

## Press kit 2020

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# The Bayeux Tapestry

Unique artefact of its kind, the Bayeux Tapestry is an embroidery of wool yarn on woven linen, made in the 11th Century. It is 70 metres long and 50 centimetres high, and recounts the tale of the conquest of England on 14th October 1066, led by William the Conqueror, the Duke of Normandy.



Remarkably well preserved, the Bayeux Tapestry features on UNESCO's "Memory of the World" Register, thus ensuring its conservation and its registration as an artefact of universal value. Saved many times from destruction through the course of history, the ' Cloth of the Conquest ' (its other name) continues to reveal its secrets today.

The Tapestry has been displayed at the Bayeux Tapestry museum since 1983 (and is still there!), a public museum housed in Centre Guillaume le Conquérant (formerly the Grand Séminaire). With close to 400,000 visitors every year, the Bayeux Tapestry attracts people from all over the world and is still the subject of many scientific research projects. A visit to the museum allows members of the public to see the Tapestry in its entirety, to get up close without damaging it, and to understand its history, and how it was made.



## UNESCO Memory of the World



### Preservation

The Bayeux Tapestry is a masterpiece embroidered nearly 1,000 years ago. It benefits from exceptional conditions of preservation, a key factor in its registration by UNESCO.

Light, dust, changes in temperature, insects and mould all endanger the preservation of cloth.

Behind its glass showcase, the Tapestry is on display 360 days a year, under dim lighting to prevent the colours from fading.

The temperature is maintained at 18-20°C, with a level of humidity at around 50%, to prevent the fibres in the linen and yarns from deteriorating.

On 2nd August 2007, the Bayeux Tapestry was registered by UNESCO as "Memory of the World", as was the Declaration of Human Rights, General de Gaulle's famous Appeal on 18th June 1940 and the Lumière films.

The memory of the world is fragile. Whilst the "World Heritage" list bestows international recognition on exceptional sites, the "Memory of the World" register compiles various kinds of documents of universal value - from photographs and sound recordings to audiovisual and multimedia materials. The objective of UNESCO's programme is to safeguard valuable archive holdings and library collections, and to ensure they are preserved in the best conditions. The Bayeux Tapestry is an exception, as most of the other registered works are not on public display.

Two plaques at the entrance of the museum, one in French, the other in English, are testimonies of the Tapestry's universal value. The town of Bayeux thus places itself amongst the world's most popular cultural destinations.

**More info:** [www.unesco.org](http://www.unesco.org)

## A thousand year old tale

### Key markers on the embroidery

The Tapestry has 58 scenes in total, 25 scenes take place in France and 33 in England. 10 scenes are depicting the Battle of Hastings.

9 pieces of linen fabric are sewn together for a total length of 68,58 metres. 10 shades of wool strings provided effects of perspective and depth to the 626 characters, the 37 buildings, among them the Mont-Saint-Michel, the 41 ships and other 202 horses and mules.



### Embroider the Tapestry with the « Bayeux stitch »

The Bayeux Tapestry has been embroidered with several stitches:

- Stem stitches to create the lines and outlines
- The couching stitch or « Bayeux stitch » is employed to fill in the coloured areas, outlined with a stem stitch and performed in three stages.

The Bayeux Tapestry is a Romanesque masterpiece from the 11th Century; it was most probably commissioned by Bishop Odon, William's half-brother, to decorate the cathedral during its consecration, on 14th July 1077. It relates the events of the conquest of England led by the Duke of Normandy, who defeated the English at the Battle of Hastings in 1066.

The tale commences in 1064, when the king of England, Edward the Confessor, asked Harold, his brother-in-law, to journey to Normandy to offer his distant cousin William the throne of England.

Harold's boat sailed across the Channel, and after an eventful journey, he conveyed the King's message to William. Before returning to England, Harold swore fealty to William, on the sacred relics of Bayeux Cathedral. He then returned to England to talk to King Edward. When Edward died, Harold betrayed his oath and accepted the throne. On 6th January 1066, Harold was crowned king of England in the place of William.

On learning the news, William decided to go and take what was rightfully his. His fleet crossed the Channel on the night of 28th September. William and his army took up position in Hastings and waited for Harold and his troops.

On the morning of 14th October 1066, the battle commenced and the Normans were victorious. Harold died at the end of the day, shot in the eye by an arrow. The tale told in the Tapestry ends with the defeat of the Saxon troops. William was crowned King of England in December 1066 at Westminster Abbey in London.

