

Bugarach



The farming village is in the region of the Cathar castles, situated on spectacular rocky outcrops. Regarded as heretics by the Catholic Church, Cathars sought refuge in these castles in the 13th century when Pope Innocent III launched a full scale crusade against them.

The village lies next to the Pic de Bugarach, a rocky peak which, at 1230 metres, is the highest point of the Corbières range of hills. The peak is dwarfed however by the nearby Pyrenees and offers splendid views of the range.

Made of limestone with galleries of caves beneath it, the peak is a geological oddity, since its top layers are millions of years older than its bottom ones, making it an "upside down mountain".

The peak of Bugarach has been shrouded in mystery, with various claims that it houses aliens in cavities beneath the rock.

The internet abounds with tales of the late President François Mitterrand being curiously heliported onto the peak, of mysterious digs conducted by the Nazis and later Mossad, the Israeli secret services. There is talk of the area, near to the Cathar castles, holding the Holy Grail or the treasure of the Templars. A visit to Bugarach is said to have inspired Steven Spielberg in his film, *Close Encounters of the Third Kind* – although the actual mountain he used is Devil's Tower in Wyoming.

Nostradamus, the French apothecary from Provence, is said to have stayed in the area and found the "vibrations" of Bugarach to be positive.

Others say Bugarach is where Jules Verne found the entrance and the inspiration for *A Journey to the Centre of the Earth*.

Bugarach is in Languedoc-Roussillon, the world's largest wine growing region.

