



Maison Rouge  
Musée des vallées cévenoles

All the Cévennes

in one museum

PRESS KIT







## PRESS RELEASE

### MAISON ROUGE - MUSÉE DES VALLÉES CÉVENOLES **ALL THE CÉVENNES IN ONE MUSEUM**

Why is the chestnut called the bread tree, the mulberry, the tree of gold ? This incredible collection of 10,000 exhibited pieces leads to understanding the life, the *savoir-faire* and the history of the Cévennes.

Man and the objects he made are central to the dialogue.

Like a legacy, the memory of this silk spinning mill-the first factory in the Cévennes to have installed the innovative Gensoul steam machine and the last one to have operated in France-is sublimated by a consciously contemporary renovation and extension.

Austere on the outside, the museum is discovered inside. The chestnut wood contrasts with the polished concrete to reveal its modernity. The rhythmic museography leads to a series of bookcases and cabinets of curiosities, beautiful, richly-composed displays, dramatisations or objects in the alcoves.

The outdoor discovery trail provides another look at this site's history and architecture. The ethnobotanical garden is a response to the apothecary's front office inside the museum.

The digital application permits another type of cultural mediation. Ideal for children, the trail also welcomes foreigners with English, German and Dutch translations.

This museum of history and ethnography is a 21st century museum.

Maison Rouge - Musée des vallées cévenoles is a new cultural and touristic destination in the heart of the Cévennes.

## A WORD FROM MAX ROUSTAN



**Maison Rouge** - Musée des vallées cévenoles is an excellent tool of transference.

The cevenol identity is anchored in the past and turned towards the future.

This museum is the testimony that explains to current and future generations the subsistence economy in the Cévennes. The harshness of life does not in any way exclude the wealth of man.

Maison Rouge is thus a landmark, but also a laboratory of experiences.

It is, I hope, a new asset that will radiate the influence of our region.

A handwritten signature in black ink, which appears to read 'Max Roustan'.

