

# Art & Architecture of Cathedrals FRANCE

WITH DR WILLIAM COOK



**FAR  
HORIZONS**

ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND CULTURAL TRIPS

Updated January 2025







# FRENCH CATHEDRALS

## Art & Architecture

with Dr. William Cook



## Explore the Magnificent Evolution of Artistic and Architectural Styles by Examining the Stunning Cathedrals and Churches in and Around Paris.

On this Northern France experience, you will explore the magnificent evolution of artistic and architectural styles by examining the stunning cathedrals and churches in and around Paris.

Since the Christianization of Europe in the 4th century, cathedrals have served both as centers of ecclesiastical authority and marvels of architectural genius and innovation. Over time, the rise of the Church as a central authority and increased overall prosperity led to the active construction and reconstruction of many truly awe-inspiring cathedrals.

Join Far Horizons on a captivating 12-day tour in Northern France and experience the birthplace of this architectural evolution from robust Romanesque to soaring Gothic architecture.

Led by renowned Professor William R. Cook, popular lecturer for The Great Courses (formerly The Teaching Company), we will explore stunning sites in Chartres, Bourges, Vezelay, Amiens, Reims, and, of course, picturesque Paris. Steep yourself in the history and culture that gave rise to these monumental tributes to the heavens...

Of course, a sojourn through France must include that country's exceptional food and drink! So, along the way, experience sumptuous French cuisine along with luscious regional wines including the champagne of Troyes.





# Daily Itinerary

## Day 1

### Depart for France

Depart on a flight bound for Paris, France.

## Day 2

### Arrive in France and transfer to the Victoria Palace Hotel

Arrive at Charles de Gaulle International Airport and take independent transfers to our hotel. For the next three nights, experience the Old World elegance of the Victoria Palace Hotel located in the heart of Paris. The afternoon is free to relax after our flight, perhaps replenishing ourselves with a coffee in one of the many cafés nearby. Once rested, enjoy our welcome dinner in an elegant local restaurant. (D)

## Day 3

### Paris: Priory of Saint-Martin-des-Champs, Musée de Cluny, Notre Dame

Our exploration of the sanctuaries of France begins with the fascinating Priory of Saint-Martin-des-Champs, a treasure of medieval architecture. This imposing Romanesque structure was discovered to be built over a chapel dating to the 8th-century Merovingian dynasty, revealing the site's long history as a place of worship.

Next, we head to the Musée National du Moyen-Âge de Cluny, housing an important collection of medieval artifacts, including tapestries, sculptures, manuscripts, and stained glass. This complex provides a unique glimpse into the civic architecture of medieval Paris, as it combines both Gothic and Renaissance elements.

The afternoon will be spent walking through the historic section of Paris, with UNESCO World Heritage status, where we see the iconic Cathédrale Notre-Dame de Paris, a masterpiece of French Gothic style. Built on a site that has been occupied since Roman times, this immense construction became a meeting place for the craftsmen's guilds and a place of education renowned throughout Europe.

*Note: The cathedral has been closed to the public since its damage in the fire on April 15, 2019. It has now reopened as of December 2024.*

In the evening, we are free to savor la cuisine française on our own. (B/L)





# Daily Itinerary *(cont'd)*

## Day 4

### Paris: Basilique Saint-Denis, Sainte-Chappelle, Église de Saint-Germain-des-Prés

Today begins with a visit to the inspiring Basilique Saint-Denis, the purported birthplace of Gothic architecture. The cathedral that once stood here, built circa 1143, was the first example of the 'new style' in Europe but was massively damaged during the French Revolution. Restoration work conducted in the 19th century has exposed the authentic Gothic style of the choir and west front.

