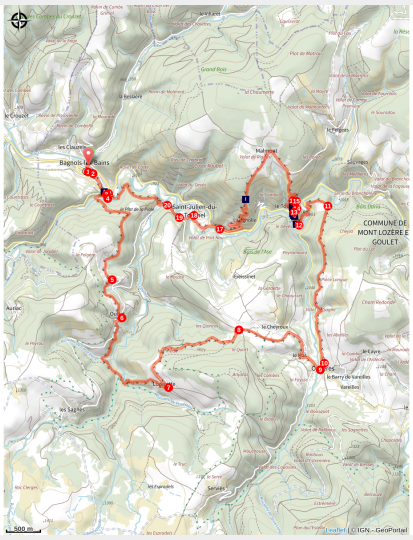
Château du Tournel, #10

Mont Lozère

Jeunes traileurs (© Mathilde Sagnes - Département Lozère)



Combine culture, nature and sport !

Explore Lozerette, Mas d'Orcières and the Château du Tournel as your legs see fit. The uphill sections will hone your calf muscles and the magnificent panoramic views will fill your eyes. A large-scale adventure!

Useful information

Practice : Foot race

Duration : 2 h 30

Length : 20.5 km

Trek ascent : 886 m

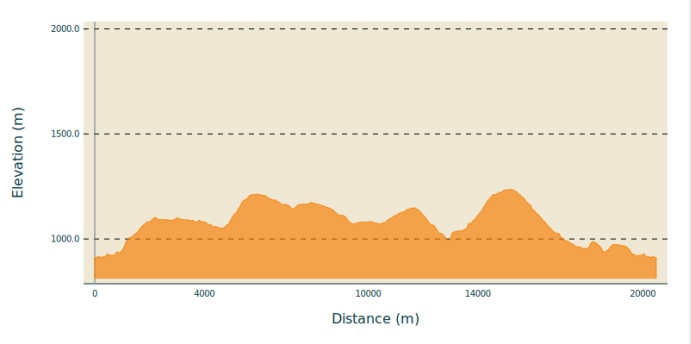
Difficulty : Difficult

Type : Loop

Trek

Departure : Bagnols-les-Bains
Arrival : Bagnols-les-Bains
Markings : Trail PPN Mt Lozère
Cities : 1. Mont Lozère et Goulet

Altimetric profile



Min elevation 911 m Max elevation 1236 m

Signposts will guide you all along this route: **follow the waymarks for trail #10**

The circuit starts with a fairly steep but pleasant uphill section, on a pretty path in the forest, leading to the typical Mont Lozère village of Oultet, with its blizzard bell-tower, stone houses and old bread oven. Once you have crossed the village, you start again on a magnificent path, initially between meadows and forest, with the river nearby (the ground is often slippery). Then you start a beautiful climb with superb views throughout. This takes you to Lozerette, a village that rarely leave visitors indifferent. Here you take a track that descends gently to the hamlets of Cheyroux and Le Mas. A few steps on tar to reach Orcières, then a great, almost flat section on a path between forest and pastureland. A slightly steep descent takes you to the Lot river, which you cross to begin the climb to the Château du Tournel. Take the time to visit the castle before getting started on the climb to Malmont, which is very pretty but steep. Once you have arrived at the road and the hamlet, you'll have finished climbing! A great zigzagging path with handsome views of the castle takes you down to Saint-Julien-du-Tournel. Go through the village to reach a path that goes back downhill to the starting-point (there is one last hump – prepare yourself mentally!).

Signposts will guide you all along this route, as well as yellow painted waymarks. In the description below, the signposted place names and/or directions are given in **bold italics** between quotation marks:

At "**Bagnols-les-Bains** » ", go to « **Oultet** » via :

1. « **Avenue de la Gare** »,
2. « **Route de la Loubière** »,
3. « **La Destourbe** »,
4. « **La Montagnac** »,
5. « **Lou Peyrou** » .
6. À « **Oultet** » continuer sur
7. « **Lozerette** », puis direction
8. « **Les Quincos** »,
9. « **Village** »,
10. « **Orcières** » . Descendre sur « **Château du Tournel** » **par /**

11. « **Bois Dario** »,
12. « **Le Tournel** »,
13. « **Sous le Château** ».
14. Au « **Château du Tournel** » monter au village de Malmont par
15. « **Les Parets** »,
16. « **La Combe** », puis descendre à « **Saint-Julien du Tournel** » par
17. « **Lavignolles** » (attention traversée de route).
18. À « **Saint-Julien du Tournel** » retour à « **Bagnols-les-Bains** » par
19. « **La Dabalade** »,
20. « **Lou Mapas** »,
21. « **La Destourbe** », « **Route de la Loubière** », « **Avenue de la Gare** ».

This hike is taken from the guidebook **Mont Lozère – Pays des sources, de la montagne du Goulet aux gorges du Bramont**, published by the Pôle de pleine nature du Mont Lozère.

On your path...

Bagnols-les-Bains (A)
One-road village (B)
Establishing the original village (C)
Defensive choices (D)
Schist: bedrock and material (E)
Panorama (F)
Panorama (G)
Château du Tournel (H)
Flora (I)

All useful information

⚠ Advices

Before committing yourself to a circuit, ensure that it is suitable for your activity level and ability. Remember that the weather changes quickly in the mountains. Please close all gates and barriers behind you. Stay on the marked path.

