

Portoz eGuide

Frejus & Saint-Raphaël Prehistoric, Roman & medieval vestiges



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Portoz eGuide

The old roman cities Fréjus & Saint-Raphaël

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0.0– Preface

The purpose of this guide is to give a rapid overview of what to see in the Fréjus and Saint-Raphaël area, with some historic background. The content is far from exhaustive, but will be filled in and grow as I find more material .

I am writing these eGuides as I explore the locations and region myself, and have chosen to make them available for free, without disturbing publicity.

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1.0– Fréjus

This picturesque city have have been inhabited long before the romans settled there about 2000 years ago, but the Ligurian-, Greek and prehistoric remains are scarce. Even the Roman vestiges have largely remained uncovered except for what is very clearly visible above ground. This is therefore a very interesting city and region to explore, as both Fréjus and Saint Raphaël where popular with Roman gentry who had their Villas along the coastline, and even went there from Rome to relax.

1.0.1 – Some dry facts

Latitude / Longitude 43° 25' 59" Nord 6° 44' 12" Est
(Fountain on the Bus terminal Place Paul Vernet).

Inhabitants today 2009 : ca. 50.000

Inhabitants during its height during Roman times: ca. 40.000

Its inhabitants are locally called “Fréjusiens” or “Forojuliens” in French, “Frejulencs” in classic provençal and “Frejulen” according to the mistralian norm.

Fréjus today together with its twin city Saint-Raphaël is a center for economic development, politics, culture and tourist activities

In the western part of the Var-departement (83). Historically it has the largest concentration in France of Roman remains (after Arles). And very little of these remains actually remains uncovered, the reason why Fréjus is also called the Pompeii of France.

The first known name of the town was from the Romans who named it Forum Julii, the Julius' market (Julius César). Founded 49 BC, to counterbalance the overwhelming power of Massilia (Marseille) to the west. Then later given status as colonie by Auguste in 27 BC with the name Colonia Octaviorum.

It then received veterans from the VIII Augusta Legion.

Fréjus was prospering under Tiberius, but then went into decline until the IV-century when the . At that time elle déclina jusqu'au IVe siècle, date de la constitution de l'évêché, deuxième de France après Lyon. Cité d'accueil du triomphe de Charles Quint en 1536, pôle agricole varois depuis le Moyen Âge, ville de garnison depuis le XVIe siècle, base aéronavale de départ de Roland Garros en 1913, frappée en 1959 par le cataclysme du barrage de Malpasset,

It is separated in the east of Saint-Raphaël by the Rivière the Pédégal , the Gonfaron runs in the district Lecoq, the Valescure in the district of the same name, the Gargalon in downtown area.

Some Roman vestiges:

Port Romain

Amphitheatre

Roman Theatre

Garden of Villa Marie (mediatheque), north of the villa,
have the ruins of a Roman Villa, today named "La Plate-forme"
the gilded door (vestige of the thermal baths of IIIème),

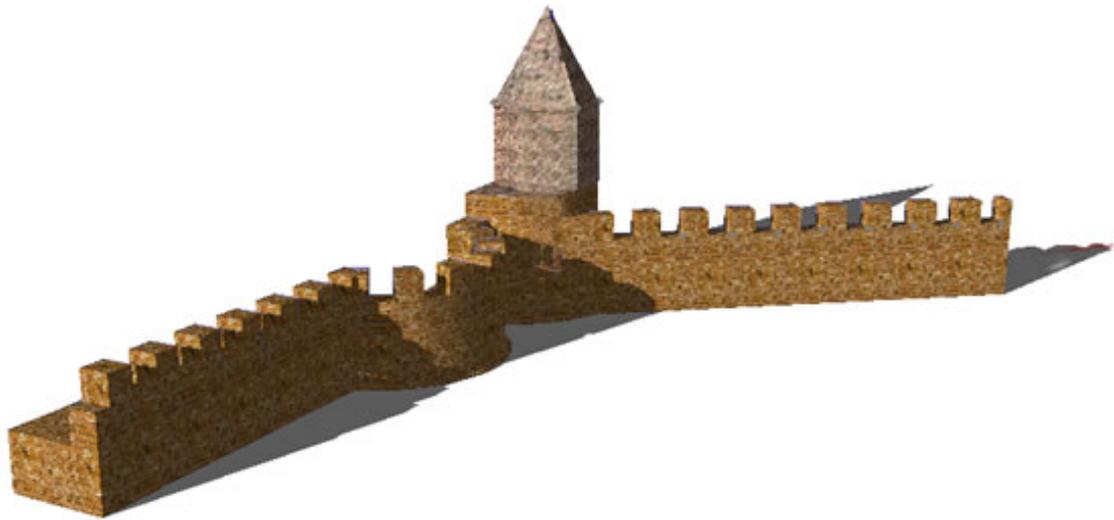
1.1. - The Roman vestiges

1.1.1 – The antique Roman port –

LAT/LON position of this enigmatic tower:

43.4295°N	06.7438°E
43°25'46.40"N	06°44'38.11"E

The original purpose or use for this low tower is not clear. It seems to be compact and has no openings for beaming lights from a bonfire. It must have been visible from the sea, and in Roman times the shoreline was about 400-500 meter further inland than today. The pyramidal tip may have been covered in leafgold in some way and shined in the sun. This is just a guess though.



The old roman port have not been properly excavated, only some vertical ditches across in some places. The port originally was about 9 meters deep in most places and was finally filled in during

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the 16th. Century. By then it did not have proper sea access, the brook that had alimanted it with fresh water, and flushed it had been filled in, and it was a stinking mosquito infested puddle.

Today the railway is crossing over in a straight line, and the ground level with the old quais are being used for farming and greenhouses. If properly excavated it must reveal very interesting information on navigation and trade over more than 1500 years.

Old ships are not likely to be found as they would have cleared them away not to have the harbor blocked. But a lot of artifacts must have been dropped overboard over these centuries.

On the satellite photo below the harbour basin (A) of the old roman port is approximately framed by the green line. The channel to the sea must have started at the bend where the Lanterne d'Auguste stands, and the narrow road Rue de la Lanterne d'Auguste follows the quai and actually seem to be paved on top of the quayside. It is nice to walk or bicycle here in daylight, but to be avoided after dark. There also is a small creek/brook draining the old port basin lining this road, and disappearing into underground piping, probably following the old channel to the sea.



1.1.2 – La Butte de Saint-Antoine –

LAT/LON position :

La Butte Saint Antoine (B – Saint-Antonio's hill) has ruins from old roman fortifications, storage rooms and a roman Villa which did control the harbor.

1.1.3 – La Porte d'Orée –

LAT/LON position :

La Porte d'Oree (C) is not a gate, but the remains of internal walls of a large roman bath (Therme).





2.0– Saint-Raphaël

Saint-Raphaël have grown together with Fréjus during the 20th century, with the river Argens as border. In roman times many wealthy romans built their Villas in what is today Saint-Raphaël.

Today's Casino is built on the site of a former large Roman Villa, which had basins for live fish, mosaic floors and overlooked the bay. On the plains of Valescure and where today's Golf Club is located there was also several large Roman Villas. One of the club-houses is even built on the site of such a villa.

2.1 – Some dry facts on Saint-Raphaël

To be added

8.0 – List with LAT/LON positions

These LAT/LON-positions have been collected by the author, and can be downloaded also in comma-delimited and Excel formats from our website www.Portoz.com

9.0 - About Portoz eBooks

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