

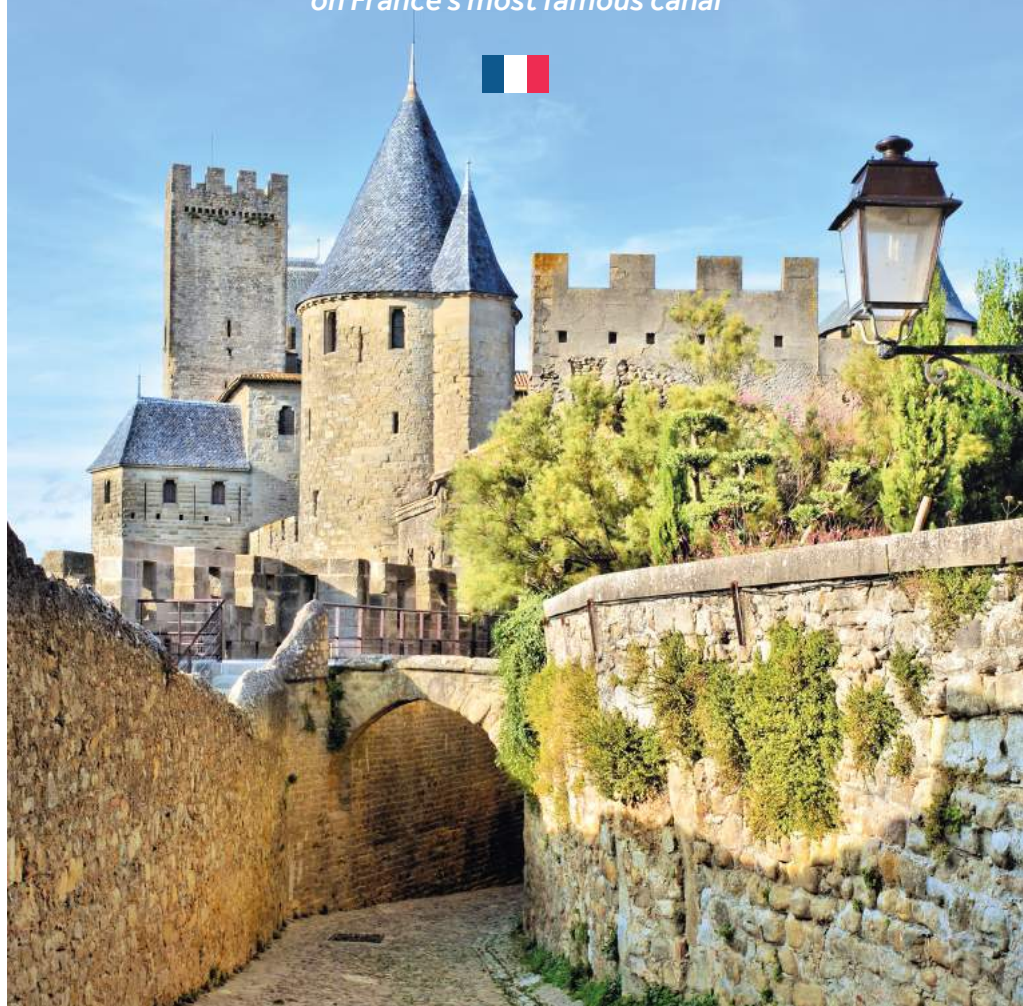
le boat

Who's on board?

THE CANAL DU MIDI

and the Embranchement de la Nouvelle

*A complete guide to boating holidays
on France's most famous canal*



Over 100 pages of inspiration

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ABOUT THIS GUIDE

This Guide is intended to help you to visualise what a boating holiday in this region might look like and help you decide whether it's the right destination for you. If you are already on board, it can be used day-by-day to ensure you make the most of everything there is to see and do. From **page 22**, each place or attraction is presented in the order it is located on the canal, from west to east (or north to south on the Embranchement de la Nouvelle), so if you're travelling in the opposite direction... just read the Guide backwards! This Guide is not intended to replace the Editions du Breil waterways guide, which is provided on board and should always be consulted when navigating along the canal.



Canal de la Robine p76

Our most popular boating region

The Canal du Midi and the adjoining Embranchement de la Nouvelle (Canal de Jonction and Canal de la Robine) form our biggest and most popular boating region, enjoyed by thousands of holiday makers every year. Bathed in warm sunshine from April to October, the canals wind their way past a diverse spectrum of remote and picturesque countryside, quaint and sleepy villages and bustling cities full of history and charm.

Whether you're an experienced captain or have never been boating before, you'll find this region easy to navigate, with friendly and helpful lock keepers on hand (on the Midi) and many fellow boaters around with whom to exchange advice, ask for help or to simply pass the time of day.

Get ready to be inspired!



IT'S ALL MAPPED OUT...

At the back of this Guide, our fold-out map will put everything in to perspective for you. We hope you enjoy our visual representation of all there is to do along the famous Canal du Midi.

Never been boating before?

No matter which of our destinations you travel to, a boating holiday is simple...

Choose the boat that best suits your requirements; pick it up from one of our bases and return it, by a certain date and time, to the same base. If you'd prefer, you can do a one-way cruise and return it to a different base further along the canal, so long as this is what you book. What you do in between is entirely up to you - you're free to stop when you want, for as long as you want; explore new places, see amazing sights and create lasting memories.

Our boats have all the necessary features to ensure you are completely self-sufficient throughout your holiday. You can travel from one exciting place to the next without the need to unpack and repack each time. The kitchens on our boats come fully-equipped if you would like to self-cater, the beds come with linen, and the bathrooms have showers, hot water and toilets. (See pages 90-91 for more information about our fleet.)

Now all you need is the waterway, which allows you to see the sights from a completely unique perspective. It slows you down and allows you to appreciate your surroundings and drink in the scenery. It provides you with an ever-changing view, delivers nature and wildlife to your door and entices you to amazing towns and villages. More importantly, it means that you can create your own holiday - be that a restful break or an active adventure.

Now... **who's on board?**

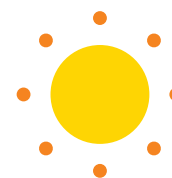


NO EXPERIENCE REQUIRED

Our boats are easy to handle with no licenses required. Before setting off on your holiday, you will be taught how to safely drive the boat, moor and how to travel through locks, ensuring you are happy and confident controlling your cruiser.



Cesse Aqueduct, just north of Le Somail

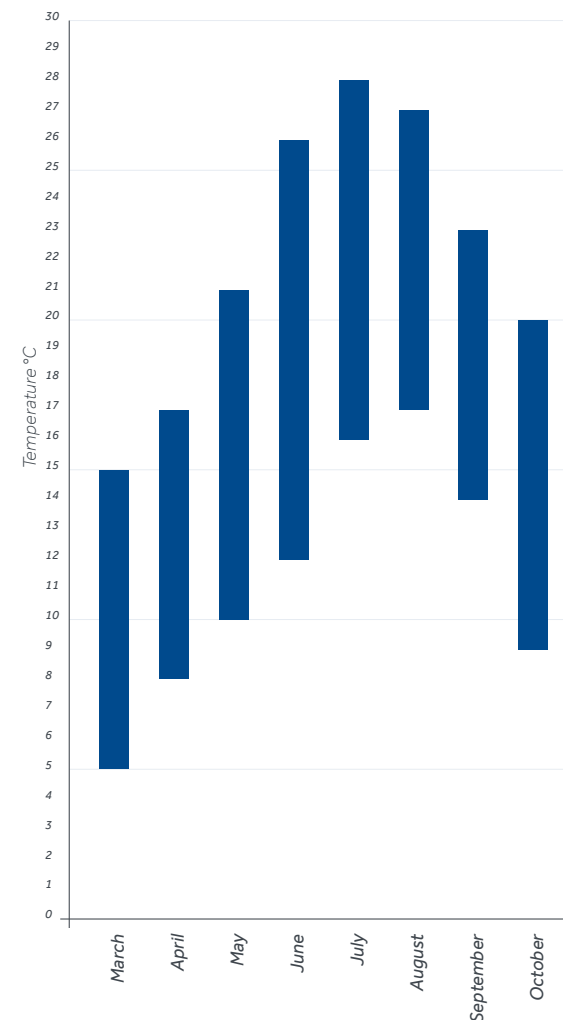


When to go

The hot and sunny months of **July** and **August** are peak season for this region and there are plenty of fellow boaters about to chat to and you'll find a greater variety of attractions, exhibitions and restaurants to choose from - some open especially for the peak season. There is an abundance of events and festivals held during these months as well. However, the canals can get busy, you may have to wait your turn at locks, and public moorings in some villages can be slightly more difficult to find.

June or **September** is slightly cooler, a bit quieter and most places are generally open.

While there is an increased chance of disagreeable weather in **April**, **May** and **October**, more often than not it is pleasantly warm and sunny. This region rarely has to suffer dreary overcast skies or persistent drizzle. Even when the temperatures do drop, the skies are still often blue and sunny. When it rains, it's usually a long heavy downpour, followed by more sunshine. These cooler months are the perfect time to escape the masses, although you can expect to find fewer establishments open for business.



Moored near Colombiers

Geography

France has quite a complicated structure and the way it is divided up can be a little confusing. Until recently, the country was divided into 27 administrative regions, but in March 2016, several regions were merged, reducing this number to 18. The Canal du Midi and the Embranchement de la Nouvelle run through the merged regions of Languedoc-Roussillon and Midi-Pyrénées, now collectively named 'Occitanie' by the new regional council. Throughout this guide, we may still refer to the region as 'Languedoc' when referring to wine, culture and traditions.

Regions are the top tier of a very complex multi-tiered system of local administration. Each region is divided into departments (which we've marked on this map); they into local areas called 'communautés de communes' and finally into communes.



What to book

With five bases to choose from, and the option of booking a return-to-base or a one-way cruise, the most difficult part of a Midi boating holiday is deciding what to book. Allow us to help...

1

THE FAR WEST

13hrs 35mins / 26 locks

A perfect part of the canal to escape the crowds – a true getaway. What's lacking in the way of attractions and things to do is made up with peace, tranquillity and glorious countryside. Stock up with provisions, and enjoy lazy days afloat and unhurried and relaxing meals on your sundeck. Bustling and vibrant Toulouse provides a striking contrast at the turnaround point. (See pages 22-29.)



The Citadel of Carcassonne p36

CASTELNAUDARY BASE

TRÈBES BASE

CARCASSONNE

HOMPS BASE
ARGENS-MINERVOIS

FONSERANNES LOCKS

BÉZIERS
PORT CASSAFIÈRES BASE

2

A PEACEFUL SAUNTER

10hrs 10mins / 24 locks

A popular stretch for those looking to revel in the simple delights of boating. Enjoy remote, peaceful countryside and a handful of sleepy villages from which to buy your morning baguette. The famous fortified city of Carcassonne, which attracts visitors from all over the world, awaits you at the end. (See pages 30-39.)



The Canal du Midi, just south of Toulouse

3

ACTIVE IN THE MIDDLE

11hrs 25mins / 27 locks

A busy section in peak season, but worth it for a combination of the stunning countryside and a frequent smattering of villages and attractions. Don't forget to see Carcassonne first if you start in Trèbes and decide to head east. A variety of active pursuits, just south of Carcassonne and northwest of Homps, make this stretch ideal if you're travelling with restless teenagers.

(See pages 40-47.)

4

LOCKLESS AND LOADS TO DO

7hrs 15mins / 0 locks

It gets busy in peak, but there are plenty of opportunities to stop in one of the many canal-side villages, see the sights, taste superb cuisine and sample local wines. There are no locks on this 54km stretch of the canal, so you can cover greater distances in less time. It is easy to travel along this entire section (and back again) within a week, departing from Homps, Port Cassafières or Narbonne. (See pages 48-61.)

5

THE ENERGETIC EAST

7hrs 30mins / 14 locks

The lively city of Béziers and the famous flight of seven locks at Fonsérannes are the big attractions on this part of the canal. There's also a variety of kids attractions close to our base at Port Cassafières, and of course nearby Portiragnes beach. (See pages 62-75.)

6

OVERLOOKED AND UNDER-RATED

7hrs 35mins / 13 locks

The tree-lined, Embranchement de la Nouvelle is just as pretty as the Midi. The thriving city of Narbonne is a perfect start or end to your holiday, especially if you would like to do a one-way route, but would rather not spend time tackling the Fonsérannes Locks. If you find time to venture southwards, you'll be rewarded with magnificent views across the vast lakes that surround the canal. There's also an amazing nature reserve and, at the end, the popular seaside resort of Port-la-Nouvelle. (See pages 76-89.)



Eaurizon, Puichéric p45

PORT-LA-NOUVELLE

Please note: for operational reasons, we are unable to provide one-way cruises from Castelnaudary to Narbonne (and vice versa) or from Trèbes to Port Cassafières (and vice versa).

Planning your time

To help you plan your time, use the helpful chart, opposite, to calculate the approximate number of hours it'll take you to travel between the villages, towns and cities along the canals. Be sure to allow plenty of time to stop, relax and/or see the sights though. An average of three hours cruising per day is quite a relaxed itinerary. Anything more than five and you'll feel quite rushed.

See more...

ADD BIKE HIRE TO YOUR BOOKING

Exploring by pedal power is much quicker than by boat. For example, if you're travelling east and don't have time to travel thorough the Fonserannes Locks, then you could moor at the top and cycle the short distance into Béziers.

BOOK A TAXI

From Trèbes, a roundtrip to and from Carcassonne will take one hour by road and six hours by boat. So, why not visit it at the beginning of your holiday, before setting off, or at the end, when you return your boat? Then you'll have more time to explore the canal to the east of Trèbes.



Le Boat bike hire



Vin en Vacances Wine Tours p38

ARRANGE A TOUR

See pages 30-39 and 80-81 for tour companies who will gladly tailor touring itineraries to suit your requirements. This will allow you to explore further away from the canal and get you to canal-side towns and cities that you don't have time to reach by boat.

OVERNIGHT IN A CITY HOTEL

If you would like to visit Toulouse, but don't want to spend all week getting there and back, how about spending a night or two in a city hotel before your flight home? Or, some airlines fly to Carcassonne and Béziers – so you could do the same in these cities instead.

Times are an approximation only and are calculated on the basis of an average speed of 7.5km/h and an average time of 12 minutes to pass through a lock. Your speed, the flow of the river and the time it takes to go through locks will all affect your progress.

*Please note that there are set times to ascend and descend the Fonserannes Locks, so you'll also need to factor in waiting time too.

Canal du Midi	Approx time		No. of locks	
	Start	End	Start	End
End of the Canal du Midi				
Toulouse	1 hr 20 min	1 hr 20 min	3	3
Castanet-Tolosan	1 hr 35 min	12 hr 35 min	1	23
Montgiscard	1 hr 40 min		2	
Gardouch	3 hr 0 min		6	
Villefranche-de-Lauragais	0 hr 45 min		1	
Port Lauragais	1 hr 45 min		4	
The Naurouze Pass	0 hr 30 min		1	
	3 hr 20 min		8	
Castelnaudary	4 hr 10 min		15	
Pexiora	0 hr 20 min	0		
Villepinte	1 hr 15 min	3		
Bram	1 hr 35 min	1		
Villesèquelande	2 hr 50 min	5		
Carcassonne	3 hr 0 min	7		
Trèbes	1 hr 5 min	3	14	
Millepetit	0 hr 50 min	0		
Marseillette	2 hr 40 min	8		
Puichéric	1 hr 0 min	2		
La Redorte	1 hr 0 min	1		
Homps	1 hr 50 min	5		6
Argens-Minervoises	0 hr 10 min	1		
Roubia	0 hr 20 min	0		
Paraza	0 hr 25 min	0		
Ventenac-en-Minervoises	0 hr 40 min	0		
Le Somail	0 hr 20 min	0		
Intersection with Embranchement de la Nouvelle	0 hr 30 min	0	12	
Argeliers	2 hr 5 min	0		
Capestang	0 hr 50 min	0		
Poilhes	0 hr 25 min	0		
Malpas Tunnel	0 hr 15 min	0		
Colombiers	0 hr 45 min	0		
Fonserannes Locks	1 hr 25 min*	7		
Asend or descend Fonserannes Locks	0 hr 40 min	2		
Fonserannes Locks	1 hr 10 min	2		
Béziers	0 hr 15 min	0		
Villeneuve-lès-Béziers	0 hr 35 min	1		
Cers	0 hr 30 min	0		
Portiragnes	0 hr 30 min	0		
Port Cassafières	0 hr 30 min	1 hr 10 min		0
Vias	0 hr 40 min	0		
Agde	1 hr 45 min	1 hr 45 min	2	
End of the Canal du Midi				

Embranchement de la Nouvelle		Approx time		No. of locks	
Intersection with Canal du Midi					
Sallèles d'Aude	1 hr 20 min	4 hr	5	10	
	1 hr 35 min		5		
Narbonne	1 hr 40 min	3 hr 35 min	2	3	
Mandrac Lock (5km from Gruissan)	3 hr 0 min		0		
Sainte-Lucie Island	3 hr 20 min		1		
Port-la-Nouvelle					



Our fold-out illustrated map at the back of this guide has handy 'hour markers' to help you plan your timings.

Wine tasting and local producers



The Languedoc region offers a greater variety of wines than anywhere else in Europe. Wine production has an informal reputation here which has given rise to numerous winemakers, many experimenting with different combinations of grape varieties and achieving incredible results.

The wide variety of soils and vines allow a broad selection of red, white, rosé and sweet wines to be produced. From the fruity and delicious reds of Corbières to the sparkling Crémant de Limoux; to the superb Muscats of Minvois and the excellent rosés produced just about everywhere - you won't be disappointed!



LOOK FOR THE 'WINE BOTTLES' ICON

There are many wine merchants along the canal, many of whom are only too happy to offer free tastings before you buy. Some will also take you on a tour of their cellars (caves) and show you how they make their wines. Throughout this Guide we've featured our pick of the best places worth stopping at. Just look for our 'wine bottles' icon.



Wine tasting in Port de Capestang p57



Cuisine and local markets

Dining out is the 'holiday highlight' of many in France. However, restaurants can be a little hard to come by on certain stretches of the canal, especially in April, May and October when some shut early or are closed altogether. Some restaurants will close between lunch and dinner and they will usually close one day a week. But don't let this dishearten you, there are still plenty of superb gems to be found and we can help you find them. Delicious, local specialities include:

CASSOULET

Castelnaudary is said to be the world capital of cassoulet, a hearty dish of white beans with pork, Toulouse sausages, duck confit, bacon, onions and carrots, all baked together for a long time until thick and tasty.

CONFIT DE CANARD

This is a typical dish of Southwest of France. Tasty pieces of duck that have been preserved in the bird's natural fat for extra taste.

PÉZENAS PIES

Shaped like a cotton reel, these little 18th century pies contain a sweet and salty lamb stuffing, lightly flavoured with lemon.

BOURRIDE

A bourride, similar to a bouillabaisse, is white fish (anglerfish, monkfish, hake) cooked in a sauce of dry white wine, vegetables, orange peel, fresh cream and combined with aioli after cooking. Scrummy!

SNAILS 'À LA LANGUEDOCIENNE'

'À la languedocienne' means that the snails are simmered in a sauce of anchovies, ham, Swiss chard, nuts, garlic and parsley.

NARBONNE HONEY

Narbonne honey is a scrubland honey which is traditionally harvested on St. John's day (24th June). It owes its softness to rosemary which also give it its bright colour.

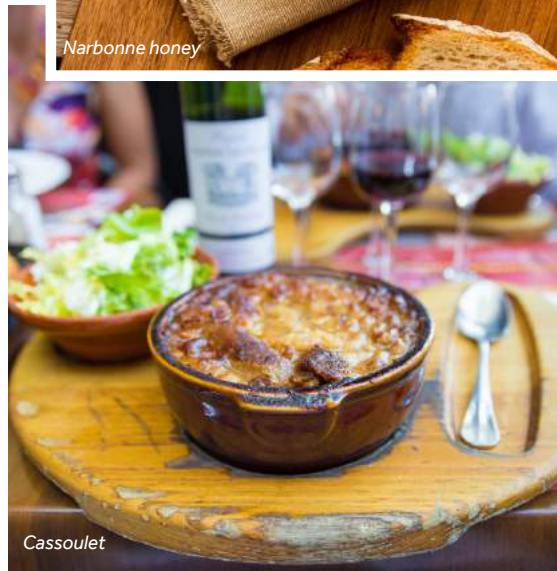


LOOK FOR THE 'SALT AND PEPPER' ICON

We've featured our favourite dining establishments throughout this Guide and highlighted them with our 'salt and pepper' icon. Enjoy!



Narbonne honey



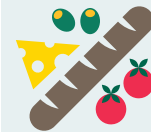
Cassoulet

LOCAL MARKETS

A French institution, most villages and towns have a market at least once a week. They usually start early and end abruptly at lunch time; the liveliest bustle is usually between 10am - 11am. All our boats have well-equipped kitchens and you can add a gas BBQ to your booking, so why not buy fresh, local produce when you can and eat on board?



Market day in Portiragnes



LOOK FOR THE 'FOOD' ICON

For those with a particular love of food and local cuisine, we've highlighted, throughout this Guide, some of the best markets and 'foodie' experiences with our 'food' icon – so keep your eyes peeled!



BLACK OLIVE TAPENADE

Although tapenade was invented by a Chef in Marseille, it has a taste of the South of France and make a goof aperitif spread on a slice of toast with a glass of red Minervois wine. Here is a simple and quick recipe...

Serves 6:

- 250 grams of pitted black olives
- 6 oil anchovies fillets
- 3 tsp of capers
- 1 clove of garlic
- 2-4 tbsp olive oil
- salt and pepper

Peel the garlic clove. Drain the anchovies and capers. Chop with a knife olives, garlic, anchovies and capers. Mash everything. Add enough olive oil until you have a supple dough. Season with salt and pepper.



Getting active and fun for the family

Bathed in warm Mediterranean sunshine throughout the boating season, the Languedoc region and its canals are a great place to chill and relax. If you like to stay active though, there are plenty of options, including kayaking and paddle-boarding on the nearby Aude River; Segway tours, horse riding, bike trails and golf.

For restless teenagers, and adults who are young at heart, there are a number of forest parks, tree-top trails and activity lakes which are close to the canal. To the east, the canal runs near the coast where the seaside attracts many visitors to its sandy beaches, along with a host of water and amusement parks.



LOOK FOR THE 'ACTIVE' ICON

If you have difficult-to-entertain teenagers in tow or fancy doing something a little more physical, look out for our 'active' symbol throughout the Guide.



Horse riding at Port-la-Nouvelle p89



Eaurizon, Puichéric p45



Segway Tours in Gruissan p86



LE BOAT BIKE HIRE

A bike is great for exploring and visiting places a little further afield, allowing you to really make the most of your time in this wonderful region. To ensure availability, we recommend you add bike hire to your Le Boat booking in advance. Or you can hire them by the day, as and when you reach one of our bases.



Europark, Vias p73



Le Boat's Homps base p46

Historic buildings

Welcome to historic Cathar country where ancient castles stand proud on hilltops. The largest and most famous is in Carcassonne, where the ramparts of the citadel can be seen for miles. Further south, away from the canal, the ruins of many more (e.g Peyrepertuse, Puilaurens, Quèribus, Puivert and Lastours) provide fascinating glimpses into a medieval age, as well as affording stunning views over the Pyrénées. (See pages 38-39 for tour options.)

