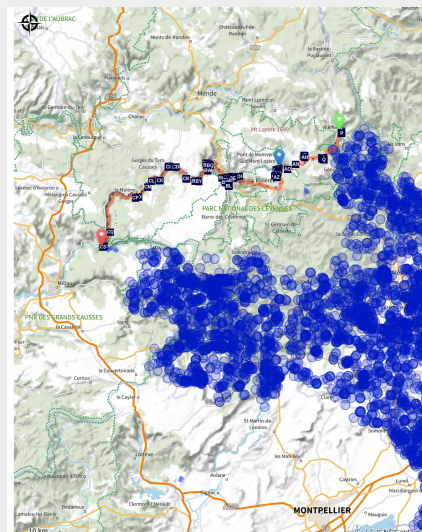


GR® 736 Tarn gorge and valley

Cévennes



Topo Gorges et vallée du Tarn



A 300 km circuit between Villefort and Albi which will let you explore the river Tarn and its valley.

This hike between Mont Lozère and the Tarn gorge takes you through diverse landscapes with a wealth of natural heritage and villages with varied and typical architecture based on granite, limestone and schist.

The route is also multi-purpose. Find out how to do part of the circuit by canoe, mountain-bike or e-bike or else with a donkey. Enjoy different ways of discovering the river Tarn using non-motorised means of locomotion !

Useful information

Practice : Pédestre

Duration : 5 days

Length : 125.9 km

Trek ascent : 4399 m

Difficulty : Hard

Type : Itinérance

Themes : Transports en commun, Faune et flore, Architecture et village, Histoire et culture, Agriculture et élevage, Eau et géologie

