

# History of Argeles

Translation and adaptation made from various sources from French into English

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## ARGELES-SUR-MER

There are two possible explanations for the name of Argelès:

Place planted with broom ("argelac" or "argelaga" in Catalan).

This etymology, appearing on the town shield, accepts neither linguistic analysis nor comparison with the numerous towns having identical or similar names.

Clayey place (from the latin word "argila", clay). Obviously, it's the right explanation. The first mention dates from 879: "Villa de Argilariis", then the name is used again with the forms "Argelarium, Argelaria, Argilaria" in the 10th century. On [Argelès-sur-Mer coat of arms](#), the mention "qui s'hi acosta, té resposta" can be seen. Which means "gather thistles, expect prickles" or "who rubs there, pricks himself there".



The name of Argelès is a derivative of the word "Clay". It means "Fatty Ground exactly", to take within the meaning of "Fertile Ground".

Prehistory with Argelès on sea arises during the Neolithic era, more precisely the megalithic time. Two dolmens are on the territory of the commune: the "Collet of Collioure" and the dolmen say "Cova del Alarb". They have every both summer classified historic buildings on November 3, 1958.

## THE HISTORY OF ARGELES SUR MER

### First mentions of the village

One finds the first mention of Argelès into 981 on a document indicating that the city belongs to the abbey of Génis Saint of the fountains and that it was in addition about the extreme limit of the possessions of this abbey (and due, further it is the sea...) This document mentions already the presence of a fortified town belonging as all the remainder of Roussillon to the descendant of the count Guifred the Hairy one.

Until 1258, date of the treaty of Corbeil fixing a border enters France and the kingdom of Aragon, it does not have there traces of Argelès. Although the border, placed much more at North (in Bélesta) did not have effect on the everyday life, the fact of changing capacity officially directing structured the life of the villages.

Thus during the XIII<sup>E</sup> century a house of the Order of the Temple appeared, whose tutor was certain Borrellus in 1273. These houses were very frequent in the cities, some had so much importance which they directed the city itself.

#### Catch of the city by Pierre IV of Aragon

In 1276 king d' Aragon Jacques the Conqueror dies by separating his kingdom into two: the elder one takes its succession while the junior receives the kingdom of Majorque. From the very start of separation they are opposed, the elder one not recognizing the separation of the grounds. But they were well obliged to cohabit time to find an agreement, agreement signed in 1279. 19 years later, in 1298, than this treaty was renewed in Argelès.

Until 1344, military year of reconquest of the kingdom of Majorque by Aragon, the two monarchs fought regular battles. However Argelès are at the border. It is thus quite naturally that the population lived its years fastes for Perpignan in fear.

In 1343, Pierre IV of Aragon attacks the kingdom of Majorque. Its troops cross the Pyrenees, take Banyuls, Collioure in turn and make the seat in front of first of all the Tower of Pujols , a tower mentioned as of 1145 which belonged first of all to Bérenger de Llupia (count de Taxo), then in Gerard of Roussillon (in 1166) which bequeathed it with its immense grounds to king de Majorque.

This tower sees arriving the army of Pierre IV of Aragon on June 2, 1343. The attack is given, but Pujols is defended well. Pushed back, the attackers withdraw themselves. The following day they attack the town of Argelès, but there still the inhabitants, helped by a troop of mercenaries génois manage to push back them.

A seat is established around the walls of the city. It succeeded in making open the doors later three days. June 6, 1343, the city is conquered by Pierre IV of Aragon.

#### French occupation

May 9, 1462 king d' Aragon Jean II, owner of Roussillon signs a treaty of alliance with the king of France Louis XI with an aim of subduing the perpetual revolt of the Catalans of Barcelona. The army of king de France loses the battle on 3 October 1462 and invaded Roussillon as reprisals against king d' Aragon.

#### Decoration of Capbreu d' Argelès, XIII<sup>E</sup> century

Argelès is again occupied by foreign troops. We do not have many documents reporting this episode but it seems that the city fell without resistance.

