



**Coteaux
Béarn
Madiran**
Tourisme & Loisirs

LEMBEYE

The capital of Vic-Bilh

Circuit : 2 km ♦ 1h30



The former political, economic and religious capital of the Vic-Bilh region, Lembeye was first mentioned in 1286 in the donation of Béarn by Gaston VII. Called « l'envii » by the Viscounts of Béarn (Invidia by Gaston VII), it is the town that is desired and envied. There's a saying that goes « Lembeye, touts que l'embeyen » (Lembeye, everyone envies it).

Situated on the borders of Béarn, facing Armagnac and Bigorre, Lembeye occupied a strategic position as a frontier town. To resist the inevitable incursions of its neighbours, the town was built as an ancient bastide towards the end of the 13th century and fortified during the 14th century. The most striking vestige of this period is the clock tower (N° 2). By the 14th century, however, the limits of the bastide had become too small and the town was extended to the north (rue du Bourguet), east (rue des Couteillous) and west, with the creation of a triangular square (place du Marcadiou) where an important market was held from the 17th century onwards.

Having become Protestant in the 16th century, Lembeye was devastated during the Wars of Religion and burnt down by Catholic troops in 1569, which led to the reconstruction of most of the houses in the town. Many of the houses have a distinctive architectural detail. Many bear dates on the lintel of the main door, and a few have designs in the shape of birds, flowers, foliage, etc. Many of the doors, gates and windows are remarkable works of craftsmanship from the period.

In the 17th century, Lembeye was the 6th largest town in Béarn. Its importance endured somewhat and in the 18th century, Lembeye was still the seat of an archpriesthood of 16 parishes.

The decline of the town is recounted by Intendant Le Bret, who said in the 17th century: "Lembeye would be the most miserable town in the world if Morlaàs didn't compete with it". And yet, at the time, Lembeye had 300 hectares of vines on the slopes overlooking the town. Most of these vines disappeared in the 19th century. Lembeye was a departure point for Madiran wines transported by cart to Morlaàs, and then on to Bayonne.

In the 18th century, flax was also grown here, and in spring the hillsides were covered with huge azure-blue carpets.

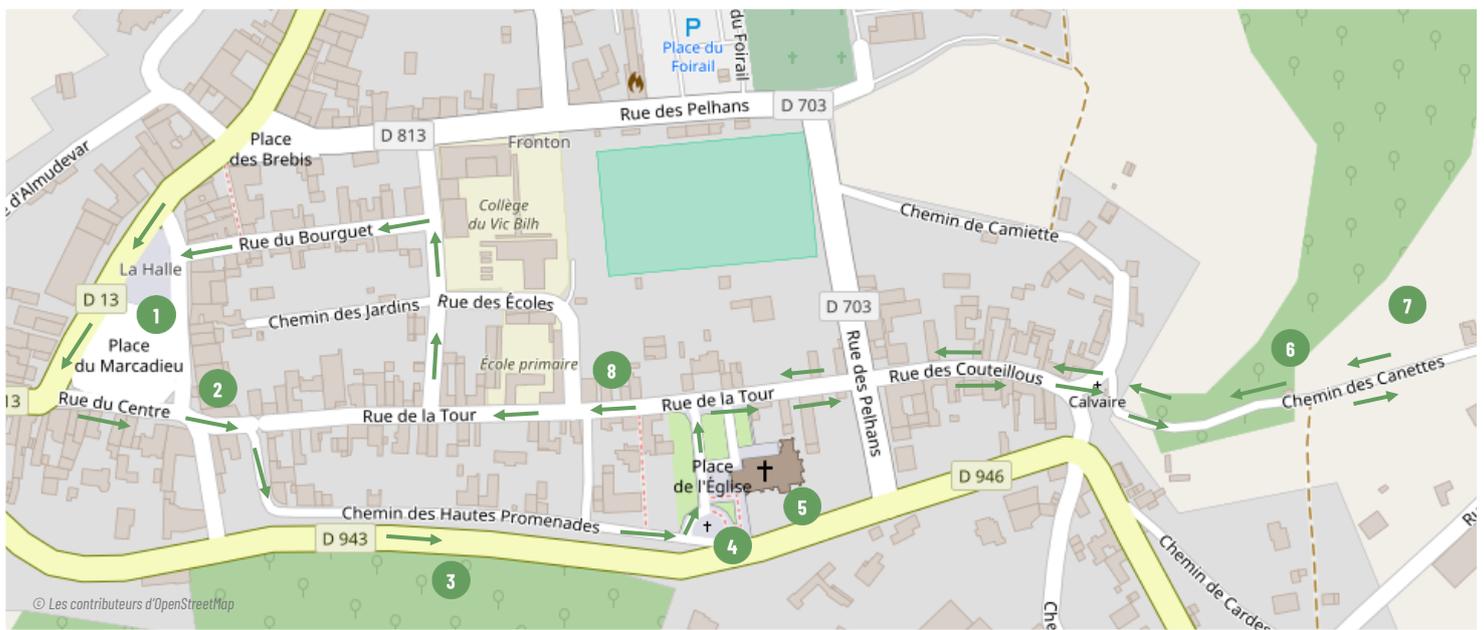
Between 1904 and 1931, a railway line was built between Lembeye and Pau. Lembeye still has vestiges of its past, such as the railway station (rue de la Gare), as well as bridges and stone embankments that have recently been restored and can be explored along a hiking trail.

