

Trail Guide



A travers les âges



Neolithic hunters

BÉLESTA

Level

3h10 - 8,9 km  340 m



GPS Coord. 42°42'56.2"N 2°36'28.4"E



Via D117 (Perpignan/Foix axis) to Estagel and D612/D38 (Bélesta) or N116 (Millas) and D612/D38 (Bélesta). Sign on the D21, in front of the hotel (fountain wall) or rue des loisirs after the car park **P** near the playground.

The prehistoric cave and the Castle-Museum of Bélesta reminds us that human beings have been settled here for a long time. They have developed and fought to preserve this land. This beautiful, varied and sportive route will take you across traces of the past, through tracks and paths which cross the middle of a marked relief: climbs, descents, fast or technical portions, etc. This track offers enjoyment, exercise and sumptuous landscapes.

Heritage

In 1983, the town decided to explore a cave well known to the shepherds of Bélesta. They discovered a significant Neolithic collective burial site (about 30 people). Under the direction of Françoise Claustre, archaeologists continued the excavations and uncovered the remains of the Neolithic and the Metal Ages habitat. The municipal team then decided to rehabilitate the medieval castle so it could become a museum of

Prehistory. This opened to the public in 1992. The museum features objects from the cave, including a fine collection of 28 intact pottery items. This series of ceramics is exceptional for its age and state of conservation. Visitors can see objects made and used by our human ancestors in the Neolithic and the Bronze Age. Several life-size reconstructions recreate various aspects of the cave: the collective burial site, life scenes, research techniques.



What to see on the way



© Commune de Bélesta

Q1

THE ANCIENT BORDER

The village is the symbol of the ancient border between the kingdoms of France and Aragon. The boundary markers date back to the Treaty of Corbeil in 1258, and then the Treaty of the Pyrenees in 1659. The landscape is marked by other remnants of this period, such as the signal towers, for example.

