

# TOUR TURENNE IN SEDAN

GRAND EST



VILLES  
& PAYS  
D'ART &  
D'HISTOIRE  
DIRE



**1. Portrait of Turenne, unknown artist, after Charles Le Brun, XVIII<sup>th</sup> century**

**2. Image d'Épinal, "Turenne (1611-1675)", "The famous children"**

series, edited by the Aiguebelle chocolate factory (Drôme)

**3. The death of Turenne at the battle of Sasbach, engraving**

**Cover illustrations :**  
*La bataille des Dunes*  
 by Charles Philippe Larivière - RMN  
 Château de Versailles

*La ville et citadelle de Sedan représentée au naturel*, engraving by Poinssart, 1642, Georges-Delaw media library collection - Ardenne Métropole media libraries network

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# TURENNE, FRANCE'S MILITARY HERO

**BORN IN 1611 BEHIND THE TOWERING WALLS OF THE FORTIFIED CASTLE, TURENNE IS UNDOUBTEDLY SEDAN'S MOST FAMOUS OFFSPRING.**

Considered during his lifetime as France's saviour because of the decisive battles he won, he was honoured throughout the following centuries as one of France's greatest soldiers. He achieved a remarkable military career, serving under both Louis XIII and Louis XIV.

He began as a simple soldier in the service of his uncle, the Stadtholder of the Low Countries, and joined the French army in 1630. After proving his worth at the side of King Louis XIII during the Thirty Years' War – in particular during the campaigns in Lorraine and Alsace, Flanders, the Rhine and Italy – he was named marshal of France on 16th May 1643, at a mere 31 years of age.

In 1648, he headed a victorious campaign in Bavaria that resulted in the signing of the Treaties of Westphalia, which ended the Thirty Years' War.

In 1649, unhappy with the annexation of the principality of Sedan by France in 1642, and wishing to defend his brother's interests, Turenne sided with the Prince of Condé and took part in the Fronde. After losing the Battle of Rethel in 1650, he nevertheless returned to the king's side and helped to suppress the rebellion.

In 1660, Turenne became marshal general of the King's Camps and Armies, the highest military rank of the time, in honour of his victory at

the Battle of the Dunes on the coast of Flanders (1658).

He was head of the French army during the War of Devolution (1667-1668) and took part in the Dutch War (1672-1678). His last campaigns took place in Alsace, where he defeated the Imperialist army of Montecuccoli at the Battle of Turckheim, before his death in 1675, at Sasbach.

His strategic talent, his habit of studying the layout of the terrain and his original war tactics – he did not hesitate to attack in the middle of winter in order to take his adversaries by surprise – made Turenne a champion of manoeuvre warfare.

Although above all a soldier, Turenne was also a statesman. He was the privileged advisor to Louis XIV in matters of defence and certain foreign policy decisions.

He left to posterity the image not only of a great strategist but also of a man of virtue. Through his remarkable achievements and the anecdotes that adorn the story of his life, Turenne has become a veritable storybook character in both the popular imagination and history books.





**1 THE FORTIFIED CASTLE :  
“TURENNE WAS BORN HERE”**

Marshal Turenne, considered one of the nation’s most glorious military heroes, was not, in fact, born in France. He was born here, in the fortified castle of Sedan, on 11th September 1611, in the principality which had been officially granted independence in 1549.

His parents, the Prince and Princess of Sedan, were delighted with this birth, as he was only the second son of their seven children. The eldest, Frédéric-Maurice, later inherited the principality, leaving Turenne – whose real name, like his father’s, was Henri de La Tour d’Auvergne – to embark on a military career.

It is thought that Turenne was possibly born in the Column room, one of the rooms most fitting to hold his mother’s chamber.

In 1815, a stone escutcheon was placed on the wall of the keep in the castle courtyard. One can still read the inscription attesting to his birth date: “TURENNE NACQUIT ICI 11 7bre 1611”.

