

*(Too) Many great 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 early morning swim laps, at the sandy river beach just 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.
- Pascal at **Petit Musee**- fluent in English. Emilie's husband.
- 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

You'll find any number of additional shops and galleries as you wander the village, some new, some in hidden corners... stop in and take a look.

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.
- 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

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 with an occasional new one opening. We keep returning to the ones we first discovered, so if you try someplace new, please let us know what you think. All the restaurants are in walking distance from the house (but give yourself time to climb those steep village streets):

- L'Oustal—casual, friendly, nightly specials
- Bar Lapopie—omelettes for breakfast; and good place for lunch. Casual, outdoor dining, and of course that salted caramel ice cream.
- Auberge Sombrol—slightly more upscale (linen tablecloths, etc.), and similarly friendly and casual. Everything we've tried has been delicious, although we keep returning to one of their signature dishes: pastry dough filled with melted cheese.
- Le Cantou—we often have duck here, as they serve it in a variety of ways. But there are other excellent options on the menu too.
- 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 foie 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, 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 at Lou Faoure (top of village) or La Plage (“Campings”) (below the village). Nothing is open before about 8 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.*

Dining beyond the village

There are many excellent restaurants in the region. New ones arise, old ones get better, some fade, some adapt. If you don't want to take a chance, ask friends, neighbors, consult your guide books or Trip Advisor, to find what is most recommended. Here are some fine restaurants we've either tried or which have been highly recommended by guests:

- L'Allee des Vignes, in Cajarc.
- La Truite Doree in Vers (reputedly excellent trout)
- La Roue in Cabrerets (a short car ride, a lovely bicycle ride)
- Restaurant La Garenne, just outside of Cahors, is a wonderful top-quality restaurant run by a husband and wife team—excellent food in a beautiful restored country house (or lovely outdoor patio)
- The vineyard, Chateau Haute-Serre, near Cahors, serves wonderful meals matched with their excellent wines (and you can tour the vineyard). The vineyard is fairly industrial, but the food and wine are superb. Here's the link: <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). 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.
- There are many excellent and highly recommended restaurants in Cahors—Cuisine cote Sud, La Garenne, Au Carre Noir, Le Marche to name a few. New restaurants too are opening and worth discovering.
- In Cahors, we often pick up sandwiches in the city center, walk from downtown to the beautiful 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 market day in Villefranche de Rouergue (a lovely ride along the river via Cajarc; lunch at Cotes Saveur, a top restaurant in the town [reservations might be necessary]).
- 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 or walk to Peche Merle (quite a hike, and we had to walk our bikes for the last quarter-mile, but 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. **Also:**
- 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.
- The Rignault museum in the village is a fascinating repository of history and objets d’art.
- 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 asparagus. Roll with the punches and you can't help but have a good time, even as you feed those burnt vegetables 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>