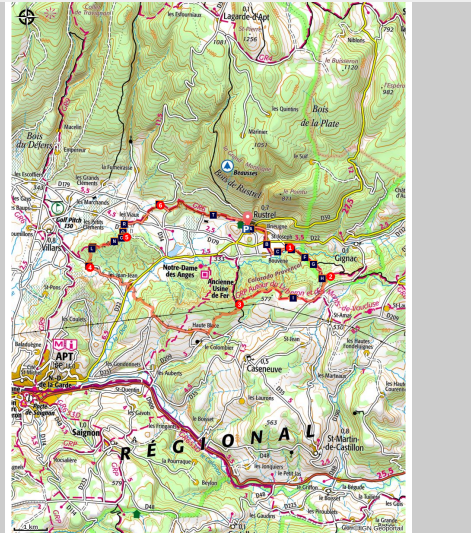


## Colorado tour by mountain bike

Rustrel



Crêtes du Colorado (©Julien Abellan)

*Technically affordable but full of reminders, it's quite physical. But what a treat!*

« The heart of the classified site of the ochres of Rustrel, very popular and particularly fragile, is reserved for visitors on foot. But by mountain biking, the tour of the Provençal Colorado massive, embellished with the crossing of the small ochre block of La Bruyère, allows full use of atypical colourful land but also to enjoy beautiful views from the ridges or through the Monts-de-Vaucluse. A magnificent loop, a must-see! ». Eric Garnier Head of Studies for outdoor sports at the Luberon RNP.

### Useful information

Practice : MOUNTAIN BIKE

Duration : 3 h 30

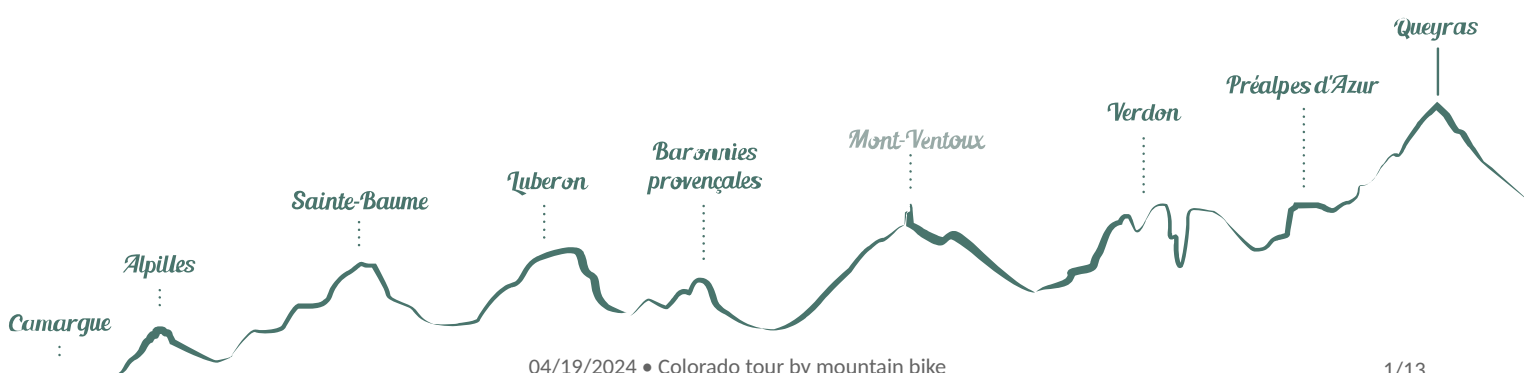
Length : 22.6 km

Trek ascent : 647 m

Difficulty : Medium

Type : Boucle

Themes : Fauna, Flora, Geology



# Trek

Departure : Rustrel village

Arrival : Rustrel village

Markings :  GR®  PR  VTT  VTT itinérance

Exit Rustrel following the GR® and the GTV® . Cross the D22 and at the crossroads "Cornet", turn left. Go along the former car park of Colorado and reach the start of the DFCI track.

**1** - Turn right, cross the ford on La Doua, then rise by the track. Pass two winding paths and at the crossroads "Barriès", turn left on a rocky path. Cross a sandy narrow gully and continue straight. Come out on the paved track and reach further onto a road. Turn right and climb to the pass.

**2** - Leave the GR® behind and the GTV® to the left and continue straight. Glide and go straight to the crossroads "Pradenques" and "Ubac de Pradenques", then climb to the plateau. Follow to the right the 1st track (RP). At the 2nd crossing, turn right on the path. After a ledge, turn right and then immediately left to reach the edge of the plateau. Then, go along a big field and reach the "Croix de Christol".

**3** - Take a left and 50m further, turn right. Continue straight on the trail, and then down the slope to the road. Follow it to the right, cross the hamlet of Haute-Blace and continue for 1.5km. At the exit of left turn, turn right and go down to La Doua. At the bottom, turn right, cross the D22 with caution and turn left on the track at the entrance of Jean-Jean. At the next crossroads continue straight. Above, follow the small road to the small mountain pass of Trécassats (marking "The Ochres by bike").

