



## BURGUNDY; AN INSPIRED LAND

*A land of passage and influences, Burgundy was the cradle of two of the most influential monastic movements in Europe. Cluny and later Cîteaux were, from the 10th to the 12th Centuries, spiritual, intellectual, artistic and even political centres of the very highest orders in Europe. From Cluny to Fontenay, from Vézelay to La Charité-sur-Loire, majestic buildings illustrate this blossoming.*

### FONTENAY; A JEWEL OF ROMANESQUE CISTERCIAN ART

*A veritable jewel of Burgundian Romanesque art, Fontenay Abbey owes its exceptional condition to its remoteness within a verdant hidden valley, but also to the establishment of a paper mill that saved it from destruction in the aftermath of the French Revolution. A superb site for visits and recharging the batteries, and listed as World Heritage by UNESCO, the abbey is celebrating its 900th anniversary in 2018: Happy Birthday!*

Situated in the north of Burgundy, Fontenay Abbey was founded in 1118 by Saint Bernard of Clairvaux. This is the oldest preserved Cistercian abbey in the world. Under the auspices of Clairvaux, Fontenay experienced great prosperity during the 16th Century. The intrusion of Royal power and the Wars of Religion brought about its decline. Sold after the Revolution as a national property, the abbey went on to become a paper factory. Today, the descendants of the Montgolfier family offer a faithful retelling of the life of Cistercian monks in the 12th Century. Listed as World Heritage since 1979, this is the only UNESCO site that is family-owned.

**My highlight: this summer, the concerts on 19th July and 11th August in the heart of the abbey.**  
[www.abbayedefontenay.com](http://www.abbayedefontenay.com)

### VÉZELAY; THE ETERNAL HILL OF PILGRIMS

*A hotbed of Christianity on the doorstep of the Morvan, Vézelay, labelled among the « Most beautiful villages in France », is a charming hilltop village. The climb to the basilica is almost a rite of passage. Throughout the centuries, artists and writers have found inspiration here. Spiritual, literary or poetic, the spirit of Romanesque art blows in the wind...*

In the 12<sup>th</sup> Century, St Bernard of Clairvaux preached the Second Crusade at Vézelay. Home to the relics of Saint Madeleine, the village became a **major spiritual staging post along the Way of St James**. At its height, Vézelay boasted nearly 10,000 inhabitants and pilgrims, drawn from all over Europe. The high-ceilinged cellars sheltered those that the houses could not accommodate. Its decline arrived suddenly. Ruined by the Hundred Years War, the town was further weakened by the Wars of Religion. After having served as a stone quarry following the Revolution, the basilica was quite rightly saved by Prosper Mérimée and Viollet Le Duc. An inspiring hill that has been painted by many French artists, don't miss the Zervos Museum that is home to works by Calder, Miro, Giacometti and Max Ernst.

### PRESS CONTACT

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*Don't miss: the summer solstice when, on 21st June, the sun floods into the nave of the basilica and reveals 9 light wells! Unique!*

[www.vezelaytourisme.com](http://www.vezelaytourisme.com)

### **CLUNY; THE SPIRITUAL HEART OF MEDIEVAL EUROPE**

*2010 marked the 1100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the foundation of Cluny Abbey... In the Middle Ages, the Benedictine abbey of Cluny's power and influence spread right across Europe.*

It was William of Aquitaine who established the abbey in 910. It was put under the direct protection of Rome and, by the end of the 11<sup>th</sup> Century, it was **one of the most important capitals in Christian Europe**. It stood at the head of a network of nearly 1,400 dependencies and around 10,000 monks across the continent. For five centuries, right up until the construction of St Peter's in Rome, **the abbey church of Cluny was the largest religious building in Europe** (177m long). Cluny has provided Christianity with a number of Popes. Sold as a national property in 1798, the abbey was dismantled and the church was practically destroyed. A 3D film begins the visit to the abbey and presents the abbey church recreated as it was at the height of its splendour. Don't miss: the augmented reality screens in the abbey and the town.

*My highlight: visit the town with an iPad from the tourist office and discover the Romanesque houses of the monastic burg. On Saturdays during the summer, finish off with a Ronde de Nuit night-time procession.*

[www.cluny-tourisme.com](http://www.cluny-tourisme.com)

### **THE PRIORY IN THE TOWN: LA CHARITÉ-SUR-LOIRE**

*A city of books by the water's edge, La Charité-sur-Loire is home to one of the most beautiful ensembles of Romanesque art in Burgundy. Its priory church, listed as World Heritage by UNESCO in the context of the Ways of St James, has been perfectly restored.*

From the 11<sup>th</sup> Century, pilgrims and the poor would ask for charity from the abbey's monks, providing the name for this important fortified crossing point along the River Loire. The long stone bridge – the oldest on the river – became a symbol for all travellers. The **"Eldest Daughter of Cluny"**, the powerful Benedictine abbey of La Charité-sur-Loire boasted around fifty affiliates across Europe. In 1429, Joan of Arc laid siege to La Charité before finally relenting.

*Don't miss: In May, the Festival du Mot literary festival takes over the town. It is a wonderful opportunity to discover the heritage of a town that is an open-air museum in itself.*

[www.lacharitesurloire-tourisme.com](http://www.lacharitesurloire-tourisme.com)

**Further infos on:**

[www.burgundy-tourism.com](http://www.burgundy-tourism.com) and <https://patrimoine.bourgognefranche-comte.com/>

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