



# Denée

Petite Cité de Caractère®  
de Maine-et-Loire

[www.petitescitesdecaractere.com](http://www.petitescitesdecaractere.com)



Discovering  
Local Heritage



# Denée, a headlands on three rivers

---

City of the Loire Valley, Denée is characterized by 2 main landforms: the valley, where the Loire, the Aubance and the Louet flow, born from a flood in 1588; the hillsides, where the crops of wheat and vines are established. In the center, the town rises on a promontory of pink schist. This favored situation explains the initial establishment of the city. A major asset for the circulation of goods and people and the presence of rivers also facilitated the installation of lords.

To the west, on the green belt of the city, the hamlet of Mantelon developed in the Gallic era, at the crossroads of a path from Faye d'Anjou to Savennières, and a track along the Loire.

In the 11th century, the town extended around its church. The parish is evidenced from 1066. At the same time, the lords of Denée erected a castle and insecurity led them to fortify the village. In the 12th century, it became a closed town. However, these ramparts did not resist the attacks of the English carried out in the 13th and 15th centuries.



From the 15th century, trade developed. Agriculture is flourishing, the first shops are opened and the parish becomes one of the richest in the diocese. This prosperity is reflected in the town by the construction of mansions, the installation of craftsmen and also by the presence of a small hospital, route de Rochefort. In 1522, François Ier granted Denée the right to have a weekly market and to hold four fairs a year. After having suffered from the Wars of Religion, epidemics of plague, and having seen the valley ravaged by the flood of 1588, the city experienced a return to the growth of its population in the 17th and 18th centuries. This is accompanied by new constructions. Built at the end of the 18th century, the presbytery and the castle of Mantelon are remarkable witnesses of the dynamism of the town until the eve of the Revolution.

After the Vendée wars (300 dead), the bourgeois of Angers made Denée a holiday resort, which contributed to the prosperity of the city. The end of the 19th and 20th centuries were however marked by a major rural exodus.

In 1964, Denée was one of the first rural municipalities to carry out a twinning, carried out with an eponymous municipality in Belgium. Rue de la Reine Fabiola, inaugurated in 1969, bears witness to this.

