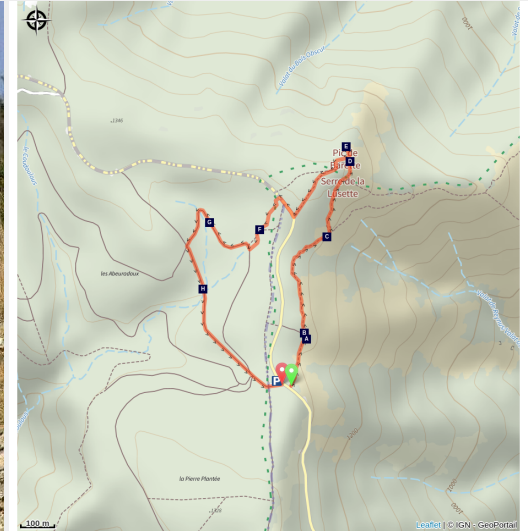


On the traces of the mouflon

Aigoual - Val-d'Aigoual



Mouflons (© Régis Descamps)



The mouflon was introduced for hunting in the 1950s and yet remains little-known or unknown to visitors to the Aigoual mountain range.

“7 June 2005. Evening is falling on the Aigoual massif. The air is cooling down after this hot spring day. I'm sitting on a small rock overlooking the heath above the Taleyrac valley. I've been at my post for only a few minutes when a triangular head with two small horns emerges out of the broom a few metres away. There can be no doubt: it's a young mouflon!”
Nicolas Pagès, Fédération des chasseurs du Gard

