

CORDES-SUR-CIEL

TOURIST OFFICE

PRESS KIT





ONCE UPON A TIME...

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CORDES SUR CIEL, A TRAVEL IN TIME

In Cordes sur Ciel all the stories start with “Once upon a time”, stories about sleeping dragons, sorcerers, alchemists and knights...

Cordes sur Ciel fascinates everyone who discovers it because it is above all a vision, that of a city reaching the sky. Founded in 1222 by the Count of Toulouse, it is also a major site of History and Art, where men's memory has been engraved into the old stones and has outlived time.

With its exceptional setting and its remarkable architectural legacy, Cordes has become one of the most significant medieval cities in France and one of the most beautiful jewels of the European heritage. Its way of life, its authentic environment have attracted artists and craftsmen and still inspire them.

From the vineyards of Gaillac to the forest of La Grésigne, the Cordes sur Ciel area overflows with interesting places to discover and will grant you pure moments of excitement.

Shhhh... Open the doors and listen carefully !



A EIGHT-HUNDRED-YEAR HISTORY

In order to improve the defence of the territory and protect the population who had suffered from the crusades, Raimond VII decided to build up new cities and grant them more freedom and financial advantages called “franchises”. “Bastides” and “castelnaus” were the names of those new fortresses.



On November 4th, 1222, Count Raimond VII signed the charter for Cordes' foundation and granted “franchises” to the inhabitants of the new fortress, called “castrum” of Cordoas – Cordes in the language of Oc.

Cordes was a thriving city. Leather and cloth industries enabled dealers and bourgeois to grow richer and build up magnificent Gothic residences between the late thirteenth century and the middle of the fifteenth. Some of them are richly decorated with fantastic and mysterious sculptures.

In the late thirteenth century, Cordes' population amounted to 5000 inhabitants (as many as Albi).

After the 1870's war, Albert Gorse, one of Cordes' young people, brought back an embroidering loom from Saint-Gall. Soon after, the city rose from its ashes. Around 600 embroidering looms became an important part of the life of Cordes' inhabitants. However, embroidery went out of fashion and the activity declined in the 1930s.

After the second world war, artists and craftsmen have settled in the medieval city and given it a second youth. In 1993, Cordes officially became Cordes sur Ciel.

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A JEWEL OF GOTHIC ART

Cordes sur Ciel is a jewel of gothic art. The set of gothic houses in the high street (Grand rue Raimond VII) is exceptional in France.

Thanks to the trade of leather and wollen cloth, wealthy merchants had lavishly decorated houses built at the end of the 13th century. The owners lived on the first and second floor. On the ground floor, some arcades led to the shop, the studio, storage rooms or stairs to the upper floor.



Recent restoration erased traces of modernization left on the gothic houses in the 18th and 19th century.

The decorated front walls were built with many stones finely cut and assembled. Grey, ochre or mauve sandstones were extracted in the village of Salles, 10 km far from Cordes.

Among all the gothic houses of Cordes, three are particularly well decorated : the Maison du Grand Fauconnier, the Maison du Grand Ecuyer and the Maison du Grand Veneur. The latter owns its fame to the hunting scene sculpted on the second level.



The sculptures on the walls of the gothic houses are of different kinds : dragons, monsters, hybrid animals, characters with twisted faces.

Many plants and flowers are also sculpted on capitals and on the arches of windows.

LEGENDS AND MYSTERIES

Cordes sur Ciel keeps her secrets well. Very little scientific research has been led in Cordes, so legends are still alive and the mysteries that surround the city still fascinate both inhabitants and visitors.

The characters and the animals sculpted on the front wall of the Maison du Grand Ecuyer are symbolical because they are half-human, half-animal.

Was the person who had the house built an alchemist ?

In the 13th century, the owner of the Maison Prunet found a 13th century handwritten book hidden in a wall : « Le Sort des Apôtres » (the spell of the Apostles). This book of oracles contains about 50 maxims and each of them corresponds to a coloured thread.

The person who wanted an answer by the oracle chose a color and pulled the corresponding thread to get the maxim that he then had to interpret.

Among them are the depth of the well on the covered market place (113m deep). People have always been wondering why it is so deep. In Cordes it was possible to get water without digging so deep.

Was the well an entrance to a secret underground tunnel ?







