HUB architecten
Hubtrip 2026
LYON (France)

Day 1 - 3
Thursday - Saturday

Date
15-17 okt 2026



For if you're too lazy to read...

Context

Traboules: **Vieux-Lyon**



1 Lyon: A City of Two Rivers

Lyon sits where the Saône meets the Rhône, and that position has shaped its entire history. In 43 BC the Romans founded Lugdunum here, capital of the Three Gauls, and its Roman theatre still stands on the hill of Fourvière.

In the Middle Ages and the Renaissance the city became a trading and banking hub of Europe. From that period comes Vieux Lyon, one of the largest Renaissance districts in Europe, inscribed on the UNESCO list together with the Presqu'île and the slopes of Croix-Rousse.

In the 19th century Lyon owed its wealth to silk. The canuts, the weavers of Croix-Rousse, left behind the traboules, hidden passages through buildings used to carry fabric home out of the rain. It was here that Joseph Marie Jacquard perfected his programmable loom, a distant ancestor of the computer.

La Fontaine Bartholdi by
Frédéric Auguste Bartholdi and realized in 1889 by Gaget & Gautier.



Institut & Musee Lumiere:
by Paul Boucher and Charles-Joseph Alex commissioned by Antoine Lumière



2 People Who Made Lyon

The city has always produced people whose ideas travelled far beyond it. In the Renaissance, when Lyon's printing presses made it one of the great literary centres of Europe, the architect Philibert Delorme was born here, and the poet Louise Labé, known as "La Belle Cordière", held court among its writers. Nearby, at the Hôtel-Dieu, the physician François Rabelais treated patients by day and published Pantagruel between rounds.

The silk age brought a different kind of genius. Joseph Marie Jacquard, born in Lyon, perfected a loom run by punched cards, a distant ancestor of the computer. The weavers who worked on such looms also gave the city its favourite rebel: Guignol, a puppet who mocks the powerful with a straight face and still performs on Lyonnais stages. Even the great fountain on Place des Terreaux comes from outside the city's own craft tradition, designed by Frédéric Auguste Bartholdi, the sculptor who later gave New York its Statue of Liberty.

The twentieth century carried the same spirit into new media. In 1895 the Lumière brothers shot one of the first films in a factory courtyard, and cinema was born. A few decades later, Antoine de Saint-Exupéry, author of The Little Prince, grew up in the city, and its airport now carries his name.



Un Bouchon: **A small unpretentious bistro**

3 A Table Worth the Journey

Lyon is widely considered the capital of French gastronomy, and the reason is a tradition rather than a trend.

It began with the mères lyonnaises, working-class women cooks, of whom Eugénie Brazier was the most celebrated, and it was carried on by her pupil Paul Bocuse, whose name now hangs over the covered Halles de Lyon.

The heart of this culture is the bouchon, a small, unpretentious bistro where a hearty mâchon is served without ceremony. Start with a salade lyonnaise of lardons and a poached egg, then try quenelles, the local dumplings of fish or poultry, or an andouillette.

Charcuterie is a religion here: rosette, saucisson, and the tablier de sapeur, a breaded tripe dish the locals call the “fireman’s apron”. Try the cervelle de canut, the “silk weaver’s brains”, a herb and fromage blanc spread that is entirely meat-free.

For dessert there are bugnes, fried pastries of carnival season, the pink praline tart, and the coussin de Lyon, a pyramid-shaped sweet of marzipan and chocolate.

Wines come from the neighbours: Beaujolais from the north, or a white Condrieu from the Rhône valley.

Traboules: **a maze of narrow lanes in Vieux-Lyon**



The Gratte-Ciel district: **Working-class houses**



The Eugénie Brazier school group: **Designed and realized by the French architectural studio Vurpas Architectes in la Confuence**



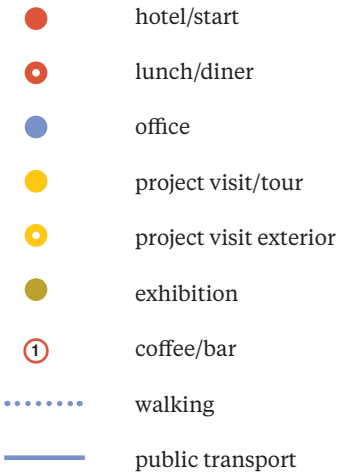
4 An Architect's City

Lyon is a rare example of a city where every era has left a legible trace, and none has erased the one before. It begins in Vieux Lyon, a Renaissance maze of narrow lanes and traboules, overlooked from Fourvière by the eclectic basilica of 1884. On the same hill, Bernard Zehrfuss's Gallo-Roman Museum sinks its raw concrete into the slope beside the Roman theatre. Down on the Presqu'île, the Haussmannian grid opens onto the vast Place Bellecour, and nearby Jean Nouvel's Opera places a glass vault on top of a neoclassical building from 1831, a lesson in how to add to the old without imitating it.

Beyond the centre, the city's twentieth-century ambitions come into view. In Villeurbanne, the Gratte-Ciel district of the 1920s and 30s shows what a socialist town could build for its workers, while in Part-Dieu the concrete towers of the 1970s, led by the pencil-shaped Crayon, are being rebuilt around a new generation of glass.

Lyon has long been a laboratory for urbanism. Tony Garnier developed his vision of the cité industrielle here in the early 20th century, and today the city is transforming entire post-industrial districts on a scale that is hard to find elsewhere. The most modern chapter we are going to see is Confluence, at the tip of the peninsula between the Saône and the Rhône. Former port and industrial land has become a showcase of contemporary architecture by some of the world's best-known offices. Coop Himmelb(l)au's Musée des Confluences, a deconstructivist "crystal cloud", stands at the very point where the rivers meet

Legend


hotel/start
lunch/diner
office
project visit/tour
project visit exterior
exhibition
1
coffee/bar
walking
public transport

Itinerary



Couvent de la Tourette: **Le Corbusier, 1959**

Day 1
Thursday

We arrive at Lyon Part-Dieu around noon, and the 1970s towers of the district give us our first look at the city. After dropping our luggage, we pick up lunch to go and walk to the office of LFA (Looking For Architecture) on rue Danton, a few streets from the station. There we eat together, meet the team and enjoy a small event hosted by the studio.

From there, we continue east to Villeurbanne, spending the afternoon exploring on foot. Our walk focuses on the Gratte-Ciel district, built between 1927 and 1934 under Mayor Lazare Goujon and designed by Môrice Leroux as a modern town centre for the working class.

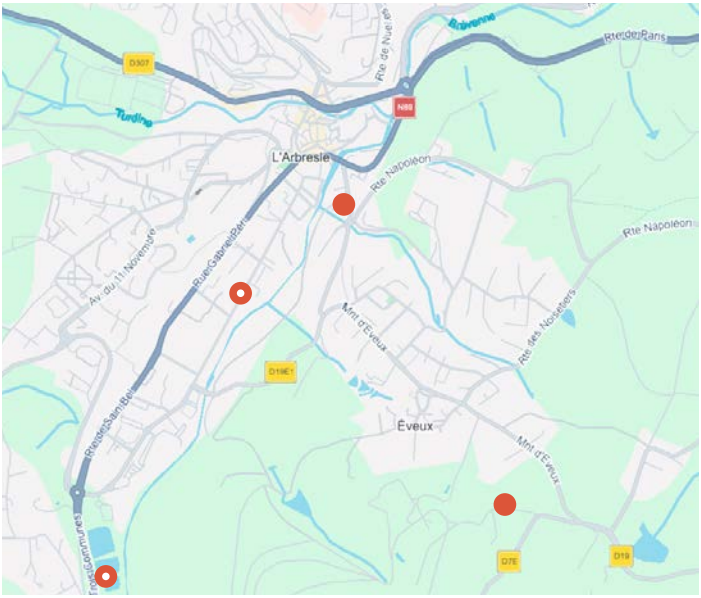
In the early evening, we travel to the Sainte-Marie de La Tourette convent in Éveux, widely regarded as one of Le Corbusier's finest late works. We end the day with time for our HUB photographers to capture the warm evening light around La Tourette before heading to one of the nearby villages for dinner at a local table, accompanied by a special tasting of regional beers.

D1 Timetable

●	6u30	Optional: Meet up @ Capri Coffee & Panos
	6u54	Train departure Antwerpen-Centraal 7u41 Arrival Brussel-Midi
	6u59	Optional: Hop on in Berchem
	8u04	Train departure Brussel-Midi 12u00 Arrival Lyon Part-Dieu
	12u00	Luggage into station lockers
◉	12u30	Lunch to go from Boulangerie L'Artisan
●	13u00	Studio visit 'Looking For Architectures'
●	14u30	Walk in Villeurbanne
	17u08	Train departure Lyon Part-Dieu 17u36 Arrival Gare de l'Arbresle
	17u40	Walk to Couvent de La Tourette
●	18u15	Check-in Couvent de la Tourette
	19u15	Bus departure to diner location
◉	19u30	Diner at La Table D'Agamy time? Bus departure to convent
◉	21u00	Beer tasting at Brewery Virage Sept 40 min walk to the convent

D1 Map


A42
D383
Rue du Canal
Cr Vitton
Cr Tolstoi
A6
Av. Paul Kruger
Rte de Genas
Cr Gambetta
Rue Feuillat
Bd Pinel
Av. Valioud
A7
Bd Yves Farge
Av. Berthelot
Rte de Vienne
Bd des Etats Unis
Av. Paul Santy
D383
A43
Rhône


D307
N89
L'Arbresle
Rte Napoléon
Rte Napoléon
Av. du 11 Novembre
Mont d'Eveux
Rte des Nonciers
D19E1
Eveux
Mont d'Eveux
D7E
D19

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Office

1 Looking for architecture

Location: 27 rue Danton, 69003 Lyon
Tel. nr. T.+33 (0)9 81 13 76 90
E-mail contact@lookingforarchitecture.com
Instagram l.instagram.com/lfa_architectes

Meet LFA

LFA was founded in Lyon in 2011 by Antoine Trollat and Laurent Graber. The studio is proudly unspecialised: it has no house style and no dogma, and it treats budgets, regulations, context and technical constraints as raw material rather than obstacles. Its members call themselves a “laboratory of impermanent architecture” and a “process agency”. Buildings are designed to be reversible, modular and ready to change, because nobody can know how they will be used in thirty years. In practice this means working with what is already there, reusing materials and thinking about a building’s end of life from the start.

The culture is horizontal and collaborative. LFA refuses to separate the artist, engineer, craftsperson, inhabitant and architect, and it invites chance discoveries into the design process.

The office is also embedded in Lyon’s cultural life. Its portfolio includes festival scenography and a programme of artist projects and talks on architecture and books, and its clients range from city councils and housing associations to the Biennale de Lyon.

The studio won the Prix Eiffel in 2022 and again in 2025.

Toasté

Project	**Grocery store/counter, a catering kitchen, and a dwelling**
Total floor area	**322 m²**
Client	**Private**
Architect	**LFA**
Year	**2021**

In Saint-Romain-au-Mont-d'Or, a three-storey 18th-century house in golden stone became a grocery counter, a caterer's kitchen and a home. Once the building was stripped back, the rammed earth (pisé), stone walls and timber floors were left visible. An external stair separates the family's home from the public restaurant, and the sage-green joinery echoes the courtyard plants.



