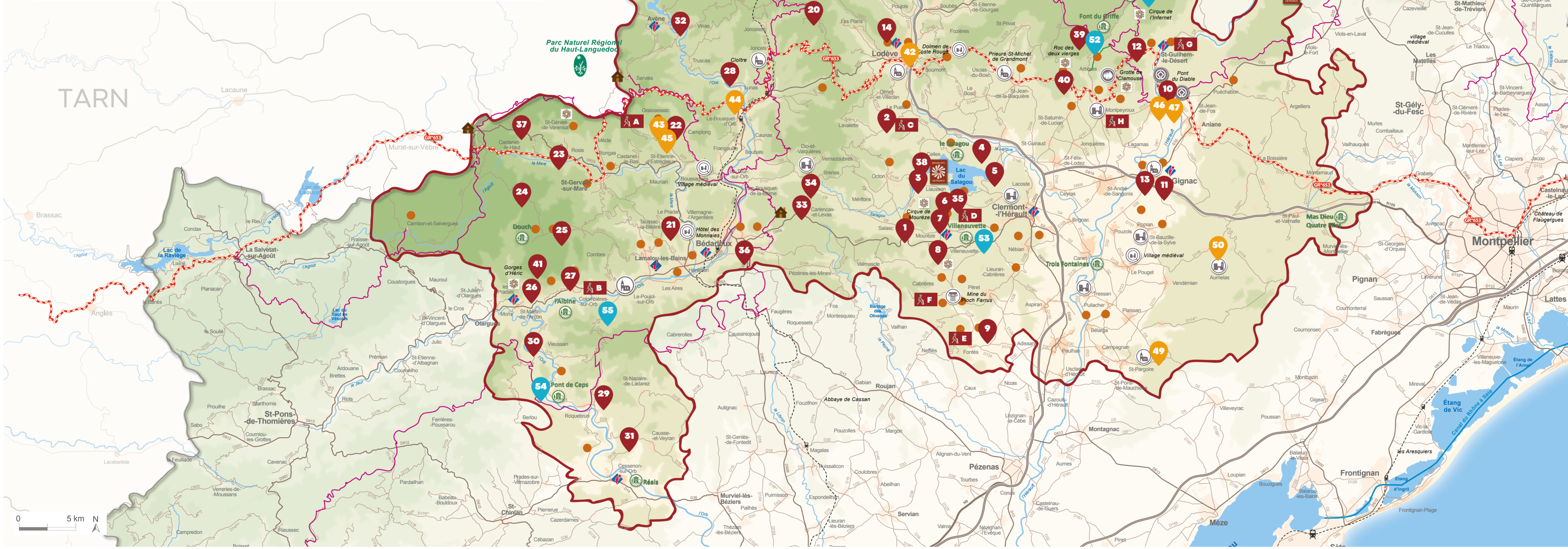


Explore the Terres d'Hérault Geopark



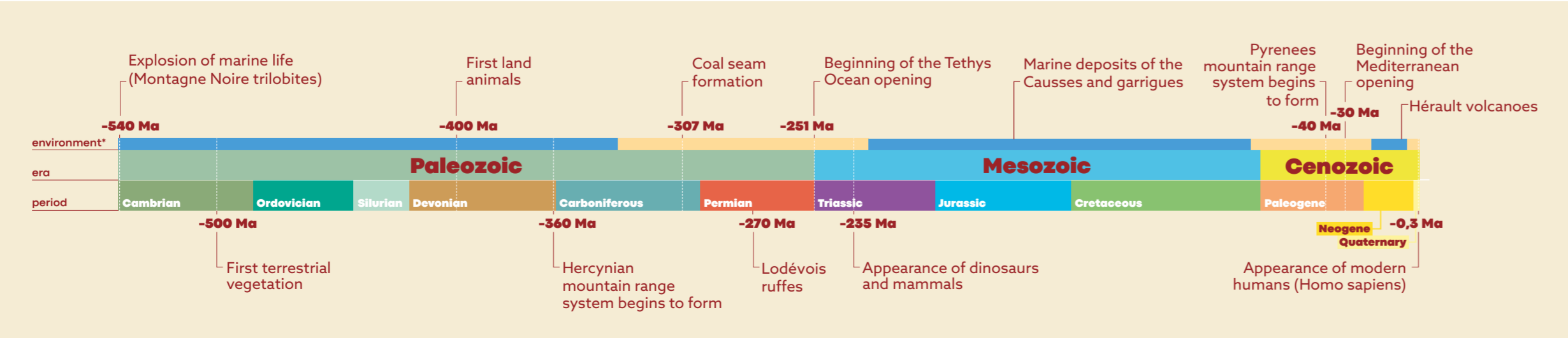
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 - ℹ️ Information places
 - 🚂 Railway stations
- Services**
 - 🏠 Departmental domains
 - 🏠 Departmental stopovers
 - 🗺️ Tourist offices
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THE STORY OF HALF A BILLION YEARS OF PLANETARY EVOLUTION

