

**ARCACHON, IN THE
DEPARTMENT OF THE GIRONDE,
FRANCE, ITS ADVANTAGES AS
A HEALTH RESORT**

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Arcachon, in the department of the Gironde, France, its advantages as a health resort by
Samuel Radcliff

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SAMUEL RADCLIFF

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IN THE DEPARTMENT OF THE GIRONDE, FRANCE,

ITS ADVANTAGES AS A HEALTH RESORT.

BY

THE REV. SAMUEL RADCLIFF,

BRITISH CHAPLAIN.

"Oceanwards it look'd ; and o'er its wooded heights
The softening breezes of the empurpled sea
Roam'd murmuring, as they gently rock'd
The fragrant pines—watching with sweet delight
The dancing shadows on the moss beneath."

Day Dreams: A Poem.

London :

THOMAS LAURIE, 31, PATERNOSTER ROW.

1883.

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HANDBOOK TO ARCACHON.

CHAPTER I.

GEOGRAPHICAL POSITION, AND ACCESSIBILITY OF ARCACHON. *

ARCACHON is situated about thirty-five miles west-south-west of Bordeaux, in latitude $44^{\circ} 40'$ N. and longitude $1^{\circ} 15'$ W., on a promontory on the south shore of a large land-locked inlet from the Bay of Biscay, called the "Bassin d'Arcachon," shaped somewhat like an equilateral triangle, and communicating with the open sea by a passage about two miles in width, which runs for some miles in a southerly direction before opening to the westward. The spit of land lying between the open sea and this *bassin* is called "Cap Ferret." It completely shelters the *bassin* from

the Atlantic swell; and the pine forests which cover its ridges of sand-hills break the force of the westerly gales; so that if the entrance were improved the *bassin* would be one of the finest harbours in the world. At present, though there are about twenty feet of water on the bar and in the deep channels at low water, these channels are so tortuous, and the tidal currents so strong, that sailing-vessels can only enter or leave the port in fine weather with a favourable wind and tide; and even steamers cannot cross the bar in very rough weather. The *bassin* is intersected by deep channels, varying from a few hundred yards to about a mile in width, which are navigable by large vessels, and afford excellent anchorage. Between these channels lie large banks of sand or clay, which are covered at high water and exposed at low water. The latter are called *crassats*, and those which have an argilaceous soil are extensively used for oyster culture.

The town of Arcachon, being situated on a promontory, has the *bassin* on three sides of it, and forest on the fourth. This forest, part of which is of very great antiquity, now covers the sand *dunes* along the coast from the Bassin d'Arcachon to the mouth of the Adour, while a corresponding strip of forest covers the *dunes* to the north of the *bassin*, from Cap Ferret to the Pointe de Grave at the mouth of the Gironde. The sowing of these

forests, on what were formerly shifting sand-hills, was chiefly due to the energy of a Government engineer, Nicholas Bremontier, who lived at the close of the last and the beginning of the present century. Inland of these *dunes* lies the great plain of the *Landes*, now almost entirely covered with pine forests, through which the traveller from Bordeaux to Bayonne, Pau, or Tarbes, passes for hours in the train. These forests are for the most part of more recent date than those which cover the *dunes*.

Arcachon, being only thirty-five miles from Bordeaux, is more accessible than any other continental health resort. It is about an hour and a quarter from Bordeaux by express train, twelve or thirteen hours from Paris, four or five-and-twenty from London, about fifteen hours from Marseilles, and five or six from Pau or Biarritz.

The least fatiguing way of reaching Arcachon from England is to go by sea to Bordeaux. The vessels of the Pacific Steam Navigation Company, which sail from Liverpool every alternate Wednesday, are most comfortable, and generally make the passage from Liverpool to Pauillac, where passengers for Bordeaux disembark in a tender, in about fifty or sixty hours. The vessels of the General Steam Navigation Company, which sail from London every Thursday, and run up to the Quay of Bordeaux, are also fine ships, and make

rapid passages, though they are not so large as those of the Pacific Steam Navigation Company. In addition to the vessels of these two great lines, smaller steamers from different British ports carry a limited number of passengers to Bordeaux; and, in fine weather, the voyage is much less fatiguing than the long railway journey through Paris, and is also considerably cheaper, especially to families travelling with much luggage.

The railway from Bordeaux to Arcachon is one of the oldest in France, having been constructed in the year 1841. It then only ran to La Teste, but was continued to Arcachon in 1857. The country through which it runs is for the most part dull and uninteresting, but a few places of some note may be seen from it. Soon after leaving Bordeaux, shortly before reaching Pessac, it passes the Château Haut Brion, celebrated for its wines. After leaving Pessac it passes the vineyard of Pope Clement V., who was a native of Pessac. The next station, Gazinet, is remarkable as being that from which the gravel for the roads at Arcachon is brought. Being naturally mixed with brick clay, it binds the roads admirably on the loose sand of Arcachon. Pierroton is close to the scene of some of the earliest efforts towards the cultivation of the *landes*, formerly barren, treeless wastes of sand, covered with heather, gorse, and coarse herbage, on which a