

C275-ST The Huguenots way

from Poët-Laval to Grenoble



This first part of the Huguenot trail will take you to the foothills of the Alpine massif. You will appreciate the Drôme Provençale, its mountainous massifs and its deep valleys which, due to its climate and vegetation, remind you of neighbouring Provence. You will reach the Diois, a natural and historical region, formed by the Drôme valley and its tributaries. Its capital, Die, nestles at the foot of the Glandasse mountain, an impressive rocky barrier south of the Vercors. After passing the Col de Menée, you will switch to the Trièves, a medium mountain region that marks the southern end of the alpine furrow. Surrounded by mountains including the famous Mont Aiguille, this high plateau, a natural fortress, breathes tranquility and good living. Finally, you will cross the tumultuous gorges of the Drac and reach the glacial lakes of the Matheysine plateau before discovering Vizille and its splendid castle on the banks of the Romansh River.

Itinerary

Day 1 – Arrival at POËT LAVAL - On a steep hill in the Jabron Valley, overlooking wooded foothills, stands the medieval village of Poët-Laval. A former commandery of the Order of the Hospitallers of St John of Jerusalem, the village has preserved the castle, the remains of the Romanesque chapel of St John of the Commanders and the ramparts from this period. The Museum of Dauphinois Protestantism is housed in a former knights' residence and was a Protestant temple from the 17th century onwards. It traces the history of Protestantism in Dauphiné, from the Reformation to the present day. Dinner, night and breakfast in a guest house in the heart of the village.

Day 2 – from POËT LAVAL to BOURDEAUX (21.5 Km - 850 m altitude difference) - From the heights of the Jabron valley, you will reach the village of Dieulefit. The village, which dates back to Gallo-Roman times, has kept many pottery workshops which were, for many centuries, the main activity of the region. A major place of Protestantism since the 17th century, Dieulefit paid a heavy price for these religious wars. Through the montagne des Ventes and the forest, you will reach the hamlet of Comps and its Romanesque church where, at the beginning of the 17th century, priest and pastor celebrated their worship alternately... Once past the ridge line, you will gently descend through the Col de Boutière to the perched village of Bourdeaux on the banks of the Roubion. Dinner, night and breakfast in a guest room

Day 3 – from BOURDEAUX to LA CHAUDIERE (14 km - 900 m of altitude difference) - A mid-mountain stage through hills and terraces dotted with hamlets and isolated farms. You will discover family cemeteries, a few graves in a garden or meadow, enclosed or not, by walls and sometimes marked by a tree. The Protestant cemeteries were disused after the revocation of the Edict of Nantes, many Protestants prefer to be buried in their property. You will cross the forest of Saoû which was used as a refuge for the Huguenots during difficult times. You will reach the col de du Gourdon then the col de la Chaudière before going down to the small village of the same name - Dinner, night and breakfast in a guest house

Day 4 – from LA CHAUDIERE to RIMON ET SAVEL (19 Km - 1200 m of altitude difference) - You will continue the path from one valley to another by the passes, a difficult but faster route than following the valleys. After having walked on the heights, you will reach the Col du Perrier and descend into the valley of the Roanne towards the village of Saint Benoit en Diois set on the edge of a rocky spur and controlling a ford passage of the river. You will climb towards the small village of Rimon and Savel perched at an altitude of 1000 m, two parishes united in a single village in 1800. The panorama is magnificent and well worth the effort! Transfer by taxi from Rimon and Savel to Saillans, a small ancient fort city that developed during the Middle Ages around a priory but suffered from the religious wars. Dinner, night and breakfast in a 2-star hotel in Saillans

Day 5 – from RIMON ET SAVEL to DIE (18 Km - 700 m of altitude difference) - Return by taxi to RIMON ET SAVEL in the early morning. You will find the path that runs along the ridge line through the Royet and Beaufayn passes. After passing the Justin Pass, you will descend into the Drôme valley to reach Die, an ancient Roman town and bishopric since the 9th century. In the 17th century, Die housed a Protestant academy that disappeared with the revocation of the Edict of Nantes.

Night and breakfast in a 2-star hotel

Day 6 – from DIE to CHATILLON EN DIOIS (19.5 Km - 1500m of altitude difference) - You will reach the abbey of Valcroissant, an old Cistercian abbey nestled at the foot of the Glandasse mountain which is now coming back to life under the impetus of its current owner. The path runs up and down the mountainside, up and down through the forest to reach the Abbey, Caux and Chaux passes before gently descending to the medieval village of Chatillon en Diois - Dinner, night and breakfast in a 2-star hotel



Day 7 – from CHATILLON to NONIERES (12 Km - 1100m of altitude difference) - A short stop that will take you, through the heights of the Bez valley and the Gorodel pass, to the winding descent towards the hamlet of Menée by the Barri ravine. This hamlet is dominated by the ruins of a castle.

