

Villes et Pays d'art et d'histoire
au fil de la ville

Établie vers 1786-1787 rue
l'endroit où se réunissaient
de passage, la salle de spect
sa renommée quand lui est
oiseaux, créé par le natura
Son nom en se collection d'anim

laissez-vous

Bar-le-Duc

Come and discover Bar-le-Duc





History

The origins of the town

In the 1st century A.D., the Roman road (now Rue des Romains) followed the Ornain Valley and Caturiges was set up on the right bank. Towards the 6th century, the settlement spread to the left bank, creating a small town surrounded by walls. In about 951 A.D., Duke Frederick of Ardennes had a fortress built on the spur of rock and it was this that led, in the 13th century, to the development of the Upper Town. At the end of the 14th century, during the reign of Duke Robert the Magnificent, the Neuveville district was built in the east of the original settlement. It was laid out like a checkerboard, with parallel streets (Rue Oudinot, Rue du Docteur Nève, Rue Martelot).

The Renaissance

The 16th century is considered as the Renaissance period but in Bar-le-Duc it began in the previous century thanks to the patronage of René I of Anjou and his grandson, René II. It was a period of relative peace and very real prosperity in both political and cultural terms. These were the days of long reigns by Antoine the Good (1508-1544) and Charles III (1545-1608), which provided the stability that allowed for the town's political, economic and cultural development.

The Renaissance is defined as the rediscovery of Classical Antiquity in the Arts as a result of observation of Roman remains which were then copied by the artists of the day.

The architecture was rigorously structured with entablatures, cornices, friezes and other decorative features that broke up façades, contrasting sharply with the mediaeval houses. Ornate sculptures (shells, colonnettes and relief figures) were reminders of the inspiration sought in Ancient Rome and Greece.

Conflict

From 1630 onwards, the town suffered as a result of the Thirty Years' War which had begun in 1618. Military occupations, famines and epidemics were then part of everyday life for the people of Bar-le-Duc. They also had to endure the consequences of the anti-French policies of Duke Charles IV who came up against Richelieu's determination to annex the area to France. After a further period of peace and independence, the duchy was finally annexed in 1766, becoming part of the kingdom of France.

The 19th century

With the French Revolution, Bar-le-Duc became a "county town". Its position in the spotlight was further enhanced during the industrial era, although it had already boasted traditional crafts and trades back in the Middle Ages. At the end of the 19th century, the economy expanded, based on breweries and factories specialising in the use of iron, mechanical engineering or textiles. The town was the birthplace of a number of innovations in those days such as the development of the Diesel engine and the velocipede.

The 20th century

At the outbreak of the First World War, the Battle of the Marne posed a threat for Bar-le-Duc but the town eventually escaped occupation. Since the Front was very close, the town then played an active role in national defence and, especially in 1916, concentrated on sending supplies to Verdun. The railway known as the "Varinot" was intensively used as was the road that, since the end of the war, has been called the "Sacred Way". The military cemetery close to the Marbot District is a reminder of this sombre past and memorials are dotted around the town, in memory of this period in the town's history.

As part of the Town of artistic, architectural and historic importance scheme (Ville d'art et d'histoire), 35 heritage information panels were set up in the town between 2006 and 2008. And to give you the background knowledge you will need if you are to gain greater understanding of the town, a summary of each of them is included in this brochure. The Bar-le-Duc street map will help you to locate the relevant monuments and follow the recommended tourist routes.



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1

Caturiges and the town's origins

Apart from a few earlier traces of a Celtic settlement, the reminders of the community living in Bar-le-Duc date from the 1st century A.D. Founded on the right bank of the River Ornain, Caturiges was no more than a Gallo-Roman staging post (statio) on the Reims-Toul road, in the heart of the territory belonging to the Leuci tribe.

2

Notre-Dame Church

11th – 18th centuries

Notre-Dame is the oldest church in the town; it was also its only parish church until the end of the 18th century. Countess Sophie commissioned its building in 1088, to replace an earlier chapel dedicated to the Virgin Mary. The church was then altered several times and given a spire but it was struck by lightning in 1619. A new tower topped by a dome was built in 1728. Because the church took more than four centuries to build, it shows a combination of different architectural styles.

3

Notre-Dame Bridge

14th century

As the obligatory link between the Barriville District and the town, Notre-Dame Bridge, also known as the “Great Bridge”, was the only one to cross the River Ornain for many years. It was a pivot between two urban districts and, until the 18th century, a large number of houses huddled above its five freestone arches. Its chapel miraculously survived air raids in the Second World War.

