



Coteaux
Béarn
Madiran
Tourisme & Loisirs

SAUVAGNON

Between parks and pretty stones

Circuit : 700m ♦ 1h



The village may have distant Gallo-Roman origins, meaning "domain of the Salvanius". First called Sobalhoo, then Saubahnou in the 14th century, it was home to 44 ostaus (houses) with their blacksmiths, weavers and barber-surgeons, as well as the ostau of the cagots, a type of untouchable people living on either side of the Pyrenees during the Middle Ages. The cagots were a major presence in the village and were given their own cemetery (not visible).

The very rural character of Sauvagnon is combined with the history of the vast **plains of Pont Long** and the bitter discussions with the Ossalois shepherds over grazing rights. In 1486 and 1491, there are written records of transactions to define reciprocal grazing rights. The villagers were thus authorised to build bordes (barns) and to surround with ditches the land below the Luy de Béarn, while the Ossalois retained the right to graze on the land known as Barrails. However, there were still many problems with farmers and shepherds living together. In 1844, almost 200 hectares of disputed land were definitively allocated to the commune.

In the early 19th century, Béarn became a renowned centre for aviation. In 1909, the engineer **Louis Blériot** triumphantly crossed the English Channel in his Bleriot XI monoplane. He took the opportunity to set up his flying school in Pau, which at the time had most of its hangars in Caubios and Sauvagnon.

Today, a stroll through the village allows you to retrace some of its history thanks to **an exhibition on the walls of photos dating from 1900 to the present day**. The exhibition has been put together thanks to the participation of some of the oldest families in the commune : wedding photos, images of post-war classes, scenes of farms and life, such as the mythical Café Malabat being restored.

Sauvagnon's communal woods

It covers more than 100 hectares. It remains **the largest wooded area north-east of Pau and is linked to the Bastard forest**. To the west stands **an oppidum** and traces of a vast rectangular camp, which may have been an Iberian or Roman camp, commanding the road from Beneharnum (Lescar) to Vicus Julii (Aire-sur-l'Adour).

The famous sun vase

In 1970, a rescue excavation was carried out on the Sauvagnon **tumulus 2**. Two vases, including the famous « **sun vase** » dating from the

The wolves

The people of Sauvagnon were once known as Loubatès (wolf hunters), as confirmed by the saying "Saoubagnou, païs de loups". At the end of the 18th century, only the nobles had the right to hunt, but in 1789, the inhabitants of Sauvagnon, fed up with not being able to defend themselves, wrote their request in the register of grievances. A decree dated 20 February 1793 provided for compensation to be paid to anyone who suffered the loss of livestock devoured by wolves.

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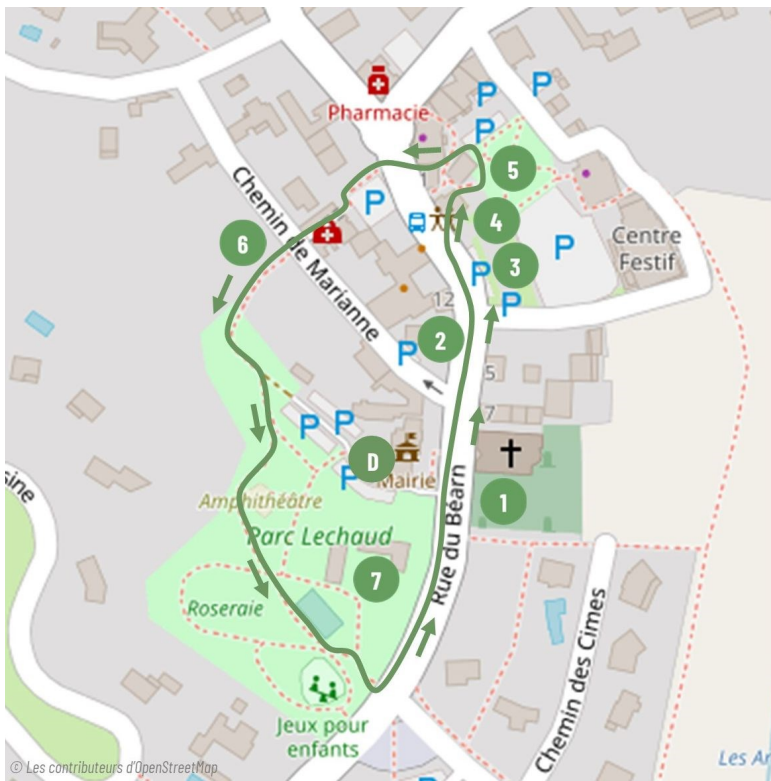
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Parc Bellehigue



Smaller than the Parc Lechaud, the Parc Bellehigue is a veritable treasure trove of greenery located at the bottom of the village, on the banks of the Luy de Béarn. With its shady spots and picnic area, it offers a moment of freshness.

