

Cathar Castles, from Quillan to Foix

Your route in brief

- Self-guided walking
- Walk with family, friends or as a couple
- Accommodation in hotels, guesthouses and gites
- A soft and sunny climate, adapted to walking all year long
- Access to your luggage every evening depending on the option chosen
- Access and return facilitated via Quillan and Foix
- Duration 7 days / 6 nights

Strong points

- Discovery of the Cathar castles : Puivert, Montsegur, Roquefixade, and Foix
- Hiking through two very distinct territories, between Aude and Ariège
- Crossing the spectacular Frau gorges
- The Pays de Sault and its beautiful high plateaus
- Beautiful views of the Ariegean Pyrenees
- The villages crossed
- A variety of landscapes: mountains, forests, gorges, high plateaus...



Between Aude and Ariège, in the heart of Pyrenean piedmont loom imposing stone citadels, Cathar castles. These fortresses are the symbol of a tragic, political intrigue and drama that shook the South of France and marked the region. From Quillan, this itinerary will take you to Foix, in the heart of a territory steeped in history. First, in Aude region, you can visit Puivert and its castle, on the land of the Troubadours. From Comus and Pays de Sault, you will join Ariège and Montsegur castle, the highest of the Cathar castles, erected on its "pog" at an altitude of 1207m. Then, before to join the city of Foix and its castle, you will go to visit Castle of Roquefixade, near to Montsegur, perched at the top of an impressive cliff. This walking holiday combines a historical interest that stirs the imagination, as well as some memorable walking through lush, unspoilt mountains and valleys. Your itinerary follows the 'Cathar Trail'.

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•PROGRAM

Day 1 : Start of holiday in Quillan

Start of holiday in Quillan, check into your accommodation and possibility to visit the village. Depending on your arrival time, it is also possible to go hiking.

Loop starting Quillan

The itinerary offers a remarkable diversity of Mediterranean and mountain vegetation. You will discover an architecture that is both unusual and charming : chalet of Carach and the village itself that is famous for its XI century church. The return route meanders back along the river Aude.

- Distance : 12,5km, duration : around 4h, altitude gain : +375m, descent : -375m.

Day 2 : From Quillan to Puivert

From Quillan, you will discover on this first walk part of the Pyrenees that has a strong Mediterranean influence. The trail leads through olive groves and vineyards, then a pleasant scrubby vegetation of box trees, shady oaks and juniper that give a subtle fragrance to the air. Crossing undulating valleys and hillsides, a castle will eventually come into view, the castle of Puivert. In its days, the castle was far more festive than military, it was the castle of the troubadours. A splendid ridge walk will lead you towards the castle doors. It is possible to explore the castle's towers, dungeons and the famous hall of musicians. This feudal castle was a hive of activity in the XII century, a meeting and performance place for the most famous troubadours of the era.

- Distance : 20km, duration : around 6h30, altitude gain : +750m, descent : -550m.

Day 3 : From Montplaisir to Comus

Transfer from your accommodation in Puivert to the hamlet of Montplaisir, start of your walk. Through forests, discovering the Plateau de Sault, located between 950 and 1300 meters high. From the Plateau de languerail, you will discover Montsegur, Roquefixade, and the Plantaurel just front of you. A little further on, the gorges and the Frau mountain will reveal all their splendour... that you will have the opportunity to admire on the next stage. Arrival in Comus, small and typical village.

- Distance : 17,5km, duration : around 5h45, altitude gain : +650m, descent : -350m.

Day 4 : From Comus to Montsegur

This walk makes the transition from Aude to Ariège and from Pays de Sault to Pays d'Olmes. First, the Frau gorges reveal their vertiginous walls cut into limestone over nearly 1 km. Then, the path joins the village of Montségur, visible as soon as you reach the end of the western side of the gorges. The pog of Montségur symbolizing resistance of the Cathar Church facing the Rome Church and the kingdom of France. The castle was taken in 1244, and all people died in a huge pyre. The walk being quite short, it's opportunity to visit the museum in the village.

- Distance : 13,5 km, duration : around 5h15, altitude gain : +650m, descent : -900m.

Day 5 : From Montsegur to Roquefixade

To start the day, a short trip to the pog of Montsegur is a must. After the visit to the castle, the Cathar Trail takes you through the heart of the Pays d'Olmes, wool country, which used to specialise in the manufacture of horn combs. During your walk, in addition to the green landscapes of the middle mountains, you will discover one of the medieval castles of Ariège, that of Roquefixade, dominating the village of the same name, formerly called the Bastide de Montfort. Charming villages such as Montferrier, or the hamlet of Coulzonne, will be an occasion for improvised meetings full of warmth with the locals.

