



ISCA & FFTS CONGRESS 2026

BENEATH THE EARTH, BEYOND TIME

**SEP 22-OCT 1, 2026
DORDOGNE, FRANCE**

2ND CIRCULAR



INTERNATIONAL SHOW CAVES ASSOCIATION



Fédération Française Tourisme
& Patrimoine Souterrain



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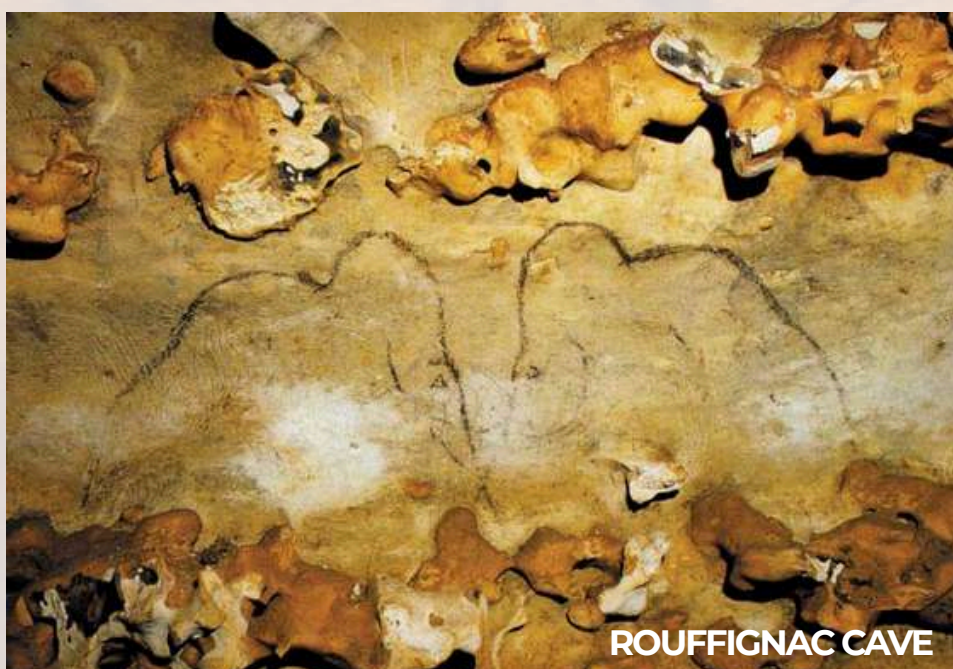




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1. INTRODUCTION

The **International Show Caves Association (ISCA)**, founded in 1990 in Genga, Italy, brings together over 100 members from more than 30 countries across all continents. Its mission is to promote international cooperation among show cave operators, encourage best practices for conservation and visitor safety, and raise public awareness of the cultural and natural value of subterranean heritage.

ISCA represents subterranean tourism globally and collaborates with major organizations such as the Spanish Association of Show Caves (ACTE), the National Cave Association of the United States (NCA), the Italian Association of Show Caves (AGTI), and the Czech Republic Cave Administration, among many others including the French Federation of Subterranean Tourism and Heritage (FFTS). Through these partnerships and initiatives, which include the International Day of Caves and the Subterranean World on June 6, ISCA fosters knowledge exchange and promotes sustainable management of these unique sites.

The **French Federation of Subterranean Tourism and Heritage (FFTS)**, co-organizer of the upcoming Congress, works to protect, promote, and share the richness of subterranean heritage. It unites 92 underground sites open to the public, most in France, but also in Belgium, Switzerland and Monaco, many of which are classified or recognized for their cultural, prehistoric, or natural value. The FFTS provides a strong professional network, promotes training, and supports responsible management and tourism development.

Together, ISCA and FFTS are committed to ensuring that caves and subterranean sites; all of them witnesses of the past, present, and future, continue to inspire, educate, and connect people worldwide. The 2026 Congress in Dordogne, France, will be a unique opportunity to share experiences, strengthen collaboration, and look ahead to new perspectives in subterranean heritage research and management.





