

THE MUST-SEE CULTURAL SITES OF THE PÉRIGORD

PRESS KIT 2025



DORDOGNE-PÉRIGORD



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SEMITOUR PÉRIGORD SHARING & PROMOTING AN EXCEPTIONAL CULTURAL HERITAGE



ANDRÉ BARBÉ
General Manager of Semitour Périgord

For over 25 years, under the direction of André Barbé, Semitour Périgord has stood out as the leading private operator managing the cultural and tourist sites of the Dordogne. Every year, more than 800,000 visitors from all over the world discover these exceptional and unmissable sites of the Périgord.

Our mission? To offer a unique and ever-evolving experience, thanks to our expertise and passion for heritage. With eight iconic cultural sites — including the prestigious Lascaux IV, International Centre for Parietal Art — as well as three accommodation and activity sites, we offer much more than a simple visit: a complete immersion into history and art.

Our promise? A warm and professional welcome, innovative tours, activities for all audiences, and unforgettable experiences that showcase an exceptional cultural heritage.

“Guardians of a precious treasure, we are committed to promoting, transmitting, and making this unique heritage accessible. With a consistently creative approach, we strive to awaken curiosity and wonder, while inviting every visitor to reflect on our history and humanity. Join us on this timeless cultural journey and discover the many facets of a living heritage that resonates with past, present, and future generations.”

ANDRÉ BARBÉ



WELCOME TO PÉRIGORD

Welcome to a true sanctuary of nature, history, and art of living. While our region unfolds in four shades, it also reveals itself through all eras. From Prehistory to Antiquity and the Middle Ages, Périgord is an open-air history book. As a cradle of humanity, it is now home to 15 UNESCO World Heritage Sites.

At the heart of this fertile land, Semitour Périgord has worked for many years to enhance its appeal and is already ambitiously looking ahead to 2025.

This press kit offers the opportunity to reflect on the highlights of the past season and to outline the objectives for this new year, which promises many wonderful surprises.

Our commitment to promoting, showcasing, and transmitting our heritage and strengths is stronger than ever.

THE SEMITOUR PÉRIGORD SITES



TRAVEL AGENCY Semitour Périgord

- 1 LASCAUX IV – International Centre for Parietal Art
- 2 LASCAUX II
- 3 PARC DU THOT
- 4 LAUGERIE-BASSE PREHISTORIC SHELTERS
- 5 GRAND ROC CAVE
- 6 CADOUIN CLOISTERS
- 7 BIRON CASTLE
- 8 BOURDEILLES CASTLE

ACCOMMODATION

- 9 Rouffiac lake campsite and leisure base
- 10 Saint-Estèphe lake campsite and apartments
- 11 Cadouin Abbey group hostel

RESTAURANTS

- A Le Bistrot in La Jemaye
- B Le Moulin du Grand Étang
- C Le Café Lascaux in Montignac-Lascaux

SEMITOUR IN FIGURES

8 CULTURAL SITES

3 ACCOMMODATION & LEISURE SITES

1 TRAVEL AGENCY (ATOUT FRANCE LICENCE)

3 RESTAURANTS

21 000 YEARS OF HUMAN HISTORY

UNESCO WORLD HERITAGE SITES 3

4 SITES LISTED AS HISTORIC MONUMENTS

1 GEOLOGICAL SITE

4 MAJOR PREHISTORIC SITES

2 CASTLES (MEDIÆVAL AND RENAISSANCE)

KEY FIGURES

OVER 700 000 VISITORS WELCOMED IN 2024

80% FRENCH VISITORS (and 20% international visitors)

TOP 10 COUNTRIES OF INTERNATIONAL VISITORS:

1. France
2. Germany
3. USA
4. Spain
5. United Kingdom
6. Belgium
7. Italy
8. Austria
9. Switzerland
10. Romania

A DESTINATION AT THE HEART OF FRANCE

BY CAR

PARIS / TOULOUSE: A20 MOTORWAY
LYON / BORDEAUX: A89 MOTORWAY

4h 4h 3h 1h15
PARIS LYON TOULOUSE BORDEAUX

BY PLANE

- BERGERAC DORDOGNE-PÉRIGORD AIRPORT
- BORDEAUX AIRPORT
- TOULOUSE AIRPORT
- BRIVE - DORDOGNE VALLEY AIRPORT (DAILY ORLY-BRIVE ROUTE: [AIR FRANCE LINK])

BY TRAIN

- PÉRIGUEUX STATION
- BRIVE-LA-GAILLARDE STATION
- PÉRIGUEUX > PARIS: 4H BY TGV VIA BORDEAUX

LOOKING BACK AT THE HIGHLIGHTS OF 2024

A cultural programme renewed and enriched each year, helping to attract new audiences.

Among the highlights of 2024, we especially note:

- The passage of the Olympic Flame at Lascaux IV in the spring.
- The 100th anniversary of the discovery of the Grand Roc Cave.
- The hosting of a collection from the Mobilier National at the Château de Biron — a project led by the Heritage Department of the Dordogne Departmental Council and Antonin Macé de Lépinay, collections inspector.
- The filming of the TV series “Fortune de France” and the M6 show “Will the Traitors Be Unmasked?” at the Château de Biron.
- The second phase of the partnership with the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York and the Château de Biron, with the inauguration of The Entombment of the Holy Sepulchre in its chapel.





LOOKING AHEAD TO 2025

**The Semitour teams
are working every day,
and several projects
will come to life
throughout 2025:**

- Our offerings are expanding with the new management of the group hostel in Cadouin, entrusted by the Dordogne Departmental Council. Renovations will take place to create new rooms and upgrade the facility.
- New historical and scientific research will be carried out in the chapel of Biron Castle, which has just recovered its censer!
- The prestigious Houen Prize will be awarded to the architecture firm Snøhetta during the European Heritage Days in September.

THE CULTURAL SITES OF THE VÉZÈRE VALLEY - THE ETERNAL VALLEY





LASCAUX IV

International Centre for Parietal Art

Inaugurated in Montignac on December 10 and opened to the public on December 15, 2016, the International Centre for Parietal Art offers, for the first time since the closure of the original cave, the opportunity to discover the entirety of Lascaux.

Alongside the full-scale replica of the cave — allowing visitors to explore the rich legacy of Prehistory while ensuring the preservation of the original — Lascaux IV invites visitors to extend their experience through various immersive exhibition spaces.



Preservation Measures

The preservation of the Lascaux hill was recommended by the site's Scientific Council to guarantee the necessary conservation conditions for the cave's longevity. This principle guided the location of the project, which was constructed below the hill, a decision aimed at protecting the integrity of this priceless heritage site while making it accessible to the public.

Architecture

The "landscape-building," designed by Norwegian architecture firm Snøhetta, stands out for its harmonious integration into the surrounding environment. Selected from over 80 international proposals in October 2012, Snøhetta created a structure that resembles a fissure in the earth, blending into the natural setting while providing a striking visual experience.

