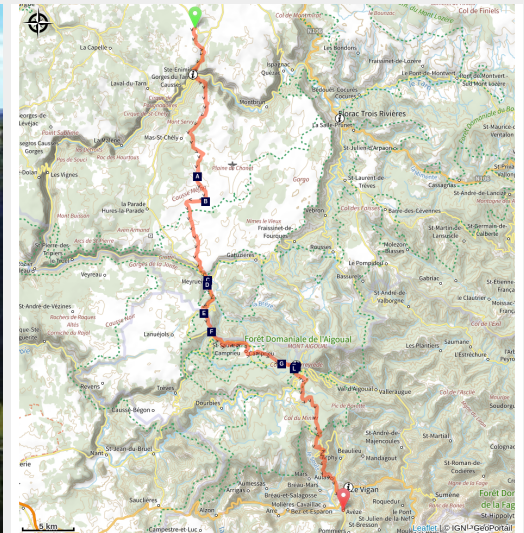


The Saint-Guilhem-le-Désert trail

Causses Gorges - Gorges du Tarn Causses



Topo Saint-Guilhem-le-Désert (Olivier Prohin)



This magnificent 240-km-long trail with its wealth of heritage is marked by many crucifixes and links the former monastery Dômerie d'Aubrac to the Abbey of Gellone in Saint-Guilhem-le-Désert.

From Antiquity onwards, this trail was used as a drovers' road and trade route to link the Aubrac uplands to the garrigues (arid shrubland) of the Languedoc. It leads past a stunning variety of architecture and landscapes. Hikers or pilgrims coming from the plateaux to the gorges, from the Aigoual massif to the Cirque de Navacelles, will complete their long journey in the picturesque village which gave the trail its name!

Useful information

Practice : Hiking on foot

Duration : 4 days

Length : 79.8 km

Trek ascent : 2462 m

Difficulty : Medium



Type : Roaming

Themes : Architecture and village, Causses and Cévennes / UNESCO, Fauna and flora, History and culture

Trek

Departure : Champerboux

Arrival : Avèze

Markings :  GR (long-distance hiking path)  GRP (regional long-distance hiking path)

