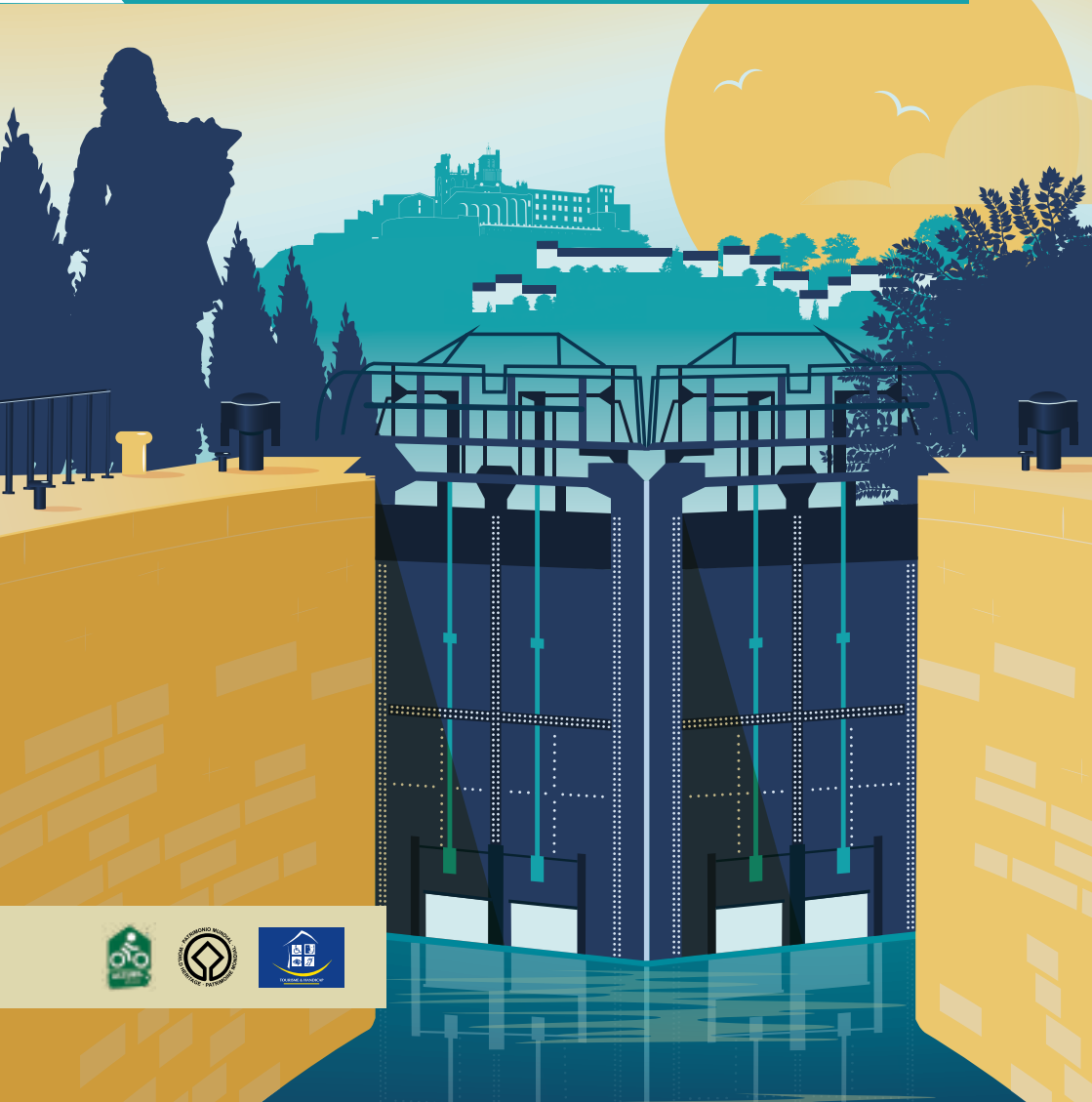




THE FONSERANES 9 LOCKS AND THE CANAL DU MIDI






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Layout: Comm. Ville/Agglo service. Printing: Combes & Hund. Advertising: DIXICOM
Alcohol abuse is dangerous for your health. Consume in moderation.


