



# LASTOURS

## CASTELS

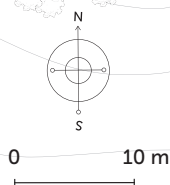
T O U R   G U I D E



# LASTOURS CASTLES

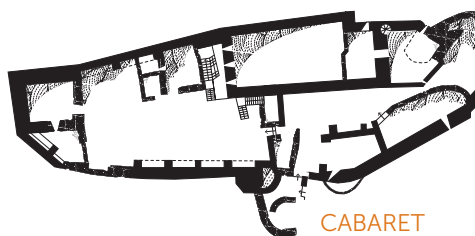
THIS VISITOR COMPANION HAS BEEN DESIGNED TO HELP YOU EXPLORE THE SITE AT LASTOURS: THE CASTLES, THE VILLAGE, THE VIEWPOINT AND BEAUTIFUL CORNERS OF NATURE. IT WILL SHOW YOU WHAT WE FIND BEAUTIFUL, CURIOUS AND INTERESTING....

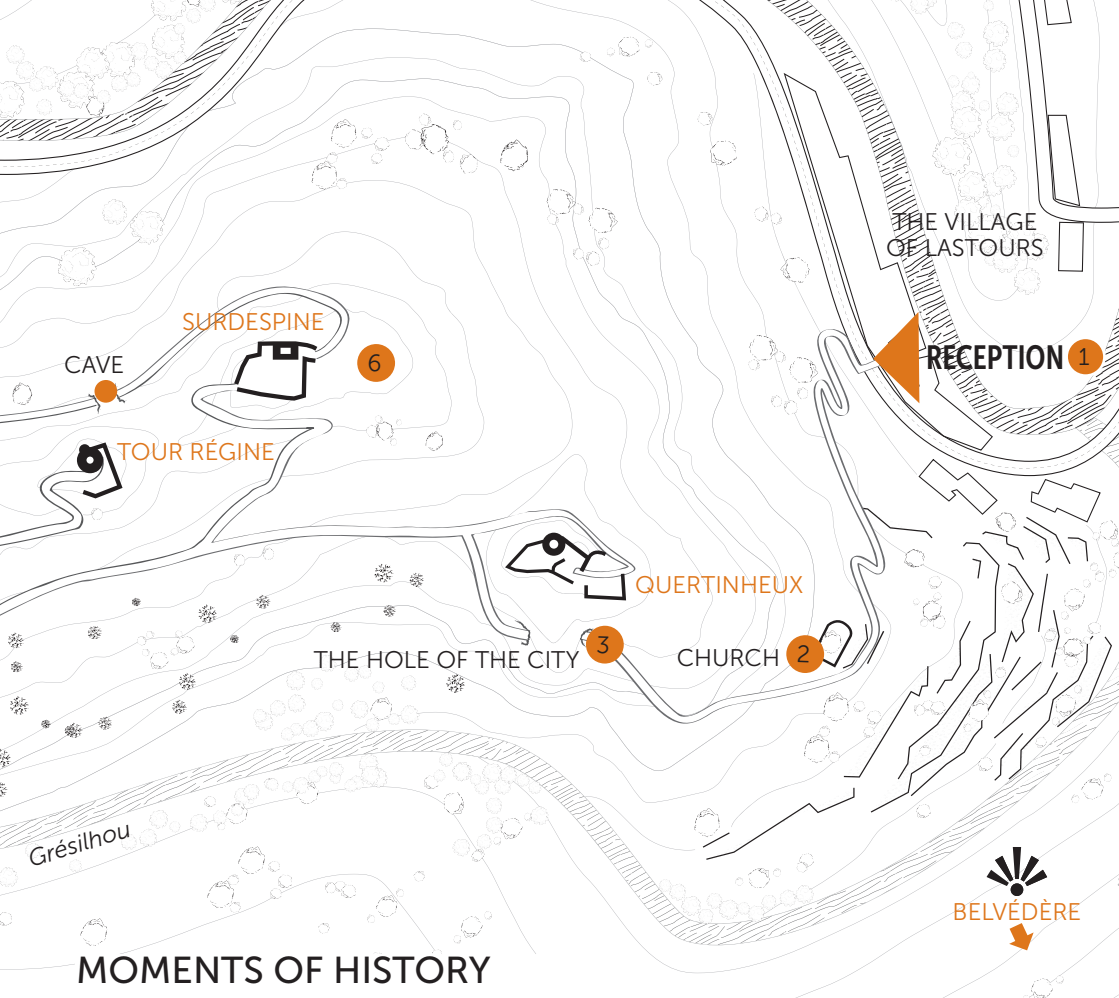
THEN, IF YOU ARE CURIOUS TO KNOW MORE, SEE MORE, AND SHARE MORE, YOU WILL FIND OTHER TOOLS AT YOUR DISPOSAL.



