

# WISDOM

English Guide

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# US, GALLO-ROMAINS

Incorporated into the Roman Empire in 15 bc, the Helvetians (or Helvetii), like their Gallic neighbours, now belonged to a new world, centered on Rome and the Mediterranean. Their community became the “City of the Helvetii”, with Avenches as its capital and secondary settlements such as *Lousonna*.

Under Roman influence, the local way of life changed rapidly: the use of Latin and writing became widespread, while new technologies and previously unknown imported goods disrupted daily life. Towns are embellished with monuments; new leisure activities such as thermal baths and theater are enjoyed, as Roman-style cooking, and new gods are worshipped. But the ancestral culture of Gaul did not disappear: it was alive and strong, and combined with Roman traditions to create a new civilization, known as Gallo-Roman.

These are the changes that we invite you to discover. In many ways, they prefigure the concerns of Swiss people nowadays.

Enjoy your visit!



# THE VICUS OF LOUSONNA

In the 1st century AD, local authorities of *Lousonna* set out a new urban planning system: the old settlements were demolished, and new neighborhoods were built according to a roughly orthogonal network of streets along the lake – whose shores were some 230 meters further north than today. The main street was the road that connected Geneva to Valais and to Italy via the Grand St-Bernard pass, opened in 47 AD.

But the town's real asset was its port: an essential passageway between the Rhone and Rhine basins, where goods from all over the Roman world transit. This privileged geographical location, both port and road, ensured the prosperity of *Lousonna*, which developed as a small typical Gallo-Roman settlement, with its *forum*, basilica, sanctuaries, theater, necropoles...

During the 4th century AD, the town is gradually abandoned in favor of the hill on which the medieval and modern Lausanne are built.

## RIVER TRANSPORT

To transport goods imported from the Mediterranean to the most remote regions of the Empire, and vice versa, guilds of boatmen took turns on the waterways. River transport was by far the safest and most convenient way of moving heavy and voluminous cargoes. Based in *Lousonna*, the company of Lemman Lake's *Nautes*, known from several inscriptions, was responsible for transporting goods on the lake and, from Lausanne, for transferring them by road to Lake Neuchâtel, some thirty kilometres to the north, in Yverdon. There, another corporation of boatmen based in Avenches took over. This meant that goods from all over the Roman world passed through *Lousonna*, an essential point in the Empire's commercial network.

## AMPHORAE TRAFFIC

Amphorae were used to package and transport wine, olive oil and *garum* (a fish sauce particularly popular with the Gallo-Romans). These worthless containers were usually made on the site where the foodstuffs to be transported were produced. These amphorae, found at *Lousonna*, are a good illustration of the commercial traffic related to the port.

## LOUSONNA

The name LEUSONNA, or LOUSONNA in other documents, is Gallic. Its meaning is controversial: according to some, it comes from the words LAUS, the ancient name of the river Flon, and -ONNA, a suffix indicating a watercourse. According to others, it derives from the word LAUSA, meaning flattened stone, accompanied by the suffix -ONNA with an individualising value. Lausanne would therefore be "The Stone", perhaps in reference to the large menhir with three sculpted faces, known in the past as the "Oupin Stone", which disappeared during the 19th century. It stood in the west of *Lousonna*, where a small sanctuary was built in early Roman times.

# DEATH AND AFTERLIFE

In accordance with Roman law, tombs were built outside towns for sanitary reasons, but also to keep death away from the world of the living. The Gallo-Romans had a superstitious fear of death, which was seen as a temporary stain that affected the entire family of the deceased and those close to them. As a warning, and to prevent passers-by from being exposed to a house that had become “funereal”, lighted lamps and pine branches were placed at the doors and windows of homes in mourning. This crisis situation would come to an end at the funeral, when the deceased – after complex rituals – finally entered the world of the dead. The presence of offerings in Gallo-Roman tombs, as well as epitaphs, attest to the belief in an afterlife where the souls of the deceased, freed from their bodies, join those of their forbearers, the *Manes*, considered immortal.

In the 1st and 2nd centuries, the dead were generally cremated. After cremation on the pyre, on which offerings and personal effects were deposited, the charred remains were washed and then buried. From the 3rd century onwards, burial in a coffin or grave became the norm, while offerings were rare. Unlike today, the graves were not hidden behind thick hedgerows, but were displayed along the roads, beckoning passers-by to remember: “Hey, traveller! Stop for a moment to read this inscription and think of me”. Other epitaphs called out to the living, urging them to enjoy life while there is still time.

In *Lousonna*, a vast necropolis stretched out at Les Prés-de-Vidy, on the western edge of the town, on either side of the road leading to *Genava*. Another layed on the northern edge of the *vicus*, on the slopes of the Bois-de-Vaux, and probably a third on the eastern edge of the city.



## FINAL RESTING PLACES

After cremation on the pyre, on which offerings and personal items of the deceased were deposited (food, drink, flowers...), charred bones were collected, washed and placed in an urn, sometimes along with the remains of burnt offerings. Another recipient, like an amphora fragment, a stone, a plank, a tile or a tessera was used as a lid. Urns were not designed as such: they were simply converted domestic vessels. Although widespread, the use of urns was not systematic: sometimes, burnt bones were placed in a wooden box, a sack or in the pit itself.

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### SARCOPHAGE

## SARCOPHAGUS

This limestone sarcophagus was discovered in the 19th century in the Bois-de-Vaux cemetery, where there was already a Gallo-Roman necropolis. Obviously of a later period, the tomb dates back to the early Middle Ages or after: in fact, ancient stone coffins are extremely rare in Helvetia. On this one, the upper slabs were originally architrave and sculpted frieze blocks salvaged from some building in Roman *Lousonna* and then cut to size. Their dimensions and classical decoration reflect the monumental adornment of the town under the Empire, and their recycling reveals the intense recovery of materials from abandoned buildings in late Antiquity.

