

TOUS LES JOURS
DE 9H À 19H

DU 30 JUIN
AU 23 SEPTEMBRE
2018

EXPOSITION
**SUR LA ROUTE DE
COMPOSTELLE**

NEUF SIÈCLES
D'ACCUEIL
À LA CHARITÉ



CITÉ DU MOT,
CLOÎTRE DU PRIEURÉ
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EXHIBITION BOOKLET



La Charité: 900 years on the road to Compostela

Pilgrim, visitor from here or there, heritage-lover or simple passer-by:
welcome to the Priory of La Charité!

For over nine centuries, travellers have been stopping for a break in this emblematic monument of the Nièvre and Burgundy regions. The city came to be called "*charité*" (charity) through its priory's reputation of generosity. Pilgrims from the north-east of France and Europe on their way to Jerusalem, Rome or Compostela never failed to stop here, where several bridges crossed over the river Loire. Even today, many pilgrims and visitors stop here to admire the priory's church, a masterpiece of Romanesque architecture, as well as the monastery's renovated buildings and the old centre's streets.

The church of Notre-Dame was inscribed into UNESCO's World Heritage List on December 2, 1998, as an important stop on the Camino de Santiago. We are celebrating this inscription's 20th anniversary. The 78 monuments and trail sections brought together by UNESCO under the designation of "Route to Santiago de Compostela through France" have come to symbolise the very notion of pilgrimage, a universal religious practice still well and alive, mixing a physical journey with a spiritual one. Pilgrims have been at the heart of fertile intercultural exchanges since the Middle Ages, being always in touch with others - hosts or travel companions.

Twenty years after the Camino Francés was added to UNESCO's World Heritage List, step into the shoes of the Compostela pilgrims. You can discover La Charité through the eyes of a traveller: a place of devotion, hospitality and care, a way over the Loire, and through it a glimpse into the history of humanity.

On the road to Compostela

THE WAY OF VÉZELAY

La Charité-sur-Loire is located on the "Vézelay route", one of four possible itineraries to Santiago de Compostela. These trails were mapped out in 1937, based on descriptions found in the 12th century *Codex Calixtinus*. As ancient pilgrim trails are still not well known, it is uncertain whether medieval pilgrims really did follow these routes. The "Vézelay route" splits in two branches at Varzy: one trail goes through Nevers, and the other through Bourges. La Charité-sur-Loire and its priory are an important stop on the Bourges route.

Historic pilgrim trails to Compostela through France are still not well known, and we probably never will be able to look at the whole picture. Through sea as well as land, pilgrims would seek to follow safer commercial routes.

Book five of the 12th century *Codex Calixtinus* describes four symbolic trails, each of them linked to a point of the compass. This description laid the basis for the four present pilgrim trails. La Charité-sur-Loire is located on the *via lemovicensis*, the "Vézelay route", which splits in two branches at Varzy: on one side is the Nièvre route (which goes through the cities of Nevers, Noirlac, Neuvy-Saint-Sépulchre and Gargilles), and on the other the Berry route (which goes through the cities of Bourges, Déols, Châteauroux and Argenton-sur-Creuse). La Charité is part of the latter. Pilgrims would reach it through the forest of Bertranges.

There is no evidence that medieval pilgrims would follow this precise trail, which was in a way invented during the 20th century. Still, pilgrims from the north-east of France and Europe on their way to Jerusalem, Rome, Santiago de Compostela (or any other pilgrimage destination) could obviously stop at La Charité after worshipping the relics of Saint Mary Magdalen at Vézelay. They would have had three good reasons for that: the city's reputation for being hospitable, the relics kept in Notre-Dame, and the presence of a bridge over the Loire.

On the road to Compostela

THE PRIORY OF LA CHARITÉ

The Priory is La Charité-sur-Loire's defining monument. Founded by the monastic order of Cluny in the 11th century, it took nearly 50 years to build. La Charité-sur-Loire and its priory then flourished, favoured by their ideal location on the banks of the Loire, then a major commercial highway, and located at the crossroads of pilgrim trails. The priory's prosperity lasted until the French Revolution, when it was dismantled and sold. The local council started acquiring large parts of its old buildings in 2000, in order to have them renovated.

