

Glossary

Ashlar masonry: a Greek technique using cut and worked limestone blocks.

Celts: a European people the Romans called the Gauls in the 1st century BC.

Corbel: a stone base topped with a wooden beam.

Dolium, plural *dolia*, Latin: a large ceramic vase to store liquids (wine, oil, water).

Domitian Way: created by the consul Domitius Ahenobarbus around 118 BC, connecting Italy to Spain.

Graffiti: inscriptions engraved on vases.

Hellenistic period: from the death of Alexander the Great in 323 BC up to the death of Cleopatra in 31 BC.

Iberians: the name given to the people of the Iberian Peninsula by ancient authors.

Oppidum, plural *oppida*, Latin: the name given by Caesar to fortified Celtic towns.

Postern: a pedestrian gate built into a rampart.

Silaging area: the silos used to store grains are grouped together to protect them.

Tuff: limestone rock.

Practical information

Average length of visit: 2 hours

Unaccompanied or guided tours.

Centre des monuments nationaux

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More than a century of archaeological research

Pioneering times

Félix Mouret (1862-1939), a local erudite considered the first explorer of the Ensérune site, acquired vineyards as of 1915 where 300 graves were excavated. The digs focused on finding “art objects” in order to establish a typology of vases published in 1928 with the support of the Louvre museum: the *Corpus Vasorum Antiquorum*.

The national interest of the site was confirmed as of 1916 by a visit from a scientific commission notably composed of Salomon Reinach, curator at the Museum of National Antiquities, Saint-Germain-en-Laye, Edmond Pottier, curator at the Louvre, and Emile Cartailhac, founder of the Saint-Raymond Archaeological Museum in Toulouse.

The discovery of the ancient settlement

The explorations of the Celtic conglomeration were carried out thanks to a series of projects to excavate the hillside run by Abbot Sigal (1877-1945).

Jean Jannoray (1909-1958) then Hubert Gallet de Santerre (1915-1991) set up a field school for students from Montpellier University.

The discoveries enriched the museum directed by Abbot Joseph Giry (1905-2002).

The research under way

Preventive excavations are now directed by the Regional Archaeological Department ahead of restoration work.

Since 2017, a research programme has been relaunched with the aim of better understanding the architectural and urban development of the *oppidum**.

* Explanations overleaf

From the Villa Maux to the site museum

In 1914, Joseph Maux had a manor house built at the top of the hill and planted the first wooded park. The chief architect of historical monuments Jules Formigé (1879-1960) converted the Villa Maux, bought by the State in 1922, into a site museum. In 1939, an extension was created to the west and the turret was raised.

Reference collections

The excavations of the *oppidum** and the 500 graves in the Ensérune cemetery dated between the 6th century and the 3rd century BC produced one of the largest collections of Celtic weaponry in Europe, as well as Greek, Iberian, Celtic, Etruscan and Roman ceramics from the South of France. Around 1,300 graffiti* in the Latin, Greek, Etruscan and Iberian alphabets are indexed.

The permanent exhibition

Ground floor

Giry Room: Ensérune a crossroads of civilisations.

Sigal Room: urban development of the settlement and daily life of its inhabitants since the 6th century BC around the ponds up to its maximum expansion in the 2nd century BC. Evocation of “Roman” life as of the 1st century BC.

First floor

Jannoray Room: a century of archaeological research to decipher the Ensérune cemetery.

Mouret Room: Félix Mouret’s study when he was writing *Corpus Vasorum Antiquorum* published in 1928.

* Explanations overleaf

Ensérune Oppidum and Archaeological Museum

A Mediterranean Celtic town

A remarkable geographic location

Anseduna, which means “high place”, appeared in 899 in the *Recueil des Actes* [Collection of Acts] of Charles III the Simple.

Affording a unique viewpoint from the Pyrenees to the coast and towards the Caroux mountains, Ensérune faced Béziers beyond Orb.

An oppidum* at the crossroads of civilisations



Created around 575 BC, the fortified town (*oppidum**) acted as an economic and cultural interface between the Celts*, Greeks, Iberians*, Etruscans and later the

Romans. Ensérune was located on a strategic route connecting the Iberian world to Italy via the Domitian Way*.