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### POUR L'AU-DELÀ

## FOR THE HEREAFTER

The so-called “secondary” offerings were not burnt with the body; they were added to the grave at the time of burial, either in the urn or next to it. They often included food and drink, perfume flasks, personal effects and an oil lamp to light the darkness on the journey to the other world. From the 3rd century onwards, fewer offerings were left for the deceased who were not cremated; at *Lousonna*, they were mainly related to drinking, as evidenced by jugs and numerous beakers.

# IN LATIN

Before the conquest, the Helvetians, like all Celtic populations, spoke Celtic but did not write it (or rarely, using the Greek alphabet), as they favoured the oral tradition. But once they were integrated into the Empire, everyone began to speak and write in Latin, which became the official language of politics, administration, justice, and commerce above all.

Latinisation occurred naturally and rapidly at all levels of society, even among women, children and slaves, as evidenced by the countless inscriptions found on a variety of supports and in all areas of life. However, the fact that the inscriptions found at *Lousonna* are all in Latin does not mean that Celtic was no longer practised.

Some people also familiarised themselves with Greek, the preferred language of science and the arts, and the official language in the eastern part of the Empire.



# SOCIETY

Contrary to what is sometimes imagined, the Roman conquest did not bring a flood of occupying troops and civil servants from Italy to our regions. The Romanisation of Helvetia was a phenomenon of acculturation of the natives themselves, who adopted the Roman framework and way of life, giving rise to an original civilisation known as Gallo-Roman.

Within the Empire, not everyone enjoyed the same rights. There were significant inequalities between free men and slaves, between native Romans and provincials, and between men and women. At the top of this social hierarchy, the status of “Roman citizen”, reserved for free men of Italian descent, offered civic rights and access to official positions; in return, citizens paid taxes. This enviable status, which was normally hereditary, could be awarded as a favour to peregrines (i.e. free men who were integrated into the Empire). Indeed, the Romans were happy to grant citizenship to the elites of defeated peoples: a clever way of putting down any rebellion and facilitating Romanisation. Many Gallic notables took advantage of this. As for peregrines of lower social status, they could become citizens, if they so wished, after 25 years’ service in the Roman army. In 212, the emperor Caracalla put an end to these divisions by granting citizenship to all free men in the Empire.

At the very bottom of the social ladder, however, slaves were still deprived of the most basic rights, starting with the right to self-determination. Despite these hierarchical distinctions, the notion of “foreigner” had little meaning: Iberians, Syrians, Greeks and Helvetians were all part of the same Empire, within which they could move freely. In fact, there was a huge cultural melting pot, and the cities were very cosmopolitan, which was a factor of cultural enrichment.

## PEOPLE FROM HERE AND ELSEWHERE

Inscriptions show that people from other parts of the world made up a relatively large proportion of the local population. For example, Greeks and other Greek-speaking Easterners were abundant in teaching, medicine and the arts. The number of Romans from Italy is less easy to estimate, since the natives who benefited from Roman citizenship were given the three Latin names (first name, last name and nickname) that characterise their social status; it is therefore difficult to distinguish the Romanised Helvetian from the native Roman.

Dedications on stone, which were quite expensive, also reveal the social status of their authors: they had to pay for the material and the work involved in carving them. Although a few inscriptions were made by people of modest means, the majority came from wealthier parts of the population.

# THE FORUM

Every city in the Roman Empire had a public square, the hallmark of Rome's influence. As the centre of power and business, a meeting place and a marketplace, the *forum* was divided into sacred and secular areas. The first was devoted to the obligatory civic worship of the emperor and Rome. The second, in the basilica (which had nothing to do with a church), brought together political, administrative, judicial and commercial activities.

*Lousonna's forum* was not like those of the great Roman cities, which were often closed off and bordered by porticoes, with clearly separated areas, an impressive temple on one side and a basilica on the other. Here, the boundaries are blurred and the main sanctuary (which appears late) is in the middle of the square. The location of the *forum*, at the eastern end of the town, is also atypical but well chosen: on the main street, near the lake and the river (Flon), at the crossroads of the main arteries. Furthermore, the natural elevation of this part of the land reinforces the dominant position of the monuments.



# MONEY AND TRANSPORT

One of the major innovations introduced to our region by the Romans was the use of the sesterce. Although the Helvetii were already minting their own money, its use was marginal, and trade was still largely based on barter. But as the Helvetians integrated the Empire, the sesterce became common: everyone now used it, whether to pay for a pound of bread or a visit to the doctor.

Thanks to this single currency, which can be compared to the Euro, and to the unification of weights and measures, the Roman world became a gigantic and prosperous common market, served by an efficient network. Building on the ancient roads, the Empire developed controlled and safe routes (at least in times of peace and stability). For instance, the Great St Bernard Pass, a factor of prosperity for Helvetia, has been almost completely suitable for vehicles since 47 AD.

Every 10–15 kilometres along the main routes, travellers and imperial mail couriers would find roadhouses (*mutationes*), where they could refresh themselves or change horses. Every 45 kilometres, stage inns (*mansiones*) offered board and lodging as well as vehicle maintenance services and stables. The routes, marked by milestones, are also dotted with military and police posts that control the strategic axes and guarantee security against bandits.



## MONETARY SYSTEM

Although local currencies still existed in the East, the monetary system introduced by Augustus was valid throughout the Empire in the 1st and 2nd centuries, greatly facilitating financial transactions and trade. Then, with the economic crises of the 3rd century, new coins were introduced, while the precious metal content of coins fell sharply.

## WEIGHTS AND MEASURES

The conquest probably did not abolish the old local units of measurement, which were still used in everyday life. However, the Empire introduced a unitary system that facilitated transactions and large-scale trade.

## VEHICLES AND TAXES

Many vehicles used Roman roads every day: light and fast two-wheeled chariots such as the *essedum*, or vehicles used to transport goods such as the *benna* (two-wheeled) or the *carrus* (four-wheeled). Carriage-making was one of the areas in which the Romans benefited from the expertise of the Celts, who were masters at building vehicles of all kinds. In fact, it was the Gallic words “carrus” and “benna” that gave rise to words like cars, or, in French, *benne* and *bagnole* (slang for car).

