

WORLD HERITAGE LIST

Lyon (France)

No 872

Identification

<i>Nomination</i>	The historic site of Lyon
<i>Location</i>	Région Rhône-Alpes
<i>State Party</i>	France
<i>Date</i>	10 July 1997

Justification by State Party

The special quality of the historic site of Lyon derives from its exceptional setting, on two hills at the confluence of two rivers, combined with the material manifestation of its way of life through its town plan and its architecture.

Since it was founded in 43 BC Lyon has been the favoured site for the spiritual and material exchanges that have created, here at the confluence of the Rhône and the Saône, an original civilization that is representative of European values.

The life-style of Lyon is an original one: its social codes come from a community of merchants, of enterprising townspeople, who are fiercely independent, combining seriousness, a taste for taking risks, and a sense of reality with idealism. Preferring substance to style, Lyonnais society has always conscientiously and resolutely adapted its way of life to its aspirations. Being oriented willingly to economic and social expansion, it has always eschewed any form of ostentation. Its sights have been directed in a rational manner towards change and fashion, which has enabled Lyon to preserve continuity in its way of life and to pass this on with remarkable authenticity.

These principles have been translated in complete harmony into the architecture:

- there are few private mansions, but instead tenements administered by the local government, a form of management invented in Lyon;
- styles emerging from major artistic trends have been skilfully used, retaining only their essential elements;

- the town has adapted itself in particular to the silk trade, with the houses of the *canuts* (silk weavers) of the Croix-Rousse serving as precedents for an original form of social life; there has been continuous spiritual enthusiasm, demonstrated by the many religious buildings constructed over the centuries, and a religious fervour, the apogee and the persistence of which are symbolized by the Basilica of Fourvière. **Criterion iii**

The historic site of Lyon may be regarded as “an outstanding example of a traditional human settlement,” which combines an exceptional site with an urban continuity that is remarkable for its harmony. Whilst in most European cities the centre has been developed by rebuilding on the same site, in Lyon it has moved eastwards, deserting the former centres. For this reason the city has preserved its centres in preceding periods intact and legible. The unusual homogeneity of the urban fabric that strikes the eye results from harmony in the architecture that goes beyond stylistic evolution and from the symbiosis between the natural site of the city and its urbanization. **Criterion v**

With the first western Christians having been martyred there in AD 177, Lyon was the centre of the expansion of Christianity in the west.

Religious and secular organizations devoted to the assistance of the poor and social works throughout the world have always been based in Lyon. Two figures from recent history admirably illustrate the international role of Lyon in this field:

- Frédéric Ozanam was born in Milan in 1813 and brought up in Lyon, where in 1833 he founded the Society of St Vincent de Paul, a secular movement committed to spiritual training and social activities. This body now represents 700,000 people spread over five continents. Frédéric Ozanam was beatified by Pope John-Paul II in August 1997;
- Father Antoine Chevrier (1826-79) founded the Society of the Prado, an organization with its headquarters in Lyon, serving poor and abandoned people all over the world, and particularly in Asia. He was beatified in 1986.

Lyon was the cradle and chosen home of famous people who have contributed to the cultural and scientific development of Europe. Names that may be quoted are those of François Rabelais, the great 16th century humanist who practised medicine in Lyon and whose literary works were first published there; Philibert de l'Orme and Jacques-Germain Soufflot, each of whom, in his own period, became internationally famous for the influence that they exercised on French architecture; Vaucanson and Joseph Jacquard, who revolutionized the textile industry through their innovative machines; the Montgolfier brothers, pioneers of ballooning (1780); the Lumière brothers, inventors of the cinema (1895); and the electrical genius Louis Ampère (1910). **Criterion vi**

Category of property

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

History and Description

History

There was a Gaulish settlement here as early as the 4th century BC, to the west of the line of hills bordering the Saône. Although the area was marshy at that time, the settlement played an important role in trading with Marseille.

In 43 BC Lucius Munatius Plancus, governor of the Roman province of Gallia Transalpina, founded a town known as *Lugdunum* on one of these hills, Fourvière; it was granted the high status of *colonia* by the Senate, giving it important fiscal privileges. With the reorganization of the provinces of Gaul in 27 BC it became the capital of Gallia Lugdunensis and the headquarters of the Imperial government. A network of roads was built spreading outwards from Lugdunum, a factor that contributed significantly to its economic and political supremacy.

Lugdunum had a special status, since it was here that the Council of the Gauls met annually. Delegates from all the towns in the three provinces came together at the sanctuary dedicated to Rome and Augustus on the slopes of the Croix-Rousse.

