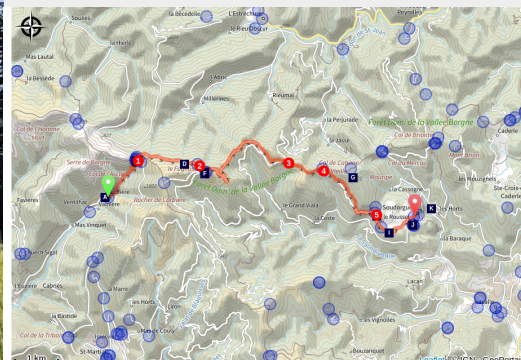


On Fageas ridge (day 3)

Gard



e long du chemin - Vallée de Soudorgues - Cognac (Béatrice Galzin)



Imagine : 150 years ago, these paths were used daily by families and peasants walking to their fields or to market, by itinerant traders, even bandits... All travelled day or night, stopping in small inns that dotted the route and provided havens of rest.

The climb to the Col de l'Asclier pass is steep. Walk under the bridge, built to ensure that the sheep are comfortable on their walk up to the summer pastures. You are on an ancient track, solidly constructed, which bears witness to the know-how of days past. This rocky path with its superb views could well be an old King's road, even if time has changed it somewhat.

Useful information

Practice : Pédestre

Duration : 4 h 30

Length : 11.7 km

Trek ascent : 561 m

Difficulty : Medium

Trek

Departure : Mas Corbière

Arrival : Soudorgues

Markings :  GR®

Cities : 1. Val-d'Aigoual

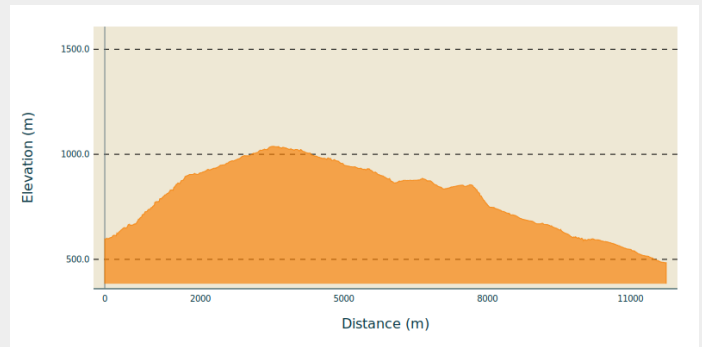
2. Notre-Dame-de-la-Rouvière

3. Les Plantiers

4. L'Estréchure

5. Soudorgues

Altimetric profile

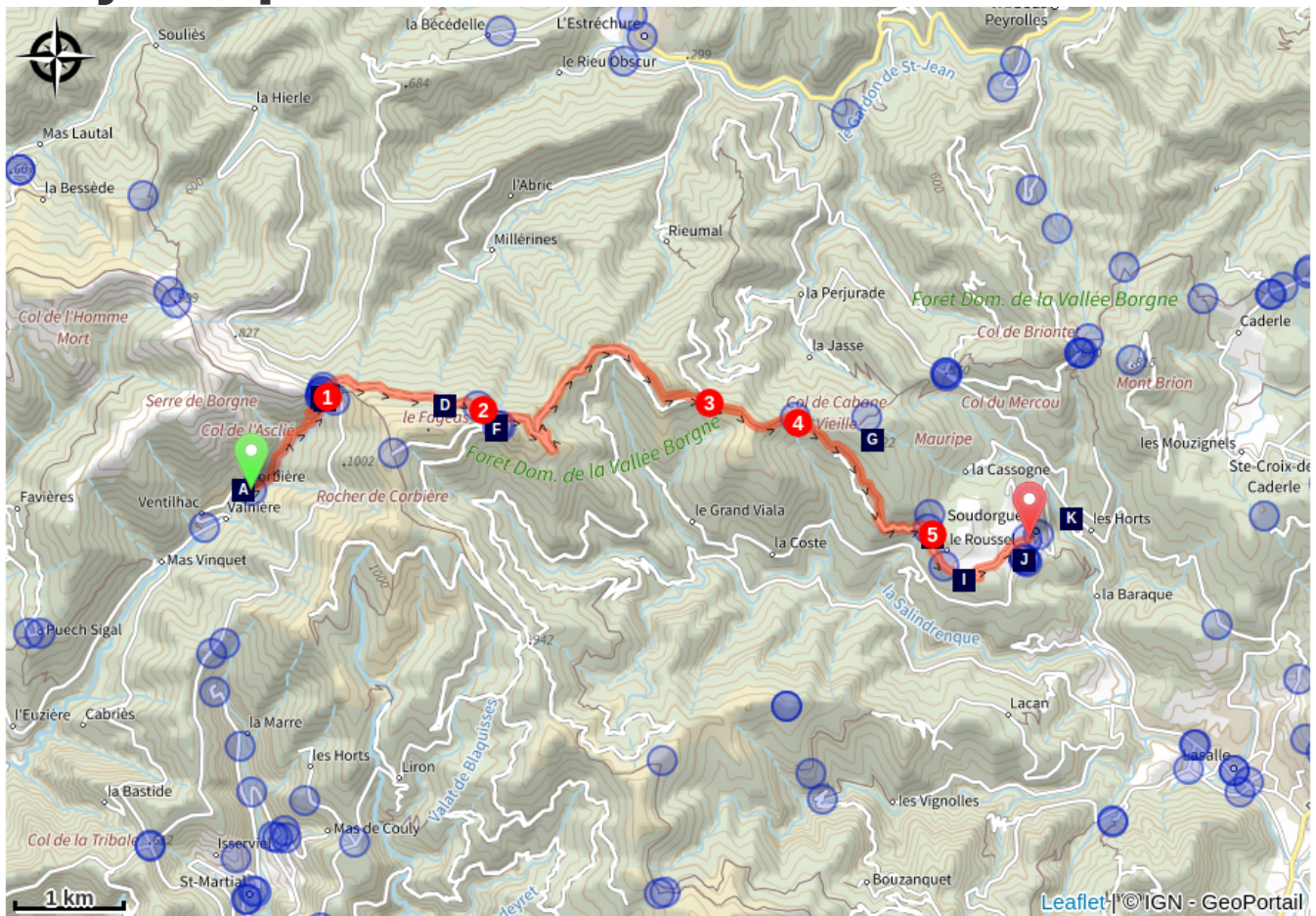


Min elevation 485 m Max elevation 1034 m

Starting at "**Mas Corbière**" go back up to the sheep bridge on the track that you took last night, towards "**Pont Moutonnier**". Walk under the bridge.

1. Then walk towards "**Col du Mercou**" via "**la Cale**" (GR®61 long-distance hiking path).
2. Turn left towards "**Col de Piécamp**" and "**col de la Mortière**".
3. From "**Col de la Mortière**" head to "**Col de la cabane vieille**".
4. At "**Col de la cabane vieille**" go downhill on the GR®63 long-distance path to reach "**Pierre Plantée**".
5. Continue to "**Quatre Chemins**" and go left to reach "**Soudorgues**" village.

On your path...



The downy or pubescent oak (A)

Sheep bridge (C)

Rush-leaf narcissus (E)

360° views from Mauripe (G)

Cemetery history (I)

