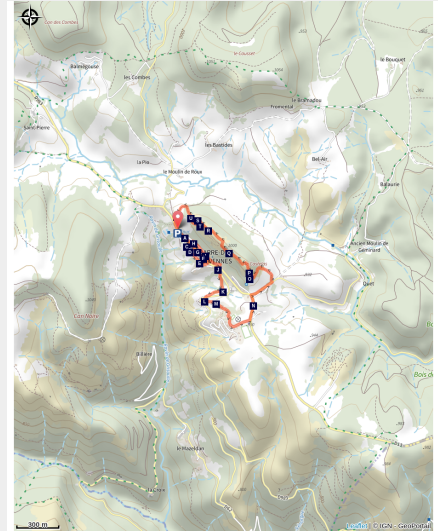


Barre-des-Cévennes

Vallées cévenoles - Barre-des-Cévennes



Vue sur Barre-des-Cévennes (© Olivier Prohin)



This trail showcases the different aspects of Barre-des-Cévennes, from the lanes of the old village to the panoramic viewpoints.

In the shelter of the Castelas, the facades of Barre-des-Cévennes line up, reminding us of its past as a rich and lively small town. In fact, the village is located at the very hinge of two different but complementary regions, and controls one of the most frequent crossing points between the Lower and Upper Cévennes. The trail leads you from gardens to fountains, from the temple (Protestant church) to the Catholic church, to the old fairgrounds and then onto the heights, where you can enjoy exceptional panoramic views onto the scenery of the Cévennes National Park.

Useful information

Practice : Discovery trails

Duration : 2 h

Length : 3.6 km

Trek ascent : 181 m

Difficulty : Very easy

Type : Loop

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

Trek

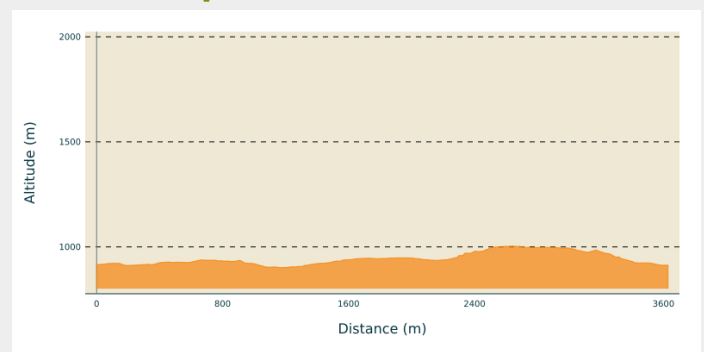
Departure : Public weigh-station (poids public) as you enter Barre-des-Cévennes

