

# Vineyards of Vidourle & Camargue

The vineyards of Vidourle Camargue are a mosaic of terroirs, each influenced by the nature of their soils. They tell the story of a territory located at the eastern end of the Languedoc, rubbing shoulders with Provence. The discovery of an important deposit of Etruscan amphora shards attests that its inhabitants began drinking wine at least 700 years before our era.

Since then, the vineyard has grown in stature, its increasingly renowned wines being nurtured by the passion of dedicated men and women.

On this territory, between land and sea, the inhabitants share another passion: the bovine environment. Livestock farming and traditions linked to Camargue bulls are omnipresent in the environment and heritage of the local villages.

## AOP/AOC

Protected/Controlled Designation of Origin

Designates a product where the production, processing and preparation must take place in a given geographical area, with recognised know-how.

## IGP / PGI

Protected Geographical Indication

Designates agricultural products and foodstuffs whose characteristics are closely linked to a geographical area in which at least their production, processing or preparation takes place.

## Wines from Vidourle Camargue

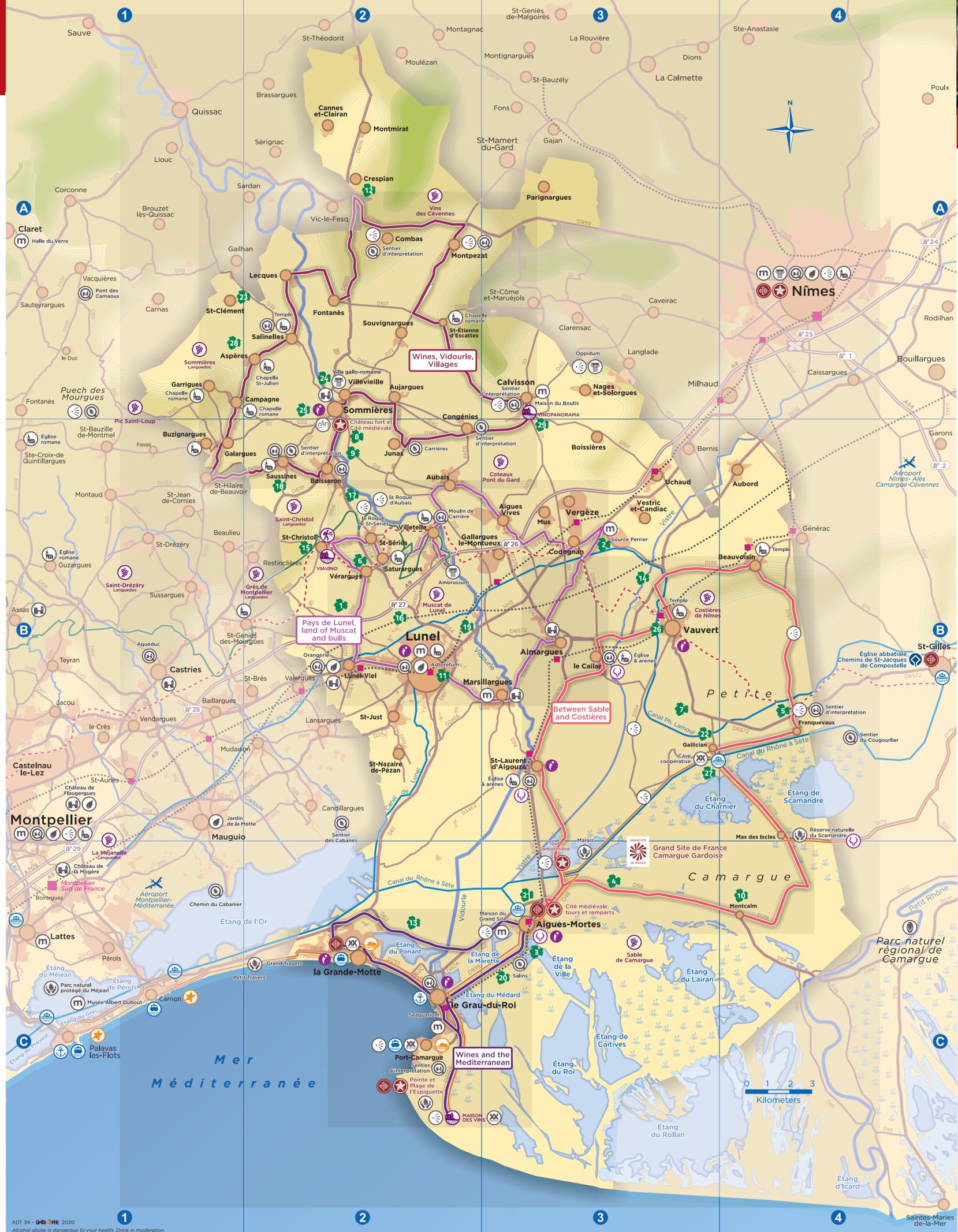
### AOP

Languedoc  
Grès de Montpellier  
Saint-Christol  
Sommières  
Muscat de Lunel  
Costières de Nîmes

