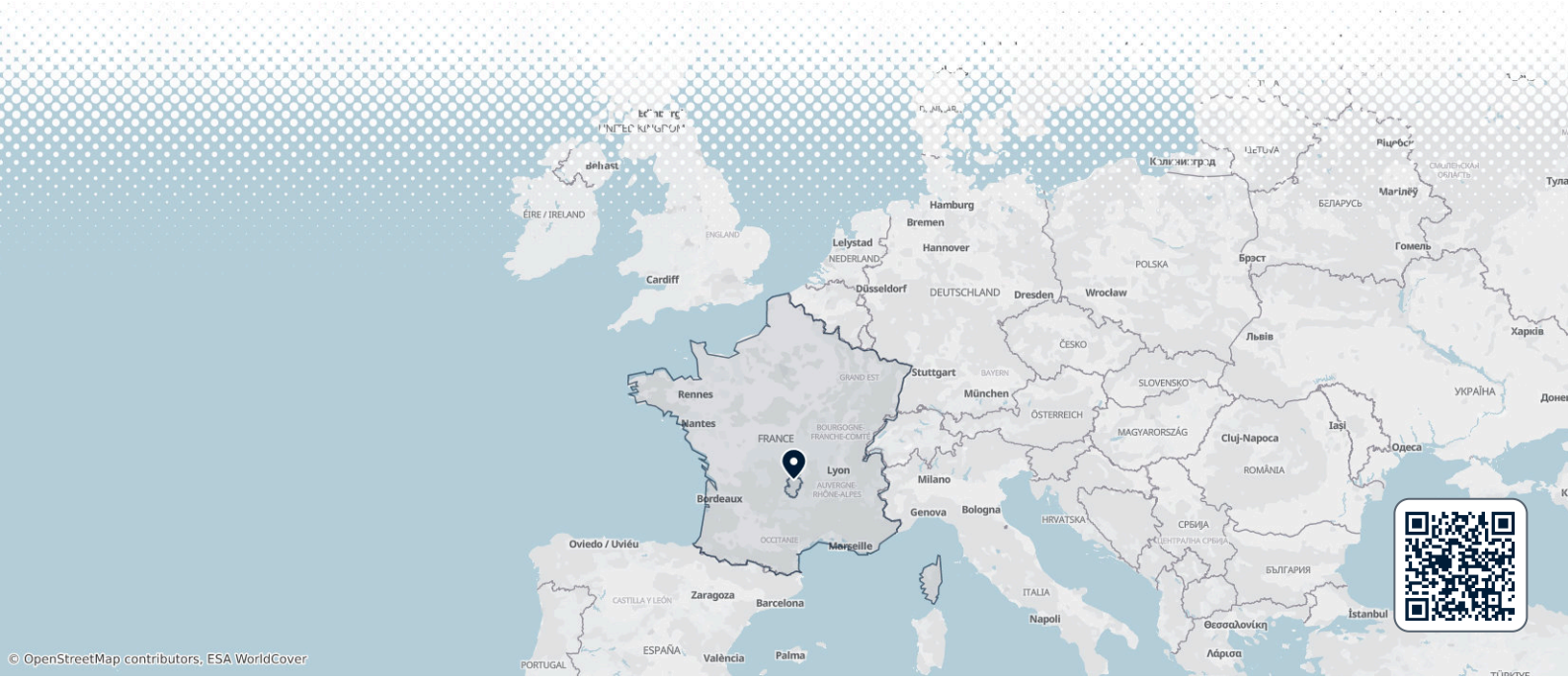


Auvergne Volcanoes Regional Park

Auvergne-Rhône-Alpes · France

TRAVEL GUIDE

Tripomatic



Overview

Auvergne Volcanoes Regional Park is the largest regional nature park in France. It covers about 3,950 km² of the Massif Central and was created in 1977. The land is made of old volcanoes: green cones, crater lakes, deep valleys and high pastures. About 91,000 people live here, mostly in small villages and farms.

The park has three volcanic areas. The Chaîne des Puys in the north has a line of small cones, and the Puy de Dôme is the best known. The Monts Dore in the centre include the Puy de Sancy, the highest peak in the Massif Central. The Monts du Cantal in the south are the remains of one of the largest volcanoes in Europe. The park suits walkers, families and drivers who want mountain views, Romanesque churches, castles and mountain cheese. Many visitors stay in Clermont-Ferrand or in a mountain village for two to four nights.

When to visit

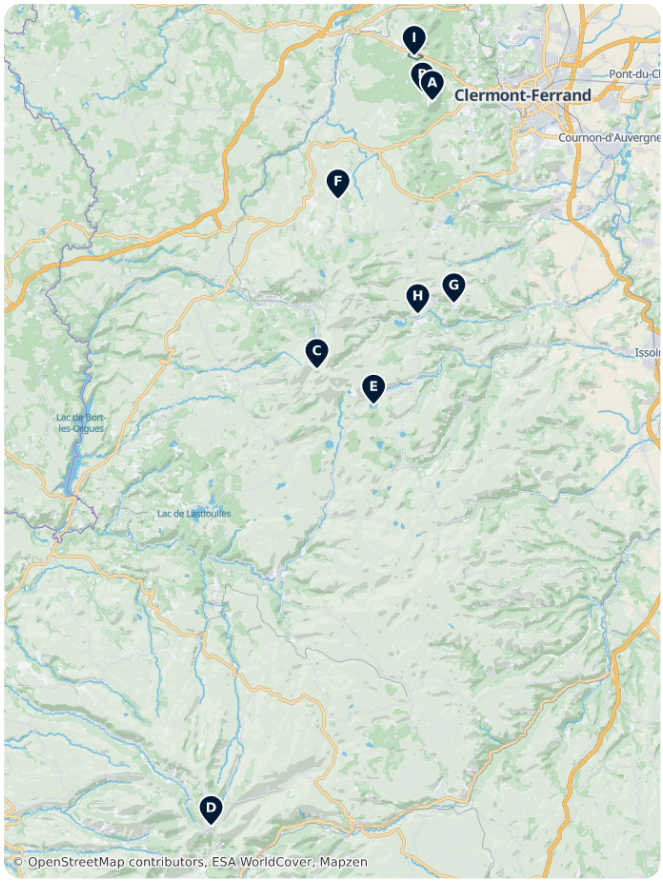
Summer is the easiest season for hiking and for the high summits. It is also the busiest, and the Puy de Dôme can be crowded on fine days. June and September are quieter, and the pastures are green. Mountain weather changes fast at any time of year, and storms and fog are common on the peaks. From autumn to spring, snow can fall at higher altitude. Some high roads close in winter, and the Sancy area has ski slopes. The climate chart is for the high Sancy area. Clermont-Ferrand and the valleys are warmer.

