

WELCOME TO TOURNUS !



Pedestrian Way «On the steps of Gerlannus»

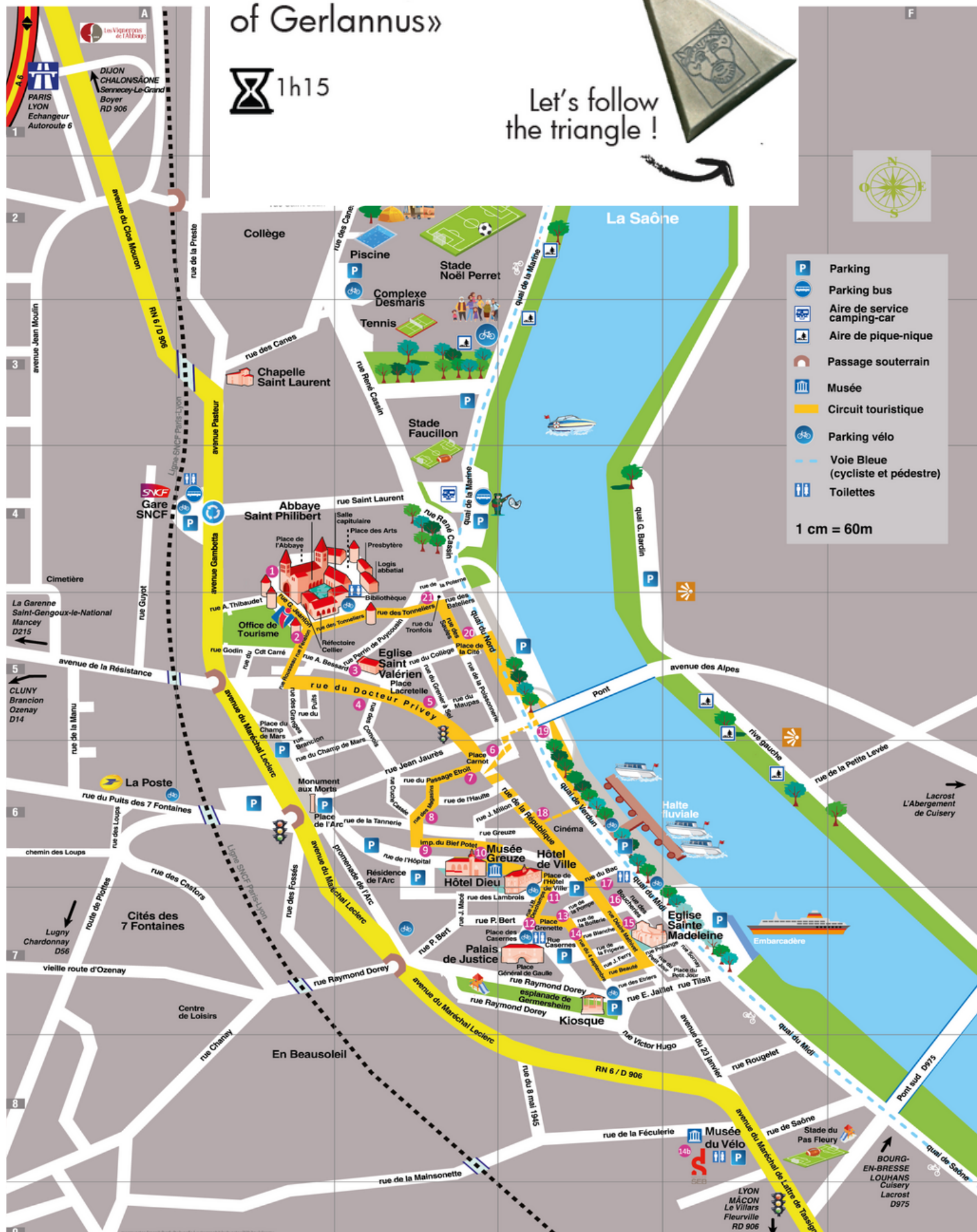
1h15

Let's follow
the triangle !



- Parking
- Parking bus
- Aire de service camping-car
- Aire de pique-nique
- Passage souterrain
- Musée
- Circuit touristique
- Parking vélo
- Voie Bleue (cycliste et pédestre)
- Toilettes

1 cm = 60m



1 The Abbey of Saint Philibert

Here you are in the abbey part of the town, in the abbey enclave to be exact, since if you look around you, you will see some of the ramparts and their towers. The Field Towers, as the name indicates, gave access to the surrounding countryside. A portcullis was used to close them and you can still see the groove it made in the stone. A soaring silhouette of pink stone, the abbey of Saint Philibert dominates the town due to its sheer size.

