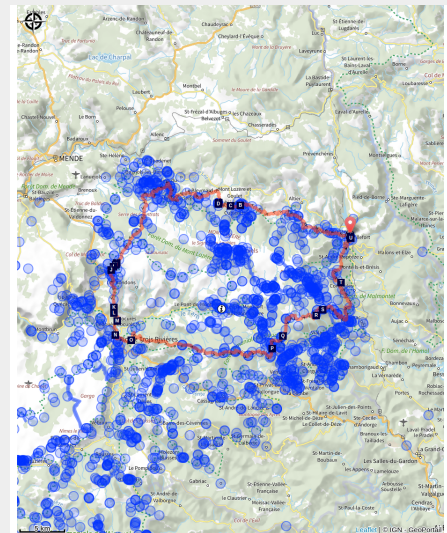


# GR® 68, the Mont Lozère circuit

Mont Lozère



Tour du Mont Lozère



115 km and 6 days of hiking to discover the granite block fields, inhabitants and shepherds of Mont Lozère.

Whether with family or friends or on your own, discover the scenery of Mont Lozère. Amidst contrasting landscapes, this path reveals many elements of agropastoralism: drovers' roads, terraced cropland, farms, open areas, itinerant shepherds, sheep... You will be hiking on old mule tracks, now disused in favour of more comfortable routes, passing belltowers, which bear witness to a time when the rude winters cut off villages from all outside contact. This is a solitary country of heath and granite, but also an authentic one, where a welcome always awaits you.

## Useful information

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Practice : Hiking on foot

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Duration : 6 days

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Length : 117.1 km

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Trek ascent : 4672 m

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Difficulty : Medium

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Type : Roaming


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Themes : Agriculture and livestock farming, Causses and Cévennes / UNESCO, Fauna and flora, History and culture, Transports en commun

