

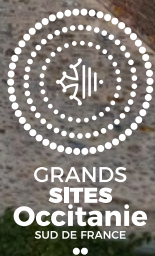
GRAND
FIGEAC

Vallées du Lot et du Cèze

TOURISME

PRESS PACK 2020

Cultivating emotion



www.tourisme-figeac.com

GRAND
FIGEAC terre d'aventure

LOOKING, FEELING, *enjoying*

Two rivers and two valleys, **the Lot and the Célé**. Majestic cliffs, peaceful river bends, hilltop villages, mighty castles... Light from **the Causses** (limestone plateaux), low dry-stone walls, a soothing fountain and a constant dialogue between water and stone, art and nature.

In Figeac, arcades and Gothic arches have gracefully reinvented the vocabulary of architecture: magnificent and alive, **the city of Champollion** is a pure enchantment.

The landscapes here are impressive or intimate in turns, elevating the senses: A major hiking route along the Way of St James, an original outing on an electric bike, a trip on a canoe, a visit to a deep and wonderful underground cave or the flight of an eagle.

In the Figeac region, you will also find the **delicious specialities of Quercy**, the round Cabécou cheese, the subtle taste of saffron, the colourful markets... Like a contemporary encounter between pleasure and tradition, with a taste of happiness and freedom.



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WHERE IT'S ALL *happening*

To the east of the Quercy region, Greater Figeac is at the limit of the older provinces of Rouergue and Auvergne. There are three types of landscapes:

- In the centre, **the Limargue**, with a fine thread of green woodland and fertile meadows, forming a transition with **the Ségala region**.
- To the east, the old lands of rye and sweet chestnut.
- The western part is the biggest, with the traditional **Causses landscape**: tall white cliffs, strong light, dry-stone walls...

To the south, the **River Lot** has forged a rich valley, sometimes lined with steep cliffs.

The Célé is a more discreet river, but more intimate, too... The two rivers meet downstream of the "pearl" of the Lot region, the village of Saint-Cirq-Lapopie.

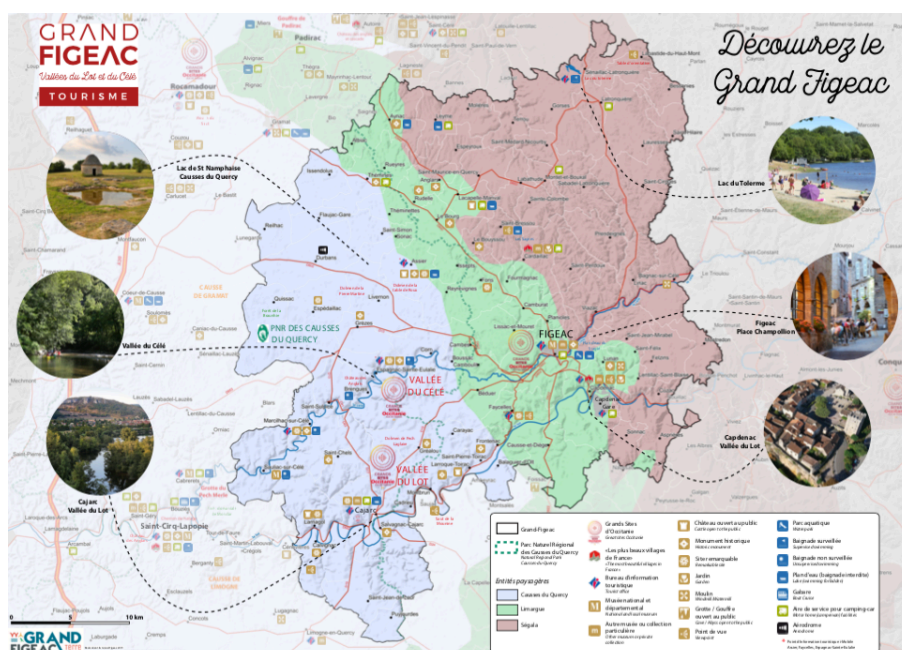


PRACTICAL INFORMATION

Greater Figeac, the Lot and Célé valleys, are in the Occitanie region, in the east of the Lot department, halfway between Cahors (70 km) and Rodez (60 km).

With train services from Paris, Toulouse and Clermont-Ferrand, Figeac is also easily accessible via the A20 motorway (Paris-Brive-Toulouse).

