



BASSIN D'ARCACHON

un monde à part



Arcachon
La Teste de Buch
Gujan-Mestras
Le Teich
Biganos
Mios
Marcheprime
Audenge
Lanton
Andernos-les-Bains
Arès
Lège-Cap Ferret

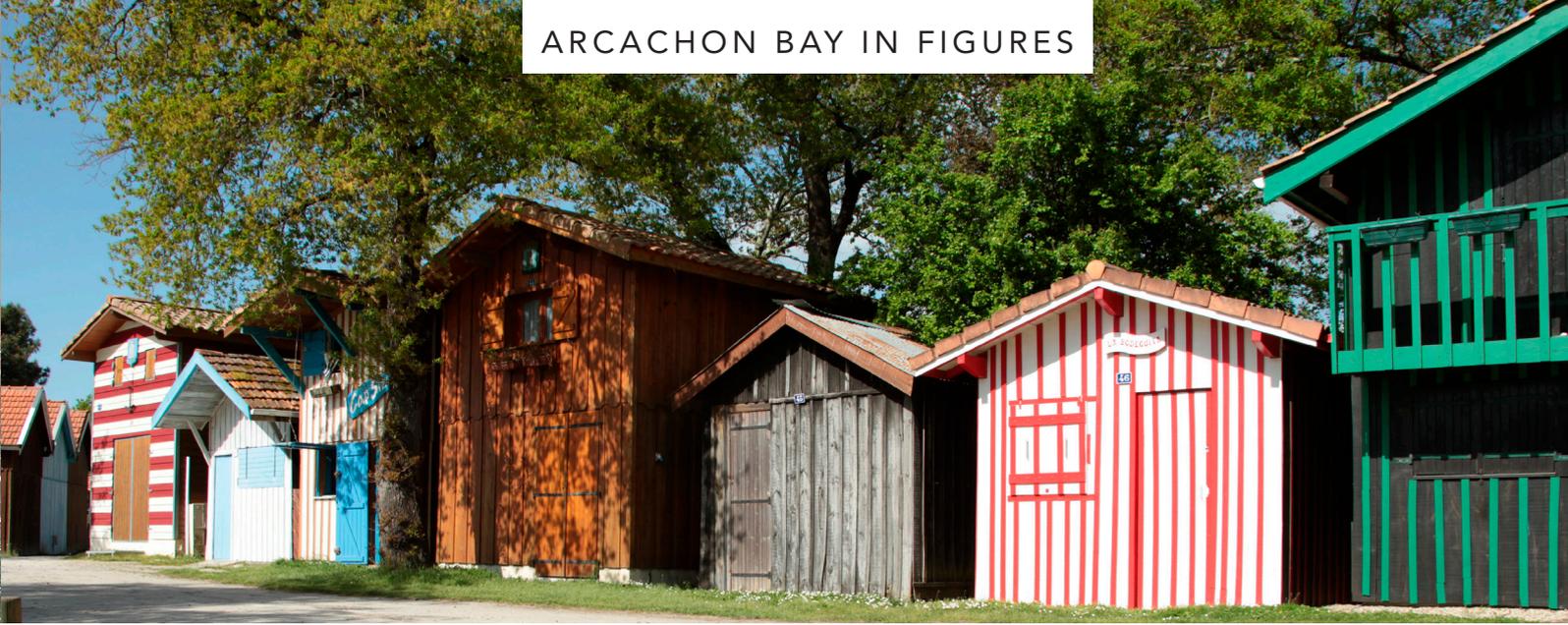
PRESS BOOK





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D'ARCACHON
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The name Arcachon Bay does not do justice to all that it has to offer: 12 towns and villages with an incredibly diverse offering of landscapes, architecture and activities!

Key figures

- 12 communes (from south to north): Arcachon, La Teste de Buch, Gujan-Mestras, Le Teich, Biganos, Mios, Marcheprie, Audenge, Lanton, Andernos-les-Bains, Arès and Lège-Cap Ferret, covering a total area of 1120 km²
- Area of water at high tide: 18,000 hectares. The total volume oscillates between 200 and 450 million m³ depending on the tide, which changes every 12 hours and 25 minutes on average.
- A perimeter of 88 kilometres from the tip of Cap Ferret to the Dune du Pilat
- Population: 128,500 inhabitants



Oyster farming and fishing on Arcachon Bay:

- 310 oyster farming businesses
- 711 hectares of oyster beds
- Annual oyster production: 8-10,000 tonnes (Over 600 jobs)
- Specialisation: production of oyster spat
- Coastal fishing: 5 trawlers, 12 netters, and 5 launches
- Fishing on the bay: 30 boats (Over 300 jobs)
- 2,000 tonnes sold at the Arcachon fish auction for a turnover of 13 million euros
- Leading products: sole, cuttlefish, red mullet, sea bass, etc.

Main Features

- 76 kilometres of beaches (39.5 km along the Atlantic Ocean)
- 850 km² of forests, including part of the Parc Naturel Régional des Landes de Gascogne
- The 135 km long Leyre river
- The internationally-reputed 120-hectare bird sanctuary in Le Teich
- The 56 km² Lac de Cazaux, the second largest lake in France
- 30 picturesque ports and villages surrounding the Bay.
- The Dune du Pilat, the tallest sand-dune in Europe (102,5 metres) which has been protected by law since 1994. It is 2,900 metres long, 616 metres wide, and contains some 60 million cubic metres of sand. This remarkable geomorphological formation is a veritable natural archive encompassing 4,000 years of history.
- The 232 m long Andernos Jetty, the longest in France
- 258 steps to the top of Cap Ferret lighthouse
- 220 kilometres of cycle paths around the Bay
- 84 kilometres of hiking trails
- 4 golf courses: Arcachon, Gujan-Mestras, Lanton and Cap Ferret
- Accommodation for over 45,000 tourists in hotels, guesthouses, resorts...





*Arcachon Bay,
the beauty of both land
and sea, and a world
unto itself...*

Arcachon Bay is like nowhere else – a sort of "Far West", with "black shores" and "Texan landscapes" according to Jean Cocteau. The horizons, family names, smells, and colours, as well as the fishing huts and their interiors have a disorienting exotic feel about them. They are often reminiscent of Africa and the Sahara, with its kilometres of dunes, or of former French colonies in the Pacific Ocean or the West Indies.

However, nothing has been imported here. Everything is genuine, shaped by the wind and tides. This is where salt and fresh water meet, and the ecosystem features extremely varied soils and vegetation.

People have adapted wonderfully to this generous environment, taking advantage of the wealth offered by the sea and using wood from local forests to build houses and boats. They have developed a lifestyle truly in tune with nature.



Real holidays

We all long to go away on holiday and enjoy imagining the pleasures it will bring. Focusing on what counts most and being true to ourselves, we are all looking for a "real holiday", suited to our expectations and needs.

Arcachon Bay promises "that real holiday", with a chance to recharge your batteries, rest, enjoy the company of friends and loved ones, and take the time to enjoy life at your own pace.

We offer you much more too, including experiences that symbolise our idea of a "real holiday".

We promise you an unforgettable stay on Arcachon Bay.

"It looks like the beginning of time here", wrote Cocteau. Although the Bay has undergone many changes and transformations since the 1920s (when the poet stayed there), it nevertheless seems untouched by time. The towns dotted around the bay have inherited not only a beautiful natural setting, but also noteworthy architecture, a flourishing economy, and a rich cultural life. These are very much alive today, even if they have sometimes been reinvented.

"We row, we sleep, we roll in the sand, we stroll along..." wrote Cocteau to his mother. With its exotic scenery and ever-entrenched local way of life, Arcachon Bay is an outstanding holiday destination, offering stimulation for all the senses and fulfilment of every need.



It all began with the Leyre...

Arcachon Bay owes its existence to a vast delta formed by the Leyre River, which used to flow directly into the ocean. This delta was partly blocked by a tongue of sand (Cap Ferret), gradually formed by tidal currents from the north, that ended up shaping the bay that we know today.

The Petite and Grande Leyre rivers join after 135 km flowing across the sandy Landes countryside and flow together into the Bay. This "Green Venice", bordered by a canopy of broad-leaved trees (Pyrenean and pedunculate oak, ash, chestnut, and willow) provides an ideal habitat for royal ferns and other magnificent plants. This "little Amazon" seems secretive and mysterious, with its subdued lighting and muffled atmosphere.

Some 80 km from its source, the river leaves its green tunnel to branch out into the multiple channels of a delta. Fresh water mixes with salt and the marshland vegetation features isolated or sickly trees, as well as plants adapted to this type of wetland and reed beds. Located on a major migration route, the Leyre is both home and a stopover point for many species of birds.

