



Discover the Lot Valley

Lot-et-Garonne

Monflanquin village

Perched on top of a hill, the fortified town of Monflanquin was built in 1256 by Alphonse de Poitiers. Its fortifications, including eleven towers and gates, were dismantled in 1632 under the orders of Cardinal Richelieu. The town's oval layout contrasts with the regularity of its streets, which are punctuated by narrow alleys and covered walkways and corridors between the houses. The central square framed by arcades and the characteristic buildings, such as the Maison du Prince Noir or the Saint Andrée church, have made Monflanquin into one of France's most beautiful villages ("Plus beaux villages de France" classification).



Château de Bonaguil

First seen through a line of trees, majestic Bonaguil castle is a real surprise. Built between 1480 and 1520, Bonaguil castle is an example of military architecture of that period. Towers, turrets, a chincane, a large barbican, drawbridges and a complete defence mechanism built around artillery. In the summer, shows, concerts, theatrical plays, theme workshops for children and entertainment in period costume restore life to the old walls.

Open: Every day from March to October. November to February, only open during school holidays.

Visit : www.bonaguil.org

Latour-Marliac Water Lily Garden

At Latour-Marliac you will find nearly 300 varieties of water lily spread over 1 hectare of historical pools that were built in the 19th century by Monsieur Latour-Marliac. Visitors also have access to the glasshouse where you'll find giant water lilies and the night-blooming tropical water lilies; the botanical garden with its lawns and gardens, giant bamboo collection, lake, Japanese bridge, koi fountain, waterfall and gazebo. There is a small museum on site that houses documents from the archives, such as Claude Monet's orders, and which describes the history of the nursery.

Open : May to October (Open after October 15 for plant sales and group visits only)

Website: www.latour-marliac.com



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Penne d'Agenais Village

A former medieval stronghold, Penne d'Agenais is a characteristic village with numerous sights of interest, including the battlements, town gates and the Notre Dame de Peyragude sanctuary, a shrine visited by numerous pilgrims on the St James' Way. Just below the village is the Plateau St Michel, a remarkable natural area which is classed as a site of particular ecological interest for its varieties of flora and fauna. Fishing, hiking, horse riding are available around Penne d'Agenais and you will find fine restaurants and master craftsmen in the village.



Website: www.penne-tourisme.com

Prune Museum



Lot-et-Garonne is the capital of the prune and it'd be a shame to leave without visiting the Prune Museum, which traces the fruit's 100 year history in the region. You'll be able to view a traditional wooden oven, ancient archives, plus an animated display will explain the culture of this local symbol. Guests can also visit the modern factory, and find out how processes have developed over the years.

Website: www.musee-du-pruneau.com

Lot

The Pech Merle



The Pech Merle cave has been called "an art gallery in a place of nature" and it's easy to see why: not only is the Pech Merle cave extremely large, spanning over two kilometers, but on the walls the millions of years of the cave's evolution are visible including primitive art. Visitors can see the third part of the galleries with seven large halls that open the way to discover the exuberant and fabulous riches of subterranean sceneries.

Website : www.perchmerle.com

Le Domaine des Savarines

The Domaine des Savarines vineyards is a unique location producing the famed Black Wine of Cahors, so called because of its intense, deep colour, following traditional methods. Grapes are grown without the use of pesticides and all work in the vineyard and the cellar is done in harmony with lunar cycles and planetary rhythms. To avoid adding synthetic yeast cultures, their wine is made using only the natural yeasts on the bloom of the grapes. Owned by Rosie Kindersley and Eric Treuille, who also own "Books for Cooks" in Notting Hill, has been offering charming chambres d'hôtes since 2011.

Website : www.domaindessavarines.com

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Cahors

In the meander of the Lot river, the Cahors is the Lot's little beauty. It cuts a fine figure, with its arcade houses, bricks and timber frames, its cathedral and its Valentré bridge (both of which are UNESCO world heritage sites). Make your way through its secret gardens that are quite out of the ordinary, displaying a variety of different, vibrant colours. These are recent creations, inspired by the events, characters, anecdotes, habits and customs of the Middle Ages, a time when Cahors knew fame and prosperity. To explore these 30 little gardens one after the other, follow the bronze acanthus leaves set in the pavement.

Website : www.tourisme-cahors.com



Saint Cirq-Lapopie



The village of Saint-Cirq Lapopie is perched on a cliff over 300 feet above the river Lot and is one of the major beauty spots of the Lot valley, having been officially designated as one of France's most beautiful villages. Its historic houses with stone of half-timbered fronts date back to the 13th-16th centuries. Several painters came to live and work in Saint-Cirq Lapopie, drawn by the area's charm. First the Post-Impressionist Henri Martin, then the Surrealists with the poet André Breton, who said he would not want to live anywhere else.

Website : www.saint-cirqlapopie.com

Château La Pinaie at Puy l'Évêque

The Burc family have been producing wine here since the 15th century (a latin-inscribed leather parchment is testament to the legacy). Today's owners, Anne & Emmanuelle Burc, have put in place an "agriculture raisonnée" which offers a sensible and practical approach to respecting the environment, and limiting health and safety risks in the vineyard.

Website : www.chateaupinaie.com



Les Senteurs du Quercy

Since 2004, this nursery has specialised in the production of irises (with more than 1000 species, it's is one of the most important collections in France), drought-tolerant plants, sage (there are more than 300 different kinds).

Website : www.senteursduquercy.com



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Figeac

Figeac's history goes back well over a thousand years. By the 13th-14th century, Figeac was a thriving centre of trade and commerce, whose rich merchants were to be found all over Europe and around the Mediterranean. This led to the construction of some of the most ornately-decorated private houses in the Lot, many of which still remain. A stroll around the old town is a delight and an education. The World Scripture Museum is a must; dedicated to the world's major writing systems, this museum is the house in which Jean-François Champollion, who cracked the lost code of Egyptian hieroglyphics in the early 19th century, was born.

Website : www.tourism-figeac.com



Domaine de Fantou at Prayssac

The Château Fantou, a vine-growing estate that dates back to several generations of the Aldhuy family, is situated in the beautiful village of Prayssac, in the A.O.C. (Appellation Cahors Contrôlée) region of Cahors. Since 1870, the family has worked on the estate and then in 2010, the 5th generation of the Aldhuy family converted the 21 hectares of vines to organic production. They would be delighted to welcome you on the family estate for wine-tasting and a tour of the wine cellars.

Website : www.chateau-fantou.com



Aveyron

Poterie du Don



In 1972 Nigel and Suzy Atkins moved to France to start a pottery in the wilds of the Lot Valley. The Poterie du Don has now been a working pottery for over 30 years, as well as an important exhibition centre for European potters, attracting over 30,000 visitors a year. The building is already a work of art in itself, so you can imagine what its art gallery is like: an incredible temple dedicated to contemporary European pottery. Weekend courses are organised there year round and the shop offers a tempting collection of pots, unique items and jewellery.

Website : www.poteriedudon.com

Coopérative Jeune Montagne

The Laguiole cheese has traditionally been made on the Aubrac for a very long time, monks from La Dômerie were already making it in the 12th century. Today, the "Jeune Montagne" cooperative collects milk from the region to make tome de Laguiole, which itself benefits from an AOC (appellation d'origine contrôlée). It is with this same tome fraîche that aligot is made. Guests can enjoy free visits of the coopérative and cheese tastings.

Website: www.aveyron.com/gastro/jeune_montagne

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Conques



Rebuilt by monks in the 10th and 12th Centuries, Conques is a classic example of Romanesque art, and was a popular stop on the Saint James' way on the way to Santiago de Compostela. The main draw is the Sainte-Foy Abbey and its cloisters, which boasts two of the most beautiful masterpieces of medieval, ornamental sculpture including the unique gold statue of Sainte-Foy. With its narrow streets and age-old timbered houses tiled in Lauzes, the village of Conques retains its ancient charm and purity.

Website : www.tourisme-conques.com

Estaing

Positioned at the entrance to the Lot gorges and at the foot of the Aubrac mountains, the medieval village of Estaing is one of the most picturesque in Aveyron and well worth a visit. Classified among the Most Beautiful French Villages, Estaing gained importance over the centuries for its rich heritage, most notably the Gothic bridge on the Lot River and its beautiful wrought-iron cross. Don't miss the imposing castle built in the 15th Century by the Counts of Estaing and the church dedicated to Saint Fleuret, patron saint of the town.



