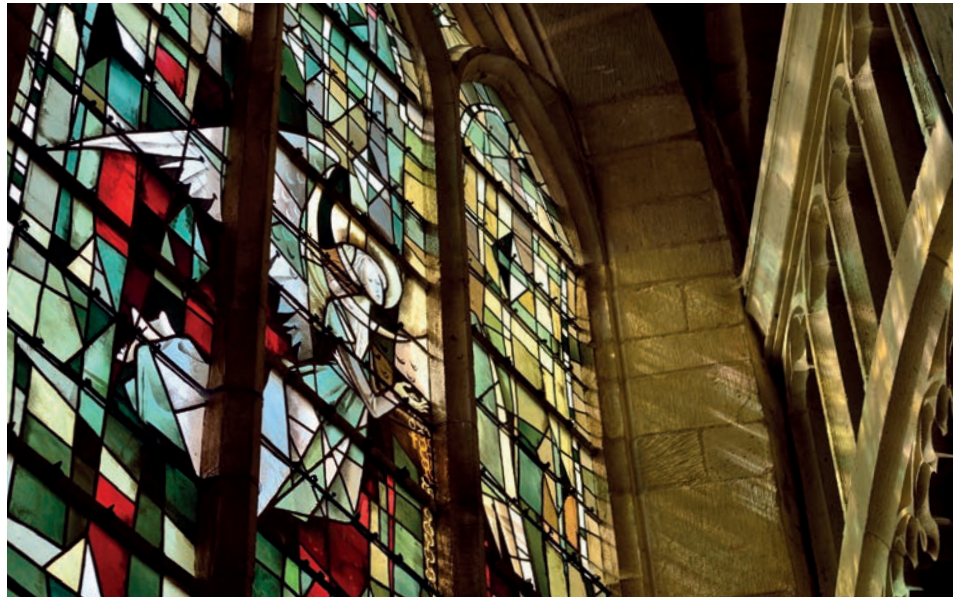

Special event

Grand opening of la Cité du Vitrail Troyes (Northeast France) Saturday, 11 September 2021



Church of Saint-Pierre de Vendevre-sur-Barse (Aube), stained glass windows by Max Ingrand, 1960s © Robert Moleda

On Saturday, 11 September 2021, La Cité du Vitrail will be unveiled in Troyes, in the heart of Aube en Champagne, the European stained glass capital.

Backed by France's Aube Department, La Cité du Vitrail is a vast scientific, cultural, educational and tourism project inviting visitors to discover and experience a rich world of emotion.

Housed within the Hôtel-Dieu-le-Comte, a remarkable 18th century edifice founded by Henri I the Liberal, Count of Champagne, La Cité du Vitrail will span nearly 3,000 square metres and propose permanent and temporary exhibitions, educational workshops, world-class cultural and artistic programmes, and facilities for special events.

The objective of La Cité du Vitrail is to bring stained glass masterpieces from France and other countries – be they antique or contemporary, secular or religious, figurative or abstract, traditional or modern – to a wider public. Research will also be a core component of this international beacon of excellence which will include a resource centre open to students, researchers and historians.

To highlight the region's rich local heritage, La Cité du Vitrail will encourage visitors to explore the open-air museum that is France's Aube Department in search of stained glass works dating from the 12th to the 21st centuries. It will also showcase the buoyant creativity of contemporary stained glass artists from across the region

An awe-inspiring tour of discovery



Pre-project © GSM Project - Cité du Vitrail - Troyes (Aube)

La Cité du Vitrail will provide visitors with the opportunity to explore the extraordinary diversity and historical, technical and aesthetic aspects of stained glass. The permanent exhibition will include numerous antique and contemporary masterpieces, many of which have been restored for the occasion. At the same time, an active acquisition and loan policy means exhibits will evolve regularly.

Spanning four stories, La Cité du Vitrail's permanent exhibition space will feature authentic stained glass works hung at eye level. Meanwhile, a chronological display comprising five sections will give visitors interesting insight into the art's stylistic changes from the Middle Ages to today:

- Medieval stained glass in the Aube and Champagne regions (12th and 13th centuries);
- The 16th century, the golden age of stained glass in the Aube and Champagne regions;
- Secular stained glass;
- The 19th century revival;
- Creation and innovation in the 20th and 21st centuries.



12th century Troyes stained glass before restoration
© Archives départementales de l'Aube

The chef d'œuvre of La Cité du Vitrail's collection is a late-12th century stained glass from Troyes which is in the process of being inspected ahead of its restoration. A bespoke room will be dedicated to the piece which represents the Transfiguration of Jesus. This extremely rare work disappeared at the beginning of the 20th century but was acquired by the Aube Department at an auction in November 2018 following its accidental rediscovery.

The tour culminates with the Hôtel-Dieu-le-Comte chapel which has been entirely redecorated, with work beginning in 1864. Its former glory has been fully revived thanks the recent restoration of its choir stained glass, mural paintings, woodwork and furnishings. The eight bays of this patrimonial treasure will showcase alternating collections of monumental stained glass windows – both rare historic pieces and modern creations – presented in natural light.

