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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 XIIIth century, has resisted all the River Orb's floods and all the invasions. In the XVth century, a king of France mentions it in a letter, as "very old, magnificent and very large". It is reserved for pedestrians, and marks the beginning of the pedestrian path up to the cathedral, along the city walls.

## 2 EMILIE AÏN GARDEN (VIEWPOINT)

➤ 4, Place des Alliés > E4-E5



Emilie 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

➤ Albigensian Square > F4



The cathedral was built on the site of a Roman temple dedicated to Emperor Augustus. The base of the building is almost all that remains of the Romanesque cathedral built in the 12th century, set on fire during the Albigensian 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 is also one of the most pleasant squares in Béziers, with the apse of the cathedral as a focal point. A gurgling fountain (transported 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 XVIIth 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 town 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. The square was built on the site of the original forum, just like every Roman 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 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: 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

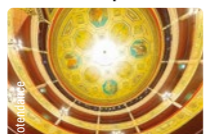
➤ St Magdalena Square > F3



This Romanesque church (12th century) with its austere whiteness, 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 burghers of Béziers in 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



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! dans la salle d'environ 500 places. Cas unique en France! De septembre à juin, on y programme toujours pièces de théâtre, concerts et 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. 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

➤ Bas des 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, prestigious visitors of the period could go to the theatres and cafés in the Allées in an open carriage, enjoying the restful view of a "natural" landscape right at the heart of the city. The Plateau 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.

## 13 ORB CANAL BRIDGE

➤ F6



The Orb Aqueduct was opened in 1858. Why was it built? So that trade shipping (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 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.

# BÉZIERS MÉDITERRANÉE

Sous le soleil, exactement

## 16 THE OLD CEMETERY

➤ Avenue du Cimetière Vieux > F1-G1



It is over 200 years old. It is as much a Mediterranean garden with its pines and cypresses as an open-air museum. This eternal resting place of the great families-winegrowers or not- 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.

## 17 ST APHRODISÉ BASILICA

➤ Rue du Puits de la Courte > G2



The pre-Romanesque basilica of Saint Aphrodise is built over the cave that serves as the tomb of the evangelizing saint, patron saint and first bishop of Béziers: Aphrodise. A former Egyptian priest of the cult of Amon, the legend says that Aphrodise left everything to follow Jesus Christ, after having sheltered the Holy Family, 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, to bury himself there.

## 18 THE ROMAN AMPHITHEATRE

➤ 12, rue du Moulin à Huile > G4



Built in 80 A.D. on Saint-Jacques hill, the Roman amphitheatre of Béziers 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 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. (tiers, vomitories, ambulatories, columns...)

## 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-Camot)  
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' gite, 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.

### 04 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.

### 05 JEAN-ANTONIN INJALBERT

Place des Bons Amis, angle rue Viennet  
He is a Béziers-born sculptor. You can see him here at his balcony, on the 1st floor, along with two of his major works: the Bust of Marianne (symbol of the French Republic), made for the centenary of the French Revolution in 1889, it was seen in every French town hall and school in the late 19th and early 20th century. To his right is his bronze and marble Titan, presiding over the Plateau des Poètes park. Above, on the 2nd floor, is one of his mentors, the sculptor Jules Dalou.

### 06 JEAN-MARIE CORDIER

Angle Place de la Victoire et pignon du 5, avenue Clémenceau  
This 120 m² fresco is a homage to Jean-Marie Cordier, the hydraulic engineer from Béziers, who brought drinking water to the upper part of the city in 1827. The women of the city had much to thank him for, since he freed them from the long, dangerous and exhausting climbs and descents to take water from the River Orb in their heavy terracotta pitchers.

### 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 Béziers-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 HONORÉ DESTIENNE D'ORVES, 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.

### 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 Béziers: 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).

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

### 15 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.

### PLUS D'INFOS SUR LES TROMPE-L'ŒIL DE BÉZIERS

➤ [www.beziers-mediterranee.com](http://www.beziers-mediterranee.com)

### HEAD OFFICE

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MAP OF BÉZIERS

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