

Pyrénées : Mystic Castles of the Pyrenees - 1st Section

From Quéribus to Quillan

7 days, 6 nights

6 days of possible walking.

Between the Pyrenees and the Mediterranean, in the heart of the sunblessed region of the Corbières you will find the imposing, mystic stone castles of the châteaux cathares. These castles represent a tragic, political and religious intrigue that shook the South of France and marked the region. During the week's walking you will discover landscapes of immense natural beauty, lush valleys and rolling hills. You will discover an interesting page of France's history along with some good local food and wines. The trails pass through a whole variety of terrain, each day is different, the vegetation, the 'garrigue' is fragrant and often full of colour.

Your itinerary follows the 'sentier Cathare', a footpath that stretches from Quéribus to Quillan. This is one week's walking and represents the first half of the trail. We also propose Puivert to Foix which completes the route. The Cathare footpath can be walked separately, or linked together to become a two week walk.

Tour Aventure Trekking

Agence de voyages LI 02A.06 0002 - Garantie Financière de 137204€ : APS - Contrat RC : n°86 410 716 Gan Eurocourtage IARD

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Program

Day 1 : Quillan to Duilhac-sous-Peyrepertuse

Rendez vous in Quillan at 16h00 in front of the railway station, transfer by taxi to Duilhac-sous-Peyrepertuse. Check into your accommodation and investigate the village of Duilhac-sous-Peyrepertuse situated at the foot of Peyrepertuse castle.

Day 2 : Padern to Duilhac via Queribus

From the Château of Padern, the trail leads through the fragrant garrigue vegetation and past rolling vineyards to arrive at the prestigious castle of Queribus. This high citadel is a real eagle's nest, perched precariously on the rocky crags at 788m. This chateau was the last stronghold to remain secure during the crusade of the Albigeois in 1255. The surrounding scenery is grand, the views stretch to the Fenouillèdes, the plains of Rousillon and the Corbières. You take a trail that will lead you back to the village of Duilhac.

Distance : 16km, duration : 5h00, dénivelé plus : +436m, dénivelé moins : -260m.

Day 3 : Duilhac to Cubières

A particularly picturesque walk with the opportunity to visit Peyrepertuse castle and the Galamus Gorge that has been carved out by the river Agly. Galamus gorge has become a favourite for those practising the sport of canyoning and you can sometimes hear the echoes below as they journey down, swimming and cascading over waterfalls, tumbling through the pools and chutes of the canyon. A narrow road passes through the gorge at mid level, half way up the cliffs, it was built in 1884. Your path leads directly past the Galamus hermitage, a humble home in a cave, now a small sanctuary, the entrance is found between small oaks and a shrubby box tree vegetation. Your day's destination is the private domaine, the Bouchard, a large private estate that is home to a whole host of animals. As you walk towards the house you are sure to see herds of deer wandering around and you may even be accompanied to the house by a friendly, tame wild boar. Once at the house you can't help but be inspired by this high vantage point that offers wonderful airy views across the Corbières. The home cooked evening meal with ample servings of wonderful fresh food will follow shortly.

Distance : 16km, duration : 5h00, dénivelé plus : +250m, dénivelé moins : -340m.

Day 4 : Cubière to Sougraigne village

You leave the Domaine du Bouchard to walk to the ravishing village of Sougraigne, set in the prettiest of country spots. You traverse the Col du Linas in the direction of the Pech de Bugarach (1230m), a dominating high mountain that occupies an important strategic position in the area and represents the gateway into the Corbières. The village of Bugarach, a few hundred metres off your trail, is certainly worth a short detour. Its castle ruins date from the XVI and XVII century, little narrow roads link houses that are one hundred years old. Once back on track you will cross over the Col de la Pourteille (694m), before dropping down to the village of Sougraigne. There is a whole mix of different trees that have been planted to combat soil erosion, such as the laricio pine, austrian black pines, cedar, larch, spruce and many beach and chestnut trees. Low stone walls, fragrant scrubby bushes, the outline of buildings and a church tower, indicate you're drawing near to the village.

Distance : 15km, duration : 5h00, dénivelé plus : +250m, dénivelé moins : -605m.

Day 5 : Sougraigne to Granes

This morning you leave Sougraigne, traversing the salty river of the Sals. The source of this river is high up in one of the valleys. In the XVII century the smuggling of salt was rife in this area and the village was particularly coveted. After the passage over the Col de la Salso at app 462m you will head in the direction of the river La Blanque towards the strange

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landscapes of the Haut-Razès. The trail leads along footpaths that are often in the welcome shade of enormous oak and chestnut trees. There are various natural curiosities en route, such as the Roche tremblante and the natural springs rich in sulphur and iron. Arriving at Rennes le Château there is time to visit this site and learn about the mysteries of the priest and the huge sum of money that he found. The trail continues to the village of Granès.

Distance : 19km, duration : 5h30, dénivelé plus : +445m, dénivelé moins : -450m.

