



PRESS RELEASE

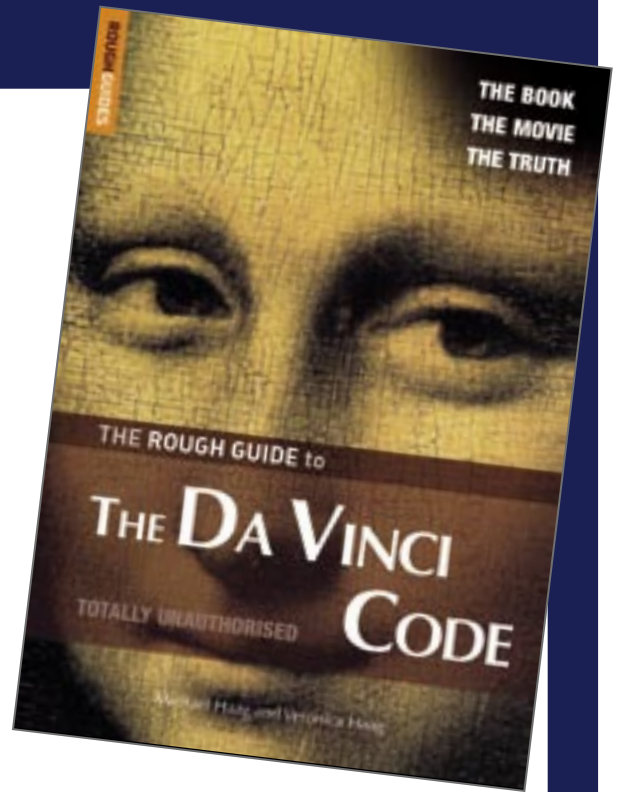
Find out the *TRUTH* behind Dan Brown's book with the Rough Guide to The Da Vinci Code.

With over 18 million copies sold and a movie of the book due for release on 19th May, Dan Brown's thriller has created unprecedented controversy with its plots of conspiracy and revelation over the bloodline of Christ and the legend of the Holy Grail. It rewrites the story of Jesus, Leonardo da Vinci and some of the most fascinating buildings in France and the UK. The preface says that "All descriptions of artwork, architecture, documents and secret rituals in this novel are accurate", but from the start, Dan Brown makes basic errors of fact.

The newly revised and updated Rough Guide to The Da Vinci Code aims to separate fact from fiction by examining Dan Brown's arguments and providing the historical, cultural and religious background material to enable readers to make up their own minds, or take their research further. From the true history of the Holy Grail and the Priory of Sion to what art historians really make of Leonardo da Vinci's symbolism in the Last Supper, the guide covers a complex topic with Rough Guides' customary mix of impartiality, irreverence and erudition.

The ten Da Vinci Code claims that follow overleaf are just a few of the most interesting (and funniest) divergences from the truth...

(Scroll down)



The Rough Guide to The Da Vinci Code includes:

- The true history of the Holy Grail and the Priory of Sion, and the debate on Mary Magdalene and the bloodline of Christ.
- What art historians make of Leonardo da Vinci's symbolism in "The Last Supper" and other works.
- How the early Christian church "edited" the Bible, and drew on earlier religions.
- Guides to Da Vinci Code book and movie locations in Paris, Rome, Jerusalem, New York, Lincoln and Edinburgh.
- The full story of the movie - its casting, controversies and the shoot.

1 Da Claim: Jesus and Mary Magdalene were married.

Da Truth: If they were, then the oldest and most authoritative sources – still the Gospels – don't mention it. Rabbis did usually marry in Jesus's time but prophets and other religious figures (John the Baptist, for one) often didn't.

Da Funny Thing Is: One of the "Gnostic Gospels", discovered in a cave in Egypt in 1945, says that Jesus used to kiss Mary Magdalene on the mouth, but this may have been a mark of special respect. Other ancient, alternative Gospels found at the same time give Mary a rival role to Peter as the founder of the church.

2 Da Claim: Jesus and Mary's descendants ruled France as the Merovingian dynasty, and are still alive today.

Da Truth: The whole idea that Mary went to France is a pious eleventh-century fraud. Thankfully, the ghastly Merovingian dynasty has long since died out – a habit of murdering members of their own family can't have helped.

Da Funny Thing Is: Like most European royal families, the Merovingians made up illustrious ancestors to make themselves look good. Early British kings claimed the name "Britons" came from Brutus, great-grandson of the Trojan hero Aeneas.

3 Da Claim: Leonardo's Last Supper shows a woman "with flowing red hair, delicate folded hands and the hint of a bosom" sitting at Jesus's right hand.

Da Truth: It's John the Evangelist, who was typically depicted in Leonardo's time as a young, pretty

and beardless man. The disciple three to Jesus's left looks just as "feminine", anyway...

Da Funny Thing Is: Leonardo did make a habit of painting strangely androgynous figures. One expert even thinks the Mona Lisa is a Leonardo self-portrait in drag.

