

Pyrenean Group Holidays

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Central Pyrénées Guided Hiking in the French and Spanish National Parks and World Heritage Site

Introduction

The Pyrenees mountain range forms the 500 kilometre frontier between France and Spain. The central area has some of the highest mountains but also beautiful valleys with attractive small towns and villages.

Summary

- Trip begins in St Lary, France and ends in Cauterets, France
- 12 nights and 13 days
- 8 nights half board & 4 nights bed & breakfast
- Authentic and charming two and three star hotels with private bath/shower
- Baggage transfers between hotels

Highlights

- Explore some of the best of the central Pyrenees where the mountains rise to over 3000 metres
- Well graded trails including sections of the GR10 trans-Pyrenees long distance trail
- Stay in delightful small towns and villages in good hotels
- Climb to the famous Brèche de Roland 2807m
- Hike in the magnificent Ordesa Canyon
- Trek through into Spain for two nights at Torla

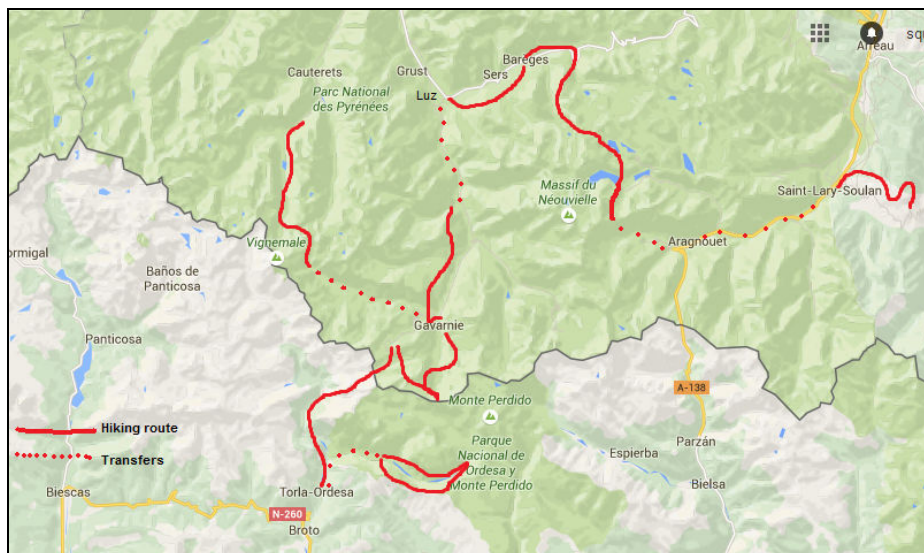
Hike Rating

This trip is rated moderate-challenging. There are 4 ½ -7 hours per day hiking, not counting breaks. The hikes range in length from 12 - 22 kilometres. The highest altitude is 2807 metres. The greatest total daily ascent is 1020 metres, and the greatest total daily descent is 1500 metres. 700 metres altitude gain or loss is a typical daily average. The terrain is rolling or mountainous with some steep ascents/descents and uneven trails. There are some sections on a couple of the walks where there is some exposure. These sections are on well-defined and popular trails so most people would find them no problem but they are not suitable for people who suffer from vertigo. Loose stones are fairly common on trails in the Pyrenees.

Overview map



Hiking area



Outline Itinerary

Day 1: St Lary

Our joining point is the hotel in St Lary with a chance to have a look around the busy little town in the evening. Please plan on arriving there by 5:00 p.m. at the latest.

Arrival. The nearest major airport is Toulouse www.toulouse.aeroport.fr and the nearest railway station at Lannemezan.

A shuttle bus operates at Toulouse between the airport and railway station and there are regular trains to Lannemezan which take about 1 ½ hours.

There are occasional buses from Lannemezan to St Lary or a minibus or taxi can be arranged.

Transport direct from the airport can be arranged.

Day 2: At St Lary

A short bus ride to the Col d'Azet (1580 m) where there are magnificent views over the valley and into the main mountain range. From there a climb along the ridge to Cap de Boupillac and then a well graded descent back to our hotel at St Lary partly following the GR10 trail and passing through some typical mountain villages. 20 kms, 5 ½ hrs, ascent 420 m, descent 1150 m, highest altitude 1680 m.

Day 3: St Lary to Barèges.



Horquette d'Aubert

We take hired transport for a 45 minute ride into the heart of the Néouvielle Nature Reserve. Setting off from the edge of the Lac d'Oredon we climb past several lakes and spectacular granite scenery to the high pass of the Hourquette d'Aubert (2488 m). Following the GR10 we pass more lakes descending to hay meadows and into the village of Barèges. 18km, 6 1/2 hrs, ascent 640 m, descent 1240 m, highest altitude 2488 m.

