



Réserve Naturelle



Conservatoire  
du littoral

# marais d'Orx

# Timeless,



*A story of man, a story of water*



The «Marais d'Orx» wetland is a geological territory whose creation dates back to about three million years ago. Over the centuries, the drying out efforts gave poor, temporary results. Incessantly, water reclaims the land.

## 1808

Napoleon I, passing Labenne on his way towards Bayonne, announces by decree, the drying out of the swamp. Work to repair this will only begin around forty years later with the installation of a pump system.

## FROM THE MID 19TH CENTURY TO THE 1980's

Thanks to the more efficient technical means of the Industrial Era, the site is practically dried up. Even if Napoleon III is the main craftsman, his successors will make one of the biggest agricultural domains and corn growing areas in France. Following the major oil crises of the 1970's, the necessary electric cost becomes too expensive.

Due to lack of profitability, the last owner gradually ceases agricultural activity. The water resumes its course.

## 1989

Acquisition of the site by « Conservatoire du Littoral » because of its ecological significance. With the Financial support of WWF (World Wildlife Fund) 100oha are withdrawn from intense agriculture and restored as swamp land.

At the time, the biggest project ever accomplished in France.

 Conservatoire du littoral



# between land & water



1995

National Nature Reserve classification, undoubted recognition of its place and importance within prestigious Nature Reserves to be protected.

2004

The « Syndicat Mixte de Gestion des Milieux Naturels », grouping the region, the department, the « Communauté de communes Marenne Adour » and the commune of Saint-André-de-Seignanx replaces « Syndicat Mixte d'Aménagement et de Gestion du Marais d'Orx ».

The «Marais d'Orx» wetland is an environmental triumph. This restored, exceptionally wild land offers a rich yet fragile biodiversity protected from most things excluding curiosity.

## A RESTORED WETLAND COMES BACK TO LIFE !

To manage this former polder, tools of the past are still used : pumps, canals, dikes and hydraulic shedding structures. Water levels in the Wetland's Lagoons are hence managed with a dual objective, hydraulically (floods) and ecologically. The « renaturalisation » is encouraged as is the welcoming of birds. In winter, they discover marsh areas for feeding. In spring, development for aquatic life is boosted in the higher areas.



INDEX CARD

- **Surface**  
Almost 1000ha of which 774ha are a classified National Nature Reserve.
- **Situated**  
In the South West of the Landes Region, on the Labenne, Orx, Saint-André de Seignanx, Saubrigues and Saint-Martin de Seignanx districts.
- **Significance**  
Last big wet zone before the Pyrenees.  
A Sanctuary of major interest.
- **Statute**  
National Nature Reserve, « Conservatoire du Littoral » site, European network Natura 2000 site, RAMSAR international wet zone.

*What is a National Nature Reserve ?*

**Hearts of Nature :**

*With appropriate régulations respecting local criteria, their actions are organised around three main tasks:*

**PROTECT – MANAGE – AWARENESS**

To DISCOVER

fauna  
& flora



## 247 identified bird species



The rehabilitation of the former agricultural domain of the «Marais d'Orx» wetland allowed the revival of a very rich ecosystem. The site welcomes hundreds of species of birds, rare mammals, insects, reptiles as well as a specific wetland flora.

### A MAJOR BIRD SANCTUARY

At the foot of the Pyrenees, near the Atlantic Ocean, the «Marais Orx» wetland is located on a west European flyway. Today it is a favourite stop for migratory birds that find food and rest. It takes its full proportion upon the arrival of the first cold weather, welcoming thousands of birds in hibernation (Anatidae, Shorebirds), as well as the famous Eurasian spoonbill, the emblem of the Swamp.

### A NOURISHING WETLAND !

The site is composed of a mosaic of natural environments : lakes, willows, reed beds, meadows and seagrass which house a large number of species dépendent on Wetlands : amphibians (Green Frog, Natterjack Toad), reptiles (European pond turtle, Grass Snake) and mammals. The European pond turtle, a protected species, who is usually very discreet, is easily visible in the spring and summer. During the summer season, various insects such as Dragonflies, Locusts or Butterflies are présent.

### *Another angle of environmental management:*

Extensive wet grazing meadows by a herd of Highland Cattle. This hardy race contributes to the preservation of open grasslands.



