

WORLD HERITAGE LIST

Carcassonne (France)

No 345 rev

Identification

<i>Nomination</i>	The historic fortified town of Carcassonne
<i>Location</i>	Commune de Carcassonne, Département de l'Aude, Région de Languedoc-Roussillon
<i>State Party</i>	France
<i>Date</i>	28 June 1996

Justification by State Party

The two million French and foreign tourists of every nationality who walk round the three kilometres of the walls of Carcassonne do so mainly in order to visit a medieval town. Only a few of them do so in order to discover one of the most important sets of fortifications of the Late Roman Empire.

The medieval image of the town, which has been popularized through books, brochures, tourist leaflets, and the films to which it lends its "medieval setting," has long ago erased its real historical dimension. The image of "the medieval town of Carcassonne" is an over-simplification. Avila, Aigues-Mortes, Avignon, and Citadella are completely different medieval towns, created as a single act by royal or papal behest.

The case of Carcassonne, whose history began in the 6th century BC with the establishment of a protohistoric *oppidum*, was quite different. The feudal period, but even more the royal period in the 13th century (St Louis, Philip III the Bold, Philip IV the Fair), were of supreme importance for the history of the town, being intimately linked with the history of France through the annexation of Languedoc to the French Crown. However, despite the definitive nature of this historical sequence, during which the town was endowed with a complex and especially effective defensive system, earlier periods should not be overlooked, especially the Late Roman Empire.

The restoration of the fortifications, entrusted first to Viollet-le-Duc and then to his disciple, Boeswillwald, was based on a rigorous architectural and archaeological analysis and the creation of meticulous and detailed iconographic documentation.

The breadth of the programme of restoration, which spread over half a century, itself constitutes a real element in the history of the town, rediscovered in the 19th century under the influence of the Romantic movement.

Thanks to this restoration and to the clearing of the lists, the present-day appearance of the town is now much closer to that of the 14th century fortified citadel than its condition before the restoration work was carried out allowed.

Dominating the valley of the Aude and the important route linking the Atlantic and the Mediterranean from its rocky spur, Carcassonne today bears witness to a thousand years of military architecture, from the 4th to the 14th centuries, and to 2500 years of history.

[Note The State Party does not make any proposals in the nomination dossier concerning the criteria under which it considers the property should be inscribed on the World Heritage List.]

Category of property

In terms of the categories of cultural property set out in Article 1 of the 1972 World Heritage Convention, Carcassonne is a *group of buildings*.

History and Description

History

The earliest known occupation of the site where Carcassonne now stands dates from the 6th century BC, when a protohistoric hill-fort (*oppidum*) was built on this rocky spur overlooking the valley of the Aude and the ancient routes linking the Atlantic with the Mediterranean and the Iberian peninsula with the rest of Europe. Following the absorption of the region into the Roman Empire in the 1st century BC, this settlement, known as *Carcaso Volcarum Tectosagum*, became the Latin *Colonia Iulia Carcaso* in 27 BC.

During the turbulent years of the late 3rd and the early 4th century it was protected by the construction of a defensive wall some 1200m in length, the impressive remains of which still survive around two-thirds of the interior fortifications of the later town. It earned the town the appellation *castellum* in a document dated to the 330s.

It came under Visigothic rule in the 5th century, and resisted repeated attempts by the Franks to capture it. It was a frontier town on the northern boundary of Septimania. The Arabs were more successful in 724, but were driven out in 759, after a siege led by Pépin the Short. In the 9th century it became the seat of a count, and later of a viscount.

The Visigothic period saw the creation of a bishopric at Carcassonne, some time in the 6th century. It is probably that a cathedral was built here, on the site of the present Romanesque cathedral, on which work began in June 1096. The chancel of this structure was demolished in 1270, when construction of the new chancel started, not to be completed until the 1320s. A Lady Chapel was added in the early 15th century,

adjoining the infirmary and chapel built by Bishop Radulph in the 1260s.

The 12th century count's castle (*château comtal*) was built over the western part of the Roman walls; it was surrounded by a rectangular fortified enclosure in 1226. At the same time the external defensive walls were built, so as to make the town, recently annexed to the Royal domains and made the seat of a *sénéchal*, completely impregnable.

