

Saint-Gaudens > Tarbes

Sunday July 12th • Stage 9 • 160.5 km

Region

● **Midi-Pyrénées**

With eight counties and a surface area of 45,000 km², Midi-Pyrénées is France's vastest region (with French Guiana) and is bigger than Denmark, Belgium or Switzerland. This immense area which is bordered by the Pyrenees Mountains to the south and the Massif Central to the north east is obviously very diverse even if the sunniness, the love of gastronomy, rugby and the capacity to welcome visitors are attractions that all of the counties have to offer.

The region's economy is dominated by the dynamism of Toulouse, the regional capital, whose activity influences those of the other neighbouring major cities, Pau or Carcassonne. The Pink City is the third biggest student city in France and is also the French capital of the aeronautics industry.

In the rest of the region, the arms industry (Tarbes) or the pharmaceutical industry (Castres, Agen) are both leading activities. However agriculture dominates the region making Midi-Pyrénées the country's second leading agricultural centre.

Tourism is also rapidly developing and the Pyrenees' many winter ski resorts attract alpine sports and nature enthusiasts alike.

Website: <http://www.midipyrenees.fr/>

Counties

● **Upper Garonne**

Prefecture: Toulouse

Sub-prefectures: Saint-Gaudens, Murat

Population: 1,135,000

Website: <http://www.cg31.fr/>

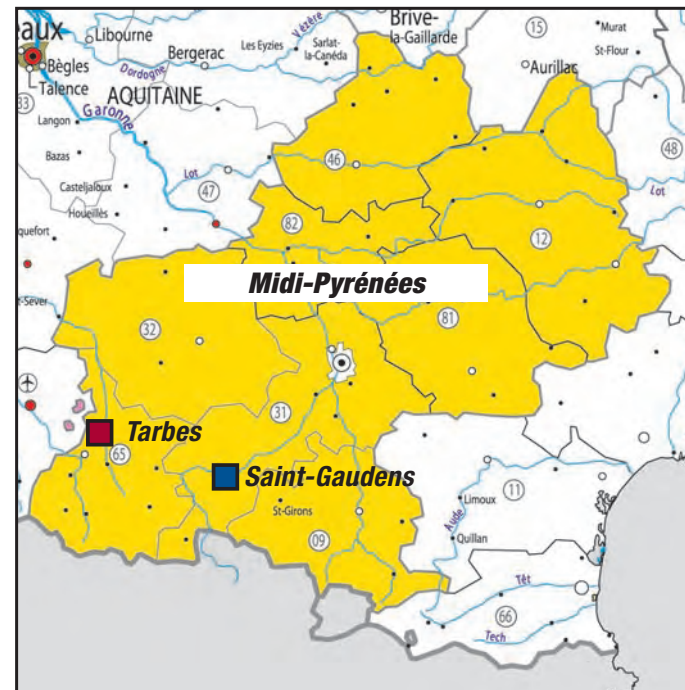
● **Upper Pyrenees**

Prefecture: Tarbes

Sub-prefectures: Argelès-Gazost, Bagnères-de-Bigorre

Population: 235,000

Website: <http://www.cg65.fr/>



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- **Arreau**
The sound of the two spring water rivers which pass through this village adds to its typically Pyrenean-style charm.
- **Luz-Saint-Sauveur**
Although the town has attracted those who came to take the waters for a long time, visitors now travel to Luz-Ardiden for its ski runs.
- **Lourdes**
The Tour's followers are in addition to the town's five million annual visitors. Lourdes is the second leading town in France with regard to its hotel capacity.

The Tour pays a visit to...



Bernard Lapasset

photo : Presse Sports

Bernard Lapasset was born in Tarbes in 1947 and was the Chairman of the French Rugby Federation from 1991 to 2007. Since 2008, he has been in charge of the International Rugby Board (IRB).

