

## The Village Spring

This is found in an alcove of granite blocks and has a millstone as a cover, in order to protect the cleanliness of the water. Two stones project and serve as stands for buckets. It was the only water source for the market town of Saint-Martin-Château, the meeting place for the inhabitants of the village, who had the chore of collecting water several times a day.



## The agricultural landscape

Farm land has reduced with the decline in agriculture but remains very visible on both sides of the path which goes down towards the Pont de Verrières. On the right, the meadows have been seeded while on the left the natural meadows form a damp valley. They serve as pasture land for the limousin cattle.

## The river Maulde

Its source is on the Plateau de Millevaches and it flows into the lac de Vassivière. Its particularly clear water is advantageous for the development of water-starwort. If you look carefully, you will be able to notice a dipper which flies very fast, just above the water. This bird, the size of a blackbird, feeds on insects which it finds underneath stones in the water.



## The woods and forests

The ancient forests of stalked oaks and beeches retreat before the recent plantations of conifers. The path follows the woods

now covering the ledges, which were once ploughed, near the small lake. Two very fine American Oaks dominate the slope.

## Pond and damp areas

The ancient, abandoned meadows have been colonized by a grass : the molinie forms mounded tufts on which the viviparous lizards like to lounge in the russet willow trees and bourdaïne bushes are slowly overgrowing the banks of the Pond. The place is particularly attractive to roebuck and boar.

## The Cascade des Jarrauds

The waterfall is an important feature in the landscape of the valley. You can hear it before you see it. After sliding over big granite slabs the water falls 15 metres into a natural basin encircled with cliffs and stone blocks. A diverted channel still feeds a small electrical plant constructed in 1887. There, the engineer Deprez tested the distant delivery of direct current, sending it as far as Bourgneuf.



## The fisheries

Dug into the upper part of the meadows, they hold the water which fed the irrigation channels : the "levades". By using those the growth of grass in the Spring was encouraged. Being near to the village women came with their washing to rinse out the ashes used instead of soap. It is the home of amphibians : frog, salamander and the marble triton which is recognizable thanks to the crest on the back of the male.



**Please signal us any problem found on the hiking trail. Thanks.**

## Hiking

Eaux, Tours de Bourgneuf  
et Royère de Vassivière

## Saint-Martin-Château

*The discovery path of  
the valley of the Maulde*



Itinerary : From Bourgneuf, take the Route de la Cascade D 51. After 100 metres, turn to the left in direction of Saint-Martin-Château. Then, continue on the road D 51a. When you are in the village, climb up to the church of the village. You can park here.



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## The sunken tracks



Often edged with low walls, these famous sunken tracks are inseparable from the landscape of Limousin. They are present everywhere, notably on the descent to the Bridge of Verrières. They

can, on the contrary, be raised when crossing damp areas. A fine example of this is easily seen between the village of "Pont" and the crossing of the same name.

## The plank bridges

These are rustic bridges, of which the "planks" are formed from big granite slabs. The "planks" at Verrières are remarkable for their size, while those at "Pont" for their regularity. Both give superb views of the river. They are pedestrian bridges. Carts and animals used the ford, which supplemented each bridge.

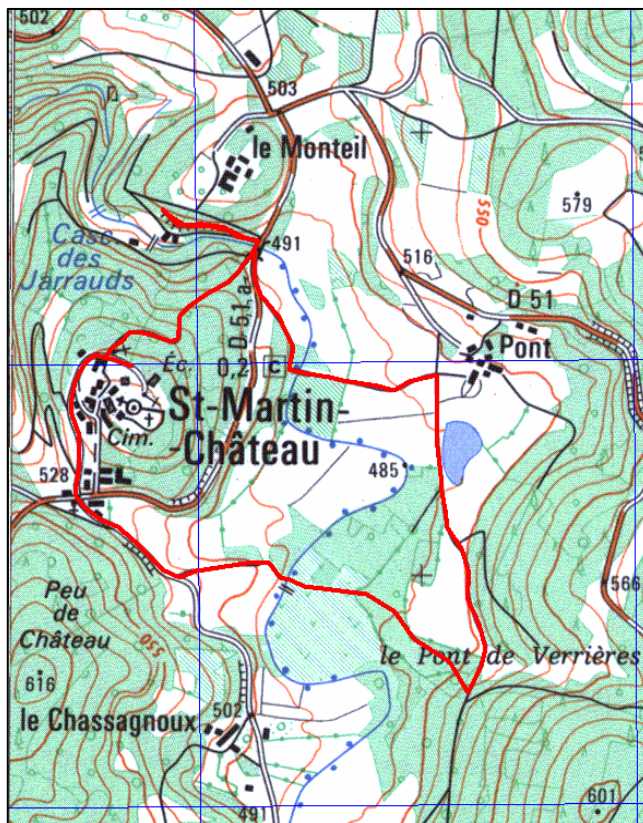


## The village

There is no castle to crown the granite mound on which perches the village of Saint-Martin-Château, looking over a bend of the river Maulde. However, an important cemetery certifies the existence of a centre of power



here from the time of the late Middle Ages. The path goes through the perched village of which the main monument is a small church, typical of the limousin heights : 3 bays, a straight apse and a limousin portal. The separate steeple and the tomb against the south wall with its recumbent statue recess give an original character to this building.



The circuit of Saint-Martin-Château

## The agricultural landscapes and the fauna of the limousine mountain

The walk provides a succession of landscapes characteristic of this region : sloping meadows with their fisheries, rivers of crystalline water, damp moors with ponds, forests of broad-leaved trees and conifers. The diversity of the fauna is marked by the presence of numerous mammals : roebucks, boars etc and the river banks shelter a very threatened species : the otter, which has found shelter here.



## The flora



The route crosses classical formations of this western border of the limousin heights. Species such as the beech, rowan, whortleberry, raspberry, wood-rush or the Austrian doronicum are typical of the mountain character of the climate. In summer, the big, white ombelles of wild angelica embellish the marshy meadows of the damp

areas which are widely colonized by the molinie.

The spotted salamander is a little seen animal during summer season ; its territory is restricted, its wanderings are nocturnal, especially after rain. The animal's shelter consists of a crevice either in the soil or under a stone.



## The association Éclats de Rives

The association "Éclats de Rives" was created in 1994 in the village of Saint-Martin-Château. It was born from the meetings of like-minded people sharing the same passion and love for the local area.

Two major objectives link our actions :

- the provision of walking paths to give access to the often forgotten heritage of the countryside in the Maulde valley : bridges, wells, crosses, fountains, and fisheries ;
- to create interest in this heritage so as to give it a new life, while making it part of the development of our region.