

Across the Massif Central by mountain-bike

Mont Lozère - Mont Lozère et Goulet



Logo GTMC VTT (nathalie.thomas)



The trail has a total length of 1,390 km stretching from the Morvan to the Mediterranean! It crosses a wide palette of scenery, geology and heritage that you can discover at your own rhythm by mountain-bike or electrically assisted mountain-bike, with friends or family.

You will cross breath-taking scenery, from the granite uplands of the Mont Lozère to the majestic forests of the Aigoual massif via the vast limestone plateau of the Causse Méjean, which is cut through by the spectacular Tarn and Jonte gorges ! Discover the fauna and flora of these mountain ranges and meet the men and women who live there.

Useful information

Practice : Bike

Duration : 5 days

Length : 192.5 km

Trek ascent : 5802 m

Difficulty : Difficult

Type : Roaming

Themes : Architecture and village, Causse and Cévennes / UNESCO, Fauna and flora

Trek

Departure : Bagnols-les-Bains

Arrival : Le Vigan

Markings : 🚩 GTMC VTT

Cities : 1. Mont Lozère et Goulet

2. Chadenet

3. Lanuéjols

4. Saint-Étienne-du-Valdonnez

5. Les Bondons

6. Pont de Montvert - Sud Mont Lozère

7. Cubières

8. Bédouès-Cocurès

9. Florac Trois Rivières

10. Gorges du Tarn Causses

11. Ispagnac

12. Mas-Saint-Chély

13. Hures-la-Parade

14. Gatuzières

15. Vebron

16. Fraissinet-de-Fourques

17. Rousses

18. Bassurels

19. Val-d'Aigoual

20. Meyrueis

21. Saint-Sauveur-Camprieu

22. Dourbies

23. Bréau-Mars

24. Arphy

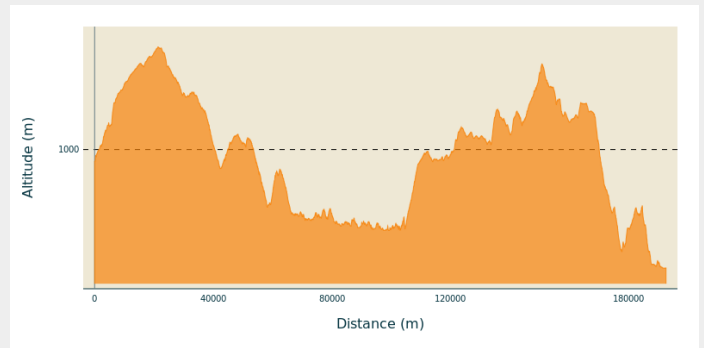
25. Molières-Cavaillac

26. Bez-et-Esparon

27. Avèze

28. Le Vigan

Altimetric profile



Min elevation 224 m Max elevation 1670 m

Only the section of the trail which crosses the territory of the Cévennes National Park is described here, from Bagnols-les-Bains to Le Vigan.

The suggested route can be covered in five stages:

1 - Bagnols-les-Bains/Pont-de-Montvert-Sud-Mont-Lozère,

2 - Pont-de-Montvert-Sud-Mont-Lozère/Sainte-Enimie:

(1) on electrically assisted MTB, take the road towards Grizac,

(2) at the activity centre, cross the Tarn and head to Sainte-Enimie on the road,