How to come ?

Transports

Ligne 253
LIO est le Service Public Occitanie Transports de la Région Occitanie / Pyrénées – Méditerranée. Il,permet à chacun de se déplacer facilement en privilégiant les transports en commun. Pour tout savoir, se rendre sur l'application lio Occitanie ou bien sur https://ww.mestrajets.lio.laregion.fr

Access

From Le Bleymard, on the D901.
From Mende, towards Badaroux on the N88, then to Ste-Hélène / Bagnols-les-Bains on the D901.

Advised parking

parking des Thermes

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 office Mont-Lozère, Bagnols-les-Bains
avenue de la gare, 48190 Bagnols-les-Bains Mont-Lozere et Goulet

contact@destination-montlozere.fr
Tel : 04 66 47 61 13
https://www.destination-montlozere.fr/

Source

CC Mont Lozère

https://www.ccmontlozere.fr/

Parc national des Cévennes

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

Pôle pleine nature Mont Lozère

On your path...

Bagnols-les-Bains (A)

Located close to the springs of the Lot, Bagnols-les-Bains has been favoured since Roman times for relaxing and getting back in shape. At an altitude of 900 m, this people-friendly health and spa resort has a hot spring, which gushes out of the mountain at a temperature of 41.5°C. It is a place for recharging your batteries surrounded by a protected natural environment, alternating outdoor activities and wellness treatments.

Attribution : © Nathalie Thomas

One-road village (B)

Marker 3
Gradually, the village re-established itself alongside the cart track that crossed the rocky spur and made trade possible, taking on the appearance of a “one-road village”. The track was paved with schist in places and followed the Lot valley to the neighbouring parishes and hamlets. The houses are arranged in a crown shape; their gable ends face out over the cliff. They are separated by enclosed gardens and small squares of sorts. These block-like houses – large and austere two-storey buildings – only have very few openings that always face south and are built to the same model: narrow slits with a simple inward splay, topped by a lintel.

Attribution : © Guy Grégoire

Establishing the original village (C)

The first village was built at the foot of the castle, on the narrow strip of the ridge between the castle and the block of rock that closes off the spur to the south. Thus protected by its inaccessibility, the village was never surrounded by an internal rampart. Its buildings can still be made out in some places, where the rock is shaped into anchorage points, and consisted of small houses built in parallel to the rock faces so as integrate them in the construction. This original accommodation was abandoned in the 13th century, badly served by its inacccessibility and the strong winds buffeting it. The houses were levelled off, their walls becoming terrace walls.

Attribution : © Brigitte Mathieu

Defensive choices (D)

Marker 2
In the 11th century, the King's authority was declining. Secular land-owning lords built fortresses to protect their assets and the people for whom they were responsible. The castrum or castle of Le Tournel was built at an altitude of 1,080 m, surrounded by a loop in the river Lot that is impossible to skirt. It occupies a rocky spur surrounded by sheer drops on all sides except the north. The vertical rock faces of the east and west sides make accessing the castle extremely dangerous. The site itself was the mainstay of the castle's defences, and enabled it to dominate and survey the Lot valley.

Attribution : @ Olivier Prohin

Schist: bedrock and material (E)

Marker 1
At Le Tournel, mica schist is ever-present. Between 220 and 200 million BC, when the Hercynian mountain chain emerged, rock was dragged into the depths by folding and subjected to high temperatures and pressure, which transformed it into schist and mica schist. These finely foliated rocks are made of quartz and mica, and break off in slabs that resist the cold, water and frost, making them excellent construction materials. They provided the raw materials for building both castle and village. Several quarries are still in use locally and supply wall, flooring and roofing materials.

Panorama (F)

Scots Pines, which have replaced oaks on limestone soils and beech on siliceous soils, cover vast areas. With birches, they are the first to invade abandoned farm land. As a result of agricultural decline, vast heaths of broom – which can live on poor soils – have formed. They are periodically subjected to controlled burns by farmers. This landscape evolves over time, and according to natural and human factors.

Attribution : @ Guy Grégoire

Panorama (G)

Marker 10
From this high point (above which short-toed snake eagles are often seen), the site of Le Tournel on the rocky spur dominating the Lot Valley, showcases all its strategic power. The surrounding landscape was slowly shaped by human activity, the dispersed settlements favouring the human hold over nature. Mont Lozère’s denuded rounded tops are maintained by the flocks of transhumant sheep that graze here. Crops take up the fertile dips near villages, where farming can be mechanised.

Château du Tournel (H)

A discovery path leads visitors through the history of the château and the configuration of the former village, today in ruins. Nobody knows what noble knight long ago chose this hill bordered by gullies to build his castrum. The first homage to Le Tournel was paid in 1219, by Odilon Guérin to the bishop and lord of Mende, Guillaume de Peyre.

Attribution : © Nathalie Thomas

Flora (I)

Along the paths, many flowers tell us that the sloping bedrock under our feet is schist (slate). The star-of-Bethlehem freshens up for 11 a.m.; the foxgloves raise their purple bell-shaped flowers; tufts of sheep’s fescue seem to have escaped from a summer pasture; biting stonecrop delights in the sunshine; yarrow hems the path in lace; the wild thyme you step on releases its fragrance...

Attribution : Nathalie Thomas