MONTH	CONDITIONS	DAY °C avg / max	NIGHT °C avg / min	
January	Great Great for skiing	2° / 8° Feels like -3°	-4° / -11°	13 rainy days · Dry air
February	Great Great for skiing	4° / 10° Feels like -1°	-4° / -11°	Dry air
March	Fair Fair for skiing	7° / 14° Feels like 3°	-2° / -7°	12 rainy days · Dry air
April	Poor Poor for hiking	10° / 17° Feels like 7°	1° / -5°	13 rainy days · Dry air · Calm winds
May	Good Good for hiking	14° / 21° Feels like 11°	4° / -1°	15 rainy days · Dry air · Calm winds
June	Good Good for sightseeing	19° / 27°	8° / 3°	13 rainy days · Dry air · Calm winds
July	Great Great for sightseeing	21° / 29°	10° / 5°	Dry air · Calm winds
August	Great Great for sightseeing	22° / 31°	10° / 5°	Dry air · Calm winds
September	Good Good for hiking	18° / 26°	7° / 1°	Dry air · Calm winds
October	Good Good for hiking	13° / 20° Feels like 10°	4° / -3°	12 rainy days · Dry air · Calm winds
November	Fair Fair for skiing	6° / 14° Feels like 2°	0° / -7°	15 rainy days · Dry air
December	Good Good for skiing	3° / 9° Feels like -2°	-3° / -10°	13 rainy days · Dry air

Best months: July, August

Climate data: NASA POWER (MERRA-2) · 1996–2025

Top sights



- A Puy de Dôme is the best-known volcano of the B Chaîne des Puys, a line of about 70 volcanoes listed by UNESCO since 2018. You can walk up in about an hour or take the rack railway. The ruins of a Gallo-Roman temple stand at the summit, and the view covers the whole chain.
- C Puy de Sancy is the highest peak in the Massif Central. A cable car leaves from Le Mont-Dore, and a short climb leads to the summit. The view is wide on a clear day.
- D Puy Mary is a pyramid-shaped summit in the Cantal mountains. A short, steep path starts from the Pas de Peyrol pass. Grassy valleys spread out from it in every direction.
- E Cratère-Lac Pavin is a round crater lake in the Monts Dore. The lake is very deep, and a path goes around the shore. The village of Besse is a short drive away.
- F Basilique Notre-Dame d'Orcival is a pilgrimage church from the 12th century in a quiet valley. It has kept its Romanesque form. A statue of the Virgin in majesty from about 1170 stands over the choir.
- G Église Saint-Nectaire is another 12th-century church. It has 103 painted capitals that show Bible scenes. It is one of the five great Romanesque churches of Auvergne.
- H Château de Murol is a medieval castle on a rock above the village of Murol. It is a good stop for families.
- I Vulcania is a large museum and theme park about volcanoes and the Earth, north-west of Clermont-Ferrand. It opened in 2002. It is a good choice on a wet day, but check opening dates.

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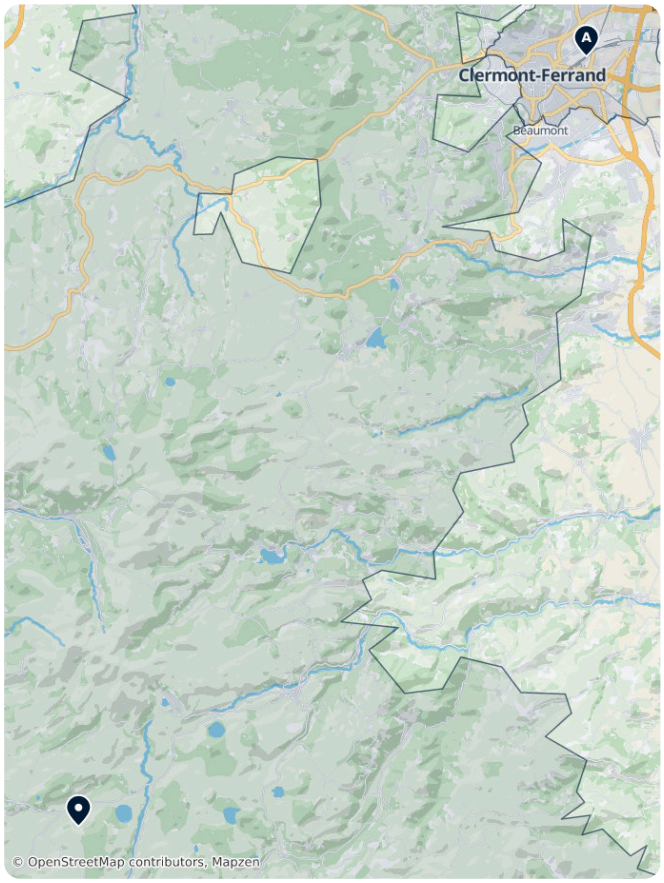
What to experience

