

# Loire Valley

24 – 30 May 2003



# **Study Tour to Loire Valley**

**24 to 30 May 2003**

## **Itinerary**

**Saturday, 24 May** 8:00 a.m. leave London Embankment. Cross by Channel Tunnel and arrive Rouen. Leave luggage in hotel. Visit Rouen Cathedral

**Sunday, 25 May** 8:30 a.m. Leave Rouen. Visit Château Gaillard; (Lunch in Les Andelys) then travel to Tours. (Stay in Tours Sunday to Thursday)

**Monday, 26 May** 8:30 a.m. leave Tours: Travel to St-Benoît-sur-Loire; Germigny-des-Prés (Lunch in Châteauneuf-sur-Loire); Azay-le-Rideau Château

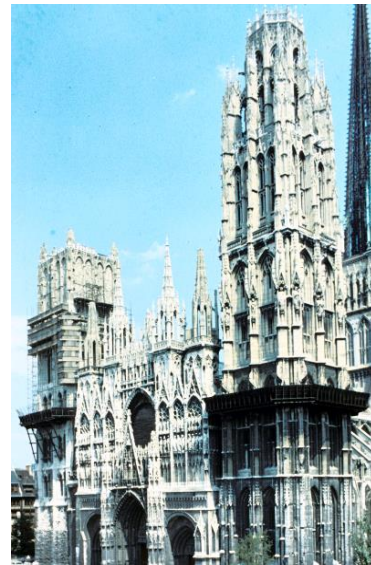
**Tuesday, 27 May** 8:30 a.m. leave Tours: Travel to Lavardin Church; Montoire-sur-Loire Church; Areines Church; Blois (Lunch in Blois).

**Wednesday, 28 May** 8:30 a.m. leave Tours: Travel to Tavant Church; Château Chinon (Lunch in Chinon); Fontevraud Abbey; Château Saumur (if time allows)

**Thursday, 29 May** 8:30 a.m. Visit Tours (morning – coach not required). Lunch in Tours. 1:15 p.m. leave Tours: travel to Amiens (overnight in Amiens)

**Friday, 30 May** 8:30 a.m. visit Amiens. Lunch Return via Channel Tunnel; arrive London Embankment.

**N**otre-Dame Cathedral at Rouen is an outstanding example of French Gothic. Although work started in the 12<sup>th</sup> century, a fire in 1200 necessitated reconstruction in the 13<sup>th</sup> century. Important additions to the cathedral were made in the 15<sup>th</sup> century by Guillaume Pontifs and in the 16<sup>th</sup> century by Roulland le Roux. The cast iron spire was added in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The cathedral was very badly damaged during the war, and a lengthy programme of restoration was implemented.



The **west façade** – which was used by Monet for a series of studies on the effects of different lighting conditions on a single subject – is flanked by two towers which are totally different. The **St Romanus Tower** (north) is the oldest, dating from the 12<sup>th</sup> century; the southern tower is the **Butter Tower** and is early Gothic in style. The **central lantern tower** is the tallest in France (151 m). It was constructed in the 13<sup>th</sup> century and raised in the 16<sup>th</sup> century. It originally had a gilded lead spire, built in 1544; this was replaced with the cast iron spire in 1876.

The **Calende Doorway**, on the south transept, is set between two 13<sup>th</sup> century towers. The doorway itself is 14<sup>th</sup> century and is a masterpiece of carving, particularly the four leaf medallions which were inspired by French ivory carving. On the north side is the Booksellers' Court, with its famous **Booksellers' Doorway** (Portail des Libraires), which features a fine Last Judgement scene on the tympanum (late 13<sup>th</sup> century).

The **nave** is early Gothic and of eleven bays. With a four-tier elevation comprising tall arcades, false tribunes, triforium and clerestory. The aisles were very high, because the tribunes were to appear at mid height. The capitals are crocketed and leaf-shaped.

The **transepts** feature excellent 14<sup>th</sup> century carving on the back of both the Calende and the Booksellers' Doorways. In the north transept, alongside a large rose window restored with its 14<sup>th</sup> century glass, is the **Booksellers' Stairway** (Escalier de la Librairie), the work of Guillaume Pontifs (the first flight of stairs is 15<sup>th</sup> century; the second is 18<sup>th</sup> century).

The **chancel** has simple, clean lines and is a masterpiece of 13<sup>th</sup> century Gothic. The pillars supporting the arcades have massive circular capitals with stylised plants. Three of the clerestory windows have 15<sup>th</sup> century glass showing the scene at Calvary.