The Priory was founded by the monastic order of Cluny in 1059, in a locality then known as Seyr. On the ruins of a preceding monastery, monks built new buildings, first in the Romanesque style, and then in the Gothic style. The Priory was then the figurehead of the monastic order of Cluny on the western border of its area of influence, as it was ideally located on the banks of the Loire, on the road from Paris to Lyon, and at a crossroads of pilgrim trails. Its influence crossed the borders of the Duchy of Burgundy. The Order founded numerous other communities throughout France and Europe, especially in England, Portugal and Italy. In 1559, a fire destroyed a great part of the priory as well as the nave of its Notre-Dame church. The priory's last prior, Cardinal de Bernis, brought the priory back to its former glory by renovating the cloister and its surroundings at the end of the 18th century.

The priory was nationalised and sold during the French Revolution. Two centuries later, it had turned into a new neighbourhood. Notre-Dame was rescued from a similar fate by French archaeologist and writer Prosper Mérimée. In 1840, he had it inscribed into the list of French monuments of outstanding historic value, thereby preventing its demolition. One hundred and fifty years later, its inscription into UNESCO's World Heritage List as part of the "Route to Santiago de Compostela through France" came as a new starting point. The local council started acquiring large parts of the former priory. The cloister, chapter house, eighteenth-century rooms and main staircase have now been entirely renovated, as well as the Prior's apartment and the monks' cellar.

Pilgrims at La Charité: now and then

HOW THE CITY EARNED ITS NAME

The city of La Charité-sur-Loire owes its name to the Priory's monks who welcomed, fed and housed travellers, in obedience to the Rule of Saint Benedict. Life in the community relied on the values of sharing and fraternal charity. The priory's coat of arms, which dates back from the beginning of the 12th century, depicts three open purses to symbolise the community's generosity.

Spiritual as well as material life at the Priory were based on the Rule of Saint Benedict, which became widely practiced in monasteries under the reigns of Charlemagne (r. 800 - 814) and Louis the Pious (r. 814 - 840). The Rule was based on the values of sharing and fraternal charity: monks slept in dormitories, took their meals in common, and cared for the poor.

The Order also owed its hospitality to any traveller, who should be welcomed "as Christ Himself". Every aspect of the community's life was planned accordingly. The admission of travellers into the monastery included prayers, a kiss of peace, and the washing of their hands and feet. Guests were housed in spaces separated from the monastic community, so as not to disturb their everyday life.

There is archival evidence that the city, formerly called Seyr, changed its name to "La Charité" (Charity) during the 12th century. The priory's coat of arms embodies this reputation of generosity: it consists of three open golden purses symbolising charity, drawn on an azure field with a cinquefoil (a five-petal flower) at its centre. This coat of arms would have been that of the first prior, Gérard, which he would have bequeathed to the monastery at the turn of the 12th century. During the 16th century, three fleurs-de-lis (stylised lilies, a traditional emblem of the French crown) were added to the coat of arms above the purses to signify the monastery's obedience to the French crown.

Pilgrims at La Charité: now and then

ROOM AND BOARD AT THE PRIORY

When they reached La Charité, pilgrims often sought to stay at the Priory, which welcomed every single traveller, be they rich or poor. They entered the monastery through its gatehouse and were given room and board in hostelries located on the current *cour du Château*. Some had to make a detour through the infirmary. Today's pilgrims can still seek accommodation inside the old gatehouse.

Travellers walked in through the gatehouse, where they would be inspected and receive a light meal. Pilgrims were treated differently according to their status. Poor travellers were shown in by the chaplain. Wealthy ones were greeted by the brother in charge of the hostelry. Hostelries were in principle free, but a compensation under the form of voluntary alms could be expected from guests who could afford it.

Two hostelries rearranged during the 15th and 16th centuries were located in the *cour du Château*. Several large hostelries were located in the north-east area of the priory; they were also called "pilgrim's quarters" or *caritas*. Another building was located in line with the cloisters, at the current location of the monks' cellar. It was built in the gothic style with twin trilobed windows, large vaulted dining rooms, a kitchen and sleeping quarters on the ground floor. Above it was a vast dormitory that was later divided into smaller bedrooms.

