

# Bibracte - Mont Beuvray

GRAND SITE DE FRANCE



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Réseau des  
Grands Sites  
de France

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ENGLISH VERSION

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# Bibracte - Mont Beuvray

This guide, part of the **Grands Sites de France** collection, is dedicated to Bibracte and Mont Beuvray. Hidden by forest, in the heart of the Morvan Regional Natural Park, this area reveals a city that has lain abandoned for two thousand years, as well as an innovative museum, in a contemporary building, and a constantly evolving archaeological site. This walk through history, in the midst of an omnipresent nature, with its beech woodlands and the heritage of the past, takes us behind the scenes of a remarkably well-preserved site and a territory with a strong identity. Enriched by the testimony of locals, this is an open reading of the many facets of this extraordinary site.



6.90 € Price France



# Bibracte Mont Beuvray

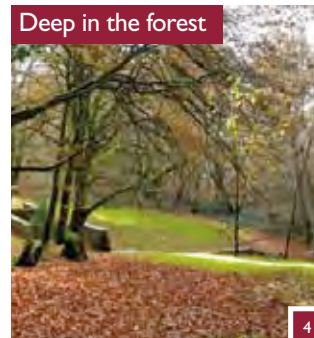
An outcrop of the Morvan Mountains, Mont Beuvray seems to watch over the town of Autun, located 20km away across the plain, right in the heart of Burgundy. The Beuvray - as it is often called - reveals a breath-taking woodland covering hillsides worn smooth by time which flaunt their beautiful rounded curves and deep valleys. These hillsides trap the humid air that sweeps in from the Atlantic Ocean. The old beech trees which spread across the forest, with their moss-coated trunks, developed as a result of this climate, as did the streams that seep down the slopes and the peatland close to the source of the River Yonne. What is left of Bibracte, the first capital of the Aedui people, lies hidden in the middle of the forest. Thanks to painstaking archaeological research, we are learning more and more about this ancient city, and it is precisely the site's great archaeological value that has rescued it from oblivion. Today, Bibracte hosts a research centre and a museum of European archaeology. The site is the driving force of a sustainable development project, combining first-class landscape management with local participation, as a result of which the site was awarded the label *Grand Site de France* in 2008. Charming and intimate, the Beuvray is an excellent place to explore the natural world and experience a landscape that has continually been re-shaped by mankind over the centuries, through the twists and turns of history.

*From a distance, the discreet outline of Mont Beuvray can be recognised only by those who are familiar with the area (here in the background of Etang de Poisson - a fish pond of medieval origin close to Saint-Léger-sous-Beuvray).*



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The Saint-Pierre fountain and its surroundings: a small clearing at the head of the valley of the Goutte Dampierre stream. Mont Beuvray has a large number of springs, thanks to heavy rainfall and the low porosity of the volcanic rocks the mountain is made of.

Deep in the forest,  
a town has lain abandoned  
for two thousand years



The landscape of Mont Beuvray reveals its green curves in the region of the Haut-Morvan mountains, which some would hardly call mountains as they rise to a mere 901m (at Haut-Folin, less than ten kilometres away), although it is still high enough for winters to be harsh and snowy. All along the roads that wind through the old forests and patchwork of fields, the discreet outline of the mountain appears now and then, and is recognised only by the locals. From the summit, you can appreciate just how unusual the site is as it affords a panoramic viewpoint encompassing all the surrounding plains, dotted with copses, small dams, hamlets and lakes here and there. There is nothing to spoil the stunning scenery, which seems to stand still in time. This makes it unsurprising that people become deeply attached to these places.

PREVIOUS PAGE: Heavy rainfall - with almost 2 metres of water a year falling on Mont Beuvray! - and the shade provided by the canopy encourages the growth of moss, which contrasts with the red carpet of dead beech leaves.

ABOVE OPPOSITE: The best time to climb Mont Beuvray (on foot) is when snow has just fallen - in order to be the first one to set foot on its pristine expanses.

BELOW OPPOSITE: Forming a ring, the location of the ramparts of the oppidum of Bibracte stands out clearly on the slopes of Mont Beuvray and can be followed very closely.





This singular atmosphere might be explained by what the architect who designed the Bibracte museum, Pierre-Louis Faloci, referred to as the place's 'silent history'. Its long and important history has left discreet but deeply embedded traces in the landscape, which archaeological exploration is gradually uncovering. After all - before the mountain was covered by the forest just over two thousand years ago, a short-lived but highly influential town grew up on Mont Beuvray. If you ever get the chance to climb up the mountain in good weather, you will no doubt understand why the Gauls chose this site: it makes one feel like the master of the surrounding lands. The traveller's gaze gets lost in the hillsides, fields and hedges, reaching the Auvergne volcanoes and, further away, the snowy peaks of Mont Blanc.

Bibracte was the capital of the Aedui people, where Vercingetorix was hailed as the leader of a coalition of Gauls in 52BC, and where Julius Caesar wrote the famous *De Bello Gallico* - *Galic Wars*. Bibracte is an authentic historical site, where some of the most ancient events in France's history took place.

**OPPOSITE:** *On autumn and winter mornings, the summit of Mont Beuvray often seems to emerge like an island in a sea of clouds which drown the surrounding valleys.*

**FOLLOWING PAGE:** *On a clear day, the view from the top of Mont Beuvray reaches to the peaks of the Northern Alps, 250 km away to the east, and to the Auvergne volcanoes, 150 km away to the south-west.*







New constructions on the site were systematically demolished and re-built every twenty to twenty-five years. During the course of these reconstructions, Rome's influence became increasingly evident. Initially limited to material objects (especially the fragments of the many amphorae which transported Roman Italian wine to the territory of the Aedui), the Roman influence was plainly evident in the architecture following the Gallic war; thanks to the construction of a monumental structure with a side length of nearly 100m, which incorporated a forum.

