

**MICHELIN**  
GUIDE  
TRAVEL & CULTURE

# TREASURES OF THE PÉRIGORD



**Semitour**

TRANSMETTRE  
& VALORISER  
L'EXCEPTION



**MICHELIN**



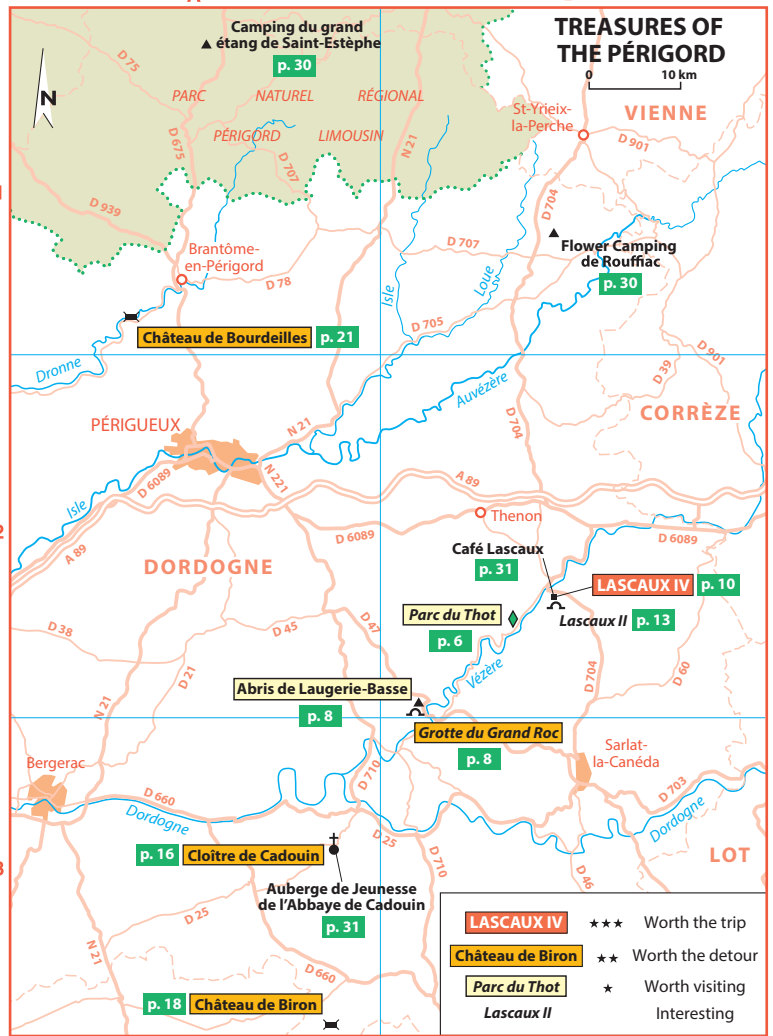
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# TREASURES OF THE PÉRIGORD

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- LASCAUX IV** \*\*\* Worth the trip
- Château de Biron** \*\* Worth the detour
- Parc du Thot** \* Worth visiting
- Lascaux II* Interesting

# Editorial

Semitour Périgord has been the leader in managing the Dordogne's cultural and tourist sites for more than 20 years. More than 800,000 visitors from around the world are welcomed each year. During that time it has always provided top quality visitor experiences, continuously looking to improve them by drawing on its expertise, impetus and desire to be at the cutting edge of innovation. It is proud of its role as a "guardian", striving to showcase visits and experiences tailored to a broad array of visitors, and promote and provide premium cultural activities. These give visitors the opportunity to delve into the extraordinary heritage showcased and encourage ongoing reflection on our History and Humanity. As director of the Michelin Green Guide: Travel and Cultures, these values of excellence and innovation are also my own. Together, we want to ensure visitors enjoy a unique, enriching experience full of discovery and amazement. Together, we are as committed to bringing these cultural riches to life as ever, and ensuring others share this cultural wealth with us. The doors of our destinations are open to anyone fascinated by History... We invite you to go on this wonderful adventure with us, and let the beauty and authenticity of our heritage take your breath away!

Philippe Orain, Director of Michelin Travel and Cultures guides

I am proud of this invaluable collaboration with the Michelin Green Guide: Travel and Cultures. This guide has always been – and continues to be – a gold standard in the culture and tourism sector. Many of us have had the opportunity to learn about new destinations as we flick through its pages. I am delighted to present this excellent publication to visitors to the Dordogne, so you can discover the sites we manage, the treasures of the Périgord region!

From Lascaux to Biron Castle, Parc du Thot to the Cloister of Cadouin Abbey, passing by the Grand Roc cave, the Laugerie-Basse shelters and Bourdeilles Castle, we continue to be delighted to open the doors of our buildings to all, whether passionate about history, or just curious... We hope you enjoy all the unforgettable experiences to choose from, and create wonderful memories to share.

