

# Purely PYRENEES

walking and cycling holidays

## The Natural Magic Of Aragon



*This is a truly magical region in the foothills of the Spanish Pyrenees. It is packed with dramatic landscapes, thousand-year-old castles, hermitages built into cliff-faces, exceptionally quaint villages, great weather, wonderful walking, original places to stay, and distinctively Aragonese cuisine.*

7 nights, 6 walking days

- Minimum required 2
- From point to point
- With luggage transportation
- Self-guided

Code :  
**FP2PURI**



## The plus points

- Transfers from and to Zaragoza (other transfers available)
- Luggage transfers every day so you only carry a daysack
- Typical Aragonese hotels with dinner included
- 24/7 customer service



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

[http://www.purelypyrenees.com/natural\\_magic\\_aragon.html](http://www.purelypyrenees.com/natural_magic_aragon.html)

*Aragon is a truly enchanting kingdom, a world unto itself, and your walking holiday includes a village they say is at the end of the world. But the "magic" comes from the frequent surprises (natural and man made) you get whilst walking through this panoramic landscape. For example, on just one walk you will find stunning, pink cliffs rising a sheer 1,000 feet above you; ancient hermitages cut into rock; almost hidden shepherds' huts; panoramic views of the Ebro plain and the High Pyrenees mountains; an abandoned village; a Roman bridge; a lovely waterfall. And that is without talking about the "magical" light that characterises Aragon, or its distinctive cuisine and hotels. It is a real surprise that, with all this on offer, there are not many more foreign visitors. Unsurprisingly, we thoroughly recommend it.*

## ■ PROGRAMME

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### **DAY 1**

#### **Arrival at Zaragoza or Loarre**

**Standard option:** You drive yourself to your first night's hotel, which will be in Loarre.

The first night is on a dinner, bed and breakfast basis at the three star Hospederia de Loarre (see Day 2).

**With extra airport pick-up:** We will meet you at Zaragoza airport (flights from London five times a week, other UK cities, or Paris three times a week) or railway station and take you to your first night's hotel, which is in Zaragoza itself. *Pick-ups also available from Madrid or Barcelona (please consult us for prices).*

You will stay in a grand hotel close to the charming historic quarter leaving you free to explore the capital of the region of Aragon. There are Roman ruins, Muslim masterpieces, a magical basilica, magnificent stone bridges over the Ebro, and the city's renowned tapas bars. You will wonder why it is not much more popular with discerning tourists.

In Zaragoza, you stay at the four star Hôtel Catalonia el Pilar close to everything you will want to visit, particularly the see-it-to-believe-it Basilica de Pilar. and a short distance from the banks of the Ebro. You stay on a bed and breakfast basis, so you can choose where to eat from the multitude of tapas bars and authentic restaurants. If you drive, then you stay in Loarre as described above see day 2 for a description of the hotel).

**Transfer time : 15 minutes.**

### **DAY 2**

#### **Loarre - Hermitage of the Virgin of the rock - Loarre**

After breakfast, we transfer you to the historic village of Loarre (if you have not already driven yourself here yesterday). You begin by walking up to Loarre's impressive, archetypal castle with 8 magnificent towers. In the 11th Century, it was built on the frontier between Muslim and Christian territories. Latterly, it featured in the epic film Kingdom of Heaven. You then continue your walk along a balcony path and on to the simply stunning Hermitage of the Virgin of the Rock, built into the cliff face. It has been a sanctuary since Roman times, although what you visit dates back merely to the 13th century. From here you also have wonderful views south across the Ebro plain. You then finish with a descent through lovely woods and ancient stone steps.

You stay at the three star Hospederia de Loarre, an historic building and hotel right in the centre of this unspoilt and charming village, where you are assured of a warm Aragonese welcome, all the 21st Century comforts you would expect - and some really good regional food and wine.

**Walking time : 4h30. Distance : 12km. Elevation : +400 / - 400 Transfer time : 1h15.**

### **DAY 3**

#### **Pusilibro**

Today there is a marvellous walk that begins by walking close to the castle (visit now or later) before a gradual climb, usually in bright sunshine, up to the Sierra de Loarre from where you get an utterly memorable panoramic view across the vast Hoya de Huesca plain - and so can understand why the Moors chose this location to spy on their enemies. The path continues through pine forest to the summit of Cerro Pusilibro - the highest point of the Sierra at almost 5,000 feet, so providing more marvellous views of this essentially unchanged landscape. It is an example, we believe you will agree, of why we are right to talk about the magic of Aragon. You then descend comfortably to Loarre to visit the castle, if you didn't do so earlier (or yesterday).

