



DESTINATION
Salagou
LE CLERMONTAIS

OFFICE DE TOURISME



Discovering the Clermontais
Villeneuve



www.destination-salagou.fr

COMMUNAUTÉ DE COMMUNES  DU CLERMONTAIS

Welcome to the Clermontais, Pays Cœur d'Hérault.

The Communauté de Communes du Clermontais is actively engaged in promoting the heritage which mirrors its historical and cultural identity.

This little guide will help you to discover the natural patrimony and the monuments and buildings of its community members: VILLENEUVETTE

Have a good time and see you very soon !

SOME HISTORY

In 1673, Pierre Baille, a sheet-making merchant and manufacturer from Clermont-de-Lodève (Clermont l'Hérault) bought a smallholding and a pressing-mill on the banks of the Dourbie River. He very quickly extended his property with dyeing and weaving workshops. This was the first Manufactory. Some years later, finance investors from Montpellier became interested in it. André Pouget, who was the Managing Director of the Gabelles, the first salt tax paymaster in the Languedoc, took it over in 1676. A year later a royal edict approved the new Royal Manufactory.

"We have given our approval to the establishment that was made under our good pleasure of a Manufactory of sheets at Villeneuve-lez-Clermont, diocese of Lodève in our province of Languedoc" Louis XIV, edict of 20 July 1677.

Villeneuve thus became the second royal Manufactory in the Languedoc to make woolen cloth (after the Saptès in the Aude) created in the Languedoc for exportation to the Ports of the Levant in the Near East following royal ambition to withstand competition from the English and Dutch over the textile market in the Mediterranean.

In the same era in the Languedoc, the Canal du Midi and the Port of Sete were being constructed in order to facilitate regional economy and exportation.

The Manufactory made fine quality sheets called "Londrin seconds" requiring the same place of fabrication for the different stages, appreciated in the Ottoman Empire and exported from Marseille after being controlled by the royal inspectors. The twenty steps needed to fabricate them were all done in the same place ; the most delicate were handed over to the women and children.

In 1720, the Manufactory was sold to Guillaume Castanié d'Auriac (son of a sheet maker) who gave it a new lease of life. His contribution to its embellishment was notably a garden in the French style, ornamented with a great water cascade. The Manufactory changed hands again in 1768, 1788 and 1793 before being taken over by the Maistre family. In the beginning of the 19th century, almost 800 workers were employed at Villeneuve of which 200 lived on the premises, and the others in the surrounding area. It was a major economic centre for the region.



The Manufactory 100 years ago and the waterfalls of the river Dourbie

The maistre family : 1803-1954

At the beginning of the 19th century the Maistre family, owners of a tannery in Clermont l'Hérault, took over the Manufactory as a family business, for more than a century of five successive generations up to 1954, date at which it closed down. Joseph Maistre, a pioneer, had to adapt to the new economic situation by developing the sheet-making for the army troupes. He was the man behind the site's industrialization and mechanization. The work was hard, the rules were strict: workers had a right to certain privileges given by their "master": school for the children, pensions in case of illness, free accommodation and garden, a savings fund. 1% of their salary went to pay a teacher and into an emergency fund and medical expenses, social security before

its time. All this meant that there had only ever been a strike of one day in 1917. This was the only conflict at the Manufactory since 1677 which worked full-time during the First World War. But the inter-war period was difficult as the State orders diminished in favour of more competitive factories. The post-war period marked the end of the Manufactory.

The Manufactory was almost completely self-sufficient. Right from the 17th century there was a grocery for staple foods, some small businesses (baker, joiner) and even a doctor. All this was designed to encourage the workers to stay on site.



THE MAIN GATE

The impressive entrance to the Manufactory with the inscription “Honour thy work” was the motto of the Maistre family in the 19th century. This gate was locked at 9 pm every evening until the following morning. There were two other entrance gates. On the left of the main gate is the former ice-house, now buried under the grass.

CHURCH OF THE ASSUMPTION OF THE VIRGIN

The chapel is on the left after going through the main gate. Pierre Baille, merchant sheet-maker, was a Protestant, a religion that was tolerated since the Edict of Nantes in 1598. By this time the two religions co-existed with mutual respect. The first chapel, inaugurated in 1678, was extended around 1740 according to a rectangular design with a barrel vault. Being a private chapel it houses



the tombs of the Maistre family. The painted décor in tribute to the family dating back from 1870 is signed by J. Pauthe. The paintings depict a paternalistic doctrine, with the representation of an archangel slaying “Materialism and Atheism”, as well as an inscription “God Bless Work”.

THE SQUARE OF LOUIS XIV: START OF THE 18TH CENTURY

The Manufactory was built according to an orthogonal layout around its very beautiful rectangular square, with large streets dedicated to King Louis XIV. The very beautiful 18th century fountain stands in the centre beneath the ancient plain trees. The Town Hall and school were situated in this square.

THE WORKERS' HOUSES

The houses were built following the same layout often with a family hearth on each floor in beautiful sandstone with a sink, leaving the ground floor free for professional activity. The roof in roman tiles had three layers of *genoises* Pezenas-style, without ungracious drain pipes.

