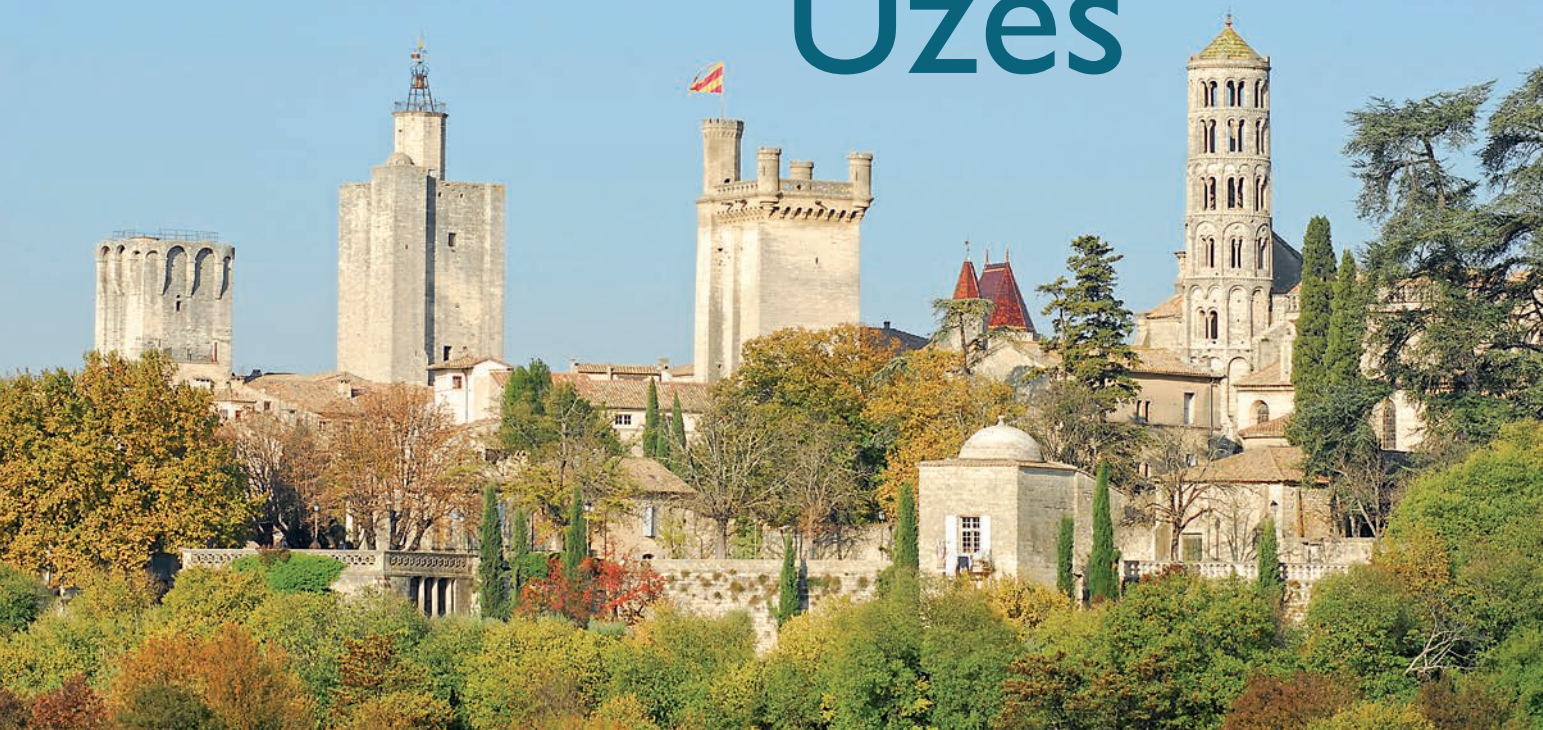


Towns and Territories of Artistic and Historical Interest
Guided Tour

Come hear the tale of

Uzès



A City Takes Shape

“Uzès lies on a relatively tall mountain overlooking land to the east, south and north. The only plains lie to the west. In any case, whichever direction one takes, one has to climb; the city is built onto the rock.”

Thomas Platter, in Le Roy Ladurie (E.), Le voyage de Thomas Platter 1595-1599, in Le siècle des Platter II, 2000.

