

# **WANDER to WONDER**

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**THIS  
EDITION:  
Notre-  
Dame Fire**

# WANDER to WONDER

by MARTINA NICOLLS



**The world will never starve for wonder, but only for want of wonder.  
G.K. Chesterson**

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## editor's note

*Welcome to the 32nd edition of WANDER to WONDER*

This edition of Wander to Wonder focuses on the Notre-Dame Cathedral in Paris, France, before and after the fire on 15 April 2019.

Until next edition, with another theme,

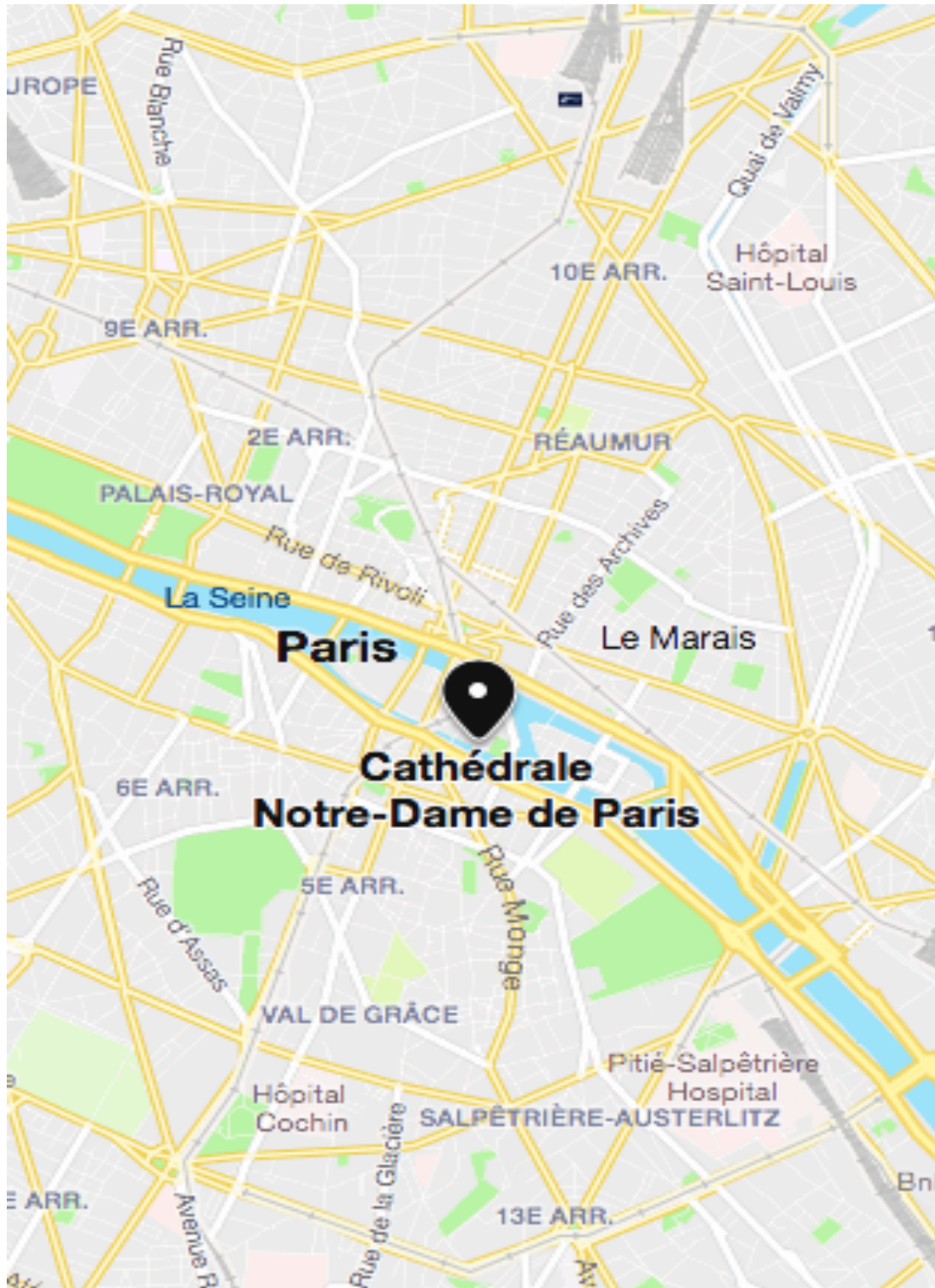
*Martina*

MARTINA NICOLLS





## map - paris

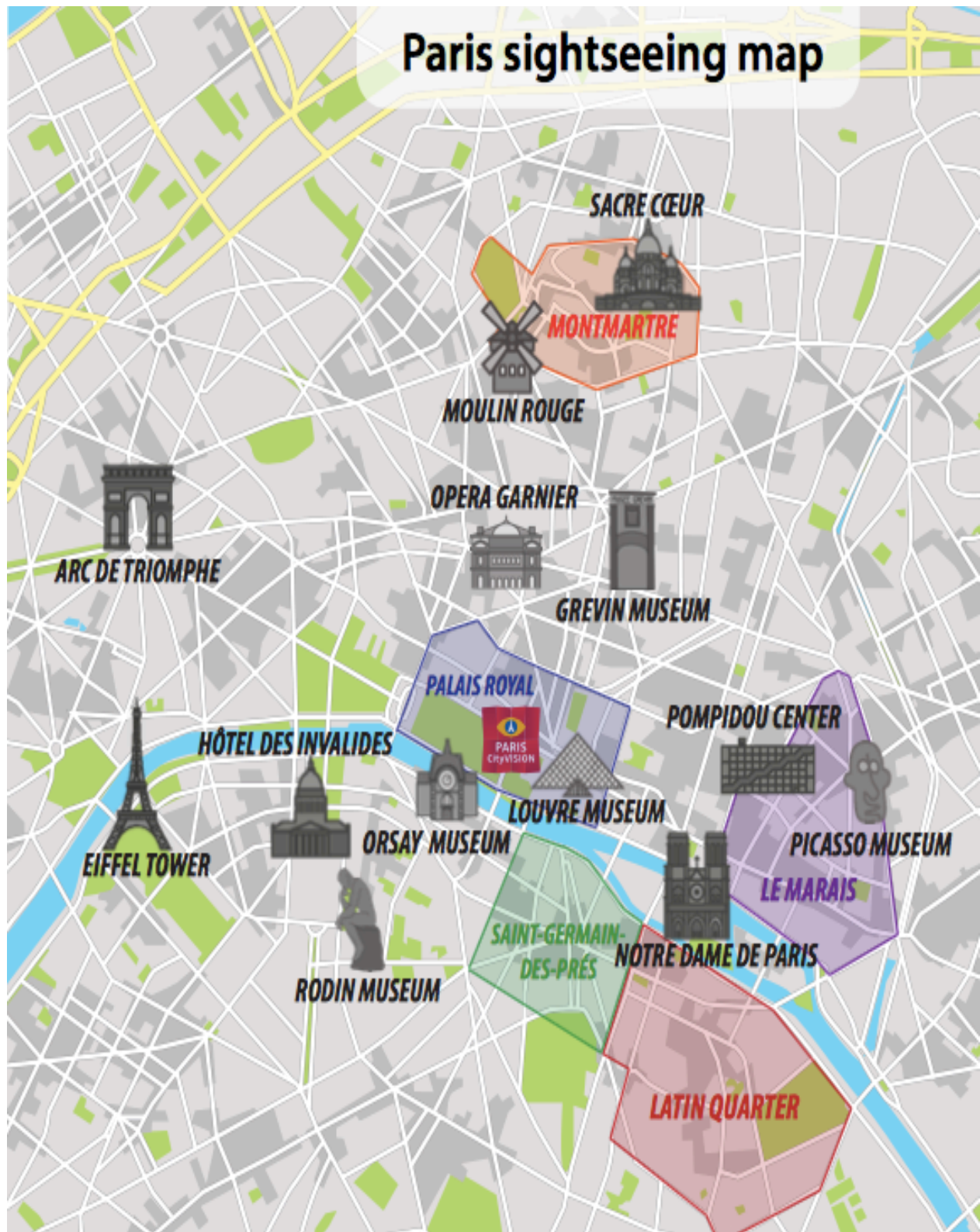


## map – island of La Cité





## map – notre-dame

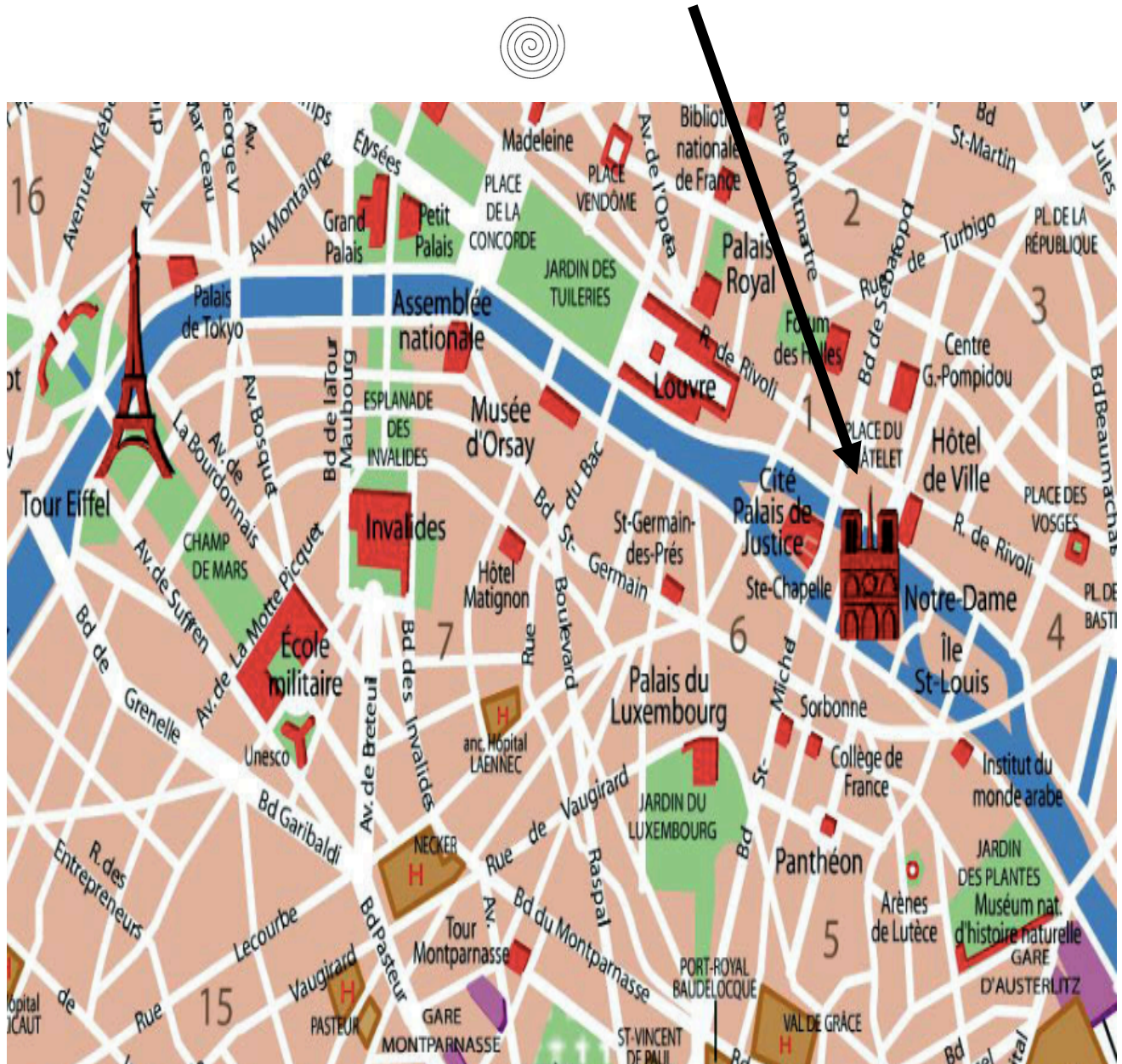




# location

The Notre-Dame de Paris Cathedral, commonly known as Notre-Dame, is the Cathedral of the Archdiocese of Paris, located on the island of La Cité.

Dedicated to the Virgin Mary, it is one of the largest Catholic cathedrals in the world. It is the tallest building in Paris, and one of the most emblematic and iconic monuments of the city.





