

*Monastic life in the Alpes*



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At the initiative of the last king of Burgundy, Rodolphe III, and his wife Queen Ermengarde, the Benedictines of Savigny Abbey, near Lyon, settled in 1018 on Lake Annecy at Talloires. These monks played an important role in organizing the surrounding parishes, especially during the founding of Annecy. After establishing the monastery, his first prior, Saint Germain, made a pilgrimage to the Holy Land, and then returned to spend his days as a hermit in a mountain cave overlooking the bay of Talloires.

In 1084, it was among the mountains of the Chartreuse Desert that Saint Bruno retired with six companions to institute a monastic lifestyle combining solitary living with community life. Thus was born the order of the Chartreux whose monasteries stand out by the alignment of small houses, constituting the cells of the monks, around a large cloister. The Prealps were the land of choice for the Chartreux. In the Aravis, Sire Aymon de Faucigny created in 1151 the chartreuse of the remailer, which gave a considerable impetus to the production of cheese in this mountain massif. In the heart of the Bauges, the Chartreuse d'Aillon was founded in 1178 by the Count of Savoie Humbert III and was at the origin of an original metallurgical industry.



The development of the Cîteaux order in the twelfth century saw the Cistercians settle in 1132 at Tamié, a pass of the Bauges, making communication between the Isère valley and the basin of Lake Annecy. The first abbot, St Peter of Tarentaise, after having established the monastery, became archbishop of Moûtiers where he developed an intense reform, charitable and diplomatic activity. The monks of Tamié also engaged in metallurgy and cheese production. The latter is still their specialty today. To return to the strict observance of the rule, in 1677 they adopted the Trappist reform. The monastery of Hautecombe, founded in 1121 on the mountain of Cessens, was integrated into the Cistercian order in 1135 under the influence of Saint Bernard of Clairvaux. He then transferred to the shores of Lac du Bourget. The abbey had great abbots like Saint Amédée who was then bishop of Lausanne, Henri de Massy who became abbot of Clairvaux, legate of the pope in Cathar country and who consecrated Notre-Dame de Paris in 1182, or Geoffroy d'Auxerre, secretary and biographer of Saint Bernard. From 1189 onwards, the abbey church of Hautecombe became the necropolis of the Counts of Savoy. Mother house of Fossanova Abbey in Lazio, Hautecombe introduced Cistercian life in Greece and Constantinople in the 13th century.

In 1932, it was the Carmelites who established themselves in the old chartreuse of the reposing place, at the initiative of Mother Mary of Jesus of Rudini, prioress of the Carmel

of Paray-le-Monial and already founder of the Carmels of Valenciennes and Montmartre. Since then, nuns have led a life of prayer and work, humble and fraternal, in fidelity to the spirit of St Teresa of Avila and St John of the Cross.

As for the abbey of Hautecombe, after being occupied by Benedictines from 1922 to 1992, it is now the seat of an important community of the Chemin Neuf, illustration of the new forms of consecrated life born in the second half of the 20th century. A Jesuit, Father Laurent Fabre, in Lyon in 1973, founded the Chemin Neuf. Because of the charismatic movement, this Catholic community with an ecumenical vocation brings together couples with children, brothers and sisters who are committed to celibacy, and priests. Each year, during various sessions, Hautecombe welcomes hundreds of young people for liturgical prayer, the spiritual exercises of St Ignatius of Loyola, biblical formation and theological formation.

However, there is yet another way to seek God in the Alps today. This one witnessed by the marvelous paintings of Arcabas chose to live in the middle of the Chartreuse massif. In it, he scrutinizes the Bible in a monacal silence and restores us with his brushes, with immense talent, the profound resonance that the Word of God awakens in him.

## ONE-DAY PROGRAM

# *Benedictines from Talloires to the cistercians of Tamié*

Benedictine life was codified in Monte Cassino around 540 by St Benedict when he wrote his Rule of the Monks, the fruit of his long experience of monastic life. This rule considers that the life of a hermit presents serious difficulties and should be adopted only by those who have long been trained in monastic life within a community. It therefore proposes a fraternal life in a monastery, under the guidance of an abbot, with the aim of seeking God in prayer and work, and for the means of obedience, silence and humility. Superseding all other rules, it eventually became the foundation of Western monasticism. The manner in which it was applied involved a variety of interpretations, which prompted many reforms as soon as it was felt that they had departed from the spirit of St Benedict.