Exhibition Design

The scenography of Lascaux IV was entrusted to the Casson Mann agency, specialists in museum design. Founded in 1984, the agency focuses on visitor experience, tailoring spaces and storytelling to provide a complete immersion into Prehistory. With the help of interactive technologies and multimedia features, each visitor can interact with the artworks and deepen their understanding of prehistoric representations.

Lascaux: An Unmatched Replica

Crafted with unparalleled precision, the replica cave allows visitors to admire the paintings and engravings dating back over 20,000 years. Every detail has been meticulously reproduced to offer an authentic and educational experience.

Lascaux IV offers a wide range of activities for all ages:

- Guided tours led by passionate mediators
- Themed visits for adults and children alike
- Temporary exhibitions throughout the year



THE CAVE OF SECRETS

Like good fairies watching over a cradle, Lascaux has been blessed with science and technology, which have produced a masterpiece: "Lascaux IV". The latest of the replicas created to protect the original cave, it gives visitors the impression of entering the "Sistine Chapel of Prehistory": to marvel at its 2,500 animal figures represented with such precision that the world was left astounded at the time of its discovery in 1940. Since then, prehistorians have mapped, catalogued, inventoried, and analysed every detail, once again calling upon science and technology to come to the rescue. And yet, even these can shed little light on the unfathomable original mystery: what did Lascaux signify for those who painted it? Why was a particular animal chosen? Does their placement hold special meaning? The unparalleled quality of these works, the abundance of themes, the dynamism of their composition, the nuanced use of colour and perspective, the play of light and shadow... all sustain the mystery. To all the scientific data and interpretations, the most dazzling mysteries remain beyond reach.

One scene in particular intrigues, one of the most unsettling of all prehistory : a man lies before a bison, not far away a bird and a rhinoceros. Nicknamed the "Well Scene" (as it is located in a kind of vertical shaft), it is regarded by many specialists as one of the only narrative scenes in prehistoric art. Its elements seem to say something. But what? Is the mysterious man a hunter struck down (as Father Breuil, the first prehistorian to study Lascaux, believed)? A shaman in trance? A sorcerer? The "Well Scene" has been interpreted in turn as a shamanic rite, a dream, or even an allegory of life and death. Who can say? The silhouettes remain, but their meaning eludes us.

For over 90 years, the greatest minds have been debating it, but maybe only you will one day have your own interpretation. Want to bet on it?

Source: Guide Michelin

Visiting experiences

Lascaux is universal and can be explored in a thousand ways.

Guided Tour

A guided visit of the cave replica followed by free exploration of the exhibition areas. (Audio guides are freely available for the second part of the visit.)

Audio-Guided Tour

An audio-guided visit of both the cave replica and the immersive exhibition spaces.

Prestige Tour

A 2-hour in-depth experience led by a cultural mediator. This tour includes:

- The replica of the cave
- Access to the Lascaux Workshop (You can arrive earlier to explore the exhibition areas beforehand.)

Storytelling Tour for Children

While the young explorers (ages 5-10) set off to discover the cave, accompanying adults enjoy their own guided tour just behind. A great way to have an age-appropriate experience for everyone — without compromise!

- ~1-hour guided tour for children
- Then, free exploration of the rest of the site

Prestige Evenings: Parietal Art & Gastronomy

The Prestige Tour continues with a Michelin-starred dinner, served in one of Lascaux IV’s spaces — for an even more immersive and unforgettable experience.

The Cave of Secrets

Like kind fairies leaning over a cradle — that of Lascaux — science and technology have led to a true feat: “Lascaux IV”, the latest and most advanced replica created to protect the original cave, gives everyone the impression of entering the “Sistine Chapel of Prehistory” and admiring its 2,500 animal figures, depicted with a precision that astonished the world upon their discovery in 1940. Since then, prehistorians have mapped, catalogued, and analyzed every detail — once again calling upon science and technology.

But even those could not answer the deepest mystery:

What did Lascaux mean to those who painted it? Why were these particular animals chosen? Does their arrangement hold a deeper meaning?

The quality of the artwork, the sheer number of figures, and their remarkable state of preservation all contribute to making Lascaux the most fascinating decorated cave of all, inspiring countless theories and interpretations — from the most outlandish to the most rigorously argued.



The Enigmatic “Shaft Scene”

One scene in particular continues to puzzle researchers: A man lies face-to-face with a bison, with a bird and a rhinoceros nearby. Nicknamed the “Shaft Scene” (as it is located in a sort of vertical tunnel), it is regarded by many specialists as one of the only narrative scenes in prehistoric art. Its elements appear to be telling a story. But what story?

- Is the mysterious man a wounded hunter (as suggested by the abbé Breuil, the first prehistorian to enter Lascaux)?

- A shaman in a trance? A sorcerer?

Does the “Shaft Scene” depict a shamanic ritual, a dream, a hunt, or... nothing at all — just a simple juxtaposition of images?

For nearly 90 years, the world’s leading prehistorians have debated these questions. They’re not the only ones. When you visit Lascaux IV, you too will have your own theory.

Care to bet on it?

Highlights coming in 2025

While the past year at Lascaux IV was rich in notable events and new features, 2025 promises to be just as exciting! Among the new surprises planned:

New Thematic Tour

Explore prehistoric lifestyles through:

- A visit to the cave
- A special station focused on prehistoric food
- Displays of reconstructed tools used by our ancestors

Houen Prize Ceremony

Awarding of the prestigious Houen Prize, one of the highest recognitions in Norway’s architectural and construction industry, to the Snøhetta architecture firm. This award celebrates the exceptional design of Lascaux IV.

Event to be held during the European Heritage Days in September.

New “Clic Clac” Photography Exhibition

To be hosted in the main hall of Lascaux IV.

Meet & Greet Sessions with Authors

Multiple talks and book signings throughout the year.



LASCAUX II

Opened to the public in 1983, Lascaux II was the first facsimile in the world, reproducing 85% of the original cave's paintings. Created by Monique Peytral, it was a technical and artistic achievement at the time.

Over nearly 40 years, the site has welcomed more than 10 million visitors, contributing significantly to its international reputation.

Today, the site continues to offer visitors an authentic and enriching experience. Nestled in the heart of the Lascaux woods, just 150 meters from the original cave entrance, Lascaux II is revealed in intimate fashion, guided by flickering light.





Tours offered

Classic Tour
A one-hour guided tour of the cave, illuminated by a soft, flickering light.

“Back to the Origins” Tour
A minimum 1.5-hour immersion, including:

- A walk toward the original cave site
- Lighting recreated using a prehistoric grease lamp, offering an atmosphere faithful to that of our ancestors 21,000 years ago

“Theories” Tour
A deep exploration (min. 1.5 hours) focused on the various theories surrounding parietal art, attempting to answer the eternal question: «Why did they paint?»