- Ride the Panoramique des Dômes rack railway up the Puy de Dôme. The summit is also a well-known place for paragliding.
- Walk around Cratère-Lac Pavin. The path takes about one hour on level ground.
- Visit Volcan de Lemptégy, a volcano cut open by a quarry. You can see the layers of ash and lava from inside. Visits are guided, on foot or by train, and take about 2.5 hours. The site is open from February to November.
- Relax in the Belle Époque spa town of Le Mont-Dore, at the Thermes du Mont-Dore, then take the cable car to the Sancy.
- Ski in winter at Super-Besse or Le Mont-Dore. The slopes are small but easy to reach, and the Sancy area has cross-country trails.
- Swim and rent a boat at Lac Chambon in summer.

Day trips

These towns are near the park.

- Clermont-Ferrand: about 20 min by car from the Puy de Dôme. Its cathedral is built of dark volcanic stone. The Michelin museum is also here. Many visitors use it as a base.
- Issoire: about 35 min from Clermont-Ferrand by car. Its abbey church is one of the five great Romanesque churches of Auvergne.
- Vichy: about 45 min from Clermont-Ferrand by car or by train. It is a spa town with a historic centre and parks.
- Le Puy-en-Velay: a long day trip, about 2 hours each way from Clermont-Ferrand by car. The old town is built on volcanic rocks and has a famous cathedral.



Where to explore

Clermont-Ferrand is the main city next to the park.

- Clermont-Ferrand

Getting there

- **By air**: Clermont-Ferrand Auvergne airport has a few mostly domestic flights. For international arrivals, Lyon–Saint-Exupéry is the main airport, about 190 km east. From Lyon, continue by train or car.
- **By train**: Clermont-Ferrand station has direct trains from Paris (about 3.5 hours) and from Lyon, Vichy and other cities. There is no high-speed train to Auvergne yet. Few rail lines enter the park itself.
- **By bus**: Regional buses link Clermont-Ferrand with towns such as Le Mont-Dore and Besse. They are not frequent, so check times before you go.
- **By car**: The A75 and A71 motorways pass the park. A car is the easiest way to reach villages, lakes and trailheads. Auvergne Volcanoes Regional Park

Getting around

- **By car**: Most sights are in villages or on mountain roads. A car gives the most freedom. Allow extra time on narrow roads.
- **Puy de Dôme**: Private cars cannot drive to the summit. Park at the Panoramique des Dômes station in Orcines and ride the rack railway (15 min, about €17–19 adult return). Or walk up the old mule path.
- **Public transport**: Local buses run rarely. Plan each day ahead if you do not drive.
- **On foot or by bike**: Walking is the best way to see the volcanoes. Bike and mountain-bike routes are marked in the park, and many roads are quiet.

Getting around on foot & by bike

WALKABILITY

Low

Sights are spread over a large mountain area, so most visitors need a car. Walking is the best way to see the volcanoes and lakes once you are at a trailhead.

CYCLING INFRASTRUCTURE

Moderate

Marked bike and mountain-bike routes exist, but roads are steep and winding. Fit riders will enjoy the quiet mountain roads.

Driving

- **Is a car worth it?** Yes. Public transport is limited, and a car is the best tool for villages, lakes and trailheads.
- **Roads**: Mountain roads are narrow and winding. Fog and cattle on the road are common. Some high roads, such as the road to the Pas de Peyrol, can close in winter.
- **Parking**: Trailheads have small car parks that fill up on fine summer days. Arrive early at the Puy de Dôme area, the Sancy and Lac Pavin.

Food & drink

This is cheese country. Five local cheeses have a protected name: Cantal, Salers, Saint-Nectaire, Bleu d'Auvergne and Fourme d'Ambert. Saint-Nectaire is a soft cow's-milk cheese with a grey rind. Salers is a mountain cheese made from the milk of cows on summer pastures. Look for farm shops and the cheese cellars around Saint-Nectaire and the Cantal.

Try the hearty mountain dishes. Truffade is potatoes fried with Tomme cheese. Aligot is mashed potato with melted cheese. Potée auvergnate is a pork and cabbage stew. The best places to eat are village auberges and farm inns, where the menu is short and local. Book ahead in July and August.

What to eat & drink

BREAKFAST

Croissant
Buttery, flaky laminated pastry and a classic French breakfast staple.

LUNCH

Ratatouille
A Provençal stewed vegetable dish of eggplant, zucchini, peppers, and tomatoes.

DINNER

Coq au Vin
Chicken braised slowly in red wine with mushrooms, onions, and lardons.

Beef Bourguignon · Bœuf Bourguignon
Beef stewed in red Burgundy wine with carrots, onions, and mushrooms.

Escargot · Escargots de Bourgogne
Snails cooked in garlic and parsley butter, a classic starter.

SNACKS & STREET FOOD

Baguette
Long, crusty white bread loaf bought fresh daily from the local boulangerie.

Cheese · Fromage
France produces hundreds of cheese varieties, often served as a course before dessert.

SWEETS & DESSERTS

Crepes · Crêpes
Thin pancakes served sweet with sugar or jam, or savory as galettes.

Macarons
Delicate almond meringue sandwich cookies in a range of flavors and colors.

DRINKS

Wine · Vin
France's wine regions, including Bordeaux, Burgundy, and Champagne, are among the world's most renowned.