## Legend

- Stone walls
- Lower masonry ruins
- Development
- "Castrum"
- Terraces

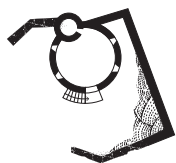




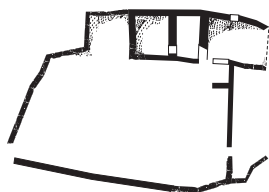
## MOMENTS OF HISTORY

The news is certain Pierre-Roger de Cabaret must surrender. The Cathars who live here, named “perfects”, bishops and regular believers must leave and find a new place of refuge. It was a difficult decision to leave this proud spur, covered with 3 castles renowned for their impregnability, in the hands of the Crusaders.

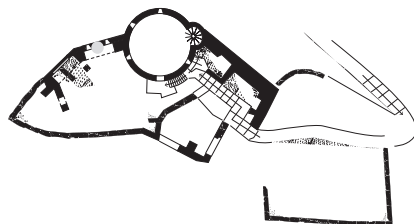
But Simon de Montfort was gathering his general staff in Carcassonne. He’s going to attack Cabaret. No fortress can resist forever, even Termes had fallen. So it’s better to negotiate, and he has a strong argument: a hostage, Simon de Montfort’s brother-in-law, Bouchard de Marly. By freeing him, he can avoid all violence. Montfort’s flag will fly over Cabaret, but not for long...



TOUR RÉGINE



SURDESPINE



QUERTINHEUX

1

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: Quertinheux, 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...

### + Further information

Pierre-Roger de Cabaret, and his younger brother Jourdain, were the heads of a very powerful family. Close to the Viscount power, they were familiar with Viscount Trencavel of Carcassonne. Here in Cabaret, they own land whose inexhaustible mineral resources provide them with a solid financial base. Iron, silver and copper are abundant. These are all ways to arm themselves, negotiate, exchange, and trade... Their court is lustrous, often visited by troubadours. Believers, "perfects", "good Christians" as they called themselves, lived in peace under their protection.

## QUERTINHEUX, A PEACEFUL VILLAGE <sup>2</sup>



The "castrum" of Quertinheux was spread out here. The remains, which are spread out below the church, show a high-quality dwelling, quite large, and comfortable. The cemetery next to the church gives us the impression that the people who lived here were rather healthy. Here, we also found a magnificent chess piece, displayed at the castle's reception. It seems that village life here was quite enjoyable..



... Chess piece

### VERTICALITY

A little further down the path, the site completely reveals itself. First of all, there is the impression of verticality given by the cypress trees planted in the 1930s. Then the strategic importance of the site, the strength of its natural defences and the royal development are obvious...





## The legendary “Trou de la Cité” 3

### (hole in the city)

This cavity and its network of underground tunnels have been built over the centuries to serve as a place of refuge, storage, a prison... Archaeologists believe that it could be the first “castle” of Quertinheux. It owes its name to a legend that the Cathars fled CARCASSONNE to come to Lastours through the tunnels.



#### + Further information

Just before the entrance to the “Trou de la Cité”, there is a small, open cavity on the right. It was there that the grave of the “princesse au collier” (princess with the necklace) was discovered. This little girl lived in the Bronze Age. Her magnificent oriental style necklace and amber pearls from the Baltic show the existence of international trade in that era...

#### + Further information

It's the water that has sculpted these valleys and pierced multiple caves in these 540 million year old Cambrian limestone mountains. There are about forty cavities on the Lastours spur.

