

# Emblematic Mediterranean Mountains as Coastal destinations of excellence (EMbleMatic)

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## CASE STUDY, PP16 Sainte-Victoire



Photo Georges FLAYOLS

### Deliverable D 3.3.3

#### WP3 – Studying

**Activity A3.3 Conduction of the in depth study of the criteria composing  
the emblematic dimension of the EMM**

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## SUMMARY

This case study is drafted in the framework of the WP3 “Studying” of EMbleMatiC project.

This document presents the recording of the elements of the emblematic dimension of Sainte-Victoire mountain based on the template produced by PP4’s subcontractor (ETAM), approved and adapted by the project’s Study Scientific Committee (LP1, PP4, PP6, PP8).

This case study document will consist a reference document for **the overall in depth study of the emblematic dimension of the project’s touristic dimension** whilst it will constitute the emblematic dimension characterization document for Sainte-Victoire mountain.

The case study is operative in correlation with D.3.3.2-Report on participative workshop, results of which have been incorporated in it.

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## Executive Summary

Sainte-Victoire, rocky islet rising 10 km far from the eastern border of Aix-en-Provence is internationally famous for having been the favourite motif of the painter Cézanne as well as being a field of very technical sports as climbing or paragliding. It is also regularly frequented especially by local hikers or families.

This mountain leaves a very strong feeling of local property (1 million visits a year). So, the aim is to preserve it of too much visitors.

To do this, in a valley lying on the southern edge of the piedmont of the mountain an itinerary for walkers and another one for bicycles is a different offer which allow riding across the interior Provence with the gorgeous landscapes of Sainte-Victoire as backdrop.

The themes to be developed on this itinerary remain to be defined, and will be able to rely on the emblematic characteristics of Sainte-Victoire, developed in this document.

This offer is going to be carried and promoted by the Grand Site Sainte-Victoire. It's knowledge of the territory and its stakeholders has been confirmed by the testimonies collected during the local meeting and the answers to a question asked on the social networks.

## PART I

### 1.1 Introduction

#### Nature at the doorstep of a metropolis of 1,8 million inhabitants

During most of the 20th century, the Sainte-Victoire Mountain was considered as the 140 000 inhabitants of Aix-en-Provence's garden. Sainte-Victoire is the heart of a 34 500 ha protected area which is the largest of the department of Bouches-du-Rhône. It is, as well as the Parc national des Calanques, the symbol wild life conservation within this commercial and residential area. The global area is the destination of anyone who is fond of nature, sports, authenticity, tranquillity or natural heritage; all these different pursuits reflect a commitment to the preservation of both natural and cultural areas.



Photo aérienne copyright AERIAL

#### Sainte-Victoire, what else ?

Sainte-Victoire is a very special feature in the overall landscape of Provence. Especially because there is a very strong feeling of ownership by the inhabitants, and each of them has his own Sainte-Victoire, and it is much more beautiful from their home than from anyone's else. It is a mountain of everyday life.

This study was written by members of the Territory Promotion and Major Projects Division of the Grand Site Sainte-Victoire, within the Aix Marseille Provence Metropolis, Land Council of Aix-en-Provence:

- Christiane CAPUS, in charge of partnerships and sustainable tourism, participates in the dissemination of information on heritage, accompanies local actors and project holders in their link with the territory; she is the memory of our territory ;
- Sophie GEORGENTHUM, head of the Division which main missions are: management of facilities for the reception of the public in natural space, monitoring and awareness, development of partnerships with local stakeholders, animation of development projects, implementation of the Grand Site de France policy; she coordinates the EMbleMatiC project for Sainte-Victoire and ensures the administrative and financial follow-up;

- Daniel ROZEC coordinates the 2 information centers of the Grand Site Sainte-Victoire: in addition to his mission of reception and management of seasonal staff, he contributes to the operation of reception areas and shops (layout, product control, documentation, ...); he will soon be commissioned to manage the website of the Grand Site Sainte-Victoire and to promote the territory.

## ***1.2 Physical and human geography of the mountain***

### **Sainte-Victoire in the Aixois landscape**

The Sainte-Victoire Mountain is a big and elegant wave of limestone presenting a woody and hilly northern slope and, on the southern one, white sheer rock cliffs running for more than 10 km. Facing Aix-en-Provence, a quasi-perfect triangle, the famous one painted so many times by Cezanne.

At the top of this western summit, (974 m) « la Croix de Provence » was erected in 1874. This place was chosen only because the monument might be seen from the main town of the area. The higher point of the mountain is at the oriental extremity, but here again, there is a debate. The question is that the « Pic des Mouches » is the historical summit, whereas some pretend that the « Baou de Vespre » is 1 meter higher which would make it, the « new one ». Yes, it might be measured but not sure that it would make of the “Baou de Vespre” the “real” summit....

At the bottom of the western extremity of Sainte-Victoire lies a dam and its lake, le « Barrage de Bimont » that was built during the second half of the 20th century. It magnifies the landscape.

### **A landscape, which is a legacy, that needs to be cared of**

The biological wealth of the Sainte- Victoire and the nearby massifs rests mainly on the very big variety of natural circles confidentially imbricated in a mosaic of open and wooded spaces.

The ecological asset which represents this mosaic is amplified by three other characteristics :

- the geography and the geomorphology : The meeting of meeting between the alpine and the Mediterranean domains, with one made uneven by 800 meters between the lowest point and the highest summit.
- the variety of reliefs, exposures, heights and thicknesses of ground creates so many different and sometimes extreme ecological conditions.
- the largeness of the site, one of the vastest natural spaces of a salt holding of Provence, which favours the development of a multitude of natural circles and sorts.
- finally the former human activity which shaped this mosaic of the Mediterranean environment in particular through the agro-pastoral system.

### **Toponymy stories in the History**

Its etymology is not very clear: the meaning is subject to debate, as it is so often in Provence. Some say it comes from Ventur, an archaic god of the winds, others are sure that it comes from a Celtic word meaning, « Mount ».

About the name « Sainte-Victoire », there are several theories for “victory”:

- the one of that the Roman general Marius, won against Cimbri and Teuton (102 or 104 BC)
- the one referring to the Battle of Lepanto, in 1571, very important moment in the occidental History. This victory, devoted to Mary therefore all over Christendom many places chose a name referring to this Holy Battle. Sainte-Victoire might have been one of them.



Charles Rostaing, linguist and expert in toponymy, in his "Essai sur la toponymie en Provence", prefers the theory of a mix, a shift from Venturi to Victoire.

So there are numerous ways to name the mountain, depending on several and sometimes interrelated things : the age of the person, if the person is not an inhabitant of the region, if the person belonged to the scouts, the person's level, of education and/or use or not the local vernacular language (which also depends on the age or/and the level of educational attainment). Anyway, for he who wants to be considered as a local, he can call the Mountain « Mont Venturi, » (some natives carry on) « Sainte-Victoire », « La Sainte », but if he calls it « La Sainte-Victoire » he immediately declares himself as being from Paris.



### Administrative identity

The Aix Marseille Provence Metropole, created the 1<sup>st</sup> January 2016, gather 1,8 million inhabitants living in 92 municipalities around Marseille (855 393 inhabitants and Aix-en-Provence (148 813 inhabitants) *source : INSEE*). It represents 93 % of the Bouches-du-Rhône's County population and 37 % of the Provence-Alpes-Côte-d'Azur Region (Riviera).

Within this Metropole, 40 km far from Marseille and bordering Aix-en-Provence, the Sainte-Victoire Mountain is located in the perimeter of the Grand Site Sainte-Victoire, wide peri-urban natural space. This 34500ha heavily forested area runs over 14 municipalities (Puylobier, Saint-Antonin-sur-Bayon, Rousset, Châteauneuf-le-Rouge, Beaurecueil, Le Tholonet, Aix-en-Provence, Vauvenargues, Saint-Marc-Jaumegarde, Venelles, Meyrargues, Peyrolles-en-Provence, Jouques et Saint Paul lez Durance). Except from Aix-en-Provence, and to a lesser extent, Venelles (with more than 8000 inhabitants) all are small villages of rural nature which average population is around 2200 inhabitants (from 142 for Saint-Antonin-sur-Bayon to more than 4000 for Jouques, Peyrolles-en-Provence and Rousset). Six of these typically Provençal villages are surrounding the mountain. To be precise, the mountain itself extends in the next county (the Var), on 3 municipalities Pourrières, Artigues et Rians. However, for the moment, on an administrative point of view, this eastern part of the mountain is not taken into account by the public institution managing the global site.

The mountain is 18 km long and 5 km large, strictly west-east oriented and culminate at the Pic des Mouches (1 011 m), near the eastern edge, and not at the Croix de Provence (946 m) close to the western edge. The Pic des Mouches is the 2<sup>nd</sup> highest summit of the Bouches-du-Rhône's County.

## **A shared governance**

The site is managed by a public institution since 2001, for 3 broad missions :

- fire prevention for the massifs (trail maintenance, clearing of underbrush, interaction with agricultural and hunting activities, surveillance...)
- preservation and enhancement of natural heritage (flora, fauna, delicate natural areas), man-made heritage sites (chapels, oratories, retaining walls, historical vestiges...)
- welcome services and cooperation with local activities (parking lot and walking path maintenance, sports statutes, promotion of local products, public information services, educational activities...).

Formerly (2001-2016) operated by a joint commission comprised of the Bouches-du-Rhône County, the Aix area and the Provence Alpes Côte d'Azur (Riviera) Region, the Grand Site Sainte-Victoire team (23 permanent members, including 8 rangers) belongs to the Aix Marseille Provence Métropole since 1<sup>st</sup> January 2017.

These missions are carried out by following a territory project, global and multiyear, elaborated in concertation with the institutional partners and the stakeholders of the site. It guarantees the coherence and the compatibility of the Grand Site's actions with the ones of all the public and private partners taking actions on the site, which mostly belongs to numerous landowners. At the moment, a large reflection is launched to define the guidelines of the next territory project (the first one lasted more than 10 years).

## **Well-developed transport and infrastructures**

With an international airport at less than 40 km, and a TGV (high-speed train) station at 30km (completed with regular shuttle services and local trains and stations), 2 highways, the site is situated in an area well served by public transit. Nevertheless, the access to the mountain itself suffers from a relative lack of public transportation (a few buses only) and a near absence of access for disabled persons.

By driving one's own car, you cannot cross the mountain nor even the whole site (natural area), but only surrounding it. To the south slope of Sainte-Victoire Mountain : the Cézanne Road (protected since 1959 by the French law of 1930) winding and driving along the south face of the mountain, she provides sumptuous perspective landscapes.

## **Demography and economic activity**

The population growth of the Metropole is weakening, and it becomes a migratory deficit with the rest of the region. A residential peri-urbanization is observed, to access the property or acquire space at a lower cost. According to these perspectives, land pressure would continue, especially on agricultural land.