4

The Michaux monument

18th – 19th centuries

Standing on the site of an old spring, a monument built in 1894 by public subscription honours the memory of Pierre and Ernest Michaux, the inventors and promoters of the pedal velocipede, both of whom were born in Bar-le-Duc. The monument also marks the entrance to the town centre.

5

Rue du Bourg

Named after the “Burgum barri”, the district through which it runs, Rue du Bourg is one of the oldest thoroughfares in the town and it is lined with buildings in a wide range of architectural styles. On the path that led to the castle, it has Renaissance frontages that inspired many a writer.





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The Prefecture

18th – 19th centuries

Located in the heart of the town centre, the Prefecture building had various functions over the centuries as a place of worship, hospital, and centre of political and administrative affairs. The official residence of the Prefect of Meuse now serves as a reminder of this rich past.

7

Place de la Couronne

The name of this square (literally, Crown Square) is thought to have come from a 17th-century inn. It was named Place de la Liberté during the French Revolution and a weekly market was held here. Today, although it has undergone several alterations, the “Crown Gate” still symbolically signals the entrance to the oldest part of the town.

8

Gilles de Trèves College 1574

Commissioned by the Dean of the Collegiate Church of St. Max to provide education for the young men of the Bar area, the building was completed in 1574. The school was run by the Jesuits from 1617 to 1762 and their teachings aimed specifically at combating the ideas of the Protestant Reform.

The architecture is typical of the Lorraine style of the 16th century, influenced by the art, architecture and techniques of the Renaissance. Laid out around a courtyard lined with a gallery, it stands out for its simplicity, its discreet but tall roof and the regularity of the openings on the tall, ornate façades whose main decorative features are hidden within the courtyard.

9

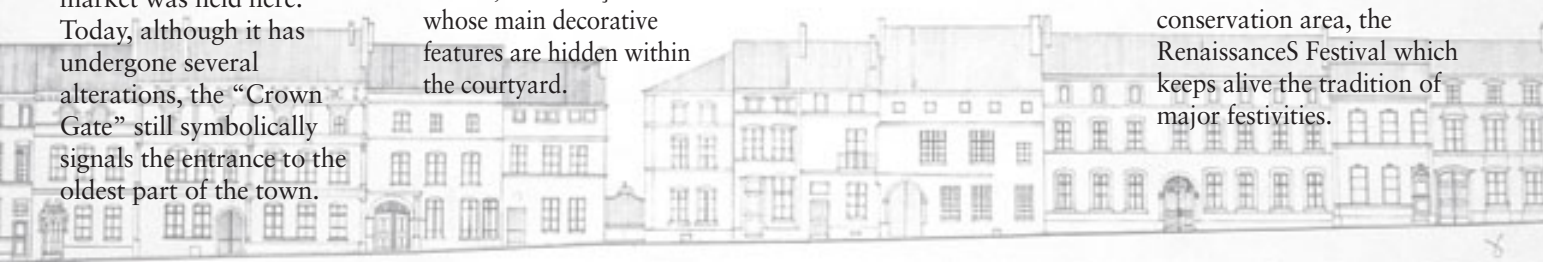
Place de la Fontaine

The fountain played an important role in everyday life before the French Revolution. It supplied drinking water for the townspeople and the castle from 1465 onwards. The Baroque construction seen today dates from 1757. It was also a convivial, popular spot – tradition has it that, on feast days, pineau de Bar would flow from it in abundance. Rue de l’Armurier, the street leading onto the square, is one of the three old roads leading to the Upper Town.

10

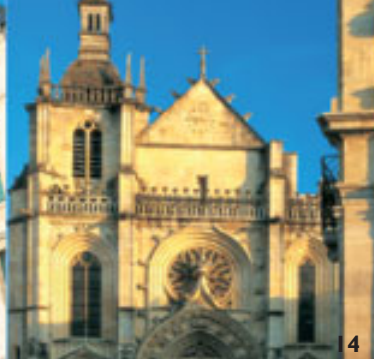
The Upper Town

The Upper Town grew up around the castle belonging to the Counts of Bar, later raised to the rank of Duke, and it contains one of the finest sets of Renaissance houses in France. Very early in its history, the Princes of Bar granted significant privileges to this district to attract a population of aristocrats to the area around the castle and keep them there. These lay or ecclesiastical noblemen were involved in managing the affairs of the Bar area and the Upper Town, also known as “The Market”, became the political, economic, legal and entertainment centre of the town. Now, the town holds an annual event in the conservation area, the Renaissance Festival which keeps alive the tradition of major festivities.





