

Sarlat, Dordogne | A time warp town to fall in love with

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You just can't help but fall in love with Sarlat in Dordogne. The medieval buildings, fabulous market and gourmet food shops are so enticing. The cobbled streets lure you on to discover winding alleyways, steep stairways and their treasures. It's a town where restaurants serve the most delicious of local dishes with pride and flair.

You can easily spend a weekend or much longer here enjoying the ambiance, the food and the sights. And you'll always yearn to return...

Time warp town



Visiting Sarlat is like stepping into the past. You'll discover a friendly town that's full of surprises and intoxicatingly pretty. It has the look of a gorgeous film set but this is a living, working town that just happens to be incredibly ancient and quite extraordinarily pretty.

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Of course all this is bound to have mass appeal and Sarlat gets very busy in the summer months. Go outside of July and August though and it's much quieter and life goes on pretty much as it has done for centuries here in the heart of Dordogne.

It's a town that has a long and colourful history. For ten years from 1360 it was an English garrison town. Before that it was well known thanks to a monk who became Bishop of Sarlat and was made a Saint after it was said he could cure lepers and raised his father from the dead. St Sarcedos died in AD250 and the Cathedral in Sarlat is dedicated to him.

He's not the only one to have performed miracles here. In 1147 Saint Bernard passed through Sarlat and cured the sick with loaves he'd blessed. The event is commemorated with the 12th century tower of Saint-Bernard, known as the Lanterne des Morts (lantern of the dead). You'll see this dark and peculiar building behind the cathedral.

Much of the architecture is from the 15th to the 17th century and the Renaissance influence is strong. That it is so unchanged is due to the fact that for some time, the town was cut off.

Sarlat – sleeping beauty of Dordogne



In the mid 1800's Sarlat pretty much went to sleep due to the lack of good roads to the town. People moved away, houses were left empty, Sarlat became run down and was on its way to falling into ruin. In fact it wasn't until the second half of the 20th century that people began to realise just how special Sarlat is.

In 1958 the then Minister of Culture, Andre Malraux, who had lived in Sarlat for a while, pushed through a law for the protection and restoration of old buildings and old areas of towns. The law mentioned Sarlat as an example and soon after, work began to restore the once neglected streets and buildings to their former glory. Sarlat has never looked back and is now one of the jewels of Dordogne.

If the weather is good take the glass lift to the top of what was the tower of the church of Ste-Marie. You'll be rewarded with outstanding views over the rooftops of Sarlat. The deconsecrated building, which was started in 1367, was turned into an arms store after the French Revolution. Since then has been a series of shops and was even used by the post office. Now redesigned by famous French architect Jean Nouvel, it makes for a fantastic covered market. The Saturday morning market which fills the streets in the centre is simply outstanding.

A muddle of medieval streets impress in this town. Head to rue Jean-Jacques Rousseau where you'll spot the 17th century Chapelle des Penitents Blanc. Here the poor people of Sarlat once



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worshipped. Book a one hour guided tour (in English) at the tourist office which is in a 16th century former mansion in Place de la Liberté. It's an excellent way to discover more about the secrets and sites of Sarlat. One of the best times to see Sarlat is as the sun is setting when the buildings seem to glow. But even when it's raining it's still incredibly beautiful.

Don't miss



The Place du Marché des Oies is a must see. A goose market used to be held here and it's now home to three life size bronze geese - the perfect selfie spot. The square is surrounded by superb old houses and shops. Just around the corner in rue des Consuls is a gorgeous 14th century house, Hotel Plamon, which once belonged to cloth merchants.

Sarlat for gastronomes



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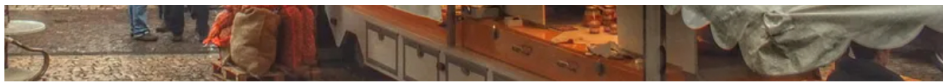
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The Saturday market spreads through the cobbled streets. Stalls piled with local, seasonal produce – walnuts, garlic, cheeses and charcuterie, fruit and veg and artisan made bread, it really is irresistible. A daily market is held in the former church of Ste-Marie where St Bernard once preached and where the doors are big enough for a giant to pass through. A night market takes place throughout the year on Thursdays.

Specialist markets for truffles and foie gras are held each year. And if you're thinking that's a lot of markets – well that's because this place is a food lovers destination extraordinaire.



The squares and tiny streets are lined with gourmet food shops selling all manner of deliciousness. Restaurants galore tempt on every corner.

Locals Love: Le Bistrot de l'Octroi, 111, Avenue de Selves, it has a cosy atmosphere, friendly service and a menu that favours local and seasonal produce. 2-course lunch menu from €14.50 and a special house menu of the best of the area such as cepes, duck and goose and desserts such as crème brulee featuring local walnuts.

Wine and dine: Le Presidial in a 16th century building in the heart of Sarlat just behind the market. On a sunny day the terrace is perfect to enjoy al fresco dining, inside is elegant and utterly charming, there's even a balcony area for those very special occasions. Old school, unpretentious, refined dining at its best, local specialities, and dishes with flair. A great menu that's also great value €19.50 for 3 course lunch menu (take it from me, it's a bargain). 6 rue Landry (book in advance if you can, this place is very popular).

Major Annual Events

With an all year-round calendar of events, there's plenty going on in Sarlat. Art, film and theatre, sports and heritage and of course food with truffle, foie gras, culinary academie and the Fete de la Gastronomie. Details: www.sarlat-tourisme.com

Practical Information

By train: Paris to Sarlat via Bordeaux takes from 4 hours 53 minutes.

Website for tourist office: www.sarlat-tourisme.com/en

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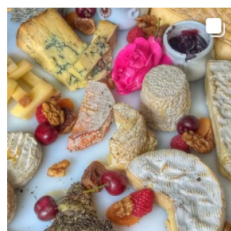
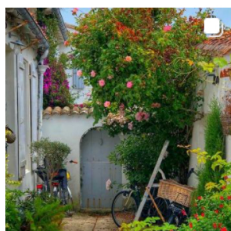


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