

5 Former Convent of the Ursulines (Place Pie)

The Ursuline nuns established a free school for young girls in 1657. The building was in the former Saint Nicolas hospital which, during the 11th century, welcomed poor people and cared for the sick. The Ursuline order, originally called *The Company of Saint Ursula*, was founded in 1535 in Brescia, Italy, by Saint Angela de Merici. Place Pie is so called in remembrance of Pope Pie VII's visit following his release.

6 Souleïado Museum

The first Tarascon factory making coloured fabrics was founded in 1806. In 1916, Charles-Henri Demery, a Tarascon pharmacist, took over the manufacture of printed fabrics and his nephew set up offices on Rue Proudhon in 1938, in the mansion, Hôtel d'Ayminy. In Provençal, the word *souleïado* means:

The small ray of sunshine that pierces through the clouds.

7 Courthouse

When the French departments were created, Tarascon became the headquarters for the Court of First Instance and the administrative centre of the 3rd arrondissement. But in 1858 the Court of First Instance and Business Tribunal were united in the mansion, Hôtel des Gras de Preigne, a stunning 17th century building.

8 Cloister of the Cordeliers – Espace TARTARIN

Prior to the Revolution there were fifteen religious communities in Tarascon, the oldest being that of the Cordeliers which was part of the Franciscan order. From 1861 to 1982, the former convent buildings housed the local crèche: it now has a cloister, built around 1550, and the former parlour. Today, some of the rooms have been dedicated to one of Alphonse Daudet's most famous works and have been reconstructed to look like the main character's environment.

9 Saint Martha's Collegiate Church

The crypt holds Martha's relics in a 14th century magnificent sarcophagus made in the Arles style. The church's portal is Romanesque but the sculptures were levelled off by the people of Arles during the Revolution. The Romanesque structure was consecrated in 1197, just a decade after the arrival of the saint's relics, and then extended in the Gothic style during the 14th and 15th centuries. In 1482, Louis XI gave the church a royal chapter whose members wore the same choir dress as the canons of the Sainte Chapelle du Palais in Paris. The bell tower was completely reconstructed during the 60s following the American bombing in 1944.

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Walking Tour : *The town's monuments*

This walk will take you into the heart of the old town to discover Tarascon's most beautiful monuments.

The royal residence of the Angevin counts until the 15th century, Tarascon is home to majestic buildings such as the Château of King René, overlooking the Rhône, and Saint Martha's Collegiate Church, where you will find the saint's tomb (4th century).



Once protected by its surrounding wall (only three gates now remain), the town was divided into eight quarters or areas in the Middle Ages including a Jewish area and a shopping quarter (Place du Marché, Rue des Halles) which have managed to keep their quaint character.

After walking along Boulevard Itam, named after a famous cavalry officer, you will walk past a beautiful residence at number 55 which houses the *Maison de Tartarin* (Tartarin's house).

By walking through the town's oldest areas, you will be able to admire the Souleïado factory's buildings, now a Provençal fabric museum, the theatre, the Palais de Justice as well as the Cloister of the Cordeliers, the ultimate Renaissance testament to the presence of monks in Tarascon.

1 Château of King René

The Château of Tarascon was built in 1400 by the count of Provence, Louis II of Anjou, on an identical layout to the one we can still see today. His son, René I "the Good", then transformed the fortress into a truly stately home thanks to its rich interior decor, the work of Neapolitan craftsmen.

Upon his death in 1480, Provence was reattached to the Kingdom of France and the château soon became a prison. It remained an official prison from 1800 to 1932 when it was taken over by the *Monuments Historiques*.