Les Horts hamlet (K)

The draille (drovers' road) and the sheep bridge (B)

The forestry track (D)

Panoramic views (F)

Lime kiln (H)

The stone or umbrella pine (J)

All useful information

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 any gates and barriers behind you.

On your path...



The downy or pubescent oak (A)

Before the pass, you can see a downy oak wood below the path, with some good-sized specimens. This tree is native to low and intermediate altitudes; from the 9th century onwards, sweet chestnuts were planted in its stead. And yet it provides high-quality wood, resists fire and drought due to its deep roots, and shelters a large number of insect and herbaceous plant species (700 different plant and animal species, including 490 of beetles that live in wood).

Attribution : Yves Maccagno



The draille (drovers' road) and the sheep bridge (B)

The draille (drovers' road) and the sheep bridge architecture
The sheep bridge at the Col de l'Asclier is on an important draille (a traditional path for livestock migrating to the upland summer pastures of Mont Aigoual and Mont Lozère), which was also a King's road during the Camisard revolt in the 18th century, a peddlers' road and is now a long-distance hiking path. The Col de l'Asclier pass (from Occitan asclar, to split), where the road seems to go through a gap, is well-named: it lies on a fault line in the rock. But the most astonishing is the bridge, a bridge without road. It was built to help sheep flocks negotiate this difficult spot!

Attribution : Nathalie Thomas



Sheep bridge (C)

This bridge was expressly built in the 19th century for shepherds heading from the plains of Languedoc to greener regions in the summer. Following the mountain ridges with their flocks, they ascended to the summer pastures. This draille [drovers' road], the Draille de la Margeride, is one of the most famous in the Cévennes alongside those leading to the Aubrac and the Gévaudan.

