

le boat

Who's on board?

Canal du Midi

and the Embranchement de la Nouvelle

Region guide



Canal du Midi		Approx time		No. of locks	
End of the Canal du Midi					
Toulouse	1 hr 20 min	1 hr 20 min	3	3	
Castanet-Tolosan	1 hr 35 min	12 hr 35 min	1	23	
Montgiscard	1 hr 40 min		2		
Gardouch	3 hr 0 min		6		
Villefranche-de-Lauragais	0 hr 45 min		1		
Port Lauragais	1 hr 45 min		4		
Castelnaudary	3 hr 50 min		9		
Villepinte	4 hr 30 min	13 hr 10 min	15	31	
Bram	1 hr 15 min		3		
Villeséquelande	1 hr 35 min		1		
Carcassonne	2 hr 50 min		5		
Carcassonne (Trèbes)	3 hr 0 min	6 hr 35 min	7	14	
Marseillette	1 hr 55 min		3		
Puichéric	2 hr 40 min		8		
La Redorte	1 hr 0 min		2		
Homps	1 hr 0 min		1		
Argens-Minervoises	1 hr 50 min	3 hr 15 min	5	6	
Roubia	0 hr 10 min		1		
Paraza	0 hr 20 min		0		
Ventenac-en-Minervoises	0 hr 25 min		0		
Le Somail	0 hr 40 min		0		
Intersection with Embranchement de la Nouvelle	0 hr 20 min		0		

Canal du Midi		Approx time		No. of locks		
Intersection with Embranchement de la Nouvelle						
Argeliers	0 hr 30 min	9 hr 25 min*	0	12		
Capestang	2 hr 5 min		0			
Poilhes	0 hr 50 min		0			
Colombiers	0 hr 40 min		0			
Asend or descend Fonsneranes Locks	0 hr 45 min		0			
	1 hr 25 min*		7			
Béziers	0 hr 40 min		2			
Villeneuve-lès-Béziers	1 hr 10 min		2			
Cers	0 hr 15 min		0			
Port Cassafières	1 hr 05 min		1			
Vias	0 hr 30 min		1 hr 10 min		0	0
Agde	0 hr 40 min				0	
End of the Canal du Midi	1 hr 45 min	1 hr 45 min	2	2		

Embranchement de la Nouvelle		Approx time		No. of locks	
Intersection with Canal du Midi					
Sallèles d'Aude	1 hr 20 min	4 hr	5	10	
Narbonne	1 hr 35 min		5		
Mandrac Lock (5km from Gruissan)	1 hr 40 min	3 hr 35 min	2	3	
Sainte-Lucie Island	3 hr 0 min		0		
Port-la-Nouvelle	3 hr 20 min		1		

Times are an approximation only and are calculated on the basis of an average speed of 7.5km/h and an average time of 12 minutes to pass through a lock. Your speed, the flow of the water and the time it takes to go through locks will all affect your progress.

* Please note that there are set times to ascend and descend the Fonsneranes Locks, so you'll also need to factor in waiting time too.



- 8** Maximum speed allowed on waterways in km/h
- 3** Maximum speed allowed in ports/marinas in km/h
- Pass oncoming boats on the right-hand side



Toulouse

WEST OF CASTELNAUDARY

This quiet and less-explored stretch of canal will reward you with beautiful countryside, the occasional sleepy village and many churches with impressive bell towers. Toulouse, the fourth largest city in France, awaits at the end. Here you can enjoy submersing yourself in true French café culture, with a host of museums and cultural attractions to keep you occupied. It will take you the best part of a week to get here and back to Castelnaudary so, if you're short on time, we recommend a taxi, or maybe an overnight stay in a city hotel before your flight home?



Cugarel Windmill

CASTELNAUDARY

The historic market town of Castelnaudary is home of the Cassoulet, a regional dish of white beans and chunky pieces of pork and duck. While here, why not visit 17th century Cugarel Windmill which has its working mechanism intact? It's worth taking a walk through town to visit, even if just for the amazing view across the Black Mountain and surrounding countryside from the site on which it stands. On the way you can stop at St.Michel Collegiate Church which is surprisingly grand inside with its impressive cloister, baroque alter and large classical organs.

Recommended restaurants: Le Tirou or Maison du Cassoulet
Amenities: There is a Spar supermarket 1.1km away in the town centre, where there are also ATMs, etc. If you spend over €100 they will usually be able to deliver your goods to your boat. Alternatively, there's a Netto supermarket 600m from the base, although it's along a busy road. The base team can give you directions to either.