Discover the Leyre Delta:

- on board a pinasse, or local flat-bottomed boat (information and booking at the Coeur du Bassin Tourist Information Office, Tel.: 05 57 70 67 56)
- in a kayak (information and booking at the Maison de la Nature in Le Teich 05 24 73 37 33)
- in a small boat or electric boat (information and booking at Le Teich Tourist Information Office 05 56 22 80 46)

A 9 km hiking path enables visitors to discover the delta, forest, water meadows, and marshes. Information at Le Teich Tourist Information Office 05 56 22 80 46 or the Coeur du Bassin Tourist Information Office, Tel. 05 57 70 67 56.

This expression, coined by historian Jules Michelet (1798-1874), aptly describes the bay's identity: land surrounded by the ocean; a maritime entity; a lagoon crossed by currents located at the mouth of the Leyre River; and gateway to the Atlantic where fresh and salt water meet.



A lagoon hemmed in by a sandy ribbon and dunes

Arcachon Bay forms a triangular indentation on the long Gironde coastline. The bay has a surface area of 155 km² at high tide, but shrinks to just 40 km² when the water retreats. Two hundred and thirty million cubic metres of water come and go with each tide at a speed of 2 m/sec between the Dune du Pilat and the tip of Cap Ferret via passes, or channels, through a mouth that is barely 3 km wide. These channels are broken up by unstable sand banks, such as the Banc d'Arguin, a sandy island emerging from the ocean.

The inhabitants of the twelve towns and villages scattered along the Bay's nearly 100 km perimeter live in the heart of this universe of beautiful landscapes and changing colours. With superb architectural heritage and natural surroundings, they have developed a unique lifestyle suited to this world unto itself.

Practical information: Discover the bay on a pinasse (flat-bottomed boat): information and booking at Gujan-Mestras Tourist Information Office, Tel: 05 56 66 12 65) or a tour boat leaving from Thiers Jetty in Arcachon (www.bateliers-arcachon.com). Alternatively, you may wish to discover the Bay from above in a 2- or 4- seater aircraft available from one of the bay's two flying clubs (Tel.: 05 56 54 72 88 - 05 56 82 18 77).



Ancient salt marshes

Domaine de Certes on the Leyre Delta, owned by the Conservatoire du Littoral, is a natural treasure covering 395 hectares between marshland and the Bay. It consists of a vast patchwork of seawalls, fish ponds, and wetlands with abundant wildlife, attracted by the calm setting and food resources. Originally created in the 18th century to produce salt, this estate turned to fish farming in the 19th century. The Gironde department General Council is now responsible for this vast Domaine. Only one fisherman continues to use some of the ponds.

Other fish ponds were built in the wetlands of Le Teich (Cantarane), Arès (salt meadows), and Pirailan in the 19th century. These were also used for extensive fish farming, largely for the reproduction of mullet and eel. Salt meadows in La Teste de Buch, Arès, and the Domaine de Certes are listed as a protected natural area due to their ecological profile, fauna, and flora.

Practical information: These beautiful locations have a unique charm and are a delight to discover on foot in wellington boots with a pair of binoculars. The hike going from the Port of Arès along the coastal path and then onto the GR8 trail to the salt meadows of Arès and Lège is a truly remarkable one. Admission is free of charge to the exhibition devoted to local fauna and flora housed in the Cabane du Résinier ("resin tapper's hut"). Guided tours on the theme of "flora and nature at low tide" provide fascinating insights. (Information from Arès Tourist Information Office, Tel.: 05 56 60 18 07),



Ocean as far as the eye can see...

Opening onto the Bay of Biscay, Arcachon Bay is ringed with immense beaches and conditions are ideal for surfing at Grand Crohot (in Lège) and La Salie (in La Teste de Buch).

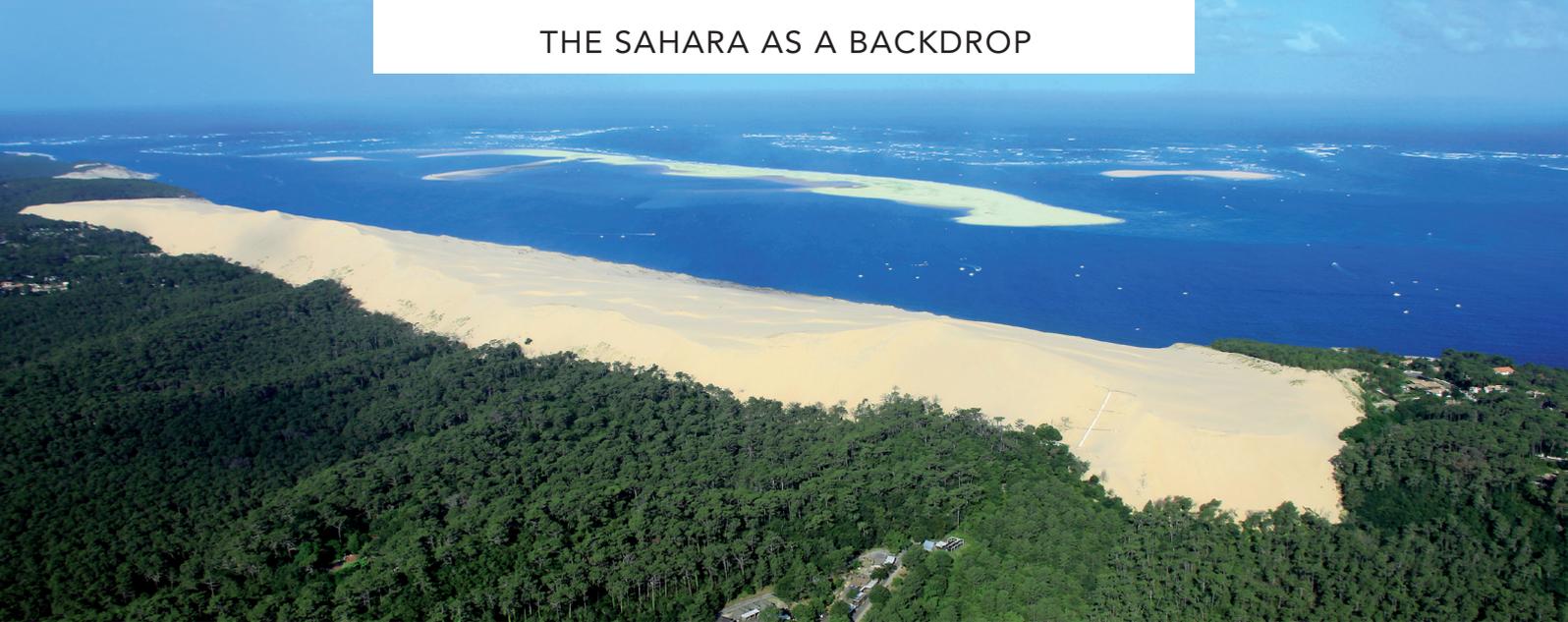


Sharing water resources

Water is often a source of conflict between various economic (urban development, tourism, etc.) and environmental interests.

In 1964, the mayors of the communes surrounding Arcachon Bay created the Syndicat Intercommunal du Bassin d'Arcachon to define the best way of sharing this precious resource. Their aim was to protect the water quality by creating a vast network to treat both industrial and domestic waste water.

For further information: www.siba-bassin-arcachon.fr



The Dune du Pilat, a natural archive

The Dune du Pilat, set in a location of outstanding natural beauty, is 102,5 metres high, 616 metres wide, and 2,900 metres long, making it the tallest sand dune in Europe and the most visited tourist site in the Aquitaine region.

The view from the top can be likened to an amazing triptych: the blue of the ocean on one side and the green of the forest on the other, separated by the light tan colour of the dune.

This natural monument between ocean and forest is constantly evolving. Although the dune looks like just a huge pile of sand, it holds within many secrets. Archaeologists have studied the effects of wind and erosion on the dune for over thirty years. Their research focuses on a level five metres from the ground on the steep side of the dune – which dates back 4,000 years.

It was created by the layering of one large parabolic dune system atop another system, consisting of barchans.

Each one was once covered by forest. This accounts for the soil that can still be seen on the western, ocean-facing side. This ancient forest soil, called "paleosol", enables us to trace back the dune's history. It went through several stages before acquiring the shape we know today. Periods of cold, windy weather led to the accumulation of sand. These alternated with warm, wet periods stimulating the growth of vegetation.

Scientists study and date each paleosol, using components such as tree trunks, pieces of ceramic, pottery fragments, etc. More than a remarkable geological phenomenon, the Dune du Pilat is a "natural archive" of the region's climate over the centuries.

