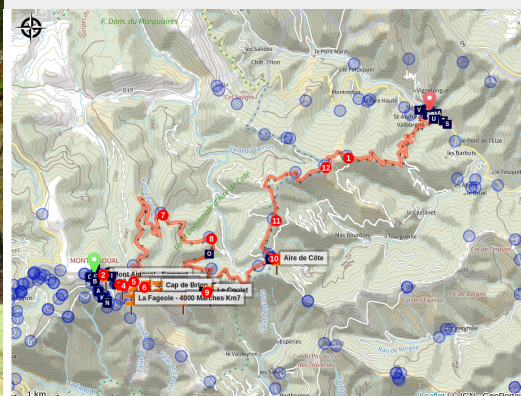


MTB 12 - The ridges of the Vallée Borgne - graded red

Gard



Forêt de hêtres de l'Aigoual (Béatrice Galzin)



“De serres en valats”, or from ridge to valley, such is the leitmotiv of this superb endurance circuit, which takes you from the summit of mont Aigoual to the floor of the vallée Borgne to discover the Cévennes! Please take into account the technicality and duration of this circuit.

Useful information

Practice : Mountain Bike

Duration : 2 h 45

Length : 24.3 km

Trek ascent : 334 m

Difficulty : Hard

Type : Itinérance

Themes : Milieu naturel, Histoire et culture, Eau et géologie, Causses et Cévennes / UNESCO