**4** - Take on the right, the coloured trail parallel to the path (GTV® marking), then climb right to the top of La Bruyère (interpretation panels). At the crossroads "Trou des Américains", follow to the right the GR® and thus through all the ochre massif. Coming out on the road "La Glaurivette", follow the D214 to the right and 550m further turn left, cross the hamlet of Viaux, cross the D179 and climb a gravel path.



**5** - Go down the road for 400m and take the first road to the left. Go up gently, turn right on the ledge and then embark on a beautiful rocky single track that falls between oaks and scrubs. Lower down, after a last turn, follow the opposite path along the foot of the massive and return quietly to Rustrel.



# On your path...





-  Rustrel and its castle (A)
-  Ochre formation (C)
-  Banks and rainforests (E)
-  Ocher and operation (G)
-  Flowering plants, the Luberon gem (I)
-  Forests as guides... (K)
-  La Bruyère hill (M)
-  The Common Bent-wing Bat (O)
-  Lesser Horseshoe Bat (Q)
-  The "Grande Traversée VTT" (mountain bike route) of Vaucluse (S)
-  Opération Grand Site Massif des Ogres (B)
-  Ochre processing in Rustrel (D)
-  The laurel leaved Rockrose (F)
-  Protected vultures (H)
-  Morenas, the avant-gardist (J)
-  Trou des Américains pond (L)
-  Landslide danger! (N)
-  Chestnut from acid soils (P)
-  A hut as a maternity ward (R)
-  Colourful channels (T)

# All useful information

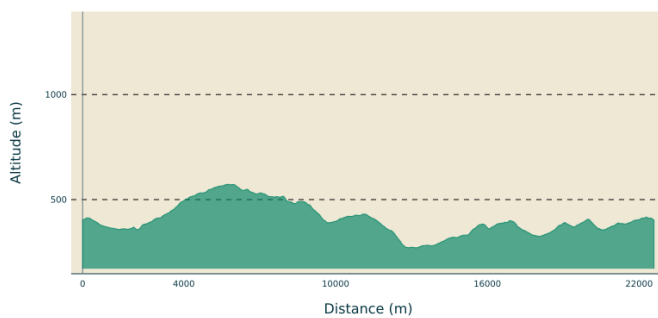
## **Advices**

Respect strictly the mountain bike riding ban in the of Colorado Rustrel (classified site). Beyond this, remain absolutely on the marked trails and paths.

Be careful when crossing the ledge between points

Drink enough water; no water spring on the way!

## **Altimetric profile**



Min elevation 271 m  
Max elevation 573 m

## **Transports**

Small car parks on each side of the road at the entrance of the village.

## **Access**

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

## **Advised parking**

car park

## **Source**



Luberon Géoparc mondial  
UNESCO

## Information desks

House of the Luberon Regional Nature Park



60, place Jean Jaurès, 84400 Apt

[accueil@parcduluberon.fr](mailto:accueil@parcduluberon.fr)

Tel : +33 (0)4 90 04 42 00

<https://www.parcduluberon.fr/>

OTI Pays d'Apt Luberon

788 avenue Victor Hugo, 84400 Apt

[oti@paysapt-luberon.fr](mailto:oti@paysapt-luberon.fr)

Tel : +33 (0)4 90 74 03 18

<http://www.luberon-apt.fr/>

Vélo Loisir Provence

[info@veloloisirprovence.com](mailto:info@veloloisirprovence.com)

Tel : +33 (0)4 90 76 48 05

<https://www.veloloisirprovence.com/>

# 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

---



## Ochre formation (C)

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 (D)

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 (E)

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 (F)

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 ocher massif where it can be found on the borders and clearings of woodlands.

Attribution : ©DR-Ecobalade

---



### Ocher and operation (G)

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 (H)

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

---





## Flowering plants, the Luberon gem (I)

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 (J)

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

---



## Forests as guides... (K)

The maintenance and development of woodlands and deciduous hedges is very important for bats. These areas serve as their hunting grounds and above all, as reference points. Some species are able to make a 5km detour to reach two places a kilometre apart only because they prefer to follow a straight line of hedges rather than to cross an open space.

Attribution : ©Eric Garnier - PNR Luberon

---



## Trou des Américains pond (L)

This wetland is rooted in the ochre activity of the site and served to store the water used for washing the ochre. This is one of the best preserved ponds of the Luberon Regional Nature Park which is a part of the known breeding sites of Western Spadefoot (or Spanish Spadefoot Toad). This rare and vulnerable species in France is considered near threatened globally. With "spades" in its hind feet, it hides in the sand until it rains!

Attribution : ©David Tatin



### La Bruyère hill (M)

Like a siliceous island in the middle of a limestone ocean, the hill of La Bruyère (listed and labelled as an environmentally sensitive area) contains a flock of siliceous (silica-loving), acid-loving (likes acid soils) and psammophile (preferring sand) plants. You can come across many species of amphibians (like the Western Spadefoot), birds (such as the European Bee-eater) and bats (like the Greater or the Lesser Horseshoe Bat, the Common Bent-wing Bat).

