

# ABBAYE SAINT-PIERRE OF MOISSAC

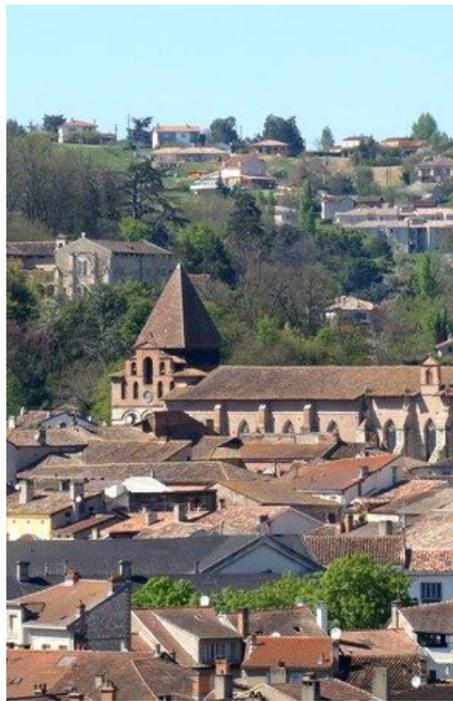


*The Abbey from the sky*

Settled at the foot of vineyards of Bas-Quercy, the abbey of Moissac was funded on the banks of the Tarn river, few kilometres away of its confluence with the Garonne river. Recognized at the UNESCO's World Heritage since 1998, it's a major stop on the pilgrim Routes to Saint-James of Compostela.



*Pilgrim visiting the cloister*



*Moissac at the foot of vineyards*



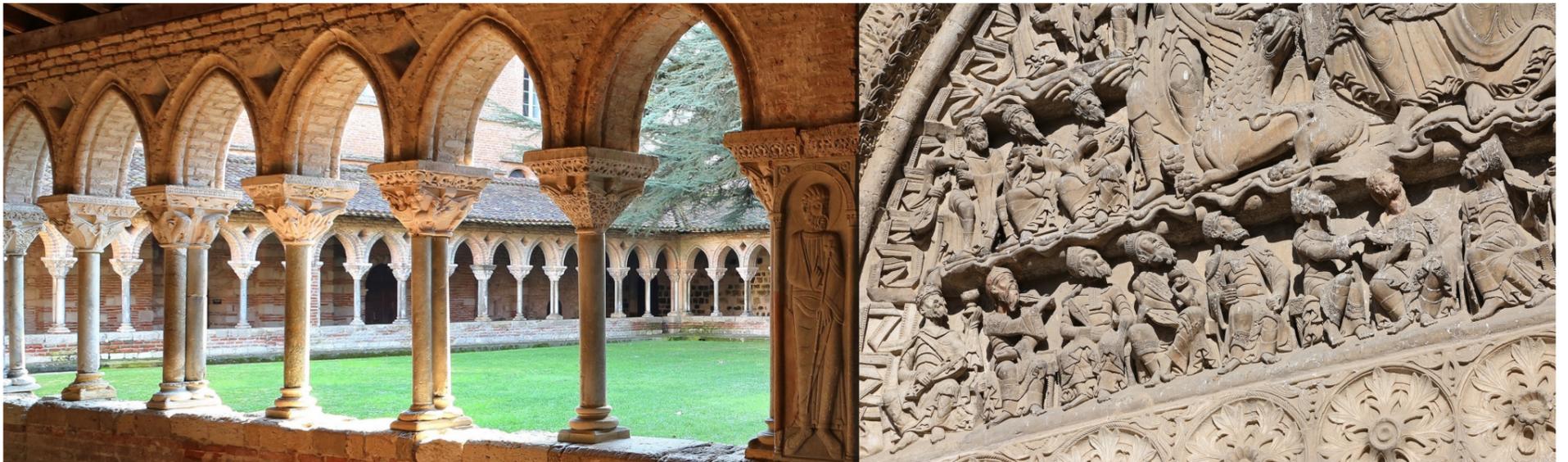
*Pillar of the Romanesque cloister*

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# ◆ A masterpiece of Romanesque Art

At the heart of the abbey is **one of the most ancient dated Romanesque cloister**, famous for the diversity and the richness of its sculpted and varied decoration on 8 pillars and **76 capitals, each one being unique**. Sculpted in 1100, it depicts plants, animals and even storiated (which mean with stories) decors. The sculpted scenes are taken from the sacred texts: Bible, Saints' Lives and martyrs...