SITE MAP


- 1 PARKING TICKET MACHINE
- 2 FOOTBRIDGE TO THE SITE
- 3 17TH CENTURY MODEL OF BÉZIERS AND ITS AREA, VISTA
- 4 VISITOR CENTRE - TOURIST INFORMATION, IMMERSIVE CINEMA ETC.
- 5 JETTY FOR ELECTRIC BOATS - CRUISE
- 6 RAMP OFF THE LOCKS
- 7 LOCK-KEEPERS' ISLAND
- 8 PLACE DU BASSIN - PUBLIC LAVATORIES
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- 10 PICNIC AREA
- 11 CRUISE BOAT JETTY
- 12 FOOTBRIDGE
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- 14 BELVEDERE
- 15 WATER SLOPE



TOWPATH
EUROVÉLO 8 «the Mediterranean by bike»
V 80: the Canal des 2 mers by bike
Towards Colombiers, the Malpas tunnel
and Capestang

 SHADED AREAS

 HIKING AND BIKING TRAILS
« FROM THE 9 LOCKS TO THE CATHEDRAL »

 DEPARTURE OF THE HIKING TRAIL,
TOWARDS THE CATHEDRAL

TOWPATH
EUROVÉLO 8 «the Mediterranean by bike»
V 80: «the Canal des 2 mers by bike»
Towards the canal-bridge,
the Quai Port-Neuf, Béziers centre,
Villeneuve and Cers



Connecting the Atlantic to the Mediterranean via a canal to both avoid pirate attacks in the Strait of Gibraltar and shorten the lengthy freight route... The Romans thought about it. Charlemagne planned it. So did François I, Henri IV. But it was Béziers-born Pierre-Paul Riquet who made it happen during the reign of Louis XIV.

THE CANAL DU MIDI IN FIGURES

► LENGTH:

240 KM

between Toulouse and Sète

► CONSTRUCTION SITE STAFF:

11,400 men

and **600** women

► VEGETATION:

42 000 planetrees planted, between Toulouse and Sète in the 19th century. Due to disease, they are currently being replaced by trees that suit the Mediterranean climate (hackberry, strawberry tree etc.).

► VISITOR NUMBERS:

over **8 000** boats go through the Fonseranes locks in Béziers every year between March and late October

► DEPTH:

2M average

► WIDTH:

20-24M

► STRUCTURES:

63 locks, and **350** bridges, spillways, reservoirs, etc.

► CONSTRUCTION DURATION:

14 YEARS (1667-1681)

► EXTENSION:

to the Atlantic from Toulouse to Bordeaux, via the channel lateral to the Garonne river

193 KM

long, inaugurated 1856

► OWNER : THE STATE

350 people from Voies Navigables de France provide peace and safety to Canal du Midi users

► NUMBER OF LOCKS

There are **12** locks on the Canal du Midi, in its crossing of Béziers Méditerranée

THE CANAL DU MIDI IN DATES

1609

Birth of Pierre-Paul Riquet in Béziers

1666

With Colbert's support, Louis XIV authorised Riquet to start work

1667

First stone of the Canal laid

OCT 1ST 1680

Pierre-Paul Riquet dies in Toulouse

MAY 24TH 1681

Official inauguration of the Canal Royal du Languedoc, renamed the Canal du Midi after the Revolution

1984

Inauguration of the water slope

1990

Last commercial freight boats on the Canal du Midi

OCTOBER 1996

Listing of the Fonseranes 9 Locks on the **Monuments Historiques** (National Heritage)



DECEMBER 1996

Canal du Midi listed as **UNESCO World Heritage of Humanity**



AVRIL 1997

The Canal du Midi is listed among french "protected sites"



2015-2017

Site under construction, for a complete renovation and upgrading.

2018

The Fonseranes 9 locks are listed among "Occitany grand sites".