Some unfortunate pilgrims had to pay a visit to the infirmary, where the sick, old and disabled would be cared for. The brother in charge of the infirmary also took care of the medicinal garden, and of the adjoining chapel, as the sick were not allowed to mingle with other residents in good health during mass. La Charité's oldest infirmary may have been in the spot currently occupied by the aisle located between the priory's courtyard and a nearby street, *rue du Champ Baratté*. A new one was built in 1533 and paid for by prior Jean de la Magdeleine de Ragny.

Pilgrims at La Charité: now and then

INNS AND HOTELS IN TOWN

As the priory could not house all travellers, some would look for accommodation in town. A great number of hotels and inns existed at La Charité-sur-Loire, near the city's gates and along commercial streets like *rue de Paris* and *rue du Pont*. Several buildings and streets in town were named after their former functions: *rue des Hôtelleries* (hostelries street), *hôtel des Trois Maures* (hotel of the Three Moors), *hôtel du Grand Monarque* (hotel of the Great Monarch).

During the Middle Ages, hostelries and hospices were charitable places where penniless travellers could stay free of charge. Prior Gérard built the first hospice in town. An almshouse belonging to the monastery also existed on the current *rue du Pont*, with a chapel consecrated to Our Lady of Alms. Its activity ceased with the French Revolution, when it was sold along with all its properties and demolished.

Pilgrims who could afford it stayed at an inn for a fee. Such inns were sometimes mistakenly called hostelries. There were many in town near the city's fortified gates and along its commercial streets, all signalled by illustrated signs. The current *rue des Hôtelleries* used to be called "*rue des Hôtes*", which in French either means "host street" or "guest street". Accommodation could be found there in a great number of establishments. The *hôtellerie de la Belle-Image-Notre-Dame* (hostelry of Our Lady's Beautiful Image) later became the hotel of the three Moors. One other hostelry, decorated with the image of Saint James, was probably attached to the parish and religious community placed under his protection. The hotel of the Great Monarch used to be a coaching inn during the 19th century; it now still exists as a restaurant. *Rue des Hôtelleries* also features many grand townhouses owned by wealthy prelates and nobles who regularly came to La Charité from the 12th century on.

Pilgrims at La Charité: now and then

THE PILGRIMS' PROGRESS THROUGH THE CITY

How pilgrims moved inside the city during the Middle Ages is not formally known but can be guessed at. It is highly probable that they would enter the city through its fortified gates (which existed until the 18th century) and gather towards the priory and centre, where they could find shops, inns and sanctuaries. Pilgrims would visit two buildings in particular: the prioral church of Notre-Dame, and the Saint-Jacques church. They would generally leave through the *porte de Pont* (Bridge gate) to cross the Loire and head towards Bourges.

Imagining what the pilgrims' old itinerary through the city would have been is still possible today. After coming in through the city's fortified gates (either through the Paris gate at the north, or through the *Saint-Père* gate at the east), they would then walk downhill towards the city centre and Priory. They even might make a detour to see the Saint-Jacques church, along the southern rampart. Then they would leave through the Marche gate (located south, on the Nevers route) or through the Bridge gate (located west, on the road to Bourges).

Nowadays, pilgrims following the "Vézelay route" arrive by the *Queue de Mouton* cemetery, walk down *rue Camille Barrère* and *Grande rue* towards the Priory, and end up in front of the 84 steps, a paved street going uphill. At the foot of the 84 steps, a mark signals the pilgrim trail. It was placed there to show where the Saint-Jacques church formerly stood. This part of the itinerary is not widely followed, as it constitutes a detour from the more popular Berry route.

In fact, this section of the trail was never even part of the historic itinerary, as the 84 steps didn't exist in the Middle Ages. The passage was created in 1658 by the nuns of the Mont-de-Piété convent. Steps were added to it in 1831. In the 17th and 18th centuries, pilgrims would visit the Saint-Jacques church, and then head back to the city through the *rue de la Montée-Saint-Jacques* and *rue Sainte-Anne*.

