

La Virginière

Goult



Site de La Virginière (©DR-Eberhard Scherzler)

Discovering a remarkable wetland on the banks of Calavon - Coulon.

& Laquo; I love this amazing intrusion into the meanders of Calavon-Coulon, a river that was once dried out by man and now revived. Between alluvial forests and pebble benches, it's possible to come across some of the 80 species of birds registered, such as the Common Kingfisher, the Golden Oriole, the Grey Heron... You will also glimpse the tangible evidence of the presence of the craftsman of the area and Europe's largest rodent: the Beaver & Raquo;. Jerome Brichard, River Technician at the Luberon RNP.

Useful information

Practice : WALKING

Duration : 2 h

Length : 4.8 km

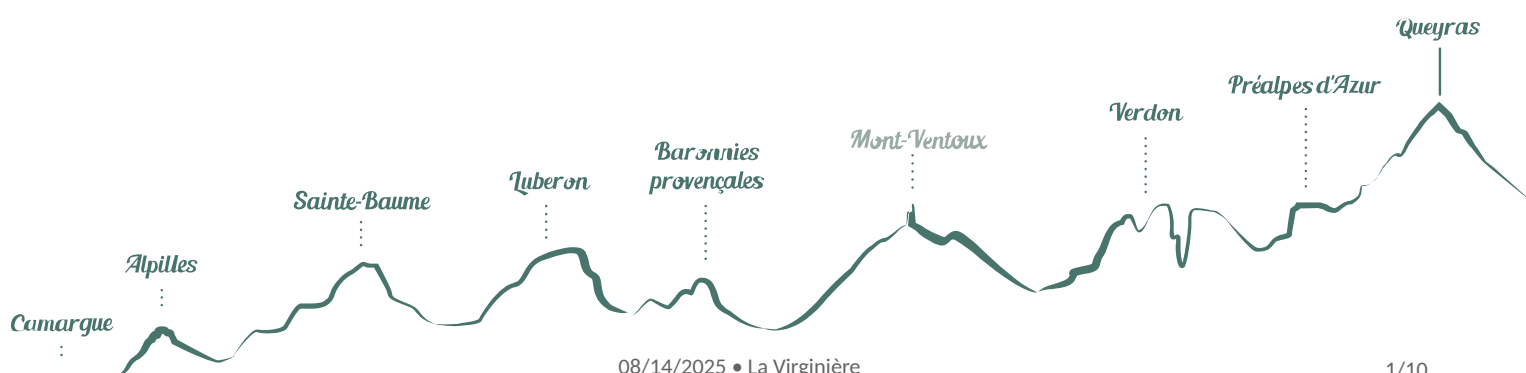
Trek ascent : 96 m

Difficulty : Very easy

Type : Boucle

Themes : Fauna, Flora, Waters and
rivers

Accessibility : Stroller



Departure : Les Beaumettes

Arrival : Les Beaumettes

Markings :  GR®  PR  Véloroute

Cross the underground passage, continue straight on the road to Ménerbes (D27), pass the bridge over the Calavon-Coulon. then continue on the road 270m.







1- At the corner of the first house, turn left onto the paved path "Chemin des Alafoux" (pole). 500m further, turn left on the dirt road. 100m further, leave the farm road to engage on a path on the edge of banks in the undergrowth (marking hardly noticeable). Come out on a track and go straight. Continue on the path, switch to the other side of the meander and after a left turn at the corner of a farm, reach the Route de Lacoste.







2- Go across on the road (D218). At the end of the straight line, go past the entrance of a farm (wind farm) and at the exit of the curve, take a left onto the dirt road. Pass the dolmen and climb the hill to reach the long-distance cycling route.

3- Turn left and follow the EV8 to the village of Beaumettes. At the exit of the small car park, go back under the underground passage to return to the Town Hall Square.

On your path...