Goods entering and leaving Gaul (a region that encompassed several provinces) were subject to a tax of 2.5% of their value, known as the Gaulish fortieth. Customs posts were set up for this purpose at the mouths of the Alpine passes, at Massongex near Saint-Maurice, Geneva, Zurich and Grenoble.

# GLOBALISATION

Long before the conquest, Roman businessmen had opened trading posts in Gallic territories, selling vast quantities of Italian wine. The integration of these countries into the Empire opened up a huge, globalised market: import-export was experiencing an unprecedented boom. Once the privilege of the ruling classes, products from the Mediterranean and the Orient had become everyday consumer goods. Wines, olive oil, fish and seafood, spices, dates and other exotic products arrived in large quantities. Raw materials such as iron, tin and lead were traded in ingots. Marble was imported from Carrara or Egypt, amber from the Baltic and even luxury items produced beyond the Empire's borders reached the region, such as silk from China.

Another novelty was the industrial production method, which flooded the Roman world with standard products such as terra sigillata, a mass-produced tableware available to everyone. Our regions exported a great number of manufactured goods south of the Alps, including woollens and skins, cured meats, cheeses and wood, not to mention human beings, since the slave trade flourished.

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## PASSÉ/PRÉSENT – PRESENT/PAST

**From Empire to Vampire?** In the first century AD, the Helvetians were faced with the Romanisation not only of their territory, but also of their cultural references and way of life. In many ways, this was an experience comparable to that of globalisation, which, on different scales, affects most human societies nowadays.

Just as Helvetians had access to goods from all over the Empire, citizens of the globalised world have access to goods, services and information from all over the world. Access is made even easier by the sprawling development of technology.

Naturally, this assimilation implies a loss of local specificities in favour of a single, and often unfair, model. Against this backdrop, initiatives to reinstate exchanges at a local level are multiplying. The prospect of a “glocal” world is emerging, in which the global and the local coexist harmoniously.

# IMPORT

The huge market of the Roman Empire gave rise to intensive trade, bringing to the shores of Lemane Lake, as it did elsewhere, vast quantities of new consumer goods from more or less distant horizons. In addition to foodstuffs, of which only the packaging and sometimes the stones or shells remained, the inhabitants of *Lousonna* now found a large number of manufactured goods in the market, brought by merchants from Italy, Gaul, Germania and elsewhere.

# FOOD

As before the conquest, the menu of the ordinary people of *Lousonna* consisted mainly of bread, boiled cereals, cheese, eggs, fruit and vegetables, and fish or meat from time to time. The menu could be enriched for the wealthier population with poultry and game, including bears, blackbirds, sparrows, moorhens and other old-fashioned delicacies. Hams, sausages and offal, teats and wombs were highly appreciated, as were frogs' legs and snails. New plants were introduced to Helvetia: oats, rye, cherries, chestnuts, etc. In addition, there were imported foods: fish and seafood, dates, pomegranates, spices, etc.

On the other hand, the famous rare and refined dishes (peacock tongues, camel heels, crests torn from live poultry, etc.), prized by certain Roman "billionaires", were hardly likely to feature on the menu of the inhabitants of *Lousonna*, even the wealthiest. Other innovations became very common, changing both cuisine and tastes. Olive oil replaced lard, while very strong fish sauces, as well as pepper and a large range of aromatic plants, spiced up the dishes. Necessary for cooking and preserving, salt was a vital ingredient. Honey takes the place of sugar, which was unknown at the time, as were pasta, potatoes, tomatoes, oranges, coffee and cocoa. All these products grow indeed in regions unknown by the Romans.

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## PASSÉ/PRÉSENT – PRESENT/PAST

**To bring (or not to bring) home the bacon** When it comes to food, it's not all about taste! Like our own, the diet of the inhabitants of *Lousonna* depends on geographical and cultural factors, as well as economic and moral ones. In this respect, the example of meat is very instructive.

In Roman times, regular consumption of meat products was the privilege of the wealthy social classes. It was not until the advent of consumer society and intensive livestock farming that access to meat became more democratic. It was no longer just the type of food, but its quality, that distinguished the diets of the rich from those of the poor.

Intensive farming may make meat available to everyone, but it also causes a fair amount of damage. Animal suffering and the environmental impact of this industry are prompting some people to rethink not only their diet, but also their relationship with living things. Giving up meat is seen as a sign of moral, not financial, superiority.

## IN THE KITCHEN

Just as the Swiss people have quickly assimilated pizza, pasta, paella, couscous, sushi and cheeseburgers, the inhabitants of *Lousonna* were adopting new dishes and new ways of cooking. In town, taverns served drinks and simple dishes, to take away or eat in. And in busy streets, vendors proposed sausages and other snacks. But meals were generally cooked and eaten at home, with the wealthiest having their own private chef or hiring a cook from time to time.

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### À TABLE

## AT THE TABLE

Some wealthy (and snobbish?) citizens began to eat lying down in Roman style, which required service staff: it wasn't easy to cut meat, for example, leaning on your elbow. But most Gallo-Romans ate seated, as before. Did they use individual plates? The question remains open; often, they had to serve themselves from the many dishes, bowls and sauce boats laid out on the table, as is the practice in the Near East, for example

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### VIN

## WINE

While the “bons vivants” of *Lousonna* probably continued to drink the traditional cereal beers and mead, wine undoubtedly became the main alcoholic beverage. Ancient wine was rather thick, so it had to be filtered through metal sieves or linen cloth, sometimes with celery or aniseed added to enhance the flavour! Only inveterate drunks and the sick drank it neat; the rest drank it with hot or cold water. While the wealthy could enjoy famous vintages, the rest of the population usually had to make do with “piquette” (bad wine), which some unscrupulous producers (particularly in the Marseille region) artificially aged by smoking it. Wine comes in many varieties: honeyed, resinous, peppery, sweet... not to mention “wines” made from various fruits, millet, turnip, aromatic herbs, rose or even absinth.

