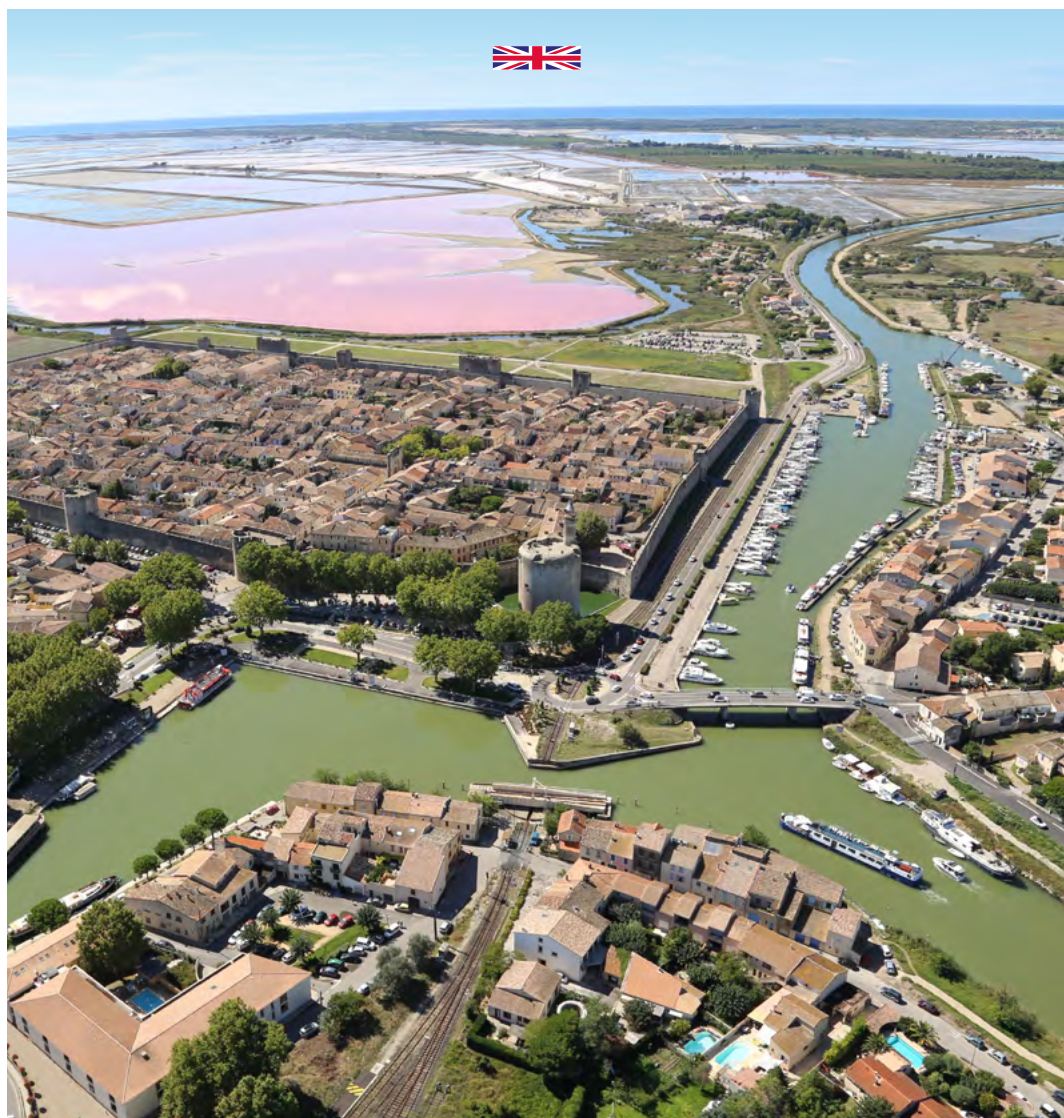


LET US GUIDE YOU!

# aigues-mortes

## en Camargue

[www.ot-aiguesmortes.com](http://www.ot-aiguesmortes.com)



# Some historical events

## Origins

Humans have always occupied Aigues-Mortes. In ancient times, a Greek colony settled there, followed by the Romans in the 1<sup>st</sup> century, who even then began producing and harvesting salt.



