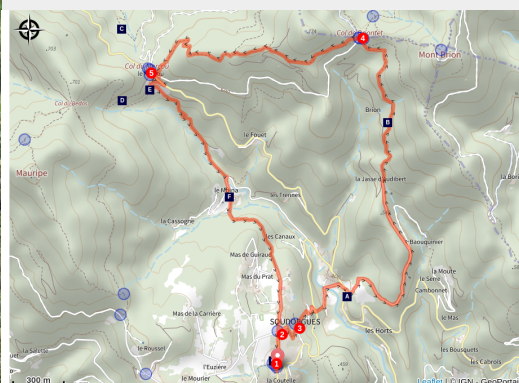


Le Briontet

CEVENNES



En chemin... (Nathalie Thomas)



Walk in the footsteps of history: the Peyre tower and its secrets, the King's dragoons searching for Camisards in very remote spots, and Resistance hideouts during World War II.

This is a pretty walk through the history of the Soudorgues area, a strategic point of passage to the continental Cévennes. Here, the freedom of religion and of the homeland were fervently defended in a natural environment that is both generous and protective.

Useful information

Practice : Pédestre

Duration : 2 h 30

Length : 7.6 km

Trek ascent : 414 m

Difficulty : Easy

Type : Boucle

Themes : Histoire et culture, Faune et flore

Trek

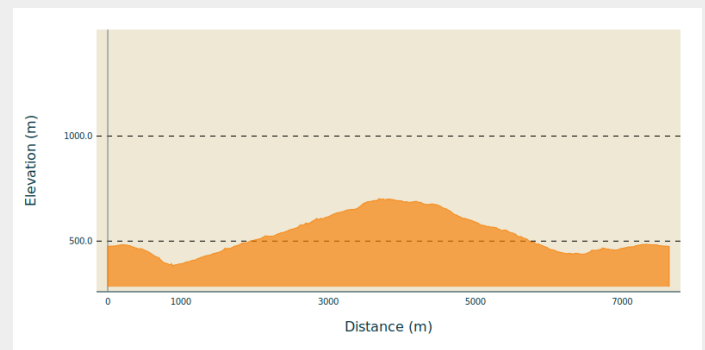
Departure : Soudorgues

Arrival : Soudorgues

Markings : — Balisage jaune et mobilier signalétique

Cities : 1. Soudorgues
2. Peyrolles

Altimetric profile



Min elevation 389 m Max elevation 707 m

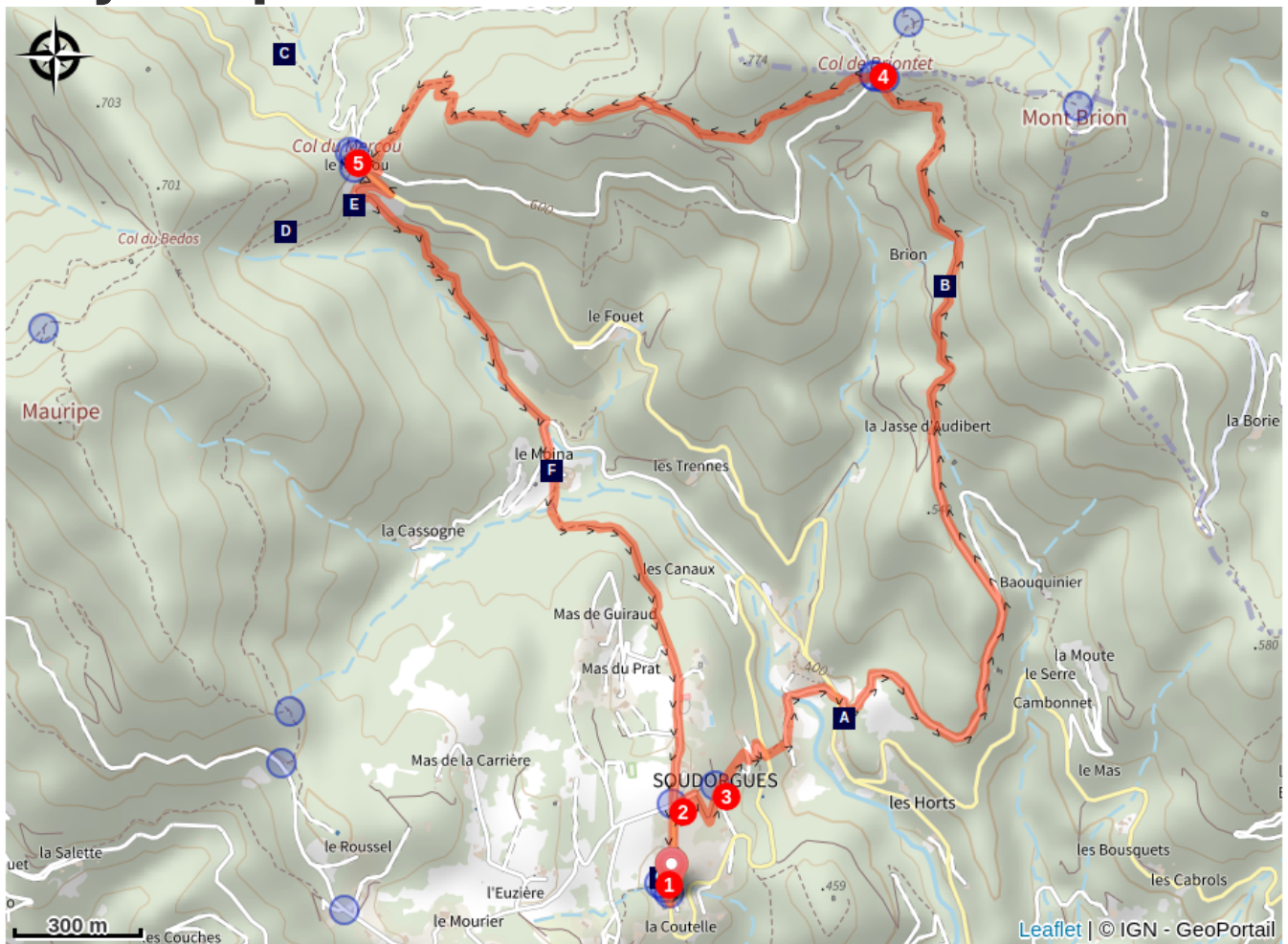
Signposts will guide you all along this route, as well as yellow painted waymarks. In the description below, the signposted place names and/or directions are given in **bold italics** between quotation marks:

Start 50 metres before the mairie (town hall) of Soudorgues, at the **“Soudorgues”** car park.

1. Walk to **“Mairie de Soudorgues”** and then to **“Col de Briontet”** via
2. **“Les quatre chemins”** and
3. **“Caserne des Dragons”**.