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2. DATES AND VENUE

- Dates: September 22 - October 1, 2026
- Venue: Josephine Baker Hall, Périgueux, Dordogne, France

3. ABOUT PÉRIGUEUX

Périgueux is one of southwestern France's most historic and character-filled cities. As capital of the Périgord, it offers a rich blend of heritage, culture, and modern energy, making it an ideal hub for the ISCA & FFTS Congress.

Its long past is evident throughout the city. The Vesunna archaeological site, built around a Roman domus, reflects its ancient roots, while the distinctive Saint-Front Cathedral illustrates centuries of architectural evolution. The compact historic center invites exploration through narrow lanes, lively squares, and riverside walks. Markets, artisan shops, and cafés create a warm atmosphere enriched by frequent cultural events.

Renowned for Périgord cuisine (truffles, walnuts, cheeses, and duck specialties), Périgueux combines authenticity with refinement. Its accessibility and quality accommodations make it an excellent base for discovering the wider region while offering an inspiring balance of history, culture, and contemporary vitality.





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4. ABOUT DORDOGNE

Located in the heart of southwestern France, Dordogne (Périgord) is a land of striking natural beauty, deep history, and remarkable underground heritage.

Known for its dramatic limestone landscapes, the region contains extraordinary caves, prehistoric art, and underground rivers that have captivated researchers and visitors for generations. Sites such as Lascaux, Rouffignac, Proumeyssac, and Villars reveal a long and enduring relationship between nature and humanity. Above ground, Dordogne remains just as enchanting. Medieval towns, hilltop castles, and lively markets reflect the region's authenticity and charm. Its celebrated gastronomy (truffles, foie gras, and local wines) invites visitors to enjoy the essence of French living.

Whether attracted by its heritage, geology, or welcoming atmosphere, participants in the ISCA & FFTS Congress will find in Dordogne an inspiring setting for exchange and discovery, where the dialogue between past and present enriches our understanding of the subterranean world and its future.





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5. ABOUT GROTTA DE VILLARS

Located in the heart of the Périgord Vert, Grotte de Villars is a major subterranean heritage site, renowned for the beauty of its natural formations and its rare Paleolithic art. Discovered in 1953, the cave offers an experience that combines geology, archaeology, and cultural history. Visitors encounter an impressive variety of calcite formations—stalactites, stalagmites, columns, and draperies—shaped by water over thousands of years. Thoughtful lighting highlights the evolving, living nature of the cave.

Grotte de Villars also preserves paintings and engravings dating back around 20,000 years, including the notable Horses panel. Protected beneath a thin calcite layer, these artworks are both rare and exceptionally preserved. Outside, a prehistoric garden illustrates traditional uses of plants for food and medicine, linking the prehistoric world within the cave to later cultural landscapes.

Grotte de Villars offers a meaningful setting for discussing sustainable management of subterranean heritage and for appreciating caves as places where past, present, and future meet.





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6. ABOUT LA ROQUE SAINT-CHRISTOPHE

Situated in the Vézère Valley, La Roque Saint-Christophe is one of Europe's most impressive troglodytic sites, carved into a vast limestone cliff overlooking the river. Inhabited from prehistory to the Renaissance, it offers a striking example of human adaptation to rock-cut environments.

Stretching over a kilometer, the cliff features terraces and natural shelters formed by erosion. These spaces provided ideal areas for habitation, storage, and defense, now accessible through a visitor route that reveals the scale and ingenuity of the former settlement. Archaeological evidence and reconstructions show how past inhabitants organized daily life, using the cliff's natural features for protection, workshops, and communal activities. Exhibits help visitors understand how architecture and tools evolved over time.

The site also offers sweeping views of the Vézère landscape, highlighting the strong connection between natural surroundings and human occupation.