## Louis IX and the construction of the royal port

Benedictine monks moved here in the 5<sup>th</sup> century, amidst marshes and ponds in a hostile environment, where they founded an abbey : Psalmody or Psalmodi. In the 13<sup>th</sup> century, King Louis IX owned no land along the Mediterranean. The Benedictines agreed to trade the territory of Aigues-Mortes for vast farmland belonging to the Crown in the Sommières region. For several years, the entire region was occupied by the construction of a town and a royal port.



## Seventh and eighth crusades

In 1248, Louis IX left for the seventh crusade. The first two storeys of a big main tower, the Grosse Fort Tour, were built. Twenty years later, in 1270, Louis IX set off on his second crusade and died of typhus shortly thereafter, off the coast of Tunis, on 25 August 1270. At the time of his death, the ramparts' foundations had only been partly mapped out. His son Philippe III le Hardi and his grandson Philippe IV le Bel took over the work and completed it towards the end of the 13<sup>th</sup> century.

## Blue bellies and the hundred years' war

In the early 15<sup>th</sup> century, France was torn apart by a civil war between the Armagnacs and the Burgundians. Governor Louis de Malpüe betrayed the town, the Armagnacs entered the town and slaughtered all the Burgundians. It was winter, the bodies could not be buried. The corpses were salted and tossed into a tower that has since been known as the "Burgundian Tower". At the end of winter, the Burgundians' abdomens had turned blue. This is one of the explanations why the people of Aigues-Mortes are known as "Blue Bellies"!





## Wars of religion and the prison tower

In 1575, a large number of Protestants sacked Aigues-Mortes. They ransacked, pillaged and burned all Catholic monuments. In 1685, following the revocation of the Edict of Nantes, the Huguenots were persecuted once again. Constance Tower was used to lock up the victims of religious and State intolerance. From 1715 onwards, women were the only prisoners there. The detainees were of all ages and all statuses. One of the best-known prisoners, Marie Durand, spent 38 years sustaining her sisters in captivity.

### Marie Durand

Marie Durand was the physical embodiment of thoughtful resistance and the triumphant resignation of female prisoners. She was arrested in 1730 at 15-year-old and she wasn't released until 1768. Legend has it that she carved the word "REGISTER" (Occitan for "resist") into the rim of the oubliette in the upper room.

## French revolution

The population of Aigues-Mortes eagerly greeted the dawn of the French Revolution. The residents formed popular societies, surveillance committees, revolutionary sans-culottes clubs. Soon though, spurred on by fierce political passions, regrettable incidents took place in the town, some of which ended in tragedy. In the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, freedom of religion was restored, the churches were returned to the faithful and religious peace was assured.

## Aigues-Mortes nowadays

The canal between the Rhône and Sète was completed in 1806, at which point Aigues-Mortes became a river port through which goods and then passengers travelled. In 1903, the ramparts of Aigues-Mortes became a listed Historic Monument.

# The Tourist Office has devised a 90-minutes tour (about 4 km) so you can stroll through town without missing a thing. Just follow our lead... and be sure to bring a camera!

**1 Aigues-Mortes coat of arms (1697 - Hozier)**  
Located on the front of the tourist office, it depicts Saint Martin, patron saint of the kings of France, sharing his cloak with a beggar.

**2 Chapelle des Capucins**  
Capuchin monks built this chapel out of stones from the Peyrade breakwater, donated by King Louis XIV. It was dedicated to Saint Francis and then sold off by the State in 1791. In 1828, it was converted into a covered market.



**3 Statue of Saint Louis (1849 - Pradier)**  
It was sculpted to commemorate the Crusades. The king stands against an anchor wearing his crown and coat of mail. The 3.25 metres tall statue tops a pedestal decorated with dolphins.

**4 Notre-Dame des Sablons Church (13<sup>th</sup> century)**  
The first church here, made of wood and reeds, dates back to 1183. In 1246, was rebuilt in a Gothic style, this time using stone. King Louis IX knelt there to pray in 1248, before setting out on a crusade. The 20<sup>th</sup> century stained glass windows were created by Claude Viallat and Bernard Dhonneur.