The houses were rented under the system of the *ancient regime* and were provided free of charge for the factory workers in the 19th century. Some families lived within the factory's walls for 200 years. The white crosses above the entrance gates date from 1860 : sign of blessing or of recognition ?





RUE DE LA CALADE

The *rue de la Calade* is the oldest part of the Manufactory. A road which leads down to the river Dourbie where there used to be a wheat mill. This part of the village is more rustic and does not resemble the rest of the inhabited parts which are more ordered.





THE DOVECOTE

On the left of the main alley is the dovecote which has the particular feature of a roof covered in scaled tiles and enamelled tiles (end of 17th century).



THE MANOR HOUSE

In the middle of the main stone-cobbled alley stands the Manor House, home to those who ran the Manufactory from the 18th century. The 19th century clock, situated above the entrance was a very important element in the life of the establishment. The house has a small mural fountain which used to supply hot water from the steam-powered machines in the workshops. No need to heat water for cooking or making tea.

Opposite the building, are the old hangers where the cloth was hung to dry.

At the exit of the Manufactory, when passing in front of the ancient spinning and dyeing workshops, the staircase on the right leads to a path that points straight ahead to the *pont de l'Amour* (the bridge of Love) and the big pond, which accedes to the big basin on turning right towards the large reservoir.



THE LARGE RESERVOIR CALLED "THE POOL"

Located behind the industrial buildings, it has a rectangular layout almost 328 ft long. A reservoir formed by a dyke which is more than 16ft thick, supplied by the canals coming from the *Pont de l'Amour* aqueduct.

THE MANUFACTORY REGULATIONS

Short extract from the Manufactory Regulations in 1870 :

Requirements for employment: Have a good character reference, believe in the mottos "Honour thy work" and "early to bed, early to rise makes a man healthy, wealthy and wise". Children between 9-14 years worked only 8 to 9 hours, depending on the season. Over 14 years, 15 hours of presence was required with 12 hours of work a day. It was forbidden to smoke in the workshops and to use vulgar or anti-clerical language.



THE BUFFET D'EAU "GRAND GUILLAUME"

The "Grand Guillaume" (an elaborate composition of fountains called *Buffet d'Eau*) was built during the embellishment of the Manufactory under Guillaume Castanié d'Auriac at the start of the 18th century. The *Buffet d'Eau* was an integral part of the French garden in this time.

In the 19th century, the French-style garden was transformed and allocated without charge to the workers.

THE INDUSTRIAL BUILDINGS

In 1883 a boiler room was built with its high chimney and steam-powered machine. At the start of the 20th century, other buildings in metal and glass were added on for new machines.

THE HYDRAULIC NETWORK

When you go walking in Villeneuveville (about 2 miles, PR 4) you will discover the Manufactory's old hydraulic network that runs all around: *béals* (irrigation canals of several miles long) and the *Pont de l'Amour* (the Bridge of Love) ... The big pond on the hill, built in 1895 on a promontory dominating Villeneuveville held more than 300,000 cubic ft of water necessary to run the factory.

It was fed into by a *béal*, 8202 ft-long. Its perfect sealing was ensured by the site's clayey rock.

LE PONT D'AMOUR (BRIDGE OF LOVE) : 1678-1681

The *Pont de l'Amour* which spans the river Dourbie is actually an aqueduct which used to carry water from one side of the river to the other.

According to tradition, lovers crossing the bridge hand-in-hand on Easter Monday had to marry within the year if they reached the other side.



VISITS

Town Hall of Villeneuveville: guided tour of the Manufactory all year for groups (on reservation) and every day during the season for individuals.