# Trek

**Departure** : Villefort

**Arrival** : Villefort

**Markings** :  GR (long-distance hiking path)

**Cities** : 1. Villefort

2. Pourcharesses

3. Altier

4. Cubières

5. Cubièrettes

6. Mont Lozère et Goulet

7. Lanuéjols

8. Saint-Étienne-du-Valdonnez

9. Les Bondons

10. Ispagnac

11. Bédouès-Cocurès

12. Florac Trois Rivières

13. Pont de Montvert - Sud Mont Lozère

14. Cans et Cévennes

15. Cassagnas

16. Saint-André-de-Lancize

17. Saint-Privat-de-Vallongue

18. Vialas

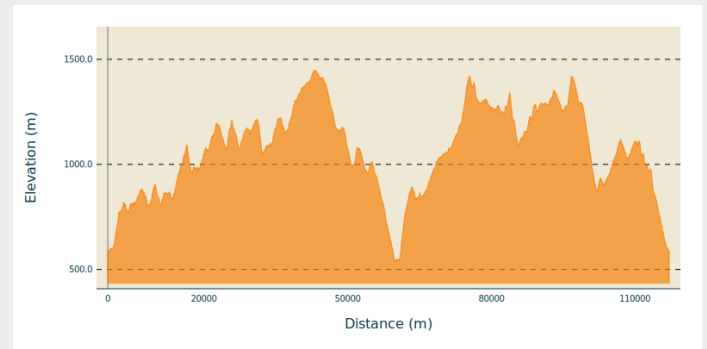
19. Génolhac

20. Concoules

21. Pontails-et-Brésis

22. Saint-André-Capcèze

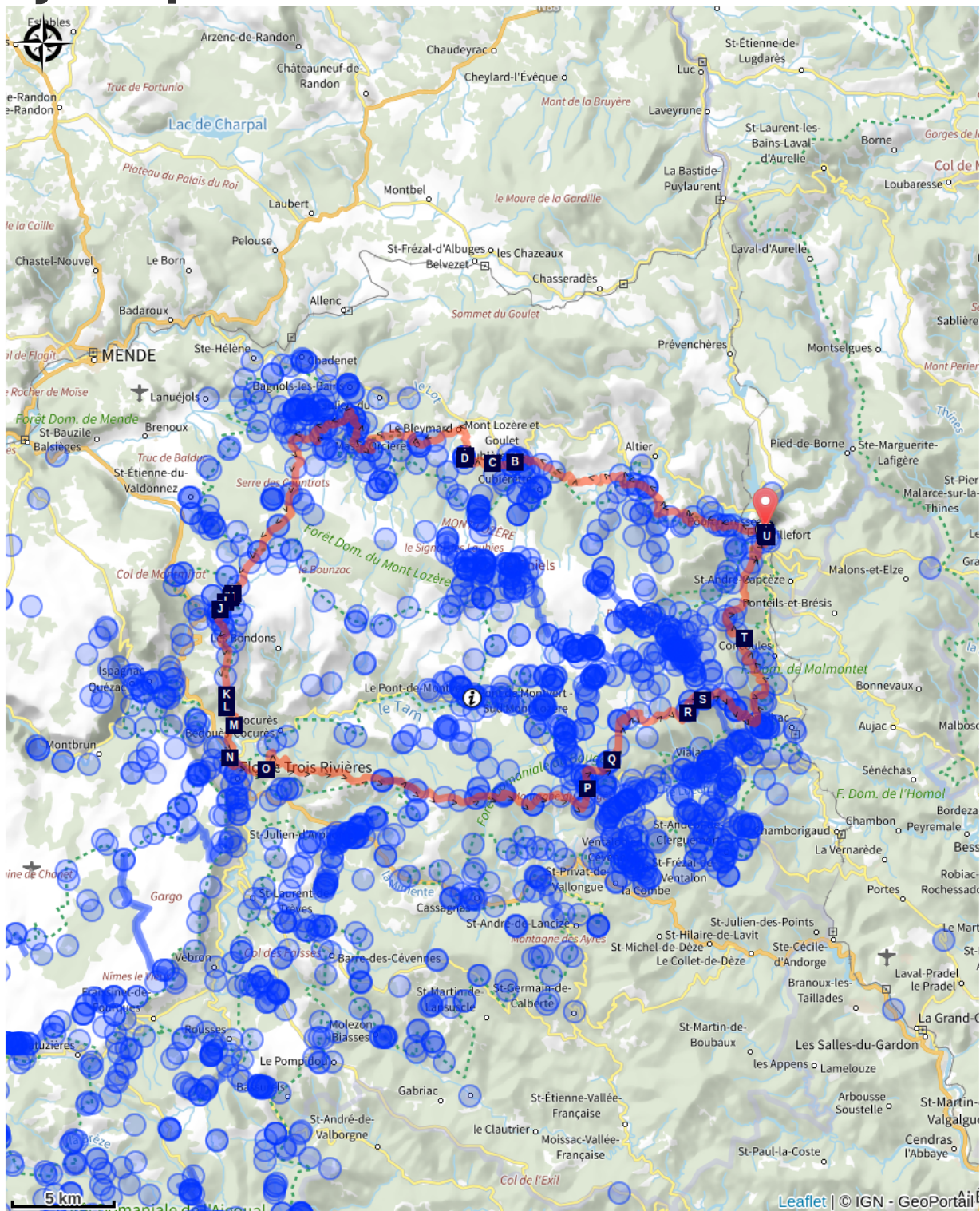
## Altimetric profile



Min elevation 532 m Max elevation 1449 m

All information on the whole route can be found on the site [monGR.fr](http://monGR.fr) of the French hikers' federation, the Fédération française de la randonnée pédestre. Map ref. IGN 2739 OT.

# On your path...



- ✦ The fairs at Villefort (A)
- ✦ The Rieutord (C)
- ✦ Passerine birds (E)
- ✦ Dolmen at Les Combes (G)
- ✦ Chabusse (I)
- ✦ The Manoir d'Issenges (K)
- ✦ Cubières (B)
- ✦ Mule trains (D)
- ✦ Puech d'Allègre and Puech de Mariette (F)
- ✦ Panoramic viewpoint (H)
- ✦ Mines and menhirs (J)
- ✦ The draille de la Margeride (L)

Transhumant history (M)


Summit of Mont Lempézou (O)

The Bougès state forest (Q)

Slash-and-burn (S)

The tourism boom (U)

The origins of Villefort (W)

 The European beaver (Castor fiber)  
(N)

The Languedoc draille (P)

Gourdouze (R)

 Many species... (T)

Troubled times (V)

# 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. As you approach any flock of sheep, be aware that they have guard dogs (patous): get information from a tourist office or National Park information centre on how to behave around these dogs. Bivouacking alongside GR trails in the National Park's central zone is regulated and, on some stretches, prohibited.

## How to come ?

### Transports

#### Bus

- Line 251 Florac - Mende
- Line 253 Mende - Mont Lozère
- Line 261 Mont Lozère - Pont de Montvert - Florac

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

- Train line: Clermont-Ferrand - Nîmes (Villefort - Génolhac)

### Access

Villefort on the D 906 from Génolhac or the D 901 from Le Bleymard.