The **ambulatory** has three radiating chapels, the eastern chapel being the **Lady Chapel**. The ambulatory holds 13<sup>th</sup> century figures of Rollo, Richard Coeur-de-Lion, Henry (second son of Henry II of England), and a 14<sup>th</sup> century figure of William Longsword, Duke of Normandy and son of Rollo. There are also five 13<sup>th</sup> century stained-glass windows: the bottom one depicts St Julian, the hospitaller and was presented by the Fishmongers' Guild; the windows showing the history of Joseph are signed by Clément, a glassmaker from Chartres; and there are scenes showing the Passion and the Good Samaritan. The Lady Chapel has 14<sup>th</sup> century glass; two fine Renaissance tombs – the one on the south is the tomb of the Cardinals of

Amboise (1515-25) and was carved from drawings made by Roulland le Roux – the other is the tomb of Louis de Bréze (built between 1534 – 44).

**Château Gaillard** is one of the greatest castles ever built. It was constructed for Richard Coeur-de-Lion together with the new town of les Andelys between 1196 and 1198. Richard's famous remark "Ecce quam pulcra filia unius anni" (Behold! What a beautiful daughter of one year), is seen as a testimony to the speed of construction.

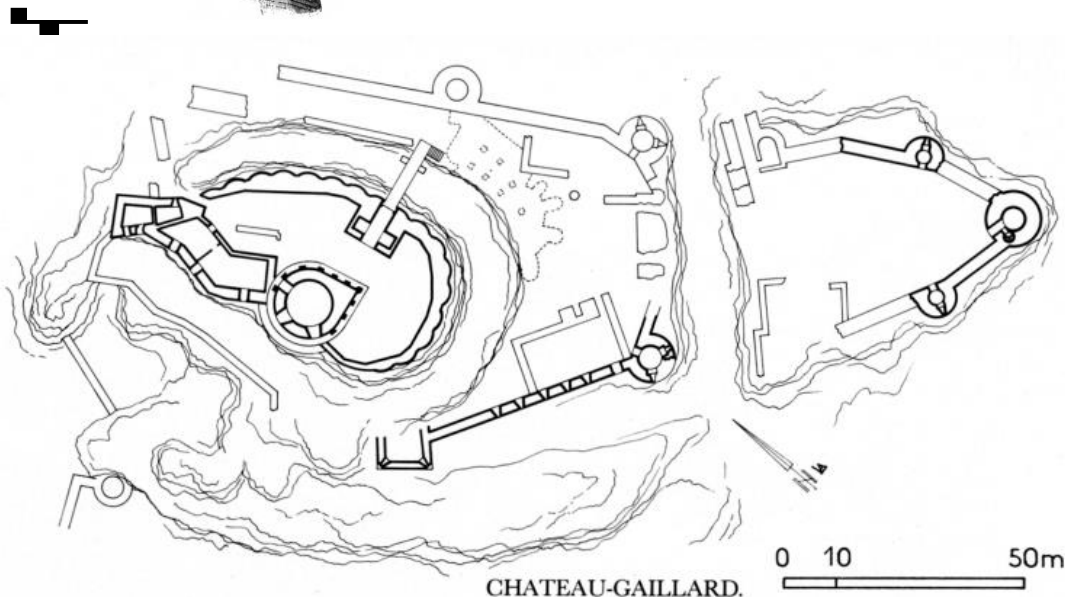


The military engineering of the castle included advanced concentric defences almost a century before the castles built by Edward I in north Wales. Situated on the cliffs overlooking the Seine, the location of Château Gaillard means that only one line of approach to the castle (from the southeast) is possible. The defences of the castle are therefore directed towards this line of approach. The castle comprises three baileys, set in a linear, rather than concentric fashion and separated by deep rock-cut ditches. An immense tower guards the approach to the triangular-shaped outer bailey. The bailey itself is entered through a gatehouse on the east and a right-angle turn leads to a bridge over the moat and thence to the gatehouse of the middle bailey.



Access to the inner bailey is reached only after passing with one's exposed flank facing the inner curtain wall. Another right-angle turn leads to the bridging point and the inner gatehouse. The gatehouse itself is overlooked by the immense keep, which stands adjacent to the hall. The interior of the keep is circular, but externally it is battered out like a ship's prow facing the direction of any enemy missiles.

Despite the incredible sophistication of its design, Château Gaillard was captured in 1204 by the French king, Philippe-Auguste, although the storming of the castle relied in part on trickery.



