

## WHAT IS ROMANESQUE STYLE ?

The term "Romanesque art" appears in art history at the beginning of the 19th century. Arcisse de Caumont (1801-1873), the father of archeology in the Middle Ages used the term to name 11th and 12th century churches and defined it as being descended from Roman art, exactly in the same way as Romanesque languages ( French, Italian, Spanish, etc.) are descended from the Romans' language. Romanesque architecture is characterized by its stone materials (rubble stone or freestone), its narrow or medium-sized windows, its vaults and semi-circular Roman arches.

The Gothic arch (referred to as 'pointed' in the past) also appeared at that period, as you will discover in Paray-le-Monial among others. It will be used later on in Gothic architecture, associated with diagonal rib arches, flying buttresses and huge windows which materialized the triumph of light. In Paray-le-Monial, you will find the first Gothic capitals of the area (at the beginning of the 13th century) and the chapel of Damas-Digoine belongs to the flamboyant Gothic style.



Why such an exceptional abundance and density? The Charolais-Brionnais possesses an exceptional number of Romanesque churches. This profusion of edifices built within a very short period (mid-11th-mid 12th centuries) can be explained by its local land wealth and the expansion of religious power (the development of monasteries, parishes, the assertion of papacy with the Gregorian reform, etc.)

In Charolais-Brionnais this abundance appeared in a particularly eventful context. On the one hand, thanks to the growing power of the Cluniac Abbey church which built up an important network of dependencies, notably under the leadership of Hugh of Semur (1024-1109), born in Semur-en-Brionnais. On the other hand, owing to the resistance orchestrated by the bishops of Autun and Mâcon to the development of non-Cluniac monasteries, such as Anzy-le-Duc, Saint-Germain-en-Brionnais or Saint-Rigaud (nowadays destroyed). The high quality of these Romanesque edifices had permitted most of them to stand the test of time and preserve their original aspects.

## A GREAT DIVERSITY

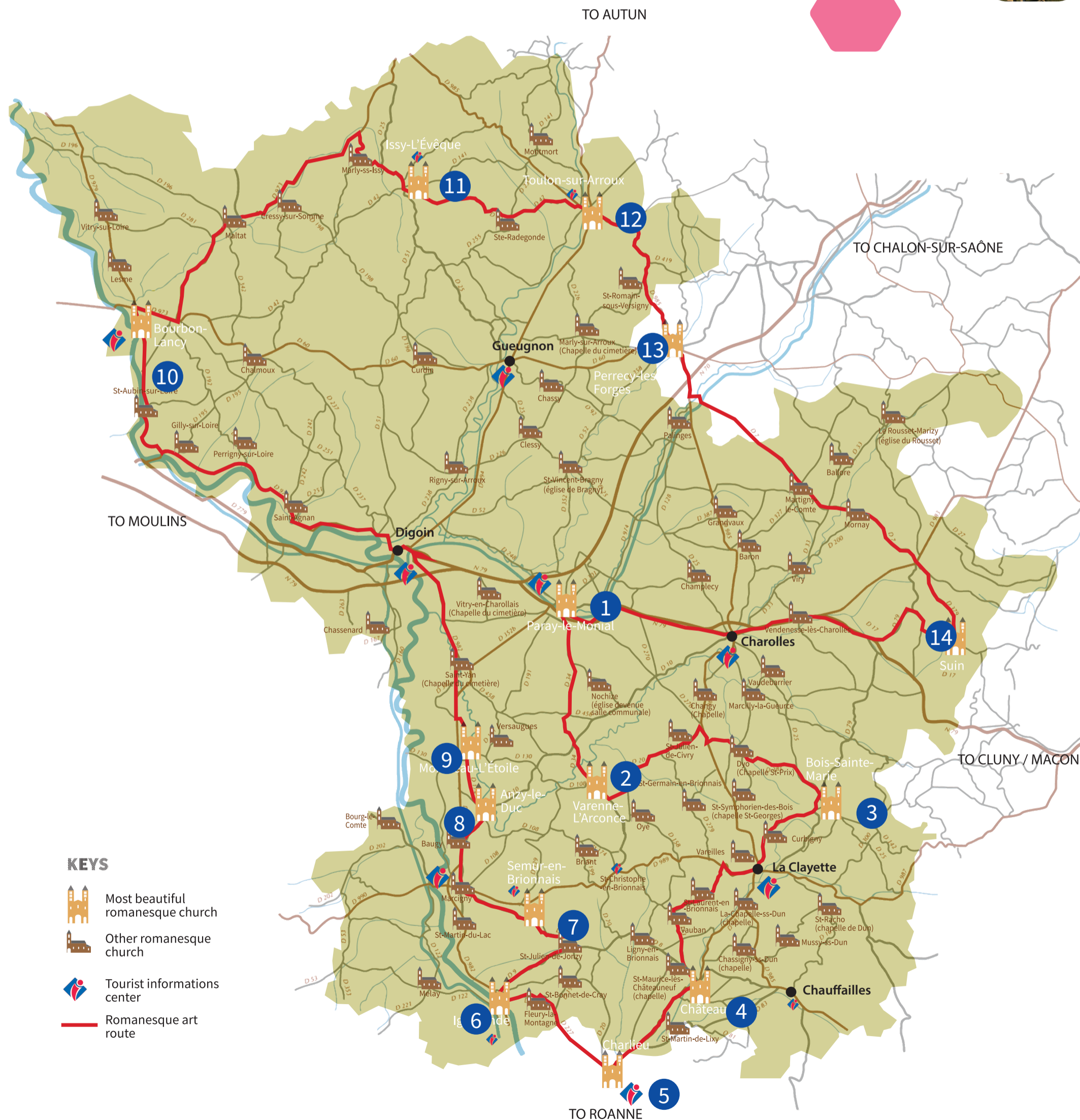
The Romanesque period is a most fascinating period of architectural research, aiming at combining the penetration of light - an outward sign of God-in-side churches with a particular mode of stonework: the stone-built vault. In Charolais-Brionnais, builders had experienced a great variety of vaulting: semi-circular barrel vaults, Gothic barrel vault, groin barrel vaults, cross barrel vaults or cupolas.