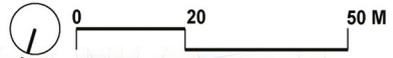


# Denée

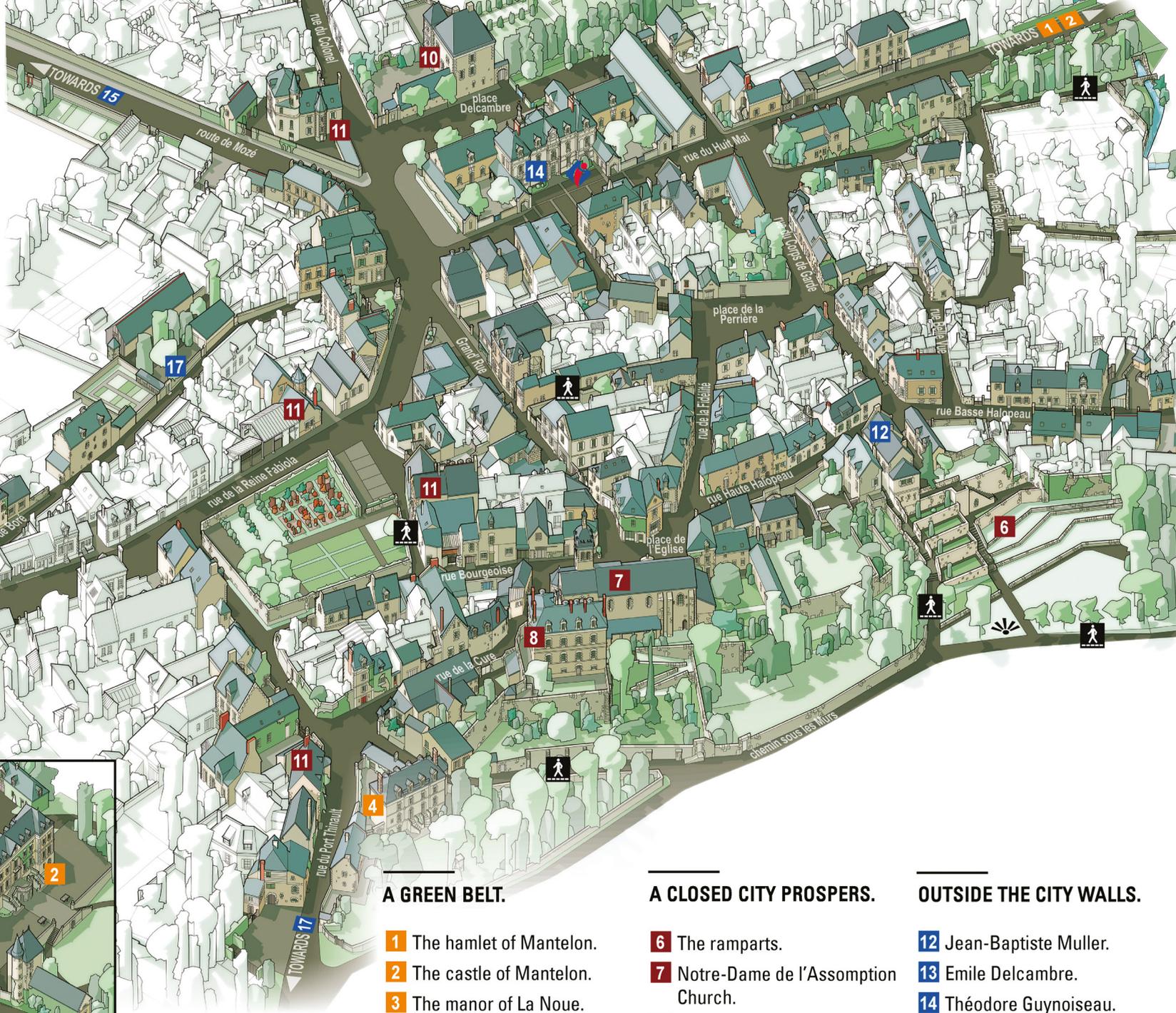
 Tourist Office.

 Passage.

 Viewing point.



Axonometric plane of Denée.  
© Damien Cabiron / Anne Holmberg



## A GREEN BELT.

- 1** The hamlet of Mantelon.
- 2** The castle of Mantelon.
- 3** The manor of La Noue.
- 4** The Portineau and its flood scale.
- 5** An economy of the Loire Valley.

## A CLOSED CITY PROSPERS.

- 6** The ramparts.
- 7** Notre-Dame de l'Assomption Church.
- 8** The presbytery.
- 9** Cultures and prosperity.
- 10** The manor of La Chabotière.
- 11** Dwellings.

## OUTSIDE THE CITY WALLS.

- 12** Jean-Baptiste Muller.
- 13** Emile Delcambre.
- 14** Théodore Guynoiseau.
- 15** Father Laury.
- 16** Jean Commère.
- 17** Fort ball societies.



1



2a



2b

1. The villa Les Roches / 2a. The gates of Mantelon Castle / 2b. The Red pavilion

## A green belt

**Denee is characterized by its green belt and the floods that mark the lives of the inhabitants. It is surrounded to the east by the stream of Blairie, to the west by the stream of la Sorcière, to the south by fields and vineyards and to the north by the Loire, the Louet and the Aubance which flow in the valley dotted with hamlets.**

### 1 The hamlet of Mantelon

The hamlet of Mantelon developed during the Gallic era. Located on the banks of the Louet, this hamlet experienced a revival at the end of the 18th century with the construction of the castle. In the 19th century, the former dwelling of the prior, whose main part dates from the 16th century, was enlarged and refurbished. Holiday homes were also built, such as the villa Les Roches (1) built in 1895 on a rocky outcrop and opening onto the Louet valley.

### 2 The castle of Mantelon

Built in 1789, this castle is a former stronghold dependent on the seigneurie of Martigné-Briand, mentioned as early as 1167. Classical in style, it was the last to be built in Anjou before the Revolution. Around, an enclosed park of 18 hectares was laid out during the 19th century, as well as an orangery. In 1879, the Thai-style red pavilion was added to the entrance of the estate (2b). It could



3. The manor of La Noue / 4. The Flood Scale / 5. A fisherman on the Louet

come from the Paris Universal Exhibition of 1878. With its sloping topography, the park, characterized by remarkable species, is sometimes flooded.

