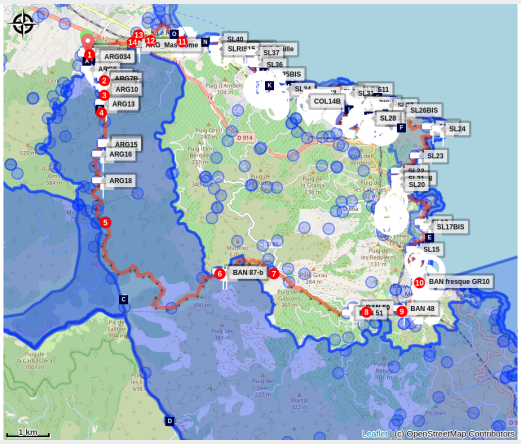
Loop hike from Valmy Castle to Banyuls via the Col des Gascons and the coastal path

Albères



col des gascons (elcoste)



/!\ Detour before the Porteils Coves Campsite due to severe weather.

A loop hike between sea and mountains, where every step reveals a new horizon.

A spectacular loop hike starting from Valmy Castle, winding through wild ridgelines, panoramic mountain passes, and the coastal path. This route reveals the contrasting landscapes of the Albères Massif, including the Massane Forest Nature Reserve, as well as the vineyard work shaping the land between Argelès-sur-Mer and Banyuls-sur-Mer. On the return, the coastal path offers exceptional flora, secluded beaches and idyllic coves, along with remarkable cultural heritage.

Useful information

Practice : Hiking

Duration : 2 days

Length : 41.8 km

Trek ascent : 1678 m

Difficulty : Hard

Type : Traversée

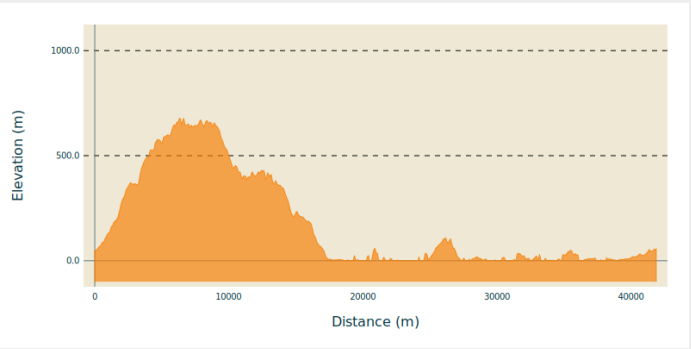
Themes : Flora, Pastoralism, Histoire, Montagne, Géologie, Point de vue, Sommet, Patrimoine, Littoral

In every season, the scenery unfolds in a different palette of colors.

Trek

Departure : Château de Valmy
Arrival : Château de Valmy
Markings : GR PR
Cities : 1. ARGELES SUR MER
2. COLLIOURE
3. BANYULS SUR MER
4. PORT-VENDRES