Day 4: Barèges to Luz



Bolou Valley

Follow the GR10 via beech forests & open pastures with stunning views across two valleys down into the town of Luz St Sauveur. Barèges to Luz St Sauveur. 15km, 4 ½ hrs, ascent 450 m, descent 990 m, highest altitude 1460 m.

Day 5: Rest day at Luz



Pont de Napoléon

Option of some gentle local walks, including the famous “Pont de Napoléon”, a visit to the National Park centre or take a bus to the famous pilgrimage centre of Lourdes.

Day 6: Luz to Gavarnie.



Approaching Gavarnie

Catch the bus to start the walk at Ayrues and follow the GR10 through beech & fir forests to the Plateau de Saugé where we start to get views of the huge glacial “cirque” at Gavarnie, a UNESCO World Heritage site. The route continues towards and then down into the village of Gavarnie. 19km, 6 hrs, ascent 730 m, descent 530 m, highest altitude 1820 m.

Day 7: A day at Gavarnie.



Cirque de Gavarnie

With minibuses to take us up to the Col des Tentes (2208m) we can then reach, via a small glacier, the famous “Breche de Roland” - a huge natural doorway in the cliffs which form the frontier between France & Spain. The return path to Gavarnie takes us over the “Plateau de Bellevue” with great views into the Cirque de Gavarnie. 16km, 6 ½ hrs, ascent 620 m, descent 1400 m, highest altitude 2807 m.

Day 8: A rest day at Gavarnie with the option of some gentle / less gentle local walks, local museum, leisurely lunch etc.

Day 9: Gavarnie to Torla



En route to Torla

Again using minibuses up to the Col des Tentes (2208 m) where we set off. We soon pass a lake and the Col d’Epeçières (2344 m) into the Aragon region of Spain. A long, gentle and varied descent takes us over grassy meadows and woodland down to the delightful small town of Torla. 17 km, 5 ½ hrs, ascent 400 m, descent 1500 m, highest altitude 2344 m.

Day 10: Ordessa Canyon



Ordessa Canyon

A short shuttle bus ride takes us up into a National Park and the Ordessa Canyon, a huge glacier carved-valley with side walls rising 1000 m above the valley floor. After a well graded ascent we reach the “Faja de Pelay” - an almost level 8 km balcony path with extraordinary views across the canyon towards the high frontier mountains. At the head of the valley we return along the valley. 20 km, 6 hrs, ascent 870 m, descent 870 m, highest altitude 1960m.

Day 11: Torla to Gavarnie



Pouey-Aspé valley

The return from Torla to Gavarnie is shortened by using transport part of the way back up the valley to the Bujareulo bridge. From there it is a 2 ½ hr ascent back to the border at the Col de Boucharo. From there we take the charming Pouey-Aspé valley which wends its way down to the village of Gavarnie. 14 km, 5 1/2 hrs, ascent 1020 m, descent 940 m, highest altitude 2273 m.

Day 12: Gavarnie to Cauterets.



Below the Hourquette d'Ossoue

22km, 7h00 hrs, ascent 900 m, descent 1300 m, highest altitude 2734 m. A long day with scenery which will make it all worth while! We need to take minibuses up a side valley to the Barrage d'Ossoue before we set off following the GR10 into a remote & wild area to the Hourquette d'Ossoue (2734 m) a pass on the flank of the highest peak in the French Pyrenees, the Vignemale (3298 m). We then descend through the Pyrenees National Park, passing the picturesque Lac de Gaube, down to the Pont d'Espagne. By then we will appreciate the bus ride down to the town of Cauterets.

Day 13: Departure from Cauterets.

Accommodation

A mixture of 2* and 3* hotels with en-suite facilities.
Eight nights half board & four nights bed & breakfast.

Baggage transfers

During the trip all baggage transfers will be arranged between hotels.

Local transport included

There are also a few days when transport will be organised to take us to the start of the walk and also on one day at the end of the walk. The cost is included in the holiday price.

What is not included

Getting to the first hotel at St Lary.
Transport from Cauterets at the end of the trip.
Lunches. It will be possible to buy food in all the villages/towns where we stay.
Evening meals on 4 days when the hotels are booked just for bed & breakfast.
Medical & travel insurance.
Personal expenses including drinks at the hotel.
Entrance fees (if any)