

C101-LU Black Perigord & Prehistory



This limestone plateau, lined at the West by the Vezere Valley and at the South by the Dordogne Valley, is covered by forests of chestnut trees, pines and Holm oaks, which give it a dark colour and its name : Black Perigord. History tells us that life has always been pleasant along the banks of these two rivers and in the valleys sheltering magnificent old villages, which have kept their uniqueness throughout time. These two rivers have carved impressive sites in the plateau, which men have exploited by erecting castles and villages on top of rock pinnacles and thus enhancing the natural beauty of the site. You will return to prehistoric times as you visit the troglodyte caverns in the cliffs of the Vezere valley, then advance through the middle ages and progress to present day as you traverse the valley of the Dordogne.



The walk

Day 1 - Arrival at MONTIGNAC, a lovely small town alongside the Vezere River. The river splits the town in two and on each side of its banks have sprung fountains, washing places, houses and half timbered buildings. On looking up, you will see the castle, former haunt of the Counts of Perigord, perched on its rocky spur and overlooking the town nestling below. Montignac is home to a masterpiece of renown, the Cave of Lascaux, whose facsimile opened in 1983. Don't miss it!! - *Dinner, lodging and breakfast in a 4-star hotel*

Day 2 - MONTIGNAC –ST AMAND de COLY via the prehistoric Lascaux cave (16 km). After leaving this small town you will walk to the well-known prehistoric Lascaux cave to visit it. The research carried out during the past decades has placed the iconography of Lascaux at the beginning of the Magdalenian Age, that is, 17,000 years before today. After this first journey in Prehistory you'll continue your walk by the château de la Grande Filolie, crossing some hamlets before reaching the small village of St Amand de Coly, where you will find an imposing fortified Romanesque church which belonged to a monastery now destroyed. This charming village has many old houses covered with stones and an old hospital dating from the 15th century. You will return to Montignac by taxi *Dinner, lodging and breakfast in the same hotel.*

Day 3 - ST LEON DE VEZERE – LES EYZIES DE TAYAC (21 km). Transfer by taxi to Saint Leon, which boasts of one of the most beautiful Romanesque churches in Perigord and two chateaus! You will walk through the Vezere Valley or along the heights of the village of Peyzac le Moustier and La Roque Saint Christophe, an imposing cliff dominating the river whose caves were inhabited as a troglodyte fortress since the earliest traces of man! You will continue your walk through the villages of Moustier and Tursac, with its massive bell tower, before reaching Les Eyzies de Tayac through forest - *Dinner, lodging and breakfast in a 4-star hotel with pool*



Day 4 - LES EYZIES DE TAYAC and PREHISTORY. The Vézere valley which is listed as World Heritage by UNESCO, is one of the largest prehistoric field in the world. During more 200 000 years Man left a lot of traces of his physical, cultural and technical evolution that we invite you to discover. The day will begin with the visit of the National Prehistory museum which presents an exceptional collection of objects coming from the most prestigious prehistoric sites of the Dordogne: stone tools, weapons, objets d'art made in stone, bone or ivory... from which we can discover and better understand the way of life of our ancestors. Then in the afternoon we propose you a 12 km circular walk via Gorges de l'Enfer and Sorcier cave in which to enjoy splendid views on the cliffs and caves which overhang Vézère River - *Dinner, lodging and breakfast in the same hotel.*

Day 5 – SAINT CYPRIEN – CASTELNAUD (17 km). Transfer by taxi from Les Eyzies to Saint Cyprien in the morning. The history of this picturesque village is attached to the abbey which was built on a hill dominating the Dordogne River during the 6th century. You will discover the tortuous lanes which lead to the church with a fortified bell-tower, only remains of this abbey destroyed after the Revolution. From Saint Cyprien you will walk along the Dordogne and will cross it to reach the village of Allas les Mines, built up right against the hill and dominated by its church with a turret. You will continue to the River port of Envaux with the boatman old house before ascending to the Chateau des Milandes, Renaissance castle offers breathtaking views over the valley. Lauzes-covered roofs (flat stones), panelling, large mullioned windows, and wonderfully preserved stained-glass windows give it its undisputable beauty. Les Milandes is forever linked to the extraordinary personality of Josephine Baker, a famous music-hall woman born in Missouri who lived here for 20 years. A permanent exhibition recounts Josephine's incredible destiny. Through forest, you will go to the castle of Castelnaud, medieval fortress which is drawn up proudly on a rocky outcrop dominating the Dordogne, opposite to Beynac, its rival. This fortress, which was abandoned after the Revolution, became a stone quarry and has been heavily restored in the last two decades. Today, it houses an extensive collection of weaponry and armour from the Middle-Ages. A taxi will take you to Domme at the end of afternoon. *Dinner, lodging and breakfast in a 3-star hotel with pool in Domme*



