

# The Queyras



Mountain Houseleek, *Sempervivum montanum*, grows on the drier, rocky screes of the Queyras



Livelong Saxifrage, *Saxifraga paniculata*, is frequent. It is a stem with white flowers emerging from a finely toothed basal rosette of leaves. Found on rocky places to 3000m



Cobweb Houseleek, *Sempervivum arachnoideum*, also like drier screes. The base is covered in a web

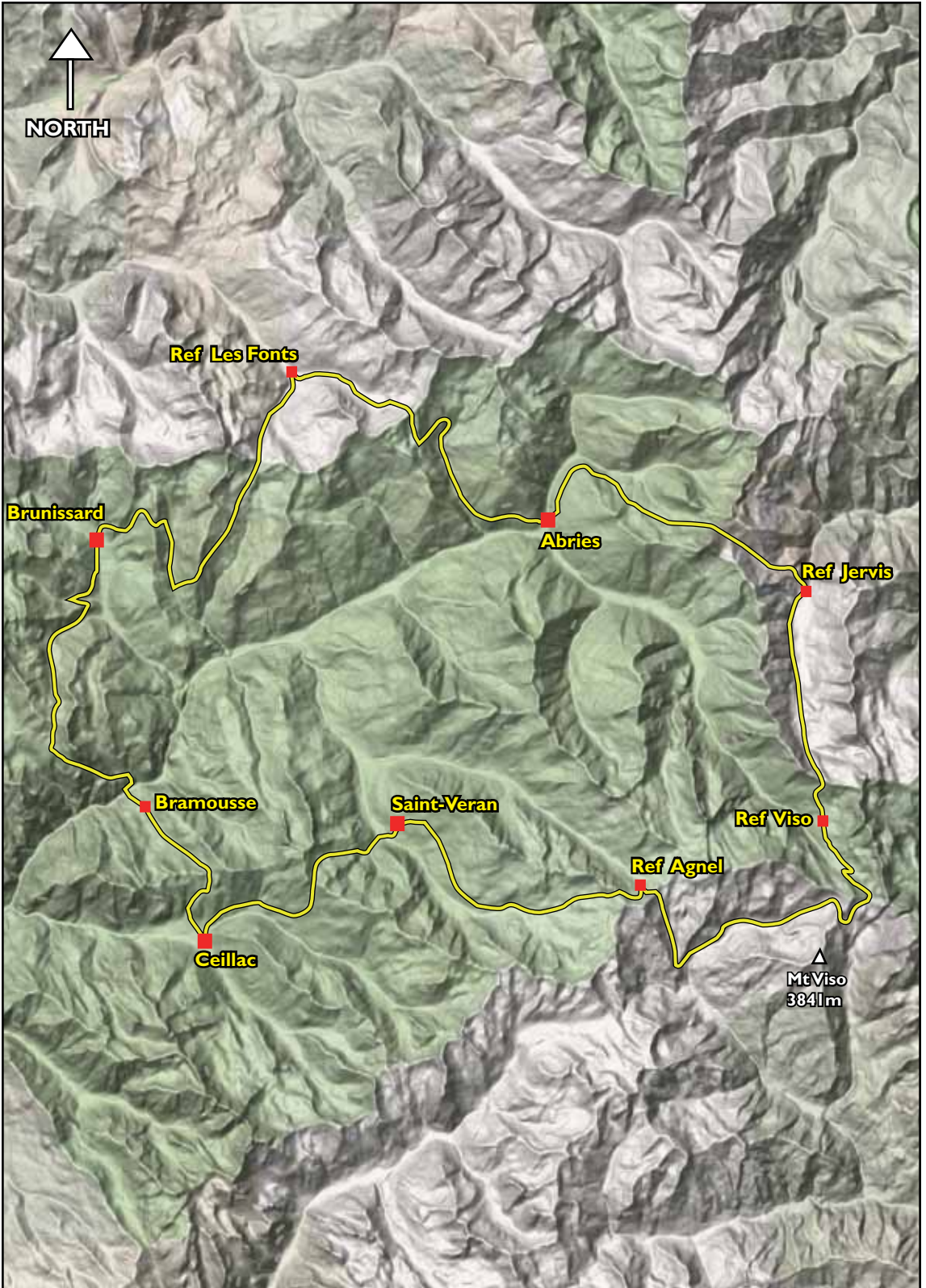
The Queyras circuit is a charming and easy trek, yet it is also very rewarding. The region is bounded on 3 sides by mountains and the final side is guarded by a deep gorge so it has remained relatively isolated through the centuries. This has helped preserve the strong pastoral and transhumant tradition still practiced here. Once a road was built in the gorge, then the main valley of the Queyras was more accessible. There have been recent, tasteful developments in the main artery of the Guil Valley and up the rural side valleys.

