



**Coteaux  
Béarn  
Madiran**  
Tourisme & Loisirs

# MORLANNE

## The authentic Béarn village

**Circuit : 2 km ♦ 1h15**



Morlanne is an established village since the 11<sup>th</sup> century, a virtually impregnable defensive bastion that was continually occupied by powerful lords.

Morlanne was an essential part of a network of strongholds between Orthez and Foix, housing garrisons and playing a defensive role on the borders of Béarn.

During the Hundred Years' War, Gaston Fébus chose the village as a defence against English Gascony (Arzacq, 13 km away, was in English hands) because of its geographical location.

Originally, Morlanne consisted of 2 heaps of built-up areas: one around the castle (the "castetbieilh", which extends to the bottom of what is now the castle's "carrère") and the other around the church, which was, of course, under the control of the Lords of the castle.

It was in the 14<sup>th</sup> century, under Gaston Fébus, that the two settlements were brought together to form a castelnau or castetnau. Each inhabitant was then allocated a small piece of land in the shape of a narrow strip to build his house (on the front), as well as his garden and his farmyard up to the ditch, which formed a rampart (made of clay topped with a wooden palisade). The carrère (street in Béarnais) was closed at each end by two gates, which have now disappeared. One was located after the farmhouse inn, and the other at the town hall. The inhabitants helped to keep watch over the village. This system of rectilinear construction is characteristic of new towns in the 14<sup>th</sup> century.

In 1385, Gaston Fébus ordered a census of the population in order to enforce the payment of taxes, and 72 fires, or households, were counted, equivalent to around 350 inhabitants. The population of Morlanne continued to grow, and a census in 1846 counted 1,046 inhabitants. The number then declined steadily, reaching its lowest point in 1975 with 338 inhabitants. Today Morlanne has 630 inhabitants.

Morlanne may have been subjugated at one time, but once it was free, the "carrère" was so coveted that everyone wanted to settle there. Unable to accommodate the large number of villagers, hard-working peasants cleared the rich, fertile land around them, giving rise to the different districts of the village (Poteau de Lanne, Bialé, etc).

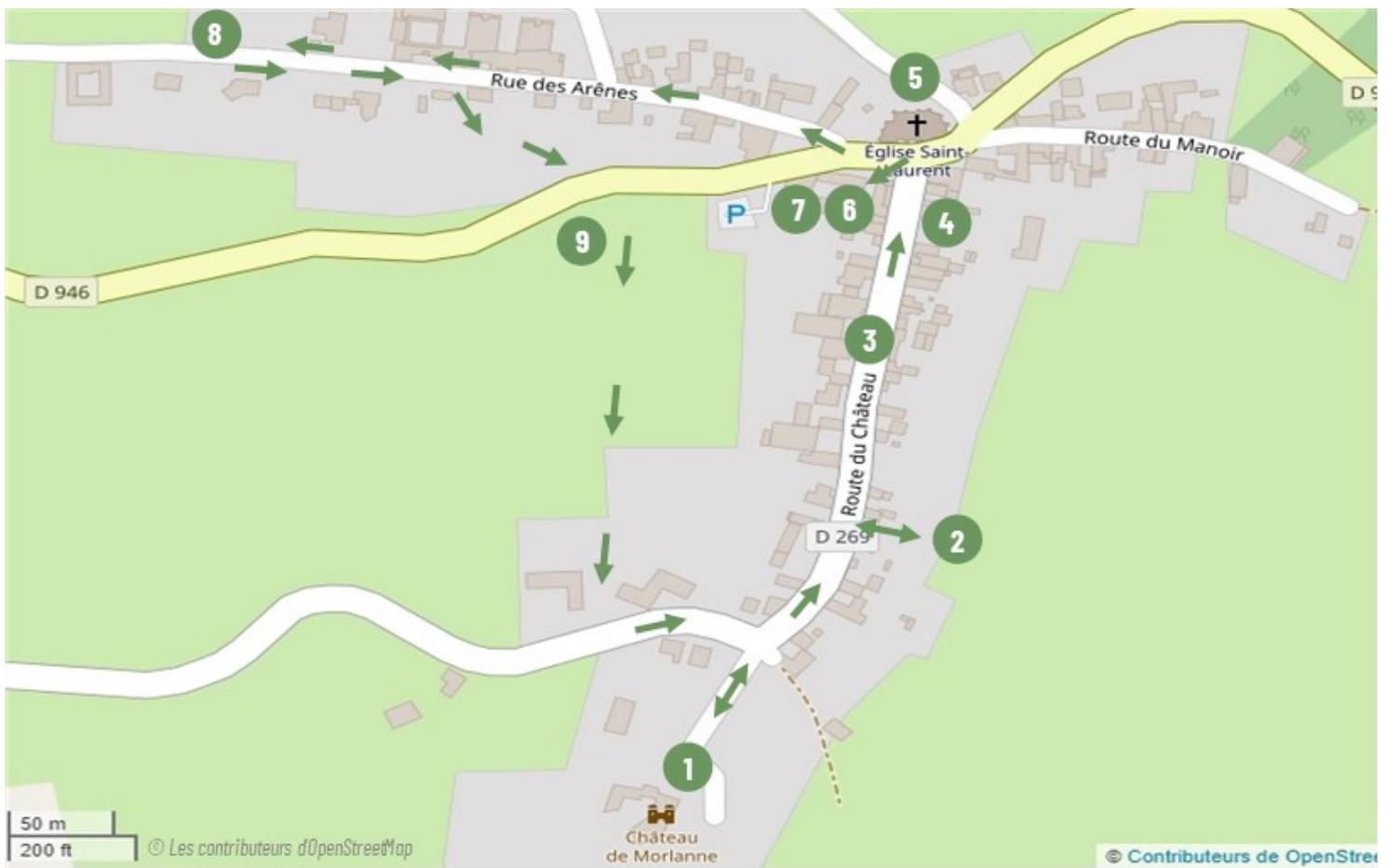
In the 1940s, this street was the main thoroughfare in and around the village, and a real meeting place for the people who came here. It was the busiest street at the time. You could find almost any trade (plasterer, carpenter, cabinetmaker, blacksmith, baker, grocer, etc.), but you could also meet up for a game of cards or just to chat...

