



# SAINT-PAPOUL

ABBAY

T O U R   G U I D E

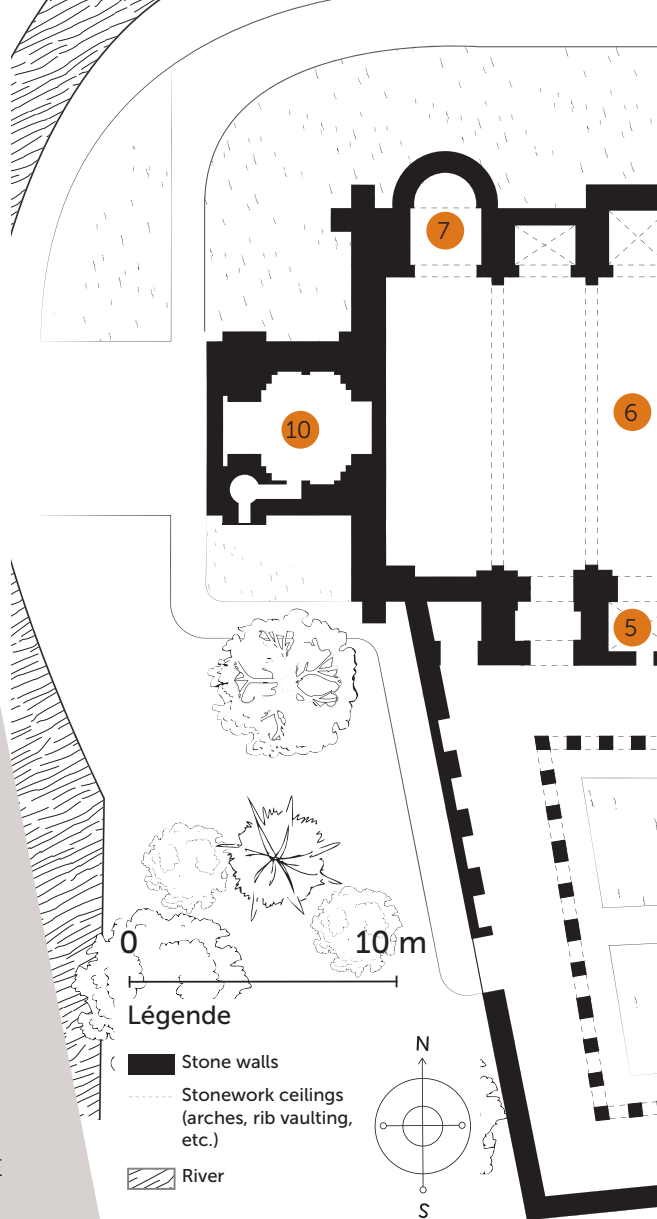


# ABBEY OF SAINT-PAPOUL



THIS VISITOR GUIDE HAS BEEN DESIGNED TO HELP YOU EXPLORE THE ABBEY AND VILLAGE OF SAINT-PAPOUL, ALONG WITH SOME NATURAL BEAUTY SPOTS. IT WILL SHOW YOU WHAT WE THINK IS MOST BEAUTIFUL AND INTERESTING...

BUT IF YOU WANT TO FIND OUT MORE AND EXPLORE FURTHER, WE ALSO HAVE OTHER MATERIALS AVAILABLE TO HELP YOU.



Plan : ©H.Nodet/CAML - Graphic adaptation: Le Passe muraille





## MOMENTS IN HISTORY

It is a beautiful evening. In the cloister, the tomb of Jourdain de Roquefort is quite deserted. Although he was a friend of heretics, this great lord had chosen to be buried here all the same. But today, the Abbott had to deal with two Cathars who were very much alive. Guillaume Vital and one of his followers, who both came from neighbouring villages, are imprisoned here. The watchmen are on the look-out. On the outside of the apse, the faces carved on the corbels by the Master of Cabestany are lit up in the moonlight. Suddenly, the crickets go quiet and the alarm is sounded. Around fifty armed men swoop down on the abbey. But they are repelled. The inquisition will take care of them later.

