

Heritage Guide

Tourist Office
Cœur de Petite Camargue



Destination Cœur de Petite Camargue

“Cœur de Petite Camargue” means “Heart of Little Camargue”. The very name conjures up emotions, images and dreams that we hope make you want to come and discover this magical place for yourself.

The word Camargue brings to mind ponds, marshes and reed beds, with horses and cattle roaming freely... and much more besides.

Petite Camargue is also full of history, a place where events of great importance have taken place. The traces of this rich past are not always obvious, but reveal themselves slowly to those who take the time to look closer. If you want to go on a voyage of discovery, the Cœur de Petite Camargue is for you.

We have designed this Heritage Guide to help you on your travels, with themed routes using different modes of transport (on foot or by car).

As you travel through Petite Camargue, you will see rich natural biodiversity unfold before you, and contrasting landscapes shaped by humans, history and culture, not to mention the wonderful distinctive smells and tastes the region has to offer.

It is crucial that we understand the value of the heritage of the Cœur de Petite Camargue, as this is how we maintain our history and pass it down to future generations.

We hope that you are moved by the culture and heritage you discover here: “It is not only the buildings that people come to admire, it is also the work of those who devoted their lives and their talents to building them.”

We are ready and waiting to welcome you, and hope that you will remember your visit for years to come.

*President
Community of towns
of The Petite Camargue*

André Brundu

*President
Tourist Office
Cœur de Petite Camargue*

Christiane Espuche

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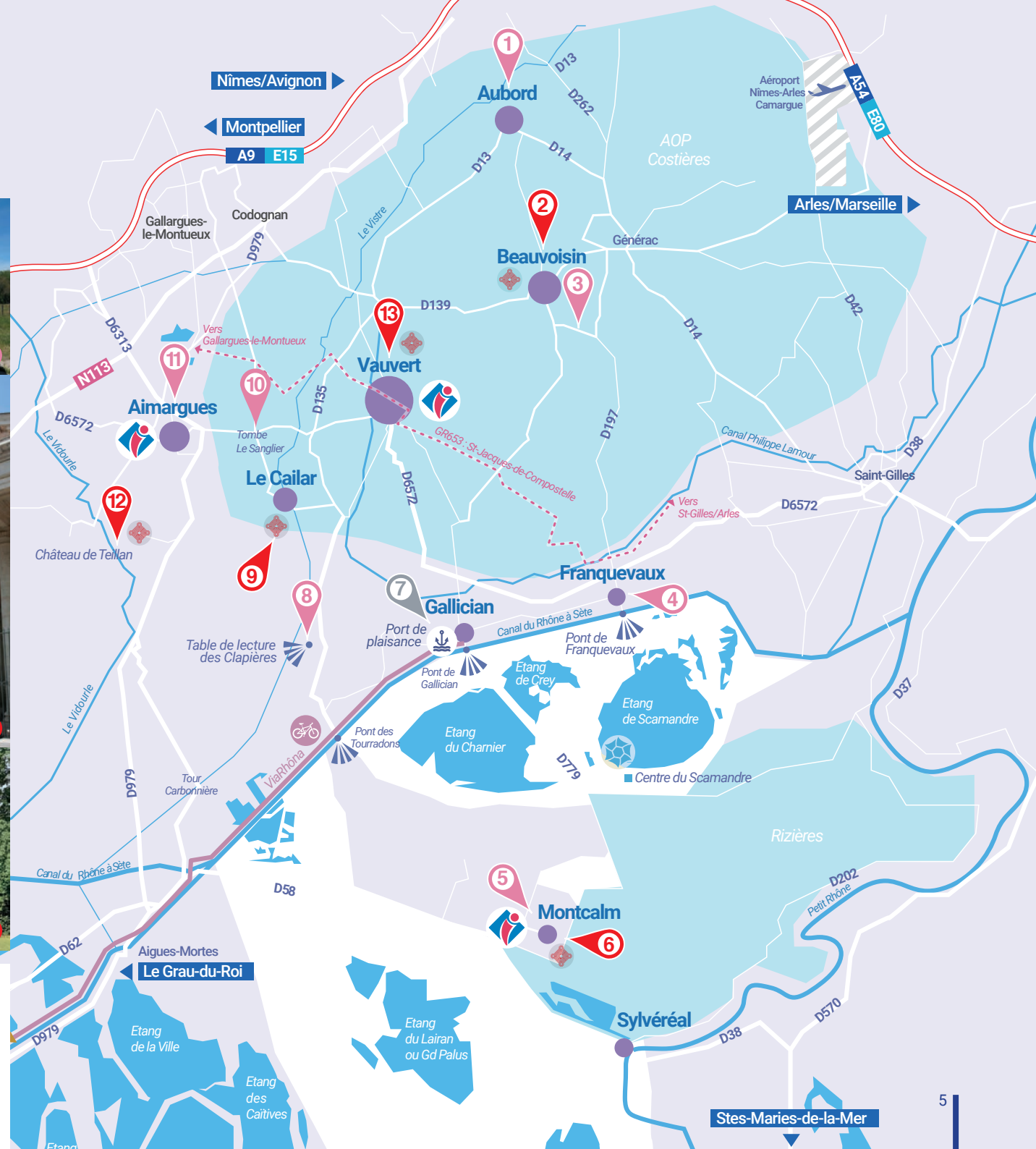
Heritage & places of interest in Petite Carmargue



Historic Monument



Twentieth Century Heritage



1 **Aubord - Temple-Café-Clock (19thC)**

Situated in the centre of the town next to the town hall, this building was constructed at the end of the nineteenth century. Interestingly, this single building houses the Protestant church, town clock and local café.

2 **Beauvoisin - Temple (19thC)**

This Protestant church was designed by Charles Durand in 1819. He was also the architect of the temple at Vauvert. The building is semicircular, featuring a monumental facade with columns and a triangular pediment. This is one of the most beautiful temples in the region.

3 **Beauvoisin - Éole Windmill**

This former windmill is built on an outcrop of land, giving it a lofty position and making it visible from far away.

4 **Franquevaux - Former Cistercian Abbey (12thC)**

Franquevaux abbey was built in 1143, the only Cistercian abbey on the Languedoc coast, and was on the route taken by the Crusaders thanks to the port of Aigues-Mortes. Now divided into several individual homes, it can be explored with the help of an interpretative trail.

5 **Montcalm - Château (20thC)**

This "Marseille-style" château is at the heart of an estate created by Louis Prat (of Noilly-Prat fame) at the end of the nineteenth century. Its architecture is strongly inspired by the Château d'Avignon. *Private estate.*

6 **Montcalm - Chapel (19thC)**

Neo-Roman chapel with a centred layout, a cupola at the transept crossing, and no internal decoration, except the column capitals. Windows signed E. Didron (1886) illustrate the life of Lazarus of Bethany. The chapel was built by Henri Revoil or Auguste Vèran. *Private chapel.*

7 **Gallician - Cooperative wine store and community centre**

Cooperative wine store

An original work by the architect Henri Floutier, the cooperative wine storehouse was begun in 1948 and operational by 1952. Only the reception bays give a clue as to the function of the building.

Community centre

Initially designed to be the community centre as well as the municipal offices and a home for the municipal officer, this building was designed by the architect Armand Pellier. A standardised, modern construction, it has a concrete butterfly roof.

8 **Le Cailar - Information display Les Costières de la Laune**

2km south of the village of Le Cailar you will find farming country with beautiful pastures; these areas flood in winter, creating high quality grazing land. In the spring, herds of Camargue horses and bulls come to graze until the end of the summer.

9 **Le Cailar - Saint-Etienne Church**

The Saint-Étienne priory dates from the eleventh century. Of the original church, only the English bond facade and the bases of the two towers that flank it remain. The nave, apse and bell tower were rebuilt in the seventeenth century.

10 **Le Cailar - Le Sanglier's tomb (20thC)**

Le Sanglier was a legendary bull and his fights in the big arenas of the region in the 1920s and 1930s drew the crowds wild. At the entrance to the village, a tomb commemorates his achievements.