This nine day trek takes in many of the side valleys where there are characterful villages and towns, which now are sustained by tourism. However, the trek also passes over many alpine meadows and through many quiet larch forests as it makes its way over some 11 cols or passes as it goes from one side valley to the next. While the mountains here might not be as high or spectacular as the neighbouring Ecrins or Vanoise Massifs they are very scenic and full of flora and fauna, including

wolves and ibex. There is also the very impressive Mt Viso, 3841m, which stands head and shoulders above everything in the Queyras.

Accommodation is in hotels, hostels or gites in the towns and villages where there are often smaller rooms, and in 3 or 4 refuges, where there are small dormitories to share. All these serve excellent food but there are also shops every other day in the villages. Outside the main season from June to September the refuges have simple self-catering accommodation. During the peak months of July and August it is imperative to book as this lovely area is popular with French tourists.

There are 3 large scale 1:25,000 maps covering the area but perhaps the best is the 1:60,000 ING map Sheet 06. Queyras – Ubaye, which has the entire area on a sheet. There are a few guidebooks but the Cicerone guide book "Tour of the Queyras" by Alan Castle is an adequate, but fussy guide, to this French Shangri-La. ISBN: 9781852845100



Map of the Queyras. The tour starts in Ceillac and then goes anti-clockwise for 9 days. Ceillac, Saint Veran, Abries and Brunissard are charming towns linking the comfortable refuges. Every day involves the crossing of a col, a walk across marmot meadows and a saunter through quiet larch forests.





Day 1. Descending down the east side of Col des Estrongues, 2651 m, after climbing up from Ceillac. The valley beyond, Vallee l'Aigue Blanche, is one of the side valleys of the main Guil River valley which is the artery of the Queyras. The town of St Veran is out of view on the picture's right, behind the round ridge



Day 2. Looking back down to St Veran from the dry course of the ancient Grand Canal which contours across the hillside above the Vallee l'Aigue Blanche below for a good 6 km. The Col des Estrongues from yesterday's walk is just out of view to the very left of the picture



Day 1. The tour of the Queyras starts by the old church in the centre of Ceillac. It lies on the main lane in the old part of the town. It is typically decorated with a sundial and stands in a small square with a water fountain



Day 1. The mountain hamlet of Rabinoux lies 4 km east of Ceillac and just consists of two barns. There was more here but an avalanche some 30 years ago destroyed everything else and it has never been rebuilt.



Day 1. The main street in St Veran is very well preserved and is lined on both sides with traditional buildings. In the distance is the main church of this charming town.



Day 1. The buildings of St Veran, and indeed throughout the Queyras region, are roofed in large slate stones or more commonly wooden planks. The walls are generally made of logs