## IN CABARET, THE PAST REAPPEARS 4



Slowly emerging from the grip of old oak trees and coming back into memory: the “castrum” of Cabaret, its streets, its houses, the life that animated it in the 12th century, everything has reappeared. Its inhabitants, brutally expelled, left everything in place: the fish in the dish, the tool in the forge, the jug full of water in its alcove...

#### + Further information

Under the direction of the archaeologist in charge of the site, Marie-Elise Gardel, the integration projects have done a remarkable job for decades. Young people with difficult backgrounds have found a meaning here, a know-how or simply a human relationship. The people of Lastours have also trowelled, emotionally discovering the life of their distant ancestors.

### IMMERSE YOURSELF IN THE DAILY LIFE OF THE OLD INHABITANTS

Archaeologists have found many objects in the village of Cabaret: dishes, belt buckles, spindle whorls, keys... These are exceptional records of the daily life of ordinary people. Most of them are displayed at the castle's reception. Don't miss this touching exhibition.

## Places of work 5

A fireplace, a basin, a grinding wheel... Here we are at the Cabaret blacksmith. The blacksmith is an important craftsman, his art is vital. He is entrusted with the maintenance of agricultural tools and the manufacture of weapons. His workshop is not far from the location of the original Cabaret castle, on the overhanging rock.



### More to see

The cobblestones show the pavement of a steep street: this measure prevents rainwater from washing away the soil. Further down, at the threshold of a house, there is a water canalization system: flat stones, driven vertically, lead the runoff water to the river.



### Further information

The lime kiln at the bottom of the village is from the royal period. It was installed at the time of construction of the royal castles, in a deserted and intentionally destroyed village. Lime, used in mortar and cisterns, is made from limestone rocks, which are "melted" in this huge furnace.



## FROM VALLEYS TO FORTRESSES



It is necessary to go back up above the forge, and take the path that goes to the left. It bypasses the spur and leads to the other valley dominated by the royal castles, that of Orbiel. It's a spectacular journey, which will take you for a shady walk to the castles...

### More to see

Throughout this spur, you can discover a preserved nature that bears witness to a rich bio-diversity.



## Underground seigneurie 6

The mountain on the other side of the Orbiel is arid and a little blackish. It is a schist-limestone contact zone, exploited in ancient times for copper and silver lead.



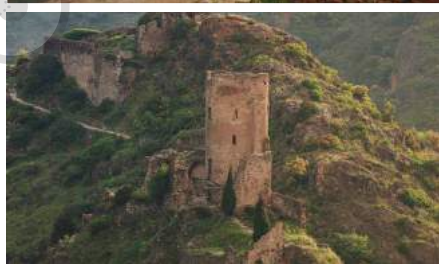
### + Further information

The land is as generous on the surface as it is underground for Jourdain de Cabaret, Pierre-Roger's brother. Its estates beyond the co-lordship of Cabaret provide it with income in barley, oats, wheat and olive trees....



## The power of the symbol

The path leads to the castle of Surdespine. Its tower, of which only the base remains, was square, like that of Cabaret, which can be seen in the background. In the foreground "Tour Régine" (Regine Tower) and its round keep, of the same inspiration as that of Quertinheux. It's necessary to go up and see the fantastic viewpoint on the Belvedere, to appreciate all of the impression of power that they give off....



# THE VILLAGE OF LASTOURS

## NEXT TO THE FLOW (OF TIME)

The Orbiel runs at the foot of the village. It is the backbone of the village. It's around the river that the village was built, leaning against the rock, 1km long. As it progresses, the history of its inhabitants is gradually revealed. The heritage and memory of the inhabitants attract your attention, make you curious and show you many interesting things...



### THE RIVER AND WOOL

A chimney proudly rises just in front of the entrance of the castles. At its foot, strange openings form an intriguing mosaic. These are the remains of the pipes through which water vapour passed to treat the woolen sheets produced in the textile factory located here. The steam made them rotproof.

### SPECIAL WATER

Since the 14th century, the inhabitants of Lastours have been working with wool. Sheep and goats occupy the surrounding pastures. The quick water of the Orbiel generates the fullers, which press the sheets. In addition to its strength, this water allows an exceptional washing quality because its acidity is neutralized by the limestone from the revival of the Pestril river. At the beginning of the 19th century, the Lastours unit's speciality became sheets for billiard tables. This shows the extreme finesse of its production.

