

Notre Dame Izel Vor church

OPEN EVERY DAY FROM 10:00 AM TO 06:00 PM.

A genuine little country cathedral, this church was built for the most part during the first half of the XVI century and is consecrated to Notre Dame Izel Vor (Our Lady of the low Sea).

Its elegant bell tower is one of the most representative of XVI th century architecture in the Cornouaille area. Its calvaire, dating back to the XVI th century, acted as an outdoor pulpit for days when the crowds were abundant. An oak frame carved with roses displays a Rosary painting gifted to the parish in 1680, a work of art of Flemish inspiration produced by a Dominican priest, classed as a Historic Monument. Polychrome statues from the XV th and XVII th centuries adorn the inside of the church. The baptismal fonts from the XVII th century are also worthy of note, as well as the altarpiece, supported by spiral pillars and embedded with niches, statuettes and two medallions recounting the mysteries of Annunciation and Assumption, the handiwork of the master sculptor Jean Rufflay. It was produced in 1640.

A slanted roof, a fine slender steeple, an old Calvary in a verdant parish enclosure at the point of the bay.



VISIT OUTSIDE

▪ The Calvary

Erected during the XVI th century, its base is a square precinct with a small gothic spire at each angle. Two of these spires carry the statues of Mary (now decapitated) and of apostle John. The central shank spreads out in brackets or consoles that carry the two thieves. On the reverse side of the cross, is the crowned statue of the Virgin and Child. Three steps lead to the precinct that served long ago as a pulpit.



▪ The West Facade (see the front cover)

Very beautiful, typical of the Breton religious architecture. The vertex of a triangular wall serves as a base for the bell tower.

The adjacent and very decorative turret houses the stair leading to the bell room. The bells were cast in 1614. On the small spire above the gargoyles, one can read, in the light of the setting sun, the words : Mr. Le Guyader, pastor. The elegant spire is decorated at the base with fine pinnacles and chiselled contours. The low porch, graced with gothic small spires is embedded in the west facade, something quite uncommon. Three statues mount guard : Peter and his key, Paul and his sword, Mary quite worn out through the years. Two stone statues wait for us under the porch. These statues most probably belong to the 15th century ; they still bear traces of their old original polychrome. They are Saint – Roch, his dog, his pilgrim hat stamped with the keys of Rome and Saint Melar a Breton king. On the right, at the level of the water fount, one can read the date : 1538.



VISIT INSIDE

As soon as the door is open and before the eye catches on the details, the soul is taken up by the spiritual atmosphere of the church, the harmony, the gracefulness of the architecture, the spirit of recollection that pervades the whole building. The nave is protected by a vaulted ceiling resting on twenty eight ribs. Dragon's heads decorate five tie – beams. From the round, cylindrical pillars, soar up arches made light and elegant by prismatic ribs. Crystal chandeliers light up the central aisle and the stained glass window in the sanctuary. On both sides of the church are windows of one, two, three mullions.

We begin the visit of the interior of the church by the left side aisle. Let us remember that a church is a house of prayer which invites us to pray, at least to be respectful.



▪ The Baptistry

Six Corinthian columns support an oak tester or canopy decorated by a "leaved" frieze and crowned with small statues representing the baptism of Jesus by John the Baptist ; the baptismal vat and piscine are carved from a single granite block. Way up, on the roof beam, a red escutcheon bears the date : 1628.

▪ The Statues

They are numerous all around the church. Eleven of them are made of wood, many are classified by the Committee on fine arts. Let us discover them, starting at the Baptistry and considering, as we move along, the Stations of the Cross, "the retable", the deposited crowns at their feet ; the king has the face of Christ ; he carries in his hands the

crown of thorns. His royal mantle is already of the « Great Century » ; in the second row, one can recognize Louis XIV. In the background, the Turkish flag reminds us of the battle of Lepanto to which, according to tradition, are attached the name of Pius V and the devotion of the rosary.

▪ Santig-Du, the little black Saint

Mediocre statue, made of plaster, one of the most venerated saints in all Quimper. Santig-Du won the heart of the people at the time of the « Great plague » of 1349.

▪ Saint-Diboan, in wood, XVI th century

A very simple statue. Boan means pain in the Celtic language ; this is a negation. People pray to the saint for a painless agony, a peaceful death.

▪ Saint-Egarec, wood XVII th century,

A very elaborate statue. There is movement in the body ; the carriage is powerful, the face rather common. The old Breton Saint is represented in the garb of a Franciscan friar.

▪ The Stations of the Cross

Recent work of a local artist, are remarkable by the harmony of colours.

▪ Saint-John the baptist, wood XV th century

It is a fine, precious work of art. The hieratic face, the backward movement of the shoulders and the forward one of the knee gives it life and nobility. The lamb of God, announced by John, has come to close the Old Testament.

▪ The Pieta, wood, XVIII th century

Work of the sculptor Antoine from the studio of the Royal Navy at Brest.

▪ Saint-Abibon, wood :

Abibon is another name for Diboan.

▪ Saint-Alan, : wood XVII th century.

▪ Saint-Nicholas, wood, XVIII th century.

▪ Saint-Euthrope, wood XV th century :

He was the bishop of Saintes ; the Romanesque crypt of the basilica of Saintes sheltered the pilgrims on their way to Saint James of Compostello.

Our two statues of the Blessed Mother and child, on either side of the main altar deserve our attention : they are two jewels.

▪ Our Lady Izel Vor (our Lady of the Low Sea), wood XVII th century :

Splendid features ! It is the strong happy woman. All is open : the eyes turned toward the horizon, the future ; the arms toward us. A deep secret joy lights the strong features of the child and of the mother who offers us her son. Our two statues remind us of the dual mission of the mother of God, the one who gives (birth) and the one who receives.

▪ Our Lady Of Kergornec, wood, end of the XVII th century :

A gracefulness somewhat affected. The young mother marvels at the child playing with her breast. Their eyes interlock ; their hands trace, one toward the other, the circle of their intimacy.



Tourist Office

1 place de La Baie
France - 29940 La Forêt-Fouesnant
+33 (0)2 98 51 42 07
www.foret-fouesnant-tourisme.com



#laforetfouesnant