

VERBS

atteindre	reach, arrive at, attain
bifurquer	branch off, fork
descendre	descend, go down
élever	rise up, climb (an unusual use – think “elevate”)
emprunter	take
engager	take
entrer	enter
laisser	leave
longer	go, or continue along the side, or edge of ~
monter	go up, climb
obliquer	veer, change direction
passer	pass, pass by
prendre	take
quitter	leave, quit
rejoindre	merge
suivre	follow ~ suiv is a form of the verb suivre , as in il suit , (pronounced “ill swee”) – ‘it follows’
tourner	turn
traverser	cross, traverse

NOUNS

bifurcation	fork in trail, intersection, split
carrefour	intersection, crossroad
chemin	path, trail, road, way
 cité	city, town
 crête	ridge, crest of a hill
 ferme	farm
 itineraire	route, itinerary
 maison	house
 piste	trail, path
 pompage	pumping
 route	route, road, highway
 ruisseau	stream, brook, creek
 sous-bois	under the trees, the woods
 souterrain	underpass
 station	station
 vallon	small valley, glen

ADJECTIVES

encaissé	steep-sided
goudronnée	asphalt
petite	small
troisième	third (premiere, deuxième, troisième...)

DIRECTIONS

droite	right;	à droite	to the right
gauche	left;	à gauche	to the left
Est	East;	à l’Est	to the East
Nord	North;	au Nord	to the North
Ouest	West;	à l’Ouest	to the West
Sud	South;	au Sud	to the South
vers	toward, in the direction of		

A FEW SMALL WORDS

après	after
dans	in, into
devant	in front of, before (a place)
pour	for, in order to

Notes: This “cheat sheet” is to help interpret the trail instructions on page 99, Topo-Guide 653, **Sentier vers Saint-Jacques-de-Compostelle ~ Le Chemin du Puy: Moissac to Roncevaux**, published in France by FFRandonnée. These are examples of the words used for trail descriptions throughout all topo-guides. A few of the “definitions” are my own attempt to give the sense of the word as it is being used in these guides, which are sometimes different from what you’ll find in a dictionary. (Apologies in advance to anyone I need apologize to).

There are many “small words” in French that have different meanings in different contexts. I have largely ignored these in this exercise. The attempt here is not to create a literal or complete translation, but to demonstrate that it’s pretty easy to get the gist of the text. Along with trail marks, road signs, a compass, common sense, observation, intuition, and occasional good luck, even this minimal understanding should suffice to find your way.

Disclaimer - None of this is a substitute for learning to speak, read, and understand a language fluently. Use this at your own risk.