(Too) Many things to do in and around Saint Cirq Lapopie
(in no particular order and not at all comprehensive)

In the village

- Walk the **Chemin de Halage tow path** by the river, along the limestone cliffs (on which you'll find interesting bas relief sculpture)—a gorgeous 45 minute stroll.
- Stroll to Bar Lapopie anytime for delicious ice cream: caramel avec fleur du sel or bittersweet chocolat.
- Stop in at the Musee de Vin for a little wine tasting, lots of gifts, and delectable chocolate-covered grapes.
- Gather for hors d'oeuvres and aperitifs on our garden terrace at sunset. Beautiful evening skies.
- Cool your feet, or get in those morning swim laps, at the sandy river beach below the village.
- Explore the many interesting artist galleries—the Tourist Office has a complete list.
- Bring a recipe, shop for food at an outdoor market, prepare a French meal in our well-equipped kitchen.
- Curl up with a good book by the window in the sun-lit lounge of the house.
- Enjoy the majestic morning views, cup of coffee in hand, at the stone picnic table out back.
- Bird-watch from the hills behind the village—climb high, enjoy the solitude. Birders delight in this region.
- Walk the village with your camera, day or night, rain or shine— many magical photo ops.

Visit these shops and say "Bonjour" to these shopkeepers:

- Emilie at **Musee du Vin** and taste the 4 Malbec wines. Lots of gift ideas too.
- Agnes in **Ambre and Amethyst** a lovely jewelry shop.
- Nicole in **Boudoir des Saisons**, a clothing boutique near the main square, on the uphill side next to Lou Faure. Some wonderful clothes and accessories. She is very helpful.
- Sophie at **Gaby** – fluent in English. Great French designs
- Brigitte at **Arcane**, the hat shop. She makes each hat by hand.
- Isabel in the **pottery/purse/umbrella shop** – many beautiful items.
- Alain and Rob at the **boutique across from Lou Cantou** – wonderful clothes and jewelry
- Christine Brousse – beautiful **handmade coats,** across from L'Oustal

Visit the artist's galleries

Throughout the village you'll find galleries, some small, some large, many very interesting, often with remarkable works of art, and often with the artist there, sometimes working away. Stop in, you don't have to buy something, but supporting art even with just your curiosity is a noble gesture.

Outside the village

- Plan your mornings around market visits, take some recipes, return mid-afternoon to cook and eat.
- Bicycle for beautiful traffic-free miles along the river. And for tackling hills above the river, try an electric-assist bicycle from Maxime at Let P'tits Velos.
- If you missed the great Saturday market in Cahors, it is repeated on Wednesdays. And lunch on the benches near the majestic Pont Valentre.
- Visit Peche Merle (amazing prehistoric caves)-- book ahead for the English language tour and go half an hour early for the video.
- Walk (90 minutes) or bicycle (20 minutes) to the Renaissance castle Chateau Cenevieres.
- Take a day trip to the vineyards near Cahors—a tour map is available at the Tourist Office.
- Paddle the river on kayaks or canoes. Bring a picnic lunch and stop along the riverbank.
- Drive to Albi (90 minutes) to visit Toulouse-Lautrec's home, the city's extraordinary cathedral, and its first vegetarian restaurant (founded by our cousins-in-law): Vegeterien Le Tournesol.
- Go to any brocante or vide-grenier market—a French flea market, with great stuff. Check out www.vide-grenier.org. We are in region 46. Zip code 46330.
- Get a relaxing massage at the Spa at the Hotel St. Cirq just across the river.
- Visit a fine French salon. Make an appointment with Alain at Siz-O in Limogne. Alain is fluent in English and 3 other languages. 05 65 31 57 87
- For walkers/hikers, search for the mysterious dolmen. The biggest in the Lot is Pierre Martine http://www.lieux-insolites.fr/lot/martine/martine.html
- Drive to the magnificent Figeac and walk the self-guided tour of medieval buildings (pick up map at tourist center there and follow the "keys")
- See the Troglodyte Houses in La Toulzanie, Larnagol and Cajarc – Cajarc has a nice afternoon market (ask the Tourist Office which days)

