

THE RIVESALTES CAMP MEMORIAL

INFORMATIONS



The Rivesaltes Camp Memorial
Conseil Départemental des
Pyrénées-Orientales
Tél. 04 68 08 39 70
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Practical Information

- Open all year.
- Closed January 1, May 1, November 1 and December 25.
- From November 1 to March 31:
Tuesday to Sunday from 10 am to 6 pm
- From April 1 to October 31: every day from 10 am to 6 pm
- Adult: € 8, reduced rate: € 5 (job seekers, students, groups of more than 10 people, heritage pass), Free under 18s (and schoolchildren, beneficiaries of social minimums, journalists, teachers, witnesses, donors, patrons).
- Audioguides in 5 Langues (Français, Anglais, Allemand, Espagnol, Catalan) + Langue des Signes Pour La Visita du Parcours Extérieur et of the Permanent Exhibition.
- Bookstore
- Coffee, snacks, and local produce
- Cultural events

Initial Project

Rivesaltes Camp is where the fate of men, women and children was sealed, during the tragic events that took place between 1938 and 1970. This place bears witness to the dark years of the 20th century.

It is a one-of-a-kind building in France due to its sheer size, its well-preserved state (the only one where we can still see and feel that it was in fact a camp), its geographic location (near the motorway, airport, near Catalonia, Toulouse, Barcelona, Montpellier, etc.) and its historic importance.

The symbolic importance of this place and the partnerships it has have earned it recognition on a regional, national, European, Euro-Mediterranean and international level.

A memorial is not just a building. It is a kind of "aide-mémoire" written into human time. This awareness should bring about a debate on the future, to educate people to commemorate and understand better.

That is why the Conseil Départemental des Pyrénées-Orientales and the Occitanie/Pyrénées-Méditerranée Region have decided to erect a monument in the same location as the former Ilot F (42 ha) of Rivesaltes Camp (600 ha), whose existing buildings already feature on the supplementary list of historic monuments. This memorial will become the first one since the Second World War to evoke and refer to the human drama that was internment in France.

- ✓ The camp was destined to be destroyed when in 1998, Christian Bourquin, president of the Conseil Général des Pyrénées-Orientales at that time, and then of the Languedoc-Roussillon Region, decided to join the local citizens in the campaign to save the site, and to transform a part of the land, Ilot F, into a place of remembrance, in the hope that "this memory will serve our youth, everyone, humanity". Between the remains of the Rivesaltes Camp barracks, architect Rudy Ricciotti and the Passelac & Roque firm built a very high, narrow monolith from ochre-coloured concrete, partially buried underground. The Memorial was officially unveiled in 2015 and in 2016 it was awarded the French Silver T-Square Prize (architecture award).
- ✓ The outdoor visit and the permanent exhibition room have been designed in such a way that the visitor can comprehend how certain historic events triggered vast deportations of populations and the creation of more than two hundred internment camps in France and North-African countries, including Rivesaltes Camp. There is a central table that displays the timeline of the camp, as well as documents and objects that recount the internment of colonial troops, Spanish Republicans, Jews, Gypsies, collaborators and prisoners of war of German, Austrian, Italian and Polish nationality, then harkis, Guinean, Malgasy and Indochinese riflemen, etc
- ✓ The visitor can also read testimonies from people who were interned, and watch a great number of archived films. The Memorial really makes visitors think about the forced movement of populations that we are seeing today.
- ✓ There are cultural, artistic and scientific events and activities (temporary exhibitions, conferences, meetings, readings, showings, etc.) all year round.

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PYRÉNÉES MÉDITERRANÉE EN PAYS CATALAN

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Some key dates in this project

1978

Publication of "The Memorial of the Deportation of the Jews of France" by Serge Klarsfeld.

1993

Publication of "Diary from Rivesaltes 1941-42" by Friedel Bohny Reiter (a nurse with the Swiss Aid for Children, Swiss Red Cross), published by Zoé, Geneva, which was then made into a film in 1997.

