

GR® 670, the Urban V trail

Causses Gorges - Mende



Topo guide, le chemin d'Urban V (Parc national)



This 320-km-long hike in the footsteps of the “Blessed” Pope Urban V enables hikers to discover, from Nasbinals to Avignon, the life and work of Guillaume Grimoard.

This trail showcases sites that are steeped in history, have remarkable natural and cultural heritage, and are charged with spirituality. The itinerary takes hikers from the Aubrac to the Popes’ Palace in Avignon, via the Tarn gorge, the Bougès massif, the northern Cévennes and the Gardon valleys, to discover an exceptional man!

Useful information

Practice : Hiking on foot

Duration : 8 days

Length : 147.2 km

Trek ascent : 5843 m

Difficulty : Medium


Type : Roaming

Themes : Agriculture and livestock farming, Architecture and village, History and culture

Trek

Departure : Mende

Arrival : Anduze

Markings :  GR (long-distance hiking path)

Cities : 1. Mende

2. Saint-Bauzile

3. Lanuéjols

4. Saint-Étienne-du-Valdonnez

5. Les Bondons

6. Ispagnac

7. Gorges du Tarn Causses

8. Florac Trois Rivières

9. Bédouès-Cocurès

10. Pont de Montvert - Sud Mont Lozère

11. Cassagnas

12. Saint-André-de-Lancize

13. Saint-Privat-de-Vallongue

14. Saint-Hilaire-de-Lavit

15. Saint-Germain-de-Calberte

16. Saint-Étienne-Vallée-Française

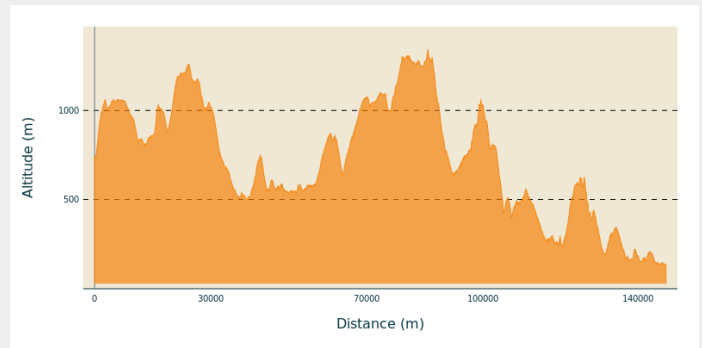
17. Saint-Jean-du-Gard

