

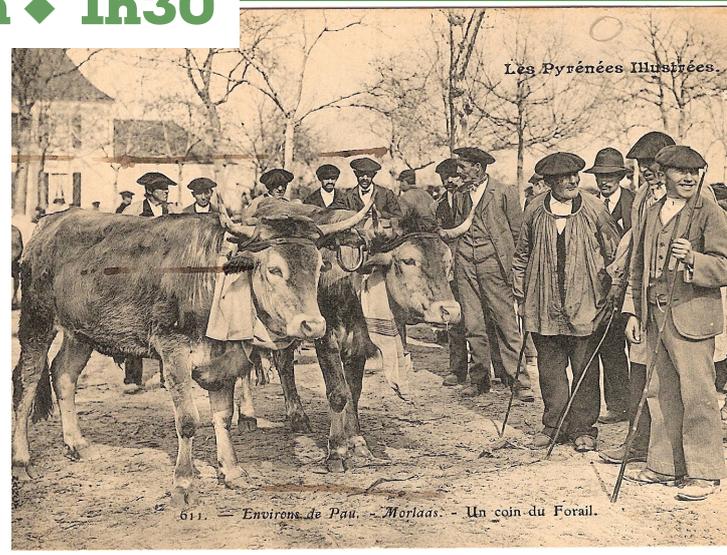
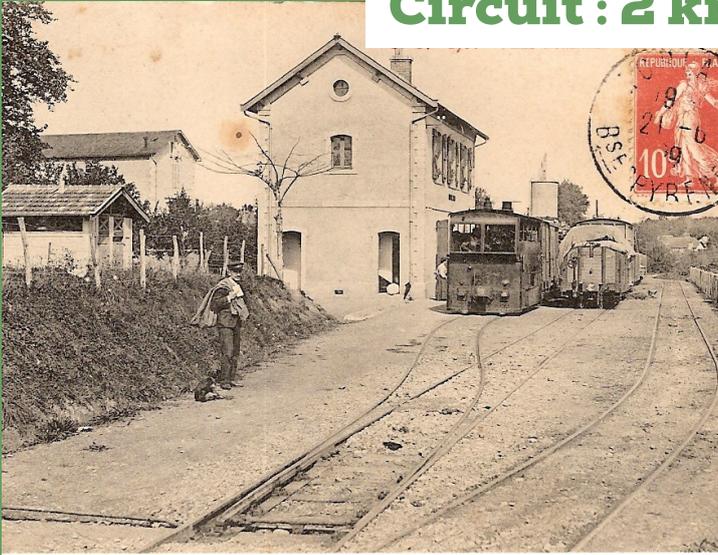


**Coteaux
Béarn
Madiran**
Tourisme & Loisirs

MORLAÀS

Historic capital of Béarn

Circuit : 2 km ♦ 1h30



CURIA MORLANENSIS

Situated to the north-east of Pau, overlooking the Pyrenees, this historic capital of Béarn from 1080 to 1260 enjoyed brilliant development thanks to the Fors de Morlaàs, a charter of privileges that made Béarn a true precursor in terms of justice and democracy.

On his arrival, Viscount Centulle V built the château de la Hourquie, the exact location of which is unknown. The town quickly developed from south to north in a succession of towns surrounded by moats. This topography, established in the 1st quarter of the 12th century, is what we know today, with the main street, 1.5 km long, whose various names correspond to these medieval villages.

Numerous traces of the past remain from this prosperous era, when the Viscounts lived here and minted their money, including the church of Sainte-Foy, a jewel of Romanesque art. Following a forbidden marriage with his niece Gisla, Centullus had to give up his beautiful young wife on pain of excommunication and, to obtain forgiveness from Rome, gave the monument to the Order of Cluny. This union gave birth to Gaston IV the Crusader, a proud warrior and ardent defender of Christianity in Jerusalem and Spain.

Together with his wife Talèse, Princess of Aragon, he helped to make the pilgrimage routes safer. Morlaàs, a stopover on the road to Arles, welcomes many pilgrims every year.

In the 13th century, Gaston VII Moncade founded the Cordeliers convent here, while the Dominican friars built the Jacobins convent at the other end of the town, near the church of Saint André. Unfortunately, many of these buildings were burnt down during the Wars of Religion.

In the 14th century, Gaston Fébus kept a garrison here to maintain the ramparts.

Having fallen into disuse for a time, Morlaàs regained its success at the beginning of the 18th century when it began producing the furniture that made its reputation.

Today, Morlaàs is a dynamic town with a population of 4,500, which has managed to retain its rural character while developing its infrastructure.

The arrival of a new population has been accompanied by initiatives to preserve urban coherence and the emergence of new services.

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

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1 Place Sainte-Foy



Town Hall: when the former market hall adjoining the west side of the church was demolished, the town bought this beautiful building in the mid-19th century. The first floor housed the town council chamber, the justice of the peace's room and the school. The ground floor was used for the market and the covered market. In the 19th century, the bell tower at the very top of the roof was used to ring the closing time for the numerous inns and cafés in Morlaàs, which were the subject of numerous complaints.



Church Of Sainte-Foy : listed as a Historic Monument. Beautiful Romanesque portal restored in the 19th century and magnificent sculpted capitals in the choir. The original 12th century tympanum can be seen in the chapel of Blessed Bernard and an old man from the Apocalypse in the exhibition room at the Morlaàs tourist information office. *Church brochure available from tourist offices in Arzacq, Morlaàs and Lembeye.* Open daily: 9am-7pm, except Sunday afternoons, closed at 6pm on Wednesday.



2 Half-timbered house and Jeanne d'Albret house

Half-timbered house (N° 3): this is certainly one of the oldest in the town. Dating from the 17th century, it is the only example of its type. In 1693, it belonged to several prominent families, including Pierre Le Roy, a lawyer. At the time, it was valued at 100 pounds.