Groups & schools
Lascaux II also welcomes groups and school visits with specially designed educational activities:

- For younger children:
A fun educational kit to explore prehistoric objects hands-on.
- For older students:
An interactive quiz on Prehistory.
- For teens:
The possibility of a drawing workshop in the Hall of Bulls (extra charge applies).

- Sprintime for drawing**
- In 2025, Lascaux II is partnering with the “Spring of Drawing” initiative to offer a unique tour.
 - Visitors will not only admire the cave’s paintings but also try their hand at drawing, using scratch cards (black sheets with styluses).

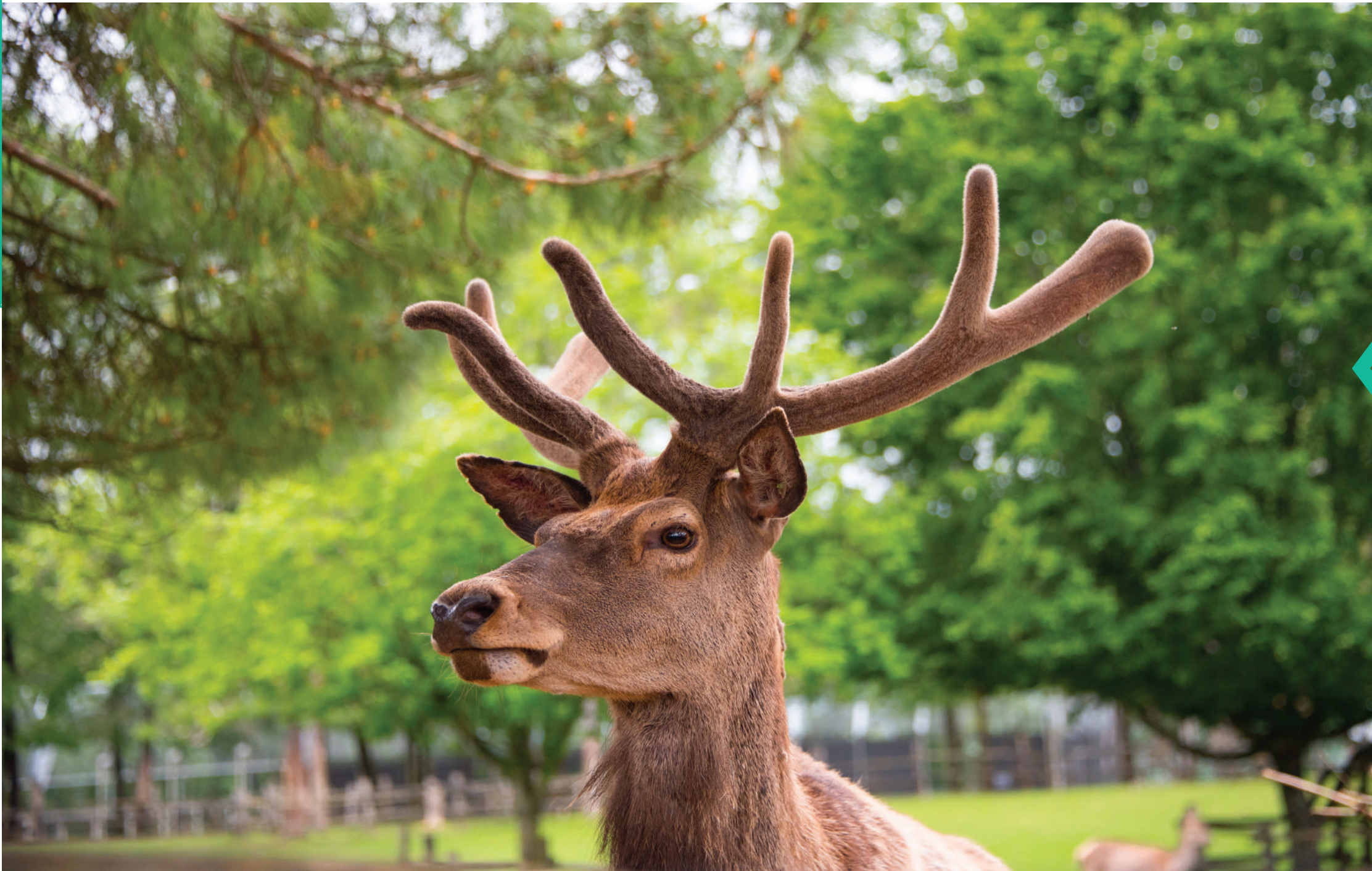
PARC DU THOT

A UNIQUE PLACE TO EXPERIENCE PREHISTORY

Located in the heart of the Vézère Valley, just a few kilometers from Lascaux IV, the Parc du Thot offers an immersive and educational journey into prehistoric life.

The site blends nature, culture, and pedagogy to help visitors understand how our ancestors lived and interacted with their environment. Open to the public since 1972, it includes:

- A wildlife park featuring European species
- A scenographic space illustrating the evolving relationship between humans and animals, from the Ice Age to modern times



THE AUROCH — FOR REAL (OR ALMOST)

Oh! An auroch! If you recognized this giant of the grasslands, congratulations! You're among the very few who can identify the ancestor of modern cattle. Appearing as though it stepped straight out of a distant past, this impressive nearly one-ton bull with massive horns stands before you — in the flesh, at the Parc du Thot.

Once wild, then domesticated, this giant roamed across Europe until it disappeared in the 17th century, a victim of hunting and deforestation. So what you're admiring is an extinct species — recreated here in this unique animal park.

A key feature of the Parc du Thot: It presents animals that coexisted with prehistoric humans — those you've likely seen painted on cave walls, depicted with incredible detail by our ancestors. Now, see their descendants "in real life" in the park's enclosures:

Red deer, bison, Przewalski's horses, wolves, and... aurochs!



But how were extinct animals "revived"? It's the result of a zoological adventure dating back to the 1920s-1930s, not without controversy. By crossbreeding various cattle breeds, biologists attempted to recreate the prehistoric auroch — or at least a version close enough to be convincing. But how can we be sure these neo-aurochs actually resemble their ancestors?

Researchers rely on cave paintings and reconstructed skeletons, but debate continues. Still, these re-created aurochs now live in protected natural areas — especially in the Netherlands — where they roam freely in ecosystems that resemble the prehistoric world. At the Parc du Thot, the team emphasizes that these reconstructed aurochs are not just scientifically or aesthetically interesting — they also raise awareness about biodiversity and conservation.

Take a moment to reflect on this — preferably while enjoying the stunning view over the Vézère Valley, another highlight of the park.

