

# Purely PYRENEES

walking and cycling holidays

## From The Basque Mountains To The Atlantic Ocean



*This short break takes you through the foothills of the Pyrenees to the Atlantic Ocean, discovering the green and gentle landscapes of the Basque Country as you go. Highlights include the spectacular viewpoint of La Rhune and the Basque talent for great food and hospitality.*

4 nights, 3 or 4 days  
walking

■ Minimum required 2

■ From point to point

■ With luggage  
transportation

■ Self-guided

Code :  
**FP2PUCB**



### *The plus points*

- Transfers from and to Biarritz (other transfers also possible)
- Luggage transfers every day so you only carry a daysack
- High quality, original hotels with dinner included
- 24/7 customer service



*Before departure, please check that you have an updated fact sheet.*

[http://www.purelypyrenees.com/mountains\\_atlantic\\_pays\\_basque\\_break.html](http://www.purelypyrenees.com/mountains_atlantic_pays_basque_break.html)

*On this short break, you discover the true Basque Country - its superb peaks, its green valleys, red and white villages, and the satisfaction of walking to the Atlantic Ocean. At the end, you stay in one of the region's liveliest and most attractive ports.*

## ■ PROGRAMME

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### DAY 1

#### Arrival at Espelette

We meet you at Biarritz airport or the railway station in Saint-Jean-de-Luz (trains from Paris). *Pick-ups also available from Pau or Bordeaux (please consult us for prices).*

Depending on your time of arrival, you can enjoy a pleasurable 1.5 to 2 hour stroll around Mount Urzumu, which offers panoramic views of the village of Espelette. There is also the option of a much longer, 5 hour walk if you were to arrive early enough.

You stay in the archetypal Basque village of Espelette that has been conserved superbly, has an interesting chateau and church, and an exceptional artisan chocolate producer (Antton), but is really famous for its festival of red peppers (pimentos). Hotel Chilhar is a real treat in the heart of Espelette. Outside it is traditional Basque. Inside it offers boutique style accommodation, and wonderfully contemporary takes on traditional Basque cuisine. We are sure you will really enjoy staying here. Dinner, bed and breakfast.

**Walking time: 1h30 or 5h. Distance: 6km or 16km. Ascent/descent: + 100m or + 600m / - 150 or - 650m. Transfer time : 30 minutes.**

### DAY 2

#### Espelette - Sare

This is a day of wonderful foothills walking through unspoilt villages and hamlets, and along country lanes and farm tracks - the remarkable Ainhoa being the highlight. It is easy walking through beautiful countryside, but interspersed with interesting places to see and things to do, not least from tempting artisan producers of foods, drinks, arts and crafts. But often you will see, not that far away, the dramatic mountain that is La Rhune, and which you will be on top of tomorrow. A longer, and somewhat more challenging, route can be chosen instead.

You stay in Sare, which has 253 houses dating back to the 15th century, and rests almost in the shadow La Rhune. The Hotel Arraya is a superb 4 star hotel in a privileged location in the village that combines an historic building with boutique luxury and exceptional "cuisine terroir".

**Walking time : 6h30 or 5h30. Distance : upto 19km. Ascent/descent: + 620m / - 760m.**

### DAY 3

#### Sare - La Rhune - Ascain - Saint-Jean-de-Luz

Your panoramic highlight is at the summit of La Rhune with its 360 degree views east towards the endless Pyrenees, south into Spain, and west to the Atlantic coast. You can walk up - a steady walk that's perfectly "do-able" - or take the magnificent rack railway, its wooden carriages slowly clattering their way to the top. Look out for pottoks - wild mountain ponies - and red headed sheep. Certainly you can enjoy the walk down until you arrive at the pretty village of Ascaïn. We will then take you the short distance to St Jean de Luz by road, or you can kayak down the gentle Nivelle river to arrive in St Jean in independent style. As ever with Purely Pyrenees, the choice is yours.

St Jean de Luz is one of our favourite - and liveliest - towns in the Pyrenees bursting with energy from its harbourside through its twisting streets to the bars and restaurants, many offering tapas as well as excellent fish dishes. You stay in the middle of the town at the impressive and comfortable Hotel les Almadies on a bed and breakfast basis, so you can choose your own restaurant (or series of tapas bars), although we offer several recommendations.

