

Touristic Guide to Toulouse

Ideally located at the heart of Southwestern France, between the Mediterranean Sea and the Atlantic Ocean, the pink city with its unique rich history features a joyful combination of heritage and “art de vivre”. From the river Garonne to the Canal du Midi listed as an UNESCO World Heritage, from the Cathars to the Basilica of Saint-Sernin on the way of Saint-James, from the Natural History Museum to the Capitole Place, from the 30 markets to the six Michelin stars restaurants, your stay in Toulouse will be a great moment of pleasure.

So, if you have an hour or two to spare during your stay, visit the city with this mini guide of must-sees and sights to enjoy!

1: Place du Capitole

This place is composed of the current city hall (Hôtel de Ville), Capitole Theatre, National Orchestra and Opera House. This building is remarkable with its 8 columns of pink marble on façade, Henry IV courtyard, the place where the Duke of Montmorency was killed, and the “Salle des Illustres” inspired by the Farnese Gallery in Rome where the golden mouldings compete with the beauty of the paintings in the cartouches. Also see the rooms Jean-Paul Laurens, Henri Martin, Paul Gervais...these historical rooms of the Capitole are open to the public the first Sunday of each month.

2: Banks of the Garonne River

If you have time for a stroll, you should go from St Pierre’s Place, the famous student spot where you can take a budget-friendly drink, to the “Pont neuf”, new bridge in French. On your way along the Garonne River you walk past The Notre Dame de la Daurade basilica with its black virgin dressed by fashion designers. You will also pass in front of The Arts Academy with its monumental façade before ending up at The Pont Neuf built in 1632.

3: L’Hotel d’Assézat

It’s a magnificent 18th Century town mansion built by Nicolas Bachelier for Pierre d’Assézat who made his fortune from woad, a plant used in dyeing. The building houses the Fondation Bemberg, a private museum with a very interesting permanent collection of paintings, bronzes and art objects.

5: Jacobins ‘Cloisters

Unique in Toulouse, this building entirely made of bricks, made the contrast between its massive or even austere aspect of the exterior and the extraordinary lightness of the interior architecture where the famous palm-tree ribs thrust upwards. There is also the cloister, the sacristy, the chapter house and a chapel dedicated to Saint Antonin which are decorated with a set of mural paintings from the 14th Century.

6: The St Etienne Cathedral

A disconcerting church because its building was spread over 5 centuries, from the 13th Century to the 16th Century, during which the architectural concepts went through significant transformations. Entrance to the cathedral is via the nave called Raymondine, of a southern gothic style with its wide single nave. The second part of the building, made up of a vast choir, was built in a Northern gothic style in order to rival other great cathedrals. It contains some interesting ornamental elements: stained glass windows, tapestries, paintings, a large rose window, a magnificent large organ suspended 17 metres up and 17 chapels.

7: The covered market Victor Hugo

Close to the Jean Jaures metro station, this market is the home to famous traders who have hand-made local food. Not expensive, it is the best place to buy the city’s gastronomic specialties including the Saucisses de Toulouse (a type of sausage), cassoulet Toulousain (a bean and pork stew) and garbure (a cabbage soup with poultry). Also, foie gras, the liver of an overfed duck or goose, is a delicacy mainly

made in the Midi-Pyrénées. On the first floor, restaurants are budget-friendly and open for lunch offering great and fresh local dishes. Open week mornings - closed on Mondays.

8: Saint Sernin Basilica

A masterpiece of Roman art, the Saint-Sernin basilica has had significant renovation work done on it over the past 30 years : recovery of the bell tower, extrication of the mural paintings of the 12th Century, revival of the alter from 1096, the crypts and the displays of the treasure trove (with its exceptional works). It's an important pilgrimage stop on the Way of Saint James, "Routes of Santiago de Compostela". The treasure trove of the basilica is located in the ambulatory and in the crypts of the building.

9: Le Canal du Midi

In 1681, thanks to Pierre-Paul Riquet, buried at St Etienne Cathedral, after 15 years, the Canal du Midi was inaugurated, linking the town of Sète to Toulouse. In 1996 it was included on the UNESCO list of world heritage sites. Rivers canal offer plenty of natural areas that are ideal for relaxing, walking or playing sport. You just have to go to the rail station and follow the path.

10: The Old City Center

The old city center is pedestrian-friendly and you will find everything you need within walking distance. The city is on the site of an ancient Roman settlement, even today many of the smaller streets follow their Roman counterparts and many of the red brick buildings are of a pseudo-Roman style. These buildings are also what gives Toulouse its nickname La ville rose (The pink city).

Between The Capitole Place, Esquirol station and St Etienne Cathedral you just have to explore and enjoy.

Much more to explore...

This guide is only a brief introduction to everything that Toulouse has to offer. If you want to grab more information, visit the official website: www.toulouse-visit.com