**Galatia – Wikipedia and Encyclopedia Britannica as sources**

Where is Galatia?

Galatia was bounded on the north by **Bithynia** and **Paphlagonia**, on the east by Pontus and **Cappadocia**, on the south by Cilicia and Lycaonia, and on the west by **Phrygia**. Its capital was **Ancyra** (i.e. **Ankara**, today the capital of modern **Turkey**).

Who were the Galatian people?

The Galatians (Ancient **Greek**: Γαλάται, Galátai; Latin: **Galatae**, Galati, Gallograeci; **Greek**: Γαλάτες, Galátes, "**Gauls**") were a Gallic people of the Hellenistic period that dwelt mainly in the north central regions of Asia Minor or Anatolia, in what was known as Galatia, in today's Turkey.

The *Gauls* were a group of Celtic *peoples* of West-Central Europe in the Iron Age and the Roman period (roughly from the 5th century BC to the 5th century AD). The area they inhabited was known as *Gaul*, encompassing present day France, Luxembourg, Belgium, most of Switzerland, parts of Northern Italy, as well as the parts of the Netherlands and Germany on the west bank of the Rhine.

The Romans knew the **Celts** then living in what became present-day France as **Gauls**. The territory of these peoples probably included the Low Countries, the Alps and present-day northern Italy. Julius Caesar in his Gallic Wars described the 1st-century BC descendants of those **Gauls**. Their Gaulish language forms the main branch of the [Continental Celtic languages](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Continental_Celtic_languages).

The Gauls emerged around the 5th century BC as the [La Tène culture](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/La_T%C3%A8ne_culture) north of the [Alps](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Alps) (spread across the lands between the [Seine](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Seine), [Middle Rhine](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Middle_Rhine) and upper [Elbe](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Elbe)). By the 4th century BC, they spread over much of what is now [France](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/France), [Belgium](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Belgium), [Spain](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Spain), [Portugal](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Portugal), [Switzerland](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Switzerland), [Southern Germany](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Southern_Germany), [Austria](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Austria), the [Czech Republic](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Czech_Republic) and [Slovakia](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Slovakia) by virtue of controlling the trade routes along the river systems of the [Rhône](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rh%C3%B4ne), [Seine](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Seine), [Rhine](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rhine), and [Danube](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Danube), and they quickly expanded into [Northern Italy](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cisalpine_Gaul#Celts_in_Cisalpine_Gaul), [the Balkans](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gallic_invasion_of_the_Balkans), [Transylvania](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Celts_in_Transylvania) and [Galatia](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Galatia).

Gaul was never united under a single ruler or government, but the Gallic tribes were capable of uniting their forces in large-scale [military operations](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Celtic_warfare). They reached the peak of their power in the early 3rd century BC. The [Roman Republic](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Roman_Republic) put pressure on the Gallic [sphere of influence](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sphere_of_influence); the [Battle of Telamon](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Battle_of_Telamon) of 225 BC heralded a gradual decline of Gallic power over the 2nd century, until the eventual conquest of Gaul in the [Gallic Wars](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gallic_Wars) of the 50s BC. After this, Gaul became a [province of the Roman Empire](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Roman_Gaul).

The Gauls of [Gallia Celtica](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gallia_Celtica) according to the testimony of [Caesar](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Julius_Caesar) called themselves *Celtae* in their own language (as distinct from [*Belgae*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Belgae) and [*Aquitani*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Aquitani)), and *Galli* in [Latin](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Latin).[[2]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gauls#cite_note-2) As is not unusual with ancient ethnonyms, these names came to be applied more widely than their original sense, *Celtae* being the origin of the term [Celts](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Celts) itself (in its modern meaning referring to all populations speaking a language of the "[Celtic](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Celtic_languages)" branch of Indo-European) while *Galli* is the origin of the adjective *Gallic*, now referring to all of Gaul.

The name *Gaul* itself is not derived from Latin *Galli*, but from the Germanic word *\*[Walhaz](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Walhaz%22%20%5Co%20%22Walhaz)* (see [Gaul](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gaul#Name)).[[3]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gauls#cite_note-3)

**Origins and early history**



[Bronze](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bronze) cuirass, weighing 2.9 kg, [Grenoble](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Grenoble), end of 7th century – early 6th century BCE

Gaulish culture developed out of the Celtic cultures over the first millennia BC. The [Urnfield culture](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Urnfield_culture) (c. 1300 BC – c. 750 BC) represents the Celts as a distinct cultural branch of the [Indo-European-speaking people](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Proto-Indo-Europeans).[[4]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gauls#cite_note-4) The spread of [iron working](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Iron_working) led to the [Hallstatt culture](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hallstatt_culture) in the 8th century BC; the [Proto-Celtic](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Proto-Celtic) may have been spoken around this time. The Hallstatt culture evolved into the [La Tène culture](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/La_T%C3%A8ne_culture) in around the 5th century BC.

By the 5th century BC, the tribes later called Gauls had migrated from [Central France](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/France) to the Mediterranean coast.[[5]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gauls#cite_note-5) Gallic invaders [settled](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cisalpine_Gaul#Celts_in_Cisalpine_Gaul) the [Po Valley](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Po_Valley) in the 4th century BC, [defeated Roman forces in a battle](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Battle_of_the_Allia) under [Brennus](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Brennus_%284th_century_BC%29) in 390 BC and raided [Italy](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Italy) as far as [Sicily](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sicily).[[1]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gauls#cite_note-celt-1)

A large number of Gauls served in the armies of [Carthage](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ancient_Carthage) during the [Punic Wars](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Punic_Wars), and one of the leading rebel leaders of the [Mercenary War](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mercenary_War), [Autaritus](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Autaritus), was of Gallic origin.

