

Religious Buildings

Saint Etienne's cathedral:

Its history:

The present monument has a very complex history. Some 12th Century Roman parts remain (crypt, turn of the northern arm), but it was mainly rebuilt in Gothic style. The apse, the transept and three parts of the nave were completed in 1261. Work then went on very slowly. The chapels and the déambulatoire were added between 1280 and 1310. The nave was completed in the late 15th century and early 16th century. Between 1628 and 1634, the west frontage (baroque style) and the two close spans were added. However, the first design of the nave was preserved through the centuries. The 1668 fire was the cause of large work (vault of the apse, nave woodframe). Important repairs were carried out in the 19th century.



Inside the cathedral :

One will admire the openwork nave. The stone walls were replaced by immense glass roofs : there the Gothic architects carried out one of their most beautiful works.

The Châlons-in-Champagne cathedral preserved a remarkable ornament of stained-glass windows. The famous Roman stained glasses (17th century) are in the Trésor. In the apse and the northern part of the transept (green and pink) beautiful 18th century glass roofs are preserved.

You can also admire an interesting series of stained-glass windows of the late 15th century. Others in the transept date from the 20th century.

Many engraved 13th century to 17th century tombstones are embedded in the floor or along the walls. The drawings are refined.

The most interesting painting dates from the 15th century. It represents the dedication of the Cathedral by Pope Eugene III, in October 26, 1147.

Outside the cathedral :

The cathedral has the shape of a Latin cross and its axis is straight. It includes a nave with nine rows with sides and transept, a chorus with five sides preceded by a right row, with a déambulatoire, on which the three chapels open. Two square vaults in the transept and two other rectangular ones can be seen by the chapels. The northern gate juts out of the building, while the Western gate does not. The northern façade is remarkable with its glass parts (windows, triforium) . There are no blank walls and the light penetrates completely.

Notre-Dame-en-Vaux church



Its history:

Notre Dame en Vaux was a collegiate church that means it sheltered a community of canons: those people met regularly to pray, but did not live with the other canons contrary to monks. They had a cloister however (see the museum, rue Nicolas Durand where more than 50 statue-columns are preserved). The church also sheltered the most important parish of the city. In the 12th century, it was a place of pilgrimage

The present church was started before 1157, to replace a former building, which had collapsed. Its rebuilding was completed in 1217. Started in intermediate styles, it was finished in Gothic style . The later changes are very few (arrows, porches, window). It was restored in the 19th century, thanks to its local priest, Champenois, who called on Lassus, a famous architect.

Notre Dame en Vaux is part of the UNESCO World Heritage.

Inside the church:

The Gothic nave, contains two galleries, broad platforms, a triforium by the high windows (like in the cathedrals of Laon and Paris).

On the Western frontage, the organ, lets the visitor admire the rose window with its 19th century stained glass.

The oldest parts of the church are the lattice work of the low arched windows and the rose windows .The three high windows and vaults (sexpartite) are Gothic; the stained glass windows as well as the apse date from the 19th century.

On the southern part are two remarkable capitals (columns). Two tombstones: Jacques', priest of Vavray-le-Petit, who died in 1295 and that of Michel Jolly, priest of the abbey de Toussaint, who died in 1464.

In the déambulatoire, when you enter each of the three vaults, two light and elegant columns divide the vaults harmoniously. In the Northern vault six small stained glassmedallions of the late 12th century have been recently restored. Close to the baptismal font was drawn up the tombstone of Pierre Lanisson, abbot of Saint-Pierreaux-Monts, who died in 1532.

Outside the church :

The Western frontage is framed by two symmetrical towers with lead-covered spires;in-between is the rose window. Southern part: the porch shelters a late12th century gate, damaged during the French Revolution. The beautiful columns are well preserved. On the tympanum, you can see the Christ



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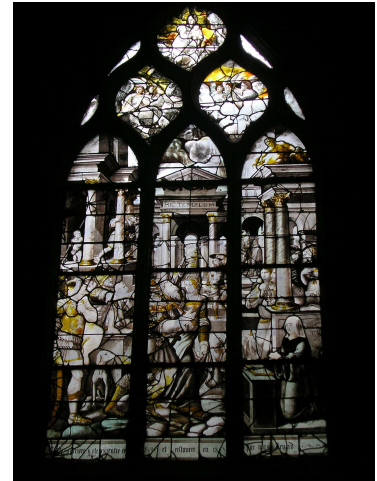
between the symbols of the four evangelists. The characters carved on the statue-columns cannot be identified any more. Southern lattice work : the sculptures around the windows and of the rose windows are remarkable as well as the small sundial, below.

