Wiki Loves Monuments: a contest for Archaeology

What if it were possible to contribute to archaeological research online without being an archaeology professional? It actually is, and in just a few clicks, thanks to the **international photo contest** *Wiki Loves Monuments*. Let's take a closer look at this unique event, whose French edition is organized by the association Wikimedia France **with the assistance of the archaeological association *ArkeoTopia*.**

Wiki Loves Monuments: a contest for Archaeology

Why does *ArkeoTopia* support *Wiki Loves Monuments*?

Certified by Guinness World Records in 2011 as the "world's largest photo competition", *Wiki Loves Monuments* opens the door for public access to world heritage. Acting as a true social, scientific, educational and cultural catalyst, this event promotes cultural heritage valorization and supports archaeological research. It has been supported by *ArkeoTopia, an alternative approach to archaeology* since 2015. Let's take a closer look at this initiative, which uses crowdsourcing to promote cultural heritage and archaeological research.

Wiki Loves Monuments – what's that?

Since its creation by the Wikimedia movement in 2010, the [*Wiki Loves Monuments*](#) international photo contest has been held every year from September 1 to September 30 and encourages a diverse range of people – archaeologists or not and photographers, professional or not – to support archaeological research. How? By capturing historical monuments and locations at a given moment, then uploading these shots to the [Wikimedia Commons](#) repository within the

designated time frame.

While it is not important when the photo was taken, the following conditions must be met:

- legitimacy: The participant has to be the creator of the photograph
- accepting the terms of the Creative Commons free [license CC BY-SA](#) that stipulates the conditions of use and distribution of the image
- the subject of the photograph must be listed in the competition notice of the relevant country. For France, the list of eligible subjects is drawn from the [Mérimée and Palissy databases](#), created and maintained by the French Ministry of Culture

- providing an email address in an account on the [Wikimedia Commons](#) website to enable contact with the organizers

At the end of the competition period the jury proceeds by sequential elimination, finally sorting out ten shots by ten different photographers. These are then classified in order of preference to select the winners. This often very difficult decision is **based on numerous criteria: compliance with the list of eligible subjects, descriptive, scientific or pedagogical relevance of the subject, technical quality of the shot, artistic value of the photo, etc.**

[blockquotes]2020 international WLM numbers:

- 51 participating countries
- 51,507 images used on Wiki
- 230,425 downloads, including France
- 7,709 people having upload including 201 in France

[/blockquotes]

Wiki Loves Monuments contest: a kick-starter at multiple levels

Wiki Loves Monuments is a singular photo competition, with far-reaching results. Reason enough to draw the attention of *ArkeoTopia* – all the more so as it aligns with four of *ArkeoTopia*'s five cornerstones.

Through WLM, we can promote and popularize archaeological research

WLM works as a social kick-starter in line with *ArkeoTopia* cornerstones *Supporting* and *Popularization*, as it spurs a large number of people to participate in publicizing heritage worldwide, thus acting as **a cultural kick-starter** as well.

The high-quality photographs, incorporated into the public domain by the participants, capture historical monuments at a given moment in time and in that way immortalize them, should they ever be damaged or even destroyed.

The photos serve as historical archives but can also be useful for potential reconstruction. Some illustrative examples are the cathedral of Notre-Dame de Paris in France (fire), the Buddhas of Bamiyan in Afghanistan (terrorism) or the Kumamoto Castle in Japan (earthquake).

Wiki Loves Monuments: a contest for Archaeology

Another important aspect of this contest is that it contributes to cultural heritage cataloguing efforts in countries where this process is not already underway and allows countries that do have such an inventory to enrich it.

Through WLM, we can create new archaeological knowledge and promote exchanges

WLM works as *a scientific kick-starter*, building up the *Research* cornerstone, by virtue of its strong potential to contribute to archaeological research with its entirely digital database listing cultural heritage sites from all over the world. It facilitates projects aimed at reconstructing destroyed or damaged monuments. ICONEM – an innovative start-up specializing in 3D mapping of heritage sites – uses Wikimedia Commons resources to enhance its replicas. WLM is also an occasion for scientific exchange: for example, the 2017 edition brought together *ArkeoTopia* and Jacques Dassié. This meeting resulted in the aerial archaeology pioneer agreeing to upload his photos, thus making available an archeological photo collection that had previously been under copyright protection.