Website : www.tourisme-aveyron.com

Sainte Eulalie d'Olt is a pretty village on the banks of the river Lot. Visitors are drawn by the beautiful floral displays and its medieval charm, dominated by a castle towering overhead. There is a lively arts and crafts scene in the village, with the establishment of the Small Arts School, running art workshops all year, the artisan's market and an opportunity to watch a traditional horse-drawn carriage being built using traditional methods.



La Maison de la Rivière



A scenographic centre dedicated to the river Lot and the traditions of the valley, namely navigation, fishing, daily life of the Ribièreols (riverains in French - inhabitants), geography and geology. Guests can enjoy a guided journey through the living memory of the Ribièreols in the romantic setting of the former Saint-Parthem convent, plus an account of man's cohabitation over the centuries with this nourishing, slow-moving, welcoming and sometimes threatening river. There's also an interactive trail, children's corner and garden.

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Saint Geniez d'Olt



Formally a major hub for tanners and drapers, the small village of Saint Geniez d'Olt has preserved its 18th century buildings and prestigious religious monuments, the Augustin's cloister and its 14th century chapel and the Pénitents-Noirs being two notable examples. Full of large squares, churches, chapels, and the Lot and midway between the Causses in the south and the Plateau of Aubrac in the north all makes it an ideal place to explore the surrounding area.

Website: www.st-geniez-dolt.com

Musée du Scaphandre (Diving Suit Museum)

For Captain Némó's dives of '20,000 leagues under the sea' fame, Jules Verne took his inspiration from the 1860 invention of the first ever aqualung by Benoît Rouquayrol and Auguste Denayrouze, both of them from Aveyron. Designed in the beginning as a rescue device during firedamp explosions in the mines, the aqualung was awarded the grand gold medal at the Universal Exhibition in 1867. The first trials were carried out in the Lot. Rare exhibits are on display and draw specialists from all over the world.



Website: www.museeduscaphandre.com

Cantal

The Chestnut House

In the hilly, wooded region known as the Châtaignerie (or 'chestnut grove') in the southern Cantal, the Chestnut House in Mourjou is devoted to the humble chestnut. In a converted barn, the museum shows where the arbre à pain (bread tree) came from and how it has been used, right down to its leaves, for mattress stuffing, and its bark, for tannin extract used in silk and leather dyes. People here are proud of their rural traditions and the humble chestnut has not been forgotten so every year for the last week-end of October, a two-day fair dedicated to the chestnut attracts 20,000 visitors with most villagers take part.

Website : www.mourjou.com

Vallée des Daims

Located in the Chataigneraie, to the South of Cantal, this deer valley in Junhac is an absolute must for children. In a preserved 30 hectares area, more than 300 animals roam in complete freedom. See the animals up close and visit the park either on foot or on a little train. If you would like to stay longer in the area, the Ferme Auberge de la Normandie offers local meat and regional specialties and bedrooms are available.



Website : www.daims.fr

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Viaduc de Gabarit

Designed by the famous Monsieur Eiffel himself, the Viaduc of Gabarit is a towering construct, spanning 565 meters of red steel and joining the two banks of the Truyère river. Since its construction in the 1880s it has served as a railway bridge and even today trains still pass over it. This bridge is a challenging, invigorating work of immense architectural importance that merges seamlessly with the surrounding landscape.

Website: www.garabit-viaduc-eiffel.com

Margeride Ecomuseum

The Margeride ecomuseum are three sites brought together to tell Margeride's rich story in Ruynes-en-Margeride. First with the garden of Saint Martin set at the foot of Ruynes-en-Margeride tower, a vestige dating back to the 12th century, in this fragrant garden you will find the aromatic plants that populate the region and the garden vegetables grown in the Middle Ages. Then the Clémence Fontille School, a historic listed monument representing a typical school of the Third Republic, and finally Pierre Allègre's farm which invites you to discover the daily life of the Margeride peasants in the 19th century.



Château d'Alleuze



Perched on a steep rock, the ruined Château d'Alleuze is a breathtaking spectacle. The wild beauty of the place, the dark woods, and the rising escarpments of rock make Alleuze one of the most impressive sights of the High Auvergne. The church of St Illide and the cemetery nearby are also interesting places to visit. Every two years the Dit d'Alleuze is held at the castle, a stunning spectacle combining theater, music, singing and fireworks.



Saint Flour

Built on a plateau of volcanic rock, the medieval city of Saint Flour (nationally recognised as a "city of art and history") is a fascinating place, with imposing Gothic cathedral and lava buildings. For lovers of architecture, it's a real treat: there are numerous beautiful Renaissance facades and medieval streets and courtyards to explore, and a great indoor market in a former collegiate church where you can stock up on local goodies.

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Lozère

La Canourgue

La Canourgue has a vibrant and engaging history that is proudly on display in its ancient streets. Developed during the Middle Ages around an old Carolingian monastery, it was Benedictine monks who subsequently built the Romanesque parts of the present day stunning Saint Martin church. Like other towns in the upper Olt Valley, La Canourgue became a well-known centre for weaving and the alum curing of leather, a fine tradition the town still lives up to. Its archeological museum in Banassac is a must see, a unique showcase for the importance of this pottery village at the time of the Romans.

Website: www.la-canourgue.com



Les Loups du Gevaudan

Get to know the secret world of the wolves, their way of life and the legends surrounding them at this nature park, hosting 100 wolves over 25 hectares. Don't miss the tour, where passionate guides will help you understand the animals during the feeding sessions, games, or even when the young wolves are having their vaccinations. And during the summer, there's the 'Nights of the Wolves' where you can have a go at howling with the wolves! On site there are stand alone 2 star gîtes for hire if you fancy spending the night that bit closer to the wolves.

Website: www.loupsdugevaudan.com



Parc à Bisons



The bison is Europe's largest mammal and these majestic beasts date back to prehistoric times, already depicted in cave paintings. As part of an international attempt to save the European bison from extinction, the Margeride area was chosen as it met the stringent criteria for providing an eco-friendly habitat for the bison. Bison now have a 200 hectare nature reserve they can call home, thriving in small herds in semi-liberty since 1991. Visit the site by horse drawn cart or, if there's enough snow, sleigh. There is also an indoor museum where you can learn more about these fascinating mammals.

Website : www.bisoneurope.com

Savonnerie Mémoires d'Anes is part mini farm, part organic soap factory. Children will be able to meet a range of animals and even get a half hour ride on a donkey, while the factory produces organic soap using ingredients such as donkey milk, goat milk and cow butter. During weekends and school holidays there is the chance to have a guided tour of both the soap factory and the mini farm.

Website: www.memoires-d-anes.fr

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Le Vallon du Villaret



In this contemporary garden, the forest space has been creatively staged by artists who have sought to guide the visitor's eye and all of his senses. Find here three hours of surprising discoveries, of games and of art, all set in a lush valley. These exhibitions are an opportunity to discover both undiscovered artists as well as better known ones. Walking through, you make sounds, play with water and wood and enjoy this reinvented natural space. A pleasure to be enjoyed whether you're 2 or 72.

Website: www.levallon.fr

Green activities

On the water :

The Casseneuil recreation area (Lot-et-Garonne) offers canoe, pedal-boat and kayak rental to either explore the immediate area or head out further afield to the river Lot from half a day to two whole days. You can visit Sainte Livrade, Fongrave, Le Temple sur Lot, or for the more experienced, Castelmoron. Signs posted all along the river will allow you to learn more about its fauna, flora and history. Once you reach your destination, you can call them and they will bring you back to the base.



Kalapca Leisure (Lot) offers you an experience that is both active and cultural in the heart of the Lot Valley. It is an open-air activity centre with climbing, trekking, caving, adventure courses and canyoning. Come and share some great times here surrounded by nature on a day of discovery or for a training course. All of the activities are supervised by qualified instructors, using up-to-the-minute new material and caring above all for your security and comfort. Also at the same location, you can rent a mountain bike or a canoe and kayak on the Lot and Célé rivers.

Le Fénélon cruises (Lot)

Take "Le Fénélon" boat for a day's cruise with a traditional locally-sourced four course meal served on board and a tour guide. Ride the boat down to picturesque Saint Cirq Lapopie or to the Cahors vineyards where you can enjoy the countryside's calm and beauty.

Website : www.bateau-cahors.com



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Babou Marine (Lot)

Make the most of the opportunity to rent a boat suitable for between 2 and 12 people, and spend as long as you like cruising along the tranquil waters of the Lot river with not a care in the world. With departures possible from both Cahors and Penne d'Agenais, this is a fantastic way to explore the region at a slower, more relaxed pace.

