

VALLESPÍR CANIGÓ

— P VÍ S C A T A L À —

Discovery guide





visit-canigo.com

Its rich past and splendid landscapes make it an ideal destination for a relaxing and discovery stay!

A cultural escape in the heart of nature.

A land of contrast and cultural richness, Catalonia has always been a melting pot of exchange and ethnic diversity. Since ancient times, Greeks, Romans, Iberians, Visigoths, Moors, and Carolingians have successively formed this fertile ground conducive to Catalan culture.

History lovers will be thrilled to discover these varied and fascinating remains.

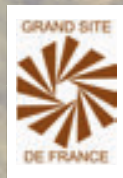
Spanning from the Neolithic period to the present day, this heritage includes the funerary urns of Serralongue and megaliths scattered across the landscape; the Roman baths of Amélie-les-Bains; the signal towers of the Kingdom of Majorca; the Romanesque art of the chapels and Arles-sur-Tech abbey; Fort Lagarde and the Vauban-fortified town of Prats-de-Mollo, listed among « Les plus beaux villages de France », and more recently, sites linked to mining and ironworking.

Crossed by the Tech river, this valley has remained well preserved and will delight hikers with its network of trails, ranging from gentle forest walks to mountain hikes.

You will find multi-day high altitude routes with accommodation in staffed mountain huts within the Grand Site de France of the Canigó massif, as well as mountain biking circuits and themed day-hiking trails.

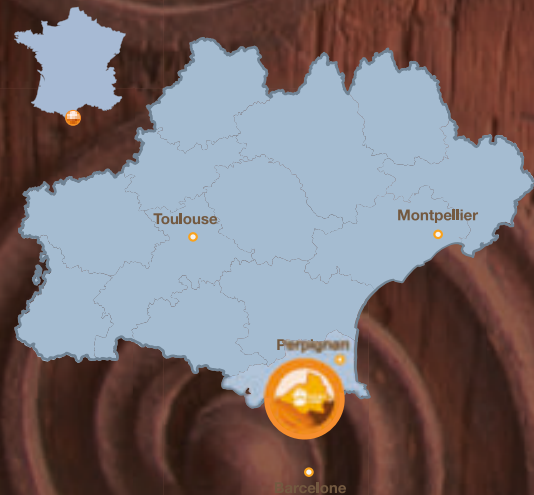
The Vallespir Canigó area is also renowned for its iconic Bear Festivals, listed as UNESCO Intangible Cultural Heritage, its distinctive gastronomy rooted in high-quality local produce—such as rousquilles, honey, mountain cured meat, goat, sheep and cow cheeses, and veal—as well as unique know-how passed down through generations, including Catalan weaving, the making of vigatanes, the preparation of linden sapwood, and the forging of Canigó iron.

Enjoy your reading, and welcome to Catalan lands at the foot of our sacred mountain, el Canigó!



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Sectors:

- Amélie-les-Bains-Palalda
- Arles-sur-Tech
- Saint-Laurent-de-Cerdans
- Prats-de-Mollo-La-Preste



Tourism promotion agency
Amélie - País Català

1st category

📍 Amélie-les-Bains-Palalda
Quai du 8 mai 1945 - Gare routière
Phone: +33 (0)4 68 39 01 98

Tourist Information Points

📍 Arles-sur-Tech
Entrée de l'Abbaye
Phone: +33 (0)4 68 39 11 99

📍 Saint-Laurent-de-Cerdans
Rue Joseph Nivet
Phone: +33 (0)4 68 39 55 75 / +33 (0)6 14 19 30 89

📍 Prats-de-Mollo-La-Preste
Place du Foiral
Phone: +33 (0)4 68 39 70 83

Events and the opening of tourist sites may be modified, disrupted, postponed, cancelled, or renewed. Please check with the relevant tourist information offices.



Nature and outdoor activities

© JC.Milhet

FAMILY-FRIENDLY HIKING

Nature and outdoor activities

Vallespir Canigo, the heart of nature ! Its visitor information centre, located at the tourist office in Amélie-les-Bains, along with its branches in Prats-de-Mollo and Saint-Laurent-de-Cerdans, **brings together the full range of activities available across the area.** Our staff will provide you with information and advices on activity sites.

Outdoor activities

Hiking

We invite you to explore the area on foot along our signposted and mapped routes, starting from each village. Experienced

hikers, casual walkers and families alike can enjoy the 34 low- and high-mountain trails at their own pace.

Day-hike route guides for the area are available for purchase at the Tourist Offices or can be downloaded free of charge from www.vallespircanigo.com.

The GR®10 links the Mediterranean Sea to the Atlantic Ocean via a trans-Pyrenean trail running from Banyuls to Hendaye, and crosses the Vallespir Canigó area from the Roc de Frausa to the Col de la Cirère.

Mountain biking area and cycling area

The Haut Vallespir mountain biking area offers 12 waymarked routes of all levels, spread across the entire area, including one permanent raid route. **The Pyrénées Méditerranée cycling area** features 20 routes, totalling 1,420 km of itineraries catering to different ability levels.

The 7th “South Canigo”

mountain passes

These road cycling routes allow riders to “collect” the ascent of seven emblematic mountain passes in the area. They are equipped with markers every 100 metres indicating altitude and positive elevation gain.

Greenway

Partly laid out along the former railway line that served the Haut Vallespir before the 1940 Aiguat floods, the greenway links the mountains to the sea, running from Arles-sur-Tech to Argelès-sur-Mer.

Pirinexus

Pirinexus is a 353 km cross-border circular cycle touring route. It links territories on both sides of the Pyrenees and passes through 53 towns and villages, combining sections of greenways with other cycling routes such as rural paths and low-traffic roads.

Canyoning

It is a water-based adventure combining jumps, natural slides and abseiling down waterfalls. The area offers a unique diversity



© J.C. Milhet

MOUNTAIN BIKING TRAILS

of canyoning sites for all levels, including one of the very few in the Pyrénées-Orientales suitable for family outings from the age of 8.

Paragliding

The Batère launch site is known among practitioners as a technical take-off point for experienced paragliders.

Equestrian

The equestrian facilities offered by our guesthouses and mountain refuges, together with our riding centres, provide ideal conditions for enjoying horse-riding excursions with complete peace of mind.