Toasté: **interior**

Marie Paradis Sports Complex

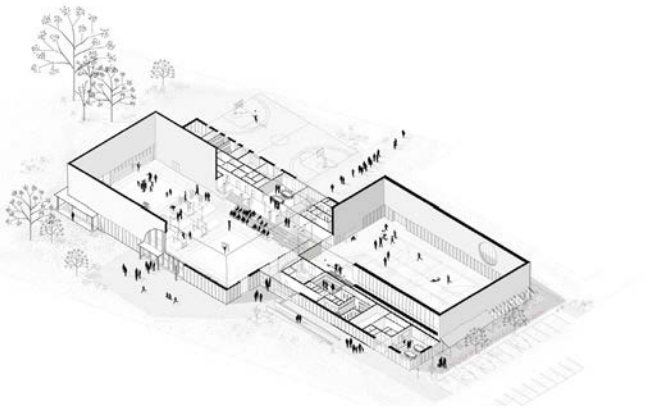
Project	**Renovation and Extension of the Marie Paradis Sports Complex**
Total floor area	**2 830 m²**
Client	**Neuville-sur-Saône (Public)**
Architect	**Face B, LFA**
Year	**2025**

In Neuville-sur-Saône, LFA worked as associate architect with Face B on the renovation and extension of a 2,830 m² gym whose parts had never quite fitted together. The design makes the plan and volumes legible again, keeps as much of the existing structure as possible, and opens views between the interior halls and the outdoors. The result is energy-sober and playful, and it won the Prix Eiffel in 2025.

Marie Paradis Sports Complex (2025): **facade**



Marie Paradis Sports Complex (2025): **Axonometrie**



Centre de Maintenance, Chambéry

Project	**Reconstruction of the premises of the Road Equipment and Maintenance Service (SMMR)**
Total floor area	**29228 m²**
Client	**Savoie Department (Public)**
Architect	**Tectoniques, LFA**
Year	**2025**

With the lead office Tectoniques, LFA designed a new road-maintenance depot for the Savoie department. The scheme gathers workshops, offices and communal spaces under one large pleated green roof, with a low-carbon timber-and-concrete structure, reused materials and a renaturalised landscape. It is a competition project rather than a built one, but it shows how LFA turns a purely technical site into an open, identifiable place to work.

Centre de maintenance:
workshops, offices and communal spaces under one green roof.

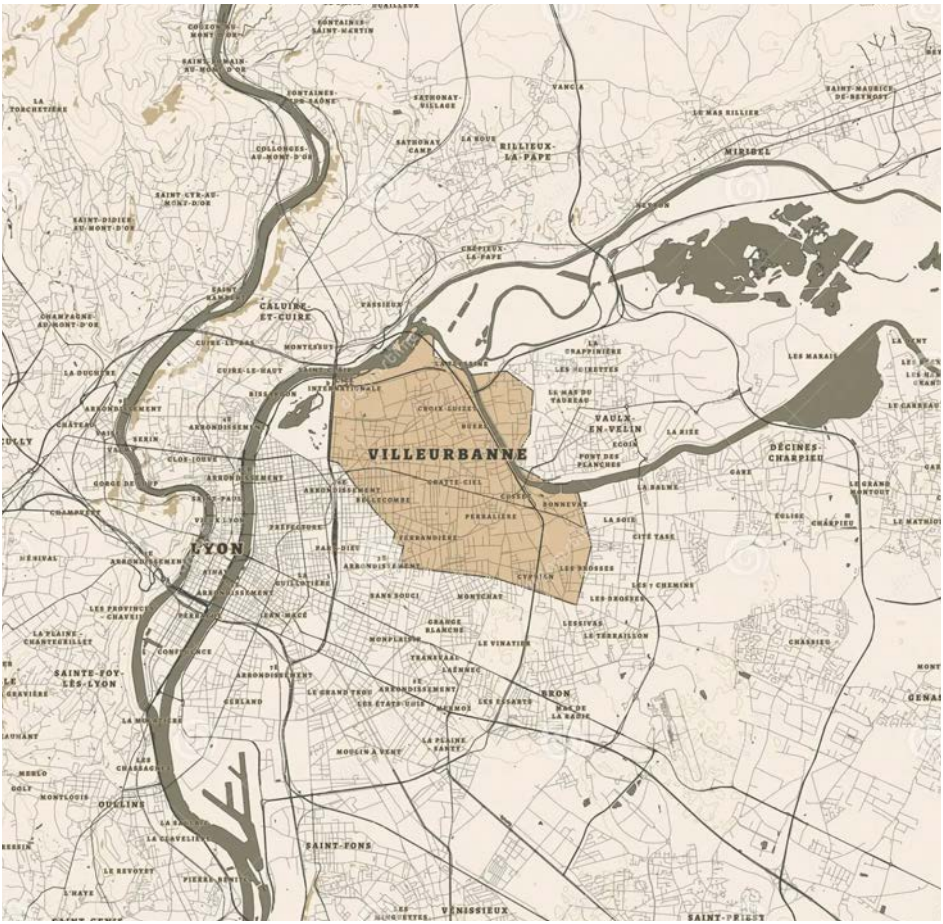


Projects

1 Villeurbanne

Project	**Construction of the new district**
Total floor area	**160,000 m² (total built area)**
Client	**Client: Ville de Villeurbanne**
Architect	**Architects: Môrice Leroux (Chief Architect), Robert Giroud (Architect for the City Hall / Hôtel de Ville)**
Year	**Year: 1931–1934**

Often overshadowed by its famous neighbour Lyon, Villeurbanne has a distinct identity of its own. Originally an industrial town, it experienced rapid growth in the early twentieth century and became a testing ground for ambitious ideas about housing, public services and urban planning. Today, it offers one of the most compelling collections of modern architecture in France, making it an essential destination for architects interested in the relationship between architecture, social reform and city-making.



Villeurbanne: **1970**

2 Grate Ciel: A Modern City Centre Before Its Time

The unquestionable highlight of Villeurbanne is the Gratte-Ciel district, one of Europe's most remarkable interwar urban projects. Designed by architect Môrice Leroux and developed between 1927 and 1934 under the visionary leadership of Mayor Lazare Goujon, the project sought to create a new civic centre for a growing industrial population.

The district is best known for its pair of slender Art Deco towers, which frame a monumental central avenue and serve as a symbolic gateway to the neighbourhood. Beyond these iconic landmarks, architects will appreciate the project's extraordinary coherence: housing, shops, public institutions and open spaces were conceived as a single urban composition.

Nearly a century later, Gratte-Ciel remains a powerful demonstration of how architecture can be used to shape a collective civic identity.

Poster: **Official inauguration celebrations of the new Villeurbanne city center, held from June 10 to July 1, 1934. (By A. Boucherat Jeune, 1933)**



The Urban Extension: Contemporary Villeurbanne

In recent years, Gratte-Ciel has expanded through a major urban extension that adds housing, cultural facilities and public spaces while respecting the spirit of the original plan. The project offers an interesting case study in contemporary densification and urban continuity, showing how historic modernist districts can evolve without losing their identity.

Everyday Modernism and Industrial Heritage

Beyond its famous centre, Villeurbanne rewards those who wander its streets. Former workers' housing estates, repurposed industrial buildings and post-war housing projects reveal the different layers of the city's development. Together they tell the story of a community shaped by industry, migration and social ambition, and demonstrate how architecture responded to these changes over time.

Why Architects Should Visit

What makes Villeurbanne unique is that its architectural value extends far beyond individual buildings. It is a city where architecture, urban planning and social ideals come together to create a coherent urban experience. Whether admiring the monumental composition of Gratte-Ciel, studying its carefully designed public spaces, or exploring newer interventions, architects will find a city that continues to illustrate how design can influence everyday life and foster a strong sense of community.



Gratte-Ciel: **Characteristic terraced facades of the residential buildings in the Gratte-Ciel of Villeurbanne.**

3 Palais du Travail

Project	**Construction of the multifunctional social, cultural, and healthcare complex (now housing the Théâtre National Populaire - TNP)**
Total floor area	**~20,000 m²**
Client	**Ville de Villeurbanne (Mayor Lazare Goujon)**
Architect	**Môrice Leroux (Chief Architect), with initial guidance/consultation from Tony Garnier**
Year	**1928–1934 (construction 1930–1934; officially inaugurated in June 1934**

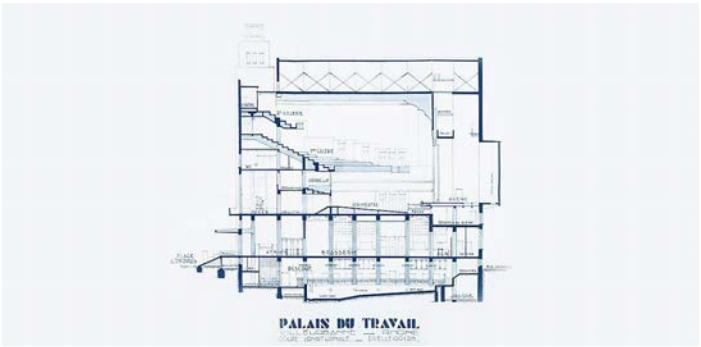
The housing complex lines up along Avenue Henri Barbusse. Six housing blocks of nine to eleven storeys alternate along the avenue, with setbacks and terraces inspired by Henri Sauvage's stepped building in Paris. Two tall towers mark the entrance to the centre, with the lower blocks completing the ensemble. Sources disagree on the towers' height: 18 storeys in one, 19 storeys, about 60 m in another.

Nearby stand the Palais du Travail. The first building, conceived as a "secular temple" for the working class. It first held a hygiene dispensary, then a swimming pool, theatre, brasserie and people's house. In 1957 it became home to the Théâtre de la Cité, the future TNP, directed by Roger Planchon, which played a pioneering role in the decentralisation of French theatre.

Palais du travaille: **Main facade of the Palais du Travail in Villeurbanne, designed in Art Deco style by chief architect Môrice Leroux (c. 1928–1930).**



Section: **the vertical distribution of the complex, including the underground public swimming pool (piscine), the ground-floor municipal brasserie, and the multi-tiered main theater auditorium (salle de spectacle / TNP) above.**



4 Hotel de Ville

Project	**Construction of the new City Hall (Hôtel de Ville) terminating the central axis of the Gratte-Ciel district**
Total floor area	**~14,500 m²**
Client	**Ville de Villeurbanne (Mayor Lazare Goujon)**
Architect	**Robert Giroud**
Year	**1930–1934 (design competition won in 1930; construction 1931–1934; inaugurated June 1934)**

No visit to Villeurbanne is complete without a close look at the Hôtel de Ville, the symbolic centrepiece of the Gratte-Ciel project.and a town hall.

While the residential ensemble was designed by Môrice Leroux, the City Hall was entrusted to architect Robert Giroud, winner of the architectural competition launched in 1930.

It stylistically stands out from the housing. Dwellings show 1930s modernism (geometric volumes, no decoration), but the town hall has an academic look with a belfry, engaged fluted columns and monumental order. It was built between 1930 and 1934, after a competition. It is Art Deco in style, and its belfry is about 65 m high. Another source gives 60 m. It has been partly listed as a historic monument since 1991.



