

Archaeology in Europe



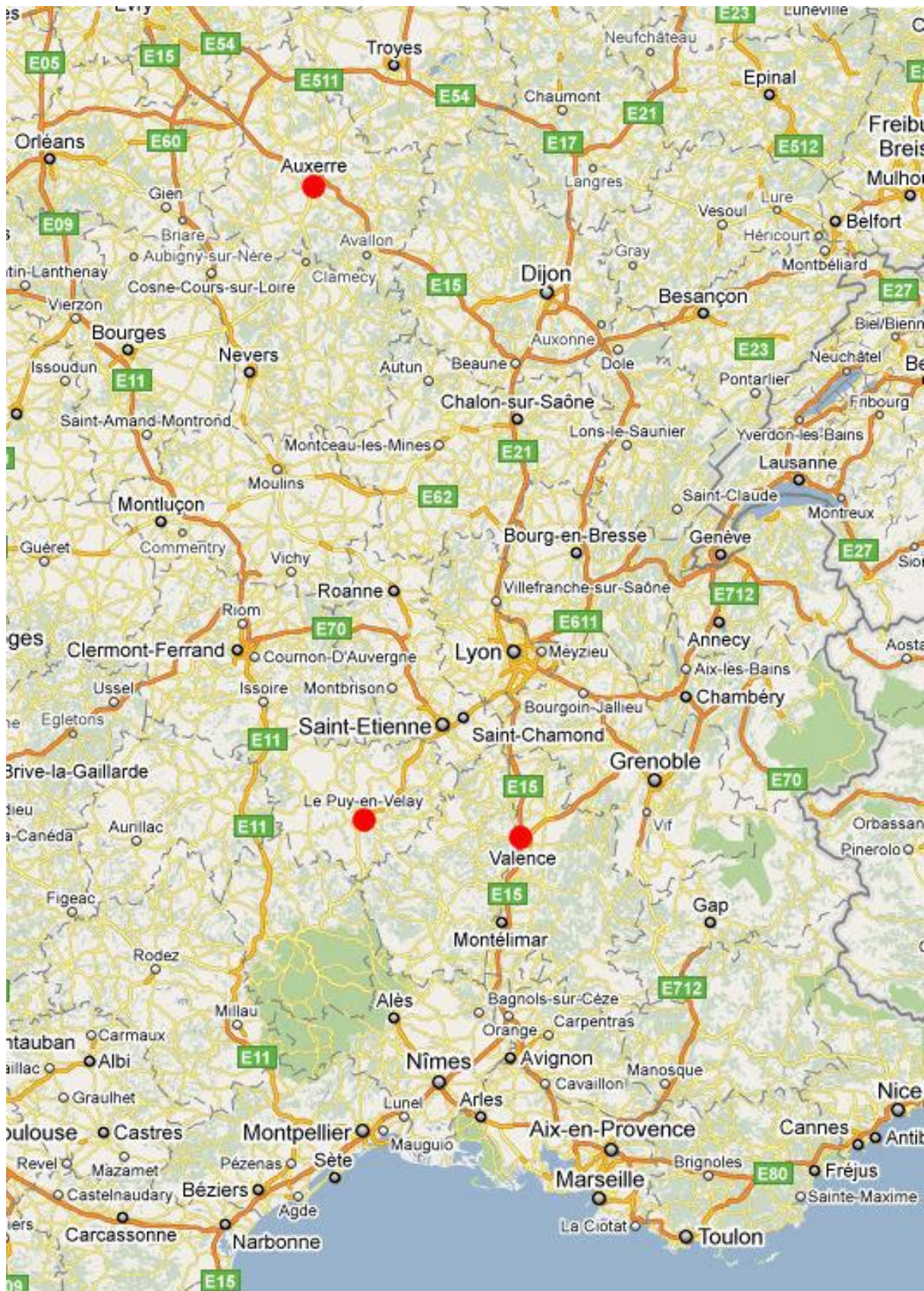
Archaeological Study Tour to Drôme and Ardèche



Chapelle St. Michel d'Aiguilhe, le Puy-en-Velay

17 to 24 June 2011

Archaeological Study Tour to Drôme and Ardèche



Archaeology in Europe
www.archeurope.com

Archaeological Study Tour to Drôme and Ardèche 17 – 24 June 2011

Notre-Dame d' Avenas

The charming little church of Avenas has one of the most remarkable survivals of late 12th century sculpture as its altar.

The west face of the altar shows Christ in majesty, surrounded by the twelve apostles. The south face shows King Louis VII presenting the church to the chapter of Saint-Vincent of Mâcon, together with an inscription. The north face shows various scenes from the life of the Virgin: the Annunciation; Nativity; Presentation at the Temple and the Assumption. The east face of the altar is relatively plain and has a door, presumably for the insertion of relics.



