



Toulouse Area

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Albi.....	698
Montauban.....	701
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Best Places to Eat

- ➔ Les Halles Victor Hugo (p694)
- ➔ Le Genty-Magre (p696)
- ➔ L'Epicurien (p700)
- ➔ La Table des Cordeliers (p705)
- ➔ La Table d'Oste (p704)

Best Places to Sleep

- ➔ Les Bruhasses (p706)
- ➔ La Maison (p699)
- ➔ Lacassagne (p706)
- ➔ Hôtel Albert 1er (p694)
- ➔ Au Château (p702)

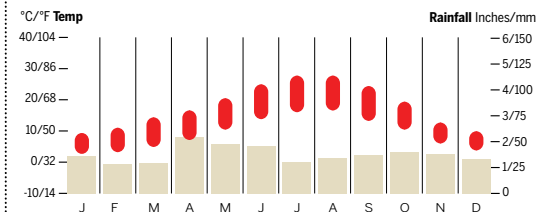
Why Go?

Gastronomy and good living are the passions underpinning this sun-kissed corner of southwestern France. At the heart of the region's farms and flower-sprinkled meadows is Toulouse, a city of pink stone invigorated by bustling *salons de thé* (tearooms), galleries and nightlife aplenty. Beyond here, stocky *bastides* (fortified towns), like hilltop Cordes-sur-Ciel and pint-sized Fourcès, snooze between vineyards and rolling pastures. Slicing through is the formidable Canal du Midi, a 17th-century feat of engineering now plied by idling houseboaters. Meanwhile tables groan under hefty dishes like *cassoulet* and confit duck, with splashes of complex Gaillac wine.

Once you've enjoyed your fill of Toulouse's festivals, music and cutting-edge art, it's time to slow down. Meander under monastery arches in Valence-sur-Baïse or La Romieu, sip fiery mouthfuls in Armagnac distilleries and bunk down in creaky converted farmhouses. If at all possible, lose track of time: this delightful region is best experienced at a dawdle.

When to Go

Toulouse



Feb Cast off winter chill with Albi's carnival or paint the town purple at Toulouse's violet festival.

May-Aug Prime time for Armagnac distillery and vineyard tours; music festivals ramp up in Toulouse.

Sep Sunshine and thinner crowds; the Quatre-Cent Coups carnival kicks off in Montauban.

Toulouse Area Highlights

- 1 Toulouse's food scene** (p694) Ogl'ing fresh produce in covered markets before a duck and cassoulet banquet.
- 2 Armagnac country** (p706) Swigging local brandy in a centuries-old distillery.
- 3 Canal du Midi** (p695) Admiring the 17th-century waterway's virtuoso engineering.
- 4 Cordes-sur-Ciel** (p700) Strutting along lofty ramparts.
- 5 Moissac** (p706) Bedding down in historic farmhouses.
- 6 Gers' romantic B&Bs** (p706) Bedding down in historic farmhouses.
- 7 Larressingle's medieval warfare** (p705) Standing back as trebuchets are armed for battle in this Lilliputian village.
- 8 Vieil Albi** (p698) Weaving through medieval laneways to Albi's gargantuan cathedral.
- 9 Beaumont-de-Lomagne's maths hero** (p702) Furrowing your brow at geometry puzzles in the hometown of Fermat.
- 10 Escalier Monumental** (p703) Gazing at expansive views in Auch.

