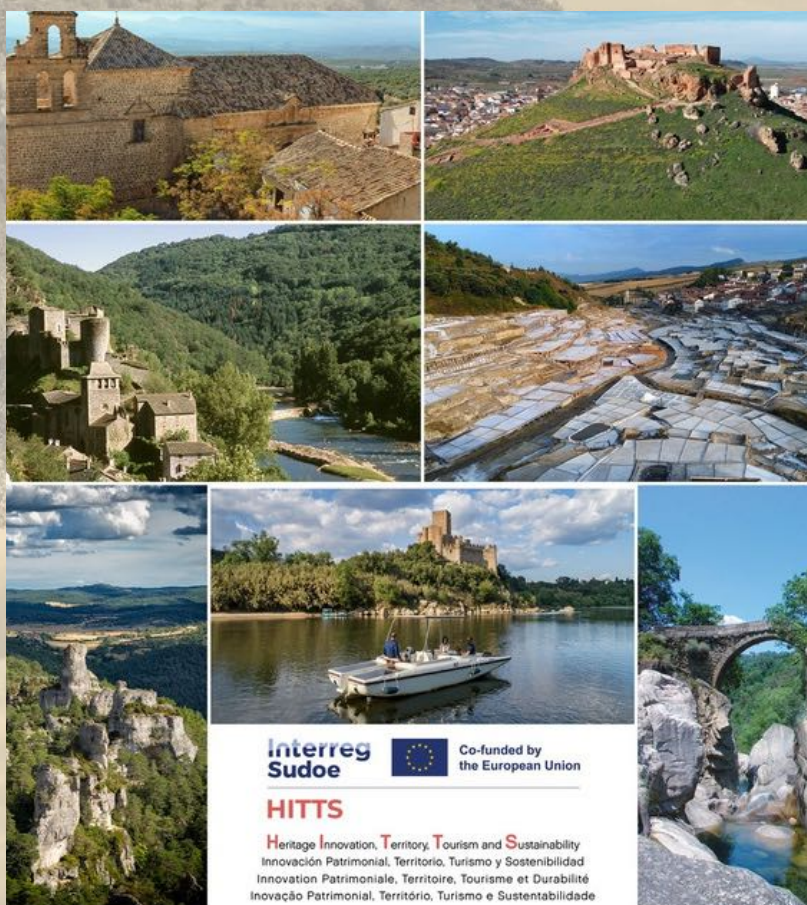


HITTS

HERITAGE, INNOVATION, TERRITORY, TOURISM AND SUSTAINABILITY

A common Story

2025



Interreg Sudoe



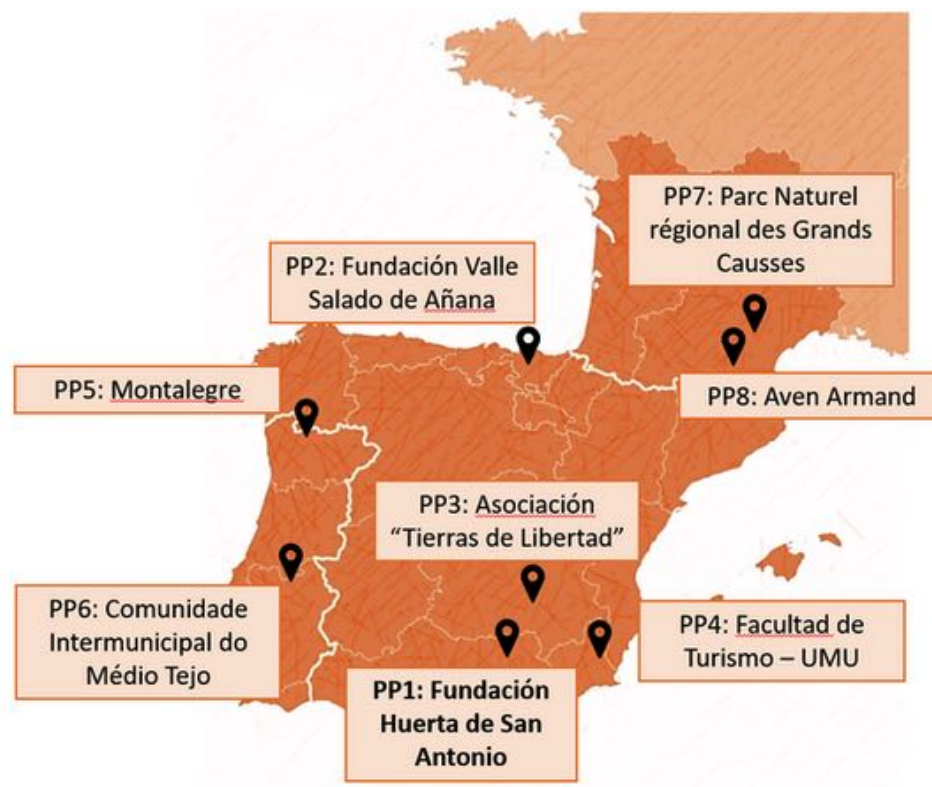
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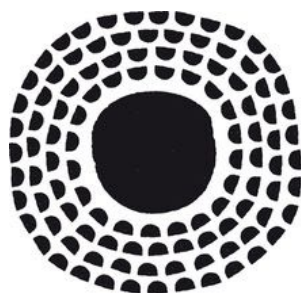
Fundación Huerta de San Antonio - Spain;
Fundación Valle Salado de Añana - Spain;
Association for the Development of Campo de Montiel and Campo de Calatrava Tierras de Libertad - Spain;
Faculty of Tourism, Murcia;
Médio Tejo Intermunicipal Community - Portugal;
Municipality of Montalegre - Portugal;
Joint Association of the Grands Causses Regional Nature Park - France;
Aven Armand - Montpellier le Vieux S.A - France



