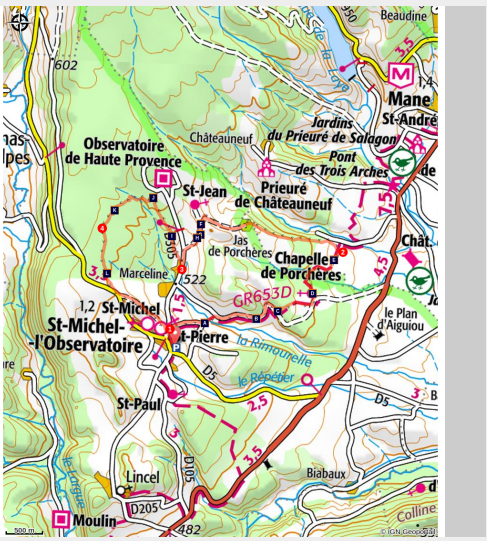
A stroll around the Observatory

Saint-Michel-l'Observatoire



Observatoire de Haute-Provence (©Pacscal Valentin - OTI PFML)

From the Earth to our star! Between harmonious landscapes and a rural heritage, to be paired with the astronomy centre of Haute-Provence.

Reasonable trails, paths and tracks succeed each other around the Saint-Michel Observatory to offer to the hiker chapels, a Romanesque tower, dovecotes but also beautiful views of the Craux, Mount Lure, the Valensole plateau... Lastly, it is highly recommended to to take advantage of the immediate vicinity of the observation site for astronomy, the environment and the study of the atmosphere of Haute-Provence, to go make a unique discovery of the sun, our star.

Useful information

Practice : WALKING

Duration : 3 h

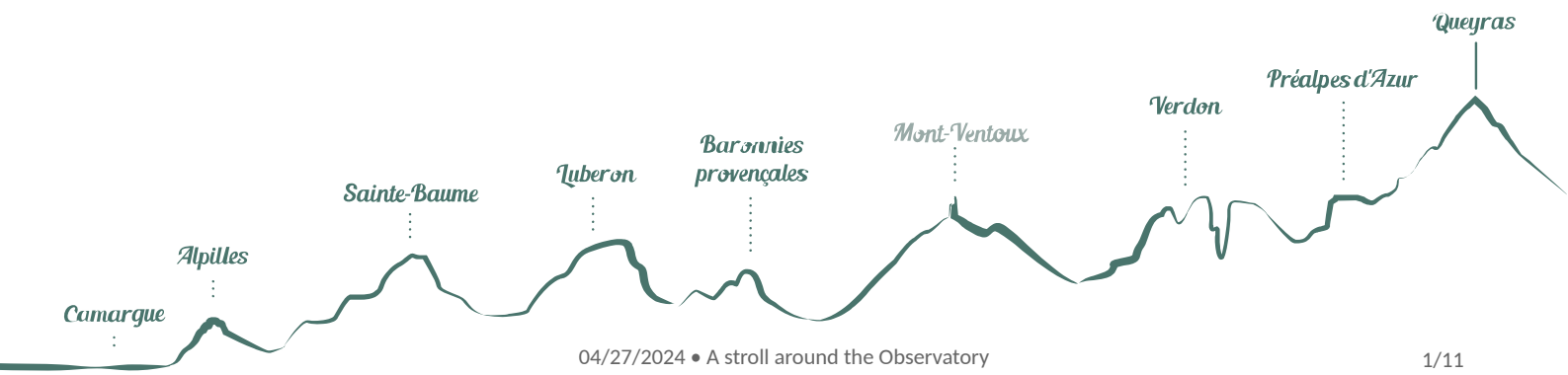
Length : 11.4 km

Trek ascent : 291 m

Difficulty : Easy

Type : Boucle

Themes : Fauna, Flora, Heritage and history



Trek

Departure : Car park of Bardouin, south of the town hall, Saint-Michel l'Observatoire
Arrival : Car park of Bardouin, south of the town hall, Saint-Michel l'Observatoire
Markings : GR® PR

Turn left at the back of the car park, pass the town hall and follow the street to the right for 300m.