The city is experiencing a deficit of jobs and its share of executives is growing but remains low compared to other large comparable urban areas. The dispersion of jobs in the metropolis always generates more commuting trips, usually in individual vehicles. Finally, the city faces high unemployment, young people in difficulty and pockets of poverty, with some areas more in trouble than others. These characteristics tend to be accentuated in recent years. More solidarity, more social diversity are crucial issues for this new metropolis

*(Source : Insee Analyses Provence-Alpes-Côte d'Azur N° 23 29/09/2015)*



### **Economic benefits related to the Grand Site Sainte-Victoire**

A study on the Assessment of economic benefits related to the Grand Site Sainte-Victoire has been conducted in 2008-2009. It aimed to know the impact of the Grand Site Sainte-Victoire on the local economy; it means the economic benefits linked to its activity but also to its attractiveness. More widely, it was an evaluation of the benefits of the existence of the Grand Site, in terms of use of its image, effect on the market value of goods (especially real estate), local products, social utility ...

It should be remembered that each year the Grand Site Sainte-Victoire generates orders of:

- € 60 million in tourist and recreational benefits, corresponding to 700 jobs and 8.6 million tax benefits; (for the day-trippers, the daily expenditure amounts to € 6.50 excluding shipping costs, for the tourist households, it is € 141)
- € 7 million related to the existence of the site and the use of the name by companies;
- € 40 million of capital gains linked to the proximity or the view of the Grand Site Sainte-Victoire.

*(Source : Le Fil des Grands Sites – FIGESMA, RGSF- 2010 )*

### **Natural dangers**

Even if the relief shows that there is a seismic risk, the last two ones were in 1909 and in 1984. The main natural dangers in Provence are the wild fires. In 1989, 5 500 ha burnt on Sainte-Victoire and for these last two years, 5 000 ha in the department of Bouches-du-Rhône in 2016 and 1476 ha in 2017.

There are many precautions about this risk, and especially a regulation limiting the access to the natural areas between June 1st and September 30th. When the risk of fire is too high, the access is strictly forbidden and visitors are invited to visit the villages, some vineyard estates, exhibitions, festivals, towns, ...

A quite significant danger is also the mountain itself. It may be about hikers who lost their way or people being victims of heart problems because they did not realise how difficult the walk could be, accidents of ankles (often because a bad choice of shoes), falls from the cliffs, accidents of paragliding, and accidents of mountain bike...

Between 2010 and 2015 first-aiders specialized in extreme areas had to intervene 408 times on the Sainte-Victoire mountain and most of the time with a helicopter.

About this, Sainte-Victoire is a major training zone for these first-aiders.



Photo Matthias Magnier

## Sunny weather

When Mediterranean climate is described as being mild, the ones who tell this talk about littoral.

Aix-en-Provence is at an altitude of 300 m and Sainte-Victoire reaches 1 000m.

Distant of 30 km of the seaside, surrounded by the Valley of the Durance and the Valley de l'Arc, the climate presents some continental aspects. As an example, a winemaker says that in Jouques (North East of the Grand Site Sainte-Victoire), he may see differences of 55° between winter and summer. Even if it can happen for 3 years running, 5, 2 or 1 mild winter can follow. However, historically qualified as plague, the mistral, this violent and cold north wind, blows 50 days per year. As it can be in summer, in case of forest fire the situation becomes immediately extremely critic.

Aix-en-Provence and its area enjoy around 300 days of sunshine every year.

## What goes on on Sainte-Victoire?

Users have a very strong feeling of ownership with this mountain. For decades, rambling and climbing associations identify and develop the network of trails. The Departmental council created AVT trails. In this countryside, the tradition of the hunting is also very anchored.

All these stakeholders live alongside each other and sometimes work together. For example, whenever there is something happening with a naturalistic stakes the para-gliders report that take off launches are prohibited for a while, generally landowners allow the public to walk over their land,... The situation is such because they all know each other; they talk together and find gentlemen agreements.

Even if it is not very high, Sainte-Victoire must actually be considered as a mountain. Let's look at the climbing web site Rockfax : "Renowned for high-quality, sun-bathed face-climbing, Sainte Victoire has been a forcing ground for climbers in the Aix area for generations. They pushed the standards of free climbing up these near-blank faces to stratospheric levels; the occasional Brits who called in to sample the delights of the area were well impressed. When the time came to upgrade the fixed gear on the cliff, consultation with many of the first ascensionists led to the decision to rebolt the routes but to retain their original feel. This sparse bolting remains a notable feature of the area." (Source : [https://www.rockfax.com/databases/results\\_crag.html?id=640](https://www.rockfax.com/databases/results_crag.html?id=640))

Concerning paragliding, the site is very famous for two things: the first one is that one will have to deserve his flight because he will have to climb. The other one is that flying in this wonderful landscape needs a high technical level.

### ***1.3 Spatial Cohesion***

#### **The Sainte-Victoire Mountain, a hinge between “Manon of sources”'s and “The Man who planted trees”'s countrysides.**

On its south-west extremity, Aix Marseilles Provence Metropole takes roots in Mediterranean and stretches a more or less dense urban ribbon until Aix-en-Provence where Sainte-Victoire rises on the eastern horizon.

Linked to the town, two roads drive to broad natural area. They surround de Sainte-Victoire Mountain. One, on the sunny slope, runs across Cezanne's landscapes and, farther through vineyards where grows the grapes dedicated to de “Côte de Provence Sainte-Victoire”. The northern road infiltrates another Provence; the Giono's one. The visitor will be able to follow Angelo's steps, heroe of the Giono's novel “Le horseman on the roof”.

Scrubland versus forest, the two faces of a same medal.

If Pagnol's countrysides with its thick and low garrigue may begin at the footstep of the sunny cliffs of the mountain, the north valley is woody. With pine trees first, and further, green oaks and then white oaks whose, in autumn, leaves get brown until the spring when the fluffy pale green ones replace them. The link between these two Provence is the natural grasslands, legacy of pastoralism.

Forgetting the very special landscape of Camargue, Sainte-Victoire synthesizes what the Provençal nature is : wild and powerful, able to resist to the dryness of summer, to windy winters, always green because the trees would need too much energy, in these poor soils, to make new leaves when spring comes back.



Photo Marie MARCHI Sainte-Victoire depuis le moulin Cézanne

#### **Spatial and socio-geographic similarities along the mountain**



This mountain is surrounded by small villages which all count less than 2500 inhabitants and decided to limit their increment. Le Tholonet is a special case in the fact that the village presents two separated urbanized zones : the historical centre and the hamlet of Palette.

The historical centre is very protected while the hamlet of Palette, along the Nationale 7 road, has been devoted to a contemporary and active development with residential and commercial buildings.



Photo Véronique Paul Château du Tholonet

At the western extremity and considered as belonging to the mountain, the plateau de Bibémus - where Cezanne rent his “cabanon” from where he painted major canvas- is a sort of Proustian garden of Eden entering the suburb of Aix en Provence, an outpost of nature before the road to the mountain.

Here, a near 1km long “tourism and disability” pathway runs on the plateau to join a belvedere. It is a place where very different publics can practice, one close to the other: people in wheelchair, riders, families with strollers, AVT...

On the southern cliffs, near 2 000 climbing routes make Sainte-Victoire famous. If some of them are equipped, the higher part going to the crest is free of any equipment and alpinism is the rule. Other paths lead to the crest. On this rocky face they are not very easy and some of them actually difficult. They are historic, and by tradition are marked out and maintained by associations, the Grand Site Sainte-Victoire and the Bouches-du-Rhône’s Council. A small mountain refuge offers a free shelter to those who want to spend the night in the mountain. Each one has to carry the wood to make a fire in the wood stove and let the place clear when leaving. Sometimes it is problematic.

At the foothills of the sunny side, in some areas natural grasslands resist as much as they can to the dynamic of forest pine. In others ones, vine yards draw the landscape. Here grow the grapes which make the famous rosé “Côte de Provence Sainte-Victoire.

The northern valley is where forest covers the slope of the mountain. What is the landscape today was not 150 years ago.

In this narrow valley the bottom was occupied by the culture of cereals and everywhere where pine trees forest is present today, terrace cultivation used to redraw the mountain. Almond trees, olive trees and sometimes vines were planted there.

When the forest is an oaks one, the activity was chopping wood and some testimonies speak of the risk of deforestation. In fact, this risk was increased by a strong pastoral activity of which flora still attests.

Today only the bottom of the valley is cultivated. Often fields are planted with wheat. Some of them are left fallow and in spring, poppies paint the countryside.



Photo Christiane Capus

Commercial timber cut is still present but nowadays costumers use wood only for fireplaces and they wish oak and not pine tree to burn it. On another hand, a herd of sheep and a herd of goats are still present but the valley could harbour more than that.

Hunting is also very much practised and to diversify the wild game, the hunters re-cultivated plots, planting there flower meadows. The result is that in this vale, a third of butterfly species living in France found a shelter.

So, hiking is, today, an important part of the identity of this northern territory. Several tracks lead to the top. The footpaths start from the Dam of Bimont in Saint-Marc Jaumegarde for one of them, and from Vauvenargues for the 3 others. The more than 200 km of marked trails offer hikes between 2 hours and 9 hours and of different levels of difficulty.

At the western top, is "Le Prieuré" (the priory) where 70 000 persons per year have been counted. It is a free mountain shelter, which offers the possibility to sleep. La Croix de Provence, just by the priory is a destination, a sort of trophy.

The monument was built at the end of the XIXth century and presents inscriptions on its base. In French on the northern side, facing Paris, in Latin on the eastern one, which shows the way to Roma, in the direction of Aix, Capital of Provence, a poem is written in Provençal and on the southern side of the base, the text addressed to Marseilles is in Greek.

The priory is the property of the association "Les Amis de Sainte-Victoire". It was sold to them by the city council of Vauvenargues for the symbolic price of one Franc. The deal was that the members of the association had to welcome the visitors and maintain the site.

In 2009, the "Maison du Grand Site" was opened in the old presbytery in Vauvenargues. It is a strategically important tourist information and a visitor centre.



## PART II

### *C1 Proud Local People*

Local people (inhabitants, stakeholders) are very proud of the Sainte-Victoire, not only the on-site inhabitants, but all the people living in the area and seeing it, even from far away. We can assume that from 30km around, Sainte-Victoire belongs to their daily life and is a marker of their territory. Each people has an intimate link with the mountain. It is more a strong feeling of appropriation than a feeling of proudness. It's like a community focused on the mountain.