## ADOPT A « NATURE ATTITUDE » !

Help protect this fragile site during regeneration, by respecting these simple rules :

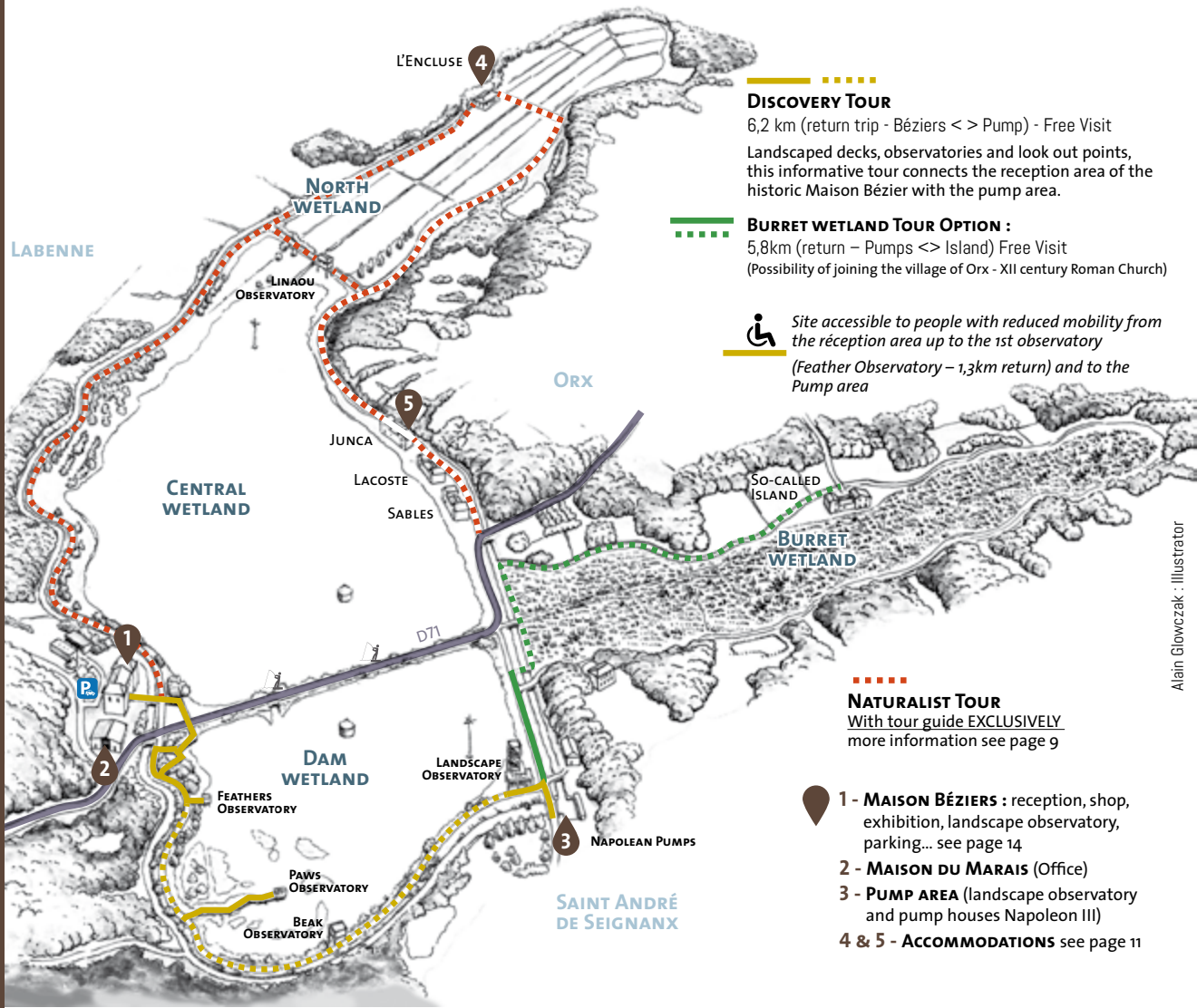
- **MOTORBIKES AND BICYCLES** prohibited outside the D71.

- **DOMESTIC ANIMALS**, even kept on a lead, strictly prohibited on the visitors circuit.