La Roque Saint-Christophe stands as an exceptional testament to troglodytic heritage, illustrating how human innovation has long shaped, and been shaped by, the subterranean and cliffside world.





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7. ABOUT GOUFFRE DE PROUMEYSSAC

Located in the heart of the Périgord Noir, Gouffre de Proumeyssac is one of Dordogne's most striking underground sites, descending into a vast chamber known as the "Cathedral of Crystal." First explored in the 19th century, it offers a vivid example of the geological forces that shape subterranean landscapes.

The immense cavity showcases an exceptional variety of calcite formations, including stalactites, draperies, and large flowstone deposits shaped over millennia. A guided descent reveals the chamber's scale and acoustics, enhanced by a lighting display that brings out the textures and contours of the mineral décor.

Interpretive materials explain the cave's formation, hydrogeology, and history of exploration, along with efforts to protect its fragile environment. Above ground, a landscaped park features exhibits on karst ecosystems and regional speleology, linking the plateau's surface to the world beneath.

Gouffre de Proumeyssac stands as a remarkable example of subterranean heritage, highlighting the ongoing work of nature in sculpting the underground landscapes of the Périgord.





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8. ABOUT DOMME CAVE

Domme Cave, hidden beneath the medieval village of Domme, reveals magnificent chambers filled with stalactites, stalagmites, and delicate draperies. Discovered in 1912, it offers panoramic views upon exit via a cliffside lift. The cave showcases the geological beauty of the Périgord Noir.



9. ABOUT COUGNAC CAVE

Grotte de Cougnac combines stunning natural formations with exceptional Paleolithic art. Its chambers display graceful stalactites and draperies, while paintings of ibex, megaloceros, and human figures dating back over 25,000 years. It is one of the oldest decorated caves open to the public.



10. ABOUT LACAVER CAVE

Lacave Cave, discovered in 1905 in the Lot Valley, leads visitors through vast underground halls filled with shimmering lakes and delicate crystalline formations. Lacave is considered to be one of the region's most impressive subterranean sites, and a must for those who decide to visit the area.





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11. ABOUT TOURTOIRAC CAVE

Tourtoirac Cave, discovered in 1995, reveals a breathtaking sequence of galleries adorned with delicate draperies, columns, and crystal formations. Its accessible pathway highlights the cave's serene atmosphere and geological richness, making it one of the Dordogne's most captivating modern discoveries.



12. ABOUT MAXANGE CAVE

Maxange Cave, located in Buisson-de-Cadouin, is renowned for its exceptional eccentric formations, where thousands of these rare star-shaped crystals can be found. In addition to a wide range of concretions, these delicate, gravity-defying structures make Maxange one of France's most remarkable mineral caves.



13. ABOUT PECH MERLE CAVE

Pech Merle Cave is one of France's finest prehistoric sites, featuring remarkable Paleolithic paintings of horses, mammoths, and human silhouettes dating back nearly 30,000 years. Its beautifully preserved chambers and art offer an unforgettable encounter with prehistoric creativity.





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14. ABOUT MILANDES CASTLE

Château des Milandes is a graceful Renaissance estate overlooking the Dordogne Valley. Its elegant interiors, gardens, and exhibitions celebrate her life, artistry, and humanitarian work, offering visitors a compelling blend of history, culture, and architectural beauty.



15. ABOUT HAUTEFORT CASTLE

Hautefort Castle, one of the Dordogne's most majestic landmarks, blends medieval origins with elegant 17th-century architecture. It features grand interiors, formal French gardens, and rich historical collections. The château offers visitors a striking example of refined noble life and enduring heritage.



16. ABOUT ROUFFIGNAC

Rouffignac Cave, known as the "Cave of a Hundred Mammoths," features impressive Paleolithic engravings and drawings spread across kilometers of galleries. Visitors travel by electric train through vast chambers to admire and experience one of the Dordogne's most atmospheric decorated caves.