Fishing

Fishing spots are located all along the Tech River. Fishing permits are available from the Tourist Office.

Trail

Our mountains offer an ideal playground for trail running.

March – Belmaig Trail in Arles-sur-Tech

May – Skyrace in Amélie-les-Bains-Palalda

June – Cami Ramader in Lamanère

July – Mont Capell Trail in

Saint-Laurent-de-Cerdans
September – Col d’Ares Trail in Prats-de-Mollo-La Preste
November – Vertical Kilometer in Arles-sur-Tech

Nordic walk

Inspired by cross-country skiing, nordic walkin is a fast-paced form of walking using hiking poles. It is highly dynamic, allowing you to walk around 1 to 2 km per hour faster than regular hiking, while remaining accessible to everyone, from beginners to experienced walkers.

Fourteen routes suitable for all abilities await you in the stunning mid-mountain landscapes of the Haut Vallespir.

The ON PISTE app is available free of charge, offering athletes of all levels the best waymarked routes to discover new destinations.



The southern balconies of the Canigó

The Southern Balconies of the Canigó are loop routes designed to be explored at your own pace, with opportunities for visits and meaningful encounters—human, gastronomic and cultural—along the way.

These eco-itineraries invite you to contemplate Canigó through the spirit of Pyrénéisme: “to ascend, to feel, to write.” They are structured around three distinct landscape areas: the Southern Balconies overlooking the Tech Valley, the Northern Balconies above the Têt Valley, and the Piedmont route linking the two valleys.

www.visit-canigo.com

The nature reserve



PERCNOPTÈRE

THE EGYPTIAN VULTURE

This small vulture, easily distinguished from other raptors by its striking black-and-white plumage, is the focus of special attention from ornithologists. Its very limited distribution and low population numbers have led to the implementation of a National Action Plan for its conservation in France. On the northern slopes of the Pyrenees, around 70 territorial breeding pairs are monitored, producing approximately 50 fledglings each year. However, as the species spends the winter south of the Sahara, mortality during migration remains high, mainly due to collisions with numerous power lines. In the Pyrénées-Orientales, two breeding pairs are known, including one in Haut Vallespir.

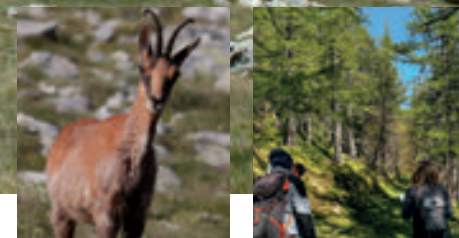
© photos Réserves naturelles catalanes

PRATS-DE-MOLLO-LA-PRESTE NATURE RESERVE – TECH VALLEY

An outstanding wild nature

Created on March 14, 1986, the Prats-de-Mollo-La-Preste Nature Reserve covers 2394 ha from 1500 to 2500 m above sea level. The objective of this classification is to protect a set of natural habitats where exceptional flora (Beech, Fir, Lapeyrouse Violet, etc.) and fauna (Isard, Wild Cat, Bearded Vulture) composed of rare and original species develop.

Landscapes to enjoy on hikes, to share and to respect!



ISARD

FOREST TRAILS

For the safety and peace of wildlife and livestock, dogs are not allowed.

Take part in our photo contest “Déclic Nature 66”, focusing on wild flora.

Guided tours and conference programs available at:

📍 **Prats-de-Mollo-La-Preste**

Phone: +33 (0)6 11 09 11 78

www.reserves-naturelles-catalanes.org



The Canigó



© 2018 M133

HIKING THE CANIGÓ PEAK

The grand site de France of Canigó



Canigó is a land of freedom and discovery, inviting visitors to feel the thrill of wide-open spaces and the magic of nature. Its rich natural, cultural, and spiritual heritage has earned it the prestigious “Grand Site of France” label, awarded by the French Ministry of Ecological Transition. This label recognizes sites that are carefully managed



CANIGÓ VIEWPOINT



THE TROBADA DEL CANIGÓ



MINING COLONY OF LA PINOSA

to protect the landscape, welcome visitors with quality, respect the spirit of the place, and involve local communities. The label may be revoked at any time if its standards are not upheld.

The Tour of Canigó – A 4–5 day trek with mountain refuges along the way, offering breathtaking views and the full majesty of the massif.

The Mining Tour – A 1–2 day loop that takes you back in time to explore the old iron mines

of Batera and La Pinosa.

The Canigó Balconies – Easy, gentle hikes across three scenic areas: North Balconies, South Balconies, and Piedmont Balconies.

Syndicat Mixte Canigó Grand Site



canigo-grandsite.com





HIKING – THE MINING TOUR

Mountain biking guides

12 MTB routes
and 1 permanent raid

Find all routes at:

www.visit-canigo.com

Free downloads available



Hiking guides

30 hiking routes

Find all our hiking guides at:

www.visit-canigo.com

Free downloads available



Mountain huts



PYRENEISM

"The ideal Pyrenean is one who can climb, write, and feel."

Henri Beraldi, Cent ans aux Pyrénées, 1898

All the mountain refuges have a unique architecture, reflecting their historical purpose.

Hiking can be done as a multi-day trek or as day trips, whether half-day or full-day, moving from one refuge to another.

Itinerant Hikes

CANIGÓ TOUR

Duration: 5 days

Accommodation: 5 staffed mountain refuges

Season: June to October

Purpose: complete the Tour of the Canigó Massif

TOUR OF HAUT-VALLESPIR

Duration: 2 × 3 days

Accommodation: staffed mountain refuges and hotel residences

Season: May to October

Highlights: a mix of mountain trekking in refuges and gastronomy and cultural heritage in the villages.



Refuge de Batère

Altitude: 1 470 m

Capacity: 38 people

Open: April - October

📍 Corsavy - Route de Batère

Phone : +33 (0)4 68 39 12 01

Web: www.refugedebatere.fr

Located on the Tour du Canigó, Tour du Haut Vallespir, and GR10, the refuge is housed in rehabilitated former miners' canteens.



Refuge de Sant Guillem

Altitude: 1 283 m

Capacity: 40 people

Open: April - Mid-November.