Although some may see stained glass as an acquired taste, La Cité du Vitrail has every intention of making this light-harnessing art form appealing to the general public by means of attractions like interactive stations and projected images to form a subdued scenography that exquisitely sets off the glass, light and colours. The priority is to trigger an aesthetic emotion, spark the curiosity of visitors and expand their grasp of this little-known art form.

Maps and a marked itinerary, *La Route du Vitrail*, will encourage visitors to prolong their exploration by touring buildings that house stained glass throughout the Department, which extend La Cité du Vitrail's in-house collection.

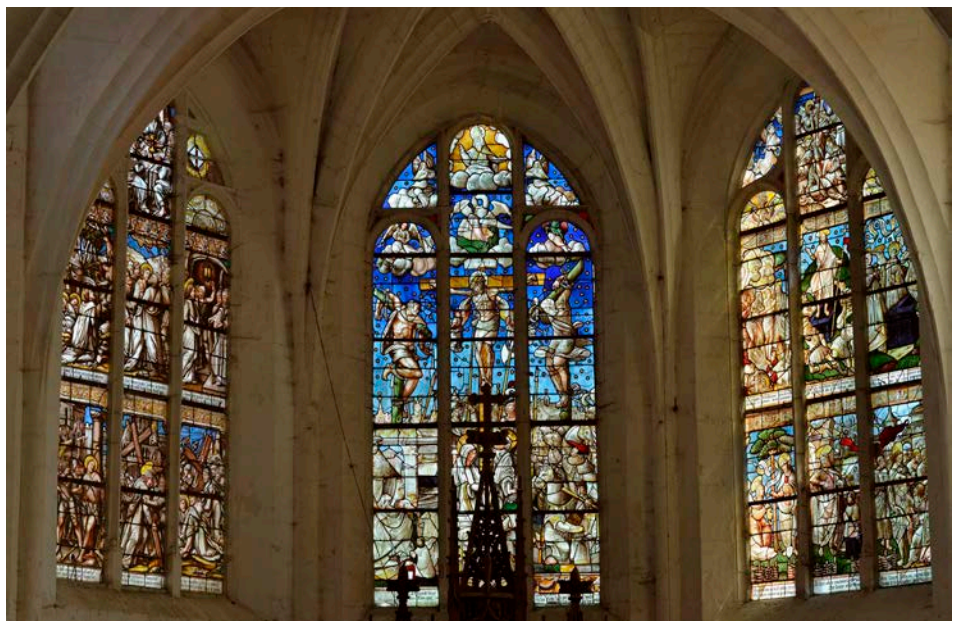


Rashi Cultural Centre in Troyes (Aube), *Tree of Rashi*, stained glass by Flavie Vincent-Petit © Cité du Vitrail

The Aube Department's stained glass heritage in numbers

- 9,000 square metres of windows dating back to before the French Revolution;
- 2,048 windows protected by their status as Historic Monuments;
- 1,042 windows from the 16th century and 1,439 from the 19th century, the two golden ages of stained glass in the Aube Department;
- Works housed in more than 350 churches and public buildings;
- A living art form: more than 150 windows created in the past 20 years by prestigious studios.

The former Champagne-Ardenne Regional Commissioner for Historic Monuments described this outstanding heritage by underlining that: *"80 per cent of the world's stained glass windows are to be found in France. 80 per cent of France's stained glass windows are located north of the Loire River. 80 per cent of the stained glass windows situated north of the Loire River are in Champagne-Ardenne, and 80 per cent of the Champagne-Ardenne's stained glass windows are in the Aube Department."*



Church of Saint-Sébastien de Villemoiron-en-Othe (Aube) © Robert Moleda

Hôtel-Dieu-le-Comte, an extraordinary setting



Hôtel-Dieu-le-Comte, Troyes (Aube) © Cité du Vitrail - Sylvain Bordier

La Cité du Vitrail is located within the Hôtel-Dieu-le-Comte in the centre of Troyes, between the Cathedral and the Saint Urbain Basilica, religious monuments which themselves feature prestigious stained glass artwork. Built at the site of the former hôtel-Dieu founded in 1157 by the then Count of Champagne, Henri I the Liberal, the Hôtel-Dieu-le-Comte is one of the rare large-sized edifices in Troyes dating from the 18th century. The entire structure in the heart of the city's merchant quarter and cathedral district was classified as a Historic Monument on 23 November 1964.

Entirely rebuilt between 1729 and 1764, the prestigious U-shaped building lies between the courtyard and the garden. A grand staircase leads to the main entrance, which was enhanced in 1776 with a magnificent, partly gilded wrought-iron gate – itself classified as a French Historic Monument on 23 April 1885 – which was made by the Parisian locksmith Pierre Delphin.

This striking 18th century building is remarkable for its formal lines and elegant silhouette. A complete restoration, commissioned by the Aube Department which owns it, has just been done.

