

History of port

Located on the meanders of the Seine, the Port of Rouen occupies a choice position in the history of France. The city, founded during Antiquity, suffered a lot from repeated Viking invasions, but it was one of them, Rollo, who made it the capital of the Duchy of Normandy in the 10th century.



- Territorial Department of Rouen -
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The Port of Rouen: more than 2000 years of history

The precinct of the Port of Rouen stretches all along the Seine estuary, from Honfleur on the left bank and Port Jérôme / Radicatel on the right bank to Rouen, representing more than 120km, and some 33 port terminals.

Rouen experienced remarkable economic growth early on in its history. Around 50 BC, the Greek geographer Strabo (circa 58 BC - circa 25 AD) stated that Rouen was a major centre for shipping relations with England: "One can travel far up the Rhone and thus carry goods to different places, because the Saône and the Doubs, which are navigable rivers capable of carrying heavy loads, flow into the Rhone. From the Saône to the Seine, goods are carried overland. It is by descending this river that they are transported into the land of the Lexovii and the Caletes, and from there by the ocean, in less than a day to Brittany." To Strabo's eyes the Seine was "one of the best trade routes formed by nature."



Rotomagus (Rouen), with its inland tide, lying at the intersection of a North - South corridor at which the Seine could be crossed by a ford, was the warehouse and transshipment point for river / sea trade between the Roman Empire and its province of Brittany (today the United Kingdom). Marble from Italy, wines from Provence, and olive oil

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□ Brittany (today the United Kingdom). Marble from Italy, wines from Provence, and olive oil from Spain were loaded in Rouen. The ships returned with tin, lead, and pottery. Later, in 840, when Charles the Bald visited Rouen there were 28 ships in the harbour! As a sign of this growth, a vessel was stamped on the coins minted in Rouen. But that period ended when the Vikings sailed up the Seine to Rouen and reduced the town to ashes (841-842).

Thereafter the river became a source of prosperity again: Rollo (911) and the Plantagenets created warehouses in Rouen for cargo from the Baltic and the Mediterranean; the Seine once again became a vital trade link with England. From then on, the Port and city saw their destinies flourish: from the reign of William the Conqueror, Rouen became for the next three centuries the capital of the Dukes of Normandy and had its own port in London, "Dunegate", where the wines of Burgundy and Ile-de-France were delivered. The oldest arsenal of the kingdom of France was established in Rouen by Philip the Fair in 1294: the "King's Galleys". Located approximately at the location of the administrative centre on the left bank today, it operated until 1532. From the late Middle Ages, the port of Rouen also developed direct maritime trade with Italy, the main cargo transported being alum (a product used to fix dyes, particularly important in a city with a large textile industry).



Long coveted and dominated by the English, the port came under French control again in 1444 and grew due to the silting of Harfleur. It was from Honfleur that navigators set sail for Brazil, Madeira, Newfoundland, and Canada. Samuel de Champlain (1567-1635) set sail from Honfleur to found the city of Quebec in 1608. Other explorers set sail from Honfleur to create trade counters in Java and Sumatra. Today, the inland port is reserved for fishing vessels, sailboats and yachts. Shipping now takes place on the quays on the river Seine located downstream from the majestic Normandy Bridge 'Pont de Normandie'. In the middle of the 17th century, traders in Rouen exported textiles to America via Cadiz. The goods went through the "Halle aux Toiles" or cloth market.

In the 18th century, the Port of Rouen found it difficult to berth ships whose drafts had increased. It is for this reason that the adoption of the 1846 law was decisive for the Port
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□ that the adoption of the 1840 law was decisive for the Port of Rouen: thanks to the interventions of Lamartine, François Arago and Victor Hugo, work was undertaken in the channel and the Seine estuary which is behind Rouen's capacity to berth major seagoing vessels today. A direct consequence of the development in the port's berthing capacity was the increase in trade.



On 28 May 1861, Emperor Napoleon III disembarked from the ship L'Eclair in the municipality of Notre-Dame-de-Gravenchon, at a place called the "Prairies du Mesnil". He visited the work undertaken since 1848 on the Seine to reduce the sandbanks caused by the meanders of the Seine and improve navigation, highly penalized by very shallow depths available. He gave the port to be built on this site the name of his uncle, Jerome, former King of Westphalia, brother of Napoleon I, who had died the previous year. The bronze terminal commemorating the event was restored and moved in 2002 to be further enhanced, to mark the 40th anniversary of the establishment of the Industrial Joint Authority of Port-Jérôme.

During the First World War, traffic sharply increased. It was driven in particular by the growth in English coal imports: from 5 Mt in 1913, they rose to 9 Mt in 1916. The Port of Rouen and its city provided a vast, powerful rear base for the Allies in particular for the front on the Somme, before rapidly expanding after the War to become the leading French port, a place it kept until the 1930s.



The reconstruction of Rouen included a virtually brand-new port, well suited to the traffic that had to be handled. However, in spatial terms, almost all of the port's facilities were moved downstream. The development of the left bank went hand in hand with the growth of local industry. The pre-war links (especially with the British Isles, the Scandinavian countries and North Africa) quickly returned to their previous level before exceeding them. In this special period of reconstruction, the citizens of Rouen showed a spirit of conquest served by remarkable commercial acumen which led them to berth regular lines from new geographical areas such as the West Coast of Africa and the Indian Ocean, as well as South America and the USA. Although it was no longer the largest French port, the Port of Rouen continued to grow.