18. Mialet

19. Générargues

20. Anduze

Altimetric profile



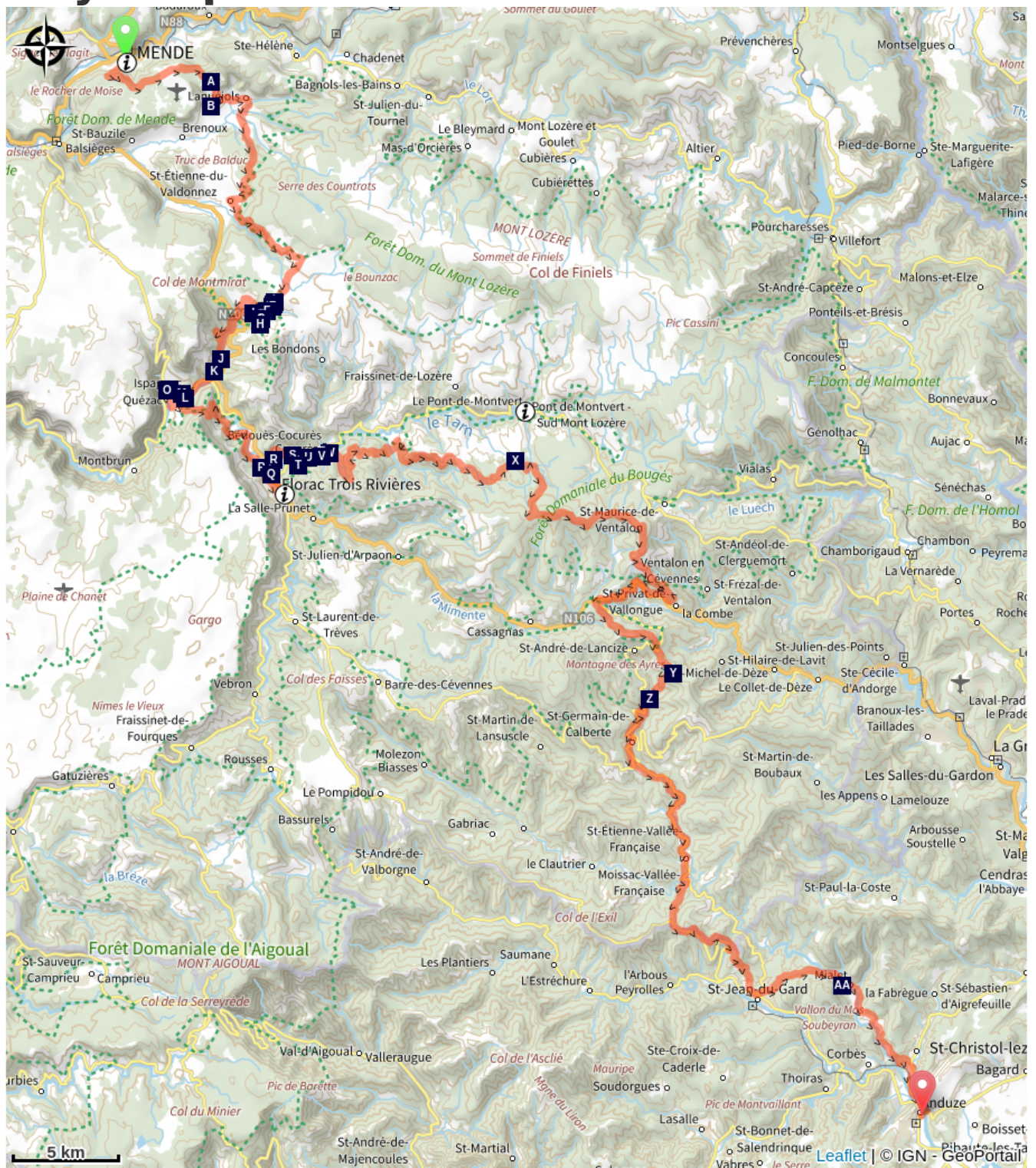
Min elevation 127 m Max elevation 1343 m














Only the section of this GR® [long-distance hiking path] which crosses the territory of the Cévennes National Park, between Mende and Anduze, is described here.

You can find the whole itinerary in the topographic guidebook *Le Chemin Urbain V* (ref. 670), published by the French hikers' federation (Fédération française de randonnée pédestre) and available for purchase in the Maisons du tourisme et du Parc [joint tourist office and National Park information centre], the online shop at www.cevennes-parcnational.fr, bookshops, sports shops and at <https://boutique.ffrandonnee.fr>.

The association Les Amis du Bienheureux Pape Urbain V can assist you and give you all the necessary information for a successful hike: www.randonnee-urbain-v.com

On your path...



-  Chapieu farm (A)
-  Puech d'Allègre and Puech de Mariette (C)
-  Panoramic viewpoint (E)
-  Mines and menhirs (G)
-  Constructing landscapes (I)
-  Pradines mill (K)
The vintners of Ispagnac (M)
-  Château de Chapieu (B)
-  Dolmen at Les Combes (D)
-  Chabusse (F)
-  Les Combettes (H)
-  The river Bramont (J)
-  Ispagnac church (L)
-  Quézac Bridge (N)

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 behind you.

How to come ?