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17. ABOUT SARLAT

Sarlat is a beautifully preserved medieval town renowned for its golden limestone architecture and winding streets. Its lively markets, historic mansions, and vibrant cultural life offer an authentic experience of Dordogne's heritage, making Sarlat one of France's most enchanting destinations.



18. ABOUT ROCAMADOUR

Rocamadour, dramatically built into the cliffs of the Alzou Canyon, is one of France's most iconic pilgrimage sites. Its sanctuaries, medieval houses, and breathtaking viewpoints create a unique vertical village. Rich in spirituality, history, and landscape beauty.



19. ABOUT LASCAUX IV

Lascaux IV, the International Centre for Cave Art, offers an extraordinary full-scale replica of the original Lascaux cave. Combining scientific accuracy with immersive digital technology. Paleolithic paintings and engravings allow visitors to discover great prehistoric masterpieces.





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20. ABOUT LES EYZIES PREHISTORY INTERPRETATION CENTER

Located in the heart of the Vézère Valley, the Les Eyzies Prehistory Interpretation Center serves as an essential introduction to one of the world's most important prehistoric regions. The center guides visitors through the cultural, artistic, and technological achievements of early humans who lived in the Dordogne over tens of thousands of years.

Interactive exhibits, multimedia displays, and reconstructions explore key themes such as human evolution, Paleolithic daily life, symbolic expression, and the development of stone tools. These resources help visitors visualize prehistoric environments and understand the lifestyles of the valley's hunter-gatherers.

As a gateway to the surrounding decorated caves and archaeological sites, the center provides clear context and orientation for discovering the Vézère Valley, often called the "Capital of Prehistory."





21. ACCOMMODATION

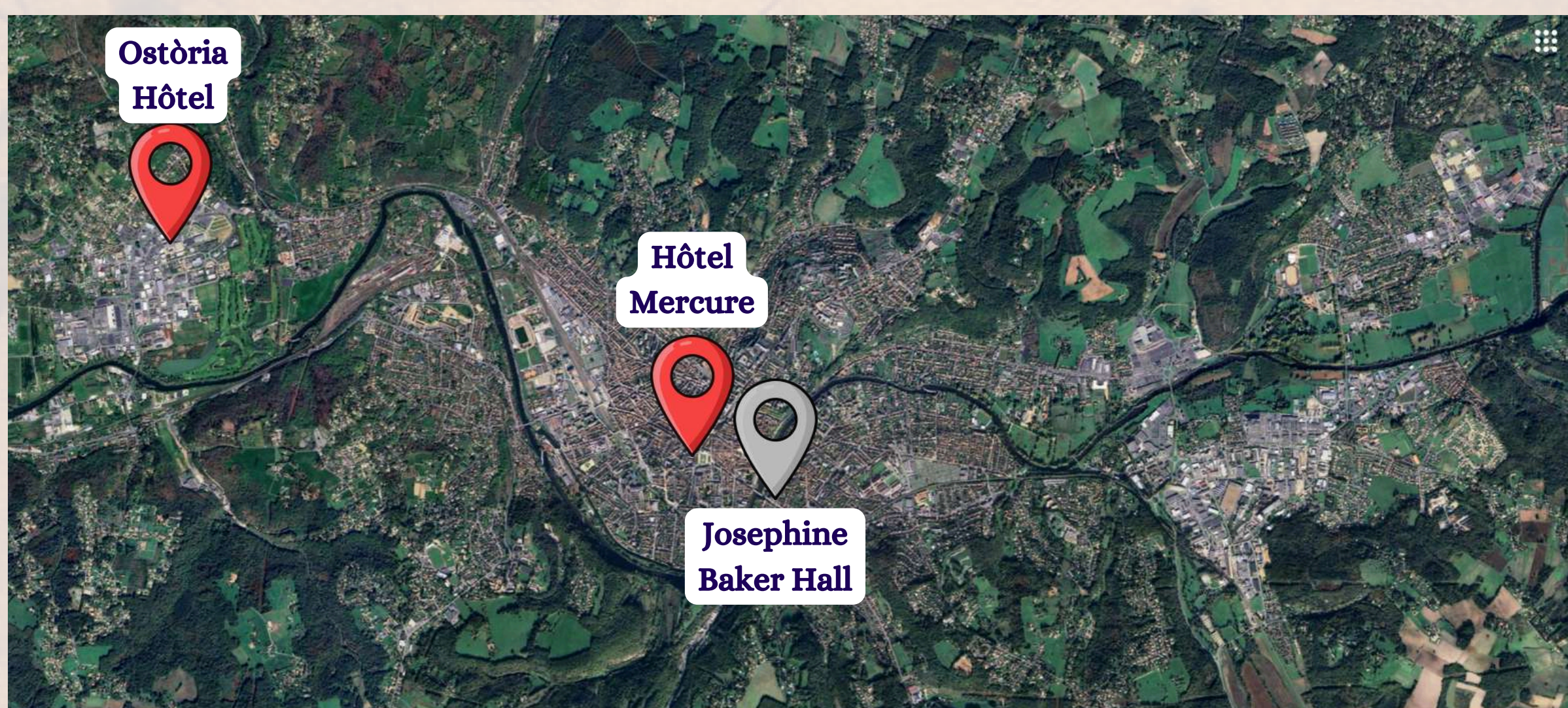
Bookings will be made through an online platform.
Hotels should not be booked directly.

