

CASTLE OF

PEYREPERTUSE

T O U R G U I D E



THE CASTLE OF PEYREPERTUSE

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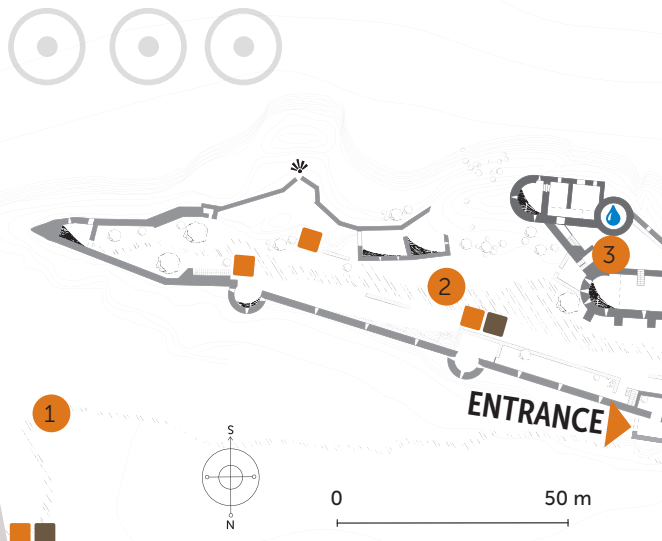


Cathar Country - the guide



Castrum - the game

f **y** **i** **a** **audetourisme**
payscathare.org



Plan: ©L. Bayrou/CAML - Graphic adaptation: Le Passe Muraille

SAFETY INSTRUCTIONS

Storm

Leave the upper part of the château, keep away from any metal objects or trees. In case of lightning and in the absence of a closed shelter, do not run or walk - sit or crouch with you head down, legs together, arms tight against the body and hands on your head.

Fire

In the event of a fire outside the château (CASTLE), remain inside and wait for the emergency services to arrive.

Accident

In the event of an accident or potential danger, alert the emergency services on 112.

Map key

Stonewall remains

Stonewall ruins

Stonework ceiling features (arches, rib vaulting, etc.)

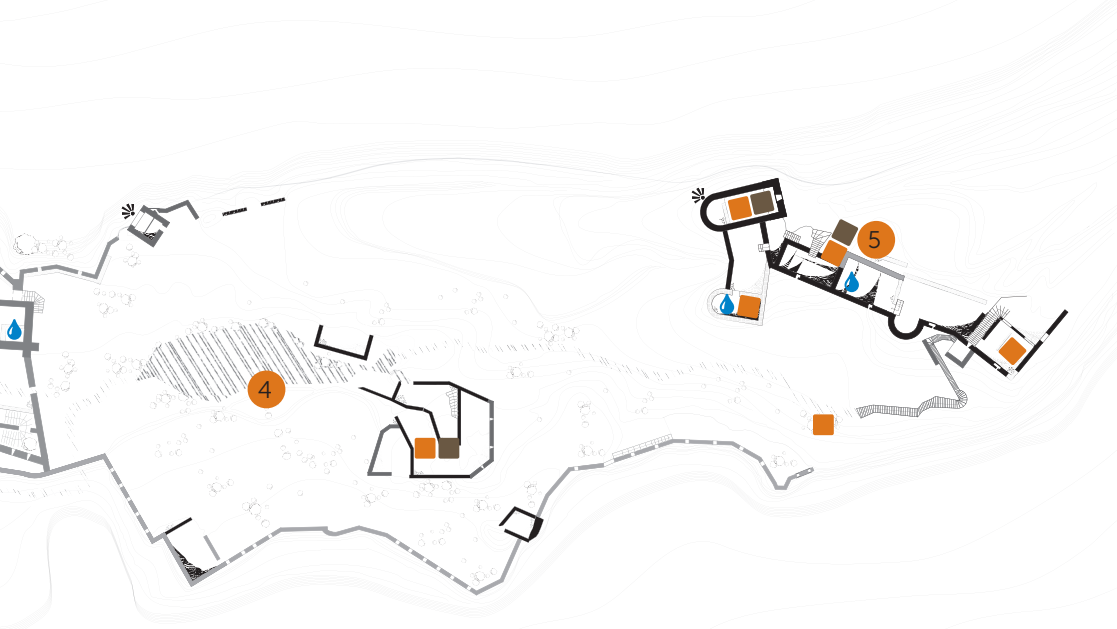
Cistern

Station of this leaflet

Station for the Cathar Country app

Station for the Castrum app





PEYREPERTUSE

AN INVINCIBLE FORTRESS

From a distance, the Fortress of Peyrepertuse cannot be seen in with the rocky ridge. Spread over 300 m and shaped like a gigantic ship, it occupies the same area as the Citadel of Carcassonne. It is divided into 3 major sections: the outer enclosure, the inner enclosure and the San Jordi keep. In between the outer and inner enclosures, the primitive château was built, like a bolt. Around its high walls, the limestone cliffs watch over it. High and steep, challenging the attacker to venture there ...

