

Walk 2: Ardillats to Beaujeu

Highlights:

- Great views across the high Beaujolais from a number of pretty ridge walks.
- Beautiful lunch spot overlooking Beaujeu.
- Changing landscapes as you descend towards Beaujeu.
- Warm welcome at your B&B with lovely views

Grade: Moderate


Distance: 18km

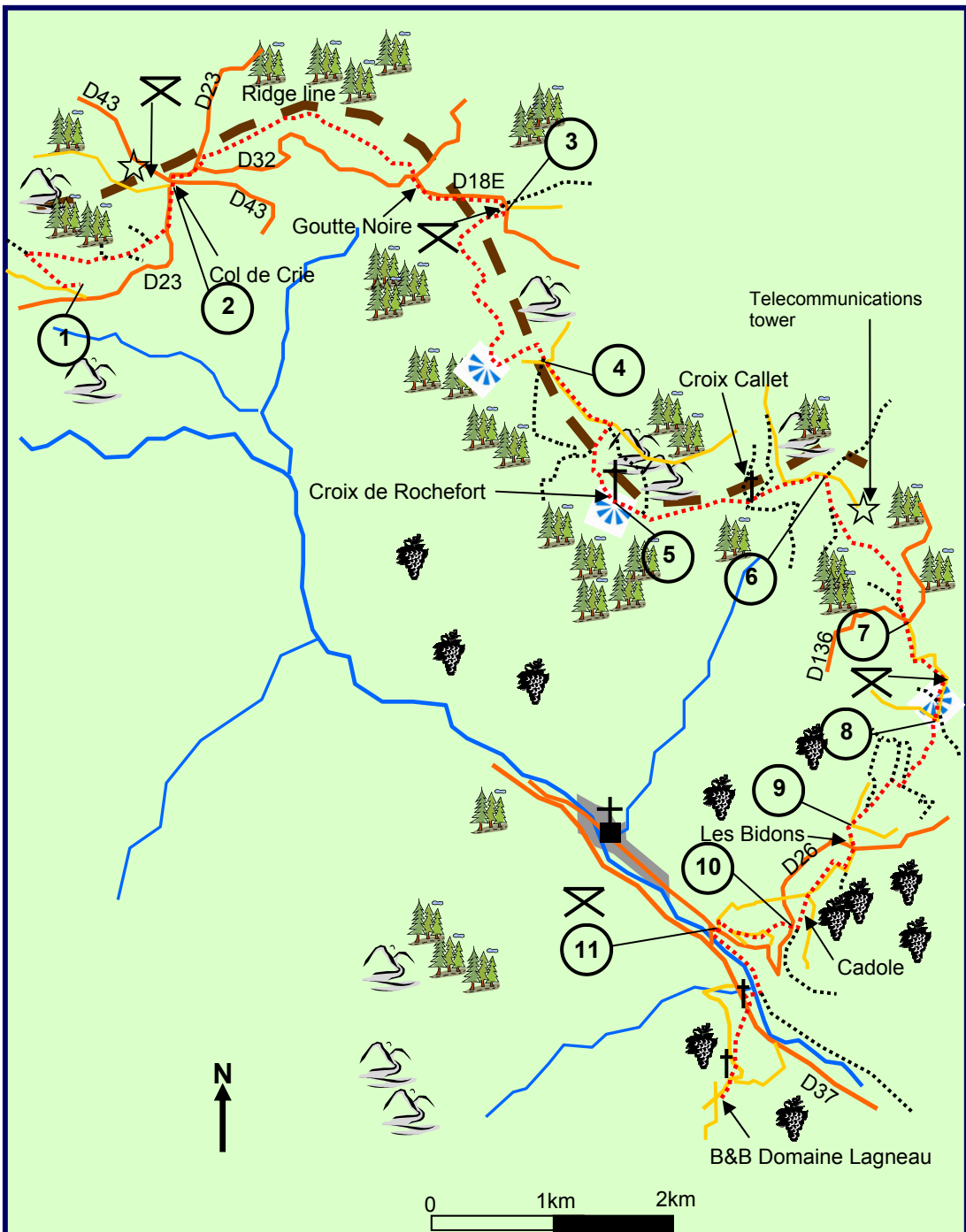
Height gain: 500m

Time: 6hrs 30min

Your day's walk follows the upland ridges of the High Beaujolais which offer breath taking views across the hills and valleys of the Beaujolais and beyond. You'll then descend to Beaujeu the old capital of the Beaujolais before the short walk to your B&B.

