VISIT MORTEMART

Behind its charming façades and peaceful narrow streets, Mortemart reveals a rich heritage shaped by over a thousand years of history. Once a seigneurial stronghold, the village retains remarkable reminders of its past, from the Hôtel-Dieu and former convents, its church and beautiful mansions.

Use this guide to discover the historic landmarks that give this exceptional village its unique charm.



Map base : Tertorio - © OpenStreetMap Contributeurs

- Town Hall
- Camper van parking area
- Public toilets
- Parking et parking bus
- Hiking trail starting point
- Picnic area
- Comptoir Limousin (information point)

HISTORICAL HERITAGE

1. Feudal Mound
3. The Ducal Château
4. Mortemart Hall
5. House of the Ducal Seneschal
8. Former Carmelite Convent
9. Former Augustinian Convent
10. Church of Saint Hilaire of Poitiers

Listed among '**Les Plus Beaux Villages de France ®**' (most beautiful villages of France), Mortemart is home to a remarkable collection of historic buildings that bear witness to its illustrious past.

1 THE FEUDAL MOUND

Standing at the crossroads of ancient routes, one of Mortemart's feudal mounts – a symbol of the Drut family's power – dates back to the early feudal period around the year 1000. Abbon Drut, a knight and Lord of Mortemart, fought alongside the Count of La Marche against the King of France during the siege of Bellac in 995. Nearby stood the parish church of Saint-Hilaire, which was destroyed in the early 19th century.

2 THE HOUSE OF THE CHEVALIER DE BÉON

This 17th-century house was owned, in the early 19th century, by Léonard de Béon who was made a Knight of Saint Louis. According to the archives, his ancestor, Fabien de Béon, was a close associate of a gentleman at the court of Henry IV.



3 THE DUCAL CHÂTEAU

The present-day château was almost certainly developed from one of the original motte-and-bailey fortifications. Parts of the moat that once surrounded the castle still remain. Inside, in the private quarters, a section of wall from the square keep—typical of the 13th century—still stands; dating from the period when the lordship of Mortemart passed, through marriage, to the de Rochechouart family. In 1360, Aimery II de Rochechouart, Lord of Mortemart, acknowledged the Prince of Wales as his feudal overlord. After 1370, when the King of France regained possession of the Limousin, the castle was confiscated by Du Guesclin. Aimery II was later pardoned and regained his property. The château was modernised in the late 15th century with residential quarters flanked by towers. The Rochechouart-Mortemart family became one of the most distinguished families of the French nobility. In 1650, Louis XIV elevated Mortemart to the status of a duchy-pairie, granting the Lords of Mortemart the title of Duke. Before the Revolution, the Dukes of Mortemart served as Governors of Les Invalides.

4 THE HALL

Listed as an historical monument, the hall was completely restored in 2013. It was built between the end of the 17th and the beginning of the 18th Centuries, using local materials. It is placed directly on the ground on one side, and atop a wall on the other. The pillars, beams, and rafters are made of oak, whilst the batten is of chestnut wood. It testifies to the flourishing commercial past of the village. Monthly fairs were introduced in 1681, and a weekly market was established in 1730, the initiative of Louis II, the Duke of Mortemart.



5 THE HOUSE OF THE DUCAL SENESCHAL

This 16th-century residence was extended in the 17th century with a central pavilion topped by a mansard roof with four slopes formed by two different pitches. When Mortemart became a duchy in 1650, the manorial justice system was revived.

6 THE HOUSE OF VERDILHAC-VILLELONGE

This house retains architectural features dating from the late 15th and early 16th centuries, including ogee lintels on the front façade and a projecting stair tower at the rear. The Verdilhac family were among the most loyal servants of the Lords of Mortemart. Joseph de Verdilhac de Villelongue, the estate steward (procureur fiscal), was probably responsible for the 17th-century remodelling of the house, as indicated by the moulded surround of the front doorway.

7 HOUSE WITH A WATCHTOWER

The house is distinguished by its watchtower, which was a popular feature in the region during the 17th century. It symbolises the power of the rising bourgeoisie gradually replacing the nobility, who were then at the King's court. Several houses in the neighbourhood have similar watchtowers, all built around 1650.

8 THE FORMER CARMELITE CONVENT

In the 14th century, during the Avignon Papacy, many clergymen, particularly those from the Limousin region, rose to prominence. One such figure was Pierre Gauvain, a native of Mortemart. Bishop of Viviers and later of Auxerre, he became a cardinal at the court in Avignon. His will of 1335 provided for the foundation of three convents in Mortemart, including a convent of Carmelite friars running a hospital for the poor. The present buildings, rebuilt at the end of the 17th century and during the first half of the 18th century, are vast and imposing. The main building consists of three wings arranged in a U-shape, flanked by two pavilions, The church, which was demolished in the 19th century, formed the fourth side of the U. The abbeys of Saint-Savin, La Réau and Solignac likewise preserve buildings of a similar scale from the same period. To the left stands the monumental porch (8a) and the privately owned former hospital. Visitors can explore the grand staircase, with its succession of flights, which is somewhat reminiscent of that at the Palace of Versailles.