CHARLES PORTAL ART AND HISTORY MUSEUM

The Charles Portal Museum, situated in the Porte des Ormeaux, presents collections of objects resulting from searches on Ropes (Puits de la Halle from 1954 till 1961) and its region (de 1977 in 1985).

It gives information to understand better the history and the architecture of the city.

An exclusive film shows the inside of enigmatic Puits de la Halle.

The history of the city meets itself in all the proposed exhibitions but also in the very building of the 13th century.

The museum preserves in particular Libre Ferrat, dated the 13th century, and which tells in Occitan the big events of the City.



Charles Portal Art and History Museum

Porte des Ormeaux
1, rue Saint-Michel
81170 Cordes sur Ciel

Tel : 05 63 80 51 72

E-mail : musee.charles.portal@gmail.com

Website : <http://musee-charles-portal.asso-web.com>



MUSEUM OF MODERN AND CONTEMPORARY ART

This museum is settled in the « Maison du Grand Fauconnier » – classified as “Historic Monument” – and offers a unique meeting between the historic architectural heritage and the artistic creation.

This museum account three rooms:

The room « Yves Brayer » dedicated to the painter (1907-1990) who was one of bigger representational painters of the 20th century.

The space « André Verdet » collects the donation made in 2002 by André Verdet and the municipal collection of contemporary works. You can find : Picasso, Miro, Léger, Klee, Fromanger, Arman, Cocteau...

The room « Baskine / Meunier » who exposes the totality of Maurice Baskine's work and some works of the surrealist Francis Meunier.



Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art

Maison du Grand Fauconnier
Grand Rue Raymond VII
81170 Cordes sur Ciel

Tel : 05 63 56 14 79

E-mail : culture@cordessurciel.fr

Website : <http://mamc.cordessurciel.fr>

YVES THURIÈS MUSEUM OF SUGAR AND CHOCOLATE ARTS

In 1998 Yves Thuriès, who has twice been voted the best master craftsman of France, created an experimental patisserie at the top of the city in a beautiful house known as Prunet.

A year later he put together a permanent exhibition, unique in the world, « The Art of Sugar and Chocolate », that brings together a large number of artistic pieces created exclusively from a foundation of sugar and chocolate.

The museum proposes sculptures created by different sugarworking techniques and shows about one hundred original pieces of art made by the team of Yves Thuriès.



Yves Thuriès Museum of Sugar and Chocolate Arts

33, Grand Rue Raimond VII
81170 Cordes sur Ciel

Tel : 05 63 56 02 40

Fax : 05 63 56 18 90

E-mail : contact@artdusucré.fr

Website : www.artdusucré.fr

HISTORAMA

« Historama » is an exhibition about several moments of life in Cordes during the Middle Age.

More than 80 waxwork characters and costumes realised into the respect of originals models.



Historama

20, Grand Rue Raimond VII
81170 Cordes sur Ciel

Tél : 05 63 56 25 33

Tél (période de fermeture) : 05 62 28 08 08

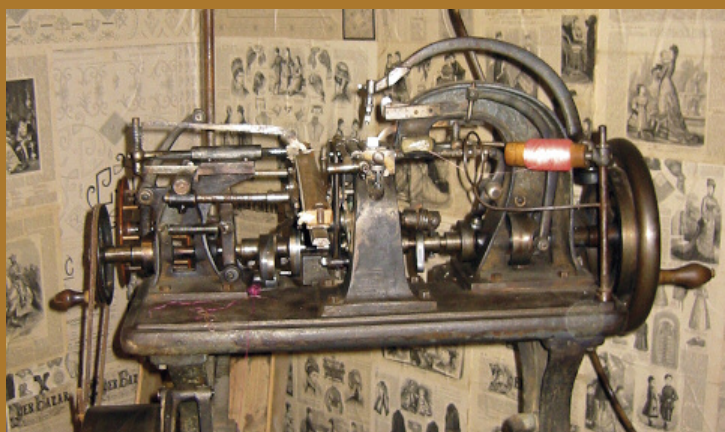
E-mail : jfr@ryst-dupeyron.com

Site : www.tourisme3281.com

LA FABRIQUE DU FOURMIGUIER

At the scene of what was once the cradle of cordaise embroidery, the early industrial era is preserved with only embroidery machine still in working order.

To complement it, historical documents, letters, machines, embroidery and cross comments, are displayed which help to understand the importance of this activity in the life of Cordes.



