

The Remarkable Heritage Site

The historic centre of Toulouse is classified as a Remarkable Heritage Site (formerly known as a protected area) since 21st August 1986. It extends across 254 hectares, with 230 ha that fall under the city and 24 ha that form part of the Garonne. In 2016, the Conservation and Development plan was launched, outlining initiatives for promoting the site.

Legend

- Green Spaces
- Viewpoint
- Metro Station
- Tramway Station
- Velo Toulouse Station

Index of Heritage Sites

1. Pont des Catalans



Created at the start of the 20th Century by engineer Paul Séjourné, this bridge marked the final stage of the encirclement of the city by the boulevards and it links the Amidonniers and Saint-Cyprien quarters. Constructed in an innovative arch bridge style, it links two parallel structures 10m apart that support the deck. The bridge was constructed out of stone: cut stone for the pillars, brick for the arches and concrete for the flooring of the deck. This two colour pattern associated with the presence of gaps at regular intervals accentuates how this bridge echoes the Pont-Neuf. Its cast-iron railings are adorned with the cross of Languedoc alternating with the initials of the city of Toulouse. Inaugurated with wild celebrations in the presence of delegates from the city of Barcelona, it demonstrates the close Occitano-Catalan friendship.

2. Bazacle and the causeway



In use since Antiquity and a fundamental aspect of the city's history, this natural passage - a strip of hardened marl - crosses the River Garonne perpendicular to the alluvial terrace upon which Toulouse was built. Until the establishment of the Pont-Neuf in the 13th Century, this ford was used when other bridges were impassable. At the end of the 12th Century, the Prior of La Daurade basilica authorised the construction of a causeway to supply the imposing mills that were greatly admired and that produced great profit for the "Pariers", who were akin to shareholders. In 1888 these windmills were replaced by a hydro-electric plant, operated since 1946 by EDF. This can be visited nowadays - machine rooms, water chambers, fish pass - and allows visitors to admire the causeway from up close from its panoramic terrace.

3. The Saint-Pierre lock and the Canal de Brienne



Carved out in the 18th Century in order to bypass the Bazacle causeway and link the Garonne with the mouth of the Canal du Midi, the Canal de Brienne forms part of the estate of the "Canal du Midi" that was listed by UNESCO in 1996 as a World Heritage site. The States of the Languedoc commissioned this work in order to facilitate the transportation of merchandise. Surrounded by buildings, its starting point was set where the moat of the ramparts began. Built entirely from cut stone, the lock was designed in the oval shape selected by Riquet in 1670 for all the locks along the Canal du Midi. Supported ardently by the modernist archbishop Loménie de Brienne, who gave the canal its name, it was inaugurated on 14th February 1776. Nowadays it is a much loved spot for walkers, covered as it is by a canopy of leaves from trees that are hundreds of years old.

5. The quayside and ports along the right bank



The alluvial terrace, the birthplace of the city of Toulouse, have always provided embankments since its very beginnings. This whole area was regulated by Joseph-Marie de Saget and his project of major urban works undertaken between 1765 and 1789. Quayside walls made of brick and two ports deeply altered the look of the right bank of the River Garonne, from the Pont-Neuf right up to Bazacle. It was intended to streamline the quayside in order to protect Toulouse from flooding and relaunch the local economy, which was in decline since the fall of the pastel trade. When it came to construction, Saget decided upon a regular style of architecture that was punctuated with arcades at ground level. The Revolution brought his project to a halt, but left a diverse range of façades as evidence of this time.

