

PARKS AND DUNGEONS

Châteaux and hanging gardens in Périgord

Beynac, Castelnaud, Biron: their names ring out as symbols of the proud châteaux in Dordogne. Marqueyssac, Limeuil and the Roque-Gageac boast truly beautiful gardens. Castles and hanging gardens make Périgord an utterly charming place.



The Castelnaud castle

BESIEGING THE CASTLES

You can't come to Périgord and not hear the legend that there are 1,001 châteaux. Bourdeilles, Hautefort, Josephine Baker's Milandes, Puymartin, Fayrac, Commarques, Monbazillac, Bridoires: the list is never-ending! Three of them stand out: **Beynac, Castelnaud and Biron.**

Perched above a 150m cliff, **Beynac** has been overlooking the Dordogne valley for 900 years. The keep stands another 30m high! This invincible fortress, seat to one of the baronies of Périgord (with Bourdeilles, Mareuil and Biron), faces its rival from the Hundred Years' War, **Castelnaud.**

They have since both been magnificently restored by their owners, thanks to over 200,000 visitors they attract every year. With its Museum of Medieval Warfare featuring life-size reconstitutions of siege engines (trebuchets, catapults and mangonels), Castelnaud is the second most popular site in Dordogne, after Lascaux II.

Biron is another Périgord barony, in the south of Dordogne, featuring outstanding architecture. Set on a hilltop above the forest, it affords incredible views. On a clear day you can see the Pyrenees!

Château de Beynac, 24220 Beynac-et-Cazenac.

Tel: +33 (0)5 53 29 50 40 | www.beynac-en-perigord.com/fr

Château de Castelnaud, 24250 Castelnaud-la-Chapelle,

Tel: +33 (0)5 53 31 30 00 | www.castelnaud.com

Château de Biron, 24540 Biron,

Tel: +33 (0)5 53 63 13 39 | www.semitour.com/site-touristique/chateau-de-biron

A VISIT TO THE GARDENS

The hanging gardens in Marqueyssac, provide over 6 kilometres of shaded walks in a splendid maze of 150,000 boxwood plants dating from the 19th century and still pruned by hand. Laid out on a rocky spur, 800m from the château, these gardens feature a fantastic panorama of the Dordogne valley, 130m below. You can admire both the châteaux de Castelnaud and Beynac from the huge belvedere.

the park has been refurbished in a more contemporary style and according to various themes with a colour garden, witches' garden and water garden: truly magical!

There are many other gardens worth exploring in Périgord, such as those in Eyrignac, the Gardens of the Imagination in Terrasson-Lavilledieu and the grounds of the château de Hautefort.

A few kilometres away, **Roque-Gageac,** where you can take a barge, features an exotic garden, whisking you off to the tropics. There is an amazing micro-climate here: facing south, above the river, the limestone cliff absorbs the heat from the sun then radiates it by night. This prompted enthusiast Gérard Dorin, to use it grow tropical and Mediterranean plants, which love this natural solarium. You can admire cactus, pink laurel and bougainvillea as well as pomegranate, orange, fig, lemon and palm trees. Past meets present in **the Limeuil Panoramic Gardens** set in one of the famous meanders further down the Dordogne. The former physician to the Sultan of Morocco, Dr Linarès, drew inspiration from North African vegetation for the grounds of his château. In recent years,



The grounds of the Hautefort castle

© J.J Brochard / CRTA

The Hanging Gardens, Marqueyssac, route de Vézac, 24220 Vézac.

Tél: +33 (0)5 53 31 36 36 | www.marqueyssac.com

The Roque-Gageac exotic garden, Le Bourg, 24250 La Roque-Gageac.

Unaccompanied free tours throughout the year

The Panoramic Gardens, Limeuil - Association Au Fil du Temps 24510 Limeuil

Tél: +33 (0)5 53 57 52 64 | www.au-fil-du-temps.com



La Roque-Gageac

DID YOU KNOW?

The bastides were built to «grid layouts»: two main streets for driving carriages and others only half as narrow that criss-cross them. The centre features a square lined with arcades and a covered market.

Avant-garde city planning: New York was built according to the same grid layout.



Lot-et-Garonne Colourful, vibrant bastides

The utterly charming bastides were fortified “new towns” from the Middle Ages, featuring arcades around a central square. There’s plenty going on too. Whether English or French in origin, they were built to protect and watch over the people, and have resisted the onslaught of the centuries. They are a typical feature of the south west, especially Lot-et-Garonne and Périgord. Over a hundred were built in Aquitaine in the 13th and 14th centuries. Many have been listed among the prettiest villages in France. Including Villefranche-du-Périgord, Domme, Eymet, Beaumont-du-Périgord and Monpazier in Dordogne. How about exploring those in Lot-et-Garonne, to find out about another aspect of this avant-garde urbanism?



VIANNE

Vianne is an excellent starting point for a Bastide circuit. It was founded in 1284 by a representative of Edward I of England, in retaliation for Lavardac, founded in 1260. Its fortifications have been beautifully preserved, with a 1,250m long city wall, four square towers and two round. Its arts and crafts, glass museum and night markets are well worth a visit in the summer!

www.albret-tourisme.com



MONFLANQUIN

Perched atop a hill and overlooking the Lède valley, Monflanquin is the archetypical French “bastide perchée”. Plenty of entertainment is laid on: medieval festivals, antique fairs, baroque evenings, outdoor theatre, exhibitions of locally produced arts and crafts, markets where local farmers sell their produce. Don’t miss the “Janouille la Fripouille” guided tours, nor the Bastides museum telling the fascinating tale of these «new towns» of the Middle Ages.

www.monflanquin-tourisme.com



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VILLENEUVE-SUR-LOT

As you might expect from its name, Villeneuve-sur-Lot is located on the banks of the Lot. It is a superb example of a French riverside bastide. Its aptly-named Pont Vieux dates from the 13th century. Of the city walls, only two stone and red-brick gates remain: the Pujols and Paris gates. Place Lafayette is the central square ringed with typical arcades, housing the traditional markets on Tuesday and Saturday morning. Villeneuve celebrated its 750th anniversary on the European Heritage Days 2014.

www.tourisme-villeneuvois.fr



VILLERÉAL

Villereal is a must. Protected from the outset by the moats of which vestiges still remain, the only way in is through a gate to the west. It features a charming 13th-century church and a central 14th-century wooden marketplace, surrounded by half-timbered houses. The Saturday market has been a tradition since 1288. It is a riot of colour, with laughter and locals speaking the Occitan dialect providing a lilt that’s typical of the south west.

www.villereal-tourisme.com