**2 PLACE NASSAU (NASSAU SQUARE) :  
“ELISABETH OF NASSAU, A DEVOTED MOTHER”**

The second wife of Henri de La Tour d’Auvergne, Elisabeth of Nassau, born in 1577, was the daughter of William of Orange-Nassau, who founded the

Republic of the Seven United Provinces. She was a devoted mother who brought up her children herself, quite rare at the time for a woman of her rank. She supervised their food and health as well as their clothing. On the death of her husband in 1623, she became regent, fighting to preserve the independence of the principality. She died in 1642.

Place Nassau is named after the bastion which stood here until the end of the 19th century. After the defeat of 1870 demonstrated that the old fortifications were useless in modern warfare, the City obtained permission to pull them down. In their place, wide avenues and huge tree-filled squares like this one were created.

**3 RUE DE LA TOUR D’AUVERGNE : “HENRI DE LA TOUR D’AUVERGNE, FATHER OF TURENNE AND BENEFACTOR OF SEDAN.”**

Born in 1555, Henri de La Tour d’Auvergne began his military career as a very young soldier and became marshal of France in 1592. He was a companion in arms to Henri de Navarre and became a Protestant convert, marrying Charlotte de La Marck in 1591. He thus acquired the titles of Sovereign Prince of Sedan and Duke of Bouillon. Henri de La Tour d’Auvergne endowed the city with huge public buildings, both secular



**1. Stone escutcheon affixed to the keep**

**2. Portrait of Élisabeth de Nassau, detail of an engraving**

**3. Portrait of Henri de La Tour d'Auvergne, engraving after a painting by Merry Joseph Blondel**

**4. The entrance to the Académie des Exercices**



and religious. He also created the Place d'Armes (Arms Square), reinforced the fortifications and launched a rectilinear town-planning operation, acting as a builder-prince. Henri brought up his children on stories of battles and the history of his illustrious lineage, sparking their imagination and filling Turenne with dreams of glory and a taste for a military career.

**4 ANCIEN COLLÈGE ACADÉMIQUE (FORMER ACADEMY COLLEGE)**

**(1 Rue de Bayle) : “TURENNE’S EDUCATION”**

Behind this façade stood the Protestant Academy, where the humanities, theology and philosophy were taught to future ministers. The Academy College, founded in 1576, had been transformed into an Academy in 1601 by Henri de La Tour d'Auvergne. Scarcely anything remains today of this brilliant seat of Calvinist culture except for a few windows and a many-sided tower in the inner courtyard.

Pastor Daniel Tilenus (1563-1633) taught here. He was young Turenne’s tutor in the intellectual disciplines, while a governor was placed in charge of his moral and military education. It is possible that the theologian Tilenus played a part in the later conversion of his pupil to Catholicism, as he would have taught him to reject fanaticism of any kind. He clearly passed on to him his love of

Latin writers (such as Quintus Curtius Rufus and Caesar), through whose writings Turenne is said to have found his military vocation.

**5 L’ACADÉMIE DES EXERCICES (TRAINING ACADEMY)(rue Berchet) : “TURENNE’S MILITARY EDUCATION”**

This porch was once the entrance to the Académie des Exercices, a military school founded in 1607 by Henri de La Tour d'Auvergne. Students learnt military theory and how to handle weapons. When the Academy was closed in 1685, the buildings were bought up and converted into linen factories.

Turenne attended the Benjamin military Academy in Paris, where his mother agreed to send him at the age of 15. Students were taught mainly horse-riding, but also fencing, dancing and the rudiments of mathematics, philosophy and history.

However, to save money and keep her son away from the French court, Elisabeth of Nassau withdrew him from the Academy after a year and sent him to complete his apprenticeship with his uncle, the Stadtholder of the Low Countries. There, Turenne took part as a volunteer in his first military campaigns and met the entire Protestant aristocracy of Northern Europe.