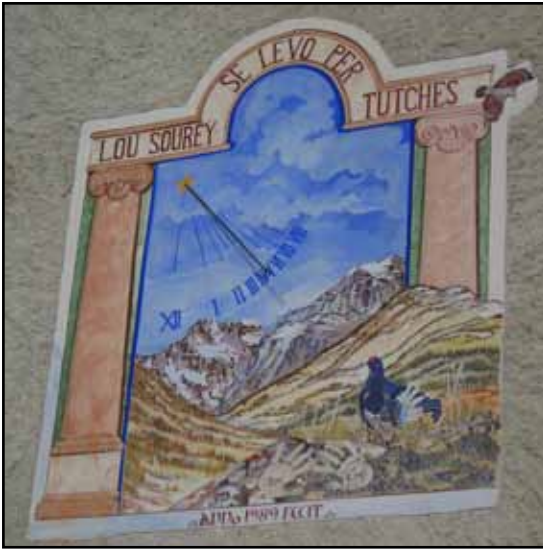


Day 1. Water fountains are a common feature in all the town and villages in the Queyras. They are always found in the square and together with the church form the spiritual centre of the town



Day 3. Looking from the top of Col Agnel down the Vallee Agnelle into Italy, and the town of Chianale. It is thought this was the pass which Haninbal crossed with his elephants





Day 2. A sundial in St Veran showing the surrounding mountains and a black grouse. St Veran is supposed to have 36 sundials painted on buildings. This one was painted in 1989 by the well known fresco artist Remi Potey



Day 2. Here is another Remi Potey sundial from 2004 on the main street in St Veran showing a farmer cutting hay in a high alpine meadow. All the towns and villages in the Queyras have sundials but St Veran is the sundial capital of France



Day 3. After crossing the Passo della Losetta, 2870m, a great view across small valley to the 1000m north face of Mount Viso, 3841m, suddenly unfolds. The path descends into this flower filled valley and then skirts the base of the mountain before heading left over Col de Vallanta, 2815m, and into France again.



Day 3. Looking from the bridge on the small road descending from Col Agnel into Italy. This view is up the pastoral Soustra Valley to Passo della Losetta, 2870m in the far distance, which leads over to the base of Mt Viso.



Day 3. Milk cows in the meadows around the summer buildings at Grange Bernard. The whole of this lush valley is filled with the sound of cow bells in the summer months, as farmers drive their cows up here to graze on the abundant grass



Day 3. Peacock-eye pink, *Dianthus pavonius*, is common in clusters in the upper meadows of the Queyras, where it can be found growing in gravelly meadows and scree up to 3000m



Day 3. Edelweiss, *Leontopodium alpinum*, likes grassy or rocky slopes, especially in limestone areas. It is not common, but can be found up to 3000m the Queyras, where it flowers in the late summer



Day 3. On the way up to Col de Vallanta and the border with France again. The view beyond is down the Vallanta Valley where the Refuge Vallanta lies beside the lake at the foot of Mt Viso



Day 3. From Col de Vallanta the route drops back into France again and descends quite steeply down to Lac Lestio. The Ref du Viso lies just beyond the lake in the green meadows





Day 3. Alpine ibex, *Capra ibex*, is an iconic wild goat found throughout the Alps. The ridged, heavy, horns of the males can reach a metre in length. They are excellent climbers and retreat to sheer cliffs if threatened. During the summer they are found up to 3300m in high rocky meadows, but sometimes the males can be seen on steep rocky ground in the upper larch forests. They can live for up to 15 years.



Day 4. Looking back up Pellice Valley to Col Selliere, 2834m, from a chalet in the pastoral summer hamlet of Partia d'Amunt. This hamlet is still much used in the summer and the sound of cow bells rings out in the surrounding larch forests. Just down the valley from here is the larger summer hamlet of Pra which is also a traditional farming centre and is where the charming Refuge Jervis is sited





Day 4. On the way down from Col Selliere the route crosses back into Italy and passes the idyllic Lago Lungo. Reflected in it's calm waters is Monte Granero, 3170m. near the lake is the Ref Granero which is run by the Club Alpino Italiano



Day 4. Ref Granero 2377m is superbly located at the top of the Pellice valley and enjoys perfect views down the valley to the pastoral hamlets of Pra, where the Refuge Jervis can just be seen with the naked eye



Day 5. After leaving Reg Jervis the trail climbs through larch covered hillside to the north west and passes some small summer farms. From here it traverses through more forest carpeted with dense clusters of Alpenrose, *Rhododendron ferrugineum*, as it climbs up towards the Col d'Urine and the French border.





