



- **Restoration Work and Rebirth of an Exceptional Site**

In the second half of the 20th century, the chateau was inhabited less regularly. The agricultural activity of the estate ended. The upkeep of the park suffered and it became overgrown.

In order to bring this enchanting setting back to life, **Kleber Rossillon**, already responsible for the restoration of Chateau de Castelnaud, undertook the restoration of Marqueyssac in 1996, supported by Michèle de Jonghe d'Ardoye, descendant of the Marqueyssac family.

This restoration focused on preserving the **site** and restoring its former charm. For one year, nearly 60 companies and 10 gardeners worked to reopen the paths, clear the viewpoints over the valley, restore the chateau and cut back the boxwoods to heights suitable for restructuring the hedges and massifs. The placing of security fences on the cliffs and the fitting out of public reception facilities were part of the essential work undertaken at this time.

Some modern creations have been added to complete the work of Julien de Cerval. These include **the serpentine path of santonica and rosemary** beginning at the chateau, and in keeping with the style of 19th-century rock gardens, the **waterway** which goes down from the Belvedere and finishes by **cascading** 40 meters down into giant **potholes**.

Five gardeners work throughout the year to upkeep the park.

- **New in Recent Years**

“**Boxwood Chaos**” (*Chaos de buis - g*) was created in winter 2003. At the back of the chateau, boxwoods were brought back into the light by the felling of about fifty holm oaks in 1996. These wild boxwoods, first cut and then worked into a cluster, were then reorganized with templates to give the illusion of stone blocks.

Since 2006, the park has been embellished by sculptures. “Birds” from Alain de Cerval, a descendant of the designer, ornaments the High Walk up to the large green area called “The Esplanade”.

In 2007, a collection of boxwoods found its place along the Great Walk. In collaboration with Mark Jones from “Les Buis de Beaussère”, about fifty varieties were placed on display.

In 2009, **the Archway** (*Allée des Arches - o*) was created by the artist Gerard Chabert. This monumental work of art is accentuated with lighting during the candlelight evenings.

Since 2010, the “Via Ferrata” has been laid out about hundred meters above river level, offering a 200-meter cliff walk.

From the autumn of 2011 to the spring of 2016, the chateau’s structure and limestone slabs were completely restored.

In 2017, the limestone slab roof of the central tower was completely redone on a new framework.

Special Dates for Marqueyssac

- **The Great Easter Egg Hunt**

On the afternoons of Easter Sunday and Easter Monday. Be sure to book early, as participation in this activity is upon **reservation only**.

- **Rendez-vous in the Garden**

Every first weekend of June, the gardens are the setting of this national event: exhibition, pruning demonstration, etc.

- **“Curious about Nature” Arts and Crafts Workshop**

Creation of animal masks, windmills, puppets and frames... during Easter and All Saints' Day school holidays, every holiday weekend during the months of May and June, then every day in July and August.

- **Via Ferrata: Discover the Dordogne Valley in a Whole New Way!**

From mid- April to mid-November, according to the schedule. Please contact us.

- **Introductory Level Rock Climbing**

Reserved for children ages 6 and older, every morning, except Saturdays in July and August.

- **Marqueyssac’s Candlelight Nights**

First Saturday in June and every Thursday evening, in July and August, from dusk till midnight.

*The Marqueyssac Team wishes you a pleasant walk
and thanks you for your visit.*

The Hanging Gardens of Marqueyssac

BELVEDERE OF THE DORDOGNE

The Gardens of Marqueyssac, **listed as a National Historical Monument**, is a **private estate** that was born from the history of a family dating from the 17th century. After **extensive restoration work**, Marqueyssac was opened to the public in **March 1997**. Today, it is the most visited garden in Aquitaine.

Designed for walking, the garden overlooks the entire Dordogne Valley from its chalky cliffs. It unveils an **exceptional panoramic view** of the whole Dordogne valley now classified as one of the major sites of Aquitaine.

The paths are organised into **three circuits** that lead to **the Belvedere** (*le Belvédère - w*), 800 meters from the chateau. At 130 meters above the river, it reveals one of the most beautiful **panoramas of Périgord**, a remarkable view given three stars in the Michelin Guide in 2016.

