



1h tour

Listed among the "Most Beautiful Villages of France®" and forming part of the "Armagnac, Abbey and Historic Towns" Grand Site Occitanie, this fortified village has remarkably stood the test of time while preserving its medieval appearance, earning it the nickname "Little Carcassonne of the Gers".

Outside the fortified village

The **stone bridge** **4** included a drawbridge on its outer section and led to **the gate tower** **5**. The tower's double doors were protected by crenellations and **machicolations**. The trefoil-shaped machicolations **6** above the doorway were used to drop stones or other heavy projectiles on attackers.

The rampart **2** built during the 13th century, originally comprised eight towers.

The arrow slits **7** or loopholes, built into the walls

protected the gate tower and the drawbridge. **The wall walk** **8** allowed access from one tower to another. The square towers had two floors and projected beyond the line of the ramparts. The battlements on top of the towers and ramparts consisted of two elements: the merlons, which formed the solid sections, and **the crenels** **9** which formed the gaps between them. Next to **the towers** **10** were **latrines** **11**, which resembled machicolations. The 10 meters **wide moat** **12** prevented land attackers from reaching the ramparts. It was never filled with water.



The fortified gate



Moat and rampart



D 507
Towards Condom
Montréal-du-Gers

D 507
Towards Lartigue Bridge

Town hall
WC

Inside the fortified village

The Castle (private) **1**

Built during the 13th century as the residence of the Abbot of Condom, the original trapezoidal keep was protected by arrow slits. During the 14th and later the 16th century, it was remodelled by the Bishop of Condom to provide a more comfortable and modern residence. Several different architectural styles can still be seen, including trefoil and cross-shaped windows, pointed-arch doorways, and loopholes designed for firearms.

The polygonal eastern tower, built during the 16th century, contains a spiral staircase.

The church **3**

Dedicated to Saint Sigismund*, the first section of the nave, dating from the 12th century, was originally a fortified church. It included a well, arrow slits resembling windows, and a room known as a "refuge", built above the nave and used by the inhabitants as a shelter during sieges. The second section of the church was built during the 13th century as an extension of the original building, beyond the cul-de-four, or quarter-sphere vault.

**Saint Sigismund: son of the King of Burgundy, he was raised in the Arian faith before converting to Nicene Christianity, making him one of the first non-Arian Christian medieval kings. Captured by Chlodomer, son of Clovis, during a feud, he was thrown into a well with his family in 524.*



The polygonal tower



The Refuge Room



Trefoil window

Cross-shaped

THE HISTORY OF LARRESSINGLE

Archaeological research has uncovered evidence of an early occupation dating back to protohistory. The village of Larressingle is first mentioned in written sources **from the 11th century**. Its name may derive from the Latin word "cingulum", meaning an outer wall or enclosure, combined with the prefix "re-", meaning "rebuilt" or "restored".

The development of the village was closely linked to **the Abbey of Condom**. Heir to the Dukes of Gascony, **Abbot Hugues** founded the Abbey of Condom in 1011. After being appointed Bishop of Bazas and Agen, he left the abbey and gave his lands around Larressingle to his successor. Until the French Revolution, first the Abbots and later the Bishops of Condom were the lords of the stronghold.

The 13th century village may have contained around 30 houses and between **250 and 300 inhabitants**. These houses were built against the ramparts. This layout strengthened the fortifications while leaving the central area of the village open.

The original **11th century church** was replaced by a **fortified church** during the **12th century**.

During the 13th century, the kingdoms of France and England were engaged in conflicts over their rival claims to Aquitaine. As tensions rose, so did the fortifications. Larressingle remained largely untouched by these conflicts. However, during the French Wars of Religion (1562–1598), the village was besieged for the first and only time in its history. **From 1589 to 1596**, a local faction of the Catholic League, led by the Lord of Montespan, occupied the

village and used it as a base of operations.

From the **17th century** onwards, the Bishops of Condom moved their residence to the more modern **Château de Cassaigne**.

At the end of the 18th century, César d'Anterroches, the last Bishop of Condom, had the castle's roof and floors removed so that the timber could be reused at the Château de Cassaigne. The villagers gradually abandoned the now obsolete fortifications and settled outside the walls.

At the beginning of the 20th century, the stronghold was largely uninhabited and overgrown with vines and brambles.

Édouard Mortier, the last Duke of Treviso and founder of **the Sauvegarde de l'Art Français**, began working to preserve and restore the village. Thanks to his efforts, a committee was established in **Boston, USA**, whose members helped fund the restoration of the medieval village.



Bust in honour of Édouard Mortier

Nowadays, the commune of Larressingle has around 210 inhabitants, but only about **ten of them** live within the walls of the fortified village.

The Lartigue Bridge (1.5 km from the village)



Also known as Lartigues or l'Artigues, this bridge is now used by hikers and those curious about historic structures, but above all by pilgrims travelling from Le Puy-en-Velay to Santiago de Compostela. Located 1,000 km from Compostela, it spans the River Osse, which forms the boundary between the communes of Larressingle and Beaumont.

Built in the 15th century, it consists of four arches. The largest carries the normal flow of the river, while the medium-sized arch and the two smaller ones allow floodwaters to pass through. Moreover, until the 19th century, there were remains of carved and pierced stone posts, probably intended to hold barriers so that the bridge could be closed off in times of war.

Soon after its construction, a hospital was built between the present-day road and the river. Run by the Order of the Knights of Saint John of Jerusalem, it was taken over by a commandery of the Order of Santiago. The complex was later completed by a chapel and a cemetery.



The Lartigue Bridge over the River Osse

The commandery remained standing until the 19th century, and the chapel remained in use until the French Revolution, after which they were sold as national property and dismantled.

Declared a protected site in 1943, the bridge has been inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage List since 1998 as part of the property "Routes of Santiago de Compostela in France". On site, information panels recount its history and that of this major pilgrimage route, which is still travelled by thousands of people today.



The Ténarèze Tourist Office offers weekly guided tours during the summer or, for groups, by booking all year round.

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