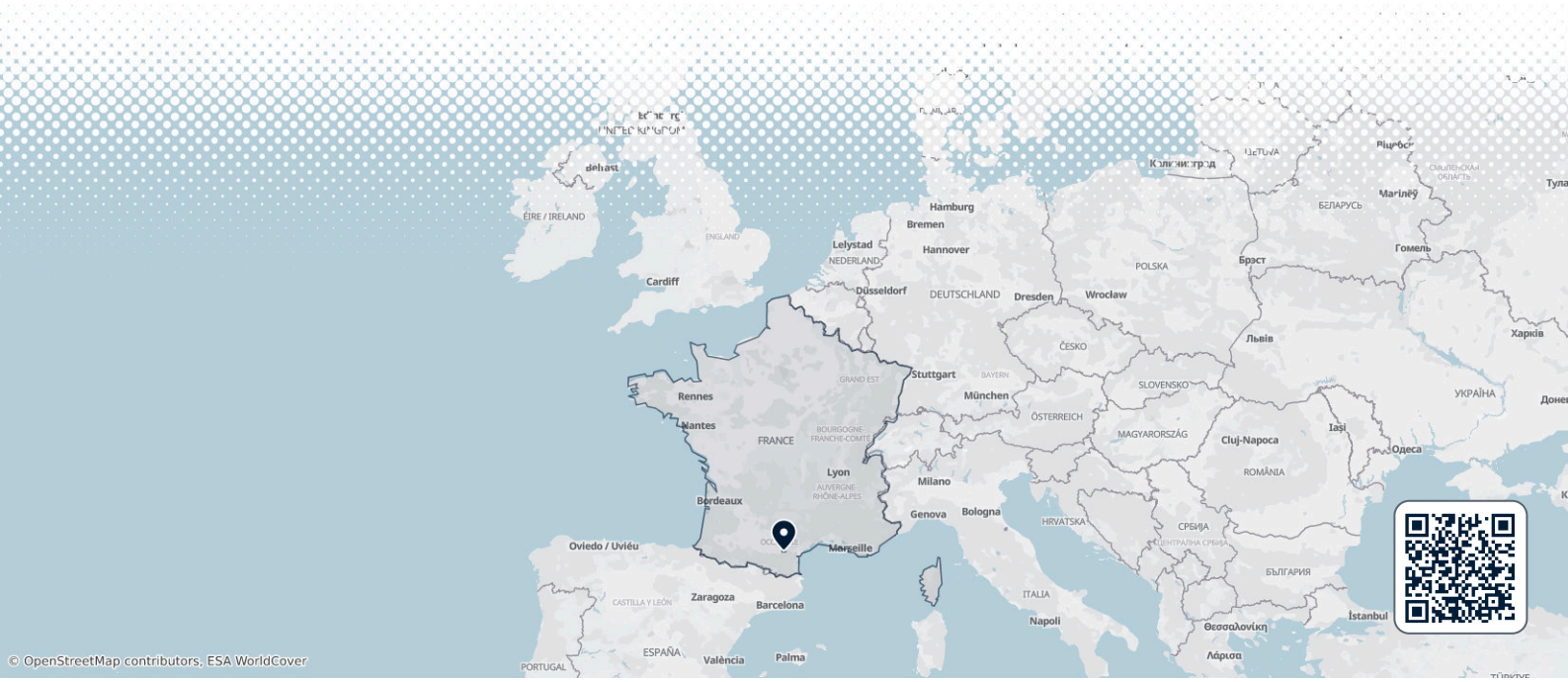


Carcassonne

Occitania · France

TRAVEL GUIDE

Tripomatic



Overview

Carcassonne is a medieval fortress city in southern France. Its hilltop old town, the Cité, has two rings of walls, a castle and a church inside. It is a UNESCO World Heritage Site and one of the best-preserved walled cities in Europe.

The Cité is the reason most people come. A visit suits a day or one or two nights, and travelers who like history, walking and regional food. Below the hill is a calmer lower town with a market square, restaurants and the Canal du Midi. A local legend says the city got its name from *Lady Carcas*, who tricked the army of *Charlemagne* and rang the town's bells in victory.

When to visit

Late spring and early autumn are the best times. Days are warm, the walls are not too crowded, and outdoor tables are open. July and August are hot and busy, and the Cité has little shade. Winter is quiet and mild, but some restaurants and sights have shorter hours.

