

Les Balcons de l'Aigoual: a land art circuit

CEVENNES



L'orée, porte d'entrée du parcours landart (© Olivier Prohin)



A unique land art circuit in the National Park's central zone proposing 14 regularly renewed installations, which are inspired by the natural environment and scenery of Mont Aigoual.

Here artists present the relationship between humans and nature and their encounter with the climatic phenomena of Mont Aigoual. Their works are therefore constantly evolving. Art inserted into the environment connects with a fundamental source of creativity for artists: observing and being inspired by nature. This circuit takes you through different atmospheres and sites, and proposes a sensitive and intimate approach to nature.

Useful information

Practice : Sentiers de découverte

Duration : 2 h 30

Length : 7.9 km

Trek ascent : 188 m

Difficulty : Medium

Type : Boucle

Themes : Histoire et culture, Faune et flore

Trek

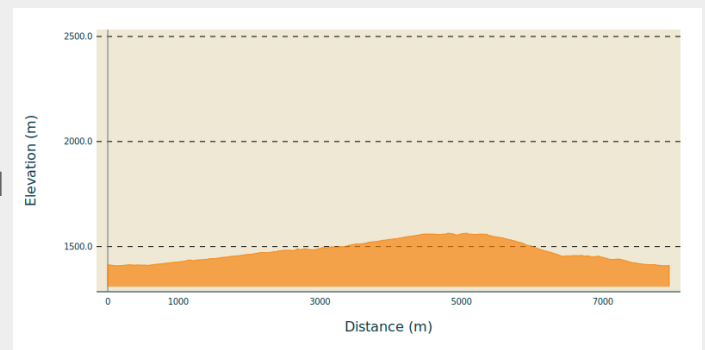
Departure : Prat Peyrot outdoors activity centre