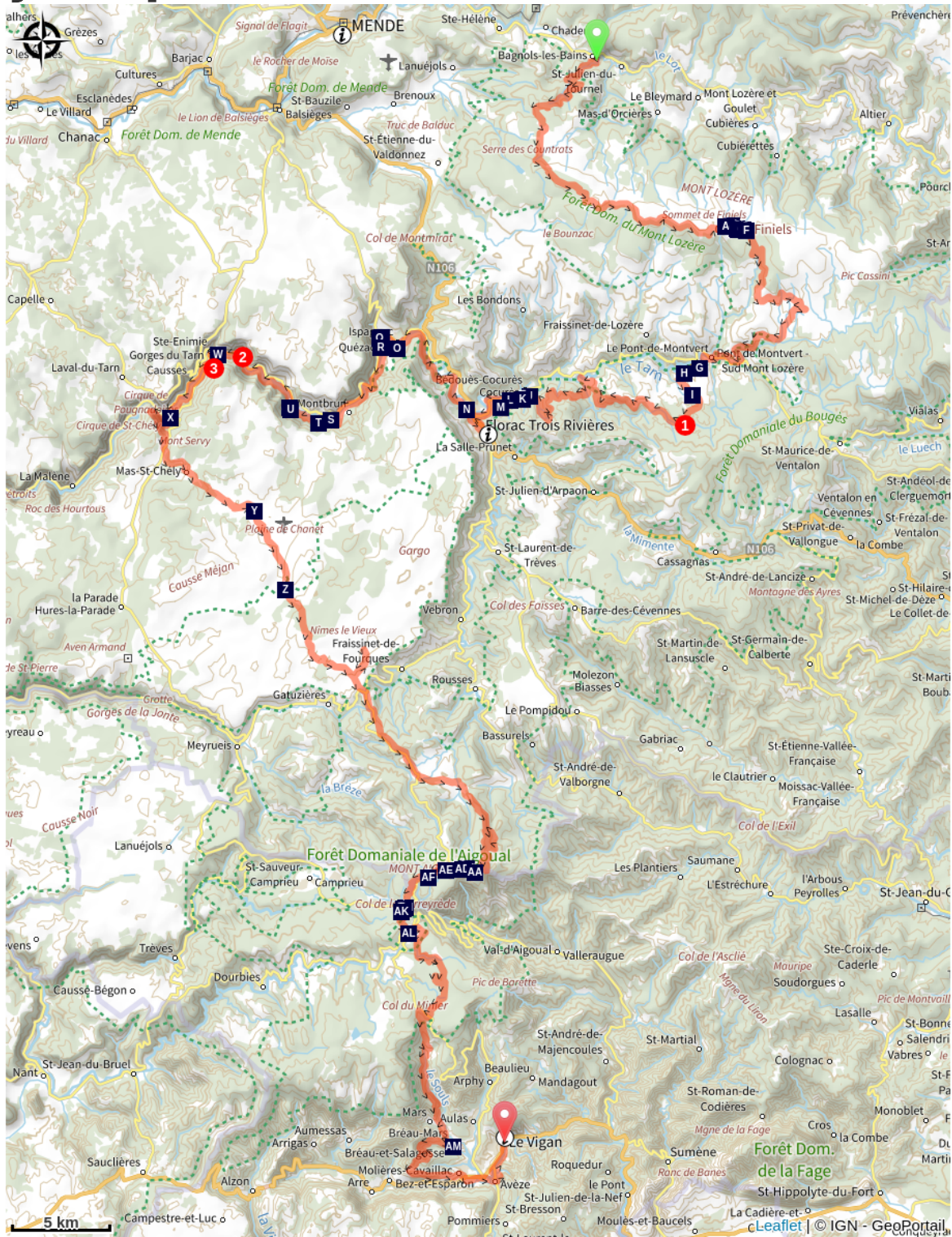
3 - Sainte-Enimie/L'Hom: **(3)** for a technical section on the way to St-Chély du Tarn, you can climb to the Col de Coperlac pass from Sainte-Enimie on the RD 986 road,















4 - L'Hom/l'Espérou,

5 - l'Espérou/Le Vigan.

You can find the whole route on the website: www.la-gtmc.com

On your path...



