

Avenches / Aventicum – The Monuments



Avenches / Aventicum

The Monuments



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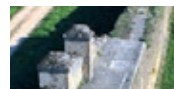
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The Amphitheatre

Performances and audience

Animal fights, gladiatorial combat and staged animal hunts took place in the *arena*. The rows of seats were allocated to the audience, i.e. the entire population, according to their social status. The games were sponsored by reputable citizens with a high social standing and were usually organized 'in honour of the emperor'. During the opening ceremony, the members of the city authorities solemnly marched into the *arena*, led by the images of the gods and followed by the combatants. The games had religious and political as well as popular aspects. They always took place during the day.

Two construction phases

The amphitheatre was probably built at the beginning of the 2nd century. Terracing work exposed the *arena* and formed the slope, into which the 24 tiers of seats – some of which may have consisted of wood – were built; only the stairs were masonry-built, as well as the walls of the *arena*, the topmost wall and the two entrances in the longitudinal axis.

During the latter third of the 2nd century, the building was extended, fitted with 31 tiers of stone seats, an external wall with recesses was added all around and on the eastern side, a monumental main portal was constructed with massive stone blocks. The surface of the *arena* itself was probably covered with sand.

This new number of 16'000 seats allows us to draw conclusions regarding the size of the population of the ancient city.

From the 4th century onwards, the amphitheatre was no longer used; most of its components were reused elsewhere as building material.

Today, the monument has been restored up to the 20th tier so that it can be used again.

In the 11th century, the bishop of Lausanne had a tower constructed at the level of the 20th row of seats above the eastern entrance; this tower has housed the Roman Museum since 1838.

Reconstruction of the extent of the capacity of the building

Construction phase 1: External dimensions without forecourt: 98.85 by 85.94 m, *arena*: 51.63 by 38.40 m; capacity: approximately 9'000 seats, distributed over 24 tiers. Dating: c. AD 130.

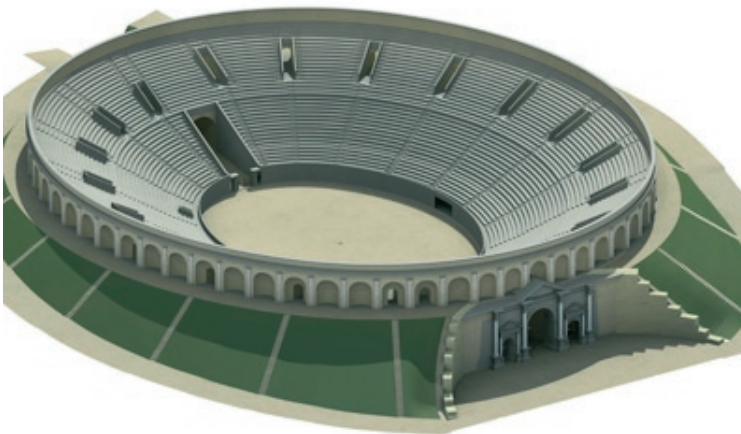


Construction phase 2: External dimensions without forecourt and east gate: 105.01 by 92.11 m; total height 18 m. Capacity: c. 16'000 seats distributed over 31 tiers. Dating: post AD 165

Building materials

Construction phase 1: Masonry of small blocks of yellow limestone; sills, service corridor and cladding made of shelly limestone.

Construction phase 2: Small blocks of yellow limestone, the recessed external wall was clad with a red painted plaster with trompe l'oeil consisting of joints carved into the plaster; seating tiers and east portal constructed of large shelly calcareous sandstone blocks; columns, bases and capitals of white Jurassic lime.



The Cigognier Sanctuary

An Imperial cult temple for the whole of *Helvetia*?

The discovery of a golden bust depicting the emperor Marcus Aurelius in one of the sewers of this huge sanctuary, its ground plan, which emulated that of the *Templum Pacis* in Rome, as well as its connection with the theatre established as part of an urbanisation project carried out during the last years of the 1st century all support the hypothesis that this temple was dedicated to an Imperial cult followed here by the population and the authorities of the *civitas Helvetiorum* – undoubtedly in connection with the Romanised Helvetian deities.