Transports

Bus line 251 Mende - Florac

Bus line 252 Florac - Alès

Bus line 112 Saint Jean du Gard - Anduze

<https://lio.laregion.fr/>

Information desks

Office de tourisme Des Cévennes au mont Lozère

le Quai, 48220 Le Pont de Montvert sud mont-Lozère

info@cevennes-montlozere.com

Tel : 04 66 45 81 94

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



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 office Coeur de Lozère, Mende

BP 83, place du Foirail, 48000 Mende

mendetourisme@ot-mende.com

Tel : 04 66 94 00 23

<https://www.mende-coeur-lozere.fr>



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...



Chapieau farm (A)

"These buildings, which were the headquarters of a very large Causse farm, are laid out around a central courtyard. The main building faces south and consists of two floors of living quarters above a sheepfold. Two barns under vaulted granges that are 22 m long form the wings." (A. Boemare)

Attribution : © Guy Grégoire



Château de Chapieau (B)

"This château is the oldest in the Tournel barony. The Chapieau site is a diverticulum of the Causse de Mende, with steep slopes on three sides. To defend it, one simply had to bar the passage linking it to the plateau. It is likely that an oppidum preceded the castle from the Iron Age onwards. (...) Was it finally razed to the ground on Richelieu's orders, like so many others? In any case, it is nothing but ruins from the 17th century on." (A. Boemare)

Attribution : © Nathalie Thomas



Puech d'Allègre and Puech de Mariette (C)

Marker 2

These natural eccentricities with their generous proportions have reminded some of female forms. Were they at the origin of a fertility cult connected also with the menhirs and their phallic silhouettes? According to one legend, it was Gargantua who created the puechs by scraping dirt off his clogs. Geologically, the Cham des Bondons is part of the Causse de Sauveterre, to which it is connected by the Col de Montmirat pass. The limestone cham sits atop the granite bedrock of the Mont Lozère and offers remarkable landscapes, notably the Eschino d'Aze with its donkey's-back appearance, and the puechs, buttes of fossil-rich black marl.

Attribution : © Jean-Pierre Malafosse



⚠ Dolmen at Les Combes (D)

Marker 3

Of the megalithic monuments, dolmens (megalithic portal tombs) tend to be better-known than menhirs. They were linked to funeral practices from 3500 BC (end of the Neolithic) to 200 BC. The dead were deposited in these collective tombs alongside personal objects. Funeral practices offer precious clues for understanding the beliefs and organisation of ancient societies. These monuments are often located in spots that dominate the surroundings, and would certainly have reminded the living of the dead.

Attribution : © Eddie Balaye



⚠ Panoramic viewpoint (E)

Marker 4

Attribution : © Olivier Prohin



⚠ Chabusse (F)

Marker 5

The Chabusse berm, which cuts abruptly across the slope, has three handsome menhirs and a fourth modest and incomplete one, and also bears other traces of successive settlement. Dr Charles Morel, who published the first menhir inventory of the Cham des Bondons, reported that a large axe made out of polished granite was found here. This, in addition to other objects found more recently (shaped flints, arrowheads, scrapers, etc.), shows that the area was inhabited at the time of the menhirs. On the same site, excavations of two tumuli uncovered human remains from multiple burials and/or bone burials, along with objects dating from the Bronze Age to the beginning of the Roman occupation.

Attribution : © Eddie Balaye



🌐 Mines and menhirs (G)

Marker 6

The region is scattered with geological faults, which are responsible for the presence of ores. Locally there is predominantly barite, but also zinc and silver-bearing lead. Scientific analyses carried out in local peat bogs demonstrate that lead was being mined 2,500 years ago and again a thousand years later. Recently a uranium deposit was mined in the municipality of Les Bondons. The fact that menhirs stand just above the seam has led some people to associate megalithism with the hypothesis of magnetism, though there is no scientific proof for this. Recent research has shown that the choice of location for menhirs is mainly linked to the way territory was organised at the end of the Neolithic.

