

BÉZIERS

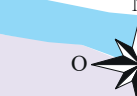
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BÉZIERS... A MONUMENT !

FROM THE 9 LOCKS TO THE CATHEDRAL, AND A GRAND TOUR OF THE CITY

1 OLD BRIDGE

➤ Pont-Vieux Avenue > E4



Until 1858, it was the only bridge across the River Orb on the road into, or out of Béziers. The "Old Bridge", built in the 13th century, has resisted all the River Orb's floods and all the invasions. In the 18th century, a king of France mention this bridge in a letter, that is "very old, magnificent and very large". It is 260 m

long, 5 m wide, reserved for pedestrians, and marks the beginning of the pedestrian path up to the cathedral, along the city walls.

2 EMILÉ AÏN GARDEN (VIEWPOINT)

➤ 4, Place des Alliés > E4-E5



Emile Aïn, a member of the Resistance and mayor of Béziers (1947-1953), gave his name to this attractive public park on the banks of the River Orb, sandwiched between the Pont Vieux and the Pont Neuf, in the Faubourg district. This is where you can enjoy the most beautiful view of Béziers.

3 ST NAZAIRE AND ST CELSE CATHEDRAL

➤ Albigenian Square > F4



The cathedral was built on the site of a Roman temple dedicated to Emperor Augustus (some remnants can still be seen in the crypt). The base of the building is almost all that remains of the Romanesque cathedral built in the 12th century, set on fire during the Albigenian Crusade in 1209. The upper part of the cathedral was rebuilt in Gothic style in the mid-13th century. It has been listed as a Historic Monument since 1840.

4 RÉVOLUTION SQUARE

➤ F4



The name of the square commemorates the "conservative coup d'état" carried out by Louis-Napoléon Bonaparte (the future Napoleon III) in 1852. The people of Béziers were fiercely republican and rose up in opposition. It all ended badly. This story is told on the monument, which was built next to the wall of the episcopal palace. But the Place de la Révolution is also one of the most pleasant squares in Béziers today, with the apse of the cathedral as a focal point. A gurgling fountain (emerging from the cathedral cloister), rustling plane trees and majestic, colourful façades.

5 FAYET MUSEUM

➤ 9, Capus street > F3



The Fayet Mansion House, built in the 18th century is one of the most beautiful architectural gems of the city. Originally owned by the Fayet family, it was transformed into a museum after the township bought it in 1966. The Fayet museum now exhibits part of the extraordinary collection of paintings (including Delacroix, Géricault, Corot) belonging to the town.

6 FORUM SQUARE

➤ F3



Its renaissance is recent (2013). The façades all around (17th, 18th and 19th centuries), have been restored to all their architectural glory, after the Post Office building was demolished. The square was built on the site of the original forum, along the lines of all Roman cities. It is right at the intersection between the "cardo" and the "decumanus", the north-south and east-west axes of the city. Today, people have dinner, relax and enjoy the lights of Languedoc in this "new Forum". Facing it is the **Town Hall**, dating from 1729 in its present form. But Béziers town hall is a very old building. Since the first stone was laid by the Consuls (the town council of the time) in the 13th century, it has always been used as the municipal headquarters.

7 ST CYR SQUARE

➤ Canterelles Street > F4



Here, you are in the heart of the history of Béziers and even of Antiquity: it is on this square that Saint-Aphrodise, evangelizer and first bishop of Béziers, was beheaded in the 4th century. Place Saint-Cyr borders the Rue Canterelles, the oldest street in the city : it is the ancient "Heraklian way", and Hannibal, his army and his 34 elephants walked there, on their journey to Rome (218 BC). 100 years later, a Roman general renamed the road "Domitian Way".

8 SAINT-MAGDALENA CHURCH

➤ St Magdalena Square > F3



This beautiful romanesque church (12th century) with its austere whiteness, both inside and out, was the scene of two bloody episodes in the history of Béziers. First, the assassination of its lord, the Viscount Raymond Ist Trencavel, by the burgers of Béziers on 15 October 1167. And above all, the massacre of the population of Béziers by troops sent to combat the Cathar heresy on 22 July 1209. People took refuge in the Madeleine Church but were "run through with swords".

