

Protected Natural Area Paulilles Bay



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INFORMATIONS

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Pyrénées-Orientales,
Environment Department
Tel. +33 (0)4 68 85 82 50
www.ledepartement66.fr/
www.ledepartement66.fr/dossier/le-site-classe-de-lanse-de-paulilles/

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Port-Vendres Tourist
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Paulilles Bay, Atelier des
Barques
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Useful links
www.tourisme-pyreneesorientales.com/en

Paulilles is a bay on the Vermeille Coast, in the town of Port-Vendres between Cap Béar and Cap de l'Abeille. The shale coastline and three beaches separated by wooded headlands, popular with fishermen, wine growers and sheep farmers for centuries, is without a doubt the most beautiful natural area of the Rocky Coast. This area was awarded the "Tourisme et Handicap" Label in 2013 and so it is adapted for people with hearing and mental disabilities.

An eventful history. But behind these beaches is a wall that was built by the German army in 1943 to prevent allies from landing here, and a 35-metre-high brick chimney right in the middle of this area is a stark reminder of the history and industrial past of this place.

For more than a century, Paulilles Bay was in fact the location of a former dynamite factory, designed by Alfred Nobel. Unfortunately the area is above all well-known for this reason.

The NOBEL PRB (Poudreries Réunies de Belgique) gunpowder factory began to produce nitro-glycerine and rubber products (tyres, pipes...) in Paulilles Bay from 1875. More than 200 people worked at the factory, and they were housed in a building between the road and the railroad tracks. This little "village" was almost completely self-sufficient with its own church, school, cooperative and vegetable garden. In the 1900s, the factory delivered 550 tonnes of dynamite to France and its colonies. By 1975, this production had reached 4,000 tonnes. The goods were transported by boat from the bay where there are a number of jetties. The dynamite was stored in underground storerooms that could be accessed by tunnels. There were often accidents, some of them deadly. The workers suffered from diseases linked to their jobs, especially cardio-vascular issues. **The dynamite factory closed its doors in 1984, purely for economic reasons.**

Before the factory closed, real estate operations had been warning local authorities of the risk of urban developments in the area. And sure enough, this vast 30-hectare wasteland soon drew the attention of a real estate developer, Jean-Claude Méry, who bought the land (for 30 million French francs, or around 4.5 million euros) in 1988. His company took on the colossal construction project of a huge complex of around a hundred villas, marinas and a harbour with no less than 500 berths, even though a part of the area had been classified by decree of the State's Council on the 26th June 1979. There was strong opposition to this project and Paulilles Bay was finally declared a classified area in full, and Jean-Claude Méry was forced to abandon his project. The buildings fell into ruin and the landscape continued to deteriorate. Even though there are quite a few visitors to the area, there are more and more accidents and fires breaking out here and on the access roads that lead to the bay.

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