Next, we visit Sainte-Chappelle. Consecrated in 1248, this aptly named 'Holy Chapel' was built to house Louis the IX's collection of relics of Christ and boasts a colorful interior and impressive stained glass that brings the immensity of the heavens to earth. Move on to the intriguing Église de Saint-Germain-des-Prés. Built on the outskirts of medieval Paris, this site once served as the burial place of Merovingian kings. After its foundation in the 6th century, this Benedictine abbey went on to become one of the richest in France. (B/L/D)



## Day 5

### Chartres

This morning we venture south of Paris, to Chartres. This picturesque town marks the point at which the Eure River divides into three branches, effectively speckling the town with bridges. We spend the day exploring the impressive Cathédrale Notre-Dame de Chartres, with UNESCO World Heritage designation. The cathedral is the first example of a 'classic' cathedral and is the high point of Gothic architecture in the region. The majority of the original stained glass windows are still intact, and there have been only minor changes in the architecture since the early 13th century when it was completed. Many features that first appeared in the Chartres Cathedral were later developed to become hallmarks of the High Gothic style. Long on the pilgrimage route, it is venerated for its famous relic, the Sancta Camisa, said to be the tunic worn by the Virgin Mary at Christ's birth.

Once we have finished our explorations for the day, we overnight at the Le Grand Monarque Hotel and Spa for one night. Dinner tonight is on our own. (B/L)



## Daily Itinerary *(cont'd)*



### Day 6

#### The Royal City of Bourges, Autun

Our drive from Chartres takes us to Bourges, a Royal City since the year 1100, and home to the Cathédrale Saint-Étienne de Bourges. Completed in the 13th century, and once located in the northeastern corner of the Gallo-Roman walled city, the location of this sanctuary has been a place of Christian worship since the 4th century. Exemplifying a supreme form of Gothic art, this architectural masterpiece demonstrates the power of Christianity in medieval France. Supported by flying buttresses, the western façade is the largest of all Gothic edifices in France. Named a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 1992, this structure is an important example in the evolution of Gothic architecture.

After lunch, move on to Autun. The Romanesque Cathédrale Saint-Lazare d'Autun was constructed in the 12th century in response to the large number of pilgrims passing through on their way to Santiago de Compostela.

We continue to Vézelay where we overnight at the Hotel de la Poste et Lion d'Or for one night. (B/L/D)

### Day 7

#### The Basilique Sainte-Marie-Madeleine de Vézelay, Abbaye de Fontaney

Rising on a rock from a deep valley, the Basilique Sainte-Marie-Madeleine de Vézelay, founded in 864, is a masterpiece of Romanesque art and architecture. Both this abbey church and the hill upon which it stands were added to the UNESCO list of World Heritage Sites in 1979.

Gaining fame for housing relics of Mary Magdalene, this site remains an important place of pilgrimage despite the exposure of its holy artifacts as fakes. Unlike its contemporaries, the subject of Vézelay's tympanum, a decorative structure above the entrance, is the Pentecostal Mission of the Apostles, which serves as a spiritual defense of the Crusades and is a prime example of politics meeting religion in architecture.

Continue to Montbard to visit the Abbaye de Fontaney, one of the oldest and most complete Cistercian abbeys in Europe. This Romanesque structure was added to the UNESCO list of World Heritage Sites in 1981. In the afternoon, we move on to Troyes, a charming medieval town that overlooks the picturesque River Seine, where we settle into the Hotel Mercure for one night. (B/L)





## Day 8

### **Troyes: Cathédrale Saint-Pierre-et-Saint-Paul and 16th-Century Houses**

Located along the Seine, Troyes is home to the multifaceted Cathédrale Saint-Pierre-et-Saint-Paul de Troyes. This complex has known many constructions but work on its Gothic incarnation began in 1208 and continued into the 17th century. The cathedral is particularly well known for its striking stained glass dating from the 13th to the 19th centuries.

Lunch and the afternoon are on our own to explore Troyes' lovely medieval old town featuring narrow, cobbled streets lined with colorful, half-timbered houses, mostly dating to the 16th century.

Afterwards, we transfer to Reims, where we overnight for two nights. (B/L)



## Day 9

### **Reims: Cathédrale Notre-Dame and the Basilique Saint-Remi**

A textile town in medieval times, Reims' wine production took over in the 15th century as the industry of choice and has remained a tradition; the town is currently home to many top champagne houses. The medieval roots of the city are far from lost, however, as the overwhelming Cathédrale Notre-Dame de Reims provides imposing evidence.

