

EXPLORE!

French Pyrenees to Carcassonne
8 days

France - Trip code PAC



French Pyrenees to Carcassonne

Discover Languedoc's remarkable string of Cathar castles on this walking holiday in southwest France. Trekking out of the French Pyrenees through the Ariège and Aude regions, pass pretty villages nestling in the shadows of dramatic castles. Walking through impressive gorges and vineyards, enjoy regional French cooking and wines along the way to the final destination - the spectacular fortified city of Carcassonne.

Trip highlights

- ★ **Pyrenees** - Enjoy the varied and stunning scenery of the eastern Pyrenees
- ★ **Carcassonne** - Explore the walled medieval city, a UNESCO World Heritage Site
- ★ **Castles of the Cathars** - Visit fabulous Chateaux along the trail
- ★ **Canal du Midi** - Walk along a short section of the 241 km long 17th century canal
- ★ **Food and wines** - Enjoy regional French cooking and wines

ACCOMMODATION GRADE:

Standard

Our standard, mid-range accommodation offers a good level of service, often with other amenities such as a restaurant, bar, garden or swimming pool. Generally rooms will be comfortable with en suite facilities.

WALKING GRADE:

Moderate

For those who are fit and active, these moderate walks are normally on good paths and tracks at low altitude. Days may include some fairly demanding ascents and descents, so previous experience is preferable but not essential.

GROUP SIZE:

10 - 16

Maximum group size ranges from between 6 to 20 people, depending on the type of trip, the transport and accommodation used and activities included. We rarely have groups that are smaller than five or six people and the average is 12 people plus an Explore leader.

Itinerary

Itineraries on some departure dates may differ, please select the itinerary that you wish to explore.

DAY 1 - Join trip at Carcassonne airport; drive to Ax-Les-Thermes

Our trip starts at Carcassonne airport from where we drive (around one hour 45 minutes) to the small spa town of Ax-Les-Thermes in the Pyrenees. Situated at the confluence of the Oriège, Ariège and Lauze Rivers, the town lies in the heart of some of the most unspoiled landscapes in southern France. Our hotel here is located close to the historic centre of town and its private gardens provide the perfect spot to relax and enjoy a beer after a day in the mountains. The welcoming restaurant serves up a feast of regional Pyrenean dishes.



Accommodation: Hotel La Grande Cordee (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: Dinner

DAY 2 - Walk from the Col du Chioula to Montailou Cathar village

A short drive takes us to the Col du Chioula (1431 m) on a popular cycling climb that is part of the Tour de France cycle race. Our walk passes through the forests and grasslands of a large plateau frequented by Nordic skiers during the winter. We pass through the village of Montailou with its small ruined castle. The village was one of the last bastions of Catharism whose beliefs were considered heresy by the Catholic Church. Our way back crosses the vast airy plateau of Sault via paths once used to access the valley of Aude and the Corbieres.

This moderately-graded walk will take approximately five hours, covering a distance of eight kilometres with a total ascent and descent of around 500 metres.



Accommodation: Hotel La Grande Cordee (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast, Lunch and Dinner

DAY 3 - Walk to the Pic de Tarbesou for a Pyrenees panorama

A short drive from Ax-Les-Thermes takes us to the Col de Pailheres, another famous pass on the Tour de France and starting point for our hike to the Pic de Tarbesou (2364 m). The views from here are simply stunning, a magnificent 360 degree panorama stretching from the Pic du Midi de Bigorre in the west to Canigou in the east. We then descend to the Rabassoles Lakes. Scored out by a long departed glacier, these three picture-postcard lakes are a great spot for a picnic lunch.

This moderately-graded walk will take approximately four and half hours, covering a distance of eight kilometres with a total ascent and descent of 510 metres.



