

## **Besançon, a Vauban city inscribed on the Unesco World Heritage list**

Besançon, the capital of Franche-Comté, has just been inscribed as a Unesco World Heritage site. Fortified by Vauban, it has been recognised for its outstanding universal value by the World Heritage Committee, united in Quebec for its 32<sup>nd</sup> session.

### **An inscription within a network**

In 2003, with the support of the Ministry of Culture and Communication, Besançon decided to propose the works of Vauban for inscription on the World Heritage list.

Today, thirteen localities, with 12 fortified Vauban sites, are united in an association "Network of Major Vauban Sites", created at the initiative of Jean-Louis Fousseret, Mayor of Besançon, President of Greater Besançon and president of the association.

Along with Besançon, twelve other localities have received the prestigious international recognition conferred by the World Heritage Committee. In so doing, the group of sites has become the 32<sup>nd</sup> French property to be inscribed on the World Heritage list.

Jean-Louis Fousseret, in the name of all of the municipalities in the Network of Major Vauban Sites, is pleased at the announcement of the decision and stresses the international recognition it confers: "this has been accomplished by four years of work and commitment to obtaining recognition of the fortified heritage sites of Vauban by the highest international authority. This label is a prestigious reward, given for the development policy implemented by each of our towns. It will give birth to new initiatives, projects and innovations for a long time to come".

### ***The stakes for Besançon***

The works of Vauban in Besançon include the Citadel and two urban walls, for a total surface area of 195 hectares (482 acres). The key components of these sites, essential elements in the cultural life of our town, have been the object of major restoration programmes.

The Citadel, with its eminently strategic position, is the *magnum opus*. Since 1959, when the town of Besançon took ownership of the Citadel, the cultural and touristic vocation of the site have preserved and enhanced it. In addition to the Citadel itself, the site includes three national museums. All go to make the Citadel the most popular tourist attraction in Franche-Comté.

On the right bank of the River Doubs, the surrounding wall in Battant is divided into two fortified façades dominated by Fort Griffon, the second citadel, situated opposite the first. Since 1991, this fort, property of the General Council of the Doubs, has been home to the university education department for primary school teachers.

To defend the heart of the city, Vauban built six guntowers along the left bank of the River Doubs, a major innovation in fortified architecture. Five of the original towers remain today: one, host to musical creations and two, recently restored to host exhibits and cultural events.

At the same time and for greater coherence, the development of a media policy has allowed to place the fortified site within the context of the whole.

Inscription on the World Heritage list is highly encouraging to the town of Besançon. It reinforces the will to publicise the works of this exceptional architect and with the twelve other Vauban sites, to become a veritable reference in terms of administrating and developing fortified heritage, from a national and an international perspective.

From the standpoint of district planning and development, the spin-offs of inscription on the World Heritage list will benefit a wide area around Besançon. Recognition by Unesco will reinforce awareness of the many assets in and around Besançon, in terms of quality of life and in terms of social and economic dynamics. Economic indicators for World Heritage sites show the impact of the Unesco label in terms of attractivity. It favours the development of sustainable tourism and attracts new businesses and economic partners. With this expansion naturally comes a commitment to excellence and a policy to enhance international relations – two guarantees for the sustainability of the project.

Jean-Louis Fousseret and the members of the Network of Major Vauban Sites are grateful to the President of the Republic, the Minister of Culture and Communication, the Minister of Defence and the Minister of Ecology and Sustainable Development for their support of their candidacy.

They pay tribute to the work accomplished by Unesco, by Icomos and by all of the professionals whose evaluations allowed to enrich our case.

They thank Jean Guéguinou, Ambassador of France, and Jean-Noël Jeanneney, co-presidents of the national support committee, General Jean-Louis Vincent, president of the regional support committee, Paulette Guinchard, and Alain Monferrand, President of the Vauban Association, for their decisive support.

Jean-Louis Fousseret would also like to highlight the investment of the members of the Network, the mayors and the citizens who, by their work and active participation, made the candidacy of the works of Vauban a truly popular and dynamic one – one that must live on.

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