

## Pure and Simple Escapism

*Dévasions pures que non sai*

The Midi Quercy region, born of a voluntary coming-together of four districts from the east of the Tarn-et-Garonne, draws its strength from a **variety of complementary factors** : the soft green slopes of the **Quercy Vert**, alluvial plains of the valley and terraces of the Aveyron, **Gorges carved out of the chalk** and the **flat farmland** of the Quercy Rouergue and the Gorges of the Aveyron, **the rolling farmland** of the slopes of Bas-Quercy, **the dry and stony grasslands** of the limestone plateaux of the Lot and the **wetter valleys** of the Causade region of Quercy. This diversity of landscapes demonstrates a variety of soil structures which in turn explain the **range of architectural materials and their related trades** : **unbaked earth and terra cotta on the one hand, and coursed and uncoursed stone on the other...**

Man continues to forge his identity in this region of confluences and comings-together, where his presence has been favoured since pre-history. Historical events have left their traces everywhere in the landscape and their influence can still be appreciated today. **Fortified mediaeval villages, bastides and ruined châteaux** ; all serve to show how men lived their lives, as do the countless smaller elements that make up our **rural heritage** ; the tiny farms, the dovecotes (known as pigeonniers), the wells and public washing places; all continuing witnesses to country life here in the past. This diversity, this heritage both natural and cultural, makes of the Midi-Quercy today a place of inspiration for creative people and a source of discovery for all.

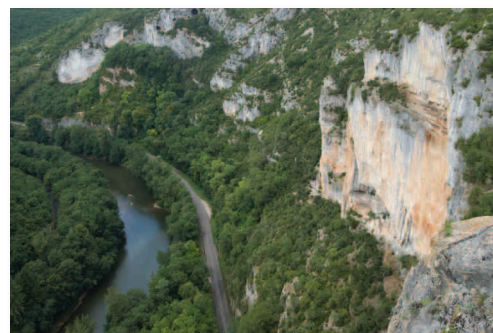
## A Region of many faces

*Un país amb tantas caras*

The Tarn-et-Garonne which was the last of the French départements to be created (1808), is in fact made up of territory from surrounding départements. This administrative realignment helps to explain the **mosaic of natural landscapes that go to make up the Midi-Quercy**.

Indeed this diversity even shows in the names that make up the Community of Communes : **Quercy and the Causse** in the « Quercy of Causade », **Quercy and Rouergue** in « Quercy Rouergue », **the Aveyron plain and terraces** in « Aveyron terraces and valley » and **Wooded Quercy** in « Quercy Vert ».

Midi-Quercy is blessed with an **exceptional biodiversity** linked to lots of **differing climatic influences and a variety of geological soil-formations** (shale, sandstone, chalk, alluvial deposits and molasse). And it's the first and foremost from these soils and sub-soils that our Midi Quercy landscapes are formed. They condition our agricultural development, provide the raw materials for our vernacular architecture (from which we get the large regional palette of colours and materials : (unbaked earth, brick, stone) and largely help explain our **ecological diversity**.



**To the East of la Bonnette**, the ancient province of Rouergue is a **region of stone and rolling farmland** where roofs in both tile and slate progress **towards the Massif Central**.

**The Causse**, between the valleys of la Bonnette and the Lère, is characterised by **wide horizons, a landscape bleached by chalk outcrops and drystone walls** and a distinctive flora that includes scrub oak and juniper. A succession of **hills and valleys** characterise the **Slopes of Monclar and of Quercy** in which **vineyards, orchards, woods, plains alternate with farmed land** frequently bordered by hedges.

The **Gorges of Aveyron**, rich and varied, have pasture, land in cultivation and the tops of steep cliffs that often surprise the casual visitor exploring their wooded slopes before their steep descent to a wide and peaceful valley punctuated with fruit trees.



