

# Lausanne by bike

A sightseeing tour



LES BALADEURS

Lausanneroule!

vélos libres

## Association Lausanne Roule

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Le projet Les Baladeurs est un projet de l'association à but non lucratif Lausanne Roule, créée en 2004. Reconnue d'utilité publique, elle met gratuitement des vélos à disposition à Lausanne, Renens (Ouest Roule) et Vevey (Vevey Roule). Ce projet est basé sur les principes du développement durable en promouvant la mobilité douce, l'intégration sociale et la santé.



## Vélo attitude

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Cette balade a été conçue pour s'effectuer à vélo. En utilisant ce mode de déplacement, vous faites un geste pour votre santé et pour l'environnement ! Le vélo en ville peut sembler un exercice périlleux, mais tout est question d'habitude ! Prendre sa place sur la route s'apprend, même lorsqu'il n'y a pas de piste cyclable. Cela vaut la peine de persévérer, car plus il y aura d'usagères et d'usagers, mieux ils se feront respecter et plus les aménagements se développeront !

## Règles de sécurité du cycliste urbain

- Roulez à droite, laissez environ 1m de distance au bord, quitte à faire ralentir les voitures derrière vous.
- Portez un casque.
- Empruntez les pistes cyclables lorsqu'il y en a.
- Indiquez bien vos intentions aux automobilistes.
- Roulez en file indienne sur les routes.
- Aux feux, placez-vous de façon à ce que les voitures vous voient, si possible à l'avant de la file.
- Anticipez toujours (une portière qui s'ouvre, un freinage brusque) et réduisez votre vitesse à l'approche des intersections.
- Et bien sûr, soyez le plus visible possible (phares et bandes réfléchissantes).



*L'utilisation de ce guide est soumise aux conditions générales disponibles sur [www.lesbaladeurs.ch/conditions](http://www.lesbaladeurs.ch/conditions)*



## Lausanne by bike

### A sightseeing tour

This itinerary will enable you to discover the city of Lausanne, from its old town to its lakeshore. The tour will guide you through Lausanne's historical buildings, peaceful parks and beautiful sightings.

>> 01

>> From the Lausanne Roule stand, follow the "Rue Centrale" through the arches, and take the little flat street newt to the bar "La Galette". The esplanade of the Cathedral is at the end of the street, on your right.



## 1. The esplanade of the cathedral

We are currently on the hill of the "Cité" of Lausanne. This promontory is both near the lake and flanked by two rivers, and is thus an auspicious spot to become a fortified place. It was inhabited from 1000 B.C. by Celtic tribes. Whilst the sophisticated Romans chose the lakeside to build their villas, the tumults of the Middle Ages forced the inhabitants, in the Age of fortified towns, to retreat to the safety of this natural hill. Marius, the archbishop of Avenches, left his barbarian-invaded town for Lausanne in or about 590 A.D., and



established it as the seat of the diocese. Marius founded his bishopric in Lausanne as well as the first church. In the Carolingian Era and that of the great Burgundy, the importance of trade grew, and craftsmen started to build their shops outside of the walls of the old town, in the two valleys created by the rivers "Louve" and "Flon". Lausanne becomes the "city of the three hills". The burg is constituted from the ninth century onward. It was situated at the crossroads of trading routes leading to Germany, Italy, France and Provence. Merchants therefore established their shops there to attract international trade. In the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, Lausanne had become a flourishing and attractive town. Its population amounted to 7'000 to 9'000 people, a number which reached the capacity of the medieval town, and would not increase until the eighteenth century. The medieval town was divided in two. The "Cité", or upper town, was the fortified town of the bishop with its castle and church. It was the heart of



the administrative, judicial and ecclesiastical life. The "ville basse", or lower town, was principally inhabited by burghers and merchants. It was visited by the peasants, who traded their products on the market. One could go from one part of the town to the other by using the street called the "Rue de la Mercerie" or the picturesque and very steep stairs going down from the main entrance of the cathedral.