11 **Aimargues - Icehouse (18thC)**

To the south of the village is the ice house, a magnificent construction built in the eighteenth century and renovated in 1991 by an exclusively female team as part of a pilot project.

12 **Aimargues - Château de Teillan (12thC - 19thC)**

The Château de Teillan is 3 kilometres south of the village of Aimargues, and was sold to Psalmody Abbey in the twelfth century. A decree of 1635 allowed the owners of the château to collect Roman artefacts in their magnificent grounds.

13 **Vauvert - Grand Temple (19thC)**

Built in 1812-1814 by Charles Durand, the famous city architect of Nîmes. It is built to a semicircular plan with grand steps, a colonnade with four columns and a vestibule decorated with two columns.



Driving routes

Protestant heritage

in Petite Camargue

From the war of the "camisards" (1702-1704) to a profusion of exceptional buildings

This route takes you through the heart of the villages of the Petite Camargue, following the footsteps of the "camisards" who rose up against the persecutions of King Louis XIV. The most famous among them were Jean Cavalier and Abdias Maurel, known as Catinat, leader of their army and originally from Le Cailar, who battled the royal armies at the head of a cavalry mounted on Camargue horses. The first Protestant churches (known as temples) disappeared, as elsewhere in Languedoc, after the revocation of the Edict of Nantes in 1685. After that, many congregations met "in the desert", in the open air, as they had no spaces of their own.

The Edict of Tolerance of 1787 did not officially allow the practice of the Protestant religion. Not until 1802, when Bonaparte enacted



Vauvert Little Temple

a law on the organisation of religions, were temples built once more. Local landowners, both winemakers and local industrialists, were prominent contributors to the rebuilding of the temples, which took place between 1813 and 1830.

Route

Rather than suggest a particular direction of travel, we have simply gathered some historical information and will leave you to choose your own route!

Protestant churches, known as temples, were built outside of the ancient medieval centres, some distance from the local Catholic church. They became the centre of a new district, linked to local economic expansion at the end of the century, and can often be found near the town hall and school. Temples are often in the middle of winemaking buildings, surrounded by farmhouses, bourgeois homes and wine storehouses, as in **Aubord**.

The temples are all built along the same lines: a space with bare walls, most often cuboid, with rows of wooden benches. High windows bring in light through the lateral walls. On the facade, a window or oculus often adds to the interior lighting, topped with a bell tower or bellcote. A wooden pulpit, sometimes with some understated decoration, and a table with a lectern to hold the Bible are the only internal elements.

From the simplest to the grandest temples, these elements are always present!

Explore our unique and varied heritage

There were two phases of construction for the temples you will find on your route:

The first took place mainly during the Restoration (1815-1830) and resulted in remarkable, monumental and simple buildings. These most beautiful temples are the result of a blossoming of material riches and spiritual dedication, leading to the commissioning and support of ambitious architectural projects. These were designed by the architect **Charles Durand**, who trained as an engineer and honed his skills through these buildings. He created some of the most beautiful classically-inspired temples in the département, including those of **Vauvert** in 1810-1817, and **Beauvoisin** in 1816-1819, which made a monumental and lasting impact on the changing rural landscape. They are built to a semicircular plan, with an imposing porch with four columns topped with the triangular pediment that was something of Durand's trademark.

The second phase was after 1833, when the construction of the temple went hand in hand with the building of the school. These temples are more modest architecturally, and adapted to their users.

A little something extra

The "little temple" in Gallician became the gallery-studio of a local painter and sculptor, Max Dejardin.



Vauvert Little Temple

The columns are no longer present, but they still respect the fundamental elements described above.

The most important goal for Protestants and one of the fundamentals of the Reformation was to open schools and promote literacy in rural areas, exemplified by the combination temple, town hall and school in **Aubord**.

A fair number of temples, enough to constitute a proper architectural grouping, are decorated with a carved book on the facade. These were not present on the facades of the first group of buildings.

These "book" temples may also be the result of this desire to teach everyone to read. The temples in **Le Cailar** and **Aimargues** both have a sculpture of a book on their facades.

The Methodists began a movement that has been called "evangelical" or "orthodox". This led to the creation of "little temples" like the "de l'Oratoire" temple in **Vauvert**.



Bullfighting heritage

The hoof-prints of an important tradition

“Bovine” is the French word that covers all of the economic and social activities, cultural events and festivities that relate to the rearing of native Camargue bulls.

The most significant and most spectacular activity relating to the bulls, and the main reason they are reared, is Course Camarguaise (Camargue bullfighting) and related games, which have been organised since time immemorial by the people of the meadows and villages, from the time of traditional grazing practices to the codified and enclosed pastures of today. Local identity is tied up with being “gens de bouvino” (bull people) and having “fé di biou” (belief in the bull). “Manade” was the medieval term for a herd of bulls, and is now used to refer to the farm where the “manadier”, owner of the bulls, lives and works.

Camargue bulls are “domesticated” wild animals whose origins are lost in the mists of time. Gallo-Roman coins found in the Nîmes area



Gandar, Vauvert

depict a “simbeu” (trained bull) with the typical horns of the breed and a cowbell around its neck. This Marseille obole coin, from the third century BCE, was used by the Volcae Arecomici, a local Gallic tribe.

The Gard area of the Camargue can lay claim to the ancient origins of many bull-related practices. Course camarguaise (Camargue bullfighting), calf fighting, abrivado and bandido, all practiced today, came from the first bull sports played in meadows or courtyards of farmhouses or châteaux. All these sports have been practiced since the fifteenth century and are still very much alive today.

Quintessentially rural, bovine activity shapes the landscape (with bull pastures), agricultural life, cultural life and festivals (bull running, Camargue bullfighting) and urban structures (arenas, bullpens, barriers, sculptures, graffiti, road signs) that give the region its unique character.



Most bullfighting arenas were built at the start of the twentieth century for reasons of public safety and at the request of the authorities, who had forbidden bullfighting at the start of the nineteenth century.

Prior to this, bull sports were played in the meadows, in informally blocked-off village streets or in a village square.

Route

This route takes you from villages to pastures, from the built environment to the natural environment, from landscape to culture.

Beauvoisin has fine modern bull fighting arenas, but some of its other distinctive features are much, much smaller: little drawings decorating the doorways around the village. These stencilled designs are called “empègues”.

Conscripts would serenade residents in the run up to the village festival. They went from house to house, collecting contributions to fund the festivities and leaving their mark on the doorway.

Beauvoisin and **Le Cailar** continue this tradition to this very day. As you wander the streets you will see this rich and abundant homemade imagery, testament to local pride and passion. The designs most often feature symbols or animals that are emblematic of Camargue. The oldest known “empègue” can be found on the shutters of the Les Aubades restaurant. It dates from 1894 and features a red outline of a horse with the year inside and the letters RF (for French Republic) between the hooves.

Leave **Beauvoisin** and head towards **Vauvert**, where you will find the biggest arenas in the area. These modern arenas took over from older venues (the Place du Jeu de Ballon and the Valentin arenas, with their unusual square layout!).

The bovine tradition has offered ample scope for many artists to represent the Camargue bull in all its forms!

In Vauvert you can admire the statue of the famous bull Gandar, from Manade Blatière, who lost a horn when his trailer was involved in a crash with a railcar! The town hall also has two Aubusson tapestries with a bovine theme.

Head back on the road towards **Aimargues** and make sure to look out for the **Le Cailar** roundabout where you will see an iron bull sculpture by local artist Max Dejardin. Also at this roundabout is the tomb of the famous bull Le Sanglier from the Manade Fernand Granon.