800 years of urban growth

The urban conglomeration established in the 6th century BC on the top of the plateau was divided into districts protected by a rampart. The expansion of the Celtic town, estimated at 30 hectares in the 2nd century BC, appeared largely unaffected by the creation of Narbonne in 118 BC. The wealth of archaeological findings justified the acquisition of 22 hectares of the hillside by the State.

* Explanations overleaf



1 The silo terrace

This silaging area* used to store grains was excavated between 1966 and 1972. The 72 silos dug in the yellow tuff* measured up to 3 metres deep. One bulb-shaped silo containing several thousand litres of grains can be seen in cross-section beside the main road. Some 300 silos have been unearthed on the 30 hectares of the *oppidum**.

2 A house at the foot of the rampart

Between 1964 and 1967, when the footpath was created, a building standing against the rampart was cleared. The fortification was composed of ashlar* limestone blocks meticulously carved and still visible in the embankment.

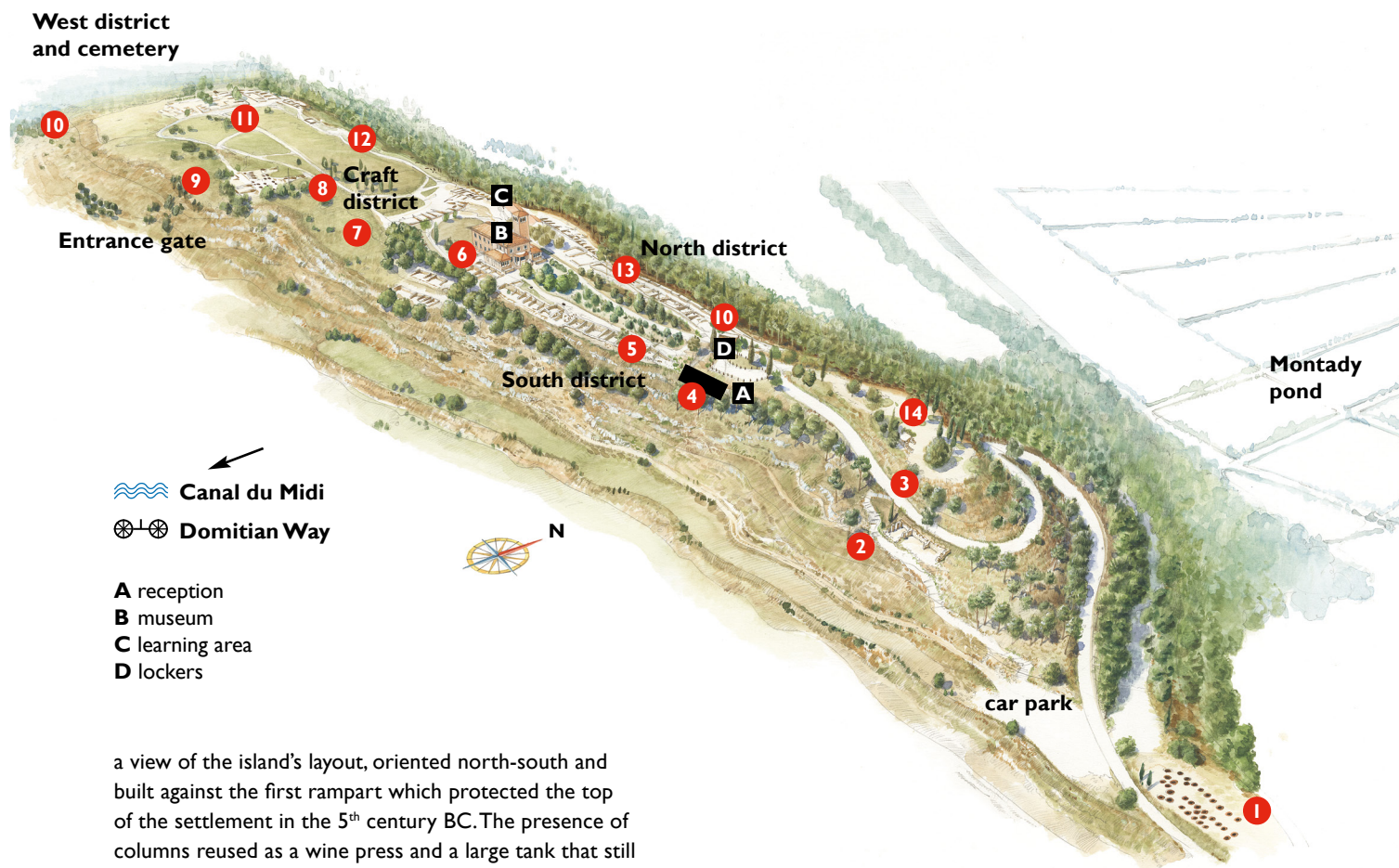
3 The *oppidum** ditch, perpendicular to the main road, was partly excavated during the construction of the road access in the 1930s. It protected the *oppidum** from any incursions from the east promontory.

