



Dreaming of a White Christmas

With this winter weather forecasts, having a white Christmas in the Lot Valley is not a dream.

If you are looking for quiet family oriented ski resorts, traditional markets, unusual winter activities (dog-sledding, snow shoeing, Nordic sauna, ...) and want to discover this part of France in a different atmosphere, visit the Lot Valley in winter.

The Lot Valley in winter still offers many opportunities and whether you are more of a foody person or like active breaks, you'll find something for you.

Gastronomy :

Throughout autumn and winter, markets in Lot and Lot-et-Garonne specialise in capon (corn-fattened chicken), duck, goose and "foie gras" liver, ready for the festive season.

These "fat" markets are in Villeneuve sur Lot (Lot et Garonne) every Saturday morning, from October to March or in Cahors (Lot) every Saturday morning, mi-November to end of December. To learn more about foie gras, visit the Foie Gras museum in Lot et Garonne (www.souleilles-foiegras.com)

Meanwhile, the market town of Lalbenque (Lot), headquarters of the French truffle industry, is getting busy. This is where the nationwide price of truffles is set, and where during the winter months there's the largest weekly truffle market in France which attracts both restaurateurs and tourists alike. First Tuesday in December through to mid-March (2pm onwards)

Many hotels and restaurants offer truffle-themed breaks that include cookery classes, menus, and even truffle-hunting expeditions with pigs or dogs. The truffles begin life underground in May or June, growing during the summer months thanks to the heavy showers and maturing at the start of Autumn. They're ready to be unearthed by winter, usually sniffed out with the help of a specially trained dog or a pig thanks to their characteristic perfume.

The favourite winter dish in Aveyron is estofinado or 'stockfish', made from dried North Atlantic cod that traditionally arrived by boat to Bordeaux. Simmered in water and mixed with mashed potatoes, beaten egg and parsley,

it was once a staple winter food but today is served in many gastronomic restaurants, especially near Decazeville.

If you've room for dessert, try tourtière - layers of wafer thin pastry topped with slice apples soaked in Armagnac, specialty of Lot et Garonne or chestnut dishes in the Chataigneraie (chestnut trees protected area) in Cantal .

Active holidays :

Nordic skiing, downhill skiing, dog-sledding, the Lot Valley in winter offers "alternative living" stays. With more than 500km of signposted slopes, the ski resorts of Le Mas de la Barque, Les Bouviers, Mont Lozère and the Massif de L'Aubrac in Lozere, as well as Saint-Urcize and Pailherols in Cantal, and Laguiole in Aveyron which is particularly good for families, offer you the chance to practice your favourite winter sport in exceptionally beautiful and preserved countryside, across wooded expanses or on the crests along the peaks.

And also unique opportunity to meet bisons and wolves in a natural environment :

European Bisons : naturally found in the wild only in the north of Europe, the European Bison has been reintroduced in La Margeride. Here they live in semi-captivity on over 200 hectares. Visits are made mainly by horse-drawn carriage or by sledge in winter. The trip (around 1 hour) allows the discovery of bisons in their natural habitat. An information space reveals the history of their survival since prehistoric times. <http://www.bisoneurope.com>

The Wolves of Le Gévaudan : more than a hundred wolves (from Canada, Siberia, Mongolia or Poland) live in semi-captivity. On the legendary lands of Gévaudan, these wolves have found safe haven in many wooded hectares of space where you can discover them by taking a guided tour of the park. <http://www.loupsdugevaudan.com>

Finally why not ending up your trip with a relaxing break :

Come and discover the benefits of rest, relaxation, well-being, of soothing and cocooning in calming surroundings. Far from the stresses and strains of daily life, the Lot Valley is the dream destination for unwinding and indulging yourself. Countryside spas were born out of the confluence of an exceptionally well-preserved environment and thermal springs whose benefits have always been enjoyed. La Chaldette resort on the high plateaux of Aubrac offers fitness holidays with or without hiking trips, as well as thermal spa treatments.

In Lot et Garonne, a Nordic sauna, oriental hammam, Japanese bath... at Les Thermes de Casteljalous Take a veritable Aquatic world tour and try out all the sensations from this new spa complex built on the spring sources for just a few hours and more if you really enjoy it.

Did you know that the hottest spring in Europe is at Chaudes-Aigues (Cantal) where the water comes out at 82°. Caleden, the hot spring and thermal therapy Centre has relaxing therapeutic breaks for everyone!

And at Cransac-Les-Thermes (Aveyron), they offer therapeutic treatment using hot natural gases, drawn from "la Montagne qui brûle" (burning mountain).

For any enquiry and organising a press trip in the Lot Valley, please contact Stephanie Khaou lotvalley1@gmail.com