

Let us tell you about

AGDE



Tour Guide

CAP D'AGDE
MÉDITERRANÉE

agde
Archipel de vie

CONTENTS



Page 4

A little history

Page 5

Stone mysteries

Page 8

Where the waters meet

Page 10

Tours and events

Page 12

Tour map

Page 13

Local figures

Entering the historic centre
from Rue Honoré Muratet

Agathé (Agde): Greek for "good", "favourable".

This was the name chosen by the Greeks when they founded Agde in the 5th century BC on a Phocaeen settlement dating from the previous century.

Since then, Agde has never stopped living by and for the sea. From Antiquity until the 18th century, Agde was one of the largest commercial ports in the Mediterranean.

Late in the 19th century, when large sailing vessels were gradually nudged aside by motorized merchant ships, Agde looked inland and winegrowing enjoyed one of its greatest periods of prosperity.

Agde, the Greek city, sits within the boundaries of three bodies of water: the river Hérault, the Canal du Midi (1666-1680) and the Mediterranean Sea. The city has navigated the centuries via a maze of narrow streets lined with houses and unique monuments made from black volcanic rock that can only be found in Languedoc. The city built its future relying on both the sea and the land.

Welcome to l'îlot Molière

This is your gateway to the town of Agde. It is a warm, friendly place designed to let you discover and share in the culture of Agde.

- The reception area of the Tourist Office, a team is at your service to answer questions and provide all the information you need to discover the area and make your stay as pleasant as possible
- The Espace Molière (Molière Centre), a showroom for exhibitions throughout the year.





A LITTLE HISTORY

AGDE IS ONE OF THE OLDEST CITIES IN FRANCE, WITH THOUSANDS OF YEARS OF HISTORY BEHIND IT. THE CITY WAS BUILT FROM THE VOLCANIC STONE OF MONT SAINT-LOUP AND HAS FLOURISHED OVER THE CENTURIES THANKS TO ITS MARITIME TRADE.

IT ALL BEGAN...

• ONE MILLION YEARS AGO

Volcanic eruptions formed Agde's subsoil and landscape. The volcanoes became extinct 740,000 years ago.

• 6TH CENTURY BC

Phocaeen sailors from Asia Minor founded Agathé Tyché - "Good, Favourable" - on a volcanic outcrop.

• 4TH CENTURY BC

Settled by Marseille, Agathé Tyché is the 2nd Greek city in France.

• 5TH CENTURY AD

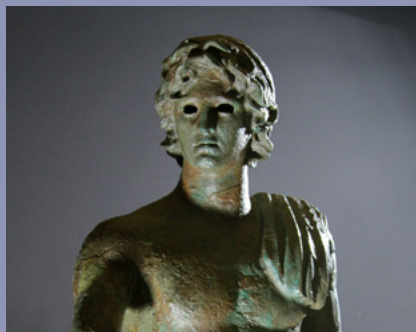
Christianization of Agde. Seat of a powerful bishopric until 1790.

• 12TH CENTURY

Construction of Agde's Romanesque Cathedral out of volcanic rock.

• 1632

Cardinal de Richelieu chooses Cap d'Agde as the site of a major port in the Gulf of Lions.



The "Éphèbe d'Agde" - Musée de l'Éphèbe



5



• 1963

Foundation of the National Development authority which decides to create a resort at Cap d'Agde.

• 1964

L'Éphèbe d'Agde, a Greek statue, is fished out of the Hérault River.

• 1969

Building work begins with St Martin port at Cap d'Agde. The first buildings are inaugurated on 1st July 1970.

• 2001

Two Roman bronze statuettes are found off Cap d'Agde. The Musée de l'Éphèbe currently boasts the largest French collection of ancient bronzes found in situ.

STONE MYSTERIES

DISCOVER AGDE'S ARCHITECTURAL TREASURES PASSED DOWN THROUGH HISTORY AS YOU WANDER THROUGH ITS STREETS AND SQUARES.

1. "LA BELLE AGATHOISE" FOUNTAIN

Surrounded by marble beasts, Agathé has been watching over the city since Ancient Times. This monumental fountain, built to honour Agathé, symbolises the Antique origins of the city.

2. THE RAMPARTS

Witnesses of 2,600 years of history, the foundations of Agde's ramparts date back to the 6th and 4th century BC, placing them among the oldest in France.