Unstaffed: 10 places

📍 Le Tech - Vallée de la Coumelade

Phone: +33 (0)6 11 22 48 79

Phone: +33 (0)9 78 04 96 85

Web: www.refugesantguillem.com

Located on the Tour du Canigó and Tour du Haut Vallespir, the refuge is set in a former ONF forest cabin, fully renovated and energy self-sufficient.



Refuge Les Conques

Altitude: 1 580 m

Capacity: 18 people

Open: June - October

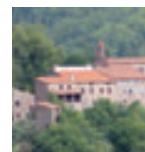
📍 Prats-de-Mollo-la-Preste
Entrée de la Réserve Naturelle

Phone: +33 (0)9 88 66 66 37

Phone: +33 (0)7 57 06 40 59

Web : www.refugi-lesconques.com

Located on the Tour du Canigó and the Tour of the Nature Reserves, the refuge is set in a former winter sports station.



Refuge de Notre Dame du Coral

Altitude: 1 091m

Capacity: 20 people

Open: year-round

📍 Prats-de-Mollo-la-Preste - Route du Col d'Ares

Phone : +33 (0)6 20 89 37 47

Located on the Tour du Haut Vallespir and the Ronde du Canigó, this refuge is set in a 17th-century hermitage featuring a beautiful chapel listed as a historic monument.

The "Chaîne Thermale du Soleil"

Amelie-les-Bains Rheumatology – Respiratory care

La Preste Rheumatology – Urinary care



THERMAL WATER POOL

The benefits of thermal water

Gentle on the body and non-invasive, thermal medicine offers a unique approach to health. Unlike treatments that focus only on symptoms, thermal therapy takes a holistic approach, giving prevention the same importance as symptom relief.

During a thermal cure, trained healthcare teams provide natural, effective treatments using thermal waters—a resource of nature



AQUAGYM



KAOLIN BATH



BODY MASSAGE TREATMENTS

whose benefits are recognized by the French Academy of Medicine.



What is a thermal cure ?

A thermal cure typically lasts 18 days. It can be partially covered by Social Security if prescribed in advance by a doctor.

Wellness and Treatments

Well-being and vitality through hydrotherapy are offered via fitness workshops at the Thermal Spa, as well as through services at the Beauty Institute.

Domaine de Falgos 18-Hole mountain golf course



ESTATE OF 650 HECTARES - GOLF



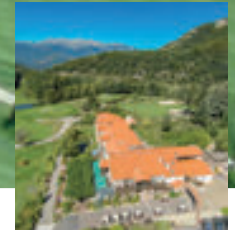
HEATED POOL, SPA AND SOLARIUM



TRADITIONAL RESTAURANT



4-STAR HOTEL



HOTEL COMPLEX

An invitation to sport and wellness

Set on the site of an 18th-century Catalan farmhouse, Domaine de Falgos blends sport and serenity in an idyllic setting between the sea and the Grand Site of France Canigó.

This exceptional complex features a **4-star hotel** and a hotel residence in the

historic farmhouse, a spa with heated pool, hammam, jacuzzis, sauna, and à la carte treatments, a fitness room, an 18-hole golf course and multi-sport courts, and a traditional restaurant serving local specialties.

“Lunch + Spa” packages allow you to fully enjoy this peaceful retreat. Golf is open year-round, offering a total escape in the heart of the Pyrenees.



Domaine de Falgos
📍 Saint-Laurent-de-Cerdans
 Open daily April-Mid-November
 (all facilities except golf)

Phone: +33 (0)4 68 39 51 42
Web: www.falgos.com

**PAYS D'ART ET D'HISTOIRE
TRANSFRONTALIER DES
VALLÉES CATALANES**



Cross-border “Pays d’Art et d’histoire” of the Catalan Tech and Ter Valleys

The “Villes et Pays d’Art et d’Histoire” label, awarded by the French Ministry of Culture,

guarantees the quality of the expert guides who lead you through all the communes of the Vallespir.

The Cross-Border Pays d’Art et d’Histoire of the Catalan Valleys organizes year-round discovery of the heritage in Vallespir and across the border to the territories of *Ripollès, Garrotxa i Alt Empordà*.

A wide variety of activities are offered: guided tours, lectures, workshops, and family-friendly experiences.

Check out the full program “**Rendez-vous Les Vallées Catalanes**” at all local tourist offices, or follow them on Facebook and Instagram.

www.vcatalanes.com
info@vcatalanes.org

Phone: +33 (0)4 68 83 99 49

Histoire et Patrimoine

THE CASTEL OF MOLLET - MONTFERRER

From the 3rd century BC, the Roman presence in the region left its mark through infrastructure—roads, baths—as well as settlements with traces of craft and artisanal activities. The Romans also resumed iron mining on Canigó, a practice whose origins date back to prehistoric times.

721-760 From **721 to 760**, the region belonged to the Kingdom of Al-Andalus.

By the late **8th century**, Vallespir was part of the Marca Hispanica—the frontier lands reclaimed from Al-Andalus and forming the border of the Carolingian Empire.

1258: The Treaty of Corbeil, signed between Louis IX of France and James I of Aragon, established the first official border along the Corbières and Fenouillèdes, with the fortress of Salses as its guardian. Vallespir became Catalan-Aragonese territory.

Between 1276 and 1349, Vallespir was

shaped by the Kingdom of Majorca. A network of signal towers still bears witness to King James of Majorca’s struggle with his brother, Peter IV of Aragon, and to the region’s strategic role in the politics of France.

In 1659, the Treaty of the Pyrenees between Louis XIV and Philip IV set the border we know today. Upper Vallespir became part of France, and Vauban was tasked with creating a frontier defense system—visible today in the forts of Perthus, Amélie-les-Bains and Prats-de-Mollo.

In 1866, the Treaty of Bayonne set the official Pyrenean border, stretching in a line from Andorra all the way to the Mediterranean.

During the Spanish Civil War (1936–1939), Vallespir felt its effects deeply. Between 27 January and 10 February 1939, almost 450,000 exiles crossed the border into the Pyrénées-Orientales, and the villages of Upper Vallespir played a crucial role in welcoming them.

In October 1940, the Aiguat—a devastating flood brought on by torrential rains—claimed around 50 lives in Vallespir and



THE CONJURADOR - SERRALONGUE

caused massive destruction. The flood reshaped the valley, and its effects on the landscape and local economy are still evident today.

