

OPENING TIME

From September to June

From Monday to Saturday: 10-12pm and
2pm-5pm

July and August

From Monday to Sunday: 10am-12pm and
2pm-5pm a sábado: 10h-12h y 14h-17h



Édition 2024 / © Lauragais Tourisme / Mairie de Villefranche de Lauragais

Ne pas jeter sur la voie publique.

VILLEFRANCHE-DE-LAURAGAIS

At the crossroads



The time of fairs

The opening of new roads and the inauguration of the railway in 1858 opened up new economic prospects. Merchants poured in from all sides. There were up to 7 places in Villefranche intended for trade: for cattle, for pigs, for sheep, for poultry... After the Second World War, these fairs gradually lost their importance.



Let's go to the market!
A veritable institution for centuries, the Friday morning market at Place Gambetta allows curious and gourmands to find local specialties and chat in the shade of the stalls.

The golden ages: pastel then wheat

After a period of troubles because of the passage of the Black Prince in 1355, the Lauragais experienced a real golden age thanks to the culture of pastel. Villefranche then became a collection center: all the pastel shells were collected in the surrounding métairies and then transported to the village hall to be sold there to merchants from Toulouse. The latter then exported them throughout Europe.
A little later, at the beginning of the 18th century, thanks to the Canal du Midi, Villefranche became an essential place of exchange for cereals. A grain market was built on the site of the town hall where barley, wheat, corn, oats, hemp, flax were sold...

The name of the city was thus found: it is a free city, since the inhabitants were freed from certain taxes and levies!

In 1280, King Philippe le Bel drafted a customary charter by which he granted economic privileges to the city and guarantees of individual freedoms and security to its inhabitants.

But in the 13th century, the count of Toulouse, Alphonse de Poitiers decided to create a town in the plain: this is how the bastide of Villefranche was born in 1252. This foundation aimed to clear the forest and relocate a growing population, which had often been victims of destruction and looting during the crusade against the Cathars (1209-1229).

Around the year one thousand, some fortified villages like Gardouch, Avignonet, Montesquieu, developed on the heights, dominating the Aquitaine Way.

Villefranche, a medieval then royal creation

Originally, this place was located in the middle of the vast forest of Saint-Rome, deemed unhealthy and dangerous. Dense and thick, this forest was however crossed by an important road axis, the **Via Aquitania** (Aquitaine Way), built by the Romans in the 1st century AD which led from Toulouse to Narbonne. A surveillance post had been created at this location in order to secure the passage.

An observation post in the middle of the forest

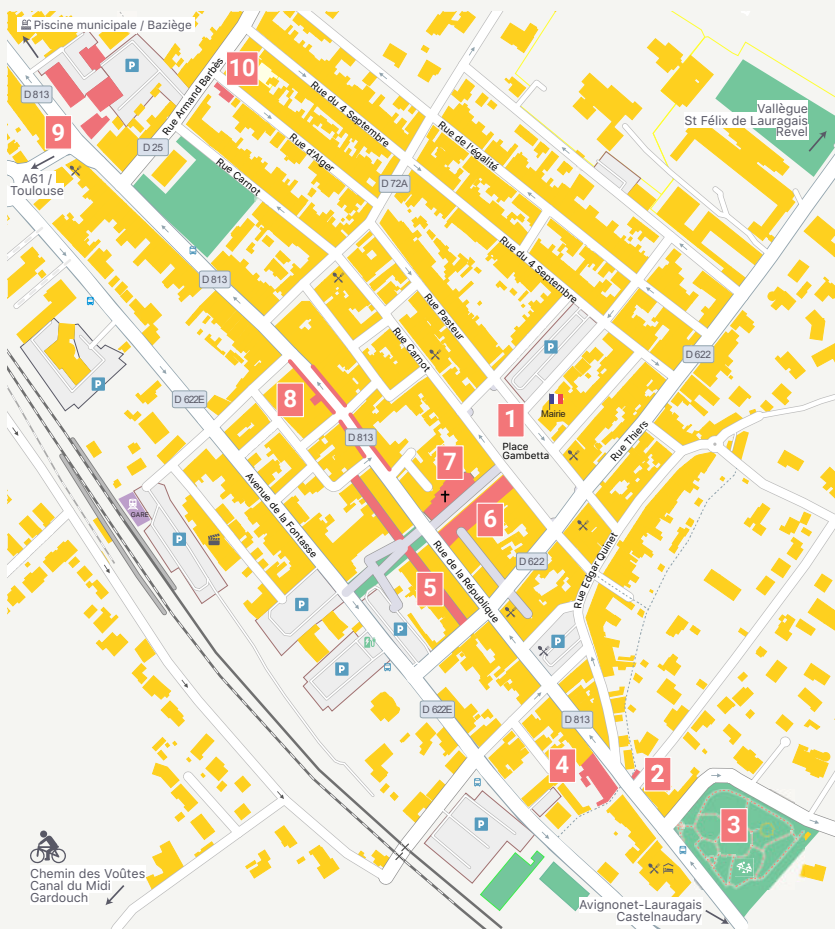
In summer, head to the municipal swimming pool to enjoy its outdoor play area!
Finally, succumb to the temptation of the many tables in the city that offer all types of catering. It's up to you to choose!