"I left Paris four years ago to return to my family home in Tarbes. I live in Louit, a small village with 150 inhabitants, 15 km from Tarbes, on the slopes of Le Magnoac. This hilly terrain is perfect for a cycling enthusiast like me. I like the road of Tarbes' mountain passes in Bagnères-de-Bigorre which overlooks the Central Pyrenees mountain range, whose highest point is the Pic du Midi. I also like the many small farm tracks: these paths which meander through the woods. With outings like this you can forget your worries, recharge your batteries and everything seems easier and more straightforward. At one time, I cycled up to 3,500 km per year. With Jo Maso, (the manager of the France National Rugby Team) and Jean Dunyach (the Vice

Chairman of the French Rugby Federation), we climbed the Aspin, Ventoux and Tourmalet Passes. Tarbes is a medium-sized town which is focused on sport, and naturally rugby and the heyday of players such as Jauréguy and Crabos. Today, the mythical Jules Soulé Stadium where I went with my father is in a rather neglected state. There is also fencing with the Touya family, women's basketball and the equestrian tradition with the National Stud. Tarbes is a service-industry and a garrison town which is being renovated. The elegant houses are being restored and the façades of the town's buildings are illuminated. And the cultural centre, which is called "Le parvis" (the square) offers a quality entertainment programme. On Thursday mornings, I like going to Marcadieu Market with its Eiffel-style metal structure. It is a meeting place with different accents, smells and fragrances. When I was a child I went there with my grand parents who were farmers."

▶ SAINT-GAUDENS

Saint-Gaudens today

A museum for the circuit?

People tend to forget it, but for a long time Saint-Gaudens was a prime site for racing since the Comminges circuit, built in 1925, hosted 18 Grand Prix races for automobiles and 15 Grand Prix races for motorcycles. In 1928, the circuit was even used for the French Grand Prix, before it was closed in 1954.

But there are still traces of the circuit in the town: the Azémar public garden bears the name of the founder of the circuit and the Boulevard Wimille, the Rue Etancelin or the Avenue René Dreyfus, named after the driver who miraculously survived an accident on the circuit, pay tribute to the drivers of the period. Since 1985, the "Ecurie Automobile du Comminges" has organised retrospectives which are very popular with the public. This is how the idea of creating a museum was born and the initiative is supported by the "Communauté des communes" (federation of municipalities) of Saint-Gaudin.



The dynamism of the town centre of Saint-Gaudens - Photo : Laure Tabary

- **Population:** 12,000 inhabitants (natives known as "Saint-Gaudinois" (m), "Saint-Gaudinoises" (f))
- **Economy:** the paper making industry, Sunn (bicycle manufacturers), Sercel (drilling equipment)
- **Local celebrities:** Pierre Berbizier, Élie Baup
- **Sports club:** "Ours de Saint-Gaudens" (the Saint Gaudens Bears) (rugby league - 13 players).
- **Festivals:** "les Rencontres du saxophone" (a jazz festival), "les Promonades" (a public and street art festival)
- **Labels of approval:** Town in Bloom ("Ville Fleurie" - three flowers award).
- **Local fare:** specialities from the south west, confit, etc.
- **Website:** <http://www.stgaudens.com/index.php>

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▶ SAINT-GAUDENS

Saint-Gaudens and cycling

Saint-Gaudens is one of the Pyrenean cities whose name rings a bell with cycling fans. Some of the greatest mountain stages in the Tour's history finished there, such as in 1955, when Louison Bobet put on the yellow jersey and kept it on for the rest of the race, allowing him to become the first man to win three Tours de France in a row. It was also after the start in Saint-Gaudens in 1976 that Joop Zoetemelk was relegated by Lucien Van Impe by more than 3 minutes and the latter took a firm option in Saint-Lary-Soulan on the overall victory.