**Walking time : 3h30 or 6h. Distance : 10.5km or 15km. Ascent/descent:: + 500m or + 880m / - 500m or - 840m. Transfer time : 20 minutes.**

## **DAY 4**

### **Saint-Jean-de-Luz - Corniche Basque - Socoa - Ciboure - Saint-Jean-de-Luz**

Your last walk is a coastal one to complete your mountains to the sea experience. You walk out of St Jean de Luz, and walk the rich green hills around Urrugne that run close to the often dramatically magnificent Atlantic. Your return route is right by the sea through the interesting villages of Socoa and Ciboure. Altogether, a thoroughly satisfying walk with plenty of memorable views, places to stop for a coffee or something more substantial, and throughout that distinctive Basque ambience that is like nowhere else in France (or the rest of the world).

You again stay at the excellent Hotel les Almadies on a bed and breakfast basis. It is right in the centre of the town, so you can easily choose your own restaurant for your final night,

**Walking time: 4h30. Distance: 16km. Ascent/descent: + 250m / - 250m.**

## **DAY 5**

### **End of stay**

After breakfast, we will take you back to Biarritz airport or the railway station at Saint-Jean-de-Luz. *Transfers also available to Pau and Bordeaux (please consult us for prices).*

**Transfer time : 30 minutes.**

*Elements beyond our control (the weather, level of the group, logistical risks, other miscellaneous reasons...) may lead our team to modify the programme. We aim to please, but your safety will systematically be our priority.*

## **■ USEFUL INFORMATION**

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### **PROGRAMME OF DEPARTURES**

1 June to 30 October

## **MEETING POINT**

We meet you at Biarritz airport or the railway station in Saint-Jean-de-Luz (trains from Paris). Pick-ups also available from Pau or Bordeaux (please consult us for prices).

## **END OF STAY**

We meet you at Biarritz airport or the railway station in Saint-Jean-de-Luz (trains from Paris). Pick-ups also available from Pau or Bordeaux (please consult us for prices).

## **TO GET TO THE MEETING POINT**

You can fly from London, Paris, Stockholm, Dublin and Madrid to Bordeaux, Pau and/or Biarritz. Trains from Paris stop at St Jean de Luz (5 hours 30 minutes typical journey time). Visit the SNCF website, or other rail ticket provider. Or drive.

## **CAR SHARING**

To reduce your travel costs as well as carbon emissions, think about car sharing, whether you are a driver or passenger. Connect to [Blablacar](#) it's simple and practical.

We recommend that you compare the cost of various different means of accessing your circuit start point by using the website [Comparabus](#). Contrary to what the name suggests, this site proposes several different means of completing a journey, including, flights, trains, buses or car sharing.

## **PARKING**

There is car parking at St Jean de Luz station. We can collect and return you there at the end.

## **GUARANTEED DEPARTURE FROM (PERS)**

2

## **LEVEL**

This itinerary features comfortable rather than challenging walking, and is suitable for most people who enjoy a good walk. You are mainly in the foothills of the Pyrenees rather than in the high mountains, and on most days there are itinerary choices, so you can choose easier or more challenging routes. Typically, there is 4 to 6 hours steady walking with ascents and descents of typically 200 to 800 metres. If the weather is really bad, or you are really tired, then we can usually transfer you to the next hotel by car.

## **LUGGAGE TRANSPORTATION**

We will transfer your luggage between each hotel, so all you need to carry when walking is a daysack with whatever you regard as essentials.

## **SUPERVISION**

This is an independent, self-guided holiday.

## **ACCOMODATION**

You stay in double or twin rooms for 1 night in four star hotels, 2 nights in a three star hotel, and one night in a particularly good two star hotel.

## **MEALS**

You will eat very well. The two included dinners are based on set menus featuring regional specialities, fish etc usually with 3 or 4 choices for each of three courses, but you can pay locally for upgraded choices. The dinners on the last two nights are not included. Breakfast is included every morning, but lunches and picnics are not because there are plenty of places to make your own choices, although the night before you can ask the hotel for a picnic, which you can pay for locally.

## **TRANSFERS**

Usually transfers are in people carriers, mini-buses, cars or taxis. Often they will be exclusively for you.

## **THE PRICE INCLUDES**

2 nights dinner, bed and breakfast, plus 2 nights bed and breakfast; people transfers; luggage transfers; detailed walking instructions; 1:25,000 IGN map; 24/7 customer phone service.

## **THE PRICE DOES NOT INCLUDE**

The journey to the start point, and from the finish point, except as specified; lunches; drinks with meals; non-standard menu items; the La Rhune train tickets; personal and travel insurance.

