



Ramatuelle



There are two origins attributed to the name of Ramatuelle :

- One has an accent of the south : Rahmatu'llah! Which in Arab means "Divine Providence" or "blessed of the God"; the Saracean occupation of the 10th century can perhaps explain this lifting root.

-The other, much older, goes back to a celto-ligurian tribe, otherwise know as the Gauls, who established an encampment on the banks of the "Gapeau", near to the present Toulon, just at the time of the Roman conquest. This group was chased from theses shores and found refuge in the protected, wooded hinterland which overlooks the Gulf of St Tropez. The tribe, called the Camatullici, settled on the site of the present village or at least very close to it and the "R" of Régio (region) Camatullicorum replaced the "C" to become Ramatullici and Ramatuelle.

BETWEEN STONES AND ROCKS

The road which climbs up to the village, twists and winds between the cork oaks and the parasol pines, as if it hesitates before entering into the square !

Following the one-way system, firstly you pass alongside the circular wall of the ancient ramparts. Park your car here. In passing, you will notice some door and window frames of the 17th century.

RUE ROMPE CU AND SURROUNDINGS

A few metres further on, at the rue Moulin Roux, the **Saracen gate** has kept its original look. On the inside of the gate, you can still make out the runners of the portcullis.

The masonry still carries the marks of the hinges which were fitted out with two large doors. There have been battles in these parts, people have killed each other , even the stones bled...



Carrying on towards the "rue du Clocher", a little white building without a roof and rounded in shape, will surely catch your attention. It dates from Napoleon III whose nomination to the head of the empire brought jubilation to the village and caused much celebration. It was built at the time of the emperor in Arab style.

The rue St Esprit is next to the prison, carry on up this street and you will enter into the centre of the village. It could be called a labyrinth. Narrow streets on after another. A small passage avoid you having to turn around too much and allow you to cross from the place de l'Ormeau to the Saracen gate by going along the rue Rompe Cu.

On the present **place Gabriel Peri**, once know as "Place du Château" is the old seigniorial residence of Audibert family; they were one of the last lords of the village who left under a cloud and their many debts to the village were never paid. Standing against the ancient ramparts, on the roof of which still runs the covered way, is the parish church dating from the 16th century.

The old stones of the village, eroded with time, still hold many secrets from the past.

Ramatuelle was from its origins, a little borough, isolated from outside world by the Maures mountain chain and the sea, and its population lived for a very long time withdrawn into itself, well away from the bustle of history. Nonetheless, three historic events left their mark on Ramatuelle and the remains are still visible today.

THE SARACEN OCCUPATION IN 892

About twenty pirates came from Spain in small boats and secretly entered the Sambracitain Gulf (the Gulf of Grimaud). Soon joined by others bands, these Muslim Brigands setup their base on the heights of la Garde Freinet from where they came down to ravage the neighbouring area.

The village was occupied by these pillagers who held the inhabitants to ransom.

The architecture of certain constructions (basement, prisons, etc) is witness to their stay.

In 972, William I count of Provence, made a sudden attack on them in their fortress and managed to free the country.

After this long period of violence and ravages the region was reorganized by the powerful House of the viscounts of Marseille who were given the job of supervising defence, justice and administration in the region. The high walls, which surrounded the village, were built at this time.

The monks in the Abbey of St Victor-lés-Marseille were called on to provide for religious practise and gifts of a vineyard and a smallholding ferme were made to them in 1956 several families of lord succeeded one another up to the revolution Saumada (1050-1340), De Castellane (1340-1450), De Villeneuve, De Cossa and d'Audibert.



The Saracen gate

The only one of the two gates that has kept its original appearance. The hinges were placed during the revolution to close this entrance with two wooden doors.

THE DESTRUCTION OF THE VILLAGE IN 1592

Grouped together in a "Leagu", many catholics fought against the new King Henry IV who was protestant. Ramatuelle, defended by a "Leagers" garrison who refused to submit to the King.

In 1592 the Governor of St Tropez, Monsieur De Belloc, received the order from the Duc de la Valette, Commander of Provence, to take the village, which was practically destroyed during this siege.

It was only at the beginning of the XVIIIth century that it was progressively rebuilt.

The dates engraved on the stones surrounding the doors as well as on the portal (1620) of the church still bear witness to this today.

It was probably at this time that the elm tree was planted that presided over the destiny of the village for almost four centuries.

THE SECOND WORLD WAR (1939-1945)

The village was successively occupied by Italians and by Germans.

A group of partisans from Ramatuelle showed their courage when a submarine secretly arrived on the coast to transfer secret agents between Algiers and the mainland.

The monument "ASSDN" erected at the entrance to the village as well as the plaque on the "Roche Escudelier" commemorate these events.

Finally the Pampelonne's Beach was one of the main theatres of operations during the landing of allied forces on august 15th 1944.



PLACE DE L'ORMEAU

On Wednesday the 23rd November 1983, a gloomy morning, the enormous dried trunk of the Ormeau (the affectionate term for the great elm tree that stood in the main square of the village) pulled by a tractor, collapsed on the ground of the village square... Thus, did this venerable tree die, symbol of our town, witness of the life in our village for almost four centuries.

