



In the heart of the Cézallier



Embark on this tour which will give you access to a wild, preserved world, with exceptional landscapes often compared to the steppes of Mongolia or the plateaus of Scotland.

These vast expanses and lands far from dense traffic hold many treasures : volcanic lakes, peat bogs, mountain roads, waterfalls, breathtaking panoramas.

Start

Step 1 : Ardes-sur-Couze

Ardes is the gateway to the pastures of the volcanic plateaus of the Cézallier. The former capital of the Duchy of Mercoeur, its houses rise in terraces above a wooded gorge carved by the Couze d'Ardes river. Stroll through the lower quarter, the oldest part of town, where the **Church of Saint-Dizain** stands as a beautiful example of the evolution of Gothic architecture. The upper part of town, known as "Ardes le haut" or "Ardes la neuve," is centered around the Grande Rue (Main Street), and you'll be surprised by the **Maison Rodde**, a neo-medieval building.

@Norbert Dutranoy

The Cézallier is the kingdom of the "red cows", the Salers, but not only ! Discover no less than 350 animals of more than 60 rare and endangered species at the **Auvergne Animal Park** in Ardes Sur Couze in a breathtaking natural setting.

Step 2 : Apchat : gentian and waterfall

6 km
10 min

Gentian is an emblematic plant of the mid-mountain regions; it grows in the Cézallier every summer. Michelle and Christian Bafoil of "**L'or en Cézallier**" transform gentian into an aperitif.

On the banks of the Zauze River, a few kilometers from the village of Apchat (take the D28 towards Zanières), the Gour d'Appât waterfall is accessible via a pleasant, shaded path to the right at the bridge. Be aware that during the summer heat, the **Gour d'Appât** may be dry. The unique feature of this site is the way the water has smoothed the granite rock.