9 THE TOWN THEATRE

➤ Allées Paul Riquet > G3



The theatre was designed by Charles Isabelle and its façade decorated with bas-relief sculptures by David d'Angers. It was inaugurated in 1844. Since then, the theatre, with a capacity for around 500 people, has conserved its original Italian-style decoration with gilded wood. A unique decor in France ! From September to June, there is still a full programme of plays, concerts and ballets.

10 PAUL RIQUET ALLEYS

➤ G3-G4



A walk along the "Béziers Ramblas" (400 m long), follows the former moat running alongside the Béziers ramparts, that were demolished in 1827 and the stone used to fill up the moat and to build most of the Haussmannian-style buildings and houses on either side of the Allées. Formerly named the Passejada (the Occitan word for promenade), they've been fully restored in 2022. The bronze statue of Pierre-Paul Riquet, the creator of the Canal du Midi (born in Béziers in 1609) stands half-way of the Allées. It was sculpted by David d'Angers. Riquet looks westward with pride, towards Toulouse, where he started digging his Canal.

11 POETS' GARDEN

➤ Bottom of the Allées Paul Riquet > H4



Symbolising the great prosperity of Béziers in the 19th century, this 5-hectare "English-style" park opened in 1865. It is filled with plants from the five continents and statues of Occitan poets. The park links the train station to Allées Paul Riquet. The wealthy, visitors of the period could go to the theatres in the Allées in an open carriage, enjoying the restful view of a "natural" landscape. The Plateau des Poètes is listed as a Historic Monument it also provides a green setting for the monumental **Titan fountain**. A 17-metre-high sculpture made of bronze and marble, stone and water, sculpted by Béziers-born Jean-Antonin Injalbert, and inaugurated in 1892. The fountain shows the giant Atlas carrying the planet Earth on his back. He is supported in turn by a titan and angels on a shell drawn by horses.

12 NEW PORT

➤ Avenue Pierre-Brousse > G5-H5



The "New Port" is the same age as the Orb Aqueduct. It was built in the 19th century, for the wine trade. Today it hosts the river port and 16 mooring rings. A stroll along the quayside is great fun. And taking a break for lunch, enjoying a drink, watching the boats go by and even playing a game of pétanque is a must in Béziers. Make sure you take a look at the decorations on the Art Nouveau Saint-Félix house on the opposite bank.

13 ORB CANAL BRIDGE

➤ F6



The Orb Aqueduct was opened in 1858. Why was it built? So that trade shipping (and today pleasure boats) could continue to sail along the Canal without having to face the unpredictable and sometimes devastating turbulence of the River Orb, which the boats had previously had to cross. At night, all lit up with blue lights, it shows off its columned spans with a hint of pride.

14 CORDIER WATERMILL

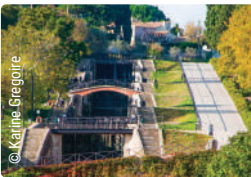
➤ Route de Murviel > E3



At the foot of the town, on the River Orb, the Cordier Mill, formerly known as the "Bishop's Mill", is the source of a technical masterpiece. Jean-Marie Cordier, a hydraulic engineer from Béziers, diverted the water from the Orb to the town centre in 1827. This made Béziers one of the first cities in France to have an abundance of water of excellent quality at a time when there was a great shortage of drinking water.

15 THE 9 LOCKS

➤ Rue du Canal Royal > C1-C2



Since 1680, thanks to Pierre-Paul Riquet and over 12,000 workers, the locks have welcomed hundreds of thousands of boats and barges. Since 2017 the site has been fully renovated. Its 9 gates and 8 basins welcome visitors and sailors from all over the world.

16 THE OLD CEMETERY

➤ Avenue du Cimetière Vieux > F1-F1



The Old Cemetery is over 200 years old. It is as much a Mediterranean garden with its pines and cypresses as it is an open-air museum. This eternal resting place of the great families and of local artists shows how they all wanted to assert their wealth and social status, even in death. Tombs and mausoleums are very ornate, impressive : bronze, marble, statues, mosaics are gathered in these 4ha of Béziers. Greek, Egyptian and even Masonic temples, symbols of all kinds around.

