



Battant District

Besançon Urban trail



1/ PONT BATTANT

This bridge was built by the Romans in the second century and was the only bridge in the city, until the Bregille walkway was built at the end of the 17th century. It was modified several times and partly destroyed during the Second World War. It was replaced in 1953 by a construction with a single archway, to avoid a dam effect in the event of exceptionally high tides.

More recently, it was again remodelled in order to hold the weight of the tram, put into operation in 2014. The area was redesigned during the building work. The wooden walkway you are going to take, overlooking the Doubs river, means that pedestrians, bicycles, cars and the tram can all move around the city without disturbing each other.

Jouffroy d'Abbans Statue

This statue represents the Marquis Jouffroy d'Abbans (1751-1832), who was the first to try out steam navigation on the Doubs.

The local people fell in love with this elegant Marquis and he is often seen with an accessory of some sort! Don't hesitate to come and get your photo taken with him!

Open your eyes: informative signs on some of the heritage sites will give you some extra information about the history. Most of them are translated into English.



2/ VESTIGES DE L'AMPHITHÉÂTRE



The Amphitheatre has impressive dimensions, worthy of the similar constructions in Arles and Nîmes. It is around 21 metres high and was built in the 1st century into a 106 metres by 126 metres oval shape, with a capacity to hold 20,000 spectators!

In keeping with the memory of this Gallo-Roman past, in the area you will find: the Rue d'Arènes, the Arènes School and the Arènes Car Park. (Arènes = Arena)

On your way you will go past number 13, rue Thiémanté: this half-timbered house is one of the oldest in Besançon, dating back to the 16th century.

3/ PLACE MARULAZ

This square bears the name of General JF. Marulaz (1769-1842), commander and defender of the town during the Siege of 1814 against the Austrians. Bordering the square is the former artillery barracks, now a vocational secondary school, and a row of buildings from various periods in time. One of them dates back to the 18th century and it is the base of a triangle built around the Delacroix fountain acting as the centre of gravity, built around 1854.

Just North of the square, on Rue Marulaz, there is a shared garden which is enjoyed by local gardeners and school children.

This shaded square is very pleasant and an ideal place to go for a drink on the terrace, during the hot summer days and evenings.

In the spring, there is a big flea market on all the streets in this district.

4/ FORT GRIFFON

The fort you can see today was built from the year 1680, based on Vauban's plans. This construction is the bridgehead of the town and due to its location right in the city centre, it could be considered a second citadel. Because of this location, it was possible to shoot towards the countryside in the event of an attack, and towards the city in the event of a rebellion. Today, it is owned by the Department of the Doubs.

5/ LE CLOS BARBISIER

The Clos Barbisier rose garden was created in 1982, near Fort Griffon. There is a very beautiful collection of old roses here, found thanks to the research done by the city council's Directorate of Parks and Gardens, in partnership with specialists from the Botanical Garden. You can admire the 100-petal roses from the end of the 16th century, as well as more recent varieties.

Barbizier (spelt with a "z" here) is mainly represented in a regional popular theatre production, originally based on the Nativity scene from 17th century Christmas traditions. This character was a wine-grower from the Battant district. When the baby Jesus was born, it is believed that this Barbizier told him about all the controversial matters in the city. All in the regional dialect of course!

Throughout the year, the Tambour Battant association organises various events, often outdoors: tasting of the «galette des rois», neighbourhood meals, clothing donations, garage sales... times of meetings and exchanges, which contribute to the animation of the neighbourhood.

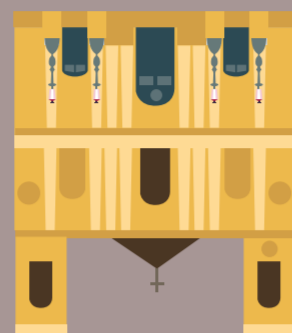
Around the same period, and of December/beginning of January, a torchlight parade is organised through the streets of Battant!

There is a small market every Sunday morning at the Jouffroy d'Abbans square nearby! This place is very popular with the locals.

On one of the towers of Sainte-Nicolas Nicole and was built between 1746 and 1766 in the same location as the Saint-Lin Baptistery, the most ancient piece of worship in the diocese. Inside, the stylistic homogeneity makes it one of the most beautiful examples of French 18th-century architecture.