**Balkan wars**

During the Balkan expedition, led by [Cerethrios](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cerethrius), [Brennos](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Brennus_%283rd_century_BC%29) and [Bolgios](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bolgios), the Gauls raided twice the [Greek](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ancient_Greece) mainland.

At the end of the second expedition the Gallic raiders had been repelled by the coalition armies of the various [Greek](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ancient_Greece) city-states and were forced to retreat to [Illyria](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Illyria) and [Thrace](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Thrace), but the Greeks were forced to grant safe-passage to the Gauls who then made their way to [Asia Minor](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Anatolia) and settled in [Central Anatolia](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Central_Anatolia_Region). The Gallic area of settlement in Asia Minor was called [Galatia](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Galatia); there they created widespread havoc. But they were checked through the use of [war elephants](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/War_elephants) and skirmishers by the Greek [Seleucid](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Seleucid_Empire) king [Antiochus I](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Antiochus_I) in 275 BC, after which they served as mercenaries across the whole [Hellenistic](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hellenistic_period) [Eastern Mediterranean](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Eastern_Mediterranean), including [Ptolemaic Egypt](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ptolemaic_Egypt), where they, under [Ptolemy II Philadelphus](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ptolemy_II_Philadelphus) (285-246 BC), attempted to seize control of the kingdom.

In the first Gallic invasion of Greece (279 BC), they achieved victory over the Macedonians and killed the [Macedonian](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Macedon) [king](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_kings_of_Macedon) [Ptolemy Keraunos](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ptolemy_Keraunos). They then focused on looting the rich Macedonian countryside, but avoided the heavily fortified cities. The Macedonian general [Sosthenes](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sosthenes_of_Macedon) assembled an army, defeated [Bolgius](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bolgius) and repelled the invading Gauls.

In the second Gaulish invasion of Greece (278 BC), the Gauls, led by [Brennos](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Brennus_%283rd_century_BC%29), suffered heavy losses while facing the [Greek](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ancient_Greece) coalition army at [Thermopylae](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Thermopylae), but helped by the Heracleans they followed the mountain path around Thermopylae to encircle the [Greek](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ancient_Greece) army in the same way that the [Persian](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Persian_people) army had done at the [Battle of Thermopylae](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Battle_of_Thermopylae) in 480 BC, but this time deafeating the whole of the Greek army.

**Galatian war**

Main article: [Galatian War](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Galatian_War)

In 278 BC Gaulish settlers in the Balkans were invited by [Nicomedes I of Bithynia](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nicomedes_I_of_Bithynia) to help him in a dynastic struggle against his brother. They numbered about 10,000 fighting men and about the same number of women and children, divided into three tribes, [Trocmi](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Trocmi), [Tolistobogii](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tolistobogii) and [Tectosages](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tectosages). They were eventually defeated by the [Seleucid](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Seleucid_Empire) king [Antiochus I](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Antiochus_I) (275 BC), in a battle in which the Seleucid war elephants shocked the Galatians. Although the momentum of the invasion was broken, the Galatians were by no means exterminated, and continued to demand tribute from the Hellenistic states of Anatolia to avoid war. 4,000 Galatians were hired as mercenaries by the [Ptolemaic](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ptolemaic_dynasty) Egyptian king [Ptolemy II Philadelphus](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ptolemy_II_Philadelphus) in 270 BC. According to [Pausanias](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pausanias_%28geographer%29), soon after arrival the Celts plotted “to seize Egypt”, and so Ptolemy marooned them on a deserted island in the [Nile River](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nile_River).[[6]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gauls#cite_note-hinds-6)

Galatians also participated at the victory at [Raphia](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Battle_of_Raphia) in 217 BC under [Ptolemy IV Philopator](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ptolemy_IV_Philopator), and continued to serve as mercenaries for the Ptolemaic dynasty until its demise in 30 BC. The Galatians continued to be a serious threat to the states of Asia Minor. In fact, they continued to be a threat even after their defeat by [Gnaeus Manlius Vulso](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gnaeus_Manlius_Vulso) in the [Galatian War](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Galatian_War) (189 BC). Galatia declined and at times fell under [Pontic](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kingdom_of_Pontus) ascendancy. They were finally freed by the [Mithridatic Wars](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mithridatic_Wars), in which they supported Rome. In the settlement of 64 BC, Galatia became a [client state](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Client_state) of the Roman empire, the old constitution disappeared, and three chiefs (wrongly styled "tetrarchs") were appointed, one for each tribe. But this arrangement soon gave way before the ambition of one of these tetrarchs, [Deiotarus](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Deiotarus), a contemporary of [Cicero](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cicero) and [Julius Caesar](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Julius_Caesar), who made himself master of the other two tetrarchies and was finally recognized by the Romans as ['king' of Galatia](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_Kings_of_Galatia). The [Galatian language](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Galatian_language) continued to be spoken in central Anatolia until the 6th century.[[8]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gauls#cite_note-8)

**Roman wars**

Main article: [Gallic Wars](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gallic_Wars)

In the [Second Punic War](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Second_Punic_War) the famous Carthaginian general [Hannibal Barca](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hannibal_Barca) used Gallic mercenaries in his invasion of Italy. They played a part in some of his most spectacular victories, including the [battle of Cannae](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Battle_of_Cannae). The Gauls were so prosperous by the 2nd century that the powerful Greek colony of [Massilia](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Marseilles) had to appeal to the [Roman Republic](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Roman_Republic) for defense against them. The Romans intervened in southern Gaul in 125 BC, and conquered the area eventually known as [Gallia Narbonensis](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gallia_Narbonensis) by 121.