Market Days *(these are just a few of many wonderful markets—check map for distances)*

- **Sunday**: Limogne-en-Quercy; St Antonin NobleVal; Gramat
- **Tuesday**: Gramat; Tour de Faure (in July and August only)
- **Wednesday**: Cahors in AM; St. Cirq Lapopie (a tiny market in July and August)
- **Thursday**: Villefranche de Rouergue
- **Friday**: Gramat
- **Saturday**: Cahors; Sarlat

For taxi/livery service in the village and region: www.taxi-merle.fr/
For bike rentals (picked up or delivered): www.lesptitsvelos-stcirq.com/
For canoe/kayak rentals: www.kalapca.com/uk/accueil.php
For Pech Merle: http://en.pechmerle.com/the-prehistory-center/
For bike routes, other adventures see our website: www.maisonsouthernfrance.com
For more info on things to do in area: http://www.saint-cirqlapopie.com/en/visitez.htm

Dining in the village

There are about ten restaurants in the village. Sometimes the chefs change, sometimes a new restaurant opens up. Most serve delicious local fare. We've actually only tried about half the restaurants in town, but I doubt you can go wrong at any of them. One note: beef (not a specialty of the region) is a bit chewy and tough for our tastes (well, actually, my daughter likes it). Here are the restaurants we know (but please try the others and report back!)

- L'Oustal—small, casual, friendly, nightly specials, very good fare

- Le Cantou—another lovely, casual restaurant with very good food; like many local restaurants, duck is their specialty.

- Bar Lapopie—omelettes for breakfast; and a nice spot for lunch. Casual, outdoor dining, and of course that salted caramel ice cream. (Recent change of owners.)

- Auberge Sombral—slightly more upscale (linen tablecloths, etc.), but similarly friendly and casual. We recommend lunch on the front patio, if there's an opening; and their specialty: a creamy cheese in a puff pastry.

- Saint Cirq Gourmand—a relatively new place on the road just above the village (a short walk); we've only lunched here on their excellent French-style pizza. Reviews suggest that their fois gras and desserts are very nice too.

- La Tonnelle—we notice the reviews on this restaurant are quite mixed: sometimes harried staff, complicated menu, variable food. But the outdoor setting is beautiful, and we were able to find some delicious salads at lunch, which made the vegetarians among us quite happy.

- Restaurant/Bar de la Plage ("Campings")—down by the river beach (under excellent new management), you can get drinks, delicious pizza, and, in the morning, croissants and coffee.

Dining tips: *Most restaurants do not serve breakfast, but you can get a good omelet at Bar Lapopie, café and croissants in summer at La Plage ("Campings") (below the village). Nothing is open before about 8:30 or 9 a.m. Lunch is usually about 12-2, and dinner about 6-9:30, but variable. And remember, the tip is always included in the price. Alas, our local coffee and croissant place closed last year. For croissants and bread now you must cross the river and go right to the boulangerie in Tour de Faure—a nice 20 minute walk.*

Dining beyond the village

There are many excellent restaurants in the region. New ones arise, old ones get better, some fade, some adapt. Here are some fine restaurants we've either tried or which have been highly recommended by guests in the past, but please let us know your experience and/or whatever you discover:

- La Roue in Cabrerets (a short car ride, a lovely bicycle ride)—on the way to Peche Merle—sometimes superb, although rather basic décor.
- L'Allee des Vignes, in Cajarc.
- La Truite Doree in Vers (reputedly excellent trout)
- Restaurant La Garenne (near Cahors)—excellent food in a gorgeously restored farm house (& great outdoor patio), run by a top-notch husband and wife team.
- Chateau Haute-Serre vineyard, near Cahors: wonderful meals matched with their excellent wines http://www.hauteserre.fr/index.php/en/the-restaurant.html
- *One Michelin Star*: Le Duèze restaurant at Chateau de Mercues (about 50 minutes from the village, along the 'vineyard route'). https://chateaudemercues.com/en/le-dueze-restaurant.html
- *Two Michelin Stars*: Le Gindreau (about an hour's drive from the village). Considered the finest restaurant in the region. http://www.legindreau.com
- Lunch at La Recreation in Les Arques, near Prayssac. Go to Prayssac on market day, before lunch. Read the book, From Here You Can't See Paris.
- La Terrasse—a lovely hour drive to Grezel lands you at this highly touted restaurant—Sunday lunch reservations suggested.
- In Concots, lovely drive, highly recommended: L'Esprit du Causse
- Recommended in Cahors—Cuisine cote Sud, Au Carre Noir, Le Marche, etc.
- In Cahors, we often pick up sandwiches in the city center (rue de la Gambetta) toward the bridge, don't cross the bridge, walk along the river to the magnificent Pont Valente bridge (a 20-30 minute walk), picnic on the neighboring lawns, then stroll across the bridge.

Additional recommendations from guests (random order)

- Visit the expansive Thursday market day in Villefranche de Rouergue (a lovely ride along the river via Cajarc; lunch at Cotes Saveur, a top restaurant there [reservations might be necessary]).
- The Rignault museum in the village is a fascinating repository of history and objets d'art.
- Visit the castle at Najac (an hour's drive)
- Monday (or is it Tuesday?) summer outdoor market in Tour de Faure, across the bridge, very convenient.
- You can bike to Peche Merle (fairly easy, but we had to walk our bikes for the last quarter-mile; we enjoyed it)
- The GR36-46, part of the national walking route network, runs through the backyard, and it is a gift for beautiful walks without cars along the rivers and cliffs and caves.
- The route on the St. Cirq Lapopie (south) side of the river to Chateau de Cenevieres is lovely for walking or biking (much better than crossing the bridge to the main road).
- The magnificent castle, Chateau de Bonaguil, in Fumel (a 90 minute drive)
- The beautiful historic village of Figeac (a 50 minute drive)—drive there along the Lot River, return along the Cele river.

  On your way back, stop and pay the few Euros to visit the **Museum of the Unusual** https://www.museedelinsolite.com
- Rocamadour—a magnificent ancient village "so beautiful that even an overabundance of tourist shops can't spoil it."
- Delicious wines at Domaine Dols a small vineyard in nearby St. Gery-- a 15-20 minute drive. Late afternoon tastings only. https://www.domaine-dols.fr
- The village has its own little market, on Wednesdays in July and August.
- Check out this English language website for further interesting things to do in and around the village: http://www.saint-cirqlapopie.co.uk
- Tour Prehistoric Caves with an English-speaking expert—Christine Desdemaines--two hours away, and expensive, but highly recommended. http://caveconnection.fr

Some thoughts on having a great vacation

Be prepared—pack anything you can't live without—a special kitchen tool, an unusual spice, a cookbook, a board game, your favorite socks. And be prepared for the weather—the climate is mostly temperate and sunny, but storms can arise suddenly, and evenings can become chilly, and a given week can stay rainy. And lately there have been more summer heatwaves. Bring sweaters and rain gear, as well as shorts and suntan lotion. The village and region are beautiful no matter the weather.

Be flexible—Anything can happen. A storm could knock out the electricity, the hair dryer could blow a fuse, the fancy kitchen stove could burn your pomme de terre. Roll with the punches and you can't help but have a good time, even as you feed those burnt potatoes to the neighborhood donkey.

Relax—in and around the village, there is more than you could do in a month. Don't try to squeeze everything in. Pick a few things you're sure you want to do, leave room for discovering some new adventures, and consider spending at least a day or two just hanging out.

Enjoy serendipity— if you get lost, take in the views; if there's a line at the restaurant, practice your French; if you come upon dangling vines of wisteria, take a picture; if you lose your passport, apply for French citizenship! Improvise, be playful, enjoy the ordinary and allow for the unusual.

Bonnes Vacances

And enjoy our blog about the region, French history, and food:
http://www.morgancharle7.wix.com/saint-cirq-lapopie