This church is a masterpiece by Nicolas Nicole and was built between 1746 and 1766 in the same location as the Saint-Lin Baptistery, the most ancient piece of worship in the diocese. Inside, the stylistic homogeneity makes it one of the most beautiful examples of French 18th-century architecture.

14/ ÉGLISE SAINTE-MADELEINE



6/ HÔTEL DE CHAMPAGNEY

It was built in the first third of the 16th century. The front wall is still in the Gothic style, the windows with ogee arches and decorated with four impressive gargoyles, the last of their kind preserved in Besançon. It was redesigned between 1560 and 1565 and now boasts the galleries and staircases open out onto the courtyard, characteristic of the Franche-Comté region.

You have just turned onto the "traje" which connects Fort Griffon and Rue Battant. In Besançon, a "traje" or "trage" is a passage which crosses courtyards and gardens, used to get from one street to another.



7/ FONTAINE BACCHUS

The sculptor Alphonse Delacroix created this fountain, which replaced the 15th-century fountain, effigy of Bacchus (God of agriculture and wine in Roman mythology). Even though the current fountain does not refer to this character, or to the wine-growing history of the Battant district, it still bears the same name.

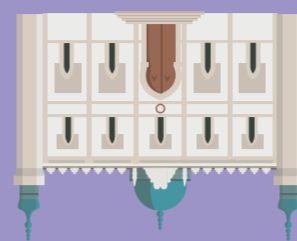
12/ QUAI DE STRASBOURG

In 1862, the authorities decided to shelter the city from floods. On the right-hand shores of the Doubs, the Napoleon Docks were built (renamed Strasbourg Docks after the fall of the Second Empire). The quay wall is higher than the highest possible tides.

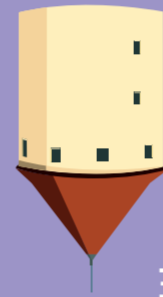
Enjoy the superb view from this dock!

13/ SYNAGOGUE

The synagogue was opened in 1869 and finished in 1871. The neo-Moorish style with an added touch of oriental style makes it one of the most representative and most original of those built in the East of France under the Second Empire.



11/ TOUR DE LA PELOTE



In 2013, the Pelote Tower, medieval military fortification (artillery tower), redesigned by Vauban in the 17th century, was destroyed by a fire which left only the external frame standing. The impressive roofing disappeared in the fire. In June 2016, thanks to the restoration, the framework of the roof was recreated, identical to the original.

The City created two digital applications: one presents the Pelote Tower and another called "Vauban week" to discover the fortifications.

In 2019, the City of Besançon – which already owned a herd of goats used to maintain the public areas on the surrounding hills – acquired a herd of sheep! Look around and you might just see them grazing on the banks of the stream in Mouillere, below Pelote Tower.

8/ SQUARE BOUCHOT

This square was created in 1907 to house the bust of Henri Bouchot (1849-1906), curator of the National Library's Prints and Drawings Department and the author of several publications about Franche-Comté. The bust of Bouchot was destroyed by the Germans in 1941, then the sculptor Saupique, Bouchot's son-in-law, made a copy out of stone which was unveiled on the 26th May 1946.

You may have noticed that in the Battant District there are numerous arts and crafts shops. To encourage those who wish to work in the cultural and creative field, number "52" rue Battant is dedicated to workshops and training courses.

9/ TOUR MONTMART

This tower is located at the centre of the Battant bastion and is also known as the "square tower". It is thought to have been built in the 13th century and was a part of the Medieval door of Battant. Vauban made it a part of the Battant cavalier and transformed it into a gunpowder magazine. In the 19th century, when the bastion cavalier was razed to the ground, the tower survived.

Realisation: Agence RHODOSIONE

For information:

Along the Shores and Remparts of the Doubs

At the heart of the loop

There are two other urban trails to discover the city of Besançon:

To make your visit as interesting as possible, there are tools and services at your disposal: City of Art and History brochures, digital applications, mp3-commented walks, guided tours given by professional expert guides and much more.