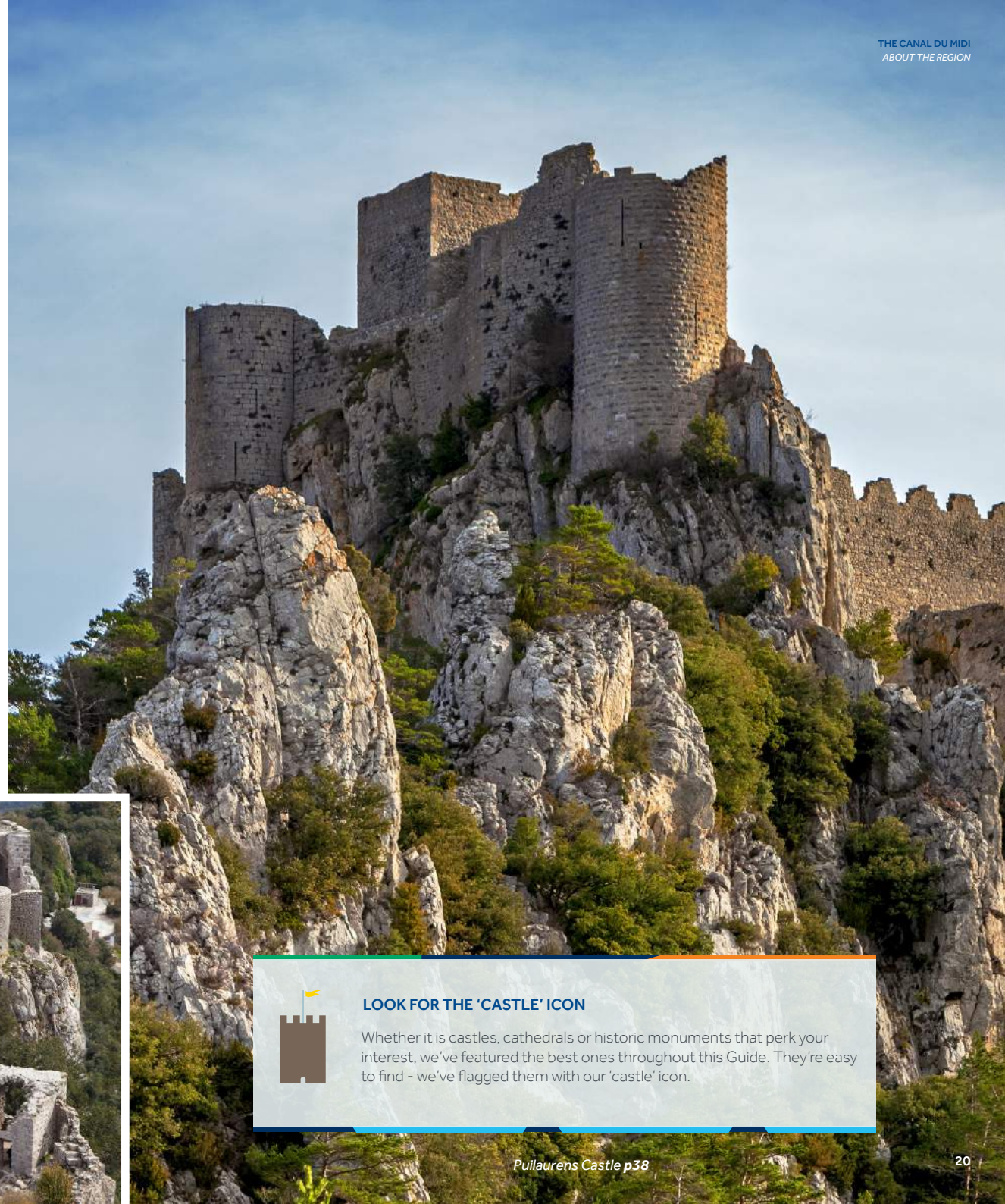
Many other impressive French châteaux can be found in this region, each offering its own unique charm: Château de Paraza with its wine cellar, Château Les Carrasses, near Capestang, with its very fine restaurant and several others which are now grand hotels.

This region also has its fair share of religious buildings. Most villages and towns, no matter how small, are centred around a quaint stone church and the grand basilicas in Toulouse, Carcassonne, Béziers and Narbonne are truly impressive and certainly worth visiting if you end up in town.

WHO WERE THE CATHARS?



In the 12th century a new religion took root in Europe, and flourished in the Languedoc region. The Cathars were Gnostic Christians and claimed their beliefs and practices predated the innovations of the Catholic Church. As such, the Catholic Church regarded them as heretics. From 1208, the Catholics launched a crusade against the Cathars and their sympathisers, who took refuge in castles and fortified towns. Many sieges and a few open battles took place and, after several generations of war, the Cathars were defeated and exterminated - burned alive by the hundreds.



Peyrepertuse Castle p38



LOOK FOR THE 'CASTLE' ICON

Whether it is castles, cathedrals or historic monuments that perk your interest, we've featured the best ones throughout this Guide. They're easy to find - we've flagged them with our 'castle' icon.



The Canal du Midi

Declared a UNESCO World Heritage site in 1996, the Canal du Midi is an exceptional example of modern engineering. Spanning 241km from the Mediterranean to Toulouse, it comprises 328 structures from aqueducts and bridges to tunnels and locks. The UNESCO committee said: "it combines technological innovation with aesthetic, architectural and landscape design that has few parallels."

This combination of engineering prowess, stunning scenery and its iconic avenues of plane trees attract thousands of visitors to the canal every year. Its green waters twist and turn through the countryside, following the contours of the land and passing by acres of vineyards, fields of sunflowers and numerous towns, villages and cities full of character and history. First-time visitors fall in love with its charm and returning holiday-makers always discover new delights each time they come.

Turn the page to begin your adventure from west to east.



The Citadel of Carcassonne



La Guinguette p48

A BIT OF HISTORY

In 1667, Pierre-Paul Riquet (1609-1680) designed and began building the then-known Canal Royal de Languedoc with the aim of transporting goods between the Mediterranean Sea and the Atlantic Ocean. It took 12,000 people, many of them women, 14 years to complete using only shovels and pickaxes and opened in 1681. However, it wasn't until two centuries later, when the canal was linked to the Canal du Garonne, that Riquet's dream of reaching the Atlantic was fulfilled.

The Canal Royal de Languedoc was renamed the Canal du Midi during the French Revolution and, at its peak in 1856, it carried over 100,000 tonnes of cargo and a million passengers a year. However, a year later, the Bordeaux to Sète railway opened and commerce along the canal all but dried up.

These days, the canal is one of the oldest in Europe still in operation and is mainly used for tourism and recreation, attracting 55,000 visitors every year. It employs about 1,900 people (lock keepers, management and maintenance), and annually contributes €122M to the economy.



Toulouse

Toulouse is the fourth largest city in France (after Paris, Marseille and Lyon) and is renowned as a centre of aviation and spaceflight, the home of French rugby and for being a University town. Yet the 'Pink City', so named because of the dusky-pink bricks used in many of its buildings, remains intimate and welcoming with a laid-back vibe. Visitors can enjoy submersing themselves in true French café culture, with a host of museums and cultural attractions to keep them occupied. Add bike hire to your Le Boat booking; there are cycle paths all over the city making two wheels an excellent way to get around.



Basilica of St. Sernin

BASILICA OF ST. SERVIN

A masterpiece of Romanesque art, this exquisite 11th-13th century church is a UNESCO World Heritage site and well worth a visit. Located 2.3km from the canal in Place St. Sernin. Open Jun to Sep: Mon to Sat (10am-5:30pm), Sun (11:30am-6pm) | Oct to May: Mon to Sat (10am-12pm & 2pm-5:30pm), Sun (2pm-5:30pm). Entry is free. Crypt: €2.50 ad / under 15s free.

THE BEMBERG FOUNDATION

Located in the exceptional setting of the Assézat Hotel, a masterpiece of Renaissance architecture, the Bemberg Foundation houses a collection of paintings, sculptures and objet d'art from the Renaissance to the 18th century, and French paintings of the late 19th century until 1930. Located 1.3km from Port St. Sauveur (where you should moor) in Place d'Assézat. +33 5 61 12 06 89. Open Tue to Sun (10am-12:30pm & 1:30pm-6pm). €8 ad / under 8s free.

MUSÉE DES AUGUSTINS (FINE ARTS MUSEUM)

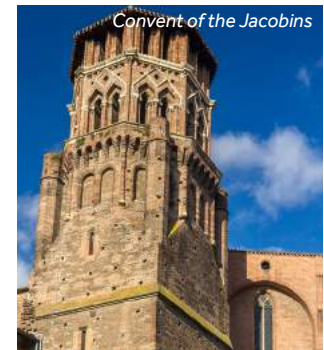
Formerly a monastery, this resplendent building houses an impressive collection of paintings, as well as sculptures in the 14th century cloisters. Located 850m from Port St. Sauveur (where you should moor) in Rue de Metz. +33 5 61 22 21 82. Open Wed to Mon (10am-6pm). €4 ad / free for ch.



Georges Labit Museum

THE GEORGES LABIT MUSEUM

Located next to the canal, this lovely building is surrounded by exotic gardens. It contains an incredible collection of oriental art and an important collection of Egyptian antiquities, gathered by Labit during his extensive travels. The star of the museum is the remarkably preserved remains of a mummy in its shroud. Located 600m from Port St. Sauveur in Rue du Japon. +33 5 31 22 99 80. Open Jun to Sep: Tue to Sun (10am-6pm) | Oct to May: Tue to Sun (10am-5pm). €4 ad / €2 ch.



Convent of the Jacobins

CONVENT OF THE JACOBINS

A beautiful example of Gothic architecture, this grand and austere complex harbours an oasis of tranquillity within its walls. You will happily spend two or three hours wandering around the church, chapel and cloisters. Located 1.7km from Port St. Sauveur (where you should moor) in Parvis des Jacobins. +33 5 61 22 23 82. Open Tue to Sun (10 am-6pm). Entry is free for the church. Cloisters: €4 ad / €2 ch.

Toulouse

JARDIN DES PLANTES (THE BOTANICAL GARDEN)

This is the oldest public park in Toulouse and home to nearly one hundred species of deciduous trees and conifers. It is as popular with the locals as it is with visitors, with a duck pond, peacocks, a playground, a merry-go-round and the possibility to ride a pony. *Located 850m from Port St. Sauveur (where you should moor) in Allée Jules Guesde. Open Apr-Sep: daily (7:30am-8pm) | Oct: daily (8am-7:30pm). Public access.*

LE CAPITOLE

The undisputed hub of Toulouse and home to numerous eateries and boutiques, as well as the 18th century Capitole building, a neoclassical masterpiece with a facade of brick and pink marble columns. You'll also find the tourist office and the famous Opera House of Toulouse here as well. *Located 1km from Port St. Sauveur (where you should moor). +33 5 61 22 34 12. Open Mon to Sat (8:30am-7pm), Sun (10am-7pm). Public access.*

CITY OF SPACE

This theme park of space adventure provides over 12 acres of space discovery – just as if you were there. Great for children and adults; you can have a go on the 'Moon Runner' simulator, discover the Ariane 5 and visit the Mir space station. *Located 3.4km from Port St. Sauveur (where you should moor) in Avenue Jean Gonord. From Port St. Sauveur, walk to Francois-Verdier Square (500m), then take the bus L16 (20min) to the stop 'Gymnase de l'Hers' (500m from the City of Space). +33 5 67 22 23 24. Open daily (check opening hours online). Up to €25 ad / €17.50 ch (5-15s) / free for ch (under 5s).*




Le Capitole



SHOPPING

The main shopping street in Toulouse is rue St. Rome or you'll find the Galeries Lafayette Shopping Centre at 77 rue Alsace Lorraine. Also, to the south of the Place du Capitole, the Old Quarter has many charming pedestrian streets lined with shops and cafés. *Standard shopping hours in Toulouse are Mon to Sat (9am-6pm), although many smaller shops close on Mondays, Wednesday afternoons and between 12pm-2pm for lunch.*

MARKETS

 **Victor Hugo Market**, in Place Victor Hugo, is the largest covered food market in southwest France. Taste local delicacies such as Toulouse sausage, cassoulet, foie gras, duck and local cheeses. *Open: Tue to Sun (7am-1:30pm).*

Other markets include:
Tue (am) - Place Jean Boriès | Wed (7am-7pm) - Place du Capitole |
Wed and Thu (all day) - Place Belfort | Thu (am) - Place du Marché aux
Cochons | Wed & Sun (am) - Avenue Albert Bedouce, Rangueil
| Sun (7am-2pm) - Place St. Aubin



EATING AND DRINKING

There are many cafés and eateries in Place du Capitole. Don't miss Le Florida Brasserie, where you can indulge with delicious ice creams by Philippe Faur, from the common flavours to more unusual varieties including foie gras, plum brandy, peanut, pesto and truffle! To the west of the city centre, on the banks of the Garonne River, the Place St. Pierre is popular with visitors and locals for its many bars and a lively atmosphere almost every night. Here's a few of our favourite Toulouse restaurants for lunch or dinner.

AUX PIEDS SOUS LA TABLE

Not far from the Basilica of St. Sernin, this chic and popular 'Gastropub' serves great meals and 'tapas' style dishes that are simply delectable. *Located 2.3km from the canal in Rue Arnaud Bernard. +33 5 67 11 01 72. Open Tue to Sat (12pm-2pm), Wed to Sat (7:30pm-10:30pm). Also open mid-Jul to mid-Aug: Tue (7:30pm-10:30pm). Chef's special, served for lunch on weekdays €15 / 3-course set menu available €29. Free Wi-Fi.*

LE SI BEMOL

A short walk from the moorings at St. Sauveur, this smart, modern restaurant serves excellent south-west French cuisine. The duck and foie gras are sublime. *A free Kir (white wine with violet liqueur) on presentation of this Guide. Located 400m from the canal in Place Dupuy. +33 5 61 62 42 22. Open Mon (12pm-2:15pm), Tue to Sat (12pm-2:15pm & 7pm-11pm). Chef's special, served for lunch on weekdays €11-€16 / 3-course set menu available €26-€32.*

LA POPOTE

A cosy, rustic and intimate setting, La Popote gives a warm reception, excellent service and divine French food which is all sourced locally and cooked to perfection. *Located 1km from the canal in Rue de la Pleau. +33 5 61 25 03 51. Open Mon to Tue & Thu to Fri (12pm-1:30pm & 7:30pm-9:30pm), Wed (7:30pm-9:30pm). Chef's special, served for lunch on weekdays €18 / 3-course set menu available €31. Free Wi-Fi.*



City of Space

MOORING

Moor in Port St. Sauveur for €9-€14 a night (depending on boat size). From here it's about a 1.5km walk to the heart of the city. If the port is full, you can moor on the quay opposite.



Castanet-Tolosan

Part of the sprawling suburbs of Toulouse and a short walk or cycle from the Canal. Castanet-Tolosan has a busy shopping centre where you will find everything you should need, including local produce and crafts.

Market : Tuesday (am)

Montgiscard

This quiet 13th century town has a Gothic church with a typical Toulouse-style bell tower – worth a 500m stroll into town for a photograph if the weather is nice. You'll find moorings at Montgiscard Lock, with a pharmacy and a good restaurant just over the road, the Brasserie de l'Ecluse. *Open Thur & Fri (8am-9:30pm) | Sat & Sun (9:30am-9:30pm) | Mon to Wed (8am-3pm).* Follow the road uphill, signposted 'Center Ville' to find the town centre and the church.

Market: Sunday (7am-1pm)

Montgiscard Church



Avignonet-Lauragais



Avignonet-Lauragais

2km north of Port Lauragais, this sweet, little town is perched on a hill with an attractive church, tower and restored watermill to discover. There is little in the way of shops and eateries, but it's a nice place to cycle to, if you want to expel some energy. *Moor at Port Lauragais.*

Port Lauragais

This purpose-built tourist marina has good moorings for the night with a restaurant (La Dinée, open daily for breakfast, lunch and dinner and has free Wi-Fi), a gourmet shop selling regional produce and a fascinating Canal du Midi exhibition behind the restaurant in Haute-Garonne House. It tells you everything you need to know about this majestic waterway: its history, its construction and its continued operation. +33 5 61 81 69 46. *Open May to Sep: daily.* Entry is free and complimentary factsheets are available. Free Wi-Fi.



THE GREEN TRAIL - TOULOUSE TO PORT LAURAGAIS

A sealed cycle track has been laid beside the towpath, stretching 44km between Toulouse and Port Lauragais. It is an easy and popular route for cyclists and roller-bladers and is a great time-saver if you wish to extend your trip further west – pedal power is quicker than boat.



Gardouch

A pleasant town with a café and a few restaurants. Try L'Envie des Mets. *Open Tue to Sun (12pm-2:30pm) | Thu to Sat (7:30pm-10:30pm).* Moor next to Gardouch Lock and walk 0.5km into town.

Villefranche-de-Lauragais

This is a bustling little village which boasts a fine example of a wall bell-tower, flanked on each side by two octagonal towers. There are a variety of shops, cafés and restaurants here if you fancy a 2km walk or cycle from Renneville Lock where you can moor. We can recommend La Camaretoise for excellent sweet and savoury crêpes. *Open Tue to Sat (12pm-2pm & 7pm-11pm).* Walk through the centre of town and then turn left when you reach Villefranche Ambulances.

Market: Friday (am) - Place Gambetta



The Naurouze Pass

The Naurouze Pass (Seuil de Naurouze) is the highest point of the Canal du Midi at 190m above sea level. Water flows to this point from the Black Mountain to feed the canal where, on one side, it goes to the Atlantic and, on the other side, it flows to the Mediterranean.

The architect of the Canal du Midi, Pierre-Paul Riquet, had big plans for Naurouze, hoping to build a city around it, modelled after the Place Royale in Paris. However, his dream wasn't realised, and so today's visitors get to enjoy the beautiful countryside instead. A large, dry octagonal basin remains, surrounded by trees and some delightful walking and biking paths. Nearby is an obelisk that honours Riquet, built in the early 1800s.



The Naurouze watershed



The dry Naurouze basin



LE RELAIS DE RIQUET

This is a friendly place, right next to the canal and popular with locals. Enjoy homemade cassoulet, sautéed lamb with thyme gravy and confit-marbled foie gras pâté. The owner has also won a "France Young Sommelier" award and offers a fine selection of wines. A free Kir (white wine with blackcurrant liqueur) on presentation of this Guide. Located in the little town of Le Ségal, 1.5km downstream from the pass, right next to the canal, close to the bridge on Esplanade du Canal. +33 4 68 60 16 87. Open Tue & Sun (9am-4pm) | Wed to Sat (9am-4pm & 6pm-10:30pm). Chef's special, served for lunch on weekdays €13.

NOT POTTERY

For generations, the Not family has had a passion for pottery and has manufactured earthenware in its canal-side workshop using traditional methods, from the extraction of soil to the firing in a wood-burning kiln. They are famous for making 'cassole', the earthenware dishes that cassoulet, a regional speciality, is traditionally cooked and served in. Visit the workshop for a chance to see a demonstration and browse the adjoining shop. Located next to Méditerranée Lock. +33 4 68 23 17 01. Tour of the workshop: Mon to Fri (8am-12pm & 2pm-6pm). Sat & Sun: by appointment. Entry is free.



Not Pottery

Castelnaudary

As well as being one of the home ports for the Le Boat Midi fleet, the historic market town of Castelnaudary is home of the Cassoulet, a regional dish of white beans and chunky pieces of pork and duck. There are several places in town claiming to serve the best. To stock up on provisions there is a Spar supermarket 1.1km away in the town centre, where there are also ATMs, etc. If you spend over €100 they will usually be able to deliver your goods to your boat. Alternatively, there's a Netto supermarket 600m from the base, although it's along a busy road. The base team can give you directions to either.

Market: Mon (8am-1pm) - Place de Verdun, Cours de la République, Place de la République and Place de la Liberté



Maison Escudier



MAISON ESCUDIER

Although there are supermarkets, we'd also recommend this small traditional delicatessen which has been in business since 1920. Behind the antique wooden shop window, you'll find: fresh cassoulet, confit, foie gras, pâtés, deli meats and cooked dishes to take away. Located 300m from the canal in Rue de Dunkerque. +33 4 68 23 12 79. Open Mon to Fri (8am-12:30pm & 2pm-7:30pm), Sat (8am-12:30pm & 3pm-7:30pm), Sun (8:30am-1pm).



Grand Bassin, Castelnaudary

LAURAGAIS MUSEUM

A former civil and criminal court set up by Catherine de Médicis, Queen of France and Countess of Lauragais. The prison, attached to the court, was built in the 17th century and has been converted into a museum which hosts a different exhibition every summer. Located 550m from the Le Boat moorings, in Rampe du Présidial. +33 4 68 23 00 42. Open 4th Jul to 30th Sep: Tue to Sun (2:30pm-6:30pm), €2 ad / under 5s free.



ST. MICHEL COLLEGIATE CHURCH

The steeple can be seen from Castelnaudary's Grand Bassin where the Le Boat moorings are located. This church is lovely to wander around and it is surprisingly grand inside with its impressive cloister, baroque alter and large classical organs. Located 800m from the Le Boat moorings, in Rue St. Michel. Public access. Guided visits can be arranged by the tourist office.



Cugarel Windmill



CUGAREL WINDMILL

Built in the 17th century and restored in 1962, this cute little stone windmill has its working mechanism intact. It's worth taking a walk through town to visit, if not for the amazing view across the Black Mountain and surrounding countryside from the site on which it stands. Located 1.7km from the Le Boat moorings, in Place du Cugarel. Open Jul & Aug. Guided visits can be arranged by the Tourist Office. Why not hire a bike from the base for a day and explore?



LE TIROU

If you catch them when they are open, the cassoulet here is excellent. The chef makes it using his Grandmother's old recipe! This country inn has a shaded terrace along the Canal du Midi and a small farm with donkeys, llamas and chickens! Located 1.2km from the Le Boat base in Avenue Monseigneur Delangle. +33 4 68 94 15 95. Open daily (12pm-1:30pm), Sat (7:30pm-8:30pm) | in Jul & Aug also open Thu & Fri (7:30pm-8:30pm). Chef's special, served for lunch on weekdays €25 / 3-course set menu available €33-€37. Booking recommended. If Le Tirou is closed, the Maison du Cassoulet, in the centre of Castelnaudary, is very popular and open every day for lunch and dinner.

LE BOAT BASE

le boat Who's on board?

There's a Le Boat base here in **Castelnaudary**. Even if you don't start or end your holiday here, you're welcome to stop for overnight moorings, fill up with water, hook up to the power supply (depending on your boat type) or just to say hello. Please let the base team know if there's anything they can help with.

Open: Mon-Sat (8:30am-12:30pm & 2pm-6pm)

Pexiora

If you find yourself short on provisions, this quiet little village has a bakery and a small grocery store, although don't expect a wealth of choice. However, the 2km walk or cycle through the countryside to get there is a delight.