After the 1992 Maastricht Treaty, the Col d'Ares border crossing became accessible day and night, and in 1995 the Coustouges cross-border road was created, strengthening connections between the two sides of the border.

Called the “Rough Valley” by the Romans, Vallespir is a land steeped in history and alive with traditions.

Historical heritage

If you love history, our villages will delight you with their cellera—the traditional layout centered around the church or castle. From churches to chapels, you can also admire Romanesque architecture, the Gothic cloister of Arles-sur-Tech, and the baroque altarpieces of Roussillon. The valley's borderland character is reflected in the network of signal towers from the Kingdom

of Majorca, the fortified villages, and the Vauban citadel of Prats-de-Mollo. The 19th and 20th centuries also left their mark, with resorts and thermal baths forming part of the landscape, including the military thermal baths of Amélie-les-Bains-Palalda.

Land of traditions

The region is steeped in legends, some dating back to the Middle Ages, such as the mystery of the Holy Tomb and the sacred relics of Abdon and Sennen, or the Simiots (monstrous, monkey-headed creatures that devoured children).

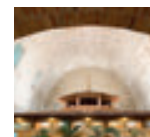
There are also the Trabucayres (17th-century highwaymen), whose treasure—never found—is said to still be hidden in the Gorges de la Fou, and the Bears festival, an ancestral spring equinox ritual celebrated in Arles-sur-Tech, Saint-Laurent-de-Cerdans, and Prats-de-Mollo-La-Preste. Catalan traditions are also very present, including during the night of the « Sanch », when hooded penitents (Caparutxa) carry life-size representations of scenes from the passion of Christ (Misteris).

Remains

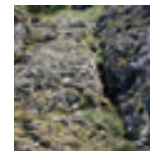
Neolithic history is especially represented by the site of La Balma de Montbolo, and above all by the dolmens of Caixas de Rotllan (Arles-sur-Tech), Cova d'en Rotllan (Corsavy), and Serrat de les Fonts (Saint-Marsal). Several protohistoric urns from the Serralongue necropolis (950–700 BC) can be seen at the small local museum.



Caixas de Rodlan



Voûte romaine



Voie Romaine

The most remarkable Roman remains include the public baths of Amélie-les-Bains-Palalda, dating from the Early Roman Empire, consisting of a large bath (lavacrum) with its ancient vault and a sudatorium (a type of hammam), extensively remodeled in the 19th century. Also notable is the Roman road of Vallespir, which followed the valley to cross the border, as well as a road linked to iron mining, still visible in particular around Saint-Marsal.

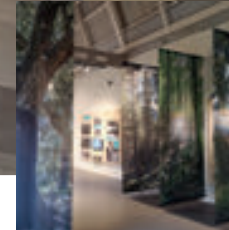
La Verneda – Interpretation Centre of the Catalan Valleys



LA VERNEDA ENTRANCE



SCHOOL GROUP



ONE OF THE VISITOR AREAS

LA VERNEDA

The Centre for the Interpretation of Architecture and Heritage (CIAP) is housed in a renovated former textile factory known as La Verneda and is home to the headquarters of the Cross-Border Pays d'Art et d'Histoire (PAHT). It features a permanent exhibition offering an overview of the history and heritage of this Pyrenean territory. Although a political border has existed since the Treaty of the Pyrenees (1659), the people of this region still share the same landscape, culture, traditions, and language—Catalan.

This CIAP is complemented by a network of exhibition venues, each exploring different themes across the region:

Religious heritage is presented at the Palau d'Arles-sur-Tech and the Palau de l'Abadia in Sant Joan de les Abadesses.

Architectural and urban heritage • s showcased at the Médiathèque of Céret, the Palalda Museum (Amélie-les-Bains), and the Maison de l'Histoire in Le Boulou.

Industrial heritage is presented at the Maison du Patrimoine in Saint-Laurent-de-Cerdans and the Cork Museum in Maureillas-las-Illas.

Border heritage is explored at the Cal Marquès Cultural Centre in Camprodon, Fort Lagarde in Prats-de-Mollo, and Fort Bellegarde in Le Perthus.

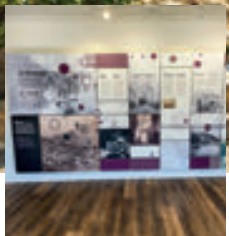


📍 Prats-de-Mollo-La-Preste
Seasonal opening
Phone. : +33 (0)4 68 83 99 49
Free admission

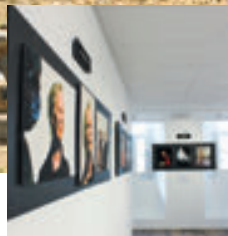


El Casal de Palalda

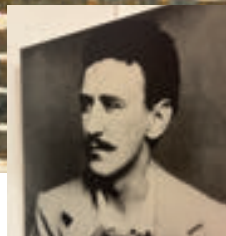
FORE COURT OF THE CHURCH - MUSEUM ENTRANCE



CIAP EL CASAL



MODERN ART EXHIBITION



MACKINTOSH

This CIAP traces the history of Palalda and Amélie-les-Bains.

The Charles Rennie Mackintosh Interpretation Centre houses models of buildings, some realized and others unbuilt, including the architect's masterpiece: a new building for the Glasgow School of Art.

A watercolourist and designer, Mackintosh also created textile patterns, and from 1913, as architectural commissions

declined, he began painting flowers, including his famous work: Mimosa. Mackintosh arrived in Amélie-les-Bains in 1923 to treat his wife's asthma and remained in Roussillon until the end of his life.

El Casal de Palalda also hosts numerous contemporary art exhibitions.

Palalda : church forecourt, place de la Nation

Opening hours: Tuesday: 3 pm – 7 pm
Wednesday – Sunday: 10 am – 12 pm / 3 pm – 7 pm

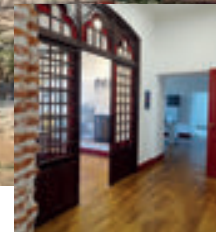
Free admission



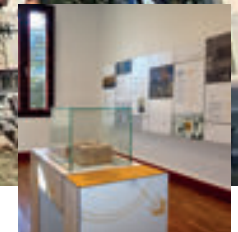
Le Palais



GRAND HALL



EXHIBITION AREA



CIAP EXHIBITION ROOM

Once an outbuilding of the abbey, this building used to house a wine press used by the people of Arles, vassals of the abbot, during the grape harvest. Sold as national property during the French

Revolution, the building was acquired in the early 20th century by a prominent chocolate-making family, the Cantaloup family, to serve as their residence. Today,

it forms the center of a religious and cultural heritage hub, featuring a museum and educational exhibition centre (CIAP) dedicated to sacred art, as well as rooms for temporary exhibitions. The Abbey Visitor Centre is also located on the same site.