10/ PROMENADE DES GLACIS

The Glacis Promenade is a vast urban park which links the train station and the Battant District. It was built onto ancient military glacis (embankments). The park was developed in the 19th century and is listed as a Historical Monument. The alleyways are lined with rose bushes, surrounded by lawns and flower beds. Three different lawn management techniques are used here, including delayed mowing on the sections around the ramparts. The large flower beds are combined with indigenous species, some of which are grown at the Botanical Garden. The footpaths along the Vauban Fortifications and the Doubs river make up an area of 27 hectares which is classified as a "Bird Protection League" (LPO in French) refuge. There are several insect hotels in the park, and educational signs so that visitors can learn about the pollinators.

Un lieu de mémoire

In 2012, the City of Besançon created a memorial site inside Glacis Park. This evocative space preserves history in the collective memory and a very busy footpath crosses through here (connecting Viotte train station and the Battant District). Around a large esplanade, there are three statues from the ancient war memorial: the

statue of the soldier's departure, the statue of the soldier's return and the statue of the City of Besançon. In this area you can also find a tribute to soldiers overseas and an artwork by the Senegalese artist Ousmane Sow, representing "The man and the child". The names of soldiers who died for France are also engraved on the stainless steel panels on the monument and represented in a group of symbolic silhouettes.

From here, you also have a breath-taking view of the city and the natural environment!

Can you see the huge dog painted on the wall? Some of the City's districts, including the Battant District, host every other year the "Festival Bien Urbain" in June. They propose a diverse programme of wall paintings, installations, guided walking tours or cycling tours, workshops, showings, meetings with artists and much more. Since 2011: 391 temporary artworks have been created here by 162 artists, of more than 25 different nationalities. About a hundred of them can be seen, just open your eyes!

Besançon Urban trail At the heart of the Loop

The City of Besançon has been given the "City of Art and History" Label and the Vauban fortifications are listed as a UNESCO World Heritage site. This city has a lot to offer in terms of architecture and heritage, covering over 2,000 years of history. Since the founding of a Gallic Oppidum (fortified town), the city has developed over the centuries to become a major military, religious, economic and cultural hub.

Other than the events previously mentioned, the city centre and the various cultural venues host a wide range of events including: the "Festival Ludinam" (based on games/May), "Jours de danse" (dance/June), "Orgue en ville" (music/July), "Les Soirées Granvelle" (music/July/August), the "Festival international de musique" and the "Concours de jeunes chefs d'orchestre" (music/September).

Take advantage of the many discounts available in the "PASS Tourisme" for visiting: Musée des Beaux-Arts et d'Archéologie (Museum of Fine Arts and Archaeology), Musée du Temps (Museum of Time), Maison Victor Hugo, the Vauban Citadel and three museums. It also offers discounts with other partners. Finally, with this pass, you can take the public transport (tram and Ginko network buses), and the Citadel bus line which takes you up to the Citadel. Sales points: at the Tourist Office or at the Ginko machines, office or on their website.