Notre-Dame

A ROMANESQUE MASTERPIECE

Notre-Dame stands as a beautiful example of Romanesque architecture, but also as a witness to the ups and downs of history. Its original plan closely resembled that of the now demolished Cluny III Abbey. During the Wars of Religion, a fire destroyed its nave. Only half of it was ever rebuilt. The other half was turned into a cemetery. *Place Sainte-Croix* now stands in its place. In the old days, monks alone were admitted into the prioral church of Notre-Dame. Still, the people of La Charité and visiting travellers would be granted access to it during certain religious holidays, like the Assumption of Mary and the Feast of the Transfiguration.

The construction of Notre-Dame started around 1080. The building process went through two phases. A first version of the church was designed and built following a classical Benedictine plan, with six staggered chapels at its chevet and an eight bays long nave. Pope Pascal II consecrated it in 1107. Near 1125, a new plan was drafted as the Order set out to rebuild its main church at Cluny for the third time. Notre-Dame's chevet was reworked to include an ambulatory aisle around its eastern apse and six radiating chapels. The regular clergy celebrated masses for particular occasions on the chapel's altars, where the church's relics were kept. The facade is decorated with a blind arcade of round arches, a typical feature of Romanesque architecture. The nave was extended by two bays and shut by a portal. Of this now missing portal, only a bell tower and two doors topped by two tympana remain.

Notre-Dame's plan is similar to that of the Cluny III Abbey, hinting at a relationship of influence between the two. In spite of the fact that access to Notre-Dame was limited to monks, it remained open to the lay public on certain occasions. Notre-Dame could accommodate a big crowd with its 115 meters long quadruple nave – which makes Notre-Dame one of the longest Romanesque churches in France.

Notre-Dame

THE ELEPHANT AND THE BASILISK: AN OUTSTANDING SCENERY

Notre-Dame's decorations are typical of Romanesque sculpture at the turn of the 12th century. Everything inside the church was preserved through time; on the outside, the transept and choir have also kept their original aspects. Sculptors displayed a rich ornamental and figurative vocabulary onto Notre-Dame's arches and columns. Nature is at the heart of their compositions, which are filled with plants, animals and fantastic beasts, completed with scenes from the Bible.

From 1080 on, the inside and outside of religious buildings were decorated with rich and profuse sculpted ornaments. A frenzy of sculptures unfurls on their columns and arches, around their windows, cornices and portals. The walls of Notre-Dame display an iconographic program of major interest, gathering a wide variety of themes, and showcasing the technical and stylistic evolution underwent by sculpture between the 11th and 12th century.

Most motifs were inspired by themes from the Antiquity (fluted pilasters, twisted columns, capitals decorated with acanthus leaves) and nature. Episodes from the Bible were illustrated in the midst of a prolific bestiary, where birds, dromedaries, elephants, wolves, sheep and all types of domestic and wild animals are shown mingled with dragons, basilisks, griffins and mermaids. The ensemble is completed by abstract compositions made of zigzags and interlaced designs.

Saint James appears on the Transfiguration tympanum, gazing upon Christ in a halo of radiating light between prophets Moses and Elijah, with apostles Peter and John at His side. Saint James is shown there as an apostle, and not as a pilgrim. His other persona is hinted at on the base of one column in the church's first chapel, which is decorated with a scallop shell motif, a distinct attribute of Galician pilgrims from the 12th century on.

Notre-Dame

AT THE CROSSROADS OF ARTISTIC INFLUENCES

In medieval times, artisans working in the construction industry – *artists* would seem an anachronistic term here – travelled from one building site to another. They would meet and trade techniques, motifs and styles. Notre-Dame is filled with the result of such exchanges: its sculpted decorations display many features not usually found in the Burgundian Romanesque style. For example, its multifoil arches may have been the result of oriental influences, brought to France through Spain. The Transfiguration tympanum itself was sculpted in a distinctive style usually found in the Languedoc region.

Although Notre-Dame was built in a distinctively Romanesque style, with round arches, equilateral pointed arches and barrel vaults, it also bears the mark of influences from the south of France and the Spanish peninsula.

Its multifoil arches disposed in arcades are characteristic of Spanish architecture. Originated in ancient Orient, this motif would have been brought to Spain by the Arabs. It then entered the French architectural repertoire. Not far from La Charité, arches of this type can be seen in cities such as Bourges or Déols, in the Berry region.

