

Identification

<i>Nomination</i>	Avignon: The monumental ensemble formed by the Place du Palais, the Palais des Papes, the Cathedral of Notre-Dame des Doms, the Petit Palais, the Tour des Chiens, the Ramparts, and Saint-Bénézet Bridge
<i>Location</i>	Provence-Alpes-Côte-d'Azur Région, Département de Vaucluse
<i>State Party</i>	France
<i>Date</i>	11 October 1994

Justification by State Party

The Palais des Papes is a unique artistic monument and a masterpiece of the creative genius of mankind.

Criterion i

The patronage of Pope Clement VI made Avignon an artistic capital whose influence radiated over the whole of Europe, thanks to the presence there of a cosmopolitan group of painters and decorators led by Matteo Giovanetti di Viterbo.

Criterion ii

Both in its architecture and its interior decoration the Palais des Papes is an outstanding example of a 14th century palace-fortress, characterized by Froissart as "the most beautiful and the strongest house in the world." Because of the technical development that it represents, Saint-Bénézet Bridge is one of the most important medieval bridges in Europe, and it is immortalized in song.

Criterion iv

For more than sixty years Avignon was the political, religious, artistic, literary, and economic capital of Christianity. For this reason it is directly and materially associated with events of universal historical value.

Criterion vi

Note No justification was included in the nomination dossier submitted in 1994. The text above is taken from the original nomination dossier of 1982.

Category of property

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

History and Description*History*

In 1309 the Frenchman Bertrand de Got, who had been elected and crowned Supreme Pontiff in 1305, refused to go to Rome, choosing instead to install himself temporarily in the Dominican Convent at Avignon. Seven Popes were to reign there until the election of Martin V in 1417 and the return of the seat of the papacy to Rome.

Clement's successor, John XXII (1316-34), moved to the former bishop's palace, which he converted into a papal palace, on the Rocher des Doms, alongside the cathedral. Benedict XII (1334-42) gradually demolished this building and replaced it with what is now known as the Old Palace, covering the northern part of the present monument, a structure that took the master-builder Pierre Poisson eighteen years to complete. It was Benedict's successor, Clement VI (1342-52), who was to complete the ensemble, under the direction of Jean de Louvres, who brought with him from the Ile-de-France the high Gothic style then prevailing there. Clement entrusted the

interior decoration to the famous Italian painter Matteo Giovannetti from Viterbo, who worked on the chapels of St John and St Martial while waiting for the New Palace to be completed. He also supervised the work of French and Italian painters on other halls and rooms within the palace.

Avignon had been sold to Clement VI in 1348 by Queen Joan of Naples and Sicily, and it was to remain the residence of the Italian Papal legates for nearly four hundred years after the Papacy had returned to Rome, until they were expelled at the time of the Revolution, when the people of Avignon, which had benefited markedly from its long association with the Papacy, opted to join France. In 1793 the Convention decided to demolish this "Bastille du Midi," but the massive building defied their efforts. It passed to the ownership of the town in 1810, and eight years later was put at the disposal of the Minister of War, who used it as a barracks until 1906, when it was returned to the town.

Description

Part of the medieval town was demolished in the 14th century, by papal order, to create the *Place du Palais*, a wide open space in front of the Palais des Papes.

The *Palais des Papes* comprises two parts - to the north the *Palais Vieux* (Old Palace) of Benedict XII and to the south the *Palais Neuf* (New Palace) of Clement VI. The whole complex covers 15,165 m². The main entrance is in the centre of Clement VI's facade, between two turrets (reconstructed in 1932). The 1800 m² main courtyard is situated between the two palace buildings.

Important features of the Palais Vieux are the vast Consistory Hall, with the Chapel of St John opening out of it (decorated by Giovannetti), and above it the Tinel or Feast Hall (also decorated by Giovannetti). Two towers rise to the north of this wing of the palace, the Tour de Trouillas at 52 m being one of the highest medieval towers. The palace also houses a number of private rooms of the pontiffs - robing rooms, bedroom, study, etc. Clement VI's day room, the *Chambre du Cerf* (Room of the Stag), contains especially important frescoes with representations of rustic scenes, the work of Giovannetti and his assistants.

The *Chambre du Cerf* gives access to the Great Chapel of the Palais Neuf, 52 m by 15 m and 19.50 m high; its heavy vault is braced by a massive flying buttress that spans the neighbouring street. The whole of the ground floor of the west wing of the palace, known as the Wing of the Great Dignitaries, is occupied by the *Grande Audience* (Great Audience Chamber) or Hall of Justice.

The *Cathedral of Notre-Dame des Doms* lies to the north of the Palais des Papes. The present building replaced the earlier group of episcopal buildings in the 12th century. The east tower was destroyed in 1405, during the siege of the town by Benedict XIII (the Antipope Pedro de Luna) but soon reconstructed. Gothic chapels were added in the 14th-17th centuries, and the apse was demolished and rebuilt in an enlarged form in 1671-72, work which resulted in the destruction of the medieval cloister.