4. At **“Col de Briontet”**, head to **“Col de Mercou”** on the GR®61 long-distance hiking path.
5. At **“Col de Mercou”**, take the D39 road downhill on the left to Mercou then to **“Soudorgues”** via **“Les quatre chemins” (2)** and **“Mairie de Soudorgues” (1)**.

NB. At **“Mercou”**, continue on the road for a few metres before turning right to walk past a building below the road, then turn left amidst the terraces onto a path that goes downhill to Soudorgues via La Moina.

On your path...



- Les Horts hamlet (A)
- Cobbled paths and retaining walls (C)
- The King's dragoons and the dragonnade (E)
- The stone or umbrella pine (G)
- Peyre tower (B)
- Draille (D)
- Les caches des prédicants (F)

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. Take enough water. Please close all gates and barriers behind you.

How to come ?

Transports

LiO is the regional public transport service of the Occitanie/ Pyrénées - Méditerranée region. It facilitates everyone's movements by prioritising public transport. For more information, go to the lio Occitanie app or visit. <https://www.mestrajets.lio.laregion.fr>

(in term time)

Access

From Lasalle take the D39 towards L'Estréchure for about 4 km, then turn left onto the D271 to Soudorgues.

Advised parking

Car park on the right, 50 m before the Mairie (town hall).

Source



CC Causses Aigoual Cévennes Terres Solidaires

<http://www.caussesaignoualcevennes.fr/>



Parc national des Cévennes

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

On your path...



