

Pays d'art et d'histoire des Bastides du Rouergue



let us tell about

the church of

**Rieupeyroux**

## Saint-Martial church

A benedictin priory developed against the primitive church built in 11<sup>th</sup> century. In the church choir, are left two piers, cruciform in shape, and two capitals ornated with foliage, intertwined design, a monster figure, a bird of prey and a sphinx. An archaic looking baptismal font could also be from that era.

The structure rebuilt at the end of 18<sup>th</sup> century or in the beginning of 19<sup>th</sup>, disposes of a three spans nave, boarded by side aisles, and pentagone shape choir. Beneath the clock tower a spectacular cupola upon a pendentive built in 15<sup>th</sup> century fans out. Profane figures, a fool and realistic animals ornate the bases of the moulded ribs. Sculpture is also present on the keystones, one of them represent the Virgin Mary. A whale shoulder bone is also kept in the church: it was brought back from the holy Land in 13<sup>th</sup> century. This event was at the source of a legend involving Gargantua...

In 1356, the structure was fortified. It became part of the fortifications surrounding the city. The front gate on the western façade is walled. A covered way punctuated with arrowslits, supported by banded arches between buttres at the top of the church. The Large attic opens up onto the clock tower and it was probably used to store cereals that the monastic community perceived as part of the taxes.

Place of cult, protection, hospitality, burial for some, keystone of the “sauveté”, the church was also used to assemble the village community during public meetings.

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