# **Carcassonne**

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*For other uses, see*[*Carcassonne (disambiguation)*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Carcassonne_(disambiguation))*.*

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Carcassonne**  *Carcassona* | |
| [**Prefecture**](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Prefectures_of_France)**and**[**commune**](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Communes_of_France) | |
| [Panorama of the Cité de Carcassonne](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:1_carcassonne_aerial_2016.jpg)  Panorama of the Cité de Carcassonne | |
| [Coat of arms of Carcassonne](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Blason_Carcassonne_Ville_Haute_11.svg) Coat of arms | |
| show  **Location of Carcassonne** | |
| [Carcassonne is located in France](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:France_location_map-Regions_and_departements-2016.svg)  Carcassonne  Carcassonne  Show map of FranceShow map of OccitanieShow all | |
| Coordinates: https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/thumb/5/55/WMA_button2b.png/17px-WMA_button2b.png[43°13′N 2°21′E](https://tools.wmflabs.org/geohack/geohack.php?pagename=Carcassonne&params=43.21_N_2.35_E_type:city(45895)_region:FR-OCC)[Coordinates](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Geographic_coordinate_system): https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/thumb/5/55/WMA_button2b.png/17px-WMA_button2b.png[43°13′N 2°21′E](https://tools.wmflabs.org/geohack/geohack.php?pagename=Carcassonne&params=43.21_N_2.35_E_type:city(45895)_region:FR-OCC) | |
| **Country** | [France](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/France) |
| [**Region**](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Regions_of_France) | [Occitanie](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Occitanie) |
| [**Department**](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Departments_of_France) | [Aude](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Aude) |
| [**Arrondissement**](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Arrondissements_of_France) | [Carcassonne](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Arrondissement_of_Carcassonne) |
| [**Canton**](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cantons_of_France) | [Carcassonne-1](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Canton_of_Carcassonne-1), [2](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Canton_of_Carcassonne-2) and [3](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Canton_of_Carcassonne-3) |
| [**Intercommunality**](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Communes_of_France#Intercommunality) | Carcassonne |
| **Government** | |
| **• Mayor**(2008–2014) | [Jean-Claude Perez](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jean-Claude_Perez)([PS](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Socialist_Party_(France))) |
| **Area**  **1** | 65.08 km2 (25.13 sq mi) |
| **Population**  (2016)**2** | 45,895 |
| **• Density** | 710/km2 (1,800/sq mi) |
| [**Time zone**](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Time_zone) | [UTC+01:00](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/UTC%2B01:00) ([CET](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Central_European_Time)) |
| **• Summer (**[**DST**](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Daylight_saving_time)**)** | [UTC+02:00](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/UTC%2B02:00) ([CEST](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Central_European_Summer_Time)) |
| [**INSEE**](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/INSEE_code)**/Postal code** | [11069](https://www.insee.fr/fr/statistiques/1405599?geo=COM-11069) /11000 |
| **Elevation** | 81–250 m (266–820 ft)  (avg. 111 m or 364 ft) |
| **1** French Land Register data, which excludes lakes, ponds, glaciers > 1 km2 (0.386 sq mi or 247 acres) and river estuaries. **2** [*Population without double counting*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Population_without_double_counting): residents of multiple communes (e.g., students and military personnel) only counted once. | |

**Carcassonne** (French: [[kaʁ.ka.sɔn]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Help:IPA/French); [Occitan](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Occitan_language): *Carcassona* [[kaɾkaˈsunɔ]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Help:IPA/Occitan); [Latin](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Latin_language): *Carcaso*) is a French fortified city in the [department](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Departments_of_France) of [Aude](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Aude" \o "Aude), in the [region](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Regions_of_France) of [Occitanie](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Occitanie_(administrative_region)" \o "Occitanie (administrative region)). A [prefecture](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Prefectures_in_France), it has a population of about 50,000.

Inhabited since the [Neolithic](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Neolithic) period, Carcassonne is located in the [Aude](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Aude_(river)" \o "Aude (river)) plain between historic trade routes, linking the Atlantic to the [Mediterranean sea](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mediterranean_sea) and the [Massif Central](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Massif_Central) to the [Pyrénées](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pyr%C3%A9n%C3%A9es" \o "Pyrénées). Its strategic importance was quickly recognized by the Romans, who occupied its hilltop until the demise of the [Western Roman Empire](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Western_Roman_Empire). In the fifth century, it was taken over by the [Visigoths](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Visigoths), who founded the city. Its strategic location led successive rulers to expand its fortifications until the [Treaty of the Pyrenees](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Treaty_of_the_Pyrenees) in 1659.

