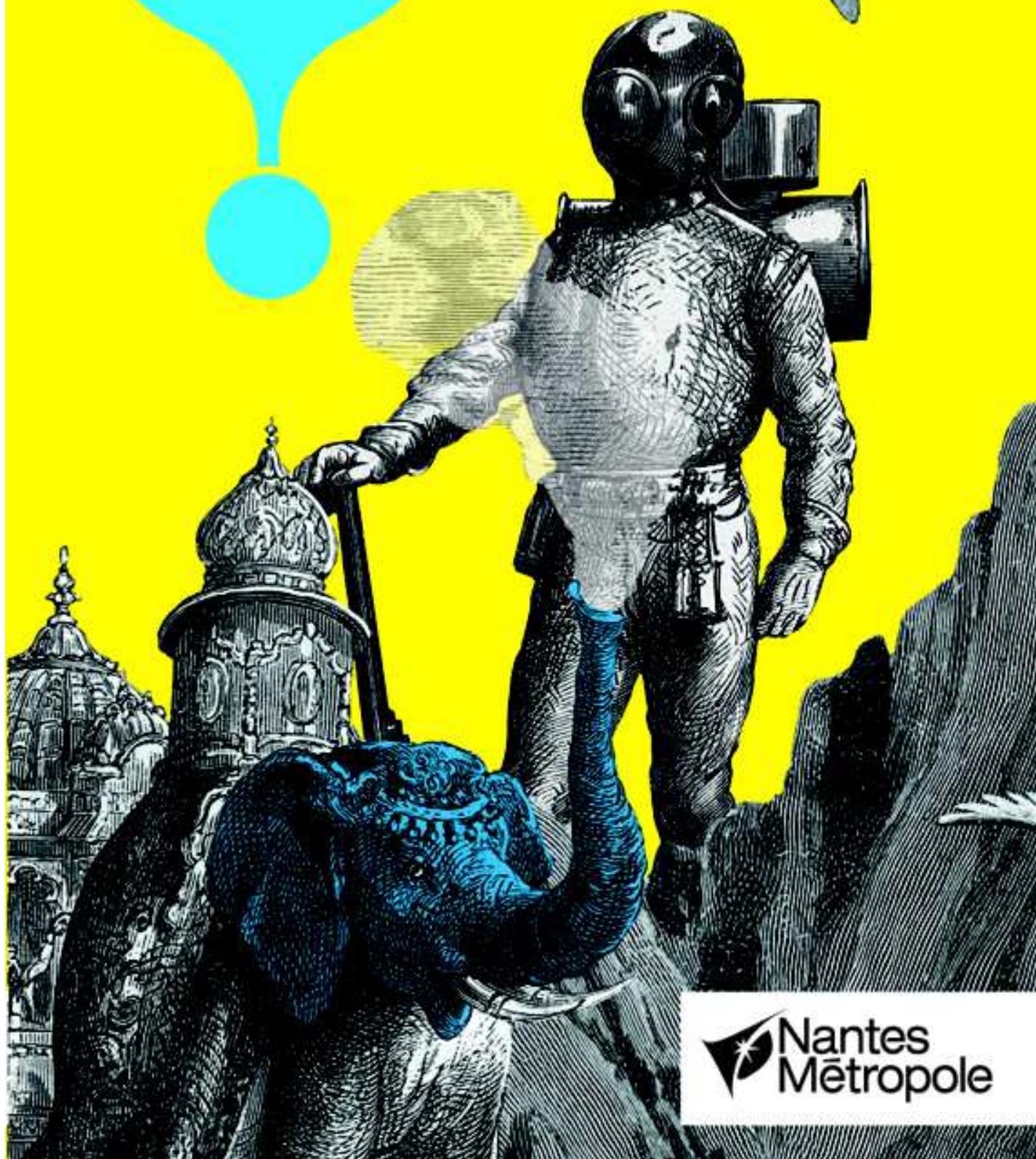
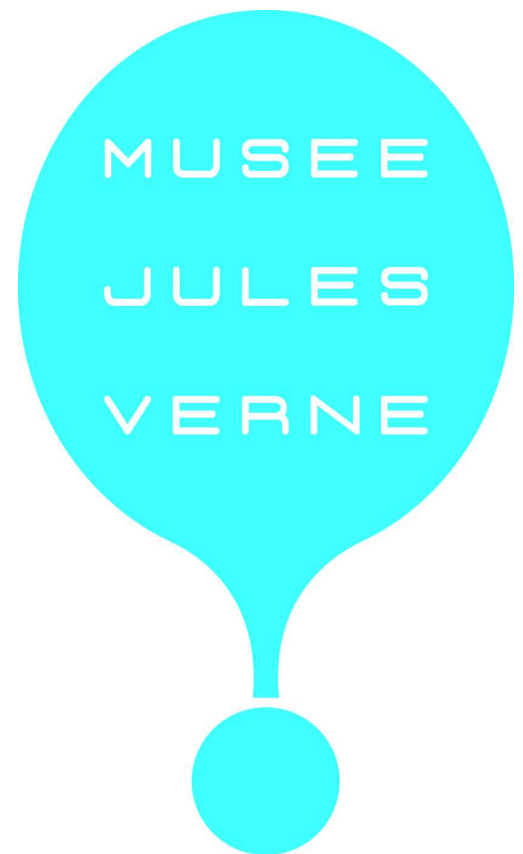


MUSEE
JULES
VERNE



Press Kit

The Jules Verne Museum, a journey in the Vernian world



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Press release

The Jules Verne Museum is a unique and unparalleled venue in Nantes for discovering the famous 19th century writer who still whets our appetite for dreaming and travel to this day.

Opened in 1978 on the Butte Sainte-Anne, a place which the writer “*must have visited frequently to look at the river from this high ground, at the point where it becomes the gateway to the sea and the route to adventure*”, according to Julien Gracq in *The Shape of a City*, the Jules Verne Museum in Nantes aims to introduce as many people as possible to the life and work of Jules Verne. The famous writer was born in Nantes in 1828 and lived there until he was twenty, then remained a regular visitor until 1887. The city of Nantes and its port were therefore a key source of stimulus for Verne’s imagination.