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Safety & health

The park is very safe for visitors. Crime is low, and the main risks come from the mountains.

- Weather changes fast. Storms, fog and strong wind are common on summits, and the temperature drops with altitude. Check the forecast and carry a warm layer, even in summer.
- Stay on marked paths. Some volcano craters and nature reserves are fragile.
- Cattle graze on many pastures in summer. Keep your distance and close gates behind you.
- Mobile signal can be weak in valleys. Tell someone your route before long hikes.

History

The volcanoes are young in geological terms. The last eruptions in the Chaîne des Puys were about 6,000 years ago, and the cones are still easy to read in the landscape.

The Romans and Gauls left marks here. A Gallo-Roman temple of Mercury stood on the summit of the Puy de Dôme, and its ruins are still there. Near Clermont-Ferrand, the hill of Gergovia was the site of a Gaulish victory over Caesar in 52 BC. A museum there tells the story: Musée archéologique de la bataille de Gergovie.

In the 12th century, builders raised the Romanesque churches of Basilique Notre-Dame d'Orcival and Église Saint-Nectaire. Local lords built castles such as Château de Murol. In the 19th century, the hot springs made Le Mont-Dore a fashionable spa town. The regional park was created in 1977, and the Chaîne des Puys joined the UNESCO World Heritage list in 2018.

Country facts

Quick practical facts for France at a glance:

CURRENCY
EUR €

EMERGENCY
112

ELECTRICITY



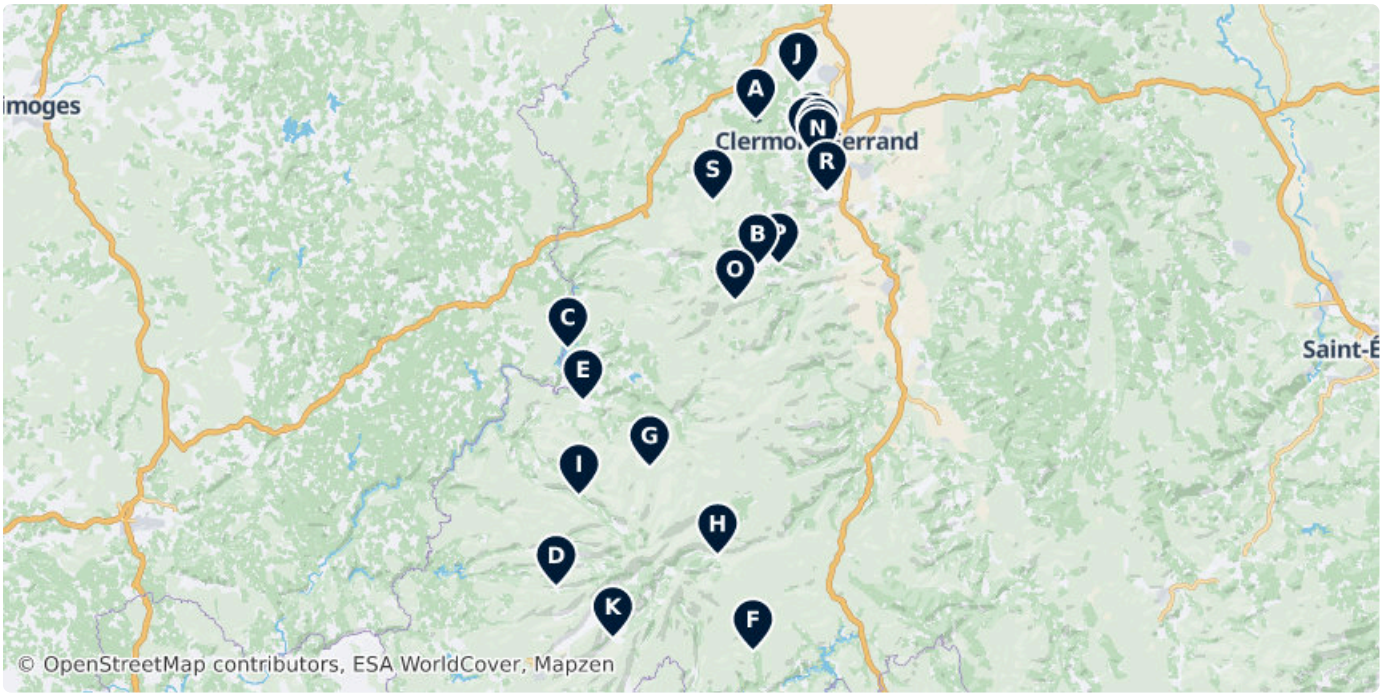
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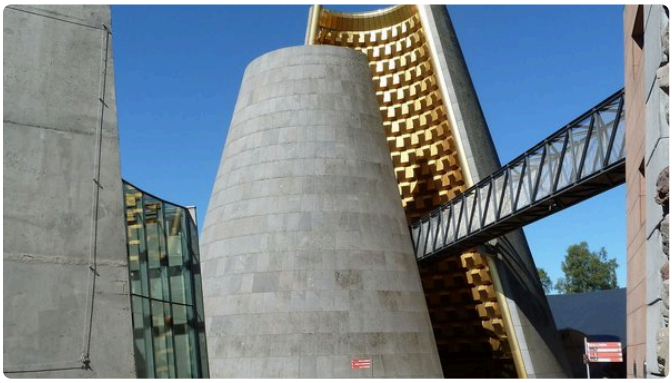
LANGUAGES
French

TAP WATER
Safe to drink

Parc naturel régional des Volcans d'Auvergne Essentials

Explore the diverse landscape of the Auvergne Volcanoes Regional Nature Park, a region defined by dormant volcanic peaks and glacial valleys. This selection highlights the area's architectural heritage, ranging from the 12th-century Romanesque Basilique Notre-Dame d'Orcival to the 15th-century Château de Val on the shores of Lake Bort-les-Orgues. The list also includes specialized sites like the Vulcania theme park and various medieval fortresses, such as the ruined Château fort d'Apchon and the well-preserved Château de Murol, which offer insight into the region's military and geological history.



