

Mas Cévenol de la Roquette

Vallées cévenoles - Molezon



Mas Chaptal, La Roquette (© Sandrine Forge)



This path nestling on the floor of a charmingly preserved valley is ideal for imagining past life in the Cévennes and gaining a better understanding of life here today.

This walk allows you to explore a little valley off the beaten track, which evokes the special atmosphere of the Upper Cévennes valleys located on the Mediterranean side of the watershed. In the shade of holm oak and sweet chestnut, this path goes uphill from a mill to a complex of dwellings midway up the slope, in the cool air of a gully. The walk enables you to understand how the Cévenols managed and increased the value of their environment. From the art of construction to hydraulic arrangements, all the components of the

Useful information

Practice : Discovery trails

Duration : 2 h

Length : 2.5 km

Trek ascent : 173 m

Difficulty : Very easy

Type : Loop

Themes : Architecture and village, Causse and Cévennes / UNESCO, Water and geology

traditional organisation of space are evoked on a preserved site.

Trek

Departure : Car park

Arrival : Car park

Markings : 🌀 découverte PNC

Cities : 1. Molezon

Altimetric profile



Min elevation 501 m Max elevation 635 m

Some clarifications:

- At the car park, walk along the lane for 300 m to the first Marker
- After Marker 2, take the path on the left (narrow, can be slippery when wet)
- Between Markers 15 and 16, the path is narrow
- After Marker 18, take the lane to return to the car park.

On your path...



- Dr Michel Monod (1934-1992) (A)
- Trabassac stream (C)
- The sweet-chestnut orchard (E)
- Mas Chaptal (G)
- The bread oven (I)
- Roofs (K)
- Holm oak or yeuse (*Quercus ilex*) (M)
- La Devèze mill (B)
- Types of schist (D)
- Bancelles and springs (F)
- The white mulberry (*Morus alba*) (H)
- Tree-trunk hive (*brusc*) (J)
- The clède and trincat (L)
- Black mulberry (*Morus nigra*) (N)

All useful information



Is in the midst of the park

The national park is an unrestricted natural area but subjected to regulations which must be known by all visitors.



Advices

In summer, it is best to do this walk in the morning.
Some sections are slippery when wet.
The path crosses several private properties. Do not leave the waymarked path.
Its continued availability to the public depends on you being discreet.
Horse-riding or mountain-biking are not allowed on or adapted to discovery trails.

How to come ?

Access

D 983 to Pont-Ravagers (12 km from Barre-des-Cévennes and 2 km from Sainte-Croix-Vallée-Française). At Pont-Ravagers, take the lane that leads to Trabassac hamlet (signposted narrow and winding road). About 10 minutes by car from Pont-Ravagers .

Advised parking

Path car park on the lane leading from Pont-Ravagers to Trabassac

Information desks

Tourism'house and national Parc at Florac

Place de l'ancienne gare, N106, 48400
Florac-trois-rivières

info@cevennes-parcnational.fr

Tel : 04 66 45 01 14

<https://www.cevennes-gorges-du-tarn.com>

Tourism office Des Cévennes au mont-Lozère, Saint-Germain-de-Calberte

Village, 48370 Saint-Germain-de-Calberte

info@cevennes-montlozere.com

Tel : 04 66 45 81 94

<https://www.cevennes-montlozere.com/>

Source



Parc national des Cévennes

<http://www.cevennes-parcnational.fr/>

On your path...



Dr Michel Monod (1934-1992) (A)

This path is dedicated to Dr Michel Monod (1934-1992) who profoundly shaped the Vallée Française. A devoted mountain doctor and true Protestant, he was guided by rigorous ethics in all his professional, social and political commitments. As councillor of the Barre-des-Cévennes canton, mayor of Sainte-Croix, and president of the board of directors of the Cévennes National Park from 1982-86, he carried out his duties with the desire to open up the Cévennes to modernity without changing the area's fundamental values of authenticity, discretion, liberty, hospitality and respect for others - values that are still the pride of the Cévennes today.

Attribution : © Musée des Vallées Cévenoles

La Devèze mill (B)

Marker 2

The bésal took the river water into the mill pond, called gourgue (gorga in Occitan). Natural basins in riverbeds are called gour (gorg). Releasing the water on demand made the millwheel go round, which in turn activated the turning millstones. This mill had several millstones to produce rye flour, walnut oil, hulled barley and chestnut flour.



Trabassac stream (C)

Marker 1

The Trabassac, which has cut deeply into the schist, has a low average rate of flow. But during storms it can abruptly go from being almost totally dry to a raging torrent. Then its capacity to erode is impressive! A water intake point built next to a small dam used to let water into a béal (or bésal in Occitan: irrigation channel), whose starting-point can still be distinguished. It directed the water to a mill (Point 2) built away from the banks so as to protect it from floods. The Mediterranean or southern barbel is a fish typically found in this stream, as is the brown trout.

Attribution : © Arnaud Bouissou TERRA



Types of schist (D)

Marker 3

Despite their varied appearance, all types of schist have one thing in common: they separate into parallel slabs. In the Cévennes, where schist is the predominant rock, it mainly occurs in the form of mica schist. Schist is a former sedimentary rock, which has been dragged into the depths of the Earth's crust under very high pressures and temperatures, and folded several times. A considerable uplift of the far south-eastern part of the Massif Central about 1.8m years ago meant that the Cévenol valleys were created by erosion more "recently". This has given the Cévennes their current appearance. On this acid substrate, holm oaks manage on thin layers of soil.