Books, manuscripts, documents, excerpts from works and illustrations, posters, games and artefacts extend an invitation to “journey to the centre of Verne’s writing” - his sources of inspiration, his working methods and relationship with the publishing world, and his legacy. Visitors are encouraged to let themselves be swept along by this teeming imagination which, like Jules Verne’s beloved Crampton engine, inspired masterpieces in which chance discoveries, feats of daring, fantasy and humour resolve the most unexpected situations through Verne’s consummate skill as a former playwright, and also to discover both the familiar and lesser known facets of a writer versed in the art of appealing to the heart, imagination and mind.

The museum design is based around objects which belonged to Jules Verne and have been donated to the City of Nantes by his descendants. It incorporates multimedia technology in response to new visitor experience trends. Stopping points are included to allow visitors to appreciate the collections fully at first hand.

Discovering Verne

Sources of the dream

When questioned about his “*taste for stories in which the imagination has free rein*”, Jules Verne replied: “*this is because I was born in Nantes, and spent my whole childhood there [...] in the maritime bustle of a trading city which was a departure point and destination for many ocean-going journeys.*” From the museum’s position on a hill above the Loire, like the young Jules Verne, you can see “*the river unfurling*” and imagine “*Through the eyepiece of a small telescope, [...] ships, ready to tack, letting out their jibs, hauling their square-rigged sails and coming about*”. You can then follow in his footsteps from island to island on the Loire, in the manner of Robinson Crusoe. (cf. the attached text of *Recollections of Childhood and Youth*).

It was in this family home at Chantenay, on a hill overlooking the Loire that Jules Verne experienced his first adventures in the company of his early heroes. Bringing his childhood dreams to fruition, he remained a lifelong lover of travel, boats and adventure. In Chantenay he designed “*all the mechanical equipment required for the expedition*” in *Twenty Thousand Leagues Under the Sea*, with the help of his brother Paul, a naval officer. On the Loire quays, he bought and moored his last and finest boat, the *Saint-Michel III*, a magnificent 28m schooner-rigged yacht, powered by a 100 horsepower engine.

This was the secret behind the man and the writer, the source of Verne’s inspiration and the crucible of his future work.

A regularly updated collection

Since the fiftieth anniversary of Jules Verne’s death was celebrated in 1955, particular efforts have been made to raise the profile of his works in the Verne Research Centre, Jules Verne Museum and Nantes Municipal Library.

The systematic and regularly enhanced collection of works by Jules Verne, studies relating to him and the many “spin-offs” which he has inspired, has also received generous gifts from donors, including the Verne family. The museum boasts furniture and artefacts from his everyday life, including his globe and compass box, courtesy of his grandsons and great-grandsons. In 1966, the heirs of Maxime Guillon-Verne, descendants of Verne’s youngest sister, donated a significant body of correspondence to the City of Nantes, which casts a particularly interesting light on his early literary endeavours.

The active acquisitions policy implemented by the City of Nantes regularly enhances the size of the collection. Thus Hetzel posters and bindings were acquired in 1971 from the collection of Joseph Laissus, President of the Jules Verne Society from 1966 to 1969. In 1981, 95 manuscripts of works by Jules Verne were purchased from his heirs with the assistance of the Loire-Atlantique Département, the Fondation de France¹ and the Pays de la Loire Region. The manuscripts of *The Mysterious Island*, *From the Earth to the Moon* and *Around the Moon*, offered under the system of acceptance in lieu of tax to the French state, have supplemented the collection.

Nantes therefore holds manuscripts of 100 novels, short stories, plays and other writings by Jules Verne, as well as various items of correspondence, a unique 20,000-page corpus which traces the development of the writer’s work in his own hand.

¹ The Fondation de France is grouping the donations of 25 companies, especially Electricité de France, the SNECMA, the Compagnie générale des matières nucléaires, the bank of Crédit agricole, Elf-Aquitaine, the bank of Société générale and the SNIAS.

A rich trove of manuscripts

These manuscripts, which lend themselves to a wide variety of readings and interpretations, open up a huge field of exploration encompassing production constraints and the tension between the creative consciousness and the subconscious creator. They include the terms of the publishing contract signed with Hetzel, and the conditions relating to its implementation. With each novel, the combination of country, plot and tone emerges gradually via the different stages of writing and the creative process. As it is written and rewritten, the text begins to acquire a life of its own, preserving the required distance between successive versions: “you cannot imagine the difference that exists at a literary level between the manuscripts and final proofs of my work”. At the same time, the author’s teaching approach combines “education which entertains and entertainment which educates” to align knowledge with travel.

It is the act of writing, “the only source of true happiness” for Jules Verne, which is embodied in these manuscripts. A young man in love, steeped in the works of Victor Hugo and the Romantic writers, wrote these poems and carefully penned the titles of his plays. He worked relentlessly, even during his ocean voyages, taking notes, producing a preliminary draft in pencil, correcting it, going over it in ink, making further revisions, rewriting whole chapters in the margins and, last of all, correcting multiple sets of proofs. The rheumatic hand of the white-bearded old man wrote his final pages in a shaky script, straying from the lines on the paper which his weak eyes could no longer see, and in the end, it was his son Michel who made the additions and corrections to the last manuscripts, and even tidied up or composed the text.

Jules Verne’s pen - with interventions in the form of “pencilled tantrums” from his publisher Hetzel - breathed life into Michel Ardan, Phileas Fogg, Passepartout, Michel Strogoff and other legendary heroes and created the *Extraordinary Voyages*. Line by line, we experience this extraordinary adventure “*probably without equal in French literature*” (Simone Vierende).

Digitization of the corpus, with funding from the French Ministry of Culture and Communication, now means that these manuscripts can reach a wide audience. They can be accessed online (www.julesverne.nantesmetropole.fr) and are being studied increasingly frequently, thus prompting a new interest in the works.

The 62 Extraordinary Journeys

1863

Five Weeks in a Balloon

An East-West crossing of Africa aboard a balloon.