### **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](mailto:contact@bearnmadiran-tourisme.fr) ♦ [www.bearnmadiran-tourisme.fr](http://www.bearnmadiran-tourisme.fr)

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### 1 Morlanne Castle

The Castle was built in 1373 by Gaston Fébus for his half-brother Arnaud Guilhem. He chose Morlanne as a defensive stronghold during the Hundred Years' War. Arnaud Guilhem married Jeanne de Morlanne and became Lord of the village. The Château has survived the centuries and its many owners have turned it into a château de plaisance. The RITTER couple restored it in the 1970s and it was listed as a Historic Monument in 1975. You can stroll through the wooded grounds and enjoy the magnificent view of the Pyrenees. Self-guided and guided tours.

**Tel: 05 59 81 60 27 - Website: [www.chateaudemorlanne.fr](http://www.chateaudemorlanne.fr)**



### 2 Convent and Sisters' fountain

*Take the carrère du Château.* After 150 m, you are here where the village gate used to be. The house on your right (N° 31) once housed a convent, run by two Sisters of the Order of the Daughters of the Cross. They had a religious role, but not the only one. They also ran sewing workshops and visited the sick and needy.



*Turn right.* Below, take the path towards the Sisters' fountain: apart from the château, only 3 houses in the street had wells. The location of the village on a ridge made it difficult to provide drinking water for both people and animals. The fountain (like the one in Benteyac, behind the church) is fed by groundwater and has 3 basins, each with its own function: drawing drinking water, washing clothes and watering animals. *Go up towards the carrère and turn right*



### 3 Castle Street

This straight street, built to connect the Château and the church, is home to a number of picturesque houses typical of the Béarn region.

Built from river Gave pebbles embedded in mortar, they are covered with steeply pitched roofs (usually 4), using a flat tile known as a "picon".

The presence of clay deposits made it possible to build the brick surrounds of the openings and the corner ties.

These flat bricks were also used for the double spandrel that joined the roof to the top of the wall.

The bricks were corbelled and filled with mortar to create a decorative cornice.

In the 40s and 50s, the street was home to all kinds of trades: duck cooperative (N° 26), dressmaker (N° 33), convent (N° 31), clogmaker (N° 29), blacksmith (N° 23), blacksmith (N° 21), joiner (N° 19), potter (N° 18), tax collector (N° 14), barber hairdresser tooth puller (N° 13), café bistro (N° 10 or N° 7), grocer (N° 6), Post Office (N° 2).



### 4 The Town Hall

At the top of the street on the right at N° 1, the Town Hall, dating from 1883, is a typical 19<sup>th</sup> century building with large vaulted doors opening onto a hall with a fairly high ceiling, and an administrative office upstairs.



### 5 Saint-Laurent church

The oldest parts of this building date from the 13<sup>th</sup> century. Gaston Fébus decided to use it as a defence against the English and had it fortified in the 14<sup>th</sup> century (the loopholes still bear witness to this).