This variety is also found in the materials used which show the geological complexity of the soil (sandstone, Bajocian limestone or granite), in the decorations and the sizes of the edifices.




Thus, one should differentiate great achievements (Paray-le-Monial, Anzy-le-Duc, Marcigny, Semur-en-Brionnais or else Issy-l'Évêque and Perrecy-les-Forges), from medium-sized edifices (Varennes-l'Arconce, Iguerande) and from small churches with only one nave (Baugy).

These churches were at their times decorated with sometimes historiated frescoes, such as in Anzy-le-Duc, Saint-Martin-la Vallée or Gourdon. But for most of them, those frescoes had been worn away by time or had not resisted to too drastic restorations (notably in the 19th century). The sculpted décor has better lived through ages. Its profusion may come from the materials which lent themselves admirably to the expertise of

sculptors whose skills had not ceased developing between the 11th century and the end of the 12th century. From an austere décor, a little crude, they came to a most mastered sculpture (Anzy-le-Duc, Montceaux-l'Etoile) up to the final exuberance.



### KEYS

-  Most beautiful romaneseque church
-  Other romaneseque church
-  Tourist informations center
-  Romaneseque art route

## ROMANESQUE STYLE THE PATHS OF THE ITINERARY



EDUCATION IS THE MOST  
POWERFUL WEAPON WHICH  
YOU CAN USE TO CHANGE  
THE WORLD.

Nelson Mandela, politician

### Your tourists informations Centers :

<p><b>Office de Tourisme et du Thermalisme de Bourbon-Lancy</b> Place de la Mairie - 71140 BOURBON-LANCY 03 85 80 18 27 contact@tourisme-bourbonlancy.com www.tourisme-bourbonlancy.com</p>	<p><b>Office de Tourisme de Paray-le-Monial</b> 25 av. Jean-Paul II - 71600 PARAY-LE-MONIAL 03 85 81 10 92 contact@tourisme-paraylemonial.fr www.tourisme-paraylemonial.fr</p>
<p><b>Office de Tourisme Entre Arroux, Loire et Somme</b> 1 rue Pasteur - 71130 GUEUGNON 03 85 85 56 90 ot@cceals.fr www.cceals.fr</p>	<p><b>Office de Tourisme Sud Brionnais - La Clayette</b> 3, route de Charolles - 71800 LA CLAYETTE 03 85 28 16 35 officedetourisme@bsb71.fr www.tourisme-sudbrionnais.fr</p>
<p><b>Office de tourisme Le Grand Charolais - Digoine</b> 7, rue Nationale - 71160 DIGOINE 03 85 53 00 81 tourisme@legrandcharolais.fr www.tourisme.legrandcharolais.fr</p>	<p><b>Office de Tourisme Sud Brionnais - Chauffailles (BIT)</b> 1, rue Gambetta - 71170 CHAUFFAILLES 03 85 26 07 06 officedetourisme@bsb71.fr www.tourisme-sudbrionnais.fr</p>
<p><b>Office de tourisme Le Grand Charolais - Charolles (BIT)</b> 24 rue Baudinot - 71120 CHAROLLES 03 85 24 05 95 tourisme@legrandcharolais.fr www.tourisme.legrandcharolais.fr</p>	<p><b>Office de Tourisme de Marcigny-Semur</b> Place des Halles - 71110 MARCIGNY 03 85 25 39 06 otmarcignysemur@gmail.com www.brionnais-tourisme.fr</p>