Hotel de Ville: **Designed by Robert Giroud in Art Deco style, featuring a monumental symmetrical facade lined with fluted columns and topped by a 65-meter-high belfry clock tower (beffroi).**

5 M-45

Project	**Construction of a hybrid, reversible mixed-use industrial and commercial building ("Productive City" model)**
Total floor area	**~5,450 m²**
Client	**Promoval, Fontanel Promotion, and 6e Sens Immobilier**
Architect	**Triptyque Architecture**
Year	**2022/2023**

On our way to Villeurbanne we come across two other relevant projects.

Triptyque Architecture is a French-Brazilian practice known for combining sustainability, flexibility and urban innovation. Their projects often reinterpret industrial heritage while creating adaptable spaces for contemporary city life.

The M45 Building (2023) in Villeurbanne, near Lyon, is a contemporary vision of the"Productive City." Inspired by the area's industrial past, the project combines workshops, offices and commercial spaces within a single flexible building. Rather than erasing the site's history, Triptyque reinterprets the language of industrial warehouses through a clean and modern architectural expression.

Organized around three compact volumes connected by external walkways, M45 promotes openness, interaction and future adaptability. Designed to accommodate changing uses over time, it demonstrates how mixed-use architecture can support a more sustainable and resilient urban environment.

M-45: **Triptyque Architecture, AA-section**



M-45: **Triptyque**
Architecture, facade



M-45: **Triptyque**
Architecture, stairs



6 Viaterra

Project	**Renovation of an old office building into mixed-use block of offices and public services**
Total floor area	**4,335 m²**
Client	**Icade**
Architect	**Maud Caubet Architectes, Supermixx Architectes**
Year	**completion 2028**

Maud Caubet is a French architect known for creating elegant, contemporary buildings that combine environmental responsibility with a strong focus on user experience. Her architecture is characterized by fluid forms, carefully crafted façades and a commitment to adaptable, sustainable urban living.

SUPERMIXX Architectes Urbanistes, based in Lyon, is recognized for its collaborative and context-driven approach. The practice focuses on creating clear, durable and innovative architecture that responds sensitively to both its users and the surrounding urban environment.

Viaterra: **existing situation**



Viaterra: **in construction**



Tips

1 Coffee & drinks

1. **Yokai Café**

   Coffee in Part Dieu

2. **Ninkasi Part-Dieu**

   Drinks in Part Dieu

3. **Carbone**

   Coffee in Villeurbanne

4. **La Pavane**

   Drinks in Villeurbanne

5. **Loop's Pub**

   Drinks in Villeurbanne

Tips


A42
D383
Rue du Canal
Cr Vitton
Cr Tolstoi
Av. Paul Kruger
Rte de Genas
Cr Gambetta
Rue Feuillat
Bd Privel
Av. Berthelot
Bd des Etats-Unis
Av. Paul Santy
Rte de Vienne
Bd Yves Farge
Av. Valioud
A6
A7
A43
Emile Zola
1
2
3
4
5

2 Evening

① Restaurant La Table D'Agamy

Due to circumstances, the dining hall at Couvent de La Tourette is unavailable. As an alternative, they have offered to transport us by bus to a winery-restaurant in Sain Bel, where we will be served a vegetarian menu and have the opportunity to taste a local wine.

② Busride back to Couvent de La Tourette

If you're looking for a quiet evening of solitude, stay seated. If you're not ready to call it a night, hop off the bus.

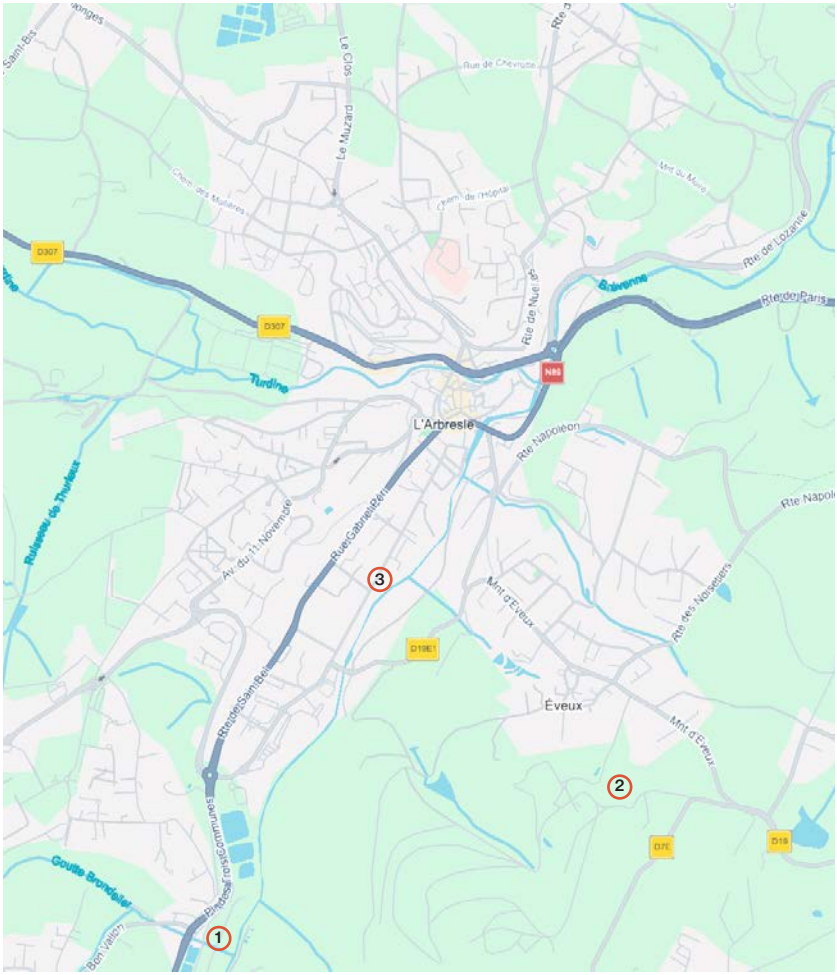
③ Brewery Virage Sept

Optional: This local brewery welcomes us for an exclusive beer tasting experience..

④ Walk back to Couvent de La Tourette

This is a countryside walk of 40 min between the villages around de hills of le couvent de la Tourette.

Tips


Le Clos
Le Muzard
Rue de Chevrusse
Chemin des Mûriers
Chemin de l'Hôpital
Mont du Muret
D307
Rte de Lozanne
Rte de Nuelle
Bravenne
Rte de Paris
N86
Turdine
L'Arbresle
Rte Napoléon
Ruisseau de Thurieux
Av. du 11 Novembre
Rue Gabriel Péri
3
Mont d'Eveux
D19E1
Rte des Noisetiers
Rte Napol
Eveux
Rte des Sapins
Cours Communaux
2
D7E
D19
Goutte Brondelle
Bon Vallon
1

Day 2
Friday

The day begins at the Couvent Sainte-Marie de La Tourette, where we enjoy a guided visit through Le Corbusier's architectural masterpiece. Set among the rolling hills outside Lyon, the convent offers a unique opportunity to experience one of the architect's most celebrated late works and to discover how light, landscape and spirituality come together in a singular architectural composition.

After the visit, we travel to Lyon and make a brief stop at the Radisson Blu Hotel in the Part-Dieu district to drop off our luggage. From there, we grab a quick lunch to go from Gus & Gas before heading south to the Gerland district, where our architectural walk begins.

Starting in Gerland, we explore a neighbourhood that has transformed from an industrial zone into one of Lyon's most dynamic urban districts. From there, we continue towards La Confluence, one of Europe's most ambitious urban regeneration projects, where contemporary architecture, innovative housing and striking public spaces have reshaped the former industrial peninsula. Depending on timing and energy levels, we may extend the walk further into the Presqu'île, Lyon's historic heart, where nineteenth-century boulevards and vibrant urban life offer a different perspective on the city.



Radisson BLU Hotel: **Inside the pencil**

As the day draws to a close, we gather at Le Péniche for sunset drinks, enjoying the atmosphere along the Rhône and watching the city transition into the evening.

After checking in at the Radisson, there is time to freshen up and unwind. Those who wish can join for a drink at the hotel bar, where the panoramic views from the tower provide a spectacular perspective over Lyon's skyline.

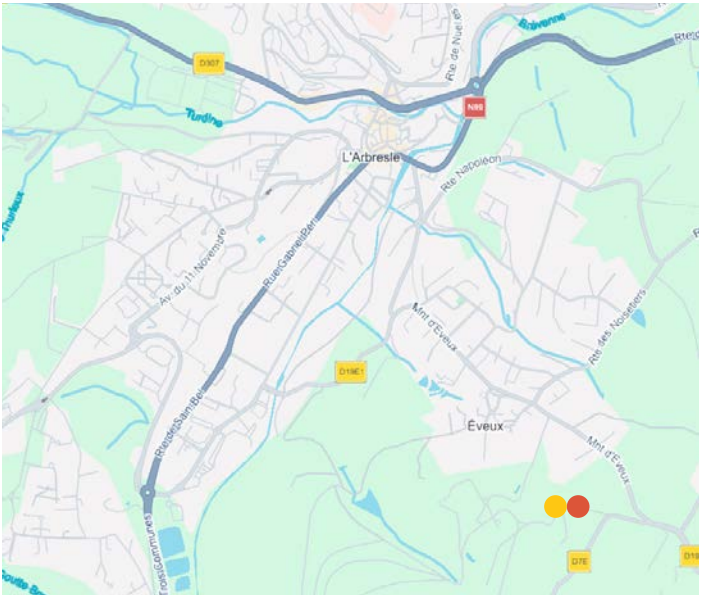
In the evening, we come together for dinner at Restaurant Bouillon, a lively setting to enjoy French classics and reflect on the day's discoveries. Afterwards, the night continues in the bars and cafés of the Presqu'île, where Lyon's vibrant nightlife offers plenty of opportunities to explore the city after dark.

D2 Timetable

7u30	Breakfast Couvent de la Tourette
9u30	Couvent de la Tourette Guided Tour 90 min
11u00	Walk to Gare de l'Arbresle
11u39	Train departure Gare de l'Arbresle 12u34 Arrival Lyon Part-Dieu
12u45	Baggage drop-off at Radisson Blu Hotel
13u00	Lunch to go from GUS & GAS
13u24	Metro MB to Gerland 20min
13u45	Walk in Gerland - Confluence - Presqu'ile
19u00	Check-inn & downtime Radisson Blu Hotel
19u30	Optional: A drink at Radinsson's bar Great city view
20u15	Walk to diner location Meeting point in the lobby
20u30	Diner at Bistrot Bouille
21u00	Optional: Explore the local bars Check tips for inspiration

D2 Map


A42
D383
Rue du Canal
Cr Vitton
Cr Tolstoi
A6
Av. Paul Kruger
Rte de Genas
Cr Gambetta
Rue Feuillat
Bd Pinel
Av. Valioud
A7
Bd Yves Farge
Av. Berthelot
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Rue Gabriel Bard
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D19E1
Eveux
D7E

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Guided tour

1 Couvent Sainte-Marie de la Tourette

Project	Construction of a Dominican priory (monastery) complex featuring a church, cloisters, chapter house, study halls, library, and 100 individual cells for friars
Total floor area	~3,800 m² (built surface area across four levels on a sloping site)
Client	Association Dominican Fathers (Pères Dominicains - Province de Lyon)
Architect	Le Corbusier and Iannis Xenakis
Year	1953–1960

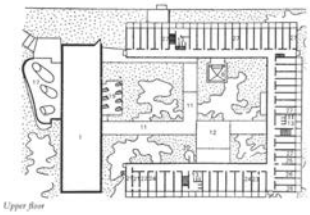
In the evening we drive out to the Sainte-Marie de La Tourette convent at Éveux, the finest of Le Corbusier's late works. The Dominican friars commissioned it, and it was built between 1953 and 1960 with the young Iannis Xenakis on the design team. UNESCO listed it in 2016 among Le Corbusier's major works. The building is a raw-concrete (béton brut) block that seems to float above a sloping hillside on pilotis of varying height, so it touches the ground in a different way at every point. Its proportions follow the Modulor, Le Corbusier's human-scale system, and its monastic cells face outwards through small loggias.