Ucetia

The origins of Uzès go back to protohistoric times, with traces remaining of a Celtic oppidum built on a rocky promontory. The Volcae Arecomici settled there in the 2nd century BC. They were followed by the Romans, who founded the town of *Ucetia*, which then spread into the valley below the hill, around the source of the small Eure river. From the middle of the 1st century AD, its waters were captured to supply the city of Nîmes by means of a 50-kilometre long aqueduct, of which the famous *Pont du Gard* section is still intact.



The source of the Eure river in the Eure valley.



Headstone from 1st century AD in the Nîmes archeological museum. It bears the name of the city of *Ucetia*.



The three seigneurial towers of Uzès. From left to right : the King's Tower, the Bishop's Tower and the *Tour Bermonde* (dungeon of the ducal palace).

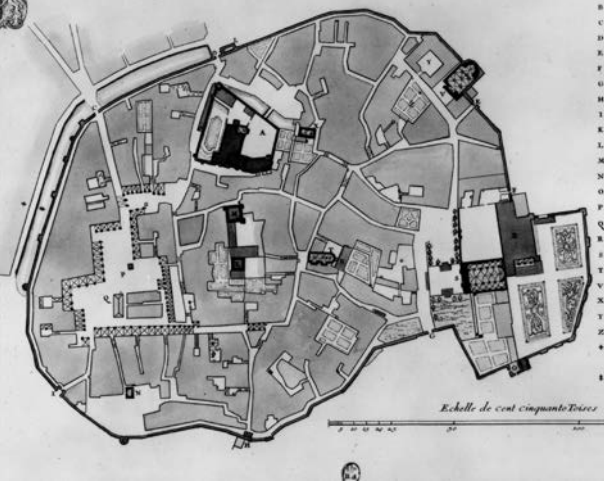
The Bishopric

The first mention of a bishopric in Uzès dates back to the year 442. In the 5th century, Bishops Ferreol and Firminus set up churches there. Around one of these grew the district of *Saint-Firmin* in the northern part of the town. The medieval town was built on the site of the Roman one. Surrounded by fortifications (now boulevards), it extended over roughly 12 hectares. In the 12th century, three towers were erected, probably as part of the same feudal castle, and were later separated: the *Tour Bermonde* (Bermonde Tower, dungeon of the present ducal palace), the Bishop's Tower (whose name refers to its purchase by the

bishop in the 13th century) and the King's Tower (bought by King Charles VII of France in the 15th century). These towers, which still dominate the city today, symbolise the three major powers which reigned over Uzès until the French Revolution.

The Merchant City

In the 13th century, the city stretched out towards the west. A merchant district was created around the *Place aux Herbes*. During the 14th century, suburbs sprang up beyond the ramparts, with inns and a population of artisans. A hospital was also built outside the city walls at this time.



Plan of Uzès around 1720.



South façade of the *Maison André* on the *Plan St-Etienne*. Two Renaissance windows on the third storey.



Place aux Herbes with the fountain of 1855 in its centre.

Prosperity

Uzès flourished during the 17th and 18th centuries through its textile industry. Several fulling mills were built along the banks of the Alzon river in the valley around the Eure. Many rich merchants had townhouses erected in the town centre, most often created from several adjacent houses. Symbols of wealth and power, the façades facing the street are mainly in the classical style, simple and with large windows, but some still display medieval and Renaissance ornamentation. The 18th century also saw the creation of large monuments, such as the Town Hall, the *Eglise Saint-Etienne* (St Stephen's Church), the new

hospital and the barracks (today a high school for arts and crafts).

The 19th Century

The face of the city changed from the middle of the 18th century, when the ramparts were pulled down. Some decades later, the dwellings in the centre of the city's squares, like those on the *Place aux Herbes*, as well as the arcades over the streets, were destroyed. The streets were widened and their houses aligned, making the city cleaner and full of light. From the 1850's on, Uzès saw the creation of fountains by means of a system which drew water upwards from the Eure

valley. However, the relative comfort they brought was not enough to prevent the decline of Uzès at the end of the 19th century. The city fell into a long slumber until after the Second World War.



The City Today

The classification of the old city centre as a preservation sector in 1965 saw the dawn of a new era for Uzès.

From the 1970's, the outer districts were developed: apartment buildings and villas were built to the north, south and west of the town, and tradesmen and artisans set up business there. Today, Uzès has nearly 9,000 inhabitants and is the administrative seat of the *Pays d'Uzès* community of communes, which includes as many as 31 communes and 27,000 inhabitants.