You enjoy a second and final night at the Hospederia de Loarre (third night if you drove there).

**Walking time : 4h30. Distance : 15,5km. Elevation : + 850m / - 850m.**

### **DAY 4**

#### **Loarre - Riglos**

Today you can expect to see large vultures flying below you, but the walking is not as demanding as that makes it sound, and as you will see from the ascent and descent figures below. You walk gradually up to the 11th century Romanesque chapel of San Miguel, and, a few hundred yards away, the remains of the castle built on a magnificent location, but now sadly neglected. From there you walk comfortably to the Mirador (Viewpoint) of the Vultures where you can enjoy the view of the amazing ochre Mallos cliffs - and you may well see climbers on them - the village of Riglos below (where you will be staying tonight), and above the kingdom of the giant vultures and other birds of prey. From there you descend on a good steady path with the 1,000 feet cliffs called Visera, Cuchillo and Pison awesomely still above you as you arrive in one of the most attractive villages in Aragon, Riglos. You will then have a short transfer to your hotel in Murillo.

The four star Hôtel Aguas de los Mallos is in every way a treat. An well designed, stylish and contemporary hotel, it is still built of stone and is generous in its use of space (not least the height of public rooms). You may find its range of luxurious facilities focused on its spa very welcome after a day of walking. We are confident that the food will delight you too.

**Walking time : 5h30. Distance : 16km. Elevation : + 350m / - 450m.**

## **DAY 5**

### **Murillo de Gallego - Riglos - Los Mallos de Riglos - Murillo de Gallego**

Your first highlight of the day is the 600 feet natural Puro "obelisk" after which you walk up between two of the Mallos cliffs. At the top you have the stunning sight of two immense pillars separated by a break in the cliffs through which you enjoy a magnificent view below of the often turquoise waters of the Rio Gallego river, fields of almond trees, olive trees and wheat. Above, you can appreciate the flying abilities of a range of large birds of prey, mostly suspended motionless before swooping at tremendous speed. You can choose an enjoyably challenging extension around the village of Arraso, or directly descend gently to the village of Murillo de Gallego where you spend the night.

You stay a second night in the four star Hôtel Aguas de los Mallos.

**Walking time : 4h30 or 5h30. Distance : 9,5km or 13km. Elevation : + 450m or + 700m / - 600m or - 850m.**

## **DAY 6**

### **Murillo de Gallego - Los Mallos de Aguero - Villalangua**

Today you visit the second section of the Mallos cliffs and begin by walking to the village of Aguero. Do visit the 12th century Romanesque church with weird and wonderful carvings of beasts. You then take an ancient path which links Aguero with Villalangua, and offers a number of fascinating features: walking beneath the Mallos cliffs; hermitages cut into rocks; almost hidden shepherds' huts; amazing views, another "breach" in the cliffs; an abandoned village; a Roman bridge; a lovely waterfall. Pretty good, don't you think for one walk? And exactly what the "magic" of Aragon is all about.

Villalangua is a pretty village which has often been described as being "at the end of the world" - so it feels like something of a privilege to be staying there. The Hôtel Posada de Villalangua is a simple but charming family-run hotel converted from a massive 19th Century stone workhouse. Bedrooms have stone walls, the terrace faces wonderful mountain scenery that includes a large colony of Griffon vultures, the restaurant serves exactly the sort of traditional mountain cuisine you'd hope for at the end of the world, and the welcome is equally authentic.

**Walking time : 5h30. Distance : 16,5km. Elevation : + 750m / - 650m.**

## **DAY 7**

### **Villalangua - San Juan de la Peña**

We begin this, your last walking day, with a transfer to the must-visit nature reserve of San Juan de la Peña and Mount Oroel. Much of it is forested with oaks. There are rare botanical species, plus wild boar, foxes, roe deer and Griffon vultures. It also offers stunning viewpoints that, on clear days, include the High Pyrenees mountains of Monte Perdido, Vignemale and Midi d'Ossau. You can begin by visiting the "new" monastery of San Juan de la Peña, merely 17th century. It features exceptional carving and an interactive presentation of the history of the Kingdom of Aragon which we think you'll find fascinating.

