Augustus becomes a hero

A mark of victory

This outstanding monument honours Augustus like a god. Traditionally, trophies were dedicated to the divinities of victory: at the end of battle, the victors gathered the corpses of their enemies on a mast, making a sort of mannequin.
Built of stone, such trophies became true architectural monuments. However, very few were preserved. At Adamklissi, in Romania, there is still a circular trophy which was dedicated to Mars in 107-108 A.D. by Trajan, victor over the Dacians.

A deified Emperor

Standing high above the ancient port of Monaco, the trophy marked the end of the Alps. It was also part of the landscape of the sanctuary devoted to Heracles (Hercules for the Romans) Monoikos. The name of Monaco, Monoikos in Greek, is almost always associated with that of Hercules by ancient writers. This association is very meaningful: Augustus is thus assimilated to Hercules, the son of a god to whom deification had been promised, a civilising hero who opened up roads through the Alps. The subjugation of the Alpine Barbarians was therefore just a pretext to legitimise the hero-worship of the Emperor: the celebration of his exploits highlighted his divine nature.

Glossary

Aedicule: a small building.
Doric order: the simplest of the three Greek architectural orders, characterised by baseless, fluted columns.
Fascia: the flat face of the architrave.
Legate: a civil servant who administrated the Emperor's provinces.
Metope: the interval separating two triglyphs on a Doric frieze, generally featuring a sculpted panel.
Triglyph: an ornament on Doric friezes composed of three glyphs (channels engraved into the stone).

Information

Share your views and win free entry tickets.

Gift and book shop
The guide for this monument can be found in the *Itinéraires* collection in the gift and book shop.

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CENTRE DES MONUMENTS NATIONAUX

English

Trophy of Augustus

In memory of the Emperor

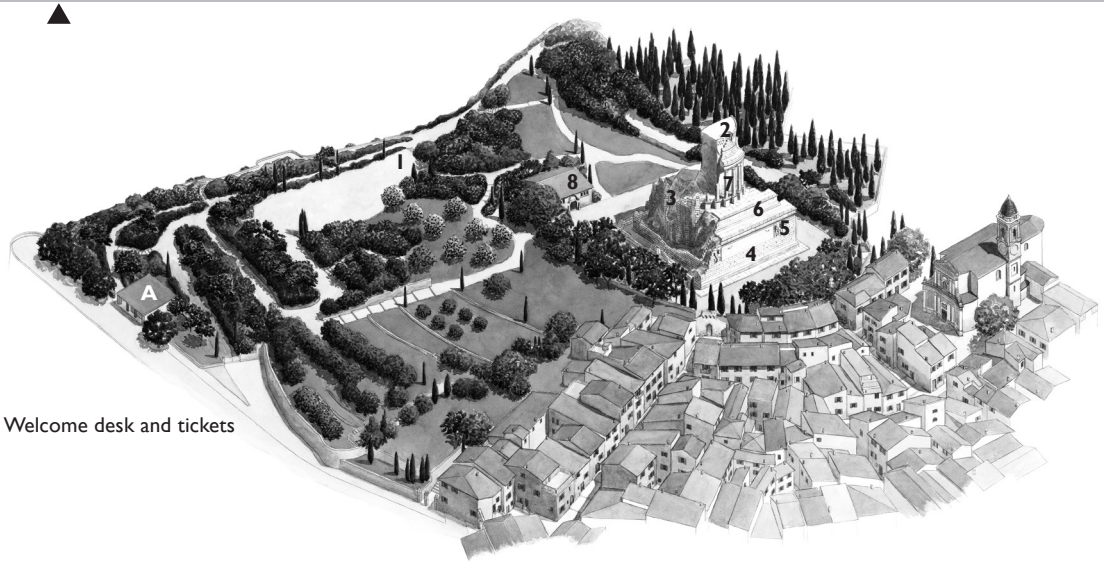
Commemoration

This monument celebrates the victory of Augustus, the Roman Emperor, over the people of the Alps who were finally subjugated between 25 and 14 B.C. In 7-6 B.C., the Senate and people of Rome dedicated the trophy to him. It was erected at the Col de La Turbie, the highest point on the Via Julia, which Augustus had had built to facilitate exchanges with Gaul. It overlooks the sea at San Remo in the Esterel massif, proclaiming the power and protection afforded by Rome.