BRAM

A pretty, but quiet village built on a circular plan with a 13th century church at the heart. A pleasant walk or cycle along a pretty tree-lined avenue will take you directly to the village where you'll find Eburomagus Archaeology Museum housing more than 4,000 artefacts discovered through excavations onsite and nearby over the last 30 years.

Recommended restaurant: L'île aux Oiseaux, right by the canal
Amenities: You'll find several restaurants (including a pizzeria opposite the museum), a grocery store, butcher, patisseries and several other shops in Bram.



Eburomagus Museum

CARCASSONNE

The famous city of Carcassonne is composed of two different parts. First you will encounter St. Louis Bastide (lower town). While not the main attraction here, this sleepy half of the city is the perfect contrast to the hubbub of the citadel which towers above. The large rose-shaped, stained-glass window of St.Michel Cathedral is worth a visit. And the 54m-high, octagonal tower of St.Vincent Church houses a carillon of 47 bells. Climb the 232 steps that'll take you to the top and enjoy the stunning views.

Overlooking the lower town, the citadel (known as 'La Cité de Carcassonne'), is the second most visited tourist attraction in France. A UNESCO World Heritage site, this fortified, medieval city is renowned for its double wall of ramparts, running nearly 3km around the perimeter, and 53 conical-roofed, fairy-tale towers. Wander through the cobbled streets, shops and leafy squares to Château Comtal, located at the heart of the citadel. The tickets you buy to get in allow access to the ramparts for breath-taking views over the lower town, canal and Pyrénées. Then explore the château itself with the help of the audio guide.



Carcassonne's 'lower town' from the Citadel

Recommended restaurants: Crêperie le Blé Noir in the lower town, or La Marquiere in the citadel
Amenities: You'll find grocery stores, shops and a wide choice of restaurants in Carcassonne, as well as many souvenir shops and restaurants within the walls of the citadel.
Market: Tue to Sat, Les Halles (covered market) | Tue, Thu & Sat (am) – Place Carnot



The Citadel of Carcassonne



Trèbes Church

TRÈBES

From Le Boat's base, take a short stroll to the 13th century church, which has beautiful oak beams and sculptured figures that look down on visitors. Trèbes is an ideal place to sample some excellent local produce. Across the water from the base (next to the Tourist Office) 'Les Vignes de Bacchus' offers a selection of local wines, accompanied by tapas. Nearby, the owners of Domaine des Pères have been olive growers for three generations, and sell olive oil and its derivatives products such as soap, as well as local wines, honey, pâtés and traditionally made beers. Say "hello" to the donkeys behind the building.

Recommended restaurant: La Poissonnerie Moderne, right on the canal, opposite the Le Boat base.
Amenities: There is a very large supermarket, 1km from the Le Boat base.
Market: Sun (am) - around the arena.

HOMPS

Homps is adjacent to the beautiful Jouarres Lake which has a beach – perfect for a refreshing swim. There is a restaurant on site and a snack bar and at peak times you can hire kayaks and canoes.

If you're up for a 12km bike ride you can cycle from Homps to Minerve. This is one of France's most beautiful towns, with charming cobbled streets, a maze of narrow alleys, quaint dwellings and a simple 12th century church. The town is perched high on a rocky promontory with rivers running through deep gorges on either side. It can be reached only by a high bridge and was the site of a famous siege in the medieval age.

Recommended restaurant: En Bonne Compagnie, next to the canal

Amenities: There is a grocery store, a small selection of restaurants, a wine shop and a café-bar in the village.

Market: If you happen to be in the area on a Tuesday morning, the nearby village of Olonzac has a market which is the best around. It is located 2.5km north of Homps. The road is quite flat, so you can easily cycle (10mins - you could hire bikes from the Le Boat base for the day), walk (30mins) or ask the base team to arrange a taxi.



PARAZA

The village of Paraza has a lovely church, Notre-Dame de l'Assomption, where the nave, choir and vaults are adorned with beautiful stencilled decoration dating from the 19th century. Near the centre of the village and dominating the brow of the hill is Château de Paraza, where wine is produced and its owners offer guided tours and wine tasting.

Recommended Restaurant: Café du Port, next to the canal.

Amenities: There's a well-stocked grocery store in the village.



VENTENAC-EN-MINERVOIS

This tiny village is noted for its waterside wine cellar in the attractive canal-side Château de Ventenac-en-Minervois. Here, local wines can be sampled for free under the arches of its amazing vault.

Recommended restaurant: La Grillade du Château

Amenities: There's a handful of restaurants, but not much in the way of shops here.