Two final construction campaigns took place in the 13th and early 14th centuries, following unsuccessful sieges in 1240 and 1280. By the end of the 13th century the town had assumed its definitive appearance as a medieval fortress. A local revolt in 1262 caused the king to expel most of the inhabitants. He allowed them to settle on the other side of the river, where the new town that they set up was itself fortified in 1347.

Such was the impregnability of Carcassonne that it was never attacked during the Hundred Years' War, even during the Black Prince's raid in 1355. The Huguenots made two surprise attempts to seize the town by force in 1575 and 1585, but both were quickly repressed. It became an arsenal and supply depot during the Ancien Régime and then during the Revolution. It was removed from the list of military fortresses in 1804, then reinstated as a second-grade fortress in 1820.

As a result, it was quickly treated as a convenient stone quarry and its walls and towers began to be dismantled. The survival of this magnificent set of fortifications owes its salvation to J P Cros Mayrevieille, who succeeded on 31 July 1850 in having the decree that abandoned the defences to demolition annulled. Prosper Mérimée, at that time Inspecteur Général des Monuments Historiques, began discussions with the War Ministry to save the ramparts, and the first funds were made available for this purpose in 1852.

Eugène-Emmanuel Viollet-le-Duc, who had been commissioned to prepare a report as early as 1846, began his restoration work at the Porte Narbonnaise and the Porte de l'Aude, and continued working at Carcassonne until his death in 1879. During this time the internal fortifications were almost entirely restored, along with a number of the towers on the external defences.

In the last part of the century his successor Paul Boeswillwald removed the houses that had been constructed within the lists (the area between the two lines of walls) and continued working on the restoration of the walls and the castle. The restoration process was not completed until 1910.

Description

The *fortifications*, consisting of two lines of walls and a castle, which is itself surrounded by fortifications, extend over a total length of 3km.

The 1250m of the internal walls have twenty-six round or horseshoe-shaped towers. Their line largely follows that of the Roman defences, and these are clearly visible over two-thirds of the total length. The

Roman walls were some 3m thick and 6-8m high, and were strengthened by 34-38 horseshoe-shaped bastions at roughly regular intervals. The masonry is in characteristic Late Roman style: rubble cores faced with courses of dressed ashlar intersected by courses of bricks and built on concrete foundations. The bastions are built on solid cubic bases surmounted by towers with semi-circular external walls, the lower storey of which was filled with rubble to resist shock from battering rams. This enceinte was reinforced and reconstructed in medieval style with crenellation in the 13th century, when the external walls were built.

The external walls, 1650m long, have nineteen round towers. Three of these are barbicans and a fourth is a covered passageway that linked the enceinte with the great barbican, demolished in the 19th century. The walls are a little lower than those of the internal walls, rising to 7-10m. The towers are open on their inner sides, so as to deny shelter to an enemy that might have seized them. Outside the enceinte (except on the south-east corner, where the natural topography affords sufficient protection) there is a 4m deep moat. The space between the two lines of fortifications (the lists) was deepened and levelled.

Both sets of walls underwent reconstruction during the final phase of building, in the late 13th century. In particular, two-thirds of the interior walls were extensively rebuilt and modernized and four towers were enlarged, according to developments in military architecture. One of these, the Porte Narbonnaise, which is one of the main entrances to the town, is especially imposing and well equipped.

The *castle* butts up against the interior of the internal line of defences on the western side. The walls of its bailey are strengthened by ten round towers, a barbican, and a dry moat. The living quarters (*corps de logis*) are in two parts: one is built up against the wall and has two squat towers at one end, and the other is built at right-angles to it. In their original form both were only two-storeyed, surmounted by a crenellated parapet.

The defensive wall round the castle and its towers were built in the second phase, in the 13th century. The enclosure of crenellated walls is rectangular and equipped with arrow slits. Three bastions of the Roman walls are incorporated into it. It is designed in the style of military architecture characteristic of northern and western France.

The two main entrances to the fortified town, the Porte Narbonnaise on the eastern side and the Porte de l'Aude on the west, are particularly elaborate defensive works.

The main body of the *cathedral*, dedicated to St Nazaire and St Celse, consists of a central six-bayed nave with an interrupted barrel vault and two narrow side-aisles rising to almost the same height and fully vaulted. The transverse arches of the barrel vaulting spring alternately from square columns surrounded by embedded columns and round pillars. The capitals have friezes round them with geometric and vegetal motifs.