1864

Journey to the Centre of the Earth

Exploring the depths of our planet.

1865-1870

From the Earth to the Moon / Around the Moon

A daring and whimsical Frenchman joins American gunners on their way to the Moon.

1866

Journeys and Adventures of Captain Hatteras

Exploring the North Pole.

1867

The Children of Captain Grant

Two teenagers travel around the world looking for their father.

1870

20,000 Leagues Under the Seas

A trip around the world in a submarine.

1871

A Floating City

A transatlantic crossing aboard the largest ocean liner in the world.

1872

Adventures of Three Russians and Three Englishmen in Southern Africa

Surveying a meridian segment.

1873

The Fur Country

A mission to the American Far North.

Round the World in 80 Days

A transcontinental wager.

1874

The Mysterious Island

Survival on a Pacific island following a shipwreck.

1875

The Chancellor

Castaways adrift on a raft in the Atlantic Ocean.

1876

Michael Strogoff

The courier of the Tsar's trek from Moscow to Irkutsk, Siberia.

1877

Hector Servadac

An interplanetary voyage on a piece of North African land torn away by a comet.

The Black Indies

Fantastic adventures in a Scottish coal mine.

1878

Boy Captain

The heroic adventures of a young sailor left in charge of his ship, struggling with navigation while confronting the slave trade.

1879

The Begum's Fortune

A struggle between Saint-Simon-inspired Franceville and steel-based Stalhstadt.

The Tribulations of a Chinese in China

A picaresque and philosophical voyage through China.

1880

The Steam House

Across India aboard a steel elephant.

1881

800 Leagues down the Amazon

Down the Amazon on a jangada, a Brazilian fishermen's floating shelter.

1882

The Green Ray

The romantic tale of a young woman finding love on her quest for the Green Ray.

The School for Robinsons

A real shipwreck on a false desert island.

1883

Keraban the Inflexible

Touring the Black Sea.

1884

The Archipelago on Fire

Greek adventures during the struggle for independence.

The Star of the South

Prospecting and adventure in South Africa's diamond mines.

1885

Mathias Sandorf

Mediterranean adventures for a Hungarian independence hero.

1886

Robur the Conqueror

A pioneer of aviation defends the heavier-than-air method against the lighter-than-air approach adopted by balloonist.

A Lottery Ticket

Suspense in Norway around a lottery ticket.

1887

The Road to France

Heroics at the battle of Valmy during the 1789 French Revolution.

North Against South

Yankees and Confederates fight the American Civil War.

1888

Two Year Holiday

The shipwrecked students from a boarding school land on a desert island.

1889

Topsy Turvy

With a mind to exploit the North Pole's underground resources, the American gunners from *From the Earth to the Moon* and *Around the Moon* (1865-1870) make an « ultrafantastic », however scientifically supported, attempt at tipping the Earth's axis.

Family Without a Name

An episode in the struggle of the French Canadian.

1890

César Cascabel

A family of French circus artists backtracks from California to Normandy via the Bering Strait.

1891

Mistress Branican

The widow of a Californian navy captain travels through the Pacific Ocean and Australia, search of her lost husband.

1892

The Castle of the Carpathians

A haunted Transylvanian castle.

Claudius Bombarnac

From Paris to Beijing by train.

1893

Little Fellow

The social rise of an Irish orphan, written in homage to Charles Dickens.

1894

Wonderful Adventures of Master Antifer

A Breton seaman engages in a treasure hunt along the coasts of Asia Minor, Africa and Scotland, and around the Mediterranean Sea.

1895

Propeller Island

An artificial island built for American billionaires drifts around the Pacific Ocean.

1896

Facing the Flag

A physicist and billionaire try to take over the world.

Clovis Dardentor

Light comedy while touring Algeria.

1897

The Sphinx of the Ice

A sequel to Edgar Poe's *Narrative of A. Gordon Pym* in the Antarctic Ocean.

1898

The Superb Orinoco

Seeking a lost father along the Orinoco River.

1899

The Will of an Eccentric

A game of snakes and ladders around the US, chasing after an inheritance.

1900

Second Fatherland

A conclusion to the Wyss's Swiss Family Robinson.

1901

The Aerial Village

Discovering the Wagdis apemen of the African equatorial rainforests.

The Yarns of Jean-Marie Cabidoulin

The legendary sea serpent interferes with a whale hunt.

1902

The Kip Brothers

Detective suspense in Holland.

1903

Travel Scholarships

The students of an English boarding school mingle with pirates in the West Indies.

1904

Master of the World

In this sequel, Robur the Conqueror (1886) has turned megalomaniac.

Drama in Livonia

Crime pits a Balt patriot against a German worthy.

1905

The Invasion of the Sea

Planning an inland sea in the Tunisian and Algerian South.

1906

The Lighthouse at the End of the World

Adventures around the first Argentine Cape Horn lighthouse.

The Golden Volcano

Gold Rush in the Canadian Far North.

1907

Thompson Agency and Co

Adventures touring the Azores and Caribbean islands.

1908

The Hunt for the Meteor

Two different American astronomers claim ownership of a golden meteorite.

The Danube Pilot

Down the Danube from its source to the Black Sea.

1910

The Survivors of the Jonathan

An attempt at setting up a commune in Patagonia.

The Secret of Wilhelm Stortiz

Adventure and romance for an invisible man in the Austro-Hungarian Empire.

1919

The Astonishing Adventure of the Barsac Mission

In the heart of Africa, a parliamentary mission discovers a vice-ridden town.