Le Sanglier's tomb

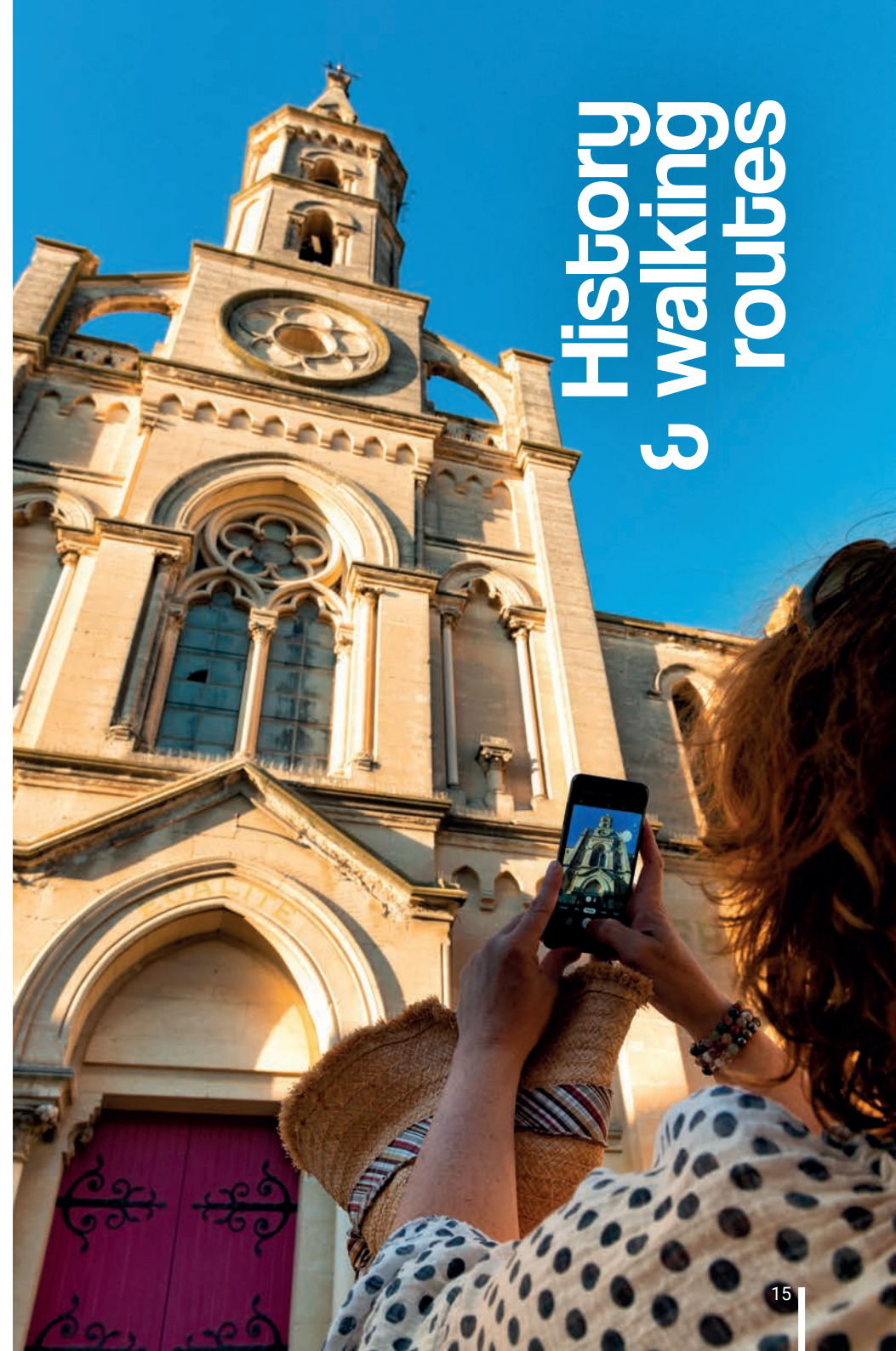
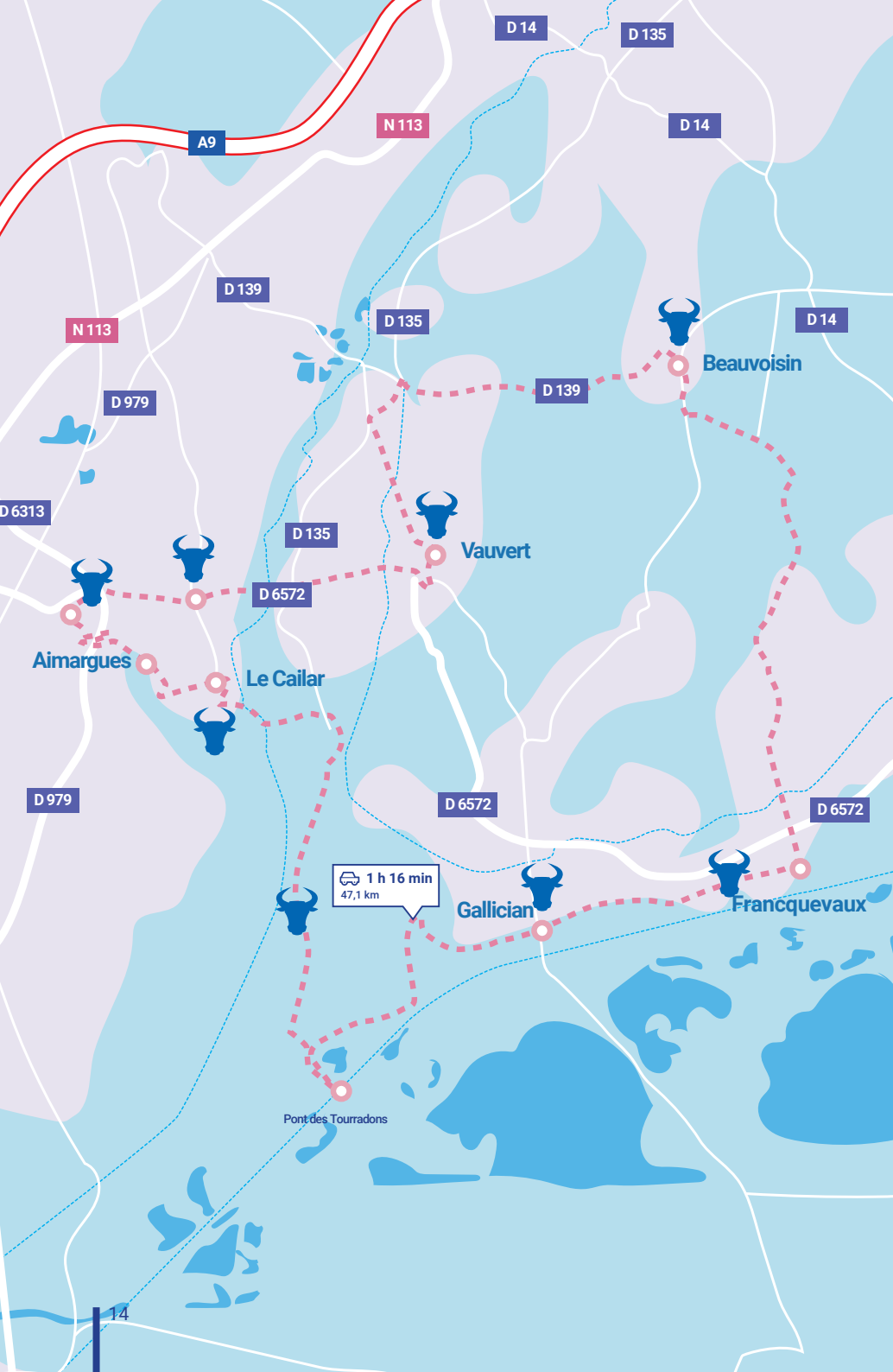
The village of **Aimargues** is closely connected with the story of the grande dame of Camargue, Fanonne Guillierme, bull farmer and a friend of the “Félibres”. The park square was originally the site of the castle of the seigneurs of Aimargues, and then was used for arenas, at first made from planks and then permanent ones, before they were moved to their current location. A statue of the grande dame on horseback surrounded by her best bulls presides over the middle of this square, the work of sculptor Ben K.

