"La Retirada" and the paths of exile

Côte Vermeille

(Elisabeth Coste)

In the footsteps of exiles who fled oppression during "La Retirada" and during the war of 39-45.

This superb hike on the border offers magnificent views of the sea, from Cap de Creus to Cap Béar, as well as the mountains and the small port villages of Port-Bou and Cerbère. Memorials on the route will tell you that this path was that of many exiles who fled Francoist Spain or France occupied by the Germans.

Useful information

Practice : Hiking

Duration : 2 h 12

Length : 5.3 km

Trek ascent : 417 m

Difficulty : Medium

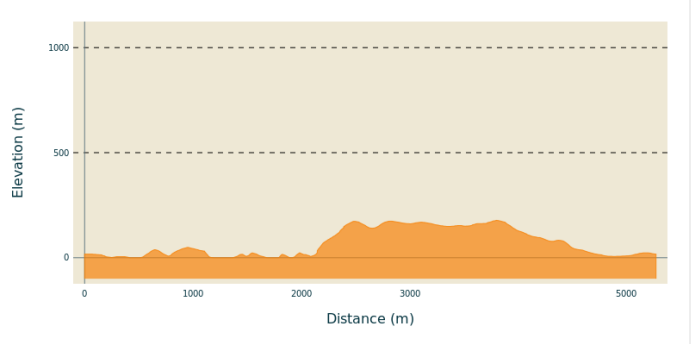
Type : Traversée

Themes : Flora, Point de vue, Architecture, Géologie, Histoire, Art, Littoral, Patrimoine

Trek

Departure : Tourist office of Cerbère
Arrival : Mémorial Walter Benjamin - Port-Bou
Cities : 1. CERBERE