Summary

Introduction.....	page 5
Fundación Huerta de San Antonio.....	page 6
Fundación Valle Salado de Añana.....	page 7
Tierras de Libertad.....	page 8
Médio Tejo.....	page 9
Montalegre.....	page 10
Syndicat du Parc Naturel Régional des Grands Causses.....	page 11
Aven Armand - Montpellier le Vieux.....	page 12
Lands that tell stories A shared spirit in SUDOE.....	page 13
Water murmurs everywhere.....	page 14
Landscapes like open books.....	page 15
A living sanctuary.....	page 16
Here, heritage is alive.....	page 17
Gastronomy is a way of life.....	page 18
The desire to work together.....	page 19

INFOGRAPHIC.....	page 20
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Introduction

A sustainable tourism and rural development project cannot be conceived without the construction of a shared narrative, capable of both strengthening the sense of belonging among local communities and increasing the attractiveness of the region. With this in mind, the HITTS project partners are working to develop a narrative that is both local and shared across the SUDOE area. The aim is twofold: to highlight what makes each territory unique while identifying the common elements that form a collective identity, thus differentiating SUDOE from other European regions. To achieve this, the territorial laboratories are mobilising a multidisciplinary team and drawing on endogenous resources and innovative tools, such as storytelling applied to cultural and nature tourism. By combining interviews, testimonials and field explorations, they are developing narratives that are both attractive and meaningful, capable of promoting the history, culture and landscapes specific to each territory. This work then feeds into the creation of a common history for SUDOE, which aims to give the area a clear, coherent and differentiated tourist image, thereby strengthening its positioning as a rural destination of high cultural and natural value.



Iglesia San Lorenzo

Living memory

A church as a starting point: Built after the Christian reconquest, the church of San Lorenzo was long the centre of a neighbourhood of market gardeners and artisans. Baptisms, processions and patron saint festivals punctuated community life until the decline of market gardens, the emigration of families and the abandonment of community practices. Closed and in ruins, it symbolised the end of an era. But San Lorenzo is now being reborn through its restoration, becoming a cultural and social hub.

The breath of the landscape

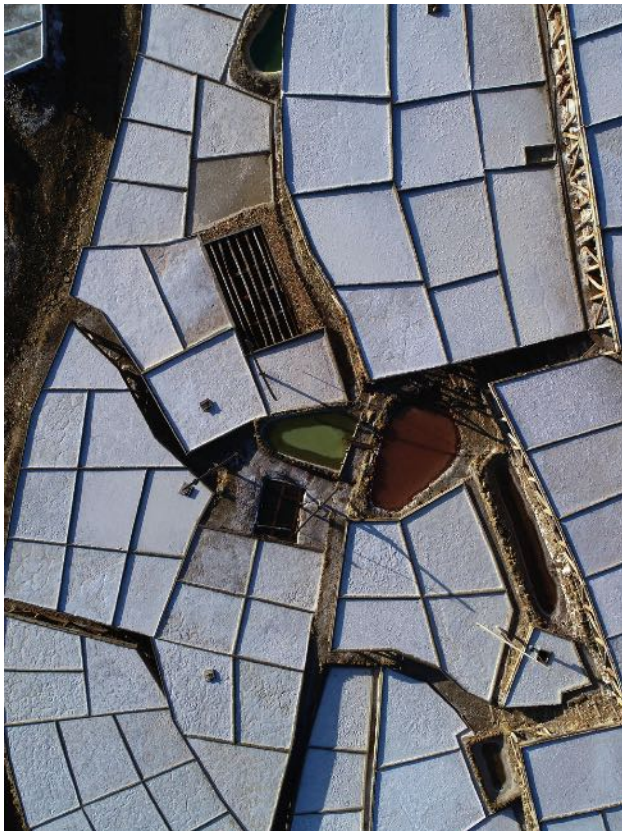
Perched on a rocky outcrop south of Úbeda, the neighbourhood opens onto olive groves, mountains and the Guadalquivir valley. Its viewpoints offer much more than just a view: they are a breathing space that writer Antonio Muñoz Molina described as an 'oceanic vision'. The landscape is experienced through sounds, smells and the ancient gestures of the hortelanos, whose hanging vegetable gardens – fragile remnants of a vanished world – still preserve its memory.

