



RIEUX-VOLVESTRE

A walk through
the medieval city...



TOURIST CIRCUIT

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OLD SEMINAR

1

After the French Revolution, the seminar, dating from the 15th and 16th centuries, became the headquarters of the town hall. Today, it is also home to the Tourist office.

There is a wing devoted to the local history museum where you can discover many remains of convents and capitals... as well as the local custom of shooting the Papogay, an archery tradition dating back to the 14th century.



HALF-TIMBERED HOUSE

2

This house is noteworthy for its beautiful two-storey overhung facade. Well worth a look, the facade uses a dual type of timber panelling: both a diamond and herringbone pattern. There is also an overhanging roof with two sculpted windows. On the ground floor was the old stall; the upper floors were the living quarters.

The entire structure dates from the end of 15th century.

It was renovated in 1970.



SAINT-MARY'S CATHEDRAL

3

It is built in the meridional style with thick walls, sometimes more than 3 metres thick and supporting pillars. Perched on a bend on the Arize river, it formed part of the city's defensive structure. It was built in the 14th century on the site of the 11th century chapel of Sainte-Marie des Aygas whose crenellated wall can still be seen on the north-east section. On the front facade, the remains of the old entrance can be seen.

It was redesigned in the 17th century. The bell tower, with its impressive octagonal base and dating from the 14th century, was described as «one of the most beautiful in the kingdom». The final three stories, competed in the 17th century, with mitre-shaped arch openings, are a replica of the bell tower of the Jacobins in Toulouse.



4

LAJOUS BRIDGE

Use the bridge to get a view of the cathedral's fortifications. The bridge was built in 1683 and renovated in 1785. It linked the town with la Casterette where the feudal castle was located, on the current site of the cemetery. The city gate, at the entrance to the bridge, was demolished in the 19th century. It bore a monument to the glory of Louis XIV. The remains of the framework of this monument can be seen on the outside wall of the cathedral's sacristy.



Cross the bridge to get a view of the Arize and the cathedral. Retrace your steps and take the Escoussière des Paous along the Arize. Enter the parking area for a view of the bell tower. Take a right along rue des Teychenés as far as the parc des Jacobins.



5

PARC DES JACOBINS

The red brick building from the 16th century, a unique remnant of the Jacobins convent, which housed dormitories and kitchens in the basement.

The Dominicans had a presence here from 1272, until the Revolution. Opposite the wrought iron gate, close to the children's playground, you can make out the intersecting ribs which used to be part of the cloister. In the 19th century, the building became a free school for young girls.

Pick up the rue du Solan du Comte using the steps opposite the Arize. View of the Arize and the Pont d'Auriac. Take a left down rue du Courtiou.



6

AURIAC BRIDGE AND CHAPEL OF NOTRE-DAME DE BONNE GARDE

The chapel, more accurately an oratory, protected the town against the Huguenots (protestants) and flooding.

Frescos, by the Toulouse painter Bénézet, depict a knight and a bishop putting the town under the protection of Notre Dame du Pont. This sanctuary served as a National Guard sentry post during the Revolution.

In 1875, a flood caused damage to the wash house end of the bridge, as well as to several buildings. The section at the town end remains intact.

Go back up rue d'Auriac and take the first road on your left, rue de Mire-poix. Continue along it as far as rue de l'Hôpital and take an immediate right onto rue de Salles as far as la Tourasse on your left.



LA TOURASSE (BIG TOWER)

7

This stately tower dating from the 13th century belonged to the Marqufave family. It was bought by the town of Rieux in 1517 to become a consistory for holding meetings of church members, then it was a town hall until the revolution.

Jail cells were set up on the ground floor during the revolutionary period and in the 19th century to hold deserters from the Napoleonic wars.

In 1923, the upstairs was converted into an Italian-style theatre. Later, it was transformed into a cinema. The building was shut down in 1963.

The building can be visited as a group booking or when the *Théâtrales de Rieux* theatre festival takes place at the start of August.

Go back down rue d'Auriac.
Go as far as la halle, on the right.



LA HALLE

8

The frame is entirely wooden pinned and dates from the 15th century. It was restored in 2004 and the pillars were fully redesigned. In olden times, a market was held there three times a week.

If evidence of fraudulent behaviour was discovered, the goods were confiscated and distributed among the city's poor. Opposite, there is a house decorated with sculpted faces from the 17th century. They depict, left to right, top to bottom: Venus, Jupiter, Mercury, Poseidon, Saturn, Bacchus.

Some claim that the one that sits above the front entrance depicted the owner!

Descendez la rue de l'Evêché.



THE BISHOPRIC, THE VALTAN TOWER, THE HOUSE LAGUENS

9

The Bishopric gateway was decorated with the coats of arms of bishops from the 14th and 15th centuries that were torn down by the revolutionaries. On either side of the gate, arrow slits were converted for firing muskets. The crenellated tower with a spire, known as the Valtan Tower, takes its name from the bishop who decided to rebuild the bishop's palace in 1510. Its construction is Moorish in inspiration. The steeple is in the shape of a minaret.

The buildings are currently in use as a medical centre.



WOULD YOU LIKE TO EXTEND YOUR WALK IN THE VILLAGE ?

From the Auriac bridge, you can follow a path along the river Arize and climb a few steps up for a view over the river.

Two pannels are available about the Auriac bridge and the mill.

*N.B : Please note that the pontoon is wheelchair accessible.
But not the path and the steps farther on.*

RIEUX-VOLVESTRE, HALT COMPOSTELLANE

Throughout the Middle Ages, pilgrimages were gathering more interest. Chapels, churches, oratories and hospitals were multiplying to accommodate the increased number of pilgrims and travelers.

At Rieux-Volvestre, there was a fraternity (brotherhood), a hospital, an oratory, Saint-Jacques' chapel and a reliquary bust. It is shown in the archives, that the Compostela issued in 1777, attests to the Jacquaire cult existing in the town and in the Volvestre.

The route through the Volvestre is an alternative path on the way to Saint-Jacques de Compostela. It follows the same direction of the Garonne or Via Garona, it is located between Via Tolosana and the road leading to Piedmont.

Today, the **Via Garona** is a hiking path, 170 km long, it links the sites of Santiago de Compostela, between Toulouse (Basilica of St. Sernin) and Saint-Bertrand-de-Comminges (St. Mary's Cathedral). It crosses 41 municipalities, which are all located in the Haute-Garonne département, in which you can find cities like, Toulouse, Muret, Noah, Rieux Volvestre, Martres-Tolosane, Saint-Martory, Saint-Gaudens and Saint-Bertrand de Comminges.

Please do not hesitate to come to the Tourism Office to find out more information:
e.g. The documentation space on the Jacquaire theme, practical tips for the preparation of the pilgrimage, La Compostela in Latin (1777), the bust of Saint-Jacques and much more.



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