The Romanesque portals of the Sainte-Croix tower also bear the mark of foreign influences. These masterpieces of sculpture were made between 1130 and 1135. The Virgin's portal was realised in the Burgundian Romanesque style. It brings together scenes from the life of the Virgin: the Annunciation, the Visitation, the Nativity, the Annunciation to the shepherds and the Assumption of Mary. The Transfiguration portal, in contrast, was executed in a style particular to the Languedoc region. It features the Adoration of the Magi, the Presentation of Jesus at the Temple, and the Transfiguration of Jesus. It may have been sculpted by the Master of Gargillesse, an artisan who, after trained near Moissac in south-east France, went on to work in the Nièvre and Berry regions. The characters' features, and the way their clothes are outlined, point to a south-eastern style.

Notre-Dame

A SACRED TREASURE: THE RELICS OF NOTRE-DAME

In Medieval times, the possession of relics (the remains of a saint's body, clothes, or of an object formerly belonging to him or her) was of major importance to places of worship. Relics were worshipped for their miraculous virtues and could turn the place where they were kept into a pilgrimage destination in its own right. Several important relics were kept at Notre-Dame, among which were a hair from Mary's head, and a tooth belonging to Saint James. None of these relics are now left at the monastery.

Relics were usually displayed in a chapel, placed inside lavish shrines, and taken out of the church on processions and religious holidays. They would preside over important events at the monastery, like the reception of new monks into the community, the organisation of councils and of trials, and the consecration of a new building. The more relics one monastery had the more powerful and revered it would be, and the more pilgrims it would attract.

Nothing is left of the relics formerly kept in Notre-Dame, but old chronicles do attest to their past presence. The relics of Saint Jovinian, which consisted of an arm and a leg kept in a precious shrine, were among the first brought to La Charité, after being transferred from the cathedral of Auxerre in 1070. Notre-Dame also kept a piece of the True Cross, a hair from Mary's head, and a tooth belonging to Saint James. One chapel was consecrated to Saints John and James. The tooth belonging to the latter might have been kept there. In the same way, the bodies of former priors were buried on location and were turned into objects of devotion. That was the case of La Charité's first prior, Gérard (12th century). Pilgrims did not have direct access to the relics, except on the occasion of special ceremonies, where they would be showed to the public.

The Saint-Jacques church and parish

SAINT-JACQUES: A CHURCH CONSECRATED TO SAINT JAMES

Located at the end of current *rue de la Montée Saint-Jacques*, the parish church of Saint-Jacques was attached to a neighbourhood of winemakers and innkeepers, who had formed a guild since the 14th century. Some of its members were former Compostela pilgrims. Even though it was located on the present way of Saint James, the Saint-Jacques church was never built in relation with the Santiago de Compostela pilgrimage: it was in fact part of a preceding local devotion. Nothing remains of this church, which was demolished during the French Revolution.

Between the 12th and 13th centuries, local population growth brought about the need for new parish churches. One of them was consecrated to Saint James in 1209. Papal letters reveal that it had also been built to fight off the growing influence of a local Cathar community, which had settled in town between 1198 and 1263.

Located on top of a hill locally known as "Saint James's mountain", between the Marche and Brèche city gates, Saint-Jacques looked over the city's southern neighbourhoods. The church burnt down at the beginning of the 16th century. It was then rebuilt and received new bells, which were paid for by its parishioners in 1535 and 1774. These bells were used by the city's aldermen to call municipal assemblies and spread the news of any local event. Saint-Jacques is said to have been the headquarters of the guild of Saint-Jacques-le-Majeur, which was essentially composed of winemakers, innkeepers and former Compostela pilgrims who had settled at La Charité. The guild would celebrate its patron saint each year on July 25 by carrying Saint James's staff in procession around town.

Saint-Jacques was nationalised in 1792, consequently sold, and demolished soon after. Its foundation stones were without doubt reused to build or renovate nearby houses.

The Saint-Jacques church and parish

ARCHIVES TO THE RESCUE

The Saint-Jacques church is only known through archives and old prints. Built facing east on a hill overlooking the land, the church had a traditional plan in the form of a Latin cross, with a comparatively short nave. Its main characteristic resided in its chevet, which hosted a conference room in the fashion of protestant temples. Members of the Saint-Jacques-le-Majeur guild would hold their meetings there.

