



# Rouen — — Norwich **PRESS RELEASE**



**Norwich is supporting the Rouen Seine Normandie bid to be European Capital of Culture 2028 on behalf of France, competing against Clermont Ferrand, Montpellier and Bourges, exactly 20 years after Norwich itself bid to be European Capital of Culture 2008.**

**The winning city will be announced on Wednesday 13 December at 6pm French time, 5pm UK time.**

**Our fingers are crossed that our twin city of Rouen will be selected as the winner. However if not, the Rouen and Norwich have already signed a pledge to work together for the next ten years at least, and the good work will continue regardless of the result.**

## **Please support #rouen2028 on social media**

For the last four years, Norwich and Rouen have been working together to build cultural connections between the two cities. Following Brexit, Rouen did not want to lose the relationship which has existed for centuries - when the Normans built our Castle and Cathedral from Caen stone and more recently as our twin city for over 60 years.

Since then, many threads and connections have been made between musicians, artists, theatre and film-makers, young people, charities and organisations.

*The photo above shows the official signing of the Memorandum of Understanding between the two cities with Director of the bid team Rebecca Armstrong, Lord Mayor of Norwich Councillor James Wright. Mayor of the City of Rouen Nicolas Mayer-Rossignol, Sileymane Sow – Deputy mayor in charge of international relationship, in June 2023.*

**For more information and photos please contact Marion de Mello Catlin  
[info@theshiftnorwich.org](mailto:info@theshiftnorwich.org) uk Tel 07946 261651**

## Rouen Norwich connections

- Norwich and Rouen are also connected through the Creative Cities Network as Norwich is a UNESCO City of Literature and Rouen is a UNESCO City of Gastronomy.
- The Norwich & Norfolk Rouen Friendship Association (in Norwich) and the Rouen Norwich Club (in Rouen) exchange visits every year and hold monthly Zoom meetings.
- French degree students from UEA are planning a field trip to Rouen in March 2024
- City College and a catering school in Rouen are working on a chef and student exchange network, giving opportunities for young people to travel and experience the food of France.
- Norwich Cathedral and the Abbatale de St Ouen are working on an organ project with Ensemble Variances, a national level ensemble based in Rouen and renowned organist Jean-Baptiste Monnot, alongside our own Cathedral organist Ashley Grote.
- **Trioca** European Youth Orchestra led by Andy Weeks is hoping for Rouen to join with Norwich, Koblenz and Novi Sad for an annual summer school and concert connecting the twinned cities.
- The Norfolk & Norwich Festival are working on the Rivers of Hope project with young people
- Mancroft Advice Project, Into Opera and Norwich Charitable Trusts have been to Rouen recently to research the potential for a joint neighbourhood project to increase opportunities for young people in challenging circumstances.
- Alliances Françaises, an organisation which exist to promote French language and culture is running French language classes in Norwich and organising French cultural events across the city and in Cambridge
- We are connected through the *This is England Film Festival* in Rouen and Norwich Film Festival which both take place in November each year.
- The GroundWork Gallery in King's Lynn is working with and exhibiting the work of artists based in Rouen with plans to exchange
- The Mayors of both cities, Norwich and Rouen, signed a Memorandum of Understanding in June 2023 to work together for the future - see photo above

These are only examples of some of the projects and connections that are underway. Rouen is a beautiful city and easy to reach by train and Eurostar. We are hoping that visitors will come from Rouen to Norwich and vice versa to promote tourism between the two cities.

Quote from Chris Gribble, CEO of The Forum and patron of the Rouen 2028 bid said '*It is a great honour to be a patron and to support the bid. As both cities are part of the UNESCO Creative Cities Network, we have a lot of common ground. I have my fingers crossed for the result on Wednesday. They deserve to win and Norwich and Rouen will be future partners whatever the result*'

Marion de Mello Catlin, cultural connector, Culture Shift Norwich said '*I was involved in the Norwich bid to be European Capital of Culture 2008 twenty years ago and I can see how our city has benefitted since then, even though we didn't win. It is why we became a UNESCO City of Literature. The UK can no longer bid but we are still part of Europe and still culturally connected with Rouen and the wider region of Normandy through our people and our cultures. We both have beautiful cities and much to celebrate together. And hopefully that includes a win!*'

