

Saint-Sauveur: the path of the Dead

Gard



Sentier des Morts (nathalie.thomas)



This is a beautiful circular walk, through pastures and forest, that lets you discover the village of Saint-Sauveur and its tree-themed path. It has pretty views over the Bramabiau valley and its underground river.

Useful information

Practice : Pédestre

Duration : 3 h

Length : 9.1 km

Trek ascent : 339 m

Difficulty : Medium

Type : Boucle

Themes : Histoire et culture, Eau et géologie

Trek

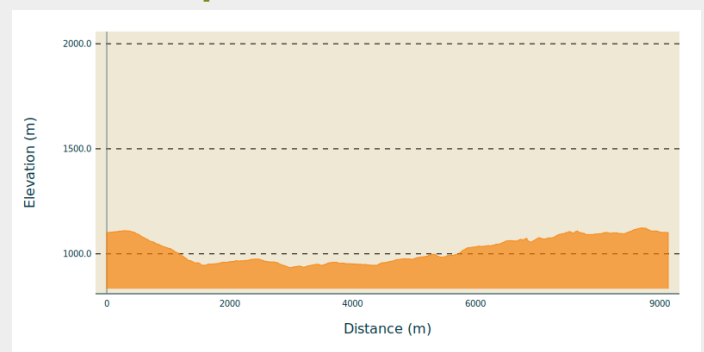
Departure : Camprieu football stadium

Arrival : Camprieu football stadium

Markings : — Balisage jaune et mobilier signalétique

Cities : 1. Saint-Sauveur-Camprieu

Altimetric profile



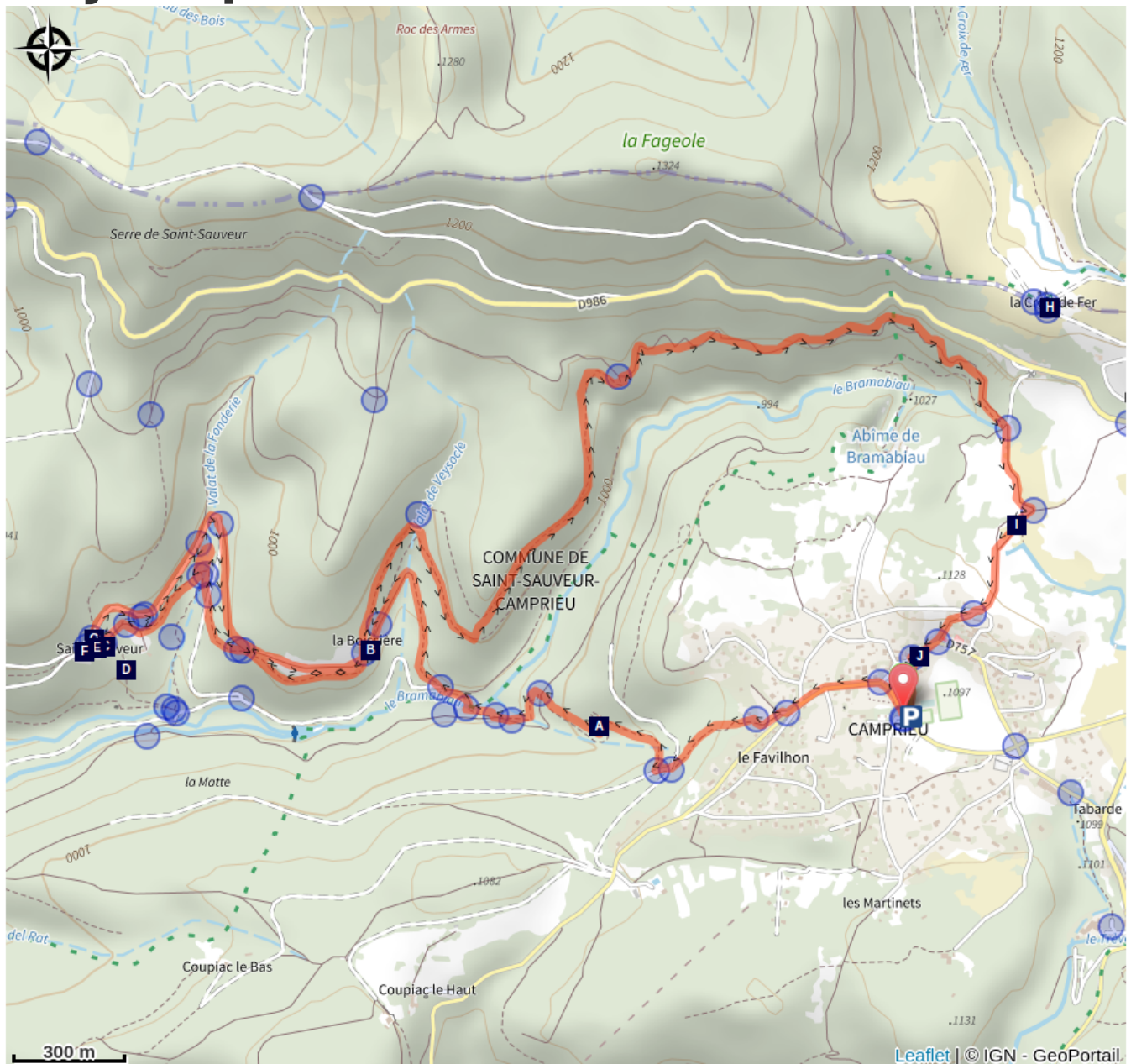
Min elevation 937 m Max elevation 1122 m