San Lorenzo retains a unique urban fabric: medieval alleyways, Renaissance palaces, Almohad ramparts. Among its treasures are the Casa de las Torres, the Granada Gate and, above all, its church, now a lively cultural centre. But the neighbourhood also expresses itself through its stories: legends of Tía Tragantía, folk tales, memories embodied by local figures such as Paca 'la Campanera'. And always, the words of Muñoz Molina, a sensitive witness who has captured the soul of the place.

A changing community

Once united by market gardening, the community became fragile with the decline of agriculture and the abandonment of the parish. Today, it is rebuilding itself around heritage, culture and landscape. The old church, now a space for meetings and creativity, once again brings together residents and visitors around a shared heritage that looks to the future.

Fundación Valle Salado de Añana



Sel Anana Valley

A millenary treasure, combining ancestral traditions and nature

The Salt Valley (Salinas de Añana) is one of the most emblematic features of the region. In use for over 7,500 years, it is one of the oldest salt extraction systems in the world still visible today. This site, shaped by generations of local families, bears witness to unique expertise and a subtle adaptation to natural resources, particularly the salt spring that feeds the terraced structures. Long a pillar of the local economy, salt production has shaped social life, trade and the organisation of the region. Even after its industrial decline in the 20th century, the memory of the saltworks has remained alive, carried on by stories, gestures and customs passed down through the generations.

The Añana region is also characterised by the diversity of its landscapes, which are a real asset to the quality of life.

The inhabitants develop a strong sense of belonging there.

Culturally speaking, Añana has a rich heritage: Romanesque art, medieval castles, tower houses, as well as rural traditions and artisanal heritage. The local culture, which is still relatively unstructured, is promoted through one-off initiatives and events such as the Schubertiada. It is developing, particularly when reinforced by collective actions and rooted in the local area.

Finally, social life is based on informal meeting places – parties, bars, natural spaces – and shared values: solidarity, respect for tradition, and a desire to build community.

Tierras de Libertad



Compo by Montiel

A territory with deep roots

Located in the south-east of the province of Ciudad Real, Campo de Montiel is a unique area in terms of its geography, history and way of life.

This vast plateau rises at the junction of the Guadalquivir and Segura river basins. Its strategic position makes it a natural corridor that promotes biodiversity and connects the landscapes of the interior La Mancha region with the valleys of Andalusia.

A unique environment: the territory is marked by a unique geology thanks to the presence of large underground water tables, of which the Lagunas de Ruidera are the most visible expression. The Mediterranean climate, with a strong continental influence, leads to marked seasonal contrasts. The diversity of the landscape provides an ideal habitat for local wildlife: golden eagles, Iberian lynxes, steppe birds and migratory species.

Campo de Montiel is a land rich in history and culture, occupied since the Bronze Age and marked by numerous civilisations. From the 13th century onwards, the Order of Santiago left its cultural and religious mark on the area.

This region is also mentioned by Spanish authors such as Cervantes and Quevedo, and influenced by the poetry of Jorge Manrique. The Renaissance and Baroque periods are reflected in places such as Guadiana, Guadalquivir and Segura.

The villages of Campo de Montiel have a homogeneous social structure, with residents who are independent but supportive of one another. Mutual aid is valued. The way of life is linked to agriculture and livestock farming, illustrated by a popular saying about local products: wine, bread, oil and meat. However, some traditional activities, such as crafts based on plant fibres, are disappearing, jeopardising a cultural heritage that is crucial to preserve.