The original Romanesque choir was replaced in the later 13th century by an imposing High Gothic structure. This is a large transept with a six-sided apse at its eastern end. It is at variance with the practice in the High Gothic cathedrals of northern France, where the choir itself was stressed; accenting the transept is more in keeping with a Romanesque tradition, which here is gothicized. Its exterior, like that of most southern French Gothic churches, has no flying buttresses, stability being assured by means of the interior vaulting.

The cathedral was in a poor state of conservation by the 19th century and major restoration work was carried out by Viollet-le-Duc. He was convinced that the cathedral played a role in the defences of the town in the Middle Ages, and so he added a crenellated parapet to the western facade.

It contains some important sculpture, notably the 13th century tomb of Bishop Radulph. The stained glass in the windows of the apse and the transept is of exceptionally high quality. Three periods can be distinguished - late 13th century, early 14th century, and 16th century.

Management and Protection

Legal status

The cathedral was designated an historical monument in 1840 and the fortifications nine years later. Other areas were added in 1926 and 1942. The site designated on 20 July 1942, in particular, covers the interior of the fortifications and a area of more than 1000ha around it. In 1959 a protection zone was designated by decree around the walls, within which nothing may be built.

Any interventions within the walls or in the 1942 protection zone must obtain authorization from the appropriate government authorities.

The properties that make up this nomination - the fortifications, the castle, and the cathedral - are all State property, vested in the Ministry of Culture.

Management

The Sous-Direction des Monuments Historiques of the Ministry of Culture is responsible for the protection and conservation of the monuments and their settings, working through its Conservateur Régional des Monuments Historiques and with the technical support of the relevant Architecte des Monuments de France and Architecte en Chef des Monuments Historiques.

On-site management is the responsibility of a Conservateur en Chef du Patrimoine, who operates within the funding and administrative framework of the Caisse Nationale des Monuments Historiques et des Sites.

The municipal authorities are currently implementing plans for improvements to the immediate surroundings of the nominated property. These include the removal of the parking area in front of the main entrance to the citadel and its replacement by a

new parking area close to the motorway, and for the possible pedestrianization of the *Pont Vieux* linking the two parts of the town.

Conservation and Authenticity

Conservation history

Since the 19th century restoration of Viollet-le-Duc and Boeswillwald came to an end in 1909, no more than routine maintenance took place until 1960, when work began on renewing Viollet-le-Duc's roofs.

The overall state of conservation of the monuments at the present time is good. A major campaign for waterproofing the towers and the castle was carried out in 1981-96. Safety was the subject of the project begun in 1995, starting with the installation of the first hand-rails. Four of the towers underwent restoration in 1996, and work was carried out on the castle in 1995 and 1996. In 1997 a major restoration campaign on the cathedral was begun, directed towards the stonework, the roofs, and the stained glass.

Authenticity

Any evaluation of the authenticity of Carcassonne must begin with an evaluation of the historical value of the 19th century restoration by Viollet-le-Duc. It has long been held that the work that he carried out would not be acceptable in the light of modern conservation theory and principles, as enunciated in the 1964 Venice Charter.

However, ICOMOS has devoted much consideration in the past three years to its perception and definition of "authenticity." The 1994 Nara Document asserts that "it is ... not possible to base judgements of value and authenticity on fixed criteria. On the contrary, the respect due to all cultures requires that cultural heritage must be considered and judged within the cultural contexts to which it belongs."

It has also been recognized by ICOMOS in its work connected with the World Heritage Convention that the cultural heritage of today owes much to the work of architect-conservators working in the 19th century under the influence of the Romantic movement. There can be no dispute that Eugène-Emmanuel Viollet-le-Duc was the greatest of these and someone who was, moreover, very influential in his time. Equally, it is generally recognized that the restoration of Carcassonne was his master work, to which he devoted the last thirty years of his life.

In its report, the ICOMOS expert mission made the following observations:

"The question of authenticity in Carcassonne should be seen in different contexts. First of all, the fortifications have certainly maintained their historic stratification, which can be verified as genuine. There are still large sections of the Roman fortifications left as part of the 13th century structures, which together make a highly interesting combination, perhaps underestimated by most visitors. In fact, Carcassonne is generally publicized as *"la cité médiévale."*

It is true that the cathedral has been largely restored and rebuilt externally, but internally it is still a genuine historic building which has had relatively little changes in the restoration, apart from some decoration in the Gothic choir. Here the impressive stained-glass windows are mostly genuine, representing contributions from different centuries; only the lower parts have been reconstructed by Viollet-le-Duc (perhaps with some mistakes). The castle has been in continuous use, and it has changed several times over the centuries. The current use as a museum will be kept, but there are plans to redesign it. Some changes are planned or being carried out in the courtyard in order to facilitate visitor management.