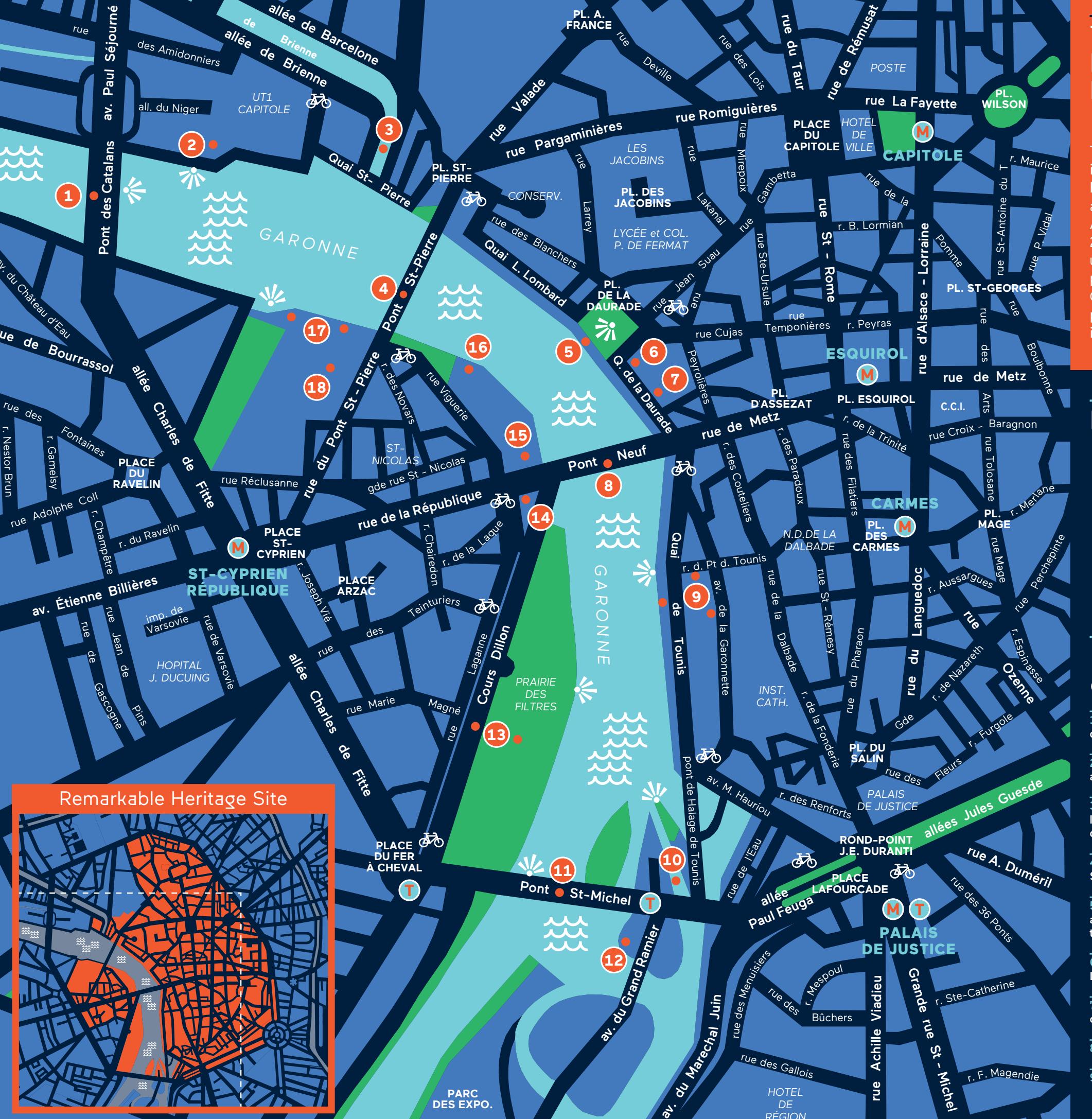
6. The basilica of Notre-Dame-de-la-Daurade



4. Pont Saint-Pierre



This is the fifth version of a bridge that was decided upon in 1852 by a local council that wished to lighten the load on the Pont-Neuf, which was constantly congested. The first two suspension bridges were washed away by a succession of floods on the River Garonne, in 1855 and 1875. The next two, built in 1877 and 1931, gradually became more and more fragile until they were unfit for the growing amount of road traffic. This led to the construction of a fifth version, made of concrete and metal. Propped up on the ancient abutments and decorated with chandeliers that give it a 1900's look, the bridge was opened in 1987. It connects the Saint-Cyprien quarter to the historic centre and, on the right bank, it leads out onto a square that has recently been redesigned by the renowned Catalan architect, Joan Busquets, within the framework of the Toulouse Centre project.