Useful information

Practice : Discovery trails

Duration : 1 h 30

Length : 2.4 km

Trek ascent : 92 m

Difficulty : Very easy

Type : Loop

Themes : Fauna and flora

Trek

Departure : Car park

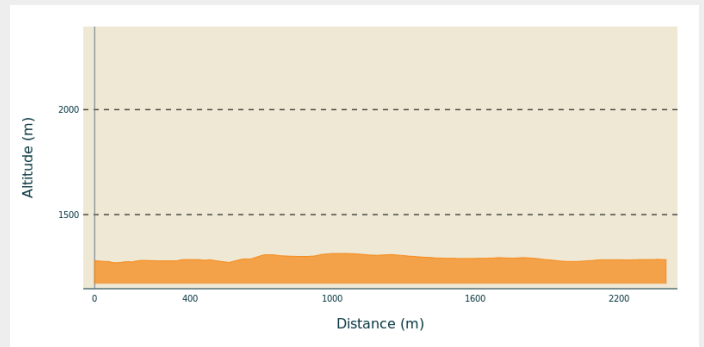
Arrival : Car park

Markings : 🗺️ Discovery

Cities : 1. Val-d'Aigoual

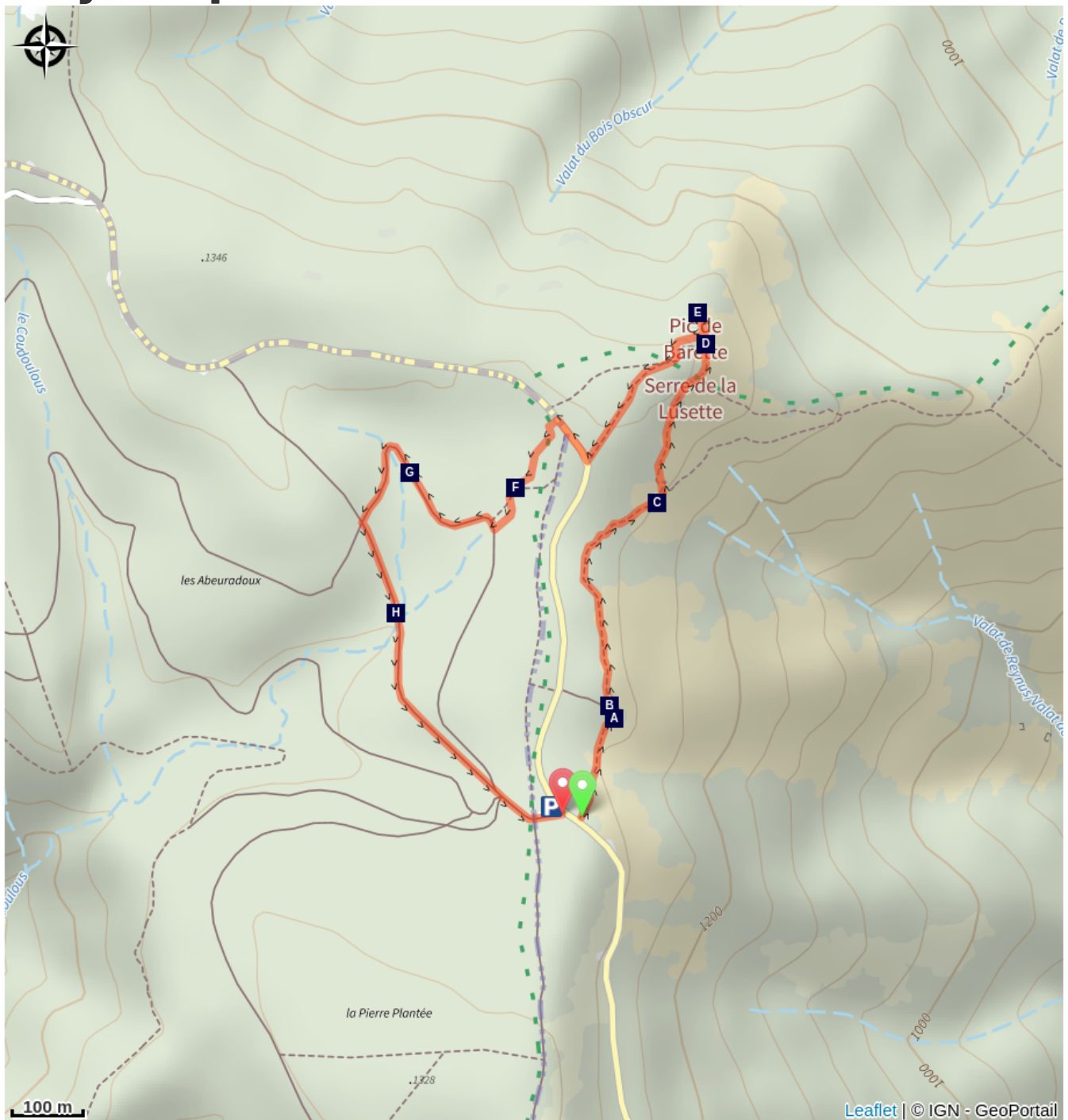
2. Arphy




Altimetric profile



Min elevation 1271 m Max elevation 1315 m

On your path...



-  What is a mouflon? (A)
-  The saga of the mouflon (C)
-  Pic de Barette (E)
- Head counts (G)
- André Chamson (1900-1983) (B)
- The 4 seasons of the mouflon (D)
- Managing the species (F)
- The origins of the mouflon (H)

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 February 2020, a forest fire affected the path. Please respect the trail markings. You are strongly advised to bring binoculars if you hope to spot mouflons. Horse-riding or mountain-biking are not allowed on or adapted to discovery trails.

How to come ?

Access

On the D 548 and D 329 from L'Espérou via the Col de la Lusette pass, towards Mandagout

On the D 170 from Le Vigan towards Mandagout, then on the D 329 towards L'Espérou / Col de la Lusette

Advised parking

Under the pine trees on the plateau, 2 km from the Col de la Lusette pass



Information desks

Tourism & national parc'house

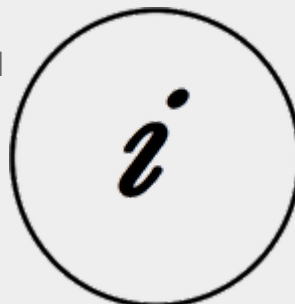
Col de la Serreyrède, 30570 Val d'Aigoual

maisonde-laigoual@sudcevennes.com

Tel : 04 67 82 64 67

<https://www.sudcevennes.com>

Accessibility : Accessible aux personnes à mobilité réduite sur les trois niveaux du bâtiment (ascenseur)



Source

On your path...