Villepinte

You will find all you need in town to replenish your provisions, including a chemist and a service station which doubles as a supermarket. Upstream of Villepinte Lock, look out for the Mézèran Aqueduct and the Villepinte Spillway which diverts excess water into the Fresquel River below.

Bram

A pretty, but quiet village built on a circular plan with a 13th century church at the heart. A pleasant walk or cycle along a pretty tree-lined avenue will take you directly to the village where you'll find several restaurants (including a pizzeria opposite the museum), a grocery store, butcher, patisseries and several other shops. Back at your boat, why not chill with a drink after your walk/cycle at L'île aux Oiseaux right on the canal?

Market: Wed (8am-1pm)



Bram

Villesèquelande

Moored by the charming stone bridge, over which the road gives access to the village a short 500m away. Seek out the pretty church and clock the Sully Elm, planted in the square outside; it is one of the last elms still alive in France; all the others were killed by Dutch elm disease. You will find a grocery shop here too.



LE RELAIS ROMAIN

The owner of this unassuming restaurant, Ghislaine, cooks as if she is having friends over for dinner. She and her partner can't do enough for you. Friendly, informal and delicious French food, particularly the duck, which is the speciality. A free Kir (white wine with blackcurrant liqueur) on presentation of this Guide. Located 1km from the canal in Voie Romaine. +33 4 68 78 09 96. Open daily (12pm-2:30pm & 7pm-10:30pm). Chef's special, served for lunch €14 / 3-course set menu available €20. Free Wi-Fi. Give them a ring and the owners will pick you up from the canal if they can.



Eburomagus Museum

EBUROMAGUS ARCHAEOLOGY MUSEUM

This museum of archaeology allows you to discover more than 4,000 artefacts discovered through excavations onsite and nearby over the last 30 years. Located 850m from the canal in Avenue du Razès. +33 4 68 78 91 19. Open Apr-Oct: Wed (10am-12pm & 1pm-6:30pm), Thu to Sun (1pm-6:30pm). €4 ad / €1 ch (6-15s).



L'ÎLE AUX OISEAUX

In an idyllic canal-side location, this casual and laid-back restaurant specialises in fish and seafood: oysters, grilled razor clams, grilled tuna, sardines and mussels accompanied with homemade fries. Located along the canal in Port de Bram. +33 4 68 24 53 66. Open Apr to Jun, Sep & Oct: Tue to Sat (12pm -2:30pm & 7pm-8:30pm), Sun (12pm-2pm) | Jul & Aug: Tue to Sun (12pm -2:30pm & 7pm-8:30pm). Bar: open (10am-10pm). À la carte. Booking recommended. Free Wi-Fi.



Lazy cruising

Carcassonne

The famous city of Carcassonne is composed of two different parts: the medieval fortified city (upper town, see pages 36-37), which impressively lords over the often overlooked St. Louis Bastide (lower town). While not the main attraction here, this sleepy half of the city is the perfect contrast to the hubbub of the citadel which towers above.



Carcassonne's 'lower town' from the Citadel

CARCASSONNE GOLF COURSE

Out of town, this internationally renowned golf course offers undulating ground and a lot of surprises and difficulties. A small river crosses the whole course and additional water hazards and bunkers make it especially challenging. *Visitors are welcome all year. Located 3.8km from the canal in Route de St Hilaire. +33 4 68 72 57 30. Open daily (8:30am-5:30pm). €40 for 9 holes | €61 for 18 holes.*



Carcassonne Golf Course

MOORING

There are plenty of public moorings in Carcassonne, including particularly nice moorings right at the central train station – where can enjoy a picnic while watching the boats come and go through the lock.



St. Michel Cathedral

ST. MICHEL CATHEDRAL AND ST. VINCENT CHURCH

Both dating from the 18th century in a Gothic style, St. Michel Cathedral and St. Vincent Church are 500m apart. St. Michel Cathedral is simple and unassuming, but has lovely stained glass to admire; its facade has a large rose window that is eight meters in diameter. As for St. Vincent Church, its 54m-high, octagonal tower houses a carillon of 47 bells. Climb the 232 steps that'll take you to the top and enjoy the stunning views over the entire city of Carcassonne and the surrounding territories. *Cathedral: located 900m from the canal in Rue Voltaire. Church: located 450m from the canal in Rue Albert Tomey. Public access.*

MARKETS

Built in 1768, Les Halles houses a covered market from Tuesday to Saturday where you can stock up on fresh local produce from cheeses, meats, fish and vegetables. Or there's a market on Tuesdays, Thursdays and Saturdays from 7am-1pm in Place Carnot.



Museum of Fine Arts

MUSEUM OF FINE ARTS

This gallery houses a rich panorama of western paintings of the 17th, 18th and 19th centuries. You will also discover a collection of pottery, tapestries and other objet d'art. *Located 750m from the canal in Rue de Verdun. +33 4 68 77 73 70. Open Jan to mid-Jun: Tue to Sat (10am-12pm & 2pm-6pm) | mid-Jun to mid-Sep: daily (10am-6pm) | mid-Sep to Dec: Tue to Sat (10am-12pm & 2pm-6pm). Entry is free.*



Crêperie Le Blé Noir

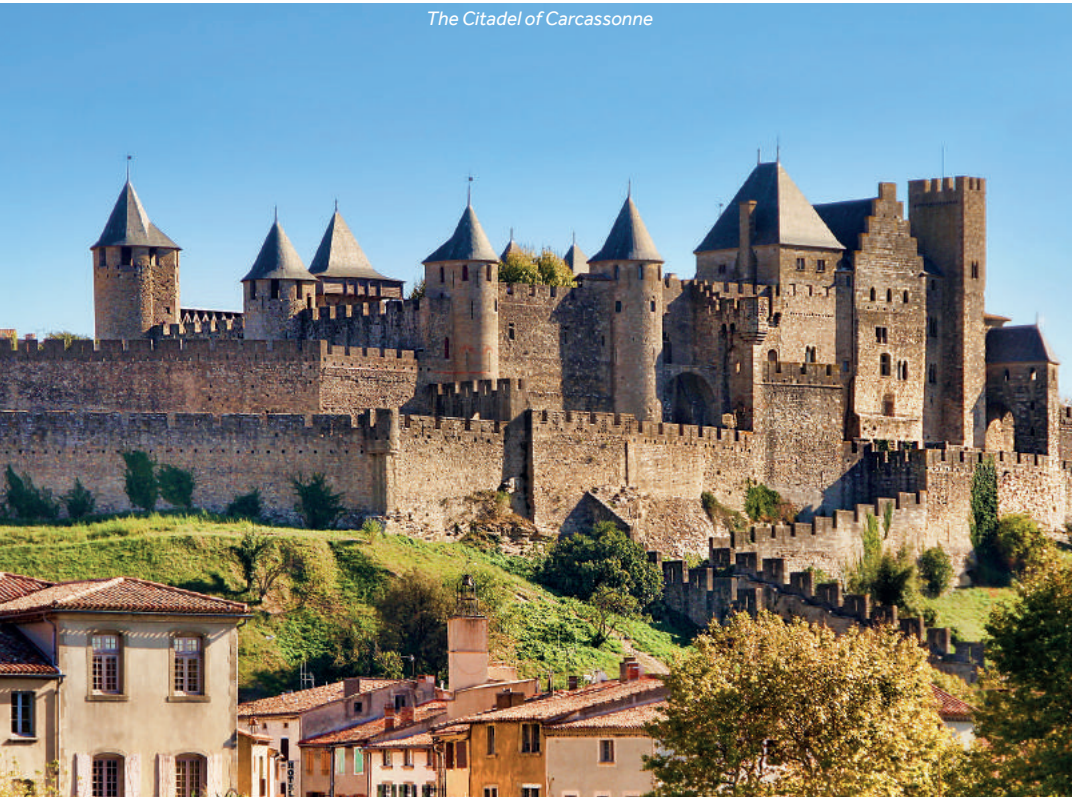
CRÊPERIE LE BLÉ NOIR

Highly-rated and very popular, this simple looking restaurant serves out-of-this-world Crêpes with savoury and sweet toppings to die for. *Located 800m from the canal in Rue de Verdun. +33 4 68 72 34 80. Open Mon to Tue & Thu to Sat (12pm-2pm & 7:30pm-9:30pm). Chef's special, served for lunch on weekdays €12.60. Buckwheat pancake €5-€12 / Set menu €18-€24*

The Citadel of Carcassonne

After the Eiffel Tower, this citadel, known as 'La Cité de Carcassonne', is the second most visited tourist attraction in France. And, as you catch glimpse of its fairy-tale turrets and imposing walls when you approach the city, you'll soon understand why. A UNESCO World Heritage site, this fortified, medieval, walled city is unique in Europe by its size and its state of conservation. It is renowned for its double wall of ramparts, running nearly 3km around the perimeter and 53 conical-roofed, fairy-tale towers.

The Citadel of Carcassonne



LA MARQUIÈRE

There are lots of restaurants in the citadel, most offering average food. This is a good find however, offering classic French dishes which are beautifully presented. Enjoy dining al fresco in the lovely inner terrace and be sure to leave room for dessert. *A free Kir (white wine with blackcurrant liqueur) on presentation of this Guide.* Located 2.2km from the canal in Rue St. Jean. +33 4 68 71 52 00. Open Fri to Tue (12pm-1:30pm & 7:30pm-9:30pm). Menu €32-€44. No children's menu. Booking recommended. Free Wi-Fi.



The 'list'

BETWEEN THE WALLS

As you enter the citadel at Porte Narbonnaise (the main gateway), turn left into the 'list' - the gap between the inner and outer walls. Walking along here, you'll appreciate the immense scale of the structure. You can even hop on a horse-drawn carriage, should you want, for a guided tour. *There is no charge for admission to the streets or to the 'lists' between the inner and outer wall. Carriages run Jul & Aug: every day (10am-6pm) | May, Jun, Sep & Oct: Sun to Fri (10am-6pm). €8 ad / €5 ch (2-10).*



Cathedral St. Nazaire



CATHEDRAL ST. NAZAIRE

After strolling between the walls, turn right when you get to Porte St. Nazaire and you'll enter the town at the southern end. Here you'll find the Cathedral St. Nazaire. It's a beautiful structure and worth a quick visit - if only to view its magnificent stained-glass windows. *Open daily (9am-6pm). Entry is free. Free organ concert: Jul & Aug: every Sun (5pm).*



Château Comtal



CHÂTEAU COMTAL & THE RAMPARTS

Wander through the cobble streets to Château Comtal, located at the heart of the citadel. The tickets you buy to get in will allow access to the ramparts for breath-taking views over the lower town, canal and Pyrénées. This is sure to be the highlight of your day. Then explore the château itself. The audio guide provides some interesting background and history and will also translate the short film from French. +33 4 68 11 70 70. *Open Apr to Sep: daily (10am-6:30pm) | Oct: daily (9:30am-5pm). €8.50 ad / free for ch (under 25s). Audio guides €4.50 ad / €6 couple.*



Inside the Citadel

THE COBBLED STREETS

Mosey around the winding lanes, home to souvenir and craft shops and countless restaurants and cafés; their tables spilling out into the leafy squares for idyllic al fresco dining. The shops aren't great and the food here is a little over priced - but the setting is just perfect.

GETTING TO THE CITADEL



You can reach the citadel on foot from the canal, walking through the lower town, over the old bridge and up the hill - it only takes about 30 minutes. Alternatively, a tourist shuttle (Navette Petit Train) operates in June & Sep to mid-Oct: Mon to Sat (11am, 12pm & 2pm-6pm every hour) and in Jul & Aug: Mon to Sat (10am-7pm every hour). No service on public holidays. Departs from Jardin André Chenier, the park opposite the port / marina. €3 return / €2 one-way.

Beyond Carcassonne

Carcassonne is a good location to use as a base to explore the region away from the canal, so why not stay an extra night?

VIN EN VACANCES TOURS

Departing from Carcassonne or other nearby villages

Spend the day touring the surrounding areas with a wine expert by your side. Vin en Vacances are a small team of qualified 'wine nuts' who have a great passion for the region, its wines, food, culture and history and promise to give you an enjoyable day to remember.

DOMAINE GAYDA AND LIMOUX WINE TOUR 7 hours

Tour the state-of-the-art Domaine Gayda winery and then enjoy a three-course lunch in their superb restaurant that overlooks the Pyrénées. Afterwards, visit the beautiful abbey of St. Hilaire where the first sparkling wine was created by the monks in 1531 and then on to Limoux to taste the sparkling wines they made so famous. €125pp. Private tours start from €495, depending on how many people.



Domaine Gayda



Quèribus Castle

CATHAR CASTLES AND ROUSSILLON WINES TOUR 7 hours

Head south to find spectacular views and the ruins of several famous Cathar castles that dot the Pyrénées, including Peyrepertuse, Quèribus and Puilaurens. Lunch is in Cucugnan and there is also wine tasting in the Agly Valley at one of the finest producers of Côtes du Roussillon wines. €135pp. Private tours start from €525, depending on how many people.

Le Boat customers are offered a 10% discount. Scheduled tours depart from Carcassonne at 9:30am on selected days and prices include pick-up, transport, visits, tastings and lunch with wine. Advance booking is essential. Book online at vinenvacances.com or call +33 6 42 33 34 09 or email wendy@vinenvacances.com to discuss specific requirements. Tours are in English, but can also be arranged privately in French, Dutch, Catalan and Spanish. If you have booked a private tour in advance, but while cruising you don't think you'll reach the agreed departure point in time, let Vin en Vacances know and they will change the pick-up point.

FLEXIBLE TOURING



Vin en Vacances have a vast range of tours to choose from, but will happily tailor something to suit your requirements. They will pick you up from other nearby villages and they can flex the pick-up time or adapt the itinerary to fit in somewhere you particularly want to see. Give them a call to discuss your requirements.

O'VINEYARDS

In a peaceful countryside setting, in the middle of 20 hectares of vines, this boutique vineyard offers a first class tour and wine tasting experience, and sensational food. Joe and Liz will treat you like royalty and tell you everything there is to know about winemaking. Your visit can be complemented with their famous deli-platter, or you can 'wine and dine' in their elegant dining room. A free bottle of red wine upon production of this Guide. Located 7.7km from Carcassonne near Villemoustaussou. To book, call +33 6 30 18 99 10, email ovineyards@gmail.com or visit their website: ovineyards.com. Experiences start at 4pm, every day except Mon (and tours-only on Sun - no food). Tours in English and French. A tour and wine tasting is €25pp. A tour, wine tasting and food experience is €55pp. A 'Wine and Dine Celebration' is €75pp. Joe and Liz can help arrange a taxi from Carcassonne (own expense).



Wine tasting with Joe



Cucugnan

Trèbes

Le Boat has a base in the thriving town of Trèbes and, whether you are starting your journey here or passing through, visitors are pleased to visit the very large supermarket, 1km from the moorings, for a chance to stock up on provisions (the base team can give you directions).



Trèbes Church

Before setting off too quickly, it is worth taking a short stroll to the 13th century church, which has beautiful oak beams and sculptured figures that look down on the visitors. If you go to the Tourist Office (opposite the base on the other side of the canal) they may be able to arrange a free guided tour.

Market: Sun (am) - around the arena

Trèbes is an ideal place to sample some excellent local produce:



Wine: Across the water from the base (next to the Tourist Office) 'Les Vignes de Bacchus' offers a selection of local wines. Drink is accompanied by tapas, or you can buy bottles to take away. Located opposite the Le Boat moorings in Avenue Pierre Curie. +33 6 73 71 47 66. Open Mar to Oct: daily (9am-12pm). Free Wi-Fi.



Olives and local produce: Domaine des Pères is also across the water from the base, but a bit further down the road. Olive growers for three generations, this shop sells olive oil and its derivatives products such as soap, as well as local wines, honey, pâtés and traditionally made beers. Say hello to the donkeys behind the building, but watch out for the electric fence!. Located opposite the Le Boat moorings in Avenue Pierre Curie. +33 4 68 24 51 78. Open Wed to Mon (3pm-8pm).



Jams, jellies and confits: Located just next to Trèbes lock, you will find 'La Confiturerie de l'Écluse' which stocks all sorts of preserves made from fruits and vegetables from the local farm. Located in Avenue Pierre Curie. +33 4 68 78 65 00. Open mid-Apr to mid-Oct: Mon to Sat (4pm-7:30pm).



LA POISSONNERIE MODERNE

It doesn't look much from the outside (or inside) but the efforts here go into great food and service. Dine on superb fish and shellfish, selecting the exact 'catch' you want from the display at the fishmonger, right next door. A free Kir (white wine with blackcurrant liqueur) on presentation of this Guide. Located opposite the Le Boat base on the other side of the canal in Avenue Pierre Curie. +33 4 68 78 26 72. Open daily (12pm-2pm & 7pm-10pm). Chef's special, served for lunch on weekdays €15 / 3-course set menu available €24-€30. In Jul & Aug, theme evenings are held on Sat. Free Wi-Fi.



The canal next to Trèbes Lock



le boat Who's on board?

LE BOAT BASE

There's a Le Boat base here in **Trèbes**. Even if you don't start or end your holiday here, you're welcome to stop for overnight moorings, fill up with water, hook up to the power supply (depending on your boat type) or just to say hello. Please let the base team know if there's anything they can help with. Open: Every day (9am-12:30pm & 2pm-5:30pm)

Cavayère Lake

If you have crew members who want to raise their pulses for the day, there's an exciting cluster of attractions to the southwest of Trèbes, all worth a short bus, taxi or bike ride to get to. Ask our base team to help arrange transport for you.



RAYMOND CHÉSA LEISURE COMPLEX AT CAVAYÈRE LAKE

There are over 40 hectares of lake and woodland here, ideal for relaxation, walking or getting active. Swimming is allowed in the lake in supervised areas marked with ropes and buoys. There are areas for picnics, pedal boats to hire, mini golf, several beach volleyball courts, inflatable water games and a forest adventure park. *Located 5km from Trèbes. Also accessible from Carcassonne (take bus line n°1 from Square Gambetta towards 'Lac de la Cavayère'). Supervised swimming during summer.*



Aquaviva Park

AQUAVIVA PARK

Every summer, giant inflatable structures are installed in the middle of Cavayère Lake; giant slides, trampolines, swings, catapults and other inflatables games. *Located 6.3km from Trèbes. Also accessible from Carcassonne (take bus line n°1 from Square Gambetta towards 'Lac de la Cavayère'). +33 7 81 91 49 12. Open mid-Jun to Aug: daily (11am-7pm). €15 for 2 h / €20 for the day.*



O2 Adventure

O2 ADVENTURE

The O2 Adventure Park offers seven tree climbing trails of increasing difficulty and two zip lines above the lake. *Located 5km from Trèbes. Also accessible from Carcassonne (take bus line n°1 from Square Gambetta towards 'Lac de la Cavayère'). +33 4 68 25 33 83. Open Apr to May: Wed, Sat & Sun (1:30pm-5pm) | Jun to Aug: daily (1pm-6pm) | Sep to Oct: Wed, Sat & Sun (2pm-4:30pm). €18 ad / up to €16 ch.*



Australian Park

AUSTRALIAN PARK

A wildlife and leisure park where the kangaroos are the stars. Take part in guided tours, see the animals being fed, practice boomerang throwing and stroll through a recreated aboriginal village to discover their ancestral way of life. *Located 6km from Trèbes in Chemin des Bartavelles. Also accessible from Carcassonne (take bus n°2 - 'prolongation Lac Cavayère'). +33 4 68 25 86 83. Open Apr to Aug daily | Sep & Oct: weekends (hours vary so check online). €10.50 ad / €7.50 ch (4-11s) / under 4s free.*



Millepetit

A working farm and wine domain with 12th century origins, Millepetit is home to a wonderful little cooking school...



COOKING BY THE CANAL DU MIDI

This unique French cooking class will provide you with useful skills and simple tips that will help you to create classic French cuisine with a modern twist! After a quick tour of the farm, you will prepare a seasonal starter, learn to trim French cuts of meat, poultry and fish, make perfect French sauces and create a classic dessert, all under the guidance of qualified chef, Heather Hayes. Seasonal fruit, vegetables, olives and wines are mostly sourced from Millepetit's own producers. After the class, enjoy lunch on their canal-side terrace accompanied by refreshing local wines. The class is ideal for all ages - their youngest cook was nine and the oldest 87! A free bottle of Millepetit's own Rose to enjoy on your boat on presentation of this guide. Classes on selected days only. The day begins at 10am and finishes after lunch at around 3:30pm. Max of seven cooks per class. €110pp. Price includes all recipes and ingredients, tastings and a three-course lunch with local wines. Lessons are in English and French. Le Boat guests can moor right outside and stay overnight if they wish. Advance booking is essential. Visit canaldumidicooking.com or call +33 6 51 63 29 04. Companions not wishing to cook can cycle or walk along the canal path, visit the nearby winery, or just relax in their canal-side gardens and then join the cooks for lunch - €40pp.



Cooking classes



Lunch by the canal



Marseillette Clock Tower

Marseillette

There's a handful of cafés and restaurants here but nothing else really worth stopping for. The clock tower in the centre, before it told the time, served as a relay for the first telecommunications network in the world. Marseillette is also known for growing rice (short grain, long, fragrant and red) which you will find in local shops, delicatessens and supermarkets along the canal.



Puichéric

This is a village full of medieval character with a lovely church... although not a great deal else! You won't even find much in the way of shops or restaurants here. Nonetheless, you'll enjoy a gentle saunter up and down its quiet streets.



EAURIZON WATERSPORTS

You can hire canoes, kayaks or stand-up paddle boards from a local water sports company so you can 'mess about' on the River Aude, which flows on the other side of town. You can take them out alone or you can be accompanied by a professional, for just an hour or half a day. You can also try a spot of archery. €2 discount on presentation of this Guide. Located 1.2km from the canal in Route Minervoise. +33 4 68 49 99 82. Open Apr to Oct: daily (9:30am-7pm). From €9 to €31.



Stand-up paddle boarding with Eaurizon

AIGUILLE LOCK

Perhaps the most original of all locks along the canal! Decorated over the years by lock keeper and artist, Joël Barthes, it is what can only be described as an open-air contemporary art museum with dozens of sculptures in wood and metal. All of the sculptures are for sale, should one take your fancy!



LE BREAK

This unassuming establishment looks quite basic but the reception you'll receive from its friendly owners, Geraldine and Jeff, is sincere and whole-hearted. The simple menu delivers scrumptious grilled meats, fish and salads at reasonable prices. A hidden gem worth discovering. Located 1.2km from the canal in Route Minervoise, just down the road from Eaurizon. +33 4 68 91 32 47. Open Mon to Fri (11:30am-2:30pm & 7pm-10pm), Sat (12pm-2pm). Chef's special, served for lunch on weekdays €13.50 / 3-course set menu available €15. Free Wi-Fi.

La Redorte

A pretty and leafy town built around a grand Château, now a luxury hotel with an excellent restaurant. The town has a supermarket, pharmacy, bakery, butcher and a handful of restaurants. There are usually plenty of moorings either side of the bridge. And note the Argent-Double Spillway just north of the bridge where excess water passes under the arches and falls in the Argent-Double River below.



Argent-Double Spillway

Homps

The small village of Homps, where Le Boat has a base, was for a long time an active trading port where barrels of Minervois and Corbières wine were loaded for their journey to Bordeaux. The waterside buildings testify to these bygone days. There is a grocery store, a small selection of restaurants, a wine shop and a café-bar in the village.