During the next generation, the local elite built themselves large residential buildings based on the Roman model. The town continued to grow until around 20BC, with a population that could certainly be counted in the thousands - perhaps 5,000 or 10,000. The site clearly acted as the capital of the Aedui, whose territory extended between the rivers Saône and Allier. This was a strategic location thanks to which the main points of communication between the Mediterranean and the plains of Northwest Europe could be controlled.

**PREVIOUS PAGE:** *The great domus of the Parc aux Chevaux, built at the start of the 1st century AD, is actually an urban palace, built to replicate the most luxurious urban residences of Roman Italy.*

**OPPOSITE:** *View of an exceptional oak beam discovered in the wet sediment of the Saint-Pierre fountain. After restoration and study, this sculpted decorative beam was identified as a support from a building dated back to around 90 BCE by dendrochronology.*





Thanks to the Bibracte excavations and historical sources, we know that the Aedui were spared by Rome, and demonstrated true enthusiasm in being part of the imperial project. Paradoxically, this would lead to Bibracte's rapid decline. A new site was chosen as capital, at the crossroads of some important roadways, on a plain, which meant that a huge urbanising Roman style project could be rolled out. This town would be named *Augustodunum*, which later became Autun.

At any rate, the premature abandonment of Bibracte has made archaeologists happy, as the town's ruins were quickly buried. The remains of the 1<sup>st</sup> Century BC were hardly affected by later events, such as the maintaining of a modest temple on the hill during the Roman era, that later became a chapel, the establishment of fairs during the 13<sup>th</sup> Century, and the establishment of a Franciscan monastery for a few centuries. All you need to do today is lift some moss and dead leaves, and you're transported back through two thousand years of French history.

**OPPOSITE:** A characteristic scene on Mont Beuvray: the ghostly silhouette of centuries-old beech trees, emerging from the mist.

**FOLLOWING PAGE:** The bulk of Mont Beuvray is best seen from the sky, an advanced stronghold of the Morvan towards the south. The view in winter also highlights the patchwork of forest plots, the result of massive reforestation dating back to the 1950s.



*The silhouette of Mont Beuvray appears in the background of the village of Saint-Léger-sous-Beuvray, the main gateway to the Grand Site.*

# A constantly evolving landscape



**D**uring the time of the first excavations, the beech woods covering the hillsides of Mont Beuvray were heavily exploited for timber; used for heating, and especially for firewood sent to Paris along the river Yonne. A large part of the ground within the ramparts was used for pasture, making Bulliot's research easier. However, things changed completely in the 20th century. This was the result of an exodus of people from rural areas, along with the slaughter of the First World War. Morvan's population was decimated, and the downturn in numbers did not slow down until the final years of the century. The population fell from 140,000 to 35,000. The abandonment of the cultivated lands is a direct consequence of this; what is more, the consequences were aggravated by the agrarian policies introduced during the 1960s. In order to feed a rapidly expanding population, it was decided to support specialised and ultra-mechanised agriculture to the detriment of nurturing the individual character of specific regions.

**OPPOSITE:** *On the edge of Mont Beuvray, subtly laid hedges and their curves emphasize the landforms.*

**FOLLOWING PAGE:** *The chestnut tree, which appear to be an ever-present part of the Morvan landscapes, is in fact the result of massive plantations from the Middle Ages, which were mainly used to provide tannin-rich bark used by the leather industry.*





The exploitation of the Morvan area turned almost entirely to rearing Charolais cattle - more specifically to the production of calves which were then sent elsewhere for fattening - while the scale of the exploitation kept on increasing without requiring more manpower. This process has continued into the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, and we have seen the uplands lose 20% of its farms (and as many agricultural jobs) per decade as a result of this consolidation. This is what **Jean-Luc Salvant, whose farm is at the foot of the Beuvray** in the municipality of Glux-en-Glenne, has to say :

*"My family has been here for several generations, so you could say that I am part of the landscape! My father had six cows and 15 hectares to run, and today I have a herd of 110 Charolais cows and 133 hectares of land to look after. I shall be retiring in four years' time. I have a nephew who would like to take on running the place but the future is uncertain, so I am not encouraging him. The costs are too high and there isn't enough profit: besides the herd and the buildings, there are also plots of land that have to be maintained on a regular basis - sometimes by hand as the machines can't access them. And then there are all these restrictions, so you can't do what you want. These are regulations dreamed up in Brussels that often have nothing to do with the reality on the ground. I'm worried about the fact that the forest is coming down the valley, and the waste land is taking over in the fields that haven't been maintained. If nothing is done about it the landscape will eventually close in again. We need more resources on the ground, more targeted action, and we also need to see more communication between agriculturalists and public authorities. What worries me is that I feel there is too much ignorance from both sides. As far as the Grand Site is concerned, dialogue is gradually being established. I hope that this will lead to a concrete outcome, as it is vital that something is done before there are no longer any farmers to maintain the countryside."*

It is easy to see what he means: the farmland most likely to be deserted is that which is difficult to farm profitably - namely the steep slopes and the humid small valley bottoms. And yet keeping the valley open is vital to the quality of the landscape: the meadowlands that wind their way alongside the streams are nice to look at, and it is thanks to these unoccupied corridors of land that the relief can be understood. A comparison of aerial photographs taken decades apart on several occasions shows us just how much the phenomenon has already affected the surroundings of the Beuvray.

There is more. Another revolution has had an effect on forestry exploitation during the same period and for the same reasons: the drive to produce more wood to power an expanding economy.

■ TOP OF PREVIOUS PAGE: Charolais cows are a common sight within the hedgerow landscapes at the foothills of Mont Beuvray.

■ BOTTOM OF PREVIOUS PAGE: Jean-Luc Salvant, a farmer from the hamlet of L'Echenault close to the village of Glux-en-Glenne, and some of his hundred and ten head of cattle kept in the barn during the winter.

■ ABOVE AND BELOW OPPOSITE: A photograph taken from the same viewpoint as that of a postcard from the early twentieth century, which clearly shows how the forest has gained ground over the last century.





