

Azure Tour

The Spa quarter

1 The Spa quarter

The spa quarter is laid out around the Parc des Sources, created in 1812 by a decree of Napoleon I and surrounded in 1900 by a covered wrought-iron gallery.

2 The Hall des Sources

Erected in 1903 around the emergence of two springs (the Chomel and the Grande Grille), this metal-framed hall houses the five springs prescribed for the spa water drinks cure.

3 The Grand Etablissement Thermal

This first-class bathing establishment with its architectural style tinged with Moorish influences, was designed by the architect Charles Lecoq in 1903.

4 The Galerie Napoléon III

Vestige of the second-class bathing establishment, built in 1858 by the British architect Charles Badger.

5 The rue Alquié

A line of houses in the English style, built to accommodate the Emperor's entourage.

6 The Chalets Napoléon III

Private residences of Napoleon III and his entourage during their stays in Vichy.

7 The Parc Napoléon III

Landscaped park of 13 hectares, laid out in 1861 by a decision of Napoleon III.

8 The Boulevard de Russie

Boulevard lined with villas demonstrating Vichy's eclectic architectural styles.

9 The rue de Belgique

Villas in varied styles and reflecting an assortment of cultural influences.

10 Isaac Strauss (1806-1888)

Villa belonging to Isaac Strauss, conductor of the Paris Opera House and the imperial court balls.

11 The Chalet de la Compagnie fermière

This XIXth century building in which the board of the Compagnie Fermière held its celebrations is now a gourmet restaurant.

12 The Casino-théâtre

Constructed in 1865 by order of Napoleon III, this building once contained a ballroom, a theatre, gaming rooms and pleasure lounges. In 1901 it was extended westwards and now houses the Palais des Congrès-Opéra, the convention centre.

13 Church of Saint-Louis

A church in Neo-Gothic style built in 1865 at the request of Napoleon III.

14 The bandstand

This bandstand built in 1902 is an indication of the importance of music in the "Queen of Spas".

Trail around the lake

The municipality of Vichy is pursuing a policy of "reconquering" the Allier, one of Europe's last untamed river. The Plage des Célestins has been provided with more amenities for visitors and reopened for bathing. The dam has been equipped with the means to cross over the river and with a facility for observing the migrating fish. And the Rotunda, that emblematic building in Vichy, has been given a facelift and is now home to two new restaurants. On the same lines, the four-lane road along the right bank has disappeared in favour of a wide promenade. The Esplanade by the Allier Lake is a veritable grandstand for spectators at the major events which take place on the water, with a mixture of boardwalks, wooded landscaped areas and stretches of cycleway.

Gold Tour

The Old Vichy quarter

15 The Source de l'Hôpital

The site of the emergence of the spring known as the Source de l'Hôpital, which takes its name from the proximity of a former XVIIIth century hospital.

16 The Petit casino

A place of entertainment built in 1929 and converted in 1960 into a cultural centre.

17 The rue Hubert Colombier

A street lined with villas in Art Nouveau, Neo-Classical and Neo-Gothic styles connecting the spa quarter to Old Vichy.

18 The Old Vichy quarter

A quarter built on the Célestins rock where the population of Vichy lived in the Middle Ages.

19 The church of Saint-Blaise and Notre-Dame-des-Malades

A church in Art Deco style, built between 1925 and 1937 by the architects Chanut and Liogier, with interior décor contrasting with the austere style of the exterior.

20 The Maison des trois Piliers

The former law courts, home of Vichy's first Mairie from 1790 to 1801.

21 Albert Londres' house

A house in neo-medieval style, birthplace of the poet, journalist and reporter Albert Londres (1884-1932).

22 Valéry Larbaud (1881-1957)

Valéry Larbaud, born in Vichy, was an innovative poet. He also devoted himself to introducing the French to the talents of foreign writers such as Butler, Joyce, Faulkner and others.