*>> The next stop is the cathedral, so take the time to turn around it, pushing your bicycle by your side.*

## 2. The cathedral

One cannot talk about Lausanne without discoursing at length on this unique witness of the past, overlooking the city. Its history is complex. The work for the cathedral was begun at the very end of the twelfth century. The

cathedral soon acquired characteristics of the gothic style in vogue at that time in Europe: it is recognizable in the ribbed vaults which establish the cathedral as the most beautiful gothic building of Switzerland. One may follow the cathedral's development beginning from the East, all the way to the West. Inside the cathedral, explanatory panels show the different steps of the building's construction, from the first elements in Romanesque style in 1170, to the addition of the painted gate noticeable on the southern wall of the building. The cathedral was consecrated in 1275 by Pope Gregory X and the Emperor Rodolph of the Habsbourg family that will have a powerful influence on Europe until 1918. The cathedral had this particularity that the street went straight through it. Indeed, a space was excavated between the porch and the belfry to permit the circulation of people. This was called the "Grande Travée". This exemplifies well the way in which ecclesiastical life, and the cathedral itself, were organically linked



with the lay medieval city: in a way, the secular cut straight through the house of God. The "Grande Travée" was filled in shortly before the Bernese invasion, in the sixteenth century. When looking up from the door, the passer-by can observe the asymmetry of the building, which contributes to the cathedral's charm. Indeed, only one of the two belfries originally planned was finally built. The watchman of Lausanne stands on top of the belfry. His purpose is to warn the inhabitants in case of fire, and announce each hour on the dot from 10 PM to 2 AM. This tradition is respected to this day! The "rosace" can be seen on the South-Eastern wall of the Cathedral. It is a stained glass window created before 1220. It contains a hundred and five glass medallions, organized on the geometrical principle of the bisection of the square, figuring the earthly world and of the circle, symbolizing the universe created by God, the whole of which is intersected by the Cross.



>> 03

>> From the cathedral, take the direction of the North, and cycle alongside the little streets running slowly down the hill of the "Cité" all the way to the castle.



### 3. The "Place du château" [Castle square]

On the north-hand side of the hill of the "Cité", the "St-Maire" castle was home to the bishop. The monument was built in or about 1400 A.D., and is very defensive in character. This is hardly surprising, when one considers that the upper and lower parts of the town had diverging interests, and that the bishop needed a stronghold to enforce his authority. Indeed, the "Cité" is the town of the Lord, and embodies tradition and power as it is the administrative, judicial and ecclesiastical center. The lower town on the contrary houses burghers, craftsmen and merchants,



subject-citizens whose preoccupations clashed with that of the residents of the "Cité" and who longed for more freedom. This conflict, mostly latent, became sometimes critical, especially when rival powers claimed the archbishopric for themselves. The Bernese invaded Lausanne in 1535, imposed the Reformation to its inhabitants, and installed their baillif in the castle. In addition, they built the Academy of Lausanne, the first French speaking higher education school of theology. Since the Vaudois reclaimed their freedom in 1803, the castle is the seat of the government of the Canton of Vaud. This is the reason why most of the public manifestations mark a stop at this spot when demonstrating their discontentment. On the square can be seen the statue of the major Davel, facing in the opposite direction to the castle. Davel was a Vaudois officer in the Bernese army, and is famous for marching on Lausanne with his troupes in 1723. There he pronounced a homily to exhort the people of Lausanne to rebel against Bernese



authority, but this without much success: he was betrayed by his peers, was condemned and beheaded, after pronouncing these last memorable words: "This is the most excellent day of my life". In the nineteenth century, Davel was turned into a hero of the Canton of Vaud's independence, although historians agree that Lausanne remained under Bernese authority until the Revolution (1798-1802).



## >> 04

*>> To continue your bicycle ride, take the street going down in the northern direction and then take the first right. At the roundabout, follow the "Rue PierreViret" which rises slowly and runs along the wall of the "Cité". Then cross the "Pont Bessière", take the "Rue de Langallerie" and cross to the "Avenue du Tribunal federal" on your left. Follow this street for about 100 meters. You will then reach the park which will be on your right hand side.*

## 4. The park of Mon-Repos

This park was an ancient piece of land belonging to a local baron, originally covered in vineyards. This kind of idyllic domain can be paralleled with that of "Sans-Souci" in Postdam: an English garden, sensual statues and Romantic extravagancies (an imitation of a ruin was built there circa 1800). The park was a place of culture during the Enlightenment period: Voltaire himself stayed there. The domain comprises large stables, aviaries housing exotic birds and an orangery (north of the "avenue du Tribunal Federal"). The mansion itself is built in a refined Neoclassical style. The motto of the manor's owner is inscribed on its northern wall: "plie au vent mais jamais ne casse" (bend in the wind, but never break). The motto is accompanied by the symbol of a wheat ear. A stone panel on the right pillar indicates that Voltaire staged several of his plays in the drawing rooms of this house. Next to a playground appears a pavilion.



