Circuit of Romanesque and Gothic churches

**Length:** one day / 60 km

**Circuit:** Pont de Salars - Pont de Salars reservoir - Le Vibal - St Martin de Cormières - Arques - St Agnan or St Chine de Ségur - Ségur - Prades de Salars - Lac de Pareloup - Salles-Curan - Salars - Pont-de-Salars.

With Romanesque and Gothic churches, castles, manor houses, abbeys, fountains, and crosses, immerse yourself in our history as you make your way along our roads and footpaths.

The circuit starts in front of the tourist office in Pont de Salars. the signs for Rodez. At the first intersection, take a right towards Le Vibal on the D523 (you can visit the Maison des Artisans in Le Vibal on your way). On leaving Le Vibal, follow the road for "Laissac“ on the left. At the intersection with the D29, turn right towards Arques, then left into the hamlet of St Martin de Cormières.

**Saint Martin de Cormières**

*(To visit the church in the hamlet, ask for the key from Mr or Mrs Agrifoul at the unrendered house opposite the church, with steps and a wooden ramp at the entrance.)*

Initially Romanesque in style, this church was given a facelift in the 15th century. Prior to the 10th century, it was a dependency of Camboulas. Today, the church is characteristic of the Flamboyant Gothic style, dating back to the late 15th and early 16th century. The features built in this period remain largely intact.

A church with a single nave consisting of three bays wider than the choir, all with ribbed vaults. In its general appearance, the church resembles the vaulted farm buildings of the neighbouring Causse.

The bell gable, which houses two bells, can be accessed via the door at the back of the church, which leads to the tribune and then the bell tower (via the second part of the period spiral staircase).

There are four chapels, the most attractive of which, on the right, is dedicated to Our Lady of La Salette. The national emblem of France suggests that the building was constructed at the time of François d'Estaing, Bishop of Rodez from 1501 to 1529. Near the entrance is a lime tree, one of many planted on the instructions of the Duke of Sully under the reign of King Henry IV of France.

*Get back on the D29 and head towards Arques (follow the D29 to the left).*
Arques
Visit of the church (for the key, ask Mr Casimir at the former petrol station).

Formerly the priory of Notre Dame d'Arques, a dependency of the Bishopric of Rodez, the early church, dedicated to St Michael, was bequeathed to Conques Abbey in 1079. In 1250, it was home to a hospital of the Order of St John of Jerusalem, which was then transferred to the Bishop of Rodez.

The current church was built in 1560 and its bell gable in 1571, in the Flamboyant Gothic style. Inside is an altarpiece decorated with statues of St Roch and St Firmin, dating from the late 17th to the early 18th century, and gilded in 1778. Another of Sully's lime trees can be found at the entrance.

Continue on the D29 towards Ségur. Before you reach Ségur, turn left onto the D95 to St Agnan.

Saint Agnan or Saint Chine de Ségur
A beautiful 12th-century Romanesque building. The choir was rebuilt in 1440 and the bell tower also dates from the 15th century. Romanesque entrance, renovated church (explanations and commentary provided in the church). Things to see: font, 5th-century sarcophagus, altarpiece.

Take the same road back to the D29 and follow the signs for Ségur. In the village, take a right turn in the direction marked "Centre-ville". Visit the village.

Ségur
Derived from the Latin "Securus locus", meaning "safe place". Originally a castle of the Counts of Rodez, built on a promontory not far from the River Viaur. The church of St Pierre was formerly the castle's chapel, hence its dominant position.

A Romanesque building converted in the 15th century.

The village is thought to have been fortified around 1368. The presence of the Armagnac family may go some way towards explaining Ségur's standing. In 1491, the site housed a school with up to 300 pupils, which held some memorable celebrations. The road from Rodez to Millau generated a substantial amount of trade.

Inside the church, be sure to take a look at the Carolingian choir screen located in the last chapel on the left. It serves as a decorative backdrop for an ogee niche above the altar.

In the village, take the D95 in the direction of Prades de Salars. Cross the D911 and continue along the D535 until you get to Prades.
**Prades de Salars**

A former "sauveté" or place of sanctuary, and the seat of a priory dependent on Conques Abbey.

The village was ransacked in the 15th century by the Routiers, the mercenary soldiers of Rodrigo de Villandrado. The church, rebuilt in the 19th century, has kept its 1542 bell gable, topped with a steeple.