Website : www.baboumarine.com

Fishing :

Few departments offer a network of rivers as beautiful, varied and comprehensive as the Lot. You can fish a lot in the Lot with its 1900 km of streams as well as 35 lakes and ponds. So fishermen and women, get yourselves into your waders or fitted with folding seat and you will find the perfect spot whether you love the majesty of a wide valley or mountain environment of a forest stream.

ASVOLT : canoeing on the Lot (Cantal and Aveyron)

A canoeing holiday is the best way to explore every bend of this beautiful waterway and enjoy the breathtaking bankside scenery. Hire a canoe from Asvolt in the lovely riverside town of Viellevie, receive a bit of tuition to hone your paddling skills and set off downstream. Sessions for children aged 5-10 and adults available.

Website : www.asvolt.com



Dam Nature

In the heart of the Truyere Gorges, you can do a whole range of water activities from the Dam Nature center including kayaking, canoeing and dragon boat racing. The centre also runs tours and rents equipment for land based activities in the surrounding area, including mountain biking, archery, orienteering and in the winter, snowshoeing. The lake is vast and peaceful, home to many different bird species. There is a small camp area on the island in the middle of the lake where you can kayak to and spend the night in a tipi or bring your own tent. The new boathouse has a great bar and cafe, perfect for relaxing in the evening sun.

Website: www.damnature.com

Water-based activities at Club Voile Mallet

Not far from the Viaduc of Garabit, the Le Mallet water-based activities centre offers many activities from canoeing to rowing and windsurfing... On your own or with a professional, you can enjoy the beautiful surroundings all year long.

Website: <http://clubvoilemallet.free.fr>



And also ...

Centre Nature OSCA

In the amazing Lot Valley scenery, professional trainers will supervise you in the activity of your choice: canoeing or kayaking on the Lot river, climbing, adventure trails on the cliffs or on the trees, caving, and also mountain biking, hiking or orienteering. If you have a head for heights then I would recommend the via ferreta (pictured), which is one of the best cliff climbing courses in Europe for beginners.

Website: www.centre-nature-osca.com

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On the road :

Discover the Lot Valley by bike (Lot-et-Garonne and Lot)



The Lot Valley véloroute runs alongside the river for 86km on well-marked, gently undulating cycle paths. From where the Lot river meets the Garonne, you can cycle past the town of Villeneuve-sur-Lot and right up to the Bonaguil fortified château. This riverside circuit is perfect for cyclists who want to take in the wonderful scenery along the way, with stunning green expanses of countryside, orchards, fortified towns and farms. There are usually very few cars on véloroutes, but traffic can sometimes be busy on short sections of the circuit.

Cycling in Aveyron

7 trails are offered in Aveyron for beginners and experts alike, all of whom will discover the beautiful landscapes and villages of the Lot Valley. One 130km circuit has two variants and will allow you to visit some truly remarkable local sites including les Bourines fortified farm, the Trou de Bozouls geological site, the Villecomtal Rougier, the abbey-church and the exceptional medieval village of Conques, famous stop on the Chemin de St Jacques de Compostelle.

Website: www.tourisme-aveyron.com/en/circuits/cycling

Hiking the GR652, the Saint James Way (Lot-et-Garonne and Lot)

The GR® is a network of long-distance footpaths in Europe. They are marked with white and red signs and are especially aimed at competent hikers. In Southwest France, the various St James' Way trails meet and all head towards the Pyrenees. One of the main paths on this age-old Pilgrim's way runs across the Lot Valley, the GR 652, via le Puy en Velay. The GR® 652 starts at Figeac, and runs for 130km from the Quercy hills to the Gascogne hillside, through Tournon d'Agenais, Penne d'Agenais, Pujols and Agen.



Saint James Way in Aveyron

From the great steppe of the Aubrac to the charming villages of the Lot valley, from the gentleness of the Vallon to the dominating plateaux, let yourself be carried away by this land full of history and emotion. Today, this heritage has been classed by UNESCO as a world heritage site, as is the ensemble of the Chemins de Saint Jacques de Compostelle. We invite you to live or relive the adventures of the 12th century pilgrims. The Aveyronnaise part of the Saint Jacques de Compostelle covers 102km between the Aubrac and Livinhac-le-Haut in the Lot valley and represents 5 days' walking.

Website: www.tourisme-aveyron.com

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Hiking along old railways (Aveyron)

'Follow the railway' is the result of an excellent idea of converting the former Bertholène-Gabriac-Bozouls-Espalion Railway into a 22 km hiking circuit. On foot, by bike and even on horse-back, you cross the SNCF tunnels and viaducts and hike the well laid-out trails alongside the railway. Map available at the Espalion or at the Bozouls Tourist Office.

Website : www.ot-espalion.fr



Horse-riding centre in Maurs (Cantal)



On the border of the Lot, Cantal and Aveyron regions in unspoilt countryside, this horse-riding centre offers a variety of activities suited to your age and experience, from treks and group tours, to dressage, show jumping and pony summer camps for children. Friendly, experienced staff.

Website: www.centre-equestre-maurs.com

Horse-riding at La Ferme Equestre de la Fontaine (Lot)

Enjoy the beautiful, unspoilt countryside of the Lot Valley from the saddle. At La Fontaine Farm, Genevieve - horse lover and nature enthusiast - will guide you through the Lot countryside, she's a font of knowledge on its fauna, flora and traditions and will happily share it with you.

Website: www.randolafontaine.com



Les Ânes de Monédiès

Pier and Michelle, who run this donkey hire and walking company, are passionate about the Pilgrimage of St Jacques and their 30 donkeys. The animals can be hired for anything of up to 3 months (if you are going all the way to Santiago) and Michelle and Pier can help you plan a route and any necessary transport to and from start points. You can choose to do one of their itineraries, during which they can arrange accommodation for you, or pick up the pilgrimage route. Around Conques there are some fantastic 2 - 4 day walking routes through forests and over green hills, which give you a taster of walking the famous pilgrimage, without having to go too far. The donkeys are always a hit with families, giving small children a lift when needed and removing the burden of carrying luggage. Michelle and Pier also have a beautiful and secluded tipi for hire.

Website : www.ane-et-rando.com/monedies/index.html

Following Stevenson trail

It was in Lozère that Robert Louis Stevenson chose to travel with his donkey, Modestine, and write his famous "Travels with a Donkey in the Cévennes". You don't have to literally follow his footsteps or ride on a donkey (though you can easily do so), but you will find in Lozère a corner of France that you can call your own. The association "Sur le chemin de Robert Louis Stevenson" will help you to find the best way for you to explore this fantastic route.

Website : www.chemin-stevenson.com

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In the trees :

P'arc-en-ciel : forest adventure trail

The Parc-en-ciel is a forested country park of 15 hectares in the Lot-et-Garonne on the limit of the Dordogne and the Périgord. The park offers outdoor forest activities for the whole family. There are a number of activities available, including climbing the tree tops, sweeping down giant tyroliens and, for a small supplement, playing mini-golf, disk-golf and laser-ball. You can also simply walk in the park, enjoy the children's playground, and picnic in the forest or on the banks of the river Lède. There's now also a fantastic outdoor pool to enjoy.

Website: www.parc-en-ciel.com



The Cap Nature Adventure Parc (Lot) welcomes you into the heart of a 3 hectares forest with challenging trails. This is a fun and energetic activity for both children and seasoned adventurers. With trails for 4-8 years old, recreational workshops along the trails, a giant zip line and much more besides, there is something for everyone. Spend your day in this natural environment then relax on the terrace where fresh drinks are waiting for you. If you want more, Cap Nature offers climbing sessions in natural surroundings around Cahors with a professional guide.

Website: www.capnature.eu

Les Ifers (Aveyron)

Surrounded by lush forests, near the village of Saint Geniez d'Olt, the IFERS adventure park offers trails among the treetops. Ropes, ladders, walkways, bridges and tunnels made of wood and super-strong wire will guarantee an exciting day out for children and parents alike. If you want to relax, fishing, canoeing and nature trails are also available. Why not go for the complete experience and spend the night in a treehouse for 4 people, with breakfast and lunch available.

Website : www.ifers.net



Du Haut des Arbres : accrobranche

In La Canourgue, this adventure park welcomes adults and children for a day of fun in the treetops. The adventures trails in trees allow anyone to take part with 3 different levels for children, teens and adults. There are also 65 different aerial games set in the tops of trees that are not only hugely entertaining, but challenging and adventurous. These aerial activities can be combined with zip lines, foot bridges, swings, bungee lines and netting and there are also picnic, pony and quads areas. This is a must-do family activity that everyone will enjoy.

