

VADE MECUM
FOR INTERNATIONAL
COOPERATION



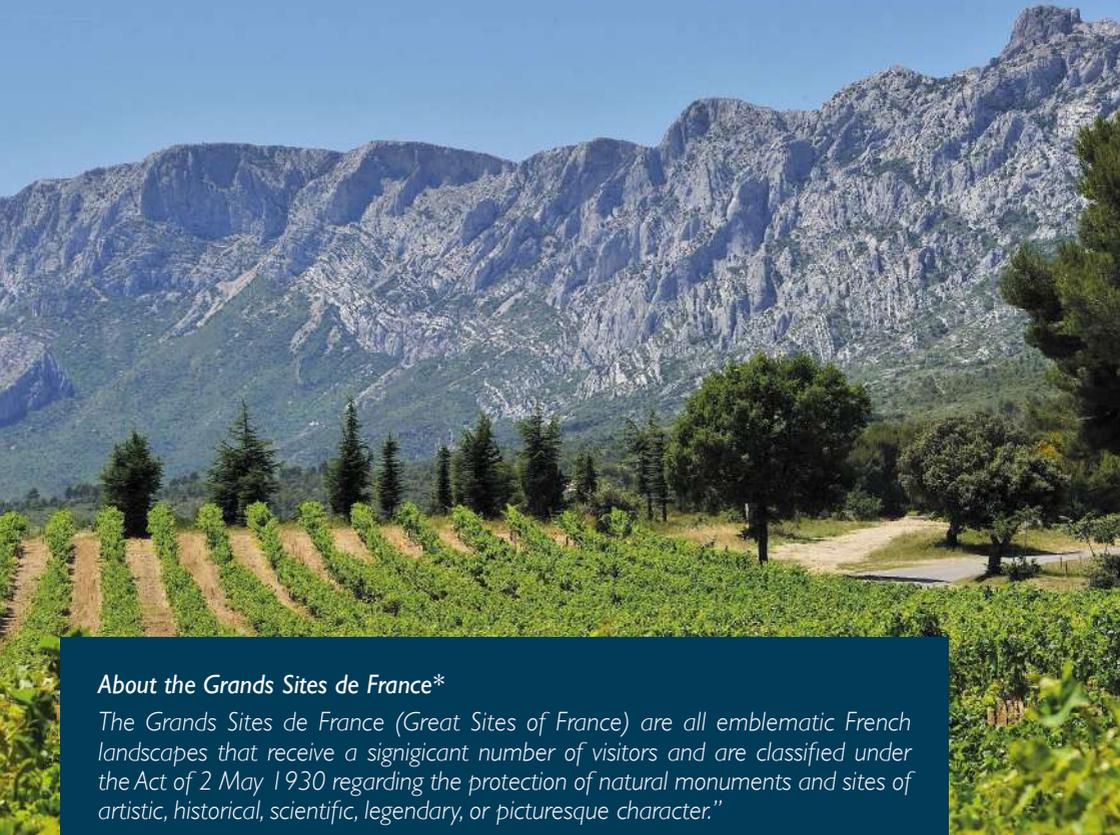
The Grands Sites de France's International Expertise

Sustainable Management of Landscapes and Heritage Sites

Pôle international
francophone des
sites patrimoniaux



Réseau des
Grands Sites
de France



About the Grands Sites de France*

The Grands Sites de France (Great Sites of France) are all emblematic French landscapes that receive a significant number of visitors and are classified under the Act of 2 May 1930 regarding the protection of natural monuments and sites of artistic, historical, scientific, legendary, or picturesque character.”

The Grands Sites de France work in partnership with the French government to strike a balance between long-term site preservation, reception of very large numbers of visitors and development of the local economy. They truly are a laboratory for the sustainable and innovative management of territories.

The Grands Sites de France Network (RGSF) is the national association of sites that have been awarded the Grand Site de France label by the Minister responsible for the landscape policy and those that endeavour to obtain it. It is currently working with over 50 sites.

Since 2010, the RGSF has been developing an active international cooperation policy through its Pôle international francophone des sites patrimoniaux (French-speaking International Hub for Heritage Sites), which it facilitates together with several ministries (Foreign Affairs, the Environment Culture) and various heritage network leaders.

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Acknowledgements

The Grands Sites de France Network and the International Hub would like to extend their sincere thanks to all the Grands Sites who generously gave their time to contribute to this rich collection of experiences, as well as to the partners who made this publication possible.

* For the purpose of this publication, the 'Grands Sites de France' and 'Grands Sites' denominations are sometimes used generically to designate certified sites and those in the process of obtaining the certification label. All RGSF members, whether or not they have been awarded the label, have specific expertise that can be called upon for cooperative projects.

The Pôle international francophone des sites patrimoniaux or 'French-speaking International Hub for Heritage Sites' will henceforth be referred to as 'the International Hub' throughout this document.