La Fabrique du Fourmiguier

La Gaudane
4 rue de la Gaudane
81170 Cordes sur Ciel

Tel : 05 63 53 09 82

E-mail : lafabrique@lagaudane.com

Website : www.lagaudane.com

LE JARDIN DES PARADIS

Contemporary and oriental, the Garden of Paradise, designed by Eric Ossart and Arnaud Maurières, welcomes visitors by offering a moment of timeless happiness.

Faithful to the original meaning of Paradise, the garden consists of a series of enclosures, each marked by a special ambience, material or particular colour. Thus when visiting, all the senses are stimulated.

This garden was awarded the 2004 label « Jardin remarquable » for its development and its innovative theme that changes every year.

Each year a new theme revives the originality of the place with new plantings, new facilities and various exhibitions.



Association C.D. Jardin des Paradis

Place du Théron
81170 Cordes sur Ciel

Tel : 05 63 56 29 77

E-mail : jardindesparadis@orange.fr

Website : www.jardindesparadis.eu



ARTISTS AND CRAFTSMEN

« An artist might (barring fevers) paint here for a year without a repeat, and all his picture would be lovely : it is a dream-city... »

Thomas E. Lawrence

Letter sent to a friend during his cycle tour through the Tarn in 1908

In the exceptional location of Cordes, with its remarkable architectural heritage, artists and craftspeople have found authenticity and a climate providing inspiration for creativity.

It is they who directly or indirectly, were responsible for the rebirth of Cordes in the 1950s. Year after year, their creations and talent enabled the city to take off again.

Artists' studios, art galleries, museums, exhibitions, Cordes therefore embraces art and culture in all its forms! You will find, in your wanderings around Cordes, a profusion of shops and quality galleries.





MEETINGS AND FEASTS

During the year, exhibitions and events give rhythm to the city life.

The medieval feast of the Grand Fauconnier

42^e edition – July, the 13th and 14th

More informations : www.grandfauconnier.com

« Musique sur Ciel » festival

41^e edition – July, the 20th to the 25th

More informations : www.festivalmusiquesurciel.fr

Fêtes Occitanes

August, the 15th

More informations : www.talvera.org





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DISCOVERY OF CORDES AND TOURS IN THE CITY

The Tourist Office of Cordes sur Ciel proposes different guided tours depending on the expectations of visitors. Your guide (regional guide diploma holder) will lead you through the city and uncover its treasures. Cordes is one of the best conserved example of civilian gothic architecture in Southern France. Artists and craftsmen will welcome you in their studio and introduce you to their art and craft.

Groups

You can create your own tour according to the interests and expectations of your group : guided visits of Cordes, Albi and villages around Cordes, visits of museums, of artists or craftsmen's studios, visits of vineyards in Gallacois...

*For more information, booking, prices and sale conditions, please contact the Tourist Office :
+33(0)5 63 56 49 11 or receptif.otcordes@orange.fr*

Individuals

The Tourist Office proposes guided tours every day in July and August. Several themes are explored : « Architecture and History » and more original tours like night visits with torches.

*For more information or booking, please contact the Tourist Office :
+33(0)5 63 56 00 52 or accueil.otcordes@orange.fr*





Cordes sur Ciel



Albi (25 km)



Najac (35 km)



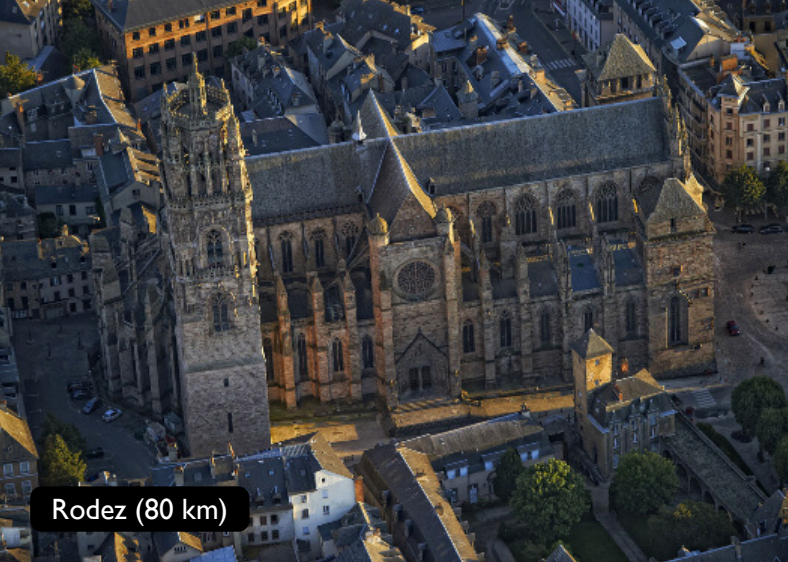
Villefranche de Rouergue (48 km)