The **basilica of St-Benoît-sur-Loire** is one of the most famous Romanesque churches in France. A monastery was originally established here in the mid-7<sup>th</sup> century. In c. 672 the abbot of **Fleury**, as the monastery was called, gave orders for the relics of St Benedict, the father of western monasticism, to be brought from the ruins of **Monte Cassino** in Italy. The presence of such important relics was naturally a great asset to Fleury and the monastery became increasingly successful and important. Fleury suffered during the time of the Viking incursions and the monastery became very lax. However, in 930 **Odo**, a monk from the Touraine, became Abbot of Cluny. He imposed the Cluniac rule at Fleury and the monastery once again grew into a great centre of learning. In the later 10<sup>th</sup> century **Abbo**, a famous scholar who had studied at Paris and Reims, returned to Fleury, where he had been a monk before travelling for his studies. In 988 Abbo became Abbot of Fleury and from this time the abbey was at the forefront of European academic life.

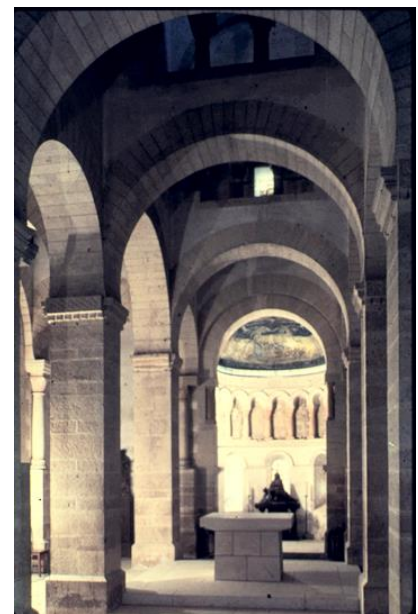


Fleury was influential in shaping the 10<sup>th</sup> century monastic revival in England, and Cluniac practices, via Fleury, formed the basis of the ***Regularis Concordia***, the first attempt to provide a national code for monastic observance.

**Germigny-des-Prés** is one of the oldest surviving churches in France. It was built as the oratory to a villa owned by Theodulf, Bishop of Orléans before 798, then Abbot of Micy and of Fleury. Theodulf was a brilliant scholar and theologian, and much admired by Charlemagne. The oratory dates to the early 9<sup>th</sup> century and contains mosaics that have been dated to c. 805.

After Charlemagne's death, Theodulf fell out of favour and was accused of plotting against Louis the Pious and exiled in 818. His villa was destroyed by the Vikings in the 8<sup>th</sup> century.

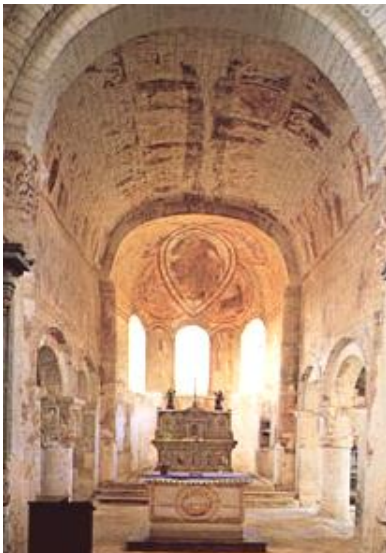
The church was originally in the form of a Greek cross, but now only the eastern part survives. The apse has a remarkable mosaic showing the Ark of the Covenant surmounted by two cherubim flanked by two archangels. The hand of God appears between them. The use of gold and silver in the design of the archangels is reminiscent of the Byzantine art of Ravenna, while the stucco blind arcades show influence of the work of the Mozarabs and the Lombards.



**C**hâteau Azay-le-Rideau commands a bridging point on the River Indre on the Tours/Chinon road. The site was fortified in the late 11<sup>th</sup> – early 12<sup>th</sup> century by one of Philippe-Auguste's knights, but the château was burnt, along with the town, as an act of reprisal by Charles VII in 1418.



The site was rebuilt between 1518 - 27 by **Gilles Berthelot**, one of the great financiers of the time. The château is one of the gems of Renaissance architecture in the Loire Valley area. Perhaps its most striking feature is the grand staircase with its open loggias and decorated pediment. The nearby 11<sup>th</sup> century church of **St-Symphorien** is also worthy of note.