Forewords

Frédéric CHOLÉ

*Delegate for Local
governments and Civil society
Ministry for Europe
and Foreign affairs*



The Grands Sites de France embody the power of landscapes, the depth of cultural heritage, and the ability of communities to come together to preserve what makes these places exceptional. Their excellence is the result of collective commitment and the solid expertise that the International Hub of the Grands Sites de France Network works to strengthen and share.

By training heritage site managers, fostering professional exchange and supporting international cooperation, the International Hub promotes a comprehensive approach that brings together sustainable tourism, biodiversity protection, cultural stewardship and the preservation of a site's unique character. This holistic vision has become one of the defining strengths of the Grands Sites de France.

The Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs fully supports this approach, which is essential at a time of growing uncertainty and global challenges. Climate resilience, the preservation of natural resources, and the inclusion of local communities should be addressed through a bottom-up approach that builds ever more strongly on the potential and initiatives of local territories and their citizens.

This vade-mecum aims to highlight and share this French expertise. It invites partners in France and abroad to join a network where shared experience and mutual learning are key drivers for the long-term protection of places that ultimately constitute part of our common heritage.





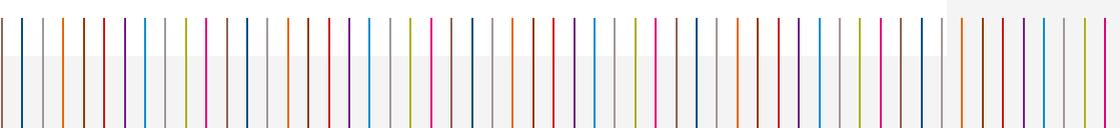
Louis Villaret
*President of the Grands
Sites de France Network*

Drawing on its experience in the sustainable management of France's most iconic landscapes, the Grands Sites de France Network has been engaged in international training initiatives since 2007. In 2010, it established the Pôle international francophone des sites patrimoniaux (French-speaking International Hub for Heritage Sites), which it facilitates through a broad-based partnership, with the aim of strengthening heritage site managers' capacities by encouraging experience sharing within a peer network. The International Hub contributes to promoting French expertise in the sustainable management of heritage landscapes and sites, while also training and connecting professionals from across the world.

Attentive to requests from around the globe, the International Hub acts as a facilitator, connecting local needs with the expertise available within the Grands Sites de France and its network of partners. At a time when heritage and landscape are increasingly recognised as effective levers for sustainable territorial development, the International Hub supports virtuous initiatives through training and by fostering dialogue between local authorities and institutions, in France and abroad, thus promoting an integrated, locally anchored approach to managing cultural and natural sites.

This *vade mecum* is the result of a collaborative effort by members of the Grands Sites de France Network, further enriched by the perspectives of professionals who sought to have their expertise recognised as they took part in the International Hub's activities. It seeks to highlight, on the one hand, the wide range of know-how developed by French site managers as well as the many various ways in which such expertise can be shared and adapted to other countries, on the other.

This publication is primarily intended for foreign heritage site managers, as well as French and international institutions and cooperation agencies involved in the preservation and enhancement of outstanding heritage sites. It was developed with the aim of sharing the contribution of the Grand Site de France approach in reconciling preservation with development, by putting the landscape at the heart of territorial projects. Hopefully, it will help foster closer ties between French and foreign site managers as they face tomorrow's challenges, and encourage dialogue across cultures.



The Grands Sites de France Network

The Grands Sites de France are exceptional territories, a symbol of metropolitan and overseas France's landscape richness and diversity.

With **nearly 40 million visitors** each year, the Grands Sites de France play a key role in France's international appeal as a tourist destination. With their famous yet fragile, inhabited landscapes, they showcase exceptional diversity in terms of heritage, nature, and culture.

The Grands Sites de France share the following characteristics:

- Part of their territory is protected under the French Act of 1930 on the preservation of natural monuments and sites.
- They are committed to a sustainable development approach structured around three core management objectives:
 - Preserving and restoring fragile landscapes, along with the associated natural and cultural heritage;
 - Guaranteeing visitors a high-quality welcome;
 - Supporting coordinated territorial development that generates local economic benefits for residents.
- Based on this approach, they design and implement a territorial project that goes beyond the legally protected area and is rooted in the preservation of the site and its values.

The Grand Site de France label recognises site managers' commitment **to this integrated, sustainable management approach**. It acknowledges the site's

outstanding heritage value, the quality of its upkeep, and the relevance of the long-term preservation, management and enhancement project, focusing on green transition issues, particularly. The label is awarded by the ministry responsible for the landscape policy, for a renewable period of 8 years. The Grands Sites de France are positioned as **experimental territories for the sustainable and inclusive management of their natural, heritage, and human resources**, especially in non-urban areas. Their action is rooted in a holistic understanding of territorial challenges, guided by the landscape method.

