

Listen to the story of **Noisiel**, Ville d'art et d'histoire...

... told by a lecture guide accredited by the French Ministry of Culture. Your guide knows Noisiel inside and out, and will look forward to welcoming you and giving you an insight into the scale of a place, the development of the town in step with its districts. Feel free to ask him questions, he's at your service!

The heritage department

manages the initiatives in Noisiel, Ville d'art et d'histoire. Activities are organised all year round for residents and school children. Contact the department for any project you have in mind.

If you are in a group

Noisiel puts on guided tours upon booking at any time of the year. Brochures specially designed for you can be sent on request.

Information, bookings

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Noisiel belongs to the national network of Villes et Pays d'art et d'histoire

The French Ministry of Culture and Communication, Architecture and Heritage department, awards the title Villes et Pays d'art et d'histoire to local communities who enhance their heritage. It guarantees the skilled experience of heritage facilitators and lecturer guides, as well as the quality of their work. From ancient remains to 20th century architecture, these towns and regions present their heritage in all its diversity. Today, there is a network of 119 towns and regions throughout France sharing their expertise with you.

In the vicinity,

Boulogne-Billancourt, Étampes, Meaux, Pontoise and Rambouillet are also proud to be Villes et Pays d'art et d'histoire.

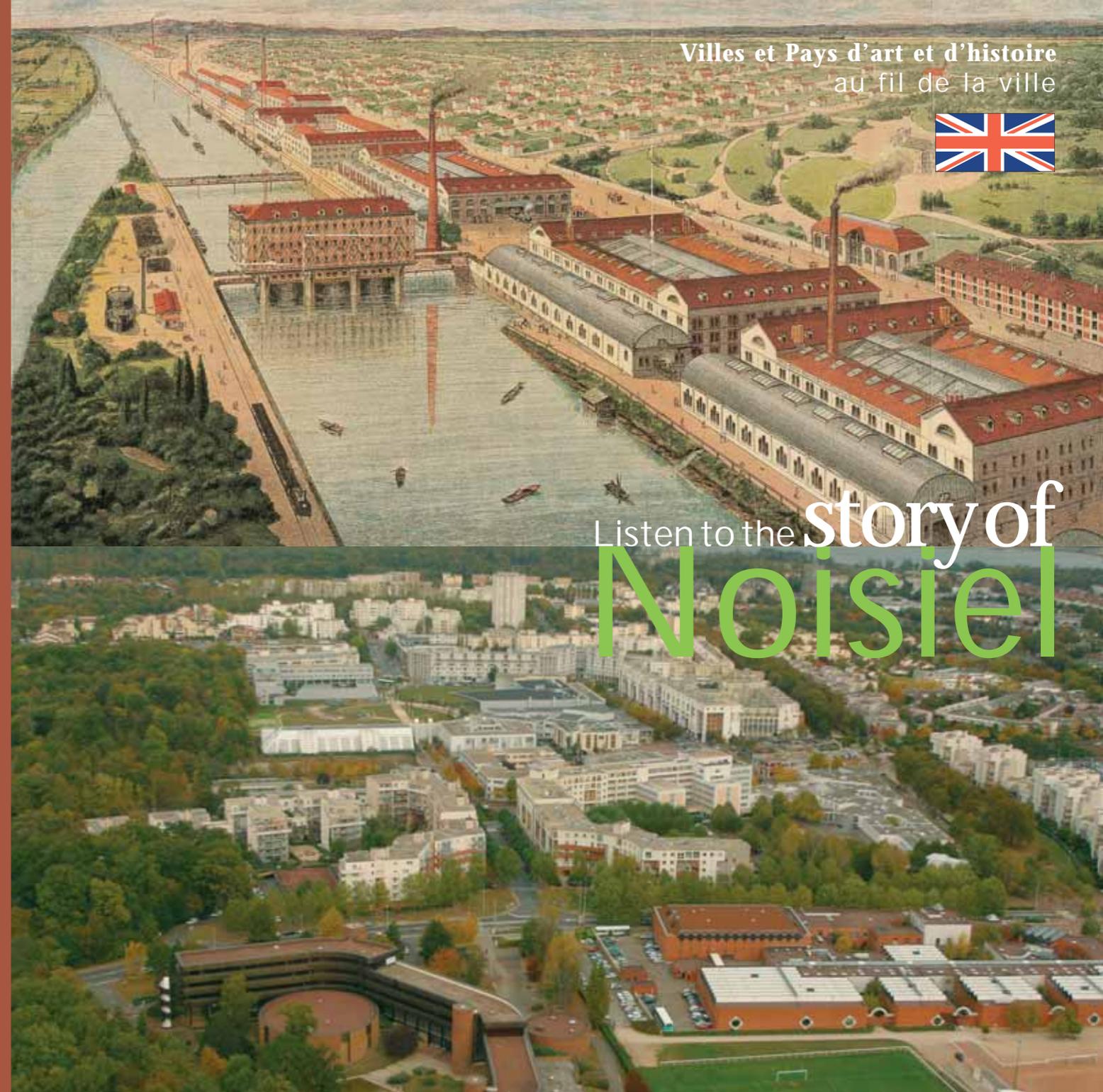
I am a monument of order and activity,
Hard work, faith and patience,
Resolve, honour and perseverance,
Forged my foundations and those who made me,
With this work have proven their valiant quality.