In 58 BC [Julius Caesar](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Julius_Caesar) launched the [Gallic Wars](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gallic_Wars) and had conquered the whole of Gaul by 51 BC. He noted that the Gauls (Celtae) were one of the three primary peoples in the area, along with the [Aquitanians](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Aquitanians) and the [Belgae](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Belgae). Caesar's motivation for the invasion seems to have been his need for gold to pay off his debts and for a successful military expedition to boost his political career. The people of Gaul could provide him with both. So much gold was looted from Gaul that after the war the price of gold fell by as much as 20%. While they were militarily just as brave as the Romans, the internal division between the Gallic tribes guaranteed an easy victory for Caesar, and [Vercingetorix](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vercingetorix)'s attempt to unite the Gauls against Roman invasion came too late.[[9]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gauls#cite_note-EB_The_Roman_Conquest-9)[[10]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gauls#cite_note-The_first_triumvirate_and_the_conquest_of_Gaul-10) After the annexation of Gaul a mixed [Gallo-Roman culture](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gallo-Roman_culture) began to emerge.

**Roman Gaul**

Main article: [Roman Gaul](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Roman_Gaul)



The [Gallic Empire](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gallic_Empire) (in green), under Tetricus I by 271 AD, included the territories of [Germania](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Germania), [Gaul](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Roman_Gaul) and [Britannia](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Roman_Britain).

After more than a century of [warfare](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Roman-Gallic_wars), the [Cisalpine Gauls](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cisalpine_Gaul) were subdued by the Romans in the early 2nd century BC. The [Transalpine Gauls](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Transalpine_Gaul) continued to thrive for another century, and joined the [Germanic](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Germanic_peoples) [Cimbri](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cimbri) and [Teutones](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Teutones) in the [Cimbrian War](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cimbrian_War), where they defeated and killed a [Roman consul](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Roman_consul) at [Burdigala](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Battle_of_Burdigala) in 107 BC, and later became prominent among the rebelling gladiators in the [Third Servile War](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Third_Servile_War).[[11]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gauls#cite_note-strauss-11) The Gauls were finally [conquered](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gallic_Wars) by [Julius Caesar](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Julius_Caesar) in the 50s BC despite a rebellion by the [Arvernian](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Arverni) chieftain [Vercingetorix](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vercingetorix). During the [Roman period](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Roman_Gaul) the Gauls became assimilated into [Gallo-Roman culture](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gallo-Roman_culture) and by [expanding](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Migration_Age) [Germanic tribes](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Germanic_tribes). During the [crisis of the third century](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Crisis_of_the_third_century), there was briefly a breakaway [Gallic Empire](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gallic_Empire) founded by the [Batavian](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Batavi_%28Germanic_tribe%29) general [Postumus](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Postumus).

**Physical appearance**

The fourth-century Roman historian [Ammianus Marcellinus](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ammianus_Marcellinus) wrote that the Gauls were tall, light-skinned, light-haired, and light-eyed:

Almost all Gauls are tall and fair-skinned, with reddish hair. Their savage eyes make them fearful objects; they are eager to quarrel and excessively truculent. When, in the course of a dispute, any of them calls in his wife, a creature with gleaming eyes much stronger than her husband, they are more than a match for a whole group of foreigners; especially when the woman, with swollen neck and gnashing teeth, swings her great white arms and begins to deliver a rain of punches mixed with kicks, like missiles launched by the twisted strings of a catapult.[[12]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gauls#cite_note-12)

The first century BCE Greek historian Diodorus Siculus described them as tall, generally heavily built, very light-skinned, and light-haired, with long hair and mustaches:

The Gauls are tall of body, with rippling muscles, and white of skin, and their hair is blond, and not only naturally so, but they make it their practice to increase the distinguishing color by which nature has given it. For they are always washing their hair in limewater, and they pull it back from their forehead to the top of the head and back to the nape of the neck... Some of them shave their beards, but others let it grow a little; and the nobles shave their cheeks, but they let the mustache grow until it covers the mouth. [[13]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gauls#cite_note-13)

[Jordanes](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jordanes), in his [*Origins and Deeds of the Goths*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Getica), indirectly describes the Gauls as light-haired and large-bodied via comparing them to [Caledonians](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Caledonians), as a contrast to the Spaniards, who he compared to the [Silures](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Silures). He speculates based on this comparison that the Britons originated from different peoples, including the aforementioned Gauls and Spaniards.

The Silures have swarthy features and are usually born with curly black hair, but the inhabitants of Caledonia have reddish hair and large loose-jointed bodies. They [the Britons] are like the Gauls and the Spaniards, according as they are opposite either nation. Hence some have supposed that from these lands the island received its inhabitants.

