

Let us tell you about

AGDE



Tour Guide

CAP D'AGDE
MÉDITERRANÉE

agde
Archipel de vie



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Entering the historic centre
from Rue Honoré Muratet

"Agathé Tyché" GOOD FORTUNE

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

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

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.

Bordered by three waters—the Hérault River, the Canal du Midi (1636–1680) and the Mediterranean Sea—the Greek city of Agde has endured the passing centuries, building its future on the changing fortunes of land or sea.

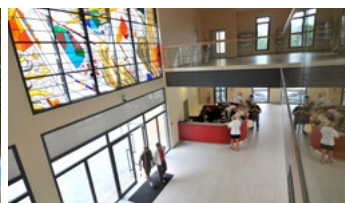
The historic centre of Agde is quite small, but boasts an extraordinary heritage unique in the Languedoc region. Its maze of narrow streets are bordered by houses and monuments crafted in volcanic rock.



Welcome to 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 Galerie du Patrimoine (The Heritage Gallery), an exhibition space that highlights the rich historical heritage of the town of Agde,
- The Galerie de la Perle Noire (Black Pearl Gallery), a showcase for designers from the town's Arts and Crafts Centre,
- 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 Fortune" - 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



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• 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, adjoining the Galerie de la Perle Noire - home of the Maison des Métiers d'Art craft centre.



4. THE HOUSE OF VIGUIER GUÉRIN

Former private house built in 1589. 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. Across the way is the Tour de Bandinel, a meeting place for grey penitents in the 17th century.

6. THE STREET OF THE TOWN, PLAN CÉCILE AND ADJACENT STREETS

This district is one of the oldest in Agde and a treasure trove of historical information. Don't miss a stroll through its picturesque streets.

7. THE PLACE CONESA

Opposite the current Music School stands the Hôtel Baldy, built in Italian Renaissance style, including a beautiful interior stairway with smooth columns and Tuscan capital columns.

8. THE HOTEL ALBARET

A monumental basalt entrance decorated with mysterious signs opens onto a spiral staircase... What secret is the smiling cat guarding the entrance keeping from us?

9. THE STREET "LA MAÎTRISE"

A hidden garden, a 14th-century style door with its gothic arch and a murder hole concealed among the old stones next to scallop shells and acanthus leaves.



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STONE MYSTERIES

10. THE SAINT-ETIENNE CATHEDRAL

Built entirely out of Agde's volcanic rock, this Romanesque fortified cathedral dates back to the 12th century. Its 35-metre-high square tower was added in 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 pulpit. Built in 1890 by Gérard Guillemin, it replaced the one installed in 1901 which had been donated by Emmanuel Laurens, owner of the Belle Isle château.



11. 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.

12. 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.

13. 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.

14. 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 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.





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15. 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.

16. FROM THE PLACE GAMBETTA TO THE STREET JEAN ROGER

The shops around the covered market hall of the Place Gambetta and in the Rue de L'Amour and Rue Jean Roger reflect the Mediterranean spirit of the city.

17. 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.

18. THE PLACE "DU JEU DE BALLON"

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

19. THE REPUBLIQUE FONTAINE

The fountain's bronze statue represents the protective French Republic. A few metres away, the shade of the plane trees will entice you to take a refreshing break and soak in the friendly atmosphere.

20. THE CLAUDE TERRISSE STATUE

A tribute to a sailor born in Agde in 1588, privateer to the King and town benefactor. See "Local figures" on page 13.



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.

- 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.

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Guided tours every week from April to September.

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.



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.

1. THE WHARVES

The basalt wharves alongside the river welcome walkers and gourmets as soon as the weather allows. They are also the setting for nautical jousting tournaments or shows on a floating stage in the summer.

2. 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.

3. THE PLACE JEAN JAURÈS

The bishopric and its grounds occupied this square, with its fine view over the river.

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).



5. 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. Today, the canal is mainly used for tourism and irrigation (300 million m³/year). 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, with offers ranging from renting your own boat to joining a passenger boat for a short cruise to the lagoon at Thau or Béziers. Step aside from your busy life and relax as you enjoy the canal's leafy green surroundings.