Source: Guide Michelin

Interactive experiences & discovery

3D Film Experience

Discover how the climate has evolved from the appearance of early humans to the time of Lascaux. Revisit the famous cave with a unique focus on the engravings in the Nave. Through life scenes and educational videos, you'll explore the skills and daily life of Cro-Magnon humans. Then, test your knowledge with our fun quiz: "Questions for an Ice Cube"

Augmented Reality – The Time Mirror

Want to meet a woolly mammoth? This interactive AR experience lets you encounter the great mammals of the last Ice Age — virtually.

Discovery Workshops

Perfect for children aged 5 to 7, these workshops allow you to create your own prehistoric items and take them home. Choose from:

- Stone Pendant
- Grease Lamp
- Leather Bracelet

Ideal for family fun and hands-on history learning!

Animal Encounters

After learning about Cro-Magnon humans, it's time to meet the animals they lived alongside. The park regularly offers animal feeding sessions in the company of caregivers, offering a unique chance to observe and learn about their behaviors and lifestyles.

Get to know the animals of Cro-Magnon

Once you're well-versed in prehistoric life, observe and learn about the animals our ancestors lived alongside.

- Throughout the day, guided animal encounters are offered
- You can watch feedings and talk with the caretakers
- Learn more about animal behavior and lifestyles

VIP animal caregiver experience – "caretaker for a day"

Step into the shoes of an animal caretaker for a once-in-a-lifetime experience with the park's animals — especially the wolves. On the program:

- Behind-the-scenes access
- Animal feeding
- Observation and interaction
- Accompaniment by a professional caretaker ready to answer all your questions



The Discovery Workshops :

Flint Knapping

When you think Prehistory, you think flint. But do you know how many tools can be made from it?

- What tools were used to knap flint?
- Have you ever tried shaping a flint shard yourself? Now's your chance.

Grease Lamp Workshop

A lamp is useful for painting in a cave — but you have to make it first! Using prehistoric tools, you'll carve limestone to create a working grease lamp. Yes, you can take it home and use it!

Leather Working

Become a Cro-Magnon for a moment and craft your own leather accessory using bone tools. You'll experience how vital leather was during the Ice Age.

Parietal Art Workshop

Ever painted inside a cave? This one-of-a-kind workshop lets you explore and use authentic prehistoric tools and materials:

- Ochre pigments
- Brushes
- Stamps
- Flint pieces

NEW – "The Micromignons' Cave"

Now even 3 to 5 year-olds can enjoy a parietal art experience! A new, age-appropriate version of the workshop lets the youngest visitors live the prehistoric adventure.

Jewelry & Adornment

Our ancestors loved making objects — especially jewelry — from all kinds of materials. In this workshop, you'll:

- Shape your own pendant
- Use your imagination to create a unique piece of wearable prehistoric art

Archaeological Excavation Workshop

How do we know how prehistoric humans lived? What tools did they use? What did they eat? Where did they live? This archaeology workshop answers these questions through hands-on digging in a reconstructed prehistoric habitat from the Lascaux era.



LAUGERIE-BASSE PREHISTORIC SHELTERS

It was in 1863 that paleontologist Édouard Lartet and his friend Henry Christy, visiting Les Eyzies, discovered the Laugerie-Basse Shelters.

They were amazed by the richness of the prehistoric remains — and many discoveries followed...

The following year, archaeologist Paul de Vibraye unveiled the famous “Venus Impudique”. Soon after, Élie Massénat unearthed a human skeleton known as “The Crushed Man.”



Just 25 km from the Lascaux Cave, in the limestone cliff overlooking the Vézère, the Laugerie-Basse prehistoric shelters bear witness to:

- A Magdalenian-era occupation (~15,000 years BP)
- A continued presence up to the Bronze Age (~2,200 years BP)

They were among the very first prehistoric sites excavated in France. This major prehistoric site, listed as a UNESCO World Heritage Site, is a true reference for historians — due to the quantity, quality, and diversity of the 600 artworks discovered there during early 20th-century excavations.

Among the most famous:

- An engraved bone disk
- A harpoon
- A female figurine with a broken head known as the “Venus Impudique” (Venus of Modesty) discovered by the Marquis de Vibraye
- A carved plaque called “Woman with Reindeer”

The site consists of two shelters:

- the “classic” shelter, which has been fully excavated
- the “Marseilles” shelter, part of which remains unexplored to this day due to a collapse of limestone blocks.

The stratigraphic section reveals many periods of human occupation over time.

THE TREASURE OF THE MAGDALENIANS



They had good taste, those Magdalenians. Who, you ask? The Magdalenians — the first Homo sapiens to settle here, some 15,000 years ago. Nestled in the shadow of a towering cliff, this natural shelter had all the makings of a five-star prehistoric hotel:

- 300 meters long, the perfect spot to set up animal-skin tents
- 4 to 5 meters of headroom
- A stone overhang offering protection from the elements
- All the amenities: the Vézère River below for water, reindeer in the valley and salmon in the river for food

They must have felt right at home — they stayed for... five thousand years! These hunter-gatherers were also hard workers. Between dinner hunts, they spent time:

- Engraving, carving, decorating all the objects and tools they needed:
 - Arrows, points, needles, harpoons
 - Animal tooth pendants
 - And even figurines — including a precious Venus, the first of its kind found in France...



Then — disaster: part of the cliff collapsed. Some areas were blocked off, but this accident preserved traces of our ancestors. A stroke of luck for the first prehistory enthusiasts who arrived in the valley in 1863. At that time, archaeology was in its infancy, and Laugerie-Basse became one of the first sites to be excavated. Some dug carefully. Others... used dynamite! But everyone made discoveries, one after the other. A prehistoric treasure trove, whose finest artifacts now grace the displays of major museums:

- The Prehistory Museum in Les Eyzies
- The Museum of Mankind in Paris
- The National Archaeology Museum in Saint-Germain-en-Laye...

The original shelter has been preserved and arranged for visits, where our ancestors seem to greet us from the depths of time



Source: Guide Michelin



GRAND ROC CAVE

Discovered in 1924 at the very same site as the Laugerie-Basse shelters, in Les Eyzies, the Grand Roc Cave opened to the public in 1927. This internationally renowned natural cavity is the only concretions cave listed as a UNESCO World Heritage Site.

Perched halfway up a 40-meter-high cliff, overlooking the river and offering a stunning panoramic view of the village of Les Eyzies and the Vézère Valley, the cave is a true mineral forest, formed of an incredible variety and density of crystallizations:

- Stalactites, sometimes thin, sometimes massive and translucent, hanging from the ceiling
- Stalagmites rising from the floor
- Together, they form columns,
- Along with straw-like formations, gours, triangles, and many eccentric shapes that seem to defy gravity...

"This cave shelters a true bestiary, a natural marvel. Just take your time, let the visit carry you... and you'll see. For example, over there — that looks like a crocodile coming toward us," says the guide. "You can see its eyes, its half-open mouth... it's as if it's about to pounce!"

