



# ToulouseArea

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## Why Go?

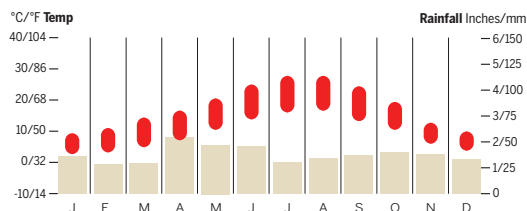
Rich food, good wine and slow living: that's what this sun-baked corner of southwest France is all about. Traditionally part of the Languedoc, the red-brick city of Toulouse and the surrounding area has been out on its own since World War II, but scratch beneath the surface and you'll discover the same old southern passions.

The capital city makes the perfect introduction: with its buzzy markets, stately architecture, crackling culture and renowned rugby team, Toulouse is one of France's liveliest provincial cities. Beyond the fringes of La Ville Rose lies a landscape dotted with sturdy *bastides* (fortified towns), soaring cathedrals and country markets, not to mention the historic province of Gascony, famous for its foie gras, fat-tended ducks and fiery Armagnac. And through it all runs the languid course of the Canal du Midi, the undisputed queen of French canals.

Take things slow: life in this corner of France is all about the living.

## WhentoGo

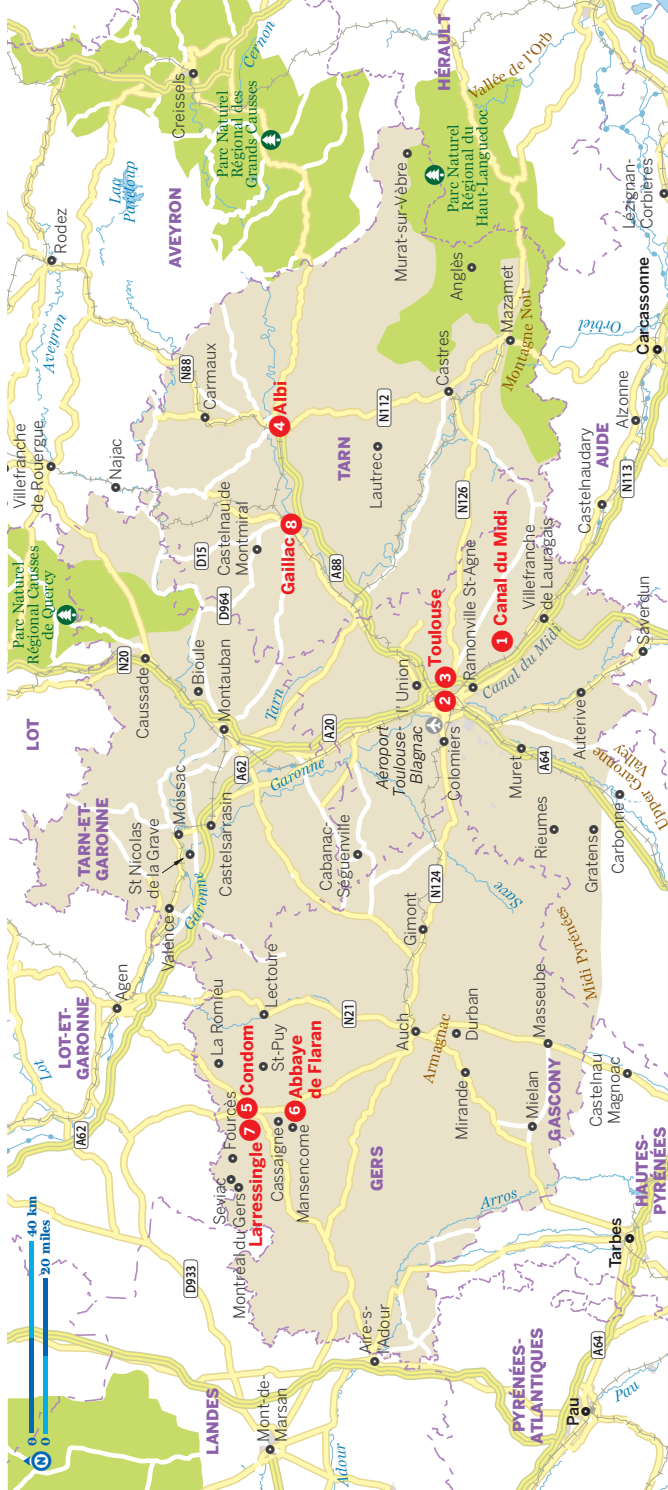
### Toulouse



**Feb** Toulouse celebrates its symbolic flower at the fragrant Festival de la Violette.

**Mar** Join the crowds for Albi's annual street carnival.

**Aug** Montauban commemorates its martial past at the Legende des Quatre-Cents Coups.



## Toulouse Area Highlights

- 1 Pilot a boat or cycle the towpaths of the historic **Canal du Midi** (p706)
- 2 Soak up the sights and smells of Toulouse's **covered markets** (p695)
- 3 Climb inside a replica of the Mir Space Station at Toulouse's **Cité de l'Espace** (p688)
- 4 Admire the prints, paintings and posters at the **Musée Toulouse-Lautrec** (p699) in Albi
- 5 Sample some brandy straight from the barrel at a traditional **Armagnac distillery** (p705) in Condom
- 6 Savour the silence of the **Abbaye de Flaran** (p707), southwest France's loveliest Cistercian abbey
- 7 Check out some medieval siege weapons at the fortified village of **Larressingie** (p706)
- 8 Spend a day tasting your way around the vineyards of **Gaillac** (p702)

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