Step 3 : Anzat-le-Luguet

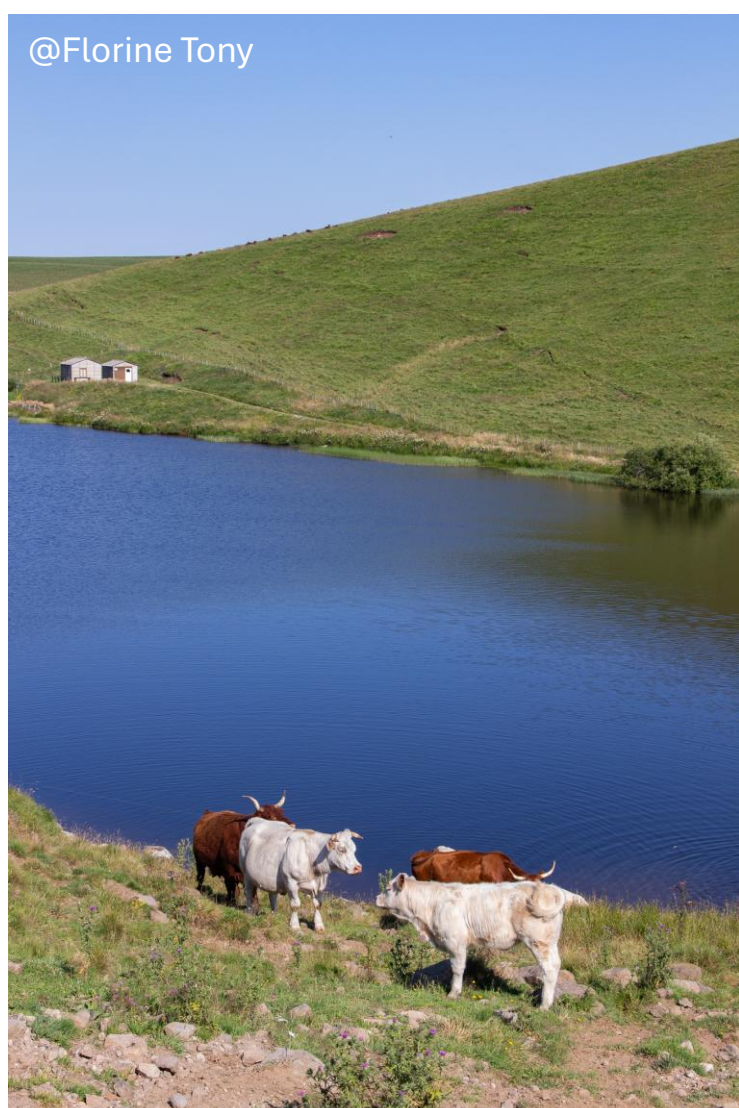
13 km
20 min

In the village of Anzat-le-Luguet, take a look at the **church**, built in the 5th century, where the five skulls embedded in a nave pillar are sure to surprise visitors. Continue your visit with a tour of the **Forge du Luguet**, where the blacksmith will demonstrate a wide variety of tools and his forging techniques. A shop displays the blacksmith's work and offers the opportunity to enjoy a tasting on the panoramic terrace.

@Julie Lobstein



Still in Anzat-le-Luguet, the **Besse Tower**, built at the end of the 12th century, is square in section and served a defensive purpose. Completely restored in 2025, it offers a breathtaking panorama, notably of the Signal du Luguet, the highest point of the Cézallier mountains at 1551 meters. This peak corresponds to ancient lava lakes formed 5 million years ago, exposed by erosion. Below, to the east, lies the **Cirque d'Artout**, one of the most beautiful glacial valleys in the Massif Central. The Cézallier plateaus are a land of livestock farming; meet Justine and Bastien from **Bichette**, who raise around sixty goats using organic farming methods. Continue your exploration at the **Domaine de Parrot**, an endless playground with numerous marked trails for hiking, mountain biking, and snowshoeing. As you continue your journey, enjoy the fabulous panoramas from the highest pass in the Cézallier: **The Col de Vestizoux**.



@Florine Tony

Step 4 : Team Sensation in Boutaresse

10 km
15 min

For thrill-seekers, come share an unforgettable moment with the dogs of Team Sensations. Depending on the season, they will accompany you **on sled rides or go-kart trips**.

Step 5 : The lake of Saint-Alyre

5 km
10 min

Discover the famous **Roche Orcine lake**, a small, secluded gem at an altitude of 1216m. It is a peat bog lake; the stream that feeds this wetland joins the Couze d'Ardes 1,5 km further on.