Afterwards head towards **Le Cailar**, a small village that embodies bull culture and has the largest concentration of Camargue horse and bull farms.

The village's arenas are on the national list of historical monuments, having been opened in 1905 on the site of the former icehouse. As in **Beauvoisin**, stencilled “empègues” are omnipresent on Le Cailar's houses and complement the bull theme that can be seen on many houses.

Head southwards out of the village towards the **Pont des Tourradons**. This small road will take you into the heart of the flood plain bull pastures. Stop at the information point at **Les Costières de la Laune** for an unforgettable view of the meadows.

Then continue towards the hamlets of **Gallician** and **Franquevaux**, which are also highly attached to Camargue traditions.



History & walking routes

The history of Aimargues

The village appears very early in medieval texts, at the beginning of the ninth century (7 January 813 - Gift from Braidingus to Aniane: ... In villa Armacianicus quae sita in Litoraria, infra pago Nemausense...) under the name of Vila Armacianicus, probably due to its owner Armatius. Furthermore, archaeologists have found evidence of highly dense and structured human habitation as early as the Roman era.

Under the Gallo-Roman occupation, there was a central settlement surrounded by a web of farms.

In the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, the surrounding population became concentrated around the "castrum" (feudal fortification), forming what would become the village of Aimargues, with the older villages becoming deserted.



Aimargues church

The town was defended by ramparts built in the middle of the fourteenth century. After the Peace of Alès ended the wars of religion, Louis XIII visited in 1629, accompanied by Cardinal Richelieu. He ordered the destruction of the fortifications and the ramparts of Aimargues were taken to Aigues-Mortes for use as construction material.



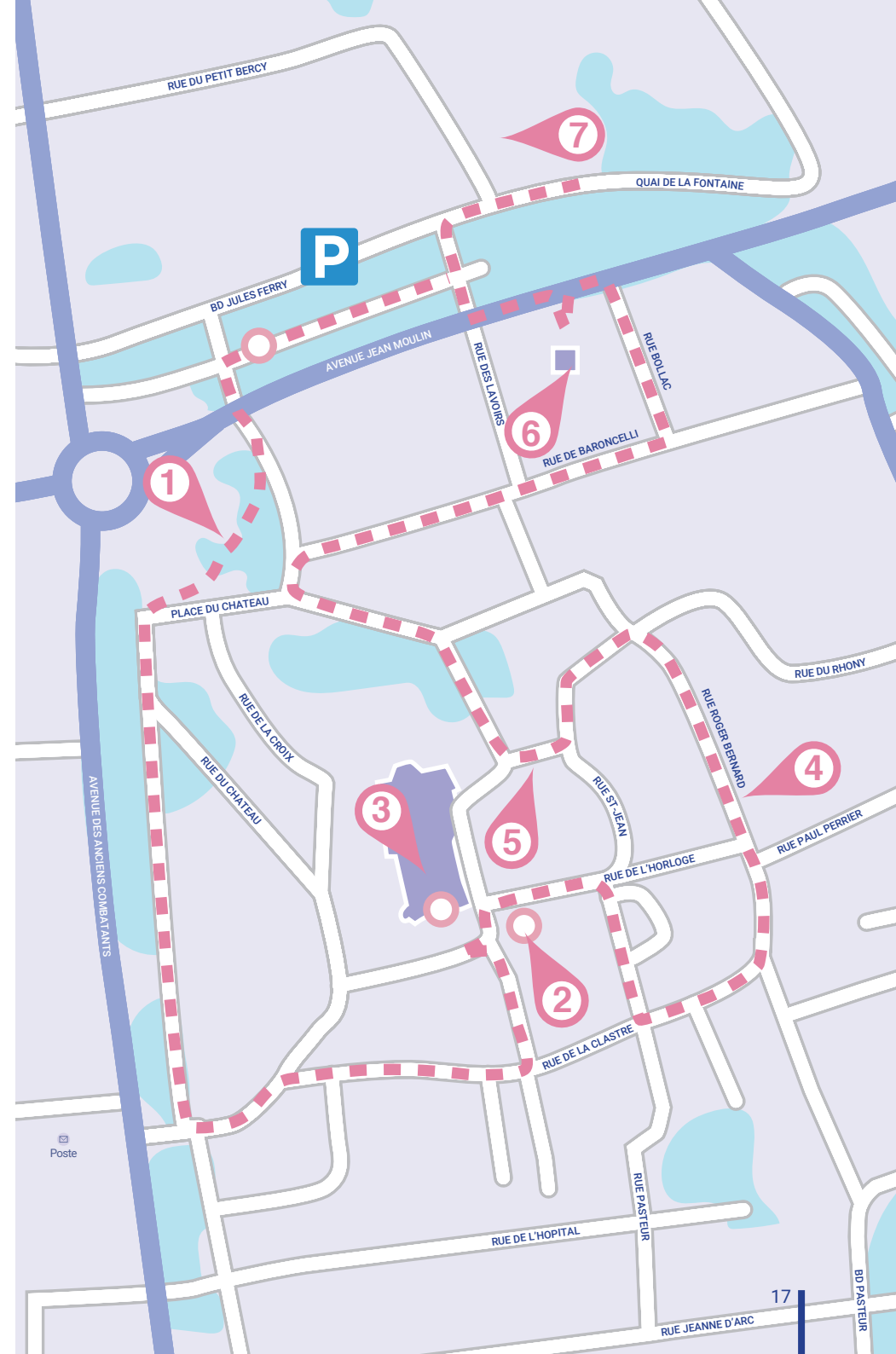
Statue of Janus, Aimargues

This castle was built on a mound at the crossroads between two important routes: the salt road and the pilgrim trail connecting Mauguio and the Languedoc to Arles and Provence.

Owned by the Uzès family, under the ancien régime the town was the capital of Basse Vistrenque. It was also the seat of a high priest.



Les Halles, Aimargues



The history of Aubord

1 Public garden

A public park was built in 1975 on the former site of the château of the lords of Aimargues. In 1990 a bust was installed of Fanfonne Guillierme, the grande dame of Camargue, bull farmer and friend to the "Félibres". This bust was moved to the entrance of the school that bears her name in 2012, and replaced by a statue of the same lady on horseback, flanked by her two "biou d'or" (finest bulls).

2 Place de la Mairie

Attached to the town hall and the post office you will find Les Halles. This facade of this former marketplace is aligned with those of the other two buildings, making up one side of a square that also contains the church. Decorated with foliage, vines and neo-classical architectural motifs, it forms part of one of the most beautiful pieces of civic adornment of the 1900s. Built during the Third Republic, it is an unusual and remarkable example of early twentieth century architecture.

3 Saint-Saturnin and Sainte-Artemidora church

Built in 1869, this church is built in a blend of the neo-gothic and neo-Roman styles, and topped with a 48m bell tower. Unusually for a French church, on the facade the inscription reads "French Republic. Liberty, Equality, Fraternity." Be sure to take a look at the magnificent eighteenth-century windows by the famous Didron, which tell stories in bright colours, as well as the 1548 painting of Jesus by Simon de Chalon.

4 Rue Roger Bernard and Rue de la Clastre

Rue Roger Bernard

At number 11, you can see a thirteenth century statue of the god Janus, with his two faces, on the band marking the upper floor. You can also see four pairs of windows and a striking semi-circular arched door on the facade of the same house.

Rue de la Clastre

On this road there are several houses dating from the fourteenth century, with string courses and lots of other architectural elements that have been conserved even where the buildings have been modernised.

5 Place du Montredon

A square and a street both take their names from the powerful de Rochemore de Montredon family, owners of land, buildings and houses in and around Aimargues. Among these properties was Petit Malherbes, also known as "domaine de Montredon". Before the Revolution, la Place Montredon was used for the sport of jeu de paume.

6 War memorial

In 1688, the commune acquired some land to use as a cemetery, but the project was abandoned in 1843. In November 1920, the mayor decided that a war memorial should be built. The sculptor was Marcel Mérignargues.