Eglise Saint-Etienne (rebuilt in the 18th century in the Baroque style).

The City Over The Centuries

“From afar, the shapes of its towers seem to arise from another era and, in the heart of the city, the narrow, winding streets, the spiral staircases, the houses with their cellars dug into the rock, and the arcades of the square all call to mind the medieval city.”

Mireille Olmière, in Feller (C.), Uzès dans les guides et les guides d'Uzès, 2009.

Origins in Antiquity

Very little is known of the protohistoric oppidum and the city of *Ucetia*. This can be explained by the lack of rigorous architectural excavation and the creation of the medieval and modern cities on the same site. The Gallo-Roman period is represented essentially by the remains of the aqueduct in the Eure valley.

Centuries of Power Struggles

In the Middle Ages, the bishop became a person of prime importance. This led to a conflict with the lord of Uzès for power over the city. It lasted several centuries, until the bishopric of Uzès came to an

end with the French Revolution. The lord of Uzès was a vassal of the count of Toulouse until Languedoc became part of the kingdom of France in the 13th century. In the 14th century, Uzès became a viscounty and later, in the 16th century, a county. In 1565, Count Antoine de Crussol received the title of duke. In 1632, the duchy of Uzès was raised to the rank of First Duchy of France, which granted it great importance. At that time, the duke was one of the most influential people in the kingdom. At the zenith of his power, the bishop of Uzès exercised his authority over a large part of what is known today as the Gard department.

These two people had to cope with a local authority that was created in the 13th century, the consulate, an assembly of prominent citizens in charge of the daily administration of the city.

Uzès and the Wars of Religion

In the 16th century, the people of Uzès largely supported the Reformation. During the wars of religion, all Catholic religious buildings were destroyed. The city became a Protestant stronghold. In 1621, it took part in the Huguenot rebellion, an uprising against the repression by the king of the Protestant south. Conquered by Louis XIII in



Regulation basin of the Roman aqueduct in the Eure valley. Its purpose was to regulate the overflow of water by diverting it to the Alzon river, and to close the aqueduct for cleaning and repair work.



Antoine de Crussol, first duke of Uzès (1528-1573). Drawing by Clouet, Musée Condé, Chantilly.



Seal of the consuls of Uzès (plaster cast, Uzès municipal archives).





Fortifications of Uzès, plan of intent, around 1620.



Rue Port-Royal, formerly Rue de la Monnaie and main thoroughfare in Uzès until the destruction of its ramparts.



Former silk manufactory, Filature Vincent, on the Esplanade.

1629, the city rebuilt its Catholic churches. Religious strife continued well after the revocation of the Edict of Nantes (1685). Many Protestant citizens of Uzès refused to convert to Catholicism, choosing instead to seek refuge abroad, with extremely damaging effects on the economic life of the city.

A Flourishing Textile Industry

During the 18th century, the prosperity of Uzès was based on the manufacture and sale of wool, twill and later stockings, which were exported throughout the whole kingdom and abroad. At that time, Uzès had about 6,000 inhabitants.

Many merchants made fortunes and were ennobled by purchasing administrative positions. In addition to townhouses, they also often owned farmhouses, where they were provided with considerable sources of income by cultivating cereals, vineyards and olive groves, and breeding flocks of sheep. From the end of the 18th until the middle of the 19th centuries, silk farming gradually replaced the wool industry. The countryside was covered in mulberry trees, and silk manufactories were set up all over the town.

Slow Decline

At the end of the 19th century, a silkworm disease (pébrine)

and competition from the foreign silk trade put an end to this prosperity. Uzès lost its status as a subprefecture, which it had been granted at the time of the French Revolution. The railway line, which started running in 1880, was closed in 1938. In the 1930's, there were no more than roughly 4,000 inhabitants in the city.



A New Revival

After the creation of the preservation sector in 1965, the city concentrated its efforts on a policy of renovating and restoring its old centre and developing a high-quality tourist industry. Forty buildings were classified as historical monuments. Uzès became an important administrative and educational centre, with twelve educational institutions. The city also boasts a national stud farm, industries, such as Haribo, and two hospitals. Since 2008, Uzès has been part of the network of Towns of Artistic and Historical Interest.

Moulin de Carrière, former flour mill in the Eure valley. Photograph on a late 19th century glass plaque.

