

Couiza / Saint-Paul-de-Fenouillet

The Vélosud



Départ
Couiza

Arrivée
Saint-Paul-de-Fenouillet

Durée
2 h 30 min

Distance
37,71 Km

Niveau
I cycle a lot

Thématique
Mountains, Canals &
intimate rivers, Nature
& small heritage

For you to cross by bike from the département (French county) of Aude to that of Pyrénées-Orientales, the Vélosud cycle route makes use of the Sals Valley, the river's waters here said to have well-being properties. As the name Sals indicates, this river is rich in salt, and you might consider stopping at the thermal spa of Rennes-les-Bains for a well-deserved treatment to relax your tired limbs after so much cycling!

Reinvigorated, you can then set off on the climb to the Col du Linas, a pass below the mysterious Pech de Bugarach Mountain, and the highest point on the whole Vélosud route, taking you to an altitude of 667m above sea level. Then you follow the Agly River all the way to the Mediterranean. This mountain stream passes through forests relatively calmly for a time but after a few kilometres transforms into a raging torrent as it squeezes through the impressive, beautiful Gorges de Galamus. All told, this may be a short day's cycling, but it's intense!

The route

This stage is entirely on roads shared with motorized vehicles, but traffic is either light or moderate. Along the Galamus Gorges, in summer, traffic is regulated, alternating between one direction and the other, and this applies to cyclists too, so you may have to wait a time to cycle along the gorges.

Points at which to take care:

- At Couiza, you join the D613 road and for the first 5km, you ride along this road on which vehicles often go fast, even if traffic is usually only moderate. Stay well to the right along this stretch.
- At Bugarach, for the Col du Linas, the climb begins as you leave Bugarach, taking you along a 4km stretch with slopes averaging 5%, so pace yourself and make sure you have plenty of drinking water.
- Along the Gorges de Galamus, in summer, traffic is regulated, alternating between one direction and the other, so that the dramatic, narrow road doesn't get blocked up, and this applies to cyclists too, so at peak times, follow the instructions given by the people on the ground who control the traffic flow here.

Practical information

- [Office de Tourisme du Pays de Couiza](#)
- [Office de Tourisme intercommunal du Fenouillèdes](#)

Transports

SNCF French National Railways train stations

- Gare SNCF de Couiza railway station: regional TER Occitanie trains (you can transport your bike for free on these), this stop on the Carcassonne-Quillan line.
- Gare de Saint-Paul-de-Fenouillet railway station: Train Rouge (a tourist train operating April - October, linking up to Rivesaltes, near the Mediterranean coast and near the end of this

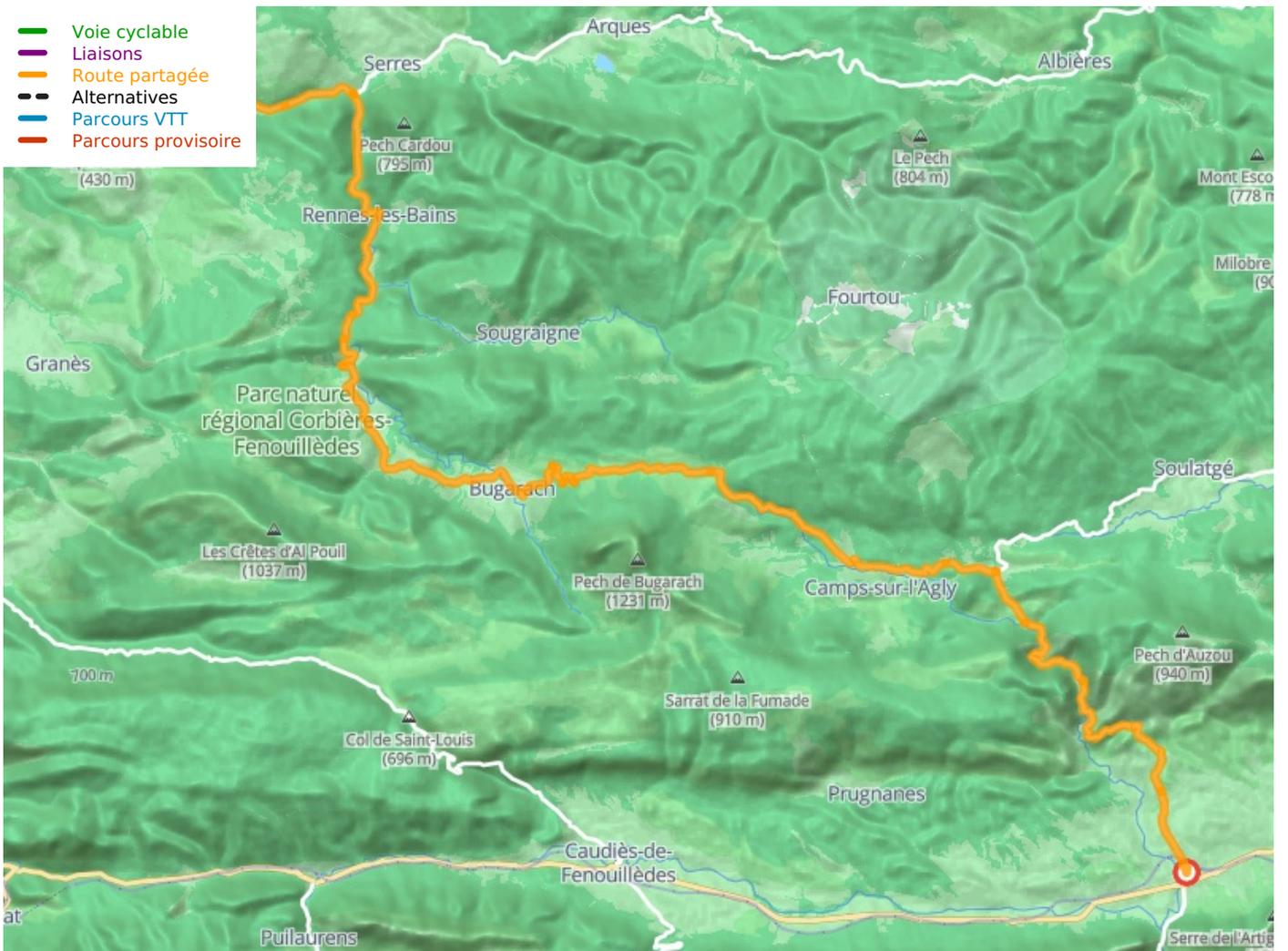
whole cycle route), <https://www.lettrainrouge.fr>, telephone to book tickets in advance 04 68 200 400.