3. THE PLACE MOLIÈRE

In the ancient chapel of the Sœurs de Sainte Marie convent, admire the 17th-century Molière hall, one of the most beautiful exhibition halls in the region.



4. THE HOUSE OF VIGUIER GUÉRIN

Historic manor house built in 1589 by Nicolas Trancaire, a viguier from Agde, (magistrate who, just like the tax collectors in other provinces of France, rendered justice in the south of France) on behalf of the Viscounts and Counts, then the King. Note the remarkable Renaissance entrance of shelly limestone with its gate posts, capitals and frieze.



5. THE STREET AND PLACE "DE LA GLACIÈRE"

Remains of ancient living quarters were found in the district of La Glacière. This volcanic mound, previously part of the river delta, was where the Greeks first settled. Some remains of the first ramparts and town are still found a few metres below the surface. Built in 1680, La Glacière (a name indicating ice storage) was where ice collected in winter was stored to cool down drinks and sick, feverish inhabitants. Number 13 rue de la Glacière is the Hôtel des Frères Barrier, where Richelieu is said to have stayed in 1642.

6. THE HOTEL ALBARET

This is a charming residence built in 1649. The owner was Antoine Albaret, a royal notary. With a medieval appearance much like this spiral staircase built into the tower and accessed via a monumental basalt door, decorated with intriguing details... What secret is the cat that guards the entrance hiding?

7. THE STREET "LA MAÎTRISE"

A hidden garden, a door in the style of the 14th-century with a Gothic arch, an arrow slit camouflaged in amongst the old stones, and opposite, decoration featuring scallop shells, a Venetian door and acanthus leaf detailing.

8. THE SAINT-ETIENNE CATHEDRAL

Built entirely out of Agde's volcanic rock, this Romanesque fortified cathedral dates back to the 12th century. The 35-metre-high keep dates from the 14th century. Its similarity to a medieval fortress and its military austerity is echoed inside. It can be entered through the Chapelle Notre-Dame de Lourdes, built in the 19th century using elements from a Gothic cloister dating back to the 14th century but now destroyed. Originally, only small holes allowed light into the nave. Towards the 17th century, the cathedral was opened up to let the light in: large openings were made and decorative stained glass added after 1851. The masterpiece of fixtures is the richly decorated altarpiece. The Baroque throne chair was made from coloured marble in 1751. A baroque organ embellishes the cathedral's



6

STONE MYSTERIES

pulpit. Built in 1990 by Gérard Guillemin, it replaced the one installed in 1901 which had been donated by Emmanuel Laurens, owner of the Belle Isle château.



9. THE EPISCOPAL CHAPTER ROOM

Behind its long basalt facade, the Cathedral complex's arched Chapter Room (12th to 13th centuries) this large vaulted room is part of the cathedral itself. Opposite, note the surprising decor of Square Picheire, with its strange trompe l'œil, and the Consular House's elegant Renaissance facade.

10. THE CONSULAR HOUSE

The current House in the Town Centre ("Maison du Cœur de ville"), built in the Renaissance style, has three floors and a covered hall with arcades used for fairs and markets. An iron ruler, or "standard metre" sealed in the stone was used by traders to standardize their measures. Rue Jean Roger features a monumental Renaissance-style door with pediment adorned with three heads combining a lion and monster (or dragon), figures linked to the door's symbolism.

11. THE HOTEL "DE BOISSEZON"

This private house at 27, Rue Jean Roger boasts a monumental Renaissance-style door with pediment reached by a horseshoe stairway.

12. THE STREET "DE L'AMOUR"

This is the more recent name for this street. Formerly known as Rue Porte or Rue du Bonel, the street name was changed in around 1793 [during the 'post-revolutionary' era a great number of street names were changed] and became known as the Rue de l'Amour or Rue de Lamour. The presence of private manor houses and lavish residences bear witness to a middle-class, wealthy lifestyle.

