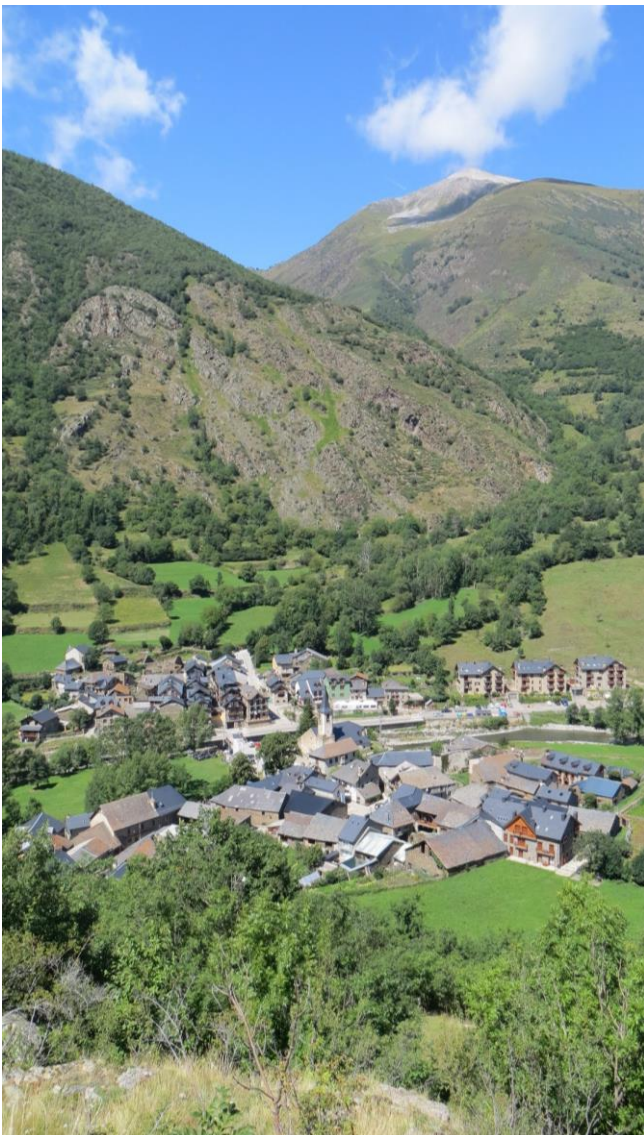


Tour  
Information



# Walking in the Val D'Aran





## Travel

### Passports

Please ensure your 10-year British Passport is not out of date and is valid for a full six months beyond the duration of your visit. EU, Andorra, Liechtenstein, Monaco, San Marino or Switzerland valid national identification cards are also acceptable for travel to France.

### Visas

British and EU passport holders are not required to have a visa.

For all other passport holders please check the visa requirements with the appropriate embassy.

French consulate: PO Box 57, 6A Cromwell Place, London SW7 2EW; Tel (020) 7838 2000/1. Information Service: Tel (0891) 887 733, Fax: (020) 7838 2046. Opening hours: 0900-1130 (and 1600-1630 for visa collection only) Mon-Fri (except British and French national holidays).



### Tickets

Included with this documentation is an e-ticket, which shows the reference number for your flight. EasyJet have now replaced all their airport check-in desks with EasyJet Baggage Drop desks. **Therefore, you must check-in online and print out your boarding passes before travelling.** Checking in online also provides the opportunity for you to pre-book seats, if you wish, at an extra cost.

Online check-in is available any time prior to travel using the reference number provided. Please see the enclosed e-ticket for more information or visit; [www.easyjet.com](http://www.easyjet.com)

Please check that the details on your documentation are accurate and that all names are spelt correctly and match the names on your passport. Your flight ticket is non-transferable and non-refundable. No refund can be given for non-used portions.



### Baggage allowance

We advise you to check the baggage allowances carefully as you are likely to be charged the excess if you exceed the weight limit. Maximum weights for single bags apply.

With Easyjet your ticket includes one hold bag of up to 23kg plus **one** cabin bag no bigger than 56 x 45 x 25 cm. Overhead locker space is limited on board the aircraft and on busy flights your cabin bag may have to go in the hold.

Please contact the airline for further information <http://www.easyjet.com/en/planning/baggage>

### Labels

Please use the luggage labels provided. It is useful to have your home address located inside your suitcase should the label go astray.

### Transfers

On arrival at Toulouse Airport please collect your luggage and exit the luggage area and proceed until you are in the arrival's hall. You will find your Guide situated in arrivals, holding a Travel Editions sign. The transfer journey will be by minibus to Bagneres de Luchon, the transfer time is approximately 2 hours.

### Special Requests

If you haven't already done so, please notify Travel Editions of any special requests as soon as possible to allow sufficient time to make the necessary arrangements.