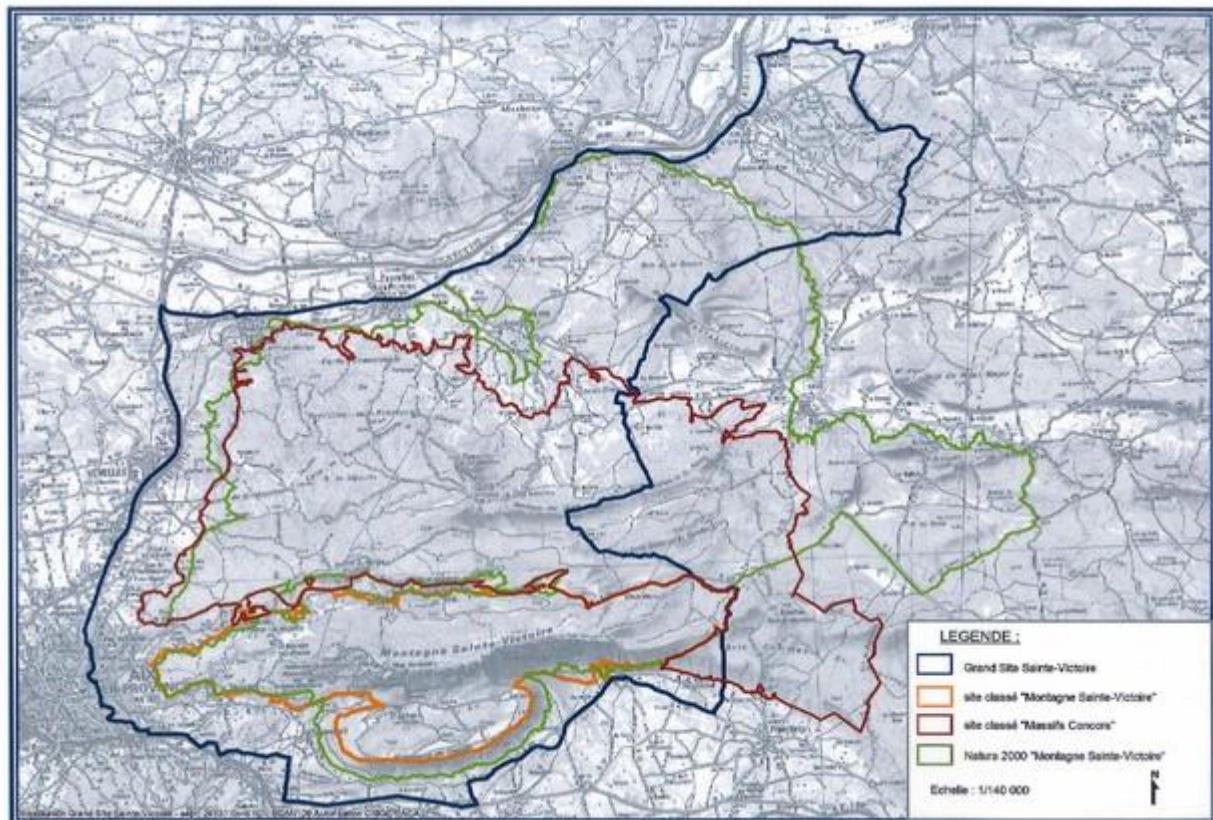
**Coming back from far away and be able to see it means to be back/at home, that is why everyone feels like being its owner. But in fact, people never really know it:** its history, its vegetation and ecosystem... remain unknown or very superficially.

People attach a great importance to the on-site natural protection. For inhabitants, it's a garden, a playground that needs to be protected.

### *C2 Institutional recognition*

The Grand Site Sainte-Victoire (blue perimeter on the map below) is a "Grand Site de France", an eminent symbolic area of outstanding natural beauty and interest, protected by the French law of 2<sup>nd</sup> May 1930 concerning "the protection of natural monuments and sites of artistic, historic, legendary or picturesque nature". Sainte-Victoire and Concors (orange and red perimeter) represent 23476ha, the widest protected area in France. The initial classification of the massif dates from 1983 and concerned precisely the Mountain Sainte-Victoire. It was implemented by the Ministry of the Ecology at the request of the associations, anxious for the effective protection of a remarkable site, and facing the risks of increasing urbanization of the country of Aix.

Classified sites (art.L341-1 to 22 environment code) do not have specific regulations that set out in advance what is prohibited or permitted but operate on the basis of a prior authorization regime for any modification of the situation or aspect of the place. The purpose is to ensure that the characters that motivate the protection of the site are maintained. So presumption of inconstructibility or rejection of heavy equipment but possibility, subject to a good insertion, works or developments contributing to the maintenance or development of the site and by extension, those directly related and necessary for the exercise of activities that have forged the identity of the site or contribute to perpetuate it.



This has allowed the preservation of these landscapes. The analysis of the photographic observatory of the landscapes of the Grand Site does not show any major evolution for 15 years, but reveals the continuation of the forest reconquest.

The “Grand Site de France” label guarantees that the site is conserved and managed following sustainable development principles, which combine the conservation of the landscape, the ‘spirit’ of the site, the quality of the visitor’s experience is welcomed, and the participation of the inhabitants and partners in the life of the Grand Site. The French Ministry of Ecology have set out regulations for the use of the label. The Grand Site Sainte-Victoire was one of the first 4 sites to acquire the designation in 2004, and it was renewed in 2011. The procedure has just been launched for its second renewal.

The Natura 2000 approach comes from two directives European "birds" (1979) and "habitats" (1992) transcribed in French law on January 3, 2001 and framed by 2 decrees. The public institution managing the Grand Site Sainte-Victoire has been appointed by the Prefect as responsible for the local implementation. In parallel, a Steering Committee which will monitor all the work and validate all decisions, has been constituted, bringing together more than 80 structures, all local. The perimeter of the Natura 2000 site was originally around 29 000 hectares. As the naturalist studies and local consultation highlighted, there have been a need to adjust these limits, which increased the total area of 3500ha in 2006 (green perimeter on the map). After 4 years of collective work with the actors in the field, the DOCOB (documents of objectives) has been adopted in 2007. It specifies the location of species concerned and their state of conservation. Precautionary management objectives were identified and various actions to achieve them defined.

A 140-hectare nature reserve was created in 1994 on the western flank of the Sainte-Victoire foothills to protect a remarkable geological site with numerous fossils, including dinosaur eggs. Located in the department park of Roques Hautes, this reserve is closed to the public in its central zone.

### **C3 Reputation**

As seen earlier, if Cezanne gives to Sainte-Victoire a universal value, this mountain has many others fields of reputations than its silhouette in the landscape.

First it is in Provence, a major destination for holidays. 300 sunny days per year, mountain, sea, villages who have preserved their identity, their rural patrimony with a strong cultural aura. Luberon, Alpilles, Côte d'Azur, Aix en Provence et Cézanne, Cézanne et Sainte-Victoire

### **A land of culture**

Of painters among whom the greatest who came in Provence to struggle and work hard to master the lights their colours and their shadows : Van Gogh, Renoir, Braque, Matisse, Gauguin, Balthus, Bonnard, Dufy, Yves Brayer, ...

Of performing arts : Festivals of Avignon, Aix-en-Provence, La Roque d'Anthéron, Cannes, Juan les Pins, but also bullfights of which Picasso was very fond of ...

Photography : Rencontres d'Arles



Photo Véronique Paul

### **A land of pleasure**

Bistros and terraces, Rosé and petanque, ... if all this are clichés they are also a way of life.



### A land of sports

The Trail Sainte-Victoire and the Iron man Aix en Provence's are the most famous nature races organized on the territory.



Photo GSSV

But out of organized competitions, Sainte-Victoire is very famous in single practised sports like climbing or para-gliding: *“With around 1000 routes, 29 or more sectors and 7 separate parking lots, there’s a bewildering gob of climbing to be done. The rock is surprisingly sticky, even the more popular routes. Slab to steep slab with very little past vertical terrain. The area has a reputation for heady routes, especially those routes established in the heyday of the 70’s. Technical footwork and a strong constitution might well win the day on especially the test pieces here. (Source : <https://www.mountainproject.com/v/sainte-victoire/107932147>)*

### Near 1 000 000 visits and not visitors each year

In “Les mémoires d'un touriste”, Stendhal wrote about Sainte-Victoire : “This mountain in which Aix is leaned”. Cezanne used to say that it was his garden, all this belongs to the identity of the site. It is a place where we come and where we return. For some, it is several times a week.



Photo Philippe Maigne

According to a survey held in 2010 , cf. diagrams in annex:

About 92700 visits are made on the natural site of Sainte-Victoire per year.

Most of the visitors are actually locals, either hiking or practicing an outdoor leisure activity.

They come and practice there because of the beauty of the landscape and the quality of the natural site but also because it is not far from where they live or stay.

Visitors are mainly active professionally or retired, rather educated, culturally sensible and some may say mostly from upper social classes.

Weather conditions imply that spring and autumn are the preferred seasons for hiking on Sainte-Victoire but local visitors actually enjoy visiting the site all year long.

Paul Cézanne's paintings are so famous all around the world that some visitors actually pop in the site because it has to be seen.

Some want to show it and share its beauty and love with friends and relatives as soon as they visit them.

*(Source : enquête de fréquentation 2010)*



#### ***C4 Legends and myths***

Despite many legends, the origin of the name Sainte Victoire remains a mystery. Initially called after the divinity “Venturi” (mountain of winds) it may have evolved with Christianity to include “Sainte” and either “Victor” in reference to monks from the famous Victor monastery or “Victoire” in memory of the battle of Lepanto (1571).

Sainte-Victoire is home to Saint Ser, curator of deafness: this virtuous hermit was persecuted by Euric, king of Wisigoths who drilled his eardrums and cut off his ears before killing him.



Photo Philippe Maigne

Out of the many caves found on Sainte-Victoire the abyss of Garagai, lying under the cross of Provence is said to contain the “Cabro d’Or”. This fabulous animal has buried his treasures in many caves and is said to get them out twice a year during equinoxes. This symbol of abundance and protection can be related to the myth of Amalthée, the wet nurse of Zeus.



Photo Bruno Coulet

Finally Sainte-Victoire is drilled by caves such as the abyss of Garagai. The mountain is full of garagai, but this one, lying under the Provence's cross, has a funny reputation. On the one hand, some says that Marius, during one of the battles between the Cimbri and the Teutons, was advised by princess Galla, to precipitate into the abyss the leader of the Teutons and 300 of his soldiers prisoners. Anne of Geierstein explains that people went to the top of the mountain to consult a pythonisse called Garagoule who had erected a tripod in front of the gaping mouth of the cave. At least, the Garagai would be one of the homes of the "Cabro d'Or" (understand golden goat). This fabulous animal runs from the Avens of Provence where it buried its treasures, only goes out twice a year to the equinoxes. This legend of the "Cabro d'Or" is to be moved closer of the legend of Amalthee, Zeus, quite powerful as symbol of abundance and protection .

