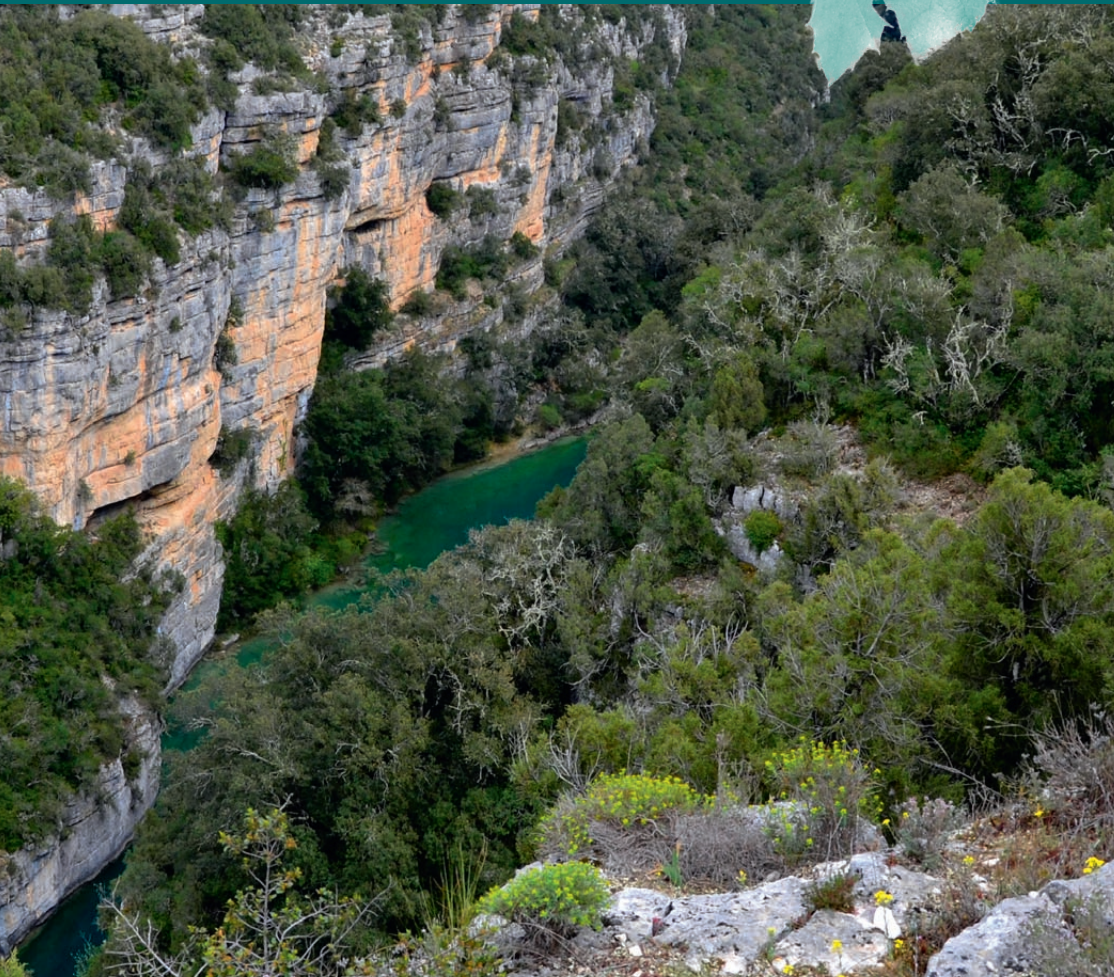


Town of Baudinard-sur-Verdon

Domaine des Éouvières

The Nourishing Forest



Discovery booklet

Domaine des Éouvières

The Nourishing Forest

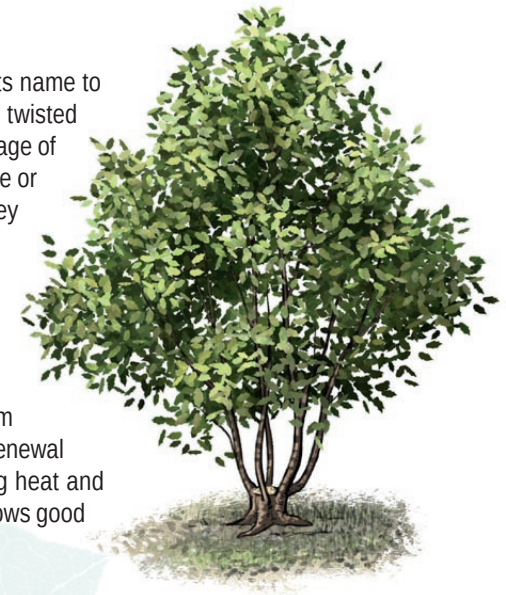
The Éouvières Forest is now a peaceful place for hiking and wildlife watching, while in the past, it hosted many unexpected human activities. For centuries, many generations of men and women have roamed these holm oak groves on a daily basis. Charcoal workers, woodsmen, shepherds, gatherers or farmers in search of their livelihood.