**The Tapestry is not simply the narration of a military operation; it is also a spiritual relic that describes how the breach of an oath is punished.**

## An eventful journey through history

### Chronology

**1077:** The Bayeux Cathedral was formally consecrated. The Tapestry was probably commissioned by Odon, Bishop of Bayeux, to decorate the monument.

**1476:** The Tapestry was mentioned in the Inventory of the Cathedral Treasures.

**1794:** The Arts Council for the district of Bayeux seized the Tapestry to protect it as a national treasure.

**1804:** Napoleon Bonaparte displayed the Tapestry at the Louvre then returned it to Bayeux.

**1812:** The Tapestry was on public display in Bayeux town hall until 1842. The caretaker unrolled it by hand before each visit.

**1913:** The Tapestry was moved to Hôtel du Doyen in Bayeux.

**1944:** The Tapestry was stored away in Sourches, then at the Louvre after being inspected in Bayeux by German scientists.

**Since 1983:** The Tapestry has been exhibited in the "Centre Guillaume le Conquérant" (the old seminary), next to the library, where it remains today.

The Tapestry, since its making, has survived many vicissitudes. A series of tumultuous events in history endangered or nearly damaged the relic.

### In the Middle Ages

In 1476, the Tapestry is listed as one of the hangings in the Inventory of Bayeux Cathedral Treasures. It was the custom at the time to hang the Tapestry around the nave on the Feast Day of the Relics. The rest of the year it was rolled up and stored in a wooden chest.

Two fires broke out in the Bayeux Cathedral during the Middle Ages, but each time the Tapestry was saved from the flames.

### During the French Revolution

It was not until the 18th Century that the Tapestry aroused an interest other than religious. In 1730, a complete reproduction was published in a book entitled "Monuments of French Monarchy" by Dom Bernard de Montfaucon, a Benedictine monk. Considered as church property, the Tapestry suffered public condemnation during the French Revolution. It was very nearly cut into pieces to be used as a simple canvas over army wagons. The captain of the National Guard, Lambert Leonard Le Forestier, saved it and kept it out of harm's way in his office.

### In the 19th Century

Several pieces and threads of yarn went missing during this period. A British draughtsman, Charles Stothard, came into possession of a fragment of fabric (whether it was given to him or stolen remains unknown). It was returned to the town of Bayeux by Kensington Museum in 1871.

### During the Second World War

After being examined by German scientists in 1941, the Tapestry was stowed away at Château de Sourches, near Le Mans, to be conserved together with other National Treasures. On 2nd March 1945, after a brief exhibition at the Louvre, it was returned permanently to Bayeux.



## Visiting the museum



### Useful information

#### Opening times

Open all year round 7/7\*

01/03 to 31/10

9.00am – 6.30pm (7.00pm May to August)

01/11 to 28/02

9.30am-12.30 and 2.00pm-6.00pm

*Last admission 45 min before closing*

\*Annual closing time

Xmas, New Year's Day, January

#### Rates 2020

Full rate 9,50€ (groups adults 7.50€)

Youth rate 5€ - free for under 10s

*Headphones included (16 languages)*

#### Twin ticket 2 museums

Full rate 12€ (reduced rate 10,50€)

#### Triple ticket 3 museums

Full rate 15€ (reduced rate 13,50€)

#### Group booking section

Contact: Aline Levavasseur

Tel.+33 (0)231 512 558

reservation@bayeuxmuseum.com

#### Boutique / Bookstore

Books, games, dishes, textiles, souvenirs. Exclusive brand « I was in Bayeux »

The Tapestry has been displayed in a 17th Century former seminary in Bayeux since 1983. The spacious building is an ideal showcase, with a direct access to the masterpiece, and offers museum facilities, entirely dedicated to the Tapestry.

### Ground floor

***The Tapestry Gallery:*** the linen is displayed, entirely unrolled and protected from the light in a horseshoe-shaped room. Audio guides providing commentary on each of the 58 scenes are available in 14 languages\*, with a children's version in English or French.

\*French, English, German, Dutch, Spanish, Italian, Japanese, Chinese, Danish, Norwegian, Swedish, Russian, Hebrew and Czech.

### First floor

***Exhibition room:*** This area reveals precious information about the Bayeux Tapestry, and places it in its historical context. This part of the exhibition was specifically designed to adjust the visitors' outlook on the masterpiece as they go deeper in their understanding of the Tapestry. Tapestry or embroidery? Mystery around its creation, its preservation through history... Includes realistic models of ships, buildings, maps and everyday scenes and objects to further the public's understanding of the Middle Ages and the Norman influence in buildings construction (London Tower, Winchester Cathedral...)