Its citadel known as the [Cité de Carcassonne](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cit%C3%A9_de_Carcassonne" \o "Cité de Carcassonne), is a medieval fortress dating back to the [Gallo-Roman period](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Roman_Gaul), and was restored by the theorist and architect [Eugène Viollet-le-Duc](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Eug%C3%A8ne_Viollet-le-Duc" \o "Eugène Viollet-le-Duc) in 1853. It was added to the [UNESCO](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/UNESCO) list of [World Heritage Sites](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/World_Heritage_site) in 1997.[[1]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Carcassonne#cite_note-1)Consequently, Carcassonne relies heavily on tourism but also counts manufacturing and wine-making as some of its other key economic sectors.

## **Geography[[edit](https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Carcassonne&action=edit&section=1" \o "Edit section: Geography)]**

Carcassonne is located in the south of France, about 80 kilometres east of [Toulouse](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Toulouse). Its strategic location between the Atlantic Ocean and the Mediterranean Sea has been known since the [neolithic](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Neolithic" \o "Neolithic) era.

The town's area is about 65 km2 (25 sq mi), which is significantly larger than the numerous small towns in the department of Aude. The rivers Aude, Fresquel and the [Canal du Midi](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Canal_du_Midi) flow through the town.

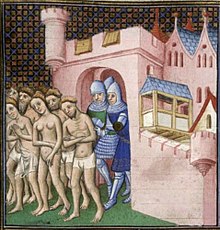
## **History[[edit](https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Carcassonne&action=edit&section=2" \o "Edit section: History)]**

The first signs of settlement in this region have been dated to about 3500 BC, but the hill site of *Carsac* – a [Celtic](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Celtic_languages) [place-name](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Toponymy) that has been retained at other sites in the south – became an important trading place in the 6th century BC. The [Volcae Tectosages](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Volcae_Tectosages" \o "Volcae Tectosages)fortified the *[oppidum](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Oppidum" \o "Oppidum)*.[*[citation needed](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:Citation_needed" \o "Wikipedia:Citation needed)*]

The [folk etymology](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Folk_etymology) – involving a [châtelaine](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ch%C3%A2telain" \o "Châtelain) named [Lady Carcas](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lady_Carcas), a ruse ending a [siege](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Siege), and the joyous ringing of bells ("*Carcas*sona") – though memorialized in a [neo-Gothic](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gothic_Revival_architecture) sculpture of *Mme. Carcas* on a column near the [Narbonne Gate](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Narbonne-carcas.png), is of modern invention. The name can be derived as an [augmentative](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Augmentative) of the name Carcas.

Carcassonne became strategically identified when the [Romans](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Roman_Empire) fortified the hilltop around 100 BC and eventually made the *[colonia](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Colonia_(Roman)" \o "Colonia (Roman))*of *Julia Carsaco*, later *Carcasum* (by the process of swapping consonants known as [metathesis](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Metathesis_(linguistics))). The main part of the lower courses of the northern [ramparts](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Defensive_wall) dates from [Gallo-Roman](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gallo-Roman_culture) times. In 462 the Romans officially ceded [Septimania](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Septimania" \o "Septimania) to the Visigothic king [Theodoric II](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Theodoric_II) who had held Carcassonne since 453. He built more [fortifications](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fortification) at Carcassonne, which was a frontier post on the northern marches; traces of them still stand. Theodoric is thought to have begun the predecessor of the [basilica](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Basilica) that is now dedicated to [Saint Nazaire](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nazarius_and_Celsus). In 508 the Visigoths successfully foiled attacks by the Frankish king [Clovis](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Clovis_I). [Saracens](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Saracens) from [Barcelona](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Barcelona) took Carcassonne in 725, but King [Pepin the Short](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pepin_the_Short)(Pépin le Bref) drove them away in 759-60; though he took most of the south of France, he was unable to penetrate the impregnable fortress of Carcassonne.[[*citation needed*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:Citation_needed)]

A medieval fiefdom, the [county of Carcassonne](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/County_of_Carcassonne), controlled the city and its environs. It was often united with the [County of Razès](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/County_of_Raz%C3%A8s). The origins of Carcassonne as a county probably lie in local representatives of the Visigoths, but the first count known by name is [Bello](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bello_of_Carcassonne) of the time of [Charlemagne](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Charlemagne). Bello founded a dynasty, the [Bellonids](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bellonids" \o "Bellonids), which would rule many *[honores](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Honores" \o "Honores)* in Septimania and [Catalonia](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Catalonia) for three centuries.