Cities : 1. Gorges du Tarn Causses

2. Mas-Saint-Chély

3. Hures-la-Parade

4. Meyrueis

5. Lanuéjols

6. Saint-Sauveur-Camprieu

7. Val-d'Aigoual

8. Dourbies

9. Bréau-Mars

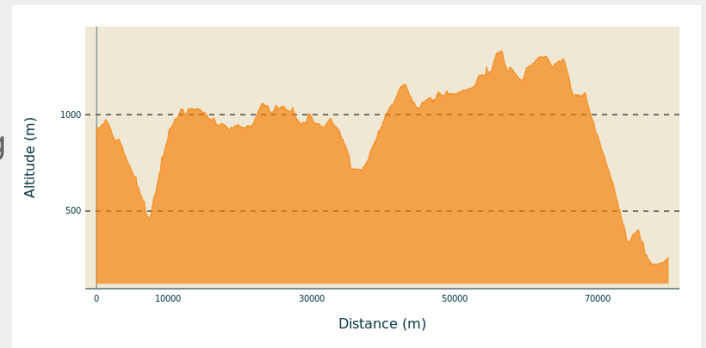
10. Arphy

11. Aulas

12. Le Vigan

13. Avèze

Altimetric profile



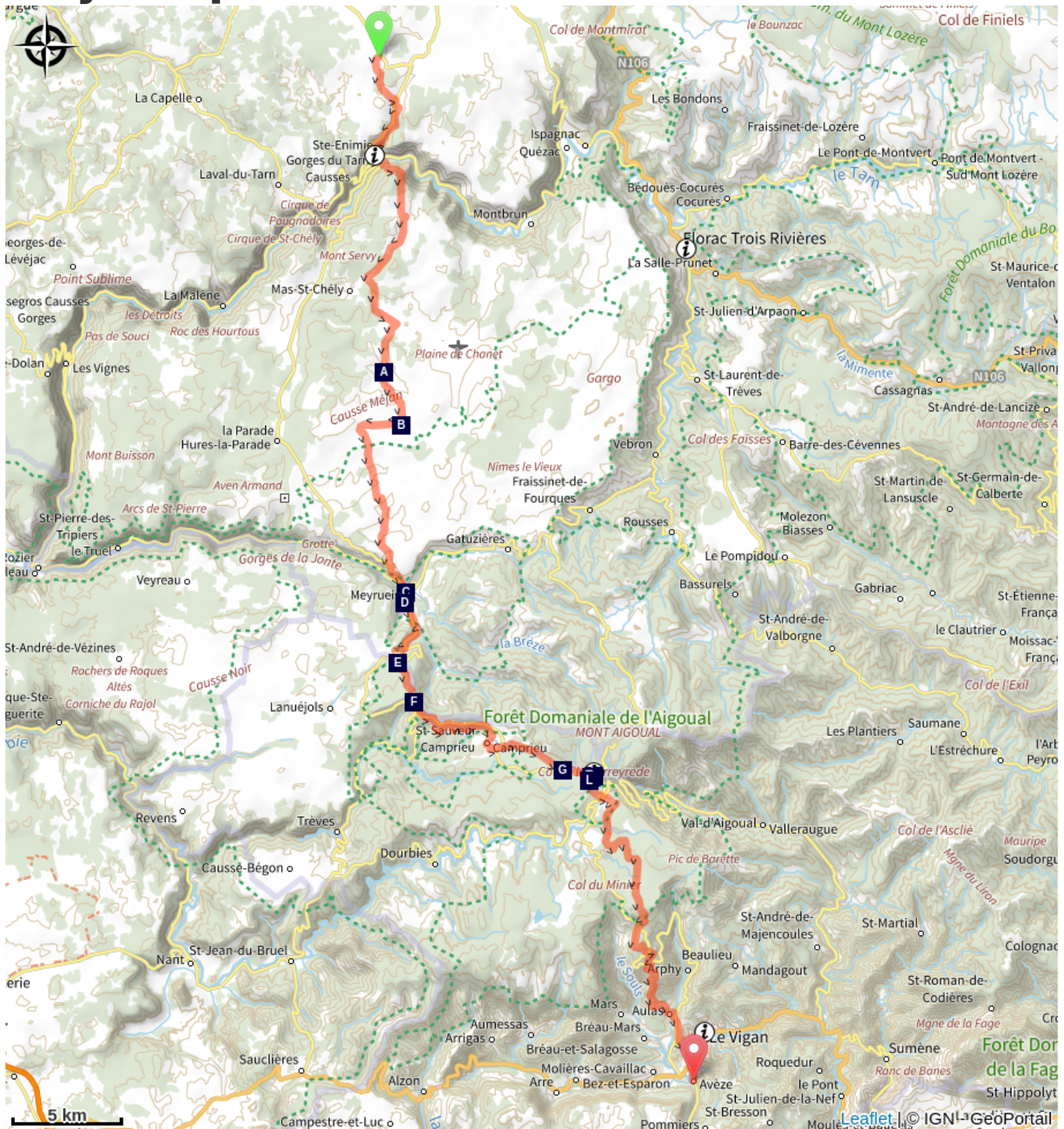
Min elevation 224 m Max elevation 1330 m

Only the section of this GR® [long-distance hiking path] which crosses the territory of the Cévennes National Park, from Champerboux to Le Vigan, is described here.

You can find the whole itinerary in the topographic guidebook *Le Chemin de Saint-Guilhem-le-Désert* (ref. 4834), published by the French hikers' federation (FFRandonnée) and available for purchase in the Maisons du tourisme et du Parc [tourist office and National Park information centre] the online shop www.cevennes-parcnational.fr, bookshops, sports shops and at <https://boutique.ffrandonnee.fr>.

All information is also available on the website of the association "Les Amis du Chemin de Saint Guilhem": <http://www.chemin-st-guilhem.fr/accueil/>

On your path...