- 178 : Valerian was arrested, martyred & beheaded.

Two centuries later, an oratory was built over the site of his tomb and in a fourth century a monastery was erected.

- 875 : the monks of the community of Saint Philibert, fleeing the Viking invasions, left the island of Noirmoutier on the Atlantic coast. King Charles the Bald gave them the town of Tournus. Thus they settled next to the monastery. In the Middle Ages, it was equally a force to be reckoned with in the temporal world, since its abbot was also overlord of the town of Tournus.

- Half XIe, XIIe & XIIIe centuries : building of the Abbey

This beautiful abbey warrants more than a cursory glance, so we suggest you visit it using the audio guides available for hire at the Tourist Information Office.

2 The Porter's tower

This other tower belonging to the abbey gave access to the enclave from the town. They were two separate entities and you couldn't go into the abbey as you do today: the monks lived in isolation and had little to do with the town.

3 The Church of Saint Valérien

This Romanesque Church has by turns been part of a Benedictine convent and the local school. It is dedicated to the first missionary to come to Tournus, where he became a martyr in AD 178.

4 Rue du Docteur Privey

At N°38, note the lovely gothic gallery on the first floor.

5 The Chimeras' House

This beautiful gothic house dates from the 15th and 16th centuries and takes its name from the two chimerae which framed the band of stone separating the ground floor from the first floor. Unfortunately, one of them has since been destroyed. Nowadays, this building houses a bakery.

6 Logis de la Teste Noire

This is one of the last half timbered houses in Tournus. It is a corbelled construction, that is to say that the upper floors overhang the lower ones. The reason for building in this way was quite simply because people had to pay a tax which was calculated according to the ground surface area... Thus house owners tried to gain a little extra space on the upper floors! Keep an eye open for the sculpted angel on the corner of Place Carnot and Rue de la République. In Place Carnot, there used to be another church: the Church of Saint Andrew. After being disused for a time, it was vandalized and looted of all useful materials. It was sold off and transformed into working class housing, before finally being demolished in 1805.

7 Rue du Passage Etroit

You are now in one of the many lanes of Tournus. This town, whose atmosphere already resembles that of the Mediterranean, may well remind you of Lyon, in that there are numerous lanes, "traboules" (passageways between streets) and private houses. Look out for the corbelled chimney against the wall on your left.

8 Rue des Magasins

This street takes its name from the warehouses which were to be found there. You will see a well at the corner of the Rue de la Cruche Cassée, whose name recalls a well-known painting by the artist Greuze. This painting shows a young girl who is scantily dressed, looking mysterious, with a broken jug on her right arm. This painting is an allegory on the loss of virginity. It is considered to be one of the most beautiful of Greuze's works.

9 Rue du Bief Potet

Its name comes from the stream which runs under your feet (piped in 1905). It was formerly known as the street of the little tanneries because this was where there were all the tanning mills for the tanners. You can still see that some of the sinks and drains emptied straight into this stream. There was no drain in this part of town, so all the used water went into the stream and ended up in the River Saône.

10 Hôtel Dieu

The old hospital and Greuze Museum, with its three large wards and its 17th century pharmacy stands up well to a comparison with the Hospices in Beaune! The buildings are also home to paintings & works of Jean-Baptiste Greuze, including two magnificent self portraits. The present entrance was not part of the hospital. These buildings were gothic houses.

11 Place de l'Hôtel de Ville

We owe this impressive 17th century building to the talent of Emiland Gauthey, a famous architect of the States of Burgundy (1732-1806). He was also the originator of the Canal du Centre. In the centre of the square, there is a statue of Jean-Baptiste Greuze, born in Tournus in 1725. At the corners of the square, opposite the Town Hall, there are two splendid houses: a gothic house over arcades and the Snail's Lodging, named for its corner tower.

12 Palais de Justice

These former law courts served as barracks built from 1733 to 1736 on the orders of the Cardinal de Fleury, abbot of Tournus and future minister to Louis XV. On the ground floor were the stables and the dormitories were on the upper floors. The building has served various purposes, notably as a Tribunal in the 19th century, hence the current name.