## An exceptional heritage from the past

*Un eiretatge excepcional del passat*



The Midi-Quercy also has huge **historical and architectural richness**. There are many remains attesting to **human occupation as far back as the Paleolithic**. Then from about 1 000 AD, the region saw **many abbeys, churches and châteaux** built

and the mediaeval urban revolution has left us a lot of very well preserved bastides. In fact, there are in all more than **80 sites and monuments on the supplementary list and 23 listed sites which history has bequeathed** to the Midi-Quercy region.

### « Caves and dolmens »

The **first traces of man** date from **350 000 BC** though this human occupation is hardly visible in the landscape of today. Midi-Quercy contains **several dolmens** dating principally from the height of the Bronze Age. Nearly a **hundred of these burial monuments have been recorded in 17 communes including Saint-Antonin-Noble-Val** where you can see a rare example of stacked dolmens that have been restored (**Dolmens du Pech**) as well as at **Septfonds (Dolmen de Finelle)**.



### « In the steps of the Templars »

**The Knights Templars** up to the time of their arrest in 1307 played **an important role in the development of the region** in the 12<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> centuries and **especially around Montricoux, where the ramparts, keep and church of St-Pierre still bear the marks of a flourishing commandery on their walls**. Those who are interested can see other very fine Templar commanderies such as those of **Lacapelle-Livron and the château of Cas at Espinas**.

### « Châteaux and Bastides »

After the appearance of the first parishes around the year 1 000, the development of the area in the 12<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> centuries was also linked to the **establishment of religious orders** whose development accelerated land clearances. **The Cistercian Abbey of Notre Dame de Beaulieu** is a beautiful example of convent architecture. **The castra** - settlements

under the protection of their Lord grouped together at the base of his château and defended by a curtain wall-were developed in parallel around the same time. These ancient castra are still visible today. The development of the village of **Bruniquel** at the foot of the château is a good example, even if the ramparts themselves are long gone.

In fact the **growth of the bastides** constituted the high point of these clearances in the 13<sup>th</sup> century and anticipated the land use we still recognise today. Bastides were in fact the result of agreements between the religious authority that provided the land and the temporal power that organised their setting-up. The Midi-Quercy region has **eleven bastides** whose principal characteristics are still in evidence amongst which are those of **Molières, Réalville and Verfeil-sur-Seze...**



## A traditional building type

*Una bastenda tradicionala típica*

**Local resources and available materials (earth, stone, pebbles)**, contribute also to the identity of various regions of the Midi-Quercy, through its differing styles of vernacular architecture.



## Off the beaten track Something to do for everyone !

*Natura prigonda - D'activitats per totes !*

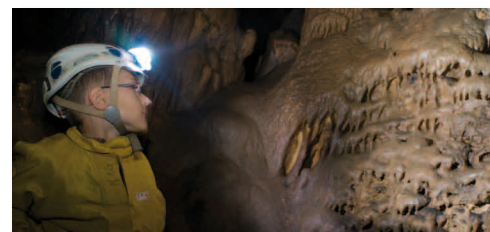


**Whether on foot, on mountain bike or on horseback**, you will find yourself in harmony with your surroundings. And whatever your physical shape, your age or tastes, you will never fail to find an activity to tempt you in Midi-Quercy ! As a rambler you'll find a lively rural region, **rich in architecture and history**. **A hundred or so paths for ramblers and hikers are maintained and signposted** according to the rules established by the French Ramblers Association for crossing the Midi-Quercy region (Intercommunal guides and the guide for GR paths « Midi-Quercy on foot » for sale in tourist offices. In addition, **the site VTT-FFC « Viaur Aveyron »** is distributed across the sectors of St-Antonin-Noble-Val and Laguëpie/Najac and labelled by the French Cycling Federation who offer selected routes of various degrees of difficulty (2 guides available in the tourist offices of the region). Finally, **the cycling route « Gorges of Aveyron »** links Montauban to Laguëpie and allows you to explore the sites and landscapes of Midi-Quercy through a 80km long signposted itinerary.



