

Mont Saint-Michael rises in the heart of a UNESCO World Heritage listed bay since 1972. Every year, more than 3 million visitors come to discover Mont Saint-Michel and its 40 people living there including a small community of monks and nuns returning to settle in 1966 after being left the place to the French Revolution. Mont-Saint-Michael is the 3rd most visited tourist site in France after the Eiffel tower or the Versailles Palace and the 3rd center of pilgrimage in France after Lourdes and Lisieux.

The bay of Mont Saint-Michel, extends over 500 km² and brings together a wide diversity of natural environments thus constituting the largest French area of salt meadows and polders. Three kilometers from the Mont, you can discover Tombelaine, a granite island, real bird sanctuary with 130 species of birds. The bay is also a breeding ground for gulls and the abundance of fish like soles, rays, bars, ... benefits predators such as the dolphin or seal that thrive in the bay. A third of the Armorican flora has settled in the bay among mud flats, freshwater and saltwater marshes, hedgerows, dunes, rocky shores, deep waters, polders and rivers.

Another animal is also inseparable from the bay. it is pre-salted lamb. For a thousand years, the lamb that grazes salt-meadows of the Bay of Mont Saint-Michel is one of the most popular meats in France. The lamb is raised on salt marshes, periodically covered by the sea. Its meat is distinguished by its pink color, the length of the fibers and the presence of fat marbling. On the soil of these pastures called herbus and covered periodically by the sea, grows a specific vegetation giving to its flesh a very fine grain and an exceptional flavor, subtle mixture of iodine, flora and hazelnut. The salted meadow lamb is slaughtered between 4 and 6 months. Since the eleventh century, the monks of Mont Saint-Michel had a "right of brebiage" that allows them to choose and appropriate each year the most beautiful sheep in each herd of farms in the Bay.

But the history of Mont-Saint-Michel began three centuries earlier when Aubert, bishop of Avranches, built the first sanctuary in honour of the Archangel in 708. In the 10th century, the Benedictines settled there at the request of the Duke of Normandy, Richard I and began building an ambitious abbey church that became a major pilgrimage site but also a center of medieval culture where were produced, preserved and studied a large number of manuscripts.

In the eleventh century, the Romanesque abbey church was founded on a set of crypts, and in the thirteenth century, a donation of the King of France Philippe Auguste allowed to undertake the Gothic ensemble of the Merveille: two buildings of three floors crowned by the cloister and the refectory.

From the fourteenth century, the successive conflicts of the Hundred Years War, between France and England, require the construction of new powerful fortifications. Mount, defended by some knights loyal to the King of France and protected by a wall flanked by several defense towers, manages to resist the assaults of the English army for nearly 30 years.

In 1622, the reform of the congregation of Saint-Maur installs new religious in the abbey. They will redevelop the place and try to revive monastic life and pilgrimages. These monks

must also face the arrival of prisoners imprisoned by order of the king in the abbey also became the "Bastille of the seas". Following the dissolution of the religious community during the Revolution and until 1863 the abbey was used as a prison for the refractory priests, the prisoners of common law and some political prisoners such as Armand Barbès or Auguste Blanqui. The prison closed in 1863 and in 1874, the abbey is classified as a historical monument, property of the french government.

More recently, a woman has marked the history of Mont-Saint-Michel. Mother Poulard is part of the French gastronomic heritage with her famous omelette soufflé recipe that she offered in her first inn in 1888.

At the same time, the Mont-Saint-Michel lost day its status as an island. The human activity with the construction of car parks to welcome the visitors, a road dike in 1878 facilitating access to the Mount and later a tram line amplified the sedimentation phenomenon by reducing the hydraulic movements of the sea around the island. To restore the maritime character of the Mont-Saint-Michael, a new dam has been built on the Couesnon river to push back the vegetation which is threatening to encircle the rock. Twice a day the water is released from the dam six hours after high tide. The causeway has also been dismantled and replaced by a wooden 2500 ft deck built on stilts, allowing water to flow freely around the monument and turning the monument back into an island for the first time in 135 year. The access to the island is possible 24 hours a day excepted during certain periods of full moon when the Mont-Saint-Michel is surrounded by the biggest tides in Europe.