### Advised parking

Villefort

## 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, Villefort

43, Place du Bosquet, 48800 Villefort

contact@destination-montlozere.fr

Tel : 04 66 46 87 30

<https://www.destination-montlozere.fr/>



## Source



Comité départemental de la randonnée pédestre 48

<http://lozere.ffrandonnee.fr/>



Fédération française de la randonnée pédestre

<https://www.ffrandonnee.fr/>

# On your path...

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## 👉 The fairs at Villefort (A)

Since 1511, Villefort market has been held on Thursday mornings. In the early 19th century, there were up to 14 fairs a year. Children had to attend mass at Saint-Loup-et-Saint-Roch Chapel to be allowed to go to the fairs. Large crowds were attracted to the fairs by their good reputation. The fair held on 14 September was one of the most impressive, with countless cattle blocking the village's squares and lanes. Today, Villefort is a lively place with bric-a-brac shops and artisan fairs.



## Cubières (B)

This village, which was founded long ago, owes its name (cubereis) to the copper that the Gallo-Romans mined here. In the Middle Ages, under the protection of the local lord, villagers had to mill flour and then bake their bread in the shared bread oven, which was the property of the Seigneur du Tournel. Whenever they did so, he received a tax called the ban. This feudal right was abolished during the French Revolution, and the oven simply became the village oven.

Attribution : nathalie.thomas



## The Rieutord (C)

This brook is the Rieutord, which flows into the Altier, a tributary of the Chassezac. Amateur geologists will notice that you are here on the boundary between a limestone pocket on the right, schist (slate) on the right and granite at the summit. The three bedrocks determine the landscape and its vegetation. The limestone is a maritime memento from the Jurassic. The schist was formed in the heat of considerable depths and pushed to the surface by earthquakes during the Quaternary Period. The granite is former magma that made its way through the schist from deeper still to become the surface of Mont Lozère.

Attribution : © Nathalie Thomas



## Mule trains (D)

You are at a crossroads; one of the tracks is the former road from Mende to Villefort, which veers off the Route des Arvènes (the Régordane) at La Maloutière (as you leave Villefort). How many mule trains – convoys of at least six laden mules – passed here over the centuries, their bells ringing! The mule drivers passing in their caravans brought life to the village and gave Cubières a look of prosperity. The village road was very commercial, aligning inns and shops.

Attribution : nathalie.thomas



## Passerine birds (E)

Open spaces with a few trees and bushes favour passerine birds. Passerines are the largest and most varied order of birds, containing over half of all bird species. The red-backed shrike in particular likes this environment, which abounds in the large insects that constitute its main food source. The shrike is strictly migratory and hibernates in eastern Africa.

Attribution : Régis Descamps



## Puech d'Allègre and Puech de Mariette (F)

### 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 (G)

### 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

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## Panoramic viewpoint (H)

### Marker 4

Attribution : © Olivier Prohin

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## Chabusse (I)

### 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 (J)

### 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

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## The Manoir d'Issenges (K)

This fortified house, built from 1624 onwards, is an example of a type of rural seigneurial estate inherited from the Middle Ages. The complex consists of three buildings: the main building with its almost square ground plan, and two long and low wings of farm buildings, which together enclose a courtyard open to the gardens to the east. The entrance is via an archway located at the southern corner of the main building. This building must have had four corner turrets, a projecting tower in the centre that contained the spiral staircase, and an entrance topped by a pediment. This fortified look was reinforced by musket slits and a parapet, or at least a brattice over the entrance gates. The turrets have been demolished and the central tower reduced in height. The mullioned windows have been preserved. A stone shows the date of 1624.

Attribution : © CC Florac Sud Lozère

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## The draille de la Margeride (L)

The ascent to Issenges is on the draille de la Margeride. A draille is a path used by herds of goats during the transhumance: moving up to the mountain pastures in June and coming back down again in September.

Attribution : © CC Florac Sud Lozère



## Transhumant history (M)

“I moved my sheep to summer pastures all the way in the Margeride. I'm from up there myself. When I was a kid, there were many of us in the family, and whenever we saw a transhumant [seasonally migrating] shepherd pass by, my dad would say: one day you'll have to go off with a shepherd... I left and became a transhumant shepherd. My first stopover was Bonperrier. Then we'd eat at L'Hospitalet, and go down to Florac for the night. I moved pastures with 4,000 sheep.”

Attribution : © com com Florac Sud Lozère

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## The European beaver (Castor fiber) (N)

The calm deep stretches of the Tarn are good areas to settle for the European beaver, which lives in a lodge dug into the river bank. An essentially vegetarian animal, it bases its diet on cellulose. It eats young shoots, bark, aquatic plants, and foliage that is abundant in the riparian forest. It is thus useful in regulating the woody vegetation of river banks, facilitating the development of riverside fauna and flora. Through its activities, it prevents the potentially dangerous accumulation of dead wood during floods. It does not build dams.