# AT HOME

Most of the private houses in *Lousonna* were modest. Although the walls were masoned and plastered, and the roofs tiled, the floor-level fireplaces were reminiscent of Gallic houses, as were the courtyards, where a well often laid, and a number of domestic activities took place. Some residences, however, were more in accordance with the Roman way of life, featuring private baths, mosaics, wall paintings, running water and heating.

Furnishings were mostly made of wood and wickerwork, as evidenced by images and a few metal elements. Drapes, blankets and cushions added to the comfort. Lighting was provided by torches, candles and oil lamps, an innovation that was widely adopted.

Most of the inhabitants probably owned their dwellings, although they could also rent them out. Keys and locks were abundant on Gallo-Roman sites, probably reflecting a keen sense of private property and perhaps the development of its inevitable corollary: theft.

## LIGHTING

With the oil lamp from the Mediterranean world, a new lighting device has been added to the traditional torches and candles. Mass-produced terracotta lamps were very common: more than 400 have been discovered in *Lousonna*. Some were made locally, but most were imported. Bronze lamps were rarer, being the privilege of wealthy homes and some public buildings.

## LOCKSMITH

The first known keys in our region date back to the end of the Bronze Age, around 1000 BC; they are long, curved, pointed rods that are used to slide a horizontal wooden latch through a hole in the door. In Gallo-Roman times, locksmithing was perfected. Doors, chests and cupboards were locked using a variety of mechanisms. The most common was a lift-and-lock system: the key was passed through the door, then lifted the bolt and slid the metal latch sideways. Disadvantages: the mechanism can only be operated from one side, and the key cannot be removed while the door is open. Advantage: picking a lock of this type is virtually impossible.

# TECHNOLOGIES

The integration of the Helvetians into the Empire brought with it a whole range of innovations that radically changed everyday life. Mediterranean architecture and construction techniques transformed the living environment, with masonry and stone, brick, tile, glass, arches and vaults, drains and pools, hypocaust heating... For three centuries, people lived in unprecedented comfort, which many castles of the Middle Ages would not offer in later times.

Porticoes, tiled roofs, multi-storey buildings and fountains gave *Lousonna* an air of Greece or Italy (only more modestly, of course). In the richest houses, frescoes, mosaics and baths reflect the Roman way of life. The Roman era also introduced the first machines: cranes and other construction equipment, water-powered mills, organs... Throughout the Empire, people and ideas travelled, encouraging the spread of expertise and inventions. This is how glass-blowing, which first appeared in the Near East, spread throughout Europe in the 1st century AD.



## CEMENT

The Romans had been using masonry since at least the 3rd century BC. Following the conquest, their technique established itself in our regions in half a century, the time it took for habits to change and for the necessary infrastructure to be in place, quarries in particular. By the middle of the 1st century AD, most buildings were made of masonry, although earth and wood architecture, a heritage of indigenous know-how, was still sometimes used.

The method used to make mortar was described by the architect Vitruvius around 25 BC: first, limestone was baked in a kiln to produce quicklime, then burnt to obtain slaked lime. “When the lime is slaked, it should be mixed as follows: one part lime, three parts quarry sand or two parts sea or river sand”. This preparation, to which water is also added, solidifies in a day or two.

## CUT STONES

Facilitated by the use of lifting machines, large-scale construction using cut blocks, assembled without mortar, was mainly reserved for public, religious or funerary monuments. Wealthy residences also used it in part for colonnades and other ornaments. Civil engineering companies worked the quarries and constructed the buildings. In particular, they employed stonemasons and sculptors who decorated capitals, friezes and cornices with Mediterranean-inspired motifs.

## TILES AND BRICKS

When it came to building, the Romans introduced innovations that are still omnipresent today. Tiled roofs first appeared in our region in the second half of the 1st century BC, gradually replacing thatch and shingles. Other clay building materials (bricks, slabs, pipes, etc.) also have a bright future ahead of them.

## GLASS

Result of a molten mixture of silica (contained in sand), lime and potash in the form of ash (from beech trees, ferns or reeds), glass was used by the Gauls to make beads and rings. But the craft took off in Roman times, thanks in particular to the advent of window glass and the new technique of glassblowing. Brought to a temperature of 800 degrees, the mass of glass was blown with a cane, either in a mould to obtain standardised shapes, or freely. The base and edges are then shaped with tongs. In its natural state, glass paste is blue-green, but it can be tinted by adding metallic oxides, particularly for making ornaments and coloured mosaic tesserae. Apart from a few findings, there were no glass crafts in *Lousonna*. In the region, the major production centres were in the colonies of Augst and Avenches.

## CONDUCTS

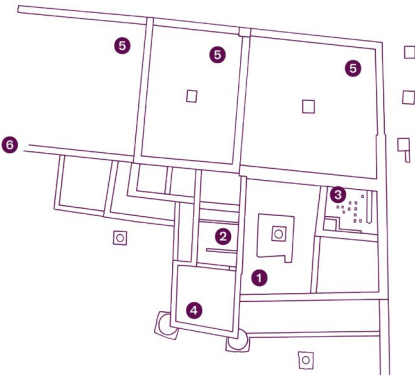
Fountains and baths, both public and private, consumed large volumes of water that had to be piped in and out. Along with sewers and rainwater collectors, the number of pipes, buried or not, that were installed in towns is impressive. Archaeological finds confirm the high concentration of pipes and sewers, a density that was hardly matched before the modern era.

# THE DOMUS

The imposing mansion on which the Museum is built was constructed around 70 AD by a wealthy *Lousonna* man, who purchased a 2,000 m<sup>2</sup> plot of land, just a stone's throw from the town center. Over the following century, the building underwent several transformations and extensions, until it was abandoned at the end of the 3rd century. Most of the remains visible in and around the museum (notably the well under the staircase and the frescoes) date back to the late 2nd century.