### IGP

Sable de Camargue  
Coteaux Pont du Gard  
Vins des Cévennes  
Pays d'Hérault  
Pays du Gard  
Pays d'Oc

- World Heritage - UNESCO
- Grand Site de France Camargue Gardoise  
It includes 4 classified sites:  
- The marshes of Tour Carbonnière  
- Espiguette  
- The lagoon and its surrounding area  
- The panorama from the ramparts of Aigues-Mortes
- Grands Sites Occitanie
- Remarkable sites
- Small towns of character
- 20th century heritage
- Museums - Cultural spaces
- Religious monuments
- Castles
- Heritage curiosities
- Archaeological sites
- Natural areas
- Natural curiosities
- Remarkable gardens
- Panoramas
- PDO and PGI vineyards
- Cenopoles & Maisons des Vins
- Cenorandos
- PDO bull meat
- Thalasso
- Family Plus Station
- Fishing port
- Marina
- River port / stopover
- Tourist Offices  
Permanent Tourist Information Offices
- Long distance footpath - Ways of St. James - GR653
- Major cycle routes Via Rhodna
- La Grande Traversée de l'Hérault
- SNCF train lines
- Mainline Stations
- Regional stations



## Our wines and produce

### AOP Languedoc St Christol

This historic terroir has been renowned for its wines for more than 10 centuries. As far back as the 12<sup>th</sup> century, the Hospitalliers of the Order of Saint John of Jerusalem set up a guesthouse at St. Christol to welcome pilgrims. They played an essential role in developing the local vineyards' reputation. Vines have been present on these undulating plains around the village, at 50 to 100 metres above sea level, since the 12<sup>th</sup> century. These ancient soils, with well rounded pebbles and wonderful Mediterranean climate, are the secret to the wonderful generosity of its wines. [www.saint-christol-en-languedoc.com](http://www.saint-christol-en-languedoc.com)

### AOP Languedoc Sommières

"Sommières" is the easternmost of the Languedoc AOP vineyards. Entirely located in the Gard, this terroir covers some 18 communes. It is crossed by the Vidourle river. Vines are everywhere, alongside olive trees, scrubland and truffe oaks. This environment confers subtle notes of Mediterranean terroir. Since antiquity, wine making has occupied a prominent place around Sommières and its neighbouring villages. [www.terroir-de-sommières-en-languedoc.com](http://www.terroir-de-sommières-en-languedoc.com)

### AOP Muscat de Lunel

The vineyards surround the towns of Lunel, Lunel Viel, Vérargues and Saturargues, a land steeped in bovine tradition. In the 13<sup>th</sup> century Arnaud de Villeneuve discovered the secret of fortified wines, paving the way for today's Vins Doux Naturels, or natural sweet wines. Ever since it was first introduced, Muscat wine has always been highly appreciated, particularly in royal households in Europe. Such demand boosted development of this culture and had a significant economic impact on the territory. Muscat de Lunel is a natural sweet wine. It is obtained by adding alcohol during fermentation, which stops the maturation of the sugars contained in the grape. The latter then keep all their fruitiness, imparting incomparable freshness on the wines. [www.languedoc-wines.com](http://www.languedoc-wines.com) ("Discover" section, then "AOC") [www.muscat-lunel.eu](http://www.muscat-lunel.eu)

### AOP Costières de Nîmes

At the south-western end of the Rhone Valley, north-west of the Camargue, the Costières appellation mainly produces red and rosé wines. Le sol de l'appellation Costières de Nîmes est essentiellement constitué de galets roulés sur des terres argilo-calcaires. On the climate score, the appellation is subject to strong seasonal rainfall. As in all Rhone Valley vineyards, the Mistral wind blows here all year round, a real asset for the terroir. [www.costières-nîmes.org](http://www.costières-nîmes.org)

