

Maison Numero Neuf



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The town - La Souterraine

A vibrant and bustling medieval market town with around 6,000 inhabitants, La Souterraine is dominated by the twelfth century church situated in the main square and underneath a crypt with Gallo-roman remains.

In addition there are a number of archaeological sites in the area and originally the town was a rest for pilgrims and some parts of the old town remain including the massive portal of Saint-Jean.

La Souterraine has plenty of interesting shops, cafes and restaurants. There are markets every Thursday and Saturday, and fairs on the 12th and 27th of each month.

There is also a swimming pool.



The region - The Creuse

The Creuse is 5,565 km² with a population of approximately 130,000, making it one of the least populated of all the departments in France.

Lying between Paris and Toulouse, West of the Massif Central, with an average altitude of 300m, the main town is Guéret with 15,000 inhabitants. Aubusson is the sub prefecture with around 5,000 inhabitants.

Not so many years ago only the French themselves knew of the existence of the area, others merely passing through en route to the South and to Spain.

Time has stood still in Creuse so if you are looking for peace and quiet, together with unspoilt countryside, wonderful wildlife, superb scenery, with rolling mountains and deep rivers and lakes full of fish, then you need look no further.

The Lakes - L'Etang de la Chaume

Situated at Azerable, just outside La Souterraine, this is a rare example of a lake which lies entirely on sand. This, along with the streams which continuously bubble through it, make the water very clean. A marked path leads around the lake and into the surrounding area (around a 3 ½ hour walk).



The lake has a beach with children's playground and a petanque area. There are proficiency courses in sailing and pedalo hire (during July and August).

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The fishing season runs from May to November. Day or half day permits are available for traditional fishing (sport fishing for carp is also possible).

On the northern bank of the lake is a bird watching centre open to the public all year round. There are 127 species which either nest there or migrate via the lake, and a wide variety of water plants which are protected.

The Lakes - L'Etang de la Cazine

Situated at Noth, just outside La Souterraine, the lake has two beaches, both of which are monitored. A footpath leads from the lake to the woods at Le Fot and back to La Souterraine, which makes for a beautiful walk with views of the valley of La Cazine, the chateau at La Fot, the arboretum and the neighbouring lakes and hills.



The stables at La Cazine offer horse and pony rides or treks where an instructor also gives individual or group tuition.

The domaine at Noth also organises mountain biking and ultra light flying. La Cazine has a brand new café, and fishing is possible day and night.

The Lakes - L'Etang du Chiex

Situated at the northern entrance to the town of La Souterraine, the lake offers numerous activities for all age groups including swimming, beach games and fishing.

There are marked paths around the lake that can also be explored on horseback. Alternatively you can also hire a pony and trap during high season.



Limoges

Scarce remains of pre-urban settlements have been found in the area of Limoges. The capital of the Gaulish people of the Lemovices, who lived in the area, was probably some kilometers south-east of Saint-Léonard-de-Noblat.

The city proper was founded as Augustoritum by the Romans, around 10 BC. The foundation was part of the reorganization of the province by the emperor Augustus, hence the new name. The Roman city included an amphitheater measuring 136 x 115 meters, a theater, baths and several sanctuaries. According to tradition, a temple consecrated to Venus, Diana, Minerva and Jupiter was located near the modern cathedral. The city was on the typical Roman square plan, with two main streets crossing in the centre. It had a Senate and a currency of its own, a sign of its importance in the imperial age.

Limoges was evangelized by Saint Martial, who came to the city around 250 with two companions, Alpinianus and Austriclinienus.

However, in the late 3rd century it was increasingly abandoned, due to unsafe conditions created by German invasions. The population concentrated instead on a more easily fortifiable site, the modern Puy Saint-Étienne, which is the centre of the modern Limoges. Starting from the construction of the Abbey of St. Martial (9th century), another settlement grew around the tomb of the saint, while a third area, next to the residence of the viscount (the future Castle of Saint Martial), seems to have been populated from the 10th century.



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Starting from the 11th century, thanks to the presence of the Abbey of St. Martial and its large library, Limoges became a flourishing artistic centre. It also was the home to an important school of medieval music composition, which is usually called the St. Martial School; its most famous member was the 13th century troubadour Bertran de Born.

