The Hermione

Summary

1. *The Hermione*: a project of national interest
   - The trace of a forgotten maritime heritage.
   - A powerful symbol of the historical ties between France and the U.S.A.

2. A worthwhile project
   - A technical challenge fulfilled.
   - A real life adventure.
   - Nearly 90% funding already acquired.

3. *The Hermione*: entering the final straight
   - Targets:
     - 2012: launching
     - 2013: Finishes of the ship & sailing tests
     - 2014 or 2015: crossing the Atlantic in La Fayette’s footsteps.
   - The financial challenge.
   - Mobilising new support.
The Hermione
A project of national interest

The trace of a forgotten maritime heritage

As opposed to other great maritime countries, France has neither kept nor rebuilt a pre 19th century vessel. This “French exception” will end with the launch of the Hermione, scheduled for 2012.

This vessel will also be a living memory and homage to France’s great maritime past, whose sailors travelled the Atlantic coasts of the New World, from Newfoundland to the

La Fayette at the core of History

In 1779, when he returned from America, where he had volunteered himself for the American cause, the young Marquis of Lafayette managed to convince the King of France to grant military and financial aid to General Washington’s troops who were fighting for their independence.

La Fayette set off for Rochefort where, on March 21st 1780, he boarded a brand new frigate ship, The Hermione. After a 38 day crossing he joined General Washington to inform him of the imminent arrival of French reinforcements. The Hermione fought in this American campaign for over eighteen months until the final victory.

A symbol of the Franco-American friendship

A friendship founded at the start of the American independence and forever symbolised by La Fayette, who engaged in the war of independence right from its beginning. The Americans themselves consider La Fayette to be one of the heroes of this war.

When rebuilt, The Hermione will be a « permanent ambassador » of the Franco-American friendship.

The Hermione’s voyage to the U.S.A. and Canada scheduled for 2014 will be a powerfully symbolic rendezvous, promoting amongst today’s Americans France’s historical affection for the U.S.A.
A technical challenge fulfilled

Reconstruction of the **Hermione** involves building a vessel measuring over 65m long, carrying three masts and 1500m² of sail area. It also entails restoration of the hull made entirely of oak reaching 1 metre thickness in certain areas (planking, lining, moulding), inconceivable today but used in the 18th century to withstand enemy cannonballs.

**Three watchwords**

**Authenticity** Reconstruction is carried out based on archive documents. A historical committee guarantees the exact reconstruction of the vessel.

**Seaworthiness** The Hermione must be able to navigate in deep and ocean seas.

**Sustainability** Construction will ensure optimal sustainability of the vessel

**The main stages of the project**

- **1993-1996** Stage 1: preliminary studies.
- **1997-2000** Stage 2: wooden framework construction
- **2000-2008** Stage 3: superstructure and deck construction
- **2009-2011** Stage 4: planking and caulking of the hull; rig manufacture.
- **2012-2013** Final stage: End of rigging - open sea trials and sail testing.
- **2014** Some more trials at sea
- **2014 or 2015** Departure for the voyage to America

**Hermione, the figures**

- **400 000** wood and metal construction parts
- A main mast 54 metres above the keel
- **2 000** oaks selected from French forests
- **1 000** pulley blocks
- 1 ton of Baru for the caulking
- **26** canons firing 12-pound cannonballs from the gun deck and 8 canons firing 6-pound cannonballs from the forecastle deck.

**A window on traditional trades and skills**

The Hermione shipyard is a wonderful place to discover traditional techniques and skills. This ambitious project has thrown light on traditional shipbuilding trades from engineering and naval carpentry to the art of linen sail making and wooden rigs.
The Hermione

A worthwhile project

A real life adventure

A project led by a team of enthusiasts

A team of enthusiasts launched the Hermione project over 15 years ago. The original pioneer group along with the author, Erik Orsenna, have been joined by several thousand others within the Hermione-La Fayette association.

More than one hundred volunteers and employees are in attendance daily in the Hermione shipyard.

An extraordinarily popular success

Visitor statistics: Over 3 million visits since 1997
250 000 annual visitors
Yearly 20 000 students and schoolchildren

A living shipyard watched by thousands daily.

A shipyard theatre

Film shooting, television programmes, photo reports in top magazines... This wooden cathedral has been attracting photographers and cameramen for over 10 years.

Milestone celebrations for the shipyard

Each major stage of the building work is celebrated: installation of the framework’s transverse beams, the keel, the stern and launching of the first longboat.
The Hermione
A worthwhile project

90% funding already acquired

An original funding model:

At present we can consider that 19 million Euros, out of an overall cost of 20 million Euros (excluding equipment needed to make the journey to the USA), have been acquired.

This funding has been made possible primarily through:

- 40% public funding (visitors and members);
- 35% from the town of Rochefort, the « Charente Maritime » county and the « Poitou-Charentes » region, who gave their support right from the beginning;

Further funding has been raised by regional, national and American sponsors and Patrons: Crédit Agricole, Moët Hennessy, Galeries Lafayette Group, The Florence Gould foundation, and the support of thirty SME’s within the "Hermione circle".
The Hermione
Entering the final straight

**Targets**

**2012 : the launch**

Stages not yet completed:
- End of Caulking, masting and rigging
- Fitting modern equipment

**2013 : Sailing on the Charente river and first trials at sea**

**2014 : Crossing the Atlantic in La Fayette’s footsteps**

Departure from Rochefort scheduled in March 2014 for the Atlantic crossing with the support of the French and American navy.

From April to July 2014: symbolic ports of call on the East coast of the USA (Rochefort, the Caribbean, Annapolis, Newport, New York, Boston, Quebec...).

**August 2014 :** return journey back to France

**The financial challenge**

In order to keep work going and remain on schedule, the team needs a further 5 million euros in order to:
- end the construction of the historical ship
- equip the ship with modern and contemporary sailing fittings
- Finance the voyage to America

Preparation and funding for the Lafayette’s Voyage have already gathered forces on both sides of the Atlantic.

**Mobilising new support**

The Hermione imperatively needs new support to enter this final straight.

The Hermione team is pulling together:
- To extend public support: through membership to the Hermione-La Fayette association, by increasing online donations (exempt from tax) via the association’s website [www.hermione.com](http://www.hermione.com)
- To obtain financial aid from large companies implanted in the USA: the «High patronage» granted to the Hermione project by the President in June 2009 should encourage support.

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