In the novel *Satyricon*, written by Roman courtier Gaius [Petronius](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Petronius), a Roman character sarcastically suggests that he and his partner "chalk our faces so that Gaul may claim us as her own" in the midst of a rant outlining the problems with his partner's plan of using [blackface](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Blackface) to impersonate [Aethiopians](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Aethiopia). This suggests that Gauls were thought of on average to be much paler than Romans.[[14]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gauls#cite_note-14)

**Culture**

All over Gaul, archeology has uncovered numerous pre-Roman gold mines (at least 200 in the Pyrenees), suggesting that they were very rich, also evidenced by large finds of gold coins and artefacts. Also there existed highly developed population centers, called *oppida* by Caesar, such as [Bibracte](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bibracte), [Gergovia](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gergovia), [Avaricum](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Avaricum), [Alesia](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Alesia_%28city%29), [Bibrax](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bibrax), [Manching](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Manching) and others. Modern archeology strongly suggests that the countries of Gaul were quite civilized and very wealthy. Most had contact with Roman merchants and some, particularly those that were governed by Republics such as the [Aedui](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Aedui), [Helvetii](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Helvetii) and others, had enjoyed stable political alliances with Rome. They imported Mediterranean wine on an industrial scale, evidenced by large finds of wine vessels in digs all over Gaul, the largest and most famous of which being the one discovered in [Vix Grave](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vix_Grave), which stands 1.63 m (5'4") in height.

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[Agris Helmet](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Agris_Helmet). Discovered in [Agris](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Agris), [Charente](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Charente), France. 350 BC

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A 24 carat Celtic "[torc](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Torc)", discovered in the grave of the "[Lady of Vix](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lady_of_Vix)", [Burgundy](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Burgundy_%28region%29), France. 480 BC

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A belt made of 2.8 kilograms (6.2 lb) of pure gold, discovered in [Guînes](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gu%C3%AEnes), France. 1200-1000 BC

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Celtic gold bracelet found in [Cantal](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cantal), France

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Celtic helmet decorated with gold "[triskeles](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Triskele)", found in [Amfreville-sous-les-Monts](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Amfreville-sous-les-Monts), France. 400 BC

* 

Celtic war trumpet named "[carnyx](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Carnyx%22%20%5Co%20%22Carnyx)" found in the Gallic sanctuary of [Tintignac](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tintignac), [Corrèze](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Corr%C3%A8ze), France.

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Celtic bronze helmet in the shape of [swan](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Swan) found in [Tintignac](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tintignac), [Corrèze](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Corr%C3%A8ze), France.

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The [Vix krater](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vix_krater), discovered in the grave of the "[Lady of Vix](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lady_of_Vix)", in northern [Burgundy](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Burgundy_%28region%29), France. 500 BC

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Gaul, [Curiosolites](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Curiosolites) coin showing stylized head and horse (circa 100-50BC)

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Gaul, [Armorica](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Armorica) coin showing stylized head and horse (Jersey moon head style, circa 100-50BC)

**Social structure**

Gaulish society was dominated by the [druid](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Druid) priestly class. The druids were not the only political force, however, and the early political system was complex. The fundamental unit of Gallic politics was the tribe, which itself consisted of one or more of what Caesar called "pagi".[[*citation needed*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia%3ACitation_needed)] Each tribe had a council of elders, and initially a king. Later, the executive was an annually-elected magistrate.[[*citation needed*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia%3ACitation_needed)] Among the [Aedui](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Aedui) tribe the executive held the title of "Vergobret", a position much like a king, but its powers were held in check by rules laid down by the council.[[*citation needed*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia%3ACitation_needed)]

The tribal groups, or *pagi* as the Romans called them (singular: *pagus*; the French word *pays*, "region", comes from this term) were organised into larger super-tribal groups that the Romans called [*civitates*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Civitates). These administrative groupings would be taken over by the Romans in their system of local control, and these *civitates* would also be the basis of France's eventual division into [ecclesiastical bishoprics and dioceses](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_Ancien_R%C3%A9gime_dioceses_of_France), which would remain in place — with slight changes — until the [French Revolution](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/French_Revolution).

Although the tribes were moderately stable political entities, Gaul as a whole tended to be politically divided, there being virtually no unity among the various tribes. Only during particularly trying times, such as the invasion of Caesar, could the Gauls unite under a single leader like [Vercingetorix](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vercingetorix). Even then, however, the faction lines were clear.

The Romans divided Gaul broadly into *Provincia* (the conquered area around the Mediterranean), and the northern [Gallia Comata](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gallia_Comata) ("free Gaul" or "wooded Gaul"). Caesar divided the people of Gaulia Comata into three broad groups: the *Aquitani*; *Galli* (who in their own language were called *Celtae*); and *Belgae*. In the modern sense, [Gaulish tribes](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_peoples_of_Gaul) are defined linguistically, as speakers of dialects of the Gaulish language. While the [Aquitani](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Aquitani) were probably [Vascons](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vascons), the [Belgae](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Belgae) would thus probably be counted among the Gaulish tribes, perhaps with Germanic elements.

[Julius Caesar](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Julius_Caesar), in his book, [*Commentarii de Bello Gallico*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Commentarii_de_Bello_Gallico), comments:

All Gaul is divided into three parts, one of which the Belgae inhabit, the Aquitani another, whereas those who in their own language are called Celts and in ours Gauls, the third.

All these differ from each other in language, customs and laws.

The [Garonne](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Garonne) River separates the Gauls from the Aquitani; the [River Marne](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/River_Marne) and the River [Seine](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Seine) separate them from the Belgae.

