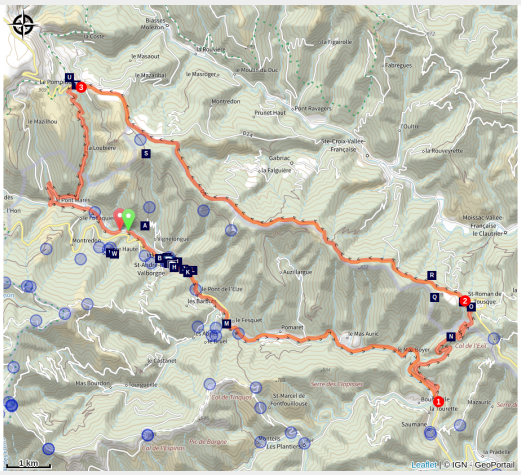
Between Gard and Lozère

Cévennes

La Vallée Française (Béatrice Galzin)



This circuit goes through the Borgne valley and on the Corniche des Cévennes road. It has panoramic viewpoints and meanders on the valley bottom along the Gardon de St-Jean river.

How satisfying, on arriving at Le Pompidou, to have a view over the entire Vallée Française and even further !

On this legendary road, Le Pompidou and St-Roman de Tousque have been rest stops for travellers since the days of long journeys in horse-drawn carriages.

Useful information

Practice : Cycling

Duration : 2 h 30

Length : 35.3 km

Trek ascent : 942 m

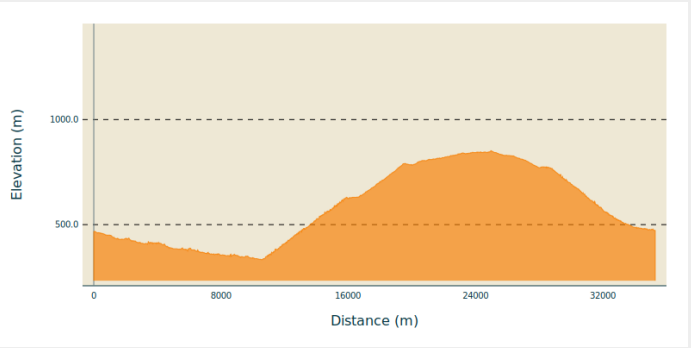
Difficulty : Medium

Type : Boucle

Trek

Departure : St-André de Valborgne
Arrival : St-André de Valborgne
Cities : 1. Saint-André-de-Valborgne
2. Saumane
3. Moissac-Vallée-Française
4. Sainte-Croix-Vallée-Française
5. Gabriac
6. Le Pompidou