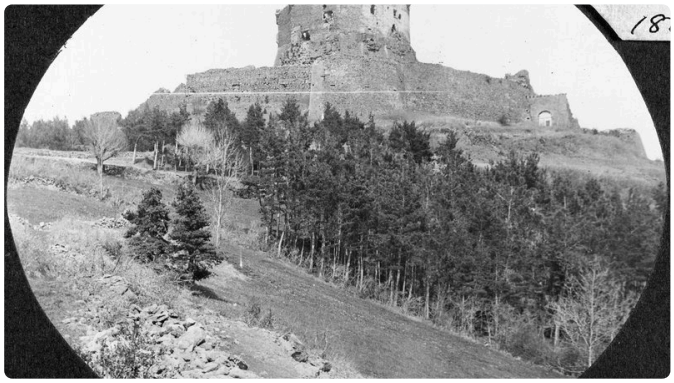


A Vulcania

Vulcania, the "European Park of Volcanism", is an educational French amusement park and museum with a volcano theme.

Route de Mazayes 2, 63230 Saint-Ours-les-Roches (45.81356, 2.94083)

vulcania.com, +33 4 73 19 70 00



B Château de Murol

The Château de Murol is a castle overlooking the town of Murol in the département of Puy-de-Dôme in the Auvergne-Rhône-Alpes région, France.

(Unnamed Road), 63790, France (45.57837, 2.94554)

murolchateau.com, +33 4 73 88 82 50



C Château de Val

A 15th-century castle situated on a rocky promontory overlooking the Bort-les-Orgues reservoir. It features six towers topped with pepper-pot roofs and a Gothic chapel.

15270, France (45.44268, 2.50533)



D Anjony Castle

The Château d'Anjony is a castle in Tournemire in the Cantal département of France.

Château d'Anjony, 15310 Tournemire, France (45.05416, 2.47812)

anjony.com, +33 4 71 47 61 67



E Château de Couzan

The Château de Couzan is a ruined castle in the commune of Sail-sous-Couzan in the Loire département of France.

(Unnamed Road), 15240, France (45.35779, 2.54025)



F Château de Rochebrune

The Château de Rochebrune is an historic castle in Étagnac, Charente, France. It was built in the 11th and 12th centuries.

(Unnamed Road), 15260, France (44.94902, 2.93432)



G Château fort d'Apchon

Ruined 12th-century fortress perched on a volcanic basalt peak, offering panoramic views of the Cantal mountains and the surrounding plateau.

Rue du Bailli, Apchon 15400, France (45.25001, 2.69456)



H Château d'Anterroches

Medieval castle located in the Alagnon valley, featuring granite architecture and historical ties to the local nobility of the Cantal region.

(Unnamed Road), 15300, France (45.10614, 2.85216)



I Château de la Borie

17th-century castle located in Solignac, known for its classical architecture and historical gardens.

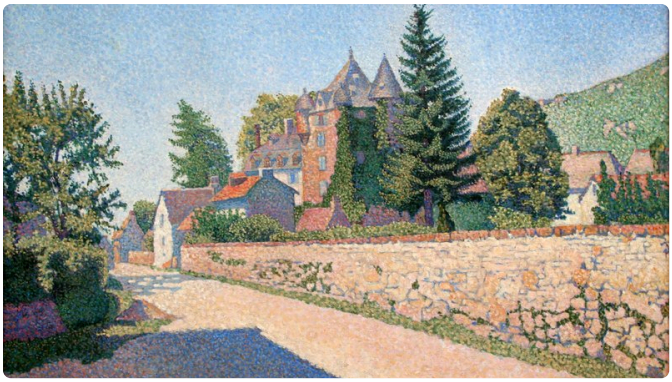
(Unnamed Road), Saint-Vincent-de-Salers 15380, France (45.20341, 2.53068)



J Château de Bosredon

18th-century residence built from local Volvic stone. It currently houses the Musée de la Pierre, which explores the history and craftsmanship of volcanic rock.

(45.87224, 3.03916)



K Château de Comblat

Medieval manor house in Vic-sur-Cère featuring a 15th-century keep and architectural modifications from the 17th and 18th centuries.

N122, Comblat le Château 15800, France (44.97005, 2.60946)

L Villa Lise

Early 20th-century heritage building located in Clermont-Ferrand.

193 Avenue de la Libération, Clermont-Ferrand 63000, France (45.75737, 3.08281)

M Villa Gros

Modernist villa built in 1936, representing the Interwar architectural style in Clermont-Ferrand.

2 Boulevard Claude Bernard, Clermont-Ferrand 63000, France (45.76553, 3.08875)

N Église Notre-Dame de la Rivière

Catholic church in Beaumont designated as a historical monument for its regional religious architecture.

2 Rue du Midi, Beaumont 63110, France (45.74931, 3.08524)

O Puy de Serveix

Volcanic peak in the Massif Central providing hiking routes and views of the surrounding glacial landscapes.

63610, France (45.52081, 2.89301)

P Villa Russe

Neo-Russian style villa built at the end of the 19th century as a holiday residence in Saint-Nectaire.

(45.58015, 2.99416)

Q Immeuble Pincot

Historical residential building in Clermont-Ferrand noted for its regional architectural features.

