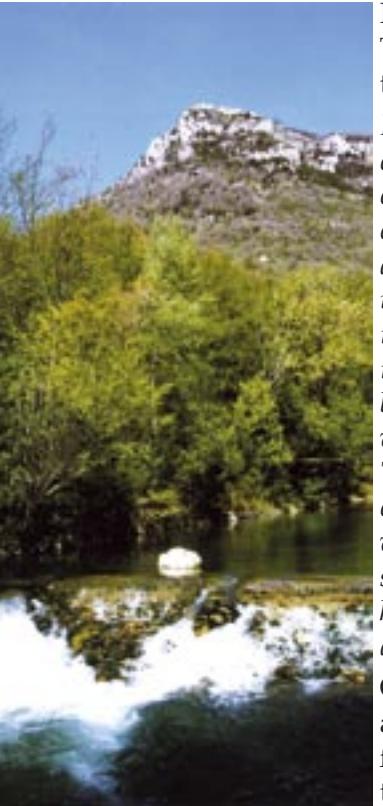


THE VALLEY OF THE LOUP

THE «GORGES DU LOUP» TOUR

The river Loup flows from its source near Andon situated at 1200 metres in the mountain range of Audibergue, for 45 kilometres to the Mediterranean at Villeuneuve-Loubet.

The Gorge du Loup starts at Pont du Loup, a village located 8 km West of Tourrettes sur Loup.



It is in Pont du Loup, at 8 km from Tourrettes sur Loup where starts the Gorges du Loup

Pont du Loup used to be a fashionable country resort at the end of the 19th century. Queen Victoria herself used to come regularly. By train or with horse drawn coaches, the elegant society used to come and lunch on fresh river trout, in the famous restaurants along the Loup. Then they would explore the breath-taking canyon and discover the vertiginous waterfalls.

The ruins of the high railway viaduct can still be seen. It was a remarkable work of architecture, its many arches spanning the river at an impressive height, unfortunately, it was blown up during the Provence landing in 1944.

On entering the gorge, one notices a great many indentations gouged from the rock and polished over time, called "marmites" in French.

The valley narrows between huge

cliffs where a sparse vegetation attempts to scale the vertical walls.

Along the road, between tunnels and bridges, the Gorges reveals its beauty in an environment at once both peaceful and wild. In and around the Gorges, one can enjoy many activities such as canyoning, hiking, climbing, speleology, to mention but a few.

On the banks of the river, there is a small chapel called the "Ermitage of Saint Arnoux". Named after an abbot from

Reims who, in the VIIth century, came to the gorge to retire in a small grotto nearby. The present chapel was built on XIIIth century by the Count Jacques de Grasse. This private place can not be visited.

After his wedding he was moved by the warmth of his subjects' welcome and, to thank them, he organised a ball even though it was in Lent, when this was forbidden by the Church. However, divine justice struck during the night and the merrymakers died. The terrified count prayed to Saint Arnoux and promised to build a chapel in the Gorge du Loup if he was spared. His prayer was heard, and he kept to his word. It then became a destination for pilgrims and it was said that miracles took place.

Further up the road, one arrives at a forty meter high waterfall called the Cascade of Courmes.

An old path carved into the cliff used to run under the waterfall and on up to the village of Courmes.

After that, one comes across the "Saut du Loup" (the Leap of the Loup), where the water comes over the cliff to fall, 90 metres below, into a foaming basin.

This is particularly spectacular at the beginning of the spring, when the snow has melted.

The Gorges has always been a very popular place. In the past, tourists would travel on the train linking Nice to Grasse and stop at Pont du Loup, where they would continue their journey up the gorge, in horse drawn carriages called "pataches".

Leaving the Gorges, one can then follow the left

bank of the river to reach Gourdon, an eagle's nest of a village overlooking the Valley of the Loup, or go to the village of Courmes on the right bank of the river and a starting point for many hikes. Much further up, one can discover the picturesque villages of Cipières, Gréolières and the skiing resort, Gréolières les Neiges.