Toulouse-Blagnac international airport is a two-hour drive away. The Brive-Souillac and Rodez airports are 55 minutes away, with direct flights to the UK for part of the year.





FIGEAC

FIGEAC, VALLEES DU LOT & DU CÉLÉ, *Grand Site*

Figeac, along with the Lot and Célé valleys, is one of 40 "Grands Sites" in the Occitanie region. This is a famous site with a strong image adding to the region's appeal. The city is a gateway for visitors, serving as a base camp to see the region's many "jewels".

A city where history is written

Set off in the footsteps of the first medieval monks and merchants. Explore the incredible adventure of Jean-François Champollion, a famous son of Figeac who deciphered the hieroglyphs. Enjoy an encounter with the inhabitants and the town today, its squares, cafés and lively market...

An elegant visit

Gothic arches and arcades, turrets and corbels... The best way to visit Figeac is on foot, along the alleyways and across the little squares. There are many houses in the city built between the 12th and the 14th centuries. Figeac can boast a rare and particularly "coherent" heritage. Medieval buildings, Renaissance town houses, imposing 18th century residences: the eras and styles are harmoniously combined.

The "Clefs de Figeac" (Keys to Figeac) tour is a chance to explore the city's little streets, squares and monuments, including the Hôtel de la Monnaie, the Saint Sauveur and Notre Dame du Puy churches, the Champollion Museum - Writings throughout the World, the Writings Square, the Heritage Space and the History Museum - Salons du Collège du Puy.

Figeac and Greater Figeac are part of the Towns of Art and History network

The French Culture Ministry awards the Town of Art and History label to towns and regions that are committed to enhancing local heritage. Figeac was awarded the label in 1990. In 2017, Greater Figeac was also given the Region of Art and History label.

All through the year, our guides help visitors to understand the city better and enjoy a glimpse behind the scenes...

In summer, evening visits by lamplight are also on offer.

Paulin Ratier Museum

The industrial heritage of Figeac found its home in autumn 2012, when the Paulin Ratier Museum opened at 16 Rue Caviale. The collection features the range of products made at the Ratier aeronautic plant from its foundation in 1904. They include propellers, with the oldest made of wood, as well as items unconnected to planes, such as motor bikes and bicycles.

CHAMPOLLION, THE MAGIC OF *writing*

In 1990, the US artist Joseph Kosuth, a leader of the conceptual movement, laid down a huge slab of black granite on the ground in a small square at the centre of Figeac. It was a larger reproduction of the famous Rosetta stone, a fragment of stele that Champollion used to decipher Egyptian hieroglyphs. The original is now in the British Museum.

Place des Écritures ("Writings Square") is today an exceptional place, full of magic and simplicity. A French translation of the text has been delicately engraved on a window, while a few steps lead to a terraced garden with papyrus plants from Egypt, as well as Mediterranean species in the shade of an old elm tree... This urban work was publicly commissioned and tactfully symbolises the renewal of the city and its successful move towards serene modernity.



KEY FACTS

Jean-François Champollion was born in Figeac on 23 December 1790. He learned Latin, Hebrew and Arabic at a very young age and took an interest in Egyptian hieroglyphs from the age of 17... He moved to Paris to study Oriental languages. In 1822, using the Rosetta stone (a fragment of stele) and a text engraved on an obelisk, he deciphered one of the world's oldest forms of writing. He was appointed the curator of the Egyptian department in the Louvre Museum and took part in an expedition to the banks of the Nile in 1828. He died at the age of 42 in 1832.

Champollion Museum – Writing Throughout the World

After two years of work on an extension and redesign, the Champollion Museum – Writing Throughout the World reopened to the public in July 2007. By expanding its collections, the museum has placed Jean-François Champollion's work at the heart of the wonderful history of writing.

This is a **social, intellectual and technical history**, decrypting 5,300 years of our history, from the first four founding forms of writing – cuneiform, hieroglyphs, Chinese characters and Maya script – until the writing we use today.

The architect designed a resolutely contemporary building in a medieval setting that is listed as one of the most beautiful sites in France.

The **façade with a thousand letters**, a copper wall behind the stone façade, is engraved with a whole host of signs, from the birth of writing to computer languages.