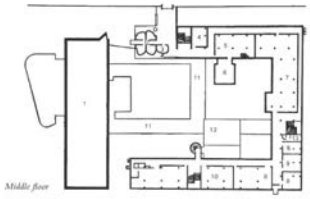
The building follows the monastic type. It stands on a square U-shaped plan closed to the north by the church, directly inspired by Cistercian models, and the plan serves the three phases of Dominican life: to pray, to study and to rest. The entrance is on the third of five levels. The floor above holds the library and workrooms, and above that are two floors of cells, each with a private loggia. The priory has about one hundred cells. A roof terrace is connected to the roof of the church by a footbridge.

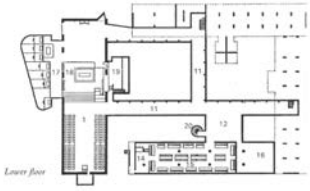
The section solves the problem of the slope. The cells run level along the top, the cloister and refectory float over an open courtyard, and the pilotis grow taller toward the downhill side, so the building stays horizontal while the ground falls away. Unlike in some earlier Le Corbusier buildings, the pilotis here are not uniform. The church is a windowless box of raw concrete, and light is shaped with great care. Le Corbusier uses light cannons, light machine guns, rays of light and loggias. In the crypt, three light cannons bring daylight down into the space. Xenakis also designed the undulating glass panes on three exterior faces, a device used here for the first time. As the sun lowers, we will watch how the light moves across the raw concrete.

Le Corbusier observed: “Space and light and order. Those are the things that humans need just as much as they need bread or a place to sleep.” Some buildings feel alive without demanding interaction. La Tourette is different—its power isn’t passive. It requires engagement: observation, adaptation, presence. That demand is what gives it meaning in our journey.

Couvent de la Tourette:
floorplans







Couvent Sainte-Marie de La Tourette: **Le Corbusier – 1959**



Couvent Sainte-Marie de La Tourette: **windows**



Couvent Sainte-Marie de La Tourette: **monks in a brutalist building**





Couvent Sainte-Marie de La Tourette: **detail**

Couvent Sainte-Marie de La Tourette: **detail**



Citywalk & projects

Between Blank Slate and Palimpsest: Urban Redevelopment in Lyon

Forty-five builders and sixty apprentices
Were building the foundations to a bridge on the river at Arta.
They built all day, and every night their work crumbled away.
The builders and the apprentices began to weep and mourn their wasted work.
"Worthless is all our work and toil, a doom is on our labor:
We build all day, and every night our work crumbles away."
A little bird flew by, it settled on the farther bank,
It did not sing like any bird, it sang not like a swallow,
It sang and spoke with a little human voice:
"Unless you make a human a ghost, your bridge will never stand:
But do not destroy an orphan, a stranger or a traveler:
Destroy instead the lovely wife of your own masterbuilder,
Who comes each morning late and late again each evening comes."

—The Bridge of Arta, a Greek ballad

The Greek Ballad The bridge of Arta speaks of a bridge that mysteriously crumbles each night, no matter how diligently the builders reconstruct it every day. A supernatural bird delivers a grim message: The bridge will never stand unless the masterbuilder's wife is buried alive within its foundations. Similar folklore exists across many cultures, telling of a supernatural power demanding a severe price, not a stranger, but someone of profound significance to the builders in order to guarantee a construction project's longevity. Whether such activities really took place in Europe is uncertain. But, The story illustrates a dilemma that architects still face today: building is not a simple act, it is a constant negotiation between loss and gain.

In a contemporary context this can take the form of material loss: existing buildings and infrastructure, or habitat cleared for new interventions. But these losses can also be immaterial, through the erasure of memories embedded in place or the identity of an area. Every new intervention therefore changes more than the physical fabric of a city. It also alters the stories, uses and associations that have accumulated there over time.

This is particularly visible in Lyon, a city shaped by successive waves of development. On this walk, we move through two areas where this process is especially apparent: Gerland and La Confluence. Both have undergone profound transformation, but in very different ways, raising questions about what is lost, what is gained, and what continues to exist.

1 Gerland

We start our walk in Gerland, a neighbourhood where land prices historically were low. During the industrial revolution the area which was suitably located along the river Rhône and in close proximity to the Paris – Lyon railway connection became the industrial centre to the city. Over the last two centuries the city has seen numerous waves of development. Each subtracting and adding material, gradually forming a layered part of the city. Slaughterhouses and logistics nodes were reused rather than destroyed, accommodating new bio-tech facilities within the physical shell of the industrial heritage.

2 Stade de Gerland

Project	**Construction of a stadion and part of a 'sports city'**
Total floor area	**~28 000 m²**
Client	**Ville de Lyon**
Architect	**Tony garnier (renovation by: René Gagis (1984) and AIA Life Designers (2017 - 2020)**
Year	**1914 - 1926**

The Stade de Gerland, designed by Tony Garnier, is a landmark of twentieth-century sports architecture. Originally built as a multifunctional stadium with a cycling track and athletics field, it became the home of Olympique Lyonnais and is now home to LOU Rugby.

Today, the Stade de Gerland combines Garnier's monumental architecture with the changing demands of contemporary sport.



Stade de Gerland: **Tony Garnier**

3 LOU piscine

Project	**Construction and subsequent major regeneration of the historic municipal aquatic and sports center**
Total floor area	**~5910 m²**
Client	**Ville de Lyon**
Architect	**Tony Garnier (renovated by: 4_32 architecte (2020 - 2024)**
Year	**1913 - 1932**

LOU Piscine, located next to the Stade de Gerland, is part of Tony Garnier's larger vision for a "sports city" in Gerland. The original outdoor swimming pool, dating from the 1930s, was recently transformed into a new aquatic and sports centre while retaining key elements of Garnier's design.

The original pool, grandstand seating and iconic diving platform were preserved and restored. Three new building volumes were added around the pool, creating spaces for LOU Rugby, fitness, training and public aquatic activities. The new architecture follows Garnier's 7.5-metre structural grid, connecting the contemporary additions to the original site. The complex reopened in 2024 as LOU Piscine, combining public swimming and wellness facilities with sports infrastructure for LOU Rugby.

The project offers a clear example of how a historic sporting site can be extended rather than simply replaced, allowing Garnier's original architecture to remain part of an evolving sports complex.

Lou piscine: **Tony Garnier, part of a larger vision for a 'sports city'**



4 CIRI

Project	**Construction of the new Rosalind Franklin building**
Total floor area	**~6.200 m²**
Client	**Université de Lyon**
Architect	**JAQ architects**
Year	**2022/2023**

The Centre International de Recherche en Infectiologie (CIRI) in Gerland is a high-tech research facility distinguished by its restrained and efficient architecture. Designed by JAQ Architectes, the building combines an exposed concrete structure, integrated building services, and a high degree of flexibility to accommodate future programmatic changes. The project stands as a strong example of how complex laboratory infrastructure can be translated into a sustainable, future-oriented, and architecturally expressive building.

The architecture of JAQ Architectes is characterized by radical simplicity, structural honesty, and functional clarity. Their projects often reveal structure and materials in their purest form, featuring exposed concrete, refined detailing, and a strong focus on sustainability and adaptability. Rather than pursuing iconic architectural gestures, they seek to create buildings that emerge naturally from the logic of the program, the construction process, and the available budget.

Centre international de recherche en infectiologie:
JAQ architects



5 Halle Tony Garnier

Project	**Construction of a colomn free industrial hall**
Total floor area	**~17,000 m²**
Client	**city of Lyon**
Architect	**Tony Garnier**
Year	**1908 - 1928**

The Halle Tony Garnier was designed from 1905 onward as part of the former La Mouche abattoir in the Gerland district. The impressive building is distinguished by its vast column-free span, a remarkable technical achievement for its time. With its steel structure, large roof skylights, and monumental scale, it stands as an icon of industrial architecture.

Following the closure of the abattoir, the hall was saved from demolition, protected as a historic monument, and, in 1988, converted into one of France's largest concert and event venues. Today, it remains a striking example of Tony Garnier's visionary engineering and architectural ambition.

Tony Garnier (1869–1948) was one of the most influential French architects and urban planners of the early twentieth century. Widely regarded as a pioneer of modernism, he became known for his rational approach to design, placing functionality, technology, and urban planning at the forefront of his work. Many of his most significant projects are located in Lyon, where he played a major role in shaping the city's development



Halle Tony Garnier: **Tony Garnier, 1905**

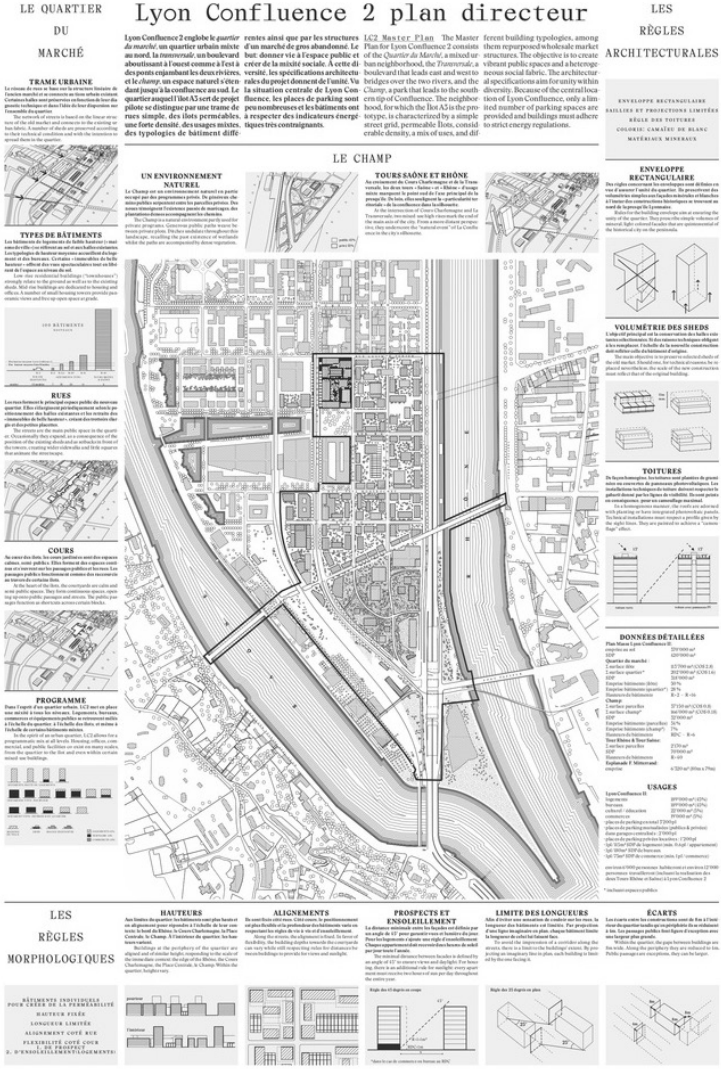


Halle Tony Garnier: **Tony Garnier, 1905**



Halle Tony Garnier: **Tony Garnier, 1905**

Herzog and deMeuron:
Lyon Confluence



6 La Confluence

From Gerland, our walk leads across the Rhone to La Confluence. Historically, this wedge of land was largely marshland and river silt until the 19th century, when Lyon expanded its port facilities, railways, and gasworks here to fuel the city's industrial growth. For decades, it was a gritty, restricted zone filled with freight stations, salt warehouses, and wholesale markets—a vital economic engine cut off from everyday city life.