With leases from the landlord, some of them were allowed to work and live there while the poor were merely allowed to collect meagre resources to improve their daily lives.

The holm oak, king of the Éouvières

This tree, called *Eouve* in Provençal language, gave its name to this forest. The holm oak can be identified by its short, twisted trunk, dark bark and holly-like leaves. According to the age of the tree and the humidity they can vary in shape. Whole or toothed, sometimes thorny, but always with a fluffy grey underside.

Unlike the pubescent oak, which is widely represented around Lake St. Croix, its leaves are persistent and remains on the tree for several years. Holm oaks grow slowly but can reach a height of 20 metres and live for more than 1000 years. Once cut, they sprout back from the roots, forming new stems. This allows the natural renewal of the forest, which is cut every 30 to 50 years. Liking heat and sun, it can withstand cold and resist drought. It also shows good fire resistance.



How to identify an oak leaf?



Holm oak leaf...



...and pubescent oak leaf

The dead leaves

Although being evergreen, holm oaks regularly lose their leaves, which accumulate on the ground. These leaves were used for animal bedding and then used as a fertilizer. This practice, attested since the Neolithic period, is now abandoned. It caused significant damage to the forest by preventing the renewal of the humus, formed mainly from the decomposition of dead leaves.

The charcoal

Undoubtedly present since the Middle Ages, coal mining activity continued in the forest of Les Éouvières until the 1950s. Known for its quality, holm oak charcoal is produced in grinding wheels and later in metal furnaces. Charcoal was sold in coastal cities for heating and cooking. The families of charcoal makers, often of Italian origin, lived all year round in the forest in very rustic conditions.

Even today, a few small grey clearings in the forest remind us of the old charcoal activity. These patches of soil have been left barren by the heavy metals naturally contained in the wood and released during the transformation of the wood into charcoal.

A valuable bark

Very rich in tannin, oak bark was traditionally used in the leather industry. Soaking the skins in basins containing water and tanbark makes them soft and rotproof. The bark was removed in the spring when the sap rose. It was then dried, assembled into bundles and shipped to the tan mills for crushing. You may even notice trees with polished bark. The result of generations of wild boars getting rid of parasites by rubbing the trunks.

The acorns

Produced in abundance by holm oaks, it is a food of choice for some wild animals such as wild boars and squirrels. But pigs are also fond of them and in winter they provided the ewes with a valuable source of protein. A very old right of use, glandage, allowed poor farmers to bring their pigs into the forest to eat the acorns. Reduced in flour, holm oak acorns, less rich in tannin than those of more northern species, were also sometimes consumed by humans.

Gathering and hunting: ancestral activities

The forest provides many small resources, insignificant for us today but essential for the rural communities of the past. It provided dead wood for heating, berries or mushrooms and aromatic and medicinal plants in the clearings. As for truffles, forest owners have generally retained the benefit.

Since prehistoric times, the forest has also been a privileged hunting ground, which still plays an important role in neighbouring villages today. Wild boar and roe deer hunting is practiced in beaten hunt and the number of annual catches is fixed for each locality. Among small game, thrush and hare are locally prominent..

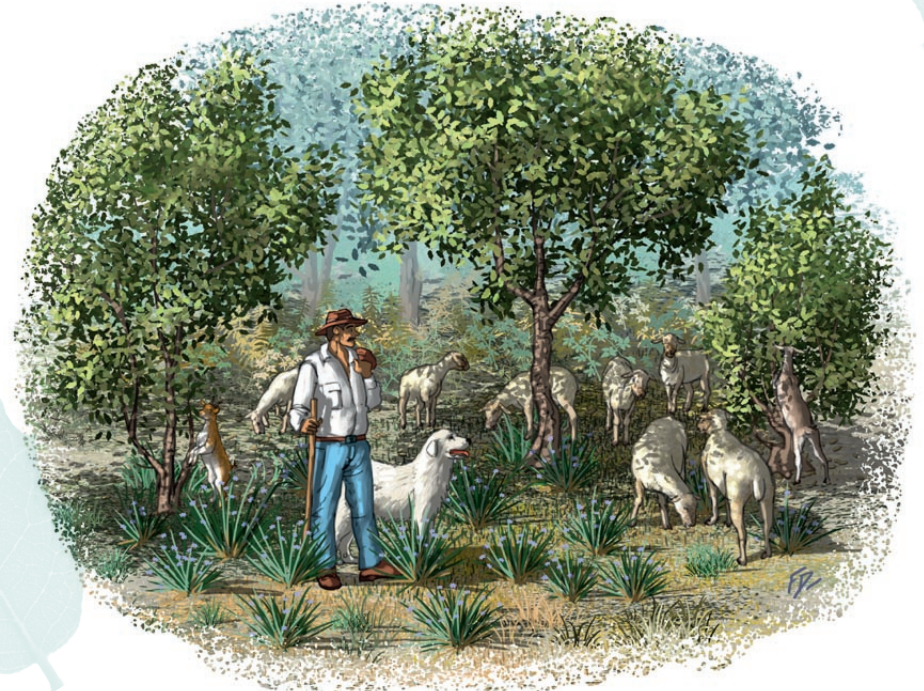
Grazing in the forest

In Provence the best soils are reserved for crops. Natural meadows are therefore rare.