This cathedral, begun in 1211, was designed for royal coronations, which meant that no expense was spared in its decoration. Its ornate façade is a reflection of the intersection of religion, art, and power. Although it was built in stages between the 13th and the 15th centuries, the structure has a unity of style that represents the height of the mature French Gothic style and has UNESCO World Heritage status.

A short distance away, at the south end of town, is the largest Romanesque church in Northern France, the Basilique Saint-Remi de Reims. Founded in the 11th century, this building was constructed over the burial site of St. Remi, renowned for baptizing the King of the Franks, Clovis I, an act which led to the conversion of the entire Frankish people. (B/L/D)





## Day 10

### **Cathédrale Notre-Dame de Laon, Cathédrale Notre-Dame d'Amiens**

We begin today in nearby Laon. Once a royal city, the surrounding woodlands were favored by kings for their superior hunting grounds. Here, we view the Cathédrale Notre-Dame de Laon, built during the 12th and 13th centuries. It is one of the most important and stylistically unified examples of early Gothic architecture. Known for its imposing towers, the pointed arches in the luminous white interior show the way up to Heaven.

Next, we continue to Amiens to begin our explorations of the compelling Cathédrale Notre-Dame d'Amiens, listed as a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Erected between 1220 and 1270, this is the largest of all Gothic cathedrals and is the tallest religious building in France. Its western portals are famous for their elaborate sculptures, creations which have influenced church sculpture throughout Europe. During the 1990s, a laser cleaning process revealed that the western façade was originally painted with vibrant colors. Fortunately, lighting techniques have been developed to project these colors with precision directly on the façade, recreating in a stunning display the edifices on churchgoers of the 13th century. We will have the option of viewing this display later this evening.

Overnight for one night at the Mercure Amiens Cathédrale Hotel. (B/L/D)



## Day 11

### **Cathédrale Saint-Pierre de Beauvais, Rouen: Cathédrale Notre-Dame, Église Saint Maclou, Abbaye Saint Ouen**

Travel west to Beauvais, home to the Cathédrale Saint-Pierre de Beauvais. Begun in 1225, this ambitious construction features the highest vault in Gothic architecture. Due to many structural complications, work on the cathedral continued sporadically well into the 16th century, but ultimately the structure was left in its current, unfinished state.

Next, we move to Rouen, an ancient capital of the Duchy of Normandy founded on a Roman settlement. Despite modernization, Rouen has maintained many medieval treasures in its 'old' district including half-timbered buildings and a clock (set in a Renaissance arch).

The glorious Cathédrale Notre-Dame de Rouen springs up from 12th-century foundations, revealing soaring Gothic arches, intricate Flamboyant carving, and two towers that flank the façade. A short distance away, we view the Église Saint Maclou, considered one of the best examples of Flamboyant Gothic architecture in France; its construction began sometime after 1432 during the transition from Romanesque to Gothic styles.

Nearby we find the Abbaye Saint Ouen de Rouen, which has both Merovingian and Carolingian origins. Construction of the current structure began in 1318, work was slowed, however, by the Hundred Years War. The abbey church's slow evolution is highlighted by the western façade, which dates to the 19th century and reflects a Neo-Gothic style.

After our visit, we head back towards Paris and overnight near the airport for one night. Dinner is on our own. (B/L)



## Daily Itinerary *(cont'd)*

### Day 12

#### Depart France

Transfer from the hotel to the airport for our flights home. (B)

PLEASE NOTE: This is a sample itinerary that is typical of our trip offerings. In general, you can expect a very similar program, though days may be swapped depending on availability, opening hours, and other affecting factors.

#### Pre and Post Trip Extensions

Far Horizons offers pre or post extensions for many of our trips. We can also arrange extra nights at the arrival and departure hotel should you wish to arrive early or depart later. Please contact us for details about the Loire Valley post-trip extension.



