

# Tour de Vézelay - North - 15 km

A varied walk through the valley of the Cure, highlights being: Tharoiseau and, on the other side of the valley, Vézelay. The centuries-long pilgrimage history of Vézelay can be found in the Cross of Montjoie (near Tharoiseau), the Saint James Church of Asquins, and of course in Vézelay itself. The walk mainly goes through fields and vineyards. That is why you can often enjoy great views. When you arrive in Vézelay (Porte de Barle) your Tour is complete.



## Alternatives:

In between, two options are described to shorten the walk. (The trip to the Cross of Montjoie is included in the total distance.)

## Marking

See the comments for each route section.

### Saint-Père campsite [1] - Tharoiseau (cemetery) (3,6 km).

**Marking:** From here, follow the yellow markings of a local route to Tharoiseau (and to Nanchèvre. This is another route than the one you took from Pierre-Perthus to the campsite.)

**[1]** Follow the D36 to the right. After 600 m: turn left, onto a small asphalt road with a strip of grass in the middle. Follow this road for about 1 km, rising slightly. (On the way, left, looking back: views of Vézelay.) At a junction with a long, square post on each corner (and just before, on the right, a post with a waymark (scallop) of the Chemin des Hongrois (a pilgrimage route)): turn left, via a narrow dirt road, up, between hedges and trees. After about 300 m, at the next junction: turn right, again a narrow road between hedges and trees. The road first descends and then ascends, to Tharoiseau. (On the way, looking back: views of Vézelay.)

Arrive in **Tharoiseau**, on an asphalt road. Follow the road to the right, along a wall of the castle (19th century). At the

next fork: turn left, to the church, with a special wash house in front of it. Pass the wash house and the church on the left and cross the village. (*Just before a wayside cross (right): view of Vézelay (left).*)

At the cemetery, at the end of the village, at a fork: two possibilities:

- continue half left, via the main itinerary, to Nanchèvre (see below), or
- visit the Cross of Montjoie ('Croix de Montjoie').

### Excursion: cemetery - Croix de Montjoie - cemetery (1.8 km)

**Marking:** none.

Continue half right, via the D71 to the D957. At the corner of both roads, on the left, is the Croix de Montjoie. Then walk back to the cemetery and continue along the main itinerary.

**Alternative:** turn left at the Croix, via the D957 (watch out, quite busy road!), descending to the first road on the right, just before the village of Fontette. You connect there to the main itinerary.

**Croix de Montjoie.** In the 11th century it was customary to erect crosses on hills around an important pilgrimage site. Such a hill was called 'Montjoie' (mountain of joy) in French, 'Monte de Gozo' in Spanish. Joy, because for pilgrims the cross meant that they had almost reached their goal. From the Monte de Gozo near Santiago, you can see the cathedral, from the Montjoie near Tharoiseau, the basilica of Vézelay.

### Tharoiseau (cemetery) – Fontette – Nanchèvre (3,0 km)

**Marking:** keep following the yellow markings of the above-mentioned local route, until Nanchèvre.

From the fork near the cemetery: turn half left, via an unpaved road (Chemin de la Grande Roche), about 700 m, in a wide bend to the left, descending. Then turn right, up a path, to Fontette. Just before the village: cross the D957 and continue straight on.

*(If you walked to the Croix de Montjoie and then via the D957 towards Fontette, you will connect to our main route here.)*

After about 50 m, at a fork: turn left, to the center of the village of **Fontette**, which includes a small chapel (1657) with enormous buttresses. Pass the chapel on the right, still descending. After about 30 m, at a fork: turn right. After about 50 meters, at a washing place (right): straight ahead. After about 100 m, at a T-junction: turn left. After about 70 m: turn right. Continue via a dirt road, through fields, vineyards and a patch of forest. After about 1 km, at a fork: turn left, descending, to an asphalt road, which splits to the right. Take the right road (Rue des Prés) to the village of **Nanchèvre**.





**Abbreviation:** Nanchèvre – Saint-Père (1,7 km)

**Marking:** follow the red-white markings of the GR13 to Saint-Père.

In **Nanchèvre**, at a T-junction: turn left (Rue du Lavoir). After about 100 m, at another T-junction: turn left again. Immediately past the house on the corner: leave the asphalt road and turn right, onto an unpaved road. Keep following this small road, which first rises and then descends, to an asphalt road. Follow this to the left. After about 300 m: arrive on the D957. Follow it to the right, to **Saint-Père**.

**Nanchèvre – Asquins (Route des Chaumots) (3,4 km)**

In Nanchèvre, at a T-junction: turn right (Rue du Lavoir) and follow the red-white marking of the GR13. After more than 40 m, past the last house on the left (number 23): leave the GR13 and turn left, onto an unpaved road.

