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Karin Møller Olsen
Jysk Fynske Medier – Daily readers: 302.000 – Advertising value: 6.667 €/page
• 3 pages article planned in 14 different editions

> Travel companion:

Christian Hjorth

If you are running late, please notify the contact person listed in the programme below.

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Canal du Midi, 30 years of UNESCO

2026 sees Occitanie celebrate the 30th anniversary of the Canal du Midi being a UNESCO World Heritage. Pierre-Paul Riquet's visionary project is a feat of 17th century engineering, with 240 km of canal running from Toulouse to the Mediterranean. The canal is now part of the region's identity and attracts thousands of visitors to soak up its locks, plane trees and pretty villages on a bike ride, boat trip or walk.

→Please see *The Canal du Midi press kit in English* on <https://press.tourism-occitanie.co.uk>

Some history - Pierre-Paul Riquet, the mind behind the Canal du Midi, was neither a royal engineer nor an academic. He was a modest tax collector in Languedoc. Yet it was he, through careful observation and intimate knowledge of the land, who realised that the Pyrenees – the source proposed by King Louis XIV's engineers – could never provide a reliable water supply. The mountains were too distant, the flow too erratic.

Riquet turned his attention instead to the Montagne Noire, south-east of Toulouse. There, rainfall was abundant, and the water could be guided through a network of small rivers and carefully constructed channels – the so-called “Rigoles” – towards the watershed dividing the Atlantic from the Mediterranean, known as “Le Seuil de Naurouze.” Undeterred by scepticism, he financed his own experiments and demonstrated, hands-on, that the system could work.

Over a period of around ten years, Riquet put his water supply and lock system to the test in the grounds of Bonrepos-Riquet Castle and constructed a series of “test ponds.” It was across this experimental complex, stretching over nearly two hectares, that Riquet meticulously studied and refined the water system for his future Canal du Midi, patiently working out every detail that would one day bring his ambitious vision to life.

Pierre-Paul Riquet risked everything on his audacious project. He invested a large part of his personal fortune and took on not only the financial, but also the technical and political risks – all to prove that it could be done and to secure the king's support. As a reward, King Louis XIV granted him the right to collect tolls from the canal's shipping traffic, giving him hope of eventually recouping his investment.

Without Riquet's keen insight, financial courage, relentless perseverance, and practical solutions, the canal would likely never have been built. Yet he never lived to see his life's work completed – in 1680, he died heavily in debt while construction continued without him. His vision and determination, however, endure in the canal, which still stands as a testament to his genius and tireless efforts.

Other sources of information:

- At the origins of the Canal du Midi : www.visit-occitanie.com/en/discovering/major-sites/sources-canal-du-midi/
- Canal du Midi, Unesco classified site : www.tourisme-occitanie.com/destinations/sites-unesco/canal-du-midi/

Cycling along the Canal du Midi

Cycling the Canal du Midi offers a gentle adventure where nature, heritage, and freedom meet. This UNESCO-listed route runs nearly 240 km from Toulouse to Sète, passing locks, villages, and Mediterranean landscapes. A flat, car-free greenway makes for an easy, stress-free ride, with each section offering its own charm—from lively Toulouse to the calm lagoons of the Thau Basin.

Five good reasons to cycle the Canal du Midi?

1. UNESCO World Heritage route
2. Flat, traffic-free, shaded paths
3. Stop off at Toulouse, Carcassonne, Béziers, Narbonne, Sète
4. Perfect for first-time cyclists too!
5. Easy to organise

Monday 27 April

17h10 Take-off from Copenhagen Airport
19h20 Arrival in Lyon St Exupéry airport
Diner and night in Lyon

Tuesday 28 April

06h40 Train departure from Lyon Part Dieu to Toulouse
10h52 Arrival in Toulouse
• Welcome in Toulouse by Birgitte Reimers and transfer to the hotel

Appart-Hotel Clément Ader **** (« Accueil Vélo » accommodation)

- 23 rue Bayard – 31000 Toulouse / www.apparthotel-clementader.fr

The Clément Ader Aparthotel is a 4-star residence located in the heart of Toulouse, between Matabiau station and Place du Capitole. The property underwent a complete refurbishment in 2021, features a heated outdoor swimming pool, a sauna and a gym, and also holds the 'Accueil Vélo' certification, making it easy to explore the city's cycle routes.