The abbey is also famous for **its monumental portal**, one of the biggest and most richly sculpted in Europe. The tympanum, completed at the latest in the first half of the 12<sup>th</sup> century, show Christ returning on Earth at the end of time, as described in the Book of Revelation. The side parts consist of illustrations of the life of the Virgin Mary, of Jesus' childhood, the parable of Lazarus and the miser as well as representations of Deadly Sins.



Romanesque cloister

Tympanum of the Romanesque portal

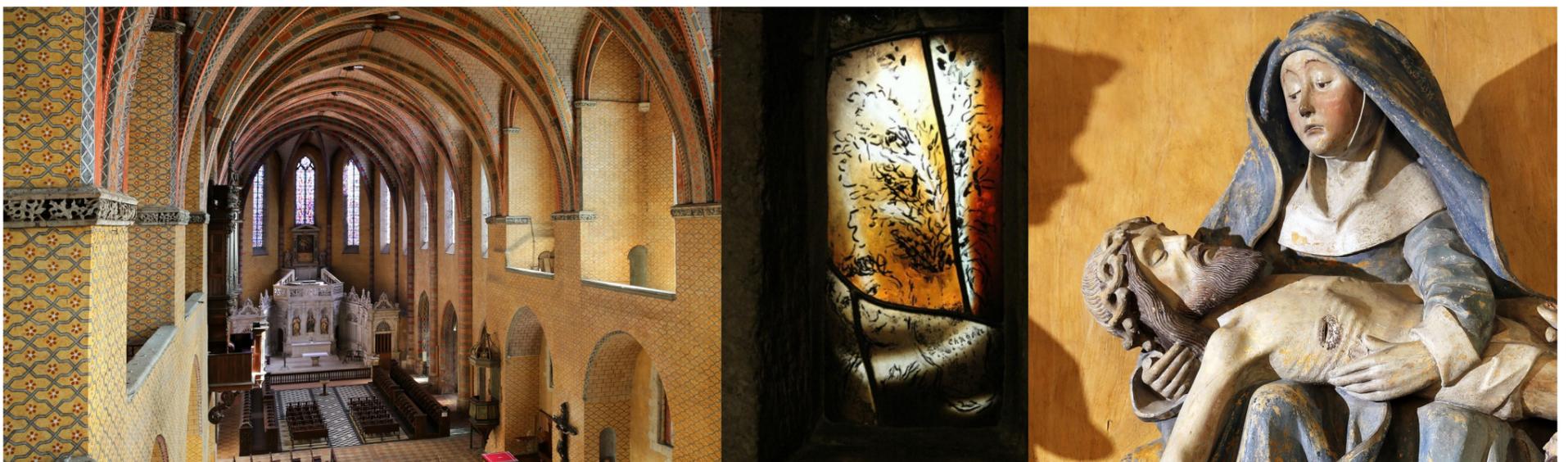
## A millenary abbey ◆

Since its foundation, the abbey has continued to evolve and rebuild itself. **Archaeological remains and furniture keep the trace of these centuries of history**. The Saint-Pierre abbey church, still used for daily religious purposes, houses many works:

- ◆ elements from the Carolingian church (9<sup>th</sup> century),
- ◆ a remarkable Romanesque Christ, looking alike the sculpture of the portal,
- ◆ major Gothic works such as these exquisite *Virgin of Lemboulari*, *Pietà* and *Entombment of Christ* from the end of the 15<sup>th</sup> century,
- ◆ contemporary stained-glass windows including a small (52 cm!) stained glass from Marc Chagall, actually on display at the Centre Pompidou Metz.