## **FORMALITIES**

You need to keep your passport with you at all times, and ideally insurance information. You need to make your own arrangements to claim local healthcare. There are requirements in France and Spain for all vehicles to carry safety equipment.

## **CONTENTS OF YOUR TRAVEL FOLDER**

When we have received your balance of payment for your holiday, and in the month before departure, we send you all the documentation you need: detailed itinerary showing dates, times, contact details etc; a detailed guide to your walking route (with options) and lots of cultural, historical and nature background information; formal documents (invoices, contracts etc); luggage labels etc. If you book at the last minute, we can send this information to your first night hotel.

## **■ EQUIPMENT**

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**Do** pack everything into one suitcase (preferably soft form) and bring a weatherproof daysack (small rucksack) each. We transport your luggage, and large rucksacks are difficult for flights and cars.

**Do** invest in "tech" clothing - light, waterproof, breathable, quick drying etc - and good walking boots with ankle protection (trainers will not be good enough).

**Do** simplify your "tech" equipment if you can: for example, can you get communications, internet access, entertainment, music and books all on your smartphone? There's plenty of space in your luggage for a Kindle, so do you need to take books as well?

**Do** choose comfortable clothing for evenings too - usually people dress casual, or at most smart casual, but remember you are usually staying and dining in quality hotels.

**Do** remember that while you are enjoying some of the most unspoilt and magnificent scenery and landscapes in the world, and walking for hours without seeing another soul, you will be staying in villages and towns with shops that have most of the things you might need as replacements, or if you've forgotten stuff. After all, you are in France and Spain, not the middle of nowhere !

## **LUGGAGE**

- A soft travel bag, avoid suitcases, which are more cumbersome and limit the weight of your belongings to 10 kg if possible.
- A small backpack of 30 litres minimum for your daytime requirements.

## **CLOTHES**

- Waterproof and breathable anorak (Gore-Tex type)
- Fleece or a sweater (depending on the location and season)
- Waterproof over-trousers
- Pair of gloves (depending on the location and season)
- Sun hat (with all round brim)
- Shorts
- Swimming costume + packaway towel
- Several pairs of proper walking socks
- Underwear
- Pair of trainers or light evening shoes
- Comfortable clothing for the evening

## **EQUIPMENT TO BRING**

- Walking boots (with ankle protection)
- Sunglasses, sunscreen and lip protection
- Water bottle or backpack container (allow 2 litres per person per day)
- Tupperware type container for the picnic + cutlery
- Compass
- Waterproof cover for walking instructions and map
- Head torch
- Survival blanket
- Mobile phone (signal strength is often surprisingly good, but cannot be relied on)
- Your identity documents (including driving licence - you never know when...)

## **FIRST AID KIT**

- Small shared kit (gauze, plasters, analgesic, blister plasters, earplugs, pain killers, indigestion tablets)

## **■ MORE INFORMATION**

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### **THE AREA**

In the Pyrenees the "west" is not so wild. This is one of the more populated areas of the Pyrenees, with large coastal towns such as Bayonne, Biarritz or San Sebastian. Further inland the population becomes sparser, giving way to green rolling hills and beautiful hillside villages of white-washed houses with red and green doors and window shutters (the colours of the Basque flag). Some of the quaintest villages in the whole of the Pyrenees are to be found in this idyllic region where traditional activities such as sheep farming and cheese production are still going strong.

Walks in this region will take you to some superb viewpoints overlooking the ocean and through beautiful wooded valleys dotted with farms and villages.

The Basques are a hospitable, modern and forward-looking bunch who are also very proud of their unique language, history, culture and traditions.

A major attraction of the west of the Pyrenees is also its wonderfully varied gastronomy. The proximity to the Atlantic Ocean means that shellfish and seafood are often on the menu as well as local lamb and beef, local cider, black cherries, cheeses from the valleys of Aspe and Ossau, the famous Basque peppers from Espelette, and plenty of locally produced fruit and veg. You will also be able to taste the famous gâteau basque (my favourite!) and sip on some txakoli, the region's bubbly white wine made from vines growing on terraces overlooking the Atlantic Ocean.

This is also home to the beret, the origin of which can be traced back to either the Basque Country or the neighbouring Béarn. You are sure to see many locals sporting this traditional and practical head garment.

Many Basques do not necessarily feel the need to identify themselves as being either "French" or "Spanish" as movement between the two nation states is natural and straightforward and both the French Basques and the Spanish Basques share a common language. There are also many people who would like to see the whole area become independent of both Spain and France.

