

Secrets de village... Le vieux-Cannet

Distance: 700 m • **Start:** Mission Cross car park

Set on a promontory, the castrum of Caneto is thought to have been founded in the 9th century after the ruin of Forum Voconii, the town established on the plain beside the Via Aurelia.

Vieux Cannet is a listed site, and sufficiently well-preserved to give a good impression of what a medieval castrum looked like.



1 Le portail de Guimard: a gate at the west entrance to the castrum. The now-absent Fougasse gate stood on the east side, by the Placette du Moulin square.

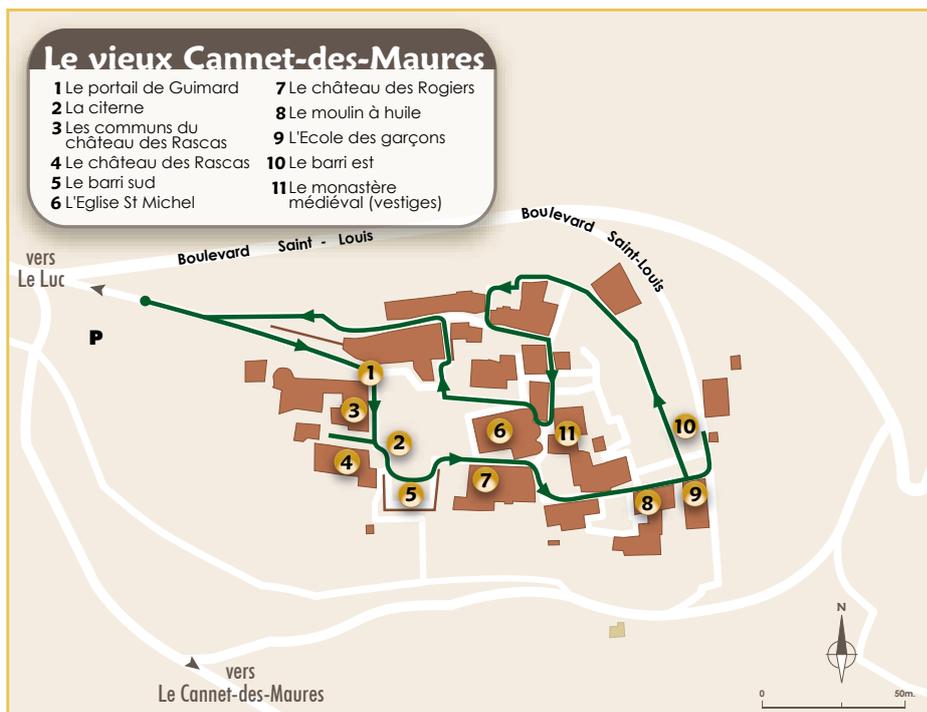
2 The cistern: built in 1848, as water was a crucial issue for the old village. Too far from the groundwater table, those living on the hill had no choice but to construct cisterns. Only the lords had been rich enough to install sizeable facilities in their castles, while the villagers had to travel to the Vazadelle spring on the eastern slope at the foot of the spur. New buildings did not include cisterns until the 19th century. The cistern on the square with its pump improved life in the village a little.

3 The castle's outbuildings: included a joiner's workshop, a chicken coop, a store room, an apartment for the staff and a stable. A 16th-century door opens onto the castle courtyard.

4 Le château des Rascas: this castle was destroyed in 1792 when seigniorial assets were redistributed. Only the cellars dating back to the castle's 9th-century origins were preserved. The current buildings are on the site of the south wing. The Revolutionaries' inventory of the property demonstrates its importance: 46 rooms were listed, including 30 for the Rascases' private apartments. The south façade had two round towers, there was a wing to the west, and the castle was on two floors.

5 The southern barri: the imposing south rampart protected the south face of the castrum. Viewpoint indicator. Between the Château des Rascas and the rampart, a stepped passageway (le Portalet) leads to the parapet walk. The Château du Bouillidou, a 19th-century residence, stands at the foot of the village. It belonged to the De Colbert family, the last marquises of Le Cannet, and descendants of the Rascas family. Napoleon slept here on 26 April 1814, when he was a prisoner en route for the Island of Elba.

6 L'église St Michel: this church was completed in 1027, and restored in the early 17th century having been damaged in the Wars of Religion. It is a superb example of early Romanesque art. It has a single nave, low-built and windowless; this has no transept and the choir has no ambulatory. It is built of hewn limestone, and has two side chapels forming a Latin cross. The tower dates from the early 12th century. The wrought-iron bell tower was given to the village in 1746, when Pierre Louis de Rascas became Marquis of Le Cannet, and the clock was installed in 1776. Above the entrance door, a consecration stone bearing two small figures surrounding a cross pattée is set into the wall. The church contains a Virgin and Child carved in fig wood: a fine piece attributed to a shepherd.



7 Le château des Rogiers: joint lords between the 16th and 17th centuries. A fortified building is presumed to have stood on this site from the 11th century. The renaissance-style column of tuff rock in front of the window dates from the 17th century, a period when the residence was being embellished by its owners. Part of the castle became the presbytery in 1680, and at times thereafter it contained the school.

8 The oil mill: this was activated by an animal, and of very ancient origin. In 1777, in a decision that was liberal for its time, the Rascas family surrendered the mill to communal use (mandatory use of an asset belonging to the lord). Its cistern was used as a water reserve, and an oven was installed in a part of its outbuildings in 1812. By 1835 it was no longer working, and it was sold by the village in 1937.

9 The boys' school: was built and started to operate in 1874. The access path known as the Boulevard St Louis was also created, running along the ramparts to the cemetery to the west.

10 The eastern barri: the eastern rampart is a remnant of the medieval walls.

11 The medieval monastery (remnants): this was used as a hospice for pilgrims en route to Santiago de Compostela.