**T**here are a number of important painted churches in the area. The four that we will visit are the very best to be found in the vicinity of Tours. St Genest's Church, **Lavardin** is built in an archaic Romanesque style and has mural paintings dating from the 12<sup>th</sup> c to 16<sup>th</sup> c. The oldest and most imposing are on the pillar at the entrance to the north apsidal chapel and show the Baptism of Christ and a Tree of Jesse. A set of paintings in the chancel shows the Passion, the Washing of the Feet and Christ in Majesty. In the south apsidal chapel there is a 15<sup>th</sup> century Last Judgement and a St Christopher. The pillars in the nave have 16<sup>th</sup> century depictions of saints.

**Montoire-sur-Loire** developed around the Priory of St Giles, which was founded in the 7<sup>th</sup> century. In the 9<sup>th</sup> century, Charles the Bald fortified the town against Viking incursions. The site was an important point on the *Via Turonensis*, the pilgrim route from Paris to Santiago de Compostela. The Romanesque chapel of St Giles has a clover-leaf shaped apse and transepts, and each semi-dome has a figure of Christ painted at a different date. The oldest painting (1<sup>st</sup> quarter of the 12<sup>th</sup> century) is in the apse. It is a Christ in Majesty, known as the **Christ of the Apocalypse**. The south transept has a slightly later 12<sup>th</sup> century painting of Christ offering the Keys to St Peter (although Peter is now missing); the north transept has a 13<sup>th</sup> century figure of Christ with the Apostles. There are also paintings on the crossing arches.

The 12<sup>th</sup> century church of **Areines** has a group of 12<sup>th</sup> century frescoes: a Christ in Majesty in the apse, with the evangelical symbols (including a very Byzantine lion of St Mark), underneath are the Apostles with blue haloes, and warrior saints, also with haloes. The chancel vault depicts the Lamb of Christ being adored by angels and the Annunciation and Visitation. There are slightly later frescoes on the walls of the chancel, including a Marriage of the Virgin.

**Tavant** also has a Romanesque church with 12<sup>th</sup> century frescoes on the vaulting, the apse and the crypt. There are also noteworthy capitals in the chancel.

**I**n the Middle Ages the Counts of Blois were extremely powerful nobles with two estates: Champagne and region of Blois and Chartres. Although they were constantly at war with the Counts of Anjou (particularly Fulk Nerra), they founded a powerful dynasty. One of the Counts of Blois married the daughter of William the Conqueror and their son, Stephen, became King of England in 1135, an event that resulted in the Years of the Anarchy, which lasted until 1154.



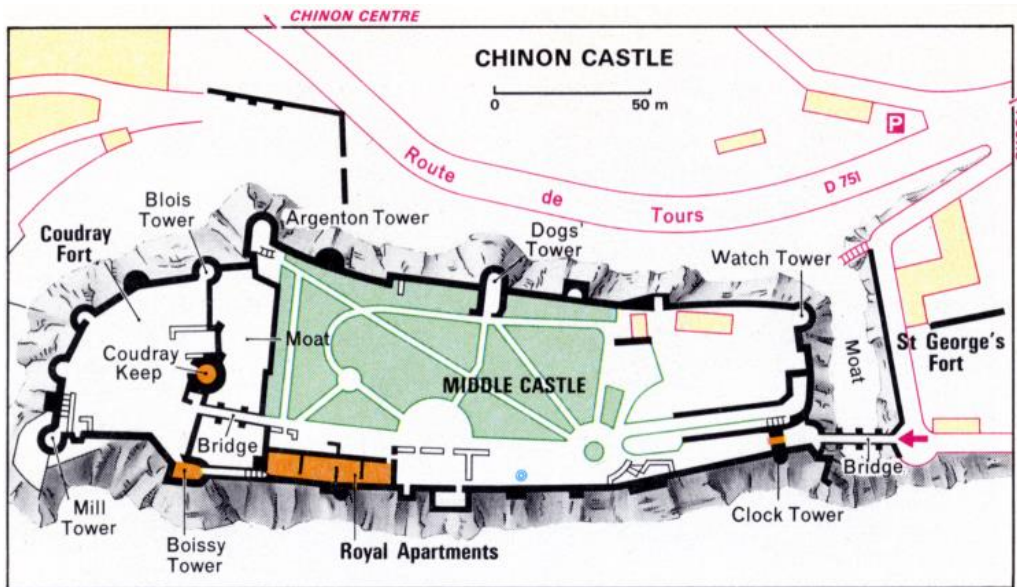
In 1234 Louis IX bought a lease on the County of Blois from the Count of Champagne and in 1392 the last Count, Guy de Chatillon sold the county to Louis, Duke of Orléans and brother of Charles VI. From this time on, the court of Orléans was held in Blois. Louis XII was born in Blois in 1462 and succeeded Charles VIII in 1498, when Blois became the royal residence instead of Amboise. The **Château** shows four main periods of construction: The chamber of the States General and the Foix Tower are from the 13<sup>th</sup> century; The Charles of Orléans Gallery (late 15<sup>th</sup> – early 16<sup>th</sup> c.), the St Calais Chapel (1498 – 1508) and the Louis XII Wing (1498 – 1501) are from the Gothic – Renaissance Transitional Period; the François I Wing, with its famous staircase shown in the picture (1515 – 1524) is from the Renaissance Period and the Gaston of Orléans Wing 1635 – 1638) is from the Classical Period.