Website : www.accrobranches.com

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More unusual :



“Escapade en Véhicules Anciens” (vintage car rides along the Lot Valley) was born from owners Sandrine and Franck Galissaire's two great passions: vintage cars and regional heritage. The company offers a fleet of vintage cars (from 1960s to 1980s) to choose from and the catalog offers more than 60 different routes (lasting from 1 to 7 days), available for self-drive hire along the Lot Valley, or with a driver who'll help you discover this beautiful area and its history. The rides can include nights in gites or chambre d'hotes, as well as dinners and picnics for lunches.

Website: www.escapadeenvehiculesanciens.com

Truyère Adventure

At Entraygues-sur-Truyère the Lot is joined by the Truyère, with the impressive Gorges de la Truyères. These gorges cut through the hills of Auvergne to the Viaduc de Garabit, interrupted by a number of imposing dams and beautiful artificial lakes. And in this rocky environment, “Truyère Aventure” has created 90 climbing trails and guided hikes. The club offers indoor training for both the beginner and the more experienced hiker.



Laguiole knives



Make your own knife in Laguiole. Life in this village is all about the renowned shepherd's knife, an essential tool for peasants and herdsmen, created in 1829. Laguiole has numerous workshops where the knives are assembled, such as the Factory Les Forges de Laguiole, restyled by Philippe Starck, which is open to visitors. A must: Make your own knife at Maître Honoré Durand.

Website : www.forge-de-laguiole.com

Montsalvy Basket Festival

It is in Montsalvy, a pretty Châtaigneraie village, well known for its picturesque Romanesque abbey and its basket makers, that the “Basket Festival” is held. At the end of July there is a huge Basket Festival where more than 80 basket makers come to show off their creations and their expertise. Basket making has always been an important tradition in this area and several times a year the basket maker association organises basket-making courses. Last Saturday of July

Laser Green is an outdoor concept, imported from Australia, that can be played in team or solo. A greener alternative to paintball, you fire harmless lasers with a range of up to 150 metres at your enemies/team mates and with such a wide selection of missions to choose from, you'll find yourself coming back for more. The



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outdoor area is made of natural and inflatable obstacles and this eco-friendly activity leaves the forest unharmed. Perfect for both adults and children aged 6 or above 6, the whole family will enjoy playing Laser Green. There are also food and snacks on offer to replenish between rounds.

Website: www.laser-green.fr

Thermal Centres :

Station thermale de Cransac (Aveyron)



For hundreds of years, Cransac has treated patients with rheumatic and musculoskeletal ailments. At the end of the nineteenth century however, Cransac became a mining town and the spa all but disappeared, but was reopened in 1960 after the mine closed. Surrounded by ancient acacia forests, Cransac receives thousands of spa guests every year who come to enjoy the natural sauna and relaxing setting.

Website: <http://www.chainethermale.fr/cures/stations-thermales/cransac-les-thermes.html>

Station Thermale de Calden (Cantal)

As the name of this commune suggests, Chaudes-Aigues is from the French for 'hot waters', there are thirty natural hot water sources with temperatures ranging from 45° to more than 80°. The most famous is the source of the Par river with a water temperature of 82° - the hottest in Europe. The waters are used all year round: in winter they provide heat for houses and for the church, and from spring the waters are channelled to the spa for the treatment of rheumatics. Calden, the hot spring and fun therapy Centre, offers relaxing therapeutic breaks for everyone.



Website : www.calden.com

La Chaldette and Bagnols les Bains thermal centres (Lozère)

Land of hot springs and wild nature, Lozère offers a wide range of thermal therapy centres and spas in a well preserved natural environment. Bagnols-Les-Bains, close to Mount Lozere and the sources of the Lot, has been a thermal centre since the Roman era, well-known for the quality of its water and its pure air. Then La Chaldette is located on the Aubrac plateau and during your stay you can alternate pampering and hiking on Saint James' way while discovering the fauna and flora of the area.

Website : www.thermalismevert.com

Winter activities in Cantal :

Winter activities in Saint Urcize, in the Plateau de l'Aubrac area, is a charming and peaceful mountain village, with an eleventh century church and medieval remains dotted around. With more than 40 kms of cross country trails, and lots of other winter activities on offer (snow shoeing trails, dog sledding skiing) there's enough to keep lovers of the great outdoors amused for weeks.

http://www.montagnemassifcentral.com/domaines/decouverte_urcize.htm

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Winter activities in Pailherols

Sandwiched between the Cantal mountains and Aveyron, Pailherols is a charming little mountain village in the heart of the Natural Park of Auvergne. The surrounding area has plenty to keep those in pursuit of snow activities happy: there are 40 km of pistes, trails for snowshoeing and dog sledding, and endless tracks and trails to explore.



Green restaurants and accommodations

Lot-et-Garonne

Bateau-hôtel Le Kévin

A solar-powered barge, designed exclusively for cruising on the river. From April 2011 you can book a cruise aboard this extraordinary boat and find out more about the flora and fauna, the surrounding villages, farms and chateaux that line the itinerary. The cruises depart from Villeneuve-sur-Lot and will make stops at Casseneuil, Fongrave, Castelmoron, Granges-sur-Lot, Clairac, Temple-sur-Lot, Penne d'Agenais, and return to Villeneuve-sur-Lot. Guests are accommodated in 2-berth cabins on board and treated to excellent meals either on board or in canal-side restaurants. Possibility to rent bikes.

Navigates on the Lot river from April to October.

Website: www.navicanal.com/cgi-bin/kevin



The Château de Rodié is a wonderful place to unwind. Take pleasure in the spacious rooms, antique furniture authentic to the region, old stone walls and huge beams, and peace and quiet occasionally broken by the squawk or baa of an animal. Try the host's cooking and enjoy the home-grown produce of the farm & gardens and the delicious local wine. You cannot have breakfast before eight o'clock (far too uncivilized) but you may have it as late as you like. The food is either organic or "origine contrôlée" and there are a range of vegetarian options.

Website : www.chateauderodie.com



La Bella Rocoma Yurt Camp



Stay in this gorgeous yurt in a secluded spot and be seduced by its circular shape and colourful fabrics, in summer or winter. The 360 square feet space is equipped with all the home comforts you'll need to be comfortable and warm, including a king size double bed (and two extra beds), a seating and dining area. Enjoy the breathtaking views from your own private terrace with garden furniture, parasol, deck chairs and barbecue. Possibility to rent bikes to visit the area.

Website: www.labellarocoma.com

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Roulotte de la Vallée du Lot

A cozy trailer on a working farm in the heart of Lot-et-Garonne. Escape from the stress of urban life by taking a dip in the heated swimming pool, strolling around the 5000m² garden and going for bike rides in the surrounding countryside. Don't miss the delicious breakfast of local products and why not buy some fresh fruit from the farm to take along on your excursion. April to October (from €95 per night for 2 persons)

Website: www.roulotte-valleedulot.com



La Ferme des Tuileries

This friendly family farm is located in the heart of Lot et Garonne. The owners grow fruit and vegetables, making sure to respect the environment and utilise only fully-ripened handpicked fruit. In the farm shop, guests can pick up fresh fruit and vegetables, but also many traditional home-made products. The farm is a member of the association "Bienvenue à la ferme", which guarantees the quality of the products, the hospitality and activities La Ferme des Tuileries provides. From €275 per week for 6 people.

Website: www.ferme-tuileries.com

Les gîtes de la Boulède

Each of the 6 cottages has been tastefully restored, located not far from the owners' home. The estate covers some 2.5 hectares and has several surprises in store for you. Originally, the site was home to various different tradesmen, explaining the names chosen for the gites: 'Forgeron', 'Menuisier', 'Vigneron'. This is a fantastically calm and peaceful spot just 2km from the picturesque bastide town of Monflanquin. From €775 per week for 6 persons

Website: www.boulede.eu



Domaine Le Vignal



Comfortably nestled in Montflanquin, perhaps Lot et Garonne's most beautiful town, Domaine Le Vignal offers B&B and gite accommodation in the heart of the Lot Valley. Here you'll be able to read and relax by the swimming pool or from the comfort of your private terrace. For the more active guests, there's plenty of walking, jogging and cycling through the many country lanes starting from the Vignal. Gites from €245 for 2 persons per week - Open: April to September

Website: www.le-vignal.com



The Hameau de Bosc-Nègre is an old Perigord-style farmhouse which has been totally reconverted, keeping the original and local character and aesthetic in mind. There are 24 chalets in total, sleeping between 4 to 9 persons, while the surrounding woods offer the pleasure of walking, biking or horse riding. There are also a great many other activities offered on site. From €70 per night for 2 people

Website: www.lebosc.com

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Le Panorama has a strategic position at the entrance to the walled village of Laparade. The 'bastide' village, dating back to 1265, is perched 500 feet above the river Lot and offers splendid views of the Lot valley and the surrounding countryside. Fresh produce can be enjoyed at the appropriately named Panorama Hotel and Restaurant, which has the label "Assiette du Pays", implying they only serve local, traceable and seasonal products.