Old descriptions and a map from the town's archives have made it possible to imagine Saint-Jacques's original aspect. The building is depicted in old engravings by Chastillon (17th century), Merian and Sylvestre (18th century), now kept at the museum. Built along an east-west axis, the church's foundations rested on a small hill formerly used as a cemetery. Twelve stairs located in line with *rue de la Montée Saint-Jacques* led up to its main entrance.

The church was built according to a Latin cross plan and separated from nearby houses by a wall. In the fashion of a protestant temple, its choir comprised an apse, a sacristy and a "conference room", and was kept shut by a metal gate. Up until the 16th century fire, the church had a double, two bays long nave, with two chapels flanking the transept. The church was then rebuilt with five naves. The bell tower, which sat above the portal, would undoubtedly have been visible from quite a long way away.

The church was surrounded by the graveyard, which was no longer in use after the French Revolution. Now a private home, the presbytery is still in place and seems to have suffered very little alteration. Two of the church's capitals would be in its garden. Saint-Jacques church also had a barn, which still stands at the top of the 84 steps.

Crossing river Loire

THE WOODEN BRIDGES

While still complex to understand and patchy, the history of La Charité's bridges spanning the Loire can be traced through archives and archaeological finds. Whether bridges existed during the Gallo-Roman period is uncertain. However, there is evidence that several wooden bridges were built during the Middle Ages. All were anchored to an artificial island called "Le Faubourg". The 13th century bridge posts are still visible between the island and the banks of the river Cher. Depending on the season and state of the river, it was also possible to cross it through a ford or a ferry boat.

On a journey, rivers can turn out to be both busy highways and obstacles. Bridges were rare because they were expensive to build and maintain. The Loire has a tumultuous course that often shifted over centuries, which meant that its banks were never fully fixed. Over the years, bridges spanning the Loire had to be moved to follow its course.

Over the roman and medieval periods, a swamp separated the banks of the Nièvre and Cher rivers. Local residents built an earth embankment to protect themselves from floods: it would later turn into the artificial island of Le Faubourg. After the 7th century, the Loire's main channel flowed to the left side of the island. Archaeologists have discovered a 13th century upstream wooden bridge spanning the river, next to the Cher. Its foundation posts are still visible on the river bed today.

The first mention of a bridge on the river Nièvre appears in an account of Notre-Dame's consecration by Pope Paschal II in 1107. It was located upstream of the present stone bridge, and probably made of wood. Watermills might have been connected to it. Depending on the season, it was also possible to cross through a ford or using a ferry boat.

Crossing river Loire

THE STONE BRIDGE

A stone bridge linking the *Faubourg* island and city was built during the 14th century. Such a bridge would most likely have been fortified and have comprised a drawbridge. It was rebuilt during the 16th century under prior Jean de la Magdeleine de Ragny. Three of its arches have now disappeared under the houses located on the *rue du Pont* (Bridge street). Over the years, it lost many more elements, not least because of the Second World War. Its renovation was completed in 2017.

When the river's main channel was moved towards its right bank, the need arose for a sturdier bridge made of stone. According to one historic source, La Charité's first stone bridge would have been built in 1520. It would have been financed by prior Jean de la Magdeleine de Ragny. However, this date has now been called into question after three of the bridge's arches were discovered in the basement of a block of flats located *rue du Pont* (Bridge street). The shape of these lancet arches would set the construction date back to the 13th or 14th centuries - as would the fact that they had been buried under houses built during the 15th century.

The bridge was weakened by the Loire's very strong current and several floods. It was renovated several times. Its ramparts, fortified gate and drawbridge were gradually destroyed. The bridge owes its current aspect to a more recent development of the river's banks.

The bridge wasn't spared by conflicts either. Several arches were destroyed during the 16th century Wars of Religion. Another part of the bridge was destroyed by French and then by German soldiers, each army hoping to delay the other one. The missing arches were rebuilt in the 1950s. The bridge was entirely renovated between 2016 and 2017.

20 years of inscription on UNESCO's World Heritage List

WHAT IS WORLD HERITAGE?

The UNESCO's World Heritage List was created in 1978. It gathers an ensemble of cultural and natural properties, sites and cultural practices coming from all over the world. Each was selected for its outstanding universal value, to be preserved for the benefit of future generations. The list currently has 1073 entries. All answer to specific criteria defined by UNESCO's World Heritage Committee.