### IGP Sable de Camargue

The terroir of Sable de Camargue wines is unique. 110 grower-producers shape this 3000 hectare vineyard, in the heart of a protected nature reserve, to nurture their gris and gris de gris wines. Very different from rosés, these a pale, salmon coloured, delicate and nuanced reds perfectly reflect their origins. From around the ramparts of Aigues-Mortes, the suppleness, roundness and freshness of Camargue wine are a symbol of conviviality, friendship and sharing. [www.win-sable-camargue.com](http://www.win-sable-camargue.com)

**GASTRONOMY**  
Asparagus, IGP Camargue rice, olives and olive oil, IGP Camargue salt and fleur de sel are among the specialties to be tasted. This region is rich in tradition and highly renowned for breeding Camargue bulls and pedigree horses. Did you know? Camargue Bull meat is recognised by a PDO label. This meat, which offers an exceptional taste is also recommended by nutritionists due to its low fat content. Not to be missed, visit a Camargue bull ranch (manade).



Isn't wine so much better when we know its history, its producers and its origins? The Hérault wine tour offers a picturesque adventure into the heart of the vineyards, from terroir to terroir, an insight into the individual character and geology of each estate.

Hérault encapsulates the entire Mediterranean wine civilization, a real land of vines. Six destinations under the "Vignobles et Découvertes" label and twenty-four wine routes to explore during a holiday, an excursion or a walk along the "oenorandos" trails amidst the immense diversity of landscapes.

Our wines are our landscapes! Admire them, taste the flavour of the Hérault.

Vines and vineyards offer a wonderful storyline to follow for a fascinating trip. The vineyards of Vidourle Camargue offer a double destination in the Hérault and the Gard.



"The Hérault is a land of providence. Each season draws uniquely vivid facets of colour and light. Wines are our most beautiful landscapes and they have so much to offer and share. I invite you to explore our wine trails and meet our winemakers to get a real taste of their heritage and our art of living."

Kléber Mesquida  
President of the Departmental Council

Here, close to the Mediterranean, the emphasis is on sharing.

Conviviality, exchange with winemakers and festive evenings... experience the true identity, culture and passion of wine in the Hérault.

### FOR MORE INFO

[petr-vidourlecarnargue.fr](http://petr-vidourlecarnargue.fr)  
[tourismegard.com](http://tourismegard.com)  
[herault-tourisme.com](http://herault-tourisme.com)  
[cirkwi.com](http://cirkwi.com)  
[oenotour.herault.fr](http://oenotour.herault.fr)

### 6 labelled destinations

#### 24 wine routes

vignobles & découvertes is an official State label awarded to 6 destinations for their commitment to welcoming you to their vineyards.



## ENORANDOS

If you like hiking, follow the "OENORANDOS" signs.

17 delightful itineraries and circuits throughout the Hérault, organized by cooperative wineries or producers' unions, all approved by the FFRP (French Hiking Federation).

Find the FFRP approved wine trails at: [oenotour.herault.fr](http://oenotour.herault.fr) or [herault-tourisme.com](http://herault-tourisme.com)

### WINE TRAILS AROUND VIDOURLE CAMARGUE

- The hills of St Christol



## Wine cellars & discoveries

	Cave des vigneronns du Muscat de Lunel	
	- ☎ 04 67 86 00 09	B2
	Caveau d'Héracles	B3
	Caveau Les Remparts	C3
	Caveau Les Sablons	C3
	Château Beaubois	B4
	Château de Vérargues	B2
	Château Roubaud	B3
	Costes Cirgues	B2
	Domaine de Massereau	B2
	Domaine de Montcalm	C4
	Domaine des Aires	B2
	Domaine des Sauvaire	B2
	Domaine du Petit Chaumont	C2
	Domaine du Vistre	B3
	Domaine Guinand	B3
	Domaine le Clos de Bellevue	B2
	Domaine les Piochs	B2
	Domaine Marco Paulo	B2
	Domaine Rouger	B2
	Domaine Royal de Jarras	C3
	Domaine Terres de Sable	C3
	Gallician Signature	B3
	Les Terrasses du Vidourle (Saint-Clément-Gailhan)	A1-2
	Les Terrasses du Vidourle (Villevieille)	A2
	Les Vignerons du Sommiérois	A2
	Maîtres Vignerons Costières et Garrigue (Vauvert)	B3
	Mas du Notaire	B1
	Mas Montel / Mas Granier	A3
	Vignerons propriétés associés	B3

# Wines and the Mediterranean

When the Mediterranean offers you a piece of its history... don't hesitate!