13. THE HOTEL MALAVAL

At no.22 Rue de l'Amour, there is a character sculpted onto the tympanum of the front door of the residence built by Antoine Malaval, the town's first consul, in 1692. The monumental entrance onto the street is a carriage entrance that allowed horse-drawn carriages to access the courtyard, and the residence and outbuildings all overlooked this courtyard. The entrance portal is modestly flanked by smooth pillars supporting a triangular broken pediment that originally featured a cartouche insert decorated with the Malaval family coat-of-arms (no longer there today). At the centre of the finely sculpted decoration is a 'putto', 'cherub' or 'cupid' with no arms and a body with drapery and acanthus leaf detailing at the bottom. There is a moulded rectangular design on either side of this sculpture. Acanthus leaves are very common decorative features on 17th century façades in Agde.

14. THE SAINT-SEVER CHURCH

Saint-Sever is the fisherman's church in the "Marine" district. Built in the 15th century on the foundations of an earlier church, it underwent significant work in the 20th century after the vault collapsed. It features a magnificent 16th-century polychrome wood sculpture of Christ on the Cross (see "Local figures" on page 13), object of particular veneration during Holy Week. Its 19th - century Romantic organ is a registered Historical Monument.

15. THE JULES BAUDOU AGATHOIS MUSEUM

The Museum was formerly a private 17th-century house; entered through a sober gateway inscribed with "Charité" (Love) in lead. It now holds the memory of Agde's history. Its ample collection includes items used in daily



16

life in Agde, furniture, clothes, dioramas, souvenirs of the city's religious power and sailors who left Agde to explore the world. From ancient ceramics to paintings by the Azéma brothers, the Agathois Museum invites you on a journey through time. Open throughout the year. Close to the Museum, at number 6, don't miss the noble facade of Maison Jordan, with its mullion windows.



16. THE SAINT-ANDRÉ CHURCH

This church, cherished by Agde's inhabitants, was built in 1525 on the site of the first basilica, birthplace of Christianity in Agde, where the important council met in 506 AD. It features the 3.3-metre high Council column. Graves from the 5th and 6th centuries have been updated.

17. THE PLACE "DU JEU DE BALLON"

Its name reveals its initial use. At the back of the square you will find the mediatheque, a former secondary school and now Agde's media library. The 19th-century stone statue at the entrance represents Knowledge.

18. THE "RÉPUBLIQUE" FOUNTAIN

The fountain's bronze statue represents the protective French Republic.

19. THE CLAUDE TERRISSE STATUE

A tribute to a sailor born in Agde in 1598, privateer to the King and town benefactor. See "Local figures" on page 13.



- The "Chapelle de l'Agenouillade" (Chapel of Kneeling).

Also built by the Constable in the 15th Century, it commemorates a medieval miracle whose story (whether authentic or just legend) is told inside. A refreshing, spiritual visit.

The sanctuary of Notre-Dame de l'Agenouillade

Founded in Antiquity and dedicated to the Virgin Mary in the 5th or 6th Century, it comprises two religious monuments:

- The Notre-Dame-du-Grau Church, the original holy place.

A Priory founded by Saint-Sever, then used by Benedictine monks, it finally became the church for a Capuchin convent built by the Constable of Montmorency, the Governor of Languedoc.

WHERE THE WATERS MEET

THE HISTORY OF AGDE IS CLOSELY LINKED TO THE SEA, THE RIVER, AND THE CANAL DU MIDI, ALL OF WHICH ARE SOURCES OF LIFE AND PROSPERITY FOR THE CITY.

1. THE CHÂTEAU LAURENS

The château was built in 1898 by Emmanuel Laurens, avant-garde voyager, man of science, and Art Nouveau enthusiast. The scenery on the visitor's tour showcases the atmosphere and decor of this amazing residence, listed as a Historic Monument.

Emmanuel Laurens was born in Agde in 1873. He was a brilliant student who was planning to go into medicine when he received a monumental inheritance of 20 million gold francs. This fortune allowed him to fulfil his dreams of travelling, from North Africa and Egypt to China, Madagascar, India, Ceylon, across Europe and Russia. This multitude of cultures and exotic lands fed his passion for art, prestige, and other marvels. He called upon the most innovative artists during the construction and decoration of his château, reflecting his dreams in the juxtaposition of different styles from the past and present, with neoclassical architecture and Art Nouveau style.

➤ All year round, from tuesday to sunday.
Domaine de Belle Isle, Av. Raymond Pitet

Find out more. Booking is compulsory:

Tel. : +33 (0)9 71 00 53 00

www.chateaulaurens-agde.fr



Since 1697, Agde's coat of arms shows three blue waves on a gold background. The three waves represent the meeting of the sea, the river and the ocean via the Canal du Midi.

