

Green walk

Start and finish

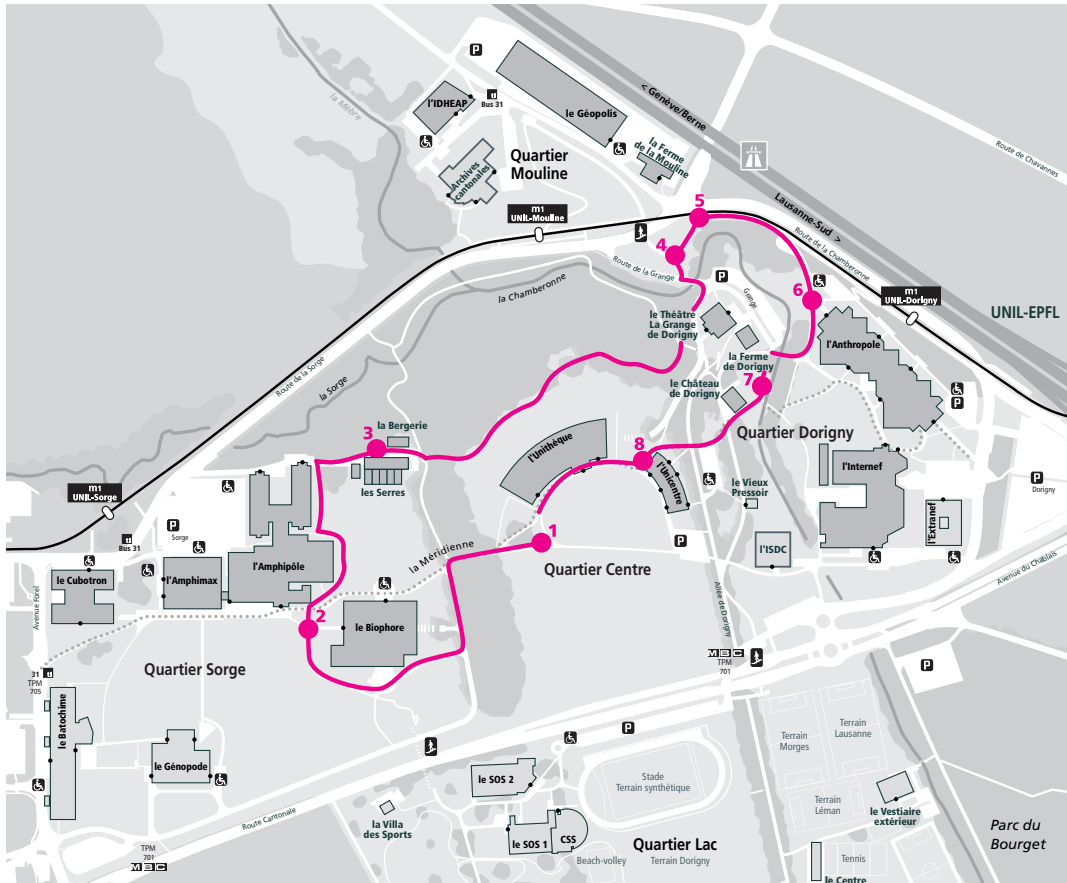
Napoleon's great oak, at one end of the Unithèque building

Duration

1 hour 15 minutes, with 35 minutes actual walking

Distance

2 km



UNIL was founded in 1537. In the 1960s, the State of Vaud purchased the land of the Dorigny estate from a well-established family. The decision to locate the University outside the town was based on a bold projection of major increases in student numbers, which ultimately proved accurate (+600% in 40 years). Despite this large increase, the campus has retained the rustic feel of the former estate, with a stunning mosaic of green landscapes maintained by the Parks & Gardens Group.



From the base of Napoleon's great oak, walk down to the stone bench situated nearby.

1.

CONTROL AND MAINTENANCE OF TREES

The trees on campus are lovingly tended by the UNIL Parks & Gardens Group. Below are some of the guidelines and practices in connection with their control and maintenance:

- Plant indigenous species.
- Check the state of health of trees on a regular basis.
- Where possible preserve the tree's natural department when pruning.
- Cut back rationally to protect the tree (mainly dead wood) making clean cuts and cuts of

small cross-sectional diameter to avoid the onset of rot.

