

Two famous ladies

Marianne



Marianne is the symbol of the Republic and is to be found in every French city, town and village. She is also on postage stamps, and a beautiful French lady is chosen every few years to be the latest model. The Marianne represents the three essentials of the Republic: Liberty, Equality and Fraternity. Our Marianne is the oldest stone Marianne in France. She was erected in 1878 following a public subscription. There is also a bust, dated 1876, in the Mayor's parlour. Our Marianne treads the royal *Fleur-de-lis* underfoot to show the supremacy of the people over the king. The symbols of royalty are also in chains.

The Virgin Mary

The Chapel of the Virgin, in the church of John the Baptist, is home to a very special Virgin & Child. Napoleon confiscated all Church property, and sent his troops to collect Church valuables - and to desecrate. Marseillan's 16th century Virgin lost her left shoulder and Child. Some say to a musket bullet. She lay ignored for some 40 years until the Bishop in Beziers persuaded the Count de Montmorency to fund her restoration. A condition was that the sculptor modelled the Child on the Count's late two-year-old son. So Marseillan's Virgin is one of very few with a toddler in her arms.



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Marseillan Holiday



Marseillan is a charming, tranquil, ancient fishing village. She is probably the oldest French village, dating back 2,500 years to her foundation by Greek traders. Nestling on the banks of the Etang de Thau, a large sea water 'lagoon' she is also the entreport for the Canal du Midi. An extremely rich village in her time she was known as the *Jewel of the Languedoc*. Her legacy is a mixture of old village houses, dating back at least 500 years, some very impressive houses that used to house Marseillan's wealthy, a magnificent church with a rather special Virgin & Child, the oldest stone Marianne and five ports.

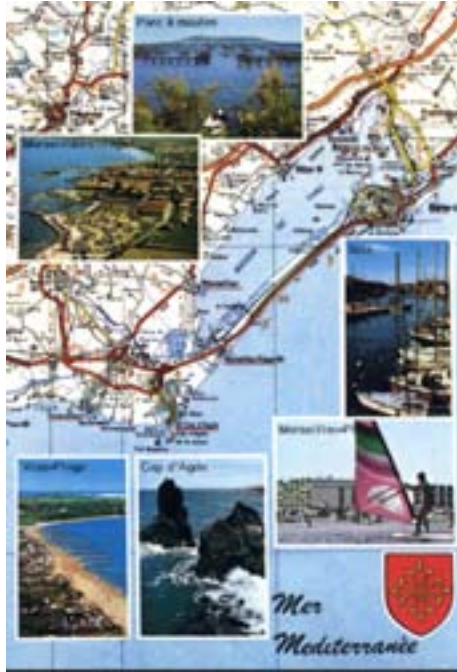
So much for the history - what does she offer today's visitor?

Glorious sandy beaches at Marseillan Plage, fantastic flora & fauna, quiet and peaceful rambles through 2,000 year old vineyards, many fine restaurants, some excellent wines, a warm welcome. Noilly Prat has its home by the port.

The ideal base for visiting the Region - the Camargue, Pont du Gard, Nîmes, Agues Morte, Montpellier, Agde, Beziers, Carcassonne - all are easy to reach.

Nightclubs, discos and a super fair are all at Marseillan Plage, close, but not impinging on the delight of Marseillan herself.

The Etang de Thau



Marseillan nestles at the end of what was once a *tranquil inland sea* that ran from the River Rhone behind a sand bar all the way to Marseillan.

She thus became a very important port, and also provided a welcome to travellers.

The Etang de Thau is a shallow stretch of water, some 19 x 5km, that nurtures both shellfish and a variety of sea fishes.

Some 10% of France's oysters come from the Etang's *Class A* waters.

Today the Etang is still linked to the Rhone, but by canal. She is also the entreport for the fantastic *Canal du Midi* that provides the link between the Mediterranean and Atlantic.

The Etang provides a home and sanctuary to birds from Gulls and Egrets to Flamingoes.

It is also excellent sailing water, with boats to hire and organised trips to visit the oyster tables.

The Canal du Midi



The Canal du Midi was opened in 1681 and until the 1890s was the economic route from the Mediterranean to the Atlantic.

Hundreds of thousands of tons of goods were shipped each year, with Marseillan and Sète the two southerly entreports.

Thus the *Marseillanais* prospered until the railway and motor lorry replaced the canal traffic.

When it opened the canal was a Wonder of the modern world... it went *uphill!*

Actually it didn't. Pierre-Paul Riquet, who conceived and built the canal, overcame the mountains by sourcing water at the highest point and building down both sides.

Today the canal is a UNESCO World Heritage site, much used for houseboater holidays.

Village views



Church of St. John the Baptist

Dating from 1615 the church is sited exactly where the pagan temples were in times past.

It replaces a succession of Christian churches constructed in wood.

It stands as a testament to the wealth of the Marseillanais in their *Belle Epoch*.

Chateau du Port

Now a magnificent home the chateau was built as the administrative headquarters of Mr Voisin. He controlled 90% of the alcohol passing through the port - and Marseillan was the route for most of the wine from the Languedoc!



La Table d'Emile

Always a splendid house it has been occupied by many important visitors. The long-term home of one of the village's prominent families (the Maffres) it is now a fine, silver service restaurant.



The Covered Market

In the heart of the village the market has provided the focus for villagers through the centuries. Today's stone building replaced the succession of wooden structures in the 1880s.



Two fishermen's games

Lou Capulet (left) is unique to Marseillan. It is a greasy pole event, over the port. Great fun!

Joute (right) is a jousting event, using rowing boats. A serious sport, the finals are in September.