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 the construction of around twenty buildings, UNIL has preserved the rustic feel of the old estate. This is a walk to discover the main buildings of the campus site.

Start and finish
Napoleon's great oak, at one end of the Unithèque building
Duration
1h30, with 45mn actual walking
Distance
2.5 km

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

1. NAPOLEON'S OAK, UNITHÈQUE AND UNICENTRE

Well before construction started on UNIL buildings in the 1970s, this oak tree was a landmark of the Dorigny estate. It is said to have been planted in 1800 to commemorate the passage of Napoleon Bonaparte and 40,000 men en route to Italy on 12 May that year. Dendrochronological research places the exact date at 1778. It was therefore planted in Dorigny when it was 22 years old. Trees and nature more generally were of great importance in the construction of the Unithèque.

The building, which was put into service in 1983, was the work of architect Guido Cocchi – considered to be the father of the campus – with three other colleagues. Known also as the Banana on account of its shape, it was built with an eye to the surrounding nature and topography. The edifice is in fact built right up against a moraine left by the Rhône glacier more than 15,000 years ago. It nestles at the foot of the stand of trees situated on this moraine, following its curved profile. With the Unithèque building, architects broke new ground by combining food for the mind with food for the body in a single building, a rarity at the time. Today it houses the campus’s largest library with 750 workstations, a media library, its main restaurant, and a cafeteria (with microwaves available for use). The Unicentre building, adjacent to the Unithèque, is home to the UNIL Rectorate. It houses the Admissions Service and the Office for Socio-Cultural Affairs (work, accommodation, grants, etc).

From this bench, walk up the pebble path and continue straight on. At the crossroads where the trees and shrubs end, turn right onto the unttarred path. By the greenhouses, turn right along the first path which leads into the woods. Very soon, at the fork, 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.

2. THE FIVE UNIL DISTRICTS

Built over an area of 90 hectares, the campus is divided into five distinct sectors. From this viewpoint offering a delightful view of the lake and mountains, you can see two of them: in the foreground is the Central District with the Unithèque building, and further off along the line of plane trees is the Lake District with its sports grounds. The other three sectors are hidden by trees or undulations. On the left is the Dorigny District with the Anthropole and Internefl building, while on the right, slightly higher up, is the...
Sorge District, located on a sloping ledge, whose focal point is the Amphipôle building. Lastly, behind you at the foot of the hill, lies the Mouline District with its brand new Géopolis building. In a little over 40 years around twenty buildings have been constructed. The road layout has been designed to cover mainly the outside of the campus. Within these different districts, nature is much to the fore, with woods, meadows, lawns, majestic trees, orchards and rivers, etc.

From the benches, walk down the single forest path. At the bottom, turn right to come out of thewoods. Then turn right along the road and across at the pedestrian crossing. Veer left to pass between the Grange de Dorigny (with its imposing roof) and Dorigny Farm (with red shutters). By the buildings, turn right across the farm terrace. Afterwards turn left, then right along the river path. On your right you can see a house with a white facade: this is the Château de Dorigny.

4. **ANTHROPOLE AND INTERNET**
   On your left is the Anthropole building, a structure of juxtaposed lozenges. This configuration made it possible to create skylights and numerous facades to encourage natural light. The edifice, inaugurated in 1987, is designed as a sort of town, with a main diagonal thoroughfare passing through common areas, sometimes enhanced by shops (shopper's station, shop, travel agent, hair salon, grocery, etc.). It is home to the Faculty of Arts, the Faculty of Theology and Religious Studies, and part of the Faculty of Business and Economics (HEC). Also dotted around the building are a self-service cafeteria, the head office of student associations, a cash machine, etc. A large cafeteria is located on the lower floors. The Internet is on your right behind the sequoia. Inaugurated in 1977, it is home to the Faculty of Law, Criminal Justice and Public Administration, and the Faculty of Business and Economics. Here there is a library with workstations, a cafeteria, a kiosk and a bank.
   The building has five lecture halls and large interior spaces designed to promote meetings and exchanges among users.