The architecture and interior of the Hôtel-Dieu-le-Comte make it the ideal setting for a heritage-promoting site like La Cité du Vitrail. Generous natural light coupled with state-of-the-art lighting technologies form the perfect environment in which to showcase the works.

The volumes consist of light-bathed rooms with high ceilings, as well as spaces directly beneath the oak beams, more conducive to study and contemplation.

Visitors will be able to move about easily inside, as each floor can be reached via a central staircase adorned with what is likely the original metal and wooden handrail. The building is also equipped with a lift ensuring accessibility to persons with reduced mobility.



The chapel of the Hôtel-Dieu-le-Comte, Troyes (Aube), after restoration
© Archives départementales de l'Aube

The hôtel-Dieu Apothecary is particularly emblematic of the site. Dating back to the 18th century, it houses a rare collection of ceramic jars and wooden boxes owned by the city of Troyes. Several sets of decorative finery also remain, notably in the chapel which was entirely redecorated starting in 1864-66. Mural paintings, woodwork, sanctuary furnishings, small ornaments and the choir's stained glass window (produced by the Erdmann and Kremer studio) have been perfectly preserved. A series of stained glass windows in the nave was lost during World War II, but this allows works from different periods to be displayed and juxtaposed today.

The 2,800 square metre garden of La Cité du Vitrail overlooks the quayside of the Canal de la Haute-Seine and is open to the public who are welcomed with the same spirit of hospitality as they were in the 19th century. The Aube Department is currently embellishing the site with the addition of new plants, while also restoring the surrounding wall and ensuring access for persons with reduced mobility.

Keeping local heritage alive



Church of Ervy-Le-Châtel (Aube),
Triumphes de Pétrarque, 1502
© Manufacture Vincent-Petit



Saint-Pierre-Saint-Paul Church in Villenauxe-la-Grande (Aube), stained glass by David Tremlett, 2005 © Robert Moleda

La Cité du Vitrail reflects the Aube Department's ongoing endeavours to promote tourism and culture, initiated in 2009 with an exhibition in Troyes of fine 16th century sculpture from the Champagne region which attracted 71,000 visitors. This was followed by other events such as *Templiers, une histoire, notre trésor* in 2012, *1814, la C(h)ampagne de Napoléon* (2014), *Clairvaux, l'aventure cistercienne* (2015), *Si près des tranchées. L'Aube en 1916* (2016), *Renoir dans l'Aube en Champagne* (2017) and *ArkéAube* (2018/19).

"Our efforts to showcase the Aube Department's heritage are rooted in a solid scientific foundation, and stained glass is no exception. That's the prerequisite if inhabitants are going to lay claim to their heritage and if we are to retain our credibility in the long term, including outside the Aube Department," says Philippe Pichery, Chairman of the Aube Departmental Council. "And it's working! Municipalities, associations, tourism professionals and other partners have joined forces to organise attractive, high-quality events." Beginning in the summer of 2013, some 100 volunteers from the Aube Department were given stained glass training to help them share their passion with tourists visiting churches. The same year, an interim venue for La Cité du Vitrail opened, which drew 160,000 visitors in five years.

The inauguration of La Cité du Vitrail is also consistent with other initiatives carried out over the past few years by the Aube Department, including inventories, studies and research concerning several thousand secular and religious stained glass works; aid to municipalities for the restoration of stained glass in their churches classified as Historic Monuments; and support for the arts by (co)financing the commissioning of public works for the churches of Villenauxe-la-Grande (2005) and Villeret (2012), and for the Aube Convention Centre in Troyes (2014).

La Cité du Vitrail in numbers

- Nearly 10 centuries of stained glass history on display, dating from the 12th to the 21st century;
- €16 million financed by the Aube Department, the project's coordinating body, with support from the city of Troyes (€1 million);
- 50,000 visitors expected in the first year;
- A restored historic garden covering a surface area of 2,800 square metres;
- 1,000 square metres of permanent and temporary exhibition space;
- 160 square metres of educational workshops for children and adults;
- 150 square metres for the study of stained glass by researchers and other professionals;
- 130 square metres dedicated to documentation and other resources relating to stained glass;
- 160 square metres of public reception space, including a ticket office, bookstore and shop, information stations, group areas, restrooms and cloak room;
- 130 square metres of special event space independent of the exhibitions, designed for conferences, private functions, etc.

The La Cité du Vitrail team

- Philippe Pichery, Chairman of the Aube Departmental Council;
- Nicolas Dohrmann, Chief Heritage Conservator, Director of Archives and Heritage, Aube Department;
- Anne-Claire Garbe, Heritage Conservator, Director of La Cité du Vitrail, Aube Department;
- Eric Pallot, Chief Architect of Historic Monuments, La Cité du Vitrail prime contractor, Aube Department;
- GSM Project (Quebec), permanent collection scenography;
- Michel Hérold, Scientific Council Chairman, eminent specialist of stained glass in France.

La Cité du Vitrail: a cultural site of the Aube Department

www.cite-vitrail.fr

Website under construction

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