In reaction to the clunisian order's interpretation of it (excessive length of services, addition of new liturgical celebrations, abandonment of manual labour, softening of asceticism, centralization in an order governed by the sole Abbot of Cluny) In 1098, the Cistercian order was born, concerned with authenticity in its desire to apply the whole rule, but only the rule. Thus, the Cistercians are only reformed Benedictines. However, the order of Cîteaux knew in its turn drifts and was divided in the 17th century into two tendencies: the Common observance and strict observance of which the most famous monastery was that of the Trappe, in the Perche, hence the name of trappists given to the Cistercians who adopted its reform.

### *Talloires, Saint-Germain, Tamié*

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Romanesque and Gothic parts, was demolished following the Revolution. Various elements of its decoration have been reused in several houses of the village. Behind the hotel, the European centre of Boston's Tuft's University occupies the so-called priory building, the former residence of the Priors, and then the vicarious abbots. It is the oldest surviving housing body, with parts dating back to the Middle Ages.

In a limestone cliff overlooking Talloires and offering a stunning view of the lake and the mountains opens a cave where St Germain, the first prior of Talloires, lived as a hermit. After instituting the monastery, he obtained permission from the abbot of Savigny to make a pilgrimage to the Holy Land, and then, upon his return, to end his days in this cave which is still the object of popular devotion.



The steles of a Way of the Cross mark the rocky path that connects the cave to the church where the relics of Saint Germain are venerated. Rebuilt in the second half of the 19th century in Gothic Revival style, this small church of Saint-Germain-sur-Talloires has preserved a baroque high altar mounted of a simple but very elegant altarpiece.

In a landscape of mountains very characteristic of the Prealps, the Abbey of Tamié occupies a pass of the massif of Bauges making communicating the basin of Lake Annecy with the Combe de Savoie. It was founded in 1132 by the Abbey of Bonnevaux en Dauphiné, itself from Cîteaux. However, there is nothing left of the monastery built by Saint Peter of Tarentaise in the twelfth century. The abbey, in fact, was completely rebuilt in the 17th century, after adopting the Trappist reform in 1677. The interior of the church produces a strong impression by the exposed stones of its walls stripped in the 1960s. At the dawn of the 21st century, Arcabas designed the altar, the Ambon, the tabernacle, the glorious cross, the Virgin of Salve, the torches and the seat of the celebrant. The monks have long practiced a major metallurgical activity and until now, their cheese enjoys a flattering reputation. Chosen in 1967 to experience a new divine service sung in French, they soon became famous for the beauty of their liturgy. It attracts a large number of the faithful, and many come to retreat in this monastery attentive to a warm welcome. The Tibhérine drama, of which two monks were from Tamié, aroused renewed interest in this Savoyard monastery, whose history and daily life are presented to visitors through an audio-visual spectacle.



## TWO-DAY PROGRAM

# *Contemplative Perspectives: Arcabas, Chartreux and Cistercians*

Drawn from the heart of the Chartreuse massif, the painter Arcabas has scrutinized the Word of God since the time of his youth, like a monk applied to lectio divina. This lover of the Bible gives us the eternal message in his colourful paintings, where gold bears witness to the divine presence. In the silence of the painter's workshop, in the silence of the Chartreux cell or in the silence of the Cistercian's scriptorium, it is the same quest for God pursued by man with a burning heart.

### Day 1

#### *Talloires, Saint-Germain, Tamié*

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## Day 2

### *La Grande Chartreuse, Saint-Hugues de Chartreuse*

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Just as the road that goes up the valley of Guiers Mort left Saint-Laurent-du-Pont it penetrates the grandiose Desert of Chartreuse where access was once forbidden to men in arms and women.

It was there that in 1084 the Bishop of Grenoble, Saint Hugues, set up St Bruno and his six companions in search of a solitude in which to seek God in silence and prayer. Dominated by the steep summit of the Great Som, the initial hermitage, located at 1175m, was swept away by an avalanche in 1132.



It was transferred slightly below; where the 40,000 m<sup>2</sup> of roofs of today is, imposing buildings are located. These date from the 17th century, almost completely rebuilt after a fire in 1676, the eighth in the history of the monastery. However, the Great Chartreuse is not to be visited. Only a walk allows you to see the buildings from the outside. On the other hand, the Correrie, the residence of the monastery treasurer, of the brothers and later of the sick or elderly monks, was transformed into a magnificent museum that allows us to discover the history of the Chartreux, their surroundings, their spirituality, their daily life, their liturgy and their activities such as logging, metallurgy or the development of their famous liqueur.

