

Pyrenean Group Holidays

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Pyrenees – Cauterets & Gavarnie

Guided Hiking in the French National Parks and World Heritage Site

Summary

- Guided trip begins in Cauterets and ends in Gavarnie, France
- 7 nights and 8 days
- Half board (breakfast and dinner)
- Authentic and charming two star hotels with private bathroom/shower

Hike Rating

This trip is rated moderate-challenging. There are 4 ½ -6 ½ hours per day hiking, not counting breaks. The hikes range in length from 12 - 20 kilometres. The highest altitude is 2807 metres. The greatest total daily ascent is 930 metres, and the greatest total daily descent is 1400 metres. 700 metres altitude gain or loss is a typical daily average. The terrain is rolling or mountainous with some steep ascents/descents and uneven trails. There are some sections on a couple of the walks where there is some exposure. These sections are on well-defined and popular trails so most people would find them no problem but they are not suitable for people who suffer from vertigo. Loose stones are fairly common on trails in the Pyrenees.

Outline Itinerary

Day 1: Cauterets

Our joining point is the hotel in Cauterets with a chance to have a look around the busy little town in the evening. Please plan on arriving there by 5:00 p.m. at the latest.

Arrival. The nearest major airport is Toulouse www.toulouse.aeroport.fr and the nearest railway station is at Lourdes.

A shuttle bus operates at Toulouse between the airport and railway station and there are regular trains to Lourdes which take about 2 hours.

There are occasional buses from Lourdes to Cauterets or a minibus or taxi can be arranged.

Transport direct from the airport can be arranged.

Other small regional airports which may be useful are at Pau www.pau.aeroport.fr and Lourdes www.tlp.aeroport.fr/voyageur . These have flights to Paris and could reduce travel time.

Day 2: Gaube Valley - Cauterets



Vignemale

We'll take a shuttle bus for the short ride up to the Pont d'Espagne (1460 metres) and then a short chairlift ride into the Gaube Valley where it is possible to hike to the Refuge des Oulettes and look across to the glacier at the base of the Vignemale, at 3219 metres the highest mountain in the French Pyrénées. 12 kilometres, 4 ½ hours, ascent 490 metres, descent 490 metres, highest altitude 2150 metres.

Day 3: Marcadau Valley – Cauterets



Lac d'Ilheou

We'll take a cable car and then a chairlift up to the Crete du Lys (2303 metres) and then enjoy a hike down to the Lac d'Ilheou and then zigzag up to the Col de Haugade before traversing to the remote Lacs de L'Embarat. From there we drop down steeply into the Marcadau Valley renowned for its herds of wild "Isards." Then a moderate descent of the valley brings us to the Pont d'Espagne and a bus ride back to Cauterets. 15 kilometres, 5 ½ hours, ascent 400 metres, descent 1200 metres, highest altitude 2378 metres.

Day 4: Ayruès to Gavarnie



Towards Gavarnie & Brèche de Roland

After a ride around to the village of Les Ayruès we approach Gavarnie (1400 metres) via footpaths over grazing land with magnificent views. Our bags will be shuttled from Cauterets and will be waiting for us on our arrival in Gavarnie. The full day hike is about 20 kilometres, 6 hours, ascent 930 metres, descent 530 metres, highest altitude 1881 metres. The hike can be shortened to 13 kilometres, 4 hours, ascent 650 metres, descent 250 metres, highest altitude 1647 metres.

Day 5: At Gavarnie

A circular walk from Gavarnie taking in the Plateau de Bellevue (great views), the Grande Cascade in the Cirque de Gavarnie (422 metre drop) and the Cabane d'Alans (views to Vignemale, the highest mountain in the French Pyrennes). 17 km, 6h00, ascent 930m, descent 930 m, highest altitude 1905m.



Cirque de Gavarnie

Day 6: At Gavarnie.

With minibuses to take us up to the Col des Tentes (2208m) we can then reach, if snow conditions allow, the famous “Breche de Roland” - a huge natural doorway in the cliffs which form the frontier between France & Spain. The return path to Gavarnie takes us over the “Plateau de Bellevue” with great views into the Cirque de Gavarnie. 16km, 6 ½ hrs, ascent 620 m, descent 1400 m, highest altitude 2807 m.



Breche de Roland

Day 7: Cirque d'Estaubé to Gavarnie.

Using minibuses to take us around to the Cirque de Troumouse we cross high pasture land to the Lac Des Gloriettes before climbing the valley into the Cirque d'Estaubé and over the Hourquette d'Alans (2490m). From there we descend the path which leads us to Gavarnie village. 17 kms, 6 ¼ hrs, ascent 900 m, descent 1300 m, highest altitude 2490 m.



Estaubé Valley

Day 8: Departure from Gavarnie

Accommodation

Days 1 - 3. Cauterets. 2* hotel - en-suite rooms.
Evening meal, bed & breakfast. 3 nights.

Days 4 - 7. Gavarnie. 2* hotel - en-suite rooms.
Evening meal, bed & breakfast. 4 nights.

Baggage transfers

Transfer of baggage from Cauterets to Gavarnie is included in the holiday price.

Local transport included

There are a few days when transport will be organised to take us to the start of the walk and also on one day at the end of the walk.

The following transport of the group is included in the holiday price:

- Day 2: Shuttle and chairlift
- Day 3: Cablecar and shuttle
- Day 4: Cauterets to Les Ayruès
- Day 6: Gavarnie to start of walk from Col des Tentes
- Day 7: Gavarnie to start of walk in the Cirque de Troumouse.

What is not included

Getting to the hotel at Cauterets at the beginning of the trip and from the hotel at Gavarnie at end of the trip.
Lunches. It will be possible to buy food in all the villages/towns where we stay.

Medical & travel insurance.

Personal expenses including drinks at the hotel.

Entrance fees (if any)