# Marqueyssac gardens, an outstanding success story in the small world of French gardens Meandering through France N° 112

👤 Frederic De Poligny   🕐 April 6, 2017   📄 Blog, Comments, Countries, gardens, History, Popular Articles, tours, Travel   💬 No Comment



— -Candlelights at Marqueyssac

**By Annick Dournes & Frédéric de Poligny**

**Marqueyssac gardens are located in the heart of Perigord, in South Western France and offer the most beautiful panorama over the Dordogne River valley, 130 meters below. Perched on high cliffs, south facing, this big park was designed during the 17th century by Porcher, one of Le Notre's student. It was not before 1861 when Julien de**

**Cerval bought it, that it was given an Italian style. No less than 150,000 box trees were planted as well as cypress trees, Italian stone pines or Naples' cyclamens. Cerval built rock gardens and created viewpoints and paths making Marqueyssac garden one of the most remarkable French gardens.**



— Marqueyssac gardens

By the end of the 20th century the gardens had been neglected for decades. When their present owner Kleber Rossillon bought them in 1996 all the plants were growing in an anarchic way and needed a "little cut" to recover their previous beauty.  Chainsaws, shears and secateurs redesigned the gardens and today a small army of gardeners still hand cut the 150,000 box trees twice a year. Maple trees, green oaks, junipers, arbutus and other local plants have been planted and give to the gardens a romantic and dreamlike atmosphere. Visitors get immersed in this vegetal choreography where foliage plays with light and shade that constantly change according to time of day and seasons. From the hanging gardens of Marqueyssac you will have a spectacular 360 degrees view of the surrounding countryside, awarded 3-star by the Michelin Guide: Middle Age and Renaissance castles as well as small villages safe of anarchic modern buildings surround Marqueyssac gardens, like a precious jewel in its case.

— Castelnaud Castle in the back ground

Figures speak for themselves: 22 hectares, 4 miles long alleys (3 different ways to get fromm the castle to the belvedere), 6 miles long box tree hedges, 3 tonnes of quality ice cream eaten by over 200,000 visitors each year... All year long activities are organised for adults and children. The Easter egg hunt attracts dozens of excited children and this year edition on Sunday 16 and Monday 17 April will be ready to welcome them once again. On Thursdays, all summer long, the gardens and the castle are illuminated with over 2,000 candles from sunset till midnight, inviting you for a romantic and mysterious stroll. The surrounding castles and villages are also illuminated and shine in the night, looking like they never do in daylight. Along the way you will be entertained by live music: a pianist, a string quartet or a jazz band... and a theatre company dressed in a fairy tale way and walking on stilts liven up the castle terrace. A magic night!


— Marqueyssac belvedere

The 19th century castle was recently renovated. The lounge, the dinning room and bedrooms now look as beautiful as they did when Julien de Cerval refurbished the castle. But the highlight of the visit is the attic! It took 5 years to rebuild the roof made with stone tiles locally

called *lauzes,* the traditional way to make roofs in Black Perigord. Unfortunately there are very few craftsmen who still have the "savoir faire" to put together these heavy tiles so that they lock one another while being perfectly watertight. This 30 inches roof is 700 sq meters large and weighs 500 tonnes! It is spectacular from the outside and from inside, so don't miss to go upstairs to the attic to look at it.



— Marqueyssac gardens

Better not suffer from vertigo to enjoy one of Marqueyssac most incredible experience, but if you feel bold enough you shouldn't miss the "Via Ferrata". Wearing a helmet and securely fastened to the rock face, you will follow a path created along the high cliff, half walking and half climbing on pitons, beams, small channels dug into the rock… Challenging, but you will be rewarded by amazing sensations and breathtaking views.

— The Via Ferrata at Marqueyssac

Last but not least Marqueyssac welcomes a new guest this year. A 1,5 million years old dinosaur is now part of the gardens' menagerie. This real skeleton of a Carnosaurus, a direct ancestor of the famous Tyrannosaurus Rex, is 7,5m long and 2,5m high. It was found in the United States in 2013 and is a rare and exceptionally complete specimen of Allosaurus that we know of today.



— In the Marqueyssac gardens

All activities including the "Via Ferrata", the tree adventure high up on Tyrolean traverses, climbing courses on the cliff, wood turner workshop using… box-wood, huts in the trees are free of any extra charge with the entrance ticket. You can also ask for the Marqueyssac app when buying your ticket and have an enhanced visit of the gardens.

More information: http://marqueyssac.com/?lang=en



— aerial view over Marqueyssac

Marqueyssac is located in Dordogne a French department East of Bordeaux and easily reached by plane through Bergerac or Brive airpots. More at http://uk.france.fr/en/dordogne

**Text by Annick Dournes**

— Marqueyssac gardeners

### About [Frederic De Poligny](#)

Annick Dournes and Frederic de Poligny are two French tourism journalists who travel the world for many years. They will share with you their very favourite experiences of worldwide travels. Those about France, their native country, will be found on a regular basis in their chronicle "Meanderings through France".

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