

Aveyron

The Departement of Aveyron is large and sparsely populated. There is much to see – and yet the only sight which is well known to many people outside France is the Millau Viaduct.

Aveyron is crossed or bounded by three major rivers, the Lot, the Aveyron and the Tarn, all running from east to west. It extends from the unknown ‘Carladez’ region in the north, to a long stretch of the scenic Tarn gorges in the south, and from Millau in the south-east to historic Conques in the north west,



Starting in the north, Carladez en Aveyron “is a secret place” far from any main highways. A curious piece of history is that in 1641, during the Thirty Years War, the French gave it to the Duke of Monaco in return for the transfer of his loyalty from Spain to France. The inscriptions “Monaco” and “Grimaldi” can still be seen on buildings in Mur de Barrez, the main town.



So often the hotels in the country-towns of the region are disappointing, struggling to survive, and unable to upgrade poorly equipped guest rooms. Not so in Mur de Barrez. The ‘Auberge de Barrez’ has good rooms and has a good restaurant. So we returned to Mur de Barrez several times and felt ‘at home’. The gorges of the Truyere are at hand and the ancient Chateau de Valon occupies a fantastic viewpoint.

There are no Museums or Theme Parks in Carladez. But it does have “Les Sentiers de l’Imaginer”. Six villages have created family walks, each telling a story, with stopping points marked by the creations of local craftsmen. So there are dragons in Carladez, created by the blacksmiths of Murols.



South of Carladez, a long stretch of the river Lot crosses Aveyron. Viewpoints abound.

And south of the Lot is Conques, an isolated town which owes its prosperity to medieval skullduggery. There was a monastery at Conques in the 9th century, and the ambitious monks realised that they needed a ‘relic’ in order to gain their share of pilgrims, the tourists of the time. After some failed attempts they targeted a shrine containing the reliquary of Sainte Foye, stole it, and installed it in what is now the Abbey Church of Sainte Foye. Conques then prospered as a major resting place on the pilgrimage route from Le Puy to Santiago de Compostela. Our room was up many stairs in the logis !



Further south, on a high ridge in a loop in the Aveyron, is Najac, one of the ‘Plus Beaux Villages to France’. It is medieval in character and the chateau dates from 1253. We have stayed both at a logis in the main square, and at one at river level.