## Accommodation

### Hotel Panoramic, Bagnères de Luchon

In the heart of the French Pyrennes, this simple and traditional three-star hotel is situated in the centre of the little spa town of Bagnères de Luchon and offers lovely views of the surrounding by the high passes, traversed by the Tour de France. The hotel has a bar. Rooms all have an en-suite bathroom with bath/shower, TV, safe, Wi-Fi. Some also have a balcony or terrace.

For more information please visit their website:

<http://www.hotelpanoramic.fr/>

### Els Encantats Hotel, Espot

Offering views of the surrounding hills and Gran Encantat mountain, this casual hotel in a stone building is 4 km from both Espot Esquí ski resort and the entrance to the National Park of Aigüestortes. The unassuming, individually decorated rooms feature free Wi-Fi, satellite TV and minifridges; some have mountain views, private balconies and/or wood-panelled ceilings.

For more information please visit their website:

<http://hotelencantats.com/>



## Food

Midi-Pyrenees Food and Gastronomy are a wonderful balance between French and Spanish cultures and Gascony food heritage. Traditionally hearty, the Midi Pyrenees region's cooking is based on both local gourmet products and convivial country dishes with chicken, goose or duck. From the renowned *Roquefort* blue cheese to the delightful *Croustade* apple pie, this Southwestern region of France is a gold mine for French Chefs!

Some of the typical dishes served in the excellent Poldo hotel are Paella, various fish dishes (sea fish) including calamari in ink with rice, fresh mountain trout, wild boar and deer, excellent local sheep's cheese and yoghurt, mountain lamb and beef. The desserts are made with wild seasonal fruits and the *crème Catalan* is excellent. The wines are brought from the coastal area near Barcelona and are very palatable.



## Drink

Wine is by far the most popular alcoholic beverage in France, and the choice will vary according to region. The Midi Pyrenees and Aquitaine region of France share many wine varieties. Thus it's not really surprising that Midi Pyrenees is a region that boasts a lot of outstanding wines with the sunny weather and excellent soil boosting the growth. The region also boasts outstanding liqueur drinks as the most famous Armagnac. The region's neighbours are France's biggest wine-producing areas (Bordeaux and Languedoc).

In elegant restaurants the wine list will be separate from the main menu, but in less opulent establishments will be printed on the back or along the side of the *carte*. The waiter will usually be glad to advise an appropriate choice. If in doubt, try the house wine; this will usually be less expensive and will always be the owner's pride.

### Meals included in the price of your holiday are:

**Breakfast** – daily; **Lunch** – six picnic lunches; **Dinner** – two dinners



## Destination

This tour takes place in the Midi-Pyrenees between the town of Luchon and the small hamlet of La Guingetta D'Aneu. The largest region in France, the Midi Pyrenees is an essentially rural area, stretching from the highlands of the Massif Central in the north, to the crests of the Pyrenees, on the Spanish border, in the south. The capital city Toulouse, lying in the centre of the Midi-Pyrenees region, is the only big metropolitan area in the region which is otherwise a region of small towns, villages, and rolling countryside.

Bagnères de Luchon is a well-known 18th century Spa centre. Originally a Roman spa built by Emperor Tiberius and revived in the mid eighteenth century by the aristocracy as a fashionable spa and climbing centre. The architecture is surprisingly elaborate and for a long time she has been known as 'queen of the Pyrenees' due to the numerous parks, large villas and long avenues with a backdrop of high mountains. In the summer and winter this is a busy resort with a large variety of walks and ski slopes.

In contrast the hamlet La Guingetta D'Aneu sits quietly next to a lake on the eastern side of the beautiful Aigues Tortes National park. The village is quiet and well situated with excellent views north to the frontiers of France, as well as wonderful high mountains all around. The nearest town is Estervi D'Aneus, a 5-minute drive away.

The week will bring us a variety of contrasts. For example, the French side is very lush with large areas of Beech forest and gushing streams and steep ascents whereas the Spanish side is more arid with Mediterranean flora, mountain lakes and high plains. We will explore the area around Vielha nestling in the foothills of the Maladetta and the highest peak of the chain, Anetto (3404m). We will walk in and around the exceptional Aigues Tortes national park, and on the borders between France and Spain on high mountain plains (Beret). Much of the area is breath-taking with a never-ending backdrop of mountains as far as the eye can see. Particularly worth noting are the Romanesque chapels in the area with occasional frescoes and original gargoyles.

Hopefully we will be lucky enough to see plenty of wildlife including Griffon vultures, Bearded vultures, Golden Eagles, Marmots, IZARD (Chamois), Red and Roe Deer, Brown Squirrels, and much more.