- ▲ Le Buffre cross (A)
- ▲ Terrace (C)
- Forest management (E)
- ▲ Notre-Dame-du Bonheur (G)
- The association "Terres d'Aigoual" (I)
- Productive forest (K)
- ▲ The church of Hures (B)
- ▲ The village of Meyrueis (D)
- ▲ Pierre plantée (Pierre plantée) (F)
- ▲ La Serreyrède (H)
- ▲ From beech copse to mature plantation (J)
- ▲ Irregular forest (L)

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

NB: For various reasons, the waymarked path may differ from that shown in the topographic guidebook: please follow the waymarks on the trail. Make sure your equipment is appropriate for several days of hiking as well as the day's weather conditions. Remember that the weather changes quickly in the mountains. Take enough water, wear sturdy shoes and put on a hat. Please close all gates and barriers after yourself.

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 & national parc'house

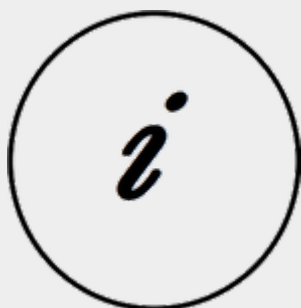
Col de la Serreyrède, 30570 Val d'Aigoual

office-du-tourisme-cause@wanadoo.fr

Tel : 04 67 82 64 67

<https://www.sudcevennes.com>

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



Tourism office Cévennes and Navacelles, Le Vigan

Maison de pays, place du Marché, BP 21, 30120 Le Vigan

contact@sudcevennes.com

Tel : 04 67 81 01 72

<https://sudcevennes.com/>



Tourism office Cévennes Gorges du Tarn, Sainte-Enimie

village, 48210 Sainte-Enimie

contact@cevennes-gorges-du-tarn.com

Tel : 04 66 45 01 14

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



Source



Comité départemental de la randonnée pédestre 48

<http://lozere.ffrandonnee.fr/>



Comité départemental de la randonnée pédestre Gard

<http://gard.ffrandonnee.fr/>



Fédération française de la randonnée pédestre

<https://www.ffrandonnee.fr/>

On your path...



⚠ Le Buffre cross (A)

This is one of the oldest and most handsome crosses in Lozère. On its cylindrical pedestal (12th c.), which is set on three steps, two persons face each other on either side of a holy water basin representing a human face. The basin is carved into the pedestal and also projects from it. The more recent actual cross is believed to date from the 18th century. Le Buffre cross is one of many that dot the Saint Guilhem route, to both guide and encourage pilgrims.

Attribution : nathalie.thomas



🏰 The church of Hures (B)

The church was founded in the 11th century by the Benedictine monks of Sainte-Enimie to expand their arable land. It was built in four stages:

- The choir in the early and the nave in the late 12th century,
- the right-hand chapel in the 14th century,
- the left-hand chapel in the 18th century.

Each enlargement of the building corresponded to an increase in the Causse population. The nave has a beautiful window. To the right of the entrance is a funereal recess, which probably belonged to a local dignitary and in which were deposited a number of bones removed from the buried body.

Attribution : nathalie.thomas



Terrace (C)

Throughout the climb, you will see abandoned former crop terraces. A few grapevines have persisted since local wine-growing came to an end. They bear witness to the fact that the slopes around these hamlets and villages were once cultivated and planted with fruit trees and vines. Terraces like these were the only way for the valley's inhabitants to have flat areas with deep soil suitable for growing.

Attribution : © Nathalie Thomas



The village of Meyrueis (D)

The geographical location of Meyrueis is remarkable, nestled between the Aigoual massif, the causee Noir and the causee Méjean. Here the Camin Ferrat crosses the Jonte river. Pilgrims and transhumant flocks of sheep stopped in the village before continuing their journey. Many merchants came to its large fairs. Stroll through the lanes and relive the flourishing past of the belle époque. From the prosperous bourgeois residences to the marketplaces, everything still speaks of the past! Sheep's wool from the plateaux was woven here, silk was spun. There was intense economic activity. In the 17th century, Meyrueis became a centre for hat-making. By 1860, 17 milliners were busy making hats for Languedoc and Provence, beautiful and exceptionally high-quality hats made from felted wool and silk bourette. Discontinued as of about 1920, this activity left room for tourism, which today animates the village.