Traduction : Cabinet Vasil  
Conception graphique : Romain Millet, d'après Des Signes studio Michiel Desclouys 2018  
Credits photos : R. Millet, A. Michel, PETR/DSL/COM2Y, OTT Bourbon-Lancy, Mission  
Tourisme 71, O. Vancollie.  
Impression : Alpha Numériq - édition 2026

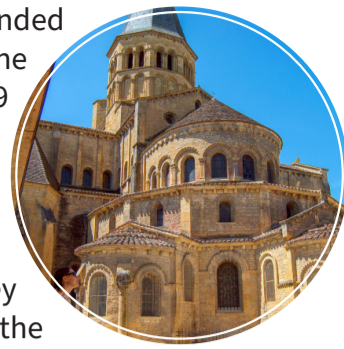


### 1 Basilica of the Sacred Heart of Paray-le-Monial

Benedictine priory founded in 973 and given to the abbey of Cluny in 999

- Built in the twelfth century and early thirteen century
- Building giving an image of the great abbey of Cluny III, built at the same time and destroyed in the years 1800-1820 : Tripartite elevation (3 levels), pointed arch, antique decoration and chevet with ambulatory and radiating chapels (characteristic element of pilgrimage churches)
- Painted decoration of the XVth century on the cul-de-four (vault of the choir)
- Chapelle des Damas-Digoine (15th century)

**Worth seeing :** benedictian cloister 18th c.



### 2 Church of Saint-Pierre-aux-Liens of Varenne-l'Arconce



Former Cluniac priory, given to Cluny around 1045, having served as a parish church, and seat of a deanery of 23 parishes

- Built in the twelfth century
- Massive bell tower built in sandstone like the rest of the building
- Tympanum carved representing the mystical lamb
- Pointed arch, painted gothic decoration (XIII-XIV<sup>th</sup> century).

### 3 Church of the Nativity of the Virgin of Bois-Sainte-Marie

Parish church under the patronage of Cluny Abbey

- Former royal castellany
- Built at the end of the eleventh century
- Saved from ruin in the nineteenth century by the architect Eugène Millet, a pupil of Viollet-Le-Duc
- Triple colonnaded ambulatory
- Cycle of capitals illustrating the clash between good and evil.

**Worth seeing:** old medieval village, houses of the sixteenth century.



### 4 Church of Saint-Paul de Châteauneuf

Parish church placed from the thirteenth century under the patronage of the collegiate church of Saint-Paul de Lyon, at the head of several parishes

- Former royal castellany
- Built in the mid-twelfth century
- Restored in the fifteenth century.

- Abundantly decorated bell tower considered as «the» model of the Burgundian bell tower by Viollet-Le-Duc
- Bedside with staggered chapels
- Position overlooking the old medieval village.

**Worth seeing:** The village and its antique dealers.



### 5 Church of Saint-Fortuné de Charlieu

Church of Saint-Fortuné de Charlieu Monastery founded in 872 and attached to the Abbey of Cluny in 932

- Major priory in the Cluniac network
- Construction in the eleventh-twelfth centuries
- We discover a real evolution of the sculpture by passing from the west portal (very sober representation of Christ in majesty) to the portals of the front nave, more exuberant (representation of a Christ in glory and the wedding of Cana)

**Worth seeing:** Cloister and chapter house of the fifteenth century, exceptional set of Gothic houses of the thirteenth-fourteenth centuries, located in the historic center of Charlieu.



### 6 Church of Saint-Marcel d'Iguerande

Parish church under the patronage of the priory of Marcigny, whose income was used to celebrate masses for the father of St-Hugues

- Construction at the end of the eleventh century
- Balance between a massive exterior architecture, an interior architecture of great sobriety (dark nave) and a rich carved decoration (bases and capitals of the pillars)



**Worth seeing :** The old town and the view of the plain of the Loire.

### 7 Chapel of Saint-Martin-la-Vallée de Semur-en-Brionnais

Parish church until 1274, placed under the patronage of the barony of Semur, and relegated to the rank of chapel in favor of the collegiate church of Saint-Hilaire

- Construction in the eleventh century
- Numerous Romanesque (XII<sup>th</sup> c.) and Gothic (XIII-XVI<sup>th</sup>) paintings
- Side bell tower (unique layout in Brionnais).

