

*ON GOD'S
PATHS*

6 **T**he name of this little town says it all – nestled like a seashell, Conques lies in the valley of the little river Ouche in the south of France. Medieval pilgrims journeying to the tomb of the Apostle James in Santiago de Compostela adorned their hats with scallop shells. Conques was an important stop along their journey. The reliquary figure of Saint Faith also drew believers from across Europe, giving rise to a unique pilgrimage tradition dating back to the ninth century that persists to this day – albeit reshaped by tourism.

Conques also captivates researchers from around the globe. Since 2020, the town has been the focus of a large-scale interdisciplinary project led by the Centre for Early Medieval Studies at the Czech Republic's Masaryk University, in collaboration with the Bibliotheca Hertziana – Max Planck Institute for Art History in Rome, as well as other research institutes and universities in France and the United States. Using methods from art history, anthropology, history, musicology, theater and cultural studies, archaeology, archaeometry, and digital techniques, the project examines Conques both spatially and in its temporal development over the course of a millennium.

The project also focuses on intangible heritage, such as religious practices and their changes over time. At Conques, which for centuries was a vital hub in the sacred landscape of medieval Europe, political and social dynamics can thus be studied in microcosm. The abbey, for example – not least through the use of intricately crafted sacred objects – succeeded in symbolically linking its site with the holy cities of Jerusalem and Rome, thereby conferring upon Conques a global political significance by the standards of the time.



ON LOCATION



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