This lagoon system inspired builders! From Louis IX, who founded Aigues-Mortes, to Jean Balladur the architect behind La Grande-Motte in the 60s, you take a journey through

## La Grande-Motte

### A modern outlook

A new town, inspired by the strong symbol of the pyramid, a unique and remarkable holder of the 20<sup>th</sup> century heritage label. A real garden-town with 385 hectares of green spaces, to be explored along 20 kilometres of pedestrian walkways through the delightful meanders in the town centre. At the outset, the avant-garde architecture drew strong reactions, but today everyone recognizes the majestic design, especially those arriving from the sea. To round off this projected environment, 7km of sandy beaches, a marina and the Ponant lagoon.

From La Grande Motte, head towards 'Point Zéro Golf/Ponant/Le Grau du Roi'. You enter the Gard department, follow 'Autres directions'. At the second roundabout go towards 'Le Grau du Roi rive gauche / Port Camargue'. The road crosses the lagoons, offering a beautiful photo opportunity of the natural beauty of the Camargue: bulls, horses, pink flamingoes and migratory birds.



## Le-Grau-du-Roi

### The n°1 fishing port on the French Mediterranean

This bustling fishing port opens a 'grau' (a passage) from the sea to the port of Aigues-Mortes. It is a much sought-after seaside resort too thanks to its 18 kilometres of golden sandy beaches and is also home to Europe's largest marina: Port Camargue. This attractive town cherishes its maritime tradition. Don't miss the Grimaldes in April, Saint-Pierre festival in June... Many nautical activities can be enjoyed all year round. The Espiguette beach is one of the most stunning dune networks on the Mediterranean. This spectacular natural site, registered and protected since 1998, is a solid ecosystem in its own right, offering incredible bathing waters too. The beaches are bordered by desert-like dunes and standing proud in the middle is a 19th century lighthouse, itself an historic monument. On the Espiguette road is the French Institute of Vines and Wine, dedicated to research in these sectors and housing a national wine conservatory where teams work on improving the quality of French wine production. The nearby Maison Méditerranéenne des Vins, designed by architect Joseph Massot, is specialized in the sale of regional wines and products.

Head back towards Aigues-Mortes. At the roundabout take the road on the right which follows the canal.

Just before reaching the medieval fortifications, the road takes you in front of two emblematic agricultural producers in the Camargue: salt and Sable de Camargue wine. The proximity of the sea, the climate and lie of the land have enabled the development of unique products here since the 17th century when the economic impetus given by the construction of Aigues Mortes boosted such production. Its 'IGP Sable de Camargue' GRIS and GRIS DE GRIS wines delightfully communicate the finesse and delicate character of the environment. The Jarras estate offers a unique sight in France of original Grenache vines which escaped the Phylloxera epidemic. This 900-hectare estate, an improbably jewel stemming from the alchemy between man and nature, can be visited by tourist train and is a real delight in summer.

# From the beach to the Costières hills

In the south of the Gard department, the Camargue, classified 'Grand Site de France' and 'Grand Site Occitanie', is a must for lovers of spectacular landscapes, both wild and peaceful, comprised of lagoons, reed beds, marshes and prairies, where horses, bulls, pink flamingos and herons all cohabit. Here,

time with a halt at Grau du Roi. Come and enjoy these unique atmospheres: 3 towns, 3 fishing or sailing ports... a great day out. Enjoy the local cuisine, inspired by the sea and the freshly caught fish, accompanied by IGP DE SABLE DE CAMARGUE wines.

## Aigues-Mortes

### "Never, in any other place, have I spent such pleasant days", Charles Quint.

The 13th century medieval citadel of Aigues-Mortes extends an invitation back in time. The town was created when Louis IX (Saint-Louis) wanted a port on the Mediterranean. Two crusades set out from Aigues-Mortes, in 1248 and 1270. It was the leading French port on the Mediterranean until the port of Marseille became part of the French crown estate in 1481. Its geometric layout, crenellated ramparts, towers and fortified gates make this 700 year old fortress an extraordinarily well preserved model of military architecture.

