



48 HOURS IN

# *Toulouse*

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# 48 Hours in Toulouse

Toulouse spent centuries as a regional capital nobody outside France paid much attention to, and used the anonymity to build something genuinely its own: a compact terracotta-brick old town nicknamed La Ville Rose, a university population that keeps the café culture running late, and — improbably — one of the world's aerospace capitals humming just outside the historic core. It's a city built at walking scale, friendly to a table for one, and easy to navigate without French. For a solo traveler it offers the rare combination of a genuine local pace and a food scene serious enough to plan a trip around.

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## DAY ONE — PLACE DU CAPITOLE, SAINT-SERNIN & THE GARONNE

9:00 AM

### Place du Capitole

Toulouse's civic heart — a vast square fronted by the 18th-century Capitole building, still the town hall and opera house, and busy with locals from morning market to evening aperitif.

*Grab a coffee at one of the terrace cafés and just watch the square wake up — it's the best free orientation to the city.*

10:00 AM

### Basilica of Saint-Sernin

The largest surviving Romanesque church in Europe, built to house pilgrims on the route to Santiago de Compostela — an enormous brick interior that still feels like a working pilgrimage stop rather than a museum piece.

*The crypt holds an unusually large relic collection for a provincial church — worth the small entry fee if you have time.*

11:30 AM

### Rue du Taur & the Old Town Streets

Narrow medieval lanes lined with independent boutiques, bakeries, and the kind of unplanned wandering Toulouse rewards more than almost any checklist of sights.

*Rue Saint-Rome and Rue des Filatiers are the two most rewarding streets to get intentionally lost on.*

1:00 PM

### Lunch: Marché Victor Hugo

A two-story covered market with a ground floor of stalls and an upper floor of no-frills bistros run by the vendors themselves — the definitive Toulouse solo lunch.

*Go for cassoulet or duck if a bistro upstairs is serving it — this is where the region's best home cooks quietly operate.*

3:30 PM

## Canal du Midi Walk

A UNESCO-listed 17th-century canal with a tree-lined towpath running through the city — an easy, flat walk or bike ride with none of the crowds of the old town.

*Rent a city bike for this stretch — the path is flat, well-marked, and one of the best cycling corridors in urban France.*

7:00 PM

## Dinner: Cassoulet in the Old Town

Toulouse all but invented cassoulet — white beans, duck confit, and sausage baked slowly in an earthenware pot — and a proper bowl, eaten slowly, is the correct way to close a first day here.

*Order it as a main, not a side — a real cassoulet is a full meal and arrives that way.*

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### DAY TWO — FONDATION BEMBERG, JARDIN DES PLANTES & SAINT-CYPRIEN

9:30 AM

## Fondation Bemberg

A private art collection spanning the Renaissance to early modernism, housed in a 16th-century mansion — a smaller, quieter alternative to the city's larger museums.

*The Bonnard and early Impressionist rooms are the highlight — plan on an hour, not a full morning.*

11:00 AM

## Jardin des Plantes & Jardin Royal

Adjoining botanical gardens on the edge of the old town, popular with locals for a mid-morning walk or a bench with a book.

*This is the city's best solo-reading spot — bring a coffee from a nearby boulangerie and stay as long as you like.*

1:00 PM

## Lunch: Left Bank, Saint-Cyprien

Cross the Garonne into Saint-Cyprien, a genuinely local neighborhood with a different, less touristed dining scene than the old town.

*This is where locals actually eat — worth the ten-minute walk across the Pont Neuf for a more authentic table.*

3:00 PM

## Musée des Augustins

A former Augustinian convent turned museum, with one of France's best collections of Romanesque and Gothic sculpture arranged inside genuinely medieval cloisters.

*The cloister garden alone is worth the visit even if you skip the interior galleries.*

5:00 PM

## Le Château d'Eau

A 19th-century water tower converted into one of France's oldest dedicated photography galleries — small, rarely crowded, and a genuinely quiet place to end an afternoon.

*Check the current exhibition online first — the space is compact and worth timing around a show you'll actually enjoy.*

7:30 PM

## Dinner & Wine: Place Saint-Pierre

A riverside square lined with bars and bistros, popular with students and locals alike for an evening glass of wine and unhurried people-watching.

*This is the spot locals mean when they say 'meet at Saint-Pierre' — arrive by early evening for the best terrace seats.*

### WHERE TO EAT

#### THE SIGNATURE DISH

## Cassoulet

White beans, duck confit, and Toulouse sausage baked low and slow in an earthenware pot — order it as a full meal, not a side.

### SOLO LUNCH

## Marché Victor Hugo

A covered market with vendor-run bistros upstairs — the easiest, most authentic solo lunch in the city.

### LOCAL CHARCUTERIE

## Toulouse Sausage

The coarse-ground pork sausage that gave the city its culinary reputation — best from a market stall or a proper bistro, not a supermarket version.

### LOCAL SWEET

## Violette de Toulouse

Candied violets and violet-flavored pastries, a regional specialty sold in old-town confiseries — a distinctive, easy-to-pack souvenir.

### WHEN TO VISIT

Apr – Jun

#### Best Overall

Mild temperatures, green gardens, and the Canal du Midi at its most pleasant for walking or cycling.

Sep – Oct

#### Second Best

Warm, golden light and thinner crowds after the summer student break ends and the university term begins.

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SCAN FOR THE INTERACTIVE MAP