

G / The Saulges caves50km/1 hour

We would actually suggest starting with Thevalles – See “H”- (the guided tour takes about an hour), then have lunch in Saulges and finish with the pre-historic site in the afternoon.

Saulges will provide you with a choice of restaurants from a modest creperie to the more expensive ‘Ermitage’ (which also offers a reasonable lunch Bistrot Menu).

<http://www.hotel-ermitage.fr/fr/restaurant.php>

The Saulges caves :

Again, you will be impressed with the setting, but for a different reason ! This time, you will be moving back many centuries and go to pre-history.



The mysterious and magical pre-historic caves of Rochefort and Margot in the Saulges Canyon - home to bats and legends - are a wonderful place to see stalactites and stalagmites. Take a walk through the glacial valley - free and open all year - and enjoy the scenery from the gorge restaurant. Caves are open every day mid-Mar-mid-Nov. Under 3s are not allowed in la Grotte a Margot and under 6s are not allowed in la Grotte de Rochefort. Cave visits are by guided tour only and, as space is limited, it is advisable to book in advance in July and Aug and on Sundays and holidays.

Early human Paleolithic hunter-gatherers were usually nomads, but at the Canyon at Saulges there are signs that, some 20,000 years ago, these people began a long and continuous period of settlement here, and this is therefore an important site for the study of early hunter-gatherer communities.

The most impressive discovery in the area were probably cave paintings in 1967. The équipe spéléologique (Speleo Group) of the association Mayenne-Sciences (Mayenne Science Association). The group was reseaching in the far end of the Grotte Mayenne-Sciences. They discovered two chambers connected by low and narrow passages. At the end the cave was blocked by debris. On 11-JUN-1967 ROGER BOUILLON removed the debris and discovered the third room with its beautiful speleothems. It also contains line drawings showing animals: four horses, a mammoth, and a bison. The paintings were partly covered by calcite, but their preservation and freshness is excellent. The site is of national and international interest. To protect this cave and its paintings, it is closed.

Two caves are open to visitors; the Grotte à Margot and the Grotte de Rochefort, and each is accessed only by guided tour. The commentary is usually offered in French, although other languages can sometimes be catered for by arrangement.

The Grotte de Rochefort offers many interesting and curious limestone formations and you will be led down to an underground river that flows beneath. The Grotte à Margot also houses a colony of bats, and paleolithic paintings have also been discovered here recently. However, you will have to come to your own conclusion regarding Margot, the young lady, who, according to legend, disappeared after entering the cave. Was she a witch or not?

The location itself is also very attractive; the river Erve is lovely to walk along or picnic beside; the cliffs offer seclusion and climbing opportunities and the bar/restaurant offers shade, a seat, a meal, and a drink.

Open March 15 to November 15

