

Le coche d'eau 'Le Miredames'



RIVER BOAT

From town center to Gourjade Park



OFFICE DE TOURISME
CASTRES-MAZAMET



The 'coche d'eau'



'Le Miredames' is made of wood and modeled on the former river diligences of the 17th and 18th Centuries, which were drawn by horses. It was put into service on July 14, 1990.

Its framework is made of oak and its hull of pine. Its dimensions : 14.35 m long and 4.36 m wide at the level of the master beam. The flat-bottomed hull has a shallow draught : 60 cm with a full load. The barge can hold up to 60 passengers on board with 2 crew members ; when empty, it weighs 6.8 T. It is propelled by two 25 HP engines.

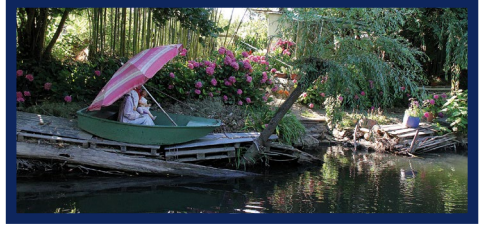
Agout, a protected river

Agout river is a tributary of the Tarn, which has its source in the Espinouse Mountains.

It is the domain of numerous animals : ducks, moorhens and grey herons, which sometimes come and disturb the silence. Coypus, introduced in France in 1955 for their fur, have dug large holes on the river banks.

There are beautiful specimens of trees on both banks : oak, poplar, maple, beech, ash and willow.

Riverbank development



The riverbank, reinforced by wooden weatherboarding, have been developed in the 19th Century by 'sand fishermen' who in bygone days, could be seen coming down the current on their small boats, loaded with heavy cargo.

Gourjade Domain



Gourjade Castle is on the right bank. Destroyed during the Religious Wars, it was rebuilt in the 17th Century.

The Gourjade Domain, bought by the town of Castres in 1978, is today, a park with 53 hectares of natural environment devoted to walks and leisure.

Numerous playgrounds and play facilities for children, a nine hole golf course with a practice for golf lovers, as well as a 100 pitch camp site (**tourism).

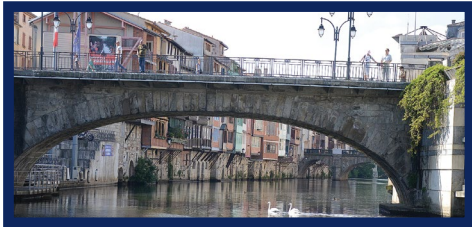
'Pont Miredames'



'Pont de Strasbourg', more commonly known as 'Pont Miredames', from which the boat got its name, has been inaugurated in 1982.

The origin of the name could come from the nearby Sister Clarisse's convent, also known as the 'minor ladies'.

'Pont Vieux'



The current bridge dates from 1849 ; however, the old bridge has been attested since the 13th Century. It had a central tower, where prostitute women were subjected to a cruel and humiliating punishment : being plunged into the river three times.

TO VISIT :

'L'Archéopole' (Center of research and archaeological research of Castres - CE-RAC) : discover the local archaeology. The miniature train network (Saturday afternoons).

Before 'Pont Neuf'



The river runs along the old houses on the Agout river, former workshops of leather craftsmen : chamois leather makers, tanners, parchment makers, curriers, etc.

The workshops opened on to the water lever, were called 'caussinos' a terme, which comes from the lime, used with the tannin to treat pure leathers.

The ground level and the first floor, often embellished with a balcony, were used as lodging for the master craftsmen.

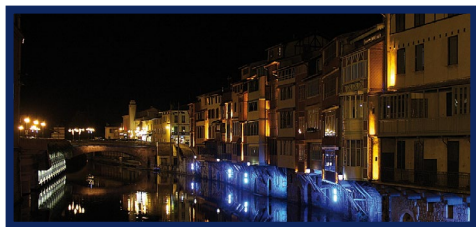
Drying rooms were installed on the second floor ; the rooms were equipped with tiny openings to protect the leathers from the light. Above the dryers was the 'solelier', which, to the contrary, was wide open so that both air and light could get in.

From 1978, the houses were restored in the same style both : in their original color and materials.

NEARBY :

'L'Archipel' (swimming pools, aqua games, ice rink) accessible by the bridge, which spans the river, fishing, horse-riding, tennis, paddle boats, nine hole golf course, etc.

'Pont Neuf'



It is lit up by nightfall.

This bridge, under which we are about to sail, was a simple wooden bridge up until 1368 when it was built in stone. Despite its name, it is the oldest bridge in Castres.

Between the 'Pont Neuf' and the riverbank



On the left bank of the Agout, the houses accommodated the dryers. They still have their beautiful vaulted cellars overlooking the river. Fabric was washed here.

The bridge that you can see further down is the 'Pont de Metz', also called 'Pont Biais' (Slanting Bridge) because of the angle it forms in relation to the river's axis.



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In the 16th Century, during the time when the town was fortified, a taut chain crossed the river at the embankment level between two mills, to forbid incursions.

After the Religious Wars, Richelieu destroyed the ramparts. The salvaged stones were used to built the cathedral dedicated to St Benoît, the private mansions and the new Bishop's Palace for which Le Nôtre designed the beautiful garden, classified as a Historic monument in 1995 and as 'Jardin remarquable' since 2004. Today it houses the town hall and also the Goya Museum, which displays an extremely large collection of Hispanic art from the Middle Ages to present day.

***We hope you enjoyed
and will take home happy
memories of your ride on
the riverboat
'Le Miredames'***

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