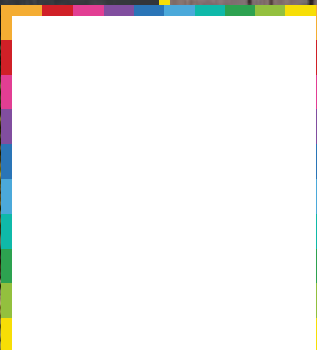
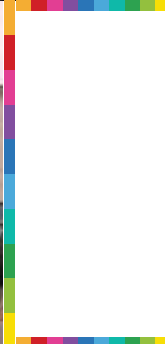
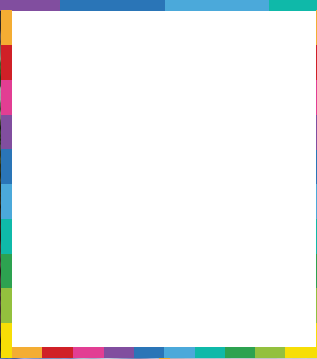




Orgon Tourist guide



Discover Orgon's history !



Orgon is situated in the north of the Bouches-du-Rhône region, at the far eastern end of the Alpilles chain and on the river Durance.

Orgon benefits from the status of town, a title granted by Queen Jeanne I of Naples in perpetuity in 1300, recognising its geographical and political importance.

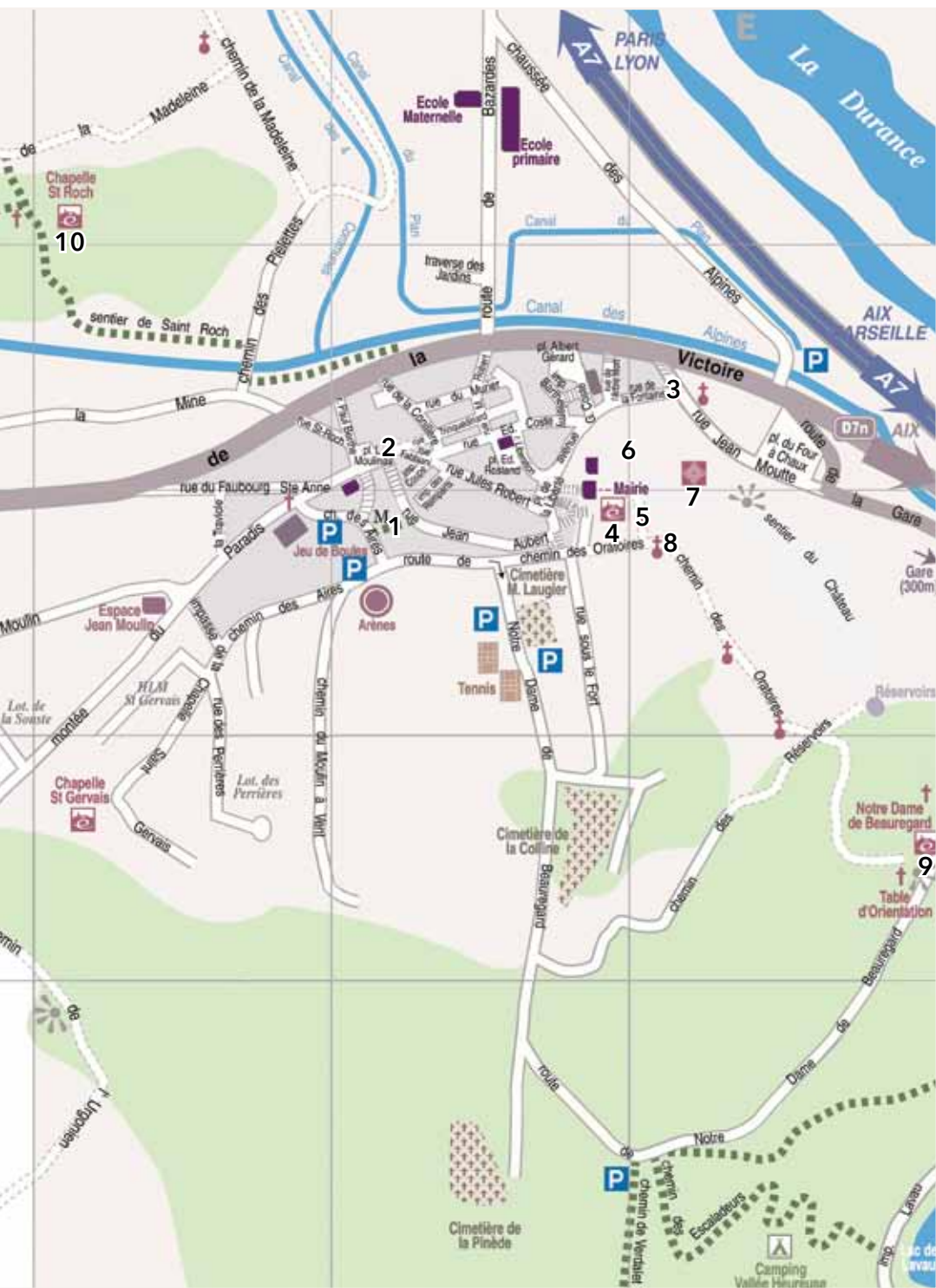
Many vestiges of the Neolithic age have been found in the Vallon de Lavau and it is probable that a celto-ligure oppidum, that is to say a fortified town, occupied by a population of Indo-European origin, existed at Notre-Dame de Beaugard.