[](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Cathars_expelled.JPG)

[Cathars](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cathars) being expelled from Carcassonne in 1209

In 1067, Carcassonne became the property of Raimond-Bernard Trencavel, [viscount](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Viscount) of [Albi](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Albi" \o "Albi) and [Nîmes](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/N%C3%AEmes" \o "Nîmes), through his marriage with Ermengard, sister of the last count of Carcassonne. In the following centuries, the [Trencavel](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Trencavel" \o "Trencavel) family allied in succession either with the counts of Barcelona or of Toulouse. They built the *Château Comtal* and the [Basilica of Saints Nazarius and Celsus](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Basilica_of_Saints_Nazarius_and_Celsus). In 1096, [Pope Urban II](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pope_Urban_II) blessed the foundation stones of the new cathedral.

Carcassonne became famous for its role in the [Albigensian Crusades](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Albigensian_Crusade" \o "Albigensian Crusade), when the city was a stronghold of Occitan [Cathars](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Catharism" \o "Catharism). In August 1209 the crusading army of the [Papal Legate](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Papal_legate), [Abbot Arnaud Amalric](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Arnaud_Amalric), forced its citizens to surrender. Viscount [Raymond-Roger de Trencavel](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Raymond-Roger_de_Trencavel) was imprisoned whilst negotiating his city's surrender and died in mysterious circumstances three months later in his own dungeon. The people of Carcassonne were allowed to leave – in effect, expelled from their city with nothing more than the shirt on their backs. [Simon De Montfort](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Simon_de_Montfort,_5th_Earl_of_Leicester)was appointed the new viscount. He added to the fortifications.

In 1240, Trencavel's son tried to reconquer his old domain, but in vain. The city submitted to the rule of the kingdom of France in 1247. Carcassonne became a border fortress between France and the [Crown of Aragon](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Crown_of_Aragon) under the [Treaty of Corbeil (1258)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Treaty_of_Corbeil_(1258)). [King Louis IX](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Louis_IX_of_France) founded the new part of the town across the river. He and his successor [Philip III](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Philip_III_of_France) built the outer ramparts. Contemporary opinion still considered the fortress impregnable. During the [Hundred Years' War](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hundred_Years%27_War), [Edward the Black Prince](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Edward_the_Black_Prince) failed to take the city in 1355, although his troops destroyed the Lower Town.[[2]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Carcassonne#cite_note-2)

In 1659, the [Treaty of the Pyrenees](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Treaty_of_the_Pyrenees) transferred the border province of [Roussillon](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Roussillon) to France, and Carcassonne's military significance was reduced. Fortifications were abandoned, and the city became mainly an economic centre that concentrated on the [woollen](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wool" \o "Wool) textile industry, for which a 1723 source quoted by [Fernand Braudel](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fernand_Braudel" \o "Fernand Braudel) found it "the manufacturing centre of Languedoc".[[3]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Carcassonne#cite_note-3) It remained so until the Ottoman market collapsed at the end of the eighteenth century, thereafter reverting to a country town.[[4]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Carcassonne#cite_note-4)

## **Historical importance[[edit](https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Carcassonne&action=edit&section=3" \o "Edit section: Historical importance)]**

Carcassonne was the first fortress to use [hoardings](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hoarding_(castle)) in times of [siege](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Siege). Temporary wooden [ramparts](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rampart_(fortification)) would be fitted to the upper walls of the [fortress](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fortress) through square holes beneath the rampart itself. It provided protection to defenders on the wall and allowed defenders to go out past the wall to drop [projectiles](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Projectiles) on attackers at the wall beneath.