Attribution : © Jean-Pierre Malafosse

🏠 Les Combettes (H)



Marker 7

The village of Les Combettes is built in a natural depression, as its name indicates (combette = little valley). The exhibition on display in the communal oven building emphasises how late Mont Lozère was first settled. By the Upper Neolithic (around 3500 BC), the region of the Grands Causses was widely settled, following a population increase. The first agro-pastoral communities formed, creating farms and villages and clearing land to grow cereals and breed livestock, whilst still hunting and gathering. These groups are behind local megalithism. The age of metals put an end to the practice of erecting menhirs, but dolmens were in use for a while longer.

Attribution : © Olivier Prohin



🏔️ Constructing landscapes (I)

Marker 8

Did the menhir-builders move in the same landscape that we see today? Current archaeological knowledge does not allow us to reproduce with great accuracy what the landscape of Mont Lozère's slopes would have looked like in the late Neolithic. Yet the birth of agriculture and livestock rearing in the Neolithic without doubt opened a new chapter in the relationship between humans and nature. For the first time in their history, populations designed the landscape by dotting it with monuments, but more importantly by developing agricultural and pastoral activities. Today – 5,000 years later – human interventions are carried out based on Natura 2000 measures, which focus notably on keeping open spaces intact and maintaining agro-pastoral activities.

Attribution : © Guy Grégoire



🌊 The river Bramont (J)

There are actually two Bramonts! The one that you are cycling along, and another Bramont, which flows north of the Cham des Bondons. As you go through Les Combettes, you are at the foot of this limestone plateau, whose highest point is at about 1,200 m. But under the plateau flows another river: the underground Bramont, discovered in 1967. It takes some of the water of the Bramont du Lot (north) and empties it into the Bramont du Tarn (south)! The old-timers knew this and understood that by blocking, unblocking or diverting the waters draining out of the northern river, they could vary the rate of flow of the resurgence.

Attribution : © jean Pierre Malafosse

🏰 Pradines mill (K)

This is one of the eight watermills that used to operate in the Ispagnac valley. Two were on the Tarn, the others on its tributaries. These mills produced wheat flour and chestnut flour as well as oil.



Ispagnac church (L)

St-Peter's Church in Ispagnac is one of the finest examples of Romanesque architecture in Gévaudan. Built in the 12th century, it is dedicated to Saint Peter and Saint Paul. The understated facade of this bulky-looking building has a simple gate with three semi-circular arches topped by a rose window that lets light into the nave. Once inside, you discover a simple and airy architecture. A sound-and-light show helps you to explore. To get the fullest impression of the architecture, you need to leave the building and walk around it to see the apse and its décor.

Attribution : cevennes-gorges-du-tarn



The vintners of Ispagnac (M)

In 2003, Sylvain Gachet, from Savoy, reintroduced grapevines to Ispagnac and Florac, planting six hectares of terraced land. On soils of clay/limestone and schist, he attempted to breathe new life into the Domaine de Gabalie. In 2006, Elisabeth Boyé and Bertrand Servières set up as vintners in the Tarn gorge, also under the stimulus package bringing vineyards back to the valley. They cleared the land of the bartas (brambles) which had invaded almost all the parcels, and rebuilt the dry-stone walls before planting almond trees, vine peaches and five hectares of grapevines: the Domaine des Cabridelles was born. The winemakers share a cooperative cellar in Ispagnac, which is also a sales outlet. Why not make a short stop to try the wines (the cellar is next to the car park by the state school (école publique)).

Attribution : cevennes-gorges-du-tarn



Quézac Bridge (N)

This bridge crossing the river Tarn gives access to the village of Quézac, located on the left bank. Around 1350, Pope Urban V decided to fund its construction to facilitate pilgrims' access to the collegiate church of Notre-Dame de Quézac. It was finished in the 15th century. Its history is punctuated by partial destruction in floods, and by more or less solid rebuilding. It became a listed monument on 27 August 1931.

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