

exploration of the historical centre

STONE MYSTERIES

A TOUR OF THE OLD STREETS AND ALLEYWAYS, DISCOVERING THE OLD TOWN'S BASALT ARCHITECTURE AND HISTORICAL TREASURES.

1. "LA BELLE AGATHOISE" FOUNTAIN

Surrounded by marble beasts, Agathé has been watching over the city since Ancient Times. This monumental fountain, built to honour Agathé, symbolises the Antique origins of the city.

2. THE RAMPARTS

Witnesses of 2,600 years of history, the foundations of Agde's ramparts date back to the 6th and 4th century BC, placing them among the oldest in France.

3. THE PLACE MOLIÈRE

In the ancient chapel of the Sœurs de Sainte Marie convent, admire the 17th-century Molière hall, one of the most beautiful exhibition halls in the region, adjoining the Galerie de la Perle Noire - home of the Maison des Métiers d'Art craft centre (see the Black Pearl Workshops overleaf).

4. THE HOUSE OF VIGUIER GUÉRIN

Former private house built in 1589. Note the remarkable Renaissance entrance of shelly limestone with its gate posts, capitals and frieze.

5. THE STREET AND PLACE "DE LA GLACIÈRE"

Remains of ancient living quarters were found in the district of La Glacière. This volcanic mound, previously part of the river delta, was where the Greeks first settled. Some remains of the first ramparts and town are still found a few metres below the surface. Built in 1680, La Glacière (a name indicating ice storage) was where ice collected in winter was stored to cool down drinks and sick, feverish inhabitants. Number 13 rue de la Glacière is the Hôtel des Frères Barrier, where Richelieu is said to have stayed in 1642. Across the way is the Tour de Baudinél, a meeting place for grey penitents in the 17th century.

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

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

7. THE PLACE CONESA

Opposite the town hall, the 17th century Hôtel de Ville, the

Italian Renaissance style, including a beautiful interior stairway with smooth columns and Tuscan capital columns.

8. THE HOTEL ALBARET

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

9. THE STREET "LA MAÎTRISE"

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

10. THE SAINT-ETIENNE CATHEDRAL

Built entirely out of Agde's volcanic rock, this Romanesque fortified cathedral dates back to the 12th century. Its 95-metre-high square tower was added in the 14th century. Its similarity to a medieval fortress and its military austerity is echoed inside. It can be entered through the Chapelle Notre-Dame de Lourdes, built in the 19th century using elements from a Gothic cloister dating back to the 14th century but now destroyed. Originally, only small holes allowed light into the nave. Towards the 17th century, the cathedral was opened up to let the light in: large openings were made and decorative stained glass added after 1851. The masterpiece of fixtures, said to have been presented by Louis XIV, is the richly decorated altarpiece. The Baroque throne chair was made from coloured marble in 1751. A baroque organ embellishes the cathedral's pulpit. Built in 1990 by Gérard Guillemain, it replaced the one installed in 1901 which had been donated by Emmanuel Laurens, owner of the Belle Isle villa.

11. THE EPISCOPAL CHAPTER ROOM

Behind its long basalt facade, the Cathedral complex's arched Chapter Room (12th to 13th centuries) this large vaulted room is part of the cathedral itself. Opposite, note the surprising decor of Square Picheire, with its strange trompe l'œil, and the Consular House's elegant Renaissance facade.

12. THE CONSULAR HOUSE

The current House in the Town Centre ("Maison du Cœur de ville"), built in the Italian Renaissance style, has three floors and a covered hall with arcades used for fairs and markets. An iron ruler, or "standard metre", sealed in the stone was used by traders to standardize their

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measures. Rue Jean Roger features a monumental Renaissance-style door with pediment adorned with three heads combining a lion and monster (or dragon), figures linked to the door's symbolism.

13. THE SAINT-SEVER CHURCH

Saint-Sever is the fisherman's church in the "Marine" district. Built in the 15th century on the foundations of an earlier church, it underwent significant work in the 20th century after the vault collapsed. It features a magnificent 16th-century polychrome wood sculpture of Christ on the Cross (see "Local figures" on page 7), object of particular veneration during Holy Week. Its 19th-century Romantic organ is a registered Historical Monument.

14. THE JULES BAUDOU AGATHOIS MUSEUM

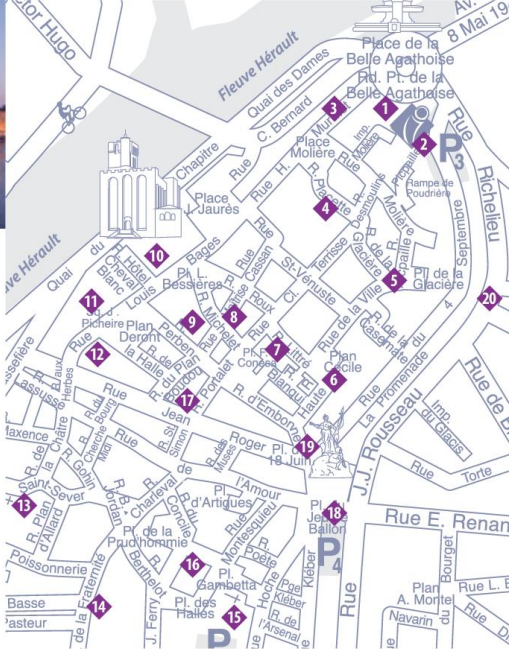
The Museum was formerly a private 17th-century house; entered through a sober gateway inscribed with "Charité" (Love) in lead. It now holds the memory of Agde's history. Its ample collection includes items used in daily life in Agde, furniture, clothes, dioramas, souvenirs of the city's religious power and sailors who left Agde to explore the world. From ancient ceramics to paintings by the Azéma brothers, the Agathois Museum invites you on a journey through time. Open throughout the year. Close to the Museum, at number 6, don't miss the noble facade of Maison Jordan, with its mullion windows.

15. THE SAINT-ANDRÉ CHURCH

This church, cherished by Agde's inhabitants, was built in 1525 on the site of the first basilica, birthplace of Christianity in Agde, where the important council met in 506 AD. It features the 3.3-metre high Council column. Graves from the 5th and 6th centuries have been updated.

16. FROM THE PLACE GAMBETTA TO THE STREET JEAN ROGER

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



17. THE HOTEL DE BOISSEZON

This private house at 27, Rue Jean Roger boasts a monumental Renaissance-style door with pediment reached by a horseshoe stairway.

18. THE PLACE "DU JEU DE BALLON"

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

19. THE REPUBLIQUE FONTAINE

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

20. THE CLAUDE TERRISSE STATUE

A tribute to a sailor hero in Agde in 1598, privateer to the King and town benefactor. See "Local figures" on page 11.

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