In the late 1990s, the city decided to relocate these operations further out andlaunch a 30 year megaproject to double the size of its city centre. Spearheaded by the public agency SPL Lyon Confluence, the 150-hectare site was split into two master planned phases: a waterfront district along the Saône featuring sculptural blocks around a new basin (Place Nautique), and a high-density grid along the Rhône designed by Herzog & de Meuron. Unlike Gerland's gradual evolution, la confluence's tabula raza approach gave a lot of freedom to decide what Lyon's future could look like.

This brings us right back to the dilemma in the Bridge of Arta: every act of building demands a sacrifice. La Confluence traded away its industrial character but gained public access to the riverbank, housing, and a bold modern identity for Lyon. Neither Gerland's re-use and layering nor La Confluence's reset is inherently right or wrong. Instead, the real takeaway is that we can never build in a vacuum. Every project realized must negotiate what sacrifices it makes. Our job isn't to avoid it, but to meditate on it, weighing what we lose against what we bring into the world, so that the decisions we make are deliberate and considered.

During the latter half of our walk through Confluence we will be joined by a partner from VERA & Associés who will guide us through their work.

7 Musée de Confluences

Project	**Construction of a landmark science and anthropology museum**
Total floor area	**~46,476 m²**
Client	**Conseil Général du Rhône**
Architect	**Coop Himmelb(l)auw**
Year	**2001 - 2014**

The Musée des Confluences forms the iconic focal point at the southern tip of the La Confluence district, where the Rhône and Saône rivers meet. The building consists of two principal elements: the transparent Crystal, which serves as the public forum and main entrance, and the floating Cloud, which houses the museum's exhibition spaces.

Thanks to its spectacular steel and glass structure, the museum appears to hover above the landscape. Conceived as a "machine for knowledge," it was designed to bring together architecture, science, and the public within a single immersive environment.
Through its sculptural form and prominent location, the museum has become the architectural icon of the regenerated La Confluence district and a symbol of Lyon's urban transformation. It stands as a powerful demonstration of how contemporary architecture can redefine a city's identity while creating a new cultural landmark.
A spectacular example of Deconstructivist architecture, where complex geometry, innovative engineering, and urban ambition converge in a single iconic building.

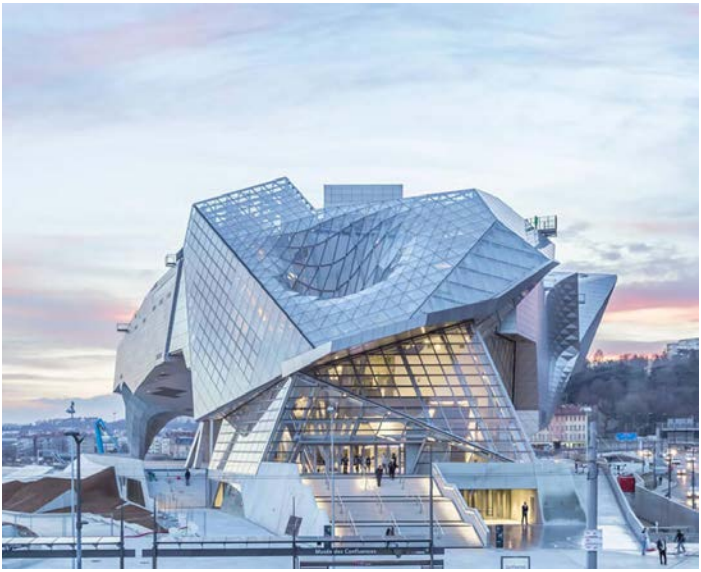
Coop Himmelb(l)au is an Austrian architectural practice founded by Wolf D. Prix, renowned for its expressive and experimental approach to architecture. Their designs are characterized by dynamic forms, complex geometries, and an extensive use of steel and glass. The firm is widely regarded as one of the leading representatives of Deconstructivism, creating buildings that often appear to be in motion or suspended in space.

Rather than following conventional architectural rules, Coop Himmelb(l)au embraces fragmentation, fluidity, and spatial complexity, resulting in highly sculptural and visually striking structures. Their work explores the relationship between architecture, technology, and urban life, pushing the boundaries of form and engineering while creating memorable landmarks with a strong architectural identity.
The Musée des Confluences is one of Coop Himmelb(l)au's most iconic European projects.

Musée de Confuence: **detail**



Musée de Confuence:
exterior



8 Confluence institute

Project	**Establishment and fit-out of an independent private school of architecture**
Total floor area	**~1,500 m²**
Client	**Confluence institute**
Architect	**Studio Odile Decq**
Year	**2014**

Studio Odile Decq is a French architecture office renowned for their bold, experimental, and highly distinctive approach to architecture. Their work merges architecture, art, and design, with a strong emphasis on movement, openness, and spatial experience. Widely recognized as one of the most influential female architects of her generation, Decq is known for challenging conventions and creating spaces that encourage interaction, creativity, and innovation.

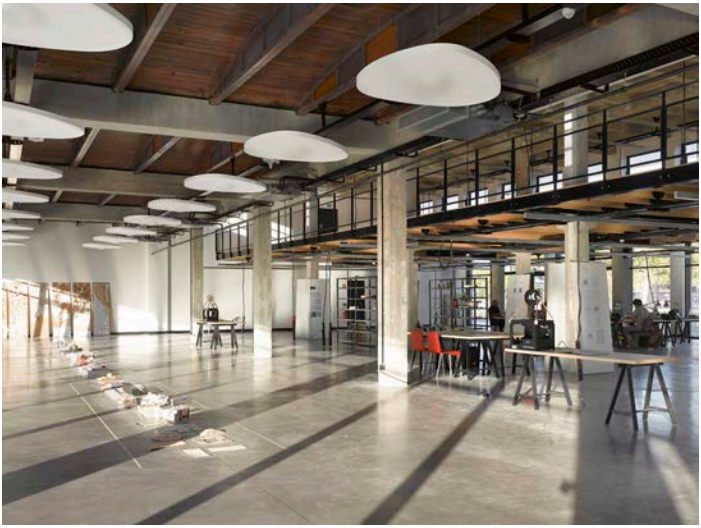
The former Confluence Institute for Innovation and Creative Strategies in Architecture, designed by Odile Decq, is located in the La Confluence district and occupies six preserved bays of a former market hall. Rather than designing an entirely new building, Decq opted for a powerful adaptive reuse project that retained the industrial structure while introducing new, open learning environments.
The building reflects her educational philosophy: a flexible and multidisciplinary setting that encourages collaboration, experimentation, and creativity. Exposed concrete, large open workspaces, and transparent circulation areas transform the building into a laboratory of ideas rather than a conventional school.

By blending the site's industrial heritage with a contemporary educational program, the project demonstrates how adaptive reuse can create inspiring spaces that foster innovation while preserving a connection to the past.

Confuence institute: **exterior**



Confuence institute: **interior**



9 Eugénie Brazier School

Project	**Adaptive reuse, thermal renovation, and extension of Hall C3 of the former 1960s wholesale logistics market**
Total floor area	**~5,700 m²**
Client	**SPL Lyon Confluence (on behalf of the City of Lyon)**
Architect	**Vurpas Architectes in collaboration with BASE (landscape architects)**
Year	**2023**

Vurpas Architectes is a Lyon-based architectural practice known for its thoughtful approach to existing buildings, heritage preservation, and sustainable transformation projects. Their architecture is rooted in the history of a place, combining functional clarity with careful attention to materials, natural light, and user comfort.

The Eugénie Brazier School is a successful adaptive reuse project of a former market hall in the La Confluence district. The scheme brings together a primary school, kindergarten, and childcare facilities within the structure of a former wholesale market. The building's distinctive brick façades and curved roofs were carefully preserved, while new interventions introduce daylight, greenery, and a child-friendly learning environment.

The project was awarded the Équerre d'Argent 2023 in the category of education, culture, and sports, and has been widely praised as an exemplary model of sustainable redevelopment, giving industrial heritage a new social and educational purpose.

Eugénie Brazier School:
aerial view



Eugénie Brazier School:
Facade



10 Diener & Diener

Project	**B2 block, part of la Confluence**
Total floor area	**~12,500m²**
Client	**SPL Lyon Confluence**
Architect	**Diener & Diener Architekten in collaboration with Clément Vergély Architectes and landscape architect Michel Desvigne**
Year	**2021**

Diener & Diener Architekten, led by Roger Diener, is renowned for its restrained and contextual approach to architecture. Rather than creating iconic stand-alone objects, the practice focuses on buildings that strengthen the urban fabric and respond to their surroundings. Their work is characterized by timeless design, careful detailing, and a strong emphasis on flexibility and long-term adaptability.

In the Lyon Confluence district, the office collaborated with Clément Vergély Architectes and landscape architect Michel Desvigne on the development of the B2 Block, completed in 2021. This mixed-use ensemble combines housing, offices, retail spaces, a daycare center, and student accommodation, contributing to the creation of a diverse and vibrant urban neighborhood.

A key concept of the project is reversibility. The buildings were designed so that residential units can be converted into offices, and vice versa, allowing them to evolve with future needs. By concentrating the load-bearing structure in the façades and cores, the floor plans remain open, flexible, and adaptable over time.

One of the most distinctive elements of the development is L'Orangerie, a low-rise office building constructed using rammed earth (pisé), a traditional building technique native to the Lyon region. This innovative use of a local material creates a dialogue between contemporary architecture and regional heritage while demonstrating a strong commitment to low-carbon construction.

For architects, the B2 Block is a compelling example of how contemporary urban development can combine flexibility, sustainability, and continuity with local building traditions, creating architecture that is both modern and deeply rooted in its context.