It was undoubtedly one of the most opulent houses in town. Its plan – an exception at *Lousonna* – resembles a domus in Italy or southern Gaul. Around a central courtyard occupied by a well ①, lie the living quarters: a living room in particular, decorated with frescoes of Mediterranean motifs, where people could eat and lounge ②. In the opposite corner, a hypocaust-heated bathroom enhanced the home's comfort ③. To the south, a tower flanked by Tuscan columns ④ gave the residence its exceptional character. Connected to the street by an enclosed gallery, the domus housed also a large entrance hall, the master's study on the second floor, and probably another living room on the top level.

A kitchen, utility rooms and bedrooms for owners and servants completed the layout of this vast residence, as did three commercial halls ⑤ separated from the rest of the house by an imposing dividing wall ⑥. Designed from the outset, these large halls facing the street hosted the economic activities of the master of the premises, whose identity is unfortunately unknown.



# TRENDS

While elegant ladies followed the Roman fashion of draped garments, most people kept to local sewn garments, better suited to the climate. For Madame, linen shirts and dresses held at the shoulders by fibulae, falling to the ankles for ladies, mid-calf for servants and slaves. Over this, depending on the weather, they wore a shawl or a stapled coat.

For the gentleman, a knee-length tunic, with fleece pants or woollen stockings in cold weather. Celtic pants remained in vogue, although they look barbaric to the Romans. In heavy weather, the *cucullus*, a typically Gallic hooded cloak, was very much in vogue. As for the toga, the inconvenient prerogative of the Roman citizen, it was worn only on official occasions.

Rustic galoshes or fine leather boots, sandals or studded *caligae*: all shoes were heelless. When it came to hairstyles, trends were inspired by the Empresses, whose image was disseminated to the four corners of the Empire through coinage. As for accessories, Gallic torques and anklets were frankly out of fashion. Other jewelry was very much on trend, from golden jewels to bronze trinkets. Women perfumed themselves abundantly and wore make-up: very pale foundation, blackened eyebrows and shaded eyelids.

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## PASSÉ/PRÉSENT – PRESENT/PAST

**Under influence?** In the Roman Empire, appearance-conscious citizens gave in to the latest trends from Rome, and the effigies of empresses on coins inspired women to create new hairstyles. This tendency to imitate prominent personalities has not disappeared, even if almost no one is inspired by the style of political leaders nowadays.

But above all, the trend is now spreading through other channels. First propagated on a large scale by the written press and later by film and television, it is now increasingly passing through digital channels. On social networks, being a trendsetter has even become an activity in itself. These are known as “influencers”.

And it's a time of one-upmanship. To keep up with the frenetic pace of these models, manufacturers are constantly flooding the market with new, ever lower-end products. To the extent that fashion is now considered to be one of the most polluting industries on earth.

## CHIC AND USEFUL

The fibula, forerunner of the safety pin, was widespread from the Iron Age onwards. Initially spring-loaded, and then hinged (from the early Roman period), fibulae were used to fasten pieces of clothing together. Over time, as sewn garments became increasingly common, they lost their practical function and became simple ornaments similar to our modern brooches. Sometimes made of iron, more often of brass or bronze (which in its original state resembles gold), and more rarely of silver or gold, fibulae became veritable pieces of jewellery, with a wide variety of shapes and decorations.

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### COIFFURES

## HAIRSTYLES

Spread by coins and other official portraits, the hairstyles of empresses set the tone for elegant provincial women. At the beginning of the 1st century, the trend was to part the hair down the middle and put it up in a bun at the nape, with twisted locks around the face. By the 70s of the first century, the trend was curly hairstyles, sometimes with additional wigs to add height. In the 2nd century, the hair was bunned at the nape, with plaits wrapped around the head like a turban. But most women did not follow the complex hairstyle trend which required time and staff. Simple braids and buns were very common, and were even becoming fashionable.

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### COSMÉTIQUES

## COSMETICS

White foundation: dried snail powder mixed with bean porridge, or crocodile dung ointment, or calf dung oil, linseed, chalk... Eye-brow black: mashed flies and ant eggs. Skin cream: clay masks, donkey's milk, honey mixed with dead bees, pigeon droppings in vinegar, turtle oil, swan fat. Toothpaste: rat ashes, honey and fennel root, or made from young boy's urine and pumice powder...

These are the recipes provided by Latin authors. Even today, cosmetic products often contain ingredients that have little to do with seduction...

# MEDICINE

In the absence of sufficient anatomical and biological knowledge, ancient medicine remained rather empirical, mingled with superstition and homemade remedies. Nevertheless, it was in Roman times that professional medicine began to appear in Helvetia, linked to the Hippocratic oath and supported by training in a faculty; there was probably one in Avenches. Practitioners, often of Greek origin, knew how to reduce fractures, ligate the blood vessels, remove varicose veins, remove tonsils, trepan the skull and perform cataract surgery. But surgery, in the absence of anesthesia, was generally limited to emergency procedures. Cauterization was usually performed with a red-hot iron.

Abortion was commonplace. In the 2nd century, the physician Soranos recommended sitz baths, the jolting of a vehicle or prolonged walking accompanied by heel strikes in the pelvis; he strongly advised against the use of needles. Contraception was also practised, using decoctions or vaginal tampons soaked in substances considered spermicidal (crushed garlic, myrrh, cucumber flesh, etc.), which were removed shortly before intercourse. Alternatively, an amulet could be worn.

Some doctors were self-employed; others were civil servants paid by a local authority, or attached to a civilian or military hospital. Others, whether free or enslaved, were in the exclusive service of a wealthy private individual.



# FAMILY

Roman society was founded on a patriarchal model. As the only owner of the family name and household assets, the father had total power over his wife and children. His role as head of the family had a civic purpose: to pass on the inheritance and perpetuate the family, and therefore the city. When a child was born, the father might have recognized it or abandoned it, particularly in the case of deformity.

