



In the footsteps of Caesar and Vercingetorix >>>



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> Over two thousand years ago, the present-day Mount Auxois constituted the stronghold (oppidum) of the Mandubians. <<<

## Welcome to Alésia!

Alésia today: a titanic epic, a remarkable site, a founding myth of the French nation, a memorial that inspires historians and archaeologists. Alésia tomorrow: a MuséoParc which should receive over 100,000 visitors every year. The fruit of an innovative project headed by the General Council of Côte-d'Or with the support of numerous partners, the MuséoParc of Alésia offers a presentation founded on the results of scientific research, its museum collections, contemporary architecture and the technologies of communication. Here the latest discoveries relating to the battle and the lives of the inhabitants of Mount Auxois through the centuries will be made accessible to the widest possible public.

Louis de Broissia \_ Senator - Chairman of the General Council of Côte-d'Or.



> This melodramatic representation of Vercingetorix surrendering to Caesar - far removed from a much more prosaic reality - was widely circulated throughout the 20th century. Painting by Lionel Royer © Musée Crozatier, Le Puy-en-Velay (1889). <<<

## The last fight of Vercingetorix >>>

The year is 52 BC. It is late summer. Under threat almost everywhere in Gaul, Julius Caesar decides to beat a retreat after being repulsed outside Gergovie. Scarcely has he reassembled his troops between the Loire and the Yonne when he is attacked by Vercingetorix. But the Roman general is undaunted, and the Gallic chief is forced to withdraw to the *oppidum*\* of Alésia – the present-day Alise-Sainte-Reine – a stronghold situated some 60 kilometres north-west of Dijon.

Caesar immediately embarks on immense engineering works: in a few weeks, two lines of fortifications 15 and 21 km long, equipped with elaborate traps, and some thirty camps encircle the Gauls, who cannot manage to get the upper hand. The arrival of an impressive army of reinforcements does not alter the situation: after a final battle of opposing

armies numbering several hundred thousand men, the Gauls, despite their courage, are forced to submit. Vercingetorix surrenders to Caesar, and even if further battles are yet to come, Gaul is on the road to becoming Roman. A new society is going to be born, which will bequeath to us its culture and physical heritage.

### **Did you know?**

*Caesar probably did not draw up a complete plan for the conquest of Gaul. It was more a sequence of events, unpredictable to begin with, that led him to bring the patchwork of Gallic tribes under the yoke of Rome. The proconsul's primary ambition was to gain glory and wealth so as to make himself a name – in Rome.*

\* An oppidum at this period was a fortified town situated on an elevation.



© B. Tschumi Architectes

> The Interpretation Centre will be located at the approach to Alise-Sainte-Reine at the hamlet of Baccarat. <<<



> The façade of the Interpretation Centre will be equipped with a wooden "double skin".  
© B. Tschumi Architects <<<



© B. Tschumi Architectes

> Downhill from the statue of Vercingetorix on Mount Auxois, the Archaeological Museum will be built near the Gallo-Roman remains. <<<



> The stone "double skin" of the Museum's façade will recall the Gallic ramparts.  
© B. Tschumi Architects <<<

## Buildings symbolizing the encirclement >>>

An exceptional site deserves actors of talent. The MuséoParc, building on the work of generations of historians and archaeologists, takes shape with the aid of a famous leading architect.

It was a formidable challenge: how to enable visitors to grasp the events of a siege that took place over an area almost as large as the present-day city of Paris?

Designer of the Parc de la Villette and the new museum of the Acropolis in Athens, Bernard Tschumi brought his experience to bear on the Alésia programme. His intention was to reconcile the force of the event with the requirement for "modesty" imposed

by the archaeologists, while handling the insertion of the facilities in a protected area with sensitivity.