7 Former washhouse

The washhouse at Quai de la Fontaine was built around 1875 to help the washerwomen in their daily work. Before it was built, they had needed to walk three kilometres on foot to wash their laundry in the Vidourle. It is made up of two large pools and could hold 60 washtubs.

The first mentions of Aubord go back to the year 879. It was also mentioned under the name of "In Alburno" by Jean Ménard, prior of Aubord. Born in Nîmes in 1637, he had an impressive reputation as a writer and preacher. He was one of the first founders of the Académie de Nîmes.

This hamlet, probably founded in late antiquity, was once again mentioned as Alburno in the Notre Dame de Nîmes cartularies of 1078.

Originally linked to Bernis, this agricultural community had around thirty households at the end of the Middle Ages. In the last twenty years or so, the population has increased tenfold.

The contrast between the few houses found on the Napoleonic land registry and the current town map is striking: the former centre is completely enveloped by new construction.



Aubord Protestant Temple

New houses, some of them opulent ones, were built in the nineteenth century following the influx of wealth created by winemaking. In the centre, the Margarot family house is a fine example.

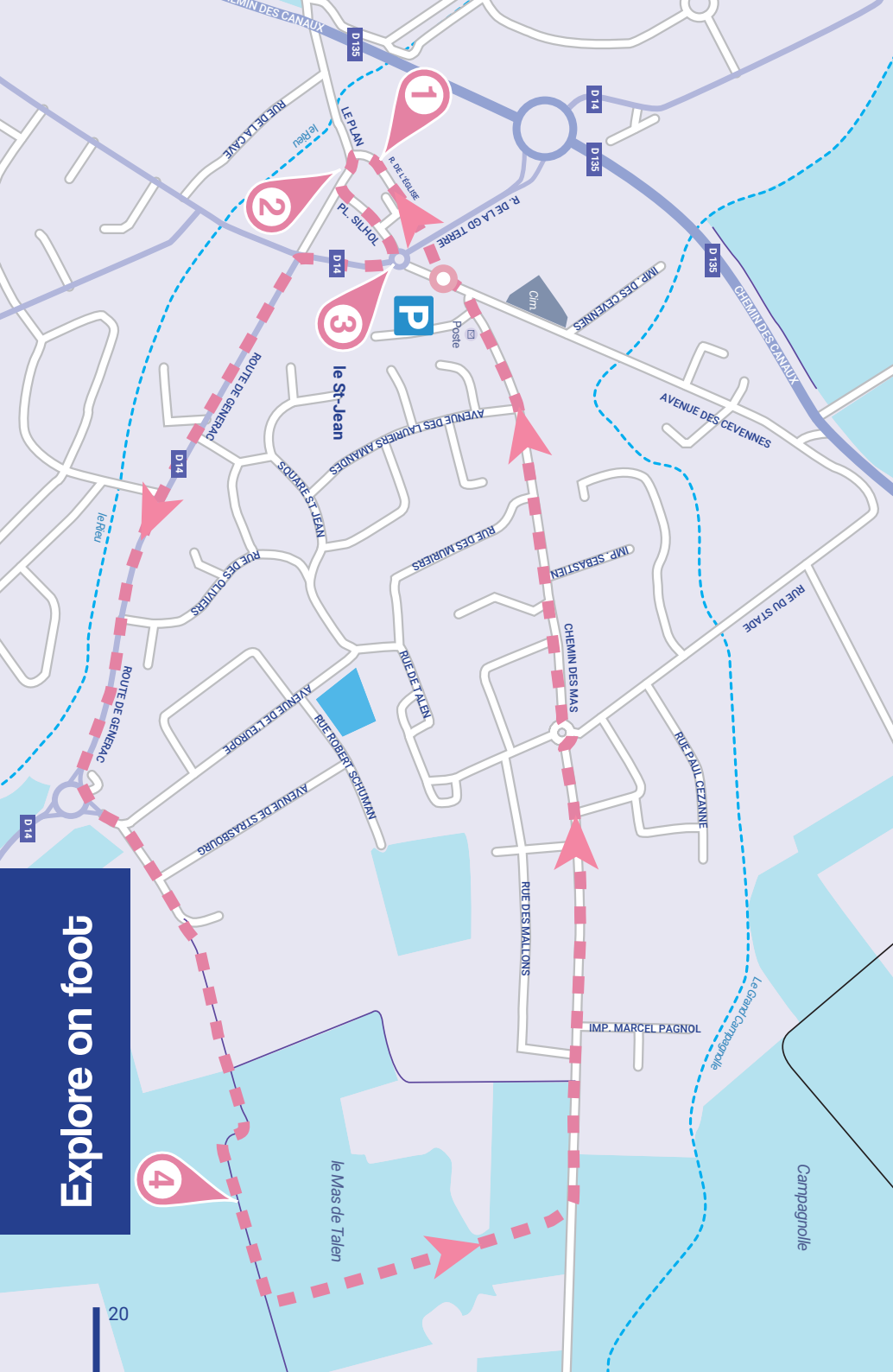


Aubord Catholic Church

The village of Aubord is part of the Costières de Nîmes AOC, which occupies Camargue's fossil band. The ground the village is built on is red and scattered with rounded pebbles, a typical Costière characteristic.

A wide variety of produce is still grown here, with a speciality in quality wine making and AOC-labelled olive oil.

Nonetheless, Aubord has kept its rural character, with a leafy, spacious centre. Of the original kernel of buildings, only a section of the Rue de l'Eglise and a few farmhouses remain.



1 Church

Part of the diocese of Nîmes, and served until the nineteenth century by the priest of Bernis, the primitive church was destroyed during the wars of religion.

Rebuilt in 1658, then refurbished in the nineteenth century, today it is in the form of a large quadrilateral with a single open space, although the roofline is cleverly designed to give the illusion of two side aisles. It faces onto a narrow street, with two buttresses on the facade. The rectangular doorway is topped with a plain semicircular tympanum, and above that there is a small oculus made of dressed stone. The cornice imitates Romanesque pilaster strips, but here they are under the edge of the roof and form a gable up to the bell. This is a simple bell tower with a single bell.

As the entrance leading straight onto the road could be dangerous, there is a door and another oculus on the western wall of the church. The church therefore does not face east, unlike most other others.

The church's font (or fountain) has been included on the national list of historic monuments.

2 Maison Margot

This beautiful house in the middle of the village adjoins Place Silhol. Its imposing facade is visible from the road. It has two rows of windows and decorative brickwork, with dressed stone around the windows and more irregular stones ("clapas") for the walls. It also has a dovecot with three sculpted doves perched on the roof. The entire building is covered with traditional roof tiles.

This building has been well-conserved in its original style, and is one of the best assets of the village centre, close to the church and the temple.

3 Temple-Café-Clock

This unique architectural endeavour was designed in 1839 to hold the temple, the town hall and the school. The rectangular niche has a semicircular niche at the back for the pulpit, behind which is the neighbouring building which went on to house the municipal clocktower. This wing behind the temple included the school on the ground floor and the town hall on the floor above.

This is the only known example of a combined temple, town hall and school, which became a temple, café and town clock under France's Third Republic. The café still pays rent to the neighbouring town hall, which owns the walls!

Recently renovated in early twentieth century style, this interesting café and temple are one of the country's most unusual pieces of Protestant heritage.

Aubord olive grove



4 Olive grove

Now owned by the local council, this olive grove covers around 3 hectares with around 1,000 olive trees.

This is a very popular location during bull-related festivities, and is a favourite spot for locals to take a stroll.

The history of Beauvoisin

The first mentions of Beauvoisin appeared around 820 on a cartulary at the abbey of Psalmody, near Aigues-Mortes.

Built on an ancient site, and mentioned from the early Middle Ages, the commune was established on one of La Costière's highest points, giving it a view over the land. Probably originally a motte and bailey castle, it was later transformed into a fortified castle with an associated settlement.

