

K – Train station:

The Tarasque from the 1950s depicted at the station's entrance is a copy of the one on the town's 15th century coat of arms.

L – Municipal theatre:

The theatre's façade, which was redone in 1885, has a stunningly colourful shield: the Tarasque has a green body and a golden shell set against a pink background.

M - Library:

* **Coat of arms (gate facing Boulevard Itam):** this shield is a copy of that of the town's 16th century one on which the Tarasque is devouring a young man. The monster's six legs appear in 10th century descriptions by the Dominican scholar Vincent de Beauvais and in the 10th century apocryphal text *"The Life of Saint Martha"* by Synthique. This coat of arms was sculpted by Tarascon's own Jean-Barnabé Amy (theatre's façade) for the town's former water tower and was mounted here at the beginning of the 80s during the library's construction.

N, O – Town Hall:

* **Façade:** The Town Hall was built in 1648 and its façade, the work of Tarascon sculptor Louis Le Mâle, decorated with a statue of Saint Martha taming the Tarasque. The consuls' choice (former town officers) of religious iconography, although rare for a civic building, can be justified by Martha's hospitable nature and the Church's view of her as "Christ's hostess".

* **Consular room entrance (1st floor in the Town Hall):** this ancient stone depicts the town's coat of arms from the 15th century whose description states that they were *"On a gules (red) background stands a castle keep with three silver towers, held up by a monstrous six-legged vert (green) dragon, its back covered in golden scales, devouring a man wearing azure trousers (blue) and sable (black) shoes."*

P – King René's Château:

* **Ladies in waiting's apartment** (by the courtyard, inside the château): the Tarasque is painted with six feet on the apartment's ceiling, livening up the room's fabulously exotic decor.

Q - Place Général de Gaulle:

This statue, mounted on Place Général de Gaulle in June 2005, is the most recent depiction of the Tarasque. The creature was carved out of a 25 ton block of stone from the quarries of Oppède, by the Tarascon sculptor Pascal Demomont. The Tarasque has six legs with bear's claws, a hideous head covered in endless rows of teeth and a tail with a sting at the end.

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Walking Tour : *In search of the Tarasque*



In the 1st century of our time, Saint Martha, Christ's disciple from Bethany in Palestine, delivered the town of a terrifying monster called the Tarasque.

To celebrate this victory, the town not only holds annual festivals which were brought back into fashion by King René in 1474 at the same time as the order of the knights of the Tarasque (*Tarascaïres*), but also has many statues and pictorial portrayals of the monster on the town's monuments.

This rich iconography means that we can admire a range of depictions of the Tarasque dating from the 13th century to today.

Depicted as a pet, as an amphibious monster and even as a six legged dragon covered in scales, these works make up a superb array by artists from various periods.

A, B, C, D, E, F, G – Saint Martha’s Collegiate Church:

- * **Vault’s bracket-corbels in Notre Dame de Piété Chapel**
- * **Saint Martha taming the Tarasque painting by Carle Van Loo in 1730 (Notre Dame du Rosaire Chapel, inside the Collegiate Church):** painted for the Capuchin chapel in Tarascon, the Tarasque is portrayed as a ferocious canine animal.
- * **Keystone (upper church, the northern nave’s last bay, above the crypt):** this bay’s keystone, built in the 15th century, is decorated with the Tarasque being tamed by Martha, sculpted on encrusted enamel. Its shell and six legs help you recognise the creature.
- * **Statue of Saint Martha taming the Tarasque (recess above the crypt’s entrance, inside the Collegiate Church):** This 14th century multi-coloured statue made of *cartapasta* (weighted papier mâché) was recently rediscovered in the church’s attic and its origin is still unknown. It depicts Martha in a gold dress and the green Tarasque with two human legs in its mouth.
- * **Saint Martha’s gothic tomb (crypt, inside the Collegiate Church):** made by the Italian artist Francesco Laurana around 1476-1477, this cenotaph is decorated with a low relief of Saint Martha and the Tarasque. The monster looks like an animal with a snake’s tail.
- * **Stained glass window (inside the Collegiate Church):** the church’s neo-Gothic stained glass windows were made in 1857. The central circular window portrays a Tarasque with a green shell wearing a necklace covered in horns which were elements that appeared after the *Jeux de la Tarasque* were started in 1474.
- * **The Collegiate’s bell tower (outside):** bombed in 1944 and rebuilt between 1968 and 1971, the bell tower is still topped by an arrow decorated with a metal Tarasque, a reproduction of the 15th century one.

H - Square Fraga:

Dating back to 1267, this former boundary stone once signalled the edges of Tarascon and Laurade, on the former Maillane road. Although very damaged, you can still make out the serpentine shapes of the Tarasque.

1 - The Tarasque’s Den:

The mobile Tarasque which is used during its festival parade is on display at 15 Rue des Halles. To keep this tradition alive, UNESCO made the Tarasque a Masterpiece of the Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity on November 25th 2005.

J – Post Office:

After the post office was destroyed during World War II bombings, a new one was built on the corner of Rue de la Charité and Place du Colonel Berrurier, after consideration by the town’s council on February 16th 1945.

The Tarasque decorating the façade is a post-war creation.

Walking Tour Route



Tourism Office

AR: arrival

DE: departure