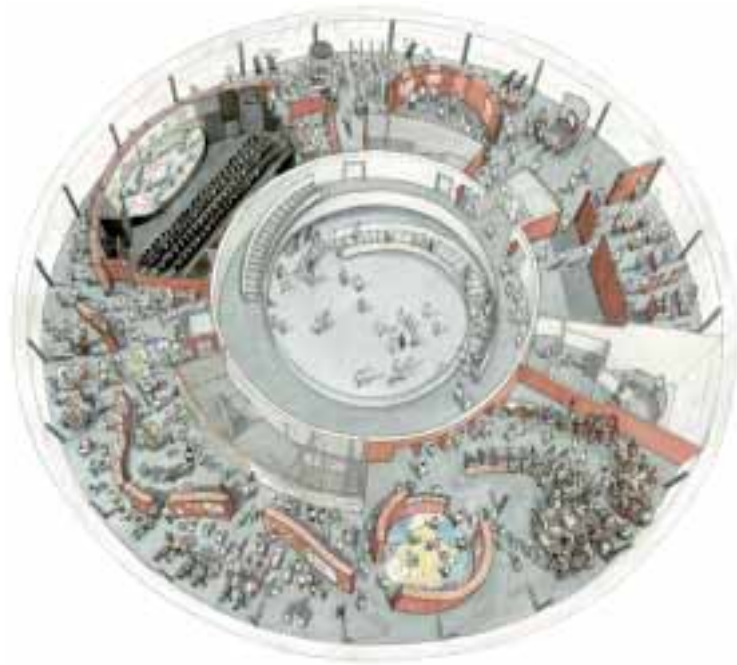
The two cylindrical buildings that he has conceived symbolize the encirclement of the Gauls by the Romans. The two edifices are distinguished by their external cladding: wood for the Interpretation Centre, in reference to the Roman fortifications, and stone, reminiscent of the *murus gallicus* (Gallic rampart wall) for the Museum.

Car parks, access roads and the clearance of formerly denuded cliffs will be subtly handled by landscape architect Michel Desvigne. The exhibition, by scenographer Guy-Claude François, will be based on antique artefacts while also using the most up-to-date multimedia techniques to depict the siege, the battle and everyday life.

### HQE procedure

*The MuséoParc is the subject of an HEQ (High Environmental Quality) procedure which covers the organization of the works as well as the design of the buildings and fittings. Its purpose is to limit external impact and ensure a healthy interior environment by minimizing nuisances associated with the building operations, and exerting an influence on the choice of building products, materials and methods, on energy and waste management, air quality, acoustics, etc.*

*Numerous partners are involved in this major programme: Europe, the State, local institutions, the Scientific Society of Semur-en-Auxois, and more.*



> On the first floor of the Interpretation Centre, a gripping immersion experience. © Illustration Scène. <<<



© Illustration Scène

> Just a short walk from the Interpretation Centre, part of the fortifications, some war machines and a Roman camp will be reconstructed. <<<



© Illustration Scène

> On entering the permanent exhibition you are immediately plunged into the midst of the confrontation. <<<

## The Interpretation Centre: at the heart of the battle >>>

The MuséoParc will comprise two centres 2 km apart: an Interpretation Centre and an Archaeological Museum. The former will be opening its doors in 2010, the latter in 2011. A preview guided tour...

The Interpretation Centre is situated down towards the plain at the bottom of Alise-Sainte-Reine. It places the siege of Alésia in its context. Nine themes are developed here: the site, the Gauls, the Romans, Caesar and the Republic, the Gallic wars, the year 52 BC, the battle, "And afterwards?", and finally, the myth. With their parents, teachers or group leaders, children are able to set off in the footsteps of Caesar and Vercingetorix. Equipped with game

booklets or audio-guides, they learn a host of facts about this period of our history. From the combat gallery to the fresco of marching armies, from interactive maps to multimedia installations, the older children are gradually immersed in the Europe of two thousand years ago. In the "theatre of operations", all will experience a gripping reconstruction of the battles of Alésia. Then each visitor can linger over the progress of the archaeological

investigations; in parallel, "magic spectacles" invite the visitor to observe a landscape on which are superimposed scenes of everyday life during the siege. Lastly, a place is reserved to consider the myth of Alésia and "our ancestors, the Gauls" before going outside to see the most spectacular physical feature of the MuséoParc: a life-size reconstruction of Roman fortifications measuring a hundred metres across and part of the Roman camp.