As time passed by, the town inevitably became a crossing point, a toll point and politically important as a natural frontier with the Durance.

This was confirmed in 1125 when Orgon became a border town when the big estate of Provence was divided between the Counts of Barcelona and Toulouse.

Throughout the centuries, the Durance was a navigable communication route and Orgon has always been a town on important trade routes as well as a crossroads of cultures.





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Urgonia Museum

This new space, situated in the town centre, presents the geological, paleontological and archeological heritage of Orgon.

All along the visit, you will be guided by the numerous items exhibited, the didactic panels, the models, the touch terminals, the digital screens and the documentaries, throughout a travel started 150 million years ago.

You will enter the deep sea where the ammonites swam.

You will also meet the rich subtropical fauna of Orgon which initiated the Urgonian limestone which was defined as a stratotype in the 19th century, then as an internationally recognized reference feature nowadays, of which Orgon is the eponymous site.

At last, come and observe the dinosaur's eggs.

Many fossils have been discovered in several districts of our town. Thanks to this geological wealth, our town has a great mineral reputation not only in France but also in foreign countries.

Discover prehistory, with the life of the sedentary man from the Campaniform period 2400 years ago, his settlement, his tools and different traces of prehistoric life.

Your travel will end with the presentation of gallo-roman life.

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The Sainte-Anne gate

The place Lucien Moulinas was named after the consul in post in 1739. A minimum of two consuls, more if the commune merited it, were elected for a term of one or two years. Their duties were to maintain justice and to keep the books which were used to calculate taxes.

If the Sainte Anne gate could talk, it would tell us all about the famous people that it had seen pass by. Some examples might be François I who, in 1516 on his way back from Italy, stopped for a few hours before continuing his journey towards Tarascon, Nostradamus, after being held prisoner for two years, Pope Pius VII had a night's rest here at Orgon at the Hotel de Berne after a long journey. Napoleon I, whose route to his exile on the island of Elba took him through Orgon, was forced to wear the uniform of a foreign officer in order to be able to cross Orgon without any great danger. Other famous names would be those of two popes, Louis XIV and Queen Christina of Sweden.