23 The Etablissement Thermal Lardy

The third-class bathing establishment built in 1937 by the privately-owned Lardy spring is now home to a university complex.

24 The Source des Célestins

Site of the emergence of the most famous of Vichy's waters.

25 The Castel Franc

XVth century bailiff's house built on the old town fortifications.

26 The Allier

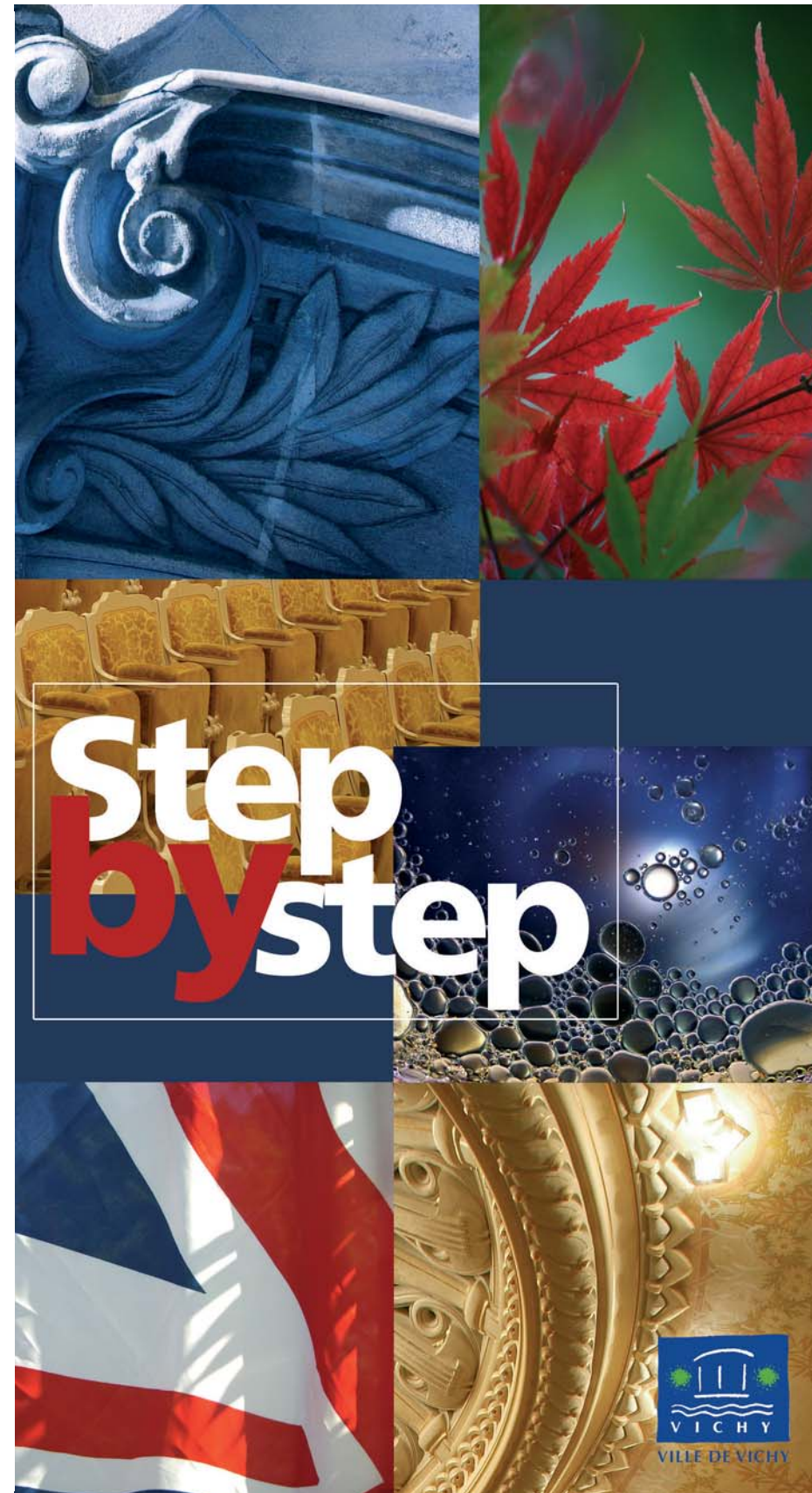
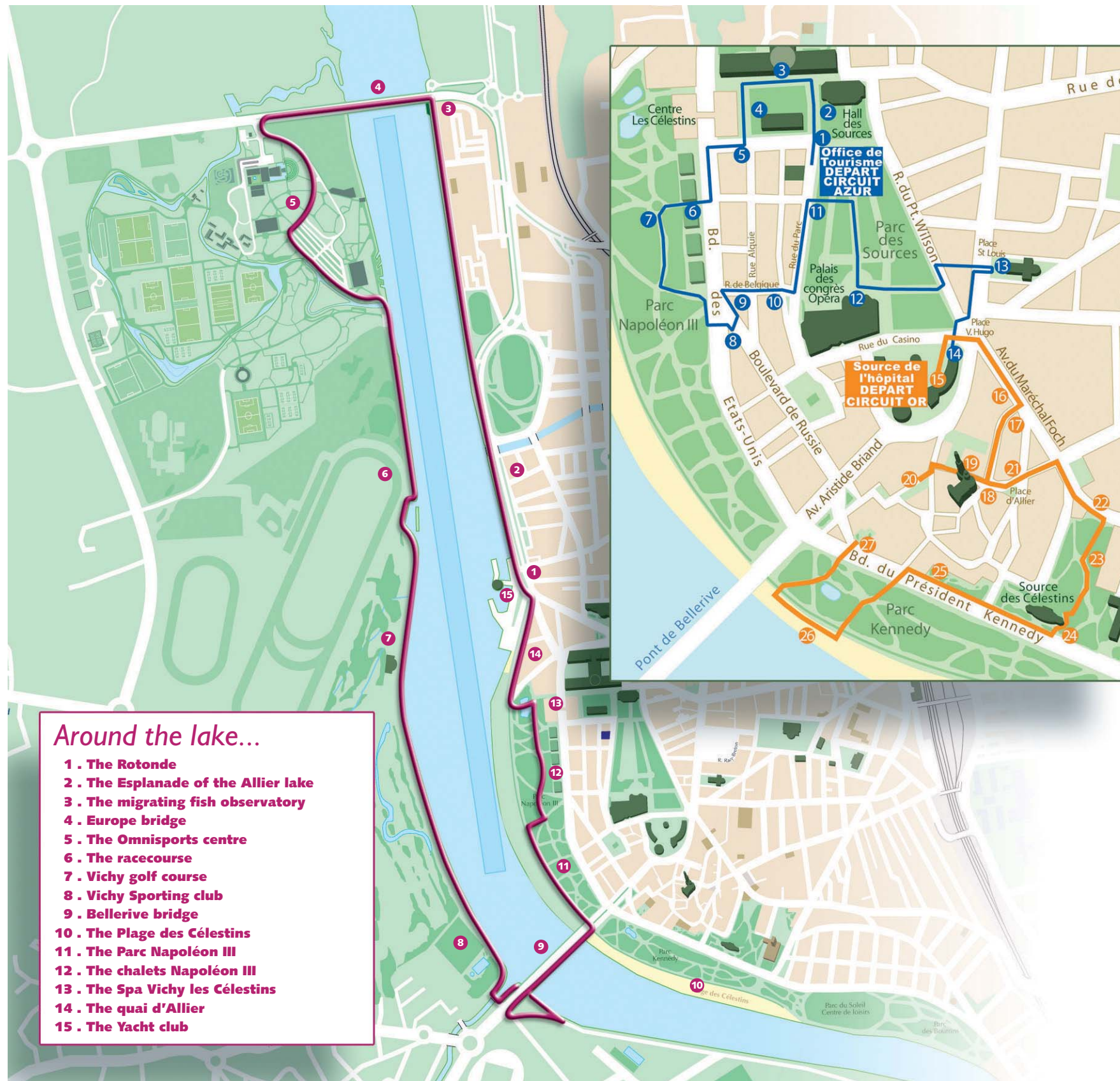
An important commercial thoroughfare which in the XVth century saw the establishment of a very active guild of watermen.