Louison Bobet during the 1955 Tour de France - Photo : Presse Sports

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- **475:** The remains of a young shepherd, Gaudens, who was beheaded by the Visigoths for refusing to convert to Arianism, were buried in the town, which was known as Mas Saint-Pierre.
- **9th century:** People began to come to worship in Saint-Gaudens. The town of Mas Saint-Pierre adopted the name of the saint.
- **11th century:** A collegiate church was built to house the martyr's remains.
- **1202:** The inhabitants obtained a "charte de coutumes" (a charter of rights and obligations) granted by Bernard IV, the Count of Comminges.
- **1258:** Gaston VII of Béarn seized the town at the expense of the people of Comminges.
- **1309:** Pope Clement V, the former bishop of Comminges, recognized the authenticity of the martyr's remains.
- **1569:** The town was looted by the Count of Montgomery's Huguenot soldiers.
- **1607:** The town and the region of Nébouzan, which belonged to the Crown Estate of Navarre, were incorporated into the Kingdom of France by Henry IV.
- **1661:** On August 30th, the martyr's remains, which had been put in a safe place during the Wars of Religion, were put back in the college church.

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▶ SAINT-GAUDENS

The return of the stolen tapestries

30 August 1661 is one of the important dates in Saint-Gauden's history, as the remains of the saint who gave his name to the town were returned to the collegiate church on that day. They had been previously moved to protect them from being pillaged and destroyed during the wars. 29 September 1997 could have become a date which was celebrated by the inhabitants of Saint-Gaudens: on this day two priceless Aubusson tapestries, which had been stolen by daring burglars seven years earlier, were returned to the same collegiate church. "The Triumph of Faith", a copy of one of Rubens' paintings and the "Martyrdom of Saint-Gaudens", which recounts the legend of the saint beheaded by the Visigoths, disappeared sometime during the night of 20 December 1989. The tapestries, which were made around 1760 by the Royal of Factory of Aubusson, only reappeared seven years later during an auction in New York at Sotheby's. It was an archivist from Aubusson who recognized the stolen works when he looked at the sales catalogue out of curiosity.



The collegiate church of Saint-Gaudens - Photo : Laure Tabary

A long investigation was carried out by the FBI and established the seller's good faith. After many discussions between the American authorities and the French ministries concerned, the stolen tapestries were recovered, probably in return for a fee. Therefore the poor shepherd Gaudens returned to his place of burial. And as for the thieves, they have never been caught...

THE COLLEGIATE CHURCH

With its cloister and its chapter house, it was one of Comminges' important religious buildings. It housed a college of canons, a community of clerics founded by Bishop Bertrand. The 11th century Romanesque church, built on the typical Pyrenean plan as a basilica with three naves, stands on the site of an earlier construction. It was extended in the 12th and 13th centuries with the construction of the cloister and the chapter house. The north side gate was added in the 16th century. The building and its belfry were restored in the 19th and 20th centuries. The most interesting of the decorated capitals are located in the sanctuary and were the work of master-craftsmen from Aragon. They represent "the Fall of Adam and Eve", scenes from medieval life and monstrous animals.

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Along the way...

UPPER GARONNE (31)

Upper Garonne, whose county town is Toulouse, is situated in the heart of the Midi-Pyrénées region, and has 1,135,000 inhabitants. The county is crossed by 200 kilometres of the River Garonne. It has a variety of landscapes and above all of cultures such as: the urban area around Toulouse, the countryside with its authentic traditions and finally the mountains which boast 4 ski resorts (Luchon Superbagnères, Peyragudes, Le Mouris and Bourg d'Oueil) or the high peaks on the Spanish border. These attractions explain why the tourism industry employs more than 10,500 people on a permanent basis, for all kinds of activities, with an annual turnover of approximately 457 million euros. Apart from foie gras and duck breast, the famous Toulouse «cassoulet» is a real treat. Toulouse sausage, one of the ingredients for Toulouse «cassoulet» has pride of place among the best French culinary achievements. Lastly, the local economy relies principally on the aeronautics and space industries.

MONTRÉJEAU - km 10.5 Pop. 2,600

Montréjeau is the home town of the former international rugby players, Gérald Martinez and Serge Gabernet. The castle of Valmirande, which is a listed building, was erected at the end of the 19th century by Baron Bertrand de Lassus. Its plans were designed by Louis Garros, an architect from Bordeaux. The grounds, which feature on the list of remarkable parks and gardens, were created by the Bühler brothers. The French-style flower beds were designed by René-Édouard André.

