

SMALL FRENCH TOWN ATTRACTS MAINLY CHINESE TOURISTS



If you roam the thin roads of Montargis, a small regional town which is approximately 110 kilometers south of the French capital Paris you will not find anything predominantly attractive to tourists. The city has a population lower than 16,000 and has no monuments symbolic of French magnificence and romance, splendid architecture nor high-end boutiques to boast about. The popular attractions are perhaps the winding canals and flowered bridges.

Despite these facts this town has recently drawn more tourists from China due to its distinctive historical associations.

Montargis was the town where a lot of Chinese scholars came to study as well as labor in the early 20th century with an aim to modernize their country by acquiring knowledge from the western world. The most famous students include the Chinese leader Deng Xiaping who is the former Chinese vice premier, Rongzhen one of the ten famous Chinese marshals and Hesen one of the well-known earliest leader of the Communist Party of China (CPC). Zhou Enlai also frequently visited the small town in the 1920s.

Montargis authorities formed a Chinese visitor trail a couple of years ago to target the thriving China's tourism market. They started promoting this small town as a must visit destination for tourists who are interested in discovering how the small French town contributed to the development of CPC. Today Chinese travelers can trail signs both in Chinese and French pointing out buildings and historical sites in this small town that are linked with the Chinese history.

Among the popular sites is the Gambetta School which is currently the Montargis Town Hall where Deng attended. The apartment house where Deng lived has been turned into the Town Hall reception, however, the view remains just as Deng enjoy it years ago because the city has scarcely changed since then.

Another place that the tourists can visit is the famous Hutchinson rubber plant where Den worked and relaxed in the Durzy gardens the same place where Cai and his wife Xiang offered their thoughts on saving their motherland China and developing a society of their compatriots back in 1920. **It is from this small town that Cai Hesen sent the well-known letter to Mao Zedong** in which he gave details on the need of forming a political party to develop a modern society.

In 2001 the Montargis Chinese- French Association was founded in a bid to promote the town's Chinese history. Leaders supported the move to draw more Chinese tourists with the government spending approximately \$19,200 in renewing tourist signs at the Chinese historical sites and printing leaflets unfolding the Chinese trail.

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