Accommodation: Hotel La Grande Cordee (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast, Lunch and Dinner

DAY 4 - Visit Chateau de Puivert; walk through the Galamus Gorge

Today we drive to the charming old town of Puivert where we visit the 13th century Chateau of the Troubadours, taken in 1210 by the notorious Simon de Monfort at the start of the Albigensian Crusade. We then drive on to the entry of the Gorges de Galamus. Our spectacular walk takes us past the seventh century Hermitage of St. Antoine de Galamus, precariously perched on the cliff face, through a landscape of Mediterranean splendour. Continuing on our way, we arrive at the foot of the Chateau de Peyrepertuse, the most important castle in the Aude region. From here we walk down to our hotel in the village of Duilhac, the charming, stone-built, blue-shuttered, Hostellerie du Vieux Moulin which has great views of the Chateau, towering high above. The restaurant here serves up an excellent array of tasty dishes using the fresh produce of the region.

NOTE: In cases of very hot weather conditions in July and August, today's walk may be too arduous. We will still visit Puivert Castle, Gorge de Galamus and Chateau de Peyrepertuse.

This moderately-graded walk will take approximately four-and-a-half hours, covering a distance of 13 kilometres with a total ascent of 450 metres and descent of 495 metres.



Accommodation: Auberge du Vieux Moulin (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast & Lunch

DAY 5 - Visit Chateau de Peyrepertuse; walk and wine tasting

This morning we return to the Chateau de Peyrepertuse for a full exploration of this magnificent site. Stretching for some 300 m

along the crest of a high ridge, it is a fine example of medieval military architecture. Later we enjoy a walk through the surrounding vineyards and will stop to taste some of the Corbieres wines produced here.

This moderately-graded walk will take approximately four-and-a-half hours, covering a distance of 13 kilometres with a total ascent and descent of 550 metres.



Accommodation: Auberge du Vieux Moulin (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast & Lunch

DAY 6 - Walk to Queribus castle; drive to Carcassonne

Our day starts with a walk to visit to one of the most magnificent of the Cathar castles, Chateau de Queribus which stands high and isolated on top of the tallest peak for miles around. A complete restoration of the castle was undertaken between 1998 and 2002. Descending by bus to the nearby village of Maury we enjoy a wine tasting at the Maury Caves before driving on to Carcassonne. With its extensive ramparts and myriad turrets, the medieval citadel of Carcassonne dominates the surrounding countryside. It's a UNESCO- listed World Heritage Site and embodiment of a fairy-tale castle.

Our sightseeing today is all on foot and we will walk for approximately two-and-a-half hours, covering a distance of eight kilometres with a total ascent of 472 metres and a descent of 224 metres.



Accommodation: Hotel La Bastide (or similar)



Simple Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

DAY 7 - Walking tour including Medieval Carcassonne and Canal du Midi

This morning we plan to walk along a section of the famous Canal du Midi. One of the greatest French construction works of the 17th century, the 241 km canal connects the Garonne River with the Mediterranean Sea. In the afternoon we will explore the maze of narrow medieval streets of the citadel and enjoy the atmosphere of this unique location on a walking tour.

The combined walking and sightseeing today is graded easy and we will walk for approximately four-and-a-half hours, covering a distance of eight kilometres with a total ascent and descent of around 100 metres.



Accommodation: Hotel La Bastide (or similar)



Simple Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

DAY 8 - Trip ends in Carcassonne

The trip ends this morning after breakfast. It's certainly worth taking a late flight home so you can make the most of your time in Carcassonne.



Meals Provided: Breakfast

Walking and Trekking information

DAILY DISTANCE



Walking grade

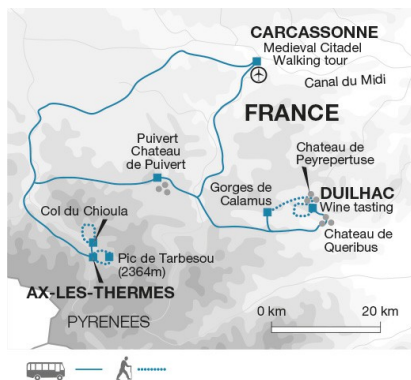
Moderate

Trek details

We trek on 6 days for an average of 4.5 hours each day. The trail is often over rough/uneven ground. We have graded this trip as Moderate.