It is converted in the summertime into a very nice outdoor bar: the "Folie Voltaire".

>> 05

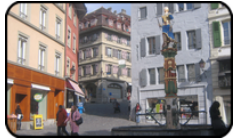
>> Ride back up the "Avenue Mon-Repos", turn left into the "Avenue Benjamin Constant" which leads directly to the Saint-François Square. The Square is on your left, behind the church.



## 5. The "Place Saint-François" [St Francis Square]

The Saint-François square was the southern limit of the medieval town. Only fields and vineyards could be seen beyond this point. The Saint-François church constitutes the only remains of a Franciscan convent founded at the end of the thirteenth century. South of this building, in lieu of the modern road, were the cloister and the buildings where the office took place. The

whole was flanked by the fortification walls. The monastery was razed in 1895, when the authorities decided to turn the square into the administrative seat of the city, due to the demographic boom as well as the wealth of the country. All the imposing buildings of the square, as well as a tramway, were built within a period of ten years. The "Grand Pont" (lit. Big Bridge), closing the square of Saint-François on its western side, was completed in 1844. The road connects the square with the railway station, already under construction in 1856. These rearrangements radically transformed the architectural landscape of Lausanne. South of the church, the buildings house the Cantonal Bank, the Post Office, the Union of Swiss Banks, and the offices of the Zurich Insurance Company. The architects designed them in the style of the Renaissance and that of Louis XVII. Luxury stores occupy the northern part of the square. Their buildings are in the Art Nouveau and Verticalism styles, in an attempt to impress the onlooker with their



modern identity. In between grand banks looking like Greek temples and expensive department stores, the "place Saint-François" symbolizes the great expansion of Lausanne at the turn of the twentieth century.

>> 06

>> *You need to take the little street named "rue Pépinet", which you will find on the western side of the Place Saint-François. This street goes down very steeply, and leads to the Rue Centrale, the first street which cuts across it. Follow it about 30m on your right and take the little paved street to the left to go back up to the place de la Palud.*

## 6. The "Place de la Palud" (Palud Square)

We are arriving at the heart of the lower town, that of the merchants and burghers. The "Hôtel de Ville" or city hall (1673-1675), is

probably the most beautiful building of the seventeenth century in the Canton of Vaud. Its architecture is comparable to that of Italian and North European communal palaces. The townspeople would meet and discuss current affairs under the arches of its ground floor. The meeting room of the "Conseil" was situated on the first floor, unattainable in case of a revolt. The belfry has a more symbolic than military role: it is a testimony of temporal power. Another symbol of the town's political power embellishes the square: the fountain of the Justice, embodied by a young blindfolded woman, sword and scale in her hands. At her feet, submissive to her authority, are represented the Pope, the Sultan, the Emperor and the "Avoyer" (a chief magistrate in the Bernese period). Looking right, from the city hall, is the famous clock of the Palud. Every hours from 9 A.M. to 7 P.M, the tourist can hear its bells toll the popular song of the "Vigneron" (the wine-maker). Puppets then appear and walk along this melody, while a narrator

recounts the story of Major Davel and the important moments of the independence of the Canton of Vaud.

## >> 07

>> *On the West hand side of the Plade de la Palud departs a little street called St Laurent. Ride up this street. You will arrive to the eponymous square, the Place St Laurent, with a church. Take the street in the southern direction. You will then see in front of you the glass bridge taking its origin from the Grand-Pont and overlooking the Flon valley. Get on it.*

## 7. On the bridge over the Flon

A little glass bridge connects the Grand Pont with the building housing the departure of the underground and cable car, on the other side of the Flon valley. It offers a privileged view of the Flon valley

and its neighbouring buildings. The Flon valley situated below us was modelled by the currents of its eponymous river, as well as that of its feeder, the "Louve". Up to the nineteenth Century, this valley was covered with fields and vineyards. The history of the Flon is peculiar: it was bought in the middle of the nineteenth century by a private Company. Indeed, in the context of industrialization and of the development of the railways, Mercier, an entrepreneur, offers the city a deal: in exchange for endorsing all the costs for the creation of a new tunnel linking the Flon to the railway station and the Ouchy harbour, his Company, the "Lausanne-Ouchy Company", receives the Flon valley for exploitation purposes. The rubble from the piercing of the tunnel was used to level up the valley (the first level of the "Grand Pont" arches is in fact buried). A railway track was then built on top of the rubble, and large warehouses placed alongside it. The development of transport by road instead of by train compel the