# *western façade*



## western facade

The Western Façade is the front, or entrance, of the Notre-Dame Cathedral. The episcopate of Eudes de Sully commenced construction of the façade from around 1200. The most noted architect is Guillaume D'Auvergne, after 1220.

The Western Façade has two towers. The North Tower was completed in 1240 and the South Tower was completed in 1250.

It is 41 metres wide, 43 metres high (to the base of the towers), and 63 metres to the top of the towers.

The main construction features include: (1) 4 buttresses at the top of the towers, (2) 2 broad horizontal strips, (3) the spire, called the arrow, and (4) the stained circular glass windows.

At the level of the Gallery known as the Virgin, a large rose, 9.60 metres in diameter, built around 1225, occupies the centre of the façade, representing a Halo to the statue of the Virgin. On the right and left, there are statues representing Adam and Eve.

Under the balustrade is a wide horizontal strip called the Gallery of Kings. It had 28 statues representing 28 generations of the Kings of Judah. In 1843, during the time of the architects Viollet-le-Duc and Lassus, none of these statues remained. Viollet-le-Duc decided, with the help of the Geoffroi-Dechaume workshop, to return the statues that appear today. In 1977, 143 fragments of the Royal statues of Notre-Dame were rediscovered. They are currently exhibited in the Cluny museum in Paris.

On the lower floor, under the Gallery of Kings, there are three large portals that are not exactly the same. The central portal, called the judgement portal, is higher and wider than the other two: the Sainte-Anne portal (on the right, or South) and the portal of the Virgin (on the left, or North).

On the buttresses, niches contain four statues redone by the Atelier de Viollet-le-Duc.





*spire*



## spire – arrow or dart

Behind the Western Façade, with a better view of it from the rear of the Cathedral, is the main section with a striking spire, or steeple. The spire is also called the arrow or the dart.

The first spire was built above the cross-sections of the transept in 1250. It was a bell tower. It had up to five bells. It was dismantled from 1786 to 1792.

The second spire was based on the four pillars of the transept and built in 1860. It is not really a steeple, which is why it is usually referred to as an arrow or dart. The arrow had 12 green copper statues of the Twelve Apostles. The architect Viollet-le-Duc was represented in the guise of Saint Thomas, seemingly contemplating the Summit of his "great work."

There was a rooster at the top of the arrow with three relics: a parcel of the Holy Crown of Thorns, a relic of Saint Denis, and a relic of Saint Genevieve. The arrow was referred to as a "spiritual lightning rod" protecting all the people inside the Cathedral. It was Cardinal Verdier, Archbishop of Paris, who provided the three relics in October 1935.













## renovations

The Notre-Dame Cathedral was undergoing much-needed renovations before the fire on 15 April 2019. The renovations were expected to take 10 years.

The Cathedral received 13 million visitors each year – roughly 30,000 visitors per day – and the renovations were mainly at the top and the rear of the Western Facade. Tourists were still able to enter the Cathedral.

The medieval Gothic architecture required an extensive makeover to the exterior. An estimated 150 million euros (USD \$180 million) was needed. Most of the funds were expected to come from fund-raising by the Friends of Notre-Dame de Paris foundation, established in 2017.