1. Retrace your steps back up the lane, before turning right onto the path that traverses through the forest. Once back at the D23 turn left and follow the road until the roundabout at the Col de Crie. (624m)
2. From there, take the D23 and shortly afterwards the D32 on your right towards Avenas. Almost immediately take the path on your left leading fairly steeply back up to the Croix du Pendu, your high point of yesterday. (730m) After about 1km, at the obvious junction in the path in the forest turn right. There are no signs or markings. The path climbs and then descends through the forest, passing by a house, just before reaching the main road D32. (708m) Cross the road and follow the D18E opposite towards Avenas. Go past a building called Goutte Noire and continue to climb for 750m until the roads bends to the right. On the inside of the bend, there is a picnic spot to take a mid-morning rest.. 1hr 30min from B&B.
3. Take the track that leaves the road on the right at the picnic site. Shortly after leaving the road you'll pass a 40km/h sign and a low green metal gate. The track climbs gently and then turns to the left. (775m) The area is covered in broom and young trees. Much of the plantations on the higher ridges were destroyed during the **storms of 1999**. As the path continues to rise, take a look back at the views to the north west. Ignore a path on your left. As you contour around the summit of Grenet and La Brunette, so the path levels off and fantastic views open out to the south. As you start to descend, you can now see in front your principal objective for the day—the Montagne de Rochefort. Descend to a junction with several routes.
4. Take the road opposite that ascends gradually for about 700m. Then take the path on the right that enters the forest marked Croix de Rochefort. (816m) Ignore the path that leaves on the left and carry straight ahead for 200m going gradually uphill. At the junction in the path, take the path on the left, again marked Croix de Rochefort. Follow the path uphill, climbing fairly steeply. After another 200m the angle eases and you'll shortly come to a small clearing in the forest where you'll discover the Croix de Rochefort (888m), an orientation table and a sumptuous view to reward you for all your efforts. Although there are no tables, the rocky edge of the orientation platform make for good seats and the view more than makes up for it. 3hrs fro B&B

 In bad weather and poor visibility, please pay particular attention when you are close to the edge of the plateau as the hill plunges very steeply from this viewpoint.



5. Continue on the path in the opposite direction from which you arrived. The path descends slightly then levels off. There are red and white GR markers. After 1km you'll reach the Croix Callet. (826m) Carry straight on, direction marked Crête de Murette. Ignore the path to your right and the GR76 path that descends to your left and carry on until you reach a tarmac lane. Turn right and follow the lane for about 300m. At a point where a wide path crosses the road, take the path on your right just before a large dead tree. (The path in the opposite direction is marked Le Fût.)

6. Follow the path through a landscape of broom. You may need to come off the path to avoid large puddles. When the path splits after about 300m, take the fork to your left. (828m) At this point the large telecommunications tower is only 200m away on your left hand side. Shortly afterwards the path starts to descend steadily through the forest. Please take care on the first part of the descent as there are loose stones on the path.

A small clearing allows lovely views to your right. About 1km after leaving the tower on the hill, you'll reach a road, the D136. (682m)

7. Follow the lane straight ahead of you. After about 500m the lane bends round to your left, with an area of old mounds fenced off on your right, of unknown origin. Just after, there is a path on your right that cuts off the loop in the road. Take either the path or the road to come out into a large grassy area with wide ranging views in most directions. There are seats carved out of tree trunks on either side of the lane to take an afternoon rest. On certain days you can see the distinctive outline of **Mont Blanc** due East. The road goes round to your right, starts to descend more steeply and passes a track coming from your right leading to Les Grandes Terres. (There is a post with blue signs for the Circuit des Cabanes pointing in the direction you've just come from.) Shortly afterwards, ignore paths on your left. (578m) Continue on the road until a sharp bend to your right where you take the track straight ahead.