The beech trees were useful to produce wood for heating but not for much else, so they were replaced by coniferous trees (including the silver fir that exists naturally in the Morvan area as well as spruce trees imported from the Alps and the Jura area, and American Douglas firs). These can produce high quality grade timber in less than half a century. Since the 1950s, over a half of the Morvan forest has been converted to this kind of woodland, and abandoned agricultural plots have been systematically used to cultivate the same species. The mechanization of wood exploitation also has an effect, as it favours clear-cutting techniques. This radical development happened over a single generation. This raises questions in the forestry business industry. One of these professionals is **Pascal Lauroy, forestry worker at the ONF** (the French Forestry Office):

*"I have been working in the Beuvray since 1981, and I am in charge of the logging and the skidding. I can see the forests I planted three decades ago growing. This environment is dear to my heart, and it is important to me that it never decays. I would prefer the area to keep its wild aspect; the forests were more beautiful before without all these coniferous trees. I am also against clear-cutting; I think that there are other ways of doing things so that you don't end up with big holes in the landscape. The thinning out of coniferous trees favours the natural regeneration of the forest, and this method avoids cutting. The forest is a form of cultivation like any other, and this gentler technique requires considerable skills in order to select trees successfully, without forgetting their preservation, which is crucial. The fear of seeing these landscapes closing down is well-founded as there are many uncultivated plots and abandoned farms where the forest is taking over. Over one decade, a plot can change its physiognomy completely.*

*Changes in the climate can also disrupt vegetation. There are more and more fungi and insidious diseases, and abrupt temperature changes can affect some species. For example, the 2003 heatwave killed a lot of beech trees. But I don't want to paint a gloomy picture, I just want to highlight the realities of the place. Having said that, I am optimistic that within the ten years that I have left to work here, the situation will move in a positive direction."*

So within a century, the changes that our society has undergone have had a huge impact on the Morvan landscape. To a certain extent, scientists have come to consider these changes as part of a long-term history of vegetation, by studying the written archives left behind by earlier generations, allowing us to go all the way back to the Middle Ages. People have also studied the sediments left behind which are now peatland.

■ TOP OF PREVIOUS PAGE: *Pascal Lauroy, the woodcutter from the National Forestry Office who oversees the daily logging of the forest on Mont Beuvray and knows (almost) every tree.*

■ BOTTOM OF PREVIOUS PAGE: *With careful management, preserving the mix with hardwoods and encouraging the co-existence of trees of different ages, conifer forests are filled with character.*

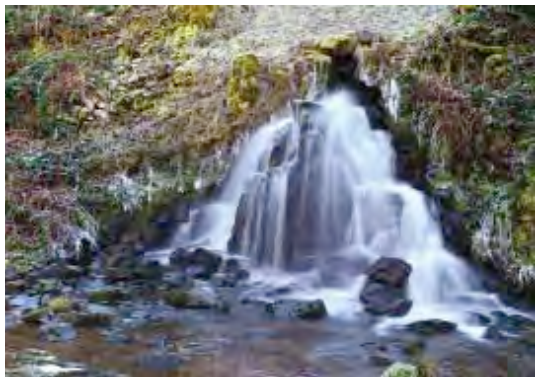
■ OPPOSITE: *With over half of its territory covered by woodland forests, the Morvan is a region filled with forestry. Logging, now a highly mechanised process, uses machines to cut trees down and powerful tractors to transport them.*





Changes in past vegetation can be identified in peat through the siliceous skeletons of pollen grains preserved thanks to the peat's acidity, and its tendency to accumulate on a regular basis over thousands of years due to the decomposition of moss, known as peat moss. Happily for archaeologists, one of the best stretches of peat in the Morvan is right next to Mont Beuvray, a short distance downstream from the source of the river Yonne.

When palynologists examined peat samples under a microscope, they showed that humans, rather than climate change, were responsible for the changes which occurred in vegetation over five thousand years.



**ABOVE OPPOSITE:** A walkway allows access to the heart of the peat bog of Port des Lamberts, a fragile natural area which is owned by the Conseil départemental de la Nièvre.

**BELOW OPPOSITE:** The flowing water of the river Yonne can only be seen when emerging from the dyke of Port des Lamberts, 2 km downstream from its source. This dyke, like dozens of others in the high valley of the Yonne, used to contain the water that was released annually for 'the great flood' that carried the logs from the surrounding forests to Clamecy where they were assembled in 'rafts' before reaching Paris. Several hundred thousand cubic metres of wood from the Morvan were delivered annually to the capital in this way, from the sixteenth to the nineteenth century.

**FOLLOWING PAGE:** A panorama in CinemaScope of the vast hedgerows of Val d'Arroux.

This means that the landscapes at the end of the Iron Age and in the Roman era were just as open as the 19th century ones. These studies also show us the rate at which new species have been introduced - for example, the chestnut tree we consider typical of the traditional piedmont plains of the Morvan region was only introduced during the Middle Ages.

So what should we make of all this? First of all, it is pointless to try to preserve the landscape as it is. There is even less point in trying to restore it to its former state, such is the extent to which the landscape has continually evolved in order to adapt to the changes in society. Perhaps it is better to accept that the landscape of the 'good old days' - the landscape built by the rural dwelling society that peaked in the 19th century - definitely belongs to the past. Today we need to create a landscape in line with this century's new needs, whilst also striving to rectify some of the excesses which occurred as a result of the emphasis on production during the second half of the last century. This means welcoming visitors coming from elsewhere to this area; a region whose sense of identity and appeal are as powerful as ever. This is the heart of the Grand Site de France initiative: creating a shared landscape proposal that meets these expectations.