2. THE CANAL DU MIDI

The Royal Canal of Languedoc is a monumental masterpiece unique in the world. The Canal du Midi was registered by UNESCO as a World Heritage site in 1997.

It bears witness to the spirit of enterprise and French genius in the 17th century. Agde is the last stop before the Thau lagoon and Sète.

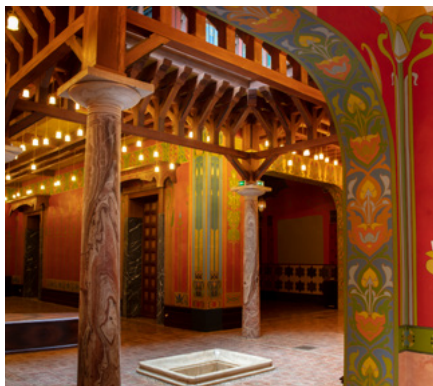
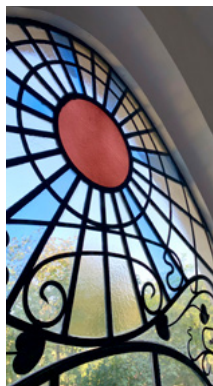
At the river port stands the magnificent "Hôtel de l'Administration du Canal". The port is not only an ideal stopover but a departure point for cruises.

3. THE ROUND LOCK

The Agde round lock is unlike any other along the Canal du Midi. Originally 29.20m wide and 5.20m deep, it was enlarged in the 19th century.

Built in 1676 using volcanic rock, the lock is a technical masterpiece of engineering and an architectural wonder.

It links together three different water levels and enables boats to turn around to take any of three exits: one to Béziers and Toulouse, one to the Etang de Thau along the Hérault River, and the third to Agde and the sea along the Canalet, a 300-year-old branch of the canal leading to the Hérault.



4. THE PLACE JEAN JAURÈS

There is a stunning view of the river from the ancient Bishop's Palace and gardens.

THE QUAYS IN THE TOWN OF AGDE

The current quays date from the 18th and 19th centuries, are made from beautiful flagstones and mooring bitts, all in basalt, and there are mooring rings on the walls of the houses.

5. QUAI DU CHAPITRE

This place holds a direct connection with the canons, whose role was to assist the bishop in celebrating mass with their presence and their singing. The buildings were made up of large storehouses alongside the river Hérault and adjoining the cathedral, which were used to store food items purchased using the bishops' own means, the tithe or other taxes.

6. QUAI ALEXANDRE DREUILLE

The quays were part of a vast development project whereby huge basalt flagstones were used to cover the banks of the Hérault, from Agde port complex to the mouth of the Grau. In 1762, the Estates of Languedoc invested considerable sums of money in view of the sheer scope of the constructions and port facilities to build.

7. QUAI COMMANDANT MAGES

The Quai Commandant Mages, originally known as the Quai de la Foraine, was reserved for foreign boats.



8. THE PLACE "DE LA MARINE" AND AMPHITRITE STATUE

Heart of the fishermen's district prior to the fish market's move to Grau d'Agde. The ironworks of the surrounding homes bear witness to the wealth generated by port activities. In the middle of the square is a statue of Greek sea-goddess Amphitrite, who symbolises Agde's maritime tradition.

9. QUAI COMMANDANT RÉVEILLE

In the early 20th century, the Quai Commandant Réveille, formerly known as the Quai de l'Ouest, still boasted commercial activity thanks to the boats navigating between Spain, Agde and Marseille, carrying mainly dried fruit, wine and sweet products. With the arrival of the train station, the siltation of the mouth of the Hérault and vessels that could carry larger tonnages, the commercial port of Agde was eventually abandoned. There are some beautiful residences dating from the late 18th and the 19th century, such as no. 11 with a basalt and limestone façade, large Classic-style windows, stunning cast iron balconies, and on the first floor, a clue as to the owners' business. Most of them were merchants (wine, oil, flour, agricultural products, wood, wheat, etc.).