Ma: Million years ago

*Deposition environment (Languedoc)

■ marine ■ continental



The Hérault, an exceptional region with exceptional accreditations

The Geopark initiative is accredited under the great landscapes of the Hérault region and shares a common approach with its partners.

- **Three "Grands sites de France":** Salagou-Cirque de Mourèze, Cirque de Navacelles, Gorges de l'Hérault
- **UNESCO sites:** Causses and Cévennes cultural landscape of agro-pastoralism, The Way of Saint James
- **Haut Languedoc Regional Natural Park**
- **Grands Causses Regional Natural Park**

How did the Geopark project come about ?

The Terres d'Hérault Geopark was born from the preliminary studies carried out by the association "Demain la Terre". In 2022, I suggested the Département lead a joint process, because it seemed to me that we were the institution that could federate all the players: municipalities and intercommunal bodies, Grands Sites de France, regional natural parks, interdepartmental actors, tourist offices, associations, museums, professionals...

What does the UNESCO label bring ?

Firstly, recognition of the quality of our approach. The label can highlight our remarkable Hérault geology to protect it, promote it and define scientific research and awareness-raising initiatives to help local residents better understand their region.

The bid is also the opportunity to develop tourism, in the same way that we have created the Hérault wine route, and more recently the oyster route : collective initiatives that invite visitors to discover our terroirs, supporting the local economy while working to preserve our environment. A challenge for today and tomorrow.

Klüber MESQUIDA,
President of the Hérault Council Department

The Terres d'Hérault Geopark, a fabulous testimony to the past

Covering more than 2000 square kilometres and 55 geosites, the «Terres d'Hérault» tells the story of 540 million years of evolution on our planet. It is a story that can be seen in the mountains, peaks, mines, causses, canyons, cirques, volcanoes and plains.

THE UNESCO GLOBAL GEOPARK LABEL

How do you obtain this prestigious label ?

- The candidate area must have exceptional geological resources of international interest.
- The community representing this territory carries out actions to preserve, raise awareness of and promote this heritage.

APPLICATION TIMETABLE

- **Summer 2024 :** The Terres d'Hérault Geopark is authorised to submit its application.
- **November 2024 :** Submission of application to UNESCO.
- **Summer 2025 :** International evaluators are hosted in the Hérault to discover our geological heritage and the dynamics of the bid.
- **2026 :** The final deliberation of the UNESCO Executive Board.

THE TERRES D'HÉRAULT GEOPARK COMMUNITY

Terres d'Hérault is made up of women and men committed to pursuing the Geopark adventure. They include the 112 partner municipalities and intercommunal bodies, museums such as the Lodève Museum, tourist offices and associations, as well as teachers, scientific mediators, craftsmen, shopkeepers...

32 geosites to discover

CAYROUX BASALT PLATEAU 2

F Explore

Geo-hike « **Le Cayroux** » Pass through dolmens, «capitelles» and the incredible landscape of «ruffes» (pelites), the red earth of the Lodévois dating from the Permian period (271 million years ago) and basaltic rock, the result of more recent lava flows (650 000 to 2 million years ago).