Arrival : Prat Peyrot outdoors activity centre

Markings :  Réseau Pôle nature Aigoual

Cities : 1. Val-d'Aigoual
2. Bassurels

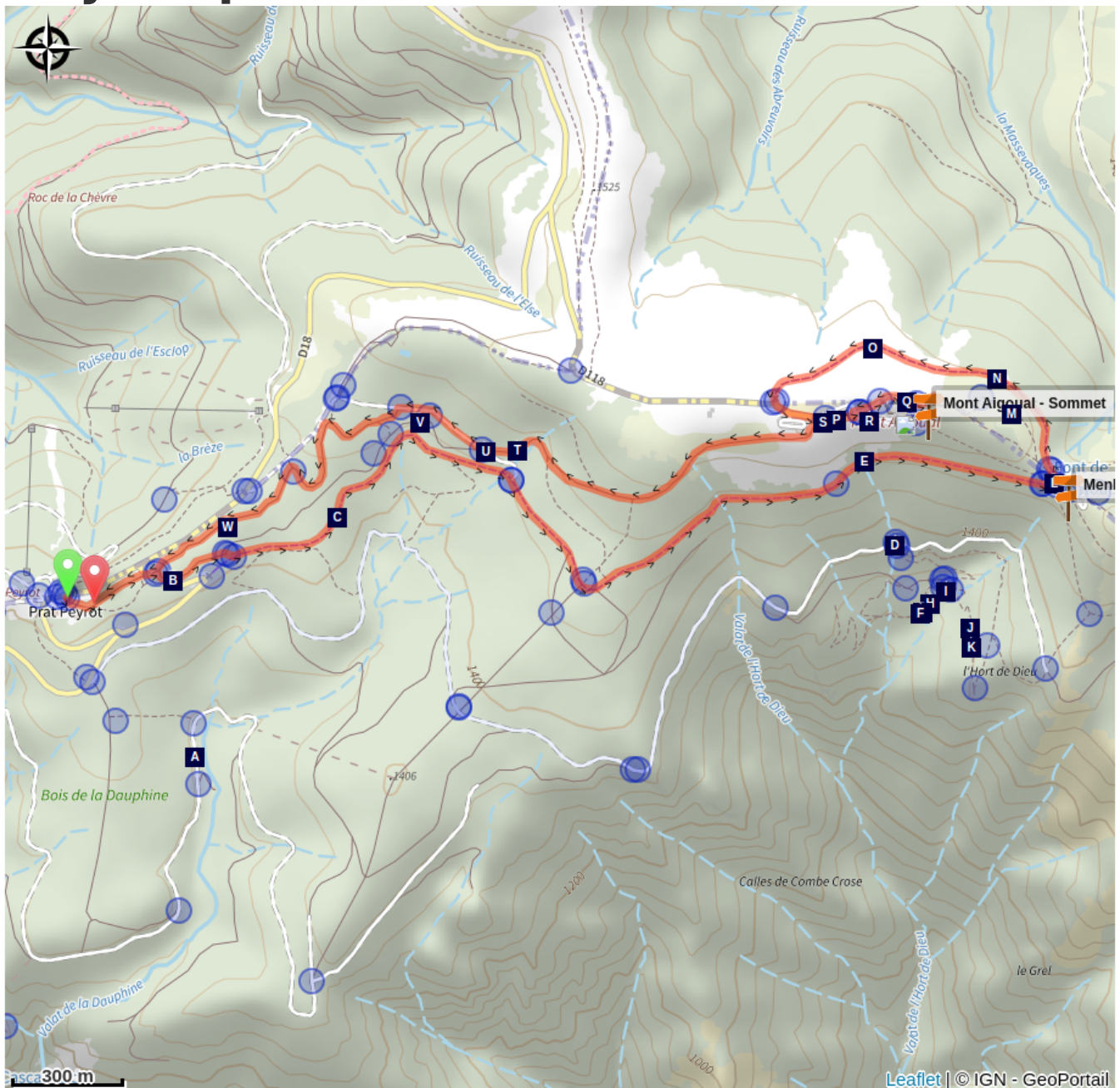
Altimetric profile



Min elevation 1409 m Max elevation 1559 m

The circuit gradually leaves the activity centre and enters the foliage, then goes through a wooden arch. After 500 m, it reaches the decommissioned D249 that takes you all the way to the summit. This path is for pedestrians and accessible to pushchairs and wheelchairs. The downhill return is on the GR 6 long-distance hiking trail, which is accessible only to hikers. The blue pictogram waymarks the entire circuit.

On your path...



River capture (A)
 Catchment Area (Xavier Rèche) (C)
 Seated (Marie-Hélène Richard) (E)
 An invasive species: knotweed
 (Fallopia japonica) (G)
 The Chalet, Charles Flahault's
 laboratory (I)
 Did you say “chourradou”? (K)
 Short-grass prairies and heath on
 the summit of Mont Aigoual (M)

On the Verge (Yoann Crépin) (B)
 A site for botanical experiments (D)
 Botanists' history (F)
 Acclimatising a plant species (H)
 Alpine garden (J)
 The evolution of plant life (L)
 Cell (Marie Gueydon de Dives) (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

At the summit of Mont Aigoual, weather conditions can change rapidly. Before setting out, seek advice from the tourist office. This circuit is prohibited in strong winds or snowy conditions.

How to come ?

Transports

www.lio.laregion.fr

Access

From Valleraugue (D986), via the Col de la Serreyrède Pass towards Mont Aigoual (or on the D48 from Le Vigan).

From Florac, via the Col du Perjuret Pass towards Mont Aigoual on the D998 and D18.

Advised parking

Car park at the activity centre

Information desks

Tourism & national parc'house

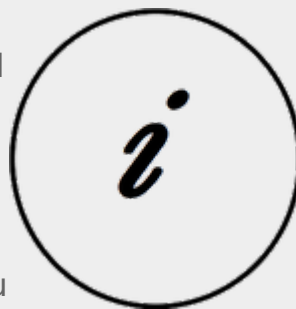
Col de la Serreyrède, 30570 Val d'Aigoual

maisondeilaigoual@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)



Weather observatory Mont Aigoual

Sommet de l'Aigoual, 30570 Val d'Aigoual

meteosite@aigoual.fr

Tel : 04 67 42 59 83

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



Source



La Filature du Mazel

<https://www.lafilaturedumazel.org>



Parc national des Cévennes

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

On your path...



