

Vienna (Vienne, France)

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Capital of the Allobroges, a people settled between the ALPS and the middle stretch of the Rhône, Vienna saw its most flourishing period during the first three centuries CE. The city lies in a remarkable natural setting where there is a favorable place for crossing the river (*see* RHÔNE). Located on the hillside of the left bank, south of the outlet of the narrow River Gère into the Rhône, the original town was established on a rock terrace protected from flooding. The earliest signs of permanent settlement date back to the fourth century BCE. The layout and extent of this agglomeration prior to the first century CE remain unclear.

Defeated in 121 BCE, the Allobroges saw their territory integrated into the Roman province of Transalpine Gaul (*see* GALLIA NARBONENSIS). Thereafter, because of its northerly position on the Rhône trade route, the city gained importance, especially from the Gallic wars on (*see* JULIUS CAESAR; GALLIC WAR). The right

bank (now occupied by the current villages of Sainte-Colombe and Saint-Romain-en-Gal) was given over to agriculture during the first century BCE.

A long rampart built during the reign of Augustus crowned the hills on the left bank and shut in the city center where the forum stood with the temple of Augustus and Livia. After that time, buildings spread southward beyond the wall and onto the right bank, gradually replacing farmland. At the time of Tiberius, a newly constructed bridge set just above the outlet of the Gère encouraged urban development of the right bank. The construction of the approach ramp bridge and the establishment of the sewer system caused the high elevation of the valley floor at Saint-Romain-en-Gal, observed over approximately 20 ha. On the left bank, to the south of the ramparts and a second bridge, huge warehouses were built along the river.

During the first century CE, Vienna became one of the most powerful cities in Gaul and was equipped with large buildings: the theater and odeon, built against the hills, the circus to the



Figure 1 Aerial view of Vienna. Reproduced with permission.

south of the city. On the right bank a huge gymnasium covered the central part of the plain. In the second century the baths known as the Palais du Miroir were added onto this monumental complex, which then reached almost 8 ha. To the north, at the entrance to the bridge, luxurious homes were interspersed with commercial buildings and *fullonicae*. At its height the city covered an area of about 300 ha.

In the second half of the third century, the city declined and shrank to its original urban core. Cemeteries were rapidly established over parts of the right bank. Among buildings of this period, only a few churches have been recognized. Nonetheless, Vienna remained an important city in the fourth century, and was the occasional residence of the emperors Julian and Valentinian II (who was murdered there). In the fifth century, with the development of Christianity, a feud broke out between Vienna and Arelate concerning the primacy about the churches of Viennoise province.

SEE ALSO: Arelate (Arles); Cities, Roman Empire (west); Lugdunum (Lyons).

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