Jules Verne's Biography (1828 – 1905)

- February 8th 1828** Birth of Jules Verne, at Ile Feydeau in Nantes, where his father is a solicitor.
- 1829** The Verne family moves to Quai Jean Bart with the birth of Paul, Jules' younger brother.
- 1837-1847** Jules Verne does his schooling in Nantes (Collège Saint-Stanislas, Petit Séminaire, Collège Royal).
- 1847** Jules Verne begins his legal studies in Nantes.
- 1848** Jules Verne moves to Paris to finish his law degree.
- 1850** *The Broken Straws*, first play by Jules Verne performed in Paris thanks to Alexandre Dumas, then in Nantes.
- 1851** Jules Verne meets Jacques Arago.
- 1852-1854** Jules Verne is the secretary of the Théâtre Lyrique.
- 1856** Jules Verne starts working for the stockbroker, Eggly.
- 1857** Jules Verne marries Honorine de Viane.
- 1859** Jules Verne's first trip to Scotland.
- 1860** Meeting with Nadar.
- 1861** Jules Verne's trip to Scandinavia. Birth of his son, Michel.
- 1862** The publisher Hetzel accepts the manuscript of *Five weeks in a balloon* and signs a contract with Jules Verne, who has to deliver two books a year for 20 years.
- 1863** Jules Verne leaves the stock exchange.
- 1866** *Geography of France*
- Jules Verne goes to the USA with his brother Paul, aboard the *Great-Eastern*.
- 1870** Jules Verne receives the Légion d'Honneur.
- 1871** Death of Pierre Verne, Jules' father, in Chantenay, on 3 November.
- 1872** Jules Verne moves to Amiens, his wife's home town.
He takes Gresset's seat at the Amiens Académie.
- 1874** Triumph of *Around the world in 80 days* at the theatre.
- 1877** Jules Verne spends a year in Nantes, where he buys his third and loveliest boat, the *Saint-Michel III*.
- 1879** Second trip to Scotland.
- 1880** Triumph of *Michael Strogoff* at the theatre.
- 1884** Mediterranean cruise on the *Saint-Michel III*.
- 1886** Attempted murder of Jules Verne by his nephew, Gaston.
Hetzel dies in Monte-Carlo.
- 1887** Death of Sophie Verne, Jules' mother, in Nantes.
Jules Verne sells his boat.
- 1888** Jules Verne is elected to the town council of Amiens on a republican list. He is put in charge of the theatre.
- 1891** Creation of the Amiens Circus.
- 1892** Jules Verne becomes an officer of the Légion d'Honneur.
- 1894** His son gets married in the South of France. Jules Verne meets Edmondo De Amicis.
- 1897** Death of Paul Verne, Jules' brother, in Paris.
- 1899** Raymond Roussel visits Jules Verne.
- 1902** Jules Verne is diagnosed with cataracts.
- March 24th 1905** Jules Verne dies of diabetes and paralysis in Amiens.

The Story of his Boyhood

Jules Verne has written “the Story of my Boyhood”, an autobiographical account at the request of the American journalist, Théodore Stanton, around 1890.

1

Reminiscences of childhood and youth ? You are well advised in asking them of men of my years. The things seen or done by us in childhood are more deeply impressed upon our memory than are those of mature age.

When one passed beyond the number of years usually allotted to man, the mind takes pleasure in reverting to early days. The images it evokes are of those that never fade. Like indelible sun-pictures, time only serves to bring them out into clearer relief.

Thus is justified that deep saying of a French writer, « Memory is far-sighted ». It lengthens as it grows older, like a spy-glass when the tubes are drawn out, and discovers the most distant features of the past. But are such reminiscences likely to be interesting ? I cannot say. At any rate, perhaps the readers of *The Companion* may be curious to learn how the calling of a writer, which I still follow, although more than sixty years of age first suggested itself to me.

So, at the request of the editor of that paper, I pull out the tubes of my memory, turn round and look back.

2

In the first place, have I always had a taste for stories wherein the imagination gives itself free scope ? Yes, doubtless ; and my family have always held arts and letters in honor ; whence I conclude that inheritance accounts in a large measure for my instincts.

Then again, there is this further reason that I was born at Nantes, where I spent nearly the whole of my childhood. The son of a father who was half a Parisian, and of a mother who was quite a Bretonne, I lived in the maritime bustle of a big commercial city which is the starting-point and goal of many long voyages.

I still see the river Loire, whose numerous arms are connected by a league of bridges, its quays encumbered by freight in the shadow of huge elms, along which did not then run the double railway track and the tramway lines.

Ships two or three rows deep line the wharves. Others sail up or down the stream. No steamboats were to be seen in those days, or, at least, very few of them. But there were many of those sailing-vessels, the type of which Americans were shrewd enough to retain and improve into clippers and three-masted schooners.

In those days the only kind of sailing-vessels we had were the lubberly merchantmen. What memories they recall ! In fancy I climbed their shrouds, triced their maintops, and clung to their sky-rakers. I longed to cross the swaying plank that connected them with the quay, and set foot on their deck !

But, childishly timid as I was, I did not dare. Timid ? Aye, I was indeed ; and yet I had already seen one revolution, the overthrow of a regime and a new royalty founded, although I was only two years old ; and I still hear the rattle of the musketry of 1830 in the streets of the town, where, as in Paris, the people fought against the royal troops.

One day, however, I did venture to scale the netting of a three-master, while its watchman caroused in a neighboring wine shop.

I was soon on deck... My hand caught hold of a halyard that slid in its block. What joy was mine ! the hatches were open, and I leaned over their sides. The strong odors that came from the hold went to my head ; odors in which the pungent smell of tar mixes with the perfume of spices.

I rose, went back towards the poop and entered. The interior was filled with those marine scents which give to it an atmosphere like that of the ocean.

Yonder appear the cabins with their creaking partitions, where I should have wished to live for months, and those bunks, so hard and narrow, wherein I should have liked to sleep whole nights. Then there was the room occupied by the captain, a much more important personage in my opinion than any King's minister or lieutenant-general of the kingdom.

I came out, mounted the poop and there actually made so bold as to turn the wheel a quarter round ! I fancied the vessel was about to leave its moorings ; that its hawsers had been cast off, that its masts were crowded with sail, and that I, an eight-year-old helmsman, was about to steer it out to sea !

The sea ! Well, neither my brother, who became a sailor a few years later, nor I had yet seen it.

In summer all our family kept within the bounds of a large country place not far from the banks of the Loire, in the midst of vineyards, meadows and marshes.

It was the residence of an old uncle, formerly a ship-owner. He had been to Caracas, and to Porto Bello. We used to call him « Uncle Prudent », and it was in remembrance of him that I gave the name to one of my personages in « Robur the Conqueror ». But Caracas was in America – a country which fascinated me already.

