

*Nîmes*  
& ITS AGGLOMERATION

PRESS  
**file**

Nîmes' Maison Carrée listed  
as a UNESCO World  
Heritage Site



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# **NÎMES**

A MOSAIC  
CITY

A PLURAL  
**city**



**STUNNING**



**DELICIOUS**



**ENJOYING**

NÎMES AND ITS TERRITORY  
IN **A FEW FIGURES**



**300 days of  
sunshine / year**



**261 779  
inhabitants\***  
(of which 150 672  
in Nîmes)



**2 000  
rooms**



**27 000  
companies**



**2,000 years  
of history**



**Strategic  
geographical  
position**



**21 business  
parks &  
20 ha of business  
parks**



**14 700  
students**

A University,  
An engineering school,  
An IUT  
A Faculty of Medicine,  
A Higher School of Fine Arts



# SURPRISING



# ALTERNATIVE



# CULTURAL

# SUSTAINABLE



# VIBRATING



Research centres



- University Hospital Centre and Centre de Cancérologie du Gard
- National Laboratory of Metrology and Health Tests
- 2 ERES : Environmental Study and Research Laboratory (Southern Antenna)



- An airport (international and national traffic, private aircraft)
- Sabena Technics (civil and military aviation maintenance services)
- Civil Security airbase (since 2017)

# LOCATION & access



## COMING TO NÎMES

### AIRPORT

Nîmes Alès Camargue Cévennes :  
15 km from the city centre / 15 minutes by car  
Direct flights :

- 1h35 from Brussels
- 2 hours from London
- 2h20 from Dublin
- 2h25 from Edinburgh
- 2h15 to Fez
- 2h45 from Marrakech
- 2h05 from Porto



### HIGHWAYS

- Via the A54 from Arles, Marseille, Côte d'Azur, Italy.
- Via the A7 from Avignon, Valence, Lyon
- By the A9 from Montpellier, Narbonne, Perpignan, Spain.
- 2h30 from Lyon
- 1h30 from Marseille
- 40 minutes from Montpellier
- 3 hours from Nice and Toulouse



### RAILWAY STATIONS



2 train stations, one of which is 5 minutes walk from the Arena.

- 2h50 from Paris by TGV (direct)
- 1h20 from Lyon by TGV (direct)
- 1 hour from Marseille
- 3h40 from Barcelona by TGV (direct)
- 5h from Brussels by TGV (direct)

### PARKING & TRANSPORT

9 underground car parks in the city centre and 2 park-and-ride facilities (exit Nîmes Centre) with Tram'Bus (10 mn from the centre)





**In the south-east of France, Nîmes is the capital of the Gard department and is part of the Occitanie region.**

Its privileged position places it between the Mediterranean Sea, the Camargue, Provence and the Cévennes, in a landscape of garrigue, on the busy Avignon-Arles-Marseille-Montpellier route and only a few kilometres from the famous Pont du Gard. With 155,000 inhabitants, Nîmes is the 18th largest city in France. Since 2017, the Nîmes Métropole agglomeration community has included 39 communes and 150,672 inhabitants.

Nîmes has fine sunshine all the year round thanks to the Mistral, the wind that flows down the Rhône Valley and blows the clouds away.

The town is set in hollows in the garrigue hills, accounting for its gentle climate and pleasant life.

Ideally sited opposite the Roman Arena, the Nîmes Tourisme office welcomes visitors all the year round and places all its savoir-faire at the service of the exploration of the city and all its richness—heritage, culture, gastronomy, festive events, etc.

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# OVER the centuries

## Before the Romans

A spring formed by rainwater was the focus for the first settlement during the 1<sup>st</sup> century BC. The **Volcae Arecomici**, a Gallic tribe, attributes the origin of the spring to a tutelary divinity. We do not know its origin or its name but it might have been *Nemos* or *Nemausus*. Only the Latin name remains today. This is **Nemausus**, the origin of the present name of the city.

The protohistoric town consists of a 30-hectare oppidum enclosed by walls dominated by a substantial watch tower that would served later as the base of the future Tour Magne.

Romanisation got under way from the 2<sup>nd</sup> century BC with the creation of the **Via Domitia**, that enabled the Romans to reach Spain by crossing the territory of Nîmes. The city was then included in the first province of Gaul under Roman control—the Transalpine, that became the Narbonnaise during the reign of Augustus (14 BC to 27 AD).



## A Latin colony

**Shortly after the conquest of Gaul by Julius Caesar (58 to 51 BC), the city became a colony under Roman law: only the elite practicing various magistratures had access to Roman citizenship.**

The city grew and was embellished during the reign of the Emperor Augustus (-14 BC – 27 AD). The Romans built a large sanctuary—the **Augusteum**—around the spring, devoted to the god Nemausus, but also and above all to the imperial cult. The Emperor gave the city some of the longest walls in Roman Gaul (nearly 7 kilometres). The **Porte Auguste**, the **Porte de France** and the imposing **Tour Magne** still exist today. The Forum was also laid out during his reign. This is where the **Maison Carrée**, dedicated to the Emperor's grandsons, was built. Nîmes also became a centre for minting coins with the production of a dupondus called the '**As de Nîmes**' (the Ace of Nîmes), decorated with a crocodile and a palm tree, a reminder of Augustus' victory at the Battle of Actium.



In the mid-1<sup>st</sup> century AD, the Romans constructed a tremendous canal from Uzès to supply water to public fountains, rich residences and thermal establishments. This is the famous Nîmes aqueduct, part of which is the **Pont du Gard**. At the end of the same century construction work started on the Arena and that is today one of the best-preserved Roman amphitheatres in the world. Nîmes reached its peak in the 2<sup>nd</sup> century AD.



# OVER the centuries

## Medieval Nîmes

The city went through a troubled period from the 5th to the 8th centuries AD with a succession of occupations by Visigoths, by Saracens and then Franks. Nîmes shrank gradually and whole parts of the city were abandoned. Dwellings were concentrated around the Arena—that had been converted into a fortress, the **cathedral** that incarnated the power of the Church and the *Maison Carrée* that was used as dwellings at the time.

There was a degree of recovery in the with the creation of a new rampart, whose escutcheon shape was a constraint on town planning until the 18th century. The establishment of a municipal authority called a '**consultate**' allowed the leading bourgeois families and landowners to participate in the development of the city. After the Albigensian Crusade (1208-1224) Nîmes, that had hitherto been dominated by the Counts of Toulouse, swore allegiance to Simon de Montfort. His son Amaury abandoned his heritage to the benefit of the King of France and Nîmes passed into royal hands in 1226. It thus became a *seneschalty*—the legal entity that on a local basis represented royal power during the Middle Ages.

In the 14th century Nîmes was not spared by the major periods of plague, wars and famines. The city lost a third of its population.



## From Modern Times to the Revolution

During the Renaissance and in a context of the rediscovery of ancient civilisations Nîmes was visited by François 1 in 1533, who triggered new interest in the Roman monuments. His visit encouraged local councillors to choose new arms for the city with the new emblem of Nîmes inspired by the Roman coin showing a crocodile chained to a palm tree. This replaced the palm leaf originally seen on the coin.

The ideas of the Protestant Reform arrived in Nîmes in the 16th century and were rapidly adopted by nearly two-thirds of the population. The city was even described as a '**little Geneva**'. Fights between Catholics and Protestants were rife and led to the deadly episode called 'la Michelade'.

On 29 September 1567, **Saint Michel's Day**, about 100 Catholics were thrown into the well at the bishopric. The signing of the Edict of Nantes in 1598 and the development of humanist pacifist ideals favoured a period of calm. However, fresh affronts at the beginning of the 17th century led gradually to the suppression of the rights of Protestants with the signing of the Peace of Alès (Edict of Alès) in 1629 and then that of the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes (or Edict of Fontainebleau) in 1685.



At the beginning of the 17th century, the wool industry on which the economy was based declined to the advantage of silk. Water requirements increased and the spring was redeveloped with the laying out of a sumptuous garden. The population of the city increased considerably. The bourgeois class resulting from the flourishing economy built luxurious mansions. On the eve of the Revolution, Nîmes was the largest **manufacturing town** in the southern Languedoc, in particular exporting production to South America.

# OVER the centuries

## Nîmes in the 19<sup>th</sup> century

Textile-based prosperity continued until the end of the 19th century thanks to the passion for 'cashmere' shawls. A vast planning programme changed the town, encompassing the boulevards built on former ramparts featured public monuments (Law Courts, churches, etc.) or private establishments (banks, cafés and department stores).

The station opened up new prospects for the city and was connected to the city centre by Avenue Feuchères, whose rich façades reflected the opulence of the city.

## Contemporary Nîmes

The city recovered slowly after two world wars. A vast **urban restoration programme** was launched in the 1980s. It was accompanied by the creation of modern buildings whose design was entrusted to **architects with international prestige and renown**: Norman Foster for Carré d'Art, Jean Nouvel for the Nemausus buildings, Jean-Michel Wilmotte for the new market... The ambitious programme is continuing today with the creation of new public establishments, also the work of the greatest architects of the moment. In their own way, they thus continue the tradition of the great Roman architects by creating a true dialogue with the ancient past of the city.



An animated model provides our visitors with a rapid exploration of the city over the years and is part of the Centre Numérique d'Interprétation de l'Architecture et du Patrimoine (C.I.A.P) linked with the title Ville d'art et d'Histoire (City of art and history). (Available in French, English and Spanish and accessible to person with deficient sight.)



# THE HISTORICAL face-off

## Nîmes is not a Roman city! At least, not only that.

Various architectural influences have contributed over the years to making Nîmes an architectural mosaic. Crossing the historic centre of Nîmes is like diving into a history of the arts. It is easy to be subjugated by the beauty of the temple of La Maison Carrée or by the exceptional state of conservation of the Roman amphitheatre. One is also surprised by the heterogeneous façade of the cathedral, a medieval monument that bears the scars of the religious confrontations that shook the city in the 16<sup>th</sup> century.



But the ancient and pretty town also knows how to be modest. To discover the wealth of the Ancien Régime textile industry you have to push open the doors of private mansions and see the courtyards with refined decoration inspired by the Ancient World. Because Nîmes takes its originality from the **reinterpretation of the Ancient**: master masons, architects, sculptors and others try during each historic period to copy the Roman buildings in their own way.

This tradition is found today in contemporary creations that are face to face with ancient structures. Thus the British architect **Norman Foster** invented a modern Maison Carrée called Car-

ré d'Art-Jean Bousquet, which is a contemporary art museum, a media centre, a bookshop and a restaurant, inspired by Centre Beaubourg in Paris. **Jean Nouvel** used the Roman name of the town, Nemausus—that of the ancient spring, to design a set of buildings that look like boats floating above the road and thus evoking the famous Nautilus and Captain Nemo. The Japanese **Kisho Kurokawa** and **Mieko Inoue** had fun with the amphitheatre, making a contemporary version called Le Colisée. And **Elizabeth de Portzamparc** very recently signed the architecture for Le Musée de la Romanité, the largest museum in the city. Its rectangular construction forms a contrasting echo to the elliptic Ar-



na opposite it. The very modern glass façade that drapes the building like a toga is inspired by the ancient mosaic technique.

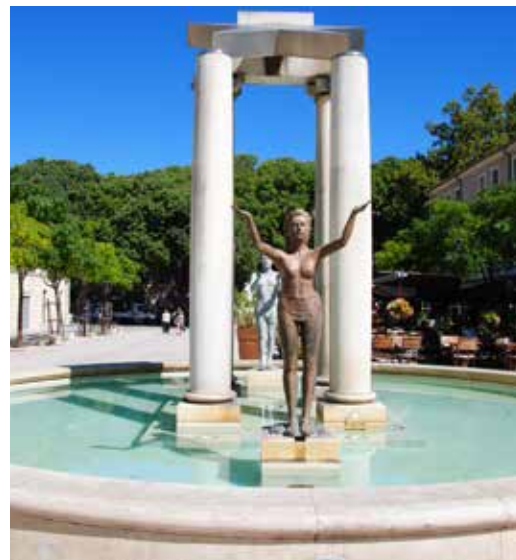
This historical face to face is one of the features of Nîmes that places it in the tradition of the great names in architecture.

In addition to its exceptional fine architectural heritage that spans nearly 2500 years of history, the city also shows contemporary works of art that give moments full of surprises and enthusiasm.



# ART ON STREET CORNERS

Since the creation of its conservation area and the awarding of the Ville d'art et d'Histoire label in the 1980s, the city has never stopped showing that it continues to be creative. The opening of Musée Carré d'Art in 1993 enabled the city to make visitors and inhabitants aware of **contemporary creation in art**. Several places in the historic centre thus house works signed by Takis, Philippe Stark and Martial Raysse. More recently, a bull by the Georgian sculptor Djioti Bjilava came to embellish the Esplanade, facing the thousand-year-old Arena.



Side by side with public commissions in the arts, certain parts of Nîmes have been the site of the development of **street art**, a new form of expression with no constraints. 'L'expo de Ouf !' is an annual festival devoted to urban and alternative culture. It is held in September and October in Gambetta and Richelieu districts and was initiated by the association 'Le Spot'. Several street artists are invited to make a work on walls in the districts. While a theme is set for each edition, the artists are free to create what they want using their preferred technique. The walls thus display lettering, frescoes, spray paint, brushes, freehand work or stencils... but paper collages,

mosaics or other more unusual works and techniques are also used.



'Le Spot' is an alternative place with cultural events that enhance exchanges, meetings, social economics and solidarity: concerts, lectures, shows etc. For more information: [www.lespotnimes.com](http://www.lespotnimes.com)





**NÎMES**  
EXPLORE AND  
ADMIRE

**Going through the streets of Nîmes is like flicking through an open history book. Page after page, monument after monument, we discover the qualities of great Roman constructors and the various aspects of their civilisation: shows, public and political lives, religious ceremonies, engineering, etc...**

The cellars of the Arena house two perpendicular galleries making a cruciform pattern. They are the remains of the vast service areas used in Roman times to raise decoration, fighters or animals. Recent excavation by the INRAP showed traces of technical systems used to organise gamers, including what is probably a pit for housing machinery and which may be even older than the present amphitheatre.

