

Originally, access to the keep was through a doorway on the first floor. This level featured four windows with stone benches. A door opened onto a spiral staircase leading to the upper floors and down into the lower chamber.

This lower room, similar to a cellar, was covered by a stone vault, traces of which can still be seen today. Equipped with five arrow slits, it served both defensive and storage purposes.

Outside the castle, below the keep, there are terraces. These are the vestiges of the former Cathar castrum — homes, cisterns and extremely narrow stairways. At the Montségur Museum, digital reconstructions help visitors better understand how the castrum was organized.



From the postern gate — a small northern doorway — a path leads down to a terrace overlooking an old stone quarry used during the construction of the castle. Continuing along the ridge, visitors are rewarded with views of the surrounding mountains — the Col de la Peyre, Soularac Peak and Saint-Barthélémy Peak — as well as the village of Montségur itself, whose south-facing houses perfectly illustrate the traditional soulane.

Digital Castle Experience



- > Available on the App Store and Google Play.
- > Remember to download the apps before your visit !

Practical Information

CONTACTS

- > guide.montsegur@orange.fr
- > 05 61 01 06 94
- > www.montsegur.fr
- Free parking available in the village (P2)
- Free parking near the castle



MORE INFORMATION ABOUT THE AREA

Pyrénées Cathares Tourist Office
www.pyreneescathares.com

MONTSÉGUR MUSEUM

Continue the adventure at the Montségur Museum! Located in the village, the museum showcases treasures uncovered during 50 years of archaeological excavations. Everyday objects, war machines and the graves of fallen fighters reveal the daily life and courage of the people who lived here in the 13th century. Thanks to immersive digital reconstructions, the castrum comes back to life before your eyes. A must-see stop to truly understand the spirit and history of Montségur.

One Site, Two Distinctions

Since January 26, 2026, our region proudly held the “Grand Site de France” label, recognizing its commitment to preserving landscapes, managing visitor flows responsibly and offering a high-quality visitor experience.

This prestigious national distinction highlights the exceptional value of a site where nature and heritage are deeply intertwined. Proud of this recognition, Montségur is also one of the eight locations included in the serial UNESCO World Heritage nomination “Royal Fortresses of Languedoc.” The final decision, expected in July 2026, could give to these legendary fortresses a worldwide recognition.

- > www.grandsitedefrance-montsegur.fr
- > www.forteressesroyalesdulanguedoc.fr

Contenu : Mairie de Montségur
 Graphique Design : Département de l'Aude et Communauté de Communes du Pays d'Olmes



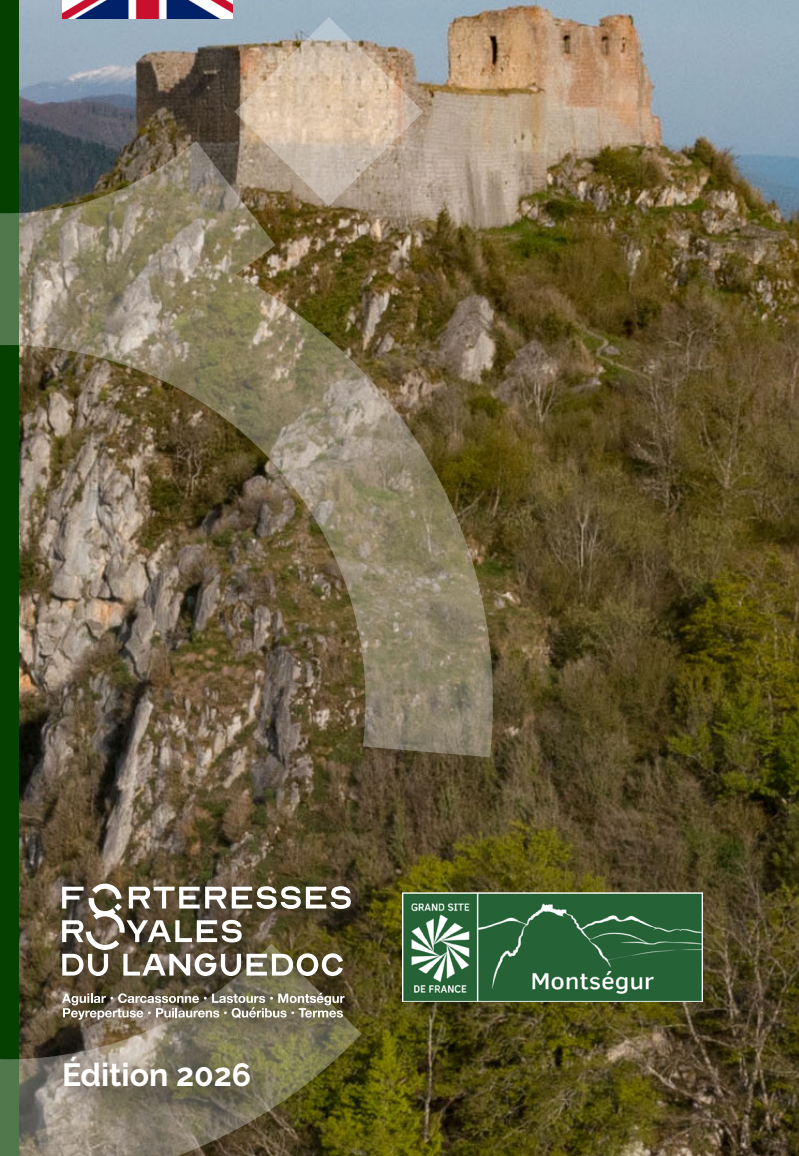
**Aguilar
 Carcassonne
 Lastours
 Montségur
 Peyrepertuse
 Puilaurens
 Quéribus
 Termes**