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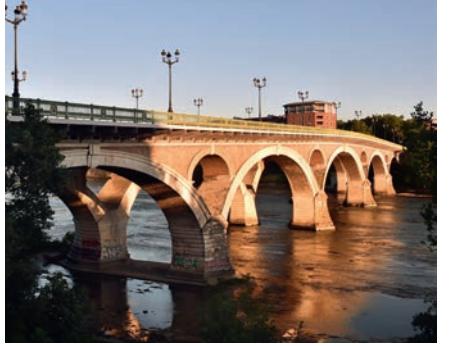


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Heritage Walks

Banks of the Garonne

Right bank or left bank... The Remarkable Heritage Site (formerly known as a protected area) of Toulouse encloses a river that is its most precious treasure. Springing forth from a tumultuous Pyrenean torrent, the Garonne becomes a river as it leaves the foothills, re-joins the Ariège and then, adopting a true fluvial physiognomy, washes up on the doorstep of our city, providing a river bend that proved ideal for the establishment of a settlement. A natural ford and a protective alluvial terrace encouraged the first inhabitants to settle here. The river flows between a low embankment that was susceptible to some memorable floods and which was initially inhabited by a modest population and a right bank that safely overlooks the river and which was favoured by wealthier inhabitants. Bridges, monuments, quays and brickwork façades all provide evidence of the great periods of development undergone by the city.

The waters and the banks of the Garonne located between the Pont Saint-Michel and the Pont des Catalans have been listed since 1988. The itinerary suggested in this pocket guide offers the most beautiful views of the city and its river. Eighteen remarkable monuments are detailed here so that visitors can discover and arrive at a better understanding of the identity of Toulouse.



7. The School of Fine-Arts



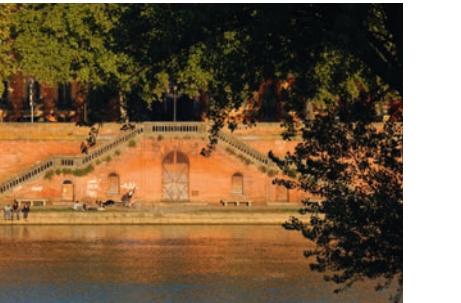
The majestic stone façade and the main building looking out onto the Garonne are the work of architect Pierre Esquié. Commissioned in 1895, they form part of a succession of wings of the ancient Benedictine monastery and combine to create a single entity. The façade is decorated with allegorical statues representing Painting, Sculpture, Engraving and Architecture surrounded by medallions that pay tribute to French artists, all illustrating this venue's true vocation. Founded in 1750, the very first provincial Royal Academy was initially based at Le Capitole, and then at the Augustins Convent in 1804. It moved when the rue de Metz was excavated and it set up home in the former La Daurade monastery, which had since become a cotton mill and later a tobacco factory. Today the Higher Institute of Arts of Toulouse no longer teaches architecture, but it has added a centre for advanced studies in music and dance.

8. Pont-Neuf



The construction from 1544 onwards of Toulouse's oldest bridge across the River Garonne was of real significance to the nation. Mindful of the need for a major and reliable crossing point along the strategic route to Spain, Francis I of France provided the funds for the city to carry out this work. The project was, however, very chaotic. The devastating floods and the unpredictable bed of the River Garonne and the wars of religion meant that this construction faced severe challenges and Nicolas Bachelier, the great Toulouse architect of the Renaissance, had great difficulty in tackling this extraordinary task. Pierre Souffron, and then Jacques Lemercier, would replace him. In 1632 the bridge was finally finished. Today we can admire the eight majestic arches -built in brick and cut stone- and its pillars that are hollowed out in order to limit the pressure of the water, a technique that has allowed it to withstand the whims of the river.