The landscape method

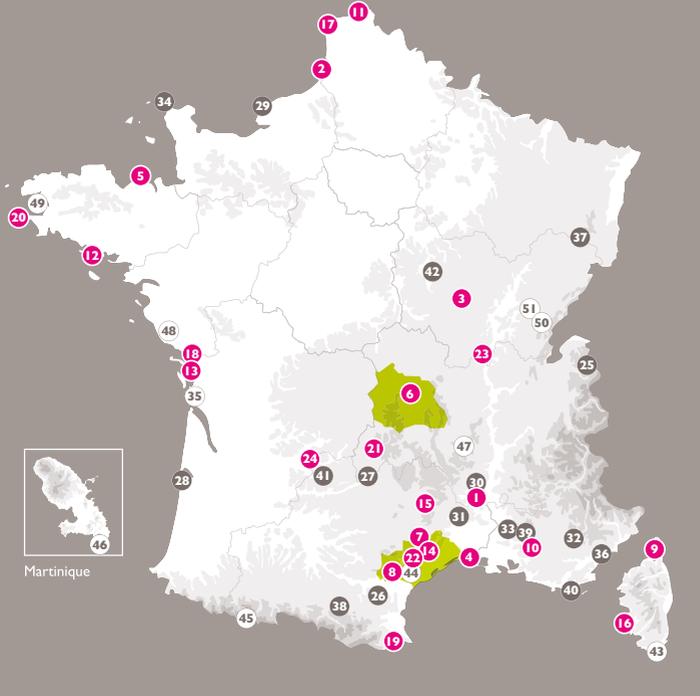
"A method based on site uniqueness and stakeholder to devise sustainable, harmonious and coherent territorial projects."

Who are the site managers?

The Grands Sites de France encompass territories ranging in size from a few square kilometres to several hundred, bringing together as many as several dozen municipalities. **Site managers** are primarily **local authorities or, more broadly, public bodies**. Their role is to coordinate and lead local initiatives within the framework of a **unique national public policy**, spearheaded by the ministry responsible for landscape protection and based on **close collaboration between the national and the local administration**.



Gorges de l'Hérault
© B.Piquart



● 24 Grands Sites de France

- Aven d'Orgnac.....1
- Baie de Somme.....2
- Bibracte - Morvan des Sommets.....3
- Camargue gardoise.....4
- Cap d'Erquy - Cap Fréhel.....5
- Chaîne des Puy - Puy de Dôme *.....6
- Cirque de Navacelles ***.....7
- Cité de Minerve, gorges de la Cesse et du Brian.....8
- Conca d'Oru, vignoble de Patrimonio golfe de Saint-Florent.....9
- Concours - Sainte-Victoire.....10
- Dunes de Flandre.....11
- Dunes Sauvages de Gâvres à Quiberon.....12
- Estuaire de la Charente, Arsenal de Rochefort.....13
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- Iles Sanguinaires - pointe de la Parata.....16
- Les Deux-Caps Blanc-Nez, Gris-Nez.....17
- Marais Poitevin.....18
- Massif du Canigó.....19
- Pointe du Raz en Cap Sizun.....20
- Puy Mary - Volcan du Cantal.....21
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- Solutré Pouilly Vergisson.....23
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- Cirque du Fer à Cheval.....25
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- Cirques et Vallées de Gavarnie-Gèdre *.....45
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- Vignobles et Reclufés du Jura.....51

■ 2 large local authorities

Département de l'Hérault
Département du Puy-de-Dôme



The Grands Sites de France Network brings together sites that have received the Grand Site de France label and others working towards obtaining it. They all share values of sustainable development.



* world heritage site - ** world heritage site as part of the routes of the Camino de Santiago - *** site featured on the UNESCO's World Heritage List under «The Causses and the Cévennes, Mediterranean agro-pastoral Cultural Landscapes»
**** site featured on the UNESCO's World Heritage List under «The Loire Valley between Sully-sur-Loire and Chalonnes»

The Grands Sites de France Network (RGSF) and its International Hub

The RGSF is a national association created in 2000 to **bring together the organisations that manage both certified sites and those actively engaged in the process of obtaining the certification label.**

The association represents the interests of its fifty-something members and supports their actions tangibly as well as their endeavours. Its core activities include training and the exchange of best practices, which help foster a **shared culture around the challenges of site protection.**

The RGSF **also takes part in national and international discussions on the preservation and enhancement of heritage sites and landscapes.** It organises seminars, workshops and training courses, and issues resources, guides, and experience-based publications.

Building on this experience, the Grands Sites de France Network established in 2010 its own cooperation instrument, the International Hub, whose mission focuses on **sharing experience with and training heritage site managers worldwide.** The International Hub thus contributes not only to promoting the know-how of the Grands Sites de France abroad, but also to building a strong community of French-speaking heritage professionals.



The International Hub is governed by a **collaborative steering committee** comprising 13 partners:



Why Apply the Grand Site de France Approach Internationally?

2

The management model implemented in the Grands Sites de France has aroused international interest, both for its relevance and adaptability.