The inscription on the south face reads:

**(RE) X LUDOVICVS PIVS AND VIRTVTIS AMCVS
OFFERED AEECLESIAM RECIPIT INTIVS ISTAM
LAPADE BISSENA FLVITVRVS IVLIVS IBAT
GOVERNED BITS FVGAT OBPOSITV AD INTITUM**

Which may be translated as:

**king Louis, pious and friend of virtue
offers (this) church: (saint) Vincent receives it
in a dozen days July was going to be completed
death puts to flight (that) which is opposed to the king.**

Although the latter part of the translation is uncertain.

Valence

At the beginning of the 2nd century Colonia Valentia was an important Roman town. Much of its importance was due to its location, being on the Rhone and close to the valleys of the Doux, Drôme, Eyrieux and the Isère rivers, thus forming a focal point for the best agricultural areas of the region.

In February, 1541, the Canon Pierre Morel opened a college for thirteen poor students. On 26 July, 1452 a university was founded by letters patent from the Dauphin Louis (later Louis XI) who was very fond of Valence. The University was approved by Pope Pius II in the Bull of 3 May, 1459. In the sixteenth century Valence was famous for its teaching of law, entrusted to Italian professors or to those who had studied in Italy. The Portuguese jurist, Govea, taught at Valence, 1554-55; the French jurist, Cujas (1522-90), from December 1557 to 1559; and François Hotman from the end of 1562 until August 1568.

The university became a centre of Protestant tendencies. Hotman was a determined Protestant; Cujas changed from Protestantism to Catholicism, but it is doubtful if his conversion was inspired entirely from religious motives. In view of these Protestant tendencies the theological teaching was deemed inadequate, and in 1575 Montluc founded a college of Jesuits at Valence, although this college did not survive for long. In the 17th and 18th centuries the University of Valence was of only minor importance and in 1738 there was a plan to transfer the university to Grenoble, however this project was later abandoned. The University of Valence disappeared during the French Revolution.

St Apollinaire Cathedral

The original 11th century pilgrimage church was badly damaged during the Wars of Religion of the 17th century.

This resulted in the cathedral being largely rebuilt during the 17th century, although the rebuilding was carried out in the primitive style.

The belfry is 19th century and was constructed in neo-Romanesque style. The white marble base is of Crussol marble and the yellow sand stone used in the upper stories is from Châteauneuf-d'Isère.



The north porch preserves a lintel from the original Romanesque church depicting the Annunciation, the Nativity, Magi before Herod and the Adoration of the Magi. The interior of the church shows the strong influence of the Auvergne Romanesque in the rebuilding. The nave is barrel-vaulted and lit by the aisle windows.

Château de Rochemaure

The ruins of the château at Rochemaure are impressively situated on the southern edge of the Coiron Plateau.

The castle was first constructed in the 12th century and there are 13th and 14th century additions. The great square keep is surmounted by a pentagonal tower which was added to give better firepower for archers.



The castle was attacked by the Huguenots in the 16th and 17th centuries and was finally abandoned in the 18th century.



Rochemaure is a charming medieval village on the banks of the Rhône. It retains much of its original appearance and many of its old houses have been recently sympathetically restored.

The 13th century **Chapelle Notre-Dames des Anges** is in the Provençal style of Gothic. It was partially destroyed by the Huguenots in 1567 and was restored in 1596. This chapel was the burial place for many of the noble families connected with the castle: Adhémar, Anduze, Levis-Vendatour and Rohan-Soubise.

The quasi-medieval suspension bridge crossing the Rhône was built in the 19th century.

Roman Bridge at Viviers

Viviers became the capital of the Gaulish Helvii tribe following the decline of nearby Alba-la-Romaine.

In late Roman times, it also became a bishopric and the capital of the pays Vivarais. The Roman bridge dates to the 2nd AD century and spans 108 m with eleven arches.



Château de Crest

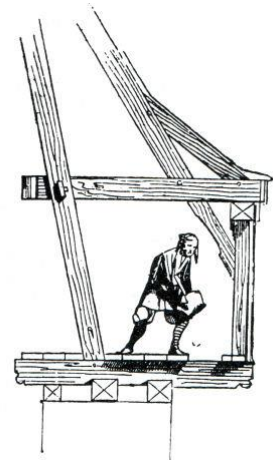


The rectangular keep at Crest is 20 m x 32 m in size and almost 52 m high. It is all that remains of the castle that was slighted in 1632 on the orders of Louis XIII.

The keep was first constructed in the 11th century, although various building campaigns added to it right up until the 15th century.