*The spires of Autun Cathedral stand out against the outline of Mont Beuvray which seems to watch over the town created two thousand years ago to accommodate the residents of Bibracte.*

# A town re-discovered by archaeologists



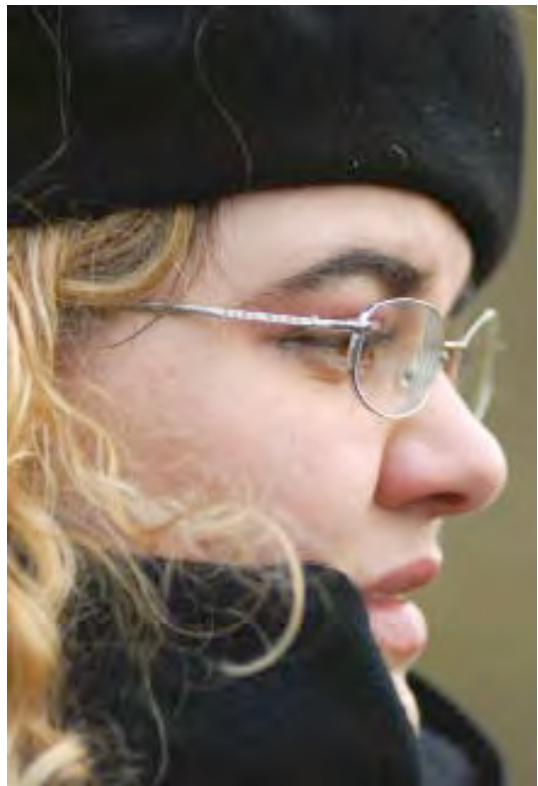
What is unusual about Mont Beuvray is that nobody lives there, and yet it has become an active and lively place once again, ever since the return of archaeologists in 1984. This revival is the upshot of a happy coincidence: firstly, the sincere attachment of a President of the Republic to a region which he was elected to represent for 35 years, and secondly the drive of the archaeological community to re-open the files on Bibracte, a site neglected since the passing away of Déchelette. It was actually François Mitterrand's wish to re-start the excavations, reviving an ambition that had first manifested itself when the Morvan Natural Regional Park was created in 1970.

François Mitterrand and his Minister for Culture Jack Lang did not issue any specific directives to scientists, whose first contingent came from the laboratories of the French National Centre for Scientific Research, the CNRS, located at the *École Normale Supérieure* higher education establishment in Paris. What was built during the 15 years after that was the outcome of an empirical mind-set that benefited from the intuitive approach of the archaeological research programme managers.

**PREVIOUS PAGE:** Every year for the last thirty years, young archaeologists from all over Europe have come back to Bibracte for the summer.

**OPPOSITE:** Although Bibracte is most famous for the place it occupies in Julius Caesar's account, it owes much of its renaissance to the affection which François Mitterrand had for it. He was a Member of Parliament for Nièvre for 35 years before becoming President of the Republic.





In 1987, the project took on a European dimension when archaeologists from different countries were brought in to boost the original team. At the same time, the need to accommodate the public who had been spontaneously coming along to see the excavations quickly arose. Guides were trained and the youngest visitors were taken into consideration by the organisers who created a place which is still a source of pride for Bibracte 30 years later. The archaeologist **Chiara Martini** speaks of it with passion:

*"I come from Bologna, and that is where I studied medieval archaeology. Because of the economic situation, I couldn't find a job in Italy and I applied to various museums in France, the country where I had done some internship work. This was how I ended up submitting an application to Bibracte. As chance would have it, my application came at a time when they were looking for an archaeologist with experience in cultural outreach. A month and a half later, there I was! Everyone was very welcoming when I got here - and very understanding about my slightly odd French accent. Meeting an Italian right in the heart of the Morvan is not surprising to anyone given that it is common practice at Bibracte to be open to Europe. I design new pedagogical tools, which might for example relate to temporary exhibitions.*

■ **OPPOSITE:** Chiara Martini, the archaeologist from the south who had to adapt to the harsh climate of the Morvan.

■ **FOLLOWING PAGE:** Every year, a summer school for 13 to 17 year olds is held which aims to continue with the excavation of the large Roman house in the Parc aux Chevaux.





*I am also in charge of liaising with teachers who want their students to learn more about Bibracte. I help them prepare as best as they can for their arrival, I reassure them at times too! I welcome classes to the 'excavation simulator' where children can have a go at being an archaeologist. And every summer I teach at the site's school where the PC1 Roman house is – it is a place dedicated to teenagers, a unique feature of Bibracte. The young people who come here are always very motivated, and the time they spend here often leads them to discover they have a vocation! A lot of former students have gone on to study archaeology, and some of them even come back to work at the very site where they first won their spurs!"*

François Mitterrand continued to keep a close eye on the place, watching over these developments. In 1989 he decided to list the site on the Register of State Works, and events gathered pace over the next six years. A semi-public company was founded to lead the project. Initially, the idea was to continue with the property acquisitions that the Regional Park had committed to in the late 1970s. The outcome was the creation of a public domain covering 950ha which encompassed nearly all of Mont Beuvray's hillsides. A reception centre for the research teams and a museum to act as a shop window for what they were doing were also needed. The President inaugurated all of the buildings on April 4<sup>th</sup> 1995 - this was to be one of his last public appearances.

The Bibracte museum was built on one of the hill's lower slopes, in a place where several routes converged, in the direction of one of the main entry points into the *oppidum*. The idea was to give an account of the various discoveries that had been made on the site, also showing the historical context in which Bibracte came to life in a broader sense, and bringing together data from the dozen or so countries that make up a 'Celtic Europe' of sorts.

The European Archaeological Centre is located four kilometres away in the village of Glux-en-Glenne, and it provides optimal working conditions for the researchers and students that have come here through the seasons. There's a 100-bed accommodation centre, a cafeteria, a library open day and night, spaces for work and well-being, and of course the technical support services of a professional team that can support an excavation from the first spade mark to the final publication. After all, one of the most outstanding features of the support available is the team of thirty or so permanent employees covering the full range of professions that define the operational chain of archaeology: from the fieldwork itself through to the displays in the museum.

PREVIOUS PAGE: For every day spent on the field, an archaeologist spends at least three days processing information: sorting, drawing and restoring objects, entering and processing data.

ABOVE OPPOSITE: The village of Glux-en-Glenne on the slopes of Haut-Folin.

