

Day 8 – From Prehistoric Wonder to Périgord Table: A Journey Through Time and Taste

Wednesday, November 12, 2025 – Weather: Perfect sunny day

After a peaceful night in the heart of Sarlat, we gathered once again for breakfast at the Grand Hôtel de Sarlat. The sky was a flawless blue this morning — no mist, just the promise of a perfect day — as we met our driver Hendrick, ever calm and smiling, ready to take us on the next chapter of our Dordogne adventure.

Our first destination was Montignac, a charming village that guards one of the most precious archaeological treasures in the world: the Lascaux IV International Centre for Cave Art. As we crossed the Vézère River, we caught a glimpse of the local château perched on its rocky outcrop, a quiet sentinel over the town since the 12th century.

Along the way, we talked about a modern challenge for rural France: les déserts médicaux — the shortage of general practitioners in the countryside. With many doctors nearing retirement age and few young doctors willing to settle in rural areas, regions like this face a serious challenge in ensuring healthcare access.

At Lascaux IV, we were greeted by our guide, Margret — a passionate storyteller who brought the Stone Age to life with flair. She led us through the breathtaking reproduction of the original cave, whose walls are alive with prancing horses, charging bulls, leaping stags, and mysterious symbols painted over 21,000 years ago. She encouraged us to wonder: Were these paintings a ritual, a teaching tool, a spiritual journey? Or perhaps all three? The questions are as powerful as the paintings themselves.

We explored the museum's immersive exhibits, learning about the pigments, tools, and techniques of our prehistoric ancestors, and the delicate balance between preservation and access that led to the creation of this extraordinary facsimile.

In the afternoon, we drove deeper into the Dordogne countryside, passing through wooded valleys and over limestone plateaus. We caught sight of the Château de Saint-Exupéry family estate, a reminder of the noble past of this region, before arriving at one of its most enchanting hidden gems: Château de Commarque.

On the way, Gwen shared the moving story of Hubert's father, arrested and deported to Buchenwald during WWII for protecting Jews — a family tragedy that deeply marked Hubert's life and inspired his later mission to reclaim Commarque's ruins.

We were welcomed to Commarque by Hubert himself, elegant and unassuming. Together, we explored a landscape where human history unfolds layer by layer: prehistoric troglodyte dwellings, a medieval keep, noble houses, and a chapel, all surrounded by the protected Natura 2000 valley. From the heights, we savored tastings of walnut delicacies — candied walnuts, and walnut biscuits — all while gazing over the valley bathed in golden afternoon light.

As the sun began to set, we made our way to La Ferme du Brusquand, Isabelle's family farm and foie gras producer. Isabelle's son Louis, her husband, and the unforgettable Mamie Ginette greeted us with warmth and humor. Together we explored the story of foie gras — from its beginnings in Ancient Egypt, to its preservation by Jewish communities in Alsace, to its post-WWII arrival in Périgord. We learned to distinguish pâté, bloc, and foie gras entier, and tasted the latter with a perfectly chilled glass of Rosette wine — a floral, lightly sweet white from Bergerac.

In a gesture of generosity, Isabelle presented each of us with a bloc of foie gras to take home — a little piece of Périgord to carry with us. Then came a hearty dinner: meltingly tender duck confit, rustic vegetables, and a cake dessert that made everyone smile.

As laughter filled the atmosphere, we realized just how close we had all become. This was more than just a dinner — it was a celebration of friendship, sharing, and a region that had welcomed us with open arms.

Back at the hotel, under a sky full of stars, we turned in for our final night in the Dordogne — heads full of images, hearts full of gratitude, and stomachs happily satisfied. Tomorrow, a new road awaits.