## Why Take This Tour?

Travel with  
Dr. William R. Cook,  
lecturer for  
The Great Courses

Visit eight UNESCO  
World Heritage Sites

Experience a  
behind-the-scenes  
view of preservation  
work at Saint-  
Germain-des-Prés  
church

Visit Notre Dame,  
recently opened after  
5 years of  
renovations

Option to join our  
curated post-trip  
extension to explore  
the castles of  
Loire Valley

Limited to 14  
participants





# Tour Information

## Pricing

For current pricing, please visit [farhorizons.com](http://farhorizons.com) and navigate to our trip page.

## Inclusions

### **Price based on double occupancy and includes:**

- Internal flights during the trip (if applicable/unless otherwise noted)
- The accompaniment of your scholar throughout the entire trip
- Local English-speaking guide
- Hotel accommodations (3 or 4 stars; or best available based in the area)
- Ground transportation
- Airport transfers for arrivals and departures
- Most meals as noted in the itinerary
- Entry fees to all included sites and museums
- Gratuities to guides, drivers, and restaurant and hotel staff
- Coordination for any private presentations or tours

*Trip prices are based on a minimum number of participants. If this minimum number is not met, trip prices are subject to change. Should the prices need to change, Far Horizons will reach out to registered guests to discuss directly.*

## Single Supplement

Should a roommate be requested and one not be available, the single supplement will be charged.

## Exclusions

- International round trip airfare
- A separate donation check of \$150.00 per person to a designated donation project
- Passport or visa fees
- Required vaccines or tests
- Airport or departure taxes
- Alcoholic drinks, beverages or food not included on set menus
- Excess baggage charges
- Personal tips and hotel incidental expenses
- Laundry or other items of a personal nature

## Donation Checks

As a tour company that benefits from the cultural and natural riches of our destinations, we have a policy of donating to the scientific and cultural sites and projects which we visit. This has created a bond between Far Horizons and the academic and local communities that has helped us establish an extensive list of lecturers and contacts in each of our destinations. We ask that each participant donate to the noteworthy project we designate. The donation amount is \$150.00 per person. Note that the donation is required as part of your registration for the trip and that it is non-refundable.

## Exchange Rate Fluctuations

Prices are based on currency exchange rates keeping below a projected level. While it is unlikely, if the exchange rates should change substantially, Far Horizons reserves the right to charge an additional amount to the trip cost.

## Registration

A deposit of \$1000 per person is required along with your registration & health forms, which will be linked in the email confirmation you receive once you pay your deposit on our booking platform. Final payment is due 120 days before departure. Prior to departure, you will be sent a reading list and a tour bulletin containing travel information.





# Tour Information *(cont'd)*

## Cancellation

Cancellations received in writing at least 120 days before departure will receive a refund less a \$500 per person administrative fee. Cancellations received less than 120 days before the departure date will not receive a refund. If for any reason you are unable to complete the trip, Far Horizons will not reimburse any fees. Upon registering for the tour, the purchase of travel protection with both trip cancellation and emergency evacuation is strongly advised. Links to recommended insurance policies will be included in the email you receive confirming receipt of your deposit.

## Expectations During Travel

Our trips are designed for flexible, energetic people who like to be active, have a spirit of adventure and a positive attitude. We have designed this trip to be as comfortable as possible, while also aiming to visit some remote or unique sites that other companies do not attempt to include in their itineraries. There may be days where we have very long drives and the conditions of the roads may vary. Hotels and transportation in some remote areas may not be up to western standards. There may be times when no bellhops are available; please pack with the understanding that you need to be able to handle your own luggage at times. Sometimes we may be walking over uneven trails for a mile or more; hiking boots are strongly recommended. Not every meal will be haute cuisine and several lunches may be picnics or box lunches. By maintaining a flexible attitude we will soon be captivated by the beauty of the natural scenery, the hospitality of the local people, and the fascinating sites we will see. Your flexibility and patience will be appreciated.

## Air Ticketing

International round trip flights are not included in the cost of the trip. If Far Horizons must change the trip dates or cancel the trip for any reason, Far Horizons is not responsible for any air ticket you may have purchased. Please send your complete air schedule as soon as you have it. NOTE: Please contact Far Horizons if you would like for us to handle your air ticketing.