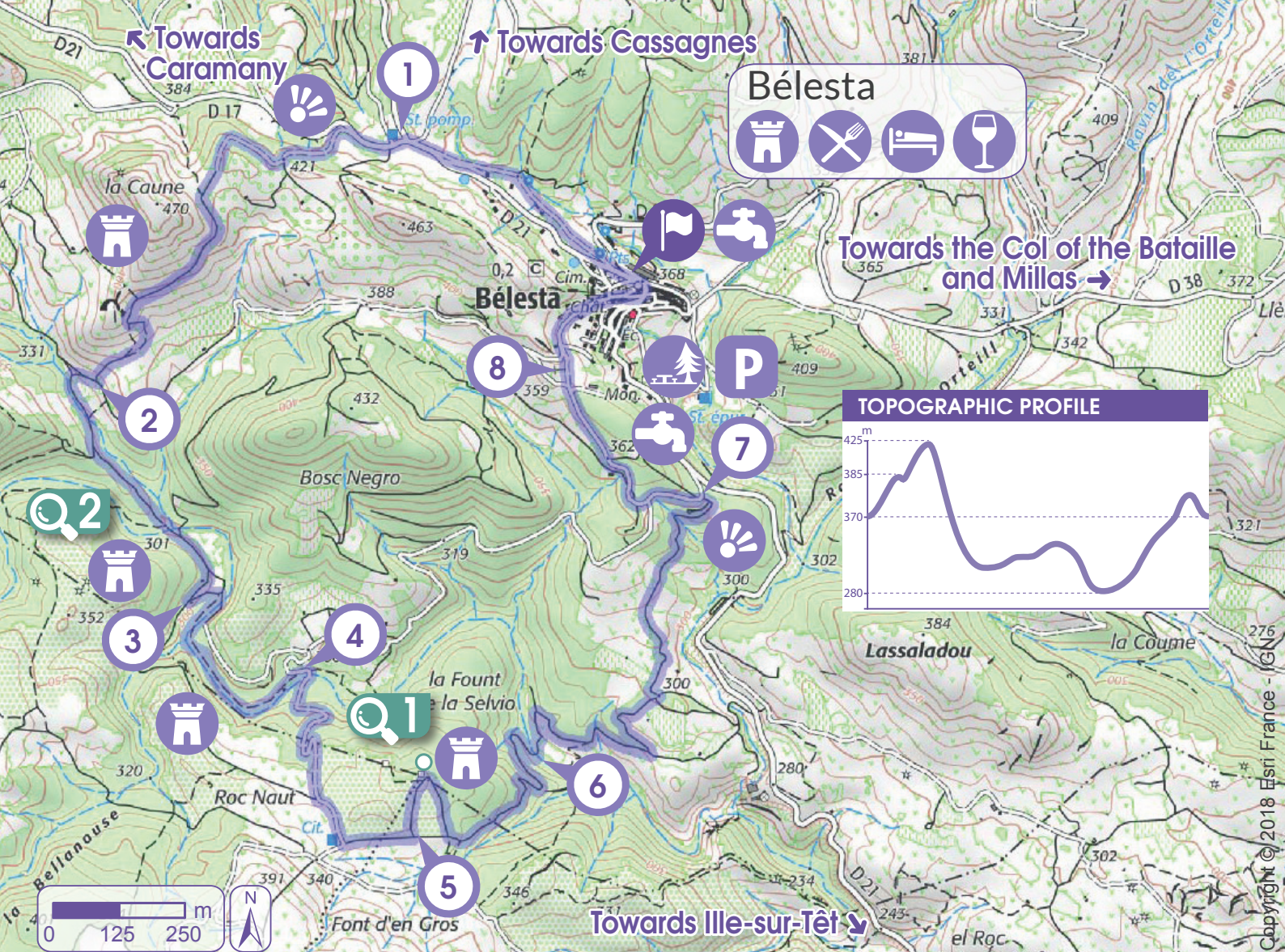


© Commune de Bélesta

Q2

THE OLD ICE PIT

This small structure must have been an ice pit, probably later transformed into a brick kiln. The packed snow was lowered down in bales of insulating straw, which was then very firmly pressed down in these brick constructions. The snow turned into ice, used during hot weather.



CAPTION



STARTING POINT



STEP BY STEP



PARKING



INFORMATION BOARD



DRINKING WATER



PICNIC



LOOKOUT



HERITAGE



RESTAURANT



ACCOMMODATION



CELLAR



RED TRAIN STATION



Starting point: Set out from the information board located near the water point opposite the hotel. Follow → the D21 towards Caramany for 50 metres, then take the tarmac road on the → and continue ↑. At the crossroads, on the right, with the "Pic Aubeill roundtrip" trail, continue ↑ upwards to reach the Col de Bélesta, where you will have a superb panorama of the Fenouillèdes. Go past the tarmac road, to the right, which leads to the "Moli del Vent" dolmen.



17 min - 0,8 km: At the junction of the main Départementale roads (Col de Bélesta), turn ← to follow the D17 200 m towards Caramany, then climb ← onto a track. Cross

the plateau and go down the track to reach the "Caune de Bélesta" (to visit it, go to the Castle-Museum). Then take the path that goes down on your ← to join a track below (steep descent).



51 min - 2,35 km: Take the road on the → for 50 m, then take a sharp ← at the hairpin bend. Further down, at the intersection with a path on the right, continue ↑. Cross the ford and leave the track on the left to continue ↑. At the fork, turn →. Continue past the ruins of an old ice pit.



1h08 - 3,3 km: Take a sharp ← and head towards the river. From here, the itinerary follows the "Water Course" trail (thematic panels). Turn before the ford to join the path

which borders the right bank. It rejoins the left bank later. After 600 m, it connects with a trail that goes down to the river.

4

1h21 - 4 km: Cross the ford and wind your way up this trail. When you reach a large flat area, take the path on the ←.

5

1h39 - 5 km: At the crossroads, take a ← to head up to the top of the hill. At the top, take a tiny detour to see an old "border post". Return to the path and go down it, and at the crossroads, turn → to head over to the mimosa grove, where you will see a remarkable juniper tree (behind the grove). Head back to the intersection and continue on the track that winds downwards.

6

2h - 6 km: At the foot of the hill, at the level of the ford, take the track which runs alongside the edge of the vineyard for 100 m. Then at the hairpin bend, take the path on the →,

followed by a sharp turn to the ←. Be careful! At the end of this climb (at the intersection), first turn ←, then → a little further on. Continue on the main track.

