

LIMOUXIN  
TOURISME



# Peregrinations Couiza - Montazels

Travel through the centuries

# *A bit of History • Couiza*

**Couiza**, close to the river **Aude** and **Salz**, attracted the attention of the Romans early in history. The surrounding heights were preferred over muddy river shores of the **Salz**. The place called “des Oliviers” was occupied from the 1<sup>st</sup> to the 3<sup>rd</sup> centuries BC, testified by the discovery of two **Gallo-Roman coins**. First, Couiza became a part of the **Roman roads** from Razès to Corbières. These roads have been used until the Middle-Ages.

## **IX° - X° The Carolingian period**

During the **Carolingian period**, the village was built gradually and the parish church of St John the Baptist was founded between the 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> centuries. In the feudal time Couiza was a small village under the authority of the earls of Razès, then the **Carcassonne's** Viscount of the Trencavel dynasty.





### XIII° - The Crusade against Cathars

As a result of the crusade against the **Cathars**, Couiza became property of the French knight **Pierre de Voisins**, who also owned the villages of **Rennes-le-Château, Coustaussa, Arques** and **Antugnac**. After the peace treaty in 1258, a sharp increase of the population could be noticed. The De Voisins supported the settlement of new inhabitants. In the second half of the 14<sup>th</sup> century, the plague and the hundred-year war caused a major population decline.



## XVI° - La construction du château

The beginning of the 16<sup>th</sup> century was marked by a noticeable economic recovery. In 1518, Françoise, the last heir of the de Voisins, married Viscount Jean de Joyeuse. The couple decided to build his new residence in Couiza. The construction was entrusted to sculptor and architect Nicolas Bachelier. Nowadays, the magnificent Renaissance castle is the heritage pearl of the municipality. In the 16<sup>th</sup> century, during the religious wars, the lands of the Barony of Arques and Couiza were sacked. De Joyeuse supported actively the Catholic League, and organized the fight against the Huguenots.



**XVII° -** The current church was built in the 17<sup>th</sup> century, under the episcopate of Nicolas Pavillon, bishop of Alet-les-Bains.

## XVIII° - The Développement

During the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, the progressive industrialization of the Aude valley promoted the development of Couiza. The population never ceased to increase, reaching 1132 inhabitants by the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. In the same period, Mr. Guinot created a hat-making factory, which soon had shipped thousands of felt hats all over the world.

# A bit of History • Montazels

Even if the area seems to have been used since prehistory, the occupation of **Montazels** goes back to Roman times. The origin of its name comes probably from the Latin word « *monticellus* » for little mound.

## XI° - First Apparition in History

The medieval history of **Montazels** is very difficult to recreate due to the lack of historical sources. The first mention of the Saint Cecilia church goes back to the 11<sup>th</sup> century. This early church was built near the old road from **Couiza** to **Antugnac**. Nearby, during the 12<sup>th</sup> century the first castle was constructed. Some ruins are still remaining. The village has been developed around these two buildings.

**XIII° - XVI°** After the crusade against **the Cathars**, **Montazels** became the property of Jean de Rivière, the Lord of the neighboring villages: **Conilhac and Roquetaillade**.

During the Religion Wars, **Montazels** was destroyed, but the village was soon rebuilt and at the end of the 16<sup>th</sup> century, counted 61 houses and one mill.



## XVII° - XVIII° Architectural changes

In the second half of the 17<sup>th</sup> century, the current owner, François de Calmes, extended the castle, which caused the destruction of the first church and changed the appearance of the village. The new church was finished in 1678. In 1785, the parish priest Jean Bernard Carles build a **three dolphin fountain** on the small square. Today the **fountain du Griffoul** gives a unique atmosphere to the village. The construction of the railway between Quillan and Carcassonne had led to a strong development of the culture of the vineyard.

# Personnalité

## ANNE DE JOYEUSE



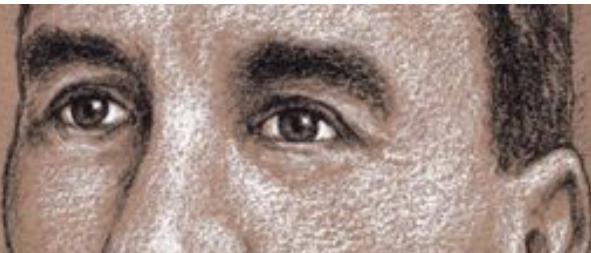
The firstborn of the Guillaume's sons, and who was called Anne of Arques, was born at the end of the year 1560. He first appeared during the reunion of the provincial States of Montpellier, in 1577; he appeared with the name of the baron of Couisan. Introduced two years after his father at the court of the king Henry III, he gained the favors of this prince who lavish him with honor and dignity. In 1581, he was declared duke and peer and obtained the title of Duke of Joyeuse, with the rights of preeminence over the other grand officers of the crown.

First Gentleman of the Chamber, soon he obtained the governance of Normandy and the eminent charge of admiral of France. In 1582, he went in Languedoc to visit his family. The nobility of the province impressed him at Nissan, close to Beziers. Probably, during his visit in the province, he spent some days at the castle of Couiza, because when he was young, he liked to spend time there. In 1587, he was in charge of the royal army during the battle of Coutras against the king of Navarre who will become later on Henry IV.

**Anne of Joyeuse pretended to be a prisoner, but he had been uncovered and killed by gun shot.**

# *Personnalité*

## ABBOT FRANÇOIS, BERENGER SAUNIERE



*Crédit photo : Travis Simpkins - François Béranger Saunière*

**B**orn on April 11, 1852 in Montazels and died on January 22, 1917 in Rennes-le-Château. This man of cloth was mainly known because he had spent enormous sum of money during his ministry at Rennes-le-Château, but the exact amount, its nature and its origins are still unknown. That personal accumulation of wealth is still closely associated, in collective imagination, to the discovery of some treasure on the very site of the village. This matter begun with rumors of an alleged discovery of valuable objects or scrolls (or even both) during renovation works in the church of Saint Marie-Madeleine in 1981.

Because of this accumulation of wealth's matter dues to a presumed treasure, adorned by many fictional story, accounts of investigation, and numerous press articles and television reports, from France and other countries, Abbot François and the village of Rennes-le-Château gained an international renown, especially in Europe and Anglo-Saxon countries.

**This story inspired Dan Brown in his best-seller's writing  
“Da Vinci Code”.**

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