Ostòria Hôtel

- **Address:** 8 Rue de la Borderie, 24430 Marsac-sur-l'Isle, France
- **Distance from venue:** 7'4km (15-20 minutes)
- **Phone number:** +33 553 025 025
- **Email address:** hotel.perigord@ostoria.fr
- **Website:** www.ostoria.fr

Hôtel Mercure

- **Address:** 7 place Francheville, 24000 Périgueux, France
- **Distance from venue:** 1km (5 minutes)
- **Phone number:** +33 553 066 500
- **Email address:** H6237@accor.com
- **Website:** www.all.accor.com
- **Board Meetings will be held here**

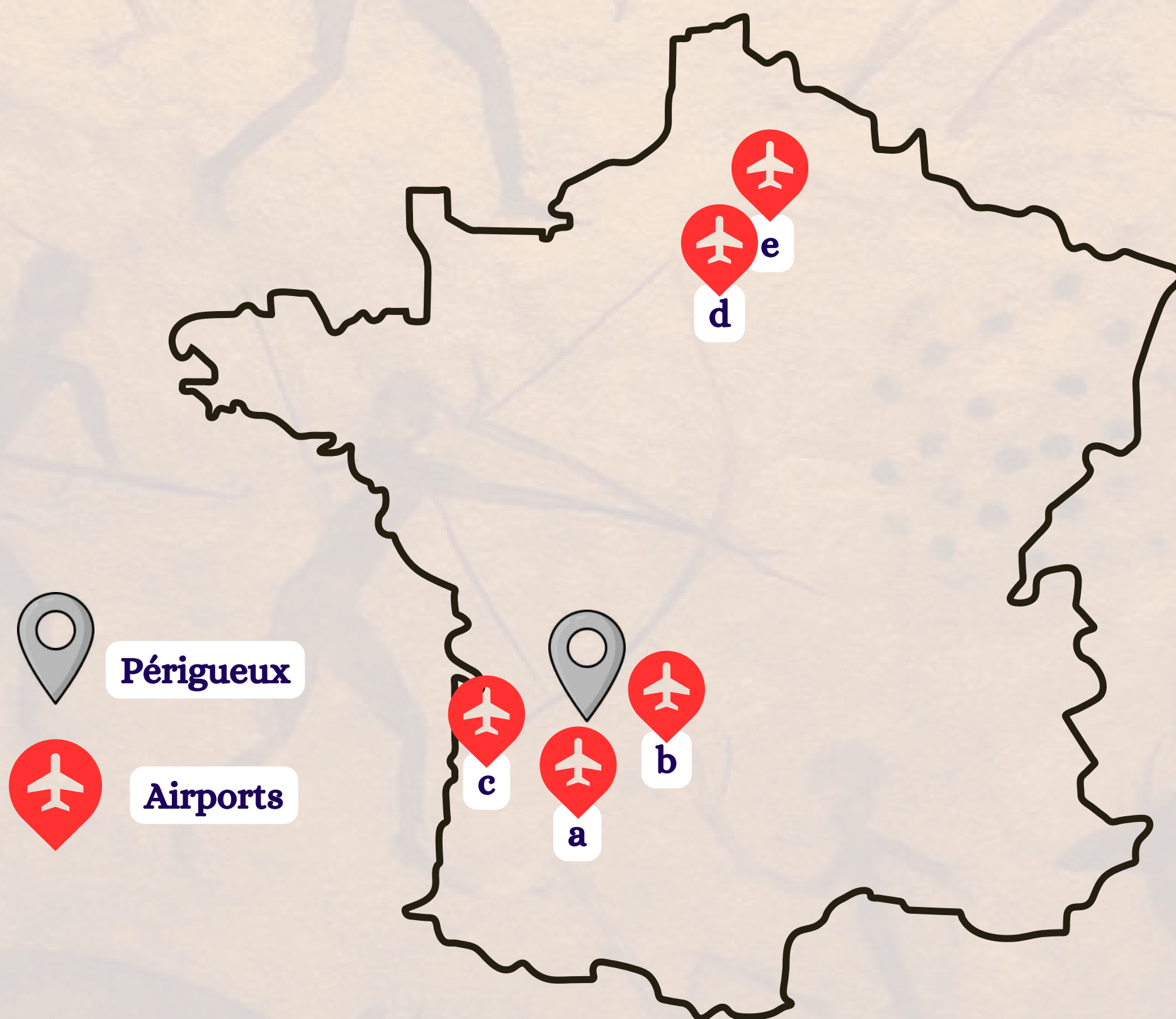




22. HOW TO GET THERE

- **BY PLANE**

- Bergerac Dordogne Périgord Airport (EGC)** – 46min. by car from Périgueux. Located within the Dordogne region. (*Est. taxi fare: 115€*)
- Brive-Souillac Airport (BVE) / Brive-Vallée de la Dordogne** – 1h 04min. from Périgueux. Also close to the region, offering good access from northern Europe. (*Est. taxi fare: 165€*)
- Bordeaux-Mérignac Airport (BOD)** – 1h 40min. by car from Périgueux. A major international airport ideal for long-haul or intercontinental flights. Airport shuttle to the train station available: click for shuttle [times](#) & [fares](#). 1h 30 min. by train. (*Est. train fare: 27€*). Info [here](#).
- Paris Orly (ORY)** - 4h 30min. by train from gare Montparnasse. Info [here](#). Paris Orly/Gare Montparnasse: 40 min by car. (*Est. taxi fare: 30€*)
- Paris-Charles-de-Gaulle (CDG)** – 5h 45min. by train.





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• BY TRAIN

- General information [here](#).
- **TGV** from Paris (or other major cities) to stations such as Bordeaux-Saint-Jean or Angoulême, and then transfer to regional lines serving Dordogne.
- Within the region, lines such as Bordeaux → Périgueux → Brive-la-Gaillarde, or lines serving Sarlat-la-Canéda and the Vézère valley.
- You may need additional transport to reach your final destination.

• BY BUS / REGIONAL TRANSPORT

- While long-distance buses and regional transport options exist, access by bus may be limited.
- Regional bus services connect some of the towns along the main rail lines and tourist hubs.
- **Flixbus**: info [here](#).
- **Blablabus**: info [here](#).

