

The Provençal Colorado

Rustrel



Cheminée des fées et le village de Rustrel (©Patrick Cohen - PNR Luberon)

*A break in the vast ochre gathering,
both intimate and panoramic.*

"The ochre massif of Luberon is a geological and landscape curiosity not to be missed! Circling around the heart of the classified site of the Colorado of Rustrel, highly visited, is choosing to enjoy the site differently. Between colored views, sandy passages, mining operation remains and natural wealth, this stroll is a treat! ".says Anne-Camille Vinson - 2nd year of Master's intern at Réseau des Parcs de PACA.

Useful information

Practice : WALKING

Duration : 4 h

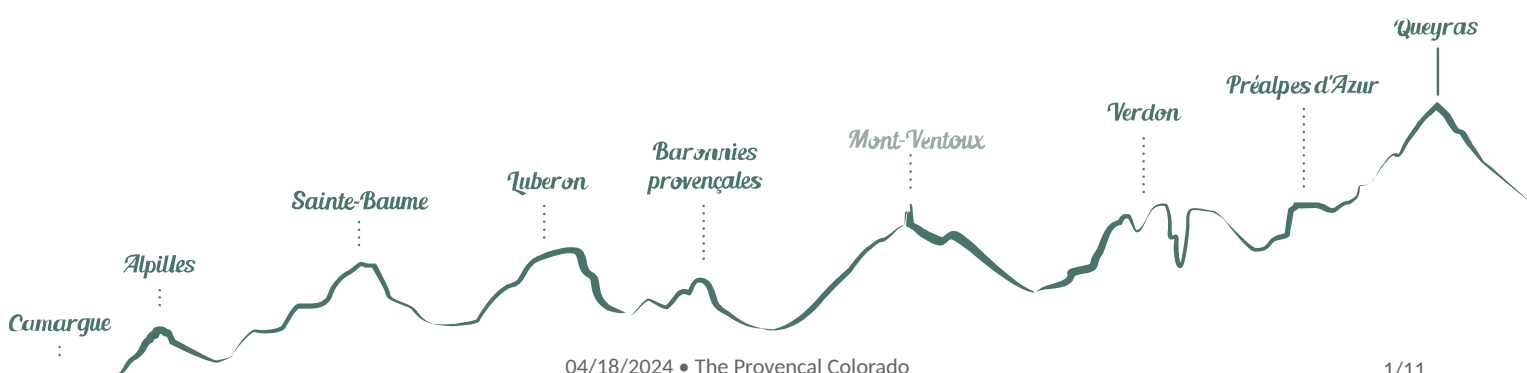
Length : 14.6 km

Trek ascent : 421 m

Difficulty : Medium

Type : Boucle

Themes : Flora, Geology, Heritage and history



Trek

Departure : Place du Marché (route d'Apt), Rustrel

Arrival : Rustrel

Markings :  GR®  Non balisé  PR

Facing the Restreou Hostel, take the Route de Saint-Christol (D30) to the right. 100m further, turn right and go down the Boulevard du Colorado (D30a). 430m further, take the Chemin de Saint-Joseph to the right and follow it. At the stop sign, cross the D22 (be careful!) and continue across. At the crossroads "Cornet", turn left. Then follow the old car park of Colorado. In a curve (refreshment area), immerse to the right on the DFCI track. Cross the Dôa (ford) and go up the long track of Barriès (GR® markings).

1- At the sign-post "Barriès" turn left onto the pretty trail (slab). Reach an area of ruts and continue straight (GR®). Then take the paved road "Chemin de l'Ubac". At the junction, go right onto Route de Gignac.















2- At the mountain pass, take the left track for 500m and reach the imprinted slabs. Turn around and go back to point 2. Back again on the pass, follow the road to the left. At the crossroads "Pradenques" and "Ubac de Pradenques" continue straight. On top of the hill, turn onto the right track. 1km away, take a right back into the woods. After a break, continue left onto the lower trail (PR). Go along a large field and reach the crossroads "Croix de Christol " (sign-post).

3- Pass the gate and hurtle down the trail (PR). The stones give way to ocher; take the time to make a landscape stop. Down, spin slightly to the left along the clearing, fording the Dôa, past the sewage treatment plant and reach the hamlet of Istrane.

4- Turn right and take small road. Skip two curves, go along a house and at the next intersection on the corner of a farm, turn left. Go up the small road. Cross the D22 (be careful!) and continue across. Pass the school parking lots and reach the center of the village of Rustrel.

On your path...