### 3 The manor of La Noue

The manor of La Noue is located east of the green belt. Built in the 16th century, it was remodeled in the centuries that followed. It belonged to Pierre Le Loyer (1550-1633), a poet friend of Ronsard, who became the owner thanks to his wife Jeanne Cornilleau, daughter of François Cornilleau Sieur de la Noue, alderman of Angers.

### 4 The Portineau and its flood scale

This dwelling was built in 1801 by Mr. Goumenault, former notary and briefly mayor of Denée. It presents an architecture of the time of the Directory. On the pillars of the portal, a flood scale is visible (4) and testifies to this recurring phenomenon. With the accumulation of the waters of the three rivers, a third of the city is sometimes flooded. A real flood culture exists and a municipal Civil Security reserve of about ten volunteers has been created to alert, protect and rescue.

### 5 An economy of the Loire Valley

City of the Loire, fishing and shipping were major activities and intense traffic existed to transport wine, livestock, cereals or materials. Carriers by water or boat carpenters lived in the hamlets of Denée, closest to the Loire, and hardly mingled with the farmers.



6



7a



7b

6. Aerial view of the ramparts / 7a. People leaving mass, early 20th century / 7b. The Assumption of the Virgin Mary, from the workshop of Abbé Choyer in Angers

## A closed city prospers

**A strategic site thanks to its promontory, the city was established in the 11th century. The lords built a castle and ramparts and Denée became a closed town in the 12th century. Over the centuries, the town prospered and many buildings still attest today to the wealth of the city.**

### 6 The ramparts

At the foot of the rock, part of the old ramparts is still visible from the path “under the walls”. Wishing to protect themselves from the attacks of invaders, fortifications were erected between the 10th and 12th centuries. The lords of Denée thus thought they could protect their castle belonging to the duchy of Brissac, which overlooked the valley and of which only tiny traces remain today.

### 7 Notre-Dame-de-l’Assomption Church

The oldest part (the north wall) dates back to the 12th century. It was revised several times. A stone bell tower was added to it in the 16th century but the most important modifications took place in the 18th century, under the impetus of Abbot François Rousseau des Riaux de Pantigny, parish priest from 1743 to 1778. The nave was lengthened at this time and a lantern is added to the bell tower, topped with an imperial roof. The entrance to the church is through a door to the south, which is surmounted by a pediment carved with the arms of the



**8a.** The church and the prebytery / **8b.** The presbytery / **9.** In the foreground, vines

Dukes of Brissac. During the Revolution, the church was used as a barn but it was then returned to worship and enlarged in 1825. It was classified as a historical monument in 1968. Inside, many listed or classified rooms make the richness of the building: paintings, confessional, communion grid or Pietà. At the back of the choir, the plaster group of the Assumption of the Virgin Mary was installed in 1852, when it was initially intended for a church in Bordeaux.

## **8** The presbytery

Built in 1766 at the request of Father François Rousseau des Ruaux de Pantigny, the presbytery overlooks the valley. Under the Ancien Régime, the cure of Denée was the best provided for in the diocese. Classified in the supplementary inventory of Historic Monuments in 1968, the building was restored by Jacqueline Dumas, a nun of the Benedictine Missionaries of Vanves, who ran an industrial bookbinding business in Denée. Inside, an imposing staircase with a wrought iron banister was also listed in 1968.

## **9** Cultures and prosperity

The territory of the city is divided into 2 terroirs: that of the hillsides, where the vines extend, and that of the valley, where flax and hemp were cultivated. Under the Ancien Régime, the city experienced a commercial resurgence. Thanks to the cultivation of wheat, hemp, a vines and livestock, agriculture is flourishing and benefits the town.