The *Petit Palais* (Small Palace) closes the western side of the Place du Palais. A group of medieval houses was demolished during the papal period to make way for it. It began as a cardinal's residence, begun in 1317, and was acquired by John XXII in 1336 to compensate the Bishop for the demolition of his palace to permit the construction of the papal palace, and was successively expanded in the 14th and 15th centuries.

At the foot of the north side of the Rocher des Doms, the *ramparts*, the *Tour des Chiens*, and the *Châtelet* form the defences of the town and separate it from the river. They are mostly 14th century work, but extensively reconstructed and strengthened in later centuries. The Tour des Chiens is the only octagonal tower in the defences and dates from the 15th century.

The Tour du Châtelet commands access to *Saint Bénézet Bridge*. Four survive out of the original twenty-two arches of this famous medieval bridge. It is built on the stone piers of a Roman bridge and replaced a 12th century wooden bridge, destroyed in 1226 in a French siege during the Albigensian Crusade. The Chapel of St Nicolas, part Romanesque and part 15th century, occupies part of the second pier.

Management and Protection

Legal status

The different elements of the historic ensemble are owned by various government bodies:

- The Place du Palais, the Petit Palais, the ramparts, the St Bénézet Bridge, and the garden and promenade of the Doms: the commune.
- The Palais des Papes (north-west part, including the Chapel of Benedict XII and the Trouillas Tower): the Département of Vaucluse.
- Those parts of the Palais des Papes not in département ownership: the town.
- The Cathedral: The State.

All are protected in divers ways, by various statutory measures dating back to 1840 (the Cathedral). The area of Avignon *intra muros* is a protected area (*secteur sauvegardé*) designated by Ministerial Decree of 16 September 1991.

Management

The various bodies listed above are responsible for the management of those monuments in their ownership. Various parts of the buildings are in use as museums (Musée du Petit Palais), conference centre (Centre International de Congrès, Palais des Papes), archive repositories (Palais des Papes), and documentation centre (Centre International de Documentation et de Recherche du Petit Palais). The Palais des Papes is the site for the Avignon Festival, and also houses many temporary exhibitions.

A *Schéma directeur de réutilisation et restauration* for the Palais des Papes was commissioned in September 1993 from Didier Répellin, Architecte en Chef des Monuments Historiques, along with a series of detailed studies on individual parts of the monument. There are regular examination and conservation programmes in respect of the properties owned by the town.

Conservation and Authenticity

Conservation history

Conservation work began as early as the first half of the 19th century. Prosper Mérimée visited the town officially in the 1840s and reported on it in his *Notes d'un voyage dans le midi de la France*, and Viollet-le-Duc was working on the restoration of the defences in the 1860s. In the present century, serious conservation work began with the return of the Palais des Papes to the town in 1906. The present campaigns date from the 1960s and have been carried out under the direction of Architectes en Chef des Monuments Historiques.

Authenticity

The level of authenticity in the fabric and design of the components of the Avignon group of historic properties is high and reflects the philosophy and policies of the French Monuments Historiques directorate. The uses to which some of the elements of the ensemble have been put and the consequent physical installations are somewhat marginal: for example, the Archives Départementales in the Tour de Trouillas.

Evaluation

Action by ICOMOS

An ICOMOS expert mission visited Avignon in February 1995. The opinion of the International Committee on Historic Towns and Villages was also obtained.

Qualities

The Avignon ensemble is an outstanding group of late medieval buildings associated with an important episode in the history of the Papacy.

Comparative analysis

No comparative study has been carried out, and it is difficult to identify the other European properties with which this ensemble might be validly compared.

ICOMOS comments

This nomination was first considered at the 7th Meeting of the Bureau of the World Heritage Committee in June 1983, when ICOMOS recommended that further consideration should be deferred. This recommendation was accepted by the Bureau, which requested that a. the perimeter of the protection zone should be more clearly delineated; b. consideration should be given to the inclusion of Villeneuve-lès-Avignon in the nominated area; and c. a map should be supplied showing the boundaries of the area proposed for nomination. The first and third of these recommendations has been adopted in the revised nomination, but not the second.

Following the expert mission, ICOMOS is of the opinion that the French authorities should be invited to give further consideration to the area proposed for inscription. The following changes to the boundaries are suggested:

North The remaining 19th century buildings at the foot of the Rocher des Doms are not of sufficient quality to justify the inclusion of this area, most of which is used as a parking lot, in the nominated area. It is proposed that the northern limit should be at the foot of the Rocher des Doms on the line of the boundary of the protected *site classé* of the garden of the Rocher des Doms.