- **HUNTING AND PLANT COLLECTING** are prohibited.

- **FISHING PROHIBITED** on the Nature reserve (in lagoons and canals, except along the D71 road in the central lagoon only, in designated areas).

**ALL SPORTING ACTIVITIES STRICTLY FORBIDDEN.**



### DISCOVERY TOUR

6,2 km (return trip - Béziers < > Pump) - Free Visit  
Landscape decks, observatories and look out points, this informative tour connects the reception area of the historic Maison Béziers with the pump area.

### BURRET WETLAND TOUR OPTION :

5,8km (return - Pumps <> Island) Free Visit  
(Possibility of joining the village of Orx - XII century Roman Church)



Site accessible to people with reduced mobility from the reception area up to the 1st observatory (Feather Observatory - 1,3km return) and to the Pump area



### NATURALIST TOUR

With tour guide EXCLUSIVELY  
more information see page 9

- 1 - **MAISON BÉZIERS** : reception, shop, exhibition, landscape observatory, parking... see page 14
- 2 - **MAISON DU MARAIS** (Office)
- 3 - **PUMP AREA** (landscape observatory and pump houses Napoleon III)
- 4 & 5 - **ACCOMMODATIONS** see page 11

# The marais d'Orx **OPENS NEW HORIZONS...**



## THROUGHOUT THE SEASONS TIMETABLE OF THE SPECIES

The Wetland reveals its secrets to the attentive visitor who can observe ...

### FROM MARCH TO SEPTEMBER

Shorebirds (Dunlin, Common Redshank, Black-Winged Stilt...) Squacco Heron, Purple Heron, Black-crowned Night Heron, Black Kite, Eurasian Hobby, Booted Eagle, White Stork, European pond turtle, Green Lizard, various insectes, (scarlet dragonfly, blue Hoplia beetle, Black-tailed Skimmer, Peacock Butterfly...)

### FROM OCTOBER TO MARCH

Great Egret, Common Snipe, Northern Lapwing, Eurasian Curlew, Western Marsh Harrier, Saint Martin Harrier, Common Buzzard, Osprey, Ducks (Northern Pintail, Northern Shoveler, Eurasian Wigeon, Common Pochard, Eurasian Teal), Greylag Goose.

### And all year round...

Little Egret, Grey Heron, Eurasian Spoonbil, Mallard, Gadwall, Mute Swan, Black Swan, Little Grebe, Great crested Grebe...



## Feel free to visit...

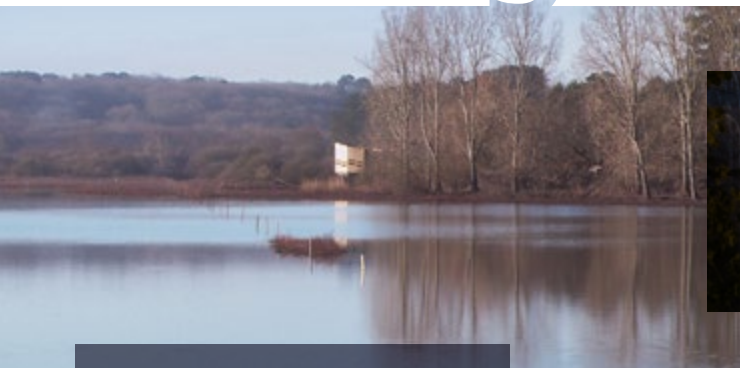
### The Discovery Tour

The «Marais d'Orx» wetland Natural Reserve can be discovered only on foot along a path significantly interspersed by landscaped decks, lookout points and observatories. Discovery booklet available at Reception.

*If you organise a group outing, kindly refer to the information on page 15.*



# TO YOUR liking



## Accompanied Adventure

### The Discovery Tour with a guide

Throughout the year, animations and theme activities are offered on the indicative trail equipped with observatories, landscaped decks and lookout points. Informed and made aware, you will be accompanied by an experienced naturalist guide to encounter the wetlands inhabitants.

*Ask for our programme or visit our website.*

The «Marais Orx» wetland is open to all on a delimited course with free access. A secret part of the site, due to its fragility, is revealed in the tracks of a naturalist guide. It is also a base for an unusual holiday cottage.



