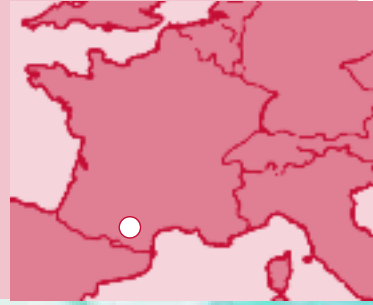


Holiday: High Pyrenees Walk



Rating:  and  levels

Holiday type: Independent Walking

- Savage and spectacular landscapes: dramatic gorges, beautiful lakes, lush green valleys, flower-filled meadows
- Exciting peak and ridge walking: choice of different walking level every day
- Unique flora & fauna, fortified villages, ancient castles
- An ornithologist's dream: eagles, vultures, grand tetra



This holiday offers breathtaking walks through the High Pyrenees, near the Spanish border. You are based at the Val d'Azun, an extensive high level area with a sunny micro-climate. The famous French naturalist, Ramond de Carbonniers, called it "The Eden of the Pyrenees", and it is also known as "The Valley of Light". It's one of the Seven Valleys of Lavedan in the ancient County of Bigorre, just a stone's throw from Henri IV's Kingdom of Navarre.




The landscapes are dramatic and varied: high peaks and *cirques*, mountain streams and passes, lush meadows, ancient woods and picturesque villages. Mostly you're around 2,000m with the snow-capped peaks of the High Pyrenees towering above you. Each day, there's a choice of  (easier) or  (more challenging) routes, and you can alternate the routes from day to day, if you wish. The routes are well designed by the knowledgeable staff of our local partner, La Balaguère, and have been checked by our own reps. As usual, your bags are transported for you.

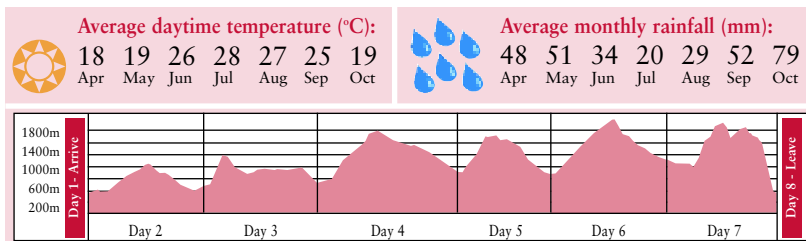
The accommodation is comfortable and very geared towards mountain walkers. En-suite rooms are guaranteed everywhere except at the alternative chambre d'hôte in Arrens. Meals are of a good standard throughout.



"Many rare species of wildlife flourish here, undisturbed. Pyrenean ibex, isard and mouflons graze the mountain passes, while griffon, bearded vultures and golden eagles circle the thermals overhead."

Walking Details

This holiday has both  and  options each day. The  walking gradients are shown below. A reasonable level of stamina is required as you move on most days (bags moved for you) and your walks take you from the valley floors to around 1500m. Walking boots are essential.



High Pyrenees Walk: Day by day

Day 1 Arrive at Argelès-Gazost

Argelès is a quiet little spa town at the eastern end of the Val d'Azun, overlooking the Gave de Pau and the mountains.

Day 2 Argelès to Arras/Aucun 11km/7mi/3hr or 12km/8mi/4hr

Off first through flower-filled fields - gentian, violets and wild anemones - to the Bergons Valley where you're rewarded with a wonderful south facing panorama. The more energetic now continue up to the summit of Mont de Gez (1097m) - we were thrilled to spot a red kite circling overhead when we lunched at the beautiful 360° picnic spot last summer. Or stroll via the picturesque mountain villages of Salles and Sère-en-Lavedan. We pick all walkers up here for the short transfer to your modern and comfortable hotel with pool in Aucion where you will spend 2 nights.

Day 3 Arras/Aucun 11km/7mi/3.5hr or 15km/9mi/6hr

Lift to Arras from where you enjoy the wonderful views from the airy heights of the Col de Liar and a spectacular ridge walk passing the Soum de la Péne. Otherwise you can take the easier route via the picturesque villages of Arcizans-Dessus and Gaillagos or the alternative path through the col, especially if you are prone to vertigo! Both the museum and the church in Aucion are worth a look.

Day 4 Aucion/Arrens-Marsous 17km/11mi/6hr or 14km/9mi/4hr

Today you explore a different part of the mountains, ending up in the wild and little-known valley of the Ozoum. It takes about an hour and a half for the adventurous to reach the point to which the less energetic accept a lift. From there the two routes are the same, winding up to the Col and Lac de Soum then along high level plateaux, down mountain stream valleys and along the GR10 down to Arrens-Marsous. You stay at the Gîte Camelat or at the nearby *chambre d'hôte*. Everyone eats at the Gîte in a convivial, relaxed atmosphere.

Day 5 Arrens to Lac d'Estaing 12km/7mi/5hr or 10km/6mi/3hr

The energetic climb via the Turhon des Aulhes (1,358m, fabulous views) to the Col de la Courbe (1,529 m), before descending to Lac d'Estaing. The gentler route follows the GR10 over the Col de Bordères (1,150m) and across the lower slopes to our hotel beside the lake. This hotel enjoys an unrivalled location, and offers superb food, so we have built in two nights here.

Day 6 Lac d'Estaing & The National Park 14km/8mi/5.5hr or 17km/11mi/6hr

Lac d'Estaing is a wonderful spot with its crystal clear lake fed by the numerous waterfalls tumbling down from the surrounding peaks. We suggest you explore the nearby National Park - a landscape of rivers, lakes and open plateaux - and home to the Pyrenean chamois (isard) who graze peacefully on the slopes. It is prime marmot country too and, if you glance up above, you should also spot griffon and bearded vultures circling in the thermals.

Day 7 Lac d'Estaing to St Savin 22km/14mi/8hr or 16km/9mi/5hr

Today's walk takes you through some truly magnificent mountain scenery. It is the longest day, so an early start is advised. For the first two hours, everyone follows shady forest tracks to Cazenove. From here, the adventurous follow mountain pastures up to 1,660m, while the less energetic descend via the pretty village of Sireix, maybe stopping for a drink at Arcizans-Avant before the final kilometre to St Savin and our hotel, which offers gastronomic pleasures within!

Day 8 Leave St Savin



For departure dates,
 prices and travel
 options, please visit
 our website at:
www.headwater.com