**6 RUE TURENNE :  
“TWO MEN FOR ONE NAME”**

Henri de La Tour d’Auvergne, Viscount of Turenne, Marshal of France: these titles refer not to one man, but two. In fact, the son (1611-1675) bore the same names as his father before him (1555-1623). He also kept the title of Viscount of Turenne by obtaining this principality when his father’s estate was divided between him and his brother. The son was called “Turenne” for the sake of convenience. However, the titles of Prince of Sedan and Duke of Bouillon were given to the elder brother, Frédéric-Maurice. The viscounty of Turenne, a sovereign principality in the Limousin region, had belonged to the La Tour d’Auvergne family since 1444. It bestowed on its owner the title of sovereign foreign prince, a title of which Turenne was justly proud. As a child, Turenne visited the viscounty with his family. Today, it is a peaceful village of 810 inhabitants.

Rue de Turenne probably owes its name to the Turenne bastion, to which it led.

**7 COLLÈGE TURENNE (TURENNE COLLEGE) : “TURENNE, A FIGURE FROM SEDAN’S GLORIOUS PAST”**

The high relief carved by Gustave Deloye brings

to mind a famous anecdote. At about ten years of age, tired of the mockery to which he was subjected because of his sickly body and wishing to prove that he was able to undertake a career as a soldier, Turenne decided to spend a winter’s night on the ramparts of Sedan. He was found there, asleep on the carriage of a cannon. This unverifiable legend highlights Turenne’s determination to follow a military career.

The Lycée Turenne (high school) was built in 1884 by Édouard Depaquit on the Place Alsace-Lorraine, created shortly after the city’s terrible defeat by the Prussians in 1870. Like its architecture, the name of the building conjures up the most glorious moments in the principality’s past. Humiliated by its defeat, Sedan seems to have found in Turenne a source of new pride and a model of revenge. After all, Turenne had defeated the Empire many times.

**8 LE TEMPLE PROTESTANT (THE PROTESTANT TEMPLE) :  
“THE TRAVELLING TOMBS”**

A cave below this temple contains the graves of Turenne’s parents, laid to rest after being moved several times. On their deaths in 1623 and 1642, they were buried in a tomb beneath the Protestant temple of the time on the Place d’Armes. However, after 1685, the temple was





converted into a Catholic church. In 1841, the princely tombs were moved to a former chapel used by the Pro-testants (today's Place Cappel). In 1930, a grand ceremony was held to honour the arrival of the princely coffins in this new temple, erected around 1896.

When Turenne died in 1675, Louis XIV granted him the privilege of burial in the Basilica of Saint-Denis, the royal necropolis. The marshal's nephew paid for the creation of a magnificent tomb designed by Le Brun. However, in 1793, the revolutionaries pillaged the tombs at Saint-Denis. Turenne's mummified body was taken first to the Jardin des Plantes (Botanical Garden) and later to the Musée des Monuments Français (Museum of French Monuments). Finally, in 1800, Napoleon Bonaparte ordered it to be transferred to the Invalides Church, which became the necropolis for the military heroes of France.

## 9 L'ÉGLISE SAINT-CHARLES (CHURCH OF ST CHARLES) : "TURENNE AND RELIGION"

In 1593, Henri de La Tour d'Auvergne and his first wife decided to build a temple, which was completed in 1601. In 1685, Louis XIV revoked the Edict of Nantes, thereby forbidding Protestant worship in France. The architect Robert de Cotte added a new façade to the

temple, as well as a choir framed by two chapels to make it into a church dedicated to Saint Charles Borromeo.

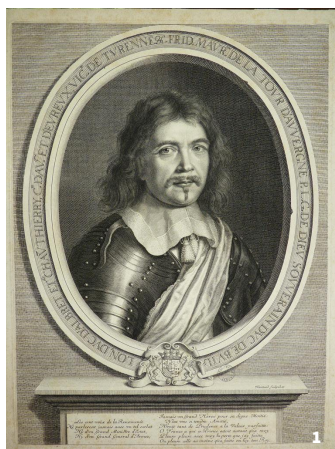
Turenne was baptised in this temple and attended services here in one of the galleries. Rambour, the pastor of Sedan, taught him his catechism. From very early on, Turenne formed moderate views of religion. Convinced of the futility of religious battles, he developed his own opinions by reading and discussions, particularly with Bossuet. Although he had always refused to convert to Catholicism for opportunistic reasons, he was finally converted privately in 1668, after a long personal self-examination.