The fort of Brescou

Built in 1586 on the only volcanic island in Languedoc-Roussillon, the Brescou Fortress was re-fortified from 1634, during the period of Cardinal de Richelieu's project to establish a naval base and commercial harbour between Cap d'Agde and the island of Brescou. Starting with Vauban's construction works, a campaign was initiated towards the end of the 17th century to restore the fortress. During the 18th century it became a state prison until 1851.

The fort is also currently undergoing restoration. If you would like to participate in its conservation, you can support the association "Amis du Fort de Brescou" (Friends of Fort Brescou).



TOURS AND EVENTS

**ARE YOU READY TO DISCOVER AGDE AND ITS HISTORY?
JOIN A TOUR ORGANISED BY THE TOURIST OFFICE!**

GUIDED TOURS with the city's official guide

› All tours are listed in the calendar on the tourist office website: www.capdagde.com

Tours with reservation:

reservation.capdagde.com

Period: from April to October;
all year round for groups.

Informations:

Tourism Office

+33 (0)6 45 82 46 14 - patrimoine@capdagde.com



Scan this code
to book your
guided tour.
French booking
web site.





MORE TOURS AND ACTIVITIES

› VISIT HISTORIC AGDE WITH AN INDEPENDENT GUIDE

Tour of emblematic districts, including that of the former bishopric and the fortified 12th century cathedral. Monuments, churches, alleys, the old port, basaltic stone architecture... Tour in French, English, German or Spanish, subject to prior booking: Group and school packages.

Information and booking:

Françine MORCILLO, local independent guide
Tel. +33 (0)6 03 06 34 60
francinemura34@gmail.com - www.agde-sur-mer.fr

› THE BUNKERS 610 AND 638

The city bears the marks of German fortifications built during WWII to repel the Allied landings. You'll be able to explore the bunker 638, a German country hospital with a surface area of 200 m², devoted to caring for injured soldiers in the event of an attack and the bunker 610 which was the command post for the Tamarissièrre battery.

› Saturday from 9.30am to 12pm throughout the year.

4 rue du Cdt Malet – Car park Antoine Groignard, next to the water tower, La Tamarissièrre.

Infos : "Agde Histoire 39-45" association

Tel. +33 (0)6 22 60 51 83

SELF-TOUR WITH BALUDIK

Take a stroll, learn, and discover Agde at your own pace

Baludik is a mobile app that you can use from your smartphone while out walking around. You can choose between family walks, themed tours, or a more athletic route.

- › The Beauty of Agathe Tyche
- › The Quest of the King's Privateer
- › The Adventures of Gabi the Gabian and his search for sardines.
Routes recommended for families with young children.
- › Agathe Tyche and the Hérault river
Audio itinerary recommended for athletes (running, cycling, scooter).
- › Agde, vila de bona fortuna.

Simply download the Baludik app on your smartphone and go to the starting point of your chosen itinerary. Each point you reach provides content on the sites and their history. The app is available for free from Google Play and the App Store.



› CHILDREN'S ACTIVITIES AND GAMES

In July and August and during school holidays, the Musée de l'Éphèbe and Musée Agathois propose a number of workshops and games sessions in an amusing and creative approach to history, for children aged 7 and above.

Information and booking:

