



CULTURAL AND TOURIST VALORISATION OF INDUSTRIAL HERITAGE TO THE AUBOIS VALLEY (FRANCE)

Authors :

- Emmanuel LECOMTE (elected member of the community Pays Loire Val d'Aubois, and president of the association "Aubois, de terres et de feux")
- Vincent COURTILAT (civil servant of the community Pays Loire Val d'Aubois, territorial management specialist)

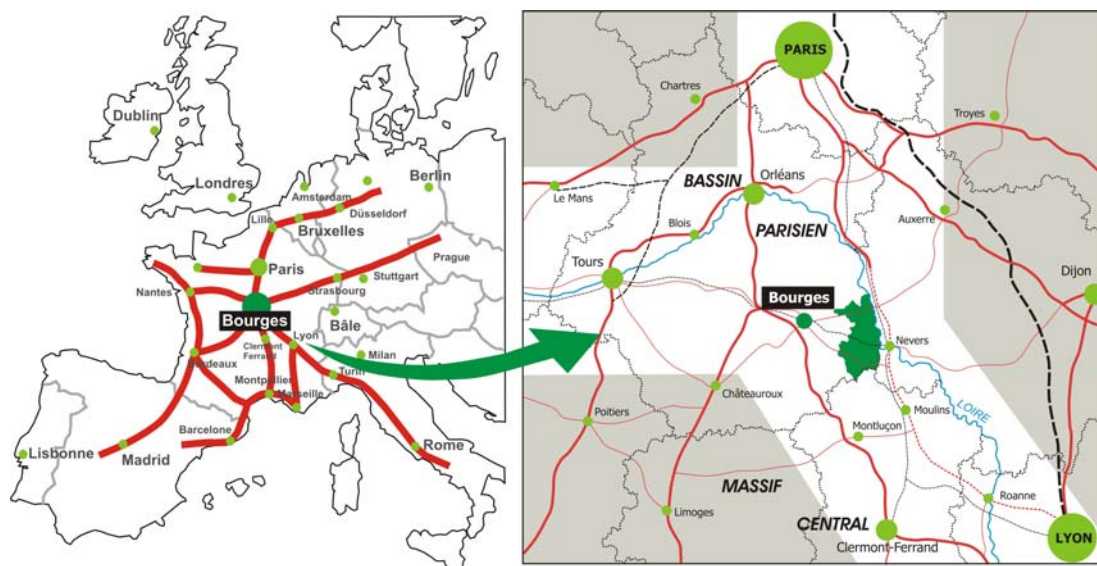
Syndicat mixte du Pays Loire Val d'Aubois (France – Loire Valley)

3 place de la mairie 18150 Germigny l'Exempt

Tel : 033 02 48 74 23 93 Fax : 033 02 48 74 03 89

Mail : contact@paysloirevaldaubois.com Site : www.paysloirevaldaubois.com

The Pays Loire Val d'Aubois (27 000 inhabitants), bounded north by the Paris Basin (10 millions inhabitants area) and south by the Massif Central, is in the heart of France. Drained by the combined waters of the Rivers Loire and Allier, this territory is ideally placed on the route from the Mediterranean to Lyons, which heads towards Paris and the French Great West via the Val de Loire.



The Pays Loire Val d'Aubois is a region of water and woods, where traditional iron and steel metallurgy, dependent upon the waterways and charcoal has been fully integrated into favourable sites. Although basically agricultural today, the Pays Loire Val d'Aubois is none the less heir to an old industrial tradition which began in the Middle Ages and reached its peak in the 19th century (Iron metallurgy, the earthenware industry with tile and brick making, the production of hydraulic lime and Portland type natural cement).

The early development of Val d'Aubois was favoured as early as the Middle Ages by abundant mineral, forestry and hydraulic resources. The transports were organized from the waterways, either natural or man-made, such as the Berry canal or the lateral canal along the Loire opened in 1837 and 1827, respectively.

Since 1995, The Pays Loire Val d'Aubois has devised and started to implement a major development programme, using of the industrial heritage of the Val d'Aubois, to lay the groundwork of sustainable development. Concretely, it is matter of creating a network capable of :

- playing the tourist card to contribute to local development and to growth an economy till now in difficulty ;

- support a number of projects (historical researchs, studies, cultural animations) ;
- preserve the memory of a singular industrial adventure (popularization of memory and tradition, mobilization of local players and inhabitants).

Owing to the political elects, a partnership approach has been instituted with the Centre Region and the Departement of Cher to support investment programmes put forward by the Pays Loire Val d'Aubois for the rehabilitation and exploitation of the industrial heritage of the Val d'Aubois.

Synergies are also sought with local enterprises which are still in business (tilery of the Aubois, Calcia cement works) in order to produce reports on the evolution of production techniques and encourage sponsorship (supply of materials, participation in events). The industrial tourist project also involves several local associations, including the "Aubois, de terres et de feux" association (<http://pageperso.aol.fr/atfaubois>).

After many years, several operations have been realised. For example, the coal shed of the old smithy of Grossouvre propose now a route highlighting the architecture of the shed as well as the theme of invention at the service of the technical conquests of humankind.

The coal shed of the old smithy of Grossouvre



The drying sheds of the old lime and cement factory of Beffes, open during the heritage days, are used to organize shows. The old quarry, full of water, becomes a diving center.

The drying sheds of the old lime and cement factory of Beffes



The Berry canal is now entirely passable in the Pays Loire Val d'Aubois (fifty kilometres). This waterway is essential for the development of hiking in the Pays.

The Berry canal



The lateral canal along the Loire has benefited from the installation of high-quality tourist signage. The redevelopment of the Halts continues to attract boating users and also the users of the Loire by Bike cycling route.

The lateral canal along the Loire



Others operations doesn't start again as the tilery of La Guerche sur l'Aubois with a project of arrangement conciliating culture and preservation of a remarkable heritage, as the old metalworks of Torteron, a site basically enhanced by taking advantage of the illumination of the old ruins and the creation of "industrial romantic gardens".

The tilery of La Guerche sur l'Aubois and the ruins of the old metalworks of Torteron

