

A-Z of the Communes in the Deux-Sèvres

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by Sue Burgess

COURS

Cours is a small village of 542 inhabitants. It is situated near Champdeniers-Saint-Denis, Les Groseillers and Xaintray, about 19km from Niort. The river Autise flows through the commune. and the inhabitants are called Coursois and Coursoises.

A VOIR / MUST SEE

- The covered well in the garden of the town hall

COUTIÈRES

Coutières is a commune which belongs to the canton of Ménigoute in the circumscription of Parthenay. The nearest villages are Chantecorps, Fomperron and Vautebis and there were 156 inhabitants at the time of the 2010 census. The commune is crossed by the river Vonne, popular with fishermen and with people who wish to wander along the river banks and discover the **sentier du granit** (the granite path). The association CPIE de Gâtine Poitevine (Centre permanent d'initiatives pour l'environnement) can be found in Coutières and it aims to educate people about sustainable development.

A VOIR / MUST SEE

- **Le Jardin des Sens (the garden of the five senses)**

The idea for this garden came about over 20 years ago. The mayor and the volunteers from amongst the local inhabitants took over an area of 7000m² which had been left empty. It is constantly evolving and changing. There are 5 zones which correspond to the five senses and different activities are organised in each area. The general theme is to do with gardens (landscapes, the insects, animals and birds that live in the garden, edible wild plants, ponds, the weather, gardening).



COUTURE D'ARGENSON

Situated in the extreme south of the Deux-Sèvres, on the border with Charente and Charente-Maritime, Couture d'Argenson is a village of about 430 inhabitants. The rural village is 15km from Chef Boutonne in Deux-Sèvres and 15km from Villefagnan in Charente. At the edge of the village there is a small stone with three holes which used to symbolise the boundaries of the three *départements* or of the three dioceses (Poitiers, Saintes and Angoulême).

A VOIR / MUST SEE

- On the village square is the **church of St Nicolas** with its hexagonal tower. The church was built with the stones of the order of Malta. The church dates from the 12th century.
- Le Château de la Foye, a home built in 1852 by the Count of Chabot. (private property which can be visited during the heritage days in September).



- Le Logis du Guidier, a 15th and 17th century home.

- **La borne des trois départements ou des trois évêchés** - the stone with the three holes.



LA CRÈCHE

The town of La Crèche has been built on both sides of the Sèvre Niortaise river. In the beginning there were three villages: Saint Carlaix, Breloux-La Crèche and Chavagné. The three communes were united in the sixties. The communes have always been on a major axis of communication - the railway, and earlier a royal road. Since the beginning of the 1980s the A10 motorway has crossed the commune and more recently the A83. This knot of motorways has meant that new businesses have settled here and the population has grown.

Archaeology shows that man has been present in this area since Paleolithic times. Around the year 1000, the habitations were regrouped around Romanesque churches at Saint-Carlaix and at Breloux. Castles allowed for the territory to be watched over and protected.

With 5448 inhabitants in 2009, the town has seen its population almost double in size since 1968.

A VOIR / MUST SEE

- **Le château de Bougouin**

The main building is surrounded by a garden and by a moat. A road separates the pigeon cote from the rest of the chateau gardens, though the north and west wings remain. The chapel and the keep were demolished between 1780 and 1815. Underneath the west wing of the chateau is a huge vaulted cellar part of which used to be used as a prison.

- **Aumônerie Saint-Jacques de la Villedieu du Pont de Vau (15th century)**

In 1437, Aymeri de Magné gave a house that could be used by pilgrims on their way to St Jacques de Compostelle. They could stop there between Champdeniers and Celles-sur-Belle after having crossed the Sèvre Niortaise river. The building now belongs to an architectural association but is open for visits during Heritage weekend



- **Le château de Miséré**

This pretty château in the village of Miséré has today been turned into lodgings.

More 'A-Z of the Communes of the Deux-Sèvres.' next month...