The seizure of France will be illegal until 1472. On this date king d' Aragon proposes in France to restore Roussillon to him in an official way against a political support , which it accepts. Argelès will thus remain French.

One do not know anything the policy applied locally, but that of Perpignan is used to us as example. Extremely of his first experiment, the king of France makes reign terror on his new grounds, obliging the majority of the opponents to flee towards Barcelona.

This established fact will last until January 19, 1493, date of the signature of the treaty of Barcelona. By this treaty Charles VIII king de France returns Roussillon to king d' Aragon.

#### Treaty of the Pyrenees and war of 1793

From 1618 to 1648 the fight between France and Spain starts again. The French forces penetrate in Roussillon, conquer the territory.

Argelès is taken in 1641 by the French General Meilleraye, who establishes a small garrison there. January 7 1642 Spanish takes it again after three days of combat. It will be again taken again in 1646. May 9, 1659 a cease-fire is issued, it will bring to the signature of the treaty of the Pyrenees fixing a new border.

One could believe that the border was final, but the hostilities began again in 1793 on the initiative of Spain. This year there a strong army crosses Albères by the collar of Perthus and took several cities. Argelès, always placed at the border into sudden the consequences. It was taken on May 23, 1793 and Spanish made of it the store of an army of 4000 men on standby between the beach and the city (with their 500 horses).

This war lasted 2 years, the line of much moving face. This part of Albères was however not released by French before 1795.

### Modern time

The seaside resort goes back to 1860, at the time of the plantation of the first pine forests. Thereafter, the municipality made all the efforts necessary to develop the modern town of way, creating in turn the infrastructures and the activities related to tourism. The first camp-site, the camp-site Bouix (which always exists), was created in 1953 close to the beach. At that time there was nothing at this place, if they are not wild campers.

### The Church Our Lady Del Prat

The parish church of Argelès on sea was built during the XIV<sup>E</sup> century on the basis of initial Romance church, listed in 1178.

Its bell-tower, classified Historic building, was set up in 1341. The gate dates from the same time, it has interesting capitals. Internally, the oldest element are the baptismal funds, which have an inscription of XIII<sup>e</sup> century. The remainder is more recent. The retables were manufactured between the XV<sup>E</sup> century (St Michel), the XVII<sup>E</sup> (high altar, of Passion, St Joseph - fact in 1700, St Jean - fact in 1620) and the XVIII<sup>E</sup> (St Jacques). It also shelters a wheel with small bells, a wrought iron candlestick of the XVI<sup>E</sup> century, a dish with search of 1673 and statues of St Côme and St Damien of the XVII<sup>E</sup> century.

### Hermitage Our Lady of Life

On the territory of Argelès on sea an old vault, Our Lady of Life is This church was perhaps the seat of an old parish, but we have not enough information to have the certainty of it. Other sources, more serious, accredit the presence of a priory who would be the true origin of the place. In fact both are possible, the priories being rather appeared towards the XIII<sup>E</sup> century.

The first mention of Our Lady appears in 1293 under the name of loco vocato Madgalenes. Indeed, the church Our Lady of Life has a recent name, it was known initially under that of Marie-Magdeleine church. In 1312, it reappears ( ecclesia Sanctae Mariae Magdalenae ), then disappears from the texts to the XVII<sup>E</sup> century.

We cannot be sure of its destiny during its years but by analogy with others parishes its history becomes limpid. The presence of Argelès, in edge of sea and equipped with fortifications with fact of concentrating the populations of the surrounding valleys in the city, which has little with little désertifier neighbourhoods. The church Marie Magdeleine stopped her religious activity following a deficiency into faithful in the area.

This forgotten church will make however the beautiful days of the population to the XVII<sup>E</sup> century. It should be said that the end of the XVII<sup>E</sup> century marked a deep change in practice of the eremitism. Withdrawn hermits, seeking deepest spirituality by a poor material life, they had become monks in relation to the local life. The hermitages multiplied, recovering and modifying in-depth the old churches or vaults castrales, not inevitably far away from the villages.

