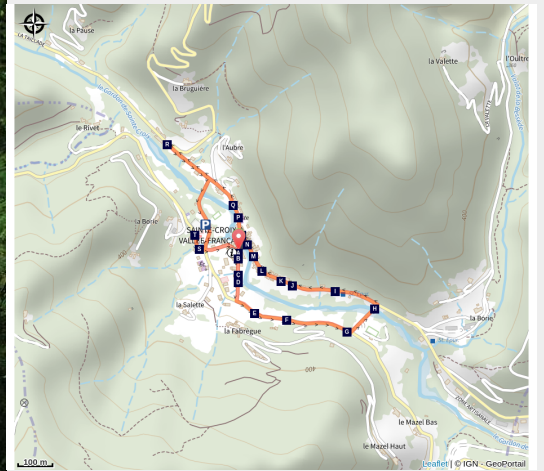


# Trail of Memories

Vallées cévenoles - Sainte-Croix-Vallée-Française



Sainte-Croix-Vallée-Française (© Olivier Prohin)



*A circuit that explores life in the village of Sainte-Croix-Vallée-Française in the 1930s.*

In the 1930s, Sainte-Croix-Vallée-Française was a hive of activity: crafting, farming and festivities. The Gardon river reflected the houses, and set the rhythm of life. A circuit of 21 audio points lets you to explore the villagers' daily life as told by oral history. Some 30 works by regional artists illustrate the economic activity of the time.

## Useful information

Practice : Discovery trails

Duration : 1 h 30

Length : 2.2 km

Trek ascent : 40 m

Difficulty : Very easy

Type : Loop

Themes : Architecture and village, History and culture

# Trek

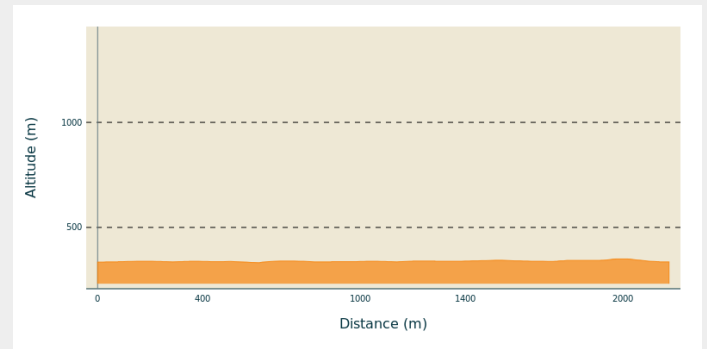
**Departure** : Tourist office

**Arrival** : Tourist office

**Markings** :  Discovery

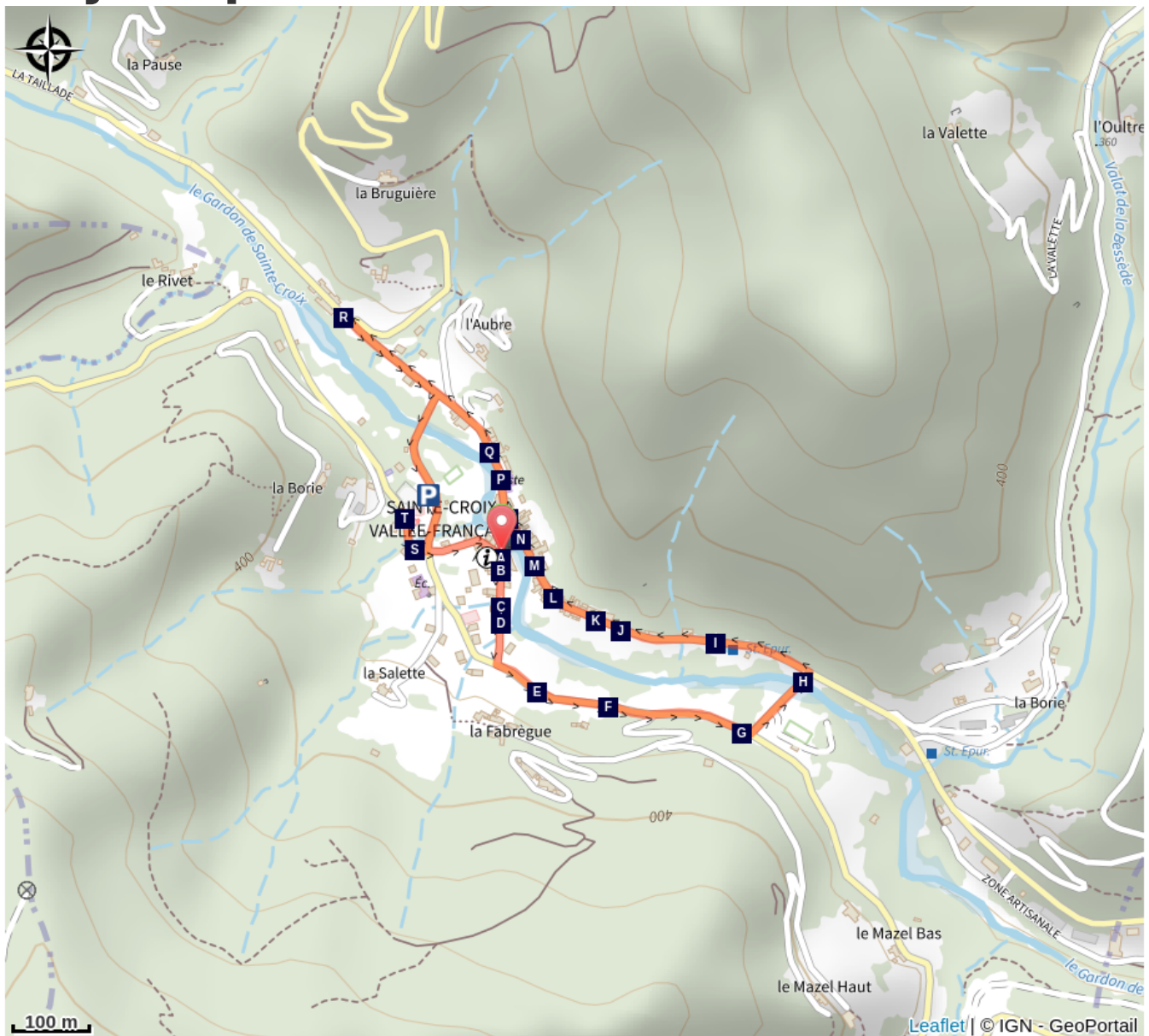
**Cities** : 1. Sainte-Croix-Vallée-Française