- Distance : 17km, duration : around 6h45, altitude gain : +800m, descent : -950m.

Day 6 : From Roquefixade to Foix

Last section of the Cathar path, this walk will take you to Foix trough the Pradières domanial forest. This itinerary is also marked by very beautiful views of the Ariège mountains. In the morning, as the start of the hike, a short round trip to the rocky outcrop supporting the ruins of the Roquefixade castle is possible.

- Distance : 17km, duration : around 6h, altitude gain : +550m, descent : -900m.

Day 7 : Visit of the Foix city and its castle, end of stay

Your stay ends in Foix. You can visit the centre of the old town with its narrow streets full of history, as well as the château comtal perched on its rock!

This programme 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.

• DATES AND PRICES

Departures

Every day from the beginning of April to the end of October.

Booking from 2 people (solitary traveller: consult us).

From 01/04/2025 to 30/10/2025 :

Prices with luggage transfer :

Price per person for a group of 2 persons	785€
Price per person for a group of 3 persons	725€
Price per person for a group of 4 persons	690€
Price per person for a group of 5 persons	675€
Price per person for a group of 6 persons	665€

Prices without luggage transfer :

Price per person for a group of 2 persons	620€
Price per person for a group of 3 persons	605€
Price per person for a group of 4 persons	595€
Price per person for a group of 5 persons	590€
Price per person for a group of 6 persons	585€

Extras :

- Extra single room option : 185€/pers
- Extra 5 picnics : 65€/pers
- Extra transfer back from Foix to Quillan on a weekday: 155€/transfer
- Extra transfer back from Foix to Quillan on a Sunday or public holiday: 215€/transfer
- Extra night in Quillan half board double room : 75€/pers
- Extra night in Quillan half board single room : 95€/pers
- Extra night in Foix Bed & Breakfast double room : 60€/pers
- Extra night in Foix Bed & Breakfast single room : 85€/pers

The price includes :

- Half board accommodation except on day 6 in bed and breakfast
- Transfer day 3
- Luggage transfer depending on the option chosen
- Dossier containing maps, route notes (1 for 4 persons, given in 1st accommodation)
- GPS tracks if you ask us + access to the detailed itinerary on the Mhikes GPS mobile application

The price does not include :

- Holiday and travel insurance
- Visits, access to castles and museums
- Dinner day 6
- Drinks and picnics

- 15€ booking fees

• TAILOR MADE HOLIDAYS

We can put together a suitable holiday for you taking into account all your specific requests and budget. Many individuals and trekking companies have relied on us for years. With our tailor-made holidays we always aim to provide you with the best quality at the fairest price.

If you want to :

- increase the comfort of your accommodations,
- change the duration of your trip,
- organize additional activities or visits,
- get a transfer from/to an airport,
- organize an extra night

Contact Gaëtan

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• ORGANIZATION

We propose a self-guided, independent formula. You choose your departure date and we will take care of all the rest from the initial meeting time through to the dispersion point. We book your accommodations, we transport your bags between the accommodations depending on the option chosen and we organize your transfer on day 3 ; we provide the maps and detailed walking route notes sent on the first accommodation as well as access to the detailed itinerary on the Mhikes GPS mobile application. This is a way of enjoying complete flexibility, you dictate the pace and rhythm of your holiday. Moreover, our team will answer all your questions, and will provide all useful advice in order to make this holiday a success.

Your transfers during the walk :

Day 3 : At 8.30am, short transfer from your accommodation to Montplaisir, at the start of your hike.

• TECHNICAL INFORMATION

Level 2/5

Occasional walker, in good physical condition. Hiking 5h-6h per day on average, altitude difference 400m-700m on average, on easy paths and tracks. They are average times that only take into account the effective walking time and do not include the stops during the hike. Depending on the weather conditions, the walking pace can also vary, ranging from +300m to +500m of climbing per hour.

Guide

Self-guided walking, without guide.

Carrying

You will need to carry a day backpack only. Our bag-moving service means you can travel light during your walks. Your main luggage (that should please be easily transportable) will be transported by vehicle between the different night stops, unless you have chosen the version without luggage transport.

