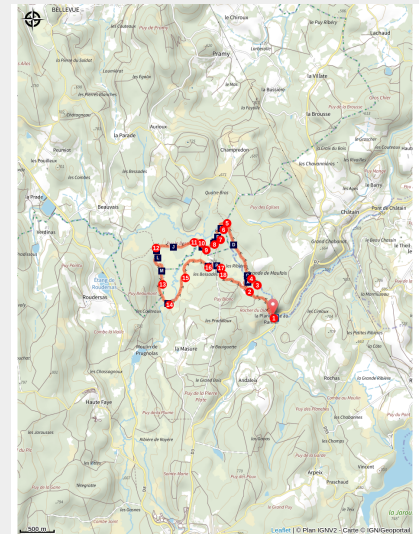


Discovery trail of the moors and peat bogs of Mazure: Large Loop

Lac de Vassivière



Landes et tourbières de la Mazure (bsavarypro)



Come and explore a large peat bog classified as a Natura 2000 site, rich in a remarkable heritage that is preserved.

This trail goes through different ecological settings that guarantee a rich biodiversity. In the past, moors and peat bogs have been used for various purposes. Today, it is important to look after these landscapes, too long neglected. This site combines both an exceptional natural heritage and a vernacular heritage testifying to the development of local life.

Useful information

Practice : Pedestrian

Duration : 3 h

Length : 7.1 km

Trek ascent : 107 m

Difficulty : Medium

Type : Loop

Themes : Discovery trail, Fauna et flora, Heritage site and architecture

Departure : Devil's Rock

Arrival : Devil's Rock

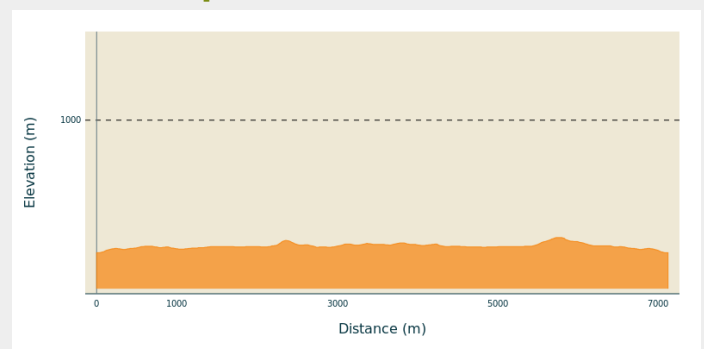
Markings : — Yellow markers

Cities : 1. Le Monteil-au-Vicomte

2. Royère-de-Vassivière

3. Saint-Pierre-Bellevue

Altimetric profile



Min elevation 632 m Max elevation 674 m

1. From the car park, head towards the footbridge over the stream, pass the barrier and follow the wide track to the next intersection.
2. Turn right, go through the woods up to a viewpoint with a bench. Continue a little in the woods, then go down towards the river to the ruins of a mill.
3. Follow the old headrace to the footbridges that allow the stream to be crossed.
4. Take the duckboards and continue straight on the path for a good distance.
5. At the intersection, take the left-hand path, which then branches off to the left at a footbridge and passes over the dike of an old pond.
6. Cross the river again and remember to close the gate. Climb the steep path that goes off to the right to reach a panoramic view.
7. Descend onto the heath to a turtle-shaped rocky outcrop.
8. Just past this rock, there are two options. The one presented here is the option of the large loop (another sheet presents a smaller loop: "Discovery trail of the moors and peat bogs of Mazure n°22: Small loop"). Take the path that goes straight down and then goes up towards the rocky outcrop that offers a beautiful view.
9. Go down to the bottom of the valley. Once you reach the peat bog, the path branches off to the right. The landscaping allows you to cross the wettest areas and reach a stone bridge (known as a "plank bridge").
10. Cross the river, turn left to reach a coniferous forest.
11. Continue straight through this forest for a long distance until you reach the intersection of four paths.
12. Turn left, go through the woods and then continue alongside the peat bog on a path lined with old low walls.
13. At the intersection with another trail, continue straight ahead until you reach some duckboards, then a small stone bridge that allows you to cross the river again.
14. Just after a small round trip to the right you can explore the remains of mills. Turn left, continue straight on a path that runs along the edge of the peat bog near the heather moors.
15. A large duckboard allows you to cross a very wet area (caution). The path continues straight ahead on the edge and then branches off to the right into a shrubby area and climbs up into a fenced meadow.