Construction of the building began as a keep with a triangular 'bec' of masonry protecting the side of possible attack. The bec was provided with protruding stone corbels which would have supported a wooden hoarding from which rocks could be dropped, as shown in the drawing on the right.

The castle originally guarded one of the principal entrances to the Pre-Alps in Drôme.



Le Puy-en-Velay

The Cathedral Notre-Dame at le Puy-en-Velay dates mostly from the first half of the 12th century.

The façade is built in courses of white sandstone and black volcanic breccia, giving an impressive striped appearance.

The west front is reached by a flight of sixty steps, and consists of three orders: the lowest composed of three high arcades opening into the porch, which extends beneath the first bays of the nave; above are three central windows that light the nave; above are three gables on the gable-end of the nave, flanked by two openwork screening gables.



The bays of the nave are roofed by octagonal cupolas, the cupola at the crossing forming a lantern; the choir and transepts are barrel vaulted.



The beautiful **cloister** is connected to remains of fortifications of the 13th century that separated the cathedral precincts from the rest of the city. Near the cathedral, the 11-century baptistery of St John is built on Roman foundations.

In 951 Godescalc, Bishop of le Puy, made the pilgrimage to Santiago de Compostela. He was the first recorded person of note to make the pilgrimage, and his action ensured Le Puy's continuing importance as a starting point on the route to Santiago.

The cathedral has been a Unesco World Heritage Site since 1998, as part of the "Routes of Santiago de Compostela in France".

Chapelle Saint Michel d'Aiguilhe

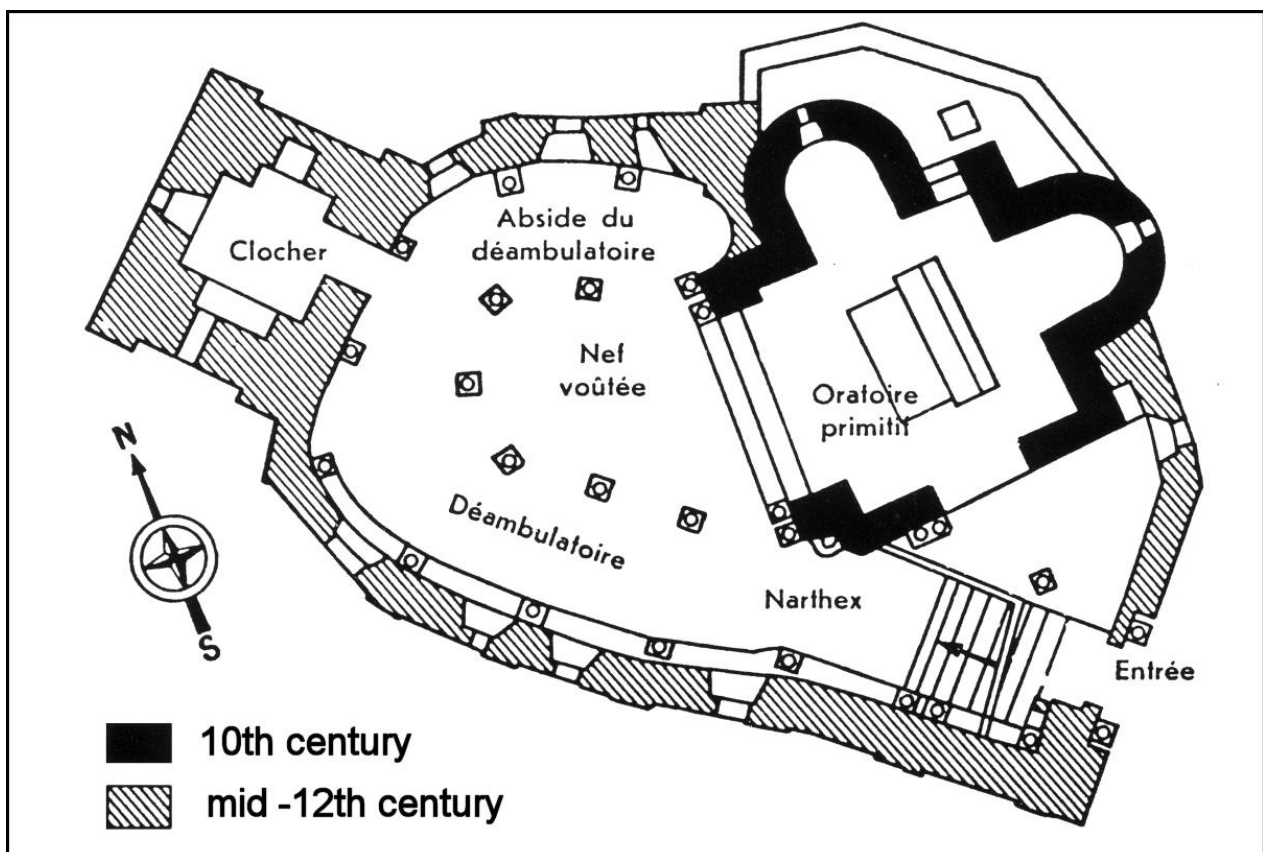
Chapels associated with Saint Michel tend to be in high places, but none are in so impressive a location as the Chapelle St Michel d'Aiguilhe in le Puy.