7

2h33 - 7,7 km: When you reach the terrace, enjoy the view over Bélesta. Follow the tarmac road to the ←. At the junction with another road, take the road on the → heading uphill. Turn → on the track that runs past the oratory.

8

2h47 - 8,4 km: Make your way back into the village of Bélesta via the tarmac road on the →. Turn → under the vaults, then, when you reach the church, take the road winding downhill. Walk past the Castle-Museum. Head to Bélesta's main street. Then turn ←, back to the starting point.

Flag icon

3h10 - 8,9 km: End of trail.



Also worth a visit



The village of Bélesta

THE HISTORY OF BÉLESTA

Here is a brief history from 4500 BCE to the present day, which retraces the history of Bélesta through the ages:

4500 BCE (Neolithic): first remains of human presence and collective burial site at La Cauna

2500 BCE (Copper Age): moli del Vent dolmen.

AD 842 (Carolingian Period): first mention of the Domaine de Lièbres (villare libarium).

11th century: Saint-Barthélémy-de-Jonquerolles, the first site of the village, belongs to the trans-Pyrenean county of Besalù.

11th and 12th centuries: because of the political and religious conflicts between France and Aragon, the development of the village (Bel Estar) took place at its current location, around the castrum of Riberach. Fortification of the castle by Saint-Louis in the 13th century.

1258: treaty of Corbeil. Bélesta is annexed to the kingdom of France and becomes a border village, since the Roussillon still belonged to the kingdom of Aragon.

1659: the Treaty of the Pyrenees brings the border further south to its present location.

1790: the Département des Pyrénées-Orientales is established by grouping the Catalan cantons with three cantons of Fenouillèdes, including that of Latour-de-France which includes Bélesta.

19th century: the village of more than 450 inhabitants lives from dry Mediterranean agriculture, cereals, vines, olive trees (numerous remains of terraces and capitelles, traditional stone huts), goat and sheep breeding (several sheepfolds were found scattered across the area) and rural crafts.

20th century: the monocultural tradition of wine culture developed (establishment of the cooperative cellar in 1925), until the crisis of the most recent decades.

Today: Bélesta is a tourist village thanks to its Castle-Museum of Prehistory, its historic village centre, its hotel and gastronomic restaurants, its arts and crafts and its numerous hiking trails. For several years now, the village's private wineries have enjoyed a revival thanks to the excellence of its terroir. www.musee-belesta66.fr



Neolithic pottery



WEATHER 32 50

www.meteofrance.fr



EMERGENCY 112

SAMU (ambulance) 15

FIREFIGHTERS 18

HIKING TRAILS

| | PEDESTRIAN PR | PEDESTRIAN GR | MOUNTAIN BIKE | |
|---------------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|-----------------|
| Following the trail | | | | Wrong direction |
| Turning left | | | | Turning right |

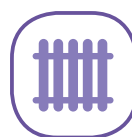
HIKING CODE OF CONDUCT



Stay on the marked paths and trails.



Do not litter, take your rubbish away with you.



Respect fences, close gates after you.



Be respectful of the people living along the trails and of other nature users.



Be respectful of crops and wildlife.



Be silent and discreet, observe the fauna and flora without touching them.



Observe instructions during traditional hunting periods - www.fdc66.fr.



Respect the facilities, signalling and markings provided.



Do not build fires; do not smoke in the woods or near edges and undergrowth.



RECOMMENDATIONS

- Avoid going alone.
- Leave your itinerary with a friend or relative.
- Do not overestimate your capabilities: plan your route and select it according to your physical abilities.
- Do not forget the map of the area (preferably IGN Top 25), and a compass.
- If possible, plan a fall-back solution in case of a problem (refuge or another route).
- Avoid leaving in bad weather and adapt your route to the seasons (violent thunderstorms in summer and autumn).
- In the event of a thunderstorm, avoid using the telephone and electrical devices, do not take shelter under trees, do not cross waterways (even dry ones).



EQUIPMENT

- Even in summer, wear hiking clothes suitable for all weather conditions, walking shoes adapted to the terrain and to your feet, a backpack, essential accessories (water bottle, knife, first aid kit, flashlight, compass, hat) and walking sticks.
- Remember to take enough water, avoid drinking water from streams.
- Pack high-energy foods, rich in protein, carbohydrates and fructose such as cereal bars, fruit pastilles, dried fruit, etc.