## A spectacular place !

The Arena in Nîmes is one of the **best conserved ancient amphitheatres** of the Roman world. It was built at the end of the 1st century AD with a capacity of nearly 24,000 spectators who came to applaud representations of hunting and combats between gladiators. It was built on the model of the Coliseum in Rome but is smaller—an ellipse 133 m long, 101 m wide and 21 m high.

Its exceptional state of preservation results from continuous use over the centuries. From being a fortress in the Middle Ages, the Arena was used for dwellings from the 14th century to the 18th century, housing nearly 800 people. These buildings were removed in the 19th century and the Arena recovered its original state of venue for shows. Historical reconstitutions were shown, as were concerts and bull shows (Camargue bullfighting from 1839 and Spanish bullfights from 1853). These have become part of the identity of Nîmes today. The amphitheatre is the most frequented monument of the city.

The building suffered over the years and now needs the **very extension work** started in 2009. Everything should be completed by 2034 and the ambitious project is now part of the 'France Relance' programme. The total cost of the works is estimated at 54 million euros plus tax.

More information on : [www.nimes.fr/projets/restauration-des-arenes.html](http://www.nimes.fr/projets/restauration-des-arenes.html)





## The Maison Carrée in Nîmes, a UNESCO World Heritage Site!

**The Maison Carrée is a Roman temple built at the beginning of the 1st century AD in honour of the adopted grandsons of the Emperor Augustus. These were termed 'Princes of Youth' according to an inscription on the pediment deciphered in 1758 by the Nîmes scholar Jean-François Séguier.**

The Maison Carrée in Nîmes was listed as a UNESCO<sup>1</sup> World Heritage Site<sup>2</sup> on 18 September 2023. Its universal value was established under criterion IV for inscription: «to provide an outstanding example of a type of building or architectural or technological ensemble, or landscape, which illustrates a significant stage in human history».

It was the **first Roman temple dedicated to the imperial cult**. It has the main features of religious buildings dating back to the beginning of our era and has particularly refined Corinthian decoration. Set in the heart of a public square enclosed by a portico of which only a few traces remain, the edifice is 26 metres long, 15 metres wide and 17 metres high and faced another building (probably the Curia). The whole layout was the *forum*—the economic, political, administrative and social heart of the ancient city.

The Maison Carrée owes its exceptional state of preservation to its continuous use since the 11<sup>th</sup> century. It was in turn a private dwelling, stables, a convent, etc. Colbert apparently suggested that it should be dismantled and rebuilt in Paris! Several restoration programmes have been focused on the maintenance and conservation of this exceptional building.

After the French Revolution it became the headquarters of the first Prefecture of the Gard Department and then

the Departmental Archives before becoming the first museum in Nîmes in 1823. Today, the monument houses multimedia installations describing its history.

More information on:  
[www.lamaisoncarreedenimes.fr](http://www.lamaisoncarreedenimes.fr)

The present name of the edifice dates back to the 16th century. At that time any quadrilateral with 4 straight angles was described as being square, whatever the length of the sides.



<sup>1</sup>The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) encourages the identification, protection and preservation of the world's cultural and natural heritage considered to be of outstanding value to humanity. This was the subject of the International Convention for the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage, adopted by UNESCO in 1972 and ratified by 194 States Parties around the world.

<sup>2</sup>Inclusion on the World Heritage List is a designation attributed to places or properties, located throughout the world, that are of outstanding universal value, with the aim of passing on this heritage to future generations. To date, 1,154 properties have been inscribed on the World Heritage List, including 897 cultural properties.

## A Magnificent Tower!

**The Tour Magne is the only tower of the Roman walls that is still standing. It was the highest and finest of the ancient city.**

The Tour Magne is the only tower of the Roman walls that is still standing. It was the highest and finest of the ancient city.

During the Augustan period Nîmes had one of the largest enclosures of Roman Gaul, with a circumference of 7 km making an area of 220 hectares. With 10 gates and fortified by 80 towers, the ramparts served both as defence and a sign of prestige.

The Tour Magne indicated the presence of the town and the sanctuary of the imperial cult located at the foot of the hill on which it was built and centred on the sacred spring. When the Romans built it they incorporated an earlier Gallic building. The latter was dismantled in the 16th century to look for treasure. The upper floor has now gone and the tower peaks at 32 metres in the Jardins de la Fontaine.

The view of Nîmes from the top of the tower is remarkable and on clear days you can see the slopes of the Cévennes, the Mont Ventoux and Pic Saint-Loup.

A prophecy by Nostradamus mentioned 'brilliant metals of the Sun and the Moon', that is to say gold and silver objects hidden in Nîmes below 'ancient vestments. The gardener François Faucat thought that this meant the Tour Magne where popular tradition supposed the existence of a golden eagle and other riches.



## The Augusteum at the Fountain

The entire history of the town started around a permanent spring. With the arrival of the Romans and the coming of the Empire, the site was changed in 25 BC and became a sanctuary devoted to 'Augusteum' imperial cult. The spring water was directed to a nymphaeum housing the Imperial altar. The sanctuary was bounded by a triple portico with a monumental entry. Part of the angle of a 2nd century pedestal can be seen at the Musée de la Romanité.





## the Temple of Diana



The 'Temple of Diana', the only vestige visible today was doubtless a room for ceremonies. A theatre laid out against the hill completed this installation; its caeua, cleared in the 19th century, was subsequently filled and can be seen in the form of an incurved law north-east of the spring. The whole is now part of the first public garden in Europe, laid out in the 18th century, to cover the water requirements of the industrial town.

## The Castellum

Nîmes still has the *Castellum divisorium* that was used to distribute water in the town. It is the only remaining edifice of its kind in the Roman world, along with that of Pompeii.



## The Pont du Gard and the Roman aqueduct running to Nîmes

In the 1<sup>st</sup> century AD, the ancient city of Nîmes constructed an aqueduct to deliver water to the fountains, thermal establishments and private dwellings. The Romans thus took water from the 'Eure' spring at Uzès for nearly 50 kilometres to the *Castellum divisorium* in Nîmes.

The Pont du Gard is doubtless the most spectacular engineering work on the Nîmes aqueduct and received Unesco world listing in 1985. With three superposed levels of arcades giving the structure a total height of 49 metres, the channel makes a 275-metre crossing of the deep Gardon valley. It is one of the 17 bridges along the aqueduct and the highest bridge built by the Romans.



### The aqueduct in figures

<b>12,30 m</b> General gradient	<b>50 km</b> Length	<b>7</b> Overhead structures
<b>25 cm/km</b> Average channel slope	<b>90%</b> Buried canal	<b>3</b> Tunnels: Sernhac (2) and Nîmes
<b>250-400 l/s</b> Average flow rate	<b>2</b> Known regulation basins	<b>1</b> Distribution basin ( <i>Castellum</i> )
<b>0,70-1m/s</b> Average speed	<b>24-30h</b> Known regulation basins	



# A REMARKABLE heritage site

**The historic centre of Nîmes has been the subject of a true conservation and exhibition of its architectural heritage since 1985 within the framework of the law on conservation centres, renamed 'Remarkable Heritage Sites' today.**

It is a **41-hectare** urban centre consisting 843 buildings to which particular town planning rules apply because of its history, aesthetics or nature such as to justify the conservation, restoration or displaying of all or part of the buildings (Article L313.1 of the Town Planning Code). The area can become larger in the future to include, in particular, the Jardins de la Fontaine.

The city has also obtained **City of Art and History** status allowing the carrying out of actions to show off this exceptional heritage that includes numerous private mansions and picturesque squares and lanes.

## Private mansions

Several fine mansions can be seen in this urban conservation area. Many 16th, 17th and 18th century façades of private mansions still have their Corinthian pediments and capitals together with the triangular and circular pediments inspired by the ancient monuments of the city. Several guided visits organised by Nîmes Tourist Office provide exclusive access to this **exceptional heritage** that is a witness to the art of living and building during the Ancient Régime in Nîmes.



**A few examples :**

### **The surprising courtyard of 'Hôtel de Bernis'**

This town house at 5 rue de Bernis has been owned by the De Pierre family, lords of Bernis, one of whose members was the famous Cardinal François-Joachim de Bernis who had a brilliant political career at Louis 15th court. The construction of the courtyard and the staircase goes back to the 17th century.

The influence of the amphitheatre can be seen in the ground floor arches while the windows with curved or triangular pediments have their equivalent in the Temple of Diana or again that of the Maison Carrée on the cornice that uses the sculpted motifs of the ancient temple. The building as a whole is listed in the Supplementary Inventory of Historical Monuments.

### **The monumental staircase of Hôtel de Fontfroide**

In 1660, the lord of Fontfroide, owner of the mansion at 14 rue de l'Aspic, commissioned the building of a monumental staircase open to the courtyard—referred to as a staircase with four newel posts as it is supported by four load-bearing pillars.

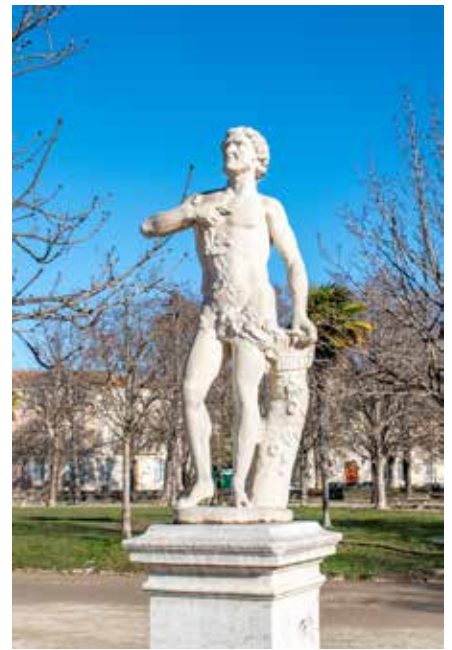
Its elegance is underlined by the fan-shaped balconies at the ends of the floors and by the presence of sculpted balusters.

# A COUNTRYSIDE atmosphere

## The first public garden in Europe

**A solid green heart of the city centre, the Jardins de la Fontaine were the first public gardens created in Europe in the 18<sup>th</sup> century.**

The lower part was laid out under Louis XV by the fortifications engineer Jacques Philippe Mareschal and keeps the organisation of the ancient sanctuary discovered shortly before. It is a fine example of a **French garden** with balustrades, vases and statues borrowed from La Mosson castle in the Hérault. From the first terrace—inspired by that of the Villa d'Este in Italy—a single look reveals the vestiges of the Augusteum and shows the classic layout of the area.



The upper part of the garden was laid out at the initiative of the former mayor of the city in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Augustin Cavalier, who also left his name to the hill. With a more romantic spirit, this part is inspired by **English or Italian gardens** with evergreen conifers and sinuous paths to the top, where you reach the imposing Tour Magne. So several gardens are thus juxtaposed.

An area is dedicated to Mediterranean plants and those that are emblematic of garrigue landscapes: thyme, rosemary, sage and others. Further up the hill, the cool island formed by the Montgolfier pool is a surprise. It is the home of aquatic plants such as water lilies and papyrus around which swim impressive carp and goldfish.

On the way is the **mazet**, a building that is a reminder of former farm huts where families used to go on Sundays.





# A COUNTRYSIDE atmosphere

## Nature in the city

Nîmes has a planted area of 365 hectares, ranging from the historical Jardin de la Fontaine to the Domaine de la Bastide and the city squares. Since 2014 it has **the 4th flower of the Label des Villes et Villages Fleuris** as a reward for the embellishment of living conditions in recent years and in particular the changes made to the Esplanade and to Allées Jean Jaurès. The local authority has laid stress on laying out, maintaining and profiting from planted areas.

Many plants grown in the municipal nurseries decorate and embellish the city. The protection and maintenance of urban trees is also—given the size of the tree heritage—one of the town's priorities with, in particular, a 'tree charter'. About a hundred tree species are found in Nîmes, with planes and southern nettle trees being dominant.

Nîmes has a natural forest heritage covering more than 1,000 hectares in 6 sections. The quality of the places concerned and their accessibility make them much loved by walkers and sportsmen.



## A natural 'garrigues' environment

The natural landscape around Nîmes is referred to as 'garrigue' or 'garrigues'. It consists of low vegetation characteristic of Mediterranean soil and the result of human activities for centuries that affect the environment. Several species of oak, box, juniper, pines can be found, together with aromatic plants such as thyme and rosemary. These are particularly appreciated in the local cuisine.

As the area has been occupied for centuries for grazing, wood cutting and the production of olive oil, human presence is still very visible with

numerous **drystone constructions** (walls, piles of stones and capitelles (small drystone huts), etc. that form a natural habitat for rare plant and animal species. This special landscape is the focus of measures for protection and prestige thanks in particular to the setting up of a '**Garrigue Charter**'. The main hills have exploration paths and picnic areas. The places concerned are the Le Bois des Espeisses, Le Domaine d'Escattes, Le Clos Gaillard and since 2020 Les Terres de Rouvières.

### Commitments for a sustainable city:

- 30% to 50% of the surface area of construction or renovation projects devoted to permeable natural space.
- No phytosanitary products and bio-control pest control. Automatic watering depending on the weather.
- 91m<sup>2</sup> of green space per inhabitant.
- 5th green city in France

The Office du Tourisme has undertaken a sustainable tourism approach and takes strong measures to develop strong structures. It also makes visitors, service providers and partners aware of the respect of the environment. <https://vu.fr/ucND>





**NÎMES**  
CITY OF  
CULTURE(S)

## The musée de la Romanité

The Archaeological Museum installed since 1896 in the former Jesuit school moved in 2018 to a new ultra-modern building designed by Elizabeth de Portzamparc. It is a large parallelepiped draped in a glass mosaic reminding us of both the toga worn by Roman citizens and ancient know-how in mosaics.

