



Chemin de CLUNY : GUYENNE - GASCOGNE

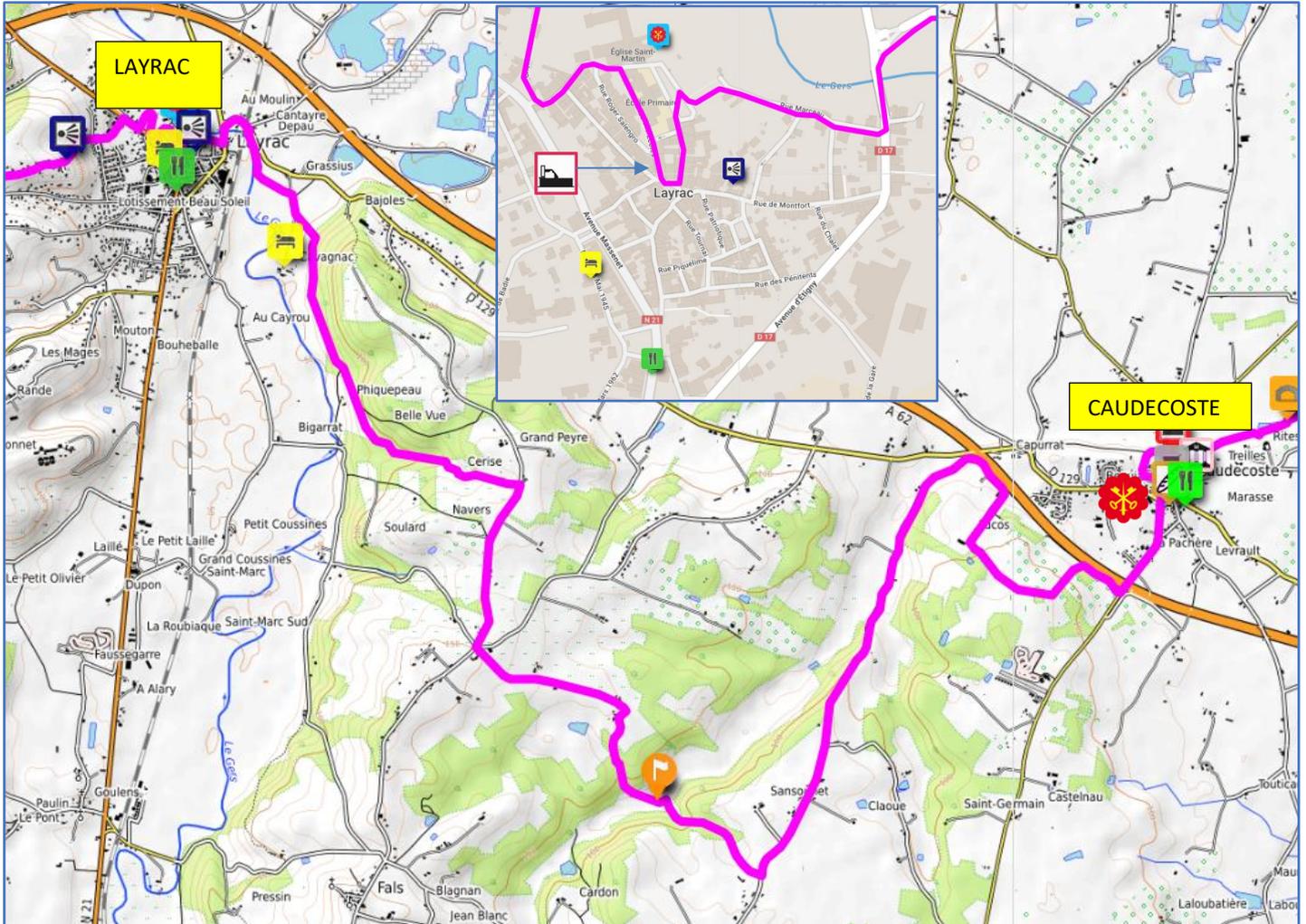


DIRECTION EAST - WEST : Moissac - Agen



STAGE 10 A: Caudecoste - Layrac

Section length: 13,6 km Allow: 3h15mn Height difference: + 201m / - 209m Difficulty: Easy



Waymarking: Red and green 

Driving distance to Caudecoste is 16.5km from Agen and 36km from Moissac

Parking: In front of the Mairie or in the car park on the D129 near the school

Starting point: The square in front of the Mairie

From the main square 'Place de la Mairie' in Caudecoste take 'Rue de 19 Mars 1962' and continue straight on, taking the **D114** towards Astaffort. After you pass under the motorway bridge, turn immediately right onto a gravel path. Continue with the motorway to your right for **300m** then take the first woodland path on the left. Follow this path, which bends to the right after **270m** and continue alongside a field on your right with views towards Agen. The path passes a concrete block with a water cistern on top. Carry straight on and follow the grassy track between trees. At the end of the trees carry straight on, heading for an old farmhouse 'Tucos'. At the farmhouse turn right on a gravel track going downhill past a metal barn. The path becomes tarmac. At the bottom of the hill turn left onto a road and follow the road uphill for **3.0km** (as you start on this road, you will pass a house called 'Sarrebuck' after 300m).