10



11a



11b

10. The manor of la Chabotière / 11a. Drawing of the Logis du Pinier by André Sarazin, 1978 / 11b. The porch-house

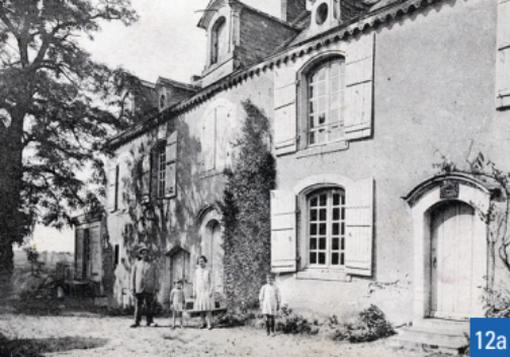
Tanners, millers, potters and ironworkers settled in the town, such as the Brouillet de l'Isle, a family of millers and then merchants. They live in the eponymous house, built in the 18th century.

### 10 The manor of La Chabotière

In the Middle Ages, this property constituted, on the south side, an advanced defense of the city, with the site of Pinier. During the Revolution, the owners, Madame de Faye and her daughter, Madame Daburon de Mantelon, had to flee to Vendée and the manor was then transformed into a tavern and national prison. The property now belongs to the family of André Sarazin (1933-2007), archivist of the city of Angers and a local historian.

### 11 Dwellings

The prosperity of the city is reflected in the construction of many dwellings. Opposite La Chabotière, the Logis du Pinier is a 16th century building, enlarged in the 19th century by a high main building with three floors (11a). This dwelling was the residence of Gilles Limiers, clerk at the presidial of Angers at the end of the 17th century. Built on the rock, the 16th century porch house (11b) was remodeled in the 18th century but has kept its original porch. It was the place of residence of Jean Hellegouarch, mayor of Denée until 1990. The 16th century Herbereau dwelling belonged to the descendants of the founder of the so-called « Herbereau » chapel, side chapel inside the church .



12a. The Logis du Bon Accueil / 12b. Jean-Baptiste Muller bust / 13a. General Delcambre

## Outside the city walls

**Under the influence of several notables, the town changed its appearance in the course of the 19th century. The construction of a new road and the construction of wealthy buildings marked the town. In this context, new personalities settled in Denée. At the same time, the old traditions continued, such as the ancient game of boules de fort...**

### 12 Jean-Baptiste Muller (1796-1857)

In 1835, Jean-Baptiste Muller (1796-1857) acquired the Logis du Bon Accueil (12a). A health officer nicknamed « the doctor of the poor », he treated the Deneans for free for 40 years. The *Maine-et-Loire*, newspaper of the time, reports that 1300 people follow his coffin when he died on March 3rd, 1857. To show their gratitude, the Deneans had a bust erected in his honor in the square that now bears his name (12b). It was inaugurated on August 8, 1875.

### 13 Émile Delcambre (1871-1951)

Founder of modern French meteorology, creator and first director of the National Meteorological Office, General Delcambre (1871-1951) lived at the Blairie manor from 1934 to 1951. In his memory, the square behind the town hall is dedicated to him .

The Blairie manor, rebuilt in 1840 by Mr. Desmazières,



13b

DENÉE (M.-et-L.) - La Mairie  
L. V. phot.



14



15

13b. Two owls at the entrance to the manor / 14. The town hall / 15. The Saint-Joseph chapel

mayor of Denée from 1837 to 1846, is on the site of an old stately home that belonged to the same family from the 15th to the 19th century. At the entrance to the property, two owls have been installed by Mr. Aguilé, owner of the manor at the beginning of the 20th century, to remind him of his attachment to the chouans (13b).

#### 14 Théodore Guynoiseau

At the request of Mayor Théodore Guynoiseau, a new town hall was built in 1867 on the site of the old cemetery, abandoned in 1827. This new town hall was built according to the plans of the Angevin architect Bihard. The main building is surrounded by two public schools for girls and boys. This construction is accompanied by the opening of rue du 8 mai and rue de la Reine Fabiola and the development of place Muller.

#### 15 Father Laury

In 1867, on the occasion of a parish mission, Father Laury ordered the construction of a chapel at the southern exit of the town. In neo-Romanesque style, the Saint-Joseph chapel is the work of the architect Charles Roques, also behind the Madeleine church in Angers. It was formerly an important stage of the Rogations, processions during which public and solemn prayers were made to ask for the divine blessing on the work of the fields.



