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05/11/2011 - Renovating the Cherbourg Passenger Terminal

The **Transatlantic Passenger Terminal in Cherbourg**, inaugurated in 1933, has been graced with the presence of the most prestigious liners during its history (such as the famous and infamous *Titanic*) and sometimes even several ships at the same time! The port's activity declined rapidly however, after the World War II when air travel took over in popularity...

From 1979 and 1989 Cherbourg's passenger terminal was in danger of being knocked down.

The Transatlantic passenger terminal in Cherbourg, an Art déco wonder, sank into oblivion and was subjected to the first phases of its demolition:

- 1979: the Cherbourg Chamber of Commerce considered that the terminal was no longer needed considering the small number of cruise ships making stop-overs at the port. On April 10th and 11th, the 110 metre northern disembarkation gallery was knocked down to provide more room for freight along the Quai de France.

- 1982 ? 1983: between November and April, the magnificent *Hall des Transatlantiques* disappeared.



1989: The Transatlantic terminal in Cherbourg is protected at last

Nobody, however, had counted on the presence of a band of indomitable Normans! Members of the local population created the association *Amis de la Gare Maritime Transatlantique* in 1989 and fought to defend and save the magnificent relic that was the transatlantic terminal. Thanks to the work of these fervent supporters, Cherbourg's terminal was added to the supplementary list of historical monuments on December 27th of the same year. The Train Hall, the *voie Charretière*, the gangways, the Baggage Hall, the stairs, facades and roofing of this magnificent building were now safe! The transatlantic Hall was also protected in the same way in 2002.

2002: The Transatlantic terminal in Cherbourg becomes La Cité de la Mer

The building had been saved, but what should become of it? What could it be used for ? Representatives of the Urban Community of Cherbourg were anxious about the building's future. Various projects were proposed but only one caught their attention and imagination. A project that would not only save the terminal building, the town's heritage of its illustrious transatlantic past, but also one that would help develop the Cotentin region. For this historical legacy is not the only thing that characterizes Cherbourg and its inhabitants. The town is also home to the company DCNS (previously Direction des Constructions Navales) just the other side of the port, which represents its strong human and industrial heritage in the form of submarine construction. The idea of a naval museum was born, integrating the first French nuclear submarine *Le Redoutable*, and this project rapidly began to take shape when the submarine was disarmed in 1991.

In 1990, Bernard Cauvin was elected President of the Urban Community of Cherbourg and he made every effort to back the project, now known as *La Cité de la Mer*. This attraction dedicated to Man's adventures undersea was to save the **Transatlantic terminal in Cherbourg** and it has now once again become a location promising great souvenirs, not only to the local people and the population of Normandy, but also to the hundreds of thousands of visitors who come through its historical doors every year.

