

A photograph of the interior of a Gothic cathedral, showing a series of high, pointed arches supported by columns. The architecture is made of light-colored stone. The perspective is from a low angle, looking down a long aisle. The lighting is soft, highlighting the textures of the stone and the depth of the arches. At the top center of the image, there is a faint handwritten number 'u 267 12'.

France

A Phaidon Cultural
Guide

in colour

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With over 800 colour illustrations
and 20 pages of maps

Phaidon



Preface

France, the hub of western Europe, is a country of stunning contrasts. Stretching from the shores of the Atlantic to the Mediterranean, its climate and scenery vary dramatically. Its architecture, adapted to suit both climate and landscape, is of a marked diversity reflecting periods of royal, imperial and republican patronage: hence the history of France can be traced in its buildings, in proud cathedrals and humble wooden churches, in romantic castles, neat manor-houses, palaces and fine country-houses.

The art of the master-builder (sometimes a famous architect, sometimes a genius whose name is unknown) is enhanced by the works of painters, decorators, sculptors, glass-makers, weavers and cabinet-makers. Often their work can be seen in its original setting; but sometimes it is transferred for safekeeping to one of France's numerous museums. And while Paris naturally has gathered together thousands of masterpieces of every period, the visitor to France will also discover many treasures on display in the provinces – in small towns as well as cities. French museums are no longer dreary warehouses of art, but complement the richly furnished and decorated churches and châteaux for which the country is justly famed.

This tourist guide to the monuments and culture of France presents a digest for visitors, concentrating on representative items of interest. It covers, of course, all the major attractions which no tourist must miss, but it also explores many out-of-the-way places and unusual items which are worthy of inclusion. The vastness of the subject has resulted in concise descriptions of France's great treasures, but significant facts of history have been included, and an attempt has been made to evoke atmosphere and put the subject in its cultural context.

As with the other guides in this series, the entries are arranged in alphabetical order for easy reference. The illustrations – which are all in colour – are placed next to the relevant text. More than 800 churches, castles, châteaux, museums, theatres and works of art are shown, including ground-plans of many important buildings.

The heading to each entry gives the name of the town, and immediately below the name and number of its geographical region (department); on the right is the number of inhabitants and a reference to the map section (pp. 410-29).

The Publishers would be grateful for notification of any errors or omissions.