



■ **Fig. 1** (left) Learning the values of roman coins and using a writing tablet, by Hervé Hugues, 2009 ■ **Fig. 2** (right) Puzzle-models of Gallo-Roman riverboats make understandable the naval architecture and the confines of towing (realised by Gilles Forget). Behind: Gallo-Roman monuments that could be placed on a topographical scene to understand urbanism, by Hervé Hugues, 2009

## „On board into history“ (Embarquez dans l’Histoire)

An original and creative pedagogical programme on the Rhône River (France)



**„On Board into History“ is a pedagogical programme open to schoolchildren from the Rhône Valley to reintroduce them to their local heritage.**

■ Camille DAVAL  
(F)

The Rhône River is one of the most important arteries of France, giving access to the Mediterranean Sea through an extensively rich and developed valley. This role as a cultural, economic and tourist attraction is not just a modern fact. All through history the Rhône has always played the roles both of a communication way and a frontier, both a gate to reach other civilisations and a protective barrier. This river remembers some of the most important historical events in the national history of France. The river’s importance is one of the reasons why several French public and private institutions,<sup>1</sup> in association with the European community, decided in 2005 to

launch a global plan on sustainable development. Many sections were chosen to encourage various programmes on ecology, economical development, or cultural events.

The programme „On Board into History“ (embarquez dans l’histoire) was initiated in the „plan Rhône“ background in 2008-2009. Its main aim is to encourage the local population to regain their own history and heritage, especially schoolchildren. The project is called „On board“ because all the activities take place on a canal boat called „La Loupika“, allowing travel on the Rhône, coming closer to local populations. There is no need to travel to the next big city to organise a cultural day out with children, and it is easier, cheaper and more ecologic (and much more fun too).

The programme has been designed to work on a three year cycle, travelling through history each year from antiqui-

ty to modern period via the Middle Ages 2010 is the second season on local medieval history.

### Flashback on the 1st Gallo-Roman edition

In March and April 2009, „On board into History“ received more than 500 children for its very first edition, dedicated to Gallo-Roman river trade. Following the philosophy of „learning by playing“, they took part in a big role-playing game, embodying Gallo-Roman *nautae* engaged in a race for commercial benefits between Lugdunum (Lyon) and Arelate (Arles). They prepared their characters at school before the day and arrived for their „Gallo-Roman day“ with a roman name, a job and a real character with his own appearance and personality.

The inside of the Loupika was decorated with historical evocation, of which the most important element was a repro-

duction of „the pillar of the Nautae“ (Fig. 3), a first century monument found under Notre-Dame in Paris and erected in honour of Jupiter by the Nautae Parisii. Another main element was a part of a Gallo-Roman riverboat with all its load of amphorae and barrels. But the most important accessory is the game table engraved with a part of the Rhône River (from Lyon to the Mediterranean sea). On the game table it is possible to play a game similar to „snakes and ladders“. This table will be kept as the central element during the entire programme for all the referred historical periods.

Divided into four teams referring to the four Gallo-Roman Provinces, the children had to gain benefits by buying and selling products while boating on the Rhône. They needed to learn the values of roman coins (Fig. 1), to distinguish local and imported products, to brave all the difficulties of river navigation from naval architecture

<sup>1</sup> The „plan Rhône“ partners are : the National government, the Comitee of the Mediterranean and Rhône Basin, the regions of Languedoc-Roussillon, Provence-Alpes-Côte-d’Azur, Rhône-Alpes, Bourgogne and Franche-Comté, the National Company of Rhône (the main operator of the River) and the European Community (FEDER).



■ **Fig. 3** The reproduction of the „Pillar of the Nautes“ made by Louxor spectacle inside the Loupika, and the wooden exvoto made by the children for the god of their choice. See also the glass pyramid that lights the inside of the boat, by Hervé Hugues, 2009

to natural dangers. To take up these challenges, they had to use historical replicas and pedagogical models (Fig. 2), galvanising their curiosity, imagination and creativity in a real collaborative team approach.

This first edition was successful for all the schoolchildren and their teachers, as well as for the programme team and the different partners of the „plan Rhône“. And even if the sestericius has not yet replaced Pokémon, some of the roman coins won by the players are still on the schoolyard market.

## 2nd edition: „On board into medieval history“

For its second edition, the programme „on board into history“ will be focused on the Medieval Period around the Rhône River.