THE WORK OF ONE ENTHUSIAST

Pierre-Paul Riquet was certainly a genius, visionary, sharp strategist and... a bit mad.

- **GENIUS:** who would have thought a tax inspector (or «Languedoc salt tax recipient» as it was known at the time) would be behind a structure as huge as the Canal du Midi? Solving the issue of its water supply that people had been trying to crack since Roman times. Hats off...
- **VISIONARY:** Riquet's canal fuelled the economic and agricultural boom in the Languedoc; he provided thousands of labourers with working conditions that enraged factory bosses at the time... He took away the King of Spain's tidy port taxes and Louis XIV loved him for it. Not bad...
- **STRATEGIST:** despite bringing fortune and life to the area, Pierre-Paul Riquet worked for the Languedoc's future by leaving it a masterpiece that is now famous the world over. And he secured his family's financial future with taxes and excise. Smart inheritance...
- **A BIT MAD:** throwing himself into a project like this (the 2nd biggest during Louis XIV's reign after Versailles) when he was 58 -a ripe old age back then- is a sign of an eccentric mind. But he did it and hung in there almost until the end.

THE CANAL STRUCTURES

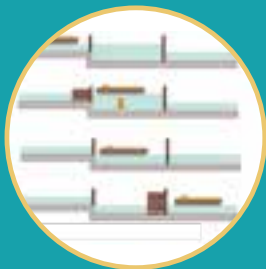


THE FONSERANES 9 LOCKS

Originally made up of a row of nine locks, the Octuple (a row of 8 staircase locks, a unique design in the history of river transport) enabled boats to cover a 13.6m elevation for a 300m length.

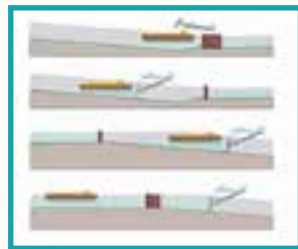
The last lock actually covers a 21.6m elevation level with the Orb River! Pierre-Paul Riquet gifted this wonder of civil engineering - which he called «Neptune's staircase»- to Béziers by building basins and channels in the space of 4 years with unobstructed views of the cathedral and ramparts.

A great tribute to his hometown. Only 7 locks are still in use. They epitomise the Canal du Midi and are ovoid in shape to better withstand the rushing water that pours in every time the basin fills up..



THE FONSERANES WATER SLOPE

Replacing locks with a water slope is common practice in Northern European canals. In Fonseranes, this structure was meant to speed up clearing the 9 locks (half the time) by avoiding the slow journey in the «octuple» next to it and primarily enable modern freight boats to clear with ease (they were too long to enter the 9 locks' traditional basins). But the water slope had countless design faults and only came into use in 1984 when commercial freight was coming to an end. So, in 1990, it ceased activity. Now tourists/ sailors gaze in wonder at this useless machinery as Riquet's trusty locks mock.





THE CANAL BRIDGE

The barges going down Fonseranes had to clear the Orb River before picking up the canal upstream. But they were often hit by the river's random rises in water level which caused many to capsize and sink. The canal bridge took up the slack in 1858: the canal's route was diverted at the 7th lock and ever since barges have sailed alongside the Orb, 12m above the river. It's 28m wide, 240m long and provides boats with access to Port-Neuf. The canal bridge is also where you get some of the best views of the «Béziers Acropolis».



HOW MUCH DID THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE CANAL DU MIDI COST ?

The project was initially valued at 3.6 million livres tournois (the currency used in France until 1795), or 114.6 million Euros. The State (the King) undertook to finance 40% of the project, the Province of Languedoc 40%, with Pierre-Paul Riquet contributing the remaining 20%, from his own funds. But obstacles and pitfalls caused the initial budget to explode: the Canal du Midi ended up costing €477.6 million (408,85 million pounds). An enormous sum for the time obviously, but... Louis XIV's other titanic project, the Château de Versailles, cost 2.6 billion Euros (2,23 billion pounds) ! (*)