André Barbé, Managing Director of Semitour Périgord



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# Vézère Valley★★

The Vézère Valley is a major prehistoric site that was awarded the Grand site de France label in 2020. Human settlement (Homo erectus, Neanderthal man, Homo sapiens) has been part of the landscape for 400,000 years. Exceptional conservation conditions have meant that modern humans can see the traces they left. The Vézère Valley and its secondary valleys form a group of 147 prehistoric sites and 25 decorated caves unlike any other in the world. They are listed as a UNESCO World Heritage Site.

► **Getting there:** The Vézère River runs through the Périgord region diagonally, with its most impressive section stretching from Brive-la-Gaillarde to Limeuil.

**Map B2-A3.**

► **Tip:** It's a good idea to pack a picnic if you want to make the most of a "prehistoric" day.

## Parc du Thot★

Thonac - ☎ 05 53 50 70 44 - [www.parc-thot.fr](http://www.parc-thot.fr) - July-Aug.: 9 a.m. - 6.30 p.m.; Sept.-Nov.: 10 a.m. - 6 p.m.; rest of the year: enquire - €11.50 - €26.50 combined ticket with Lascaux IV - online ticketing service [www.ticketsdordogne.com](http://www.ticketsdordogne.com) - shop and picnic tables. Accueil Vélo

("Bikes welcome") label. PRM access for the museum and west park only. Interactive guided tour available using the Wivisites app.

How did the Cro-Magnon people live? What was our ancestors' relationship with animals and their environment? The site uses a host of reconstitutions and realistic scenarios to answer these questions for you. Magical black light reveals the engravings of the wide variety of wildlife that Palaeolithic humans came across and depicted on the cave walls in Lascaux Nave: aurochs, deer, bison, wolves, Przewalski's horses, ibex, and so on. Some of these species can be seen in the wildlife park, which organises workshops and themed tours.



Participatory workshop at Parc du Thot.

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## Laugerie-Basse prehistoric shelters ★

2933 av. de Laugerie, Les Eyzies -  
 ☎ 05 53 06 92 70 - [www.abris-laugerie-basse.fr](http://www.abris-laugerie-basse.fr) - July-Aug.:  
 9 a.m.-7 p.m.; April-June and Sept.-Oct.:  
 10 a.m.-1 p.m., 2-6 p.m. - €7.50 - guided  
 tour €8.50 (age 5-12 €5) - combined  
 ticket with Grand Roc cave (€15.30 -  
 age 5-12 €10) - online ticketing service  
[www.ticketsdordogne.com](http://www.ticketsdordogne.com) - shop  
 and restaurant on site.

Site listed as a UNESCO World Heritage Site under Prehistoric Sites and Decorated Caves of the Vézère Valley. PRM accessible. 😊 Use the digital consoles to explore the site and see what living in the Palaeolithic era was like. This site upstream of Laugerie-Haute has been used as a dwelling place on several occasions, from around 14,000 years ago (Middle Magdalenian period) to more recent times. Many tools in stone and bone were found there, along with artistic objects created using bone or antler. They are mostly housed at the National Prehistory Museum. Have a close look at reproductions



Laugerie-Basse prehistoric shelter.



## Unusual

Follow in the footsteps of the first cave explorers... A simple storm lantern lights your way as you discover the countless crystallisations in the Grand Roc cave, just as they did. Enjoy this unique experience at the end of the day during the school holidays (1-hr visit). Online booking recommended.

in display cases and a watch a 3D film during your visit.

## Grand Roc Cave ★★

Route de Périgueux, Les Eyzies  
 - ☎ 05 53 06 92 70 - [www.grotte-grand-roc.fr](http://www.grotte-grand-roc.fr) - guided tour (40 min)  
 July-Aug.: 10 a.m.-7 p.m.; April-June  
 and Sept.-Oct.: 9 a.m.-1 p.m., 2-6 p.m. -  
 €9.50 (age 5-12 €6.30) - combined  
 ticket with Laugerie-Basse (€15.30 -  
 age 5-12 €10) - ticketing service  
[www.ticketsdordogne.com](http://www.ticketsdordogne.com) - shop.  
 Site listed as a UNESCO World Heritage Site under Prehistoric Sites and Decorated Caves of the Vézère Valley. Enjoy a fabulous **view**★ over the Vézère Valley from the terrace at the entrance to the cave. J. Maury discovered the cave in 1924. After making your way along forty metres of narrow tunnels, you come across an extraordinary crop of stalactites and stalagmites, eccentric formations similar to coral (look out for the “Winged Victory of Samothrace”), and a wide variety of hanging calcite formations, triangles, loops and spirals. The chambers are narrow meaning you can really see the crystallisations (protected by a metal gate).





# Lascaux IV ★★★

The International Centre for Cave Art, also known as Lascaux IV, is the main attraction in the Vézère Valley. This is where you can visit all of the exact replica of the Lascaux cave, made with a degree of precision that has never been equalled! As you walk by, carefully designed lighting brings the cave paintings and engravings from over 21,000 years ago into view. The experience continues in the museum exhibition spaces. State-of-the-art interactive and digital technologies give you the opportunity to observe, understand and consider the meaning of this prehistoric “Sistine Chapel” and even find connections between cave art and contemporary art...

