

# From the ancient town of Matisco to the castrum : the Gallo-Roman period

Matisco, an open town: the time of expansion (50 BCE / 350 CE)

Following the conquest of Gaul, and under the impetus of the founding of the Roman colony of Lyon, a town began to develop. Including the necropolis, this ancient settlement covered an area of around 68 hectares with no defensive fortifications. No traces of urban development in this period are visible today, however archaeological discoveries prove the existence of monuments, luxury homes and fountains. Objects unearthed also point to flourishing artisanship and commerce.

Matisco, an entrenched town: the time of the castrum (350 CE / 500 CE)

In the middle of the third century, Gaul, like the rest of the Roman empire, went through an extremely serious crisis. Civil wars and barbarian invasions wreaked destruction in towns and the countryside. Once order was re-established, at the end of the third century, towns built defensive fortifications. Mâcon entrenched itself on the Plateau de la Baille; its surface area was reduced to some 7 hectares. It was then known as the 'castrum matisconensis'. Part of the rampart covered the banks of the Saône, protecting the vitally important access to the port. Economic, political and religious life was now concentrated within this new area.

Knowledge of the ancient town

While excavations carried out by the GAM, led by Albert Barthélemy and François Cognot, from 1972 to 1985, provided new information on the town and its necropolis, it was the preventive archaeology operations conducted during the 1990s that painted a clearer picture of the growth of the ancient town of Mâcon.

In the fourth century, the town of Mâcon entrenched itself behind a new, powerful fortification, including towers and walls three to four metres thick. The first foundations of the rampart were built using architectural blocks taken from monuments in the town.



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