The forest thus provided regular pastures for domestic cattle. This very old right of use, allowing herds, has sometimes caused significant damage to the forest, particularly by preventing the growth of young shoots.

Wildlife at Éouvières

The protection of the forest, combined with good management and proximity to the river, ensure the protection of a diversified fauna. The cliffs and caves of the lower gorges are home to many bird species and about ten bat species. The genet, a small nocturnal carnivore resembling a cat, is also reported. During your hike, you may encounter the jay of oaks. A beautiful bird with imitation skills that can simulate the screams of other birds or the meowing of a cat..





Sylvestre bridge

Lake of

Baudinard gorge
Le Verdon

Sainte-Croix dam

Ste-Croix bridge

Sulagran

D211

D111

3

1

D71

2

Oppidum of the
Castellas

D9

P

D71

Chapelle Notre-Dame
de la Garde

D9

Baudinard-sur-Verdon

P



Tour du lac de Sainte-Croix
long-distance hiking trail



Lake tour hiking trail



Loop walks



Car park



Viewpoint

The Conservatory

This 800-hectare estate was acquired in 1982 by the Conservatoire du littoral. Since then, the Public Institution has been in charge of its protection, with the help of the municipality of Baudinard-sur-Verdon, which manages it on a daily basis. This intervention prevented the construction of a tourist complex with a capacity of 30,000 beds and a network of roads in the hills overlooking the lake. Its opens access to the public should not make us forget the other accredited users such as farmers (aromatics, truffle growers, shepherds) and hunters who roam the massif all year round. Be considerate and respectful for a good coexistence.

Access and car park

- From Bauduen and Sainte-Croix-du-Verdon, get to the Sainte-Croix bridge and follow the D 71 road in the direction of Baudinard-sur-Verdon. Les Éouvières car park is 1.8 km away.
- From Montpezat: on the D 211, cross the pont Sylvestre and follow the D 9 to the junction with the D 71 that you take to the left. The parking is located 200 m from the crossroads

Picnic facilities are to be found at the unattended «Les Éouvières car park», at the crossroads of the various footpaths. However, you may prefer the security of a cctv car park in the village of Baudinard-sur-Verdon, which is an alternative starting point . In this case, allow 1 additional km return .



1 The charcoal trail

Length: 2 km - Vertical drop: 90 m - Difficulty: easy

A chance to experience contrasted forest environments. The arid slopes with beautiful cade junipers are followed by cooler valleys with pubescent oak and boxwood . Halfway, a viewpoint offers a remarkable view of the dam and the entrance to the Baudinard Gorge. The return path follows a dry valley, whose terraces are still clearly visible. These former cultivated plots are supported by terraces, dry stone walls that retain the soil but allow rainwater to infiltrate.

2 The Museau de la Colline Trail

Length: 4.3 km - Vertical drop: 150 m - Difficulty: easy

Among scrubland and oak woods, the path leads up to the Museau Crest and to the Baudinard Chapel for a breathtaking view over the vast lake up to the cliffs at the exit of the Grand Canyon. Many traces of ancient occupation can be seen along the way, such as former charcoal fireplaces or the remains of dry-stone enclosures and habitats. On the ridge, many aromatic plants may capture your senses.

3 The Baudinard Gorge Trail

Length: 6 km -Vertical drop: 260 m - Difficulty: average

An easy hike with a superb view of the cliffs of the lower gorges. Sculpted just like the Grand Canyon du Verdon 5 to 6 million years ago, the lower gorges are carved out of many caves, partially flooded by the Quinson Dam reservoir located 10 km downstream. These cavities, already densely occupied in the Neolithic period, were more recently used as a refuge by Protestants during the religious wars or by resistance fighters during the Second World War. The lower gorges are now considered an ecological corridor for many flying species. Bats in particular have found a sanctuary in these cavities.

Please help us protect this site: waste containers are to be found in the village. Remember that hikers have a priority, cyclists are required to slow down as pedestrians approach. Make sure you keep your dog on a leash.

Due to the high risk of fire, wild camping is strictly prohibited on the dry hills of the Haut Var.

The mainly stony paths require comfortable walking shoes.