All through the museum visit, a dozen installations provide a sensitive approach to the collections: videos, multimedia games, taking fingerprints, books to browse on screen, soundscapes...





CAJARC

AROUND *Figeac*

Explore our history through the villages and landscapes of Greater Figeac!

Around the ancient fortress, with only two robust square towers still standing, alleyways and delightful houses grew up... On the foothills of the Ségala region, **Cardaillac** is one of the most beautiful villages in France. The unusual and fascinating "Musée Eclaté" is a museum taking visitors on a tour of the daily life of yesteryear: a chestnut drying oven, a nut oil mill, a clog factory, a village school... A whole host of things to see!

Capdenac-le-Haut is an old Quercy stronghold. Its ramparts have been preserved. Some believe it is the site of Uxellodunum, a die-hard Gallic village captured by Caesar's troops... Nestling on its rocky spur, the village boasts a vast panorama over the Lot valley. Capdenac-le-Haut was added to the list of the most beautiful villages in France in 2010.

Further downstream, the river is by turns lazy and turbulent, and then follows a series of loops and meanders with impressive cliffs on either side. Not far away, the village of **Faycelles**, built against the cliff, enjoys a unique location

The **Larroque-Toirac** castle looks down on the Lot valley from the hillside. It stands next to the village of **Saint-Pierre-Toirac**. The castle was built in the 12th century, and its defensive system is still intact. It played a major role in the Hundred Years War and was captured by the English several times. Below, in the village, a fortified 14th century church has a particularly original architectural design.

Capdenac-Gare is on the left bank of the River Lot. It developed as the focal point of a network of railways in the 19th century. A hub for all the south of the Massif Central, Capdenac-Gare enjoyed great prosperity due to the boom in the railways and steam trains. Today, the town still reflects the period with a remarkable series of early 20th century houses.

Nestled deep inside a loop in the River Célé, **Espagnac-Sainte-Eulalie** has preserved the peaceful atmosphere of the former Val Paradis Priory. The old abbey with its turbulent history and dating from in the 13th century is crowned with an exceptional steeple.

At the heart of the Limargue region, **Lacapelle-Marival** grew up in the Middle Ages at the crossroads of major trade routes. Its real history began when the castle was built in the late 13th century. Today it is the village's trade mark.

In **Assier** the Renaissance has left its mark. The **Château d'Assier** was built from 1518 by Galiot de Genouillac, a Master of Artillery for King Francis I. The church dates from about 1540. It contains Galiot de Genouillac's finely crafted tomb. The frieze around the outside is unique in its kind and celebrates the local lord's career.



CAJARC

The village of **Cajarc** with its rounded shape is in what was once a bend in the River Lot. It follows the curve of the tall red cliffs all around it. The old town is encircled by boulevards and still has a large number of historic buildings, including the Maison de l'Hébrardie. The sun-filled Cajarc evokes a relaxed, peaceful lifestyle in the shade of the plane trees... President **Georges Pompidou** came here to unwind. He was also an elected town councillor here. The Georges and Claude Pompidou **Contemporary Art Centre** has been housed in a large Quercy building in Cajarc since 1989. Each year, several original, high-quality exhibitions are held here.

Françoise Sagan also contributed to the fame of her birthplace. The author of "Bonjour Tristesse" organised plenty of escapades here and always in fun company.

The saffron town in Quercy

Cajarc and the neighbouring region are home to many saffron producers. Their skill earned Cajarc its listing as a "Remarkable Taste Site" in 2011. In summer and autumn, a range of different events highlight the value of the "red gold".





MARCILHAC-SUR-CÉLÉ

Tall, white cliffs and a wide valley cut out of the limestone plateau... The village of Marcilhac-sur-Célé is built on a remarkable site and developed around a **fortified Benedictine abbey**, a powerful religious centre in the 11th century. Twice destroyed in two wars, Saint-Pierre Abbey in Marcilhac still has some of its original ramparts, a tall, square tower and some impressive Romanesque capitals. On the abbey grounds, the Maison du Roy is today home to the Tourist Office. King Henry IV of France is said to have stayed here in 1580.

Bright stone

On the cause (limestone plateau) around Marcilhac, hikers can see a large number of "caselles", small drystone cabins built by shepherds in the 18th and 19th centuries. These representatives of «minor» rural heritage are now listed and protected.