Some interesting places to visit on the French side of the border might include the picturesque village of Espelette (well-known for its famous red peppers which can be seen hanging from many of the houses), the amazing Ainhoa (one of the most beautiful villages in France), or the summit of La Rhune. This small mountain can be easily hiked up but there is also a rack-and-pinion railway line leading up to the top, with extensive views out to Biarritz, San Sebastian and the Atlantic Ocean. The beautiful seaside resort of Saint-Jean-de-Luz is also worth a visit, with great beaches and boat trips.

The walking around the medieval town of Saint-Jean-Pied-de-Port is also fantastic, and thousands of pilgrims still set out from here every year to cross the Pyrenees and begin their journey to Santiago de Compostela in the north-west of Spain. This particular area is also on the flight-path of many migrating birds, making it a paradise for bird-watchers and pigeon hunters alike!

Horses freely roam these mountains, with the most famous Basque race being the pottock, a very sturdy horse with tough leg muscles and a low centre of gravity that used to be used in mining activities in the area. Nowadays, many first-time grandfathers will still traditionally give a pottock to their grandchildren in order to guarantee them a future livelihood should all else fail.

## ■ INSURANCE

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According to the regulation of our profession, Purely Pyrenees is covered by a Civil Professional Liability. However, each client must hold an individual civil liability as well as an individual multi risk guarantee in order to protect themselves from incidents or accidents that may occur before or during their hiking trip.

We remind you that a credit card covers, in general, only assistance in repatriation and not the cancellation of your trip, and this only provided you use the card to pay for the total of the trip.

We offer a choice of three insurance options which you can purchase at the time of booking.

### **Package 1: simple cancellation insurance at 2.5%**

This insurance provides reimbursement of the amount incurred (excluding fees and the cost of insurance) in case of cancellation due to one of the following causes: serious accident, illness or death of insured, spouse or person accompanying them, and certain family members.

### **Package 2: simple cancellation insurance and assistance / repatriation at 3.7%**

This insurance allows, in addition to the benefits described in the plan No. 1; - To benefit from assistance in case of illness or injury during the trip and covers your return home if necessary. - A reimbursement paid on a pro rata basis (excluding transportation costs and with a waiting period) in the case of an interruption of your trip following an accident, the death of a loved one or other specified accidents.

### **Package 3: Package "super multi-risk": 4.8%**

This insurance offers, in addition to the benefits described in the packages No. 1 and No. 2, - A wider cancellation insurance with the repayment of amounts incurred (net of deductible) in case of cancellation for any justifiable reason including an exceptional and unexpected event. - The management of some of the costs incurred at the time in case of return not linked to an exceptional and unexpected event. - Compensation (capped) for loss, theft or destruction of baggage. - Payment of compensation for delayed baggage delivery of more than 48 hours.

**The rapatriation is not valid for all countries, please check with us before subscribing the insurance.**

You will receive with the confirmation of your booking an extract of the general conditions of contract chosen (in french). Take this document with you on your journey. The validity of all guarantees corresponds with the travel dates indicated on the invoice and applies only to services sold. For departures and returns postponed, please contact us. Warning: If you buy only the contract No. 1 (simple cancellation insurance), this means that you need to have your own insurance, repatriation assistance (related notably to certain credit cards). We advise you to check your contract and cover guaranteed. In this case, we ask you to tell us when you book the name of your insurance company and your policy number. You will assume, therefore, the responsibility of certain risks, especially in the advance payments of certain costs.

Important: If you must use the assistance during the trip, you must obtain the prior consent of Europe Assistance before taking any action or incur any expenditure by telephoning: 33 1 41 85 85 85 and quoting the number of contract: 58662860

## ■ ACTING FOR RESPONSIBLE TOURISM

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Purely Pyrenees is a founding member of Action for Responsible Tourism.

The label "Action for Responsible Tourism" was awarded Purely Pyrenees in 2009. It is controlled, every year, by ECOCERT.

Based on common values of respect, solidarity and quality, ATR aims to harmonize professional practices of its members.

To win the confidence of customers, it focuses on four key commitments, which arise from many activities in the field and at home.

- Clear information and awareness of responsible tourism given to the traveller.
- Selection of providers in the spirit of responsible tourism.
- Setting up of a transfer of competencies to the providers.
- Commitment in relation to the tour operator's own structure.

More information on the label ATR on [/www.tourisme-responsable.org](http://www.tourisme-responsable.org)

## ■ CONTACT US

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Purely Pyrenees is a brand created by La Balaguere SAS.

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## ■ NOTES

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