You climb back up to the hamlet of Bénevisse before going down to the hamlet of Nonières. The most courageous can make a detour to admire the Archiane Circus, a classified site of great beauty, surrounded by cliffs or steep slopes sculpted by nature and coloured in pink, grey or ochre. Dinner, night and breakfast in a 2-star hotel

Day 8 – des NONIERES in PERCY (17.5 Km - 1150 m of altitude difference) - You will reach the great waterfall of Sapet then gradually climb, in a grandiose setting, towards the Col de Menée which marks the border between the Diois and the Trièves. Every year, Protestants from the region gather near the cross overlooking the pass to commemorate the passage of many Huguenots fleeing persecution. Through the forest, you will reach the farm and hermitage of Esparron, a place of spirituality where a hermitage was built and became a monastery in the 19th century which, after setbacks and hopes of rebirth, was burned by the German army in 1944. It is now coming back to life with the help of volunteers and the Diocese of Grenoble. You will continue your descent towards Le Percy, a magnificent small pastoral village protected by the cliffs of the Vercors and Mont Aiguille. To the south, the Obiou massif and the Oisans massif to the east complete the setting of this almost unique place. Dinner, night and breakfast in a 2-star hotel

Day 9 - from PERCY to MENS (16 Km - 550 m of altitude difference) - You will reach the village of Monestier du Percy then cross the Ebron, a torrent that descends from Grand Ferrand and flows into the Drac. You will cross the peaceful village of Prébois and continue this walk towards Mens not without crossing the Amourette stream! The village of Mens dates back to Roman colonization and was the capital of the Trièves in the Middle Ages. In the 16th century, Constable Lesdiguières made Mens a stronghold of Protestantism. The first temple was built in 1561. Mens was then the most important Reformed parish in the region, rich merchants and craftsmen rubbed shoulders there and contributed greatly to the village's rich heritage that you will not fail to discover. Dinner, night and breakfast in a 2-star hotel

Day 10 – from MENS to LA MURE (18 Km - 780 m of altitude difference) - The path leads you to Saint Jean d'Hérans, a peaceful village that you will cross before going down into the Dracet valley. You will cross the Drac at the Cognet bridge, which was a major challenge during the Wars of Religion. This bridge was destroyed in 1605 and rebuilt shortly afterwards. That's the bridge you'll be using today. You will admire the church of Cognet before reaching La Mure, a small town on the Matheysin plateau whose origins date back to the Gallo-Roman era. The Wall suffered a painful and bloody siege during the Wars of Religion and suffered from the closure of coal mines at the end of the 20th century that had been in operation since the Middle Ages. Dinner, night and breakfast in a 2-star hotel

Day 11 – From LA MURE to LAFFREY (16 km - 400 m of altitude difference) - This stage will introduce you to the 3 lakes of glacial origin and the wetland that is the northern part of the Matheysin plateau. The trail overlooks or approaches the lakes of Pierre Chatel and Pétichet before reaching the large lake of Laffrey on the edge of which the hotel is located. You will walk around this lake to go to the famous meadow of the meeting where one of these crucial moments in the history of France was played out. In March 1815, Napoleon returned from the Island of Elba and headed for Paris. He spent the night of March 6 in Corps, joined La Mure and headed for Vizille. In Laffrey, he met the army of King Louis XVIII, who had come to stop his march towards the capital. Alone, he walks up to the troop and exclaims, "Soldiers, if there is one among you who wants to kill his general, here I am!" To the cry of "Long live the Emperor", the soldiers trample their fleurs-de-lis. This was the first mass rally that marked Napoleon's return. The place of this episode is today marked by an equestrian statue of the emperor - Dinner, night and breakfast in a comfortable 1-star hotel

Day 12 – from LAFFREY to ECHIROLLES (22.5 Km - 650 m of altitude difference) - From the end of Lac Mort, you will descend towards St Pierre de Mésage then reach the village of Notre Dame de Mésage which has 2 remarkable churches. The 11th century Notre Dame church, whose bell tower slopes south, is built on a narrow flat surface and surrounded by retaining walls. A few hundred metres further on, stands the chapel of St Firmin, wrongly known as the Templar Chapel. It never belonged to this order but was handed over in 1312 to the Hospitallers of St John of Jerusalem, who would become the Order of Malta. You will go down towards La Romanche and along the river to reach Vizille and its castle on the other bank. The sumptuous Château de Vizille houses the Museum of the French Revolution. Through the village of Monchaboud and the castle of Bon Repos, you will reach Echirolles and the first suburbs of Grenoble. You will reach the city centre and station by tram, which will take you a few steps from your hotel. Night and breakfast in a 2-star hotel.



Day 13 – GRENOBLE – end of the tour after breakfast

Season

From April to middle of October but be careful this trail is more and more popular and we recommend to reserve earlier to get (the best) rooms. Best time is May, June and September

What's included?

- 12 nights in 2 or 3 star hotel or guest house with breakfast .
- 10 dinners
- Hotel to hotel luggage transfer 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.
- Phone emergency assistance 24/24

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 road: Reach Montélimar by the A7 motorway then take the D540 towards Dieulefit

By rail: destination Montélimar then bus line 35 (Montélimar/Dieulefit/Valréas) see schedules :

<http://www.ladrome.fr/fr/les-services/transports/lignes-regulieres-et-horaires/index.html>

Where to leave your car: possibility of parking in the village (unguarded)

From Grenoble

Numerous trains and TGVs from Grenoble

Return to Poët Laval: many trains or buses with a change in Valence to reach Montélimar (journey time about 2h30)

Then bus to Le Poët Laval (see schedules above)

Walk difficulty

Level 3 and 4 for some stages - The stages require 6 to 8 hours of walking per day. We are in very hilly, rugged or mountainous terrain. The total difference in altitude is about 500 to 700 meters but beware of certain stages, not too long, which have a difference in altitude of more than 1000 m. You must be in good physical condition and have prepared beforehand.