



Chemin de CLUNY : GUYENNE - GASCOGNE

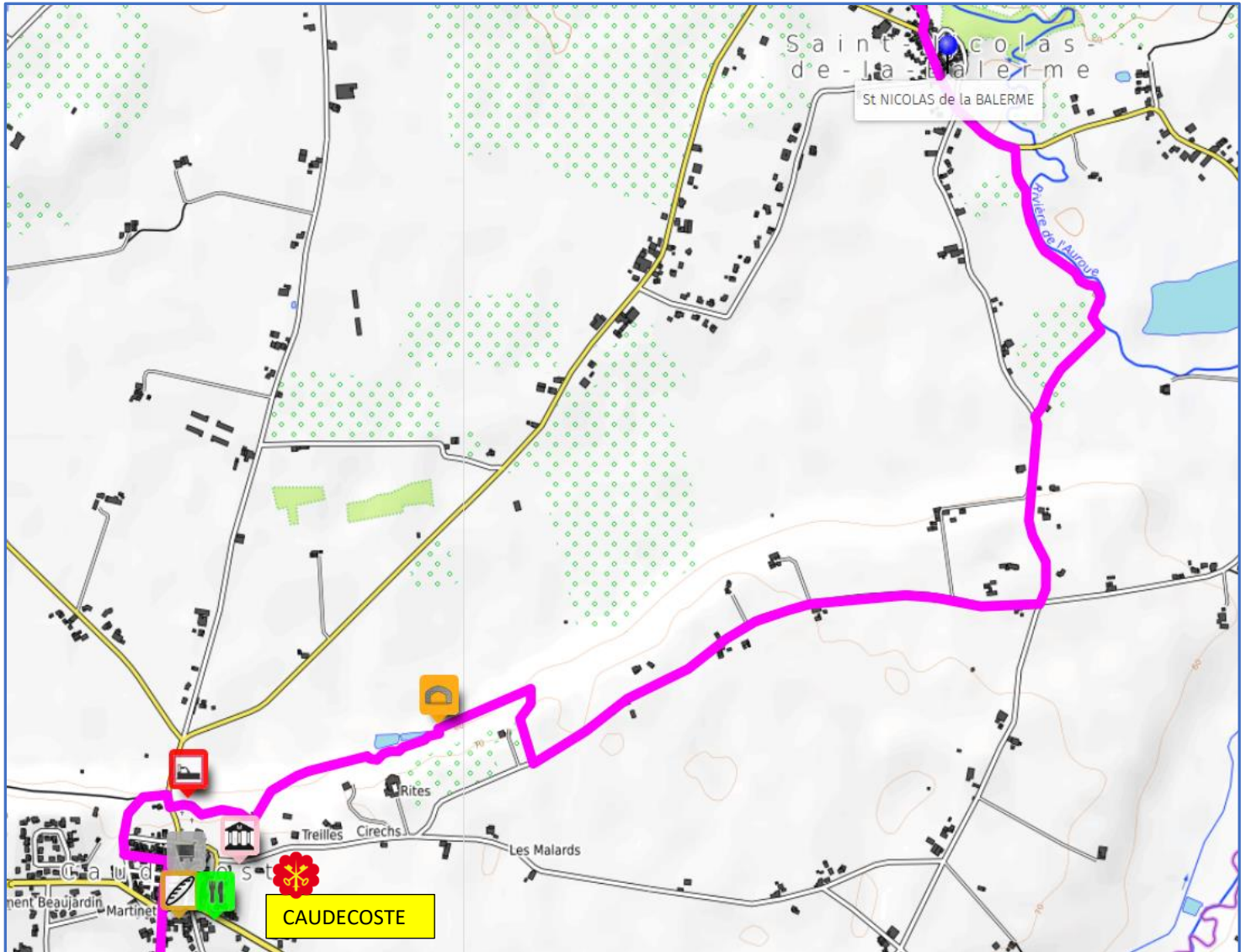


DIRECTION EAST - WEST : Moissac - Agen



Stage 9 A : Saint Nicolas de la Balerme - Caudecoste

Section length: 5,1km Allow: 1h15mn Height difference: + 43m / - 22m – Difficulty: Easy



Waymarking: Red and green



Driving distance to Saint Nicolas de la Balerme is 18km from Agen and 33km to Moissac via the D813.

Parking and Start point: Car park near the Mairie

Turn right out of the car park on the main road (**D284**) heading towards the village centre.

After about **400m**, just before a bridge over a small river ('**L'Auroué**'), take a track on the right.

This becomes a grass track. After approximately **500m** there is an orchard to your right. Follow the track around to the right, skirting the edge of the orchard, with a hedge and a small stream on the left. At the end of the orchard, carry straight on. The track eventually leads onto a road. There is a house on the left. Turn left and follow the road until a T-junction at the top of the hill. Turn right at the 'Stop' sign at the crossroads. Follow this road for about **1.5km** and watch out for a 'Clunisien' way marker in the trees to the right. (You will

see the Chateau Rites, with two pointed spires, in the distance). At the way marker, turn right into a woodland track between the trees. The track leads downhill. At the bottom of the hill, you join a farm track. Continue straight on for about **15m** and then turn left onto a grass track.

Follow the grass track. There are mature hedges on either side. After approximately **300m**, the hedge continues on your left only. Carry on until the field finishes and then cross a ditch on your left, at a gap in the hedge. Continue in the same direction of travel, with the hedge now on your right.

The path skirts a small lake on the right and continues all the way to the village of Caudecoste. On the way you cross a small mound as the path bends to the left. Continue up the hill to the left. After about **100m**, at a chain link fence, turn right. Follow the fence and continue straight on along the woodland path. As the woodland path widens, carry straight on, ignoring the track on your left. The path leads to an old restored lavoir (former wash-house) on your right, and then onto a road (**D114**).

Turn right onto the road. After approximately **20m**, by the Caudecoste 'end of village' sign, turn left onto a track. After about **75m** turn left into a grass track, which leads up a hill between vegetable gardens.

As you come up the hill you meet a road. Carry straight on along the road, and after about **40m** turn left into 'Rue Roger Dublin'. Follow this until you meet the village square ('Place de la Mairie').

St Nicolas de la Balerme:

*The 15th century **chateau of St. Phillipe** is a fine example of a Gascony style castle. It occupies an exceptional site above the flood zone on the left bank of the Garonne. It can be seen from the nearby bridge over the Garonne.*

*The **church of Saint Nicolas de la Balerme** was destroyed during the religious wars and was reconstructed towards the end of the 16th century. It is a mixture of Romanesque and Gothic architecture. It houses a wooden statue of Saint Roch, who became the patron saint of the parish. This listed statue was carved by a local craftsman in the 15th century.*

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' provides a stopping place for walkers and hikers on the Cluny Way, which passes through Caudecoste.