**1. The village of Turenne nowadays** (Corrèze)

**2. Turenne asleep on the carriage of a cannon,** high-relief on the Turenne college

**3. Translation of Turenne's ashes to the Invalides Church,** lithography by Charles Motte after Alexandre Marie Colin

**4. The funerary stele of Turenne's parents** (inside the Protestant temple)



**10 LE PALAIS DES PRINCES (THE PRINCES' PALACE) : "TURENNE AND SEDAN - A RELATIONSHIP OF MUTUAL DEVOTION"**

Wishing to own a comfortable, modern princely mansion, Henri de La Tour d'Auvergne had the Palais des Princes built between 1613 and 1614, after designs by Salomon de Brosse. On the right of the entrance gate is a plaque commemorating the annexation of Sedan to France in 1642. Frédéric-Maurice, Turenne's older brother, had to relinquish the principality to avoid decapitation following the discovery of his plot against Richelieu.

The energy with which Turenne attempted to keep the principality proves how attached he was to his native town and his family. On the death of Frédéric-Maurice, he continued to look after the interests of his nephews and nieces.

His devotion to Sedan was well rewarded. Completely disregarding the last of its princes, it worships its most celebrated offspring, who bestowed his own prestige on the city. Indeed, Sedan became famous as the "Cité de Turenne" (Turenne's city).

**11 L'ANCIEN HÔTEL DE VILLE (THE FORMER TOWN HALL) (39 Rue de l'Horloge) : "TURENNE IN LITERATURE"**

From 1613-1614, Henri de La Tour d'Auvergne had a proper town hall built for the inhabitants of Sedan; this, too, was designed by Salomon de Brosse. Apart from the aldermen, the Protestant Academy met in the Town Hall, which used to house their very rich library.

Turenne is often described as being miserly with words and, indeed, he wrote relatively little besides his *Mémoires* (Memoirs), written around 1665, and a small theoretical treatise, *Mémoires sur la guerre* (Memoirs on War), published during the 18th century. His most important literary legacy is a large correspondence containing information on his life and military campaigns. On the other hand, a far larger number of works have been written about Turenne, as every period since his death has been eager to bring out a particular aspect of the character : the sensitive hero, the Republican hero, and so on.

**12 LE COUVENT DES FILLES DE LA PROPAGATION DE LA FOI (GIRLS' CONVENT) : "WOMEN OF FAITH"**

In 1652, the Girls' Convent for the Propagation of the Faith was established here to encourage young girls to convert to Catholicism. Ironically, the convent chapel was used for Protestant





services after 1803, and was the burial place of Turenne’s parents, who supported the Reformation. It was destroyed in 1931 and Place Cappel was created in its place.

Turenne’s religious and sentimental life was deeply influenced by the spirited women of faith in his life: his mother, his sister Charlotte and his wife, all three fervent Protestants. It was undoubtedly to avoid hurting their feelings that he waited until their deaths before becoming a convert to Catholicism. Turenne married late to Charlotte de Caumont-La Force, the daughter of one of his companions in arms. She was an intelligent, pious and well-educated woman. Their correspondence bears witness to a sincere attachment, which, however, suffered by the absence of children and their theological disagreements.

**13 LA PLACE TURENNE (TURENNE SQUARE) : “THE DEATH OF A MARSHAL”**

In the early 19th century, a new square surrounded by neo-classical buildings was created. A statue of Turenne was erected in its centre in 1823 by means of a subscription. The sculptor Edme Gois chose to represent Turenne standing in a stately pose in court dress. Notice the lace cravat and the marshal’s baton with fleur-de-lis in his right hand. At the marshal’s feet is a cannonball, an allusion to the circumstances of this death : on 27th July 1675, at Sasbach, as he was preparing to attack the Imperial forces led

by Montecuccoli, Turenne was hit in the stomach by a cannonball.

The news of his death spread dismay throughout the ranks of his army and at the royal court. Louis XIV himself seemed deeply affected by it. His adversary Montecuccoli is said to have announced on learning the news : “Today has seen the death of a man who was an honour to mankind”.

