

# Itinerary #11

## Medieval Tour

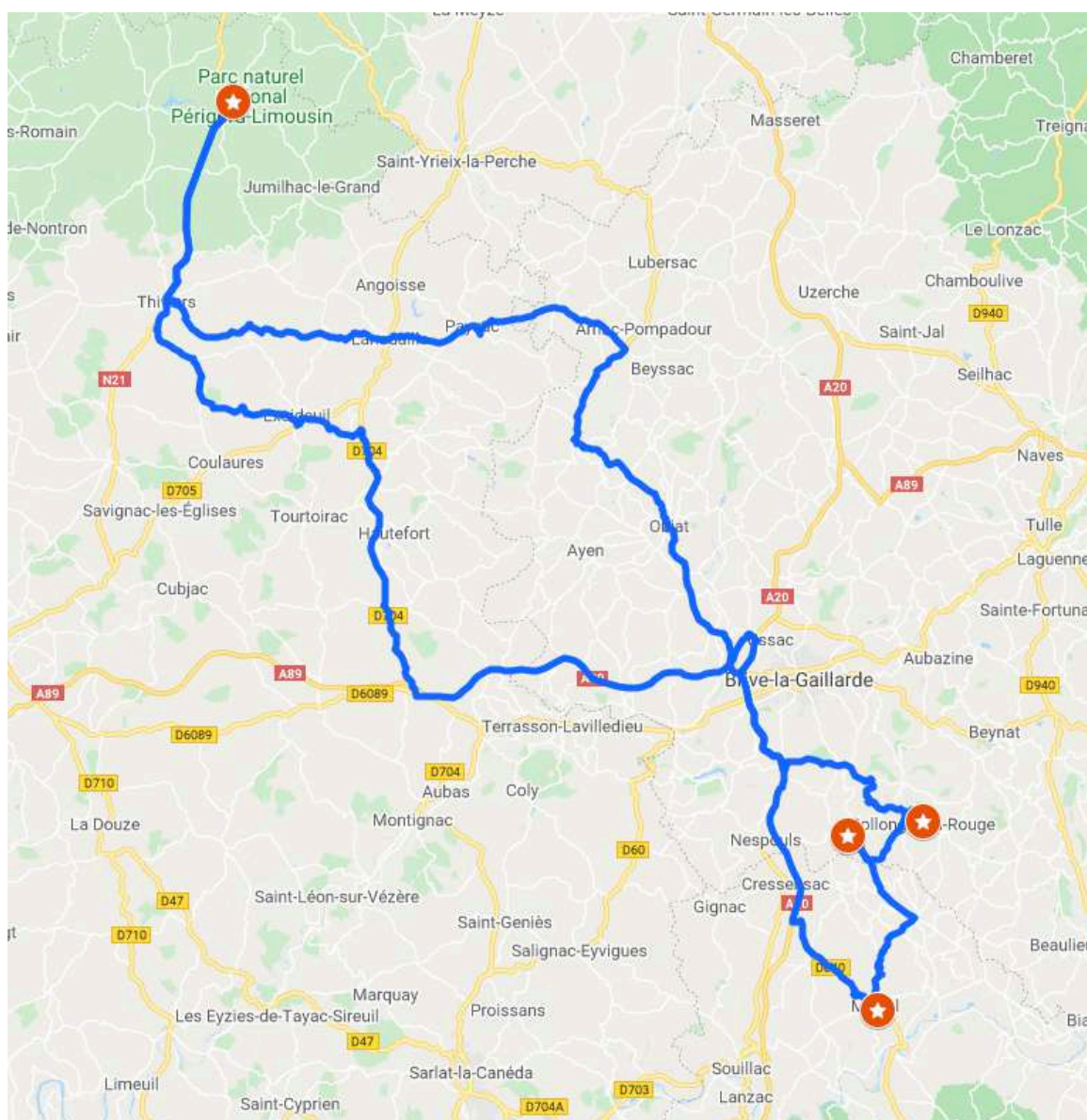


**Trip Time: 8+ hours \***

**Distance: 274 km**

1:50 to Collonges-la-Rouge	(117 km)
0:10 to Turenne	(10 km)
0:20 to Martel	(18 km)
1:45 to Bonne Routes	(129 km)

*\* Trip time does not include lunch, and depends on the time spent at each location and whether you take the train at Martel or just visit the village*



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## Main Sites

### Collonges-la-Rouge



*1 hour visit*

The village was built on the geological fault of Meyssac, which separates sandstone from limestone, and is where the red sandstone of the buildings originates. The village is one of the jewels in the medieval crown of France with beautiful narrow streets, castles and fortified towers. You will be forgiven for thinking you are on a film set. Of particular note are the House of the Mermaid, the Romanesque church and its tympanum, the covered market and its oven, the Chapel of the Black Penitents and its contemporary stained glass windows.

The site dates back to 844. By the 16th century it had become the residence of the officers of justice, administration and other senior officials of the Vicomte de Turenne. From there come many castles, mansions and pepper mill towers, which adorn the village and contribute to the architectural richness of Collonges. It was famous for its white wine until phylloxera destroyed the vines in 1880. The village then started to fall into ruin until Historical Monument status in 1905 gave it new life.

The headquarters of the association "Plus Beaux Villages de France" is in Collonges-la-Rouge.

### Turenne



*1 hour visit*

Another one of the many 'beautiful villages of France' Turenne is characterised by its height and unique position on top of Martel Causse, and dates back to the 9th century. In the 14th century Turenne was one of the great fiefs of France. The village has many 13th – 17th century houses and noble houses, along with vestiges of the former fortress dismantled by Louis XV.

The château overlooking the village offers self-guided tours of the garden and towers (the Guards Room is the only room open to the public). The César tower built in the 12th century symbolised the oath of allegiance to the crown as well as its power and position to send signals to the dependant castles. Climb the spiral staircase to get the best views from the top of the tower as far as les Monts d'Auvergne and the Marches du Midi Toulousain. The garden built on the walls of the old fortress combines simple and elegant French and British styles. Off season opens 14h-16h, plus 10h-12h low season, 10h-19h July/August.

There is a choice of bars and restaurants outside the historic village and within the Place du Foirail, the main square in the heart of historic Turenne.

## Martel – Steam Train



*1.5 hour visit*

The Chemin de fer touristique du Haut-Quercy offers a scenic trip on a steam pulled open train through the Dordogne valley. The 1 hour round trip from Martel provides a couple of stopping points so you can see the valley, the train (and the gift shop). There are lots of old trains and parts around the yard and a museum in the station (1€ turnstile).

Steam trains run Sundays and bank holidays in low season at 11h00, 14h30 16h00, and daily (excepting Saturdays) in July and August with additional departures. Diesel trains run at 15h on many days – check the website for the timetable. Arrive 30 minutes before departure. There is a café in high season.

## Martel - Village



*0.5 hour visit*

Martel is listed as a 'town of art and history' and is a well preserved medieval village. It is known as the town of seven towers. Pick up a map from the tourist office in the main square to help you find them! Some of the ramparts of the 12<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> century still remain, including some of the stone gateways.

Market days are Wednesday and Saturday mornings. In the 19<sup>th</sup> century Martel was an important town in the truffle market. On the edge of town there is a walnut mill that you can visit and watch the production of walnut oil which is available to buy in the shop.