The hermits were thus accessible. They were seen like people holding the knowledge, they had the capacity to judge a situation and to give councils. They are reflected to move, with to go in contact with the villagers with an aim of searching for their hermitages. Indeed, they had one role of reception of the travellers, and for this reason they were to ensure the receipts of what one would call today a list stage. These populations, in spite of this usual search, favoured rather what will become an institution. Catalan hospitality was also built on top.

Reconverted into hermitage at one time when they become à la mode, the vault Ste Marie Magdeleine will be transformed into 1666. She appears in 1688 among the list of the hermitages of Roussillon (hermita of Santa Magdaléna), then she will change patron saint in 1746, becoming the hermitage Our Lady of Life, name under which know we it today.

In 1790 the French revolution put at bottom certain pillars of the Church. In particular, goods of the Church are declared goods of State, and as such put on sale. Only will be able to escape from it them parish churches, which means that the hermitages of the department, although always desired by the inhabitants, were sold to private individuals or communes. The hermits disappeared, and it was the end of Our Lady of Life.

To also see near this hermitage, the interesting vault préromane, dating from X<sup>E</sup> century is dedicated to St Jerome.

In the early 20th century, Argelès-sur-Mer was a large, rural village living mainly on agriculture, breeding and craft industry. World War I decimated a generation: 122 young inhabitants of Argelès died in that war.

During the first half of the 20th century the town was beginning to be equipped with public services. Electricity appeared little by little (1910-1938) as well as running water. A rubbish collection service started (1923), the co-operative wine-cellar saw the light of day (1925), there were the first tourists on the beach playing tennis on the courts in the pine forest, going to the huts built on the sand or relaxing in bars and restaurants.

February 1939 was a turning point in the history of Argelès. As they were fleeing the Civil War and Franco's military regime, 500,000 refugees crossed the frontier. A camp was urgently set up on the beach. Nearly 200,000 persons stayed in the camp. From time to time, there were nearly 80,000 persons surviving in awful conditions. The camp was closed in 1941.

After World War II, from where 22 children of the village never returned, and the necessary period of reconstruction (30% of the villas of the beach were destroyed by the German army), in the latter half of the century, the town developed thanks to tourism industry. Public services and infrastructures multiplied: waste water treatment plant (1957), schools, roads, public facilities, Gaston Pams stadium and refuse incineration plant (1971), swimming-pool (1972), cinema (1985), development area (1985), creation of Port Argelès (1989), development of the diversion road (1993), refuse disposal site (1993), social housing (1991 and 1998), multipurpose room (1999), restoration of the heart of the village (2002)...

In 2002, the creation of the Community of Municipalities of the Albères gathering the eight villages and towns of the district confirmed the place of Argelès as the central

town of a living area of 25,000 inhabitants.

Over a century, Argelès has converted from a village into a small town combining tradition and modernity

### Seafront promenade

Among all the coastal towns of the Pyrénées-Orientales, Argelès-sur-Mer is the town that boasts the longest coastline: 10 kilometres of coasts among which 7 of sandy coast and 3 of rocky coves.

The jewel of the seaside is unquestionably the promenade which is parallel to the beach. Built in the 1980s, 1.6km long, planted with lawns and Mediterranean vegetation, it stretches from Port-Argelès to the pine forest giving shelter to several thousands of trees. There were three parts in the building works: 1973, 1990 and 1994. On foot, by bike, by rollers, walking or running, the seafront is, winter and summer alike, the favourite place for pleasant walks by the sea.



## THE HISTORY OF ARGELES SUR MER

The history of Argelès-sur-Mer, the first seaside resort in the Pyrénées-Orientales and the second one in Languedoc-Roussillon, combines with the development of tourism and leisure industry.

The major events of this history are the following ones:

1860: planting of the pine forest.

1893: creation of the first town housing estate south of the pine forest (nowadays, allées Jules Aroles, des Tamarins and du Racou).

1904: creation of the local initiative committee prefiguring the future local tourist office (1929).

1924: setting up of wood huts on the beach of the pine forest.