MARIE-VIRGINIE MENIER/AT NOISIEL MILL /1842

Villes et Pays d'art et d'histoire
au fil de la ville



Listen to the story of
Noisiel



The changing face of a town

Noisiel took root on the banks of the Marne and expanded out over the gentle slopes of the Brie plateau before becoming a new town in the 20th century.



Circa 1825, the English garden was laid out around the Château, a stone's throw from the village where the houses hugged the banks of the River Marne.



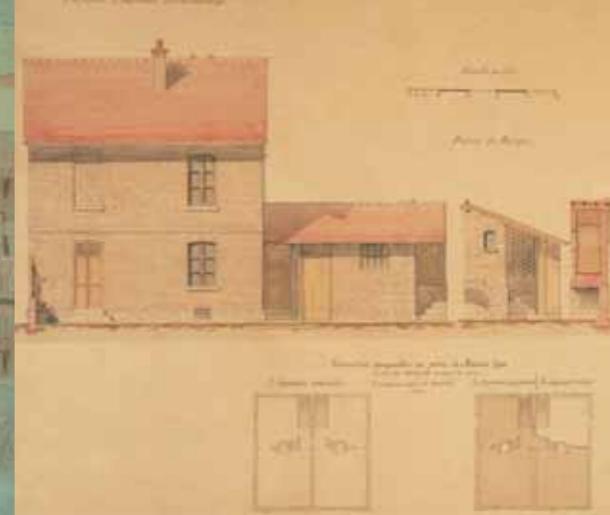
Before the Menier family settled, the mill was built on an island in a pastoral setting.



In 1766, Jean-Baptiste Chaussard renovated the Château de Noisiel for Aymard-Félicien Boffin de la Sonne. The Château was to retain its classical architecture until 1831, when the architect Huvé brought in innovation.



Circa 1895, the workers' housing estate was almost completed. The houses were built in staggered rows to help air and light to circulate. (Nestlé France coll.)



Several styles of house were built: houses situated in the middle of residential plots with 4 living quarters, houses with 2 living quarters (here) and more spacious corner houses. (Nestlé France coll.)



In the new town, each district has its own architectural unit and is designed with a combination of diverse colours and original forms.

Founded circa 841

The first record of Noisiel dates back to 841, in a text that quotes "Nucedo". This Merovingian beginning is confirmed by the existence, a few centuries later, of a church dedicated to Saint-Médard. Bishop of Noyon in the 6th century, Médard played a leading role in the Christianisation of Merovingian Gaul.

From "Nusiellum" to "Noisiellum"

The town would keep its Latin name, "nucetum", meaning a place planted with walnut trees. "Nusiellum" in the 12th century, then it became known as "Noisiellum" in the 15th century.

The mediaeval village revolved around its "molendinum", or flour mill, in evidence from the 12th century along a loop of the Marne. The first Church, of Saint-Médard, was built nearby, and woods and grassland grew all around.