Reconstruction

As a focal point of the allegiance sworn to Roman state power, this sanctuary was designed around a vast interior courtyard with an avenue crossing through it along its longitudinal axis; an impressive temple with a vestibule (*pronaos*) with eight columns dominated the courtyard on the northern side; the temple was supported by a high *podium*, which also carried the large peristyle that surrounded the courtyard on three sides and was fitted with three rows of seats. A high wall formed the southern boundary of the complex with a forecourt located in front of it. A gate in the wall provided a connecting route to the theatre and the new arterial road leading from the West to the East gate of the city. As demonstrated by the only column that has been preserved in its original state, the vestibule (*pronaos*) and the peristyle were connected in such a way that an ambulatory was created on the inside, which was probably used for processions, and which prevented direct access from the colonnades to the interior courtyard. There was evidence for two secondary entrances at the corners of the northern portico.

The work of the emperor Trajan?

The construction commenced in AD 98; this date was established from the dendrochronological analysis of the numerous oak piles, which supported the foundations of the entire body of masonry. The temple is one of a series of large construction projects, which came to fruition after *Aventicum* was awarded the status of a *colonia* under Vespasian (AD 71/72). However, the initiative for this particular project as well as its realisation probably came from Trajan, who had returned to Rome



as a victorious field commander from a campaign in *Germania* and had subsequently ascended to the emperor's throne; the edifice was to symbolize the lasting pacification of the northern regions of the empire.

Dimensions

The Cigognier sanctuary was the largest temple in *Aventicum*. Exterior dimensions: 111.58 by 118.80 m. Temple: 42.17 by 27.36 m, height of gable 23.10 m, 2.40 m of which was the *podium*; colonnades: 64.00 by 83.35 m, height of gable: 19.50 m, 2.40 m of which was the *podium*; forecourt: 15.14 by 104.58 m.



Designed to emulate a model from Rome?

Both the ground plan of the temple and the construction techniques and materials used strove to emulate the luxury of the imperial buildings in Rome. Massive foundations of small yellow limestone blocks, resting on piles and carefully drained; sandstone facing of the *podium* and the rows of seats in the colonnades; upstanding masonry of the temple, façade of the colonnades and interior stone slab floor made of white Jurassic limestone imitating marble; use of coloured and often imported stone slabs to cover the interior walls; rich sculpted ornamentation on the cornices of the temple with figurative decoration (*two fragments of entablature preserved on the southern wall of the parish church Sainte Marie-Madeleine, a third fragment can be seen at no. 37 Rue des Alpes*) and in the colonnades, displaying pairs of sea monsters fighting against *kantharoi* (drinking cups); parapets of the arches that opened the colonnades up towards the *pronaos*, decorated at the top with a frieze of sea dragons (traces of which are still visible on the column that has been preserved *in situ*); delicately chiselled and probably painted Corinthian capitals. The precise meaning of the rather heterogeneous imagery probably shows provincial taste and possibly points towards a Helvetian but Romanised pantheon linked with the Imperial cult, the illustration of which was executed using classical patterns.

Modern name of the temple

The so-called stork's column (Le Cigognier), a name referring to a stork's nest that used to lie on top of the column capital, was mentioned for the first time on a 1642 engraving by Matthaeus Merian the Elder. The stork's nest was removed during restoration work carried out in 1978.



The Theatre

A Gallo-Roman theatre

In terms of the arrangement of the seating tiers and the layout of their accesses, the monument preserved in the En Selley area is very similar to a classic Roman theatre, but also shows a number of elements typical of its Gallo-Roman modification: both the *orchestra* and the *cavea* (tiered seating) are more than semicircular, the rather modestly sized stage building was built onto the exterior of the linear façade wall, and the actual stage consists of a simple wooden platform which reaches into the *orchestra*.

The theatre was probably used to stage simple productions of comedies and tragedies of the classical repertoire as well as burlesque and pantomime. However, the cult-niche at the foot of the auditorium, evidence pointing towards the existence of an altar in the *orchestra*, and also the general orientation of the building towards the axis of the Cigognier sanctuary suggest that the edifice also had a political and religious function; it may have been the setting for 'religious pageants' in the context of celebrations of the imperial cult.

