

## NIORT AND THE DEUX-SÈVRES IN THE FRANCO-PRUSSIAN WAR OF 1870-1871

### GENERAL INFORMATION :

Name of the walking tour : Niort and the Deux-Sèvres in the franco-prussian war of 1870-1871

Type : Walking tour

Distance in kilometers : 3km

Duration of the walking tour : 40 minutes

Difficulty : medium

### INTRODUCTION :

On the 19th July 1870, Napoléon III, the Emperor of France, declared war on King William I of Prussia. The town of Niort supplied equipment and accommodated sick and wounded soldiers. France signed the armistice on the 28th January 1871 and handed over Alsace and part of Lorraine (Moselle) to Germany and an indemnity of 5 billion gold francs.

### 1 : CASERNE DE CAVALERIE DU GUESCLIN

The Du Guesclin barracks were one of the first 20 barracks built in France for the regular army during the 18th century. In 1870 the Hussars and Horseguards set off from here to join the army of the East. Then the National Mobile Guard, included the 34th regiment of Deux-Sèvres, arrived in Niort.

### 2 : PLACE DENFERT-ROCHEREAU

Pierre-Philippe Denfert-Rochereau was born in 1823 in the Deux-Sèvres. He was nominated governor of Belfort and resisted 107 days the Prussian army. On the orders of the French government, Colonel Denfert-Rochereau left Belfort without having surrendered. He has been nicknamed «the lion of Belfort».

### 3 : RUE DE LA BURGONCE

On 1870, Mobile reserve units from the Deux-Sèvres participated to a seven hours battle against the Prussians at La Bourgonce, a village in the Vosges region. French soldiers capitulated.

### 4 : RUE VILLERSEXEL

Not far from Belfort, the town of Villersexel was the scene of one of the longest and most murderous battles of any sort on January 1871. 20 000 French soldiers carried off the victory against 15 000 German soldiers. The 34th regiment of the Deux-Sèvres Mobile Guard only attended the fighting in the snow.

### 5 : RUE BEAUNE-LA-ROLANDE

Situated to the North-East of Orleans, the town of Beaune-La-Rolande was the scene of a terrible battle on 1870. The 34th regiment of the Deux-Sèvres Mobile Guard took part in it. There were 5000 dead and injured French soldiers. It was a defeat but the French General Crouzat proclaimed a victory.

## **6 : RUE DE STRASBOURG**

On September 1870, Niort town council decided to name this street after the town of Strasbourg. This one was commanded by the French General Uhrich who capitulated after a siege of 46 days against the Prussians.

## **7 : PLACE DE STRASBOURG**

This square has the name of the town of Strasbourg which was held to siege by the Prussian armies from August to September 1870. The monument inaugurated here on October 1881 represents Winged Glory taking a soldier with her.

## **8 : RUE ALSACE-LORRAINE**

Alsace and part of Lorraine (Moselle) were annexed by Germany by the treaty of Frankfurt on May 1871. After 47 years of German occupation, the regions were given back to France at the Armistice of 11th November 1918 which put an end to the First World War.

## **Point d'intérêt n° 9 : PLACE DE LA BRECHE**

This is the main square where important events used to take place in Niort. It was there that the National Mobile Guard paraded. On September 1870 the mayor presented the flag offered by the town to them. He was accompanied by the prefect and the commanding officers of the Deux-Sèvres army.

## **Point d'intérêt n°10 : GARE**

The railway station built in 1856 was requisitioned for the transportation of soldiers, supplies and equipment. On September 1870, the 34th regiment of the Deux-Sèvres Mobile Guard boarded three trains to join the army of the East. Niort was declared a centre of evacuation and thousands of wounded and sick people arrived here.

## **TECHNICAL SPECIFICATIONS SHEET :**

Produced by the City of Niort with the assistance of Agnès Dupont Brillatz - JeRegarde, guide-lecturer and Marie-Laure Viart, national lecturer.

The texts are accessible to people with disabilities and non-French speakers.

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