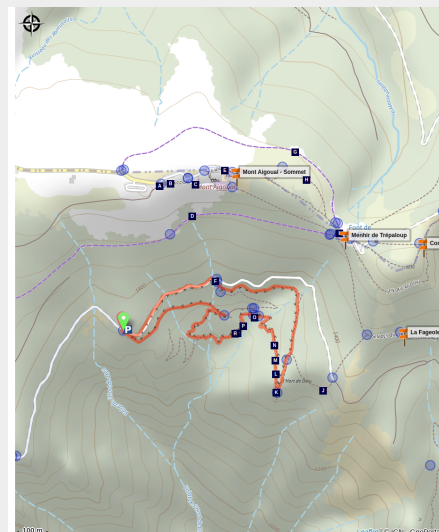


L'Hort de Dieu arboretum - short

Gard



Le site en 1903, avec la bergerie qui sera transformée en laboratoire (© Fonds Flahault, Université de Montpellier)



An extensive reforestation programme was carried out on the Aigoual mountain range in the late 19th century under the leadership of forester Georges Fabre.

“Remembering the fabulist's good advice, we wanted to plant without waiting; in spring 1903, and especially in the following autumn, we put in place over 1,200 plants at L'Hort de Dieu, including 773 trees... We now have 219 species of tree or shrub being either cultivated or studied on Mont Aigoual.” (Charles Flahault, 1904). A network of ten arboretums was created between 1885 and 1903. The botanist Charles Flahault provided scientific support to create the L'Hort de Dieu arboretum.