+ More to see

Peyrepertuse, or *pèira pertusa* in Occitan, means "pierced stone". This stone has now disappeared ...

👁 Further information

1 The access path goes around the cliff and passes under the outer enclosure, which gives Peyrepertuse its unusual shape. This wall ends with a spur, a very tapered structure clearly visible from this spot. It is an active defence construction, designed to deflect projectiles.



Wind, stones and memories ... that's what awaits you at the end of the path that you will take from the reception.

We maintain the entire site in a spirit of authenticity to accompany you in the exploration of a place that was designed to be inaccessible. You cross a forest of shady boxwood trees, the trunks of which have in some places become smooth with the many hands that have gripped them. At a bend in the path, the landscape opens out before you. Overhanging it, the outer walls of the château stretch out. This path, where you have to inch past the rockface, leads you to the entrance of the fortress that all men and animals ... have been using since the 13th century.



The country of Perapertusès is mentioned in the 9th century and the Château of Peyrepertuse in the 11th century. It belonged to the Count of Besalu, a small Catalan country, which joined the county of Barcelona in the early 12th century. During the crusade against the Albigensians, the Lord of the area, Guilhem de Peyrepertuse, paid tribute to Simon de Montfort, but continued to resist, notably by occupying the château of Puilaurens. It was in 1240 that King Louis IX of France actually took possession of Peyrepertuse.

+ More to see

In the 12th century, there were 3 castles on this mountain, which was then land of the lords of Cabaret, built on the mid-slope: Quertineux, Surdespine, Cabaret. 3 fortified villages, named "castras", stretch out below them as far as the stream of Grésilhou. At the end of the crusade against the Albigensians, this complex was destroyed: the King of France wanted to erase the memory of such a powerful lordship, protective of heretics. 4 royal fortresses were erected on the summit, marking the French takeover of the Occitan land. However, it is remembering the inhabitants who were driven out of their villages that will be the focus of your visit...



THE FORTIFICATIONS: A REMARKABLE PROJECT

When Louis IX took possession of the château, he quickly began work on new fortifications, which turned the modest seigniorial château into an impressive royal fortress. Until 1255, Peyrepertuse was in hostile country, facing Quéribus and Fenolhédès. As a result, the fortress was equipped with all the innovations for active defence and the use of new war machines and crossbows... The accesses ended in a labyrinth, a very narrow space in front of the gate prevented a ram from being used there, while the gates were protected with barbicans and watchtowers... The construction site of Peyrepertuse was one of the most important of its time. We have an exceptional document for the years 1250-1251, which provides us with a clear picture.

THE OUTER ENCLOSURE ²

A VAST AREA

A little vaulted room welcomes visitors: this is the lodge for the porter who watches the entrance. A high wall with rough buttresses stands: it is the nave of the chapel of the early château. Climb slightly to the left ... A tree in the rock offers its shade and after that, the huge stone vessel opens out...

The long wall is defended from a walkway that runs over 120 m long from the entrance to the spur. This is the place for the scouts, where they could detect any movement in the distance or on the way. Two open towers at the ravine provide a dangerous welcome for attackers: if they attempt to move forward, soldiers posted in front, or in the château below, would catch them easily. There was no way to hide. But before getting here, they would have to avoid the rain of arrows from the crossbows of the archers, carefully placed...



+ More to see

At the end of the wall, you enter the triangular space of the spur. It is a place with aperture windows on two levels, where you have to imagine the floors... On the second floor, a platform was designed for a launching device, a catapult, for example: the bow of the ship is offensive...

👁 Further information

A 2-storey lodge of good quality construction was used in the 15th-16th centuries as the reception for the garrison. Near the entrance can be seen some basic amenities carved into the rock: a bench, steps, a sink.