Marriages were arranged and couple divorced, especially if the wife failed to bear children or committed adultery. Among the wealthiest, marriages – arranged by the fathers of the family – were not based on romantic feelings, but on the opportunity to seal political alliances and the need to ensure offspring, especially when the patrimony was substantial. This task was not so simple, however, given the very high infant mortality rate.

Women had no civil rights. They generally married between the ages of twelve and fifteen to much older men, even though men could legally marry as early as their fourteenth year. They were then placed under the legal guardianship of their husbands. In the event of divorce, they returned, with their dowry, to their father's authority, or to that of another male relative. Apart from motherhood and the upbringing of young children, women's day-to-day lives were devoted to domestic chores, a task which, in wealthy families, involved mostly managing slaves. Among the more modest, some had no choice but to work: they often worked as midwives, hairdressers or seamstresses, or assisted their husbands in their work.

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## PASSÉ/PRÉSENT – PRESENT/PAST

**Who's your daddy?** Less exotic than olive oil or dates, the patriarchal model in force in the Roman Empire did not constitute a real revolution for the conquered people. This pre-eminence of the paternal figure persists today in many parts of the world, with varying degrees of opposition.

In the West, women's struggles for the right to vote, civic recognition and gender equality are gradually overturning the established order. In Switzerland, paternal authority was abolished in 1978 in favour of joint parental authority, but it was not until 2013 that the family name was no longer systematically the husband's.

The decline of the patriarchal model gave rise to more global questioning of the family structure. As a result of new social struggles, new models such as the reconstituted or single-parent family, and couples in same-sex unions are gaining recognition. Nevertheless, married couples with children remain most common in Switzerland.



## WHAT ABOUT LOVE?

Although marriage was first and foremost a social duty, mutual love, respect and affection were not absent from the home. Many Gallo-Roman images and inscriptions, particularly epitaphs, reflect conjugal and filial love. Some even bear witness to the deep bonds forged between masters and their slaves or freedmen, who were sometimes regarded as genuine family members.

# LEISURES

In Rome, there were 150 public holidays a year. In Helvetia as elsewhere, the culture of leisure permeated social life. Of course, modest people still spent most of their time working, not to mention the realities of slavery. Nevertheless, the baths, games, reading and, of course, shows, sponsored by wealthy citizens or the authorities, provided Gallo-Romans with many new ways to spend their free time.

Abundant on archaeological sites, dice, pawns and tokens are reminiscent of games of strategy and chance, in which some people gambled away fortunes. In the public and private thermal baths, people relaxed, exercised and socialised. The amphitheatres of the major cities drew thousands of spectators to gladiator fights, hunts and other ultra-violent spectacles. The inhabitants of *Lousonna* had to travel to Martigny, Avenches or Nyon for these events. They did, however, have a theatre where tragedies and farces, pantomimes and concerts were staged, as well as religious performances.

Like the baths, the shows played an important role in promoting Roman culture; the enthusiasm they aroused is reflected in the many everyday objects depicting theatrical masks or amphitheatre scenes, while some gladiators and chariot drivers became stars, with groupies and fanatical supporters.

# ENTERTAINMENTS

Offered by the authorities or by wealthy patrons in search of popularity, the arena games drew large crowds. *Panem and circenses*, bread and circuses: according to the satirist Juvenal (circa 50–130 AD), this was what was needed to satisfy the people, and therefore to control them. To entertain the people was also a way of creating diversion...

The chariot races, the most famous spectacle of Antiquity, took place in an elongated stadium: the circus. None of these have (yet) been found in Switzerland, but equipped tracks, with or without wooden stands, may have been enough to stage the races, which are depicted in frescoes (as at the Roman villa in Pully) or on everyday objects.

# WEALTH

Although the richest people were sometimes, willingly or unwillingly, generous donors, they did not neglect the attractions of personal wealth. And in the absence of discreet bank accounts, they often kept their savings in cleverly concealed hiding places, at least in troubled times.

This is how, shortly after 144 AD, a hoard of coins, then one of the ten largest known in the Roman world, was buried in *Lousonna*. In two hiding places inside the same house were deposited two sets of 35 gold coins: one contained coins minted between 72 and 143, the other coins issued between 100 and 144.

With 70 coins in all, this treasure represents one pound of gold; it is worth 1,750 silver denarii or 7,000 sesterces, or 3,500 meals, or 7 years' salary for a legionary or a teacher!

There seems to have been trouble in the region in the middle of the 2nd century, which may have prompted the owner to shelter his fortune. In any case, he was unable to recover his property, and the house's subsequent occupants lived with a treasure beneath their feet without suspecting it. Fortunately for the archaeologists who, after 18 centuries, had the joy of unearthing this hoard.

## IMPERIAL PROPAGANDA

Gold and silver coins were minted in imperial workshops in Rome. They conveyed official imagery throughout the Roman world, starting with the portrait of the sovereign, sometimes his designated successor or his wife. They also show the emperor's titles and, on the reverse, the symbols of his power and politics: protective gods, personified virtues (Concord, Hope, Piety, etc.), civic images (the goddess Rome), feats (military victories) and good deeds (distributions of goods).

## COST OF LIVING

It's hard to know what rates were charged throughout the Empire: they fluctuated greatly and the evidence available covers a wide variety of regions and periods. We can, however, give a few figures: a labourer received 4 sesterces a day; a legionary received 2.5 sesterces at the beginning of the 1st century, and 4 sesterces at the end of the 2nd century, while a centurion's pay was 50 sesterces and that of a high-ranking officer around 80 sesterces.

According to the graffiti in Pompeii, for 1 as (a quarter of a sesterce) you could get: 1 kilo of bread, ½ litre of ordinary wine, 1 plate or 1 terracotta lamp. For 1 sesterce, you could buy ½ litre of top-quality wine (Falernum), 330 grams of oil, or the cleaning of a tunic. For 520 sesterces: a mule. Social inequality was already very marked in terms of pay and purchasing power. For the legionnaire or the family worker, it was not easy to make ends meet, and many women worked to put money into the household chest. At the top end of the scale, a famous doctor claimed to earn 600,000 sesterces a year, and some billionaires spent up to 200,000 sesterces on a single meal...