UPPER PYRENEES (65)

The county of Upper Pyrenees has 236,000 inhabitants over an area spanning 4,464 km². Three distinct sectors make up the local landscapes: the mountain and its valleys which cover 50% of the land, the hills and the plains. To the south, the mountains form a barrier with the Spanish border at high altitude: 35 peaks top 3,000 metres. Tourism represents the county's principal economic activity, thanks in great part to Lourdes, the second most visited pilgrimage site in the world, and the circus of Gavarnie, which is listed as a UNESCO World Heritage site.

The Pic du Midi culminates at 2,877 m. It is reached by the cable car which leaves from La Mongie, with 600 m² of panoramic terraces and allows visitors to discover more than 300 km of the Pyrenees' mountain peaks. There are many winter sports resorts there (12 in total including Cauterets, Luz-Ardiden, Hautacam or Saint-Lary), without overlooking its thermal spas (Argelès-Gazost, Barèges-Barzun and Beaucens, etc). Lastly, a real Bigourdan menu always begins with «garbure»: it is a soup made from Tarbes beans, ham bones, morsels of duck or goose confit, black Bigorre pork, cabbage, leeks, carrots, turnips, onions and garlic.

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Along the way...

ARREAU - km 48 Pop. 820

Arreau is one of Bigorre's mountain villages. The charm of the old houses and monuments is enhanced by two spring water rivers which cross it, the Neste and the Luron. The Pyrenees Mountains harmoniously complete this picture postcard scenery. In addition to the village's appeal, the surroundings are also stunning, with the Aulon Nature Reserve which is very nearby and several ski resorts.

Arreau is the former capital of the Four Valleys and is located on one of the secondary routes followed by Saint James of Compostela's pilgrimage: the path of the Valley of Aure. Its remote situation meant that the village did not become involved in the majority of conflicts which bathed the region in blood. The town hall market of Arreau is very picturesque as well as the attractive "Maison des Lys", whose wooden façade is sculpted with hundreds of fleur-de-lis. Arreau was the birthplace of Jean Bertrand Féragaud, the courageous Deputy of the Convention, who was lynched by the mob in Paris in 1795.

THE ASPIN PASS - km 60.5

The Aspin is one of the passes which the route of the Tour has most taken, since it

has been climbed by the pack and the publicity caravan 68 times. The climb begins on the outskirts of Arreau and lasts for 12.3 km with an average slope of 6.7% and a difference in height of 770 metres from start to finish.

The list of riders who made it to the top of the pass first since the initial ascent in 1910 reads like a Who's Who of outstanding climbers, from Octave Lapize to Richard Virenque, as well as Jean Robic, Gino Bartali, Fausto Coppi, Louison Bobet, Charly Gaul, Federico Bahamontes and Lucien Van Impe.

LA MONGIE - km 85.5 Pop. 50 (9,000 in winter)

La Mongie is a winter sports resort situated half-way up the ascent to the Tourmalet Pass and is a prime site for cycling as well as skiing: the Tour goes through the resort each time it takes the great Pyrenean pass. La Mongie also hosted the Alpine Ski World Cup in 1985.

Situated at the foot of the Pic du Midi of Bigorre, La Mongie and Barèges are linked together and form the biggest ski area on the French side of the Pyrenees Mountain range, with 69 ski waymarked runs and 43 ski-lifts.

The name of the resort comes from the word "Monge" (monk) due to the presence of monks who had withdrawn to the shelter of the Pic du Midi of Bigorre in the Middle

Ages. At the beginning of the 20th century, when the Tour passed through there for the first time, there were only a few shepherds' huts. Skiing in the resort began moderately around 1920 but in 1945 the first ski lift was installed, which was the fruit of the work of Pierre Lamy de la Chapelle, the resort's unquestionable founder. The domain stretches over an altitude of between 1,400 and 2,500 metres on both sides of the Tourmalet Pass. Barèges is situated on the west side and La Mongie on the east side. The link between the two ski areas was established in 1973.

