

# Le Flon by night

Le cœur de la capitale vaudoise bat dans un nouveau centre. A deux pas du Lausanne Palace, cet ancien quartier de port-franc revit depuis quelques années et s'anime particulièrement dès la nuit tombée. — Texte **Sylvie Ullmann**

**P**hare de la vie nocturne lausannoise depuis son ouverture en 1985, le MAD, unique boîte de nuit de Suisse à figurer dans le top 100 des meilleurs clubs du monde, a longtemps régné seul sur les nuits du Flon. Ce temple des musiques électroniques accueille les plus grands DJ et un public éclectique, tous âges confondus, que rassemble une envie: faire la fête. Igor Blaska, aux commandes de l'établissement depuis 1995, a vu le quartier changer de visage. «Tout a commencé avec l'installation d'un cinéma il y a dix ans, puis d'un parking», se souvient-il. Boutiques, cafés et restaurants ont suivi ces cinq dernières années, poursuivant cette métamorphose dont il se félicite: «Auparavant, les Lausannois se contentaient de traverser le Flon pour se rendre en ville. Désormais, ils s'y arrêtent pour flâner ou boire un verre.»

## POUR TOUS LES GOÛTS

On s'y retrouve à l'apéritif ou en soirée autour de la place centrale, tout récemment rénovée. Une seconde boîte de nuit, le Xoxo, a pris ses quartiers à deux pas du MAD. Depuis trois ans, dans ce bâtiment à la façade habillée d'une

résille géante de béton qui rappelle le Mucem marseillais, on danse sur les derniers rythmes tendance et des beats latino-américains. Mais pas question de chercher à faire concurrence au célèbre voisin: les deux établissements ont opté pour la complémentarité, pour le plus grand bonheur des clubbeurs, qui peuvent ainsi profiter d'une offre de haut vol aux deux adresses. Quant à celles et ceux qui souhaitent sortir sans rentrer aux petites heures, les distractions ne manquent pas dans ce quartier, qui compte une multitude de bars pour toutes les envies. Les fans de sport fileront au Bulldog et les amateurs d'ambiances italo-américaines au Cipriano. Et pour faire le plein de musique à l'heure de l'afterwork en mode chic et décalé, rendez-vous au Punk.

## PASSÉ INDUSTRIEL

Le Flon rassemble toutes ces ambiances éclectiques et les imprègne de sa propre atmosphère. Ce n'est pas un hasard: ses bâtiments restent fortement marqués par le passé industriel des lieux. Si, jusqu'au milieu du XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle, l'endroit n'était qu'une vallée où coulait une rivière du

même nom, dès le XIX<sup>e</sup>, des scieries et des tanneries s'y sont installées suite au développement industriel. En 1832, une épidémie de choléra amène la municipalité à procéder au voûtement du cours d'eau, puis à combler la vallée. Peu à peu, des entrepôts s'y implantent; bon nombre d'entre eux sont encore debout aujourd'hui. A l'époque, ils étaient desservis par des chariots, en mémoire de qui l'une des principales rues s'appelle «voie du Chariot». Au début du XX<sup>e</sup> siècle, l'endroit devient la plus grande gare de marchandises de la ville.

Mais dès les années 1950, ces activités ralentissent, les halles de stockage accueillent bureaux, artisans et artistes, donnant au quartier une couleur alternative, qui perdurera jusqu'à la première décennie du XXI<sup>e</sup> siècle. Aujourd'hui, les anciens entrepôts ont été rénovés, marquant de leur allure typique ce paysage urbain. Commerces, restaurants et cafés s'y sont établis et les Lausannois, réconciliés avec les lieux, s'y attardent désormais volontiers de jour comme de nuit. «Welcome home», slogan du MAD pour 2017, n'a jamais sonné aussi juste. ☾



# Le Flon by night

The heart of the cantonal capital is beating in a new place. Only a stone's throw from the Lausanne Palace, this former free-trade zone has been brought to life in recent years and is particularly lively at night.

**A** beacon of Lausanne nightlife since it opened in 1985, the MAD – the only Swiss nightclub in the world's top 100 clubs – has long reigned over nightlife in Le Flon. This temple of electronic music plays host to leading DJs and an eclectic population of all ages who have only one thing in mind: to party. Igor Blaska, who has managed this institution since 1995, has seen a definite change in the neighbourhood. "It all began ten years ago with the opening of a cinema, then a car park," he recalls. Shops, cafés and restaurants followed over the next five years, continuing the metamorphosis which he happily applauds: "In the past, locals would pass through Le Flon on the way into town. Now, they stop, take a stroll or have a drink."

**SOMETHING FOR EVERY TASTE**  
People meet around the recently renovated main square for an aperitif or later in the evening. A second nightclub, the Xoxo, has taken up residence close to the MAD. For the past three years, party-goers have danced to the latest hits

and Latin-American beats in this building with its giant concrete-mesh façade reminiscent of the MuCEM in Marseilles. But the new arrival does not compete with its famous neighbour: the two clubs play the complementarity card, much to the delight of clubbers who benefit from a quality offering at both addresses. For anyone wanting to enjoy a night out without having to go home in the early hours, the neighbourhood boasts numerous bars catering to every taste. Sports fans will make a beeline for the Bulldog while those looking for an Italian-American atmosphere will be tempted by the Cipriano. And if you want to enjoy some music during a chic and offbeat after-work event, then the Punk is the place to be.