Of all these, the Belgae are the bravest, because they are furthest from the civilisation and refinement of (our) Province, and merchants least frequently resort to them, and import those things which tend to effeminate the mind; and they are the nearest to the Germani, who dwell beyond the Rhine, with whom they are continually waging war; for which reason the Helvetii also surpass the rest of the Gauls in valour, as they contend with the Germani in almost daily battles, when they either repel them from their own territories, or themselves wage war on their frontiers. One part of these, which it has been said that the Gauls occupy, takes its beginning at the River [Rhône](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rh%C3%B4ne); it is bounded by the River [Garonne](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Garonne), the [Atlantic Ocean](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Atlantic_Ocean), and the territories of the Belgae; it borders, too, on the side of the Sequani and the Helvetii, upon the River [Rhine](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rhine), and stretches toward the north.

The Belgae rises from the extreme frontier of Gaul, extend to the lower part of the River Rhine; and look toward the north and the rising sun.

Aquitania extends from the [Garonne](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Garonne) to the [Pyrenees](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pyrenees) and to that part of the [Atlantic](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Atlantic) ([Bay of Biscay](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bay_of_Biscay)) which is near [Spain](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Spain): it looks between the setting of the sun, and the north star.

[*Julius Caesar*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Julius_Caesar)*,* [*Commentarii de Bello Gallico*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Commentarii_de_Bello_Gallico)*, Book I, chapter 1*

**Language**

Main article: [Gaulish language](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gaulish_language)

Gaulish or Gallic is the name given to the [Celtic](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Celt) language that was spoken in [Gaul](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gaul) before the [Latin](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Latin) of the late [Roman Empire](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Roman_Empire) became dominant in [Roman Gaul](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Roman_Gaul). According to Julius Caesar in his [*Commentaries on the Gallic War*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Commentarii_de_Bello_Gallico), it was one of three languages in Gaul, the others being [Aquitanian](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Aquitanian_language) and [Belgic](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Belgic).[[15]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gauls#cite_note-15) In [Gallia Transalpina](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gallia_Transalpina), a Roman province by the time of Caesar, [Latin](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Latin) was the language spoken since at least the previous century. Gaulish is [paraphyletically](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Paraphyletic) grouped with [Celtiberian](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Celtiberian_language), [Lepontic](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lepontic_language), and [Galatian](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Galatian_language) as [Continental Celtic](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Continental_Celtic). The Lepontic language and the Galatian language are sometimes considered to be dialects of Gaulish.

The exact time of the final extinction of Gaulish is unknown, but it is estimated to have been around or shortly after the middle of the [1st millennium](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/1st_millennium).[[16]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gauls#cite_note-16) Gaulish may have survived in some regions as the mid to late 6th century in France.[[17]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gauls#cite_note-Helix-17) Despite considerable Romanization of the local material culture, the Gaulish language is held to have survived and had coexisted with spoken Latin during the centuries of Roman rule of Gaul.[[17]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gauls#cite_note-Helix-17) Coexisting with Latin, Gaulish played a role in shaping the [Vulgar Latin](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vulgar_Latin) dialects that developed into French, with effects including loanwords and [calques](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Calque)[[18]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gauls#cite_note-Savignac-18)[[19]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gauls#cite_note-Matas-19), sound changes shaped by Gaulish influence[[20]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gauls#cite_note-20)[[21]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gauls#cite_note-21), and well as in conjugation and word order.[[18]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gauls#cite_note-Savignac-18)[[19]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gauls#cite_note-Matas-19)[[22]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gauls#cite_note-Adams-22) Recent work in computational simulation suggests that Gaulish played a role in gender shifts of words in Early French, where by the gender would shift to match the gender of the corresponding Gaulish word with the same meaning.[[23]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gauls#cite_note-23)



[Taranis](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Taranis) (with [Celtic wheel](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Celtic_wheel) and thunderbolt), Le Chatelet, Gourzon, [Haute-Marne](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Haute-Marne), [France](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/France).

**Religion**

Main article: [Celtic polytheism](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Celtic_polytheism)

The Gauls practiced a form of [animism](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Animism), ascribing human characteristics to lakes, streams, mountains, and other natural features and granting them a quasi-divine status. Also, worship of animals was not uncommon; the animal most sacred to the Gauls was the [boar](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Boar), which can be found on many Gallic military standards, much like the Roman eagle.

Their system of gods and goddesses was loose, there being certain deities which virtually every Gallic person[[*citation needed*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia%3ACitation_needed)] worshiped, as well as tribal and household gods. Many of the major gods were related to Greek gods; the primary god worshiped at the time of the arrival of Caesar was [Teutates](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Toutatis), the Gallic equivalent of [Mercury](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mercury_%28mythology%29). The "father god" in Gallic worship was "Dis Pater". However, there is no record of a theology[[*citation needed*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia%3ACitation_needed)], just a set of related and evolving traditions of worship.

Perhaps the most intriguing facet of Gallic religion is the practice of the [Druids](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Druids). There is no certainty concerning their origin, but it is clear that they vehemently guarded the secrets of their order and held sway over the people of Gaul. Indeed, they claimed the right to determine questions of war and peace, and thereby held an "international" status. In addition, the Druids monitored the religion of ordinary Gauls and were in charge of educating the aristocracy. They also practiced a form of excommunication from the assembly of worshippers, which in ancient Gaul meant a separation from secular society as well. Thus the Druids were an important part of Gallic society.

About the Gallic wars

The countries of Gaul were civilized and wealthy. Most had contact with Roman merchants and some, particularly those that were governed by republics such as the [Aedui](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Aedui) and [Helvetii](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Helvetii), had enjoyed stable political alliances with Rome in the past.

