

TREKKING THE ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON TRAIL

**THE GR70 THROUGH THE CÉVENNES/
MASSIF CENTRAL**



About the Authors

Nike and Jacint met many years ago on a long coach journey as they both travelled into the unknown to build a new life in a different country. It wasn't long before they became inseparable. Travelling quickly emerged as their favourite activity: they had their first walking holiday in Madeira in 2008 and now wherever they go they try to find the best trails.

Nike went to journalism school and Jacint is a keen photographer. They really enjoy walking in the mountains and would happily spend every day on the trails.

When they followed Robert Louis Stevenson's footsteps through the Cévennes they were mesmerised by the diverse scenery. With their guidebooks and photos they want share their passion for walking with others.

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THE GR70 THROUGH THE CÉVENNES/
MASSIF CENTRAL

by Nike Werstroh and Jacint Mig

CICERONE

JUNIPER HOUSE, MURLEY MOSS,
OXENHOLME ROAD, KENDAL, CUMBRIA LA9 7RL
www.cicerone.co.uk

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you to Jonathan and Joe Williams for suggesting we explore the GR70 trail.

*Front cover: Magnificent views over the Cévennes from the pre-historic burial site
(Stage10)*

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Updates to this Guide

While every effort is made by our authors to ensure the accuracy of guidebooks as they go to print, changes can occur during the lifetime of an edition. This guidebook was researched and written before the COVID-19 pandemic. While we are not aware of any significant changes to routes or facilities at the time of printing, it is likely that the current situation will give rise to more changes than would usually be expected. Any updates that we know of for this guide will be on the Cicerone website (www.cicerone.co.uk/918/updates), so please check before planning your trip. We also advise that you check information about such things as transport, accommodation and shops locally. Even rights of way can be altered over time.

We are always grateful for information about any discrepancies between a guidebook and the facts on the ground, sent by email to updates@cicerone.co.uk or by post to Cicerone, Juniper House, Murley Moss, Oxenholme Road, Kendal, LA9 7RL.

Register your book: To sign up to receive free updates, special offers and GPX files where available, register your book at www.cicerone.co.uk.

Note on Mapping

The route maps in this guide are derived from publicly available data, databases and crowd-sourced data. As such they have not been through the detailed checking procedures that would generally be applied to a published map from an official mapping agency, although naturally we have reviewed them closely in the light of local knowledge as part of the preparation of this guide.

Symbols used on route maps

	route		track
	alternative route		vehicle track
	start point		tarmac road
	finish point		refreshments
	bridge		mid stage accommodation
	route direction		bus stop/bus station
	parking		viewpoint
	woodland		other feature
	urban areas		
	regional border		
	international border		
	station/railway		
	peak		
	tunnel on route		
	campsite		
	building		
	church/monastery/cross		
	castle		
	pass		
	water feature		

SCALE: 1:50,000

0 kilometres 0.5 1
0 miles 0.5

Contour lines are drawn at 25m intervals and highlighted at 100m intervals.

Relief
in metres

1600–1800
1400–1600
1200–1400
1000–1200
800–1000
600–800
400–600
200–400
0–200

GPX files for all routes can be downloaded free at www.cicerone.co.uk/918/GPX.



ROUTE SUMMARY TABLE

Stage	Start/Finish	Distance	Ascent	Descent	Time	Page
1	Le Puy-en-Velay to Le Monastier-sur-Gazeille	19km	640m	390m	5hr 30min-6hr	26
2	Le Monastier-sur-Gazeille to Le Bouchet-St-Nicolas	24km	785m	495m	6hr-6hr 30min	35
3	Le Bouchet-St-Nicolas to Langogne	28.5km	395m	690m	7hr 30min	44
4	Langogne to Cheylard-l'Évêque	16.5km	445m	235m	4hr	53
5	Cheylard-l'Évêque to La Bastide-Puylaurent	20km/27km	405m/675m	500m/770m	5hr 30min/7hr-7hr 30min	60
6	La Bastide-Puylaurent to Le Bleyard	30km	900m	850m	7hr 30min-8hr	68
7	Le Bleyard to Le Pont-de-Montvert	21km	670m	820m	6hr	75
8	Le Pont-de-Montvert to Florac	30km	820m	1180m	7hr 30min-8hr	84
9	Florac to Cassagnas	18.5km	645m	485m	4hr 30min	91
10	Cassagnas to St-Germain-de-Calberte	16km	480m	660m	4hr	96
11	St-Germain-de-Calberte to St-Jean-du-Gard	23km	745m	1055m	6hr	101
12	St-Jean-du-Gard to Alès	25.5km	950m	1010m	7hr 30min-8hr	108
Total		272.5km or 279.5km	7880m or 8150m	8370m or 8640m	12 days	