Lunch suggestions :

- Les restaurants du Marché Victor Hugo – Place Victor Hugo – www.marche-victor-hugo.fr – situated only 450m from the hotel : *Since 1896, the Victor Hugo Market, the oldest covered market in France, has been an authentic and iconic landmark of the Pink City. Ideally located in the heart of a lively district, **Victor Hugo Market** welcomes both discerning food lovers and curious visitors throughout the seasons. Bringing together around sixty traders passionate about fine food, representing all traditional food professions, it serves as a showcase of Toulouse's local gastronomy—excellent yet accessible to all. The uniqueness of this market also lies in the presence of various **restaurants** on the upper floor of the hall, whose talent highlights the regional produce available on the ground floor.*
- Le Goût en train - 5 Bis Rue Caussette / 05 62 30 08 08 – 500 M from the hotel
- Le J'Go - 16 place Victor Hugo - <https://leigo.com> – 450m from the hotel

- 14h Meeting in front of the Tourist Office, Square De-Gaulles for an English-guided tour with Marie-France Cerutti with focus on the story of the canal du Midi

Toulouse - A Capital of Expertise and Heritage

Vibrant, passionate, and full of life, Toulouse is the beating heart of Occitanie. Its iconic orange-rose brick architecture tells a story shaped by 2,000 years of history.

Here, cutting-edge aeronautical and space landmarks coexist seamlessly with historic charm. Bathed in sunshine, buzzing with festivals, and brimming with a relaxed, joyful spirit, Toulouse is a city that many French dream of calling home. www.toulouse-tourisme.com/en/

- 16h End of the tour

- 18h Walk to the bike rental or get on the metro B-line (station “canal du Midi”) and pick up two e-bikes for 18h.

Paulette – Bike & services

- 58 Boulevard des Minimes - 05 61 53 29 06 - <https://paulette.bike/en/>

Two e-bikes reserved :

- e-Bike woman : 180 cm
- e-Bike man : 192 cm

Begin your trip today on the canal du Midi starting from the Ponts-Jumeaux. The Ponts-Jumeaux is the junction point between the canal du Midi and the canal de Garonne. Together, these two canals form what is officially called the **Canal des deux Mers** (Canal of the Two Seas). Often people would talk about these canals as Canal du Midi.

Bike-parking is booked for you at the Clément Ader Appart-hôtel

- 19h30 Diner at the restaurant le J’Go (just give your name at the entrance)
16 place Victor Hugo - 31000 Toulouse

The motto ‘omnivorous, farm-fresh, sustainable’ sums up the work that the J’GO has been doing supporting local farmers of the Occitanie region.

> *Included for you: full menu, main/starter/dessert + 1 soft and 1 glass of wine per person*


Wednesday 29 April

Canal des deux Mers by bike: <https://en.canaldes2mersavelo.com/itineraire/planifier/15/249/262>

Day trip Toulouse – Castelnaudary: 61 km

Toulouse – Montgiscard – 21 km – 1h25

- <https://en.canaldes2mersavelo.com/cycle-route/toulouse-montgiscard>

 **Idea** : Stop for a coffee break at the **Castanet Lock** around 10 km from Toulouse. Along the Canal du Midi, many lock-keepers’ houses have been creatively restored, blending historic charm with modern comfort. Some now house bike rental, gîtes, art workshops or cafés, offering visitors a journey between heritage and contemporary imagination.

- 67 Chemin de Halage, 31320 Castanet-Tolosan / 05 67 11 86 07 – www.restaurantelusecastanet.fr

Montgiscard – Seuil de Narouze : 27 km – 1h50

- <https://en.canaldes2mersavelo.com/cycle-route/montgiscard-seuil-de-narouze>
- Seuil de Narouze - Castelnaudary : 13 km – 50 minutes
- <https://en.canaldes2mersavelo.com/cycle-route/seuil-de-narouze-castelnaudary>

Overnight stay & dinner at the **Domaine de Lanis** (Accueil Vélo accomodation)

- 1617 route de Saint-Papoul 11400 CASTELNAUDARY
Anne et Stéphane : Tél. : +33 6 88 05 73 30 - www.domainedelanis.fr