📍 **Arles-sur-Tech**

Opposite the Town Hall

Opening : seasonal

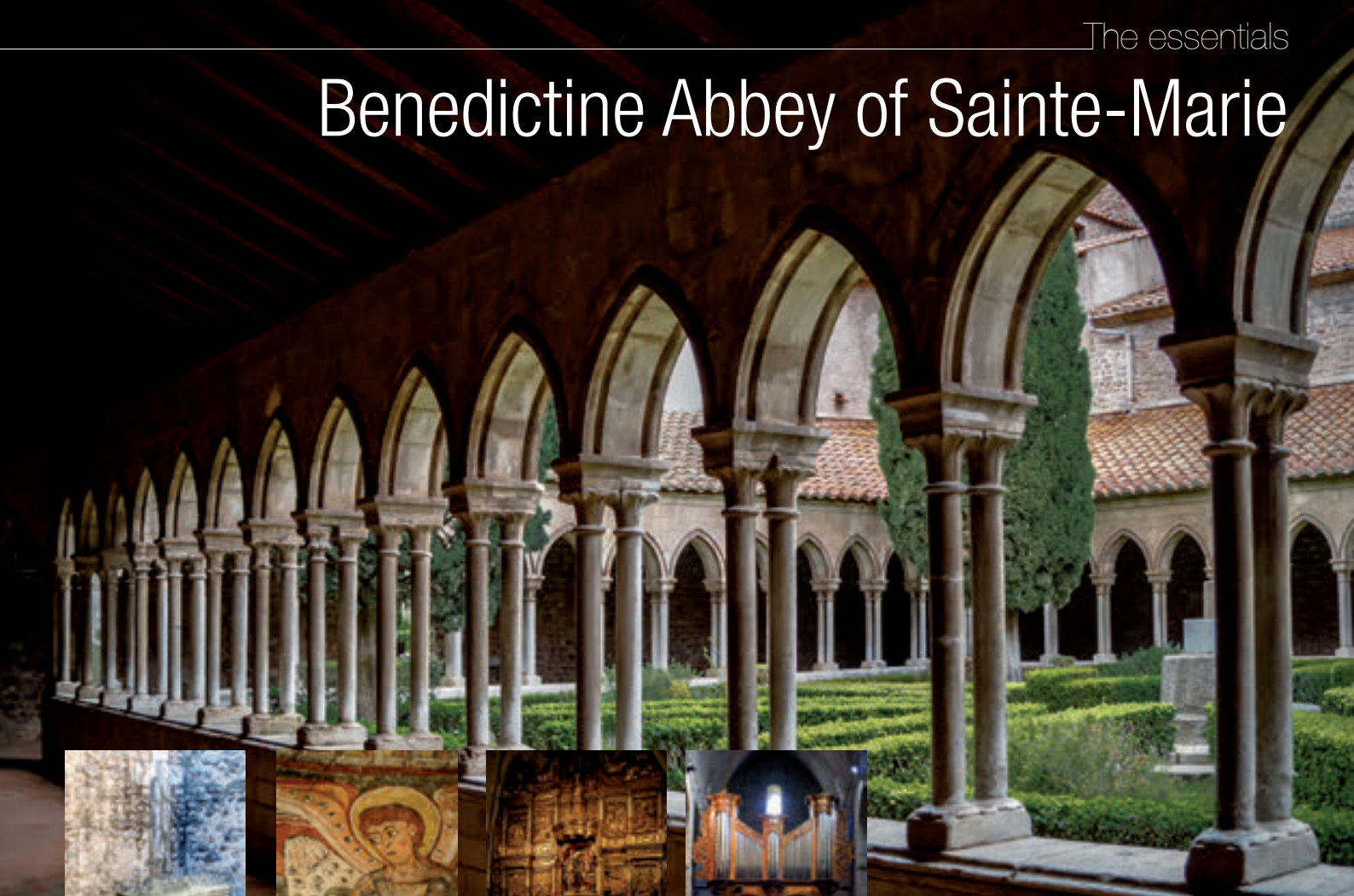
Phone: +33 (0)4 68 83 90 66

abbaye@arles-sur-tech.fr

Free admission



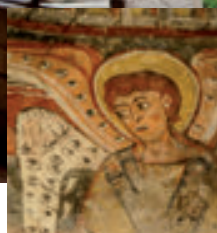
Benedictine Abbey of Sainte-Marie



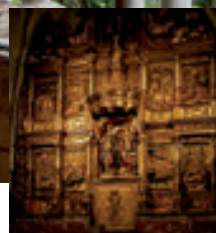
GOTHIC CLOISTER



THE HOLY TOMB



SERAPHIM FRESCO



ALTARPIECE



18TH-CENTURY SCHMIDT

The **Abbaye Sainte-Marie** proudly claims to be the oldest Carolingian abbey in Catalonia. It was founded in 778, in the earliest days of the reconquest that ended Arab incursions north of the Pyrenees.

The Romanesque church has three naves, vaulted in the 12th century, and enhanced with side chapels in the 13th and 14th centuries. It houses a fully preserved 18th-century Schmidt organ.

The attached cloister, dating from the 13th century, reveals a restrained, elegant Gothic style. On the church forecourt, a 4th-century sarcophagus exudes exceptionally pure water, having once held the relics of Saints Abdon & Sennen, the patrons of Arles-sur-Tech. Its origin unknown, the water became an object of veneration, which alone helped establish the abbey's fame.



📍 **Arles-sur-Tech**

Le Palau, opposite the Town Hall

Opening : seasonal

Guided tours, reservations, and information

Phone: +33 (0)4 68 83 90 66
abbaye@arles-sur-tech.fr

Entrance fee applies

Religious heritage

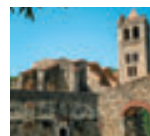
PRIVATE CHAPEL OF THE HERMITAGE OF SANT GUILLEM DE COMBRET, 12TH CENTURY – LE TECH



The Conjurador of Serralongue, dating from the 14th century, is a small cubic building unique in France, with each face oriented toward the cardinal points. In the past, processions were held here to ward off storms.