The notion of World Heritage encompasses all types of cultural as well as natural properties (monuments, urban and natural sites, landscapes) whose protection and conservation are of outstanding interest to all humanity. The UNESCO's* World Heritage Convention was signed on November 16, 1972. Since 1978, its World Heritage Committee has been adding to a list that now counts 1073 elements from all over the world.

In order to be inscribed into this list, the properties in question must be of "outstanding, universal value" and validate one or more of the official criteria of selection. For example, a cultural property should be a masterpiece of human genius, the witness of cultural traditions, of interactions between civilisations or of an exchange of influences in several technical or artistic fields. Each criterion is listed in the applicant's *"Statement of outstanding universal value"*.

(*United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation)

20 years of inscription on UNESCO's World Heritage List

THE ROUTES OF SANTIAGO DE COMPOSTELA THROUGH FRANCE

The "Routes of Santiago de Compostela through France" are a serial property comprising 78 elements, which was inscribed into the World Heritage List in 1998. It brings together monuments and trail sections historically or symbolically linked with the supposed medieval version of the Compostela pilgrimage.

The "Routes of Santiago de Compostela through France" are a serial property inscribed into the World Heritage List on December 2, 1998. It is composed of 78 elements spread between 10 regions: 64 monuments, 7 sites and 7 trail sections. The majority of it is located in the south-east of France. Three other monuments from the Burgundy-Franche-Comté region also feature on the list: the church of Saint-Jacques-d'Asquins (Yonne), the Sainte-Marie-Madeleine-de-Vézelay basilica (Yonne) and the Notre-Dame church of La-Charité-sur-Loire (Nièvre)

Such a selection of monuments, sites and trail sections takes part in making the pilgrims' routes to Compostela through France better known and identified. All of these places stand out for their historic, architectural, and artistic values. All were selected by UNESCO's World Heritage Committee according to criteria distinguishing them as properties of "outstanding universal value".

The serial property is cared for and curated by the ACIR (the Agency for Interregional Cooperation and Network of the Routes of Santiago de Compostela), and by the owners and managers of each protected site.

20 years of inscription on UNESCO's World Heritage List

AN "OUTSTANDING UNIVERSAL VALUE"

The Statement of outstanding universal value describes the reasons in favour of the property's inscription into UNESCO's World Heritage List. In addition to the selection criteria, the property must also meet certain qualifications of authenticity and of integrity. It must also be protected – in France, it typically would be as national monument – and cared for with proper measures of conservation and maintenance. The Statement of outstanding universal value brings together the 78 elements of the "Routes of Santiago de Compostela through France".

The "Routes of Santiago de Compostela through France" were picked by UNESCO's World Heritage Committee as it met three out of ten of the required selection criteria. These criteria confer the property an "outstanding universal value", which means that its interest as regards history and culture goes beyond borders and deserves to be recognised and passed on universally to future generations. This is the mandatory prerequisite to any inscription into UNESCO's World Heritage List.

As the most important pilgrimage of European Christianity, the pilgrimage to Santiago de Compostela played an important part in cross-border and intercultural exchanges, by throwing on the road worshippers of all origins. These pilgrims would halt in sanctuaries that were pilgrimage sites themselves, because of the relics kept on location. All the monuments selected by UNESCO's World Heritage Committee are major achievements in the history of humanity. Today, pilgrimage is still a living religious practice shared by many different religions around the world.

In addition to meeting the selection criteria, the property must also meet certain qualifications of authenticity and of integrity. The selected element must be historical, authentic, and a true testimony of its time of construction. It should be well preserved, not degraded and its outline should be easy to distinguish. It should also be protected – in France, it typically would be as national monument – and cared for with proper measures of conservation and maintenance.

Voilà l'été dans la Cité !

Here comes the summer in the Cité !

This exhibition is part of the Cité du Mot's summer season: 3 months of events and cultural activities from classical and blues concerts, to weekly tea-time discussions in French and in English. There are also guided tours of the heritage site and of the city's historic quarters.

So you don't have to speak French to take part. For more information please ask our staff in the cloître or email us on info@citedumot.fr to receive more information in English.

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