Day 5. The small Bergerie des Pierre Ecrites is a pastoral cabin hidden in the larch woods, where the shepherd would have stayed, The woods here are lush and just above them the open meadows offer excellent grazing for cows and sheep.



Day 5. The small town of Abries lies in the Guil Valley where a side valley enters it. It is quite a traditional town with many old buildings, some of which have been converted into hotels or gites, and others into shops.



Day 8. The larch forest between Brunissard and Col de Furfande is typical of the larch forests in the Queyras. These deciduous trees let in enough light during the summer months to allow for a lush carpet of grass and blueberries which in turn provides good grazing and shelter for sheep and cattle.



Day 6. The climb from Abries, 1540m, to Col de Malrif, 2830m, is long but is broken up into a number of sections. As you gain height a marvellous view of the Queyras unfolds and even Mt Viso can be seen in the distance



Day 6. Lac Grand Laus lies at 2580m just on the south side of Col de Malrif. It is the largest of a cluster of alpine lakes. The view beyond the lake is to the highest mountains in the Queyras National Park, which lie to the south of Ceillac.



Day 7. The descent from Col du Tronchez, 2347m, goes down a steep ravine and then traverses over scree slopes to a saddle between the mountain and the knoll marked on the map as 2056m.



Day 8. Initially the descent from Col du Furfande is gentle and takes you down to a high mountain shelf with a refuge on it. After this shelf there is a merciless further 1100m of descent to the valley



Day 9. Bramousse is a charming hamlet of some 15 houses and barns, most of which are lived in. There is an excellent gîte here which serves fresh food from its large vegetable garden



Day 9. High above the hamlet of Bramousse is a collection of 15 chalets which the farmers of Bramousse use in the summer months to tend their livestock and to cut hay for the winter



