

el Periòdic News

INTERVIEW

Marine Bordes

MAYOR OF FOIX

«I'm proud to be able to take part in the work to have our shared history with Andorra listed by UNESCO»



IRINA
Rybalchenko

In the heart of the Ariège, at the foot of the Pyrenees, Foix, symbolised by three towers of its castle, combines the quality of life of a prefectural town with the advantages of proximity to major cities such as Toulouse, Carcassonne, the Pyrenees – as well as Andorra and Spain.

Dated back to the 10th-15th Century, the castle stands on its majestic rock and was home to the Counts of Foix, including the famous Gaston Fébus (1343-1391).

Foix plays a major role in the organisation of the economic infrastructure of the Ariège valley. Foix town centre, with its medieval atmosphere, is a veritable commercial hub, with 641 commercial and service establishments representing nearly 8,000 jobs.

We talk to Marine Bordes, Mayor

of Foix, the town's first female mayor.

Interview: Irina Rybalchenko

—**What are the town's main economic sectors?**

—We have been trying to achieve a balance between shops in the historic medieval centre and business areas, and it's been a winning bet, as we can now be proud of a good commercial dynamic.

The shops are varied - arts and crafts, food and drink, restaurants, clothing, home decoration... they all contribute to the appeal and liveliness of the town.

The markets, held on Tuesday and Friday mornings, are colourful and have a unique atmosphere – offering local produce, gastronomy, and crafts.

The business parks developed at the town's entrances are home to shops and craft industries, as well as Vitesco, which produces calculators for car engines and



AJUNTAMENT DE FOIX

employs nearly 400 people.

—**Do you have any statistics on tourists visiting your town?**

—Foix Castle and its museum are the busiest tourist site in the Ariège, welcoming 112,000 visitors every year. The number of visitors this August is up sharply by almost 8% compared to a year ago in August 2023!

The majority of tourists are French, with foreign visitors accounting for almost 20%. Spanish tourists are the most numerous, we also welcome tourists from Andorra, who account for just over 1% of visitors to the castle. But it's worth pointing out that many tourists who visit Ariège also travel to Andorra.

—**What cultural and sporting events are planned for this year?**

—Foix is the setting for many colourful and musical events and a wide range of sporting, cultural and leisure activities. All

summer long, after the Fête de la musique, they hold a succession of emblematic festivals: cinema, traditional music, jazz, African music, historical shows, and concerts.

From 30 August to 1 September, the Grandes Fêtes de Foix takes place with a traditional fireworks show.

Foix also benefits from an unspoiled environment that is ideal for all kinds of outdoor sports and leisure activities, from hiking, horse-riding or mountain biking, to the joys of a descent in calm or running waters, or the excitement of a paragliding flight over the valley.

If we're talking about gastronomy, there are about 55 restaurants! They offer a variety of cuisine to suit all tastes. We have our famous liver sausage, known thanks to the nursery rhyme: 'Once upon a time in the town of Foix, there was a liver merchant who used to say, this is the first time I've sold liver in the town of

BENJAMIN FLICKR

Foix.’

—How has the standard of living changed in 2024?

—Generally speaking, the incomes of the people living in Foix are higher than those of the rest of the department, and close to the regional level.