A faint path leading to a prehistoric burial site (Stage 10)

INTRODUCTION



Magnificent views to Goudet from the Château de Beaufort (Stage 2)

On 22 September 1878, the Scottish writer Robert Louis Stevenson set off from Le Monastier-sur-Gazeille with Modestine the donkey on a 12-day hike through the Cévennes. He kept a journal, and his book *Travels with a Donkey in the Cévennes* – considered a pioneering classic of outdoor

literature – was published in 1879. Stevenson would most probably be surprised to see that some 140 years after his journey, many people depart from Le Puy-en-Velay or Le Monastier-sur-Gazeille to walk the GR70 long-distance trail that follows his footsteps as closely as possible.

Stevenson's often-quoted lines beautifully summarise the philosophy of walking that many hikers can identify with:

For my part, I travel not to go anywhere, but to go. I travel for travel's sake. The great affair is to move; to feel the needs and hitches of our life

STAGE 1

Le Puy-en-Velay to Le Monastier-sur-Gazeille

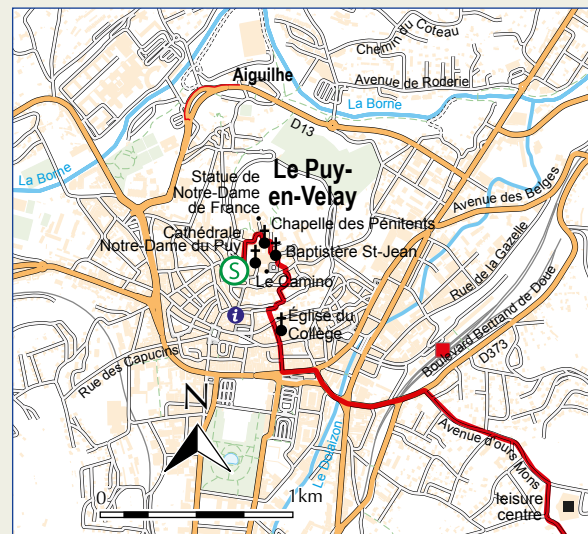
Start	Cathedral, Le Puy-en-Velay
Finish	Le Monastier-sur-Gazeille
Distance	19km
Total ascent	640m
Total descent	390m
Time	5hr 30min–6hr
Refreshments	Plenty of cafés, restaurants and supermarkets in Le Puy; bar/restaurant and small shop near the bridge in Coubon; taps with drinking water on either side of the bridge over the Loire in Coubon; supermarket, bakery and small restaurants in Le Monastier-sur-Gazeille