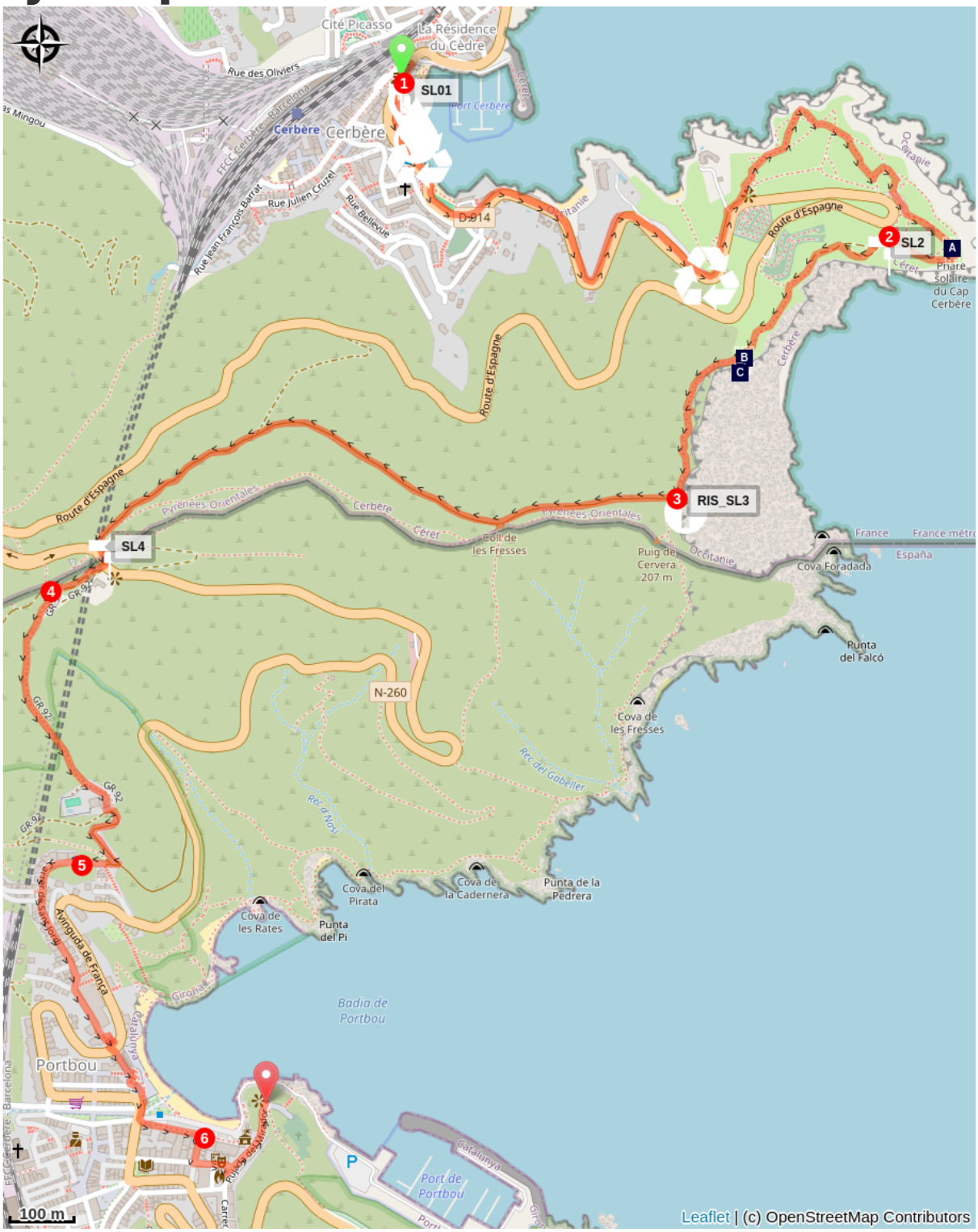
Altimetric profile



Min elevation 0 m Max elevation 178 m

1. Leave from the Cerbère Tourist Office and follow the D914 to the Cerbère photovoltaic lighthouse.
2. Go around the lighthouse, take the marked path which rises to the left above the cliffs.
3. When you arrive at the Puig de Cerbère, go to the right following the path and cross the D914.
4. At the old border post, turn right and go up to see the Retirada memorial on the hill. Continue and take the marked path on the left which descends towards Port-Bou.
5. Arrived in Port-Bou, continue on the GR-92. Head towards the beach and the "Passeig de Sardana".
6. At the corner of the restaurant "Voramar" turn right then take the first left, climb the stairs and go right following the signs "Memorial Walter Benjamin.

On your path...



Solar Lighthouse of Cap Cerbère (A) boundary stone n°601 (B)
The cliffs of Cerbère (C)

All useful information

⚠ Advices

Bring water, walking shoes, windbreaker (whatever the time of year) and cap. Be careful above the Cerbère cliffs. Please bring back your waste.

How to come ?

Transports

Bus 2€
Port-Bou Cerbère train for the return trip, click here.

Access

D 914

Advised parking

Port 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

On your path...

Solar Lighthouse of Cap Cerbère (A)

The last lighthouse before the French-Spanish border, this structure, built in 1982, replaced the old Cerbère lighthouse, which was decommissioned in 1980. Also known as the “Solar Lighthouse” due to its power source—photovoltaic cells—it has a range of 15 nautical miles. To preserve the landscape, all external electrical wiring was excluded from the site. Don’t miss this lighthouse, recognizable by its grey stones and tall red top.

Attribution : Elisabeth Coste

boundary stone n°601 (B)

The boundary markers 601 and 601bis are part of the 602 boundary stones and crosses that delineate the Franco-Spanish border. These markers represent the last accessible land-based boundary points before the border reaches the Mediterranean Sea. The marker 602 is located in the Foradada Cave in the sea, between Cerbère and Port-Bou.

These boundary stones were established following the Treaty of the Pyrenees in 1659 and the Treaty of Bayonne in 1856, which set the current course of the border.

To reach boundary stone 601, one should follow the customs path (sentier douanier). Upon reaching the sign marking the end of the path section, continue straight ahead (following the yellow cross) rather than turning right onto the dirt track. This will bring you to the boundary stone, allowing you to experience this historical marker along the French-Spanish border.

Attribution : Camille Reynaud

The cliffs of Cerbère (C)

The Cliffs of Cerbère are among the highest in Europe and are part of the Banyuls to Cerbère Ecological and Faunistical/Floral Natural Area (Zone Naturelle d'Intérêt Ecologique Faunistique et Floristique des Falaises de Banyuls à Cerbère). Located in the southern part of the Côte Vermeille, this protected area stretches across 7 kilometers of coastline between Banyuls-sur-Mer and Cerbère, covering 140 hectares.

This rugged coastline is oriented from north-northwest to south-southeast and is predominantly made up of schist. The cliffs are sharply cut and are followed by numerous reefs and underwater islets. Several prominent capes punctuate the coastline, including the Cap de l'Abeille, Cap Redéris, Cap de Peyrefite, and Cap Canadell, which demarcate several sandy coves. The most significant of these is Peyrefite Beach.

The summit plateaus are covered with Mediterranean vegetation, including grasslands and maquis scrubland, which are often intersected by temporary streams. This diverse and ecologically significant landscape is a haven for a wide range of plant and animal species, making it an area of great natural interest.

Attribution : Elisabeth Coste