Attribution : © Olivier Prohin

The forestry track (D)

On the first two kilometres, up to the Rocher de l'Aigle, you are on the forestry track opened in 1938. Where there are forestry tracks, there are state-owned forests, meaning forests managed by the French state and the Office National des Forêts so as to develop the area. The presence of so many beech trees and pines is a marker of the previous reforestation policy on the Aigoual massif and in the Cevenol foothills. A plaque has been erected at the Col du Fageas pass, further along this trail, in memory of Max Nègre (1880 – 1960), one of the project managers of this collective undertaking. From 1935 to 1939, he thinned out the forests planted since the end of the 19th century and opened up forestry tracks.



Rush-leaf narcissus (E)

Come in spring – up to the end of April – to see the rush-leaf narcissi opposite the Rocher de l'Aigle. They grow in abundance on the limited surface area of the sheltered and south-facing stony slope. Often there is only one fragrant flower per plant. Do not pick them! Take a photo instead!

Attribution : © Yves Maccagno



Panoramic views (F)

Enjoy a superb 360° view! On the northern horizon, you can see the summit of Mont Aigoual and, on the valley floor, the hamlets of Les Millerines and L'Abric in the foreground and a part of the districts of L'Estréchure and Saumane in the middle distance. Further north, the village of St-Roman-de-Tousque is perched on the long corniche of the Cévennes. To the east, you can make out the city of Alès, Mont Bouquet and, in the distance, the “giant of Provence”, Mont Ventoux (1,912 m).

On the southern horizon are two limestone hills: the Jumelles de Monoblet. Behind them, Coutach hill overlooks Sauve and Quissiac. The Pic Saint-Loup rises above it all with its 658 m. You can also see a stretch of coastline, with the salt marshes of Aigues-Mortes and La Grande-Motte just visible. Further west, the Roc Blanc rises next to the Pic d'Anjeau. And finally, just opposite you, Mont Fageas, the summit of the Liron range, on which you have been walking west-to-east for an hour already.

Attribution : © Olivier Prohin

360° views from Mauripe (G)



From here, on a clear day, you can see the Alps (west) and the Mediterranean (south). Looking northwest, you can make out Mont Aigoual, the Col de l'Asclier pass, the Col de Fageas with its television mast and, if you follow the ridges eastwards with your eyes, the Rocher de l'Aigle, Piécamp and La Mortière. The lowest ridge is the famous Corniche des Cevennes. Behind it, further east, are the mountain ranges of La Vieille Morte and Le Mortissou, and, in the far distance, the ridges of Mont Lozère. Far to the south, you can make out the city of Alès and, even further away, Mont Ventoux. In front are the town of Lassalle and then La Fage mountain above Saint-Hippolyte-du-Fort. On the horizon, the Mediterranean shimmers furtively.

Attribution : © Olivier Prohin

Lime kiln (H)

The process of burning limestone to make lime has been used since the Bronze Age. The lime was mixed with sand to make mortar for building houses. Concrete was not known until the early 19th century. Lime is also a powerful antiseptic and was used to disinfect buildings, especially sheepfolds. The kiln operator had to maintain the kiln temperature at 800 to 1,000°C. Plaster was made from gypsum deposits using the same principle.



Cemetery history (I)

The walk leads you past the village cemetery, which was in fact the Protestant cemetery. Soudorgues also has a Catholic cemetery, another particularity brought about by the turbulent history of the Reformation. Catholic cemeteries did not accept “non-Christians” or “heretic Christians”. There were countless exhumations of Protestant bodies in the 16th century. To put an end to this injustice, the Edict of Nantes ordered that “convenient” cemeteries be built for those who followed the so-called reformed religion. When the Edict was revoked, the order was also dropped. Huguenots had to renounce their religion to be buried in ‘family’ cemeteries in the countryside. Today, only the owners of these on-site cemeteries still have the right to be buried in them.

Attribution : © Nathalie Thomas



The stone or umbrella pine (J)

In the distance in the Lasalle valley there is dense, dark green vegetation. The stone or umbrella pine has a very characteristic opened-out shape, which resembles an umbrella from a distance. This conifer is at home especially in the Mediterranean basin. It prefers dry, deep and cool soils. Its bark is reddish and cracked. Its fruit, the pine nut, is often used in pastry cooking.

Attribution : Béatrice Galzin



Les Horts hamlet (K)

The hamlet got its name from the Latin hortus, meaning garden. The presence of many springs and waterways contributed to the expansion of dry-stone terraces for growing crops (bancels or faïsses). Les Horts had a watermill.

Attribution : Nathalie Thomas