

# Nemausus (Nîmes)

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Nemausus (modern Nîmes), situated in southern Gaul on the road from Italy to Spain (the *via Domitia* of 118 BCE), was the “capital” of the Volcae Arecomici (Strabo 4.1.3; 4.1.12; Plin. *HN* 3.37; also cf. local coins from 125–50 BCE with legends *Νεμασσι* and *Volcae/Arec*; see GALLIA NARBONENSIS). From ca. 500 BCE, the first settlement was situated around the sacred spring and on the slopes of the neighboring Mount Cavalier. In the third century BCE, a settlement of 30 ha was enclosed by the first rampart, dominated by a large dry-stone tower, later incorporated into the Gallo-Roman “Tour Magne.” The presence of Attic black/red-figure ware and Etruscan, Greek, and Massaliote amphorae shows close interaction with the Mediterranean world, as does the adoption of the Greek alphabet for inscriptions in the Celtic language.

After the Roman conquest 125–121 BCE, Nemausus continued to flourish and became a Latin colony: *colonia Augusta Nemausus* (e.g., *ILS* 6983–4; *AE* 1992, 1219). Issues of local coins with the legend *Nem(ausus) col(onia)* suggest a grant of colonial status between 44 and 27 BCE; silver coins with a crocodile and palm branch, celebrating Octavian’s victory over Egypt, may indicate a possible deduction of veterans 31–27. A phased development seems possible, with the probable acquisition of *ius Latii* under Caesar, followed by further grants (cf. Darde 2005: 39). Twenty-four *oppida ignobilia* of the Volcae Arecomici were attributed to Nemausus (after Plin. *HN* 3.37).

From 16–15 BCE, a new rampart (6 km) enclosed a city of 220 ha (still visible today: Porte d’Auguste, Porte de France, and the Tour Magne (height today 32.5 m)). A podium temple (“Maison Carrée”) in the forum was dedicated to Augustus’ grandsons, C. and L. Caesar (*AE* 2005, 1004; ca. 2–3 CE). Further visible



**Figure 1** “Maison Carrée,” Nîmes. A pseudo-peripteral podium temple in Corinthian order, probably inaugurated ca. 2–3 CE. © Tony King.

buildings include the aqueduct from Uctia to Nemausus (with the *PONT DU GARD* and *castellum diuisorium*) and the Flavian amphitheater (90–120 CE; 25,000 seats). Hadrian is said to have built the *basilica Plotina* in 122 CE (*SHA Hadr.* 12.2), probably part of the spring sanctuary (cf. *ILS* 4844). The Roman orator Domitius Afer and the emperor Antoninus Pius (86–161) were born in Nemausus.

Nemausus’ religious focus was the spring sanctuary (*nymphaeum*). The pre-Roman cult place (cf. excavations of portico at the site “Villa Roma”) was monumentalized from 25 CE (*ILS* 85) and transformed into what Gros (1984) described as the “Augusteum.” However, this sanctuary was above all a center for status display, containing honorary inscriptions of *flamines* from across the province; the major focus of dedications is directed to local cults, above all the god Nemausus, probably the god of the spring; other local

deities include Sucellos/Silvanus, *fons Ura*, the nymphs, *proxsumes*, and *matres* (cf. the Gallo-Greek dedication to the *matrebo namausikabo*). Jupiter is identified with an indigenous “wheel” god; other Celtic theonyms include Ialona (*CIL* XII 3057). After the missionary St. Saturninus around 245 CE, St. Baudilus, who was decapitated in Nîmes for interrupting a pagan cult ritual, is considered the “apostle” of Nîmes (late third century CE); the first attested bishop was Sedatus in 506. The city was captured by the Visigoths in 473.

SEE ALSO: Celtic languages; Colonies, Roman and Latin (republican); *Matres/Matronae*; Religion, Celtic; Silvanus; Springs, sacred.

#### REFERENCES AND SUGGESTED READINGS

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