Website: www.panorama-laparade.fr

Les Rives du Plantié

Discover the delicious cooking of Les Rives du Plantié, in a stunning ancient barn amidst a vast and beautiful park. The menu reflects the seasons and includes local farm and market products such as lobster raviolis, beef 'en croute de sel', and boar paté with porcini mushrooms. For lunch, why not enjoy a fresh salad before spending the afternoon by the pool. Les Rives du Plantié has the label "Assiette du Pays", serving only local, traceable and seasonal produce.

Website: www.lesrivesduplantie.com

Les Voyageurs

Well situated on a historical wine route, take a break at the restaurant "Les Voyageurs", in Tournon d'Agenais, a fortified village dating back to the 13th Century. Savour the delicious local delicacies such as 'Canard aux saveurs des coteaux de Tournon' (Local spiced duck) on one of the restaurant's two wonderful terraces. "Les Voyageurs" has the label "Assiette du Pays", serving local, traceable and seasonal produce.



Website: www.hoteltournonagenais.com

Organic market in Villeneuve-sur-Lot



The local markets in France are full of the freshest and tastiest produce and the work of local artisans. The weekly market is still a must for locals and an appealing attraction for tourists. Villeneuve-sur-Lot is the oldest and biggest organic market outside of Paris, open every Wednesday morning and selling a large range of local, fresh and seasonal produce. Every Wednesday morning from 7:30am - 12pm

La Bastide des Oliviers

Two fantastic restaurants in one for the acclaimed Chef Christophe Lacombe - one gastronomic and a brasserie, both of which make the most of the delicious local and seasonal products on offer in Monflanquin.

Website: www.labastidedesoliviers.fr

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Lot

Le Mas d'Azémar



A magical place in the heart of Cahors' vineyards, Sabine, Aurore and Claude Patrolin welcome you to "le Mas Azémar". These attentive hosts are also talented cooks and will lead you through this ancient residence, restored with love, respect for tradition and offering the best of comfort. Boasting period furniture, rare and quaint items and diverse works of art; visiting this charming XVIIIth century residence is a delight for the discerning eye. The surrounding park has its own charm with a diverse wildlife offering the perfect place go for a stroll at any time of the day, or sunbathe alongside the heated swimming-pool in complete tranquillity. From €117 euros per night for a double room (breakfast inc.)

Website: www.masazemar.com

Les Cadichons

This is an ideally located camping site, part of the diverse and beautiful landscape with its forests, cliffs, rivers and caves. Here yurts, caravans, tipis and Inuit tents are all available for rent and you can also stay in your own tent or caravan. Enjoy a wealth of activities such as hiking, horse or donkey riding, canoeing, mountain biking, swimming, climbing and caving. From €50 for 2 persons in a yurt with breakfast / from €40 for 2 persons in a caravan / from €60 for a tipi (from end of April to October)



Website: www.les-cadichons.com

Hôtel le Saint Cirq



Guided by their deep passion for old stones, gastronomy, wine and nature, Eric Viven, former Chef of the Restaurant Le Gourmet Quercynois, and his partner Adeline will show you the heart and soul of their native home: the Quercy. This renovated Quercy hamlet boasts 25 rooms prepared with loving care that will surround you in the natural charm and character of this beautiful place. Outside, grapevines and truffles provide tasty treats in season. Why not take a Canoe trip on the Lot then go mountain biking over this serene and beautiful countryside. From €78 per night in a double room

Website: www.hotel-lesaintcirq.com

Lou Repaou

Odile and Nano welcome you to their authentic 19th century Quercy farm. Now fully renovated with the best natural materials, the beds are extremely comfortable and the large rooms each offer a Turkish bath or a whirlpool bathtub while outside lies a swimming pool surrounded by dry stone walls. Located in Aujols, near Saint Cirq Lapopie, come and be pleasantly surprised by the calm and in the evening find yourself wrapped in a beautifully starry sky. From €112 per night for a double room, breakfast included



Website: www.lourepaou.fr

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Camping de Cabessut

Sit peacefully along the edge of the Lot river and only a short walk from the cultural stronghold of Cahors, this impressive campsite is run by the Costes family and offers a perfect place to park up, pitch a tent, and breathe in the fresh air of the French countryside. You'll never run out of things to do in the area, with Cahors market, a wonderful cathedral, Valentre bridge and hidden gardens all within walking distance. If that all seems like a little too much effort, you could always just sit and watch the Lot river run by, or take a stroll in the surrounding fields.

Website: www.cabessut.com



Camping de la Plage



Situated next to the River Lot, in Saint Cirq Lapopie, this campsite is an ideal base for those after an activities-based holiday, with many sporting things to do onsite or in the surrounding area; you can even rent canoes and kayaks onsite. There are 120 pitches, including 109 touring pitches (all with electricity), a few fully-serviced, and several hardstanding pitches. Most are on a very slight slope and have good shade from mature trees and bushes.

Website: www.campingplage.com

Hostellerie Le Vert at Mauroux



Le Vert is located near the village of Mauroux which lies, surrounded by vineyards, in the heart of Cahors. This 17th century domain formerly produced wine - now it's a lovely place to stay: rooms are spacious and comfortable. Food is seasonal and tasty, served in a stone-walled dining-room or on the shady flower-filled terrace that overlooks the sunny valley beyond. From €85 for 2 (breakfast €10 extra); from €169 for 2 halfboard

Website: <http://www.hotellevet.com>

Chambres d'hôtes at Parnac

Here, you are right in the heart of the Cahors vineyards. Georges Delmas offers accommodation if you wish to stay in the vineyards. You can visit the property, discover the products and how they are made and stay in one of the four guest rooms at your disposal. As an added bonus, if you dine at one of the three selected restaurants, you'll have a bottle of Chateau Prieuré offered during the dinner. Price: from €60 per night for a double bedroom.

Website: www.domainedelmas.com

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Le 14, located in a picturesque decoration shop at Prayssac, offers wonderful meals with spicy and adventurous cuisine mixing Lot products and exotic flavours. Eat well then go home with some beautiful plates, candles or glasses...

Place d'Istrie - 46220 Prayssac; Phone +33 5 65 36 04 86



L'Auberge du Sombrol is a charming old house, nestled away in the heart of the medieval village of Saint Cirq Lapopie. The restaurant offers a number of culinary specialties including home-made foie-gras, snails ramekin, poached trout with cahors wine, roast leg of lamb from Quercy and much more besides. There are also 8 fully refurbished rooms if you are looking for not only a meal but also a quiet place to stay.

Website: www.lesombral.com

Le Marché



In the centre of Cahors, facing the marketplace and the cathedral, Cécile and Hervé Bourg have imagined a stylish "bistro" boasting both a beautiful terrace and modern cuisine. The Chef Hervé Bourg transforms each day market produce, from the Lot's delicious ingredients, into stunning and flavoursome meals. His moto is: "good cooking is when things taste of what they are". The Cuisine here evolves each day, guided by instinct and the joy of discovering new flavours in the local produce.

Website: www.restaurantlemarche.com

La Récréation

Located in Les Arques, in an old primary school, this restaurant has a beautiful patio, where the chef offers a delicious market menu made with local and fresh products. The village itself hosts the Zadkine Museum, showcasing some wonderful works by the Russian-born sculptor, and an 11th century church of Saint-Laurent with a huge wooden Christ.

Website : www.restaurant-traiteur-lot.com

L'Allée des Vignes

This former rectory, situated in the medieval part of Cajarc, was restored and refurbished, and is now a delightful restaurant. Its secluded garden was transformed into a sunny and flower-filled terrace where you can spend time accompanied by soft murmurings from the old well. The restaurant combines modern decor with tradition to create a warm and friendly atmosphere. L'Allee des Vignes offers a variety of delicious local food as well as mouthwatering dishes from other corners of the world.

