



LES REFUGES PERIURBAINS

The Periurban Refuges of Bordeaux Métropole

[The Periurban Refuges](#) are a unique network of eleven artistic shelters scattered across the outskirts of Bordeaux Métropole. Designed as both architectural installations and overnight shelters, they invite hikers, residents, and visitors to explore the edges of the city through a contemporary form of urban trekking. These singular structures—shaped like a cloud, an owl, a shell, or a tree trunk—are the result of a collaborative project led since 2010 by the collective [Bruit du frigo](#), in partnership with [Zébra3](#), and supported by Bordeaux Métropole and participating municipalities.

Each Refuge is conceived in close dialogue with its natural surroundings, offering a poetic and immersive experience of the periurban landscape. Open from March to November and free to access (reservation required), they propose a minimalist yet meaningful overnight stay—without water or electricity, but rich in atmosphere and perspective. By linking these shelters through walking paths and hidden trails, the project promotes a new way of seeing and using urban peripheries: as spaces for reconnection, reflection, and adventure.

Blending art, architecture, and public space, the Refuges are part of a broader movement to reimagine the city as a terrain for exploration. They reveal the diversity of metropolitan landscapes and encourage a shift in perception—making room for slower, more sensitive forms of mobility. Celebrated for their innovative approach to social cohesion and cultural access, the Periurban Refuges offer a new kind of public facility: one that inspires wonder, fosters local discovery, and opens up new narratives of the city through the simple act of walking.

Genesis

The project emerged in the late 1990s from the work of architect Yvan Detraz, then a recent graduate of the Bordeaux School of Architecture and Landscape. As part of an urban study, Detraz undertook a detailed exploration of Bordeaux's peripheries, identifying residual and overlooked spaces on the margins of the city. This research laid the foundation for the creation of *Bruit du frigo*, a collective that has been working since 2000 on issues related to the use of public space, temporary architecture, and participatory urbanism. One of the collective's key focuses has been the development of walking routes and infrastructures that invite residents to engage differently with the urban and peri-urban environment.

Territory

The Bordeaux metropolitan area is characterised by a fragmented urban fabric, where suburban developments, industrial zones, and natural landscapes coexist. This complex territorial composition offers opportunities to promote alternative forms of mobility and leisure, including peri-urban hiking and eco-tourism. In this context, *Bruit du frigo* has worked to enhance the accessibility and visibility of these transitional spaces by integrating them into walking networks and equipping them with shelters. These interventions seek to encourage a new relationship with the territory—one that is slower, more attentive, and rooted in proximity.

Forms

From this unique territorial context emerged a form of micro-architecture rooted in exploration and modesty. Inspired by mountain shelters, *Bruit du frigo* and the design collective Zébra3 created a network of urban bivouacs—free, accessible shelters installed along suburban hiking routes. These small-scale, low-impact structures are built with minimal materials and blend into their environment. Both functional and poetic, they invite city dwellers to spend the night in unexpected places—by a lake, under a bridge, in a forgotten park. These shelters embody an alternative way of living in and discovering the city, reconnecting people with the landscapes they often overlook.

Collaboration and Governance

The Suburban Shelters project is the result of a long-standing and dynamic collaboration between Bordeaux Métropole and two Bordeaux-based creative collectives: *Bruit du frigo* and Zébra3. From its inception, the project has benefited from the metropolitan authority's strategic vision for enhancing the quality of life through sustainable urban planning and the promotion of natural and peri-urban landscapes. Bordeaux Métropole's support—initially as a commissioner, later as the owner and promoter of the shelters—ensured institutional anchoring and territorial coherence. *Bruit du frigo* contributed its expertise in participatory urban design and micro-architecture, while Zébra3 brought a curatorial and production-based approach rooted in contemporary art. Together, these actors created a unique framework where public policy, artistic experimentation, and civic engagement intersect. This partnership illustrates a governance model that fosters cross-sectoral collaboration, enabling the shelters to become both tools for territorial development and cultural symbols that resonate with local communities and visitors alike.



The following examples illustrate the diversity of forms and contexts in which the Suburban Shelters are embedded, reflecting the specific identity of each site and the artistic approach of their designers.

Le Prisme

"[Le Prisme](#)," designed by Lou-Andréa Lassalle, is situated by a lake and is characterized by its geometric, glass structure. The shelter reflects the surrounding landscape, blending natural and man-made elements. The design offers a space for quiet reflection or group gatherings, with the glass facets creating varying light effects that alter the perception of the landscape. The shelter provides a unique, immersive experience of the environment, highlighting both natural and constructed elements of the site.



La Belle Étoile

"[La Belle Étoile](#)," designed by Stéphane Thidet, is located in the Domaine de la Burthe in Floirac. The shelter consists of a five-pointed star, with each point offering a private sleeping area. The design allows for communal living while maintaining individual space, providing a simple camping experience under the open sky. This shelter reflects the concept of "sleeping under the stars," offering visitors a unique, free-of-charge opportunity to connect with nature.



Les Guetteurs

"[Les Guetteurs](#)" is a shelter inspired by three totemic owls, symbolizing guardianship over the surrounding environment. Positioned on the site of a traditional fishing hut, the refuge is accessed by a pontoon leading to a terrace with a view of the Garonne River and Arcins Island. The design includes circular sleeping areas in the shape of the owls' heads, allowing occupants to observe the stars and the river, creating a unique experience of being immersed in nature.



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