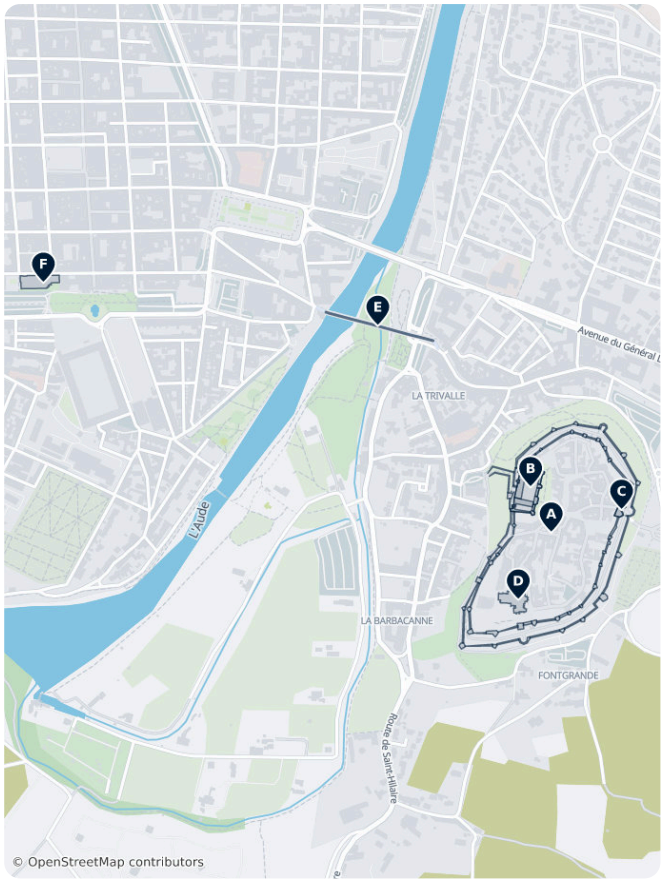
The biggest event is **14 July**. Fireworks and red lights light up the Cité walls, starting around 22:30. The show is free. Watch from the banks of the Aude, and arrive early to find a place. The Festival de Carcassonne, a summer series of concerts and shows, also runs through July.

MONTH	CONDITIONS	DAY °C avg / max	NIGHT °C avg / min	
January	Fair Fair for cycling	11° / 17° Feels like 7°	4° / -2°	12 rainy days · Dry air
February	Good Good for cycling	12° / 19° Feels like 8°	4° / -3°	Dry air
March	Good Good for cycling	15° / 22° Feels like 12°	6° / 0°	Dry air
April	Good Good for cycling	18° / 24° Feels like 15°	8° / 3°	Dry air
May	Great Great for sightseeing	22° / 29°	12° / 7°	12 rainy days · Dry air
June	Great Great for sightseeing	28° / 35°	16° / 11°	
July	Good Good for sightseeing	31° / 37°	18° / 14°	Up to 5 days above 35°
August	Fair Fair for sightseeing	31° / 37°	18° / 14°	Up to 6 days above 35°
September	Great Great for sightseeing	26° / 32°	15° / 10°	
October	Great Great for sightseeing	22° / 28°	12° / 6°	Dry air
November	Good Good for cycling	15° / 22° Feels like 12°	7° / 0°	13 rainy days · Dry air
December	Fair Fair for cycling	12° / 18° Feels like 8°	4° / -2°	Dry air

Best months: May, June, September, October

Climate data: NASA POWER (MERRA-2) · 1996–2025

Top sights



- **A** Cité de Carcassonne is the walled hilltop city and the main sight. Walk its narrow streets and the open ground between the two walls. Entering the Cité is free. You pay only for the castle and the rampart walk.
- **B** Château Comtal is the castle inside the Cité, built by the *Trencavel* family in the 12th century. Visit it to walk the ramparts and see the Cité from above.
- **C** Porte Narbonnaise is the main eastern gate of the Cité, with a drawbridge and twin towers. Most visitors enter here.
- **D** Basilique Saint-Nazaire is a church inside the Cité. It mixes a Romanesque nave with a Gothic choir. It is known for its old stained glass.
- **E** Pont-Vieux is a medieval stone bridge over the Aude with 12 arches. It links the lower town with the Cité. It gives the classic view of the walls, best in the evening.
- **F** Cathédrale Saint-Michel is the Gothic cathedral of the lower town. It is a quiet stop on the way between the market square and the river.

