

Western art



In the Paris suburb, about 80 km from the city, there stands the one of the most exquisite samples of the French cathedrals of Gothic style, the Chartres. Numerous works on this subject somehow mention that “ Gothic architecture began with the quantum leap of Chartres Cathedral, France” (Vickers, 1999). To be more specific about the interior architecture of this building, let us come inside. There are several unique architectural features, ‘ cutting-edge’ for the 12th century, introduced in the edifice.

First and the most outstanding of them, the flying buttresses, have greatly contributed in the whole architectural solution represented by higher ceiling and thinner walls, which later became typical for Gothic structures. The buttresses allowed redistributing of the roof load outdoors, and helped to avoid the old practice of thick, heavy walls. Generally, the Cathedral was built in Latin-crossed configuration, as we can see on the plan:

As we enter the cathedral, our attention is primarily drawn by multiple arches (another peculiarity of cathedral’s architecture), the stained-glass windows composed of the hundreds of geometrically shaped glass pieces, and the sculptures illustrating Old Testament scenes. By moving on between the two towers, we are walking over the famous labyrinth, and can see numerous arcades on the both North and South Naves, with clerestory and stained glass above.

As we look back to the entrance, we notice one of the three rose windows on the west front. Passing the aspiring aisles leads us to the Crossing, the central part of the building, wider and more spacious. On the left transept

our glance is immediately grabbed by the wall painting of Saints fronting the 'Virgin and Child' painting on the opposite transept.

At the same time we are enjoying the view of cross-type vaulting and upper north and south walls including more rose windows. After the Crossing, we are finally reaching the Choir section and the Ambulatory. The apse of the cathedral is represented with 5 Radiating Chapels. The Chartres Cathedral that we have nowadays, despite fire damages and further restoration, is one of the finest examples of the French Gothic architecture.