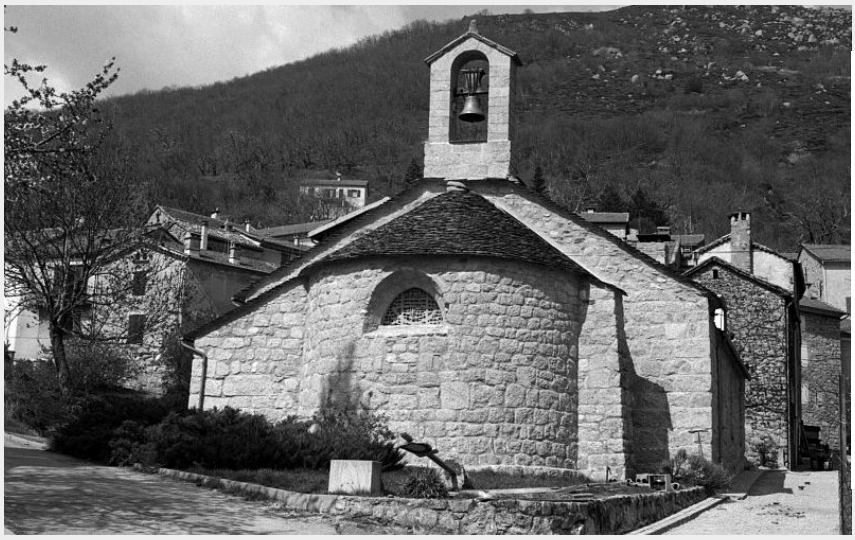
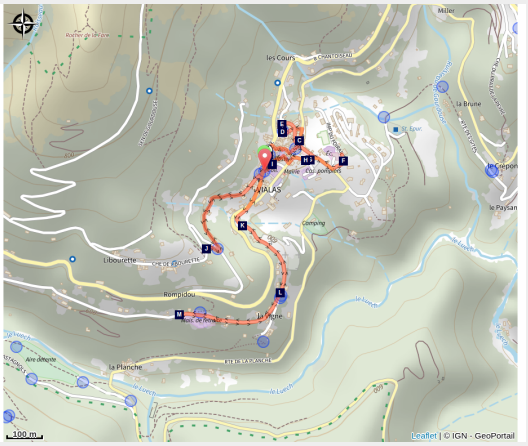
Vialas Trail

Mont Lozère



Temple de Vialas (© Guy Grégoire)



A short walk in the heart of the village of Vialas to discover the history of its districts, built around the temple and the silver-bearing lead mine.

This trail winds through the village of Vialas, which lies where granite meets schist. It traces the village's history, from the first inhabitants settling around the house of the Montclar family, local lords in the 14th century, to the present day. It highlights the importance of the silver-bearing lead mine in the development of this village, home to one of the oldest temples (Protestant churches) in the Cévennes.

