



## *Lorient Submarine Base, Gwen Riou*

Elaine: First of all, thank you very, very much for your very informative tour around the submarine base here.

Gwen: You're very welcome

Elaine: Um, With so many stories to tell it's amazing all the information now that you must have taken onboard. Could you describe to our listeners perhaps where we actually are?

Gwen: We stand right near the first bunker that was built, it's called K1, and we stand right in front of the bay of Lorient actually, where er there are two wrecks in front of another bunker that was built on this submarine base. This other bunker is K3. That is a very impressive submarine base where three just huge bunkers were built to protect German submarines.

Elaine: So why do you think that today so many people are still interested coming to see these amazing submarine bases? Because they're not buildings of beauty, er, in fact the opposite, and they have quite a stark history. So why do you think people continue to be intrigued to look at them?

Gwen: Because these bunkers actually belong to history today and they were built during World War 2, and the history of the city of Lorient is 100 per cent linked to what happened on this submarine base during the war, because at some point the allied forces will, will decide not to hit the bunkers themselves any more, but they instead decided to hit the city in order to try to isolate the bunkers. So really the, the destiny of the city of Lorient is linked to what happened during, during the war on this place.

Elaine: To destroying these bunkers, which in fact they didn't because, er, they were impenetrable.

Gwen: Yeah, and er, so these bunkers belong to our patrimonial history today.

Elaine: So has this city, has Lorient itself, had to put a great deal of money into this base here, in order to develop it to attract the tourists?

Gwen: Yes, because the submarine base has been used till '97 by the French navy who, er, which decided to leave at this period of time, and after we had no choice but to keep them because, you know, it would have cost such a huge amount of money to, to get rid of them, it was not possible and we had to keep them. So yes, there has been a reconversion started by end of the '90's and that obviously cost lots of money. But it was

really worth it because today is a very, very dynamic place, basically it is a place to be if you are involved in maritime activities.

Elaine: Absolutely. I mean also you've got the Eric Tabarly Centre as well.

Gwen: Exactly. There is a Cité de la Voile based here that attracts lots of tourists on this place and this Cité de la Voile proposes many different activities really on this place you can go on a boat, on a sailing boat, so lots of interesting activities. There are also museums as well, such as the Flore Museum, the Submarine Museum with its training, with its former training centre for submariners, so many possible er, different activities are proposed on this place. And if you are interested in history, well, you can follow me on a guided tour of this place as well.

Elaine: Well it was brilliant today certainly. But it must also give a great deal of employment to people from Lorient and the area.

Gwen: Exactly, at least 50 different companies are based here on this place and most of them are involved in the maritime area, so there are very different activities such as building hulls for instance, or masts, but there are also sailing teams that are based here all year round, so yes, lots of, uh, more and more employment jobs are created on this place .

Elaine: And so the facilities improve, so it's a sort of an ongoing action really isn't it, in that the more people are employed, the more you have to provide facilities in terms of restaurants ...

Gwen: Exactly, the place is ...

Elaine: Museums ...

Gwen: Exactly, the place is becoming actually more and more trendy and that was not always the case. I know that by the very end of the 90's it was not a place where you would come to have a walk, because simply it was not always safe. Today it is a completely different story. There are concerts here, there are races, sailing racings, races makes a stopover here, for instance the Volvo Ocean Race made a stop on this, on this place, so it's a more and more dynamic, trendy place, an interesting place.

Elaine: And it's interesting how history has evolved, because from being a centre of sub, German submarines, of U-boats and a very important geographical point in Brittany, it's now become important, using that but in a slightly different way.

Gwen: Exactly, exactly. It's a place, er, that finally looks at the future so we were able to convert this place really that was very loaded on the emotional point of view into a place really that is really so dynamic, full of positive energy, in the end that's very good.

Elaine: So the past is basically bringing Lorient into the future.

Gwen: Exactly, exactly. That's a good way to say, exactly, completely.

Elaine: Completely taking it by the hand, OK we can move forward. We don't forget what happened here ...

Gwen: No.

Elaine: ... but it's a way forward.

Gwen: Exactly, exactly, yeah, yeah.

Elaine: So there is some construction going on or did you say a concert hall or something?

Gwen: Yeah, exactly. In the second bunker in what is called K2 there is some work going on because there will be a recording studio in that bunker and there will be a big, big concert hall, I think it's by the end of the year in this bunker, so it's a very good choice regarding the noise probably and you will have probably very good er ...

Elaine: Well the acoustics will be amazing

Gwen: Yeah, yeah, probably, and there will be very, very good music festivals in the future in this, in this place, so we will have more and more people coming.

Elaine: So it's continuing just to blossom in every respect.

Gwen: Exactly, exactly, completely.

Elaine: Thank you very much, Gwen. It's been absolutely fascinating and I'm sure that people will be encouraged to come and to follow your tour.

Gwen: It was a pleasure for me too. Thank you.