Musée de l'Éphèbe Tel. +33 (0)4 67 94 69 60

Musée Agathois Jules Baudou

Tel. +33 (0)4 67 94 82 51

EXHIBITIONS

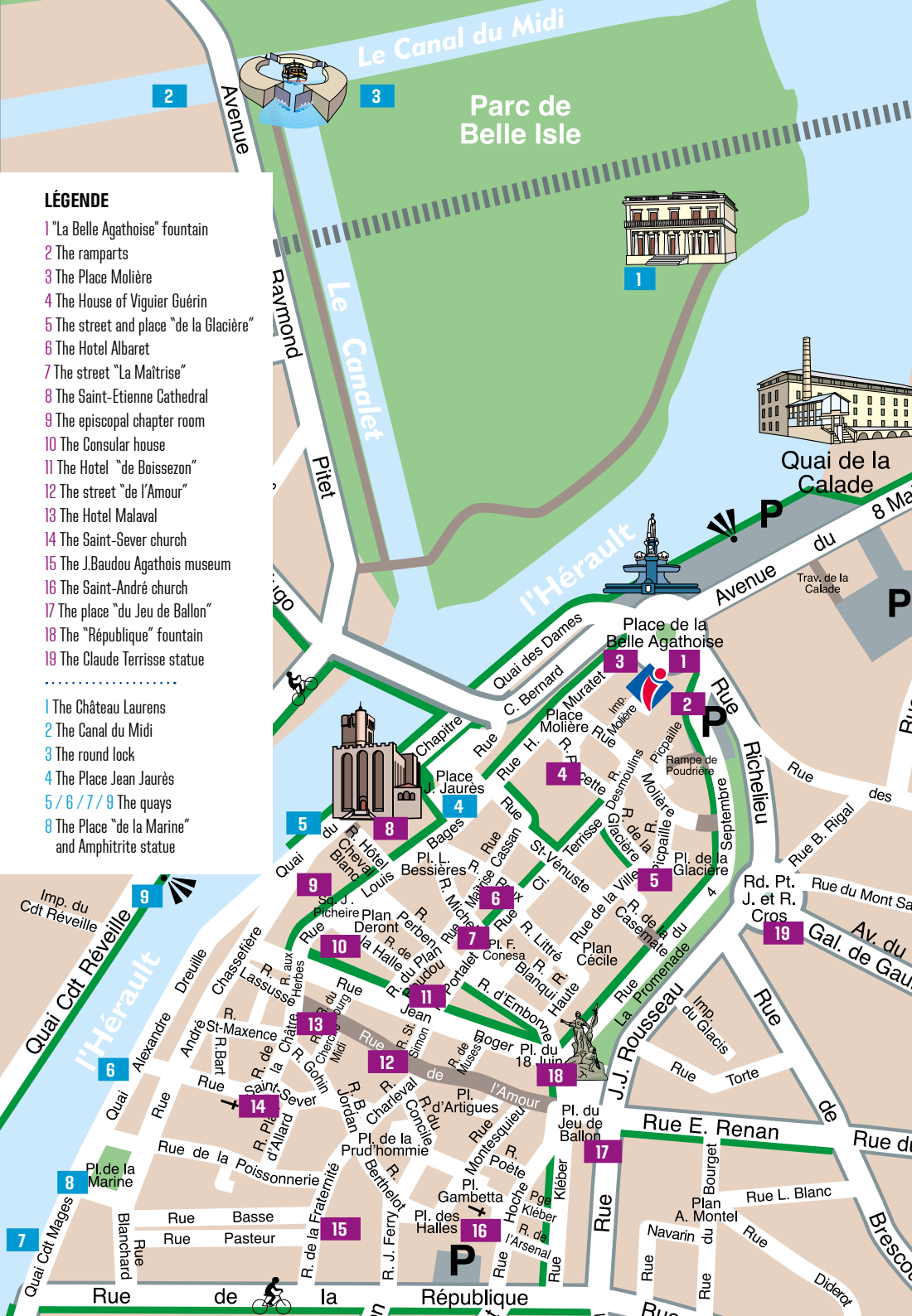
Visit the exhibitions on the Îlot Molière : Espace Molière



LÉGENDE

- 1 "La Belle Agathoise" fountain
- 2 The ramps
- 3 The Place Molière
- 4 The House of Viguier Guérin
- 5 The street and place "de la Glacière"
- 6 The Hotel Albaret
- 7 The street "La Maîtrise"
- 8 The Saint-Etienne Cathedral
- 9 The episcopal chapter room
- 10 The Consular house
- 11 The Hotel "de Boissezon"
- 12 The street "de l'Amour"
- 13 The Hotel Malaval
- 14 The Saint-Sever church
- 15 The J.Baudou Agathois museum
- 16 The Saint-André church
- 17 The place "du Jeu de Ballon"
- 18 The "République" fountain
- 19 The Claude Terrisse statue

- 1 The Château Laurens
- 2 The Canal du Midi
- 3 The round lock
- 4 The Place Jean Jaurès
- 5/6/7/9 The quays
- 8 The Place "de la Marine" and Amphitrite statue





LOCAL FIGURES



— CLAUDE TERRISSE



This famous sailor was born at Agde in 1598. His intelligence and bravery led him to become a Privateer to Louis XIII and Louis XIV. In 1659, he returned to Agde to live and was appointed Premier Consul several times. He was a generous man, leaving his wealth to the poor. Claude Terrisse died in 1673 and is still remembered as a town benefactor. In 1876, a bust was erected in his honour, with the following inscription: *"I wish my goods to belong to the poor and remain theirs forever"*. 1st July 1672. To Claude Terrisse, as valiant a captain as generous benefactor, Agde Town Council.

