



# Grand Parc Miribel Jonage

## A story in 10 snapshots

**English version**

**D**iscovering the Grand Parc Miribel Jonage :

That's what this booklet is all about.

It tells the stories behind the park, describes the features of this island site, draws out its identity and suggests ways to explore its more hidden and unspoilt areas. An invitation to discover nature and all its exceptional fauna and flora... right on the outskirts of the city of Lyon.

**S**ituated around ten miles outside Lyon, at the foot of the Côtière de l'Ain hillside, the Grand Parc Miribel Jonage extends from the ford at its western entrance to the Jons dam in the east - with the EDF barrier just in front. The two canals, the Miribel and the Jonage, run along the northern and southern edges of the site, which is what makes it an island. At the heart of this region, where nature is always abundant in its various guises according to the seasons, paths invite you to take a stroll. There is something to delight everyone here - with new discoveries on every visit, whether you stay in the developed areas or venture out into the wilder spaces. Each visitor has a unique way of appreciating and experiencing the park. The park really is one of a kind, just like the imagination of each and every one of us.

Those who enjoy the site can talk about it for hours. Some come for the leisure activities in natural surroundings. Others - nature lovers, whether novices or seasoned observers - come above all for the fabulous biodiversity of the surroundings. Some city-dwellers who haven't set foot here for decades still continue to talk about the site's eventful past as if it were still going on today. In the islands of the River Rhone, so people used to say, the river would reshape the countryside on a whim. The movements of the great river meant that the scenery was always changing. In this natural *no man's land*, crooks set up camp away from prying eyes, in a place they shared only with poachers and lovers. How times have changed since then!

This book will take you on a journey through the Grand Parc - my journey, which is embellished by the experiences and comments of other enthusiasts I have come across on my travels, who were happy to reveal their experiences to me. The booklet is split into ten different approaches - or ten themes exploring the identity of the place.

From the shingle to the colour blue, for example, the resulting stories are above all personal ones. Someone else walking through the park would have pointed out different aspects. They might have preferred to talk about the colour green. They might have organised the book more like an encyclopaedia, studying in order the geology, the rises and falls in water levels or the species of plants and animals inhabiting the site. Reading my own snapshots, they might even notice some things I have missed. That was the risk I had to take.

And so this booklet describes my own view of the Grand Parc. For the past thirty years, I have been discovering all of its sides, always in an informal rather than a scientific way. I have explored the park, either alone or with others. Swimming, walking, running... I have even got lost, always being taken by surprise by just how vast it is. Sometimes it takes forever to retrace your steps and find your way when you've gone off track. In winter, the cries of birds have made me jump. In summer, I have been fascinated by jam-packed beaches and that incredible atmosphere you get when city-dwellers come out for the fresh air and to relax and get away from it all.

The booklet reveals a series of intimate postcards. They are interspersed with the viewpoints of several photographers, whose pictures were not taken with this booklet in mind. Most of them existed already and, rather than being illustrations for my text, they supply other snapshots of the Grand Parc.

The book can be read in any order. You can start at the beginning of course, but you can also open it up at a chapter you are particularly interested in - or even start at the end, like the Grand Parc itself. What really matters is the journey I am inviting you to take with me, the freedom it gives for everyone to find their own way in an original territory ripe for exploration, just a few minutes away from the city of Lyon.

# Chapters

## **A submersible island**

On this island, formed by two canals, water is omnipresent. Paradoxically, countryside which appears to have existed for centuries is actually very recent. The site, which arose from the historic flooding of the River Rhone, has been redeveloped to accommodate the floods. When the water sweeps through from the north and the east, it transforms into a bubbling expanse of water... restocking the underwater supplies of drinking water as it passes through.

## **Shingle**

It is everywhere - on the beaches, under the water, in the quarries and under the vegetation that now covers the former quarries. Like the water, it is part of the natural identity of the Grand Parc. The shingle has been used for construction purposes in the city of Lyon, and it was also used on the Miribel Jonage island ahead of the major renaturation projects.



## Sculpture

This site was sculpted first by the great river itself and then by man, both of them fighting a merciless battle. They turned it into an open-air sculpture, with the earth and gravel being modelled first by the water and then by the construction machinery. Beavers, just like artists, mark out the countryside with their eclectic constructions. Some of them fulfil a domestic function. Others make up part of the dialogue with nature.



## A city on its doorstep

Has nature taken over the city? Or has the city become part of this greenery? Both is the short answer. Europe's second largest city park has two completely different sides - the busy western section and the wilder eastern section. A whiff of the French Riviera here. Dense forest over there. Turn a corner and you see the outline of a tower or town house reminding you that the city is not far away.



## Passages

This natural monument is constantly changing. The water, of course, rises and falls. Some migratory birds stop over in autumn on their way to Africa.

Others stay for the winter.

Aeroplanes, lorries, cars and bicycles criss-cross the sky and the ground. Animals and plants fight for their territory, whether they have always lived here or whether they are more recent arrivals.



## Risks and refuges

This site has lived through episodes of flooding. These episodes have also enriched the area.

Following programmes of natural regeneration, the biodiversity here is exceptional. Nature has not become less dangerous over time - something that the summer sunshine and the beautiful scenery tend to make us forget. This natural paradise also has a hidden side to it.



## Languages, sounds, signs

You don't always realise at the start. But over time, after several visits, all the languages of the park reveal themselves.

The park expresses itself in ways reminiscent of Asia, Africa and Europe. The loud and lively croaking of frogs. The wheels of a bicycle. The figures themselves take over to express the water flow rate.

A surprising interplay of signs to interpret!



## Blue

Blue dominates all the other colours.

Especially in summer, with the blue sky and the water, but it is also present in the plants and animals. Also on man-made objects, with details in shades of blue, like a painter's palette that contains shades of just one colour.

Whilst green is also present and red and ochre add their touch from time to time, it is blue that always ends up triumphant, taking advantage of a ray of sunshine.



## Traditions and customs

It was the Garden of Eden for the poor and the brave. In times gone by, people made allotments in the meanders of the Rhone. Agriculture goes back a long way in the park, taking on different forms as times have changed. Whilst farming was once intense, today it has become more in tune with nature. Honey and hemp oil are two of the “Saveurs du Grand Parc” for you to enjoy!



## Stories and dreams

Long the backdrop to some incredible stories and also inhabited by bandits and highwaymen, today's Miribel Jonage island has been the subject of many different planning projects. Many of them have given rise to verbal debates and even some power struggles. Most disappear over time into the records of the Grand Parc, which have been kept since 1968.

# Contact

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