Homps

LE CHAI PORT MINERVOIS

Across the footbridge from the Le Boat base, the Minervois wine growers set up a shop offering a vast selection of wines from over 100 wineries and vineyards of the region. They will gladly allow you to try before you buy, so why not stock up before you leave. Located opposite the Le Boat moorings, in Quai des Tonneliers. +33 4 68 91 29 48. Open Mon to Sat (9am- 12pm & 2pm-7pm).

JOUARRES LAKE

Homps is adjacent to the beautiful Jouarres Lake, an expanse of water spanning 100 hectares with a beach and shady pine forest. It's a perfect place to start or finish your boating holiday if you want a refreshing swim or somewhere to relax - there is a lifeguard on duty in July and August. There is a restaurant on site and a snack bar selling drinks and ice creams. At peak times you can hire kayaks and canoes and fishing is also possible. Located just 1.2km from the Le Boat base.



Jouarres Lake

EN BONNE COMPAGNIE

Located in an old village house on the banks of the Canal du Midi, the English chef here was trained to use French haute cuisine techniques. Dine in or outdoors and be tempted by dishes such as fillet of beef and pan-fried foie gras or a wild mushroom and snail stew. And, for dessert, try the soufflé with banana and caramel vodka. Mmmm! A free Kir (white wine with blackcurrant liqueur) on presentation of this Guide. Located along the canal in Quai des Négociants. +33 4 68 91 23 16. Open Tue to Fri & Sun (12pm-2pm), Tue to Sat (7pm-10pm). Chef's special, served for lunch on weekdays €17.50 / 3-course set menu available €26.50-€42. Free Wi-Fi.



OLONZAC MARKET

If you happen to be in the area on a Tuesday morning, the nearby village of Olonzac has a market which is the best around. Located 2.5km north of Homps. The road is quite flat, so you can easily cycle (10mins - you could hire bikes from the base for the day), walk (30mins) or ask the base team to arrange a taxi.

MINERVE

If you're up for a 12km bike ride (add bike hire to your booking, or hire them for the day from our Homps base), you can cycle from Homps to Minerve. This is one of France's most beautiful towns, with charming cobbled streets, a maze of narrow alleys, quaint dwellings and a simple 12th century church. The town is perched high on a rocky promontory with rivers running through deep gorges on either side. It can be reached only by a high bridge and was the site of a famous siege in the medieval age. There is a good 'miniatures' museum which explains the town's history, some lovely restaurants, quaint little shops and a delicious chocolatier – a perfect little place for peaceful reflection and enjoying the breath-taking scenery. Don't fancy cycling? Why not hire a 2CV from Paraza (see page 50)?



Minerve



Minerve

LE BOAT BASE

le boat Who's on board?

There's a Le Boat base here in **Homps**. Even if you don't start or end your holiday here, you're welcome to stop for overnight moorings, fill up with water, hook up to the power supply (depending on your boat type) or just to say hello. Please let the base team know if there's anything they can help with. Open: Every day (9am-12:30pm & 2pm-5:45pm)

Argens Minervois

Before you reach Argens-Minervois, (or after you leave it if you are heading west), you can get some great views over the village by scaling a short but steep path at Pechlaurier Lock which leads to a look-out. The village itself is overlooked by the square towers of a 14th century château and is a lovely little place to stop, with its narrow cobbled streets to wander around. There are ample public moorings, and there is a grocery store, a café-bar and a restaurant. If you are heading east from here, Argens Lock is the last lock you'll pass through for 54km, until you reach the Fonserrannes Locks (see pages 62-63) near Béziers. This whole section of the canal is known as the 'big pound'.



Argens-Minervois Castle



LA GUINGUETTE

You'll love this 'finger-lickingly' good barbecue restaurant. It's al fresco dining only and strung with bunting and fairy lights at night. The food here is rustic, tasty and freshly prepared... oh, and the portions are generous too. The ice cream is served in vase-sized glasses. A free homemade aperitif 'la Carthagène' on presentation of this Guide. Located 200m from the canal in Rue de la Fontaine Fraîche. +33 4 68 41 51 96. Open mid-Apr to mid-Oct: daily (12pm-2:30pm & 7pm-10:30pm). Chef's special, served for lunch on weekdays €16 / 3-course set menu available €25-€35. Free Wi-Fi.



Roubia

The village of Roubia is very pretty with an old stone church and tower, and there's a grocery store and restaurant in the village.



RESTANQUE OIL MILL

The owner of this Oil Mill will explain with passion the mysteries of the olive, the process of extracting the oil and there will be the opportunity to taste the different types of oil too. Extra virgin olive oils, olive purée and soaps are available to purchase from the mill shop. Located 1km from the canal in 38 Avenue des Loisirs. Follow the main road out of town towards Argens-Minervois and turn into the long drive signposted 'Moulin à huile de la Restanque'. +33 6 75 18 31 61. Open mid-May to mid-Sep: Mon to Sat (11am-6pm).



Hand-made olive soap



Harvesting the olives



LA FOURCHETTE FOLLE

This is a quaint little restaurant and bar serving unpretentious and delicious fare, from excellent steaks to mussels with Roquefort cheese. When the weather is fine, sit outside in the quiet square and watch the world go by. Located 300m from the canal in Place du Cadran Solaire next to the stone church. +33 4 68 49 30 61. Open daily (10am-10pm). 3-course set menu available €15-€23. Free Wi-Fi.

Paraza

The village of Paraza has a café-restaurant, a grocery store and a lovely church, Notre-Dame de l'Assomption, which was once located in the path of the canal. Riquet had it dismantled and rebuilt where it stands today. Inside, the nave, the choir and the vaults are adorned with beautiful stencilled decoration dating from the 19th century. There are plenty of public moorings before and after the bridge. To the west of Paraza is the Répudre Aqueduct, the first canal-bridge ever to be built in France and the second in the world!



Château de Paraza



CHÂTEAU DE PARAZA

Near the centre of the village and dominating the brow of the hill is Château de Paraza, which is where Pierre-Paul Riquet was housed while he oversaw the building of the canal. Today, wine is produced at the château and its owners offer guided tours and wine tasting. Afterwards, why not sit on the terrace with a glass of wine and enjoy tapas and platters of local produce. Free tour and wine tasting on presentation of this Guide. Located 800m from the canal in Rue du Viala. +33 6 17 87 51 46. Open Apr: Mon to Fri (10am-6pm) | May to Oct: daily (10am- 8pm). Free Wi-Fi.



Paraza vineyards



GETTING TO CHÂTEAU DE PARAZA

You can moor right outside the Château - look for the sloping walls made of large stone boulders.

Make your way up the path and through the overgrown gardens to the Château. There's a friendly donkey in the gardens. The walk is only five minutes, but is quite steep. There is a longer, but gentler, route through the village if you prefer - just moor a bit closer to the bridge.



CAFÉ DU PORT

This little restaurant has a lovely ambience and outdoor seating right by the canal. The food is a tasty fusion of French and Mediterranean cuisine. Located next to the canal in Rue du Port. +33 6 28 82 80 42. Open Tue to Fri (12pm-2pm), Tue to Sat (7pm-10pm). 3-course set menu available €16- €24.



CITROËN 2CV HIRE

Drive around the beautiful French countryside in France's most popular and legendary convertible car – the Citroën 2CV. Explore the hinterland of the Minervois wine region and why not visit one of France most beautiful villages – the medieval fortified village of Minerve (20km away - see page 47)? Pick up your car from Paraza Harbour. Book in advance on +33 6 08 67 63 64. Half day hire (5hrs) costs €80 (€200 deposit required). Visit lesroutesdusud.com for details.

Ventenac-en-Minervois



CHÂTEAU DE VENTENAC-EN-MINERVOIS

This tiny village is noted for its waterside wine cellar in the attractive canal-side Château de Ventenac-en-Minervois. Here, local wines can be sampled for free under the arches of its amazing vault. For €2 you can also tour the small museum, 'Grenier des Vignerons', which has a collection of tools for growing grapes and winemaking from the 19th century. There are two restaurants right by the moorings. Located next to the mooring in 17 Cour du Château. +33 4 68 43 27 34. Open daily (10am-12:30pm & 2:30pm-7pm). Free tour.



Château de Ventenac-en-Minervois



LA GRILLADE DU CHÂTEAU

Out of the two restaurants in Ventenac-en-Minervois, this is definitely our favourite. Its lovely shaded terrace by the canal has chickens running loose and a barbecue pit is constantly on the go. The pizzas, rib steak, duck breast and lamb chops are all good. And they'll do takeaway. Located next to the mooring in Route Neuve. +33 4 68 91 25 89. Open Tue to Sun (12pm-2pm & 7pm-10pm). Chef's special, served for lunch on weekdays €13 / 3-course set menu available €18-€28.

Le Somail

Le Somail was once an important harbour for trade and served as a 'lying' stop for passengers coming from Sète or from Toulouse. Nowadays, it is a beautiful little Languedoc village, home to some nice restaurants, a couple of artist studios and a grocery store.



Le Somail



Antiquarian Bookshop

ANTIQUARIAN BOOKSHOP

This book shop (Le Trouve Tout du Livre - which literally translates as 'The Find All Book') offers no less than 50,000 books from cheap paperbacks to rare editions. It is a delight for young and old readers! Located 200m from the canal in Allée de la Glacière. +33 4 68 46 21 64. Open Jul & Aug: daily (10am-12pm & 2:30pm-6:30pm) | the rest of the year it is closed on Tuesday.



GROCERY BARGE

The grocery barge, moored close to the bridge, offers fresh bread, pastries, basic groceries, drinks, wines and also a selection of regional products. It is recommended to pre-order your bread and pastries the day before (+33 4 68 46 95 11). Located on the canal. Open Apr to Oct: daily (8am-12:30pm & 3:30pm-7pm) except Wed & Sun afternoons.



The grocery barge at Le Somail



L'O LA BOUCHE

A beautifully converted wine cellar is the ideal setting for this restaurant that serves elegant and tasty French food like cassoulet, lobster ravioli and tuna steak, and there's a choice of 80 wines on the menu. Outdoor seating overlooks the canal. Located along the canal in Allée des Cyprès. +33 4 68 46 00 09. Open daily (12pm-2pm & 7pm-10pm). Chef's special, served for lunch on weekdays €10 / 3-course set menu available €22-€33. Free Wi-Fi.



LE COMPTOIR NATURE

Overlooking the canal with a shaded terrace, this perfectly-situated restaurant offers local dishes such as lamb a la plancha, grilled black pudding, wild Mediterranean sea bream and a wide choice of locally-sourced fresh vegetables. And don't leave without trying the homemade almond milk ice cream, muscat sorbet or other divine flavours. A free Kir (white wine with blackcurrant liqueur) on presentation of this Guide. Located 100m from the canal in 1 chemin de Halage. +33 4 68 46 01 61. Open daily (12pm-2pm & 7pm-10pm). 3-course set menu available €17.50-€32.50. From mid-Jun to mid-Sep every Wednesday there's a jazz concert at dinner time. Free Wi-Fi.



Le Comptoir Nature, Le Somail



WHICH WAY?

Between Le Somail and Argeliers you face the choice of continuing along the Canal du Midi, or heading south onto the Canal de Jonction, which will lead you onto the Canal de la Robine, Narbonne and Port-la-Nouvelle on the coast. See pages 76-89.

Argeliers

A 700m stroll along a tree-lined avenue and into town will take you to a handful of restaurants, a grocery store, a butcher, two bakeries and a café-bar.

Argeliers Bridge



ARGELIERS DISTILLERY

If you are a brandy fan, take a 1.6km walk or cycle to find the Distillerie d'Argeliers. The site is very industrial looking, but inside many varieties of fruits and wild berry brandies are distilled and aged using traditional methods. Try the 'Carthagène', a harmonious blending of brandy, Languedoc wines and grape syrup. Grape seed oil is also for sale. Located 1.4km from the canal in Cours de la République. +33 4 68 46 11 12. Open Mon to Fri (8am-12pm & 2pm-6pm).



LE MARCELIN

This is a simple but quaint restaurant serving Italian/French cuisine (scallops, rib steak, grilled cuttlefish) and the most enormous and delicious pizzas; friendly service and great value included. There's no outdoor seating though. Free aperitif and liqueur on presentation of this Guide. Located 900m from the canal in Rue du 1er Mai. +33 4 68 40 34 19. Open Fri to Wed (6pm-9pm). Pizza €7-€15 / 3-course set menu available €22. Free Wi-Fi.

Capestang

Capestang is a small market town with a good range of shops, including a supermarket, three bakeries, several café-bars and restaurants and an impressive 14th century church. The stone bridge over the canal has the reputation of being the lowest on the canal (the lowest is actually in Carcassonne). Its curved shape makes it quite tricky to pass under – so take it slow and steady.



The low bridge at Capestang

Markets: Wed & Sun (7am-1:30pm) - Place Jean-Jaurès | Wed, Sat & Sun (7:30am-1pm) - the market hall



ST. ÉTIENNE COLLEGIATE CHURCH

The Gothic St. Étienne Collegiate church was built in the 13th century by the same team who built the cathedral in Narbonne. It was meant to be a lot bigger and grander, but it was never finished, hence the rather 'out-of-place' grandeur of the stained-glass windows and other features. It is worth paying for a tour, which grants you access to the bell tower, from which magnificent views over the Cevennes foothills, the Pyrenees and the Oppidum of Ensérune (see pages 60-61) can be enjoyed. Located 600m from the canal in Place Jean-Jaurès. Open daily (9am-12pm & 2pm-6pm). Entry is free. Commentated tour and access to the church tower: Apr to Jun: Sat to Sun (5pm) | Jul-Aug: Fri to Sun (5pm & 6:30pm). €4 ad / €2 ch.



St. Etienne Collegiate Church



LA TABLE DU VIGNERON

This secret gem is located in the centre of the village and is worth searching for among the back streets. The exterior looks like nothing special, but inside... WOW! Sit in the outside courtyard in the shade of the plane trees or indoors in the cool cellar – a perfectly romantic setting to dine, particularly as the light fades. The food is divine and accompanied by wines from Cros-Reboul, the family property. A free aperitif "Rosé d'une nuit" on presentation of this Guide. Located 400m from the canal in Rue Paul Bert. +33 4 67 93 48 90. Open May-Sep: daily (6pm-10pm). 3-course set menu available €20-€25.



ARCHBISHOP'S CASTLE

This ancient castle was the Archbishop of Narbonne's summer residence and, while it's not much to look at from the outside, it's worth a visit to see the palace staterooms and a ceiling adorned with 15th century paintings. The very helpful tourist information office is right next door. Located 600m from the canal in Place Gabriel Péri. +33 4 67 37 85 29. Open May to Oct: Mon to Fri (9am-12pm & 2pm-5pm), Sat to Sun (10am-12pm & 5pm-8pm). €2 ad / €1 ch.



LES VIGNERONS DU PAYS D'ENSÉRUNE

This wine cellar belongs to the oldest cooperative in France which owns over 3,650 hectares of vineyards in 11 villages. There is a wide selection of wine on offer from different appellations (Coteaux d'Ensérune, St. Chinian, Coteaux du Languedoc). Located 900m from the canal in Avenue de Béziers. +33 4 67 93 30 11. Open Jul to Aug: Mon (3pm-7pm), Tue to Sat (9:30am-12:30pm & 3pm-7pm) | Sep to Jun: Tue to Thu (9:30am-12:30pm & 3pm-6pm), Fri to Sat (9:30am-12:30pm & 3pm-7pm).



Wine tasting at Port Capestang



CHÂTEAU LES CARRASSES

This old wine château from the 19th century welcomes you to its brasserie or terrace overlooking the garden and the surrounding vineyards. It is most definitely worth taking the time to get here if you want somewhere extra special to dine. The food is, without question, sublime. In the Château's shop, you will find regional wines and homemade jams, tapenade, olives and crafts. Located 2.6km from the canal in Route de Capestang. +33 4 67 00 00 67. Open daily (12pm-2:30pm & 7pm-9:30pm). Chef's special, lunch on weekdays €25 | dinner on weekdays €35 | à la carte during the weekend. In Jul & Aug there's a Sun evening barbecue night with a buffet accompanied by a live band (€40 pp). Booking recommended. Call them and they will come and collect you from the canal upon request.

Poilhes

Poilhes is a charming canal-side village with a small shop and a handful of lovely restaurants.

VINAUBERGE

Next to the canal, Vinauberbe stocks literally hundreds of bottles of wine, from all over the South of France. Enjoy delicious tapas while sampling wines by the glass at very reasonable prices. Let the knowledgeable staff guide and recommend wines to you. You can either sit inside, surrounded by racks of wine bottles, or outside on the paved terrace. Located 200m from the canal in Cours de la Cave. +33 4 67 21 78 42.



LA TOUR SARRASINE

This is a quaint little place, right by the canal with shaded outdoor seating. Here, the menu is varied and changes daily. The chef's specialty is 'la Montgolfière', a dreamy fish soufflé. An aperitif is offered on presentation of this Guide. Located next to the mooring in Boulevard Paul Riquet. +33 4 67 77 06 97. Open Tue (7pm-10pm), Wed to Sun (12am-2pm & 7pm-10pm). 3-course set menu available €30. Free Wi-Fi.



Lazy days!

Colombiers

The small, pretty town of Colombiers is a lively place and there is a pleasure port here with fresh water (you'll need to buy tokens) and an electricity point. There is a supermarket, pharmacy and newsagents right at the port. After a 300m stroll into the village, you'll find a lovely patisserie, more restaurants and a pretty church. The main attractions, however, are a little further out of town and are certainly worth getting to:



Malpas Tunnel

MALPAS TUNNEL

The Malpas tunnel passes under the hill of Ensérune and was dug, in secret, by Riquet. A few metres of digging in hard rock revealed very brittle sandstone, subject to slippage. So, work was stopped by the prime minister while he sent a royal commission to decide the canal's future. Undeterred, Riquet began digging anyway and completed the tunnel in eight days. The tunnel is 173m long, 6m wide and 8.5m high – the first navigable canal tunnel in Europe. There's no room for passing, so check that passage is clear, and honk your horn before entering.

MONTADY LAKE

The dry Montady Lake was once a marsh of stagnant water which once caused many epidemics. In the 13th century, the lake was dried out using 60 drainage ditches, which split this vast expanse of 430 hectares into the shape of a large shining sun. From the centre, an underground culvert, 1.3km in length, evacuates water through the hill of Ensérune, under the Malpas Tunnel, and away to the south. The best viewpoint from which to admire it is from the Oppidum of Ensérune (see opposite).

The dry Montady Lake



OPPIDUM OF ENSÉRUNE

The Oppidum of Ensérune is an archaeological site that offers a remarkable glimpse into the past, from the Bronze Age to the Roman conquest (6th century BC to 1st century AD). Follow the trail to discover the well preserved remains of the ancient village and 300 silos dug into the rock to store grain. The museum houses a fine collection of pottery and ceramics from excavations on this site. Located 1.4km uphill from the canal if you moor 200m east of the Malpas Tunnel, 1.8 km from Colombiers. +33 4 67 37 01 23. Open Apr & Sep to Oct: Tue to Sun (10am-12:30pm & 2pm-6pm) | May to Aug: daily (10am-7pm). €5.5 ad / free for ch (under 18s).



Oppidum of Ensérune

THE CANAL DU MIDI
LOCKLESS AND LOADS TO SEE



CHEZ L'ÉCLUSIER

Right next to the marina, this smart, fine-dining restaurant offers traditional dishes and innovative culinary ideas – a real treat and a feast for the eyes and taste bud. A free Kir (white wine with violet liqueur) on presentation of this Guide. Located right next to the moorings. +33 4 67 37 14 77. Open Thu to Tue (12pm-2pm & 7pm-10pm). Chef's special, served for lunch on weekdays €19 / 3-course set menu available €22-€50. Free Wi-Fi.



AU LAVOIR

This contemporary restaurant has a shaded terrace overlooking the canal and serves fine French cuisine prepared with fresh, locally-sourced produce. Delicious! Located 200m from the canal in Rue du Lavoir. +33 4 67 26 16 15. Open daily (12pm-2:30pm & 7:30pm-9:30pm). Chef's special, served for lunch on weekdays €15 / 3-course set menu available €30-€60. Free Wi-Fi.

The Fonserannes Locks

Just outside the city of Béziers you will encounter one of Riquet's most ingenious engineering solutions, the Fonserannes Locks. It's a staircase of locks, originally composed of eight chambers in a row, which allowed boats to be raised a height of 21.5m across a distance of 300m. Today, only seven chambers are still in service - the bottom lock is not used and boats enter and exit to the side of the next chamber up. Approaching from the west you go down the flight, from the east you ascend them.



Le Boat's Vision, exiting the locks

If you are heading west from here, there are no more locks to pass through for 54km, until Argens Lock (just west of Argens-Minervois, page 48). This whole stretch of the canal is called the 'big pound'.

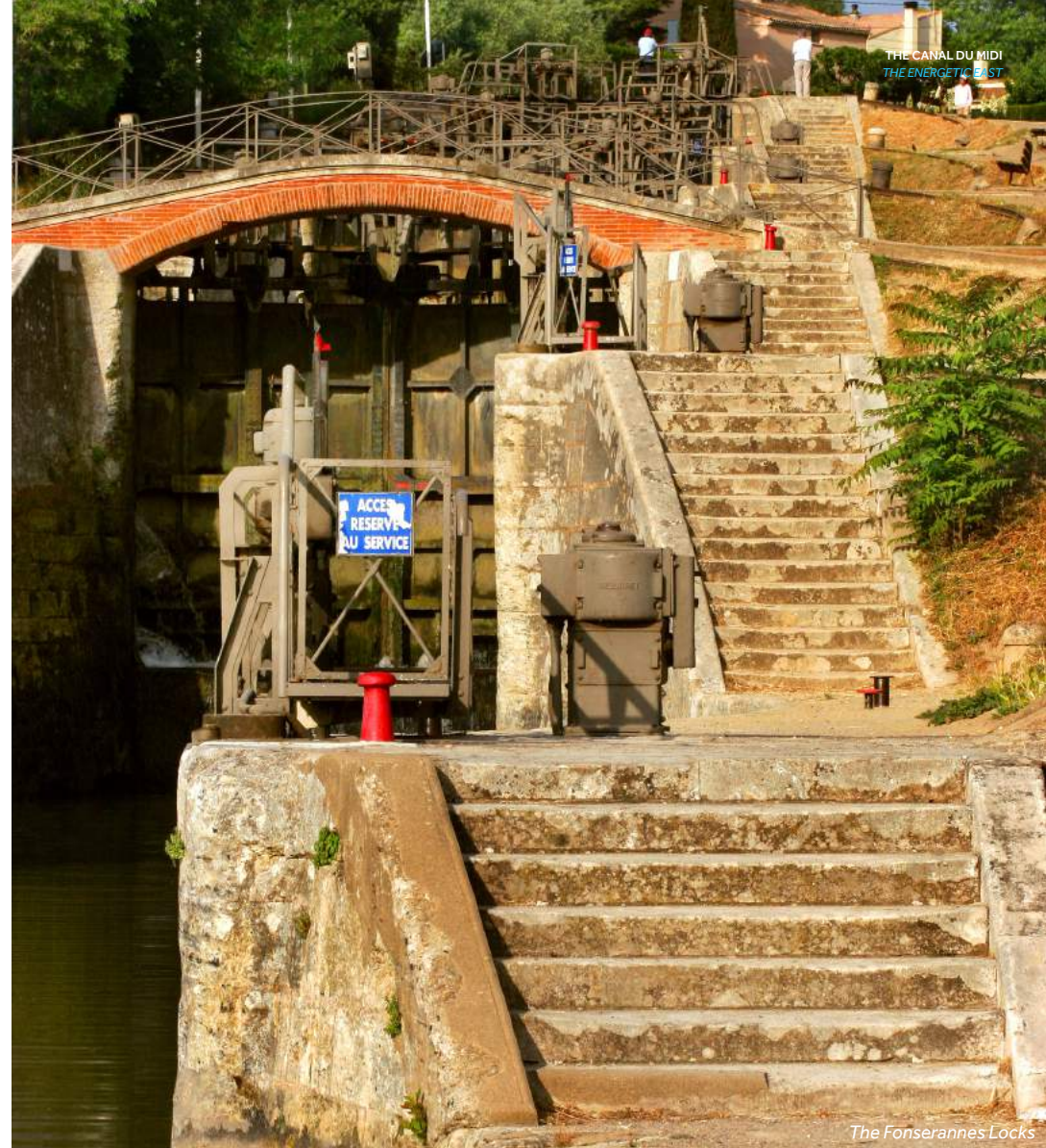
TACKLING THE STAIRCASE

There are strict times to pass through the flight. If you miss the allocated time, you may have to wait for most of the day, or overnight for the next timeslot. It will take about 1hr to travel through the staircase, so prior planning is essential, especially if you are short on time and need to return your boat to base.

