



Guided Hike | Level 2/5   | 6 days of hike

Cathare Country and its major sites : from Carcassonne to Foix

Your hike

- Guided hike in the heart of the Cathar Country, between castles, vineyards and vertiginous gorges
- 5 nights in a hotel and 1 night in a hikers lodge in a room
- A warm and sunny climate, suitable for hiking almost all year long

Highlights

- Discovering the main sites and castles of the Cathar Country
- Discovering Carcassonne and Foix
- Crossing the stunning Garamus and Frau gorges
- Panoramic hike with a view over the Haute Ariège high summits



Between the Mediterranean Sea and the Ariège region, in the heart of the Pyrenean Piedmont, impressive stone citadels are standing : the Cathar Castles. Those fortresses remain the living memory of a tragical history that marked the South-West of France during the crusade against the Albigenses. Starting from Carcassonne and its famous medieval old town, you will go and discover the most famous sites and castles of the Cathar History with a mountain guide specialized on the Cathar country.

Firstly in the Aude region, you will have the opportunity to visit the Quéribus eyrie, the incredible fortress of Peyrepertuse, Puilaurens the archetypal bastion and finally Puivert, the home of troubadours. In Ariège, you will explore Montségur castle, the highest of the Cathar Castles, standing on its rock at 1207m of altitude. Then, before reaching Foix and its castle, you will visit the closest neighbour to Montségur, Roquefixade, perched on the top of an impressive cliff.

Beyond the discovery of a territory and its rich and overwhelming history, the Cathar Country is full of stunning and varied landscapes, influenced by the Mediterranean and Mountain Climates that are merging here, but also by the Nature that dig gorges in limestone, carved rocky spurs and has always allowed mankind to use those natural resources.

•PROGRAM

Day 1 : Beginning of the trip in Carcassonne

Meeting at 18:45 at the hotel (300m far from the train station). Check-in at your accommodation (2-star hotel). Welcome drink and briefing on the tour.

Day 2 : From Carcassonne to Quéribus castle

In the morning, you will discover the famous medieval town of Carcassonne. Later in the morning, transfer to the Quéribus Castle, « The Vertiginous Citadel ». Like an eyrie built on a rocky outcrop, this was the last stronghold of the Cathar resistance during the crusade against the Albigenses in 1255. Perched at 788m of altitude on the donjon's High Terrace, astonishing landscapes will meet your eyes, from the Canigou summit to the Roussillon and Corbières plains. By a short hike through the Corbières vineyards, the fragrant scrubland and the very beautiful village of Cucugnan, you will then reach Duilhac sous Peyrepertuse.

- Distance : 8km, ascent : +200m, descent : -450m.

Day 3 : From the Galamus gorges to the Peyrepertuse castle

Short transfer to the Galamus gorges. Today's hike starts at the entrance of the gorges, an impressive canyon and outstanding natural setting. The Agly river, « eagles' river », dig the rock from waterfall to waterfall, and a road built in 1884 now hangs on the cliff. The itinerary then leads you to the Peyrepertuse fortress : the Castle is standing at 800m of altitude on a limestone ridge. This is one of the most beautiful examples of Cathar fortresses, which is also part of the old line of defence of the « five Carcassonne sons ».

- Distance : 17km, ascent : +620m, descent : -680m

Day 4 : From Duilhac to Comus, visiting the castles and enjoying a panoramic hike

Transfer from Duilhac to Puilaurens and visit of the Puilaurens castle, perched on a rocky spur at 697m of altitude, in the heart of a coniferous forest. You will reach this magnificent site by a botanical trail. After visiting the castle, you will head to the Puivert castle : a castle in the plain, situated on a gentle hill at 600m of altitude. Finally, you will head to Comus and the Sault plateau for a short hike towards Roc de Quercourt where a fantastic view over the Pyrénées Ariègeoises high summits awaits you. Night in Comus.

- Distance : 2,5km ; ascent : +170m ; descent : -170m (Puilaurens castle)
- Distance : 5km, ascent : +200m, descent : -200m (Roc de Quercourt)

Day 5 : From Comus to Montségur

This section is a transition from Aude to Ariège, and from the Sault Country to the Olmes Country. Firstly, the Frau gorges will reveal their vertiginous walls notched in the limestone over almost 1km. The path then reaches the Montségur castle, visible as soon as you reach the end of the gorges' west side. Montségur symbolizes the resistance of the Cathar Church against the Church of Rome, but also against the King of France and the overlords of the North searching for the rich lands of the South : they took possession of the place after the surrender and stake in 1244. Short transfer after the hike to your accommodation in Foix

- Distance : 14,5 km, ascent : +500m, descent : -700m.

Day 6 : From Montségur to Roquefixade

Short transfer in the morning to Montségur. The Cathar Path crosses the heart of the Olmes Country, a region famous for its wool that used to be specialised in the production of horn combs. During the hike, you will not only enjoy the green medium mountain landscapes but also discover one of the Ariège's medieval castles, Roquefixade, that overlooks the village and used to be called the Montfort Bastide. Maybe you will get to enjoy a warm welcome by the locals in charming villages such as Montferrier or the Coulzonne hamlet. Short transfer after your hike to your accommodation in Foix.

- Distance : 17km, ascent : +400m, descent : -750m.