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|---|---|
|  Rustrel and its castle (A) |  Opération Grand Site Massif des Ogres (B) |
|  Restoring the views on the Provençal Colorado (C) |  Ochre formation (D) |
|  Ochre processing in Rustrel (E) |  Banks and rainforests (F) |
|  The laurel leaved Rockrose (G) |  Ocher and operation (H) |
|  Protected vultures (I) |  Slabs with imprints (J) |
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|  Morenas, the avant-gardist (M) |  They like ocher... (N) |
|  The Dôa, the multicolored torrent (O) | |

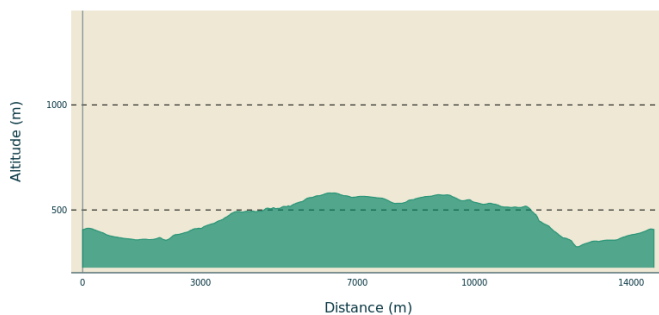
All useful information

Advices

The two fords on Dôa at the start and at the end of the walk can be difficult after a big storm or a long rainy period. Be vigilant and if in doubt do not continue!

Remember to bring water; no water spring on the way!

Altimetric profile



Min elevation 325 m
Max elevation 581 m

Access

At 10km Northeast of Apt by the D22 and D3011.

Advised parking

Car park near the village center

Source

Luberon Géoparc mondial
UNESCO



Information desks

House of the Luberon Regional Nature Park



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On your path...



Rustrel and its castle (A)

The landscape of Rustrel has been shaped by generations of ocher workers and peasants: hills with ocher sites and valleys with market gardens. The village is dominated by its traditional Upper Provence castle, a quadrilateral flanked by four round corner towers, probably built in the early 17th century. The town of Rustrel began to buy parts of the building in 1847 and now fully owns the castle which houses the town hall and a rest house.

Attribution : ©Anne-Camille Vinson - PNR Luberon



Opération Grand Site Massif des Ogres (B)

Classified site since 2002, the ochres of Apt are one of the largest deposits in the world. With a significant number of visitors and risks of degradation, the Massif des Ogres raises lots of questions. In 2010, working in tandem with local actors, an "Opération Grand Site" (sustainable Tourism project) was launched to implement a development project, good management and preservation of natural and landscape heritage but also cultural heritage in the hope of becoming a "Grand Site de France".

Attribution : ©Daniel Grenouilleau



Restoring the views on the Provençal Colorado (C)

Since the end of the ochre processing, vegetation gradually invaded the Provençal Colorado. The colonisation of Scots pine (highly flammable) has become a landscape issue but also a safety one. Also in 2015, tree cuttings were done to recreate landscape openings and to find old quarry excavated faces. The goal was to reinstate the ochre in the site but also in the great landscape and safeguard the visitors by creating an assembly point.

Attribution : ©Marion Eyssette - PNR Luberon



Ochre formation (D)

The ochre sands result from a deep chemical modification of green marine sands. About 100 million years ago, green sands emerged and were altered under a hot and humid climate which transformed into, amongst others, ochre sands. It is from these sands extracted in quarries that ochre is made. Warning, mountain biking in the heart of the Provençal Colorado in Rustrel is forbidden, as is the sampling of ochre sands in natural environment.

Attribution : ©Vincent Damourette - Coeurs de nature-Sipa



Ochre processing in Rustrel (E)

The Provençal Colorado is an old ochre operating quarry which dates back to the 19th century. The distinctive feature of the extraction is the use of water which served for washing the excavated faces. The sands were then dissolved and rolled down the slopes to the settling ponds. The remains from working the ochre are still found today on the site as an aqueduct, a network of pipes, pumping machines, drying ponds ...

Attribution : ©Rémi Duthoit



Banks and rainforests (F)

Mainly located along the Doa, an alluvial forest of softwood (like the poplar) has settled in connection with the layer of the river. They play many biological roles, namely, maintaining the banks, the self-purification of water, a reservoir and an ecological corridor for many species. They are a breeding and feeding hub for many species of birds and insects.