Max walking altitude (m)

2364



What's included?



Included meals

Breakfast: 7
Lunch: 4
Dinner: 3



Transport

Minibus



Trip staff

Explore Tour Leader
Driver(s)



Accommodation

5 nights standard hotel
2 nights simple hotel

Trip information

Country information

France

Climate

Across France, from April - August, weather conditions are generally warm and pleasant with moderate rainfall; Autumn temperatures are a bit lower and the winter months (though colder) remain mild. The summer months on the Mediterranean Coast in the south tend to be warmer than the rest of France and have less rainfall, and also more mild winters; freezing conditions are nearly unheard of. The mountainous areas of the Alps, Juros and Pyrenees can be quite different. During summer the morning and evening temperatures are considerably cooler and it becomes much colder in winter with heavy snowfall. Western France, along the English Channel, there can be very strong winds and frequent rain during the winter months Nov - Apr. Wine harvesting takes place in late August/early September.

Time difference to GMT

+1

Plugs

2 Pin Round

Religion

Catholic

Language

French

Budgeting and packing

Clothing

Take light and comfortable clothing that can be layered according to the temperature. Temperatures can change dramatically at altitude and at night with the difference being more marked early and late season. You should bring a good quality waterproof jacket and trousers (e.g. Goretex), fleece jacket, comfortable walking trousers, shorts, T-shirts and long-sleeved tops, walking socks, warm hat and gloves and sunhat.

Footwear

We recommend you bring walking boots with ankle support- leather or fabric are both fine. Make sure that your boots are worn-in and comfortable before the start of the trip. Also trainers or sandals for relaxing and general wear. We suggest that on international flights you either carry your walking boots in your hand luggage or wear them - should your luggage be lost or delayed, your own boots are the one thing that will be irreplaceable.

Luggage

20kg

Luggage: On tour

One main piece of baggage and a daypack (we recommend approximately 35 litres) to carry your own personal gear on walks.

Equipment

Bring a torch, a 2 litre water bottle, sunhat, sunglasses and sun cream. Trekking poles are highly recommended.

Tipping

Explore leader

At your discretion you might also consider tipping your Explore Leader in appreciation of the efficiency and service you receive.

Country Information

France

Food and drink

The costs for meals may vary depending upon location, type of restaurant and number of courses eaten and so the prices given are an average guide. Local restaurants located off the beaten track may be less expensive, whereas an upmarket restaurant located in the centre of a major city may charge more.

Lunch price

£11

Dinner price

£16.00 - 18.00

Beer price

£4

Water price

£1.3

Foreign Exchange

Local currency

Euro

Recommended Currency For Exchange

Pounds Sterling and US Dollars can only be changed in larger airports with a Bureau de Change. Please change currency into Euros prior to arriving in France.

Where To Exchange

Bureau de Change can only be found in major cities and large airports. Many French banks no longer exchange Foreign currency.

ATM Availability

In cities and most major towns

Credit Card Acceptance

In major restaurants (make sure you have informed your credit card company that you are travelling abroad as some companies will reject payments)

Travellers Cheques

Travellers Cheques are no longer commonly accepted and can only be changed in larger airports with a Bureau de Change.

Transport, Accommodation & Meals

Transport Information

Minibus

Essential Information

FCO Advice

We strongly recommend that you check your government's travel advisory for up-to-date information and advice about your destination: safety and security, entry requirements, health, local laws and customs. For UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office advice [click here](#).

For more information from Explore about travel advice, [click here](#)

Under 18 immigration guidance

Please note that some countries require proof of parental consent when travelling overseas with under 18s. Please check requirements with the relevant embassy or consular office well in advance of travel if this applies to your party.

Price Guarantee

Once your booking has been confirmed we guarantee the price will not increase, whatever the circumstances. Before booking please ensure you have read our important tour pricing information. [Booking Conditions](#)

Visa and Passport Information

France: Visas are not required by UK, E.U Nationals, Australian, New Zealand, US and Canadian citizens. Other nationalities should consult their local embassy or consular office.

