

Purely PYRENEES

walking and cycling holidays

The Get-Away-From-It-All Pyrenean Break



You may not have heard of the Azun Valley, but we're confident you will be one of its many fans after this wonderfully, tranquil break. It's packed with slow, gentle walks, unspoilt villages, bucolic scenery, superb, authentic accommodation, great regional cuisine - and some more challenging higher altitude walking if that takes your fancy.

4 nights - 3 walking days

- Minimum required 1
- Point to point
- With luggage transportation
- Self-guided

Code :
FP2PUVA



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The plus points

- **Get-Away-From-It-All peace and quiet**
- **Superb walking in valleys, woods and on panoramic hilltops**
- **Unspoilt villages, ancient stone pathways, flora and fauna galore**
- **Wonderful, authentic chambres d'hotes accommodation with great food**



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

Not far from Lourdes, yet a thousand miles away deep in the tranquil, rural, unspoilt, verdant, welcoming heart of the Pyrenean foothills lies the Azun valley. Its wide, green valley bottom is lightly sprinkled with farmhouses and small villages, its hillsides with oak, chestnut and pine woods, its higher slopes with wildflower filled Alpine style meadows, while its peaks are the domain of snow and 22 species of birds of prey. Its warm, welcoming and sunny - and great for walking. Each day you have a choice of routes as comfortable or challenging as you like, and each evening you return to comfortable, high quality, authentic chambres d'hotes. This is the real France, the real Pyrenees. It awaits you.

■ PROGRAMME

DAY 1

30 minutes drive from Lourdes airport (you can organise it yourselves, or we'll arrange it. Please ask), and you are in not just a different world, but a better one, a much better one. A world where Nature dominates gloriously from blue skies to snow capped peaks down green forested hillsides to Alpine meadows garlanded with wild flowers in spring and early summer right down to crystal clear tumbling streams and mini-waterfalls. Then there are promising paths snaking their way up hillsides, herds of sheep and shepherd's huts, productive valley-bottom fields, and attractive mountain villages that remind you that not everything man does is bad! Welcome to the Azun Valley, one of the most enjoyably unspoilt valleys in the Pyrenees - if not the whole of Europe! If you wanted a get-away-from-it-all break, then you've made the right choice.

Arras-en-Lavedan is an understated village, and all the better for it. Quietly, it boasts streets that make you feel you have slipped back in time, an interesting church, and 13th century castle now being restored having all-but disappeared under centuries of invasion by weeds and shrubs - the English having held it during the 100 Years War. Now it also has an artists' route through the village, and an Artists' "Maison" well worth visiting, but it also hosts your appropriately authentic chambres d'hotes accommodation, Les Gerbes, that combines the historic with the contemporary in the form of a jacuzzi on the terrace.

Transfer time (from Lourdes airport, if arranged): 30 minutes.

DAY 2

Today you can choose a comfortable, or more challenging, distance. You follow gently rising paths and ancient cobbled tracks through beautiful oak and chestnut woods upto the high point - in several senses - the panoramic viewpoint on Mont de Gez (you don't have to climb right to the top to get there). To the north, you can see the Pau river and valleys stretching down over French plains, to the east there is Lourdes, and to the south the magnificent - and much higher - Pyrenean summits flow over the frontier into Spain. From here you continue into the superb Bergons valley with the largely unvisited village of Salles at its heart. Here you'll ramble around meadows, alongside streams, and look out for indigenous species of flowers, and the 22 species of birds of prey regularly found here. This really is the Pyrenees where man and nature live in harmony.

You spend a second and most welcome night at Les Gerbes

Walking time: 3.5 hours, or 6 hours. Elevation: + 500m / - 500m, or + 850m / - 850m.

DAY 3

Again, there is a choice today. The valley route takes you through woods, meadows, up hillsides and down beside streams, and through interesting villages including Arcizans-Dessus and Gaillagos, not forgetting to keep count of the number of old stone windmills you see near and far. However, we'd recommend the higher route

that takes you through Arragnat forest across a series of hilltop summits (typically, about 4,500 feet high) with simply magnificent views. It can be irritating, to tell you the truth, because you have to keep getting your camera out! Anyway, you reach the Couraduque col - renowned in summer for occasionally being part of the Tour de France, and in winter for its skiing. From there, you descend pleasurably into the tiny village of Marsous where a great welcome awaits you after a great day's walking.

Sylvie and Jean-Paul have made the lovely stone-built 17th century village house into one of our favourite places to stay anywhere in the Pyrenees. Maison Sempe has a remarkably wide ancient wooden staircase, wonderful wooden floors, lovely, characterful rooms, great views, good food featuring regional recipes and home made specialities, often including what's currently available in village gardens and hedgerows, plus freshly baked bread, foraged jams and fruity cake for breakfast. Being chambres d'hotels, you eat at the communal table with your hosts and other guests, so you may well find the conversation is as engaging as the food is delicious.

Walking time: 4 hours, or 5.5 hours. Elevation: + 580m / - 400m, or + 800m / - 600m.