As the road flattens out (after some scattered houses), watch out for a path on your right leading down to woods. This is about **200m** after a stone cross and a sign for 'Sansoulet'. There is a 'Clunisien' way marker indicating the start.

Turn right onto this grassy path between trees. Continue for **900m** until you reach a brook (L'Estressol'). Cross over the brook and continue straight along the path, which goes uphill through woodland. Near the top of the hill, where another path joins, take the right-hand fork towards a hamlet, passing a house called '**St Ament**'.

Pass through the hamlet and follow the road up the hill for about **1 km**, until you come to a crossroads with a house called '**Au Carrefour**'.

Take the **second** road on the right, going downhill (signposted '**Layrac**').

After **1.1 km**, turn left into a farm track (with a road sign 'Vehicules Tous Terrains de Loisirs') just before a house on the right called '**Petit Cadillon**'. Follow the farm track for **2.5km** all the way to the valley (it becomes a grass track and eventually a woodland track).

At the bottom of the hill the track comes out onto a tarmac road near the '**Chateau de Cavagnac**' (B&B). Ignore the drive to the chateau, following the road round to the right. After about **100m** continue straight onto a grass track. After about **40m**, turn left onto another grass track. This runs along the edge of a field, with trees on your right. At the end of the field, after about **100m** turn right and cross the brook. Carry straight on, following the river **Gers** on your left. The track widens out into a grassy area. Keep going until you meet the road, and then turn left and go underneath the railway bridge. (*Please be extremely vigilant of the traffic, as there is no pavement*).

Follow the road (**D129**) up to a T-junction with a large metal horse. Here turn left on the **D17** and go over the bridge, crossing the river '**Gers**'.

Shortly after the bridge, turn right into the '**Rue Marceau**'. At the end of this road, keep going straight up the steps, which lead to a tree-lined square with a car park ('**Place du Royal**').

You will see the 'Prieuré St. Martin' (Priory) to your right.

Here the walk takes you on a short diversion to admire the old town square of Layrac.

Turn left and go through the arch of the old bell tower. Follow the road straight on, until you arrive in the '**Place Jean Jaurès**', which offers the opportunity for refreshments in a shady spot (Town Hall, café/bar, benches, bakery).

To continue the 'Clunisien' walk, turn right into the '**Rue Salengro**'.

Caudecoste:

Caudecoste is the only bastide (fortified village) founded by a religious order (Cluny).

Its history dates back to ancient times. Neolithic objects have been found here. There is also a listed Bronze Age site a few hundred meters from the village.

The first inhabitants, from 1200 BC, were Ligurians. They believed the local spring – now known as 'La Fontaine de St Jean' - had healing properties. The Ligurians were driven out around 500 BC by the Iberians, who then settled here. The archives indicate that a village was on the present site from the year 900 AD, then belonging to the Viscount of Bruilhois. In 1049, Caudecoste (which belonged formerly to the church of Saint-Martin de Layrac) became a dependency of the Cluniac abbey, the Prior of Layrac being the "Seigneur" (Lord).

The 'lavoir' (former wash-house) provides a stopping place for walkers and hikers on the Cluny Way, which passes through Caudecoste.

What to see in Layrac:

*The listed **church of St Martin**, a part of the Cluniac priory of the 11th and 12th centuries, is a masterpiece of Romanesque architecture.*

A majestic portal marks the entrance, and the church interior is built around a single nave of astonishing width. Remains of Romanesque mosaics are still visible in the floor, depicting the biblical scene of Samson slaying the lion. Numerous sculpted capitals adorn the pillars. The choir is topped by a dome ten metres in diameter and a large apse with nine windows encloses the sanctuary. It is one of the largest Romanesque churches in France to have a dome suspended on flat pendentives.

*Coming from the square in front of the town hall and heading towards the 'Esplanade du Royal', you will see the **Gothic bell tower and its porch**, dating from the 12th to 14th centuries. These are the remains of the old parish church of Santa Maria. There is a room on the 1st floor containing a Renaissance fireplace bearing the coat of arms of the city.*

*There are magnificent **views towards the Gers and the Garonne valleys** from the Esplanade du Royal.*

*The **old town** still has a number of half-timbered houses in good condition.*

*There is an interesting old '**lavoir**' (former wash-house) with a copper funnel which collects the rainwater as a roof. This is in the 'Chemin de Verdun', along the continuation of the Cluny way towards Moirax.*