Publication of "The transfer of Jews from the camp of Rivesaltes and the Montpellier area towards the center of Drancy for deportation on August 10, 1942" by Serge Klarsfeld.

1994

On the 16th January, a monument was erected in Memory of the Jews deported from the camp of Rivesaltes to Auschwitz, upon the initiative of the "Sons and daughters of Jews deported from France" association and Serge Klarsfeld.

1995

On the 2nd December, a monument was erected in memory of the Harkis.

1997

There were threats to destroy the camp. A collective petition "To the living memory of the camp of Rivesaltes" was signed by Simone Veil, Claude Simon, Edgar Morin and a great number of citizens.

1998

Christian Bourquin was elected President of the Conseil Général des Pyrénées-Orientales. He opposed the destruction of the site and started public consultations on the project. The associations who represent the imprisoned communities were contacted and educational projects were launched. He decided to support and continue the work that had been started on this place of remembrance.

1999

On the 30th October, a monument was erected in memory of the Republicans of the Spanish Civil War.

2000

Rivesaltes Camp was added to the supplementary list of Historic Monuments by the Ministry of Culture. The Conseil Général des Pyrénées-Orientales unanimously voted in favour of the Memorial project.

2002

The internment camps historian, Denis Peschanski was elected president of the scientific council who would lead the project from a historical point of view. Also included in the initiative were a Memorial commission bringing together the associations, and an educational commission bringing together the numerous teachers who had already been actively involved for several years together with their pupils.

2005

Architect Rudy Ricciotti, a partner of the Passelac & Roques firm won the international architecture competition.

In November, the Conseil Général des Pyrénées-Orientales acquired Ilot F, covering a surface area of 42 hectares.

Robert Badinter agreed to sponsor the project.

2010

Following the death of Georges Frêche, Christian Bourquin became president of the Languedoc-Roussillon Region. The following year, the Regional Council unanimously approved the transfer of the Memorial project from the Conseil Général des Pyrénées-Orientales, to the Region.

2014

In January, the administrative structure was set up: it was to be a Public Institution of Cultural Cooperation (EPCC), with Agnès Sajaloli appointed as director.

2015

The Rivesaltes Camp Memorial was officially opened to the public from the 16th to the 19th October 2015, in the presence of France's Prime Minister at the time, Manuel Valls, the president of the Languedoc-Roussillon Region, Damien Alary and the president of the Conseil Départemental des Pyrénées-Orientales, Hermeline Malherbe.

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Bibliography

“Les camps de la honte : les internés juifs des camps français 1939-1944” by Anne Grynberg, published by La Découverte, Paris, 1991

“Diary from Rivesaltes 1941-1942” by Friedel Bohny-Reiter. published by Zoé, Geneva, 1993

“Le camp de Rivesaltes 1941-1942 : du centre d’hébergement au “Drancy de la zone libre” by Anne Boitel. published by Presses Universitaires de Perpignan, 2001

“L’Archipel du mépris, histoire du camp de Rivesaltes de 1939 à nos jours” by Joël Mettay. published by Trabucaire, Perpignan, 2001

“French Internment Camps 1938-1946” by Denis Peschanski. published by Gallimard, Paris, 2002

“Les Juifs au camp de Rivesaltes : internement et déportation 1941-1942” by Alexandre Doulut. published by Lienart and Rivesaltes Camp Memorial, 2014

“Histoire du camp militaires Joffre de Rivesaltes” by Béate Husser. published by Lienart and Rivesaltes Camp Memorial, 2014

“Rivesaltes le camp de la France 1939 à nos jours” by Nicolas Lebourg and Abderahmen Moumen. Published by Trabucaire, 2015

“Les Tsiganes au camp de Rivesaltes 1941-1942” by Alexandre Doulut, published by Lienart and Rivesaltes Camp Memorial, 2015

“Harkis au Camp de Rivesaltes. La relégation des familles. Septembre 1962-décembre 1964” by Fatima Besnaci-Lancou. published by Lienart and Rivesaltes Camp Memorial, 2019

Links

www.memorialcamprivesaltes.eu

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