After more than 250 m, at a fork: take the road to the left, which shortly afterwards turns to the right, first through a small forest, then through the fields. (*Left: views of Vézelay and Asquins.*) The small road descends to a farm. Walk left around the farm and immediately after that, at a fork, turn left (from here the road is paved). After more than 200 m, just before the Cure: arrive on another asphalt road. (*For the municipal campsite, turn right here.*) Follow the asphalt road to the left, crossing a long bridge over the Cure. Arrive in **Asquins** and on the D951.

*From the North, several pilgrimage routes arrive in Asquins, to continue to Vézelay: from Paris (Voie de Sens), the Netherlands and Belgium (GR654, Via Campaniensis), Germany (Jakobsweg Trier) and Avallon.*

Cross the D951 and continue. The road bends to the left. Immediately after, at a fork with a tree in the middle: turn right (Rue de la Chèvrerie). After about 10 m: fork right (*Rue du Four, bronze scallop on the road surface*). After about 30 m: half right (Rue de l'Église), up, to the church of Saint Jacques le Majeur (*bronze scallop in front of the entrance*).



**Église Saint-Jacques-le-Majeur** (*Saint James the Great, 11th century*) is on the World Heritage List of Unesco, as a historical monument on one of the four major pilgrimage routes through France to Santiago de Compostela. In the church you will find a reliquary bust of Saint James (late 16th / early 17th century) and a stained-glass window with his image. In Asquins, Aymeric Picaud is said to have written the 'Codex Calixtinus', between 1135 and 1140 (see also p.7).

From the church: continue via Rue de l'Église (further on: Rue des Soeurs), which bends to the left, to (again) Rue du Four. Follow it to the right. A little further, at the junction with Rue de la Tuilerie: straight on. After about 80 m, at another junction (around a triangle with two trees and a white cross in the middle): turn left (Chemin de la Croix Blanche). (*Vézelay is on the hill in front of you.*) After about 350 m, at a fork near a farm: arrive on the Route des Chaumots.

**Abbreviation: Asquins – Vézelay, via La Cordelle (1,7 km)**

At the mentioned farm: turn left. At the next fork: turn half right, direction Vézelay (Rue de Bouillère).

**Marking:** from here keep following the red-white marking.

Take the next road on the right (Chemin de la Cordelle). The beginning is paved, the rest unpaved. At a junction of unpaved roads: straight on. At the junction with an asphalt road: straight on again, to the '**La Cordelle**' chapel.



**Chapelle Sainte-Croix ('La Cordelle')**. *The chapel was built around 1150. (At that time the front portal of the basilica was also built.) The chapel commemorated the call for the Second Crusade by Bernard of Clairvaux, in 1146. (The place where he preached, a little further away, is marked by a wooden cross, which replaces the original stone memorial cross.) Around 1232, the Franciscans founded their first monastery in France near the chapel. (The name 'La Cordelle' refers to the cord they wear around their waist.)*

*The monastery was destroyed several times, including during the Hundred Years War, the Wars of Religion and the Revolution. Only the chapel survived all this, albeit as a barn. The Franciscans did not return there until 1949.*

Near the chapel: continue in the same direction, via a narrower road, past the Croix de Bernard, up. Arrive on an asphalt road, near a sign 'La Cordelle' (pointing back): cross the road and continue in the same direction, further up, past a sign 'Porte Sainte Croix'. Arrive again on an asphalt road: cross it and continue straight on, to the basilica.

### Asquins – Vézelay[1], via de Route des Chaumots (3,7 km)

At the mentioned farm: turn right. The road immediately bends to the left. Follow the road for more than 2 km, gradually uphill: first along fields, then vineyards on the left (and views of Vézelay), then through forest. *(On the way, on the right: a restored shelter of winegrowers made of stacked stones.)*

At a junction: turn left, onto a semi-paved road. (The road on the right goes to 'La Vieille Borde'.) After 20 m: fork left, onto a dirt road (sign 'VTT / FCC6' and yellow marking), descending. *(When leaving the forest and after: views of Vézelay.)*

At the end of the forest edge (right): straight on (the route 'VTT / FCC' and the yellow markings turn right), via a field road, which descends first, then ascends and bends to the right.

Arrive on an asphalt road: cross it and continue straight on, via an unpaved road, which soon ends on the mentioned asphalt road again and a little further on the D951. Cross the D951 and continue up a small set of steps to a parking lot. Cross this and arrive again on the D951. Turn right for a moment and you are back at the starting point of your Tour de **Vézelay**: the Porte du Barle and the main street up to the basilica [1]. ◀