BELOW OPPOSITE: The archaeological centre welcomes the regional centre for the conservation and study of archaeological collections of Burgundy. (P.L. Faloci, architect).





From 1995 onwards, the project was set up in its new surroundings and sought to make good use of the unprecedented generous investment of public funds in a location that is quite a long way from any urban centre. The semi-public company gave way to a public institution that took the name of Bibracte (in 2008). Later, the European Archaeological Centre was expanded (in 2011) in order to host a conservation and study centre for the archaeological collections of Burgundy. The museum was renovated between 2011 and 2013, and now it is the archaeological site itself that gets the most attention. The beginning of the excavations already meant

**ABOVE OPPOSITE:** *The open gaps in the forest reveal the location of the most active areas of ancient Bibracte; the area expanding between the Porte du Rebut and the Pâtur du Couvent is shown here.*

**BELOW OPPOSITE:** *The most fragile remains must be sheltered to protect them from the mountain climate. This large umbrella, covering an area of nearly 1000 m<sup>2</sup>, is made up of a complex structure of aluminium beams without foundations. It is the result of an experiment led by an architect, Paul Andreu, and engineers, here in Bibracte.*

**TOP OF FOLLOWING PAGE:** *The soil of Mont Beuvray contains remains of buildings that were built in the first century BC, as shown here with the hollowed-out marks of the foundations of a large wooden structure which was later replaced by two esplanades enclosed by stone walls.*

**BOTTOM OF FOLLOWING PAGE:** *The two subsequent ramparts of Bibracte, 7 and 5.2 km long respectively, were embankments clad in stone on one side; the structure of the embankments was reinforced by a lattice of intersecting horizontal beams.*



that several forest clearings had to be created, perceptibly changing the landscape of the Mount. The research programme was set up during this period, and it became essential that the implications of future archaeological excavations should be considered. A landscape planner was drafted in to lead on the discussions, and these led to a definitive management plan which will be rolled out over the course of this century. The idea was to press on with the deforestation in order to uncover the core and the size of the *oppidum*, whilst preserving the vegetation in order to give a focus to the eye and enhance the views - rather in the manner of an English-style park. The plan, agreed in 2005, also suggested that only constructions related to the archaeological works were to be allowed on the hill. These were to be temporary constructions that could be removed without leaving any trace. Since then, respecting this norm has become compulsory for all work that takes place on the Mount, whether it be forestry operations, archaeological sites, or the showcasing of the remains.

Over the years, the excavations have developed, and the locations have changed. If the remains that have been uncovered cannot be shown the site is filled back in. This was the case with the wooden structures that were uncovered at the Côte Chaudron, no trace of which is left in the rammed earth and the anchoring posts. In other cases the remains might be consolidated, as was done with the grand Roman house of the Parc aux Chevaux, or the Franciscan Convent. A bolder approach was taken with the Convent pasture area. The excavations undertaken by the Universities of Budapest and Leipzig showed the remains of significant Roman constructions that were built one after the other between the middle of the 1<sup>st</sup> Century BC and the change in eras. In 2009, a protective cover was created for this purpose by the architect-engineer Paul Andreu, who was well-known for his innovative creations.





The shelter shows the remains in the state in which the archaeologists uncovered them, with some minor consolidation on a long-term basis.

The excavations continue at a sustained pace. They are undertaken as part of a research programme that is reviewed every four years with the support of a scientific advisory board, and is closely monitored by the Ministry of Culture. The various programme initiatives are entrusted to researchers - mainly at universities - who mobilise their students. These students find an unparalleled field of practical experience at Mont Beuvray, with the added advantage of being able to mix with colleagues from different European countries. A number of university towns have sent groups of students to Bibracte since the 1980s, including Besançon, Bologna, Brno, Brussels, Budapest, Dijon, Durham, Edinburgh, Hamburg, Kiel, Lausanne, Leipzig, Ljubljana, Madrid, Mainz, Munich, Paris, Prague, Reading, Rzeszow, Saragóssa, Sheffield, Toulouse and Vienna.

**OPPOSITE:** Each year, the excavation sites of Mont Beuvray welcome several hundred students who come to further their archaeology training and help to contribute to what is known about ancient Bibracte.

**FOLLOWING PAGE:** Wood was the material of choice for the builders of Bibracte. 2,000 years later, all that remains of their homes is the imprint of structural posts.





New sites are being set up to explore previously unknown parts of the oppidum and new investigation techniques are being tested, such as micro-topographic measurements using laser remote sensing technology (LIDAR), geomagnetic and geo-radar explorations thanks to which it is possible to detect buried remains. New research fields are also being drawn on, such as mining archaeology, through which the unexpected large size of ancient metal extraction sites in the Morvan area has been revealed (including on Mont Beuvray itself), with exploration of the surrounding countryside yielding many new unsuspected sites. This town, that was only occupied for a century and a half, has been keeping archaeologists busy for nearly a century and a half, and it is very likely that their research will continue for as long as they are allowed to keep working, such is the wealth of material available!

**PREVIOUS PAGE:** A significant discovery is always around the corner, as shown here: the remains of a mosaic which decorated the triclinium of a large Roman house built in Bibracte's final years, at the dawn of the Common Era.

**OPPOSITE:** Archaeological surveys show that, in ancient times, Haut-Morvan was home to a highly developed industry in the form of a large number of mines which produced a range of metals. These operations can still be seen in the landscape as deep incisions left by the mining trenches. The trench shown here, located in the oppidum, was the object of a partial excavation.



The museum exhibition space looks out on the forest of Mont Beuvray. (P.L. Faloci, architect)

# Bibracte, an open town



In its heyday, Bibracte was strongly fortified, but it was also a place of significant importance that must have shown traders from all backgrounds, coming to trade their commodities from faraway, that they were welcome. They could also acquire a wide range of metallic accessories, the specialty of the *oppidum* artisans. Much later, from the 13<sup>th</sup> to the 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, Mont Beuvray was known all over Burgundy for its trade fairs, held on the first Wednesday in May. Since the excavations were resumed, the site has been relentless in its mission of welcoming people - first of all towards the inhabitants of the Morvan area, to whom Mont Beuvray is somewhat sacred. The aim is also to attract a wider audience, one that loves history or is simply enchanted by the quiet beauty of the Morvan landscape, far from the well-beaten tourist trail.