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11

Rue des Ducs-de-Bar

Formerly “Grande Rue”

Rue des Ducs-de-Bar is the main thoroughfare through the upper town, leading off the “France road” from Paris, and it is a supreme example of an aristocratic street. It reflects the wealth and grandeur of the Bar area and the members of the upper class had their mansions built here from the 16th century onwards. Grande Rue, or “High Street” became Rue des Ducs-de-Bar in 1857 in honour of the sovereigns who played a part in its embellishment.

12

Hôtel du Département

1883-1991

Once the female teachers’ training college, this impressive building was erected in 1883 outside the old town, to plans by local architect, Micault. It is Classical in inspiration, consisting of a long building set between four pavilions to form an “H”. During the First World War, it was turned into a military hospital; during the Second World War, it became a prison. Since 1991, the building has housed the “county” offices after being redesignated as an admin. building by architect Dominique Perrault.

13

Hôtel de Salm - 1716

Closing off the end of Rue des Ducs-de-Bar is the Salm residence, built in 1716 over the remains of an older house erected for the Salm family. This mansion is different to the other residences in the district because of its Classical architecture in which the regular spans, height and balustrade further highlight the ostentatious character of this aristocratic house.

14

Eglise Saint-Étienne

Formerly the Collegiate Church of St. Peter
1315-1520

The Collegiate Church of St. Stephen (i.e. a church served by a college of canons) was founded in 1315 by Duke Edward I on the site of an older chapel. In 1782, the St. Max chapter merged with the chapter from St. Peter’s and brought its relics with it. Originally the church was reserved for the town’s high-ranking civil servants but, during the French Revolution, it became the parish church. The initial church was damaged during the Hundred Years’ War. It was restored by René I in the 15th century, in a Flamboyant Gothic style with decorative features indicative of Renaissance influence. The church now contains ornate furnishings and several works of art including the famous Skeleton (“Le Transi”) by sculptor Ligier-Richier.





15

15

Hôtel de Florainville

16th – 18th centuries

Built during the Renaissance period for the Florainville family who were close to the Dukes of Bar, this mansion dominates Place Saint-Pierre because of the ornate decoration completed in the 18th century when it became the town hall. Although based on the same style of architecture as the other buildings on the square, this one has a tall slate roof. Since 1949, the Florainville residence has housed the magistrate's court followed later by the Assizes.



16

16

Place Saint-Pierre

16th-17th centuries

In the Middle Ages, the square was the site of fairs, markets, meetings and celebrations but it gradually decreased in size as the surrounding houses were built. The square has had its current layout since the Renaissance period, flanked by the covered market and mansions that once belonged to the town's nobility. The general use of Savonnières stone and the similar heights of the buildings give the square great uniformity. A single house built in the mediaeval tradition, with corbelling and half-timbered walls, contrasts with the other frontages.



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17

The îlot de la Halle

13th – 19th centuries

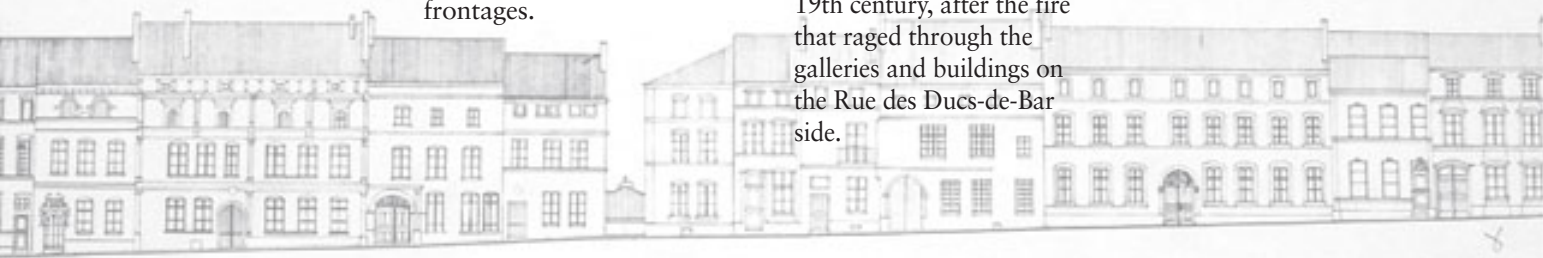
The covered market has been a place for chats, storage and production over the years. Benefiting from many privileges, the market was built during the reign of Count Thiébault II (1239-1291) as a focal point for the town's commerce.

