

## On the trail of Saint Jacques

### FROM THE RUE SAINT-DENIS TO THE RUE DE VAUGIRARD

The Apostle Saint Jacques, brother of Saint Jean l'Évangéliste, was part of the inner circle of Christ. The first of the Apostles to be tortured, he was decapitated in Jerusalem in 44 AD. He is sometimes known as Saint Jacques le Majeur to differentiate him from Saint Jacques (known as the Mineur), Jesus' first cousin. His apostolic activity after the Ascension is not known, which probably contributed to the legend that he evangelised Spain, which wanted to link the history of its Church to that of a disciple of Christ. In truth, he never preached in Spain and his grave cannot be found in Galicia.

This legend originated as part of the Crusade against the Moors (Reconquista), who had controlled the majority of the country since the beginning of the 8th century. In the same spirit, the monks of Cluny preferred a pilgrimage to Santiago de Compostela for financing the Christian reconquest of Spanish land.

In Paris, a number of buildings (churches, chapels, hospitals) dedicated to the Apostle have been built since the 11th century. His worship was encouraged by the fact that the road to Santiago de Compostela for pilgrims from Northern and Eastern Europe passed through there. In the Middle Ages, this Saint's popularity was such that his feast day (25 July) was celebrated in the capital. Few of these buildings can still be seen today. Those which remain include the parish churches of Saint-Jacques-du-Haut-Pas and Saint-Jacques-Saint-Christophe-de-la-Villette, built in the 17th and 19th centuries respectively, when the worship of Saint James was already decreasing in popularity.

#### 1 (1st) Corner of Rue Saint-Denis and Rue Etienne Marcel Saint-Jacques-aux-Pèlerins Hospital

Here finally was a place pilgrims crossing through Paris could find comfort. The poor and the sick also found help and shelter here. Inside the church, it was possible to worship relics of the Saint which had been preserved there.

Between 1319 and 1324, the Brotherhood of Saint Jacques, formed in 1315 by former pilgrims, had a building constructed on the corner of the Rue Saint Denis, which was extended to the whole block by the end of the century. The brotherhood was dissolved in 1672 and the hospital destroyed in 1823. Ancient engravings showed three parallel naves, one of which was topped by a campanile. The gate to the Rue Saint Denis provided a side entrance to the church. The cloisters and the cemetery extended to the west, in the middle of the lodgings and the houses of the canons. Of the decor, all that remains today are five works kept at the Museum of the Middle Ages (Cluny Mansion), including the magnificent Saint Jacques, which is probably the work of Robert de Lannoy.

#### 2 (1st) Rue du Jour Saint-Eustache Church

Saint-Eustache Church previously included a chapel dedicated to Saint Jacques, located to the left of the building level with the fifth row of benches. Since 1803, this chapel has been dedicated to Saint Eustache, proof of the decline in the worship of the Apostle after the 17th century, firstly among the aristocracy and then at all levels of the population.

The windows in the high chancel were installed in 1631, almost a century after the first stone in the church was laid. The series of paintings by Antoine Soulignac brings together the Four Fathers of the Church and the Apostles around the main window which portrays the risen Christ and Saint Eustache. To the right of the chancel, in a single lancet window, Saint Jacques le Majeur takes visitors by surprise. In fact, since the Middle Ages there have been three different representations of Saint Jacques: Jacques the Apostle, Jacques the pilgrim and Jacques the knight. Here it seems that Soulignac combined the image of the pilgrim (staff, counterpane over the shoulders) with that of the Apostle (Book of the New Law).

(1st) 2, Place du Louvre

#### 3 Saint-Germain-l'Auxerrois Church

This keystone, at the base of the organ, probably dates from the reconstruction of the church nave in the 15th century. The figure of Saint Jacques the pilgrim bears witness to the right of patronage of the collegiate church over the Brotherhood of Saint Jacques which, in 1317, built a hospice (Saint Jacques aux Pèlerins) on

the corner of Rue Saint Denis and Rue Etienne Marcel (formerly Rue Mauconseil). On this keystone, Saint Jacques presents the different attributes characteristic of the pilgrim to Santiago de Compostela : the pilgrim's staff or walking cane, the wide-brimmed hat and of course the scallop shell which pilgrims returning from Compostela wore on their chest or on their beggars' pouch.