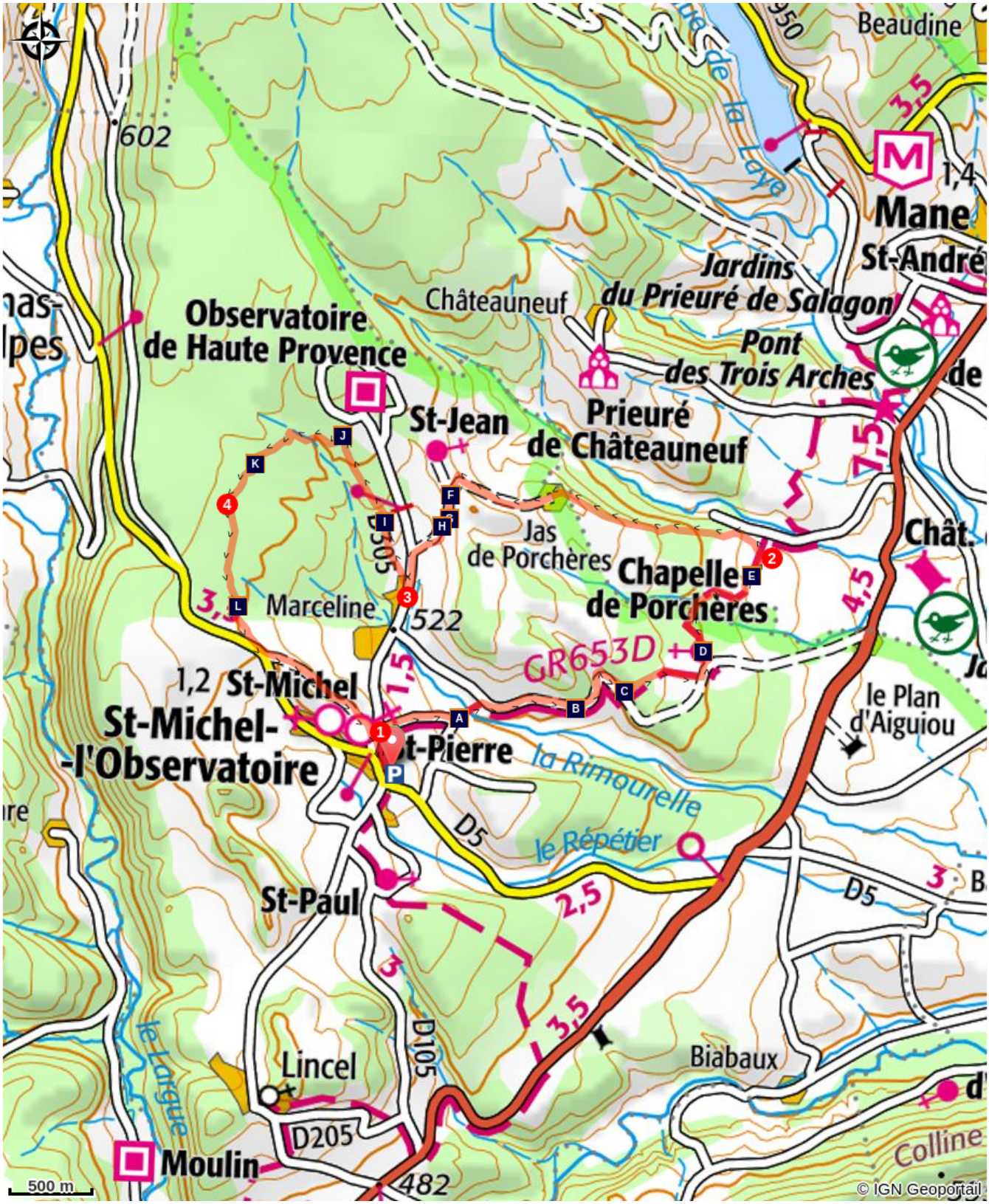
1 - Take the little road that goes to the right below the D305 and then take a quick right and go past the cemetery. Go left at the first intersection. After a steep hill, turn right on the small road which turns into a path 200m further. Behind a well marked shift to the right, climb the narrow path to the left. At the top, take the track to the right, then 70m further, continue straight. Turn right again and then left. At the crossroads'Tour de Porchères'', turn left, walk along the tower, go past a house then turn right. Then, from the right, go around the old quarries of Porchères (private property). Take a right at the next Y-shaped fork.