- Look after century-old trees, not least Napoleon's great oak, which is more than two centuries old. To stabilise the tree, 120 metres of guy ropes were installed in the early 2000s.

This system, changed in 2012, is a so-called static system. A second example is the giant sequoia located near the Anthropole building, which was struck by lightning around ten years ago. It has since grown some new shoots however and is regularly checked to monitor its growth. A third example is the avenue of plane trees, which also receives special attention.

From this bench, walk up the pebble path and continue straight on. At the crossroads where the trees and shrubs end, turn left along the straight path. After 100 metres, follow the path on the right which takes you down to the Biophore building and cross a small car park. At the fork in the paths, turn right. At the next fork, you arrive at a sort of roundabout.

2.

PRESENTATION OF DIFFERENT AREAS AND THEIR MANAGEMENT BY THE PARKS & GARDENS GROUP

Presentation of different areas and their management by the Parks & Gardens Group

The campus extends over 90 hectares, most of which is green space. Leaving aside its infrastructures, it consists of six types of green area which blend harmoniously together (from this roundabout you can see the first four types in the list below):

- Farming areas consisting of fields and meadows, where the grass is kept short by sheep or cattle. Pastureland is situated in particular near the main buildings (Internef, Amphipôle, Biophore, etc). To show that this type of extensive maintenance is the fruit of policy rather than simple neglect, the edges of grassland bordering footpaths are marked out by regular mowing.

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- Ecological compensation areas, which can be found for example behind and in front of the Unithèque building and near the Biophore building (to the right of the Amphipôle from this roundabout). Here, haymaking does not take place until after 15 June and sheep graze only from 1st September to encourage biodiversity, allowing insects to reproduce for example.
- Relaxation areas, where the grass is mown 12 to 15 times a year. In these areas, traditional lawns are increasingly being replaced with meadows. This is the case for example around the farm and the Château de Dorigny.
- Wooded areas extending over 12 hectares which are operated by UNIL (although they are administered by the forest ranger). Three aspects are highlighted in their management: ecology (preservation of undergrowth behind the Unithèque, consisting of old trees such as beech, oak and ash, encouraging new growth, etc), safety (regular checks on trees within a radius of 30 metres of footpaths) and public access (through the creation of new forest paths).
- A small vine-growing area (near the Anthropole building).
- Extensive sports grounds (near the lake).

Generally it is fair to say that with each passing year, these different areas are managed with ever greater tolerance for nature. Where possible, large areas (meadows and ecological compensation areas) favourable to biodiversity are encouraged. No green spaces have been chemically treated since 2011, except for sports grounds, where such practices are nevertheless strictly controlled. The general principle applied to all vegetation (trees, shrubs and plants) is based on encouraging indigenous species. For plants, more perennial, hardy varieties are preferred to annuals. Quickset hedges (where undergrowth is not cut) consist of blackthorn, hornbeam, viburnum, dogwood, yew, etc.

From this roundabout, continue straight on. At the next crossroads, follow the narrow footpath ahead of you (starts slightly to the right). Follow this winding main path. At the very end of the path and the building, turn right up a wider, climbing path. At the top of the incline, follow the path which takes you closest to the wooden building.

3. THE SHEEP

This wooden building is none other than... a sheepfold! With a presence on campus dating back more than 20 years, sheep have become the local mascot, to the extent that their presence and familiar bleating are for many an integral part of the campus identity. Since 1st May 2014, the flock has consisted of two varieties: one threatened with extinction in the early 1980s, Les Roux du Valais; and a dwarf variety, Les Moutons d'Ouessant. The sheep are environmentally-friendly mowers for the fifty or so hectares of grassland on the campus. The animals are moved from place to place by a shepherd and his dog. To round off this rural picture, a herd of cows belonging to a local breeder takes up residence near the lake in the summer, while a number of fields, particularly in front of the Unithèque building, are cultivated by another of the region's farmers. Several hectares are given over to flowering meadows which are mown after 15 June to encourage biodiversity.

