

let's explore
auvergne

A visitor guide

les
gorges
de l'**allier**

LE PAYS OÙ LA NATURE PREND SA SOURCE

gorges-allier.com
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^{My}
haute-loire
LE SECRET LE MIEUX GARDÉ D'Auvergne

Historic villages

Arlempdes

A picturesque village dominated by one of the first castles on the banks of the Loire. The remains of the medieval fortress stand like a sentinel over the Gorge.



Pradelles

A stone's throw from Lake Naussac and Haut-Allier, this ancient stronghold was an important stopover on the Régordane route linking Auvergne to Languedoc.



Blesle

Its rich religious past once made Blesle famous: the seat of a Benedictine abbey for women of noble origin, the town developed during a large part of the Middle Ages. Take the time to explore the different districts of the town to discover the vestiges of its past with its rich architectural heritage from the 16th, 17th and 19th centuries.



Auzon

With its rich historic past, this village is characterized by its old cobblestone streets and its Romanesque collegiate church, adorned with medieval wall paintings.





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Discover the rich heritage of the smaller
villages in **the Allier Gorges.**

Lavaudieu

This village on the banks of the Senouire, is built around an old Benedictine abbey. This delightful haven of peace, with remarkable buildings, is home to the only intact Romanesque cloister in Auvergne.

Chilhac

Chilhac is really an exceptional site, a village perched on a majestic basalt flow which dominates the Allier river. Wander through the narrow streets of the old fortified village, with its typical houses from a wine-growing past, around its Romanesque church and Christian Guth paleontological museum.



Lavoûte-Chilhac

With its remarkable location in the centre of a horseshoe bend on the river Allier, and dominated by its 18th century priory buildings, Lavoûte-Chilhac is classed as one of the Most Beautiful Villages in France. Maison des oiseaux.



Haut-Allier Art and History heritage area
The Haut-Allier is officially designated as a national Art and History Heritage Area

The Haut Allier was one of the first rural areas in France to have been officially designated as an Art and History Heritage Area, the prestigious label awarded by the French Ministry of Culture. The Heritage Area staff know all the ins and outs of the Haut-Allier, and can help you discover and understand the historic, natural and landscape heritage of the area. Throughout the year they organise events for the benefit of the local population, tourists, and school children.

Discover our villages

From the granite hilltops of the Margeride to the valley of the Allagnon or the old volcanos of Le Devès, the territory of the Gorges de l'Allier offers a remarkable variety of landscapes and an unusually rich heritage. Each one of our villages has a special character resulting from geology, relief, vegetation and human activity. Ancient legends and folklore are entwined in its many Romanesque churches, medieval castles, giant stairways and dolmens. We invite you to discover the multiple facets of our heritage.

For more information on sites to visit, please contact our local Tourist Offices (see page 3) and ask for the « laissez-vous conter... » books or the Pays d'art et d'histoire du Haut-Allier activity program.

Around Auzon

CHAMPAGNAC-LE-VIEUX 12th to 16th century church with 15th century reliquary and Romanesque doorway.

Castle and old dovecot in Durbiat.
Freshwater lake | Tree climbing.

LEMPDES-SUR-ALLAGNON Romanesque church with sculpted capital and corbel, 17th century Pieta. 19th century semicircular market. 18th century great arch bridge. Old water mill over the Béal. Maison de la vie rurale.

SAINT-HILAIRE Romanesque church with sculpted capitals. An essential oils distillery.

Around Cayres-Pradelles

LE BOUCHET SAINT-NICOLAS 19th century church. Hunter's house with sculpted decorations (private). Lac du Bouchet protected natural site : natural lake in a middle of a caldera surrounded by a dense forest. Foot pathway around the lac du Bouchet with tactile pictures and maps for blind people to discover geology and local legends, beach. Legendary healing cross at La Chevre.

SAINT-JEAN-LACHALM

12th century church with multicoloured tiled belfry. Séjallières 15th century castle (private). Voie Bollène : ancient Roman road . panoramic views of the the gorges of the Allier river and orientation table.
Via ferrata.

Around Langeac

CHANTEUGES 12th century Abbey rebuilt during the 15th century, Romanesque capitals, stalls. 15th century Santa Anna Chapel, called « de l'Abbé ». Remains of the medieval cloisters. Rural heritage.
La Gravière : beach on the river Allier, adventure playground.

LANGEAC 15th century collegiate church, 15th century wood carved multicoloured statue of the Entombment, 16th century stalls. Saint Catherine's monastery with chapel and Reliquary of the Blessed Mother Agnès . « Agnès de Langeac Historial » ; « Maison du Jacquemart » with wall paintings, 17th century carved wood ceilings. Orientation tables at Mont Saint Roch and Lestival. « Maison de la Béate » several rural heritage sites in Jahon.
White water sports | Tree climbing.

PEBRAC Imposing historic abbey built in 1062 by Pierre de Chavanon. 15th century church with wall paintings. Treasure room, ritual items, 15th century polychrome wooden crib.

PRADES Village built out of granite and basalt rocks, overlooked by the imposing « Roche Servière » (a remarkable 97m high basalt cliff with organ rocks) illustrating the impressive forces of nature. Volcanic prisms and rocks. Romanesque church with wall paintings. Remains of a feudal castle.