Website: www.alleedesvignes.com



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L'Ô à la Bouche

A new location for this local restaurant, situated in the heart of Cahors. The relaxing decor gives a peaceful atmosphere to the place. Feel free to observe the chef - Jean-Francois Dive - at work: food is simple and always locally-sourced. There are two areas to the restaurant: one half has big tables for convivial get togethers with friends; the other half has cosy tables for couples.



Website : www.loalabouche.com

L'Auberge des Gabarres



This restaurant uses local and seasonal products such as aligots, magrets and confits to offer a simple and tasty food. According to the owner, a meal is a success if the bread and wine are good and here, both Croustilot (the Cahors bread) and le Domaine La Berangerie will be provided before the cheese selection comes out (if you make it that far; €15 gets you a soup, a starter, main, cheese and dessert). In the summer, guests can eat out on the patio under the wisteria. 24, place Champollion - 46000 Cahors

Aveyron

Logis Auberge Du Fel is an attractive house in a traditional village overlooking the narrow Lot Valley. Each room, named after a variety of grape from the South-West, offers a different layout and atmosphere. Try the Cabernet or Grenache rooms, which boast a balcony from which to admire the surrounding countryside. The Logis Auberge du Fel hosts a refined restaurant serving some of the best local specialties to be enjoyed on the sunny panoramic terrace. During your stay at Le Fel, why not take the time to visit the Millau Viaduct or the Cantal mounts. From €66 per night for double room



Website: www.auberge-du-fel.com

La Rivière



Expect a warm welcome and impeccable service at Hotel La Riviere, in an exceptional, historical setting. The hotel features a large heated outdoor pool, a beach, a bar, and a landscaped garden which includes magnolia, catalpa, white birch, flower beds and lavender, outdoor games for children and a 'petanque' ground. Everything has been designed to help you completely unwind in gorgeous and peaceful surroundings.

Website: www.hotellariviere.com

The Hostellerie de la Poste offers peace and quiet in a green setting. Faithful to the traditions of the Rouergue region for four generations, expect warm hospitality and diversity of flavours. Located in Saint Géniez d'Olt, you can visit the village, the cloisters, the churches, the old bridge, the Talabot monument and hear about the village's many legends. Discover the magical Saint Eulalie d'Olt village nearby, classed as one of the Most Beautiful Villages in France.

Website: www.hostelleriedelaposte.com

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Moulin de Cambelong

Welcoming and authentic, this 18th Century mill has been converted into a charming hotel where your hosts Dominique and Hervé Busset will ensure you have a relaxing and tranquil stay. Overlooking the gardens, the swimming pool offers welcome refreshment during the hottest hours of the day, and eases the limbs after a walk on the St James Way. You will discover an authentic cuisine, with local produce and hand-picked nettle, sage and elder flowers from the property. Savour Hervé Busset's farm pork with mountain thyme and his home-made ice cream with ground ivy. From €140 per night for a double room.



Website: www.moulindecambelong.com

La Ferme du Duzou

Located on a quaint farm near Conques, this cosy collection of nine chalets (sleeping 2 to 6 people) also boasts a swimming pool and play room, making it a great choice for families. The three Mansois cottages have wooden exteriors and a private terrace from which to while away the balmy evenings, while the larger Ontario cottages have light, modern interiors and BBQs on their own private terraces. Nearby, you can discover some of Aveyron's most picturesque villages or explore one of the area's many hiking routes. There's also a private lake where guests can try canoeing, rafting and even fish for trout, carp and perch, with a boat available to hire. Groups of up to 10 people can take part in lessons concerning subjects such as local environment and biodiversity, and the heritage of the land. €140, based on four people sharing for two nights.

Website: www.aveyron-chalet.com

L'Auberge du Château



This distinctive country house hotel and restaurant has one of the most peaceful locations available, tucked away in the quiet village of Muret le Château, between Rodez and Marcillac. Each of the rooms is individually decorated and much has been done to ensure the renovation is in-keeping with the village's traditional, relaxed atmosphere. What you get for breakfast will depend on what is in season (served either in front of the fireplace or next to the swimming pool), but you'll most certainly enjoy snacking on the homebaked cakes and marmalades.

In the restaurant, chef Marc Cordy prepares an impressive, original menu using only the freshest locally-sourced ingredients.

From €72 per person, per night.

Website: www.laubergeduchateau.com

Hôtel Nou 4

You'll find this cosy guesthouse in the village of Laguiole. The rooms are light and airy, plus there's a fantastic restaurant and café serving up local goodies. Impressively, all of the hotel's energy comes from renewable sources. The heating and hot water comes from a combination of pellet boiler and solar panels, the toilets have reduced water tanks, recycling is of utmost importance and the ingredients used in the food are sourced from organic farms. During the winter, you'll be in a prime position to make the most of the region's alpine skiing, cross country skiing and snowshoeing



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opportunities, plus you can pick up a number of maps and guidebooks regarding walking in the area from the owners.

Due to change of ownership, the hotel reopens beginning of April 2015.

Website: www.nou4.com



Le Val de Saures campsite boasts 126 pitches, each of which has its own privacy - 50 pitches are found at the bank of the Lot River. At Val de Saures you can stay without your car: all shops and services are only at a small distance in the village that you can easily reach with the footbridge over the River Lot. You'll also be able to try your hand at canoeing and kayaking, as well as visiting the car-free village of Bastié. From €12.5 per pitch per night and from €39 for a 6 person chalet. Open: April to September.

Website: www.camping-valdesaures.com

Château de la Falque

From convent to boarding school and now to luxury hotel, this beautiful old château dates from the 17th century and is steeped in a fascinating history. The lavishly-themed rooms (Chinese, Moroccan, African) are creative and quirky and are set around the stunning central courtyard. There's an outdoor pool and spa or, if you can tear yourself away from the hotel and grounds, there's masses to explore in the surrounding area too. From €90 per room.

Website: www.chateau-la-falque.fr



Le Moulin d'Alexandre is located in the heart of the beautiful village of Sainte Eulalie d'Olt, next to the Aubrac mountains, famous for its breathtaking scenery and the quality of the local food. Laurent and Christel will welcome you and help you make the most of your stay, whether that's hiking, sightseeing, fishing, or just relaxing in the garden. The entirely restored ancient mill is well worth a visit.

Website: www.aumoulinalexandre.fr

Restaurant L'Aubrac

In the heart of Laguiole, renowned for knife-making and gastronomy, discover the Aubrac restaurant. For several generations, the Brouzes Favier family have been offering authentic and natural cuisine. You can try the delicious "Fleur d'Aubrac", local cow meat reared in natural conditions and the Aligot, purée of potatoes with crème fraîche and lots of traditional melted Tome cheese from Aubrac. Why not also try regional wines such as Marcillac, Entraygues le Fel and Estaing.

Website: www.hotel-aubrac.fr

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The Auberge Saint Fleuret is a cosy and welcoming inn conveniently located on the Saint James Way, which is on the UNESCO World Heritage List. Your hosts are delighted to accommodate visitors who are passing through Estaing on their journey and to provide them with information about the beautiful surroundings and rich cultural heritage. Try the delicious local Terroirs cooking and enjoy an after dinner digestif on their shady terrace looking out over the swimming pool.

Website: www.auberge-st-fleuret.com



The Méjane, on the St James Way in Espalion, is a meeting place for gourmets. Régine and Philippe Caralp welcome you to their intimate restaurant where the work of local artists is displayed amongst numerous mirrors. Philippe invites you to sample his signature dishes, made from seasonal, regional products and influenced by the cuisine of the Languedoc region. Régine delights in helping you pick the best combination of food and wine.

Website: www.restaurant-mejane.fr

Le Lion d'Or

This luxurious hotel restaurant has two rooms and a terrace from which to sample delicious regional cuisine. The first room allows guests to dine in front of a fantastic 16th century stone fireplace, while the second, larger room accommodates much larger groups. The outdoor terrace seating area is a peaceful and sunny spot that can seat around 60 people. The regional dishes range from local fish, dried meats, aligot and local cheeses. All of these are accompanied with a huge range of wines from the hotel's cellar.

Website: www.leliondor-stgeniezdolt.com

Le Belvédère

Finding this restaurant should be pretty easy, seeing as it is located next to one of Aveyron's most impressive geological sites, a huge 400m canyon-shaped horseshoe, at the bottom of which flows the river Dourdou. The restaurant itself boasts a relaxed atmosphere, while Michelin-starred head chef Guillaume cooks up a host of fantastic local delicacies using fresh, local produce.