**Max ROUSTAN**

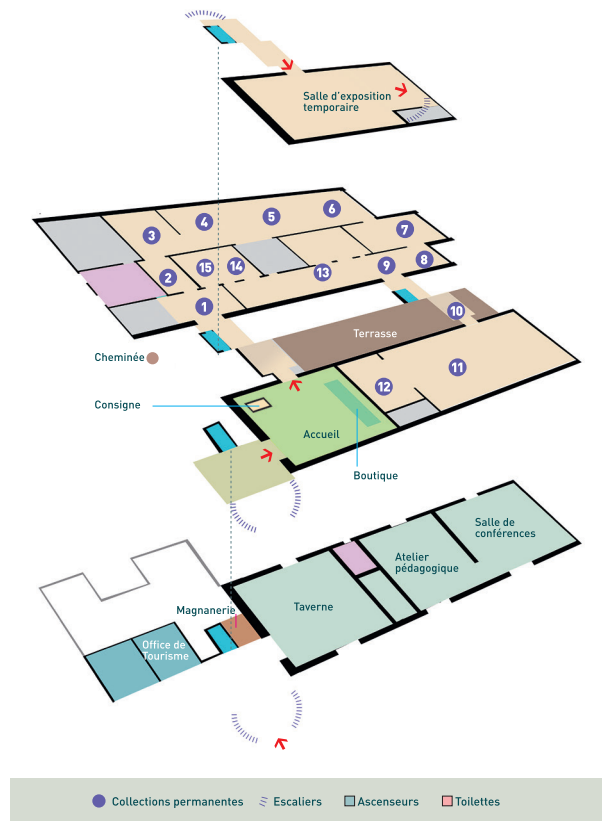
*President of Alès Agglomération*

# 1- THE MUSEUM

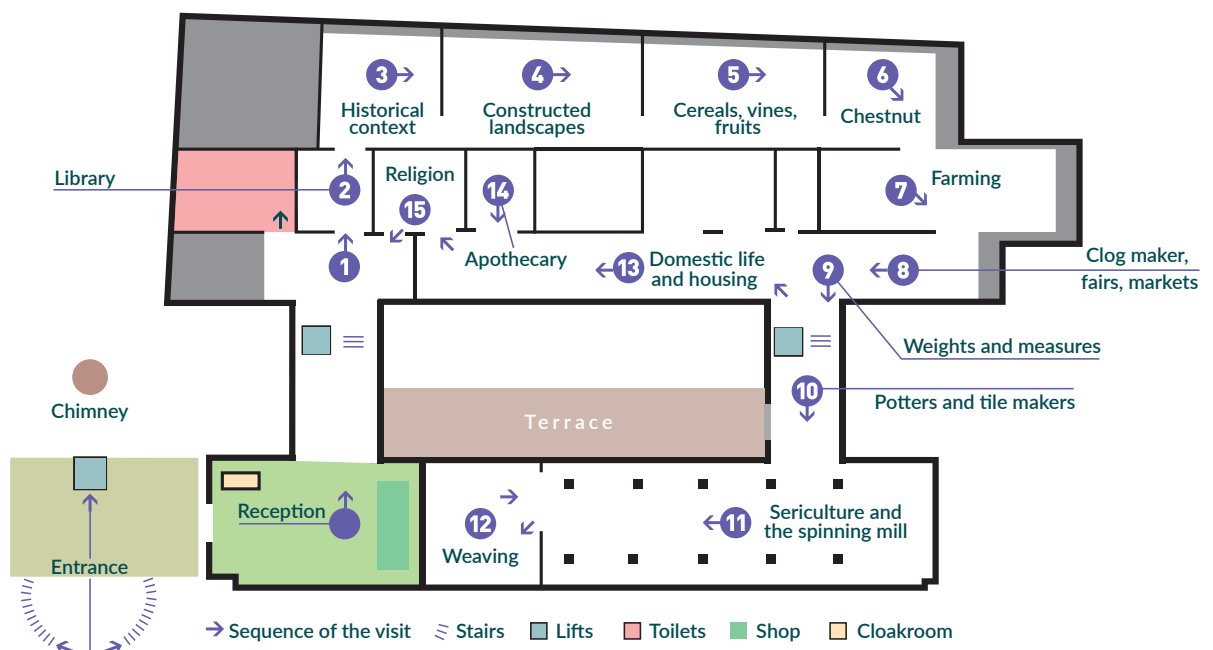
## A MUSEUM OF THE CÉVENNES

**Maison Rouge** - Musée des vallées cévenoles, a Museum of France since 1999, showcases copious ethnographic and historical collections as well as popular arts and traditions of rural life in the Cévennes from the 17<sup>th</sup> century to the present.

As a museum of history and ethnography, one of its main objectives is to highlight the people of the Cévennes as well as this area's tangible and intangible heritage. It is attentive to the word, the expression, the *savoir-faire* of individuals and groups.



### Floor plan for the permanent collection





# THE MUSEOGRAPHICAL ROUTE

## 1 Introduction

The culture and identity of the Cévennes are highlighted throughout the museum's spaces. The displayed objects are witnesses to a shared history, conveyers of memory charged with commemorating those who created, made and used them. Beyond this material legacy, is the entire intangible heritage associated with it made of stories, know-how, and customs. The video in this first room presents a series of old and contemporary portraits of people from the Cévennes. Their faces are reflections of this region's living history. Everyone can own an object or a memory evoking this cultural identity.

For many years, the Cévennes was a rural area where man had to adapt to survive by exploiting the territory's natural resources. This way of life marks the identity and character of its population which was constantly pushed to the economy of means. This tradition is highlighted throughout the museum's themes.

*« The Cévennes is not only a beautiful landscape, it is not only forests, rivers, this austere loneliness ... Its originality goes beyond : it resides in its history and its people. »*

*Philippe JOUTARD (cévenol notebook)*



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## 2 Louis Isaac Soubeyran library

Owned by Louis Isaac Soubeyran, this reconstructed library recalls the importance of writing and reading in the Cévennes. Displaying the writings of the Enlightenment, such as Diderot's Encyclopedia, this prestigious bookcase contrasts with a writing desk of more modest origins. This juxtaposition highlights the practice of writing and reading in French, sometimes the language medium. For many years, Occitan was the language spoken by the entire population.

Through reading the Bible and religious psalms in French the Protestants were the first in the Cévennes to practice bilingualism regardless of their social origin. This knowledge subsequently allowed them to access senior positions in the public service.

*Huguenot mirror*

*After the repeal of the Edict of Nantes in 1685 that criminalised the practice of the Protestant religion, the faithful take up the habit of hiding religious books behind Huguenot mirrors. Such objects are thus emblematic in the Cévennes.*

### ③ Historical context

The cévenol identity is intimately tied to the area's historical memory. Marked by Christianity in the Middle Ages, it rallies unanimously to Protestantism during the Reformation, unlike the rest of the country. The revocation of the Edict of Nantes forces the Protestant church into hiding and inscribes the Cévennes as a land of resistance and refuge. This reputation is renewed during the Second World War when Jews, antifascists and deserters are welcomed.

Suffering from a demographic decline amplified by the First World War, new populations settle in the 1970s. They participate in the reinvention of life and farming in the Cévennes. This story is presented as a timeline illustrated with different documents and objects.

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### ③ Man and his environment

Since the beginning, man has taken elements from the environment that allow him to survive. In a rural, traditional society like the Cévennes, man lives in close harmony with nature. He takes minerals, plants and animals and then transforms them. The popular knowledge thus created is then transmitted from generation to generation. From the mineral kingdom the cévenol extracts stone for buildings and the manufacture of tools, ore for metals, coal for energy, clay for pottery, sand for glass. Plants are sources of food for humans and animals. They have medicinal, veterinary and meteorological functions and are raw materials for rural handicrafts. Finally, fishing and hunting provide nourishment or protection from pests.



*Lo Brusc (or beehive in Occitan) :*

*This trunk regroups nature's three kingdoms that man has used to organise his daily life. This hive with a traditional shape is made with a trunk of chestnut, covered with a slate of schist and houses a colony of black bees from the Cévennes. It is used to produce honey.*



#### ④ A sculpted landscape

The ordered layout of *bancels* (terraces in Occitan) is a distinguishing element of the Cévennes landscape. Far from being completely natural, the countryside is the result of the long and painful work of generations of farmers who have built, maintained and cultivated this characteristically difficult environment. These earthworks and cultivation of the land, mostly done by hand, deeply bind the peasants to their soil.