## The walks

We will walk between 4 and 5 hours per day with a maximum of 500m ascent in a day. We will carry a picnic lunch with us on some of the days and choose a wonderful place to eat it. The terrain is varied with sections of well-maintained ancient paths, some wide and some narrow, dirt roads, and cobbled tracks. The terrain underfoot is grass, dirt, and rock, and, overall, the paths are well maintained and well walked. There are the occasional steep ascents and descents, especially on the French side. For most of the week our paths are located at high altitude, between 900 and 2000 meters, which means the climate is usually very pleasant for walking at this time of year.

## The Guide

### Jonathan Peat

Jonathan has been guiding walks in France and Greece for more than 20 years. He is of British/Greek descent and speaks both languages fluently as well as French. He spent many years living in Greece but finally settled in France with his French wife, Myriam, and their three sons. His passion for the country is fully represented in his guiding when he aims to introduce the visitor to the region's unspoilt and beautiful nature and a very authentic side of local life.

**Please note as this tour is very much dictated by the hands of nature, it is possible some of the walks mentioned may change if conditions are not suitable for the walks advertised. If appropriate, these decisions will be taken by the guide during the tour.**

## Clothing & Equipment

We recommend you bring the following items:

- Comfortable walking shoes or boots. Decent, non-slip soles are important
- 1 good size day sack (clients carry their own picnics)
- 1 water bottle (1 litre)
- A personal first aid kit.
- Sun/rain hat, sun cream and insect repellent (which may not be necessary)
- Shorts, T-shirts, layers useful for varying temperatures
- Waterproof jacket and trousers
- Plenty of T-shirts/layers so you can adjust to weather conditions
- Walking poles are recommended as they can be very useful on more difficult terrain
- Small penknife useful for picnics

Please note there is a very well stocked mountain shop in Luchon where you can get any extra gear you might need, plus buy 1/25,000 or 1/50,000 maps of the area.

It is essential when walking in rural terrain to have comfortable, well-fitting and protective footwear. It is advisable that boots are ankle high to provide good ankle support. Vibram soles tend to have better grip. It is always advisable to break in your boots before your holiday. Try two pairs of socks, one thin pair close to the skin, and a thicker outer sock.

Bring a foot care kit, with the especially useful moleskin and second skin, and compeed for blisters.

## Reading Suggestions

**The rough guide to the Pyrenees.** Marc Dubin

One of the most comprehensive books on this wonderful region.

**Graham Robb, *The Discovery of France*.**

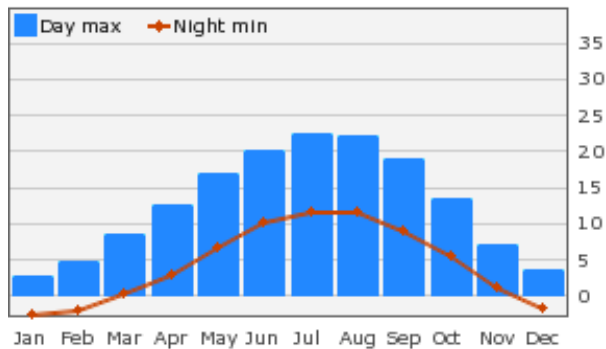
A general introduction to French culture, landscape and history, it also features an excellent insight into the distinctive character of France's regions.



## The Basics

**Climate** – The weather at this time of year is likely to be pleasant, but there is the chance of the odd shower. Our best advice is to come prepared.

**Time** – GMT +2 hours (Summer time Apr-Oct); GMT



+ 1 (Standard time Nov-Mar).

**Language** – French and Spanish

**National holidays** – New Year's Day (01 Jan); Easter Monday; Labour day (01 May); Victory in Europe day (08 May); Ascension day; Whit Sunday; Whit Monday; National day (14 Jul); Assumption of Mary (15 Aug); All Saints' day (01 Nov); Armistice day (11 Nov); Christmas day (25 Dec).

**Currency** – Euro. €1 = 100 cents. Notes are in denominations of €500, 200, 100, 50, 20, 10 and 5. Coins are in denominations of €2 and 1, and 50, 20, 10, 5, 2 and 1 cents.

**Banks** – Cashpoints compatible with international banking networks are located in all towns and cities, as well as airports, major train stations and other spots. They usually offer an attractive exchange rate. Those banks that still exchange foreign currencies into local money will always charge a transaction fee, so withdrawing money from an ATM usually represents the most logical means of obtaining euros. We do recommend taking some euros with you as it's not always easy to find cashpoints in smaller villages.

**Credit cards** – American Express, Diners Club, MasterCard and Visa are widely accepted across the country. If you're eating at a restaurant, check prior

to the meal that your card will be an acceptable form of payment. It is advisable to carry a supply of cash with you at all times, as restaurants and shops in small villages may not accept credit cards.