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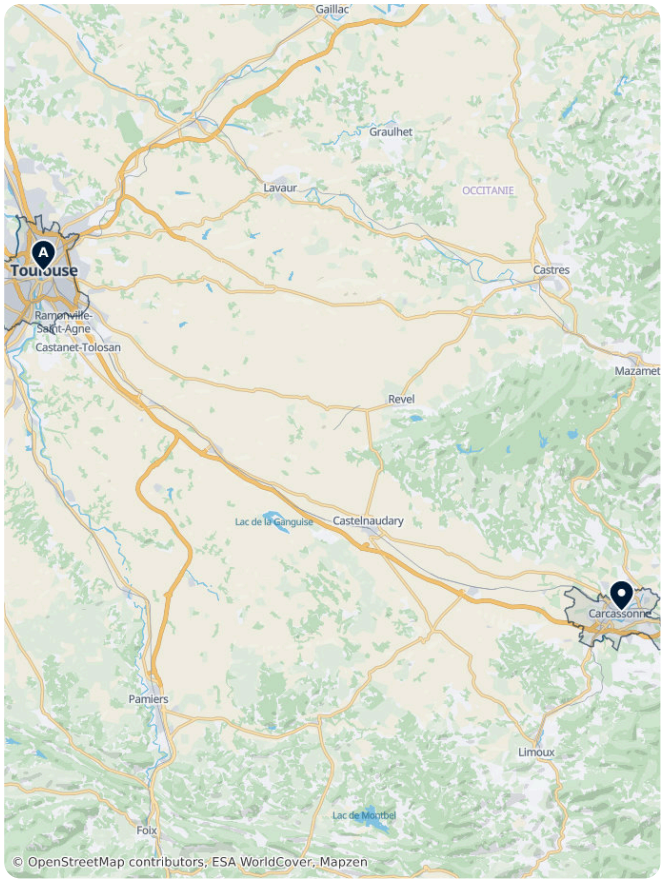
What to experience

- Watch the **14 July fireworks** over the Cité, from the banks of the Aude. It starts late in the evening and is free.
- Go to a concert at the **Festival de Carcassonne** in July. Many shows take place inside the Cité.
- Take a boat trip on the **Canal du Midi** from the canal port in the lower town.
- Cycle or walk part of the **Canal du Midi towpath**, under plane trees.
- Stay a night in the Cité. Day visitors leave in the late afternoon, and the walls are lit at night.

Day trips

Carcassonne works well as a base for the Cathar country and the Canal du Midi. The first three trips are close.

- Lastours: about 25 min by car. Four ruined castles stand on rocky ridges above a valley. There is no useful train or bus, so a car is easiest.
- Castelnaudary: about 25 min by train. This canal town has a large canal basin. It also claims to be the home of cassoulet.
- Lagrasse: about 45 min by car. This village in the Corbières hills has a large old abbey and a medieval bridge. It is also a wine area.
- Narbonne: about 40 min by train. This city has a cathedral, a Roman underground gallery and a big covered market.
- Ⓐ Toulouse: about 45 to 60 min by train. This large city has a famous basilica, a pink-brick old town and a canal.



Where to explore

Larger cities and regions around Carcassonne:

- Toulouse and Albi to the north-west and north: Toulouse is about 1 hour by train. Albi is a UNESCO-listed brick city about 2 hours away.
- Mediterranean side: Perpignan is about 1.5 hours by train. Montpellier is about 2 hours by train. Collioure is a small harbor town near the Spanish border.
- Pyrenees: Ax-les-Thermes is a mountain spa town with hot springs and ski slopes.

Getting there

- **By air**: Carcassonne Airport is about 3 km west of the center. Ryanair is the only airline with scheduled flights, mainly to the UK, Belgium, Ireland and Portugal. A shuttle meets arriving flights and goes to the center and the train station, for €6. Pay on board or in the RTCA app. For more routes, use Toulouse-Blagnac Airport, then a train or coach. Carcassonne Airport transport
- **By train**: Carcassonne station is in the lower town. Direct trains run from Toulouse, Narbonne, Perpignan, Montpellier and Marseille. Trains from Paris usually need a change. SNCF Connect
- **By bus**: Long-distance coaches link Carcassonne with Toulouse and its airport. They are slower than the train on most routes.

Getting around

- **On foot**: The lower town, the station and the Pont-Vieux are all walkable. The walk from the station to the Cité takes about 25 to 30 minutes. The streets inside the Cité are cobbled and steep in places.
- **Public transit**: City buses are run by RTCA. Line 4 goes from the station area to the Cité. Buy tickets in the RTCA app or ask the driver.
- **Cycling**: The Canal du Midi towpath is flat and good for bikes.

Getting around on foot & by bike

WALKABILITY

High

The lower town, the station and the bridge to the Cité are walkable. The Cité streets are cobbled and steep in places.

CYCLING INFRASTRUCTURE

Moderate

The area is mostly flat and the Canal du Midi towpath is good for bikes. The Cité itself is cobbled.