(*) Source : Wikipédia and <https://convertisseur-monnaie-ancienne.fr/>

ACTIVITIES

THE VISITOR CENTRE

The «beating heart» of the 9 locks site with everything you need to explore, experience, eat and drink... It's home to:

BÉZIERS MÉDITERRANÉE TOURIST INFORMATION OPEN ALL YEAR:

- April 1st-June 30st : monday-sunday 10 am-6 pm
- July 1st-August 31st : monday-sunday 10 am-7 pm
- Sept. 1st-Oct. 21st : monday-sunday 10 am-6 pm
- Oct. 22nd - November 6th : monday-sunday 10 am-12:30 and 1:30 pm-5 pm
- Nov. 7th-Dec 16th : saturday-sunday 10 am-12:30 and 1:30 pm-5 pm
- Feb. 17th-Jan 2nd : monday-sunday 10am-12:30 and 1:30-5pm

AUDIOGUIDE TOUR: (90 mins) in 14 stages. A free audioguide/vehicle on the car park; 2 €/extra audioguide.

GIFT SHOP: Exciting eco-friendly souvenirs; over 500 different wines and cakes, olives and honey. Bookshop (history, fiction, comics etc.).

The Canal du Midi game, jewellery etc. Visit the ticket office (next to Tourist Information): to set sail on boat rides, captain your own electric boat, hop on the tourist train to central Béziers...



IMMERSIVE CINEMA:

« THE TALE OF THE CANAL DU MIDI »

The 9 locks and Canal du Midi all around you, from the floor to the walls.

DURATION: 14 mins.

SESSIONS 7 days a week
19 people/session.

PRICE: adult 3 €, child (6-12 years old) 2 €, schools 2 €



TREASURE HUNT "ALICE AND THE MAGICAL FOUNTAIN"

Alice is the Canal Archivist's daughter (you know him: the guy with big glasses chatting on the 3D cinema walls!). She found a dusty book of spells on her dad's desk all about a magical fountain in Fonseranes that makes wishes come true. But the fountain's location has been lost... It's time to begin the treasure hunt brought to you by Tourist Information at the 9 Locks site. How about detective tools? a blue backpack with Alice on it containing a puzzle booklet, map, ruler, pencil, magnifying glass and fishing rod. As for Alice with her funny face, pretty dress and top hat, she'll guide treasure hunters on the site (if they listen closely to the puzzles...). Available all year in english too. **DURATION:** 50 minutes **AGE:** 7-11 **PRICE:** €3/backpack



CRUISES AND BOAT EXCURSIONS

Visit the ticket office (next to Tourist Information):
to set sail on boat rides, captain your own electric
boat, hop on the tourist train to central Béziers...

Book at the counter.

LES BATEAUX DU MIDI

Cruises from 2 hrs to a full day, with or without a meal.

PRICES: from 12 to 59 €/adult ; from 8 to 35 €/child
(4-12 years)

☎ (00 33) (0)4 67 36 51 24

LES BATEAUX DU SOLEIL

Cruises for 2 hrs or a full day, with or without a meal.

PRICES: from €16 to € 52/adult, from €10 to €29/child
(4-11 years)

☎ (00 33) (0)4 67 94 08 79

CAP AU SUD

Three guided cruises of 1h, 2 or 3 hours. Passage of
the locks and picnic on board.

PRICES: 13- 27 €/adult, 8-15 €/child (4-11 years old)

☎ (00 33) (0)7 82 09 13 51



BÉZIERS CITY TOUR, BEZIERS TOURIST TRAIN

Explore Béziers, Pierre-Paul
Riquet's hometown (Fonseranes/
central Béziers). Start point
Coche d'Eau Visitor Centre.

Highlight: you can stop and get off
the train in the centre to visit it or go
shopping... Information and booking.

PRICES: 8 €/adult , 5 €/child
(4-11 years), 2 €/pet

INFORMATION AND BOOKING

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CITY CARD



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THE TOURIST OFFICE,
INTERPRETATION
CENTRE

SAILING CALENDAR



The Canal du Midi may be royal... but it's old too! At the grand old age of 343, it needs regular TLC to carry on working. Voies Navigables de France is in charge of its maintenance and upkeep. So it has put a sailing schedule in place for the Canal du Midi. If you want to experience the joys of sailing on the canal, here's some essential information.

