

10. October 2023

Europe/International

Bocholt residents visit the French twin towns

A unique experience - the citizens' trip to Aurillac and Arpajon-sur-Cère

32 people from Bocholt have now returned from their visit to the French twin towns of Aurillac and Arpajon-sur-Cère with many impressions. They were guests there for five days and experienced a varied programme in bright sunshine. Together with the German-French Society of Bocholt, the city of Bocholt organised this citizens' trip on the occasion of the 50th anniversary of the twinning.

This anniversary was already celebrated last year with the European Town Festival in Bocholt. Numerous French people from the council, the administration and from the new circle of friends of the towns of Aurillac and Arpajon-sur-Cère came there. For the first time in the more than 50-year history of the Franco-German town twinning, the German-French Society of Bocholt now has a local partner association.

Cheque presentation for the European Youth Camp 2024

On their arrival in Aurillac, the Bocholt residents were greeted by their host families and members of the friends' association. The next day, there was a city tour of Aurillac with a visit to the cultural centre "Pierre Mendès France". In the afternoon, the tour group was guests at the town hall of Arpajon-sur-Cère. There, Mayor Isabelle Lantuejoul welcomed them in the council chamber. They then took a short stroll through the town centre to the Social and Cultural Centre. There, the Circle of Friends and Deputy Mayor Gudrun Koppers, who was travelling with them, presented two cheques to the centre. The money will cover the costs for the next visit of a French youth group to the European Youth Camp in Bocholt next year.

Encounter evening with live music

A German-French encounter evening in a cosy civic hall in Senilhes in Arpajon-sur-Cère was one of the highlights of the programme. A 3-man band with accordion, guitar and double bass played world-famous French chansons and provided an excellent musical programme. This was accompanied by "pot au feu à l'auvergnate", a typical stew with savoy cabbage, boiled pork and potatoes from Auvergne. Together, Germans and French sang songs they knew in the German and French languages that evening. For example, the chanson "Oh, Champs-Élysée" became a catchy tune on this trip.

Excursions in the Cantal

Together with their host parents, the German guests got to know not only the two twin towns but also the surrounding area in the French department of Cantal. Excursions to Puy Mary, the second highest peak of the "Monts du Cantal" in the Massif Central, and to the St. Etienne - Cantalès reservoir inspired them because of the beauty of nature. The visit to the village of Salers, one of the most beautiful villages in France, invited us to stroll around. Salers is a completely preserved small town of the Renaissance period, with private and public buildings, town wall, defence towers and church. The visit ended with the official reception in Aurillac's town hall. There, the first deputy mayor Bernard Berthelier emphasised the special friendship between the cities. DFG President Wilfried Flüchter emphasised that the citizens' trip was a valuable opportunity for French and Germans to meet. All the guests felt sincere gratitude for this.

Stopovers in Beaune and Paris

The one-week trip starts in Bocholt by bus. Due to the long distance of about 1,100 kilometres, the travel group made a stopover in the French cities of Beaune and Paris. In Beaune, the travellers took the opportunity to visit the world-famous "Hôtel-Dieu", a hospital from the Middle Ages. A wine tasting was also on the programme. They got to

know the French capital on a city tour and had a fantastic panoramic view of the whole of Paris at the end of the tour on the visitors' terrace of the Arc de Triomphe.

Promotion

The encounter between the citizens of the city of Bocholt and the two French twin towns of Aurillac and Arpajon-sur-Cère, which was rated as "unforgettable" by the participants of the trip, was supported by the [Franco-German Civic Fund](#). The Franco-German Citizens' Fund advises, networks and finances projects that make Franco-German friendship and Europe a tangible experience for the wider population.

It promotes a variety of formats and topics, is low-threshold and open to all actors of civil society. The Citizens' Fund has its origins in the Treaty of Aachen concluded between Germany and France in 1919 and was established in April 2020. It is implemented by the Franco-German Youth Office (DFJW) and is financed in equal parts by the German and French governments.

All info at: www.buergerfonds.eu



*The participants and their host families at the town hall of Arpajon-sur-Cère
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*The Bocholt travel group at the joint exchange
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