Chevet : Rue Grande Etape, one can see the whole of the building with the different successive styles . One can also notice that the church is as long as high. From Place Notre-Dame: vine stocks, bunches and gimlets are carved on the walls and the small 15th century gate.

Saint-Alpin church

Its history

The church is known as Saint-Alpin -bishop in Châlons in the early 5th century. It already existed in the 9th century and was rebuilt around 1170 in a Gothic style (still marked by the Roman style). From that period, remains the nave -6 rows whose arcades alternate with opposed piles - and aisles. Around 1230, the building was renovated by arching the nave and the aisles. Later, the transept and its northern row were altered. In the early 16th century a new polygonal choir was built, surrounded of a déambulatoire -without chapels-, but with large windows. Some rich people had them decorated with splendid coloured glass roofs. On the southern side a series of vaults was added to preserve some remarkable grisaille glass roofs.



Inside the church

The glass roofs of the déambulatoire, were put in between 1515 and 1522 . Some small bright coloured details, can be seen with decorative inscriptions.

The glass roofs representing the Passion, the Last Judgement and the Life of the Virgin date from 1521 and 1522. The grisaille glass roofs of the southern row of the transept and the southern side date from 1535 and 1550. Note the yellow and red colours that are used. Some coloured glasses are noticeable: those representing Saint, Jean-Baptist , the Resurrection and Saint-Alpin facing Attila.

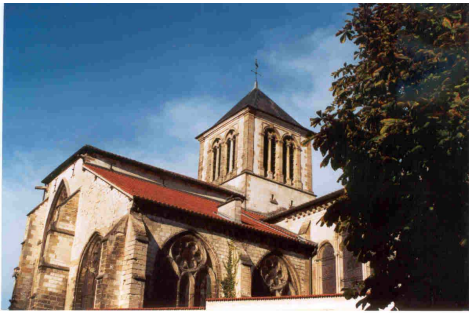
In the northern aisle two small early 13th century medallions were offered to the church in the 19th century. In the nave, on the floor a very beautiful 14th century tombstone representing two young women can be seen (simple and expressive graphics).

Sculptures: God of Pity (early 16th century) in a vault of the northern side and small 1529 ex-voto in the déambulatoire.

Outside the church

The frontage includes a contemporary central part with two Renaissance side gates (1539). The tower is contemporary with the déambulatoire (squat, square , with richly decorated buttresses).

"Saint-Jean" church



Its history

Dedicated to Saint Jean-Baptist, the nave of the church was built around 1100, and makes it the oldest religious building of Châlons. The choir and the vaults of the transept were built in the early 13th century. The transept was constantly altered until the early 15th century.

The bays of the northern transept are of High Gothic style, while those of the southern transept are of Flamboyant style.

The presbytery was altered in the early 17th century, the right-hand side arcade dates from 1603. The sides were rebuilt in 1671 with different materials a part of which comes from the 1666 demolition of the church. jubé

Inside the church

The Roman architecture of the nave, with its two similar sides can impress any visitor entering the church. This one was covered with a wooden barrel vault. Admire its chalk walls with very high windows, semicircular arched arcades, with simple columns.

On the first left, pillar is a small Renaissance niche On the right, one can admire a painting representing the Assumption of the Virgin (17th century). On both sides, the two 17th century statues, out of polychrome wood represent two saints and bishops from Châlons: Saint Lumier and Saint Elaphe.

The stained glass windows were completed in the 19th century. The side ones, neo-Byzantine style, were made in the Rheims Vermonet-Pommery workshop. Those in the choir and the transept were carried out in the 13th and 14th century styles by glass artist Marquant of Rheims.

Outside the church

The bell-tower was elevated in 1551. Close to the frontage, the chapel of the crossbowmen was built around 1500. It is decorated with a 1778 sundial and bas-reliefs representing the martyrdom of Saint-Sébastien, crossbowmen Patron Saint.

The church garden is open to the public.

