



Robert Louis Stevenson was devastated in the early fall of 1878.

The woman he loved—an older, married American called Fanny Osbourne whom he'd met at a dinner party in Grez-sur-Loing, France—had returned to the States with her two surviving children.

R.L.S. missed her dreadfully.

Attempting to forget about his love for Fanny, and to learn more about the countryside in the Cévennes region of France, R.L.S. decided to take a long walk in southern France.

Setting-out on his 12-day journey, with a donkey named Modestine as his only companion, Stevenson explored the isolated and rugged area once inhabited by the Camisards (French Protestants who had a century-long battle against French Catholics during the Middle Ages).

Leaving Monastier sur Gazeille, in the Haute-Loire region, Lou (as he was known by his family) walked 220 kilometers (136.7 miles) to Saint Jean de Gard. Along the way, he had many great adventures which he turned-into a humorous account entitled *Travel with a Donkey in the Cévennes*.

At that time in his life, Stevenson was not the wildly loved author he later became. He was still years-away from writing *Treasure Island*, his first major success.

The route Stevenson followed is referred to as GR 70, or the "Robert Louis Stevenson Trail." It is depicted in the map, at the top of this page, and follows ancient bridle-ways and footpaths. It passes through some of France's most-remote countryside, including deep valleys, sweet-smelling chestnut trees and winding rivers known for their clear water.

Mulberry trees, also covering the hill slopes, play a slightly different role today than they did in Stevenson's time. The area was once known for its silk industry, and mulberry leaves provided food for the silkworms which were bred in the local mills (known as magnaneries).

When R.L.S. finished his trek, one thing remained clear after all those hiked miles. He loved Fanny and was unwilling to live his life without her.

Credits:

Map image online via the French-based website, Ici & Là Nature Blog.

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Robert Louis Stevenson and His Walk with a Donkey

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Silkworms Gobbling Mulberry Leaves

Video online, courtesy YouTube.

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