

Itinerary #8

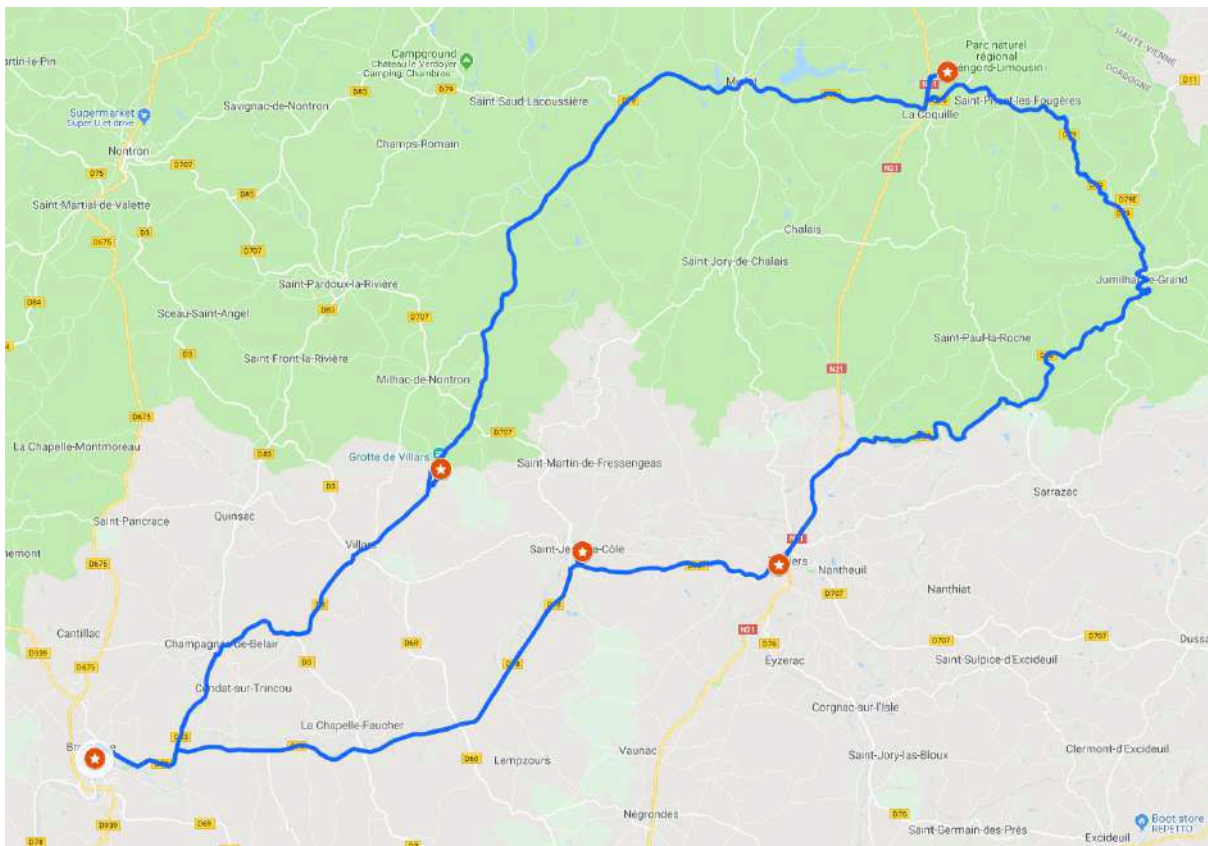
Beauty underground and on the water



Trip Time: 7 hours *

Distance: 106 km

0:30 to Grotte de Villars	(28 km)
0:20 to Brantôme	(18 km)
0:20 to Saint Jean de Côte	(20 km)
0:10 to Thiviers	(7 km)
0:40 to Bonne Routes	(33 km)



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*** Notes:**

If you choose to stop for lunch at Brantome on Saint Jean de Côte, this will extend the duration of your trip accordingly.

The return route from Thiviers takes you on a scenic route, some of which is relatively narrow with some imperfect road surfaces. Depending on your car you may wish to just stay on the N21 North to La Coquille to end your journey.

Main Sites

Grotte de Villars



1.5 hour visit

The caves at Villars are a maze of 13 kms of tunnel and form the largest underground network in the Périgord. Inhabited since prehistory, you will find examples of Aurignacian painting, bison, antelope and the famous Magdalenian white horse. The stalactites and stalagmites are spectacular.

The guided tour takes around 45 minutes. Most guides do speak English but it can't be guaranteed. English translations will be provided. In the reception building, a 20 minute video (English subtitles) explains the history and geology of the cave. It's worth viewing the video to understand the geology in the cave which will be explained during the tour.

The prehistoric gardens are an educational walk for children but we can all learn something! A small cafe restaurant is on site but does close for lunch.

Brantôme



1 hour visit

One of the most photographed scenes in the Dordogne – the Abbey of Brantôme. Wooded cliffs loom up behind the 8th century Benedictine abbey (one of the oldest in France) and the river Dronne runs around the village. Known as the Venice of Périgord there is plenty of medieval architecture to see. Collect a map from the tourist office which shows 41 numbered panels around the town.

Behind the abbey are troglodyte dwellings used by the original monks and a cave with the remarkable sculpture of 'The Last Judgement'. A self-guided tour is purchased at the turnstiles by credit card or in the tourist office across the bridge.

A tour of the abbey tower (130 steps up) is available from the tourist office on the opposite side of the river. Tours start from the office.

There are plenty of restaurants in the town serving a whole range of dishes, virtually all of which have excellent reviews so you can't go wrong. There is also a superb glacier serving anything from walnut to foie gras ice cream.

Brantôme Cruise



1 hour visit

50 minute river cruises run April to October: 14h, 15h, 16h; with extra cruises in May (17h) and June to September (11h, 17h).

Board next to the Moulin bridge on the Abbey side of the river.

Boat trip 8 € (cash only)

St Jean de Côle



0.5 hour visit

A tiny but beautifully formed 11th century settlement for monks on the banks of the river Côle. There are lots of wall plaques and information boards around the village explaining the history. This includes a beautiful medieval bridge and the village square dominated by the 12th century Château de la Marthonie and 11th century Roman-Byzantine church, with 18th century wooden carvings in the choir. Drive around to the chateau for a photo opp with your car.

In season you will find cafes and shops open, but life is limited out of season.

Thiviers



>1 hour visit

Thiviers is a pretty, active town which prides itself on its local speciality - foie gras - and the other local products such as walnuts and truffles. It is the 'Capital of the foie gras in Périgord Vert' and there is a museum in the town dedicated to foie gras production next to the tourist office in the main square. The church, the eglise Notre-Dame de l'Assomption, in the square was built in the 12th century. The town also has an important history of producing pottery (faïence) and there is a museum dedicated to the story of the production. The lively market takes place on a Saturday morning, and there are two patisseries on the square (one award winning) which are worth a visit.