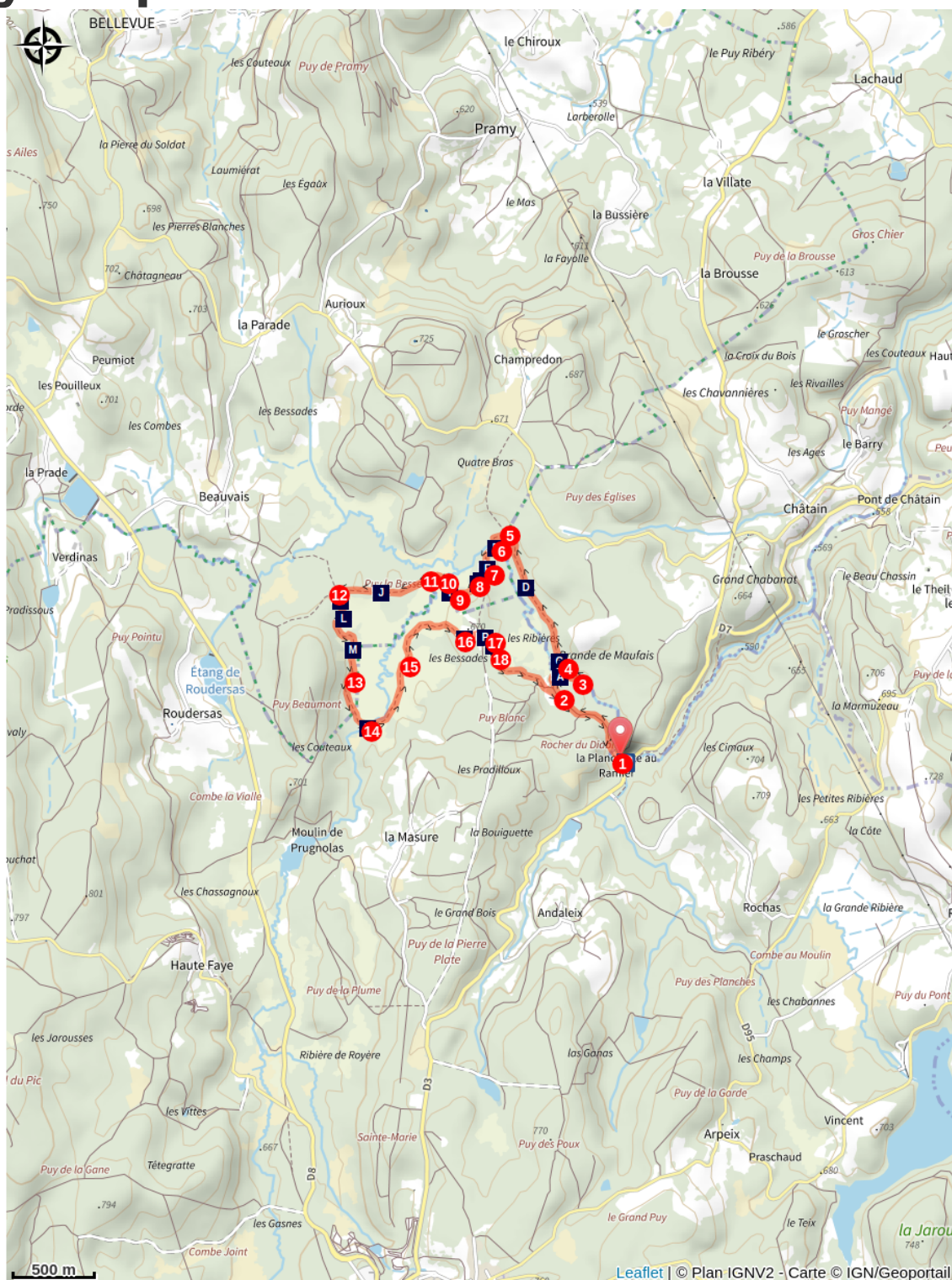
Rando Millevaches
NATURE EN LIMOUSIN


16. A fenced corridor makes it possible to cross this meadow in complete safety (beware, however, of apiary). At the end of the meadow, take the path opposite (slightly to the left) in a coniferous forest.
17. The path then continues through a leafy forest, branching off to the right to an old fishery.
18. Continue on the right, following the watercourse, until the next intersection with a wide path.
19. Take this path on the left, go on alongside the fenced pasture and continue straight on the path (taken on the outward journey) to return to the car park.