Lausanne-Ouchy Company to change its line of business, and concentrate from then on on the management of the valley. The Flon burgeons into a commercial, artisanal, and soon cultural neighbourhood. In the 1980s, the surrounding area becomes quite radically "underground". It is very dynamic and houses different nightclubs which bring party people all the way from Geneva and neighbouring France! The MAD, a well known spot for techno music enthusiasts and the EJMA (the Cantonal School of Jazz and Contemporary Music) also have their headquarters in the Flon. Several projects for the architectural redevelopment of the Flon have been submitted since the 1950s. One of these was finally accepted in 1991. Indeed, the Flon valley has acquired in the past decades some sort of cachet with the romantic quality of an industrial area built in the nineteenth hundreds, as well as its orthogonal plan, its square buildings and its bohemian atmosphere. The cultural inheritance of the neighbourhood was therefore to be retained, while at the same

time new and modern buildings were implanted in the area. The construction work is now well underway... you are the judge as to its results. Let us stay a few more minutes on the bridge, to look at the Bel-Air tower (1929-1931). This beige building is overlooking the Flon valley, on its right. The tower has become an emblem of Lausanne, although many opposed its creation. People were anxious that this square tower might overshadow the cathedral, and thus symbolically religion itself. Some even detected in this building the attack of capitalism on regional identity. The Bel-Air tower was also called the first sky-scraper of Switzerland, as it is in fact the first tower of Switzerland that was so high and could boast of a steel structure. Finally, let us turn around and look to the south. You will see a beautiful house, which looks like an old mansion. It is the seat of the Mercier Company (1898-1900). Its glazed roof tiles, its pediments, as well as its Gothic gables are all witnesses of the surprising mixing of styles



popular at the end of the nineteenth century. Indeed, at this period, this mingling of styles signified luxury and wealth.

>> 08

>> *Continue to cycle on the glass bridge to its end, and take the little concrete bridge right of the underground building. You will then arrive on a street. Cross it with your bike by your side, and then take right and follow the pedestrian lane bordered with trees, up to the park of Montbenon.*

## 8. The esplanade of Montbenon

The green lawn of Montbenon is the perfect spot from which to admire the lake and the mountains. In front of us, on the other side of the lake, is France, with the city of Evian and the Savoyard mountains (as they appear on the still water bottles). At the far right



extremity of the lake, is Geneva, and the beginning of the Jura mountain chain. Eastwards, you can see the Valais and the entrance to the Valais valley, which is illumined by the first rays of light every morning. The view you have of the city from here permits you to notice, near the lake, the Royal-Savoy hotel, resembling a castle as it would be represented in an opera production. This grandiose architecture is a testimony of the touristic tradition of Lausanne. The ground cable-car liaising the Flon to Ouchy via the railway station was very practical for the tourists to visit the city from its lakeside to Saint-François, and the luxury hotels were thus built alongside its line. Leaving the breathtaking view of the alps in front of you, and turning around, you can witness another symbol of the nineteen hundreds' tourism: the Casino of Montbenon, built in the style of the Florentine school. It houses the film archive since 1948. The film archive regroups 70'000 films and offers about 600 projections a year, some of



which accompanied by the performance of a pianist: a very good (and quite inexpensive) idea to pass an agreeable evening in Lausanne. The itinerary for the next part of the guided tour requires to take the direction of the Pont Chaudron (built in the Art Nouveau style) to slowly begin the descent to the lakeside. If you do not want to go back up again, you should stop here. Otherwise, the tour continues and ends in the area of Ouchy, from where one can take the "Metro-bus" with one's bike. The bus will bring you back up to Saint-François.

## >> 09

*>> Leave the park by going back up again, and take the first road you will encounter on your left. You will pass on your right the Pont Chaudron, also crossing the Flon valley. Follow this street on the bicycle path running alongside the underground rails. Once you see on your right the underground stop called "Provence", cross the street, continue about a hundred meters on your*

*left and pass under the bridge. Follow the green signs indicating "Vallée de la Jeunesse".*



