

Corsavy : 10 historic sites

From Mas Les Chantalies, our beautiful home just outside the village, we can see 10 historic sites in and near Corsavy.



We start by looking to the East (and then moving right):

1. La Chapelle Sant Martí

Founded in 993 CE the chapel is next door to our house and visible through the trees:

Over the centuries it fell into disrepair, but for almost 40 years (starting in 1981) Jean-Pierre Vergès and his team have laboured to restore it.

For more details about the founding of the chapel, see:

www.123johnson.net/corsavy/CorsavyDownTheAges.pdf



The chapel viewed from the eastern end of our garden.



The ruined chapel in 1980

2. Les Gorges de la Fou

Turning slightly to the right, the top of this gorge, called “le canyon le plus étroit du monde”, is just visible from our garden:

It had a metal walkway one mile (1500 m) long running along and over the river Fou within the narrow ravine, which is up to 250m deep.

Unfortunately, in 2018 there was a rockfall and it's unlikely that this tourist attraction will ever re-open.



The top of the Gorges de la Fou (visible at lower right) from our lower garden. At top left the Roc de France and the white 'horse's head' of Montalba.

3. Lo Castell Vell

In April 1820 the Maire of Corsavy wrote:

'At a quarter of an hour distant to the South-East of Cortsavi can be found the remains of another chateau.

It appears to be older than the castle in the village. It has been called for a long time 'Lo Castell Vell'.

These days someone has built a farmhouse there, known as Can Gaillard.'

Though the foundations remain, a more modern house has been built on them, now called Can Gaillard:

It stands near the top of the Gorges de la Fou, not far from the old zinc and lead mine of Can Pey, and is just visible from our garden:

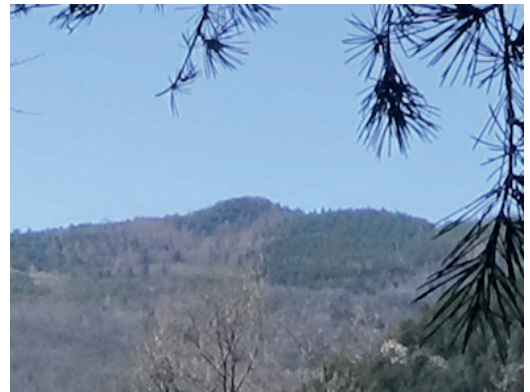


Can Gaillard viewed from the lower end of our garden.

4. Lo Castell, Montferrer

Turning westwards, across the long green hill of L'Escatirou [green, now that the charbonniers no longer work to produce charcoal for the iron forges], to the south-west of Les Chantalies we can see the crest of the hill on which was built the castle of Montferrer:

The castle was built before the 11th Century and is now derelict (it was mostly demolished by Vauban, in 1675, to prevent it having any military value).



The crest viewed from our garden.

It had a bad reputation; a Catalan refrain says:

Adeu, castel de Montferrer; Jo may no t'agués vist; Hi ha presos, tant malas; Que n'os veu may ni dia y nit.

Goodbye Montferrer castle; I wish I'd never seen you; There are prisoners, so evil; that may never see day or night.

Some walls remain (unlike Corsavy it was not close enough to the village to be raided for building stones; a few local farmhouses benefitted).

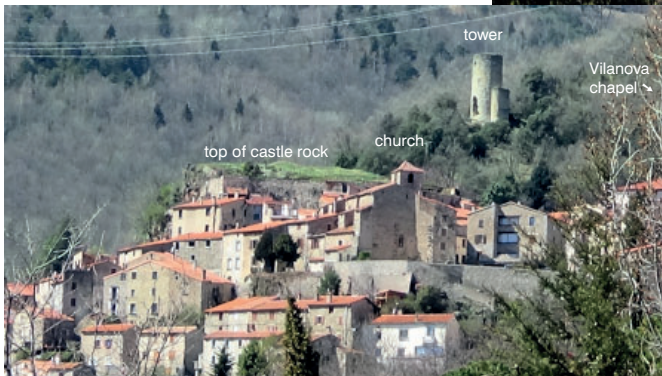
Like the castle in Corsavy (probably) it belongs to the cowshed school of architecture.



To the west of our house, under the huge dome of La Souque [La Soca] we can see the village of Corsavy:



Apart from the village houses, there are 4 main points of interest:



La Souque and Corsavy from our garden.

5. The Castle / Le Chateau / Lo Castell

The buildings on the top of the castle rock were in ruins by 1509, with the stones undoubtedly used to build the village houses round the rock.