The Romans respected and feared the Gallic tribes. Only fifty years before, in 109 BC, Italy had been invaded from the north and saved only after several bloody and costly battles by [Gaius Marius](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gaius_Marius). Around 62 BC, when a Roman client state, the [Arverni](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Arverni), conspired with the [Sequani](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sequani) and the [Suebi](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Suebi) nations east of the Rhine to attack the Aedui, a strong Roman ally, Rome turned a blind eye. The Sequani and Arverni sought [Ariovistus](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ariovistus)’ aid and defeated the [Aedui](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Aedui) in 63 BC at the [Battle of Magetobriga](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Battle_of_Magetobriga). The Sequani rewarded Ariovistus with land following his victory.[[10]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gallic_Wars#cite_note-Grant,_Julius_Caesar,_87-10)[[11]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gallic_Wars#cite_note-Gérard_Walter_1952-11)[[12]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gallic_Wars#cite_note-Adrian_Goldsworthy_2007-12) Ariovistus settled the land with 120,000 of his people. When 24,000 Harudes joined his cause, Ariovistus demanded that the Sequani give him more land to accommodate the Harudes people.[[13]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gallic_Wars#cite_note-Walter,_Caesar:_A_Biography,_159-13)[[14]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gallic_Wars#cite_note-C_Fuller,_Julius_Caesar_1965-14) This demand concerned [Rome](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rome) because if the Sequani conceded, Ariovistus would be in a position to take all of the Sequani land and attack the rest of Gaul.[[13]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gallic_Wars#cite_note-Walter,_Caesar:_A_Biography,_159-13) They did not appear to be concerned about a conflict between non-client, client and allied states. By the end of the campaign, the non-client [Suebi](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Suebi) under the leadership of the belligerent [Ariovistus](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ariovistus), stood triumphant over both the Aedui and their co-conspirators. Fearing another mass migration akin to the devastating [Cimbrian War](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cimbrian_War), Rome, now keenly invested in the defense of Gaul, was irrevocably drawn into war.

**Oppidum**

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[Jump to navigation](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Oppidum#mw-head) [Jump to search](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Oppidum#p-search)

For other uses, see [Oppido](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Oppido_%28disambiguation%29).



Modern-day rendering of a Celtic Oppidum, Central Europe 1st century BC

An ***oppidum*** (plural ***oppida***) is a large fortified [Iron Age](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Iron_Age_Europe) settlement. Oppida are associated with the [Celtic](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Celts) late [La Tène culture](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/La_T%C3%A8ne_culture), emerging during the 2nd and 1st centuries BC, spread across Europe, stretching from [Britain](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Iron_Age_Britain) and [Iberia](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Iberia) in the west to the edge of the [Hungarian plain](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Great_Hungarian_Plain) in the east. They continued in use until the Romans began conquering Europe. North of the River [Danube](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Danube), where the population remained independent from Rome, oppida continued to be used into the 1st century AD.



**Contents**

* [1 Definition](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Oppidum#Definition)
* [2 Location and type](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Oppidum#Location_and_type)
* [3 History](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Oppidum#History)
* [4 Examples](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Oppidum#Examples)
	+ [4.1 Belgium/Luxembourg/Netherlands](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Oppidum#Belgium/Luxembourg/Netherlands)
	+ [4.2 Czech Republic](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Oppidum#Czech_Republic)
	+ [4.3 France](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Oppidum#France)
	+ [4.4 Great Britain](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Oppidum#Great_Britain)
	+ [4.5 Germany](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Oppidum#Germany)
	+ [4.6 Hungary](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Oppidum#Hungary)
	+ [4.7 Italy](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Oppidum#Italy)
	+ [4.8 Portugal](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Oppidum#Portugal)
	+ [4.9 Serbia](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Oppidum#Serbia)
	+ [4.10 Slovakia](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Oppidum#Slovakia)
	+ [4.11 Spain](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Oppidum#Spain)
	+ [4.12 Switzerland](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Oppidum#Switzerland)
* [5 References](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Oppidum#References)
* [6 Further reading](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Oppidum#Further_reading)
* [7 External links](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Oppidum#External_links)

**Definition**



The [Hallstatt](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hallstatt_culture) and [La Tène](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/La_T%C3%A8ne_culture) cultures

*Oppidum* is a [Latin](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Latin) word meaning the main settlement in any administrative area of [ancient Rome](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ancient_Rome), and applied more generally in Latin to smaller urban settlements than cities, equating to "town" in English (bearing in mind that ancient "cities" could be very small by modern standards). The word is derived from the earlier Latin *ob-pedum*, "enclosed space", possibly from the [Proto-Indo-European](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Proto-Indo-European_language) *\*pedóm-*, "occupied space" or "footprint".

In his [*Commentarii de Bello Gallico*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Commentarii_de_Bello_Gallico), [Julius Caesar](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Julius_Caesar) described the larger [Celtic](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Celt) [Iron Age](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Iron_Age) settlements he encountered in [Gaul](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gaul) during the [Gallic Wars](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gallic_Wars) in 58 to 52 BC as *oppida*. Although he did not explicitly define what features qualified a settlement to be called an *oppidum*, the main requirements emerge.[[1]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Oppidum#cite_note-1)

They were important economic sites, places where goods were produced, stored and traded, and sometimes Roman merchants had settled and the [Roman legions](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Roman_legion) could obtain supplies. They were also political centres, the seat of authorities who made decisions that affected large numbers of people, such as the appointment of [Vercingetorix](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vercingetorix) as head of the Gallic revolt in 52 BC.[[2]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Oppidum#cite_note-Oppida-2):12–13

