

# C100-ST

## Dordogne & Haut Quercy

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Quercy is a large limestone plateau cut out by the valleys of the Dordogne, Lot and Aveyron rivers and by many other streams that delimit the Causses - arid stretches of land covered with sparse meadows and grazing flocks of sheep. To the north, Haut Quercy - formed by the Causses de Martel and the Causses de Gramat - leans against the Massif Central. The majority of this hike crosses through the Dordogne River Valley, from Souillac to Saint-Cere, at times straying to the Causse de Gramat, to discover magnificent sites such as the valley of Ouyse, the hillside town of Rocamadour, Castelnau, and the Cirque d'Autoire. You will be thrilled by the Gouffre de Padirac's underground river, a strange and marvellous underworld. Though your days will be spent investigating the wilderness of the region, your



evenings won't let you forget that this is one of the main centers of gourmet cuisine and gentle living.

## Itinerary

**Day 1** - Arrival at SOUILLAC, a small, prosperous town built around a Benedictine abbey on the banks of the Dordogne river. Spend the day visiting the Musée des Automates, and the remarkable abbey with three cupolas on pendentives, fine carved capitals and a statue of the prophet Isaiah, a masterpiece of Romanesque art. Stroll in the old historic city near the abbey - *Dinner, lodging and breakfast in a 3-star hotel*

**Day 2** - SOUILLAC - CALES (19 km). Don't miss to visit Souillac and its old districts before beginning the walk. You will go to the Dordogne River and continue along it before penetrating into a wood and joining the village of Pinsac, some kilometers farther. There you will cross the Dordogne and will admire the castle of Treyne which builds at the edge of cliffs and dominates the river. It is a luxury hotel today. You will walk through wood along the river and will reach the small but picturesque village of Le Bastit which possesses a strange castle. After touring it you will continue the way through stunted oaks woods, cultivated fields, some with tobacco and large areas covered with grass where sheep flocks graze.

*Dinner, lodging and breakfast in a 2-star hotel*

**Day 3** - CALES - ROCAMADOUR (18 km). Transfer by taxi to the Pont de l'Ouyse where the Belcastel chateau rises in the distance. You will visit the Caves of Lacave (1 hour and a half tour) and make your way up the Ouyse valley (a remarkable site in the Lot department), wild and mysterious and spotted with old watermills, including the 13th century fortified watermill of Cougnaguet where everything works as it used to! The subterranean waters of the Gouffre de Cabouy rise above ground here as the source of the Ouyse. You will continue the hike through the Alzou Valley and will arrive in Rocamadour in late afternoon - *Dinner, lodging and breakfast in a 2-star hotel*





**Day 4 - ROCAMADOUR – SAINT SOZY (20 km).**

This morning will begin with a quiet visit of Rocamadour city. This is the second-most-visited place in France after le Mont Saint Michel. Once a revered site among the Christian community, Rocamadour remains a holy place for many pilgrims, notably those on the path to Santiago de Compostella. Clinging to the cliffs of the Alzou canyon, the medieval village has many interesting facets: vestiges of a former castle and a hospital for pilgrims, Basilica of Saint Sauveur and the pilgrimage chapel of the Black Virgin, narrow old streets lined with beautiful gates and homes dating back to the Middle-Ages. You will leave the city through l’Hospitalet, a village built on the cliffs’ edge, and pass through Le Causse and the picturesque villages of Mayrinhac-le-Francal and Bougayrou to arrive in Meyronne, an old cliffside village that looks out over the river, yet

sits in the shadow of an old fortified castle. You will cross the river to reach the pleasant village of Saint Sozy one kilometre later. *Dinner, lodging and breakfast in a 3-star hotel*

**Day 5 – SAINT SOZY - CARENNAC (23 km).** You will walk back to Dordogne River, ascent to the church of Meyronne and continue through countryside to another loop of the river. Then you will ascend on the causses (a dry limestone plateau) and continue through woods towards the lovely village of Montvalent, the hamlet of Veysou. and the edge of the cliffs of the Cirque de Montvalent. From this point you will look out over the beautiful panorama of the Dordogne Valley. You will pass through the forests towards the small villages of Veysse, Floirac and Mezels before arriving in the charming village of Carennac. *Dinner, lodging and breakfast in a 2-star hotel*

**Day 6 - CARENNAC - LOUBRESSAC (19 km).** The village of Carennac has developed from the 11th century onward after a priory was founded by the abbey of Cluny. The village has a number of houses dating back to the Middle-Ages, and a beautiful 12th century Norman church called St Pieter’s. Its cloister, half-Romanesque half-Flamboyant-Gothic, shelters a remarkable 16th century entombment. You will leave the village and walk across the Gramat Causse to the Padirac Gouffre. Here you will be treated to a boat tour that begins 103 meters below ground and takes you along 500 meters of river. Next will come a guided walking tour through the vast cavernous galleries, including the Grand Dome that reaches 94 meters in height! You will exit again into open air and continue your walk to Loubressac, a beautiful village opposite the feudal castle of Castelnaud, a very imposing 12th to 15th century fortress and one the finest examples of the military architecture of the Middle-Ages - *Dinner, lodging and breakfast in a 2-star hotel*

**Day 7 - LOUBRESSAC – BRETENOUX (16 km).** In the morning, you will visit the charming village of Loubressac, with its narrow, flowered streets, ancient houses and its castle. After leaving Loubressac, you will walk to a beautiful site: the Cirque d’Autoire. From the top of the cliffs, a spectacular view of the Bave Valley spreads before you. You will walk down to the village of Autoire, nestled in the hollow of the valley lined by impressive cliffs. You will descend towards the Chateau de Castelnaud, one of the most beautiful fortified castles in France. After having toured the chateau you will continue on to the charming village of Bretenoux, which was built up around the Place des Consuls. A taxi will now escort you to your destination for the day, Beaulieu sur Dordogne, a lovely medieval town situated on a wide bend in the river built around the 12th century abbey-church of St Pierre which belonged to an 12th-13th Benedictine abbey- *Dinner, lodging and breakfast in a 2-star hotel at Beaulieu sur Dordogne*



**Day 8 - BEAULIEU SUR DORDOGNE.** taxi transfer to the Bretenoux/Biars train station after breakfast



## Season

From April to end of October but be careful this area is very crowded in summer time and we recommend you to reserve at the earliest possible moment.

## What's included?

- 7 nights' accommodation in selected 2 or 3 star hotels with breakfasts
- 7 dinners
- Hotel to hotel luggage transfer
- Taxi transfers
- A set of maps (1/25 000 scale) with the route marked on and detailed route notes
- A daily itinerary together with information about facilities and places of interest along the trail.
- Phone emergency assistance with English-speaking support ( 24/24 7/7 days)

*Visa fees - transportation fees to and from the walk area - Insurance (strongly recommended on all trips) - Transfers except those mentioned above – Drinks - Additional meals - Spending of personal nature e.g. laundry, souvenirs, phone calls... are not included*

## Getting there and away

**By train:** Souillac is on the Paris-Toulouse line and is about 5 hours from Paris Austerlitz station. To return, transfer by taxi to the Biars station to join Brive La Gaillarde on the Paris-Toulouse line.

**By car:** Souillac is accessible by the RN20 Paris-Toulouse road and the A20 motorway.

**Where to park:** unguarded free car parkings in Souillac. Transfer by taxi between St Cere and Souillac to take back your car.

## Walk difficulty

Grade 2 – walks of 4 to 6 hours a day. Some stages could be more 20 km (13/15 miles) and rolling uplands, ascents mainly gradual than steep of up to 500 m. An average level of fitness or some experience with walking is recommended