**Electricity** – 220 volt, two-pin continental plug.

**Drinking water** – Tap water is safe to drink. (Although you'll find a huge amount of bottled water for sale too)

**Shops and museums** – Department stores are open 0900-1830 Monday to Saturday. Most shops are closed between 1200-1430. Some food shops (particularly bakers) are open Sunday mornings, in which case they will probably close Monday. Many shops close all day or half-day Monday.

Please note that most museums are closed on Mondays.

**Camera** – bring plenty of memory cards/film and any spare camera batteries as these are not always available. Please check with your guide before photographing people.

**Bath plugs** – The hotel has plugs for basins, but it is useful to carry a 'universal' one with you.

**Telephones/mobiles** – You should be able to use your mobile phone in France, depending on your operator and contract.

**Tipping** –To keep our tours affordable, we do not increase the tour price by adding in tips. However, in the tourism industry, there is a certain level of expectation that when receiving a good service, one does award with a tip. Tour Managers, Representatives, Guides and Drivers appreciate a tip at the end of their involvement with the tour, but this is entirely at your discretion. We believe in allowing you to tip according to your level of satisfaction with their services, but for your guidance about £2-3 per person per day for the tour manager is the norm. We would like to reiterate that tipping is an entirely optional payment and this information is given purely to answer any questions you may have about it.



## Health

### Doctor/Dentist/Chemist

Please talk to your guide if you are feeling unwell and they will organise for you to see a doctor.

**Keep receipts for insurance claims.**



### Hospital

Your guide/hotel reception will arrange hospital transport.

**Keep receipts for insurance claims.**

### General Health Advice

We suggest you take a good supply of your own individual medicines with you and always keep some in your hand luggage in case you get delayed or your luggage goes astray. General-purpose supplies for bites, stings, or scratches, and your usual medication for headaches, or stomach upsets are always recommended. Oral re-hydration sachets are excellent for topping up salt and glucose levels.

Visit the NHS Fit For Travel website for more generally information specific to the country you are visiting – [www.fitfortravel.nhs.uk](http://www.fitfortravel.nhs.uk)

### Sun Protection

Always ensure you take sun protection and moisturiser, advisable when walking at high altitudes. A sun hat and sunglasses are also advisable.

### Inoculations

You should check with your own doctor and take their advice as to which inoculations are required for the country you are visiting, as only they know your medical history and recommendations are liable to change at short notice.



## Insurance

To be covered under your Travel Insurance Policy, if you become ill, it is essential that you contact a local doctor and telephone the emergency number of your insurance company. You will **NOT** be covered for any claim unless this procedure is carried out. Your insurance company will then decide on the best course of medical attention.

### European Health Insurance Card (EHIC)

The EHIC replaced the old E111 in 2006. Valid in all EEA countries, the card lets you get state healthcare at a reduced cost or sometimes for free. It will cover you for treatment that is needed to allow you to continue your stay until your planned return. It also covers the treatment of pre-existing medical conditions.

Please note that the EHIC is **not** an alternative to travel insurance. It will not cover any private medical healthcare or costs such as being flown back to the UK, or lost or stolen property. Therefore, it is important to have both an EHIC and a valid private travel insurance policy. It is also important to note that each country's healthcare system is slightly different, so the EHIC might not cover everything that would be generally free on the NHS.

We strongly recommend that you take out an appropriate travel insurance policy when you travel abroad.

For more information about the EHIC please visit:

<https://www.ehic.org.uk>

## Emergencies

**Should an emergency arise, please call our offices on:**

00 44 20 7251 0045 (Mon-Fri 0900-1700)

Outside the above hours please telephone our emergency staff on:

00 44 7899 796542 or

00 44 7831 133079 or

00 44 1235 850720

**PLEASE USE THESE NUMBERS ONLY IN THE EVENT OF A GENUINE EMERGENCY.**

If you find that you need consular assistance during your holiday:

Consular services Paris

16 rue d'Anjou

75008 Paris

France

Tel: +33 (0)1 44 51 31 00

Fax: +33 (0)1 44 51 31 27

Open Mon-Fri 0930-1230. Outside these hours a consular Emergency Service is in operation and can be contacted on +33 (0)1 44 51 31 00.

British Consulate General Barcelona

Avda Diagonal 477-13

08036 Barcelona

Spain

Spain.consulate@fco.gov.uk

Tel: +34 93 366 6200

Fax: +34 933 666 221

The consulate is open to visitors Monday to Friday from 8:30am to 1:30pm, excluding public holidays.

Consular phone lines are open from 8am to 4pm.

### Travel Editions

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Tel: 0207 251 0045

Email: [tours@traveleditions.co.uk](mailto:tours@traveleditions.co.uk) [www.traveleditions.co.uk](http://www.traveleditions.co.uk)

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