TOURIST OFFICE COTEAUX BÉARN MADIRAN

Lembeye : 05 59 68 28 78 ♦ Arzacq : 05 59 04 59 24 ♦ Morlaàs : 05 59 33 62 25

@ : contact@bearnmadiran-tourisme.fr ♦ www.bearnmadiran-tourisme.fr

Facebook & Instagram « Coteaux Béarn Madiran - Tourisme et Loisirs »



1 Place of Marcadieu



This triangular square is an interesting historical monument in its own right, thanks to the harmony of the 18th-century houses with large Béarn roofs that surround it.

The current market hall was built in 1993, replacing the Eiffel-style hall dating from the 1930s, which had itself replaced the original one, built in the 16th century on stone pillars, with old beams, a tiled roof and wrought-iron gates. The Lembeye coat of arms can be seen under the covered market.

The Town Hall was built around 1852/1853 and renovated in 2004/2005. This majestic building once housed the local secondary school.

The former Auberge du Cheval Blanc (now the *Restaurant de la Tour*), at N° 29, boasts its famous white horse-shaped tin sign over a classical doorway. This carriage entrance, covered in the second half of the 17th century, features a key decorated with an angel's head and a basket of flowers and fruit.

N° 21 is a pretty, recently restored **house with a wooden balcony**.

The wrought iron cross in the *centre of the square*, on a base of joined stones (late 17th century), commemorates the execution of a man and a woman guilty of adultery and murder of the husband.

Only one arcade, at N° 13 (*Lacaze shop*), remains on the square, which used to have numerous arcades, places to rest, cool off, stroll or take shelter during fairs and markets. Doctor Doléris was born in this house in 1852. A commemorative plaque has been affixed to the house.

The lintels of the main door often reveal drawings of flowers and foliage. This is the case at N° 12 (*ancient pharmacy*) where the date 1762 is inscribed and at N° 17 (*towards the Tower*) with the date 1861.

2 Clock tower or town Gate



This is the only striking vestige of the ancient fortifications of the old bastide town. The gate tower was built in 2 stages: the ground floor (second half of the 13th century) was built in ashlar (medium sandstone), then the tower was raised in brick and pebbles for the 3 upper levels at the end of the 14th century. A passageway with a pointed arch is present on both sides. The bays were narrowed and fitted for firearms in the 16th century. The town clock was installed in the attic before 1720.

A second tower would have stood at the northern end of the Rue de la Tour, as well as a castle around which the village had grown. These gates had a drawbridge stretched over the moat and a portcullis operated by a winch that opened and closed the passage into the town. Today, they have completely disappeared.

The Clock Tower was also used as a prison in the 18th century.



3 Chemin des Hautes Promenades

Around the corner on the right is a **pretty Béarnaise house** with blue shutters. It features a steeply pitched roof covered in flat tiles, and the junction between the wall and the roof is emphasised by a spandrel roof made of masonry hollow tiles, often supported by brick mouldings forming successive projections.

The Chemin des Hautes Promenades was the town's sentry walk in the days of the old bastide town, linking the Tour de l'horloge to the church of Notre Dame de l'Assomption. It was bordered by the palenc, a set of wooden stakes driven into the earth above the large moat, which has now been filled in and is used as a road. It is an excellent vantage point for observing the Pyrenees.