Date and development

The theatre was definitely built in the early 2nd century AD as an important component of the programme of urban monumental development in an area previously occupied by small groups of residential buildings. It was renovated and rebuilt several times but not much detailed information can be obtained about these phases. In the latter part of the 3rd century it was finally turned into a fortified retreat enclosed by a defensive ditch and was used as such until the mid 4th century.

Size and capacity

Total length: 106.25 m; total width: 66.4 m; *Orchestra* diameter 17.75 m; *Orchestra* depth: 21 m. Capacity: c. 12,000 seats spread across 50 rows; these were accessible via 11 *vomitoria* (vaulted entrances), which in turn fed two semicircular passageways (*praeciniones*); a further passageway was located at the foot of the *cavea*, where there was also a 1.6 m wide *prohedria* (front seating) reserved for dignitaries.

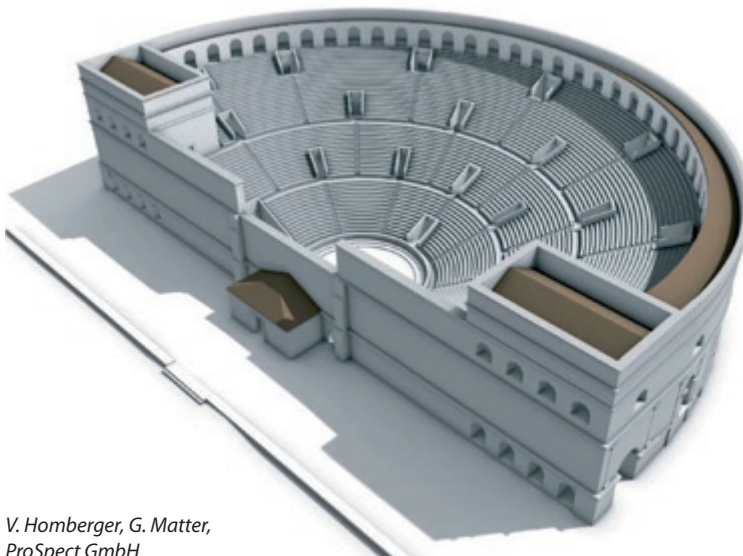


Location of the theatre in a political religious precinct

The theatre was located at the southern end of a vast open area on the same axis as the Cigognier sanctuary to the north. The space was further framed by two Gallo-Roman temples to the west, however later in date, and possibly other buildings to the east. The theatre occupied a commanding position within the large-scale urbanisation project geared towards designing a religious precinct west of the network of residential districts.

Construction techniques

The substructure of the theatre leans against the gentle slope of the hill towards the village of Donatyre. The construction of the lower parts of the building thus required a combination of terracing and masonry of small sandstone blocks. The top components of the building are freestanding constructions made up of masonry consisting of small sandstone and limestone blocks combined with cut shell limestone. At least parts of the seating tiers were made of shell limestone, while it is possible that the top rows were timber-built.



V. Homberger, G. Matter,
ProSpect GmbH

The Grange-des-Dîmes Sanctuary

A Gallo-Roman sanctuary

The temple dates from the end of the 1st or the beginning of the 2nd century AD; it replaced a *fanum* (shrine), which had been built in the Gallic tradition in the 1st century AD. While the *cella* with its almost square ground plan and ambulatory was reminiscent of Celtic sanctuaries, the construction and the sculptures decorating the temple were typically Roman. However, on the front of the building, the colonnade was interrupted by a typically Roman porch with a gabled roof; also typical of Roman architecture were the *podium*, which the temple stood on and the *perron*, which enabled access. The enclosed temple district also contained an altar, a well and a further architectural structure with four pillars and a canopy, which probably protected a statue. The complex represented a renewed architecture and a renewed cult, which were strongly characterized by the syncretism between indigenous and Roman belief systems.

The temple was probably dedicated to the god Mercurius Cissonius, who was the Romanised Gallic god of travellers and tradesmen, possibly in conjunction with the Gallic Lugoves; its connection with Jupiter-Ammon, with the river deities and with the Medusae, which adorned the medallions on the attic (topmost section of the wall) of the colonnade (motifs that refer back to Augustan models), was a feature of the new interpretation, which we can only speculate about. This religious complex was situated in the immediate vicinity of the baths in *insula* 19 and may even have been connected to them. The complex, which was erected on the edge of the first road axis through the city, was obviously the oldest and most important cult site for the section of the Romanised indigenous population involved in trade. This temple – located in the immediate vicinity of the Cigognier sanctuary, which the *Civitas Helvetiorum* had dedicated to the imperial cult – indicates how important this section of the population was.