In the 13th century, at the peak of its splendour, central Limoges was constituted by two different fortified settlements.

- The town proper, with a new line of walls encompassing the Vienne River, inhabited mainly by clerks and the connected workers. It has a bridge named after Saint-Étienne, built by the bishops, and a developed port. Sacked in 1370, it never recovered entirely.
- The castle, with 12 m-high walls, including the abbey and controlled by the abbot, sometimes in contrast with the bishop-ruled town. Traces of the walls can still be seen in the city's centre.

Outside the lines of walls were the popular quarters. In 1370, Limoges was occupied by Edward, the Black Prince, the heir to the English throne, who massacred some 3,000 residents according to Froissart.



The City and Castle were united in 1792 to form a single city, Limoges. During the French Revolution several religious edifices, considered symbols of the *Ancien Régime*, were destroyed by the population: these included the Abbey of St. Martial itself.

Some years later the porcelain industry started to develop, favoured by the presence of kaolinite which was discovered near Limoges in 1768. Many of the inhabitants became employed in the new sector or in connected activities (including the lumbering of wood needed for firing the porcelain).

In the 19th century Limoges saw strong construction activity, which included the destruction and rebuilding of much of the city centre. This was necessary as the town was regarded as unhealthy because of local chicken eating contests and as a nest for prostitution. The unsafe conditions of the poorer population is highlighted by the outbreak of several riots, including that of July-November 1830; April 1848 and early 1905. The first French confederation of workers, Confédération Générale du Travail (CGT), was created in Limoges in 1895.



Main Sights

- The **Crypt of Saint Martial** (10th century), including the tomb of the bishop who evangelized the city. It was discovered in the 1960s.
- Remains of the Gallo-Roman **amphitheater**, one of the largest in the ancient Gaul. It was covered with earth in the 1960s.
- The Gothic **cathedral of St-Etienne**, begun in 1273 and finished only in 1888. It is noted for a fine rood loft built in 1534 and for the fine, partly octagonal bell tower. The main artistic work are a Renaissance rood screen and the tomb of the bishop Jean de Langeac, with sculpted scenes of the Apocalypse.
- The **Chapelle Saint-Aurélien** (14th-17th centuries). It includes the relics of St. Aurelian, the second bishop of Limoges, and has medieval statues and Baroque works of art.

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- The church of **St-Pierre-du-Queyroix**, begun in the 12th century
- **St-Michel-des-Lions**, begun in 1364. It houses the relics of St. Martial and has noteworthy stained-glass windows from the 15th-16th century. The most striking feature is the 65 m-high tower, with a spire surmounted by a big bronze ball.
- The bridges of **Saint Martial** (dating from the Roman era) and of **St-Etienne** (13th century).
- The **Bishops' Palace** (*Palais de l'Évêché*, 17th century). Of the original building, only a chapel remain. It is the seat of the Musée de l'Émail, with a large collection of old enamels.
- The modern **Gare de Limoges Bénédictins**, inaugurated in 1929.
- The **Château de La Borie** (17th century), at 4 km (2.5 mi) from the city. It is home to the Centre Culturel de Rencontre de La Borie et l'Ensemble Baroque de Limoges.
- The remains of the 12th century **Castle of Chalucet**, 10 km (6.2 mi) outside the city. During the Hundred Years' War it was a base of the bands of pillagers which ravaged the country.
- The city's botanical gardens include the Jardin botanique de l'Évêché and the Jardin botanique alpin "Daniella".

In 1768, kaolin, a rock rich in fine, white clay which is used for making porcelain, was discovered at Saint-Yrieix-la-Perche, near Limoges.

Under the impetus of the progressive economist Anne Robert Jacques Turgot, Baron de Laune, who had been appointed *intendant* of this impoverished and isolated region, a new ceramics industry was developed, and Limoges porcelain became famous during the 19th century. However, Limoges porcelain is a generic term for porcelain produced in Limoges rather than at a specific factory.

More than 50% of all porcelain made in France comes from Limoges.