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 at "**Camprieu - parking**", make for "**ferme de La Boissière**" via "**La Croix Basse**", then "**La Croix Haute**", "**La Clédette**", "**St Sauveur**", "**Ferme de la Boissière**". At "**ferme de La Boissière**" take on the left a small path towards "**La Fonderie**", "**Arboretum 0.1 km**", "**Les Plots**". At "**Les Plots**", head towards "**St-Sauveur-Eglise**", "**St-Sauveur-Carrefour**". Take the track on the right towards "**Croix de St-Sauveur**", "**St-Sauveur-Parking**", "**Valat de la Fonderie**", "**Ferme de la Boissière**". At the farm, turn left towards "**Camprieu**" via "**Rouveyrolle**", "**Abîme de Bamabiau**", turn right towards "**Camprieu-Perte du Bonheur**", (there and back to the sinkhole), then "**Camprieu - Mairie**" and return to the football pitch.

This walk 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 Path of the Dead (A)
- Castle or farm estate? (C)
- A church at the heart of it all (E)
- A cemetery that reveals histories (G)
- The Bonheur river (I)
- La Boissière farm (B)
- Arboretum (D)
- Un domaine agricole reboisé (F)
- Col de la Croix de Fer pass (H)
- Camprieu (J)

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

Make sure your equipment is appropriate for the day's weather conditions. Remember that the weather changes quickly in the mountains. Take enough water, wear sturdy shoes and put on a hat. 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, call 08 10 33 42 73 or go to www.laregion.fr

Access

From Meyrueis or L'Espérou on the D986.

Advised parking

Camprieu football stadium



Information desks

Tourism & national parc'house

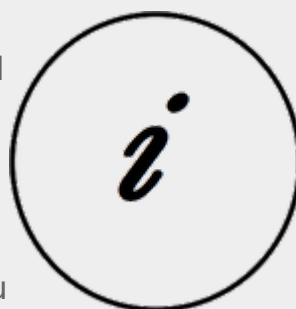
Col de la Serreyrède, 30570 Val d'Aigoual

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)



Source



CC Causses Aigoual Cévennes Terres Solidaires

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



Parc national des Cévennes

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



Pôle Nature Aigoual

On your path...