The site was founded by a troubadour: Dieudonné de Prades, canon of Rodez Cathedral. He was one of those to witness the first stone of the church being laid in 1277 by Raymond de Calmont, Bishop of Rodez.

*Continue along the D535 until you reach the D993. There, turn left towards Salles-Curan.*

**Salles-Curan**

Salles-Curan: the former summer residence of the Bishops of Rodez. A medieval walled town which takes its name from one or more "state rooms" in a lordly manor. After the different parts of the castle were sold off, Bishop Vivian de Boyer (bishop from 1240 to 1274) had the castle rebuilt. His successor acquired the church in 1282 and adopted Salles-Curan as his summer residence, fortifying the site. Salles-Curan benefited from the generosity of these illustrious guests, as demonstrated by some attractive relics: the castle, rebuilt in around 1445, the 15th-century Gothic collegiate church, and the old 15th-century tithe barn with Renaissance corner windows.

The church was designed in the Gothic style of southern France, under the episcopacy of Guillaume de la Tour d'Oliergues. The construction work lasted from 1452 to 1455. It was built not as a parish church, but as a collegiate church for the bishop, his house and his chapter.

A Gothic church with a single wide nave and no aisles or flying buttresses, with side chapels built inside the abutments. The only entrance is preceded on the outside by a set of wide granite steps. On the top step, two stone lions sit peacefully guarding the church. Above the door is the coat of arms of François d'Estaing (1504-1529).

Things to see: the stalls (1510), the listed 15th-century stained-glass windows, the 14th-century Virgin, the 15th-century processional cross.

The castle has, above its ribbed entrance door with portcullis, retained a feature dating back to the construction of the original castle in around 1442: the coat of arms of Guillaume de la Tour.

The façade was once flanked by three aligned towers. Today, only the first remains. Salles-Curan was the home town of painter and poet Eugène Viala (1859-1913), bard of the Lévèzou.

*Get back on the D993 and head towards Pont-de-Salars, then turn left (after about 1 km) onto the "Vernhes" tourist route to discover the Lac de Pareloup. Come back along the D993 until you reach the D911. There, turn left towards Pont-de-Salars. At the start of the descent into the village, turn right towards "La Chapelle de Salars."*
Salars chapel (12th-century)
Panoramic view over the village.

Previously known as St Martin de Salars. It is believed that the initial sanctuary, which was built to replace a former place of pagan worship, dates from the Visigothic and Merovingian era.

Without a doubt the birthplace of Pont-de-Salars, the chapel, which was renovated in the 15th century and at several other times since, has not fallen into disuse. It is a place of pilgrimage for the people of Pont-de-Salars on Whit Sunday.

Get back on the D911, cross the bridge and the entire village, and return to the starting point in front of the tourist office.

Detailed list of the main noteworthy religious buildings
- The Gothic basilica, the listed covered markets and the Ceignac oratory (15th-16th century)
- Saint Amans church in Magrin, Calmont (14th century church with frescos)
- The Gothic church (14th-15th century) and the oratory (1635) in Canet de Salars.
- The church of Saint Sauveur de Grandfuel and the "Sainte Epine" reliquary in Comps la Grand Ville
- Comps church and its baroque altarpiece (1660)
- St Amans church (statue of the Virgin Mary) in Salmiech
- Carcenac-Salmiech church (entombment) in Carcenac
- The bell tower and frescos in the old church at Flavin
- Saint Georges de Camboulas church (14th century) in Pont de Salars
- Salars chapel (12th century) in Pont de Salars
- Poujol church in Camboulas (13th century), Pont de Salars
- 15th-century collegiate church in Salles Curan
- Templar cross in Les Canabières, Salles Curan
- The Romanesque church of Saint Agnan and its sarcophagus in Ségur
- Bergounhoux sanctuary (18th century), Ségur
- Church in Fijaguet, Villefranche de Panat.
- Chapelle del Pasturalh in Saint Lazare, Agen d'Aveyron
- Church of Notre Dame d'Aures, Arvieu
- 14th- and 15th-century church in Cassagnes-Bégonhès, listed as a historic monument due to its bronze bell
- The Romanesque church of Saint Laurent du Lévézou.