Not being able to sail to sea, my brother and I drifted about the open fields and threaded the woods together. Not having any masts to climb, we spent whole days at the tops of the trees. He was the greater fellow who made his nest the higher in them. We chatted, read, or projected voyages, while the branches swayed by the breeze, gave us the illusion of the pitching and rolling on board ship. Ah, those delicious leisure hours !

3

At that time people traveled little or not at all. Oil street-lamps, breeches, the National Guard and the flint and tinder-box were then quite the fashion. Yes, I have witnessed the genesis of phosphoric matches, detached collars, cuffs, letter paper, postage stamps, pantaloons, the overcoat, the opera hat, women's boots, the metric system, the steamboats of the Loire, which are said to be « nonexplosive » because they blow up a little less often than the rest, the « buses, railways, tramways, gas, electricity, the telegraph, the telephone, and the phonograph ».

I belong to that generation which is comprised between those two geniuses, Stephenson and Edison. And I now witness those astonishing discoveries, at the head of which marches America, with its movable hotels, its sandwich-making machines, its movable pavement, its newspapers printed with chocolate ink, upon sift, thin sheets of pastry, which are read first and eaten afterward !

I was not ten years old when my father bought a small place at the extremity of the town, at Chantenay – a pretty name that ! It was situated on a hill which overlooks the right bank of the Loire. From my little room I could see the river winding over an extent of two or three leagues, between the meadows which it flooded when the waters overflowed in winter time.

Ah, the Loire ! If it cannot be compared with the Hudson, the Mississippi or the St. Lawrence, it is none the less one of the finest rivers of France. It would no doubt be looked upon as a small stream in America : but then, America is not simply a « country », - it is a whole continent.

Nevertheless, at sight of so many passing ships, I felt an eager leaning toward the sea. I was well versed in the seaman's language, and understood naval manœuvres sufficiently to follow them out in the maritime novels of Fenimore Cooper, whom I never tired of reading, and still read with admiration.

Looking through a little telescope, I saw the ships, ready to tack about, hoist their jibs and gather in their sails, shifting first abaft, then at the bows.

4

At the farther end of the port there was a man who kept boats to let, at twenty cents for the day. This was a heavy sum for our purses. It was also imprudent to embark in the man's boats, for they leaked sadly.

The first one we took had but a single mast, but the second had two, and the third had three, like the coasting luggers and fishing-smacks. We went out with the ebb-tide, luffing against the west wind.

What a schooling was ours ! The blunders we made in steering and in working the sails, the sheets let out at the wrong moment, and the shame of tacking with a back wind, when the waves ran high in the broad basin of the Loire, in front of our Chantenay !

Generally we went out with the ebb and came back with the flow, a few hours later. And, as our clumsy hired craft sailed heavily along between the banks, what a look of envy we cast on the pretty pleasure yachts that went lightly scudding over the bosom of the river !

One day I happened to be alone in a sorry yawl, which had no keel. I was some two leagues beyond Chantenay, when one of the planks was stove in, and the water came into the boat. There was no stopping the hole. The yawl went down head-foremost, and I had just time to save myself by swimming to an islet all covered with a thick growth of reeds, the tufted tops of which were swayed by the wind.

Now, of all the books I had read in my childhood, the one I liked best was « The Swiss Family Robinson » ; I preferred it to « Robinson Crusoe ». I know that Daniel Defoe's work is broader in its philosophical scope. It is man given up to himself alone, who one day discover a footprint on the sand. But the work of Wyss, in rich facts and incidents, is perhaps more interesting to a youthful mind.

Meanwhile, I was enacting, on my little island, not the part of Wyss's hero, but that of Defoe's. I was already meditating the construction of a log-hut, the manufacture of a fishing-line with a reed, and of fish-hooks with thorns, and of obtaining fire as the savages do, by rubbing on dry stick against another.

Signals ? I should decline to make any, for they would be answered too soon, and I should be saved quicker than I wished to be.

The first thing was to appease my hunger. But how ? My provisions had gone down with the wreck. Go hunting birds ? I had neither dog nor gun. Well, what about shell-fish ? There were none.

Now, at last, I was made acquainted with all the agony of being shipwrecked on a desert island, and with horrors of privation such as the Selkirks and other personages mentioned in the « Noted shipwrecks » had experienced – men who were not imaginary Robinsons ! My stomach cried with hunger.

The thing lasted only a few hours, for, as soon as it was low tide, I had merely to wade ankle-deep through the water to reach what I called the mainland, namely, the right bank of the Loire.

I quietly came back home, where I had to put up with the family dinner instead of the Crusoe repast I had dreamed of – raw shell-fish, a slice of peccary, and bread made from the flour of manioc !

Such was this lively bit of navigation, with its head-winds, its foundering and disabled vessel – everything in fact that a shipwrecked mariner of my age could desire.

I have sometimes heard the reproach that my books excite young boys to quit their homes for adventurous travel. This, I am sure, has never been the case. But if boys should be brought to launch out into such enterprises, let them take example from the heroes of my « Extraordinary Voyages », and they are sure to come safe into harbor again.

5

At twelve years of age I had not yet set eyes on the sea. Except in thought, I had not hitherto set foot on the many sardine-boats, fishing-smacks, brigs, schooners, three-masters, or even steamboats – they were then styled “pyroscaaphes” – which sailed toward the mouth of the Loire.

One day, however, my brother and I got permission to take passage on board Pyroscaaph N°Two. What joy was ours ! It was enough to make us lose our wits.

Soon we were on our way. We passed Indret, the huge State establishment, all feathered in dark wreaths of smoke. We left behind the landing-places on either bank, - Coueron, Le Pellerin, Paimboeuf. Our pyroscaaph crossed obliquely the broad estuary of the river.

We reached St. Nazaire, with its incipient pier, its old church and slate-covered, slanting steeple, and the few houses or ramshackle tenements, which at that time made up the village that has so rapidly increased into a large town.