THE MOURÈZE CIRQUE 7

D

Geo-hike « **Mourèze Cirque** » A beautiful stroll where dolomites form natural sculptures in a chaos of upright rocks. A challenging climb takes you to the summit of Liausson Mount.

PIC DE VISSOU 8

E

Geo-hike « **The Visou tells its story** » The starting point for this loop is the village of Cabrières, home to Europe's oldest copper mines, dating back 3 000 years. The path then winds through the heart of a listed site, rich in geological and landscape discoveries.

THE MOURÈZE CIRQUE 7

Western setting or lunar landscape, the Mourèze Cirque is an amphitheater of ruiniform reliefs carved out of Jurassic dolomite, at the foot of which Mourèze village nestles in a maze of corridors and pinnacles.

DID YOU KNOW ?

Sediments deposited since the Jurassic period were sculpted by water and frost to form these dolomites 1.8 million years ago. The eroded debris forms a unique sand, known locally as *grésou*.

THE MOURÈZE CIRQUE 7

Observe

The Neck of **la Roque**, an ancient volcanic vent
The **Dyle of la Roque**, an ancient fracture in which the lava cooled

PIC DE VISSOU 8

A must-see site, for its unique panorama. The Pic du Visou has attracted generations of geologists to its slopes, trying to understand the mysteries of its complex formation, which took several tens of millions of years.

DID YOU KNOW ?

The geological site has become famous since Paul Gervais de Rouville, the first geologist to climb the Pic in 1868. Identified an inversion of rocks, with older overlying newer ones.

CÉRESSOU 9

Céressou, overlooking the surrounding plains, is one of the Hérault volcanoes that were active between 2.2 and 1.1 million years ago. Emerging from the sea that once covered the region, its crater has long since been filled in.

NAVACELLES CIRQUE 15

A Grand Site de France, it is the widest canyon in Europe - and it is spectacular! 1400 meters separate the viewpoints of Blandas and Baume Auriol, while they face each other above Navacelles. Here, the Vis river has carved out its bed in the limestone of the Larzac and Blandas plateaus, forming vast meanders. Over time, the river's course has been diverted by the infilling of the former meander by limestone concretions on vegetation.

C Geo-hike « **The Céressou** » Starting out from the village, this loop takes you through the Fontès vineyards, oaks and an olive grove, to reveal the remains of the ancient volcano, part of the Massif Central range. This is an exceptional site for observing basalt flows, the black stones produced by lava flows over a million years ago.

DEVIL'S BRIDGE 10

It offers a remarkable view over the alluvial plain of the Hérault at the end of the Hérault canyon. It has been a listed historic monument since 1996 and has been on UNESCO's World Heritage List as part of the "The Way of St James" since 1998.

H Geo-hike « **The Castellans of Montpeyroux** » One of the entry points to the «Saint-Guilhem-le-Désert Gorges de l'Hérault» Grand Site de France, Montpeyroux, a village at the foot of the Séranne massif, is a must for nature lovers. Pass through olive groves, vineyards and garrigues to reach the ramparts of Castellans, a medieval fortress whose remains will surprise you.

GIGNAC WAY OF THE CROSS 11

Sitting on a promontory, which is in fact a 23 million years old Miocene river's bed, the Gignac Way of the Cross is a privileged viewpoint over the Geopark's «Plaine de l'Hérault» geological area. It is listed as a historic monument.

DID YOU KNOW ?

Travelers passing through Gignac will notice these little chapels lined up on a promontory. Fourteen in number, they form a Way of the Cross that starts from Notre-Dame-de-Grâce church. It would appear that the first chapel was built before 1672 by the Recollet fathers, the others by parishioners. It was not until the 19th century that they took the name «Way the Cross».

NAVACELLES CIRQUE 15

Strombolian cone with basaltic flows that seal the fore-Causse. In this area, the hikes around Roc Castel are not to be missed! This relief features the remains of a medieval castle, overlooking the limestone plateaus and the emblematic dolomites of the Navacelles Cirque. This is also an ideal natural area for «agropastoralism».