An inspiring approach that attracts foreign countries

- 
- A **holistic approach to heritage areas** that takes into account all of their ecological, landscape, historical and cultural values, and ties the protection of each area to a cross-disciplinary territorial project.
 - A **combined methodology** that relies on the principles of integrated management of heritage sites and areas, promoting the consideration and consistency of all site management aspects as early as the project design phase.
 - An interest in mobilising **all local actors** as stakeholders to build inclusive territorial projects.
 - An approach grounded in **international reference** frameworks: the Grand Site de France label refers both to the UNESCO 1972 Convention concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage, and the 2000 Council of Europe Landscape Convention.
 - An approach aligned with the **Sustainable Development Goals**, as it commits territories to a more sustainable model through the pursuit of a **balanced relationship between people and nature**.
 - An approach developed in a spirit of **experimentation and innovation**, for the benefit of the territory and its inhabitants.
 - An **original governance mechanism** that involves both the national and local authorities through strong territorial partnerships, and is of particular interest to countries engaged in decentralisation processes.
 - An example of **local stakeholders' successful structuring through a national network (the RGSP)** that enables experience sharing, mutual support, training, continuous improvement, solidarity, and international engagement.
 - An effective and operational heritage site management model that helps countries to **meet UNESCO's expectations** for the management of inscribed or candidate World Heritage sites. Achieving the objectives of the Grand Site approach requires designing and implementing a strategic project and action plan similar to a UNESCO site management plan, and can serve as the foundation for any heritage-based territorial project.
 - Particular attention is paid to the **role and situation of the site manager**, who coordinates the preservation, management, and enhancement project for the site, and ensures good governance across the territory.

The Grand Site de France approach for heritage site managers

Relying on emblematic landscapes and remarkable heritage, the Grand Site de France approach seeks **to drive the territories' sustainable development** by generating economic and social benefits for their inhabitants through the preservation of these local assets.

It goes beyond site management and preservation to implement a cross-disciplinary and coherent territorial project that integrates both the residents' quality of life and a superior visitor experience. With the Grand Site de France approach, the heritage drives local development. Thus, instead of being disconnected from the territory, the project is truly rooted in it due to stakeholders' shared attachment to the heritage sites.

From the outset, the project must be carefully designed, integrating all of its components as well as the full range of local actors and partners (national and local authorities, professionals, residents, etc.), so it can result in better balance overall, stronger social acceptance of the preservation strategy, and community involvement.

Landscape reading workshop
© SM Cirque de Navacelles



The Grands Sites de France's Expertise

The comprehensive, integrated management approach calls for a constant balancing act, as managers need to preserve the sites while supporting local development and synthesising the heritage, environmental, economic and social perspectives.

As coordinators of a territorial project, the managers of the Grands Sites de France adopt a **broad scope of action and a cross-cutting approach**: knowledge acquisition and development, conservation and preservation, visitor reception, integration into the local economy, implementation of good governance, heritage transmission, and community engagement.

Grands Sites de France managers are keen to **share this project-based approach and methodology with their international counterparts, and to engage in peer-to-peer exchanges based on their experiences, know-how, and best practices**. Open to various forms of collaboration, **they are eager to learn from others in a spirit of reciprocity** and work together on shared heritage site challenges.

*The Grands Sites de France share **common values**, a method, a culture, and the same approach. Yet, they encompass a **wide variety of geographical contexts** (coastal areas, mountain landscapes, archaeological sites, rural and urban environments, etc.) **as well as diverse political, social, environmental, and cultural situations**. Facing such a breadth of situations can nourish their exchanges with international counterparts: while the shared method provides a common framework, each site manager embodies it in their own way. This diversity is also reflected in the way the Grands Sites are connected to other protected or internationally recognised territories, such as UNESCO World Heritage sites or French Regional Natural Parks.*



Preserving and enhancing emblematic sites



“Spirit of the Place” workshop
© Marais de Brouage

Landscape: A common property, the landscape is the fruit of human societies' interaction with nature. Inherently breathing and evolving, the landscape is at the core of the Grands Sites approach, being all at once their subject (as the heritage landscape of the site), their foundation (due to the regulatory framework defined by the Act of 1930), and their ultimate goal (as becoming a certified Grand Site requires the implementation of a territorial project centred on the landscape method).

It is also a source of individual and collective well-being which fosters social cohesion and provides a means of engaging all local actors. Site managers thus begin by working on the collective expression of the landscape values, drawing on how the site is perceived by its residents and visitors and the emotional connection it inspires (the «spirit of the place»). When collectively expressed, these values help guide and support the changes affecting each site, in order to preserve what makes it unique.

Example : Through writing, drawing and photography workshops, personal accounts, and on-site explorations, the Marais de Brouage used a participatory method that brought together multiple perspectives, emotions and types of knowledge, shaping a shared understanding of the heritage value of the site. This collective effort, which involved 80 participants, led to a published report and helped establish a common thread to initiate the Grand Site Operation.