   Just as the bridge, at the fork in the path, turn left along the river. A little further on, up walk the small road facing you. At the top of the incline, at the end of the road, continue straight on by the side of the metro track. The path then starts to descend to the left (steps). At the end of the path, turn right along the wide lane which passes under the metro tracks and then begins to climb. At the top of this incline you will see the Géopolis building on your right, the Cantonal Archives on your left, and a little further on the same side, the Idheap building.

5. **GÉOPOLIS AND IDHEAP**
   These two buildings of different sizes were built on the site of a former industrial zone. With its original façade, the Géopolis building was designed to be a flagship feature of the UNIL campus and at the same time a functional building for its users. Inaugurated in 2013, it is home to the Faculty of Social and Political Sciences and the Faculty of Geosciences and Environment. Here there is a restaurant, a cafeteria, a library and “Zélig”, a bar managed by a student association.

   Put into service in 2010, the building occupied by Idheap (Swiss Graduate School of Public Administration) stands out by its patio, where there are pine tree saplings. A pleasant source of light in a building which also houses a small cafeteria.

   Continue straight on along the road. Just before the Idheap building, turn left along the straight path bordered by pine trees which runs by the side of this building. At the end of this path, turn left along the boundary path. At the fork, turn right. Then turn left and cross the metro track and the road by the pedestrian crossing.

   Turn right along the road, then left after 50 metres, just after the road bridge across the river, to go into the woods.

6. **MÈBÈRE + SORGE = CHAMBERONNE**
   Here you are at the confluence of two rivers: the Mêbre (completely on the left-hand side) and the Sorge (in front of you). Downstream the river is called the Chamberonne and runs into the lake after crossing the campus. The River Mêbre has its source in the Jorat woods and flows through Cheseaux, then Crissier and Renens, after winding its way through some impressive gorges. The Sorge also has its source near Cheseaux, passes close by Villars-St-Croix, then flows through Crissier and Ecublens. Near its source it is called... the Chamberonne!

   Turn right straight away to follow the course of the Sorge, which you will cross a little further on by means of a footbridge. Then climb the main forest path which begins with some steps. At the top of the path, at the fork on the sloping ledge, turn right to join the path by the edge of the woods. Then follow the path on the right, which immediately veers left and passes beside a wooden building. Further on, this path starts to go downhill.

   At the bottom, turn left and walk up the narrow path by the side of a large building. Follow this winding path. At the end, you can see several buildings.

7. **BIOPHORE, AMPHIPÔLE AND AMPHIMAX**
   On your left is the Biophore, a building opened in 1983 which is currently used by the Faculty of Biology and Medicine. Here there are numerous laboratories where exotic ants and carnivorous plants are among the species studied.

   On your right, the Amphimôle building begins. This was the first university building opened in Dorigny in 1970. It consists of four 300-seat lecture halls (unoccupied those days). It is also home to the Eprouvette, a public laboratory, and the Anthropos Café, the venue for meetings of all kinds. Occupying the building’s extension, the Amphimax, put into service in 2004, has a large auditorium able to seat nearly 900 people. The projection of course media onto a sort of large virtual blackboard made it possible to dispense with the tiered, concentric structure of previous lecture halls. This brings more modularity to the space, which can easily be divided into two halls. In this building there is a restaurant-cafeteria and a kiosk.

   At the end of this path, turn left and continue straight on to rejoin Napoleon’s oak. Before this however, take a look at other campus buildings from afar. To get a good overall view, go to the grassy area behind the avenue of trees.

8. **GÉNOPODE, BATOCHEMIE AND CUBOTRON**
   Facing you in the foreground is the Génopode (1991), which houses the Centre for Integrative Genomics and the Swiss Institute of Bioinformatics, behind which is the Batoclime building (1994). As well as a cafeteria, it is home to the School of Criminal Sciences (ESC), and also EPFL laboratories. While two of this building’s three shafts are used for ventilation, the third houses a training area for some students. Here, real crime scenes are re-enacted to allow theoretical knowledge to be put into practice. The last building, the Cubotron, is hidden behind the tallest plane trees. Although it is situated on UNIL land, it houses EPFL physics departments.

Walk designed by Pierre Corajoud, version 1 - October 2015
More walks to discover on www.unil.ch/durable