8. The track bends round to the left. You have now reached the upper limit of the **Beaujolais vines (see overleaf for an introduction to the Beaujolais wines)**. Here in the parish of Lantignié, you are in the appellation **Beaujolais village**. At a point where the path starts to descend more steeply you'll reach a t-junction. Take the path on your right. After about 50m the path divides again, this time take the path that descends on your left. There is a cream coloured sign pointing back towards Les Grandes Terres. Ignore a path that joins from your right. You may notice during your walks some land parcels with old vines piled in heaps. These vines have been pulled up as part of a bid to **reduce the amount of vines in the Beaujolais**. Descend past a building on your left to emerge at a road. (441m)

9. Take the path opposite, which joins a road head with new houses on your right. Follow the lane until you reach the main road, D26, at Les Bidons. Take the lane ahead of you which bears to the right. After 200m, at the t-junction take the road to your right (not the path opposite) and follow the road around to the left. After 300m the road splits. (384m) Take the left fork for a few metres before immediately taking the path on your right leading off between the vines towards a hut, known as a **Cadole**. If it's open, take a little look inside. After another 200m there is a junction in the track. You'll see a post with a sentier victor sign and a cream directional sign. Take the path to your right and descend to the main road, D26.

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Storms of 1999

In December 1999 two storms in quick succession devastated France and much of central Europe. They caused 92 deaths and 15 billion euros worth of damage. The first storm traversed the northern half of France on the 26th, whilst the second affected more central areas on the night of the 27th to 28th. On both occasions many places experienced wind speeds of between 130 and 150 kmh with maximum speeds reaching close to 200kmh. Strong rain accompanied the second storm with 2m of snow falling in two days in the Alps. Many forested regions in France, including the High Beaujolais were badly effected. Astonishing images were captured of single gusts of wind on exposed ridges blowing over corridors of trees as if they were matches. As a result many fine old Douglas Pines which had reached 60m tall were blown down in the storm. In addition, much of the plantations on the slopes leading towards the summit of the Montagne de Rochefort were blown over, changing the landscape overnight. For the time being this deforestation provides fine views across the High Beaujolais. Some of the forests are being replanted with a greater mix of species to increase biodiversity and reduce their vulnerability to storms.

Cadoles

The term Cadole is used to define a construction implanted in the Beaujolais vines, originally built and used as a shelter for men and material. It comes from a local term for cabin or "cabane". Some examples still, in part, fill this function and have been carefully maintained whilst others have fallen into disrepair. There is no uniformity in their appearance or in their building methods. Some are built from wood, some from earth, whilst many are made from stones collected from the surrounding fields. This was largely done



during the 19th century in an attempt to improve the soil for planting and maintaining the vines. A few examples in the southern Beaujolais have lovely limestone roofs supported by their own weight. (photo) Some of these cadoles are very simple shelters with walls on three sides, whilst many others are enclosed with doors and a chimney allowing workers in a former era to cook dinner, keep warm and sleep overnight before descending to the valley.

When can I see the the Mont Blanc?

The Mont Blanc is about 300km due east of the Beaujolais. However, in certain conditions it is clearly visible as an imperfect pyramid. The time when you are most likely to see the Mont Blanc is at dawn when it appears sombre. It slowly brightens with the sun until after half an hour, the haze of daylight obscures the mountain for the rest of the day. However, the Mont Blanc is occasionally visible during the day in summer, usually just before the onset of bad weather when the atmosphere has a higher humidity. It is also common to see it in settled winter weather above the low clouds filling the valleys.