► **Getting there:** Lascaux IV, in Montignac, is 30 km north-east of Les Eyzies, 30 km north of Sarlat.

## Map B2.

► **Tip:** The cave is very popular which means it is very busy in the summer and during the school holidays. To avoid the queue, make sure you book your ticket online. Plan on two hours to enjoy visiting all of Lascaux IV.

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## International Centre for Cave Art

*Av. de Lascaux, Montignac-Lascaux - ☎ 05 53 50 99 10 - www.lascaux.fr - July-Aug.: 8 a.m.-10 p.m.; rest of the year: enquire - closed Jan. - €23 (age 5-12 €15) - combined ticket with Parc du Thot (€26.50 - age 5-12 €17.50) - online ticketing service www.ticketsdordogne.com - shop and food and drink served on site. Site listed as a UNESCO World Heritage Site under Prehistoric Sites and Decorated Caves of the Vézère Valley. Accueil Vélo (“Bikes welcome”) label. Tourisme & Handicap label - all spaces can be used by people with the four types of disability (motor, mental, visual or hearing) - wheelchair loan (booking required) - ♿ P1 (disabled parking spaces).*

Your visit begins with a one-hour guided tour with 35 to 40 minutes spent in the cave itself. Then you can continue exploring the museum exhibitions, workshop and shows at your own pace. A digital “companion” gives you additional content as you visit. This tech equipment enhances the tour of the cave’s replica.

The **International Centre for Cave Art** (widely known as Lascaux IV) is in



### Great deal

Take advantage of the **Au fil de la Vézère** 4-site pass to visit Lascaux IV, Parc du Thot, the Grand Roc cave and Laugerie-Basse prehistoric shelters: €40.50, age 5-12 €26.50.



Children's storytelling tour, Lascaux IV.

a building with striking horizontal architecture emerging from the bottom of the hill. Its grey exposed concrete makes it stand out against the green vegetation.

### **The viewpoint and the shelter**

*Guided tour, 15 min.*

The tour begins on the roof of the building. Enjoy taking in the sweeping view of the Vézère Valley, which places the cave in its geographical context. Your guide then invites you into the shelter, where a film outlines the landscape around Lascaux.

### **The cave ★★★**

*Guided tour, 40 min.*

This is the highlight of the tour.

The cave has been perfectly replicated. Practically every element of the original cave has been recreated for the first time to reflect its atmosphere: the half-light, how quiet it is, and even the temperature (13 °C).

The experience you have is incredible. The guide lights one engraving at a time for you to see the detail. The gallery is slightly wider than the original, but the slope is the same. This creates a spectacular and extremely moving impression. You can't help but ask yourself questions that can never be answered: what do these paintings mean? Why is just one man depicted among hundreds of animals? The first paintings are said to date back to 21,000 years before our time.



## Lascaux IV is celebrating its 10th anniversary!

Lascaux IV has provided an exact full-scale replica of the original cave at the heart of the International Centre for Cave Art since 2016. Various tours and events are being organised throughout the year to celebrate the tenth anniversary of this full-scale replica. These include a new interactive treasure hunt and tour, “The Music of Prehistory” storytelling tour, a tour of the reproductions, and a themed tour about how it was discovered. A photo exhibition, a film, a tribute book, and a “Cave Art and Fine Food” evening are also lined up (*see details on p. 28*).

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Visitors are struck by the amount of animals depicted as soon as they enter, and the intensity of the ochres and black used. The animals seem to be running along the wall. Some of them are over three metres long. What tools and techniques did the artists use? The cave is “divided” into seven decorated sectors. The first is the **Hall of Bulls**. 130 figures are featured here, including 36 depictions of animals (horses, cattle, deer and a single bear), and fifty or so geometric signs, the rest being evidence of activity. It extends into the **Axial Gallery**, a narrow 30 m-long passageway dubbed the “Prehistoric Sistine Chapel” with red cows, yellow horses, and the large black bull on a vast scale (3.71 by 1.93 m). The perfectly-proportioned famous upside-down horse is seen at the end. The artist achieved this despite not being able to see it as a whole because it wraps around a pillar, and seems to be falling into the depths of the cave. The **Passageway** connects the Hall of Bulls to the **Nave**. It is more difficult to interpret as the elements that have come down to us are mostly

engravings: horses, bison, ibex, bovids and deer, along with hook-, cross- and quadrangular-shaped signs. In the Nave, the frieze of swimming deer raises questions: is it a group or one and the same deer whose movement has been deconstructed? **The Apse** on the right is dome-shaped and measures 30 m<sup>2</sup>. More than a thousand figures cover its surface (out of the 2,000 or so figures in the whole cave): half are animals and the rest are geometric signs. Although Lascaux is best known for its cave paintings, don’t forget that it also has hundreds of engravings, a lot of them being of animals. Most are found in the Apse and are difficult to see (*you’ll get a better view of them in the workshop, see below*). This is where the replica of the original cave ends, as its final two sections are completely inaccessible. This means that the 6-m deep **Shaft** (at the far end of the Apse) cannot be seen “in situ”. Yet this deepest point is where the artists chose to paint the only human figure in the cave. Likewise, at the end of the Nave, we cannot get to the **Chamber of Felines**. You can spend

your time having a close look at them in the workshop and the cinema (see below).