The resort's other unusual feature is the cable car which goes up to the Pic du Midi of Bigorre (2,782 m). Today the resort is managed by the former captain of the French National Rugby Team (15 player game), Jean-Michel Aguirre, a great cycling enthusiast. La Mongie has hosted three Tour de France stage finishes, where 3 great champions dominated the race: Bernard Thévenet (1970), Lance Armstrong (2002) and Ivan Basso (2004). Adrien Théaux, who is currently a member of the French team or the former World Snowboard Champion, Mathieu Crépel are two of the skiers who have been trained in La Mongie.

THE TOURMALET PASS - km 90

The Tourmalet is the mountain pass which has been climbed the most often

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by the race's riders: they have gone over its peak 75 times. Culminating at 2,115 metres, it is also one of the highest points on the Tour's route, since the fourth highest finish of the race was judged there in 1974 and was won by Jean-Pierre Danguillaume.

Shepherds, pilgrims or pedlars have always travelled along this pass, whose name means "bad detour". It was first mentioned in 1675, when Madame de Maintenon went over its peak in a sedan chair. As a flood had cut off the road from Luz to Barèges, this was the only solution to be able to go "to take the waters" in Barèges in order to treat the Duke of Maine. Moreover, Madame de Maintenon gave her name to the town of Barèges, whose original name at that time was Bourg des Bains.

The modernization of the pass was carried out during the Second Empire, and the work financed by Napoleon III was completed on 30 August 1864 when the "spa route" was opened. The Tour de France completed the patents of nobility already awarded to the pass. The Tourmalet was first climbed in 1910 by Octave Lapize and since then the peloton's greatest names have triumphed there.

From Sainte-Marie de Campan, the road ascends for 16.9 kilometres with an average gradient of 7.2%. At the peak,

a monument pays tribute to the former director of the Tour de France, Jacques Goddet. Sainte-Marie de Campan will be the departure point of the ascent this year and is known by the race's followers in particular as the place where Eugène Christophe was able to repair the broken fork of his bicycle in its forge in 1913.

LUZ-SAINT-SAUVEUR - km 108 Pop. 1,200

Victor Hugo lived in Luz in 1843. This is how he explained the origin of the name of this village which is well known by the race's followers: When the Spanish "miquelets" (irregular Catalan militia) and smugglers arrived from Aragon by La Brèche de Roland, they suddenly noticed great brightness coming from the depths of the dark gorge, in the same way as for those who are in a cellar when its door is opened. They rushed to find a lively and very luminous town, which they called Light, "Luz". Saint-Sauveur was added to the village's name in 1962. As the mountain torrents of Gavarnie and Beston go through Luz and converge downstream from the village to form the Gave de Pau, floods have often influenced its history. A hydro-electric power station has been able to take advantage of this topography. In the Middle Ages, the other torment which was experienced by the village's

inhabitants was the continual attacks by Spanish plunderers, the "miquelets". The building of ramparts around the church protected Luz from them.

Sainte-Marie Castle, which is today in ruins, represents the village's past. It changed hands many times, belonging to the Hospitallers of Jerusalem and then the Knights of Malta before being occupied by the English, who were driven out by the inhabitants at the beginning of the 15th century. The thermal baths, which were known in particular for their healing properties for gynaecological conditions, then brought wealth to the village and Napoleon III fell in love with it. In 1861, the Emperor built a huge bridge there which spanned the Gave de Pau. Since the 1960s Luz has banked on its other tourist attractions and in particular the Luz-Ardiden ski resort, designed in 1966 and opened in 1975, with only two ski lifts. Today the domain stretches over 100 hectares and allows tourists and locals alike to ski on 60 km of waymarked runs. The Tour route passes through Luz-Saint-Sauveur each time it goes over the Tourmalet pass. In 1985, it hosted the start of the individual time trial which was won by Stephen Roche. Seven finishes have been judged in Luz-Ardiden. The first one in 1985 was won by Pedro Delgado and the last one in 2003, was won by Lance Armstrong.

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ARGELÈS-GAZOST - km 125.5 Pop. 3,500

Situated on the Gave d'Azun, an essential stop-off point between the Aubisque and Tourmalet Passes, Argelès-Gazost has often seen the Tour pass by, but it has only hosted one departure stage, which finished in Pampelune and was won by the Swiss rider Laurent Dufaux.