"Saint-Loup" church

Its history

Saint Loup parish was created between 1246 and 1250, following the division of Notre-Dame, parish covering the 13th century city.

Dedicated to Saint Loup, 5th century bishop of Troyes, the present church replaced a first building probably built out of light materials (wood and cob). 75 years were necessary to complete the transept. The choir and the transept form one of the rare sets of 14th century architecture.



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75 years were necessary to connect the transept and the tower to a nave begun towards 1450 . The construction entirely depended on the people's money. Some pillars date from 1459 and 1461 ;one can read the names of those who financed the construction : the Brotherhood of the Coopers and of the Vine growers.

The first frontage, of traditional style (1662) can be seen in the Vendel passage near the Town hall. The actual 1886 frontage was built by Abbot Chapiteau, who restored the whole building.

On that occasion, a medieval style arrow was added in 1903.

Inside the church

Saint Loup is a characteristic example of the architecture of an urban 14th century parish church.. The choir and the transept are slender and the light enters through large windows In the early 14th century, the apse was high and the transept was completed in the middle 14th century. The choir and the transept. form one of the rare sets of 14th century architecture.

About 1530, the nave was elevated, so that the vault of the transept crossing is not horizontal.

Outside the church

On both sides of the central gate, the gilded cast iron statues, melted by Maurice Denonvillers, represent Jean d' Arc and Saint Loup.

Saint Loup is not opened to the public any more.



"Notre-Dame de l'Épine"

Its history

About 1200, there was already a simple vault and Marian. In 1400, a shepherd would have discovered a miraculous statue of the Virgin in a thorn (épine) bush and the present church would have been built to shelter the statue.

However, l'Épine was already a shrine in the 13th century. Whatever the truth, the monument is there and it was started in the early 15th century. Charles VII helped with its construction, which continued until the early 16th century.

After that period l'Épine was "forgotten" in the 17th century, sacked during the French Revolution and invaded in 1814. The church is still being restored.

Inside the basilica

The Basilica was built with two materials: white stone from the "Savonnières en Perthois" (Meuse) and the Champagne chalk, which one finds locally.

The Gothic style Basilica has three levels, large arcades, a blind triforium and high windows. By the choir, one can admire a 15th century jubé. Under the right-hand side vault, the statue of the Virgin the pilgrims come to honour. Above, on a beam, is Jesus Christ, Marie (in blue), Saint Jean (in red and brown). This was restored in February 1980.

In the northern transept, the platform and the organ date from the 16th century. On the balustrade, ahead, one sees two pagan gods giving the names of the days of the week. This was rebuilt by Jacques Petit Falaize (Librecy 08) in 1982. On the righthand side of the organ, one finds pieces of 16th century stained glass windows representing angels playing music. All the others were created in the 19th and 20th centuries.

Turn right and enter the choir. The southern part is of Gothic style while the northern one is of Renaissance style.

Walk along the déambulatoire starting on the right, you can see successively :

- the stone wall of the sacristy,
- the tomb vault or Chapel,
- the Ave Maria vault
- the Saint Nicolas's Day vault,
- the vault of St Jeanne d' Arc -
- the Saint-Jacob vault.
- The Gate vault Reliquary inside of which is a seat : a trunk is located on the choir wall.

Outside the basilica

The west front is amazing. Unfortunately, the sculptures disappeared partly or were devastated. There are three gates, one level , with a rose, two towers and spires. On the first level there are some blind windows. The second level is divided by a mullion. The spires are out of stone and the highest, 55 meters high , is the oldest. The northern spire was destroyed in 1798 to install, a Chappe optical telegraph. In 1868 the spire was restored. On it is an imperial crown (Second Empire) and some "fleurs de lys" symbolizing the purity of the Virgin rather than the royalty .On the side walls one can see flying buttress. They are crowned with pinnacles and, underneath some gargoyles used to get rid of rainwater.

With its two turrets, the Southern gate is an imposing construction. The much less important northern gate comprises only one turret: five apsidal chapels frame the chevet.

Two characteristics are to be noticed in Notre-Dame de-l'Epine.

First the roofs: they are very slightly slanted, like those of the formerly Champagne houses covered with Roman tiles. The balustrades make them practically invisible, so that, the church seems roofless. It is unusual in our region.

Second the large number of true or fake, singular, sometimes satirical gargoyles.