THE ADVENTURER OF THE PÉRIGORD



You won't see his (massive) tomb — it's hidden in a fold of the valley, along a path now closed to the public, right next to the cave he dedicated much of his life to. Who was he? Jean Maury, archaeologist and speleologist, born in 1874, whom you might have run into if you lived in Les Eyzies in the 1920s. He participated in excavations at the Laugerie-Basse shelter, located below the cliff towering above the Vézère River.

*Down below: Prehistory.
Up above: mystery...*

That is, until Jean Maury looked up and noticed a trickle of water emerging from the cliff face, 30 meters up.

He wasn't a geologist, but the man knew he was standing in the heart of a karstic limestone massif, crisscrossed with fractures and fissures where water had been seeping for millions of years, tirelessly carving through the rock.

What lay behind that small spring? It took some serious courage to climb up there (yes, the view is amazing, but still)... And an incredible level of perseverance to dig, centimeter by centimeter, for two full years, opening up a narrow passageway through solid rock. That passage had reached 40 meters when, on April 29, 1924, it finally gave way. Jean Maury crawled through the tight gap. Were there prehistoric paintings waiting at the end?

In the faint glow of his candle, something else dazzled him: an immense 45-million-year-old mineral forest, teeming with crystal formations of every kind:

- Some shaped like pyramids
- Others like crosses — a rare formation
- Some as clear as crystal itself

Jean Maury had just discovered a natural treasure, one of the most beautiful underground wonders of the valley. He would go on to patiently prepare it for visitors. In 1927, the first tourists arrived. In 1979, the cave was listed by UNESCO. Jean Maury never found out. He died in 1948, so deeply attached to the site that he was laid to rest near his beloved cliff.

Source: Guide Michelin





Visits and activities offered

The Grand Roc Cave

Storm Lantern Tour

Available during school holidays, this tour offers an authentic experience, plunging visitors into darkness to explore the cave under conditions similar to its original discovery, using storm lanterns.

The Laugerie-Basse Prehistoric Shelters

Cro-Magnon Workshop

Designed for children, this workshop lets them discover the domestic activities and daily life of Cro-Magnon humans. They'll have the chance to:

- Build a life-sized shelter
- Try out prehistoric hunting tools like the spear and the atlatl (spear-thrower)



THE MEDIEVAL HERITAGE OF THE PÉRIGORD



MONUMENT
HISTORIQUE

CASTLE OF BIRON

Perched on a hill overlooking the landscape, the Castle of Biron rises proudly on the borders of the Périgord, Quercy, and Agenais.

It is the largest castle complex in Nouvelle-Aquitaine, made up of 14 buildings crowned by a hectare of roofing! It also served as the seat of one of the four baronies of Périgord.

The castle's history is intimately linked to that of the Gontaut-Biron family, who owned it for eight centuries, from the 11th to the 20th century. In 1978, the Dordogne Department acquired the castle, saving it from ruin and ensuring its preservation and public opening.



A blend of medieval fortress, Renaissance residence, and classical castle. Each era has left its mark, shaped by:

- the turbulence of the Middle Ages
- peasant uprisings
- and the French Revolution

creating a true architectural palimpsest:

- A 12th-century keep, vestige of the original medieval fortress
- A double-level seigneurial chapel from the 16th century — a Renaissance jewel and veritable theatre of exceptional sculptures
- Renaissance apartments, combining comfort and refinement

- Impressive vaulted kitchens
- The Hall of the Estates, symbol of seigneurial power
- The seigneurial lodgings and company salons from the 18th century

Now recognized as a major heritage site in Aquitaine and listed as a Historic Monument, the Castle of Biron offers visitors a journey through the history of France and eight centuries of castle architecture.

Its strategic position provides magnificent views over the Périgord and the surrounding regions, from the deep forests of the Périgord Noir all the way to the Pyrenees...



TOM THUMB AND THE STONE GIANT



Once upon a time, deep in the forests of Périgord, lay the ruins of a gigantic castle — sacked by the English, ravaged by famine, devastated by epidemics.

Tough luck for Pons de Gontaut-Biron, born right in the middle of this chaos. Poorly fed, Pons grew small and weak, earning the nickname “Tom Thumb.” But though small in stature, he had big ideas. Emancipated early by his struggling parents, the scrappy young lad set off through the woods to seek his fortune at the royal court — an adventure many believe inspired Charles Perrault’s classic tale of Tom Thumb. Instead of breadcrumbs, the real “Petit Pouce” gathered titles and honors — and even made a good marriage.

With his fortune made, he returned to restore his beloved Castle of Biron, which, thanks to him, once again became one of the grandest castles in the Périgord.

At the end of his life, in 1524, the little man was buried in the castle chapel he had commissioned — a gem of flamboyant Gothic architecture, inspired by his travels in Italy, adorned with two exceptional Renaissance sculptures: a Pietà and an Entombment of Christ.

Was Petit Pouce finally able to rest in peace for eternity? Not quite. In 1908, the last marquis, out of money, sold the two masterpieces to the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York.

How to get them back? Luck (and advances in science) allowed exact replicas to be made in... 2024! Crafted by the Ateliers des Fac-Similés du Périgord — the same team that recreated Lascaux — these stunning reproductions once again grace the chapel of Petit Pouce.

Today, the Dordogne Department manages the castle, which is open to visitors and film shoots. As you explore its rooms, keep an eye on the ramparts: they say that Charles de Biron, a descendant of Pons, sometimes walks the walls holding his own severed head — ever since his execution in 1602.

But that’s another story.

Source: Guide Michelin



Visiting Experiences and Medieval Activities



Self-Guided Tour – “Treasure Hunt”

Equipped with an educational booklet “Les Incollables”, young explorers set off to uncover the secrets of the castle. Using a map, they will identify the various architectural styles of Biron Castle while referring to a timeline.

Discovery Workshops

Table Etiquette & Banquet Arts

Children will learn proper manners, recipes, and banquet menus, and will set the table just like in the time of the Medieval Fabliaux!

Medieval Dance – Let’s Dance!

Students will take to the floor to learn three medieval dances. They’ll also identify musical instruments and follow the dance steps.

Coin Striking

A workshop dedicated to discovering the history of money and coin minting techniques, where children will create their own medieval-style coin!

Coat of Arms

A chance to learn the Art of Heraldry by designing their own coat of arms, while following the official rules of blazoning.

Upcoming Highlights in 2025

Renovation of the 18th-Century Apartments

Thanks to a partnership between the Dordogne Department and the Mobilier National, the 18th-century apartments will be refurbished. The bedroom of Queen Jeanne d’Albret will also be fully redecorated to commemorate her stay at the Castle of Biron in January 1572, where she negotiated the terms of her son’s marriage (the future Henri IV) with Armand de Gontaut-Biron, the Prince of Condé, and the Prince of Orange.