In 973, Bishop Bernard de Nîmes gave a "hermas" (piece of uncultivated land) at the edge of Beauvoisin to someone named Raoux, in exchange for vines by the walls of Nîmes. Under the name of Bellovicidum, the village land belonged to the Vicomte of Nîmes, a member of the Aton family, from 1027 to 1041. The castle is thought to have been built in 1067 and to have belonged to the Knights Templar before being destroyed around 1150, along with its Saint-Pierre chapel (which stood where the current church does now).



Beauvoisin Catholic Church

witnessed a donation by Pons-Guilhem of his lands known as Francavallis to the abbey of Franquevaux.

Into order to keep his jurisdictions, Rostaing III of Posquières bought back his mother's dowry from Bernard Aton in 1146, for the price of 98 marks of Saint-Gilles weight, i.e. jurisdiction over the Châteaux of Beauvoisin, Calvisson and Marguerittes, and the power to require all their inhabitants to swear loyalty to him.

On 10 December 1156, Pope Adrian IV gave the "Ecclesia de Bellovicino" to the canons of the chapter of Nîmes, who made it into a priory.

Following the war between Raymond V, who was the Comte de Toulouse, and the Comte de Barcelona, the former took Beauvoisin's castle from Posquières and gave it as a fief to Pierre de Belvesin in 1179. This was a punishment for Trencavel, Vicomte de Nîmes, and his vassals, who had sided with the Comte de Barcelona.

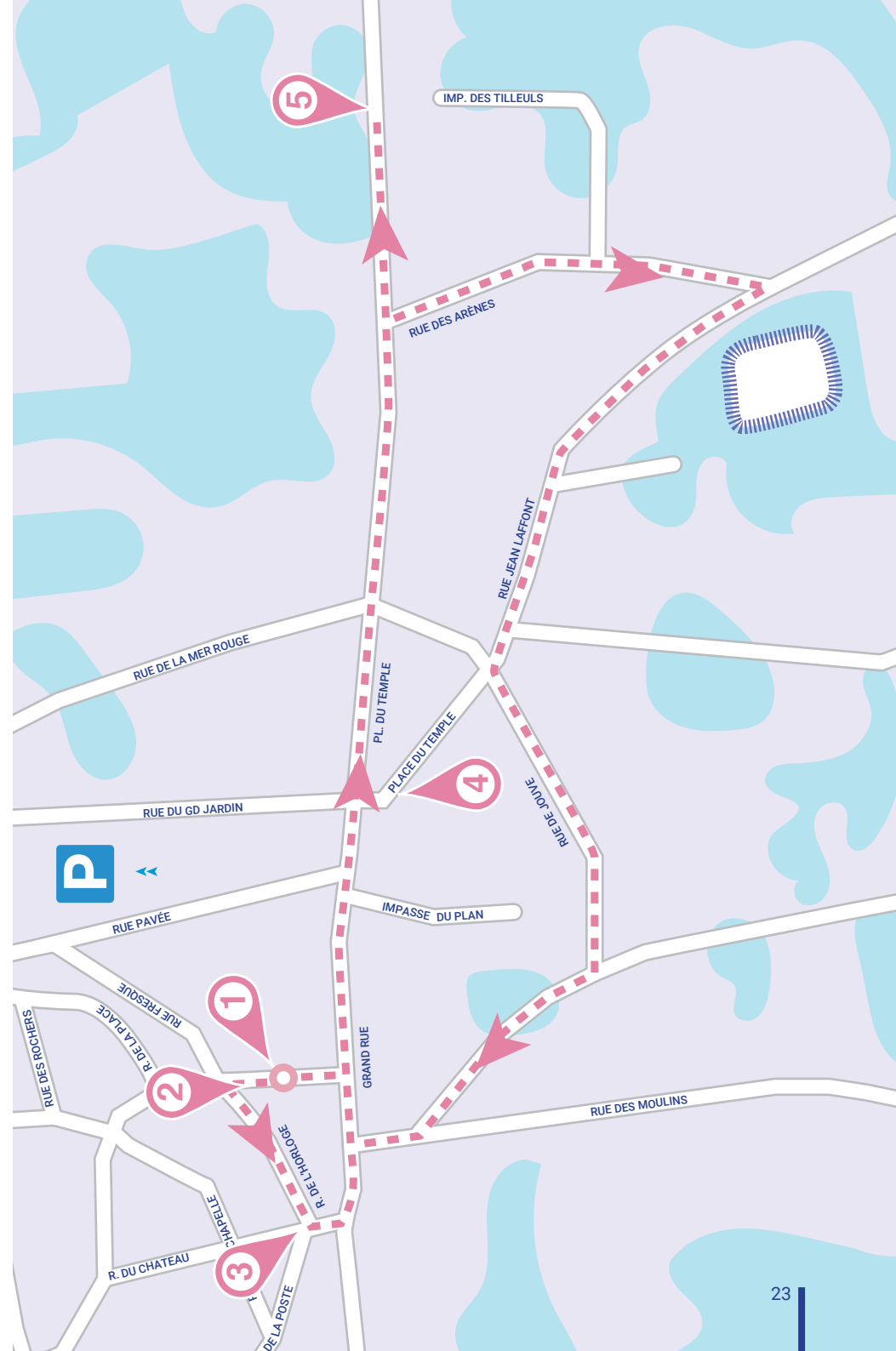
Cathar or Albigensian brigands occupied the castle and in 1197, Raymond VI, Comte de Toulouse, laid siege and won it back. An agreement was made in 1198 between the Abbot of Franquevaux, the Provost of Nîmes and the Prior of Beauvoisin as to the limits of their respective territories.

In 1121, Beauvoisin's castle passed into the jurisdiction of Vauvert when Rostaing II of Posquières (the former name of Vauvert) married Ermessinde, daughter of Bernard Aton IV. The châteaux of Beauvoisin, Calvisson and Marguerittes were part of her dowry.

In 1143, Pierre de Beauvoisin



Beauvoisin Protestant Temple



1 Town Hall

It dates, like the clock tower, from the Third Republic. Only the facade remains today. Its opulent entrance is decorated in the neo-classical Greco-Roman style, with pointed stones surrounding the door. The doorway is topped with a balcony supported by floral corbels and above there is a classical plain tympanum with ionic capitals.

2 Clock Tower

This public clock tower dates from the end of the nineteenth century. Situated next to the town hall, it fulfilled the secular desire to have a Republican representation of time to counterbalance the church bells striking the hour. The clocktower/town hall/temple combination is found in other communes in the region, and was a typical counterweight to the hub made up of the château and the church.

3 Church

Before 1790, this was a parish church in the Nîmes diocese (under the high priest of Aimargues), served by a perpetual curate. The simple and secular priority of Saint Thomas de Beauvoisin was annexed to Nîmes cathedral. The church at Beauvoisin was given to the abbey of Psalmody in 871; later it passed to the canons of Nîmes. The current parish church was rebuilt after the wars in religion, in around 1670. It was restored in 1868. It is in the gothic style, with some Romanesque elements.

4 Temple

The temple was built in 1819 by Charles Durand, the same architect behind the Grand Temple in Vauvert. Durand was the city architect of Nîmes where his buildings included the Palais de Justice (Law Courts). His neo-classical style is characteristic of ancient and renaissance influences.

This temple is semicircular, with a monumental entrance with columns and a triangular pediment. A bell tower is accessible via a spiral staircase. It is built from dressed stone.

High windows provide light for the upper gallery inside; this semi-circular balcony is covered in floor tiles. It is held up by wooden pillars. The monumental pulpit is well conserved. In 2012 it was added to the national list of historic monuments.

5 "Empègue" at the Les Aubades restaurant

Beauvoisin is the site of the oldest remaining "empègue" (see page 13). It dates from 1894 and features a red outline of a horse with the year inside and the letters RF (for French Republic) between the hooves.