Maison Cordeville, *located in the middle of the street*, dates back to the 14th century and has undergone a number of restorations and modifications. It still has the very steep roof slopes of the 17th century and a mullioned window on the right-hand side. It was the seat of the Seneschal, the King's Deputy Intendant General, and later served as a convent.

Another **beautiful Béarnaise house** with sky-blue shutters is *at N° 17*.

4 House of Docteur Amédée Doléris

At the end of the Chemin des Hautes Promenades, below on the right.

The famous Doctor Amédée Doléris, who was born in Lembeye in 1852 and died in 1938, lived in this house. He was one of Lembeye's greatest men: a leading doctor in Paris hospitals, specialising in gynaecology; Mayor of Lembeye around 1900; Member of Parliament around 1920; Founding Chairman of the Pau-Oloron-Mauléon tramway, which was created in 1905. He was responsible for many transformations and modernisations. He promoted local trade and crafts, as well as developments in agriculture. He wrote a treatise on the history and marketing of Madiran wine...



Passionate about oenology, he owned a large vineyard. He perfected a process for making sparkling wine using the Champagne method in his cellars at Royal **Béarn** (*now Chai Doléris*), located at the foot of the Lembeye hill. He had a 170-metre-long underground passage dug into the hillside, which provided an excellent place to store and preserve the wine.

The village of Lembeye erected a **stele of Doctor Doléris** with his bust, *near the house, on Boulevard Doléris (on your right)*.



5 Church of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary



Church closed to the public: take a tour to discover the architectural features.

This ogival-style church is the largest Gothic religious building in the Vic-Bilh. It was built in the 16th century on the site of an earlier church, probably dating from the 13th or 14th century. This rib-vaulted, 3-vessel church has 13 stained glass windows. **On the west side:** a beautiful flamboyant-style double doorway, protected by a bell tower-porch. The basket-handle arch of the doorway is topped by a tympanum with a niche containing a statue of the Virgin Mary, to whom the church is dedicated. Above the niche: an accolade decorated with curly cabbages, surmounted by a shield borne by 2 angels and framed by bellows and flycatchers. Solid square bell tower topped by a high modern spire. Small carved stone in the wall representing a cow. **North side:** small carved stones set into the wall representing men's heads and a lion. **South side:** the "cagots" door, a narrow, low door reserved exclusively for the use of these reprobates from Béarn who had to cross the adjoining cemetery to get to the church.



6 La Peyrailles wash house

At Rue de la Tour, turn right, then take Rue des Cousteillous. Turn left, then immediately right and go down the Chemin des Canettes.

On your left, the **Peyrailles wash house** is an imposing rectangular wash-house dating from the late 18th century, completely restored in 2016. It is covered in canal tiles on a superb oak roof frame.



7 Menjoulou fountain

Continue straight ahead and take a look at the conservatory orchard, planted at the end of 2019 with a variety of old fruit trees. This area is both educational and fun. A few metres further up, still on your left, you'll come across the **Menjoulou fountain**, a domed fountain dating from 1780, built of stone and pebbles. The back of the fountain, which was not walled up when it was restored in 2016, allows you to observe the flow of water. *Turn around and take the same path back to rue de la Tour.*



8 Rue de la Tour

At N° 41, you'll find a **pretty Béarnaise house** with blue shutters. Rue de la Tour was the only street in the original village, formerly known as Rue du Bourg. It formed the backbone of the town. This central street was closed at both ends by gates; a drawbridge was stretched over the moat and a portcullis operated by a winch opened and closed the passage into the town. One of these gates, the Clock Tower, still exists.

Just before N° 29, the **primary school** was formerly the Convent of the Sisters of Nevers and the Daughters of the Cross. The date 1762 is inscribed on the lintel of one of the doors. *At N° 29*, you can see a **well equipped with a hand pump**.



9 Rue du Bourguet

The 1st house on the right, **Maison Douau**, comprises 2 parallel buildings: the dwelling and the barn.

At N° 13, a **pretty Béarnaise house** with a spandrel roof and exposed stonework bears the date 1793 on the entrance lintel. *N° 9* bears the date 1867. *At N° 10*, the rounded lintel bears the date 1778. *Before N° 2 on the left*, the top of the doorway features a **curious Indian head**, in keeping with the exotic "New World" fashion of the late 18th century. *Back to Place Marcadieu.*