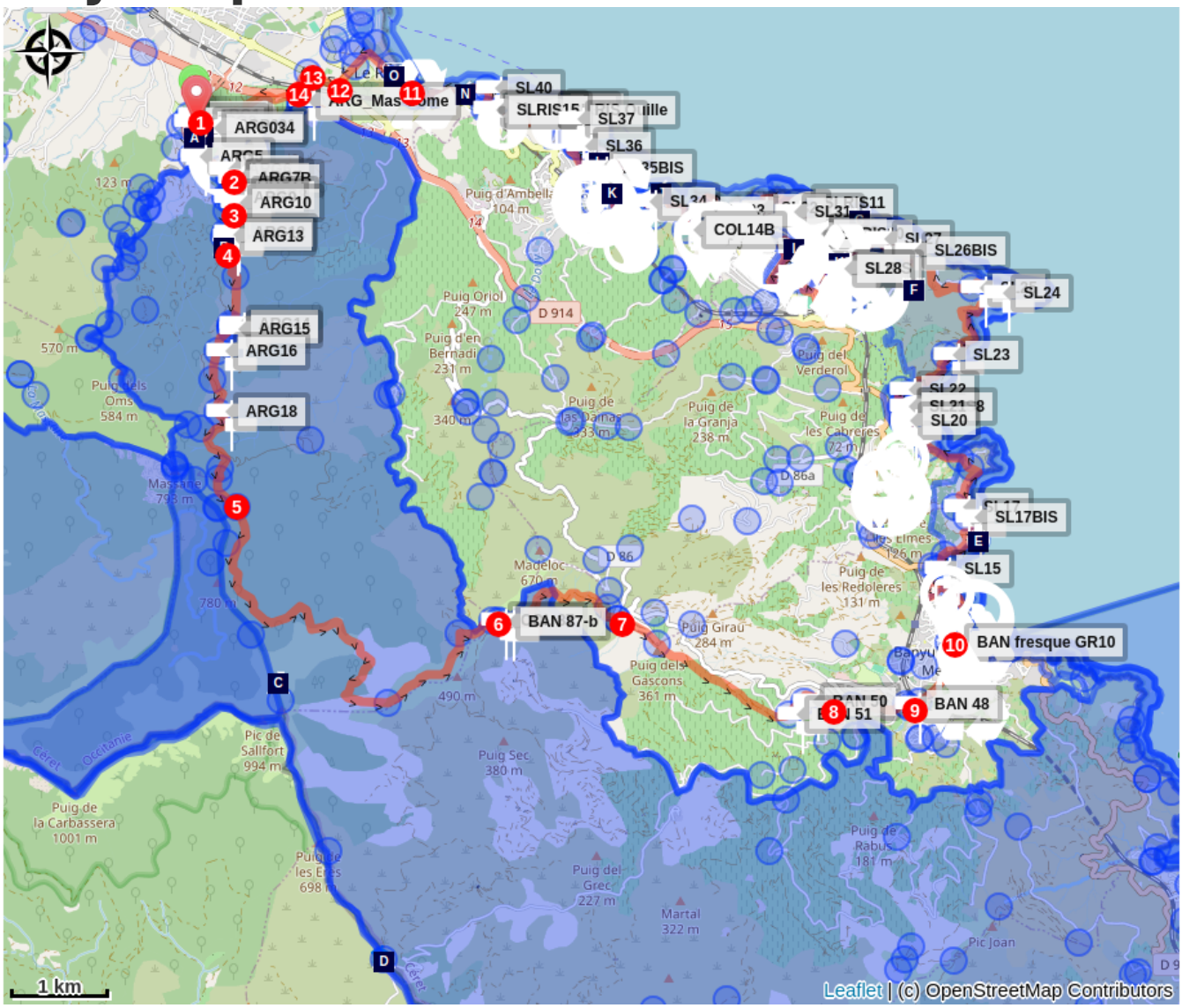
Altimetric profile



Min elevation 0 m Max elevation 678 m

1. Start from the parking area towards Camping des Mimosas. Before reaching the campsite, take the track on the left, DFCI AL42. Take the path on the right above the château grounds, then rejoin the track a little further on.
2. Climb the path straight ahead towards the dolmens.
3. After the first dolmen, follow the path, then take the right fork and continue uphill to the second dolmen.
4. After this one, take the path on the right. At the junction, stay on the path that connects to the DFCI AL41 ter track (picnic table).
5. Head towards Col d’en Verderol (787 m), avoiding the route via Col de la Place d’Armes. Continue the itinerary towards the Tour de Madeloc.
6. At this point, take the middle path towards Col des Gascons (387 m).
7. After enjoying this exceptional panorama, take the rightmost path towards Notre-Dame-de-la-Salette Chapel. Continue towards the centre of Banyuls-sur-Mer.
8. Follow the Cami de la Salette (picnic table), then the Cami del Ramader, and the Mas Puig road.
9. After the gendarmerie, turn left and follow the Baillaury River along Avenue Général de Gaulle (all the way to the end). Turn right to reach the Banyuls Tourist Office.
10. Follow the waymarking of the coastal path to Le Racou.
11. Cross the Valmary woodland (or walk through the typical Racou district), then at the roundabout turn left.
12. At the junction, turn right,
13. then a few metres further on turn left. Pass under the railway line and the D914 road.
14. Climb up on the left through the vineyards to reach Valmy Castle.

