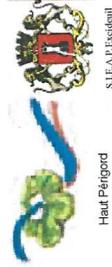




Informations Touristiques du Périgord vert et du Périgord blanc

Le Magazine du HAUT-PÉRIGORD

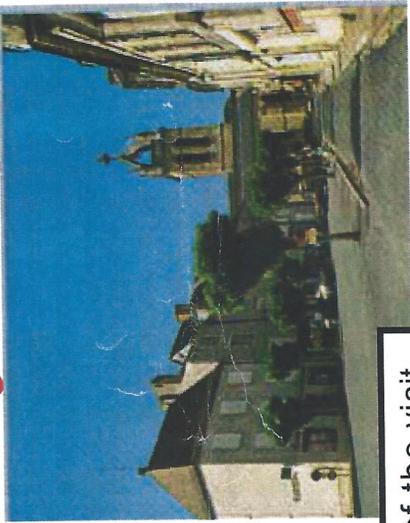
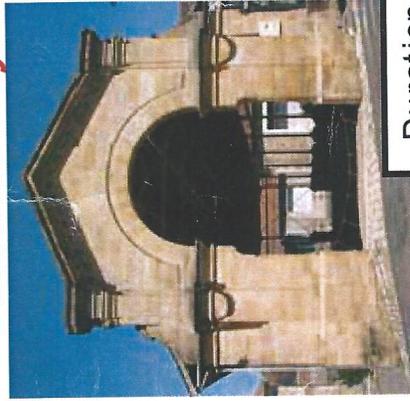
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Discover the ancient borough
St. Thomas's treasures
in the heart of the town



A walk in EXCIDEUIL Another way of seeing the Perigord



Duration of the visit
1 h 00 / 1 h 30



The Castle



A large part of Excideuil's history is identical with that of its castle - The latter was built up by the viscounts of Limoges, who, as far back as the 11th and 12th century, replaced the wooden tower - perhaps erected during the Norman invasions - by ramparts and a stone-keep. From the 11th century to the 16th century, the castle remained in the possession of the viscounts of Limoges who used it as a base in their fight with the count of Périgord. But this so envied military stronghold was also the scene of hard battles, especially the one which opposed the Haute-Aquitaine knighthood to the Plantagenets, who had become the region's suzerains since Alienor's marriage with HENRI II (1152). Three times during the year of 1182 Richard the Lion Heart and his lieutenants laid siege to the castle. The borough was plundered twice, but the castle held out against all the attacks. On the other hand, during the one hundred years war, it did not have the same luck. In 1346, the English attacks were repulsed but in 1351 the castle was besieged by the enemy. Taken up again in 1356, it was handed over to the English and then released again thanks to Du Guesclin or his lieutenants backed up by the barons of Limousin. Unhappily for the inhabitants of Excideuil these fights were far from being the last. During the religious wars the castle, which then belonged to Jeanne d'ALBRET, Queen of Navarre, owned a catholic garrison. It was attacked during the autumn of 1574 and taken up by the Huguenots soldiers, but it was a short lived victory for the next spring it fell again into the catholic hands owing to the Mesieurs de Hautefort who for this feat received HENRI III's congratulations. After his mother's death, Henri took the title of « King of Navarre », but in order to face all his monetary needs, he had to alienate several seignories of the viscounty. So on the 23rd of March 1582, in presence of a lawyer from Poitiers, he let count François des Cars have Excideuil Castle and the seignorie (150.000 livres worth). He then became the successor of the viscounts of Limoges. Having become the owner of the castle thanks to his wife's dowry, the count des Cars changed the severe military building into a sumptuous residence which was plundered several times, but this was quickly restored owing to François's fortune. The daughter of the countess Des Cars married Daniel de Talleyrand, prince of Chalais (Charente), a very favoured man in the courts eye, which permitted to the Excideuil estate to be established in marquisate (1613). Unhappily for the Talleyrands, kept at court by their duties, they only made a few appearances at Excideuil's castle. The most beautiful furniture and also the statues and the chimney-pieces were removed to their house in Chalais. Regarding the buildings they were left to ruin little by little. Under the revolution the patriots of Excideuil made some token gestures which had no consequence from the material point of view. But for several years already life had been diminishing little by little from the castle.



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Follow the "Rue des Cendres" whose name reminds us of the cruel fire which devastated the borough during its fall in 1420. This street leads the visitor to the "Place Bugeaud", at the centre of the town. Going up the "Rue des Cendres", you can admire the roofed portal of the old Magnac Hotel (17th. century) and some older remains : an ogee arched opening now bricked up on the right, and a corbelled house at the corner of the narrow "Rue St-Georges".

Following the "Rue St. Georges" you will discover several picturesque medieval nooks (at the opposite end of the street). Near the corner of the "Rue des Cordeliers" (now "Rue Jean Jaurès") a 15th century carved opening compels the visitor to admire it. (return to **rue des Parfums**)

The "Place Bugeaud" is busy only one day of the week namely Thursdays, market day. The Market Place is triangular and steep, brightened up by an avaint 16th century house and its turret, and also by its sounding fountain, present of the Marechal Bugeaud.

The very top of the St. Thomas's Church is decorated by a 15th century porch. On the western elevation, near the big portal, is a blind arch which is diamond shaped, this being a relic from the original Roman church. Inside, in one of the apsidal chapels, a beautiful 17th Century gilded wooden altar piece, a niche in the southern wall contains a 16th Century polychrome Pieta.

Facing the big portal, the district of the old **Comman-derie St Antoine** is noteworthy for its group of ancient buildings, two of them skillfully restored. Beautiful 16th century geminated window at the top of the « Rue St. Antoine » and a high 16th century chimney and square turrets (one in pendant) in a neighbouring house. From the "Rue St-Antoine", the "Rue Porte-Piquet" leads to the ramparts which surround the North West side, the Northern and Eastern parts of the town. Their well bonded walls still support large gardens of old noble houses of the town, such as the "Porte-Piquet" house (Rue du Roc, 17th century) and the old "Hôtel de Les-trade's" garden in the "Rue Jean-Chavoix" (17th century).

Going round the ramparts it is recommended to see the beautiful views of the dales and the surrounding countryside. This leads the visitor to the fair-ground from where the "Rue du Champ-de-Foire" leads to the «Rue des Cordeliers» (now « Rue Jean-Jaurès »). In this shopping arcades you can admire the "Hôtel de Vendeuil": its façade and inner court (18th century). From there you

can go to the Hospital (formerly **Corde-liers'covent**) founded in 1260 outside the walls by the old viscounts of Limoges. On our left, the «Avenue Eugène Le Roy» will lead the visitor to the "Allées", where under the shade of the trees you can recollect the past in front of the remains of the Cordeliers' Sacristy (16th century turret and a large casement win-dow). The broad view of the "Allées" towards the rock of Saint-Martin is nowadays adorned by the statue of the Marechal Bugeaud repara-triated from Algiers. At the end of the «Allées» the visitor cannot help but to admire the im-pressive layout and the imposing mass of the castle : a footpath at the end of the Allées and then an uphill lane will bring the visitor back to the **starting point**.