## Private Tours and Talks

The private tours of archaeological sites and talks by specialists are scheduled in advance and include a donation to each. Specialists working at these sites are excited about showing their work to interested enthusiasts. However, please be aware that there may be times when the director or a member of the staff may not be on site when our groups arrive due to other commitments.

## Walking and Standing

Far Horizons expects all participants to be physically active and able to walk and climb independently throughout the full touring days. This includes walking over uneven terrain (uphill and downhill) for 2 miles or more at each site. You should expect to be on your feet for much of each day, averaging as much as 5 miles of walking per day. **As such, each participant should be able to walk unaided at a pace of 3 miles per hour for at least an hour at a time, and to stand unsupported for at least 60 minutes.** Bearing this in mind, we suggest that, if you have not already done so, you begin walking several miles every day, ideally including stairs and hills. If you have questions about your ability to keep up with the group or the strenuous nature of this trip, please contact the Far Horizons staff.





## Travel Insurance

We strongly recommend that you consider purchasing travel insurance. Should illness or an unforeseen event force you to cancel your travel plans after your final payment or during your trip, it would be doubly unfortunate to incur a significant financial loss. Trip cancellation protection will enable you to be reimbursed for the loss of your payment if you are unable to travel for any of the covered reasons in the "Outline of Coverage" section, or should you have an accident or suffer from any medical conditions during the trip.

Far Horizons offers customized protection plans through Travel Insured International (a Crum & Forster Company) with the following benefits:

- Trip Cancellation and Trip Interruption for covered reasons
- Trip Delay
- Baggage Loss and Baggage Delay
- Emergency Medical Expenses and Emergency Medical Evacuation
- 24-Hour Accidental Death & Dismemberment
- 24-Hour Travel Assistance & Concierge Services
- Option to upgrade to 'Cancel for Any Reason (CFAR)

We recommend reviewing the language in detail so you are aware of specific parameters; Depending on the policy, to waive the Pre-Existing Medical Condition Exclusion or to upgrade to CFAR coverage, the plan must be purchased within 14 to 21 days of the initial trip deposit, full trip cost must be insured, and traveler is medically fit at time of plan purchase. Otherwise, coverage may be purchased at any time prior to departure.

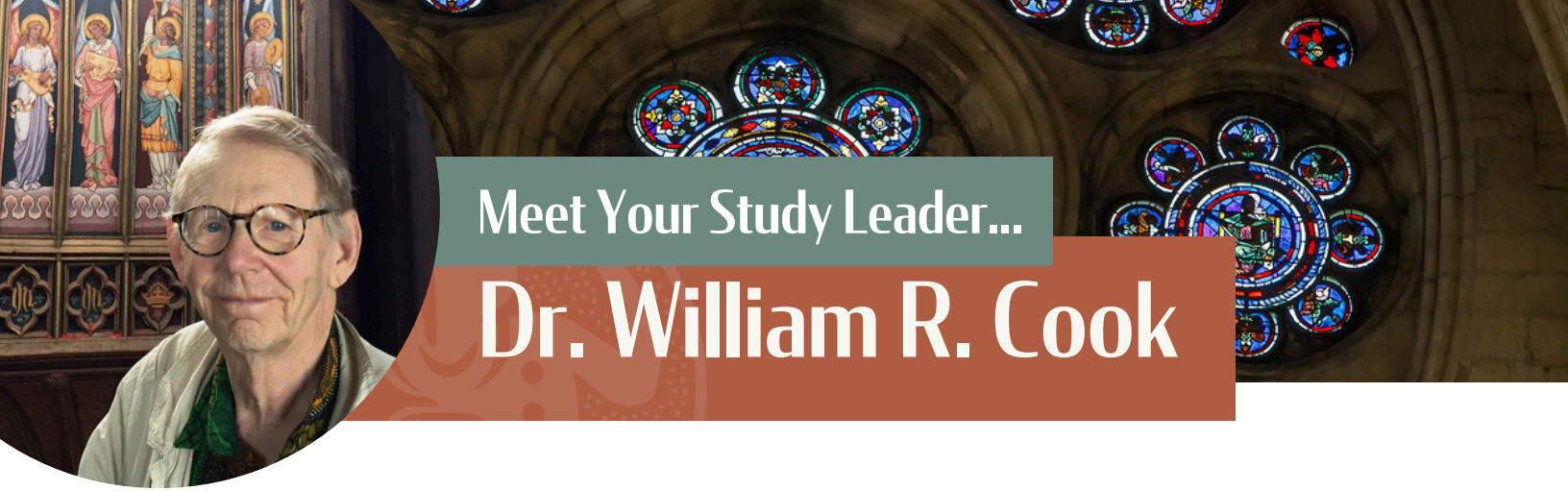
To obtain a personalized quote and/or purchase a plan through Far Horizons/Travel Insured International, simply click [HERE](#). For specific questions regarding the Worldwide Protector Plan, please contact Travel Insured International's Customer Care Center at 1-800-243-3174 or by email at [customercare@travelinsured.com](mailto:customercare@travelinsured.com), and refer to Far Horizons' account number: 54070.