*The park is around 1.5 km from the town hall.
Get there on foot or by car.
Address: Chemin de la Higue-Belle.*



Departure from the Mairie car park.



1 The church of Sainte-Marie-Madeleine

Built in 1852 by Pau architect Paul Pouban, this church boasts remarkable frescoes by **Léonard Fortuné** (1894), a renowned painter who worked in several Béarn churches between 1870 and 1910.

Two of the stained glass windows are the work of **the Mauméjean workshops**, founded in Pau by the patriarch, Jules, in 1862. Thanks to his 4 sons, the company quickly gained international renown, setting up branches in Hendaye, Paris and Madrid, working for Alfonso XII, King of Spain, receiving an award from Napoleon III, and fulfilling more than 500 orders worldwide.

An illustrious guest is buried in the nave, Abbé Jean Baptiste Lubin Blez, founder of the Immaculate Conception congregation in the commune.

On leaving the church, turn right along the pavement for around 50 metres.



2 The well at the Passage des lecteurs

There are several wells scattered around Sauvagnon. They were either neighbourhood wells or private wells that had become public and were integrated into the urban landscape thanks to the work of craftsmen. This one has a beautiful roof made of warm-coloured tiles, just like those on the houses in the village. These flat tiles, known in Béarn as "picons", were made in the region and had a small hook, the "picot", for hanging them on the wooden battens.



3 The Place du Champ de Foire

The cattle fair had grown in importance (15 March 1923). All the breeders in the canton came together. They were held on the 3rd Thursday in March and the 3rd Thursday in October.

Today, it is still the venue for all the town's festive events.



4 **Maison pour Tous: an authentic presbytery**

Restored by the town council in the 1990s, this former presbytery, occupied for over 30 years by Abbé Grangé, has now become the Maison pour Tous, while retaining its authenticity and beautiful stone walls.

Originally, the house included several outbuildings (farmyard, barns, aviaries, wells, gardens, etc.). Rebuilt several times, it was sold in 1796 for 2,430 francs at the time, before later becoming the property of the sister of a priest ministering in the parish.

Today, it belongs to the commune.

Today's attractive, **recently refurbished hall** was part of this complex and was used as a garage. Signed bricks embedded in the wall are a reminder that a large clay quarry was used for a long time by brickworks in the Toupis district (which means clay pot).

Only these testimonies and the name of a street perpetuate the memory.



5 **« Everyone sees noon at their own door » in the Jardin du Temps**

This sundial* in the centre of the time garden was installed in 2002 by the local council, along with the pretty fountain overlooking the garden, to enhance this public space, in harmony with the architecture of the village.

*The gnomon, the ancestor of the **sundial**, is thought to have been invented by the Babylonians. The invention was later perfected by the Egyptians and Mesopotamians.

Did you know?

The expression "everyone knows what they're doing" found on the sundial plaque is thought to come from the sundials that used to be installed in front of every house. The shadow cast by the sun could be used to determine the time of day at home. There was no need for a watch or clock, as our ancestors, particularly in the countryside, always knew what time it was.



Go left of the market hall and take the passage de la Fontaine behind the Maison pour tous, then cross the road and take the covered passage to the right of the medical centre. Take the Chemin de l'Oratoire.

6 **The Passage de l'Oratoire and the convent**

The Chemin de l'Oratoire runs alongside the **former convent**, on your left. It is most visible from the town hall car park, at the bottom of the passage. This path features Bernadette Soubirous kneeling at the foot of the Virgin Mary. This statue was part of the convent.

Its origins date back to the 14th century as a **lay abbey**. They were founded on the principle that a lord or a large farmer would create a parish in order to collect a tithe (tax), and would be responsible for maintaining a church. In 1830, this lay abbey was transformed into a convent and became **the community of the Sisters of Saint Joseph**, whose purpose was to take in poor young girls and teach them housework and sewing.

In 1868, this small community became **the Congregation of the Immaculate Conception**, with its 25 sisters living from their looms and candle-making.

The congregation did not survive the 1903 laws.

At the bottom of the Passage de l'Oratoire, take one of the paths through Parc Lechaud.

7 **Lechaud Park**

The 14,000 m² Lechaud Park has been designed as a truly intergenerational space, opposite the retirement home, with a children's play area, a bowling green and a small open-air theatre.

Along the way, you can admire thirteen remarkable oak trees, including Quercus pyrenaica, Quercus ilicifolia, Quercus frenaitto and Quercus boyntonii. Flowering trees such as robinia and magnolia stand alongside a beautiful rose garden.

Water run-off is guided by pebbles and tiles, all traditional materials of the region.

