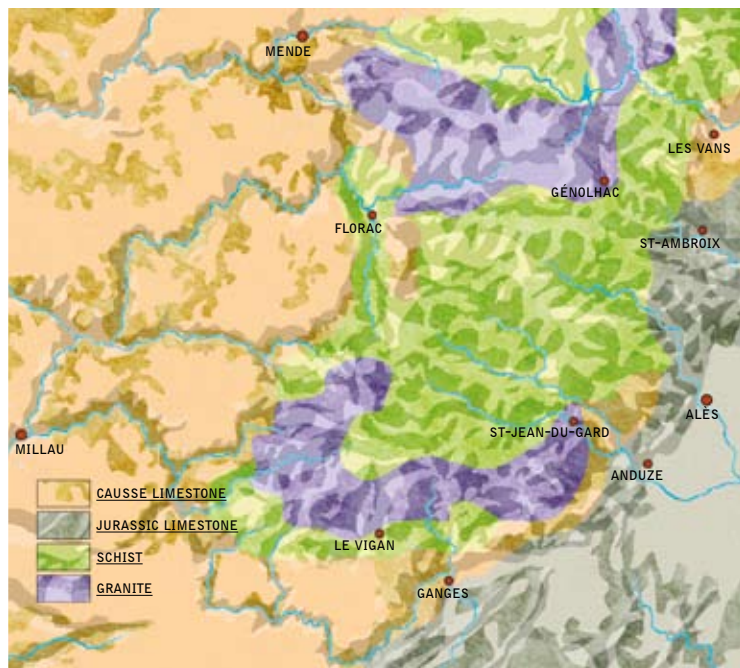


Geology and Climate

Superb examples of karst features are found on the Causses (routes 2, 4, 14 and 15) and in the Bois de Païolive (route 11). You traverse granite boulder landscapes (ruines in French) on routes 1 and 7. The Ecomusée of le Pont de Montvert has a small exhibition on the Cévennes geology (in French). On page 214 you'll find an overview of caves, karst and other landscape features associated with limestone.

The key to the natural richness of the Cévennes lies in its climate and its complex geology. Three completely different types of bedrocks are found in the region: limestone, granite and schist. These different bedrocks have shaped the landscape in such a fundamental way that you can't really speak of THE Cévennes, rather of the schist, granite and limestone



Simplified map of the geology of the Cévennes and Grands Causses.

Facing page: the three different rock types found in the Cévennes. Limestone (top), Granite (middle) and Schist (bottom).

Cévennes. The bedrock shapes not only the landscape and its vegetation but also determines its flora and fauna and even the cultural history. Therefore you will find that this book is laced with references to these soil types. It also dominated our choice in selecting the routes, balancing them out over the different geological regions. For instance, the introductory car routes (routes 1 to 4) we organized in such a way that they capture two and, where possible, all three geological worlds in a single trip.

Geological history

The bedrock of the Cévennes was shaped in two different eras. The schist and granite was deposited early in geological history. Later, parts of the terrain were overlain with limestone.

The oldest bedrock dates from the late Carboniferous age, some 290 million years ago. It is part of the Hercynian mountain range, a huge range that came into being during an ancient collision of tectonic plates. Hercynian massifs are among the older mountains in the world. They were created long before the 'Alpine' mountains of the Pyrenees, the Picos de Europa, the Carpathians and, of course, the Alps themselves.

Most of the Massif Central is of Hercynian origin and is part of a now disjointed range that comprises the Vosges in North-east France, the Ardennes in Belgium, the Black Forest in Germany, Brittany in the west of France and parts of the southern UK. Towards the southwest, the Hercynian mountains continue in western Iberia. A twin chain was formed in the same process, the Appalachian mountains, now situated thousands of kilometres west on the