But among the legends, some of them concern Picasso who bought, in 1957, the castle of Vauvenargues. He looked forward to a quieter place than the Côte d'Azur and chose this village because of the lights, which were like the ones he knew in Catalonia.

The story tells that Picasso, very excited, said to his paintings trader "I bought Sainte-Victoire de Cézanne!" "Which one?" asks Kahnweiler thinking that one was talking about a painting. "The original", answered the master.

Picasso had sworn that he would not return to Spain as long as Franco would be alive, but he died before the dictator. He was buried in his property, in front of his castle under a monumental sculpture, which had been installed in front of the detached house of Spain in the World Fair of 1936. In this detached house was displayed Guernica.

The story concerns this exhibition. One tells that a Nazi soldier asked to Picasso: "Is it you who did that ?", and Picasso replied "No, it is you".

## ***C5 Power of inspiration***

### **Painting**

Before becoming, thanks to Cézanne, a famous cultural symbol of the world, the Sainte-Victoire mountain has inspired numerous artists and writers from the XIX century, such as: Constantin, Granet, Loubon, Guigou, Cabasson, ... who preceded Cézanne for whom Sainte-Victoire became a real outdoor workshop. For almost twenty years (from 1885 to 1906) it would be the subject of about 80 of his works.

These paintings are located in the biggest international museums: Saint Petersburg, Moscow, New York, Washington, London and Paris . And the admiration of this great master would bring another world-famous painters, Picasso, to come and spend a few years at the foot of the mountain where he rests, to Vauvenargues where he rests in the property of the castle.

Several major painters chose to paint Sainte-Victoire, but many anonymous also did.

The most famous is obviously Cézanne who represented it near 80 times.

Marius Granet (1775-1849) in few drawings, oil painting and watercolours

Auguste Renoir (1841- 1919)

Joseph Ravaisou (1865-1925)

Wassily Kandinsky (1866-1944)

Yves Brayer (1907-1990)

Pierre Ambrogiani (1907-1985)

Bernard Buffet (1928-1999) some oils canvas

Pablo Picasso chose to buy the castle of Vauvenargues because he needed to get a bit far from la Côte d'Azur and found there the ambiance and the light of his beloved Catalonia and Winston Churchill came several times in Aix en Provence where he used to camp out near "le Pont des 3 sautets" (one of the subjects painted by Cezanne), and we can guess that during these holidays he tried to find rest and inspiration facing the mountain.



Copyright Musée de l'Hermitage Saint Petersburg

### Literature

On a literary plan if we find it evoked in "The memoirs of a tourist» by Stendhal. We find it in "Anne of Geierstein or the girl of mists" by Walter Scott and praised by the poet Joachim Gascut in "This mount of the victory which rises to the sky as an altar". After Zola, in "The fortune of the Rougon", it inspired Joseph d'Arbaud, Peter Handke with "The Lesson of Sainte-Victoire"(1985), as well as Jacqueline de Romilly (member of the French Academy) with "On the paths of Sainte-Victoire" (2001) "Cezanne painted indefinitely the clear mass of the mountain, as an apparition, as a goal, as an end towards which everything converges. It is the miracle of Sainte-Victoire that this luminosity of pure rock and this way it has to detach, precise and light, above all the rest, thus attracting the eye."

And also Michel Bernascolle "Les Rapegons de Sainte-Victoire" ([2006](#))

.....

### Cinema

2008 : a key scene of the François Favrat, La Sainte Victoire, gathering Christian Clavier et Clovis Cornillac, was filmed on the mountain Sainte-Victoire.

2013 : Near death experience, a film by Benoit Delepine and Gustave Kervern with Michel Houellebecq in which the mountain actually is a character of the story

2014 : Cezanne et moi a film by Danièle Thompson with Guillaume Canet and Guillaume Gallienne which tells the friendship between Zola and Cezanne



### Photography

Among the famous photographers who photographed the mountain, [Brigitte Bauer](#), [Jürgen Hill](#) who exposes in 2004, his pictures at [Maison de Heidelberg](#) Jean Jérôme Crosnier Mangeat, Jean Christophe Ballot.... And anybody who sees this powerful and isolated rock.



Photo Jean-Christophe Ballot

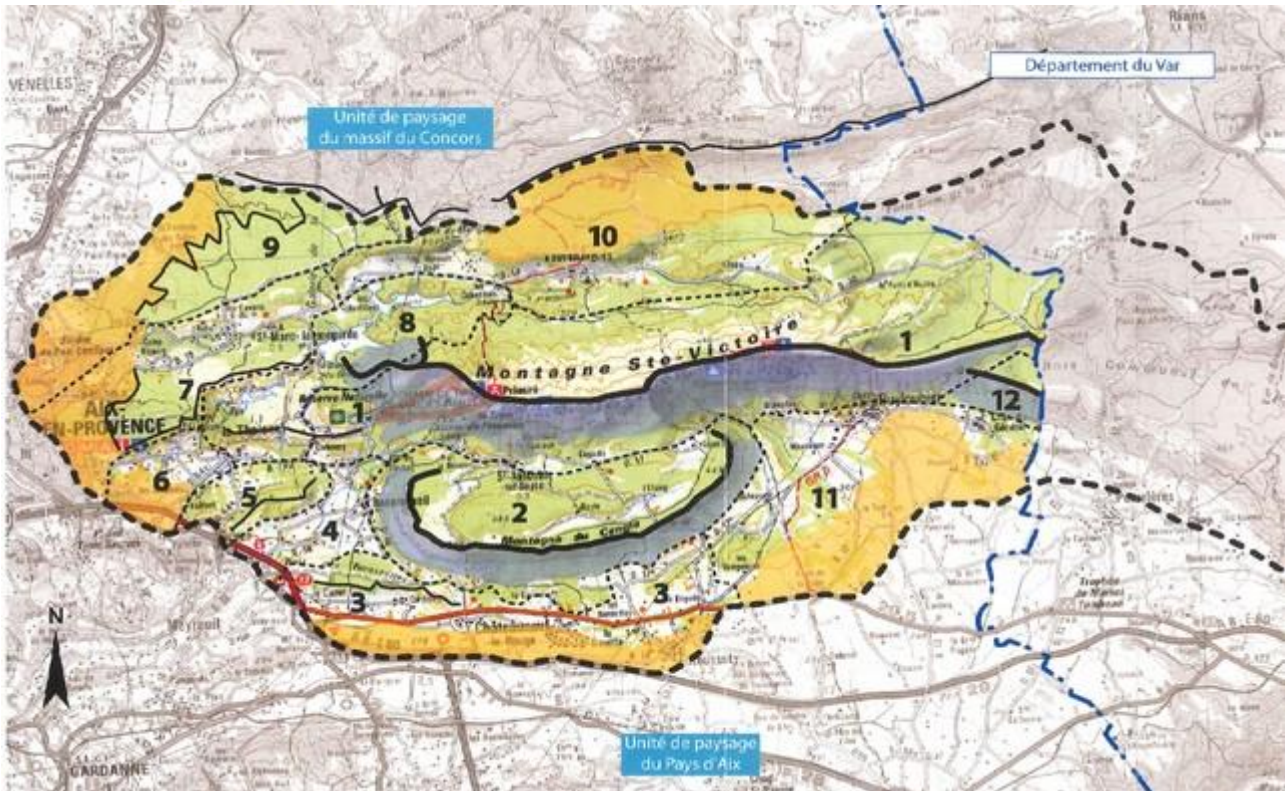
### Inspiration for all

But far from fame, what is fundamental is that this mountain is a power of inspiration for the ones who see it every day, who will paint it, tell it, write about it, photography it, film on it. Inspiration is also something which concerns people who are not so famous.

### *C6 Picturesque landscape*

Amazing rocky mountain range of modest dimensions, Sainte-Victoire is impressive with its strong shape, and its variety of changing colours as the day wears on. Like a beacon, visible from everywhere, it is not only reassuringly stands out, but it is also a kind of eden, where wild nature and spirituality express themselves.

The Sainte-Victoire mountain is a geomorphological unit very present in the landscape. The cliff of the central chain is surrounded by buttresses which contrast with it: the promontory of the Cengle, the softened hills towards Bibémus, the small basins and the valleys. These reliefs form many interstitial spaces with varied atmospheres that spare multiple effects of discovery of the mountain.



*Mountain Sainte-Victoire's landscape unit (Source : atlas paysager des Bouches-du-Rhône-2007)*

Its limits: to the south and to the west, the mountain directly dominates plains, valleys or basins. The transition is brutal, the mountain is the horizon of these spaces and the fringes correspond to the spaces of piedmont and to the first slopes; to the north, the mountain is extended by the massif of Concors. The transition is smooth with the continuities of the reliefs and the ridge, which dominates the valley of Vauvenargues. The summit plateaus constitute the fringes; to the east, the mountain slopes gently and connects to the plans of the department of Var.

The landscape unit of Montagne Sainte-Victoire has 12 sub-landscape units. Among them :

- the Sainte-Victoire range is a great structuring relief with marked oppositions between the ubac wooded long slope and adret with the steep vertiginous cliff. These spaces are spectacular, rough, wild. A rich set of contrasting colors results from the alternation of geologic layers: white limestone, marls and ocher and red clays spectacularly eroded.
- The Cengle plateau: at the outposts of the mountain, of which it seems symmetrical horizontally, this slab gently curved belvedere dominates the valley of the Arc. The cultivated plateau and the slight bulges of scrubland contrast with the cliff and compose a landscape of great harmony. The southern slope, denude, is a chaos of a large picturesque with blocks collapsed on a slope of red clay gullies.

*(Source : atlas paysager des Bouches-du-Rhône-2007)*





Photo Sébastien Verdière

### ***C7 Particular ecosystem***

Sainte-Victoire and Concors are a natural environment consisting of a variety of unique wooded, agricultural and mountainous landscapes, which harbour a precious biodiversity. They are the symbol of all that Provence represents with its history, its culture, and the wealth of its natural heritage. A multitude of flora and fauna shares the rich mosaic of these environments, incorporated into the European Natura 2000 network.

On the edge of this mountain climate, both alpine and mediterranean species can live together. Cliffs and scrubland, vine cultures and natural grassland or forest all share the territory and constitute natural habitats for 20% of French flora and more than 130 species of birds. Among them, 21 species of plants and 32 of birds are protected. As an example, 36 couples of *Aquila Fasciata* live in France and 2 of them in Sainte-Victoire. 15 eaglet chicks have been raised over these last 3 years. The symbolic character of the natural heritage of Sainte-Victoire is translated by the presence of this emblematic eagle.



Photo Matthias Magnier

Concerning flora, *Anthemis gerardiana* or *Ophrys saratoi* which are globally under threat are flourishing on the territory of Sainte-Victoire.