Despite the many efforts to contain it, the dune will keep moving so long as the wind adds more sand. In fact, it continues to retreat from one to five metres a year towards the forest, meaning any efforts to tame it would result futile. The inexorable shift is part of the dune's myth.

Like the Pointe du Raz, the Dune du Pilat belongs to the Grands Sites de France network.

Practical information: Climbing to the top of Europe's tallest sand dune, on your own or with a guide, is not to be missed. It is open all year round with free services (special events, performances, rest areas, etc.).

For a completely safe, environmentally-friendly tour of the site, please access it via the reception area.

Visitors parking charges contribute to the upkeep and preservation of this fragile natural site. However, access to the dune is entirely free if you come by bus or bicycle, or on foot. A staircase facilitates the climb to the top of the dune from April to November.

For further information, please call Point Information iDune on 05 56 22 12 85 - www.ladunedupilat.com.



Site classé





Across the bay from the dune: Cap Ferret point and lighthouse

Like a tongue of sand between the bay and the ocean, the Cap Ferret peninsula features 40 km of beaches (including 25 on the ocean side). This is a Mecca for surfers. The dunes around Cap Ferret border a pine forest, criss-crossed by cycle paths linking points of interest, so there is no need to drive from A to B.

Far from being a desert, the tip of Cap Ferret is more of an oasis, and home to typical seaside flora such as beach-grass, as well as a variety of wildlife (and not just marine animals). This site may also be visited with a guide from the local Bird Protection League.

Fifty-three metres tall with a rotating lens visible for 50 km, the lighthouse protects the narrow mouth (3 km wide) of the bay. Other than the pleasure of going up and taking in the breath-taking view, it also offers a new interactive exhibition on the theme of marine cartography.

Practical information: Information: tel. 05 56 03 94 49
www.lege-capferret.com.



Ecotourism: delicate sites

This patchwork of landscapes and natural treasures is, in fact, quite fragile. Aware of their duty to protect them, the communes around Arcachon Bay and the surrounding region have joined forces to develop and promote ecotourism. Sixteen sites are concerned by this effort.



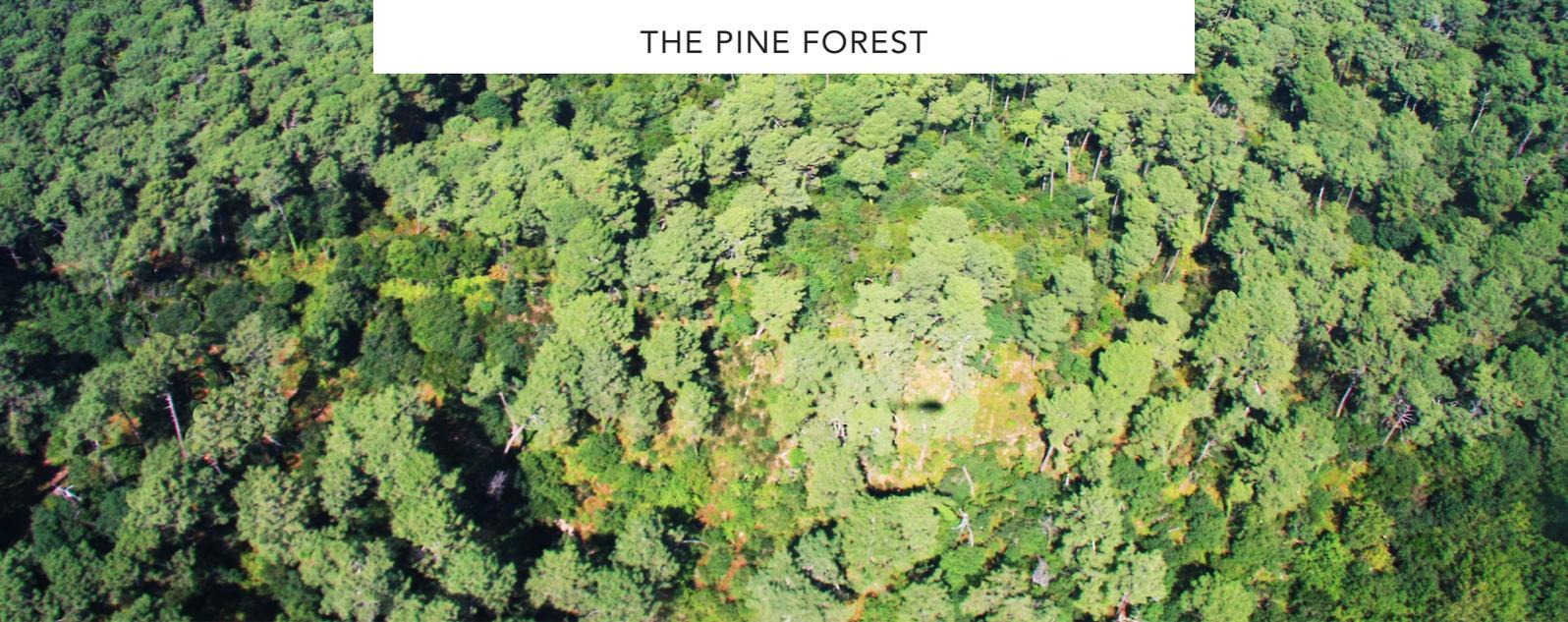
Banc d'Arguin: at the foot of the dune

Located at the bottom of the Dune du Pilat, the Arguin sandbank is a link between the bay and the ocean, forming a subtle ideogram, with perpetually moving contours shaped by the wind and tides. It no doubt deserves to share the same name as a famous Mauritanian nature reserve because its desert landscape is indeed reminiscent of Africa.

This precious, fragile sanctuary, as well as the surrounding sea, have constituted the Réserve Naturelle Nationale du Banc d'Arguin since 1972. It is home to protected plants and wildlife, including some endangered species. The reserve was originally created to protect a colony of sandwich terns. Between 2,000 to 3,000 couples, or over half of the French nesting population in certain years, come here to hatch their eggs and raise their chicks away from terrestrial predators. This reserve is managed on behalf of the French state by SEPANSO, a regional environmental protection agency. All year long, rangers ensure that the rules governing the reserve are respected and that the birds are left in peace.

Practical information: For further information:
www.sepanso.org/reserves/arguin_p.php.





The human factor

Man has always played a role in the history of forests, but in this region he was the very creator. Alongside an old mixed forest with sand dunes and maritime pines (with a few oaks and arbutus trees), a very different sort of forest was planted by Nicolas Brémontier to contain the sand dunes, and by Jules Hilaire Chambrelent to drain the Landes.

These forests extend as far as the eye can see, covering 785 km² with a lush, multi-coloured undergrowth of ferns, gorse, broom, and heather. They are a continuation of the Landes forest, the largest in Western Europe, with an area of over a million hectares.

However, the 3,800-hectare Forêt Usagère de La Teste de Buch is distinct from the Landes de Gascogne forest. Spanning out from the bottom of the Dune du Pilat, it has naturally regenerated itself for centuries. With rather atypical biodiversity, this forest has a highly unusual status (private with regard to the soil and huts, but communal with regard to afforestation), which makes it one-of-a-kind in France.

Practical information: To discover this ecosystem and its history, go to the Maison de la Nature, located at the maritime entrance to the Parc Naturel Régional des Landes de Gascogne in the commune of Le Teich. Tel.: 05 24 73 37 33. www.mnba-leteich.fr