-  When toads will have blades... (A)
-  Aqui l'aigo es d'or! (Here the purest water is gold!) (C)
-  The lumberjack of rivers (E)
-  Precious archaeological excavations (G)
-  A riparian forest, what is it? (I)
-  When electricity rhymes with biodiversity (K)

-  The steppes of Calavon (B)
-  Calavon or Coulon? (D)
-  The neolithic dolmen (F)
-  Eighty ! (H)
-  The barrier of Lumières (J)
-  The riverbeds (L)

All useful information

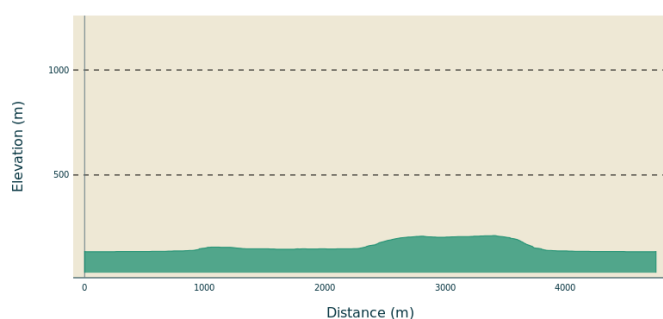
Advices

Be careful on both road sections; continuing on the left side of the road (in the direction of travel), facing the vehicles, may be preferable. Be careful also on the long-distance cycling route: Lots of bikes may surprise you from behind.

Do not move too close to the edges of the banks because of the risk of subsidence. Remain discreet to enjoy birdwatching.

Be careful if you are travelling with a stroller; paths on the first part of the route are rocky!

Altimetric profile



Min elevation 135 m

Max elevation 212 m

Access

At 15km east of Cavaillon, taking the D15 and D900.

Advised parking

Town Hall Square, The Beaumettes

Information desks

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On your path...



When toads will have blades... (A)

This is already the case.! With the European spadefoot toad and its hen-like singing. With its rooster-like spurs in its hind feet, it hides in the sand until it rains! A rare and vulnerable species in France, considered near threatened globally, the Luberon Park restored breeding ponds for the species in the reed bed located just below.

Attribution : ©Jérôme Brichard - PNR Luberon



The steppes of Calavon (B)

The alluvial terraces bordering Calavon are colonised by herbaceous plants including the rare and protected Sand bassia. This steppe species of sandy areas seems to keep up in France only in the Vaucluse, especially in the Calavon between Apt and Robion (15 known sites of the 19 in France). Here, just below the path, a program for the reinforcement and the monitoring of its populations is implemented on the grounds of the Luberon Regional Nature Park.

Attribution : ©David Tatin



Aqui l'aigo es d'or! (Here the purest water is gold!) (C)

The Calavon often goes through droughts. In addition to the dry climate, 45% of its drainage basin does not contribute to the flows of the river. The water seeps into the Karst (porous limestone) and comes out at the Vaucluse fountain. To this loss of water you may add water drawing for a household, agricultural or industrial use. Through its regular monitoring of the flows, the Luberon Park participates in Prefectural decisions on drawing restrictions. Let's save water, every drop counts!

Attribution : ©Hervé Vincent



Calavon or Coulon? (D)

The Calavon is also called Coulon downstream of Apt. The geographical limits of use of the name Coulon is set here in the Commune of Goult where one of its tributaries reaches upstream of the bridge: L'Imergue. Spelled "Limergue" until the early 20th century, it comes the Latin word "Limés" which means the limit. This river was considered, from late Antiquity to the Middle Ages, as a border between the two influential linguistic areas and the Contat Venaissin.

Attribution : ©DR-Robert Caracchioli



The lumberjack of rivers (E)

Its nocturnal habits make a of the Beaver a discreet host of the rivers, where only the marks of its lumberjack activity betray it. Recognizable by its stocky shape and flat tail, it is a vegetarian and feeds particularly on willow and poplar. Building dams during droughts, it is very useful in the preservation of wetlands. With its 30kg, it is the largest rodent in Europe. Protected since 1968, he recolonised the Calavon where a hundred individuals are identified.

