

BEAUX-CIEUX

PLACES TO VISIT

We suggest you visit this website: <http://www.tourisme-landesdarmagnac.fr/voir-faire>, although it is in French, it has the latest tourist information on the local area. Below, we've listed some other places further afield.

We strongly recommend you check these locations on the internet before you travel to make sure they are opened! (especially when holidaying outside of July and August)

Fermes Découverte

- **Domaine de l'Hecso** (5 mins) Off the road between Saint-Julien and Saint-Justin d'Armagnac
Traditional farm with goats and horses – on offer: visit the farm, watch the milking or cheese-making, goat-cheese tasting, horse-riding lessons
- **Le Rucher du Haget**, Barbotan-Les-Thermes (10 mins)
Discover bee keeping, how to make "pain d'épices" and visit the little museum. Open April to Nov. every day except Sunday and Bank Holidays. Bee keeper clothing is provided for children.
- **Ganaderia de Buross** Route de Nérac, Escalans (15 min)
Discover cow stock-breeding and Courses Landaises, and a traditional palombière (wild pigeon shooting platform)
- **La ferme aux Cerfs** 32460 Le Houga (35 min)
Shaded walks allows you to discover deers, does and fawns, wildboars and local cattle. Nice food at the restaurant

Nature resorts

- **Centre Jean Rostand** (20 min): Discover the fauna and flora of the swamps
- **Parc Régional des Landes** (1h): Ecomusée de Marquèze (access by steam train). The Ecomusée is a 'living' museum where traditional 19th landais farm-buildings have been sympathetically reconstructed and brought to life by demonstrations of rural life back then. This is a snap shot of the agro-pastoral society of the Great Landes. It is reached by a 6 minute train ride from Sabres and is worth making a day for, especially for those with children.
- **Réserve naturelle du Courant d'Huchet** (Etang de Léon) (1h30): boat promenade in exotic forest surroundings – the current goes into the sea at Moliets and this is a good spot for a beach (don't aim for the Moliets beach but the Courant d'Huchet one!)
- **Dune du Pyla** (2h15 min) Dune de Pyla - the largest sand dune in Europe, 3 kms long and 115 metres high. The climb to the top is a must, better still at sunset.

- **Bassin d’Arcachon** (2h10 min) : the Bay is home to wide variety of birdlife. There are birdwatching reserves at nearby Parc Ornithologique du Teich and the Bird Island (*Ile aux Oiseaux*) in the Bassin which can be visited by boats that depart from the Arcachon jetties.

Large towns worth a visit

- In Gironde
 - o historic city of **Bordeaux** (1h30 min) with its the 18th century old town centre, its cathedral and many fine monuments and buildings such as the Opera, Bourse and Grand Théâtre.
 - o **Arcachon** (2h): sea-side resort hugely popular with French families with exceptional sandy beaches, long, picturesque sea-front promenade, all topped off by Arcachon's signature architecture, exemplified the Moorish casino and park, and by the magnificent villas of the Winter Town featuring stained glass, ornate balconies and intricate brickwork.
- In Gers
 - o **Auch** (1h20 min): Musée des Jacobins, the Gothic Cathédrale Ste-Marie
- In Lot-et-Garonne
 - o **Mezin** (38 min): Medieval city, Cork Museum, Touristic Train to Nérac
 - o **Nérac** (50 min): Renaissance city of Henry IV, river cruises, touristic train
- In Pyrénées-Atlantiques
 - o The resort of **Biarritz** (1h40) Belle Époque Biarritz gained popularity in the 19th century when Europe's rich and famous bathed and rested here. Today it's vibrant once again, offers exceptional beaches, top quality golf and surf, fine shops, restaurants and museums, and a particularly good aquarium (Musée de la Mer)
 - o **Bayonne** (1h45) capital of the French Basque Country: shopping, culture, ramparts, museums - plus lots of ham & chocolates! In mid-August, the city goes mad during the fêtes de Bayonne.
- In Hautes-Pyrénées
 - o **Pau** (1h30), compact, cultured, scenic and historical city with lovely boutiques, cafés and tea-shops, the castle of Gascon king Henri IV and the spectacular Boulevard des Pyrénées. The city hosts international golf (Pau’s golf course was created in 1856, the oldest in Continental Europe), equestrian and motor-racing tournaments.
 - o **Lourdes** (2h), the Pilgrimage town

Medieval Bastides and villages

- Les Landes

- **Labastide** (10 mins): Place Royale, whose architecture was the model for the Place des Vosges in Paris; Notre Dame des Bastides (a bike sanctuary); Ecomusée de l'Armagnac: nature trail through forests and around 7 lakes, gascon barn with traditional tools and casks for armagnac making, distillery and underground wine store; Temple des Bastides (Bastides museum); See Tourist Office for guided tour of the village.
- **Saint-Justin** (15 mins)

- Gers

- **Montréal du Gers** (30 mins) oldest Bastide in the area
- **Séviac** (30 min) 5thC roman villa (near Montréal du Gers), with over 30 mosaic pavements
- **Fourcès** (35 mins) unique round Bastide
- **Laressingle** (45 min) a tiny fortified village, museum of medieval weapons An authentic siege camp of the 12-14th century with demonstrations of siege machines. Medieval trades are demonstrated e.g. rope making, armour, blacksmith etc.
- **Condom**: (50min) Musée de l'Armagnac, Cathedral
- **La Romieu** (1h), charming bastide famous for its cats: 15 stone cats can be found in the town. The legend goes that Angéline and her beloved cats saved the village from disaster when rats threatened to over-run the town and plunge it into famine.

Cathedrals & abbeys

- Gers

- **La Romieu**: (1h) 14thC Collegiate Church listed World Heritage Site by UNESCO.
- **Auch** (1h20): 14thC cathedral, famous for its stained glass and choir walls, the latter rated one of the finest surviving in the world today
- **Valence sur Baïse** (55min) : peaceful Abbaye de Flarans

- Gironde:

- 13th Basilique of **Bazas** (45mins via Losse) Fine church square lined with fine 16th and 17th houses. (also see Châteaux below)

Châteaux

- Gers
 - Château de **Lavardens** (1h10), near Auch
 - Château de **Cassaigne** (50 mins), near Condom: Built in 1247, visit the vaulted kitchens, associated rooms, a cellar and Armagnac tasting room.
- Gironde:
 - Château de **Cazeneuve**, near Bazas (45 mins via Losse)
 - Château de **La Roquetaillade**, near Bazas (50 mins). The two fortresses are a masterpiece in Aquitaine and the site is one of the most visited in South West France. (children will enjoy the farm)

Vineyards:

If you are a wine lover, you might want to explore the Bordeaux Wine estates from the **Graves** region (on the left bank of the Garonne), which are easily accessible from the house, and a bit further, the **Pessac-Léognan** region (1h45), famous for its full-bodied clarets.

Closest is the **Sauternes** region (1h from the house, near Bazas) with its sweet dessert wines (reputedly the best in the world).

You'll be spoilt for choice if you want to visit the **Armagnac** vineyards which are all around. We recommend the Château de Joutan in **Betbezer** (the turn-of is on the left at the entrance of the village) which produces one of the best locally. Alternately, you could visit the Château de Briat or the Domaine de l'Espérance both award-winning châteaux in **Mauvezin d'Armagnac**. The later also selling Flocc (local apéritif wine) and a very drinkable rosé!

The vineyards of the Gers, not as well known as those of Bordeaux but they produce wines well worth a try, the **Côtes de Gascogne**. The towns to head for are **Madiran** which produces the healthiest full-bodied red wine or **St Mont** (delicious wine whether red, white or rosé).