The peaceful village of Saint-Hugues-de-Chartreuse, at the foot of the tiny pyramid of Chamechaude, which stands at 2082 m above sea level, has a modest 19th-century church that is vaguely neo-Romanesque. However, we have to push the door and it is the surprise to discover a parish church that is at the same time departmental museum of contemporary art. The stunning scenery of extreme thematic richness is a true theophany. It is the work of one man, the work of an entire life, the culmination of a tireless meditation on the Bible. This man is the painter Arcabas who lives in Saint-Pierre-de-Chartreuse, the neighbouring village. Three major periods saw the creation of this unique setting. In 1952, in a world still marked by the war that has just ended, man's life, marked by the commandments of God, came to surround the nave with austere black paintings on a dark red background, to find its culmination in the Eucharist, which covers the rounding of the apse. In 1973, this setting was

surmounted by joyful paintings evoking the jubilation of Psalm 150 with the appearance of gold as a sign of the divine presence. In 1985, under the original decor, the predelle takes place, the many tablecases of which bring the Gospel to the height of our gaze. There would be so much to say about this monumental catechesis. From the angels who guard the door of the church, to the angel who supports the tabernacle. From the baptismal font to the altar. From the Mother of whom the Son was born in the southern transept, to the Calvary from which the Church was born in the northern transept...



## PROGRAMME SUR DEUX JOURS

### *De la vie bénédictine à la vie d'ermite, de la vie cistercienne à celle du Chemin Neuf, de la vie des chartreux à la vie des carmélites*

Apart from Tamié, where Cistercian life is still going on, most Savoyard monasteries have changed communities over the ages: in Hautecombe, the Cistercians were replaced by Benedictines and then by a community of the Chemin Neuf, while at the remainder the Chartreux gave way to Carmelites. Some monasteries have even ceased to exist: in Talloires, the mundane life of a luxurious hotel succeeded the prayers of the Benedictines, but in the mountain overlooking the ancient monastery the grotto of Saint Germain remains a high place of prayer; at the chartreuse of Aillon, it is the Heritage House of the Regional Natural Park of Bauges that was built in the only building that survived the destruction of the monastery.

#### Day1

##### *Talloires, Saint-Germain, Tamié*

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Founded in 1018 in the enchanting setting of a bay on Lake Annecy, protected to the north by the Roc de Chère, the Talloires Monastery was for a long time a mere priory of Savigny Abbey. After fervent beginnings illustrated by holy monks, some of whom finished their lives as hermits, like Saint Germain or Saint Ruph, the monastery experienced a serious decline from the end of the Middle Ages. In the 17th century, he attracted the full attention of Saint Francis de Sales, who tried to reform him by detaching him from Savigny. In 1618, Talloires became an autonomous abbey and was eventually incorporated into the Benedictine congregation of Monte Cassino in 1674. It was then that the monastic buildings, with the exception of the church, were completely rebuilt. They now form the setting of a luxurious hotel. The church, which juxtaposed pre-Romanesque, Romanesque and Gothic parts, was demolished following the Revolution. Various elements of its decoration have been reused in several houses of the village. Behind the hotel, the European centre of Boston's Tuft's University occupies the so-called priory building, the former residence of the Priors, and then the honorary abbots. It is the oldest surviving housing body, with parts dating back to the Middle Ages.

In a limestone cliff overlooking Talloires and offering on the lake and the mountains a view of a striking beauty, a cave opens where lived as a hermit Saint Germain, the first Prior of Talloires. After having instituted the monastery, he obtained the permission of the abbot of Savigny to make a pilgrimage to the Holy Land, then, upon his return, to end his days in this

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## Jour 2

### *Hautecombe, Aillon, le Reposoir*

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Bathed by the waters of Lake Bourget, in an isolated and wild site, the abbey of Hautecombe brought here the name of the high combe where it had been founded in 1121, on the other side of the lake, on the mountain of Cessens. This transfer occurred after the monastery had adopted the Cistercian reform in 1135, under the influence of Saint Bernard of Clairvaux. From 1189, the abbey church became the necropolis of the Counts of Savoy. To shelter their remains, Aymon the Pacific had the Chapel of the Princes built in 1339, a beautiful transposition of the French Gothic into Savoyard land. In 1518, the flamboyant Gothic style rose brightly in the funerary chapel, which Abbé Claude d'Estavayer added, against the church façade. However, monastic life was then in decline, following the use of giving the abbey in commende to an abbot who was not a monk. The buildings that were no longer maintained deteriorated inexorably. At the end of the 18th century, with the exception of the church, the monastery was rebuilt in noble architecture.