A SCENIC LOOKOUT

Just north of Argens Minervois, you can get some great views over the village by scaling a short but steep path at Pechlaurier Lock which leads to a look-out.

ARGENS MINERVOIS

The village is overlooked by the square towers of a 14th century château and is a lovely little place to stop, with its narrow cobbled streets to wander around.

Recommended restaurant: La Guinguette, al fresco barbecue restaurant next to the canal.

Amenities: There is a grocery store, a café-bar and a restaurant here.

THE BIG POUND

Argens Lock is the last lock you'll pass through for 54km, until you reach the Fonserrannes Locks near Béziers. This whole section of the canal is known as the 'big pound'.



LE SOMAIL

A beautiful little Languedoc village, home to some nice restaurants and a couple of artist studios. The antiquarian bookshop (Le Trouve Tout du Livre - which literally translates as 'The Find All Book') offers no less than 50,000 books, from cheap paperbacks to rare editions.

Recommended restaurants: L'O à la Bouche or Le Comptoir Nature - both overlooking the canal

Amenities: The grocery barge, moored close to the bridge, offers fresh bread, pastries, basic groceries, drinks, wines and also a selection of regional products. It is recommended to pre-order your bread and pastries the day before(+33 4 68 46 95 11).



CAPESTANG

The Gothic St. Étienne Collegiate church in Capestang was built in the 13th century by the same team who built the cathedral in Narbonne. It is worth paying for a tour, which grants you access to the bell tower, from which magnificent views over the Cevennes foothills, the Pyrenees and the Oppidum of Ensérune can be enjoyed.

While the Archbishop's castle is not much to look at from the outside, it's worth a visit to see the palace staterooms and a ceiling adorned with 15th century paintings. The very helpful tourist information office is right next door.

Recommended restaurant: La Table du Vigneron, hidden in the town centre on Rue Paul Bert

Amenities: Capestang has a good range of shops, including a supermarket, three bakeries, several café-bars and restaurants

Markets: Wed & Sun (7am-1:30pm) - Place Jean-Jaurès | Wed, Sat & Sun (7:30am-1pm) - the market hall.



THE MALPAS TUNNEL

The Malpas tunnel passes under the hill of Ensérune and is 173m long, 6m wide and 8.5m high – the first navigable canal tunnel in Europe. There's no room for passing, so check that the passage is clear, and honk your horn before entering.

COLOMBIERS

The small, pretty town of Colombiers is a lively place with a church and a number of restaurants. The main attraction, the Oppidum of Ensérune, is a little further out of town. This archaeological site offers a remarkable glimpse into the past, from the Bronze Age to the Roman conquest. The museum houses a fine collection of pottery and ceramics from excavations on this site. The Oppidum is located high on a hill, from which impressive views of the neighbouring Montady Lake (dry) can be seen.

Recommended restaurant:

Chez L'Éclusier or Au Lavoir

Amenities: There is a pleasure port here with fresh water (you'll need to buy tokens) and an electricity point. There is a supermarket, pharmacy and newsagents right at the port. After a 300m stroll into the village, you'll find a lovely patisserie and more restaurants.

The dry Montady Lake



FONSERANES LOCKS

There are strict times to pass through the flight of seven lock chambers at Fonsérane. If you miss the allocated time, you may have to wait for most of the day, or overnight for the next timeslot. It will take about 1hr to travel through the staircase, so prior planning is essential, especially if you are short on time and need to return your boat to base.

BÉZIERS

Béziers is best seen by ambling through its medieval streets, animated squares and leafy parks. Visit the majestic St. Nazaire Cathedral, located on a rocky mount which affords a magnificent panorama across the city and its five bridges. Admire the sculptures and paintings dating from the 15th century to present day at the Museum of Fine Arts, including Rubens and Delacroix productions. Stroll through the Plateau des Poètes garden and discover the works of a local sculptor. You'll find all the necessary shops and plenty of restaurants in Béziers.

Recommended restaurant: La Raffinerie. Walk east along the towpath from the Béziers Moorings.

Amenities: Supermarket, shops, restaurants and cinema (all at Polygone Shopping Centre – 500m from Marina).

Market: Tue to Sun (7:30am-1:30pm) – Place Pierre Semard.

PORT CASSAFIÈRES

From the Le Boat base in Port Cassafières you can relax on the sands at Portiragnes-Plage (1.5km from base) or scale the heights of the tree-top course and zip wires at the Azimut Adventures Park (2km from base). Speak to the base team about bike hire or a taxi to get you there.