Rando Millevaches
NATURE EN LIMOUSIN

On your path...



 Peat bogs, a thousand-year-old treasure (A)

 Heath, pasture and traditions (C)

 The river, a whole ecosystem (E)

 Originally, a partnership (G)

 Century-old landscapes (I)

 Rare aquatic plants (B)

 A specific fauna (D)

 An exceptional ecological site (F)

 Biodiversity (H)

 Peat bogs and man (J)



Rando Millevaches
NATURE EN LIMOUSIN

07/15/2025 • Discovery trail of the moors and peat bogs of Mazure:
Large Loop •



La Mazure peat bog (K)



From plants to medicine (M)



The plank bridges (L)



Water and the mill (N)



Rando Millevaches
NATURE EN LIMOUSIN

07/15/2025 • Discovery trail of the moors and peat bogs of Mazure:
Large Loop •

All useful information

Advices

Trail not accessible to people with reduced mobility and strollers. Walking shoes/trainers strongly recommended. Please respect the tranquillity of the shepherd and his flock. Dogs prohibited from May to September (presence of roaming ewes and wild species not to be disturbed).

How to come ?

Access

From Royère de Vassivière, take the RD7 in the direction of the devil's gully.

Advised parking

Parking the foot of the Devil's Rock, near the RD7

Information desks

Bureau d'information touristique de Bourganeuf

Place du Champ de Foire, 23400
Bourganeuf

bourganeuf@tourisme-creuse-
sudouest.com

Tel : 05 55 64 12 20

[http://www.tourisme-creuse-
sudouest.com](http://www.tourisme-creuse-sudouest.com)

Bureau d'information du Lac de Vassivière

tourisme@lелacdevassiviere.com

Tel : 05 55 64 75 11

<http://www.lелacdevassiviere.com>



Rando Millevaches
NATURE EN LIMOUSIN

On your path...



Peat bogs, a thousand-year-old treasure (A)

The peat bog is located in a kind of very wet bowl (alveolus) fed by runoff and a stream. The ubiquitous water prevents the decomposition of organic matter (plant/animal), which explains the formation of peat.

Peat bogs provide many ecological services:

- they store large quantities of water which they purify and gradually release.
- they store carbon (in the peat).
- they are home to a specific fauna and flora that guarantee biodiversity.

Attribution : ©J.DAMASE/ADRT23



Rare aquatic plants (B)

Many plant species thrive only in acidic, stagnant, shallow freshwater environments. As the abundance of habitats containing all these characteristics is decreasing, the areas where these plants develop are generally areas where biodiversity is protected. The Mazure peat bog meets these different criteria and thus we see various rare plants evolving within it, such as the floating water plantain, the American shoreweed and the spiny-spored quillwort.

Attribution : ©Thierry Arbault



Heath, pasture and traditions (C)

In the 19th century, open environments dominated the landscape. With the rural exodus, afforestation has developed strongly either because of the abandonment of grazing activities or because of the planting of trees (often resinous). At the same time, livestock farming, essentially ovine (sheep), has become bovine (cows). Nevertheless, today, sheep farming is being revived in areas difficult to access and old plantations are being converted into heathland, such as on this site.

Attribution : ©OTCSO



Rando Millevaches
NATURE EN LIMOUSIN



A specific fauna (D)

Birds, butterflies, dragonflies, lizards... all find refuge on the Mazure site. They are often very shy and difficult to observe. The European nightjar, for example, is a migratory bird with a "dead leaf" colour plumage, and it nests on the ground. The marsh fritillary is a brown, orange and pale yellow butterfly that lays its eggs only on the small scabious plant. The sand lizard is insectivorous and lives in colonies in burrows. The black darter is a dragonfly characteristic of bogs.

Attribution : ©Jean-Marc Rabby



The river, a whole ecosystem (E)

An ecosystem is a set of interactions between living beings (animals, plants...) and their environment (geology, climate...). The river's water quality depends on the presence or absence of trees/shrubs on the banks, aquatic plants, fish, crustaceans, insects, as well as fungi and bacteria. They are links in a food chain that are essential to the life and health of rivers, but not only that. They are themselves a link in the biodiversity chain, in particular by serving as an ecological corridor.