River capture (A)

Violent precipitation and the steep gradient of Mediterranean torrents cause regressive (i.e. upstream) erosion of the valleys through which they flow. This erosion can invert the sense of flow and thus “capture” for the Mediterranean a waterway that had, until then, flowed into the Atlantic. One example is the Hérault with its waterfalls, the capture being located at the falls. The Hérault and the Dauphine brook used to flow via L'Espérrou into the Dourbie... River pebbles found around the village by geologists attest to the existence of a waterway in the past.

Attribution : Arnaud.Bouissou



On the Verge (Yoann Crépin) (B)

A doorway to a circuit of art within the natural environment. To fuse and interact with the environment and play with the seasons, time, light and weightlessness. To let humanity express itself through nature and nature express itself through humanity – a necessary interaction, a symbiotic interaction that inspires us to discover another world.

Attribution : © Filature du Mazel



Catchment Area (Xavier Rèche) (C)

By its location and name, this installation evokes the nearby watershed between the Atlantic and Mediterranean. A vessel reduced to a suspended wooden framework, without strakes or gunwale, tilts in the direction of the runoff. It emphasises the first branches of a gigantic drainage system.

Attribution : © Filature du Mazel



A site for botanical experiments (D)

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



Seated (Marie-Hélène Richard) (E)

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 Maze!



Botanists' history (F)

Marker 9

The particular nature of this site earned it the name of “God's garden” (Hortus Dei). Since the 16th century, Mont Aigoual has provided botanists with rare species for herbariums and botanical surveys. Some species were also gathered for their medicinal qualities, called “vertus des simples”, a term to be found on a handwritten map of the Cévennes dating from the early 18th century. In 1936, a stele was inaugurated that is dedicated to the memory of the many botanists who contributed to the advancement of the sciences on the L'Hort de Dieu site.

Attribution : © B. Algoët



An invasive species: knotweed (*Fallopia japonica*) (G)

Marker 8

Sakhalin knotweed, just like Japanese knotweed, is an invasive species. That means it is not in its environment of origin and grows at the expense of other species, alongside roads and on the banks of many rivers. A “test zone” project aiming to limit the species is being studied at L'Hort de Dieu, thus continuing the experimental mission of the arboretum. To stop knotweed from proliferating, ripping-up, rhizome destruction and covering- up with tarpaulins are all being tried.

Attribution : © Valère Marsaudon



Acclimatising a plant species (H)

Marker 7

Fabre and Flahault pursued two objectives: studying the way certain forest species adapt to the Cevenol climate and studying plants in their relationship with environmental conditions. Some plant species are better adapted than others to the Cevenol climate. Thus, Mediterranean and Douglas firs do very well, as do almost all the species native to Europe, Asia Minor and the western United States. Species from East Asia and the eastern United States, however, wither away. Through his work, Flahault laid the foundations of phytosociology, the study of how plants arrange themselves into communities as a function of the environmental conditions.

Attribution : © B. Algoët



The Chalet, Charles Flahault's laboratory (I)

Marker 6

“And who knows whether some generous benefactor will not decide one day that our students should have a hospitable roof at L'Hort de Dieu itself? I can see the little house as if it were already built, receiving much sunlight on the Mediterranean side, with its study room on the ground floor and its large fireplace around which scientific problems are discussed late into the night..” (Charles Flahault, 1904)

The Chalet, which was built the following year, made it possible to establish a botanical garden, a high-altitude vegetable plot and a plant nursery nearby. Despite the forest reconquering the surroundings, some of the plants introduced at the time have survived until today: Pyrenean lily, great masterwort, and others.

Attribution : © B. Algoët



Alpine garden (J)

Marker 5

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

Attribution : © J.-P. Grandmont



Did you say “chourradou”? (K)

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



The evolution of plant life (L)

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



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

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



Cell (Marie Gueydon de Dives) (N)

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