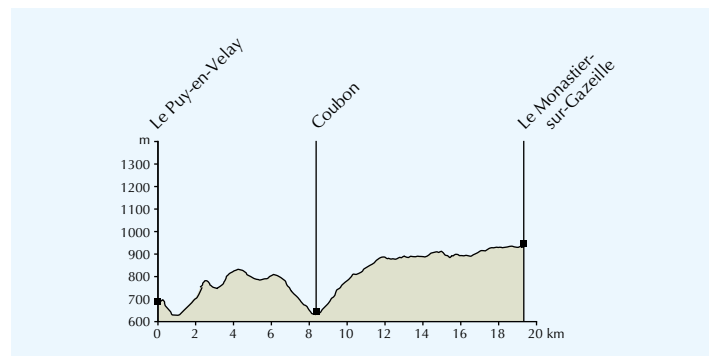
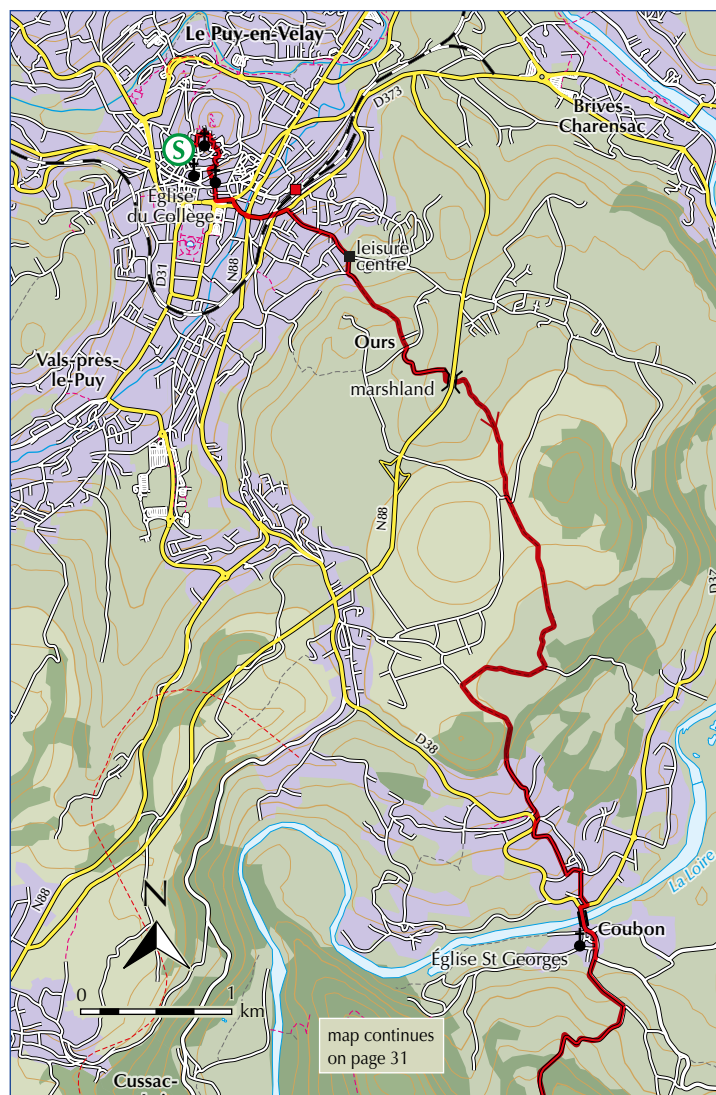
Robert Louis Stevenson didn't start his walk in Le Puy-en-Velay, although he did visit the town before his journey. Today, it is the starting point for many walkers. You might want to spend some time wandering through the cobbled streets and visiting some of the sights before you set off. This first section of the trail eases you gently into the walking and, despite not being officially part of the trail, it is well signposted, and you will see Chemin Stevenson GR70 signs.

LE PUY-EN-VELAY

It is worth spending at least an afternoon in Le Puy-en-Velay. Towering over the town on a hill, the Roman Catholic Cathédrale Notre-Dame du Puy dominates the centre. Its distinctive striped façade is made of white sandstone and black volcanic breccia. Built in the 12th century, the cathedral is a UNESCO World Heritage Site and one of the starting points for the Camino de Santiago pilgrimage. Some mornings you might see pilgrims gathering to be blessed.

Perched on the hill, the iron statue of the Virgin Mary (Notre-Dame de France) was made from 218 Russian cannons taken during the Siege of Sevastopol (1854–55). You can climb the steps inside the statue to enjoy great views of the town.





Facing the **cathedral** at the end of the rue des Tables, go left and follow the red and white signs along a cobbled road that skirts behind the cathedral. Go down some steps near the **Le Camino** museum (www.lecamino.org). There are signs indicating the way. Pass the church of St Jean François Régis and, at the next junction, continue straight on downhill.