• BY CAR

- From **Bordeaux** (1h 30min. on **A89**; 2h 40min. on **D6089**).
- From **Paris** (5h 40min. starting on **A20** towards Limoges; then take **N21**).
- From **Brive-la-Gaillarde** (1h on **A89**; 1h 30min. on **D6089**).
- From **Bergerac** (50min. on **N21**).
- From **Toulouse** (3h starting on **A62** towards Montauban; then take **A20** towards Brive-La-Gaillarde; then take **A89** towards Périgueux).
- If coming from the **UK** or **Ireland**, a ferry or **Eurotunnel** crossing into northern France followed by a scenic drive can also be a pleasant option.

• Guide: Responsible travel in Périgueux and Périgord.





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23. ORGANISING COMMITTEE

- **Guilhem Cleedel**
 - FFTS President
- **Roselyne Aulner**
 - FFTS Executive assistant
- **Juan José Tiscar Moya**
 - ISCA Secretary
- **Catherine Birckel-Versaveaud**
 - Villars Cave and FFTS Deputy Secretary General
- **Joëlle Darricau**
 - Isturitz-Oxocelhaya Cave, FFTS Vice president and ISCA Ex-officio Director
- **Sophie Barse and Alice Bellocq**
 - Troglodytic city of La Roque Saint-Christophe
- **Charlène Francès and Stéphane Albié**
 - Proummeysac Chasm
- **Florence Barreau**
 - Dordogne Tourism Board





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24. SPEAKERS

- **Dominique Genty**

- Paleoclimatologist, Director of Research at the CNRS (National Center for Scientific Research). Specialization: speleothems and underground environments. Study of speleothems (stalagmites, stalagmitic floors) and current environmental conditions in caves to reconstruct paleoenvironments and better understand infiltration and exchange processes in karst environments.

- **Laurent Bruxelles**

- Geomorphologist (and geoarchaeologist) at Inrap (National Institute for Preventive Archaeological Research), CNRS, and the French Institute in South Africa (IFAS), and Director of the French mission Human Origins in Namibia (MEAE), has long studied the biological destruction of prehistoric rock art—particularly that caused by bats.

- **Frédéric Plassard**

- Doctor of Prehistory, Head of the Rouffignac Cave. He is specialised in Paleolithic cave art and portable art. Most of his work focuses on Magdalenian art in southwestern France. His interest in decorated caves is not limited to cave paintings, but also includes the taphonomy of cave walls - the physical study of decorated surfaces and their evolution over time.

Would you like to participate?

Please contact us (see 'Contact' section at the end) for any proposal.





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25. OFFICIAL LANGUAGES

The official language of the Congress will be English. Exceptionally, depending on the origin of the authors of the communications and posters, presentations in other languages will be accepted.





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26. TENTATIVE PROGRAM

- **Friday 25, September**

- **8:30-10:30AM:** ISCA Board Meeting
- **Concurrent for other attendees:** Périgueux tour
- **10:30-11AM:** Welcoming delegates and distribution of badges/gifts
- **11AM-12:45PM:** Opening ceremony: Press Conference & Cocktail
- **12:45-2PM:** Catered Lunch
- **2-4PM:** ISCA General Assembly Meeting 1
- **4-4:15PM:** Coffee Break
- **4:15-6:15PM:** Around the world video session 1 (includes break)
- **7-9:30PM:** Dinner at Guinguette Barnabé with live music

- **Saturday 26, September**

- **9-10AM:** Presentation by Dominique Genty
- **10-11AM:** Presentation by Laurent Bruxelles
- **11-11:15AM:** Coffee Break
- **11:15AM-12:30PM:** Presentations 'News from subterranean world'
- **12:30-13:30PM:** Catered Lunch
- **1:30-2:30PM:** Around the world video session 2
- **2:30-7:30PM:** Lascaux IV tour
- **7:30-9:30PM:** Dinner at Bistro le Centenaire