DID YOU KNOW ?

Roc Castel is a perfect example of the role of geology and topology in human history. In the Middle Ages, villages were built on higher ground to better defend themselves, as was the case here !

INFERNET CIRQUE 12

The Infernet Cirque is a gigantic wall of Jurassic limestone and dolomite. Over thousands of years, the Verdus river has shaped the rocks, eroding them and opening up the Cirque towards the present-day Saint-Guilhem-le-Désert village.

DID YOU KNOW ?

This path, built by the monks of Gellone at the bottom of the Cirque, suspended in places in the cliffs, offers breathtaking views. Starting from the Saint-Guilhem-le-Désert village square, this loop crosses over grey limestones and dolomites, shaped by geological movements over 170 million years ago, when the Hérault was still bathed in the waters of a tropical sea.

RED PASS OF ESCANDORGUE 20

This basalt formation is a fabulous testimony to the period of volcanism in the Hérault between 2.2 and 1.1 million years ago.

G Geo-hike « **Escandorgue plateau** » To take full advantage of the beauty of these landscapes, try the «Escandorgue plateau» hike, which passes through the state forest and close to the Lerab Ling Buddhist temple, renowned as a major retreat center in Europe.

THE GREZAC PLATEAU 14

Anchored in the Causse, the Grezac plateau is made up of Jurassic limestone and dolomite. 1.8 million years ago, water eroded these rocks to form the plateau's current aerial landscapes and the dolomitic ledges on its heights.

DID YOU KNOW ?

The oppidum, a naturally fortified town built on the Puech de Grézac, is a reminder of the almost continuous presence of humans on the plateau until the High Middle Ages. The «colocles», hollow way laid out by man, were used by herds to reach the oppidum.

« ORGANS PIPES » OF TAUSSAC 21

Rising above the surrounding vegetation, the Jurassic dolomitic organs of Tausac feature a distinctive columnar formation known as *debit*, not to be confused with volcanic organs.

PADÈNE CLIFF 22

On these slopes, layers of coal 1 to 6 meters thick alternate with so-called 'barren' layers of sandstone and shale. These deposits date from the Upper Carboniferous period.

E Access to the site is do by the hike that starts at the museum «Graissessac in the past», a must-see place to discover the mining history of the Graissessac coalfield.

CHAPEL OF NOTRE-DAME-DE-SAINT-EUTROPE 23

The climb up to the chapel provides an opportunity to observe the metamorphic formations of the Espinouse mountains. Located in the central part of the Montagne Noire, this mount is mainly made up of gneisses (ancient granites) with layers of metamorphosed sedimentary formations.

DID YOU KNOW ?

The chapel was probably once a hermitage. The current building may date from the Middle Ages (14th century) and replaces an old pre-Romanesque site. Legend has it that Saint Eutrope withdrew alone to these mountains to pray.

BELVEDERE OF LIAUSSON 35

The Liausson mountain offers a breathtaking panorama of the geology of the Hérault : the spectacular red ruffes around the Salagou lake, the volcanic mess and, in the background, the southern edge of the Larzac plateau and the Mont Saint-Baudille. To the south, views open out over the Mourèze Cirque with its dreamlike atmosphere, and the primary era formations around the Pic de Visou.

E The Courtnals belvedere, with its orientation table overlooking the cirque and the village of Mourèze.

MONT SAINT-BAUDILLE BELVEDERE 59

Mont Saint-Baudille is part of the Séranne mountain, an ancient coral reef dating back to the Jurassic period. Under the tropical waters of the Jurassic Sea, sediments were slowly deposited and compacted to form grey limestone and dolomite. Geological processes then transported the rocks to their present location.

DID YOU KNOW ?

The dissolution of the limestone has given rise to several thousand sinkholes and caves in the Hérault region, a remarkable place for caving.