2 - At the crossroads '"Petit Sauvan", turn left towards Saint-Jean. Turn left after 150m, then continue straight through a path that narrows down and enters the woods. Reach a track and continue straight along a beautiful house and continue the track. When you come out on the track, turn left on the small road. Go down the road and reach the D305. Continue on the left for 200m.

3 - Turn right, pass between a farm and a shed, then rise slowly. At the first apparent crossroads (transformer) turn left. Go along an old wall, take a slight descend and go up the opposite side of the valley. After a marked turn on the left, turn right and come out on the plateau. Continue straight for 500m.

4 - At the crossroads (point 632), take the path going down to the left and thus reach the D5, a kilometre below. When you come out on the road, take a quick left and take the small road. Continue straight at the next intersection and go down to the village. After the wash-house, turn right and return to the starting point through the streets used to go.

On your path...



- Rimourelle and its meadows (A)
- Tree sheds (C)
- The Craux: pastoral heritage (E)
- The Farming Contest of Meadows (B)
- The Tour de Porchères (D)
- A chapel serving as a maternity ward (F)

The OHP: a recognized observation site (G)

Take root in the limestone (I)

The ICOS (Integrated Carbon Observation System) tower (K)

Telescope 193 (H)

O3HP: the oak forest with a magnifying glass (J)

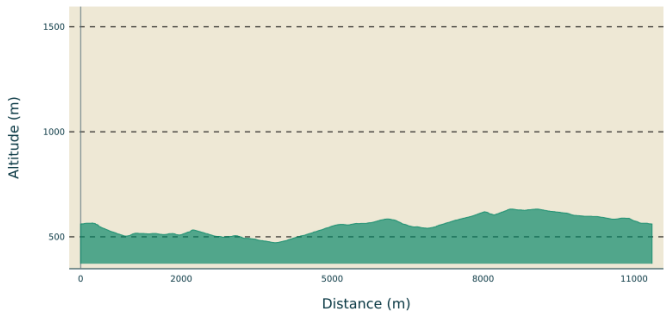
bucolic countryside and vast panoramas (L)

All useful information

Advices

Caution with your ankles on the rocky passages after point 3.

Altimetric profile



Min elevation 472 m
Max elevation 632 m

Transports

Limitons les déplacements en voiture, pensons aux transports en commun et au covoiturage. Tous les transports en commun sur www.pacamobilite.fr

Access

Village of Saint-Michel-l'Observatoire, at 16km from Manosque by the D907 and D105, or 21km from La Brillanne by Forcalquier and the D4100 and D105.

Advised parking

Car park of Bardouin, south of the town hall, St-Michel l'Obs. (just to the right upon entering the village through the D105).

Information desks

House of the Luberon Regional Nature Park

60, place Jean Jaurès, 84400 Apt

accueil@parcduluberon.fr
Tel : +33 (0)4 90 04 42 00
https://www.parcduluberon.fr/

OTI Forcalquier-Montagne de Lure
13, place du Bourguet, B.P. 15, 04301 Forcalquier

bienvenue@haute-provence-tourisme.com
Tel : +33 (0)4 92 75 10 02
http://www.haute-provence-tourisme.com/

On your path...

Rimourelle and its meadows (A)

This rather preserved stream and the damp grasslands that border it harbour a remarkable diversity of plants and animals. There is a water spring and precious natural environments in this very dry environment and in some sections, the presence of many rare and protected species: European pond turtle, White-clawed crayfish, Dwarf bulrush (water plant), Souffia (fish) and Mediterranean barbel ... The banks and riparian vegetation are sometimes in poor conditions due to past work.

Attribution : ©David Tatin

The Farming Contest of Meadows (B)

If you look to the west, a vast plain extends before you in which natural meadows remain. These "flowering meadows" are made of quality flora to feed herds. Often located on areas at risk of flooding, the grass grows naturally. One of these meadows has been evaluated by a panel of student farmers and was awarded at the International Agricultural Show in Paris in March 2016.