Altimetric profile



Min elevation 332 m Max elevation 851 m

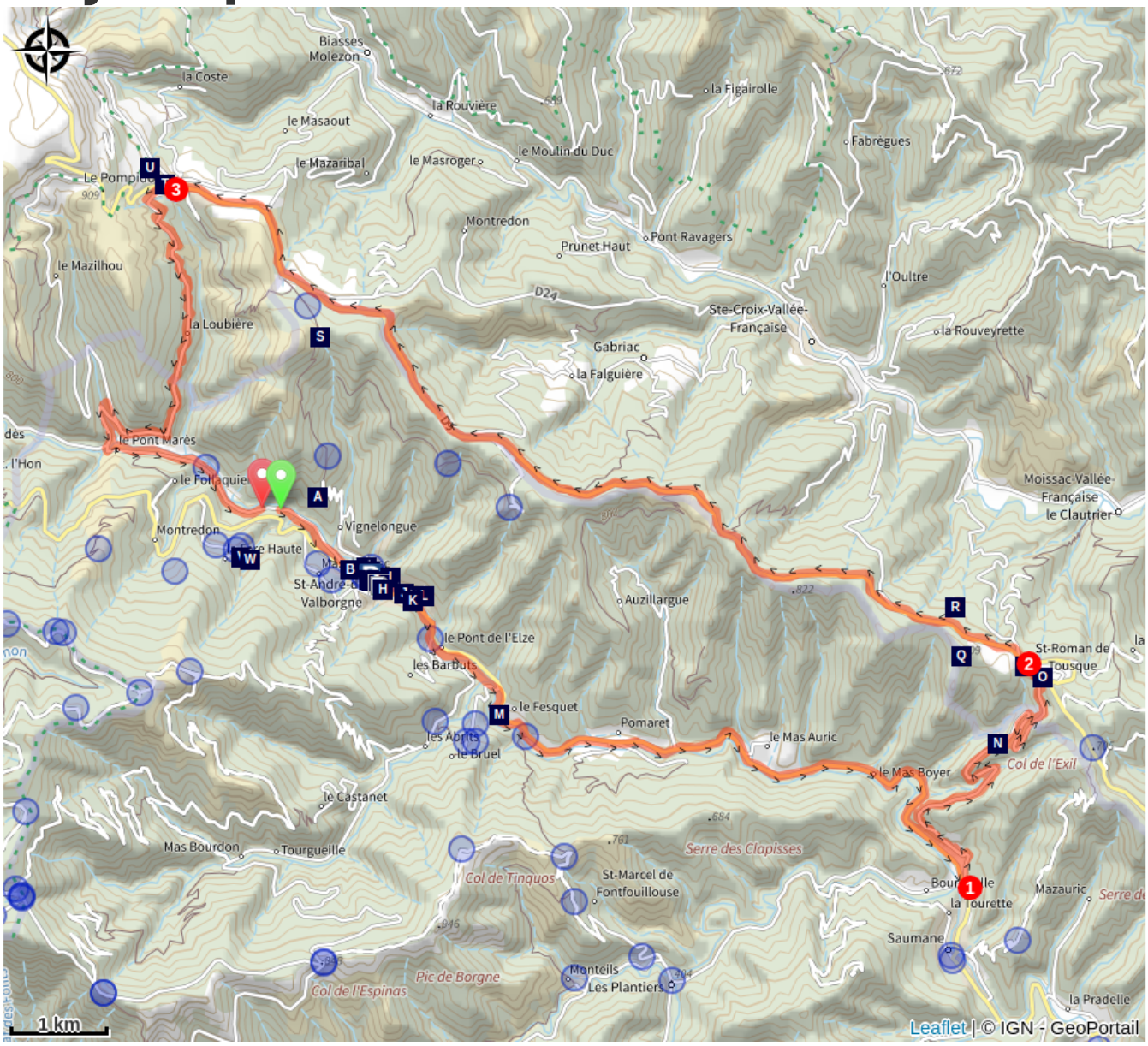
From St-André de Valborgne, towards Le Pompidou on the D10 and D61.

1. Descend to the valley floor towards Saumane, turn left and climb to St-Roman de Tousque via the D39.

2. In St-Roman de Tousque, take the D9 (Corniche des Cévennes road) to Le Pompidou.

3. At Le Pompidou, descend via the D10 to St-André de Valborgne.

On your path...



The Château de Nogaret (A)
Traces of giants? (B)
The tanners’ district (C)
The age of silk (D)
One spring, five fountains (E)
The village of St André de Valborgne (F)
The gardonnades (G)
Water! (H)
Well-supplied (I)
Two in one (J)
Fish and other animals... (K)
Electrified... (L)
Cévenol housing (M)
Heritage: the King’s road (N)

All useful information

⚠ Advices

Before committing yourself to a circuit, ensure that it is suitable for your activity level and ability. Respect traffic laws and other road users; stay in control of your speed and trajectory. Make sure to be seen and travel in single file when in a group. Remember that the weather changes quickly in the mountains. Take enough water. Safe trip !

How to come ?

Access

From St-Jean du Gard, take the D907 to St-André de Valborgne, via L'Estréchure and Saumane.

From Florac, take the D907 towards St-Jean du Gard, through the villages of Vébron, Les Vanels and Rousses, to reach St-André de Valborgne.

Advised parking

Car park in the village

Information desks

Tourism & national parc'house
Col de la Serreyrède, 30570 Val d'Aigoual

maisondelaigoual@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

Parc national des Cévennes

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

Pôle Nature Aigoual

On your path...

The Château de Nogaret (A)

Built in the 11th century, the Château de Nogaret stood on the only road linking Saint-André de Valborgne with Le Pompidou. It is believed to have been constructed to serve as a stronghold and to defend the Vallée Borgne. It was set alight in 1628 during the war between the Duke of Rohan and Louis XIII, and again in 1704 by the Camisards, before being rebuilt in the 18th century. This private property still belongs to the Manoel de Nogaret family.
“This small château is one of the finest examples of the fortified manor houses built towards the end of the Middle Ages by minor local lords wanting to free themselves, at least symbolically, from domination by their feudal overlords.” (Isabelle Darnas - Les châteaux médiévaux en Cévennes).

Attribution : Nathalie Thomas

Traces of giants? (B)

“Giant’s cauldrons” have formed in the rock at the base of the waterfall. These regular, rounded cavities are only created in rapidly flowing waters. They are caused by the repeated friction of stones caught in a depression and moved by swirling currents.