Village, farms and châteaux

In the 18th century, the village was made up of fifteen or so houses built on a terrace overlooking the river. A port was laid out to the east of the village for transporting wood to Paris. Westwards lay the park with a Château built a century earlier and a seigniorial farmstead. Another château, belonging to Luzard, stood further south, next to the wood of the same name. Land was therefore only built on to the far north-west of Noisiel, with the exception of the Buisson-Saint-Antoine farm, adjoining a chapel, and a handful of houses, located much further to the south.

The first land developments

When the Duke of Levis bought the Château at the turn of the 19th century, he set about redeveloping the park, thus altering Noisiel's landscape for the first time. In 1825, Jean-Antoine-Brutus Menier acquired the mill to set up his pharmaceutical products and chocolate factory. The small undertaking grew between the village and the Marne, and the road was subsequently modified to give the factory easier access.

From village to industrial estate.

In the latter part of the 19th century, chocolate was the factory's only produce. Spurred on by Emile Menier, the company underwent considerable expansion and, around 1900, the industrial site extended for almost 900 metres over the banks of the Marne. The small village gradually gave way to industrial buildings and the first programme for workers' housing. In 1874 the workers' housing estate was created: smart brick houses and collective facilities sprung up to the east of the old village. Completed in the early 20th century, it was organised into three long parallel streets, covering around twenty hectares

of the Brie plateau slopes.

Nothing but the church remained of the old village. The park became the property of the Menier family in 1879: the château was extended, stables were built where the old seigniorial farmstead used to stand, and a new main gate, flanked by a warden's lodge, was erected at the park entrance. In the south, Buisson farm was integrated into a farming estate of some 1 500 hectares, belonging to the Meniers. And so Noisiel would stay until the 1960s.

The new town

A social housing programme was set in motion in the 1960s with the creation of the Pièce-aux-chats and Potager districts. Noisiel underwent further urban development which would transform its landscape for good with the founding of the new town of Marne-la-Vallée in the 1970s. At the heart of the new town, the small industrial community evolved and new districts sprung up. With the finishing touches taking place today, this fresh urbanisation has brought a positive boost of green spaces and pedestrian zones criss-crossing the town.

The town through the centuries

A new town twice over during its history, Noisiel emerged as an industrial site of international renown in the 19th century before embarking on the adventure of founding Marne-la-Vallée.

The beginnings

Few prehistoric or antiquity traces remain. A handful of protohistoric elements have been the only discovery in the Pièce-aux-chats district, attesting to human presence during this period.

A village on the banks of the Marne

In the Middle Ages, economic life in Noisiel revolved around the Marne. A charter signed by the young Louis VII, dated 1157, mentions that the water mill belonged to the Crown. Until 1824, it would simply be used for grinding grain. The port is first cited in 1428: the river enabled transportation of wood and food-producing materials. It was also brimming with fish, but fishing was tightly controlled and only provided a source of income for a very small number.

In the days of the seigniories

In 1120, the lands of Noisiel were given to the priors of Gournay by Ancel de Garlande, the benefactor of Torcy, and remained their property until the end of the 15th century when they were handed over to Jean du Tremblay, secretary to King Henry IV. The lands changed hands countless times through the 17th and 18th centuries, with the majority of owners being lords with significant royal duties. At this time, there were two Châteaux, at Luzard and at Noisiel, located not far from the Marne, with an adjoining seigniorial farmstead. It remained a rural village, whose resources came exclusively from the river and farming.

Industrial Noisiel

At the turn of the 19th century, Noisiel's seigniorial days were over. Château de Noisiel was still standing, owned by the Duke of Levis' family but, the Château du Luzard had disappeared. The first businesses sprung up in the north of the village: a greengrocer's, tobacconist's and restaurants. The arrival of the Menier family would completely change daily life in the small rural community. Jean-Antoine-Brutus Menier set up his factory in 1825 and, in 1853, his son Emile turned the small family business into a real chocolate empire. The most innovative chemists, architects and engineers came and went, turning it into a state-of-the-art factory

with the construction of grand buildings for housing the workshops.

The manufacturer, spurred by progressive and social ideas, set about building a model workers' estate, which would be completed by his sons. It comprised housing for workers, schools, shops for provisions, a canteen, hotel-restaurants and town hall, and on completion, saw the population rise from 165 to 1254 inhabitants in less than fifty years.