Attribution : © Arnaud Bouissou TERRA



The sweet-chestnut orchard (E)

Marker 4

The sweet-chestnut tree is a native species, but its cultivation really began in the Middle Ages, with a very significant expansion in the 16th century, until it declined as an economic resource in the 19th century. The chestnut tree was the pivotal tree of a civilisation, because of the high quality of its wood, which is very resistant; because of the fact that it bears fruit fairly regularly, feeding both humans and animals; and through the use of its foliage and tannin. It is therefore not surprising to see old chestnut orchards near mas (farmhouses). Grafted chestnut trees (identifiable by the bulge on the trunk) produce nuts. The rest, called bouscas, are not intended to be productive.

Attribution : © Arnaud Bouissou TERRA

Bancels and springs (F)

Marker 5

The terraces (bancels) on this steep slope are narrow and supported by tall schist walls, which make them look like a staircase. The surfaces that they border have a slight incline across the slope, enabling rainwater to drain away towards the gully, which then carries them to the stream. This is a good example of the dual purpose of bancels: they are also effective at retaining soil, thus creating cultivatable areas. The seepage creates a spring above the steps into the garden. This is Mas Chaptal's only year-round water supply. A vegetable garden has been laid out below it to take advantage of the irrigation.



Mas Chaptal (G)

Marker 6

Mas Chaptal is the most handsome of the three groups of buildings in upper La Roquette. Its large south-facing facade, built of schist blocks of equal size, has regular openings. A beautiful mullion window livens up the austere schist wall. The door and window surrounds have all been made very carefully, often from limestone or kersantite (dark grey, fine-grained, igneous rock). At the top of the staircase in the gable end, you can make out the drain of the stone sink. Doors, roof structure and floors are made from chestnut, and have recently been restored.

Attribution : © Bruno Daversin

The white mulberry (*Morus alba*) (H)

Marker 7

White-mulberry trees played an important role in the economy of the Cévennes from the 16th to the 19th century, since they made it possible to feed magnans (silkworms). Their knotted shapes are the result of reams of foliage being harvested each spring, during silkworm breeding. The trees received as much care as the silkworms themselves, and were often planted in the best soils, on terraced crop land (bancels) near the mas.

The bread oven (I)

Marker 8

The modest oven has a baking stone consisting of a recycled sandstone millstone. Ash was caught in a sort of niche (on the bottom left) and then used, mainly for washing up. Growing rye (seigle) for bread-making has shaped the area's place names: Ségalières, Ségaliérette. Several details show the care taken in its construction: the passage cut into the rock which has a drainage channel at its base that prevents water from reaching the walls of the mas, and the small bench hewn out of the rock.



Tree-trunk hive (brusc) (J)

Marker 9

Traditional hives in hollowed-out sections of chestnut trunks were placed on a schist slab and closed with a round tilestone. Bees entered through a hole at the base and built their own honeycombs inside, which made it more difficult to harvest honey than in modern hives. The box trees planted around the apiary allowed the insects to feed early (still in winter) on their fragrant flowers. A specific variety, the black bee of the Cévennes, still subsists as a relic in a few isolated valleys. Genetic cross-breeding with imported bees is a very serious threat to its future survival.

Attribution : © Sandrine Forge



Roofs (K)

Marker 10

All the roofs are covered in rectangular or rounded schist tilestones (lauzes), which came from small neighbouring quarries. They are laid using nails (formerly dowels) or simply wedged, depending on the support. The flat or crossed ridges, and the often imposing chimney stacks, give the roofs an inimitable character.

Attribution : © Sandrine Forge

The clède and trincat (L)

Marker 11

The clède (a small building for drying chestnuts) made it possible to preserve chestnuts by drying them and thus protecting them from mould and parasites. The chestnuts were poured through an opening in the back gable onto a latticed wood floor. Underneath, on the ground level, was a covered fire giving off heat and smoke. The “path” cut into the rock uphill of the buildings is in fact a water channel. Cutting across the steep slope, it captures runoff rainwater and diverts it, thus protecting the buildings below. Such trincats are also sometimes used as paths by humans and animals.

Holm oak or yeuse (*Quercus ilex*) (M)

Marker 12

Forest fires and felling for firewood and charcoal have usually kept holm-oak stands to a modest size. It is therefore rare to see such handsome trunks. These trees would also have been pruned for many years: their leaves were fed to livestock during droughts. Until the 18th century, some groves were used as pasture land (acorns) for pigs, sheep and goats. Like all uniform environments, these groves are rather low in animal species. But you can still see a whole procession of birds: the blue tit and great tit, western Bonelli’s warbler, jay, song thrush, blackbird, robin, wren, etc.

Black mulberry (*Morus nigra*) (N)

Marker 13

The black mulberry, which is more resistant to late frosts and better suited to altitudes above 500m than the white mulberry, was introduced into southern France in the 5th century. As of the 13th century, it was used for silkworm breeding. If there was a spring frost, farmers could use its leaves to feed the worms temporarily, while waiting for the white mulberry to produce its leaves. The white mulberry replaced the black mulberry in the 15th century, and the latter has almost disappeared from the landscape. Its fruit are succulent, but beware of permanent stains!