# RELIGION

Religion was omnipresent in the daily lives of the Gallo-Romans, as evidenced by the remains of places of worship, inscriptions, statuary and a multitude of objects.

In *Lousonna*, archaeologists uncovered three public places of worship: a large temple dedicated to Mercury Augustus in the main square, a cult enclosure with three chapels for Mercury, Neptune and Hercules, close to the lake and the basilica, and a sanctuary of indigenous tradition at the western entrance of the *vicus*. Stone inscriptions help to identify the deities worshipped publicly, while domestic items reveal a private religion in which Venus and the mother goddesses played an important role, blending Celtic roots with Roman divinities.

At the pinnacle of Gallo-Roman religion was the cult of Rome and the emperor, but the Romans were tolerant about the gods of conquered peoples. The similarity between the concepts of ancient polytheisms, based on the respect and proper performance of rites (*pietas*), facilitated links between Roman, Gallic and Eastern traditions.

Several Roman political colleges combined religious and administrative functions, notably by determining which days of the year were favourable (*fasti*) or unfavourable (*nefasti*). Many of the latter were public holidays, dedicated to gods or festivals. The effect of religion on the calendar can still be seen today, for example in the names of the days of the week in French (or Italian): *mardi* (Tuesday) is the day of Mars, *vendredi* (Friday) is the day of Venus...

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## PASSÉ/PRÉSENT – PRESENT/PAST

**What's this mix up?** For 21st century observers like us, the ancient religious landscape can be surprising! By the quantity of gods and goddesses who appear there, first of all, but also by the non-exclusive nature of the love uniting men and divinities. An eclecticism that did not survive the progressive imposition of Christianity.

Of ancient deities, our era has only preserved a documentary memory, and today there are few disciples of the cult of Jupiter. The advent of science, which was readily postulated to put an end to all forms of belief and superstition, led to a more or less harmonious cohabitation between knowledge and belief.

The fact remains that alongside established dogmas, a wide variety of cultic, spiritual or occult practices continually emerge. Long carried out in secret, some are now coming out into the open. A direct descendant of the New Age, the personal development, a syncretic blend of oriental wisdom and pseudo sciences, has countless followers.

## GODS FROM HERE AND ELSEWHERE

Celtic, Roman, Greek or Oriental, countless gods coexisted peacefully, mixing and combining. The Romans banned belief systems such as Druidism and Christianity. That aside, the religious openness of Rome allowed the great Gaulish gods to be assimilated into Roman divinities. Jupiter is associated with his Celtic equivalent, Taranis, master of storms, while Apollo the healer is linked to Belenos, the Gallic god of medicine. Mercury, meanwhile, incorporates the divine functions of Lug, whose cult was banned because it was too closely linked to Druidism. Lastly, Mars was linked to the protective forces of the Gallic peoples, becoming Mars Caturix (“King of battle”) among the Helvetians, for example. Secondary deities such as Sucellus, the god of life and death, kept their more Celtic forms.

Eastern divinities completed this pantheon from the 1st century AD: Isis, the great Egyptian mother, then Mithra, of Persian origin, who was worshipped by brotherhoods in the region. Christianity, which also came from the East, has left no clear traces in *Lousonna*, but it nevertheless made its mark at the end of the 4th century, when it became the only authorised religion in the empire in 392 AD, as the population of the *vicus* settled on the hill of the City of Lausanne.

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### SIS À LOUSSONNA

## ISIS IN LOUSSONNA

The Egyptian goddess Isis seems to have been of some importance in *Lousonna*. Several objects attest to rituals linked to her cult. As mistress of the waters, she may have been associated by some with the local deity *Leousonna*, the name originally given to the river Flon that bordered the *vicus*. The hatchet on display here is dedicated to this pairing by a person whose name could be Gaius Alpinus. “Alpinus”, which sounds very regional, is associated in other parts of Switzerland both with Isis and with *nautes* whose work was linked to lakes and rivers. These traders would therefore have associated their beliefs with the cult of Isis, which was imported into the region and into the Roman Empire. In addition to the statuette representing the goddess, archaeology has uncovered a *sistrum*, an attribute of Isis in Egypt and used in rites dedicated to her. Discovered in a private dwelling dating from the 3rd century AD, this object may originally have come from an Isiac sanctuary or temple that has not (yet) been unearthed.

## CLOSE TO THEM

In the Roman world, many houses (and even shops) revealed small structures called *lararia*, which were more or less decorated and architecturally developed. These domestic altars, which take their name from the Lares gods, personifications of the family's ancestors, were used for rituals consisting mainly of offerings. They are also related to the Penate gods, guardians of the household hearth. Religion was staged during the great ceremonies in and around the temples, but it also accompanied the Gallo-Romans in their daily lives, in a more discrete way. Various types of objects evidence this, such as protective amulets and rings adorned with intaglios depicting divine figures, as well as lamps and ceramics with figures of divinities.

## FIAT LUX

Light plays an important role in the religious beliefs and ceremonies of many cultures. In some rituals, the play of light lends greater solemnity to the moment, or helps to illuminate what was hidden. For instance, "Lamp-bearers" or "lamp-lighters" were an important part of rites dedicated to Isis. During night-time rituals and processions, participants carried torches, which were also used in marriage ceremonies. It is a good omen for marriage that the flames are very intense.

It's hardly surprising that oil lamps, indispensable everyday objects in Gallo-Roman homes, featured representations of divinities, who must have come to life as the flames rippled. Their presence on these inexpensive objects undoubtedly gave them a protective aspect and enabled them to be associated with various domestic rituals.





# CRAFTS

While the port and trade are the mainstays of *Lousonna's* economy, local production also contributes to its development. Inheriting Celtic skills enriched by new techniques introduced by the Empire, craftsmen worked textiles, leather, bone, stone and glass, forged metal and made pottery. Craftsmen sometimes grouped together in professional guilds. They were free men, most often of modest means. Most were independent and worked directly with their customers. Others sold their products through merchants or worked as sub-contractors for industrial producers.