Argelès-Gazost is a spa resort and a village which is ideally situated for holidays in the Pyrenees. In the summer, visitors can go hiking in the National Park, situated less than 20 km away or the nature reserve of Pibeste, which has a great variety of protected animal and plant species. They can also visit the Pyrenees Safari Park located at the entrance to the village, on arrival from Lourdes. In the winter, there are no fewer than four ski resorts which are less than 15 km away and in particular Hautacam, which is linked to Argèles for administrative purposes.

To begin with, Gazost was the name of the spring located about ten kilometres away. In the 19th century, its water was used to supply the rapidly developing spa and the spring's name was added to Argèles. Due to the village's spa tradition, which attracted the English who came to take the waters, magnificent 19th century houses are scattered throughout its streets and are overlooked by the per-

fectly preserved defence towers from the Middle Ages, the towers of Mieuzac and of Mendaigne.

LOURDES - km 139 Pop. 16,000

In the heart of the Pyrenees, Lourdes welcomes more than 5 million visitors each year from around the world. However, the town was only a small village with 4,000 inhabitants on 11 February 1858, when Bernadette Soubirous met the "Lady" who was going to change Lourdes into a pilgrimage site, on the banks of the River Gave. Today Lourdes is the second leading town in France in terms of its number of hotels (it has almost 250 of them). Its geographical situation at the foot of the mountains also makes it an ideal departure point for excursions to the Pyrenees Mountains.

In the middle of the 19th century, Lourdes was a small quiet village in Bigorre, which had not been involved in the turmoil that the neighbouring water towns had experienced. Situated on the right bank of the River Gave, at the foot of its stronghold, Lourdes enjoyed a peaceful existence. Bernadette Soubirous was born on 7 January 1844, a year after the marriage of her parents, who were millers, in "Le Moulin de Boly" (the Mill of Boly). Bernadette described this mill, where she spent

the first ten years of her life as the "mill of happiness". This happiness was short lived due to the death of her younger brother, followed by the accident of her father who lost the sight of one eye. The little girl herself also experienced serious health problems as she was asthmatic. In 1854, the family was obliged to leave the mill. François Soubirous earned his living from temporary jobs. Three years later, he was accused of stealing flour and was arrested. At that time the family was living in a "cachot", a dark, tiny room, which was a former prison cell. The miracle that was to change the destiny of Bernadette and Lourdes occurred on 11 February 1858. While she was on the banks of the River Gave where she had gone to gather firewood, she saw "a lady dressed in white" near a grotto. On the following Sunday, Bernadette returned to the grotto and the same lady appeared again. On the following Thursday, the apparition spoke to Bernadette and asked her to come and see her every day for two weeks and to drink the water from the grotto's spring. During the following visits, Bernadette was accompanied by one hundred, then one hundred and fifty and then by as many as eight thousand people to whom she passed on the lady's messages.

People thought that she was mad and she was threatened with imprisonment.

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The first miracle occurred on 1 March. One of Bernadette's friends, Catherine Latapie, plunged her dislocated arm into the water of the spring and it regained normal movement. The lady asked Bernadette to go to the local priests and tell them to build a chapel on the site of the apparitions, but Father Peyramale, the parish priest of Lourdes, insisted that the lady perform a miracle to prove that she was real. The crowd continued to grow, but it was only on 25 March that the lady said to Bernadette "I am the Immaculate Conception", an expression which the young girl had never heard before. Father Peyramale was disturbed.

The miracle of the candle appeared on 7 April: the flame of the candle that Bernadette was holding licked her hand without burning it.

The final appearance occurred on 16 July in front of the grotto, which had been barricaded. The Virgin Mary appeared before Bernadette 18 times.

For 150 years, 67 miracles have been officially recognized by the Church, the last one being in 2005.