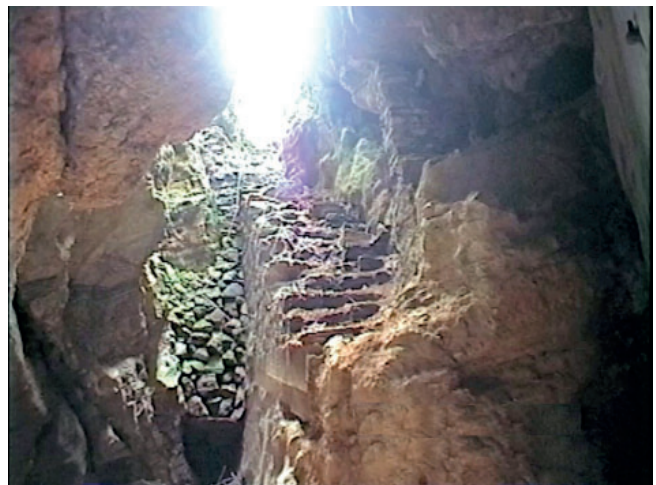
However a staircase up to the castle, inside the rock, still exists:

For more details see the article at:

www.123johnson.net/corsavy/The-Castle-In-Corsavy.pdf

and the video at:

<https://youtu.be/K9XgJ6HOrml>



The staircase inside the rock.

6. L'église Saint Martin / Parish Church

L'église paroissiale, dedicated to St Martin (feast day November 11th) dates from 1621 with a porch showing the date of 1775. It has two 17th Century alterpieces.

For a 360° tour see: <https://goo.gl/maps/NZBpECzeUEz3bAo6A>

An earlier church (dedicated to St Jacques) on the same site had taken over as the village church, as the power of the lords of the castle increased to the detriment of the Chapelle Sant Martí [see (1) above]. More in the document at

www.123johnson.net/corsavy/CorsavyDownTheAges.pdf



The bell-tower, painted by Ann.

7. The signal tower / la tour á signaux

The chain of signal towers in Rousillon was built mainly in the 14th century.

The tower at Calaris in Corsavy linked mainly to the ones at Batère and at Cabrenys. Batère was the main tower, linking to over 20 other towers in Vallespir and in the Têt valley (using smoke by day; fire by night).

For a 360° view from the tower, see: <https://goo.gl/maps/afWXCEQDWgKMDGD18>



The signal tower from our garden (church at bottom left).

For a 360° tour of the *inside* of the tower, click on: <https://goo.gl/maps/rvS5LsTYHBWj7WZP9>

There is more about the tower in Corsavy in Appendix 2 of the PDF at: www.123johnson.net/corsavy/CorsavyDownTheAges.pdf

8. La chapelle et le mausolée Vilanova

For a long period the Vilanova family provided the squires of Corsavy and this is their mausoleum chapel, completed in 1869, at the top of the village cemetery.

Joseph Vilanova, at the time the head of the Vilanova family, had given the adjacent plot of land to the Commune in 1832, for a new cemetery, on condition the chapel could be built.

At the time, the official calculation for the size of the new cemetery was: average deaths over the previous 10 years was 20 per year; doubling to allow for population growth and epidemics meant they required 80m per year (at 2m per body); this number was multiplied by 5 to allow for renewal of the pits; adding on space for pathways and walls gave an area needed of just 5 ares (500m²)



The chapel seen from our garden.



A translation of the 1824-36 diary of Joseph-Francois de Vilanova is at: www.123johnson.net/corsavy/Vilanova-1824-1836.pdf

9. Le Canigou / El Canigó

Swinging further round to the north-east we can see the top of Canigou, covered by snow for much of the year.

The mines of Canigou (mainly iron), and the consequent forges, have been the source of employment for the people of Corsavy for much of its history. For more about the iron industry and the catalan forges, see www.corsavy.co.uk



Canigou from our garden.

10. El Cortal d'Aloy / La Crêperie

To the north of us, our nearest neighbour is the Cortal d'Aloy, formerly a farm but now a Crêperie.

In 1845 it was the site of the showdown with an infamous group of bandits called Les Trabucayres.

The gendarmes supported by infantry had finally tracked them down there. They surrounded them, many of the infantry reaching the farm by walking up the terraces and across the field where I am writing this.

A short battle ended the rampage of Les Trabucayres, with one of them killed and four of them sent to the guillotine.

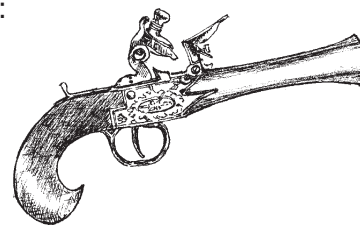


La Creperie du Cortal from our garden.



The Crêperie, painted by Ann.

The Trabucayres were named after the trabucs (pistols) they used:



For more details about the Trabucayres, see Appendix 3 of the PDF at:

www.123johnson.net/corsavy/CorsavyDownTheAges.pdf

Keith Johnson
Mas Les Chantalies
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