9. Tounis



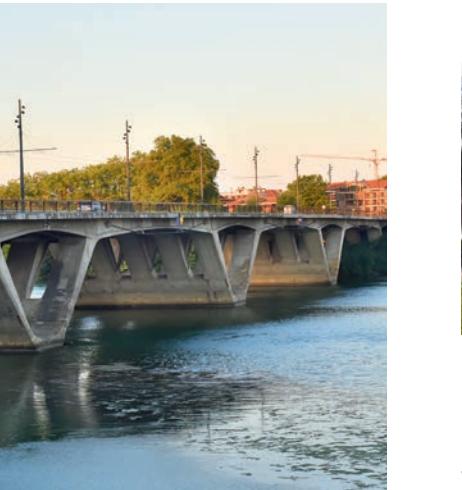
Access to the île de Tounis is gained by crossing Toulouse's oldest bridge (1516). Often remodelled by the floods and by human endeavour, this site was originally home to a small and hardworking population that undertook a malodorous profession: skinners, tanners, dyers... Exposed to the whims of the River Garonne, the Tounis inhabitants were finally protected in 1850 thanks to the construction of a barrier wall: the current quayside. 100 years later, the Garonnette, a branch of the river that separates the island from the city, had dried up: Tounis has become a sought after residential area -Claude Nougaro's final home was located here, at no.112- and one of Toulouse's finest viewpoints across the River Garonne.

10. The Saint-Michel lock



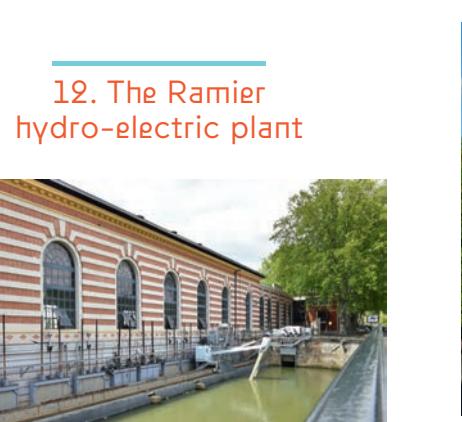
The Isle of Saint-Michel is home to the only lock on the Garonne in Toulouse, constructed in the mid 19th Century to aid navigation. Accessible by the stairs of the Pont du Halage-de-Tounis, it sits alongside the lock-keeper's house bearing a mark that shows the level that the waters reached during the devastating flood of 1875. Construction of this ensemble resulted in a conflict that pitched the City and the mill owners of the Château Narbonnais, situated at the mouth of the Garonnette and no longer standing, against one another. As their business flourished, these mill owners diverted the flow of the river by constructing barrages and a large causeway that can still be seen. Following this, it was necessary to redevelop the site in order to make navigation possible once again. Having fallen into disuse in the 1930's, the site was restored in 1996 and the lock is now automatic.

11. Pont Saint-Michel



Built in 1844 to lighten the load on the heavily used Pont-Neuf, it links the Saint-Michel and Fer-à-Cheval quarters. The current bridge is actually the third to be built on this site. Washed away by the flood of 1875, the first bridge, which was a suspension toll bridge, was replaced by an arch bridge with metal deck. This was, however, too narrow and was later demolished in 1954 and replaced by the current structure. Coming into service in 1961 and built of concrete, this latest bridge met the city's traffic needs first and foremost. Since 2010 it is used by the T1 and T2 tramway lines, which completed Toulouse's public transport network. By bike or on foot, it provides one of the most beautiful views of the historic city and the île du Ramier.

14. The Château d'eau water tower



12. The Ramier hydro-electric plant



Constructed from 1917 onwards between two branches of the Garonne, this illustrates the importance of this waterway as a source of energy, evidence of which can be seen in the many causeways that still bar the river. This industrial building in brick and concrete is studded with great bay windows around its centre that look in on the machine room and its six turbines. The rendering simulates an alternating brick and stone pattern that is traditional of Toulouse's architecture. The factory's main function is to produce electricity to light the city of Toulouse thanks to a causeway that sits before it and ensures the plant's efficiency by regulating the flow of the river. Still in operation, it is run by the municipal electricity company.