Photo Xavier Nicolle

Recent inventories have listed 23 species of rhopalocera reflecting both Community interest and natural heritage. Further 23 species of chiroptera among which 9 protected at different levels as well as 30 species of invertebrate and 6 reptiles and amphibians.

In relation the species which benefit from a national protection, 25 plants, 100 birds, 14 reptiles, 12 mammals, 2 fishes, 12 insects, 1 shellfish, and 6 amphibians are concerned.

The mountain plants like Bearberry or Martagon Lily, could be relics of the last ice age. Talking about the Mediterranean ones, many among them depend of the traditional activity of pastoralism which started 12 000 years ago, when the Man gave up nomadic life style, settled and began to interact with nature.

It is also necessary to quote the geologic heritage, in particular the reserve of Roques Haute which protects one of the biggest deposits of dinosaurs eggs, in the world.

This rich natural diversity is the result of centuries of agriculture and pastoralism and its mosaics of areas; but nowadays with agriculture and farming practices in decline, the forest takes over giving a somewhat monotonous ecological outlook, much poorer than what diversity offered.

Cezanne died in 1906, when agriculture was very much part of the landscape. The focus now is to preserve the features of the mountain, which will result in thriving rural activities.

And the stake now, is to preserve these points of view on the mountain. They will result of dynamic rural activities.

### C8 Mediterranean cultural identity

With its wine of controlled origin label (AOC label): "Côtes de Provence-Sainte-Victoire", its olive oil label "Oil of Aix-en-Provence" (AOC), its fields of lavenders, honey, the almonds which enter the composition of the famous "calissons of Aix", nougat and crisps ..., the country of the massif Concors-Sainte-Victoire offers a panel of typical Provençal products.

Photo Véronique Paul



This wealth is valued in a very dynamic way with the label "Vignoble and Terroirs", which promotes the wine tourism (wine growers meetings, wine growers process), marketing producers, distillery of lavender oil, local oil mills...

Photo Véronique Paul



There is no specific cultural marker in Sainte-Victoire, but on Sainte-Victoire are alive, as elsewhere, Provençal traditions, with folk dances at local festivals, weekly village markets, artisanal soap production, pottery, products derived from lavender, biscuits, olive wood carving...

Photo Véronique Paul





### ***C9 Sustainability and anthropogenic environment***

#### **Sainte-Victoire, a mountain of “first times”**

Immediately after the wild fire that ravaged the mountain in 1989, the State, through the Prefect, met the associations. More than a cathartic exercise, a concertation was organized to plan the future of this mountain. It had never been done before.

Just like a mourning act, the first decision was to remove burnt wood, create fascines to prevent the erosion of autumn storms; it had never been done before.

The mountain had been classified in 1983 with a forest landscape and the French law considers that “Natural monuments or classified sites cannot be destroyed or modified in their condition or appearance unless specially authorized” but the question was that the conditions and appearance of forest was the cause of the wild fire. So a document of requalification was drafted and submitted to the minister. It included the idea to open the landscape and try to maintain unwood zones. It had never been done

The Label Grands Sites de France is framed by a very precise regulation of use and decreed by the French State. As a result of a cooperation with the Grands Sites de France Network, private actors of tourism and the Grand Site Sainte-Victoire, an experiment is in progress. It allows tourism stakeholders to post their partnership with the Grand Site Sainte-Victoire in exchange for which their participation in the evaluation of the convention of use is requested for this experimental step. The idea is also to organize professional meetings which aim to make stakeholders to know each others, and make the welcome for tourists better and richer. It had never been done.

#### **Simple and parsimonious infrastructures**

The goals pursued in terms of attendance management aim to offer a quality discovery offer while maintaining the overall number of visitors (at its average increasing rate, about 2% per year). To do this, it is necessary to organize the management of space and traffic flows.

The signage proceeds from a logic of progression in the site and remains confined outside the massif; no equipment is installed in a natural area.



Photo Philippe Maigne

Only the most frequented parking areas have been rehabilitated and upgraded, and the number of parking spaces has been deliberately limited. The materials used are natural and if possible local (replacement of the pre-existing macadam by mixing grass and soil, use of lime instead of concrete, ...).



Photo Virginie Isambert

### Charters for a shared space

Sainte-Victoire is a major point of interest for plenty of different publics. The local one represents the main part of them and the activities are very different. Some of them are looking for calm, others one come to chase, climb or paraglide, some come alone, some with children, but the local have the deep feeling that this mountain is theirs.

Visitors from abroad are welcome as long as they respect. We might make a joke saying that they are welcome as long as they are also able to feel the mountain as being theirs as well.

This mountain hosts precious and protected species of plants and fauna and the idea is not to prevent access, to hinder it but to create offers in the surroundings, in areas in demand of visitors, from where the view is gorgeous and where the nature is less solicited and indeed more able to absorb the flood of visitors.

So, between 2007 and 2015, several charters have been drafted with the associations :

- the climbers' associations to preserve certain areas of the cliffs free of any equipment
- organizers of sports manifestations which treats of cohabitation with the non-engaged hikers the hunters, the others organizers for example, to preserve certain areas especially addressed to the orienteering, This charter also limits to 35 the number of events per year and limits the number of racers to 350
- a charter of sustainable tourism whose aim is to spread visitors in the villages around.

All these charters result of a co working between the concerned populations and the Grand Site Sainte-Victoire.



### **C10 Historic places**

The Celtic-Ligurian remains of the oppidum of Untinos and Bramefan attest to an ancient presence on the site. In 483, the hermit Saint Servin (Saint Ser) was assassinated by Visigoths, in a chapel on the mountainside, in the town of Puyloubier. In the 13th century, a chapel was built just a few steps from one of the peaks of the mountain.

Between 1850 and 1854 the dam of Zola is built. Another dam, the dam of Bimont will complete the action of the dam Zola. Its construction will range from 1946 to 1951.

A cross called "Croix de Provence" visible for kilometers around, dating from 1875, was restored for the first time in 1982, then in 2004. Under the project management of the Grand Site Sainte-Victoire, the whole of the old pedestal was replaced, forming a peripheral bench. where the Provençal landscape is visible 360°.



Photo Georges Flayols

The cross is also overlooking a chapel (Notre Dame de la Victoire) and a former priory of the 17th century recently restored by an association "the Friends of Sainte-Victoire" with the technical and financial help from the Grand Site Sainte-Victoire. It is open all year round as a free access shelter. Inscribed to the national historical monuments list (1978). In the small terrace adjacent, which offers a view to the south, are located a well (cistern) and the old staircase that allowed the monks to go down in their garden on the south face. The rectangular opening that gives both views and sunshine to this terrace is artificial. It was dug by the monks in the seventeenth century.

At the foot of the south face, the small village of Saint-Antonin-sur-Bayon has some houses around its castle (18th century bastide on very old foundations) and its parish buildings also dating from the 18th century. The village also has a Romanesque chapel dating from the 11th century (restored in 2011). According to John Rewald, American specialist Cezanne, the painter sometimes stayed in the sheepfold of this village when he came to paint the mountain.

A little further east, still on the southern face, the chapel of Saint-Ser, destroyed by a landslide in 1990, a summer completely restored in the early 2000s with the help of the Grand Site Sainte-Victoire (project management). Southwest of the Croix de Provence, the Old hamlet of the Trou on

the occasion of a recent restoration, Arch of the old chapel, wheat area, foundations of houses, just next to the refuge Cézanne, but currently closed. Finally the oppidum of Uninos, above Saint-Antonin, inhabited at various times (Celtic-Ligurian habitat, ruins of the Old Castle) and a probable served as watchman during the Roman era.



Photo Georges Flayols

A remarkable aqueduct, one can still see the remains along the CD17 which goes from Saint-Antonin to Aix, led the water of Sainte-Victoire towards Aix, since a catchment located upstream of the village of Saint-Antonin.

In the foothills of the northern slope, are various bastides and the castle of Vauvenargues, dating from the fourteenth century, where Picasso is buried (it still belongs to his descendants but it is not open to the public and cannot be visited).

The mountain has a quarry from which is drawn the marble of Aix: an aggregate of pinkish tint and composite cut, notoriously reminiscent of pink marble. The marble of Aix comes from a site of collapse of stones and sediments located in the municipality of Saint-Antonin-sur-Bayon. Often used as building material of the posh villas of the country of Aix, it also composes the bases of the leonine sculptures of the Rotonde fountain, in Aix-en-Provence. The quarry, which is no longer used, is accessible by foot through the trails of the massif. The extraction site shows both the marks of the chisel operation, with a very irregular wall, and those of the wire cutting operation, with a high inclined mirror wall.

*(Source Wikipedia)*

Between the Sainte-Victoire massif to the north, the Etoile chain to the south and the Sainte-Baume massif to the east, the coal basin of Provence has traces of mining since the 15th century. It is especially at the beginning of the 19th century, with the sinking of vertical wells, that the basin takes an industrial dimension to reach fifty wells and many descendanties. The 80s, with the construction of the "Grand ensemble de Provence" in Gardanne will mark the revival of coal mining and productivity records marked by the modern facilities will be regularly recorded. All this activity will cease on January 31, 2003 at the Morandat well in Gardanne. Today, most of the installations have been dismantled. Only a few headframes have been preserved, including that of

the Hély d'Oissel well in Gréasque, built in 1917 and transformed into the Musée de la Mine, the more recent well Gérard (1945) in Mimet, the impressive headframe of well Z and finally the extraction tower of the well Yvon Morandat which shelters today a pole of scientific culture of the most innovating. This mining tradition is also still present in the memory of the inhabitants of the mining basin, who for the most part worked at the mine from father to son or are women, sisters, daughters of former miners. (Source : Contrat SPÔTT – Provence, mines d'énergies)

### **Synthesis of the extraordinary-emblematic characteristics of the mountain**

#### **10 emblematic characteristics of Sainte-Victoire**

1. It is an every day mountain
2. that is why everyone feels like being its owner
3. one love its changings. It is neither quite the same nor quite else. It depends on the light effects and from where one observes
4. it is preserved. From urbanization and ecologically,
5. but the spirit of place is a reality.
6. As an evidence, associative network associative network pays a lot of attention to its preservation
7. it is deeply inspiring for each one, as far as it can be seen in the landscape. It is a lighthouse.
8. Even if for some it is a post card
9. it is still natural and wild ; even if it is rather small it actually is a mountain
10. it is authentically living with a true rurality. It hasn't been changed in museum, neither in a heart of national park nor in a semi-urban park.

#### **5 globally unique characteristics**

1. It is an every day mountain,
2. it is authentically living with a true rurality. It hasn't been changed in museum, neither in a heart of national park nor in a semi-urban park.
3. Even if for some it is a post card
4. it is still natural and wild ; even if it is rather small it actually is a mountain
5. that is why everyone feels like being its owner.