Attribution : ©David Tatin

Tree sheds (C)

Kept for the production of acorns and the renewal of forests, some trees measure more than 50cm in diameter. Several hundred years old, they carry with them the signs of aging. A true social housing for insects and bats, these residents occupy the slots and holes made by woodpeckers. To preserve the wood cuts, the trees were inventoried and marked with a white triangle.

Attribution : ©Anne-Marie Loison

The Tour de Porchères (D)

Dated from the 12th century, this tower is classified a historical monument. In the archives, this tower is reported as a barn. It therefore certainly stored crops but probably also served as a watchtower. In 1861, it was converted into a chapel by the owner back then, Léon de Berluc-Perussis. The stone door calls to linger. A village of a dozen families had settled around the tower in the early 17th century.

Attribution : ©Eric Garnier - PNR Luberon

The Craux: pastoral heritage (E)

The traditional extensive grazing is key to the conservation of this unique ecosystem. It keeps dry grasslands and juniper formations which intertwine. These open areas have considerably reduced since the late 19th century due to agricultural decline and plantations. Support of pastoralism allows the annual renewal of grass resource for the herd and the diverse flora despite the extreme conditions.

Attribution : ©DR

A chapel serving as a maternity ward (F)

In the St Jean Chapel and the surrounding sheds, bats of the Lesser Horseshoe Bat species find there favourable conditions to their development. A true maternity ward, these buildings, heated by the sun, are suitable places for birthing and nursing the young from April to August. Please do not disturb them.

Attribution : ©DR

The OHP: a recognized observation site (G)

The Observatoire de Haute-Provence (OHP) of the CNRS (the French National Center for Scientific Research) founded in 1937 is famous internationally for excellence in astronomy (exoplanet researchespecially: the first discovery in 1995 using the telescope of 1.93 m and its spectrograph Sophie»). also known as atmospheric science (study of the ozone layer) and ecology (O3HP). Very active in the dissemination of scientific culture, it receives more than 11000 visitors per year.

Attribution : ©Eric Garnier - PNR Luberon

Telescope 193 (H)

In astronomy and astrophysics, the site hosts several instruments, including the telescope of 1.93m in diameter that led to the discovery of the first exoplanet; it features an innovative spectrograph which ranks among the best in the world.

Attribution : ©DR-CNRS

Take root in the limestone (I)

Do not dig, there is only limestone. Here the soil is not deep, the calacil is thin. And so, each crack is an opportunity for an acorn to find something to root on and grow on a holm oak. Slow growing, it measures up to 30cm in diameter despite being a centenarian. To prevent water loss through evaporation, this species has evolved over thousands of years by keeping small leaves.

Attribution : ©Axelle Baumard - PNR Luberon

O3HP: the oak forest with a magnifying glass (J)

On the site of the Observatoire de Haute-Provence, O3HP (Oak Observatory at OHP) studies the dynamics, functioning and biodiversity of the forest of pubescent oakagainst the climate changes. ambitious project to predict future changes through a gateway instrumented system, a rain exclusion system,and sensor network (temperature, humidity ...).

Attribution : ©Sophie Bourlon - PNR Luberon

The ICOS (Integrated Carbon Observation System) tower (K)

In atmospheric sciences: the geophysics station is one of the largest global network of detection of changes in atmospheric composition (NDACC). The measurements are performed by LIDARs (including a laser), spectrometers and weather balloons. A tower 100m high, allows the multiple sampling on the composition of the air.

Attribution : ©DR

bucolic countryside and vast panoramas (L)

This walk goes through a wide basin, slightly hilly, consisting of a real landscape mosaic. This diversity is related to the sporadic presence of rock and water that allowed the development in certain areas of lush farming. This bucolic landscape is embellished with vast panoramas of the Luberon to the south, the Lure mountain to the north and the Alps to the east. The villages, with their well marked outline, are located on rocky spurs on the outskirts of the valley.

Attribution : ©Françoise Delville - PNR Luberon

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L'outil Geotrek a été financé par l'Union européenne, le Parc national des Ecrins et le Parc national du Mercantour.

Le projet Chemins des Parcs est financé par la Région Provence-Alpes-Côte-d'Azur et les Parcs naturels régionaux des Alpilles, de Camargue, du Luberon, du Queyras et du Verdon.

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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Avec le soutien de