## The Wetland Secrets

### The « naturalist Tour » with a guide

Become a privileged observer... When hiking, your guide will lead you to the heart of the protected area of the Nature Reserve, the most secret, and usually closed part of the wetland.

You will have access to specially preserved zones which host flagship species at certain times of the year only, in order not to disturb the species.

*Possibility of « personalised » private visits with friends and family (subject to availability).*

# A BETTER UNDERSTANDING

# know & respect

Throughout the seasons, the Nature Reserve team offers various entertainment suited to all public : associations, schools, recreation centers and people with reduced mobility.

## THEME ACTIVITIES ALL YEAR ROUND

*Ask for the informative file or visit our website.*

### *Special school and Leisure centres*

Activities for schools (primary and highschool and college students) and leisure centres are based on playful methods and physical field trips. Content can be developed together with the teacher, taking into consideration ongoing or future school projects. An educational kit is available to assist teachers prepare their trip to the «Marais Orx» Wetland.

#### **SOME ACTIVITY IDEAS ?**

Discover a Wetland, migration, animal behaviour... *Visual equipment available for bird watching, videos, slide shows, group amenities, activity room, nature trail.*

© Photo : A. Noel



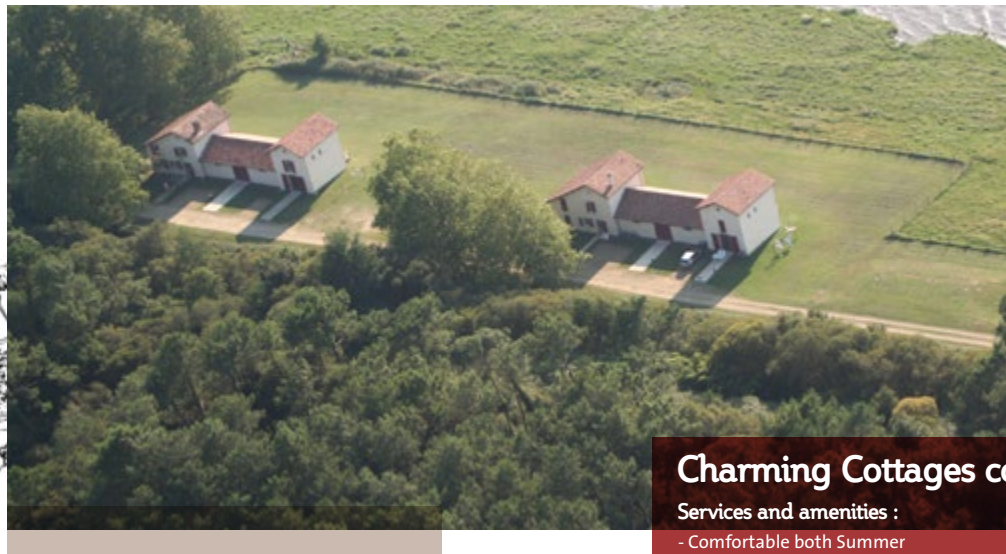
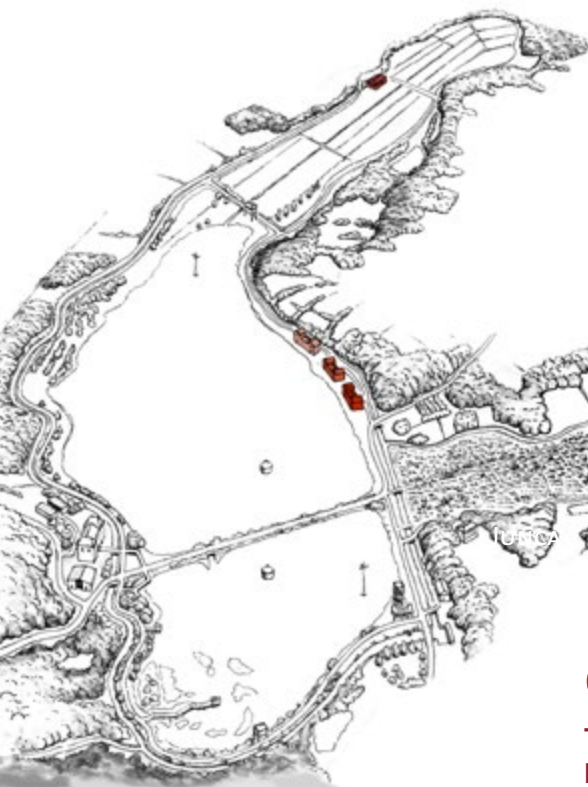
IMMERSION