Down (travelling towards Béziers) 8am-9.30am & 1pm-3:30pm
Up (travelling away from Béziers) 10am- 11:45am & 4pm-5:15pm (later in peak months)
Times can vary slightly, depending on season.

The locks are manned by lock keepers, who will squeeze as many boats into each lock as they can. They will operate the gates, so all you need to do is steer your boat into each chamber and keep your boat still using the lines. After you're in the first lock, it is easier to send one or two crew members lock-side with the lines (when it is safe to do so) and keep them there for the duration.

If you allow plenty of time and don't allow yourself to be panicked or rushed, you will enjoy the experience. Just accept that progress will be slow. If you miss the ascent or decent time, or don't have time to travel through the staircase, Béziers is only 2-3km away by foot or by bike.



The Fonserannes Locks

THE ORB AQUEDUCT

1km west of the staircase you will cross over the River Orb on the Orb Aqueduct - the largest aqueduct on the Canal du Midi with seven main arches measuring a total of 240m long, 28m wide and 12m high.

Béziers

Béziers is the capital of Languedoc's wine industry and birthplace of Pierre-Paul Riquet, who was responsible for building the Canal du Midi. While it may not be the prettiest city in the South of France, there is still plenty of charm to be found. Like all cities with a long history, Béziers is best discovered by ambling through its medieval streets, its bright squares and its leafy parks.



Béziers and the Pont Vieux (old bridge) on the River Orb



St. Nazaire Cathedral



ST. NAZAIRE CATHEDRAL

The majestic Romanesque St. Nazaire Cathedral is located on a rocky promontory that affords a magnificent panorama across the city and its five bridges. Inside is pretty impressive and the 14th century cloisters harbour interesting sculptures of animals and mythical beasts. The cloisters provide access to the tranquil Bishop's Garden, laid out in a typically French style. Located 1.6km from the canal in Impasse Baudin. Moor at Port Neuf. Open Jun to Aug: daily (9am-5:30pm) | Sep to May (9am-12pm & 2.30pm-5:30pm). Entry is free.



Museum of Fine Arts

MUSEUM OF FINE ARTS AND BÉZIERS TRADITIONS

In a mansion of the old town (Hôtel Fabrégat), the Museum of Fine Arts houses a fine collection of sculptures and paintings of Italian, Dutch, Spanish and French origin. Works range from the 15th century to present day and include paintings by Rubens and Delacroix, as well as some local artists. Located 1.6km from the canal in Place de la Révolution. Moor at Port Neuf. +33 4 67 28 38 78. Open Jun to Aug: Tue to Sun (10am-6pm) | Sep to May: Tue to Fri (9am-5pm), Sat to Sun (10am-6pm). €3 ad / €2 ch (12-18s) / free for under 12s.



Plateau des Poètes

PLATEAU DES POÈTES

This vast landscaped garden is the lung of the city. Stroll through the garden and discover the works of local sculptor, Injalbert, such as the Fountain of Titan and the statue of the Child and the Fish. You'll also find the busts of poets, a pond bordered by willows, a playground for children and an open air theatre in the centre of the park where shows are held during summer time. Located 1km from the canal. Moor at Port Neuf. Open daily (7am-8pm). Public access.

Béziers

EATING OUT AND SHOPPING

The Polygone Shopping Centre is 500m from the marina. It comprises a supermarket, 110 shops, a dozen or so restaurants, a cinema and a bowling alley. *Open every day.*

Food market: Tue to Sun (7am-1pm) - Allées Paul Riquet
Flower market: Fri (7am-6pm) - Allées Paul Riquet



Pizza at Chez Jpetto

CHEZ JPETTO

Voted as having the best Pizzas in France by Tripadvisor in 2015, the chefs here enthusiastically toss dough through the air in the open kitchen with its traditional wood-fired oven. *Located 700m from the canal in Boulevard de Verdun. +33 4 67 93 33 10. Open Tue to Sun (12pm-2pm & 7pm-11pm). Pizza €8-€16. Booking recommended – this restaurant is very popular. They also do takeaway. Free Wi-Fi*

OCTOPUS

Excellent fine dining with one Michelin star, the Octopus is contemporary and welcoming with a pleasant terrace for al fresco dining. The cuisine, from oysters, lobster, rack of lamb and even frogs, is sophisticated, upmarket and delicious – a perfect place for a special treat. *Located 1.4km from the canal in Rue Boieldieu. +33 4 67 49 90 00. Open Tue to Sat (12pm-1:30pm & 7:30pm-9:30pm). Chef's special, served for lunch €25 / 3-course set menu available €33-€110. Free Wi-Fi.*

LA RAFFINERIE

This converted sulphur refinery makes a unique environment to dine in, with many original features still on view. The chef frequently concocts new recipes using local, seasonal produce. The menu is about quality rather than variety, but you won't be disappointed and the food is beautifully presented. The outdoor terrace is most pleasant, and for dessert, we recommend the chocolate pot... sublime! *A free Kir (white wine with blackcurrant liqueur) on presentation of this Guide. Located right by the canal on Avenue Joseph Lazare. Moor at Port Neuf and walk 400m eastwards along the towpath. +33 4 67 76 07 12. Open Mon to Fri (12pm-2pm & 7:30pm-10:30pm), Sat (7:30pm-10:30pm). Chef's special, served for lunch on weekdays €15 / 3-course set menu available €30. Free Wi-Fi.*



La Raffinerie



The old town of Béziers

Villeneuve-lès-Béziers

The large and lively village of Villeneuve-lès-Béziers has very good amenities including several restaurants, bars, and a Spar supermarket. This is an excellent spot to stock up on supplies.

Markets: Tue, Thu and Sat (8am-12am) - Place Michel Solans



The vineyard, Alma Cersius, covers 1,200 hectares across the territories of Villeneuve-lès-Béziers, Portiragnes and Cers, and produces 24 different grape varieties. Stop here for a tasting and to stock up. Located 100m from the canal in Avenue André Palmade. +33 4 67 37 77 43. Open Tue to Sat (9am-12:30pm & 3:30pm-7pm).

ST. THOMAS GOLF COURSE

With its 18-holes the St. Thomas golf course is set in typically Mediterranean scenery and has something to interest all levels of player, from the beginner to the very experienced. Located 7.5km from Béziers or Villeneuve-lès-Béziers in Route de Bessan. +33 4 67 39 03 09. Open daily (8am-7pm). €47 for 9 holes / €65 for 18 holes.



LES ENFANTS TERRIBLES

With a lovely outdoor seating area, this hotel/restaurant is especially good for its seafood. Try the mussels, oysters gratin with Noilly-Prat wine, baked bass with thyme and lemon, or the grilled sea bream. And for dessert, there's caramel apple crumble, floating islands or tiramisu. Heavenly! Located 200m from the canal in Boulevard de la République. +33 4 67 39 48 45. Open Tue to Sun (12pm-2:30pm), Wed to Sat (7pm-9:30pm). Also open on Mondays from Jul to Oct. Chef's special, served for lunch on weekdays €15 / 3-course set menu available €23-€36. Free Wi-Fi.



L'ÉCLUSE

Located by the lock, 1km west of Villeneuve-lès-Béziers, the chef here cooks traditional French cuisine, such as pan-fried scallops, foie gras and smoked salmon, with fresh and local produce. The 7hr slow-cooked lamb is the speciality and the dessert platters are worth saving room for. A free homemade cocktail on presentation of this Guide. Located next to Arièges lock in Avenue Pierre Bérégovoy. +33 4 69 00 12 85. Open daily (12pm-2:30pm & 7pm-10pm). Chef's special, served for lunch on weekdays €19.50. À la carte for dinner and during the weekend. Free Wi-Fi.



Cers

This is a busy little town, but there's not much to stop for besides the very large Intermarché supermarket, just 200m from the canal. However, you will need to cross a busy main road at an intersection to get there, so please take care. Moor as close as you can to the concrete bridge with green railings. There's a smaller Spar supermarket in Villeneuve-lès-Béziers if you prefer.



CAYLUS BRIDGE FISH FARM

The kids will love this. Why not let them catch their own dinner? This trout farm will lend you a rod, line and bait and will let you catch your own fish from a well-stocked pond. You simply pay for the fish you catch. They will clean them up for you, leaving you to cook them for supper – delicious! Located 100m from the canal about halfway between Villeneuve-lès-Béziers and Portiragnes, not far from the town of Cers, on the opposite side of the canal. Moor close to the stone bridge and then follow a sign for 'Pisciculture'. +33 4 67 39 32 48. Open Apr & May: Wed. Sat to Sun (2pm-6pm) | Jul & Aug: daily (10am-8pm) | Jun & Sep: daily (2pm-6pm). Fishing equipment is free + €12/kg of fish caught.



Trout



Portiragnes

This is a cheery town with a butcher and a couple of nice restaurants. It's worth stopping at if you find yourself there when a market is on. Otherwise, don't make any great effort to plan it into your itinerary.

**Market: Mon (am) - Parking de la Tramontane | Tue (am) - Place de la Gendarmerie
Night market: Jul & Aug: Tue & Sun (8pm-12am) - Parking Labech**



Port Cassafières

Port Cassafières is a small marina where Le Boat has a base with fresh water and electricity points.

For those starting their holiday from Port Cassafières, there are no grocery stores within walking distance from the base. So, if you wish to get provisions, there is a large hyper-market in Cers and a supermarket in Villeneuve-lès-Béziers, only 60-75mins west by boat. If you want to do a big shop, and don't want to carry weighty bags back to the boat, the supermarket in Colombiers is literally opposite the moorings. You could just buy enough for each day until you reach there, and then do a big shop. Remember, you can add a grocery pack on to your booking, so you can have provisions ready and waiting for you when you arrive. There is a restaurant by the base to serve boaters. Otherwise, the main attractions are a short taxi ride away. Ask the base team to arrange one for you, or you could take a bike. You can add bike hire to your booking, or just hire them for the day from the base.



Azimut Adventures

AZIMUT ADVENTURES

Within a beautiful park of pine and plane trees, test your agility and head for heights on a selection of 14 tree-top trails of varying degrees of difficulty. Children 4yrs and above are welcome. *Located 2.7km from the canal in Domaine de Roque Haute. Moor in Port Cassafières. +33 6 30 36 09 57. Open Apr to Jun: Wed, Sat & Sun (2pm-7pm) | Mid-Jun to mid-Sep: daily (9am-7pm). €20.50 ad (over 14s) / €17.50 ch (7-13s) / €12.50 ch (under 7s).*



Portiragnes Beach

PORTIRAGNES BEACH

Remote and relatively wild, Portiragnes Plage is a lovely beach, with fine sand and virtually no commercial distractions. It's a perfect place to kill a few hours if the sun is shining, although take provisions with you, as there are no shops or facilities.



le boat Who's on board?

LE BOAT BASE

There's a Le Boat base here in **Port Cassafières**. Even if you don't start or end your holiday here, you're welcome to stop for overnight moorings, fill up with water, hook up to the power supply (depending on your boat type) or just to say hello. Please let the base team know if there's anything they can help with.

Open: Mon, Fri & Sat (8:30am-6pm) | Tue, Wed, Thu (8:30am-12:30pm & 2pm-6pm) | Sun (8:30am-12:30pm & 1:30pm-5:30pm)



Le Boat's base at Port Cassafières

The Libron crossing

The Libron River, which crosses the Canal du Midi 2.8km east of Port Cassafières, has a propensity to flash flood up to twenty times a year, making passage of canal traffic impossible. At least it would be, if not for this nifty structure. Because the level of both waterways is similar, an aqueduct was not a viable solution. So, in 1855, the Ouvrages du Libron (Works of Libron) was built, which cleverly diverts the flow of the Libron into two channels in times of flood. Each channel can be blocked in turn, allowing boats to pass as each channel is closed. A board, explaining how it works, is located next to it.



Le Boat's Vision passing through the Works of Libron

Vias

The centre of Vias town is located 1.5km north of the canal. It is full of character and has a lovely plaza in the centre where a cluster of restaurants spill out onto the flagstones. The real reason to stop here however, is the host of leisure parks, which are great if you have any active kids (or big kids) in your party.



Europark is the largest fixed fairground park in France with nearly 80 attractions, from thrill rides to quieter family rides, there's something for everyone. There's a fireworks display every Friday night too. Located 600m from the canal in Route de Farinette. Moor after the two road bridges just downstream of the Libron Crossing. +33 4 67 30 71 06. Open mid-Jun to early-Sep: daily (8pm-2am). Rides vary between €1 to €5 a go.



Europark



Californian Mini-golf



Two courses of crazy-golf, set in the great American West - great fun for all the family. Located 600m from the canal in Avenue de la Méditerranée, opposite Europark. +33 4 67 21 57 13. Open mid-June to mid-Sep: daily (3:30pm-2am). €9 ad / €7 ch (under 12s). All rounds started before 6pm will get a second round for free.



MegaKart



This outdoor karting circuit will delight both amateurs and experienced drivers. Children of 7yrs and older can discover the joys of driving too with karts suitable for their age. Located 600m from the canal in Voie Communale du Tots et des Tricots, opposite Europark. +33 6 61 49 36 37. Open Apr, May & Oct: weekend (2pm-6pm) | Jun to Sep: daily (2pm-7pm). A session of 8 mins: €15 ad / €10 ch (7-13s).

Agde

Once a Greek city, a medieval fortress and a rich village during the Renaissance, Agde was largely built using black volcanic rocks. The old town has a lovely little centre with cobbled streets full of pleasant shops, restaurants and buildings with medieval architectural details. It also has a pretty church and a local museum.

Market: Thu (7:30am-1pm) - Place Gambetta
Market hall: every morning (except Mon) - Les Halles, Place Gambetta

AGDE ROUND LOCK

When it was built in the 1600s, the lock was perfectly round but, in 1984, it was extended to accommodate larger barges. The lock gives access to three different water levels - two gates access the canal, while a third gate opens onto the Hérault River (although hire boats are not allowed this way). Unless you are continuing on to the Camargue, there is no real need to pass through this lock. Moorings can be found just prior. Agde is only 1km away and Le Cap d'Agde is 7km away.



RICHEMER WINE CELLARS

Born from the merger of Agde and Marseillan cooperatives and bringing together 450 winegrowers, Les Caves Richemer offers both the discovery and tasting of local wines. The famous 'Piquepoul' and 'Terret' dry white wines must be tasted fresh with a platter of oysters. Free tasting of Pays d'Oc and Côtes de Thau wines. *Located 1.7km from the moorings at the Round Lock and 5.2km from Bagnas Lock, in Boulevard du Soleil. +33 4 67 94 25 25. Open Apr & Oct: Mon to Sat (9am-12:30pm & 2:30pm-6:30pm) | May to Jun & Sep: Mon to Sat (9am-12:30pm & 2:30pm-7:30pm) | July & Aug: Mon to Sat (9am-8pm), Sun (9am-12:30pm).*

MARE NOSTRUM

Enjoy superb, freshly-caught fish and shellfish in this delightful restaurant. You can dine outside on the floating terrace looking out over the Hérault River. You won't be disappointed... with the food or the setting! *Located 200m from the canal in Rue André Chassefières. +33 4 67 94 97 58. Open Wed to Sun (12pm-2pm), Mon to Sun (7pm-10pm). Chef's special, served for lunch on weekdays €15 / 3-course set menu available €18-€28. Free Wi-Fi.*



Le Cap d'Agde

This is a busy seaside resort with a plethora of fun activities for kids, including the beach, an aquarium, a fairground and a huge waterpark. It's about 7km from Agde Round Lock, and 5km from Bagnas Lock (should you choose to cruise further west), so you'll need to cycle or arrange a taxi either way.



AQUALAND

Aqualand is a water park comprising fifteen gliding attractions and slides to entertain and refresh the whole family during a hot day. *Located 6.1km from the moorings at the Round Lock and 5km from Bagnas Lock in Avenue des Iles d'Amérique. +33 4 67 26 85 94. Open Jun & early-Sep: daily (10am-6pm) | Jul & Aug: daily (10am-7pm). €15pp.*

ÉPHÈBE MUSEUM

The Éphèbe Museum is devoted to underwater archaeology. It houses exceptional collections discovered across 50 years of excavations in the Hérault River, the sea and in the Thau lagoon, all reflecting the economic activity of Agde over the centuries. The exhibits include the famous 'Éphèbe of Agde', a bronze statue and effigy of Alexander the Great, discovered in 1964 in the Hérault River. *Located 6.1km from the moorings next to Agde Round Lock and 4.8km from Bagnas Lock in Mas de la Clape. +33 4 67 94 69 60. Open Jul & Aug: daily (10am-6pm) | Sep to Jun: Mon to Fri (10am-12pm & 2pm-6pm), Sat to Sun (10am-12pm & 2pm-5pm). €5 ad / €2 ch (11-18s) / free under 10s.*



AND ON TO THE CAMARGUE...

After Le Cap d'Agde, you can continue east, past where the Canal du Midi ends and into the Camargue region. Here you'll experience bustling crusader ports, excellent sandy beaches and a more traditional lifestyle which includes Romany gypsy festivals and modern-day guardian cowboys. It's also teeming with amazing bird and wildlife and it's our number one destination in France for children. **To find out more about our cruising region in the Camargue, visit our website.**

The Embranchement de la Nouvelle

(Canal de Jonction and Canal de la Robine)

Between Le Somail and Argeliers, the Canal de Midi is intersected by the Canal de Jonction, at which point boaters can choose to leave the Midi and head southwards. After 5km, the Canal de Jonction then connects with the Canal de la Robine which passes through the centre of Narbonne and eventually meets the Mediterranean Sea at Port-la-Nouvelle.

The Canal de la Robine, while not as famous as the Midi, is equally as pretty and harbours just as many reasons to visit. The city of Narbonne has a lovely atmosphere and is the perfect place to start or end your cruise. The journey south towards the Mediterranean is water-less-travelled, but you won't be disappointed if you decide to go this way. The canal winds majestically alongside wide open lakes to the Sainte-Lucie Nature Reserve where you'll definitely have the camera in overdrive. And the seaside town of Port-la-Nouvelle and neighbouring Gruissan also make a refreshing change from the countryside.

Turn the page to continue your adventure from north to south.

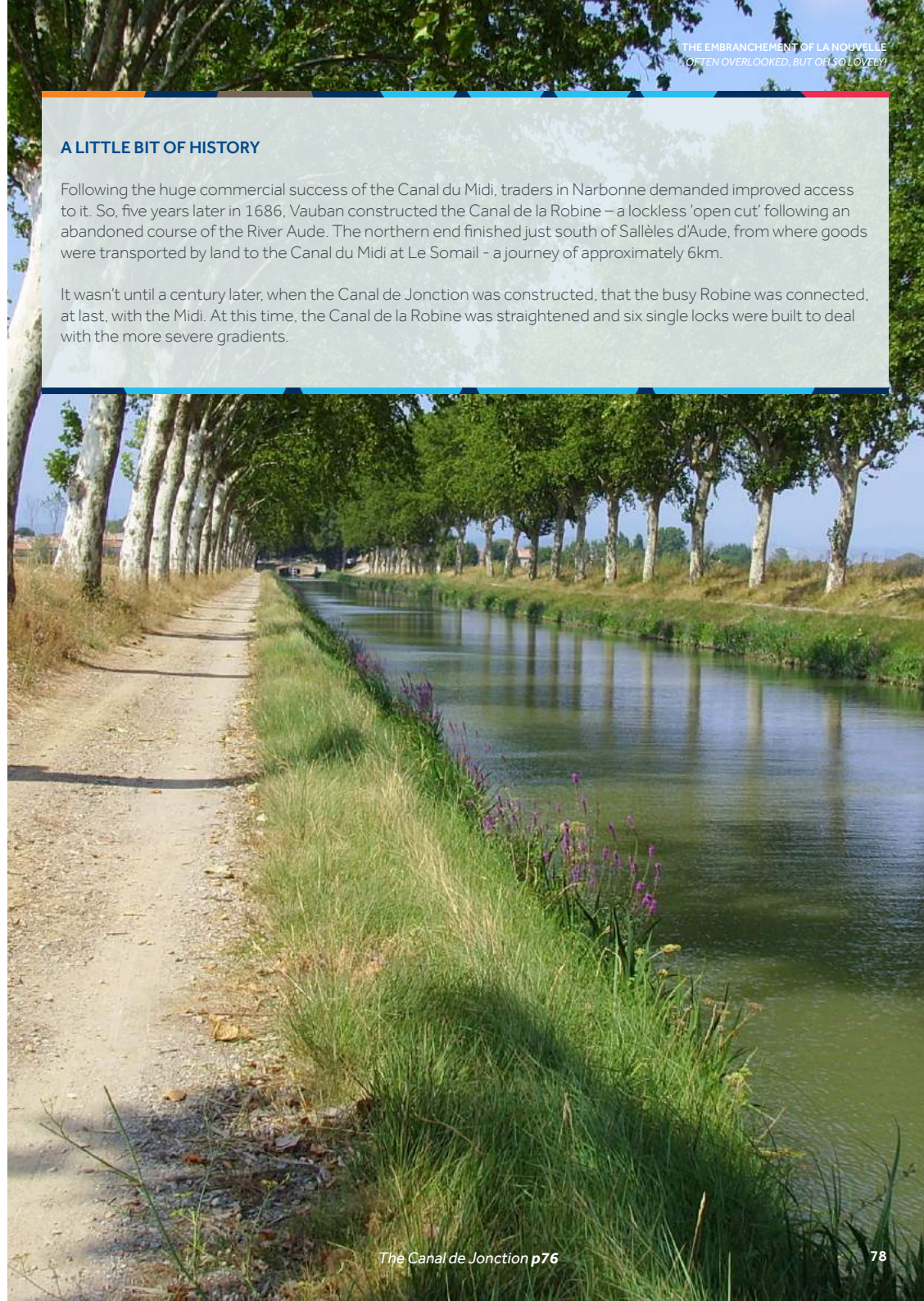
St. Just and St. Pasteur Cathedral in Narbonne p82



A LITTLE BIT OF HISTORY

Following the huge commercial success of the Canal du Midi, traders in Narbonne demanded improved access to it. So, five years later in 1686, Vauban constructed the Canal de la Robine – a lockless 'open cut' following an abandoned course of the River Aude. The northern end finished just south of Sallèles d'Aude, from where goods were transported by land to the Canal du Midi at Le Somail – a journey of approximately 6km.