Attribution : Béatrice Galzin



Forest management (E)

The Mont Aigoual forest.
The wood harvested here comes from a forest that was reforested from the late 19th century onwards, after a period of overgrazing. This forest begins, grows and dies like all living beings. The job of foresters is to manage and support its development while respecting the laws of nature. They harvest trees before they die to make room for young trees. These tree trunks supply an entire economic sector, from the lumberjack to the skidder operator, the saw operator and the carpenter or cabinetmaker. Wood also accompanies you throughout your lives, from your cradle, furniture, woodwork and the wooden frame of your house to your coffin.

Attribution : Gaël Karczewski



Pierre plantée (Pierre plantée) (F)

Since ancient times, stones have stood along the Camin Ferrat: directional markers indicating a crossroads. Above all, they marked the boundaries of two parishes. Since the creation of Departments in 1790, they have outlined the border between Gard and Lozère.

Attribution : Béatrice Galzin



⚠ Notre-Dame-du Bonheur (G)

This Romanesque monastery was built in the 11th and 12th centuries by the rich Lord of Roquefeuil and Mandagout, with the noble intention of turning it into a “hospital for the poor”. He allowed the monks to reap the fruits and revenue of the land. In return, the villagers paid him sheep, pigs, poultry, wine and cheese. He also charged the transhumant herds on his vast estate pasture fees. The path that passed through this peatbog linked Languedoc to the Gévaudan. A snowstorm bell weighing 200 kg would ring in fog or blizzards to help merchants, peddlers, itinerant workers, farmers etc. find their way to safety. The monastery had six canons, the last of whom was forced to leave during the French Revolution. An association dedicated to preserving the Abbey of Notre-Dame du Bonheur is working to restore it.

Attribution : nathalie.thomas



La Serreyrède (H)

Before 1861, the house at the Col de la Serreyrède was inhabited by two families of farmers. They owned some livestock and had a vegetable garden, whose terraces you can still see above the La Caumette track. From 1861 on, the farm was inhabited by a forest ranger. It was only bought by the state body Eaux et Forêts in 1883, to be turned into a forester's house. It became one of Georges Fabre's headquarters during the reforestation of the Aigoual massif. The Cévennes National Park, tourism office and Terres d'Aigoual growers have now joined forces to revive La Serreyrède with the help of the Communauté de Communes Causses Aigoual Cévennes - Terres solidaires.

Attribution : © Jacques de Joly



The association "Terres d'Aigoual" (I)

The Cévennes National Park rents out part of the building to the association, enabling local farmers to sell their products directly to the public. The association brings together farmers who wish to promote what they produce and share their know-how. They also enjoy sharing their vision of farming- high quality produce and products,

- human-sized farms,
- mutual aid.

Come and discover their products!

Attribution : © Nathalie Thomas

🌲 From beech copse to mature plantation (J)

Marker 1

Around 1850, before reforestation began, the inhabitants of the Cévennes were using local wood resources on a massive scale for heating and in industry, especially spinning-mills. Gradually, only a few beech copses remained, which were cut every 25 to 40 years. Grazing by tens of thousands of sheep further reduced the herbaceous plant cover. Much weakened, the plant cover was then also subjected to heavy precipitation, the so-called Cevenol episodes. It is against this backdrop that the lengthy work of the foresters began. To reduce risks and establish a lasting forest cover, the first technique was to make use of what was already present by converting the disused copses into mature plantations.

🌲 Productive forest (K)

Marker 2

Another method of creating a durable forest cover is to plant or sow. This work is carried out either on bare soil or among existing tree stands. The Aigoual reforestation programme was a gigantic effort, requiring 900,000 days of work, the planting of 60 million conifers and 7 million deciduous trees, and sowing of 38 tonnes of seeds. Spruces and pines, which can be planted in full sunlight and grow quite quickly, were widely used. Under the forest canopy, preference was given to firs.

Irregular forest (L)

This tree population consists of trees of very different diameters, ages and heights. Species are mixed: mainly pine, but also beech, rowan and whitebeam. This is an irregular mature forest, a forestry dynamic that is interesting for several reasons: it creates permanent forest cover; resistance to soil erosion; better resilience against storms or parasite attacks; regular production, etc. In the small clearing to the left of the path, the sunlight now penetrating to the forest floor has made natural regeneration of beech and fir possible, ensuring the renewal of the forest.