To rush off the boat and dash down the seaweed-coated rocks, in order to take up some of the seawater in the hollow of our hands and convey it to our lips, was for my brother and myself our first impulse.

« But it isn't salty ! » said I, turning pale.

« Not a bit ! » responded my brother.

« We have been hoaxed ! » I exclaimed, in a tone which betrayed the liveliest disappointment.

Noodles that we were ! It was low tide, and we had simply scooped up from the hollow of a rock some of the water of the Loire.

As the tide came in, however, we found it briny beyond our best hopes.

6

At last I had set eyes on the sea, or at least on the vast bay which opens on the ocean between the extreme points of the river.

I have since scudded, over the Bay of Biscay, the Baltic, the North Sea and the Mediterranean.

With a smaller boat first, then with a sloop-yacht, and with a steam-yacht afterwards, I have been able to make some fine coasting pleasure-trips. I have even crossed the Atlantic on board the Great Eastern, and set foot on American soil, where – I am ashamed to have to confess it – I stayed only eight days.

What could I do ? I had a ticket to go and come which was only good for a week !

After all, I saw New York, stopped at the Fifth Avenue Hotel, crossed East River before Brooklyn Bridge was built, sailed up the Hudson as far as Albany, visited Buffalo and Lake Erie, gazed on the Falls of Niagara from the top of the Terrapin Tower, while a lunar rainbow could be seen through the vapors of the mighty cataract, and finally, on the other side of the Suspension Bridge, sat down on the Canadian shore.

After which, I started back home. And one of my deepest regrets is to think that I shall never again see America – a country which I love, and which every Frenchman may love as a sister of France.

But these are no longer the reminiscences of childhood and youth ; they are those of maturer years. My young readers are now made acquainted with the instincts and circumstances that led me to write a series of geographical novels.

I have made several voyages in the west, north and south of Europe – voyages, of course, much less extraordinary than those described in my stories, and I have now withdrawn into the provinces to terminate my task. That task is to paint the whole earth, the entire world, in novel-form, by imagining adventures peculiar to each people, and by creating personages specially belonging to the regions in which they act.

But the world is very big, and life very short. To leave behind a complete work, one should live a hundred years.

Well, I shall try to be a centenarian, like M. Chevreul. But, between you and me, it is very difficult !

Original manuscript preserved at Jules Verne Museum, Nantes, and edited for the first time by Christian Robin in *Les cahiers du Musée Jules Verne* (Association des Amis de la Bibliothèque municipale de Nantes, 1990) with an English version published in Boston's *The Youth's companion* (1891) along with a critique.

The other face of Jules

A monologue by Honorine Verne

1905. Death and legacy

Jules died yesterday in my bed. In the picture which will be preserved for posterity, we are both sitting on a garden bench. I am looking at him in a protective, knowing way, whereas Jules is sitting with his hands and legs crossed, looking straight ahead into the distance. Of course the portrait was posed: the elderly sage serenely and steadfastly contemplating the huge world which he has crisscrossed so often and the “worthy companion of the great populariser” offering affectionate and admiring support. This is the image which we have been presenting for fifteen years to journalists and visitors who come to meet “the famous novelist and his charming wife”. This is the image which they took away and disseminated widely. I was delighted to read the pleasant accounts of these visits published in the press, which described my “round, rosy face under a halo of grey hair”, my “very kind and gentle smile”, my “bewitching big dark eyes” and my “charming friendliness”. I particularly liked the fact that from the moment they arrived until the time came for goodbyes outside the house, with “the stiff breeze ruffling our grey hair”, Jules and I looked like the united and very close “warm-hearted couple” who inspired the *Extraordinary Voyages*.



Some may say that this is the official, fabricated version of a shared life which weathered “storm upon storm”. I prefer to think that it reflects a genuine peace which reigned after many storms and allowed Jules to depart this world which he described so extensively while keeping his distance, at peace with his family and himself – even if this involves taking a flexible approach to reality, overlooking one or two things and getting rid of a few papers which I shall burn.

Can I really claim to have supported him, to have shared his life and work? I was married to this man for almost fifty years “from widow’s cap to old lady’s veil”. I may only be a tiny part of his true story, but I helped to write it. Since death invites us to take stock, I am “extending the tubes of my memory, turning round and looking back”, as Jules did a few years ago, to explain the origins of his vocation as a writer.

1856 – 1863. Marriages

The story began here in Amiens, in May 1856, in the fresh Picardy springtime at the wedding of my younger sister Aimée to Auguste Lelarge. He was accompanied by one of his friends, a smart young man with thick wavy red-blond hair, fine features, a teasing smile and piercing light blue eyes. The celebrations lasted a week and were very light-hearted “with parties, kisses, handshakes, tears of joy, tears of pleasure, post-wedding day parties, conjugal outpourings, nuptial sentiments, Amien pâtés, stuffed chitterling sausages, rustic hams, first lunches that lasted an hour, second lunches that lasted three hours, dinners that began at 6 o’clock and finished at eleven o’clock at night”. I was 26, widowed for barely a year, and was swept along on this tide of jubilation and utterly captivated by Jules’ Parisian and romantic appearance. Aged 28 and desperately looking for a wife, he was captivated – by my charms of course. I was generally held to be “tall, with a good figure, well-turned out, with dazzling skin, smiling eyes, an impulsive nature, always ready with an unexpected answer”, with a delicate soprano voice. Perhaps I reminded him of his cousin Caroline and his first loves. He was also captivated by my cheerful and unaffected family and the possibility of going into partnership with my brother in a brokerage business. With his customary written fluency, Jules summed up the situation clearly for his father:

He wrote: “I am seizing the first opportunity to get married as I’m utterly fed up with my bachelor life – just like all of my friends who feel this way too. You may think it odd, but I need to be happy – nothing more, nothing less. And so a position as a stockbroker would not only allow me to live in Paris but would be very helpful...”

We therefore got married eight months later, on Wednesday 10 January 1857 in Paris at the town hall on the Place des Petits-Pères and at Saint-Eugène church. My parents-in-law deplored the “slapdash mass” and “bohemian meal”, but they had to bow to Jules’ desire to have “the quietest possible wedding”.