THE COLOMBIÈRES CANYON 27

The gneisses and schists of the Colombières canyon are among the oldest rocks in the Geopark. Take a trip back over 400 million years witnessing the remains of one of the most remarkable geological formations on our planet: the Hercynian chain.

DID YOU KNOW ?

The gneiss found here is the result of a phenomenon known as metamorphism. It is called «augen gneiss» because of the egg shape of the large white feldspar crystals it contains !

MENDIC GRANITE 28

The Mendic granite massif is located in the Orb Mountains, one of the highest reliefs in the Hérault. This granite stands out in the landscape for its characteristic pink color and grainy texture. It probably dates from the early Cambrian period, 540 million years ago. It is one of the oldest rocks in the Terres d'Hérault Geopark.

MONTPEYROUX NAPPE IN ROQUEBRUN 29

On the southern flank of the Montagne Noire, the Montpeyroux nappe consists of a powerful, folded and inverted Paleozoic sedimentary series, interpreted as a Hercynian thrust sheet.

COUMIAC RED MARBLE QUARRY 31

An ancient «griotte» marble quarry, exploited since the 6th century for facing and ornamentation. Not far from this quarry, there is an international stratotype (gold nails) to serve as a reference for the Frasnian/Famennian transition.

DID YOU KNOW ?

The Coumiac quarry is a real geological gem. Its marble adorn one of the rooms of the White House in Washington.

LODÈVE MUSEUM 42

The museum's permanent exhibition immerse you in the ancient history of the Hérault. «Tell me about life on Earth» traces 540 million years of the Earth's history, with graphic and digital reconstructions, treasures and numerous fossils collected only locally.

DID YOU KNOW ?

The Département has acquired the endangered natural site that is home to the paleontological slab of la Lieude, a unique site with over 900 footprints of synapsids and reptiles older than the dinosaurs. (This site is currently being developed and is not open to the public)

AVÈNE THERMAL SPRINGS 32

Avène's water is extracted from the Lower Cambrian dolomites. It comes from rainwater infiltration on outcrops near the station. The water is heated at depth before returning mineralised to the surface, 40 to 50 years later.

SIMON MINE 43

Coal mining at Graissessac began in the 18th century and continued until 1993. The Simon mine is one of the remnants of this industrial past. Here, coal made up of layers of dead vegetation deposited during the Carboniferous period can be seen on the surface.

A Geo-hike « **Le Devois** » A hike between mountains and ridges to Cabanes nous. Here, people and landscapes are linked to coal mining: result of the fossilisation of vegetation that proliferated in marshes in an equatorial climate, buried under the sand and clay produced by the erosion of a mountain range.

MAISON DE GRAND SITE OF DEVIL'S BRIDGE 47

It welcomes you to the Gorges de l'Hérault Grand Site de France, between Aniane and the Devil's Bridge.

THE LEGEND OF DEVIL'S BRIDGE

Every night, the Devil destroyed the work being done of the two abbeyes of Aniane and Gellone to build a bridge over the Hérault. Guilhem promised the Devil the soul of the first creature to cross the bridge if he helped build an indestructible bridge here. The Devil agreed, and once the bridge was built, he was sent a poor dog as a reward... The Devil tried in vain to destroy the bridge ! Out of spite, he threw himself into the river !

MAISON DE GRAND SITE OF « BAUME AURIOL » 48

Located on the Baume Auriol belvedere on the edge of the cliff, the Maison de Grand Site presents the history of the Navacelles Cirque, a scenic area emblematic of the Lodévois and Larzac limestone plateaus.

DID YOU KNOW ?

At Navacelles, the immense meander is the result of the Vis river, carving through the Jurassic limestone over thousands of years.

LES LAVAGNES DEPARTMENTAL ESTATE (ENS) 51

Human activity at Les Lavagnes has left many legacies, including menhirs and relic trees. The site is inextricably linked with the 'lavognes' (wheat storage places) that can be found there, due to the scarcity of water in this environment. In fact, rainwater seeps directly into the depths of the cracked limestone rock, drying out the causses. Humans therefore created impermeable depressions to store this vital resource and water the herds.

