

COMMENT

Top 5: Places with city walls

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BEST OF



Built in the early Middle Ages to protect the inhabitants, these city walls still stand today. And they lend the towns a special charm. For our top 5, we're going on a journey through Europe.

5. Ávila Spain

Today's tranquil Ávila lies on the border between the Muslim and Christian worlds, in Castile. In order to protect itself from conquest, the city had to fortify itself early on with an imposing wall. The Romanesque city wall from the 11th to 14th centuries has been completely preserved to this day and is a UNESCO

World Heritage Site. It is 2.5 kilometres long, has 88 towers and nine city gates. According to the tourist office, its good condition makes Ávila "one of the best-preserved walled towns in Europe." Ávila is definitely a place to be for medieval fans, historians and lovers of traditional Castile.



(c) Jose Luis Cernadas Iglesias

4. Tallinn Estonia

Estonia's capital Tallinn was one of the best fortified cities on the Baltic Sea in the Middle Ages. Construction of the city wall began in the middle of the 13th century. Over the next 300 years, it was constantly extended, reinforced and repaired. The result was an imposing wall 2.35 kilometres long, 13 to 16 metres

high, 2 to 3 metres deep and with more than 40 towers. Today, 1.85 kilometres of city wall and 26 towers remain. Since 1997, Tallinn has been listed by UNESCO as a World Heritage Site as an "exceptionally complete and well-preserved example of a medieval northern European trading town".



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3. Dubrovnik Croatia

The old town centre of Dubrovnik in Croatia is also a UNESCO World Heritage Site. The city wall can be recognised from afar. Its oldest stones were laid in the 8th century. The largest part dates from the 12th to 17th centuries. Dubrovnik was an important harbour town during this period. The preserved city wall is 2 kilometres long and between 1.5 and 6 metres wide. There are also several

fortresses and defence towers in the historic complex. With a height of up to 25 metres, Dubrovnik's city walls not only offered protection from invaders, but also from storms and tidal waves. More recently, however, the city has had to cope with a different kind of flood: ever since it was featured as a backdrop in the Game of Thrones series, Dubrovnik has been virtually overrun by fans.



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2. Le Mont-Saint-Michel France

Mont-Saint-Michel is a granite rock in Normandy and a UNESCO World Heritage Site. The 78 metre high rock is home to a medieval abbey of the same name, around which a small village has grown. One would think that the remote location in the middle of a bay would be protection enough. After all, the rock is completely submerged at high tide. And at low tide, the long path across the sandbank was not easy to negotiate either. Nevertheless, a massive wall with

several defence towers protects the abbey and the people. Today, the medieval houses around the abbey are mainly home to souvenir shops and restaurants. A walk along the town wall from defence tower to defence tower with a view of the historic village on the one hand and the Atlantic Ocean on the other makes Mont-Saint-Michel a place with a town wall that is really worth seeing.



(c) Joan Campderrós-i-Canas

1. Carcassonne

France

Carcassonne was the main base of the Cathars at the beginning of the 13th century and was fiercely fought over for a long time. In the Middle Ages, 3,000 to 4,000 people are said to have lived in the Cité de Carcassonne. Today, the fortified town is a minor star: whether as a backdrop in films and television, as a popular setting for literature and art or as the namesake for a famous board game. For this reason alone, the town is one of the most popular tourist attractions in France. Historic Carcassonne has been listed as a UNESCO World Heritage Site since 1997 and is still inhabited. A massive, double ring of walls surrounds the city with the Château comtal castle and the Basilique Saint-Nazaire church in the centre. The extremely good state of preservation of the historic buildings and walls, a still lively old town and its iconic reputation give the medieval city of Carcassonne its well-deserved top ranking. Simply legendary.



(c) Roger W