Diener & Diener: **B2 block, detail**



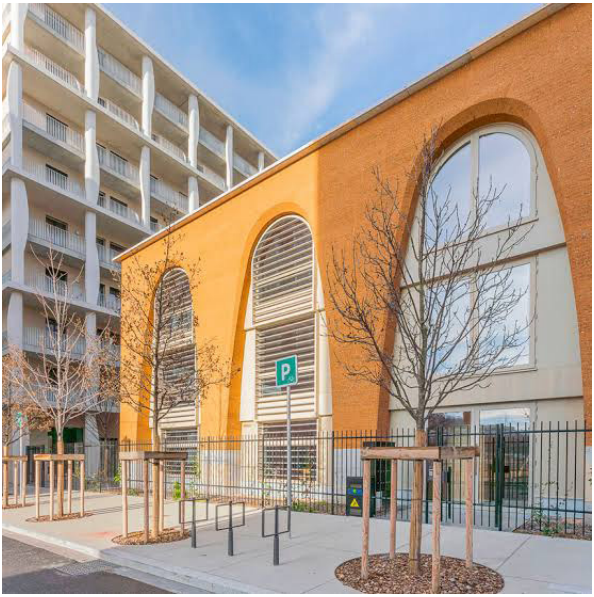
Diener & Diener: **B2 block, facade**



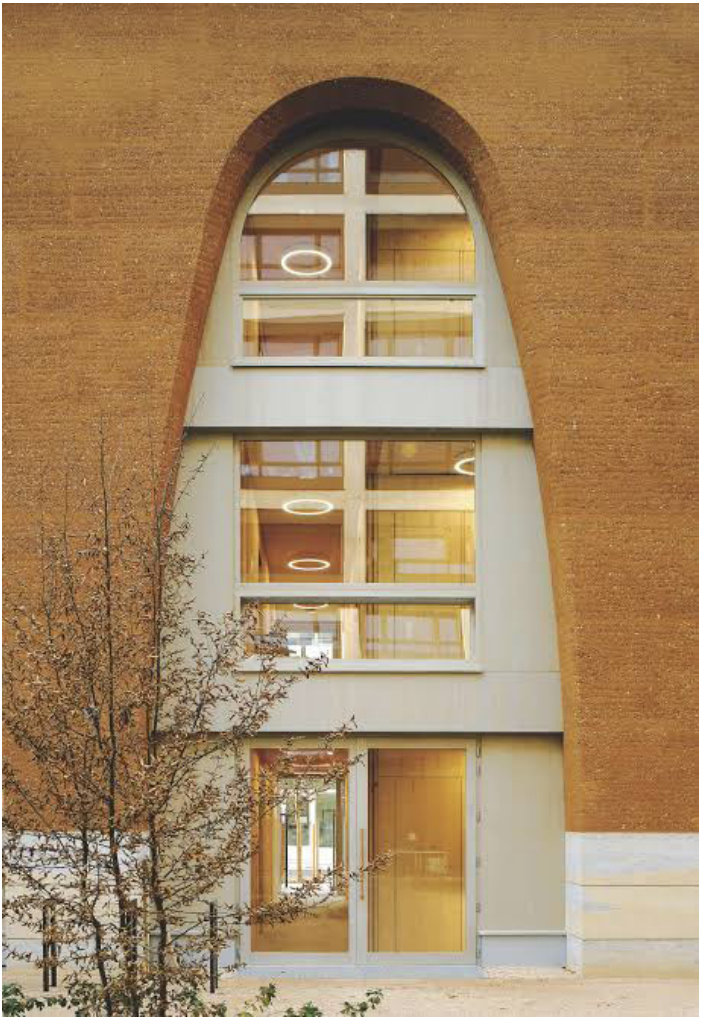
Diener & Diener: **B2 block, colomns**



Vergély Architectes: **B2 block, facade**



Vergély Architectes: **B2 block, facade**



11 Îlot B2

Project	**B2 block, part of la Confluence: featuring five buildings, including housing, offices, retail spaces, and an innovative rammed-earth (pisé) office building at its core.**
Total floor area	**~12,500m²**
Client	**SPL Lyon Confluence**
Architect	**Masterplan by Herzog & de Meuron**
Year	**2021**

In the second phase of the La Confluence redevelopment, several internationally acclaimed architectural practices collaborated to create a new mixed-use district that combines housing, offices, healthcare facilities and public space. Working within the masterplan developed by Herzog & de Meuron, the project demonstrates how distinct architectural approaches can contribute to a coherent urban vision.

David Chipperfield Architects coordinated the development of three urban blocks comprising eleven buildings and also designed three key buildings themselves. The practice is internationally renowned for its restrained and timeless architecture, characterized by clear geometries, refined proportions and an emphasis on permanence rather than spectacle. In Lyon, this approach translates into elegant residential, office and mixed-use buildings that provide structure and coherence to the new district while remaining flexible and adaptable over time.

AIA Architectes, one of France's leading multidisciplinary design firms, is known for combining architectural quality with innovation, technical performance and environmental responsibility. Their work often focuses on creating buildings that balance functionality, sustainability and user experience, making them a strong contributor to large-scale urban developments such as La Confluence.

Atelier VERA & Associés brings a contextual and urban-minded approach to architecture. Their projects are often characterized by careful integration into the existing city fabric, attention to everyday use and a sensitive treatment of materials and public space. Within La Confluence, their contribution reinforces the diversity of the neighbourhood while maintaining the overall coherence of the masterplan. The Portuguese office Aires Mateus e Associados, founded by brothers

Manuel Aires Mateus and Francisco Aires Mateus, is internationally recognized for its minimalist and sculptural architecture. Their work

is defined by pure volumes, monolithic forms and a masterful use of light and space. At La Confluence, their building introduces a strong architectural presence, and together with Chipperfield's mixed-use tower forms an important gateway to the new district.

The resulting neighbourhood showcases a remarkable dialogue between different architectural cultures: Chipperfield's rational urbanism, AIA's technically driven sustainability, VERA's contextual sensitivity and Aires Mateus' sculptural minimalism. Together, these approaches create a contemporary district that balances architectural diversity with a strong collective identity, reflecting the ambitions of La Confluence as one of Europe's most significant urban regeneration projects.

Exterior: **David Chipperfield, AIA architects, Atelier VERA & Associés, Aires Mateus e Associados**





Exterior: **David Chipperfield, AIA architects, Atelier VERA & Associés, Aires Mateus e Associados**

Exterior: **David Chipperfield, AIA architects, Atelier VERA & Associés, Aires Mateus e Associados**



12 Îlot A3

Project	**A3 block, part of la Confluence: comprising eight buildings organized around a central courtyard, featuring 218 housing units, offices, ground-floor retail, and a public health center.**
Total floor area	**~28,300m²**
Client	**SPL Lyon Confluence**
Architect	**Masterplan by Herzog & de Meuron**
Year	**2017**

Manuel Herz is a Swiss architect and founder of Manuel Herz Architects, a practice known for combining strong social ideas with expressive architectural forms. His work often explores the relationship between architecture, community and cultural identity, resulting in buildings that are both conceptually rigorous and highly livable.
In La Confluence, Herz contributed to the pioneering Îlot A3 development, the first block realized within the second phase of the district's regeneration masterplan led by Herzog & de Meuron. Together with architects including Tatiana Bilbao and Christian Kerez, he helped shape a new urban model based on the principle of "unity within diversity," where multiple architectural voices contribute to a coherent neighbourhood.

His building, Sur Ses Épaules ("On Their Shoulders"), combines a nursery at ground level with social housing above. The project is conceived as a tribute to Lyon's modernist heritage and draws inspiration from the work of Tony Garnier, particularly the Halle Tony Garnier and the Quartier des États-Unis. The stepped form of the building creates generous terraces for residents, while movable shutters animate the façade and reflect daily life within the building.

Tatiana Bilbao is one of Mexico's most influential contemporary architects, known for combining social responsibility with expressive architecture. Her work often explores the relationship between community, public space and everyday life, creating buildings that are both generous and deeply human. Rather than focusing on iconic forms, Tatiana Bilbao ESTUDIO seeks to create architecture that encourages social interaction and strengthens a sense of belonging.
As part of the ambitious redevelopment of La Confluence in Lyon, Tatiana Bilbao ESTUDIO was invited to contribute to the pioneering A3 block within the masterplan developed by Herzog & de Meuron. Under the concept of "unity within diversity," the studio designed three residential buildings: two social housing blocks and one market-rate residential building.

Herzog and deMeuron:
Typologies et Identité



Christian Kerez is a Swiss architect renowned for his radically minimalist approach to architecture. His work is driven by structure, geometry and spatial clarity, often reducing a building to its essential elements. Rather than relying on decoration or complex materials, Kerez allows the construction itself to become the architecture, creating powerful and highly rational buildings.

Kerez designed Building 6, an office building completed in 2018 that embodies his architectural philosophy with exceptional clarity. The project is conceived as a flexible framework defined by a simple grid of columns and floor slabs. The exposed concrete structure is left visible and becomes the architectural expression of the building, creating a continuous relationship between interior and exterior.

The building stands out through its structural honesty and adaptability. By minimizing architectural gestures and focusing on space, light and construction, Kerez creates an office environment that is both robust and remarkably flexible over time. At the same time, the project carefully responds to Lyon's urban context, reinterpreting the proportions and rhythm of the city's historic architecture in a contemporary language.

Manuel Herz: **Iliot A3, B4**
(Social housing)



Manuel Herz: **Iliot A3, B4**
(Social housing)





Tatiana Bilbao: **pioneering A3 block**



Tatiana Bilbao: **pioneering A3 block**



Christian Kerez: **office building 6, exterior**

Christian Kerez: **office building 6, exterior**



Christian Kerez: **office building 6, interior**



Tips

1 Coffee & drinks

1. **Le Zibou Lab**

   Coffee in Confluence

2. **Slake Coffee House**

   Coffee in Presqu'il

3. **L'Antiquaire**

   Cocktails in Presqu'il

4. **La cave café Terroir**

   Wijnbar in Presqu'il

5. **La barge**

   Drinks at peniche Part-Dieu

6. **Sauvage**

   Cocktails in La Guillotière

7. **Turbine**

   Wjnbar in La Guillotière

Tips


A42
D383
Quai Joseph Gillet
Quai Charles de Gaulle
Rue du Canal
Cr Vitton
Cr Tolstoï
A6
Av. Paul Kruger
Rte de Genas
Cr Gambetta
Rue Feuillat
Bd Pinel
Av. Valioud
A7
Bd Yves Farge
Av. Berthelot
Rte de Vienne
Bd des Etats-Unis
Av. Paul Santy
Bd Pinel
D383
A43
Rhône
Emile Zola
1
2
3
4
5
6
7



Fourvière Hill: **aerial view**

Day 3
Saturday

Enjoy an easygoing morning breakfast at the Radisson Blu Hotel before checking out. A brief journey via public transport takes us to the Lugdunum Museum and Roman Theatres, where we will explore one of Lyon's premier cultural sites overlooking the city.

Following our museum visit, we will have lunch before exploring the historic Old Town (Vieux Lyon), famous for its Renaissance architecture and unique traboules (passageways).

After some time in the old town, we will make our way to the train station for our journey back home to Antwerp.

D3 Timetable

●	7u30	Breakfast at Radisson
	9u30	Check-out Radisson Blu Hotel Bagage can stay in the lugage room
	9u50	Walk to tram Location and time?
	10u00	Tram T1 to Fourvière 30 min
●	10u30	Lugdunum Museum
	13u00	Verplaats
●	13u30	Lunch at restaurant Armada
	14u30	Walk in Vieux Lyon
●	15u50	Métro D and B to Radisson
	16u30	Pick up lugage at Radisson
	17u00	Train departure Lyon Part-Dieu 20u43 Arrival Brussel-Midi
●	20u59	Train departure Brussel-Midi 21u53 Arrival Antwerpen-Centraal

D3 Map


A42
D383
Rue du Canal
Quai Charles de Gaulle
Cr Vitton
Cr Tolstoi
Av. Paul Kruger
Rte de Genas
Cr Gambetta
Rue Feuillat
Bd Pinel
A7
Bd Yves Farge
Av. Berthelot
Rte de Vienne
Bd des Etats-Unis
Av. Paul Santy
D383
A43
Rhône

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Context

1 Fourvière hill

Fourvière Hill is one of Lyon's most iconic landmarks, rising above the historic city center and offering spectacular views over the Rhône and Saône rivers. Often referred to as the "hill that prays," it has long been a spiritual and cultural heart of the city. Visitors are rewarded with breathtaking panoramas, while the hill's rich history provides a fascinating insight into Lyon's development through the centuries.