Further afield:
Château

Given its position, this was no doubt the site of a motte and bailey castle from the Carolingian period, redeveloped into a fortified castle in the Romanesque period. Reduced to ruins on several occasions, the current château dates from 1631. It was then occupied by the Génas family. This site of this château is of particular interest. The estate has a commanding view similar to the Tour Royale at Gallargues or the Roc de Gachone at Calvisson.



Le Cailiar clock tower

The history of
Le Cailiar

Le Cailiar is situated at the confluence of two rivers, the Vistre and the Rhône. Previously they flowed into a lagoon, but this is no longer the case. A Gallic tribe, the Volcae Arecomici, lived there, on a small mound surrounded by water (oppidum). The Romans later occupied the site, calling it Virinae.

This strategic location was good for trade (salt and wine), arable farming (sheep, horses and Camargue bulls) and more recently winemaking.

The site of Le Cailiar has been studied since the 2000s: an initial survey revealed a significant proto-historic trade centre, occupied since the sixth century BCE, and highly involved in trade between the Greek colony that

would later become Marseille, as well as the entire Mediterranean region.



Le Cailiar Washhouse

A uniquely artistic village sign

Le Cailiar's original sign was created by the artist François Boisrond, a member of the Figuration Libre movement, in 1995.

At the entrance to the village is a large panel in a naive style, welcoming visitors to this Petite Camargue village full of bovine tradition.

In 1995, 70 other signs could be found scattered throughout the streets, humorous designs illustrating shops and key locations from the butcher to the church, and of course the arenas. In 2020 there were 116 of them inside and 20 outside the village!

In the village square, you will find a map showing all the activities and signed locations in the heart of the village, as well as all the tourist attractions in the area.

An archaeological excavation has been conducted on the outskirts of the village, on the Place de la Saint-Jean, where a significant deposit of arms and severed heads dating from the third century BCE was found between 2003 and 2013. Since 2015, excavations have been ongoing revealing vestiges of different eras at different depths: four, five and finally six centuries BCE, in a vast open space next to the ramparts. The ramparts are also being uncovered, with a portion restored in 2005.

Some of the material taken away is now in the Musée de la Romanité in Nîmes!

Later, a fortified castle, now destroyed, was built on the highest ground and the village then had a series of names deriving from this: Castlaro, Castellus, Castlar, Le Caylar, Le Caila and now Le Cailiar.





1 Town Hall

This large building, constructed on the site of a former cemetery and finished in 1766, was intended as a barracks for the King's dragoons who were responsible for maintaining order during the wars of religion. The barracks, once finished, never housed any dragoons and was instead occupied by a school, town hall, post office and "maison du peuple" (workers' welfare centre).

2 Clock Tower

This square tower is four centuries old and was originally 14.5m tall. On the upper platform, a bell hung from a metal arm and sounded the hours. In 1910, it was decided to build higher in dressed stone, and add 4 clock faces. The bell underneath is protected by a steeple covered in slate. This attractive building is now 24.4m high.

3 Saint-Etienne Church

The Saint Etienne church, built in the Roman style of the tenth or eleventh century, has been destroyed several times, including being burnt in the wars of religion in 1703 by the "camisard" leader Jean Cavalier. Rebuilt over the course of the eighteenth century to the form we know today, its facade is listed as a historical monument.

4 Arenas

The "Glacière" arenas are a recreation area, typical of the South of France, dedicated to Camargue bulls. In the summer, the region's famous bull-related events attract large crowds. These arenas were built in 1905, and its paddock, bullpen and cafe have historic monument status.

Le Cailar town hall



Le Cailar Temple

5 Temple

Built in 1818, Le Cailar's Protestant church is among the "book temples", a local decorative quirk: the large rectangular space is very simple, with a triangular tympanum over the door and then a bas-relief of an open Holy Bible above. The enclosed bell tower is unique in the French Mediterranean.

6 Pont du Grès

This bridge over the Rhône is of crucial importance: it is the link between the old village and the new one to the north. It prevented the old centre from being cut off during floods.

7 Bel Air washhouse

Situated on the banks of the Rhône, this washhouse has three pools. The metal structure that covers it was built in 1899 based on plans by the architect Séraphin de Nîmes. The washhouse was restored in 2009.

The history of Vauvert

First of all there was Posquières, a cultural and religious centre where Jews and Christians lived together amicably. A sanctuary, Notre-Dame-de-Valvert, which was a popular pilgrimage site, sat alongside a synagogue with its own rabbinical school that was famous in the Jewish world.

Vauvert takes its current name from the sanctuary, which in the Middle Ages was situated where the Rue Carnot meets the Rue Saint Gilles and was dedicated to the Virgin Mary. "Valle verdi" became Notre-Dame du "Val-vert" and then later Vauvert, and gradually replaced "Posquières" around the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, at which time the Jews were expelled from France by King Philip IV (Philip the Fair). From the sixteenth to the seventeenth century, the town joined the Reformation. Protestants and Catholics were in conflict, leading to the disappearance of most of the town's most beautiful monuments.



Vauvert town hall

"Au diable Vauvert" (The back of beyond)

In the Middle Ages, the Notre-Dame du Val Vert sanctuary attracted many pilgrims, many of whom had come from very far away. For sins that the Church regarded as particularly serious, some penitents were instructed to complete a pilgrimage in order to be absolved. The distance from Val-Vert made it a hard penitence for those who had to make the journey. We know that in Flanders it was a regularly prescribed punishment.

Twentieth century heritage

Vauvert contains some architectural marvels, from some remnants of classic urban architecture, most often in Pierre du Gard stone (most famously used for the Pont du Gard), to contemporary architecture in the same material. Architects include Armand Pellier, Robert Prohin, Joseph Massota and Henri Floutier, supported by the sculptor Paule Pascal for decorative bas-reliefs, and before her Jean-Charles Lallement, a Nîmes sculptor who had his studio in Le Grau du Roi, and was a great friend to Picasso.

• Robert Gourdon Cultural Centre

Armand Pellier was the architect of this cultural centre, and Robert Prohin was later asked to link the centre, the gymnasium and the home that adjoin the current building.

• Vauvert wine storehouse

Vauvert chose Henri Floutier to design its communal wine store in 1939, with 3 medallions sculpted by Armand Pellier.

• Radélyévitch Stadium

Paule Pascal gave this stadium a colourful concrete wall by carving out large curving forms. The colours used make these silhouetted sports players visible from afar.

• L'Ecole Jean Macé

Blazon on the gable of the school by the sculptor JC Lallement.

• Vauvert town hall

- 2 Aubusson tapestries signed Armand Pellier and Joseph Massota.
- Pediment of the first floor of the town hall by Armand Pellier.



1 Town Hall

This beautiful 1858 construction is situated on the site of the former cemetery.

Proof of the wealth winemaking provided to Vauvert in this period, Third Republic architecture is widespread throughout the area: all of these grand buildings were paid for with the profits of viticulture.

Bedos, an architect, and Bastide, an entrepreneur, worked together to create this monument, with the first stone laid on June 1 1858, and the work finished on April 1 1859.

2 Porte Saint-Louis

This gate dates from the seventeenth century. It was named the "Saint-Louis Gate" to commemorate the visit from the King of France, Louis IX. In 1270, Saint Louis, waiting for the fleet to take him to the Crusades, came to worship in Vauvert.

3 Rue des Juifs

The Jewish quarter was on the south-eastern slope of the hill, from the ramparts to the middle of what is now called the Rue des Juifs (Jew Road). The Jews of Posquières (now known as Vauvert) were particularly spiritual and wrote some Kabbalistic texts. At that time, Provence was covered by a network of Jewish schools and academies (Narbonne, Lunel, Posquières and Marseille).

Around 1165, Abraham ben David, known as Rabad, set up his school, which went on to become famous. Rabad used his wealth to welcome students, some who travelled great distances to study with him. He turned his own house into a dormitory, and the neediest among them were housed for free.

A Kabbalistic work mentions eminent students coming to Posquières from Spain, Germany and Damascus to study at Rabad's school.