SAILING PERIODS

From March 27 to November 5, 2024

NO SAILING

Navigation is interrupted on 1 January, 1 May, 11 November and 25 December 2024

FONSERANES LOCKS, OPERATING HOURS

Period	MORNING				AFTERNOON			
	First descent	Last descent	First ascent	Last ascent	First descent	Last descent	First ascent	Last ascent
From March 27 to April 30	8.40 am	9.25 am	10.15 am	12.15 am	1.15 pm	3.15 pm	4.05 pm	5.45 pm
From May 2 to Sept. 30	8.10 am	9.25 am	10.15 am	12.15 am	1.05 pm	3.20 pm	4.10 pm	6.50 pm
From October 1 to Nov. 3	7.40 am	8.25 am	9.15 am	11.15 am	12.15 pm	14.15 pm	15.05 pm	16.45 pm

The 9 locks, a place to enjoy in many ways



LET'S EAT!

LE 9, THE 9 LOCKS RESTAURANT

Coche d'Eau Visitor Centre

RESTAURANT / BRASSERIE / GLACIER

«Bistronomy» menu, weekly set menus.
Settle down under the barge prow-shaped
glass roof or one of 2 terraces:
give yourself a break to relax, enjoy... live!

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A PLACE ACCESSIBLE TO EVERYONE

The 9 Locks on the canal du Midi in Béziers, are the most visited place in Hérault. The site is run by the Tourist Board of Béziers Méditerranée, since it was totally renovated and modernized (except the locks themselves of course) from 2015 to 2017. The changes were designed to allow everyone to come : disabled (whatever disability they endure) or not. The Tourist Board, the immersive cinema, the banks of the canal, the bridges, lifts, carpark, commodities etc... Every place is accessible by all means. Because the 9 Locks deserve to be seen and experienced by everyone, as well as everyone deserves to discover them.

DID YOU KNOW THAT?



THOMAS JEFFERSON'S JOURNEY ON THE CANAL DU MIDI

The 3rd president of the United States, Thomas Jefferson, sailed 9 days on the Canal du Midi in May of 1787, between Sète and Toulouse.

To study how to adapt this structure to the transportation needs of his country. Result: the Erie Canal, inaugurated in 1827, 1 year after the death of Thomas Jefferson, former U.S. ambassador to France.



JEFFERSON'S PECAN TREE ON THE 9 LOCKS BOTANICAL TRAIL

In December 2021, a new tree enriched the botanical trail: a pecan tree (aka Jefferson Walnut). This 25th plant of the botanical trail - and modest shrub for now -, was planted with great care. It is watched very closely, as it symbolizes the whole - and long - historical tie, between Thomas Jefferson and La Fayette, which links the United States and France (*). In a few years, one will eat pecans at the 9 locks !

THE BOTANICAL TRAIL OF THE 9 LOCKS: brochure available at the Tourist Information Office of the 9 locks, or downloadable on: www.beziers-mediterranee.com/brochures



THE CANAL DU MIDI IN VERSAILLES

It is painted on the ceiling in the Hall of Mirrors and pays tribute to Riquet and the Sun King alike: this medallion features an allegory for the Atlantic (Neptune with a crown and trident, on the right) holding hands with the Mediterranean (his wife Amphitrite, on the left). The image symbolises the Canal du Midi which connects the two.

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FOR BIKES ENTHUSIASTS

Two bicycle routes cross the agglomeration Béziers Méditerranée. They follow the towpath along the Canal du Midi.