Attribution : ©Jérôme Brichard - PNR Luberon



The neolithic dolmen (F)

At the foothill is the reconstitution of the dolmen discovered 500m downstream during the flood of 1994. The original monument forgotten, was covered with silt for centuries and therefore well preserved. Then, after 2014, too exposed to successive floods, in 2013- 2014, it was fully moved, stone by stone, after numbering and carefully disassembling them. This structure is the second of its kind in the Vaucluse after the one in Ménerbes, and one of the few in Provence.

Attribution : ©Pierre Prouillac - PNR Luberon



Precious archaeological excavations (G)

The excavation located below is the original site of the Neolithic dolmen reconstructed 500m upstream, away from the Calavon floods. The flood from 1994 had uncovered it due to the erosion of the banks which were pushed back here at 40m over a distance of 150m. Located on the north-facing slope, this tomb dating back to 3000 BC contained fifty individuals of all ages and gender, buried in a contracted position, the legs folded and brought close to the torso.

Attribution : ©Jérôme Brichard - PNR Luberon



Eighty ! (H)

The number of bird species documented on this site through monitoring conducted each spring. Of these, 40 are nesting. Most are typical of the riparian forest of the river and its banks: Kingfisher, Golden oriole, Grey heron... The latter is easily recognized by its large size, its grey plumage, its slow and powerful flight and his neck bent into an "S". These bird populations are very sensitive to any disruption of the area, so hush!

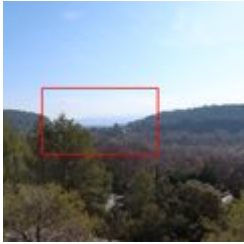
Attribution : ©Fabrice Teurquety



A riparian forest, what is it? (I)

A wide riparian forest is developing on the opposite bank. This Latin word comes from "ripa" meaning bank (river), and "sylva" forest. This wetland vegetation is characterized by the presence of the soft wood trees such as willows and poplars of which the Beaver is very fond. It is essential to the proper functioning of rivers by acting as shade, sewage, soil protection as well as refuge and food source for many species.

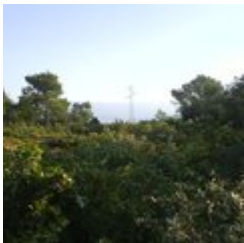
Attribution : ©PNR Luberon



The barrier of Lumières (J)

From here, you will be overlooking the valley floor of Calavon dominated by the presence of natural environments (alluvial forest and pebble banks) shaped by the river at the whim of floods. There at the Hameau de Lumières, the plain bears the marks of the narrowing hilly area, creating a barrier effect. The slopes are made up of a sandy limestone of marine origin: molasse. It was formed 20 million years ago when the Mediterranean sea went up the Rhone Valley.

Attribution : ©Eric Garnier - PNR Luberon



When electricity rhymes with biodiversity (K)

Here the high voltage line Apt - Cavaillon crosses outstanding natural environments of Calavon. The management and maintenance of vegetation in and around the electrical works are for Réseau Transport Electrique a major technical and environmental concern. Therefore, the Luberon Park and RTE are working together to restore the site in order to reconcile the safety of the electrical grid and the preservation of the biodiversity.

Attribution : ©Eric Garnier - PNR Luberon



The riverbeds (L)

The channel bottom of a river is called bed. The flow rate (amount of water that passes a point in a given time) vary throughout the year. The minor riverbed is the physical confine of the normal water flow. The moderate bed corresponds to the non-overflowing floods, contained by the higher river banks. The major bed is the rise in water level overflowing its banks and flowing onto its flood plain. Preserving these beds is essential to slow down the water in order to protect the urban areas against flooding.

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www.cheminsdesparcs.fr

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