### The workshop ★★

*Self-guided tour.*

Eight large life-size and 3D displays feature the main works in the cave. Here you can spend as much time as you like looking at every detail. Listen to the audio guide for some more information you'll find interesting, but if you have any questions the facilitators in the room will be happy to answer them. Demonstrations show the techniques, perspectives and processes used to create the paintings and engravings.

### Imagination Gallery

*Self-guided tour.*

90 screens display contemporary works of art with a theme or technique that connects them to cave art.

### Cave Art Theatre and 3D Cinema

The show (15 min) tells the story of how the prehistoric caves were discovered and how they have been understood over time, from the 19th century to the present. Set to an atmospheric soundtrack, when you watch the film in 3D you'll find yourself immersed in the Lascaux cave, as well as different caves around the world (15 min).

### Immersion Room

This scenographic installation highlights connections between different themes focused on art,

prehistory and humanity. The visitor is literally surrounded by images projected onto giant screens. The new show, "One single humanity", completes the trilogy after "Ancestral Woman" and "Our animal brothers".

## NEARBY

### Lascaux II

*1 km south of Lascaux IV.*

☎ 05 53 51 95 03 – [www.lascaux2.fr](http://www.lascaux2.fr) – *guided tour (1 hr) in a group – variable times, see the website – €16 (age 5-12 €10.50) – combined ticket with Lascaux IV-International Centre for Cave Art (€29) or Parc du Thot (€21). Site listed as a UNESCO World Heritage Site under Prehistoric Sites and Decorated Caves of the Vézère Valley.*

A few metres from the original cave, Lascaux II is the first replica of the main decorated walls. This site is a technical and artistic achievement that more than 10 million visitors have visited since 1983. It is nestled in a peaceful, safeguarded setting on the hill protected by UNESCO, at the heart of the forest. The "**Origins**" tour immerses you in the cave's original atmosphere, in light like that of an oil lamp. The reason why the artists created these paintings is still a mystery, and if you're curious to find out more, choose the "**Theories**" tours. They give various explanations that could be true, enhanced by recent discoveries about cave art.

# A Palaeolithic sanctuary

## Chance works in mysterious ways

In September 1940 a violent storm uprooted an oak tree which left a gaping hole. 17-year-old Marcel Ravidat was out walking with his friends and his dog, which disappeared down the hole. When Marcel went to find him, he noticed another, much deeper opening in it. On 12 September, he ventured into the untouched sanctuary of the Lascaux cave, along with Jacques Marsal, Simon Coencas and Georges Agnel. The chamber was prepared for tours in 1948, but quickly suffered from the crowds of visitors. Their breath, the humidity caused, and spores they brought in stuck to the soles of their shoes led to two types of disease developing: “green”, with the growth of moss and algae, and “white”, which caused calcite deposits to form. In 1963 it was decided that the cave would be closed to the public. In 1983, a replica finally opened in the immediate vicinity: **Lascaux II**.

## A sealed cave

The cave is a modest chamber that stretches for 250 m. It is made up of several sectors, including the Rotunda and the Axial Gallery, in which 90% of the paintings are found; the walls are covered in over 2,000 depictions. A naturally airtight seal and the impermeability of the ceiling explain

why no concretions formed and the paintings are perfectly conserved, stabilised and authenticated by a slight natural coating of calcite. The works have been attributed to the ancient Magdalenian period (around 21,000 years ago, although some people favour the idea that use continued from the Solutrean to the Middle Magdalenian period), when the climate was relatively mild, as the presence of deer on the walls shows.

Some animals are only represented once: a bird, rhinoceros and of course the man, shown with a bird's head. This depiction is said to be one of the rare narrative scenes in Palaeolithic art: the theme of “hunter in difficulty”, also seen in the Villars cave, which in all likelihood dates from the same period. It is possible that some of the figures from Font-de-Gaume belong to the same era.

## The Lascaux style

Lascaux's animals have a distinctive appearance: horses have large stomachs and tapered heads, aurochs and ibex with horns and hooves in three-quarter profile, and deer with extraordinary antlers. But without a doubt the most important characteristic is how the beasts are shown in movement. In one of the drawings at the end of the Axial Gallery, an ochre horse seems to



Hall of Bulls and Axial Gallery.

be falling into the bowels of the Earth. Note how the contours and volumes of the wall have been skilfully used in many cases.

### **Overlapping seasons?**

First come horses, then bovids (aurochs, bison), and finally deer: the animals in Lascaux do not just intermingle, they are layered on top of each other. The horse is the first to start its mating season when winter ends. It is shown on the walls

in its winter coat, and mostly with the aggressive attitude of males competing with each other for access to females. The bulls are shown in their summer coat, when the mating period begins for them. Last but not least, the extensive growth of the stags' antlers and the presence of a bellowing stag indicate the rutting season at the end of autumn.