The museum invites visitors for a unique experience in the form of a trip **through history** from the 6<sup>th</sup> century BC to the 19<sup>th</sup> century AD using innovative museography and immersive scenography. It also has an archaeological garden, a restaurant and a **planted terrace** giving a unique 360° panoramic view of Nîmes and its finest Roman treasures.

**5,000** of the 25,000 pieces formed by the archaeological reserves are presented, including the Pentheus mosaic, a major item found during archaeological excavations in Avenue Jean Jaurès in 2006-2007.



# MUSEUMS



## Carré d'art

The building called Carré d'art – Jean Bousquet is intended to be the modern pendant of the Maison Carrée. Designed by the British architect Norman Foster, it is a large glass rectangular parallelepiped with lines of perfect purity and whose main feature is transparency. A central atrium that brings to mind the courtyards of houses in Nîmes; is topped by a glass roof that allows light—another fundamental feature of this architecture, to penetrate the building generously. Inside, the Musée d'art **contemporain** has a collection of nearly 500 works dated from 1960 to today. It illustrates movements that like Nouveau Réalisme, Supports-Surfaces and Figuration libre started in the South of France. Arte Povera is particularly well represented with works by Mario Merz, Giuseppe Penone, Alighiero Boetti and Giovanni Anselmo. There are also important works by American artists such as Richard Artschwager, Allan Kaprow, Joseph Kosuth and Christopher Wool. Part of the collection is devoted to German painting, with works by Gerhard Richter, Sigmar Polke and Albert Oehlen, together with installations by Thomas Schütte.





# MUSEUMS

## Musée des Beaux-Arts

### Fine Arts Museum

The Musée des Beaux-Arts (Fine Arts Museum) is housed in a 1907 building by the architect Max Raphel and restored in 1987 by Jean Michel Willmotte. In fact, the collection of paintings to be seen was assembled from 1823 onwards.

Some **3800 works** are held today, including paintings characteristic of the main European schools from the **16th to the 19th centuries**. Italy is represented by works by Giamboni, Basso and Prédi. Painting from the North is presented by works by

Bramer, Rubens, De Heem, Both and Pynacker. Finally, Chaperon, Reynaud Levieux, Boucher, De Troy, Natoire, Sigalon and also Delaroche illustrate French painting until the 19th century. A room is also devoted to landscape painters from Provence.

**A Roman mosaic** illustrating 'les noces d'Admète', discovered in 1883, is also displayed in the centre of then Museum.



## Musée du Vieux Nîmes

### Museum of Old Nîmes

Housed in the former bishop's palace (17th century), the Musée du Vieux Nîmes describes local life since the Middle Ages using **collection of everyday objects and bourgeois furniture**. Much of the collection covers the industrial textile with, in particular a room devoted to serge de Nîmes and its special links with the famous **denim**.

# MUSEUMS

## Musée des Cultures Taurines C. et H. Viallat

### Bull Culture Museum

Unique in France, this museum shows a collection of objects and works associated with bulls over time and in various places. The permanent exhibition highlights **the bull shows and bullfighting traditions** found in the region : Camargue and Spanish bullfights.

However, temporary exhibitions show bull culture from all over the world. Works by **great artists** such as Goya, Picasso and Claude Viallat can be seen.



## Muséum d'histoire naturelle

### Natural History Museum

Inaugurated in 1895, the Museum in Nîmes has the **6<sup>th</sup> national position** for the richness of its collections, including a section devoted to geology, statue menhirs, prehistoric objects, etc. The presentation of the room devoted to ethnography has hardly changed since the 1930s and gives an idea of the dominant ideas of the colonial period. With some 500 specimens, the zoology room at the museum gives better understanding of the theory of evolution and the bases of classification.



## Le Théâtre de Nîmes Bernadette Lafont

Place de la Calade 30000 Nîmes [www.theatredenimes.com](http://www.theatredenimes.com)  
+33(0)4 66 36 65 00

In 2012 the Minister of Culture awarded the theatre in Nîmes the distinction of ' *Scène conventionnée pour la danse contemporaine* ' and in 2018 that of ' *Scène conventionnée d'intérêt national-art et création-danse contemporaine* '. Renamed Théâtre Bernadette Lafont in 2013 in homage to the Nîmes actress, its programme includes much creative work, with artists in residence. In the basic work done by the teams all types of publics are targeted and especially those for whom access to culture is not easy or frankly difficult. Since 2020, the theatre has hosted the Académie internationale de Mise en scène de Théâtre musical, T & M.



## Théâtre Christian Liger

A modern theatre seating a maximum audience of 280. Year after year, it has a pluridisciplinary programme centred on 3 main principles : quality ;diversity and conviviality.

## The Odéon

This former 1950s cinema joined the Théâtre de Nîmes in. More intimate, this venue houses small forms and many events throughout the season.

## Le Périscope

This arts and culture facility in the heart of the Gambetta district runs a programme of pluridisciplinary shows focused on present writing and contemporary creation. Artists' residencies.

## Télémac Théâtre

Here, theatrical expression is a tool for personal development like a trampoline towards shows. The theatre workshops lead to a show for the public at the end of the season.

Other theatres such as le Telquel Théâtre, la Maison du Théâtre et de la Poésie and le Triptyk théâtre also provide rich and varied programmes throughout the year.



# CONCERT hall

## SMAC Paloma

Paloma» is an imposing 5,000 m<sup>2</sup> building that acts as a bridge between the worlds of culture, equipped with the latest digital technology. As well as a performance space, it houses studios, stages and accommodation for artists in residence. Designed by Jean-Michel Bertreux of Tretrac Architects. Paloma proposes a strong programme featuring artists of national and international renown.



## The explosion of alternative venues

Alternative cultures alternatives are highlighted with the starting up of various 'alternative venues'—hybrid places that encourage the creation of social links thanks to co-working and also to association operations. In Nîmes, 4 venues form part of the 'Réseau des Tiers lieux du Gard' supported by the Occitanie region and that develop new kinds of work, meetings and exchange. They are true grouped and responsible eco-systems that give energy to certain districts. (<https://vu.fr/QLvT>): le Spot, le Fablab, la station co-working. But there are also other initiatives such as la Verrière, la Miess 30, le Village, la Ruche, N° 58, Open tourisme Lab, etc.



## The NOGA Festival

The festival **Nîmes Open Games Arts** (NOGA) means that every year the city takes a plunge in the world of video games and digital art through tournaments talks and graphic and interactive exhibitions at the Carré d'Art library. With the title Bibliothèque Numérique de Référence et précurseur sur ce terrain, it is one of the only establishments to organise events of this type.

## The CACN

The aims of the CACN (*Centre d'Art Contemporain de Nîmes*) are creation ; the promotion of artists and the spread of contemporary art at the local, regional, national and international levels. Projects are in the form of exhibitions, publications, events in the arts (performances, projections, talks) and by collaborative projects via residencies of artists and curators. The CACN also publishes in parallel and a free journal centred on research by French and foreign exhibition curators. It is called the Coopérative Curatoriale. All the exhibitions have free access. <https://www.cacncentredart.com>

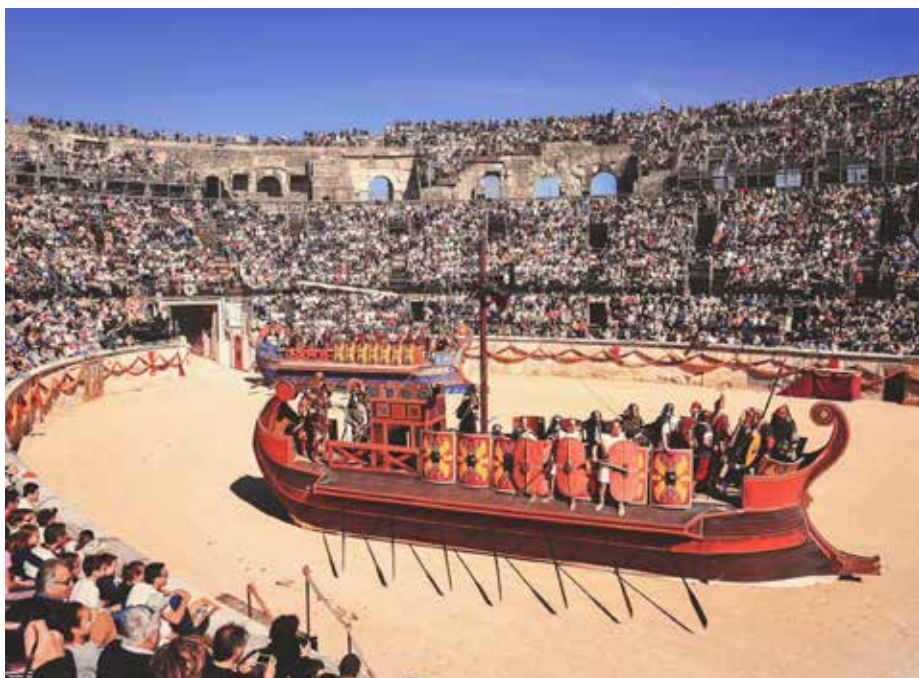


# MAJOR events

## The ferias

The first feria was held in 1952 in pure Spanish style and, today, still mixes corridas, Camargue bullfights, concerts, releases of bills in the streets and various other events. Famous all over Europe, it is a key popular event. Twice a year, hundreds of thousands of people are on the streets. Bodegas (improvised bars) spring up all over the town and everyone goes to make merry!

The Nîmes Feria is 5 days at Whitsun week-end and 3 days in September. The festivities are continuous for the pleasure of all publics and all tastes! You can watch a bullfight in the Arena, see *abrivados* and *bandidos* (release of Camargue bulls in the streets, watch the *peñas* (bands) go by, dance the *sevillana* until late at night in the bodegas, eat paella on the boulevards, listen, to concerts, watch water jousting on the Canal de la Fontaine, go to Mass in Provençal at the Cathedral, see the floats of the Pégoulade, the opening procession of the Feria de Pentecôte....



## Historical shows

The town goes back in time for a week-end and is permeated with a Roman atmosphere. Nearly 500 participants take the floor in the Arena to re-enact ancient *ludis* (games) with combats between gladiators, horse races, etc. The whole city goes Roman : Roman legionaries parade in town, restaurants serve Roman or Gallic menus. Every spring this is one of the largest ancient reconstitutions in Europe!

More information on :  
[www.arenas-nimes.com](http://www.arenas-nimes.com)



# MAJOR events

## «Le Festival de Nîmes»

Prestigious guests perform each year in the majestic setting of the Nîmes. National and international stars and 'must hear' groups and! From pop to electro; from hard rock to variety ... People await these concerts eagerly and come in large numbers. A real atmosphere! The Festival holds some 20 concerts in June and July.



## Les jeudis de Nîmes (Thursdays in Nîmes)

The town is lively every Thursday evening in July and August: craftsmen, second-hand dealers and collectors are there for visitors in the squares and streets in the historic centre. Without forgetting activities for children and the 'JeuDivins', tasting of wines with local. Festive atmosphere guaranteed. These markets are dotted with musical performances : jazz, flamenco, classical music, tango, world music, variety...

## Flamenco Festival

Organised by the Théâtre de Nîmes, the Festival welcomes great Spanish musicians and reveals much talent in singing, guitar and dance that perpetuates the Andalusian tradition in the South of France.

Flamenco is an art that is vibrant and alive. It has been recognised since 2010 as an intangible world heritage that continues to evolve and go back to its roots. Nobody is capable of predicting its future but it has an annual rendezvous with the public in Nîmes.

[www.theatredenimes.com/](http://www.theatredenimes.com/)





**NÎMES**

EXPLORE  
THE CITY

# TOURIST Office



## The Tourist Office's quality commitments

The Nîmes Convention and Visitors Bureau, ideally located opposite the arena and close to the Romanesque Museum, is a member of the national federation of institutional tourist organisations (ADN tourisme) and is **committed to a number of quality initiatives aimed at constantly improving the services it offers to the public.**



Category I classification gives the resort access to tourist resort classification, and is recognition of the excellence of its welcome. The national *Qualité Tourisme™* mark is awarded by the State to tourism professionals for the quality of their welcome and services.

The *Vignobles & Découvertes* label is awarded for a period of 3 years by Atout France, on the recommendation of the *Conseil Supérieur de l'Oenotourisme*, to a wine tourism destination offering a wide range of complementary tourist products (accommodation, restaurants, cellar tours and tastings, museums, events, etc.), making it easier for customers to organise their stay and directing them to qualified services.

## The Tourist Office shop



A showcase for the expertise of local craftsmen and producers, the Tourist Office shop offers gourmet specialities (*brandade, croquants...*), a selection of gift ideas and souvenirs to suit all budgets (stationery, books, decorations, textiles...) as well as a ticket office (guided tours, mini-train, *courses camarguaises...*).



# LIFT UP your eyes

## The City Pass

The Nîmes CITYPASS is designed to make visits as simple as possible. It is a made-to-measure proposal for exploring all the cultural features and tourist services with a single document at a special rate. It is valid for **2 days, 4 days or 7 days** and includes access to the following sites or services: 3 Roman monuments in Nîmes (Arena, Maison Carrée, Tour Magne), the Musée de la Romanité, Carré d'Art-Jean Bousquet, Musée des Beaux-Arts, Musée des Cultures Taurines, Musée du Vieux Nîmes, Mu-

seum d'Histoire Naturelle. A guided visit (depending on the calendar) or a trip in the small tourist train (except during Férias). Access to the Pont du Gard site and Saint-Gilles Abbatial Church are also included. During its validity, the pass gives a single access to each site. And it also gives a 5% reduction at Office de Tourisme shop.



## Guided visits

The city belongs to the Réseau Ville d'art et d'histoire, a label awarded by the Ministry of Culture and that allows the creation of a service devoted to highlighting heritage. The Office de Tourisme contributes to these missions by organising visits with national guide/lecturers on various themes, and with exclusive access—from the Roman heritage to street art by way of visiting the private courtyards of mansions or more subjects for knowledgeable visitors. The visits are scheduled regularly throughout the.