Médio Tejo



Medjo Tejo

Wine tells the story of the land

A long and multifaceted history, written by different peoples and cultures who, over the centuries, have shaped the landscape, identity and expertise of the region. Each era has left its mark, still alive today in the vineyards, the musts and the people: from the Romans to the Knights Templar, from the silent spirituality of the Cistercians to the trauma of phylloxera, through the transformations of the 20th century to the innovation of the 21st, with eyes fixed on the future.

It is this history that we seek to recount today through this chronological journey through the history of wine in the Médio Tejo. It is a sensory and cultural journey, where each era represents a chapter in the deep connection between man and the land. The Médio Tejo is, par excellence, a showcase of terroirs. Clay-limestone, alluvial and schist soils reveal a remarkable geological diversity, which is reflected in the richness of the grape varieties, vine management methods, production

This diversity offers different expressions of wine within the same terroir. In Médio Tejo, this communion is tangible. Here, each wine expresses a landscape, a memory, a way of life. And it is through this deep and authentic connection that the region asserts itself as a unique wine tourism destination, with a strong identity based on biodiversity.

By adopting a shared wine narrative, rooted in the region's historical diversity and natural and cultural wealth, Médio Tejo positions itself as a place where the past and present intertwine in authentic, sustainable and memorable experiences. A territory where wine is not just a product, but a living heritage, constantly renewed and ready to take on the challenges of tomorrow.



Montalegre



Montalegre

An identity forged by the mountains

Montalegre is a high-altitude region characterised by its harsh climate, rich natural resources and strong relationship between humans and their environment. Located in the heart of Peneda-Gerês National Park, Portugal's only national park and a UNESCO Biosphere Reserve, the municipality embodies a unique way of living in the mountains. The valleys, forests, waterfalls and lagoons are not just elements of the landscape: they are spaces that are lived in, used and respected. The feeling of being 'an island in the sky' reflects the deep, almost spiritual bond that unites the inhabitants with their territory.

Montalegre is an area rich in living culture, where legends, traditions and symbols are essential. The Misarela Bridge, the monastery of Santa Maria das Júnias and the celebration of Friday the 13th illustrate a living and reinvented heritage. Events such as Aldeia dos Lobos show the region's ability to reinterpret its identity, transforming the once-feared figure of the wolf into a positive symbol.

Social life in Montalegre is based on solidarity, shared skills and a great capacity for adaptation. Traditional agricultural and pastoral practices coexist with contemporary forms of cooperation.

The Barroso Ecomuseum plays a central role in this dynamic: it connects villages, supports local initiatives and promotes collective memory. It is a tool for cohesion, but also for the future.

Gastronomy and intangible heritage: the cuisine is simple and rustic, but deeply rooted in the local identity. Rye bread, certified Barrosã meat, wood-fired dishes, smoked products and economic resource markets also reflect a lasting link between the land, tradition and community. Gastronomy acts as a vector for social cohesion, a driver of tourism and a form of cultural transmission.

Parc naturel régional des Grands Causses



The Grands Causses

The southern tip of the Massif Central

Here, high plateaus open to the sky, fertile valleys, vertiginous gorges with translucent waters, green mountains and the purple lands of the Rougiers compose an infinite palette of colours and emotions. Created in 1995, the Park was the culmination of the struggle of pioneers for preservation.

The Great River Tarn

Hiking on the GR736 Gorges and Valley of the Tarn. Covering 300 km and around fifteen stages, this journey reveals the spirit of the river.

As they travel, hikers never lose sight of the river. They walk along its green banks, bathe in its rushing waters, and contemplate the valley from breathtaking viewpoints. Starting from the moors of Mont Lozère, with the rising sun at their backs, hikers head west, guided by the Tarn River. This is where it has its source. As the days go by, it becomes clear that this is a journey that follows the river and plays out in many different ways.

The Tarn River reveals many faces as it rushes along its course. Born in the Cévennes from a thousand streams springing from granite, it flows across a high plateau, a land of pastures and peat bogs. How could anyone imagine that this timid torrent would soon carve out a monumental canyon with an emerald stroke? This metamorphosis takes shape at the entrance to the famous Gorges du Tarn.

Welcome to the world of the Grands Causses. Everywhere, the immensity of the landscapes invites communion with the monuments of nature that man has had the wisdom to preserve. The Millau Viaduct, an aerial masterpiece flown over by vultures, crosses the valley in harmony. Downstream, the river, tamed by dams in Les Raspes, stretches out into calm stretches of water between two wooded and wild banks. Then comes the bucolic Tarn Valley, cultivated by agriculture and crisscrossed by meanders, including the Ambialet peninsula and its charming little town. The final stage offers the discovery of the city of Albi.