The church of Ste Marie de Mollet in Montferrer, from the 12th century, is dedicated to the Virgin Mary and classified as a Historic Monument. Inside, it houses a sarcophagus from 1322 and a retable on the main altar, executed between 1708 and 1725.



The Church of Sainte-Juste and Sainte-Ruffine in Prats-de-Mollo-La-Preste was created at the end of the 9th century and expanded several times in the 13th and 17th centuries. At the entrance is a door with medieval ironwork, and a 19th-century “whale rib” ex-voto. Inside are numerous retables from the 17th to 19th centuries, a medieval monolithic baptismal font, an 18th-century engraving depicting weavers’ tools, and an 18th-century organ.



The fortified Romanesque Church of Sainte-Marie in Serralongue, from the 11th–12th centuries, features a baroque retable (1713) in polychrome and gilded wood. The double-leaf door has Catalan wrought-iron hinges with a dragon-head lock.



The Church of Saint-Martin de Palalda (13th century) was the former castle chapel, and the Chapel of the Rosary dates from the 17th century. It contains a magnificent retable and unique iron hinges from the Canigó.



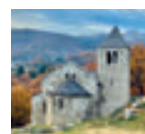
The Hermitage of Notre-Dame du Coral (17th–18th centuries) is located in Prats-de-Mollo-La-Preste, toward the Col d’Ares. The single-nave chapel has an upper chapel that served as the Virgin’s chamber. It houses a 13th-century Virgin, the object of pilgrimage, a Christ in Majesty from the 18th century, and retables of Christ and Saint Isidore dating from 1868.



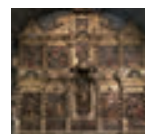
The Chapel of Sainte-Engràcia, an 18th-century hermitage in Amélie-les-Bains, is dedicated to Saint Engràcia of Zaragoza. Recently restored, it is a popular site for pilgrimages and picnics.



The Church of Sainte-Marie de Coustouges is a masterpiece of Romanesque art, consecrated in 1142 on the ruins of a chapel built in 900.



The Romanesque Church of Saint-Martí de Cortsavi (11th century) in Corsavy is the village’s original church. It is being restored stone by stone by passionate volunteers.



The Romanesque Church of Saint-Michel de La Bastide, from the 12th–13th centuries and remodeled in the 17th century, is fortified on its eastern side and has a rectangular bell tower. Originally, it was the castle chapel of Saint John.

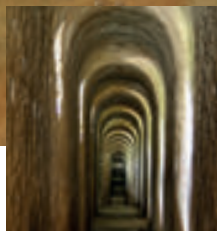
THE Fort Lagarde



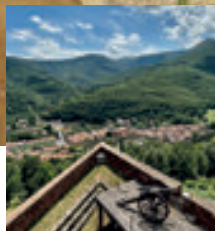
FORT LAGARDE



SHOW AT THE FORT



THE UNDERGROUND PASSAGE



FROM THE FORT

Fort Lagarde was designed and built by Vauban around an old signal tower. It is part of the Vauban fortification network, a typical star-shaped military structure. Beyond protecting the town, its main role was to monitor the Col d'Ares, a natural route into Spain. The fort is connected to the fortified town by an underground passage.

In summer, animated guided tours are offered, with costumed interpreters, demonstrations of historic weapons, and explanations of life in the barracks.

The fort also hosts temporary exhibitions in its unique spaces.

Access: on foot via the underground passage, the shaded path, or by shuttle, depending on the program.



📍 **Prats-de-Mollo**

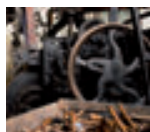
Open from April to October

Reservations: tourist office, place du Foiral

Phone: +33 (0)4 68 39 70 83
www.pratsdemollolapreste.com

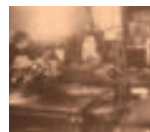
Industrial Heritage

BATÈRE MINE: THE FURNACE AND THE HOPPER – CANTEEN TOKENS



Catalan weaving made the territory famous, with factories in Arles-sur-Tech and Saint-Laurent-de-Cerdans.

It was in the 19th century, in Saint-Laurent-de-Cerdans, that the remarkable story of the espadrille began—a tale of craftsmanship that grew into a thriving industry, supporting an entire valley



The chocolate factories that gave rise to the Cantalou Catala brand (Cémoi) were swept away by the flood of 1940. However, the craftsmanship survives today in Arles-sur-Tech and Amélie-les-Bains-Palalda, where it continues in artisanal form (see the Flavors chapter).



The forges, built along the waterways to harness the power of flowing water, had almost all disappeared by 1940.



The iron mines include the Batère site in Corsavy, where several remnants recall past activity, up to the Batère refuge, which was adapted

from the old mine canteen.



The Mine Square (Carreau de la Mine) in Arles-sur-Tech was used to transport ore to the roasting furnaces and load it onto trains.



ballast.

The Ménérots Mines in La Bastide were notable for lifting ore up to the railway using an ingenious system of wagons with hydraulic



ore before it was sent on to the Amélie-les-Bains-Palalda station.



The old paper mill below Palalda is now Sterimed, where medical fabrics are produced, employing around 300 people.

When the 1940 flood reshaped the industrial landscape



The Aiguat refers to an episode of heavy rainfall. In 1940, the Pyrenees experienced such a downpour, causing devastating floods that swept through the Tech Valley. Guillaume Julia, a schoolteacher from Saint-Laurent-de-Cerdans, recorded 1,930 mm of rain over five days.

The raging waters of the Tech carried everything in their path: bridges, footbridges, railway lines, industries, and homes. Around 200 buildings were destroyed, including some 60 in the Arles-sur-Tech – Amélie-les-Bains-Palalda area and about 50 in Prats-de-Mollo-La-Preste.

The Amélie-les-Bains-Palalda train station was wiped out along with the railway, four power plants were destroyed, and the Cantalou Catala chocolate factory in Arles-sur-Tech vanished in the floodwaters. All communal buildings were lost in the village of Le Tech, including the church, town hall, and school.