Life followed its course, with one move after another. I quickly realized that although Jules had decided to settle down, start a family and have a proper, lucrative professional career, he would never abandon his true passions: literature, to which he devoted himself in the very early hours of the morning, and travelling with his friends. He even set off on a six-week cruise around Scandinavia in 1861 when I was pregnant and missed Michel’s birth by five days, adding absent fatherhood to a swiftly expedited wedding.

Jules continued to seek new ways to make a name for himself in the literary world. This tireless quest led him to the publisher Pierre-Jules Hetzel in 1862. He described this key meeting to his fellow kerb brokers in the following terms: “Lads, I think I’m going to leave you... I am getting married, I have found an eligible bachelor, Monsieur Hetzel.” I was already aware that self-interest played a part in Jules’ choice of marriage partner. I was now going to have to relinquish my exclusive hold on my husband.

1867 – 1887. Storm upon storm

Four masterpieces in four years, a bigger flat, a boat. We had all the ingredients for happiness; the only thing missing was the joy of being together. Swept up by an idea, burning with enthusiasm for his work, Jules would very often lose himself in his paperwork in search of an ideal which, it must be said, was quite at odds with my dream of domestic felicity, middle-class respectability and a fashionable social life. When he emerged, he found other ways of staying apart from me: with his friends whom I tried in vain to bring together at our home; with Hetzel, with whom he was building up a body of work; with the one woman, who, unlike me, had managed to exercise a hold over his heart and soul during those years and whose enigmatic presence is still an endless source of fascination; and lastly, with his boat. More often than not I didn’t even know where he was. Despite my best efforts, my husband was slipping through my fingers, a little more every day. He then began to write about marriage with increasingly scathing irony in his novels. The Mormon in *Around the World in Eighty Days* even abandons the polygamy famously practised by his fellows: “ ‘One was quite enough, Sir!’ he replied, lifting his arms to the heavens”. This was just the first of many such quips.

Far from bringing us closer together, Michel was an additional source of worry and discord. This sickly, hypersensitive child needed attentive but firm parenting. What he actually had, unfortunately, was a father who shut himself up in his study, prepared to do anything to stop him screaming, and a mother who was too soft, an unloved wife who melted when he got down on his knees and said “How beautiful you are!”. By the time he was fifteen, the damage was done and Jules and I had to endure some terrible trials. Michel gambled, consorted with young leading ladies at the theatre in Amiens and ran up debts. Jules, who had been treated with patience and understanding by his own parents during his bohemian days in Paris, was a merciless father - “by way of paternal punishment” Michel was sent to Mettray and boarded ship for an 18-month trip around the world

I lived through some dreadful years while he was writing his opus, I died a thousand deaths until my strength was spent, unable to share my life with the writer or heal the rift between father and son. Things came to a head in 1886, after the triumphal cruise in the Mediterranean where Jules was feted from Oran to Rome, while continuously flying into a rage with me as soon as we left the sea for “the damned land”, where I felt more at home than aboard the *Saint-Michel III*. On 10 March, his nephew Gaston shot him in the foot in a fit of insanity – or so it was said to hush up the scandal. According to Jules, whose mobility was impaired and who lost both his mother and his publisher and mentor Pierre-Jules Hetzel simultaneously, this marked the beginning of a dark period in his life. The time had probably come to step back and also to make peace - with Michel, who was gradually beginning to share the task of writing with his father, and with me, who had endured so many shared trials.

Portrait of her husband

Afflicted by hypochondria, introverted and fiercely independent, Jules often rebuffed my affection, although it never waned. This was the price I paid for becoming the “worthy companion of the great populariser” and gradually discovering the private truth about the man who agreed to don the Hetzel straitjacket whilst regretting all the while that he had “never counted for anything in French literature”.

I hope that looking beyond the clichéd image of the inventor of the submarine, the first space explorer and minor writer of adventure stories for young people, he will gain recognition as a real writer who was able to express the dreams and fears of his era by opening up new visions of the world, as he aspired to do throughout his life from dreamy child and hot-headed youngster to a man nursing a deep wound.

This text was written by Agnès Marcetteau-Paul, Director of the Jules Verne Museum, based on accounts by and about Honorine Verne, drawing mainly on the following sources:

Marguerite Allotte de la Fuye, *Jules Verne, sa vie, son œuvre*. Paris, Kra, 1928.

William Butcher, *Jules Verne. The Definitive Biography*. New York, Thunder's Mouth Press, 2006.

Correspondance inédite de Jules Verne et de Pierre-Jules Hetzel (1863-1886). Editée par Volker Dehs, Olivier Dumas et Piero Gondolo della Riva. Genève, Slatkine, 1998-2002.

Entretiens avec Jules Verne (1873-1905). Edités par Daniel Compère et Jean-Michel Margot. Genève, Slatkine, 1998.

Jean Jules-Verne, *Jules Verne*. Paris, Hachette, 1978.

Charles-Noël Martin, *La Vie et l'œuvre de Jules Verne*. Paris, Michel de l'Ormeraie, 1978.

Exclusive interview *

Star sign? Aquarius, because I was born on 8 February.

Favourite colour? “That dazzling array of colours” Captain Hatteras admires when he sees the Northern Lights, and which the heroes of *The Green Ray* see in the setting sun.

Favourite smell? “The pungent odours” of the ship’s hold, “those smells which combine the acrid fumes of tar with the aroma of spices”. From the bridge, those “scents of the sea which conjure up the atmosphere of the ocean”, even when the boat is moored.

Sport? Sailing.

Hobby? Cruising on steamers or my own boats.

Holidays? The trips that I have always made by sea to England, Scotland, Germany and Scandinavia, to the United States and around the Mediterranean.

Your idea of heaven on earth? An island, natural or manmade.

Your artificial paradise? Writing - “the only source of true happiness”.

What dish would you never eat? I don’t know if there has ever been one - I’ve always been so greedy, a compulsive eater even!

Name three living people you would never invite to dinner.

1/ For a long time, I would have said collectively “all the young ladies whom I flattered with my attentions and who all invariably got married within a short space of time”, but with the passage of time both my passion and my sorrow have waned.

