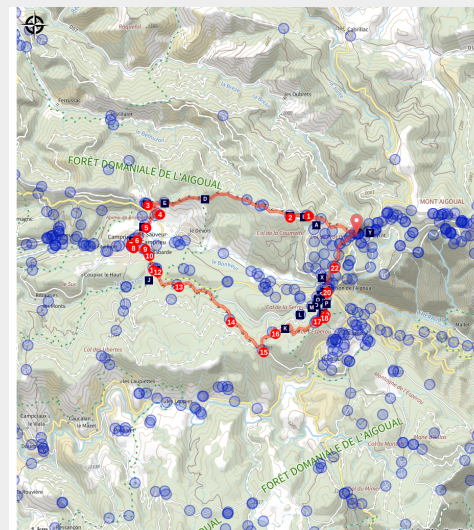


MTB 9 - The 5 Bonheur passes

Cévennes



Pré au dessus de Camprieu (Béatrice Galzin)



This rather uneven and technical downhill circuit allows you to discover the perched Bonheur valley and the pretty panorama of the surrounding forests and peaks. From the Col de la Serreyrède pass, you also have handsome views onto the south side of the Aigoual massif before beginning your climb back to the starting point.

Useful information

Practice : Mountain Bike

Duration : 2 h 42

Length : 18.8 km

Trek ascent : 564 m

Difficulty : Hard

Type : Boucle

Themes : Architecture et village,
Milieu naturel, Histoire et culture,
Agriculture et élevage

Trek

Departure : Part Peyrot

Arrival : Part Peyrot

Markings : ➡ VTT

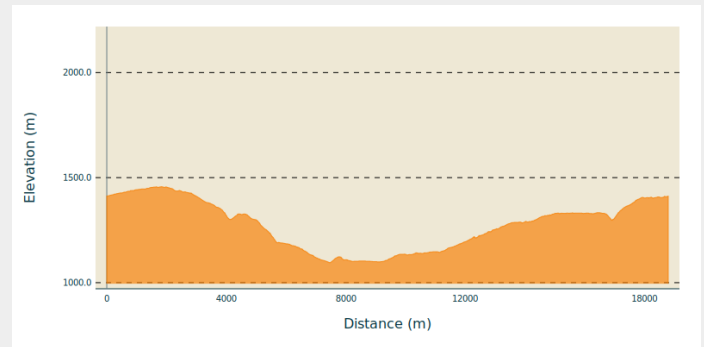
Cities : 1. Meyrueis

2. Val-d'Aigoual

3. Saint-Sauveur-Camprieu

4. Dourbies

Altimetric profile



Min elevation 1098 m Max elevation 1466 m

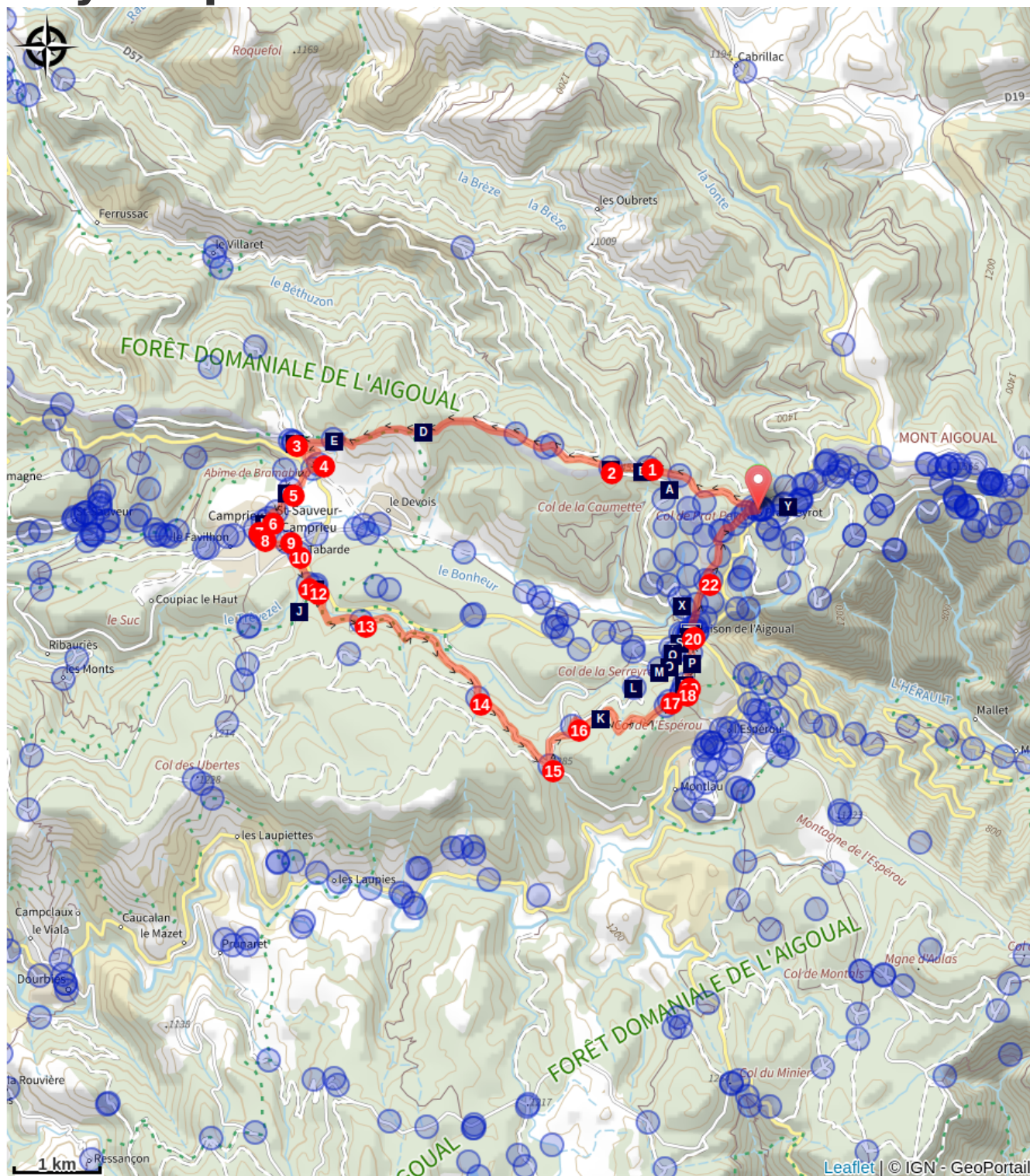
Signposts will guide you all along this route. In the description below, the signposted place names and/or directions are given in **bold italics** between quotation marks:

Starting from "**Station de Prat Peyrot**", head towards "**La Croix de Fer**" on the GR® 6 trail via the two crossroads

1. "**Les Fayards**" and
2. "**Col de la Caumette**".
On your descent, make sure to turn left onto the single-lane path and continue to "**La Croix de Fer**"; leave the GR® 6 behind.
3. At "**La Croix de Fer**", turn left towards
4. "**L'Aubespî**",
5. "**Perte de Bramabiau**" and "**Mairie**".
6. At the "**Mairie**", turn right, go through the village towards
7. "**La Croix basse**",
8. "**Camprieu**", then towards "**Maison du bois**" via
9. "**Le Cros**",
10. "**Tabarde**".
11. At the "**Maison du bois**", head towards "**Col de Faubel**" via
12. "**Tailladette**",
13. "**Taillade**",
14. "**Bois de l'Agre**".
15. At the "**Col de Faubel**" pass, go towards "**Col de l'Espérrou**" via
16. "**La pépinière**",
17. "**Montlau**", then turn towards "**Col de la Serreyrède**" via
18. At "**Col de l'Espérrou**" go to
19. "**Serre de Favatel**",
20. "**Trevezel**".
21. At the "**Col de la Serreyrède**" pass, climb back up on the drovers' road (GR® 7) to "**Station de Prat-Peyrot**" via
22. "**Le Fangas**".

This circuit is taken from the guidebook **Massif de l'Aigoual**, published by the communauté de communes Causses Aigoual Cévennes as part of the collection Espaces naturels gardois and the label Gard Pleine Nature.

On your path...



 The black woodpecker (A)

The salt road (C)

Wetlands (E)

The Bonheur river (G)

 The Mont Aigoual forest (I)

 Beech trees and the Mont Aigoual forest (B)

From canons to the King's Road (D)

Col de la Croix de Fer pass (F)

Camprieu (H)

 The hidden life of the forest (J)

 The Aigoual forest (K)
Peat bog and acclimatisation
garden (M)

 Woodpecker nesting chambers (L)
Multi-purpose forest (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

Caution: patous (livestock guard dogs)! Seek advice on how to behave near these dogs from tourist offices and National Park information centres.

Before committing yourself to a circuit, ensure that it is suitable for your activity level and ability. You must wear a helmet. Protective equipment is recommended. Respect other road users and stay in control of your speed and trajectory. Make sure your equipment is appropriate for the day's weather conditions. Remember that the weather changes quickly in the mountains. Take enough water. Please close all gates and barriers behind you. No off-roading.

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, call 08 10 33 42 73 or go to www.laregion.fr

Access

From Valleraugue, take the D 986 towards L'Espérou, then towards col de la Serreyrède. At the Col (pass), take the D 269 towards mont Aigoual (4 km) – park at the Prat-Peyrot car park.