For architecture enthusiasts, Fourvière is an essential destination. The hill is home to the magnificent Basilica of Notre-Dame de Fourvière, a masterpiece of 19th-century architecture that dominates Lyon's skyline. Nearby, the remarkably preserved Roman theatres reveal the city's ancient origins and showcase over two thousand years of architectural evolution. Combining history, culture, and outstanding viewpoints, Fourvière Hill offers a unique journey through Lyon's architectural heritage.

Exhibition



Lugdunum Museum: **stairwell**

1 Lugdunum Museum

Project	Underground construction of the Gallo-Roman museum embedded in Fourvière Hill
Total floor area	4,000 m²
Client	City of Lyon / Métropole de Lyon
Architect	Bernard Zehrfuss
Year	1972–1975

Good morning, everyone! I hope you all had a great evening. Hard to believe we're already starting our third and final day in Lyon — but we are kicking it off in a place that brings together several of the themes we have encountered throughout this trip.

Over the past two days, we have experienced radically different architectural worlds: from Le Corbusier's sacred Brutalism at Sainte Marie de La Tourette to the experimental contemporary urbanism of La Confluence. Today, we travel much further back in time, to the very birthplace of Roman Lugdunum, founded in 43 BC on Fourvière Hill.
And yet, despite its Roman setting, the building we are about to enter is very much a product of the 20th century.

A museum that disappears

The idea of creating a museum for Lyon's Roman archaeological collection was already being discussed in the 1930s. It was not until the 1960s, however, that the project took shape and was entrusted to French architect Bernard Zehrfuss, co-designer of the UNESCO Headquarters in Paris.

Zehrfuss was confronted with an unusual architectural problem: how do you introduce a substantial modern museum into an extraordinary archaeological landscape, directly beside two major Roman monuments, without competing with them?

His answer was radical: 'Make the architecture disappear.'

Rather than placing a monumental object on top of the hill, Zehrfuss embedded the museum within the slope itself. From the archaeological site above, the building almost disappears into the landscape. Its discreet presence allows the Roman remains — rather than the new architecture — to remain the dominant elements of the hill. wZehrfuss famously described this approach as a way of avoiding "offending the professionalism of my Roman colleagues."

Construction began in 1972 and the museum opened in November 1975. This makes the Lugdunum Museum an interesting counterpart to many of the buildings we have seen on this trip: instead of standing apart from its context, the architecture deliberately becomes part of the terrain.

The buried museum

The museum is essentially carved into the hillside. Its massive concrete structure acts simultaneously as architecture, structure and retaining element, holding back the earth above.

The material palette is deliberately uncompromising: raw poured concrete, or béton brut, dominates the interior. The marks of the formwork, joints and tie-rod holes remain visible rather than being concealed.

This is worth looking at closely. The concrete is not simply a structural necessity. Zehrfuss gives it the presence and precision we might associate with more traditional monumental materials. There is something almost archaeological about the way the raw concrete records its own construction — just as the Roman ruins outside record theirs.

The result is a fascinating dialogue between two very different kinds of monumentality: Roman stone and 20th-century concrete

Lugdunum Museum:
detail (images by: Martial Couderette)



A museum designed as a journey

Once inside, the most striking thing is that the museum does not behave like a conventional sequence of exhibition rooms. Instead, the building is organised around a continuous helical concrete ramp that gradually descends through the museum.

The main spatial volume is extraordinary in scale — around 18 metres high, 312 metres long and 6 metres wide — and connects several levels of the collection in one continuous spatial sequence.

Rather than moving horizontally from room to room, you are constantly descending. Exhibition spaces branch off from the ramp, while the changing height, perspective and orientation continuously alter your perception of the building. In other words, the circulation is the architecture.

The ramp determines your pace, your viewpoint and even the order in which you discover the collection. The building is therefore experienced less as a container for archaeological objects and more as a carefully choreographed spatial promenade.

As you move through it, notice how often the architecture gives you a glimpse of something without immediately revealing the whole space. The museum creates a sense of discovery — appropriate for a building devoted to uncovering a buried city.

Light from the outside world

For a building that is largely embedded in the hillside, daylight becomes particularly important.

Zehrfuss introduces light through carefully positioned openings and angled concrete viewports — sometimes described as oculi or “light cannons”. These openings bring daylight deep into the building while simultaneously creating visual connections with the archaeological landscape outside.

And this is one of the building’s most clever moves. The outside world is not simply visible through windows. It is framed.

At certain points, the Roman theatres suddenly appear as carefully composed fragments of the view. The ancient architecture becomes part of the museum experience itself. So while the museum takes us underground, it never completely disconnects us from the site above.



Lugdunum Museum: **Bernard Zehrfuss (images by: Martial Couderette)**

Two theatres, one Roman complex

Eventually, the descent brings us towards two of Lyon's most important Roman monuments: the Grand Théâtre and the Odéon.

The two buildings stand side by side and once formed a remarkable cultural complex. During Late Antiquity they were gradually abandoned and transformed into quarries, meaning that they almost disappeared from the landscape. Their remains were only rediscovered, restored and partially reconstructed during the first half of the 20th century.
The Grand Théâtre is built directly into the slope of Fourvière Hill. Dating from the early Roman period, it is considered the oldest theatre in Roman Gaul and, at approximately 108 metres in diameter, one of the largest.
Originally, two tiers of seating accommodated around 5,000 spectators. The theatre was later enlarged: the stage was rebuilt and a third tier was added, increasing its capacity to approximately 10,000 people.

This was a place of performance and public gathering. Plays — often comedies — were presented here, accompanied by music and dance.

Next to it is the considerably smaller Odéon. Where the Grand Théâtre catered to large public performances, the Odéon was intended for more intimate events: concerts, musical performances and declamations. It could also function as a meeting space. Odéons were relatively rare in the western Roman Empire. Only a few are known in this part of the Roman world, including those at Lyon, Vienne and Valence. The Lyon Odéon originally had two tiers of seating and could accommodate around 3,000 spectators.

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Lugdunum Museum: **interior (images by: Louison Desforêts, Métropole de Lyon)**

A world in stone and colour

One of the most remarkable details can be found in the orchestra of the Odéon.

Its pavement was decorated with an extraordinary range of coloured stones and marbles sourced from across the Roman world: green porphyry from Greece, red porphyry and granite from Egypt, yellow marble from North Africa, and purple and red marble from Asia.

It is easy to see these materials simply as decoration. But they also tell us something about the world that produced this architecture.

The materials travelled enormous distances. Their presence demonstrated wealth, connectivity and power — turning the theatre itself into a display of the geographical reach of the Roman Empire.

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Lugdunum Museum: **Window view Théâtre Gallo Romain**

What to look for as architects

As you explore the museum, it is worth resisting the temptation to focus only on the archaeological collection.
Instead, look at the building itself.

Notice the threshold:
How does the transition from the bright hillside into the darker interior change your perception of the site?

Follow the ramp:
How does the continuous descent control your movement? Where does it slow you down, and where does it reveal something unexpectedly?

Look at the concrete:
Study the formwork marks, joints, tie-rod holes and changes in texture. The construction process has deliberately been left visible.

Watch the light:
Where does daylight enter? What does it illuminate — and what does it leave in shadow?

Look through the openings:
When the Roman theatres appear, ask yourself whether you are looking out of the museum or whether the Roman landscape has effectively become part of the museum itself.

And finally, look back:
The museum and the archaeological site are almost opposites in material and age, yet they share a similar ambition: both use architecture to create a sense of monumentality, procession and collective experience.

Architecture as archaeology

Perhaps the most interesting thing about the Lugdunum Museum is that it does not simply display the archaeological history of Lyon. The building itself becomes an archaeological experience. You descend into the earth, move through a sequence of spaces, encounter fragments of the past and eventually reconnect with the ancient landscape outside.

Zehrfuss does not compete with the Roman city. He lets it remain visible, while creating a powerful piece of modern architecture underneath it.

Almost two thousand years separate the Roman theatres from Zehrfuss' concrete museum. Yet both are concerned with the same fundamental architectural questions:
How do you shape movement?
How do you frame a view?
How do you create a sense of collective experience?
And how can architecture turn a place into a memory?

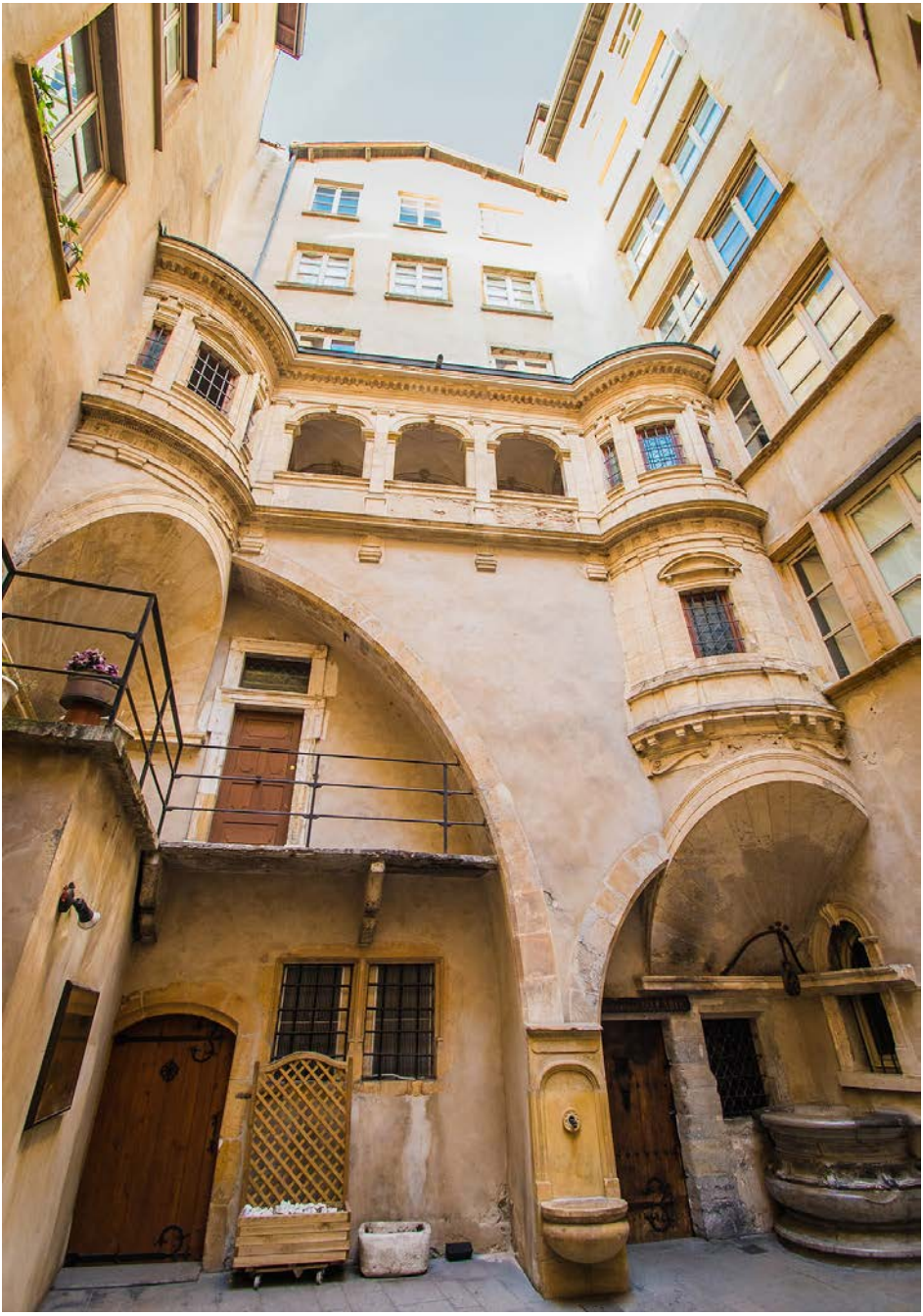
As you walk through the museum, keep those questions in mind.