TO THE RHYTHM OF *nature*

On the water

Shaded river banks, peaceful river bends, tall cliffs, sunbaked villages... For canoeing fans, the River Lot and even more its tributary the River Célé are a real paradise. With no major difficulties, the rivers are an ideal spot for families to enjoy a trip on the water.

A series of watersports centres have been set up along the rivers: in Figeac at the Domaine du Surgié, in Cajarc and in Capdenac-Gare, you can try your hand at standup paddleboarding, a pedalo, water-skiing, canoeing or an electric boat...

Alternatives include the bathing spots in the Célé valley, and Lac du Tolerme in Haut-Ségala, with its sandy beach, water sports and a zip-line above the lake!

On the land

There 69 footpaths and hiking trails in Greater Figeac. A range of topographical guides give details about the trails – on foot, on horseback or by mountain bike – in the Lot valley, on the limestone plateau (causse) or around Figeac.

The Way of St James

This is one of the three major historic routes towards Santiago de Compostela. It runs from Le Puy and Conques Abbey Church and then crosses the Figeac region before heading for Cahors and Moissac. Visitors can follow this major hiking trail (GR 65) from Figeac to Cajarc at the timeless rhythm of the pilgrims, while taking in the villages of Faycelles and Bédier... Unless you prefer the GR 651 along the Célé valley with a visit to Espagnac and Marcilhac-sur-Célé. Figeac is also the starting point for the GR6 trail towards Rocamadour.

Underground worlds

Chasms, caves, cavities, canyons... Between the Rivers Lot and the Célé, or on the Causse de Gramat close by, nature has carved out magical cathedrals in the limestone, such as the famous Padirac Cave. The Lot region has always been a must for potholers. Although some networks are only accessible to experienced practitioners, many other caves are open to the general public.



DELICIOUS *mix*

In the Figeac region, you can also enjoy all the flavours of Quercy, with a contemporary experience combining enjoyment and tradition. A gourmet overview:

A famous round shape... Rocamadour goat's milk cheese, also known as **Cabécou**, now has the **Protected Designation of Origin status** (AOP in French), quite a rare honour for a cheese...

Quercy lamb, from a typical Causse breed (they seem to be wearing funny "dark glasses"), and local farmhouse veal with its pink flesh, have an excellent reputation. Served with a glass of Cahors wine, **foie gras** – made from goose or duck –, fillet of duck breast and confit of duck are also part of the Quercy culinary tradition. In fact, there are several canning factories near Figeac.

Botanists call it *Crocus sativus*... **Saffron** flourished hereabouts until the 18th century but is now seeing a strong revival in the Cajarc region. **The "red gold of Quercy"** is found at the heart of the little mauve flowers. The subtle and legendary spice brings colour and fragrance to a wide range of dishes

The **estofinado** is a delicious recipe and somewhat surprising for the landlocked Quercy. With a dash of walnut oil, the dish is made from what locals call "estofi", alias stockfish or dried cod. It illustrates the strong interactions once existing between Bordeaux, a cod-fishing port, and the upper Lot valley.

Quercy is also a land of sweet **chestnuts, walnuts** and of course mushrooms, which are plentiful in season on the markets. There is no shortage of inventive recipes in this region of "bon vivants", where meals at the farm are a delight for the eyes and the taste buds...

Not to be missed: **Figeac market** every Saturday morning, spread out across the heart of the city. The south of France atmosphere and the wealth of typical produce will give you a foretaste of Quercy gastronomy. A market can also be savored at night ! The **night markets**, full of festive and gourmet moments, illuminate the summer evenings of the Figeac region



SHARE SOME GREAT *experiences*

All through the year, events and festivals bring Figeac to life and help create a high-quality cultural programme. Enjoy an encounter with the people who are bringing dynamism to the region today. Take part in the events on offer because the enthusiasm and conviviality of the locals is contagious.

