

In 7 Km

9th STOP-OFF : USSON AND THE QUEEN MARGOT



Meeting point place de la Reine Margot to begin your visit.

Perched on a volcanic mound and dominated by a Virgin statue, the village of Usson offers a panorama at 360° on the chain of Puys, on the Sancy Mountains, the Cézaillier, the Cantal mounts of those of Livradois-Forez. This village keeps the memory of the Queen Margot, who was exiled for 19 years in her fortress, one of the most important of the kingdom. Following the salamander path, you will discover the village and will be seduced by the size of its basalt columns, the power of its old ramparts, the charm of its streets climbing up to the church, which is surrounded by old houses, a reconstituted forge, wine-making houses, and artists' workshops. All these elements help it being listed "Most beautiful village of France".

In 23 Km

10th STOP-OFF : MONTPEYROUX AND ITS DONJON



Meeting point place de l'église to begin your visit

This village, perched on its mount, has more than 1000 years of history and shines with its arkoses rock, rich material that made its richness. The name of Montpeyrroux (Rocky Mount) dates back to the end of the 11th century. That's why Montpeyrroux has been listed "Most beautiful Village of France". At the entrance of the old fortified village, you can discover a beautiful porch of the 14th century. Older, a donjon of the 13th century dominates of 30m the houses and offers since its crenelated platform an exceptional panorama on the chain of Puys, the Sancy Mountains and the Cantal mounts. Let yourself be seduced by the labyrinth of little streets and vaulted passages whose oldest constructions date back to 1122. Let yourself be charmed by the wine-making accommodations and the old bourgeois houses, testimonies of the wine-making prosperity in the 19th century.

In 9 Km

11th STOP-OFF : THE FORTIFIED VILLAGE OF PLAUZAT



Meeting point place de l'église to begin your visit.

This old fortified village dates back to the 15th century. It has a Romanesque church, constructed in arkoses in the 11th and 12th centuries (the domed choir and transept are masterpieces of the Romanesque art), then fortified and expanded in the 14th century, at the gothic period. It's listed Historical Monument since 1862. It was the old chapel of the castle, which became later a priory church. The seigneurial castle, as for it, dates back to the 14th century. It has been reworked several times during History and corresponds nowadays to the town hall. You will also find a fountain decorated with lions and mermaids by the sculptor Louis Gourmier (1832-1901).

Return to Champeix - 6 km



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Fortified Castles and Fortified Villages

95 km



The Region of Issoire and the South-Allier valley offers a mass of history and architectural diversity. Indeed, the history marked the territory, especially by building fortified villages to protect them from the Hundred Years' War. You'll also discover others defensive sites such as fortified castles, but also recreational castles.



START

1st STOP-OFF : CHAMPEIX AND THE MARCHIDIAL



Begin your visit in the village of Champeix and reach the hamlet of "Le Marchidial"

Champeix develops itself in the 13th century thanks to the Dauphins d'Auvergne who developed the wine production and the markets. Champeix was the second residence of the Dauphins d'Auvergne. In the middle Ages, castles and commercial trades often went hand with hand together. Several chateaus owner in Auvergne created a market inside of their castles. It's the case of Champeix where the castle's district took the name of this old market. This district is called "marchidial", which means "the market place". The market changed of place in the 16th and 17th centuries to move at the bottom of the village on the Friday mornings. On this granitic headland, you'll notice a chapel, the Saint-Jean church built on the rock, and also a part of the principal tower, the gardens and the basis of the donjon. The rest of the castle was destructed in the 17th century on the order of Richelieu. In the village, on the right side of the Couze Chambon, you'll discover the Romanesque church Saint-Croix, built in the 12th century, probably at the place of an old monastery of Camaldule monks, and modified in the 15th and 16th centuries. A walking route offers the discovery of thematic gardens of Champeix: gardens in terrace, orchards, vegetable garden near the river. You'll start the tour in the village.

In 7 Km

2nd STOP-OFF : SAINT-FLORET, ITS DONJON ET THE SITE OF CHASTEL



Start in the village in direction of the donjon, and then go up to the site of Chastel

This village rising up on rock is protected by the donjon of a feudal castle from the 13th century. In the ground floor, you can discover one of the most beautiful gothic rooms of France, the Knights room, with frescoes recounting the Tristan and Iseults' novel. Then, the second room of the castle offers a panoramic point of view from the donjon. The archaeological site of Chastel dominates the village. A Romanesque chapel from the 12th century with its bell tower from the 16th century keeps treasures, including a "Virgin with a bird" and a fresco of the lord of Saint-Floret.

In 7 Km

3rd STOP-OFF : THE FORTIFIED VILLAGE OF PARDINES

Meeting point rue de l'Eglise to begin your visit.