## 9. The "Vallée de la Jeunesse" [the Valley of Youth]

This very imposing park was designed in 1964, within the larger scheme of the National Exposition. In fact, six National Expositions have already been organised in Switzerland since 1883. Lausanne organised that of 1964. The goal of these momentous and very expensive events is to promote a feeling of national unity for the different cantons and linguistic areas of the country. This is achieved in representing Switzerland in its technological, economic, artistic and cultural realisations. The National Expositions are often the opportunity for big works, and thus often give momentum to the regional economy of the town chosen to organize it. The Lausanne Exposition, to the surprise of a couple of Swiss-German

journalists, was gratified with the visit of as much as twelve million people. The Vallée de la Jeunesse was created for the young visitors of the exposition, and necessitated the filling up of the Flon river! Today, the park features an "Espace des Inventions" (a space devoted to inventions), a kind of little interactive museum for the sciences, (a very good idea for children who will be able to play and make experiments). It also comprises thousands of flowers, including beautiful rose-bushes. The rose garden can boast of 10'000 plants as well as of a collection of miniature conifers. While wandering about, you will be able to see numerous playgrounds including bumps, attractions and fantastic slides, a children's theater under a dome made out of concrete and a park designed to teach teenagers the basic rules of the road. A peculiar sort of competition is organised every August in Lausanne: the "Roller & In Line Contest". Indeed, the steepness of the Lausanne slopes lends itself perfectly to suicidal downhill



roller-blading, and after a while contests were organised. The Vallée de la Jeunesse is part of the itinerary for the vertiginous descent event. Once you have left the Vallée de la Jeunesse and crossed the Maladière roundabout, you will find yourself in the woody area of Vidy. You will pass, on your way to Ouchy, through the ruins of the Roman town of Lousonna and protected areas, often home to migrating birds.

## >> 10

*>> Once at the bottom of the Vallée de la Jeunesse, pass under the two bridges which permit to cross under the big Maladière roundabout. Go straight to the lake, and then turn left. When following alongside the lake will not be possible anymore, go back to the main road, and use the bicycle path all the way to Ouchy.*

## 10. Last stop: Ouchy

The port town of Ouchy was separated from Lausanne by vineyards up to the construction of the railway station in 1857. As before mentioned, at that time a cable-car ("la ficelle", lit. "the string") linking the Flon to Ouchy via the railway station was built for industrial as well as touristic reasons. Around 1900, the little village of fishermen is caught in the expansion of the city. This was appreciated by some pirates, who have written on a house in Ouchy "Commune libre d'Ouchy", or "Independent village of Ouchy", to remind the passer-by of the independence of the little town. The castle of Ouchy, undergoing extensive repair at the moment, dates back to the Middle Ages (twelfth century). The old archbishopric is sold by the Vaud state to Jean-Jacques Mercier (the entrepreneur of the Lausanne-Ouchy Company), who demolishes everything but the tower. It was formally stated that the new hotel which would spring up from the castle's ashes should spare the tower, so the architect built all around it in a colourful Burgundian

gothic style. If you wish to continue towards the east, along the lake, you will see on your left after about two hundred meters the Beau-Rivage Palace (1860) and the Olympic Museum (1993), a must see for sports buffs. A little later, you will encounter the century-old trees of the Denantous park, where you will see the Haldimand tower. This tower is the result of a very peculiar architectural contest: in 1825, three friends influenced by the romantic passion for medieval ruins, bet on who of the three would be able to build the most convincing imitation of a ruin, and the Haldimand tower was the best project. This is the finishing point of our tour. By now, you have seen the historical side of Lausanne, you are experts on its topography, aware of its history, and probably charmed by its attractions. If you wish to extend this experience, you have several opportunities to do so: Lausanne Roule offers diverse thematic itineraries and the city abounds with cultural spots which the tourist office will help you uncover

(Tourist offices located in Ouchy and at the Lausanne railway station).

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*>> To come back up: The Metro and some buses stop regularly on the place d'Ouchy (Ouchy square) and will bring you to the city centre in no sweat and no time!*

# Crédits des illustrations

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Pauline Roy et Carole Desponts

## Remarques personnelles

## Remarques personnelles



## Remarques personnelles

# Infos Pratiques

N'oubliez pas de télécharger la carte de l'itinéraire sur [www.lesbaladeurs.ch](http://www.lesbaladeurs.ch)

## Thème

Histoires



## Difficulté

Tous mollets



## Durée

1h-2h



## Itinéraire

The esplanade of the cathedral - The cathedral - The "Place du château" - The park of Mon-Repos - The "Place Saint-François" - The "Place de la Palud" - On the bridge over the Flon - The esplanade of Montbenon - The "Vallée de la Jeunesse" - Ouchy

## Prêts de vélos

Prêt de vélo gratuit 7j/7 de 7h30 à 21h30 contre caution de 20 CHF et présentation d'une pièce d'identité. Lausanne Roule - sous les arches du Grand-Pont.