👁 Further information

A lord, 21 sergeants, a scout, a porter, a chaplain and dogs: this was the garrison in 1302. In the 14th century, the local residents guarded the fortress: peasants and tradesmen... Rewarded by the king, they were exempt from taxes. That is why they were called "morte-payés", a lucrative responsibility, which soon became hereditary.

+ More to see

How, in the Middle Ages, could anyone leave the château without being seen by the porter? Between the latrines and the lodge, a little postern-gate opened onto a hidden path. In the shelter of the rocky needle, they were protected, if they were agile enough to climb these wild slopes...



THE "OLD KEEP" ³

THE MEMORY OF ITS ORIGINS

The "old keep" stands between the outer and the inner enclosures. It was here that Peyrepertuse began, around a keep, transformed since then into a cistern and a church. In the 13th century, the whole building was refortified by the royal architects...

Further information

On the wall before entering the enclosure of the Old Keep, two levels of construction are clearly identifiable: small stones at the bottom and larger, better worked stones at the top mark the difference between the 11th-12th centuries and the 13th century.



More to see




The courtyard provides access to the governor's house, upstairs, and to Sainte-Mary's Church. This parish church has been dated to the 11th century. It probably served as a seigniorial chapel since bodies were found buried

in the nave. A plaque honours them at the end of the church. The original door of the walled church during the work undertaken by the King is still visible. A cistern was also built probably at this time, between the rock and the wall.

THE CISTERNS

Cisterns are strategic structures that guaranteed the autonomy of the fortress in case of siege. They are four in the château. They were built under the direction of a cistern master, a highly skilled craftsman in the service of the King.

³  ⁴ Go through the door of the old keep reaching the inner enclosure

THE INNER ENCLOSURE ⁴

Its size gives an idea of the importance that the King wished to give to Peyrepertuse. Here, an army could be lodged, in addition to the usual garrison. Everything was planned for supplies and water ... on a large scale. The remains of the polygon building are an example. It has two levels: the ground floor, probably for animals and upstairs for grain. A natural cooler opens up in the ground, for other types of commodities...



THE SAN JORDI "KEEP" 5

A SYMBOL OF DOMINATION

In 1242, shortly after taking possession of Peyrepertuse, Louis IX ordered the Seneschal of Carcassonne to undertake the construction of a staircase leading to the highest point of Peyrepertuse. It was here, at an altitude of 800 m, that the royal engineers designed the San Jordi keep, a complex that provided the fortress with modern buildings and gave it the power of a real weapon of deterrence...



Further information

The Saint-Louis staircase was carved into the rock and runs along the cliff. It was recently restored because the steps were so worn that they were no longer safe to climb. Its impressive 60 steps extend to the edge of the precipice... At the top, strong walls with a walkway ensured the defence of the rock.



More to see

The Châteaux of Peyrepertuse and Quéribus are the only two that can be viewed from each other and could communicate directly. Both keep watch over the whole region, from the sea to the Pyrenees. Even a hoof stirring the dust on the horizon could be detected immediately. With this network of towers and castles dotting the region, it was calculated that it took only 3 hours to warn the Seneschal in Carcassonne.



Further information

Here the windows are wide, and equipped with window seats, or small benches, that are quite comfortable. The stones were carefully chiselled. The remains of a chimney were also found. Here, we are in a higher quality setting, attentive to light and comfort for its occupants... signs of changing times, passing slowly from the Romanesque to the Gothic era.

Further information

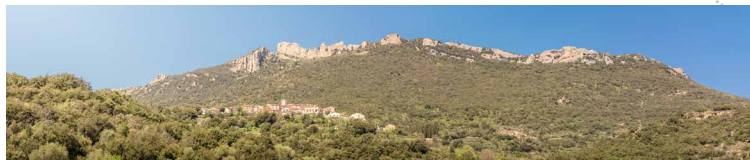
At the top of the San Jordi rock, there are two cisterns, and above, at the highest point, the remains of a chapel. But what keeps everyone here for a long time, struggling with the wind and the sun, is the fantastic view. The fortress reveals its enormous size and its organisation, while the exceptional beauty of the landscape all around it makes it a wild oasis. The sea, the Pyrenees, the Fenouillèdes hills, the Bugarach peak ... and the Quéribus Château, the loyal sentinel standing at the forefront on its lonely cliff.

