

## The Montoir–Vigo Ro-Ro Service is 50 Years Old!

**2023 marks the fiftieth year of existence of the ro-ro shipping link between Montoir de Bretagne and Vigo. Nantes – Saint Nazaire Port’s oldest shipping service, it was originally created to support the development of flows of component parts between the Citroën plants in Rennes, in Brittany, and Vigo, in Spain.**

On 25<sup>th</sup> September 1973, the German car ferry *Saaletal* docked at the Quai des Grands Puits facility in the Penhoët dock basin, in Saint Nazaire. This call marked the start of a scheduled roll-on/roll-off (ro-ro) service to Vigo, at the rate of two trips per week. The vessel took on board some ten semi-trailer loads of auto parts produced at Citroën’s Rennes plant, a refrigerated truck carrying a consignment of peas from England, and two trucks containing industrial parts manufactured in Strasbourg and destined for Portugal.

The Sales Directorate of the Autonomous Port Authority of Nantes – Saint Nazaire had been campaigning to launch this service since 1969. Citroën’s Executive Management was seeking to develop the flows between the automotive plants in Rennes and Vigo. The logistical aspects formed a major obstacle to that deployment. At the time, the road networks were not as developed, trucks were far less powerful, and it was necessary to cross two mountain ranges (the Cantabrian Mountains and the Pyrenees). Also, Spain was not yet part of the European Union, only joining in 1986, and the formalities at the Irun/Hendaye border point added significantly to the transit time by road.

### Construction of a Ro-Ro Berth at Montoir

Two years after the service came on stream, 400 crossings were made, and 10 000 trucks or semi-trailers transported. The arrival of Suardiaz on 6<sup>th</sup> October 1976 increased the operating capacity and gave the maritime service a whole new dimension.

The volumes passing between the two plants grew rapidly, and the Saint Nazaire facility soon became too small. As part of the French Government’s revitalization plan following the oil crisis, the decision was made to build a ro-ro berth at Montoir de Bretagne, to support the service and activity at the two plants, going forward. The new berth began operating in 1977.

The service developed progressively, and came to occupy a strategic position as a logistical support for the Peugeot Citroën Group. The traffic types diversified over the course of time. The service opened up to other sectors of activity, notably consignments of slate. At the start of the 1990s, the commercial success of the *Xantia* model in Spain drove the take-up rate and justified the commissioning of a second berth. That period also coincided with the effort to reinforce the presence of Gefco, the PSA Group’s transport subsidiary, at Montoir de Bretagne.



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## "Motorway of the Sea" Certification in 2015

Following an interruption lasting a few years, during which the service was operated by the CMHF shipping line, Suardiaz took over its operation in 2013. In the interim, Renault had incorporated the Montoir de Bretagne call in its logistics plan for the transportation of cars manufactured in Turkey. Two years later, in 2015, the Montoir-Vigo service was awarded "Motorway of the Sea" certification by the European Union, with a view to speeding up energy transition and to permitting the Montoir and Vigo ro-ro terminals to strengthen their port call reception capability.

In 2017, the Montoir-Vigo maritime motorway service opened a new connection to Tangiers, tying in with the location of factories operated by Renault and PSA (now known as Stellantis) within the free zone of the Port of Tangiers. This new call notably offered the Scania plant in Angers a direct maritime solution for exports to the Moroccan market. In 2023, a new solution offering an alternative to road haulage has been put in place for the exportation of vehicles produced at the Stellantis plant in Rennes. Somaloir and Nantes – Saint Nazaire Port are helping to establish a scheduled link between Montoir de Bretagne and Turkey.

The success of the service over all these years is based primarily on the relationships of trust that exist between the different players (Gefco, Suardiaz, Somaloir, Manocéan and MSO, Somaloir subsidiary companies specializing in cargo handling), on the strength of the relationship with both Port Authorities, and on the quality of the facilities.

## About...

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### Port of Vigo

The Port of Vigo is one of the largest ports on Spain's Atlantic Coast, in terms of general cargo, fisheries and cruise shipping. It specializes in particular in container and ro-ro traffic. The port facilities cover an area of 250 hectares on land, whilst the surface area on the water exceeds 14 000 hectares. The Port's total traffic volume is over 4 million tonnes per year, approximately 90 % of which consists of general cargo that is mostly handled at specialist terminals: the TERMAVI terminal, which receives container traffic, and the Bouzas terminal, which handles new motor vehicle ro-ro traffic. The world's principal shipping lines in the fields of ro-ro, lo-lo and breakbulk currently operate at the Port of Vigo, via 90 scheduled maritime services.

*To find out more, go to: [apvigo.com](http://apvigo.com)*

### Suardiaz

Suardiaz is a leading multimodal logistics group. With over 100 years of experience and more than 600 employees in Europe, America and Africa, Suardiaz Group offers its customers integrated solutions. Suardiaz combines innovation and tradition within a family-owned business. Suardiaz Shipping Lines, which has owned and operated ro-ro vessels in Western Europe since 1945, is currently focussed on the sustainable and environment-friendly development of motorways of the sea, in keeping with the priorities of the European Commission, such as Industry 4.0 digitalization, which is going to define the new era of logistics.



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In line with the current market demand for more eco-friendly solutions, Suardiaz's R&D team is developing new technological projects, such as those relating to liquefied natural gas and small-scale LNG. Suardiaz Oil & Gas has recently built the "Bunker Breeze", a multi-product, LNG-ready supply barge. Suardiaz Logistics, the multimodal logistics division, is concentrating its efforts on developing and improving the effectiveness of its multimodal solutions, notably for door-to-door services, warehousing and forwarding.

*To find out more, go to: [suardiaz.com](http://suardiaz.com)*

### **Somaloir**

A specialist in roll-on/roll-off logistics, Somaloir is based at the Port of Nantes – Saint Nazaire's ro-ro terminal. Somaloir proposes a comprehensive range of services designed to simplify and to optimize supply chain management for industrial firms. Somaloir offers at one and the same time ship's agent and consignment services, ro-ro transportation and road haulage forwarding agent services, and port-based cargo handling services. Somaloir notably provides port handling services for the Montoir-Vigo shipping service.

*To find out more, go to: [somaloir.com](http://somaloir.com)*

### **Nantes – Saint Nazaire Port**

An industrial tool for economic growth and a regional planner and developer, Nantes – Saint Nazaire Port works in partnership with the Regional Community's public- and private-sector stakeholders to enhance the Loire Estuary on an economic level and on an environmental level. It forms a strategic interface between land and sea, receiving nearly 3 000 calls by merchant vessels each year, and acts as a real international hub for industrial and logistical operations. The activities at the Port of Nantes – Saint Nazaire generate 28 500 jobs at around 500 establishments forming a single industrial and port complex (2022 study based on 2018 data conducted by INSEE, the French National Institute of Economic and Statistical Information). The Port owns a Port Authority area covering 2 722 hectares, of which 1 545 hectares are developed port, logistical and industrial zones, and 1 177 hectares are reserved natural spaces.

*To find out more, go to: [nantes.port.fr](http://nantes.port.fr)*