



EMBRUN NOTRE-DAME DU RÉAL CATHEDRAL



Embrun in 1570, plan Belleforest

Writing and production: C. Clivio / PAH S.U.D. - Printing: Recto/verso, Embrun - Editing: 2021 - Photographic credit and illustrations: creation 800 ans, R. Ferré; © C. Clivio/Pays S.U.D.; Ville d'Embrun; C. Bertuletti; Archives départementales 05. Translation: J.-L. Nerva Proofreading: J. Oke



Chasuble, 15th century, detail, Municipality of Embrun

Stamp or die for the making of medals, Municipality of Embrun



A famous pilgrimage, attracting kings

On the tympanum above the north door, there was a miraculous fresco, representing the Adoration of the Magi. A book listing miracles (1339-1536) credited to the Virgin details curing the paralyzed, the epileptic and the dying as well as war wounded. Donations flowed in with the pilgrims, among them several princes and kings: Edward II of England, Charles VII, François I and Louis XI. The Cathedral treasure is completed with copes, chasubles, silverware and paintings etc... Welcoming pilgrims generated substantial income for the population of Embrun and for the prelates. The highlights of the religious year were on January 6th, at the time of the Épiphanie and September 8th, for the Nativity of the Virgin. The miraculous fresco was destroyed by Protestants in 1585 and the influence of the pilgrimage gradually decreased.

10 The Adoration of the Magi in mosaic

The mosaic in the chapel of the Virgin was created in 1931 by Maison Mauméjean. They drew their inspiration from two dies dating from the 15th and 16th centuries and kept in the Cathedral treasury. These took up the theme of the miraculous fresco formerly fixed on the tympanum under the Réal porch (see 1).

Rediscovered in 1860 under the fresco plaster, a sculpture carved from local pink marble represents the blessing of Christ, surrounded by the symbols of the four evangelists: a lion, eagle, bull and winged man.

11 A major treasury

The Chapel of Saint-Anne and the sacristy hold a treasury of liturgical artefacts of major importance. There is a remarkable collection of priestly vestments and embroidered items: more than 500 pieces, some of which date back to the 15th century. The collection includes more than 200 pieces of silverware, manuscripts and many paintings. It bears witness to the rites of the liturgical year, the power of the archbishops and the prosperity of this religious centre.

A cathedral with an eventful history

(listed as a historical monument in 1840)

Built between 1170 and 1220/1225, and contemporary of Notre-Dame in Paris, the cathedral ends with the west façade. In the 14th century a chapel was added to the south side. It is enlarged in the 16th and 17th centuries. The golden age of the cathedral is linked to an important pilgrimage attached to the miraculous fresco. It was sacked during the religious war at the end of the 16th century, and the church became a Protestant temple. In 1852, lightning struck the steeple which collapsed. It will be rebuilt identically. Many restoration campaigns follow one another and are still going on...

A fortified cathedral district

In the Middle Ages, this quarter was surrounded by walls and guarded by a fortified keep (Tour brune 20). This cathedral is surrounded by the Archbishop's Palace (21), the so-called Maison des Chanonges (22), the Provost's House (Presbytery, 23) and also the former Jesuit College (casernes Lapeyrouse 24) ...

..... Practical Information

Guided tours by tour guides of Pays d'art et d'histoire Serre-Ponçon Ubaye Durance (PAH SUD);

- **Programme and reservation** at the Tourist Office and on web site www.exploreserreponcon.com
- **On request in English for adults or school children:** 00 33 (0)4 92 44 15 12 or patrimoine@pays-sud.fr

CONTRIBUTE TO THE RESTORATION OF THE CATHEDRAL !

Subscription to the Heritage Fondation:
<https://www.fondation-patrimoine.org/les-projets/cathedrale-notre-dame-du-real-d-embrun>



Approaching from the plain of the Durance you will have seen a slender bell tower that dominates the town of Embrun. You may be wondering about the massive and colourful architecture of the building. Imagine masons travelling from the other side of the Alps to construct this cathedral in the 12th century, with their expertise very different from what was done in France. Discover this unique architecture, the story of an ancient and historic extended archbishopric and its cathedral with a miraculous fresco!



Embrun, 1652, Tassin etching

An Archbishopric from the Alps to the Mediterranean

The Bishopric of Embrun was created by Saint Marcellin in the 4th century. Located on Via Domitia, the city was then the capital of the Roman province of Alpes Maritimae and was experiencing a period of expansion. It is raised in an Archbishopric in the 9th century. From this religious center depend on the dioceses of Digne, Vence, Glandève, Senez, and Nice. In the 13th century, the Bishopric of Grasse was attached to it.

Guardians of a strategic way to cross the Alps, the prelates became, in the Middle Ages, auxiliaries of the papacy. More than 80 Archbishops, senior figures, scholars, jurists, diplomats, and officers of the Pope, followed one another, including Jules de Medici, in 1510, future Pope Clement VII. The Archdiocese was abolished after the French Revolution, at the end of the 18th century, the cathedral then became a parish under the authority of the Bishop of Gap.



Réal porch, « stylophore » lions (supporting a column)



Vault of the nave © Michel Eisenhor

Lombard, Romanesque or Gothic architecture?

Master masons from Lombardy organised the construction site, hence some architectural features which are unique for this period in France, but were current in Italy. Lombard architecture was very similar to Romanesque and the Embrun builders were also inspired by Gothic style, marked by ribbed vaults.