Useful information

Practice : Discovery trails

Duration : 1 h 30

Length : 3.4 km

Trek ascent : 154 m

Difficulty : Very easy

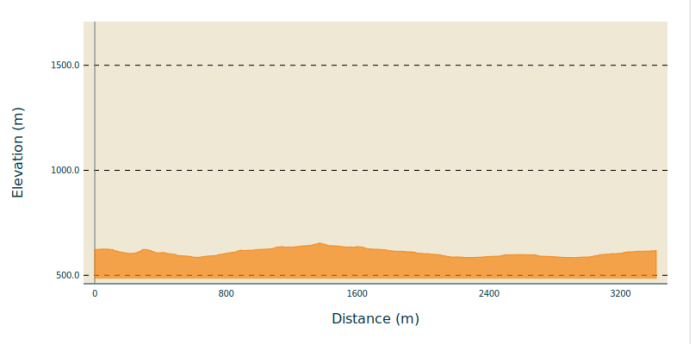
Type : Loop

Themes : Agriculture and livestock farming, History and culture

Trek

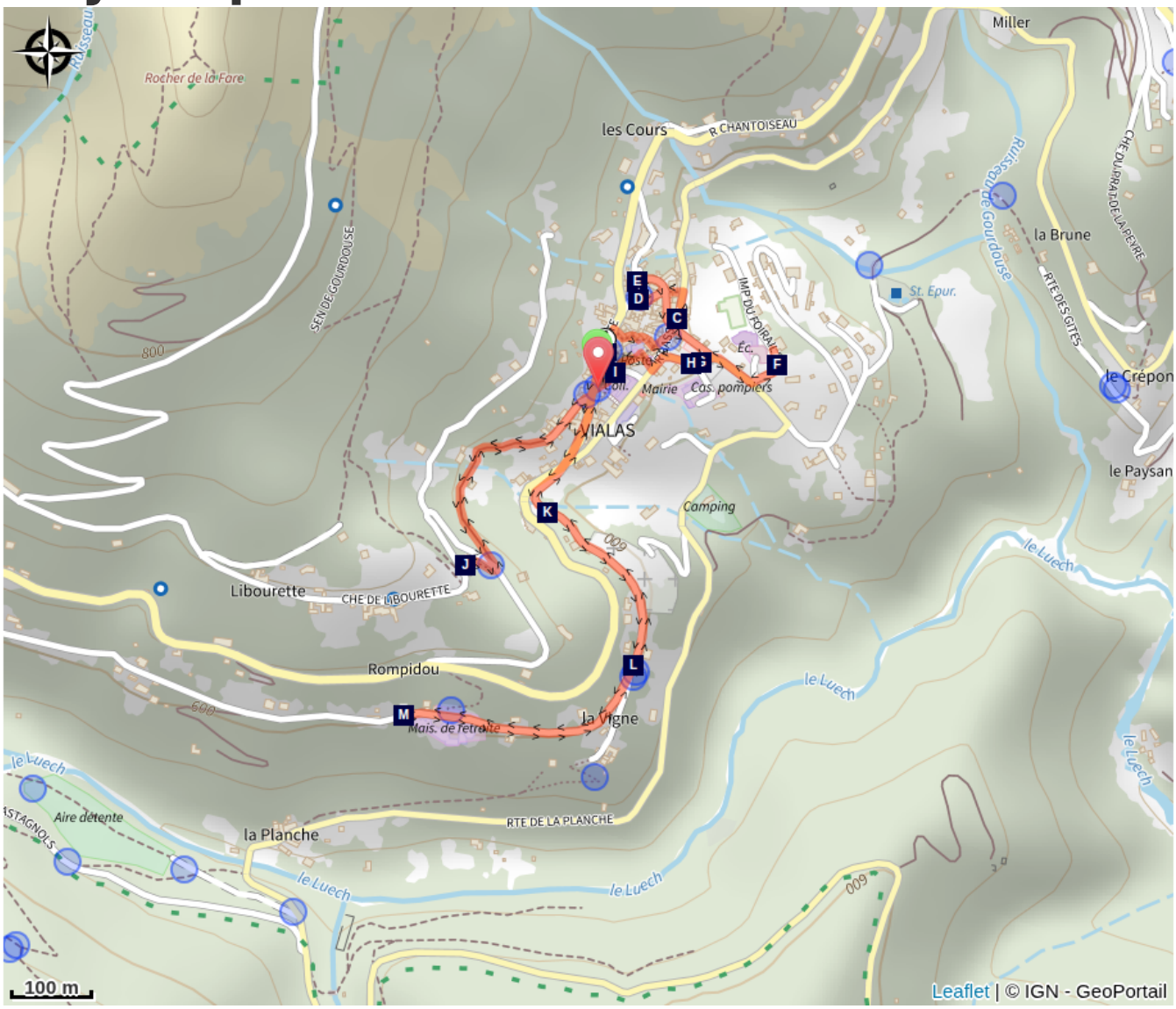
Departure : Tourist office
Arrival : Tourist office
Cities : 1. Vialas

Altimetric profile



Min elevation 584 m Max elevation 655 m

On your path...



The village and its history (A)
Water (B)
Foiral (C)
Terras (D)
Hôtel Chantoiseau (E)
Rocks (F)
Temple (G)
Vialas (H)
Lower secondary school (I)
Landscape architecture (J)
Esparnettes (K)
Evolution of the landscape (L)
Silver-bearing lead mine (M)

All useful information

Advices

A route through the village in thirteen panels, which you can discover as you move around the streets.

Urban trail: take care. Wear sturdy shoes: some interpretation points are at the end of a path that may be strewn with chestnut burrs in season.

How to come ?

Access

D 998 from Florac, passing through Pont-de-Montvert

Advised parking

Rue Principale

Information desks

Tourism office Des Cévennes au mont-Lozère, Vialas
1 place de l'ancienne gendarmerie,
48220 Vialas

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...



