

SAINT MARTIN OF TOURS, EUROPEAN FIGURE, SYMBOL OF THE SHARING

Europe as a whole has been marked by the memory of Saint Martin of Tours since the 4th century. An indefatigable lifelong traveler throughout Europe, this European before his time, a symbol of the universal value of sharing, was born in 316 in Pannonia, the modern Hungary, to pagan parents. Raised in Pavia, in Italy, where his father was an officer in the Roman army, he was himself conscripted at around 15 years of age. In 337, while stationed at Amiens in France, he cut his cloak in half and shared it with a beggar who was dying of cold.

He subsequently had a revelation of faith and converted to Christianity. In 356, he was freed from military service while at Worms in Germany and became a disciple of St Hilary, Bishop of Poitiers, in France, who trained him. Having returned to the home of his parents in Pannonia, he converted his mother. After a period spent in Milan, in Italy, he sought refuge on the island of Gallinaria, off the Ligurian coast. Back in France, he returned to Hilary's side. Living as a hermit near Poitiers, he founded the monastery of Ligugé, the first in western Europe. The people of Tours acclaimed him as their bishop on 4 July 371. He founded the nearby monastery of Marmoutier and, during his frequent journeys across part of Europe, the first rural churches in Gaul (Germany, Luxembourg, Switzerland, Spain...). Saint Martin died at Candes on 8 November 397 and was buried in Tours on 11 November. Europe as a whole has been marked by the memory of Saint Martin of Tours since the 4th century. An indefatigable lifelong traveller throughout Europe, this European before his time, a symbol of the universal value of sharing, was born in 316 or 336 in Pannonia, the modern Hungary, to pagan parents. Raised in Pavia, in Italy, where his father was an officer in the Roman army, he was himself conscripted at around 15 years of age. In 337, while stationed at Amiens in France, he cut his cloak in half and shared it with a beggar who was dying of cold.

The Saint Martin of Tours European Cultural Route, recognised by the Council of Europe, links up the very many European towns and cities which shared in saint Martin's life and those possessing a major architectural heritage related to his worship (thousands of monuments are dedicated to him, including 14 cathedrals in Europe), together with an intangible heritage that is still very much alive. The towns and regions that participate in the Saint Martin of Tours European Cultural Route will thus ensure that a long-forgotten major cultural heritage is rediscovered. No one is more representative of "Europeanism" than Saint Martin of Tours.

His tomb in Tours was one of the highest places of pilgrimage during the High Middle Ages, at the level of Jerusalem and Rome, before becoming a famous stopover for pilgrims on their way to Compostela. Throughout his life, Saint Martin travelled tirelessly throughout Europe, leaving a significant imprint of humanity, charity and citizen sharing on our collective memory.

Stretching over ten countries and more than 5,000 km across Europe, the **Saint Martin of Tours route** connects European cities related to the life and worship of Saint Martin. Several thousand monuments are dedicated to him, including 14 cathedrals in Europe. Abbeys, churches, fountains, bridges, archaeological remains as well as myths, rites, legends, beliefs and traditions... a rich tangible and intangible heritage invites the traveller to follow the footsteps of Saint Martin de Tours along four major routes.