See the programme on : <https://www.nimes-tourisme.com/fr/a-voir-a-faire/visites-guidees.html>

### Would you like a guide just for you?

Book a guide for a group of up to 8 people for a 2-hour visit. The guide will adapt to your wishes! <https://vu.fr/YVoP>

For groups of more than 8 people, please contact our group service for a tailor-made programme. [groupes@nimes-tourisme.com](mailto:groupes@nimes-tourisme.com) 0466583815



# LIFT UP your eyes

## The little train

From the spring onwards the main monuments can be seen from the comfort of our little tourist train. The 40-minute visit gives you an overall view of the entire history of the city. Commentaries are available in several languages.



## Family play activities

The town centre is particularly suitable for family explorations. The Office de Tourisme organises a treasure hunt to find out about heritage in a playful and amusing manner: help the famous treasure hunter Toutankrôko in his search by making your way through the city using a compass and a map, solve various puzzles using your magic box and finally discover the treasure. Nîmes will no longer have any secrets for you. From 6 years old.

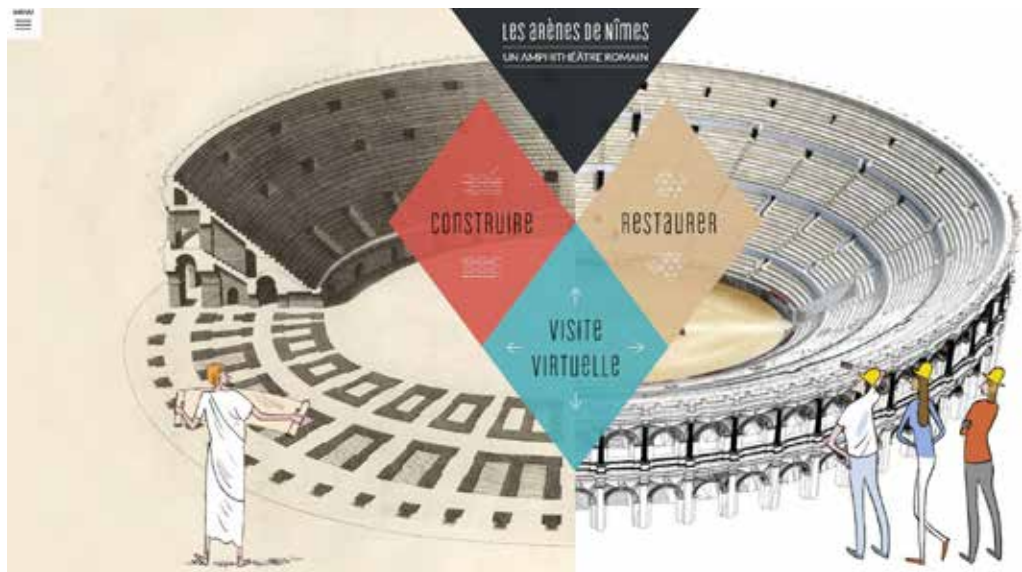




# AUGMENTED reality

**Explore Nîmes without moving from your sofa ? This is made possible by various virtual reality facilities. For public unable to come, to prepare a stay or to gain better knowledge, the City of Nîmes has placed various facilities online.**

To discover the secrets of the construction of the amphitheatre, its preservation and restoration work, see the page [www.arenes-webdoc.nimes.fr](http://www.arenes-webdoc.nimes.fr). The system received the prix Patrimoine et Innovation prize from the Club innovation et Culture.



Another multimedia document mentions the Maison Carrée, gives access to an iconotheque and describes the history and evolution of the building and also the buildings around it. Finally, a section is devoted to its renown and the scale of the distribution of its image around the world. The Maison Carrée was a substantial source of inspiration for artists and also for architects all around the world, like Thomas Jefferson, President of the United States, who copied the plans for the building of the first Capitol of the United States. [www.maisoncarree.eu/](http://www.maisoncarree.eu/)





# SUITABLE routes

**The City of Nîmes, in collaboration with the Office de Tourisme, has awareness of questions of accessibility for all publics and in particular for persons with reduced mobility.**

On Friday 20 October 2023, the town of Nîmes was awarded the silver level of the state endorsement 'Destination pour tous'. Created by the ministries of tourism, solidarity and social cohesion, the endorsement is awarded for 5 years to areas that have developed accessibility for at least two families with handicaps, undertake to broaden their scope for tourism and propose new accessible services.

Here, several urban projects for the reclassification of public highways are being carried out to facilitate access to the city centre together with clear signposting appropriate for the different types of handicap. Actions are also being carried out in public transport to facilitate the inclusion of all users and awareness is being promoted among retailers.

With regard to tourism and culture ; the city has installed **tactile heritage**

**signposting** showing the main Roman monuments. The Office de Tourisme suggests **two suitable routes for visits**, to be used independently between the station and the lower part of Les Jardins de la Fontaine. It also proposes accessible guided visits and appropriate publications: guide in FALC (Easy to read and understand).

The Nîmes Tourist Office has been involved in the «**Tourism and Disability**» initiative for several years now, and has been awarded the labels for mental, motor, hearing and visual disabilities. The reception desk is wheelchair accessible, has adapted furniture, a hearing loop, warning strips, documentation in Braille and «easy to read»<sup>1</sup>, large-print posters and staff trained to listen. Guided tours are available for visitors with visual or motor disabilities, and there are two self-guided discovery routes for people with reduced mobility.



<sup>1</sup> Easy to read : a method of translating classical language into language that everyone can understand.



**NÎMES**

TASTE  
AND ENJOY

# OUR specialities

**Nîmes grew among the scents of garrigue, olive trees, vineyards and chestnuts. So its cuisine naturally gained the accent of Provence and the force of the Cévennes, plus it would seem a point of 'fleur de sel' from the Camargue.**

All our specialities can be found in the vibrant market in the centre of Nîmes or in one of the many district markets.

Made famous in around 1830 by the chef Durand, '**Brandade de Nîmes**' is still one of the best-known dishes of Nîmes. Salt cod poached in milk and then blended with olive oil give a smooth white cream that can be eaten cold or hot.

Why salt cod? Nîmes was well supplied with this as it had the subject of barter, with Atlantic fishermen swapping it for bags of salt from Aigues-Mortes, a town close to Nîmes.

**Le Petit Pâté Nîmois** has a gold crust and contains veal and pork stuffing. It can be eaten warm or hot.

The secret recipe for **Croquant Villaret** has not changed since 1775. The most surprising feature of this delicious, long golden biscuit is not its mysterious taste but its texture. The Caladon is based on almonds and honey and is softer.

**Fraise de Nîmes IGP** is the only strawberry in France grown in soil under cover and is much appreciated for its earliness.

**AOP and AOC olives from Nîmes**, the famous "picholine with juicy, crisp flesh is eaten green. Ripening and cold-pressing gives a strong, very fruity oil with intense aromas of plum and pineapple. AOP 'huile d'olive de Nîmes' is an assembly of 70% picholine and three other varieties: Négrette, Bouteillan and Aglandeau. Certain categories of olive are picked when green while others are gathered when they are ripe—firmly black! The Les Halles Market also has local produce from the nearby Cévennes, such as the famous Pélardon and sweet onions from the Cévennes, both of which have an AOC.

Built in less than a year, the Halles were constructed in 1884 and were inspired by the work of Gustave Eiffel and Baltard. In the 1980s, the municipality undertook to modernise them and called on the renowned architect Jean-Michel Wilmotte.

**Les Halles  
in a few figures :  
3500 m<sup>2</sup>  
74 stallholders  
3 restaurants  
1 best worker in France  
in 2019 : Fromagerie  
Vergne**

The Gard department has 6 products recognised by the national label «Remarkable Taste Site» and which can be found on the market stalls of Nîmes: The sweet onion of the Cévennes, the black truffle of the Pays d'Uzès and the Pont du Gard, the bull of Camargue, the olive and oil of Nîmes, the fig of Vézenobres, the AOC Rosé of Tavel





## Les Costières de Nîmes

A kingdom of rolled pebbles left by the Rhône and the Durance, the **Costières de Nîmes** zone is in the heart of the high stony terraces of the Rhône.

The 3000-hectare vineyard is on plateaux and hillside where mas (farmhouses) and castles are open for wine-tasting.

The vines benefit from plenty of sunshine and the sea breeze from the Camargue lakes, which reduces the heat in summer.

Already appreciated by the Greeks and then by the Romans, the wines from the Costières de Nîmes, one of the most ancient vineyards in Europe, are closely associated with numerous historical vestiges in Nîmes and the region.

In 1986, Costières du Gard gained AOC status and in 1989 took the name Costières de Nîmes.

More information on [www.costieres-nimes.org](http://www.costieres-nimes.org)

Other AOC wines are also found around Nîmes including **Clairette de Bellegarde**, **Côtes du Rhône villages** and **Côtes du Rhône gardoises**, **Rosé de Tavel**, **Lirac**, as well as **AOC Languedoc**, **IGP Gard**, **Côteaux du Pont du Gard** and **Duché d'Uzès**.

60

private wineries

10

cooperative wineries

20 M

bottles per vintage



### The events!

- **Vignes Toquées** offers you a stroll through the vineyards! Enjoy a gastronomic tour and savour dishes concocted by star chefs while tasting the wines of some thirty Costières de Nîmes winegrowers!

- **Bodega des Costières:** as soon as the bullfights are over, the true aficionados meet at the bodega des Costières de Nîmes located on the Esplanade Charles de Gaulle where the poetry and the magic of the festival are mixed in a warm atmosphere. You can taste the three colours of the appellation as well as local products thanks to its foodtruck, until the end of the night. Passion, joy and sharing make the Bodega des Costières de Nîmes the ephemeral place not to be missed during the FERIA de Nîmes!

- **The JeuDivin** every Thursday in July and August in the centre of Nîmes: wine tasting accompanied by local products in a festive atmosphere!



## Perrier Water

This spring known all over the world no longer needs an introduction. In less than a century its history, personality and creativity made Perrier a legend. It owes its name to an Englishman, Sir John Harmsworth, its patron, who founded the Compagnie de la Source Perrier in 1906 at Vergèze, not far from Nîmes.



## Star chefs

In Garons at the edge of the Camargue, between Nîmes and Arles, Michel Kayser has succeeded in modelling to his image a unique venue: Alexandre \*\*. Excellence, authenticity, sharing and enthusiasm characterise the cuisine of Chef Michel Kayser. Produce of quality from the Gard are essential conditions magnified by Michel Kayser's talent and technique.

A superb Provençal mas houses the hôtel \*\*\*\* Mas de Boudan, with a brasserie, **Le Bistr'Au**, and the Jérôme Nutile Gastronomic \* Restaurant run by the Chef Jérôme Nutile, meilleur ouvrier de France in 2011. The gastronomy is contemporary and gourmet.

The restaurant **Le Skab\*** welcomes you close to the Arena, opposite the Musée de la Romanité, in a contemporary, cosy atmosphere and with quiet, shady patio. Le Skab reveals all the flavours and values of regional cooking, with delicate attention paid to the flavours and values of regional cuisine, with delicate attention paid by Chef Damien Sanchez and his kitchen staff.

In the heart of the prestigious Hôtel Impérial Maison Albar\*\*\*\*, the Chef Pierre Gagnaire – who has accumulated 14 Michelin guide stars for all his establishments – signs creative, atypical and gourmet menus for 3: **the Duende\*** gastronomic, the brasserie L'Impé and the Hemingway bar. The Chefs Pierre Gagnaire and Nicolas Fontaine have gained a first star in the Michelin guide after a year of opening.

In the heart of the historic centre of Nîmes, at Hotel Margaret Couleur\*\*\*\* the chef Georgina Viou is running the restaurant **Rouge\***. She proposes instinctive Mediterranean food with a substantial role played by local produce, punctuated by condiments and a hint of flavours from elsewhere. And for a sweet and gentle finish to the meal, the restaurant has recruited the pastrycook François Josse, champion of France for desserts in 2018!



## 'Signature' tables

The discreet front of this restaurant leads you to thinking that you are not at the right place. However, it is there, protected from the effervescence of the city, in a quiet, elegant and warm setting, that the Chef **Vincent Croizard** takes another look at the area with unusual cooking consisting of curiosity, adventure and discoveries as regards tastes. High quality local products mingle with unexpected flavours.

**La Table du 2**, on the second floor of the Musée de la Romanité, dialogues with the Roman amphitheatre. A magnificent terrace for lunching or dining head-to-head with the Arena of Nîmes. The menu devised by the Chef Franck Putelat\*\* examines all the classics of French brasserie food.

## 'Gourmet' tables

The **Wine Bar** hosts you opposite the Arena in a vaulted room decorated with paintings and sculptures by local artists or in the shaded patio. The menu emphasises local produce and the rigorous wine list has more than 300 references covering the most famous vineyards in France and elsewhere.

**Aux plaisirs des halles** serves generous and tasty market-based dishes accompanied by regional wines. It is two steps from the main market and you can enjoy the patio in the summer months!

**The Ciel de Nîmes** has one of the finest views of the Roman monuments—the Maison Carrée and the Tour Magne. The menus are designed by the chef every week according to the season and the local produce available at the market. A splendid table with a view!

## ‘Creative’ Tables

The vibrant heart of the market is the place to taste the best burger in France, with local flavours taken from the Cévennes and the Camargue! Indeed the winner of the championship in 2021 was none other than Joannès Richard who has the restaurant **Chez Jo.**

The friendly atmosphere of the **Caboulot de la serendipité** will charm you. There are no individual tables here—just two large ones where you sit opposite people you don’t know for unexpected meetings and conversation. From the kitchen comes a single vegetarian menu that varies according to the crops gathered by local farmers. Here, it’s not just a high-quality meal that is served but a true moment of discussion and simplicity.