From One Place to Another

“The charm of Uzès could render it as famous as a city in Tuscany, with its delicate stonework, shady streets where a subtle coolness emanates from porches as deep as wells, and its gardens fringed by classical balustrades whose tenderness contrasts with light-crushed loneliness.”

Jean Carrière, Retour à Uzès, 1967.

Uzès as a Preservation Sector

Uzès was entirely renovated under the law, presented to parliament by André Malraux in 1962, establishing preservation sectors. The first restoration work was to the *Place aux Herbes*, where two buildings had collapsed in 1960, making the town aware that the old city centre had become dilapidated. This work revealed the original façades of edifices decorated in the classical or Renaissance style. The streets were then paved and all cables buried underground. One block of houses, the *îlot Nicolas Froment*, was entirely rebuilt. Today, the preservation sector

is being extended and restored: the perimeter has been enlarged and now includes the boulevards, the cathedral area and the former suburbs. At the same time, a new preservation and development plan is being drawn up setting out the rules for protecting and enhancing the entire preservation sector in the years to come.

The *Place aux Herbes*

At the heart of the ducal city, the *Place aux Herbes* has been the market place since its creation in the Middle Ages. Originally, it was divided up into different smaller markets, such as the vegetable market, the oxen market and the chestnut market. The square

did not take on its present appearance until the 19th century. Formerly, houses had been built in its very centre. The square is lined with many 17th and 18th century townhouses.

Uzès Cathedral

Erected in the 11th century, the cathedral, dedicated to Saint Theodoritus, was destroyed during the wars of religion. A remnant of this period is the belltower, (called *Tour Fenestrelle* because of its distinctive paired windows). It is the only round Romanesque campanile in France. The cathedral was entirely rebuilt in the 17th century. In the 19th century, a Neo-Romanesque



Hôtel de Roche, a townhouse in the Rue Paul Foussat, before restoration.



Townhouse Maison Alméras on the Place aux Herbes (early 17th century).



Organ in the Uzès Cathedral (late 17th century).



Uzès Cathedral and belltower.



Ducal Palace of Uzès : *Tour Bermonde*, Renaissance façade of the main building and chapel rebuilt in the 19th century in the Neo-Gothic style.



Medieval garden.



The Duchess of Uzès, Anne de Mortemart-Rochecouart (1847-1933) hunting with hounds, painted in 1913 by Adolphe Weisz, and now in the Uzès museum.

façade was added in front of the original one.

The cathedral organ, a 17th century masterpiece, has been classified as a historical monument. The only organ in France with its original panels, it is still used today for services and concerts. The northern gallery of the cathedral holds the Bishop's chapel, which leads directly to the episcopal palace.

The Ducal Palace

This is one of the best preserved feudal monuments in the centre of a city. Remains can be seen of the various periods during which it was built (between the 12th and 19th centuries): the medieval period, with its towers, especially the *Tour*

Bermonde (12th century feudal dungeon), the Renaissance, with the richly decorated façade of the main building, and the Gothic and Neo-Gothic periods, with the chapel, restored in the 19th century.

The Medieval Garden

Inspired by the enclosed gardens of the late Middle Ages, the medieval garden lies at the foot of the King's and Bishop's Towers. It contains plants for food, medicine and tinctures. Both these towers, as well as the former royal lodgings, which were later turned into prisons, are open to visitors and are venues for exhibitions.

The Georges Borias Museum

In the former episcopal palace, the Georges Borias Museum holds rich collections dealing with the history, archeology, and the arts and traditions of Uzès and the surrounding Uzège region. Ceramics hold pride of place, with very fine pieces created by the Pichon family of potters from Uzès. One room is devoted to the writer André Gide, who, as a child, used to spend his holidays in Uzès at the home of his paternal grandparents.

The Eure valley and Alzon river in autumn.

The Eure Valley

A gem of peaceful, green landscapes, the valley of the Eure river stretches out below Uzès. The Romans captured the waters from the springs of the Eure. Remains of the aqueduct, including a regulation basin, can still be seen today, as well as a number of mills standing along the banks of the Alzon, the valley's main river.



Cuisine and Crafts

“And I have since learned that it took a lot of washing and other procedures to make the olives soft enough to eat. The oil they yield is used as butter, as I feared, but I have tasted it in sauces and there is honestly nothing better.”

Jean Racine, Letter of 11th November 1661 to Jean de la Fontaine.