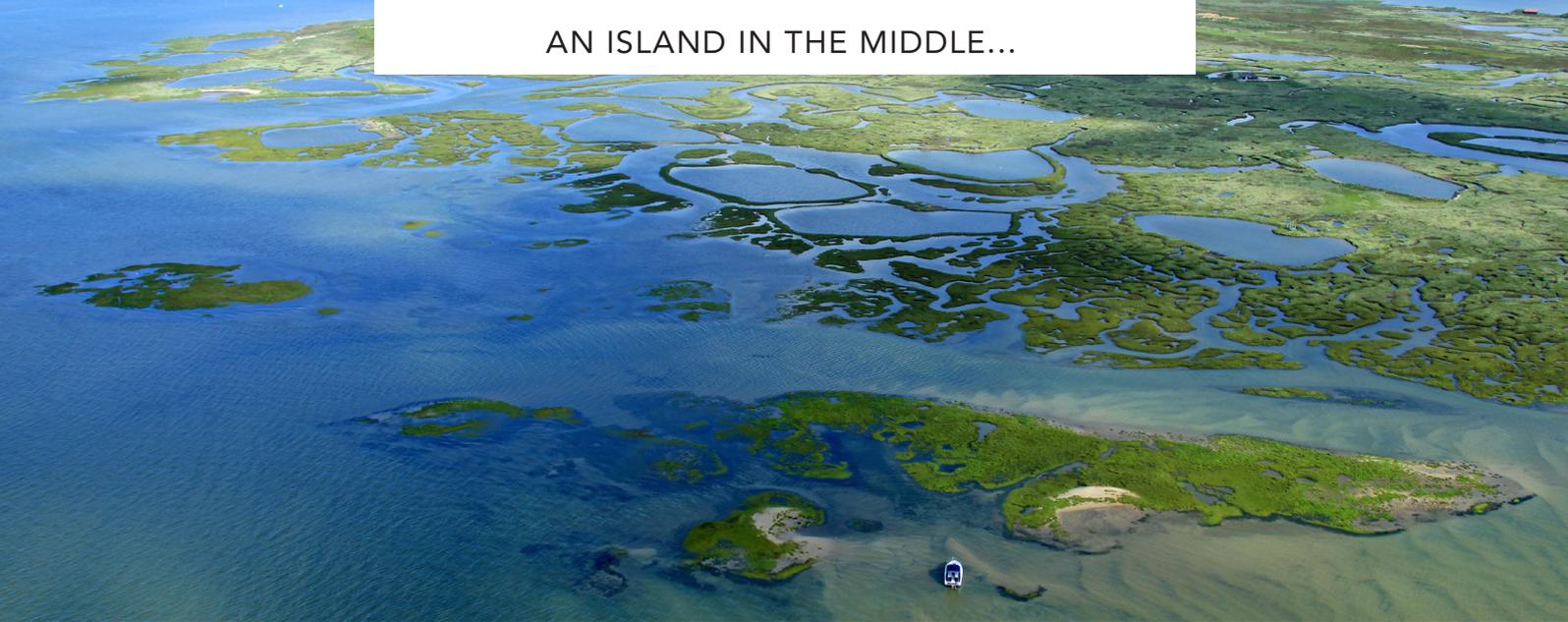
A source of wealth

Other than stabilising the dunes and draining the Landes, these forests also played an economic role and contributed, like the ocean and the Bay, to shaping the regional identity.

The oyster huts and pinasses (flat-bottomed boats) are made of wood from the Landes pine forest. Furthermore, resin tapping was a major source of income for the people of Arcachon Bay at one time. This resin was used by numerous chemical industries, for instance to produce turpentine. This activity left its mark on many of the pine trees, which are referred to as "bottle pines" because of their amazing shape. They have rolls caused by scarring all around their circumference, and are easily recognisable. The resin tapper's hut in Claouey has been renovated and is open to the general public to exhibit this craft. (Tel.: 06 28 41 03 98 - www.captermer.com)

Today, the Smurfit Kappa Cellulose du Pin factory in Biganos, which produces Kraft paper, is glad to welcome visitors to present another industrial activity linked to the forest. Information and booking at the Coeur du Bassin Tourist Information Office: 05 57 70 67 56 - www.tourisme-coeurdubassin.com.





Sea or pond, lake or ocean? We can safely say that there is an island in the centre of this body of water, Ile aux Oiseaux, often considered emblematic of Arcachon Bay.



site classé

Ile aux Oiseaux and its "cabanes tchanquées"

Owned by the Conservatoire du Littoral and the commune of La Teste de Buch, this island, located in the heart of the Bay, has a surface area of 300 hectares at low tide and 100 hectares at high tide. Part of the island is covered with trees, moor, and heath, surrounded by wetlands and sand. The island owes its name to numerous birds that find refuge there.

Man has also left his mark on this paradise. Nowhere is this more apparent than in the famous "cabanes tchanquées", or huts on stilts, which originally served as temporary shelter for oyster farmers between tides. The term "tchanquée" comes from the Gascon word meaning "standing on stilts", a reference to their construction on wooden piles. These two majestic structures in the middle of the bay act as sentinels, protecting the Ile aux Oiseaux. The first hut of this type was built in 1883, but the combined effect of the tides and salt corrosion caused it to collapse in 1943.

The two huts standing today have come to symbolise the bay.



About fifty other, less emblematic, huts are scattered around the Ile aux Oiseaux. Their happy owners benefit from temporary authorisations.

Practical information: Disembarking on the Ile aux Oiseaux is difficult and depends largely on the tidal coefficient. Outings in launches or pinasses take passengers around the island for a closer view. Information and booking at the Union des Bateliers Arcachonnais, Tel.: 05 57 72 28 28.



Le Teich Bird Reserve

Even more so than the island that bears their name, this reserve is a true sanctuary for birds. It covers 110 hectares of forests, reed beds, meadows, maritime wetlands, and brackish lagoons, and was designed to provide shelter for wild birds and facilitate their observation by the public. The reserve welcomes storks, egrets, spoonbills, nightingales and many other species in an undisturbed natural environment. In fact, over 260 species either stop over or live in this internationally-recognised reserve. Eighty sedentary species nest here and 180 others stop over occasionally to feed or rest.

Information: Tel. 05 24 73 37 33 (open all year long). www.reserve-ornithologique-du-teich.com



The forest and its resources are not the only riches of this outstanding natural ecosystem. Arcachon Bay is also proud of the fact that it is one of the largest centres for oyster spat production in Europe. Oyster farming and fishing have always played a major role in the Bay's identity and are still extremely important today.

Oyster and maritime heritage tour®

Oyster farming in Arcachon-Cap Ferret

Arcachon Bay offers all the requisite conditions for reproducing and farming oysters.

The temperature is ideal, and the Bay has a microclimate with plenty of sunshine all year long, without heat waves in summer. The average summer temperature (the optimum season for oyster reproduction) is 22-24°C.

Perfect salinity: the salinity of the water in Arcachon Bay is also ideal thanks to the inflow of fresh water from the Leyre.

Perfect light: the Bay's shallowness enables light to penetrate to the bottom which, combined with freshwater and its accompanying food, results in areas with a high production of phytoplankton and algae, at the bottom of the food chain.

A preserved watershed: covered to a large extent (70%) by the Landes forest, this has a natural protective role, "purifying" water that runs off into the bay.

@ brand registered by the CRCAA



These combined conditions are a blessing to local oyster farmers, as well as all French and European oyster-producing regions, since Arcachon Bay is one of the most active areas for producing spat in Europe.



“Oyster farming: an economic activity that also preserves the environment” :

Oyster farmers combine their needs to make a living with a strong desire to preserve the environment. Offering tastings in their huts is a way for oyster farmers to diversify, promote their product, and justify renovating their huts.

Oyster beds and the flavours of the Bay

The specific geographical location on Arcachon Bay, which varies significantly from north to south, influences the taste of oysters. There are 4 sub-regions.

Most of the oyster beds are found around the Ile aux Oiseaux (especially on the Grand Banc), toward the ocean (the Banc d'Arguin) and along the Cap Ferret peninsula.

Today, 81 oyster farmers offer on-site tasting.



For further information:
huitres-arcachon-capferret.fr



A wealth of fish

Clams, mussels, soles, cuttlefish, red mullet and sea bass are also found in the Bay, and can be caught from the shore, with a net, or in cages by a flotilla of nearly 30 boats from various ports around the lagoon.

As for ocean fishing, 12 netters, 5 trawlers and 5 launches complete this armada, and unload their catch at the port of Arcachon. The fish market is famous for quality. Every year, some 2,000 tonnes of fish worth about 13 million euros are sold there.



For further information:
<http://peches-arcachon-gironde.fr/>

The fish market

There is nothing like a trip to the Criée d'Arcachon (the Arcachon Fish Market) at the fishing port to further your understanding of the jobs at sea. The excitement and lively atmosphere at the fish auction are unforgettable, and this is also a great way to become familiar with the various species. Tours with a guide familiar with the fishing industry are available on Mondays and Thursdays.

Practical information: Duration: 1 hour 45 minutes, from 6:30 to 8:15 am. Price: €6 (free for children under 12). Booking obligatory at the Arcachon Tourist Information Office: 05 57 52 97 97 - www.arcachon.com

Up the Cap Ferret lighthouse

The lighthouse houses a fine interactive exhibition on marine cartography. The scenography reflects Arcachon Bay's maritime identity. Visitors can have an entertaining look at the world of marine maps thanks to a 3D film, touch-sensitive tables and terminals, and even an augmented reality application... The Cap Ferret lighthouse affords more than just a wonderful view over the Bay.

Practical information:
Information at the Lège-Cap Ferret Tourist Information Office: 05 56 03 94 49 - www.lege-capferret.com

The Maison de l'Huître

Located in Larros, one of the seven oyster-farming ports in Gujan-Mestras, the "Oyster House" informs visitors on everything there is to know about this mollusc, its anatomy, reproduction, and, of course, how it is farmed. The visit ends with a tasting session. Established by oyster farmers, this museum features interactive scenography and is a must for gourmets and anyone interested in oysters. It is also an important way of promoting Arcachon Bay. The Maison de l'Huître is open all year long.