Arrival : Place des Ayres

Markings : 🌀 découverte PNC

Cities : 1. Barre-des-Cévennes

Altimetric profile

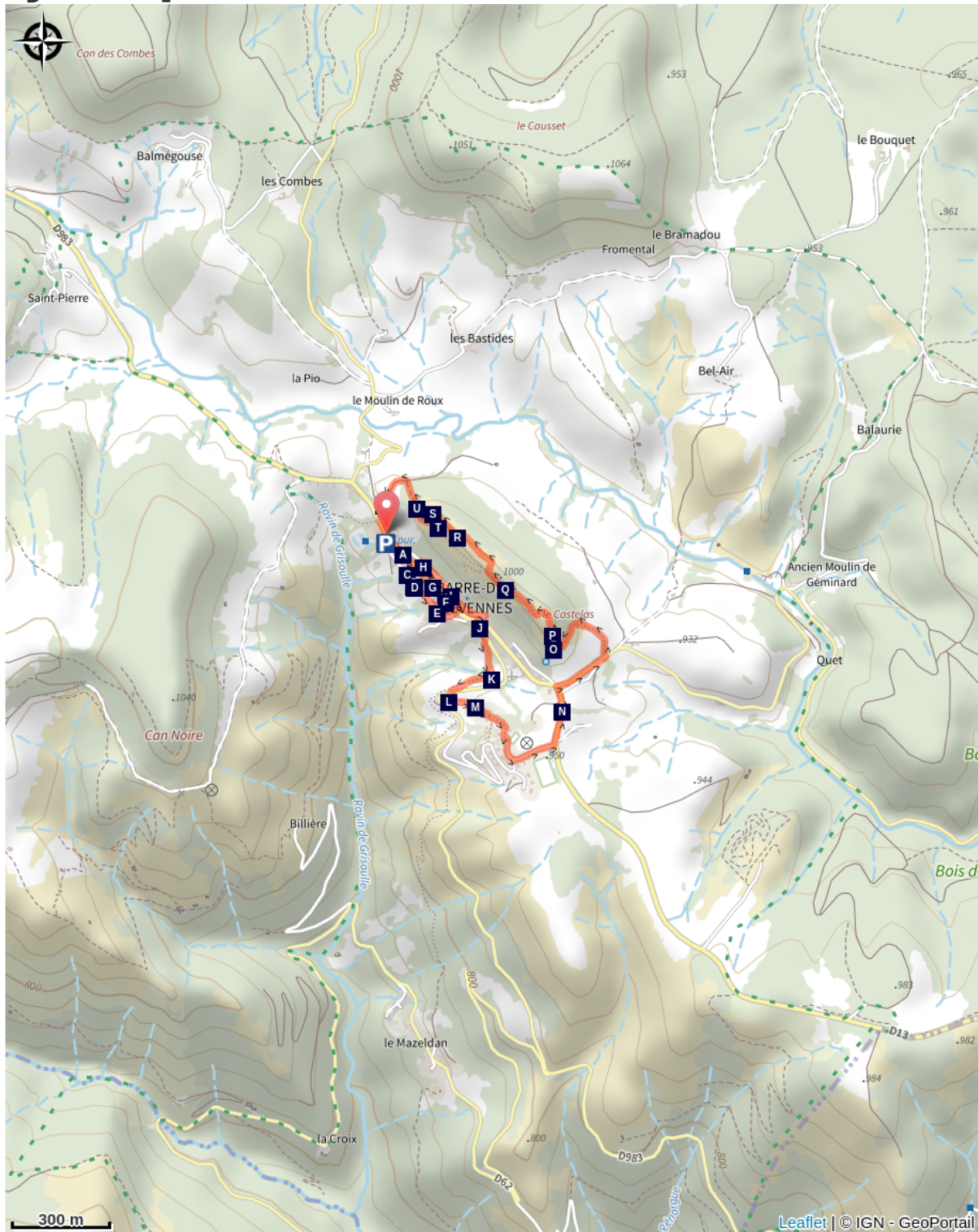


Min elevation 901 m Max elevation 1004 m

A few clarifications:


- A few dozen metres after Point 6, take the stairs on the right.
- Between Points 9 and 10, the path may be closed by two barriers. Please be sure to close them again after yourself.
- Steep uphill section after Point 13.
- At Point 16, do not climb the rocks – risk of falling.
- Steep downhill section after Point 18.

On your path...



- Place de la loue (Hiring Square) (A)
- Théron Fountain (C)
- Place des écoles (Schools Square) (E)
- The Château (G)
- The Catholic church (I)

- Bedrocks and construction (B)
- Wall plants (D)
- Place de la Madeleine (F)
- The temple (Protestant church) (H)
- Place de l'Orient (J)

 Ash trees pruned in the “tadpole” style (K)

Village de vacances (holiday village) (M)

Can Noire (L)

Sandstone outcrop (N)

All useful information

Advices

This trail has rather steep slopes (60%) and cliff sections that are difficult for people with walking difficulties. Children must be kept under parents' supervision. Horse-riding or mountain-biking are not allowed on or adapted to discovery trails.

How to come ?

Access

Barre-des-Cévennes on the D 907 and then D 9 from Florac; after Nozières hamlet, take the D 983 on the left.

Advised parking

On the right as you enter the village coming from the Col du Rey pass

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>



Source



Parc national des Cévennes

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

On your path...

Place de la loue (Hiring Square) (A)

Marker 1

This little square, located at the north-eastern entrance to the village, was where the “loue” (hiring) used to be held during the great spring and autumn fairs: shepherds, domestics and chestnut gatherers would sit on the parapet and hope for an employer to take them on. The village hosted 12 to 15 fairs every year. The spring and autumn ones could attract up to ten thousand people from neighbouring departments, but also from the Var, Vaucluse and Bouches-du-Rhône. This village-rue (one-road village) was protected at each end by a fortified gate. One of them, called the Florac Gate, stood near the Place de la Loue. It was destroyed in the early 19th century.

Bedrocks and construction (B)

Marker 3

Different types of rock were used to build the village, as in the courtyard on your left, in particular limestone (5) and quartzite (2) for houses. Additionally, sandstone (4) and granite (1) were used for retaining walls, and mica schist for roofs (3). These rocks came from the immediate surroundings of Barre, where they make up the landscape’s structure. This can be seen in the foreground, looking south-west. On each side of the narrow street are the terraced gardens. This system, typical of mountain regions, makes it possible to retain soil by reducing gradients. Oral tradition has it that local lords granted their feudal tenants these gardens free of charge.



Théron Fountain (C)

Marker 2

Barre was built on the contact zone between sandstone and mica schist. Several springs and seeps emerge from this impermeable zone, which feed into the village's fountains and garden wells. The oldest, the Théron Fountain, has been restored several times. The typical Barre house is generally taller than it is wide, probably to avoid encroaching on cultivatable land. On the ground floor would have been a shop, workshop, storage space, or the stable; on the first floor, the kitchen; and above that one or two bedrooms. At the very top, a hay loft would have been used to store hay and straw.