**14 L’HÔPITAL DE SEDAN**

**(SEDAN HOSPITAL) : “TURENNE, SEDAN’S BENEFACTOR”**

In the first article of his will, Turenne left “the sum of 50,000 pounds to the poor who became converts to Catholicism”. This legacy was eventually endowed to the existing hospital to build a new wing and buy the Signy-Montlibert farm in the 18th century.

A black marble plaque was placed above the entrance to the left of the chapel. It bears the inscription “Pavillon Turenne” (Turenne pavilion), followed by a reminder in Latin of the generosity of Turenne and Rovigo towards the hospital.

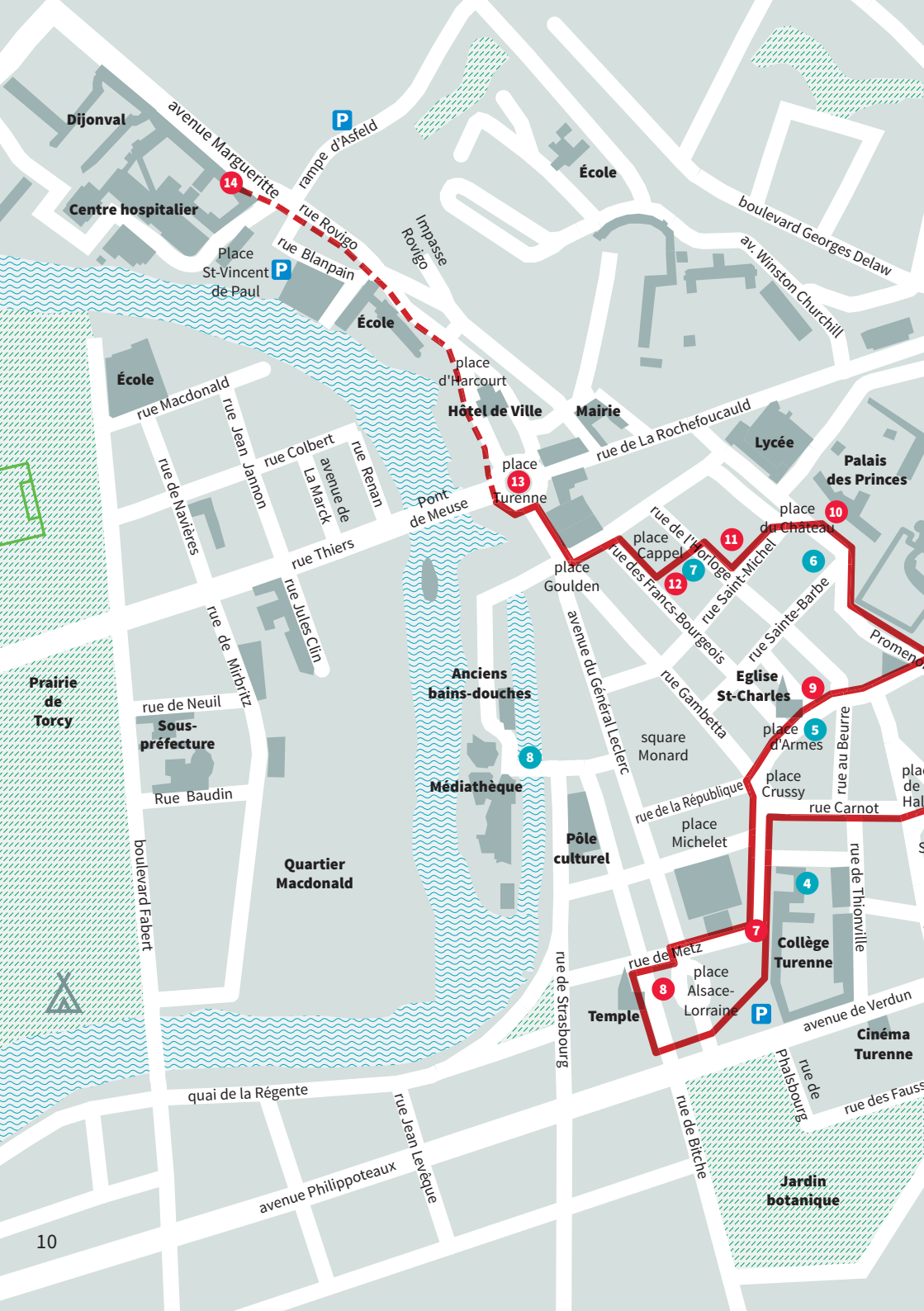
**1. Portrait of Frédéric-Maurice de La Tour d’Auvergne,** engraving by Nanteuil