If you do require assistance in obtaining a visa then you may consider applying through Explore's recommended visa service in the UK, Travcour. See www.travcour.com to download the relevant visa application for your trip, if applicable (UK citizens only), along with details of how to apply for your visa through Travcour. The Team at Travcour will be happy to answer specific questions relating to visa applications, please call them directly on 0208 5431846.

It is your responsibility to ensure that you are in possession of a full passport, with the correct validity for your chosen destination.

Booking conditions

Before booking your Explore trip, please ensure that you read both our [Essential Information](#) and [Booking Conditions](#).

Transfers

[Find out more about Trip Transfer Terms and Conditions before you book.](#)

Booking a land only package with Explore

Customers who have chosen to book on the 'Land Only' arrangements of our tour, please ensure that you have checked your tour specific 'Joining Instructions' prior to booking your own travel arrangements. Your joining instructions can be found below in the dates and prices information.

You may also be eligible for the Free Explore Transfer.

Joining Tour Abroad

Customers booked on the 'Land Only' arrangements will now receive a Free Transfer, provided you arrive and depart on the tour only itinerary start and end dates. The transfers will be from the Explore designated airport or train station to the joining point of your tour, and then back from the ending point to the designated airport or train station. The exception to this rule is customers who are booked on a tour where the joining and ending point is at the designated airport or train station.

Free transfers are not available for Self-Guided, Polar, Tailormade or Tours for Churches customers.

If you are not eligible for the Free Transfer then you will need to make your own way through to the joining and ending point. On a majority of our tours Explore will be able to provide a private transfer at an additional cost. Please ask for a quote at the time of booking.

For more information regarding the Explore Free Transfer [click here](#)

Insurance

It is a condition of booking with Explore that you have adequate valid travel insurance. It is your responsibility to arrange appropriate travel insurance and ensure you have read and understood the full terms and conditions of your travel insurance policy to ensure that you are covered for all activities you intend to undertake whilst on the tour, including all optional activities. Your Insurance Policy must fully cover you for medical expenses and emergency repatriation to your home country. Please ensure your policy includes medical emergency helicopter evacuation in the event of illness or injury and covers the entire duration of your holiday. If you are trekking at altitude please ensure that there is no upper altitude limit which may limit or exclude cover for your trip. The cost of many of our Polar Voyages will exceed the capped amount covered by standard insurance premiums and you will be required to pay an additional premium to cover the full value of your trip. Please ensure that you are covered for the full amount of your holiday cost, as insufficient cover could invalidate a claim under the policy. Medical and repatriation insurance cover is not mandatory for UK residents who are travelling on trips within the United Kingdom. Read more information about what travel insurance is required.

Flight information

Explore offers a wide range of flexible flying options to make joining and leaving our trips easy. Read more about them here.

Flight Information

You are able to book this tour on a 'land only' basis or as a 'flight inclusive' package. Your flight inclusive package will be fully protected by the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) ATOL protection scheme.

Booking a flight inclusive package with Explore

We have a good selection of flights not only from London but from many regional airports around the UK allowing us to compare fares between scheduled carriers as well as low cost and charter airlines. Our dedicated flights team will match the best flight options to your arrival and departure airport.

On our website we display a UK flight inclusive package guide price which is generally based on a London departure. To avoid paying supplements or to secure your preferred flight option, we recommend booking as early as possible, especially for peak travel dates.

Maximum altitude (m)

2364

France

Vaccinations

Nothing compulsory. Tetanus recommended. Please check the latest requirements with your travel clinic or doctor prior to departure. The above is not an exhaustive list. Further information regarding vaccinations and travel health advice can be found by following the NHS and NaTHNaC links at [Explore Travel Health](#) and from your local healthcare provider. Visa and vaccination requirements are subject to change and should be confirmed by you before travelling.