Thursday 30 April

Day trip Castelnaudary – Carcassonne: 44 km

Castelnaudary – Bram – 24 km 1h05

- <https://en.canaldes2mersavelo.com/cycle-route/castelnaudary-bram>
- Bram – Carcassonne – 24 km – 1h40
- <https://en.canaldes2mersavelo.com/cycle-route/bram-carcassonne>

Arrival : Check In **Hôtel du Pont Vieux** (Accueil Vélo)

30 /32 Rue Trivalle 11000 Carcassonne
<https://www.hotelpontvieux.com/>

- 15h00 Tour of the **Maison de la Laine et du Drap** (“Wool and Cloth House »)
The Maison de la Laine et du Drap presents the remarkable history of the cloth industry in Carcassonne. The creation of a woolen cloth involves several stages, which will be presented one by one at the Maison de la Laine et du Drap. These stages, each as important as the next, required artisanal expertise and special tools.
- 77 Rue Trivalle, 11000 Carcassonne
- 16h00 Meeting with **Sarah Séguy** (+33 6 83 86 89 58) at the Cité Tourist Information Office for an English guided tour of the fortified medieval city **Carcassonne** (Unesco)
- Tourist Office 21 Cros Mayrevieille, Cité, 11000 Carcassonne
www.tourisme-carcassonne.fr/en/discover/the-medieval-city-of-carcassonne/

Carcassonne - Step into a fairytale ! You'll see it appear in the distance like a vision, crowning a hill in the midst of the vineyards. Carcassonne, its 52 towers and 3km long double city wall encapsulates how everyone imagines a medieval town. UNESCO listed it in 1997 and you're invited to the party to celebrate its 1000 years of military architecture. Enter through the Narbonne gate. Walk around the city, soak up the buzzing restaurants and boutiques, stop in the 12th century count's château built by the Trencavels and visit Saint-Nazaire Basilica.

If you have time, then don't miss the lower Carcassonne, also worth a visit :

www.audetourisme.com/en/see-and-do/not-to-be-missed/the-cite-of-carcassonne/

Overnight stay In **Hôtel du Pont Vieux** (Accueil Vélo accomodation)

- 30 /32 Rue Trivalle 11000 Carcassonne - www.hotelpontvieux.com/

Dinner Restaurant **La Brasserie à 4 Temps**

- 2 Bd Barbès, 11000 Carcassonne - www.brasserie4temps.com/

Friday 1 May – Bank Holiday in France

Day trip Carcassonne – Le Somail: 60 km

Carcassonne – Marseillette – 22 km – 1h30

- <https://en.canaldes2mersavelo.com/cycle-route/carcassonne-marseillette>

Marseillette – Homps – 18 km – 1h15

- <https://en.canaldes2mersavelo.com/cycle-route/marseillette-homps>

Homps – Le Somail – 20 km – 1h20

- <https://en.canaldes2mersavelo.com/cycle-route/the-canal-du-midi-by-bike-homps-le-somail>

Le Somail — Nestled in the heart of the Minervois, Le Somail is a distinctive and charming village that has retained its historic character and continues to inspire artists. Visitors can admire buildings that have remained virtually unchanged since the construction of the Canal du Midi in the 17th century. In those days, travellers aboard the postal barges would stop here for the *couchée* — an evening meal followed by an overnight stay. www.canal-du-midi.com/en/explore/along-the-waters/carcassonne-to-beziers/le-somail/

Suggestions:

- For dinner:
 - 1 – Le Comptoir Nature : 1 chemin de Halage Le Somail
 - 2 – L’Auberge du Somail: 1 chemin de Halage Le Somail (à côté du Comptoir Nature)
 - 3 - L’escale du Somail: 65 allée de la Glacière, Le Somail

Overnight Stay Bed & Breakfast Le Neptune (Accueil Vélo accomodation)

Allée des Cyprés, 11 120 Le Somail - <https://chambresleneptune.com/>

Saturday 2 May

Day trip Le Somail – Béziers : 44 km

Le Somail – Capestang – 23 km – 1h30

- <https://en.canaldes2mersavelo.com/cycle-route/le-somail-capestang>

Capestang – Béziers : 21 km – 1h40

- <https://en.canaldes2mersavelo.com/cycle-route/capestang-beziers>

Béziers - Set on the banks of the River Orb, this historic town in Hérault combines culture, heritage and relaxation. Just 20 minutes from the Mediterranean, Béziers is often regarded as one of France’s oldest cities and is closely linked to a prestigious wine-growing past that shaped its elegant architecture and vineyard landscapes. Today, the destination appeals just as much for its iconic sites, including the Nine Locks of Fonseranes (a must see !), the historic centre and Saint-Nazaire Cathedral, the nearby beaches of Valras and Sérignan, the Canal du