Biodiversity: Protected for the diversity and quality of their landscapes, the Grands Sites de France are ideal spots for biodiversity to thrive. Many of them are covered by designations or protection measures for species and natural habitats, and are actively engaged in their preservation (nature reserves, Natura 2000 sites, biotope protection orders, Ramsar wetlands, UNESCO biosphere reserves, etc.). The Grands Sites work tirelessly to improve species knowledge and protection, support sustainable agriculture, restore degraded and artificial areas by bringing nature back, prioritise low-impact infrastructure, and regulate site uses. They are places that foster consistency between biodiversity conservation and territorial management goals.

Example: At the Grand Site de France Pointe du Raz en Cap Sizun, the relocation of infrastructure previously located near the coastal point (buildings, car parks, etc.), combined with ecological restoration efforts, the creation of footpaths, and measures to manage dispersed visitor flows, have helped return the site to nature while offering visitors a more immersive way to explore the site.



Pointe du Raz en Cap Sizun
© M.Milot



Rehabilitation programme
© S.M. Solutré Pouilly Vergisson

Natural, built and landscape heritage: As territories combining both natural and cultural values, the Grands Sites de France aim to make heritage a lever for local development. Respecting the identity and values of each site, and seeking to avoid standardisation, site managers work to restore and enhance these forms of heritage. This includes restoring natural areas, preserving heritage landscapes, rehabilitating built and vernacular heritage by drawing on local expertise and traditional skills, and supporting sustainable agricultural practices.

Example: The Grand Site de France Solutré Pouilly Vergisson features an abundance of drystone heritage, historically linked to viticulture and forming an integral part of the landscape. Since 2007, drystone walls and structures have been restored by a team of people undergoing rehabilitation. The revival of this traditional know-how, which had entirely disappeared from the site, has sparked interest among local elected officials and winegrowers, leading to an increase in restoration projects and the creation of training and awareness-raising activities on drystone techniques for residents and visitors alike.

Ensuring a quality visitor experience and supporting local development



Marais Poitevin
© Darri

Visitor Reception: To ensure a high-quality visitor reception, the Grands Sites take an active approach to tourism development. Their aim is to offer experiences that are tailored to the site's uniqueness and fragilities, while allowing visitors to engage with the territory in an immersive way.

Consequently, the Grands Sites have developed a wide range of inspiring good practices. These include training programmes for tourism professionals, the implementation of harmonised signage that blends into the landscape at the scale of the site, and support to local service providers and producers of crafts and local specialities.

Example: Through the implementation of a cycling development plan, accommodation renovation support and the creation of new visitor facilities well distributed across the territory, the Grand Site de France Marais Poitevin has, over the past 20 years, shifted from short-stay tourism to a longer form of tourism that is spread more evenly across the site.



Visitor flow management: Over the years, Grands Sites managers have developed tools to better understand and monitor visitor flows. Often faced with overcrowding at key points of interest, they work to better distribute visitor flows across the site, with the aim of enhancing the visitor experience and ensuring that benefits are shared more broadly across the territory. They install appropriate infrastructure, develop multiple “gateways” into the territory (modernisation and/or repurposing of visitor centres), and help diversify the tourism offer to encourage longer stays and extend the tourist season. The Grands Sites also promote the use of green mobility solutions to reduce the pressure of car traffic.

Example: By limiting motorised access to the mountain and developing a marked trail network connecting the surrounding villages, the Grand Site de France Massif et balcons du Canigó has gradually become an ecotourism destination focused on outdoor activities. Today, it offers much more than the traditional ascent to the summit, encouraging visitors to explore the wider territory.



Massif et balcons du Canigó
© A.Ortiz



Malle vagabonde
© RGSF

Example: In partnership with the CitéMômes association, the Grands Sites de France Network has developed the “Malle vagabonde” or “Wandering suitcase”, which offers a series of simple and immersive tools aimed at raising awareness among visitors, particularly young people, about the landscape and how it changes. Inviting visitors to discover the landscape “through all the senses”, the “Malle vagabonde” is an educational and interpretive tool currently available in a dozen Grands Sites.

Cultural and scientific interpretation, awareness-raising: The Grands Sites de France are a medium for people to discover natural and cultural heritage. As such, they are places of connection, well-being transmission, and their appeal has grown since the COVID-19 pandemic. Site managers thus offer a wide range of ways to discover the territory, accessible to all: activities, events, guided tours, and encounters with raconteurs (residents, guides). Visitors are invited to explore the many riches of the territory while being made aware of the importance of respecting the site, practising sustainable tourism, and adopting eco-responsible behaviours. Tourism professionals are closely involved at every stage of the project.

Encouraging the local circulation of economic benefits: It is essential to ensure that the economic value generated by the sites is based on activities, products, and services that align with the spirit of the place. The Grand Site-induced business – particularly tourism – is a driver of local development, while also contributing to the preservation of the territory's heritage and riches. The project is rooted in the territory and highlights local activities and products. The Grands Sites support the development of local sectors and skills by promoting traditional know-how and locally produced goods. They help preserve traditional activities and maintain the rural socio-economic fabric by supporting the emergence of innovative, eco-responsible economic and tourism projects.