Today the Sanctuaries of Lourdes cover 51 hectares and are divided up in to 22 places of worship. More than 100,000 voluntary workers as well as 292 permanent and 120 seasonal workers are involved in the organisation and supervision of

the pilgrimages. With regard to sport, the town was the capital of French rugby in the 1950s and 60s under the leadership of Jean Prat, one of the greatest players ever. The Tour de France has only arrived in the town once, in 1948. Gino Bartali known as "Gino the Pious" was the winner. But Lourdes was also the departure town for the Tour in 1990 and has hosted three finishes in the ski resort of Hautacam.

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TARBES

Tarbes today

The PAMELA Project

The PAMELA Project (Process for Advanced Management of End-of-Life of Aircraft), which involves the dismantling and recycling of aircraft, provides an opportunity to give a new boost to the economy of Tarbes. For several years, the chamber of commerce and industry analysed opportunities for creating an industrial aeronautics site around Tarbes-Lourdes International Airport. With its long runway which allows all kinds of aircraft



Town Hall - Photo : Mairie de Tarbes

to land there, it was the perfect place for this “aircraft scrap yard” project. The idea which was able to win over Airbus is original: it is a genuine “scrap yard for aircraft” which allows them to be dismantled but above all to recycle their components or equipment. The first aircraft which was used for experimental purposes arrived at the site in March 2006 when the platform had become operational. The project, which entered its industrial phase in 2007, plans to be able to dismantle and recycle ten aircraft per year. The future outlook is even more promising as 6,000 aircraft will finish active service in the next twenty years.

The objective of the Tarbes-Lourdes-Pyrenees platform is to become the reference centre for a European aircraft dismantling network, which will disseminate expertise and technology to other regions of the world.

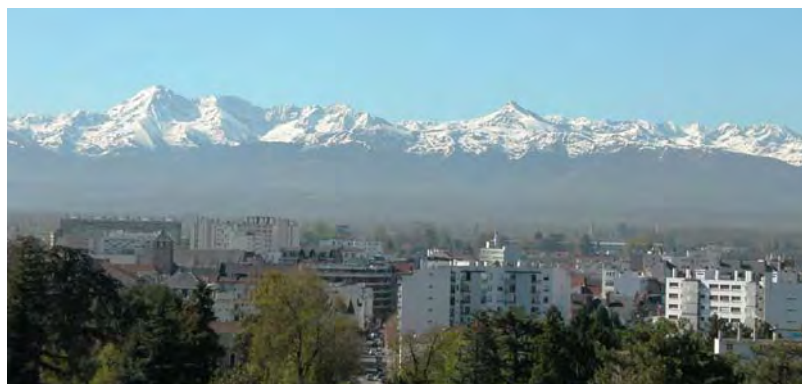
- **Population:** 48,000 inhabitants, natives known as “Tarbais” (m), “Tarbaïses” (f)
- **Economy:** arms, transport, the aeronautic industry, «CIEN» (International Centre for New Energy)
- **Sports clubs:** the Stadoceste Tarbais (rugby), Tarbes Gespe Bigorre (women’s basketball)
- **Local celebrities:** Marshall Foch, Théophile Gauthier, Lautréamont, Yvette Horner, Philippe Dintrans
- **Festivals:** Equestria, (an equestrian art festival), Tarbes-Pyrenees Comic Book Festival, International Festival of Argentine Tango, Pic d’Or (a French song festival)
- **Local fare:** Tarbes beans, garbure (soup made from Tarbes beans, ham bones, morsels of duck or goose confit, black Bigorre pork, cabbage, leeks, carrots, turnips, onions and garlic), “gâteau à la broche” (turnspit cake), madiran (red wine)

🏠 TARBES

Tarbes and cycling

The Tour is true to Tarbes, where it has been a departure town on several occasions in recent years. The race will return there again this year for the finish of the last Pyrenean stage. The last time that the finish line was marked out in the prefecture town of the Upper Pyrenees was more than fifty years ago. In 1951, it was the stage in which Wim Van Est, the winner the day before in Dax, and wearing the yellow jersey, fell into a ravine, after crossing the Aubisque Pass. The fall cost him the overall lead, but not his life. “Which God was watching over Wim Van Est?” asked the newspaper L’Équipe in astonishment in its headlines. The next day, between Tarbes and Luchon, Hugo Koblet went into the overall lead and remained there.

