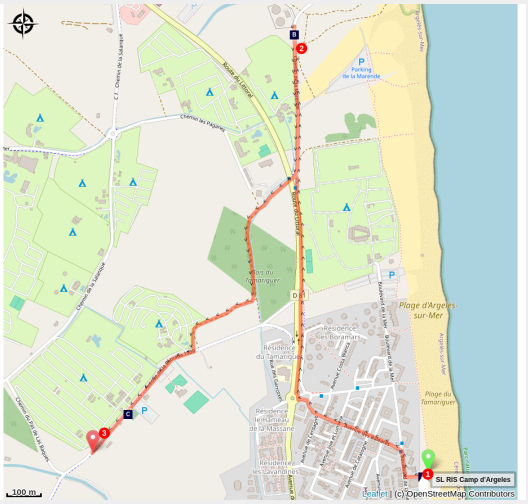
Memorial Trail of the Argelès-sur-Mer Camp

Albères



(Mémorial du camp d'Argelès)



Walk in the footsteps of the memories of the Argelès-sur-Mer camp, where more than 170,000 refugees were interned between February 1939 and the beginning of 1942.

A memorial trail connects the Monolith of the camp to the North plaque, passing by the Spanish Cemetery. At these sites, multilingual explanatory panels recount the history of the Retirada (the exodus of Spanish Republicans) and the Argelès-sur-Mer camp. An audio guide is available in four languages (French, Catalan, Spanish, and English).

Useful information

Practice : Hiking

Duration : 42 min

Length : 3.4 km

Trek ascent : 19 m

Difficulty : Easy

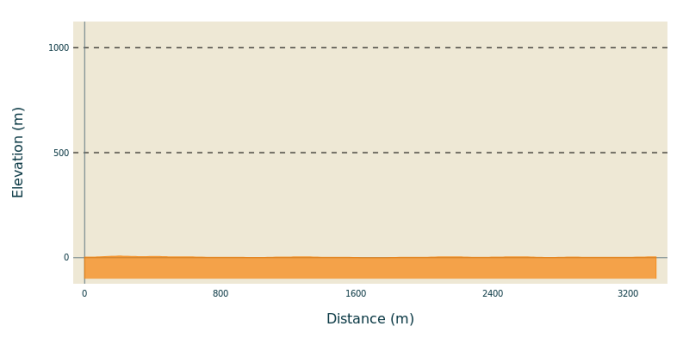
Type : Traversée

Themes : Histoire, Littoral, Patrimoine

Trek

Departure : Monolith of the Camp (60 Boulevard de la Mer)
Arrival : Spanish Cemetery (Avenue de la Retirada)
Cities : 1. ARGELES SUR MER

