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The different stages of construction of Cherbourg harbour

Cherbourg harbour is the largest artificial harbour in the world. This fact is thanks to the engineer-architect Vauban, who first evoked the idea in one of his 17th century memoires by recommending the creation of a wet dock.

Construction began in 1783 and was completed in 1853, resulting in a harbour wall 4km off the coast measuring 3,700 metres with a surface area of 1,500 hectares. The Eastern harbour entrance is 950 metres wide compared to the Western entrance which measures 2.3 km. The harbour has a depth of 13 metres at low tide.

Cherbourg harbour and military port were inaugurated in 1858 by Emperor Napoleon 3rd, Empress Eugénie and Queen Victoria.

Seven forts of defence were built between 1794 and 1857:

- 1794: fort de Querqueville

- 1824: fort Central
- 1844: fort des Flamands
- 1847: fort de l'Ouest
- 1847: fort de l'Est
- 1854: fort de Chavagnac
- 1857: fort du Roule

Cherbourg harbour wall: a monumental edifice

This colossal creation, built at a time when maritime construction techniques barely existed, is made from more stone than the Great Pyramid in Egypt. The base of the **harbour wall** reaches a width of up to several hundred metres in places in order to resist the violent storms that can sweep the English Channel.