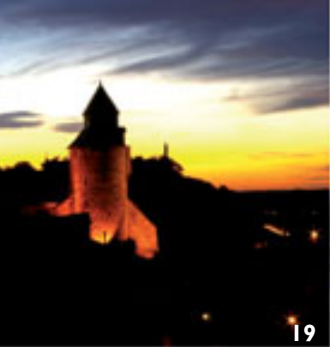
In the 16th century, the Duke laid down building regulations to harmonise the architecture, which had previously lacked any hint of uniformity. The covered market found itself flanked by stone residences with arcaded galleries opening onto a central courtyard. The current appearance of the area has scarcely changed since the early 19th century, after the fire that raged through the galleries and buildings on the Rue des Ducs-de-Bar side.

18

Rue des Grangettes

The street follows the line of the old town walls. On this side, the frontages were built over the base of the town walls. The street name undoubtedly harks back to the hamlet mentioned in the 15th century, "Les Grangettes". The term refers to the barns ("granges") of the mansions at the back of Place Saint-Pierre which the street was built to service.





19

Clock Tower

Former castle walls

This section of the old fortifications gets its name from the “Great Clock” installed in 1381 by Duke Robert for the people in the castle. It then played a significant role in town life, alerting the local people to enemy attacks or fires, ringing the curfew and the opening of the market, or accompanying ceremonies.



20

20

Castle of the Dukes of Bar

15th – 16th centuries

Aware of the need to protect his land, Duke Frederick of Upper Lorraine decided, at the end of the 10th century, to build a fortress on a spur of rock high above the Ornain Valley. It was an ideal spot, surrounded by two ravines and extending onto a plateau but, in the early days, there were no more than a few houses and a chapel there. After many alterations, extensions and reinforcements, the castle was almost totally destroyed in the 17th century.



21

21

The fortifications

Disconnected sections

The ducal town lay on the borders of France and the Holy Roman Empire. It was a fortress and the capital of a province that had been independent for many centuries, protected by several rings of walls in the valley and set on a promontory. Each district had its own walls. There were no less than four levels of protection to keep the townspeople free of danger.



22

22

The Canal des Usines

- 6th century

This is the oldest deviation of the River Ornain and, with the Marne-Rhine Canal, the Canal des Usines has helped to structure the modern urban fabric. Crossing the town from one side to the other, it originally provided the water needed for protection and for the development of a number of trades and crafts (textiles, armour, breweries etc.).





23



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23

Town Hall and park 19th – 20th centuries

Built outside the town in 1803, the present Town Hall was built for Maréchal Nicolas-Charles Oudinot who wanted to own a residence worthy of his position as an Army officer in the town of his birth. It was built with a courtyard on one side and gardens on the other, in accordance with the aesthetics of the time, and was bought by the Town Council in 1868 to be used as Town Hall and to give the local people a lush green park in the heart of the town.

24

Eglise Saint-Antoine 14th century

The Augustine Convent was founded by Duke Robert the Magnificent in the new district that he had recently created in the east of the town. A number of very large monetary gifts enabled it to extend and embellish its church on several occasions. After the French Revolution and the closure of the convent, the church became the parish church of St. Anthony.

25

Place Reggio

Place Reggio was developed late in the town's expansion, in the 18th century, but it plays a pivotal role in the heart of the Lower Town. Set at the junction of two old urban districts, it opens onto Neuveville and its carefully-aligned streets on one side and, on the other, onto the town and the monumental façade of the Prefecture. Its name and the statue that stands on it both pay homage to a local lad who won fame during the Napoleonic Wars, Maréchal Oudinot, Duke of Reggio.

26

Café des oiseaux

First half of the 19th century

Opened circa 1786-1787 in Rue de la Neuveville on the spot where troops passing through the town would meet up, the theatre became famous when the Café des Oiseaux opened by taxidermist Louis Poirson was annexed to it. Because of its immense collection of stuffed animals, the café was described as “undoubtedly being the most extraordinary café in Europe”.





27

Boulevard de la Rochelle

18th – 20th centuries

Now the town’s main shopping street, Boulevard de la Rochelle was originally no more than a dirt track linking the suburb of Entre-Deux-Ponts and the Great Bridge. However, when trade developed in the Lower Town at the end of the 18th century, it became necessary to reorganise the flow of traffic along this road, which was located outside the mediaeval town walls.

28

Place Exelmans

1858

Laid out on the site of the former Place de l’Abattoir, the square was renamed after Remy-Joseph-Isidore Exelmans in 1874. It was then renamed again and known as Place Thiers between 1878 and 1901 but it returned to its previous name after the erection of the statue by Émile Peynot paying homage to the field-marshal who was born in the nearby Rue Bar-la-Ville.