(45.77536, 3.07400)



R Wayside cross

A wayside cross is a cross by a footpath, track or road, at an intersection, along the edge of a field or in a forest.

D52, 63450, France (45.69597, 3.10548)



S Basilique Notre-Dame d'Orcival

12th-century Romanesque church known for its unified architectural style and its status as one of the five 'major' Romanesque churches of Auvergne.

D555, Orcival 63210, France (45.68294, 2.84152)



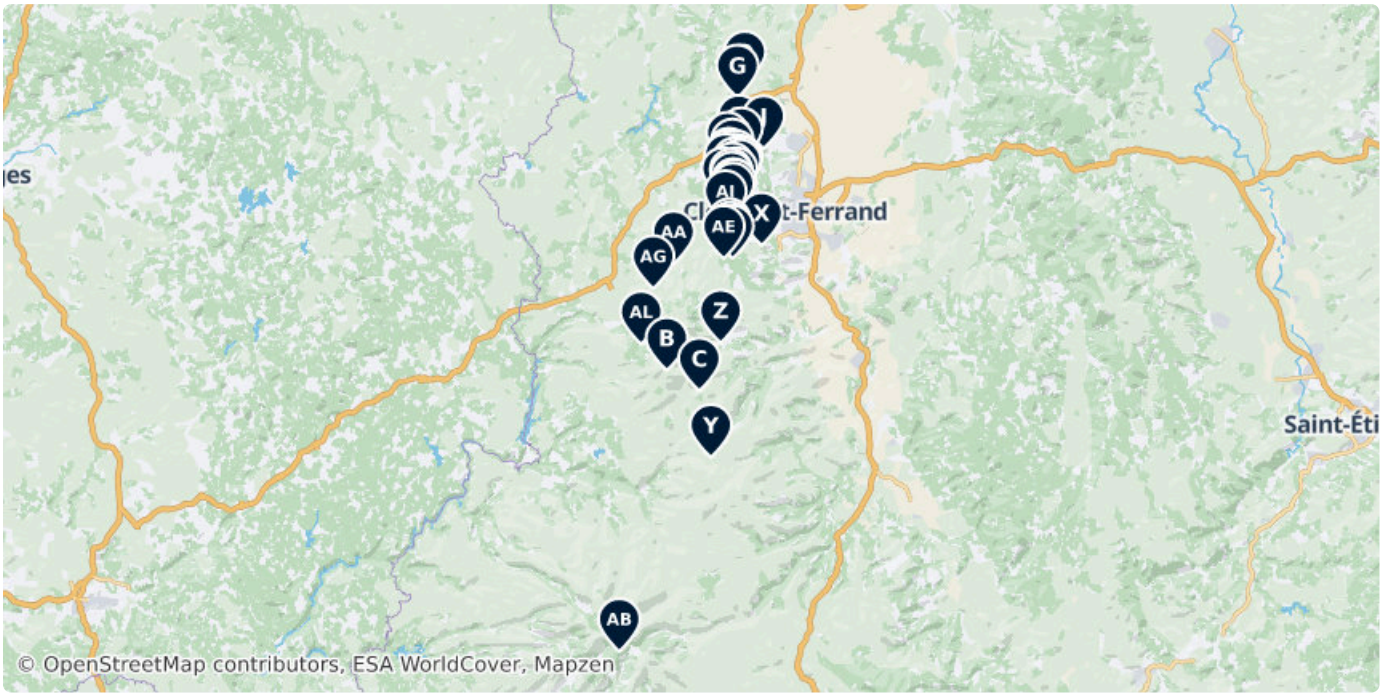
T Gare de Royat-Chamalières

Belle Époque railway station built in the late 19th century to serve the thermal spa resorts of Royat and Chamalières.

5Bis Place de la Gare, Chamalières 63400, France (45.76765, 3.06150)

Volcanic Landscapes of Chaîne des Puys

The Chaîne des Puys is a 40-kilometer tectonic fault featuring over 80 monogenetic volcanoes in France's Massif Central. This UNESCO World Heritage site showcases diverse geological formations, including the iconic Puy de Dôme lava dome and the cinder cones of Puy Pariou. The landscape is characterized by ancient craters, basaltic flows, and deep maars like Lac Pavin. Spanning approximately 95,000 years of volcanic activity, the area offers extensive hiking trails through dormant and extinct craters, providing a rare look at the evolution of continental rifting.

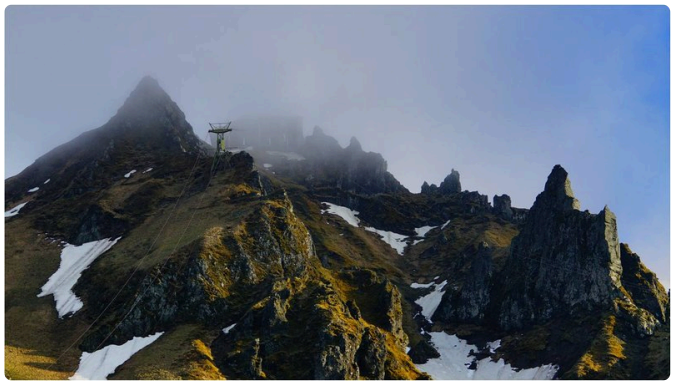




A Puy de Dôme

Puy de Dôme is a lava dome and one of the youngest volcanoes in the Chaîne des Puys region of Massif Central in central France.

(Unnamed Road), 63870, France (45.77265, 2.96441)



B Puy de Sancy

Puy de Sancy is the highest mountain in the Massif Central, in Puy-de-Dôme departement of south central France.

