

“Seeking the origins of Chartres” – a journey among friends

with Dr John James OAM and Jethro Lyne*

*Dr John James is a world authority on medieval architecture; Jethro Lyne is an art historian employed by the Art Gallery of New South Wales, and previously at the National Art School in Sydney. This trip is run under the aegis of West Grinstead Publishing. See <http://www.westgrinstead.com.au/about-author-john-james.html>



For ten days in June 2009 we will be taking an informal “journey among friends” to key medieval sites in France, seeking the origins of the sculptors of Chartres.

Starting from the greatest church of the north, Chartres Cathedral, we will head south to the extravagant porches at Bourges, then further south through Burgundy to the Dordogne Valley and the Massif Central taking in Beaulieu, Souillac and then Moissac, before driving west from the Midi to Arles and beyond. Along the way, we will visit various smaller but significant churches. These carry some of the finest ensembles of high medieval sculpture in all of Christendom. In each place we will admire and discuss the style and subjects of the great portals and carved capitals, and their place within the architecture of the sacred space. We will be a band of jolly detectives seeking out where the great sculptors of Chartres came from, and how they travelled and getting as much fun out of these ten days as we can. .

We have located the most reasonably priced yet pleasant hotels in each town, often in picturesque settings. We will be travelling in a 9-seater minibus and a 5-seater car, which will be driven by John and Jethro, and two volunteers.

This is definitely *not* a standard type of packaged tour. The great beauty of this tour is that it is, within the limits of time and hotel bookings, extremely flexible and relaxed. If any of you have a favourite picnic spot or church or river along the way we can stop and enjoy ourselves just as we wish.

COSTS

The trip will cost **1,900 Euros**. This does **not include fares or personal insurance**, but it does include hotels, vehicle hire, fuel and road tolls and our participation as organisers and guides. It is quoted in Euros as this is the safest for us and may at the time be in your best interests.

This is a ‘tour among friends’, and to keep costs down each of us will pay for our own meals, museum entry etc. This way we can each live within our personal budgets. You will need to arrange your own **fares and insurance**.

We are sorry to tell you there will be limited room for luggage, so please pack sparingly if not monastically! Each person may bring one suitcase that is no larger on its longest side than 60cm. Go, measure what you have got, and buy another suitcase if you have to. In addition you may carry a small bag which can sit at your feet in the bus or car. Remember, it is summer!

ACCOMMODATION

In your email confirmation, please let us know whether you are a couple preferring a double bed or a twin share. If you are a single traveller, would you be prepared to twin share. If not there may be additional costs for a single room OR (and this is important) recognise that in some of the small towns it may not be possible to obtain a single room, and in such instances rooms will have to be shared.

DEPOSIT – *FIRST IN GET THE PLACES!*

The numbers are limited to 9 people, plus John and Hilary James and Jethro. To assure your place you must email John James at gothic@johnjames.com.au right away and send a deposit of **\$au.1,000 or 500 Euros per person**, refundable only if there is another to take your place. So far, passionate interest has been shown by more than we can accommodate. So be quick. Your deposit is essential so we may finalise our vehicle and hotel bookings and pay for them.

Payment may be made by cheque or by internet bank transfer to John James, Westpac Bank, branch 032828, account 154356. Please include your name in the transfer notes.

ITINERARY for June 2009

- Sun 7 Meet in Chartres for lunch, tour of the cathedral, stay at Séminaire
- Mon 8 Chartres, discussion in front of the Royal Portal, see town, stay at Séminaire
- Tues 9 Pick up vehicles, travel to Étampes for the portal, lunch
Saint-Germigny-des-Prés, Saint-Benoît-sur-Loire
Gregorian chanting in basilica, stay at La Labrador opposite the basilica
- Wed 10 Bourges sculptural portals, La Charité-sur-Loire portal and Donzy-le-Pré, and then on to stay with old friends at their B&B at Lucenay l'Evêque for two nights
- Thurs 11 Nevers and Souvigny, and return to Lucenay. Autun and other great Burgundian churches a possibility as we have two vehicles.
- Fri 12 Lovely drive through the mountains to Beaulieu-sur-Dordogne in a magical setting. Dream of a beautiful picnic spot on the way!
- Sat 13 Beaulieu church, sculpture and for those who want to, on to Souillac. Second night at Beaulieu. This is on the Dordogne river!
- Sun 14 Moissac cloister and portal, and stay at nearby medieval village
- Mon 15 Carcassonne (Montségur a possibility) and stay the night nearby
- Tues 16 St-Gilles-du-Gard façade and visit to Avignon, night in the country
- Wed 17 Le Thoronet, Cistercian abbey, return vehicles to Toulon railway.

Most of these sites contain sculpture that could have been carved by the men who ended up at Chartres. One excitement in this trip will be to photograph and draw the details in the sculpture, and then follow up the same details elsewhere.

BONUS

We will guarantee to purchase a second hand copy of John James' rare *Travellers Key to the Sacred Architecture of Medieval France*, as a gift for the first three to reserve a place. This is a classic tour book published by Knopf in 1988. More than that, we will do our best to obtain copies and provide them for no more than \$30 each to anyone else who wants one.

Map of our tour – June 7 to 17, 2009