# Cloister of Cadouin Abbey★★★

A narrow valley, a river and a Cistercian abbey listed as a UNESCO World Heritage Site set the backdrop for Cadouin. Many people following the road to Santiago de Compostela stopped in the village to visit the pilgrimage site. These days visitors come to admire the splendour of the magnificently preserved cloister.

► **Getting there:** Cadouin is 16 km to the south of Le Bugue and 11 km east of Beaumont-du-Périgord.

**Map A3.**

► **Tip:** It will take about 90 minutes to visit the entire abbey.

## Cloister★★

☎ 05 53 63 36 28 – [www.cloitre-cadouin.fr](http://www.cloitre-cadouin.fr) – summer: 10 a.m.-7 p.m.; Apr.-June and Sept.-Oct.: 10 a.m.-1 p.m., 2-6 p.m.; rest of the year: enquire – €7.50 self-guided tour, €8.50 guided tour (age 5-12 €5) – combined ticket with Biron Castle (€14 + €1 if guided tour – age 5-12 €8.60 + €1 if guided tour) – online ticketing service [www.ticketsdordogne.com](http://www.ticketsdordogne.com) – shop.

*Site listed as a UNESCO World Heritage Site under Routes of Santiago de Compostela.*

*Tourisme & Handicap label – spaces and tours suitable for all disabilities.*

😊 *Night-time tours organised in July-August; candlelit musical evenings, moulding, quilling and illumination workshops, treasure hunt. Interactive guided tour available using the Wivisites app.*

## The most famous relic in the Périgord region

Cadouin Abbey was founded in 1115 by Géraud de Sales on the outskirts of Bessède Forest. It became affiliated with the Cistercian Order in 1119 (its name perhaps comes from the Latin *catinus*, flat place, or the Gallo-Roman name *Catonius*). It became prosperous but was damaged during the Hundred Years' War (the Romanesque cloister and certain buildings were destroyed), the Wars of Religion and the French Revolution. After the First Crusade, a Périgord canon brought a linen sheet from Antioch that was believed to have been wrapped around the head of Christ. The shroud became a cult object, making Cadouin a pilgrimage centre visited by the great and the good, including Richard the Lionheart, Saint Louis and Charles V. But the myth was left in tatters in 1934. Subjected to scientific tests, the shroud revealed its true origins: it is a piece of Egyptian cloth dating from the 11th century. The embroidered bands feature Kufic characters that mention an emir and a caliph who governed Egypt around 1100. The Bishop of Périgueux put an end to the pilgrimage.



Cloister of Cadouin Abbey.

The cloister was constructed in the 15th century in the Flamboyant Gothic style thanks to Louis XI's generosity. Building continued until the middle of the 16th century, as the Renaissance capitals on a number of columns show. Note the beauty of the proportions and the variety of forms, particularly in the Renaissance or Flamboyant Gothic style doors, the varied cornerstones, the illustrated capitals and arch springers, and the fresco depicting the Annunciation. High reliefs either side of the abbot's seat illustrate Christ's ascent to Calvary and the monks' procession (15th century). It is worth taking a detailed look at subjects from the Old and New Testament (Samson and Delilah, Job, the rich man and Lazarus, among others) featured on four small columns in the shape of a tower. One room is devoted to the restoration work on the cloister and replica of the shroud.

## ALSO WORTH A LOOK

### Church ★

It was consecrated in 1154 and has a facade with three horizontal sections: two floors of arcatures are separated by the middle level which has three semicircular arch windows that light the aisle. The only decoration on the extremely plain millstone building is the play of light on the projections of the wall punctuated with buttresses. Cistercian simplicity stops at the building's layout (choir with apse and two absidioles) and its cupola at the transept crossing, crowned with a chestnut shingle bell-tower. The richly decorated interior with moulded windows and sculpted capitals is another infringement of the Cistercian Rule. However, the spirituality specific to Cistercian sanctuaries is exuded by the balanced volumes and grandeur of the building as a whole.



# Biron Castle★★

History emanates everywhere at Biron Castle, which was the seat of one of the four baronies in the Périgord region. It served as a strategic observation post from the top of its hill, on the border between the Périgord and Agen regions. 21st-century visitors find it very “instagrammable”. Its architecture reveals how the art of construction has evolved over eight centuries. It keeps the legend of Charles de Gontaut, Duke of Biron alive. He is said to have been roaming the ramparts carrying his head in his hands since he was beheaded in 1602...

► **Getting there:** Biron lies 8 km south of Monpazier.

## Map A3.

► **Tip:** Enjoy the panoramic view from a picnic area.

Before leaving Biron, take the opportunity to wander through the charming village below, to see its church with a flat bell-tower and the old houses built in tiers down the hillside.

