

# An extremely VARIED SITE

Here, you are in a crossing point and transition zone between garrigue (scrubland) and plain. It offers visitors a wealth of forms, colours, species, landscapes and activities. You can take a walk amid nature and culture, sun and shade, dry and wet environments, gorges and valleys - or even below ground.

When water sculpts landscapes :

From a limestone plateau to the Hérault gorges...

## KARST

Water - a serene and patient force...

It dissolves limestone milligram by milligram. For millennia, it has been hollowing out the gorges for which the site, now a protected area, is famous.

The water shapes the landscape and determines the vegetation. As it quickly drops underground through the fissures in the rock:

- Very little is available for vegetation, which explains the drought conditions on the Causse.
- It feeds the underground rivers which flow beneath the St-Guilhem hills and the surrounding area, and is responsible for the unique subterranean landscapes of the Grotte de Clamouse.

Did you know?  
The limestone plateaux were formed by marine deposits 'during the Jurassic period (165 million years ago)'.  
If this sea 'were' still here today, it would be over our heads!



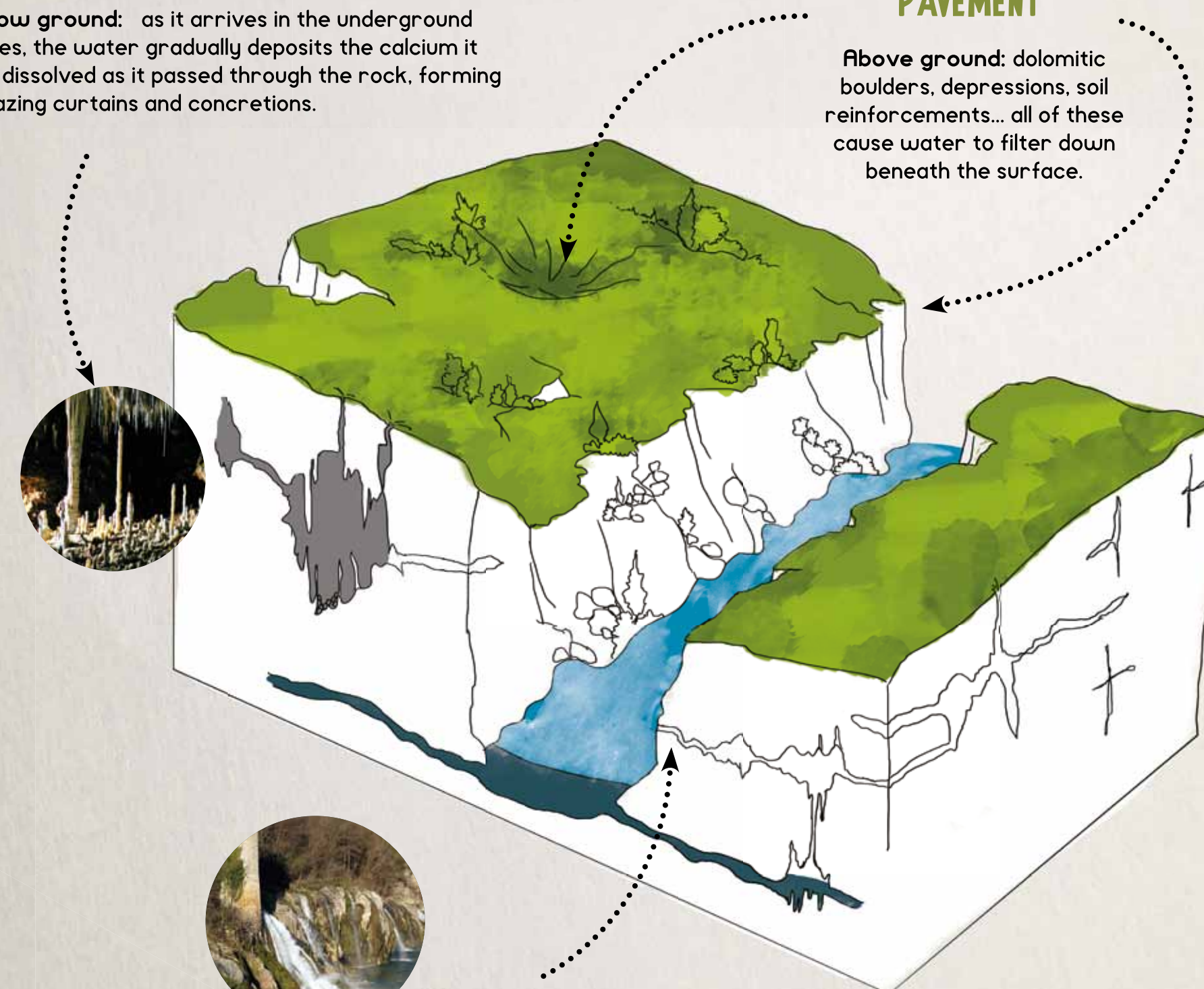
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## SINKHOLE AND LIMESTONE PAVEMENT

Above ground: dolomitic boulders, depressions, soil reinforcements... all of these cause water to filter down beneath the surface.

## GROTTE DE CLAMOUSE

Below ground: as it arrives in the underground caves, the water gradually deposits the calcium it has dissolved as it passed through the rock, forming amazing curtains and concretions.



## 3 BRIDGES

Linking the two banks of the river at the entrance to the gorge, where the River Hérault sometimes reveals its destructive nature power during floods:



Its stone or concrete bridges have always provided a vital link between people, villages and cultures. Invisible at the horizon, the 21<sup>st</sup> century "Passerelle des Anges" footbridge is the 4<sup>th</sup> bridge on the site and provides a safe way to reach the Pont du Diable.

### THE GORGES

Carved out of the limestone by the River Hérault, they are home to remarkable ecosystems which are still protected by the terrain and the quality of the water.



### THE GARRIGUE (SCRUBLAND)

A legacy of the time when sheep grazed peacefully in the sun, the garrigue, now free from human intervention or the effects of grazing sheep, is reducing, metre by metre, and becoming an oak forest once again.



### THE OLIVE GROVES

Olive oil, table olives, soap... Olive groves first appeared in the Aniane area in the 11<sup>th</sup> century and their shimmering green and silver foliage is still a notable feature of the landscape.



The road bridge was built in 1932 in response to the development of motor vehicles.



### THE MAISON DU GRAND SITE

This visitor centre stands at the edge of the "Saint-Guilhem-le-Désert - Gorges de l'Hérault" Grand Site de France. You are assured a warm welcome and an invitation to explore the riches of the Hérault Valley and its local produce.

### THE RIVER HÉRAULT

A powerful and unpredictable river, it links the granite of the Cévennes to the sands of the Mediterranean, shaping our landscapes and providing nourishment for humans, plants and animals.



## RÉSURGENCE

With each drop, streams form below ground and these then flow back out through a resurgence. This is how the Clamouse spring was formed.