4 The panoramic terrace affords a view of the coastline where the Greek port of Agde was established as of the 6th century BC.

5 The south district, a residential district occupied since the 5th century BC, is laid out in the form of a small, long island of houses built along the reconstructed southern rampart standing 3 metres tall. Restored in 1988, the lower sections (cellars, storage spaces) of the dwellings are outlined. Five large terracotta jars (*dolia**), reproductions of which can be seen *in situ*, were used to store liquids. A very large-capacity silo was carved into the rock while another is still visible in front of the museum facade. A water tank made from blocks covered with a waterproof coating completes the engineering systems.

6 The archaeological crypt is located beneath the museum. It houses the remains of a district built around two roads running east to west. The houses were equipped with storage areas for liquids and for grain processing, visible thanks to a glass panel installed in the museum floor.

7 The craft district underwent major restoration in 2002. An overhang more than 4 metres high provides



a view of the island's layout, oriented north-south and built against the first rampart which protected the top of the settlement in the 5th century BC. The presence of columns reused as a wine press and a large tank that still has its waterproof coating are evidence of the specialist activities carried out in this part of the *oppidum**.

8 The grand plateau overlooks the agricultural plain crossed by the Domitian Way* in ancient times. The Massif de la Clape bars the horizon to the south.

9 The entrance gate

Excavations of this area have revealed evidence of a main access road to the settlement from the Domitian Way* to the south, designed to accommodate chariots and equipped with a central sewer for water. A former quarry can also still be made out in the natural substrate that was drilled with some forty large-capacity

silos. An ashlar masonry* building, possibly from the Hellenistic period*, has been identified as a fortified granary. The contemporary metal shelter protects the remains of a large house dating from the 1st century BC.

10 The eastern belvedere affords views over the territory around the city of Narbonne. In the distance, the Mediterranean coast can be made out, along with part of the Pyrenees mountain range and the Canigou Massif.

11 The west district and the cemetery

The cemetery, in use from the 6th century BC to the 3rd century BC, can be made out from the six limestone steles that marked the surface of the graves. The district built in its place was laid out behind the northern rampart and had a monumental water tank. To the south is a vast monumental room measuring around 80m², likely used for a public function. Lastly, the vast dwellings with their stylish architecture inspired by Italic models were built in the 1st century BC.

12 To the northeast, the foothills of the Montagne Noire and the Caroux mountains can be made out, abundant mining areas in ancient times.

13 The north district was built on the slope based on a geometrical urban plan. It runs along the rampart behind which a 4-metre long street was constructed. A postern* with a staircase passes through the rampart measuring 2 to 3 metres thick. The houses are equipped with small tanks and storage spaces for jars (*dolia**). The existence of two-storey houses was confirmed by the discovery of the so-called "column house" with a double corbel* capital that supported the upper floor.

14 Montady pond

The west promontory affords an exceptional panorama over the pond of Montady. This land oddity is a result of the draining in the 18th century of the pond that initially lay at the foot of the *oppidum**. The central hydraulic device used to collect the water subsequently discharged into the ponds on the south side of the *oppidum** can be seen. The medieval Montady tower can also be made out, and beyond, to the east, the outline of the city of Béziers crowned by its cathedral and the old city overlooking the Orb river.