Appearance in Flavian times (late 1st century AD)

The preserved archaeological remains consist of the southern wall foundations of the *cella* (10.8 by 9.4 m), a section of the elevation of the *podium* (20.2 by 20.4 m) and the access stairs as well as the locations of



the altar, the well and the partially reconstructed canopy. The back of the *podium* is marked by a masonry pointer north of Avenue Jomini, beneath which the rest of the temple is located. Since 2006, the ground plan of the temple has been highlighted in cobblestones on the street. A colonnade which formed the northern boundary of the temple district was excavated in 1992, but is no longer visible.

Reconstruction

Using the preserved stone blocks of the elevation of the *podium* (columns and entablature of the colonnade, columns of the porch), the height of the complex can be reconstructed: The *podium* was 1.8 m high and supported a *cella* in the shape of an approximately 20 m high tower, which was covered by a roof with four sides; the *cella* itself was surrounded by a lower colonnade carrying an attic storey and a porch (diameters of the columns: 0.51 m, height: c. 4.5 m, height of the entablature: 1.16 m); at the front, the colonnade is interrupted by a porch with 4 columns *in antis* (diameter of the columns: 0.89 m), carrying a gabled roof. Two pillars supporting a screen wall connected the porch with the colonnade; at the same time they left passage ways, thus allowing the worshippers to walk around the *cella*. Numerous stone blocks richly decorated with sculptures have been preserved and can be dated to the end of the 1st century AD.

Building materials and construction techniques

Walls of the *cella* and core of the podium: masonry with small yellow limestone rocks; facing of the *podium*: large sandstone blocks.

Columns, entablature and attic storey: yellow limestone in large blocks

Floor slabs and steps: sandstone

Inside the *cella*: possible traces of painting

Roof decoration monument: gilded bronze acroter



The East Gate

New access point to the city with a panoramic view

The East Gate was built in order to protect access to the city by means of a new transport axis; the route was probably decided upon under Vespasian, when *Aventicum* was awarded the status of a *colonia*. The East Gate is situated in a dominant position; from this point, people approaching from outside could see the entire city and the vast area enclosed by the city wall. This panoramic view was particularly impressive, and was probably set up this way deliberately. The access to *Aventicum* from the east was moved away from the old road in the plains; only a small gate, the so-called Northeast Gate, was located there. The new roadway was at a higher level and thus less threatened by the fluctuating movements of the River Chandon. In the distance, one could see the corresponding West Gate. Both gates were endpoints of a through road, which branched into several routes: one of these routes led into the city centre with its regularly arranged residential districts and forum, while another route bypassed the city centre and led directly into the cult district located to the west, where the Cigognier temple and the theatre would soon be built.

First the gate, then the city wall

It seems that the East Gate was built before the adjoining sections of the city wall were constructed; the transit traffic was to be led in a new direction, right from the beginning of a very important period in the development of the city, i.e. the years after AD 70.

Reconstruction following a comparison with a city gate in Autun (F)

The foundation walls were practically the only feature of the East Gate that was preserved. The archaeologist Louis Bosset rebuilt it to a height of 2 m. He also presented a reconstruction drawing of its elevation facing outwards, away from the city, which was inspired by the – older – city gates of Aosta, Turin and most importantly Autun (the Porte Saint-André, restored by Viollet-le-Duc).

The ground plan of the construction was based on the rediscovered remains. This monumental gate was 28 m wide and 26 m deep; its centre contained a perfectly circular courtyard with a diameter of 11.6 m, which was accessible for carriages through two passageways that were originally



3 m wide and were covered by arches both on the inside and the outside of the gate. Two corridors for pedestrians (2.1 m wide) ran along either side of the inner courtyard and probably supported a gallery which surrounded the entire courtyard and thus enabled its monitoring. Two further passageways were only accessible from the inside of the city wall; they each ended in a polygonally designed tower, which was built in front of the city wall and protected the access points to the gate complex from the outside; they provided access to the gallery of the inner courtyard and the allure of the adjoining city curtain wall.