You will find what is called *le Patus* at the back of the church, next to the Pilgrim House. **The remains of a chapel dedicated to the Virgin Mary** were rediscovered there during excavations in 2013. It's also there you'll find the *Hôtellerie Sainte-Foy*, the ancient house of the abbot, and its Romanesque chapel with **frescoes from the 12<sup>th</sup> century**, restored in the 2000s. For their preservation, this chapel is only punctually open for visits or events (*European Heritage Days*). The *Hôtellerie Sainte-Foy* regularly hosts the temporary exhibitions of the Heritage Department.

As it was formerly affiliated to the abbey of Cluny in the 11<sup>th</sup> century, Moissac is also part of the network of Cluniac sites with, in its close surroundings, Saint-Maurin, Moirax and Layrac.



Saint-Pierre abbey church

Stained glass by Chagall,  
1962

Pietà from the 15<sup>th</sup> century

# A living heritage

Throughout the year, **the Heritage Department of the city applies to make this place live**, either internally or in partnership with various actors:

- ◆ guided tours, audioguides, discovery booklets and workshops for children all year long
- ◆ the abbey is the setting of the *Festival des Voix* as well as more intimist shows in the cloister or the abbey church (organs, harp, dance...),
- ◆ an unusual meeting place between the public and heritage actors: storytellers, illuminating artists, photographers, comedians, art restorers...
- ◆ hosting of *Museum of the Moon* by Luke Jerram (September 2020).



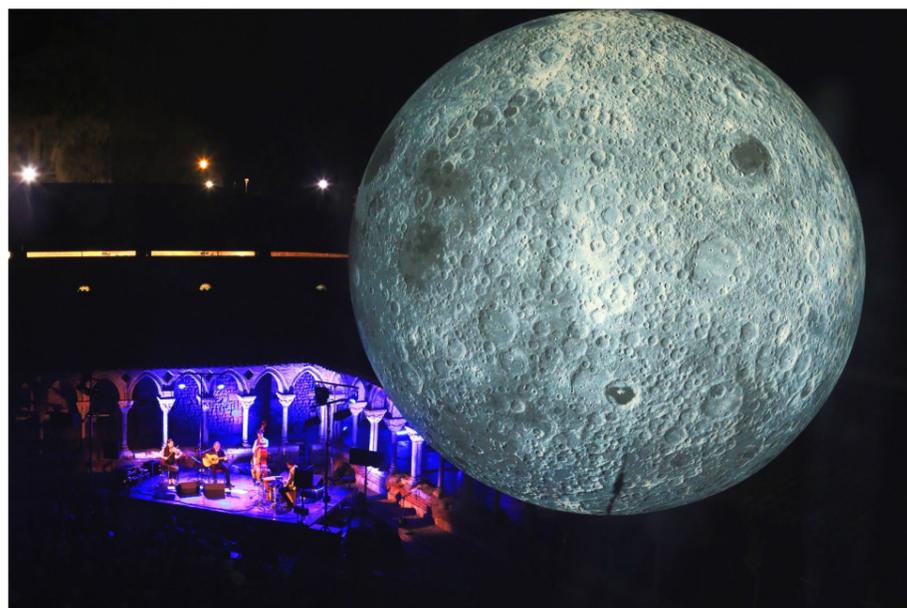
## THE ABBEY IN FEW FIGURES - 2019

**69 915 visitors**  
**4 258 pilgrims**  
**28% visitors from abroad**

**3 256 children for heritage workshops**

# A place of inspiration

The abbey inspired filmmakers as the French **Alexis Michalik** for his film *Edmond* in 2019 or another French, **Jean-Jacques Annaud**, for the famous *Name of the Rose* in 1986 with the late Sean Connery. It also inspired artists from all backgrounds such as the sculptor **Zadkine**, the musician **Marcel Pérès** and his *Ensemble Organum*, or the art photographer **Jean Dieuzaide**...