2/ René de Pont-Jest, who accused me of plagiarism when I wrote *Journey to the Centre of the Earth*.

3/ The engineer Eugène Turpin who took me to court so sensationally over *Facing the Flag* - an unpleasant business, but one which the talented Raymond Poincaré was able to resolve in a satisfactory manner.

What were you like as a child? A cheerful and carefree dreamer. The “factory at Indret, our trips on the Loire and the poems I used to scribble were the three major pleasures and activities of my youth”.

Who is the man or woman of your dreams? Those who take an interest in my life and work generally agree that Stilla, the heroine of *The Carpathian Castle*, is the most complete embodiment of my ideal woman, the distillation of all those I loved or dreamed about.

Who is your favourite historical figure? In my *History of Great Voyages and Great Voyagers*, Christopher Columbus emerges as the Vernean hero par excellence. His daring and determination changed the course of world history, although I did not attempt to hide “his narrow-mindedness, quasi-barbarous habits and religious intolerance”. This chapter was important enough to merit publication as a separate volume in 1883. Many of his traits are visible in a number of characters in the *Extraordinary Voyages*.

What is your favourite way of spending time? Writing or sailing – these two solitary activities give me the greatest joy.

Which faults are you prepared to overlook? All those which arise from what is commonly referred to as eccentricity, such as the excessive pride and stubbornness of people who pursue a single goal come hell or high water. However, as I have shown in some of my novels, I am aware that this attitude can degenerate into megalomania and an obsessive madness pernicious to humanity.



What would you have liked to be? Perhaps a street acrobat, one of those free spirits like my heroes Passepartout and César Cascabel, who combine fantasy with an open mind, a taste for adventure and an artistic temperament.

What do you like most about your friends? Like me, my friends have always been aficionados of literature and the arts, and ready wits with occasional flashes of irreverence.

What are your faults? My tendency towards hypochondria and introversion, and my all-consuming desire for independence, which those around me often found difficult to live with.

What natural gift would you like to have? Long life, so that I can finish the task I set myself: “to paint the whole world in novel form [...] But the world is very big, and life very short!”

Your favourite song? “Melodies of friendship” for which I wrote the lyrics and my friend Hignard the score, some of which are mentioned in the *Extraordinary Voyages*: “Greenlandic Song” in *The Fur Country*, “Memories of Scotland” in *The Child of the Cavern*, and “The Tankadere” in *Tribulations of a Chinaman in China*.

Your favourite writer? “I am the most enthusiastic admirer of the greatest psychologist the world has ever known, Guy de Maupassant”. I also like English and American novelists very much, particularly Charles Dickens, “whom I consider the master of all of us”.

Your favourite film? The cinema has adopted my works since its very earliest days [*In Search of the Castaways* in 1901, *A Trip to the Moon* (1901) and *The Impossible Voyage* (1904) by Georges Méliès], so my oeuvre could well be one of the most fertile literary sources for this burgeoning art form.

What would you like your legacy to be? To be recognized as a fully-fledged writer.

What would you do if you were invisible? I would be like Captain Nemo when he rescues the survivors of the shipwreck in *The Mysterious Island* rather than sowing terror like Wilhelm Storitz.

What would annoy you? Showing contempt for or thwarting my artistic plans.

And what would please you? Offering help, support and understanding for my work.

What would you change about yourself? The oversensitivity and hypochondria I’ve already mentioned which caused my friends and family so much grief, but which were perhaps also the driving force behind my literary creativity.

What is your proudest achievement? Making my literary mark and fulfilling the task I set myself, in the face of many obstacles and difficulties.

What do you like about Nantes? That hillside by the Loire where as a child from my bedroom window at Chantenay, “through the eyepiece of a little telescope, I used to watch the ships tacking, unfurling their headsails, taking in their spankers and coming about”.

What will you do tomorrow? As usual, I will get up at dawn and write until 11 o’clock. After lunch, I will spend the afternoon reading various works which provide me with invaluable information for my novels. Then in the evening I will enjoy some relaxation. For some years now, journeys have provided the only disruption to my schedule.

*** This text was written by Agnès Marcetteau-Paul, Director of the Jules Verne Museum for the publication *Nantes Métropole Magazine* (2007).**

Practical Information

Location

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M. musee-julesverne@nantesmetropole.fr

On Line

julesverne.nantesmetropole.fr

Opening schedule

From September to June
Monday, wenesday, thursday, friday :
- For the groups only : from 10 am to noon
- For individual public : from 2 pmto 6 pm
On saturday from 10 am to noon / from 2 pm to 6 pm. On Sunday from 2 pm to 6 pm, Closed on tuesday and bank holiday.
Summer schedule
Everyday from 10 am to 7 pm. Guided Tours in French on Sundays at 3 pm everyday.

Public transports

Tramway line 1 - Stop Gare maritime then 15 minutes on foot. Chronobus 1 – Stop Lechat then 10 minutes on foot.

Admission prices

Full rate : 3 €
Concessions : 1,50 € – after 5 pm, young people between 18 and 26, groups > 12 persons
Admission free : young people under 18, unemployed people, disabled people, registered unemployed-minimum wage recipients, teachers preparing a group visit.
On the 1st Sunday every month from September to June, Heritage days in September, Springtime museums event.

Guided Tours

Full rate : 6 €
Concessions : 2350 € under the same conditions
Extended concession : 3 € or 2 € from 7 to 18 years old
Admission free: under 7
Group price (25 persons maximum)
For the groups of children : from 26 € to 36 € per group
For the groups of adults : from 67 € to 90 € per group

Pass

ANNUAL MUSEUM PASS : from 10 € to 30 €

Collections

Centre d'études verniennes
Médiathèque Jacques Demy
24, quai de la Fosse
44000 NANTES
Tél. : 02 40 41 42 33 / fax : 02 40 41 42 00
Appointment to consult the collections from Monday to Saturday
Research via mail

Press

Catalogue available online : www.bm.nantes.fr

<http://www.julesverne.nantesmetropole.fr/espace-presse.html#article>

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