Significant progress was made with the development of the new channel in the estuary which opened in 1960 and has always been scrupulously maintained by specialists in the Port of Rouen. The structure of traffic radically changed: in 1968, under the pressure

□ from trade in grain, flour, sugar, petroleum products and regular North-South shipping lines, exports predominated traffic for the 1st time, a constant feature of the port ever since 1981.

Application of the Autonomy Statute (1966) established the port of Rouen as one of the major French ports to play a national role. Agricultural production was encouraged by the Common Agricultural Policy, support was given to exports, enabling the Port of Rouen to make a real leap forward, and has been positioned as the front-ranking European port for grain exports ever since. More than four decades later, despite the vast expansion of the European Community, Rouen still occupies that position as leading export port for grain.



The decade 1990-2000 brought profound changes. On the one hand, the reform of the Common Agricultural Policy (1992), with the ensuing grain shock it caused in the Port of Rouen from 1994 to 1996, ended a long period of growth for grain exports. On the other, the national goods handling reform in 1992, made essential by the technical developments in goods handling and the disappearance of overland borders within the European Union, and its efficient implementation at the local level, restored Rouen's reliability and competitiveness. The advantages of the port could once again be used to their full advantage: industrial and operators were attracted, massive investments were made, supply chains developed: the Port of Rouen could offer a new deal.

The law passed on 24 June 2008 by the French National Assembly established major seaports (- Grands Ports Maritimes - state public establishments like the autonomous port authorities), including that of Rouen.



In 2012, the HAROPA economic interest group was created (short for HAVre-ROUen-PARis, or Harbours of Paris), combining the Grands Ports Maritimes of Le Havre and Rouen, and the Paris autonomous port authority. HAROPA is alternately chaired by the three CEOs of the corporations. In 2012, the first president of the EIG was Philippe Deiss, Executive Director of the Port of Rouen, also the location for the headquarters of HAROPA.

Rouen was also the location for the following events:
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Rouen was also the location for the following events.

- **1787:** The Sally, the first American ship calls at Rouen to offload whale oil from Nantucket
- **1789:** The American Robert Fulton designs, manufactures and secretly experiments in Rouen the Nautilus, the first submarine in history
- **1816:** The Elise is the first steamship to call at the Port of Rouen
- **1821:** Steamboats start to commute on the Seine: it cost 10 francs at that time for a 1st class ticket for the 9-hour trip from Rouen to Le Havre
- **1833:** The obelisk from Luxor now in the Place de la Concorde passes through Rouen
- **1840:** Napoleon's ashes from St. Helena pass through Rouen
- **1855:** The Statue of Liberty is loaded in Rouen, bound for New York on the frigate Isère
- **1876:** The Frigorifique, a ship owned by Charles Tellier, leaves Rouen for the first Transatlantic crossing by refrigerated transport ever made
- **1892:** Navigation by night begins in the estuary after installing the required beacons
- **1899:** The first ferry bridge in France – 50 m above the ground – is built in Rouen
- **1918:** With traffic of more than 10 Mt, Rouen is the leading port of France
- **1960:** Construction of a new fairway
- **1966:** Application in the Port of Rouen of its status as an autonomous port authority
- **1966:** The first 20-foot containers (TEU) are offloaded onto the docks in Rouen and port call by the first ship over 200 meters long (Agios Vlasios V, 33,000 deadweight tonnes)
- **1969:** William the Conqueror Bridge marks the upstream limit for sea-going vessels
- **1972:** Port call of the first full container ship, the Anita (133 TEU) on the West Coast of Africa line, and the first ship of 50,000 deadweight tonnes (the Anna Bibolini)
- **1981:** First port call by a vessel of 100,000 tonnes (the Jag Laadki)
- **1985:** the Cetra Corona breaks the record for ship length (280 meters, 139,000 dwt)
- **1989:** The Sails of Liberty, the first event for tall ships at the heart of the city, starts the series of Rouen Armadas
- **2000:** First port call by a vessel of 150,000 tonnes (the China Act)
- **2012:** The bulk carrier Densa Shark (292 meters long) set a new length record for ships berthing in the port of Rouen, at Grand-Couronne.

Commissioning of facilities or industries:

Silos :

- **1958:** Simarex (first silo for grain exports in Rouen)
- **1961:** SPR / UCASPOR on the Elie peninsula (combined to form Senalia in 2002)
- **1968:** Soufflet
- **1971:** MRM (now Senalia)
- **1974:** Lévy

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- **1977**: Lecureur

Quays (date of commissioning of their first section):

- **1963**: Africa Quay (later to become the West Quay)
- **1969**: Petit-Couronne Quay
- **1970**: Saint-Wandrille Quay
- **1972**: Rouen-Quevilly Quay (ro/ro in 1979)
- **1974**: Radicatel Quay
- **1976**: Seine 1 Quay in Honfleur
- **1981**: Grand-Couronne Quay
- **1992**: Seine 2 Quay in Honfleur
- **2004**: Seine 3 Quay in Honfleur

Industry :

- **1933**: Esso refinery in Port-Jérôme (ExxonMobil)
- **1958**: Skalli (Semolina factory 'Semoulerie de Normandie')
- **1975**: Coflexip (Flexi France)
- **1975**: CKD Renault
- **1984**: Soufflet mills
- **1991**: Société Lyonnaise de Déroulage (Saint-Wandrille)
- **1993**: Saipol (1995 diester)
- **1998**: first arrival of bulk cocoa beans
- **1999**: opening of the first warehouses on the Rouen Seine Valley Logistics Park
- **1999**: Soufflet malthouse
- **2011**: SRT (Société rouennaise de transformation) in Grand-Couronne.

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