Through WLM, we can educate future generations

Lastly, **our *Education* cornerstone** benefits from WLM producing material useful for pedagogical purposes, from grade school through university, but also for the general public. It proves its value as **an educational kick-starter**, as the resources it produces allow people to discover both French and international cultural heritage. Drawing from these resources, teachers can illustrate their History and Civics classes, emphasizing the idea that everyone can add to the dissemination of this knowledge.

A competition promoted by *ArkeoTopia*

It was only natural, indeed, that *ArkeoTopia* become involved with a contest whose values and initiatives are so closely aligned with its own.

First, the association became part of the jury in the French edition of the *Wiki Loves Monuments* competition in 2015. The following year, ArkeoTopia helped *Wikimedia France* organize the French edition of the contest.

Wiki Loves Monuments: a contest for Archaeology

In June 2016 the two became official partners in the organization of the event as well as in the management of other aspects within the universe of Wikimedia and archaeology, by way of signing an ongoing partnership agreement.

ArkeoTopia's contributions are not limited to the organization of the annual competition. It also helps:

- grow the contest, by searching for new solutions that would make it possible to more comprehensively include French cultural heritage in the selection of eligible photographic subjects. In 2019, the association advocated for adding the Palissy database to the selection, in addition to the Mérimée database of official historical monuments, in order to broaden the choice of eligible heritage subjects. In 2021, ArkeoTopia championed a Wikidata/OSM working relationship.
- increase the number of volunteers by promoting the [wlm@wikimedia.fr mailing list](#) and making use of their know-how, essential for the development of the contest in France
- promote the contest through press articles both on the web and in classic media (*Archéologia*, *La Classe*, *Vosges-Matin*, etc.)

Development of cultural heritage inventories

More than a simple photo contest, *Wiki Loves Monuments* constitutes a central event for archeological research. From raising awareness about cultural heritage to bolstering archaeological research, this competition appeals to each and every one of us to play our part, in an amusing and active way, in studying, preserving, and ensuring proper respect of cultural heritage. In this regard, ArkeoTopia aspires to further the French edition to eventually establish a collaborative inventory that would improve upon the Mérimée and Palissy databases, thus contributing to archaeological and cultural asset mapping.

Interested in the competition? Looking to share some of your quality shots? Find out how to participate on the official [*Wiki Loves Monuments* international webpage](#) after selecting the country where your photo was taken.

For more information

- [wikilovesmonuments.org](#) to access the official international webpage, listing the sites in all the participating countries
- [wikilovesmonuments.fr](#) to access the official webpage of the French edition of the contest
- [The 5 *ArkeoTopia* cornerstones](#) (Les 5 piliers d'*ArkéoTopia*) for a video presentation of the 5 cornerstones of *ArkeoTopia* with English subtitles
- [Working Group: *Wiki Loves Monuments*](#) to access the work page of *Wikimedia France* partnering with *ArkeoTopia*
- [wikiloves.toolforge.org](#) to access participation statistics from all editions of the contest

Sources

Wiki Loves Monuments: a contest for Archaeology

- Janpaule J., « La naissance de l'archéologie aérienne en Poitou-Charentes. Entretien avec Jacques Dassié », 17 octobre 2020, [Online, in French] https://www.arkeotopia.org/fr/ressources/veille-mediatique/437-specialiste-malgre-moi-entretien-avec-jacques-dassie.html
- Wikimédia France, « *Wiki Loves Monuments*. Communiqué de presse 2020 », 31 août 2020, [Online, in French] https://wikilovesmonuments.fr/2020/08/31/communique-de-presse-2020/
- Collectif, « *Wiki Loves Monuments* : philosophie », 18 avril 2019, [Online, in French] https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/Commons:Wiki_Loves_Monuments/Philosophy/fr
- Tool Labs, participation statistics for WLM's 2020 edition, [Online] https://wikiloves.toolforge.org/monuments/2020
- Gransard-Desmond J.-O., « Science participative : comment valoriser le patrimoine culturel sur Internet », *Archéologia* 595, février 2021, p. 10.

Vous souhaitez que nous fassions une interview, une critique de livre, de documentaire ou de support en relation avec l'archéologie, que ce soit pour le grand public, des enfants ou des spécialistes, n'hésitez pas à nous écrire à redaction@arkeotopia.org.

ArkéoTopia, une autre voie pour l'archéologie® a vocation à porter un autre regard sur l'archéologie d'aujourd'hui pour mieux aider les organismes existants à préparer celle de demain. Pour en savoir plus sur l'association, n'hésitez pas à prendre connaissance de notre vidéo institutionnelle et de nos actions.