Masonry of small blocks and architectural order

With a combination of small building blocks in yellow, possibly plastered limestone and large sandstone blocks, which were used in the facing at the bases of the polygonal towers, in the lining of the gate openings and in the sills of the gate passageways, the façade of the East Gate displayed at least two architectural orders above each other; evidence for this are the remains of two types of entablature, capital fragments and other elements in soft limestone or white Jurassic rock. Several fragments of a sandstone relief were also preserved, which, together with some letters from an inscription, underlined the significance of the monument as a political symbol.



The City Wall

Symbol of the status as a *colonia*

With their gates, towers and crenellated alures, fortified city walls symbolically represented the political status of numerous ancient cities. *Aventicum* acquired this wall embellishment after it had been awarded the status of a *colonia* in AD 71/72; by doing so, the city asserted its presence within the landscape and at the same time determined the boundaries of its municipal area, which extended far beyond the already built-up areas and the residential districts still in the planning stages.



Oversized development

The city wall enclosed an area of approximately 230 ha and was more than 5.5 km long. It followed the ridge of the hill at Donatyre in the south, enclosed today's city hill of Avenches in the west, bordered the swampy area that was located at the time in the valley plain in the north, and climbed upwards along the terraced landscape in the east. This large enclosed area was accessible through four main gates, of which, however, only the East and West gates are known today, as well as a small gate in the northeast and several posterns; the edifice contained 73 towers built on the inside of the wall, which provided access to the alures. Several sections of the wall are preserved as ruins and sections on each side of the East gate have been restored. At the location of Tornallaz, a small section has even been fully reconstructed. Almost everywhere else, obvious traces of the course of the wall are visible in the landscape.

Military construction or prestigious edifice?

The wall foundations were 3 m thick and the wall above ground measured 2.4 m. It was built to a height of 5 m, above which followed the alure, protected by 2 m high and 1.9 m long merlons. The towers, which mainly served as stairwells, were slightly higher than the curtain wall, were circular in shape with an external diameter of 6.9 m, were 10.8 m high and touched the outside facing of the wall; at the bases they had horseshoe-shaped ground plans and were built onto the wall; the tower walls were 1.2 m thick and bonded with the city wall. A 3.8 m wide and 1.6 m deep ditch ran along the outside of the wall. It had been dug at a distance of 2 m from the city wall; conversely, in the swampy plain, the wall foundations rested on oak piles, which have been dated by



dendrochronological means (tree ring method) to AD 72–79. Although the city wall gave a very militaristic impression as regards its conceptual design and its appearance, it most likely served a defensive purpose only in exceptional situations. While it probably assisted the policing of the access points to the city, its primary function was more than likely to underline the prestige of the Helvetian capital city.

A building site with pharaonic dimensions

The city wall was built in yellow limestone blocks, which were not much bigger than the usual masonry of small blocks; only the coping of the crenellation, the merlons and the floor slabs of the alures were made of sandstone. Approximately 200'000 m³ of Jurassic limestone in large blocks was transported on barges from the northern shore of Lake Neuchâtel and unloaded at the port of *Aventicum*; there, they were broken into smaller blocks that were easier to handle and then transported on carts to the various building sites, where they were broken down further into building blocks that were used in the facing of the wall; the infilling of the wall consisted of limestone and shelly limestone splinters bound with mortar. Given the capacity of the port and the barges used, one may assume that the construction of the entire wall took approximately 12 years. It remains unknown, what the costs of such a gigantic building project would have been and who was in charge of the site management.



Tornallaz

A tower with changing roles

Of the 73 towers of the city wall, tower no. 2, located north of the East Gate, is the only one that has been preserved. Originally 10.8 m in height, it was raised to 12.5 m, probably in the Middle Ages. The reason for its survival was that it served as an observation and reporting post for a long time, presumably since medieval times.

For this purpose, the tower was restored several times, renovated and its height raised; its current appearance can be traced back to restoration work undertaken at the beginning of the 20th century. At that stage, a wooden stairs was installed inside the tower, leading to the reconstructed alure and the observation terrace constructed at the top. At the same time, the original entrance from the city side was restored and the Roman masonry was repaired up to the height to which it has been preserved to this day (i.e. up to the height of the alure).

