

From Ispagnac to the mediaeval village of Sainte-Enimie - Day 1

Causses Gorges - Ispagnac



Canoës dans les Gorges du Tarn (© Olivier Prohin)



This trail takes you from the entrance to the Tarn gorge, in Ispagnac, to the mediaeval village of Sainte-Enimie, which lies at the very heart of the canyon. It is also a journey through time, including a stroll through the semi-troglodytic hamlet of Castelbouc and offering fine views onto the Château de Prades before you arrive in Sainte-Enimie.

Useful information

Practice : Hiking on foot

Duration : 6 h

Length : 17.8 km

Trek ascent : 454 m

Difficulty : Medium


Type : Roaming

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

Trek

Departure : Ispagnac

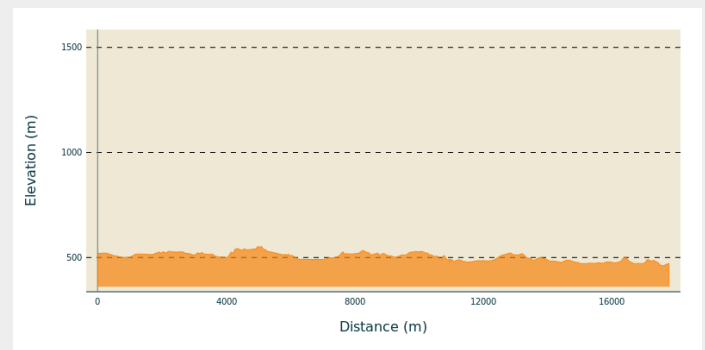
Arrival : Sainte-Enimie

Markings :  GR (long-distance hiking path)

Cities : 1. Ispagnac

2. Gorges du Tarn Causses

Altimetric profile



Min elevation 461 m Max elevation 553 m

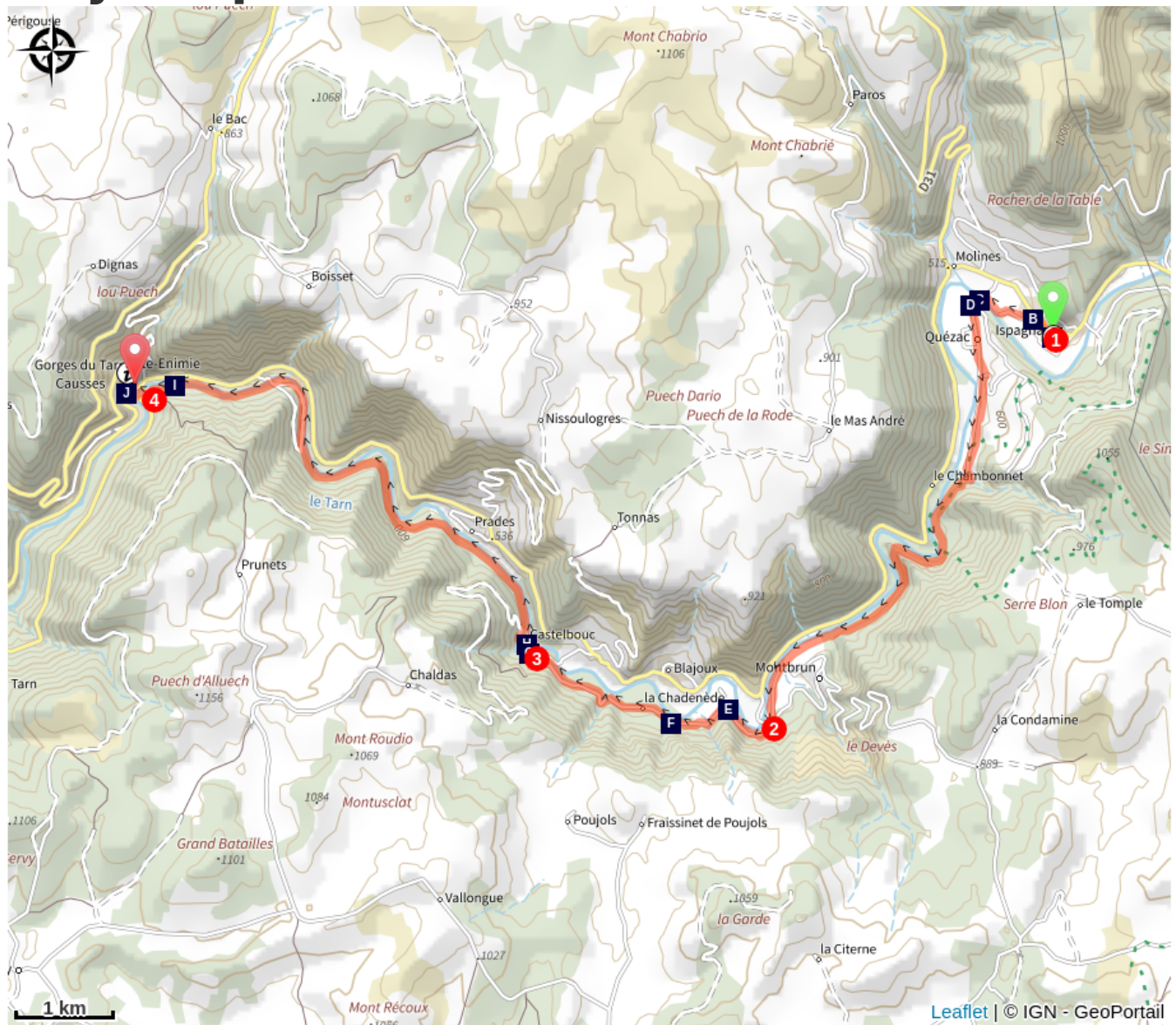
1 – From Place de la Mairie, take Rue des Barrys to its end. There, turn left towards “Le Prè Morjal” campsite and continue straight to walk along the Tarn. Cross the bridge and cross the village of Quézac. After the village, stay on the lane for 1.5 km before taking the Tarn gorge path.