Upon purchasing the Buisson farm, the château and parkland, the Menier family owned all the land in the town. Life in Noisiel revolved around the factory, under the watchful eye of the chocolate manufacturers.

A model farm on the Brie plateau

In 1879, Emile Menier acquired the Buisson farm and all the adjoining farmland. Along with Lognes, Croissy, Emerainville and Torcy farms, it formed a farming estate of several thousand hectares. Between 1880 and 1889, the Menier family had new buildings erected that were adapted to the needs of industrial agriculture. They applied their innovative and productive principles to agriculture and, in 1889, the farm welcomed President Carnot during the Agricultural Competition of the World Fair. Their medal count just kept rising.

In Marne-la-Vallée

From 1975 onwards, Noisiel played a role in the economic and urban development of eastern Paris: two zones of economic activity and an urban centre accommodated the largest number of jobs, 80% of which were in the service sector. Right in the new town of Marne-la-Vallée, present-day Noisiel has a wealth of architecture and quality town planning where traditional meets contemporary. A heritage enhancement policy, instigated in the 1980s, has led to the protection of twelve buildings listed as historic monuments and won the town the label "Ville d'art et d'histoire".



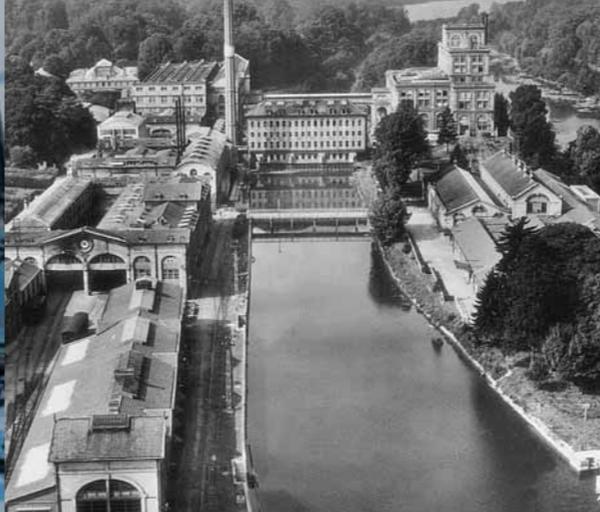
Between 1825 and 1852, the mill was renovated countless times, without production ever coming to a standstill. (detail of a triptych preserved at the Melun museum)



The central street, pictured in 1890, was the main access route for the workers' estate. (Nestlé France coll.)



The various architectural styles of the chocolate factory blending functionality with exceptional elegance.



In the 1950s, the factory reached peak expansion. It sprawled over the banks of the Marne for almost 900 metres, including the Menier island.



The Meniers' farm model, built between 1880 and 1889, kept the "old 18th century barn" and the two lofts.



In the heart of the new town, some buildings sport an original architectural style with symmetrical façades.

Places of all shapes and sizes

From the colourful tiles and bricks of the chocolate factory and the workers' estate to the glass and concrete façades of the Luzard district, admire the original character of Noisiel's heritage.



Designed by Jules Saulnier in 1872, the mill sought to serve two purposes: as a functional building and as a corporate communication tool through its exceptional decoration.



Today a Theatre awarded the label "Scène nationale" (national stage), the old stable-barn on the Buisson farm displays a harmonious blend of brick and concrete through its architecture.



The old schools, renovated and expanded in 1994 became the Town Hall and have had their original façade restored, elegantly adorned with ceramic tile friezes and coloured bricks.



The originality of the old canteen roof lies in its rhomboidal shape and geometric motifs created by multicoloured tiles.



The ceiling of the former Town Hall Council hall is decorated with a painted background where the M for Menier and N for Noisiel are interlaced.



The main gate stands majestic at the main entrance of Noisiel's park. It was erected in 1889 and restored in 2000.

The Menier chocolate factory

Evidence of the town's industrial past, the old chocolate factory has today become the headquarters of Nestlé France. The architects Reichen and Robert were careful when restoring it to preserve the key components of industrial architecture, integrated harmoniously into a contemporary architectural style. Present-day visitors can still see the Saulnier mill (1872), the Refroidissoirs building (1882-1884), the Pont-Hardi and the Cathedral (1906), nestled in a landscaped setting.

