

Bourges

Bourges is a city in Centre region, France.

Get in

Bourges is accessible by train from Paris Austerlitz in about 1 hour 45 minutes, or on the A71 motorway from Paris via Orleans.

Get around

Most parking in the historic centre is metered. However, there are large free car parks just outside the centre if you're prepared to make a five minute walk. The historic centre is small enough to walk around, and that's definitely the best way to see it.

See

The cathedral of St Etienne, a UNESCO heritage site, dates from about 1200-1255. It's an exceptionally fine and most original work of French Gothic, with double aisles and an immensely high nave. It has preserved almost all the original stained glass of its ambulatory, and some of the high windows of the choir. There are also some lovely later windows in the side chapels. The crypt and towers can be visited for an extra charge.

Jacques Coeur built the richest man in France and banker to Charles VII the Palais de Jacques Coeur from 1443-1450. It's a flamboyant work, highly decorated and punctuated by stair turrets and towers just like the castles in the Tres Riches Heures du Duc de Berry - another Bourges inhabitant. The interior can only be visited on a guided tour, for which a charge is made.

The Marais, to the north of the historic centre, is an area of allotment gardens divided by canals. A walk all the way round will take you 2-3 hours and give you excellent views of the cathedral. Go at a weekend and you'll probably see some of the gardeners punting through the canals to their plots.

The whole city is full of lovely houses, some in half timber, others in the light stone that is characteristic of Bourges. Rue Bourbonnoux and Rue Coursalon are particularly worth visiting.

Palais des Echevins / Musee Esteve is another medieval mansion which borrows its vocabulary from the Palais Jacques Coeur, built 40 years earlier.

Musee de Berry - a free museum of local traditions, in another medieval mansion.

Musee des Meilleurs Ouvriers de France - this museum, opposite the cathedral, displays works of craftsmanship that has been made for the MOF diploma. Free entry, and worth a look.

Do

Take a boat trip round the Marais.

You can go to the 'Plan d'eau', which is an artificial lake to have a 6km-walk. It's also possible to use your bicycle or rollers around it on a lane separated from the road - it's relatively flat.

In April, there is a music festival called 'Le Printemps de Bourges' where, during around 1 week, around 30 "official" concerts (prices varies) are given in the city (in several places, sometimes at the same time). The programme may be fetched in early March. During this period, most of the pubs and bars also have bands playing (for free) and the whole city gets a lot of animation.

Buy

Most shops are located in the centre of the town localized by rue Moyenne.

One of the specialties of Bourges is the Forestines, which is a kind of candy. You can find such in the 'Maison de la Forestine' (located rue Moyenne).

Eat

Warning! Almost everything is closed on Sunday, though you will find a couple of pizza restaurants in Place Gordaine.

Place Gordaine and the area by the market have cheap shawarma, couscous, and a number of French restaurants. More chi-chi places and a fine Breton crêperie can be found on Rue Bourbonnoux.

Drink

Sleep

A fine chambre d'hôtes is 'Les Bonnets Rouges', not far from the cathedral and just off rue Bourbonnoux.

If you are arriving by car, the highway entrance locates some cheap hotels.

A hotel 3* located in the historical center is 'Hotel d'Angleterre', at around 100m from the rue Moyenne.

Get out

Saint-Benoit-du-Sault

Saint-Benoît-du-Sault is a medieval village, perched in a curve on a rocky butte overlooking the *Portefeuille River* in the Indre département. In 1988 it was named as one of **the most beautiful villages of France**.

Tourist Information office, Indre (36) - Center - Loire Valley: Place des Augustins,

A double line of ramparts surrounds the town. The first, the most ancient, protected the priory, the church and the fort, the second established in the XVth century, encircled the commercial part. Still today, its maze of narrow cobbled streets are a must to explore, and makes Saint-Benoît-du-Sault a beautiful medieval town.

Of architectural significance:

- Belfry
- Portal *XIVth*
- Roman Priory *XIVth*

For more info see: www.wikipedia.org

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