Attribution : © Bruno Descaves

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## Summit of Mont Lempézou (O)

Mont Lempézou is the mountain overlooking Florac and the Tarnon valley. From the Col (pass) of the same name, you can take a path to the summit. Panoramic views over the three valleys (Tarn, Tarnon, Mimente) will give you a better idea of the local hydrography.

Attribution : © CC Florac Sud Lozère

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## The Languedoc draille (P)

This draille (path for seasonal livestock migration) is known as the Languedoc draille and has seen tens of thousands of sheep pass by that have come up the many drailles from the Midi, combining into ever larger flocks before reaching the summer pastures on the Mont Lozère plateau. The plant cover, grazed and trampled by so many sheep, had no time to grow back. A few flocks and a few shepherds still keep the tradition alive. Other flocks are brought to the summer pastures by lorry.

Attribution : otcevennesmontlozere

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## The Bougès state forest (Q)

This covers an area of about 3,300 hectares. Reforestation was carried out between 1880 and 1925, at the beginning of the agricultural decline, to fight the erosion caused by over-grazing. Today, the Office National des Forêts manages this forest, primarily with the goal of protecting the different forest species and ecosystems, but also with a view to making it productive. The forest is made up of a number of tree species, including spruce, silver fir, larch and Corsican pine. A varied fauna inhabits the forest (deer, wild boar, birds of prey). A few capercaillies, re-introduced by the Cévennes National Park, live in these wide open spaces. (Julie Hugon)

Attribution : © Guy Grégoire

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## Gourdouze (R)

In the 14th century, this village was a priory of Castagnols parish. In 1906 all its thatched roofs burned down. Parts of the village were bought by a private individual in the 1960s who greatly modified them. It subsequently became the property of the Cévennes National Park, which sold 250 hectares back to a Mont Lozère livestock cooperative: their herds maintain the space. The cooperative manages 1,200 hectares at Mas Camargues and Gourdouze. These uplands receive sheep and cattle herds from 15 May to 15 November.

Attribution : nathalie.thomas

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## Slash-and-burn (S)

This technique consists of clearing weeds and shrubs using fire: the fire is utilised to get rid of broom, especially in places that a motorised shredder cannot access. Slash-and burn is carried out every 4 to 5 years in a zone chosen by the farmer. Over larger areas, it is supervised by the fire brigade. In the 19th century, 100,000 sheep migrated to summer pastures here (transhumance) and joined the plateau herds, leaving no room for broom. As soon as the meadows are no longer grazed, they are colonised by broom, then shrubs, then forest. These open spaces are due to human activity (clearing) to allow herds to graze on grass. Grazing prevents the spontaneous growth of shrubs and any generalised invasion of forest.

Attribution : nathalie.thomas



## 🌿 Many species... (T)

This prospering and diverse forest boasts many ground animal species, such as large mammals, especially deer. Its trees play host to numerous birds, including diurnal and nocturnal birds of prey: buzzards, sparrowhawks and owls. Woodpeckers and passerine birds live on the edge of the forest. Some species are uncommon and even threatened, such as the Eurasian goshawk.

Attribution : Emilien Hérault

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## The tourism boom (U)

Villefort dam, located a kilometre north of the village, was filled on 14 July 1964, creating an economic alternative to agriculture. Tourist activities developed: fishing, swimming and water sports. Local tourism is also founded on the canton's abundant natural heritage, with a great number of hiking trails, canyoning in the Chassezac gorge, skiing at the Mont Lozère ski stations, etc.

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## Troubled times (V)

Villefort was embroiled in the religious wars of the 16th and 17th centuries. In 1629, Henri de Rohan besieged the village. Rue de la Bourgade was torched by the Huguenots. In the 17th century, town walls were built around Villefort, which were demolished between 1808 and 1813. During the French Revolution, heraldic shields recalling the Ancien Regime were chiselled off walls, testament to the locals' hatred of their lords. A cross on Place du Portalet is a reminder of the 1794 execution of a defiant priest from Saint-Frézal-d'Albuges. The First World War caused many local casualties. During the Second World War, Villefort was occupied by the Germans. A resistance movement nevertheless emerged in the area, consisting of many different groups.

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## The origins of Villefort (W)

In the Middle Ages, Villefort was known as Villa Montisfortis, a name that might stem from a former Roman agricultural estate. At the time, a castle overlooked the village, of which nothing remains today. This castrum was strategically located on the heights of Le Collet (at the southern exit of Villefort) to protect the Regordane Way – and to collect tolls.