### THE FLOOD OF 1930

At the end of the 19th century, the textile industry was in full swing. A factory was built around 1800. But in 1930, a catastrophic flood swept everything away, from les Martyrs to Conques: bridges, houses, and the factory. It must be rebuilt. The chimney visible today is a remnant of this new factory.



### THE YARN OF THE WOOL

Clean, spin, weave, dye, wash... wax! For a long time the women removed, one by one, the small blades of grass or straw left in the weft fabric lying on the drying terraces, which were visible from the start of the path leading to the castles.





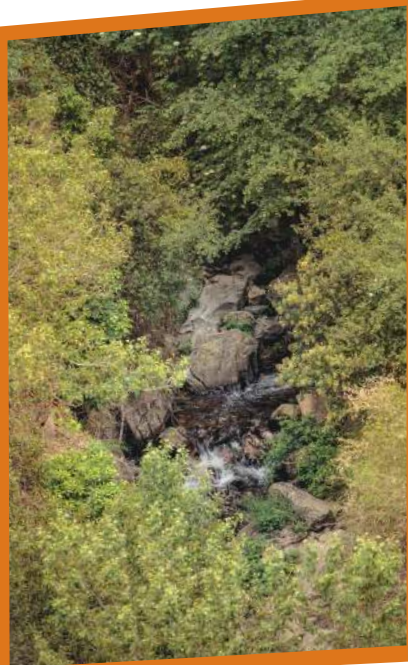
## LES BARRENCES

2400 years ago, the Romans operated many copper mines on the slopes of les Barrencs, the blackish mountain on the other side of the river. 180,000 tonnes of copper was retrieved. The soil from the excavation of these mines, used as backfill, eventually carved terraces where the Romans planted olive trees. This cultivation lasted until 1956, when frost destroyed the trees. The olive tree gave its name to the river "Orbiel".



## THE MINERS PATH

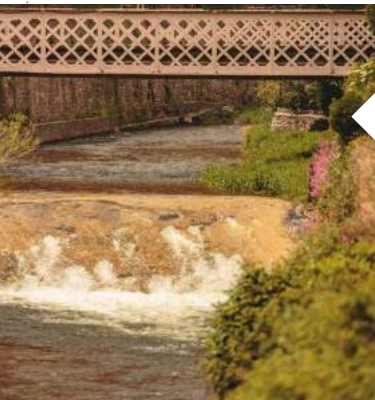
Following the road to the village, a bridge crosses Grésilhou, a tributary of the Orbiel. On the right, a path ran along the small stream leading to the viewpoint of the Belvedere. It is the former miners trail which led to the gold mines of Salsigne-Villanière in the first half of the 20th century. Imagine, passing the mountain and a valley, with people from Limousis arriving above Lastours on a hill where those from Fournes joined them. They all descended the hill, passed the Oribel, then, now accompanied by their colleagues from Lastours, climbed up this path to the most important gold mine in Western Europe. On the way back, everyone stopped at their small plot of land to cultivate their peas, beans, onions...



# WATER OF LIFE

## SUPPLYING THE INHABITANTS WITH WATER

From 1923-33, water was collected and distributed in a dense network of fountains. Lastours is one of the first villages to have running water. Fountains were present in every corner of the neighbourhood, which was huge progress. One of them remains, against the parapet on the left bank, at the end of the flowered footbridge spanning the Orbiel before the bakery.

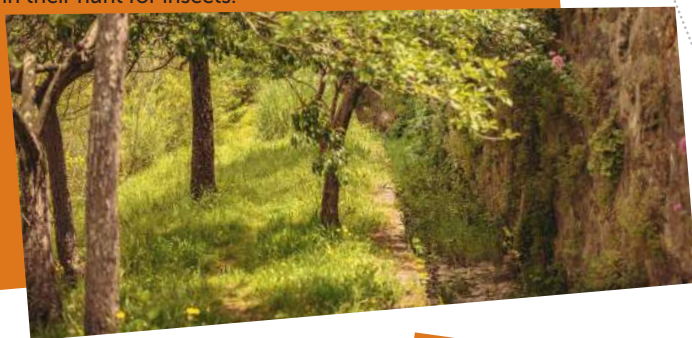


## RUNNING THE MILLS

Return to the right bank of the Orbiel. A little after the iron footbridge, the river rumbles and springs. It's a "pavement": the bed of the river was raised to accelerate its flow, and thus to turn the bakery's grain mill, which was still in operation until the middle of the 20th century. The bubbling water was led into the small canal along the bank by a lock system which can still be seen today, up to the gears of the mill.