9 THE FORMER AUGUSTINIAN MONASTERY

Cardinal Gauvain's will also provided for the foundation of a monastery for Augustinian friars who were responsible for educating 12 children. The present buildings were rebuilt in the late 17th or early 18th century. The current town hall, formerly a secondary school, features a fine double-curved staircase with a wooden balustrade. The main building is the work of the renowned architect Brousseau, who designed numerous châteaux in the region, notably the Bishop's Palace in Limoges.



10 CHURCH OF SAINT HILAIRE OF POITIERS

This building was originally the Augustinian church. In the early 19th century, an elegant bell tower was added, built above the former parlour, and it became the parish church of Saint-Hilaire. The portal and windows are typical of 14th- century Avignon architecture. The rich interior furnishings were salvaged from demolished buildings: the former Church of Saint-Hilaire and the Church of the Carmelites. In a niche in the chancel stands a 14th-century polychrome statue of the Virgin Mary.

Of particular note is the beautiful set of 15th-century wooden choir stalls, whose misericords are carved with figures of animals, monsters, plants and figures. The altarpiece, dating from 1651 and likely originating from the Church of the Carmelites, is particularly magnificent. The front of the altar is carved with a bust of the young Louis XIV, commemorating his long-awaited birth and giving thanks to the Virgin Mary. On either side of the 'Virgin of Mercy' who presides over the altar, are the remains of 17th-century paintings on panelling: the Assumption of the Virgin on the left, the Resurrection of Christ on the right. A magnificent 17th-century gilded wooden lectern is adorned with an eagle whose outstretched wings supported the liturgical books.



11 REMAINS OF THE CHURCH OF LE MOUSTIER

The cardinal's will also provided for the construction of a large church to serve the three orders, took turns conducting services there. Only a few remains of this church, which once had a bell tower and a vaulted ceiling, survive at the chancel end of the Augustinian church, including small columns characteristic of 14th-century Avignon architecture.

12 THE CARTHUSIAN MONASTERY

Cardinal Gauvain's will also provided for the foundation of a Carthusian monastery. It was probably never completed and was suppressed in 1412. Today, traces of the large cloister and the monks' cells can still be seen in a neighbouring (private) meadow, as viewed from the air.

LIMOUSIN nouveaux horizons

LE DORAT TOURIST OFFICE
Open in July and August
9,Bis Place de la Collégiale, 87210 Le Dorat

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AN INVITATION TO EXPLORE...

Explore the area **within a 20-minute radius of Mortemart.**
From museums and castles to exploring local craftsmanship, nature walks and leisure activities – the choice is yours from this extensive list of must-see attractions!

OUR MUSEUMS

LEATHER MUSEUM (CITÉ DU CUIR)
A museum space dedicated to the leather trade, with a stunning view of the River Vienne! Open from Wednesday to Sunday
20 Chemin Notre Dame du Goth, Saint-Junien
05 55 02 76 68 - www.citéducuir.fr

MARTYR VILLAGE AND REMEMBRANCE CENTRE OF ORADOUR-SUR-GLANE
A site of remembrance. Guided tours are available from the Centre de la Mémoire. Open daily from 15 January to 15 December
L'auze, Oradour-sur-Glane
05 55 43 04 30 - www.oradour.org

LA DIGITALE - JEAN GIRAUDOUX'S BIRTHPLACE
Be more than a spectator and discover the world of Jean Giraudoux, the writer and playwright who led many different lives. Open in July and August, and on 19 and 20 September
Bellac
06 08 43 51 90 - www.ladigitale-giraudoux.fr

RENÉ BAUBÉROT MUSEUM
Immerse yourself in the spirit and history of the Limousin region at this archaeological and ethnographic museum.
Châteauponsac
05 87 59 51 18 - www.museechateauponsac.fr

LE FRAISSE CASTLE
Owned by the Monstiers family for over eight centuries, this historic landmark opens its doors from 15 June to 15 September
Le Fraisse, Nouic
05 55 68 32 68 - www.chateau-du-fraisse.com

ROCHEBRUNE CASTLE
Sheltered behind its moat, this building – a fine example of military Romanesque architecture – takes you on a journey through centuries of history.
Étagnac
05 45 84 22 22

HAUT-LIMOUSIN «MICRO-FOLIE»
Discover national masterpieces for free in this innovative digital museum. A fun and interactive activity for the whole family, especially when the weather's bad.
Médiathèque Gaëtan Picon, Le Dorat
05 55 68 26 94

STORIES SET IN STONES

The Monts de Blond are a land steeped in legend. Here, ancient stones tell tales of fairies, hidden treasures and age old folk beliefs.
As you explore, try to make the Wobbling Stone of Cieux move; in days gone by, those accused of a crime who managed to do so were granted a pardon.
Discover the true fairy palace, or try to land a stone on the ledge halfway up the Ceinturat menhir if you wish to get married within the year.
Just outside Blond are the Rochers de Puychaud, which mark the symbolic boundary between the Langue d'Oc and the Langue d'Oïl. If you happen to be passing through on Christmas Eve, you might be lucky enough to see one of the rocks open up and reveal a magnificent treasure of gold and precious stones.