13. Cours Dillon and the Prairie des Filtres



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16. Port Viguerie



A few fountains, numerous wells and the filtration boats along the Garonne for many years were sufficient for providing potable water for the people of Toulouse. The Château d'eau was built in 1825 with the aim of creating the very first water distribution system for the city. At the end of the Pont-Neuf, its brick tower crowned with a lantern sits high above the Prairie des Filtres. Its mill wheel fitted onto the bedrock was capable of pumping water up from the Garonne, filtered thanks to its passage through the prairie, and thus feed the fountains of the city in accordance with the wishes of Charles Laganne, the Capitoul whose bequest made its construction possible. In 1974 the Château d'eau was given a new lease of life and handed over to the Toulouse photographer Jean Dieuaide (1921-2003) to create a public gallery of photographic art, the oldest of its kind in France.

15. Hôtel-Dieu Saint-Jacques

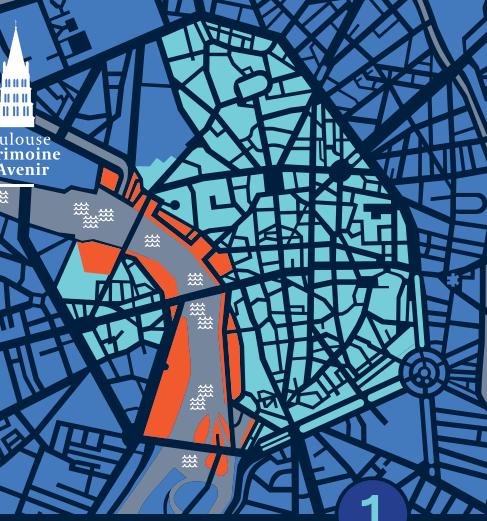


Overlooking the Garonne, this hospital founded by Benedictine monks from La Daurade basilica shows off its majestic brick façade, the result of several centuries of modifications. The Pont de la Daurade, the main route into the city centre up until the 17th Century and whose arch still survives just beneath the great skylight as a reminder, confirms the importance of the two hospitals: Sainte-Marie and Novel, situated on the left bank at either side of the bridge. Progressively merging with other establishments, Sainte-Marie became the Hôtel-Dieu. It finally took on its definitive form in the 19th Century and still remains true to its original mission: to treat and nourish the needy, pilgrims and abandoned new-borns -these unfortunate infants would be left at the tower, still visible today, to the right of the frontispiece. Flanking the U-shaped courtyard and its great scallop shell, the former hospital wards bear witness to this past. This place of hospitality, an obligatory stop for pilgrims that were on their way to pray at Saint-Sernin, forms part of the UNESCO estate of the Ways of St James in France.

17. The Saint-Cyprien Ramparts



Constructed in the medieval period, the ramparts of the Saint-Cyprien quarter are part of the wider fortifications along the right bank. This military construction aimed at protecting the city was, along with the ancient ramparts, subject to extensive reconstruction work during 16th Century. Bordering the Raymond VI gardens, more than 300 metres of ramparts were renovated in 1998 at the time when the annexes of the former abattoir were demolished. This mighty fortification dating from the time of Francis I of France replaced the embankment that protected the right bank up until then. It is studded with four towers, including the imposing Taillefer (1516) on the banks of the Garonne, which housed plague victims from La Grave hospital during the 18th Century. Way below, the suspended walkway created in 2008 clings to the façade of the hospital. It links up with the Port Viguerie, providing the ideal belvedere from which to admire the main monuments of the right bank.



Heritage Walks

Banks of the Garonne

Toulouse and the River Garonne are one and the same. This capricious, but always majestic, river has truly fashioned our remarkable city. Through a series of heritage walks, we invite you to get to know it and to admire the architectural wonders that dot its quaysides. This spotlight on our glorious past is part of our objective to confirm Toulouse as a UNESCO World Heritage site. It is an ambitious project, and one that reflects a city that is focused on excellence and resolutely looks to the future. Enjoy your time visiting these exceptional waterside sites!

Jean-Luc Moudenc
Mayor of Toulouse
Président of Toulouse Métropole

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