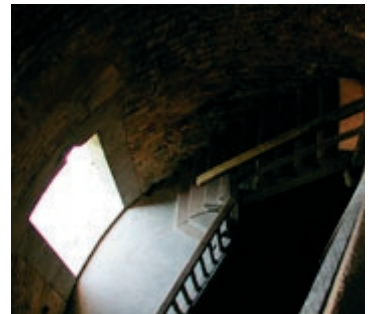
In Antiquity, a space with circular ground plan and narrow window openings interrupted the curtain wall, which could be accessed through two doors; in contrast to this, the present-day construction in this location corresponds to the taller medieval monument, with a straight wall facing away from the city and an entrance door higher up, which was probably accessed in medieval times from the outside by a portable ladder leaning against the tower.

Restoration provides information about the construction history

During maintenance and repair work recently carried out on the outer plasterwork, it was possible to distinguish between the Roman masonry, whose joints are marked, and medieval and post-medieval work; the latter areas were dressed with a plaster with better covering, which in some spots imitated the medieval plaster.

Roman and medieval construction techniques

The various construction techniques can be most easily identified on the interior facing of the masonry: small and regularly worked building blocks of yellow limestone on the Roman remains, in contrast to less carefully constructed masonry containing various roughly hewn types of stone mixed with tile and brick fragments in the medieval building components.



These still show the anchor positions for the beams of the intermediate floors that had been installed at various heights in the course of the construction history.



The West Gate

Necessary access to the city

The West Gate marked the threshold of the municipal area of *Aventicum*; travellers approaching the city from the west would have had to use this gate. It was undoubtedly located on a transport axis, which crossed the midlands from the southwest to the northeast long before the founding of the Roman city.



Part of the Flavian city wall (after AD 72)

The West Gate was an important element of the city wall erected under Vespasian. It marked the spot where the municipal area's new boundary was crossed; this boundary had been formally established by a *pomerium* on the occasion of *Aventicum* being awarded the status of a *colonia*. Further road links ran towards the West Gate and several transport axes radiated from it, thus accessing the city, which already consisted of regularly designed residential areas as well as the cult district in the plain, which was still in the planning stages; there were also throughways to the East Gate with the new road starting from it; this meant that the city centre around the forum could be avoided.

Monumental dimensions

This important but only partially excavated city gate undoubtedly exhibited a ground plan and dimensions, which corresponded to those identified in the East Gate, i.e. a double passageway for carriages and two corridors for pedestrians as well as two passages leading to polygonal towers with circular foundations, which would have framed the city gate.

Military architecture or prestigious edifice?

The West Gate consisted of small yellow, possibly plastered limestone building blocks. At the base and at the corners of the polygonal towers it was reinforced with large sandstone blocks and without doubt its façade was architecturally structured and faced with ashlar masonry. The gate presented itself as a monument with a militaristic character and conceptual design. However, this appearance, which was undoubtedly designed to underline in some way the new *colonia* status bestowed to the city, probably did not correspond to a real strategic function,



considering that, at the time, *Helvetia* was at peace under the *pax romana*, which had been stabilized for a long time by Vespasian. The gate had a more policing function: At nightfall, it would have been closed in order to stop burglars and robbers from coming into the city.

The Forum Baths

Public baths at the *forum* of the *colonia*

The so-called Baths of En Perruet and their auxiliary buildings took up the entire *insula* 29 located to the east of the *forum*. They were constructed from AD 77 onwards as part of an urban development programme set up on the occasion of *Aventicum* receiving its status as a *colonia*, and were undoubtedly financed by an influential Romanised Helvetian family, the Camilli.

The new monumental bath complex not only provided the city's population with a place to bathe and wash their bodies, nor was it only a place where they could have massages and beauty treatments and pursue sports, but it also promoted a characteristic element of the Roman way of life; the baths were a place of informal get-togethers, where one could meet people and relax, or where one could, for instance, listen to speeches or visit a library. With this gift to the entire population of the city, the donor family created an infrastructure in accordance with the highest standards of the time, an infrastructure which was indispensable in realizing the ideal articulated in the famous motto by Juvenal, *mens sana in corpore sano*.