2 Old Jewish Quarter

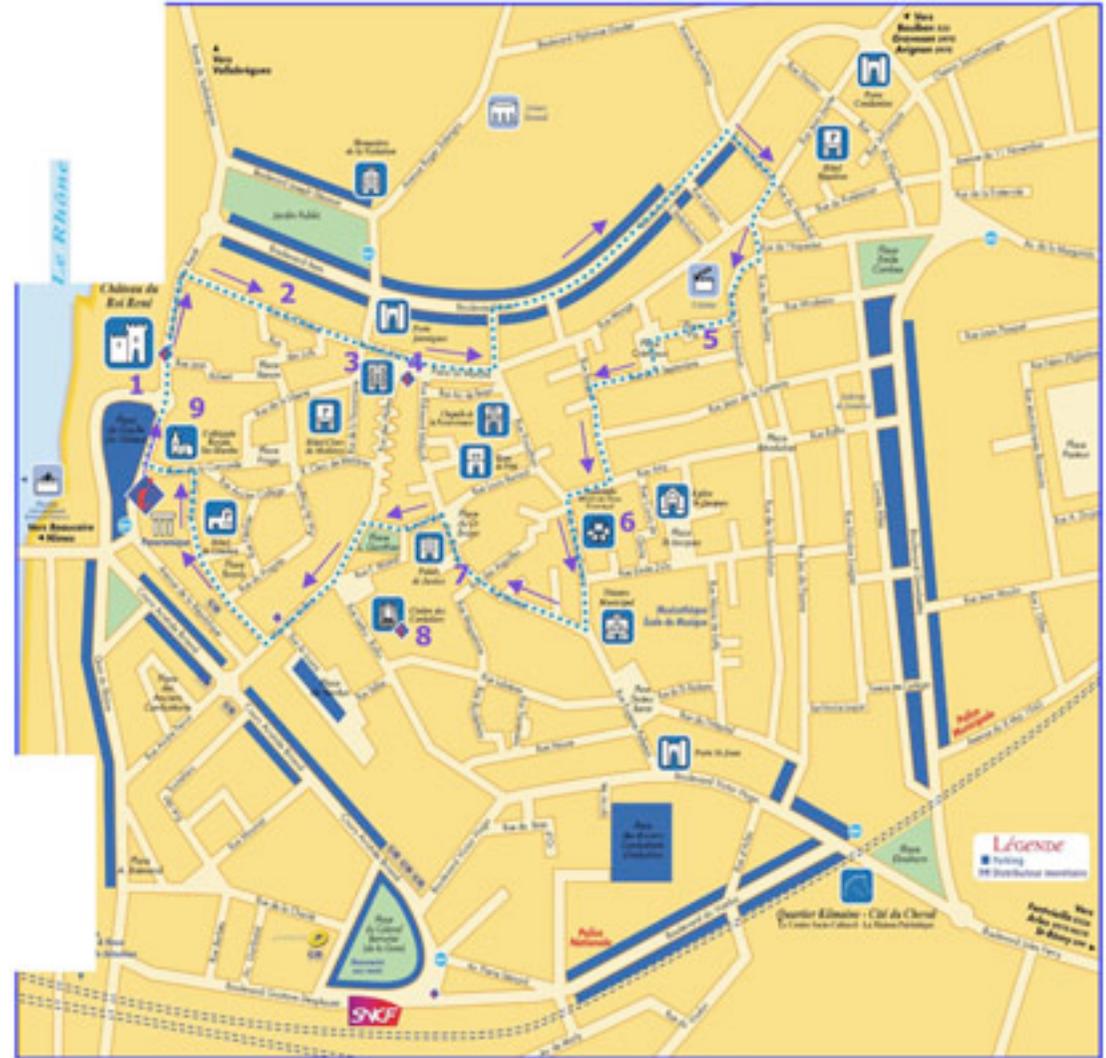
During the Middle Ages almost 300 Jews lived here in this area near the château. It was home to a synagogue, Jewish butchers, school and an extra-muros cemetery. In the 15th century, there was still a Jewish presence in the town and the reign of King René saw the last period of relative tolerance. After the king's death, the climate grew hostile in French-owned Provence (1481), and saw the end of the Jewish community here (1500-1501).

3 Town Hall

The present Town Hall was built in 1648 and placed under Saint Martha's protection: the commissioning of a statue of the saint taming the Tarasque was awarded to Tarascon's own sculptor, Louis Le Mâle. A bust of Marianne, symbol of the Republic, sits above a magnificent balcony which was extended in 1785. Its stunning Mannerist façade is made in the style of Louis XIII.



Walking Tour Route



4 Place du Marché - Rue des Halles

Place du Marché, formerly Place aux Herbes, was once home to fruit and vegetable sellers but was also the main location for the *Jeux de la Tarasque* as the race went around the wells in the middle of the square. Under France's Old Regime, Rue des Halles housed the town's indoor market and is now the last remaining covered street in the department: its oldest arcades date back to the 14th century. The fishmongers were on one side and the butchers on the other.