

The **Musée de l'Arles Antique** opened in 1995, replacing and combining the collections of the former Museum of Christian Art and Museum of Pagan Art. Its unusual, ultra-modern triangular structure was designed by Henri Ciriani on the site of Arles' enormous Roman circus. The contents encompass models of ancient monuments, objects from daily life in Roman times, and a variety of religious art ranging from the prehistoric period to the 6th century AD. Among the displays are one



of the world's most famous collections of 4th-century Roman Christian sarcophagi as well as sculptures, mosaics, jewellery and inscriptions. Eleven detailed models show ancient monuments of the region as they existed in the past. Many of the Christian sarcophagi are from the necropolis of the Alyscamps and the early Christian burial place of St. Genest in the modern suburb of Trinquetaille. Mostly dating from the 4th century AD, the sarcophagi are richly decorated with some of the earliest surviving Christian sculpture, depicting a combination of scenes from the Old and New Testaments. One of the finest is the Sarcophagus of the Spouses (Sarcophage des epoux) or Trinity Sarcophagus (Sarcophagus de La Trinite), dating from the early 4th century. Found in 1974, still sealed, it contained the remains of a woman around the age of 50 and a man around 60, with war wounds. Location: av 1ere Division France Libre Presqu'île du Cirque Tel: 04 90 18 88 88 Open: Mar-Oct: 09.00-19.00; Nov-Feb: 10.00-17.00

**Les Thermes de Constantin** was once a grand imperial palace. Now only its vast Roman baths. Nevertheless, they are remarkably well preserved and give an idea of the luxury its bathers enjoyed. Location: Rue Dominique Maisto Tel: 0490 49 36 36 Open: 09.00-12.30 & 14.00-19.00



The **Musée Réattu**, installed on the banks of the Rhône in the former Grand Priory of the Order of Malta, presents old works (17th-19th centuries), drawings and paintings by Picasso and contemporary art. The museum owes its existence to Jacques Réattu, a painter from Arles (Grand Prix de Rome in 1790) who bought the building to live and work in. His dream was to house artists in residence here, but even though he never realized this dream, the museum has inherited the buildings and all the painter's works. Location: Rue Grand Prieuré Tel: 04 90 49 38 34 Open: 09.00-12.30 & 14.00-19.00



**Saint Trophimus** of Arles (also called Trophime) was the first bishop of Arles. Pope Fabian sent out seven bishops from Rome to Gaul, to preach the Gospel: Gatien to Tours, Trophimus to Arles, Paul to Narbonne, Saturninus to Toulouse, Denis to Paris, Austromoine to Clermont, and Martial to Limoges. Local tradition has also assimilated Trophimus of Arles with the Trophimus mentioned in the Acts of the Apostles as a companion of Saint Paul.

**Frédéric Mistral** (1830-1914) came from an old and well-to-do family of landowners



that had settled in Provence in the sixteenth century. He was deeply influenced by his early years in the leisurely and patriarchal manor of his father. Mistral read law, but after taking his degree devoted himself entirely to writing poetry in Provençal, the passion for which had been aroused during his school days by one of his masters, the Provençal poet Joseph Roumanille. Mistral's aim was to make neo-Provençal a literary language conforming to fixed standards of purity. For this purpose he spent many years on the compilation of the *Trésor dóu Félibrige*, a dictionary of Provençal published by the «*Felibrige*», a literary society that Mistral had founded. Mistral was both an epic and a lyrical poet. His work is determined by Provence, not only in language, but in content and feeling. Provence is the true hero of all his poems. His first great success was *Miréio* (1859), a story of two star-crossed lovers. It was followed by *Calendau* (1867), a fantastic narrative poem about a Provençal fisherman. Other works include *Lis Isclo d'or* (1876) [Islands of Gold], a collection of poems; «*Nerto*» (1884), a narrative poem based on a chronicle of the Avignon Popes; *La Rèino Jano* (1890); and *Lou pouémo dóu rose* (1897) [The Song of the Rhone]. A five-volume edition of his works appeared between 1887 and 1910; three volumes of unpublished works appeared posthumously (1926-30). Mistral wrote an autobiography *Moun espelido: Memori è raconte* (1906) [Memoirs of Mistral]. His efforts to revive Provençal were at various times supported by the Academie Française and the Institut de France.

#### **Abbaye Notre Dame de Montmajour**

After leaving Arles, the first and most striking monument you pass is Abbaye Notre Dame de Montmajour, a fortified Benedictine monastery built between the 10th and 13th century on what was then an island five kilometres north of Arles. The Abbey is noted for its 11th-14th century graves carved in the rock, its subterranean crypt and its massive unfinished church. It was also an important pilgrimage site during the Middle Ages and in the 18th century it was the site of a large Maurist (a



the sanctuary of St. Trophimus, who had been sent from Rome by St. Peter to convert the Gauls. After coming to Arles in 46 AD, he took shelter in one of the caves on the island and received his disciples there - a rock cell under the church is called "The Confessional of St. Trophimus." Another legend said that the graves were those of soldiers of Charlamagne, who had fought against the Saracens. A third said that the first church was founded by King Childebert I, the son of Clovis, after seeing the fervour of a group of anchorite hermits on the island.

Location: rte Fontvieille Tel: 04 90 54 64 17 Open: May 2 to August 31 10.00-18.30  
September 1 to April 30 10.00-17.30