#### INDUSTRIAL PAST

Le Flon brings together this eclectic collection of atmospheres and stamps them with its own character. And it is not by chance: the buildings in the neighbourhood are still heavily marked by its industrial past. Until the mid-18th century, the area was nothing more than a valley and a river of the same

name, but as the 19th century dawned, sawmills and tanneries sprang up as industrial development progressed. In 1832, a cholera epidemic forced the municipality to bridge the river and fill in the valley. Warehouses were gradually built, many of which are still standing today. At the time, goods were transported by carts, a fact that can be seen in the name of one of the main streets: "Voie du Chariot". At the beginning of the 20th century, the district became home to the city's largest freight station.

From the 1950s onwards, however, industrial activity began to slow and the warehouses were occupied by offices, craftsmen and artists, giving the district a new atmosphere that would last until the first decade of the 21st century. Today, the former warehouses have been renovated, marking this urban landscape with their distinctive appearance. Shops, restaurants and cafés have moved in and, with a renewed affection for the district, the inhabitants of Lausanne now happily linger here day and night. "Welcome home", the slogan of the MAD for 2017, has never rung so true. ☀



#### SELECTION OF ADDRESSES



##### FRIENDS CAFÉ

The Friends Café occupies two floors of LHotel: the ground floor and, in fine weather, the roof terrace. It is the ideal place to spend time with friends. Enjoy a glass of wine or a house cocktail while munching on an appetiser or two. The café often hosts DJs and live concerts.

**FRIENDS CAFÉ**  
Place de l'Europe 6, 1003 Lausanne  
Tue – Wed from 16.00 to 23.45, Thu from 16.00 to 00.45  
Fri – Sat from 16.00 to 1.45  
[www.lhotel.ch](http://www.lhotel.ch)

##### For an after-work event



##### MAD CLUB

Five storeys, four dance floors, a restaurant and the leading electro DJs: this is the place to be for night owls visiting the Vaud cantonal capital. The main room, with its mobile ceiling, plays host to the most famous DJs. A mezzanine is reserved for VIP customers. The basement is home to urban music while at the very top, the Jet Lag has a separate entrance and is geared to the over 30s.

**MAD CLUB**  
Rue de Genève 23, 1003 Lausanne  
Thu – Sun from 23.00 to 5.00  
[www.madclub.ch](http://www.madclub.ch)

##### For fans of electro



##### XOXO CLUB

This nightclub boasts two dance floors – one "all styles" and the other devoted to Latino music – a VIP zone with separate entrance and cloakroom, a smoking room and an electronic hookah bar. Recently, the Xoxo has also opened a restaurant serving excellent fusion cuisine. Open in winter, the terrace is also a firm favourite, as are the cocktails. The house speciality is a mojito that can be served with a strawberry, passion fruit or kiwi twist.

**XOXO CLUB**  
Rue des Côtes-de-Montbenon 20, 1003 Lausanne  
Fri – Sat from 23.00 to 6.00  
[www.xoxoclub.ch](http://www.xoxoclub.ch)

##### For people who prefer contemporary music



##### CIPRIANO WINEBAR

There are several ambiances in this huge, fully glazed bar with its lounge area boasting a giant, peacock-blue sofa and standing tables near the long bar, bringing a little bit of America to Le Flon. But in the glasses and on the plates, it is Italy that takes pride of place: you can savour typical Italian cold cuts, bruschettas, piadinas, paninis and salads. To accompany the food, there is a wide selection of Italian wine as well as Spanish, Portuguese and Swiss offerings and a tempting choice of cocktails.

**CIPRIANO WINEBAR**  
Rue du Port Franc 11, 1003 Lausanne  
Mon – Wed from 11.00 to 23.00, Thu from 11.00 to 1.00,  
Fri – Sat from 11.00 to 2.00, Sun 11.00 to 23.00  
[www.cipriano-bar.ch](http://www.cipriano-bar.ch)

##### For anyone dreaming of the sun



##### PUNK BAR

There are no mohicans or tartan here. The punk element can be found in the offbeat spirit of the place. The atmosphere is that of a lounge while the decor is resolutely baroque, with comfortable Chesterfield armchairs and reproductions of Botticelli's works on the wall. At the bar, guests can taste delicious cocktails made with fresh produce as they listen to hits ranging from the 1970s to the present day selected by a DJ. Fashion shows, concerts and other events are also on the programme. The bar has been nominated several times in the category of "Best Bar in Switzerland" at the Swiss Nighlife Awards.

**PUNK BAR**  
Place de l'Europe 9, 1003 Lausanne  
Thu from 17.00 to 1.00, Fri – Sat 17.00 to 2.00  
[www.punkbar.ch](http://www.punkbar.ch)

##### For "lounge addicts"



##### BULLDOG BAR

Half way between the cinema and the Xoxo, this is a perfect place for all sports fans. With its numerous giant screens showing live sporting events, it bursts at the seams during football or rugby matches but there are so many other sports to watch: motor racing, tennis, athletics and boxing, to name just a few. The American-style atmosphere extends to the food with burgers, ribs and nachos on offer for anyone feeling a little peckish.

**BULLDOG BAR**  
Rue du Port-Franc 17, 1003 Lausanne  
Mon – Wed from 9.00 to 0.00, Thu from 9.00 to 1.00  
Fri – Sat from 9.00 to 2.00, Sun from 10.00 to 0.00