Altimetric profile

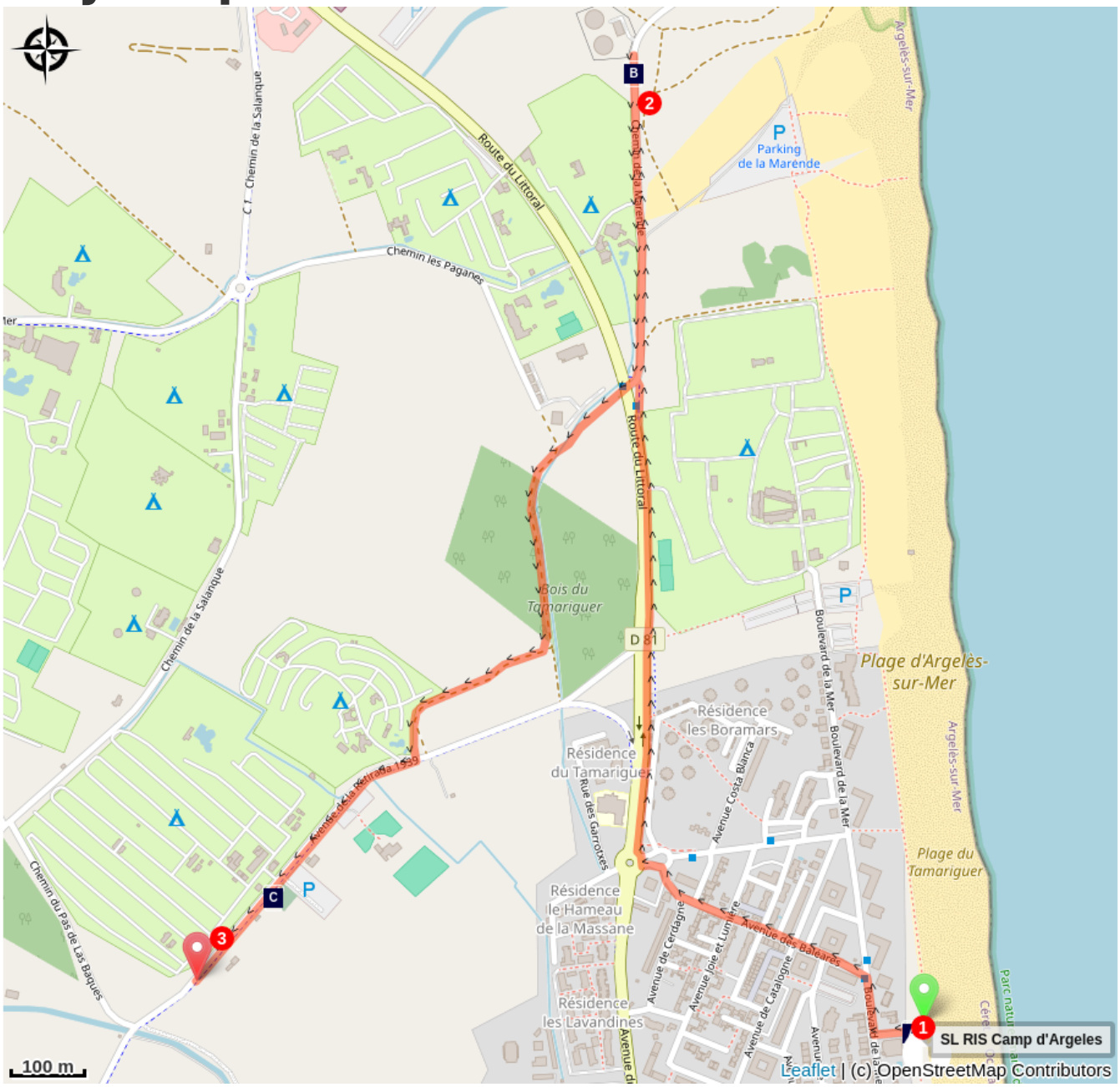


Min elevation 0 m Max elevation 8 m

1. From the Monolith (marking the former entrance of the camp), follow the coastal path towards the Mas Larrieu nature reserve. Pass by the Roussillonnais campsite, then turn left at the Marende parking lot.
2. From the North plaque (symbolizing the northern boundary of the camp), take the bike path along the D81 until you reach the junction with Avenue de la Retirada, which you should then follow.
3. Continue along Avenue de la Retirada on the bike path until you reach the Spanish Cemetery (the former camp cemetery), located across from the Les Marsouins campsite. From here, you can either return to the beach retracing your steps or continue straight ahead towards the village to discover the Camp Memorial (26 Avenue de la Libération).

More information

On your path...



The Camp Monolith (A)

North Plaque of the Argelès-sur-Mer Memorial Trail (B)

Spanish Cemetery (C)

All useful information

How to come ?

Transports

Transportation: Bus for €2 to Argelès-sur-Mer, get off at the arrival roundabout (beach center). Lines 540, 543, 550, 552, 553, and 555. Shuttle services between the beach and the village are also available from early November to the end of March.

Access

D81

Advised parking

Parking Le Roussillonnais and Costa Blanca are located near the Monolith

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.

Zone Natura 2000 Directive Habitat

Sensitivity period:

Zone Natura 2000 Directive Oiseaux

Réserve Naturelle du Mas Larrieu

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

Réserve Naturelle du Mas Larrieu

On your path...



The Camp Monolith (A)

The monolith at the camp marks the southern entrance to the Argelès-sur-Mer camp, which was opened in early February 1939 to intern some of the refugees who had fled Spain during "La Retirada." Over 100,000 refugees, including women and children, passed through the camp until summer 1939, all sleeping directly on the sand in makeshift shelters. The camp was reorganized and reopened following the declaration of war in September 1939. After France's defeat in June 1940, the camp became more international, with refugees from Northern and Eastern Europe, including foreign Jews, and the return of Spanish workers. The Vichy government used it as one of the main camps in southern France, interning French nomads there in the autumn of 1940.

People from over fifty nationalities lived together behind the barbed wire at Argelès. These "undesirables" were confined on a beach where living conditions were extremely harsh, with high mortality rates, particularly among infants. In 1941, the Ministry of the Interior transferred most of the internees to the Rivesaltes camp and deported some Spaniards and international brigadiers to camps in Algeria. By June 1942, with only a hospital remaining, the Argelès-sur-Mer camp was converted into a French Youth Work Camp before closing permanently in November. Erected in 1999, this monolith pays tribute to all the refugees who passed through the camp.

Attribution : Mémorial du camp d'Argelès



North Plaque of the Argelès-sur-Mer Memorial Trail (B)

This plaque symbolizes the northern boundary of the Argelès-sur-Mer camp.

Attribution : Mémorial du camp d'Argelès



Spanish Cemetery (C)

Nearly 400 internees died in the Argelès-sur-Mer camp or following transfers to hospitals in Perpignan between 1939 and 1942. A quarter of them were children. All were refugees, mostly Spanish, but also French Roma and refugees from nearly 50 nationalities interned on Argelès-sur-Mer beach, one of the largest camps in southern France.

The camp cemetery was devastated by floods in October 1940. In 1953, after the commune acquired a part of the former cemetery grounds, a Belgian citizen donated a memorial stele engraved with the names of some of the men, women, and children who died in the camp. This site, maintained for many years by former internees, has become a place of memory and reflection, and it remains the last vestige of the camp.

Attribution : Mémorial du camp d'Argelès