

(On disk filename/dossier ref: Trois Seigneurs)

COMMUNITY OF COMMUNES
The Razès Hillsides

Footpath of “The Three Lords’ Vineyards”

In the Razès, a countryside rich in circular villages and beautiful orchids, the footpaths criss-cross the communes and enable you to better understand the local history.

All along this route, display panels introduce the different grape varieties that make up the Malepère wine.

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Malepère Wine

All around the wooded massif that bears its name, the Malepère vineyards occupy slopes and terraces, alternating with cereal production and oak woods.

The western positioning of the ‘appellation’ is what contributes to its originality, allowing the Atlantic influences to compete and mix with the dominant Mediterranean characteristics. This particular climatic and geological situation (sandstone and limestone outcrops and clay hillsides) has led to innovative grape varieties: Merlot and Cabernet, varieties from Aquitaine, dominate in the West, and grow alongside, on the dryer soils, Cot, Grenache and Cinsaut, neighbours of Mediterranean plants.

The red and rosé Malepère wines, reflecting the region’s soil, combine fruitiness and freshness, suppleness and power, body and smoothness.

The Razès, characterised by its rolling hills and gentle valleys, is both the birthplace and the heart of the ‘appellation’, thanks in particular to the Domaine de Cazes where the ‘Maison des Terroirs’ is to be found, the Headquarters of the Malepère Wine Producers’ Union.

Experimental Wine Production Domaine of Cazes

Purchased in 1967, through the initiative of Wine Co-operatives from western Aude and the Aude Chamber of Agriculture, the Domaine covers an area of 36 hectares. More than 120 varieties of grape are tried out and are the subject of study (climatic conditions, productivity etc). Many of them are made into wine in the domaine’s experimental cellars, with the aim of quality assessment.

These observations have enabled grape varieties to be adapted to the region (soil, climate) and have contributed to the choice of vines for the Malepère wines. The Domaine is concerned not only with the rôle of the countryside, but also with a respect for bio-diversity, and as such has become a platform where many studies into natural bio-diversity are carried out. Sensible management, prevention of pollution, planting of hedges, the creation of a stretch of water ... are among the routes taken which will serve to raise awareness among the biggest number of farmers. Within the Domaine, all along the pathway, information panels explain this bio-diversity.

Where you can find Malepère wines:

By road: Cave du Razès. 6kms from Belvèze on the Limoux Road. (Tel: 04 68 69 02 71)

On the walk: Château de Routier (Tel: 04 68 69 06 13)

Domaine de Girard at Alaigne (Tel: 04 68 69 05 27)

Experimental Wine Production Domaine of Cazes. (Tel: 04 68 69 11 56).

Also regional produce on sale.

In Belvèze: Château de Belvèze (tel: 04 68 69 13 94)

Other specialities:

Onion conserves at the Domaine de Bordère (Tel: 04 68 69 12 91). Visits by appointment.

Further information:

Community of Communes
The Razès Hillside.
Tel: 04 68 69 55 32

Access routes:

Motorway A61. Take BRAM exit, between Carcassonne and Castelnaudary, then follow signs for Limoux. At the 4th roundabout, take the road to Belvèze. In Belvèze, follow signposts to Alaigne.

Limoux: Take the Carcassonne road. Then D623 to left, marked to Castelnaudary & Belvèze. Follow signs to Belvèze and then to Alaigne.

Carcassonne: Take the Montréal road. After Montréal, follow signs for Belvèze and then for Alaigne.

Mirepoix: Take the Limoux road. After Caudeval turn left for Belvèze. In Belvèze, follow signs for Alaigne.

Castelnaudary: Take the Limoux road. Follow signs for Belvèze, and then for Alaigne.

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Belvèze: From the Square in front of the old Rly Station, go between the bandstand and the doctors' surgery and turn left. Cross the road which replaces the old railway line and then turn left into 'Allée des Prunus'. After 100metres take the road on the right. Then, after 120 metres, take the track that goes up to the left (signposted Routier). At the top of this climb, admire the view over Belvèze. Carry straight on up the slight incline and the track then turns to right and then left. Just before leaving the edge of the vineyard to take the track to the right on the embankment – admire the ruins of 2 windmills, just behind and to your left. Carry straight on as far as the crossroads (where there is a well). Take the track in front of you and continue straight ahead. Fork right at the next junction. $\frac{3}{4}$ of the way up the slope which leads to Routier, there is a view over the 'Cave Co-opérative du Razès' – the largest 'cave' in Europe in terms of storage capacity.