**5 House at 2 rue Jean Jaurès (17<sup>th</sup> century)**  
The two visible sides of this house feature nine brackets decorated with female heads with tiaras and leaves, along with the remnants of large mullioned windows.

**6 House at 19 rue Jean Jaurès (17<sup>th</sup> century)**  
House bedecked with Corinthian pilasters with acanthus leaves and a series of S-shaped brackets.

**7 House at 26 rue Jean Jaurès (late 18<sup>th</sup> century)**  
This house features four keystones, with demi-relief sculptures of faces representing the four seasons on the front.

**8 Fountain**  
It was installed on 12 April 1896 to inaugurate the arrival of running potable water in Aigues-Mortes.

**9 Porte de la Gardette**  
For centuries, this gate was the only point of entry into the fortified town, guarded by a watch of soldiers.

**10 Childhood of Bacchus statue**  
It was sculpted by Ferdinand Faivre for the 1900 World's Fair. It was donated to the town in 1901. During the Second World War, the statue was melted down for use by the German army. It was later reconstructed by Patrick Granier using its original base.

**11 Tour de Constance (13<sup>th</sup> century)**  
It was built during the lifetime of King Louis IX, around 1242. It has served as a lighthouse, a residence and a prison with a tragic history.

**12 Tower's bartizan** this round, covered watch-turret was used to monitor the entrance to the Governor's House.



**13 Governor's House (16<sup>th</sup> century)**  
It was built by Governor de Civey in the place of the old royal residence which burnt down in the 15<sup>th</sup> century.

**14 House at 22/24 Bd Intérieur Ouest (1679)**  
This house was purchased by the consuls for the garrison's officers. An inscription on its façade reads "Mare de Deu de Montserrat" (Our Lady of Montserrat).

**15 Porte des remblais (Embankments Gate)**  
Known as Porte de Montpellier up until the 18<sup>th</sup> century, it was rebaptized Porte de Remblais when the moat was filled.

**16 House at 29 Bd Intérieur Ouest**  
This former residence of the Lieutenant of the Realm was acquired by Salins du Midi in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Its façade features a sculpture of a whale.

**17 Tour des Bourguignons**  
In 1421, during the Armagnac-Burgundian Civil War, a garrison of Burgundians was massacred here. It was winter, so the ground was frozen. To prevent any risk of contagion, the bodies were piled and salted. After the thaw, they were removed from the tower and buried.

**18 Porte de l'Organeau (Anchor Ring Gate)**  
Its name was inspired by the old port's anchorage. Formerly known as "Sewer Gate", it is now fitted with mooring rings.  
*Gargoyle: the primary purpose of gargoyles was to discharge water away from the walls. Gargoyles come in shapes inspired by animals, both real and imaginary. The one on Porte de l'Organeau is a griffon (part eagle and part lion) carrying a man away.*

**19 Porte des moulins**  
The two windmills that gave this gate its name were raised and installed atop these two towers.

**20 Porte des Galions**  
Its original name, Porte de Portalet, was changed to the current "Galleons Gate", in reference to it being a mooring point on the town's pond.

**21 Porte de la Marine (Naval Gate)**  
Galleys would moor alongside this gate. The mooring basin they used was called Psalmodi Pond.

**22 House at 35 Bd Gambetta (17<sup>th</sup> century)**  
It is the only one with a portico whose roof is a floor. Its façade is pierced by mullioned windows.

**23 Porte de l'Arsenal**  
This gate owes its name to its proximity to Place de l'Arsenal.

**24 Tour de la poudrière**  
Initially called "Powder Tower", it was later renamed "Gunpowder Magazine Tower", for its location near the gunpowder and munitions depot.

**25 Porte de la Reine (Queen's Gate)**  
It was through this gate that King Louis XIII and Anne of Austria entered Aigues-Mortes in 1622. *Gargoyles: a lion crouched on all fours and others in the form of ferocious dogs.*

**26 Ice house**  
Last of the three recorded in the 17<sup>th</sup> century. Back in the day, it was covered with earth to keep it cool. In its centre is a well.

**27 Tour de Villeneuve**  
It was first called "Masks Tower" before being that was changed to the name of General Romieu de Villeneuve, a close associate of King Louis IX.

