

PATHWAY TO PARADISE

Mont Saint-Michel in Normandy remains a popular tourist spot and now, thanks to work by architect Dietmar Feichtinger, using LEC lighting, an illuminated footbridge leads visitors down the right path.



Mont Saint-Michel in Normandy, France, has always been a popular tourist destination, attracting almost three million visitors each year. With its roots dating back as far as the 4th Century, Mont Saint-Michel has naturally been in need of restoration over the years. More recently the main goal has been to create an in-depth and long-lasting rehabilitation of its maritime landscape, while renewing the appeal to tourists.

Supported by the French Government and local authorities in Normandy and Brittany, a ten-year-long restoration period of the entire site began back in 2005. With all elements due to complete next year, there have been various stages to the rehabilitation process - in 2009 a dam that generates flushes depending on tides began to dredge the immediate areas around the Saint-Michel. Then, in 2012 parking lots were moved onto the mainland and 24/7 public transport was set up. Most recently, in July this year, a new footbridge connecting pedestrians and cyclists from the mainland to the Mont Saint-Michel opened. Designed and realised by architect Dietmar Feichtinger, the footbridge has been up-lit using tailor-made LED light bars designed by LEC of France.

In designing the new footbridge, Feichtinger wanted, above all else, to avoid disturbing the majestic feel of the historic site and so,

the footbridge is solidly fixed on 134 stilts, extending over 760 metres, and is in total harmony with the environment, using wooden decks for the footbridge floor, as pictured above. The footpath has been separated into two, which works to secure the footbridge while keeping the pedestrians separate from the shuttles. It also allows for resting points should visitors want to take their time and appreciate the spectacular scenery. Commenting on his vision, Feichtinger said: "The desired effect was to mark the pathway to the Mont while keeping the attention on it. The pier slowly and gradually goes towards the Mont Saint-Michel - its up-lighting highlights this very delicate approach. The goal here was to avoid encroaching the beauty of the place with discreet and elegant lighting. It also needed to safely mark-light the pathway to the Mont. We wanted a luminous line, that was continuous and homogenous but that would blend into the horizon."

The lighting brief for the footbridge was to produce fully integrated lighting that is discreet and resistant to extreme weather conditions. The discreet up lighting of the footbridge uses a total of 296 LEC 5620-Brunei LED light bars, each measuring 1.45m and tailor-made to suit. The lighting bars include an organic glass pane that is resistant to extreme

weather conditions; an IP 68 rating and shock resistant up to 60 Joules. As well as a very long LED lifetime and low energy consumption, the fixtures have been integrated underneath the separation panel, diffusing consistent and homogenous light over a length of 430 metres. To avoid encroaching on Mont Saint-Michel's own lighting, the LEC light bars are directed downwards so that they up-light the footpath only. The lighting intensity can also be dimmed anytime from the central pilot in the Saint-Michel upstream. The embedding cases for the lights are used as cable protectors and have allowed for a neat installation that is perfectly integrated into the footbridge.

"LEC was selected following a public tender," said Feichtinger. "We'd already had the opportunity to work together, in particular the up-lighting of the Passerelle de la Paix in Lyon. LEC's solution fully met with our specifications, in particular because of the LED fixture's small size, it was ideal for discreet implementation. The visual result is superb, is continuous and fluid all the way. LED light bars are also energy and cost-efficient as they are known for the long-lasting diodes.

"Our collaboration with LEC's team went really well and we appreciated their flexibility and bespoke solution." www.lec-lyon.com