27 Madame de Sévigné

The Marquise was a celebrated devotee of the cures and stayed in Vichy on two occasions, in 1676 and 1677.

Around the lake...

- 1 . The Rotonde
- 2 . The Esplanade of the Allier lake
- 3 . The migrating fish observatory
- 4 . Europe bridge
- 5 . The Omnisports centre
- 6 . The racecourse
- 7 . Vichy golf course
- 8 . Vichy Sporting club
- 9 . Bellerive bridge
- 10 . The Plage des Célestins
- 11 . The Parc Napoléon III
- 12 . The chalets Napoléon III
- 13 . The Spa Vichy les Célestins
- 14 . The quai d'Allier
- 15 . The Yacht club



Vichy step by step

Vichy welcomes visitors to its heritage treasures, a harmonious blend of natural countryside and fine buildings. Whether you discover the town on your own or accompanied by a guide, the world of Vichy is your oyster.

» The heritage circuit with its two trails, Gold and Azure, features Vichy's principal attractions and buildings. 27 high-profile markers (photo opposite) highlight the parks and gardens, the buildings, the history of a district of the town and famous people connected with Vichy.



» Vichy and the Allier... A 5 km walking or cycling trail around the Allier lake: take a brisk walk along the Esplanade, get down below water level in the wake of the salmon (the migrating fish observatory*), walk through the Centre Omnisports, pass by the century-old golf course and the racecourse, see the rare varieties of trees in the Parc Napoléon III then make your way back to the Rotonde du Lac.

* admission charges apply

» The Tourist Office guides invite you to journey back with them through time. Some ten different guided tours are organised weekly from Monday to Sunday. In July and August, at 5 pm on Wednesdays, our Vichy digest city tour offers a comprehensive panoramic view of two thousand years of Vichy's history, from the Gallo-Roman era, through the Second Empire and the Second World War to the present day, all in the language of Shakespeare!

Other things to do and see:

» Activities, leisure pursuits: the Casinos (the Quatre-Chemins and the Grand Café), the tourist train, the Vichy pastille factory, Rosalies, mini golfs, pedal boats and children's amusements (the Allier Terraces and boating), excursions around Vichy-Auvergne organised by the Tourist Office, carriage or donkey rides, the riding school and much more.



» Concerts: Vichy Opera House, the Valéry Larbaud cultural centre (modern music and exhibition gallery), the bandstand.

» Museums and exhibition galleries: Museum of African and Asian Arts, Vichy Opera House museum, the François Boucheix museum, the Valéry Larbaud cultural centre, art galleries (Pinxit, Les Tournesols), the Valéry Larbaud municipal library and resources centre.



» Entertainment and festivities: Vichy Fete Napoléon III, beginning of May (guided tours, grand parade, music, live shows, dancing and more); The Jeudis de Vichy, mid-July to mid-August, 5 pm to 11 pm, Parc des Sources (workshops, games and workshops for children, music, craft market...); Vichy Nouvelle Vague (fireworks, supervised bathing, entertainment, giant games, paddling pools, beach huts, swimming platforms, showers, water sprayers and more).



The Plage des Célestins

Vichy Past...

» The Gallo-Roman era

The presence of the springs and a ford over the river Allier prompted the Gallo-Romans to settle near a bridge which Julius Caesar had probably taken on his return from the battle of Gergovia. They were the first to exploit the springs' therapeutic properties, as is evidenced by the mention of "Aquis Calidis" (hot waters), the name given to what is now Vichy in a medieval transcript of a planisphere of the world of ancient Rome.

