



## Origins

During the tertiary period, what is now called Le Malzieu was covered by a lake. A geological phenomenon caused the water to recede, carving the Verdezun gorges, through which the Truyère now flows. Numerous flints found in the area are the remains of human activity during the stone age. Megalithic civilization is also represented by the "Pinjo Chabre" standing stone, near Mazeyrac (road to La Garde) and the "Puor Negro" standing stone near Julianges.

## Gallo-Roman period

Evidence of the Gallo-Roman period can be found all around Le Malzieu, in the form of pieces of pottery, old tiles and even walls... The town walls, towers and underground tunnels are particularly remarkable and attest to the existence of a Celtic oppidum in Verdezun which, due to its high location and panoramic view, was the first fortress built in this area. The Romans established their settlements on the surrounding hillsides.

## The middle ages

During this period the walls, towers, gates, and underground tunnels that make up the town of Le Malzieu, were built. Le Malzieu became a fortified town with its own judicial system. The Governor's house and tower, and the Clock Tower (La Tour de l'Horloge), in which prisoners were kept and which was built in the 11th century, are both reminders of this period.



## The 16<sup>th</sup> century

In the 16th century, at the time of the French Wars of Religion, Le Malzieu was besieged by the Huguenot captain Mathieu Merle. He entered the city on November 17th 1573, breaking a passageway through the town walls. The hole he left behind is now named "Merle's Hole" (*le Trou de Merle*). He destroyed the church and killed 14 priests in a dead-end street now called "la Sanguinerie". Merle left the town in 1576 and the church was rebuilt in 1582.



## The 17<sup>th</sup> century

Le Malzieu was devastated by the plague which killed 85% of the local population. Plague victims were buried in a cemetery near the village of Fantoubette where there is now a crucifix. In 1632, to fight the disease, an apothecary called Jean Conché burnt every affected house to decontaminate the town, this led to a terrible fire that destroyed a large part of the town. The rebuilt houses were given magnificent granite doorways surmounted by triangular pediments.

A map of 1648 and the scallop shell carving on the church wall confirm that Le Malzieu was indeed situated on the pilgrim route between Le Puy and Santiago de Compostela.



## The 18<sup>th</sup> century

Between 1764 and 1767, a number of attacks, attributed to the "Beast of the Gévaudan" (*La bête du Gévaudan*) took place around Le Malzieu and in the neighboring regions now called Haute-Loire and Cantal. This gigantic animal used to appear suddenly and attack women and children, killing around a hundred people. The death of the twelve-year old Marie-Jeanne Rousset is recorded in Le Malzieu town hall. Several hunting parties were organized to bring its reign of terror to an end. On June 19th 1767, during a hunt organized by the "Marquis d'Apcher" in the Ténazeyre Forest, the Beast was killed by Jean Chastel. He caught the Beast in "Sogne d'Auvers" near the *Mont Mouchet*. The Beast of the Gévaudan has inspired many writers and storytellers, however, who or what it was stays unclear until today...

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# Historical Tour



## Le Malzieu-Ville