Between La Maison Carrée and Place de l’Horloge, **l’Arbousier** serves dishes that are Lebanese and inspired by the whole of the world. Taking care to serve food in which everybody finds flavour, the menu has gluten-free and lactose-free dishes and vegan and vegetarian food. The produce used is also organic.

**Les petits poissons verts** is another vegan and organic address in the centre of Nîmes. You will find inventive, flavoursome cuisine suitable for persons suffering from food allergies or intolerance.







# **NÎMES** CURIOSITIES...

# PALM & crocodile

## The 'as de Nîmes'

As de Nîmes' (the 'as' was a monetary unit worth half a dupondus), commemorating the victory of Octavius over Marcus Aurelius and Cleopatra at the Battle of Actium in 31 BC. The victory enabled Julius Caesar's adoptive son to take control of Rome and make in-depth changes to the Republic to set up the Empire. He took the name Augustus.

The coin represents Egypt in submission with a crocodile chained to a palm tree. Crocodiles are very present on the banks of the Nile and personify Egypt while the palm is an ancient symbol of victory. The other side of the coin shows Octavius-Augustus and Agrippa, the great winners of the battle.



© Ville de Nîmes

## The Arms

When King François 1st visited Nîmes in the 16th century, the consuls requested permission to use the Romain coin as the emblem of the city. The king gave his assent in a letter dated 1535. One change was made : the palm tree replaced the palm leaf.

From this date onwards, several patrons bought real crocodiles to decorate the consul building from the 16th to the 18th century. The 4 crocodiles now hang from the ceiling in the stairwell of the present City Hall.



## Artistic versions

In 1986, the City of Nîmes asked the architect/designer **Philippe Stark** to modernize the emblem. la modernisation du blason. It can now be found almost all over the town in the form of studs fixed to the ground or to urban posts. Stark also designed a bus shelter inspired by the emblem.

The artist **Martial Raysse** worked on the design of the Place du Marché, playing with the arms of the city by separating his bronze crocodile statue from a real palm tree.

The Avignon painter **Dominique Durand** made a trompe l'œil crocodile at a window in one of the busiest shopping streets of the town centre.



DENIM...

## from Nîmes ?

### From serge to denim

Nîmes was an important manufacturing town from the 17th to the 19th century, producing wool and silk cloth exported all over the world. One of the types of cloth, referred to as 'serge de Nîmes', seems to have been one of the ancestors of denim, which became particularly famous around the world as it is used for making jeans.

**Denim** is a cotton cloth woven using the 'serge' technique. There are serges of all kinds but denim is special as it is woven diagonally using non-coloured thread and thread with indigo surface dyeing. This gives one side white and the other blue with gradual bleaching. Denim became famous thanks to two men—David Jacob and Levi Strauss—who joined forces at the end of the 19th century to make very strong trousers called jeans. The name comes from the contraction of the expression 'a pair of jeans' in English, meaning trousers. The word jeans, thus meaning trousers, should not be confused with jean, which is the name given to a cloth in plain serge.

The town of Genoa in Italy used to be a large producer and exporter of serge cloth and is said to, be the origin of the word jean.

It is possible that the word denim is a contraction of 'de Nîmes' used as an indication of quality as

in the 18th century the town was particularly reputed for the quality of its cloth, including 'serge de Nîmes' woven in wool and/or silk.

Denim and serge are similar in their names, the weaving method and the used of twin-coloured thread. The Musée du Vieux Nîmes traces the history and links between the two materials in its permanent exhibition.



### Denim made in Nîmes

The 'Ateliers de Nîmes' have launched a slightly mad challenge—that of making denim in order to make true denim jean made in Nîmes!

The adventure started with the making (in Nîmes) of jeans using imported cloth. This is to ensure the first fame of the new make. Then, with the purchase of a weaving loom, it was possible to learn the methods and techniques to produce Nîmes denim cloth for the first time in 2020 and to envisage the making of 100% local jeans. [www.lesateliersdenimes.com](http://www.lesateliersdenimes.com)





# **NÎMES**

THE CITY OF  
THE FUTURE

# CONVENTION centre

## A place to gather

The opening of a Convention Centre in Nîmes in 2025 will allow the city to complete its facilities with regard to events, conventions and seminars. This will make it more attractive and dynamise the economy and local tourism.

The 10,000 sq. m building will house a plenary room, several commission rooms, an exhibition space, in-house restoration facilities, a 700-seat auditorium with modulable configuration, integrated technical equipment (audio and video), scenography furniture and facilities and external areas.

## An architectural gesture

The future Convention Centre forms part of a policy for the revitalisation and urban requalification of the city centre. Its imprint in the town must be a strong architectural feature. The architectural practices Chabanne 3XN have thus wished to establish a link between the historical context and the present by using materials such as pale local stone, unsurfaced exposed concrete and wood.

The curved façades give the project all its singularity and also preserves the identity of the nearby streets. The glassed areas facilitate relations between interior, and exterior and integrate the building in the district.



## A durable building

The project uses an environmental approach with attention paid to durable development and the mastery of costs in the long term. The architecture of the building incorporates the climatic constraints of Nîmes to ensure users' comfort and energy saving, in particular with the use of photovoltaic panels and geothermy.

[www.agence-chabanne.fr/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/dp-chabanne-3xn-ville-de-nimes-palais-des-congres-de-nimes.pdf](http://www.agence-chabanne.fr/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/dp-chabanne-3xn-ville-de-nimes-palais-des-congres-de-nimes.pdf)

# «PARC Jacques Chirac»

## The requalification of the Pichon nurseries

In 1885, Ernest Pichon used a vast space behind the station to establish a nursery in which he grew a large number of plants along the Vistre de la Fontaine, an affluent of the water from the spring in Nîmes, including bamboo varieties obtained from the famous Bambouseraie d'Anduze. The area was abandoned in the 2000s and has a large number of distinct natural species and historic glasshouses that are to be requalified as an urban park in 2024.

### A 'green diagonal'

The aim of this park is to extend a 'gentle mobility' route from Esplanade Charles de Gaulle to the ring road and then in a second phase to the motorway A9. Families, those keen on sport, amateur gardeners, gentle walkers and keen hikers will be able to take the air, relax or picnic in this area of more than 14 hectares that will show the heritage of the former nurseries and make numerous activities possible: training in kitchen gardening, food areas, co-working, play areas, places devoted to sport and culture...

### A positive- energy park

Rainwater management by natural infiltration, led lighting, the installation of two boreholes and pumping stations fed by photovoltaic panels or wind, the choice of durable materials such as drainage materials gabion walls, the re-use of materials for in-situ recycling, furniture in raw wood, simple maintenance and rational management, the appropriate choice of plants to match the area and climate fit it with the environmental requirement of the specifications.



© Thibaut Douceran illustration pour ALEP paysagistes



# SPORTS hall



## A pluridisciplinary area

The city has chosen the A+ Montpellier architecture practice for designing a 7477 sq. m sports hall for associations and schools to practice nearly 11 different disciplines: volleyball, handball, futsal, badminton, basketball, handisport, climbing, gymnastics (artistic, rhythmic and sportive). Access to the upper floor is via a spiral staircase and a lift and is for use for arms training and has a combat room. It is to be built in the Mas de Vignolles district while awaiting the refurbishment of the Costières Stadium. Delivery is planned for 2024.

## An architectural signature

As is often the case in Nîmes, architecture is often inspired by the history of the city. The undulating façade thus refers to the textiles of the past and when it is lit at night it has the appearance of a magic ship with swollen, sparkling sails.



## A bioclimatic approach

Bio-sourced materials are to be used together with a virtuous heating and heat regulation system: geothermal energy, photovoltaic panels on the roof, use of rice straw from Camargue, natural ventilation and light using steel coverage to block the summer sun.



# NÎMES

## SHOPPING

# FASHION & accessories

**Nîmes, the capital of dualities, reveals through its many shops its past steeped in tradition and its deeply contemporary spirit. The Tourist Office offers you a small, non-exhaustive selection of characteristic and surprising places not to be missed during your visit.**

## Ligne de Bohème

38, rue de la Madeleine 30 000 Nîmes - Tél. : + 33 (0) 4 66 21 83 80  
- Site Web: [www.lignedeboheme.fr](http://www.lignedeboheme.fr) (Boutique en ligne)

A boutique dedicated to luxury accessories, Ligne de Bohème will satisfy shopaholics who will find designer bags, scarves, jewellery and bathroom linen.

## Marie M

7, rue de l'Hôtel de Ville 30 000 Nîmes - Téléphone: +33 (0) 4 66 21 34 73 - Site Web: [www.mariemchaussures.fr](http://www.mariemchaussures.fr) (Boutique en ligne).

A place that will delight lovers of beautiful shoes. Wide selection of brands such as Clergerie, Free-Lance, Marc Jacobs, Accessories, Repetto...

## Ateliers de Nîmes

2 Rue Auguste Pellet 30 000 Nîmes- Téléphone: +33 (0) 9 53 40 15 89 - Site Web: [www.ateliersdenimes.com](http://www.ateliersdenimes.com) (Boutique en ligne).

The Ateliers de Nîmes offer a collection of French clothing to revive the legend of jeans in Nîmes.

## Le vestiaire de Jeanne

18, rue Auguste 30 000 Nîmes -Téléphone: +33 (0)6 89 75 55 82-  
Site web : [www.levestiairedejeanne.com](http://www.levestiairedejeanne.com) (Boutique en ligne).

Sober clothes, bed linen, candles, bags, refined and timeless creations fill this boutique workshop near the Maison Carrée. Inside, the decorations are hung like masterpieces on a white wall. The shop also hosts local craftsmen such as «La botte gardiane».





# FURNISHINGS

## design & luxury

### Domus

11, rue de l'Horloge 30 000 Nîmes - Téléphone: +33 (0) 4 66 76 13 56- Site Web : [ww.designbest.com/fr/pro/showroom/200028](http://ww.designbest.com/fr/pro/showroom/200028)

One of the two major addresses for contemporary furniture in Nîmes. The shop offers on a surface of 400 m<sup>2</sup> and on two floors, design furniture brands such as Zanotta, Cappellini, Triad or Knoll, to name but a few. An excellent shop where regular exhibitions of famous design names are held in the showroom.



### Objets d'hier

4 rue Graverol 30 000 Nîmes- téléphone +33(0) 6 30 40 81 10- Site Web : <https://objetsdhier.eu/informations/>

This gallery exhibits and sells furniture with characteristic designs from the 1950s to the 1970s. It is also possible to have antique furniture restored here, as the gallery also houses an upholstery workshop.



### Souleiado

Rue Général Perrier 30 000 Nîmes-Téléphone: +33 (0) 4 66 23 76 97-Site Web: [www.souleiado.com](http://www.souleiado.com) (Boutique en ligne).

The Souleiado shop, a well-known brand in the south of France, is still the must-have brand for lovers of Provence. Its typical and chic fabrics are more relevant than ever. Clothes, linen, crockery...and a museum space are presented there.

# IT LOOKS LIKE Provence

## Les Indiennes de Nîmes-Mistral

2, boulevard des Arènes 30 000 Nîmes-Téléphone: +33 (0) 4 66 21 69 57-Website: [www.indiennesdenimes.fr](http://www.indiennesdenimes.fr) (Boutique en ligne). This other well-known Provençal brand is inspired by traditional Camargue clothing, which it reinterprets with style. «Les Indiennes de Nîmes-Mistral» offers a wide range of products, from men's and women's clothing to decorative and furnishing fabrics, lamps, pillows, quilts for the home and a wide range of tableware.

## Maison Garlaban

20, rue de la Madeleine 30 000 Nîmes- Téléphone: +33 (0) 4 66 06 43 55-Site Web: [www.maisongarlaban.fr](http://www.maisongarlaban.fr) (Boutique en ligne). Opened in the summer of 2020, the «Maison Garlaban» boutique is a concept store that offers fabrics, shirts and tablecloths from the «Les Olivades» brand as well as Santons (Provençal nativity scenes). You can also find decoration, tableware and jewellery. A modernised Provençal spirit and artisanal products made in the region.



## Galerie Jean-Louis Fages

9, rue Racine 30 000 Nîmes-Téléphone: +33 (0) 4 66 27 11 94 /+33 (0)6 07 37 70 67 Site Web : [www.jlfages-decoration-interieure.com](http://www.jlfages-decoration-interieure.com) This shop defines itself as a cabinet of curiosities, a place where you can find everything: antiques, lighting, decorative objects, furniture, upholstery, etc. All these items are piled up in a small, extravagant room. A good address for bargain hunting.

## Marlies Fleurs

23, rue de l'Horloge 30 000 Nîmes Téléphone: + 33 (0) 4 66 67 97 61 Site web : [www.marliesfleurs.fr](http://www.marliesfleurs.fr) (Boutique en ligne). A treat for lovers of peonies, old roses and other romantic bouquets. Charming accessories, vases and planters complete this unique flower shop.

# HOME, DECO, **antiques, unusual**

## **Le Local - Design Decoration Art.**

5, place Questel 30 000 Nîmes-Téléphone: +33 (0) 6 12 32 80 78

Close to the Maison Carrée, the Local offers a decoration and furniture area (sofas, coffee tables, chairs, lamps, jewellery, pillows... from different countries) and an art gallery area with exhibitions by local artists.

## **Mademoiselle Madeleine**

37, rue de la Madeleine 30 000 Nîmes - Téléphone: +33 (0) 4 66 67 91 92 Site Web: [www.mademoiselle-madeleine.fr](http://www.mademoiselle-madeleine.fr) (Boutique en ligne).

In the historic centre, a concept store offering costume jewellery, ready-to-wear, shoes, bags and accessories, as well as a decoration area!

## **Galerie Corps et Âme - Galerie d'Art Contemporain**

1 bis rue Emile Jamais 30 900 Nîmes-Téléphone: +33 (0)6 22 16 15 35- Site web: [www.corpsetamegallery.com](http://www.corpsetamegallery.com).