In order to facilitate your visit, you will find below some of the principal attractions of the park that should not be missed. The letters in brackets reference the map of the park you received at the reception desk and will help you find your way.

The Surroundings of the Chateau

Marqueyssac has two very distinct characters, represented on one side by the garden and on the other side by the park. To begin, we invite you to discover the **terraces** and the extraordinary **«folly of boxwoods»** located on the Bastion and afterwards to embark on an exploration of the park walks for a complete change of scenery.

- **The Wood Turner** (only in high season) (*le Tourneur sur bois- b*)

At the entrance, the wood turner’s workshop is open to the public during the summer season. Having a **lemon-yellow colour** and a fine grain, boxwood takes an **excellent finish**. It is used for engraving and sculpting and also for **wood turning**. Jean-Pierre works with **boxwoods that were cut down in the park** during the restoration work.

- **The Aviary and the Nature Pavilion** (*la Volière et le Pavillon de la Nature - c*)

At the beginning of the walk, in the oldest tradition of gardens, the **aviary** houses **pigeons** of exotic shapes and plumage. In the same spirit, **peacocks** live in freedom among the boxwoods.

The **Nature Pavilion** presents a collection of 19th century dioramas that illustrate the **wild fauna of Perigord**, including the unique skeleton of a 7.5-metre-tall dinosaur that lived in Europe in the Jura. This huge 150-million-year old carnosaur was discovered in 2013 in the United States and is one of the very rare allosaur skeletons known to date to be displayed with such integrity and in such good condition.

- **The Chateau and the Terraces** (*le Château et les terrasses - f*)

On the west side of the chateau, the **three terraces** with their regular layouts are a reminder of the classical era of the estate and the work of one of André Le Nôtre’s students. From the Terrace of Honour, you will discover, from left to right, the feudal fortresses of **Castelnaud** (housing the Museum of Medieval Warfare), **Fayrac** and **Beynac**.

In its current form, the chateau is an early 19th-century **luxury residence**. Constructed with great **simplicity**, Marqueyssac displays a remarkable **roof** made from material typical of the region: **limestone slabs (lauze)** or stone tiles. This roof of more than 700 m² was completely restored in recent years and weighs more than **500 tons!**

The residence has two distinct sides. Facing the valley, Marqueyssac reveals an **imposing facade**. The **central tower** containing the staircase is a vestige of a previous construction. The geometric shapes of the boxwood beds mirror the symmetry of the chateau’s structural design. At the back, the layout is much more intimate, opening out onto the park which was reserved for the **enjoyment of residents**.

The **dining room** of the chateau, with its **earthenware stove** in the Flemish style is a reminder of the origin of the last occupants. The living room was refurbished in 2017 and displays beautiful wall paper that was identically restored and elegant Empire-style furniture.

The **bedroom** and **dressing room** of the southern wing of the chateau were restored in order to recreate the atmosphere from the epoch of the 1880’s. The furniture in place, a **four-poster canopied bed** and **desk**, date from the golden era of Marqueyssac.

- **The Restaurant - Tea-room** (*le Restaurant - Salon de thé - b*)

Located in the North wing of the **chateau**, the Tea-Room is open during the summer months. On the **panoramic terrace**, shaded by an **arbour**, you can enjoy light lunches, pastries, ice cream and refreshments.

- **The Bastion and Landscape** (*le Bastion - d*)

South of the chateau, **the bastion**, a magnificent structure built on the hillside, dominates the plain and the meanders of the Dordogne River. This large terrace is fitted out with a **pleasure garden** designed with pruned boxwoods.

The small green space at the beginning of the High Walk (*Promenade des Hauteurs*) reveals a beautiful view of the whole garden.

At Marqueyssac, the boxwoods are set-off by an arrangement showing great imagination and full of movement. Its layout with its **sinuous paths** is typical of landscaping done in France under **Napoleon III**. The **roundness** and **rolling aspect** of the boxwoods make Marqueyssac **soft and romantic** and naturally unite the garden with the rest of the landscape of the Dordogne Valley.

Water is very rare in this calcareous region. Filled by rainwater, the two **cisterns** carved into the rock were used for watering.

