

C257-ST The Stevenson trail



In the autumn of 1878, R.L. Stevenson, the young Scottish writer who would become famous for his book *Treasure Island*, settled into a small village to the south of Le Puy-en-Velay so to prepare an initiatory Journey across Les Cévennes. One month later, he left Le Monastier-sur-Gazeille with his lone companion Modestine, the temperamental donkey which carried his baggage. His journey was to bring him in contact with the Cévenols, descendants of the Camisards who fought and were persecuted after the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes. For 12 days he traveled across Le Velay, Le Gévaudan and the Cévenol region to arrive in Saint Jean du Gard. He tells of this voyage in his book entitled *Travels with a donkey in the Cévennes*.



We propose a tour that follows the itinerary of R.L. Stevenson and begins at Le Monastier-Sur-

Gazeille. You will cross Le Velay, a vast plateau deeply crevassed by beautiful rivers. You will next pass through the dark, forest-covered Gévaudan and launch yourself in the long ascent of Mont Lozère. You will then turn towards Pont de Monvert and Le Pays Cévenol. Thus you will find yourself in chestnut-wooded valleys that flow into vineyards as you near the Midi.

Itinerary

Day 1 - Arrival at MONASTIER SUR GAZEILLE. The village grew up around a Benedictine abbey that reached its peak in the 11th and 12th centuries. From its prestigious past, Le Monastier has inherited a considerable heritage: a 10th century Romanesque church - a largely Romanesque abbey church, with its treasure and organ built in 1518 - a 16th century castle and convent buildings 18th century. In 1878 Robert Louis Stevenson spent more than a month in this village arranging his trip through Cévennes. *Diner, lodging and breakfast in a 2-star hotel*

Day 2 - LE MONASTIER SUR GAZEILLE – LE BOUCHET ST NICOLAS (23 km – 6.30 walk). This first stage is hilly and dotted with some rough climbs and descents on stony paths. You will cross a first plateau before reaching the narrow valley of the Loire at Le Goudet. You will go up on another plateau near the ruins of the perched castle of Beaufort. You will cross other villages and admire along the way some beautiful old farmhouses. You are in a volcanic landscape and the red earth of the path contrasts with the colors of the varied cultures. You will reach Le Bouchet Saint Nicolas. North of the village is the Lac du Bouchet which fills an old crater. *Dinner, lodging and breakfast in a guesthouse.*



Day 3 - LE BOUCHET – LANGOGNE (25 km – 7 hours' walk). You will hike the length of the plateau, passing through picturesque little villages such as Landos and Jagonas, to reach Pradelles, a medieval city worth visiting. You will then arrive in Langogne, a small city that grew up around its medieval center.

Dinner, lodging and breakfast in a two-star hotel.

Day 4 - LANGOGNE – CHEYLARD L'EVEQUE (16 km – 4 and a half hours' walk). Today's hike is short, giving you time to wander around the little villages you will pass through, such as Saint Flour de Merçoire, where you will discover a Romanesque church. Your destination for the day is Cheylard l'Eveque, a picturesque village at the end of the earth, sitting quietly in the shadow of the Notre Dame de Toutes les Graces Chapel, accessible by a path which leads one through the 14 Stations of the Cross - *Dinner, lodging and breakfast in a guesthouse with en-suite facilities*

Day 5 - CHEYLARD – LA BASTIDE PUY LAURENT (19 km – 5-hour walk). You will cross through the forest and over small streams, admiring the landscape all the way to Luc, which now holds only the ruins of a chateau that once defended the entire Allier Valley. You will follow the river to La Bastide Puy Laurent.
Dinner, lodging and breakfast in a one-star hotel with en-suite facilities

Day 6 - LA BASTIDE – CHASSERADES with a round-trip journey to the Abbey of Notre Dame des Neiges (about an hour and a half walk) then, La Bastide – Chasseradès (12 km). In the morning you will leave for a visit of the Trappist abbey of Notre Dame des Neiges which Stevenson, though Protestant, often mentioned in his writings. The buildings were all rebuilt after a fire in 1912. You will return to La Bastide to point your route towards Chasseradès, passing through the lovely village of Chabalièr, and by the Rocher de Rochoabo, which looks much like a château in ruins - *Dinner, lodging and breakfast in a one-star hotel with en-suite facilities*

Day 7 - CHASSERADES – LE BLEYMARD (14 km – 3.30 hours' walk). You will make your way to Mirandol and its famous viaduct and continue on to l'Estampe, at the foot of the Goulet Mountain. The path zigzags through the forest passes through the abandoned village of Serremejean, and then heads down the southern slope to Le Bleybard - *Dinner, lodging and breakfast in a two-star hotel.*