— THE "ÉPHEBE D'AGDE"

Discovered in the Hérault River in 1964, l'Éphèbe is the symbol of Agde's past. Inspired by portraits of Alexander the Great and attributed to the Lysippe school, this 2,300-year-old Greek bronze statue takes pride of place in Cap d'Agde's Musée de l'Éphèbe. The museum is dedicated to underwater archaeology but also features a very rare collection of amphorae and ancient bronze sculptures found on site.

— SCULPTED CHRIST, SAINT-SEVER CHURCH

This wooden sculpture representing Christ on the Cross is the object of popular veneration. It has traditionally headed up the Good Friday procession for generations, and remains a mainstay of Agde's heritage and culture.

Dating from the Renaissance, little is known of its origins although one legend says it was sculpted by an angel.

Research undertaken over several years has led to a number of conclusions: the Christ of Saint-Sever has all the features of Italian Renaissance architecture from the end of the 15th century. The statue is beautifully sculpted. It is reminiscent of Michelangelo's style and well worth a visit in the Saint-Sever church. Indeed, "Les Amis d'Agde", (Friends of Agde) association believe that Michelangelo actually made the statue. The association is attempting to accumulate evidence to prove their hypothesis.



— HENRY I, DUKE OF MONTMORENCY (1534-1614)

This Governor of Languedoc for 40 years was a patient listener and proved his goodness to Agde's inhabitants when exercising his fiscal duties (setting taxes and redistributing the resulting income) and protecting the territory. He watched over the town and Fort Brescou. At the height of differences between Roman Catholics and Protestants, he proved both moderate and tolerant. In 1593, as a sign of his gratitude, King Henri IV made him High Commander over the King's armies. Henry de Damville proved his attachment to the Agde region and his Catholic faith by developing the Notre-Dame Sanctuary in Grau d'Agde, which he bought in 1583. He built a church, a convent and a chapel there. A legend tells of the appearance of the Virgin kneeling on a rock in prayer, after which a flood was miraculously averted. The rock believed to bear an imprint of the Virgin's knee is now enshrined in the chapel. Upon his death, the Duke was buried in the sanctuary, which remains a destination of pilgrims along the route of St-Jacques-de-Compostelle.



Take a guided tour



➤ Tours are available throughout the year.
A guide will take you exploring the history
and heritage of our towns and villages.

➤ Tourism Office
Tél. : +33 (0)6 45 82 46 14
patrimoine@capdagde.com
Online tickets (in French):
reservation.capdagde.com

➤ CONSULT OUR AGENDA:
www.capdagde.com

**Do you have any questions?
Do you need some advice?
Contact our Tourism Offices.**

- **Cap d'Agde** > Rambla du Soleil : +33 (0)4 67 01 04 04 – contact@capdagde.com
- **Agde** > Place de la Belle Agathoise : +33 (0)4 67 31 87 50 – contact@capdagde.com
- **Pézenas** > 20 Place du 14 Juillet : +33 (0)4 67 98 36 40 – pezenas@capdagde.com
- **Portiragnes** > Place du Bicentenaire : +33 (0)4 67 90 92 51 – portiragnesplage@capdagde.com
- **Tourbes** > 6 Place de l'Eglise : +33 (0)4 67 94 43 92 – tourbes@capdagde.com
- **Vias** > Avenue de la Méditerranée : +33 (0)4 67 21 76 25 – vias@capdagde.com

Opening hours are indicated on the website:
www.capdagde.com/tourist-office



**OFFICE DE TOURISME
Cap d'Agde Méditerranée**
BP 544 - F-34305 Le Cap d'Agde cedex
Tél. : +33 (0)4 67 01 04 04
contact@capdagde.com

Agde Tourist Information Office
Îlot Molière
Place de la Belle Agathoise
34300 Agde
Tél. +33 (0)4 67 31 87 50



#capdagdemediterranee

www.capdagde.com

**CAP D'AGDE
MÉDITERRANÉE**