## Altimetric profile



Min elevation 332 m Max elevation 350 m

# On your path...



The little square (A)  
The still, l'estamaïre and the fountains. (C)  
Bancels and water (E)  
Protestant tombs (G)  
The stone-breaker (I)  
Café Gély and the fairs (K)  
Le Caïffa (M)

The grocers (B)  
Women (D)  
Recipes using chestnuts (F)  
The river (H)  
The montgolfière (J)  
Brandade (L)  
Professions of the olden days (N)

# All useful information

## **Advices**

To hear the oral history accounts in their entirety: either directly via a smartphone (QR code on the panels) or on audioguides available at the tourist office. Excerpts of the accounts are broadcast directly on the platform Destination Cévennes.

## **How to come ?**

### Access

D983 from Barre-des-Cévennes or Saint-Jean-du Gard to Sainte-Croix-Vallée-Française.

### Advised parking

Car park at the mairie (town hall)

## **Information desks**

### **Tourism office Des Cévennes au mont-Lozère, Sainte-Croix-Vallée-Française**

Mairie, 48110 Sainte-Croix-Vallée-Française

[info@cevennes-montlozere.com](mailto:info@cevennes-montlozere.com)

Tel : 04 66 45 81 94

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

## **Source**

Groupe mémoire vivante



Parc national des Cévennes

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

# On your path...

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## The little square (A)

### Marker 1

The Trail of Memories began with “Fifteen sessions of memory sifting initiated by the Mutualité sociale agricole, [after which] the participants began collecting oral history. Annie, Madeleine, Rémi told us about their Sainte-Croix of the 1930s...”

Encouraged by the town council’s trust, the group suggested a project to transmit oral history via a circuit in the village with works by 12 local artists evoking its economic and festive activities in situ. The trail was then expanded by 21 audio points of popular history, told by those who were there.

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## The grocers (B)

### Marker 2

The village’s grocers depended on distribution chains which had begun to develop in France in the late 19th century.

Economats du Centre and La Ruche had branches in Montpellier and Clermont-Ferrand which supplied them, initially by stagecoach, then by bus.

There was no excessive packaging in those days! Foodstuffs were sold in bulk: sugar, salt, pulses, etc., using a ladle; oil, wine and all non-food liquids (lamp oil) were poured out of cans.

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## The still, l'estamaire and the fountains. (C)

### Marker 3

Most families made their own wine. Every harvester had the right to have part of his production distilled at the still, having declared it to the Indirect Taxation Office. The allowance was for a maximum of 20 litres of brandy of 50°.

Unless inhabitants were lucky enough to have a spring on their land, they had to come to the right bank of the Gardon for drinking-water, either to the freshwater fountain or to the fountains on the little square. In 1933, an inhabitant donated her spring to the town council, which installed three standpipes in the village, including two on the left bank. The works were funded by a loan given by another inhabitant.

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## Women (D)

### Marker 4

While women, undeservedly, did not yet have their civic rights recognised – they did not gain the right to vote until 1944 – they were active. Young women often took positions in bourgeois households so that their families were no longer responsible for their upkeep. There, they learned to cook, sew and run a household. Others worked in the spinning mill. Once married, they often had large families (contraception and abortion being forbidden and punishable by imprisonment), which did not prevent them from helping their husbands on the farm or in the shop. They had to wait until 1980 for the status of co-farmer to be created.