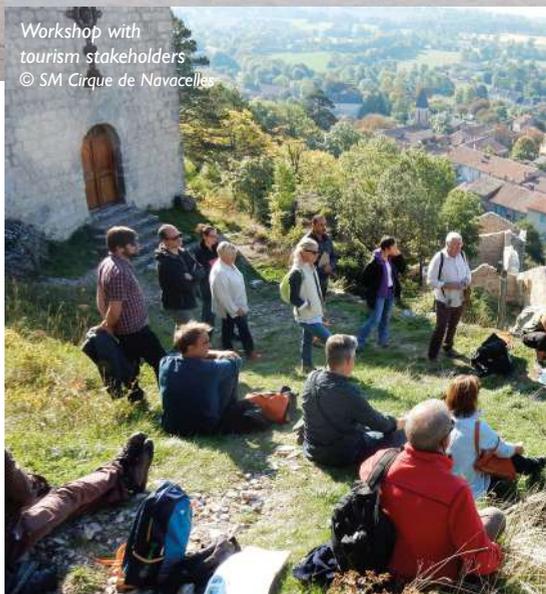


© Aven d'Orgnac



Estuaire de la Charente,
Arsenal de Rochefort ©
S.Courtois

Example: The Grand Site de France Aven d'Orgnac hosts a collective point of sale managed by an association of local producers, offering visitors locally sourced products that reflect the values of the site. This cooperative initiative contributes to the local economy and strengthens the bond between residents and visitors.



Workshop with
tourism stakeholders
© SM Cirque de Navacelles

Aligning the governance model with territorial dynamics

Example: The Rochefort Océan incorporated municipality, who manages the Grand Site de France Estuaire de la Charente, Arsenal de Rochefort, created the “Parliament of the Estuary,” which brings together around 60 people once a year. As one of the governance bodies of the site, it reflects a desire to involve local stakeholders, particularly the professional groups’ representatives (farmers, shellfish farmers, etc.), in developing a shared vision of the Grand Site project and identifying collective solutions to the challenges encountered.



Governance: The Grands Sites de France encompass large territories that bring together communities at multiple levels. The success of a Grand Site project depends on the establishment of a governance structure that is appropriate to the scale of the territory and aligned with the project, as well as on the involvement of all stakeholders. The strength of the approach lies in its cooperative and partnership-based nature, whereby local and national authorities, and the stakeholders who bring life to the territory come together. It relies on a consultation methodology that involves not only the multidisciplinary team of the managing organisation and local elected officials, but also residents, farmers, local producers, tourism professionals, community actors, experts, and consultancy firms.

Consultation and involvement of residents and professionals: Grands Sites managers continuously talk with project stakeholders and the local population, who play a key role in conveying and sharing the values of the site. Various tools are thus used to ensure broad participation of all involved actors, especially the residents, drawing on their strong attachment to the area. Examples include the creation of working groups and advisory committees, public meetings, volunteer workcamps, educational programmes in schools, and networks of local ambassadors.

Example: To enable local tourism actors to contribute to the promotion of the heritage of the Cirque de Navacelles, the site organised a series of meetings and training sessions on topics such as archaeology and agro-pastoralism, biodiversity and human activity, and the spirit of the place. These sessions led to the creation of a range of sustainable themed stays offered by local tourism providers.

4

The Grands Sites de France's International Experience

Managers of the Grands Sites de France share their know-how and exchange ideas with peers worldwide through various forms of collaboration.

Decentralised cooperation projects

The Grands Sites de France have been and currently are involved in various **decentralised cooperation projects**:

- The Marais de Brouage developed a partnership with the authorities of Île d'Orléans in Québec, using the French language as a lever for local development. Several areas of collaboration were launched, including work on genealogical tourism as well as youth volunteer projects and expert missions related to wetlands.

The **cooperation tools provided by the European Union** allow Grands Sites to engage in joint projects with their European counterparts:

- The Massif et balcons du Canigó acted as lead partner for the EMbleMatiC project, "Emblematic Mediterranean Mountains as Coastal destinations of excellence", under the Interreg Med programme. This project, which continues today through the capitalisation and transfer of experience with new countries, has led to the development of a sustainable tourism model based on the creation of eco-itineraries. These are promoted under a shared brand and common communication tools across nine emblematic mountain sites in the Mediterranean basin. <https://emblematic.interreg-med.eu>

- The Dunes de Flandre and the Belgian province of West Flanders have developed a shared vision and joint cross-border actions on the landscape, ecology, and visitor reception as part of the VEDETTE project (under the Interreg Cross-border programme). <https://www.vedetteinterreg.com/>



Rock art stand © PIP



Immersion course
© PNR Marais Poitevin

Participation in international networks

The Grands Sites are **members of international networks, particularly in the fields of research and science.** Here are a few examples:

- The Vézère Valley is a member of the international association Prehistoric Rock Art Trails (PRAT), which brings together 151 sites worldwide and is currently chaired by the president of the Grand Site de France;
- Bibracte–Morvan des Sommets, both a Grand Site de France and a European Archaeological Centre, is a member of the Iron Age Europe network dedicated to the preservation and promotion of archaeological sites and key Iron Age collections across Europe;
- The Dune du Pilat regularly hosts international professionals conducting scientific research in areas such as geophysics, natural risks, and coastal evolution.



