

A) IDENTIFICATION

Nomination : The banks of the Seine in Paris
Location : Ile de France
State party : France
Date : 1 October 1990

B) ICOMOS RECOMMENDATION

That this cultural property be included on the World Heritage List on the basis of Criteria I and II.

C) ICOMOS OBSERVATIONS

ICOMOS is concerned that rigorous development control be maintained not just over building in adjacent zones but indeed over the profile and height of visible background skylines, to maintain the integrity of the site and its vistas.

D) BACKGROUND

Paris is a river town. Ever since the first human settlements, from the prehistoric days and the village of the Parisii tribes, the river Seine has played both a defensive and economic role.

The present historic city, which developed between the 16th and particularly the 17th centuries and the 20th century, translates the evolution of the relationship between the river and the people: defense, trade, promenades, etc.

The choice of the zone between Pont de Sully and Pont d'Iéna is based on the age-old distinction between Paris upstream and Paris downstream. Upstream, beyond the Arsenal, begins Paris the port and river transport town; downstream is the royal, and subsequently aristocratic Paris, which had only limited commercial activity. It is this latter section of the city which was selected in the nomination. The powerful hand of the State is extremely visible here through its constructions and the legislation in effect.

The section includes the banks of the Seine in the truly historic part of its course, from Pont Sully to Pont d'Iéna, with Ile de la Cité and Ile Saint-Louis in between. The proposed section also includes the following buildings and sites along the banks: Place Saint-Germain-l'Auxerrois; the ensemble composed of the Louvre palace and the Tuileries gardens; Place de la Concorde with the axis Church of the Madeleine-Assemblée Nationale; the Hôtel des Invalides and its esplanade- the Grand Palais and the Petit Palais des Champs-Élysées; Ecole Militaire- Champ-de-Mars- the Eiffel Tower- the Palais de Chaillot and the Trocadéro gardens.

One can see how the site and the river were gradually brought under control with the articulation of the two islets, Ile de la Cité and Ile St Louis with the bank, the creation of North-South thoroughfares, installations along the river course, construction of quays and the channeling of the river.

Similarly, although the successive walls of the city have disappeared (enceintes Philippe-Auguste, Charles V and the Fermiers Généraux), their traces may be read in the difference in size and spacing of the buildings, i.e. closer together in the Marais and the Ile Saint-Louis, more open after the Louvre, beyond which are a greater number of major classic constructions laid along three perpendicular axes: the Palais Bourbon, Concorde-Madeleine, Invalides-Grand and Petit Palais, Champ-de-Mars, Ecole Militaire and Palais de Chaillot.

The ensemble must be regarded as a geographic and historic entity. Today it constitutes a remarkable example of urban riverside architecture, where the strata of history are harmoniously superposed.

- **Criterion I.** The banks of the Seine are studded with a succession of masterpieces, including, in particular, Notre Dame and Sainte Chapelle, the Louvre, the Palais de l'Institut, the Invalides, Place de la Concorde, Ecole Militaire, the Mint (la Monnaie), the Grand Palais des Champs Élysées, the Eiffel Tower, and Palais de Chaillot. A number of them, such as Notre Dame and Sainte Chapelle, were definite references in the spread of Gothic construction, while the Place de la Concorde, or the vista at the Invalides, exerted influence on the urban development of European capitals. The Marais and Ile Saint-Louis have coherent architectural ensembles, with highly significant examples of Parisian construction of the 17th and 18th centuries (Hôtel Lauzun and Hôtel Lambert on the Ile St Louis), Quai Malaquais and Quai Voltaire.

- **Criterion II.** Haussmann's urbanism, which marks the western part of the city, inspired the construction of the great cities of the New World, in particular in Latin America. The Eiffel Tower and the Palais de Chaillot are living testimony of the great universal exhibitions, which were of such great importance in the 19th and 20th centuries.

ICOMOS, May 1991