17 ST APHRODISÉ BASILICA

➤ Rue du Puits de la Courte > G2



The pre-Romanesque basilica of Saint Aphrodise (8th cent., reworked from the 12th to the 14th cent.) is built over the tomb of the evangelizing saint, and first bishop of Béziers: Aphrodise. A former Egyptian priest of the cult of Amon, the legend says that he left everything to follow Jesus Christ, after having sheltered the Holy Family, which was fleeing the "massacre of the Innocents". He left with his camel, evangelized Béziers, and was beheaded by the Romans on Square St Cyr. Then, with his head under his arm, he would have crossed the city to a cave, where he laid down and died : it is said to be the current crypt of the basilica. However, it is known that the church was built on top of an early Christian necropolis. Open all year on Fridays (2-5 pm) . In July and August on Mondays and Thursdays (10-am-1pm).

18 THE ROMAN AMPHITHEATRE

➤ 12, rue du Moulin à Huile > G4



Built in 80 A.D. on the Saint-Jacques hill, the Roman amphitheatre could accommodate up to 13,000 spectators. There are only a few remains, the building having been used in the Middle Ages as a quarry (notably for the Saint-Jacques church) for building. Re-opened in 1992, it has undergone an extensive campaign of excavations and rehabilitation : elements visible from the ground were rediscovered. (vomitories, ambulatories, columns...).

19 THE CHAPEL OF THE BLUE FRIARS (FRANCISCANS)

➤ Corner of rue du 4-Septembre and rue Guibal > G3



14th - 15th centuries. Its choir and several bays were destroyed in the 19th century, at the same time as the ramparts against which it was built. On the left wall, at the entrance, is a beautiful ex-voto: the exact 18th-century model of a gunboat commissioned by Louis XVI for the Languedoc region. This warship patrolled the coasts of the Biterrois region to deter 'barbarian pirates'...

HISTORICAL FRESCOES IN BÉZIERS

01 JEAN MOULIN, NATIONAL HERO

Corner Place Lavabre and Rue Mairan
Hero of the French Resistance. Born in Béziers in 1899, died - as a result of the torture he endured - ; on the train taking him to deportation in 1943. His paintings gallery expressed his passion for drawing, painting ; and allowed him to travel in occupied France under his « art dealer » cover.

02 THE PATHS OF COMPOSTELA

33, rue Saint-Jacques (pignon de l'école Sadi-Carnot)
You are on the 'camin romieu' ('the road from Rome' in occitan) to Compostela, which passes through Béziers, via the church of Saint-Jacques (of course), the 'Buon Camino' gîte, the Old Bridge... Follow the bronze cabochons set in the ground.

03 "THE WINEMAKERS' REVOLT OF 1907"

Corner rue des Capucins and 30 rue St Jacques
In March 1907, an unprecedented crisis hit the winemaking profession, plunging winemakers into poverty. Marcelin Albert (upstairs, at the balcony), a café owner and winemaker, launched a campaign of demonstrations to attract politicians' attention to the issue. The revolt was drowned in blood. But in Béziers, the 17th Infantry Regiment refused "to fire on their own" and downed their weapons. The winemakers' revolt led to laws regulating the production and quality of wine.

07 THE 9 LOCKS

17, avenue du Colonel d'Ornano et angle avenue Valentin-Duc
The original name of the 9 locks on the Canal du Midi, in Béziers, was the " the Neptune staircase " . A name dedicated to King Louis XIV by Pierre-Paul Riquet, the Beziers-born man who imagined and built the Canal du Midi.

08 LA COMMEDIA DELL'ARTE

Arrière du théâtre municipal, Place de la Victoire
The 2017 painting evokes the Commedia dell'Arte and is the work of the A-Fresco workshop. It runs along all the rear façade of the municipal theatre. It shows a mischievous Harlequin and brings a blind wall to life, while paying homage to the site's vocation.

09 MOLIÈRE'S "LOVER'S RESENTMENT"

9 avenue Alphonse Mas
It was just a few steps from there that Jean-Baptiste Poquelin, known as Molière, performed his very first play in 1656... in Béziers. Before embarking on a very brilliant career, whose fame has spanned the centuries.

09 CAMILLE SAINT-SAËNS

9 Place St Esprit
He was often the guest of his donor, Castelbon de Beauhostes, whose town mansion stands on the square where this mural was painted. Castelbon was a very rich winemaker who funded the construction of the arenas of Beziers. Because of its incredible acoustics, operas were staged there. One of them was Camille Saint-Saëns' "Déjanire", the poster of which can be seen in the trompe l'oeil.