**C**hinon began as a Gallo-Roman camp and later became a fortress belonging to the Counts of Blois. In the 11<sup>th</sup> century, it was seized by the Counts of Anjou, one of whom, Henry Plantagenet, built the earlier parts of the present château. After Henry became King of England in 1154, Chinon remained one of his favourite residences and he died here in 1189. It was during the Angevin period (1154 to 1204) that Chinon thrived.

In 1429 **Joan of Arc** came to Chinon, having travelled from Lorraine. The King was in the great hall of the Milieu (the middle bailey) of the château. According to the documentary sources, the hall was lit with 50 torches and contained 300 men. The king hid among the men while a courtier wore his robes. Despite this attempt to test her, Joan came straight to Charles and said “My name is Jehanne la Pucelle (Joan the Maid). The King of Heaven sends word by me that you will be anointed and crowned in the city of Reims, and you will be the Lieutenant of the King of Heaven, who is the King of France”. Although the King was convinced, many of his followers were sceptical and Joan was made to appear before a court at Poitiers, where she was questioned for three weeks. Eventually she was allowed to return to Chinon, where she was given arms and soldiers. She left Chinon with her army on 20 April 1429.

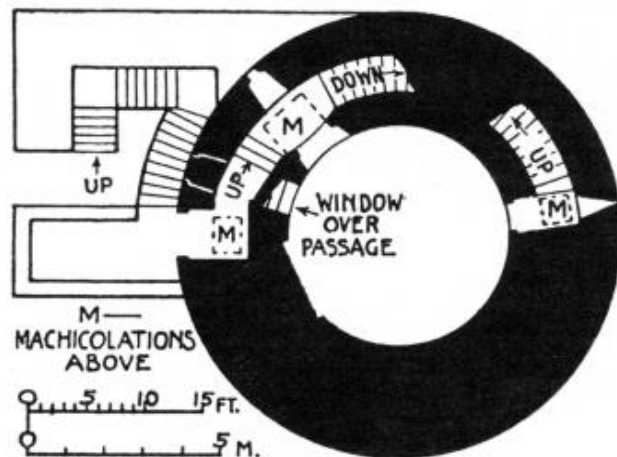
The **town of Chinon** was once surrounded by strong walls, which earned it the name *Ville Fort*. The old town sits between the château on the high ground and the quays on the river Vienne and contains many charming medieval buildings. The **Grand-**

**Carroi** was the old town centre, where the rue Haute St-Maurice crossed the rue de Grand-Carroi, which ran up from the bridge.



**Château Chinon** dates mostly from the time of Henry II (12<sup>th</sup> century). It measures c. 400m x 70 and is composed of three baileys: St-Georges, le Milieu and Coudray, each separated by deep dry moats. The eastern outer bailey of St-Georges, which has now been abandoned, protected the more vulnerable side of the château, which was accessible from the plateau. Le Milieu, or middle bailey was reached from St-Georges by a bridge over the moat. The original gate to le Milieu was replaced in the 14<sup>th</sup> century with the Tour de l'Horologe (Clock Tower). To the west of le Milieu, another bridge leads to Coudray, the inner bailey which is sited on the point of the rock spur.

