

Secrets de village... Les Mayons

Distance 1,3 km • Start: Bouchonnerie car park.

Les Mayons was considered an 'abandoned hamlet' by its inhabitants, and was decreed a commune or village by Napoleon III on 7 November 1863, with the name of Mayons du Luc. The 'du Luc' was deleted from the name in 1897. Prior to this date, the hamlet was governed by the administrative centre of Luc-en-Provence. Sprawling on its spur of schist rock, Les Mayons looks very much as it did at that time. Crowned by the Maures massif above, the village still lives by the rhythm of the neighbouring forest.



1 Place de la Victoire: starting point of Chemin de St Pierre and Chemin de St Jean. Two oratories on these paths watch over the village. There is a fine view to the north from the square, to the Maures plain and the limestone foothills of the Haut Var.

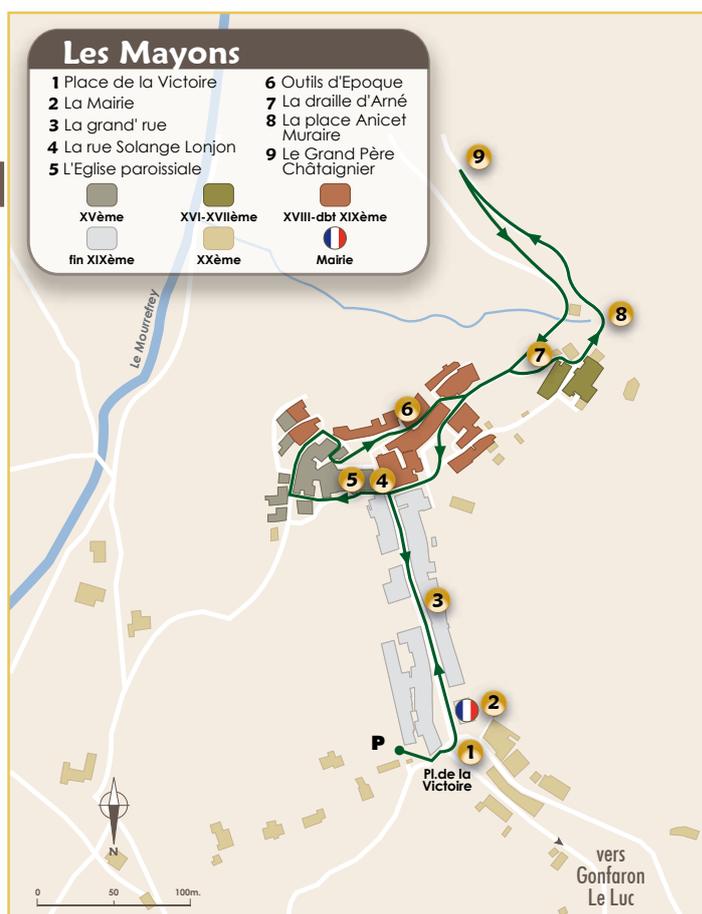
2 La Mairie: the town hall was a symbol of the village's independence from neighbouring Luc, and its ability to produce civil status documents. It

had been inconvenient for the people of the hamlet to have to declare births and deaths and hold their marriages in the administrative centre 10km away. The residents of Les Mayons are very fond of this building: home to the town hall, schools, post office and accommodation for administrative staff, it was the centre of the community.

3 La grand' rue: the main route through the village. As well as the traditional schist stone of village buildings in the Maures massif, Permian sandstone was also used to build the houses in Les Mayons. This stone was extracted from the nearby plain. Its colour varies according to its iron content: the more iron it contains, the darker and harder it is. On any facades that have lost their rendering, you can see that the softer, more easily cut red sandstones were used as cornerstones.

4 La rue Solange Lonjon: Solange was born in Les Mayons in 1823, and led the village's uprising against Louis Napoleon Bonaparte and his coup d'état in 1851. She was put on trial in Draguignan, and charged with having 'borne symbols of rebellion, caused rebellious songs to be heard, incited insurrection and the arrest of the assistant deputy of the 'Maillons', and taken part in the insurrection'. One of 16 female rebels in the Var, she was sentenced to five years' transportation.

5 L'église paroissiale: the parish church was built in the 17th century, and extended in the 19th. It houses a 17-century canvas depicting Calvary and three 19th-century gilded statues made of carton-pierre, a mix of paper and ground stone.



6 On the façade of the house: contemporary tools, the two-handled loubé saw, the cork axe, the large varlope plane, and the chestnut rake - all reminders of the importance of the forest that covers over 80% of the territory of Les Mayons.

7 La draille d'Arné: a sheep track named for Ernest Clavel, or 'Arné', who has always symbolised the archetypal poacher. He was a friend of Jean Aicard, who is thought to have used Arné's features and personality when he created Maurin des Maures, the hero of the eponymous novel of 1908. Arné was born in Les Mayons in 1832, and lived out in the woods at La Pommière, among the wild boar and hares. In homage to him, in 1911 the Toulonnais author brought him out of the hospice at Le Luc to a banquet, where he invited him to tell the most colourful of his stories, the inspirations for the famous novel. Perhaps you will hear his footsteps on the *draille* as he goes home to La Pommière. His wife is waiting, with the stew simmering in the pot, the chestnuts roasting in the ashes and the bottle of *Jacquet* wine cooling in the well.

8 La place Anicet Muraire: Muraire was Mayor from 1876 to 1919. He is credited with responsibility for liberating Les Mayons from the administrative authority of Le Luc, and he negotiated the difficult division of land between the two villages. Les Mayons owes its whole infrastructure, including the school, the roads and the cemetery, to him. He brought the telegraph to the village, and even asked for a railway line linking Gonfaron, Les Mayons and La Garde-Freinet. In 1924, at the age of 87, he was awarded the *Légion d'honneur*.

9 Le Grand Père Châtaignier: this 1,000-year-old chestnut tree has a circumference of 11 metres, and is listed as one of France's finest trees. It is part of the Maures sweet chestnut forest that extends over some 2,000 hectares. Nearly 350 hectares of this forest belongs to Les Mayons, producing around 40 tonnes of chestnuts; production often exceeded 300 tonnes in the late 19th century. The chestnut tree was the village's second economic resource, after cork: its wood was very resistant to rot, and was used for timber frames for buildings, while its dried or milled fruit were an important source of carbohydrate for humans and livestock. However, the survival of this species was gradually threatened by neglect, disease (bleeding canker or chestnut blight), and the increasing age of the trees. The chestnut is the symbolic tree of Les Mayons.

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