The more modest earlier Forum Baths, which were found in the western section of *insula* 23 and which dated from the mid 1st century, were obviously no longer sufficient to cater for the needs of a population that had grown significantly; around AD 120, a building dedicated to the goddess Minerva was built in the location of these earlier baths; this building may have been a library, which means that one of the secondary functions of public baths would have continued in this location.

A large, however, not yet fully investigated building complex

The main building of the Forum Baths is the only part of the complex that is visible today. It consists of three large rooms arranged from east to west: the *frigidarium*, an unheated room, which originally housed two coldwater pools in its small eastern apses; the *tepidarium*, a slightly heated room, which included a floor heating system (hypocaust) with two heating chambers that were serviced through a passageway, and which may have been fitted with two pools with lukewarm water; finally, the *caldarium*, the hot bath, only partially excavated but identified by floor markings,



which was heated with two heating systems both from below ground and through the walls; these heating systems also provided hot water for two bath tubs and two large water pools installed in the *caldarium*.

The entire complex measures approximately 52 by 32 m, the three rooms occupied an area of between 200 and 325 m².

Test excavations carried out in the northeast have identified an important water reservoir, which was supplied with water through an aqueduct running under the *frigidarium*, and also remains of what was probably a large outdoor swimming pool, which occupied part of the *palaestra* (gaming and sports ground); the *palaestra* extended further west over the entire width of the *insula* without, however, reaching the road that separated the *insula* from the *forum*. In this western section of the *insula*, an annex, which probably consisted of two rows of rooms, made the transition to the *forum*; this annex may have been the seat of a corporation or it may have been used for other social and cultural meetings and activities. Other servicing rooms located further south, have not yet been identified more precisely (latrines, changing rooms etc.)

Later renovations

As part of a thorough restructuring project carried out on the building after AD 120 (dendrochronological dating), both the *frigidarium* and the *caldarium* were fitted with new pools: An annex with heated rooms was erected on the southern side, which may have been an additional section of baths, possibly reserved for women. Maintenance work continued to be carried out on a regular basis well into the 3rd century.

Luxurious design

The masonry of the building shell consisted of courses of small, very evenly hewn yellow limestone blocks and was supported by a grid of oak piles.

The systems that heated the air (floor and wall heating) and the water (boiler) were made of molasse sandstone throughout, blocks of which had to be replaced periodically. The floor of the hypocaust, the columns and the supporting structure of the floors of the rooms as well as the flue tiles along the walls, through which the warm air was carried upwards, all consisted of burnt clay slabs of various sizes.



Derrière la Tour Palace

Residence of a high dignitary?

The meagre remains of one of the pools of the baths, which are visible below the Rue du Pavé at the level of the last block of flats, are the only elements to have survived of a monumental 3rd century palace; this palace extended over the entire terrace south of the road mentioned and over large parts of the north-facing slope – from Avenue du Général Guisan to Rue du Moulin. A section dedicated to trade and administration could be identified in the east, within the reorganized *insula 7*, with a specially protected storehouse, an administrative building with heated rooms, with



shops and separate bathhouses, all arranged around a large open space; in the southwest, a garden courtyard with colonnades led across to the actual residence.

Around the mid 1st century, the earliest estate was located outside the regular grid of residential districts of the city and almost 100 m west of *insula 7*. After renovation work had been carried out, this building formed the core of the 3rd century palace complex. This core was extended in the east by a trapezoidal courtyard encircled by rooms with administrative or residential functions, including a bath complex; these rooms were suitable for welcoming numerous guests of high social standing. Another courtyard extended the complex to the west. The palace complex occupied an area of almost 15'000 m².

The owners of this residence were undoubtedly high-ranking figures, known far beyond *Aventicum*. The palace was arranged symmetrically around a vast courtyard enclosed by porticoes; on the northern side, a large palatial room opened onto this courtyard. The room, which was probably meant for audiences, had a mosaic measuring 18 by 12 m and a pool. Pavilions were arranged to the rear of the porticoes around the courtyard. The pavilion to the south of the courtyard can be identified as a so-called summer *triclinium*, a reception room decorated with mosaics and wall paintings, which could not be heated. The family quarters were located to the front of the northern façade and were probably distributed over a number of storeys.