Trek

Departure : Villefort

Arrival : Le Rozier

Markings :  GR®

Cities : 1. Villefort

2. Pourcharesses

3. Saint-André-Capcèze

4. Pontails-et-Brésis

5. Concoules

6. Pont de Montvert - Sud Mont Lozère

7. Vialas

8. Cassagnas

9. Cans et Cévennes

10. Florac Trois Rivières

11. Bédouès-Cocurès

12. Gorges du Tarn Causses

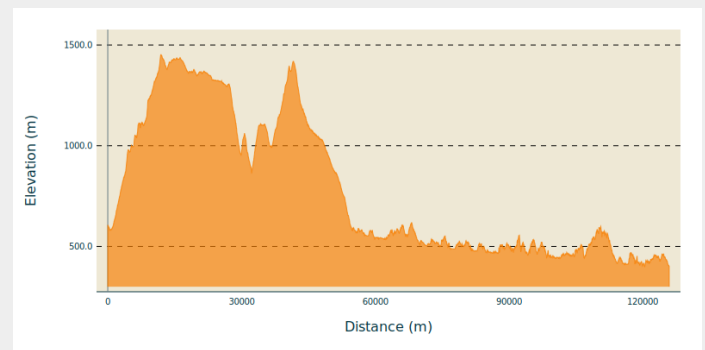
13. La Malène

14. Masegros Causses Gorges

15. Saint-Pierre-des-Tripiers

16. Le Rozier

Altimetric profile

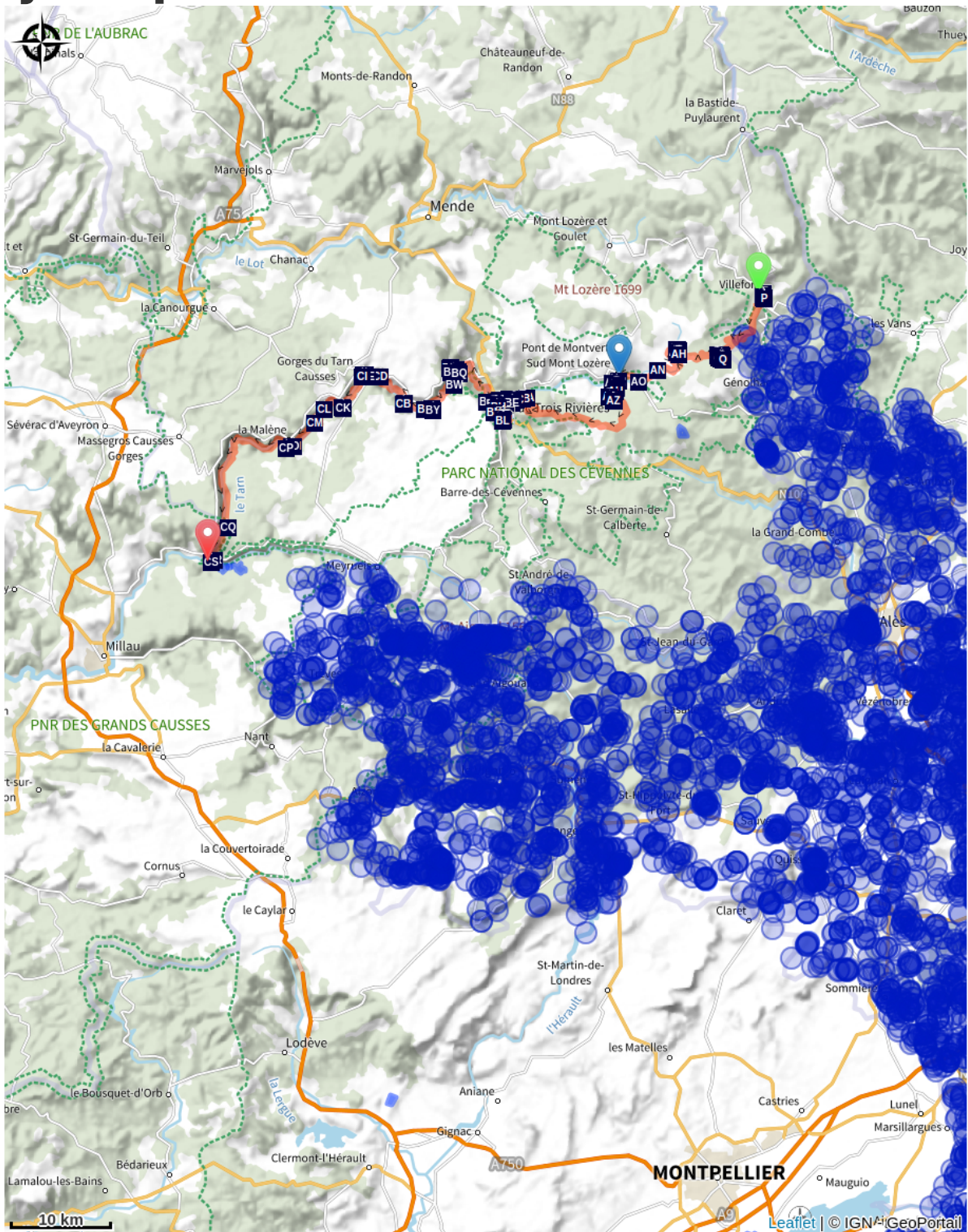


Min elevation 400 m Max elevation 1448 m

Only the section of the GR® long-distance hiking path that crosses the Cévennes National Park (from Villefort to Le Rozier) is presented here.

The official guidebook for the GR® 736 by the Fédération Française de randonnée pédestre (FFRandonnée, French hiking federation) has been published in spring 2023. You can find it on sale in the Maisons du tourisme et du Parc (joint tourist office and National Park information centres), the online shop at www.cevennes-parcnational.fr, in bookshops and sports shops and at <https://boutique.ffrandonnee.fr>

On your path...



- Lavoir (A)
- Religious buildings and pilgrimages (C)
- Rue de la Bourgade (E)
- Merchants and craftsmen (G)
- The Regordane Way (I)

- River network (B)
- The fairs at Villefort (D)
- The origins of Villefort (F)
- Troubled times (H)
- Stone architecture (J)

Rue de l'Église (K)
The tourism boom (M)

The sweet chestnut (L)
Place de l'Ormeau (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

NB: For a variety of reasons, there may be differences between the actual waymarks and the route shown in the guidebook.

Please follow the waymarks.

Make sure your equipment is appropriate for a multi-day hike as well as for 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 any gates and barriers behind you.

Bivouacking in the Cévennes National Park is regulated. Get informed at La Maison du tourisme et du Parc (joint tourist office and National Park information centre) in Florac-Trois-Rivières (tel. 04 66 45 01 14).

How to come ?

Transports

Summer only bus lines

- line 254 La Garde Guérin - Villefort - Bagnols les bains - Mende
- line 253 Mende - Bagnols les bains - Mont Lozère
- line 261 Mont Lozère - Pont de Montvert - Florac
- line 258 Florac - Le Rozier

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

Access

Villefort on the D906 from Génolhac or on the D901 via 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'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 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 Randonnée Pédestre

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

On your path...



Lavoir (A)

This 19th-century granite washing place has two basins. Laundry was beaten in the large basin using a washing bat, then rinsed in the clear water of the smaller basin which was fed by the river. You can still see the traces of soot from the stoves used to boil water. This lively site, where the grievances and joys of the washerwomen resounded, was in use until the 1950s.

Attribution : OT Mont Lozère

River network (B)

The river Palhères flows through Villefort on its way down from Mont Lozère. It goes through one of the two mismatched Gothic arches of Saint Jean bridge. This humpback bridge dates from the 14th century. Two rivers flow through the centre of the village, under Place du Bosquet. Having become unsanitary after being used as drains and latrines, they were vaulted over for reasons of hygiene in 1934. This created both the square and Rue des Jardins.