Transported to the middle of the fourteenth century,

schoolchildren will have to deal with some of the most important events in local, national and international history. This year, three teams are fighting to inherit the Dauphiné from the last „Dauphin“ Humbert II who has no son. Each of the teams has to deal with a specific event to be authorised to inherit. The royal team, headed by King Philippe VI of Valois has to manage with the Hundred Years War, while the pontifical team, with the Pope Clement VI, has to conduct the embellishment of their palace in Avignon. The third team, from Provence, featuring Jeanne Ière de Naples, will have to face one of the most important epidemics of history: the Black Plague.

The long table with the drawing of the Rhône River will be used to feature the different territories that the children will have to equip (mills, bridges, production centres, markets, etc.). The main elements of the historical *mise-en-scène* will be a gothic library with manuscript replicas and decorated modern books (used during the game to find clues and information) and a small medieval garden on the boat's deck.

Schoolchildren will discover military and civil engineering with models of medieval artillery and vault building puzzles, learn botany and medicine around the garden and take part in a common project of an illuminated manuscript.

One great novelty of this second edition is its opening from schools to the general public. During the project period (March - April 2010), each 'no-class' day will be an „open“ day. Festive events with voluntary living history troupes and conferences will be freely accessible. The idea is to build bridges between the general

public and the scientific world around medieval themes and archaeology. In this initiative, „On board into History“ is proud to be supported by associations and committees of nautical archaeology (Comité RABA,<sup>[2]</sup> AREAP<sup>[3]</sup>) and is still open to all propositions.

The positive reactions of the participants and the partners after the first edition and the enthusiasm already shown for the second edition are really encouraging and stimulating. „On board into History“ is a developing programme that expands its impact on local populations each year. This openness is completely linked to a real request from the children to come back with their parents, with a great hope that this chain-reaction can contribute to reintroducing people to their own heritage.

## In practice

„On board into History / Embarquez dans l'Histoire“ is a triennial programme launched in 2009. It has been created by the association Cinéfil, represented by Bastien Thibaudier and the Individual Company Archeomedia, headed by Camille Daval.

It is financially supported by the „Plan Rhône“ partners and, thanks to that, it is completely free for schoolchildren. The second edition on Middle Ages will work in March and April 2010, between Lyon and Valence.

Find more information and exchanges on the forum: <http://www.embarquezdanslhistoire.eu/> or contact: [camille@archeomedia.fr](mailto:camille@archeomedia.fr)

## Summary

„Embarquez dans l'Histoire“ est un programme pédagogique proposé aux scolaires de la Vallée du Rhône pour les sensibiliser à leur patrimoine local. Approche ludique, manipulations, maquettes et expériences encouragent un apprentissage actif basé sur la curiosité et la créativité, dans un cadre de travail au fort contenu scientifique. La deuxième édition consacrée au Moyen Age est en cours de conception, avec un développement événementiel autour de la période médiévale et de la recherche historique et archéologique.

„Zur Geschichte an Bord“ ist ein pädagogisches Programm, das für Schülerinnen und Schüler aus dem Rhône-Tal entwickelt wurde, um sie wieder an ihr regionales Kulturerbe heranzuführen. Spiele, Modelle und Experimente werden genutzt, um das Eigenstudium, das Interesse und die Kreativität auf einer seriösen wissenschaftlichen und historischen Basis zu befördern. Die zweite Saison, die sich dem Spätmittelalter widmet und die ein vergleichbares Programm „mittelalterlicher“ und wissenschaftlicher Veranstaltungen aufweist, wird derzeit erarbeitet.

■ **Camille Daval** graduated with a degree in Higher Applied Studies in Art History and Archaeology (University of Grenoble – France) in 2006 with a specialization in archaeological communication. Camille Daval has created ArchéoMédia to help private and public operators promote cultural Heritage. Specializing in new methods of pedagogy, ArchéoMédia works on planning boards of archaeological and historical sites, on the creation of animation programs and on the conception of communication supports.



2 Comité RABA : multi-regional institution of nautical activities, including sub water archaeology (<http://www.comiteraba.fr/>)

3 AREAP : Association pour la Recherche et l'Etude en Archéologie Ponantaise / Association supporting research and communication on western Europe sub water archaeology (<http://www.areap.fr/>)