City Council Culture & Events Officer Clare Hubery said '*We have forged strong links culturally and in many other ways with Rouen during our 64 years of being twinned. We are extremely proud to support Rouen in their Capital of Culture bid and look forward to continuing to work with them on this journey and for many years into the future. They would be very worthy winners*'

Chair of Norwich & Norfolk Rouen Friendship Association James Bert Bremner said '*Norwich and Rouen have been twinned for over 60 years. We are fully behind the Rouen2028 bid and look forward to more exchanges in the future – it could be a real benefit to Norwich and Norfolk, both economically and culturally*'

**For editors:**

Rouen is in Normandy in northern France. The Rouen Seine Normande 2028 bid includes the region along the River Seine which flows from Paris through Normandy. The region stretches from Giverny to Le Havre and Honfleur. The river is the main character of the bid as it has influenced the development of settlements, towns and cities along the course of the river.

The City of Rouen appointed an independent company to manage the Rouen 2028 bid on behalf of the city led by Rebecca Armstrong. Jean-Gabriel Guyant is seconded to the bid company responsible for the Dimension européenne / Relations Internationales and they have visited Norwich several times. Rouen has signed agreements with 6 European cities, including Norwich to work with in the future.

The other shortlisted cities remaining for consideration this week are Bourges, Montpellier and Clermont Ferrand. In 2003, Norwich bid to be European Capital of Culture 2008, a title which was eventually given to Liverpool.

**What is a European Capital of Culture?**

The European Capital of Culture initiative was launched in 1985 at the initiative of the Greek and French Ministers of Culture, Méline Mercouri and Jack Lang.

Today, "European Capital of Culture" is a European label with a dual objective:

- at the European level, it aims to "safeguard and promote the diversity of cultures in Europe, and to highlight the common characteristics that they share, while strengthening citizens' sense of belonging to a common cultural space";
- at the national level, it must "foster the contribution of culture to the long-term development of cities".

Very concretely, a city, European Capital of Culture promotes its territory and its visibility thanks to this label that recognizes a project and cultural actions of great interest.

**Who chooses the future European Capital of Culture?**

The organization of the European Capitals of Culture is governed by the decision of the European Parliament and the Council of 16 April 2014 as amended. Three cities – two from two Member States of the European Union and one from a candidate or potential candidate country to join the European Union (in this case every 4 years) – are designated each year as European Capitals of Culture. For the year 2028, a French city alongside a Czech city (Ceske-Budejovice already chosen) and a third European City outside the Member State – Skopje from North Macedonia already chosen too will bear the title.

The designation of a European Capital of Culture is the culmination of a long preparation. It begins six years before the event with the establishment of a national competition. The selection procedure consists of two rounds:

- a pre-selection round, at the end of which a short list of candidate cities is drawn up, and
- a final round of selection about nine months later. The selected city is then officially designated by the Member State concerned.

**About Norwich Twinning**

The twinning charter between Norwich and Rouen was signed in 1959 to facilitate visits, exchanges, goodwill and friendship.

In 2019 Rouen and Norwich celebrated the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary, and the relationship was confirmed again in 2023, when the both Norwich and Rouen signed a Memorandum of Understanding to work together to develop cultural links and exchanges [www.nnrfa.co.uk/about.html](http://www.nnrfa.co.uk/about.html)

**For more information and photos please contact Marion de Mello Catlin  
info@theshiftnorwich.org uk Tel 07946 261651**





Visit to Rouen from Norwich October 2023. From the left Genevieve Raghu Into Opera, David Hynes, Norwich Charitable Trusts, Dan Mobbs Mancroft Advice Project, Jean Gabriel Guyant, Rouen 2028 Bid team, Sandra McAfee, Norwich Charitable Trusts



Visit to Norwich from Rouen July 2023. From the left Rebecca Armstrong Bid Lead, Steve Miller Head of Norfolk Museums Service, Jean Gabriel Guyant, Rouen 2028 Bid team meeting at Norwich Castle