» The Middle Ages

Following the acquisition by Louis II on December 6th 1374 of his final share in the castle of Vichy, the town became part of the Bourbonnais. 1410 saw the foundation of the Célestins convent, which was to give its name to the most famous of Vichy's mineral water springs.

» The Renaissance

In 1527, the Bourbonnais became part of the kingdom of France. Thanks to the creation by Henri IV in 1605 of the post of surveyor of baths, fountains and mineral waters, Vichy's waters rapidly acquired a quasi-miraculous reputation and attracted the great and the good.

» The Grand Siècle

As a result of her two cures in 1676 and 1677, Madame de Sévigné vaunted the properties of Vichy's waters, which, by healing an unfortunate paralysis of the hands, enabled her to rediscover the use of her brilliant pen. Victoire and Adélaïde, the daughters of Louis XV, came to Vichy for the summer of 1785, but found the bathing establishment highly uncomfortable. On their return to Versailles, they persuaded their nephew Louis XVI to have more spacious and pleasant spa buildings constructed.



» The Second Empire

In 1799, Laëtitia Bonaparte, the mother of Napoleon I, took the cure at Vichy; the Parc des Sources would later be laid out on the orders of her son.

In 1853, control of Vichy's mineral waters was handed over to the Compagnie Fermière de Vichy, a limited company empowered to profit from the exploitation of the waters in return for a fixed sum payable to the state and for embellishment and modernisation work on the spa and its surroundings.

Spurred on by the emperor Napoleon III, these were the boom years for the spas in Vichy. The banks of the river Allier were built up, urban development projects made profound changes to the town and 13 hectares of landscaped parkland replaced the former marshlands. Along the newly laid-out streets and boulevards, houses were built to house the Emperor and the imperial retinue. Entertainment and amusement, as important as spa treatments, were not forgotten; in 1864 a casino, built in an eclectic style, was constructed looking out over the Parc des Sources.

» The Belle Epoque

After the Second Empire, the Belle Epoque marked the second great period of building works in Vichy: in 1900, the Parc des Sources was surrounded by a



...and Present



700 m long covered wrought-iron gallery adorned with a frieze of thistles and produced by the master blacksmith Emile Robert. The start of the new century also saw the construction of the first luxury hotels.

In 1903 the Opera House, the Hall des Sources and the Moorish Grand Etablissement Thermal were officially opened. Vichy became the summer capital of music in France.

Private mansions in an astonishing variety of architectural styles were erected in the first half of the XXth century.

» The War and the Occupation

Following the debacle of 1940, Marshal Pétain was asked to form a new government and on June 18th General de Gaulle broadcast his famous appeal from London. Unable to remain in Paris, the government withdrew to Bordeaux, but after the signing of the armistice on June 22nd 1940 fled Bordeaux because of the German occupation and settled in Vichy for the next four years. The town was chosen because of the large amount of hotel accommodation and the existence of a modern telephone exchange.

» The contemporary period

From 1960 onwards, a massive investment programme was launched to diversify Vichy's industrial base and create new attractions in anticipation of the relative decline of traditional spa treatments. With the construction of the Centre Omnisports and its huge rowing lake, Vichy became a major centre for sport. In the 1990s the town centre was transformed and modernised thanks to major investment: a large pedestrianised area enhanced the appeal of shops open 7 days a week, a convention centre was built within a historic monument, 2000 hotel rooms ranging from 2 to 4 stars were created, thermal baths were renovated, a spa was linked to a 4 star hotel, the 1400 seater opera house is now open all year round, a university campus was established on a brownfield site that was formerly a bathing establishment, and the central market, the station area and the esplanade alongside the Allier lake were restored. These major improvement works enhance Vichy's architectural and ecological heritage and boost its attractions so as to enable it to become the second largest conurbation in the Auvergne.

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ROUTE
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