

Cros: the silk trail

Gard



(© R. Castanet)



As you travel through a valley shaped by silkworm farming, every step shows you signs of this commercial activity, now abandoned.

At Cros, mulberry trees were first recorded in the early 18th century. In fact, it all started with that tree, whose leaf is indispensable for feeding the manhan (Occitan for silkworm, spelled magnan in French.) Silkworm breeding takes a few weeks from April to July and requires a large workforce as well as specific rooms, the magnaneries. Cros was also home to several spinning-mills that transformed the precious cocoons into silk thread.

Useful information

Practice : Sentiers de découverte

Duration : 1 h 30

Length : 2.1 km

Trek ascent : 96 m

Difficulty : Very easy

Type : Boucle

Themes : Histoire et culture, Agriculture et élevage

Trek

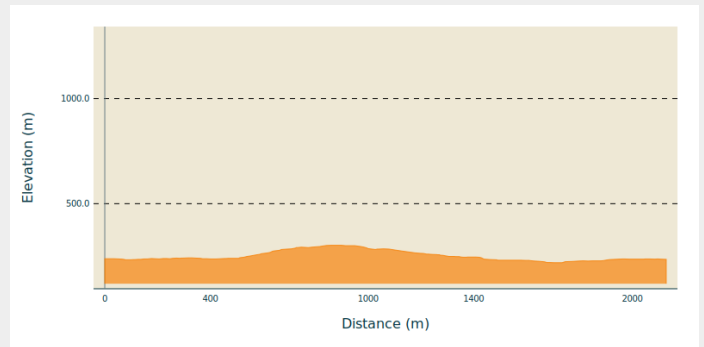
Departure : The Temple (Protestant church) in Les Mazades

Arrival : The Temple (Protestant church) in Les Mazades

Markings :  Balisage jaune et mobilier signalétique

Cities : 1. Cros

Altimetric profile



Min elevation 223 m Max elevation 307 m

On your path...



L'oustalet des Italiennes (A)
From crops to forest (C)
La Mazade hamlet (E)
The spinning-mills (G)

Les Arnaudes mill (B)
The terraces of Mas Bourguet (D)
The Vidourle (F)

All useful information

How to come ?

Access

From Saint-Hippolyte du Fort, D1 69 upstream along the Vidourle river.

Advised parking

Car park behind the temple (Protestant church).

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 Piémont Cévenol, Saint-Hippolyte-du-Fort

Cour d'honneur des Casernes, 30170 Saint Hippolyte du Fort

tourisme@piemontcevenol.fr

Tel : 06 45 85 75 25

<https://www.piemont-cevenol-tourisme.com/>



Source



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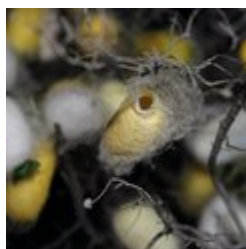
<http://www.piemont-cevenol.fr/>



Parc national des Cévennes

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

On your path...



L'oustalet des Italiennes (A)

This little house (oustalet) contained lodgings for the female workers, mostly from Italy, who were employed during silkworm breeding, to pick mulberry trees and, after the spinning-mills had been built, to unravel the cocoons.

Local labour was also very important – everyone swung into action.

Attribution : © Manon Lanière



Les Arnaudes mill (B)

Like all mills at Cros, this one worked with a water reservoir, filled via a béal (canal) from the Vidourle river upstream. This wheat mill still has its millstones, engraved with the date of 1716. The first floor was set out as a magnanerie – a room dedicated to silkworm breeding – which was used until the 20th century. Some of the mulberry trees that supplied the worms' food still stand in the surrounding area.

Attribution : © Manon Lanière



From crops to forest (C)

Today, the village's land is largely wooded, the forest having progressively spread since planting of crops and intensive farm use came to an end in the second half of the 20th century. Since the Middle Ages, land use in the Vidourle valley, as in all valleys in the lower Cévennes, had been divided into three, using a system that can be described by the Latin terms hortus (gardens), ager (cereal crops, meadows, grapevines and fruit trees), saltus (sheep pasture, chestnut trees, etc.)

Attribution : © Yves Maccagno



The terraces of Mas Bourguet (D)

On the opposite slope of La Fage mountain, Mas Bourguet has a substantial spring, which ensures the village's water supply. On the entire slope, terraces have been laid out to make cultivation possible. Stairs built into the thickness of the retaining walls let people pass from one terrace to the next. Everything is constructed out of dry stones, meaning without any mortar.

Attribution : © R. Castanet



La Mazade hamlet (E)

The municipality of Cros consists of some ten hamlets. La Mazade (the Occitan word for hamlet) is one of the largest. In this plunging perspective, you can see, from right to left: the Protestant church; the Perrier spinning-mill; a house that has had a top floor added to set up a magnanerie; the Daudé spinning-mill; and other residences whose uppermost floors were used as magnaneries.

Attribution : © R. Castanet



The Vidourle (F)

The Vidourle, a Cevenol torrent whose spring is at Saint-Roman de Codières, is a fickle waterway: almost dry in the summer, it can cause terrible floods in the autumn (the so-called Vidourlades), as it did on 17 September 2014. As it crosses Cros, the Vidourle even disappears underground, to reappear just before Saint-Hippolyte du Fort. Between Saint-Hippolyte and Sauve, it is once again subterranean, before re-emerging as the Fon de Sauve, which was long believed to be a real spring.

Attribution : © R. Castanet



The spinning-mills (G)

Spinning-mills were not built at Cros until late, in the mid-19th century. Before that, the thread unravelled from the cocoons was sold at the Alès fair (24 August) or directly to the spinning-mills in Saint-Hippolyte and the wider region. Two spinning-mills were constructed within a decade: the Perrier mill in 1847 and the Daudé mill in 1856. They both closed in the 1920s, due to a lack of cocoons and outlets.

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