A magnificent citadel which can be contemplated from afar as you approach across the marshy plains. The ramparts are reflected in the salt lagoons, like a mirage, offering a sublime show which is constantly renewed with the changing light. "Like a high seas vessel shipwrecked on the sand", wrote Chateaubriand. Constance Tower, completed in 1248 is a masterpiece in defence fortifications and from the 17th century was used as a prison by the Huguenots. Marie Durand was incarcerated here for over 38 years. Don't miss: Notre-Dame-des-Sablons, a church where the light filters through the contemporary stained glass windows designed by Claude Viallat; guided tours of the towers and ramparts (entry fee, with times depending on the season); the Baroque chapels of the Grey and White Penitents (variable opening times and periods). The Grand Site de France building is on a listed, protected location, it is open from February to September (with group visits only in winter) offering both a fascinating permanent exhibition of how the Camargue has been tamed by man and a delightful nature trail.

From Aigues-Mortes return to La Grande Motte via the D62 expressway which goes around the north of the Ponant lagoon.

### On the road... a practical notebook

<b>Aigues-Mortes</b>	<b>CAVEAUX</b>
<b>RESTAURANTS</b>	• Caveau Les Remparts 04 66 53 80 56
• L'Atelier de Nicolas 04 34 28 04 84	• Domaine du Petit Chaumont 04 66 53 60 63
• La Camargue 04 66 53 86 88	• Domaine Royal de Jarras 04 66 51 17 00
• L'Oustau Camarguais 04 66 53 79 69	• Domaine Terres de Sable 06 11 68 49 21
<b>ACCOMMODATION</b>	
• Hotel Canal 04 66 80 50 04	<b>Le Grau du Roi</b>
• Hotel des Remparts 04 66 53 82 77	<b>CAVEAUX</b>
• La Mas des Sables 04 66 53 79 73	• La Maison Méditerranéenne des Vins 04 66 53 51 16
• L'olivierie de Paul (guest houses) 06 03 95 06 25	

# Pays de Lunel, land of Muscat and bulls

Amidst vines and garrigue, you are in Pays de Lunel, a land of traditions in the heart of the Petite Camargue, secret and authentic...

Stroll in the shaded cool of the villages or around the Caladons in Lunel... and let the stones tell their stories. Enjoy the enchantment of the delightfully romantic Roman bridge at Ambrussum and above all, that of the seductive local wines: Muscat de Lunel and AOC Languedoc St. Christol! There are also many ways to explore, by foot, on horseback, bicycle, canoe... amidst the horses, bulls and pink flamingoes. You are in a heady Mediterranean garden!

### On the road... Practical notebook

<b>RESTAURANTS</b>	<b>Aubais</b>
• Aubais 04 66 80 24 24	• La demeure (bed and breakfast) 04 66 80 17 62
<b>Lunel</b>	<b>WINERIES</b>
• Le Bistrot de Caro 04 67 15 14 55	<b>Lunel</b>
<b>Vergèze</b>	• Domaine des Aires 04 67 71 12 08
• Côte Patio 04 66 53 36 62	• Domaine Rouger 04 67 83 92 66
<b>ACCOMMODATION</b>	<b>Entre-Vignes (St Christol)</b>
<b>Entre-Vignes (St Christol)</b>	• Domaine Guinand 04 67 86 85 55
• Domaine de Bacchus 04 67 86 86 22	<b>Saturargues</b>
<b>Lunel</b>	• Domaine du Clos de Bellevue 04 67 83 24 83
• Hôtel Mon auberge 04 67 71 01 62	<b>Vergèze Entre-Vignes</b>
• Hotel Kyriad 04 67 83 11 55	• Cave des vigneronns du Muscat de Lunel 04 67 86 00 09
• Gîte Mas St Ange 06 24 99 23 21	• Château de Vèrargues 04 67 86 09 70
• Gîte Sacré cœur de ville 06 11 98 10 73	<b>St Sèriès</b>
<b>Marsillargues</b>	• Domaine les Plochs 06 99 44 04 59
• Le Gîte 06 09 34 51 41	<b>Vergèze</b>
<b>Lunel-Viel</b>	• Caveau d'Héracières 04 66 88 85 50
• Bed and Breakfast le Clos de l'olivade 06 03 98 59 39	

## Villetelle

A major archaeological site: Ambrussum. The Gallo-Roman oppidum on the Domitian Way bears witness to the level of urban organization in antique times: the Ambrussum bridge, a crossing point over the Vidourle, the paved road, the lower district with a former halt housing remains of a spa, houses and wells, the upper district with fortifications on the hill. Go back towards the Vidourle towards Aubais. Here, there is a large riverbank, a ginguette café and the Carrière mill (on the left bank), a perfect invitation for a picnic break.