Attribution : ©Eric Garnier - PNR Luberon



The laurel leaved Rockrose (G)

The laurel leaved Rockrose (*Cistus laurifolius*) is an easily identifiable shrub with its large evergreen, lanceolate, and dark green leaves, and beautiful white flowers in spring. You may even recognize them with your eyes closed since its light, sweet perfume spreads in its immediate environment. Strictly dependent on acid soils, it is rather localized in our region, but is fairly common in the ochre massif where it can be found on the borders and clearings of woodlands.

Attribution : ©DR-Ecobalade



Ocher and operation (H)

Below is the old mining area Barriès (private - guided tour only). From washing, then decanting in large basins, to drying, crushing, and baking, a large scale of natural pigment was made, with a variety of colors. Launched in the 18th century, the industrial process for making ochre pigment reaches its high point in the 1920s. Today, the Société des Ogres de France still operates a quarry in Gargas and produces 1200 tons of ochre per year.

Attribution : ©Eric Garnier - PNR Luberon



Protected vultures (I)

In the 80s, the cliffs just above Rustrel housed a famous couple of Egyptian vultures. Smaller than European vultures, this scavenger and detritivorous animal is also a long-haul flight expert! In 1998, thanks to tracking markers, school children were able to follow their migration to Sahelian Africa. The couple disappeared from our skies for a few years and their young descendants have not taken over. There are a hundred of couples in France.

Attribution : ©David Tatin



Slabs with imprints (J)

This exceptional site is a limestone slab which has on its surface over 200 footprints of mammals that lived in the area about 30 million years ago. Near a vast lake, rhinos have left three-toed footprints while the two-toed ones belong to mouse-deers or warthogs (related to the wild swine). The mammal footprint imprinted slabs are very rare throughout the world but 8 were profiled in the Luberon!

Attribution : ©PNR Luberon



Pattern imprinted concrete from Viens (K)

200m left, a limestone slab has on its surface more than 200 footprints of mammals that lived in the area about 30 million years ago. Near a vast lake, rhinos have left three-toed footprints while the two-toed ones belong to mouse-deers or warthogs (related to the wild swine). The mammal footprint imprinted concrete is very rare throughout the planet but 8 were described in the Luberon!

Attribution : ©Stéphane Legal - PNR Luberon



Flowering plants, the Luberon gem (L)

Adonis, Cornflower, Love-in-a-mist... The Luberon is one of two regions of France richest in annual garden flowering plants, called "Harvest companions". Unfortunately, highly threatened in France, these plants depend completely on traditional farming for survival, as it is still done here by farmers that use little or no herbicides on their fields. The work of these farmers is essential for the preservation of a rich and fertile soil in the Luberon.

Attribution : ©Eric Garnier - PNR Luberon



Morenas, the avant-gardist (M)

In the Provençal Colorado, Francis Morenas was the first one to mark hiking routes in 1953. True pioneer of the southern GR, often called a "fada" (an informal term used to say someone is a bit nuts, crazy) by the locals, with his billhook and his pickaxe, he prepared over 1500km of trails between Ventoux, Monts-de-Vaucluse and Luberon. Fascinated, he loved above all sharing his pleasure for the outdoors with others. Until his last breath, he continued to maintain his footsteps, which have now more or less disappeared.

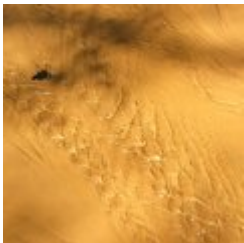
Attribution : ©Eric Garnier - PNR Luberon



They like ocher... (N)

In a very limestone environment, the ocher massif of Luberon offers the vegetation a unique sandy substrate in which an outstanding procession of siliceous (growing on silica), acidophilous (growing on acid soil) and psammophilous (growing on sand) plants develops. At the heart of the maquis, lawns colonize small isolated clearings in which rare species took refuge, some of them being protected by law.

Attribution : ©Daniel Grenouilleau



The Dôa, the multicolored torrent (O)

The torrent has its source in the town of Viens (5 km away, to the east) and flows into the Calavon, a sub-tributary of the Rhone via the Durance. Before going through the Provençal Colorado, the Dôa runs through valleys surrounded by hills and the foothills of the mountains of Vaucluse. During its course through Rustrel, when there are violent thunderstorms, the torrent charges ochreous muds and clay loam which give a yellow to orange color to its waters.

Attribution : ©Eric Garnier - PNR Luberon



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Ce projet partenarial rassemble également le Comité Régional du Tourisme, les agences départementales de développement touristique, les offices de tourisme et les syndicats d'initiative.

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