Practical information:

Information and booking: 05 56 66 23 71
www.maison-huitre.fr

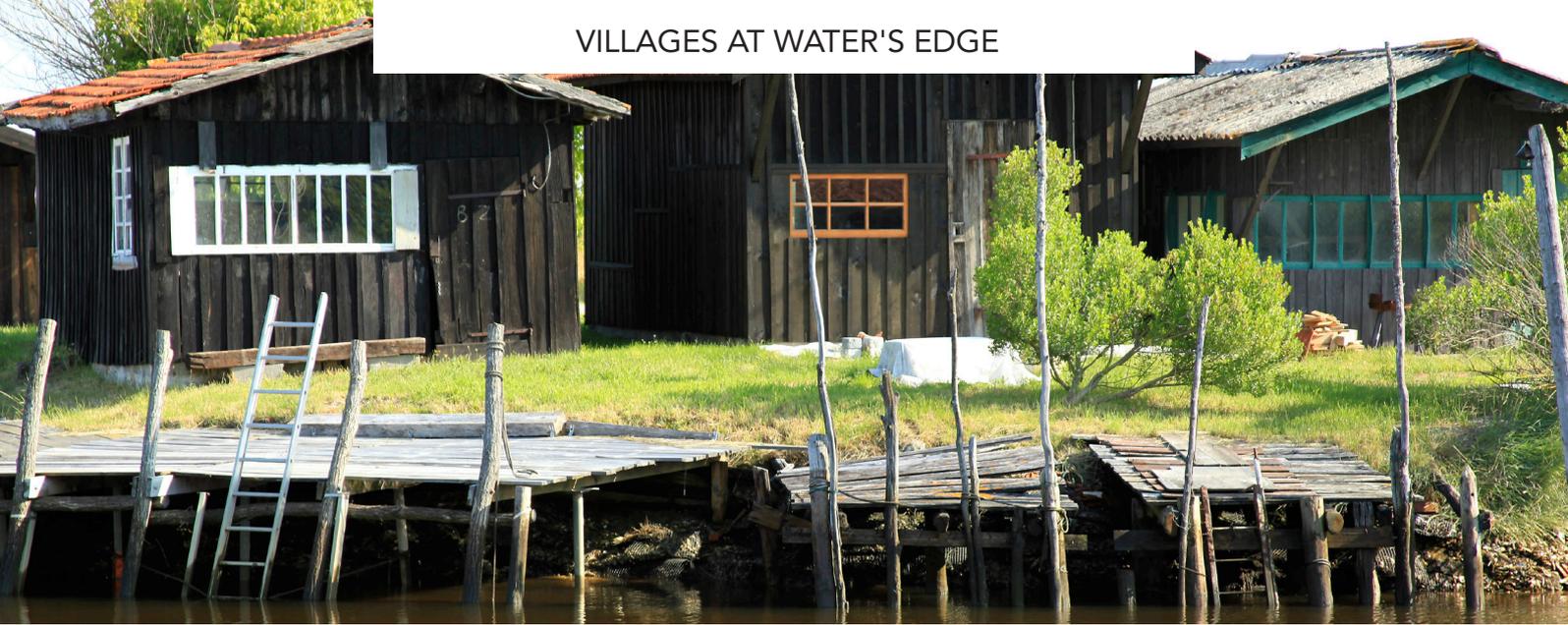


"Pescatourisme" operation: Go out on the bay with oyster farmers and fishermen!

Our fishermen and oyster farmers are happy to invite you to spend a day with them between tides, on one of their boats. This is a great opportunity to enjoy an authentic, inside look at the secrets of the Bay and the people who earn their living from it. As for oyster farming, depending on the season and the day, you will see how spat collectors are positioned, how oyster bags are turned over and separated, how the beds are cleaned and how the oysters are harvested. As for fishing, you will see nets or cages positioned the previous day being retrieved and the techniques used to retain maximum flavour.

Practical information: €45/person (tasting included) to go out with a fisherman or oyster farmer. Times vary according to the tide. A trip with an oyster farmer lasts about five hours, and approximately 4 with a fisherman. Phone numbers of these local tradesmen are available from Tourist Information Offices. Family (2 adults + 2 children) price: €130, half-price for children aged 8-12 years old. Information: www.bassin-arcachon.com/en/spend-a-day-in-the-bay-with-an-oyster-farmer-or-fisherman/





Many people are familiar with the twelve municipalities on Arcachon Bay: Arcachon, La Teste de Buch, Gujan-Mestras, Le Teich, Biganos, Mios, Marcheprime, Audenge, Lanton, Andernos-les-Bains, Arès and Lège-Cap Ferret. However, the Bay's 26 oyster ports are much less well-known. The town of Gujan-Mestras, the local oyster farming capital, has no fewer than 7 such ports. They appeared around the bay in the 19th century to accompany the development of oyster beds. They epitomise the reality and the true spirit of Arcachon Bay.

Inspiring huts

In the early 20th century, these basic pinewood huts, formerly restricted to use by fishermen and oyster farmers, became places in which to dream. Located in a setting of wild beauty, between dunes, beaches, and pine forests, they began to attract rich families wishing to spend their holidays in Arcachon. The huts became a new sort of playground to them, and a great way to escape from the pressures of society.

They were soon joined by Parisians, including many artists who found these basic shelters wonderful places to retreat to, and to stimulate their creativity. Among others, Jean Cocteau sought accommodation of this singular nature many times between 1917 and 1923 because it made him feel "so happy and so rich".

New huts continue to be built, but with a wooden framework. This new generation is more beautiful, larger, and more comfortable, but perpetuates the myth of a secret hideout and exotic refuge. Often decorated in a basic, almost rough way, and sometimes in a colonial style, the huts continue to inspire both poets and city dwellers to recharge their batteries.

Meticulously preserved

Huts located within the Public Maritime Domain are available to professionals in the maritime sector when provided with a temporary occupation authorisation.

On Cap Ferret, the oyster farming crisis in the 1970s led the Public Maritime Domain to sell a few such authorisations to private customers in order to ensure their upkeep. These concessions were in the oyster-producing villages of L'Herbe, Le Canon, Pirailan, and Les Jacquets, as well as Petit Piquey where professionals and holiday-makers live side by side.



Admirable authenticity

Criss-crossed by channels and canals, and punctuated by basins and reservoirs, the port buildings consist of a group of huts made of dark-coloured wood. These are used by oyster farmers. Water is omnipresent. It penetrates the earth, which seems to want to merge with the sea in the form of pontoons and landing platforms. Some of these ports are very busy, as evidenced by the cluttered fishing and oyster farming equipment visible just about everywhere: piles of rope, rusty wire mesh and tool boxes. The huts are identical in all the ports.

They were built according to strict specifications dating back to 1830. Most of them are rectangular. The oldest are 6 by 4 metres and the most recent 8 by 6 metres. The latter can include an extra floor for storage purposes. Constructed with pine from the Landes forest, the huts all have the same simple structure consisting of posts, wooden cladding, and a roof structure with two slopes covered with pantiles. Some of the huts have a distinctive touch of colour: yellow shutters, blue doors, etc.



Traditional boats

"Pinasses (local flat-bottomed boats) are to the people of Arcachon Bay what gondolas are to the Venetians", according to a *pinassayre* – the name given to those who sail these traditional boats. Every village does their utmost to showcase this unique symbol of their heritage at regattas and celebrations.

From work boats to pleasure craft

In the beginning, *pinasses* were fishing boats, and the word first appears in a text dating back to the 16th century. The boats were used to go fishing and to bring in shellfish and oysters, which were not farmed at the time. The *pinasses* had either sails or oars, and the largest ones could leave the Bay to go fishing along the coast. In the 19th century, these boats were naturally used by oyster farmers.

Then motors were invented... The boats began to use them and changed design. The large *pinasses* became "pétroleuses". In order to have increased working area on-board, oyster farmers introduced a flat part at the back of the boat, and then evolved into barges. Pleasure craft developed at about this time. Some oyster farmers take on jobs in the summer to go chez *Monsieur* and look after a wealthy summer resident's boat - which explains where the name "pinasse de Monsieur" came from.