Website: www.belvedere-bozouls.com



Le Petit Chou is a salon de thé in the center of the village, facing the main square. There is a warm relaxed atmosphere where you can enjoy a wide variety of teas, coffees, milkshakes and smoothies. The salon bakes scones, cakes, cup cakes, tarts and makes their own Italian ice cream. The salon also serves breakfast, light lunches and dinners including: paninis, salads, croque-monsieur, a variety of delicious salads and a daily 'plat du jour'.

Website: www.lepetitpois.fr

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La Méjanassère

At the heart of the Chataigneraie, between the picturesque communes of Conques and Laguiole sits this fantastic wine domain, restaurant and B&B. Visitors can opt to stay in one of the comfortable bedrooms, or simply choose to dine on the locally-sourced produce. You'll also be able to taste the sweet selection of wine made from grapes growing on the surrounding hillsides.

Website: www.domaine-de-mejanassere.fr



Cantal

Le Domaine d'Hypolite sits in a sheltering hollow at the head of a long, sweeping valley.



A luxury retreat tucked away in the beautiful Cantal countryside, from its position on the crest it offers spectacular views across the green pastures, the wheat fields and the magnificent chestnut trees (« chataigniers ») which give their name to this whole region. This ancient hilltop barn, painstakingly restored to offer all the creature comforts you could desire as a haven of indulgence complete with its own private spa, sauna and jacuzzi.

From €795 per week (Rates include electricity ,firewood, all charges and taxes, linen and towels. Visitors receive a welcome basket of seasonal farm produce)

Website: www.domainehypolite.com

Tipis d'hôtes Saladou

In the heart of the Lot Valley, La Ferme du Saladou offers their guests a unique approach to nature, encouraging eco-responsible stay by letting their guests live in tipis and participate in the farm life. From there, you can go hiking, cycling, or just relax. Each tipi has got 3 to 4 single beds, wood furnace and solar lamp. There is a common tipi for breakfasts and dinners or just to relax in and a bathroom inuit tent with solar shower and dry toilets.



From €70 per night

Website: www.tipis-de-france.com/dormir-dans-un-tipi/ferme-du-saladou/

Tipis Lalo-Bas

The tipis are placed in a meadow above a forest of chestnut trees, in a very quiet hamlet next to Montsalvy. This location provides a milder climate and offers great sceneries with nature lovers appreciating the area's calm and authenticity. The two tipis are 6 meters in diameter, have a capacity of 6 seats each and are equipped with a floor to isolate the humidity and cold. Mattresses and cushions are laid on the floors and a brazier is placed at the center in order to make a fire if it gets a little chilly. €40 to €60 per night (1 to 6 persons) for the whole tipi. Or "Formula Tipi Collective": share the tipi with other people and everyone pays what they want. Offer valid only for groups or families up to three people.

Lalo Bas – 15120 Montsalvy – Phone +33 4 71 49 29 76

For further information please contact: Stephanie Khaou

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Les Yourtes du Cantal

In the heart of a 2 hectares pine forest, to the south of Cantal, these yurts are completely integrated into the natural environment while providing all the best of modern comfort. The three yurts each have their own character and are well spaced out to provide privacy so you can quietly relax while watching the forest's fauna and flora. All made by French craftsmen, the yurts are decorated with natural products and the bedrooms have a round bed so you can watch the stars before you sleep.



From €80 per night for two persons

Website: www.yourte-cantal.com

Auberge des Montagnes

This Auberge is run by a family who have lived in the small mountain village of Pailherols for over a century. The Auberge is decorated with antiques that have been passed down through generations and huge stone fire places and snug seating areas make this the perfect mountain retreat. The on site spa houses a hot tub, outdoor and indoor swimming pool a small gym, a snooker table and play area. On Saturday evenings the restaurant is often fully booked, renowned for its superb home made local food. The same family also own a chalet that can be hired on a self-catering basis and a larger hotel in the same village. From €59 for a double bedroom, €54 per person half board.

Website: www.auberge-des-montagnes.com

Chambres d'hôtes La Roussière

This 200 year old farmhouse has been carefully and beautiful converted into a B&B offering 3 luxury bedrooms at the foot of the Plomb du Cantal. The house sits on the edge of a remote valley, set in summer pastures, amid lush green forests and snowy hills. Its rural setting takes you far off the beaten track and is a haven of peace and fresh air. The owners have very good English and Christian is a guide in the area and so can offer you heaps of information on the best walks and sites. Rooms from €75 per night, including breakfast.

Website: www.laroussiere.com

Ferme le Ruisselet is located in an extremely culturally-rich area. Only a short distance away you'll find the museum and cathedral of Saint-Flour, the Church of Bredons in Murat and the fascinating Castle of Alleuze. The farm itself offers a variety of accommodations including two gites, one sleeping 2-3 and the other sleeping 2-18. The larger gite has been wonderfully converted from a barn and has since been decked out in a traditional Auvergne style.



You can even opt to have your hosts cook you a locally-sourced meal using ingredients grown on the farm and have it delivered straight to your dining table. The main house offers 5 comfortable B&B rooms, plus a dining room and a communal lounge.

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Between June and September you can also camp out on one of the 15 sites if you're only looking to stop off for a little while. From €50 per night for two people, B&B; cottages cost from €165 per week.

Website: www.ferme-le-ruisselet.com

Camping le Belvédère



In the heart of the Truyère Valley is this lovely campsite with 86 marked, shady and south facing pitches (between 80 to 100 m²), arranged in terraces offering a quiet, peaceful holiday. There is also the possibility to rent equipment should you need it. Chalets and bungalows are also available to rent.

Website: www.campinglebelvedere.com

Château de Varillettes

Situated near Saint-Flour, nestled in a green undulating landscape, Château de Varillettes borders fields and woods, and appears to watch over the rolling hills of the Margeride. Dating from the fifteenth century and originally built as a keep, this château is now witnessing a new age. Charm and authenticity have been preserved, restoring the original minimalist and sober decor. The medieval garden, the jewel in the crown, is divided into six boxwood lined squares and includes a diverse range of herbs, medicinal and aromatic plants, with sage, hyssop, wormwood and rosemary, amongst others.



Website: www.chateaudevarillettes.com

Le Bon Air

Located in Fraissinet, a picturesque hamlet near Saint-Flour, this fantastic eco-friendly village is comprised of four wooden chalets and is the first of its kind in Cantal to receive the Green Key certification. Energy saving credentials include solar panels, a thermal water heater and goothermal heating, with the self produced energy doing much to power the entire site. The gites themselves are modern and comfortable, with decking outside where you can look out over the surrounding countryside. 400 - 1100 euros per week or 80-120 euros per night

Website: www.gite.bon.air.stflour.free.fr/

Auberge la Pagnoune



Close to Grandval Lake and the Viaduc of Garabit, this authentic country inn is packed full of charm and character with its beautiful stone facades, wood beams and rural architecture. The discovery of the Lot Valley begins in the dining room and continues to the seven rooms where you'll find influences that tell the story of the natural and cultural heritage of Margeride and the Valley of the Truyère. From €60 per night for 2 persons.

Website: www.aubergelapagnoune.com

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The hôtel restaurant La Terrasse is on the banks of the river Lot in the village of Vieillevie, at an altitude of 200m. Formerly a stagecoach post house, it has been run by the same family since 1870 and is currently in the hands of the 4th generation. The restaurant offers regional specialties, made with local products, in a warm and rustic setting. If you want to spend the day out, the family will make you a nice picnic but you can also relax and enjoy the pool by the river, in the beautiful garden, on the large shaded terrace (wisteria), or playing in the tennis court.

Website: www.hotel-terrasse.com



The hôtel restaurant Puech built in Calvinet in 1938 has been redecorated and transformed into a charming inn with six rooms, two suites, one apartment and a duplex. Its dining room has exposed stone and wood with a patio and porch leading onto the garden. The Chef, Louis Bernard Puech offers a menu "A la Carte" based on selected products. In the kitchen of Louis Bernard Puech, there is everything: the carefully selected ingredients, tradition and the seasons. Area man par excellence, the Michelin star chef Cantal, gets up early to find "the" product, fresher, tastier, longer "terroir". Menus from €26

Website: www.cantal-restaurant-puech.com

Auberge de Mourjou



Located in Mourjou, a small village in the south-western part of Cantal, L'Auberge de Mourjou offers local and simple regional specialties. Their Chestnut menu is a must try, with every course based on chestnuts. While you are there, visit the Chestnut House, a museum dedicated to the history and uses of chestnuts in this area. Unusually, the Auberge de Mourjou offers rooms in the former Town Hall so if you stay there, you might get to sleep in the Mayor's swish office.