Attribution : ©Eric Garnier - PNR Luberon

---



### Landslide danger! (N)

As holed as cheese, the hill of La Bruyère is pierced with ancient galleries dug by hand. It was an important place for the extraction of ochre. Then, a number of them were transformed into mushroom growing areas. Today, there is no longer human activity. Some have become refuges for large colonies of bats. It is strictly forbidden to enter the galleries (private property), due to frequent landslides and to avoid dramatic disturbance of bats.

Attribution : ©Eric Garnier - PNR Luberon

---



### The Common Bent-wing Bat (O)

The hill of La Bruyère hosts the largest transit site of Common Bent-wing Bats in the Luberon. This bat feeds on moths. Very sociable, it settles in clusters in ochre galleries. Its protection is primarily based on tranquillity, especially since the closing of holes with grids is harmful to the Common Bent-wing Bat, because its flight, hard to manoeuvre, does not allow it to move easily between the bars.

Attribution : ©DR

---



### Chestnut from acid soils (P)

A small island in the middle of the limestone mountains of Luberon and the Monts-de-Vaucluse, the ochres are home to species of trees that do not grow in limestone. Thus, the chestnut enjoys this ground as it enjoys the sandy soil in the Var department further to the south.

Attribution : ©Eric Garnier - PNR Luberon



### Lesser Horseshoe Bat (Q)

A true little fur ball, this bat weighs only 2 to 5g. The species has a distinctive horseshoe-shaped nose. When roosting and hibernating, the Lesser Horseshoe Bats hang free and wrap their wings completely around their bodies, resembling a pear hanging free. In winter, it occupies ochre galleries. In summer, the females use the huts as maternity wards. Be careful not to disturb them! It is strictly forbidden to enter the galleries and huts (private property), due to frequent landslides and to avoid dramatic disturbance of bats.

Attribution : ©DR-Tanguy Stoeckle

---



### A hut as a maternity ward (R)

In the fields nearby, huts were built to provide shelter and storage. Today abandoned or restored, they are privileged and coveted places by female bats. A true maternity ward, these huts, heated by the sun, are suitable places for birthing and nursing the young. It is strictly forbidden to enter the huts (private property) to avoid dramatic disturbance of bats.

Attribution : ©Eric Garnier - PNR Luberon

---

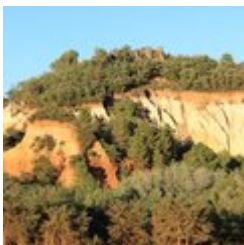


### The "Grande Traversée VTT" (mountain bike route) of Vaucluse (S)

The Grande Traversée VTT of Vaucluse is 388km of fun and a personalised course! Starting with the challenging trails of Mont Ventoux, passing through the limestone ridges of the Dentelles de Montmirail mountain range, you will go through a remarkable natural area to reach the Gorges de la Nesque. Then, the race continues through the Luberon Regional Nature Park, where the dry stone structure heritage, the impressive cliffs and trails in the ochre will delight mountain bikers.

Attribution : ©Julien Abellan

---



### Colourful channels (T)

This route, away from the Calavon, flowing between the massifs of the Monts de Vaucluse to the north and Luberon to south, bypasses the Ogres de Rustrel massif. These colourful cliffs clearly stand out of the wooded hills of this agricultural valley dominated by vineyards. Resulting from a particular geological formation and past human exploitation, this richly coloured excavated face is threatened by forest takeover.

Attribution : ©Anne-Camille Vinson - PNR Luberon

---





- En aucun cas les auteurs des contenus de ce site ne sauraient être tenus pour responsables de problèmes ou d'accidents sur les itinéraires cités.
- Cependant, nous comptons sur vous pour signaler toutes contradictions importantes entre cette fiche et le terrain.
- Pensez également à signaler les éventuels problèmes rencontrés pendant votre balade sur <http://sentinelles.sportsdenature.fr> (erreur de balisage, panneau défectueux, pollution, conflit d'usages...).
- La vente de cette fiche est autorisée au coût d'impression.
- Ne pas jeter dans la nature.

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.

- The authors of this website will in no case be held responsible for problems or accidents on the routes mentioned.
- We count on you to point out any inconsistency between this content and the field itineraries
- Please report any problems encountered on the routes (route marking problems, defective panels, pollution, conflict of uses ...) on <http://sentinelles.sportsdenature.fr>
- The sale of this sheet is authorized at the cost of printing
- Please don't litter

The Geotrek tool was funded by the European Union, the Ecrins National Park and the Mercantour National Park.

The Chemins des Parcs project is funded by the Provence-Alpes-Côte-d'Azur Region and the regional nature parks of Alpilles, Camargue, Luberon, Queyras and the Verdon.

This project was developed in partnership with the Regional Tourism Committee, the departmental tourist development agencies, and tourist offices.

Avec le soutien de



Avec l'aide technique de :

- Luberon Géoparc mondial UNESCO