An annual regatta sponsored by town halls

Small *pinasses*, over which are actually 8 metres long, are called *pinassottes* or *pinasses à voile*. They are very odd to steer, especially when changing tack faced with a strong wind. *Pinassayres* lower the sail, raise the mast, and hoist the sail on the other side... This manoeuvre is spectacular during a regatta! There is even a "world championship" regatta in ten rounds! The famous "Regatta of the Mayors" takes place in late July. The communes, each with their own *pinasse*, confront one another in a friendly competition. Traditional boats also take part in all maritime celebrations. Well-adapted to sailing on the bay, they can also go up small estuaries (tidal channels) and be taken up to beaches.

All aboard!

Several shipbuilding sites, especially in the southern part of the bay, perpetuate regional expertise in this field going back 6 or 7 generations in some instances. However, many of the boats are now made of plastic instead of wood, like the small, elegant sailing boats with similar lines to those of old-fashioned mackerel boats. One-design competition boats, however, are still often made of wood. These small, very nippy vessels were created over 100 years ago by young members of the Arcachon Yacht Club. Another traditional sailing boat, the *bac à voile*, has a large deck originally adapted to transporting merchandise and working on oyster farms. Today, several associations and yacht clubs run boat trips for the in a *pinasse* or barge. All these traditional boats have their reserved berths on the quay in Arcachon and are given precedence at ports and mooring buoys on Cap-Ferret. You cannot miss them!

A FASHIONABLE RESORT WITH A LONG HISTORY: THE "WINTER TOWN" AND SEASIDE STYLE ARCHITECTURE



The motto of the first mayor of Arcachon in 1857 was: "Uninhabited yesterday, a village today, and a city tomorrow". That was the year the railway arrived in Arcachon and the ambitious Ville d'Hiver construction project was launched.

A town that rose out of the sand

Before this date, Arcachon was just a cluster of fishing huts on the shore. Taking advantage of the popularity of seaside resorts and the arrival of the train, the Pereire brothers, Bordeaux investors, founded the *Ville d'Hiver* or "Winter Town". Construction began in 1862, according to plans partly designed by the young Gustave Eiffel. It took just 3 years to build all the main edifices: the Casino, the Grand Hôtel, etc. This attracted the aristocracy and wealthy people whose sumptuous villas popped up along the long tree-lined streets, deliberately curved to reduce the effect from wind from the sea.



Eclectic styles

Swiss chalets, Moorish palaces, Gothic manors, neo-Landais houses, English cottages, colonial-type mansions... The villas come in many different styles, especially as no municipal orders prevented the architectural creativity. Several recurring features nevertheless give cohesiveness to the whole. The most important ones are the parts of buildings that jut out: balconies, patios, galleries, bow windows, porches, canopies, turrets, marquees, conservatories, etc... These form a sort of transition between indoors and outdoors, and invite people to enjoy the beautiful natural setting.

Opulent architecture

The other major factor that harmonises the various dwellings is their richly-decorated façades. There are often multi-coloured designs, featuring stone, brick and wood. They also sport studs, ceramics, varnished bricks, or earthenware medallions, whereas their balconies and fascia boards are decorated with wooden lace-like patterns. Pinials, valley rafters and weather vanes crown their frequently asymmetrical roofs.

Practical information: Information and booking for guided tours and audio tours of the Ville d'Hiver available from Arcachon Tourist Information Office, Tel.: 05 57 52 97 97 – www.arcachon.com



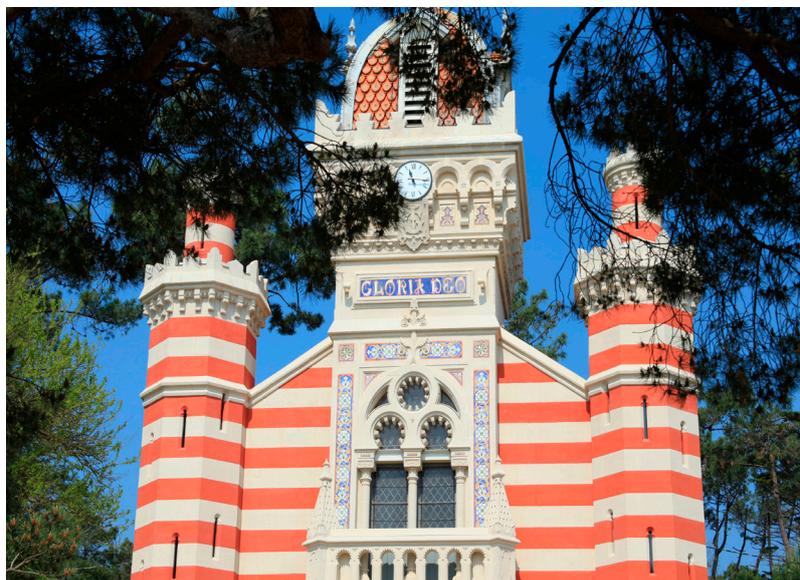


Architecture with diverse influences: Frank Lloyd Wright and the Bordeaux school of architecture

With its varied landscapes, Atlantic luminosity and wild settings, Arcachon Bay has stimulated the imagination of architects, who have made it a laboratory for experimentation.

The Salier Courtois, Lajus & Sadirac agency

One agency in Bordeaux especially left its mark on the banks of the bay. Established in 1955, it brought together four major architects: Yves Salier, Adrien Courtois, Pierre Lajus and Michel Sadirac, who are often referred to as the founders of the "Bordeaux school of architecture". Largely inspired by the Bauhaus movement and the Californian architecture of Frank Lloyd Wright and Craig Ellwood, they reinterpreted conventional approaches and principles to adapt to local landscapes.

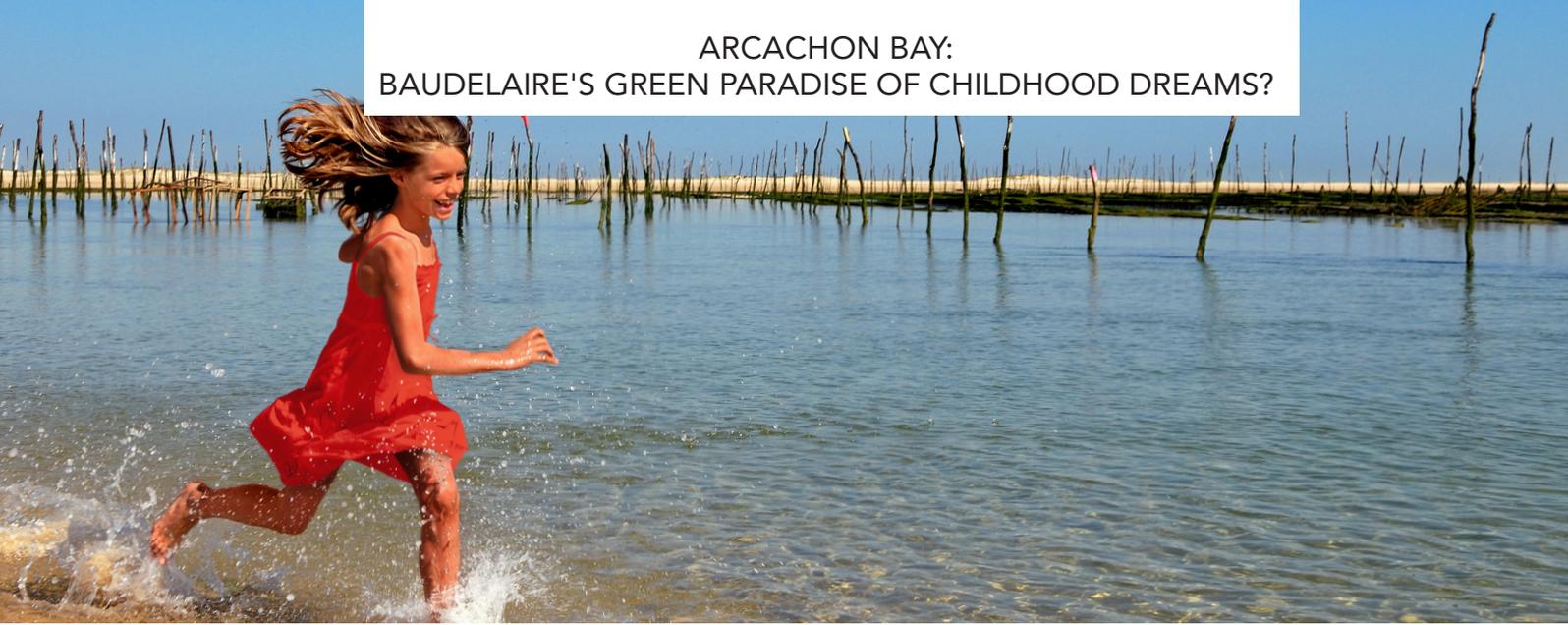


Avant-gard audacity

The cutting-edge aspect of their creations lies in two major characteristics: building materials and architectural forms. In fact, the former were conducive to the latter. Made out of concrete, glass, and steel, these houses have a silhouette displaying finesse, flatness and transparency. Roof terraces, glass walls, piles, open-plan layout (shear walls replaced by load-bearing posts), maximum interpenetration of interior and exterior (the former extending into the latter, and vice versa), etc. are some of the hallmarks. But, above all, they all stand in perfect harmony with their surroundings. Indeed, some are world famous! For example, the Maison Verte in the village of L'Herbe, near the Villa Algérienne, designed by Sadirac, or the Villa Février on the Dune de l'Herbe by Salier.