Another question is the authenticity of restoration works, and particularly of the work of Viollet-le-Duc. There have been some changes, especially in the Roman towers and in some roofing materials, but most of the 19th century restorations are still intact. Even the changes, which are minor, can be taken as part of the history. It is to be noted, however, that the building materials used in Carcassonne are not of good quality and so the site needs to be continuously repaired and maintained to keep it standing."

In its written evaluation of this property, when it was first nominated in 1985, ICOMOS recommended the State Party to give consideration to resubmission of Carcassonne (with Pierrefonds) "as an eloquent example of the conservation policy of the 19th century and the restoration doctrines of Viollet-le-Duc." Since that time, this romantic, historicizing tendency of 19th century restorers has been recognized by ICOMOS and by the World Heritage Committee as a positive factor in evaluating nominations to the List: for example, the castle of Karlštejn (Czech Republic) and the Luther memorials in Eisleben and Wittenberg (Germany). Against this background and with these precedents, therefore, the work of Viollet-le-Duc at Carcassonne would appear to qualify strongly for inscription.

Evaluation

Action by ICOMOS

An ICOMOS expert mission visited Carcassonne in February 1997.

Qualities

The fortifications of Carcassonne, including the castle, and its cathedral, are impressive monuments, giving a vivid picture of a medieval fortified town. This is to some extent a false one, since it is generally recognized that Viollet-le-Duc was responsible for some incorrect reconstructions in the course of his restoration. One criticism, relating to the general appearance of the fortifications, which have been accused of owing more to northern France, with its steeply sloping slate roofs, than to Languedoc, has recently been shown by the study of a 1462 drawing to be unfounded.

Nonetheless, a major part of the substance of the walls and towers (estimated to be at least 85% of the total) is still wholly authentic, preserving substantial elements of the Late Roman defences in the lower sections. The cathedral, and in particular the interior, is also authentic to a high degree and is an integral part of the feudal and, later, royal design of this great medieval fortress.

In its report, following a detailed analysis of the nature and extent of the 19th century restoration, the ICOMOS expert mission commented: "Looking at the situation as a whole, one can first say that the work of Viollet-le-Duc certainly merits full respect. It is also more coherent than the later works; even the work of Boeswillwald, his disciple, cannot be considered to have the same quality. Recent restorers have not taken into consideration the overall context of the citadel, as did Viollet-le-Duc, and have over-emphasized single architectural features."

The work of Viollet-le-Duc, carried on by Boeswillwald, was one of the most extensive projects of its kind in the 19th century. It set the standard for work - albeit in a "Romantic" idiom - over much of Europe and beyond for many decades. To quote the ICOMOS expert mission report again, "... his rational mind contributed to the development of archaeological study and systematic recording and analysis of heritage sites." As such, therefore, Carcassonne has a fundamental historic quality that is pre-eminent.

Comparative analysis

In its 1985 evaluation, ICOMOS commented that "... the Cité of Carcassonne ... cannot be accepted as the example, *par excellence*, of urban fortifications in medieval Europe. Other towns easily rival Carcassonne by the magnitude of their defensive systems, including Avila with its 2500m of perimeter and its 82 towers (42 remain at Carcassonne). For the typological interest of their arrangements, other 13th century ensembles could be chosen, such as Caernarvon [United Kingdom], Citadella (Italy), Albarracin (Spain) [or] Aigues-Mortes (France). By the density of monuments and the weight of history, Dubrovnik [Croatia, included in 1979 on the World Heritage List], Visby (Sweden) [inscribed 1995], [or] Assisi (Italy) are standards of comparison whose universal character is clearly more obvious."

The State Party reviews a number of comparable medieval towns and fortifications in its nomination dossier, with short evaluations of each as a medieval fortified town. These include Aigues-Mortes, Avignon,* Boulogne-sur-Mer, Dinan, Guérande, Langres, le Mont-Saint-Michel,* Montreuil-Bellay, and Provins (France), Avila* (Spain), Viterbo, Assisi, and Citadella (Italy), Nuremberg and Rothenburg-obder-Taube (Germany), York (United Kingdom), Visby* (Sweden), Dubrovnik* (Croatia), and Krak des Chevaliers (Syria) [those marked * are already inscribed on the World Heritage List].