Driving

- **Is a car worth it?**: Not for the city itself. A car helps for Lastours, Lagrasse and the Cathar castles, where public transport is limited.
- **Parking**: Paid car parks sit just outside the Cité, near its main gates. They fill up in July and August, so arrive early. Car parks in the lower town are a longer walk from the Cité.
- **Restrictions**: Narrow streets inside the Cité are meant for pedestrians. Leave the car outside.

Food & drink

The dish to try is **cassoulet**, a slow-cooked stew of white beans and meat. Carcassonne, Castelnaudary and Toulouse each claim their own version. Local wines come from the Corbières, Minervois and Cabardès areas. Limoux, about 30 minutes away, is known for sparkling wine.

Restaurants inside the Cité mostly serve day visitors, and quality varies. For a better meal, go to the lower town around Place Carnot and the covered market hall. The market hall is named after the chef *Prosper Montagné*. Markets are held on the square several mornings a week.

What to eat & drink

BREAKFAST

Croissant
Buttery, flaky laminated pastry and a classic French breakfast staple.

LUNCH

Ratatouille
A Provençal stewed vegetable dish of eggplant, zucchini, peppers, and tomatoes.

DINNER

Coq au Vin
Chicken braised slowly in red wine with mushrooms, onions, and lardons.

Beef Bourguignon · Bœuf Bourguignon
Beef stewed in red Burgundy wine with carrots, onions, and mushrooms.

Escargot · Escargots de Bourgogne
Snails cooked in garlic and parsley butter, a classic starter.

SNACKS & STREET FOOD

Baguette
Long, crusty white bread loaf bought fresh daily from the local boulangerie.

Cheese · Fromage
France produces hundreds of cheese varieties, often served as a course before dessert.

SWEETS & DESSERTS

Crepes · Crêpes
Thin pancakes served sweet with sugar or jam, or savory as galettes.

Macarons
Delicate almond meringue sandwich cookies in a range of flavors and colors.

DRINKS

Wine · Vin
France's wine regions, including Bordeaux, Burgundy, and Champagne, are among the world's most renowned.

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Safety & health

Carcassonne is safe for visitors. Petty theft is rare but possible in crowds, so keep bags closed in the Cité in summer. Prices in some Cité shops and restaurants are higher than in the lower town.

Summer afternoons are hot, and the Cité has little shade. Bring water and a hat. The cobbles are uneven, so wear flat shoes.

History

People have lived on the hill since ancient times. The Romans and then the Visigoths fortified it. In the 11th century the *Trencavel* family took the city. They later built Château Comtal.

In 1209 the army of the Albigensian Crusade besieged the city. Viscount *Raymond-Roger Trencavel* was captured and died in prison. The French crown then ruled the city. After the Treaty of Corbeil in 1258, Carcassonne became a border fortress facing the Crown of Aragon. The fortress later lost its military use, and the walls decayed.

In 1853 the architect *Viollet-le-Duc* began a large restoration. It lasted until 1879 and shaped the look of the Cité seen today. Some of his choices, like the pointed slate roofs on the towers, are debated. The walls and gates, including Porte Narbonnaise, are part of this work. Basilique Saint-Nazaire has stood inside the walls since the Middle Ages.

The lower town grew on the other side of the river. Pont-Vieux linked the two. The Canal du Midi arrived in the early 1800s with a port in the lower town.

Country facts

Quick practical facts for France at a glance:

CURRENCY
EUR €

EMERGENCY
112

ELECTRICITY

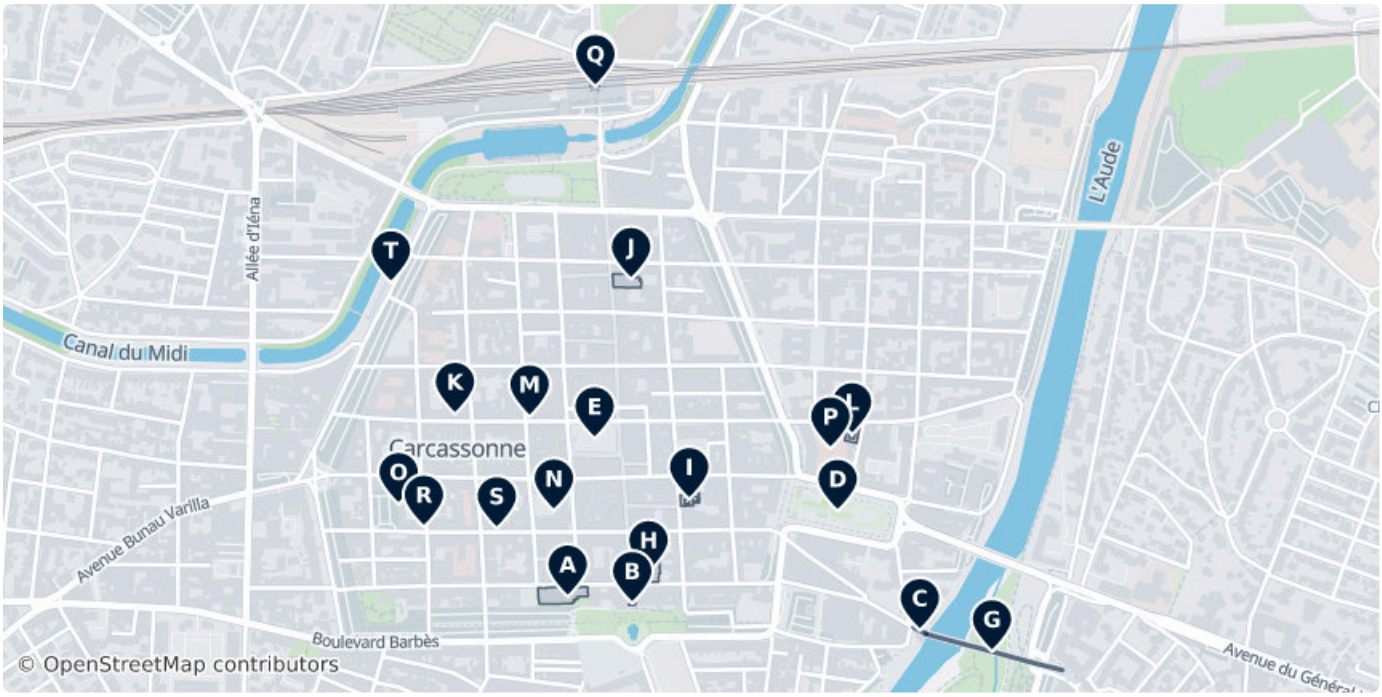
Type C / Type E
230 V · 50 Hz

LANGUAGES
French

TAP WATER
Safe to drink

Carcassonne: The Absolute Essentials

Carcassonne features two distinct historic areas: the hilltop medieval Cité and the lower Bastide Saint-Louis. This selection highlights the architectural heritage of the lower town, including the 14th-century Pont Vieux and the Gothic Cathédrale Saint-Michel. It also covers the city's transport hubs, like the 19th-century railway station, and local landmarks such as the Neptune Fountain and the covered market halls (Les Halles), showcasing the evolution of Occitan urban design and daily life across several centuries.





A Carcassonne Cathedral

Carcassonne Cathedral is a cathedral and designated national monument in Carcassonne, France.

Rue Voltaire 52, 11000 Carcassonne (43.21095, 2.35125)

pop.culture.gouv.fr/notice/merimee/PA00102584



B Portail des Jacobins

18th-century stone gateway, the last remaining of the four original portals that controlled access to the Bastide Saint-Louis.

1 Rue Courtejaire, Carcassonne 11000, France (43.21086, 2.35251)



C Pont-Vieux

14th-century stone bridge spanning the Aude river. For centuries, it served as the primary link between the lower town and the medieval citadel.

Pont-Vieux (43.21047, 2.35810)



D Square Gambetta

Central garden square in the Bastide Saint-Louis, home to the Musée des Beaux-Arts and surrounded by 18th and 19th-century architecture.

21 Square Gambetta, Carcassonne 11000, France (43.21216, 2.35650)



E Fontaine de Neptune

18th-century marble fountain located in the center of Place Carnot, featuring a sculpture of the Roman god Neptune.

10 Place Carnot, Carcassonne 11000, France (43.21319, 2.35178)



F Carcassonne station

Carcassonne is a railway station in Carcassonne, Occitanie, France, on the Bordeaux–Sète and Carcassonne–Rivesaltes lines.

Rue Buffon, 11000 Carcassonne, France (43.21821, 2.35178)

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G Pont-Vieux

Historic 14th-century pedestrian bridge offering panoramic views of the medieval Cité's ramparts across the Aude river.

Pont-Vieux, 11000 Carcassonne, France (43.21017, 2.35950)

H Théâtre Jean Alary

Early 20th-century municipal theater built in the Art Deco style, featuring a distinctive facade and hosting local cultural events.

(43.21129, 2.35283)

I Maison Courtial

17th-century town mansion (hôtel particulier) representing the classic architectural style of the Bastide Saint-Louis district.

30 Rue Jean Bringer, Carcassonne 11000, France (43.21233, 2.35362)

J Église Notre-Dame des Carmes

13th-century church originally associated with a Carmelite convent, featuring Gothic architectural elements and 19th-century restorations.