On your path...



Château de Valmy (A)
Dolmen dels Collets de Cotlliure (B)
Puig de Sallfort (C)
Col de Banyuls-sur-Mer (D)
Sphinx (E)
Fort Béar (F)
The jetty's lighthouse (G)
Redoute Béar (H)
Nostra Mar (I)
View of Collioure Bay (J)
Royal Castle of Collioure (K)
Fort Miradoux (L)
Ouille Beach (M)
Criques de Porteils (N)

All useful information

⚠ Advices

This route is offered as a multi-day hike.
Overnight stays are possible in Banyuls-sur-Mer or Port-Vendres.
Bring water, a cap, snacks, sunscreen, a windbreaker, and possibly a waterproof jacket.
Stay on marked trails at all times.
Respect nature and take your litter with you.
Remember to check the weather forecast before setting off, as well as the wildfire risk in the massif.

How to come ?

Transports

Bus 2€

Access

D914, Valmy exit.

Advised parking

Valmy Castle car park

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

Zone Natura 2000 Directive Oiseaux

Sensitivity period:

Zone Natura 2000 Directive oiseaux

Réserve de la Forêt de la Massane

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

Réserve Naturelle de la Forêt de la Massane.

Porté par l'Etat français, la hêtraie de la Réserve Naturelle de la Forêt de la Massane a rejoint le patrimoine mondial de l'UNESCO le 28 juillet 2021 sur la liste des "Forêts primaires et anciennes de Hêtres des Carpates et autre régions d'Europe".

Ce classement international prestigieux reconnaît l’ancienneté et le fort niveau de naturalité de cette vieille forêt du bassin méditerranéen en libre évolution depuis plus de 150 ans. Il est le fruit du travail exemplaire mené tant sur la connaissance que sur la gestion de la réserve depuis sa création en 1973 par les organismes cogestionnaires : l’Association des Amis de la Massane et la Fédération des Réserves Naturelles Catalanes.

Un haut lieu de biodiversité

La forêt de la Massane est probablement l’aire protégée la plus inventoriée d’Europe, voire du monde. Les dernières publications montrent que cette forêt peut être considérée comme présentant une très grande diversité d’espèces à l’hectare, avec plus de 8 200 espèces répertoriées sur seulement 336 hectares.

Un patrimoine commun à préserver

Si la hêtraie de la Massane a conservé ce patrimoine naturel exceptionnel depuis les dernières glaciations, elle n’en est pas moins menacée par les changements globaux brutaux (climat, activités humaines, etc.). De par ses caractéristiques biogéographiques, la Massane est considérée comme un poste avancé du changement climatique en zone méditerranéenne. Elle accuse certaines années des taux de mortalité 6 fois supérieurs à ce que l’on observe dans les autres hêtraies.

Afin de répondre aux enjeux actuels de gestion, un plan d’adaptation a été élaboré à partir d’un diagnostic de vulnérabilité établi selon les prédictions du GIEC et toutes les connaissances acquises sur le site (Life Natur’adapt). Pour préserver ce bien commun, il est donc indispensable de garantir sa tranquillité et son intégrité, notamment au regard des risques majeurs actuels (changement climatique, pollutions, surfréquentation, etc.).

On your path...



Château de Valmy (A)

An amazing space leaning against the Albères, embracing the vineyards and the Mediterranean: welcome to the Château de Valmy. Art Nouveau style, it is the work of the Danish architect Viggo Petersen. It is Pierre Bardou, a Peruvian industrialist creator of the brand JOB, who controls this castle for his daughter Jeanne from 1888 to 1900. His descendants are still owners of the castle. They relaunched the wine business and created guest rooms at the Château. Go check it out !

Attribution : CCACVI



Dolmen dels Collets de Cotlliure (B)

Find this dolmen on the path that connects the Château de Valmy to the Tour de la Massane. The path will lead you first to the Dolmen de la Cova de l'Alarb, then you will arrive directly at the Dolmen del Collets area. Open your eyes and look around. The dolmen is there but in poor condition.