-  The prairie's botanical rivals (A)
-  Birds (C)
-  Small grassland creatures (E)
-  Natural evolution of beech and oak groves (G)
-  Granite boulders (I)
-  Fages Sawmill (K)
-  Saint-Saturnin chapel (M)
-  An endangered landscape (B)
-  Low-growing plants and shrubs (D)
-  Subalpine short-grass prairie (F)
-  The Tarn valley and its landscapes shaped by human activity (H)
-  The river Tarn (J)
-  The brown trout (*Salmo trutta fario*) (L)
-  The iron-rich water of Salce (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

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. Slow down in farms and hamlets. Be careful around livestock.

How to come ?

Transports

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

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 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 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



Parc national des Cévennes

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

On your path...

The prairie's botanical rivals (A)

Marker 4.

Below you, vast areas have been planted with pines and other conifers. The interest and regional and European rarity of short-grass prairies mean that they must be clearly demarcated from the forest. In fact, natural seeding of pines, carried onto the prairie by the south wind, has created a new forest. This plant dynamic, which is entirely logical at the altitude, gives the forest the upper hand over the prairie. The European Union is currently helping local participants to fell these new trees so as to protect the prairie. On your return leg, you will see other indigenous tree species which could encroach on the prairie in the same way (beech, birch).



An endangered landscape (B)

Marker 3

This vast expanse of short-grass prairie, an area of historical and natural heritage, is endangered today. The surface area of this relic has been much reduced over the past few decades. While the summits are made stable by the prairie, the mountain side presents evidence of erosion (denuded rocks) that is the result of foresters' attempts at reforestation. On the ledge, pines are starting to establish themselves at the expense of the prairie. These zones have become fragile and need better management of all the territory's elements. Shepherds will have to guide their flocks carefully here, so as to avoid making erosion worse but also to eliminate pine seedlings.

Attribution : © Parc national des Cévennes



Birds (C)

Vertebrates benefit from the plants or from small prey, especially hares or the common lizards with its thick tail, which is coveted by the reptile-eating short-toed snake eagle. Among the birds of prey, you may spot the characteristic silhouette of a Montagu's harrier or hen harrier, with their low contour-hugging flight. Among the many passerines, you may spot the Northern wheatear, a summer guest, sitting on a stone, or more rarely a grey partridge. If you listen, you may well hear larks singing.

Attribution : © Jean-Pierre Malafosse

🌿 Low-growing plants and shrubs (D)

A large amount of sunshine encourages many low-growing grasses from other botanical families to appear among the fescue and nard. They are almost all perennial. They form a veritable tangle of plants. Among the pretty alpine flowers are the spring pasque flower and the blue dwarf spring gentian in summer. Other, smaller plants are perfectly capable of “making holes” in a short-grass prairie that is less intensely grazed than before. Grass networks that lose in density develop weak points that shrubs exploit to grow at the very heart of the prairie: blueberries, which are here associated with lingonberries (cowberries) and calluna, a type of heather.



🐛 Small grassland creatures (E)

Marker 2

Each spring, a demographic explosion of fauna prepares itself to burst forth in the summer. Earlier in the year, the thousands of small creatures to be seen here have not yet finished their metamorphoses, and the various species are difficult to recognise as larvae. Subalpine short-grass prairies attract a specific mountain fauna that is getting rarer everywhere else in Europe, such as the *Stauroderus scalaris* cricket, which tirelessly enlivens the pastures with its summer concerts. Crickets only eat plant matter whereas grasshoppers, such as the wart-biter, tend to be carnivorous. Many butterflies visit the flowers.

Attribution : © Bruno Descaves



🌿 Subalpine short-grass prairie (F)

Marker 1

Like garden or sports pitches, short-grass prairies are shaped by mankind. Grazing and controlled burns are the tools for their maintenance here. The main plants are nard and fescue, perennial grasses related to wheat. If you cut (graze) one of their stalks, five more will soon form; if you trample them, they multiply and become very dense. This kind of “torture” creates a thick plant cover that stabilises the sparse dark soil, which is derived from erosion of the ever-present granite. Here, then, are some clues for the appropriate management of this environment, which becomes weakened if neglected.