Van Est will go down in history as the first Dutch rider to wear the yellow jersey, but also the pink jersey of “Il Giro” (the Tour of Italy). The “survivor of the Aubisque Pass”, who won two other stages of the Tour later on, died in 2003 at the age of 80. A monument was built on the Aubisque Pass in memory of his fall.



View of the Pyrenees Mountain range from Tarbes - Photo : Mairie de Tarbes

2009 Stages

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- Introduction
- Departure town
- Along the way
- Arrival town

- **Roman Empire:** Tarba was made up of houses and big agricultural estates.
- **5th and 6th centuries:** A Roman camp was built to protect the town from the Barbarians. Its remains are situated in the rear courtyard of the prefecture.
- **840:** The Vikings looted Tarbes. The Bishop of Bigorre rebuilt the town, beginning with the cathedral, la Sède.
- **12th century:** The Count of Bigorre established his court in Tarbes Castle.
- **1569:** Jeanne d’Albret’s troops set fire to the town’s religious buildings. Its inhabitants were slaughtered.
- **1652:** A new era of prosperity coincided with the rebuilding of the Episcopal Palace, which has become the prefecture today.
- **1790:** Thanks to the influence of Bertrand Barère, the Deputy of the National Constituent Assembly, Tarbes became the prefecture of the Upper Pyrenees.
- **1806:** The French National Stud of Tarbes was created by Napoleon.
- **1851:** The future Marshall Foch was born in Tarbes.
- **1859:** The railway system was established in Tarbes.
- **1871:** The artillery manufacturing plant of Meudon moved to Tarbes. The “arsenal” turned Tarbes into a garrison town.
- **1944:** Tarbes received “La Croix de Guerre” (the war cross medal) for its participation in Resistance activities.

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 **TARBES**

The town of horses

The horses that were painted in the grotto of Niaux (Ariège), which greatly resemble Merens horses, the region's most well known breed, bear witness to the bond that has existed between men and horses in the Pyrenees for more than 20,000 years.

However, it was because of the Hussars, who turned Tarbes into a garrison town, that the National Stud was created in 1806 by imperial decree. It was used for many years to supply horses to the army's most eminent riders. Tarbes was one of the few studs to have been visited by the Emperor, two years after it was built in 1808. It is set in magnificent grounds covering nine hectares, and today represents a harmonious and remarkable Empire-style architectural grouping, which is a blend of sober and classical beauty. Following major renovation work that was carried out in 1995, a "Maison du Cheval" was created which houses a museum dedicated to the life and the image of horses in the region. In addition to traditional activities, the National Stud of Tarbes hosts the Equestria Festival each year and organises events focusing on the southern breeds and equestrian techniques. However, the stud's most won-



The National Stud - Photo : Mairie de Tarbes

derful heritage is its living heritage: the breeds of horses which are raised and remain within its walls. Although Tarbes protects and develops regional breeds such as Merens horses or Pyrenees donkeys, its breeding is particularly renowned for the Anglo-Arabian breed, the development of which the stud has greatly contributed for a century. The stud also accommodates Comtois, Percheron and Breton draught horses. In the town horses are ever present, from the statue of Marshall Foch to the racecourse located in Lalloubère, which is the oldest one in France.

THE NATIONAL STUD OF TARBES

(See higher up)

THE MASSEY GARDEN AND ITS MUSEUM

The beautiful park which covers 11 hectares has been awarded the "Jardin remarquable" (remarkable garden) label and provides an oasis of greenery in the heart of the town, thanks to its many species of trees and fauna which have found an exceptional urban habitat there. Placide Massey, the owner and creator of a garden with rare species, was a native of Tarbes and a brilliant horticulturist. He donated his garden and house to the town in 1853. The naturalist was the intendant of Queen Hortense's gardens and then the director of the gardens of Versailles, Trianon, Sèvres and Saint-Cloud. The garden will allow visitors to discover luxurious vegetation with trees dating back to 1830, a variety of plant species, conifers and cedars.