## **Main sights[[edit](https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Carcassonne&action=edit&section=4" \o "Edit section: Main sights)]**

### The fortified city**[[edit](https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Carcassonne&action=edit&section=5" \o "Edit section: The fortified city)]**

*Main article: [Cité de Carcassonne](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cit%C3%A9_de_Carcassonne" \o "Cité de Carcassonne)*

The fortified city itself consists essentially of a concentric design of two outer walls with 53 towers and [barbicans](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Barbican) to prevent attack by siege engines. The castle itself possesses its own drawbridge and ditch leading to a central keep. The walls consist of towers built over quite a long period.[[5]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Carcassonne#cite_note-5) One section is Roman and is notably different from the medieval walls, with the tell-tale red brick layers and the shallow pitch terracotta tile roofs. One of these towers housed the Catholic Inquisition in the 13th century and is still known as "The Inquisition Tower".

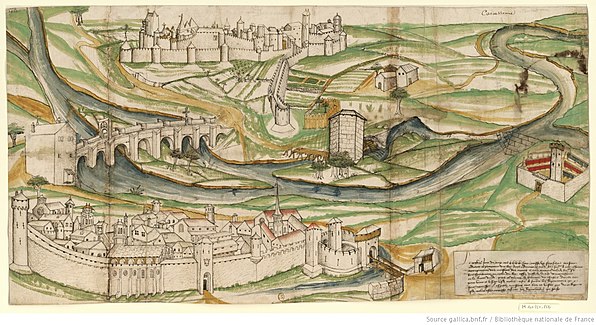
Carcassonne was demilitarised under Napoleon and the Restoration, and the fortified *cité* of Carcassonne fell into such disrepair that the French government decided that it should be demolished. A decree to that effect that was made official in 1849 caused an uproar. The antiquary and mayor of Carcassonne, Jean-Pierre Cros-Mayrevieille, and the writer [Prosper Mérimée](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Prosper_M%C3%A9rim%C3%A9e), the first inspector of ancient monuments, led a campaign to preserve the fortress as a historical monument. Later in the year the architect [Eugène Viollet-le-Duc](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Eug%C3%A8ne_Viollet-le-Duc" \o "Eugène Viollet-le-Duc), already at work restoring the Basilica of Saint-Nazaire, was commissioned to renovate the place.

In 1853, work began with the west and southwest walls, followed by the towers of the *porte Narbonnaise* and the principal entrance to the *cité*. The fortifications were consolidated here and there, but the chief attention was paid to restoring the roofing of the towers and the ramparts, where Viollet-le-Duc ordered the destruction of structures that had encroached against the walls, some of them of considerable age. Viollet-le-Duc left copious notes and drawings on his death in 1879, when his pupil Paul Boeswillwald and, later, the architect Nodet continued the rehabilitation of Carcassonne.

The restoration was strongly criticized during Viollet-le-Duc's lifetime. Fresh from work in the north of France, he made the error of using slates, ( when there was no slate to be quarried around,) instead of terra cotta tiles. The slate roofs were claimed to be more typical of northern France, as well as the addition of the pointed tips to the roofs. Yet, overall, Viollet-le-Duc's achievement at Carcassonne is agreed to be a work of genius, though not of the strictest authenticity.

### Other**[[edit](https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Carcassonne&action=edit&section=6" \o "Edit section: Other)]**

Another bridge, [Pont Marengo](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pont_Marengo), crosses the Canal du Midi and provides access to the [railway station](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gare_de_Carcassonne). [Lac de la Cavayère](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lac_de_la_Cavay%C3%A8re) has been created as a recreational lake and is about five minutes from the city centre.

[](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Painting_of_Carcassonne_from_1462.jpeg)

This drawing of Carcassonne from 1462 found by Jean-Pierre Cros-Mayrevieille in the Gaignières collection of the Bibliothèque Royale, had a major influence on the project of Carcassone's restoration. It reinforced Viollet-le-Duc's idea that all of the towers were topped with conical roof trussing.[[6]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Carcassonne#cite_note-6)

[](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Carcassonne_vieux_pont.jpg)

The fortified city of Carcassonne and the Pont Vieux crossing the [Aude](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Aude_(river)" \o "Aude (river)) river

Further sights include:

* the [Basilica of St. Nazaire and St. Celse](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Basilica_of_St._Nazaire_and_St._Celse,_Carcassonne)
* [Carcassonne Cathedral](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Carcassonne_Cathedral)
* Church of St. Vincent

## **References[[edit](https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Carcassonne&action=edit&section=18" \o "Edit section: References)]**

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  5. [**^**](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Carcassonne#cite_ref-5) midi-france.info. [*"Historic Cities: Caracassonne"*](http://www.midi-france.info/030101_carcassonne.htm). midi-france.info.
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