## Aubais

Dominated by the former château, nicknamed the Versailles of the Languedoc, the village is set to the rhythm of bull traditions. Visit a ranch and take note of the 'empègues', traditional Camargue decorations painted onto the doors of many houses. The castle courtyard, a listed monument, is transformed into a poppa arena during village festivities.

## Aigues-Vives

Birthplace to two great statesmen: Emile Jaurès, member of parliament for the Gard, and Gaston Doumergue, who became President of the Republic in 1924. In the 19th century, the ever-present vineyards boosted the activities of wine merchants and brandy production. The imposing stone buildings and their cellars and warehouses around courtyards with forged iron gates bear witness to this activity.

## Codognan

A crossing point, as can be seen by the remains of the ancient Domitian Way, which crosses the Rhône river at a ford. The Route Royale was also brought here in the 16th century, further adding to the village's mobile history.

## Aimargues

The village square offers a remarkable ensemble of Third Republic architecture. Aimargues is the birthplace of Fanfonne Guilleme, one of the first female ranchers in the 20th century.

## Marsillargues

In the middle of the village stands Guillaume de Nogaret's château. On the lagoon remains from the original period but the façade today is a jewel of lower Languedoc: Renaissance architecture. The courtyard houses the Paul Pastre museum of Popular Arts and Traditions.

## From Lunel

Renowned for its famous Muscat wines, medieval origins and rich heritage. Don't miss: the prison tower museum and its moving stories which can be explored by torchlight and the Méjord museum and its impressive collection of ancient books. Follow the historic trail of this Languedoc town, famous in the 12th and 13th centuries for its Jewish community of doctors, philosophers and translators, the arcades of the market square, the Caladons, the gothic style house of Philippe le Bel, the Penitents chapel, the Boltard design indoor market, the Jean Hugo park lined with century trees and the modern arena. The Lunel canal, souvenir of the former port, directs us towards the wetlands of the Camargue.

## Lunel-Viel

This Gallo-Roman village offers a typical 19th century wine-making era architecture, with large gateways designed for the passage of carts laden with barrels. Don't miss the town hall, a mansion set in a park with precious trees. The road then takes you onto the vineyards of the famous Muscat de Lunel, the natural sweet wine which brought prosperity to the region. Magnificent mansions bear witness to this past, including the renowned Tour de Farges, owned by the Sabatier d'Espèyran family since the end of the 18th century. In the 19th century, the château became an international culture salon, immortalized by Gustave Courbet in a painting, 'Vue de la Tour de Farges' (Musée Fabra, Montpellier).

## Vèrargues / Entre-Vignes

Nestling amongst the Muscat de Lunel vineyards, majestic wine merchants' mansions relate the prestigious history of the local wine production which was highly appreciated by nobles and royalty throughout Europe. Explore the area on a good walk or by mountain bike.

## Saint-Christol / Entre-Vignes

Site of one of the most important Commanderies of the Order of Malta within the grand priory of Saint-Gilles, its famous vines obtained one of the first ever barrel marking rights (ancestor of the Appellation rights). There are numerous wonderful walks starting from the village.

## Saint-Sèriès

Along the riverbank and up to the top of the hill for a magnificent view over Roque de Saint-Sèriès (spectacular cliffs above the Vidourle river), an orientation table is there to explain the view. A via ferrata has been set up and it is the starting point for canoe trips.

## Saturargues

Its Romanesque church was the scene of dramatic events during the religious wars. The road winds between two hills covered in scrubland. At the top, there is a wonderful 360° view over the surrounding landscapes. (Cèvennes, Mont Ventoux...)

## Franquevaux

Vines have been present here since the 15th century, all around the remains of the former abbey. The abbey itself was operational up until the French Revolution before being dismantled for sale. The lands were converted into large Costières vineyard estates. This fascinating history is related along an interpretation trail.