Halfway between the amphitheatre and the 'Carré d'Art Musée d'Art Contemporain', this gallery, which specialises in modern and contemporary painting and sculpture, offers high-end interior design with an exclusive selection of the best works by more than 30 well-known artists on the contemporary art market.



## Les Halles de Nîmes

5 rue des Halles. 30 000 Nîmes-Site internet : [www.leshallesdenimes.fr](http://www.leshallesdenimes.fr)

For 135 years, the Halles de Nîmes has always drawn its strength from the quality of its food products. More than seventy exhibitors are waiting to advise you and offer you quality products. 3 restaurants on site offer local specialties. Open 7 days a week in the morning.

## La Maison de la Brandade

7, rue de l'Horloge 30 000 Nîmes - Téléphone: +33 (0) 04 34 04 26 96-Site Web: [www.lanimoise.fr](http://www.lanimoise.fr) (Boutique en ligne).

This shop/workshop offers fresh brandade according to the family recipe from 1851. Christophe Mouton represents the 4th generation. Brandade is available at any time of the year, with a variety of ingredients: truffles, citrus fruits, asparagus...

## L'Huilerie

10 rue des Marchands 30 000 Nîmes - Téléphone +33 (0) 4 66 67 37 24 – Site web : [www.lhuilerie.com](http://www.lhuilerie.com) (Boutique en ligne).

For over 45 years, this delicatessen in the heart of Nîmes has been offering the best specialties from here and elsewhere, thanks to privileged relationships with over a hundred producers selected for their expertise and the excellent quality of their products.

## Cafés Nadal

7, rue Saint-Castor 30 000 Nîmes - Téléphone: +33 (0) 4 66 67 35 42-Site Web: [www.cafenadal.fr](http://www.cafenadal.fr) (Boutique en ligne).

«Cafés Nadal» is a roasting shop founded in 1919 in Nîmes by Auguste Nadal on the site of the current shop. The shop has preserved its authenticity and character by focusing on its know-how: a selection of the best vintages of green coffee from the finest plantations in the world.

## Pâtisserie Courtois

8, place du marché 30 000 Nîmes - Téléphone: +33 (0) 4 66 67 20 09  
Site Web: <https://patisserie-courtois.business.site/>.

In a Second Empire décor, listed as a historical monument, reminiscent of Italian theatres with its gilding, mirrors and tassel lamps, the Pâtisserie Courtois awaits you for a break in one of the busiest squares in the city centre.

## La tableterie

4 rue des marchands 30 000 Nîmes - Téléphone: +33 (0) 6 83 70 77 53 Site Web: <https://www.latableterie.fr>

Facing the cathedral, this artisanal chocolate factory offers a range of chocolates made on site, with the workshop visible from the shop.

## Le Napoléon

46 Boulevard Victor Hugo 3000 Nîmes telephone +33(à)4 66 05 98  
25 site web : [www.le-napo.fr](http://www.le-napo.fr)

Take a break in this historical address in Nîmes and enjoy the golden mouldings and the ceiling painted in the 19th century in the spirit of the cafés of Paris.





**NÎMES**

READ,  
AND SEE IT  
AGAIN



## The history of Nîmes

- HUARD Raymond (Ouvrage collectif sous la direction de). 1982. *Histoire de Nîmes*. Aix-en-Provence : Edisud . 424p.
- POTAY Corinne et PEY Jean (Ouvrage collectif sous la direction de). 2006. *Nîmes, les vingt ans du secteur sauvegardé*. Nîmes : Ville de Nîmes. 383p.
- ANDREANI (sous la direction de). 2005. *Nouvelle histoire de Nîmes*. Toulouse : Editions Privat. 319p.
- CABANNE Francine et JEAN Danièle. 2019. *Nîmes au fil de l'histoire*. Nîmes : Alcide. 368p.
- LIGER Christian. 1990. *Nîmes sans visa. Portrait d'une ville*. Paris : Robert Laffont. 392p.

## Nîmes and its ancient heritage

- DARDE Dominique et LASSALLE Victor. 2005. *Nîmes antique. Guides archéologiques de la France*. Paris : Imprimerie Nationale. 123p.
- GROS Pierre et alli. 2012. *La Maison Carrée Chef d'œuvre d'architecture romaine*. Paris : Errances. 175p.
- FABRE Guilhem, FICHES Jean-Luc et PEY Jean. 1994. *L'eau à Nîmes*. Montpellier : Edition Les Presses du Languedoc. 155p.
- FICHES Jean-Luc et VEYRAC Alain (sous la direction de). 1996. *Carte archéologique de la Gaule : Nîmes 30/1*. Paris : Editions de la Fondation Maison des sciences de l'Homme. 634p
- GOLVIN et LANDES. 1990. *Amphithéâtre et gladiateurs*. Paris : Les presses du CNRS. 238p.
- TEYSSIER Eric. 2009. *La mort en face. Le dossier gladiateur*. Arles : Actes Sud. 357 p.
- TEYSSIER Eric. 2014. *Nîmes la romaine*. Nîmes : Alcide. 315p.
- DELAGE Alain. 2019. *Ces Gardois qui ont fait l'histoire*. Villeveyrac : Editions le Papillon Rouge. 264p.
- VEYRAC Alain Donnain Pierre, Maudry Jaques. 2011. *Nîmes romaine aujourd'hui*. Le Pontet : Edition Alain Barthélémy. Collection Institut Européen Séguier. 120p.

## Nature

- BOMBAL Véronique. 1995. *Jardins de garrigues*. Aix-en-Provence : Edisud. 141p.
- Ville de Nîmes. 2006. *Charte de la garrigue*. Nîmes : Ville de Nîmes. 72p.

## Publications Ville d'art et d'histoire

(Disponibles à l'office de tourisme ou consultables en ligne : <https://www.nimes.fr/culture/patrimoine.html>)

- Laissez-vous conter la Maison Carrée
- Laissez-vous conter les Arènes / Laissez-vous conter la salle cruciforme / La restauration des Arènes
- Laissez-vous conter Carré d'Art
- Laissez-vous conter l'avenue Feuchères
- Laissez-vous conter la place du Chapitre
- Laissez-vous conter Jean-François Séguier
- Laissez-vous conter le chemin de Saint-Jacques de Compostelle à Nîmes
- Promenade dans les Jardins de la Fontaine
- Parcours Nîmes
- Laissez-vous conter Nemausus, premier édifice en Languedoc-Roussillon à avoir reçu le label Patrimoine XXe siècle et construit par Jean Nouvel.
- Pissevin, un témoin des trente glorieuses
- Focus : Illustre et antique cité de Nîmes
- Focus : Alphonse Daudet à Nîmes

## Novels, poems and texts

- Apollinaire Guillaume. 1947. *Poèmes à Lou*. Paris : Gallimard. Collections Imaginaires. 247p.
- Vargas Fred. 2017. *Quand sort la recluse*. Paris : Flammarion. 496p.
- Barjavel René. 1985. *La peau de César*. Paris : Gallimard. Collection Crime parfait. 408p.
- Demerson Monique. 1997. *Fugue en Nîmes majeur*. Paris : La baleine. Collection Le Poulpe. 134p.

## The Hemingway Prize

A literary prize awarded during the Féria de Pentecôte by the Association des Avocats du Diable since 2004. It is aimed at giving a prize for an unpublished short story by a French or foreign writer on the subject of bullfighting, its universe or its culture. Winners in recent years were:

- GIRARD Adrien. 2016. *Uriel, berger sans lune*. Vauvert : Au diable Vauvert. (Lauréat 2017)
- VALDES BELMAR José Luis. 2017 *Ombres de lune*. Vauvert : Au diable Vauvert. (Lauréat 2018)
- FABRE Cyril. 2018. *Mecha de plata*. Vauvert : Au diable Vauvert. (Lauréat 2019)
- THIEBAU Élise T.2019. *Un toro dans la reine* Vauvert : Au diable Vauvert. (Lauréate 2020)
- GOFFART Hélène.2020. *les liens du groupe sanguin*. Vauvert : Au diable Vauvert. (Lauréate 2021)



# A LAND of cinema

The softness of its light and its rich heritage Nîmes a perfect setting for film making. Many directors have pointed their cameras and their eyes at our town for documentaries, fiction, romance and scary films.

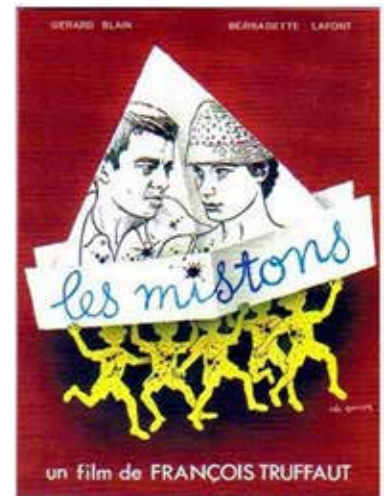
## *Le salaire de la peur*

This French cinema classic was shot near Nîmes and the whole film crew was housed a few metres from the Arena, leaving locals with numerous anecdotes concerning the life of the actors when they were not facing the cameras.



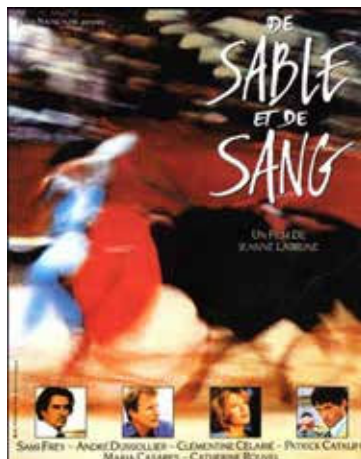
## *Les mistons*

François Truffaut's first film was filmed entirely in Nîmes and in the Gard. This short revealed the actress from Nîmes Bernadette Lafont, later called 'the cinema fiancée' and laid the foundation for the 'Nouvelle vague' in French cinema in 1957.



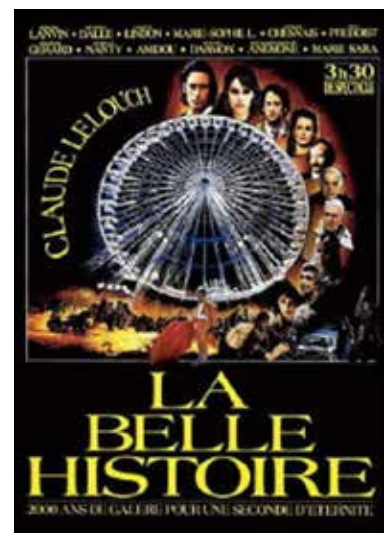
## *De sable et de sang*

Human relations were examined against a background of bullfighting by the film-maker Jeanne Labruno who used an excellent cast: Samy Frey, André Dussolier, Clémentine Célarié, Patrick Catalifo and Maria Casarès. The film was shown at the Cannes film festival in 1988 category 'Another look'.



## *La Belle Histoire*

*La Belle Histoire* by Claude Lelouch (1991) featured Gérard Lanvin and Béatrice Dalle in a millenary love story that paid tribute to the Arena in Nîmes and the working man's district La Placette.

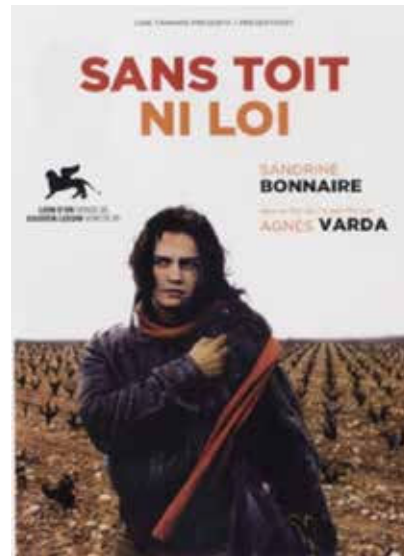


# A LAND of cinema

## **Sans toi ni loi**

Sandrine Bonnaire became known to the public in 1987 behind the excellent camera of Agnès Varda in a documentary fiction shot in the Gard and the Hérault. The main character, a young homeless girl, was inspired by a meeting with the director near the station in Nîmes.

The film received many awards: the Golden Lion in Venice, the Critics Award, César award for the Best Actress Sandrine Bonnaire, best film and best director at the Brussels Festival ...



## **Bellamy**

In 2009, Claude Chabrol directed Gérard Depardieu and a prestigious cast in the streets of Nîmes for his crime film Bellamy. This was the first collaboration between the director and the emblematic French actor.



## **Partir**

he director Catherine Corsini took her camera to the Jardins de la Fontaine and the Mont Duplan district in 2009 to tell a love story for three acted by Kristin Scott Thomas, Serge Lopez and Yvan Attal.

## **Les meilleurs amis du monde**

In 2010, in a favourite moment of Julien Rambaldi's comedy, *Les Meilleurs amis du monde*, Marc Lavoine and Pierre-François Martin-Laval play a scene in one of the oldest pastry shops in the historic centre of Nîmes.



The city hosts several events related to the 7th art every year:

- Le festival des écrans britanniques (British screens festival).
- Un réalisateur dans la ville (A filmmaker in town festival).
- une salle sous les étoiles (Outdoor cinema).