Some of the highlights in Greater Figeac

- **« Graines de Moutards »** - Culture festival for children and families - Greater Figeac
- From 8th to 23rd February - www.astrolabe-grand-figeac.fr
- **Exposition Never Starting Story - Rieko Koga** - Figeac- Musée Champollion, les Écritures du Monde - From 26th February to 29th Septembre.
www.museum-champollion.fr
- **Pâques en Quercy-** National bicycle touring event at Easter - Cajarc- From 11th to 13th April - <http://lot.ffc.org>
- **Le Salon des Métiers d'Art** (arts and crafts fair) - Figeac - From 11th to 13th April
- Beginning of the **“Transhumance”** and Sheep Festival - Espédaillac- Thursday 21st of May

- **L'Autre Festival** – Capdenac-Gare - 30th and 31st Mai - www.derriere-le-hublot.fr
- **The Figeac Theatre Festival** - From 21st to 31st July www.festivaltheatre-figeac.com
- **Les Rencontres Musicales** (classical music festival) - Figeac and surrounding areas. From 6th to 20th August - www.festivaldefigeac.com
- Le Festival **Africajarc** (African music, cinema, littérature...) – Cajarc- From 23rd to 26th July - www.africajarc.com
- Les Marchés Nocturnes (**Night markets** , in summer) - Figeac, Capdenac-le-Haut, Capdenac-Gare, Lacapelle-Marival, Fons...
- **La BD prend l'air** (comic book festival) – Cajarc- 26th and 27th September
- **Quercy Saffron Festival** – Cajarc- 24th and 25th October





SAUT DE LA MOUNINE

GREATER *Figeac*

92 communes (86 in Lot and 6 in Aveyron) today make up the Great Figeac municipal community, providing solidarity for the region's development.

These communes have a population of around 45,000.

The Greater Figeac Tourist Office is in charge of promoting the region and welcoming visitors. It is housed in the historic town centre of Figeac, in the impressive Hôtel de la Monnaie.

In the news in 2020

Le Viguié du Roy

This exceptional building, right at the heart of Figeac, was for a long time a famous hotel. When the hotel closed, part of the local heritage was in danger of disappearing. The premises were taken over by Greater Figeac and reopened in 2019. The hotel is now managed by Cité Hôtels, a family group based in Carcassonne.

The hotel's decoration is inspired by the work of the Egyptologist Jean-François Champollion. The design makes use of the graphic codes of writing, with hieroglyphs and numbers adding style, colour, vibrations and a modern feel to the site. Today, the hotel has 21 rooms and a swimming pool. An extension with 12 rooms is scheduled for spring 2020.

Hôtel Mercure Le Viguiier du Roy – Figeac Tél. 05 65 50 05 05 – www.cite-hotels.com

L'Allée des Vignes

The restaurant was awarded its first Michelin star in 2019. Here, each detail counts and is designed to make your lunch or dinner a unique experience, from the dining room to the plate. L'Allée des Vignes serves "equitable, patient and gastronomic" dishes. Claude-Emmanuel Robin is a chef who likes to explore flavours, colours, aromas and textures. All the year round, he unveils diverse and creative cuisine with high-quality, seasonal and local ingredients.

Restaurant l'Allée des Vignes – Cajarc - Tél. 05 65 11 61 87 – www.alleedesvignes.com

Meet the Greeters

The Greeters aim is to bring about new encounters with local inhabitants and their region. These free visits going off the beaten track were launched by the Greater Figeac Tourist Office in partnership with Derrière Le Hublot. The Greeters are volunteer guides providing visits for both locals and holidaymakers.

Today, there are 10 Greeters helping you to explore their home region and the places they love. Set off in their footsteps for a warm, friendly encounter giving rise to plenty of conversation.

Booking and informations : www.tourisme-figeac.com

The Relais Cap France de Terrou holiday village

This holiday village is truly out of the ordinary, since visitors stay in accommodation that was once the village bakery, the girls' school, etc.

Firmly based on the principles of sustainable tourism, the village provides made-to-measure stays for holidaymakers in search of an authentic experience. Nearby is the vegetable garden with tomatoes, aubergines and aromatic herbs, which are cooked and served to visitors. Short food supply chains for meat, sweet or savoury cooking workshops... In winter, the staff prepare home-made pâtés, preserves and foie gras. The holiday village gives pride of place to local farmers, helping holidaymakers (hikers, visitors, bicycle tourists and families) to enjoy a truly delicious experience.

New in 2020:

"The Lot Spirit, Relaxation and Gardens" stay, set up in partnership with RUSTICA, features all the pleasures of the soil in the company of professionals. The "health and wellness" stay includes contributions from a nutritionist, a physiotherapist, etc.

Relais Cap France de Terrou - 05 65 40 25 25 - Mail : contact@cfterrou.fr



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