

The treasury

The treasury was first founded when one of the cathedral's canons, Wallon de Sarton, brought back the precious St John the Baptist relic from the Fourth Crusade in 1206.

A treasury reconstituted

Only five small reliquaries remain of the treasury accumulated during the Middle Ages. It suffered considerable losses during the Revolution, but old inventories enable the lost objects to be identified. From the 19th century onwards, the treasury was reconstituted little by little. The 19th century crosier (1) is the symbol of the bishop's power. The chapel (2), built between 1873 and 1879, contains the main objects used to celebrate mass. The chasse* (3) was made in 1236 using the *champlevé** enamel technique. In 1851 a relic of Saint Firmin was placed within it. In 1858, three reliquaries from the Oratory of the Paraclete were added to the treasury. The Cross (4) is the treasury's *pièce de résistance*, in which all the techniques of medieval goldsmith work are on show. The 16th-century Madonna and Child sculpture (5) comes from the cathedral.

Glossary

Champlevé: cells are cast into copper, which are filled with enamel before baking.
Chasse: casket containing the relics of a saint, of Christ or of the Virgin Mary.
Flamboyant: term used to describe the flame-shaped patterns typical of the Gothic art of the late Middle Ages.
Gable: triangular pediment above a doorway or window.
Hortillonage: family allotments marked out by small channels.
Labyrinth: a long black line (234 metres long in Amiens) in ornamental floor tiling in an octagonal shape symbolising the complexity of man's journey towards salvation.
Neo-Gothic: architectural style inspired by Gothic art, popular in the late 19th century.
Tracery: interlaced stone lines which decorate the interior of a window or rose window.

Information

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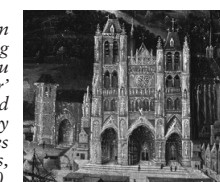
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Towers of Notre-Dame d'Amiens

The largest cathedral in France

A speedy and extravagant construction

The very first stone of the cathedral was laid in 1220 by Bishop Evrard de Fouillooy. Three edifices had preceded it – the first destroyed by the Normans in the 9th century, the second and third burnt down in 1137 and 1218 respectively.



Detail from the painting 'La Vierge au palmier' (The Virgin and Palm Tree), by the Maître des Puy d'Amiens, circa 1520.

The new cathedral, due to accommodate the skull of St John the Baptist, obtained in 1206, had to be large enough to receive great numbers of pilgrims. The considerable funds made available enabled the cathedral's structural frame to be completed in 1288. The names of the master builders appear at the centre of the labyrinth*: Robert de Luzarches, and Thomas and Renaud de Cormont. The building's dimensions are impressive, standing 42.3 metres high and 145 metres long.

Immense and unified

The cohesion of its architecture and the grandeur of its statues make Notre-Dame d'Amiens a major example of art during the era of King Louis IX. With its walls whose openings dominate the solid, the style is a perfect illustration of the transition from the classical Gothic to the more decorative 'rayonnant' Gothic. The cathedral escaped harm during the Revolution and the two World Wars, and became a Unesco World Heritage site in 1981.

* Explanations overleaf

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The Rose gallery

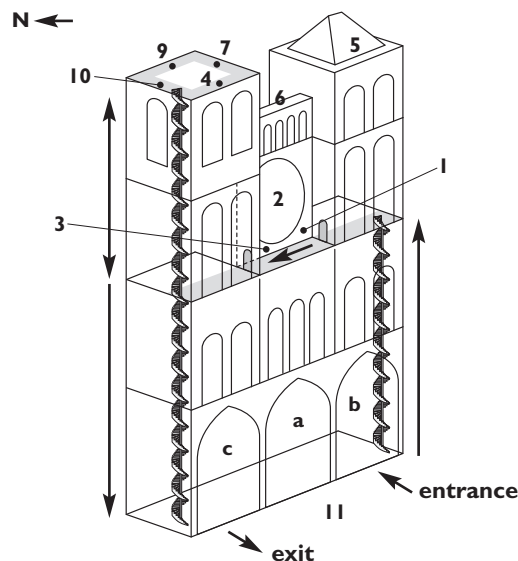
- 1 The rose gallery** stands above the gallery of kings. It overlooks the cathedral square from a height of 30 metres and is adorned with sculpted chimeras and gargoyles. In places, the limestone is naturally flecked with flint.
- 2 The rose window** dates from the 16th century. Its tracery* is made up of curves and counter-curves characteristic of the flamboyant* Gothic style. At the centre are three sculpted cockerels, a nod to the surname of the rose window's donor, Coquerel.

3 Panorama over the city's western districts

Despite the damage sustained during the First World War, and 60% of the city being destroyed during the Second World War, Amiens retains a number of significant historic monuments, which stand side-by-side with post-war and contemporary buildings. The belfry, constructed in the 15th and 18th centuries, is 52m tall and is itself a Unesco World Heritage monument. To its left is the Zénith, built in 2008 in a brilliant red colour, whilst the Licorne stadium, built in 1999, is recognisable for its transparent structure. To the right of the belfry is the church of Saint-Germain, which dates from the 15th century.

At the top of the north tower

- 4 The north tower** was constructed in 1402 and is 66m tall.
- 5 The south tower** is the older of the two towers, built in 1366, and at 61m high is also the smaller. To make up for this height difference, the architect Eugène Viollet-le-Duc added gables* during restoration work in the 19th century.
- 6 The musicians' gallery** was redesigned by Viollet-le-Duc and links the two towers.



7 Panorama to the south

The neo-Gothic* church of Saint-Rémi stands in front of the imposing 19th century Musée de Picardie. Further along on the right is the Palais de Justice, also a 19th century construction, and beyond that the neo-Gothic* church of Saint-Martin.

- 8 The spire** (not in diagram) is made of oak and clad in lead. It reaches a height of 112m, is octagonal in shape and is the oldest existing spire in France (1529-1533). It is decorated with lead statues of chimeras and centaurs measuring 2.5m.

9 Panorama to the east

To the right, the Perret tower (1942-1954) is 110m tall and bears the name of the architect responsible for the reconstruction of the area around the railway station. The former bishop's

palace to the left at the foot of the cathedral dates from the 18th century. In the distance can be seen the hortillonnages* to the left of the canalised river Somme.

10 Panorama to the north

The Saint-Leu district is named after its 15th-century church. The university buildings were constructed in the 20th century. The citadel, completed in 1622, can be seen beyond the church.

11 The west facade seen from the cathedral forecourt

The facade is a cohesive work, divided vertically into three parts which correspond to the three doorways. These vertical divisions are marked out by the two towers and the four substantial buttresses. Horizontally, the facade is divided into five. The lowest of these five levels contains the three doorways, topped by gables* and leading into the nave and aisles. The sculptures on the central doorway, also the largest, are dedicated to the 'Beau Dieu', or resurrected Christ (**a**), and those of the right-hand doorway to the 'Mère Dieu', or Virgin Mother (**b**). The left-hand doorway is dedicated to Saint Firmin (**c**), who was martyred around the year 300 and is considered to be the first bishop of Amiens.

On the second level is an openwork gallery, on the third is the gallery of kings and on the fourth is the rose gallery. The two towers are linked by the bell-ringers' gallery which supports the musicians' gallery (**6**) on the fifth level.