



Vézelay - Avallon - Morvan - Noyers

Avallon

sheltered by its ramparts

A small City in the South of the Yonne, in the heart of Burgundy, Avallon, whose name comes from a Celtic word "Aballo", is situated in the Northern part of the "Parc Naturel Régional du Morvan".

Set on a granitic spur and encircled with walls, the city dominates the valley of the river Cousin 100m below. The historic city is surrounded by 10th century terraced gardens. It is a remarkable site open on the Morvan landscape. Dominating a several valleys, the town has played an important military part for several centuries.



As far back as prehistoric times, there is evidence of continuous human settlement in this naturally protected site. In Gallo-roman times, the castle situated nearby the Agrippa way, the existing rue de Lyon, was set on the edge of the spur. In the 4th century, St Martin de Tours converted the region to Christianity and very soon a church was consecrated to him. A century later, Barbarians crossed over the Rhine and invaded the western part of the Roman Empire which disappeared in 476.

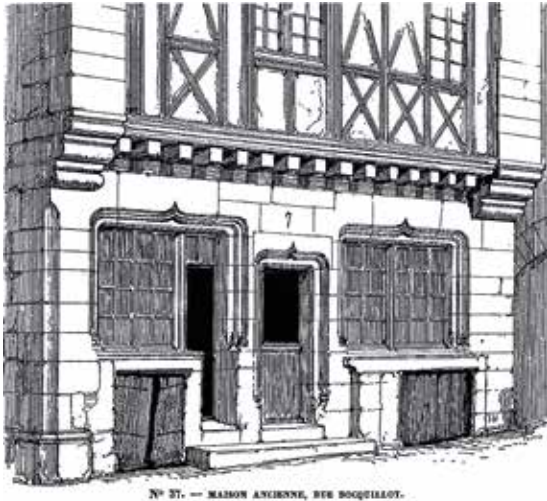


Following a long period of turbulent times Avallon had its first stone walls built in **the 9th century**, to protect itself against fights between the Franks and the Burgundians, against wars led by the Merovingians and then by the Carolingians to impose their power. In 987, even though Hugues Capet founded the Capetian dynasty which would continue for a long time to come the wars continued. The fortifications round Avallon became short-lived as in **the 11th century**, they were razed to the ground. The a quiet period took place under the reign of King Henry 1st.

The 14th century, and the 100 year war brought new ordeals to the town with plundering, destroying, plague and starvation. Fortifications had to be restored with the building of 17 new towers. Avallon being a border town was successively occupied by both opposite sides. However, in 1477, the Duchy of Burgundy became part of the realm of France and Avallon benefited from a quiet and prosperous period for over a century. Unfortunately in 1562 religious wars cast a tragic shadow over the region.

In the 17th century, Avallon grew bigger protected by the fortifications but was stricken by the plague. A century later, there was no need for fortifications any longer during a long lasting period.





In the 19th century, thanks to the river, economic growth with cereal and oil mills, tanning, paper mills and fuller's earth along the river Cousin developed in Avallon. In 1847, Eugène Felgrand, a civil engineer, installed a drinking water supply in the town by building an aqueduct over the river Cousin. The Baron Haussmann was impressed by his works and asked him to design the water system together with the sewerage system in Paris. Three years after the defeat of the Prussian war, Avallon recovered and unveiled the statue of Vauban sculpted by the sculptor Bartholdi who sculpted the statue of the Liberty in New York. On the same day the railway arrived in Avallon.



In the 20th century, even though both world wars did some damage to Avallon, they did not stop the economic growth of the town which managed to develop tourism, nature activities and heritage.



The Collegiate Church of St Lazarus

The origin of the church classified as an Historic Monument goes as far back as the 8th century when the Duke of Burgundy Henry the Great gave the church a bone from St Lazarus's skull who saved many people from the plague.

The church was considerably refurbished over few centuries. From the three portals only two remain. In 1589 the steeple was struck by lightning which melted the bells. Twelve years later, the stone pinnacles were destroyed by a storm and in 1633 the tower, just rebuilt, was knocked over by a hurricane that also destroyed a part of the church vaults and its portals. However, the 24 figures of elderly people in St John's apocalypse, the monthly works and the zodiac signs can still be seen on the tympanum of the great portal in the center.

While entering inside the Church, you will see the central nave with its two aisles. You will also notice the three meter difference of the ground level between the entrance and the choir.

The church also contains an organ dating from 1850 refurbished in 1890. Unfortunately the church and the organ are still awaiting restoration hopefully in the near future.

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