SIAUGUES-SAINTE-MARIE Remains of a 14th century feudal castle (private). Orientation table with wide panoramic view at La Durande, altitude 1299m. Close to the village: the Limagne maar, a former peat bog in a caldera.

SAINT-ARCONS-D'ALLIER Perched village. Old mill on the Fioule. 14th and 15th century church. Former priory, 15th century tower, wrought iron cross, French gardens.

SAINT-JULIEN DES CHAZES 15th century church with 12th century statue of Our Lady enthroned. 18th century remains of the Chazes abbey. Basaltic organ rocks. Waterfall. Romanesque chapel, Notre Dame des Chazes.

Around Lavoûte-Chilhac

ALLY 12th century church. At an altitude of 1000 m, the Ally plateau is known for its wind farm (once the biggest in France with 26 wind turbines). Also 5 historic windmills recently restored, two of which can be visited. Gallo-Roman silver and antimony mines . Panoramic view.

CHILHAC Old medieval town encircled by historic city walls (14th, 15th and 16th centuries), overlooking the Allier river, built on one of the last lava streams of the Deves mountains. Towers and dorways of the old castle. Romanesque church rebuilt. Old winegrowers' houses. Paleontology museum. 19th century suspension bridge over the Allier river.

SAINT-CIRGUES Towers and remains of the old castle of the Mercoeurs. 13th century church with remarkably well preserved 14th and 15th century frescoes. Octagonal bell tower.



Around Paulhaguet

CHAVANIAc-LAFAYETTE 14th century castle, birthplace of the "Marquis de Lafayette", rebuilt during the 20th century, Remarkable gardens, botanical conservation area.

DOMEYRAT Romanesque church with sculpted capitals. 14th century remains of the castle with 16th century wall paintings. Medieval bridge over the Senouire river.

Around Saugues

AUVERS 19th and 20th century Church. Auvers is the village where the famous Gévaudan beast was killed. You can see its bronze statue carved by Philippe KAEPELIN and visit the Maison de la Bête and its exhibition.

Mont-Mouchet : In the middle of the granite Margeride mountains, this historic French Resistance site reminds us of the tragic events that took place during the second world war. The museum shows several testimonial documents and an extensive collection of items and memorabilia. Mont-Mouchet is the highest peak in the Margeride (1497m) and has fantastic all-round panoramic views (toposcope / orientation table at the mountaintop).

CHARRAIX Late medieval church with 16th and 18th century wall paintings. 19th century granite cross. Bounou rock, the remains of the ancient Rochelaure castle, built on a granite outcrop. Besque waterfall.

CHANAILEILLES

Church with imposing wall belfry. Statue of the Blessed Virgin enthroned. 15th century carved cross in the cemetery. Farmhouse « du Sauvage ». Saint Roch fountain in l'Hospitalet.

ESPLANTAS Castle with a 13th century circular keep. 15th century church with wall belfry.

SAUGUES 13th century « Tour des Anglais ». Collegiate church with 12th century Statue of the Blessed Virgin enthroned and 16th century polychrome wooden Pieta. « Chapelle des Pénitents Blancs » (procession every Maundy Thursday). St Bénilde diorama. The Beast of the Gévaudan fantastic museum. Lainerie du Gévaudan wool museum | Moulin au fil de l'eau | Lake | Wakeboarding | Horse riding.

Around Blesle

LÉOTOING

A fortified site, distinguished by the towering remains of the 13th-14th feudal castle (private). In the village, discover former winegrowers' houses, renovated terraced slopes, and an old village gateway. At the top of the village, the Romanesque church has medieval wall paintings. The "Leper" chapel has exhibitions and a model of the village.

Around Brioude

BRIOUDE

This exceptional small town is classed as one of the Prettiest out of the way small towns in France (*Plus Beaux Détours de France*) and also as an Arts and Crafts town (*Ville et Métiers d'art*). As well as its arts and crafts shops, the historic centre has houses dating back to the 13th century, half-timbered houses from the 15th century, and other historic town houses and ecclesiastical buildings from the 17th and 18th centuries. Saint-Julien's Basilica is the largest Romanesque church in Auvergne, and has been awarded the top ranking 3 stars in the Michelin green guide.

LAMOTHE

This is a fortified medieval village with gateways. Among things to see are the medieval castle, remodeled in the 17th century (private; visit by appointment at 04 71 76 41 16), old winegrowers' houses, and other old houses. At Cougeac, once a center for navigation on the Allier, discover the ruins of the St-Laurent chapel, and a dyke against the floods of the Allier. The local flora and fauna are typical of flood-prone areas, and include many protected species such as mallards, grey herons, and reed beds. Geological and geographical features include the (extinct) Garenne volcano, the basalt quarry of the Greises volcano, the Pré-Caillé meander, and the red sandstone of the Côte-Rouge, not to mention arkosic sandstone, old coal mines (closed) and former red clay quarries near the tile factories.

