

C258-ST North part of 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 Gevaudan 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 hike that leads you through the beginning of R.L. Stevenson's travels. This

journey begins at Le Puy en Velay, a magnificent city built around the three large boulders that dominate it and dedicated to the followers of the Virgin Mary. Young Stevenson himself was unaware of the city's value, but you will discover it for him. You will cross Le Velay, a vast plateau more than 1000 meters in height and surrounded by mountains and farming regions, some of which yield the lentils that have become part of the region's fame. You will then pass into Le Gevaudan, famous for the animal which terrorized the inhabitants of this area of valleys, forests, and streams. Though pleasant in summer, life in this region becomes hard in the winter months. Finally, you will arrive in the Allier Valley, visit the Trappist abbey of Notre Dames des Neiges, and finish the hike at Chasseradès, at the foot of the Goulet and Lozère mountains.

Itinerary

Day 1 - Arrival in LE PUY EN VELAY. The volcanic site of Le Puy is of exceptional beauty, with pitons rising in number all across the plain. The city has a long history. Having always been a place of cultish or religious activity, it has more recently been dominated by Christianity and has become a sanctuary of the Virgin Mary. As a place of pilgrimage in itself, and the departure point for one of the paths on the pilgrimage of Santiago de Compostela, Le Puy deserves a visit. Take time to see the Episcopal city, Notre-Dame Cathedral, the cloister, the Saint Michel d'Aiguilhe Chapel sitting on a rock hill, and the old quarter. Le Puy is also famous for its lace, a liquor called La Verveine du Velay, and its lentils - *Dinner, lodging and breakfast in a 3-star hotel.*

Day 2 - LE PUY EN VELAY - LE MONASTIER SUR GAZEILLE (19 km – 5 and a half hour walk). After walking through the plateau, you will descend into the Loire valley to Coubron dominated by the château of Bouzol. You will cross the river and go up on the other side to reach Le Monastier sur Gazeille, small town rich in history. The old city is very pleasant and is worth a visit - *Dinner, lodging and breakfast in a two-star hotel.*

Day 3 - LE MONASTIER SUR GAZEILLE – LE BOUCHET SAINT NICOLAS (23 km – 6 and a half hour walk). Before setting out, you will visit Monastier, its abbey and château, and the old streets and homes of the village. You will cross the valleys of the Gazeille and the Loire, then a vast plateau, to arrive at Le Bouchet. *Dinner, lodging and breakfast in a guesthouse with en-suite facilities*



Day 4 - LE BOUCHET – LANGOGNE (25 km – 7 hour 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 5 - LANGOGNE – CHEYLARD L'EVEQUE (16 km – 4 and a half hour 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 6 - 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 château 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 7 - 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 – CHASSERADES (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 Chabalière, and by the Rocher de Rochaubo, which looks much like a château in ruins.
Dinner, lodging and breakfast in a 2-star hotel



Day 8 - LA BASTIDE PUY LAURENT. 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?

- 7 nights' accommodation in handpicked 2 and 3-star hotels or charming guesthouses
- 7 breakfasts – 7 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

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.

Public taxis from Chasseradès to 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)

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. To return, Trains from Chasseradès to Alès or Clermont Ferrand.

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.