- **Sunday 27, September**

- **9-10AM:** ISCA General Assembly Meeting 2
- **10-10:15AM:** Coffee Break
- **10:15-11:15AM:** Presentations 'News from subterranean world'
- **11:15-12PM:** Partner Presentation
- **12-3PM:** Catalog vendor show
- **1-3PM (Concurrent):** Catered Lunch
- **3:30-5:30PM:** Maxange Cave tour
- **5:30-7PM:** Proumeyssac Chasm tour
- **7:30-10:30PM:** Live concert and cocktail reception at Proumeyssac Chasm





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• Monday 28, September

- **9-11AM:** Les Eyzies Prehistory Interpretation Center
 - **9-10AM:** European Commission lobbying working session
 - **10-11AM:** ISCA General Assembly Meeting 3
 - **Option 2 - 9:30-11AM:** Prehistory Museum
- **11-11:15AM:** Coffee Break
- **11:15AM-12:30PM:** Prehistory Presentation by Frédéric Plassard
- **12:30-2PM:** Catered Lunch
- **Afternoon trips (reservation required)**
 - **Option 1 - 2:30PM:** Rouffignac Cave
 - **Option 2 - 2:30PM:** La Roque St Christophe & Reignac Fortified house
- **7-11PM:** Dinner and entertainment

• Tuesday 29, September

- **8:30-9:30AM:** ISCA New Board meeting
- **9:30AM-12:45PM:** Visit to Brantôme or Villars Cave tour
- **12:45-13:45PM:** Catered Lunch
- **13:45-16:15PM:** Visit to Brantôme or Villars Cave tour
- **18:45-7:30PM:** Closing speech
- **7:30-11PM:** Dinner show





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27. PRE AND POST CONGRESS TRIPS

- **PRE CONGRESS TRIPS**

- **Wednesday 23, September**

- Domme Cave tour
- Milandes Castle tour

- **Thursday 24, September**

- Tourtoirac Cave tour
- Hautefort Castle tour

- **POST CONGRESS TRIPS**

- **Wednesday 30, September**

- Sarlat tour
- Lacave Cave tour
- Rocamadour

- **Thursday 1, October**

- Pech Merle Cave tour
- Cognac Cave tour





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28. REGISTRATION

- Download the registration form by clicking **here** (ISCA Website and/or FFTS website).
- Complete the file with all the required information.
- Return the completed form to **florence@tourismeperigord.com**
- For further questions, doubts or suggestions, please email **contact@ffts.fr**

Please note:

- **Early registration** ends on May 30.
- Attending ISCA full members will be offered a 10% discount on their 2027 membership fees.





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29. FAQs

- **What is the proper attire while attending Congress sessions?**
 - Business Casual. On days with scheduled activities away from the hotel, comfortable walking shoes are recommended.
- **What is the proper attire for pre and post field trips?**
 - Casual. Comfortable walking shoes.
- **What will the weather be like in late September?**
 - Late September in Dordogne generally offers pleasant early autumn weather. Days are usually mild and comfortable, with average daytime temperatures between 18°C and 24°C, while evenings are cooler.
- **What's the best way to get from the airport to the hotel/s?**
 - Rental cars are the best option.
- **Should I rent a car?**
 - It is recommended to rent a car. You may find somebody else who would like to share each ride.
- **I have special food requirements (allergies, dietary restrictions, etc.)**
 - Please alert us to your dietary requirements and we will do our best to accommodate you.
- **Still need answers?**
 - See 'Contact' section at the end and contact us.





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30. CONTACT

- **Roselyne Aulner (FFTS Executive Assistant)**
 - contact@ffts.fr
- **Juan José Tíscar Moya (ISCA Secretary)**
 - secretary@i-s-c-a.org





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