



**MUSÉE DE CLUNY**  
le monde médiéval

**PRESS RELEASE**  
October 2024

## LEAFING THROUGH NOTRE-DAME. MASTERPIECES OF THE MEDIEVAL LIBRARY

The history of Notre-Dame cannot be solely defined by its famous building: it has also been shaped by books, manuscripts and prints which were used for worship or study. From 19 November 2024 to 16 March 2025, the Musée de Cluny – Musée National du Moyen Âge in Paris is deep diving into the Bibliothèque nationale de France (BnF) collections for the 'Feuilletter Notre-Dame. Chefs-d'œuvre de la bibliothèque médiévale' (Leafing through Notre-Dame. Masterpieces of the Medieval Library) exhibition, organised in collaboration with the BnF.

Since 1756 most of Notre-Dame's medieval manuscripts – some 300 documents – have been stored at the BnF. And now the Musée de Cluny exhibition is revealing the richness of this collection through a curated selection of around 40 documents. In addition to precious medieval manuscripts from the Department of Manuscripts and the Bibliothèque de l'Arsenal in Paris (part of the BnF), it features two illuminated pages from the Musée de Cluny's collections, five chapter registers documenting the cathedral's book management; three manuscripts and a map on loan from the Archives nationales, as well as an illuminated manuscript from the Archives historiques de l'Archevêché.

Structured around four key themes – library management, text books, witnesses to worship and the future of the medieval library in modern times – the visitor journey offers a snapshot of the cathedral's rich intellectual, artistic and religious life during the Middle Ages.

The first section examines the history and management of the library, providing visitors with an insight into the structure and organisation of a cathedral library in the medieval period. Among the items on display, the public will have the opportunity to discover, for the very first time, two heritage acquisitions that have recently been added to Notre-Dame's collection in the BnF's Department of Manuscripts: a missal from around 1400 and a 16th-century ritual.

The Notre-Dame library was one of the very first 'public' libraries in Paris and open to underprivileged theology students. Its content reflects both the Notre-Dame's liturgical vocation and the canons' areas of interest. As some were also masters of theology at the University of Paris, the library collection consists of text books (works about theology, church history, canon and civil law as well as the works of classic authors) and biblical and liturgical books. A handful of pristine copies used for religious services offer valuable evidence of Parisian liturgical practices and their dissemination during the Middle Ages.

The library saw its collection of medieval manuscripts flourish under the Old Regime thanks to the generosity of Claude Joly, one of the cathedral cantors. Several highlights from his personal collection are on display in the final section, including History of the Franks by Grégoire de Tours,

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📍 Musée de Cluny - musée  
national du Moyen Âge  
#BibliothequeNotreDame

Exhibition organised by the  
Bibliothèque nationale de  
France as part of the 'Dans  
les collections de la BnF'  
programme  
#BibliothequeNotreDame

which dates back to the Merovingian period; a Carolingian gospel book from Reims, and the earliest known exemplar of Christine de Pisan's *The Book of the City of Ladies*.

The exhibition 'Leafing through Notre-Dame. Masterpieces of the Medieval Library' has been organised by the BnF at the Musée de Cluny as part of the 'Dans les collections de la BnF' programme with the generous support of the National Archives.

Overseeing the curation is Charlotte Denoël, Chief Curator and Head of the Department of Medieval and Renaissance Manuscripts at the BnF; supported by Éric Landgraf, a Doctor of History and Head of the Documentation, Library and Archive Department at the Musée de Cluny – Musée National du Moyen Âge.

### About the Musée de Cluny - Musée national du Moyen Âge

Reopened on 12 May 2022, the Musée de Cluny is the only national museum in France dedicated to the Middle Ages. The public can now discover the Middle Ages for a new generation, thanks to improved accessibility, renewal of the visit itinerary and museum design, and redesign of the information tools targeted at a diverse public.

At 28 rue Du Sommerard, in the heart of the Latin Quarter, the museum takes you on a journey back in time, from the 1st to the 21st century, in a unique setting. The 15th century private townhouse of the Abbots of Cluny, attached to the Gallo-Roman thermal baths, has now been joined by a contemporary extension, inaugurated in 2018 and designed by the architect Bernard Desmoulin.

This heritage site houses prestigious collections illustrating the extraordinary diversity of medieval artistic production. The new museum itinerary follows a chronological thread, designed to make the development of forms, groundbreaking moments, innovations and aesthetic differences between Northern and Southern Europe easy to understand.

For autumn 2024, the Musée de Cluny is putting on an entire programme of events dedicated to the Notre-Dame to mark its reopening. Alongside "Leafing through Notre-Dame. Masterpieces of the Medieval Library", the museum is running another exhibition entitled "Making Stones Speak. Notre Dame's Medieval Sculptures" on the same dates. It is also taking part in the seminar "Entre matérialité et interdisciplinarité: Notre-Dame de Paris, la cathédrale des savoirs" at the Collège de France from September to December 2024.

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### Practical information

#### Museum entrance:

28 rue Du Sommerard  
75005 Paris

#### Opening times:

Open every every day, except Monday,  
from 9.30 am to 6.15 pm  
Open 1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Thursday evening of the  
month from 7 to 9 pm  
Closed on 25 December, 1 January  
and 1 May

#### Book/gift shop:

9.30 am – 6.15 pm, free entry  
Tél. +33 (0) 1 53 73 78 22

#### Directions:

Métro Cluny-La-Sorbonne/Saint-Michel/  
Odéon  
Bus n° 21 – 27 – 38 – 63 – 85 – 86 – 87  
RER lines B and C Saint-Michel – Notre-  
Dame

#### Prices:

€12, concessions €10  
Free for those aged under 26 (EU citizens  
or on long stays in the EU) and for all  
visitors on the first Sunday of the  
month

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