The day war was declared in September 1939, we had almost lost the tree. A violent gust of wind from the east had broken the largest branch and torn off part of its trunk. Badly mutilated, it did however survive until Dutch elm disease, which raged throughout Europe, got the better of the giant. Cures were attempted, but unfortunately, neither injections nor the pruning regretfully of the branches were any help. For obvious security reasons, it was regretfully decided that it would have to be cut down. That day all the inhabitants felt very emotional, particularly the older members of the village who remembered, with nostalgia, hiding inside its immense trunk and climbing along its allow branches.

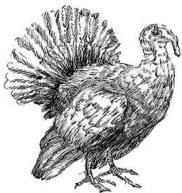


The birth certificate of the Ormeau is not to be found in the village archives, in fact, the date of its planting is not mentioned in any text. It is, however, very probable that this took place in the reign of Henry IV, when his minister Sully had many trees planted, including elms, in village squares. Ours must have been planted after the siege of Ramatuelle in 1592, when the village was rebuilt in the opening years of the 17th century. Curiously, in a resolution dated August 1793, it is written that during the month of May a violent gust of wind has damaged the roof of the church and had made the little elm in the square fall over and that it had to be righted and help up by encasing it between four planks of wood. They are probably talking about another elm, younger, or at least, punier than the one that we have know. Our Ormeau was already two centuries old at the time of the Revolution and its height would have been sufficiently imposing, that it could not have been described as little even although we continue to call it Ormeau which is diminutive of Orme.



Moreover, this hypothesis seems to be confirmed, because 67 years later, in 1860, we learn “that a plane tree was planted south of the square and the fountain, where had to be pulled out because it was on the point of collapsing as its roots could no longer support its weight”. Therefore, there were two elms on our village square, one, which died in 1860, and the other in 1983. Today a typical Provençal tree, an olive-tree (which is only 90 years old !) has taken the place of the old elm. A symbol of Provence and peace, it is well-installed and ready to face the future... let's wish it the same long life as its illustrious predecessor.

THE HOLY TURKEY



At the end of the last century, Ramatuelle was invaded by grasshoppers who threatened to damage the grape-harvest. To solve this problem, the village elders took advantage of the greed of the turkey and his appetite for this type of insect in order to get rid of these harmful invaders. It was just as well that they did, because not only were there soon no grasshoppers but the turkey, replete, had become big, flat and plump.

To celebrate their victory, the biggest, plumpest fowl were chosen from the poultry-houses, for long, slow cooking. But the village women, perhaps more grateful towards their saviours, refused to pluck the birds. Against their will, the men folk did it, but to get their own back on the rebellious women, refused them the right to take part in the feast.

Thus, for almost 100 years, on the second Sunday of the month of December, “*la Saint Dindon*”, the Holy Turkey, is celebrated !Traditionally, the meal takes place at midday and women have never been allowed to take part.

Of course, this tradition must not be seen as sign of male chauvinism...Moreover, it has been proved that the grasshoppers came to Ramatuelle and, on reflection, the village never did have as many turkeys as that !!!

THE PAILLAS WINDMILL

The most remarkable spot is that of the Moulin de Paillas (the Paillas windmill) from where there is a wonderful view over the Islands of Hyères, the bay of Cavalaire, the plain of Pampelonne and the massif of the Maures.

If you climb up close to the first windmill, not far from the road, you will have beneath you an ever-changing romantic sight: the Maures, low stacked mountains, which according to the time of day, seem

translucent, when bathed in sunlight, or at the arrival of dusk, mysterious in a shroud of softness. To get to these windmill, take the Gassin road, CD 89, right at the top of the village, after the Town Hall. Did you know that at the end of the 19th century the windmill still worked and daily supplied the flour for all the inhabitants of Ramatuelle ?

In the village, at place Gabriel Péri and rue Clémenceau, bread was distributed and the currency, for those who did not have wheat to take to the windmill, was very varied.

Visits : ask the tourist office



THE LIGHTHOUSE OF CAPE CAMARAT

Brought into service in 1831, it is the second most important lighthouse in France due to the height of its light source above the sea's level: 130 metres.

The current building dates back to the end of the 19th century. It's lighting, which operated on petrol, was electrified in 1946 and automated in 1977.

For security reasons, the lighthouse can not be visited



THE CAPE TAILLAT

A remarkable protected site where many rare plants bloom: red valerian, dwarf fan-plan... It has been inhabited since prehistory. Here you can see the "Dolmen de la baie de la Briande", which is a burial place dating back to 2000 years B.C.

This dolmen, which was excavated in 1935, revealed arrowheads, pendants and pearls recently restored, it is now completely empty.

On the small beach near the customs house (19th century) , we can discover a roman watering place (well).



PAMPELONNE'S BEACH

In the night of August 15th 1944, this beach was the theatre of the allied landing in Provence.

The soldiers of the 3rd American division, under the orders of General O'Daniel, attacked the beach of Alpha Yellow (the code-name was give by the Allied Commander to the beach of Pampelonne).

As for the 509th battalion of U.S paratroopers, they landed on the hills to the north of the beach by mistake (the original objective which was planned was the Muy plain) which allowed them to liberate the town of St Tropez.

The entire coast completely de-forested at time as from 1943 to cut down the magnificent umbrella pines which went all the way to the water's edge. It was not until the 50th that the Pampelonne beach became a place for leisure activities.