#### **10 key words with reference to the mountain**

1. Hiking
2. Cézanne
3. Provence
4. Nature
5. Preserved landscape
6. Villages
7. Lighthouse
8. Spirit of place
9. Popular belonging
10. Shared

### **A non-superlative mountain except that....**

Sainte-Victoire is neither a high mountain, nor a hill, and not even a big hill. In reality, it isn't either a small mountain and no more an average one. So, the question is what is Sainte-Victoire?

First it is a shape and lights, it is a double faced mountain with a rocky vertiginous southern slope and hilly and green curves on the north facing side.

Even if there were two pilgrimages, interrupted for years and even centuries, this mountain did not really win a religious fame.

Of course, a priory was built on the crest in the XVIIth century but it worked only in an intermittent way. The conditions of life were much too hard: very little water and an absolute dryness in summer with months without a drop of rain, very low temperatures in winter, exposed to this violent and icy wind that the mistral is...

It also didn't "get much light" because of its famous close neighbour, the Sainte-Baume mountain with : the Provençal tradition of Saint Mary Magdalene and its well-known pilgrimage.

So, how did this mountain become so famous?

It certainly results of the combination of several things:

- Hiking began to become popular at the end of the 19th century
- Cézanne owed his recognition to the retrospective exhibition that Vollart organized in Paris in 1895, he died in 1906
- thirty years later, the French get 15 days a year of paid leave.

The time of leisure activities can arise.

Because of Cezanne's celebrity, Sainte-Victoire enters cultural circles and people know it through the artist's representations. In 1948, one year after Jean Vilar creates the Festival of Avignon, Gabriel Dussurgé and Lily Pastré organize the first festival of lyrical art of Aix-en-Provence. The region adorns itself with an aura of culture.

Pierre Vidal Naquet in "L'incendie de Sainte-Victoire les enjeux sociaux de la réhabilitation"(CERPE juillet 1991) , the sociologist, speaks about Sainte-Victoire, about a "cezannian revolution : profane regarding as sacred" (page 31)

Concerning the sportive and naturalists interest, dozens of hiking associations climbed all the mountains around Marseilles and Aix-en-Provence. In 1955, Henry Imoucha a jeweller from Marseille, falls in love with the ruins of the Priory of Sainte-Victoire.

Stone by stone he rebuilds walls and low walls, hiring even the passing walkers. The association « Les amis de Sainte-Victoire » was born. It counts more or less 900 members. Here are more than 60 years that they restore the Priory which was a property of the commune of Vauvenargues who sold it for one symbolic Franc with the condition that the associations will welcome the visitors, tell them the story of the site and take care of it. They are about 70 000 per year.

Concerning the maintenance of the hiking trails is collectively managed by the Grand Site Sainte-Victoire, the department of the Bouches-du-Rhône and the associations who share the tasks and the trails at the beginning of each year.

Over the decades, Sainte-Victoire became a sort of « every day mountain ».

Reading in its colours or silhouette what will be the weather, being the destination of a simple walk, a challenge to paint, a challenge to climb, a part of nature to take care of ... Each one has intimate links with it.



Asking on Facebook and Twitter networks: *“Could you tell me in what, for you, Sainte-Victoire is an emblematic mountain? One word, several, this is not a chain. I just need to know what you want to say about what it represents for you”* we got 64 answers (cf. D332-Participative\_Workshop)

Farther than its international fame as Cezanne's source of inspiration, this mountain took place in the local culture and practices. This is an authentic rock of passion.

***Isn't it modernity, which is the real emblematic of Sainte-Victoire ?***

Essential motive for a major artist in the history of the painting, mountain phoenix which found again a good part of its landscapes after the huge wild fire which burnt 5 500 ha in 1989, territory shared between the local actors for whom the dialogue is a way of collectively managing the site. May be, here is the main emblematic of the Sainte-Victoire mountain.

That is why, as a fragile reserve of nature, a precious place of conviviality, the symbolic property of more than one million persons a year, this place has great responsibilities towards its neighbours less famous.

As visible as a highlight in the Aixois landscape, the idea is to propose to the visitors, to live the experience *“Sainte-Victoire in Provence”* and discover it in the Provençal countryside, to give them the keys, in this Provence of the interior, to understand a little bit more what is the local deepness.

## PART III

### III.1 Tourism infrastructure and supply

Located in the heart of Provence the Pays d'Aix has a lot to offer to who is willing not to just focus on the Mediterranean Sea and pop in Aix just to see the famous Sainte-Victoire mountain.

Aix-en-Provence counted 148 813 residents in 2016 when the Pays d'Aix broad area (36 municipalities including Aix-en-Provence) counted 414 756 residents (*source : INSEE*).

Since 2016 Aix-en-Provence and Marseille got together with 90 other municipalities to give birth to Aix Marseille Provence Metropole, main administration dealing with a huge territory counting 1,80 millions inhabitants.

25 kilometres from Marseille Marignane international airport Aix-en-Provence is based at 30 kilometres from Marseille, major city of the south of France that counted 855 393 inhabitants in 2016.

Being now France's number 1 cruise port, ranked 5th in the Mediterranean and 17th in the world for total cruise traffic, Marseille aims to join the world's top 10 ports by 2020, by welcoming 2 million passengers.

Aix-en-Provence TGV, high speed railway station, is based at 20 kilometres from Marseille Marignane international airport. Two main motorways (A8 and A51) are passing by Aix-en-Provence making of it an easy destination to reach by car either from France and even Europe.

With such infrastructures Aix-en-Provence provides the travellers with facilities that are necessary for an historical and cultural city where major international festivals and exhibitions are held throughout the year.

Caumont Centre d'Art : 320 000 visitors in 2016

Musée Granet : 175 477 visitors in 2016

Festival International d'art lyrique : 75 526 spectators in 2016

Festival de Piano de La Roque d'Anthéron : 75400 spectators in 2016

Grand Théâtre de Provence : 7 342 visitors in 2016

...

With 3457 hotel rooms in the broad area of the Pays d'Aix, the accommodation capacity appears to be sufficient even though it is concentrated in the city of Aix-en-Provence that counts 2556 hotel rooms itself (66 % of occupancy rate throughout 2016 in Aix-en-Provence guests houses and hotels).

Tourism residences have developed in the Pays d'Aix area for the past few years (18 in 2017).

Aix-en-Provence counts 2 four stars campsites and 2 two stars campsites can be found close to the south side of the mountain Sainte-Victoire.

Although being quite difficult to estimate it is obvious that new modes of accommodation made possible through social networks such as Airbnb, Homelidays, Booking... etc, are nowadays increasing in the area like everywhere else in France and abroad.

Individuals and particularly families tend to prefer that type of accommodation and we can feel that this trend is coherent with a new way of travelling, looking for experiences and willing to meet locals as " happy few ".

### III.2 Tourism operators

Apart from the fact that local residents know really well the natural site of Sainte-Victoire on which they love practicing outdoor activities and despite the fact that many associations in the broad area deal with outdoor activities, tourism operators have developed outdoor activities in the area over the past few years.

- Hiking and guided visits are obviously the most famous. Qualified guides work quite well in such a cultural city as Aix-en-Provence. The main tourism office in Aix-en-Provence being the starting point of most of the city tours. Outdoor activities as well as guided villages visits in the Pays d'Aix area are now promoted and even sold through a "Pass" at Aix-en-Provence Tourism office's desk. This has to be developed and supported. "Slow sport" discovery tours are now regularly organised in the area as another way to tackle the mountain's hills and dales.
- Wine tasting can operate in some of those circuits and cheese or olive oil tasting remains to be developed somehow.
- Business opportunities could be created in local crafts and arts but that needs support and coordination.
- If mountain bikes were already famous in the area it is obvious that electrically-assisted bicycles are now developing. Electrically-assisted bicycle tour operators host day to weekly excursions on a variety of themes and electrically-assisted bicycles hiring stations have been launched close to the mountain.
- As a historic rock-climbing venue and former training site for the towering Alpine summits, Sainte-Victoire has now become a genuine climbing sanctuary.

### III.3 Tourism demand

Provence-Alpes-Côte-d'Azur is the first touristic destination in France for french visitors, the second for foreign visitors.

Visitors come to Sainte-Victoire from all over the globe to roam its many footpaths and the people of Aix-en-Provence love to explore "their mountain" every which way : walking, climbing, mountain biking, paragliding or even driving around it ...

Aix-en-Provence being definitely a cultural and touristic city, main tour operators dragging their foreign customers by coach throughout the South of France lead them straight to the city centres towards major exhibitions. Those visitors do not stay long in the city, and therefore in the area, jumping from one main city such as Nice, Marseille or Aix-en-Provence to another such as Arles or Avignon. Some of them manage to find the time to pop in and see what the Cézanne's mountain actually looks like.

As for French visitors staying in hotels in the Pays d'Aix area, 62% of their stays are actually registered between may and october (*source : Bouches du Rhône Tourisme*).

Most of french visitors in the area are actually regular visitors coming mainly from neighbouring departments from the Provence-Alpes-Côte-d'Azur region, Paris and Ile-de-France or Rhône-Alpes (*Source : Bouches du Rhône Tourisme*).

As well as the inhabitants, those can actually represent a good target for new ways of discovering the broad area from a laid back distance from the mountain that they already know.

Individuals (including families) coming from abroad to visit Sainte-Victoire area mainly come from Europe.

They want to enjoy the spirit and the way of living in the South of France, and more and more often ask for a singular experience.

### **III.4 Tourism impact**

Grand Site Sainte-Victoire is dedicated to promoting and protecting the natural and cultural environment of Sainte-Victoire mountain and the surrounding towns and villages.

Throughout the world the mountain is associated with the work of Paul Cézanne who portrayed its colours and changing quality of light to perfection, but Sainte-Victoire cannot be resumed to the painter's muse and its surroundings and broad area deserves to be discovered.

In that sense a charter of sustainable tourism has been signed in 2015 by the Grand Site Sainte-Victoire, the tourism offices and municipalities of the Pays d'Aix area, the Bouches-du-Rhône council and Bouches-du-Rhône Tourisme agency. Its aim being to spread visitors in the villages of the territory and get them to stay longer in the area, one idea has been to develop a cycling and hiking tour that connects villages while revealing the local history and richness. This led to the project named "Provence, Mine d'énergies" cf. part III.6.

Just like a hint, few years ago, during the Marseille Provence European Capital of Culture Year in 2013, the GR® 2013, a metropolitan long-distance footpath was arranged around the Etang de Berre lake and Massif de l'Etoile, between Marseille and Aix-en-Provence. The idea was to demonstrate how gorgeous landscapes of Provence can often be just a step out of town and can be seen from a whole new angle when infrastructures can be arranged. Featuring stunning protected sites, together with suburban and urban zones, the footpath leads from town to country and back as an invitation to discover the country through a hiking experience.