It wasn't until a century later, when the Canal de Jonction was constructed, that the busy Robine was connected, at last, with the Midi. At this time, the Canal de la Robine was straightened and six single locks were built to deal with the more severe gradients.



The Canal de Jonction p76

Canal de Jonction

A series of seven locks make this short and straight section of canal quite slow going, but the shady tow path lined with umbrella pines, the village of Sallèles d'Aude (see opposite) and a couple of interesting attractions along the way make it a pleasant undertaking.

AMPHORALIS MUSEUM

This fascinating museum overlooks the site of the archaeological excavations of a Gallo-Roman potter's workshop, active since the 1st century BC to the 3rd century AD. Discover the daily life and activity of these potters who lived on site and mass produced amphorae (large urns), bricks, tiles and dishes. Located next to the canal in Allée des Potiers. Moor next to Empare lock. +33 4 68 46 89 48. Open Jun to Sep: Tue to Sun (10am-12pm & 3pm-7pm). €5 ad / €3 ch (under 16s).



Amphoralis Museum



Gailhousty Lock and Outlet

GAILHOUSTY OUTLET

A construction of 16 sluice-gates which, on the opposite side, correspond to four large arches where a long canal, linked to Capestang Lake further north, begins. The façade of the edifice is ornamented with the coat of arms of the old province, along with those of the Archbishop of Narbonne.

Sallèles d'Aude

This is a charming little village, worth a stroll around to find the quirky Chapel of St. Roch and Le Calvarie, a pretty, roofed structure of stone walls and arches which is now (or soon to be) a park for the people of the village to share. In the centre, there are a couple of grocery stores, a bakery and several restaurants.



Le Calvarie, Sallèles d'Aude

Domaine des 7 Écluses



DOMAINE DES 7 ÉCLUSES

At the side of the canal, between St-Cyr Lock and Sallèles Lock, the Domaine des 7 Écluses produces and sells red wines, dry white wines and a very fruity rosé. A tour of the cellars and a free tasting is in order, if time permits. Located next to the canal in Quai de Lorraine. +33 6 71 60 57 61. Open Apr: Wed & Fri (5pm-7:30pm), Sat (10am-12:30pm & 5pm-7:30pm) | May, Jun, Sep & Oct: Mon to Sat (5pm-7:30pm) | July & Aug: Mon to Sat (10am-12:30pm & 5pm-7:30pm).



HEADING NORTH?

If you are travelling north, the Canal de Jonction will eventually intersect with the Canal du Midi – turn to page 54 to continue reading the Guide at the right point.



CHEZ HERVÉ

This simple little pizza restaurant by the side of the canal, with an outdoor seating area, is very popular and gets rave reviews. As well as its speciality pizza, the menu offers a variety of French cuisine such as duck confit, oysters and salad. The desserts are also yummy. It gets busy, so arrive early if you can. They offer takeaway too! A glass of wine is offered on presentation of this Guide. Located next to the canal in Quai Alsace. +33 4 68 46 83 10. Open Tue to Sun (12pm-2pm & 6pm-11pm). Chef's special, served for lunch on weekdays €13.50 / 3-course set menu available €19.50-€27.50. Free Wi-Fi.

Sallèles d'Aude

GUIDED CITROËN 2CV TOUR

Departing from Sallèles d'Aude and other nearby villages

This will be one of the highlights of your trip, but be sure to book it in advance. Drive (or be driven) around the beautiful French countryside in France's most popular and legendary convertible car – the Citroën 2CV. Vin 4 Heures Tour has two available to hire and an English or French speaking wine expert will accompany you and your group to a variety of locations.



The Devine Tour, Vin 4 Heures Tour



The Devine Flavours Tour, Vin 4 Heures Tour

THE DEVINE TOUR 2.5 hours

A unique and remarkable tour past the region's exceptional vineyards and breath-taking scenery between land and sea. Price depends on the number of participants (e.g. €150 for 4 people). Price includes transport in a 2CV (as a driver or passenger), fuel, insurance, technical assistance and the presence of an expert wine guide.

THE DEVINE WINEMAKERS TOUR 4 hours

Soak up the stunning scenery en-route to one of the region's magnificent vineyards. Take a tour and learn from the masters who create the grape varieties that produce delicious Languedoc wines. Partake in some wine tasting in the quiet wine cellars where future Grand Crus are slowly maturing. Price depends on the number of participants (e.g. €180 for 4 people). Price includes wine tasting, transport in a 2CV (as a driver or passenger), fuel, insurance, technical assistance and the presence of an expert wine guide.

THE DEVINE FLAVOURS TOUR 6 hours

As well as a drive through the captivating countryside and a visit to a wine domain for a spot of wine tasting, this tour includes a stop at a village and a picnic lunch of mouth-watering local products from around the region and Mediterranean coast. Tantalise your taste buds with gourmet pleasures on this delectable tour in the great outdoors. Price depends on the number of participants (e.g. €240 for 4 people). Price includes lunch, wine tasting, transport in a 2CV (as a driver or passenger), fuel, insurance, technical assistance and the presence of an expert wine guide.

Vin 4 Heures Tour is located next to Sallèles Lock in Cour du Château. Call +33 6 51 87 90 47 or email maud@vin4heures-tour.fr to book a tour. Book in advance – a week prior is advisable. If you book in advance, but while cruising you don't think you'll reach Sallèles d'Aude in time, let Vin 4 Heures Tour know and they can change the pick-up point to another nearby village such as Le Somail. Visit vin4heures-tour.fr for more information.

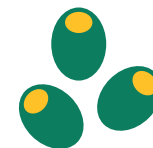


Vin 4 Heures Tour at Minerve p47



FLEXIBLE TOURING

Vin 4 Heures Tour will happily tailor their tours to suit your requirements. They will pick you up from other nearby towns, they can flex the pick-up time and they can adapt the itinerary to fit in somewhere you particularly want to see. Give them a call to discuss your requirements.



OULIBO OLIVE CELLAR

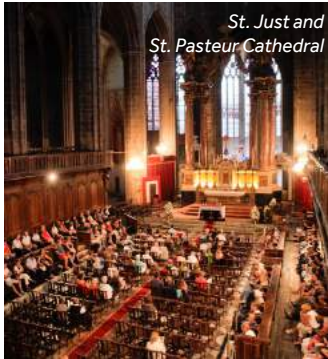
At Oulibo Olive Cellar, 6km north of Le Somail you will learn all about the humble olive and sample different flavours of olive oil. You can visit this instead of a vineyard, or bolt this onto your tour.

Narbonne

Narbonne has a rich heritage where grand and ancient buildings sit majestically among a network of clean, modern and lively streets and boulevards. It has a wonderful southern French atmosphere with a Spanish twist. And of course, it is home to one of Le Boat's bases.



Archbishop's Palace



St. Just and St. Pasteur Cathedral



Roman Horreum

ARCHBISHOP'S PALACE

The Archbishop's Palace is composed of the 'Old Palace' of Roman origin, and the 'New Palace' of Gothic origin making it an impressive-looking, albeit unusual, building. It has housed, since the 19th century, the City Hall and is now also home to the Museum of Art and the Archaeological Museum. You can walk up the steep steps inside the 42m tower and get a great view over to the Mediterranean and the cathedral. *Located 500m from the canal in Place de l'Hôtel de ville. Open daily (8:30am- 6:30pm). Audio guide rental €10. Guided tours in Jul & Aug, Mon to Fri (information at the reception). Entry is free.*

ST. JUST AND ST. PASTEUR CATHEDRAL

It is quite amazing that a city as small as Narbonne has such a massive cathedral. It's the third highest cathedral in France and you can literally see it from miles around. It was never completed though. It is supposed to have an eastern nave, but this would have meant demolishing the old Roman defensive wall. The immense interior is equally as impressive as its Gothic exterior. *Located 800m from the canal in Rue Armand Gautier. Open daily (9am-12pm & 2pm-6pm). Entry is free.*

ROMAN HORREUM

These are the underground tunnels of an ancient Gallo-Roman warehouse dating from the 1st century BC. There's not a great deal to see, although you will marvel at the sheer size. The galleries achieve an atmosphere reminiscent of the market days, thanks to the sound and light that animates the place. *Located 1km from the canal in Rue Rouget de Lisle. +33 4 68 32 45 30. Open Jun to Sep: daily (10am- 6pm) | Oct to May: Wed to Mon (10am-12pm & 2pm-5pm). €4 ad / free under 10s.*

MOORING

Of course you can moor outside the Le Boat base with access to water, electricity, etc. It's about a 700m stroll along the canal to reach the heart of the city. If you would like to be closer to the action, you might find spaces available in the public moorings near the centre, close to the footbridge.



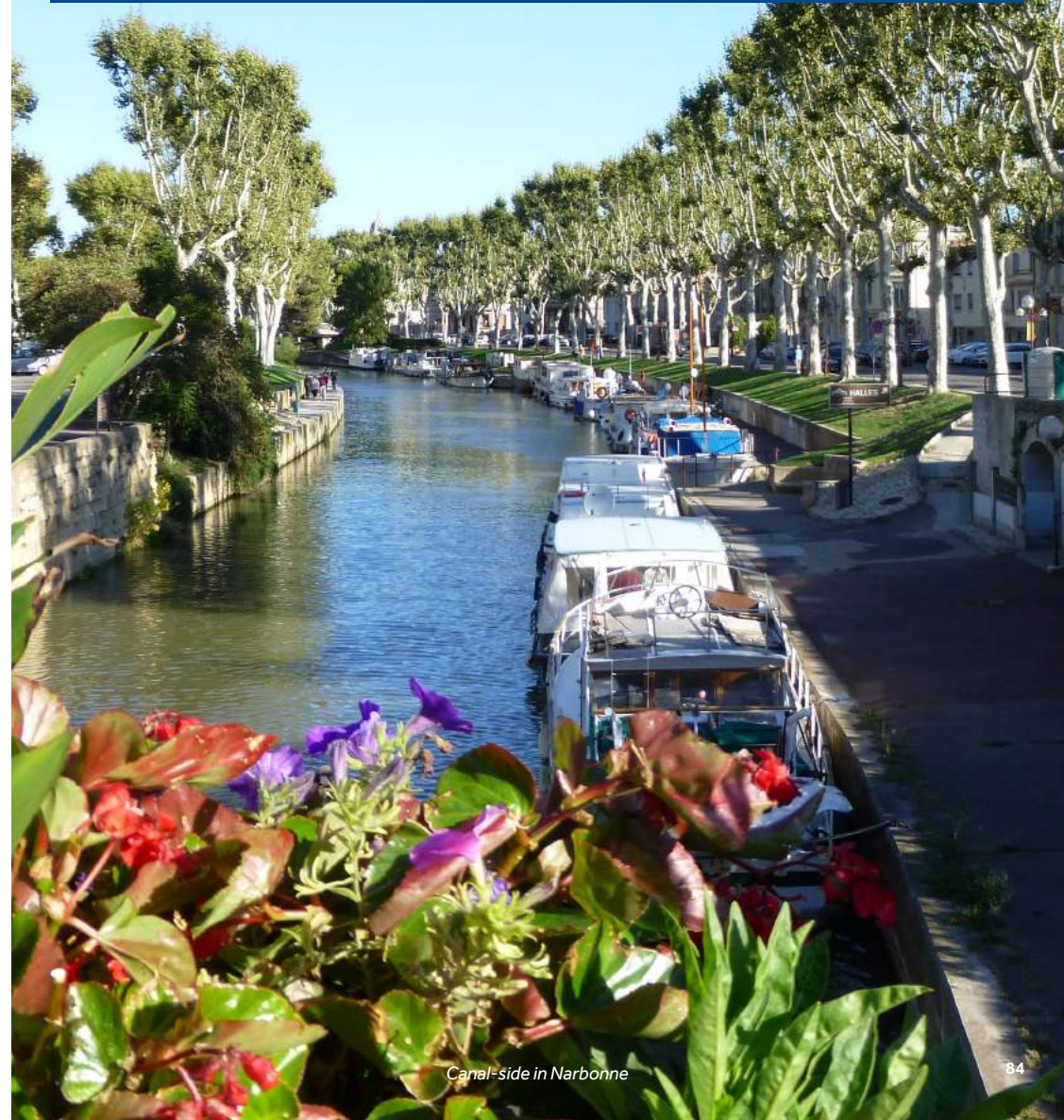
le boat

Who's on board?

LE BOAT BASE

There's a Le Boat base here in **Narbonne**. Even if you don't start or end your holiday here, you're welcome to stop for overnight moorings, fill up with water, hook up to the power supply (depending on your boat type) or just to say hello. Please let the base team know if there's anything they can help with.

Open: Every day (9am-12:30pm & 2pm-5:30pm).



Canal-side in Narbonne

Narbonne



SHOPPING, MARKETS AND EATING OUT

The centre of Narbonne is quite small. In fact, there are really only a few streets either side of the canal (which flows right through the city centre) that are worthy of a visit. Perhaps the best time to be in Narbonne is on a Sunday morning, when these streets are taken over with a huge market, mainly selling clothes, leather and shoes, etc. Also, be sure to visit the wonderful "Les Halles de Narbonne" which is famous across the south of France. This covered food market hosts more than 70 stalls: bakers, confectioners, butchers, delicatessens, fishmongers, greengrocers and wine merchants. *Located 500m from the canal in Cours Mirabeau. Open daily (7am-1pm).*



Les Halles de Narbonne



Les Halles de Narbonne



CHEZ BEBELLE

Located in Les Halles de Narbonne, your order is announced by staff using a megaphone and then the fresh meat will be tossed to the kitchen staff from neighbouring stalls. Quite a show! Open for breakfast and lunch only. *Located 600m from the canal inside Le Halles de Narbonne, +33 6 85 40 09 01. Open Tue to Sat (6am-2pm). Main course between €13-€19. Booking recommended.*



LES TABLE DES CUISINIERS CAVISTES

This gourmet restaurant is located in a quiet back street near the famous Les Halles de Narbonne. It has a small seating area outside and a modern and classy décor inside, with quirky features such as tables made from old oak barrels. The French cuisine served here is delicious and exquisitely presented and the wine list is extensive. This hidden gem gets a big thumbs-up from us. *Located 800m from the canal in Place Lamourguier. +33 4 68 32 96 45. Open Tue to Sat (12pm-2pm & 7:30pm-10pm). Chef's special, served for lunch on weekdays €21 / 3-course set menu €31-€80 (tasting menu). Booking recommended.*



Les Table des Cuisiniers Cavistes



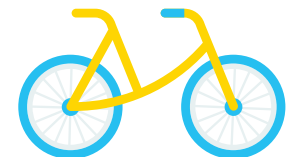
LES GRANDS BUFFETS

Oh so worth the distance to travel to, this all-you-can-eat, buffet-style restaurant serves all the great classics of French cuisine: lobster, pan fried foie gras, cassoulet, spit-roasted suckling lamb, pork ribs, chicken, seafood platters, smoked salmon and many homemade desserts arranged around a chocolate fountain. There's an open kitchen in the centre of the restaurant where the dishes are flamboyantly prepared before your eyes. *Located 1.5km from the canal in Rond-point de la Liberté. +33 4 68 42 20 01. Open Mon to Fri (12pm-2pm & 7pm-10pm), Sat & Sun (11:30am-2:30pm & 7pm-10pm). €32.90 ad / €16.50 ch (6-10) / under 5s free. Booking recommended. Free Wi-Fi.*



CYCLE TRACK - NARBONNE TO PORT-LA-NOUVELLE

The towpath is sealed and follows the Canal for 20km from the centre of Narbonne to the entrance of Port-la-Nouvelle, passing between two vast lakes. The route, although it has little shade and can be quite windy, is really beautiful. This is a good option if you wish to extend your trip a bit further south, but are short on time – pedal power is quicker than boat. You can add bike hire to your booking, or just hire them for the day from our Narbonne base.



Gruissan

The town of Gruissan is a lively seaside town, full of French character and a rich history. Located 5km away from the canal on the Mediterranean coast, it is definitely worth the effort to get to. Gruissan was originally a fishing village on a small island surrounded by marshland. The narrow streets of old Gruissan village are built around the 13th century castle and form a circular pattern. In recent years, Gruissan has expanded considerably with the development of holiday homes on the nearby sandy beach, a modern yachting marina with a bar and restaurants, a casino and holiday apartments built along the palm-lined quays.

Markets: Mon, Wed and Sat (am) - Place Gibert | end of Jun to mid-Sep (from 7pm) - the docks

Segway Tours



GUIDED SEGWAY TOURS

After 15-30 minutes of instruction, 'stroll' a Segway for an hour along the quays of the port, the cycle paths and the village streets. A fun and original way to visit Gruissan! Located 6.5km from the canal (Mandirac Lock). Over 14s only. Booking at the Tourist Office or call +33 4 68 49 09 00. In Apr to Jun & Sep: Fri (10am) | Jul & Aug: Tue to Fri (5:30pm & 7pm). €22pp / €60 family price (2 adults & 2 teens).



Gruissan

GUIDED WALKING TOURS

Gruissan Tourist Office invites you to discover Gruissan's rich heritage. Visit Gruissan Castle (the famous 'Tower of Barbarossa'), the church and the old village. Learn the secrets and fascinating history of Gruissan on this very informative 1 ½ hour tour. Located 6.5km from the canal (Mandirac Lock). Booking at the Tourist Office or call +33 4 68 49 09 00. Apr to Jun & Sep: Fri (4pm) | Jul & Aug: Wed (5:30pm). €4.50 ad / free under 10s.

ST. MARTIN ISLAND SALT WORKS

Take an interesting 1hr 20min tour where you'll learn about the amazing chemistry of sun and wind that produces salt. The vast, flat expanse of the salt plains is an impressive sight too. Located 6.8km from the canal (Mandirac Lock) in Route de l'Ayrolle. +33 4 82 53 10 61. Guided tours in Apr, May, Jun & Sep only: daily (11am, 3pm & 4:30pm). €7.60 ad / €4.50 ch.

GETTING TO GRISSAN

The closest you'll get to Gruissan on the canal is Mandirac Lock, where you can moor to the south of the gates. From here you can either cycle 5km to Gruissan's old village, the route is very flat, or call a taxi. The lock keeper or the owners of the adjacent restaurant may be able to help you call a taxi. If you want to go on a tour, ask the taxi driver to take you straight to the "Office de Tourisme de Gruissan".



PLAN B

A quirky French restaurant in the old village, with a modern but cosy interior and shaded outdoor seating at the front. The food is simple and very tasty and the owner is a real character. Located 5km from the canal (Mandirac Lock) in rue de la République. +33 4 68 49 14 26. Open Tue to Sun (12pm-3pm & 7pm-10:30pm - although hours may vary). 3-course set menu available €25-€32. Booking recommended by phone or email franketso@yahoo.

Sainte-Lucie Island



SANTE-LUCIE NATURE RESERVE

Known as the island of a thousand scents, this is a nature reserve of exceptional beauty, comprising 825 hectares of peaceful surroundings, breath-taking vistas and abundant wildlife. Walk or cycle in the shade of pine trees on a 3km or a 7km circuit, and look out for wild pigs and deer, as well as amazing birdlife. Moor along the canal near Ste-Lucie Lock. The entrance to the reserve is opposite. Access is free.

View of the Canal de la Robine and beyond from Sainte-Lucie Island



Port-la-Nouvelle

Port-la-Nouvelle, the last town on the canal, is a bustling fishing port. On the seafront you will find many restaurants and bars and the beach is wide and sandy, perfect for sunbathing or a day of family fun. Don't forget to try the seafood – it's as fresh as you can get.

Market: Wed & Sat (7am-1pm)

- Place de l'Église and Place Léon Blum

Night market: mid-Jun to mid-Sep: Wed (5pm-12am)

- Place St. Charles



Port-la-Nouvelle



Manade Jean Henri



HORSE RIDING WITH
MANADE JEAN HENRI

For something different, discover the region on horseback! Whether you are a beginner or amateur horse rider, this ranch offers accompanied, horseback riding on the beach and in the marshes. Located 2km from the canal in Chemin des Vignes. Call +33 6 68 84 15 01 or +33 4 68 48 00 95. €15 for one hour. Children have to be 7yrs or older.



Terra Vinea



TERRA VINEA

This may be a little touristy, but if you want an excuse to indulge in some wine tasting with the kids are in tow, this is the perfect option. Climb on-board Express Terra Vinea for a ride through the Languedoc 'outback', and enter the largest subterranean wine warehouse in the south of France. Watch the spectacular son et lumière show and plunge into the subterranean cathedral for a tour. Located 11.6km from the canal in Chemin des Plâtrières - Portel-des-Corbières. Moor at Port-la-Nouvelle. +33 4 68 48 64 90. Port-la-Nouvelle Tourist Office can arrange a taxi for you. Open daily (10am-5:30pm). €8.90 ad / €4.80 ch.












LE XV

Not far from the moorings, this is a chic and modern restaurant, with rugby memorabilia tastefully displayed on the walls. The food is delicious and well-presented with a varied menu. Save room for dessert! There's no outdoor seating unfortunately. A free glass of Sangria on presentation of this Guide. Located 200m from the canal in Rue Jean Jaurès. +33 4 68 40 04 47. Open Mon, Tue & Sun (12pm-2pm), Wed to Sat (12pm-2pm & 7pm-10pm). Chef's special, served for lunch on weekdays €14 / 3-course set menu available €20-€29. Free Wi-Fi.

Our boats

We have an exceptionally wide choice of boats in this region, so you are sure to find something to suit your requirements - whether you want a boat packed with features and modern comforts or something more basic and affordable; a boat for a couple or a spacious cruiser accommodating up to 12 passengers. The following selection will give you a taste of what's available:

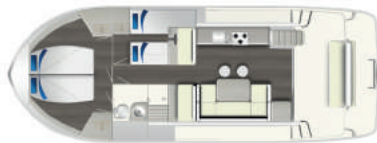
-  Air conditioning
-  Bimini sun shade
-  Air cooling
-  Bow thruster
-  Inside & outside steering
-  Heating
-  Electric toilet
-  Shore power
-  TV / DVD Player



HORIZON

A brand new model for 2016 and perfect for couples or a small family. It is packed full of features and has the largest sun-deck of any boat of its size.

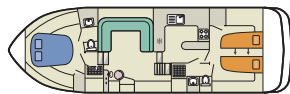
Sleeps: 5 (2+3) / 2 cabins + saloon
Size: 11.5 m x 4.2m (36ft x 13ft 1in)



ROYAL MYSTIQUE

Perfect for two couples who are looking for a luxurious cruise in an easy-to-handle boat, with a bit of privacy.