Useful information

Practice : Sentiers de découverte

Duration : 2 h

Length : 2.6 km

Trek ascent : 142 m

Difficulty : Very easy

Type : Boucle

Themes : Histoire et culture, Faune et flore

Trek

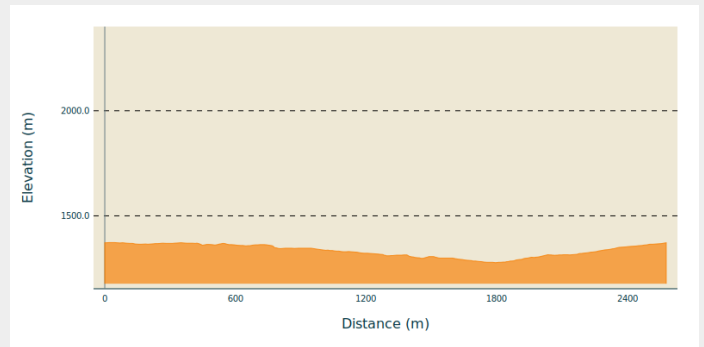
Departure : Car park

Arrival : Car park

Markings :  Interprétation

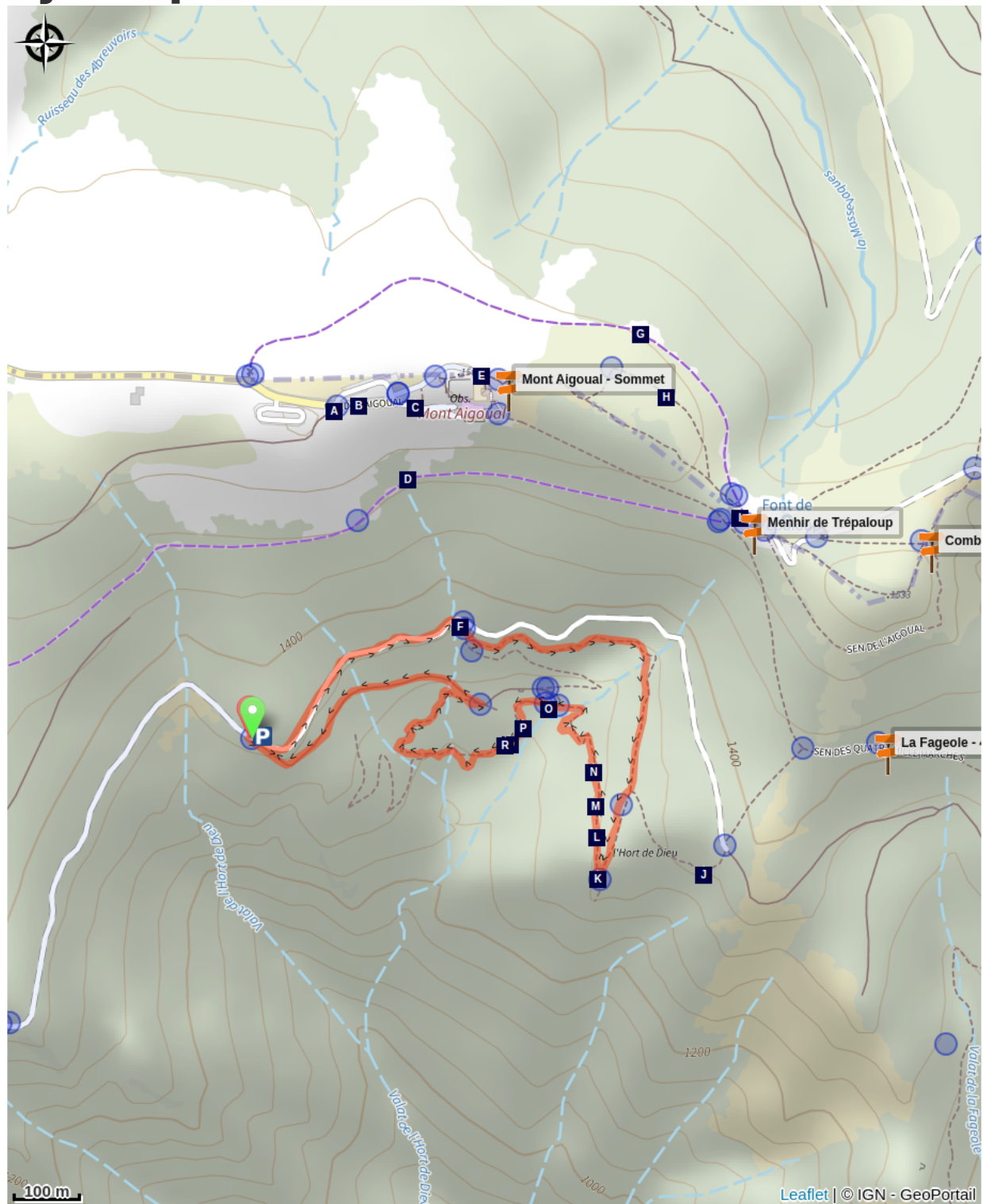
Cities : 1. Val-d'Aigoual

Altimetric profile



Min elevation 1270 m Max elevation 1373 m

On your path...



Archeosmart (Marc Limousin) (A)
 Mont Aigoual weather station (C)
 The meteorological observatory (E)
 Cell (Marie Gueydon de Dives) (G)
 The evolution of plant life (I)

Summit of Mont Aigoual (B)
 Seated (Marie-Hélène Richard) (D)
 A site for botanical experiments (F)
 Short-grass prairies and heath on
 the summit of Mont Aigoual (H)
 A site for botanical experiments (J)

 Creeping pine or mountain pine?
(K)

 Did you say “chourradou”? (M)

 Restoring the forest (L)

 Alpine garden (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

Narrow and steep path – firm shoes are essential.

The access to the highly protected Alpine garden (marker 5) was specially conceived for this walk. Please stick closely to the laid-out paths.

Horse-riding or mountain-biking are not allowed on or adapted to discovery trails.

How to come ?

Access

Col de la Serreyrède on the D 986 (from Valleraugue or Meyrueis) or D 48 (from Le Vigan). At the Col, head towards Mont Aigoual (D 269), then take the forestry track on the right before the turn-off to the Prat Peyrot ski resort.

Col du Perjuret on the D 998 and D 18 from Florac, direction mont Aigoual / Valleraugue. Then take the forestry track on the left off the D 269 after the Prat Peyrot ski resort.

Passing oncoming traffic can be difficult on the access track: go very slow.

Advised parking

Arboretum car park

Information desks

Tourism & national parc'house

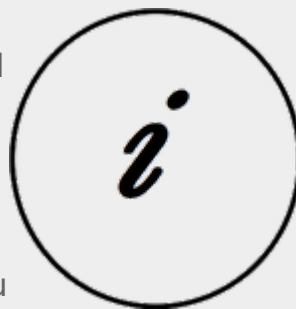
Col de la Serreyrède, 30570 Val d'Aigoual

maisonde-laigoual@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



CC Causses Aigoual Cévennes Terres Solidaires

<http://www.causses-aigoual-cevennes.fr/>



Parc national des Cévennes

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

On your path...



Archeosmart (Marc Limousin) (A)

Smartphone imprints appear on the rocks: fossils of the present that will become mysterious in the future. This carved stone, like the cup-shaped marks and other rock art of the region, discloses history revealed in matter and resonates with Malraux's phrase: "The future is a present given to us by the past".

Attribution : © Filature du Mazel



Summit of Mont Aigoual (B)

At an altitude of 1,565 m, the climate is harsh: weather conditions are the same as they would be at 2,000 m elsewhere, with only four "frost-free" months a year. Winds of above 60 kph blow on 265 days a year, and the average annual temperature is 4.8°C. Trees do not have enough time to complete their life cycle. Local plant formations are those of the montane zone: subalpine short-grass prairies.

Attribution : © Nathalie Thomas



Mont Aigoual weather station (C)

Inaugurated in 1894, this infrastructure is France's last mountain weather station to be inhabited. Its history is closely linked to the reforestation of Mont Aigoual. It has become a high-performance weather station with an array of modern test instruments, measuring devices for extreme conditions, and a museum/exhibition on meteorology. The 800 sq m exhibition will tell you more about climatology on Mont Aigoual and about meteorology in general.

Attribution : © Météosite du Mont Aigoual



Seated (Marie-Hélène Richard) (D)

Far from town, paths open the door to new rhythms. Another vision of life and time lets us breathe in the ever-present contemplation, stones, trees and skies. A physical experience of coming face-to-face with nature. A bench made of wood and branches, whose back becomes thinner as it rises towards the sky, as if to turn back into a tree.