SAINT-ILPIZE

The imposing remains of the fortress of the Dauphins d'Auvergne stand on a rocky outcrop dominating the village and the valley below. At the heart of the castle

stand a tower and a Romanesque chapel. The 14th century parish church, just outside the castle, has 15th and 16th century wall paintings. Below the castle, an impressive 19th century suspension bridge spans the Allier. There is a waymarked short hike starting from the Mairie, taking visitors up to the castle (free entry) with a return via the historic village. The hillsides around St Ilpize were once all terraced, and some of these terraces have been renovated as a historic vineyard, on the road leading down from the castle. The village of Tapon has an old chapel and many old houses..

VIEILLE-BRIOUDE

Another traditional wine-growing village. The wine-growing heritage is illustrated by the large 7 ton wine-press and the small wine-growing museum and garden. Next door is the 12th century Romanesque St-Vincent's church and its treasure. Opposite stand the Priory and the former Notre Dame church. An impressive early 19th century stone bridge carries the main road over the Allier with a single span arch of 54 m. From the bridge can be seen the remains of the Vayron aqueduct. Outside the village the river is held back by the Bageasse barrage. There is also a historic 12th century leper colony (private - restaurant) beside a 15th century hump-backed stone bridge over the Senouire. Other sites to discover include megaliths in Védrières and 17th century crosses, old winegrowers' houses and vineyard cabins in each village.



VILLE ET MÉTIERS D'ART

Brioude

is the first town in Haute Loire to have been officially recognised as an Arts and Crafts town (*Ville et métiers d'art*). This recognition has been achieved thanks to the tireless efforts of Mathias Cazin, coordinator of the Lacemaking Centre (*Hôtel de la Dentelle*), and the town council, to establish a full inventory of the network of highly qualified craftspeople in Brioude and its surroundings.

out and about

white water sports and swimming

The gorges de l'Allier territory offers plenty of opportunities for water sports. From the tumultuous waters of the Allier below the Naussac dam, to family kayaking downriver from Langeac to the sumptuous landscapes of the gorges de la Loire full of legends, and the astonishing crater lake of Le Bouchet, there will always be something that suits your wishes in rafting, kayaking, canyoning, or quite simply for swimming.

hiking

With more than 2500 km of trails and marked paths, including the famous Santiago de Compostella pilgrimage trail, and the Robert Louis Stevenson trail, discover the rich environmental, cultural and historic heritage of our area.



other sports

One of the advantages of this vast territory is to be able to combine white water sports or hiking with other activities like a trip on a "Velorail" (pedal-cars on an old railway at 1000 m altitude), climbing on volcanic rocks, or adrenaline-boosting adventure sports in the treetops or on the edge of a bridge - not to mention miles of cycling and mountain-biking trails.



arts and crafts

Artists often dream of living in a place filled with richness and inspiration, and the Gorges de l'Allier is an area where many have made their dream come true.



markets & fairs

Wander through the hearts of our villages

Flea markets, garage sales, fairs... For information about one-off events, visit our tourist offices or their websites.

Weekly markets, farmers' markets and local craft markets...

The area of the Gorges de l'Allier is a generous and friendly place renowned for its welcoming hospitality. Rustic and authentic flavours, tradition and folklore are found in the products of this region.

Balsac | Saint-Géron

Lively country market in summer on Monday evenings.

Blesle

Lively country market in summer every Friday evening.

Brioude

A substantial weekly market every Saturday morning throughout the year. In July-August lively craft market in the historic center every Thursday evening.

Champagnac-le-Vieux

Weekly market on Friday mornings throughout the year. On Wednesdays at 6 p.m. from July 1 to August 31, craft and local farmers' market.

Chilhac

In July-August, summer market on Wednesdays from 6:00 p.m.

La Chomette

An organic and local farmer's market every Tuesday throughout the year, from 4:30 p.m. to 6:30 p.m., extended until 10 p.m. in summer.

Costaros

Weekly market throughout the year, Monday mornings.

Landos

Weekly market throughout the year, Tuesday mornings.

Langeac

Weekly markets throughout the year, Tuesday and Thursday mornings.

Lavaudieu

Country market in summer on Wednesday evenings.

Lavoûte-Chilhac

Weekly market throughout the year, Fridays from 5:30 p.m. Sunday morning 9 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. in July and August.

Lempdes-sur-Allagnon

Weekly market throughout the year, Tuesday mornings.

Mazérat-Aurouze

Every first Saturday of the month from 2 p.m. to 7 p.m., farmers' market at Moulin.

Paulhaguet

Weekly market throughout the year, Monday mornings.

Saint-Beauzire

Summer market on Friday evenings on the square: entertainment, refreshment bar and food stalls.

Saugues

Throughout the year, market on Friday mornings. Livestock market at the covered market on Monday mornings (cattle) and Friday mornings (sheep).

Siaugues-Ste-Marie

Weekly market in the town centre, on Sunday mornings throughout the year. Livestock market at the covered market.

Villeneuve-d'Allier

Small market throughout the year, Thursdays from 5 p.m. to 7 p.m.





Gorges de l'Allier

gorges-allier.com

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To find out more, just drop in to our tourist offices, where our friendly and well-informed staff will be happy to provide you with further information.



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Crédits photos

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