Christianity was brought to Lugdunum by the Greeks from Asia Minor who had settled there in large numbers. In AD 177 the Christian community sent a letter to their co-religionists in Asia Minor, giving the names of 48 of their number who had suffered martyrdom in the Croix-Rousse amphitheatre, among them St Pothinus, first Bishop of Lyon. The church was, however, to recover quickly, and Ireneus, the successor of Pothinus, became the first great Christian theologian. In the 5th century this intellectual tradition was maintained by another son of Lugdunum, Sidonius Apollinaris.

In the period that followed the collapse of the Roman Empire of the West, Lyon survived as an important urban centre, and a number of important monastic communities established themselves there. In 843 it was assigned to Lotharingia by the Treaty of Verdun, and then passed to the Burgundian kingdom. It became the centre of the County of Lyon, the lordship of which was conferred by the Holy Roman Emperor Frederick Barbarossa to the Archbishop of Lyon in 1157. Although small, the County was influential, by virtue both of its independent status and of its commercially and politically strategic location. The Archbishopric was also important, since Pope Gregory VII had conferred the title of "Primate of the Gauls" on its holders in 1078. It was especially favoured by the Papacy, and several pontiffs were crowned there.

This independence came to an end in 1312, when Philip the Fair annexed the city to the Kingdom of France. However, its commercial significance was unaffected and it continued to prosper. During the first

half of the 16th century Lyon also became the base for French political activities in Italy. As a result it was frequently visited by the French court, bringing many artists in its train.

During the reign of Louis XI (1461-83) four annual fairs were established, which drew merchants from all over Europe, especially Italy (and Florence in particular). Lyon became a major centre for the spice trade and, even more importantly, the silk trade, following the authorization by François I of weaving privileges, hitherto an Italian monopoly. The Florentine immigrants also made Lyon a financial centre for banking and insurance.

The first printing establishment was set up in Lyon in 1472, and it quickly became one of the most important printing and publishing centres in Europe, behind Venice and Paris, producing books in Hebrew, Greek, Latin, Italian, and Spanish as well as French. The works of Erasmus, Rabelais, Scaliger, More, Poliziano, and many other intellectual leaders were published by the Württemberger Sebastian Gryphe, who set up in Lyon.

When French policy turned away from Italy in the 1550s, Royal visits to Lyon became less frequent. It was also caught up in the Religious Wars and in 1562 was seized by Protestant troops. Lyon was the location of the meeting that resulted in 1601 in large parts of the Dukedom of Savoy being added to the French kingdom.

Lyon lost the considerable degree of autonomy that it had hitherto enjoyed around this time, but its commercial and industrial importance were not abated. During the 17th and 18th centuries its pre-eminence in silk production was unchallenged, and inventors like Vaucanson and Jacquard made far-reaching contributions to this industry.

The geographical situation of Lyon meant that many artists and architects passed through it on their way to and from Italy, and their influence is plain to see in many buildings of the period, such as the Hôtel-Dieu and the Loge du Change. During the 18th century the expansion resulting from increased prosperity indicated the need for a measure of systematic town planning, and this was carried out by a series of brilliant planners and architects such as de Cotte, Soufflot, Morand, and Perrache.

When Napoleon I imposed the use of Lyonnais silk on all the courts of Europe the industry boomed. New tenements with workshops were built for the craftsmen (*canuts*). Lyon was to see the first *Conseil des Prud'hommes* (labour litigation court) in 1806 and the first cooperative grocery store in 1835. Between 1800 and 1848 the number of looms in operation increased tenfold, from 6000 to 60,000, and over 90,000 people were employed in the industry. However, relations between the workers who produced the silk and the merchants who sold it were always uneasy, and Lyon also saw the first worker demonstrations in 1831 and 1834. This was to come to an end with the authoritarian policies of the Second Empire.

The wealth of Lyon and its worldwide mercantile contacts attracted banks from the Far East to the city as

well as encouraging the creation of banking institutions by the Lyonnais themselves. This led in turn to investment in land in Algeria, Madagascar, and south-east Asia: the port of Haiphong was created with Lyonnais investment.

This concern with non-Christian countries outside Europe had another important effect on Lyon, which was to become the leading centre of missionary activities in the Catholic world. The earliest institution to be founded was the Propagation de la Foi (1822), to be followed by bodies such as the Pères Maristes (1836), the Pères des Missions africaines (1856), and the Soeurs de Notre Dame des Apôtres.

