Prendre son temps en Quercy Blanc...

VISITOR'S GUIDE

Castelnau-Montratier

Castelnau-Montratier, a long history...

There is no doubt of the presence of a dense **Gallo-Roman occupation**. In proximity to Saint-Aureil at Saint-Sernin de Thézels were found remains of a luxurious edifice, perhaps a temple, amongst the remains the Constantine stone, a white marble lintel dating from the 5th or 6th century, presenting similarities with the lintel of the Moissac Abbey portal. It can be seen in the Cahors museum. In 1962 important Gallo-Roman remains dating back to the 1st and 2nd centuries were uncovered in the locality known as "Moulin du Souquet".

Towards the 10th century a first "stone keep" was built on the Maurélis mount about 1.5 km from the village. It's keep, of which only a well-preserved triple ditch remains, gives witness to the feudal period of Castelnau. **The initial stone keep of Castelnau** was most certainly situated at the extreme southern point of the village at the end of a rocky promontory. By circumventing this mount, a few remains of the ancient 12th or 13th century ramparts can still be seen.

In the mid-11th century, **"new castle" "Castelnau de Vaux"** named because of the numerous valleys (vaux meaning valley), was built on the peak dominating the Lupte valley. Simon de Montfort

had the castle destroyed in 1214 during the Albigensian crusade.

THE BASTIDE

In 1250, Lord Ratier undertook the reconstruction of the town and gave his name to it. It is built on the specific plan of a bastide: **an imposing central square surrounded by arcades and a church on the outskirts**. The center of power is the square. The construction plan is parceled out in a checkerboard fashion: straight, parallel streets with houses and gardens.

From the 13th to the 15th century, Castelnau knew a very prosperous period owing to the wool trade. The manufacturers of Montauban used the Quercy wool for their weaving trade and came to Castelnau to buy it, particularly during the 12th of October fair. **The "Barries", or districts, developed on each side of the straight road** (rue Clémenceau).

A second battlement encircled the town. In 1785, Castelnau still retained its walls except at the south where they were destroyed during the Hundred Years' War. The town is entered by five gateways.

Stroll through the town...

1 CHURCH SAINT-MARTIN
Its architecture is inspired by the Romano-Byzantine Basilicas. It was built at the end of the 19th century on the promontory at the emplacement of the former Roman church. The dome was installed in 1935-1936.

2 CAPTAIN TAILHADE STREET
This private house called "the Castle" was undoubtedly used as a hospital during the Middle Ages. It has 13th century twin bay windows, the tower and its gargoyles date from the 19th century. Renovated, half-timbered houses from the 15th century line the street. This street was entered via the Gleye gateway (church portal).

3 GAMBETTA SQUARE
This central square surrounded by stone arcades is typical of a bastide. From the Middle Ages, it hosts markets. The monument depicting the Virgin, raised in 1858, hides a well.

4 THE MILLERETTE GATEWAY
It is one of the five gateways to the medieval town. At the end of the alleyway the remains of the enclosure wall can still be seen.

5 SAINT-MATHURIN GATEWAY
N° 2 "rue de la Pompe" is the oldest house in the village. Built on the rampart walk, you get an idea of the beautiful spiral staircase. The "rue de la Pompe" is also a witness to the medieval past. At the end of Clémenceau Street is the Saint Mathurin gateway or Amont Gate that closed the bastide's town wall. The "Barri" or Saint-Mathurin district stretches beyond the "gate". As a stop-over on the Royal Route, the posthouse welcomed horses and travelers.

6 MEDIEVAL QUARTERS
The "Lacavalerie" Street lines a square where, near to the well, the elders rested. The houses with their low doorways have, for some, been renovated. On one street corner can be seen a house with, above its front door, a coat of arms and a roman motif. The "rue de l'Aiguiller" gets is name, perhaps, from the wool trade, aiguille meaning needle.