2 – At Montbrun bridge, continue straight onto the lane that follows the left bank all the way to the hamlet of Castelbouc.

3 – Enter the hamlet and, at the square with the communal bread oven, take the lane to the right. Cross the small bridge and, at the crossroads, continue on the path on the right. Follow this path to Sainte-Enimie.

4 – On arrival in the village, take the street that goes downhill on your right to cross the bridge.

On your path...



Ispagnac church (A)
 Quézac Bridge (C)
 The Château de Charbonnières (E)
 The spring of Castelbouc (G)

The vintners of Ispagnac (B)
 Quézac mineral water (D)
 Not always a docile river! (F)
 The strange legend of Castelbouc (H)
 The bridge (J)



The beaver (I)

All useful information

Advices

Take care during periods of floods in spring and autumn: some sections of the path through the Tarn gorge will be impassable.

Make sure your equipment is appropriate for 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 stop: Car park by the school (Ecole publique)

Bus line "Florac - Mende"

Year-round daily service Monday to Saturday morning (except bank holidays)

Bus line "Ispagnac - Florac - Alés" Monday to Saturday from 15 April to 31 October

Bus line "Florac - Sainte-Enimie - Le Rozier", every day in July and August

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

Access

Ispagnac D 907bis

Advised parking

Car park by the school [Ecole publique] or opposite the pharmacy

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 Gorges du Tarn, Ispagnac

Place de l'Église, 48320 Ispagnac

info@attractivite-tourisme-gcc.com

Tel : 04 66 45 01 14

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



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Tel : 04 66 45 01 14

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



On your path...



Ispagnac church (A)

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 (B)

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 (C)

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.

Attribution : © CC Florac Sud Lozère



Quézac mineral water (D)

Quézac mineral water emerges naturally from the Diva spring, near the entrance to the village, in exceptional surroundings which have been naturally protected for centuries. This pleasant-tasting water is rich in mineral salts and trace elements and is also well-known to be beneficial for the stomach. The spring's water actually comes from Mont Aigoual. According to scientific studies, it takes 30 to 40 years for it to re-emerge in Quézac, after first settling in aquifers, where it acquires its effervescence naturally (rare in France).

Attribution : © Nathalie Thomas



The Château de Charbonnières (E)

In a bend of the Tarn downstream from the village of Montbrun stands the Château de Charbonnières. While the former castle has lost some of its defensive elements, it has nevertheless preserved a knightly character and traces of many historical episodes of the Tarn valley. It is first recorded in the 13th century. Its defensive role was tightly linked to a whole “fortified system” downstream of Ispagnac, which consisted of Quézac, Javillet, La Roche, Rocheblave, Montbrun, Castelbouc, Prades and Sainte-Enimie.