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## Bancels and water (E)

### Marker 5

The fact that the Gardon was so close gave the village many advantages. There was no need for a wash-house; the gardens were irrigated by pumping water from the river or from wells. Parcels further away were irrigated using small channels (béals) that were dug out or built. These drew their water from a brook in which a deviation dam (païsière) had been built. The tiniest patch of land, which is today covered by trees and bushes, was used as a bancel – terraced cropland on the slopes. Shored up by drystone walls, these terraces made it possible to grow on flat land.

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## Recipes using chestnuts (F)

### Marker 6

*Brasucade*: fresh chestnuts are scored and roasted over a wood fire in a holed frying pan. You have to shake the pan regularly so they do not burn. Before eating, they were wrapped in newspaper for some time to facilitate the peeling. A child sat on top as if to hatch them, or else they were used for warming feet.

*Bajana*: After being dried in a *clède* (chestnut drying building), the chestnuts are put to soak in the evening, then cooked in water for about two hours the following day. They are served as a soup, either plain or diluted with milk or wine.

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## Protestant tombs (G)

### Marker 7

The Revocation of the Edict of Nantes (1685) was accompanied by discriminatory measures against Protestants (forbidding public office, access to Protestant churches and cemeteries). In response, clandestine cemeteries were created by the Protestants. Burials were carried out at night, often in cellars or in fields. A certain amount of tolerance had become the norm from 1760 onwards, but it was the Edict of Tolerance (1787) which legalised the existence of Protestant burial grounds.

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## The river (H)

### Marker 8

Be careful of the Gardon river's fits of anger during Cevenol episodes (heavy rainstorms). These gardonnades have deepened the riverbed by several metres. They also twice swept away the footbridges that were the only link between the left and right banks until 1970. Three wooden footbridges enabled pedestrians to cross the Gardon: one upstream of the village, near the spinning mill; one in the centre to access the gardens; and one downstream. They were solidly secured only at one end so that the floods would push them to the bank. This was known as when "the plank has turned".

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## The stone-breaker (I)

### Marker 9

Travel was mostly on foot, though biking was becoming popular. The biker who returned home without a puncture was lucky - studded shoes and overshoes were always losing their nails. Most roadways were gravelled. The bridges and highways agency, which was in charge of their upkeep, employed young men to get stones out of the river that the stone-breaker would then reduce to more or less small pieces, depending on needs. Municipal paths, which were the responsibility of town or village councils, were maintained by riverside inhabitants, who received a local-tax rebate for their days of service.

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## The montgolfière (J)

### Marker 10

The village fête took place over three days in July: Saturday on the little square, Sunday on the left bank and Monday at the village entrance, so that every café could benefit. It was organised by the local conscripts, men 20 years of age who had been declared fit by the draft board to join a regiment. Musicians – often two or three locals – played at the ball and during the tournée des fougasses (traditional sweet breads sold door to door to finance the fête) all over the municipality. A small montgolfière (hot air balloon) was released to close the fête.

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## Café Gély and the fairs (K)

### Marker 11

There were ten fairs a year, of varying importance. Since the village had no fairgrounds, animals were divided by category: sheep and goats “at the foot of the village”; piglets on the river banks. Farmers made their deals in the bistros. Women often participated in the patche (business negotiations), then went home with the money. Calixte Tinel bought goats from several dealers. At the end of the fair, he offered lollipops to the children who would help him to encaminer (guide) the herd out of the village. The fair stalls and games (Cevenol skittles, for example) stretched along the road and the little square.

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## Brandade (L)

### Marker 12

Until the late 19th century, food was dried and salted for preservation. Cod is a fish from the northern seas. Fishermen from that region fetched supplies of salt at the saltworks in Aigues-Mortes, where they swapped their fish for salt. The recipe for cod brandade was created around 1766. It consists of shredding the desalted and poached cod, adding olive oil and brandir the mixture. In Provençal, brandir means to stir, hence brandade.

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## Le Caïffa (M)

### Marker 13

The shop Le Caïffa was owned by Au Planteur de Caïffa, which was initially a coffee company. The manager criss-crossed the countryside with his cart bearing the shop's name to sell its products.

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## Professions of the olden days (N)

### Marker 14

As the seasons turned, the village would be visited by the pelharot, who collected rabbit pelts; the cadiéraire, who made and repaired chairs; and the estamaire, who melted tin to cover cutlery with. A couple of peddlers with suitcases full of lace, haberdashery items and household linen lodged at the hotel while criss-crossing the surrounding countryside on foot. Another emblematic figure of the day, Dr Atger, visited his distant patients on horseback. To retain the doctor, in 1920 the village council voted to award him an annual allowance of 350 francs.

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