Composed of dry stone walls, the terraces have several functions : retain the earth and fight against erosion ; create arable strips of topsoil; protect from precipitation by preventing gully erosion ; and supply water to springs during drought periods.

The rural space is organised in such a way that each family can live self-sufficiently on their land.

##### *Back basket for transport :*

*Unlike low valleys or the plains, animals (cattle or equines) could not access the terraces' long, narrow surfaces. Without their help, terracing and farming were much more difficult, forcing the men to use their arms and backs. They carried soil and manure in baskets made from chestnut strips.*



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#### ⑤ Agricultural output

Since the Middle Ages, the Mediterranean region's classic agricultural production, such as cereal, olives and grapes, has also been cultivated in the Cévennes. The irrigable and enclosed vegetable garden played a major role in supplementing household nutrition in the Cévennes's self-sufficient economy.

Apple, pear, plum, cherry and other fruit trees planted in the fields ensured the desserts of everyday life a good part of the year. Sometimes, the fruits were even exported to the cities.

Farmers' lives followed the pace of the agricultural calendar that depended on the seasons, the sun and the moon's influence.



## 6 The chestnut

The chestnut or bread tree is a founding element of the cévenol identity. It was already known in the Cévennes between the 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> centuries. But population growth from the 16<sup>th</sup> century onward led to an unprecedented boom in chestnut cultivation. Present in everyday life, the chestnut is the cévenol's first source of food. Titanic town and country planning were needed to replace the forest with chestnut orchards. Its rot-proof wood is used from cradle to coffin; its leaves as food and litter for livestock. In the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, "the ink" disease infected the chestnut groves coinciding with a rural exodus that accelerated the abandonment of the chestnut tree. Only in recent years have attempts at rehabilitation multiplied with the diversification of varieties and the recognition of the fruit's nutritional and flavour characteristics.



### *Footwear :*

*Shoes with a wooden sole and long spiky tips to trample dehydrated chestnuts placed in a trough. This operation, called pisage (trample in Occitan), aimed to shell the chestnut to obtain the fruit. Another more common technique was to place the chestnuts in a linen bag and then beat them on a wooden block. Machines known as pisaries (tramplers in Occitan) replaced these methods at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.*

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## 7 Farming activities

The Cévennes farmhouse had to function in quasi-self-sufficiency. Each family raised its own sheep, pigs or goats. Apiaries were also on the properties. Honey was the only source of sugar for these families.

In 2011, the World Heritage Committee inscribed the Causses and the Cévennes on the World Heritage List as a living cultural landscape of Mediterranean farming. This denomination refers to farming, landscape or socio-economic activities in which agriculture

is intimately associated with livestock in natural pastures. This inscription highlights the thousand-year shaping of landscapes through agricultural and pastoral activity in a singular relationship between man and nature.



## 8 9 Fairs and markets

From one to 15 fairs and markets per year paced village life in the Cévennes. At these gatherings, farm produce, livestock and tools were sold or purchased, and seasonal workers were hired. As economic sites, they also had a strong cultural and social connotation. They gave the peasant a break from his daily life.

Until the 18<sup>th</sup> century, the *Ancien Régime* society was subject to feudal organisation. Each city and diocese in France had the right to establish its system of measurements and to collect rights to the measurement. Oats were not weighed like chestnuts, likewise for liquids, which were measured depending to their components in stone, copper, tin or glass containers. The Revolution abolished this diversity of measurement and unified quantification through the metric and decimal system. However, this required a transitional period of half a century before its permanent adoption.

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## 10 Pottery

Many potters of earth and tiles have practiced their art in the chalky and clayrich Cévennes. These terracotta productions date back to early history, but their reputation was established with the manufacture of horticultural vases in the 18<sup>th</sup> century and enjoyed remarkable success in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. These Anduze vases, large glazed pots in the shape of overturned bells sitting on small pedestals, decorated all the parks and the orange groves of France and Navarre at that time.

*Anduze vase:*

*The Anduze vase is manufactured 15 km from Saint-Jean-du-Gard. Its shape remains unchanged since its creation in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. Still marketed throughout France and the world, this pottery retains a strong link with the local identity.*





## 11 12 Silk

Sericulture in the Cévennes surges in the 18<sup>th</sup> century following the 1709 cold snap which severely damages the chestnut plantations. To fix the economy, a decision is made to invest in planting mulberry trees, the silkworm's preferred food. The region is laid out : terraces are built, hydraulic systems are installed and housing is modified to create space to cultivate silkworms.

### *Birth of a silk thread*

*The silkworm's mouth secretes a thread called a «drool» which it deposits in successive layers in figure-eight movements to form its cocoon, a cavity in which it locks itself to complete its chrysalis or pupal phase. This slime of 20 microns in diameter can reach a length of 1,200 to 1,500 metres. It is made of silk fibre and sericin which bonds the threads between them to give a homogeneous appearance. The sericin dissolves in a 90° water bath and the silk is drawn.*

### *The small bags :*

*The eggs of the mulberry tree silkworm (Bombyx mori) are called seeds. They are incubated for 15 days, the time necessary for the larvae to hatch. For many years, the female body's warmth incubated the seeds, which were placed in small bags under women's clothes. The small bags were then replaced by castelets (or little castles in Occitan for these metal or wood incubators).*





## The hosiery business

The stocking loom or knitting machine (invented by William Lee, an English pastor) takes root throughout France from the second half of the 17<sup>th</sup> century until the late 18<sup>th</sup> century (Paris 1656, Lyon and Avignon 1662, Orange 1667, Nîmes 1674, Marseille 1676, Montpellier 1702 and Troyes 1751).

