Mirepoix

A trip to Mirepoix, is like stepping back into medieval France. First cited in the 10th century in a charter granted to the inhabitants by the Count of Foix, and is thought to be of Celtic origins. The town has had a turbulent history, it started life on the other side of the River Hers. During the crusade against the Cathares in 1209, Simon de Montfort took the feudal chât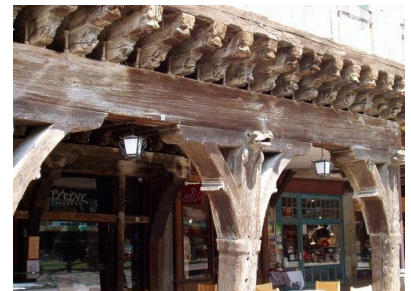eau. and dispossessed the family, who had strong links with the Cathares. Subsequently giving the town to Guy de Levis who became the Marchécal de Mirepoix.

In 1279, the barrage at Puivert ruptured and caused massive flooding that destroyed the whole village, sparing only the château. In 1289 Guy de Levis decided to rebuild in its current location.

In 1362, the town was attacked by a band of highway robbers who set it on fire and totally destroyed the southern part of the town. The centre was refortified with a strong wall and four large gates to protect it. Today, all that remains of this fortification is the Porte d'Aval.

Today, the highlight of this ancient bastide town is the central square, "Place des Couverts" and has, some unique medieval architecture with houses and arcades, dating from the 12th century The square is absolutely beautiful and very colourful as the timber-framed houses are painted in a variety of pastel shades. Take some time to admire the woodwork involved in these houses - some of the carpentry and decorative features have fascinating details.

The 'Maison des Consuls' is one of the best of these buildings. Keep an eye out for the carved figures on the ancient woodwork, these include African heads, women's heads and a tortoise. There are an incredible 103 carvings in total! On the other end of the square by the tourist office there are two grain measures dating from the 17th -18th century. Each being able to hold 20 litres of grain. There is also a wrought iron market hall in the centre of the square, built in the 19th century.

On Monday mornings in the square is a bustling market, in the summer, you can sit at cafe tables intermingled almost between the stalls, listen to buskers playing their music, buy the very best in local produce, and soak up a very essential "French atmosphere" and watch the world go by. Mirepoix is also renowned for its numerous fairs and festivals held throughout the year, including a jazz festival in April, a brocante and flower fete in May, the famous Medieval fete in July, a marionette festival in August and the 'Fete de la Pomme' held in October.

The cathedral of Saint Maurice, in Mirepoix is built in the gothic style and is the second largest single-naved church in Europe, and is a classified Historic Monument.

Montsegur /Mirepoix Map

Ginoles ~ Mirepoix: Distance 45Km, 55 minutes
Mirepoix ~ Montsegur: Distance 31Km, 50 Minutes
Ginoles ~ Montsegur: Distance 40Km, 55 Minutes