Day 7 : Discovering Foix and its castle

Visit of the old town centre and its narrow streets filled with History, then visit of the castle perched on its rock. Transfer to Carcassonne in the afternoon.

This program is an example of the itinerary we aim to adhere to. It may be necessary, if situations arise that are beyond our control, for the itinerary to be modified.

• MEETING POINT AND END OF THE TRIP

Meeting point :

On Day 1 at 18:45 at your accommodation in Carcassonne (11 – Aude) : Hôtel** Astoria, 18 Rue Tourtel, 11000 Carcassonne. The hotel is 300m far from the train station.

End of the trip :

On day 7 around 15:00 in Carcassonne, after your transfer.

• DATES AND PRICE

Group size

From 4 to 8 people.

Departures

Departure is secured from 4 people.

From Sunday, May 3rd, 2020 to Saturday, May 9th, 2020

From Sunday, May 24th, 2020 to Saturday, May 30th, 2020

From Sunday, June 7th, 2020 to Saturday, June 13th, 2020

From Sunday, June 28th, 2020 to Saturday, July 4th, 2020

From Sunday, August 30th, 2020 to Saturday, September 5th, 2020

From Sunday, September 6^h, 2020 to Saturday, September 12th, 2020

From Sunday, September 20th, 2020 to Saturday, September 26th, 2020

Price per person : 840€

Extras :

- Single room extra : 170€/pers

The price includes :

- Full board accommodation from the dinner on Day 1 to the breakfast on Day 7

- Transfers

- Luggage transfer

- Guiding by a mountain guide specialised in the Cathar Country

-Entrance tickets to the castles

The price does not include :

-Travel insurance

-Meals that are not specified as included in the price

-Additional transfers

-Additional visits

-Drink

Nature of the terrain

Easy hikes, on good paths, the terrain is varied but often rocky.

Level 2

These trips are designed for people who are looking for active holidays. A reasonable level of physical condition is required. 3 to 6 hours of hike per day. Climbing pace* +300 m per hour.

**Be advised : these are average times that only take into account the effective walking time and do not include the stops during the hike.*

Guide

Guided hike with a mountain guide specialized on the Cathar Country.

Carrying

You will need to carry a day pack only (personal equipment needed during the day and your picnic). Your main luggage will be transferred by car between the different accommodations. We kindly ask you to make sure that your main luggage is easily transportable (please see below our recommendations regarding the equipment).

• ACCOMODATION / FOOD

Accommodation

Full board :

3 nights in a 2-star hotel

2 nights in a 3-star hotel

1 night in a family-run hikers lodge in a room

Food

- Continental breakfast (tea, coffee, milk, bread, butter, jam)

- Evening meals are often based on local specialties and include a starter, a main course and a dessert.

- Drinks are not included

• PRACTICAL INFORMATION

How to get to Carcassonne :

- By train :

From Toulouse to Carcassonne, many TER trains, via Castelnaudary, everyday. Many trains from Nice and Marseille.

Information : 36.36 (direct line) or www.sncf.fr

- By car :

Motorway « Autoroute des 2 mers » A61-RN113-D118

90km from Toulouse, 110km from Perpignan, 300km from Barcelone, 150km from Montpellier, 320km from Marseille, 340km from Bordeaux, 450km from Lyon, 730km from Paris, 950km from Lille.

Practical information

Tourist information centre : 15 Bd Camille Peletta 11890 Carcassonne

Tel : +33 4 68 10 24 30 ; Fax 04 68 10 24 38

Regional Weather Forecast : +33 8 36 68 02 11.

• WHAT TO BRING AND PACK

Luggage

• A 35L (or so) hiking backpack that you will use to carry your personal belongings during the day.

Clothes

• 1 sunhat or cap

• T-shirts (1 for 2 or 3 walking days). Avoid cotton, very long to dry; rather choose short-sleeved T-shirts (breathable material) in Capilene (Patagonia), Dryflo (Lowe Alpine), Light Effect (Odlo) etc...

• 1 base layer (with the same characteristics) or long-sleeved shirt

- 1 polar fleece jumper
- 1 trekking trousers
- 1 comfortable trousers for the evenings
- 1 wind and rainproof jacket (Gore-tex type), simple and light
- 1 swimwear and towel to go to the spa center. Compulsory if you want to access the health Spa.
- Warm underwears
- Walking socks (1 pair for 2 to 3 walking days). Avoid the « tennis » type socks (cotton), which take a long time to dry and increase the risk of blister; rather choose some Coolmax-based ones.
- 1 pair of waterproof ankle hiking boots (Vibram type soles)
- 1 pair of comfortable trainers for the evenings

This list should be adapted according to the season you choose

Other little things

- 1 high quality sun glasses
- 1 water bottle (1 liter minimum)
- 1 pocket knife (don't forget to put in your checked baggage for your flight)
- Small toiletry bag and towel
- T-roll, suncream, lipstick
- For picnics: cutlery, glass and a sealed plastic box

Your own first-aid kit

- Your usual medication
- Vitamin C or polyvitamin
- Pain medication: paracetamol, preferably
- Adhesive bandage (Elastoplast-type, 6cm wide)
- Adhesive dressings + disinfectant wipes
- Blister plasters (Spenco type, available in pharmacies, drugstores, sport stores...)

Collective first-aid kit

- First-aid kit placed under the responsibility of your Mountain Leader