**4** (4th) Square Saint Jacques

### **Saint-Jacques Tower (remains of Saint-Jacques de-la-Boucherie church)**

The Abbots of Cluny, who had owned the church since 1119, and the Valois had given it a generous grant: the Head of Saint Denis and several relics of Saint Jacques were worshipped there. The two powers encouraged the pilgrimage, the Abbots for the revenue it brought in and the Valois to distance the rowdy nobility. The Brotherhood of Butchers had a large statue of Saint Jacques (3.5m) installed at the top of the tower it had built. In 1854, this statue was replaced by a free copy by Louis Chenillon. The Apostle, designed in a very plain style, appears as a pilgrim. He is wearing a hat with a cockle shell and, dressed in a great-coat and leaning on his staff, is holding a book with a rich clasp symbolising his evangelisation mission. He is leaning on a flamboyant 5m high pinnacle. The pilgrims carried out their devotions in this centre dedicated to worshipping the Saint.

**5** (4th) Place Saint Gervais

### **Saint-Gervais-Saint-Protais Church**

On the internal register of one of the windows of the high nave is a two-level equestrian representation of Saint Jacques fighting the Moors at the Battle of Clavijo in 844 (third stained glass window to the right on entering). The scene shows the legendary apparition of Saint James the Moor-slayer charging victorious at the head of King Ramiro I's troops against the army of Abd-al-Rahman. This iconography of Saint Jacques routing the Infidels was spread widely in Spain during the Reconquest and seems to have been extensively used in Parisian decor. The panels created at the beginning of the 17th century probably come from a different church in the capital, as the bay where they are currently found was created during an indisputably recent redesign (only the meeting between Abraham and Melchisedech in the centre of the stained glass window and the tympan at the top are in their original places).

**6** (4th) In front of Notre Dame

### **Notre-Dame de Paris Cathedral**

Before setting out, it was customary for pilgrims to ask Notre Dame for the protection of Saint Christophe, the patron saint of travellers. Previously, to the right on entering the church, there was a huge statue of Saint Christophe holding the infant Jesus. Antoine des Essarts, a councillor and chamberlain of Charles VI, was represented in "this great image and remembrance of Saint Christophe in the year 1413". The statue, which is 28 feet (9m) high, was destroyed in 1785. Among the Apostles, to the right of the main gate, can be seen Saint Jacques le Majeur (with his beggar's pouch marked with a scallop shell) whose traits are reminiscent of Eugène Viollet-le-Duc: this admirer of the Middle Ages was also represented as a pilgrim on the gate of the Pierrefonds Castle chapel in L'Oise.



(5th) 1, Rue des Prêtre Saint Séverin

### **Saint-Séverin Church**

Adjoining the Rue Saint Jacques, Saint Séverin Church, in its current form, dates back to the very end of the Middle Ages. In the 19th century, it received a set of old stained glass windows which were then considerably reworked at the request of the architect Victor Baltard so they would fit the size of the windows. Under a dais, one of the bays in the north wall (the third from the entrance) shows a figure at the foot of Saint Jacques, in an arrangement frequently-found from the 15th century onwards. The Apostle, standing on a pedestal in front of a blue damask sheet, is holding a Book of the New Law in his hand and is leaning on a sword, the symbol of his martyrdom. His feet are bare in accordance with tradition and his finely drawn face shows great insightfulness. The stained glass window comes in part from the chapel of Beauvais College. It was removed at the time of the Revolution and placed for a time in Saint-Germain-des-Prés Church.

8 (5th) 6, Place Paul Painlevé

### Mansion of the Abbots of Cluny - National Museum of the Middle Ages

From 1334, the Abbots of Cluny owned a house next to the Gallo-Roman thermal baths. These baths were destroyed in 1470 to make way for the current town house which became a model for the architecture of Parisian town houses. It was very probably begun by John III of Bourbon, Abbot of Cluny from 1456 to 1485, and continued by Jacques of Ambroise, who had sculptures of his coat of arms and his motto made on the façade of the courtyard. The scallop shells and the staff evoke both the pilgrimage linked to the Patron Saint of the Abbey and the fact that the Abbey of Cluny in Burgundy played an active role in increasing the popularity of pilgrimages to Compostela in the 12th century.