Practical information: For further information, please contact the Lège-Cap Ferret Tourist Information Office, Tel.: 05 56 03 94 49 - www.lege-capferret.com

ARCACHON BAY: BAUDELAIRE'S GREEN PARADISE OF CHILDHOOD DREAMS?



Children are also delighted with the bay. This beautiful natural setting also features a microclimate with plenty of sunshine in summer, but without excessive heat. Many families have been coming to Arcachon Bay for generations, largely because the adults remember the wonderful time they spent there as children.



Leisure activities on the water

With its kilometres of beaches, Arcachon Bay proposes young people a host of water sports. On the bay side, the still water is perfect for young children, whereas the ocean side with its waves and breakers is ideal for the more adventurous. There's something for everyone: surfing, sailing, kayak excursions, going out on the bay with an oyster farmer, etc. There are indeed many options.

Practical ideas:

- The surfing club at Grand Crohot beach, one of the six largest in France, with a three-star rating from the French Federation, offers introductory surfing lessons to children in complete safety.
Information and booking: 07 60 91 75 25
(www.ecole-surf-grand-crohot.com).
- The Taussat-Cassy yacht club offers beginners lessons in sailing a dinghy or optimist
(Tel.: 05 56 82 57 22)
- The Biganos nautical base organises kayak outings such as going down the Leyre or around the Ile de Malprat.
Information and booking: 06 71 63 01 14

Ecotourism for children

Thanks to Arcachon Bay's outstanding natural environment and many protected species of fauna and flora, this is a wonderful place for children to discover an ecosystem and deepen their respect for nature. Going up the Dune du Pilat or visiting the Le Teich Bird Reserve are musts. Furthermore, many excursions – visits and tours that are both informative and entertaining – are organized for children.

Practical ideas:

- Biganos: Organisation of a treasure hunt with a coordinator at the port of Biganos – two enjoyable hours learning about the history of Biganos and the bay. (Information and booking at the Tourist Information Office, Tel.: 05 57 70 67 56 - www.tourisme-coeurdubassin.com).
- Audenge: In the daytime, there are "nature expert" outings revolving around an entertaining imaginary police enquiry at the Domaine de Certes-Graveyron to make children more aware of nature. At night, La tête dans les étoiles ("Head in the Stars") evenings are offered to discover stars and constellations at the port of Audenge. (Information and booking at the Tourist Information Office, Tel.: 05 57 70 67 56 www.tourisme-coeurdubassin.com).
- Lanton: the Tourist Information Office organises group shore fishing sessions with a guide in channels at low tide for the whole family (Information and booking at the Tourist Information Office, Tel.: 05 57 70 67 56 www.tourisme-coeurdubassin.com).





Leisure activities

Had enough of bathing and discovering nature? There are many other fun activities to turn to: Treetop adventure course, a zoo, mini-golf, seeing farm animals, paintball, laser games, etc. You will never get bored!

Practical ideas:

- **La Teste de Buch:** The Arcachon Bay Zoo offers 23 tree-shaded hectares and a day full of emotion, with animals from five continents. www.zoodubassindarcachon.com.
- **Gujan-Mestras:** Amusement parks: Aqualand is great for people who love water slides, rapids and swimming pools with or without waves (www.aqualand.fr), Coccinelle is great for discovering animals in a farm setting (www.la-coccinelle.fr), Kid Parc delights small children with its enchanted river (www.kidparc.com), Bassin Aventures is for the more athletic who enjoy tree climbing (www.bassinaventures.com), and Max' Golf is ideal for children who wish to learn how to play golf like mum and dad on a mini-course (www.maxgolf.fr).
- **Mios:** T en Leyre, adventure park with high and low ropes courses among the trees (<https://parcours-acrobatique-t-en-leyre.fr/>). Aquapark 33, water park (<https://aquapark.fr/aquapark-33/>) and Lakecity, water ski lifts on 32 acres (<https://lakecity.fr/>).
- **Andernos-les-Bains:** Tree climbing for people who enjoy a thrill (Escalad'Parc, Tel.: 06 87 84 90 47 - www.escalad-parc.fr) and Megazone Laser Games (Tel.: 05 35 54 63 80 - www.lasergames.fr) for older children.



- **Andernos-les-Bains:** Guided tours to discover the town's architectural heritage, the treasures of the oyster port, and the Quinconces. Information at the Tourist Information Office, Tel.: 05 56 82 02 95 <https://andernos-tourisme.fr/>

- **Arès:** Nature tours are organised at the Domaine Saint Brice wetland, an environmentally sensitive area. A treasure hunt is available for small children (starting at age 5) at the Réserve Naturelle des Prés Salés (Salt March Natural Reserve) to discover the rich and varied plant life. Also available: walks and shore fishing by moonlight at low tide, as well as bicycle excursions. Information and booking at the Tourist Information Office (Tel. 05 56 60 18 07 - www.ares-tourisme.com).

- **Lège-Cap Ferret:** Entertaining land excursions are organised at the Arès-Lège Réserve des Prés Salés for children to discover this unusual environment as well as its fauna and flora. Information and booking at the Tourist Information Office: 05 56 03 94 49 www.lege-capferret.com.





Villages that have kept their identity, trendy seaside resorts, buzzing urban areas with so much going on or quaint picturesque market towns, each location on Arcachon Bay has its unique heritage, specialities and riches – while sharing the same spirit!

Arcachon

- Plage Pereire: this sandy beach with a nearby pine forest features a promenade along the bay as far as Le Moulleau or the marina.
- Overlooking the beach and built in 1853 in a neo-Renaissance style, Château Deganne is now a casino and a venue for performances of all kinds.
- A guided tour will share the secrets of mineral water from Sainte-Anne-des-Abatilles, drawn from a well 472 metres deep in the pine forest.
- The Tourist Information Office will take you on a tour of the Ville d'Hiver, a unique district of elegant villas with remarkable façades and roofs in a beautiful ten hectare green setting.

Useful address:

Office de Tourisme d'ARCACHON (33120)
Tél.: 05 57 52 97 97
tourisme@arcachon.com
www.arcachon.com



La Teste de Buch

- Whether on your own or with a guide, going up Europe's tallest sand dune is not to be missed. There is no fee and visits are possible all year long, with free services (special events, performances, rest areas, etc.). This is a small charge for parking (which goes toward preserving the site).
- L'Île aux Oiseaux: located in the middle of the bay, this island welcomes an impressive number of bird species. A boat trip makes it possible to see the birds close up and also to admire the famous cabanes tchanquées (huts on stilts).
- The Banc d'Arguin: Located between the Dune and Cap-Ferret, this sandy island has been a listed nature reserve since 1972. This is where sandwich terns come to rest. The SEPANSO offers guided tours.
- Excursions and guided tours: Admire the Villa Tethys, A walk through the western salt marshes, All about oysters, Remember the past (bunkers from the Second World War), Behind the scenes at the race track, Guided shellfish collecting expedition, La Teste tasting tour, Guided forest walk, Fishing on the sand banks, Stroll around the villas in Pyla-sur-Mer...

Useful address:

Office de Tourisme de LA TESTE DE BUCH (33260)
Tél.: 05 56 54 63 14
info@tourisme-latestedebuch.fr
www.tourisme-latestedebuch.com





Gujan-Mestras

- The seven ports: La Hume, Meyran, Gujan, Larros, Le Canal, La Barbotière and La Mole have maintained their charm. Maritime history is omnipresent.
- The Maison de l’Huître: Located at the Port de Larros, this "Oyster House" with modern scenography enables visitors to learn about this fascinating mollusc, its place in local history, and how oysters are farmed.
- La Hume features a bowling alley, a casino, a golf course, five theme parks, and a night club for people who want to enjoy themselves day and night. The town has a water park, an amusement park, a tree-climbing park and a giant miniature golf course. An entertaining time and plenty of leisure activities are available for the entire family in Gujan-Mestras!