Recommended restaurant: La Gibrine. Ask the base team to arrange a taxi or, if walking, head towards Plage Est.

Amenities: There is a pizzeria on site. There is a small grocery store in Portiragnes-Plage, but there are plenty of other options further along the canal. There are bigger supermarkets close to the canal in Cers and Villeneuve-lès-Béziers (60-75 minutes west by boat) or, if travelling east, there are grocery stores just a short walk into Agde.

THE LIBRON CROSSING

Just east of Port Cassafières, you'll pass through the 'Ouvrages du Libron', an engineering marvel built in 1858 that cleverly diverts the intersecting River Libron in times of flooding.



Le Boat's Vision passing through the Works of Libron

Béziers and the Pont Vieux (old bridge) on the River Orb



VIAS

1km north of the canal will take you into the historic centre of Vias with its picturesque streets and alleyways, and the gorgeous Vias Plaza in the centre where restaurants spill out onto the pavements. But the real reason to stop in Vias is its leisure parks, perfect if you have active kids (or just big kids) in your crew. Not far from your mooring point, you'll find an outdoor karting circuit, mini-golf and France's largest fixed fairground, Europark, with nearly 80 attractions, from thrill rides to quieter family rides.

Recommended restaurant: Le Vieux Logis, in the centre of town.

Amenities: There is a bakery, butchers, delicatessen, café, ice-cream parlour, and some nice restaurants.

Market: Mid-Apr to mid-Sep: Wed and Sat (am) around the church.

AGDE

Agde is an ancient Greek city largely built using volcanic rock. Walking through its cobbled streets you can discover its ramparts, mansions and 12th century cathedral carved from black basalt. At the Éphèbe Museum, admire the city's buried treasures which span 2600 years, with many found in Roman shipwrecks. Then take the footpath that goes to the St. Loup Mount, an extinct volcano which is now a protected nature reserve offering exceptional views.



Agde's Round Lock

Recommended restaurant: Mare Nostrum, overlooking the Hérault River.

Amenities: There is a grocery store and plenty of restaurants in Agde.

Covered Market: Tue to Sun (am) –Place Gambetta, Agde.

AGDE'S ROUND LOCK

Just outside Agde the canal will bring you to Agde Round Lock. When it was built in the 17th century, the lock was perfectly round, but it was extended in 1984 to accommodate larger barges. It has the distinction of having three gates: two gates access the Canal du Midi, whilst the third opens onto the Hérault River (although rental boats are not allowed on this route).



The Canal de Jonction

SALLÈLES D'AUDE

This is a charming little village, worth a stroll around to find the quirky Chapel of St. Roch and Le Calvarie, a pretty, roofed structure of stone walls and arches which is now a park for the people of the village to share. At the side of the canal, between St-Cyr Lock and Sallèles Lock, the Domaine des 7 Écluses produces and sells red wines, dry white wines and a very fruity rosé. A tour of the cellars and a free tasting is in order, if time permits.

Recommended restaurant: Chez Herve, a pizzeria next to the canal

Amenities: In the village centre, there are a couple of grocery stores, a bakery and several restaurants.



Le Calvarie, Sallèles d'Aude



LA EMBRANCHEMENT DE LA NOUVELLE

Between Le Somail and Argeliers, the Canal de Midi is intersected by the Canal de Jonction, at which point boaters can choose to leave the Midi and head southwards. After 5km, the Canal de Jonction then connects with the Canal de la Robine.

St. Just and St. Pasteur Cathedral

NARBONNE

Narbonne has a rich heritage where grand and ancient buildings sit majestically among a network of clean, modern and lively streets and boulevards. The most iconic building here, the Archbishop's Palace, is composed of the 'Old Palace' of Roman origin, and the 'New Palace' of Gothic origin making it an impressive, albeit unusual, building. It has housed, since the 19th century, the City Hall and is now also home to the Museum of Art and the Archaeological Museum. You can walk up the steep steps inside the 42m tower and get a great view over to the Mediterranean and the massive St. Just and St. Pasteur Cathedral, the third highest cathedral in France.



Recommended restaurant: Les Table des Cuisiniers Cavistes (800m from the canal) or Les Grands Buffets (1.5km from the canal - but well worth the effort to get there)

Amenities: There are plenty of shops, restaurants and supermarkets in Narbonne

Market: Sun (am) - city centre | Daily (am) - Les Halles de Narbonne, a covered market which is famous across the south of France.