Destruction and renewal

In the Middle Ages, the edifice was fortified and inhabited. However, in 1705, the fortress was dismantled and its carved stone was reused in building in the village. In the 19th century, the ruins were used as a quarry. After the County of Nice became part of France in 1860, the trophy was listed as a historic monument. In 1905, the French centre for archaeological research entrusted Philippe Casimir, a local scholar, with the task of clearing the trophy. Then Jean-Camille Formigé and his son Jules, master architects for historic monuments, rebuilt part of the edifice with funds donated by the American benefactor, Edward Tuck (1929-1933).



A Welcome desk and tickets

The trophy and its site

1 The road leading to the monument has fine views over the Monaco Bay with a landscaped route reconstituted by the architect, Jules Formigé: "Only wild mountain plants were used, in order to create a piece of nature rather than an ornamental garden.".

2 The trophy is set on a paved esplanade. It has a high square podium topped by a round aedicule*. 24 columns surrounded a tower which had a statue of Augustus on top, making the edifice over 50 metres high - it is just 36 metres today.

Architecture and sculpted decorations

3 The interior structure of the monument is visible: walls built from large limestone blocks form a frame filled in with a mixture of stone rubble and lime mortar, which were widely used in Roman architecture. The central cylinder had pillars which were used as foundations for the columns on the circular floor. Nothing is known about the interior areas. The facade around the base, which has been partially rebuilt, covered it completely. The materials were taken from nearby quarries. The sculptures, capitals and inscription were made from Carrara marble.

4 The dedication inscription was restored by Jules Formigé thanks to the text passed on by Pliny the Elder (1st century A.D.) and fragments discovered on the site: "To the Emperor Caesar Augustus, son of the divine Julius, Pontifex Maximus, proclaimed Emperor for the fourteenth time, and invested with the seventeenth Tribunician Power, from the Senate and Roman people, because under his leadership and auspices, all the Alpine people from the Upper Sea (the Adriatic) to the Lower Sea (the Tyrrhenean) have been subjugated to the power of the Roman people. Conquered Alpine tribes (followed by the list of 45 tribes)".

5 Two winged victories surround the inscription. On either side, a bas-relief drawing represents a trophy of arms with two Barbarians in chains at the bottom. The vanquished and subjugated are listed and represented on the lower level, while the colonnade features sculptures of the legates* who led the military campaigns.
The statue of the conquering Emperor dominates from the top of the edifice.

6 The architecture was restored in its environment partly by Jean-Camille Formigé (1913-1915) who reinstated the elevation by erecting the two colonnades again. His son Jules then completed the base wall and continued the colonnade.
The monument was erected with the dedication facing Gaul. The monument was also linked to the medieval village on the same side by cutting a road downwards through the built-up areas on the site of the ancient Via Julia. The remains of the medieval fortifications have been preserved at the top.

7 The elevation of the colonnade complies with the rules of the Doric order*. The columns with capitals on top bear the entablature composed of the architrave with three smooth fascia*, a decorated frieze and a moulded cornice. Triglyphs* and metopes* with bas-relief decorations alternate on the frieze. The panel set back from the colonnade had hollowed-out niches which held statues of the legates* or generals of Augustus, including Drusus and Tiberius, his stepsons. Fragments of these sculptures have been replaced there.

The museum

8 The "Museum", presenting casts of the main remains discovered and photographs of the excavations, was completed at the end of the restoration of the trophy in 1933. In the middle the model of the Formigés's trophy has a conical top with twelve steps, whilst a copy of the statue of Augustus found at Primaporta gives another idea of the top of the trophy.

* *Explanations overleaf.*