The heritage and memory centre « André Abet »

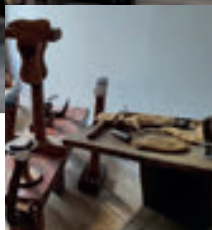


RECONSTRUCTION OF THE FACTORY

The André Abet Heritage and Memory Centre, Saint-Laurent-de-Cerdans

Preserving traditional skills: espadrilles and Catalan weaving.

Housed in the former “Union Sandalière”, a cooperative factory founded in 1923 by unionised workers, this site of collective memory now features a reconstructed espadrille and weaving workshop. The centre also explores La Retirada,



ESPADRILLE WORKSHOP



THE BEAR AND THE MONACA



1939 REFUGEE CAMPS



RETIRADA EXHIBITION ROOM

commemorating the exodus of Spanish Republicans who sought refuge in Saint-Laurent-de-Cerdans in January and February 1939. Around 70,000 refugees passed through the village, 5,000 were accommodated locally, and the wounded and sick were cared for on the second floor of this building.



📍 **Saint-Laurent-de-Cerdans**
Rue Joseph Nivet

Phone: +33 (0)4 68 39 55 75
+33 (0)6 14 19 30 89

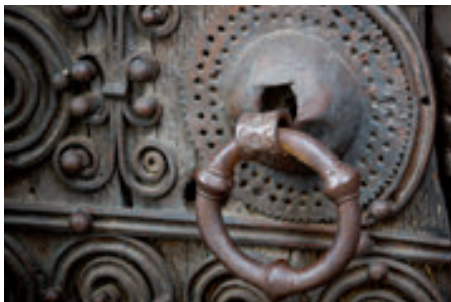
contact@ville-saint-laurent-de-cerdans.fr
www.saintlaurentdecerdans.fr



Local know-how

CANIGÓ IRON FORGE

Unique traditional skills passed down through generations : the weaving and crafting of vigatanes and espadrilles, the preparation of linden bast, and the forging of Canigó iron—all skills preserved and passed on over centuries.



DETAIL FROM THE CHURCH DOOR OF SERRALONGUE

The Weaving Conservatory: formerly the Museum of Catalan Weaving.
Rue du 14 juillet Arles-sur-Tech.
+33 (0)4 68 39 11 99

Artistic blacksmiths - Coustouges,
Arles-sur-Tech

Basket weavers - Coustouges

Pottery workshops - Corsavy,
Prats-de-Mollo-La-Preste

Art Gallery - Amélie-les-Bains-Palalda,
Arles-sur-Tech, Prats-de-Mollo-La-
Preste, Saint-Laurent-de-Cerdans.

Glassmakers - Montferrer, Arles-sur-Tech

Artisan Cutlers - Prats-de-Mollo-La-Preste

Full list available at vallespircanigo.com



CATALAN KNIFE WITH GARNET INLAY

European festival
of artistic ironwork



Every two years, master blacksmiths from around the world gather in Arles-sur-Tech at a highly symbolic location: the old mine square. In a spirit of friendliness and good humor, they work iron to create monumental artistic pieces, showcasing the full range of craftsmanship and assembly techniques of their trade. The sculptures trace the Iron Route on both sides of the Canigó Massif. But this precious metal, once extracted from Canigó, is not easily tamed! Only when heated to 900°C can it be worked—hammered, arched, twisted—using all the imagination and strength of the blacksmiths.

More information: +33 (0)4 68 39 12 22

Les Toiles du Soleil



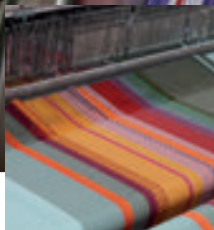
© JC.Milhet

A living heritage company

In 1993 Henri and Françoise Quinta took over the historic factory Sans and Garcerie founded in 1897. In 2025, the factory became part of the Saint-Lo group, opening a new chapter in its story.

The creation process

Warping is an operation that consists



WEAVING



WARPING



SHOP OF PRODUCTS MADE FROM THE FABRICS

of winding the threads to form the warp under the same tension, parallel to each other and in a certain order to give life to the design. Weaving is the art of interlacing two series of threads to produce fabrics, these two series of threads being perpendicular.

The fabrics are cut and sold by the meter or made up to be offered in the form of tablecloths, napkins, placemats, table runners, aprons, cushion covers, curtains, bags, deckchairs...



📍 **Saint-Laurent-de-Cerdans**
Avenue Jean Jaures

Shop opening hours:

Mid-April to late September:

monday to saturday, 10:00 am- 12:00 pm
and 1:30 pm – 5:30 pm

October to December: monday to
thursday, 10:00 am-12:00pm and 1:30
pm – 5:00 pm.

Closed on : 1 May and 30 September

Phone: +33 (0)4 68 39 33 93

www.toiles-du-soleil.com

Création Catalane



© J.C. Milhet

THE WORKSHOP

Preserving a traditional craft

Création Catalane was born in February 2008, rooted in a family history of sandal-making and driven by the dream of reviving the artisanal know-how of espadrille and vigatane production, which made Saint-Laurent-de-Cerdans famous.



SOLE MAKING



STITCHING THE PARTS



SHOP



ESPADRILLES AND VIGATANES

These shoes are crafted primarily in harmonious, contemporary colors, bringing a modern touch while preserving the traditional manufacturing process.

Discover the secrets behind the making of espadrilles.



📍 **Saint-Laurent-de-Cerdans**

Chemin du Baynat d'en pouly

Phone: +33 (0)4 68 54 08 68

www.espadrille-catalane.com

Le Moulin des Arts et de l'Artisanat



GLASS ART

Step behind the scenes of time and craftsmanship

Le Moulin des Arts et de l'Artisanat (the Mill of Arts and Crafts) is the former weaving factory of Arles-sur-Tech, once renowned for producing Catalan fabrics famous for their durability and imaginative designs. Sadly, faced with economic challenges, activity gradually declined, and the machines fell silent for good in 1989.

Acquired by the municipality in 2011, the site is now dedicated to the arts and crafts and offers visitors a poetic and surprising journey into creativity:



UPHOLSTERY CRAFT



LEATHERWORK



BIJOUX EN GRAINE



FERRONNERIE D'ART

workshops in ceramics, painting, stained glass and fusing, jewelry, foundry and sculpture, artistic ironwork, leatherwork, and upholstery.