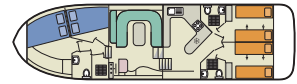
Sleeps: 6 (4+2) / 2 Cabins + Saloon
Size: 13.25m x 4.10m (43ft 6ins x 13ft 6ins)



MAGNIFIQUE

A great boat for large groups or families. There's plenty of space for socialising in the large saloon or on the huge sundeck.

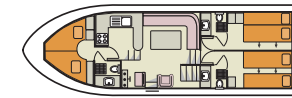
Sleeps: 10 (8+2) / 4 Cabins + Saloon
Size: 14.50m x 4.10m (47ft x 13ft 6ins)



CRUSADER

This large boat has several layout options, handy if you're cruising as a group of friends.

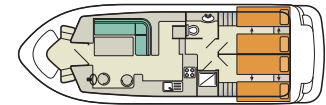
Sleeps: 6 / 3 Cabins
Size: 11.90m x 3.90m (39ft x 13ft)



TANGO

A favourite option for a small family. It has a forward deck from which to enjoy peaceful and uninterrupted views as you cruise.

Sleeps: 6 (4 + 2) / 2 cabins + saloon
Size: 11m x 3.8m (37ft 7in x 12ft 6in)



...and there's more!

We've got many more boats to choose from. To see our full range, order a brochure or visit our website.

WHAT'S ON BOARD...

All our boats come with everything you need for a great holiday, including a fully-equipped kitchen with fridge, hob and oven; showers, toilets and hot water; and comfy beds with linen and bath towels provided. There is also an information pack on board, which includes a waterways map.

POWER

Car-style sockets in the saloon and two-pin shaver points in the bathroom provide 12v power to charge phones and tablets, so bring an adapter. There is also a 220v socket in the saloon although, on some boats, this will only work when the engine is running and, on other boats, only when your boat is hooked up to shore power in a port/marina. We recommend you bring a euro plug adapter with you if travelling from overseas.

Locks

Going through locks is one of the highlights of a boating holiday. By the end of your break, you will pass through locks confidently and became a dab hand at throwing ropes over mooring bollards.

The Canal du Midi has 91 locks, the Canal de Jonction has seven and the Canal de la Robine has six, although this count is actually the number of lock chambers. Some locks are double or triple locks where each chamber is connected by a single gate. All locks in this region are electric – ideal if you're not as spritely as you once were.

MANNED LOCKS

The majority of locks along the Canal du Midi are operated by a lock keeper. Lock keepers will of course help and assist where they can, but when occupied with controlling the gates and sluices, they cannot take your mooring lines from you.

SELF-SERVICE LOCKS

Some locks on the Midi and all locks on the Canal de Jonction and Canal de la Robine are user operated. They are very simple to use though.

1. Set a crew member down before the lock, so they can walk to the lock's control panel.
2. The crew member should push the button corresponding to the direction in which you wish to travel. The lock will automatically control its own sluices and gates.
3. When the single green traffic light is showing, enter the lock. One red light means do not enter. Two red lights indicate the lock is not currently in operation. A red and green light together mean the lock is being prepared for your entry.
4. The lock-side crew member can receive lines, loop them around the bollards and pass them back to a crew member on board, so that they can steady the boat while the lock is filling or draining.
5. When the boat is safely moored, the crew member should start the locking procedure by pressing the green button when it lights up. Again, the lock will automatically control its sluices and gates.
6. When the doors open, move out of the lock and don't forget to pick up your crew member.

A crew member should always stay next to the control panel while the lock is in operation, ready to push the red stop button, in case of emergencies.

THE FONSERRANNES LOCKS

This flight of seven lock chambers, just outside Béziers, has specific times when you are allowed to ascend and descend. See pages 62-63 for more details.



LOCK HOURS OF OPERATION

Locks are open and passable seven days a week at the following times:

MONTH	CANAL DU MIDI	CANAL DE JONCTION AND CANAL DE LA ROBINE
March, April	9am-12:30pm & 1:30pm-6pm	9am-6pm
May to September	9am -12:30pm & 1:30pm-7pm	9am-7pm
October	9am-12:30pm & 1:30pm-6pm	9am-6pm

All locks are closed on 1st May on the Canal du Midi, Canal de Jonction and Canal de la Robine.

Staying safe and boating etiquette

In order to keep the waterways a safe and enjoyable place to holiday, please observe the following rules and guidelines and keep your holiday incident-free.

SAFETY AT LOCKS

When entering the lock

- When waiting for a lock, moor in an orderly queue in the lay-by. If the moorings are all taken then stay well back and 'hover'. Do not queue jump when the gates open.
- Always do what the lock keeper tells you to do. The lock keeper may call boats into the lock in a specific order, which may not be the order you arrived in.
- Always stop your boat using reverse gear, not with your ropes.
- Do not fend off with hands, feet or boat hooks.
- Don't jump to the lock side. Those helping with ropes should stay on board and throw ropes over the mooring bollards, while keeping hold of one end. Or better still, set down a crew member before the lock, so that they can be 'lock-side' to receive lines. Once they have looped the rope around the bollard, lines should be passed back to a crew member on board.
- Don't throw ropes directly at anyone – you should pass them.

While the lock is draining or filling

- Keep your engine switched on with someone at the helm so that you are ready to perform any manoeuvre the lock keeper tells you to make.
- Use a rope at the front and the back of your boat to keep your boat from moving in the lock.
- Keep your lines fairly taught as the water rises or falls, to ensure your boat doesn't swing around. Don't tie off though, as you could hang your boat as the water falls.
- When the water is falling, make sure your boat's bumper does not get caught on the lock wall.
- Keep your boat well clear of the gates when inside the lock and behind the white vertical line painted on the lock wall.

When using self-service

- If a boat is approaching behind you, wait for them to enter the lock with you, if there's room.
- A crew member should always stay next to the control panel while the lock is in operation, ready to push the red stop button in case of emergencies.
- Do not attempt to enter a lock when a red traffic light is displayed.

At all times

- As you approach and travel through a lock, turn off radios and other noise so you can hear the lock keeper's and each other's instructions.
- Keep children under close supervision.
- Keep dogs on your boat or on a lead while passing through a lock.

GENERAL NAVIGATION

- Navigation after dark is forbidden.
- Children under 18 are not permitted to operate the boat, unless a adult is closely supervising.
- When moored, always start the boat's engine before casting off.
- Navigate in the middle of the canal and pass oncoming boats on the right-hand side.
- Larger boats and commercial vessels always have priority.
- Some bridges are very low: take care and remember to take down any parasols or the bimini sunshades before passing under them.
- The speed limit is 8km/h (a fast walking pace) and 3km/h in marinas - don't create wash and slow down when passing anglers and moored boats.
- Avoid turning or mooring near bends, bridges or locks.
- When mooring, don't leave unusable gaps and be careful not to damage the riverbank. (See page 98b).
- Boating under the influence of drink or drugs is not tolerated - it impairs judgement, slows down reaction times and significantly increases the likelihood of accidents.
- We recommend life jackets (provided on board) are worn at all times, especially by children and non-swimmers.
- Swimming is not permitted in the canal.
- Wear appropriate non-slip footwear – no flip flops!
- Don't throw cigarette butts; the area has a high risk of fire.



Mooring, fuel, water, and waste

MOORING

The beauty of a boating holiday is the freedom to stop whenever the fancy takes, whether you see a nice looking restaurant or an interesting village to explore. And moorings are plentiful along the Canal du Midi and the Embranchement de la Nouvelle and you are free to moor anywhere where you can safely access the towpath. Exceptions are: if there is a sign indicating to the contrary, if you are on a bend or if you are less than 50m from a structure, such as a bridge or lock. Most towns and villages have mooring bollards or rings to tie up to and moorings are usually free.

Mooring stakes and a mallet are provided on board, should you wish to moor where there are no bollards or mooring rings. However, to prevent the spread of a disease currently affecting the region's beautiful plane trees (see page 102), avoid mooring underneath avenues of plane trees, never tie your mooring lines to trees and disinfect your stakes afterwards in the blue boxes, which are provided at most single locks.

You also have the option of mooring in a private marina (port), which usually have water refill points and electric hook-up facilities (not available on all boats). You must report to the port office on arrival and there is a charge (approx €10-€20) for overnight mooring and use of the facilities.

FUEL AND WATER

You will have enough fuel on board to last you seven to ten days. The fuel you use is chargeable and payable at the end of your holiday. If you are on an extended holiday and you need to fill up, you can get fuel at any Le Boat base.

You will need to fill up your water tank once or twice during the course of a week. Water points are of course available at all Le Boat bases en-route, for free. Otherwise, there are several ports/marinas that will allow you to fill your tank for a charge of €4 - €5. In some marinas, you'll need to purchase tokens from the port office.

WASTE TANK PUMP OUT

In accordance with French regulations, nearly all our boats in France are fitted with holding tanks to store waste water. However, the problem all boaters face in France is the lack of pump out facilities with which to empty them. Because of this, waste water is realised directly into the canal at present.

Le Boat has been working with our industry colleagues for many years to lobby the VNF, the public waterways authority which manages many of France's rivers and canals. They are responsible for the provision of pump out facilities along the waterways, but unfortunately, our influence over their actions is limited. Insufficient funding means that the complicated and costly process of installing pump-out facilities and supporting sewerage systems (to sometimes remote areas) is slow. However, we continue to work with them and progress is being made. We hope that, in the coming years, the provision of pump-out facilities will improve so that waste water can be stored on board, as it is in many of our other European destinations.

In the meantime, we strongly encourage customers to use eco-friendly washing products (dish washing detergents, hand soaps, shampoos, etc.) so that harmful chemicals are not released in the canal. An 'eco pack' can be purchased as an extra with your holiday (€12), which contains ecological dish and kitchen cleaners. The use of bleach is strictly prohibited.









It's all mapped out...

This map has been created to demonstrate the wealth of sights and attractions available along the Canal du Midi, Canal de Jonction and Canal de la Robine. The order of each village, attraction and lock is correct and is intended as a helpful tool to plan your holiday, help you decide where to go and to show you how long it roughly takes to get there. We hope you find it useful as a guide and fun way to 'virtually' explore the canals.

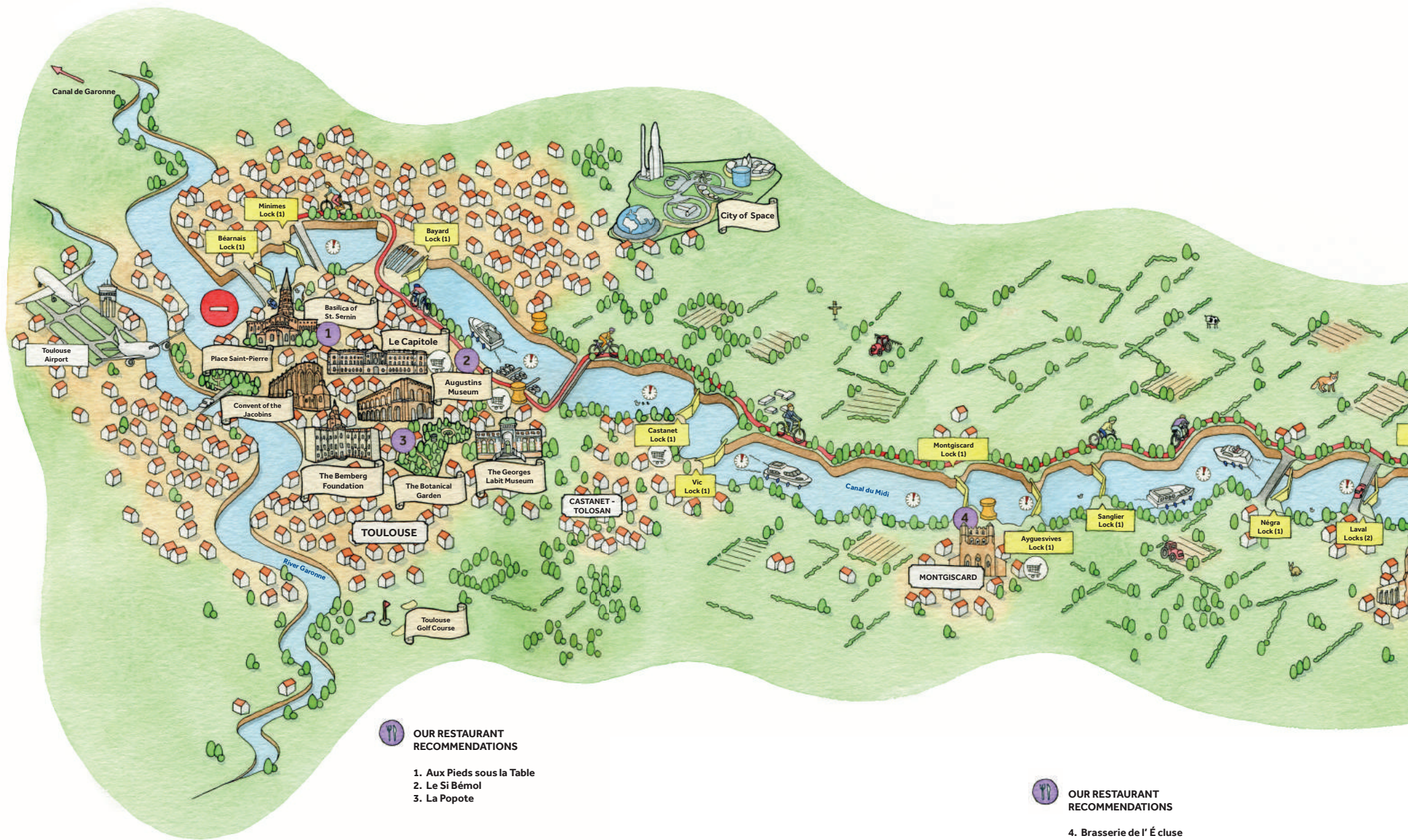
Please don't take it literally though – the distances along the canal are not to scale and the course the canal runs is not represented here, nor are the exact position of moorings, bridges, islands and other navigational features and hazards. **Your waterways map, provided on board, should ALWAYS be consulted when navigating along the waterway.** The position of attractions, supermarkets and restaurants within each village, town and city are also representational and are not accurately placed.

If you would like to read more about anything you see on the map, cast your eyes upwards (or downwards for the Embranchement de la Nouvelle) to find the relevant page numbers to turn to.

KEY:

-  = Locks
-  = Hour markers (a rough approximation only and are calculated on the basis of an average speed of 7.5km/h and an average time of 12 minutes to pass through a lock. Your speed, the flow of the river and the time it takes to go through locks will all affect your progress. See page 11 for a more precise estimate.)
-  = Public moorings (most are free, charges apply at some)
-  = Places to eat
-  = Supermarkets
-  = Grocery stores





 **OUR RESTAURANT RECOMMENDATIONS**

1. Aux Pieds sous la Table
2. Le Si Bémol
3. La Popote

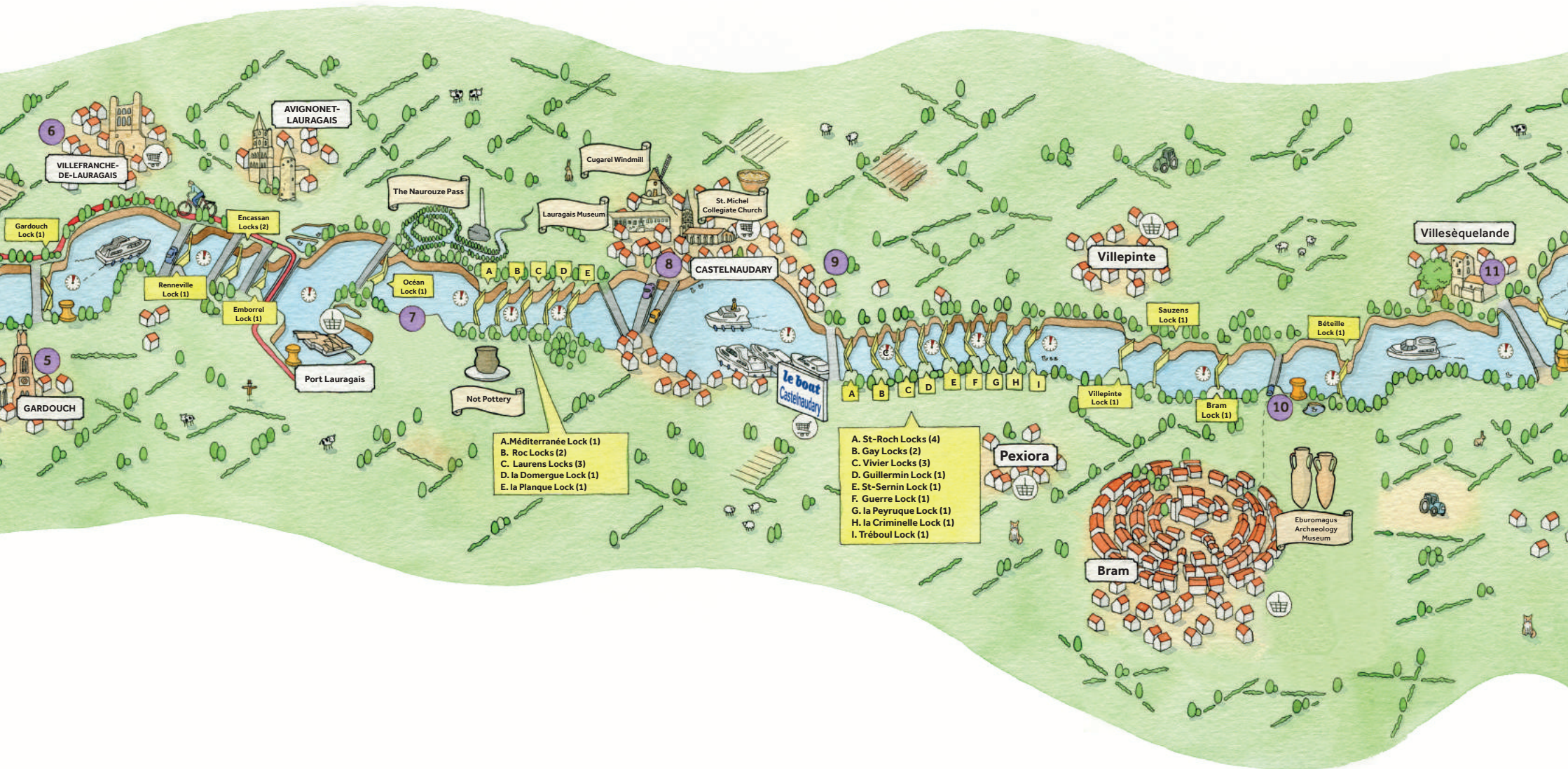
 **OUR RESTAURANT RECOMMENDATIONS**

4. Brasserie de l'Écluse
5. L'Envie des Mets
6. La Camarétoise
7. Le Relais de Riquet



OUR RESTAURANT RECOMMENDATIONS

- 8. Maison du Cassoulet
- 9. Le Tirou
- 10. L'Île aux Oiseaux
- 11. Le Relais Romain



6
VILLEFRANCHE-DE-LAURAGAIS

AVIGNONET-LAURAGAIS

Cugarel Windmill

Lauragais Museum

St. Michel Collegiate Church

8
CASTELNAUDARY

9

Villepinte

Villesèquelande

11

5
GARDOUCH

Port Lauragais

Not Pottery

- A. Méditerranée Lock (1)
- B. Roc Locks (2)
- C. Laurens Locks (3)
- D. la Domergue Lock (1)
- E. la Planque Lock (1)

- A. St-Roch Locks (4)
- B. Gay Locks (2)
- C. Vivier Locks (3)
- D. Guillermin Lock (1)
- E. St-Sernin Lock (1)
- F. Guerre Lock (1)
- G. la Peyruque Lock (1)
- H. la Criminelle Lock (1)
- I. Tréboul Lock (1)

Pexiora

Bram

Eburomagus Archaeology Museum

Gardouch Lock (1)

Encassan Locks (2)

Océan Lock (1)

Emborrel Lock (1)

Renneville Lock (1)

A B C D E F G H I

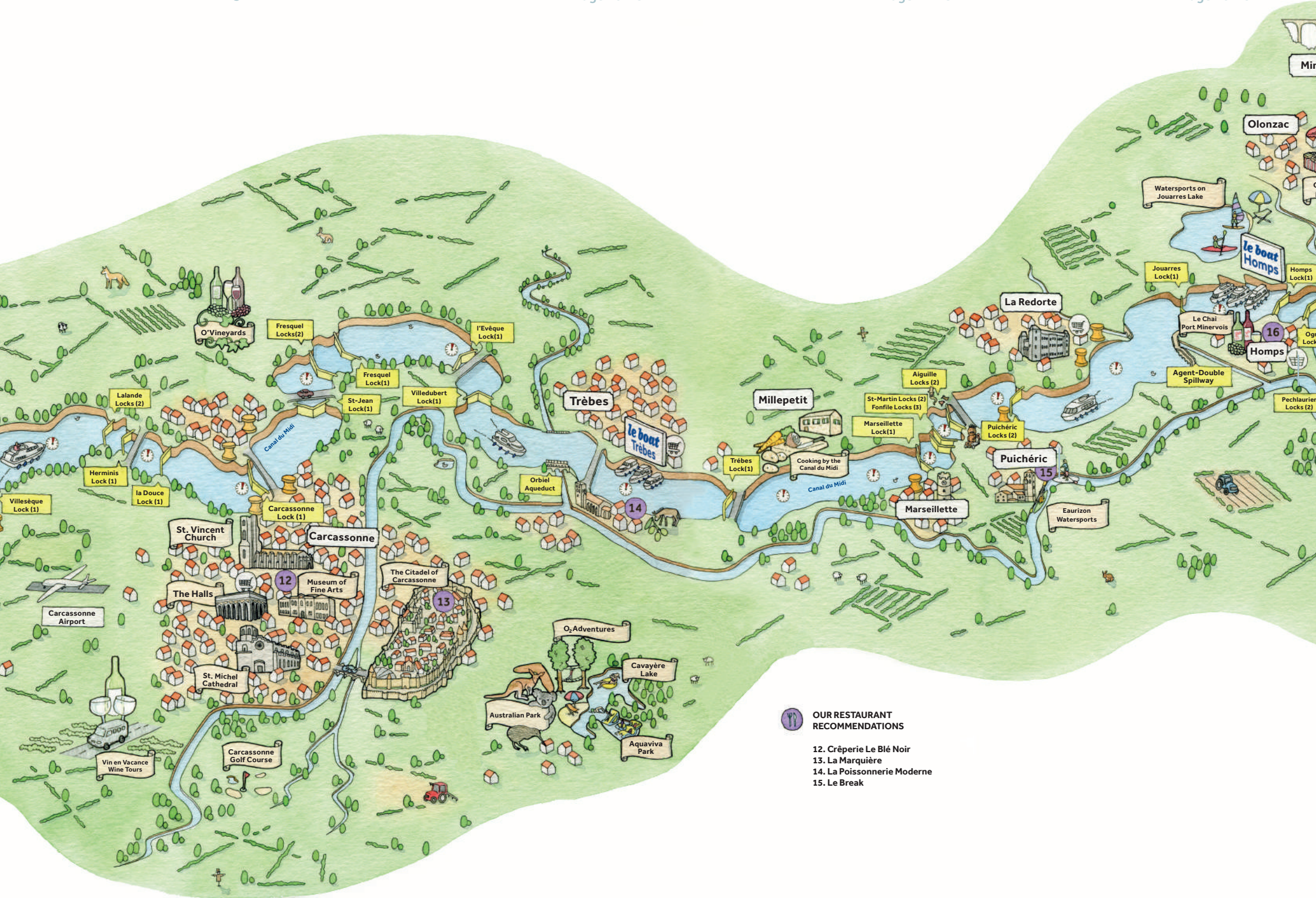
Sauzens Lock (1)