*Museum of the Moon by Luke Jerram, September 2020*

*"The beauty of these capitals in the cloister of Moissac cannot be surpassed in architectural sculpture"*

Emile-Antoine BOURDELLE, sculptor from Montauban, 1861-1929  
Quote from the Visitor's Book of the cloister in 1914

# MOISSAC, A CITY BORN FROM ITS ABBEY



Born thanks to and around its abbey, Moissac is a city rich of history and heritage, labelled **Ville d'Art et d'Histoire** (city of Art and History) in 2012. Much remains to be discovered about its Ancient past but several Gallo-Roman villas were located in the town's area. Among those, the one on which was built **the Saint-Martin church**, below the train station. It's the oldest building of Moissac. This is ancient Gallo-Roman baths converted into a place of worship, perhaps during the 7<sup>th</sup> century. The hypocaust (underfloor heating system) was moreover rediscovered by the various archaeological excavations. Its house also mural paintings from the 15<sup>th</sup> century depicting episodes of the Christ's life.



*Moissac from the sky*



*Mural painting depicting Saint James as a pilgrim*



*Saint-Martin church*

# Along the water

The **Canal de Garonne**, built in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, is going through Moissac and links the *Canal du Midi* to Castets-en-Dorthe (in Gironde, one of the French departments) to join the Atlantic Ocean, composing the *Canal des Deux Mers*. It spans the Tarn river, 2 km from the abbey, thanks to the *Pont-Canal du Cacor*, **the third longest in France**. Its former towpaths, become a bicycle green way from Bordeaux to Toulouse, its swing bridge, the last one on the canal, the serenity of the banks of the Tarn river make it a privileged place of walks and promenade for the visitors and the Moissagais (people of Moissac).



Tarn basin



Pont canal du Cacor



Chasselas grape picking

# A fruit capital

**Homeland of the Chasselas** (a variety of white eating grape), Moissac welcomes every Saturday and Sunday mornings a fruit and vegetable market, witness of the importance of fruit production in Tarn-et-Garonne. Nearly 80% of fruits from the department are produced in Moissac and the Tarn-et-Garonne is the first French department for the production of plums Reine-Claude, apples, melons....

## Art Déco district

Due to **the great flooding of March 1930**, several districts of Moissac were rebuilt in the architectural style of that time. The interplay of colours and materials, the stylised floral decorations, the geometrization of openings and the elements of ironwork reveal today **the great richness of this Art Deco vocabulary**.

The most representative monuments in Moissac are **the Hall de Paris**, formerly a sales room dedicated to *Chasselas* and nowadays a performance hall, but especially **the Uvarium** (from the Latin *uva*, the grape). This octagonal kiosk next to the Tarn river was built in 1932 and was initially used to consume *Chasselas*, fresh or in juice, in the context of cures very popular in the 30's. The mural paintings that can be seen on the outside of the monument are the work of Domergue-Lagarde, a painter from Valence-d'Agen, in 1934



Art Déco house



Kiosk of the Uvarium



Paintings from Domergue-Lagarde

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### TIMETABLES OF CLOISTER

#### July to September

10:00am to 07:00pm

#### October and April to June

10:00am to 12:00am / 02:00pm  
to 06:00pm

#### November to March

01:30pm to 05:00pm

### ENTRANCE FEES

**Full price** : 6.50€

**Reduced price** : 4.50€ (12-18 years old, students, pilgrims, persons with reduced mobility, job seekers, "éco-voyageurs")

**Children (7 to 12 years old)** : 1€

**Free admission** : children until 6 years old, Moissac Ambassador

**Family price** : 14€ (2 adults + children)

### ABBEY OF MOISSAC

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### HERITAGE DEPARTMENT

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