# The Queyras

Day	Start	Finish	Km	Up	Down	Time	General
1	Ceillac	St-Veran	14	1150	790	7	Walk NE through the traditional village of Ceillac passing stone and wood buildings. After a km the route leaves the road and heads up through small forest to a track. The route follows this track for a km to the pastoral summer hamlet of Le Villard then continues for another km to a couple of further chalets in hay fields. Then start a long 800m zig-zag climb through scant larch forest and grassland to Col des Estronques, 2651m. From here there is a great view over the 3000m peaks to the south of the Queyras National Park. A better view could be had by a ½ hour walk up Tete de Jacquette, 2757m. From the col there is a long descent down easy slopes to the edge of the forest. St-Veran soon appears on the slopes of the far side of the main valley below. The path continues down through lovely larch forest crossing some eroded landslide areas until it reaches the floor of the main valley at 1850m. It is now just a short ½ hour hike up meadows and the farming hamlet of Le Raux to reach the charming and relatively unspoilt village of St-Veran. This village has a number of gites, inns and hotels dotted amongst its old farmhouses, barns, beautiful church and old shops, all adorned with characteristic sundials.
2	St-Veran	Ref Agnel	14	850	310	6	There is a new route which starts above the main church and climbs for 200m across grassy meadows to an old water channel, called le Grand Canal. This route has now taken over as the main Tour de Queyras route (G58) from the previous one which descended down to the valley and then followed the valley up, as the views are better and there is less ascent. Once at le Grande Canal follow its level course south and then east for 5km across meadows full of marmots and the occasional larch copse. Eventually the valley floor with the old route comes up to meet the course of le Grande Canal at the small Chapelle de Clausis. Near this chapel the route up to Col de Chamoussiere starts its easy 500m climb. Set off up across meadows until the grass is replaced by scree at the col, 2884m. There is a good view here, but a better one can be had by the 140m, 1 hour return ascent to the summit of Pic de Caramantran, which lies on the Italian border. From the col there is a hours descent down a scree filled bowl to the Ref Agnel, which is visible from the Col de Chamoussiere itself. The large wooden refuge lies beside the small mountain road over to Italy, which is part of the next day's walk over the Col Agnel.
3	Ref Agnel	Ref Viso	19	1170	1280	8	Head up a path to Col Agnel crossing the road twice. Descend down the Italian side to the east of a rivulet, cross the road and continue down steeply, east of this rivulet, to the main valley floor. Descend pastures and marmot meadows for 2 easy km keeping west of the stream and road until the two meet at a bridge. On the uphill side of the bridge a steep track descends into the Soustra Valley. Once in the valley head up for an hour to the buildings and meadows at Granges Bernard. Beyond the sound of cow bells diminish as the path climbs the narrowing valley for an hour until the meadows turn to stone fields. The final hour is across stony ground which steepens towards col Passo della Losetta, 2870m and a great view to the 1000m north face of Mount Viso, 3841m. From the pass the route heads south to Ref Vallanta, but after 10 minutes it forks to the east and contours round the craggy hill for a short flower filled hour to reach the Col de Vallanta, 2815m, and the French border. Bouquetin or Ibex are frequently here. The descent down the north side of the col is initially rocky to the cobalt blue Lac Lestio. From the lake it is a gentle ½ hour up across meadows to the Ref du Viso, 2460m.
4	Ref Viso	Ref Willy Jervis	11	430	1150	5.5	Leave the refuge and traverse north across the hillside for a km until the path forks north of the stream, with both forks going to passes over to Italy. Take the one heading north to Col Selliere. It is a good hour's climb up the 400m to the rocky col, which is the France-Italy border. The view both south to Mt Viso and north down the Pellice Valley is superb. Some 8km and 1150m below is the pastoral hamlet of Pra, where you can just make out Ref Willy Jervis, among the chalets and barns. The initial descent into Italy is steep on loose schist, but after ½ hour the path eases. Soon you can glimpse the cobalt Lago Lungo, and the very quaint and well appointed Ref Granero beside it. In ½ hour you reach this idyllic spot. From Ref Granero there is a good path descending down azelea covered hillside and then larch forest for a good hour as you descend 600m down onto the flat valley floor where the sound of cowbells will undoubtedly greet you at the first pastoral hamlet of Partia d'Amunt. From here a track heads along the valley floor through open larch forest for an easy 3km until you reach the hamlet of Pra and the large comfortable Ref Willy Jervis, full of Italian charm, just beyond.
5	Ref Willy Jervis	Abries	15	830	980	6.5	The path to Col d'Urine leaves the track just 100m north of the refuge. It zig-zags up the larch covered hillside for ½ hour to old stone bergeries. The route continues up the spur and then traverses the hillside covered in larch and azelea. The traverse continues until you reach the stream, Comba del Urina. Follow this stream up for 1½ hours climbing some 500m up rocky, loose, but not steep ground, until you reach Col d'Urine, 2525m, on the French Italian border. The descent down the west, French, side into France is easy and pleasant. The first km goes down marmot meadows to the small huts of Bergerie Sous Roche. Then cross to the south side of the southern rivulet and enter larch woods at 2200m. There are a few paths here and a large scale map is needed to find the smaller path which traverses gently down across glades and the open larch forest to the idyllic log cabin at Bergerie des Pierres Ecrites. After this cabin the path drops down to the larger path above the main valley floor. Once on the main path it is an easy 6km through tranquil larch woods, full of black squirrels, as you curve round the hillside above the village of Le Roux for the final descent into the comfortable and charming town of Abries.