E The marbled newt, a veritable freshwater dragon

FONT DU GRIFFE DEPARTMENTAL ESTATE (ENS) 52

Long neglected because of its aridity, the Font du Griffé opens its paths to you over 400 hectares of natural spaces. Today, the sea has given way to limestone mountains. In fact, 150 million years ago, the region was part of a vast ocean in a different geographical position, as a result of continental drift.

E Discover the town's archaeological heritage and enjoy a breathtaking view from the top of Mont-Saint-Baudille.

A COLLECTION OF MAPS TO HELP YOU DISCOVER THE HÉRAULT REGION

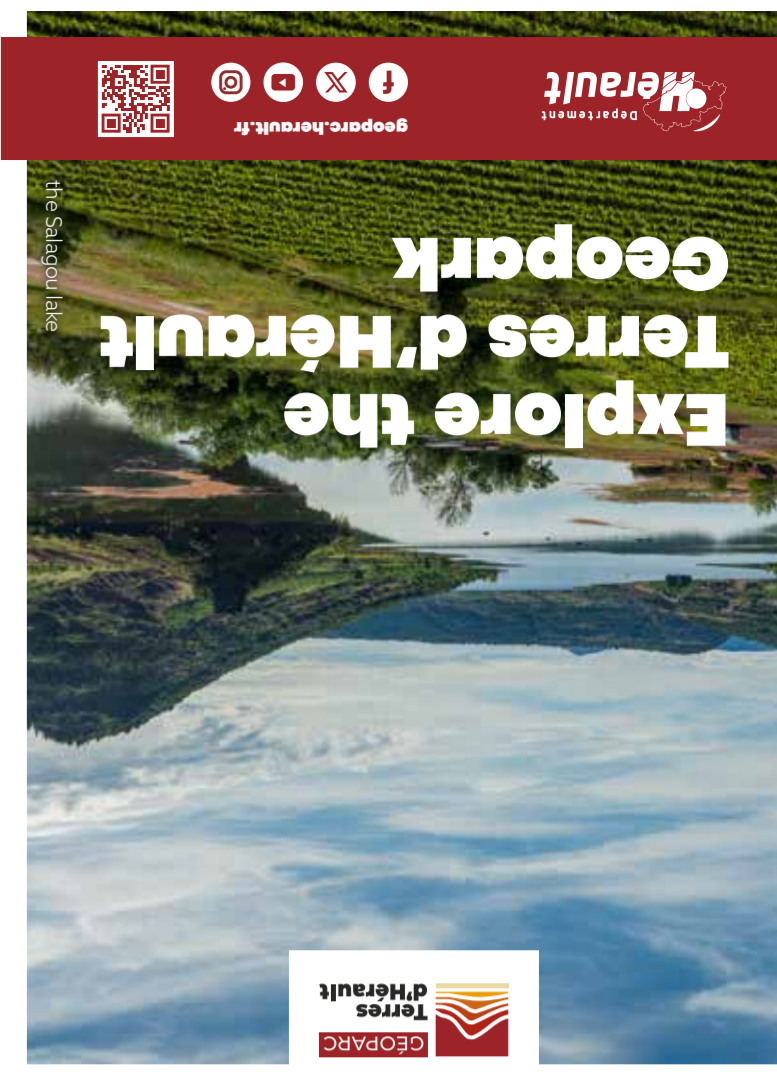
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YOU WANT TO JOIN A CLUB ?

Contact the Hérault hiking committee. 04 67 67 41 15 herault.ffrandonnée.fr

HERAULT SPORT

Nelson Mandela Departmental Sports House 04 67 67 30 00 sport.herault.fr



PRACTICAL INFO

To explore the Terres d'Hérault Geopark go to : geoparc.herault.fr

Everything you need to know about our events, news and geology in the Hérault. Follow us on our social networks and newsletter!

Your geo-hikes and all your leisure projects are on : herault-tourisme.fr

Herault.fr

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