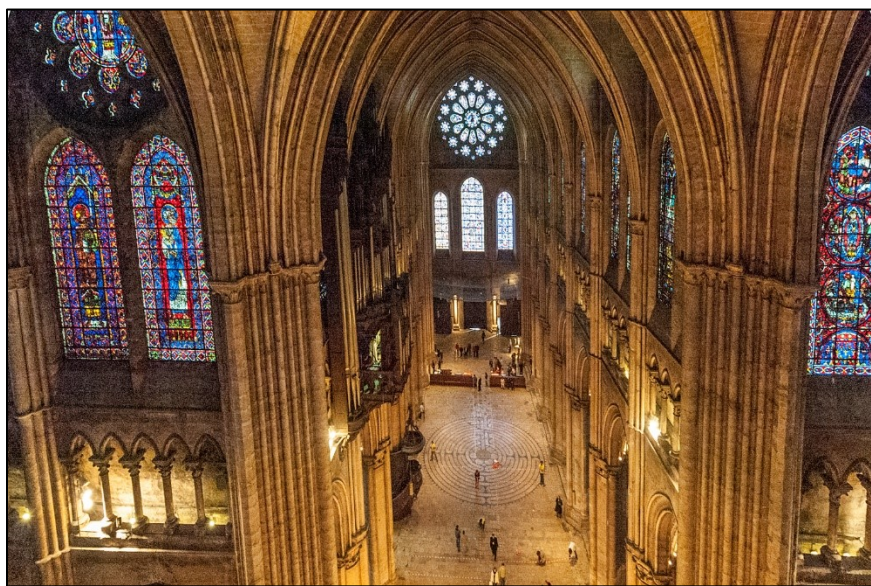


# The Lesser-Known Labyrinths of Chartres

Jill Kimberly Hartwell Geoffrion

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Pilgrims to Chartres Cathedral love the experience of walking its medieval labyrinth. For many who come on Fridays between the beginning of Lent and November 1<sup>st</sup> in non-COVID times (from 10 am to 5 pm, unless there is a funeral or other official event), it is first an experience, and then a memory that is treasured for life.



*The labyrinth in the nave of Chartres Cathedral*

When overly focused on fulfilling a big dream, one can miss all sorts of little wonders. Many are not aware that there are other labyrinths in Chartres Cathedral, and several beyond the cathedral walls. Here's a visual guide to orient labyrinth-lovers who are able to spend time in Chartres and would like to explore her many labyrinths.

Around the corner from the door to the north tower, behind the work area of the Monuments Historiques at the end of the north aisle is a little-known wall graffito, approximately 3.5 inches (9 cm) wide. “The Petit Labyrinth Graffito of Chartres Cathedral” in *Caerdroia* 40 (2010) p.4-8, by Alain P. Louët and the author describes this small labyrinth in more detail.



*Labyrinth graffito in the*

*cathedral. Photo: Jeff Saward*



*Labyrinthine circles in the south nave*

On the other side of the cathedral, in the south ambulatory of the nave behind one of the confessionals another labyrinth-like form can be found. This inscription, along with five other graffiti that may be in relationship to the floor labyrinth, were discussed in the note, “Mysterious Circles at Chartres” in *Caerdroia* 44 (2015) p.59.





### ***Bel Air Labyrinth***

Other labyrinths can be found outside the cathedral walls. *Les fresques de Bel Air*, a series of paintings related to the identity of Chartres found on the sides of buildings, can be reached by walking for 20-25 minutes from the cathedral. The labyrinth and a blue heron flying over it is not difficult to locate on the side of a four-floor residence.



### ***Modern maze in the Bishop's Garden***

If you walk through the Bishop's Garden on the way to Bel Air (recommended), you will notice a well-manicured maze in the south corner. In French the word, *labyrinthe*, is used for both patterns with a unicursal or multicursal pattern (as found here).



***Pilgrims from a church in Paris finish their 5-day journey  
on the Maison St. Yves labyrinth***

If you are staying at the Maison St. Yves (3 rue des Acacias) and have a room facing the river, you will see a labyrinth in the Bishop's courtyard below. It was designed by Jeff Saward and installed by a Veriditas group using local paving stones. Some groups receive permission to walk the labyrinth (usually requested at the time of booking), but availability is not guaranteed. As they say in France, "Il faut demander," which you might translate as "It's worth asking." Personal and group inquiries can be made in French or English at the reception desk.

For groups who would like to use a canvas labyrinth while in Chartres, the Community of Chemin Neuf, the group that sings Evening Vespers in the Cathedral, owns and shares (donation requested) a Chartres-style replica that was designed and painted by American labyrinth artist Lisa Moriarty. It is kept at the Centre Œcuménique et Artistique de Chartres (COACH: Ecumenical and Artistic Center of Chartres) at 13 rue de Fourmestraux (just blocks from the cathedral). Inquiries can be made in French or English to [aretic.ccn@wanadoo.fr](mailto:aretic.ccn@wanadoo.fr) or +33 (0)2 37 18 32 24.