## Castle★★

☎ 05 53 63 13 39 – [www.chateau-biron.fr](http://www.chateau-biron.fr) – July-August: 9.30 a.m.-7 p.m.; April-June: 10 a.m.-6 p.m.; rest of the year: enquire – €10.10 (age 5-12 €6.70) – combined ticket with the Cloister of Cadouin Abbey €14 + €1 if guided tour – (age 5-12 €8.60 + €1 if guided tour) – online ticketing service [www.ticketsdordogne.com](http://www.ticketsdordogne.com) – shop, picnic area, French sign language audio guide.

To get to the castle, take the rampart walk then St. Peter's Tower, which is decorated with the remains of Renaissance frescoes. A beautiful vaulted room, formerly the kitchen and refectory for the garrison, served as the cellar for the palace built from the 16th to the 18th century. Take the time to admire the view before you enter the main courtyard, along with the outer facades and the loggia. On the right, the Renaissance residence has huge rooms with fireplaces and wood panelling. Temporary exhibitions are

organised in them. The residence was modified in the 18th century. On the left, the former seigneurial residence (15th and 16th centuries) leads to the keep, whose origins date back to the 14th century.

The visit ends on the panoramic terrace, where you can enjoy the stunning,



## 250th anniversary of the United States

1776–2026: the Castle is celebrating the 250th anniversary of American Independence! Biron invites you to turn back time and follow the footsteps of its last duke, Armand-Louis de Gontaut-Biron, who played a key role in the American victory in Yorktown, and returned to France to announce the news to Louis XVI. From 11 to 25 July, feel what it was like to live in the 18th century: an encampment, activities, exhibitions and costumed characters will bring this great historic adventure back to life.





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The “Alienated” exhibition by the Mobilier National (French state furniture collection)

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sweeping **view**★★ over the surrounding area. You then reach the courtyard via an elegant rib-vaulted corridor.

### Courtyard

It surrounds the residential buildings on three sides. The **warden's lodge**, in the elegant crenellated watch tower, rampart walk and Renaissance decoration are found here, then the **chapel**★, built in

### “Alienated” by the Mobilier National

A new exhibition at Castle Biron! An experimental research programme launched in 2019 lies behind this odd title. It aims to widen perspectives when it comes to connections between decoration and works of art, by giving artists commissioned to work on antique furniture seen as outdated and lacking any heritage value the opportunity to freely express their artistic sensitivities.

the early 16th century in the Renaissance style, with a balustrade running around the base of the roof. Two **tombs**★ with recumbent statues influenced by the Quattrocento are found inside. One is that of Armand de Gontaut (Bishop of Sarlat), decorated with seated Virtues, and the other his brother's, Pons, featuring bas-reliefs depicting the life of Christ. The lower nave was once used as a parish church and the upper nave as a chapel for the nobility.

The bakery and **tax collection building** (where the peasants paid their dues) that lie north of the courtyard date from the 15th century. Historical and scientific research has been carried out in the castle's chapel recently to reveal the mysteries of the tombs. The Renaissance tombs have been fully restored. Since 2025, they have been joined by reproductions of the Pietà and the Entombment, the originals of which are on display at the MET in New York.

# Bourdeilles Castle★★

Bourdeilles is another of Périgord's four baronies, the others being Beynac, Biron and Mareuil. Set on a rocky hill overlooking the Dronne on one side and the village on the other, Bourdeilles castrum is divided into two buildings from different eras: a medieval fortress and a stately residence.

► **Getting there:** The castle is 24 km north-west of Périgueux.

**Map A1.**

► **Tip:** The short walk to see the castle from the other bank of the Dronne is worth the effort.

## Castle★★

☎ 05 53 03 73 36 – [www.chateau-bourdeilles.fr](http://www.chateau-bourdeilles.fr) – July-August: 10 a.m.-7 p.m.; Apr.-June and Sept.-Oct.: 10 a.m.-6 p.m.; rest of the year: enquire – €10.10 (age 5-12 €6.70) – online ticketing service [www.ticketsdordogne.com](http://www.ticketsdordogne.com) – shop. Interactive guided tour available using the Wivisites app.

Two buildings make up the castle sat at the top of its rocky hill: an 8th-century medieval fortress and

an elegant Renaissance residence. The remarkable complex combines the military austerity of the medieval fortifications with the lively style imported from Italy.

An elegant garden on the esplanade with box trees pruned into the shape of fleur-de-lis gives you a stunning view over the Dronne River, where you can spot a 17th-century seigneurial mill and a medieval bridge. Decorative arts enthusiasts will particularly enjoy this historic visit.

## Dividing up Bourdeilles

1259, the year when Saint Louis gave the Périgord region and the barony of Bourdeilles to the English, marked the beginning of the divisions in the Bourdeille family. The elder members supported the Plantagenets, while the younger branch, the Maumonts, favoured the Capetian side. At the end of the 13th century, Géraud de Maumont seized the family castle. He was a master builder supported by Philippe le Bel, and his protector hastened to have it fortified and to station a garrison there. A century later, in 1377, Du Guesclin made his mark on the fortress. He took it back by force from the troops of the Black Prince, Edward Plantagenet, who had taken the place eight years earlier. In the 16th century, **Jacquette de Montbron** (1542-1598), André de Bourdeille's widow, followed the work on the Renaissance residence, helping to draw up the plans herself. Brantôme, her brother-in-law, stated: "Among all the arts, she greatly loved geometry and architecture, in which she was very skilled and ingenious."