9 (5th) 158 Rue Saint Jacques

### Saint-Jacques-aux-Prêcheurs Monastery

The old Roman via superior crossed the ramparts here before heading off towards the south. Jean de Barastre, firstly a doctor and then a chamberlain of Philip Augustus, established a free inn for pilgrims here in around 1209. The hospice had a chapel and an adjoining house. Jean de Barastre, a supporter of the cause of Saint Dominique, welcomed him there in 1219 to set up his order. Thanks to the support of Louis IX, this order of friars, who took the name of Jacobins, grew very rapidly: the monastery on the Rue Saint Jacques became one of the most famous colleges in Paris, Saint Thomas school. The remarkable church contained two vast, 80-metre long naves. The Jacobean convent, which extended beyond the Rue Victor Cousin, Rue Cujas and Rue Mallebranche, disappeared in 1790. The buildings survived until 1849 and the gate on Rue Saint Jacques was demolished in 1866.

10 (5th) 252 bis, Rue Saint Jacques

### Saint-Jacques-du-Haut-Pas Church

Saint-Jacques-du-Haut-Pas Church, begun in 1584, took the name of the former hospital and chapel which, nearby, welcomed pilgrims on route to Santiago de Compostela in the Middle Ages. Today it houses several works representing the figure of Saint Jacques. These include a stone statue from the Medieval era showing Christ's disciple wearing the wide-rimmed pilgrim's hat decorated with scallop shells and holding the Book of the New Law (first chapel after the vestry). Some thirty years ago, the church received as a private gift a wooden bas-relief (ambulatory) showing the preacher Saint adoring the Virgin who, according to tradition, appears to him seated at the top of a column, surrounded by a choir of angels. Two prostrate pilgrims, reduced in size to highlight the difference between the human world and the divine world, complete the composition on the right.

11 (6th) 70, Rue de Vaugirard

### Saint-Joseph-des-Carmes Church

The second chapel on the left in the nave is dedicated to Saint Jacques, due to the first name of its founder, Jacques d'Etampes, Lord of Valençay, who bought the land in November 1635, just after the death of his wife. Its vault is decorated with four scenes from the life of the Saint, showing Christ calling Jacques and André, the representation of his decapitation, the battle of Clavijo where the Saint routed the Moors at the head of the squadrons of Leon and Castile and a group of lepers and the infirm making the pilgrimage to the tomb of the Apostle. These paintings, which surround a representation of the transfiguration of Christ, are the work of Abraham van Diepenbeek, while the altar painting dedicated to Saint Jacques the pilgrim is the work of Pieter van Mol, whose Antwerp culture and Rubensian style became famous in Paris as soon as he arrived in the capital around 1630.

For five centuries, **Saint Jacques Tower** has been a prominent feature of the landscape of the Right Bank of the Seine. Before being a "tower" on its own, it was the church tower of Saint-Jacques-de-la-Boucherie church, which was sold as a national asset during the Revolution and then taken apart as quarry stone. In 1836, the City of Paris acquired the existing church tower, which stood alone and abandoned, and in the 19th century became Saint-Jacques "Tower", an adornment for one of the first public gardens in Paris.

Over the centuries, the Tower, in particular the delicate sculptured decor and the statues, were weakened by several human interventions, the stresses of the climate and pollution. Four interventions occurred over 150 years, but did not manage to stop the stone falling. It became dangerous for visitors to the square, so scaffolding was erected at the end of 2000, partly to protect passers-by and also to allow in depth technical and scientific studies to be carried out to complete a full analysis of its condition. The restoration project to renovate the Tower whilst conserving its 16th and 19th century elements was validated by the Higher Commission of Historic Monuments in 2004. The works, which lasted more than three years, were carried out in cooperation with the services of the Ministry of Culture and were completed at the end of 2009. The project was managed by the Department of Cultural Affairs of the City of Paris