This review goes on to identify two types of medieval fortified towns, "created" and "spontaneous," the former characterized by regular street plans and the latter adapted to the landscape and to a pre-existing

street pattern, having evolved over a period rather than having been created in a single act of foundation.

Carcassonne is, rightly, assigned to the latter group, having developed from a Late Roman fortified town. It is considered to be superior in this sense to other French towns whose ramparts are of Late Roman origin, such as Toulouse, Le Mans, Bordeaux, or Senlis. The cultural value of the sequence of fortifications at Carcassonne, from late antiquity to the Middle Ages, is considered by the State Party to transcend regional or even national importance.

Whilst respecting the point of view expressed in the dossier, ICOMOS does not retreat from the view that it took in 1985 in this respect. Equally, it adheres to its evaluation of the universal cultural significance of the work of Viollet-le-Duc.

ICOMOS recommendations for future action

The original nomination related only to the fortifications, the castle, and the cathedral. ICOMOS is of the opinion that the entire urban complex *intra muros* cannot easily be separated from the fortifications.

In this context, it is worthy of note that the revised tentative list for France dated 20 September 1996 contains the following two items, under separate group headings:

- Carcassonne: Town within the ramparts;
- Carcassonne: 19th century restoration of the medieval town.

This matter was discussed during the ICOMOS expert mission, and the relevant authorities agreed that the nominated property should be extended to cover the entire old town within the walls. An additional dossier was sent to the World Heritage Centre and to ICOMOS, covering the fortifications, the castle, the cathedral, and the residential buildings within the fortified area. In addition, the Church of Saint-Gimer, one of the three churches designed by Viollet-le-Duc and built on the site of the demolished barbican, is included in the nominated area.

The ICOMOS expert mission also drew attention to the open-air theatre behind the cathedral. This is in use only for a very short period each year, but remains in place permanently. It is somewhat unsightly, and it is suggested that the authorities consider the possibility of replacing it with a structure that can be dismantled after each season of performances.

The mission was also concerned about public safety on the wall walks to which the public have access, but understands that a new design of metal railings is to be installed.