Working in the courtyards of houses or in workshops on the outskirts of the town (because of the nuisance), they produced for a regional customer base, living in *Lousonna* and the surrounding countryside. The hinterland supplied the town with food and raw materials.

Some pottery manufacturers distributed their products to the Swiss Plateau, or even open branches. Several of the owners and employees of these former small businesses in Lausanne are known by their brand names: *Vepotalus*, *Pindarus*, *Jucundus*, *Juvenis*, *Attius* and *Lucus*; the latter specialised in oil lamps.

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## PASSÉ/PRÉSENT – PRESENT/PAST

**Is it handmade?** In *Lousonna*, as elsewhere, craftsmanship was obviously the norm in Antiquity. However, large-scale production developed, flooding the Empire with sigillata tableware decorated with Roman motifs. These ceramics were so successful that, ironically, local craftsmen began to copy the artefacts of this proto-industry.

While mechanisation gradually took hold throughout history, the industrial revolution at the beginning of the 19th century marked a major turning point. Although it did not mark the end of craftsmanship, it did bring about a profound transformation, not only in manufacturing methods, but also in consumer habits.

Accustomed to the advantages of mass production – particularly in terms of price – today's consumers are not rejecting handmade products, which meet other needs and desires. In the luxury sector, for example, craftsmanship has become synonymous with meticulousness and expertise. A guarantee of excellence that industry cannot match.

## IRON

The smelting of iron was still unknown in Roman times, as it was impossible to reach the high temperatures required. The iron was reduced in blast furnaces where the ore was mined, and then transported in the form of ingots to the forges, which were usually located on the outskirts of the towns. The forges at *Lousonna* are attested by abundant slags and tools. The tools on display were found in two buried deposits, one under the Bois-de-Vaux cemetery, the other near the Museum. These tools, or their weight in metal, must therefore have been a precious possession.

## TEXTILE AND LEATHER

The wool and hair of certain animals, flax, hemp, perhaps also nettle, hops and the filaments under the bark of certain trees, were used to make fabrics, ropes and nets. The fibres were generally soaked, then combed, spun and woven. Objects found in homes associated with this craft show that it was essentially a domestic activity; there are currently no known specialist textile workshops.

## WOOD

Framework, formwork, scaffolding... Even in the days of stone and masonry, the construction industry made extensive use of wood. Not to mention cartwrighting and shipbuilding, cooperage, cabinetmaking and the manufacture of countless objects of all kinds. Because wood does not keep well, carpenters and joiners are best known for their tools. In addition, *Lousonna's* guild of carpenters was prosperous and influential enough to have their own seats in the theatre, as revealed by an inscription mentioning the *tignarii* (carpenters), discovered in 1998–99 during excavations of the Roman theatre. This favour was perhaps a reward for their participation in the construction of the building.

## TERRACOTTA

In Roman times, the pottery sector invented industrial production. In northern Italy, and later in Gaul, factories mass-produced tableware known as *terra sigillata*, firing up to 40,000 pots in a single batch in enormous kilns! Their products were sold throughout the Roman world and beyond. Smaller workshops were also set up in Helvetia. Here, craftsmen produced tableware similar to that used in Gallic workshops for regional distribution, sometimes in original, local designs. These products were often stamped with the craftsmen's names. They also produced a variety of everyday containers, from local or non-local tradition: beakers, dishes, jugs, cooking pots, food jars, etc.

This sector flourished at *Lousonna*, where nine workshops, most of which date from the 1st century, have been identified. One of the oldest known potters in Switzerland, Vepotalus, settled here at the end of the 1st century BC, after learning his craft in Lyon. Later, in the 1st century AD, the so-called “de la Péniche” factory on the eastern outskirts of the town produced sigillata ware, among other products. Pindarus, a manager, Jucundus, Juvenis and Attius worked there. Other workshops operated until the 3rd century.

## MISFIRED

Firing pottery is not so easy: *sigillata*, for example, has to be fired to 980 degrees; at 1170 degrees, it starts to melt. So the temperature has to be constantly monitored (without a thermometer). Cooling must also be slow and controlled, to avoid cracks. These delicate operations were not always trouble-free, and even experienced potters could lose dozens and dozens of vases in a single failed batch that had taken many hours to turn and decorate, not to mention prepare the clay and perform other tasks.



# 2000 YEARS SEEN IN PROFILE

The stratigraphic section exposed here is quite characteristic of what can be discovered in the subsoil of *Lousonna*. It roughly tells the following story:

At the beginning of the local Roman period (probably around 20 BC?), a house in light architecture was built on ground made of sand formed during the Ice Age. The walls of the house were built of wooden beams and clay-plated poles. In the mud-floor we can see two pieces of tile that used to be the hearth. The roof was covered with tiles which appear in great number in the blackish layer that indicates the destruction of the house, probably caused by a fire.

Still in the Roman Period (1st century AD), above this first layer, filling material has been deposited. A trench was dug in order to implant the foundation of a stone wall. On the external side of the wall, there was a porch sustained by poles set on large stones. Underneath the mud-floor of the porch lies a small pipe-work. On the inside, there was a room with a floor made of mortar cast on a layer of pebbles, and with painted wall-coverings.

Later on, the floor of the room was perforated to plant a pole, probably to sustain a weak ceiling. It is possible that the porch was already ruined at this point.

Afterwards, possibly in the 4th century, the house was abandoned. The roof collapsed; it probably burnt down. The wall fell into ruin; stones and scraps of plaster have piled up.

Century after century, vegetation and floods covered the vestiges with a thick layer of soil stirred up by ploughing.

A few years ago, a trench was dug with a mechanical shovel to install a pipeline. At the moment of filling up the trench, a worker must have been thirsty...

A few weeks ago, a project for an administrative building lead the local archaeological service to start an excavation.



MUSEE ROMAIN  
LAUSANNE-VIDY