BUS services

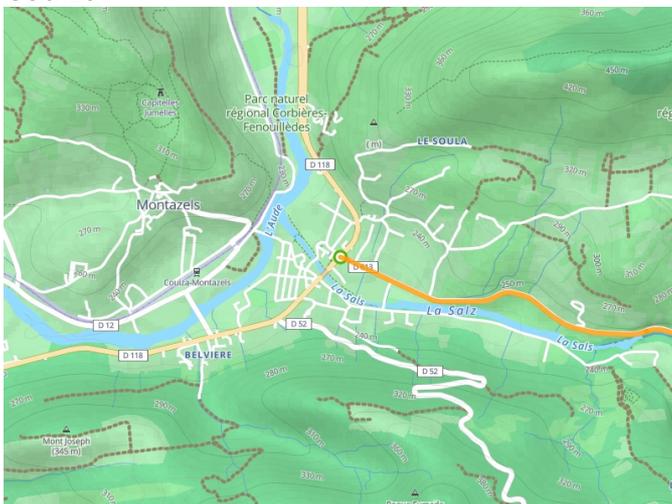
- LiO regional bus network, serving Couiza via line 411 between Castelnaudary and Axat.
- LiO regional bus network, serving Couiza via line 402 between Carcassonne and Axat (with the possibility of continuing on to Saint-Paul-de-Fenouillet via line 500).
- <https://www.lio-occitanie.fr/horaires-et-plans/>

Don't miss

- **Couiza**: the Château des Ducs de Joyeuse, just 300m from the Tourist Office (at the stadium), a remarkable castle worth having a look at, although note that it has now been converted into an impressive four-star hotel with gastronomic restaurant.
- **Rennes-les-Bains**, a thermal spa resort built beside the meandering Sals, a river whose waters are naturally salty, a fact exploited since Gallo-Roman times, the waters now feeding the sole thermal spa establishment in the county of Aude, putting the waters to good effect, particularly in treating rheumatism and osteoarticular trauma, but also offering short well-being treatments.
- **Bugarach**: in the heart of the Corbières Range, the village of Bugarach is an important stop on the Sentier Cathare GR®367 national hiking trail (linking up the main Cathar sites, recalling the importance, and persecution, of this Christian sect in these parts in medieval times). The valley here has been lived in for millennia, a Roman road even linking Rennes-les-Bains and Bugarach in ancient times. You'll spot the medieval castle ruins in the midst of the village. Back at the start of the 19th century, hat-making was the main activity here, with three factories, but today agriculture and tourism are the main pillars of the local economy.
- **Le Pech de Bugarach**, the Aude county's sacred mountain: You'll feel relieved once you've climbed to the top of the Col de Linas. Well done, but maybe, just maybe, you were helped by the Pech de Bugarach's special powers to reach this, the highest point along the whole Vélosud / V81 cycle route? That's because this, the highest summit in the Corbière Range, is an iconic mountain venerated by the locals, who've attributed all sorts of myths and wild stories to it. Some with very vivid imaginations have considered it as a place to go to to seek refuge when the world comes to an end, others as a galactic portal, a place to spot UFOs, a place linked with geomagnetic reversal, a cache for treasure, an energy centre... let's at least put a bit of faith in the last suggestion, thanking the mountain for giving you the push you needed to reach the top of the pass!



Départ
Couiza



Arrivée
Saint-Paul-de-Fenouillet