*Stay in the heart of the wetland*

# Close to nature holiday cottages

6 CHARMING COTTAGES ON AN EXCEPTIONAL SITE



## Charming Cottages c

### Services and amenities :

- Comfortable both Summer and Winter
- House keeping at the end of your stay
- Bedding rental
- Wood for sale for the cottages 6 to 8 people



WASHING MACHINE



DISHWASHER



TV



WIFI



BINOCULARS PROVIDED



## ON THE WATERS EDGE

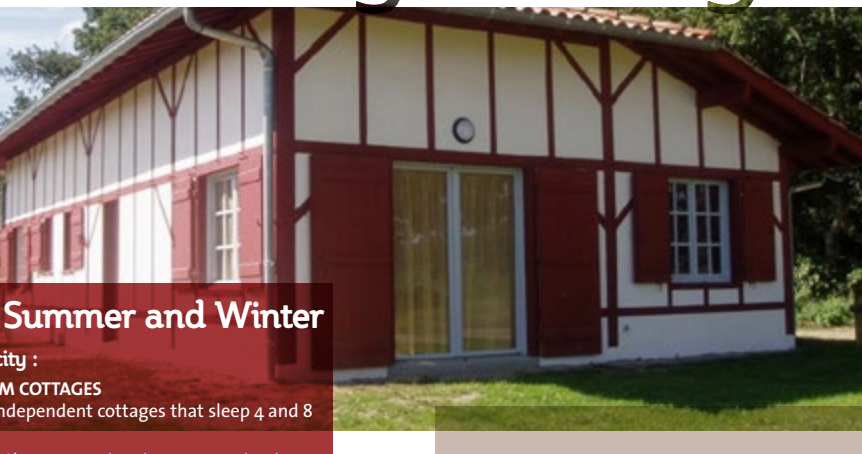
**The three Napoleonic farms, called Sables, Lacoste and Junca are located on the eastern part of the Central Wetland.**

Enjoy spectacular views of the vast expanse of the central wetland and bordering pastures occupied by a small herd of Highland Cattle. During migration, Egrets, Greylag Geese or Curlews will be your neighbours.

*Living in the wetland is a commitment !*

The cottages are located within the perimeters of the Natural Reserve. Therefore, the rules apply to the tenants and their guests (NO DOGS ALLOWED).

# TO nature holiday cottages




comfortable both Summer and Winter

#### Accommodation Capacity :

##### SABLES AND LACOSTE FARM COTTAGES

Each farm consists of 2 independent cottages that sleep 4 and 8 people.

 *Sables cottage (sleeps 8) is equipped with a room and toilet facilities for handicapped people.*

##### JUNCA FARM

Sleeps 6 situated 400m from the other farms.

##### L'ENCLUSE

Individual cottage, (sleeps 4), accessible from Bénése Maremne.

**Rates** : from 310€ per week

#### Reservations and Contact :

Booking at Maison Béziers : 05 59 45 42 46  
gites-maraisorx@orange.fr - [www.gites.marais-orx.fr](http://www.gites.marais-orx.fr)  
[www.gites-de-france-landes.com](http://www.gites-de-france-landes.com) (payment on-line)

You are an experienced or amateur ornithologist ?  
A lover of nature and tranquility ?

Spend your holiday in a unique spot !

Six charming cottages welcome you in any season...

## L'ENCLUSE, A HOLIDAY WITH A DIFFERENCE

**The Encluse cottage is ideally situated on the north wetland, in the heart of the Nature Reserve on the edge of vast grasslands.**

You will be situated in a frontline spot, in a popular area for many species (Common Crane, Greylag Geese in winter, but also Raptors and Roe Deer...)

# Maison Béziers



The «Marais d'Orx» wetland welcomes you to Maison Béziers.  
This entrance to the site is the starting point of the « Discovery Tour » open to all.