PREVIOUS PAGE: A private conversation under the protection of a century-old beech tree.

ABOVE OPPOSITE: Until the early twentieth century, the summit of Mont Beuvray hosted a regional fair on the first Wednesday of May, a tradition which began in the thirteenth century.

BELOW OPPOSITE: Inside the museum, an interactive experience allows visitors to consult the excavation archives of Bibracte.





Today, Bibracte provides a unique experience to its visitors. There are wide open spaces to be enjoyed, people can walk around the *oppidum* making their way from excavation to excavation, get off the beaten track to experience a more intimate exploration of the woodland, and appreciate the incredible views from the summit. They can visit the place independently, although it would be worth going with a member of the site's guiding team. These guides can direct the visitor's attention towards this or that odd bump in the landscape that betrays the presence of ancient ramparts, or decipher the remains dug up by archaeologists on the sites, or bring to life the discoveries made on these sites in the last 150 years in a step-by-step fashion. A visit to the Bibracte museum is essential if you want to truly explore the site's multiple facets. The museum is the shop window for the research undertaken at the former capital of the Aedui and it is also a fantastic tool in the presentation and popularisation of the site, all housed in a building which won the supreme French architectural prize the 'Équerre d'Argent' ('Silver T-square').

■ **OPPOSITE:** *Alongside objects which are more than 3,000 years old at a special exhibition devoted to the ancient salt mines of Hallstatt in Austria.*

■ **FOLLOWING PAGE:** *The museum of Bibracte is on the slopes of Mont Beuvray, on the site of a pass where several roads which led to the oppidum through the Porte de Rebout converged (P.L. Faloci, architect).*





The top gallery of the permanent exhibition depicts Celtic Europe at the time of Bibracte's foundation around 100BC. At that time, societies were in the throes of demographic and economic expansion from the Atlantic to the Carpathian Basin. The sudden appearance of a couple of hundred *oppida* on this vast territory has led archaeologists to ask questions: was this a new stage of progress towards an urban society, or was it perhaps the manifestation of a crisis? The lower gallery is an opportunity to explore the various facets of Bibracte's archaeology, its districts, its artisan workshops and its houses - all of which are evidence of the unprecedented cultural shift that was going on in the 1<sup>st</sup> century BC. The inhabitants of Bibracte became Gallo-Romans once they decided to abandon the *oppidum* in favour of the new town of *Augustodunum*. This statement is confirmed by the study of objects dug out of the soil on Mont Beuvray, but also by models, facsimiles and multi-media devices which allow us to get as close as we can to the archaeologists' research. Among other things, the museum plans to have a special exhibition every year, based on scientific partnerships set up around the research programme.

PREVIOUS PAGE: A bird's eye view of the remains of the agrarian economy from the first century BCE: pet footprints on terracotta, charred remains of edible plants (cereals, legumes, berries), agricultural tools and kitchen utensils.

OPPOSITE: The basin in the Pâturage du Couvent, discovered in 1985 and since restored, was built shortly after the middle of the 1<sup>st</sup> century BCE.





The place is also meant to be a venue for artistic creativity, welcoming artists in residence whose works can be explored with the perspective of the archaeological remains that are being shown.

Around 40,000 visitors make their way through the doors of the museum every year. They spend an average of four hours at the site, making the most of the diverse experiences they can enjoy: the museum, the archaeological site with the possibility of a stop at *Le Chaudron* (the Cauldron), the museum restaurant, where dishes reflect the ingredients and preparation techniques known to the inhabitants of Bibracte. However, it would be impossible to cook Gallic dishes as no recipe books have been preserved. School groups alone account for 8,000 visitors. They are allowed to use the same work facilities as the students staying there for up to a week.



**ABOVE OPPOSITE:** Valuable bowls by Alain Vernis, a ceramist based in the Morvan, in the setting of the museum's architecture and its natural surroundings.

**BELOW OPPOSITE:** The cauldron, an essential utensil in Gallic households.

**FOLLOWING PAGE:** Charly de Galember offers original accommodation with lake cabins on his family's land, near the village of Poil, a few kilometres away from Bibracte.

Most visitors have travelled a long way to get to Bibracte, and it makes sense to provide enough activities for them to spend a full day there, in order to make the most of their journey. But the aim is also to prevent visitors from leaving as quickly as they came, and to encourage them to stay in the Morvan area. **Charly de Galember** is directly involved in the double challenge of welcoming visitors, and highlighting the local riches. He gives us his opinion on the subject:

*"It's been a few years since I took on the Ettevaux family property to build some unusual accommodation in the form of ecological lakeside cabins built using wood from the grounds, as well as more traditional guest rooms and two holiday cottages that are ideal for family holidays and businesses looking to provide training sessions in a preserved setting. One of my priorities is to preserve our environment, and this is why the activities and plans of Bibracte interest me. Aside from the landscape, all of the points dealt with have affected me on a personal level, such as the issue of agriculture and of maintaining the grounds, and the importance of preserving expertise. I get the feeling that locally we have often missed development opportunities. The communication between the various interested parties in local life seems crucial to me. There needs to be a real effort at communicating between the local authorities and those who develop tourist plans. To give an example, I would say that there isn't enough accommodation. As for me, I'm not short of projects! To name just a few, I would like to set up an orchard/kitchen garden conservatory in order to bring the species that are suited to the Morvan climate back.*





*On a cultural level, I would like to organise a festival themed around the Blues and Black spiritual music and stage concerts in the area, as well as working with the Bibracte museum and at Autun. In short, there are ideas that ought to be nurtured for them to come to life, so that culture, nature and people can meet around these common themes."*

The Ettevaux owner is not the only person in the locality who wants to find innovative ways of welcoming tourists. This little section of the peaks of the Morvan has a distinctive character and is close to a heritage hotspot, Autun, as well as being located right in the heart of Burgundy. All of these elements make for an area that is rich, as long as the means to develop 'soft tourism' in harmony with the area are provided.