In the present century Lyon has moved its industrial base from silk to other sectors, such as automobiles, textile chemicals, and pharmacy, from which it has continued to enjoy a considerable degree of prosperity.

Description

The site of Lyon is dominated by two hills: to the west Fourvière and to the east Croix-Rousse, the latter prolonged by a peninsula formed by alluvial deposits laid down at the confluence of the two rivers. The Rhône is a strongly flowing river that comes from the Alps; it is wide and shallow and not easy to bridge. The Saône, by contrast, is a gentler and more easily navigable river, linking Lyon with the plains of north-eastern France.

The present city began with the Roman settlement on Fourvière, although the area of the confluence had been used by man for many centuries before. The Roman town spread to Croix-Rousse and the Peninsula, but shrank during the troubled 3rd century AD to two fortified areas. One of these was on the right bank of the Saône, at the foot of Fourvière, around the bishop's estate, and the other a commercial district around the church of St Nizier on the Peninsula; there was also some extra-mural suburban settlement.

Around 1000 the perimeter of the city became stabilized within its walls, and with clearly defined ecclesiastical and secular quarters. By the mid 15th century it was one of the mostly heavily populated cities in Europe, with some 65,000 inhabitants. There were 36 districts, each with its own mercantile attribution, and only the slopes of Croix-Rousse were not densely built on, being reserved for the "rural" villas of rich German and Italian merchants and for vineyards.

Over-population and the risk of epidemics led to the implementation of a policy of planned expansion starting in the mid 16th century and led by the religious orders, who set up new establishments in what had been open land. New districts were opened up in the 17th century, in particular the Bellecour area in the south, round the Place Royale (now the Place Bellecour). However, this did not suffice, and new projects were undertaken in the 18th century. These involved extensive drainage works to the east and the linking of the peninsula to an adjoining island.

During the Revolution, land confiscated from the religious orders became available for building and further expansion. In 1850 several separate surrounding

communes were incorporated into the city, and a number of major roads were driven through the centre. The resulting urban fabric, visible today, is an epitome of the development of Lyon, with areas of medieval streets and of 18th and 19th century town planning alongside one another.

The Roman city is represented by the buildings that have been excavated on Fourvière. The large theatre, capable of seating some 10,000 spectators, was built in the second decade of the 1st century AD and reconstructed under Hadrian (117-138). Alongside it is the smaller *odeon*, seating around 3000 people and probably built in the mid 1st century. The amphitheatre is on Croix-Rousse hill, and was built around 19 BC to accompany the altar dedicated to Rome and Augustus. It was here that the Council of the Three Gauls met each August.

The succeeding centuries are well represented in the rich stock of private residences in Lyon. Some outstanding examples are the Thomassin house in the Place du Change (late 13th century, enlarged 15th century); the Claude de Bourg house (1516); the house of the poet Maurice Scève (1493; additional storey in 17th century); the Chamberlain's mansion (1495-1516), illustrating the transition from Gothic to French Renaissance style; the Mannerist house of the Lions (1647); the classical building on the Quai Lassaragne (1760); and the "House of 365 Windows" and the "Courtyard of the Voracious", striking examples of the tenements built for the *canuts* in the first half of the 19th century.

Among the public buildings, mention should be made of the late 11th century *Manécanterie* (Choir School); the Ainay Abbey Church (1107) in full Romanesque style; the noble Cathedral of St John the Baptist (1160-1481), which preserves a remarkable degree of stylistic homogeneity, given the long period over which it was built; the Church of St Nizier, begun in the 14th century but not completed until the 19th century, with its Flamboyant Gothic nave, classical Renaissance front, and neo-Gothic south spire; the imposing Hôtel de Ville (1646-1703); the 17th/18th century Hôtel-Dieu, built over a medieval original; the Loge du Change (1745-80), now in use as a Protestant church; the Fourvière Basilica (1872-96), one of the most prominent landmarks of the city; and the École de Tissage (Weaving School), the work of Modernist architect Tony Garnier (1927-33).

Management and Protection

Legal status

There is no legal protection that is specific to the area of Lyon within the ancient defences that is proposed for inscription on the World Heritage List. However, there is a series of interlocking statutory protection zones that cover most of the area.

Since 1995 the slopes of the Croix-Rousse have been designated a Protection Zone for the Urban Architectural and Landscaped Heritage (ZPPAUP) under the provisions of the relevant 1983 Law. On the opposite bank of the Saône the area known as Old Lyon

(Vieux-Lyon) is protected by a Plan for Preservation and Enhancement as a *Secteur Sauvegardé* under the provisions of the 1962 Law; it was, in fact, the first to be so designated in France, in 1964 under the so-called “Malraux Law.”