Continue along the path, which soon veers to the right. In the bend, turn off to the left along the wooded path. Not far ahead, at the fork in the path, turn right and follow the winding path which borders the woods and leads you to the Belvédère de Dorigny, where there is an obelisk, a number of century-old lime trees and some wooden benches. From the benches, walk down the single forest path. At the bottom, turn right to come out of the woods. Walk down to the left along the road, then turn left. After the bridge over the river, cross by the pedestrian crossing and walk up the wide lane opposite you. Immediately take the path on your right.

4. PLANTATION OF STANDARD FRUIT TREES

In total, 12 apple trees were planted in the autumn of 2012 on this spot, eight on the slope facing you. These fruit trees receive no chemical treatment whatsoever. To this end, old varieties were chosen for their better resistance to disease. On the rest of the campus, there are around sixty cherry trees mainly by the side of the cantonal main road (staff can take turns at picking fruit at the start of the summer), around ten walnut trees, pear trees, plum trees, Mirabelle plum trees, peach trees, fig trees, kiwis, quince trees, etc.

At the top of the steps, veer sharply right by the side of the metro track. But before this, cast your eyes across the tracks to Mouline Farm.

5. PRESENTATION OF THE PARKS & GARDENS GROUP AND ITS MAIN TASKS

The Parks & Gardens Group is part of the UNIBAT Service which is based at Mouline Farm. In 2015, it is composed of eight full-time employees who carry out a wide variety of tasks throughout the seasons. Some of these, such as the pruning of large trees, require help from outside firms. Before detailing some of the main tasks carried out by gardeners, it is worth noting that green spaces on the UNIL campus (with the exception of sports grounds) undergo no chemical treatment. This policy creates more work for the gardeners, but ensures preservation of the natural surroundings as well as encouraging biodiversity. Throughout the year, gardeners keep the Dorigny site looking its best by maintaining the different green areas (lawns, meadows, woods, vines, etc) as well as the campus's different access roads and footpaths (including de-icing in winter). They are also in charge of keeping the site clean. Spring is the time for planting flowerbeds, fruit trees, etc, and the first lawn mowing. In summer, plants are watered where necessary and meadows are mown. Shrubs and bushes are cut back in the autumn, while this job is reserved for fruit trees and larger trees more generally in the winter.

Follow the metro track, then at the fork follow the small road down to your right. At the bottom on your right you will see some vines.

6. DORIGNY VINES

Planted in 1991 to celebrate the 100th anniversary of the conversion of the Academy of Lausanne into a University, these vines consist of around 400 vine stocks of Chasselas, the region's leading grape variety. One bottle per year and per stock is produced under the supervision of a wine-grower, Mr Pellichet from Féchy. Stamped Dorigny, the bottles contain a white wine which is served at UNIL events. The vines have been grown organically since 2012, although the grapes are not made into wine using an organic process.

Continue along the small road and cross over the river by the bridge. Then take the

path immediately on your left. This path quickly divides into two. Keep to the right along the small curved path.

7. HEDGES AND FLOWERS

To round off the general impression of greenery on the campus, particular attention is paid by the Parks & Gardens Group to hedges and flowers. This is the case on both sides of the path, with hedges and boxtree coppices, small trees such as hornbeams, but also periwinkle on the ground and hydrangeas, with large sculpted leaves and pink flowers with four petals. As opposed to annuals or bi-annuals, hardy plants (or perennials) last for several years. They germinate most often at the start of the summer, develop stems and leaves which generally die in winter; however in contrast to annuals, they reappear the following spring, and repeat this cycle.

Pass by the terrace of the Château de Dorigny with its white facade, then turn right after crossing a double boxtree hedge. Climb the steps facing you, then continue straight on. At the Unicentre building, look to your right slightly above ground level.

8. INSECT HOTELS

In 2012, nine insect hotels made out of larch by the Parks & Gardens Group were installed on campus. This system encourages solitary bees, ladybirds, earwigs, etc. In winter, it can serve as a refuge for species that feel the cold, while in spring it allows certain species to reproduce. Over and above this direct action to encourage biodiversity, the introduction of these wooden insect hotels also has an undeniable impact on the landscape; it also encourages questions from curious passers-by.

Here from the Unicentre building, you can see the imposing Napoleon's oak in the distance.