Rue Georges Clemenceau 62, 11000 Carcassonne (43.21545, 2.35249)

K Maison Guilhem

Registered historical monument showcasing the traditional architecture of the town's historic residential buildings.

39 Rue Victor Hugo, Carcassonne 11000, France (43.21354, 2.34906)

L Anciens Bains-douches

Former public bathhouse building from the early 20th century, now serving as a local municipal facility.

(43.21325, 2.35678)

M Maison Alaux

18th-century private mansion featuring a refined facade characteristic of the wealthy merchant residences in the lower town.

(43.21350, 2.35051)

N Halles

Traditional covered market hall used for the sale of local produce, meat, and cheese, reflecting regional culinary heritage.

(43.21217, 2.35099)

O Lycée de garçons

19th-century school building notable for its classical French architecture and historical role as a boys' secondary school.

(43.21226, 2.34796)

P Groupe scolaire Jean Jaurès

Early 20th-century primary school complex built with traditional stone and brickwork, typical of French Third Republic public architecture.

(43.21305, 2.35636)



Q Carcassonne

Regional railway stop providing access to the Occitanie rail network and the historic center of Carcassonne.

5 Rue Buffon, Carcassonne 11000, France (43.21818, 2.35179)

R Ancienne Chapelle des Jésuites

17th-century former Jesuit chapel now utilized as a venue for art exhibitions and cultural performances.

Rue des Études, 11000 Carcassonne (43.21194, 2.34846)

S Maison du Sénéchal

14th-century residence in the Bastide Saint-Louis, historically associated with the office of the Seneschal, the king's judicial representative.

Rue Aimé Ramond 70, 11000 (43.21192, 2.34987)

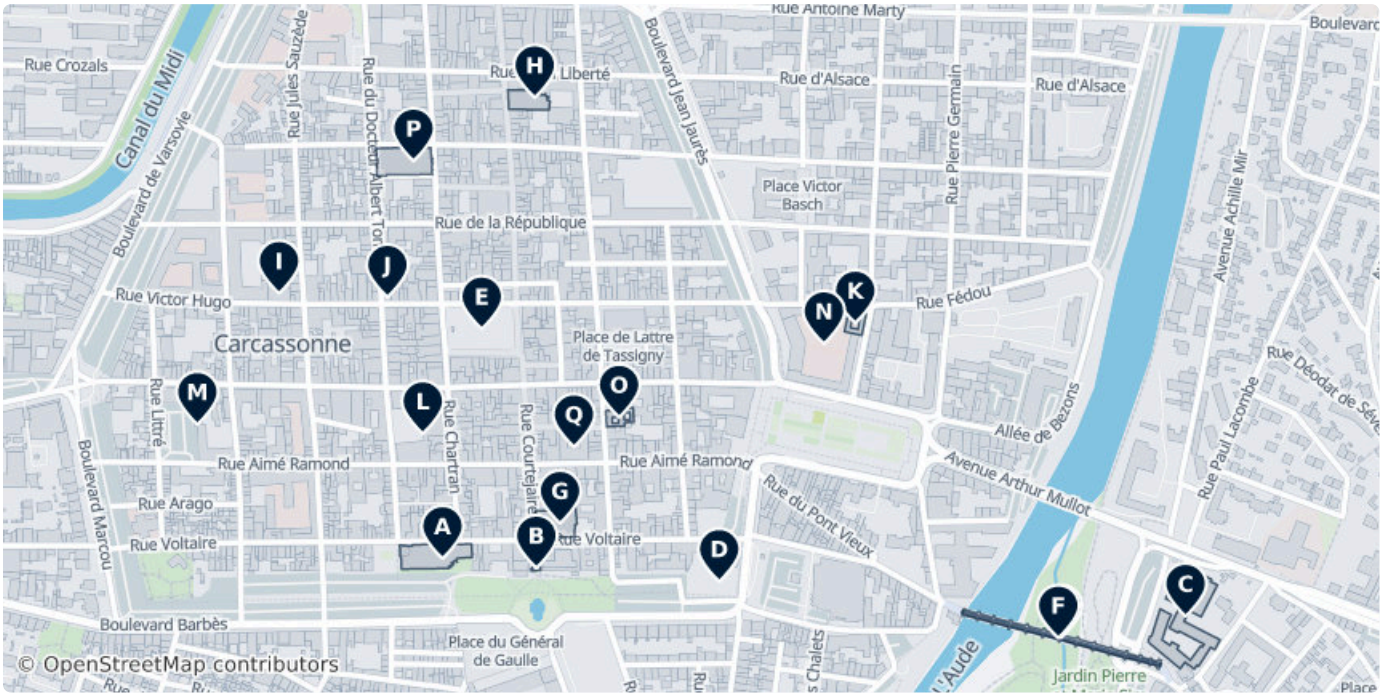
T Boulevard de Varsovie

Major boulevard and public transport hub located on the edge of the historic Bastide Saint-Louis.