4,2 km ~ 2h15

GROUND SIGNS



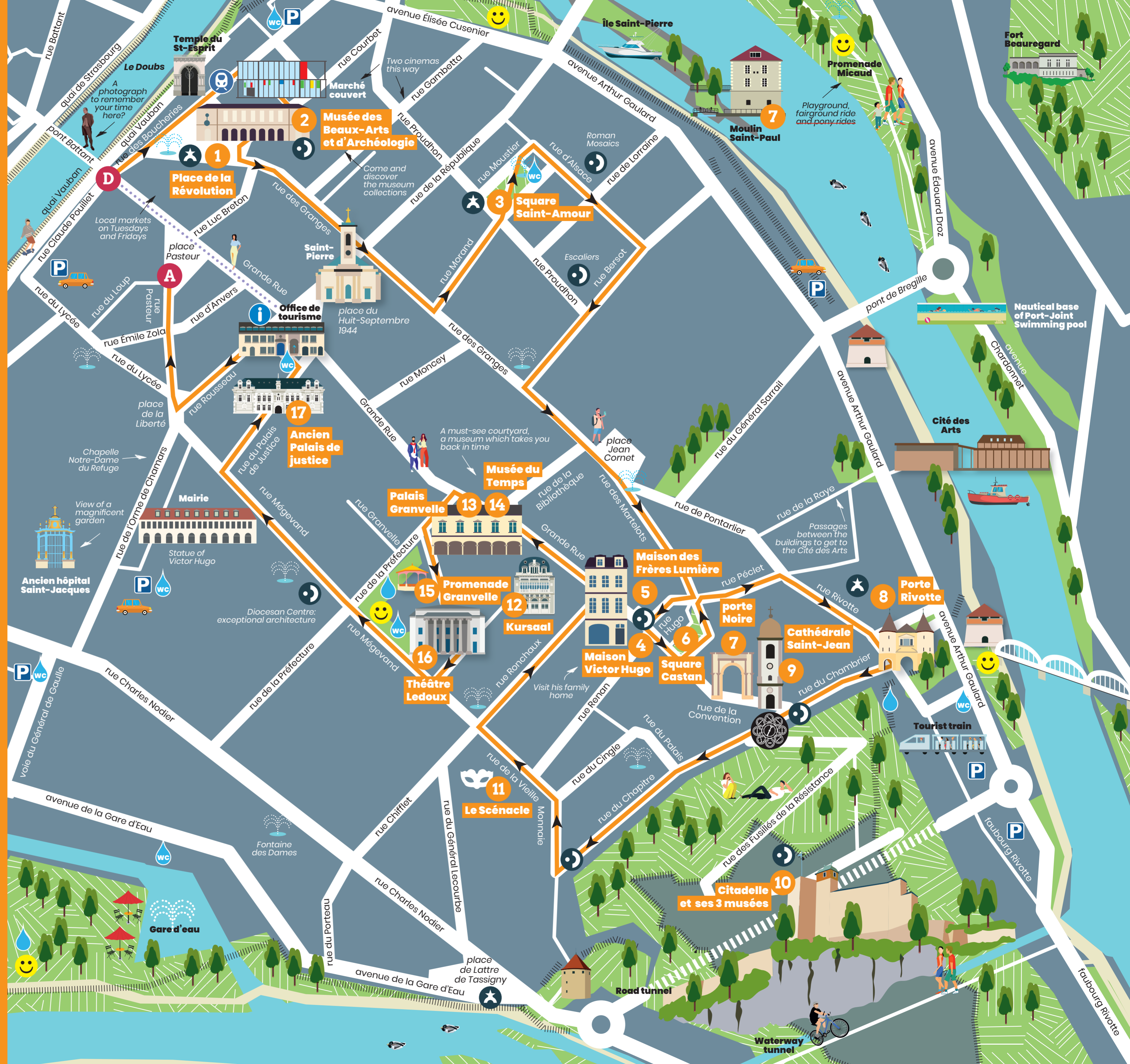
Starting instructions plate of the three urban trails



Arrows to follow

MAP LEGEND

- D A Departure and arrival locations
- Must-sees along the way
- Local must-see events
- Vauban Fortifications
- Playground
- Water fountain / WC
- Tram station near the departure



Besançon Urban trail

Along the Shores and Remparts of the Doubs river

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The City of Besançon is also located in the midst of a particularly remarkable natural environment combining the river, limestone rock, cliffs and carved anticlines. The loop formed by the Doubs river fascinates people of all ages, and there is a lot to discover here.

This urban trail will delight nature-lovers and is also dotted with fabulous heritage sites! In 2018, Besançon was actually named French capital for biodiversity.

4,6 km ~ 2h30

GROUND SIGNS



Starting instructions plate of the three urban trails



Arrows to follow

MAP LEGEND

- Departure and arrival locations
- Must-sees along the way
- Local must-see events
- Vauban Fortifications
- Departure for short hiking trails
- Playground
- Water fountain / WC
- Tram station near the departure





Along the shores and Remparts of the Doubs river

Besançon Urban trail



1/ QUAI VAUBAN

In 1691, construction works began on either side of the Battant bridge, on the left shores. Vauban was against this as he only wanted to build a simple rampart here.

★ Today, the quayside is an animated area where locals love to go for a wander as a family, stopping for a break on the benches along the way.

Cordeliers Bastioned Tower

These towers are a truly remarkable innovation from Vauban. The first bastioned towers alongside the city walls in Besançon were built from 1687. They have got two firing levels and are smaller than a bastion: the upper level is open and the lower one to shelter the canons from shots raining down from the neighbouring high ground. This tower is believed to have been finished in 1691.