Day 8 - LE BLEYMARD – LE PONT DE MONTVERT (18 km – 7 hours' walk). Here starts the long climb up Mont Lozère. You will pass by Le Mazel, which holds ancient mines, and follow the long and difficult climb through the forest. When you need a rest, sit alongside one of the few waterfalls along the route. Just beyond Le Chalet du Mont Lozère, the landscape changes. The crests become covered by nothing more than a sad prairie from which rise towers of granite stone (called montjoies) marking the footpath. You will have a startling view of the Pic de Piniels at 1,699 meters. Finally your work will be rewarded with the downward conclusion of the hike, bringing you through the forest to Finiels, and then further still to Le Pont de Montvert, at the bottom of the Tarn Valley - *Dinner, lodging and breakfast in a two-star hotel.*

Day 9 - LE PONT DE MONTVERT – FLORAC (28 km – 8 hours' walk). You will visit the village where, in 1702, the assassination of the Abbot Chayla marked the start of the War of the Camisards. You will pick up the path again – though not that which R.L. Stevenson followed through the Tarn Valley, as it is too dangerous today, but the lovely route passing through the Montagne de Bougès and the Col du Sapet (pass) to arrive in Florac, a magnificent little village which you simply must visit! - *Dinner, lodging and breakfast in a 3-star hotel.*



Day 10 - FLORAC – CASSAGNAS (17 km – 4.30 hours' walk). After leaving Florac, you will climb up the steep-sided valley of La Minente to arrive in Saint Julien d'Arpaon and the looming ruins of its medieval château. You will follow the old train tracks to Cassagnas - *Dinner, lodging and breakfast in a charming guesthouse*

Day 11 - CASSAGNAS – SAINT GERMAIN DE CALBERTE (16 km – 4.30 hours' walk). You will climb slowly through the forest to Le Plan de Fontmort where an obelisk commemorating the martyrs of the War of the Camisards stands. You will arrive at the Pierre Plantée Pass after you admired the dolmens, menhirs, and other roman ruins that decorate the route. You will climb down into the very typical village of Saint Germain via the hamlet of La Serre de la Can. The 12th/14th century church of St Germain houses the tomb of Abbot Chayla, responsible for leading the repression against the “Huguenots” in Cevennes, killed by them at Pont de Monvert. Transfer by taxi to St Jean du Gard. - *Dinner, lodging and breakfast in a two-star hotel in St Jean*

Day 12 - SAINT GERMAIN DE CALBERTE – SAINT JEAN DU GARD (22 km – 6.30 hours' walk). Back by taxi to Saint Germain de Calberte. The path continues down among the chestnut trees, along some valleys to St Etienne Vallée Française, beautiful village with narrow streets whose oldest part, at the foot of the castle hill, surrounds the church. You will climb to the St Pierre pass - beautiful views of the region - before descending into the Gardon St Jean valley and reaching St Jean du Gard. The small capital of Camisard country stretches along a main street at the foot of the Tour de l'Horloge, former bell tower of a Romanesque church destroyed during the wars of religion. *Dinner, lodging and breakfast in a 2-star hotel*

Day 13 - SAINT JEAN DU GARD. Tour ends after breakfast.

Season

From beginning of May to middle of October but be careful this trail is very popular in summer time and there are few comfortable accommodations along the trail. We recommend you to reserve 4 or 5 months before.

What's included?

- 12 nights' accommodation in handpicked 2 and 3-star hotels or charming guesthouses
- 12 breakfasts – 12 dinners
- Luggage transfer between accommodations along the trail.
- Taxi transfers as written in the description of the itinerary
- A set of maps (1/25 000 scale) or topoguide (with translation) with the route marked on and detailed route notes describing the trail.
- A daily itinerary together with information about facilities and places of interest along the trail.
- Emergency assistance.

Visa fees - transportation fees to and from the walk area - Insurance (strongly recommended on all trips) - Transfers except those mentioned above – Drinks – Entrance fees – Additional meals - Spending of personal nature e.g. laundry, souvenirs, phone calls, are not included

Walk difficulty

Grade 3 - walks of between 5 and 8 hours a day with ascents up to 700 m. Some hiking experience is advisable. A reasonable level of fitness and some stamina are required for these walks.

Getting there and away

By car: Drive to Clermont Ferrand along A71 motorway. Get off exit 20 and go to Le Puy along N102 road via Brioude. Continue on D535 to Le Monastier

Shared taxis from St Jean du Gard to Le Monastier or Le Puy for trip back (contact us for reservation)

Where to park: toll secure underground car park in Le Puy en Velay (Special rate for one week or more) or toll-free unattended car park in Le Monastier

By train: Le Puy en Velay is easily reached from the principal train stations in France, with connection at Lyon, Clermont-Ferrand or Saint-Etienne. A bus or taxi will then bring you to Le Monastier sur Gazeille.

To return, a taxi or bus will bring you from Saint Jean du Gard to the Alès or Nîmes train station.