The Walks of Marqueyssac

At Marqueyssac, there are more than **6 kilometres of sinuous walks** that constitute a veritable labyrinth. Nevertheless, three main axes can bring you out of this maze: the Cliff Walk (*la Promenade des Falaises*), the High Walk (*la Promenade des Hauteurs*) and the Great Walk (*la Grande Allée*). On your circuit, numerous smaller paths allow the continuous possibility of going from one walk to another.

Opening out on the Dordogne Valley to the south, the Cliff Walk and High Walk reveal the main vantage points from the park. Facing north and completely shaded by vegetation, the Great Walk is very pleasant in springtime, but provides few openings for viewing the surrounding scenery.

Therefore, we invite you to take the Cliff Walk or High Walk to go to the Belvedere. Easy access for wheelchairs or strollers is shown on the map.

All along your circuit, beautifully **illustrated signs** give many details about the history of the Dordogne Valley, its fauna and flora.

- **The Cliff Walk** (*la Promenade des Falaises*)

This walk begins after the **Bastion** (*d*), heading towards the **Chapel** (*Chapelle - j*). To take full advantage of the view of the garden, you can reach it by taking the **Rosemary Path** (*Allée des romarins - i*) at the beginning of the High Walk.

The Cliff Walk ends in **Waterfalls** (*Cascades - t*) before going up to the **Belvedere** (*w*).

- **The High Walk** (*la Promenade des Hauteurs*)

The starting point is on the corner of the chateau, going up to the **Rosemary Path** (*Allée des romarins - i*). The High Walk enables you to go to the three highest points in the park: the **Calvary** (*Cabvair - n*), the **Bell Hut** (*Cabane en cloche - q*) and finally the **Belvedere** (*w*). It goes along a relatively hilly circuit, which is why we advise you against taking this way with a stroller or if you have any difficulties walking.

- **The Great Walk and the Shuttle** (*la Grande Allée et la navette*)

This walk begins at the level of the Tea Room by a **half-moon-shape bench** and ends, 1600 meters further along, at the **Poet's Hut** (*Asile du poète - z*). This **drystone hut** marks the estate border.

Perfectly **flat and straight** over nearly 500 meters, it offers very vast views. This remarkable achievement was made possible by the construction of **support walls** and by opening a **breach in the rock**.

In high season, a **shuttle service** is available to bring you back to the chateau.

- **The Children's Circuit and Playground**

Children will enjoy the labyrinth in the park for playing hide-and-seek. **There are two playgrounds** with swings and huts. The first one (*Aire de jeux - u*) is at the base of the Belvedere, **near the Waterfalls** (*Cascades - t*) where children will also enjoy the two new tree huts, and the second one (*Aire de jeux - y*), near the **Heath Hut** (*Cabane en brande - x*) is equipped with a large netted path in the trees over 100 metres long.

At the back of the chateau, near the arbour of the restaurant terrace, the tall, wild boxwoods house the children's labyrinth (*Labyrinthe des enfants - k*) for an enjoyable moment of playtime.

To help children discover the garden in an amusing way, a game questionnaire is available at the desk office.

On the Cliff Walk, the **Toddler's Circuit** (*Parcours des tout-petits - r*) is an amusing climb illustrated with paintings of small wild animals which small children will especially appreciate.

Boxwoods and Vegetation

Boxwoods are everywhere in the park. Planted throughout, they make up the **main theme** of the walks. They form a network, imposing themselves on the entire estate to bring order to **unruly nature**.

The **dense and evergreen foliage** of boxwoods gives the gardens an unchanging aspect and stay green throughout the seasons. They also lend themselves to **pruning**, thus enabling the creation of complex vegetal forms: **topiary art**. It is for these qualities that boxwoods have been widely planted in gardens for centuries and more specifically since the Italian gardens of the Renaissance.

These are **common boxwoods**, *Buxus sempervirens*, adapted to **calcareous soil**, **resistant to drought** and capable of growing in undergrowth.

The garden needs to **be pruned twice a year**, once at the end of spring and again at the end of autumn. The hedges in undergrowth are only pruned once a year, at the end of summer. The pruning of the 150,000 boxwoods is done with **hand-shears** and not with electric shears, as electric shears mutilate the leaves and cause the plants to yellow.