The Return of the Chapel’s Censer

A little anecdote: the censer had been sent off for restoration by the Copper Royers, the castle’s former owners. But after the property changed hands and was acquired by the Dordogne Department, the item remained in the workshop and was forgotten. Then, in a surprise turn this January, the restorer’s son showed up at the castle — revealing that he had just found the censer in his parents’ workshop! A wonderful discovery that allowed this treasure to return to the chapel of Biron Castle.

An Exceptional New Exhibition

A remarkable exhibition will be held in the upper apartments of the Marshals’ Wing.

New Historical and Scientific Research in the Castle Chapel

In 2025, an in-depth study of the tombs will be carried out to uncover their mysteries... Starting this February, visitors will be able to view the fully restored tombs, located beneath the Pietà and the Entombment of the Holy Sepulchre sculptures, which were inaugurated during the 2024 European Heritage Days.

The Biron Medieval Festival

Following its success during the Bastide Festival, the Biron Medieval Festival aims to establish itself as a cultural staple and become an unmissable event on the last weekend of October.





CADOUIN CLOISTERS

Located in the Bessède Forest, between Sarlat and Bergerac, the Cloister of Cadouin stands as a testament to Flamboyant Gothic art. This architectural gem, listed as a Historic Monument and inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage List under the Routes of Santiago de Compostela, invites visitors on a journey through nearly ten centuries of history.



Founded in 1115 by Géraud de Salles, the Abbey of Cadouin joined the Cistercian Order in 1119, becoming the eleventh abbey affiliated with this order, renowned for its strict adherence to the Rule of Saint Benedict. This affiliation marked the beginning of a monastic era defined by poverty, austerity, and silence.

The site's history is rich and eventful. While monastic life ended in 1790 during the French Revolution, the cloister still bears the marks of its glorious past. From the Romanesque period, the abbey church, the sacristy, and the base walls of the convent buildings still remain. However, it was the reconstruction of the cloister at the end of the 15th century that gave Cadouin its present-day splendor.

Its galleries — three in Gothic style and the fourth in Renaissance style — open onto an inner garden through lattice stone arches. Every corner of the cloister offers a dazzling display: finely sculpted columns, elegantly interwoven vaults, delicate arabesques, carved doors, pillars, keystones, sculpted capitals, and a stone abbot's seat.

The richness of the ornamentation and the splendor of the decor make this place universal, timeless, and peaceful. The play of light and shadow, as the sun draws arabesques on the floor of the galleries, adds an almost magical dimension to the experience!

FINE LINEN



Welcome to the edge of the Bessède Forest: with its honey-colored stone and tiled rooftops, the charming village of Cadouin is home to a Cistercian abbey (founded in 1154), listed by UNESCO, whose 15th-century cloister is a jewel of Flamboyant Gothic architecture. But if this complex made religious headlines for eight centuries, it was less for its beauty than for housing the most famous relic in the Périgord: a Holy Shroud, no less! This sacred cloth, believed to have covered Christ's head in the tomb, was supposedly retrieved by a bishop from Le Puy-en-Velay during the First Crusade in 1098. The relic protected the bishop so well that he died in an epidemic, leaving it in the hands of a humble country priest, who was tasked with bringing it back to the cathedral of the deceased prelate.



But upon his return, the canons of Le Puy, believing neither the priest nor his sacred cloth, slammed the door in his face. Taking refuge in his modest church in Brunet, the priest was soon driven out by a fire. Rather than question the power of his relic (two disasters, after all!), he rushed to entrust it to the Abbey of Cadouin. And so, the village was declared a major pilgrimage site, a fervor that saw ups and downs — declining after the Revolution, but flourishing again in the late 19th century, when the relic drew thousands of pilgrims each year.

Still, some began to have doubts. Weren't there — yes, look closely — some Eastern characters on that cloth?

In 1934, science confirmed it: the fine linen could not have covered Christ's head in the tomb, as it had been woven in Egypt at the end of the 11th century, and indeed bore calligraphic inscriptions in praise of a caliph. The Bishop of Périgueux immediately abolished the pilgrimage.

Since 2012, a facsimile of the supposed relic has been on display in a small museum within the abbey. The real one? Sent to Périgueux in 2005 for restoration, it's still there.

To be continued...



Source: Guide Michelin

Discovery Trails and Activities

The “Marmouset” Tour

Specifically designed for children curious to learn more about monastic life and the enigmatic sculpted figures of the cloister.

“Saturday Collation”

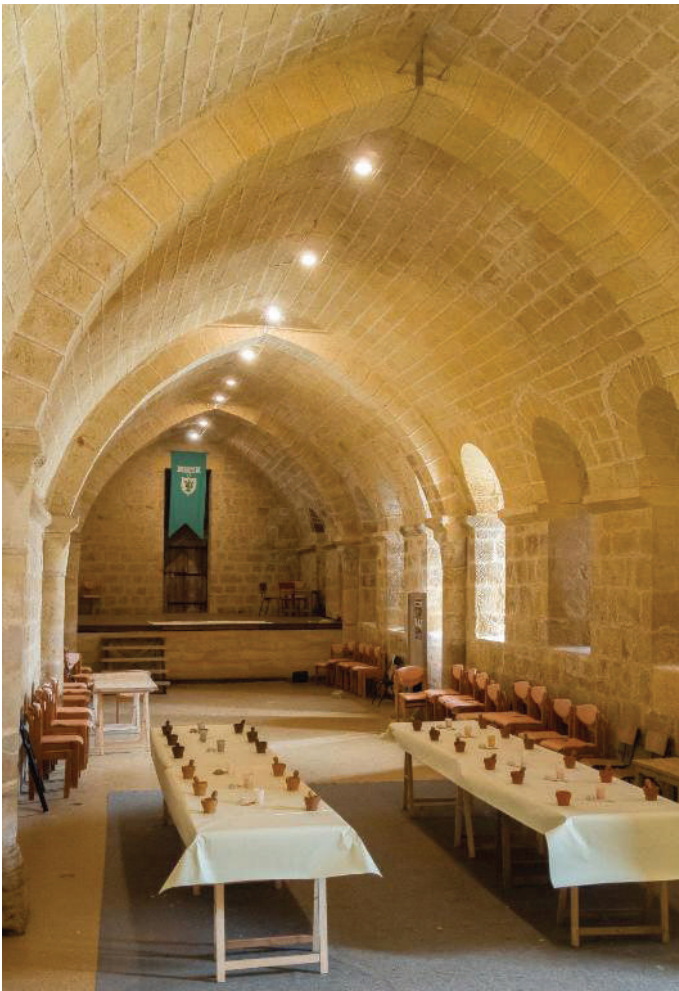
Named after the traditional afternoon “collation” — a reading and discussion gathering held by the monastic community in the cloister — this is a guided tour for enthusiasts. During the moulding workshop, participants create their own plaster cast and leave with a sculpted element from the cloister.

Night Tour

This visit offers the chance to discover the cloister and its exceptional sculptures in the heart of a summer night.