Take advantage of your stay in Villefranche-de-Lauragais to participate in the many events organized in the city or a screening at the Cinema Boré

enjoy yourself!





1 Gambetta Square

It is around this place that the city has developed since its creation. Originally smaller, it has always been a place for trade in goods. In the Middle Ages, this square was surely bordered by wooden galleries (cutlery) under which there were stalls, small shops.

This square was completely redeveloped in 1875.



2 Tabernoles Square

Villefranche was once surrounded by ramparts and closed by two large fortified gates, located on either side of the current Rue de la République. This district known as the 'tabernoles' (the wine merchants) was located outside the walled city: it was attached to the town of Renneville until 1864.

3 The public garden

Sacred destiny for this peaceful place! Located outside the walls, it was the old city cemetery, then a market place for sheep, before welcoming walkers and children for a relaxing or playful stop (playground).



4 The former school

This large building was the city's old school. Boys and girls had a separate entrance. A hospital managed by Sisters, as well as a boarding school occupied this building for a time.

5 Street of the priests

This narrow street was a firebreak in the heart of the medieval bastide. Its location away from the main road later gave it a key role for the city: that of an open sewer! It is at this moment that the Occitan nickname of 'Cantou Merdous' appears.

One can still see many small bridges that spanned the old alley and allowed to go from one house to another without going out into the street!



8 Republic street

One of the oldest houses in Villefranche-de-Lauragais is located in this street, it would date from 1634! A little further is the old town hall, and just opposite, a beautiful facade with statues of antique inspiration.

Continuing, one can see elegant houses with facades adorned with terracotta friezes and moldings, false columns, or even wooden panels. A true mix of genres known as eclecticism in architecture.

At the end of the street, main communication axis since the Middle Ages, enjoy a stop at the square of General De Gaulle and observe the charming buildings of style "Art Deco" of the former Baths Showers of the city.

9 The administrative district

From 1800, the city becomes sub-prefecture of Haute-Garonne and is equipped with many buildings including a gendarmerie, a prison and a court.

This distinction ends in 1926.



10 The Sainte Germaine chapel

In 1854, a cholera epidemic caused the death of 143,000 people in France. The disease had affected a large majority of villages in Lauragais, but the Villefranchois were relatively spared.

This chapel was built in 1860 as a tribute to Saint Germaine, patron saint of the weak and sick, to thank her for her protection against illness.

6 The merchants' hall

It is called so in relation to the grain hall which was located on the site of the current town hall (destroyed in the 70s). It occupies the site of an old square plan hall, attached to the church, used for the pastel trade.

The current market hall was built in 1858 when the trade in Villefranche experienced its golden age thanks to the opening of the railway line: merchants flocked from all over Lauragais to sell the products necessary for daily life.



7 The Church of Our Lady of the Assumption

This church was built at the end of the XIIIth century at the request of Jeanne de Toulouse, daughter of the famous Count of Toulouse Raymond VII and wife of Alphonse de Poitiers, brother of the future king Saint Louis.

The imposing bell tower-wall, surrounded by its two turrets and pierced with six bell-shaped bays, is recognizable among all! The building was extensively remodelled and enlarged in 1865 to accommodate all the faithful and erase the scars of the Hundred Years' War and the Wars of Religion.



Before entering, notice the Siren carved on the top of the door. Original, isn't it? The fact that it appears on the entrance gate of a church carries with it a deep symbolism: by entering the building from the west, the Believer leaves behind him Death and Sin.

Inside, we discover stained glass windows of the Toulouse house Gesta, as well as a beautiful sandstone Trinity from the 16th century in the first chapel on the left upon entering.