Buisson farm

The Meniers' farm was built between 1880 and 1889, incorporating an old 18th century barn whose framework is still visible today. The farming buildings were designed according to an industrial layout, around the stable-barn. Exhibiting colourful brick façades covering metal structures, these buildings, along with the chocolate factory, are the cream of 19th century industrial architecture. Now housing an Arts and Culture Centre, the farm was renovated by Bernard Huet in 1991.

The workers' estate

Built between 1874 and the turn of the 20th century, the workers' estate is now subject to an architectural dictate seeking to preserve the character of its brick houses. Noisiel looks like an "industrial" village with houses laid out in staggered rows along streets lined with trees and private gardens. A winner at many World Fairs, the model estate, designed by Jules Logre for Emile Menier, was meant to be a reproducible example where architecture forms an integral part of the social project.

Place Emile-Menier

A monument takes pride of place in the centre, dedicated to Emile-Justin Menier, the founding father of the estate. Erected in 1898, it is the work of sculptor Paul Berthet, based on an original bust by Carrier-Belleuse. Surrounding the square are the oldest collective buildings of the estate with brick façades adorned with ceramic tile friezes: the old Menier schools (1874), today the Town Hall, shops for provisions (1874), the workers' canteen (1882-1884) and, a little further on, two hotel restaurants (1888-1889).

Place Gaston-Menier

During the final construction phase of the estate, circa 1895, place Gaston-Menier marked the limit of the estate opposite the old chocolate factory. On either side of rue Claire-Menier, the square has 2 symmetrical buildings: the Pompes building (fire station) and the former town hall. A tobacconist's and post office used to stand at the entrance of the street back at that time. The former town hall sets itself somewhat apart from the other public buildings with its limestone construction, particularly on the porch framed by two columns. Its interior decor is at once evocative of Noisiel, the Republic and the Menier family.

Noisiel park

In 1879, the Menier family ornamented the landscaped garden with an English-style river, "follies", a bear cage and some exceptional trees. All that remains of the Château, destroyed in 1954, is the main gate and warden's lodge, erected in 1889. The Meniers' private residence (Petit château, 1854), and old stables (1889) now accommodate the offices of the public development establishment of Marne-la-Vallée (Epamarne).

20th century architecture

The various districts of the new town each have their own identity and are part of a regulated town planning programme. From the "Pyjamas" of the Buisson farm district to the "Tour des jeunes mariés" of Deux-parcs, not forgetting the residences in the "Allée des bois" or "Le logis vert", a wide array of contemporary architecture is on show, created by architects such as Jean Nouvel, Christian de Portzamparc, Vasconi or Bernard de la Tour d'Auvergne.

Flavours and flair

With a brick estate where chocolate smells once filled the air, and the Marne riverbanks perfect for strolls, Noisiel boasts a varied heritage just waiting to be explored along the countless footpaths and walkways...

A brick estate
Brick is the prevailing element in the old centre of Noisiel. The red-and yellow-bricked workers' houses form a uniform architectural ensemble reflecting the same style as the public buildings. On Buisson farm, like the old chocolate factory, the brick is more colourful. An economical material par excellence, the decorative wealth of brick is evident here. In the past, the town had up to three brick factories that exploited a local clay.

Changing decors...
Ceramic tile friezes decorate the estate building façades while the walls are often ornate with geometric motifs and ceramic cocoa flowers blossom on a balustrade. The M for Menier is ubiquitous, stylised in metal, outlined in bricks or painted on ceramic tiles. The Saulnier mill, at the centre of the old chocolate factory, exhibits terracotta in all its forms: coloured or varnished bricks, ceramic tiles and ceramic motifs or motifs that evoke cocoa.

A taste for chocolate
Founded in 1816, the Menier company set up shop in Noisiel in 1825. Through the latter part of the 19th century, Menier chocolate became famous and was sold all over the world, bringing economic prosperity to the town. Gold and silver medals glistened on chocolate bar packets, and the "little Menier girl" appeared on every wall in France. This success shone until the period between the two world wars, and although the Menier family left Noisiel around 1960, successive owners taking over the business kept production going, with the smell of chocolate continuing to fill the air around until 1991.

