



Huelgoat

Lying between Morlaix and Carhaix just off the D764 is the small picturesque little town of Huelgoat, its name is taken from the Breton for high - huel and wood - koat .

Sitting on the shores of a large, pretty lake, Huelgoat is popular with tourists and boasts a large population of British expats. The lake was artificially created in the 16th century to supply water to the silver and lead mines which were the areas main industry at the time. Today the lake looks perfectly natural and you wouldn't know it was man made. There are plenty of cafes and bars where you can sit and watch the water or the world go by.

But Huelgoat's main attraction has really got to be its beautiful and often overlooked magically enchanted forest. Literally just off the town centre and covering an area of 10 square kilometres the forest of Huelgoat abounds with amazing gigantic mossy boulders and sparkling clear pools as the river Argent winds its way through the trees. A beautiful old watermill stands at one end of Huelgoat's lake. Take the path down beside the mill and you enter an amazingly secretive, green, rock-strewn world, which has inspired wild Arthurian and Christian myths.

There are plenty of marked paths and trails through the forest. Follow the main path and your first stop will be Le Chaos de Rochers or the Chaos of Rocks and the Grotte Du Diable or Cave of the Devil. Here the water from the lake plunges dramatically ten meters below ground into a large cavern, the brave can climb down the slippery rocks and steep iron ladder to watch from below the water thundering down.

The river then continues underground for a short distance before re-emerging and winding its way through the forest sometimes widening into fairy pools with stepping stones and small bridges.

Surrounding you are beautifully moulded, water smoothed, boulders which make this place so special and if you look hard enough you may even see the odd Fée or Korrigan, fairies that are supposed to inhabit the forest.

Further into the forest you pass the Grotte d'Artus, where Arthur was meant to have had a bed in the woods, before arriving at the Camp d'Artus, an ancient hill fort. Legend has it that Arthur hid a hoard of treasure in this spot. Archaeologists say that the ancient defences here long predate Arthurian times and were probably erected by the local Celtic tribe. Then there is the La

Roche Tremblante, a massive boulder weighing 137 tonnes which is precariously balanced in such a way that it can be rocked by the weight of just one person - if you can find the exact place to push against it.

And if all this walking and pushing on rocks has worked up an appetite - then in the centre of the forest you will find a very pleasant creperie where you can recharge your batteries.

Before you leave, on your way back out of the forest, stop for a while at the war memorial, next to the natural spring which runs across the path. The memorial honours the many local people who fought in the French resistance and who lost their lives in the forest of Huelgoat.

Enjoy your visit to Huelgoat, it is a one of Brittany's many hidden gems.