# THE REFECTORY <sup>1</sup>

## SCULPTURE ON THE MENU



As you leave the reception area, you enter the monks' refectory, which houses an exhibition dedicated to the Master of Cabestany. Stone carvings of a remarkable quality are evident everywhere at Saint-Papoul. Every period is represented, including the simplicity of the early Romanesque, the expressive works of the 12th-century Master of Cabestany, Gothic finesse and classical perfection.

### **+** Comprehension

The story of St Papoul began in the eighth century when it was a Benedictine Monastery under the protection of the Carolingian dynasty. It did not belong to the dioceses of Carcassonne or Narbonne, but that of Toulouse. In the 14th century, Toulouse became an archbishopric, and St Papoul a bishopric. This was a turning point in its history. The Abbott was made a bishop, and from then on lived in his own palace, which was run by a Prior. But the monks, who had become canons, continued to follow the rule of saint Benedict. In the 17th century, the canons were secularised and no longer lived in community. The refectory was converted into a cellar, and diaphragm arches were added to support the weight of a granary that was installed on the floor above.

### **👁** Observation

The pulpit was blocked up during these works, but you can still see traces of where it was on the wall to the right of the entrance. A reader – who was known as the 'semainier' (from the French, 'semaine' meaning 'week') because the duty was changed weekly – read from the Bible while the monks ate their meal in silence.

A very rare 18th-century reliquary decorated with quilled paper can be seen in this room. It is a sort of portable altar made of paper that was used for prayer while travelling.

### THE CABESTANY EXHIBITION

In order to understand the exhibition better, we recommend visiting the rest of the abbey first. That way you will be able to see the original carvings by the Master of Cabestany on the outside of the apse. Here you can see exact reproductions of the carvings made by the sculptor Alphonse Snoeck from Lagrasse.



# THE CLOISTER <sup>2</sup>

## A PLACE THAT SPEAKS

Probably built on the site of the Romanesque cloister, the 14th-century cloister you see today is in the Gothic style typically seen in Languedoc. Its arches – which are supported by double columns made of brick with occasional pillars made from a single stone – mostly have capitals that are decorated with foliage. However, some of them have stories to tell...

## The capitals and prayer <sup>3</sup>

Some of the capitals of the columns are carved with pictures. They are intended to tell stories to remind the monks of their vocation to pray for others and by doing so to fight evil. There are representations of inspiring tales, such as the legend of saint Papoul. They also tell of monsters, men who were swallowed by dragons and fantastical creatures with women's faces – incarnations of evil to be overcome..

## A place of burial <sup>4</sup>

Monks and canons, abbots and bishops were buried in the cloister closest to the church, and therefore closest to God. In the cloister, there are memorials to the abbots of the Middle Ages carved into the stone and 15th-century bishop is remembered on a stone tablet.



## The chapter house <sup>5</sup>

With its beautiful façade and imposing dimensions, this room was very important in the life of the monastic community. It was a place of discussion and debate. Here problems were aired, forgiveness was sought and penance was given. You don't need to speak loudly to be heard here. Give it a try!



### + Comprehension

The cloister had several functions. It was a place of prayer where the monks could take a stroll and carry out the "100 steps". It had a practical purpose with the arches separating different areas. It was also a burial ground.

## THE PILLAR OF ST PAPOUL

On the first pillar as you leave the refectory is a carving of the legend of St Papoul. Papoul was a companion of St Sernin (the first bishop of Toulouse), who sent to evangelise the Lauragais region. He was martyred at L'Ermitage, about two miles from St Papoul. Once beheaded, he picked up his head and put it on the ground causing a miraculous spring to well up. The river Limbe, which flows past the abbey also rises at the same place. Then his soul ascended into



### + Comprehension

The flagstones cover a vault that must have been intended for the burial of bishops, but it soon became clear that as soon as it rained, it filled up with water...