13 Place de la Grenette

Recently re-named ironically «Chalk Square», it was here that the grain market was held. At the back, the curved wall shows the Tower of the Mint. This is where treasure was found in 1885. The “treasure” was in fact a few coins, which lead us to the understanding that the monks of Saint-Philibert had the right to mint coins. Once you have passed this tower, you are in the ancient “castrum” or camp, the oldest part of Tournus, which dates back to Roman times and which has retained its characteristic layout; the main street, Rue Désiré Mathivet, is intersected by streets which are perpendicular to it. It was a supply camp for the legions.

14 Rue de la Boiterie & Rue Beauté

The “boîte” (box) was the daily ration of wine for a worker. In this street therefore, wine was served: it was the street where all the cabarets were to be found. The part of town known as the Madeleine is much quieter nowadays than in the last century. It was there that the world’s oldest profession was practised (rue Beauté).

14b Bicycle Museum

A few moments from your route, take a trip into the world of the bicycle! The collection ranges from the ancient dandy horse, a simplistic bicycle made in 1818 and which was propelled by kicking the ground as there were no pedals, right up to Chris Boardman’s carbon fibre bike designed by Lotus for the 1992 Olympics, along with many more amazing bicycles. Discover this exhibition, which covers over 600m² and is unique in France.

15 Rue Désiré Mathivet

All along this street, you can see evidence of mediaeval booths. The merchants lifted the shutters off their windows every morning and laid them on the stone which was sticking out, thus making their counters. The Church of Saint Madeleine (12th century) attracts attention with its beautiful Romanesque porch, on the facade, whose stones were not all new ones. On it the coat of arms of Tournus (a fortified gateway) is visible. At the northern corner of the church is the Rue des Boucheries. In the Middle Ages, tradesmen were joined together in guilds: tailors, merchants and so on... and this street was where the butchers lived and worked. The animals were also slaughtered there.

16 Rue de la Pompe

This street marks the northern boundary of the Roman “castrum”. Looking at the rounded shape of the street, you see the proof that this was indeed where the Roman ramparts ended. The pump from which the street takes its name was used by the inhabitants to obtain drinking water. The water came from underground cisterns, built in Roman times.

17 Rue du Bac

Before a bridge was built, the only way to cross the Saône was by a flat-bottomed boat, known as a “bac”, hence the name of the street. In the middle of this street, the upright of an old porch can be seen. It was demolished at the beginning of the 20th century in order to improve traffic flow and was the Piquette Porch, linked to the defences on the River Saône.

18 Rues de la République & Greuze

Beautiful shop fronts and facades of private houses can be seen here, like No 67. Opposite the cinema, No 5 rue Greuze is the house where the artist Jean Baptiste Greuze was born and spent his early years, as is indicated by the plaque fixed on the facade. Rue de la République and the quays were linked by covered passageways, known as “traboules”, like for example the one at No 29.

From now, two options :

- Cross through towards the Saône using the «traboule», which were covered passageways linking the Rue de la République and the quay, then turn left towards the bridge when you come out of the «traboule».
- Make your way along Rue de la République following the arrows, admiring in particular the fine 18th century building with rococo decoration at No 17.

19 The Bridge

Several centuries passed before a bridge was finally built in Tournus. The first one was completed in 1801. As the opposite bank of the river was in the “Empire”, whereas Tournus belonged to the Kingdom of France, Tournus was a frontier town. The monks were responsible for the ferry crossing, which added to their income. The present bridge dates from 1988. For photographers: the best photos of Tournus can be taken from the left bank of the river.

20 Place de la Cité

Because this part of town often gets its feet wet, some house owners mark off the high water mark on the facade of their houses (see N°3 bis). The worst flooding took place in 1840. Now go along Rue des Saules. Here you are in the “fishery” part of town. The purpose of the holed stones which can be seen high up on the facades of some houses still has not been explained. Were they used for hanging out the fishing nets? For drying skins? Hoisting sacks of wheat into the attics?

21 Maison du Roy Guillaume

This 16th century house belonged to a certain Guillaume Roy (William King), a property owner. Note the wordplay on the name. The house has lovely cornices and corner sculptures.

Go up the Rue des Tonnelliers to get back to the abbey precinct and you are back where you started!

To discover our beautiful region of Southern Burgundy & have some advice, just ask us!