Attribution : © Brigitte Mathieu

🌿 Natural evolution of beech and oak groves (G)

Marker 1

This steep terrain consists of a mass of fallen granite rocks (scree), which makes it unusable by domestic animals. The beeches and chestnuts growing here have thus evolved naturally, the only intervention being felling for timber or firewood. Other species are also associated with tree cover (hazelnuts, blueberries, ferns, etc.), as well as rocks covered in mosses, which attest to the relatively damp conditions.



⚠️ The Tarn valley and its landscapes shaped by human activity (H)

Marker 2

The open scenery overlooking the Tarn offers a grand panorama. The landscape has been profoundly shaped by the presence of humans and their flocks. Farmers practise slash-and-burn farming to contain the spreading forest. This needs to be regularly repeated to stop Pyrenean broom from getting the upper hand. On the plateau, you will see hay meadows and, along the edges of plots, pruned ash trees (whose branches are used as animal fodder in the autumn). Some birds of prey like these open spaces, where hunting rodents is easier.

Attribution : © Régis Descamps

🌐 Granite boulders (I)

Marker 4

Granite, which is used for dressed stone as you saw in the hamlet, is a vulnerable rock on the geological timescale. The erosive power of water is furthered by the cracks that divide the rock. These occur because of the stresses to which granite – which rose as magma at the end of the Paleozoic – has been exposed since cooling. The speed of this erosion depends on the climate. This is why whole, undamaged granite blocks break off. They form particularly picturesque block fields (felsenmeer) once the coarse sands have disappeared.



☹ The river Tarn (J)

The Tarn has its spring at an altitude of 1,550 m under the ridge of Mont Lozère. Having carved its way into the granite bedrock, it separates the Bougès massif from Mont Lozère. After Bédouès, it meets the river Tarnon and slowly enters the limestone region, in which its bed is increasingly deep. At its confluence with the Jonte, at Le Rozier, the Tarn leaves the department of the Lozère.

Attribution : © Yannick Manche



🪵 Fages Sawmill (K)

Upstream from Bédouès, you will see a sawmill, which mainly produces wood to make crates and pallets. It also produces some timber. Today, local forestry companies utilise wood in a number of ways: for energy, paper pulp, timber, crate-making and construction.

Attribution : © Olivier Prohin



🐟 The brown trout (*Salmo trutta fario*) (L)

This trout lives in our waterways and is an indigenous species. This stock is a part of our heritage. Its size varies with the quality of the water, fishing pressures, and the nature of the riverbed (hiding-places). In the summer, it hunts in white water and on the surface, and catches insects. In the winter, it eats larvae on the bottom. Reproduction begins in November and is staggered throughout the winter. The female lays its eggs on a gravelly stretch of the riverbed, into which it has dug a pit using its caudal fin. The male deposits its milt over the eggs. Once they are fertilised, the eggs are covered with gravel.

Reproductive success depends on variations in the water flow and especially on the risk of the spawning areas drying out in dry winters.

Attribution : © Philippe Baffie



🏰 Saint-Saturnin chapel (M)

Saint-Saturnin chapel stands at the heart of the village, surrounded by its cemetery. Inside every wall boasts a magnificent painted décor. It was built in the 12th century. Guillaume de Grimoard (the future Pope Urban V) was baptised here in 1309. It is next to the town hall (mairie) and is well worth a detour.

Attribution : © Nathalie Thomas

🌍 The iron-rich water of Salce (N)

After a small detour from the hamlet of Salièges to the river Tarn, you will come across a spring of ferruginous water. For a long time, the ability to prevent (or cure) alcoholism was attributed to this water rich in Fe^{2+} ions, and made famous by a sketch by the stand-up comedian Bourvil. It supposedly supplies the iron that would normally come from regularly drinking alcohol. A small construction indicates the Salce spring (the path from Salièges is way-marked), as does the red tinting from iron oxide, which you find in many contact zones between schist and limestone.