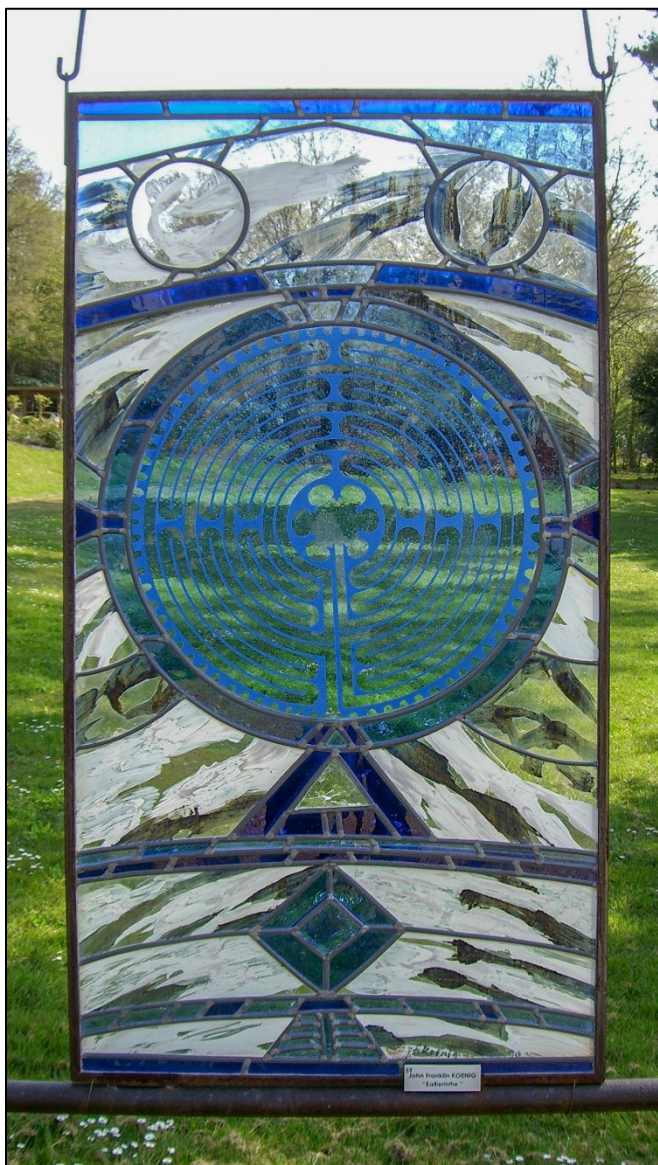


*A parish group from Paris walk the canvas labyrinth at COACH on World Labyrinth Day*



Chartres merchants thrive on welcoming pilgrims and tourists with items that can be taken home. Across from the north side of the cathedral is the Galerie du Vitrail (17 Cloître Notre-Dame, +33 (0)2 37 36 10 03) where various small and large items of stained glass with labyrinths are for sale.

*A modern stained glass labyrinth window purchased at the Galerie du Vitrail*



*Labyrinth stained glass in the garden at Atelier Loire*

Atelier Loire is just three kilometers from Chartres (a pretty 1.7-mile walk in part along the river) in the town of Lèves. Various contemporary labyrinths in glass can be seen in their gardens. Visiting is by appointment only; you can ask for more information at the Galerie du Vitrail or call the Atelier: +33 (0)2 37 21 20 71.





***Labyrinth bread at  
the Maison Monarque***

Across from the south side of the cathedral (49 rue des Changes) is the Maison Monarque, a tearoom with all sorts of delicious treats. They also have beautiful labyrinth items that you can purchase to eat later, including *Le Pelérin* (The Pilgrim), an apple cake that comes with a labyrinth design on top and is sold in a labyrinth decorated tin, or labyrinth decorated bread. (Note: they are closed on Mondays.)

In the many gift shops around the cathedral and in town one can find labyrinths galore. Keep your eyes open; and your sense of humor at the ready. I have no idea why I have bought labyrinth adorned glasses cleaning cloths, or labyrinth decorated mousepads, but sometimes enthusiasm overcomes reason! Truly, there is something labyrinthine for every taste and budget!

***Labyrinth chocolate  
from L'atelier du  
Chocolat***

***Photo: Alain Pierre  
Louët***



When it comes to labyrinths and Chartres, one never knows exactly where the path is going to lead, but it is likely to be full of surprises and delight!



*Costumed child (a sheep) on the streets of Chartres before Easter  
(blurring required by French law)*

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#### Note

All photos by Jill K. H. Geoffrion unless stated otherwise. Jill is a Hospitality Team Member (Service Accueil Visites) for the Chartres Cathedral Labyrinth.



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*Dancing on the Pumpkin Maypole Labyrinth  
at the TLS Gathering in New Harmony, Indiana, November 2010  
Photo: Jeff Seward*



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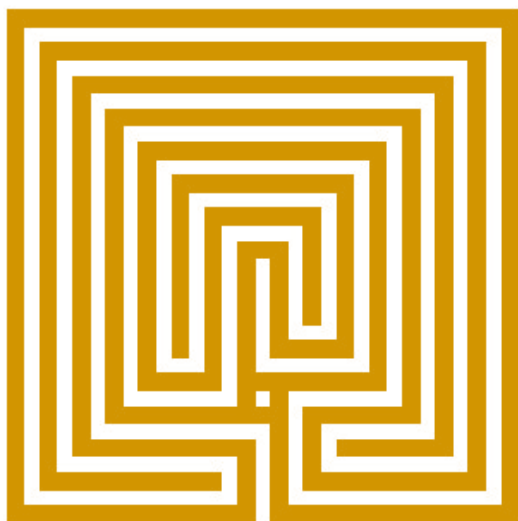
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