63680, France (45.52824, 2.81401)



C Lac Pavin

Lac Pavin or Lake Pavin is a meromictic crater lake, located in the Dore mountains, in Auvergne, in the territory of the commune of Besse...

63610, France (45.49569, 2.88790)



D Gour de Tazenat

The Gour de Tazenat is a volcanic lake in the French department of Puy-de-Dôme.

63410, France (45.98057, 2.99092)



E Puy de Lassolas

The Puy de Lassolas is a volcano in the Chaîne des Puys in France, peaking at 1187 metres.

63122, France (45.71103, 2.95819)



F Puy Pariou

The Puy de Pariou, also known as Puy Pariou or Le Pariou, is a volcano located in the Chaîne des Puys, in the Massif Central region.

63870, France (45.79696, 2.97165)



G Puy de Chalard

Extinct volcano in the Puy-de-Dôme department belonging to the Chaîne des Puys.

63410, France (45.95891, 2.97426)



H Le Petit Suchet

Also known as Puy de l'Aumône, this dormant volcano reaches 1,198 meters and features ancient caves used for stone extraction.

63870, France (45.78989, 2.96133)



I Puy des Goules

An extinct volcano also known as Montgoulède, featuring a regular crater approximately 30 meters deep.

63870, France (45.80961, 2.98000)



J Puy de la Bannière

Extinct volcano located near Volvic, part of the northern Chaîne des Puys.

63530, France (45.87898, 3.03360)



K Puy des Gouttes

An extinct cinder cone that partially surrounds the younger Puy Chopine.

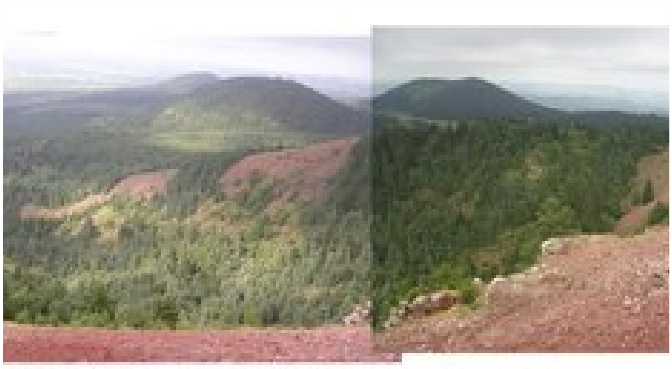
63230, France (45.82471, 2.95396)



L Puy Chopine

A volcanic needle of trachyte that rose through the center of the older Puy des Gouttes.

(Unnamed Road), 63230, France (45.82788, 2.95502)



M Puy de la Vache

The Puy de la Vache is a basaltic volcano in the Chaîne des Puys, in the Massif Central of France.

63122, France (45.70557, 2.96315)



N Puy de Louchadière

Large extinct volcano featuring a breached crater open to the west.

63230, France (45.85285, 2.95115)



O Grand Sarcouy

A trachyte lava dome known for its cauldron shape and Merovingian-era sarcophagus quarries.

63870, France (45.81428, 2.98105)



P Puy de Lemptégy

A volcano excavated for scoria, now serving as an open-air museum where the internal structure of a volcano is visible.

63230, France (45.81862, 2.94681)

Q Puy de la Nugère

Extinct volcano known for producing the gray Pierre de Volvic lava stone used in regional architecture.

63530, France (45.86015, 2.98363)

R Puy de Paugnat

Extinct volcano in the northern part of the Chaîne des Puys.

63410, France (45.87997, 2.97709)

S Puy de Mercœur

Dormant volcano at the southern end of the main chain, featuring a well-preserved crater.

63122, France (45.71659, 2.95614)



T Puy de Clierzou

Lava dome approximately 11,000 years old, featuring several caves where volcanic rock was quarried.

63870, France (45.79469, 2.95952)

U Puy de Chaumont

Extinct volcano located north of Puy de Dôme between Grand Sarcouy and Petit Suchet.

(Unnamed Road), 63530, France (45.82449, 2.96972)

V Puy de la Coquille

Extinct volcano forming a twin pair with Puy de Jumes, featuring a distinct crater.

63230, France (45.84226, 2.96278)



W Puy de Côme

Dormant volcano known for its two nested craters and extensive basaltic lava flows.

63210, France (45.79680, 2.94064)

X Puy de Berzet

Volcanic peak located near the village of Berzet.

63122, France (45.72626, 3.02884)

geodesie.ign.fr/fiches/index.php

Y Montagne de Janson

Ancient volcanic formation in the Dore mountains area.

63850, France (45.39009, 2.91386)

geodesie.ign.fr/fiches/index.php

Z Le Tartaret

Dormant volcano whose lava flow created the natural dam for Lake Chambon.

63790, France (45.57198, 2.93588)

AA Puy de Saint-Martin

Dormant volcano located in the Massif du Sancy region.

63210, France (45.69686, 2.82948)

AB Puy Griou

A phonolite dome in the Cantal mountains, recognized by its steep conical shape.

15590, France (45.08039, 2.70642)

AC Puy de Porcherolles

Extinct volcano located near the Puy de Dôme.

63530, France (45.81881, 2.96735)

AD Puy de Fraisse

Extinct volcano within the northern Chaîne des Puys.

63870, France (45.80456, 2.96250)

AE Puy de Montjuger

Volcanic peak reaching 1,142 meters in altitude.

63970, France (45.70533, 2.94283)

AF Nid de la Poule

A small, well-defined volcanic crater located on the slopes of the Puy de Dôme.

63870, France (45.77975, 2.96495)

AG Vivanson

Dormant volcano located in the southern part of the regional park.