**2. An illustration of the city of Sedan’s devotion for Turenne : a chocolate factory**

**named after him. “Turenne” chocolate bar**

**3. The statue of Turenne, Turenne Square**

**4. “Pavillon de Turenne” inscription, Sedan hospital**





### PARCOURS TURENNE

- 1 The fortified castle
- 2 Nassau Square
- 3 Rue de La Tour d'Auvergne
- 4 The former Academy College
- 5 Training Academy
- 6 Rue Turenne
- 7 Turenne College
- 8 The Protestant Temple
- 9 Church of St Charles Borromeo
- 10 The Princes' Palace
- 11 The former Town Hall
- 12 Girls' Convent
- 13 Turenne Square
- 14 Sedan Hospital

### OTHER XVII<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY BUILDINGS

- 1 Maison du Gros Chien
- 2 Hôtel Sacrelaire
- 3 Hôtel Dauphin
- 4 Collège des Jésuites
- 5 Hôtel Stasquin
- 6 Hôtel Montchambert
- 7 Pavilion of 1610, hôtel de l'Alouete
- 8 Soissons Bridge

-  Tourist Office
-  Car parks
-  Campsite

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- N° 2 page 2, n° 3 page 7 : Hervé Gury collection
- N° 3 page 2, n° 2 page 4, n° 3 page 5, n° 1 and 2 page 8 : Georges-Delaw média library collection - Ardenne Métropole media libraries network
- N° 1 page 4, n° 2 page 6, n° 3 page 9 : photos by Jean-Marie Charlot / City of Sedan
- N° 4 page 5, n° 4 page 9 : photos by the Heritage Department / City of Sedan
- N° 1 page 6 : photo by the Tourist Office of Brive-la-Gaillarde
- N° 4 page 7 : photo by Céline Lecomte / LPA

50 m





# “OF ALL THE GENERALS WHO PRECEDED ME, AND PERHAPS ALL THOSE WHO WILL FOLLOW, TURENNE IS THE GREATEST”

Napoleon Bonaparte, quoted by Barry E. O’Meara, *Napoleon in Exile, or A Voice From St. Helena*, 1822

## **Come hear the tale of Sedan, Town of Art and History**

A qualified tour guide approved by the Ministry of Culture would be delighted to welcome you. Our guides are thoroughly familiar with every nook and cranny and will give you the keys you need to understand the scale of a square, the town’s growth over the centuries, etc. They would be happy to answer your questions. Feel free to ask!

## **Group visits**

Sedan offers tours throughout the year by reservation, with a large variety of themes, including Turenne. For more information, contact the Heritage Activities Department or the Tourist Office.

## **Sedan belongs to the national Towns and Areas of Art and History network.**

The Heritage Department of the Ministry of Culture and Communication awards the Towns and Areas of Art and History label to local communities that develop heritage-related activities. It guarantees the competence of the tour guides and heritage activity managers and the quality of their work. From ancient ruins to 21st century architecture, these towns and areas showcase their heritage in all its diversity. Today, a network of 186 towns and areas throughout France offers you its know-how.

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Charleville-Mézières, Reims, Châlons-en-Champagne, Troyes, Langres, Amiens, Cambrai, Noyon, Laon, Soissons, Metz and Bar-le-Duc have also received the Town of Art and History label.

## **The Heritage Activities Department**

The Heritage Activities Department coordinates the heritage initiatives of Sedan, Town of Art and History. It offers year-round activities for Sedan’s residents and school groups and would be happy to assist with a project.

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