EUROCYCLE ROUTE 8, La Méditerranée à Vélo :

The Mediterranean by Bike: from Cadiz (Spain), to Izmir (Turkey), 7,500 km along the Mediterranean basin. On the route through France, steps 4 and 5/15, cross Beziers Méditerranée.

www.francevelotourisme.com/itineraire-la-mediterranee-a-velo

VÉLOROUTE 80, The « Canal des 2 mers »:

from Royan to Sète, 750 km, along the towpath. Steps 27 and 28/30, « visit » Béziers Méditerranée.

www.canaldes2mersavelo.com

THE TOURIST OFFICE IS ALSO
LABELED ACCUEIL VELO



HIKING TRAILS

Two routes, created by the Tourist Board, and the French Hiking Federation allow to walk along the Canal du Midi, but also to walk the vineyard, or climb to the centre of Béziers:

« BETWEEN CANAL DU MIDI AND VINEYARD »

10 km along the Canal and in the vineyards around Béziers and Villeneuve-lès-Béziers. Brochure available at the Tourist Office, at the 9 Locks, or downloadable from: www.beziers-mediterranee.com/brochures

« THE CANAL DU MIDI AND BÉZIERS »

8 wonderful kilometers: departure from the 9 Fonseranes locks, towards the ancient center of Béziers, via the towpath of the canal, the banks of the river Orb, large public gardens, the Old Bridge and the canal bridge... On July 1, a brand new trail variant will be inaugurated: the one that runs along the ramparts of Béziers and allows you to climb (on foot or with a lift), to the cathedral ! Brochure available at the Tourist Office, or downloadable from: www.beziers-mediterranee.com/brochures



THE "ACCUEIL VÉLO" LABELED SERVICE PROVIDERS IN BÉZIERS MEDITERRANÉE

BÉZIERS MEDITERRANÉE TOURIST OFFICE (ALL INFORMATION OFFICES)

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- la Villa Kumquats, 06 59 53 89 25, 16 Avenue Enseigne Albertini, Béziers
- La Villa Guy, 04 67 35 26 49, 2 Rue Giuseppe Verdi, Béziers
- Zénitude Hôtel-Résidence Béziers Centre, 04 99 41 08 20, 9 rue D'Alembert, Béziers
- Maison d'hôtes Le Petit Molière, 04 99 41 64 48 / 07 83 30 22 28, 16, Rue Molière, Servian

- Maison d'hôtes Château de Raissac, route de Lignan, 34 500 BEZIERS. Tel 04 67 28 15 61

• RESTAURANT

- Le 9, site des 9 écluses
- Restaurant l'Ecluse, 16 avenue Pierre Bérégovoy, Villeneuve-lès-Béziers, 04 67 62 11 02
- Brasserie Nootka, 10 rue du Romarin, Villeneuve-lès-Béziers, 06 13 14 61 10

• BIKE RENTAL

- Relax Bike Tour, 06 38 12 32 82, Allées Paul Riquet, Béziers
- Paulette location, 05 82 28 05 10, 83 Avenue du président Wilson, Béziers
- Ô Vélos ! 33 boulevard Victor Hugo, Sérignan, 07 82 80 39 36



The Boatman's House, in the new port

Downstream of the 9 locks, after the canal bridge and at the bottom of the lock of the Orb (the highest, deepest and most recent lock of the Canal du Midi) you arrive in the river port of Beziers: the Quai Port Neuf, now managed by the Tourist Office.

It took over from the «Port Notre-Dame» in 1858, when the canal bridge diverted the traffic of boats, in order to avoid the crossing - often very perilous - of the Orb.

Its commissioning came just in time with the wine boom in the Béziers region. It was a good thing: the Port-Neuf (Newport) is much larger than the old one. On its quays, warehouses follow one another and store thousands of barrels of wine, which are then transported to Sète or Toulouse on the barges of the Canal. But the development of rail transport sounded the death knell for this activity. Little by little, the warehouses closed and the buildings were destroyed. Even more so since the 1990s, when the Canal du Midi was designed exclusively for river tourism. Of its former vocation there remains: a warehouse, a small loading crane (at the entrance to the port), the «Café de Plaisance», installed there since the opening of the Port-Neuf. But it is with great pleasure that one strolls through this district, whether one stops for lunch, dinner, or just a drink in the shade of the plane trees: Le Café de Plaisance, the restaurant La Raffinerie, the traditional brewery «La Gorge Fraîche», the petanque court on the banks of the Canal have a «southern postcard» feel to them.