Delegation hosting
Camargue gardoise
© RGSF



Delegation hosting at
Cirque de Navacelles
© RGSF

International delegation hosting

The Grands Sites de France regularly host foreign delegations for on-site study visits and as part of the International Hub's training activities, hosting international training course participants during immersive professional stays, for instance. Furthermore, Grands Sites managers occasionally take part in expert missions abroad.

5

What We Can Offer You

The International Hub uses a wide range of activities to draw on its partners' and the Grands Sites de France's know-how within the framework of international cooperation projects.

*International workshop
co-organised in Lebanon
with the DAECT
© RGSF*

The International Hub: A dedicated cooperation unit

Created in 2010, the French-speaking International Hub for Heritage Sites aims to **facilitate the exchange of experience between site managers in France and worldwide**. Coordinated by the Grands Sites de France Network within the framework of a broad partnership, the Hub draws on its members' expertise in response to international requests from partner organisations, with a commitment to **mutual exchange and shared learning**. It also carries out continuing vocational training activities for heritage practitioners.



An intensive international training course tailored to the needs of heritage site managers

Since 2010, the International Hub has been offering an international training course on integrated heritage site management, under the patronage of UNESCO. Each session welcomes around fifteen French-speaking professionals.

Organised every two years, the course includes group work led by numerous contributors (Grands Sites managers and International Hub partners), field trips on host sites, as well as collective and personalised support with the aim of developing actionable strategies for each participant's site.

The International Hub provides pedagogical coordination and assists each participant in organising their training stay.



International workshop in Burkina Faso
© RGSF

Example: The participation of several heritage professionals from Burkina Faso in the international training course since 2011 has fostered strong ties with the country's heritage institutions and led to long-term cooperation involving the Grands Sites de France Network and several of its member sites.

The integrated site management workshops held as part of this collaboration contributed to Burkina Faso's nomination file for its Ancient Ferrous Metallurgy Sites, inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage List in 2019.

Co-development of international workshops on sustainable heritage management

The International Hub organises or takes part in field-based international workshops upon request, in collaboration with French diplomatic posts and local institutional partners. Following a co-development approach, some of these integrated and sustainable heritage management have been conducted in Central Europe, the Balkans, West Africa, North Africa and the Middle East, in French or in English.



International workshop in Ghana © RGSE

Example: In 2021, the International Hub co-organised a field workshop in Kumasi, in partnership with the French Embassy in Ghana as part of the FSPI (Solidarity Fund for Innovative Projects). The workshop laid the groundwork for an action plan to support the local site manager in preserving and enhancing traditional Ashanti buildings.

Example: In 2019, as part of a tripartite collaboration between the French Development Agency (AFD), the International Hub and the Grand Site de France Bibracte-Morvan des Sommets, the latter took part in an expert mission organised by the AFD in China. The International Hub later facilitated a study visit for four heritage professionals and elected officials from Fengxiang District (China) to several French sites, supporting the AFD-led planning and development of an archaeological and natural site.



Tailor-made support in foreign delegation hosting and study visit organising

The International Hub organises delegation visits, study tours and customised individual programmes for site managers, technical staff and elected officials, both in France and abroad. The Grands Sites de France regularly host foreign delegations on-site to share their know-how and exchange on common challenges.

In addition, the International Hub can mobilise its network of partners for these visits and provides support to its members during expert missions abroad.



Delegation hosting in Burgundy-Franche-Comté
© RGSF

Example: In October 2021, as part of a partnership with the French Embassy in Gabon, the International Hub and the Grand Site de France Bibracte-Morvan des Sommets hosted the director of the National Museum of Gabon. This study visit led to concrete suggestions, including the creation of a thematic ecomuseum network across the country.



Field trip during the international training course on the Climats de Bourgogne © RGSF

When should you reach out to us?

Grands Sites de France managers do not offer “turnkey” projects.

Instead, they share an approach and methodological tools that site managers can adapt to suit their specific situations.

In the context of international cooperation projects such as those initiated by development agencies, the Grands Sites may intervene during the pre-operational phase, supporting partners in identifying their needs, helping to define a working method (drawing inspiration from the Grands Sites project methodology), and facilitating the emergence of a shared project.

As experimental spaces that rely on a specific approach and methodology, the Grands Sites can assist their partners in refining their project through a collaborative, non-profit process based on mutual learning and co-development.



International training 2019 © RGSF



A resource platform and a place for sharing experiences

The International Hub serves as a space where professionals can connect, exchange, and find resources.

It coordinates a collaborative platform that brings together more than 140 French-speaking heritage site managers operating in close to 40 countries, and maintains an open access, online library: <http://www.polepatrimoine.org/base-documentaire>. It also organises thematic online seminars open to both its partners and platform members: <http://www.polepatrimoine.org/videos>



France - Albania Senate Friendship Caucus © DR

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What makes our approach unique

With over 15 years of experience, the International Hub has built an established international network of French-speaking professionals. It provides long-term, recognised support to and from heritage site managers.



