



CENTRE NATIONAL D'ÉTUDES SPATIALES

**WGISS27**

**Toulouse**

## What is Toulouse ?

### ■ An antique city

- ◆ **founded in the IV<sup>th</sup> century BC by the “Volques Tectosages”, a Gallic tribe**
  - on the site of a ford on the Garonne river (the “Bazale”)
- ◆ **4<sup>th</sup> major city of the Roman Empire during the II<sup>nd</sup> and III<sup>rd</sup> centuries AD**
  - “decumanus” (E-W street) and “cardo” (N-S street) can still be seen in the city
  - a theater with more than 10,000 seats existed close to their intersection
  - only a few roman monuments crossed the centuries (amphitheater, outerwalls)
  - ruins of a roman villa to be seen at Montmaurin (60 km South) - more than 200 rooms
- ◆ **capital city of the Wisigoth kingdom (V<sup>th</sup> century AD)**
  - a wall of King Alaric's palace has been recently discovered under the basement of a church

## What is Toulouse also ?

### ■ A medieval city

- ◆ **owned by a dynasty of earls (Raymond) until the XIII<sup>th</sup> century**
- ◆ **main stop on one of the pilgrimage ways to Saint James (Spain)**
  - raising of the “Saint Sernin” basilica during the XII<sup>th</sup> century (holds a treasure-house)
- ◆ **high civilization**
  - “courtly love” rendered through poems and songs by the troubadours
  - Folquet de Marselha
- ◆ **hit by the “Crusade of the Albigensians” during the XIII<sup>th</sup> century**
  - aimed at the eradication of Catharism by French knights
  - Albigensians were defeated and the earldom incorporated into the French kingdom
  - foundation of the university by the Dominicans (preaching friars)
  - raising of major churches and monasteries (the “Jacobins” with the grave of Saint Thomas of Aquinas)

## What is Toulouse also ?

### ■ A city from the Renaissance

- ◆ The Renaissance was the “Grand Siècle”
- ◆ Cultivation of *isatis tinctoris* in the Lauragais (East from Toulouse)
  - same family as cabbage or mustard - also called “pastel”
  - after a complex chemical process provides a dye holding a unique blue (“Blue of the Lauragais”)
  - very popular and very expensive, made some inhabitants (the bourgeois) extremely rich
  - but after one century could not compete with another dye - indigo - coming from India
- ◆ Raising of imposing private mansions by the bourgeois
  - the most prominent of the bourgeois became “capitouls” (the rulers of the city meeting at the Capitole)
  - each mansion has a tower whose height depends on the wealth of the owner
  - because of the pink stone which was used, the city is called “la ville rose”

### ■ A city from the French Grand Siècle (Louis the XIV<sup>th</sup>)

- ◆ digging of the “Canal du Midi” linking the Atlantic Ocean to the Mediterranean by the Marquis de Riquet
  - required more than 10,000 workers
  - Riquet invented holidays and Health Services
  - still in use, but only for tourism (you can rent a barge and sail on the canal)

## What is Toulouse also ?

### ■ A modern city

- ◆ **more than 800,000 inhabitants in the conurbation**
- ◆ **space and aeronautics employ 30,000 people**
- ◆ **two excellent vineyards**
  - Fronton (30 km North)
  - Gaillac (50 km East, created by the Romans, famous for the “Gaillac perlé”)
- ◆ **nice vicinity**
  - Albi (70 km East, Toulouse Lautrec museum)
  - Montauban (40 km North, Ingres museum)
  - Castres (70 km East, Goya museum)
  - Carcassonne (90 km South East, medieval city), Cordes (70 km East, medieval village next to the Gaillac vineyard)
- ◆ **a WGISS meeting (May, 2009)**

### ■ Toulouse or Tolosa ?

- ◆ **names of streets are given in two languages**
  - French : rue de...
  - Occitan : carrièra...
- ◆ **all people today speak French but,**
  - this was not the case before the XX<sup>th</sup> century
  - people spoke Occitan (“oc” = “yes” in Occitan), was the language of the troubadours





**Welcome !**