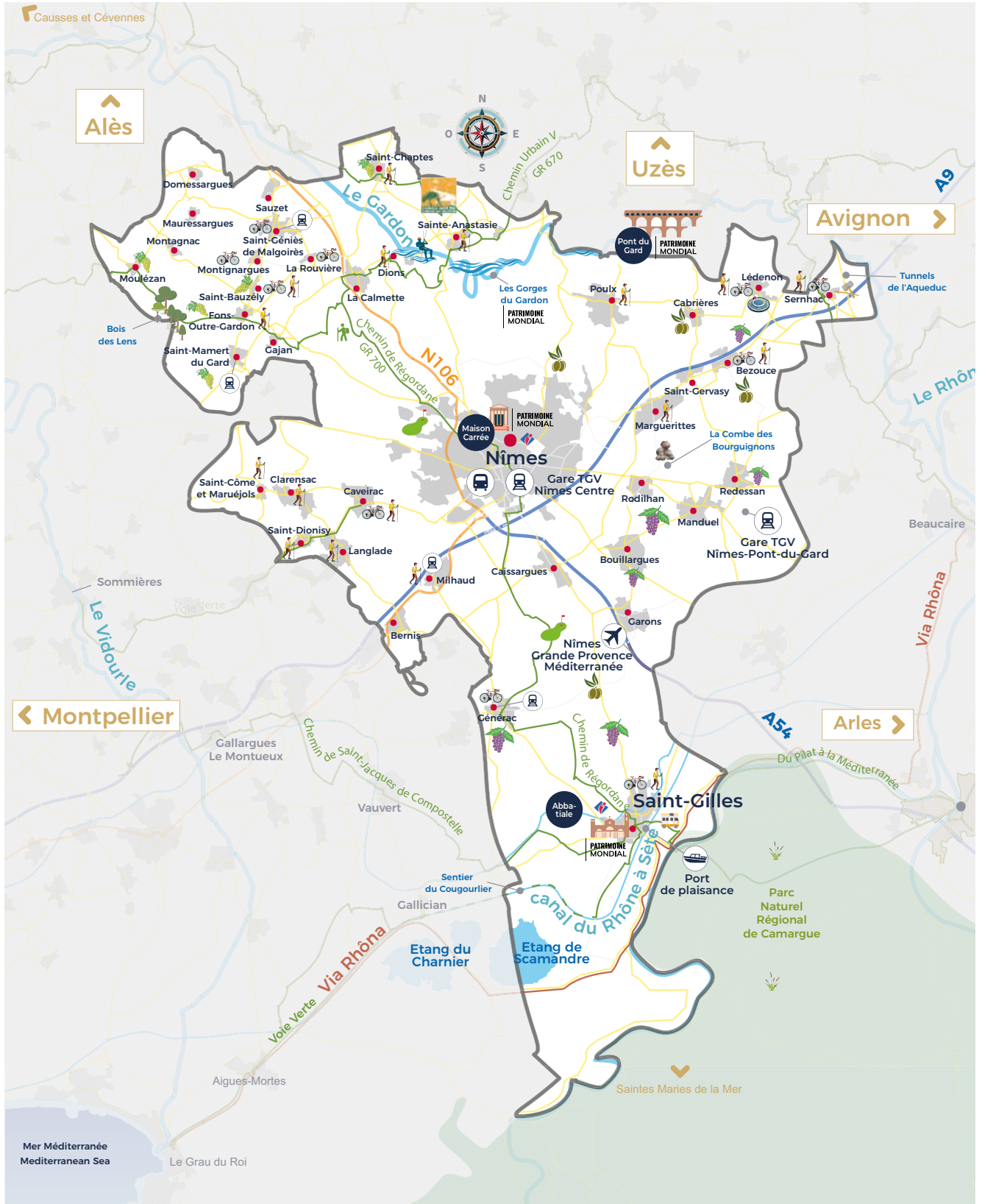


# **AT THE GATES OF THE TOWN**

AN AREA WITH  
MANY LANDSCAPES



# MAP OF THE territory



# AROUND THE Rhône

The land rises gradually from the banks of the Rhône to the southern ramparts of the Cévennes, resulting in several distinct landscape units around Nîmes.

## The ‘petite Camargue’

The area is bordered to the east by the Rhône that has contributed strongly to defining the landscapes near Saint-Gilles and the Costières. Around Saint-Gilles is **La petite Camargue** or Camargue gardoise. Thousands of years ago, the river, bearing alluvium, met the sea here and each deposited its sediment in turn, participating in the creation of the delta. As time passed, the capricious Rhône chose another bed, leaving us two distinct territories today:

- the Delta itself is called the **Camargue**, the area between the present distributaries of the Rhône the furthest from each other and in the Bouches du Rhône department;

- the **Petite Camargue** or **Camargue Gardoise** south of this and consisting of lagoons. This is the land of reed beds and salt marshes called sansouïres.

Bordered by the Vidourle, the Petit Rhône, the Costières and the Mediterranean the Camargue Gardoise is a wild area totalling nearly 40,000 hectares. Etang du Scamandre, a marshy area bordered by one of the largest reed beds in Europe is probably the best illustration of this special environment. It is a wild space with many natural habitats and where many protected plant and animal species can be observed, such as the Eurasian bittern, the Red-naped ibis and the Eurasian teal. But it is also an area where human activity has its role with nearly 30 hectares used for rice growing ; traditional reed cutting (sagnes) for use in tradition roofing. Finally, the rearing of Camargue bulls and horses plays a full role!



## The Costières

The Rhône has also left many rolled pebbles or sandstone that form the body of the **Costières**—planted with vines since Ancient times. This area between the present Petit Rhône and the Coteaux de la Costière is devoted to the southernmost appellations d’origine contrôlées of the Rhône Valley. When cool mists from the Mediterranean come into contact with the heat released by the pebbles result in convection and strong ventilation, ensuring strong daily heat amplitude that favours the conservation of the fruit and ensures the specific character of the vineyard. But the land is also suited to **fruit growing**—especiallly apricot and peach.



## Mediterranean agropastoralism

The Nîmes area is particularly marked by the 'Garrigue' landscape, with low vegetation on limestone suited to the Mediterranean climate. But this natural landscape is nonetheless the work of **man's hand and sheep teeth**. Some 10,000 years ago, the area was covered with a forest of green and white oak, sometimes 20 metres tall! But during the Neolithic people started to become sedentary and cleared these forests to make grazing land for flocks. As time went by, the environment opened up and formed natural habitats for particular animal and plant species. Stones were removed from arable land to make way for olive and vines. Sheep earing, which created manure, became a complement for crops. This was agropastoralism.

## Exceptional fauna and flora

The garrigue hosts a set of wild plants and animals that are protected at the national and international scales, forming what we call '**patrimonial species**'. They include the ocellated lizard, the largest lizard in Europe and one of the finest in the garrigue with its green and blue colouring, the 'Ox killer' scorpion and many birds. The emblematic plants in the garrigue are thyme and rosemary of course, but these open spaces also display protected orchids and other species that developed 'plant strategies' as time went by. Their many prickles protect against sheep teeth (scorpion thorn, cade, thistles...) while absorbing humidity (rosemary and oak leaves or becoming covered by impermeable varnish (kermes oak) or release aromatic essences that create a kind of humidity around the leaves.

## Stone, stone huts and mazets

Men removed stones from the heart of these natural areas, thus making 'clapas' heaps of stones (clapas) or walls to protect cultivated fields, and facilitate the passage and sorting of (triadou). This drystone was also used to build shelter for tools, workers and sometimes harvests. These called **capitelles**. The buildings have corbelled drystone vaults that narrowed and then by a single slab. These shelters gradually developed with the use of mortar and form what we call a 'mazet'. As time went by, they became leisure dwellings, friendly places for family gatherings on Sundays. Numerous explanatory and hiking paths make it possible to explore these special places, such as the Combe des Bourguignons at Marguerittes or the capitelle path at Bernis

**Nîmes Métropole** has drawn up and inventory of this biodiversity and now has a database covering 40,000 records of fauna and flora : 'l'Atlas de la biodiversité'. The agglomération is also the holder of the prize 'Territoire engagé pour la nature'.





## Gorges and Canyon

The Gardon landscape began to take shape more than 100 million years ago! At the time, the whole region was covered by the sea. Sediments were deposited progressively and are the origin of the limestone seen today. The sea lowered little by little, helped by the rising of the Cévennes and the Alps 6 million years ago. The river then flowed through the plain, deepening its bed gradually as the ground rose, making the gorges and canyons that we know today. The gorges of the Gardon form a 29-kilometre canyon between the village of Dions to the west and the famous Roman aqueduct the Pont du Gard to the east. An emblematic example of landscapes sculpted in limestone, the Gorges du Gardon alternate arid garrigue plateaux, gorges, rock wall and caves.



the Prehistoric period onwards, as it shown by the discovery of the **'decorated caves'** in the commune of Russan. Today, there are the **natural habitat** of exceptional fauna and flora: Bonneli's eagle, Egyptian vultures, bécasse orchids...

## A singular area

The area features an **army camp**— the Camp des Garrigues— which contained the urban spread of Nîmes. The absence of a large road infrastructure in this area has contributed to its **wildness**, encouraging the protection of the Gorges du Gardon and les Garrigues as a **'protection site'** since 1982.

The influence of the Mediterranean climate affects the water level during the seasons and sometimes results in particularly violent and feared floods called **'Gardonnades'**. The **natural cavities** in the limestone were occupied from

## Biosphere reserve

The area was classed as a Biosphere Reserve by **UNESCO** in 2015. This allows the recognition of its high ecological value, with living organisms, minerals and various reliefs. The issue also lies in the highlighting of **durable and experimental actions** carried out by the local population to ensure the sustainability of resources, the perennity of species and the maintaining of a climatic and environmental order.



Large birds of prey, bats, reptiles, beavers, flora, history and heritage ... sont présentés dans l'espace muséographique de la Maison du Grand site des Gorges du Gardon. Numerous activities are also proposed throughout the year.

2 rue de la Pente 30190 Ste Anastasie  
www.gorgesdugardon.fr +33(0)4 48 27 01 00



# **AT THE GATES OF THE TOWN**

LAND OF  
PILGRIMAGES

# THE 'RÉGORDANE'

## An ancient route of communication

In the 1st century AD, Pliny the Elder l'Ancien already vaunted the quality of the goat cheese from Gabales (Lozère) that could be found in the forum in Nîmes. here is no doubt that this trade route carrying the delicious cheese followed the itinerary of the prehistoric trails used by migrating sheep that it the time crossed the Cévennes and the Massif Central. it was called the Régordane and developed above all in the Middle Ages, linking the Mediterranean and the major fairs in the North of France at a time when the Rhone Valley was under the authority of the Holy Roman Empire. The route also highlighted two important centres for pilgrimages, le Puy en Velay and **Saint-Gilles du Gard**.

## The cart of Nîmes

One of the oldest Medieval chansons de geste about the William of Orange cycle mentions the Régordane. The **12th century text recounts events** that occurred a few centuries before. This was the taking of Nîmes by William of Orange against the Saracens and how, thanks to the volume of business on the Régordane the hero succeeded in entering the town dressed as a merchant. A copy kept at the Bibliothèque nationale de Paris is still studied by numerous medievalists and its enluminations are remarkable. The work is in the **12th century literary tradition** that highlighted Christian and feudal values

## A hiking trail

While the Régordane is still today a pilgrims' way to Saint-Gilles, it is also much liked by hikers who know it as the **GR 700**. The route shows a great variety of landscapes and also numerous buildings: Medieval buildings, carved and sculpted crosses, towers, etc. In the Nîmes area ; the path crosses the medieval village of Saint-Chartes, then the territory of Sainte-Anastasie, Dions, Nîmes, Générac and finally Saint-Gilles.



The name Régordane is a mystery! Does it come from the Occitan word Regor, meaning lambs? Or rather from gourgue, which evokes spaces soaked by run-off water? Or from a local lord named Régordane?



# SANTIAGO de Compostela

## Santiago de Compostela

On 25 juillet 813, a hermite called Pélage, guided by a star, discovered in Spain the sepulchre of Santiago, one of Christ's apostles. The latter's hagiography states that his body left Judea for the extreme north of the Iberian peninsula. The faithful who accompanied him chose to bury him in a field. They were also guided by a star, whence the name *Campus Stella* (the field of the star); that became Compostela.

## The southern route

Pilgrimages to the relics of Santiago reached their peak in the century and became the third most important pilgrimage destination in the Christian world. This was also the date of the *Codex Calixtinus*, a collection of texts devoted to Saint James and his pilgrimage, whose fifth volume, the way of Saint James in Compostela, was considered to be the ancestor of guide books. It describes in particular the four main French routes (from Tours, Vézelay, Le Puy-en-Velay and Arles) and the Spanish stages. In the Nîmes region, the Arles route, referred to as the southern route, crosses the commune of **Saint-Gilles**, (already a pilgrimage destination itself) and now forms the **Chemin de grande randonnée 653 (Major hiking trail 653)**.



## World Heritage site

On 2 December 1988, UNESCO entered the Santiago routes on the World Heritage list as a 'series heritage'. In all 71, monuments and 7 sectors of paths, present the cultural, economic and artistic importance of the pilgrimages to the apostle's tomb. This is why the **old abbey church of Saint-Gilles** is on the world heritage list.

A management plan for the whole of the classified site is being drawn up under the aegis of the ACCIR (*Association de coopération interrégionale et réseau*) Santiago routes.

This will result in the best possible conditions for the 71 buildings and 7 sections of paths, to guarantee a high quality of reception, the accessibility and highlighting of each component the enrichment and spreading of knowledge and encouraging the networking of persons acting for it, for its cultural reputation and its tourist development.



## The legend

The legend says that a certain **Aegidius**, a Greek from an illustrious family in Athens, left his country to escape the renown given him an ascetic life during and many miracles. After a long journey via Rome and Arles, he finally settled on the banks of the Gardon (at Beaume de l'Ermite at Poulx) with the Hermit Vérédème. He then sought his own hermitage near the Rhone estuary. The legend says that he was joined on Saint-Gilles hill by a deer hunted by the men of the Visigoth king Flavius Wamba. The holy man protected the animal and was hit in the hand by an arrow. The king was upset to find that the hermit had been injured and gave him the land called 'la vallée flavienne' and encouraged him to build a monastery there.

## The forms abbey church - a masterpiece of Romanesque art

A Benedictine monastery was built in Saint-Gilles in the Middle Ages and several successive churches were built above the saint's



tomb. The present building dates back to the 12th century while the devotion to Saint Gilles is such that his tomb is the 4th pilgrimage site of Christianity after the Holy Land, Rome and Santiago de Compostela. The edifice therefore has the dimensions of large pilgrim churches: 95 m long and 33 m

around a stone core. It is a masterpiece of stereotomy, that is to say the art of stone carving. The technical prowess lies in the making of the vault as a cradle whose curve is a little less than a half-circle.