Les Horts hamlet (A)

The hamlet got its name from the Latin hortus, meaning garden. The presence of many springs and waterways contributed to the expansion of dry-stone terraces for growing crops (bancels or faïsses). Les Horts had a watermill.

Attribution : Nathalie Thomas



Peyre tower (B)

The Peyre tower may have been built in the 10th century. It has long been considered a signal tower, where fires would have been lit to signal danger or any other event from valley to valley (66 towers or active posts have been listed in the Cévennes). It has also been identified as one of the eight watchtowers that guarded the northern route, also in the 10th c. A third hypothesis sees it as the defensive tower of a castle.

Built on a rectangular floor plan measuring 9 metres by 6 metres, it is 12 metres high. Its Romanesque style is typical of the 12th to 13th centuries.

Attribution : Béatrice Galzin



Cobbled paths and retaining walls (C)

Under your feet, you will see traces of all this old built road heritage on the paths. Cobblestones make roads more comfortable and suitable for vehicles.

The retaining walls are regular and, in places, built on very steep areas or carved into the rock. The traces left by humanity are impressive.

After the Château de Bussas, you will see piled-up tyres by the side of the path. There is also a thick cable. The taut-cable system made it possible to transport materials and wood all the way to the road. When the load arrived, it had sometimes picked up too much speed because of its weight. The pile of tyres was there to stop it.

Attribution : Béatrice Galzin



Draille (D)

The rocky path becomes wider and has stone reinforcements on the downhill side, which shows that it was once used by large herds. This draille led from Saint-Jean-du-Gard to the summer pastures on Mont Aigoual. At the Col de Mercou pass (570 m), there are panoramic views northwards over the Corniche des Cevennes. The pass was once a site for trade and commerce, with its own market. Its name is derived from Mercury, the god of travellers and commerce. There are also references to Melkart, a Phoenician deity: Semitic traders left traces of their passage here in the architecture of the old proto-historic bridges. Melkart or Melqart was the tutelary god of the city of Tyre - whose name means "strong king" in Phoenician - and was the god of riches, industry and navigation. He was worshipped in the tenth century BC.

Attribution : © Nathalie Thomas



The King's dragoons and the dragonnade (E)

Three-quarters of local Huguenots (Protestants) renounced their faith due to the "missionaries in boots", meaning the dragoons. The dragonnade was the name given to Huguenots being forced to house these soldiers of the King, who then pillaged and mistreated them into renouncing their faith. The dragoons met with a unique resistance in the Camisard War (1702 to 1705), during which 3,000 Protestants in white shirts defied 30,000 red dragoons. The dragoons were on horseback, booted and armed with sabres a metre-and-a-half long, which was not very practical on small paths, during this guerilla war.

Attribution : Nathalie Thomas



Les caches des prédicants (F)

From 1685, the so-called “wilderness period” began for Protestants, who were forced to follow their faith with clandestine preaching in isolated spots. In the Soudorgues area, these included Villeméjeanne (called Campan), Les Bousquets, Espaze, La Faux and Grevault du Bedos (a mas or farm near the pass of the same name). They took refuge in caves or with locals. The Mas du Moina had several hiding-places. One, in the stables of the residential building, had an arrowslit to be able to see the Dragoons arrive. Near Soudorgues, hiding-places have been identified at Mas Novis, Euzière and Viala (in the hamlet of Horts). Their good-hearted inhabitants risked having their farms destroyed and being sent to the galleys for life. A little further, beyond Mas Guiraud, there is still a flat-topped rock known as Le Templas, which has a very narrow entrance. About 20 people could fit into it for religious gatherings.

Attribution : © Nathalie Thomas



The stone or umbrella pine (G)

In the distance in the Lasalle valley there is dense, dark green vegetation. The stone or umbrella pine has a very characteristic opened-out shape, which resembles an umbrella from a distance. This conifer is at home especially in the Mediterranean basin. It prefers dry, deep and cool soils. Its bark is reddish and cracked. Its fruit, the pine nut, is often used in pastry cooking.

Attribution : Béatrice Galzin