

Train du Pays Cathare et du Fenouillèdes

If you are a train enthusiast, or the main car driver, this trip is a must for you. The 60 Km journey from Axat to Rivesaltes, broadly follows the D117 and passes through some of the most spectacular scenery, which if you are driving, you will not be able to fully appreciate. A trip on the "Red Train" can also be combined with a day out in **Collioure** on which there is a separate write up.



Originally built at the very start of the 20th Century to connect Carcassonne with Perpignan, the line was closed in the 1990's, after the section between Quillian and St Martin Lys, was declared unsafe. In 1993 it was purchased by 3 rail enthusiasts who vowed to breath life back into this spectacular stretch of line. The main service between Axat and Rivesaltes only run fully during July and August. The rest of the year it runs on a reduced timetable, which can be checked online at <http://www.tpcf.fr> Apart from July and August advanced booking online is very strongly recommended.



Leaving the pretty town of Axat (not missing out the perfect model of Axat station as it looked in the 1960's made by one of the founders of the railway) the train heads off towards Lapradelle and stopping on the viaduct (Built in 1904), producing a stunning view of the Chateau of Puilaurens. 12 minutes later the train arrives at Caudies, which not only has the

Church of Notre Dame de Laval, and the ruined Château Saint-Pierre de Fenouillet, but is also the Head Office of the train company, also now you are now out of the Aude Valley and in Pyrénées-Orientales. At the next stop St.Paul, there are sometimes excursions by bus to the nearby Gorges de Galamus. The next stop is a bit unusual as the station Maury is owned by the local vineyard. Tasting's & tours are available, but need to be booked in advance (Tel 0468590095). The next stop Estagal is the birthplace of the 25th Prime Minister who was not only a political but also a mathematician, physicist, and astronomer of renown, and is responsible for the Paris Meridian. As you pull into Cases de Pene, on the right there is the tiny Hermit Church of Notre Dame de Pene and on the left the vineyard of the Château de Jau. Tasting lunches and dinners (between June & September) held by the lake in the shade of a 300 year-old mulberry tree are a must-do for all wine enthusiasts. (Tel 0468389138).

Finally the train pulls into Rivesaltes, where you can transfer to the mainline to continue onto **Collioure**, if you are going to make a day of it.