The industry developed markedly in Nîmes and other nearby towns in the Cévennes :

Alès, Anduze, Saint-Jean-de-Gard, Monoblet, Lasalle, Sauve, Durfort, Saint-Hyppolite-du-Fort, Ganges, Saint-Laurent-le-Minier, Sumène, Valleraugue, Le Vigan, Aulas, Aumessas, Avèze ...

With the development of sericulture, silk stockings will increasingly supplant the production of wool or cotton socks. Ganges was a major centre of this industry which established the reputation of the cévenol workshops. Its creations, mostly for export, used silk in all its forms.

In 1788, this business provided work in the Ganges region to 36 manufacturers who used 4,000 looms which were serviced by 12 loom makers with 30 workers, 300 embroiderers and 4 dyers.

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## 13 Domestic life and housing

The museography presents reproductions of interiors of a typical cévenol house in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century. It shows the furniture, domestic utensils and their different functions. It also evokes the stages of a cévenol life, often associated with a religious practice.

### *Schoolbag :*

*This schoolbag made with simple wooden boards recalls the time in 1881 when school in France became compulsory, secular and free. At first it was compulsory only for six to twelve years old children. After earning a certificate of studies, most children left school to work (The girls went to work at the silk spinning mills).*

*Priority was given to educating boys. In 1836, girls are permitted to attend school but it is not compulsory or free. For many years, classes were not mixed. Schools in the villages, however, were an exception. Due to their small numbers, girls and boys were grouped together in the same class as early as the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Since 1975, gender diversity has been compulsory in French public education.*



#### 14 The apothecary's front office

This installation using the old wooden and glass cabinets of a former apothecary in Saint-Jean-du-Gard permits broaching the subjects of body care, medicine and the use of plants.

##### Personal hygiene :

In the past, only uncovered body parts were washed. The use of the washstand, bowl and earthenware pitcher began at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Running water as well as toilets inside the home arrived very late in the rural world. For many years, defecation was done outside or in chamber pots (or night vases), or in chairs with cutout seats for the sick.

##### Medicine :

Since ancient times, man has sought to alleviate pain and fight disease. Over time, empirical knowledge led to the compilation of a popular pharmacopoeia based on medicinal plants. These recipes were written or transmitted orally within families. At the same time, scholarly medicine and pharmacies developed in the towns.

##### Use of plants :

The use of plants for medicine, dye, food and fun was widespread in the daily lives of adults and children. This forgotten know-how is recalled both in the museum and the park's ethnobotanical garden.



## 15 The religious phenomenon

This space evokes the birth of an awareness of identity that is broader than the history of Protestantism. The sense of belonging to a persecuted minority and the need to resist exists in the two Protestant and Catholic communities that form the cévenol identity.

At the end of this visit of the permanent collection, four objects synthesise the museum's main themes : the basin reminds us of silk ; the spiky shoes evoke the chestnut ; the hoe symbolises the sculpted landscape ; and the folding stool represents the seats used by the Protestants during their outdoor assemblies. Like an endless loop, transparency makes it possible to finish where one has begun : the back of the mirror reveals the Bible's hiding place.



### The outdoor trail :

#### The ethnobotanical garden

This garden, a rich ethnobotanical selection, has been created in response to the museum's collection. As a nod to the apothecary's front office, Alain Renaux, an ethnobotanist with the National Centre for Scientific Research (CNRS), created a cévenol garden. A fitting illustration can be found in his book, "The Knowledge of Herbs, the Plant and the Child of Long Ago" published by Nouvelles Presses du Languedoc.

The discovery trail in the Maison Rouge's park permits a greater understanding of this entire site. Twenty panels revisit the spinning mill's history and contrast yesterday's images with today's facades. Detailed explanations provide a different perspective on this fundamental cévenol industrial heritage.

The Anduze vases are now home to citrus trees. A mandarin tree, two orange trees which are at least 70 years old, a lemon tree of the same age and younger lemon trees are planted on the ground floor.

Strawberry and pomegranate trees can be found on the terrace.



# THE PROJECT'S GENESIS : ONE OF THE REGION'S RICHEST COLLECTIONS

The Musée des vallées cévenoles was born originally from the passion of Daniel Travier. Many years ago, aware of the absolute necessity to convey the cultural heritage of this country, he undertook to collect objects, tools, documents, information ... all testimony linked to the history and everyday life of the Cévennes.

The embryonic collection was presented to the public for the first time in 1964 as part of a temporary exhibition. Then in 1969, based on the 1901 law permitting the creation of non-profit organisations, the collection became a permanent exhibition on private premises. In 1979, the town of Saint-Jean-du-Gard acquired a former 17<sup>th</sup> century *relais d'affenage* (or animal feed barn/stopover) and restored it. A large section was used to house the collection and it was inaugurated in 1982. On this occasion, the museum organised a symposium dedicated to "museums of identity" or museums of history and ethnography, a first in France.

