



Cotdoussan - The valley of Castelloubon

At the heart of the little unsung valley of Castelloubon, this itinerary explores picturesque villages, with charms from the past, which have kept an architecture marked by the presence of water.



Duration : 2h00 Ascent : 280 m Difficulty : easy

- > Location : Juncalas, at 6 km from the south east of Lourdes by the D921b and D26
- > Car park : valley's house of Castelloubon
- > Paths markings: from 1 to 2 : no markers – from 2 to 3 : white/red marks – from 3 to 6 : yellow marks – from 6 to 2 : white/red marks

1 - From the valley's house, take the road opposite that climbs to Cheust. In the village, follow the road on the left, towards Ourdis-Cotdoussan.

2 - Leave this road at the end of Cheust to take the street on the left. Some meters after having crossed the river « Le Louey », take, on the right, a path that goes up to Cotdoussan. Join the St Jacques' church (you can visit it, call Mr and Mrs Beugin : 06 73 50 56 52).

3 - Take on the right the road that goes down to Ourdis-Cotdoussan (you can see, at the left, some « leytés » (kind of natural milk fridge), then further down a sawmill and a water mill).

4 - In the village, turn on the left after the wash house. Go until a road and cross it to continue straight on a shady path. Follow it on 1 km to a junction.

> variation path goes, on the left, until the village of Gazost (3km round trip, approx. 1h).

5 - Continue on the path that goes down. At the end of the wood, join further down the D7 through the ferns. Cross the road and go down the path opposite for a long time. Continue walking down to the chapel « St Roch », and by the road until the bridge on « Le Louey ».

6 - Do not pass it but take the path on the right that climbs until Cheust. Walk across the village, then take the road on the left to join the valley's house.



Church « St Jacques de Cotdoussan » – Registered on the list of the properties of « the way of Saint James »

Further to mergings of several villages, Ourdis-Cotdoussan has been created in the XIXth century. Located in the valley of Castelloubon, Cotdoussan has developed at the foot of a medieval castle, which was a residence of the counts of Lavedan. This fortress, established on a rocky peak, overlooked the valley and the village. There remains very little of this ancient castle.

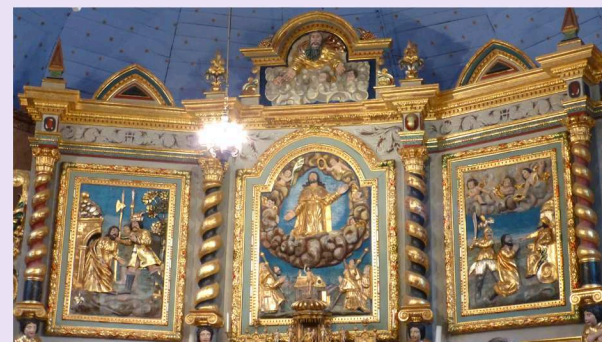
The pilgrims of « Santiago de Compostela », coming from Bagnères-de-Bigorre for the Gaves valley in the direction of Gavarnie, from Spain or Lourdes, passed by Cotdoussan. The church and its cemetery, established in the centre of the village on a splendid terrace, are held by high walls. This ensemble forms an indivisible whole that, originally, could be the seigniorial chapel.

Only a few elements of the original chapel remain, except some putlog holes (ancient supports for scaffolding) or reemployed stones. It was rebuilt completely in the XVIIth century, after the terrible earthquake in 1660. The church is composed with a unique nave, ended by a semi-dome apse on the east and a bell gable on the west. On either sides of the nave, two crypts are placed in the walls.

In the one on the south, there is the gravestone of a pilgrim interred in 1661, decorated with St James

scalop shell, the pilgrim's staff (a walking stick) and a flask.

The reredos (or altarpiece), centrepiece of the composition, sits imposingly in the choir of the church. Made by the workshops « Ferrère & Soustres », it is dedicated to « St Jacques le Majeur », known as « Santiago de Compostela ».



The iconography is inspired by the « Golden Legend », text written by Voragine at the XIIIth century. The two sides record and represent the life of St James. On the left, it shows the arrest of St James and his release from jail. On the right, it's about the decapitation of St James. In the centre, the painting represents the apotheosis of St James and his ascension into Heaven.