In the machine hall, the looms still stand, as if ready to spring back to life. In the bright and spacious shop—showcasing “Made in Vallespir Canigó” creations—about ten local artists present their works in a warm and colorful exhibition.



📍 **Arles-sur-Tech**
Rue du 14 Juillet

Shop open Monday to Saturday

April–June 2:00 pm – 6:00 pm

July–September 2:00 pm – 7:00 pm

October–December 2:00 pm – 6:00 pm

Additional hours

Please inquire for workshop visits.

lemoulindesmetiersdart66@gmail.com

Flavors



LES TOQUES BLANCHES DU ROUSSILLON - ROUSSILLON'S MASTER CHEFS

A cuisine full of character and high-quality local products: rousquilles, coques, honey, mountain charcuterie, goat, sheep, and cow cheeses, as well as farm products with local quality brands and labels.

Rosée des Pyrénées® - Veal

The first beef in the region to receive the official “Certified Quality” label, Rosée des Pyrénées comes from 5- to 8-month-old calves raised freely on mountain pasture. This summer-raised veal has a pink color and a unique flavor.

El xai® - Lamb

C'est une marque d'agneau créée par la Coopérative Catalane des Éleveurs. Les agneaux sont élevés en permanence avec leurs mères. Ils consomment de fait un maximum de lait maternel, ce qui rend cette viande tendre et claire, sans excès de gras ou de goût.

El tirabuixó® - Pork

The Tirabuixó is a farm-raised pig from the Pyrénées-Orientales, raised with respect for animal welfare, either outdoors or on straw bedding.



Mountain Charcuterie

In Catalan country, the love of good food is no legend. Mountain ham, truffled pâté, wild boar pâté, young goat pâté, sausages, fuet (thin dry sausage), and botifarra (type of dry sausage) — their exquisite aromas fill the tables of food lovers.



Authentic cheeses

Sheep, goat, or cow cheeses with the character of our mountains.



Delicious pastries

All kinds of turrón and nougat, soft **rousquilles** with hints of lemon, and crispy bunyetes with

orange blossom delight the palate with their sweet flavors. Another pastry unique in its kind: **the Somptueux**, a rum and almond paste cake from Maison Pi Roué.

Unique flavors

Other natural flavors await discovery to enrich your table, such as mountain honey—from thyme, rosemary, chestnut, and more—and the black truffle of Canigó.

LOCAL MARKETS

Amélie-les-Bains-Palalda : every day at place de la République, Thursday mornings at the PetiteProvence parking lot.

Arles-sur-Tech : Wednesday mornings in the Town Hall park.

Prats-de-Mollo-La-Preste : Friday mornings at Place du Foirail.

Saint-Laurent-de-Cerdans : Saturday mornings at the bus station.

Serralongue : Sunday mornings.

Traditions and festivities



© JC Milhet

CORREFOCS

Cultural traditions

Catalan traditions and culture are the keys to life in the Vallespir Canigó territory.

The Sardana Dance and its Cobla Ensemble

The sardana is the traditional dance of Catalonia. It is danced in a circle alternating between man and woman holding hands. The sardanas are orchestrated by a musical formation named Cobla.

Cobla is a traditional instrumental ensemble composed of a flabiol (small flute), of a drummer



(tambori), of two tables, of two tenors, two or three trumpets, a slide or valve trombone, two fiscorns and a three-string double bass (verra).



Goigs

On the eve of Easter, a choir goes from house to house singing Catalan songs known as the Goigs dels Ous. At the

end of each performance, the singers pass a basket on the end of a long pole to collect food—eggs, blood sausage, cured meats, and more—which will be used to prepare the traditional Easter omelette.

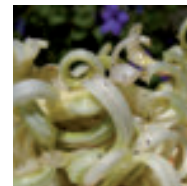
Contrapàs

The Contrapàs is unique in that it is danced exclusively by men, in an open circle. In Prats-de-Mollo-la-Preste, the Contrapàs is still performed in its purest traditional form.

Calçotada

Calçots are a type of sweet onion that resemble leeks and are mainly enjoyed between January and March. Grilled over an open flame, they are then dipped in a delicious Salvitxada sauce made from almonds, tomatoes, peppers, and garlic.

The Coscolls



The Coscoll, scientifically known as *Molopospermum peloponnesiacum*, is a wild plant that grows in the high mountains during spring. Tradition

holds that the village youth climb the slopes to harvest it and offer it to the elders. Only the stem is eaten: it is peeled, cut into quarters, and plunged into ice-cold water before being served as a salad.

The Bear Festivals



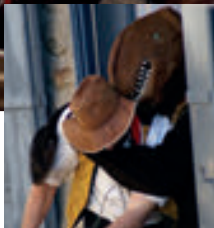
© J.C.Milhet

BEAR FESTIVAL - Saint-Laurent-de-Cerdans

Ancient initiation rituals

Les The Bear Festivals draw their origins from the legend of Jean de l'Ours* and ancient traditional initiatory rituals celebrating fertility and the arrival of spring. In the festivities, a bear who has kidnapped young shepherdesses, is pursued by hunters, captured, and then displayed to the villagers in the town square. During the closing ceremony, the beast is shaved, revealing its human form once again.

*Jean de l'Ours is a legendary hybrid being, half-human and half-bear, born of a woman and a bear. Possessing superhuman strength, he overcomes a series of challenging trials.



THE TRAPPEUR & THE BEAR
Arles-sur-Tech



BEAR DEFYING THE PUBLIC
Prats-de-Mollo-La-Preste



MONACA
Saint-Laurent-de-Cerdans

These three festivals each have their own unique character. In Arles-sur-Tech, the celebrations are more theatrical: performers mingle with the crowd, bringing the streets to life with playful scenes staged in the village squares and other iconic spots. In Prats-de-Mollo-La-Preste, the bears are released into the town, playfully "marking" in black all the villagers they encounter along the way.

Pyrénées Orientales - Oc tania

In Saint-Laurent-de-Cerdans, the festival is closely tied to the carnival, featuring a grand parade through the town center with lively interactions between the characters. All the celebrations conclude with the bear being shaved in the main square. The Bear Festivals are recognized a spart of UNESCO's intangible Cultural Heritage. **They take place just before and during the winter school holidays.**



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AAT Amélie - País Català**

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