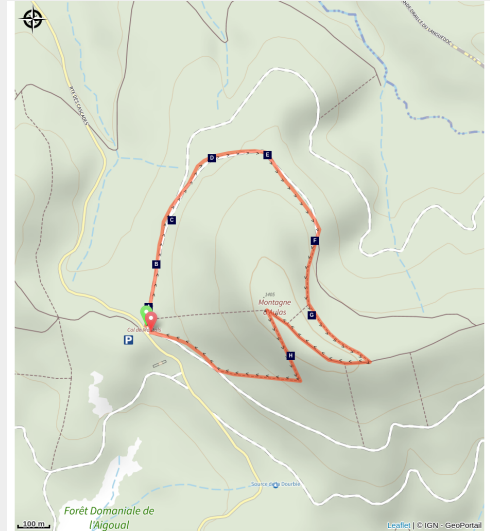


The beech forest walk

Aigoual - Arphy



(© Valère Marsaudon)



This walk passes through one of the most handsome beech forests on the Aigoual. Since the massif was reforested in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, it has slowly grown in vigour and health in the foresters' care.

The beech tree first settled the Aigoual massif over 4,000 years ago. It likes altitudes above 1,000 m here, with the sufficient moisture that the frequent fogs bring, as well as north-facing slopes that avoid the excessive heat of summer. This environment also favours many animal species, including the boreal owl, which returned to the massif in the 1990s.