And enjoy exploring one of the great examples of 20th-century architecture hiding in plain sight — literally beneath your feet.

Lugdunum Museum: **interior**



Citywalk



1 Vieux-Lyon and Traboules

Welcome to Vieux Lyon — one of Europe's largest and best-preserved urban ensembles of Renaissance architecture.

For us as architects, this is more than a picturesque historic quarter. It is a remarkable lesson in density, adaptation and spatial ingenuity, developed over centuries between the Saône River and the steep slopes of Fourvière Hill.

There was very little room to expand horizontally. The result was an urban fabric that grew upward, inward and through — with buildings occupying deep, narrow plots, courtyards bringing light into the dense blocks, and a hidden network of passages connecting the city behind its street façades.

The district is traditionally divided into three historic parishes: Saint-Paul, once an important commercial and financial centre; Saint-Jean, the religious heart of the neighbourhood; and Saint-Georges, historically associated with craftsmen and artisans.

During the 15th and 16th centuries, Lyon developed into an important European centre of trade and finance. Wealthy merchants and Italian bankers settled here and introduced new architectural ideas, transforming the medieval urban fabric with elegant Renaissance hôtels particuliers, courtyards, arcades and elaborate staircases.

But perhaps the most characteristic feature of Vieux Lyon is not what you see from the street.

It is what lies behind it.

The Traboule: a city within the city

The word traboule is thought to derive from the Latin transambulare — roughly, “to cross through” — via the local trabulare.

And that is essentially what a traboule does. These passageways cut through buildings, courtyards and sometimes entire urban blocks, creating shortcuts between streets that would otherwise require a long detour around the block.

The earliest examples are thought to date back as far as the 4th century. Their importance grew as Lyon developed into a major centre of commerce and, particularly, textile production.

The geography of the city explains much of their logic. Vieux Lyon is squeezed between the Saône and Fourvière, while the streets are largely arranged parallel to the river. There are surprisingly few streets crossing the district perpendicular to it. The traboules provided an alternative pedestrian network, allowing inhabitants to move quickly between the hillside and the river without having to follow the longer street routes.

They also provided something else: shelter. For craftsmen, merchants and workers transporting textiles and other goods, these covered routes offered protection from rain and bad weather while moving through the dense city.

Later, the traboules became particularly important to Lyon’s silk industry. The canuts, the city’s silk workers based primarily on the slopes of Croix-Rousse, could use the city’s network of passages and routes to move between their workshops and the merchants and trading areas below.

The result is a fascinating form of parallel urbanism: the official city exists at street level, while another, more intimate circulation system runs through the interiors of the blocks.

Traboules: **secret passage (images by: Manuel Cohen)**





Traboules: **staircase (images by Hilke Maunder)**

Look beyond the façade

This is one of the things that makes Vieux Lyon particularly interesting from an architectural perspective.

The street façade tells only half the story. Behind it, the buildings extend deep into the plot. Internal courtyards and lightwells bring daylight and ventilation into these otherwise dense blocks, while stair towers and galleries create circulation routes that are partially external.

Look for the characteristic spiral and polygonal staircases rising through the courtyards. Rather than hiding circulation inside enclosed stairwells, many buildings turn the staircase itself into an architectural object — often combined with arcades, galleries and delicate Italianate details.

The courtyard therefore becomes more than an empty space between buildings. It is simultaneously a lightwell, circulation space, social space and architectural centrepiece.

This is a recurring theme throughout Vieux Lyon: when space is scarce, architecture becomes increasingly inventive about how different functions can overlap.

From Gothic to Renaissance

As you explore, pay attention to the transition between architectural styles. Vieux Lyon contains an extraordinary mixture of late Gothic and Renaissance architecture. You may encounter Flamboyant Gothic windows, carved stonework and gargoyles alongside the new language brought from Renaissance Italy: arcades, pilasters, classical proportions, loggias and shell motifs.

This was not simply a matter of changing decoration. It reflects a broader transformation in Lyon itself — from a medieval trading city towards a wealthy international centre with strong connections to Italy and the wider European economy.

The architecture is therefore a physical record of the city's changing social and economic ambitions.

What to look out for

As you explore, keep an eye out for a few particular details:
The courtyard & lightwell system

Notice how deep the plots are and how courtyards prevent the interiors of the blocks from becoming completely dark. Look upwards: some of the most interesting architecture is several floors above eye level.

External vertical circulation

Look for spiral and polygonal stair towers rising through the courtyards. These are often accompanied by stone arcades and galleries, turning circulation into a prominent architectural feature.

The traboule mechanism

Whenever you enter a passage, try to understand the sequence spatially. How many courtyards does it cross? Where does the light change? When do you move from public street to semi-private courtyard and back again?

The relationship between public and private

One of the most intriguing aspects of the traboules is their ambiguous character. A passage can begin on a public street, pass through a private courtyard and emerge onto another public street. The boundary between public and private space becomes surprisingly fluid.

Gothic meets Renaissance

Look for the moments where medieval construction and Renaissance decoration coexist. The contrast tells you a great deal about the period in which these buildings evolved.

A few landmarks worth looking for

Galerie Philibert de l'Orme — 8 Rue Juiverie

Dating from around 1536, this remarkable gallery is associated with architect Philibert de l'Orme. Look for the stone squinches (trompes), which allow the upper galleries to project without relying on conventional columns beneath.

Maison du Chamarier — 37 Rue Saint-Jean

A beautiful combination of Gothic structure and early Renaissance detailing, distinguished by its prominent tower.

Hôtel de Gadagne — 1 Place du Petit Collège

One of the great Renaissance residential complexes of Vieux Lyon. Its double courtyard arrangement gives a good sense of the scale and complexity that wealthy urban residences could achieve within the medieval street pattern.

La Longue Traboule — 27 Rue du Bœuf 54 Rue Saint-Jean

One of the most famous traboules in Lyon and the longest continuous passage accessible to visitors. It crosses five courtyards and four buildings, giving a particularly clear impression of the hidden network running through the urban fabric.



Neighborhood: **Vieux Lyon (images by Pramote Seemak)**

A city preserved and still alive

By the 20th century, Vieux Lyon had suffered from neglect and decay, and demolition was seriously considered in parts of the neighbourhood.

Instead, it became an important early example of urban conservation. In 1964, Vieux Lyon was designated France's first protected historic sector under the Malraux Law, marking a major shift in attitudes towards historic urban fabric: rather than clearing the old city to make way for modern development, the existing buildings themselves became something worth preserving.

Today, Vieux Lyon forms part of Lyon's UNESCO World Heritage area. But perhaps the most interesting thing is that this is not a museum district. People still live here.

The courtyards, staircases and traboules remain part of everyday urban life, even though many of the passages are now also popular with visitors. More than forty traboules are accessible to the public, while many others remain closed or have been incorporated into private spaces and storage areas.

So as you explore, remember that the architecture around you is still someone's home. Keep voices down in the courtyards, use the intercoms or service buttons where required, and take a moment to look upwards. The best details are often far above street level.

And when you pass through a traboule, don't think of it simply as a shortcut. Think of it as a piece of hidden urban infrastructure — a spatial system that has allowed people, goods, light and movement to pass through this dense city for centuries.

That may be the most fascinating lesson of Vieux Lyon: Sometimes the most important architecture of a city is not the architecture you see from the street, but the spaces that allow the city to work behind it.

Tips

1 Coffee & drinks

① **Puzzle Café**

Coffee in Vieux-Lyon

② **Les Zam Soeurs**

Coffee in Vieux-Lyon

③ **Café 203 Vieux Lyon**

Drinks in Vieux-Lyon

④ **Le florian**

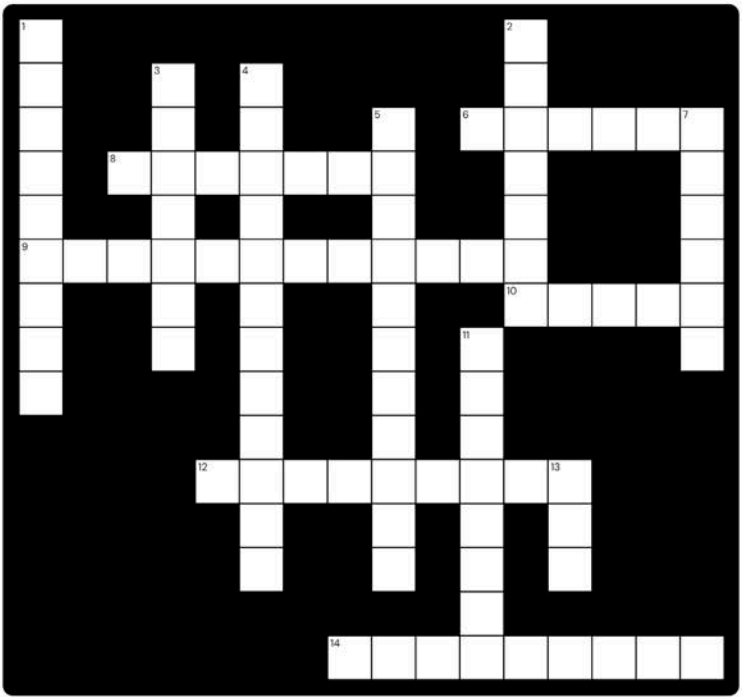
Cocktalbar Vieux-Lyon

Tips


A42
D383
Rue du Canal
Cr Vitton
Cr Tolstoi
A6
Av. Paul Kruger
Rte de Genas
Cr Gambetta
Rue Feuillat
Bd Privel
Av. Valioud
A7
Av. Berthelot
Bd Yves Farge
Rte de Vienne
Bd des Etats-Unis
Av. Paul Santy
D383
A43
Emile Zola
1
2
3
4

Extra

1 Puzzle



ACROSS

6. Nickname of the 1970s Part-Dieu tower. Our hotel for the 2nd night
8. Brothers who pioneered cinema in Lyon
9. Roman arena of the Three Gauls, on the Croix-Rousse slope
10. River meeting the Saone at the Confluence
12. The term for raw concrete, coined by Le Corbusier during the construction of Unité d'Habitation in Marseille
14. "Almost island" between the two rivers

DOWN

1. Salad with lardons and a poached egg
2. Tony, designer of the cité industrielle, or stade de Gerland
3. Small, traditional Lyonnaise bistro
4. Lyon-born author of "The Little Prince", namesake of the airport in Lyon
5. Period that shaped Vieux Lyon
7. Architect who put a glass vault on the Opera
11. Bernard, architect of the Gallo-Roman Museum
13. High-speed rail service run by France's national rail operator we travel with