Caesar named 28 oppida. By 2011, only 21 of these had been positively identified by historians and archaeologists: either there was a traceable similarity between the Latin and the modern name of the locality (e.g. Orléans-[Cenabum](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cenabum%22%20%5Co%20%22Cenabum)), or excavations had provided the necessary evidence (e.g. [Alesia](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Alesia_%28city%29)). Most of the places that Caesar called oppida were city-sized fortified settlements. However, [Geneva](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Geneva), for example, was referred to as an oppidum, but no fortifications dating to this period have yet been discovered there. Caesar also refers to 20 oppida of the [Bituriges](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bituriges) and 12 of the [Helvetii](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Helvetii), twice the number of fortified settlements of these groups known today. That implies that Caesar likely counted some unfortified settlements as oppida. A similar ambiguity is in evidence in writing by the Roman historian [Livy](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Livy), who also used the word for both fortified and unfortified settlements.[[2]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Oppidum#cite_note-Oppida-2):13

In his work *Geographia*, [Ptolemy](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ptolemy) listed the coordinates of many Celtic settlements. However, research has shown many of the localisations of Ptolemy to be erroneous, making the identification of any modern location with the names he listed highly uncertain and speculative. An exception to that is the oppidum of *Brenodurum* at [Bern](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bern), which was confirmed by an archaeological discovery.[[2]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Oppidum#cite_note-Oppida-2):13



[Bibracte](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bibracte) France, seen from above, 1st century BC

In archaeology and prehistory, the term *oppida* now refers to a category of settlement; it was first used in that sense by [Paul Reinecke](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Paul_Reinecke), [Joseph Déchelette](https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Joseph_D%C3%A9chelette&action=edit&redlink=1) [[fr](https://fr.wikipedia.org/wiki/Joseph_D%C3%A9chelette%22%20%5Co%20%22fr%3AJoseph%20D%C3%A9chelette)] and [Wolfgang Dehn](https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Wolfgang_Dehn&action=edit&redlink=1) [[de](https://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wolfgang_Dehn)] in reference to [Bibracte](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bibracte), [Manching](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Oppidum_of_Manching), and [Závist](https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Oppidum_Z%C3%A1vist&action=edit&redlink=1).[[3]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Oppidum#cite_note-3)[[4]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Oppidum#cite_note-4) In particular, Dehn suggested defining an oppidum by four criteria:

* Size: The settlement has to have a minimum size, defined by Dehn as 30 hectares (74 acres).
* Topography: Most oppida are situated on heights, but some are located on flat areas of land.
* Fortification: The settlement is surrounded by a (ideally uninterrupted) wall, usually consisting of three elements: a facade of stone, a wooden construction and an earthen rampart at the back. Gates are usually [pincer gates](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pincer_gate).
* Chronology: The settlement dates from the late [Iron Age](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Iron_Age): the last two centuries BC.[[2]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Oppidum#cite_note-Oppida-2):12

In current usage, most definitions of *oppida* emphasise the presence of fortifications so they are different from undefended farms or settlements and from urban characteristics, marking them as separate from [hill forts](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hill_fort). They could be referred to as "the first cities north of the Alps". The period of 2nd and 1st centuries BC places them in the period known as [La Tène](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/La_T%C3%A8ne_culture). A notional minimum size of 15 to 25 hectares (37 to 62 acres) has often been suggested, but that is flexible and fortified sites as small as 2 hectares (4.9 acres) have been described as oppida. However, the term is not always rigorously used, and it has been used to refer to any hill fort or [circular rampart](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Circular_rampart) dating from the La Tène period. One of the effects of the inconsistency in definitions is that it is uncertain how many oppida were built.[[5]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Oppidum#cite_note-5)

In European archaeology, the term 'oppida' is also used more widely to characterize any fortified prehistoric settlement. For example, significantly older hill-top structures like the one at [Glauberg](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Glauberg) (6th or 5th century BC) have been called oppida.

Such wider use of the term is, for example, common in the Iberian archaeology; in the descriptions of the [Castro culture](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Castro_culture) it is commonly used to refer to the settlements going back to the 9th century BC. The Spanish word 'castro', also used in English, means a walled settlement or hill fort, and this word is often used interchangeably with 'oppidum' by archaeologists.[[6]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Oppidum#cite_note-6)

**Location and type**

According to prehistorian [John Collis](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/John_Collis) oppida extend as far east as the [Hungarian plain](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Great_Hungarian_Plain) where other settlement types take over.[[7]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Oppidum#cite_note-7) Central Spain has sites similar to oppida, but while they share features such as size and defensive ramparts the interior was arranged differently.[[8]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Oppidum#cite_note-8) Oppida feature a wide variety of internal structures, from continuous rows of dwellings (Bibracte) to more widely spaced individual estates (Manching). Some oppida had internal layouts resembling the *insulae* of Roman cities (Variscourt). Little is known, however, about the purpose of any public buildings.[[2]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Oppidum#cite_note-Oppida-2):28



A museum model of a typical *Zangentor* at the [Oppidum of Manching](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Oppidum_of_Manching) in Germany

The main features of the oppida are the walls and gates, the spacious layout, and usually a commanding view of the surrounding area. The major difference with earlier structures was their much larger size. Earlier hill forts were mostly just a few hectares in area, whilst oppida could encompass several dozen or even hundreds of hectares. They also played a role in displaying the power and wealth of the local inhabitants and as a line of demarcation between the town and the countryside.[[2]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Oppidum#cite_note-Oppida-2):25 According to Jane McIntosh, the "impressive ramparts with elaborate gateways ... were probably as much for show and for controlling the movement of people and goods as for defense".[[9]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Oppidum#cite_note-McIntosh156-9)