### **III.5 Public infrastructure and services**

The Pays d'Aix area benefits from a quite good overall mobile coverage.

Main roads enable emergency aid possibilities in good conditions thanks to adequate hospital facilities in the area.

Meanwhile, the secondary road network needs improvements when it comes to securing bicycles lanes and pedestrian sidewalks. This involves a great deal of engineering while dealing with the regulations and implies important costs.

Coherent markings and signalisation remains to be done to secure both hiking and cycling itineraries on outer zones.



### III.6 Partner's perception of the tourism vision of their territory



The tourist strategy of the Grand Site Sainte-Victoire was presented in a very global way during the TWS of TNM1 in Gran Sasso.

The points of attraction of the territory of the Grand Site Sainte-Victoire are centralized on and around the mountain. It is essentially (source: Etude de fréquentation, October 2010) the strolls mainly located around the dam of Bimont and the meadows of Roques Hautes. The built sites such as the St Ser chapel, the Cézanne refuge or the archeological site of the oppidum of Saint Antonin also attract a large and developing attendance. For hiking routes, the Croix de Provence and the Pic des Mouches are the two main destinations, most often with very busy trails.

The objective is to propose a discovery offer of quality, respectful of the natural and human environment, by maintaining overall the number of visitors on the Montagne Sainte-Victoire itself and by promoting complementarities between the territories of the Grand Site and around. This desire to better spread attendance throughout the territory aims on the one hand to limit the pressure on the main attractive sites and on the other hand to organize the reception of the public towards the periphery of the massifs and from the center of the villages, promoting an economic dynamic. In this context, the Grand Site Sainte-Victoire puts in a pattern of trails on the massif of Concors (north of Sainte-Victoire). These are loops of paths from the villages of the massif. The Grand Site also supports initiatives to create hiking tours and thematic discovery trails (landscape, hydraulic heritage, geological, paleontological).

As part of this global tourism strategy, the meaning of the EMbleMatiC project has been actively sought. The territory of Sainte-Victoire is indeed very attractive, and has weaknesses and issues.

- Sainte-Victoire is already internationally recognized, very popular, elected officials as residents and visitors, want extremely sparse improvement (Source: attendance study 2010).
- About ten years ago, a sociological study concluded that there was a risk for this territory to become a prisoner of its image, and in which man would no longer have his place. It would be a territory-museum, a reserve, a 'mark', a monument deserted from the living. To escape this trend, the recommendation was to transform the island into a peninsula, to create a bridge between this island and the world (Source: study image 2008 Sylvie Rebillard – Bouches-du-Rhône County Committee of Tourism).

- On the initiative of the Grand Site, a Sustainable Tourism Charter was co-constructed and signed in 2016 with local authorities and local tourism organizations. The signatories have agreed on the need to reason at the wider scale of the territory of influence of the site (Aix-en-Provence surroundings), and to define objectives shared between protection and tourism actors. "Sainte-Victoire is a carrier of a strong image capital that radiates. It is an emblem that can be a gateway to a much larger area, to other more confidential places to explore, which invites to go further and encourages the stay. It is an asset to value from all the country of Aix and more broadly all Provence."

This charter has been backed by a multi-year action program framework, which includes:

- a willingness to work on the development of alternative offers (to prevent harmful overcrowding for inhabitants, natural environments and visitors)
- the principle of an association of the Grand Site to the creation of the Provence Mines d'Energies project
- a reflection around the "Balconies of Sainte-Victoire". "This is a route of the most beautiful views of the Sainte-Victoire mountain would go from villages to villages throughout the country of Aix. It will be staged, each belvedere developing a theme and / or experience, with a vocabulary of planning and common communication, so that the visitor wants to browse in its entirety. From a distance, the mountain is the landmark but not the site of visit. Plan the communication to make this route known. "

The tourist brand Provence® was created last April by the Regional Committee for Tourism and Bouches-du-Rhone County Committee of Tourism with the catch, in English, "Enjoy the unexpected". However, Sainte-Victoire is precisely for the tourist a particularly expected destination.

EMbleMatiC can therefore be a vector for positioning Sainte-Victoire as an unexpected destination. Indeed, as the mountain Sainte-Victoire is itself the point of attraction, the villages of its peripheries can be seen as its hinterland, towards which orient the public to relieve the Mountain. The purpose is to propose an authentic experience, lived in an habited territory backed by Sainte-Victoire, where the Mountain structures the landscape: the unexpected mountain Sainte-Victoire is the one which seen by far is even more beautiful.

The participation of local actors in the project is an essential dimension of EMbleMatiC and is systematically applied to all projects conducted by the Grand Site. The aim has been to rely on an approach with real local portage, where villages and communities had economically and sociologically needs.

It was therefore chosen to capitalize on a project in creation, to add a complementary facet that could bring in terms of tourism visibility. Participation in the valorisation of Provence Mines d'Energies routes has been proposed in terms of:

- content with the possibility of setting up interpretation supports, based on the most emblematic features of Sainte-Victoire
- communication under the umbrella brand "Mediterranean emblematic summits".

This principle was validated by the Management Committee of the Grand Site on October 6, 2017, which brought together 11 elected representatives, including the Deputy Vice-Presidents at the Grand Site Sainte-Victoire and Tourism. In addition, many stakeholders of the Provence Mines d'Energies project participated in the local meeting and all were supportive.

## PART IV

### **IV.1 SWOT analysis regarding the implementation of an emblematic slow tourism product (eco-itinerary)**

#### **Strengths :**

1. In accordance with the Charterer for Sustainable Tourism, the tourist product to be created within the framework of EMbleMatiC can be produced on the outskirts of the Sainte-Victoire massif but benefiting from its image. It will thus be possible to enhance the territories in escheat by coming out of the Cézannien cliché. At the same time, this product will complete the tourist offer "Provence enjoy the unexpected".
2. The tourist product to be created as part of EMbleMatiC will be able to complete the 'Provence Mines d'Energies' project.
3. The product will be able to rely on intersecting cycling and pedestrian routes (currently being finalized).
4. The principles 2. & 3. have the support of the elected representatives (presented in the Management Committee of October 6, 2017) and local members.
5. EMbleMatiC will be able to offer an international visibility to a workers' memory on an activity that has now disappeared.
6. A synergy can be born from all the actions undertaken around 'Provence Mines d'Energies', in particular the communication, which will contribute to the global valuation.

#### **Weaknesses :**

1. Since the 'Provence Mines d'Energies' project brings together various projects, special attention should be given to their coordination.
2. The interior of the Musée de la Mine is rich and the animations of quality, but the external arrangements have not yet been finalized.
3. The EMbleMatiC calendar and land constraints for the creation of an ex nihilo trail have made it necessary to support existing physical routes
4. The multiplication of actors on the same routes will require a delicate communication that does not hurt anyone but values everyone (different thematic routes carried by different owners on the same route).
5. The actors who participated in the local meeting were very strongly involved, will it be possible to meet their possible expectations (which they have in no way formulated).
6. The attractiveness of the developed concept "the unexpected mountain Sainte-Victoire is the one which is more beautiful" and the support of tourism institutions to promote it remains unclear.

#### **Opportunities :**

1. The product will be able to rely on intersecting cycling and pedestrian routes (currently being finalized).
2. By training effect, this could boost other initiatives carried by local actors in the same project.
3. The product will make it possible to bring to the attention of places still little or insufficiently valued.

4. If the concept works, can be continued around the Grand Site and will enhance the territories of the northern part of the Grand Site, which is in demand of tourist attendance.
5. The number and quality of the interventions at the local meeting proved the link between a public initiative and a participation (a help) of the private actors (proud to be able to help to build a project).
6. The product will support smooth travel (cyclist, pedestrian) with journeys designed without the use of the car.

#### **Threats :**

1. If the EMbleMatiC label takes on too much importance, it should not come overwriting local identities.
2. If the other actions on the 'Provence Mines d'Energies' project are not carried out (specific bike signage, GR approval for the hiking trail, etc.), this can make it difficult to implement the EMbleMatiC projects.
3. If the publications are not written by a local actor (but by an outside company), there is a risk for the quality of the transmission of "the spirit of the place".
4. The future of local tourism offices (metropolitan policy being defined).
5. Metropolitan delays and formalism.
6. If the institutions do not promote the itinerary, it risks remaining confined to a niche tourism offer.

#### ***IV.2 Indication of ideal locations for an eco-itinerary and possibilities to engage stakeholders***

Pursuing the idea that the mountain can even be more beautiful when seen and observed from a laid back position, while going through outer villages, it came out that historical richness of the territory and traditional know-hows could be discovered as well as the beauty of the landscape through a hiking and cycling itinerary.

The project "Provence, mines of energies" is located on the mining basin of Provence, between the Sainte-Victoire mountain in the north and two other massifs in the south (l'Etoile) and in the east (Sainte-Baume). Its history and landscapes have been strongly influenced by the coal industry which flourished in the 19th century and will flourish until the end of the 1970s before declining and finally ending in the 2000s. Most of the facilities have been dismantled: only a few headframes have been retained, and some older equipment is still visible. However, the mining tradition is still present in the memory of the inhabitants of the mining basin, who for the most part worked at the mine from father to son or are women, sisters, daughters of former miners.

Some local producers have been identified in the mining area: honey, goat cheese, olive oil, fruits and vegetables, etc. Walks around wine estates and wine tourism are being set up, in particular through the Vignobles & Découvertes label. La Tuilerie Bossy brings together fifteen or so renowned craftsmen on a renovated industrial building.

Infrastructures for nature tourism are in full development with the creation of a hiking trail entitled "Sentier Provence, mines of energies", 120 km long, for which a GR® country approval



application has been filed with the French Federation of Hiking and a cycling loop of 54 km, connecting the various municipalities together. These 2 routes intersect at different points.

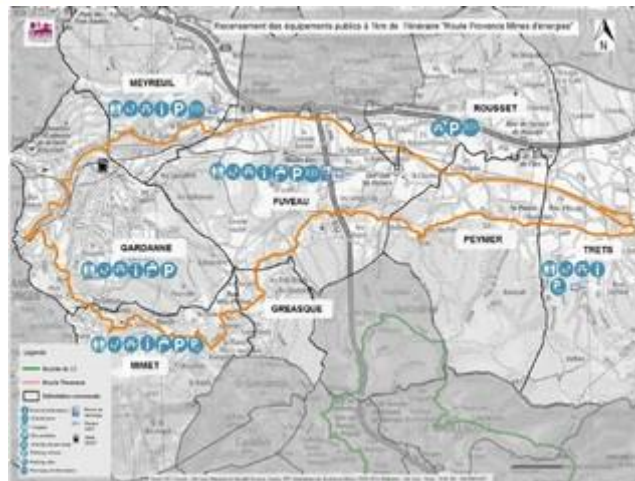


This project is based on the tourism development of the industrial and historical heritage linked to the coal industry and the development of new energies. It proposes to develop the mining area by developing an attractive and dynamic tourism offer based on the identity and values of this area. It aims to respond to local issues and needs in a sustainable development logic by contributing to the enhancement and preservation of natural areas, the development of the attractiveness of the territory and its tourism offer and to convey a dynamic and modern image of the territory.

