

15

ROCHER

Circuit of the Virgin



Difficulty: Easy

Total Distance: 6.9 km

Elevation gain: 380 m

Length: 2h30

Starting point at the Village's square.
Follow the road on your left that goes along the Hospital of the Cèdres (Hôpital des Cèdres), after the Church, continue in the direction of "Champs Blanc (1.3km)".



Take now the tar path that goes up on your right. In approximately, 300 m you will see on your left an aqueduct. *It was built in the years 1850, at the moment of the Castle's and its surroundings accommodation. In the aim of providing water to the gardens and the water fountains, an open sky canalization linked to the source of the Perbost's Hamlet was created. Some gutters, dig up into sandstone, conducted the water on 550 m. Today, a plastic drain avoids repeating the same maintenance gestures.*

Before the last house, turn left and then follow the trail, pass now Saint-Joffrès's hamlet. Next, follow on the road on your left until Perbost. Cross the hamlet.

● **Champ Blanc**



Continue on the stony way that follows the spring of Vaure.

● **Le Vaure**



At the intersection, take right. This path crosses some old Chestnuts orchards, it will lead you to the Virgin of Ranc Courbier. From up there, you will have a magnificent panorama on the Ligne's Valley, on the south of Ardèche and on the Ventoux Mount. You can now, go down in the direction of Joux and by a beautiful chestnut orchard.

On the 13th December of 1863, was pronounced the official blessing of the Statue. This tribute to the virgin was made by Mister Léopold de Gigord, Captain and sergeant major at the 5th Lancer, and with the help of the parishioners.

Cross the hamlet by following the tar road, continue straight in the direction of:



After 100 m, take the path on your left, then continue on the trail of the DFCI.

● **Ranc Courbier**



At the junction, turn left and go down by the same way until:

● **Champ Blanc**



Go down on the right of the path. Once you arrived at the road, turn left until the crossroads.

● **Le Pontet**



Continue then turn left. Go past the bridge, take the narrow street on your left that goes back into the village. Turn right to get back at the parking.

THE CHESTNUT TREE

This walk will lead you to cross through Chestnut Orchards... Thank you for respecting the work of the chestnut producers... don't pick up the chestnuts please!

In Ardèche, there is around sixty different varieties of chestnut. In our sector, we will find mainly the Aguyane, the Pourette, the Bouche Rouge and the Garinche. The chestnut tree likes acid soil and grows only between 300m and 800m of altitude.

The development of the Chestnut Tree culture goes back to the XIII century. This tree is also called "the bread tree", because, the chestnut, once dried and stored used to provide, for our elderlies, the base of their alimentation throughout the year. The chestnut tree was an interesting wood resource and was useful for the fabrication of house's frameworks, of barrels, of furniture and also for the construction of hives.

The golden age of the Chestnut Tree continues until the XIX century, just before the arrival of ink sickness and Endothia sickness. From the fifties, the "bread tree" as it was called, was massively chopped down to provide material for Ardèche's factories of Tannin, then replaced by resinous trees, necessary to the industrials and mining needs of the region.

Nevertheless, thanks to the willpower and the perseverance of the chestnuts producers who resisted, innovated and mobilized the local population around them, the region was able to keep its territory and the chestnut production alive.

In June 2006, the Ardèche chestnut obtained a prestigious certification, "controlled designation of origin". (AOC)

**Ink: This sickness, is caused by a fungus, it attacks its roots and turn the tree's sap color into black; the tree dies fast. Uncurable illness that appeared in France at the end of the XIX century.*

**Endothia or canker: this parasite takes place on the trunk and on the branches of the tree, just under the bark, depriving of sap the top of the tree. It creates some mysterious landscapes where you can see some chestnut trees with high branches, all dried up and skeletal, its almost like they were crave. Curable illness that appeared in France in 1952.*

Source : « La châtaigneraie des Monts d'Ardèche » - PNR