SANTE-LUCIE NATURE RESERVE

Known as the island of a thousand scents, this is a nature reserve of exceptional beauty, comprising 825 hectares of peaceful surroundings, breath-taking vistas and abundant wildlife. Walk or cycle in the shade of pine trees on a 3km or a 7km circuit, and look out for wild pigs and deer, as well as amazing birdlife.

PORT-LA-NOUVELLE

A bustling fishing port where the beach is wide and sandy, perfect for sunbathing or a day of family fun. For something different, discover the region on horseback! Whether you are a beginner or experienced horse rider, Manade Jean Henri offers accompanied, horseback riding on the beach and in the marshes.

Recommended restaurant: Le XV, located not far from the moorings

Amenities: There are many shops and restaurants here, especially along the seafront.

Market: Wed & Sat (am) - Place de l'Église and Place Léon Blum

Night Market: mid-Jun to mid-Sep: Wed (5pm-midnight) - Place St. Charles



Port-la-Nouvelle

HELP SAVE THE PLANE TREES

The iconic plane trees that line much of the Canal du Midi and the Embranchement de la Nouvelle are under threat from an incurable disease. Please help prevent its spread by observing the following...

- Do not damage trees
- Do not moor in places where there are plane trees, infected or otherwise.
- Do not tie ropes around trees.
- Do not lean bicycles against trees
- If you use mooring pins, disinfect them afterwards in the blue boxes provided at many locks.

LOCKS

Please refer to the onboard Boat and Navigation Manual for more information about how to operate and pass through locks. The majority of locks along the Canal du Midi are operated by a lock keeper, who will of course help you if you need direction. A few locks on the Midi (and all on the Canal de Jonction and Canal de Robine) are user operated. Set a crew member ashore before the lock so they can walk to the controls. Only enter the lock when a single green traffic light is showing. The crew member should always stay next to the control panel while the lock is in operation, ready to push the red stop button in case of emergencies.

OPENING TIMES:

Locks are open and passable seven days a week at the following times:

MONTH	CANAL DU MIDI	CANAL DE JONCTION AND CANAL DE LA ROBINE	FONSERANES LOCKS* DOWN (TRAVELLING TOWARDS BÉZIERS)	FONSERANES LOCKS* UP (TRAVELLING AWAY FROM BÉZIERS)
March, April	9am - 12:30pm & 1:30pm - 6pm	9am – 6pm	March - 30 April: 8u40 - 9u25 13u05 - 15u05	March - 30 April: 8u40 - 9u25 13u05 - 15u05
May to September	9am - 12:30pm & 1:30pm - 7pm	9am – 7pm	2 May - 30 Sept: 8u40 - 9u25 13u05 - 15u05	2 May - 30 Sept: 8u40 - 9u25 13u05 - 15u05
October	9am - 12:30pm & 1:30pm - 6pm	9am – 6pm	1 Oct - 30 Oct: 8u40 - 9u25 13u05 - 15u05	1 Oct - 30 Oct: 8u40 - 9u25 13u05 - 15u05

All locks are closed on 1st May on the Canal du Midi, Canal de Jonction and Canal de la Robine.

*It will take about an hour to pass through the Fonserrannes flight of locks – please allow enough time.

MOORING

Moorings are plentiful and you are free to moor anywhere where you can safely access the towpath. Exceptions are: if there is a sign indicating to the contrary, if you are on a bend or if you are less than 50m from a structure such as a lock or a bridge. Most towns and villages have mooring bollards or rings to tie up to, and mooring are usually free. Otherwise, mooring stakes and a hammer are provided on board. You also have the option of mooring in a private marina for a charge of between €10–€40 - this is particularly recommended in the Camargue region. Usually they'll have water refill points and electric hook-up facilities (not available on all boats).

WATER

You will need to fill up your water tank once or twice during the course of a week. Water points are available at all Le Boat bases en-route, for free. Otherwise, there are several ports/marinas that will allow you to fill your tank for a charge of €4 - €5. In some marinas, you'll need to purchase tokens from the port office. Water is particularly precious in this area, so please use it sparingly. Thank you.



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Disclaimer: We have endeavoured to ensure that all the information in this Guide is correct at time of printing. However, opening times and prices are subject to change. Attractions, restaurants, locks and even stretches of the canal can close without notice. Le Boat is happy to recommend all of the attractions and eating establishments featured within this Guide. However, they are not owned or managed by Le Boat and, as such, we cannot guarantee the quality of your experience at any particular time. If anything in this guide is not correct, we'd love to hear from you at guides@leboat.com so that we can revise future editions.

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