### Second floor

***Cinema:*** every 20 minutes (alternately in French and English) a film in high definition showing a reenactment of the Battle of Hastings - combined with special effects - explains how and why William became king of England.

***Education Room:*** a half-scale reproduction of the Tapestry is on display here. This 130 m2 area is dedicated to the study of various scenes. Some are enlarged and accompanied with chronological annotations and a translation in English and French of the embroidered Latin text.

## What's on in the museum?

### Stay in Bayeux

#### Access

Bayeux is located 260 km away from Paris and 30 km from Caen.

By car: motorways A13 et A84

By train: line Paris-Cherbourg, the station is 500 meters from the museum.

By plane: Airport of Caen-Carpiquet 20 km away

By car-ferry: Terminal of Caen-Ouistreham 30 km away

Bayeux Tourist Board

Pont Saint-Jean - 14400 Bayeux

Tel. 0033 (0)2.31.51.28.28

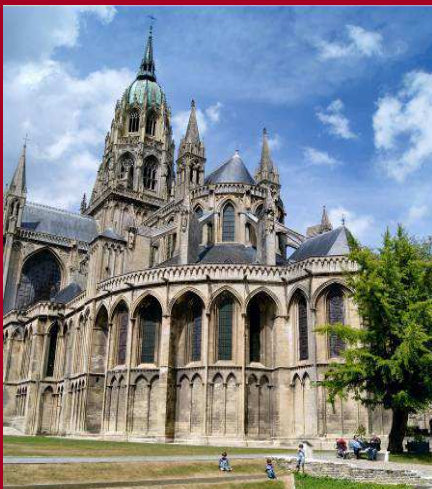
[www.bessin-normandie.com](http://www.bessin-normandie.com)

Calvados Tourist Board

8 rue Renoir – 14054 Caen Cedex 4

Tel. 0033 (0)2.31.27.90.30

[www.calvados-tourisme.com](http://www.calvados-tourisme.com)



### *A new museum in 2025*

The project consists of an overhaul of the current museum which will benefit of the surfaces of the building left free by the library at the beginning of 2019.

Objective: to improve the conditions of conservation and presentation of the Bayeux Tapestry and to enrich the experience of visitors who come to discover this heritage piece, listed by UNESCO on the Memory of the World register. Alongside the State, the Normandy Region, the Calvados Department and the City of Bayeux will finance this project whose total amount is estimated at 20 million €.



### *In May, the Night of the Museums*

On "the Night of the Museums", the public is invited to discover the Bayeux Tapestry, free of charge from 8 p.m. to midnight.

### *In September, Heritage Days*

This annual event is a chance for the public to discover local historical monuments. The Bayeux Tapestry Museum takes part in the open days. Free entry to the museum all weekend.

## Museum milestones

1983: The museum was housed in the former seminary building

1987: The Prince and Princess of Wales donated a facsimile of Domesday Book of the museum

1994: Restoration of the 13th Century chapel

2003: The museum was voted France's second most profitable attraction by the magazine « Challenges »

2005: The chapel was refurbished to host temporary exhibitions

2007: The Tapestry was listed « Memory of the World » by UNESCO

2011: Exhibition « Emakimono and Bayeux Tapestry » in partnership with Idemitsu Museum of Tokyo

2016: Exhibition « Guillaume Le Conquérant, Héros en BD » with the partnership of Editions OREP

2025: Opening of the new museum

## The museum in figures

The Tapestry Museum is one of the three museums managed by the Town of Bayeux.

### Statistics

In August 2019, the Bayeux Tapestry welcomed its 15 millionth visitor since 1983. On average, the number of visitors reaches around **400, 000 per year**, from all over the world, with record numbers when there are D-Day anniversary celebrations every 5 or 10 years.

### Visitors' profile

Each year, individual visitors account for two-third of admissions, the other third is made up of groups. Schools account for 47% of group visitors.

Half of the visitors come from English-speaking countries (mostly British and American). French visitors account for just 26 % of admissions.

Since 2013, the 3 museums of Bayeux are identified with an only brand, **Bayeux Museum**. The proposal of combined tickets encourages the return of clients and the discovery of the other museums with a discount rate (*see useful infos*):

-**Bayeux Tapestry**

-**Memorial Museum of the Battle of Normandy**

-**MAHB, Art and History Museum Baron Gérard**