Since then, the collection and its viewing public have expanded. The number of annual visitors grew from 6,800 to 22,000 in the 1990s. These numbers declined to 15,000 and 18,000 annual visitors in the 2000s before its closure.

The museum's collection had become too large for its limited space.

Although endowed with attractive architectural features, the site had weaknesses in terms of conservation and presentation: insufficient storage, shop space, video and interactive areas, not enough rooms for temporary exhibitions, conferences, demonstrations, educational activities or workshops to prepare exhibitions. The opportunity to invest in the former Maison Rouge silk spinning mill appeared. Enhanced with remarkable architecture, registered in the Inventory of Historical Monuments, brimming with history and memory and perceived as a symbol, this site was ideal for the realisation of the Alès Agglomération's ambitious museographic project for the territory.

## DANIEL TRAVIER, COLLECTOR AND CREATOR

*Daniel Travier, president of the Friends of the Maison Rouge association, is an outstanding collector. For more than 50 years, he collected diverse objects, listened and gathered information about life in the Cévennes. Founder of the museum, author of its research and cultural project, he presided over the Friends of the Borgne Valley association, beneficiary of the collection.*

*His investment over several decades is the genesis of the project.*

*Thanks to him, one of the richest and most documented regional collections essential to a museum of history and ethnography is shared with the greatest number.*

**THE MUSEUM EXHIBITS ABOUT 10,000 OBJECTS OUT OF ITS COLLECTION OF 30,000.**





## MAISON ROUGE, A DISTINCTIVE AND UNIQUE BUILDING

### A REGISTERED NATIONAL MONUMENT

This industrial complex has all the characteristics of the dominant features of large-capacity silk spinning mills in the Alès district: Alès, Saint-Ambroix, Anduze, Lasalle, Saint-Jean-du-Gard and the Borgne Valley. This typology is also represented in the Vigan district. Maison Rouge is remarkable in the corpus of spinning mills because it is perfectly representative, while being exceptional by its architectural and ornamental treatment. Note the monumental horseshoe staircase with a double flight of 48 steps with terracotta balusters that alternate with monolithic stones carved in sandstone. The chimney behind the facade is the last one in Saint-Jean-du-Gard. With a height of 25 metres at its crown, it was first built during the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, as confirmed by the photographs of its construction or even earlier ones still showing the original square-section chimney.

A windmill and a tea room overlook the river in the park behind the spinning mill. The windmill was built in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century to operate a water pump. Resting on a stone base, the square floor plan has 12 lower openings and ends in a truncated pyramid. A very simple wrought iron balustrade caps the top. The tea room, a small two-storey stone-clad brick building, topped by a flat roof adorned with a stone balustrade, denotes a surprising aesthetic quest in an industrial setting. It seems that this pavilion, akin to the colonial style, was designed after 1850 for relaxation or to receive guests in an exotic setting evoking the Far East and the origins of silk.

**Maison Rouge has been registered on the Inventory of Historic Monuments since 2003.**





## MAISON ROUGE RETAINS THE MEMORY OF CÉVENOL SILK

This spinning mill frames the entire history of French silk spinning.

It was on this site that France's first industrial spinning mill was set up with the famous Gensoul process, an innovative method which used steam to heat the basins' water and made it possible to operate in larger workshops in 1809. Maison Rouge was also France's last spinning mill in activity, closing in 1965. In 1856, Saint-Jean-du-Gard, with a population of 4,450 inhabitants, was home to 23 establishments that worked with silk employing 1,090 women and 150 men.

From 1836 to 1838, Jean-Henri Léon Molines builds a 106-basin spinning mill known as the *Grande Rouge* (Big Red). He installs a steam engine on the ground floor of the former *Grande Fabrique* (large factory) which had been decommissioned as a spinning mill. The cocoons are stored on its three upper floors. In 1839, Louis Soubeyrand takes over the business. He builds the guardian's pavilion at the entrance to the property, as well as some of the structures on the terrace overlooking the monumental horseshoe-shaped staircase. These constructions would later be used as a hot room and housing for the workers. In 1880, as part of the Soubeyrand estate, the Lyon-based Camel Brothers and Co. (Barthélémy and Antonin), acquires the spinning mill. In 1881, the company enlarges the building by adding a silk-weaving workshop covered by a saw-tooth roof, an example of cutting-edge architecture for the time. The Camel company also builds another building next to the guardian's pavilion which it uses as an

office on the ground floor, an apartment for the director on the first floor and rooms to store cocoons on the upper floors.

From 1900 to 1918, Tresca, a Lyon-based company, owns and operates Maison Rouge. It builds (or renovates) another spinning mill on the property called *Petite Rouge* (Little Red), specialised in the production of class-one thread, which is inaugurated in 1900.

In 1918, Henri Barthélémy Bertrand, a silk manufacturer from Lyon, already the owner of spinning mills in southern France, acquires Maison Rouge.

In the 1920s, the spinning mill comes under the control of the *Cie Générale des Soies de France et d'Indochine de Lyon* (General Silk Company of France and Indochina of Lyon), which will become the *Compagnie Générale des Soies de France et d'Importation* (General Company of French Silks and Importation). It remakes the roof of the *Grande Rouge*, replacing the wood frame which had been degraded by steam with a metal frame and the old Roman tiles with interlocking tiles that can still be seen today.