## Itinerary Changes

Changes in our itinerary, accommodations, and transportation schedules may occur while traveling. While we are committed to keeping as close to the published details as possible, sometimes it is simply not possible. Weather events, government affairs, or other factors out of our control sometimes come into play. A good book to read as well as patience, flexible attitude, and a sense of humor are essential.







Meet Your Study Leader...

## Dr. William R. Cook

**William R. Cook earned his B.A. from Wabash College, graduating cum laude.**

Shortly thereafter he received the Woodrow Wilson and the Herbert Lehman fellowships to study Medieval History at Cornell University where he completed his Ph.D.

He is a lecturer for The Great Courses and is currently the Distinguished Teaching Professor of History at the State University of New York at Geneseo, where he has taught since 1970. His publications include *Images of St. Francis of Assisi* and *Francis of Assisi: The Way of Poverty and Humility*.

He also currently edits and contributes to *The Art of the Franciscan Order in Italy*. Dr. Cook's passion and enthusiasm for medieval art and architecture make him both an informed and lively trip leader.





The background image is a photograph of the interior of a Gothic cathedral. The view is looking up towards the high, vaulted ceiling, which is covered in intricate blue and gold stained glass patterns. The architecture features pointed arches, ribbed vaults, and ornate carvings. The lighting is warm, highlighting the golden details of the ceiling and the deep blue of the glass. The overall atmosphere is one of grandeur and historical significance.

What People Are Saying About...

# Dr. William R. Cook

“Dr. Cook was unbelievable and adorable! I fell in love instantly. Not only brilliant and funny, but his passion is contagious. The Cathedrals energized him as though it was his first time entering them. Knowing as much as he did about the political and spiritual context in which those structures were born helped us to experience their humanity and their divinity in a much deeper level. I knew from his “Great Courses” teaching that he was knowledgeable, but he really exceeded my expectations. The guy is a true gem.

– Father “MAC” McMillymoyl





# Why Travel with Far Horizons?

With over forty years of experience, and an 85% customer return rate, we have stood the test of time. Remind yourself what makes Far Horizons so unique.

## ✦ Scholar Led Tours

Every tour is led by a well-respected PhD scholar with expertise in the subject & regions we visit.

## ✦ Behind the Scenes Access

Our groups have private access to closed areas and on-site specialists.

## ✦ Personalized Service

We love knowing our guests and helping with the decision process. We are here to assist you.

## ✦ Trusted Partnerships

Trusted Partnerships: Every tour is led by a well-respected PhD scholar with expertise in the subject & regions we visit.

## ✦ Unique Trips

Our itineraries are designed to showcase sites that are off-the-beaten path; we explore places that many travelers never see.

## ✦ Small Groups

Our tours have a maximum of 14 travelers. So you can trust that you will have a boutique experience every time.





# READY TO TRAVEL WITH US?

## Art & Architecture of Cathedrals

# FRANCE

WITH DR WILLIAM R. COOK

Email with Questions

[journeys@farhorizons.com](mailto:journeys@farhorizons.com)

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