16



17a



17b

16. *La Loire à Denée*, Jean Commère/ 17a. Covered game of boules de fort / 17b. Society Le Rivage

#### 16 Jean Commère (1920-1986)

Born in the interwar period, Jean Commère (1920-1986) was a French sculptor, painter and engraver. In 1948, he moved to Denée with his wife Suzette. This is the beginning of his yellow period. Inspired by the Angevin and Denean landscapes, he painted numerous paintings and in 1952 won the Othon Friesz prize, tied with Michel Rodde (1913-2009), for his painting *Floods at Denée*, which increased his notoriety. Although he only lived in Denée for four years, many of his works depict the city and its surroundings, such as *La Loire à Denée*.

#### 17 Fort ball societies

In Denée, two fort ball societies coexist, la Fontaine and le Rivage. Rare fact, the second has an outdoor game (18b), one of the last in Anjou. A typical Maine game born in the 16th century, the origins of fort ball are unclear. It would have been invented by the mariners of the region in the curved holds of the boats. Its practice gradually became institutionalized and became a sport at the end of the 19th century. Today, the boules de fort is classified as a "Ligerian heritage game" by the Ministry of Culture. During a game, two teams compete and try to send the ball as close as possible to the jack, called the master. These balls are weighted on one side, the strong side, which unbalances them and makes it difficult to practice. The other particularity of this game is the shape of the track: the ground is in the shape of a gutter on the sides.

# Visitor Information

- **Town Hall**

3, rue du 8 mai 49190 Denée

Tel. 02 41 78 72 18

[www.mairie-denee.fr](http://www.mairie-denee.fr)

- **Loire-Layon-Aubance Tourist Office**

Place de l'hôtel de Ville

49290 Chalennes-sur-Loire

Tel. 02 41 78 26 21

[accueil@loire-layon-aubance-tourisme.com](mailto:accueil@loire-layon-aubance-tourisme.com)

[www.loire-layon-aubance-tourisme.com](http://www.loire-layon-aubance-tourisme.com)

## To see, to do

- **The Denéenne, race on the banks of the Louet and the Aubance (1st sunday of July)**

- **Hiking routes**

- **Competition of Fort ball, a traditional local game (June)**

[www.petitescitesdecaractere.com](http://www.petitescitesdecaractere.com)

---

**Texts:**

Petites Cités de Caractère® des Pays de la Loire

**Photo credits:**

J.-P. Berlose - Petites Cités de Caractère® (A, B, E, 1, 2a, 2b, 3, 4, 7a, 7b, 8a, 8b, 9, 10, 11b, 12b, 13b, 15); André Sarrazin (11a), Jean-François Delochre (D, 6)

**Conception, production:**

Document : Landeau Création Graphique

Layout : Petites Cités de Caractère® des Pays de la Loire

Town plan: Damien Cabiron & Anne Holmberg

Map of the region: Jérôme Bulard

**Printing :** ITF Imprimeurs



DÉPARTEMENT DE MAINE-ET-LOIRE

**anjou**

PATRI MOÏNES

Région  
PAYS  
de la  
LOIRE





# Petites Cités de Caractère®

In accordance with precise and rigorous commitments made as to meet the requirements of a National quality charter, these little towns implement innovating ways to enhance their cultural heritage, the local animation and satisfy the public. They are happy to welcome you throughout the year and invite you to their best events and other cultural appointments.

You are invited, so please feel free to push the gates and let them take you on a journey to a certain "art de vivre" (lifestyle).

Find out more about them on [www.petitescitesdecaractere.com](http://www.petitescitesdecaractere.com)

MAINE-ET-LOIRE

Petites Cités de Caractère®  
des Pays de la Loire



**Petites Cités de Caractère®  
du Maine-et-Loire**

Tél. 06 70 26 08 62

[pccpaysdelaloire@orange.fr](mailto:pccpaysdelaloire@orange.fr)

[www.petitescitesdecaractere.com](http://www.petitescitesdecaractere.com)

● Commune homologuée  
● Commune en cours d'homologation