Reaching boulevard Maréchal Fayolle, go left and, at the junction, turn right onto avenue Georges Clemenceau, passing a World War 1 memorial. Cross the bridge over **Le Dolaizon** and continue uphill by a supermarket on rue Pierre Farigoule. There are views towards Le Puy Cathedral and the Notre-Dame de France statue perched on some rocks on the left. Follow the road over the railway and then continue straight on. Keep right on avenue d'Ours Mons uphill. Turn right just before reaching the **leisure centre** and then immediately left uphill on rue Edouard Estaunié.

Go up the hill with the leisure centre on your left. The tarmac road eventually becomes a path – red and white stripes mark the way – and views open up towards Le Puy-en-Velay with the hills in the background. Walk alongside a stone wall, past a stone cross until you reach a small junction at a hamlet. Carry straight on, go over the road by the cross and then continue downhill on the Chemin du Vallon.



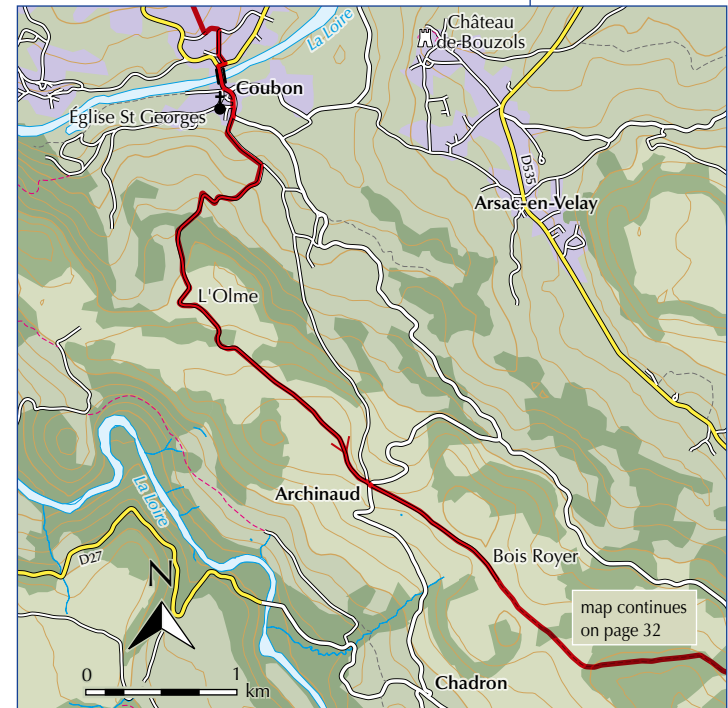
Near the hamlet of Ours, the views are dominated by meadows, fields and hills

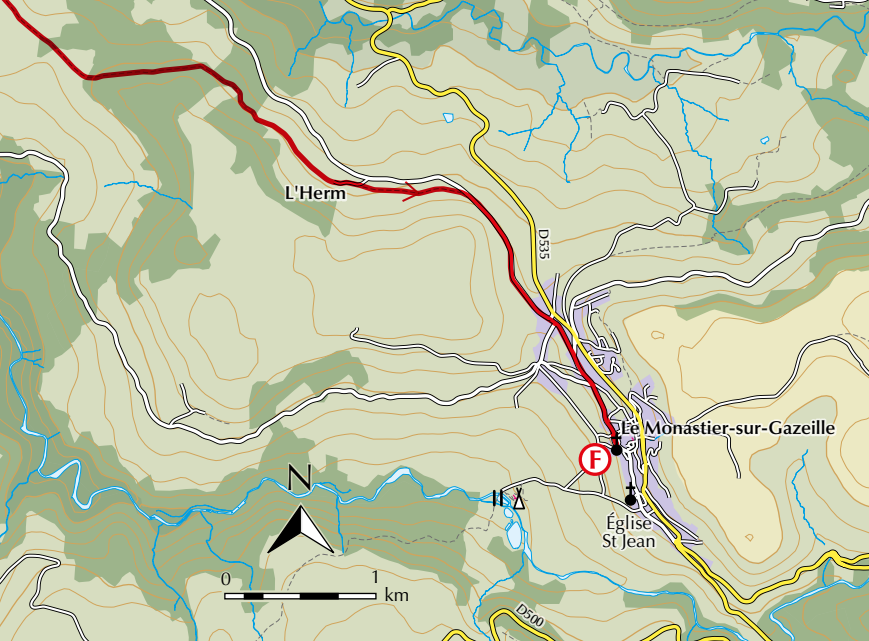
Leaving the houses of **Ours** behind, pass a trough and follow the tarmac road. You'll see a small area of **marshland** with a sign on the right. Continue along the surfaced road and, when it splits, keep right and go under the main road (**N88**). After the **tunnel**, cross a surfaced road and follow the sign right on a narrow path lined with blackberry bushes. There is a drystone wall alongside the path as you continue uphill and soon views of fields open up on the right. Joining a tarmac road, turn left and, a few metres later, leave it to the right. Walk first between several fields, ignoring a path on the left, then, shortly after, pass a dirt track on the left and follow the sign straight on. The dirt track becomes a surfaced road. Turn right onto a dirt track and head towards some buildings on the hillside. At the junction, turn right, head towards the buildings and go left by the warehouse. Continue along the red and white-marked stony track. Pass a building with a vegetable garden on the right. The views are dominated by meadows and hills. Notice a cross and bench near the path and, ignoring a path opposite the cross, descend