If you fancy hanging on rocky cliffs with your head in the clouds or searching for secrets buried deep in the earth, professionals are available to help you try your hand at **rock climbing, free flight or pot-holing** whether it's for the thrill, the pleasure of the sport or simply for pure enjoyment.

**A landscape forged by water** : try a descent by Canoe-kayak (guide available in the Tourist Office in Saint-Antonin), fishing or bathing... **Water activities are much in evidence** here. (information from the tourist offices and information centres).



## Ecotourism and Biodiversity

*Patrimoni natural*

In the communes of Saint-Antonin-Noble-Val, Cazals, Bruniquel, Penne et Puycelsi, a **Natura 2000 zone** has been designated, called « Gorges of Aveyron, nearby causes and the valley of the Vère » and it stretches over **28 800 acres**. In fact Natura 2000 is a **European network of natural regions that have been identified for the quality, rarity or delicate balance** of their flora and fauna and natural habitats. **This biodiversity** of course needs to be preserved for future generations, despite the presence in these areas of a wide range of human activity.

In this site, which is rich in **11 habitats and 16 species of special interest, a code of practice** has been introduced by **those responsible for tourist development**. In effect this involves a **moral contract** between the voluntary tourist agencies who have committed to being bound by a series of **recommendations which aim to preserve this natural environment**.

**You too, visitors to the Gorges of Aveyron, join with those of us who are charged with looking after the preservation of this site on a daily basis !** (Chart and list of signatories available on the internet site of the Midi-Quercy : [www.midi-quercy.fr](http://www.midi-quercy.fr) and in the Tourist Offices).



The Midi-Quercy region is committed to a sustainable form of tourist development and allies itself with the aims of the CPIE Midi-Quercy by training and creating awareness of its progressive principles and solutions for those involved in tourism.

## Ancient Savoir-faire and creativity today

*Saupre-far ancian e creacion contemporanèa*



In discovering Quercy, the Rouergue, the Albigeois and the Agenais, Midi-Quercy you will find a region of convergences, of comings-together. Geological diversity, varied landscapes, multiple climatic influences, **changing light patterns, soft colours or intense, bold ones**, Midi-Quercy is a

welcoming region where **memories of the past mingle and become enriched by new experiences**. Following the example of the nearby Midi-Pyrenees with its many festivals, Midi-Quercy now also offers many festivals and shows throughout the year, **from the Bruniquel châteaux lyric festival**, dedicated to Offenbach, to the **Summer hat festival** at Causade and Septfonds, not to mention the **Lenga Viva** occitan festival of Laguëpie, **Samba al Pais** at Nègrepelisse and the **Winter Documentary Festival**. Other cultural initiatives are taking Midi-Quercy towards new horizons with **the O Babeltut Association and its cultural transport** as well as exploring other creative themes with **The Art and Design Centre, La Cuisine**, situated in the commune of Nègrepelisse.

**Lute makers, ironworkers, potters and ceramicists, glass blowers, sculptors and painters; the artists and craftsmen of the Midi-Quercy open their studios**, delight in putting on exhibitions and sharing their passions often through unusual or spectacular events when their creative magic takes over.

## Une palette de saveurs A whole range of colourful flavours !

*Una paleta de sabors acolorida*

**As a reflection of the landscapes of Midi-Quercy, our local gastronomy is at once both generous and varied.**

From the slopes where the sun bathes the vines and melons and plums ripen, to the nourishing plateaux from which our sheep and cattle derive all their flavour : **a huge range of tasty products are there to welcome and surprise you !**

In fact the heritage of the past, confers an expertise, a **savoir-faire**, on this land where our first concern is always with quality. With the flavour of **truffles, of saffron or of chestnuts**, our farmers, chefs, butchers and caterers are just waiting to serve up their lovingly prepared local « Midi-quercy » specialities for you.

From village to village, **street markets display every imaginable flavour** : why not let yourself be seduced or even try creating your own menus ?