## Medieval fortress

The austere-looking (late 13th-century) fortress stands on older foundations. The entrance gate opens between two large round towers set into the remains of a defensive wall crowned with machicolations and pierced with arrow slits and loopholes. The seigneurial residence over two floors preserves fireplace jambs, the beginnings of a groined arch and large gemel windows. Climb the circular staircase (125 steps) in a turret set in one of its eight faces to reach the octagonal keep (35-m high). It gives access to four floors of vaulted rooms and a terrace, which offers a fabulous **sweeping view**★ over the Dronne River and the Renaissance château.

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## Renaissance Residence

Jacquette de Montbron built the refined, understated Renaissance residence in 1588 (📍 *box on p. 21*) in an Italian-inspired style discovered in the books of Sebastiano Serlio. Sculpted decorations can be seen on the south-east facade. The 700 pieces in the **furniture collection**★★ (with the Musée de France label) assembled by Mr and Mrs Santiard-Bulteau, the last owners of the premises, are displayed over three floors. Walk through the rooms to admire the

harmonious arrangements of sculpted groups, chests, tapestries and furniture. Highlights of the visit include a **reception room**★, which conserves an interior design commissioned by one of Jacqueline de Montbron's grandsons from the painter Ambroise Le Noble (v. 1588-1670) and 17th-century tapestries. Nine Spanish **bargueños**-style cabinets (chest-writing desk with drawers) are presented in a richly decorated room, showing Robert Santiard's keen interest in furniture from Spain.

## The gardens

What better way to make the most of the view of the castle than a stroll through the gardens? The grounds display beautiful colours in summer, and in winter they host activities such as archery or film screenings. A number of night-time costume tours are organised, during which the guides put on their finest attire to embody historical figures and tell stories by candlelight. As you leave Bourdeilles and head north, the road passes by the foot of a rock known as “**Devil's Forge**”. Enjoy the view of the lush green scenery here.





# PLANNING YOUR TRIP



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# As a family

## Lascaux IV

The educational areas have lots of fun, smart interactive devices that children will love.

During the storytelling tours, young visitors are first welcomed by a “scientific” mediator who guides them to the cave, which they visit with a “prehistoric” mediator who tells them all about the cave’s mysteries and how our prehistoric ancestors lived (age 5-12, €16).

## Lascaux II

Children don’t need anything special as the guided tour “speaks” to them so much they just love it!

## Parc du Thot

Various activities are organised for families during the school holidays: workshops dedicated to jewellery, cave art, flint cutting, leatherworking, and more. You can also do activities led by the team of animal keepers throughout the day. *Booking advised.*

## Laugerie-Basse prehistoric shelters

In the Cro-Magnon Workshop, children experience what it is like to live in a Palaeolithic encampment. *From the age of 7, during the holidays.*

## Cloister of Cadouin Abbey

How about making a mould of one of the sculptures in the cloister yourself? You can, and you learn a lot. Moulding, quilling and illumination workshops are organised, along with candlelit musical evenings and a treasure hunt, so children can experience the whole site at their level (age 7-12).

In the Terra Aventura app, enjoy doing the treasure hunt on the *Cadouin in a pilgrim’s footsteps* trail (2 km, 1 hr) as a way to explore the village: set off to find clues that will lead you to the treasure!



© Dan Courtyce

Leatherworking workshop at Parc du Thot.



© Dan Courtice

Visiting Biron Castle as a family.

Find out all you need to know at [www.terra-aventura.fr](http://www.terra-aventura.fr). It has lots of other trails for the whole region.

## Biron Castle

The castle has lots of different things to do as well as the tour: wooden games, archery, along with treasure hunts that play along with the seasons. In July and August, enjoy an introduction to medieval dance or coining using a coin discovered during archaeological digs...  
Find out more at [chateau-biron.fr](http://chateau-biron.fr).

## Bourdeilles Castle

Children will love trying crossbow archery and the various educational workshops:

- heraldry, where you can create your own coat of arms (*from the age of 5*);
- calligraphy, where you learn about the history of writing and make an illumination of your first name (*from the age of 8*);
- coining, where you learn about the history of money and learn how to mint coins.

Workshops and activities (€3) –  
dramatised night-time tour (€15).

# Events

The thriving life of Périgord's sites is reflected in their rich cultural and events programme.

## Lascaux IV's 10th anniversary

Programme of events:

► April: new "The secrets of assegai blades" treasure hunt and tour. Visitors think they are going on a traditional tour, but an unexpected event causes an artist from Lascaux and a prehistorian from the 1940s to suddenly appear in the present day. After they appear, the tour takes a turn to follow their story, which takes the visitors on treasure hunt in which past and present combine, with everyone following clues hidden around the site. It's an adventure

with a difference full of twists and turns.

