

14 days on a 'walking holiday' and 4 days resting and seeing sites in the towns

May 2020

Day 1: Arrival

Train from Toulouse. Welcome, transfer from Gaillac train station and settle in to your first guest house near Castlenau in the Tarn.

Day 2: Castlenau - Donnazac

Your first day starts by climbing to the first of your bastide villages - Castelnau-de-Montmiral. This beautiful village sits on top of a hill with a central square surrounded by wonderful timber-framed historic houses. Your trail then continues west through quiet rolling countryside with a patchwork of Gaillac vines decorating the pretty vistas. After visiting the village of Cahuzac you'll turn north to reach Donnazac and your wonderful guest house. 21km, +310m

Day 3: Donnazac to Cordes-sur-Ciel

An easier day as you make your way through vineyards, passing historic chateaux and farmsteads to reach the remarkable bastide of Cordes-sur-Ciel, widely considered to be the finest fortified settlement in France. Climb into the old town to explore the narrow winding streets and see the beautiful gothic and renaissance buildings, which are incredibly well preserved. Afterwards, descend to your lovely guest house at the foot of the village. 14km, +240m

Optional extra night and day with possibility of visiting Albi on the banks of the river Tarn, classed a World Heritage Site by UNESCO. The city is home to Saint Cecile Cathedral, the largest brick built building in the world.

Day 4: Vaour - Bruniquel

Transfer to a small hamlet beyond Vaour. A day of contrasts as you traverse the hills of the Causse Magrou before descending to reach the Aveyron Gorge. Just before you reach the gorge, you can climb to reach the pretty ridge-top village of Penne with its ruined castle. Afterwards you have the choice of following the bottom of the gorge or the plateau above to reach your next bastide - Bruniquel. Like many of the villages you'll explore, this is also classed as one of the prettiest villages in France. Explore its steep streets lined with historic dwellings. 17km, +350m

Day 5: Bruniquel to Puycelci

Your trail takes you into the forest of Gresigne which is the largest forest in the Tarn and the greatest oak forest in the South of France. It was also the hunting forests of King Francois I. A choice of trails depending on the distance you wish to walk. You'll finish by climbing to another wonderful hilltop bastide. Puycelci has been a strategic highpoint from prehistoric times. This small village is the archetypal bastide with its church and houses encircled by protective walls which sit on the edge of vertical cliffs. 14 - 18km, +380m

Day 6: Puycelci to Castlenau de Montmiral

You'll descend from Puycelci to reach the Vere Valley which you'll never leave for too long during your day's walking. Your trail passes through a quiet rural scene of farms, manors and small hamlets. You'll undulate across a number of small tributary valleys in and out of woods to return to your guest house near Castlenau. 16km, +330m

Day 7: Tour from Castlenau de Montmiral

For your last day you have a choice of walks from your guest house, either on the north in the Gresigne forest or south into Sivens forest. Plenty of interest throughout in these deciduous forests. You can of course choose to relax by the pool at your guest house.

Day 8: Departure - Toulouse

Transfer to Gaillac station after breakfast. The train to Toulouse. Hotel in Toulouse 4* with breakfasts.

Day 9: Toulouse

Day at leisure in the Pink city.

Day 10: Toulouse – Bayonne - Hendaye

Train to Hendaye. Welcome at your hotel in Hendaye

Depending on your arrival time, after checking into your hotel, you may choose to walk in the region of Domaine d'Abbadia. A fantastic natural site of 65 hectares situated right on the coast. You will find a great mix of landscapes, moors, prairies, heather and high cliffs. You can also visit the famous neo-gothic chateau, the Domaine d'Abbadie.

If you have more time: from St Jean de Luz, the coastal path, offers you magnificent panoramas from the port of Ciboure to Hendaye. 5.5km (2hrs), +80m, -80m or 12km (3hrs30), +200m, -200m.

Day 11: Hendaye - Ibardin

Hendaye lies on the estuary of the River Bidassoa, which forms the border with Spain. The GR10 walking route begins its course on Hendaye Plage. Rising rapidly above the Atlantic, this first stage of the walk is pleasant. The landscape, scattered with villages, is peaceful and harmonious with the rolling hillsides. The ambience is very basque but there is no sign yet of the high dramatic mountains to come. 14km (4hrs45) +730m, -345m.

Day 12: Ibardin - Dancharia

Short transfer (can be avoided, consult us). The first outlines of the distant mountains can be spotted on the horizon. You have the chance to reach the summit of La Rhune. At an altitude of 900m it is considered the first peak in the Pyrenean chain. You'll pass picturesque villages; Sare and Ainhoa are scarcely more than single streets lined with large houses. The houses (mostly dating from the 17th century) have stone lintels carved with the dates of their construction and details of their family's history. 21.5km (6hrs45) +650m, -670m.

Day 13: Dancharia - Col des Veaux

Today the GR10 passes a series of summits, crossing over high mountain passes, it winds its way around l'Erebi (583m), and then further on l'Axulegi (617m). At the high mountain pass of col Zuccuta there is a superb viewpoint. From the col, weather permitting, you can either take the track route to the Col des Veaux or if it's fine you might choose to stay on the ridge. This is not part of the GR10 but it is well worth it for the views. The ridge leads all the way to the Pic Gorospil at 691m where there are superb panoramic views. 13km (4hrs), +670m, -200m.

Day 14: Col des Veaux - Bidarray

The GR10 continues to alternate between the Pyrenean summits and mountain villages that have a strong Basque identity. The trail heads in the direction of Col de Mehatche situated at an altitude of 716m. You'll pass into a rocky landscape that is home to griffin vultures that circle high above. You descend to Bidarray village, an emblematic overnight stop that is vibrant with the characteristic Basque culture and lifestyle. 11km (3hrs30), +270m, -740m.

Day 15: Bidarray - Saint Etienne de Baigorry

Today is a challenging walk and will lead you to Saint Etienne de Baigorry across some breathtaking scenery, such as extraordinary sandstone cliff faces along the classic ridge walk of the Cresta d'Iparla and its culminating peak of 1044m. 18km (7hrs30), +1135m, -1075m.

Day 16: Saint Etienne de Baigorry - St Jean Pied de Port

This is the final day of the first week's walking on the GR10 trail leading into Saint Jean Pied de Port, in the very heart of the Basque country. There is over six hours challenging walking with 900m ascent and descent before arriving at Saint Jean Pied de Port. It lies in a picturesque setting on the banks of the river Nive, and is located on a historic route into Spain. Enclosed by walls of pinky red sandstone, the old town is pretty and interesting with a single cobbled street. Many of the historic houses bear inscriptions on the lintels from the 16th and 17th centuries. 19km (6hrs30), +900m, -900m.

Day 17: Departure - Bayonne

Your walking holiday ends after breakfast in Saint Jean Pied de Port. Opportunity to visit the historic capital of Basse-Navarre. Train to Bayonne. Check in to 4* hotel in central Bayonne, with breakfast.

Day 18: Bayonne

Day at leisure exploring this most basque of cities.

Day 19: Departure.

End of our services after breakfast.

Our pricing : 3262€ per person (based on 2 pax)

INCLUDES :

18 nights' accommodation.

All breakfasts and 11 evening meals ; 6 lunches

Full walking notes and maps.

Transport of luggage between accommodation

Transfers as required during walking tour

GPS files (if requested)

Transport of luggage between guest houses

Train journeys as mentioned