4 Da Claim: Jesus's early followers never thought he was God. The idea was made up at the Council of Nicaea, in 325 AD, to reinforce the power of the church and the empire.

Da Truth: Paul, writing within thirty years of the crucifixion, believed Jesus was divine, as did the author of John's gospel, probably writing in the late first century. The Council of Nicaea was called to discuss the nature of Jesus's divinity, not whether or not he was divine.

Da Funny Thing Is: Jesus never actually says that he is God. The nearest he gets is in one passage in Mark's Gospel, where he admits under close questioning that he is "the Christ, the Son of the Blessed One", which scholars say is ambiguous.

5 Da Claim: Mona Lisa is an anagram of Amon L'Isa, from the Egyptian god Amon and the goddess Isis – "whose ancient pictogram was once called L'Isa". Leonardo meant her to represent the god-goddess.

Da Truth: "Mona Lisa" is an English nickname for the painting, taken from art historian Giorgio Vasari's comment that it was a portrait of one Monna ("M'lady") Lisa, so Leonardo had nothing to do with it. Isis's pictogram was never called "L'Isa".

Da Funny Thing Is: The sitter may not actually be "Mona Lisa". Vasari described Lisa's portrait as

having thick eyebrows (the Mona Lisa has none) and parting lips (she smiles, but her mouth is closed).

6

Da Claim: The Holy Grail is not the cup that Jesus used at the Last Supper, but a coded way of talking about the Holy Blood, or family of Jesus.

Da Truth: The idea was made up by a trio of semi-serious authors in the 1980s, based entirely on a fake etymology for the medieval French word for the Holy Grail. They creatively turned “Saint Graal” into sang royal, or “royal blood”.

Da Funny Thing Is: The Holy Grail was made up by the twelfth-century poet Chrétien de Troyes. And he said it was a serving dish – graal in medieval French – not a cup. Later writers of Arthurian fantasy fiction ran with the idea, and these days it can mean anything – Sex and the City’s Samantha Jones uses the word for a generously-sized schlong...

7

Da Claim: Rosslyn Chapel, near Edinburgh, stands on a “north-south meridian” that also runs through Glastonbury, and its name comes from the mystical “Rose Line”.

Da Truth: Glastonbury’s longitude is -2.65° ; Rosslyn’s is -3.16° . The name comes from the Scots Gaelic ross, meaning promontory, and lynn, meaning pool or stream.

Da Funny Thing Is: Rosslyn Chapel was built in 1446 but it has carvings of cacti and maize, which are indigenous to America. Did the builder’s grandfather, Prince Henry of Orkney, sail to America a hundred years before Columbus?

8

Da Claim: The Louvre’s pyramid has 666 panes of glass.

Da Truth: 673: that’s what the

Louvre says, and co-author of the Rough Guide to The Da Vinci Code James McConnachie has counted them himself.

Da Funny Thing Is: The office of the pyramid’s architect, IM Pei, counted 698. But Pei is not interested in numbers or symbols. Geometrical abstraction and light are his obsessions.

9

Da Claim: The ratio of female to male bees follows the “divine proportion” or Phi – 1.6180339...

Da Truth: Bee numbers vary hugely according to the season.

Da Funny Thing Is: Because female bees have two parents (they are born when the queen’s eggs are fertilized) and male bees have one (they are born from an unfertilized egg), the ratio of female-bee ancestors and male-bee ancestors multiplies according to Phi every generation you go back.

10

Da Claim: “Nothing in Christianity is it original”. The weekly holy day was originally the Jewish Sabbath but was later changed, or rather “stolen from the pagans” who worshipped the sun, hence Sunday.

Da Truth: Sunday was chosen because it was the day of Christ’s resurrection – three days after his death on Friday, the evening of the Jewish Sabbath.

Da Funny Thing Is: Christianity did borrow good ideas from competing religions. The December date of Christmas comes from raucous winter solstice festivals, not the actual month of Jesus’s birth – which no one knows.

AUTHOR NOTES

James McConnachie is co-author of the Rough Guide to Paris and the Rough Guide to Conspiracy Theories and has discussed The Da Vinci Code on Richard & Judy, BBC4's Culture Show (with Matthew Sweet), Newsnight and Sky News, as well as on various radio channels.

Michael Haag is a London-based historian and traveller with a particular interest in the cultures of the Mediterranean and the ancient Middle East. His works have been published in Egypt, Britain and America. His *Alexandria, City of Memory* was recently published by Yale University Press.

Veronica Haag is a Classicist at University College London and is as much at home in Latin and ancient Greek as in French and English. Her interests lie in the history, literature, art and philosophy of the ancient world, and in their manifestation during the Renaissance.

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For review copies, extracts and author interviews please contact Demelza Dallow at the Rough Guides Press Office

Tel: 020 7010 3701

Email: press@roughguides.com