Situated on a great 80 m high needle of lava, the chapel is reached by a stairway of 268 steps. There was probably originally a temple to Mercury at this site.

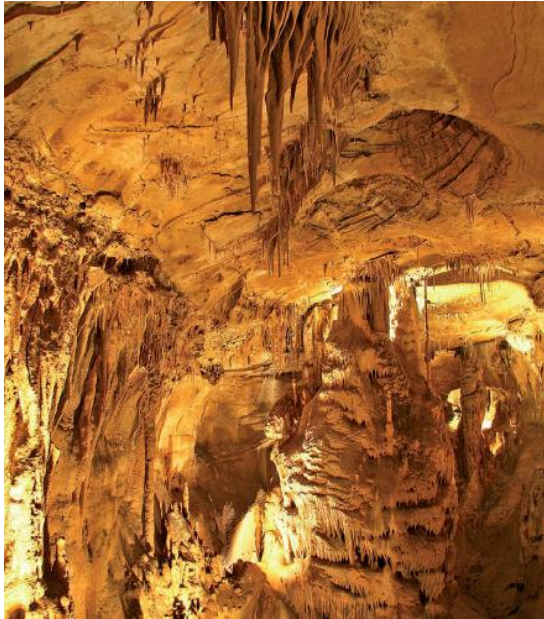
The chapel is mainly of 12th century date, although it incorporates the remains of an earlier 10th century structure, including wall paintings of this period.

The strange shape of the chapel, and the complexity of its vaulting show great determination in utilizing as much as possible of the available space on this site.

As you make your way up the stairs, spare a thought for the builders who had to transport the construction materials to this site!



Grottes de Soyons



The Grottes préhistoriques de Soyons are numerous caves at the southern end of the village. They are located in the cliff of the Serre de Guercy.

Six of those grottes, Grotte de Néron, Les Enfants, Trou du Mouton, Trou Roland, la Madeleine, and Trou du Renard, were excavated in 1870 by Lepic and De Lubac. Nearly 100 years later, in 1965, excavations were carried out by J L Brochier and E. Brochier. Since then a number of excavations have taken place.

During Paleolithic times, the grottes of the Serre de Guercy were home to neanderthals on many occasions. When not occupied by humans, the caves were used by animals, especially carnivores like bears, cave lions, and hyena. Later, in Neolithic times, Cro Magnon people followed the Neanderthals.

There is an Archaeological Museum which displays finds from the excavations, and also presents reconstructions of the sites.

Château de Crussol

The hill of Crussol was occupied in Roman times when a temple was constructed here.

At some point in the 5th century, an apparently fortified building was constructed to the south of the temple site.

An earthwork and timber castle was built during the 10th or 11th century, but was destroyed in a fire.



The earliest parts of the present castle were constructed in the 12th century, when Bastet de Crussol chose this site for his fortress which could control the transportation route along the Rhône. At the end of the 15th century, the Crussols were linked by marriage to the Uzès family and the site was abandoned for the more comfortable Château d'Uzès.

Abbaye de Charlieu

The monastery, dedicated to Saint Fortunatus, was founded in 872. Its patrons were Ratbertus, bishop of Valence, and his brother Edward. The abbey was placed under the direct control of the Holy See.

By 926 the abbey was important enough to be the seat of a synod, at which it was decided that certain alienated church properties were to be returned to the church by their lay proprietors.



The Benedictine community at Charlieu was annexed by the Cluniac movement in 932. It was one of Cluny's earliest acquisitions and always among the first mentioned in any list of Cluniac houses.

In the eleventh century the abbot was reduced to a prior. The church was rebuilt on a somewhat expanded plan under the rule of Odilo, abbot of Cluny, in the first half of the eleventh century, in a campaign that lasted fifty years, continuing under

Odilo's successor Hugh: the abbey church was consecrated in 1094. A narthex was added in the twelfth century.

On 9 September 1792 a Revolutionary mob broke into the abbey's muniments room and made a bonfire of all its records. In 1795 the abbey church was sold for the value of its building materials, in two lots, of which one, comprising the narthex and westernmost bay, still stand today as a ruin; the eastern end was razed.