The objective of the project is to develop a quality local tourism offer in accordance with the identity of the territory through collaborative work involving all local stakeholders and complementary to the flagship destinations that are Marseille and Aix-en-Provence. It will act on the labeling, qualification and accessibility of the offer, the appropriation of the territory by the inhabitants, tourist attendance, the length of stay and the maintenance and creation of jobs.

To achieve these objectives, the actions will focus on structuring the tourism offer by developing outdoor activities, with the establishment of two itineraries that may be structured and linked to other territories cycling and hiking projects. The idea is to use the existing cycling network as much as possible and very low traffic roads in order to reach balconies offering stunning views towards Sainte-Victoire mountain to start with but also discover villages points of interest while going through thematic loops in the area. Local daily usage may of course benefit from the structuring project.

To promote the construction of this offer, various actions of accompaniment and animation of the professionals will be realized. Finally, it will be a matter of implementing a promotion and communication strategy that will give an important place to digital media. Specific project events will also be organized.



The porting of the project is based on a competent and complementary multi-partner initiative, which not only ensures effective and sustainable action but also territorial coherence, with

- public actors: the Aix-Marseille Provence metropolis, coordinated by the Tourism Economy Service of the Aix-en-Provence Regional Council, the municipalities concerned and their tourist offices, the Bouches-du-Nord -Rhône's County, Region, Bouches-du-Rhône Tourism, Tourist Office of Aix-en-Provence
- associative actors: the French Federation of Hiking, the French Federation of Popular Sports, many local sports associations, cultural associations
- private companies: BEE'S (develops a range of electric-assisted bicycles in this area), SECRETS D'ICI (develops guided tours in the basin's communes on the theme of the mine and its miners), local tradesmen and craftsmen
- the local population, a real lever with many former miners.

*(Source : Verret, Magali, chef du service « Économie du Tourisme »)*

### **AS AN EMBLEMATIC CONCLUSION...**

Linked to the field, the Grand Site Sainte-Victoire works with three ears... One earing the nature it has to care of, one listening to the folks it has to answer to, and the third one is used to catch the whispers that announce the needs of tomorrow...

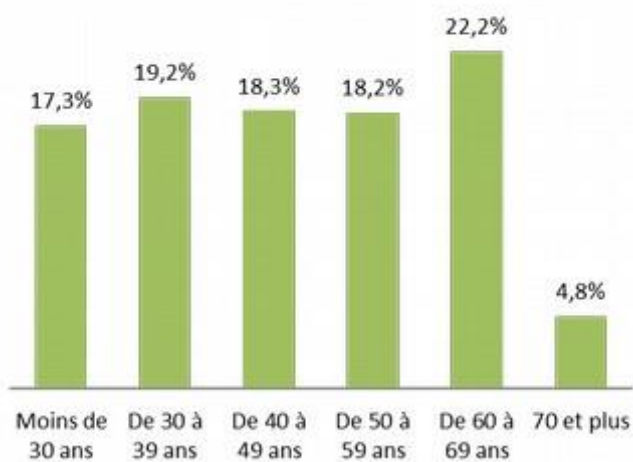
**ANNEX**

*Tables and diagrams*

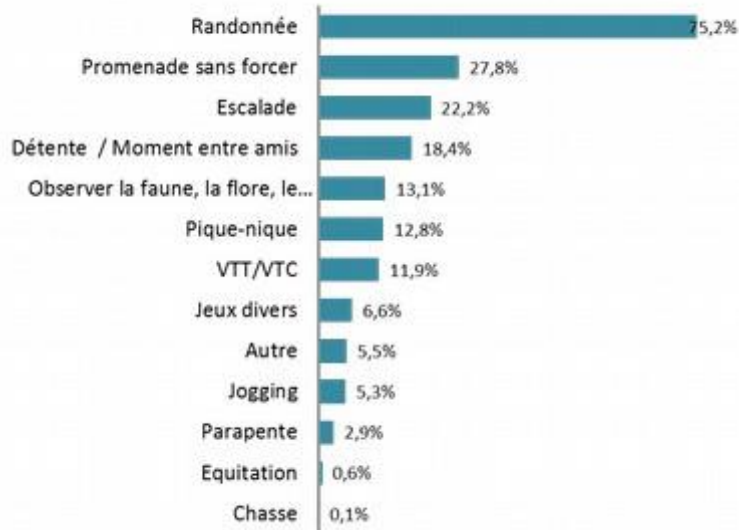
**Catégories socioprofessionnelles**



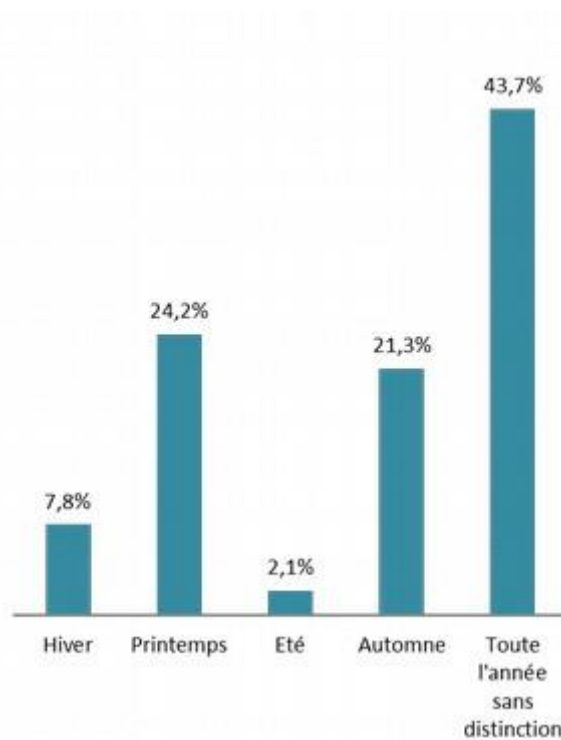
**Classes d'âges**



**Activités pratiquées en général par les habitués du site**



**Saisons pratiquées par les habitués du site**



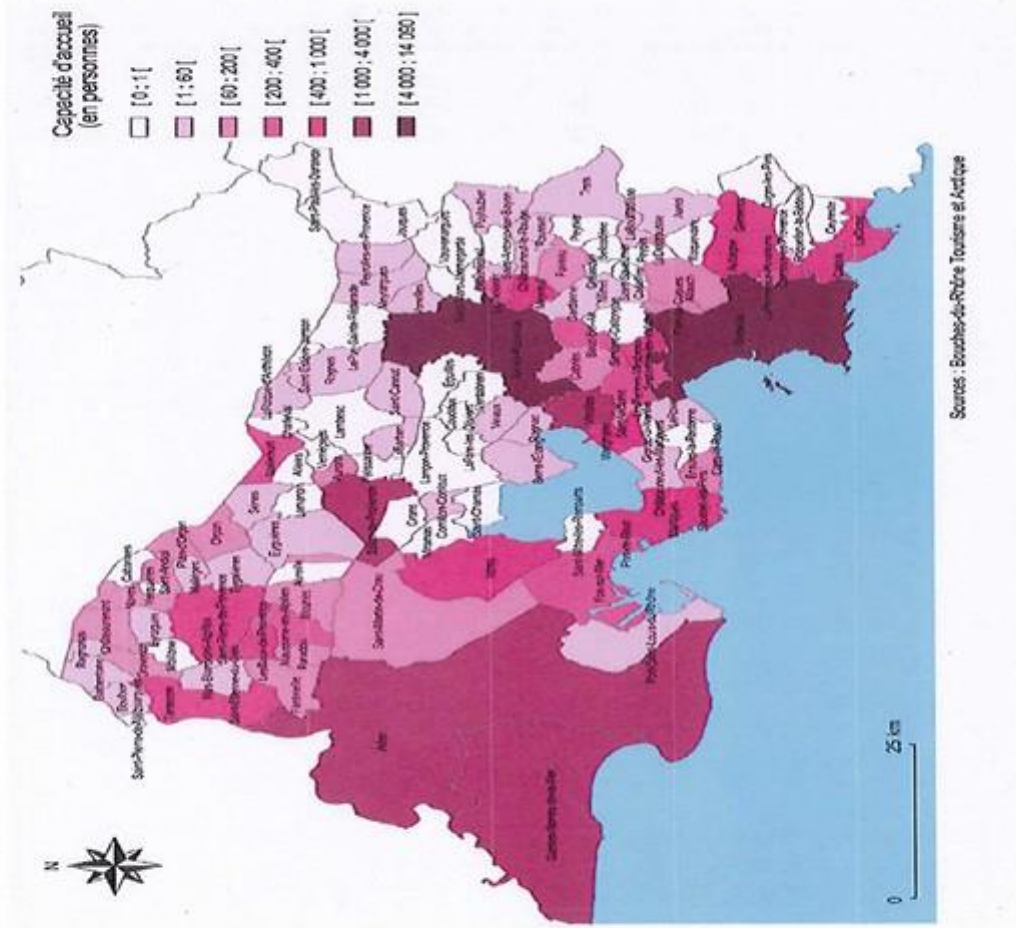


### Raisons du choix du site\*



**HÔTELLERIE**

**Répartition de la capacité d'accueil hôtelière dans les Bouches-du-Rhône en 2017**



BOUCHES-DU-RHÔNE TOURISME

P. 18

LES ESPACES MONTAGNARDS - 4<sup>e</sup> trimestre 2017

### Photographs



Photo Jean-Christophe Ballot





Photo Xavier Nicolle



Photo Véronique Paul





Photo Véronique Paul



Photo Georges Flayols





Photo Véronique Paul



Photo Sébastien Verdière



Photo Georges Flayols

### Self-evaluation table

CRITERIA		Score	For memory : local meeting's score
C1 Proud local people	1-10	8	5 for spatial cohesion
C2 Institutional recognition	1-10	7	5
C3 Reputation	1-10	8	6
C4 Legends and myths	1-10	4	4
C5 Power of inspiration	1-10	10	9
C6 Picturesque landscape	1-10	10	10
C7 Unique ecosystems	1-10	8	8
C8 Particular cultural identity	1-10	10	8
C9 Sustainability and anthropogenic environment	1-10	4	6
C10 Historic places	1-10	4	7
<b>TOTAL</b>	10-100	<b>73</b>	68