Attribution : © Guy Grégoire

Wall plants (D)

Marker 3

Vegetation on walls has to overcome the lack of both soil and water. To persist under these conditions, there are three possible strategies:

- spending the hardest season as seeds, as annuals do, e.g. thyme-leaved sandwort (*arenaria serpyllifolia*);
 - laying in water reserves, as succulent plants do, e.g. white stonecrop (*sedum album*);
 - drying out without dying, as lichens and mosses do. By breaking down the substrate, these also create a bit of soil for superior plants (those with flowers and therefore seeds: sandwort, stonecrop, etc.).
-

Place des écoles (Schools Square) (E)

Marker 4

"Schools Square" has changed name several times over the years. In the Middle Ages, it was known as PourcariéSqaure because it hosted the pig market. Later the market also opened up to oxen, horses and mules, and was therefore renamed the Fairground Square. It was the most important area of the fairs, where the largest sums of money changed hands. During the Protestant Camisard Rebellion (1702-1704), the square was protected by a large wooden palisade. During the 1789 French Revolution, the National Guard held arms drills here, and its name changed to Arms.

Place de la Madeleine (F)

Marker 5

The fountain dates from the 18th century. At the end of the 19th century, the bust of Marianne – the personification of the French Republic – was added. At the same time, a poplar was planted by republican youth as a symbol of freedom. From here, you can see several bourgeois houses, which mostly date from the 17th and 18th centuries. They bear witness to the village's thriving past, when it had some 20 voituriers (merchant-carters), who would drive their carts down to the plains laden with wool and chestnuts and return with salt, wine and oil. Under the houses' large porches, harnesses and carts were kept. During fairs, the seed market took place in these vaults and those of the town hall.

The Château (G)

Marker 6

Constructed in the 12th and 13th centuries, the Château was entirely rebuilt in the early 16th century. From 1710 to 1715, it was modified by the Lord of Barre, who had his coat of arms carved above the entrance. Two towers were also added at this time. During the 1789 Revolution, the coat of arms disappeared under vigorous hammer strokes. In the early 19th century, during an expansion, the main tower was removed.

The temple (Protestant church) (H)

Marker 7

Begun in 1823 and finished in 1826, this temple was Barre's third. Its architecture is similar to that of all the temples built at this time. The first temple had been constructed in 1608 near the Catholic church, shortly after the arrival of Protestantism in the region. Only one of its stones still exists and can today be seen in the facade of a house on the main street, inscribed: "He who is of God hears the word of God – 1608". In 1675 Protestants built a second temple below the village. It was destroyed on Royal orders in 1685 following the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes (which re-criminalised Protestantism), forcing Protestants to hold their religious gatherings in the mountains.



The Catholic church (I)

Marker 8

The church was probably built in the 12th century. Its barrel-vaulted nave is Romanesque in style. The original building was extended by several lateral additions in the Gothic style: in the 14th century, a chapel (north side) featuring the coat of arms of the Lords of Barre; in the 15th, three chapels on the south side. The church has been a listed building since 1931. In front of it is the Place de la Bladarié, which hosted the medieval seed market and, as of the 16th century, the sheep market.

Attribution : © Guy Grégoire

Place de l'Orient (J)

Marker 9

Barre's third fountain used to stand on this square, where the pig market was held from the 16th century onwards. At the entrance to the main road was the Cévennes Gate, dismantled in 1836 because it obstructed carts. The houses adjoining this Gate and the Florac Gate were requisitioned during the Camisard War to house the King's soldiers. At the time, Barre was one of their main garrisons.



Ash trees pruned in the “tadpole” style (K)

Marker 10

No water runs in this little gully in the summer. You can see a large number of ash trees of a particular shape caused by regular pruning, called “tadpole”. Ash trees prefer relatively deep and humid soils, but locals have privileged it here over its direct rivals (willows, aspen, and hazelnuts). Celts and Germanic tribes already considered the ash a sacred tree, believing it to attract lightning and beneficial rains. Its hard and elastic wood is much appreciated in cabinet-making. It is also used for tool handles. The first skis were made of ash. Farmers use ash leaves as supplementary fodder for livestock.

Can Noire (L)

Marker 11

In front of you is an abrupt slope broken halfway by a level shelf. This shelf corresponds to a strip of the peneplains which, at the end of the Palaeozoic (between 280 and 230 million years ago) resulted from the complete erosion of the great Hercynian mountain chain. Below the shelf are rocks established between 350 and 280 million years ago: essentially mica schist (3) and granite (1). Here, the steep slopes with their thin acid soils are covered by Cévenol heaths of broom, heather, bracken and thyme. A few sessile (durmast) oaks, ash and willows break up the monotony. Above the shelf are sandstone (4), dolomite rock (6) and limestone (5), deposited by the sea in the Mesozoic, between 230 and 190 million years ago.

Village de vacances (holiday village) (M)

Marker 12

Barre's holiday village was built in 1971 by the association of local councils. It consists of 30 units and can accommodate 180 people. The impetus behind its construction was a re-orientation of Barre's economy towards tourism.

Sandstone outcrop (N)

Marker 13

On the other side of the road, the sandstone bank shows criss-crossing layers which were deposited by flood waters with very strong currents. The pebbles they contain have angles that are barely blunted, indicating that they were not carried far. This very crumbly sandstone is generally held together by a greenish clay rich in white mica without any limestone. It bears witness to the arrival of the sea, 200 million years ago. On this rock face, plants have to compensate for intense erosion by being able to develop rapidly and withstand a certain amount of dryness. There are a very few chamomile plants and streamlined plantains.