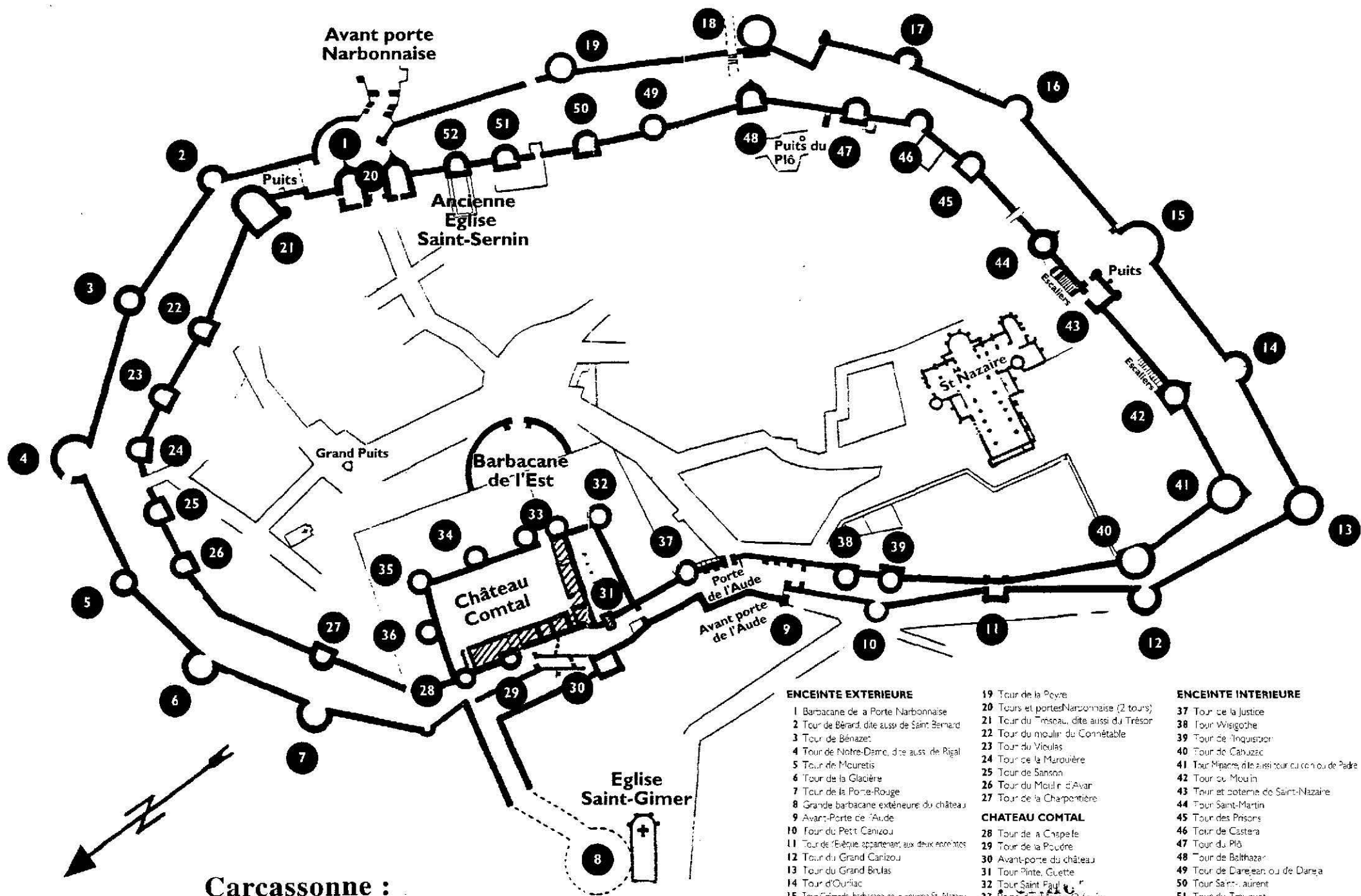
Recommendation

That this property be inscribed on the World Heritage List on the basis of *criteria ii and iv*:

The historic town of Carcassonne is an excellent example of a medieval fortified town whose

massive defences were constructed on walls dating from Late Antiquity. It is of exceptional importance by virtue of the restoration work carried out in the second half of the 19th century by Viollet-le-Duc, which had a profound influence on subsequent developments in conservation principles and practice.