Located at the foot of a cliff bordering a basaltic plateau which dominates the Couze Pavin, Pardines suffer a true cataclysm. In 1733, after torrential rains, masses of rock crumbled during 24 hours and around 60 buildings were crushed. This natural disaster was related to a divine punishment. The population of this village dates back to the 3rd and 4th centuries, with the presence of a necropolis in the place called "la Maison Blanche". The owner of this domain discovered in 1928 skeletons and terracotta vase. Until 1935, he discovered 210 graves, vases from the 3rd century, bronze objects and change from the 2nd and 4th centuries. This village was fortified in the 15th century, by Austremoine Bohier. You will discover old curtain walls and circular towers integrated in houses.

In 14 Km

4th STOP-OFF : THE FORTIFIED VILLAGE OF MAREUGHOL



Meeting point rue du Pont-Levis to begin your visit of the village

At the south of the fertile plains of the Lembron, and protected from the winds by the relief, Mareughol benefits from a favourable microclimate very close to the mountain. The village has a fort, built around the church in the Hundred Years' War period. The wall of the village, really imposing, is a vast quadrilateral of 65m, adjoined on the corners of the circular towers and presenting surrounding walls of 10m high. Inside this fortification in a very homogeneous basalt, most likely constructed rapidly, the little streets of the medieval district are like a labyrinth around a really dense assembly.

To discover: the fortified village (14th – 15th centuries), the Romanesque church Saint Victor and Sainte Couronne and its furniture (historical monument), the crosses of the 17th century: stripped cross, the cross of Saint-Rock, the group washing place-fountain-trough-laundry room (Mareughol has the chance to have kept intact its entire heritage dedicated to the uses of water).

In 3 Km

5th STOP-OFF : VILLENEUVE-LEMBRON AND ITS CASTLE



Meeting point Route du Lembron to visit the castle, its park and its stables.

The castle of Villeneuve-Lembron was constructed in the 15th century for Rigaud d'Aureille, maître d'hôtel of the kings Louis 11, Charles7, Louis 12 and François 1st.

The castle offers the testimony quite rare of the seigniorial castle of the beginning of the Renaissance, with a purely symbolic defensive system. Erect in barony, the land of Villeneuve fell to the family of Montmorin in the early 16th century. Gaspard de Montmorin embellished the castle with a big decoration painted with grotesque: it remains of it some remarkable testimonies in the pomp room (window frames) and in the huge stables. In 1643, Villeneuve-Lembron was bought by Isaac Dufour, treasurer of France, who converted the old fortress. This castle is the property of the National Centre of Historical Monuments. The castle has been decorated with mural paintings, which remain vestiges in the two galleries of the corps de logis, on the outside walls and inside the chapel. The illustration of familiar maxims, such as "la Chiche-face", or "l'Astrologue", mixes with a decoration inspired of erudite literary references. You will also discover the Saint Claude church, from the 15th century, with its rich religious furniture and the old hotel of the Aureille family, and its Romanesque tower (historical monument, private property).

In 3 Km

6th STOP-OFF : CHALUS AND ITS CASTLE



In the end of the 19th century, most the hills were covered with vineyards cultivated in terrace. Chalus still keep today the memory of marks of this past. We can notice several old wine-growing houses. The tradition continues with passionate wine-growers who offer a fruity and heady wine Côte d'Auvergne: the wine of Boudes. The castle of Chalus is pointed out since the 10th century, period in which Chalus had to be an important place because the lords of Chalus were also those of Boudes and Sansac. Today, the castle is divided into 2 parts: the Northern part, fitted out in private house, and the Southern part, listed Historical Monument, which still have an imposing circular donjon and a corps de logis of the 15th century.

In 7 Km

7th STOP-OFF : THE FORTIFIED VILLAGE OF LE BROC



This fortified village is located on the East side of a basalt slide; the Romanesque way from Clermont to Le Puy crossed its territory. By the way, it is named after a Gaulish word "broccos" which means "rocky spur". The panorama on the plains of Limagne is breath-taking. The parish life dates back to the 10th century and Le Broc was the centre of an important seigneurie. It was the property of the family of Le Broc until 1304 and some representatives played an important role in the entourage of the Dauphins d'Auvergne. In the hamlet of Chassaing (at 2, 5 km at the south) still exist buildings of the commandery of Chauliat, gothic construction with lower-room and turrets of spiral staircases, the chapel still have interesting mural paintings listed Historical Monument in 1969 (private property).

In 9 km

8th STOP-OFF : PARENTIGNAT, ITS CASTLE AND ITS ENGLISH STYLE PARK



Constructed between 1720 and 1720 by A.F de Lastic on an old fortified house, the castle of Parentignat still belongs to the same family. Its English style park, overlooked by a patio with centenarian orange trees and old rose bushes, oddly contrasts with the rigour of the courtyard of honour where were reconstructed the six lawn-beds that existed before. It has already been listed in the 18th century as one of the houses most richly furnished in the region. The castle of Parentignat is called by Henri Pourrat "the little Versailles in Auvergne". Each generation never stopped enriching the exceptional collection of art objects of the castle, and we still can find an important part of its original furniture.