The Path of the Dead (A)

In the Middle Ages and until 1870, the Catholic village of Camprieu had neither church nor cemetery. “Its inhabitants therefore went to the hamlet of Saint-Sauveur de Pourcils. To transport their dead to the remote cemetery, they had to take the ‘Path of the Dead’. They carried the coffins on their backs and, at every rest stop, recited the prayer De Profundis. Funeral processions stopped using the path in summer 1872. That year, the village of Camprieu finally obtained its own cemetery. But the name has stuck: “the Path of the Dead”.

Attribution : nathalie.thomas



La Boissière farm (B)

La Boissière farm was abandoned by its inhabitants when Mont Aigoual was reforested. A salary from the French National Water and Forestry Commission was so much more secure than the meagre revenues from a farmer’s endless work. You pass through the farm’s porch and walk on its threshing floor – but there are no chickens or cereals on the threshing floor, and no herds ambling to the meadow. Today the forest has won.

Attribution : nathalie.thomas



Castle or farm estate? (C)

In the 12th century, minor vassal lords of the Roquefeuil family ruled from a castle at Saint-Sauveur des Pourcils. They lived in autarky with their livestock, large pastures and a share of the farmers' harvests. No remains from that period survive. The main building looks more like a farmhouse. Over the centuries, the castle has become a large farm estate with outbuildings.

Attribution : © Coll. G. Mathon



Arboretum (D)

To begin with, arboretums were experiments to study the behaviour of tree species introduced to the massif as part of the reforestation programme from the late 19th century on. Over time, their scientific character gave way to a more educational and ornamental outlook. On the Aigoual, the French Forestry Office maintains a network of arboretums that are representative of the forest's diversity and of the work carried out by foresters on the massif since the early 20th century. The waymarked circuit only covers a part of the vast arboretum.

Attribution : © Elodie Mazel



A church at the heart of it all (E)

Why was such an imposing church built in a small hamlet? The profound attachment of the parishioners to their place of worship was key. The church was destroyed three times, by Protestants (1562 and 1703) and by the ravages of time (1848). But each time the parishioners who lived in neighbouring hamlets decided to rebuild it. Despite this determination, the church and cemetery were eventually transferred to Camprieu (1871). The episcopal authorities cited difficulties in accessing the place of worship and disagreements between the mayor and parish priest. The local faithful, who were opposed to the transfer, managed to keep masses for the yearly pilgrimage, baptisms, funerals and weddings in St-Sauveur.

Attribution : © Coll. G. Mathon



Un domaine agricole reboisé (F)

Today, the hamlet of Saint-Sauveur des Pourcils is surrounded by trees but in the 19th century the Aigoual massif was bare! Its reforestation began as a state programme managed by foresters. The French Forestry Office bought many farm estates to turn them into foresters' houses. Saint-Sauveur des Pourcils had all the required characteristics: buildings for housing foresters; varied soils; good sun exposure; and water nearby (the river below). The foresters set up a tree nursery to grow young trees and an arboretum to test how well-adapted different species were.

Attribution : © Coll. G. Mathon



A cemetery that reveals histories (G)

The small cemetery of Saint-Sauveur des Pourcils, so peaceful today, reveals a rich and eventful history. The gravestones bear the names of Catholic, Orthodox, Protestant, Jewish and Muslim families. This religious plurality is partly due to the arrival in the 20th century of foreign workers to mine argentiferous lead and copper in the neighbouring hamlet of Villemagne. During the murky period of World War II, the wife of a resistance fighter and her six children took refuge in the surrounding area. The Muslim graves bear witness to the period following the Algerian War when a camp for harkis was set up in the region. These Algerian Muslims, who had served in the French army, were employed by the French Forestry Office for the reforestation of the Aigoual massif.

Attribution : © Coll. G. Mathon



Col de la Croix de Fer pass (H)

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 (I)

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 (J)

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