6. 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 CHÂTEAU LAURENS

The château was built in 1898 by Emmanuel Laurens, avant-garde voyager, man of science, and Art Nouveau enthusiast.

Classified as "Monument Historique", it is currently undergoing restoration. In time, visitors will be able to discover the atmosphere and decor of this amazing residence.

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.

Now the property of the City of Agde, the château is one of the biggest heritage restoration sites in the Occitanie region today.



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.en.capdagde.com

Tours are free of charge, with reservations

Made by calling +33(0)6 45 82 46 14

missionpatrimoine.littoral@capdagde.com

Period: from March to the end of September; all year round for groups.

NOT TO BE MISSED

Agde's medieval footprint

Agde was the seat of a diocese until the French Revolution. It was one of the smallest dioceses in the kingdom, but also one of the richest and most reputable due to its age.

Cap d'Agde - the resort's 20th-century architecture

Guided tour of the resort and its listed "20th-century heritage" architecture.

Grau d'Agde - Sea-bathing during la Belle Époque

Discover the seaside architecture and lifestyle in fashion at the end of the 19th and beginning of the 20th centuries.

FAMILY TIME

Little explorers

A tour following the adventures of Agde's great explorers.

TWO VOICES

Agde - Heritage and Arts & Crafts

This tour of the historic centre combines the discovery of heritage sites and encounters with local craftspeople.

MONUMENTS FULL OF HISTORY

Grau d'Agde - Notre-Dame de l'Agenouillade

History and mysteries of this sanctuary turned major pilgrimage destination.

The churches of St. André and St. Sever

Go back in time to the beginnings of Christianity in Agde.



Access all the information on guided tours by scanning this code.



During the summer, the tourist office's Heritage Department also organises dramatised night tours and treasure hunts. Check the calendar.



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:

Francine MORCILLO, local independent guide
Tel. 04 67 94 27 40 - 06 03 06 34 60
francinemura34@gmail.com - www.agde-sur-mer.fr

› LE BUNKER - INFIRMARY 638

The city bears the marks of German fortifications built during WWII to repel the Allied landings. You will discover a war building as well as an exhibition centred around some of the main themes of the Second World War, such as the Germans' regional organisation, daily life in Agde, the construction of the bunkers, and the organisation of the German defence at Tamarissière.

› Saturday from 9.30am to 12pm throughout the year.
La Tama campsite (next to the water tower). La Tamarissière.

Infos: "Agde Histoire 39-45" association

Tel. 06 22 60 51 83

› 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. 04 67 94 69 60

Musée Agathois Jules Baudou Tel. 04 67 94 82 51

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.

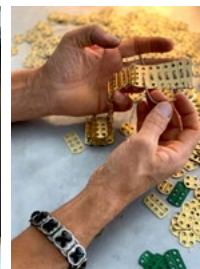
- › The Beauty of Agathe Tyche
- › The Quest of the King's Privateer
- › The Adventures of Gabi the Gabian and his search for sardines. Routes recommended for families with young children.
- › Agathe Tyche and the Hérault river. Audio itinerary recommended for athletes (running, cycling, scooter).

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.