7 JACOB HOUSE
Pierre Jacob, an officer of the marines in the 18th century, donated this 13th century house for the creation, in perpetuity, of a school where the children of the poor local community could learn to read and write. His wish was granted in 1881 up until the building of state schools.

8 LOVE STREET (RUE D'AMOUR)
Also known as Joffre Street gets its name, so they say, from the solanums or "love apple" plants that grew there. In this medieval street can be seen some beautiful half-timbered houses.

9 ORFÈVRES STREET
In this small lane typical of a bastide, beautiful old or renovated houses hide gardens overlooking the valley. In the 13th century another town gate, Cross Gate or the Lower Door, closed this street and the one running parallel, Love Street.

10 PORTANELLE - TOWN HALL
The Portanelle, another town gate, was called Rozet Gate or Aval Gate. The town hall in 1475 was the Consuls' House. Council magistrates met in the vaulted ground floor room. The belfry was added in the 18th century and houses an engraved bell.

Montcuq, a strange name...

MONTCUQ IN THE PAST

The site in the old country of Vaux in the Quercy Blanc, is established at the confluence of the small Barguelonne river and the Nègue-vieille stream. It is composed of a **high, conical, rocky mount** on the summit of which was built at the end of the 12th century or the beginning of the 13th century the **Counts of Toulouse fortified tower** and on the southern side a **small village**.

Montcuq, seat of an important castellany of Bas Quercy, was from the 12th century part of the property of the Counts of Toulouse, to whom the town remained loyal during the Albigensian crusade. Defeated by Simon de Montfort in 1212, the town was sentenced by the Treaty of Paris (putting an end to the Hundred Years' War) to deliver to the king strongholds to keep watch over the country and to destroy the fortifications. The

Montcuq takes its name from the Latin **mons** (mount) and an appellative pre-indo-european of the same sense, **tuc, cuc or suc**, designating a summit.

tower was probably only topped, the ramparts of the town perhaps destroyed. By the marriage in 1271 between Alphonse of Poitiers (brother of King Saint Louis and Jeanne daughter of Raymond 7th, the County of Toulouse was attached to the French Kingdom. The city was administered by **twelve consuls housed in the Consulate** (town hall).

Montcuq, seized by the English in 1348 and 1355, emerged from the Hundred Years' War completely ruined. From the second half of the 15th century a wave of reconstruction began, of which many **half-timbered** houses bear witness. The French Wars of Religion were the last troubles in its history: the Protestants burnt down the Saint-Hilaire church in 1562, destroyed the Cordeliers Convent and the Saint-Privat church.

THE TOWN

Beneath the tower, a **first urban centre in oval form**, visible in the morphology of the town, was bounded by a fortified wall excluding the first church Saint-Hilaire, situated outside of the walls in front of the western gate of the town. Beyond developed a small **district called "Narcès"**.

The "rue du Pla" evokes the oldest public square within the town (pla del castel) situated to the north between the village and the Lords' mount. On the outskirts, to the east, can be found the **parish church of Saint-Privat** (close to today's cemetery), rebuilt in the 17th and the 19th century on the site of a ruined church dedicated to Saint-Blaise.

To the north, isolated on the banks of the Barguelonne, the **Saint-Jean hospital** and its chapel (both non-existent today), were founded in the 12th century by the Hospitallers of Saint-Jean of Jerusalem, to welcome the pilgrims travelling towards Moissac on the Saint-James' of Compostela Way.

A second fortified wall coupled with a ditch encircled the town towards the middle of the 13th century and remained along today's boulevard until the 18th century. It incorporated within its boundaries the Saint-Hilaire church where nearby could be found the House of Measures and the butchers. It was pierced by two gateways the **Cantals Gate** to the east and the **Narcès Gate** to the west beyond which stretched the "place del Mercadial" or market place.

A second district, the **Cantals Barri** (Saint-Privat), grew outside of the walls to the east where, in 1283, the Franciscan religious order was established (Cordeliers' Convent).