THE DEADFALL

This is an active defence system, present in all the royal castles. A slot was made in the entrance archway, where a soldier, posted on a platform above the entrance, could welcome attackers in a ... stunning way!

THE VILLAGE OF DUILHAC-SOUS-PEYREPERTUSE

THE CHARMING STREETS



Perched on its rock, Duilhac appears to be wrapped around its church, surrounded by scrubland and mountains. While strolling in the streets, original perspectives open out onto the landscape and the château, which can be seen between two houses, from a bend in a garden path, or from the lookout on the town hall square... You have to follow your nose to walk around here, or push open an old door to see a ceiling of woven boxwood and old mangers...



THE FORT

Duilhac is an ecclesial village: it was built at the beginning of the 11th century around a place of worship. At that time, the warring between the local lords led the Church to impose the "Peace of God", that is to say, truces, and areas deemed to be protected. During the Hundred Years War, the ecclesial enclosure of Duilhac was refortified and became the "Fort". Some villagers must have had their own shelters in this area.

Today, we can still guess the outlines by observing the layout of the houses, from below, but also on the town hall square. And the door of the Fort still exists, you must go through it to get to the church of Saint-Michel...

THE FACILITIES

Wonderfully renovated, the village welcomes visitors in a very charming and picturesque setting, where you can still see the way of life of previous generations. Its facilities are also recently built: you can play tennis on a court of quality aerated concrete, at the foot of the château, or lawn boules in an idyllic setting...



THE ROMANESQUE CHURCH OF SAINT-MICHEL

A RESTORATION REWARDED

Take a few steps from the street to get to the door of the Fort and you reach the heart of the village, its church. It is a Romanesque church, dating from at least the eleventh century. In 1866, a bell-tower porch was built for it, in sandstone of a soft colour and simple patterns; the Romanesque door was placed there, through which you can enter today. A simple barrel-vaulted nave is colourfully decorated and the stained glass windows are tinted blue and yellow. You can savour the atmosphere of this little, living church, very Southern with its wall motifs and marble altars... The municipality was awarded the prize of the Rubans de Patrimoine in 2002 for the restoration of this church.



HENRI-PAUL EYDOUX

Leaving the village by the road to Rouffiac, you go past the cemetery. Tall cypresses trace the paths where you can find names from the past. Among them is Henri-Paul Eydoux. Decorated with the Croix de Guerre 1939-1945, the Resistance Rosette and the "Medal of Freedom, he pursued a political career: a technical advisor to Jacques Soustelle's cabinet, while he was Governor-General of Algeria (1955-1956), and then he was named Minister of Information (July. 1958-Jan. 1959) and Minister Delegate to the Prime Minister (Jan. 1959-Feb. 1960). He was especially a writer whose work includes some forty books on the history and geography of Africa, classical archaeology, and medieval and modern archaeology and architecture. He wrote "Châteaux Fantastiques" (published by Flammarion) to reveal a region he loved so much that he chose his last resting place here.

FRESHNESS AND PROSPERITY

THE FOUNTAIN OF LOVE

The villagers drink good spring water, cool and pure. This water gushing from a large rock at the end of the village is channelled to a fountain where it is collected in 4 basins of red marble that overflow in winter.

Carved into the rock, the words of Ronsard ring out like a pledge:
« Whoever drinks here will fall in love... » It's up to you to try it out...

CAPTURED WATER

On the outskirts of the village, the water runs in small channels flush with the houses. The inhabitants can capture it and manage the flow by a system of mini-locks, very similar to the *aguls* in Catalan country. The water also sprinkles the gardens across the street below.

A COOLER?

Above the rock of the fountain, towards the tennis courts, green oaks on a slope provide welcome shade.

According to the elders, the village had a cooler.

In the 20th century, there were several cafes in Duilhac and they shared the cooler to store their bottles...



THE OIL MILL

Imagine Duilhac in the 19th and 20th centuries, as a prosperous village growing lavender, grapes and olive trees.

The olives were harvested in winter: a difficult crop, tended by women, whose fingers froze on contact with snow or frost. However, they had to wait for winter; it was essential: «Whoever picks olives before January leaves oil on the olive tree»...

The harvest was carried to the oil mill installed at the inn adjoining the fountain. This mill had a good reputation. Why? For the water. It was used to drive the oil to the bottom of the jars and it ensured perfect quality.