**Worth seeing :** Old castle village, castle Saint Hugues (tenth century). Mansions of the XVI and XVIII<sup>th</sup> c.



### 7 Saint-Hilaire church in Semur-en-Brionnais

Collegiate church built at the request of the lords of Semur, marking the links of the family from which the great abbot of Cluny, Saint Hugh, came with the powerful abbey

- Built at the end of the XIIth century (one of the last roman churches in the Brionnais)
- Carved tympanum representing the life of Saint Hilary, a rare iconographic theme
- Tripartite elevation and antique decoration
- Astonishing corbelled tribune imitating that of Cluny III.

**Worth seeing:** Old castle town and castle Saint Hugues (tenth century). Mansions of the sixteenth-eighteenth centuries.



### 8 Church of Notre-Dame-de-l'Assomption in Anzy-le-Duc

Priory founded by Hugh of Poitiers (died c. 925) and placed under the protection of the bishopric of Autun

- Important place of pilgrimage in the Middle Ages
- Built late eleventh-early XIIth century
- Octagonal bell tower, a masterpiece.
- Abundant carved decoration (tympanum, modillions, capitals)
- Paintings of the twelfth, thirteen and fourteen centuries.
- Unique crypta in Charolais-Brionnais.



**Worth seeing :** former priory buildings (Tower and Romanesque portal)

### 9 Church of Saint-Pierre-et-Saint-Paul de Montceaux-l'Etoile

Parish church under the patronage of the priory of Anzy-le-Duc

- Construction in the twelfth century
- Sculpted tympanum, one of the most beautiful in Brionnais, representing a scene of the Ascension full of movement
- Funerary chapel in baroque style, built by the Marquis Abel de Vichy, lord of the place in the eighteenth century
- Contemporary stained glass windows by Father Kim En Joong.



### 10 Church of Saint-Nazaire de Bourbon-Lancy

Spa town of Roman foundation then seat of a barony during the Middle Ages

- Priory church placed under the patronage of the abbey of Cluny in 1030, converted into a museum since the nineteenth century
- Construction in the XI<sup>th</sup> century
- Plan of Carolingian inspiration and nave framed with great sobriety (absence of carved decoration)
- Chevet with staggered chapels of remarkable proportions.

**Worth seeing :** medieval quarter with its belfry and its wooden house dating back from the XV<sup>th</sup> century



### 11 Saint-Jacques Church in Issy-l'Evêque

Parish church, stage on the way to Santiago de Compostela

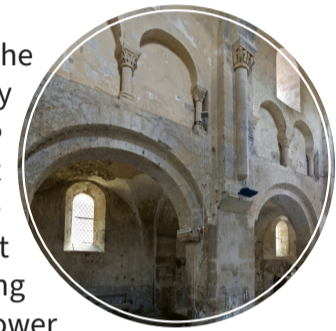
- Fief that belonged for 900 years to the bishops of Autun
- Construction in the second half of the twelfth century.
- Position of the bell tower on the façade, very original
- Stylistic evolution in the nave: passage from the semicircular arch in the east to the pointed arch in the west
- Fifteenth-century wooden tabernacle with a beautiful decoration of swans faced.



### 12 Saint-Jean-Baptiste church of Toulon-sur-Arroux

Parish church under the patronage of the priory of Paray-le-Monial

- After the Revolution, it served as a barn, garage and parish hall
- Built at the end XIth- beginning XIIth century
- Bell tower transformed into a watchtower in the Gothic period
- Tripartite elevation and vaulting of ridges
- Capitals in archaic style.



### 13 Church of Saint-Pierre-et-Saint-Benoît de Perrecy-les-Forges

Priory founded between 885 and 908, placed under the patronage of the abbey of Saint Benoît-sur-Loire, Cluniac dependency

- Construction in the years 1020-1030
- Revisions in the thirteenth, fourteenth, sixteenth and nineteenth centuries.

- Building of the first Romanesque age with basilical plan of Carolingian churches and frame nave
- Fully carved entrance portal: tympanum, bases and capitals of the columns

CHURCH CLOSED TO THE PUBLIC



### 14 Church of the Assumption of the Virgin of Suin

Site of Celtic and Roman occupation, then royal castellany in the Middle Ages

- Parish church placed under the protection of the bishopric of Autun
- Built in the 12th century.
- Nave extended in the 19th century.
- Paintings of the choir dating back from the 12th to the 18th centuries

**Worth seeing :** Exceptional panorama over the Charolais mountains