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Day	Start	Finish	Km	Up	Down	Time	General
6	Abries	Les Fonts de Cervieres	15	1230	750	7.5	Cross to the west side of town and start up the path with 12 shrines to stages of the crucifixion leading up to the floodlit chapel on the hill. The path now traverses across the hill for a good 2km climbing slowly up above the River Guil. Soon the path heads NW up a side valley to reach the semi ruined hamlet of Le Malrif where there is a restored chapel. For the next 3 km the path goes through lovely larch woods and glades of meadow to reach the tiny Bergerie at Les Bertins. It is here the path starts to climb in earnest and path zig-zags up the grassy hillside for the next 2 hous gaining over 500m in height to reach the azure blue Lac Laus lake. There are splendid views from here over the ridges crossed and mountains passed during the last 5 days including Mount Viso. It is another hour along the lakeside and then up the final 300m to the Col du Malrif where a superb view of the Ecrins Massif, with all its peaks spread out and covered in glaciers. The descent down the west side of the col is initially steep but soon reaches gentle meadows. These continue for 5km as the path passes through them gently descending to the hamlet of Les Font de Cervieres, where there is a superb gite on the upper edge of the forest.
7	Les Font de Cervieres	Brunissard	18	1140	1370	7.5	Head due south into the open grassy valley. Climb slowly for a few km and then more steeply up a moraine mound, to gain the final easy slopes up to Col de Peas, 2629m. The path gently descends into the valley for 2km, but then veers off up the west flank traversing the often steep hillside for 2km until it enters the upper larch forest. The path crosses the forested spur and begins the long zig-zag descent down through lush larch woods to the hamlet of Souliers, 1844m, where there is a gite. From here it is a relatively easy 3 hours to the village of Brunissard. Take the track heading north up the small valley for quick hour to the lovely Bergerie de Souliers. Here the track forks and the upper one climbs through small pastures and larch for a further quick hour to reach the sandy Col de Tronchet, 2347m. On the west side of the col there is a choice of paths, but the quickest is marked as the GR58. It goes down into the bowl to the west of the col before entering the larch forest and dropping quickly down the east side of a ravine with the small stream, Torrent du Pinet, flowing in its depths. The path zig-zags down before traversing across a couple of scree slopes to pass to the north of a pinnacle of rock marked as 2056m. From this deep saddle the path descends through woods into the Ravin du Partus in limestone terrain. Pass a recreational climbing area before spilling into the valley just to the east of Brunissard village, where there is a good gite.
8	Brunissard	Bramousse	19	1140	1480	8.5	Walk down to the bottom of the village where the path crosses to the west side of a small stream. It then contours through bright larch woods for 3km, passing over La Chalp village and goes into a deep ravine. After the ravine it crosses a wooded spur over Arvieux village and then drops into another ravine with a track in it. From here head south up past the small Cabane du Plan du Vallon as the path and track keep crossing each other. Soon after the path climbs out of the larches and climbs towards the Col de Furfande, 2500m, where the track terminates in a small parking area. The Refuge de Furfande can be seen below among some pastoral chalets. It is a short ½ hour down to it. From this basic refuge the path skirts east round the lip of a bowl and then starts a long descent into the drier large forests again. There is good 1½ descent down to the charming hamlet of Les Escoyeres, and then another 45min down hairpins to the Guil River on the valley floor to complete the 1300m descent. Walk ½km downstream on the busier tarmac road, cross the bridge over the River Guil and then begin a ½ hour ascent up to the lower houses and barns of Bramousse hamlet. It is a short jaunt up through this lovely hamlet to the excellent gite at the top.
9	Bramousse	Ceillac	10	800	630	4.5	Leave the gite and head up past a few more barns and vegetable gardens of Bramousse to find the path heading up through the pine forest on the edge of the meadow. After a quick ½hour the path leaves the meadow altogether and climbs through the mixed conifers for another ½hour to the glades at the lower end of the summer transhumant hamlet of Chalet de Bramousse. It is an easy ½ hour past these quaint cabins and surrounding meadows before you enter the larch woods for the final easy hours climb up to the Col de Bramousse, 2251m, the last of the uphill sections. The descent down the south side is initially easy with the path falling gently through the upper larch forest, which is sparse and open here. However at 2000m the path veers west and plunges steeply down a series of zig-zags in the mixed, and then pine, forests. An hour after the col the path finally relents and spills you into the upper houses of Ceillac. It is still a good km walk through the newer chalets of this large village to reach the charming street of the older quarter, where there is a comfortable gite waiting.
			135	8740	8740	61	