(43.21540, 2.34782)

Carcassonne Heritage Sites

Explore the architectural evolution of Carcassonne through this collection of heritage sites, primarily located within the 13th-century Bastide Saint-Louis. The list highlights the city's transition from a medieval stronghold to a textile industrial hub, featuring Gothic churches like Saint-Vincent, 18th-century merchant mansions, and the 14th-century Pont-Vieux. Notable landmarks include the last remaining city gate at Portail des Jacobins and the 17th-century Royal Cloth Manufactory, reflecting centuries of regional history.





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Rue Voltaire 52, 11000 Carcassonne (43.21095, 2.35125)

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B Portail des Jacobins

The only surviving gate of the four original 14th-century entrances to the Bastide Saint-Louis.

1 Rue Courtejaire, Carcassonne 11000, France (43.21086, 2.35251)

C Ancienne manufacture royale de draps

A 17th-century industrial complex established under Jean-Baptiste Colbert to produce fine woolens for the Levant trade.

Avenue Achille Mir, 11000 Carcassonne, France (43.21039, 2.36121)

D Bastion de Montmorency

A 16th-century defensive fortification designed to modernize the city's medieval walls against artillery fire.

1 Boulevard du Commandant Roumens, Carcassonne 11000, France (43.21073, 2.35496)

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E Fontaine de Neptune

An 18th-century marble fountain sculpted by the Barata family, located in the center of Place Carnot.

10 Place Carnot, Carcassonne 11000, France (43.21319, 2.35178)



F Pont-Vieux

A 14th-century stone bridge with twelve arches that historically served as the only link between the lower town and the Cité.

Pont-Vieux, 11000 Carcassonne, France (43.21017, 2.35950)

G Théâtre Jean Alary

A municipal theater featuring a 1930s Art Deco interior, built on the site of a former Dominican convent.

(43.21129, 2.35283)

H Église Notre-Dame des Carmes

A 13th-century Gothic church originally belonging to a Carmelite convent, featuring a simplified Languedoc style.

Rue Georges Clemenceau 62, 11000 Carcassonne (43.21545, 2.35249)

I Maison Guilhem

An 18th-century townhouse reflecting the wealth generated by Carcassonne's historic textile industry.

39 Rue Victor Hugo, Carcassonne 11000, France (43.21354, 2.34906)

J Maison Alaux

A historic residence showcasing the traditional urban architecture of the Bastide Saint-Louis district.

(43.21350, 2.35051)

K Anciens Bains-douches

A 20th-century municipal building originally constructed as public baths, now serving as a kindergarten.

(43.21325, 2.35678)

L Halles

A 17th-century covered market hall built on the site of a former church to facilitate local trade.

(43.21217, 2.35099)

M Lycée de garçons

A historic educational institution housed in a 19th-century building with significant regional architectural features.

(43.21226, 2.34796)

N Groupe scolaire Jean Jaurès

An early 20th-century school complex recognized for its civic architecture and regional heritage status.

(43.21305, 2.35636)

O Maison Courtial

A notable 18th-century private residence representative of the city's urban development during the Enlightenment.

30 Rue Jean Bringer, Carcassonne 11000, France
(43.21233, 2.35362)

P Église Saint-Vincent

A Languedoc Gothic church from the 14th century featuring a wide nave and a bell tower with panoramic views.

68 Rue du 4 Septembre, Carcassonne 11000, France
(43.21483, 2.35086)

Q Hôtel de Rolland (s.XVIII)

An elegant 18th-century private mansion that currently serves as the Carcassonne Town Hall.