Attribution : Jean-Philippe Lapeyre



Puig de Sallfort (C)

An important summit of the Côte Vermeille with 981 meters of altitude, the Puig de Sallfort marks the border between France and Spain. It is shared between Argelès and Banyuls for the French Pyrenees, and Espolla in the province of Girona. See what's going on!

Attribution : Liza Tumson



Col de Banyuls-sur-Mer (D)

This incredibly wild and unspoiled site, which serves as the border between France and Spain, has been the scene of many twists and turns in the history of refugees. Discover the beauty of the place and let yourself be amazed by the unique panorama of the site.

Attribution : François-Xavier Hallé



Sphinx (E)

When Egypt invites itself on the Côte Vermeille. Observe the coastline and you will discover an authentic sphinx ... with a little imagination. This cape located near the Plage des Elmes is a beautiful place. You have to take the Chemin des Douaniers, by the Plage des Elmes to get there.

Attribution : CCACVI



Fort Béar (F)

Built between 1877 and 1880, Fort Béar was built in order to lock the borders and replace the fortifications of Vauban with buried polygonal forts. This fort was used until the middle of the 20th century, when a radio station was installed after the German occupation (1949). He is now owned by the Army.

Attribution : CCACVI



The jetty's lighthouse (G)

Having weathered the weather so far, the metal lighthouse at the pier of Port-Vendres has run bravely 110 years. However the last storms have a little damaged, including its spiral staircase, since removed because of the automation of the lantern. Listed in historical monuments since 2011, go see it before the sea prevails!

Attribution : CCACVI



Redoute Béar (H)

Due to its strategic maritime position and its proximity to historical boundaries, Port-Vendres has received a great deal of attention from military builders. The historic turning point of the city is around 1659, when after the Treaty of the Pyrenees, King Louis XIV charged Vauban to make "Port-Vendres" a port of war. Go up to the Redoubt Béar built in the 18th century according to the plans of Vauban and immerse yourself in history.

Attribution : CCACVI



Nostra Mar (I)

Club hiking webbed and environmental awareness. Discover the rich marine environment of the Côte Vermeille from the edge with fins, mask and snorkel! Marine, diving instructor and biologist, will guide you. All levels. Equipment provided: fins, mask, snorkel, combination.

Attribution : Nostra Mar



View of Collioure Bay (J)

Collioure, with its rich history, offers various tourist sites, each with a unique but equally extraordinary perspective. The bay of Collioure is one of those stunning spots where the sea meets the mountains, providing a perfect place to relax for a moment. Whether you're down in the Catalan town or at a higher viewpoint, make the most of this one-of-a-kind location.

Attribution : CCACVI



Royal Castle of Collioure (K)

Built in the 13th century to house the court of the Kings of Majorca, the Royal Castle of Collioure has been listed as a historical monument since 1922. Reinforced many times, the castle eventually pushed the city back to the foot of the cape turned into a citadel in the 17th century. It is inseparable from Collioure as the city can not be separated from the sea. To return to the heart of the world of the Royal Castle of Collioure, do not forget the guided tours!

Attribution : CCACVI



Fort Miradoux (L)

In 1669, Vauban who wanted to make Collioure a garrison town, decided to shave the old town and create Fort Miradoux on the site of the old Fort Sainte-Thérèse built around 1540 by Charles V. This fort because of its location was of paramount importance in the defense of the castle. Today, Fort Miradoux, owned by the Army has become the National Commando Training Center (CNEC).

Attribution : admin66pm



Ouille Beach (M)

The beach of Ouille, between Collioure and Racou, is a real paradise. This confidential beach is mostly frequented by locals or customers of neighboring campsites. With its small pebbles, it extends about 100 meters below the cliffs of the Côte Vermeille. This beach, very quiet even in high season, however, is not monitored and parking to access is quite far. In short, a great place to be away from the crowd.

Attribution : Aurélie Rubio



Criques de Porteils (N)

The largest cove in Argelès, stretching 180 meters, Porteils Cove isn't the easiest to find. Many smaller coves are scattered throughout the area, with access varying depending on the season. Generally, you'll find peace there, lulled by the waves of turquoise waters.

Attribution : CCACVI