Fairs and Markets

An inherent part of life in Uzès, markets are held in the ducal city each Wednesday and Saturday on the *Place aux Herbes*. The Wednesday market is devoted to local food. The Saturday market, today a large market selling a wide variety of products, has officially been in existence since 1226. Fairs and markets have also been held on other sites over the years: on the *Place Tour du Roi*, where pigs were sold, and *Place Albert I* (wheat market), on the *Promenade des Marronniers* and *Boulevard du Portalet* (livestock market), and lastly, the *Saint-Firmin* fair in the north of the town.

Local Flavours

Many high-quality food specialities are grown in the land around Uzès. Olives have been cultivated since ancient times all over the Uzège region. Formerly, even private houses contained olive presses, like that in the *Hôtel Verdier-Allut* on *Rue de la République*. The black truffle (*tuber melanosporum*), also called “black diamond”, is harvested in winter. It is a must in January in this ducal city. Today, vineyards play an important part in local agriculture. The wines of the duchy of Uzès were recently granted the controlled designation of origin certification (A.O.C.).

From Zan to Haribo

The first licorice manufactories in Uzès were established in the late 19th century, when the silk mills were closed down. Licorice became a new economic outlet; the “Zan” trademark was registered in 1884 by Paul Aubrespy. With its licorice sticks, powder, and hard and soft sweets, Zan left its mark on Uzès and the history of licorice. The company was bought in 1987 by Haribo, whose sweet factory is still in Uzès, at *Pont-des-Charrettes*.



Saturday market on the Place aux Herbes.



A local delicacy: olives.



The black diamond or tuber melanosporum.



Vineyard with A.O.C status in the duchy of Uzès.



Postcard after a poster for the Zan brand.



Vase intended for the Uzès municipal council room, a Pichon ceramic from the late 19th century, in the Georges Borias museum.



Polychrome cupboard called "armoire d'Uzès" from the early 18th century, in the Georges Borias museum.

Ceramics

The manufacture of ceramics goes back a very long way in the Uzège area, because of the many clay deposits here. It did not begin in Uzès itself until the 19th century, when Auguste Vernet, a potter from Marseilles, settled here in 1820. In the years from 1827 to 1830, one of his apprentices, François Pichon, took over the factory from Auguste Vernet. This was the beginning of a family firm which has lasted for seven generations, the only example of uninterrupted ceramic production in Uzès.

Painted Furniture

Uzès has a tradition of painted furniture which began early in the 18th century with the creation of cupboards called "armoires d'Uzès". These are very simple pieces of wooden furniture whose value lies in their decoration, mostly with plant motifs. Uzès museum contains several of these cupboards, which were often given in sets of two at weddings to hold the future couple's trousseau.

Famous Citizens of Uzès

The writers Jean Racine (1639-1699) and André Gide (1869-1951) lived in Uzès for some time. Racine spent two years there, from 1661 to 1662, in the hope of obtaining a church benefice through his uncle, the bishop's vicar. The letters he sent to close friends and family bear witness to life at the time and show how ill at ease he felt because the Occitan dialect, the local cuisine and the climate were new to him. The memories of André Gide are contained in *Si le grain ne meurt*, in which the Nobel prizewinner for literature relates his holidays in Uzès. Uzès is also the home town of the apothecary Moÿse Charas

(1619-1698), the translator Pierre Coste (1668-1747), the writer and philosopher Firmin Abauzit (1679-1767), the painter Xavier Sigalon (1787-1837) and the economist Charles Gide (1837-1932).



Photograph of André Gide aged 16.



av. Général Vincent
av. Jean Jaurès

av. Maxime Pascal

Gambetta

Bd Charles Gide

boulevard

rue de la République

rue Jacques d'Uzès

rue du Salin

Dr Blanchard

rue St-Julien

Ancienne promenade des Marronniers

Place Dampmartin

Place du Duché

Place de l'Évêché

Tours du Roi et de l'Évêque

Évêché

Passage du Marché

Jardin Médiéval

Cathédrale St-Théodorit

Place aux Herbes

Place d'Austerlitz

rue Port Royal

rue de l'Évêché

Esplanade

bd des Alliés

rue St-Étienne

rue A. Malraux

Place N. Froment

Médiathèque

28

29

12

27

25

24

10

22

11

9

8

2

bd V. Hugo

av. M^{re} Foch

21

13

15

14

Place de Verdun

30

1

16

7

3

17

19

31

4

18

20

33

32

6

5

vers la vallée de l'Eure



Place Albert 1^{er}

Hôtel de Ville

Le Duché

Jardin Médiéval

Église St-Étienne

Le Portalet



View of the Eure valley and the episcopal palace of Uzès.