The city has a Comprehensive Development Plan (*Plan d’occupation des sols* - POS), which defines areas of special historical importance and lays down regulations regarding all forms of intervention.

There is a large number of buildings and monuments in Lyon that are protected under the basic 1913 antiquities law. Each of these is surrounded by a protection zone of 500m diameter in which all interventions require Ministerial authorization. These perimeters overlap and cover the entire area proposed for inscription on the List.

[For the buffer zone, see “ICOMOS recommendations for future action” below.]

Management

Ownership is 75% private and 25% public (national, regional, and municipal governments).

The City of Lyon is responsible for overall management of the nominated area, on the basis of its POS (see above), working through its Agency for Urban Planning (*Agence d’Urbanisme*). In all matters related to protected buildings, the Ministry of Culture is involved, working through its Regional Directorate of Cultural Affairs (DRAC), with which are associated the Regional Curator of Historic Monuments (CRMH) and the Architect in Chief of Historic Monuments (ACMH).

There is also a number of voluntary bodies closely involved with the conservation and presentation of the historic centre and who work closely with the official bodies.

Conservation and Authenticity

Conservation history

Lyon has a tradition of historical and archaeological research that dates back to the 16th century. Since 1861 the Société Académique d’Architecture, a private professional body set up in 1830, has encouraged work connected with the history of the city. A municipal commission for Vieux-Lyon was set up in 1891 which carried out a detailed photographic inventory of the architectural heritage. However, little more was done between the two World Wars.

It was under pressure from voluntary bodies that concern for the past of the city began to express itself again, beginning with the body known as *Renaissance du Vieux Lyon* in 1946. This body strongly and successfully opposed urban renewal projects of the time that would have destroyed much of the old city. Since the beginning of the 1990s the city authorities have adopted a positive policy towards the conservation of the historic heritage. Major conservation and restoration projects have taken place or are in progress on, *inter alia*, the Hôtel de Ville, the Palais Saint Pierre (now the Fine Arts Museum), the Jesuit Chapel, the

Ainay Abbey church, and the churches of St Nizier and St Bruno.

Authenticity

The authenticity of the urban fabric and of many of the historic buildings in Lyon may be considered to be high.

Evaluation

Action by ICOMOS

An ICOMOS expert mission visited Lyon in January 1998. The ICOMOS International Committee on Historic Towns and Villages was also consulted on the cultural value of the city.

Qualities

The historic centre of Lyon is an eloquent expression of its continuous and coherent urban development over more than twenty centuries in response to changing socio-economic and cultural conditions

Comparative analysis

Lyon is unusual in that it represents a major Roman foundation that has continued to play a major role in European economic, political, and cultural life uninterrupted. There are two other such cities in France, Paris and Bordeaux, but in neither does the present-day urban fabric so vividly and comprehensively illustrate this process. It is equally difficult to find comparable towns in other western provinces of the Roman Empire, since in most cases the homogeneity has been destroyed by war or by subsequent radical restructuring.

ICOMOS recommendations for future action

The ICOMOS expert mission studied the boundaries of the nominated area and of the buffer zone with care. In the case of the nominated area, it recommended that the boundary on the north-west, which was not clearly indicated in the otherwise excellent nomination dossier, should be established on the left bank of the Saône.

So far as the buffer zone was concerned, the only area specifically designated as such was on the opposite bank of the Rhône. This was not considered to be adequate, even though much of the urban area surrounding the nominated site is covered within the POS. ICOMOS proposed that there should be a clearly defined buffer zone that extends all round the nominated area. This proposal was accepted by the responsible authorities in Lyon and revised maps were submitted to ICOMOS.

Brief description

The long history of Lyon, which was founded by the Romans as the capital of the Three Gauls in the 1st century BC and has continued to play a major role in the political, cultural, and economic development of Europe since that time, is vividly illustrated by its

urban fabric and by its many fine historic buildings, from every period.

