

On the road to Rutènes

Gard



Chaos des Déroucades (Nathalie Thomas)



This walk offers handsome panoramic viewpoints over the Arre and Coudoulous valleys, with perched villages.

From Molière-Cavaillac, the path meanders over crop terraces and the Déroucades blockfield to reach Esparon. From the pass, you stay on a track lined with chestnut and wild cherry trees to Bréau-Salagosse with its picturesque lanes.

Useful information

Practice : Pédestre

Duration : 4 h

Length : 10.3 km

Trek ascent : 469 m

Difficulty : Medium

Type : Boucle

Themes : Histoire et culture, Eau et géologie, Agriculture et élevage

Trek

Departure : Molières - Cavaillac

Arrival : Molières - Cavaillac

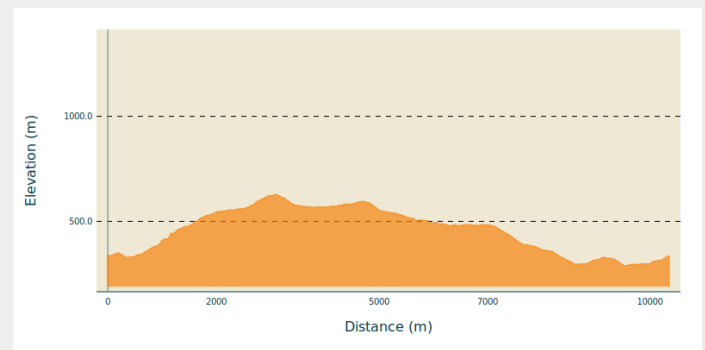
Markings : — Balisage jaune et mobilier signalétique

Cities : 1. Molières-Cavaillac

2. Bez-et-Esparon

3. Bréau-Mars

Altimetric profile



Min elevation 290 m Max elevation 629 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 "**MOLIÈRES-CAVAILLAC**", walk to "**ESPARON**" via:

1. "**Place Bellevue**",
2. "**Bois et Avans**",
3. "**La Croix d'Esparon**",
4. "**Chapelle d'Esparon**".
5. From "**ESPARON**", continue to "**BRÉAU**" via:
6. "**Col d'Esparon**",
7. "**Courbières**",
8. "**L'Ubac**",
9. "**La Bernadelle Ouest**". Go to "**Bréau**" on the right-hand track.
10. On the square in front of the Protestant church in Bréau, take on your right the former Roman road to return straight to "**MOLIÈRES-CAVAILLAC**".

This walk is taken from the guidebook **Les Vallées Cévenoles - En Pays Viganais**, published by the Communauté de communes Pays Viganais-Cévennes as part of the collection Espaces Naturels Gardois and the label Gard Pleine Nature.

On your path...



- (A) The origin of the villages' names
- Olive farming (C)
- The village of Bréau (E)

- The Arre valley (B)
- On the road to Rutènes (D)

All useful information

Advices

Make sure your equipment is appropriate for the day's weather conditions. Take enough water, wear sturdy shoes and put on a hat. Please close any 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, go to the lio Occitanie app or visit : <https://www.mestrajets.lio.laregion.fr>

Access

From Le Vigan towards Bez-et-Espéron on the D999. At the roundabout in Cavaillac, turn right onto the D199 towards Aulas, then take the road uphill on the left to the village of Molières-Cavaillac

Advised parking

Near the information sign

Information desks

Tourism office Cévennes and Navacelles, Le Vigan

Maison de pays, place du Marché, BP 21,
30120 Le Vigan

contact@sudcevennes.com

Tel : 04 67 81 01 72

<https://sudcevennes.com/>



Source



CC du Pays Viganais

<http://www.cc-paysviganais.fr/>



Parc national des Cévennes

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

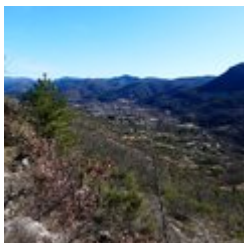
On your path...



The origin of the villages' names (A)

Molières comes from the Occitan molièra, meaning “bog, wetland”. The valley below the village was a swamp. Known from 1162 onwards by the name of Eclésia Santi Johannes de Molieyrus, the village received its current name in 1435. Esparon comes from the Occitan esparron, which means “echelon, banister”. A castle built against the rock surveyed the Esparon valley and pass; it was destroyed during the crusade against the Albigensians in the 13th century.

Attribution : Nathalie Thomas



The Arre valley (B)

The path climbs steadily over fallow crop terraces. The higher you get, the wilder and more typical of dry limestone soils is the vegetation: white oaks, box trees, thyme, etc.

Opposite, the Causse de Blandas plateau overlooks the Arre. Following a geological incident, the river was diverted and dug its bed into the limestone, thus separating Esparon from the Causse. Halfway between Molières and Esparon, the Déroutades blockfield, created by an earthquake in 580, lies on a faultline.

Attribution : Nathalie Thomas



Olive farming (C)

Two oil mills used to exist halfway up the slope amidst the terraces. Most families had olive and grapevine plots of varying sizes on the south-facing side. The olives were harvested as of 25 November : “on St Catherine’s Day, pick your olives, if there’s no oil in them, don’t expect any later”.

The millstone was turned by a mule; the olives, first crushed then pressed, released the virgin oil first. “We poured boiling water on and continued to press. Three or four men braced themselves against the press to make sure that nothing but crushed stones remained in the paillassous (baskets). The stones were fed to the pigs, which loved them. Nothing was allowed to go to waste.”

Attribution : Nathalie Thomas



On the road to Rutènes (D)

Before Gaulle was conquered by Julius Cesar, this former track linked the territory of the Arecomici (whose capital was what is now Nîmes) and the land of the Rutènes (whose capital was first Albi, then Rodez). The Ruteni were the Gaulish people of the Aveyron department.

(see Molières-Cavaillac info sheet, available at the tourist office in Le Vigan).

Attribution : Nathalie Thomas



The village of Bréau (E)

The origin of the name is uncertain. For some, Breono is the Latin form of the Gaulish brogilos, which became brueilh in Occitan. Brueilh means copse, wood. For others, Breono comes from Brannus, an alternative name for Bellenus, a Celtic god. The temple (Protestant church) of Bréau dates from 1845. (...) It has the unusual characteristic of being octagonal; its steps were carved by local craftsmen. The first temple had been destroyed in 1664 by the King’s soldiers, assisted by requisitioned locals.

Attribution : N. Thomas