

# Pyrenean Group Holidays

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## **Eastern Pyrénées** **Guided Hiking in France and Spain** **From the Mountains to the Sea**

### **Introduction**

The Pyrenees mountain range forms the 500 kilometre frontier between France and Spain. We start the trek towards the eastern end in an area which spans the frontier, the northern half in France is known as *Cerdagne* and the southern half in Spain is *Cerdanya* forming part of Catalonia in Spain. We spend time on both sides of the border as we follow the mountains eastwards to where they drop into the Mediterranean Sea. We then swing south for the last 3 days following sections of the popular "Collioure to Cadequès" route which takes in some dramatic coastal scenery and some delightful fishing ports.

The scenery is extremely varied - the frontier ridge contains some impressive mountains reaching almost 3000 metres whilst towards the Mediterranean coast the mountains give way to hills sheltering vineyards, old forests of cork oak trees and pretty stone-built villages.

Much of the hike follows well defined "Grande Randonnée" routes – a network of long distance paths. It includes sections of the French GR10 - a 700 km route that traverses the whole mountain range from the Atlantic to the Mediterranean Sea. We also hike part of the GR11 – the wilder Spanish equivalent to the GR10.

### **Summary**

- Trip begins in Mont Louis, France and ends in Cadaqués, Spain
- 12 nights and 13 days
- 9 nights half board & 3 nights bed & breakfast
- 2\* and 3\* hotels with private bath/shower some of which are situated in stunning unique locations and some with spa facilities.
- Baggage transfers except Day 3

### **Highlights**

- Well graded trails including sections of the GR10 and GR11 trans-Pyrenees long distance trails
- Crossing the France/Spanish frontier several times
- A night in a 3\* hotel at the isolated former monastery at 1960m altitude.
- A huge variety of scenery, from high summits to cork oaks and coastal cliffs
- Exploring centuries old villages and towns
- Arriving at the Mediterranean Sea on foot from the mountains

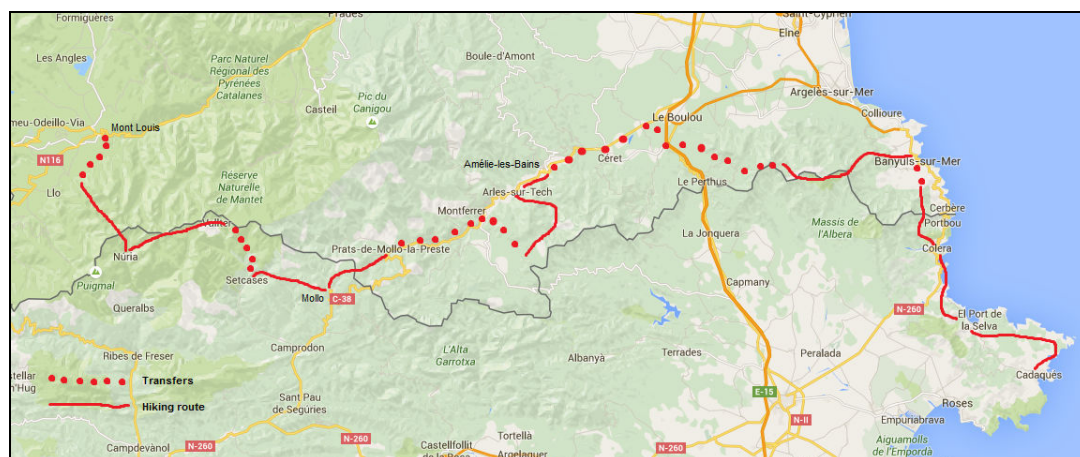
### **Hike Rating**

This trip is rated moderate-challenging. There are 5 -7 hours per day hiking, not counting breaks. The hikes range in length from 13 – 24 kilometres. The highest altitude is 2775 metres. The greatest total daily ascent is 1100 metres, and the greatest total daily descent is 1580 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



## Itinerary

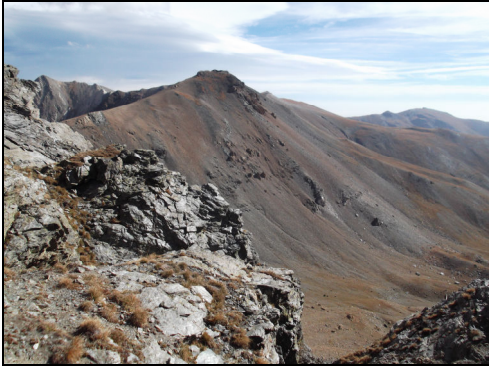
**Day 1:** Arrival at the village of Mont-Louis, which nestles inside massive fortifications, built in 1680. Possibility to visit the world's first solar furnace developed in the late 1940s.

**Day 2:** A short bus ride before we ascend the Eyne valley, a renowned nature reserve. The gently rising valley leads to the Col de Nuria (2683 m) where we cross into Spain. This high mountain pass allows us to appreciate magnificent views before we continue down to our hotel situated at Nuria. This former pilgrimage centre, **inaccessible by road**, has a stunning location. On this day we will have to manage without baggage. 14 kms, 6 hrs, 1100 m ascent, 750 m descent, highest point 2683 m.