NEARBY



RIBAUTE MILL

A trail with yellow markings will lead you from the village, to discover the waterfalls and the ruins of the mill. The departure point is at a big plane tree on the D14, towards Rouffiac.

THE CASCADES

An area for recreation and supervised bathing in summer located in the great outdoors.

THE CATHAR TRAIL (GR®367)

This path that goes from Port-La-Nouvelle to Foix crosses the village ...



LES
CITADEL-
LES DU
VERTIGE
EN LUCE POUR
UNESCO

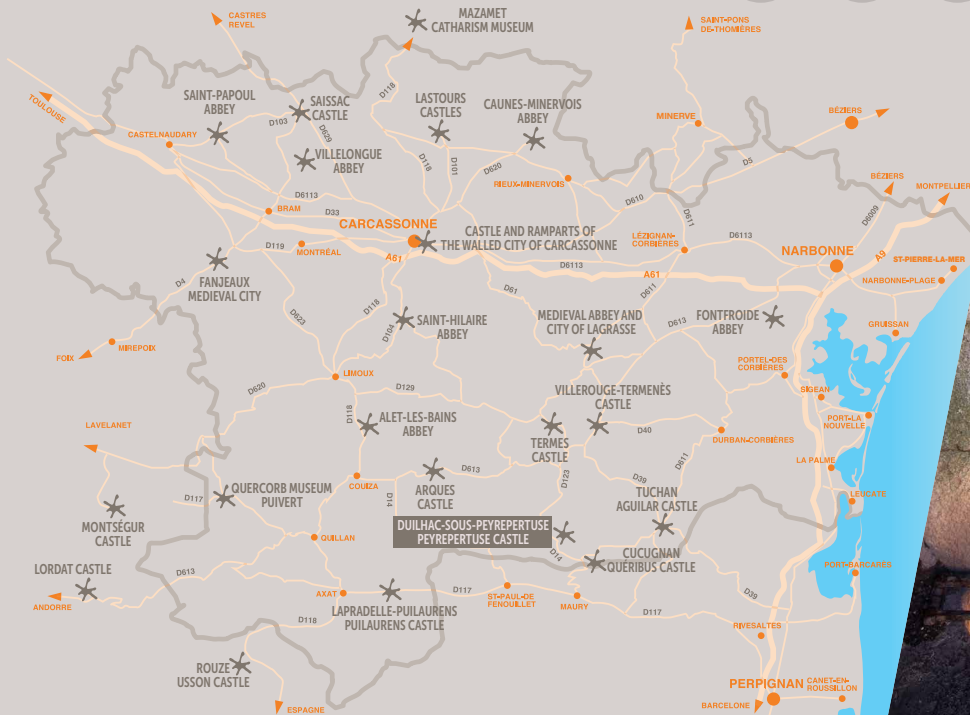


ON THE WAY TO UNESCO!

In the 13th century, at the end of the Crusade against the Albigenses, the power of the King of France was asserted in our newly conquered region. For the first time, a coherent system of defence was set up for the entire territory to face an enemy: Aragon. Peyrepertuse, Puilaurens, Termes, Quéribus, Aguilar, Lastours, and Montségur (Ariège) made up a line of invincible fortresses coordinated by the Seneschal of Carcassonne. A new, central defensive system where the citadel of Carcassonne was the headquarters. A spectacular architectural feat in the city and in these ridge-top castles blending into the rocks. Lastly, totally preserved landscapes and exceptional panoramic views. These are the main arguments put forward in the application for inscription as a UNESCO World Heritage site.

You can support this application at this website citadellesduvertige.aude.fr

PRACTICAL INFORMATION



GOOD PRACTICES

- You are advised to bring walking shoes, a snack, a hat and/or wind-proof jacket and a bottle of water.
- Please keep an eye on your children.
- Pets welcome.
- Respect the local wildlife, no foraging.
- Please take your rubbish with you, there are bins available at the reception.
- Visiting is dangerous in high winds and forbidden in case of a violent thunderstorm.
- The municipal order is on display at the reception and on peyreperutuse.com.

SERVICES

- TOILETS**
Under the reception area.
- PARKING**
Free carparks in the village and at the château.
- CASH WITHDRAWAL**
You can withdraw cash at the post office, during opening hours, for holders of an account at the Banque Postale.
- SHOP**
- Corbières Roussillon TOURISM OFFICE**
2 route de Duilhac - 11350 Cucugnan - +33 (0)4 68 45 69 40



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