Salade Quercynoise or barbecued duck kebabs with prunes

**Omelette aux cèpes** or **Pan fried foie gras with grapes**

**Cabécou** or **Rocamadour** goats cheese

Croustade aux Pommes or Massepain

**Wine from the Coteaux du Quercy or the terraces of Montauban**, whatever takes your fancy !

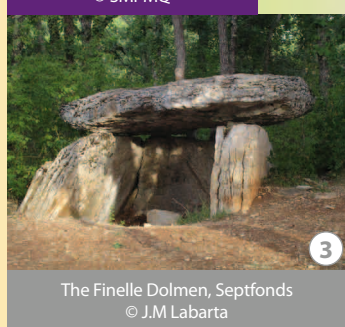




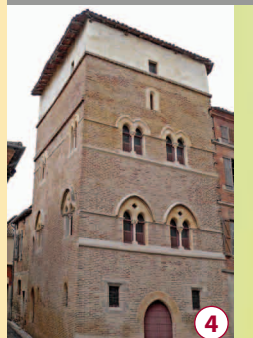
The Collegial church at Montpezat-de-Quercy - © ADT 82



Notre-Dame de Saux, near Montpezat-de-Quercy © SMPMQ



The Finelle Dolmen, Septfonds © J.M Labarta



The Arlet tower, Caussade © OT de Caussade



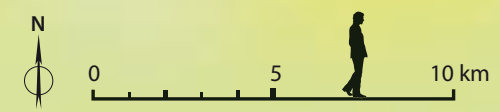
Hat manufacture and exhibition, Caussade © SMPMQ



La Cuisine, a centre for innovation, art et design, as applied to food, Nègrepelisse © La Cuisine



The Marcel Lenoir museum, Montricoux © SMPMQ



The two châteaux in Bruniquel - © CCTVA



The little train at Monclar-de-Quercy - © OT de Monclar, Quercy vert et Pays Monclairs



The Romanesque house, St-Antonin-Noble-Val © C. Pélaprat/Bijlara.com



The Aveyron gorges, near St-Antonin-Noble-Val - © C. Pélaprat/Bijlara.com



Climbing in the Aveyron Gorges © C. Pélaprat/Bijlara.com



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The Château de Cas, Espinas - © SMPMQ



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Zadkine's sculpture of Christ, Caylus church © OTP de Caylus

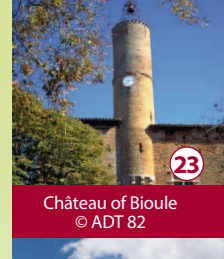


The Cistercian Abbey at Beaulieu, Ginals - © Ass. cult. de Beaulieu

- Office de tourisme - Syndicat d'initiative
- Patrimoine religieux
- Château
- Musée
- Préhistoire, dolmen ou grotte
- Activité de pleine nature
- Base de loisirs - baignade surveillée (eaux vives, lacs ou piscine)
- Station verte de vacances
- Plus beau village de France
- Aire de service camping car - Stationnement
- Station essence
- Carte bleu
- Site Natura 2000 « Gorges de l'Aveyron, causses proches et vallée de la Vère »
- Itinéraire véloroute

Sites numérotés illustrés

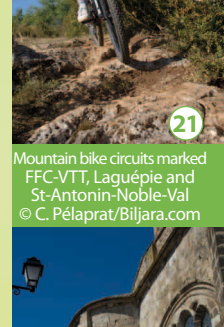
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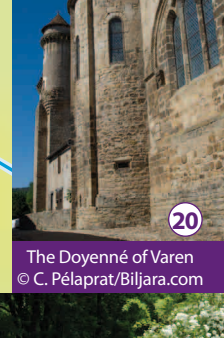
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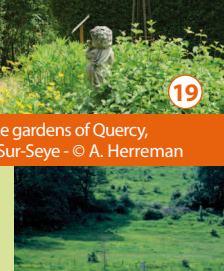
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