*Nuria*

**Day 3:** Nuria to Setcases. The whole day above 2000 m altitude! Mainly following the GR11 we return to the heights of the frontier and cross a series of high passes below the Pic du Geant (2881 m). Our route leads to the mountain refuge d'Ulldeter (2235 m) before finishing at the Hostal d'Alta Muntanya Pastuira (2000 m) where we will be met by a bus to take us down to our overnight stay at the historical village of Setcases. 14 kms, 5 ½ hrs, 1040 m ascent, 1000 m descent, highest point 2775 m.



*On the way to Setcases*

**Day 4:** Setcases to Mollo. A shorter day following the GR11. After a climb out of the village through the forest we spend the rest of the day above the tree line with excellent views into Spain. The route leads to the picturesque village of Mollo with its magnificent Romanesque church. 13 kms, 5 hrs, 630 m ascent, 730 m descent, highest point 1900 m.



*Setcases*

**Day 5:** Mollo to Prats de Mollo. Passing through the village of Epinavell and climbing the cobbled streets we take old smugglers' paths to cross back into France. In the afternoon we can visit the "Tour de Mir" an ancient lookout tower and descend to the delightful small walled village of Prats de Mollo. 16 kms, 6 hrs, 480 m ascent, 910 m descent, highest point 1654 m.



*Prats de Mollo*



**Day 6:** A well deserved day off here. As well as some local walks and restaurants there are some sites worth visiting, for example the nearby 17<sup>th</sup> Century Fort Lagarde connected to the village by a covered and partially underground passageway.

**Day 7:** From Prats de Mollo we take transport up to the small town of St-Laurent-de-Cerdans we climb gently through the hills up to the magnificent viewpoint at Pilo de Belmaig. We then wend our way down into the Vallespir valley to the ancient village of Arles-sur-Tech, built around a Benedictine Abbey. From here we can catch a bus to our hotel at Amélie-les-Bains or walk the 4 kms following the "Ronde du Canigou" hiking route. 15 kms, 5 1/2 hrs, 800 m ascent, 1200 m descent, highest point 1280 m.



*Pilo de Belmaig and the path to Amélie*

**Day 8:** We take a bus from Amélie-Les-Bains up to our start point back on the frontier at Puig Neulos (1240 m). The long and spectacular frontier ridge leads us east towards the sea passing the Tour de la Madeloc and we then descend through cork oak woods and vineyards to the Banyuls-sur-Mer, a delightful seaside resort. 24 kms, 7 ¼ hrs, 520 m ascent, 1580 m descent, highest point 1250 m.



*Tour de la Madeloc*

**Day 9:** Day off at Banyuls. Lots of choice of things to do here as well as a lazy day. Perhaps a 25 minute bus ride to Collioure a town much favoured by artists in the early 20<sup>th</sup> Century. Or visit local art galleries, wine cellars, the local spa. Sit on the beach!



*Banyuls sur Mer*

**Day 10:** Banyuls to Llança. A short bus ride out of the town enables us to avoid the road and start gently climbing on old tracks through vineyards and then a footpath to the Spanish border from where there are good views down to the coast and Llança. Using a mixture of footpaths and tracks we head down to the Mediterranean Sea arriving at the town of Colera. From here we follow the coastline for the final 2 hours, an interesting mixture of cliffs and beachside paths. 22 kms, 7 hrs, 630 m ascent, 770 m descent, highest point 563 m.



*Llança*

**Day 11:** Llança to Port de Selva. A shorter day which will allow us to visit en-route the extraordinary monastery of St Pere de Rodes parts of which date back to the 11<sup>th</sup> Century. The route continues down to the charming fishing port of Selva. 16 kms, 5 hrs, 630 m ascent, 630 m descent, highest point 550 m.



*Port de Selva*

**Day 12:** Port de Selva to Cadaqués. We follow the GR11 eastwards passing the abandoned Monastery of Saint Baldiri. From there we cross the hills before descending to the pretty coastal village of Cadaqués. 14 kms, 4 hrs, 400 m ascent, 400 m descent, highest point not very high at all!



*Cadaqués*

**Day 13:** Departure from Cadaqués.

## **Accommodation**

A mlixture of 2\* and 3\* hotels with en-suite facilities.  
Nine nights half-board and three nights bed & breakfast.

## **Arrival & departure**

The nearest major airports are Perpignan and Barcelona. We can arrange direct transport between the airport and the start and finish of the trek.

## **Baggage transfers**

During the trip all baggage transfers will be arranged between hotels **except on Day 2.**

## **Local transport included**

There are also a few days when transport will be organised to take us to the start of the walk. The cost of this is included in the holiday price.

## **What is not included**

Transport to the first hotel at Mont-Louis.  
Transport away from the last hotel at Cadaquès.  
Lunches. It will be possible to buy food in all the villages/towns where we stay.  
Evening meals on 3 days when the hotels are booked just for bed & breakfast.  
Medical & travel insurance.  
Personal expenses including drinks at the hotel.  
Entrance fees (if any)