Aven Armand - Montpellier-le-Vieux



Aven Armand

Where the stone speaks

In the heart of the Grands Causses lies a land sculpted by time and imagination. A place where rock becomes cathedral, where trees cling to cliffs, where the wind knows the names of the ancients. It is here that the Aven Armand plunges into the bowels of the Causse Méjean, and that the Cité de Pierres rises like a mineral forest defying the sky. It was here that SA Aven Armand Montpellier-le-Vieux was born a century ago.

For a hundred years, this family business has been working with the land, keeping pace with the transformation of the rock. It embraces its lines, its fragilities, its promises. It has made visible worlds that were once thought inaccessible. It has opened paths and dug tunnels, but never without listening to what the earth had to say.

Nature is a partner and a master, offering an immersive experience. Beneath the stalagmites of Aven Armand, you can feel geological time.



Montpellier-le-Vieux

At the City of Stones, every step connects dreams and erosion. Preserving these treasures involves soft lighting and water management, encouraging observation and understanding. Visiting this place allows you to disconnect in order to better reconnect with the world. This place is more than just limestone and wind; it is steeped in memory, history, and living heritage. It tells the story of explorers such as Martel and Armand, as well as the guides, geologists, and storytellers who followed in their footsteps.

On the occasion of its centenary, the company is reinventing itself to better tell its story and welcome visitors, while anchoring its development model.

Aven Armand and the Cité de Pierres are not simply natural wonders. They are mirrors of a century of humanity in search of meaning. And their greatest treasure is the women and men who, here every day, bring rock, memory, and life into dialogue.



Hitts

Lands that tell their story A shared soul in SUDOE



There are places we pass through, and others that pass through us. Places that impress us not with their power, but with their authenticity. Landscapes that vibrate, stones that speak, waters that connect. From Añana to San Lorenzo, from Campo de Montiel to the Tarn Valley, from the mountains of Montalegre to the hillsides of Médio Tejo, from the cliffs of the Grands Causses to the windy plateaus, the same breath can be heard.

A plural voice, but a common soul.