63210, France (45.65797, 2.78322)

AH Petit Puy de Dôme

Dormant volcano situated immediately north of the main Puy de Dôme peak.

63870, France (45.77821, 2.96885)

AI Puy Besace

Dormant volcano located near the Puy de Lassolas and Puy de la Vache.

63210, France (45.76098, 2.94699)

AJ Petit Sarcouy

Extinct volcano located adjacent to the larger Grand Sarcouy dome.

63870, France (45.81615, 2.98339)

AK Creux Morel

Extinct volcanic crater located near the Puy de Pariou.

63870, France (45.81212, 2.96664)

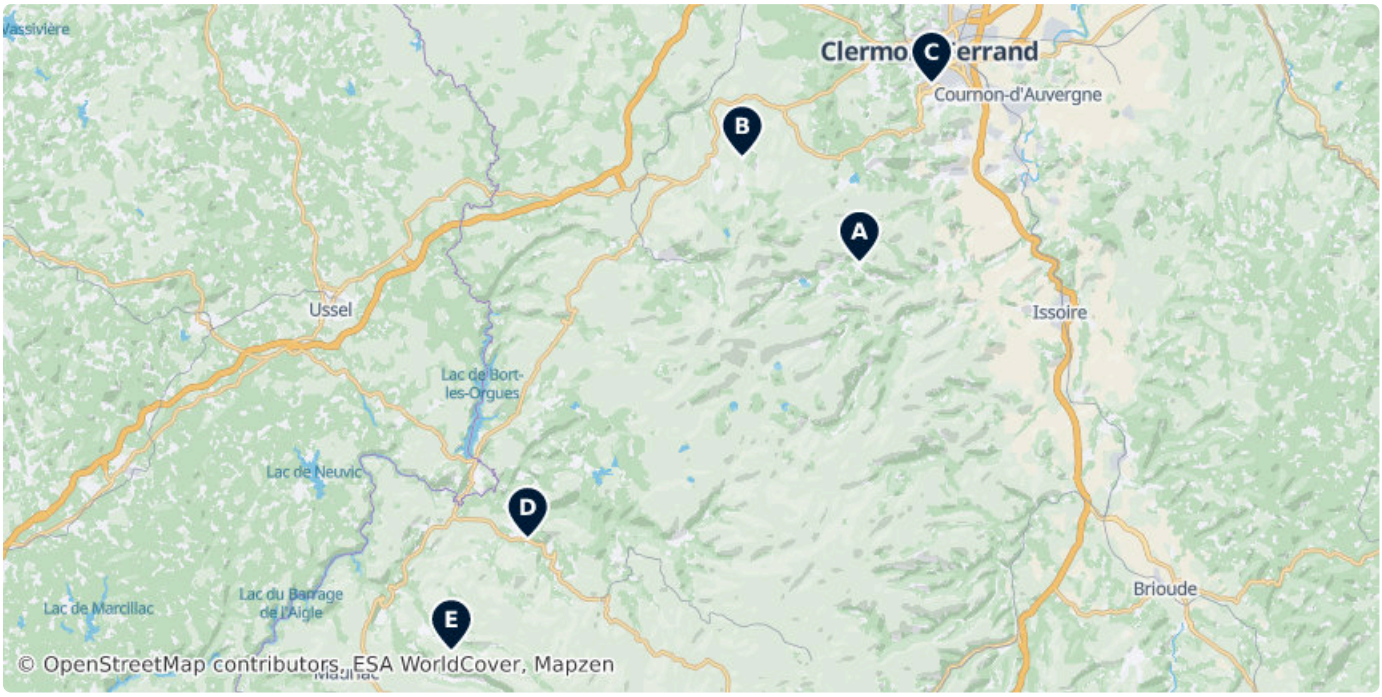
AL La Roche Vendeix

Volcanic phonolite peak that formerly housed a medieval fortress.

63150, France (45.56998, 2.75596)

Christian Heritage Sites

This collection showcases the distinct Auvergne Romanesque architectural style within the Volcans d'Auvergne Regional Natural Park. Key sites include the 12th-century church on Mont Cornadore and the Basilique Notre-Dame d'Orcival, both renowned for their harmonious proportions and intricate stone carvings. The list also includes regional heritage sites in Salsignac, Beaumont, and Moussages, illustrating the enduring religious and cultural history of this volcanic landscape.





A Église de Saint-Nectaire

A 12th-century Romanesque priory church situated on Mont Cornadore. It is one of the major Romanesque churches in Auvergne, notable for its detailed stone capitals and architectural harmony.

Quartier de l'Ancien Poste, Saint-Nectaire 63710, France (45.58823, 2.99248)



B Basilique Notre-Dame d'Orcival

A 12th-century Romanesque basilica featuring a distinct octagonal bell tower. It is a significant example of the Auvergne Romanesque school and houses a celebrated statue of the Virgin Mary.

D555, Orcival 63210, France (45.68294, 2.84152)

C Église Notre-Dame de la Rivière

A Catholic parish church located in Beaumont, serving as a notable regional heritage site.

2 Rue du Midi, Beaumont 63110, France
(45.74931, 3.08524)



D Église Saint-Ferréol de Salsignac

A Romanesque-style church located in the village of Salsignac. It demonstrates the traditional architectural characteristics of the Cantal region.

(Unnamed Road), Salsignac 15240, France
(45.33953, 2.56556)



E Église Saint-Barthélemy

A Catholic church located in Moussages, representing the religious and architectural heritage of the Cantal department.

(Unnamed Road), Moussages 15380, France
(45.23797, 2.46736)

DATA SOURCES

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