

Rennes les Bains

The origins of Rennes-les-Bains go back to antiquity, and bathers have enjoyed the natural hot spring waters for thousands of years. It was popular as far back as Roman times, being used as a spa by the nearby Roman colony of what is now Narbonne.

Rennes les Bains actually has both hot and cold springs, and two wells that were dug in the 19th century. Because of the unusual geological characteristics of the rock the water in the river Sals is naturally salty (hence the name of the river), which is very unusual for an inland river

This picturesque town, which lies along the valley bottom with tall houses hugging the waters edge, some of them having balconies situated over the river, is still well known for its Spa. This has been updated since the Roman times, but still offers a wide variety of ways to pamper yourself ranging from massage to mud packs, to Jacuzzi's. Or you can just relax and enjoy the thermal waters of the pool (€5.50 adults €2.50 children).



At the Salle de Patrimoine you can trace the history of the village with Gallo-Roman artifacts, fossils, mineral collections. Interesting panels examine the past of the baths and spas, the origin of the water, and the mines, and quarries of the area. Open Monday to Friday 9am to 12. and from 2pm until 6pm

There are also 4 warm water natural springs Les Bains Doux (route de Couiza, left bank of the Sals) 37°C

Les Bains Forts (in the village, under l'Hostellerie, right bank of the Sals) 47,5°C, Les Bains de la Reine (à l'entrée du village, under the Résidence de la Reine, left bank of the Sals) 40°C.

The weekly town market is held on Thursday mornings, and combined with an afternoon of pampering or relaxing this can make a really good day out.

The town also has a small art gallery "Espace d'Art" located on the main road running through the village, displaying works by local artists.

Naturally like all small towns and villages in the region, its history is closely entwined with that of the history and myths of the Cathars and Mary Magdalene. There are 2 nearby cold water springs that add to the myths. The first of these is the Magdalene Spring known locally as Sources de la Madeleine (heading towards Bugarach) where it is said that Mary Magdalene got married to Jesus, and near to that the Fountain of Love (Fontaine des Amours) where it is said that Mary herself carried out the first Christian Baptisms. It is also said that if you bath in this spring with your partner, you'll remain together forever. To get to either of these, you can either walk (5km, about 1 hour, highly recommended) along the river heading out of Rennes towards Sougraigne and Bugarach, or drive towards Bugarach on the D14, turning off onto the D74.



Finally if you do choose to visit this wonderful little town, it is advisable to park the car outside the town, as the small streets only offer limited parking.