Bétéille Lock (1)

Villepinte Lock (1)

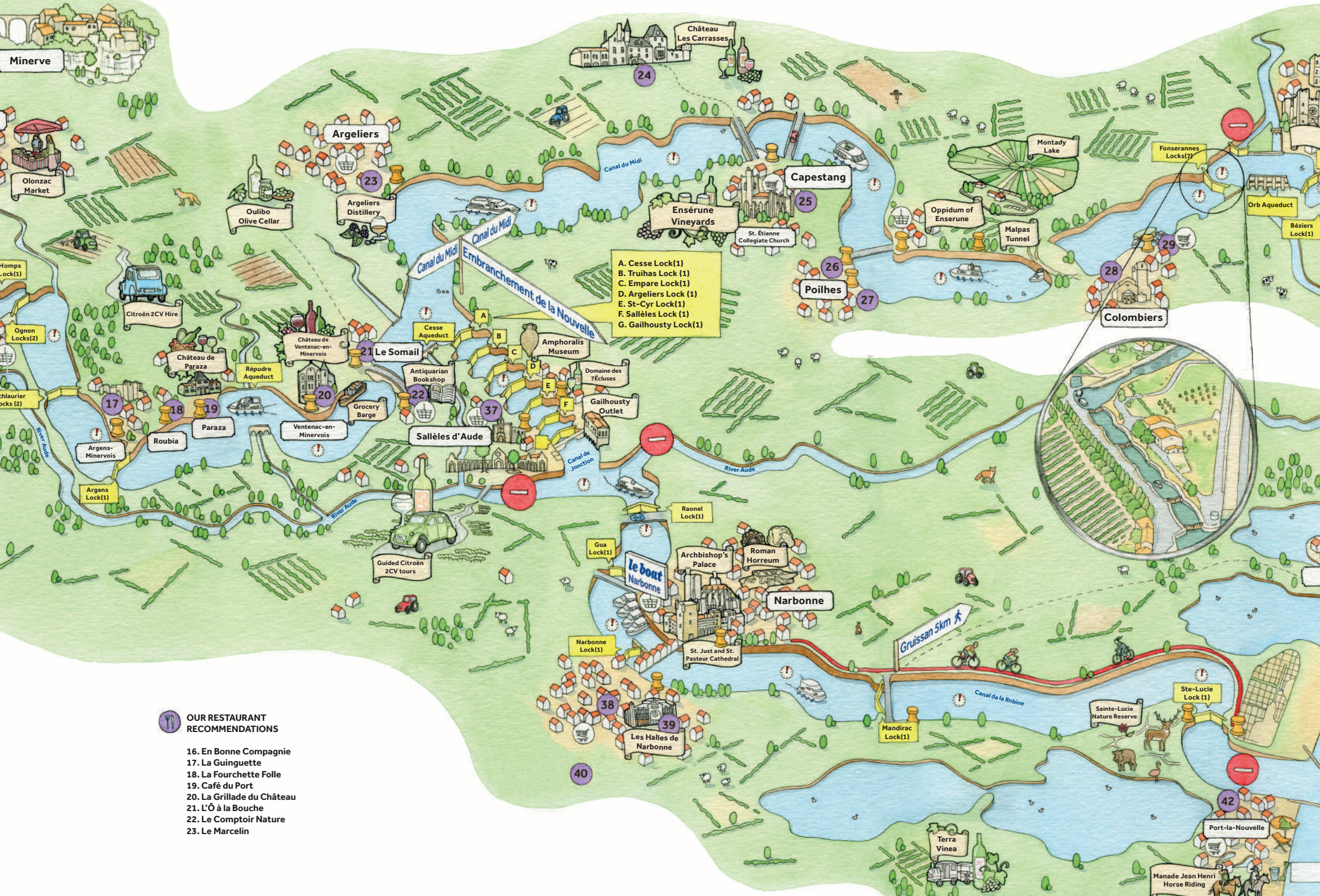
Bram Lock (1)

10



OUR RESTAURANT RECOMMENDATIONS

- 12. Crêperie Le Blé Noir
- 13. La Marquière
- 14. La Poissonnerie Moderne
- 15. Le Break



 OUR RESTAURANT RECOMMENDATIONS

- 16. En Bonne Compagnie
- 17. La Guinguette
- 18. La Fourchette Folle
- 19. Café du Port
- 20. La Grillade du Château
- 21. L'Ô à la Bouche
- 22. Le Comptoir Nature
- 23. Le Marcelin

- A. Cesse Lock(1)
- B. Truihas Lock(1)
- C. Empare Lock(1)
- D. Argeliers Lock(1)
- E. St-Cyr Lock(1)
- F. Sallèles Lock(1)
- G. Gailhousty Lock(1)



OUR RESTAURANT RECOMMENDATIONS

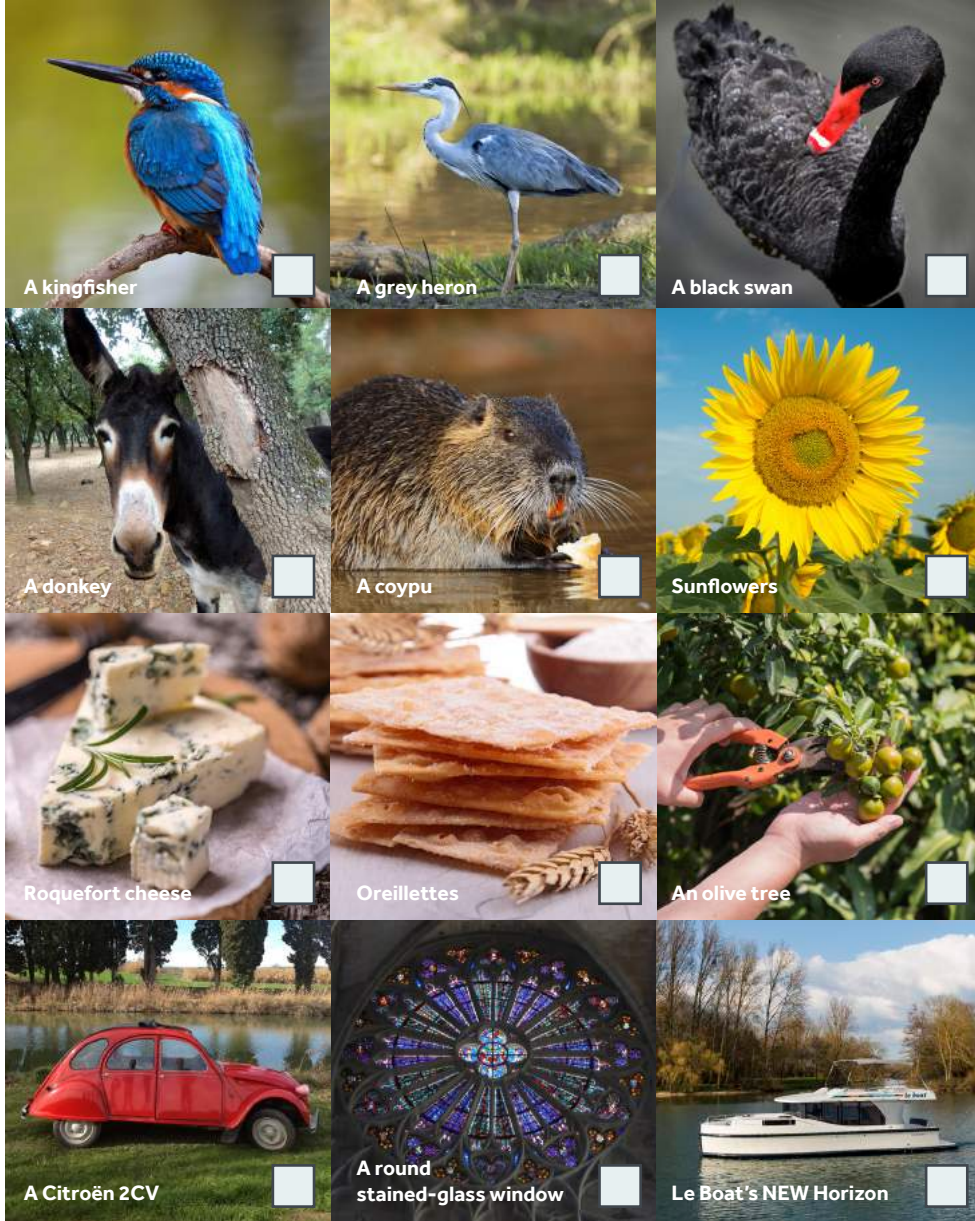
- 24. Château Les Carrasses
- 25. La Table du Vigneron
- 26. La Tour Sarrasine
- 27. Vinauberge
- 28. Au Lavoir
- 29. Chez l'Éclusier
- 30. La Raffinerie
- 31. Chez Jpetto
- 32. Octopus
- 33. L'Écluse
- 34. Les Enfants Terribles
- 35. Le Rendez-vous des Bateliers
- 36. Mare Nostrum

OUR RESTAURANT RECOMMENDATIONS

- 37. Chez Hervé
- 38. Les Table des Cuisiniers Cavistes
- 39. Chez Bebel
- 40. Les Grande Buffet
- 41. Plan B
- 42. Le XV

Can you spot them all?

Come on kids... keep your eyes peeled and see how many of the following you can find while on holiday!



Help the tree replanting programme

The iconic plane trees that line much of the Canal du Midi and the Embranchement de la Nouvelle are under threat from an incurable disease. The only way to control the disease is to cut down infected trees to prevent it spreading. Since the disease was detected on the Midi in 2006, over 15,000 of the canal's 42,000 plane trees have been cut down. It is feared that all 42,000 trees will eventually have to be removed over the next decade.



The fight is not over however, and huge stretches of the canal remain unaffected so far. A major replanting operation is currently underway, with thousands of new trees being planted (either hardier plane trees or pines, poplars and oaks), to preserve the character of the canal for years to come.

How can you help?

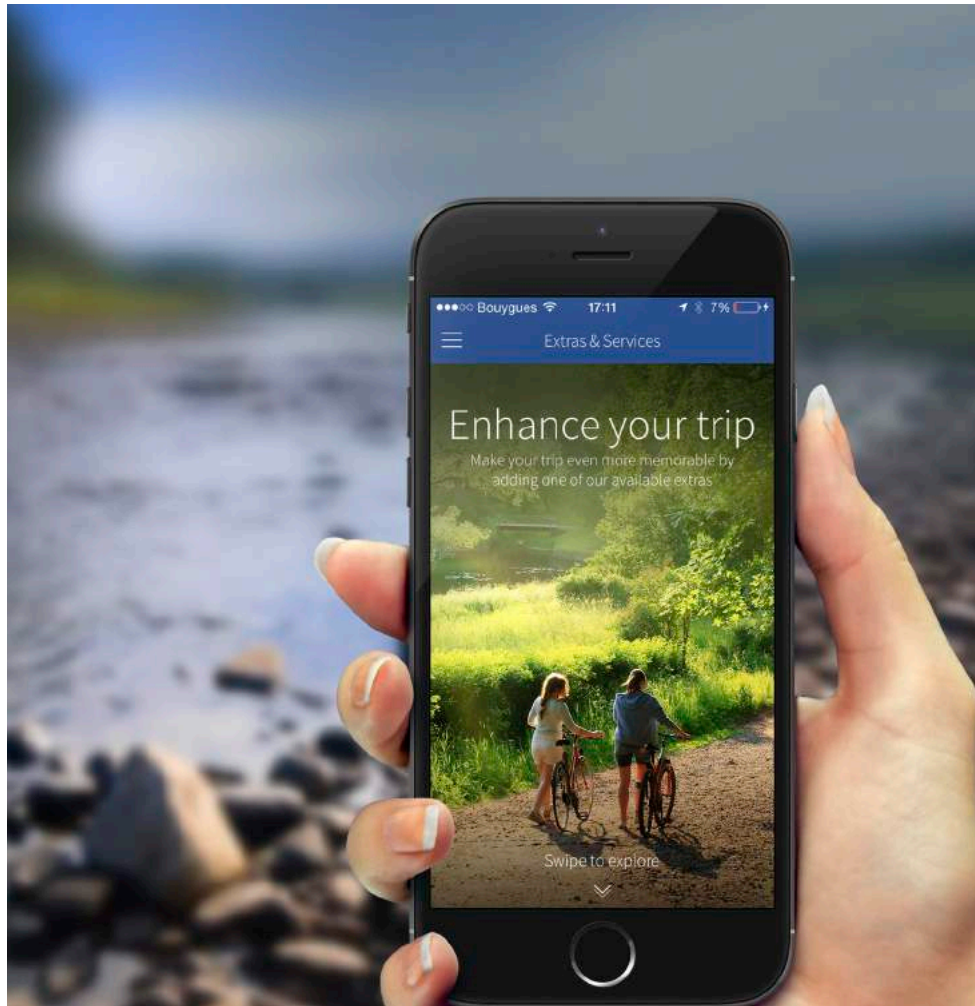
Do not damage trees and moor in places where there are no plane trees, infected or otherwise. Do not tie ropes around trees, do not lean bicycles against trees and if you use mooring pins, disinfect them afterwards in the blue boxes provided at many locks. The VNF, the French waterways authority, are raising funds to help tackle the problem and assist with the re-planting programme. You can make a donation at replantonslecanaldumidi.fr/en/make-a-donation



Download our app

Our brilliant and free app is the ideal cruising companion to guide you as you cruise. GPS will pinpoint your location on the canal and show you what's coming up. All the towns, villages and attractions featured in this Guide will be pinpointed on the app's interactive map... plus many more besides. And it can help you find those attractions once you've moored as well.

Our app is free for everyone to download, whether you have booked with Le Boat or not. Simply search 'Le Boat' in the App Store or Google Play.



Useful french phrases

Making an attempt to speaking the local 'lingo' can go a long way in France. Even a simple 'hello' can make the difference between being treated with courtesy and being snubbed in a restaurant or store. We hope the following phrases will help you to hit it off with the locals...

BASICS

Hello	Bon jour	Bon-joor
Goodbye	Au revoir	Ah reh-vwarh
Excuse me	Excusez-moi	Ex-kuo-say-mwa
Please / Thank you	S'il vous plaît / Merci	Seal voo play / Mare-see
Yes / No	Oui / Non	Wee / No (like 'fo' in fox)
Do you speak English?	Parlez-vous anglais ?	Par - lay vooz ah(n)-glay

NUMBERS

one	Un (Une)	Aan (Oon)
two	Deux	Deh
three	Trois	Twa
four	Quatre	Cat-ra
five	Cinq	Sank
six	Six	Seese
seven	Sept	Set
eight	Huit	Wheat
nine	Neuf	Nurf
ten	Dix	Deese
eleven	Onze	Ownze
twelve	Douze	Dooze

MOORING

Where can we moor?	Où peut-on s'amarrer ?	Ooh pet-on sah-mai-ri
Can we stay overnight?	Peut-on passer la nuit ici ?	Pet-on passay la newie issy
Is there a charge?	Est-ce payant ?	Ess suh pay-o (like 'fo' in fox)

GETTING AROUND

Can you call a taxi for me to..	Pouvez-vous appeler un taxi pour moi pour aller ...	Poo-vay-vou app-oo-lay ahn taxi poor mwa paw allay
Can you show me the way to..	Pouvez-vous me montrer le chemin pour aller ...	Poo-vay-vou mur mon-tray lur shem-ar paw allay
Is there a bus that goes to...	Y a-t-il un bus qui va à ...	Ee at-till ahn boos key var ar

AT A RESTAURANT OR SHOP

Please can I book a table for... at...	Je souhaiterais réserver une table pour ... à ...	Jur sew-ay-tray rez-erv-vay uhn tab-ler paw ... ah
Do you have menu's in English?	Avez-vous un menu en anglais ?	A-vay voo ahn men-oo ahn ong-lay
Please can I have...	S'il vous plaît, puis-je avoir...	Seal voo play, po-eej av-war...
Rare / medium / well done	Saignant / à point / bien cuit	Sen-yor / a-pwoh / bee-an quée
I would like... of those/ these	Je voudrais ... de ceci	Jur vous-dray... dur seh-see

TIME

... 'o' clock	...heures	Urh
Quarter past [one]	[une] heure et quart	[oon] urh ay kar
Half past [one]	[une] heure et demi	[oon] urh ay dem-ee
Quarter to [one]	[une] heure moins le quart	Oonn] urh mwa ler kar

Events and festivals



Béziers Feria

Bastille Day - 14th July

Practically every Languedoc village, town and city celebrates this national holiday and many have a fire work display. Carcassonne's pyrotechnic show however, is something else! It takes place in and around the ramparts of the walled city and the grand finale gives the impression of the whole citadel being ablaze.

Béziers Feria - Mid August

Feria is a big, four-day party with bullfighting at its heart. Love it or hate it, it's a big part of the Languedoc calendar and a way of life here. If you'd rather not see the bullfighting, the streets and public squares of the town are filled with people dancing and having a good time.

Chancing upon a local fiesta can make a holiday extra special. Here are some of the major spectacles that take place, every year, in this region...

Toulouse 'Rio Loco' Music Festival - June

Every year, more than 100,000 people gather on the banks of the River Garonne for four days of music, exhibitions and open-air cinema by artists from all around the world.

Carcassonne Festival - July

The Carcassonne Festival is a major international event where Carcassonne's prestigious sites of historical significance become the stage for theatre, circus, opera, dance and concerts. Past performers include Elton John, James Blunt and Don Giovanni.

Castelnaudary Cassoulet Festival - August

This celebration of the region's most famous dish draws crowds from all over, who come to eat, drink and dance. There are street markets, water jousting, children's sideshows and a parade. Visitors are encouraged to wear blue and white, the traditional festival colours.



Cassoulet Festival

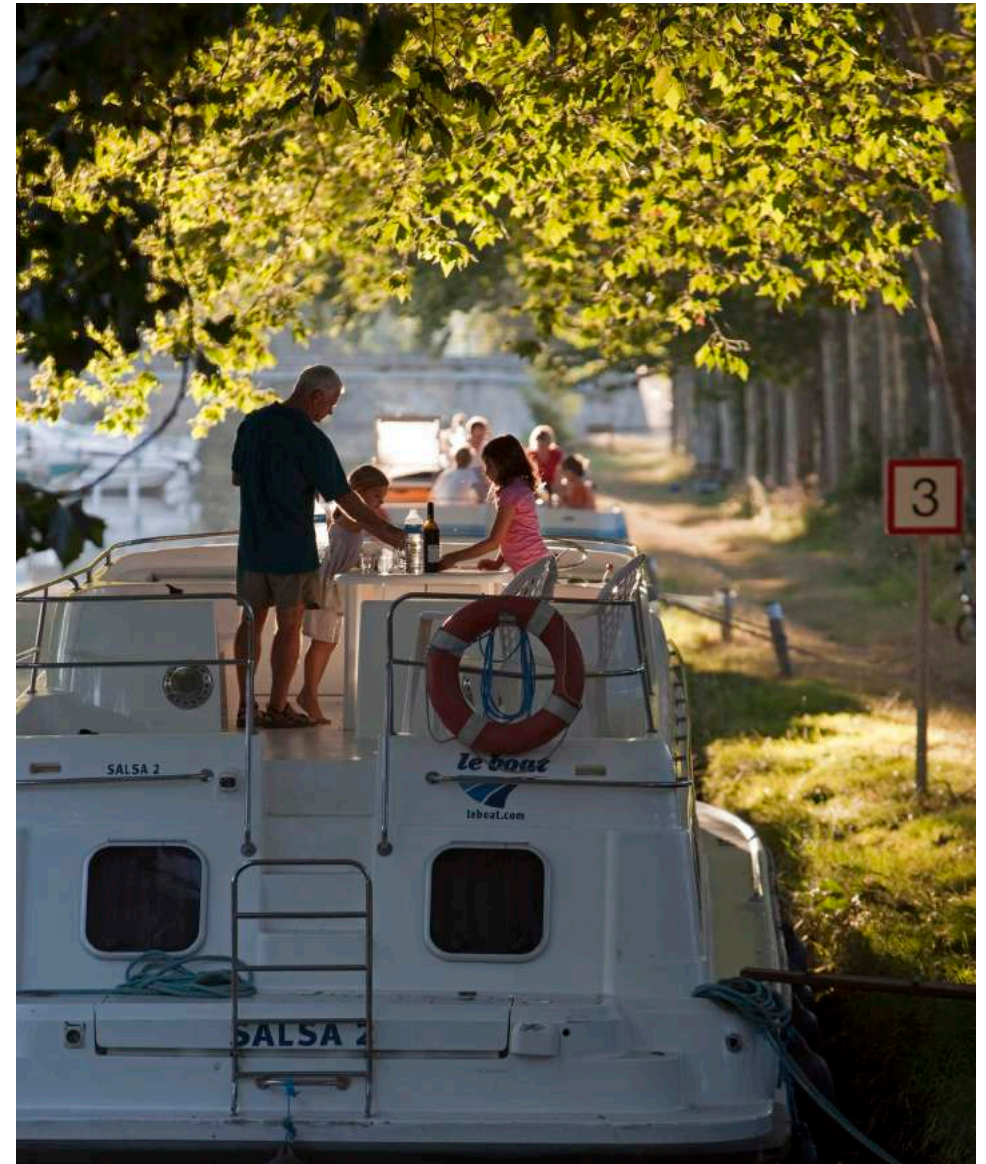


Fireworks in Carcassonne

We'd love to hear from you

We hope you've found this Guide useful, whether you've been busy researching your holiday or have been referring to it as you cruise. We'd love to get your feedback, good or bad, and any suggestions to improve its contents for future editions are always very welcome.

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BEYOND THE MIDI

Le Boat offer the chance to explore the beautiful waterways in eight countries across Europe: France (nine different regions including Brittany, Burgundy and Camargue), Germany, Belgium, Holland; Venice in Italy, the Thames in England, the Caledonian Canal in Scotland and the River Shannon in Ireland.

Photography and images provided by:

Gracie Davies, Stuart Pierce, Martha Helper, OMT Carcassonne, A.Piechta, Office de Tourisme du Canal du Midi, Jean Lecuyer (Not Pottery), OTI Haut Minervois, Philippe Benoist, Julian Ramsch, Kira Malcherowitz, Joceyln Hoffman, Photoendances (Fonserannes), Christian Féménias, Pierre Arnaud, (Éphèbe Museum), salleslesdaude.fr, Office de Tourisme de Gruissan, Christian Ferrer (Sainte-Lucie), Mairie de Port la Nouvelle, Mairie Narbonne. And thanks to the restaurants and attractions featured within this Guide who have supplied images as well.

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