Up on Marqueyssac's rocky spur, the **vegetation** is remarkable. It has **adapted** to the **moisture-deficient calcareous soil** and a very **particular exposure to sunlight**. The cliff exposed to the south is very sunny. It accumulates heat during the day, then releases it, warming the vegetation up again at night. During winter, haze and fog rising up from the river encircle the plants and shelter them against the frost. The **southern side** of the park is filled with **Mediterranean** vegetation including **holm oaks**, durmast oaks, Montpellier maples, arbutuses, etc. These species, like boxwoods, show very distinct **resistance to drought**. Their thick and tough leaves are often shiny on the top and fuzzy underneath in order to limit as much as possible water loss due to evaporation. Thus their need for water is reduced. During summer, the sound of **cicadas** completes the southern French atmosphere of this side of the garden.

In contrast, on the more humid **northern side** grows an **Atlantic type** of vegetation, represented essentially by hornbeams, rural maples, oaks and robinia false acacias.

From the Belvedere, the southern side of the park with its numerous **holm oaks with dark foliage** and tormented shapes appears much darker than the northern side. This characteristic of the sunny slopes in the region of Sarlat is responsible for the origin of its name **Perigord Noir**.

History of a Passion

- **The Construction of the park**

The history of Marqueyssac begins in the classical era with Bertrand Vernet of Marqueyssac, who acquired the property for the family in 1692 and was responsible for the construction of the terraces surrounding the residence.

At the beginning of the 19th century, between 1830 and 1840, Julien Bessière, a career military officer, opened the Great Walk for his horse riding and had the chapel built. This chapel will be remodelled at a later date.

However, the main construction of the garden and walks date from the end of the 19th century. **Julien de Cerval** inherited the property in 1861 and having a passion for gardens, he dedicated the last thirty years of his life to the **beautification of Marqueyssac**. Back from Italy, he had **tens of thousands of boxwoods** planted that make Marqueyssac a veritable garden **“folly”**. He transformed the vegetable garden of the Bastion into a pleasure garden.

Having a passion for agronomy, Julien de Cerval was also responsible for the introduction of the **ornamental species** found in the park: the **lime tree**, the **Judas-tree**, the **liburnum**, the **plantain** and the **elm tree**. Passionate about Italian culture, he planted **cypresses** and **umbrella pines**. Lastly, Julien de Cerval planted the small **Naples cyclamen**, which today forms a fabulous coloured carpet from August to October.

Inspired by romantic gardens much-appreciated at the end of the 18th century, Julien de Cerval also embellished the southern side of the park with many elements. He added **belvederes**, **sinuous pathways**, small **staircases**, three **drystone huts**, a large **esplanade** designed for recreation and elegant receptions, a small **rotunda**, a **wayside cross**, **rock gardens**, **benches carved into the rock**, etc., accentuating the beauty of the site.

Julien de Cerval also transformed Marqueyssac's **chapel**, built by Julien Bessière, and gave it its current neo-gothic style.

Moreover, Marqueyssac was always an estate with an **agricultural calling**. At the end of the 19th century, this activity experienced rapid development. Julien de Cerval thus built **many outbuildings**: sheds, greenhouses, fruit gardens, dovecotes, stables and a sheepfold.

After Julien de Cerval's death in 1893, his family made a great effort to preserve the park as he had originally designed it to be. Several things were added to embellish his work, for example, the **rock gardens** which punctuate the angles of the eastern front of the chateau and the **yuccas** that finish off the landscaping of the Bastion.

At the turn of the 20th century, Baron Maximilien d'Erp, son-in-law of Julien de Cerval and a Belgian diplomat posted in Rome near the Holy See, invited his friend Giuseppe Sarto to visit. Bishop of Mantua, he was to become pope in 1903 under the name of **Pius X**. Under a shady arch of greenery, across from the small chapel of Saint Julien de Cénac, we can still see today the **Pope's Seat** (*Siege du Pape - s*) carved into the rock where he meditated. This Belgian branch of the family explains the Flemish furniture and the Dutch portraits present in the rooms of the chateau.