For more information: Tel: 04 67 96 06 00

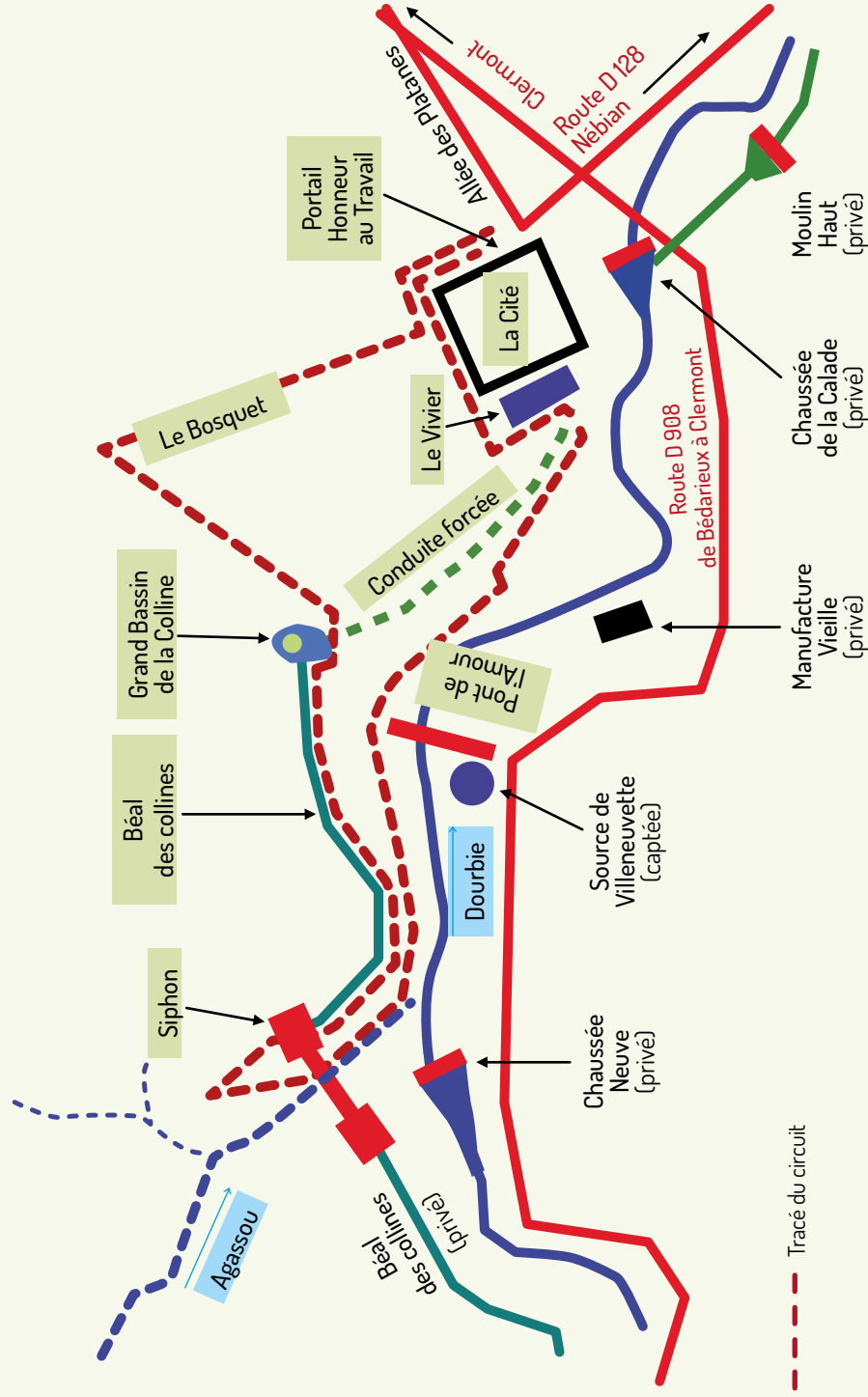
"Les Amis de Villeneuveville" Association: visits to the hydraulic network (1st Saturday of the month) Tel: 04 67 88 49 90, and making brochures about the Manufactory.

www.les-amis-de-villeneuveville.fr



RANDO CARD, THE HYDRAULIC NETWORK

aménagé par le Conseil Général en 2006



DISCOVER VILLENEUVETTE DIFFERENTLY

■ **Rando Card, "The Hydraulic Network"**, an itinerary for hiking labelled FFRandonnée34, to use when discovering the history, patrimony and local produce.

Duration 1hr
Distance 1.8 miles
Level of difficulty easy

Available in the Tourist Offices of the Clermontais or download from internet site : www.clermontais-tourisme.fr

■ **The « Villeneuve » Randoland Card** is a fun circuit made out to be a paper chase to accompany children of 4-12 years while discovering the area. On the trail, the clues are elements of the architectural, historic or natural patrimony (inscriptions, dates, geometric shapes, 100-yr old trees, etc) allowing the enigmas of the site being visited to be resolved.

3 levels available for children of 4-6 yrs / 7-9 yrs and /9-12 yrs to learn more about what they have started to learn in their classrooms, while playing at the same time.

Duration 1hr 30mins
Distance 1.8 miles
Level of difficulty average

Available in the Tourist Offices of the Clermontais or download from internet site : www.clermontais-tourisme.fr

■ **The booklet « These walls that talk to us »** takes an unprecedented stroll into geological times so as to understand more about the rocks used to build and decorate the habitations, squares and monuments. Making the walls talk is walking in the Clermontais villages while observing the old facades, roads and narrow footpaths, the cul-de-sacs, the way the doors and windows are framed and the engraved porches. It means becoming aware of how useful rocks have been to mankind in the construction of buildings that shelter, protect and house.

On sale in all the Tourist Offices in the Clermontais : 3€

■ **Guided tours with the Tourist Office's official visitor's guide.** Explore the richness of the natural patrimony and architecture of the Clermontais and take a plunge into the history of a land that has character.

Information and Reservations : 04 67 96 23 86 or tourisme@cc-clermontais.fr



ALSO TO SEE IN THE SURROUNDING AREA

The lake Salagou
Mourèze and its Cirque
Clermont l'Hérault



Offices de
Tourisme
de France



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Seasonal Offices

At Mourèze, Octon and the lake Salagou,
the shores of Clermont l'Hérault
and portable phone access at Cabrières, Fontès and Paulhan

INFORMATIONS

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