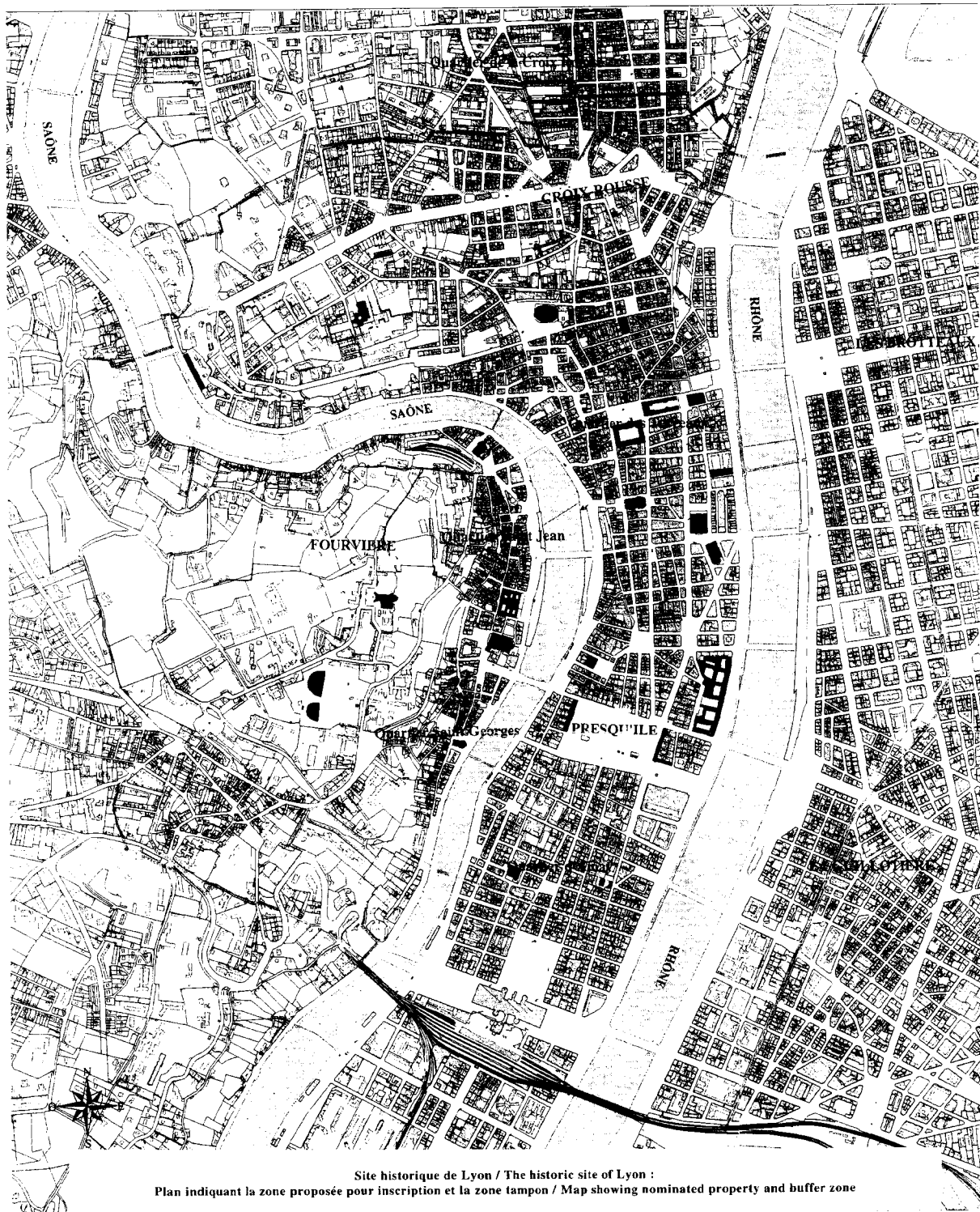
Recommendation

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

Criterion ii: Lyon bears exceptional testimony to the continuity of urban settlement over more than two millennia on a site of great commercial and strategic significance, where cultural traditions from many parts of Europe have come together to create a coherent and vigorous continuing community.

Criterion iv: By virtue of the special way in which it has developed spatially, Lyon illustrates in an exceptional way the progress and evolution of architectural design and town planning over many centuries.

ICOMOS, October 1998



— LIMITES
DU SITE HISTORIQUE

— LIMITES
DE LA ZONE TAMPON

■ MONUMENTS
IMPORTANTES

FEVRIER 1998
ECH : 1/10 000^e

LE SITE HISTORIQUE DE
LYON
LYON HISTORIC SITE
DELIMITATION DU SITE
SITE BOUNDARIES

CARTE C 41

TEXTE PRINCIPAL - ADDENDA - PAGE 4

Site historique de Lyon / The historic site of Lyon :
Plan indiquant la zone proposée pour inscription et la zone tampon / Map showing nominated property and buffer zone