*Closing of the 2022 international training course
at the National Monuments Centre
© RGSF*

A strong national and international network of heritage management practitioners

The action of the International Hub builds on the experience and know-how of the Grands Sites de France, who share common values and methodology in terms of heritage site and landscape restoration and preservation. It also draws on a network of French-speaking site managers operating across all continents, which has gradually expanded since 2010.

This network is coordinated by the Grands Sites de France Network (RGSF) in partnership with other organisations managing heritage sites and protected areas, such as the Association of French World Heritage Sites, ICOMOS France, French Outstanding Sites & Cities, French Nature Reserves, IUCN France, the National Monuments Centre, and museums. These partnerships help pool a wide range of skills that complement those of the Grands Sites.

Supported by various French government bodies (including the ministries in charge of Foreign Affairs, the Environment, and Culture), the International Hub operates in accordance with a multidisciplinary and cross-cutting approach that enriches the projects it contributes to.

Within the RGSF, the International Hub works closely with the **Grand Site de France and European Archaeological Centre Bibracte–Morvan des Sommets, which has a long-standing international experience.**

Worldwide contributors — often former participants in the international training course — are systematically involved in the workshops and training activities organised by the Hub. Furthermore, they have the opportunity to come and speak at the RGSF annual Talks, which features an international session.

The International Hub is well-positioned to **build bridges between site managers from different countries, and actively promotes exchanges among heritage professionals,** as is the case in West Africa, for instance.



2022 International training
© RGSF

A primarily French-speaking environment

The training courses organised by the International Hub are today among the rare French-language initiatives that address **the challenges of integrated heritage site management**. Sharing a language also means sharing a common culture and mindset, especially in how heritage site management is envisaged. The International Hub can also work **in English** when hosting foreign delegations or organising international workshops.

*Visit to the Bibracte
Museum*
© RSGF



Long-term support for site managers and their projects

Based on experience and best practices sharing as well as mutual support, the International Hub **provides long-term guidance to heritage site managers** through both its network and the activities it offers. With its international training course it aims to equip heritage professionals who, in turn, will disseminate their knowledge in their home countries. The projects and meetings conducted as part of the International Hub's activities allow both French and foreign site managers to **gather new ideas** and **draw inspiration from other practices**. These actions ultimately enable all managers to take a step back from their own practices, and help **foster medium- and long-term cooperation projects**.

A recognised expertise

- The Grands Sites de France Network (RGSF) and its International Hub have been awarded the **EXPE-CT label** by the Local Authorities' External Action Delegation (DCTCIV), which recognises the value of local authorities' expertise. The label acknowledges "the expertise of the association and its members in the preservation, management, and enhancement of outstanding (natural, cultural and landscape) heritage sites".
- The international training course, held every two years, takes place under the **patronage of the UNESCO World Heritage Centre** and/or the French National UNESCO Commission.
- The RGSF is a member of both the **International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) and its French Committee**. Its director has been chairing the French Committee's World Heritage Working Group since 2021. The RGSF is also a board member of **ICOMOS France**.

- The RGSF and its International Hub are regularly represented at events such as the International Heritage Fair in Paris ; in 2021, they attended the IUCN World Conservation Congress in Marseille.
- At the national level, the RGSF is involved in several policy and advisory bodies and professional associations. For example, it is a member of the French Office for Biodiversity's Conference of Protected Areas, and of the France. Exceptional Heritage and Territories association.

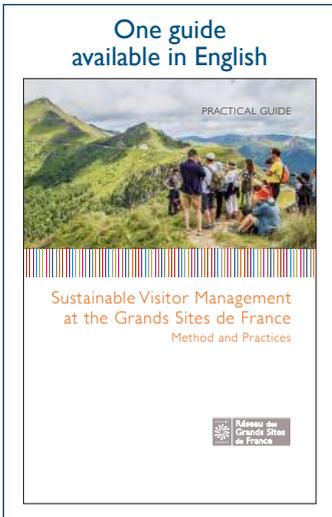
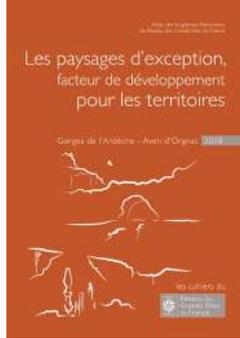
*2022 International training
in Bibracte - Morvan
des Sommets
© RGSF*





Resources and Contact Information

Available resources



The Grands Sites de France Network's publications (only in French)

- Minutes of the Talks
- Framework documents
- Studies and guides
- And more

To access our publications, visit <https://www.grandsitedefrance.com/ressources>

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The International Hub's resource centre

Online library

<http://www.polepatrimoine.org/base-documentaire>

Webinars

<http://www.polepatrimoine.org/videos>



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