Useful information

Practice : Discovery trails

Duration : 1 h 30

Length : 2.9 km

Trek ascent : 99 m

Difficulty : Very easy

Type : Loop

Themes : Fauna and flora, Forest

Trek

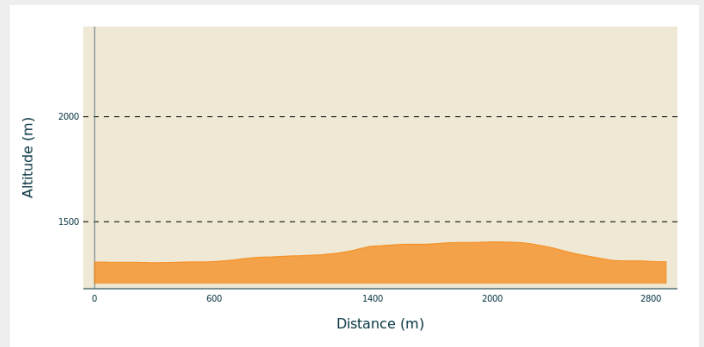
Departure : Col de Montals

Arrival : Col de Montals

Markings :  Yellow waymarks

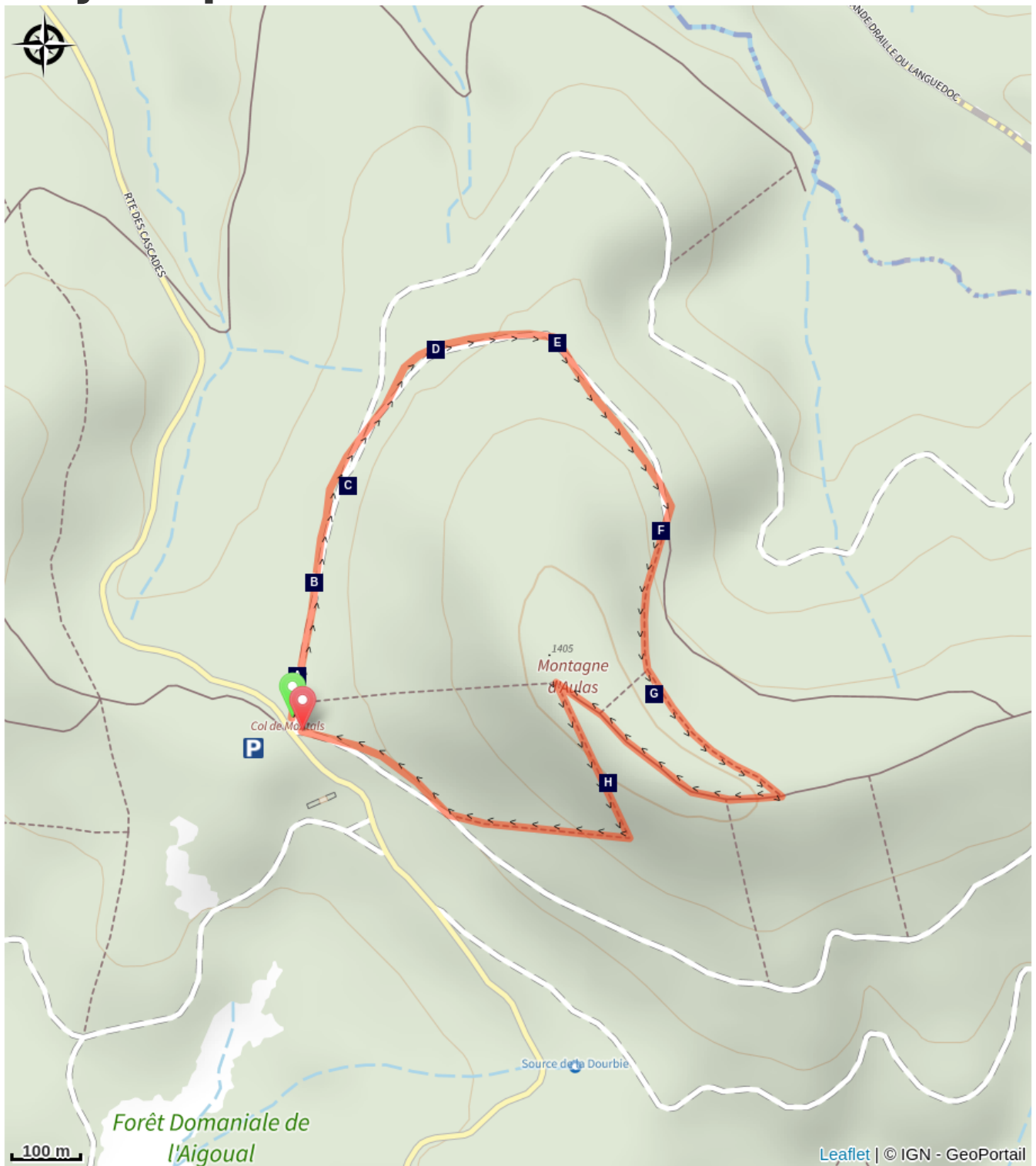
Cities : 1. Arphy

Altimetric profile



Min elevation 1305 m Max elevation 1404 m

On your path...



- From flower to fruit ... (A)
- Timber from stumps (C)
- A genetic conservatory (E)
- An ancient forest (G)

- From the seed to the tree (B)
- The profession of forester (D)
- A little treasure! (F)
- The south-facing slope (H)

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.

How to come ?

Access

From L'Espérou: D 548 (5 mins). From Vigan (30 mins): D 48N towards Mont Aigoual, then D 548 from the col de la Broue pass.

Advised parking

Car park at the Col de Montals pass.



Information desks

Tourism & national parc'house

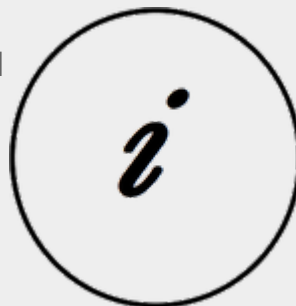
Col de la Serreyrède, 30570 Val d'Aigoual

maisondeilaigoual@sudcevennes.com

Tel : 04 67 82 64 67

<https://www.sudcevennes.com>

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



Source



Office national des Forêts

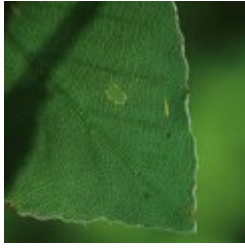
<http://www.onf.fr/>



Parc national des Cévennes

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

On your path...



From flower to fruit ... (A)

The beech is a monoecious tree, meaning that female and male flowers are distinct but occur on the same tree. They flower in April and May; insects carry the male reproductive cells (the pollen) to the female cells.

After pollination, the flower produces seeds enclosed in soft-spined husks: beechnuts. Every three to five years, in autumn, an adult beech disperses thousands of seeds.

Attribution : © Emilien Hérault



From the seed to the tree (B)

Because most seeds are rich in oils, they are devoured by famished animals in the winter: squirrels, field mice, wild boar, jays, chaffinches... Any seeds still on the ground the following spring can start germinating.

Attribution : © Philippe Raichaud



Timber from stumps (C)

Beech trees regenerate very easily; their regrowth is a number of shoots grouped together on the same stump. In the old days, this method (coppicing) was much used to obtain firewood. On the northern slope of Aulas mountain, foresters turned the former coppices into timber plantations on stumps: the new trees with their straight boles were a steady supply of wood for packaging (crates). Since the closure of these companies, the beeches have only been commercialised as firewood.

Attribution : © Mathieu Baconnet



The profession of forester (D)

The forester is a silviculturist, meaning that s/he cultivates the forest to ensure that it is vigorous and healthy. The forester intervenes at all stages in the trees' life cycle to encourage or oppose natural evolution, depending on the objectives. Sometimes that means momentarily protecting a species dominated by rival plants, for instance by clearing beech seedlings threatened by brambles or young firs. When a plantation reaches maturity – at about 70 years – the forester supervises fructification to make sure there are abundant flowers receiving sufficient light...

Attribution : © Gaël Karczewski



A genetic conservatory (E)

This parcel, no. 308, is an official Conservatory of Genetic Resources. Its trees are vigorous and thus well adapted to the soil, climate and altitude conditions. These qualities of adaptation to the environment are inscribed in their seed, which is why some of their beechnuts are liable to be collected, dehydrated and preserved so as to be used to regenerate the beech forests of the Aigoual massif, if necessary.

Attribution : © Valère Marsaudon



A little treasure! (F)

The evolution of plantations, and of handsome beeches with straight boles, is favourable to certain animal species. They include a discreet little owl, 25 cm tall and weighing less than 200g, which resettled the Aigoual massif in 1990: the boreal or Tengmalm's owl. Nesting trees are marked with yellow paint, and an official period of peace and quiet applies to areas of reproduction from 1 January to 31 July, during which all forestry is forbidden.

Attribution : © Régis Descamps



An ancient forest (G)

Some species, such as the *Lobaria pulmonaria* lichen, which grows very slowly, are good indicators of a forest's age. Likewise, some species of herbaceous flora, for instance woodrush, are noticeably more abundant in old forests than in recent forests.

Attribution : © Bruno Descaves



The south-facing slope (H)

Over the centuries, the south-facing slope of Aulas mountain was cleared for pasture, leaving the bedrock bare in places. In the late 19th century, foresters replanted the slope with spruce. These pioneer trees slowly re-established a forest floor and, in their shade, beechnuts germinated. Foresters are now guiding this stand towards a mixed plantation of beech and fir.

Attribution : © M Nègre (1923)