

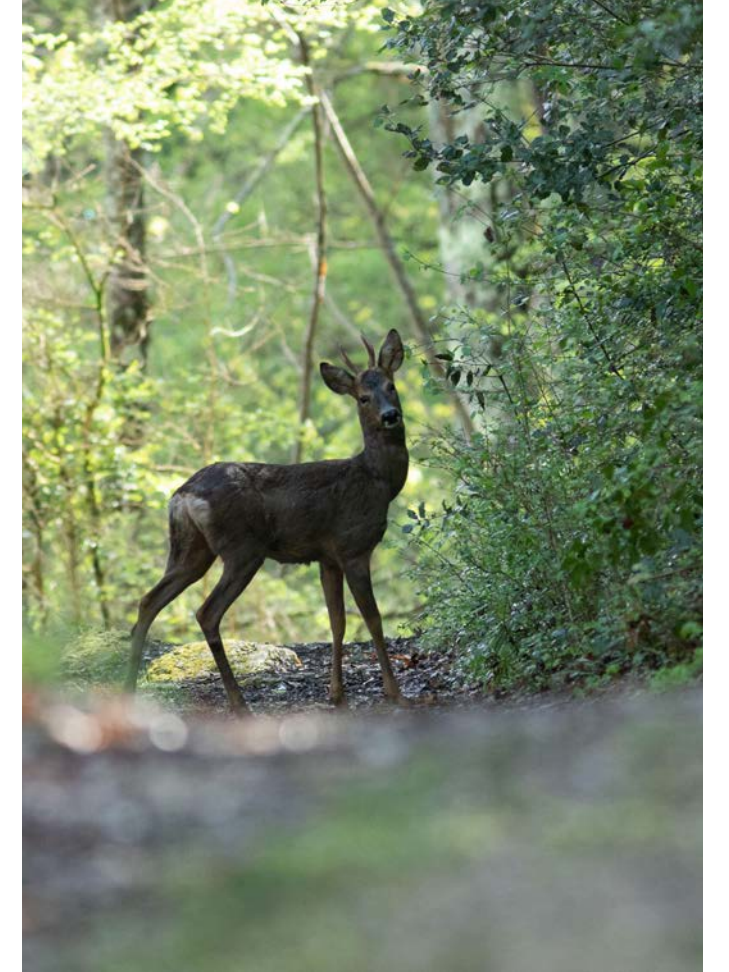


Apart from its sheer limestone walls and winding watercourse, the highlight of Galamus is the Saint Antoine Hermitage, a remote and difficult-to-access sanctuary founded in the late 14th century.

During the following quartet of stages (5–8), the trail winds past more impressive Cathar castles, namely Puilaurens and Puivert, as hikers transition from vineyards to high pastures and sweeping, forest-clad valleys. Highlights of this stretch include the enchanting villages of Caudiès de Fenouillèdes, Quirbajou, and Axat, the latter of which is a popular destination for water activities such as fly fishing, canoeing, and rafting. (Note: From Cucugnan at the end of stage 4 to Puivert at the finish of stage 8, hikers have the option of taking a northern variant of the Cathar Way. See Bonus Track for details.)

The ninth stage of the Cathar Way shines a spotlight on a much more recent historical period. During the Second World War, the hamlet of L'Escale (5 km/3.1 mi south of Puivert) was destroyed by German troops for its links to the "Maquis," the name given to rural guerrilla bands of French Resistance fighters. In memory of the Maquis' role during the conflict, the stone hut (Cabane du Maquis de Picausset) used as their regional base was reconstructed and can be visited by hikers via a short side trip from the main trail (see Map).

Just over 6 km (3.7 mi) south of L'Escale, the Cathar Way doglegs west towards the Plateau de Languerail. Arguably the >



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- ↑ The Lastours Castles are a group of four Cathar castles located near the town of Carcassonne—a short side trip north of our featured trail.
- The multitiered Peyrepertuse Castle is strategically perched on a limestone ridge.
- ↗ A surprise encounter on a lonely forest path.
- Gazing up at Montségur Castle, the most famous of the nine Cathar castles.