Useful address:

Office de Tourisme de GUJAN-MESTRAS (33470)
Tél.: 05 56 66 12 65
contact@gujanmestras.com



Le Teich

- The Bird Reserve: located between the Leyre Delta and Arcachon Bay's salt water, this bird sanctuary has been designed to be a haven for wild birds as well as a tourist attraction. As a listed environmental protection area, this 110 hectare site is known internationally for the variety of water birds that either live or stop over there.
- The Leyre Delta: the fauna and flora here are a pure delight to nature lovers. Access is via a path along the beach, which follows a ring of seawalls.
- De luxe tasting: tour and tasting at L'Esturgeonnière - Caviar Perlita, producers of French caviar.
- La Fontaine Saint-Jean: one of the pilgrim roads to Santiago de Compostela went through Le Teich. This fountain is a reminder of that time, when its waters were said to cure skin diseases.

Useful address:

Office de Tourisme du TEICH (33470)
Tél.: 05 56 22 80 46
leteichtourisme@agglo-cobas.fr
www.leteich-tourisme.com

Biganos

- Two ports: The only port located in the middle of the forest is in Biganos. This is a must see, and the Port des Tuiles is also well worth discovering. Tuile means tile, and these were formerly shipped from here to oyster farmers who used them to propagate spat.
- De luxe tasting: tour and tasting at Moulin de la Cassadotte, the oldest producers of French caviar.
- Canoe excursions: Discover the Leyre Delta in the Parc Naturel Régional des Landes Gascogne either on your own or with a seasoned instructor.
- La Serre Ô Délices: Oysters also come in the form of a plant! Discover the highly unusual oyster plant in a greenhouse specialised in aromatic, savoury plants used in cooking.

Useful address:

Office de Tourisme Cœur du Bassin (Biganos / Mios / Marcheprime / Audenge / Lanton)
Tél.: 05 57 70 67 56
info@tourisme-coeurdubassin.com
www.tourisme-coeurdubassin.com



Audenge

- Domaine de Certes-Graveyron: These 530 hectares (a drained former salt marsh) feature remarkable fauna and flora. Belonging to the Conservatoire du Littoral, this estate also has a fine manor house that is currently being restored. The Gironde Department General Council offers guided tours in high season.
- The oyster port is home to La Cabane Bleue des Artistes, where numerous exhibitions are held. Learn how to fish for crabs at high tide here with an instructor.
- The coastal path: Salt production and fish farming will hold no more secrets after a walk down this path between land and the bay.

Useful address:

Office de Tourisme Cœur du Bassin (Biganos / Mios / Marcheprime / Audenge / Lanton)
Tél.: 05 57 70 67 56
info@tourismecoeurdubassin.com
www.tourismecoeurdubassin.com

Mios

- Take a trip down the calm waters of the Leyre.
- Climb in the trees at T en Leyre, a tree top adventure course.
- The joys of Lakecity.
- Something for the whole family at Aquapark 33.

Marcheprime

- Culture: La Caravelle Theatre offers a rich and varied cultural program
- Horse riding: Enjoy the thrills of riding at the Croix d'Hins stables.

Lanton

- The beaches: Taussat-les-Bains (with its well-known beautiful houses not far from the coast) and Cassy are wonderful locations to bathe for young and old alike.
- Gardarem Ecomuseum: Gardarem means "we will maintain" in Gascon. This museum, located in the old port at Taussat, is open on weekends from 5-7 pm. It reflects local traditions and exhibits tools used locally by oyster farmers, resin tappers, fishermen and farmers.
- Notre-Dame de Lanton church, dating back to the 12th century, is located on the pilgrim road to Santiago de Compostela.

Useful address:

Office de Tourisme Cœur du Bassin (Biganos / Mios / Marcheprime / Audenge / Lanton)
Tél.: 05 57 70 67 56
info@tourisme-coeurdubassin.com
www.tourisme-coeurdubassin.com

Andernos-les-Bains

- The jetty: 232 metres long, and affords a panoramic view.
- The beaches: 5 km long and completely safe, with a playground at Bétey beach and at the oyster port, which serves as a venue for special events and tastings at oyster huts.
- Excursions and guided tours: A feast for the eyes! Walks along channels and esteyes (rivulets subject to the tide), Sur les Pistes de Robin strolls with the family (itineraries in a book in which an imaginary character helps children to discover new places with their parents), tours of the oyster port, the Quinconces, the small Oyster Museum, the Louis David house, and Gallo-Roman vestiges... And why not "follow in the footsteps of Sarah Bernhardt"?
- Saint-Éloi church, built in the Romanesque style, bordering the beach, with its restored paintings.

Useful address:

Office de Tourisme d'ANDERNOS-LES-BAINS (33510)
Tél.: 05 56 82 02 95
contact@andernos-tourisme.fr
<https://andernos-tourisme.fr/>

Arès

- The beach: 3 km long: a paradise for swimmers at high tide. A bathing area is also accessible at low tide with a lifeguard in summer.
- Salt marsh reserve: As the largest in the Aquitaine region with 495 hectares, the reserve offers a huge variety of landscapes: mud flats, channels, sand banks, salt marshes, reed beds and wooded dunes. There is also a wide range of wildlife, in every season.
- Discovering nature: a walking or biking guided tour of Saint-Brice by the light of the moon... Entertaining family treasure hunts to discover the two sites mentioned above.
- La Fête de l'Huître: This three day Oyster Festival is fun for the whole family. Oyster tasting for holiday makers and local inhabitants.

Useful address:

Office de Tourisme d'ARÈS (33740)
Tél.: 05 56 60 18 07
info@ares-tourisme.com
www.ares-tourisme.com



Lège-Cap Ferret

- At fifty-three metres tall and featuring a 258-step staircase, Cap Ferret lighthouse offers a splendid panoramic view over the ocean, the dune and the bay, not forgetting the peninsula.
- You can taste fresh oysters in huts and take a stroll around the streets of the nine ports and oyster farming villages.
- You are also sure to enjoy a walk or bike ride through the 7,000 hectares of forest, the bay's "green lungs".
- The 25 km of beaches and dunes on the bay side are great for the family to visit and wonderful for water sports, even extreme ones, on the ocean side.
- La Chapelle de l'Herbe: the Moorish-style chapel of the Villa Algérienne.

Useful address:

Office de Tourisme de LÈGE-CAP FERRET (33950)
Tél.: 05 56 03 94 49
info@lege-capferret.com
www.lege-capferret.com

Travelling to Arcachon Bay

>> By car

- ▶ From Paris: A10 Paris-Bordeaux motorway
- ▶ From Toulouse: A62 motorway to Bordeaux, then the A660 to Arcachon (not a toll road)
- ▶ From Biarritz: A62 motorway to Bordeaux, then the A660 to Arcachon (not a toll road)
- ▶ From Lyon: A89 motorway to Bordeaux, then the A660 to Arcachon (not a toll road)
- ▶ Arcachon Bay is less than one hour from Bordeaux, via Route Nationale 250.

>> By train

- ▶ Arcachon Bay is 3 hours from Paris thanks to the TGV high speed train link Arcachon-Paris Montparnasse.

There is a TER (Train Express Régional) train that stops at the stations in the bay area about once every hour from Bordeaux.

List of SNCF stations on Arcachon Bay: Marcheprime / Facture – Biganos / Le Teich / Gujan -Mestras / La Hume (Gujan - Mestras) / La Teste de Buch / Arcachon.

>> By plane

Bordeaux-Mérignac international airport (45 minutes from Arcachon Bay by car).

>> By coach

Leaving from Hall B, the Jet'Bus shuttle links the airport to Bordeaux station every 45 minutes, 7 days a week, via the city centre (45 minute trip). For further information: www.bordeaux.aeroport.fr.



Travelling around Arcachon Bay?

>> By bicycle

A 220 km network of cycle paths serves all the towns on Arcachon Bay.

>> By boat

"Transbassin" maritime shuttles leave from Arcachon and Cap Ferret all-year-round, and from Andernos-les-Bains during the tourist season. It is also possible to take water taxis.



In order to sail your boat on the bay without any problems, please download the free **e-navigation** application.

>> By coach

In the northern part of the bay area (Biganos/Mios/Audenge / Lanton / Andernos - les Bains / Arès / Lège - Cap Ferret): TransGironde network.
Information: www.transgironde.fr

In the southern part of the bay area (Le Teich / Gujan - Mestras / La Teste de Buch / Arcachon): Baïa network (regular and seasonal service for beach destinations).
Information: www.bus-baia.fr

>> By train

There are hourly daily TER (*Train Express Régional*) to and from Bordeaux Saint-Jean station.

List of SNCF stations on Arcachon Bay: Marcheprime / Facture - Biganos / Le Teich / Gujan - Mestras / La Hume (Gujan - Mestras) / La Teste de Buch / Arcachon.





BASSIN D'ARCACHON

un monde à part

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