• ACCOMMODATION / FOOD

Accommodation

Half board except on day 6 (bed and breakfast)

- 2 nights in hotel *** in room days 1 and 6
- 1 night in guesthouse in room day 4
- 3 nights in gites in room days 2, 3 and 5

Food

- Continental breakfast (tea, coffee, milk, butter, jam)
- Evening meals in gites, often based on local specialities, include a starter, a main course and a dessert. For dinner in Foix (D6), plenty of restaurants in town.

- Picnics not included. They can be reserved in advance (with extra). Or you can buy them directly at your accommodation or at the grocery stores, mini-markets and bakeries listed in the roadbook.
- Drinks not included

• PRACTICAL INFORMATION

Starting : Day 1 according to your time of arrival in your accommodation in Quillan.

Ending : Day 7 after breakfast in Foix.

How to reach Quillan by public transport:

Trains from the main towns to Carcassonne (sometimes with connections) : <https://www.sncf-connect.com/en-en/>

Bus from Carcassonne to Quillan (Aude - Ligne 402 – Axat > Quillan > Limoux > Carcassonne) : <https://www.lio-occitanie.fr/horaires-et-plans/>

How to leave Foix by public transport:

From Foix, train to main towns (with connections in Toulouse): <https://www.sncf-connect.com/en-en/>

How to reach Quillan from Foix by public transport:

Train from Foix to Carcassonne : <https://www.sncf-connect.com/en-en/>

Bus from Carcassonne to Quillan (Aude - Ligne 402 – Axat > Quillan > Limoux > Carcassonne) : <https://www.lio-occitanie.fr/horaires-et-plans/>

Nearest airport :

Carcassonne Airport

Toulouse-Blagnac airport

Perpignan airport

Parking lot in Quillan :

Free parking, no surveillance : Quillan train station, opposite the hôtel Cartier. Caution : on July and August they may be some events on this parking, we advise you to enquire about availability before coming.

Parking lot in Foix :

All free and paid parking lots on this page :

<https://www.mairie-foix.fr/D%C3%A9placements%20/%20Mobilit%C3%A9/80/4430>

If you're leaving your car for the duration of your stay, please check with the tourist office to find out if there are any events (festivals, markets, etc.) taking place in your parking area.

• WHAT TO BRING AND PACK

Your main luggage (if package includes luggage transport between accommodations) :

For logistical reasons, we ask you not to bring more than one item/person. Its weight should not exceed 12kg - 15kg.

Your day backpack

The size of your bag varies upon the type of activity.

For a walk without portage : 30L minimum

For a walk with partial portage : 50L minimum

For a walk with portage : 60L minimum

Whatever activity you participate in, you should always carry in your rucksack:

- Rainwear, warm clothing, spare T-shirt, sunglasses, sun cream, first aid kit, picnic kit, personal items, etc.
- Picnic lunch of the day (bring a plastic box)
- Sufficient water (minimum 1.5 litre water bottle)

Walking Boots

The type of boot depends upon the activities you take part in, however they are one of your most important items. They should be comfortable, waterproof and breathable. For the best protection we advise ankle boots.

We recommend our young walkers to wear flexible walking boots with a good sole and back.

For mountain walking for more than 4 hours long we recommend a boot with a fairly ridged sole.

If you need to buy a new pair of boots, we advise you wear them in before the start of your holiday. Don't wear boots that are too small because feet have a tendency to swell up. Be careful with your shoes that have been left in the wardrobe for too long. The lifespan of a shoe is 2 to 5 years. After a while the soles will come off and the seams can tear.

Clothes:

- A wind and rainproof jacket
- A thick jumper or a fleece
- Comfortable walking trousers
- Shorts, t shirts as well as breathable base layers
- Spare clothes
- Swimwear and towel
- For the start and end of season, hat and gloves suitable for GR10 walks at altitude.

For Sleeping

- Sleeping bag liner for all nights spent in the gites and mountain shelters (blankets are provided)
- Earplugs

For Picnics

- Sealed plastic box (0.5L) to carry salads
- Cutlery (folding knife and fork)
- A 1,5L minimum flask

Small equipment

- A pair of tennis shoes, or sandals for the evening
- A pair of telescopic poles (optional)
- Sunglasses and sun cream
- Hat, cap or bob
- Camera...
- A small toilet bag, with towel
- Torch or headlamp
- Toilet paper
- A mini-pharmacy: personal medication, Compeed for blisters, elastoplast, gauze, disinfectant, arnica granules and aspirin in case of minor injuries, a survival blanket.