2/ PROMENADE CHAMARS

Chamars is the shortened version of "campus martii", or "champ de mars". In the Middle Ages, this area was used as pastures and the town's windmill was also found here. This area became a public walkway which was redeveloped between 1770 and 1778 by local architect Bertrand, who turned it into one of the most beautiful public walkways in France.

Marais Bastioned Tower

See explanation of bastioned towers: "Cordeliers Bastioned Tower"

This tower was built into the rock, on the river bed, between 1687 and 1691.

Open your eyes: informative signs on some of the heritage sites will give you some extra information about the history. Most of them are translated into English.



3/ GARE D'EAU

In 1826, it was decided to open up an inland waterway facility in Chamars, to link the Rhône canal to the Rhin (a part of the Doubs which is canalised). The building work was done between 1827 and 1833. However, until the end of the 19th century, there was not much activity coming through this waterway facility. This was because a harbour had been built in Rivotte, which was able to welcome all the boats coming down the canal! Later, once the tunnel was built under the citadel, the waterway facility was no longer used at all.

👉 The waterway facility and the shores of the Doubs are now places to come and relax, to observe and contemplate the natural environment and the wildlife found here. People come here especially to see the magnificent views over the Citadel.

★ As soon as the weather gets warmer and for the whole summer season, a traditional pop-up guinguette is set up next to the water.

The City Bastion

The city's windmill was built on a little island on the shores of the river in the Middle Ages, and Vauban decided to surround it with a bastion, to protect it. In the 19th century, a towpath was built for the Monsieur canal, meaning that the windmill would no longer be used; the bastion which at the time was called the city windmill bastion, became a sea wall for the city and its name was consequently changed to "The City Bastion" (Bastion de la Ville).

4/ TUNNEL FLUVIAL SOUS LA CITADELLE

The first building works for this waterway tunnel under the citadel were concentrated on the upper section of the rock, and the second removed the lower section. In March 1881, the rock had been completely tunnelled through. On the 30th March 1882, the underground section was filled with water and on the 30th April the tunnel was opened.

Be careful in the darkness of the tunnel as it is also accessible for cyclists. It is cool down here, but you will appreciate it when it's hot outside!

👉 You will most certainly be able to spot the boats sailing down the Doubs. As you enter the waterway tunnel, look at the lock mechanism when a boat is approaching!



5/ LA CITADELLE DE BESANÇON

The Citadel of Besançon is a remarkable example of 17th century military architecture. It covers almost 12 hectares and is one of Vauban's masterpieces, listed as a UNESCO World Heritage Site.

👉 It is built against a superb landscape and overlooks the old town in a meander of the Doubs, from over 100 metres above, with breath-taking panoramic views.

This Citadel really is a unique place in that it houses three museums which are certified "Musées de France": the Museum of Resistance and Deportation, the Museum of Franche-Comté and the Museum with various rooms dedicated to animals. Several different areas have been set up for visitors, including the Naturalium which is an exhibition hall for biodiversity.

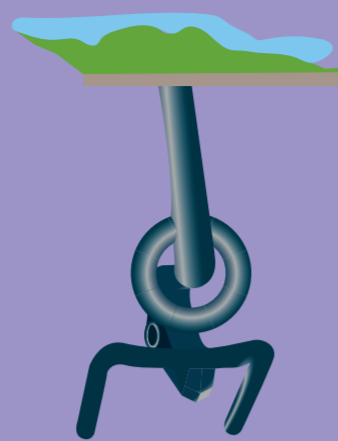
👉 Rock nesting birds choose the city of Besançon and the Citadel, and in particular the escarp wall above the Rivotte district and the cliff overhanging it, to build their nests. The main species found here are the Peregrine Falcon, the Common Kestrel, and the Goosander (species of duck). The capital of the Franche-Comté region is also the home to the biggest known nesting population on any waterway in France.



Welcome to our exceptional natural environment!

👉 In Besançon, you can go from the city to the countryside in just a few minutes! From the city centre (departure points noted on the map), walking trails over the hills, trail running paths, cycle tourism routes and the Eurovelo 6 Nantes-Atlanta take you into the heart of the countryside in very little time. You will discover some amazing viewpoints up on the hills overlooking the city, and some breath-taking landscapes along the Doubs valley. There are a lot of outdoor activities in Besançon or the surrounding area: Mountain biking, kayaking, hang-glider and climbing!