Previous renovations included the replacement of the stained-glass windows of the nave in the 1960s, cleaning of the front facade in 2000, and the replacement of several bells in 2013 for the Cathedral's 850th anniversary.

The current restoration (before the fire) focused on the flying buttresses and their decorative limestone pinnacles, the gargoyles, the lead-covered spire, and masonry at the back of the Cathedral. Philippe Villeneuve was the chief architect in charge of the cathedral's renovations. The Friends of Notre-Dame were trying to raise over USD \$110 million over the next 10 years to complete the renovations. The French state, which owns the Cathedral, currently contributed 2 million euros (USD \$2.5 million) per year for maintenance and pledged to double it annually for the next 10 years.





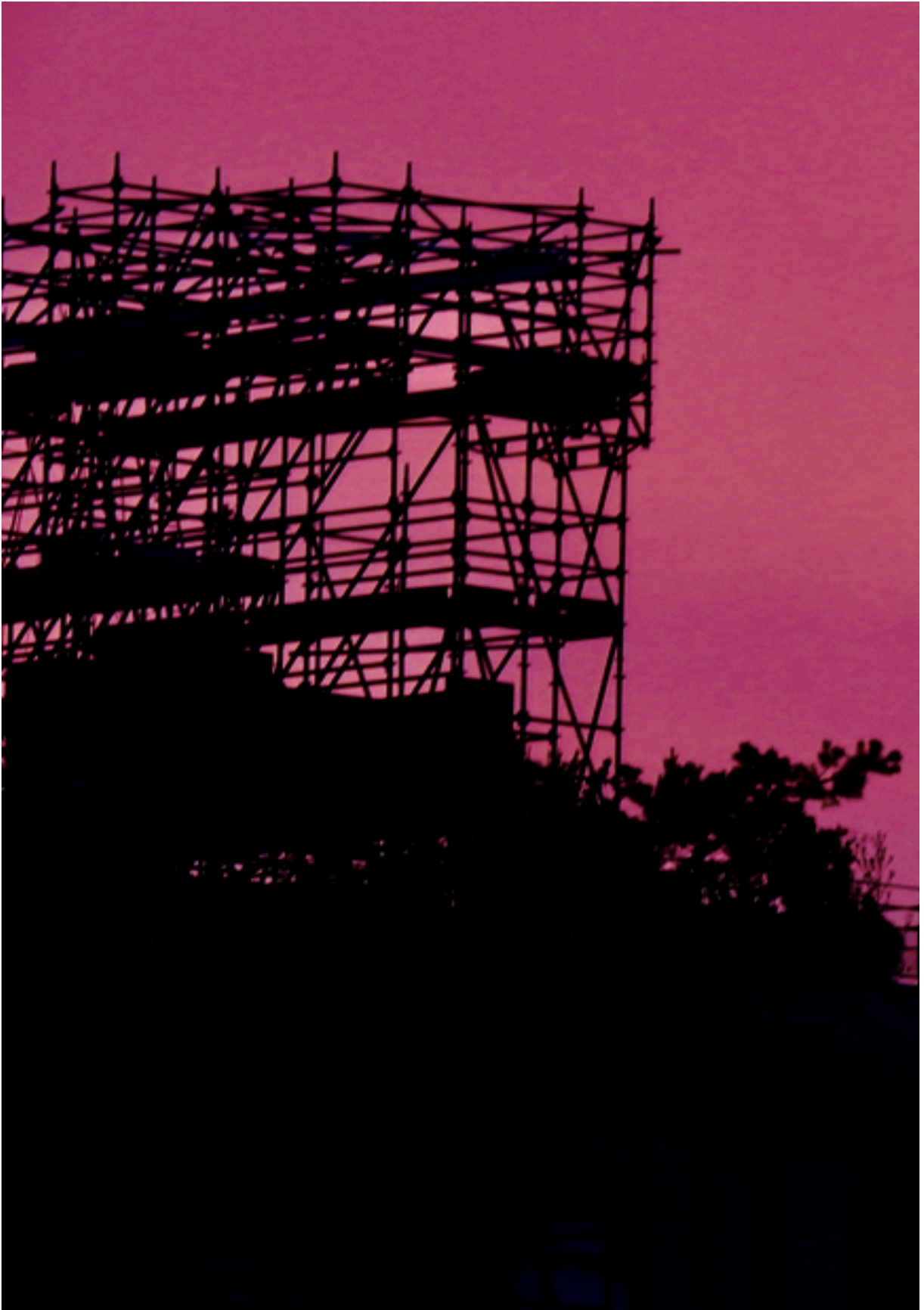












## fire

Fire started in the rooftop renovated area, at the rear of the Western Façade of the Cathedral, at about 7:00 in the evening, on Monday 15 April 2019. People had gathered inside for mass.

Initially light, white smoke could be seen from the roof, and fire fighters were called to the scene. The congregation inside were not aware of the fire above them.

The fire quickly spread across the roof and up to the spire. The congregation was evacuated and no-one was injured. As many as 400 fire fighters arrived to attend to the fire. By 8:00 pm, spectators witnessed the collapse of the spire.

The fading light of evening turned the sky pink.









## aftermath

At dawn on 16 April 2019, 12 hours after the fire started, it was under control. The initial 400 fire fighters were replaced at 11:00 pm with a second group of 400 fire fighters.

The spire had collapsed into the Cathedral, and the entire roof had collapsed. This resulted in three large holes above the choir and nave, but the altar cross was undamaged. All of the works of art were saved, and the Virgin was water damaged but still standing on her pedestal. The 12 Apostles and the four evangelists were undamaged. The three organs were intact but damaged by soot and water, and it is unknown yet whether they still function. Currently, it seems that the stained-glass window from the 19<sup>th</sup> century was damaged, but some windows may need to be removed to prevent them from falling. The spire's rooster was found wholly intact but damaged. The three relics (Holy Crown of Thorns and the relics of Saint Denis and Saint Genevieve) were also intact.











