Following the Revolution, the church was transformed into an earthenware factory. Between 1824 and 1837, it had to be completely restored by King Charles-Félix and his wife, Queen Marie-Christine. Based on the flamboyant Gothic style of the Estavayer chapel, these works were carried out in the troubadour Gothic spirit by the Turin architect Ernesto Melano. It was then that a lush decor came to hide the Cistercian simplicity of the building, whose walls and pillars were populated with innumerable sculptures in memory of the princes and princesses of the House of Savoie that lie in this place. Charles-Félix and Marie-Christine wanted to be buried at Hautecombe. The statue of the king, by Benedetto Cacciatori, and that of the queen, by Giuseppe Albertoni, are true masterpieces, just like a splendid Pietà also due to the talent of Cacciatori.

After the recovery of the Cistercians in the 19th century, Hautecombe was entrusted in 1922 to the Benedictines of Sainte-Marie-Madeleine in Marseilles. During the Second World War, they welcomed Cardinal Hlond, Primate of Poland, whom the Gestapo stopped at the monastery in 1944. Overwhelmed by tourist traffic incompatible with the calm and silence required by monastic life, the Benedictines left Hautecombe in 1992 and moved to Ganagobie in the Alpes de Haute-Provence. Under the authority of the Archbishop of Chambéry, it is the community of the Chemin Neuf that now watches over the princely tombs. Finally, it was at Hautecombe that the last reigning rulers of the House of Savoy wished to be buried: King Humbert II in 1983 and Queen Marie-José in 2001.

The establishment of the Chartreux in the valley of Lourdens, within the massif of Bauges, is the work of Blessed Count of Savoie Humbert III, founder in 1178 of the monastery of Aillon. As was customary, a Correrie filtered access to the monastery itself to preserve the absolute silence of the cells where the fathers lived their lives of loneliness. In the Correrie there lived Father Mail, that is, the treasurer, surrounded by the brothers devoted to the various works ensuring the subsistence of the community. From the Correrie there remains the Saint-Michel chapel, renovated in baroque style in the 18th century, and a farm building. As for the monastery itself, it was completely rebuilt in the 1650s. Destroyed after the Revolution, there remains only a beautiful portal re-employed in the parish church of Aillon-le-Jeune, and the hotel building, construction that replaced the Correrie by housing the brothers and welcoming the visitors. The interior façade of the hotel is bordered by arcades in basket coves, surmounted by a gallery bordered by an elegant turned wooden balustrade. It is now the Heritage House of the Bauges Regional Natural Park. In addition to several works of art from the Charterhouse, a model of its state in the 17th century, a presentation of monastic life in the Bauges, and more particularly of Cartusian life, the Maison du Patrimoine evokes the different economic activities of this pre-alpine massif where the Chartreux played a major role in the cultivation, exploitation of forests and livestock, but also in an original metallurgical production specializing in the manufacture of nails for frames and for fixing slate.

In 1151, it was in the Aravis massif, at the foot of Pointe Percée, which peaked at 2,750 m, that the sire of Faucigny Aymon I, surrounded by his brothers Arducus, bishop of Geneva, and Pons, Abbot of Sixt, founded the chartreuse of the reposing machine. The first prior was Blessed John of Spain, who came from the Charterhouse of Montrieux.



The church and the small cloister were rebuilt in the 15th century. All the other buildings were the result of a general reconstruction undertaken in 1686, when the Chartreux had developed their cheese production using Gruyère armailis. The reception buildings, the buildings reserved for community life and the cells of the Fathers aligned around the large cloister are perfect examples of what a Cartusian monastery is. However, since 1932 Carmelites have succeeded the Chartreux. This transformation of the chartreuse into Carmel was the work of Mother Mary of Jesus, Prioress of the Carmel of Paray-le-Monial, founder of the Carmels of Valenciennes and Montmartre. This Carmelite of a strong personality had had a rather restless youth. Alessandra di Rudini, daughter of a mayor of Palermo who was several times Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Italy, was a friend of Queen Marguerite and Emperor William II of Germany. Widowed at 24 years of the Marquis Carlotti di Riparbella, she became the passionate mistress of the poet Gabriele of Annunzio, before being caught up by grace...