

DESTINATION
Grand Vézelay

DISCOVERY BOOKLET

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Visit
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*M*ONTRÉAL



Office de Tourisme
du **GRAND VÉZELAY**

Avallone - Montréal - Marwan - Nagels

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Montréal

Famous for its 12th century collegiate church and the impressive 16th century stalls within, the village of Montréal, just twelve km north east of Avallon, is an old fortified town, built in a beautiful natural setting.

Overlooking the **Serein valley**, the village offers its visitors a page of history (its gates, the remains of its fortification, its ancient houses) and all the charm of a village whose authenticity has been perfectly preserved.

Legend has it that in the 6th century, Queen Brunehaut and her grandson, Thierry, took up secondary residence here. In memory of these royal guests the village took the name of **Mont-Royal, Mont Regalis, Mons Regus**. During the revolution, the village lost its noble title and became **Mont Serein**, but very soon reverted back to its original name.

To reach the **church** on the plateau, where the **castle** stood up until 1793, you will have to go through the medieval village, along the only street that leads to the top of the hill. Firstly, you pass through **the "Porte d'en Bas"** (the lower gate), the first vestiges of the three defence walls that surrounded the castle and church in the **Middle Ages**. It's a perfect example of 12th century military architecture. There was no drawbridge, only double gates and portcullises. You will see interesting dwellings dating back to the **15th, 16th and 17th centuries**, with corbelling and overhanging roofs, plus unusually shaped recesses and windows. Notice also the many stone wells each with unique stone cap. Water is never far away, even in the summer.

La grande rue

Here the beautiful stone dwellings still have their dovecotes, turrets and spiral staircase towers. **The oldest houses** are in this street and you will notice the porticoes supported by corbelled pillars. Observe how some houses have wine cellars. **Up until 1950**, certain house owners still had enough vines to harvest.

Place de la Mairie et suite de la Grande Rue

This is where you would have found the **Market Hall**. The market cross was erected in april 1781 but the pedestal is much older and has an inscription in gothic characters. There also used to be a fountain on this spot. To the right of the

well by the town hall, you will notice a stone engraved with a **salamander**, the emblem of **François 1st**, who came several times to Montréal and held his General Assemblies here. The stone comes from the **Market Hall**. Continue along the Grande Rue to the cross roads. **The paving stones** indicate that you are where the second gate once stood (long since demolished).

Further on, you will reach the third gate which houses the church bells. Around you, you will notice the beautiful houses and as you continue down **Rue de la Poterne**, the remains of the **fortifications**. Carrying on towards the **church**, one of the houses has some very impressive cellars which were used as a guard-room (located at the foot of the ramparts). Beyond this last gate, on your left (No. 45) is the school where **Prior Antoine de Fontaine** gave **Maréchal Vauban** his first lessons of mathematics and geometry. You are now on the top of the hill where the castle used to be, although only the well and the church remain.

La Collégiale

The collegiate church was built in 1150 by Anséric II on his return from the second crusade, and completed in 1170. **Viollet-le-Duc** was so impressed by the architectural excellence that he had it classified as a historical monument in 1845 and received funds to restore it. The impressive rounded arch doorway takes up over a third of the building's façade, and is a perfect example of roman floral art.

The rose-window above the doorway is one of the oldest in France and inspired the one completed fifty years later at Notre-Dame de Paris.

The side walls have bevelled windows and the corner gables each bare a different cross. There is no bell tower; the initial plan did not provide for one! You have to go down **several steps** to access the church as it was built approximately one meter below ground level. Take a look around the church and admire its numerous treasures. It is particularly renowned for its twenty six oak stalls, eight low relief carvings and five figurative groups carved in the round. They were sculpted during the first half of the 16th century by the Rigolley brothers, two craftsmen from Nuits-sur-Armençon.

The alabaster altarpiece (a noble white stone, used for both carving and sculpture) to the left of the choir dates back to the 15th century, and was imported from Nottingham. The wooden triptych to the right of the altar is 16th century. The finely carved oak **pulpit and lectern** are 15th century. **The Christ**, facing the pulpit, dates from around the same era. **The renaissance cross**, in the right side transept was found broken, but has since been restored by the sculptor Michel Roetwer. **The painting above the pulpit** is dated 17th century and represents the coronation of the Virgin.

Since 2000, **several 21st century works of art have been placed in the church**, notably a processional cross (by A. Legouy) a roman statue (by Xavier Bouzerand) and a high relief of Saint Jean-Paul II (by François Rouillot).

Before you leave, take the time to walk around **the cemetery**. You will see underfoot vestiges of the old ramparts and the remains of two square towers to your right and left.

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