Website: www.laubergedemourjou.fr

Au Fourneau de Marie

Marie and Vincent are famous in the local area for their home-cooked food using the best local products available. The menu is diverse and the restaurant has a friendly vibe catering for couples, families and groups of friends. It is often fully booked at the weekends, which is a testament to the excellent value of the mouth watering food and wine served. There is a cosy bar area so we recommend arriving early so you can fully soak up the cosy mountain lodge atmosphere.

Website: www.auberge-des-montagnes.com

L'Auberge Fleurie is a charming stage between Lot and Truyère, in the village of Montsalvy, near the great site of Conques, near Salers and the mounts of Aubrac. The chef Jean-Pierre cooks using only fresh and seasonal products.

Website: www.auberge-fleurie.com



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L'Auberge de Concasty is right in the heart of the countryside and in a beautiful valley full of magnificent chestnut trees. The Auberge de Concasty is the ideal spot for a peaceful, relaxing break. The ingredients that go into the food that is served at Concasty come from the local markets and the dishes are inspired by all-time favourites while adding an extra special and innovative touch.

Website: www.auberge-concasty.com

Château du Couffour

Since 2009, Serge Vieira - Michelin-starred chef and winner of the 2005 Bocuse d'Or (world cooking competition) - has been welcoming guests through the doors of his restaurant. Eating here is a unique experience. The creativity of the modern interiors is mirrored in the food which mixes tradition, taste and texture and using organic products. From organic wines to organic cleaning products, everything aims to preserve the environment. And also cooking classes with Serge Vieira.

Website: www.sergevieira.com



Lozère

La Grange d'Emilie

Between Aubrac and Margeride, La Grange d'Emilie is a charming stop for the Saint James` way pilgrims or just nature lovers. Emilie and Michel will help you to plan your daily hikes and in the evening, why not relax and enjoy a massage in your room? You can also unwind in the steam room, spa, gym. All of the five bedrooms give a panoramic view on to the beautiful Margeride fields. From €95 (including breakfast)

Website: www.chambrehote-emilie.com



Les Chemins Francis



Set in the heart of the Lot Valley, Bagnols is a protected area in the middle of Margeride, Grands Causses and Mont-Lozère. Within Bagnols, Les Chemins Francis has bedrooms for up to four persons, an indoor pool, spa, and it offers educational guided hikes and well-being stays in the stunning surrounding countryside. This accommodation has signed the Sustainable Tourism Chart and taken several actions to protect the environment such as providing a free shuttle from the station, recycling as much as possible and using local products. From €52 per night for a double bedroom

Website: www.hotel-cheminsfrancis.com

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Les Hauts du Gévaudan

On the edge of the forest, next to Marvejols, Aubrac and Margeride, the gîte village 'Les Hauts du Gévaudan' provides vacation rentals with disability access and is located near to the disability sports centre in Montrodat. The 30 gîtes in this quiet, environment friendly village offer all the best of comfort and can house up to 6 people. €370 to €917 per week (depending on season)

Website: www.leshautsdegevaudan.com



Chalets du Booz



This gîtes village offers a genuinely relaxing stay in an intimate natural environment but also plenty of activities ranging from water fun, swimming pool and spa, and nature treks such as an adventure park, climbing, mountain biking and caving. The village has 30 bungalows for 4 to 6 people, each with a fully equipped kitchen and allowing for half board. From €209 per week.

Website: www.chalets-booz.com

Les Dolines de Longviala

On the Causse of Sauveterre, this remote old farm has been converted into a spacious campsite containing 9 yurts, wooden chalets, indoor bathrooms, play area, pool and huge dining room. The location, whilst remote, is perfect for exploring all that the Lozère and the Aveyron départements have on offer. The yurts are spread out amongst 5 hectares and at an altitude of 890 meters, have great views over the surrounding hills and forest. breakfast and dinners are friendly and wholesome affairs and the campsite has a peaceful and relaxed vibe. The yurts are furnished with Mongolian furniture including huge comfy beds, your own table and chairs just outside and are spread out enough to offer privacy. From €56 per night, for two people, breakfast included

Website: www.yourtes-gorgesdutarn.fr

La Borie de l'Aubrac

Located in the heart of beautiful Aubrac, along the famous Saint James path, la Borie de l'Aubrac is a welcoming accommodation with a selection of five luxury bedrooms. Surrounded on all sides by countryside as far as the eye can see, there's also the river Bes nearby, as well as the Deroc waterfalls. If you don't feel like venturing outside, you can always soak up the natural environment from the comfort of one of the house's private terraces. From €95 per night.

Website: www.borie-aubrac.com



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Chalets de la Rule



In the heart of Aubrac, near Nasbinals, this collection of 5 cosy wooden chalets offers all the comfort you'd expect from a hotel, but within a wonderfully natural environment. Each chalet can sleep up to five, and offers modern interiors, as well as outstanding views out over the surrounding countryside. Of course, there's always the option of cuddling up in front of the open fire. €110 per night for two persons / 6 night stay for 2 to 3 persons from €690

Website: www.leschaletsdelarule.fr

Château d'Orfeuillette

If you are looking for glamour and luxury, you'll love this 19th century castle entirely redecorated "modern art" in 2010. In the heart of Gévaudan and surrounded by 12 acres of picturesque land, this 4* hotel is peaceful and surprising. Each room is different and very original (some of the rooms even offer a jacuzzi and a swing!) From €150 per night

Website: www.hotels-brunel.com/fr/chateau-d-orfeuillette



Chez Camillou



Situated at the heart of the Massif Central between the Aubrac and the Margaride, Chez Camillou will delight nature lovers. After four generations, Cyril Attrazic has taken over the family restaurant which still carries the name of his great grandfather, Camillou. Here there are two restaurants within one, each with their own styles. The brasserie offers simple local and seasonal food such as dry pork meat, trout, Aubrac meat; while the restaurant has a contemporary fine cuisine, but always uses local and seasonal products.

Here's an example: Celery raviolis with foie gras, mushroom of the day with a frothy chicken broth, Aubrac steak, crispy preserved beef, buttered courgettes in broth and a Craquelin mille-feuille with seasonal fruit and milk ice-cream.

Website: www.camillou.com

La Remise

Formerly a stagecoach post house, La Remise is perfectly situated near not only Mont Lozère, but also National Park 'Les Cévennes' and the Lot river. Claude Bergounhe and Jean-Francois Combes welcome you to their home's cosy atmosphere. True lover's of their region, they will use local and seasonal products to make you discover its specialties, particularly chestnuts, trout, local cheeses and meats. Discover the Lot valley with donkey hikes, a fishing week-end and even take a motorbike ride.

Website: www.hotel-laremise.com



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La Safranière



In Chabrits, a little hamlet near Mende, lies 'La Safranière', an old farm and the family home of the Chef Sébastien Navecth. His cooking is a mix of local traditions and fragrant innovation. Using the experiences he has gained from working in some of France's best restaurants, he will delight you with his spicy and aromatic dishes.

Chabrits 48000 Mende Phone +33 4 67 92 79 75

Lou Clapas

Located on the Causse de Sauveterre, near La Canourgue, three menus offer regional specialities, traditional cooking (home made foie gras, snails, frog legs, aligot, ...) and also pizzas cooked in the oven in the middle of the restaurant. In the summer, enjoy the panoramic view on the Causse from the terrasse. Lou Clapas is trying to promote the local specialties such as dry prok meat from Lozere, Aubrac meat, local cheese and veal head. All the meats are cooked on the fire in the restaurant room.



Website: www.louclapas.com

Hôtel restaurant Brune!

Despite being minutes from the motorway this hotel is in a quiet spot and offers peaceful dining in a contemporary restaurant. At the heart of their cooking is a love of fresh, local produce, prepared with a touch of imagination. Pike cooked with gentian is prepared "à la plancha", and the chips are made with rice rather than potato! A great spot for a long lunch in between sight seeing.

Website: www.lerocherblanc.com

Buron du Ché

Pay a visit to this wonderfully renovated buron where Arlette the host offers a warm welcome and Christian prepares the Aligot, a local dish made with potato, cheese and gorgeous local beef. After dinner, Christian can entertain you with typical French accordion music, which is sure to be a memorable experience.

Website: www.buronduche.fr

