

La Vraie-Croix



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ROCHEFORT-EN-TERRE TOURISME
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WELCOME TO LA VRAIE-CROIX - Awarded 4 flowers by Village Fleuri, the town of La Vraie-Croix is also known for winning the Grand Prix National du Fleurissement (an award given out every year to one or several villages in France with 4 flowers), and the Prix Européen du Fleurissement (for all of Europe). It is also invited to attend the Floralties International, a prestigious floral event held in Nantes in May 2014. La Vraie-Croix was formerly known as Langroez and used as a resting place for the Knights of Malta during the Crusades.

1 CHAPEL

The chapel is the town's most unusual monument and located above a public road. Legend has it that a knight, coming back from the Crusades, carried a real piece of Christ's cross. After stopping in the village of Hôpital, the knight fell asleep at the foot of a hawthorn. When he woke up, he realised that the piece of the cross had been stolen from him. He left the village without ever finding it. Shortly after, the people of the village noticed, at the top of a hawthorn, a crow's nest lit with a supernatural light: the light came from the piece of the cross. The piece was brought to the church; however, it disappeared the following night. It was found once again in the crow's nest. The people decided to build a chapel here with the choir located in the same place where the fragment of Christ's cross had been found.

A reliquary cross holding the piece of cross is kept inside the southern transept. The granite chapel dates back to the 16th century; however, it was restored at the end of the 20th century (1974-1986) by Bâtiments de France. The chapel, along with the crypt, were both classified as Historical Monuments in 1926.

The chapel was built above a one-way public road, going from the square towards the street. This particular location allows pilgrims to pass underneath the relic situated in the upper chapel. An archway, located on the eastern side, overlooks a type of vaulted crypt lit by two

stained glass windows. The altar from Saint Just chapel (located about 3km away from the village) is situated here, along with a statue of Mary, font and lintel.

On the opposite side, a similar archway holds a beautiful portal made of four pointed arches. Previously, this solemn entrance led to a staircase, which climbed to the upper floor.

The chapel also has another defining feature: two staircases on each side of the upper chapel, allowing pilgrims to easily come and venerate the relic.

The panelled vault is painted sky blue and dotted with gold stars. The choir, marked off by a wrought iron gate, is completely covered with carved wooden panels. The altar has the same decorative design. The pews are covered in plant motifs. The entire decor was created by Rector Tanguy, who also did all of the church's woodwork. The two stained glass windows on either side of the choir illustrate the legend of the relic in the nest and the reliquary of La Vraie-Croix.

Turn around and you can see the reliquary cross kept inside the southern transept. It contains a piece of Christ's cross. It is only 20cm high; however, it is a true cross-shaped masterpiece made of bronze and silver with a wooden core.

2 OLD RECTORY

The building situated in front of the chapel is the old rectory. Here, Rector Tanguy set up a carpentry workshop where he made the woodwork for the current church (1891-1892). Once connected to the chapel, the building now holds the multimedia library, renovated in 2012 with a new green roof, which overlooks the adjacent jardin de curé (kitchen garden).

3 MAISON LOUIS

This building, with a turret at the rear, was used as a dairy during the 1950s before being turned into housing and assembly rooms. During the 12th and 13th centuries, it was home to the monks of St John of Jerusalem, whose mission was to welcome and care for pilgrims travelling to The Way of Saint James or Jerusalem.

4 CHURCH

Previously, another church, whose patron saint was Saint Sauveur and Saint John the Baptist, was found here. In the late 19th century, it was destroyed and replaced by the current church kept by Saint Isidore, the patron saint of farmers. The nave and tower were built by Rector Tanguy between 1891 and 1892.

He also made the woodwork, side altars, confessionals, pulpit and tribune. The new building was solemnly blessed on 25 June 1893. The right altarpiece was restored in 2012.

5 JARDIN DE CURÉ (kitchen garden)

The jardin de curé (kitchen garden) is made up of four square vegetable beds edged with boxwood (sign of eternity). Beds were also placed along stone walls. Fruits, vegetables, flowers, herbs, and medicinal plants are all grown together in order to make the most out of these kitchen gardens.

A learning garden was also set up here.

THINGS TO DISCOVER NEARBY

Public fountain

At the edge of town, the fountain takes on a very monumental aspect. It is surrounded by a stone wall. Its basin is sheltered underneath a platform supported by four small columns.