## Gallician

Two examples of wine related architecture within the region: Mas du Notaire and the cooperative winery, registered as a 20th century heritage site. Its walls are made from rounded stones collected from the surrounding soils. An ideal stopover point from the Rhône - Sète canal at this delightful marina, to explore the landscapes of the Camargue. From the 12th century records show trading in wine and salt via the waterways of the Bourdigou and Radelle canals. In the 18th century, the current channel gave access to the Canal du Midi from Sète, opening up new markets for local vineyards. 16km of canal paths offer a wonderful cycling trip on the Via Rhôna to Grau du Roi. Visit the Scamandre Regional Nature Reserve with 146 hectares dedicated to the Camargue biotopes: prairies, salt marshes and a remarkable biodiversity. Access is regulated to allow access to pathways (Tuesday to Saturday, closed on public holidays) while protecting the natural environment. The road to Montcalm crosses the heart of the Camargue with a kaleidoscope view of horses, bulls, rice fields, vineyards; the helmet bears the name of the Marquis of Montcalm, a French Lieutenant-General who died on the ramparts of Montcalm defending Quebec against the English. He was a dedicated agronomist and planted numerous grape varieties in the middle of the 18th century. His descendants sold the estate to Louis Pot-Nolly, a wine merchant from Marseille who built the mansion in the 19th century.

### On the road... a practical notebook

<b>RESTAURANTS</b>	<b>Gallician</b>
<b>Beauvoisin</b>	• Mas du Notaire 04 66 35 03 00
• Les Aubades 04 66 01 94 21	• Gallician Signature 04 66 73 31 65
<b>Vauvert</b>	<b>Montcalm</b>
• Sandrine and Co 04 66 51 08 19	• Domaine de Montcalm 04 66 73 51 52
<b>ACCOMMODATION</b>	<b>Vauvert</b>
<b>Saint-Laurent d'Aigouze</b>	• Domaine du Vistre 04 66 88 80 58
• Le mas de l'Étoile (chambre d'hôtes) 06 88 56 38 98	• Les Maîtres vigneronns Costières et Garrigue 04 66 88 20 31
• Hotel lou Garbin 04 66 88 12 74	• Château Roubaud 04 66 73 30 64
<b>WINERIES</b>	<b>Saint-Laurent d'Aigouze</b>
<b>Franquevaux</b>	• Caveau Les Sablons 04 66 53 60 63
• Château Beauvois 04 66 73 30 59	

## From Aigues-Mortes to

### la Tour Carbonnière

Built at the end of the 13th century, at the same time as the Aigues-Mortes ramparts, Tour Carbonnière was a toll booth and customs post for controlling merchandise entering and leaving the city and was the only terrestrial access point to Aigues-Mortes. It is a listed monument and accessible all year round. Once up the spiral staircase you are rewarded with an exceptional panoramic view. Interpretation panels explain the Camargue landscape, where egrets, grey herons, waterhens and many other species besides live peacefully alongside copys, bulls and horses. You can also see the nearby ruins of Psalmody abbey where they made wine from the 12th century. It was part of a significant network of priories and abbeys in the area which traded salt, cold meats, fish and livestock.

It is free to visit and you can also explore the surrounding marshes or use the terrace as a perfect selfie point or for watching the sunset. La Tour Carbonnière and its marshes are part of the Camargue Gardoise Grand Site de France.

## Saint-Laurent-d'Aigouze

A typical wine producing and Camargue style village. The village square is bordered by the church and the arena. The bullpen is virtually an extension of the sacristy! It is unique in Europe and listed as an historic monument. Don't miss the outdoor exhibition around the arena (panels explaining the local bovine passion and traditions). Nearby, the town hall, the covered market with arches surmounted by three sculpted heads representing Xerxes, autumn and Bacchus, an allegory to the harvest season. A fun fact, in the 19th century 97% of the population worked in the vineyards. Wine really is part of the local way of life.

# Wine, Vidourle, Villages

Medieval Sommières is the starting point for our circuit and is worth a closer look. Between the plains and the hillsides, on the foothills of the Cèvennes, this tour offers an exceptional heritage to be discovered: mills, washing houses, capitelles, Romanesque

## Sommières

The Medieval town amply merits its title of 'City of Character'. The Roman bridge over the Vidourle, its arcades, houses and terraces all combine to make a lively and authentic ambience. The path up to the castle (11th century) is beautiful and offers an exceptional view over the town. The interior of the castle (Tour Bermond, chapel, educational workshops for children) is great to visit in summer. The gardens and paths are open all year round. As a hub of exchange between the Cèvennes and the Méditerranée, the Saturday morning market is very lively. You can pick up oysters, goat cheese and enjoy these at a café with a glass of local wine.

## Villeveyrie

The village has one of the finest castles in the Gard, dating back to the 11th century. Saint-Louis and Louis XIII both stayed here. It has belonged to the same family since 1529, and today they organize visits and explain how the castle has crossed the turbulent history of the region. The village dominates the Vidourle plain and offers a beautiful view of the Pic Saint-Loup, the Cèvennes and Mont Aigoual. In 1929 an olive oil mill was set up and the reputed produce is labelled 'AOP Huile d'olive de Nîmes'.

