

History of the town

Located in the **Baïse river's** valley, at the confluence with the Gèle stream, the city of **Condom** likely derives its name from a Celtic or Aquitanian settlement called «Condatómagos», meaning : **The market at the confluence.**

In **1011 an abbey** was founded on the hill where sits the present-day cathedral. The abbots assumed the title of lords of the town. Dedicated to **Saint Peter** and entrusted to the Benedictines, the institution quickly prospered thanks to the passage of numerous pilgrims traveling the Way of Saint James to Compostela. The important relics housed in the abbey encouraged them to stop there.

In the 13th century, the abbey came under the protection of King Edward I of England. In return, seigneurial authority was shared between the abbot and the king.

During the Hundred Years' War, the town changed hands many times between the French and English camps.

In **1317**, pope John XXII elevated the abbey to a bishopric.

In the **mid-16th century**, during the Wars of Religion, the region was torn apart by conflicts between Catholics and Protestants. Although the town had a Catholic lord, most of its residents supported the Reformation. Condom was

besieged and plundered repeatedly by both sides.

In the **18th century**, the town underwent significant transformation. The city was cleaned up, its ramparts torn down, and its moats filled in. New streets were laid out. Wealthy families built private mansions called "**hôtels particuliers**" on the newly available land.

The French Revolution marked the end of Condom's bishopric.

In the **19th century**, work was completed to make the Baïse River navigable on the Gers side. The town's port welcomed **gabarres** (flat-bottomed boats), which transported local goods and barrels of **armagnac** down the Baïse River to Bordeaux via the Garonne River.

Today, the town has about 6,500 residents.

Since 1973, **every second weekend of May**, the historic town center vibrates with music during the famous **Festival de Bandas.**

A stop on **the Way of Saint James** since the 11th century, Condom still welcomes pilgrims. The section of the GR 65 trail between Lectoure and Condom has been listed as a **UNESCO World Heritage Site** since 1998.

The former episcopal city : the cathedral and cloister

Located in the very heart of the historic center, **Saint-Pierre Cathedral** dates from the **16th century**.

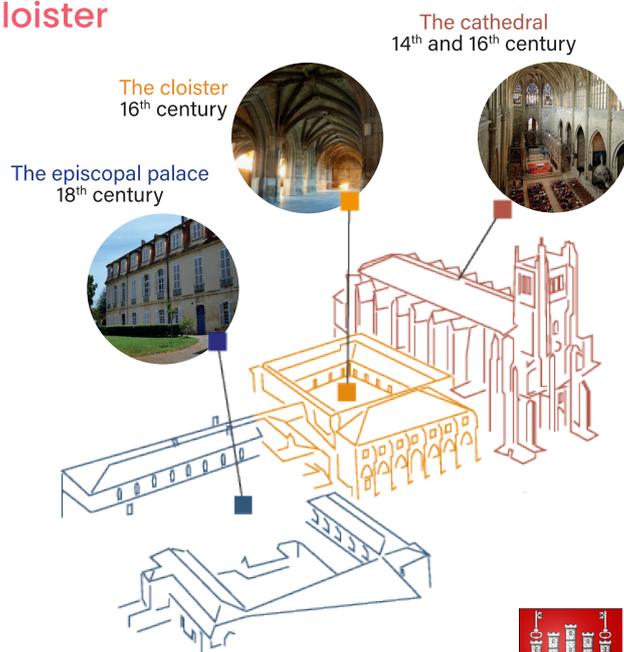
The former abbey church was restored in the 14th century but was heavily damaged in the early 16th century when its bell tower collapsed. **Bishop Jean Marre** ordered a complete reconstruction of the building. The construction lasted 24 years (1507–1531): the old abbey church was gradually demolished as the work progressed.

From the outside, the massive appearance of the church resembles the **Southern Gothic style**. The very bright interior is lit by elegant windows in the **Flamboyant Gothic style**. The only remaining part of the abbey church is the axial chapel, dedicated to the Virgin Mary, built in the 14th century in a primitive Gothic style.

During the second half of the 19th century, major restoration work was undertaken: the stained glass windows were made in a workshop in Condom, the vault keystones were restored, and a new stucco choir enclosure was installed. It is a replica of the choir screen of **Sainte-Cécile of Albi**.

The large **cloister** was built in the **16th century**. It connected the cathedral with the rest of the episcopal complex. Today, this public space hosts various events.

The former **episcopal palace**, built starting in **1693**, is one of many neoclassical mansions in the city. It currently houses Gers' sous-préfecture.



THE CITY'S COAT OF ARMS

The design is inspired by the town seal used from the 13th century by the consuls. The towers represent the city walls that once surrounded the town. The bridge refers to Barlet Bridge over the Baïse River. The two keys symbolize Saint Peter, patron of the cathedral.

Why are the musketeers in Condom ?

The sculpture by Georgian artist Zurab Tsereteli has stood at the foot of the cathedral since 2010. He donated it in gratitude for his induction into the Company of the Musketeers of Armagnac. Every year, this brotherhood holds its grand annual chapter under the cloister of Condom. The bronze statue, weighing 5.5 tons and standing 2.20 meters tall, is one of the few to feature all four Musketeers together. The real d'Artagnan was born in the Gers region, in the village of Lupiac. The three other companions also truly existed.

Can you identify them? To find out more, visit the interactive terminal.



The Ténarèze tourist office offers weekly guided tours during the summer or by reservation all year round for groups.

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