



Languedoc-Roussillon

Includes »

Nîmes	709
Montpellier	719
Sète	726
Carcassonne	729
Parc National des Cévennes	735
Gorges du Tarn	738
Parc Naturel Régional des Grands Causses	740
Perpignan	746
Têt Valley	752
Côte Vermeille	753

Best Places to Eat

- » JardindesSens(p723)
- » Tamarillos(p724)
- » AlTrès(p749)
- » Neptune(p754)
- » La Cantine de Robert (p733)

Best Places to Stay

- » LeChevalBlanc(p713)
- » BaudondeMauny(p722)
- » Le Relais des Chartreuses (p751)
- » HôtelduChâteau(p731)
- » Château de Creissels (p744)

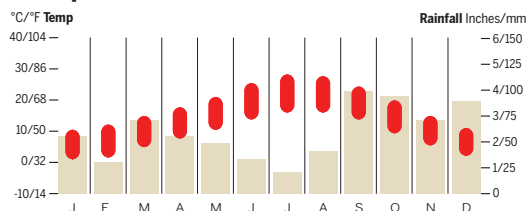
Why Go?

Languedoc-Roussillon is really three regions rolled into one. Bordered to the east by sun-baked Provence and to the west by the Pyrenees, it's been a strategic border since Roman times, and the area is littered with reminders of its past, from Gallo-Roman aqueducts to lonely Cathar fortresses. It also boasts its own unique culture, cuisine, festivals and languages, making it feel almost like a miniature country in its own right.

Each of the three areas has a different flavour. Bas-Languedoc (Lower Languedoc) is a land of bullfighting, rugby and robust red wines, and is home to the major towns of Montpellier, Nîmes and fairy-tale Carcassonne. To the north is Haut-Languedoc (Upper Languedoc), a wild landscape of hills, caves, valleys and gorges, ideal for outdoor pursuits. In the far southwest is Roussillon, which in many ways has more in common with Spanish Catalonia than it does with the rest of France.

WhentoGo

Montpellier



Apr & May

Springtime walking or cycling in Haut-Languedoc.

Third weekend in Sep

Grape harvest and partying at Nîmes' Féria des Vendanges.

Sep & Oct

Explore magical, still-warm Carcassonne after the summer crowds have left.

BAS-LANUEDOC

The broad, flat plains of Bas-Languedoc boast all of the Languedoc's main towns, as well as its best beaches, richest Roman remains and (arguably) its finest wines.

During the Middle Ages, Bas-Languedoc was largely the property of the counts of Toulouse, but it now forms the modern-day *départements* of Gard and Hérault.

i Getting Around

A single bus journey anywhere within in the Gard *département* costs a flat-rate €1.50. Full timetables are available from **Edgard** (www.edgard-transport.fr).

As always, trains are the fastest way to get between the major towns.

Nîmes

POP146,500

Nîmes' traffic-clogged, concrete-heavy outskirts provide a pretty uninspiring introduction to this ancient southern city, but push on and you'll discover some of southern France's best-preserved Roman buildings – including a 2000-year-old temple and a magnificent amphitheatre, where bullfights and gladiatorial battles are still staged.

Nîmes has a longstanding rivalry with nearby Montpellier, but it's perhaps best known these days for its contribution to *couture* – namely the hard-wearing twill fabric known as *serge de Nîmes*, traditionally worn by agricultural labourers right across the Languedoc, and nowadays known to all as denim.

👁 Sights

Les Arènes

ROMAN SITES

(www.arennes-nimes.com; place des Arènes; adult/child €7.90/6; ☉9am–8pm Jul–Aug, earlier closing at other times) Nîmes' twin-tiered amphitheatre is one of southwest France's most impressive Roman structures. Built around 100AD, the amphitheatre would have held around 24,000 spectators across four seating tiers; the posher you were, the closer you would have sat to the centre. The arena would have staged gladiatorial contests and public executions, and it's still regularly used for public events – mostly of a less gory nature than in Roman times, although bullfights remain a regular fixture on the calendar.

Inside, the amphitheatre is remarkably well preserved, especially considering

its somewhat chequered history of being adapted, modified, plundered for stone and generally abused (the arena even contained a miniature town-within-a-town during the Middle Ages). The seating tiers, interior halls and staircases are still in situ, and there's a small museum which contains replicas of gladiatorial armour. An informative audioguide detailing the building's history is included in the admission price.

A major project is currently underway to clean limescale, lichen and pollution stains from the exterior, and to address some troubling cracks that have appeared in recent years, so there may well be some scaffolding when you visit.

Maison Carrée

ROMAN SITES

(place de la Maison Carrée; adult/child €4.60/3.80; ☉10am–8pm Jul–Aug, earlier closing at other times) Constructed in gleaming limestone around AD 5, this impressive temple was built to honour Emperor Augustus' two adopted sons. Despite the name, the Maison Carrée (Square House) isn't actually square – to the Romans, 'square' simply meant a building with right angles. The building is beautifully preserved, complete with stately columns and triumphal steps; it's worth paying the admission price to see the building's interior architecture, but it's probably worth skipping the rather lame 3D film on show inside.

Carré d'Art

MUSEUM

(www.carreartmusee.com; place de la Maison Carrée; permanent collection free, exhibitions adult/child €5/3.70; ☉10am–6pm Tue–Sun) The striking glass-and-steel building facing the Maison Carrée was designed by British architect Sir Norman Foster. Inside is the **municipal library** and the **Musée d'Art Contemporain**, with permanent and temporary exhibitions covering art from the 1960s onwards. The rooftop restaurant makes a lovely spot for lunch.

Jardins de la Fontaine

ROMAN SITES

(Tour Magne adult/child €2.80/2.40; ☉Tour Magne 9.30am–6.30pm) The elegant Jardins de la Fontaine conceal several Roman remains, including the **Source de la Fontaine** – once the site of a spring, temple and baths – and the crumbling **Temple de Diane**, located in the gardens' northwest corner.

A 10-minute uphill walk brings you to the crumbling shell of the 30m-high **Tour Magne**, raised around 15 BC. Built as a display of imperial power, it's the largest of a

© Lonely Planet Publications Pty Ltd. To make it easier for you to use, access to this chapter is not digitally restricted. In return, we think it's fair to ask you to use it for personal, non-commercial purposes only. In other words, please don't upload this chapter to a peer-to-peer site, mass email it to everyone you know, or resell it. See the terms and conditions on our site for a longer way of saying the above - 'Do the right thing with our content.'