EXHIBITIONS

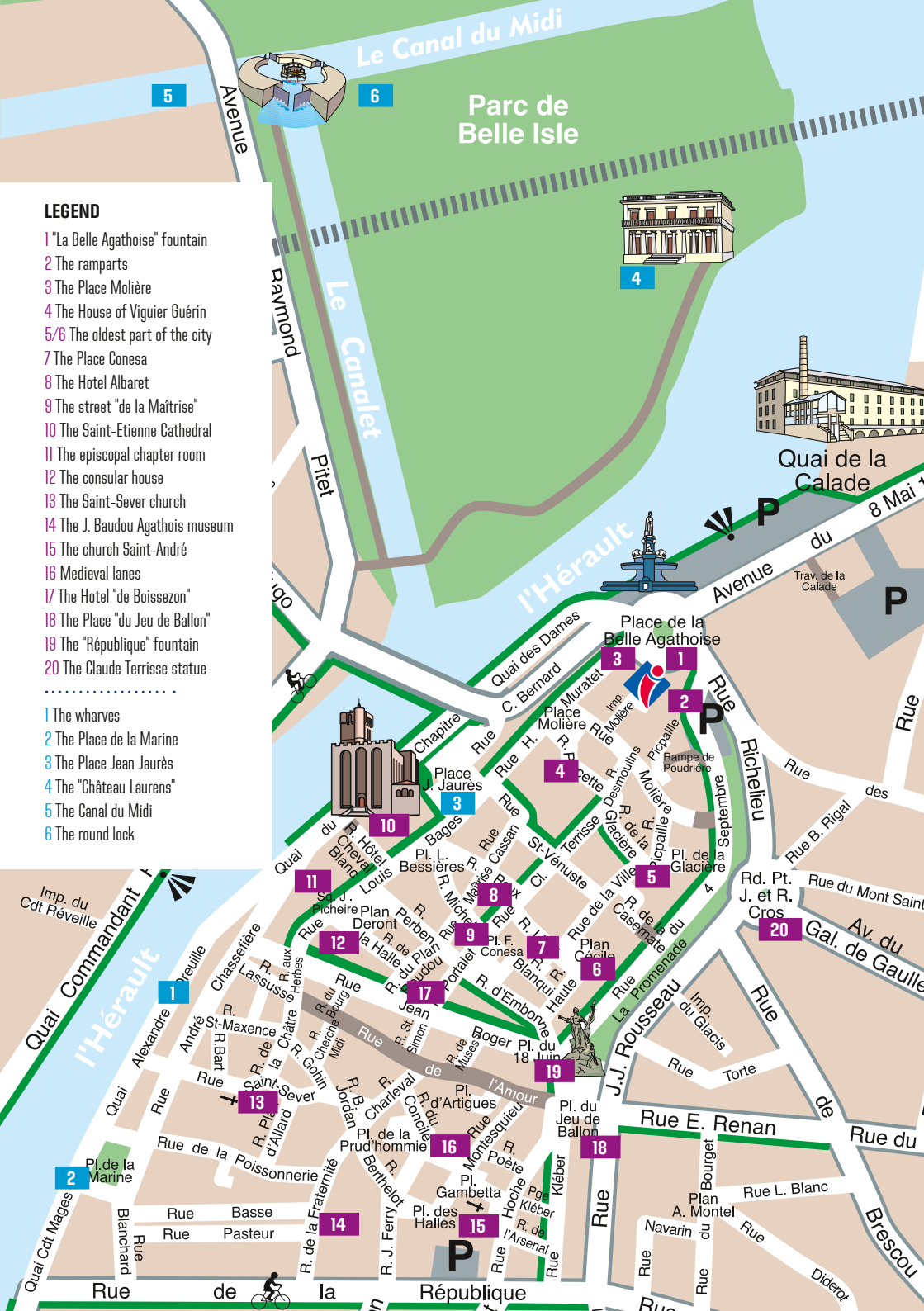
All year long, the Galerie du Patrimoine (Heritage Gallery) presents exhibitions on historical, natural, and immaterial heritage. You can also visit the exhibitions at the Galerie de la Perle Noire (creators & craftsperson's gallery) and the Espace Molière. All of these galleries are located on the Îlot Molière.



LEGEND

- 1 "La Belle Agathoise" fountain
- 2 The ramps
- 3 The Place Molière
- 4 The House of Viguer Guérin
- 5/6 The oldest part of the city
- 7 The Place Conesa
- 8 The Hotel Albaret
- 9 The street "de la Maîtrise"
- 10 The Saint-Etienne Cathedral
- 11 The episcopal chapter room
- 12 The consular house
- 13 The Saint-Sever church
- 14 The J. Baudou Agathois museum
- 15 The church Saint-André
- 16 Medieval lanes
- 17 The Hotel "de Boissezon"
- 18 The Place "du Jeu de Ballon"
- 19 The "République" fountain
- 20 The Claude Terrasse statue

- 1 The wharves
- 2 The Place de la Marine
- 3 The Place Jean Jaurès
- 4 The "Château Laurens"
- 5 The Canal du Midi
- 6 The round lock





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 1593. 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.
- Mission Patrimoine Littoral
Tel. +33 (0)6 45 82 46 14
missionpatrimoinelittoral@capdagde.com
- CONSULT OUR AGENDA: www.en.capdagde.com

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

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



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