Everywhere, water murmurs

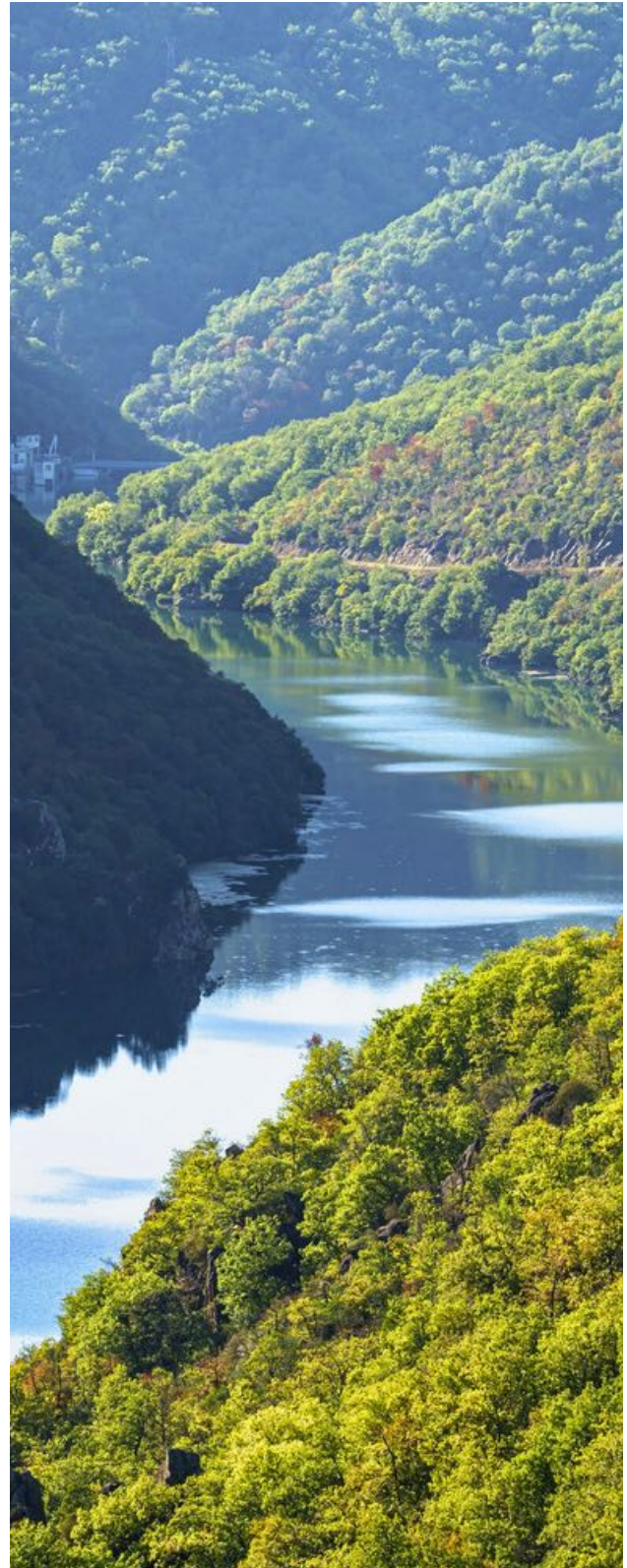


In Añana, it traces lines of salt that date back thousands of years. In San Lorenzo, it cradles the uncultivated orchards. In Campo de Montiel, it rises from the depths to create lagoons of light. In the Tarn Valley, it winds its way between houses, nourishing and soothing.

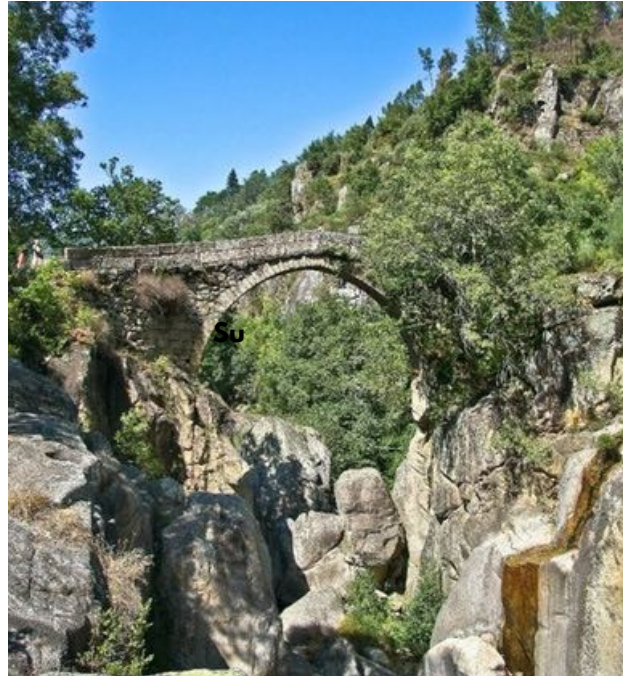
In Montalegre, it descends from the peaks, crosses lagoons and waterfalls, and embraces the valleys. There, it embodies an ancient spirituality, a tacit pact with the mountains.

And in the Médio Tejo, it quenches the thirst of the soil and vineyards, permeates the memory of grape varieties, and silently carries the echo of ancient harvests.

In the Grands Causses, water becomes a treasure. The landscape imposes its laws: cliffs, sinkholes, caves, hidden rivers. A harsh but inspiring territory.



Landscapes, like open books



In these lands, the landscapes are open books. They reveal the hand of man, centuries of ingenuity and effort. Abandoned terraces, dormant mills, faïsses carved into the rock.



One can also perceive the return of the wild: encroaching forests, faded paths, rebellious oak trees. These contrasts weave together territories that are both wounded and fertile. They speak the truth about today's rural world.

And in these landscapes, stones have a voice...



In San Lorenzo, they recount the legends of a neighbourhood suspended in time. In the Tarn Valley, they feature almond-shaped balconies, wine cellars and the gates of a fortified village. In Montalegre, they preserve the memory of the Devil's Bridge, monasteries buried in the valleys and ancestral beliefs. They also recount the resistance of a mountain people, their faith, their stories, and their deep connection to the land and spirits.

In the Causses, they bear witness to hardship and conquest: crosses planted in memory of the departed, caves explored by the first speleologists, walls climbed in the name of an existential challenge.

A living sanctuary



In Añana, they preserve the echo of tower houses and Romanesque chapels. In Médio Tejo, the stones of cellars, wine presses and low walls speak to us, telling the story of enduring craftsmanship and the slow alchemy between limestone, schist and humans. And in the depths of the Grands Causses, at Aven Armand, the stone whispers differently.



Here, a century-old spirit inhabits the rock. A spirit born of a unique human adventure, that of a society unlike any other: a community of men and women, pioneers and smugglers, united to make the invisible visible.