Orgon, a town of passage, was also a staging post for soldiers, who were a great burden to our ancestors, who had to bear the cost of board and lodging for them. Each house had to accommodate four to eight soldiers and that could sometimes last for a whole season. From the time the soldiers arrived the gates of the town were locked and nobody could leave without a pass. Each regiment would consist of 1500 to 3000 men.

Orgon was also a staging post for convicts coming from the centre of France, chained, on foot, who stopped either at the hospital or at the prison before heading for the port of Marseilles or the prison at Toulon. The ramparts are about a metre thick and about six or seven metres high.



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The Durance gate

The Angel gate is also named the Durance gate because before the Herculean drainage work carried out by the Romans, this land was only swamps. From the sixteenth century Orgon expanded and new ramparts appeared. These constructions were part of the second enclosure built in 1591 during the religious war which purported to be to defend the Catholic religion from the Calvinists, but was in fact an attempt to take the throne by the House of Guise. The first ramparts in Orgon surrounded the village of the Savoie which was at the foot of the castle.

The Durance gate has freestone facings with ogival openings and crenels and machicolations crown this gate. In the middle ages it was closed by a portcullis named Saracen which was still in existence in 1741. It was a heavy open work fence which formed an impassable obstacle. The portcullises were manoeuvred from the vaulted room which was directly situated above the passage. This room, used as a guardroom and later as the watchman's lod-ging, was opened on the interior side and was closed with girders in case of bad weather. The old Roman was, already mentioned, ran here at the bottom of Orgon, between the Durance and the rock. There was a tollgate situated in a natural cave next to the Durance gate, at the foot of the Guise castle, and nowadays it is used as a shed the wooden doors of which can be seen on your left. The tollgate of Orgon mainly registered a trade in fish and oil. Depending on the rises in the water level, boats were moored just a little further to your left. This is why this place was later named the district of the Port Vieux.

The Durance also permitted the trade which was carried on by timber floats and flat-bottomed boats with other towns. This is how the stone of Orgon was loaded for construction.

The church of the Assumption

The church of the Assumption, is dedicated to the Blessed Virgin Mary. There is on the pavement, at the foot of the church, a finely worked cast iron cross which surmounts a stone altar where, in the past in certain circumstances, the parish priest officiated. This cross replaces an old wooden cross that supported a very tall figure of Christ.

The first church was built inside the village of the Savoie, at the foot of the ruins of the castle. The present church was built in 1325. Sober but elegant, it is of a gothic Provencal style and is composed of an apse with five bays and a single nave of undressed stone, higher than the apse, the whole being vaulted with ribs.

This church is also a vast necropolis. In five of the six chapels there are the sepulchres of many Orgon families as well as the priests and monks who have served the church throughout the ages.

The church tower was built in 1660, the of King Louis XIV's visit to Orgon. At that time its bells were renowned. It still has seven bells of which six are of molten steel and were hung in 1862, and a tenor bell made of bronze which was christened Anne-Marie in 1754.

The choir is the oldest part of the church. It has the unusual characteristic of it being oblique to the central axis of the church. This is an evocation of the tilt of Christ's head on the cross. The marble altar was installed in 1825. In the chapel dedicated to Sainte Therese, you will see, set in the stone slabs, two solid links which were used to chain up convicts passing through Orgon who wanted to attend mass. The choir, which was covered with panelling in the eighteenth century, is adored with five paintings which date from the classical period and were listed as historical monuments.

There is a superb triptych named The Virgin and Child between Saint Peter and Saint Paul, as well as sixteen paintings of high quality.

There is also a magnificent baptismal font made of white marble finely sculpted, and a pipe organ which was inaugurated by the then vicar, Canon Bonnard on 15th August 1873.



The Hortet gate

The eighteenth century Hortet gate is a remnant of the first enclosure. Here at this gate the roads from Avignon and from Saint Remy met. Well conserved, it still retains its guardroom.

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La Savoie

The former village, in order to assure its own safety, was built at the foot of castle and was surrounded by a belt of fortified walls of which a section is still visible.