## The Museum project

A project for a museum of about **1000 sq. m** is planned for 2025 in the former monastic buildings adjoining the abbey. This should show the exceptional heritage of Saint-Gilles. The history of the religious building and **pilgrimages** will of course play an important role as will the effects on the village (where many signs of former grandeur can still be seen) with the numerous **Romanesque houses** and also the Marshalls' Gate. Finally, an area should also be devoted to the **Petite Camargue** environment and its many **traditions**.

Tous les 1<sup>er</sup> septembre la ville s'anime pour les fêtes de la Saint Gilles et de nombreux pèlerins affluent du monde entier !

wide. The abbatial church was built above a vast crypt holding the **tomb** and almost like a lower church, giving it specific features. In spite of the damage caused during the Wars of Religion in the 16th century and then during the French Revolution, the **façade** still has a rich carved décor characteristic of **Southern Romanesque art**. At the back of the building, the old Romanesque choir has an exceptional spiral staircase—a generic model referred to as 'the **Saint-Gilles spiral**'. It consists of helicoidal stairs turning





# **AT THE GATES OF THE TOWN**

A LAND  
OF TRADITIONS



The word **Bovine** covers all the traditions and show related to Camargue bulls and that are found in a large part of the Nîmes area.

## The *raço di Bióu*

The original Camargue race, or *raço di bióu*, is used in the 'course camarguaise' and various games with bulls. The animal, *lo bióu*, is black or dark brown with lyre-shaped horns. It is the incarnation of a wild, untameable animal that is the subject of true passion: '*la fé di bióu*'. The race was recognised in 1999, and is happy in a semi wild state on vast estates called **manades**. Each animal has an area of a minimum of 1 hectare of land where access, is difficult (marshland, etc.). The **gardians** who mind the herds quickly managed to use the abilities of Camargue horses to help them in their everyday work. Camargue bulls are branded at the top of the thigh at a festive occasion called a *ferdade* and their ears are cut

It was in 1905, during the visit of the famous Buffalo Bill to Nîmes, that the Marquis Folco de Barroncelli was inspired by these shows to create the «gardian games», honouring the qualities of the Camargue horse and its riders, the famous gardians.

in a specific way (*l'escoussure*) for each breeder. The animals are reared for their meat, recognised by an AOP (*appellation d'origine contrôlée*) and an SRG label (*Site remarquable du goût*) but also and above all for Camargue bullfights.

## Camargue bullfights (*la course camarguaise*)

These bull shows are held in an arena but the bulls are not put to death. The animal is first fitted with several trophies between and on its horns: a rosette (1), two strings (2) and two tassels (3). In the arena for 15 minutes, the animal must try to keep its decorations under the attacks by the *raseteurs*, young men dressed in white holding a hook in one hand and determined to grab the trophies to recover the prizes given for them. After the show, the animal goes back to the estate and can participate in other competitions, gaining a great reputation.



## Specific vocabulary

The bulls used for these events have been *bistournés*, that is to say castrated. Before the event they are guided to the arena by gardians on horseback: this is the *abrivado*. It is not rare for people to try to disrupt the procession—they are called *atrapaires* or *agantaires*. The return to the field or the lorry is called the *bandido*. In the arena, the *raseteurs* perform a procession, the *Capelado*, before the show.

# 'VOTIVE' festivals

## You said 'votive' festivals?

These were initially aimed at celebrating the **patron saint** of the commune. It was therefore a religious festival. However, little by little, **enthusiasm for bulls and festivities** outweighed religious devotion. From the beginning of the spring until autumn, the villages in the area liven up each year for festive events that no longer have much to do with religion. Mass might be said in the morning but some villages even have ceremonies in Provençal and in traditional dress.

## Festival procedure

The 'votive', as it is termed in the area, is an annual event that almost always proceeds in the same way. In the morning the participants gather for 'breakfast in the fields' where they can watch the choosing of the bulls. Then they accompany the procession to the Arena. This is the '*Abrivado*.' In the afternoon they can watch a **course camarguaise** in the village arena before going to dance on the main square. A large meal is usually served—an opportunity for discussion and friendliness. Other **activities** may be planned during the day: bull swimming pool events, boules competition, etc.

## Empègues

For financing the festivities, the young organisers go from house to house to collect funds, offering fougasse pastry brioches. The generous donors are thanked by a stencilled '*empègue*' on the façade of their houses. The word comes from the Occitan *empeguar*, meaning 'sticking'. The tradition started when the stencils were applied to the houses of conscripts, that is to say 18-year-old boys leaving for their military service. Today, girls and boys participate in the operation and choose a new symbol each year: bulls, flamingos, cicadas, etc. The letters VLU, standing for '*vive la jeunesse!*', can also be seen sometimes.



### > APRIL

Domessargues, Mauressargues

### > MAY

Caissargues, Langlade, Saint-Dionisy, Sauzet

### > JUNE

Garons, La Rouvière

### > JULY

Bernis, Caveirac, Gajan, Gènerac, Marguerittes, Moulézan, Milhaud, Poulx, Rodilhan, Saint-Bauzély, Saint-Gervasy, Saint-Mamert-Du-Gard, Sainte-Anastasia

### > AUGUST

Bezouce, Bouillargues, Clarensac, Fons-Outre-Gardon, La Calmette, Lédénon, Manduel, Saint-Chaptes, Saint-Côme et Maruéjols, Saint-Génies-de-Malglouès, Saint-Gilles, Sernhac.





**AT THE GATES  
OF THE TOWN**  
EXCEPTIONAL  
HERITAGES



# BEFORE the Romans

## Traces of prehistoric occupation

The territory of Nîmes Métropole displays many signs of very ancient occupation. The **grottes ornées** (decorated caves) in the Gardon gorges are the same age as the Chauvet cave, showing human presence **37,000 ans** years ago!! Although they cannot be visited, their history can be found in **La Maison du Grand Site des Gorges du Gardon** covering the commune of Sainte-Anastasié. Excavations carried out for the building of Autoroute A54 on the commune of Caissargues revealed several 30000-year-old sepulchres, including that of a young woman about 20 years old, named '**la dame de Caissargues**' (the lady of Caissargues) who is at the heart of an exhibition at one of the motorway stops on the A54 going towards Arles.

## Gallic Oppida

Gallic occupation of the area was not limited to the sacred spring in Nîmes. Numerous remains have been found of oppida, high points fortified during the Iron Age by pre-Roman populations. Such remains can be seen at the **Roque de Viou** oppidum in the commune of Saint-Dionisy, that of the **Mouressip** at Saint-Côme-et-Maruéjols and that of **Castel Viel** at Sainte-Anastasié.



## ... and these statues!

The oldest Celtic figures in the region were found at Sainte-Anastasié. They are two **male busts** carved in the 7th-6th century BC. They feature a large hat falling as a cape on the shoulders, with a crest and rounded forms on the sides, looking somewhat like the horns of a ram or a carnyx (a Celtic musical instrument) a sculpted necklace (torque) and equestrian representations on the chests. They can be seen in the permanent exhibition of the Musée de la Romanité in Nîmes.



# ROMAN remains

## The Via Domitia

The Romans colonised the region from the 2nd century BC with the establishment of a long road from Italy to Spain, the Via Domitia. It crossed the present metropolis of Nîmes and numerous villages still have **Roman milestones**, large stones erected along the road every thousand Roman paces. They were often used in later buildings or removed from their original position but are still clearly identifiable. There are some in the village square and the church in Manduel, and a facsimile was installed in front of the new TGV Nîmes-Pont-du-Gard station.

## The remains of the Nîmes aqueduct

In the 1st century AD the Romans took water from Fontaine d'Eure to Nîmes via an aqueduct. The waterway then crossed various villages in the territory and vestiges can still be found that are less well known than the famous Pont du Gard. In Sernhac, two tunnels— La Pleurotte and Les Cantarelles—were dug in the rock to cross the Escaunes Valley. They show the problems in the levelling and extraction of rock that had to be faced by the Romans.



To see this unusual place, the Office de Tourisme provides a guided tour of the tunnels followed by a tasting of AOC Costières de Nîmes and IGP Cévennes wines: for more information see <https://www.nimes-tourisme.com/fr/sejours-visites/p-tit-groupe/produit/tunnels-antiques-et-vignobles-2.html>

## A Roman curiosity: the Caveirac bull altar

In Caveirac where it is kept in the Town Hall, a bull altar dating back to the 3rd century AD can be seen. It is a large piece of limestone on which bulls could be sacrificed. The inscription in Latin states that it commemorates a sacrifice performed in the name of the Nîmes colony in honour of the goddess Cybele. This cult started in Turkey and gradually spread throughout the Roman Empire.

## The Bois des Lens quarry

The Bois des Lens quarry is in the commune Moulezan. The Romans excavated it for the moulded or sculpted parts of the Maison Carrée. The stone was used more recently in the construction of famous monuments such as the base of the Statue of Liberty in New York and the Fourvière basilica in Lyons.



# COUNTRY OF castles

## Medieval castles...

Although they are not necessarily open to visitors, there are several castles in the 11 communes of the community of the agglomeration. Many were built in the Middle Ages, such as the castle in Lédenon, dated to the 12th century, whose imposing silhouette dominates the village. In Générac, the building welcomed prestigious hosts, including the famous king Saint Louis who it is said reached his room by climbing the circular staircase on horseback. One of the buildings of this castle now houses the **Musée de la Tonnelerie**.

## ... and fine Grand Century residences...

Others were built under Louis XIV and show the wealth of some local families. An example of this is the Castle of Caveirac, referred to as Le **Little Versailles** and now the town hall. The building was owned by Jacques de Boisson, a rich draper from Nîmes who spent all this fortune on it. The inside was sumptuous, with carved marble fireplaces and wall decorated with frescoes. The next owner embellished it with a sumptuous French style garden with fountains, statues and flower beds. The French Revolution put an end to part of the gardens and some rooms in the mansion. However, a painted room with cassions that is listed as a historical monument still remains to be seen. In Garons, the castle that used to be the **summer résidence of the bishops** of Nîmes also became a Town Hall. It is still possible to admire the main door giving access to a monumental

staircase and, on the ground floor, several rooms with painted ceilings. The communes of Saint-Chartes and Cabrières can also be mentioned.

## And 19<sup>th</sup> century castles

Works were carried out on several medieval or classical residences in the 19th century to meet the requirements of rich local families. The **castle of Espeyran** set in 13 hectares of grounds, is a perfect example of this. In the 19th century, this former residence of the abbey of Saint-Gilles became an elegant residential cast-

le for the family Sabatié d'Espeyran, drapers from Montpellier. In 1964, the descendants left the building and all the furniture to the Archives nationales, which installed the **Centre national du microfilm et de la numérisation** ((national center of microfilm and numerisation) in the grounds. A visit (on request) of the castle gives total immersion in the life of a 19th century bourgeois family. Part of the castle also houses a collection of horse-drawn vehicles and objects concerning the world of horses—animals particularly appreciated by the owners.





# VERNACULAR heritage

## Windmills

Although Alphonse Daudet was born in Nîmes and grew up in the communes of Fons-outre-Gardon and Bezouze, his most famous book, *Les lettres de mon moulin*, was inspired by the windmills in the Alpilles. However, our area has quite a lot of windmills some of which have been restored and highlighted recently, such as those at La Calmette and at Dions. The **Moulin Cavalier** at Langlade is now functional again and can be visited on request on Saturday and Sunday afternoons in the summer. These mills could be used to grind flour or extract olive oil.



## Griffins and washhouses

Griffins are used as a term in the region to indicate the fountains in the centres of villages. A griffin is a legendary animal—half lion and half eagle. In mythology, it had the job of guarding the treasures of the gods Apollo and Dionisos. And here water is particularly precious! A true **symbol of wealth** in the commune, the griffin is often decorated with a statue, as at Caveirac and Saint-Mamert du Gard, or with columns, as at Clarensac and Gajan. The heritage relative to water is also present, with numerous washhouses and norias.



**The area is suitable for many open-air activities.**

## On the water

Trips on the canal from the Rhône to Sète leaving from the Saint-Gilles river port make it possible to explore the Petite Camargue at a slower rate. Fishermen will also find pleasant rivers for trying to catch freshwater fish or fine Silurians in the Petit Rhône.

## Cycle tourist routes

Cycling enthusiasts will also be delighted to explore the heritage using the cycle tourism circuits set up:

- The Aqüeduct circuit to see the noria and aqüeducts at Bezouze, Cabrières fountain, Vallon d'Escaunes tunnels and of course the famous Pont du Gard.

- The Gardonnenque circuit that winds between vineyards and truffle oaks.

- The cycle tour of the Vaunage and its varied landscapes: valleys, plains and garrigues

Several companies rent bicycles, mountain bikes or scooters with electric assistance to enjoy a trip without firing too much on your muscles! <https://www.nimes-tourisme.com/fr/sejours-visites/solo-duo-tribu.html>

## Hiking

Numerous hiking trails are available and can be consulted on 'carto- guides' (guide maps). GR 42 'Du Pilat à la Méditerranée' and GR670, 'Chemin Urbain V' complete the network of long distance trails that cross our area, with pilgrims' ways to Santiago de Compostela and Saint-Gilles. (More details from our information offices).

## Rock climbing

Lovers of climbing can go up the cliffs in the Gardon gorges or use the Via Ferrata for magnificent views of the canyon. The spot is fairly famous in the region! The guide 'L'escalade dans les Gorges du Gardon' provides all the information needed for amateurs: routes open, places to avoid, etc. It is distributed free of charge in the Maisons de site (Castor and Gorges du Gardon) of the Syndicat mixte des Gorges du Gardon and in the Offices de Tourisme in the region.

## Golf courses

The area has two radically different golf courses: Vacquerolles and Nîmes Campagne.

And for more fun, the minigolf at Domaine du Moulin à huile Nicolas in Cabrières, will also provide more information about olive preparation processes.





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