Béal: this Occitan word means canal. On the banks of this canal, a strip of wooded land offers a refreshing stopover for dreamers and picnickers. In summer, swallows and swifts fly over the surface of the water, in their hunt for insects.



## DOING THE LAUNDRY

Until 25 years ago, the river ran at the foot of the road, into the car park. The steps that go down there were used by washerwomen. Who needs a wash house when you have a river? Thick flagstones were placed on an inclined plane to do the job. All you have to do is make room for their crate, and there you go, they can get to work...

## SPRING WATER

To find the spring in Lastours, you must go to the tap. This is where it flows from and is enjoyed. This water supplies the villages as far as Puichéric.

# TRAFFIC ROUTES

## HIGH ROADS

In the corner of the bend in the street where the bakery lies, on the other side of the road, rue de la Calade begins, with a flight of steps. The houses supported by the rock follow one another in terraces up to the church. You can go back down to the village by the alley of La Forge.



## A BLACKSMITH AND TOOLS

Each family has a shovel, a pickaxe, a plane, a saw, a hammer, and an axe... All of these tools guarantee a minimum of independence. It's the blacksmith who maintains them, and makes them, but only the iron part. You make your own sleeves, often made of chestnut or boxwood. The tools are made to measure, adapted to the size and strength of each person...



## DEPARTURE FOR CARCASSONNE

At the end of the car park, the old station of Lastours remains how it was in 1930 when the flood put an end to its activity. Lastours became an important transfer platform for the valley's production of wood, textiles, and especially for the transport of gold matte from the Salsigne mines. Workers and travellers also profited from this connection.

## MATTE

Matte is a metal product resulting from the first smelting of an ore, in this case a gold ore, i.e. Containing gold.

## 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](http://citadellesduvertige.aude.fr)

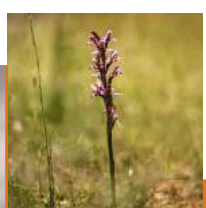
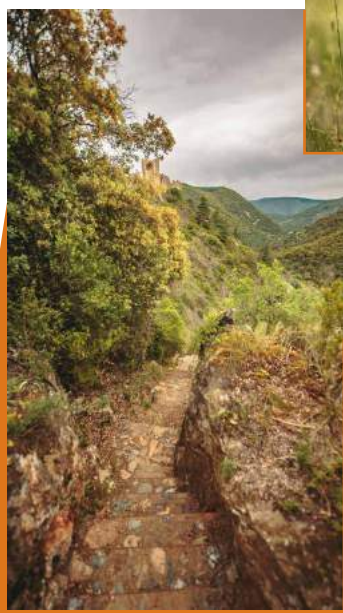


# A STRATEGIC POSITION



The spur seems to split the landscape to advance towards the Montagne Noire that it defends. It stands out, surrounded by steep and deep valleys where the Grésilhou and Orbiel rivers run. To the west is Mont Clergue, where the only access road to the Montagne Noire opens up to the Revolutin; to the north, Mont Cante Merle, then the Orbiel valley, which runs towards the Ilhes, and beyond Hautpoul, Mazamet, then Albigeois; the Barrencs and its ancient mines rise to the east... The view is amazing, it will take your breath away.

## THE VIEWPOINT OF LASTOURS A HIGHLIGHT



You can get to the village by car, or on foot following the landscaped path which goes the length of Grésilhou. It's a magnificent path through the oak forest, along this small mountain stream...







## ALL HAIL, THE KING OF FRANCE

Hovering above the spur, 4 royal castles crown the hill: Quertineux, Surdespine (or Fleur d'Espine), Tour Régine and Cabaret. These buildings from the second half of the 13th century impose their presence across the whole landscape. It is a question of maintaining the royal power, insistently expressed in the creation and name of the Tour Régine, the Queen's Tower. It's also about rebuilding this important site. These buildings are the northern outpost of the royal defence system against Aragon. However, their symbolic role is as important as their effectiveness: after their total destruction at the end of the Crusade against the Albigensians, they replaced the 3 castles of the lords of Cabaret, a powerful family friendly to heretics.