Its name La Savoie suggests the name of the Savoyard army of Duke Charles-Emmanuel I during La Ligue in 1590.

It is a curious fact worth noting, rarely encountered in the history of feudal society, that our Orgon peasants were never serfs and were always free.

Queen Jeanne and King Louis I granted to the inhabitants of Orgon the right to repel with force any who might appear to threaten the independence of the estate and granted Orgon the status of town.

The castle of the Duc de Guise

Texts mention the castle from 1183 under the name of Castrum de Urgone, and in the twelfth century it was a well-known military fortress.

Its name of castle of the Duc de Guise is a result of the fact that the King Rene included the castle in the dowry of his daughter, Yolande, who married the Duc de Guise.

This fortress dominated the Durance valley allowing for raising a toll on travellers crossing the river and on those travelling along its left bank. It was also a place of justice and a feared prison. The importance of the fortress didn't escape the attention of the King of France, Louis XI, who demanded its dismantling in 1483.

In 1630, the castle was reconstructed by Charles de Guise, governor of Provence, but a short time later, Cardinal Richelieu ordered the destruction of all the feudal castles of the region. Orgon was one of the first to be targeted. This second destruction was its last.

From the time of Louis XIV it has been in a state of ruin and its stone has been used to build other houses.



The route of the oratories

Of the five oratories which lined the hillside of the route of the oratories in former times, three still remain.

The oratory of the Annunciation is a massive construction of dressed stone with a roof formed from a slightly arched slab surmounted by a metal cross. Its low pedestal supports a big niche at the back of which a badly mutilated sculpture represents the Virgin Mary and the Angel.

The next oratory is to The Glory of Jesus and Mary. It presents the same elegance of Renaissance architecture and has numerous sculptures, a coat of arms and allegorical motifs adorning the base and the niche. You can read an inscription in Latin and, very clearly, the date of 1516.

Finally, the third oratory represents The Massacre of the Holy Innocents and the Flight to Egypt, as an inscription engraved in the vault testifies. It is made up of a large niche in a semicircular arch framed by two fluted pilasters surmounted by capitals.



The chapel of Beauregard

Notre-Dame de Beauregard was a religious site well before the Christian era. This oppidum played an important role throughout the evolution of religions.

In 1878 Canon Bonnard, Rector of Orgon, started the building of the magnificent chapel. In the intervening period the site became the monastery of Beauregard. There are about twenty votive offerings to discover in the monastery.

An expiatory monument had been erected at the edge of the cliff to commemorate the following miracle. On the 8th September 1562, baron des Adrets came to the hill with a pillage troop of soldiers. Having violated the statue of N.-D. de Beauregard in the chapel, he carried it to the edge of the precipice and threw it into the abyss. The statue rolled over the trees and rocks to reach the bottom of the mountain completely intact except for a slight mark on her little finger. The statue and its slightly damaged finger is in the parish church. There is a copy in the chapel.

The chapel of Saint Roch

This site of Mont Sauvy has a name derived from the mountain of the Salviens. To reach this place, you have to pass in front of a cross, erected in 1803 to witness to the religious revival which followed the Revolution of 1789.

The chapel of Saint Roch is dedicated to Saint Roch. This saint, born at the end of the thirteenth century, worked all his life in the service of plague victims.

The chapel was erected in the seventeenth century and extended in 1720. That year, a terrible epidemic of the plague struck Provence.

In Orgon, there were many victims but fewer died than in the neighbouring villages. So, to thank providence for having delivered them from this peril, the Orgonnais and their consuls vowed to organize a solemn procession each year to Saint Roch on the sixteenth of August.





Service Communication, Événementiel & Tourisme
Musée Urgonia

Chemin des Aires 13660 Orgon

Téléphone : 04 90 73 09 54

Courriel : officedetourisme@orgon.fr

Site internet : www.orgon.fr