A short path, which is a minor variant of the St James Camino (ending at Santiago de Compostela - many, many days away on foot), leads you to the superbly restored old monastery built under a huge rock originally occupied by hermits. In the 11th Century a monastery and church were built and this became the favoured religious location for the kings of Aragon. It flourished until a 17th Century fire resulted in the new monastery being built. Having explored these captivating sites, it is time to explore around the plateau!

It perhaps suffices to say that the four star Hospederia Monasterio San Juan de la Peña lives up to expectations. However, a little more detail may help: it occupies the whole "new" monastery, and includes architectural features within what is now a beautifully designed boutique style hotel that uses local woods to great effect for walls and floors. With every comfort and great food, this all adds up to an appropriately memorable final night.

**Walking time : 2h or 5h30. Distance : 6km or 15km. Elevation : + 200m or + 650m / - 200m or - 650m. Transfer time : 45 minutes.**

## **DAY 8**

### **End of stay**

**Standard option:** After breakfast, we transfer you back to Loarre to pick up your car.

**With extra airport pick-up:** After breakfast, we transfer you back to Zaragoza. *We can also arrange transfers to Madrid or Barcelona (please consult us for prices).*

Sorry, but all good things...

*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.*

If necessitated by flight times, you can stay the last night in Zaragoza at the Hôtel Catalonia el Pilar (with supplement).

## **■ USEFUL INFORMATION**

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### **PROGRAMME OF DEPARTURES**

1 April to 30 October 2017

## **MEETING POINT**

**Standard option:** You drive yourself to your first night's hotel, which will be in Loarre. The first night is on a dinner, bed and breakfast basis at the three star Hospederia de Loarre.

**With extra airport pick-up:** We will meet you at Zaragoza airport (flights from London five times a week, other UK cities, or Paris three times a week) or railway station and take you to your first night's hotel, which is in Zaragoza itself. *Pick-ups also available from Madrid or Barcelona (please consult us for prices).*

## **END OF STAY**

**Standard option:** After breakfast, we transfer you back to Loarre to pick up your car.

**With extra airport pick-up:** After breakfast, we transfer you back to Zaragoza. *We can also arrange transfers to Madrid or Barcelona (please consult us for prices).*

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

There are direct flights from London (5 times a week), other British cities, and Paris (3 times a week) to Zaragoza (Saragossa) airport. There are motorway and rail routes from Madrid and Barcelona as well as rail from Paris and London (but that can become a little convoluted). If you are coming from Britain or northern Europe, driving directly to Loarre over the Pyrenees can be a thoroughly enjoyable experience that adds much to the holiday.

## **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**

If you decide to drive to Loarre (standard price), there is free public parking near to your hotel in Loarre.

## **IF YOU WANT TO ARRIVE THE NIGHT BEFORE OR STAY AFTER THE TRIP**

You can book extra nights before, during or after the holiday. Just contact us.

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

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## **LEVEL**

This holiday features mostly comfortable rather than challenging walking, and is suitable for anybody who enjoys "a good walk". On most days the walks last 3 to 5 hours, but can take much longer if you so choose, and there are slightly more challenging extensions to walks on several days. It can get very hot in July and August, as well as more crowded, but the temperatures are moderated by being up in the mountains and you can always take a siesta during the heat of the day. We would recommend May, June, September and October as the best months.

## **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 walking holiday.

## **ACCOMODATION**

You stay in double or twin rooms for 3 nights in four star hotels, 2 nights in three star hotels, and 2 nights in simple mountain hotels.

## **MEALS**

You will eat well. Dinners are based on set menus featuring regional specialities usually with 3 or 4 choices for each of three courses, but you can pay locally for upgraded choices. Breakfast is included every morning as are picnics on days when there are no shops or cafes/restaurants - and, anyway, you can always ask the hotel the night before to make 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**

6 nights dinner, bed and breakfast, plus one night bed and breakfast; people transfers; luggage transfers; detailed walking instructions; 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; entry fees; 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)

## **LUGGAGE**

Please use soft travel bags, and restrict each bag to 10 kilos. You will also need a daysack of about 30 litres.

## **CLOTHES**

You will know what to bring, but casual as much as smart casual clothing works for most evenings, and your priority should be comfort, especially for your feet!

## **EQUIPMENT TO BRING**

For walking, you will know what to bring, but we would recommend ankle protecting walking boots, a complete waterproof and breathable outfit, sunhat, plenty of sun protection, a 2 litre water container per person, waterproof map case, compass, head torch, mobile phone, small first aid kit, and a Tupperware container and utensils for lunches.