### + Further information

Pierre-Roger de Cabaret, and his younger brother Jourdain, were the heads of a very powerful family in the 12th century. Close to the Viscount power, they are familiar with Viscount Trencavel of CARCASSONNE. Here in Cabaret, they own land whose inexhaustible mineral resources provide them with a solid financial base. Iron, silver and copper are abundant. These are all ways to arm yourself, negotiate, exchange and trade... Their court is lustrous, often visited by troubadours. Cathars, "perfects", "good Christians" as they call their selves, live in peace under their protection. 3 lordly castles then dominate 3 fortified villages, the "castrums". Their remains give the image of a well thought-out urban planning. The objects found in these "castrums" also reveal a very lively place. They are displayed at the reception of the castles.



... Belt buckle



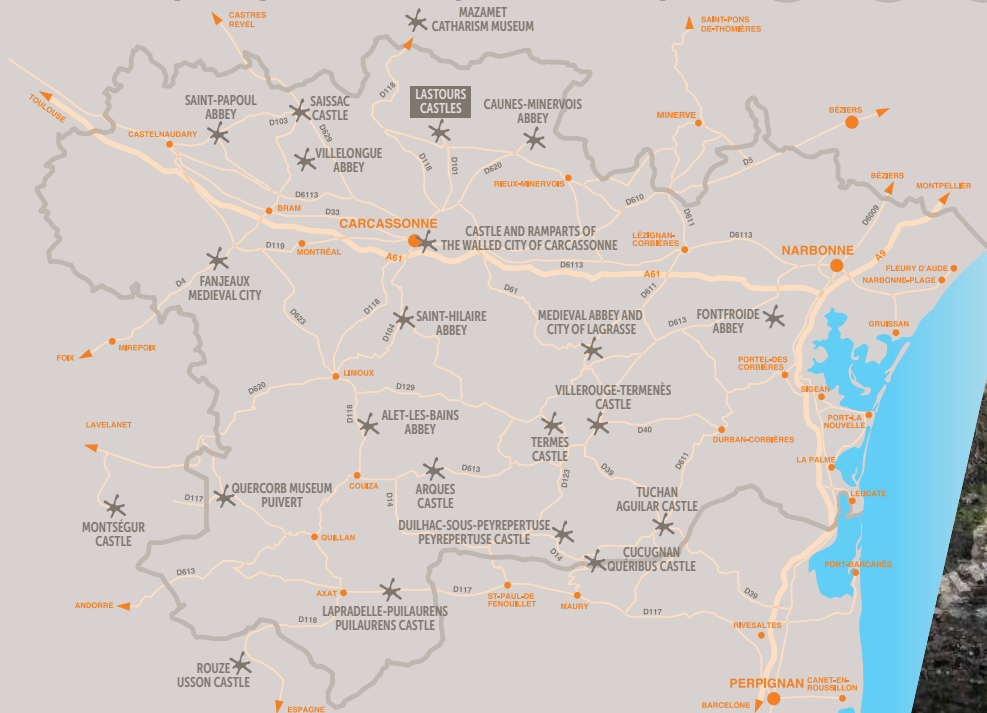
... Coin



... Spindle whorls and dice to play



# PRACTICAL INFORMATION



## GOOD PRACTICES



- Sturdy walking shoes
- Accepted animals

## SERVICES



- TOILETS**  
At the castle's reception.



- PARKING**  
Free car park at the entrance of the village on the way from Carcassonne.



- Recharging station for electric vehicles.



- CASH WITHDRAWAL**  
You can withdraw cash at the post office, during opening hours, for holders of an account at the Banque Postale.



- SHOP**  
At the castle's reception.






- TOURIST OFFICE of the Montagne Noire**  
4 Moulin Bas - 11600 Lastours  
+33 (0)4 68 76 64 90



[www.payscathare.org](http://www.payscathare.org) | [citadellesduvertige.aude.fr](http://citadellesduvertige.aude.fr) |

[www.chateauxdelastours.fr](http://www.chateauxdelastours.fr)

Contact: +33 (0)4 68 77 56 02    Emergencies: 112