## A baptistry? 6

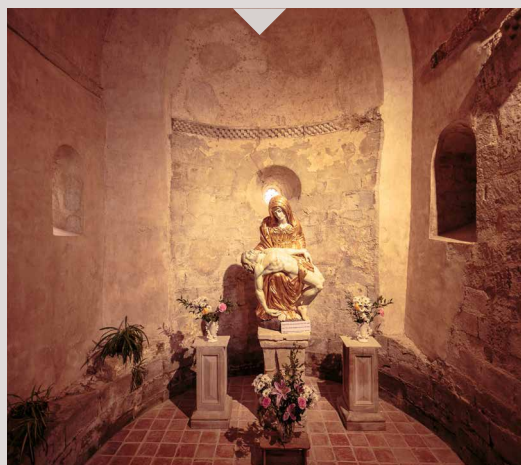
This small chapel was originally part of the church. In the 20th century it was reordered by the parish priest, who wanted the font to be at the entrance to the church. He installed this 18th-century font of Caunes' marble. The four heads at the base of the arches are in Romanesque, perhaps even pre-Romanesque, style. They have undoubtedly been reused.

## The Church 7

The Abbey Church, or rather the Cathedral, is on an imposing scale and incorporates a range of styles. All periods are represented and this creates surprising contrasts. The baroque gilding in the choir rubs shoulders with the sober Romanesque apse to its left and the elegance of a Gothic chapel to its right. The side chapels mark out the centuries...

## The Chapel of Saint-Bérenger 8

Saint Bérenger, a monk and then Abbot of St Papoul in the 11th century, was the subject of a pilgrimage which was to ensure the prosperity of the abbey. His relics, which were supposed to produce miracles, may have been kept in this chapel in order to protect them from the crowds.



### Observation

In the chapel to the right of the choir, there are two contrasting styles of sculpture. The symbolic figures on the Romanesque capitals are juxtaposed with by the realistic statue of Bishop Donnadiou praying on his tomb.



### + Comprehension

The enormous lectern in the choir was used to hold large chant books called antiphonals. It was designed to be practical. It is the height of a man with a place to put candles so that it can be well lit from all sides. Finally, there is a storage chest below for books.

8



2

1

Leave the church via the cloisters to reach the door that leads outside.

# THE EASTERN END OF THE CHURCH

9



## A VISIT IN ITSELF

Follow the path around the outside of the church. Here you will find Romanesque features that reveal its 12th-century origins. Created by the Master of Cabestany, there is a clear and coherent architectural design here. Engaged columns standing on high stylobates give the central apse rhythm. Each column is topped by a capital, two of which illustrate the story of Daniel in the Lion's Den. Above, the cornice is carved with a twisted rope motif and above that there is a unique roof.

### Observation

You can find out more about the Master of Cabestany in the exhibition in the refectory, which you will pass as you leave. You will be able to see St Papoul's carved capitals and corbels close up, which will help you to understand the unique creativity of this extraordinary sculptor. His capitals are characterised by a liveliness, movement, and composition that really broke the mould. Triangular faces with bulbous eyes, receding foreheads and chins, and neatly combed hair... his work is instantly recognisable everywhere and can be spotted by anyone.



### Comprehension 10

The roof is made up of rectangular tiles, covered with carved stonework in the shape of a cone. This is what gives it its fish-scale appearance. It is all made of local sandstone. The Master of Cabestany was in the habit of using resources that were available on site. As you go around the church you will see the porch tower. This was the former entrance to the Abbey Church, a massive construction which also had a defensive role. With three floors, it provided an excellent look-out point.

## THE CANON'S HOUSES

From the end of the 15th century the canons no longer lived as a community. Some had houses outside the monastery. You can see traces of these houses behind the church as you return to the reception area. The wall of the house next to this area speaks volumes. Here you can see how the houses changed over time. At first, the doors were on the abbey side, as although the canons no longer lived communally, they still lived in the abbey. Then in the 17th and 18th centuries the doors on the monastery side was closed and the



houses were opened up to the square outside. The canons had become secular.





# THE VILLAGE OF SAINT-PAPOUL

## A CATHEDRAL CITY



### A FORTIFIED VILLAGE

The village of Saint-Papoul grew up around the abbey. The Abbot granted privileges to the inhabitants in order to support the development of the village. During the 14th century, when the Abbey of St Papoul became a Cathedral, the village became a cathedral city. Status had to be maintained and the city needed effective protection from the insecurity of the times, so strong fortifications were built.