Ancient, Medieval and Renaissance Uzès

- 1 Ducal Palace
- 2 King's and Bishop's Towers
- 3 Townhouse *Hôtel Barlatier*
- 4 Belltower (*Tour Fenestrelle*) and Cathedral of St-Theodoritus
- 5 Eure valley (remains of the Roman aqueduct and old water mills)
- 6 Fountain (*Fontaine St-Théodorit*)
- 7 Former *Rue de la Monnaie*
- 8 Townhouse *Maison André*
- 9 *Place aux Herbes*
- 10 Townhouse *Hôtel du Solier*
- 11 Townhouse on *Place Dampmartin*
- 12 *Bourgades - Place Tour du Roi* (Former suburb of Villeneuve)
- 13 Former suburb *Masbourguet*

Classical and Modern Uzès

- 14 Former barracks
- 15 Town Hall
- 16 Townhouse *Hôtel Chambon-la-Tour* (*Maison d'Uzès*)
- 17 Townhouse *Hôtel de Castille*

- 18 *Promenade Racine* and *Racine Pavillion*
- 19 *Hôtel du diocèse civil* (former town hall)
- 20 Townhouse *Hôtel de Rosier*
- 21 Former hospital
- 22 *Eglise St-Etienne* (St Stephen's Church)
- 23 Townhouse *Hôtel Pontanel*
- 24 Townhouse *Hôtel de la Rochette*
- 25 Townhouse *Maison Alméras*
- 26 Townhouse *Hôtel de Flaux*
- 27 Townhouse *Hôtel Verdier-Allut*
- 28 Protestant church (former monastery of the Friars Minor)
- 29 Former silk manufactory *Filature Vincent*
- 30 Former seminary
- 31 Tourist Office (former Capuchin chapel)

Cultural Institutions

- 31 Georges Borias Museum and municipal archives (former episcopal palace)
- 32 Multimedia library
- 33 Medieval garden

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Cover:

Plan of the town of Uzès, circa 1720. View of Uzès with the King's and Bishop's Towers and Belltower.



UZES



PRÉFET DE LA RÉGION LANGUEDOC-ROUSSILLON



www.uzes.fr

Come hear the tale of **Uzès**, Town of Artistic and Historical interest...

... accompanied by a guide accredited by the Ministry of Culture. Your guide, who knows every facet of Uzès, will give you the keys to understanding the scale of a square, the development of the town's districts, and be happy to answer any questions you may have about Uzès. Please feel free to ask.

The Heritage Department

... coordinates events held in Uzès, a Town of Artistic and Historical interest. With the help of its team of guides, its tourist office and cultural establishments, it offers activities for its residents and school children all year round. It is at your disposal for any projects you may have in mind.

If you are a member of a group...

... Uzès offers tours all year round in French or other languages by reservation. Brochures and programmes will be sent to you on request.

Information, reservations

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Uzès is a member of the **national network** of Towns and Territories of Artistic and Historical Interest

The Heritage Department of the Ministry of Culture and Communication grants the title of Towns and Territories of Artistic and Historical Interest (*Villes et Pays d'art et d'histoire*) to local authorities with a particular interest in bringing their heritage to life for the public. It guarantees the competence and quality of the guides who present the architecture and heritage of these towns. From ancient ruins to the architecture of the 21st century, the towns and territories display their heritage in all its diversity. Today, there is a network of 184 towns and territories to welcome you throughout the whole of France.

In the vicinity,

Nîmes, Beaucaire, Lodève, Narbonne, Carcassonne and Perpignan have all been awarded the label of Town of Artistic and Historical Interest, Mende and Lot en Gévaudan, Pézenas, the valley of the Têt as well as the Catalan valleys of the Tech and Ter have been granted that of Territories of Artistic and Historical Interest.

“Finally, when the night has spread its sails,
The moon with its changing face
Seems seated on a silver throne,
Holding court with the stars.
The sky remains clear as it runs its course,
And our nights are more beautiful than your days.”

JEAN RAGINE, LETTER OF 17TH JANUARY 1662 TO HIS COUSIN NICOLAS VITARD.