The village and its history (A)

At the end of the Middle Ages, Vialas was no more than a hamlet of Castagnols, a parish of the lordship of Montclar, whose castle occupied the heights of the Chastelas. In 1686, the assignment of the temple to Catholic worship and the abandonment of the church of Castagnols led to the parish seat being moved to Vialas. Until the early 20th century, economic life relied mainly on agriculture and the mining of silver-bearing lead.

Attribution : N Thomas

Water (B)

There are many structures for drawing off, carrying or storing water. These include horizontal galleries known as "mines", dug to capture springs; numerous irrigation channels, called béals, which divert water from streams; and reservoirs or "boutades"... Many water mills were used to extract walnut oil, to beat hemp, to grind rye and to shell (piser) chestnuts...

Foiral (C)

This is where, below the road, fairs are held five times a year between March and November... In this district you can also see "fenestrons" on the top floor of the houses: small windows that ventilated the magnaneries (silkworm nurseries), where silkworms were "raised". Mulberry leaves were hoisted up using pulleys.

Terras (D)

The first inhabitants of Vialas settled in this district around an older house occupied in the 14th century by the local lords: the Montclar family. As rain and the daily passage of flocks had eroded the area, a retaining wall was built above the present road in the 15th century, forming an earth platform (terras)... Today it is the square where the war memorial stands.

Hôtel Chantoiseau (E)

A former post house, this building was extended by its successive owners in the late 19th century to accommodate, in particular, the French and foreign visitors who came to consult the healer Cyprien Vignes. Since the 1960s, the hotel has taken its name from the nearby district of "Chantoiseau".

Rocks (F)

The granite is crossed by several small cracks, known as fractures (diaclases). Water seeped in through them and weathered the rock. Erosion carried off the crystals, forming rounded boulders known as granite boulder fields. The schists above were tilted upright and then eroded, leaving only the granite exposed in places. The commune of Vialas lies on the boundary between the two rocks, which gives rise to quite different landscapes and architecture.



Temple (G)

Vialas was originally part of the Catholic parish of Castagnols. Following the Edict of Nantes in 1598, Protestants were free to practise their religion. From 1612, the lord of La Fare granted them a plot of land on which to build the temple… In 1686, after the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes, the temple was assigned to Catholic worship, which kept the building in good condition. In 1804, the temple was returned to the Protestants, but the cemetery remained Catholic.

Attribution : nathalie.thomas

Vialas (H)

The temple (Protestant church): in 1612, the Protestant community had this church built at its own expense, several kilometres from Castagnols. Donated to the Catholic community before the Edict of Nantes was revoked, it thus escaped the destruction meted out to Cevenol temples. The Protestants got their church back in 1804.
The secondary school: in 1889, after the so-called Jules Ferry Laws were passed, the primary school with its two classes was completed by a secondary school. This was the first ever in Lozère. In 2005, the establishment, now a boarding school, welcomed 60 pupils from all over the region.

Lower secondary school (I)

As early as 1886, the municipal council planned to create a school complex comprising a nursery class, a primary school for boys, one for girls, and a supplementary course to take in children from the whole canton after their primary school leaving certificate (certificat d'études). This supplementary course became a lower secondary school (collège) in 1976.



Landscape architecture (J)

Supporting terraces called bancels or faïsses, where fruit, vegetables, rye and chestnut trees were grown, these walls held back the soil and channelled the runoff water. Higher up, steep meadows mown by hand provided the hay that was brought down to the hamlets in the 19th century by means of cables.

Attribution : © Olivier Prohin

Esparnettes (K)

This district stands on the site of the "terres paranettes", that is, uncultivated land that once formed part of the château estate. With the exploitation of the mines, the population grew: houses replaced gardens and were built high. The present-day district extends from the start of the street to the church.

Evolution of the landscape (L)

The diagram of the village's development shown on the panel was produced by comparing the compoix (old cadastre record from the 14th to the 17th century), the Napoleonic land registers of 1815 and 1830 and the current land register...



Silver-bearing lead mine (M)

The first mining is thought to date back to the Gallo-Roman period. The seam of silver-bearing lead was rediscovered in 1781 and worked until 1894. The ore was first transported to the Villefort works via the Col de Montclar pass. Then in 1827, a smelter was set up in Vialas to process the ore on site.

Attribution : @ Olivier Prohin