ICOMOS, September 1997



Carcassonne :
Plans des fortifications /
Plan of the fortifications

ENCEINTE EXTERIEURE

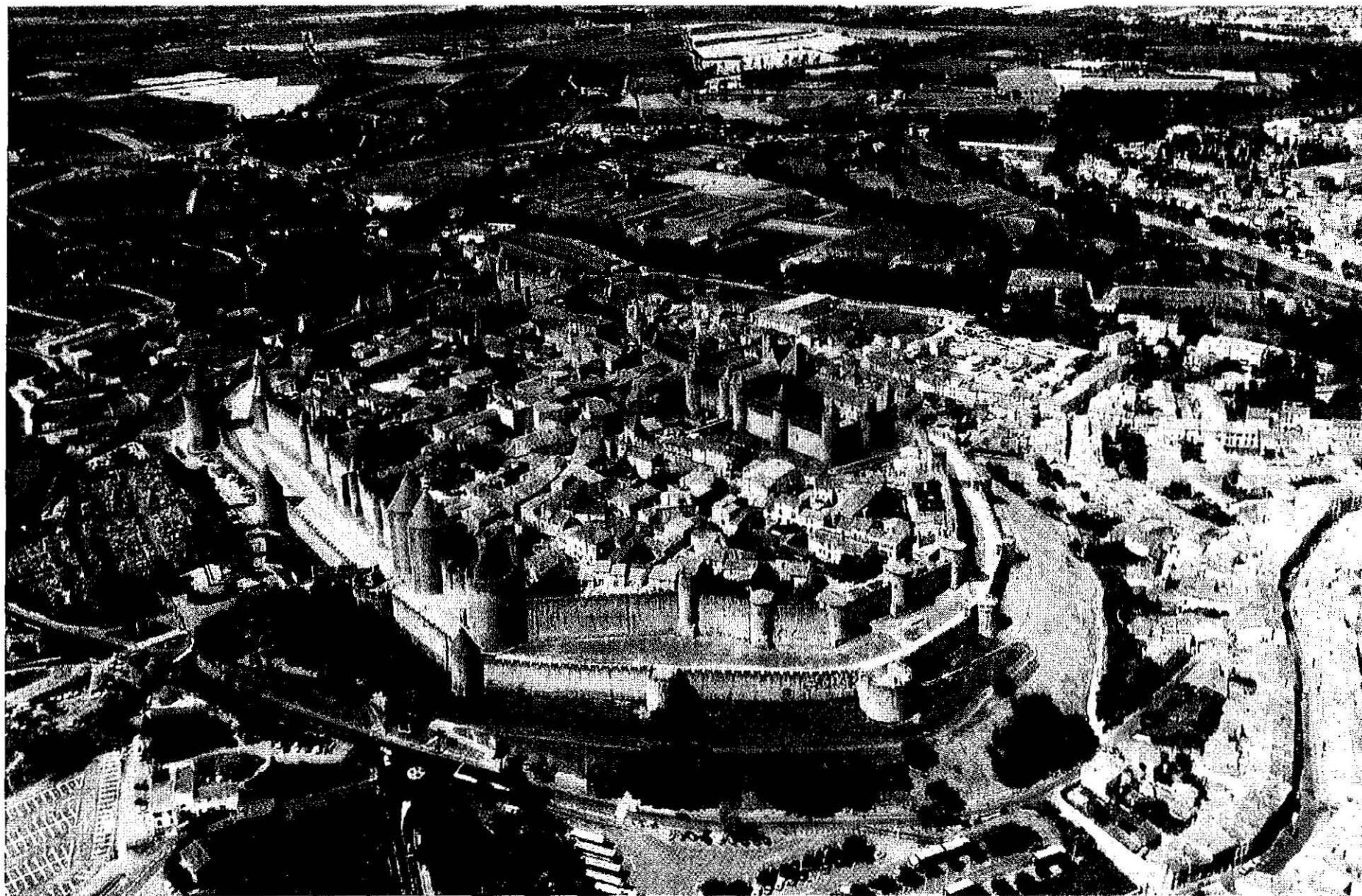
- 1 Barbacane de la Porte Narbonnaise
- 2 Tour de Bérard, dite aussi de Saint Bernard
- 3 Tour de Bénazet
- 4 Tour de Notre-Dame, dite aussi de Rigal
- 5 Tour de Mouretis
- 6 Tour de la Glacière
- 7 Tour de la Porte-Rouge
- 8 Grande barbacane extérieure du château
- 9 Avant-Porte de l'Aude
- 10 Tour du Petit Canizou
- 11 Tour de l'Église appartenant aux deux enceintes
- 12 Tour du Grand Canizou
- 13 Tour du Grand Brulas
- 14 Tour d'Ourlac
- 15 Tour Gréade, barbacane de la porte St-Nazaire
- 16 Tour Cautères
- 17 Tour Poutelo
- 18 Tour de la Vache, dite aussi du Papégay
- 19 Tour de la Peyre
- 20 Tours et portes Narbonnaise (2 tours)
- 21 Tour du Trésor, dite aussi du Trésor
- 22 Tour du moulin du Connétable
- 23 Tour du Viculus
- 24 Tour de la Maroulière
- 25 Tour de Sanson
- 26 Tour du Moulin d'Avant
- 27 Tour de la Charpentière

CHATEAU COMTAL

- 28 Tour de la Chapelle
- 29 Tour de la Poudre
- 30 Avant-porte du château
- 31 Tour Pinte, Guette
- 32 Tour Saint-Paul
- 33 Porte du château (2 tours)
- 34 Tour des Quatre
- 35 Tour du
- 36 Tour du Degré

ENCEINTE INTERIEURE

- 37 Tour de la Justice
- 38 Tour Wisigothe
- 39 Tour de l'Inquisition
- 40 Tour de Caluzac
- 41 Tour Miquet, dite aussi tour du coin ou de Padre
- 42 Tour du Moulin
- 43 Tour et poterne de Saint-Nazaire
- 44 Tour Saint-Martin
- 45 Tour des Prisons
- 46 Tour de Castera
- 47 Tour du Plô
- 48 Tour de Balhazar
- 49 Tour de Dargéan ou de Dargé
- 50 Tour Saint-Jacques
- 51 Tour du Traquet
- 52 Tour de Saint-Sernin



Carcassonne :
Vue d'ensemble de la ville /
General view of the town