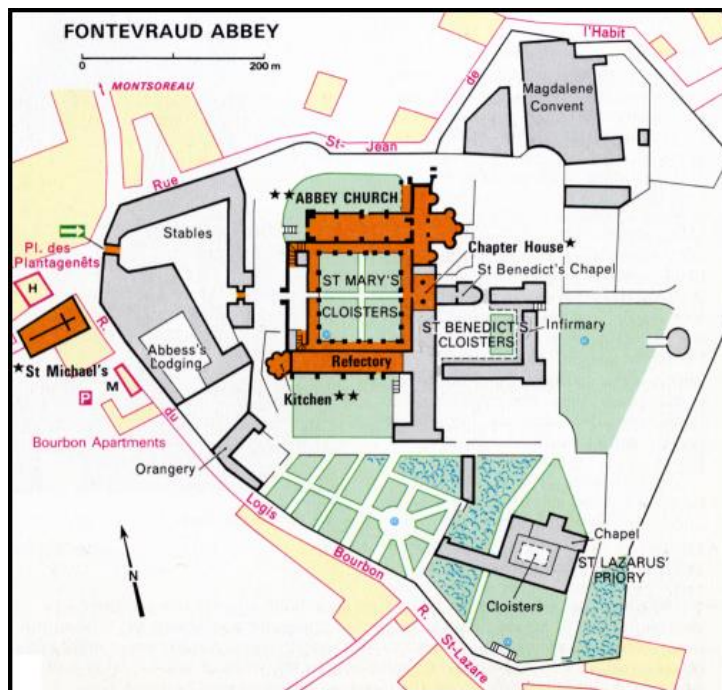
The round donjon, or **Tour de Coudray**, was built by the French king, Philippe-Auguste, in the early 13<sup>th</sup> century. The mural stairways and the space inside the entrance doorway are protected by machicolations, which pass straight up through the wall to the wall walk (see plan on the right). Thus any enemy who succeeded in gaining the inside of the donjon would find his progress checked by a rain of deadly missiles from above; while the defenders on the battlements could fight against those within the donjon, as well as those outside it.



**F**ontevraud Abbey was founded by Robert d'Arbrissel in 1101. Although it has suffered over the centuries, including being used as a prison from 1804 to 1965), this is the largest surviving group of monastic buildings in France. This is because from its foundation, this abbey was unique in having five separate to house the mixed community: St-Jean-de-l'Habit (priests and lay-brothers, St Mary (contemplative nuns), St Lazarus (lepers), St Benedict (invalids) and St Mary Magdalene (lay-sisters). Each group had its own separate existence, with its own church, chapter house and cloister, and domestic buildings. Robert d'Arbrissel ordained that the whole monastery should be ruled by an abbess who was later known as the "Head and General of the Order". This arrangement continued until the time of the French Revolution.



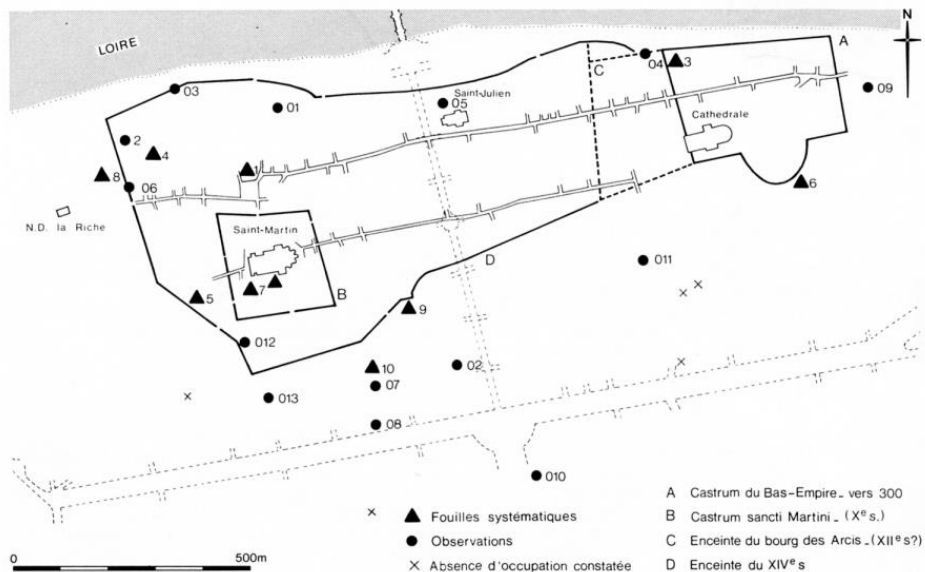
The nave of the 12<sup>th</sup> century **Abbey church** is roofed by a series of domes, a roofing style more common in the southwest of France than here. The choice of such a roof is most probably due to the strong ties between the Anjou and the Aquitaine during the Plantagenet reign. The transepts and chancel with its ambulatory and radiating chapels are several decades earlier than the nave.