Moulding Workshop

Inspired by Gothic art sculptures, this workshop lets you create your own mould and take home your creation.



Semitour is proud to announce that it will officially take over management of the group hostel at the Abbey of Cadouin starting in January 2025. Although renovation work is still underway, we look forward to partially welcoming guests as early as April.

Our team is actively working to create a warm and comfortable space, worthy of the millennium of history that surrounds it.

The hostel will be more than just a place to stay — located in the heart of the Dordogne, it will serve as the ideal starting point for exploring the region’s most iconic sites.

BOURDEILLES CASTLE

Perched on a hill overlooking the Dronne River, in the heart of the Périgord Vert, the Bourdeilles Castle tells the story of over eight centuries of history. Listed as a Historic Monument, this iconic site stands out for the harmonious coexistence of two remarkable buildings: a 13th-century medieval fortress and a 16th-century Renaissance residence.

The Medieval Fortress

Built in the late 13th century, the medieval fortress of Bourdeilles bears witness to the political and military upheaval of the time. During the height of the conflict between France and England, the castle passed alternately under English and French control, until it was recaptured by the army of Bertrand Du Guesclin. Its impressive military architecture reflects its defensive function: a high curtain wall lined with machicolations, arrow slits and crossbow loopholes, along with a fortified gatehouse.

Towering above the complex is a 35-meter-high octagonal keep, offering a breathtaking panoramic view from its rooftop terrace. This keep, with its four vaulted levels, is a striking example of medieval ingenuity



The Renaissance Residence

In the 16th century, as peace began to settle, Jacquette de Montbron, Baroness of Bourdeilles and close confidante of Catherine de' Medici, undertook the construction of a Renaissance residence beside the medieval fortress. Inspired by Italian palaces, this bright and elegant building embodies the refinement of the Second Renaissance. Its large windows and cross corridors reflect a remarkable degree of architectural modernity.

Today, the residence houses an exceptional furniture collection ranging from the 14th to the 19th century. Assembled in the 1960s-1970s by a pair of passionate patrons, it is one of the richest collections in Aquitaine, offering visitors a true journey through time.

The first written mention of the château dates back to 1183, when monks took refuge there with the relics of Saint Sicaire.

Since then, the castle has stood through the centuries as a witness to great historic events. It was also one of the four baronies of Périgord, alongside Biron, Beynac, and Mareuil. Over the centuries, Bourdeilles has maintained its dual military and residential identity, thanks to visionary owners like Jacquette de Montbron. A learned woman, she is regarded as one of the first female architects in the Western world, leaving a lasting mark on the history of the castle.

A PALACE OF ONE'S OWN

One hundred and twenty-five steps. How many times did Jacquette de Montbron climb the keep of Bourdeilles Castle to monitor, far below, the progress of the construction of her own castle — the one she is said to have designed herself? Experts agree: in the Renaissance, such an initiative was extremely rare. They also point out that, at the time, widowhood could lead to a certain level of emancipation: in wealthy circles, many widows continued construction projects begun by their late husbands.

But Jacquette went further — she would conceptualize the design herself. That takes tremendous confidence. Her life story shows she had plenty of it: Born into the nobility of the Charente, Jacquette was 16 years old when she married André de Bourdeilles, heir to one of the four baronies of Périgord and owner of the medieval fortress of Bourdeilles.

Being born and raised in such a circle gave her access to royal courts: Jacquette became lady-in-waiting to Louise of Lorraine (wife of Henri III), and later to the queen mother, Catherine de' Medici, who counted her among her favorites.

André died in 1582, leaving Jacquette alone with six children. She returned to Bourdeilles carrying with her 4,000 écus bequeathed by the queen mother — the equivalent of half a million euros (not bad!). Was Bourdeilles' fortress too massive, heavy, and dark?

Directly across from it, Jacquette designed the pleasure castle of her dreams. Farewell to machicolations, arrow slits, and crossbow loopholes. She decorated the façade in the style of the Italian palaces that inspired her, added large windows to let in light, and had the salons painted by fashionable artists... She may even have sculpted some of the façade herself! A woman with serious character — is that what you think as you walk through her domain? Back then, they said instead: "divine gallant lady", as her brother-in-law, the writer Brantôme, called her. He even based some of his novels on her. A true heroine, then.



Source: Guide Michelin

Visiting Experiences in the Heart of the Castle

Treasure Hunt – “Who Killed the Marquis?!”
Children investigate in teams throughout the castle to uncover all its secrets. A fun and original way to explore Bourdeilles Castle.

Tour – “In Search of the Griffin’s Egg”
The Bourdeilles griffin has lost its egg. Can you find it? This tour, built around the legend of the Bourdeilles griffin, plunges children into the world of fantastical creatures(griffin, dragon, chimera, sphinx...) which they can discover on the furniture inside the castle.

Mysterious Investigation in the Heart of the Castle
In this immersive game, you'll be the main players in a mystery investigation. Your mission: find out who stole a valuable painting.

Through a series of games and riddles scattered throughout the castle, you'll need to use logic, observation, and teamwork to solve the mystery. Each clue brings you one step closer to the truth!

Recommended age: 7 to 12 years old.

Virtual Escape Game
A unique immersive experience at the crossroads of the Middle Ages and the Renaissance. Equipped with a virtual reality headset, dive into the captivating world of a Templar knight, imprisoned during the Hundred Years’ War. Your mission? Escape by solving puzzles before time runs out! Between suspense and history, this adventure will take you on a journey into the past, all while testing your problem-solving skills.

Number of players: 1 to 4
Recommended age: 12 and up



Discovery Workshops

Heraldry Workshop – The Science of Coats of Arms
A workshop on the use of heraldry, its vocabulary, and the rules to follow when creating your own coat of arms — ending with participants designing their own shield.

Calligraphy
An opportunity to explore the invention of writing, its origins, and the earliest writing tools. The session continues with an introduction to medieval writing techniques and styles, followed by the creation of an illuminated version of the participant’s first name on a beautiful card.

Coin Striking
Suitable for all ages, this workshop allows participants to strike a copy of a medieval coin onto a pewter token.

Upcoming Highlights in 2025

27th Edition of “Printemps des Poètes”
Participation in the national event “Printemps des Poètes” (Springtime of Poets), from March 14 to 31, to encourage and celebrate poetic creation and reading.

“Châteaux en Fête” (Castles in Celebration)
From April 19 to May 4, enjoy a program of art exhibitions, medieval demonstrations and activities, and discovery workshops, including coin striking, heraldry, calligraphy, and crossbow shooting.

Paratge Festival – Occitan and World Cultures
A day of performances to celebrate Occitan culture and beyond, on May 24.

4th Edition of the Medieval Festival
Two unforgettable days at the castle featuring demonstrations and workshops, all set to the rhythm of traditional music and dance, on July 26 and 27.