## Junas

On the outskirts of this charming medieval village, the former Bon Temps stone quarries once supplied stones for the Roman bridge in Sommières, to Le Vigan and Aigues-Mortes. Today, the quarry is no longer in operation but offers a beautiful spot for a walk or a picnic in an unusual setting between nature and history. The site also hosts numerous summer festivities, including the annual 'Rencontres de la Pierre' jazz festival.

## Montpezat

A village perched on a rocky outcrop built in a circular design. The beautiful, cool streets wind through the houses up to the feeding spot for a break. Then, a delightful, shaded road along the Vidourle towards Salinelles where

## Combas

This pretty village sits against the Lens massif, an ecological reserve. The interpretation trail offers a perfect family outing: the Marvels of the Garrigue and the Lens woods which offer a beautiful view over the vineyard. Aftern Fontaines, on the road to Lecques the Notre-Dame de Prima-Combe sanctuary offers a beautiful vision in the heart of the garrigue.

## Lecques

This ravishing, fortified village overlooks the Vidourle river. A submersible bridge crosses the river where the banks offer a refreshing spot for a break. Then, a delightful, shaded road along the Vidourle towards Salinelles where

chapels, temples in pretty villages nestling around their castles, where the spirit of the Camisards still lingers. Over the centuries, men have worked on the lands here to cultivate vines and olive trees. Archaeological research has shown that here, close to

Calvisson, in the 7th century BC, the Etruscans imported wine. Cellars and wineries continue this culture between vineyards and garrigue and invite you to taste the Languedoc appellation which delightfully communicates the local character.

## Boisseron

A Medieval village, as can be seen from its fortified gate with guard room on top, the remains of the ramparts and dry moats transformed into gardens. Note the Roman bridge dating back to the 1st century AD and wine makers' houses from the 18th century. The former quarries have been transformed into green spaces and a rock-climbing site.



Quarry of Junas

there is a Spanish colonial style temple in the middle of green oaks and pines. The heart of the village offers a renaissance style château and orangery to be explored. Just below, there is a beautiful ensemble of a wash house, washing stones, a spring and a water mill. The Romanesque chapel of Saint Julien de Montredon is worth a look as you leave the village. In summer it hosts concerts and exhibitions.

## Aspères

The circuit continues along a little road amidst vines, olive trees and oaks; Aspères is in fact a series of small hamlets. Vine cultivation is the heritage of builders and landscapers who worked for the powerful Psalmody abbey. Try out the digital interpretation trail, downloadable from the Rando Gard app.

## Campagne

A charming 12th century Romanesque church.

## Galargues

A village with typical wine makers' houses.

## Saussines

This is one of the oldest villages in the Vidourle valley. Villa Salsinas was mentioned, along with its church, back in 844. A real jewel to be discovered following the circuit detailing its preserved architecture.



## A land of tradition

Get ready for the festive rhythm of 'la fe di diou', or the passion for all things bovine. Here the black Camargue bulls are at the heart of traditional activities and local events. If you want to join the festivities, go along to a Course Camargaise competition in one of the local arenas, or a traditional bull running event through the local villages. Take care, and always follow the instructions!

If you have chosen to visit a ranch (mandou), you will see just how much the ranchers respect horses and bulls. This respect drives away any fear: man and animal are in unison... come along and take a ride into their environment!

### A cultural heritage glossary, unique in France!

**Bovvine:** a collective name encapsulating all the cultural traditions and economic activities surrounding bull breeding in the Camargue.

**Raseteurs:** men dressed in white who face the bulls in the 'Courses Camargaises'; a recognized, highly athletic sport where these men run to catch prizes held between the bulls' horns.

**Abrivado:** the procession of bulls, surrounded by ranchers on horseback from the field or trailer to the arena (barricado: the opposite procession in the evening). An entertaining moment where young spectators ('atrapalès') try to make the bulls escape from the ranchers!

**Mandou:** both the herd and the ranch of Camargue bulls and horses. The guardian is the 'mandrier'.

**Gardian:** the ranch hand in charge of bull breeding tasks. Their traditional equipment forms part of an ancestral know-how. They work on horseback in vast open spaces, using a trident to direct the herds. Their saddle, known as a Camargue saddle, is deep with a high standing solid leather knob which enables the rider to stay steady when changing direction very quickly.

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