## **■ MORE INFORMATION**

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### **THE AREA**

As soon as you get just a few kilometres to the south of the central frontier ridge between France and Spain, you will notice a marked change in the vegetation. If you go just a few kilometres further then you start to find black pines and Mediterranean herbs such as rosemary. A bit further still and you can find certain areas such as the Bardenas Reales (Navarra) or the Monegros (Aragón) that can justifiably be described as being deserts. The rainfall maps of Navarra in particular show us how weather fronts from the north are regularly blocked by the chain of mountains, leaving us with green lush beech forests and pastures in the north and barren deserts of clay and sandstone in the south. Nowhere else in Europe is there such a marked contrast in scenery in such a short distance, with the northern valleys getting over 2500mm of rain per annum while the southern plains get just 400mm (and most of that falls in torrential downpours which occur from time to time).

In the Aragonese foothills we can find easier walking than in the High Pyrenees, with many summits of moderate altitude providing us with exceptional viewpoints for the higher peaks to the north. There are many fascinating canyons and gorge-walking routes, notably in the Sierra de Guara. It is also less populated here, giving you the sensation of being sent back in time to another century.

The few people you will meet will almost certainly be very friendly and hospitable, and if you are lucky they may offer you some homemade patxarán, a purple-coloured alcoholic beverage based on local blackthorn berries and some aniseed.

The incredible amount of Romanesque churches, monasteries and hermitages will probably add to that feeling of being transported into another world. A world which is also made from strange and exciting rock formations due to the posterior erosion of sediments that accumulated in the area due to it lying for millions of years beneath a huge inland lake.

In addition, the two main pilgrimage routes to Santiago de Compostela pass through these lands and join up with each other at Puente La Reina, just to the south-west of Pamplona.

Politically, Aragon is an autonomous region of Spain, with Catalonia to the East and Navarra to the West. Along with neighbouring Navarra, it is an ancient Christian kingdom with long and important history.

The regional language is Aragonese (though it is not an official language of the Spanish state and very few people speak more than just a few words).

One of the highlights of the Aragonese foothills would be the impressive Mallos de Riglos, a Mecca for both rock-climbers and bird-watchers alike. These 300m towers of puddingstone conglomerate provide a home for thousands of vultures. Not too far away from here you can visit amazing castle of Loarre (used in the 2005 Ridley Scott film "Kingdom of Heaven"), the beautiful medieval town of Aínsa or the astonishing monastery of San Juan de la Peña, which is partially built into a rock face and contains some of the finest restored Romanesque capitals you will ever see.

Further west there is the Sierra de Guara, where hiking can be combined with gorge-walking or just strolling around picturesque villages such as Alquézar.

Yet another interesting highlight could be the numerous reservoirs that were initially constructed under Franco. Some villages were swallowed up by the waters and in the reservoir of El Grado the church spire can still be seen sticking out of the water as a ghostly reminder of past events. In other places, such as Yesa, other villages in the area had to be abandoned due to the lands available for agriculture being flooded, or because of the Spanish state deciding to evict entire villages to make way for plantations of thousands of black pines, needed to stabilise the terrain to prevent sediments from getting into the reservoir and damaging the dam.

You could also visit some of Aragón's wonderful Moresque churches (also on the UNESCO list).

Not far to the south of Pamplona there is a desert of clay and sandstone straddling the border between Navarra and Aragón - Las Bardenas Reales. Hiking around this protected area will take you through canyons riddled with natural arches and secret passages while admiring the unique plants that are able to support such harsh conditions. The special landscapes found in the desert have made it a popular spot for the filming of many television advertisements, films and TV series such as James Bond (The World is Not Enough) or Game of Thrones. The most iconic feature of the desert is known as Castil de Tierra, which is actually a "hoodoo" or "fairy chimney" - a giant tower sculpted by the different speeds of erosion around and under a large block of sandstone balanced on the top of the column.

## ■ **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 repatriation 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  
48 Route d'Azun  
F-65400 ARRENS-MARSOUS  
FRANCE

Tel: 00 33 (0)5 62 97 72 01  
Fax: 00 33 (0)5 62 97 43 01  
[contact@purelypyrenees.com](mailto:contact@purelypyrenees.com)

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## ■ NOTES

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