Religious buildings and pilgrimages (C)

Rue de Rome leads to Saint-Jean Chapel, also called gleisetto (little church). In the Middle Ages, sick pilgrims or pilgrims looking for a roof for the night were welcomed in this former Romanesque chapel-turned-residence. A leper colony was attached to it. Further north, Saint-Loup-et-Saint-Roch Chapel overlooks the Lake. It was built to look exactly like a Romanesque edifice of the 12th or 13th century, on the precise site where a hermit, who had followed the example set by St-Loup, had his shelter. It has been restored several times. St-Loup is the region's patron saint; St-Roch has been associated with him since the 1720 plague. Two pilgrimages persist to this day: on 29 July for St-Loup and on 16 August for St-Roch.

The fairs at Villefort (D)

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.



Rue de la Bourgade (E)

At the southern end of Rue de la Bourgade is the birthplace of Odilon Barrot (1791-1873), an eminent barrister at the Toulouse parliament and the court of appeal, parliamentarian, president of the council of ministers, etc. A plaque was put up on the wall in 1991. In this street, you can also see two lintels dated 1617 and 1620 respectively, as well as a third that has been sculpted to indicate a blacksmith's workshop (on a house near Avenue de la Gare).

Attribution : © Guy Grégoire

The origins of Villefort (F)

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.

Merchants and craftsmen (G)

Local crafts first emerged in the Middle Ages. In the late 18th century, lead mining began in the area, affording farmers another source of income. A foundry was built upstream of the village. A century later, the attraction of industry and the city led to a rural exodus and the decline of trade and crafts.

Troubled times (H)

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.

The Regordane Way (I)

The Regordane Way linking Alès (Gard) and Luc (Lozère) is a section of the important route that connected Lower Languedoc and the Auvergne in the Middle Ages. It facilitated trade between the Mediterranean basin and parts of the Kingdom of France. The mule-drivers that used it – known locally as Régordans or Rigourdiens – transported oil, wine and salt. It was also a religious path, taking pilgrims called Romieux to Saint Gilles. It was progressively abandoned in the 14th century, when the port at Marseille and the fairs in Lyon grew in importance. Ruts left by cartwheels can still be seen north of Prévencières (between Le Thort and La Molette) and near Saint-André-Capcèze.

Stone architecture (J)

The architecture of Villefort's old buildings is typical for one-street villages:

- the houses with the two vaulted porches were once inns, tradesmen's or artisans' shops: one of the porches was used to store merchandise, the other to display it;
- the sculpted lintels above the entrances to some houses on Rue de l'Eglise and Rue de la Bourgade bear witness to the activities of former occupants;
- several facades have handsome mullioned windows from the Renaissance.

Rue de l'Église (K)

The town hall is a former private mansion of the 15th century, with a spiral staircase and ground-floor rooms with vaulted ceilings. The lintel behind the gate comes from a fortified house in the village of Bayard, which is now under the waters of the Lake. On the facade of the 16th century house opposite is a finely crafted mullion window.

- The oldest house in the village is a listed monument and dates from the 14th century. It has Gothic windows and a pulley system once used to bring forage into the loft.
- An archway giving onto an internal courtyard shows you mediaeval walls made from large regular blocks.
- Two lintels bear Christ's monogramme: IHS, Iesus Hominum Salvator (Jesus saviour of mankind). One instance is followed by the inscription Ave Maria.

The sweet chestnut (L)

In 1900, sweet chestnuts were the main farm produce. The nuts of this so-called "bread tree" fed many families as well as their farm animals. Chestnut-growing is a year-round activity, but is especially busy at harvest time. Harvesters would meet in the evening for a brousillade (chestnuts roasted on a wood fire). When parts of the rural population left, many chestnut orchards were abandoned while others were cut down for their tannin to be extracted. Chestnut bleeding canker and chestnut blight, diseases caused by mushrooms, also killed off a great number of trees. Today, chestnut farming in the Cévennes is being revived with a focus on quality.

The tourism boom (M)

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.

Place de l'Ormeau (N)

Villefort's former market square, Place de l'Ormeau hosted Clédou market on Thursday mornings until the 1980s. The square teemed with smells and colours. Livestock, meat, vegetables, grains and chestnuts were sold here, especially in the 19th century. The lime tree on the square was planted on 11 November 1920 as a “victory tree” so that future generations might remember their ancestors' fight for freedom during the First World War. The Maison Chambon, with its double-archway entrance, has an inscribed lintel: Metre lehan Martin 1595, flanked by a diamond shape and a heart.