**St Mary's Cloisters** (part of the nun's convent) have Renaissance vaulting, except on the south side where it is Gothic. The **Chapter house** has a richly carved doorway; inside are 16<sup>th</sup> century murals showing the abbesses. The Romanesque **Frater** (refectory) is 45m long; its original timber ceiling was replaced with a Gothic vault in 1515. The Romanesque **Kitchen** was originally flanked by eight apsidal chapels, although three were destroyed in the 16<sup>th</sup> century when the kitchen was attached to the

frater. The octagonal plan of the kitchen is reminiscent of the kitchen at Glastonbury.

**St Benedict's Cloisters** were replaced in the 17<sup>th</sup> – 18<sup>th</sup> centuries, although the north wing still contains the 12<sup>th</sup> century **St Benedict's Chapel**.



**T**ours was founded during the Roman period as the settlement of *Turons*. It developed into a prosperous city and acquired the name *Caesarodunum*. The town reached its greatest prosperity in the 2<sup>nd</sup> century AD, but by the 4<sup>th</sup> century it had shrunk to a walled administrative enclave around the present cathedral area (traces of the wall can be seen near the castle and in the rue des Ursulines). In 375 the town's name reverted to *Turones* and it became the centre of government for the third Lyonnaise – a province comprising Touraine, Maine, Anjou and Armorica.

The early medieval expansion of Tours was based, not on this administrative area, but the area around the church of Saint Martin, which was situated within one of the extra-mural Roman cemeteries on the road outside the town. In 471 a great basilica measuring 50m x 20m had been built over the tomb of Saint Martin. For some time the city consisted of two separate elements: the cathedral and administrative area, and a monastic centre around which developed an increasingly important market function. Following the Viking incursions of the 9<sup>th</sup> century, the monastery of Saint-Martin erected a *castrum*, which was completed by 918. This led to the growth of a *suburbium*, an area not subject to the authority of the count or the bishop. By the later 10<sup>th</sup> century there were two parish churches for the town, two for the administrative centre and nine for Saint-Martin and its *suburbium*.



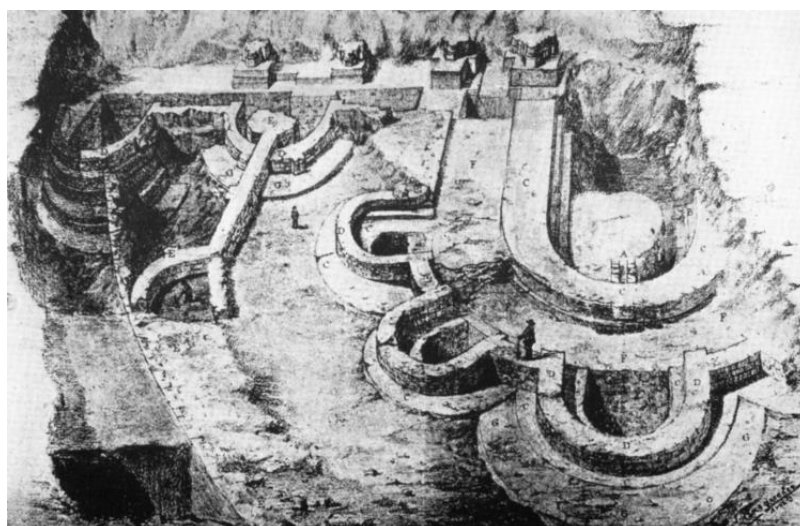
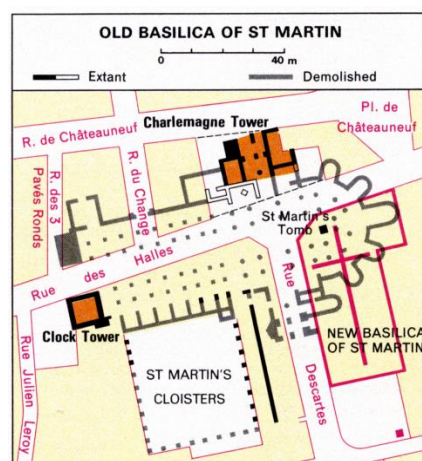
**Saint Martin** was the greatest bishop of Gaul, but he began as legionary in the Roman Army. At the gates of Amiens the young soldier was approached by a beggar shivering in the wind. He cut his cloak in two and gave half to the beggar. That night, in a dream, he saw Christ wearing half of his cloak. He was baptised and founded a monastery at Ligugé in Poitou; this was the first monastery to be built in Gaul.