Saint-Cirq Lapopie - Pech Merle (66 km)



Figeac (79 km)



Rodez (80 km)



Cahors (81 km)

GREAT TOURIST SITES IN MIDI-PYRÉNÉES

Experience an extraordinary journey in Midi-Pyrenees and discover great sites closed to Cordes sur Ciel, within a radius of a hundred kilometers.

Unspoilt countryside and wide open spaces, villages of character and historical attractions, rivers and canals, vineyards and towns in the colours so typical of the South of France: Midi-Pyrénées is all about discovery, exploration, new experiences and the human touch.

Famous for its gastronomy, friendly and endearing, this region takes up much of Southwestern France between the Atlantic and the Mediterranean.

More informations : www.tourism-midi-pyrenees.co.uk



Discover the movie of the
Great Sites in Midi-Pyrénées
on your smartphone



Toulouse (82 km)



Sorèze / Revel / Saint-Ferréol (90 km)



Moissac (102 km)



Conques (108 km)



SPECIALITIES

Croquants

The 'Croquant' is Cordes' speciality. That subtle mixture of sugar, egg whites, flour and almonds is inherited from the Middle Age. You will find them in all the best cakeshops in Cordes.

Gaillac vineyard

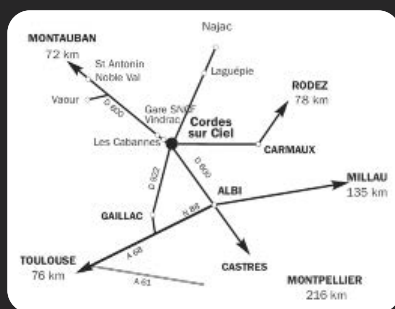
The AOC wine of Gaillac (AOC is the French quality label which guarantees the origin of the wine) is one of the Cordes area specialities. The wine growers have always taken great care in the choice of the vine most adapted to the climate and the land, in order to produce a high quality wine which retains all its characteristics. The 'mauzac', the 'ondec' and the 'en de l'el' are typical wines of the Gaillac area.

Maison de Pays

A place that welcomes you...

At the foot of the medieval city, the 'Maison du Pays Cordais' features the producers and the artisans who have signed a charter for high quality (products must be guaranteed hand-made and therefore not produced industrially...)

LOCATION AND ACCESS



Cordes sur Ciel is located 50 min from Toulouse by the A68 highway (Gaillac exit) and 20 min from Albi.

By car

Paris - Cordes sur Ciel : 665 km, A20, exit Caussade then direction Saint-Antonin Noble-Val

Toulouse - Cordes sur Ciel : 76 km, A68, exit Gaillac / Cordes

Cordes sur Ciel - Montpellier : 216 km

By taxi

Taxi Cordais : +33(0)6 22 42 72 11

Taxi Gilles : +33(0)5 63 56 87 52 - +33(0)6 16 30 14 90

By train

Regional railway : Toulouse / Cordes-Vindrac / Auriac. The SNCF train station "Cordes-Vindrac" is 5 km from Cordes sur Ciel, the 707 bus line (Albi / Cordes-Vindrac) conducts daily connections.

By plane

Toulouse-Blagnac airport : 90 km from Cordes (1h30 by car)

Rodez-Marcillac airport : 95 km from Cordes (1h40 by car)

Castres-Mazamet airport : 75 km from Cordes (1h20 by car)

SOME FIGURES

1047 inhabitants

Around 600 000 visitors a year

Around 20 artists and craftsmen live in Cordes sur Ciel all year round.

40 shops and businesses all through the year (twice as many in the high season)

SERVICES

Available in Cordes sur Ciel : all shops close by, nursery and primary schools, secondary school, police station, banks, lawyer, general practitioner, dental surgeon, physiotherapist, nurses, vets, chemist's...

Restaurants, hotels, pubs and bed and breakfast all year round.

TOURIST OFFICE

Office de Tourisme du Pays Cordais au Pays de Vaour

Maison Gaugiran

40 Grand Rue Raimond VII

81170 Cordes sur Ciel

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