Maison Jeanne d'Albret (N° 1): bears the date 1451 around a "burnt" shield. Altered in the 18th century. Legend has it that at the height of the War of Religion, Jeanne d'Albret, mother of the future Henry IV, having given the order to set fire to the church, came down from her house to add some bundles to the blaze.



3 Convent of the Cordeliers (destroyed)

Turn left into rue des Cordeliers. It stands on the site of the former rugby stadium. Gaston VII de Béarn, founder of the convent, was buried here in 1290, and in the 14th century the sovereigns of Béarn made substantial donations. Destroyed in 1569, the monks rebuilt it in 1621. Sold as national property in 1791, it was later definitively destroyed. Today, architectural elements remain in the surrounding churches, as well as opposite the stadium, in this beautiful house with a portal flanked by **twin columns** used as replacements. The tourist information office also has a stone on display, part of a larger complex, which appears to depict a blessing figure.



4 Place of the Hourquie

Under Gaston Fébus, this area was home to a very special trade: the armourers who made chain mail. Today, planted with magnificent century-old plane trees, the square hosts the market every Friday by two weeks and Saturday mornings. The market is a very old institution, made official by the royal decree of 1 June 1746. This age-old tradition is still respected today, with the livestock day held here every two years, where over 300 animals of exceptional quality are presented. **The rails of the old tramway line**, set into the trunks of the trees, are still used today to tie up the animals. The square is also a lively place where all the city's cultural and sporting events take place.

The plantier et the traditional game of "9-pin bowling": This ancient game from Béarn was played by Henri IV and requires strength and skill to knock down the 9 skittles placed in a clay square using a walnut ball weighing over 6 kg. Don't hesitate to come in, as the players are always happy to share their passion. A 2nd board has recently been added for outdoor bowling. An explanatory board and a folder are also available from the tourist information office.



5 The wash-house

Below on the right, at the end of the rue de la Fontaine. This is the last remaining wash-house in Morlaàs, fed by the Gouttère, formerly the aptly named "l'Arriu Merdé". In the 1840s and 1850s, medical research made great strides and doctors encouraged the authorities to look after public hygiene to prevent the recurrence of typhoid and cholera epidemics. On 3 February 1851, the government of the 2nd Republic voted an extraordinary credit of 600,000 Francs to help municipalities create baths, fountains and washhouses. In Morlaàs, 3 washhouses were installed. On 8 February 1863, the town council decided to build sheds over the washhouses, which were completed in 1882.



6 The station

Continue along the road opposite and join Avenue des Écoles. The departmental tramway company opened the Pau/Morlaàs section on 28 October 1902. Until 1914, all the lines were served by 3 regular trains in each direction, dropping to 1 return trip per line at the time of the First World War. Old-timers say that on their way back from the Pau trade fair, on the steep Morlaàs hill, passengers had to get out of their carriages to lighten the load. Caught up by progress, the last journey was made in 1931.



7 8 The defensive system

All the market towns were defended by ditches and stakes. The defensive system of the Bourg Mayou was reinforced by an enclosing wall that was modified several times in the 14th century under Gaston Fébus. It was completed by 8 gates with drawbridges. Today's **Rue des Remparts** is located in the old town moat.

Maison de la Baque : once owned by the Viscounts of Béarn, this house is the only remaining evidence of the existence of a octroi gate. Now restored, it features a beautiful mullioned window. At the top of the tower is a weather vane depicting a cow, the emblem of Béarn.



9 In the Bourg Neuf: Saint-André church and the Hôtel de la Monnaie

On the left, rue Bourgneuf. Contemporary with the church of Sainte-Foy and built by the parish priest Bernard de Beuste. Burnt down by Montgomery's troops during the Wars of Religion, it was completely rebuilt on a slightly different site, according to the censiers of 1645 and 1676. Originally, it had only one vessel and was used exclusively by the faithful of the Bourg-Neuf district and those of Saint-Jammes. 3 listed paintings from the 19th century: a Saint André by Subercaze, a Nativity by Galimard, and a Visitation by Bernède which is a copy of the one by Sébastiano del Piombo. *The building is closed. Can be visited as part of a heritage walk (ask at the tourist information office).*



Hôtel de la monnaie (*destroyed*). At a bend in the Gouttère, Gaston Febus had a castle built in which he set up a mint. The history of the Béarnaise coin, a symbol of political independence, goes back a long way, with the first mentions of Morlanes coins dating back to the 11th century. From 1079 to 1662, this workshop minted coins that were renowned throughout the Middle Ages throughout the South West and the Iberian Peninsula.



10 The Pilgrim painting

Behind the Arrayade retirement home, this mural depicting a pilgrim facing the Pyrenees reminds us that Morlaàs is a stopover on the Arles route (GR 653). Climb the stairs on the left, and cross over to the car park opposite, passing under the porch of the bank.



11 The house of the Sieur de Salinis

Once you leave the porch, facing you (*nº. 16*), you can still see parts of the stables of the town's Jurat, the Sieur de Salinis.

On the street side, the heraldic emblem of Béarn, the cow, and on the courtyard side, above the door, a horse's head.



12 The bust of Depaul

Inaugurated in 1892, this is a resin copy of the bronze original, cast by the Germans.

It glorifies a man of science, head of the clinic in Paris in 1841, surgeon at the Hôpital des Enfants Assistés in 1861, professor of obstetrics at the Faculty in 1862, author of numerous works on vaccination, patriot during the 1870 war, but also town councillor in his home town. He died in 1883 at his property, Château de Sarrabat, in the commune of Morlaàs (*private residence*).