DAY 4

One choice for this last day is a very pleasant and panoramic "stroll" up the gentle slopes of the Artigaux hills rising above Marsous. A wonderful wander through beech woods and across Alpine meadows, a long, slow picnic, a snooze maybe, a reading session, more than a few photographs: it all makes for a day really appreciating the Pyrenees. Alternatively, you can venture up higher and further over the col du Soulor (as the Tour de France peleton does), the Col de Saucède with its dramatic views of Gabizos peak, and the small but perfectly formed, high altitude Soum lake. Plenty of time to relax beside it, even dip your toes in the water to see quite how cold it is, before your final descent back down to Marsous as the Azun valley spreads out before you in all its verdant majesty.

Sylvie and Jean-Paul will welcome you "home" with cake and tea before showers, and a dinner to remember for its food, local wines and conversation.

Walking time: 3.5 hours, or 6 hours. Elevation: + 420m / - 420m, or + 920m / - 920m.

DAY 5

After a leisurely breakfast, we return you to Arras-en-Lavedan, or, if arranged, to Lourdes airport. A short break, yes, but a memorable one? Certainly.

Transfer time: 10 minutes, or to Lourdes airport, if arranged: 40 minutes.

Elements beyond our control (the weather, your levels of fitness, logistical risks, other miscellaneous reasons) may lead us to modify the programme. We aim to please, but your safety will always be our priority.

■ PRACTICAL INFORMATION

DATES

Mid-May to mid-October.

MEETING POINT

The holiday begins at the accommodation in Arras en Lavedan, but you can arrange for us to pick you up at Lourdes airport, or rail station. Please ask.

END OF YOUR TRIP

The holiday ends where it started at the accommodation in Arras en Lavedan, but you can arrange for us to take you to Lourdes airport, or rail station. Please ask.

PARKING

You can park in the centre of Arras en Lavedan.

MINIMUM NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS REQUIRED

1

LEVEL OF DIFFICULTY

This itinerary features comfortable walking with challenging options, and is suitable for people who are reasonably fit and enjoy a good day's walking. You are in the foothills rather than in the high mountains. Typically, there is 3 to 6 hours steady walking with ascents and descents of upto 900 metres or as little as 450 metres. It is usually only pleasantly hot in July and August often with lots of shade, but we'd recommend June and Spetmeber as the best months of all.

LUGGAGE TRANSFER

We will transfer your luggage to the next accommodation, so all you need carry is a daysack with your choice of essentials plus picnic.

TRIP FORMAT

This is an independent, self-guided holiday.

ACCOMMODATION

You stay in double-twin rooms in authentic, top quality chambres d'hotels with en suite facilities, lounge areas, outdoor terraces and/or gardens.

MEALS

The cuisine is often regional in character, and all the better for it. There is no choice for each course unless you have expressed preferences in advance. A glass or thre of wine is included with dinner, but you can buy additional drinks as required. Picnics are not included, but you can shop for them locally, or order them the night before (pay locally).

TRANSFERS

Usually transfers are in people carriers, mini-buses, cars or taxis.

THE PRICE INCLUDES

4 nights dinner, bed and breakfast; people transfers as detailed; luggage transfers each walking day as required; detailed walking directions; 1:25,000 maps; 24/7 customer phone service; GPS tracking if required

THE PRICE DOES NOT INCLUDE

The journey to the start point and from the finishing point; all drinks except wine with dinner; lunches; entry fees; booking fee, 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.

YOUR TRAVEL DOCUMENTS

When we have received the balance of payment for your holiday, and in the month before your departure, we send you all the documentation you need: a detailed itinerary showing dates, times, contact addresses etc; a detailed guide to your walking routes, often also including a lot of cultural, historical and nature background information; formal documents (invoices, contractual terms and conditions etc); luggage labels etc. If you book at the last minute, we can send information to the first night's accommodation..

■ EQUIPMENT

LUGGAGE

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

CLOTHES

- a waterproof and breathable jacket (Gore-Tex type)
- a fleece or a sweater
- a raincoat (poncho)
- walking trousers
- 1 pair of gloves
- 1 hat- shorts
- a bathing suit + towel
- several pairs of socks (not too large)
- underwear
- 1 pair of trainers
- loose clothing for the evening

EQUIPMENT TO BRING

- 1 pair of walking shoes that have been used before
- Sunglasses, sunscreen and lip protection
- 1 bottle (allow 2 to 3 liters per person per day in summer)
- a Tupperware type plastic bowl for the picnic + cutlery
- 1 compass
- Waterproof map cover (advised)
- 1 head torch in your rucksack (for safety)
- 1 survival cover (from a chemist)
- 1 mobile phone (advised)

FIRST AID KIT

- a small personal kit(gauze, Elastoplast, analgesic, double skin for blisters, earplugs ...)

OTHER DETAILS

- camera and why not a novel, your watercolours or other desires...
- your identification documents.

■ INSURANCE

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

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

■ CONTACT US

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