The original square bell tower (at the back) is undoubtedly the oldest part of the building. The other two towers, one round and the other octagonal, were built as watchtowers.

In 1911, the battlements, loopholes and parapet walk disappeared during restoration work. The façade was restored in 2006, and the interior boasts a wealth of furniture dating from the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries, including the lectern (17<sup>th</sup> century) and the pulpit and confessional (18<sup>th</sup> century). The church's architecture is predominantly late 15<sup>th</sup> century Gothic, with ribbed vaults and bellows windows.

Listed as a Historic Monument in 1911, discover 3 side chapels facing the large south door, which were successively added from east to west between the late family, the wealthy owners of the large building just a few steps from the church. On the floor, amidst the brick-red terracotta floor tiles, the nave contains 9 graves covered with tombstones. One of them contains the remains of David de Frèche, Lord and Baron of Morlanne, who died in 1775, and another that of a member of the Belluix family.

In 2021, the church underwent a new phase of renovation. The original entrance on the west side was restored. New stained glass windows, created by craftsman Matthieu Gasc, adorn the nave, choir and chapels. Furniture and old paintings have been restored to their former glory.





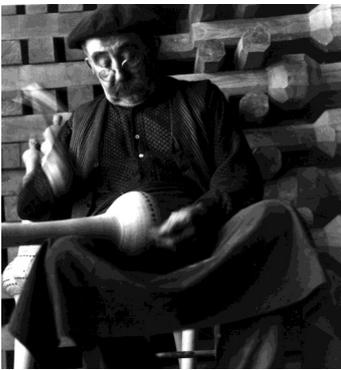
## 6 Belluix House

Opposite the church, enter the courtyard (*at N° 3*). This imposing building dates from the late 15<sup>th</sup> and early 16<sup>th</sup> centuries. It has had 3 successive owners, giving it 3 different names :

- Maison Belluix, because it was the Belluix family who built it at the end of the 15<sup>th</sup> century. Jurats from father to son, the family grew rich and wanted to demonstrate its financial power. They bought part of the fiefs of the secular abbey of Morlanne and undertook construction work such as the family funeral chapel in the church and the Belluix house.
- In the 18<sup>th</sup> century, another name appeared : Domecq. In 1790, Pierre Martin de Domecq was mayor of the village. His son emigrated to Puerto Rico to make his fortune and one of his descendants sold the property to the Pintat family.

- Pintat then became an important name in Morlanne and the building was transformed into a flour mill. Grain was stored on the upper floors, which were accessed via the tower serving them. The bakery was located in what is now the school canteen. The Pintat business flourished until 1984, when the family sold the building to the local authority.

Restored in 2010, the building now houses a media library on the 2nd floor. A rural market organised by the Morlanne sur la Place association takes place here every Thursday from 4pm to 7pm, with baking in the wood-fired oven every last Thursday of the month.



## 7 Former 9-pin bowling workshop

*The current Maison de l'Enfance* once housed the Navarron workshop, a former factory producing 9-pin skittles, an emblematic game in Béarn, Bigorre and the southern Landes region. Marcelin Navarron (1867/1947) began production in 1892. Little is known about the origins of this game, but Henri IV is said to have played it in the inns of the Béarn countryside. Carved from beech wood, the skittles made by the Navarron workshop were to remain a landmark in the evolution of the game, and it was Marcelin who undertook to completely renovate it by imposing a quality technique. Until 1954, 9-pin bowling had its hours of glory in Morlanne with Pierre Navarron (Marcelin's son, who sent his last set of bowling pins to Buenos Aires), but also, and more recently, with the very last Morlanne manufacturer, Alain Ducassou.



## 8 The Arena

*To the left of the church, turn right into Rue des Arènes and continue for 200 m.* In 1978, thanks to a network of strong friendships, the wooden bullring in Morlanne was bought from Vielle-Tursan (40), which was building a new one. The Morlanne arenas are a bit like the Cinderella of the Béarn landes race, alongside Orthez, Arzacq-Arraziquet and Garlin. But they got a big boost when a good twenty Morlannais refurbished them. Previously, an account book attests to its existence as early as the 19<sup>th</sup> century), the enclosure was made up of ox carts placed end to end and installed on the Place de l'Église...

## 9 Nougadère path

*Retrace your steps and after 50 m, turn right at the calvary.* The Nougadère (a reference to the walnut trees that once flourished here) is part of the "Le Château" hiking trail. Pass under the main road leading into the village from the west, before returning to your starting point in front of the Château.