■ **OPPOSITE:** Lazing around at the top of Mont Beuvray, during a concert.

■ **FOLLOWING PAGE:** Mont Beuvray is sometimes used for its natural scenery (shown here: Emmanuelle Vein and Daniel Fernandez, during the Tracking Istanbul festival in Bibracte in 2009).



Bright lights indicate that resident archaeologists are at work in the European archaeological centre at any hour of the night. (P.L. Faloci, architect).

# Behind the scenes of the Grand Site de France



One of the requirements for being awarded the *Grand Site de France* label is that the site be classified according to the French Act of the 2<sup>nd</sup> May 1930, relating to "the protection of natural monuments and sites of artistic, historic, scientific, mythological or picturesque character." This classification only applied to a few picturesque trees at the summit of Mont Beuvray before being extended to the entire hill and its immediate surroundings, amounting to a 1478ha area, in 1990. This influenced plans to boost the value of the site, as did the classification as a historic monument, which was obtained in 1984 for a surface area restricted to the area within the inner ramparts. This covered a 135ha area as the exterior ramparts, enclosing a 200ha area, had not yet been identified. One final measure taken in 2011 is related to biodiversity: the area was added to the Natura 2000 National Register.

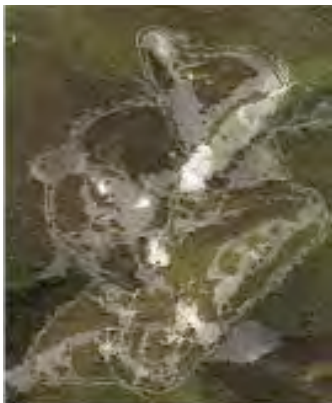
**PREVIOUS PAGE:** *Landscape-reading workshop: an opportunity for all those involved (politicians, agricultural and forestry professionals, governmental technicians, associations, etc.) to compare their understanding of the landscape and their questions about its future.*

**ABOVE OPPOSITE:** *The road sign for the Grands Sites de France, found in the square in front of the museum of Bibracte.*

**BELOW OPPOSITE:** *Strange geophysical measuring instrument, used to detect buried remains without disturbing the soil.*



2100



Back in the 1970s, it seemed that public authorities would be managing the site. The Regional Natural Park of Morvan, which in 1980 acquired the land located within the ramparts, first managed the site. Later on, the place was managed on behalf of the French state by the semi-public company set up in 1990 to run the large cultural project of Bibracte. The regional Environment Management Authority quickly wrote a landscape management charter for the site, and the National Forestry Office drew up an initial management plan for the Regional Park grounds for the upland area to be managed coherently.

A new stage was reached in the early nighties when the question of how to manage the landscape of the site started being tackled. This was the result of a report written in conjunction with the

**■ OPPOSITE:** *The changing landscape of Mont Beauvray, as envisaged by the landscape architect Claude Chazelle. Taking the forest coverage rate after the Second World War as a point of reference, this consisted in inventing a new landscape, revealing the structures of the landform and helping the understanding of the main lines of the oppidum and its urban construction.*

**FOLLOWING PAGE:** *Site position of Mont Préneley/  
Sources of the river Yonne in relation to Mont Beuvray.*

This casefile only dealt with the 'heart of the site': the 950ha or so under public control. The status is re-examined every six years by the Ministry of Ecology, and its renewal in 2013 was an opportunity for new goals to be set, and to decide upon a new operational mode.

These new goals include the incorporation of the 500ha of the classified site that remained in private hands, along with a buffer zone of around 3,000ha which includes the surroundings of Mont Beuvray, incorporating the knock-on effects of changes in agricultural and woodland practises. There is also a suggestion that the classified site of Mont Beuvray may be merged with another classified site nearby - the sources of the river Yonne and Mont Preneley - given that the two places complement each other in many respects (relating to the way the landscape is structured, their biodiversity and their archaeological value) as well as being faced with the same management issues.





Most importantly, this enlargement of the geographical reach, which is part of the scope of the *Grand Site de France* initiative is a chance to have a more active partnership with local communities and their residents. Altogether, the initiative covers an area inhabited by just under 2,000 people (with a very low population density of 8 inhabitants per km<sup>2</sup>) spread across six rural districts: Glux-en-Glenne, Larochemillay, Poil, Saint-Léger-sous-Beuvray, Saint-Prix and Villapourçon. As far as the operational mode is concerned, what is new is a closer partnership between Bibracte and the Natural Regional Park for the delivery of the casefile, with the two establishments benefiting from skillsets and missions that complement each other perfectly.

People continue to be at the heart of the plans, as recognised in the *Grand Site de France* initiative, which is all about sustainably managing the heritage landscape whilst also delivering an optimal experience for the visitors with positive effects on the inhabitants. The main challenge is to create an action programme that benefits the landscape of Mont Beuvray, drawing on a shared vision of

**ABOVE OPPOSITE:** *The European archaeological centre, its 90-bed accommodation and its cafeteria (pictured) have brought life to the village of Glux-en-Glenne which has less than two dozen inhabitants during winter.*

**BELOW OPPOSITE:** *La Petite Auberge in Glux-en-Glenne, a valuable meeting place for archaeologists and local residents.*

**FOLLOWING PAGE:** *Caroline Darroux, ethnologist and storyteller.*



the future of this landscape. In order to achieve this, at least one key point has been taken on board: regardless of what they do, all of the residents are aware that they live in an era that has a considerable effect on their quality of life. The lively debate inspired by this topic needs to be constructive yet again, and people need to avoid locking themselves into a particular position whether they are agriculturalists, forestry owners, or supporters of the environment. In order to stimulate this debate, a multi-disciplinary scientific team has been brought together around a collective project entitled 'mountain territories and innovations' which is a mix of skills in various domains including ethnology, sociology, agronomy and rural economy, all of them being involved in the project.