Size and construction varied considerably. Typically oppida in [Bohemia](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bohemia) and [Bavaria](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bavaria) were much larger than those found in the north and west of France. Typically oppida in Britain are small, but there is a group of large oppida in the south east; though oppida are uncommon in northern Britain, [Stanwick](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Stanwick_Iron_Age_Fortifications) stands out as an unusual example as it covers 350 hectares (860 acres). [Dry stone](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dry_stone) walls supported by a bank of earth, called [Kelheim](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kelheim) ramparts, were characteristic of oppida in central Europe. To the east, timbers were often used to support the earthen ramparts, called [*Pfostenschlitzmauer*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pfostenschlitzmauer) (post slot wall) or "[Preist](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Preist%22%20%5Co%20%22Preist)-type wall".[[2]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Oppidum#cite_note-Oppida-2):25 In western Europe, especially Gaul, the [*murus gallicus*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Murus_gallicus), a timber frame nailed together, was the dominant form of rampart construction. Dump ramparts, that is earth unsupported by timber, were common in Britain and were later adopted in France.[[10]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Oppidum#cite_note-10) They have been found in particular in the north-west and central regions of France and were combined with wide moats ("Type Fécamp").[[2]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Oppidum#cite_note-Oppida-2):25 Oppida can be divided into two broad groups, those around the Mediterranean coast and those further inland. The latter group were larger, more varied, and spaced further apart.[[11]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Oppidum#cite_note-11)

In Britain the oppidum of [*Camulodunon*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Camulodunon) (modern [Colchester](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Colchester), built between the 1st century BC and the 1st century AD), tribal capital of the [Trinovantes](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Trinovantes) and at times the [Catuvellauni](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Catuvellauni), made use of natural defences enhanced with earthworks to protect itself.[[12]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Oppidum#cite_note-Crummy,_Philip_1997-12) The site was protected by two rivers on three of its sides, with the [River Colne](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/River_Colne%2C_Essex) bounding the site to the north and east, and the Roman River forming the southern boundary; the extensive bank and ditch earthworks topped with palisades were constructed to close off the open western gap between these two river valleys.[[12]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Oppidum#cite_note-Crummy,_Philip_1997-12)[[13]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Oppidum#cite_note-Denney,_Patrick_2004-13) These earthworks are considered the most extensive of their kind in Britain,[[12]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Oppidum#cite_note-Crummy,_Philip_1997-12)[[14]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Oppidum#cite_note-14) and together with the two rivers enclosed the high status farmsteads, burial grounds, religious sites, industrial areas, river port and coin mint of the Trinovantes.[[12]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Oppidum#cite_note-Crummy,_Philip_1997-12)[[15]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Oppidum#cite_note-roman-britain.org-15)[[16]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Oppidum#cite_note-16)

**History**



The reconstructed walls of [Bibracte](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bibracte), France

Prehistoric Europe saw a growing population. According to Jane McIntosh, in about 5,000 BC during the Neolithic between 2 million and 5 million people lived in Europe;[[17]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Oppidum#cite_note-McIntosh-17) in the late (pre-Roman) Iron Age (2nd and 1st centuries BC) it had an estimated population of around 15 to 30 million.[[17]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Oppidum#cite_note-McIntosh-17) Outside Greece and Italy, which were more densely populated, the vast majority of settlements in the Iron Age were small, with perhaps no more than 50 inhabitants. While hill forts could accommodate up to 1,000 people, oppida in the late Iron Age could reach as large as 10,000 inhabitants.[[17]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Oppidum#cite_note-McIntosh-17)

Oppida originated in the 2nd and 1st centuries BC. Most were built on fresh sites, usually on an elevated position. Such a location would have allowed the settlement to dominate nearby trade routes and may also have been important as a symbol of control of the area.[[9]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Oppidum#cite_note-McIntosh156-9) For instance at the oppidum of [Ulaca](https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Ulaca&action=edit&redlink=1) in Spain the height of the ramparts is not uniform: those overlooking the valley are considerably higher than those facing towards the mountains in the area. The traditional explanation is that the smaller ramparts were unfinished because the region was invaded by the Romans; however, archaeologist [John Collis](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/John_Collis) dismisses this explanation because the inhabitants managed to build a second rampart extending the site by 20 hectares (49 acres) to cover an area of 80 hectares (200 acres). Instead he believes the role of the ramparts as a status symbol may have been more important than their defensive qualities.[[18]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Oppidum#cite_note-18)

While some oppida grew from hill forts, by no means all of them had significant defensive functions. The development of oppida was a milestone in the [urbanisation](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Urbanisation) of the continent as they were the first large settlements north of the Alps that could genuinely be described as towns.[[2]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Oppidum#cite_note-Oppida-2):29 Caesar pointed out that each [tribe of Gaul](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_peoples_of_Gaul) would have several oppida but that they were not all of equal importance, perhaps implying some form of [settlement hierarchy](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Settlement_hierarchy).

Oppida continued in use until the Romans began conquering Iron Age Europe. Even in the lands north of the [River Danube](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/River_Danube) that remained unconquered by the Romans, oppida were abandoned by the late 1st century AD.[[9]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Oppidum#cite_note-McIntosh156-9) In conquered lands, the Romans used the infrastructure of the oppida to administer the empire, and many became full Roman towns. This often involved a change of location from the hilltop into the plain.