East The exclusion of the Jardin de Benoît XII and the Verger d'Urbain V, which are historically an integral part of the ensemble (and which also come within the protected area of the Palais des Papes) is unjustified.

South It is suggested that this boundary be extended beyond its present limit, the external line of the defences, to include the Vice-Gérance (the 14th century Palais du Maréchal de la Cour, the 12th century Palais de la Commune, and part of the archaeological remains on the Rue Peyrolerie).

West The validity of the northern part of this boundary is debatable. It is suggested that this might be redrawn along the eastern facade of the Hôpital du Pont and the exterior contour of the rampart through to the Bridge.

There is no formally designated buffer zone around the nominated site. ICOMOS feels, however, that this is not required, because of provisions of the existing legislative protection of the historic monuments within the nominated area. It is recommended, however, that the *Plan de Sauvegarde et de Mise en Valeur*, currently being prepared for the Secteur Sauvegardé, should make specific dispositions in respect of the areas surrounding the monuments, in order to ensure the long-term protection and conservation of the authenticity of the ensemble.

Recommendation

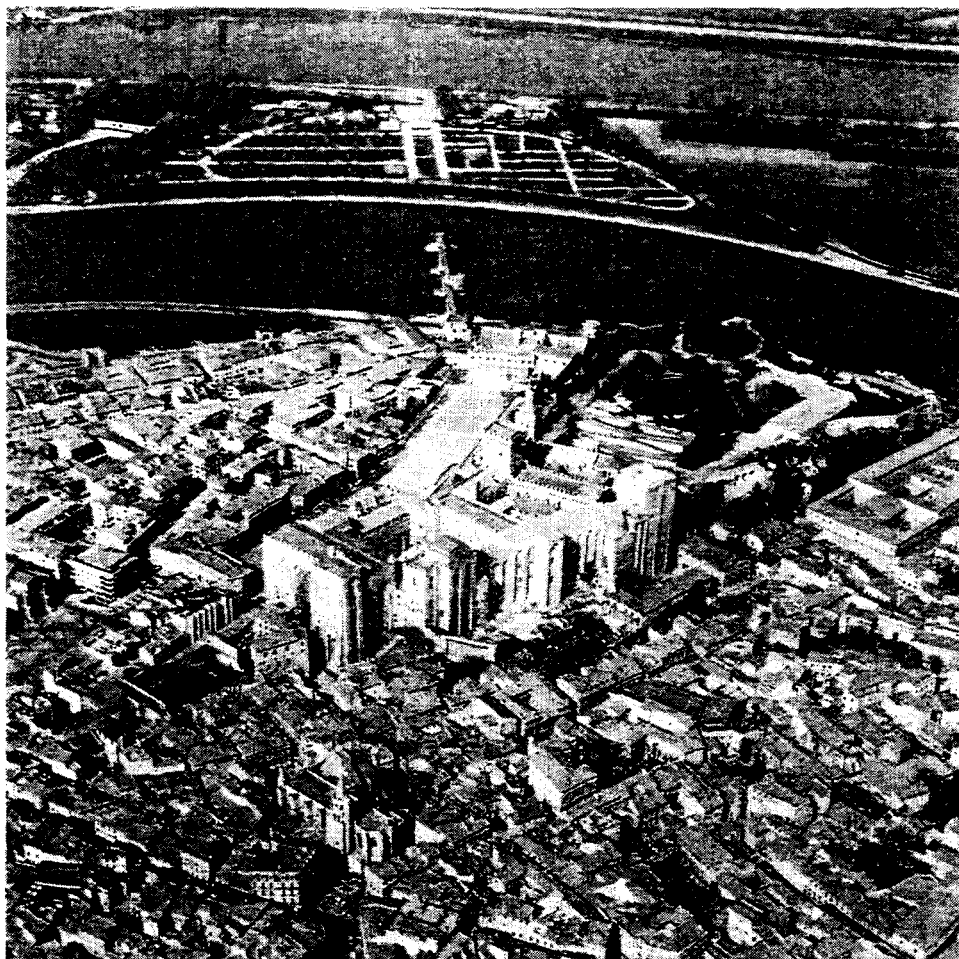
That this nomination be referred back to the State Party to revise for the boundaries of the area proposed for inscription on the World Heritage List to be revised as proposed by ICOMOS. In the event of agreement being reached on the boundaries, ICOMOS recommends that this property be inscribed on the World Heritage List on the basis of *criteria i, ii, and iv*.

The monumental ensemble in the historic centre of Avignon is an outstanding example of late medieval ecclesiastical, administrative, and military architecture, which played a significant role in the development and diffusion of a characteristic form of culture over a wide area of Europe at a time of critical importance for the development of lasting relationships between the Papacy and the civil powers.

ICOMOS, September 1995



Avignon : carte indiquant la zone historique /
Map showing the historic area



Avignon : vue aérienne depuis le nord-est /
Aerial view from the north-east