► Weekend of 8 May: "Lascaux: history of a wartime discovery" tour to mark the Armistice.

► 20-21 June: World Music Day with a "The Music of Prehistory" storytelling tour.

► 12 September: anniversary of the discovery. "History of a discovery", combined tour of Lascaux II and Lascaux IV.

► 19-20 September: European Heritage Days. Tour of the replicas in Lascaux II, Lascaux IV and the Atelier des Fac-Similés du Périgord based on the following theme: "Endangered Heritage".

► November: Photo exhibition about the Lascaux IV project and the building's construction.





Medieval Days at Bourdeilles.

► Christmas holidays: “Cave Art and Fine Food” evening with a gourmet meal prepared by three chefs (3 stars in the Michelin guide).

### **Biron Castle**

► A new exhibition in the upper apartments in the Marshals' Wing.  
 ► The Purple Périgord festival and its extravagant programme in early August.  
 ► 20 to 22 August: Les Villégiatures, or an alternative way to experience the castle in the evening during musical events.  
 ► Biron Medieval Days in the autumn: Two days with a difference featuring demonstrations and workshops, with music and traditional dances setting the rhythm. The public find themselves in the era of the Bastides watching

troupes, combats and shows.

► Enjoy the host of events organised throughout the year: the Châteaux en Fête event, activities and shows every day in July and August, the 250th anniversary of American Independence (*see p. 18*), European Heritage Days, Christmas at the castle, and so on.

### **Bourdeilles Castle**

► Printemps des Poètes poetry festival in March 2026.  
 ► Châteaux en Fête from 4 April to 3 May.  
 ► Paratge festival on 23 May  
 ► Medieval Days on 25 and 26 July.  
 ► Historical reenactment and capture of the castle on 9 August.  
 ► Theatre Festival (4th edition) on 15 August.

# Accommodation

## ► Flower Camping de Rouffiac campsite

### Map B1.

Rouffiac Leisure Centre, 24270 Lanouaille - ☎ 05 53 52 68 79 -

[www.camping-rouffiac.fr](http://www.camping-rouffiac.fr).

Pitch €15/27/night. Accessible to people with reduced mobility. Shop and services.

Open from 1 May to 30 Sept. 2026.

This three-star family campsite is set in wooded grounds spanning 100 hectares on the shores of one of the largest bodies of water in the Périgord region. It has a wide choice of accommodation (tents, mobile

homes, chalets) and lots of activities: a treetop adventure course, hiking, mountain biking, archery, canoeing, paddleboarding, cable water skiing, climbing, bike hire, etc.

## ► Camping du Grand Etang de Saint-Estèphe campsite

### Map A1.

2063 route du Lac, 24360 St-Estèphe -

☎ 05 53 05 65 65 - [www.camping-saint-estephe.com](http://www.camping-saint-estephe.com). Pitch €9.40/

night/pitch + €4.30 per adult/night.

33 pitches, 8 Lodge tents, studios and apartments. Accessible to people with reduced mobility: reception, communal





Cadouin Abbey.

areas, sanitary facilities, launderette. Open from 14 May to 30 Sept. 2026. This campsite with well-equipped, tree-filled grounds spanning more than a hectare is surrounded by water and forest. It has all the amenities, including a restaurant. Anyone who loves fishing, swimming, canoeing, tennis and hiking will find it perfect as a base camp.

### ► Café Lascaux

#### Map B2.

International Centre for Cave Art Lascaux IV - ☎ 05 53 50 99 38 - [www.restaurantcafelascaux.fr](http://www.restaurantcafelascaux.fr) - open every day, food served all day. This restaurant/tea room in the Lascaux IV complex has a welcoming and modern dining room opening

onto a vast terrace. It has a brasserie menu with a Périgord flavour, as well as takeaway food and drink options. Enjoy gourmet dinners in summer.

### ► Cadouin Abbey Youth Hostel

#### Map A3.

Pl. de l'Abbaye - 24480 Le Buisson-de-Cadouin - ☎ 05 53 73 28 78 - [www.dordogne-perigord-tourisme.fr](http://www.dordogne-perigord-tourisme.fr) - €25/night. 92 rooms, including PRM-accessible rooms.

This completely renovated youth hostel is ideally located on the road to Santiago de Compostela and the Chemin d'Amador hiking trail. Stay in an abbey renowned for its superb cloister. Enjoy the stunning view of it from several of the rooms.

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# TREASURES OF THE PÉRIGORD

## The top attractions



The Périgord is a truly unique region where each stone tells a story! Which of its treasures will you set out to find? Will you choose to visit the impressive castles? Wander through the picturesque villages? Go back to prehistoric times in the painted caves? Or any of the other attractions, all nestled in unspoiled landscapes, where you can also enjoy stopping to enjoy the many renowned places to eat in the region.

Explore the **sites star-rated** ★, ★★ and ★★★ we have chosen for you.



Use **Michelin map** n° 329

*Complimentary copy, not for sale.*



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