In 1956, the last silk spinning factories of southern France merge into a company, *La Filature Française de Soie des Cévennes* (The French Silk Spinning Factory of the Cévennes), and in 1957 equip Maison Rouge with automatic Japanese machines.

In January 1965, Maison Rouge closes its doors definitively and with it comes to an end France's last silk spinning mill.

## 2 - THE DESIGN OF MAISON ROUGE - MUSÉE DES VALLÉES CÉVENOLES



*"Set on what remains of the land and its history, a modern extension stretches along the length of the historical buildings. In the form of parallel strips, it follows the footprints of the narrow plots which developed perpendicularly to the river Gardon to fetch the canal's precious water.*

*The former Grande Rouge silk spinning mill, built in 1838, flanked by a grand, monumental, double-convoluted staircase, the annexes, the boiler room and the chimney built in the middle of the 19th century, are cleaned and restored with care, preserving the memory of its industrial past.*

*The extension, sober and austere in the style of cévenol architecture, responds to the decorative luxuriance of the Grande Rouge. It stretches to the south and takes*

*"Held between past and present, between two architectural forms, five major themes of identity are narrated and followed in a precise order of progression: the sculpted landscape, the bread tree, the tree of gold, the home and domestic life and religion. Set design places the object at the centre of the discourse and stages it in its original function.*

*It is made accessible and alive, exposed without ostentation and bears witness to the intelligence of the cévenol civilisation. From the beginning of the visit, the library room proclaims the exhibition's encyclopaedic*

*off to the west so as to reveal the facade and the spinning mill's original gallery.*

*The new section consists of three elongated spaces, juxtaposed between long walls sheathed in shale stone. The north and south facades, built with a wood and metal skeletal structure, incorporating solid and glazed features, are dressed in chestnut wood to form a latticed partition.*

*Fruit of a close collaboration between architects and the museum designer, the architecture, the landscape and the museum trail set the stage for visitors to discover this unique and timeless place."*

**Vurpas Architects, Lyon**

*tone. The scenography aspired to highlight the work of a life of research and collection, the erudition of a man, an emissary of lives.*

*The objects speak in a silent language of knowledge that is revealed by their arrangement. The writing, the image and the voice participate in their testimonies. The route's progression will reveal the modernity of a people through the memory of its objects."*

**Marion Lyonnais, set designer**  
**Fakestorybird, Vers-Pont-du-Gard**



## THE PERFECT FUSION OF A CÉVENOL SILK SPINNING MILL AND A CONTEMPORARY MUSEUM

The main body of the stone and wood-sided museum stands in the place of the demolished silk-weaving workshop with the saw-toothed roof. This resolutely simple rectangle is placed and aligned parallel to the silk spinning mill commonly known as Maison Rouge.

While its facade is austere, inside it reveals chestnut wood that contrasts with polished concrete and thus expresses its modernity. The rhythmic museography successively offers libraries and cabinets of curiosity, beautiful, richly composed showcases, stagings or objects tucked in alcoves.



### TOTAL AREA 3 623 M<sup>2</sup>

Reception .....	192 m <sup>2</sup>	Storage and logistics .....	440 m <sup>2</sup>
Permanent exhibitions .....	1 134 m <sup>2</sup>	Silkworm farm .....	43 m <sup>2</sup>
Temporary exhibitions .....	234 m <sup>2</sup>	Circulation .....	352 m <sup>2</sup>
Teaching workshop .....	127 m <sup>2</sup>	Picnic area / Tourist Office .....	120 m <sup>2</sup>
Conference room .....	160 m <sup>2</sup>	Annexes and technical premises .....	796 m <sup>2</sup>
Administration .....	132 m <sup>2</sup>		

As the area is liable to flooding, the ground floor is used for parking by the museum staff as well as deliveries and handling. The roof is covered in vegetation and which greater thermal insulation. The outside car park includes two areas for coaches and 70 spaces for automobiles.

## MAISON ROUGE - MUSÉE DES VALLÉES CÉVENOLES, A SIGNIFICANT REGIONAL FACILITY

Grand Alès (which preceded Alès Agglomération) acquired Maison Rouge site in August 2002 in order to house Maison Rouge - Musée des vallées cévenoles. This project has evolved considerably in the last 15 years.

Alès Agglomération, a community of communes, is the public contracting authority for the transfer of the Musée des vallées cévenoles to Maison Rouge. It has set up a steering committee which represents its main partners : Europe, France (represented by the French Museums Directorate, the Regional Directorate of Cultural Affairs (DRAC), and the sub-prefecture), the Languedoc-Roussillon Regional Council, the Gard County Council, the Cévennes National Park, the Chamber of Commerce and Industry (CCI), and the commune of Saint-Jean-du-Gard.

It has also set up a research committee which is represented by state government services (the DRAC and the Museums of France) of the Languedoc-Roussillon region and Gard County. Alès Agglomération manages Maison Rouge - Musée des vallées cévenoles. Ms Carole Hyza, curator of Alès Agglomération (the Pierre André Benoit and Colombier) museums is also the director of Maison Rouge - Musée des vallées cévenoles.