through forest. Also ignore a narrow path on the right as you walk towards a hamlet.

When you reach a paved road by the first house, descend between some houses and, at the road junction with trail signs and a map, facing the map board, keep left. You will reach a main road (**D38**) where you go left on a smaller tarmac road, Route de la Chabanne. Shortly after you will see a red and white sign. Follow the tarmac road steeply downhill and at the junction (Lot Les Mourges) go right as the Coubon sign indicates. **Coubon** is built on the banks of the Loire. At the junction with a bridge, about 2hr after setting out from Le Puy, keep right and then cross the bridge over the **Loire**. ▶

This is a picturesque crossing with views towards the Château de Bouzols on the hill. Église St Georges is on the right just after the bridge.





After the bridge, follow the road straight on. Carry straight on on a tarmac road alongside a stone wall at a bend in the road. Ignore a road on the right, pass some more houses and continue uphill on the tarmac road, as the signs indicate. At the road junction, keep right uphill. Pass a cemetery enclosed by hedges. Follow the tarmac road and soon you will pass a small cross on the left.

On reaching the hamlet of **L'Olme** (about 45min after crossing the bridge) follow the tarmac road. Keep left on a gravel road indicated by a Chemin de Stevenson trail sign and walk alongside some fields. There are views to the hills with a small group of houses at the foot of the hill. The track becomes a surfaced road and you continue straight on, as the red and white sign indicates.

At the **Archinaud** road junction continue straight on towards **Bois Royer**, also indicated on red and white signs. Pass some houses (on a surfaced road) with views towards other houses scattered over the slope. After a lone building, turn right on the dirt track. Ignore a path

on the right and, when the dirt track splits, carry straight on (as the red and white sign indicates) ignoring two further tracks on the right. Walk through a wooded area, ignoring any sidetracks. When you reach a road with a gate on the right, cross over and carry straight on along a stony path. ► Follow the forest track and shortly you will reach some houses and notice a wooden Stevenson sign.

At a minor junction in the hamlet of **L'Herm**, go right as the red and white 'Monastier 3.4 km' sign indicates. Pass some houses then walk uphill among moss-covered rocks. Follow the stony path alongside a drystone wall and shortly you will arrive at a gravel road where you turn left, heading towards the hamlet. When you arrive at a road, turn left again and, a few metres later, follow the sign to the right. Walk between some houses and past an old cross. Pass a *gîte* (Mountcalm) and then carry straight on. At the junction with a playground, continue straight on as the Monastier sign indicates. Soon you'll hear the sounds of the village below you as you descend on the narrow path with views towards **Le Monastier-sur-Gazeille**. When you reach the asphalt road, there is a supermarket on the left where you can stock up with supplies for the following day. Follow the signs to the village centre.

There is an information board about basalt rock, which is prevalent in this area.

Walkers starting their descent to Le Monastier-sur-Gazeille