Saint Martin's fame spread and in 372 the people of Tours asked him to become their bishop. Although Christianity had arrived in Gaul a century earlier, paganism was still very strong and Saint Martin gained a reputation as a great fighter against idolatry and pagan practices.

He died in Candes in 397. The monks of Ligugé and Marmoutier quarrelled over possession of his body. During the night, as the men of Poitou slept, the men of Tours ceased the body and carried it upstream by boat. Then a miracle occurred; although it was November, the trees and plants burst into leaf – a Saint Martin's summer.

**Clovis** is said to have visited the tomb of Saint Martin in 496 or 498, and to have vowed to be baptised if he defeated the Alamanni. He returned in 507 during the war against the Visigoths and commanded his army not to plunder Tours out of respect for the saint. In 563 Gregory, a young deacon who suffered from poor health, visited the tomb of Saint Martin. After his miraculous cure, he settled in Tours, eventually becoming bishop in 573. **Gregory of Tours**, as he became known, wrote *The History of the Franks* as well as many other works. Between 573 and Gregory's death in 594 the town developed and a great abbey grew up around Saint Martin's Basilica.

At the end of the 8<sup>th</sup> century the fame of Tours as an artistic and intellectual centre greatly increased under the leadership of **Alcuin**, an Anglo-Saxon monk. Alcuin had originally come from York and had met Charlemagne in Italy, later returning with him to France. After serving at Charlemagne's court, Alcuin wished to retire and in 796 Charlemagne offered him the abbacy of Tours. Although the Abbey of Saint Martin had over 200 monks, it was not renowned for its importance in the field of learning. Alcuin's retirement developed into a campaign to increase the prestige of the abbey. He reformed the abbey school by creating two cycles of study: one elementary and the other comprising the seven liberal arts of grammar, rhetoric, logic arithmetic, geometry, music and astronomy. He also revived the scriptorium and produced a new copy of the Vulgate Bible. Alcuin died on Whit Sunday 804 and for half a century after his death Tours continued to be a great centre of learning to which people from all over Europe travelled. The abbey also continued to develop as a place of pilgrimage and it became one of the most important shrines on the *Via Turonensis* the great pilgrim route that ran from Paris to Santiago de Compostela.



In 997 a great fire destroyed the Abbey of Saint Martin and the *suburbium* outside it. The damaged 5<sup>th</sup> century basilica was replaced by a great Pilgrimage type church constructed in 1014. This was burnt down in 1230 and rebuilt on an even larger scale. This church was badly damaged by the Huguenots in

1562 and fell into further disrepair during the Revolution, when its vaulting collapsed. In 1802 the nave was demolished to make way for the *rue des Halles*. Excavations in 1860 revealed the plan of the church and located fragments of Saint Martin's Shrine. A remaining tower – Charlemagne Tower partially collapsed in 1928, but has been carefully restored. A new basilica in the neo-Byzantine style was built between 1886 and 1924 and this church has the shrine of St Martin in its crypt.



**W**ork on Amiens Cathedral started in 1220, following the destruction of the Romanesque cathedral in a fire of 1218. The start of construction at Amiens is contemporary with the start of construction of Salisbury and it is instructive to compare the two buildings to see how far the national styles had diverged since the introduction of Gothic at Canterbury in 1175.

Amiens Cathedral is the largest Gothic building in France and is 145m in length. Although the length of Salisbury is similar (144m), the impression of length is emphasised by its modest width; at Amiens the length to width ratio is 1 to 4, at Salisbury it is 1 to 6. The difference in height between the two buildings is extreme; the nave at Amiens is the highest in France, rising to 42.50m at the crown of its vaults; by contrast, the vaults at Salisbury are a mere 25.60m high.

Despite the emphasis on vertical line, the west front at Amiens has a horizontal aspect consisting of several bands: the three doorway, the two galleries, the rose window and the small bell-ringers gallery. The central doorway is framed by the wise and foolish virgins, the left doorway is dedicated to St Firmin and the right doorway is dedicated to the Mother of God.

In the centre of the **nave** there is the famous labyrinth, which was restored in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. It contained a text which gives the date of construction for the church (the original stone is in the Picardy Museum). The **Flamboyant oak stalls** in the chancel were created between 1508 and 1519 by Antoine Avernier, Arnould Boulon and Alexandre Huet. The two master stalls were designed for the king and the dean of chapter. There are vestiges of **13<sup>th</sup> century glass** in the apsidal chapels.

There is a gallery of photographs from this study tour on the Internet at:

[www.archaeology.eu.com](http://www.archaeology.eu.com)