

EUROPEAN STORIES

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A week ago, exactly, the first transnational meeting of European Stories took place in Bordeaux, France. The project leader, [Le LABA](#), and their local partner, [Les Balades Alternatives](#), invited the other European partners to experience an 'on your feet' live introduction to our shared project. We were guided by an *éclaireur urbain* (an urban illuminator) on a route around la Bastide neighborhood, which historically emerged opposite the historical settlement of the city, across the river Garonne.



The bridge built in the time of Napoleon Bonaparte, connecting the two parts of the city, features ‘macarons’ - ornament remnants of its past, yet it was only **through the story of [Dominique – our guide](#)** - that we quickly learned how the community of the new territory was **created two centuries ago**. The toll tax for passage across the bridge raised needed income, and wealthy patrons contributed to building essential communal institutions in the European spirit, such as: a theatre, a baby crèche (providing free medical care), a school for girls, a fire station, a public bath, and the city hall. One finds all of them in the perimeter of 1 km.



This is not your regular ‘historical’ city tour. The tour moves from the medieval era to the socialist époque and puts a focus on the ‘architectural gems’ in the Bastide. Is the guide a historian, an architect or a socialist?

One of the buildings presented during the tour - the l'Art Nouveau communal building “la Cité de la Benauge”, was considered a pioneering effort in communal architecture in Europe.

#EuropeanStories is here to showcase exceptional cultural tours such as this one:

- target primarily people living or visiting the partnering cities and interested in **the story of the territory and its people**
- **Tours that experiment with generating a social impact on the local communities and favour sustainable tourism**

We learn from Les Balades Alternatives that the tour guides receive **training to build their self-confidence skills** (notably speaking in public) as well as skills that **empower them to seek new job opportunities** (research and networking), and skills that reconnect them with the social and economic aspects of life (group-learning and exploration of the local community).

The #EuropeanStories partnership has the ambition **to research, connect, and support local players or newcomers on the terrain of the #informalculturaltrails business**. The partnership is based in 5 EU countries, combining diverse expertise in the field of cultural research, training, creation, marketing, and valuation. The partners will not only provide valuable tools to ‘informal businesses’ but also test methodologies to ‘initiate’ story-based tourist trails focusing on local life, locally spoken languages, and the wealth of European stories, which are as diverse as the locals who have settled here in past or more recent times.