29

Synagogue

1871-1872

The synagogue in Bar-le-Duc was built in 1871-1872 by architect Charles Demogot on the right bank of the Ornain and it is representative of the Moorish style that was so popular for synagogues in the second half of the 19th century, especially in the east of France. The Moorish decor can be seen both inside and outside the building. Features include horseshoe-shaped arches and spandrels carved with garlands and interlacing, murals, stained-glass windows and a wooden ceiling.

30

Lycée Raymond Poincaré

1856-1857

Built to replace the Gilles de Trèves College founded in the 16th century, which had become too small, the “imperial school” was opened on 16th October 1857. The buildings, which could cater for three hundred pupils between the ages of 6 and 18, were laid out around a central courtyard. The school has been extended on several occasions and now includes both a junior and senior high school.





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31

The town's cemeteries

19th – 20th centuries

The civilian cemetery, which opened in 1850 beside Chemin de Popey, and its military neighbour are a reminder of the town's history. The graves that they contain make the memories of the past more real. Some of them are of great artistic value and are covered by conservation orders as Historic Monuments.

32

Château de Marbeumont

1903-1905

Château de Marbeumont is a reminder of the architecture of the early days of the 20th century which drew inspiration from the styles of Ancient Greece and Rome. It also reflects the social and economic standing of its owner, banker Paul Varin-Bernier. Yet, underneath this historicist eclecticism are building techniques and materials that were highly innovative in those days.

33

Côte Sainte-Catherine District 1964

Long before the apartment blocks of Côte Sainte-Catherine stood here, vines carpeted the hillside. In fact, there were vineyards here from the 12th to the 19th centuries. The first modern buildings were erected in 1964, in response to the housing crisis caused by the baby-boom after the Second World War. The district was built to a new type of plan that emphasised the need for equality in the housing sector, as recommended by Le Corbusier.

34

Marbot District

Probably founded in the days of the Ancient Romans at the junction of various roads, the Marbot District was referred to as a “hamlet” in 1365. It was one of the four suburbs around the ducal town; the others were Vél, Couchot and Entre-Deux-Ponts. It is said to have got its name from “mar” (a pond) and “bot” (a hillock).

35

Libération District

Located outside the old town, this district was developed after the Second World War. Its name is a reminder of the American troops who entered Bar-le-Duc by this road on 31st August 1944. A milestone on the avenue commemorates the event.



Listen to the story of Bar-le-Duc, a town of artistic, architectural and historic interest

...with a guide registered with the Ministry of Culture.

Your guide will give you a warm welcome. He knows every nick and cranny in Bar-le-Duc and will explain the scale of a square or the way in which the town developed as you pass from one district to the next. Your guide is also an attentive listener so don't hesitate to ask questions

The Heritage Department

It coordinates the initiatives taken by Bar-le-Duc, a town of artistic, architectural and historic interest. Throughout the year, it organises special events for the townspeople and school pupils. Contact the department to discuss your projects.

If you come from elsewhere in a group

The Bar-le-Duc Tourist Office can arrange visits throughout the year for adult groups and young people (other than school parties). Brochures designed especially for you can be sent on request.

From the window of my bedroom high on the second floor, I could see the upper town like an amphitheatre, its steep roofs and church steeples sharply outlined against the softly undulating vine-clad hillsides.

ANDRÉ THEURIET/Années de printemps, 1896

Information:

Musée-patrimoine (museum)

tél : 03 29 76 14 67,
fax 03 29 77 16 38
Esplanade du Château
55000 Bar-le-Duc
email : musee@barleduc.fr

Office du tourisme (tourist office)

tél : 03 29 79 11 13
7, rue Jeanne d'Arc
55000 Bar-le-Duc,
fax 03 29 79 21 95
email :
barleduc.tourisme@wanadoo.fr
www.tourisme-barleduc.com

Bar-le-Duc belongs to the national network of Towns and areas of artistic, architectural and historic interest

The Department of Architecture and Heritage, part of the Ministry of Culture and Communication, grants the title of Town (or Area) of artistic, architectural and historic interest to communities that bring their heritage to life. The title guarantees the expertise of the tourist guides and heritage leaders and the quality of their work. From ancient ruins to 20th-century architecture, these towns and areas highlight their heritage in all its diversity. Now, a network of 130 towns and areas offers you the same expertise throughout France.

Nearby

Langres, the Guebwiller area, the Montbéliard area, Châlons-en-Champagne, Reims and Sedan all hold the title of Town (or Area) of artistic, architectural and historic interest.