Midi and the panoramic Oppidum of Ensérune. www.beziers-mediterranee.uk/explore/city-of-beziers/

Suggestions:

- For dinner:
 - 1 – Restaurant Hôtel la Prison - <https://www.beziers-hotel-la-prison.com/fr/page/restaurant-beziers-bistro-la-prison>
 - 2 – Pica Pica : <https://www.pica-pica.fr>
 - 3 – Les Halles

Suggestions:

- For accommodation “Accueil Vélo”
 - 1 – Hôtel la Prison - <https://www.beziers-hotel-la-prison.com/fr>
 - 2 – Résidence Zénitude - <https://www.zenitude-hotel-residences.com>
 - 3 – Villa Kumquats - <https://villakumquats.com>

Free visit of Béziers / Main sites in the city not to be missed :

- the Fonseranes Locks : www.canal-du-midi.com/en/explore/along-the-waters/beziers-thau-lagoon/fonseranes-beziers/
- the cathedral Saint Nazaire : www.beziers-mediterranee.com/patrimoine-culturel/cathedrale-saint-nazaire-et-saint-celse
- Paul Riquet avenues : www.beziers-mediterranee.com/patrimoine-culturel/allees-paul-riquet/
- The market halls : www.beziers-mediterranee.com/patrimoine-culturel/les-halles-de-beziers/
- The Church of the Blue Penitents : www.beziers-mediterranee.com/patrimoine-culturel/chapelle-des-penitents-bleus/
- , the Plateau des Poètes : www.beziers-mediterranee.com/patrimoine-culturel/plateau-des-poetes

Sunday 3 May

Day trip Béziers – Sète : 51 km

Béziers – Agde 26 km – 1h40

- <https://en.canaldes2mersavelo.com/cycle-route/beziers-agde>

Agde – Sète : 25 km – 1h40

- <https://en.canaldes2mersavelo.com/cycle-route/agde-sete>

Return e-bikes at **Paulette – Bike & services** in Sète

- Hotel Au Valéry - 20 Rue Denfert Rochereau – Sète - 04 67 74 77 51

Check-in at the **hotel Au Valéry** for the night

- 20, Rue Denfert Rochereau, 34200 Sète – 04 67 74 77 51 - www.hotelauvalery.com/en/

Unfortunately, we do not have an available guide in Sète on Sunday afternoon. However, at the hotel you will find a kit with all the necessary documentation in English (maps, itinerary, etc.) to visit Sète on your own. We indicate all points of interest on the map.

If you arrive in Sète before 18:00, we recommend setting out on foot to explore the MACO, a street art trail through the city. You can also stop at Simone Weil Park to discover the sculptures by François Petrovitch and Ève Laroche-Joubert.

Alternatively, you could visit the MIAM. Museum. [23 Quai Maréchal de Lattre de Tassigny](#). We have informed them of your possible visit.

20h00 Diner at Restaurant **Monte Christo**

Here, you can enjoy an excellent introduction to our local specialties from Sète. If you don't like fish, they also serve meat dishes!

•31 Quai Général Durand, 34200 Sète. +33 4 67 51 95 65

From there, it's ideal to continue with a walk to the jetty and the Sète lighthouse for a beautiful view of the sea.

Monday 4 May

Breakfast at the hotel

End of program

20h00 Take-off from Lyon St.Exupéry airport

22h10 Arrival at Copenhagen airport

We hope you enjoyed your stay!

This press trip was organised by the Destination Occitanie and its partners. We would be grateful if you could mention our websites in your future articles :

Destination Occitanie : www.voyage-occitanie.com

Haute-Garonne Tourisme : www.hautegaronnnetourisme.com

Toulouse Tourisme : www.toulouse-visit.com

Aude Tourisme : www.audetourisme.com/fr/

Carcassonne Tourisme : www.tourisme-carcassonne.fr/en/

Tourisme Hérault : www.herault-tourisme.com/fr/

Sète Tourisme : www.tourisme-sete.com