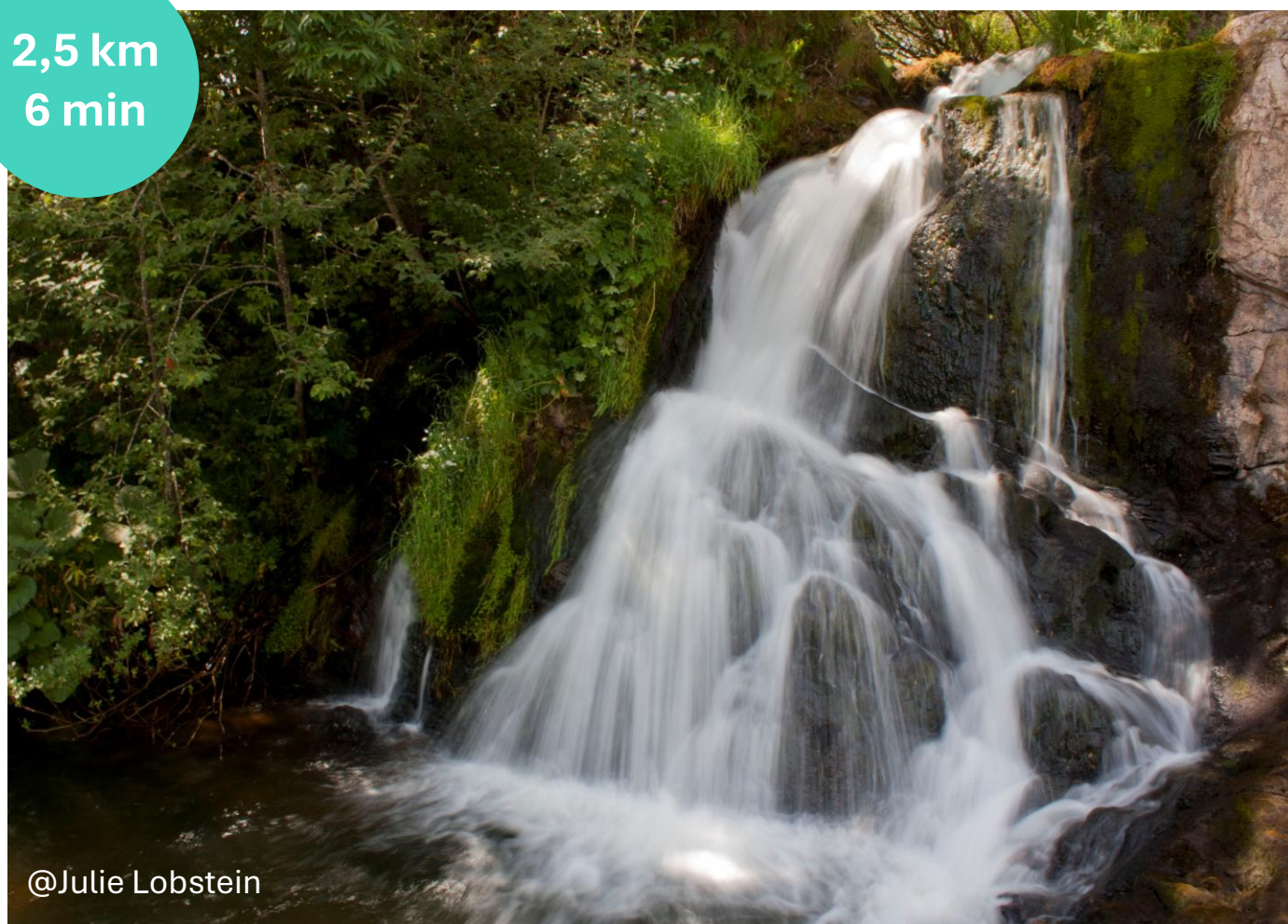
Step 6 : Jassy : waterfalls and cheese

In the heart of the Cézallier, the **Jassy waterfalls** are located in the commune of Saint-Alyre-Ès-Montagne.

These two small waterfalls are easily accessible from the hamlet of Jassy, just follow the signs "waterfalls 1 and 2" and follow the river between the two waterfalls via a small path.

Don't leave without a piece of Saint-Nectaire fermier AOP from **the Ferme du Fayet shop**.

2,5 km
6 min



@Julie Lobstein



Step 7 : Saint-Alyre-ès-Montagne

2,5 km
5 min

The **church** of Saint-Alyre stands at an altitude of over 1100 meters, on the edge of the Cézallier massif and its summer pastures. Its volcanic materials and slate roofs give it a robust character, blending into its environment marked by the harsh climate. The open space to the west of the church offers a view of **Mount Chabrut**, recognizable by its double hump upon which stands a cross.

Step 8 : Rentières

In a former farmhouse, in the heart of the pretty village of Rentières, **L'accueille des Pensées** welcomes visitors and offers a foraging experience. Originally from the Cézallier region, Cécile creates blended herbal teas, plant preserves, jams, herb-infused salts, syrups, and more. She also guides you on botanical walks to help you learn to recognize and use around twenty edible wild plants.

Complete the circuit in style by reaching **Le Fromental**, a site offering a beautiful view of the Rentières gorges. Perched on this rocky promontory since the 12th century is the "Arch of Fromental." It comprises the remains of the old castle, an outpost of the powerful Mercœur family, and the castle chapel, now dedicated to Saint Agatha, protector against volcanic eruptions.



15 km
20 min

Back to Ardes 5 km – 7 min

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