On the farm
Today, the only remnants of the past agricultural glory in which Noisiel basked are the splendid buildings of the Buisson farm. The model farm bought by the Menier family in 1879 sits at the heart of a 1 500-hectare estate, whose winning formula has always been innovation. Medals and awards were won in every area of industry: sheep and cattle breeding with a selection of species, fertiliser invention for boosting wheat and beetroot cultivation and increasingly mechanised machinery.

Preserved nature
Protected since 1944, Noisiel park flourishes with open green spaces and wooded areas for walkers to enjoy, watched over by remarkable trees such as giant sequoias, bamboos or American honey locusts.... The Allée des bois and chocolate factory promenade, which follows the old private railway of the Menier family, are just a couple of examples of green walkways zigzagging through the new town. Noisiel can pride itself on being a "Ville Fleurie" (town in bloom), winning a third "Flower" in 2001 for the quality of its horticultural efforts to create a pleasant living environment.

A world of water
Water is central to Noisiel's heritage, since its history is closely interwoven with the river. The Historic Walkway along the banks of the Marne that can be reached by a floating bridge provides walkers with access to Menier island where the old chocolate factory site is waiting to be explored. The banks are still being developed to preserve this natural environment where ducks, grey herons and other birds can find refuge. Water is also a pretext for artistic creation: the Totems water towers, decorated with molten glass by the plastic artist Maurice Garnier, or the Quatre-Pavés water tower, designed by Christian de Portzamparc, are just some such examples.

Heritage for children
All year round, the heritage educational department organises both in-school and extracurricular activities for children in Noisiel. Discovery visits, workshops and observational games reveal the wealth of their heritage before their very eyes. This awareness-raising initiative helps them to feel a part of their living environment. It isn't just about looking back to the past though, but also about understanding the present to better prepare for the future.



The banks of the River Marne still have a charming air of tranquillity about them and are enjoyed by fishermen and pedestrians alike.



On the front of the Saulnier mill, cocoa is the star ingredient and flowers and cocoa pods are presented in diverse forms. When this mill, listed as a historic monument, was restored, the colours recovered their original hue and crispness.



Forerunners in the advertising game, the Meniers were quick to grasp the importance of winning children's loyalty by designing toys, books and school items sporting their brand.



On the wall of the former town hall, yellow, red and blue bricks form elegant motifs lined with ceramic tile friezes.



Green spaces cover more than a third of the town. The "Allée des bois", used in the olden days by the Meniers to go hunting in the "Bois de la Grange" wood, crosses Noisiel from north to south for almost 2.5km.



Looking lively, children learn while having fun...



Historic centre

- 1 old chocolate factory
- 2 former Town Hall
- 3 old canteen
- 4 Emile-Menier monument
- 5 the old schools – Town Hall
- 6 Saint-Médard church
- 7 Petit-Château
- 8 the Orangeries
- 9 old Menier stables
- 10 former old peoples' home
- 11 main gate
- 12 Buisson farm

New town

- 13 water tower at the Quatres-pavés roundabout
- 14 Lizard sports complex (COSOM)
- 15 Chambre Régionale des Comptes (Regional Chamber of Accounts)
- 16 IT centre for the Direction Générale des Impôts (Tax Collection Office)
- 17 Ecole Nationale du Trésor Public (national college for training tax inspectors)
- 18 RATP (Parisian public transport authority) technical centre
- 19 René Cassin technical sixth-form college
- 20 Totems stadium stand and water towers
- 21 Banque de France

Car parks

- P Town Hall car park
- P Nestlé France car park (weekends only)
- P Buisson farm car park
- P RER car park
- P COSOM car park
- P Cariatides car park

Visits-guided tours, user guide

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1hr30 or more...

Tours and activities usually last about an hour and a half.

→ Meet your guide at the: Service d'animation du patrimoine (Heritage department), Former Town Hall 200 place Gaston Menier 77186 Noisiel

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 © **E. Barbara:** p. 2/3 no. 4
 © **E. Davoux:** p. 8/9 no. 3
 Design
 Mission de la Diffusion culturelle; LM communiquer: Laurence Madrelle, Emmanuelle Robin.
 Production and printing
 BLEU BANQUISE
 Translation
 Traduteurs

With support from the Ile-de-France cultural affairs department – French Ministry of Culture and Communication