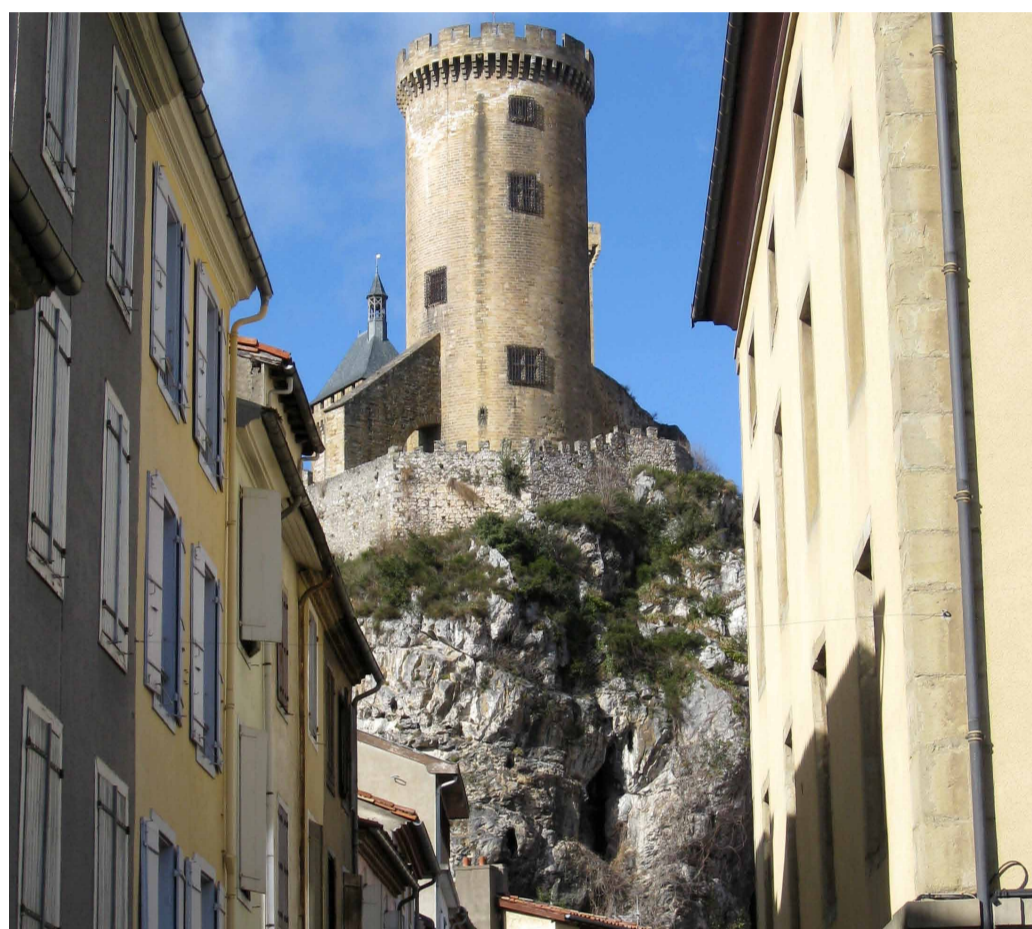
While the property market went through a sluggish period in 2023, the trend is reversing for 2024 with a clear upturn. Property prices have risen slightly: €1,330 per m² on average for a flat and €1,460 for a house.

—What are the main projects in the town’s future?

—We’re working hard on the urban renewal of Foix’s historic medieval centre: improving public spaces, planting greenery, calming traffic, developing the town’s entrances, but also rehabilitating the housing stock. Emblematic renovation or demolition and reconstruction projects are under way to provide quality housing.

—What are the city’s investment plans for 2024?

—We have made major investments since 2019 in housing improvements, mobility, local services and sports facilities. The priority for 2024 is to prepare for the world junior and U23 canoe-kayak championships, which will



The Château de Foix, an emblematic building of the town.

take place in 2025.

—Does the town of Foix cooperate with universities in Andorra and Spain?

—The Foix university centre is home to between 400 and 450 students (from France and abroad) attending the Toulouse Jean Jaurès University. It offers three specialist and recognised university training centres focusing on geography, regional planning, the environment, sustainable tourism, information and communication technologies

applied to tourism and education, as well as vocational and continuing training.

The university centre has taken part in a cross-border tourism project with Catalonia. I’m in favour of this and hope that other projects and exchanges can be developed.

—Foix Castle is due to be added to the list of UNESCO sites. When might this happen, and how important is it for the town’s image?

—I’m proud to be able to take

part in the work to have our shared history with Andorra listed by UNESCO. Obviously, we’re hoping for recognition of our specific characteristics and the links we still have with Andorra, thanks in particular to our twinning arrangement and the many initiatives we run with young people.

We are honoured by the global visibility of such a listing, and we must do everything in our power to live up to such a distinction.

—Could you tell us a few words about yourself? What are your hobbies?

—I was elected Mayor on 3 October 2023, and I’m proud to be the town’s first female mayor. My sporting background includes paragliding, climbing, handball, and skiing. I also still swim. I love travelling, theatre, museums, playing the piano, and singing.

On a very personal side, my family has always had very strong links with Andorra. My grandfather, an architect in Foix, built the French lycée in Andorra, the Meritxell clinic, the Llop Gris hotel, and many other buildings. I often accompanied him on building sites, and Andorra was also my playground for skiing and hang-gliding!

I’ve always been very attached to this beautiful country! ●

Your leading real estate agency in Andorra.

Our experience guarantees results, realtors since 1988.



 (+376) 353 424 / (+376) 379 769

 (+376) 747 747

 laportella@andorra.ad

 Casa Nova Olivet 10 · Ordino

 www.laportella.ad