Trek

Departure : Summit of mont Aigoual

Arrival : St-André de Valborgne

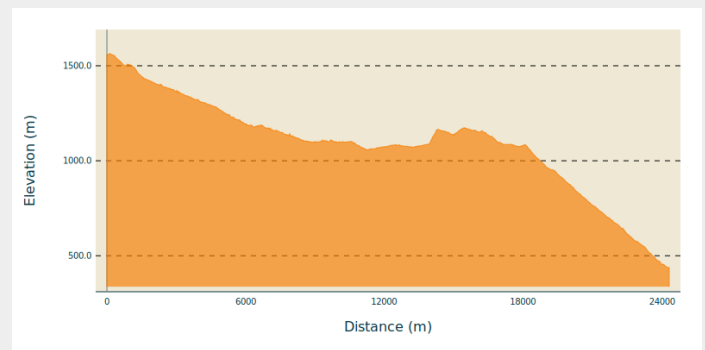
Markings : 🏠 VTT rouge

Cities : 1. Val-d'Aigoual

2. Bassurels

3. Saint-André-de-Valborgne

Altimetric profile



Min elevation 437 m Max elevation 1559 m

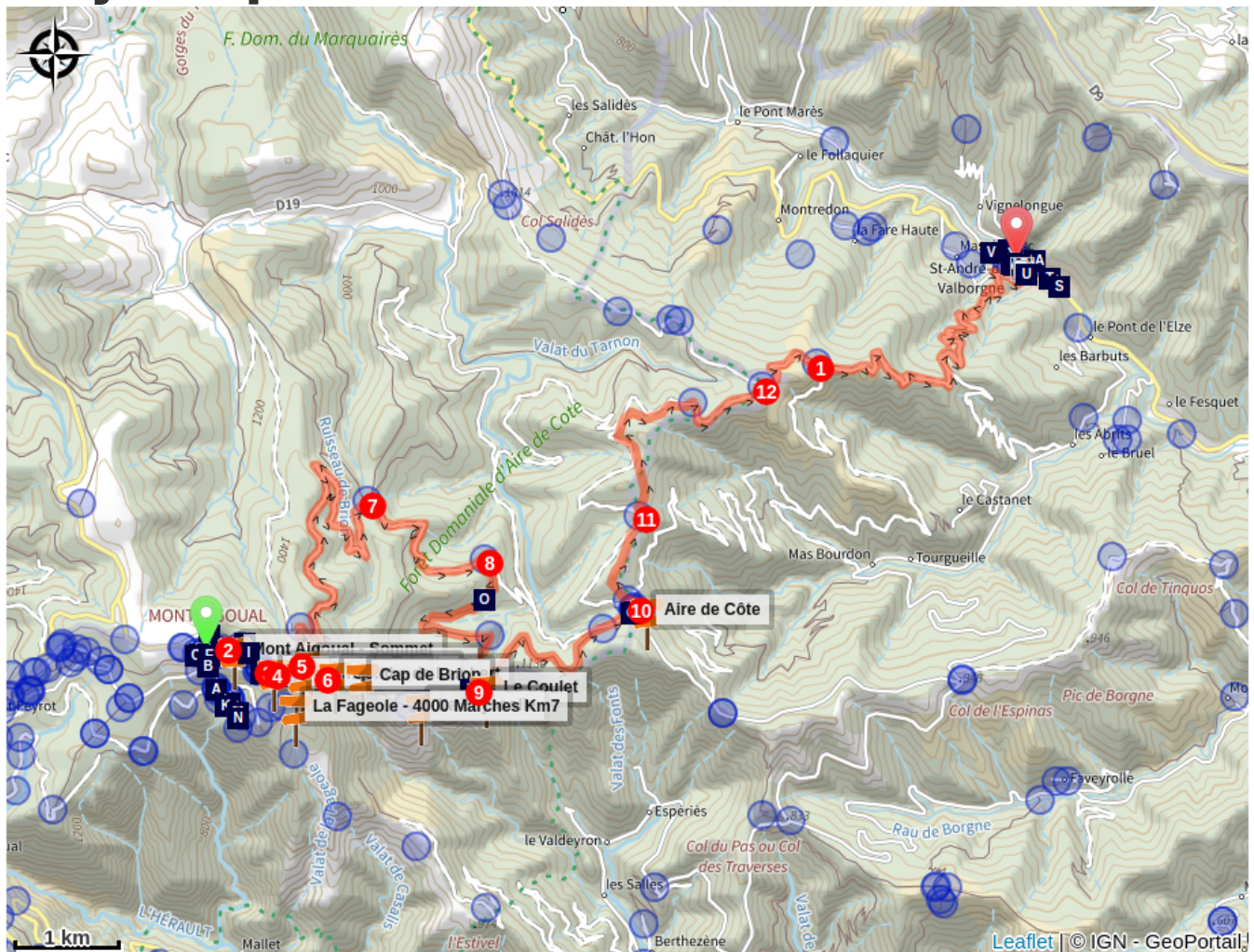
Signposts will guide you all along this route. In the description below, the signposted place names and/or directions are given in **bold italics** between quotation marks:

From the observatory, head due east, go to

1. "**Sommet**" then
2. "**Menhir du Trépaloup**",
3. "**Source du Tarnon**",
4. "**Font de Trépaloup**", then
5. « **Combe de Lambert** ». Go to
6. « **Col de l'Estrade** »,
7. « **Côte 1100** » and
8. le « **Coulet** ». Continue on level ground to
9. "**Aire de Côte**". Take the left just before the gîte (2) towards
10. "**Sestrière**",
11. « **Combe Radal** ». Turn right and go straight down to a track. Skip to
12. « **Serre des Buges** ». Then continue to the right, always staying on the same track up to « **Saint-André de Valborgne** ».

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...



A site for botanical experiments (A)
 Archeosmart (Marc Limousin) (C)
 Mont Aigoual weather station (E)

The meteorological observatory (G)
 Short-grass prairies and heath on
 the summit of Mont Aigoual (I)

🌱 Acclimatising a plant species (K)

🌱 Alpine garden (M)

Seated (Marie-Hélène Richard) (B)
 Summit of Mont Aigoual (D)
 Tempus Fugit (Fiona Paterson,
 Donald Buglass) (F)

Cell (Marie Gueydon de Dives) (H)
 The evolution of plant life (J)

The Chalet, Charles Flahault's
 laboratory (L)

🌱 Did you say “chourradou”? (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: The start and finish are not in the same place. Make sure you organise return transport for yourself.

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.

NB: This trail is also used by horse riders. 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.