### Financial commitment

Alès Agglomération .....	33,27 % .....	3 212 200 €
State regional museums .....	25,86 % .....	2 497 000 €
Historical Monument Fund .....	6,21 % .....	600 000 €
Gard County Council .....	15 % .....	1 448 400 €
Occitan Region .....	15 % .....	1 448 400 €
European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD) .....	3,11 % .....	300 000 €
EAFRD on museography .....	1,55 % .....	150 000 €



### 3 - A 21ST CENTURY MUSEUM



#### A MUSEUM WITH MULTIPLE RESOURCES

**Maison Rouge - Musée des vallées cévenoles** is a special place that preserves and enhances the *cévenol* heritage. Beyond its natural functions of conservation, research and scientific studies, the museum is also a place of memory, a tribute to the women and men who struggled to create and maintain the *cévenol* countryside. The collections gathered here make sense only if they bear witness to these men and women. Intrinsically, the museum is above all an act of recognition of the *cévenol* culture within the framework of its Occitan and French components.

This place of restored memory is intended for the permanent inhabitants of the Cévennes, allowing some to become more aware of the richness and value of their culture, too long denigrated and in danger of trivialisation. It also seeks to give an awareness of identity and a cultural rooting to others, especially the youngest.

For visitors, it is a major place to interpret the Cévennes, offering keys to understanding and leading to a reflective and profound discovery.

A place of cultural development for the permanent population that is based on memory yet favours current life and cultural fulfilment.

A place for tourists which adds to the area's activities and consequently their time spent in the Cévennes.

A thought-provoking place that participates in developing new economic activities while providing a legacy for the revival or renewal of traditional activities in agriculture, crafts or hospitality.

*A digital application offers an interactive cultural experience.*

*Twenty tablets and 20 visual guides are available as well as a downloadable smartphone application. Visitors from France, England, Germany and the Netherlands are encouraged to have a different museum adventure: browsing and enjoying the museum while also learning.*



## THE MUSEUM TEAM

Curator of the Alès Agglomération Museums ..... Carole Hyza  
 Maison Rouge conservation attaché ..... Claire Champetier

**Sixteen employees work at the museum.** Most live in Saint-Jean-du-Gard and the surrounding area.

**Five employees work at the three museums** in conservation, exhibition management, administration, documentation and events communications.

## MAISON ROUGE HAS TWO MISSIONS: CULTURAL AND TOURISTIC

Maison Rouge's exceptional patrimonial context is in perfect coherence with its collections and themes. This makes it an ideal setting to highlight silk, the museum's major identity leitmotif. Maison Rouge provides the appropriate space for an old set of silk spinning equipment to be reassembled.

Its conference room and educational workshop are additional and essential facilities.

Maison Rouge - Musée des vallées cévenoles is a member of Gard County Tourist Sites club.

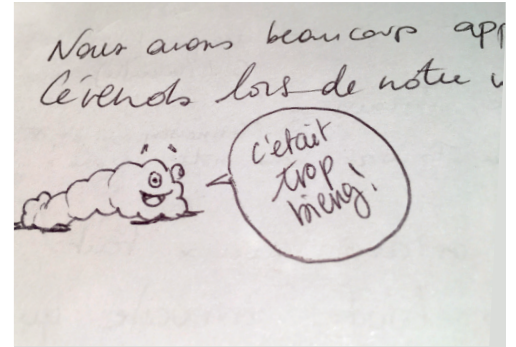
The museum is one of the area's most significant sites. It offers keys to understanding the Cévennes and broadens the inventory of regional tourist attractions (the Cévennes National Park, the Cévennes steam train, and the Bamboo Park).

# THE PUBLIC

## VISITORS

The museum has admitted 53,215 visitors between its opening on September 19<sup>th</sup> 2017 and the end of December 2018.

A satisfaction survey carried out the first summer revealed that most visitors are at least 45 years old and hail mainly from Gard County. A problem of outdoor signage at the museum was raised and has since been resolved. The satisfaction is general and the average visit is more than two hours.



## FAMILIES

Guided tours and family workshops are offered every month and during the school holidays. Visitors with a smartphone can also download an application that provides an audio-guided and a fun educational visit to the museum. This free application can be downloaded on Google and Apple stores.

**Foreign visitors:** guided tours in English and German are available from July 15<sup>th</sup> to August 30<sup>th</sup> and by reservation all year-round.

The free mobile application with an audio-guided tour and a fun educational visit are available in English, German and Dutch.

## STUDENTS

Thematic workshops and educational kits are available for students from kindergarten to high school. The museum implements annual projects with the Ministry of National Education and the teaching staff. The first exhibition was held in October 2018 around the theme "an installation : a thread, some threads, a weft".

**Leisure centres** are also available for visits and thematic workshops related to the permanent collections and temporary exhibitions.

**Groups** can make reservations for free or guided tours throughout the year. Visiting times range from 50 minutes to one-and-a-half hours to discover the collections, the history of Maison Rouge silk spinning factory and silk in the Cévennes as well as current or temporary exhibitions.

The museum educators adapt their visits according to the group's social interests or physical requirements.







## 2018 TEMPORARY EXHIBITIONS

The temporary exhibitions at Maison Rouge make it possible to highlight subjects that are more contemporary or less developed than in the permanent collections.

