

## International conference “The essential beauty of tree avenues”

Carcassonne, France – Hôtel du Département –  
19–21 November 2023

***The second international ALLÉES-AVENUES /allées d'avenir/ conference on tree avenues will take place from 19 to 21 November, 2023, in Carcassonne, France. Its aim is to present information and matter for reflection for putting ‘forgiving roadside’ policies—an obstacle to the preservation and replanting of avenues— out of the way. Organized with the support of the Aude County Council, its target audience is elected representatives and professionals, in addition to private individuals such as landowners and people who appreciate avenues.***

### Challenge ‘forgiving roadside’ policies to advance the preservation and replanting of avenues

The so-called ‘forgiving roadside’ road-safety policies adopted throughout the world are aimed at ensuring the physical integrity of road users in the event of a run-off-road accident. For this purpose, they require that trees be no closer than 4, 7 or even 10 metres from the edge of the road. But these regulations are consistent with neither the reality of the space available for planting nor the very essence of tree avenues, i.e. their conventional geometrical characteristics. In every country where they are applied, these policies are a major obstacle to the preservation and planting of roadside trees.

But does road safety really depend on there being no trees close to the road? Is the guarantee of physical integrity enough to make life worth living? Does not physiological existence, our physical health, our mental wellbeing, and our social wellbeing—all of which are defined by the World Health Organization as factors in health—also depend on trees? Is beauty not also as indispensable a factor for living or rebuilding oneself, for putting some magic into the world and drawing society into crucial projects? Is not beauty a special marker of tree avenues, a factor in the very principle of their existence? Is it not vital, today, to preserve and multiply tree avenues, as a form of international cultural heritage and as vital corridors in the light of global warming and depredation of biodiversity?

### Highly scientific, highly human symposium

Proceedings will be enriched by the input of specialists—researchers and managers—in the environment, biodiversity, landscapes, town planning, risk management, the use of motor vehicles, road safety, tourism, and the history of tree avenues and also elected representatives and the public at large from a dozen countries.

Thanks to speakers from the Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences and the universities of Vilnius, Cagliari, and Eberswalde, the symposium will give insight into the cultural dimension of tree avenues. Participants will be given the latest data on the effects trees have on physical health (presentation by Hubert Mansion, founder of the University in Nature, in Canada, and organizer of the World Conference on Forests for Public Health) and will learn about original outlooks on subjects such as the biodiversity of tree avenues and the connection between mental health and trees (presentations by Anna Westin and Tommy Lennartson of the Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences and by Marianne Zandersen of Aarhus University). The issues of spacing and rhythm in avenues, the physiological effects of beauty, risk and behaviour, and tourist marketing image will be addressed by Jean-Baptiste Viale (ENSA – French National School of Architecture – Clermont-Ferrand), Sylvie Monpoint, physician, David Ball (Middlesex University) and Jean-Pascal Assailly (member of the Committee of Experts, CNSR – French National Road Safety Council), and Nadine Darson Beretta (Aude Tourism Development Agency). Sunday 19 November will be devoted to visiting tree avenues in Aude County.

The human dimension, one of symposium’s most central topics, will be addressed through a collection of personal accounts and descriptions of tree planting in Harlem and Berlin (Sonja Dümpelmann, Co-Director of the Rachel Carson Centre for Environment and Society at Ludwig Maximilian University of Munich) and during the Trees for Sarajevo operation.

### Final declaration to put pressure on development policies

As far back as 2011, the report ‘Road Infrastructures: Tree Avenues in the Landscape’ published by the Council of Europe pointed out that ‘forgiving roadside’ policies are ‘barking up the wrong tree’.

To finally make progress in the matter, the symposium will end with a joint declaration resulting from the discussions and contributions of all parties present: the need for beauty and tree avenues must be correctly reflected in the development policies of every country, with, as a consequence, an obligation to look beyond the simplistic notion of ‘forgiving roadsides’. To underscore this commitment, it will be proposed that the first steps be made towards creation of a ‘European tree-avenue route’ under the Council of Europe’s Cultural Routes programme.

**About ALLÉES-AVENUES / allées d'avenir /:**

ALLÉES-AVENUES / allées d'avenir / is a French-registered not-for-profit organization whose purpose is to promote, defend, and generally increase awareness of the values of tree-lined paths, roads, streets, and canals—known collectively as tree avenues—, a rich cultural heritage rooted in the principles of French formal gardens that, in today's world facing climate change and diminishing biodiversity, has become indispensable.

Its influence is exerted in a variety of forms, such as publication of the 'Memento on the Protection of Tree Avenues' (with respect to application of Article L350-3 of France's Code of the Environment), creation of the 'Tree Avenues: from War to Peace' exhibition, organization of the Annual Trampot Ash Avenue Artistic Observatory, National Stakeholder Meetings, and annual technical meetings, all backed by a digital exchange platform.

**About the Aude Departmental Council:**

With around 40,000 roadside trees under its care, the Aude county has one of France's largest networks. The people of the region and tourists have identified its tree avenues as emblematic of the area.

Since 2022, under its commitments to ecological transition, the County Council has been engaged in an unswerving policy with respect to trees and the landscape. This means that trees are taken into account in the region's beautification policy and that concrete measures are implemented for ensuring best practice with respect to their management (inventories, tree and landscape charter, management specifications).

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