1930: urbanizing 75ha north of the pine forest and construction of the Hotel Xatard (nowadays, Hotel Plage des pins).

1950: creation of the pilot camp, nowadays Roussillonnais campsite.

1954: creation of the first private campsite: Bouix campsite.

1962: classing the town as a holiday and seaside resort.

1964: inaugurating the new casino.

1965: creation of the Leisure Centre for the Young at the Roussillonnais campsite.

1970: construction of the Coastal road between Argelès and Saint-Cyprien.

1971: creation of Municipal Tourist Office.

1973: first section of the construction of the seafront promenade.

1982: pedestrianizing allée Jules Aroles.

1989: inaugurating Port-Argelès.

1993: new premises of Municipal Tourist Office.

2001-2002: modernizing avenue Charles de Gaulle.

2002: modernizing the waste water treatment plant (capacity 120,000 inhabitants)

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## AN AERIAL VIEW OF ARGELES VILLAGE





## **DEEP IN THE SOUTH OF FRANCE**

Deep in the south of France, next to the Mediterranean and in the foothills of the Pyrenees, experience the warm, colourful atmosphere of Catalan life in Argelès-sur-Mer. The jewel in the crown of the Côte Vermeille, 3 km from Collioure, Argelès-sur-Mer has a 7 km sandy beach and 3 km of coves lapped by some of the clearest water in the Mediterranean.

An old Catalan town, Argelès-sur-Mer has seen many centuries of history, recorded in its remarkable Museum, La Casa de los Alberès, in the heart of the old town next to the medieval church.

Besides visiting the village and its museum, church, tower and ramparts, there are several sights in the surrounding area that are worthy of a detour: -

Taxo d'Avall, 11th C. castle and chapel –

Tour Pujol, built in the early 12th C. –

Site d'Ultrera and the remains of the fortress –

Notre-Dame-de-Vie –

Saint-Laurent du Mont, Romanesque church –

Tour de la Massane, old signalling tower The surrounding area –

Collioure and the Château Royal (former castle of the Knights Templar) –

Tour de la Madeloc (old signalling tower) –

Le Perthus and Bellegard Fort, built by Vauban - Perpignan and the Palace of the Kings of Majorca, St-Jean Cathedral –

Le Castillet, former city gate –

Salses and its 15th C. fortress –

Villefranche de Conflent, a remarkable walled town –

Château Fort Liberia built by Vauban above [Villefranche de Conflent](#) - Castelnou, a picturesque medieval village near Thuir –

Prats de Mollo, a walled town with ramparts reinforced by Vauban –

The Cathar Châteaux –

Saint Genis des Fontaines, its church and cloisters –

Saint André de Sorède, and its 12th C. Romanesque church –

Elne, its cathedral, cloisters and archaeological museum –

**Arles sur Tech, Ste Marie abbey, 13th C. Gothic cloisters and the famous 4th C. sarcophagus known as Sainte Tombe, which miraculously fills up with pure water every day –**

**Serrabonne, Romanesque priory from the 11th and 12th C. –**

**Saint Michel de Cuxa, Romanesque abbey from the 10th and 11th C., crypt and tower from the 11th C., cloisters from the 12th C. –**

**Saint Martin du Canigou, on a splendid site, 11th and 12th C. abbey, accessible only on foot or in a jeep from Casteil or Vernet Natural sites –**

**Canalettes, Grandes Canalettes and Fontrabiouse caves –**

**La Fou and Galamus gorges –**

**Ille sur Têt "Orgues" (geological rock formations) –**

**Le Canigou mountain –**

**Saint-Thomas spa waters**

**Sport: Boat trips and sea fishing, scuba diving, boat hire, sailing, swimming, sea kayaking, tennis, horseback riding, archery, cycling and mountain biking, go-karting, hiking, mini-golf, microlight flights, canyoning, paragliding etc.**

**Activities: fireworks, folklore, "Sardane" (Catalan dancing), Château Valmy and its grounds, the Argelès eagles, amusement park, Luna Park, zoos. Casino, cinemas, discos, bars, restaurants etc.**