### SILK DREAMS, THE WOVEN WORKS OF MARY LECLÈRE

March 30<sup>th</sup> - September 2<sup>nd</sup> 2018

Marie Leclère, now a resident of Saint-Jean-du Gard, weaves silk as she lives, independently and indifferent to fashion or trends. Weaving is essential to her life and she creates unique, surprising works.

She envisages sculpture in her intuitive intertwining while she searches ceaselessly for colours and form.

### THE STAR-SPANGLED CÉVENNES, PHOTOGRAPHS BY CAROLE REBOUL

September 19<sup>th</sup> - December 30<sup>th</sup> 2018

The temporary exhibition of the poetic and original photographs of Carole Reboul celebrates the very recent certification, International Dark Sky Reserve, awarded to the Cévennes National Park on August 13<sup>th</sup> 2018.

Artist/photographer Carole Reboul chose the Cévennes as a place to experiment. She plays with the effects of light (only natural light suits her) and captures in her photographs the moments of grace that transcend a landscape.





## AMENITIES



Free wi-fi hotspot at the museum reception

**The book store and boutique** is open during museum hours and offers a selection of the Cévennes best products. Shepherd's bags, silk scarves, gourmet jams and crunchy cakes can be found on the stands.

### The Museum Tavern

Take a comforting break : local products, a glass of wine, an apple juice, a gourmet pastry ... The Tavern lets you satisfy your appetite once your head and eyes are chock-full of stories ! Marion Polge from Saint-Jean-du-Gard welcomes and concocts a comestible to relish and sustain.

Saint-Jean-du-Gard's **tourist information centre** finds a natural space within Maison Rouge ensuring the promotion of Cévennes tourism in this exceptional place.

In a spirit of reciprocity of welcoming visitors to the museum and the tourism office, this information point is open seven days a week from April to the end of October. Its services are offered during schedules harmonised with Maison Rouge.

# 4 / FULL INFORMATION

## VISITING HOURS

From February 1<sup>st</sup> - March 31<sup>st</sup> 2019 :  
Wednesday to Sunday : 2 - 5.30pm

- **Low season** (November 6<sup>th</sup> - December 29<sup>th</sup> 2019 / February 1<sup>st</sup> - March 29<sup>th</sup> 2020)  
Wednesday - Sunday : 2 - 6pm
- **Mid season** (April 1<sup>st</sup> - June 30<sup>th</sup> / September 2<sup>nd</sup> - November 3<sup>rd</sup>)  
Daily : 10am - 12.30pm and 1.30 - 6pm
- **High season** (July 1<sup>st</sup> - September 1<sup>st</sup>)  
Daily : 10am - 6pm  
Closed : all of January, December 25<sup>th</sup>, May 1<sup>st</sup>

## ADMISSION RATES

Normal rate : €8

Half-price : €4 (12-18 years old, students, minimum wage earners)

Free (under 12, disabled individual and companion, journalists, museum friends).

## SPECIAL RATES

School groups : free for schools in Alès Agglomération

€2 / child outside Alès Agglomération

Family Pass (2 adults + 2 paying children) : €18

Annual individual pass : €19

Group larger than 15 : half price

**Guided tours of the collection and the temporary exhibition**

Guided tours : €2 for individual visitors + entrance price

Booking recommended (25 people) - Duration 1 hour

Visits in English and German are available during the summer. Please look on the museum website for information.

## GEOGRAPHICAL COORDINATES

Latitude : 44.1038872

Longitude : 3.8863460

Bus: Nîmes to Saint-Jean-du-Gard : Edgard Bus A12

Alès, Anduze, Saint-Jean-du-Gard : Ntecc Line 72

Train : steam train of the Cévennes (reduced rate)

## AMENITIES

Park, outdoor trail, café, snacks, tourist information, shop, access for the disabled

## PRESS CONTACT

Valérie Dumont-Escojido

04 66 86 30 40

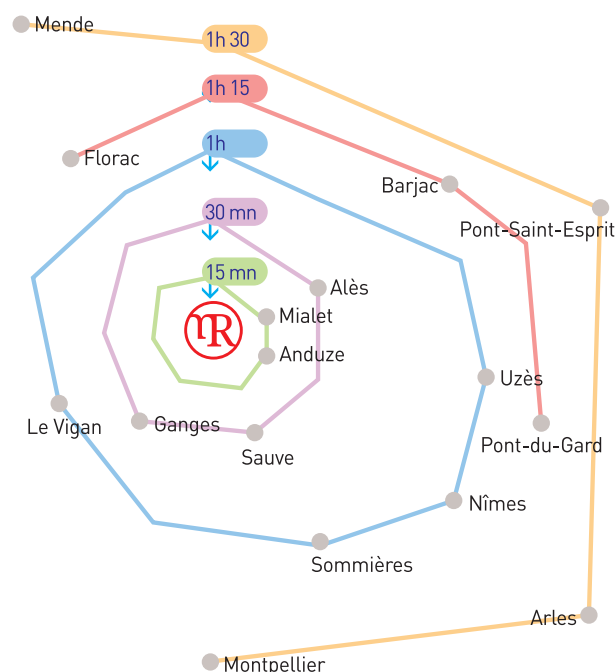
valerie.dumont-escojido@alesagglo.fr

The press kit photos can be requested from Valérie Dumont-Escojido.

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Some elements of the press kit come from the museum's research and cultural project.



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**Maison Rouge**  
Musée des vallées cévenoles