### LA TOUR DES GARDES

Originally one of many that were dotted around the city wall, the watchtower is the only one to remain standing. This is because from the time of the 14th-century Bishop Guillaume de Cardaillac until the 19th century, this tower was used as a prison. If you look carefully you can imagine the portcullis that ran in the groove that you can see in the gateway. This was reinforced with a door, the hinges of which you can also still see. Going through the gateway, you go under a large pointed arch to find yourself '*extra muros*' - outside the city walls. Look, three carved heads are watching us!





## BEYOND THE WALLS

In Saint-Papoul, what little space there is is precious. This means that houses were extended upwards, over two or three storeys. Another characteristic feature is the lack of gardens within the walls, at least until the 19th century. Up to then, vegetable plots and gardens were set out in a ring around the village. A second circle, further out contained orchards. Finally, there were large plots that were used for growing cereals.



## THE WALLS AND THE DITCHES

You can see traces of the city walls all around the village. In some places they are still visible wherever you can see large well-cut stones or a staircase cut into the wall. Even where there is no wall, it is there in the layout of the village. For example, if you head right out of the abbey and take the road that goes up opposite the bishops' palace, you will be following the line of the wall and the ancient defensive ditch...

## A SNAKE

In this road, on the left, the side of one of the houses has a surprising feature: a fine snake with geometric scales is curled up on the wall. It is a carved corbel from the abbey, one of the Master of Cabestany's creations.



## CLAY AND THE GENERAL OF THE FRENCH EMPIRE

The large black gate to the bishops' palace bears the coat of arms of the Marquis d'Hautpoul, a famous general of the French Empire, Minister of War and President of the Council of Ministers. In Saint-Papoul he is remembered as mayor, member of parliament and wise industrialist. The village prospered from the extraction of clay and manufacture of pottery and in 1811, there were four factories. In 1829, the Marquis of Hautpoul gave the industry a boost by opening a large communal pottery.

# PRACTICAL ACCOMMODATION

## THE SECRETS BEHIND THE FAÇADES

Near the Tour des Gardes, the two oldest houses in St Papoul display typical 12th and 13th-century façades constructed with wooden beams and jetties. Since the exterior plasterwork has fallen off, you can see the framework. This method of construction was very practical and was designed to avoid as much tax as possible. Since taxes were calculated on the basis of ground area, what did they do? They built a small ground floor with the upper storeys getting bigger and bigger - which created the jetties. But if someone did the same on the other side of the street, the houses ended up touching. Fires spread and hay-carts could no longer pass, so they had to legislate and from the 16th century onward the jetties were removed, although their traces can still be seen all over the village.



## THE SHOPS

Saint-Papoul was a very active village and businesses prospered. Many of the houses are former shops. You can see a door and another opening of various sizes. This opening was the shop window. In the morning, the wooden shutter was taken down to form a stall. In the evening, the shutter was put back to close the shop. The Mairie is housed in the old market-hall.

## LOOKING AFTER THE POOR

The house known as Lacapelle is the former Hôpital de la Charité. This 17th-century building housed a dozen beds reserved for the "destitute and dishonourable" who were given medicines, caps and nightgowns. During the 18th century, the Maison de la Providence opposite provided education for poor girls for which the bishop sometimes donated funds. The boys were probably educated in the abbey...







