

## Strolling through history - Fozera quarter

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<http://www.libourne-tourisme.com/en/decouvrir/visites-guidees/balade-dans-lhistoire-le-quartier-fozera.html>

As you leave the Tourist Office, *place Abel Surchamp* (Abel Surchamp square), you come into the main square of the "Bastide".

In the Middle-ages, a "bastide" was a new town. These new towns were built to make commercial and agricultural trade easier, to gather the population together, and to become established in the area. They were also the bases for important tax collection.

In May 1268, Prince Edward, the Duke of Aquitaine, son of King Henry III of England, decided to replace the former riverside village, Fozera, with this "bastide". What Edward wanted was a city with a port which could work in conjunction with Bordeaux. Thus the ships would be able to return to the confluence at high tide. This project was realised in November 1269 by one of the King's lieutenants: Roger De Leyburn. In 1270, the city came into being and it was named after its builder, Leyburnia. This became Liburnia, and eventually Libourne.

The square is the central point of a "bastide". It is surrounded by arcades with a market in the center. It is a kind of gathering place in the heart of the city. In the left hand corner, opposite you, and where the covered market is now held, there was once the church of Saint Thomas (demolished in the 19th century) which was second to that of Saint Jean.

The square, which has been recently renovated, is no longer surrounded by mediaeval houses. The oldest houses date from the 16th century, and have embossed arches (n°35, n°16 in the square). On the right, it is possible to determine several 18th century houses (n°7, 8, and 9), just as, on the left, there is a very attractive group of neo-classical houses (n° 27, 28, 29 and 30).

Where "rue Victor Hugo" meets the square, there is a very beautiful house belongs to Etienne Louis Grignan, built in about 1770 (n°62).

There is another house from the same period nearby (n°70), with a forged iron balustrade. This is Pierre Desvignes's house, a bourgeois merchant. This house has a well in its cellar.

Further down you cross "rue Président Carnot". At right angles there is a turreted mediaeval house which belongs to the lawyer, Belliquet. Mazarin stayed there in 1650; the year in which King Louis XIV and Queen Anne of Austria were born in the town, and the year of the troubles of the revolt. When here as Bordeaux took the side of the rebellious Princes, Libourne remained loyal to her King. When the latter made his entrance on a white horse. Both the town bells, and the cannons on the ramparts, saluted him.

At the n°17, "rue Victor Hugo", you can see ancient boutique of the 16th century.

If you head for the river, you come across the imposing form of the entrance to the "grand port" (big port) and its adjoining section of wall. You can see, on passing, that the town walls, which date back to the 14th century, were built from pebbles which normally served as ballast for the boats.

After crossing the causeway, you find yourself at the edge of the "Isle", site of the old port. Thanks to its privileged position, at the confluence of the two rivers (the Isle and the Dordogne), Libourne has been well known from the very beginning for its role as a harbour which has assured the town's prosperity over the centuries.

Libourne is a river and sea port, and this proves very advantageous for transportation. It used to be the centre for trade between the northern lands of the "Dordogne" and foreign countries, like England, the Netherlands, Germany, and even America. Wood and wine traffic came down the river and salt (from the salt marshes of Aunis and Saintonge) travelled up it.