Lombard Bell Tower

It's an imposing one: 35 metres high, crowned with a stone spire. Note the twin bays that gradually increase in number with each floor. Another unusual feature is the stone spire framed with pyramidions. Gargoyles, mostly in the form of lions' head, drain rainwater from the corners. This bell tower, with its typically Lombard decoration, served as a model for others, outside the Archbishopric area.

1 Porche du Réal, a prestigious entrance

This monumental entrance, facing the entrance to the cathedral district, is striking for the elegance of its pink marble columns supported by lions, a common combination in the north of Italy. Symbols of good and evil are hidden in the sculptures. Can you spot them?

2 An asymmetrical façade with a rose window

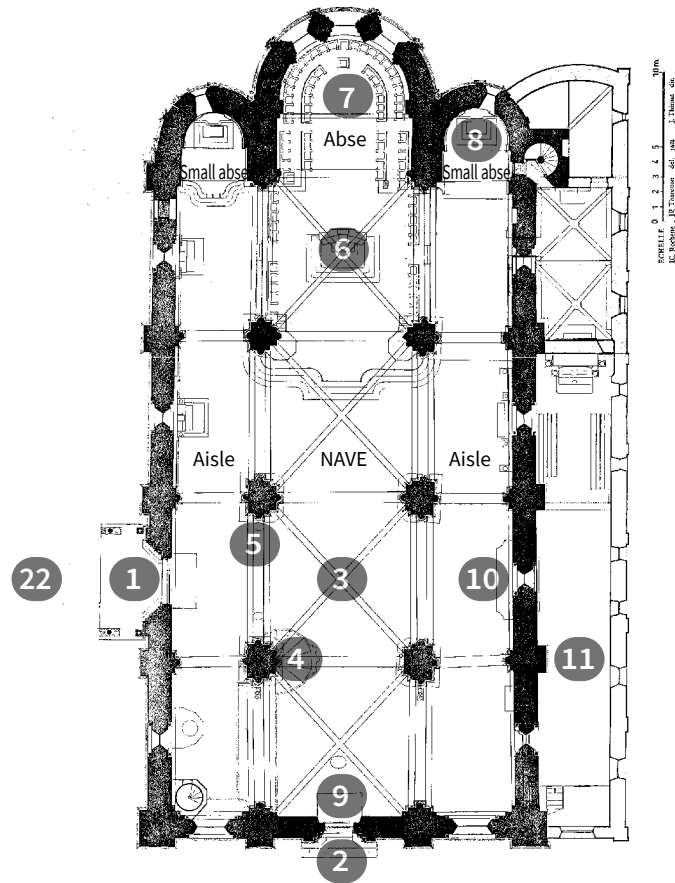
To the right of the majestic composition with three aisles, a chapel has been added, built of yellow 'cargneule', a typically Alpine sedimentary rock. Note on the left, the only bell tower in the building. The façade is made beautiful by its large rose window. The portal with carved columns and capitals protects a wall painting of the Annunciation, probably dating from the 15th century.

3 A Gothic vault for the nave

Builders will test the cross-ribbed vaults which is a new technique coming from the Ile-de-France, to cover a nave: ribs forming a cross support the vault and direct the forces towards the stone piers.

Here, rows of stone play with colour, in alternating black shale and white limestone (dichromy)

20 21 EAST



22

WEST

23

Drawing : J. Cl. Rochette, 1974

A simple and monumental plan

Imposing monument on the scale of the Alpine arc, its interior, 53 m long, 26 m wide and with a maximum height of 19 m, uses optical effects to play on the depth of the building.

The plan is remarkably simple, oriented, ample and without transept. It has a central nave with four bays, and aisles leading respectively to an apse and small abse chapels. This plan belongs to the first Romanesque art. It has correspondences in northern Italy.

Great organ, restoration workshop Quoirin



Stalls in the apse



4 Historical organ said to have been donated by Louis XI Originally polychrome, this instrument was installed in 1463. It is placed on a «swallow's nest» support and seems suspended from a pillar. It has been modified according to tastes in religious music, with contributions from organ builders such as the brothers Eustache, Scherrer and Puget in the 17th, 18th and 19th centuries. It comprises three manuals: positiv, great and swell. Restored in 2008 it still resounds during services or concerts.

5 A 15th century fresco (1450-1470)

Rediscovered under a whitewash in 1937, it illustrates the Flagellation of Christ. The artist highlights the figure of Christ by playing with the relief of the half-column, while the executioners appear flat on either side. Other traces of wall paintings are visible in the building. Can you see them?

6 A Baroque high altar

Made of polychrome marble, it was commissioned by Archbishop Fouquet and consecrated in 1764. This very elaborate altar is the product of a Parisian workshop.

7 Stalls for the canons

The stalls for the Archbishop's retinue, the canons' assembly, were originally in the choir, but moved in the 18th century. Various carvings evoke the 14th and 15th centuries. Can you find the three seats of honour: for Archbishop, first Canon and Provost (in charge of finances)?

8 Saint-Martin chapel painted (light on the left)

Its furniture dates to the 18th century. Paintings are signed Louis Court (1671-1733) from Guillestre. Note on the left, the painting representing saint Roch, protector against the plague, with Embrun in 1720 in the background.

9 A remarkable rose window

With a diameter of 4,5 metres, its 12 rays light are illuminated at sunset. Above, God blessing presents the Globe and, on his right, the Virgin Mary and then ten apostles succeed one another. In the lower part, coats of arms date from the end of the 14th century. This could be one of the restorations.