Photos :
 Philippe Benoist

3D Reconstruction :
 T. Bergerot, F. Chambon,
 P. Garnier, G. Valayer

Two faces of Montségur, cathar castrum & royal fortress



**FORTERESSES
 ROYALES
 DU LANGUEDOC**

Aguilar • Carcassonne • Lastours • Montségur
 Peyrepertuse • Puilaurens • Quéribus • Termes

Édition 2026



History

Montségur before the Cathars

Archaeological research has revealed that signs of human presence on the « pog » (rocky outcrop) date back to the Bronze Age. Artefacts (tegulae, coins and ceramics) also suggest Gallo-Roman activity on the site.

The Cathars period of Montségur

In 1204, before the Albigensian Crusade (1209-1229), the local lord Raymond de Péreille was asked to « rebuild the castrum of Montségur ». The castrum (fortified village) was home to the Cathar clergy, believers, knights between 1204 and 1244. At maximum, more than 500 people were living at its summit.

In 1232, Montségur became the headquarters of the Cathar Church.

Catharism

Cathars were medieval Christians who rejected the authority of the Catholic Church. It was a dualistic faith in which the Good, associated to God and spirit, was the opposite to the Evil, in which material and earthly world belong to. They were believers or « Good Men » and « Good Women », spiritual pillars of catharism. After receiving the Consolamentum (main rite of the Cathar faith), they devoted themselves to a life of work and prayer.

The life on the pog

Over time, the castrum of Montségur grew into a real fortified mountain village spread across the summit of the pog. Houses were built along the cliff edges and connected by a dense maze of narrow streets, stairways and passageways.

The Siege and Fall (1243–1244)

After a first failed siege in 1241 and the killing of the inquisitors at Avignonet in 1242, the royal army laid siege to Montségur in May 1243.

From May to mid-December 1243, the defenders successfully held off the crusaders. But around Christmas 1243, the capture of a fortified outpost known as the Roc de la Tour by a crusader commando changed everything.

From there, siege engines were installed and the defenses were gradually destroyed.

On March 2, 1244, the garrison surrendered and a truce was granted. On March 16, 225 Cathars who refused to renounce their faith were burned alive at the foot of the pog, in a place now known as the “Prat dels Cramats.”

After Montségur

At the end of the 13th century, a new fortress was built on the ruins of Raymond de Péreille’s former castrum by the Lévis family.

This reconstruction took place during a tense period marked by border conflicts between the kingdoms of France and Aragon. The castle later became a secondary stronghold.



Visiting Montségur

The climb begins with a steep path crossing the “Prat dels Cramats,” believed to be the site where 225 Cathars were executed for refusing to abandon their faith. Further up stands the memorial stele dedicated to March 16, 1244.

Along the trail, you will notice remains of dry-stone masonry — the earliest traces of the Cathar castrum. Higher still, steps carved directly into the rock, known as the “donkey steps,” were designed to help equidae reach the summit.



After these steps, you will come across the remains of an impressive dry-stone wall: the first fortified wall of the Cathar castrum.

At the foot of the castle, the historical period suddenly changes. The fortress you see today was built after the destruction of the Cathar castrum, during the reign of King Philip III of France, known as Philip the Bold (1270–1285).

Following the Albigensian Crusade, Languedoc became part of the French Crown. Yet beyond these mountains lay the County of Foix, under the authority of the Kingdom of Aragon. In this context, Montségur became part of a strategic network of border fortresses designed to protect the frontiers of the French kingdom.

The castle courtyard once contained several buildings — living quarters, barns and stables — of which only traces of beams and stairways remain today.



The keep towers above the site. Originally, it stood taller than it does now. Archaeologists believe that at least one floor and the roof are missing. The current entrance is not original: visitors now enter through what used to be the castle cistern.