

Le Caroux

Need nice dry rock with sunshine, a good selection of the lower grade routes, good wine and food for October half term? Look no further than your copy of Jingo Wobbly's Europe Sport Vertical, or if you don't have one beg or borrow one from someone who does. Page 108 takes you to Le Caroux just north west of Beziers in the Landuloc region of France. The guide says 'if you want to get away from the crowds, then a trip to Caroux in the autumn is simply beautiful' and we agree!

An early morning flight with Ryan Air from Liverpool (don't be late they lock the gate) to Carcassonne where our hire car awaited us at the airport. Some shopping on route and we were at our comfy rented Gite at Les Horts in three hours. The gite sits high on the south facing slopes of the Plateau Carroz amidst chestnut groves and vineyards. One neighbour holds the key and the other makes organic wines, its looking good!

The rock hereabouts is volcanic and there are 300+ routes some of which are 250m in length. A good number of them are in the lower grades and the area is one of natural beauty. Indeed the Gorge de Heric where we spent most of our time is a popular and very beautiful walking area. The whole area is covered in Chestnut plantations which were originally planted to provide flour. The plantations seem to have been abandoned and they now provide a haven for deer and wild boar. In our wanderings we came across the tracks of both, seeing deer but thankfully the only wild boar we saw was stuffed and in a shop window.

The climbing potential is undoubtedly five stars and whilst the walking is more wandering it has to be getting on for five stars as there are some wonderful old trails to explore which lead up onto the plateau and take in some super views. The chestnut groves provide perfect shelter from the sun, whilst we were there in October we had temperatures of 25 deg C every day brilliant!

Just one small problem my busted knee ruined my climbing ability, so our adventure on the rock was limited to some simple single pitching which given that we were in such a wonderful place proved to be a little frustrating.

Jingo Wobbly gives the guide book as Caroux Escalades which was produced in 1991 and available from CAF Beziers. We didn't manage to obtain a copy locally and as there isn't much 'locally' we would advise anyone intending to visit to obtain a copy of the guide prior to travelling.

Dave Sudell