Advised parking

Prat Peyrot

Information desks

Tourism & national parc'house

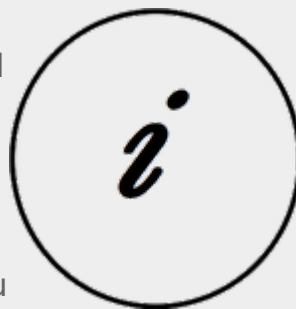
Col de la Serreyrède, 30570 Val d'Aigoual

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/>



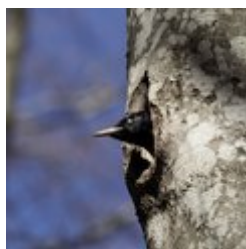
Parc national des Cévennes

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



Pôle Nature Aigoual

On your path...



The black woodpecker (A)

The black woodpecker is the largest of our woodpeckers and reappeared in the massif in 1936. Gripping wood with its claw, supported by its very stiff tail, it hammers a large hole (diameter over 30 cm) into the trunk of a beech: its nesting chamber, in which it will reproduce. The hole must be located over 6 m above ground, and its oval entrance must open onto a clear space to facilitate take-off. Abundant food must be available: ant hills; diseased or dead conifers that the black woodpecker will riddle with holes to extract larvae; pine or spruce cones that it will wedge into those holes to pick out the seeds. You may hear its call, a powerful “kree-kree”!

Attribution : Jean-Pierre.Malafosse



Beech trees and the Mont Aigoual forest (B)

Beech is the main species of the Mont Aigoual forest, which consists of a large variety of trees adapted to the diverse soil types and exposure. Like most deciduous trees, beech stumps put out many shoots after a tree has been felled. Foresters select the best of these for timber. Old beeches can attain remarkable sizes, such as the beech in Le Suquet forest in the municipality of Camprieux, a vestige of the original forest that has come down to us through the centuries and has a circumference of six metres and a height of 25!

Attribution : Gaël Karczewski



The salt road (C)

La Caumette pass is on a former salt road. From Antiquity to modern times, salt has been a precious merchandise used for preserving food and tanning leather. Salt has always been traded and taxed during its transport inland from the Mediterranean coast. The sentry box at the pass was built in the 16th or 17th century at a strategic point at the crossroads of several roads, both to levy the salt tax and for surveillance against smuggling.

Attribution : nathalie.thomas



From canons to the King's Road (D)

Have you noticed that you are on an ancient path? Let's plunge into history... Around the year 1000, this track was called Camin Ferrat and was used by transhumant shepherds and their flocks, pilgrims and merchants between Meyrueis and Le Vigan. From the latter, it passed through Mandagout, L'Espérou and the Col de la Serreyrède pass before descending to Bonheur Abbey and going back up to La Croix de Fer and reaching Meyrueis. This important mule track enabled trade between the Mediterranean and Meyruies. The Baron de Roquefueil, the region's lord, had an abbey built below it, in the Bonheur valley, to aid travellers lost in the mountains. In the late 11th century, he founded a religious community of six canons who performed religious services and, in bad weather, rang the "bell for the lost" at regular times to guide passers-by in danger. The Abbey was abandoned in 1790. In the 18th century, the Camin Ferrat was disused in favour of the King's Road, which you follow from the Col de la Caumette pass to Meyrueis. This new route went via the Col de la Serreyrède and the Col de la Caumette, after which it followed the ridge. The wall that you walk alongside from La Caumette and La Croix de Fer might be a vestige of the King's Road or else the limit of the Bonheur Abbey estate. The secret remains, only our ancestors knew...

Attribution : Béatrice Galzin



Wetlands (E)

Above the path, the soft sound of trickling water... These are wetlands, a fragile zone that must be protected. The peatbog is made up of rushes, sedge and many types of moss, such as sphagnum. Numerous insects live here, such as the large marsh grasshopper and dragonflies, as well as the common frog. If you make little noise, you may see deer here, or other animals that have come to cool down.

Attribution : MALAFOSSE Jean-Pierre



Col de la Croix de Fer pass (F)

At the col de la Croix de Fer pass, which is a strategic crossroads of several tracks, there used to be an inn for travellers. The magnificent ruin with its two impressive vaults was also a sizeable farm, owned by the Baron de Roquedols. It was located at the limit of the municipalities of Meyrueis and St-Sauveur-Camprieu on the route of the Camin Ferrat and the King's Road. In the days of religious persecution, the preacher François Vivens* organised secret Protestant gatherings in the small valley just below the buildings. (*Vivens was killed in 1692, 10 years before the Camisard War)

Attribution : nelly Carel



The Bonheur river (G)

The Bramabiau site is an example of a karst spring. Here, slightly east of Camprieu, the Bonheur River has dug into the Causse (limestone plateau) and disappears in a natural tunnel. It re-emerges into the open at the bottom of the Aven de Balset, but it twists to the south to disappear again below ground. The river meanders through more than 10 km of tunnels. Then, 700 horizontal meters from its sinkhole, it reappears as a spring! The rock walls of the narrow canyon magnify the sound of its waters and add to its rumbling some acoustic vibrations that are close to a gigantic roaring. This is no longer the tranquil Bonheur, it is the tumultuous Bramabiau.