+ The outdoor base of Pres des Vaux opened its doors in 2024



9/ LE MINOTAURE

This monumental seven-metre-high fountain was built at the foot of the Doubs. Water gushes from the Minotaure statue seems to float on the Doubs. Water gushes from the fountain intermittently.

In Greek mythology, a Minotaur is a fabulous monster which is half-human, half-bull. It was born from the love between Pasiphaë (King Minos's wife) and a white bull sent by Poseidon. Minos locked the Minotaur away in the labyrinth.

Municipal pastoral management and conservation of natural areas

👉 The City of Besançon has launched a programme of grazing-lands for goats in order to stop the land here becoming fallow.

Why goats? For simple reasons: they graze on pretty much all vegetation and can easily access all types of land, even the most inaccessible!

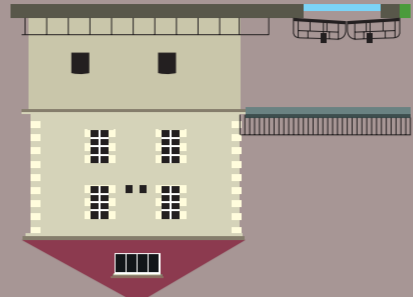
Since March 2019, the city council has also invested in sheep! They are used to maintain the grasslands in the urban areas, sometimes even at the heart of the city centre!

(See the Battant District Urban Trail) This is a one-of-a-kind project in France, because it is focused on a unique approach to urban farming, not necessarily on local traditions.

8/ PROMENADE MICAUD

In 1830, the development project of the Doubs shore opposite Saint-Paul Windmill was launched. The land was owned by the millitary at the time and it was necessary to wait 1689. Vauban built a bastion around it. In the 19th century, a towpath was built for the Monsieur canal - the future canal connecting the Doubs to dry up. The project was achieved in 1843, and many of the species which were traditionally planted in the 18th century were demolished. A lock was then built onto the "coursiers" of the windmill (channels which held the water Besançon Casino and the Centre Dramatique National Besançon found here.

Franche-Comté are situated nearby. The fish of the Doubs, including pike-perch, carp, barbel, trout, sheatfish, eels, etc. They can easily be seen from the docks!



7/ LE SAINT-PIERRE

Saint-Paul Abbey windmill straddles a branch of the Doubs, in around 1689. Vauban built a bastion around it. In the 19th century, a towpath was built for the Monsieur canal - the future canal connecting the Doubs to dry up. The project was achieved in 1843, and many of the species which were traditionally planted in the 18th century were demolished. A lock was then built onto the "coursiers" of the windmill (channels which held the water Besançon Casino and the Centre Dramatique National Besançon found here.

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6/ CITÉ DES ARTS

In 2006, the Grand Besançon Urban Community and the Franche-Comté Region came together in a joint project: to create a building for the discovery and practice of art. The councils decided to acquire the land and the former commercial port, now industrial waste land, in order to build a place dedicated to art. They chose architect Kengo Kuma to draw up the plans for the building which was opened in 2013.

They had to take into account the frequent flooding from the Doubs river, when designing the building, and include a protective wall.

👉 The Cité des Arts houses the Regional Conservatory of music, dance and theatre, the Fonds Régional d'Art Contemporain (FRAC) and a restaurant-tea room which is run by the "La Furieuse" association. Concerts, exhibitions and shows are held all year round at this unique venue, with a priority for associations and with solidarity in mind.

★ All around the city, along the riverbanks, there are seating areas where you can watch the boats bobbing in the water in the port down below, and watch the river flow past. On the other side, you can see Bregille hill and the "Grand désert": a large slab of limestone, decorated with dry grassland and bushes.

Bregille Bastioned Tower

This tower was built between 1687 and 1689 and is the only tower to be built entirely out of stone. It has a circular vault on a central pillar, containing a well. It was built to provide flanking for the Rivotte tower and also had a defensive role for the Saint-Paul mill. At the end of the nineteenth century, it was converted into a military dovecote, which would continue to be used until 1920.

★ Today, the tower houses "Le Bastion", a place for modern music with rehearsal rooms, recording studios and training rooms for amateur and professional musicians.



At the heart of the loop

Battant District

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much more.

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