Every step echoes softly, every light is carefully considered, every word measured. This is not a tourist site: it is a living sanctuary.

Here, heritage is alive



And those who live there are its guardians

Collective stories are written in cafés, squares, fairs and festivals. In Campo de Montiel, the plains remember the markets of yesteryear. In Saint-Rome-de-Tarn, the Cornards festival brings the local children back every year. In Montalegre, the community gathers around its rituals and flavours. Friday the 13th becomes a magical celebration. The wolf, once feared, is celebrated. The inhabitants forge bonds through the seasons, the harvests and the stories. The Barroso Ecomuseum becomes the beating heart of this living memory.



In the Causses region, nature became a school in the mid-20th century. The Club Alpina de Millau, born out of social Catholicism, transformed cliffs into classrooms, hiking into initiation, and physical effort into collective learning. Clubs, hostels, associations, and cooperatives invented an outdoor culture where adventure was a shared right.



At Viala-du-Tarn, artists and storytellers nurture a popular and demanding culture.

In San Lorenzo, literature becomes memory with the words of Antonio Muñoz Molina. In Añana, ancient music mingles with the whispers of the earth.

And in Médio Tejo, each harvest reinvents tradition: wine is a language, a liquid narrative carried through the centuries.

Rooted since ancient times, shaped by monastic orders, shaken by trials, it is reborn each year, rich in diversity, memory and future.

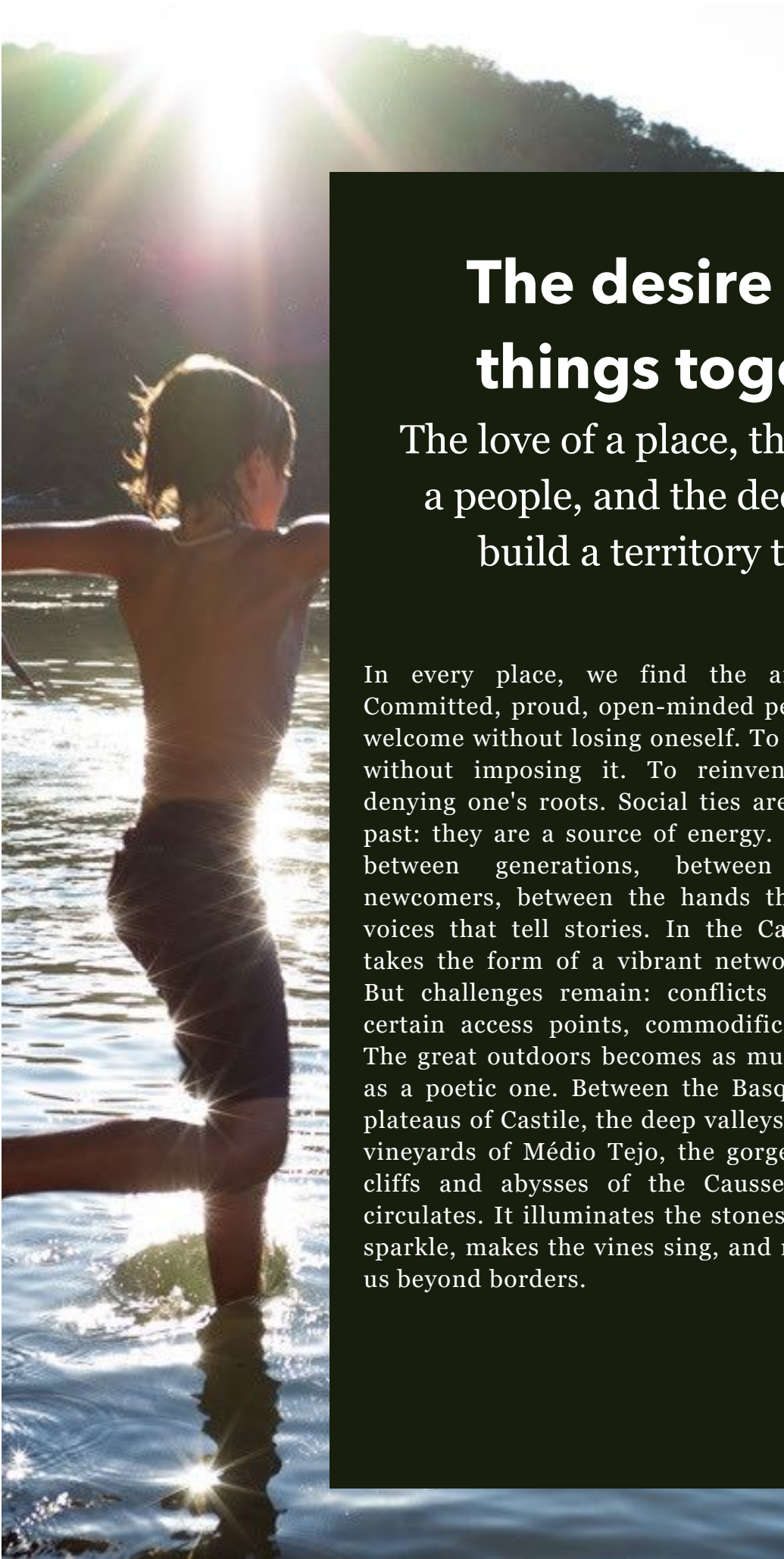
Gastronomy is more than just a way of life here