Routier (1 hr): On entering Routier take the first lane to the right and follow it as far as the water tower. Leave this on your left and go straight ahead on a minor road towards Alaigne (D202). After 600 metres take the second road on the left (after the bend and before the slope downhill). Follow this for 2 kms as far as the D102. Ignore all tracks to right and left. At the junction with the D102 take the track opposite which climbs uphill. After 250 metres go right at the junction. At the top, there is a panorama over the Pyrenees, the Razès and the Black Mountain. Then go down into ...

Alaigne (2hrs): Go straight ahead, through an arched gateway (Porte de Pépy), cross the Square and go out through the 2nd archway (Porte d'Arrès). Turn left. Follow the road around the 'circulade'. Take the 1st turning right after the road to Bellegarde. Carry straight on, alongside the old chapel and cemetery. When the track reaches the top of a small col, coming out of a wood, go to the right alongside a field (electric fence). After the 2nd gate, follow the fence as far as the 'Hill of the Three Lords' (characterised by a small dip at the top. Beautiful view). Go straight down, ignoring the ridge-way. Where you meet a larger track turn right to re-join a minor road (D52). Turn left and 300

metres after the little bridge take the track on your left (opposite the access road to Fancette), to re-join the ridge. At the top, fork right (on your left is a view to the Château of Monthaut). Follow the minor road to ...

Col de Marmages 371 metres (3 hrs.): (Border for 120 years between the Visigoths, to the East, and the Franks to the West. A great battle between the Franks and the Visigoths took place at this spot). Follow the lane going up towards Domaine de Bordère for 300 metres, and then take the track to the right. After going through the wood (view the circular village of Bellegarde-du-Razès to your left and a view-point over Routier, Alaigne and the Peak of Bugarach to your right), go down as far as the wine-producing property of Turonis. Go behind it and at the last building, turn right and then left to follow the small tarmac road to the D102 (Electricity pole). Cross over, go left and straight ahead to go to ...

Domaine de Cazes (3½ hrs.): which you will see in front of you. When you hit the tarmac, turn right and go past the 'Maison des Terroirs' (where you can stop and taste the Malepère wines and discover some local produce). Turn right immediately after the building to take the small lane that goes downhill. On the flat embankment, turn left towards the umbrella pine. After the pine-tree count approx 40 rows of vines, then turn left to go up a wider row. At the lane, turn left and then right after a few metres to go down into the wood. As you leave the wood, turn left twice to walk alongside the bottom of the vines. When you get to a wider row (electricity pole in the middle of the row) turn right to re-join the ridge. When you meet a track, turn left and follow it until it meets another that comes from the Domaine de Cazes. Turn right and go straight ahead until you get to the tarmac road. Take the lane opposite and follow as far as ...

Belvèze (4½hrs.): When you reach the minor road (Avenue des Prunus) turn left towards D102 and then to the right to cross the bridge. After the old railway bridge, turn left and then take the 2nd road on the right into the estate 'La Paulette'. Cross the River Sou. Opposite the School (Ave. de l'Hôtel de Ville) turn right. Go past the Town Hall, shops, and after the Bakery, turn right. Cross the little bridge (Listed statue of the Virgin Mary). Re-join the carpark by turning right after the bridge.

Useful Information

Duration : 4½ hours

Distance: 19 kms

Height variation: 300 metres

Waymarkers: yellow lines. On the path, panels show the names of the grapes and their role in the wine-making process.

IGN Map: 1/25000 (Blue Series). Montréal 2246 East

Difficulty : None. The proximity of villages will reassure the weary hiker.

Further information:

In Belvèze – shady parking by the (old) Station. Tap for drinking water.

In the village – 2 general stores, a bakery, a butcher and caterer, a café, a chemist, a bank with ATM, a PO and 5 doctors.

Photocopies authorised

(3 Seigneurs – 1 p)

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