As the key contact person for this team speaking on behalf of those involved in the *Grand Site*, **Caroline Darroux's** words are worth reflecting on:

*"I am an ethnologist and I carry out my work on the territory of the Morvan and Burgundy. Together with the group of researchers to which I belong, I am concerned with the way in which inhabitants are involved in the Grand Site de France initiative, whose aim is to serve the collective interest. We are also trying to make a comparison between what happens in the Morvan and other mountain territories. This could, among other things, make it possible for us to suggest working methods which have been tried elsewhere. In concrete terms, I am the interface between the researchers' group and those involved in the Grand Site de France - in other words, the Establishments of Bibracte and the Natural Park of the Morvan.*

*The main difficulty I see is that of building links between these two worlds, which are institutions on the one side and inhabitants on the other. For example, in Autumn 2014, we organised an event, that we called Overlapping Perspectives, on the future of the landscape of the Grand Site which brought together 70 participants.*





*It was conducted as a forum, in which professionals, residents, researchers, elected representatives, agricultural and forestry professionals and professionals from institutions all made a contribution. There were workshops on understanding the landscape right on the ground, and these were opportunities for everyone to express their opinion and to hear other people's: some common views did emerge from these interactive discussions which were also constructive. In the long term, working methods may change and inject a real shared energy into the territory by respecting each of the parties involved and by explaining the initiatives as clearly as possible."*

The initiative requires the plots of land with landscaping issues to be accurately identified, and a drawing up of solutions adapted to the specific features of each property and each manager of the space on a case-by-case basis. This all takes place within a very complex administrative environment. It is complex both because of the large number of parties involved, and because of the abundance of regulations relating to the environment that sometimes make it difficult to understand the situation properly.

Promoting these places means welcoming visitors and increasing tourism on the one hand, and recognizing the inhabitants' attachment to their land on the other. A particular goal is making sure that the agricultural economy successfully intersects with the tourist economy in a more effective way through short supply chain sales, or by welcoming visitors to the farms themselves.

**Anne-Marie Ducreux, mayor of Saint-Léger-sous-Beuvray,** explains the steps taken concerning the tourist offer, and the development of local resources:

*"I was born in the Morvan and, as an elected representative, I consider that Bibracte is a site of undeniable importance to my village. However, I feel that the inhabitants don't take ownership of the site - not because*

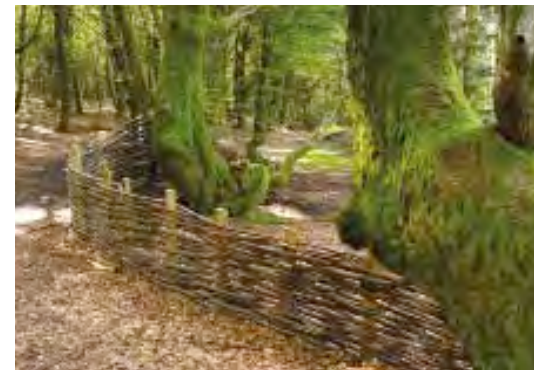
*they lack interest, as they reflect a lot on issues regarding culture, but because they believe it all relates to a different world that is not for them. I believe that the 'Grand Site de France' approach could bring about some change. For my part, I would like tourists to do more than just pass through, I would like them to take the time to spend a few days exploring the Morvan area. Craftsmen and traders have a particular interest in the matter because the local economy is closely linked to what Bibracte does.*

*My deputies and I are keen on carrying out various projects such as laying out the village square and creating a local producers' business. We also want to restore our identity through these festivals that used to be held over several days and which pulled in a good number of visitors. I would like to see more tourists coming here, though having said that, I do not want to see hordes of visitors. In all honesty, this is not the purpose of Bibracte. Mont Beuvray is a beautiful and perfectly preserved site, and in this respect the preservation initiatives that are being taken at the moment are vital."*

■ **PREVIOUS PAGE:** Anne-Marie Ducreux, Mayor of Saint-Léger-sous-Beuvray ... and an archaeologist's wife.

■ **ABOVE OPPOSITE:** Hurdles guides visitors along paths lined with uniquely shaped beech trees, the remains of ancient 'laid hedges', i.e. the branches are half cut through so they continue to live, but are bent down and intertwined with the other branches in the hedge.

■ **BELOW OPPOSITE:** The ever-present pastures in the landscape of the area around Mont Beuvray reflect an economic focus on cattle.





Managing the *Grand Site* is also about the day-to-day mobilisation of a team of several dozen people who have been tasked with managing the area (including forest workers, expert partners at Bibracte and interns at the two active inclusion worksites there) and welcoming visitors. It is about maintaining a dynamic management set-up once again, using this team of people with skillsets that are unusual because of their sheer diversity, as well as an economy based on complementarity between solid public support from the State and the regional authorities on the one hand and the actual resources linked to welcoming the public and managing the forest area on the other.

30 years after the forests of Mont Beuvray had started resonating to the sound of the archaeologist's trowel once again, the main parties involved in the 'Bibracte project' are strongly convinced that success will only be achieved with time - every year, the project continues to be built, to build up new skills, and to mobilise new partners...

PREVIOUS PAGE: Wood chips from Mont Beuvray are used to feed the boilers of the museum and the archaeological centre.

OPPOSITE: Year after year, masons must follow the archaeologists to reinforce the visible remains...



This collection is published in partnership with the *Réseau des Grands Sites de France*. Created in 2000 at the initiative of the authorities managing the *Grands Sites*, and thanks to the support of the Ministry for the Environment, this network brings together the sites which bear the *Grands Sites de France* label, together with others which aim at being awarded it in the future. The organisation supports its members in their initiatives promoting landscape as the heart of a land-planning project in line with sustainable development principles. It is a place where people can communicate ideas, where they can innovate and share experiences in France and at an international level.

**More information about Bibracte – Mont Beuvray can be found on [www.bibracte.fr](http://www.bibracte.fr)**

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