Attribution : © Filature du Mazel



The meteorological observatory (E)

Inaugurated in 1824, the meteorological observatory was built on the initiative of Georges Fabre, one of the pioneers of the reforestation of Mont Aigoual. His work with the botanist Charles Flahault enabled the creation of the arboretum of L'Hort de Dieu. The first meteorological data were gathered by agents from the French National Water and Forestry Commission. Since 1943, the observatory has been managed by the National Meteorological Office. It is France's last mountain weather station that is inhabited year-round.

Attribution : nathalie.thomas



A site for botanical experiments (F)

Marker 1

L'Hort de Dieu is located at an altitude of 1,300 m and shaped by an extreme climate. This site with its exceptional assets is a favoured study and experimentation zone for botanists. The tree collection is just over 100 years old, and some of the specimens are declining because of old age or else because they are not well-adapted to this mountain range. Today, there are 75 species left of the 140 that have been tested over the past century. To safeguard the interest of this heritage site, the Office National des Forêts and the Cévennes National Park are currently reflecting on renewing the collection.

Attribution : © Gaël Karczewski



Cell (Marie Gueydon de Dives) (G)

This artwork, natural in architecture but artificial in execution, represents a passage between the interior and exterior worlds. Posing or opposing while questioning the notions of limit, porousness and opening.

This work encourages you to come inside but feel outside. To be the contemplative eye, the receiving ear, the conscience that objectifies reality.

Attribution : © Filature du Mazel



Short-grass prairies and heath on the summit of Mont Aigoual (H)

Here, only species with a short reproductive cycle can settle due to the frequently glacial climate. The heath has been invaded by heather and mountain pine. This zone is barely wooded due to the violent winds and is comparable to subalpine vegetation, consisting of short-grass prairies and heather and blueberry moor. It is sometimes called pseudo-alpine.

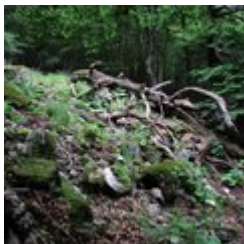
Attribution : nathalie.thomas



The evolution of plant life (I)

At the pass stands a schist menhir (standing stone). To the north, in Trépaloup ravine, hewn flint implements bear witness to a human presence in the region since prehistoric times. Palynological analyses (studies of pollen fossilised in peatbogs) have allowed scientists to piece together the plant life on Mont Aigoual from 8,000 to 5,000 BC. Pine predominated, accompanied by birch and hazelnut. Then pine populations gradually diminished. The damp climate warmed up, favouring the spread of oak and hazelnut. Finally, the increased damp and cloud cover at altitude allowed fir and beech to develop. From the end of the first century BC, the substantial percentage of grasses shows that forest had receded in favour of pasture and prairies. This was the start of the great deforestation.

Attribution : nathalie.thomas



A site for botanical experiments (J)

Marker 1

L'Hort de Dieu is located at an altitude of 1,300 m and shaped by an extreme climate. This site with its exceptional assets is a favoured study and experimentation zone for botanists. The tree collection is just over 100 years old, and some of the specimens are declining because of old age or else because they are not well-adapted to this mountain range. Today, there are 75 species left of the 140 that have been tested over the past century. To safeguard the interest of this heritage site, the Office National des Forêts and the Cévennes National Park are currently reflecting on renewing the collection.

Attribution : © Gaël Karczewski



🌲 Creeping pine or mountain pine? (K)

Marker 2

The pine trees look different from one side of the path to the other. At the upper limit of Europe's mountain forests grows a “prostrate” pine called creeping pine. To ascertain whether its shape – which is different from the mountain pine's – was due to violent winds or genetics, Flahault planted the two trees next to each other. He was thus proved that this particularity was due to genetics, and that these are indeed two different species. In complete contrast with the original conditions, the creeping pine is now dominated by the other trees and poised to disappear.

Attribution : © Yves Maccagno



🌲 Restoring the forest (L)

Marker 3

Several forestry dynamics can be seen here:
on the left, natural evolution: the rocky ridges have herbaceous and shrubby vegetation and are gradually being colonised by oak and whitebeam. This overgrowth tends to be detrimental to certain species, such as the Apollo butterfly.
opposite, natural regrowth of the beech forest from over-exploited 19th-century coppices.
on the high slopes, on the right, assisted forest development: conifers have been introduced among the naturally growing deciduous trees.

Attribution : © Régis Descamps



🌲 Did you say “chourradou”? (M)

Marker 4

This remarkable beech is over 200 years old and called chourradou in Occitan, after the sheep that would chourrer (ruminate) and rest under its shady canopy. This kind of tree (large cavity, detached bark and dead wood) is home above all to saproxylic or dead-wood-eating insects and fungi. On another of these old beeches, below the path, you can see a large lichen called lobaria pulmonaria, which needs a lot of water and is highly sensible to atmospheric pollution. It grows very slowly and thus testifies to the ripe old age of this part of the forest.

Attribution : © Mario Kleczewski



Alpine garden (N)

Marker 5

This panel shows the legacy of Charles Flahault's experimental work.

Attribution : © J.-P. Grandmont