

106 m high

Managed forest

A record-breaking dune

NATIONAL RESERVE OF THE BANC D'ARGUIN

Stretch of sand whose the surface evolves according to winds, tides and currents.

2 900 M LONG / 600 M LARGE / 55 MILLION CUBIC METRES OF SAND

CONSTANTLY IN MOTION

The dune has a dissymmetric form. On the forest side, it shows a gradient steep and on the ocean side, it offers a gentle one. Under the effects of meteorological (winds, storms), hydrologic (current, swell, wave, tide) and climatic aspects, the Dune du Pilat is moving to the East from 1 to 5 metres per year. Little by little, it recovers the forest clump.

PILAT OR PYLA?

The dune is named Pilat after the word « Pilot », which means in Gascon (a French dialect) « heap of sand ». However, Pyla comes from the name of the village near the dune called Pyla-sur-Mer. So the correct spelling is Pilat.

A PROTECTED NATURAL PLACE

By its beauty and its fragility, the Dune du Pilat, historically coveted, is a protected Grand Site (French label for the protection of specific places). Nowadays, more than 6800 hectares, including the dune and the forest, are protected by the law of 1930 about natural monuments.

In partnership with the State, the Conservatory of littoral and local authorities, Grand Site has a mission of management and protection. Like the Baie de Somme, the Dune du Pilat is a member of the Grands Sites de France network.

www.grandsitedefrance.com



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The Dune du Pilat conveys the values of the Bassin d'Arcachon brand based on environmental awareness and on the promotion of natural areas and human activities that are connected to the territorial identity. This emblematic site remains accessible throughout the year to the inhabitants and the visitors, with this desire to offer them a different vision on the Grand Site and on the Bay in order to preserve them, in the interest of future generations.



Grand Site de la Dune du Pilat



EMOTION IN RELIEF

Ne pas jeter sur la voie publique - Récif Design.
Credit photos : IRIN Banc d'Arguin - P. Jacques - SMOGP - JF - Deligey - Grand Site de la dune du Pilat



A UNIQUE FOREST IN FRANCE

A huge forest clump, coupled to the dune, spreads out over more than 3800 hectares, in the middle of the Landes de Gascogne forest. This « user forest » (a type of managed forest) is protected and private. It is locally known as « **the Great Mountain** ». It covers ancient dunes which give it a distinct relief. Unlike most of the Landes forest planted during the 19th century, the forest of the dune is of natural origin.

ANCIENT LANDSCAPES

« **Paleosols** » or ancient grounds are dark levels and can be observable on the dune, on the ocean side, when winds push back sand. Each of them is a testimony of warm and wet climatic periods, permitting the development of vegetation (forest, meadow). The dense sand levels between « **paleosols** » were formed during colder and windier climatic periods. The study of the successive levels enabled us to know what the climate in Aquitaine was during the **last 4000 years**.

UNDER THE SAND

The Dune du Pilat is hiding a lot of historical and archaeological treasures, which are testimonies of human occupation since the Bronze Age (15th – 8th centuries BC) to the middle of the 20th century.

« **The dune means a place full of stories, a place full of adventures** »

Jules, Victor Hugo school,
La Teste de Buch

A RESERVE OF LIFE

The forest, mostly composed with maritime pines and lobed-leaved trees (*common oaks, strawberry trees, holly...*) houses numerous mammals, birds and insects (*deer, raptors, beetles...*).

The dune has a specific ecosystem where fauna and flora (*larks, plovers, marram grass, bindweeds...*) have to adapt to harsh climatic conditions (*wind, spindrift, salt*). The coastline environment is full of typical species of the Aquitaine coast (*fishes, shellfishes and molluscs...*).

1

Harvest of resin or tapping.
This activity has marked the local economic life until the end of the 20th century.

2

Hanneton foulon. Resident of the dune, this beetle of imposing size lives in the ground.

3

Linaria Thymifolia.
It is a protected species nationwide, which grows only on the Aquitaine coast.

4

Site of archaeological excavations on the dune.

5

Sterne caugek (type of bird) raising her chick. The Banc d'Arguin is an important international site for the reproduction of the species.

6

Blockhouse built at the top of the dune during World War II. With the coast erosion, some of them appear on the West side of the dune.