Attribution : © Béatrice Galzin

The tanners’ district (C)

La Calquière district gets its name from that of the ditches in which the tanners soaked their animal skins with limestone, which is called cauç or calç in Occitan. All along the Gardon there were tanneries because its acidic water was good for rinsing the skins, which was indispensable for obtaining high quality products.

Attribution : © Béatrice Galzin

The age of silk (D)

From the 19th century onwards, the silk industry developed in the Cévennes: tanneries gave way to spinning mills. The mills used water not only to treat the silkworm cocoons (which were boiled to prepare the silk) but also for the steam-driven spinning machines. In the second half of the 19th century, diseases strongly reduced silk production, which was also subject to competition from foreign silks and then from artificial silk. The silk industry went under in 1965.

Attribution : © Béatrice Galzin

One spring, five fountains (E)

This fountain is one of Saint-André's five public fountains, all of which are supplied by the same spring (its water is thus the same as in the Fontaine du Griffon). Before houses were connected to mains water, there were many more fountains on this side of the quay.

Attribution : © Béatrice Galzin

The village of St André de Valborgne (F)

As you stroll along the quay above the river, you can still see the handsome bourgeois houses dating from the silk boom. If you look around, former spinning mills and industrial buildings dedicated to silk farming can still be seen in the landscape. A little lower down, opposite the 16th century château, you can listen to
Bernadette Lafont on the Camisard saga in and after 1702. As you reach the square again, quench your thirst at the fountain and have a look inside the Romanesque church (12th century).

Attribution : © Béatrice Galzin

The gardonnades (G)

The village benefits from the water that the Gardon brings – but it also has to put up with the river's sporadic bad moods. Abundant rain can rapidly raise river levels. It is often in autumn that the torrent overflows its banks. The worst floods can have dramatic consequences in both material and human terms. Many can still remember the floods of September 1958 and 2002, which caused much damage.

Attribution : © Béatrice Galzin

Water! (H)

The Griffon fountain is known for its pure water, which will quench any walker’s thirst. In the old days, the whole neighbourhood used it not only for drinking but also for cooking, washing, washing clothes, watering plants, etc. The fountain was not only a supply point but also an important meeting-point in village life.

Attribution : © Béatrice Galzin

Well-supplied (I)

Cévenol gardens are supplied by béals (little canals), which bring water from rivers or springs to cultivated land. The latter is usually laid out in bancels (terraces). By retaining the soil, the low walls make it possible to have level plots and deeper soils. Water can seep into the ground slowly and remain there for longer.

Attribution : © Béatrice Galzin

Two in one (J)

This cobbled path going uphill is a calade. It is not only a path but also a brook, allowing rainwater to be evacuated. Caution: slippery when wet!

Attribution : © Béatrice Galzin

Fish and other animals... (K)

On the river banks, a pretty white, grey and black bird paces up and down looking for insects, bopping its long tail up and down: the white wagtail. The more colourful grey wagtail is often seen alongside it. The white-throated dipper resembles a blackbird with a big white stain on its breast. It often disappears underwater to hunt insect larvae. Trout, which like the same prey, also live in the Gardon, where they keep anglers happy.

Attribution : © Régis Descamps

Electrified... (L)

The village’s inhabitants had access to electricity as early as 1919. The inconspicuous little hut on the opposite bank sheltered a little turbine supplied with water by a béal (irrigation channel). It was built by a villager, Mr Teston, and produced enough electricity for one lightbulb per household.

Attribution : © Béatrice Galzin

Cévenol housing (M)

Houses normally occupied the centre of the cultivated area. Built from schist, they were tall and narrow to save the level ground for crops. When houses needed expanding, people either added another storey to existing buildings or built a new wing parallel to the contour lines. Hamlets were always constructed near water sources and often at mid-slope because the valley floors are susceptible to brutal flooding as well as difficult to access. Good exposure to sunlight was not a decisive factor in choosing sites.

Attribution : Nathalie Thomas

Heritage: the King’s road (N)

The uphill section from Capou is on the former King’s road, which climbs up the Valat des Pierres valley all the way to St-Roman de Tousque. The road originally linked St-Roman to St-Hippolyte du Fort via Lasalle, the Col du Mercou pass, St-Martin de Corconac and Saumane. This former road is a delight for a slow walk among ferns, pines and sweet chestnut trees. The sound of water is everywhere, in the form of springs or little waterfalls, and the original supporting walls, aqueducts and milestones are magnificent.

Attribution : Nathalie Thomas