## NEARBY



### LE SEUIL DE NAUROUZE

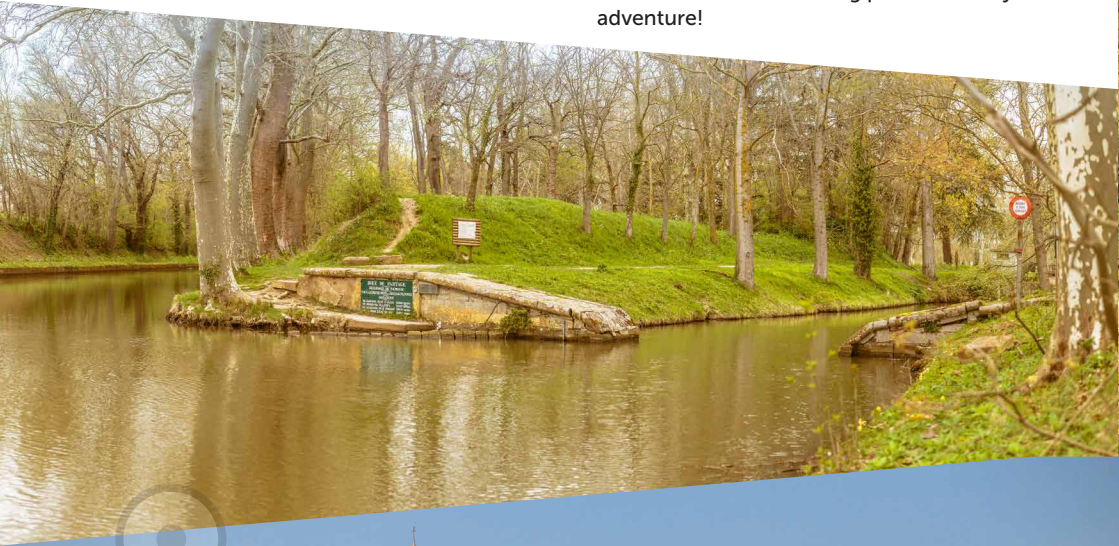
This is the watershed point of the Canal du Midi where water flows to both the Atlantic and the Mediterranean.

A beautiful and interesting place for a walk and a picnic.



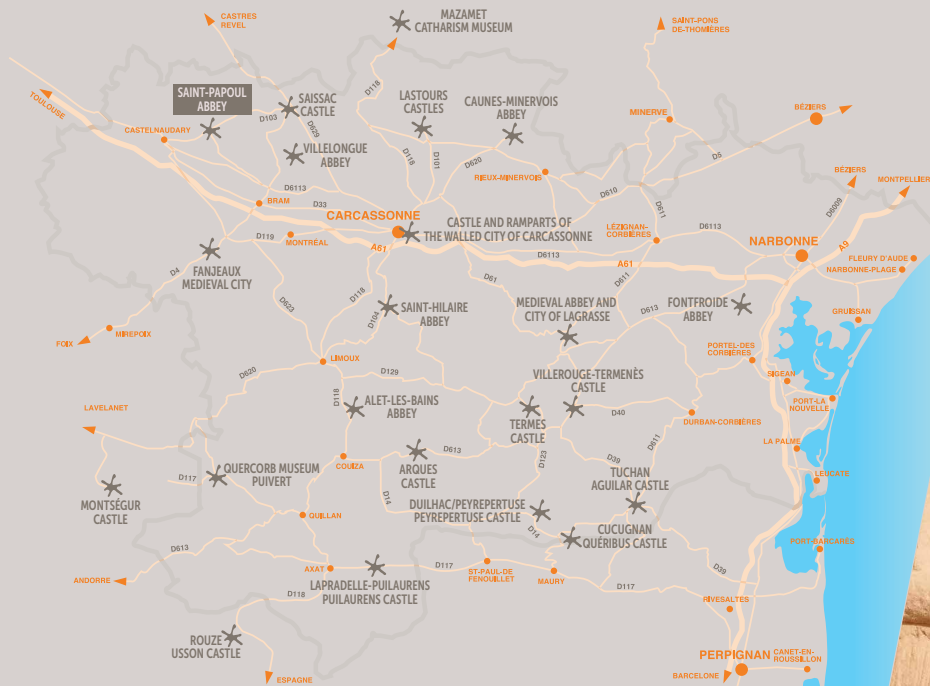
### THE PORT OF CASTELNAUDARY

Take a stroll among the boats in the middle of the town at this the largest port on the Canal du Midi. The starting point for many an adventure!





# EN PRATIQUE



## SERVICES



### TOILETS

Disabled toilets available.



### PARKING

Free parking in front of the abbey and 150 metres from the village hall.



### CASH WITHDRAWAL

At the post office.



### SHOP

At the abbey reception



### OFFICE DE TOURISME DE CASTELNAUDARY LAURAGAIS AUDOIS

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