

Auvergne and its Traditions

The Auvergne of traditions can be very modern. Today, Puy-en-Velay lace inspires the greatest fashion designers and Thiers cutlery adorns the most prestigious tables. Both are very important crafts, rooted in traditional savoir-faire and driven by a constant search for perfection.

As for country traditions, far from being old clichés, they attract more and more townfolk searching for the roots of today's world.

★ The Unusual

Lace in French Designer Fashion



Dior, Chanel, Givenchy and others make use of this traditional savoir-faire. The Hôtel de la Dentelle (House of Lace), in the heart of historic Brioude houses collections of old lace but in particular contemporary samples. Using historical, economic and artistic angles, the visitor is guided through 600 years of heritage, with priceless works of art along the way. You get caught up in today's creations which experiment with lace in new materials and colours, and even amounts. The workshop, a school where two 'Meilleurs Ouvriers' (Best Workers) of France watch over a busy hive of young professional lace makers with golden fingers, reveals part of the secrets of the patience and skill of this craft.

Contact: Tel. 04 71 74 80 02 - Email: hoteldeladentelle@wanadoo.fr



CRT AUVERGNE

The 'Rouets' Valley, a century of Thiers cutlery



In the 19th century, a period of great expansion for the Thiers cutlery industry, there were no fewer than 27 'rouets' (knife-grinding mills) in the Durolle gorges. Almost 700 people came down there at dawn every day and went back up at nightfall. In the cutlery industry, the grinder had the highest rank, or at least held the most prestigious position; it was he who gave the blade fresh from the forge furnace its cutting edge. He didn't have the best job, flat on his stomach on a board, in the cold and the wet, pressing the iron against the sandstone, his face close to the grindstone which could shatter at any time. Today, only a few lingering traces remain of the epic industrial story of these grinders, the muffled echo of a bygone pride. A necessary follow-up to a visit to the Lace Museum and the House of the Cutlers, the 'Rouets' valley leads visitors to retrace the steps of the grinders, in a superb wild valley along a trail some 3 km long. On entering the final working 'rouet', the visitor can see the wheel turning, hear the pulley belts banging about and go up to the "chamber" where the polishing women used to work. The two tours open up an exceptional, original and moving site to lovers of history, industrial heritage, hiking and nature.

The 'Rouets' Valley can be visited at any time in any season.

Contacts: Vallée des Rouets, Tel. 04 73 80 58 86

Musée de la Coutellerie, Tel. 04 73 80 58 86

Web site: www.musee-coutellerie-thiers.com



MUSÉE DE LA COUTELLERIE



LA TOINETTE ET JULIEN

La Toinette and Julien: a very emotional experience

The 'Scenomuseum' 'La Toinette and Julien' has two sites: La Toinette's House and Julien's Barn, a few hundred metres apart, in the heart of Murat-le-Quaire, a village of 500 inhabitants situated at an altitude of 1050 metres, in the Sancy massif.

These two sites call for the use of an innovative museographical concept: 'scenovision' which, by putting together modern technologies and authenticity, appeals to all the senses and arouses feelings and curiosi-

ty. It allows the audience to widen their knowledge and makes them think.

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An artists' village in Châtel-Montagne

Nestling into the Bourbonnaise Mountain, Châtel-Montagne has 400 inhabitants and 15 artisans/artists settled in the commune thanks to housing and shops made available by the local council. A glass blower, a glass engraver, a rattan basketmaker, an antique doll restorer, a stone sculptor, a ceramist, a photographer, a wood turner, a Provencal figurine maker, a watercolourist, a cabinet maker, a tapestry maker, a potter, a saddler and a wood painter welcome the many visitors and tourists.

Contact: Châtel-Montagne Town Hall - Tel. 04 70 59 72 17 - Web site: <http://perso.wanadoo.fr/mairie-chatel.montagne>

The Mysteries of Farges

The mysterious story of troglodyte dwellings from the Middle Ages, presented in 'scenovision'

Moving through the caves, the visitor is plunged into the depths of the earth to the very roots of Auvergne. Bringing the time of the warriors back to life: you enter a world of images, sounds and lights that takes you to caves from across the centuries. Share the secret of Abbot Dubois: the magic lantern show invites you to learn about the Unusual adventure of two brothers from Farges during the Revolution. Discover the Treasure of Vigineix: 100 years ago, a certain Mr Vigineix acted as 'Auvergne Ambassador to Paris'. He had photographed raised pictures of the landscapes and characters that he loved so much.



JOËL DAMASE ©

And Bellonte Farm: Saint-Nectaire seen from the wings

The Bellonte Farm offers to share its daily routine during a visit of the milking sheds and the Saint-Nectaire manufacturing process. The Bellonte family, small farmers in Farges for 8 generations, give a down-to-earth welcome to visitors.

Contact: Alphonse BELLONTE, GAEC de Farges - Tel. 04 73 88 52 25 or 04 73 88 53 95

Email: farges@fr.st - Web site: www.farges.fr.st

The Margeride ecomuseum: between Truyère and Landes

To the south, between Cantal and Haute-Loire, Auvergne is transformed. It leaves the volcanic summits behind for the moors and forest landscape of the Margeride which reaches an altitude of 1500 m. Over three sites, with houses and gardens, objects and pictures, smells and atmospheres, the Margeride ecomuseum recounts the history, past and present, of its inhabitants: the farm of Pierre Allègre, the garden of Saint-Martin, the school of Clémence Fontille.

Contact: The Margeride ecomuseum - Tel. 04 71 23 42 96

Web site: www.margeride-truyere.com

➔ The Unmissable

Seasonal Migration in Allanche: the most popular summer pasturing festival in Auvergne H3

Every year, at the end of May, the Salers cattle start moving up the mountains. For 5 months, these beautiful beasts with mahogany coats invade the Cézallier area and graze on quality pasture land. This type of authentic free-range rearing combines tradition and modernity and makes for healthy, flavoursome meat and dairy products. This is the time for the village of Allanche to host the summer pasturing festival, a highly colourful event that includes seminars, cattle driving, a local produce market, walks and more.

Contact: *L'Estivade en Cézallier* - Tel. 04 71 20 48 43



J.F. FERRATON

Brion Fair... say hello to calves, cows, 'burons'! G3

Brion is a hamlet built right up against the largely eroded vent of an ancient Cézallier volcano, a promontory that overlooks high plateaux and wide open spaces. Once a month in the summer season, this 'middle of nowhere' village takes on the airs of a capital city. There's the Store Calf festival, the Veal Fair, the Heifer Market, there's the Bull Calf Fête, the Village Ox Fair, the Bull run, there's the Cow Gathering; in short, it's the biggest market in upper Auvergne when 'buron' farmers, cattle traders, butchers, breeders, fatteners, farmers, tenant farmers, sharecroppers, simple onlookers and even tourists meet up. The meadows are divided up into multicoloured enclosures visited by noisy, if not very talkative crowds, unlimited deals are made, handfuls of notes change hands beneath the 'biaudes' (tunics from Berry). The five 'burons' of Brion are transformed, as if by a miracle, to water parched throats and fill hungry stomachs with mountain specialities.

Contact: *Besse-en-Chandesse Tourist information office* - Tel. 04 73 79 52 84



J. MONDIÈRE / CRT AUVERGNE

Traditional Auvergne Music

The traditional music of Auvergne is definitely topical and geared towards modernity being developed every day. This same music, which speaks out around the land of its history to help keep the tale alive, works with influences from all over the place. The Agency for Traditional Music in Auvergne helps with the coordination of a network and with the artistic promotion of many productions.

Contact: *Agence des Musiques Traditionnelles en Auvergne*

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