Day 6 - BEYNAC - DOMME (19 km). Transfer by taxi from Domme to Beynac in the morning. You will discover the village by climbing these sloping lanes lined with splendid old houses. You will reach the castle, true medieval fortress which suffers many attacks and was taken only once by Richard Lion-hearted. You will visit the medieval chapel and the Calvary which dominate the Dordogne. By the heights you will reach the Combe de Brague (a small valley) then the village of Vézac and the castle of Marqueyssac. This residence built in 18th century has a splendid park decorated

with cut boxwood which dominates the Dordogne and offers exceptional sights on the villages and neighbouring castles. You will go down near the river and will walk to the splendid village of La Roque Gageac nested at the foot of high cliffs facing South in a loop of the Dordogne. Listed among the most beautiful villages of France, it shelters many old houses, troglodytic forts and beautiful Renaissance residences as the Tarde manor. By the church, at halfway the hill you will discover an astonishing exotic garden. You will go back Domme walking through countryside and along Dordogne River. *Dinner, lodging and breakfast in the same hotel.*



Day 7 – Tour of DOMME and SABLAT. The morning will be devoted to tour Domme. This bastide town, founded in 1283 had an unstable early history, and changed hands several times between the English and the French during the Hundred Years War. The turbulent times continued in the later Wars of Religion. It is situated high above the river with outstanding views of the Dordogne and the main châteaux in the area. You will discover its fortified gates and its towers, that were used as prison, the consuls' and the goldsmiths' houses, the old covered market and the governor's hotel. Underneath the market square there is a cave with stalagmites and stalactites. Transfer by taxi to Sarlat in early afternoon. Sarlat is a beautiful, well restored town a few kilometers north of the River Dordogne. The old town, dating from both medieval and renaissance times is a pleasure to visit. Don't miss the streets around the cathedral with the attractive Cour des Fontaines and Cour des Chanoines behind, and the streets to the north of the old town. You will soon become lost in the maze of narrow lanes, with something new to see around every corner, but doesn't worry the town is small and is very attractive. You enjoy the colorful and full of life Saturday market. *Lodging and breakfast in a 4-star hotel*

Day 8 - SABLAT. Tour ends after breakfast.

Season

From beginning of April to mid-November but be careful this area is very crowded in summer time and we recommend you (if you can) to come outside this period. Nevertheless this area attracts a lot of tourists and you have to reserve earlier to get the best rooms.

Getting there and away

By plane: Bergerac is the nearest international airport. Links from London Stansted, Bristol, Southampton, Birmingham, Liverpool, Nottingham East Midlands, Exeter, Leeds Bradford. Taxi from airport to Montignac

By train: The Montignac nearest rail station is Brive la Gaillarde. Escort by taxi from Brive to Montignac. From Sarlat trains to Bordeaux

By car: Go to Brive-La-Gaillarde along motorway A20. Take the N89 road towards Périgueux. At Lardin, turn left onto D706 road towards Montignac.

Where to park: unsupervised free parkings at Montignac. Return by taxi from Sarlat to Montignac



What's included?

- 7 nights' accommodation in selected 3 or 4star hotels
- 7 breakfasts – 6 gourmet dinners
- Hotel to hotel luggage transfer along the trail.
- Taxi transfers
- A set of maps (1/25 000 scale) with the route marked on and detailed route notes describing the trail.
- 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 - entrance fees - Additional meals - Spending of personal nature e.g. laundry, souvenirs, phone calls... are not included

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.