OUR TOWNS AND VILLAGES

MONTROL-SÉNARD
The 'Rural Nostalgia' walk through the village brings back to life shops, trades and scenes from days gone by. A captivating, nostalgic experience, accessible to all. From Mortemart, you can walk to the village (20 mins) along the path near the Château des Ducs.

BELLAC
The birthplace of Jean Giraudoux, Bellac captivates visitors with its picturesque narrow streets, its Notre-Dame church and its rich history linked to the tanners on the banks of the river Vincou.

SAINT-JUNIEN
Visit its historic centre and discover the history of the glove-making craft that has made its reputation known throughout the world.

OUR ACTIVITIES

MORTEMART GOLF CLUB
18-hole course with breathtaking views of the Monts de Blond
Les Villards, Mortemart
05 55 60 45 16 - www.golfdemortemart.jimdoweb.com

SAINT-VICTURNIEN LEISURE CENTRE
Climbing, archery, orienteering, slacklining
Saint-Victurnien
07 64 05 26 90 - www.porteoceane-dulimousin.fr

SAINT-VICTURNIEN CANOEING
Canoe hire, self-guided or guided trips
Saint-Victurnien
05 55 03 25 84 - www.ckc-saintvicturnien.fr

AÏGA BLUÏA WATER LEISURE CENTRE
Outdoor and indoor pools, sauna, steam room
Saint-Junien
05 55 01 11 00 - www.porteoceane-dulimousin.fr

LE LÉOTILUS ESCAPE GAME
Three rooms to explore
Rancon
07 57 50 62 69


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BELLAC CINEMA
A friendly, community-run cinema offering an eclectic programme.
Bellac
05 87 77 91 19 - www.cinema-bellac.com

BELLACHON ZOO
A community-run micro-zoo and animal sanctuary home to over 150 animals (birds, marmosets, meerkats)
Bellac
06 38 74 01 90

LES HAUTS DE BLOND EQUESTRIAN CENTRE
For a riding lesson or a horse ride, head to Les Hauts de Blond !
Bachellerie, Blond
06 76 06 50 70 - www.centre-equestre-les-hauts-de-blond.com

JAVERDAT EQUESTRIAN CENTRE
If you're on holiday in the area, why not explore the many horse riding trails?
Les Herses, Javerdat
06 83 30 92 72 - www.ecurieslesherses.fr

LE MONTEIL STABLES
The Monteil stables offers forest rides and trail rides.
Le Monteil, Saint-Junien
06 75 76 84 21 - www.ecuriedumonteil87.ffe.com

TÈRRA AVENTURA
Take part in a treasure hunt that takes young and old alike on a journey of discovery through historic and natural sites; an original and fun way to uncover the secrets of the Haute-Vienne.
Join the adventure with the free Terra Aventura app.

OUR FAVOURITE NATURE SPOTS

Did you know? In Haut-Limousin, there are over 1,000 kilometres of signposted trails to explore on foot, by mountain bike or on horseback !

THE MEGALITHS TRAIL
Along the way, you'll come across the wobbly stone, the Ceinturat menhir, the Fairy Rock and many other stones steeped in legend.
Cieux

THE «BUTTE DE FROCHET»
This natural site is one of the most iconic in the Haut Limousin region. An interpretive trail allows visitors to learn about the area's flora and fauna.
Bussière-Boffy, Val d'Issoire

LAKE SAINT-PARDOUX
Enjoy water-based activities all year round: 3 beaches, swimming pool, sports, water skiing, wakeboarding, treetop adventure courses, mountain biking and children's activities...
Razès - www.lacsaintpardoux.com

«L'OR DES SIMPLES»
A botanical garden featuring over 300 medicinal and aromatic plants that grow naturally in the area and are often little known.
Rancon - 06 19 94 74 34

THE «JARDIN DES CÔTES»
Situated on the banks of the River Vincou, this spot on the rockside offers panoramic views of the old tanneries and the Vincou valley.
Bellac

SITE COROT
A must-see natural site that offers a chance to immerse yourself in the heart of a steep-sided, wooded valley with a rich industrial history.
Saint-Junien



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