### **A powerfully evocative landscape**

*Seen in panoramic view from the terrace, the landscape tells the story: the oppidum where Vercingetorix and his troops took refuge, the two rivers mentioned by Julius Caesar in his Commentaries on the Gallic Wars, the plain three thousand paces across, where most of the battles were fought, the hills where the Romans set up their camps...*



> On Mount Auxois, the terrace of the Archaeological Museum will form a splendid vantage point from which one can imagine how the Gauls gazed across "the three thousand paces wide" plain. <<<

> A few hundred metres from the Museum, the Gallo-Roman remains (the excavation site) will be shown to advantage. <<<



> From the reception area, visitors can make their way to the exhibitions on the first floor or, on the ground floor, to the tea-room, the bookshop-boutique and the educational rooms. <<<

## The Archaeological Museum: at the heart of everyday life >>>

We change course now for Mount Auxois, between the statue of Vercingetorix and the Excavation Site. This is the other component of the MuséoParc, consisting of a museum linked to the remains of the Gallo-Roman village and archaeological base reserved for researchers.

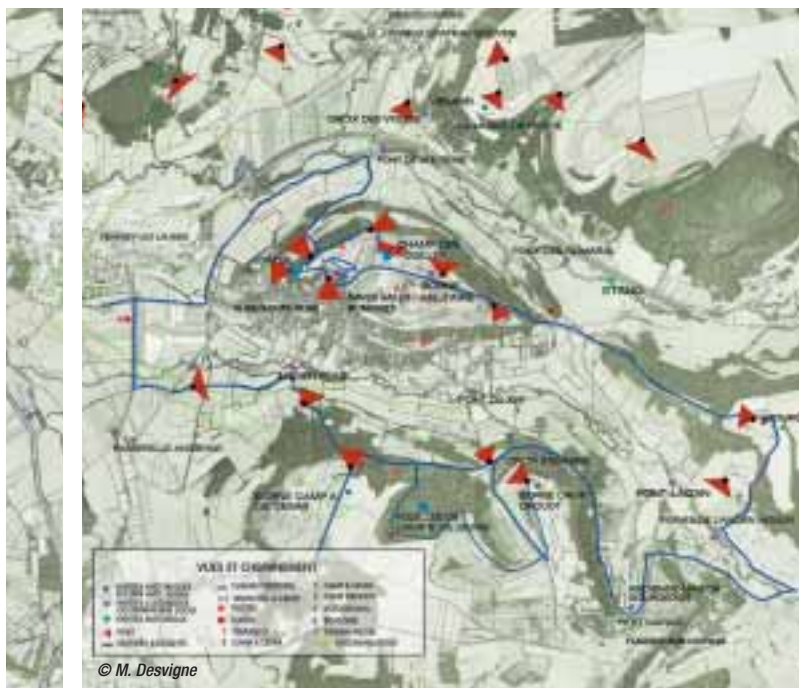
The Museum offers a broad panorama of the sites evolution, from prehistoric times to the present day. The visitor will of course be shown objects bearing witness to the occupation of the stronghold shortly before the siege by Julius Caesar: ceramics, kettles, bracelets, pegs from the murus gallicus... But the main discoveries of the archaeologists have been sculptures and objects from the Gallo-Roman town that was built

after the siege; a profusion that makes this civilization that vanished over 1,500 years ago very real to the visitor. Reconstructions of a bronze-workers shop and a sanctuary cellar, enriched with multimedia presentations, a bust of a woman, a mirror, amphorae, a wooden bucket, an oculist's stamp, glass tableware, bronze-workers' moulds, pieces of horse harness and many other items collected tell the story of how life was organized in the

Gallo-Roman town: homes, trade, crafts... Religion plays the part of an Ariadne's thread in understanding the history of Alésia. The importance and the common features of the Gallic, Roman and Christian beliefs are of course clearly brought out. Part of the Museum is also reserved for the scientists whose discoveries will add material to the permanent and temporary exhibitions intended for the general public.