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

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 St-André de Valborgne, take the D907 towards Florac for 8km, then the D19 to Cabrillac. In Cabrillac, take the D18 on the left to mont Aigoual summit - Parking.

Advised parking

Summit of mont Aigoual.

Information desks

Tourism & national parc'house

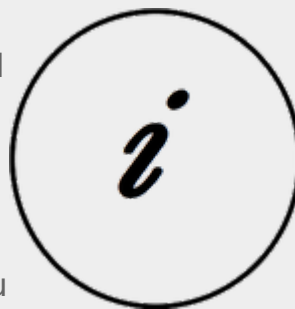
Col de la Serreyrède, 30570 Val d'Aigoual

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)



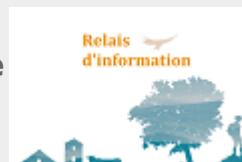
Tourism office Mont Aigoual Causses Cévennes, Saint-André-de-Valborgne

les quais, 30940 Saint-André-de-Valborgne

standredevalborgne@sudcevennes.com

Tel : 04 66 60 32 11

<https://www.sudcevennes.com>



Source



CC Causses Aigoual Cévennes Terres Solidaires

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



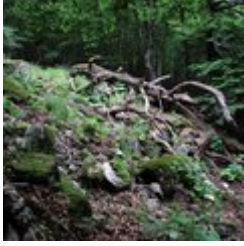
Parc national des Cévennes

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



Pôle Nature Aigoual

On your path...



A site for botanical experiments (A)

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) (B)

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 Mazel



Archeosmart (Marc Limousin) (C)

Smartphone imprints appear on the rocks: fossils of the present that will become mysterious in the future. This carved stone, like the cup-shaped marks and other rock art of the region, discloses history revealed in matter and resonates with Malraux's phrase: "The future is a present given to us by the past".

Attribution : © Filature du Mazel



Summit of Mont Aigoual (D)

At an altitude of 1,565 m, the climate is harsh: weather conditions are the same as they would be at 2,000 m elsewhere, with only four “frost-free” months a year. Winds of above 60 kph blow on 265 days a year, and the average annual temperature is 4.8°C. Trees do not have enough time to complete their life cycle. Local plant formations are those of the montane zone: subalpine short-grass prairies.

Attribution : © Nathalie Thomas



Mont Aigoual weather station (E)

Inaugurated in 1894, this infrastructure is France’s last mountain weather station to be inhabited. Its history is closely linked to the reforestation of Mont Aigoual. It has become a high-performance weather station with an array of modern test instruments, measuring devices for extreme conditions, and a museum/exhibition on meteorology. The 800 sq m exhibition will tell you more about climatology on Mont Aigoual and about meteorology in general.

Attribution : © Météosite du Mont Aigoual



Tempus Fugit (Fiona Paterson, Donald Buglass) (F)

Time flies, conscience cries, death threatens, heaven invites, hell scolds, and man sleeps. Here, the effects of time and natural elements transform the wood used in the artwork; everything is an endless renewal at the same rate as the passing hours. How much time have we got left before everything is lost and it is too late to repair the damage? Nature will continue on its trajectory and efface the traces of Humanity on Earth.

Attribution : © Natacha Maltaverne



The meteorological observatory (G)

Inaugurated in 1824, the meteorological observatory was built on the initiative of Georges Fabre, one of the pioneers of the reforestation of Mont Aigoual. His work with the botanist Charles Flahault enabled the creation of the arboretum of L'Hort de Dieu. The first meteorological data were gathered by agents from the French National Water and Forestry Commission. Since 1943, the observatory has been managed by the National Meteorological Office. It is France's last mountain weather station that is inhabited year-round.

Attribution : nathalie.thomas



Cell (Marie Gueydon de Dives) (H)

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 Maze!



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

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



The evolution of plant life (J)

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



Acclimatising a plant species (K)

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, whither 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 (L)

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 (M)

Marker 5

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

Attribution : © J.-P. Grandmont



Did you say “chourradou”? (N)

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 Kleszczewski