What is a mouflon? (A)

Marker 1

The mouflon is a ruminant mammal related to the domestic sheep. Its staple diet is herbaceous plants, which it finds in open spaces such as heaths. It also feeds on about a hundred other plants (ferns, mosses, mushrooms, etc.). The horns of the male (ram) are spiral-shaped and grow continuously, which makes it possible to estimate its age. The female (ewe) rarely has horns. The mouflon's life expectancy is around 14 years. Being an excellent climber, it can easily escape to steep areas in case of danger. These rocky zones also help limit the growth of its hooves through wear.

Attribution : © Chantal Daquo

André Chamson (1900-1983) (B)

In his works, André Chamson constructed an imaginary Cévennes park. His writings bear witness to his love for the area and his attachment to his Huguenot ancestors. A nationally renowned writer, he was elected to the Académie française in 1956. His final works see time and death become more powerful than work or human faith.



The saga of the mouflon (C)

Marker 2

Twenty-three mouflons were introduced to this mountain range in 1954. They roamed the ridge rimmed by heath that you can see in front and to the right of you. Since introduction, the population has slowly grown on the Cevenol slopes. In 1999, the Gard Departmental Hunters' Federation in tandem with the Office National des Forêts, the Cévennes National Park, farmers and hunters took over the management and monitoring of the species. Since then, the population has grown steadily in the Aigoual area, and has recently started to settle other districts as well.

Attribution : © Gaël Karczewski



The 4 seasons of the mouflon (D)

Marker 3

A vantage point for mouflon spotting, which is equipped with an information panel on how to detect mouflons and how to get your bearings in this vast landscape.

Attribution : © Michel Monnot



Pic de Barette (E)

Marker 4

The Pic de Barette is a perfect viewpoint for spotting a great variety of animals, especially the golden eagle. Mouflons like to warm up in the sun and graze quietly on the slope opposite you, near the rocks that stick out of the forest. You will need patience and silence to spot mouflons. In spring and summer, their beige colour stands out against the rather green surroundings. In autumn and winter, it is easiest to make out the females' white 'face masks' and the males' saddles (white mark on the back).

Attribution : © Régis Descamps



Managing the species (F)

Marker 5

The Cévennes National Park is unusual for a national park in that hunting is allowed in its central zone. In the absence of large predators, hunting is considered compatible with maintaining a good natural balance. Local mouflons are subject to a compulsory hunting plan, which estimates the numbers to be culled every year. There is regular monitoring to check population levels. Knowing that a mouflon group grows by about 25% a year, it is possible to calculate the number of animals that can be culled without compromising the future of the herd.

Attribution : © Régis Descamps



Head counts (G)

There are two methods for counting mouflons. "Relative abundance indices" estimate variations in the population. In May, observers position themselves in fixed spots at day's end and record the number of animals they see in 20 minutes. Head counts "by combined observation from a hide and from stalking" are used at the end of winter. Observers move through thickets where mouflons shelter. The groups of animals they disturb escape towards fixed observers, who count them. The mouflon population is currently estimated at around 200. Local actors and inhabitants are very involved in the monitoring and counting operations.

Attribution : © Gaël Karczewski



The origins of the mouflon (H)

Marker 6

L'Abeuradou is located on a draille, a drovers' road for shepherds and their flocks to move between the plains of Languedoc and summer pastures on the southern Massif Central. The name L'Abeuradou indicates that it is a spot where the flocks drink and rest before continuing their long hike. Today's domestic sheep is descended from the mouflon. Since being introduced to the slopes of Mont Aigoual, the mouflon has thus been rubbing shoulders with its cousin, which grazes here in summer. Their cohabitation does not seem to be a problem for the livestock farmers.

Attribution : © Olivier Prohin