4 Place du Jeu de Ballon

This was the former location of bullfights, with villagers installing carts or stages to make arenas. Those families who so wished, after a request to the municipality, could put up their own structure; at that time, the ring was rectangular.

Also visible is the wall of a château, destroyed in 1628 on the orders of the Duc de Rohan during the wars of religion.

5 Le Courrier

Vauvert is a waypoint on the Way of Arles, part of the Camino de Santiago, the GR®653, and boasts a new rest and information point.

The iron silhouette of a pilgrim, as well as benches and an information panel with both historical and practical information have been installed for pilgrims and walkers.

6 Jardin du Castellás

The Castellás hill, called Motte Foussat in medieval times, is a remarkable location. You can look down onto the town of Vauvert from above, and learn more about its various monuments from an information panel. The view stretches towards to sea, and the Cévennes can be seen to the North. On a clear day, you can even see the Pyrenees!

7 Place Gambetta/ Church, clock tower and Fontaine du Griffé

Clock Tower

This architectural ensemble is made up of parts from different eras. At the base is the Panapée gate, which was part of the fortified enclosure of Posquières.

Built in the seventeenth century, the belfry was restored between 1848 and

1849. The old medieval fortifications contained three gates, but only the Panapée gate remains.

The bells rang out to mark various events within the commune.

Notre-Dame church

The current parish church was built in 1687-1689, destroyed in the sixteenth century, and once more took the name Notre-Dame-de-Vauvert.

Built in the neo-classical style, inside the fifteen windows in the nave represent the fifteen mysteries of the rosary.

One window, at the back of the church, shows Louis XI, King of France, kneeling before the statue of Our Lady.

Fontaine du Griffé

This monumental fountain was erected in 1898 when running drinking water was installed in Vauvert.

It was restored in 2009 as part of a heritage plan from the Communauté de communes de Petite Camargue.

8 Grand Temple

The construction of this temple based on plans by Charles Durand began in 1811 and was completed by 1817. The entrance features a portico attached to the semicircular layout, with two columns between two pilasters, then four ionic columns, and finally a triangular pediment.

A discreet bellcote is found to the side, further back. In 1864, a central lantern, and in 1867, a library were added. This building is striking for its pure volumes and authenticity.

9 Arenas

The town of Vauvert has had four different arenas. The Valentin arenas, now lost, the Place du Jeu de Ballon (which some older locals can still remember being used for bull sports), the Arènes Paul Allier and now the Arènes Jean Brunel, opened on May

16, 2004.

In 1986, Jean Brunel, who had just become the President of the festival committee, organised a competition of four "abrivados", which now takes place every year on Ascension Day.

10 Temple de l'Oratoire

In the first half of the nineteenth century there was a powerful religious movement called the Réveil (Revival) that sought to return to the basic fundamentals of the Christian faith, and led to the creation of some of the greatest works of evangelical Protestantism. In Vauvert, after two years of attempts at continued coexistence between liberals and evangelicals, the parishioners of the Église Réformée could not agree and a separation took place in 1867.

The "petit Temple" as locals call it was finished in spring 1869.



Vauvert clock tower

Hamlets

little villages and big stories!

Gallician

In the thirteenth century, the Baron de Vauvert gave the “people of Posquières-Vauvert” rights to fish, hunt and graze their animals, as well as to make use of the reed beds on the ponds on his estate, a very rare act of generosity for the time.

In the Middle Ages, peasant fishermen lived in cabins made from planks and reeds next to the “Coustière” (coast). The plentiful activity of their small flat-bottomed boats transporting their produce ensured the prosperity of the barony.

Meanwhile, viticulture quickly developed on the hillsides of Les Costières and barges started to transport barrels of wine and eau-de-vie.

Most of the houses were built at the end of the First Empire. It was the Galissian family’s farm that led to the name of the hamlet. Later, the owner of the Mas de Fonteuil created an eaux-de-vie “factory”. An “affinage” was created at the end of the road leading to the bridge, offering bed and board to sailors. Gradually, most fishermen left their cabins and built houses: the hamlet of Gallician was born.



Cooperative wine store

An original work by the architect Henri Floutier, the cooperative wine storehouse was begun in 1948 and operational by 1952. Only the reception bays give a clue as to the function of the building. The storehouse is symmetrical, with two huge pavilions either side of a lower central section for offices and a shop. Gallician’s cooperative “cave” was a trendsetter in this way of organising

the wine trade, and was part of the creation of the AOC Costières de Nîmes.

Community centre

Initially designed to be the community centre as well as the municipal offices and a home for the municipal officer, this building was designed by the architect Armand Pellier. A standardised, modern construction, it has a concrete butterfly roof.

For decoration, Pellier called on Paule Pascale, who made a discontinuous frieze with horses and bulls. She also sculpted a cockerel, the emblem of Gallician, to serve as a gargoye at the bottom of the side wall of the cinema.

Montcalm

The hamlet is part of the estate created by Louis Prat, the Marseille industrialist (Noilly-Prat) during the time of phylloxera epidemic. He bought the land at the end of the nineteenth century from a descendant of the family of the Marquis de Montcalm. Vines were planted and numerous farmhouses built. Around the central château there are wine storehouses and other winemaking buildings.

The hamlet also includes the stables and the coach-house and coachmen’s accommodation, as well as the servants’ and gamekeepers’ quarters, bakery, school, water tower and chapel at a distance from the property.

Franquevaux

The prestigious history of the Cistercian abbey at Franquevaux began in 1141, when a group of monks asked for hospitality from Seigneur Pierre de Belvedin (Châtelain de Beauvoisin). It was built over a period of sixty years next to the vast Scamandre lake. The only Cistercian abbey on the coast, it became a highly important economic and political player. During the violent wars of religion, the abbey was ransacked and demolished three times. During the French Revolution it ceased to exist, with the monks forced to flee and their goods confiscated. Some of their lands went on to become the major estates of Costières.

Abbey interpretative trail

Wander through the forgotten history of the Franquevaux monks by following this marked walk through the hamlet. The Abbey of Franquevaux was built in 1143, and what remains today is split into several different dwellings.

Start from Espace J.Torrès (arena parking area).

Along the path, you will find five panels retracing the life of the abbey, ending at the Pont de Franquevaux, from where you will have an exceptional view of the Rhône canal towards Sète and the surrounding ponds. Allow yourself to be transported to the setting in which the abbey was built.

Franquevaux interpretative trail



Gallician cooperative wine storehouse



More information

Activities, events

Visit the tourist office website for lots more ideas to make your stay in the Camargue Gardoise extra special!

Whether you are looking for festivals, parties or markets, Coeur de Petite Camargue has a wide range of festive activities of all kinds on offer!

Discover our selection of events and entertainment and set out on a journey of discovery around **Cœur de Petite Camargue**.



Camino de Santiago guide

Discover our guide for pilgrims, helping you to make the most of the section of the Way of Arles that passes through Gard, with eight pages of historical and practical information.

It is **available to download from our website www.coeurdepeticamargue.fr** and the ACIR website, and a **paper version can be contained at the Tourist Office**.

Activity walks

for families

For a fun journey of discovery through town centres and villages, pick up one of our Randoland walking guides.

Randoland trails are available for all villages in the area:

Aimargues, Aubord, Beauvoisin, Le Caillar and Vauvert. These treasure hunt-style walking leaflets are available from the Tourist Office and you can also **download them from our website: www.coeurdepeticamargue.fr**

You will find a parents' guide sheet with a map of the village as well as a sheet with questions for children to answer, split into age ranges: 4-6, 7-9 and 10+.



Thanks

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Photo credits

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Opening hours

From April to October

Tuesday to Friday from 9am to 12.30pm and 2pm to 6pm and Mondays and Saturdays from 9am to 12.30pm and until 1pm in July and August.

The rest of the year

Tuesday to Friday from 9am to 12.30pm and from 1.30pm to 5.30pm and Mondays and Saturdays from 9am to 12.30pm.