



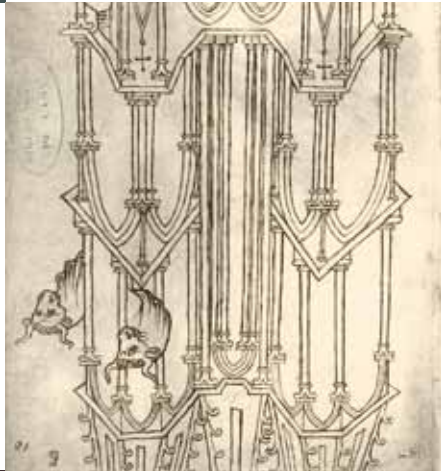
From the Middle Ages the cathedral towers have been admired by all, including the most knowledgeable, such as **Willard de Honnecourt**, a 13th century master mason, who wrote thus: "J'ai esté en mult de tères, si com vus podes trouver en cest livre : en aucun lieu, onques tel ne vis com est celle de Loon." (I have travelled to many places, as you can see from this book, but in no other place have I seen such towers as those in Laon).

The cathedral towers



Verdable forest within a town, the hillside slopes of the Cuve Saint-Vincent are criss-crossed by a network of paths revealing hidden treasures along the way. For a breath of fresh air and unique views of the town, visit the Cuve Saint-Vincent and step into another world in minutes. Go from city dweller to explorer and really appreciate the meaning of the expression «the countryside in the town».

The Cuve Saint-Vincent



The story told by a monk called **Gilbert de Nogent** (12th century) reached the top. This miracle is commemorated in the colossal carved oxen that adorn the towers on the western façade of the cathedral of Notre-Dame.

The Legend of the Cathedral Oxen (12th century)



Travel back in time with a visit to the galleries under the Citadel. From the rocky outcrop formed 40 million years ago up to the mid-20th century, discover fossils, a gallo-roman grain silo, tunnels and other traces that humans have left over the centuries. Come and explore the history of Laon from the inside! Information about guided tours is available at the Tourist Office.

The Underground Galleries

3 original ways to discover Laon

1 / **Audio guides** for the cathedral and the medieval city are on loan from the Tourist Office. (Children's version and foreign languages available).



2 / **The phone app** Tourisme Laon is a free download on Appstore and Playstore.



3 / **The booklet** «Les Visages du Pouvoir», for sale at the Tourist Office.



LAON

The city known by the Gauls as **Lugdunum** first enters the history books with **Saint Rémi, Charlemagne** and **Roland of Roncesvalles**...

With its many shades of grey stone in a green and leafy setting, its narrow streets, fortified gates and many legends, Laon is city of great poignancy, encircled by ramparts that seem to stand guard to its illustrious past.

This "crowned hill" is sure to capture your heart and your imaginationCome and explore its treasures.



Laon < Aisne < Picardie

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LAON



Caption

- Ramparts (7km)
- Funicular
- Walk
- Free parking
- Public toilets
- Picnic area
- Children's playground
- Camping car area
- Panorama
- Tourist office



The Abbey of Saint-Martin

1 The Abbey of Saint Martin

The architecture of this vast 12th century abbey church, second in rank in the Premonstratensian order founded by Saint Norbert in 1120, shows marked Cistercian influences. The brick and stone Abbey lodge includes an elegant wing built for leisure pursuits and called the "Vide Bouteilles" (Bottle emptier). Backing onto the abbey church, the 18th century cloister leads to the chapter room, the refectory and a wonderfully balanced monumental staircase. Today these buildings are used to house the immense collection of books belonging to the city of Laon, including 8th - 15th century mediaeval manuscripts and incunabula.

2 The Soissons Gate

Built in a 13th century military style, this gate is flanked by two broad towers with arrow slits and two vaulted guard rooms. Beside it, the tower of Lady Eve slipped off its foundations in the 12th century and now leans into the ramparts.



The Soissons Gate



100m

3 The Abbey of Saint Vincent

Founded in 589 by Queen Brunehaut, the abbey was destroyed by the Normans in the 9th century. The only remaining part is the abbey lodge built in 1771 where the facade of the church that was destroyed in the French Revolution is depicted in relief on the pediment. Within the fortified abbey walls there survives a stone-lined pond whose waters are always at the same level, a phenomenon which attracted the attention of the naturalist Buffon.



The Fort Morlot

4 The Fort Morlot

Built by Séré de Rivières in the 19th century, it houses the optical telegraph that was used for communications between the forts of Bruyères-et-Montbervault and Mons-en-Laonnois.



The Petit Saint-Vincent

5 The Petit Saint-Vincent (Saint Vincent the Minor)

A sanctuary belonging to the abbey of Saint Vincent, located outside the city walls. It was used to lodge pilgrims and as a place of refuge for clerics during invasions.



The Ardon Gate

7 The Ardon Gate

Formerly called the "Royée Gate", it opened onto carolingian royal palace. Below the gate stands an old spring-fed drinking trough and wash house, a building that would have one been found near all the many city gates.

8 The Town Hall Square

In 1831 the medieval royal palace of King Louis VII and the keep built by Philippe Auguste were demolished to make way for the Town Hall that still stands today, a decision which provoked this reaction from Victor Hugo : "Laon is full of beauty but I have never come across such a crass town council".

9 The Old Town Hall

In the porch built in 1736 you can still see the standard weights and measures that were commonly used in the city at that time.

10 Abbey of Sainte Marie and Saint Jean

Founded in 640, the 17th cloister is now part of the Préfecture buildings.

11 The Dauphin courtyard

This courtyard once belonged to an inn traditionally believed to be the place where Louis XIV was conceived when, in 1618, his father, Louis XIII, and mother, Anne of Austria, spent the night here on their way back from a pilgrimage to Liesse to pray for an heir.



The Chenizelles Gate

6 The Chenizelles Gate

A 12th century gate opening onto the "cuve Saint-Vincent" where vineyards once stood, producing wines such as "Clos Saint-Rémy" and "la Goutte d'Or" both of which were used during the Coronation ceremonies of the kings of France which took place at Reims.



The underground galleries

14 The Citadel

Built on the orders of King Henri IV in the merchant district and used in reprisals against the townsfolk when Laon supported the Sainte Ligue in the wars of religion. The underground galleries can be visited.

15 The Chapel of the Knights Templar

In the old Commandery stands the Templar chapel built in 1140 to the same design as the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem. Near the Chapel, the museum has some fine collections, including a 17th century painting, called "the Concert", by the Le Nain brothers who came from Laon.



The Chapel of the Knights Templar



Noire-Dame Cathedral

12 Notre-Dame Cathedral

This masterpiece of early Gothic architecture was inspired many other cathedrals including thos of Chartres, Reims, Lausanne, Bamberg, Limbourg and Magdeburg. It was built in under thirty years (1150-1180). On its side facing the ramparts, this palace of a Bishop, Duke and Peer of the Realm has ornate turrets and Gothic style openings. In the courtyard the imposing 13th century edifice, built on a gallery, houses the Aula or Great Hall. At the back can be seen the sombre façade of the two storey, 12th century Palatine chapel. Built in 1170 near the cathedral, the Hôtel Dieu hospital is the oldest one of this kind in France.

13 Pourier alleyway

In this narrow street stands the oldest house in Laon, a 12th century dwelling with remarkable round chimneys.



4 hours

2 hours