Stroll through the town ...

1 FORMER TOWN WALLS
Of the first fortified wall dating from the 12th century, only the Tower remains. A second fortified wall was built in the 14th century.

2 FORMER "CANTALS" GATEWAY
It is one of the two fortified gateways giving access through the second wall.

3 "PETIT RAPPORTEUR" STREET
This name is recent. It gave access to the village centre.

4 THE FORMER CONSULS HOUSE
Up until the Revolution the twelve Consuls in charge of the town's administration were housed here.

5 PLA STREET
Many remarkable architectural elements can be found in the houses of this street.
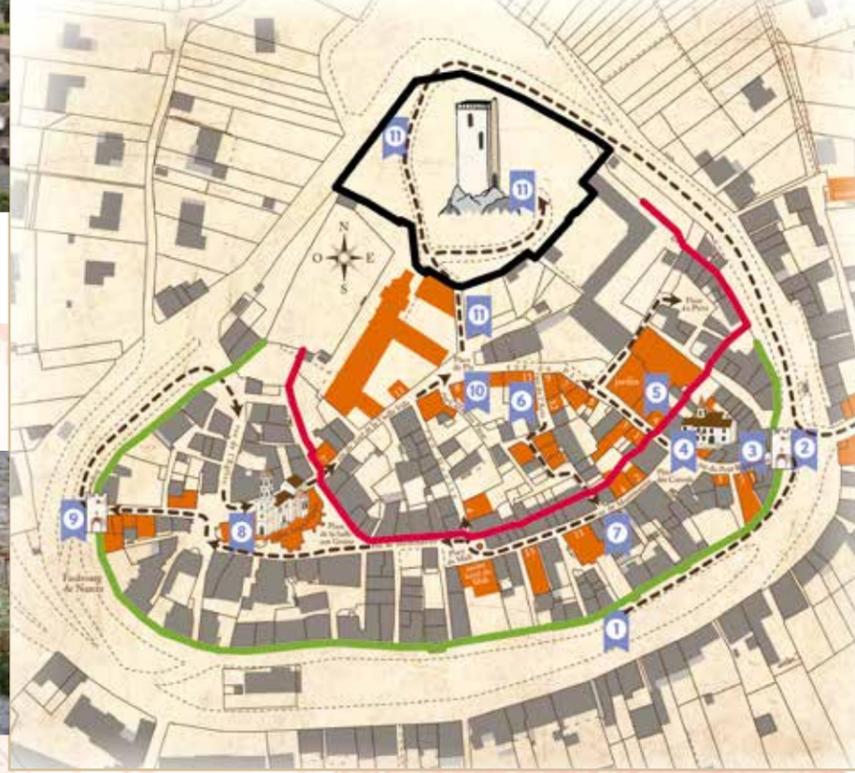
6 ASTE STREET
This street formerly led to the first outer wall. A few dwellings retain interesting architectural features.

7 MONTMARTRE STREET
This name is recent. The town's main street, it leads to the former Corn Exchange and the Saint-Hilaire church.

8 SAINT-HILAIRE CHURCH
This edifice dating from the end of the 13th beginning of the 14th century was reworked following the damage it suffered over its history. Brightly coloured stained glass windows retrace the life of Christ and Saint-Hilaire.

9 THE FORMER "NARCÈS" GATEWAY
The second fortified gateway in the second outer wall was demolished in the 19th century.

10 PLA SQUARE
This square, dating from the 12th century is the oldest pubic square of the town.

11 THE COUNTS TOWER
Dominating the "castrum", this dungeon tower built in the 13th century almost certainly replaced a previous tower.

12 SAINT-PRIVAT DISTRICT (off the map)
This suburb developed around the Cordeliers' Convent, outside of the fortifications.

Panels explaining the history and architecture of the medieval town are posted along the route.

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Montcuq