32 Rue Aimé Ramond, Carcassonne 11000, France
(43.21204, 2.35301)

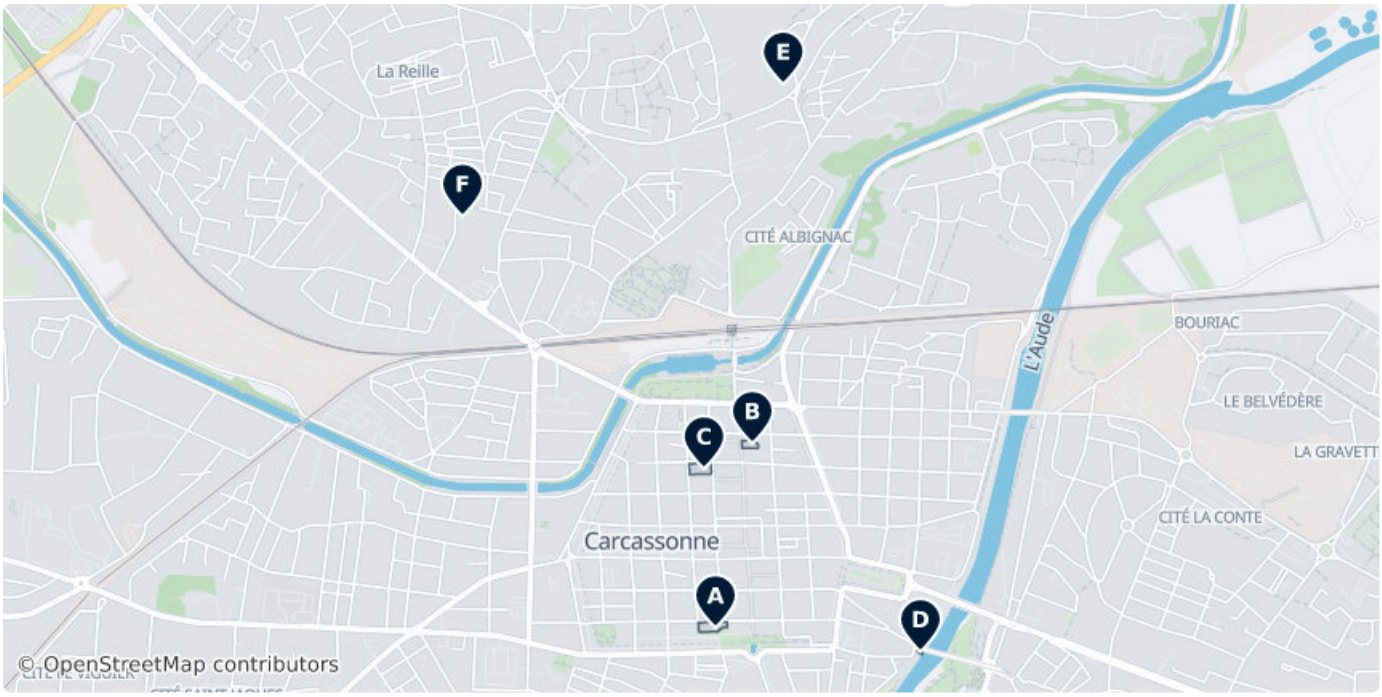
R Pont-Vieux

A medieval stone bridge spanning the Aude river, providing a pedestrian route between the lower town and the fortified Cité.

Rue du Pont Vieux, Carcassonne 11000, France
(43.21018, 2.35954)

Historic Churches and Cathedrals

Carcassonne's religious architecture spans from the 13th-century Gothic style of the Saint-Michel Cathedral to the modern 20th-century design of Notre-Dame de Grazailles. The collection features the Southern Gothic Église Saint-Vincent, known for its exceptionally wide single nave, and the 15th-century Chapelle Notre-Dame-de-Santé, which historically served as a sanctuary for plague victims near the Pont Vieux. These sites illustrate the ecclesiastical development of both the medieval Cité and the lower Bastide Saint-Louis.





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B Église Notre-Dame des Carmes

A 14th-century church originally part of a Carmelite monastery. It features a simple Gothic structure typical of mendicant orders and underwent significant restoration during the 19th century.

Rue Georges Clemenceau 62, 11000 Carcassonne (43.21545, 2.35249)

C Église Saint-Vincent

A 14th-century Southern Gothic church featuring one of the widest naves in France. The building includes a massive octagonal bell tower and houses significant 17th-century artworks and stained glass.

68 Rue du 4 Septembre, Carcassonne 11000, France (43.21483, 2.35086)

D Chapelle Notre-Dame-de-Santé

Built in the 15th century at the entrance to the Pont Vieux, this Flamboyant Gothic chapel was originally attached to a hospital serving plague victims.

Pont-Vieux, 11000 Carcassonne (43.21037, 2.35812)

E Église Notre-Dame de Grazailles

A contemporary 20th-century church built in the 1970s to serve the Grazailles district, featuring modern architectural lines and materials.

2 Rue Salvador Allende, Carcassonne 11000, France (43.22422, 2.35352)

F Église du Sacré-Cœur

A 19th-century neo-Romanesque church located in the Bastide Saint-Louis. It was built to accommodate the growing population of the lower town during the mid-1800s.

20 Rue Jules Michelet, Carcassonne 11000, France (43.22099, 2.34277)

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