Attribution : ©OTCSO



An exceptional ecological site (F)

This site benefits from a strong ecological and landscape interest which makes it part of a dynamic of protection both at the national level (listed site, classified as a Natural Zone of Ecological, Fauna and Flora Interest) and at the European level (Natura 2000 site). Nearly 120 species have been inventoried there, including 16 species protected at national and European level. In addition, 14 types of habitat are present on the Mazure site, 5 of which are considered to be decisive.

Attribution : ©OTCSO



Rando Millevaches
NATURE EN LIMOUSIN



Originally, a partnership (G)

This site largely belonged to the private company, EDF, which planned to make a hydroelectric reservoir. As early as 1996, aware of the ecological potential of the site, the Conservatoire d'Espaces Naturels began negotiations to buy the land. In 2005, the Community of Communes became the owner for a symbolic one Euro and arrived at an agreement with the Conservatory and the National Forestry Office to entrust them with its management. It is thanks to this partnership that the site now receives so much attention and is open to the public.

Attribution : ©J.DAMASE/PSC



Biodiversity (H)

The partnership set up aims to restore and maintain the site's biodiversity. Open environments (moors, grassland, peat bogs) have a natural tendency to become wooded. In order to preserve the mosaic of environments, which guarantees the diversity of the animal and plant species hosted, an action programme is being implemented in particular through Natura 2000: logging and extensive grazing.

Attribution : ©OTCSO



Century-old landscapes (I)

Granite is a ubiquitous component of the local landscape. A solid material, it has long been used by the inhabitants of the Creuse to build farms, mills, bridges, low walls, pond dikes, bollards, etc. The masons of the Creuse have thus acquired specific expertise which they have put to good use in several large towns. Plank bridges are one of those typical constructions consisting of a deck made of granite slabs cut from large blocks.

Attribution : ©J.DAMASE/PSC



Rando Millevaches
NATURE EN LIMOUSIN



Peat bogs and man (J)

The gates of Hell on Earth... that's how peat bogs were considered centuries ago! To dry them out and allow them to be cultivated or planted, many have been drained and thus lost their ecological functions. Since the 1980s, scientific progress has demonstrated the value of preserving them, particularly because of their role in the water cycle and in terms of biodiversity. Despite this reputation, peat bog soil (peat) was traditionally used as a fuel, replacing wood, which was a scarce commodity at the time.

Attribution : ©J.DAMASE/PSC



La Mazure peat bog (K)

Covering an area of 280 hectares, this site, located in the communes of Monteil au Vicomte, Royère de Vassivière and St-Pierre-Bellevue is one of the most remarkable in the region in terms of well-preserved habitats but also in terms of rare and protected species.

It abounds in a mosaic of environments (streams, peat bogs, moors and forest) and many rare animal and plant species worthy of preservation.

Attribution : ©bsavarypro



The plank bridges (L)

The plank bridge consists of two ends and a central pillar made of matching blocks that support granite beams. None of the construction is visible, the "planks" are just placed side-by-side. This type of bridge does not appear on the 1831 land registry map. It can be dated to the end of the 19th century. "Offerings" were a fee in kind or working hours, which each owner owed to the commune according to his property. Property tax has replaced this fee since the 1950s. The maintenance of bridges, roads or common lanes was ensured by this means.

Attribution : bsavarypro



Rando Millevaches
NATURE EN LIMOUSIN



From plants to medicine (M)

Several plants found here have medicinal and homeopathic properties. While their use is sometimes outdated, this is not always the case. Cranberries are now known for their berries, which we consume as Cranberry juice. The Stag's-horn clubmoss is a tiny fern that looks like a moss and has diuretic properties (beware it is protected, collection is prohibited). Mountain Arnica is well known for the treatment of bruises in the form of ointment.

Attribution : ©J.DAMASE/PSC



Water and the mill (N)

Man's use of the driving force of water to grind cereals has been a true symbol of progress. In the past, only human or animal power operated the "blood" mills. The old water mills of the Limousin had an important function in rural societies. On streams, mills were equipped with diversion canals (mill races) or small ponds to increase water flow. Bucket mills, with their horizontal wheel, were more common than vertical wheel mills.

Attribution : ©J.DAMASE/PSC