

Le Puig Neulòs

Rated: Difficult. Climb: 1100 metres. Duration: 6 hours without stops.

Follow: Route No. 12

Points of interest: “**Le Puig Neulòs**” or “**Pic Néoulous**” is the highest point of the Albères massif. It is at 1256 m and marks the frontier between France and Spain. On the top you will see the stone obelisque which commemorates Manel, a well known shepherd of the Albères and which is in strong contrast with the modern TV relay station next to it. There is a superb view from here over the plain of Roussillon, bordered by the Mediterranean, with the Pyrenees and the Spanish plain of Ampurdán (Empordà).

From the Tourism Office, Walkers’ Centre, return to the church at the old village. With your back to the church door, go up the “**Rue de L’Eglise**” and at the end, take the footpath with a small stream on the left: this footpath leaves the village. On the right hand is the old windmill - “**Moulin de la Pave**”. Shortly you come to fine shady spring – “**Fontaine des Oiseaux**”. The footpath then goes uphill following a half buried pipe. Arriving at a fork, go right and immediately on the right will be a small reservoir at the end of which is a crossroads with a signpost. Take the path towards “**Dolmen-Pic Neulos – Col de L’Ullat**”. To the left of the footpath is a small watering canal that you follow until you arrive at a main pathway crossroads where you can hear the river below.

Then, at the main signposted crossroads, take the left route. Notice further on the wooden boundary marker in blue and white. The path has yellow markings and passes through low scrub, climbing all the time. You come to a new signpost; a stone on the ground has writing in yellow; take the path to the left.

The pathway comes out onto a track where you take the right hand route. After a further 200m you will come to an old ruined farmhouse on your left. Immediately after this ruin come off the track and take a path to the left. This route is through scrubland which becomes very gullied. At the next pathway intersection, take the left fork; the pathway runs alongside a fence and the route continues to be very gullied.

You come to a crossing of paths; to the right there is a fence and a small metal gate, to the left a route marked with a yellow cross. Take the path straight ahead. This path climbs steeply under chestnut trees; keep following the yellow markers (you will pass a black plastic pipe on the way). The pathway levels out bringing you to an intersection with a signpost. Take the left hand route which ascends and a few metres further on you come to a fork; go left to the Dolmen on the crest. From the Dolmen, the path climbs steeply and you come to an area of scrubland, then a beech wood before coming out onto a forest track. Cross over it and take in front of you a good path which leads off to the side; initially in a rocky area and then a beech wood before arriving at the “**Col de la Vaca Vella**” which is at 910m. A lovely area, where the crest separates the two valleys of Laroque and Sorède.

The upward path goes up the hillside through beech trees towards the “**Col de l’Artiguet**” which is at 1010 m and leads on to another forest track. Take this track on the right which leads you to an old orientation table. From here take the left hand path towards the “**Pic Neulos**”.

Pic NEULOS (1256 m). Here, descend in a westerly direction, either by the tarred road or by the crest which follows the French / Spanish boarder; here you will come across a small gate on your left which gives access to the snow pits. There is a sign there in Catalan - “**Pou de gel**”.

Go back up to the tarred road, and follow the sign for the GR 10. (which is a mountain route between Perthus and Banyul-sur-Mer). Take this road westerly and which goes along the crest in between the forest and descends to the “**Col de l’Ullat**”, where there is a picnic area and a small auberge. From the crest, take the road North towards Laroque and you will come across a spring (**Reina de las Fonts**), situated below the road. This spring is the departure point for the way back to Laroque and which has yellow track markers. The path descends rapidly through beech woods and crosses several forest tracks before coming close to the Laroque river where you cross at a ford. It also comes close to some ice pits and continues to descend towards the village.

You come to a passage between two rocks where in the past, shepherds used the narrow passage to count their animals. A few metres further on you come to a pathway crossing; this you passed about 30 minutes after you left Laroque village behind on the way up. Follow the path down which you took coming up and you will soon arrive in the village.