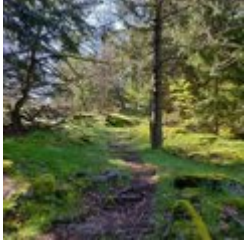
Attribution : nathalie.thomas



Camprieu (H)

In the 19th century, the village streets were bustling year-round with a throng of artisans, labourers and shopkeepers, who lived in these modest mountain houses that were also suitable for livestock rearing. Camprieu had: two cobblers, six clog makers, two basket makers, one carpenter, two wheelwrights, two farriers, one miller, two stonemasons, one glassworks, one sawmill, one dairy, two grocer's shops, a haberdashery and ironmonger's and one shop for ladies' "fashion and dresses". There was also a cheese cellar that produced Roquefort until 1932, a hotel and an inn.

Attribution : nathalie.thomas



🌿 The Mont Aigoual forest (I)

“Aigoual, Forêt d’Exception”

The French Forestry Office, which manages state forests, launched a programme in 2013 called “Aigoual, Forêt d’Exception” (Aigoual: An Exceptional Forest) with the aim of highlighting the massif’s natural and cultural heritage. The Forestry Office thus tries to foreground the different aspects of its multi-faceted management: production, protection and receiving visitors. One key aspect of this approach, which complements other initiatives by local actors, is to improve visitors’ experience in the forest.

Attribution : Béatrice Galzin



🌿 The hidden life of the forest (J)

Trees grow upwards towards the light while mosses benefit from their shade on the ground and spread out. Like soft cushions or carpets, they hug everything that sticks out of the ground, such as old tree stumps. This soft felted surface is pleasing to see, and an undergrowth without mosses would not be worthy of the name. Legend has it that mosses show which way is north.

Wrong!

Mosses indicate a degree of moisture; they protect the soil from drying out by retaining every last drop of dew. They prepare pockets of humus for the future occupants: grasses and herbaceous plants. They also love the damp of tree trunks and can grow there, on the side that is most exposed to the prevailing rains.

Attribution : Béatrice Galzin



🌿 The Aigoual forest (K)

In the 19th century, Mont Aigoual was almost totally bare of trees. Intensive use of the forest and the pressure of transhumant grazing together with the harsh local climate caused devastating floods. The rich vegetation of the grazing grounds was replaced by heather pastures and many gullies. In the valleys huddling at the foot of Mont Aigoual, terrible floods pushing tons of stones downstream carried off roads and pastureland. In response, a reforestation programme was launched in the second half of the 19th century, which created the forest you see today. Nowadays, the forested Aigoual massif protects the valleys while at the same time providing a space for economic production, biodiversity and leisure.

Attribution : © Olivier Prohin

Woodpecker nesting chambers (L)

Marker 5

If you look up, you will see two oval holes on the beech trunks. They are black-woodpecker nesting chambers. This jet black bird with its red “beret” is the largest of Europe's woodpeckers, and rather timid. Its diet consists of ants and insects living in wood. Its prowess at hammering and digging seems quite out of proportion to its size. The opening you see gives onto a chamber with a volume of about 30 litres, which a woodpecker has dug out of healthy wood, using only its bill as a tool, over two to three weeks. In May, there will be 3 to 5 eggs in a nesting chamber. Since the number of trees with nesting chambers is limited, they have been marked with a triangle or banded in yellow to make sure that they are preserved.



Peat bog and acclimatisation garden (M)

Marker 4

This peat bog was a site for experiments and research by Charles Flahault. Flahault, who studied the geographical distribution of species, was interested in what was then known as acclimatisation (adaptation to local environmental conditions). He attempted to introduce 200 plants from 40 non-indigenous species to Le Trévezet peat bog, echoing the way tree species were introduced into arboretums. The peat bog's history and the way it works are described in detail on the panel (in French only).

Attribution : © Jean-Pierre Malafosse

Multi-purpose forest (N)

Marker 6

A draille is a path between winter and summer pastures, used by shepherds and their sheep. In the mid-19th century, this draille was the eastern border of the Miquel woods. At the time, forest covered 20 to 25% of the surface of Mont Aigoual. Following reforestation, that figure has risen to 80%. Foresters ascribe three purposes to forest: being a space the public can enjoy, providing protection and being productive. These objectives were already part of Georges Fabre's vision.