

Secrets de village... Pignans

Distance: 1,3 km • **Start:** Place des Ecoles (car park)

The ecclesiastical Seignury of Pignans had considerable influence in the Middle Ages. This village on the plains, with the 780m high Notre Dame des Anges towering above it, still has the winding, vaulted alleys of its illustrious past.

1 Place des écoles: the bronze statue is a work by Olivier Descamp in homage to Jules Gérard, 'the lion killer'. Gérard was born in Pignans in 1817, and fought as a brigadier in the conquest of Algeria, where he gained a reputation as a fine marksman. When the Arabs were invaded by lions, they asked him to help resolve the problem, and it is said that he killed 25 lions in 11 years! He died in 1864, during an expedition to Sierra Leone. He is believed to have been Alphonse Daudet's inspiration for his 'Tartarin de Tarascon' ('The Braggart of Tarascon').



2 La collégiale: the first church is believed to have been founded by Thierry, son of Clovis, to commemorate a victory over the Wisigoths. It was destroyed by the Saracens, and rebuilt in 1039. The term collégiale appears around 1080, and a cloister is mentioned in 1246. These buildings were part

of a fortified monastery that was pillaged and burnt at the end of the 16th century during the Wars of Religion. The existing collegiate church dates from this time, but was reworked several times in the 17th and 18th centuries. It has a magnificent late-15th-century altarpiece, a painted wooden panel depicting a lamentation, attributed to the School of Avignon, and a beautiful 17th-century organ.

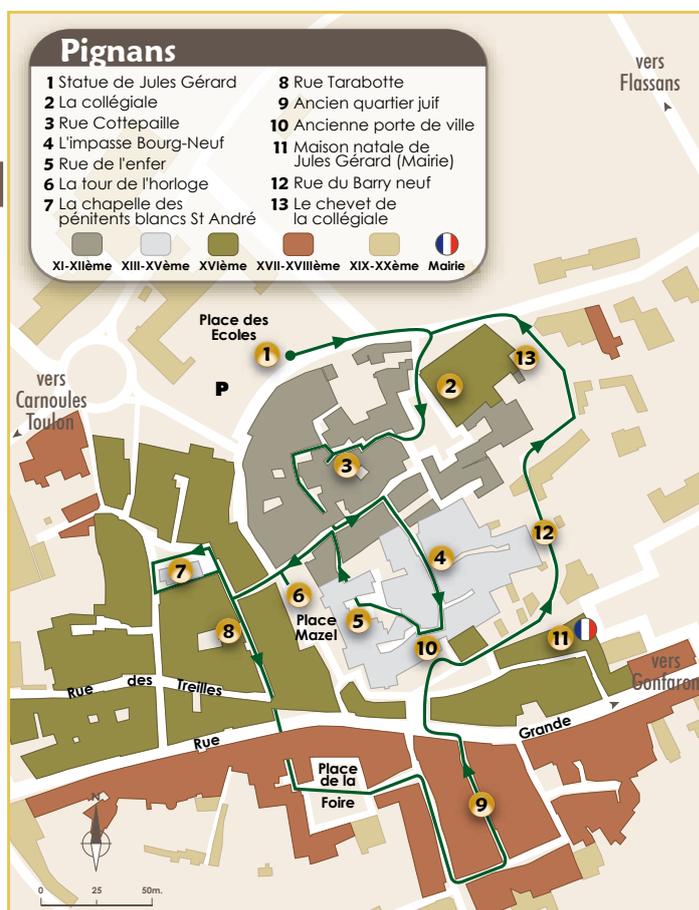
3 Rue Cottepaille: within the first walls of the burg that developed to the west of the collegiate church between the 11th and the 12th centuries. The signs of two trades can still be seen: a clog engraved in the stone at no.10, representing the clogmaker, and a cleaver at no.13 representing the butcher.

4 L'impasse Bourg-Neuf: a typical medieval alley with vaulted passages.

5 Rue de l'Enfer: the name comes from the old Provençal *les infèrs*, meaning the residues of olive oil, because at the time there was a mill in this street. At no.10 on the little square, the 15th-century stone house contained this mill and later the town hall.

6 Place Mazel: at no.29 there is a fine door by the reputed Vian sculptors, who specialised in furnishings for churches. The fountain on the square is the work of Joseph Vian, and dates from 1832. La Tour de l'Horloge, the clock tower known as the Porte Sarrasine, dates from 1630 and marks the position of the second medieval walls.

7 The St André chapel of the white penitents: built in the 13th century 'outside the walls'. Remnants of this are to be found in the house standing on the spot. The 16th-century village mainly extended around this priory.



8 Rue Tarabotte: known as Rue des Tallabots in the 16th century, it must have been inhabited by small people, as this is the definition of the word Tallabot.

9 Rue Juiverie: in 1306 the Jews were driven out of France by King Philippe Le Bel. Some of them found refuge in the County of Provence, which was then outside the Kingdom of France. In the late 15th century, Provence became part of France and the deportations resumed: only the States of the Pope of Avignon and the Comtat Venaissin retained some tolerance towards the Jews. Those who remained converted, and were known as the néophytes. In spite of the distrust of the time, most became gradually integrated into the higher strata of Provençal society. Some Jews set up home in this street in the 14th century, then formed a small district between the 17th and the 18th centuries.



10 Passage de la rue de l'église: a door providing access to the second medieval walls. These were erected to protect the houses built to the south of the original burg, between the 13th and 15th centuries.

11 La Mairie: the town hall was the birthplace of Jules Gérard. It has a beautiful carved door.

12 Rue du Barry Neuf: originally 'barri', meaning a rampart in Provençal. This street is thought to mark the position of the second medieval wall.

13 The chevet in the collegiate church: remnants of the wall of the Romanesque fortified monastery.

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