Renovated by the « Conservatoire du Littoral », this beautiful building from the Napoleonic are belonged to the engineer, Lefebvre-Béziers.

## A « NATURE » SHOP :

Book Shop, toys, educational toys, postcards and souvenirs....



## A PERMANENT EXHIBITION :

On the «Marais d'Orx» wetland, its inhabitants and its history.

## PRACTICAL INFORMATION :

Information booklet

Rental of visual enhancement material like binoculars and telescopes

Drinks for sale

Toilets



*Accessible to people with reduced mobility up to and including the 1st observatory and pumps section.*

### Opening hours Maison Béziers

July / August : 9h – 19h

May / June / September : 9h – 12h30 / 14h – 18h

October to April : 9h – 12h / 14h – 17h

Bookings : 05 59 45 42 46



### PARKING : IMPORTANT !

Parking ONLY in the Maison Béziers Parking Area. NO PARKING ALLOWED along the RD71 for security reasons.



## Landscape Observatory :

## *Taking it to new heights !*

Situated in the pumps area at a height of 10m, the « Sensory course » is a specific look out point from where you can appreciate the entire size of the site, combined with the landscaped conservatory of Maison Béziers (7m).

## Practical information :

### PARKING AND PICNIC AREA

### THE DISCOVERY TOUR

- Distance : 6,2km return (up to 12km with the Burret Tour)
- Average length : adaptable accordingly (1h to full day)
- Level : Accessible to everyone  
**up to Feather Observatory and Pump section**
- Departure : Maison Béziers
- Note : Binocular rental at Maison Béziers
- What to bring: walking shoes, clothing suited to the weather, preferably neutral in colour
- Follow the rules of good conduct (see page 6).

**NOTE :** for groups, even although free access is granted for group outings, it is advisable for group organisers to inform the date of arrival.

### AN ACCOMPANIED ADVENTURE

Ask for our activity programme or visit our website : [www.marais-orx.fr](http://www.marais-orx.fr)

### RATES :

1/2 DAY :

Adults 6 € / Children 3 €

Groups 4 € per person

(minimum 10 for structures and associations only)

FULL DAY :

Adults 12 € / Children 5 €

Groups 8 € per person

(minimum 10)

*Number of places limited to guarantee a quality event. The staff reserve the right to cancel the activities depending on the weather. Visual equipment supplied subject to availability.*

**LA MAISON DU MARAIS :** activity centre for pupils, group réception

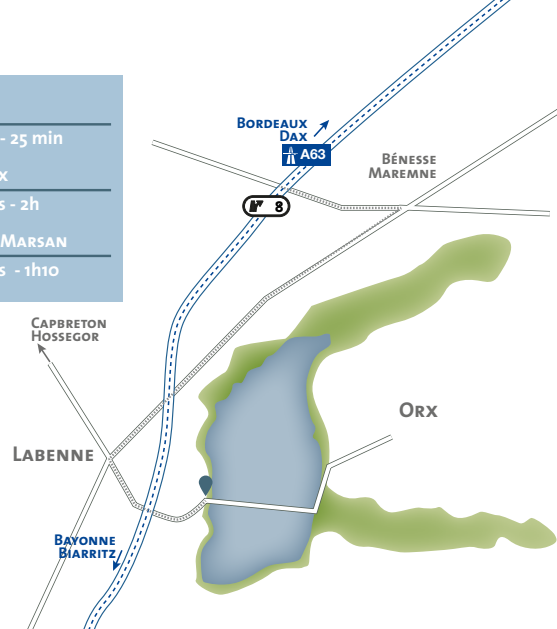
Temporary exhibitions (anyone can expose their exhibits !), meeting room, conference room, offices



**BAYONNE**  
9,3 miles - 25 min

**BORDEAUX**  
111,8 miles - 2h

**MONT DE MARSAN**  
58,4 miles - 1h10



**OPENING HOURS MAISON BÉZIERS :**

July / August : 9h - 19h  
 May / June / September : 9h - 12h30 / 14h - 18h  
 October to April : 9h - 12h / 14h - 17h

More information @ : [www.marais-orx.fr](http://www.marais-orx.fr)

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MARAIS D'ORX



SYNDICAT MIXTE DE GESTION DES MILIEUX NATURELS



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