### Something for everyone

*The MuséoParc is a place accessible to anyone, irrespective of their prior knowledge or the time they have to spare. From the permanent exhibitions to the play areas, from the Museums Resource Centre to the Interpretation Centres lecture theatre, where conferences, seminars and film shows are organized, from the educational rooms to the temporary exhibitions and events, from the restaurant to the tea-room and the bookshop-boutique, there is something for the wishes or needs of all. Special consideration is also given to people with disabilities or limited mobility.*



> The many discovery trails provide an opportunity to spend from half an hour to a day or more understanding the relationship between history and landscape. <<<



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© R. Guiton



© P. Pichon



© P. Pichon

> Where the trail leads, you, Alésia at liberty; on horseback, mountain-bike or on foot, enjoy exploring this exceptional site at your own pace. <<<

## The Discovery Trails: in the heart of nature >>>

Since it is difficult to grasp the difficulties confronting the combatants without moving slowly around the site, the visit naturally follows the Discovery Trails.

The Discovery Trails are ideal for little family walks or more sporting excursions on foot, mountain-bike or on horseback. Starting from the Interpretation Centre or the Archaeological Museum, there are numerous possible ways to adopt the standpoint of the Romans or of the Gauls, to grasp how closely linked are history and the lie of the land, and to measure the full physical extent of the theatre of operations.

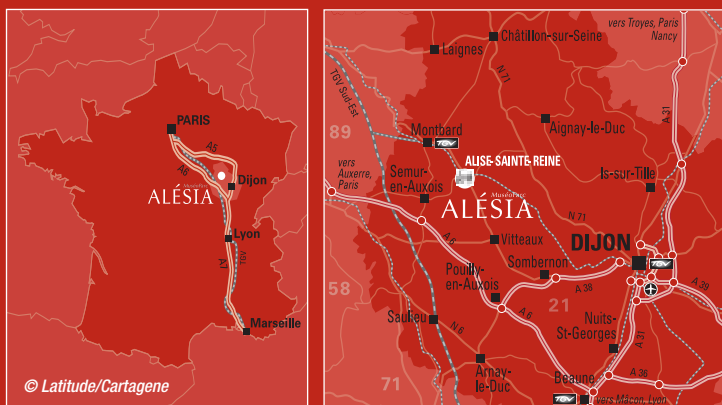
Viewpoint indicator tables and information points are distributed over Mount Auxois and the Flavigny and Penneville hills. After leaving your vehicle on the “shady” car park at the Interpretation Centre, and with the aid of a leaflet, audio-guide, or accompanied by a Conference guide, you can make your way on foot to the site of Caesar’s camp, which is due south of the car park, halfway up the hillside, where you will enjoy a

superb view of the whole length of the *oppidum*, and be able to wander through the narrow streets of Flavigny. Then you are invited to return to the statue of Vercingetorix and admire all the rich heritage of the village of Alise-Sainte-Reine, before getting back to your car, coach or motorcycle.

A delight for nature lovers, who appreciate the harmony of landscape and also for photographic enthusiasts!

### Leave, and come back again...

There is so much to see on the site that a single day is not enough! What makes a longer stay all the more tempting is that the Muséo-Parc is located in a region blessed with a remarkable cultural heritage. We need only to mention the Abbey of Fontenay, a registered *Unesco World Heritage site*, Flavigny-sur-Ozerain, one of France’s Most Beautiful Villages, the *château* of Bussy-Rabutin, the *mediaeval town* of Semur-en-Auxois, and the *naturalist Buffon’s museum, park and forges at Montbard*. In the surrounding area you can locate the “treasure of the Tumulus” of the Princess of Vix at Châtillon-sur-Seine, the various sources of the river Seine, and much more.



The Alésia site enjoys excellent access:

- \_ **By road:** A6 motorway (Bierre-lès-Semur exit, 22 km away)  
RN71 (Dijon-Troyes) and RD 905 (Dijon-Montbard).
- \_ **By train:** Montbard TGV station, 15 km away  
and Venarey-les Laumes station, at the bottom of the site.
- \_ **By the Burgundy Canal:** waterway base with facilities  
at Venarey-les Laumes.

MuséoParc  
**ALÉSIA**

Conseil Général de la Côte-d'Or  
Mission Alésia  
BP 1601 - 21035 Dijon Cedex  
Tél. 03 80 63 64 52 - Fax : 03 80 63 64 49 - mission.alesia@cg21.fr - www.alesia.com