

# Secrets de village... Le Thoronet

**Distance:** 1,1 km • **Start:** Place Roger Viort (near the post office)

The history of the village of Le Thoronet is closely linked to that of the Abbey three kilometres away. The Abbey's tenant farmers in their family groups gradually established themselves in hamlets, and the burg of Le Thoronet grew from the hamlet of La Bourgade in the late 17th century. Le Thoronet's subsoil, like Cabasse's, was mined for its bauxite ore during the 20th century. Visitors strolling through its streets are immersed in the life of a working, mining village of the 1900s.



**1 La place des Vermot:** at the start of the century, the villagers came to what is now the boules pitch (then known as *les suies*, meaning 'soot') to dump their compost, manure, and other waste. There was a square for each resident who owned a horse.

**2 Le lavoir :** the washing place is from the same period as the cooperative. Only women, known as *bugadières*, did the washing. Since the washing place was low down, they would kneel on a crate to wash, scrub and beat the washing on a stone, with a big cauldron of water and ash boiling away on a wood fire beside them. Whites were piled up in a tub, and a heavy piece of open canvas called a *fleurier* was placed on top. The contents of the cauldron were poured onto the *fleurier*, which acted as a filter, and this process would whiten and disinfect the washing. This operation might be repeated 14 times, then the items would be rinsed in the *lavoir*.

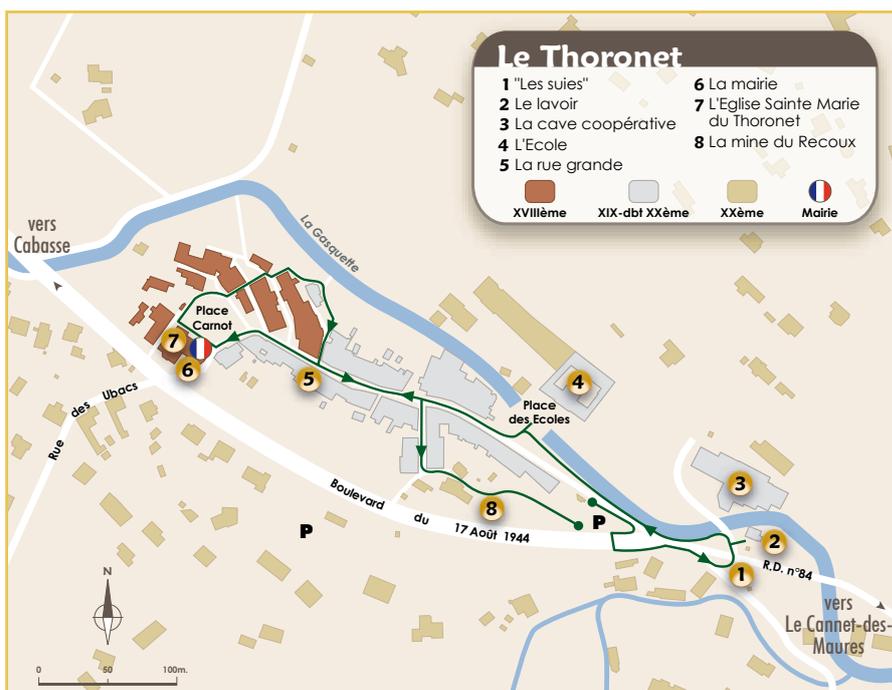
**3 La cave coopérative:** the cooperative wine cellar came into being in the early 20th century, a time of great crisis in wine-making when the combination of overproduction and competition from Algerian wines led to a slump in sales. Added to this, the manufacture of 'sweet wines' swelled the volumes of wine brought to market, while devaluing its image. By 1907 the situation had become intolerable, resulting in rebellion by the wine-growers of southern France. To break this deadlock, some producers decided to get together and form a cooperative to make and sell their wine. Construction of the building began in 1901, and was completed in 1914. The façade features a fresco by a local artist, Sylvie Gagnepain.

**4 The school:** built between 1882 and 1884, a time when basic education was compulsory for children aged 6 to 13: learning to read, write, count and love one's country were the aims of the secular, republican education envisaged by Jules Ferry.



Moral philosophy and civic education had replaced prayer and religious education, and the teachers emphasised the child's obligations to its family and school, such as respect and obedience, politeness, kindness and fairness, and diligence.

**5 La rue grande:** in the early 20th century, shops and businesses were well-established in this street: these included a bakery and three grocers, one of which also



served as a butcher's shop. Livestock was cut for meat in the street. A gargoyle made of tile was used to dispose of waste water at no.16. And the blacksmith at no.8 would shoe horses and mules on the little square, the Placette des Trois Ormeaux.

**6 The town hall:** the *mairie* is an old bastide or country house adjoining the church, and from the same period. A school used to occupy the first floor, while the ground floor housed stables, then a grocery and later the post office.

**7 L'église Sainte Marie du Thoronet:** this church is located in the oldest part of the village. Built in 1704 thanks to the support of the Abbey's commendatory abbot, it was improved many times during the 19th century. Its two square towers with arrow slits, one of them with a bell tower on top, make it look like a small fort. The door is the work of Marius Mullercke, a sculptor from Le Cannet des Maures. The central motif depicts a miner and a wine-grower, the village's principal occupations in the 20th century.

**8 La mine du Recoux:** (viewpoint). The hill still bears the scars of bauxite mining. At the beginning of the century, the ore was brought out in trolleys drawn by mules, which were gradually replaced by a mine railway. The mines at Vieux-Cannet were linked by a narrow-gauge 'shunter' railway. The ore was then transported overland to the station 150m below. A mine entrance with its narrow-gauge railway and ore trolleys has been reconstructed just below the embankment (turn right after the stairs).

04 98 10 43 59 | [tourisme@coeurduvar.com](mailto:tourisme@coeurduvar.com)  
[www.coeurduvartourisme.com](http://www.coeurduvartourisme.com)

Rejoignez-nous  