THE BOATMAN'S HOUSE, HARBOURMASTER'S OFFICE AND TOURIST OFFICE ON PORT NEUF

HARBOURMASTER'S OFFICE

The harbour master's office is located in the boatman's house (former lock keeper's house), in front of the lock of Béziers. The reception, mooring and water/electricity supply to the boatmen are taken care of here. The Port-Neuf offers: 3 water/electricity terminals with 6 electric sockets each (18 sockets) in operation, on a 136 m long stretch of land, offering 16 places to boats. Security is provided by video surveillance cameras.

TOURIST OFFICE

Tourist information, documentation, travel advice, ticketing for shows and guided tours, City Cards...

Maison batelière

2, Quai Port-Neuf

Harbour master's office: 04 67 01 84 21

Tourist Information Office: 04 99 41 36 36

OPENING TIMES:

1st April to 31st October: 8.30am/12pm - 1.30pm/7pm

Low season: closed

VILLENEUVE AND CERS

LAST STEPS ON THE CANAL DU MIDI IN BÉZIERS MÉDITERRANÉE

Villeneuve-lès-Béziers



VILLENEUVE-LÈS-BÉZIERS

The lock of Villeneuve, a few metres from the bridge that crosses the Canal du Midi to access the historic centre of the town, had wooden doors, originally. Like its 62 sister-locks between Toulouse and Sète, it was then equipped with metal doors. The basin has not changed one iota: it sports like all the others this beautiful ovoid shape, unique in the world. So, as soon as one hits the lock (in the downstream direction, towards Sète and the sea), one passes under the bridge and arrives at the small port. The boaters, welcomed by a very graceful rustling fountain, can cast moorings. On the banks of the canal in Villeneuve, they find shops to fill their food reserves, have a meal at the restaurant, walk around hours on - on foot or by bike - on the towpath...

• **DOCKING AREA:** on the quay, drinking water facilities, via a payment/supply terminal

• **TOURIST OFFICE:** la gabarre, boulevard Pasteur. Open in July and August, Monday to Friday, 4pm to 6pm.

CERS, LET'S MEET UNDER THE CAYLUS BRIDGE

It is one of 130 bridges built to restore the traffic on old roads interrupted by the Canal du Midi waterway. The bridge from Caylus in Cers, with its typical shape of the Riquet period (XVIIth century) was built, like all the others, with stones found along the way. Until the 1930s, however, the inhabitants of Cers had to make a long detour through it: it was the only bridge that connected the village and the lands of the plain. In 1927 finally, a new bridge is born (it has moreover been fully restored during the fall of 2021). Close to the canal is established - also in the nineteenth century - an innkeeper, in a large building still visible today, which experienced various assignments. But as soon as one has crossed the bridge of Caylus, the Canal du Midi and its boaters leave Béziers Méditerranée. Bon voyage...



Cers



CAP AU SUD
EN BATEAU SUR LE CANAL DU MIDI

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aux 9 écluses de Fonseranes

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L'abus d'alcool est dangereux pour la santé, à consommer avec modération

OUR HEADQUARTERS

Mail Plein Sud
1, avenue du Président Wilson
34 500 Béziers

OUR INFORMATION CENTRES

• BÉZIERS

Centre Historique - Place du Forum
Canal du Midi-9 Ecluses de Fonseranes-Rue du Canal Royal
Canal du Midi - Quai Port-Neuf - Maison batelière

• VALRAS-PLAGE

Centre Station - square René-Cassin

• SÉRIGNAN

Maison de Site, les Orpellières, Sérignan-Plage

• VILLENEUVE-LÈS-BÉZIERS

La Gabarre -Boulevard Pasteur, rives du Canal

• BASSAN

Point I-mobile - Place Jacques-Villeneuve



BRING ME BACK TO THE TOURIST OFFICE,
I WILL BE REUSED/RECYCLED

CONTACTS

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