3rd Edition of the Théâtrales
Shows, theater workshops, and themed guided tours, on August 16.





OUR COMMITMENTS

After Lascaux IV was awarded the quality label with jury commendations in 2022 and 2023, Semitour Périgord, always mindful of the ecological footprint of its flagship site and more committed than ever to aligning with initiatives led by the Nouvelle-Aquitaine Region, the Dordogne Departmental Council, and the community councils of Terrasson in Périgord Noir and Vallée de l'Homme, continues to strengthen its commitment to a sustainable development policy, in line with the evolving criteria of AFNOR.

Since its opening, Lascaux IV has established itself as a model of universal accessibility. Certified “Tourism & Disability” since 2019, our flagship site has successfully met the needs of the four main disability categories (motor, cognitive, visual, and auditory), thanks to specially adapted facilities and inclusive cultural mediation.



Motor Disabilities

- The site is 100% accessible to visitors with reduced mobility and wheelchair users.
- Wheelchairs are available free of charge for visitor use.
- In every area, touchscreens and furniture have been designed to be accessible to all, including children and wheelchair users.



Cognitive Disabilities

Each cultural mediator takes special care to support these visitors, regardless of age, and ensures their inclusion within group settings.



Hearing Disabilities

- Headsets are equipped with ARC technology, allowing people with next-generation hearing aids to simply place the headset on their shoulders. The chip then transmits the sound directly to the hearing aid.
- From the start of the visit to the end of the cave experience, a tablet allows visitors to follow the tour via commentary in French Sign Language, created by our cultural mediators. This tour is also available in text format on the same tablet, in French, English, and Spanish. Visitors can choose the mode that suits them best from the application at the start of their visit.
- Throughout the rest of the tour, the visitor companion includes a “subtitles” option in the language of their choice for all audio and video content.



Visual Disabilities

- The cave tour is fully designed to provide a descriptive and immersive experience for all.
- Thermo-relief booklets are available to visitors.
- An option on the visitor companion activates adapted content: including color settings, graphic design, and font size.

Each cultural mediator takes special care to support these visitors, regardless of age, and ensures their full inclusion within group visits.



Ecotourism in the Vézère Valley

The “Ecotourism in Vézère” eco-charter is the result of a collaboration between two intercommunal bodies and their respective tourist offices: the Lascaux Dordogne – Vallée Vézère Tourist Office, the Vézère Périgord Noir Tourist Office, and the Grand Site Operation of the Vézère Valley, involving the Terrassonnais en Périgord Noir Thenon Hautefort community of communes and the Vallée de l'Homme community of communes. Developed in 2018-2019, this initiative aims to engage local tourism stakeholders in a sustainable approach. Its objectives: to formalize commitments, create an eco-responsible network, structure the tourism offering, and promote the pillars of sustainable development.

It is with great enthusiasm that Lascaux IV has become a member of the “Ecotourism in Vézère” eco-charter, an initiative committed to fostering more responsible tourism, and greater respect for the Vézère Valley, a site listed as UNESCO World Heritage and designated Grand Site de France!



“Accueil Vélo” (Cyclist-Friendly Label)

Soft mobility, such as cycling, is a growing trend that supports the expansion of national and local cycling routes. As Dordogne is one of the leading destinations for cycling tourism, Semitour Périgord has applied in 2024 for the “Accueil Vélo” label for its sites in the Vézère Valley (Lascaux IV, Lascaux II, Parc du Thot, and Grand Roc Cave). This initiative is part of a broader effort led by the Dordogne Department and local authorities across the region. The “Accueil Vélo” brand is a national certification that guarantees special services, facilities, and a warm welcometailed to the needs of cycling tourists, including users of bike routes and cycle paths. It represents a commitment to quality service for cycling visitors throughout France.

Becoming Accueil Vélo certified is a way to express our intention to meet the expectations of a growing audience — one that values active holidays and eco-friendly modes of travel.

INDIVIDUAL RATES

2025

	ADULTS >13 YEARS Adultes > 13 ans	REDUCED RATE* ADULTS Adultes Réduits*	DISABLED >13 ANS Handicapéss > 13 ans	CHILD 5 - 12 YEARS Enfant 5-12 ans	YOUNG CHILD UNDER 5 YEARS <5 ans	PRIVILEGE CARD Carte Privilège	DISCOVERY WORKSHOP Ateliers	OTHER ACTIVITIES CARETAKER WORKSHOP ADULT/CHILD/PASS Autres animations
LASCAUX IV	€23	€22	€16 (€11 for under 13 years)	FULL PRICE €15 REDUCED PRICE €14*	FREE gratuit	€55		
PARC DU THOT	€11,50	€10,50		FULL PRICE 7,20 € REDUCED PRICE 6,80€	FREE gratuit	€26	€4 promo €3	Caretaker: €80 for >13 years / €52 for 7-12 years / Family Pass (2 adults + 2 children) = €210
COMBINED TICKET LASCAUX IV + THOT	€26,50			€17,50	FREE gratuit	€65		
LASCAUX II	€16			€10,50	FREE gratuit	€37		
LASCAUX II + THOT	€21			€13,20	FREE gratuit	€50		
LASCAUX II + LASCAUX IV	€29			€19	FREE gratuit	€68		
GRAND ROC CAVE	€9,50			€6,30	FREE gratuit	€23		
LAUGERIE BASSE SHELTERS	€9,50			€6,30	FREE gratuit	€23	€4 promo €3	
COMBINED TICKET GRAND ROC & LAUGERIE	€15,30			€10	FREE gratuit			
CHÂTEAU DE BIRON	€9,70			€6,40	FREE gratuit	€23	€4 promo €3€	Coin strikin €2,50
CADOUIN CLOISTER	€7,90			€5	FREE gratuit	€18	€4 promo €3€	
COMBINED TICKET BIRON + CADOUIN	€13,60			€8,60	FREE gratuit	€32		
CHÂTEAU DE BOURDEILLES	€9,70			€6,40	FREE gratuit	€23	€4 promo €3€	Coin strikin €2,50

* Special rate (- €1) available upon presenta on of appropriate documenta on and only in the following cases: job seekers, students, large family card holders, disability card holders, Crédit Agricole members.

PRACTICAL INFORMATION

OPEN FROM FEBRUARY TO DECEMBER

Online ticketing at ticketsdordogne.com

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PRESS AREA

Find our dedicated press areas and photo libraries on
the websites of each site:

- <https://lascaux.fr/fr/espace-presse/>
- <https://lascaux2.fr/fr/espace-presse/>
- <https://grotte-grand-roc.fr/fr/espace-presse/>
- <https://abris-laugerie-basse.fr/fr/espace-presse/>
- <https://chateau-biron.fr/fr/espace-presse/>
- <https://lcloitre-cadouin.fr/fr/espace-presse/>
- <https://chateau-bourdeilles.fr/fr/espace-presse/>

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