The château has three rectangular buildings arranged in a horseshoe shape around an internal courtyard. The facade overlooking the Tarn has a square tower that dominates the river. Access to the internal courtyard is via gates under a semi-circular arch. From the courtyard, a stone staircase leads up to the chapel, whose doorways are decorated with fleur-de-lys. The modest interior has a ribbed vault framing a keystone engraved with the arms of the Montesquiou family, lords of Charbonnières from the 13th century onwards. The other parts of the residential building have handsome fireplaces, a monumental staircase and fine vaulted halls. In the 17th and 18th centuries, the château became the property of the Volonzac Malespina family and, in the 19th century, of the Boutin family. It is not open to the public.

Attribution : © OTGCC nc



Not always a docile river! (F)

For 52 km, from the point it enters the canyon at Quézac to Le Rozier, the Tarn has no overground tributary. However, it is fed by about 170 karst springs stemming from subterranean aquifer networks. These springs release the rainwater absorbed by the avens, dolines and fissures of the Causses plateaux. When reserves are high, the water gushes with great force from the karst environment. Locals say that “the corks are popping”. In the event that the tributaries of the Tarn (the Mimente and Tarnon) rise and add to the springs, the time will have come to move the furniture upstairs.

Attribution : BOUISSOU Arnaud / TERRA Ministère de l'Environnement



The spring of Castelbouc (G)

The vast spring as you enter the hamlet has four outlets, including one at the back. These openings, out of which water surges during heavy rain, reinforce the translation of the Occitan bouc as bouches (“mouths”). All springs are fed by a catchment area of varying size. Here, the catchment area is the sector of Aven du Pic de l’Usclat, Aven du Loup (Cros garnon) and Aven du Crapaud (Fretma) on the Causse Méjean plateau.

Attribution : nathalie.thomas



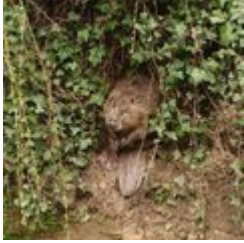
The strange legend of Castelbouc (H)

For you to judge...

The etymology of Castelbouc is *castel blanc*, meaning “perched on the rock” in Occitan.

Legend has it that during the Crusades the castle’s lord was the only man to have remained behind in this little hamlet of dwellings built against the cliff. He had many female visitors, and it was important to him to satisfy their needs. Unfortunately, the Crusade was so long that he was unable to keep going to its end. When his soul left his body, an enormous he-goat was seen hovering over the castle tower... Ever since, a bleating sound followed by strange murmurings can be heard on the summit. This is the legendary origin of the name of Castelbouc...

Attribution : Bruno Daversin



The beaver (I)

Proof that I have been here might be a tree carved into a pencil shape; pieces of bark; wood chips; a heap of branches in the water; back or front paw prints in the sand. I'm the Eurasian beaver. I live near water. I'm active mostly at night, and sometimes at dawn and dusk if no-one disturbs me. From the Middle Ages (11th century) to the 19th century, times were hard for us. We were hunted by humans for our flesh, fur and because we were thought a nuisance. In the early 20th century, we had disappeared from many parts of France. Today, things are better – we live alongside and in the Tarn again.

Attribution : © OTGCC nc



The bridge (J)

Finally a bridge over the Tarn!

In the 13th century, the Benedictine monks of Sainte-Énimie built a bridge to replace the ford, or possibly a previous, more precarious construction. The new bridge linked Sainte-Énimie to the Causse Méjean plateau, where the Benedictine community owned land. Commerce and trade with Lower Languedoc (wool, woven products, wine) boomed. The village soon became an essential point on the important pilgrim route linking Le Puy-en-Velay with Aniane, via Saint-Guilhem le Désert. In the Middle Ages, it was rare to find so many bridges that could be crossed with carts and other large means of locomotion. The monks were true visionaries: today, the bridge is the only access to the Causse Méjean from the Tarn gorge that is authorised for buses and lorries weighing more than 19 tonnes (on the D986 linking Mende with Meyrueis).

Attribution : © OTGCC nc