The harsh yet fertile land of Montalegre also speaks through its flavours. Gastronomy here is more than a way of life: it is a ritual, an identity, a tradition passed down through generations. Smoked meats, rye bread and dishes simmered over a wood fire tell tales of winter, patience, mountains and mutual aid. In the Causses, it is winter bivouacs, picnics on the cliffs, and memories of first times on a rope or in a kayak that feed the taste memory. The taste of the region here is that of fire, simplicity, and conviviality.

The soil of Médio Tejo is a living mosaic. Limestone, alluvial, schist... each terroir is a voice, an emotion, a way of inhabiting the world. Wine becomes a mirror of the territory and a catalyst for identity. Through the creation of a historical wine route, the region is affirming its desire to transform this memory into a shared, sustainable, sensitive and collective experience.





The desire to do things together

The love of a place, the memory of a people, and the deep desire to build a territory together.

In every place, we find the art of community. Committed, proud, open-minded people. An ability to welcome without losing oneself. To pass on knowledge without imposing it. To reinvent oneself without denying one's roots. Social ties are not a relic of the past: they are a source of energy. A thread stretched between generations, between old-timers and newcomers, between the hands that create and the voices that tell stories. In the Causses, this energy takes the form of a vibrant network of associations. But challenges remain: conflicts of use, closure of certain access points, commodification of practices. The great outdoors becomes as much a political issue as a poetic one. Between the Basque mountains, the plateaus of Castile, the deep valleys of Montalegre, the vineyards of Médio Tejo, the gorges of the Tarn, the cliffs and abysses of the Causses, the same light circulates. It illuminates the stones, makes the waters sparkle, makes the vines sing, and reveals what unites us beyond borders.

Our history

Our story takes shape in the lands we travel through, which sometimes leave their mark on us in return. These are places that matter, not because of their power, but because of their authenticity. Landscapes imbued with meaning, stones that bear witness, waters that connect. From Añana to San Lorenzo, from Campo de Montiel to the Tarn Valley, from the mountains of Montalègre to the hillsides of Médio Tejo, from the cliffs of the Grands Causses to the windswept plateaus, the same dynamic emerges: a diversity of voices, but a shared identity.



Our unique features

Úbeda (San Lorenzo)	Añana	Médio Tejo	Campo de Montiel	Montalègre	Grands Causses	Aven Armand Montpellier le vieux SA
Heritage revival around the church and hanging gardens.	A millenary treasure of salt extraction.	Wine and wine-growing heritage as a shared narrative	Historic lands and biodiversity	High mountains, vibrant culture, Barroso eco-museum	Agropastoralism and the River Tarn, monumental landscapes	Major geological sites and history of the discoverers

Shared Identities

Water	Landscapes and stone	Living and festive cultures	The terroir	The strength of community and solidarity
The salt flats of Añana, the lagoons of Campo de Montiel, the vineyards of Médio Tejo, the rivers of Tarn, the underground waters of the Causse...	Fortified villages, towers, Romanesque chapels, cultivated farmland, terraced fields, bridges, cellars, wine presses, low walls, caves, cliffs	Early music, literature, markets, folk festivals, beliefs, rituals, agricultural traditions, clubs, outdoor culture, artists	Local flavours, food crops, lowland and mountain farming, traditional skills, vineyards, gastronomy	Cultural transmissions, collective narratives, rural community life, shared experiences, community life

Shared Values and Challenges

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- Build sustainable tourism based on innovation and shared governance.
- Preserve and promote natural, cultural and intangible heritage.
- Reinvent tourism through cultural and artistic experiences.
- Develop inclusive tourism that respects local populations.
- Promote welcoming and caring tourism that fosters meaning and intercultural exchange.
- Adapt tourism to climate change.

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