Day 6 : Granès to Quillan

The trail leads through varied terrain, often in forests and through a succession of small villages. The local communities are welcoming and time seems to have stood still in the squares of sleepy villages, such as Saint Ferriol or Saint Julia de Bec. The Cathare footpath crosses from valley to valley before passing through a wooded area to the foot of the Col des Trois Quilles. Having traversed the col you drop down to 555m to Quillan the capital of the Audoise. As you arrive in the town you will pass the ruins of the castle that date from the XIII century and offer an interesting panoramic view. The walking finishes today in Quillan, situated on the banks of the river Aude. This traditionally industrial town has become an animated authentic centre and popular for tourism in recent years.

Distance : 18km, duration : 5h00, dénivelé plus : +350m, dénivelé moins : -440m.

Day 7 : Tour ends at Quillan

The holiday comes to an end in Quillan after breakfast at your hotel. You can choose to do a circular route from Quillan.

Circular walk from Quillan

The itinerary offers a remarkable diversity of Mediterranean and mountain vegetation. You will see the unusual chalet of Carach and the village itself that is famous for its XI century church. The return route meanders back along the river l'Aude.

Distance : 12km, duration : 3h30, dénivelé plus : +295m, dénivelé moins : -295m.

This programme is an example of the itinerary we aim to adhere to. It may be possible, if situations arise that are beyond our control, for the itinerary to be modified.

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Details

Level of difficulty

The walks are on good footpaths and trails, the terrain is varied but often rocky. You need to be used to walking and take regular exercise to enjoy this holiday.

Price

- From 2008/01/01 to 2008/12/31 : Price per person in Double room 585 €, Price per person in Single room 705 €

Supplements/reductions :

- Supplement for 5 pic-nics : 52 €/pers - Supplementary night in Quillan (BB) : 35 €/pers

Price includes :

Half board accommodation (except day 6), internal transfers, baggage transfers between hotels, the dossier containing your maps, route notes and all necessary details needed for your holiday.

Price does not include :

Entrance fees, additional transfers, drinks, picnics, additional activities, holiday insurance, travel and evening meal day 6.

Encadrement

Self-guided walking.

Carrying

You will need to carry a day sack only, with your water bottle, camera, picnic and gortex jacket.

Our bag-moving service means you can travel light during your walks.

Your main luggage - will be transported by vehicle between the different night stops. We ask you to please limit your main luggage to between 10-15kg to facilitate the transportation and carrying for the taxis. It is also important to consider that it may be necessary to carry your bags short distances at the start or end of your holiday. (Consult with us for left luggage facilities)

Accommodation/food

Accommodation

- Half board accommodation in double room in hotels, one night with exterior bathroom.

Food

- Continental breakfast (tea, coffee, milk, butter, jam)
- Evening meals in gites, often based on local specialities.
- Pic-nics not included.

Starting point/end

Starting point : Day 1 at Quillan train station, at 16h00.

End : Day 7 at your hotel in Quillan after breakfast. If you are doing both sections of the Mystic Castles of the Pyrenees trail the night in Quillan is offered BB.

Organisation

We propose a self guided, independent formula. You choose your departure date and we will take care of all the rest between the initial rendez-vous time through to the dispersion point. We transport your bags between the hotels,

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provide the maps and good walking route notes. This is a way of enjoying complete flexibility, you dictate the pace and rhythm of your holiday.

Dates

Every day of the year, according to availability.

Number of participants

From 2 people

Access

Quillan train station.

Bibliography

Rough Guide the Pyrenees - Marc Dubin 2004

Rough Guide Languedoc & Roussillon - Brian Catlos 2004

The Cathars and the Albigensian Crusade - Michael Costen 1997

Practical info

HOW TO GET THERE

By Road:

Quillan is situated 39kms from Carcassonne, on the D118 passing by Limoux.

From Toulouse it is 140km by motorway to Carcassonne.

There is a bus service from Carcassonne to Quillan.

For more information contact 08 36 35 35 35

By Train:

There are regular trains from Toulouse 'Matabiau' to Carcassonne.

PRACTICAL INFORMATION

Railway station at Quillan: 04 68 20 05 63

Meteo Aude: 04 36 68 02 11

To carry in your luggage

- Bags

A small day pack for your water bottle, camera, picnic and waterproof.

A bag, rucksack or suitcase for your main luggage 10kg maximum per person.

- For Walking

Good walking shoes or boots with a good grip sole

Walking socks.

Warm fleece

Shorts and T shirts.

Swimming costume or trunks

Towel

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2 Walking poles (optional)

Water bottle (one litre minimum)

Personal first aid kit with good blister protection

- For your picnics

A good cutting knife, fork, spoon, plastic cup and plate

some plastic bags

- Sun and rain protection

Sunglasses and sun cream

Sun hat

Wind and waterproof jacket (Gore-tex stlye)

- Relaxing time

Trainers or open sandals

Warm Fleece and casual wear

With your service

The Tour Aventure team is present and always at hand to ensure the smooth running of your holiday. We are on the ground and ready to assist in any eventuality.

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