

N°9 The castle trail

Des falaises de Roquefort au Rougier



Village de Saint-Izaire (Virginie Govignon)



Three valleys are the guideline of this biking tour which starts from a castle and enables you to combine physical activity with heritage sight-seeing.

Right from the beginning and throughout your riding, you will enjoy beautiful scenic viewpoints over Saint-Izaire and the Dourdou meanders. This circuit offers plenty of shade.

Useful information

Practice : VTT

Duration : 2 h 15

Length : 16.6 km

Trek ascent : 516 m

Difficulty : Easy

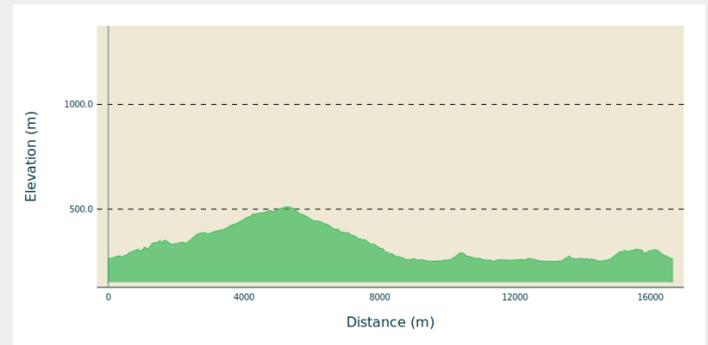
Type : Loop

Themes : Agropastoralism, History and heritage, Panorama

Trek

Departure : Saint-Izaire
Arrival : Saint-Izaire
Markings : ► VTT Parc
Cities : 1. Saint-Izaire

Altimetric profile



Min elevation 251 m Max elevation 511 m

This circuit which has easy gradients can be combined with circuit n° 10 “Le Bois Noir”. The two circuits share the same starting point.

Follow the road towards Faveyrolles for about 1 km.

1. Take the path to your right and enjoy the beautiful view overlooking the village. Pass alongside the deserted farm of Graudenc, then carry on along a path that picks its way through the undergrowth. Pass under the high voltage line and then cycle down towards the valley de Gos. Take your time to enjoy the nice views over the Dourdou valley on the eastern side. The Tarn valley is to the North and the Gos valley to the SW.
2. Cycle up to a cross by the side of the trail, leave the trail here taking the path to the left that runs across a field up to some woodland.
3. After a hairpin bend, cycle towards the sandpit and the banks of the Tarn river. Carry on alongside the shady bank on the left side of the river, pass along the hamlet of les Alvernhes, and then follow the road for 300 m.
4. Cycle down under the stone bridge of the former railway line. Then take the trail alongside the railway line that enables you to bypass the old tunnel by way of a 16th century house called Janolles. Follow the river and cycle under the bridge to reach the farm Mas de Gascuel from the left hand side. You will eventually end the circuit by cycling along a path which slopes gently down to Saint-Izaire.

Saint-Izaire: Former residence of the Vabres l’Abbaye bishops, the castle and the village are built in red sandstone. The castle dates from the 9th century, and was remodeled during the 14th century by the bishop who was to become Pope John XXII. The Bishops’ bedroom with its magnificent wooden floor and fine frescoes is the gem of the castle. The lovely houses and dovecotes that you will see in the village are built in the style of the Albigeois period.

All useful information

AdVICES

Box tree moths are active from May to October. During the caterpillar phase, they feed on the leaves of box trees. They crawl down trees and move on long silken threads, although these threads are annoying when hiking they do not pose any health risk

Gear

Prévoir une réserve d'eau et une tenue adaptée

How to come ?

Transports

Travel by bus or train: <https://lio.laregion.fr/>

Carpooling : [BlaBlaCar](#), [Rézo Pouce](#), [Mobicoop](#), [ldvroom](#), [LaRoueVerte](#), [Roulez malin](#)

Access

Starting from Millau via the D992 road first, then via the D999 road up to the roundabout before Vabres l'Abbaye. Starting from Albi follow the D999 up to Vabres where you turn right onto the D25 road that leads to St-Izaire which is a 16 km drive from Vabres.

Advised parking

Recommended car park : By the Dourdou riverbank, on the right side next to the bridge.

Environmental sensitive areas

Along your trek, you will go through sensitive areas related to the presence of a specific species or environment. In these areas, an appropriate behaviour allows to contribute to their preservation. For detailed information, specific forms are accessible for each area.

Zones interdites au bivouac

Sensitivity period: January, February, March, April, May, June, July, August, September, October, November, Decembre

Information desks

Saint-Affrique Tourist Office

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On your path...



Village of Saint-Izaire (A)

The history of this village is intertwined with that of the old Episcopal castle, which was formerly the Bishop of Vabres summer palace. The name of the village was first made mention of in an official document dating back to 862 AD.

During the 12th century, continual invasions, acts of banditry and battles between feudal lords created a tremendous insecurity. This led to the building of battlements to improve the defensive system and provide a safe haven to the neighbouring people during periods of turmoil. The castle and the fortified village date back to the time of the Vabres bishops who made the village their summer residence and a safe refuge.

When the religious wars were over and peace restored, the protective wall lost its primary function and so today the façade of the castle has windows inserted along its length. The fortified gates were also demolished to allow the passage of carts or to expand the neighbouring houses. The village street, footpath and house pattern has remained unchanged since the Middle Ages, and the beautiful 15th century facades and windows can still be seen in some streets today. The old church part of the battlements had its vault lowered in 1635 to provide housing to the schoolmaster and guards. In 1650 repair works were started by the Consuls.

Attribution : Roquefort Tourisme