LES GORGES DU LOUP



Cascade de Courmes

© Crédit photo: René Ghiselli : «Le Loup»

TOURRETTES SUR LOUP

LA VALLEE DU LOUP

CIRCUIT TOURISTIQUE DES GORGES DU LOUP



C'est au lieu-dit «Pont du Loup» à 8 km du village de **Tourrettes sur Loup**, que se situe l'entrée des **Gorges du Loup**.

Le Pont du Loup a vécu son heure de gloire à la fin du XIX^e siècle grâce à l'ouverture de la ligne des chemins de fer de Provence (Nice - Draguignan) et à ses célèbres hôtels où les visiteurs venaient apprécier les truites du Loup avant de s'aventurer dans les Gorges du Loup. Les arches grandioses du viaduc enjambant le Loup, dont on voit encore les ruines, furent dynamitées en 1944, causant ainsi la fermeture de la ligne.

En pénétrant dans les Gorges, le visiteur admire les nombreuses cavités naturelles que le temps a polies et que l'on nomme ici des marmites. La vallée se resserre, dominée par d'impressionnantes escarpements rocheux. De tunnels en ponts, les gorges font découvrir au visiteur leurs fabuleux paysages, une nature calme, sauvage et apaisante.

Au bord du Loup est bâtie une petite chapelle : **l'Ermitage de Saint Arnoux**, du nom d'un évêque de Reims qui s'était retiré dans une grotte, au VII^e siècle, pour fuir le monde. Une chapelle fut édifiée au XIII^e siècle par le Comte Jacques de Grasse, seigneur de Tourrettes.

Ce lieu privé ne se visite pas.

Cet édifice religieux a une légende : au XIII^e siècle, le comte Jacques de Grasse est accueilli avec effusion par ses sujets après son mariage. Il veut les remercier en donnant un bal. Malgré les interdictions, il choisit la période sacrée du Carême. La justice divine frappe les danseurs qui trépassent dans la nuit. Le Comte épouvanté invoqua Saint Arnoux et lui promit, s'il l'épargnait, d'élever une chapelle dans les Gorges du Loup. Epargné, il tint parole.

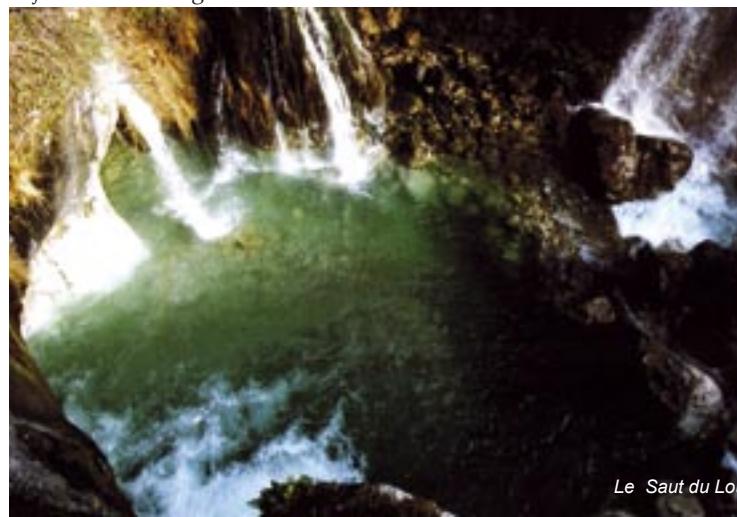
Remontant la route, le promeneur atteint un renfoncement

La rivière du Loup d'une longueur de 45 kilomètres prend sa source dans le massif de l'Audibergue au pied d'Andon à 1200m d'altitude et se jette dans la méditerranée à Villeuneuve-Loubet.



d'où jaillit une cascade haute d'une quarantaine de mètres : **la Cascade de Courmes**.

Un ancien sentier taillé dans la falaise passait sous la cascade pour rejoindre le village de Courmes.



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