

The path : discovering oneself discovering the other

Whatever our starting point, it always takes us somewhere, often where we did not mean to go! On the way we enjoy discovering landscapes and making unexpected encounters, following in our forefathers' footsteps. Sent on our way to new life choices.

Warm thanks to our dedicated translators :
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Editorial

On the paths of our God

All the paths lead to He who is Love, Benevolence and Peace. History is waiting along a GR from Milhaud, Mérindol or Poët-Laval. God was walking with Protestants practising their faith in secret, He is with you now.

Across the plain from Bagnols-sur-Cèze or the villages from Aigues-Mortes to Corsica, you will be reminded that God is in the midst of those gathered in His Name.

Finally, if you start from Montpellier, Marseille or Lyon, you might ask yourself: 'which path does the Lord take to lead to Jesus Christ so many different people?'



Jean-Pierre JULIAN

On the road

A spiritual awakening

Michel Paret is a minister of the French Protestant United Church of France in Montargis and a dedicated walker. He describes how walking shapes his spiritual life.

In the Bible walking is being faithful to the Creator : «And I will lead the blind in a way that they do not know, in paths that they have not known I will guide them.» (Isaiah 42.16), and «What does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God ?» (Micah 6.8).

A break in rythm

Walking helps to appreciate the earth, and its rhythm. Anarchists, christians, philosophers have developed their thinking while walking. In life, as in the Bible, the road generates encounters

and changes. Life and society mould us, but walking a few days will make us shed our burdens, as Christians following Jesus.

Get liberty back

When you walk, seek silence and solitude, walking is akin to asceticism, it is a life's way. The first days are often uplifting, the next days will help us assess our body, our life choices, to know ourselves, to be born again. If you cannot go away, then read, walk in your mind. What I enjoy when I walk : the open spaces, water, bread, honey, my backpack, an old sweater that comforts me

into shedding my old habits and my worries.

Michel PARET,
pastor in Montargis (Loiret)



Protestant paths in our regions

Several paths in our regions are memories of the Protestant exile in the end of the 18th century.

On the Huguenots Trail is a cultural, European route which recreates the historic route followed by the Huguenots from Dauphiné on their way into exile in Switzerland and Germany after the Edict of Nantes was revoked (1685-1690). It encapsulates the Huguenots' cultural heritage, their historic departure into exile and their gradual integration into their countries of arrival.

The Camisard path

The Chemin Camisard follows partly the same route as Sur les pas des Huguenots. The main paths along its 140

km are the famous GR 70 and 67, as well as the paths across the Parc National des Cévennes. It runs in a circle, from Mialet to Mialet.

Luberon : following in the Vaudois' footsteps

At the end of the 15th Century, about 6000 peasants from the Alpine valleys of Dauphiné

and Piedmont were brought to the Luberon where villages were deserted and fields lying fallow. They succeeded in restoring the rural economy and found their place in society. But, until 1560, they were persecuted by the Inquisition for having joined the Reformation in 1532.



Amazing routes

The GR 20 in Corsica

The « GR 20 » is a mythical route, 200 km long, across mountain ranges. It joins Calenzana (in the north) to Conca (in the south). It is one of the most difficult and picturesque in Europe! The average hiker will spend 16 days on its difficult, sometimes steep, rocky tracks, until reaching the softer paths in the south.

The 4000 steps Slope

The 4000 steps Slope links Valleraugue to the Mt Aigoual Weather Observatory (1567 mts), the last staffed, and lived-in Weather Observatory in Europe. The former «postman's path» is nowadays the hikers' path. Situated in the Parc National des Cévennes, it crosses the Hort-de-Dieu Arboretum. It is 9,5 km long, with 1200 m drop.

Stevenson Trail

In August 1878, in order to recover from a failed love affair, Robert Louis Stevenson travelled to the South of France at Le Monastier in Haute-Loire. He took several walks in the area. He then decided to walk across the Cévennes : 252 km on foot in order to mend his broken heart. Various commemorations will celebrate the Scottish writer's feat.

Michel Prat

1000 km a year on foot

For Michel Prat hiking is a passion, a quest, a way of life. For over 20 years he has climbed up and down the main mountain ranges in France, discovering new landscapes only reached on foot. For him, hiking means steep slopes and sustained efforts. Since his retirement he has hiked about 4 hours every Tuesday and 50 to 80 km twice monthly.

More than a sport

Hiking helps him cleanse his mind. Most of his holidays are dedicated to his passion, with his wife they leave their camper at a location every day, then drive to the starting point of their daily hike. It helps them adapt to bad weather conditions or tour the area.



Meditating

Hiking turns into a spiritual exercise as Michel discovers the wonders of creation in the fauna, the flora, the geology around him. In his hikers' group many are searching for some spiritual awareness and share informal conversations on the creation. Some have joined the group of biblical studies of Centre Hérault.

Hiking with the family

Michel Prat dislikes hiking alone, when his children were young they used to climb up mountain ranges with friends and their children. He lured the children with strawberry gums across difficult passages during a 7-hour walk.

In the future

«I plan to keep on hiking as long as possible», says Michel, inspired by an 81-year old fellow hiker. He plans his hikes carefully, he has hiked in lots of places,

though not to Santiago de Compostela, too easy, too much of a myth.

Well then, friends, how about discovering your country and yourselves ?

The Camino de Santiago is attracting a new type of pilgrim: believers, agnostics, atheists, hikers alone, or in pairs, families. Their motivations are less and less religious, more often spiritual, they are on a quest for their inner self, they search for their limits, some want to be alone, others welcome company. Some will set themselves a personal challenge, or just forget about everything. Their paths cross our three regions.

Walking is also protesting

Marchers get together and occupy space, marching turns into commitment and protest. In the marchers' body lies their strength and their defence. In 1930 Mahatma Gandhi left his ashram with a few disciples, they walked 386 km to the Indian Ocean to pick up handfuls of salt. The Salt March, gathering several thousands of followers, was the first step towards the country's independence in 1947.

Non-violent protests

Very much inspired by Gandhi's non-violent methods, Martin Luther King used marching as a way to protest. The 1963 March on Washington proved the success of the protest was due to its strength in the media and on the ground as much as to the famous speech I have a dream.

Marching to decisions-making locations

Recalling the testimony brought by the Marche des Beurs (autumn 1983), the Marche Solidaire will link Vintimille to Calais and Douvres (April 30 to July 8 2018), bearing witness to the ill-treatment of the migrants trying to cross the Italian border, helped by various associations.