**28 Porte des Cordeliers (Franciscans Gate)**  
Upon his return from the Seventh Crusade in 1255, King Louis IX founded a Franciscan monastery between this gate and Place de la Viguerie. After being destroyed in 1575 during the Wars of Religion, it was rebuilt in the 17<sup>th</sup> century and then sold to a local resident in 1778.

**29 Tour de la Mèche**  
A fuse (mèche) was kept lit at all times, ready to set fire to the gunpowder in case of danger.

**30 Porte Saint Antoine**  
Named after a nearby cemetery. Three sculptures: a centauress, a dragon and a centaur. The centauress seems to have been designed to carry statues that have since disappeared.

**31 Tour du Sel**  
It was originally used as a salt depot. Because it served as a prison in the 12<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> centuries, it is also known as "Military Prison Tower".

**32 House at 5 Rue de la République (19<sup>th</sup> century)**  
Culpted lions keep watch from the balcony.

**33 House at 30 Rue de la République (19<sup>th</sup> century)**  
Its façade bears the crest of the former owner's guild (makers of chain mail).

**34 White Penitents' Chapel (17<sup>th</sup> century)**  
Which belongs to the Confraternity of White Penitents and is home to a listed fresco by Xavier Sigalon and paintings by Auguste-Barthélemy Glaize.

**35 House at 6 place de la Viguerie**  
Remnants of its immense mullioned window.

**36 Grey Penitents' Chapel (17<sup>th</sup> century)**  
It belongs to the Confraternity of Grey Penitents and features a listed stucco altarpiece made by Jean Sabatier.



**37 Cross of the Five Wounds**  
This ancient cross was inaugurated in 1814 on Place Saint Louis, where the statue of Saint Louis now stands. It was moved to its current location in 1825.

**38 House at 48 rue Emile Jamais (19<sup>th</sup> century)**  
A balcony supported by acanthus leaves frames the doorway.

**39 Town Hall (1535)**  
Consular administration building was initially erected in 1279, replaced in 1535 by the newly built Town Hall, which also housed the prison. The building soon became too small and dilapidated. So, the consuls purchased the western corner and expanded the property. The interior staircase dates from 1772, and the façade was redone during the 19<sup>th</sup> century.  
**Faun head:** at the cornice on the corner of Town Hall, this mask dates from the 17<sup>th</sup> century, from the time when the edifice was rebuilt.







GARE

Les Saintes-Moires de la Mer

Rue de la Pinède

Av Frédéric Mistral

Place A. France

Bd Diderot

Rue Abbé Taignon

Rue Émile Zola

Bd Intérieur Nord

Rue A. Lorraine

Rue de la République

Rue Pasteur

Rue É. Jamais

Rue Marceau

Place de la Viguerie

Bd Intérieur Nord

Rue Louis Blanc

Bd Gambetta

Rue Baudin

Rue J. J. Rousseau

Rue Sauze Arsenal

Rue R. Salengro

Rue du 14 Juillet

Imp de la Prud'Homme

Rue Hoche

Rue P. Bert

21

Rue Rouget de l'Isle

Rue des Bains

25

Rue Di Pietro

Rue de l'Arsenal

26

Bd Intérieur Sud

24

# services

-  Public toilets
-  French post office
-  Police station
-  Market



# Want more ideas about what to visit in Aigues-Mortes ?

- Dive into History at the Tours et Remparts d'Aigues-Mortes
- Take a step back and admire the southern rempart on the Grand Site de France path
- Visit the Salin d'Aigues-Mortes and learn more about Camargue salt
- Enjoy the scenery on the Marette discovery trail at the Maison du Grand Site de France – Camargue Gardoise
- Climb up to the terrace on top of the medieval Tour Carbonnière in Saint-Laurent-d'Aigouze
- Travel along the Rhône to Sète Canal's towpath in direction of Le Grau-du-Roi and reach the beaches of the Mediterranean Sea

**OFFICE DE TOURISME  
D'AIGUES-MORTES**  
Place Saint Louis - BP 23  
30220 AIGUES-MORTES

+33 (0)4 66 53 73 00  
info@ot-aiguemortes.com  
ot-aiguemortes.com



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@aiguemortestourisme

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