## donations

Even as the fire fighters were attending to the fire, people from around the world were pledging donations for the Cathedral's renovations. Within two days, nearly \$1 billion was pledged to restore the 856-year-old building.

Controversy was not far behind the pledges. After several wealthy business families donated \$100 million or \$200 million each, the people of France were outraged at the wealth gap. Every weekend, for weeks, the Gilet Jaune – the Yellow Vests – had been protesting economic inequality. Now they were asking whether the wealthy families had paid their “fair share” of taxes. For others, the question was whether altruism and philanthropy should be criticized? For most, it was not hostility towards the act of giving, but rather, a question about the best use of the dispersal of funds. Emotions are high and spontaneous, at the damage of an iconic attraction, and questioning why some disasters attract more philanthropy than others.

















## the author: Martina Nicolls

I am an author and humanitarian aid consultant with over 30 years' experience in the management, implementation, and evaluation of international aid development projects, particularly in post-conflict environments and countries with transitional governments, such as Somalia, South Sudan, Sudan and Darfur, Afghanistan, Kashmir, Pakistan, Iraq, Liberia, Sierra Leone, Georgia, Kosovo, Rwanda, and Sri Lanka, and also Mauritius, Mongolia, Papua New Guinea, Thailand, Vietnam, Cambodia – and others. I provide technical advice on areas such as peace-building and conflict mitigation, education, poverty reduction, human rights, child labour, data quality and financing models.

But mostly I am a wanderer. Wherever I am and wherever I go, I take photographs and I write. My books include:

Similar but Different in the Animal Kingdom (2017)  
A Mongolian Lament (2015)  
The Komodo Verses (2012)

Liberia's Deadeast Ends (2012)  
Bardot's Comet (2011)  
Kashmir on a Knife-Edge (2010)  
The Sudan Curse (2009)

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