10 L'ARLÉSIENNE

Forefront Of Boieldieu Street
Allées Paul Riquet
Well no, the Arlesian is not... Arlesian. But from Beziers. Her name was Marie Cauffopé and her family had a shop in this very spot of the town. Her tragic love story with the nephew of the great writer Frédéric Mistral became the argument of an opera set to music by Georges Bizet.

11 JEAN-JACQUES DORTOUS DE MAIRAN

18 rue Mairan
This elegant gentleman wearing a wig and frock coat is a mathematician and astronomer from Béziers (1678-1771), member of the Academy of Sciences, and of the French Academy, correspondent of all the scientists of Europe in his time. His astronomical works were so remarkable... that a crater on the Moon bears his name!

12 THE COOPERS

Rue Tiquetonne
(Corner of Rue des Balances)
The street bears a name whose sound resounds, like that of the hammers on the iron hoops, when the coopers made these wooden containers, so representative of the most flourishing industry in Beziers : winegrowing.

13 THE RUGBYMEN OF BÉZIERS

Rue Noël-Sylvestre
The Béziers rugby club, created in 1911, has won the Brennus Shield (which, since 1892, symbolises the title of Champion de France) 11 times. Béziers is thus the 3rd most successful club in French rugby (after Toulouse and Racing Club-Paris). (Off plan).

14 CASIMIR PÉRET, A REPUBLICAN HERO

Place Louis Germain
Casimir Péret, the mayor of Béziers, and a fierce republican, headed the resistance to the coup d'Etat carried out by Louis-Napoléon Bonaparte (the future Napoleon III) in 1851. He was arrested, put

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LES TROMPE-L'OEIL
DE BÉZIERS

on trail and sentenced to penal servitude. He was deported to Cayenne (French Guiana) and died while attempting to escape on 16 October 1855.

15 HONORÉ DESTIENNE DORVÈS, HÉROS DE LA RÉSISTANCE

21, avenue Alphonse Mas
Officer of the French Navy, he was one of the first heroes and martyrs of the French Resistance during WW2. Arrested, tortured, tried and convicted, with all his intelligence network, he was shot on 29 August 1941.

16 THE ARRIVAL OF THE FIRST TRAIN IN BÉZIERS

Rue Alfred de Vigny
The first train entered the brand new station at Béziers on 22 April 1857. At the time, the train belonged to the « Railway Company du Midi » (and yes, strangely, it was the owner of the Canal du Midi), which held the concession for the line from Bordeaux to Sète. And this innovation in transport changed the destiny of the Beziers region, which would thus export its wine everywhere !

17 VISCOUNT RAIMON TRENCAVEL

15/17 Rue de la Citadelle
Raimon-Roger Trencavel, Viscount of Béziers, Carcassonne, lord of Agde and Razès, lived only 24 years : opposed to the Crusaders of the King of France and of the Pope, who went on a 'hunt for the Cathar heretics' (1209 - 1229), he lost everything, including his life, in 1209, after the conquest of Beziers and Carcassonne by his enemies.

18 ANTONIN MOULIN

Place Antonin Moulin
Jean Moulin's father was, like his son, a staunch republican. Originally from the Provence region, he was appointed professor of French and Latin at Henri IV Highschool. He was then elected and became deputy mayor of Béziers Mayor Alphonse Mas. He founded in 1899 the Beziers section section of the League of Human Rights.

19 THE CATHEDRAL

Place des Provinces
This beautiful work marks the entrance to Béziers, when you come from Pézenas. The cathedral Saint-Nazaire on its acropolis... it's the whole city and its long history that you look at. (Off plan).



HEAD OFFICE

MAIL PLEIN SUD

➤ 1 av. du Président Wilson 34500 Béziers

OUR TOURIST INFORMATION CENTRES BÉZIERS

➤ Towncentre - Place du Forum
➤ Canal du Midi - 9 Écluses de Fonseranes
➤ Canal harbour master's office - Quai Port-Neuf

VALRAS-PLAGE

➤ Centre Station

SÉRIGNAN

➤ Visitors' Centre - Les Orpellières - Sérignan-Plage

VILLENEUVE-LÈS-BÉZIERS

➤ The barge - Rives du Canal du Midi

BASSAN

➤ Point i mobile - Place Jacques Villeneuve

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BÉZIERS

MAP OF BÉZIERS

BÉZIERS

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