

Factsheet | Guided walking | Level 4/5  | 6 walking days on the GR10

Guided GR10, Part 6 : From Aulus les Bains – Mérens les Vals

Your Tour briefly

- Guided hike with a certified mountain leader specialist in the region
- Itinerant tour
- Varied accommodation: stopover gîte, yurt, mountain refuge
- Luggage transport between stages, except for 2 nights in refuges
- A well-organized logistics system to compensate for the lack of accommodation in this part of the Pyrenees
- **Easy access and return via Saint Giron and Mérens**
- **Duration: 7 days / 6 nights**

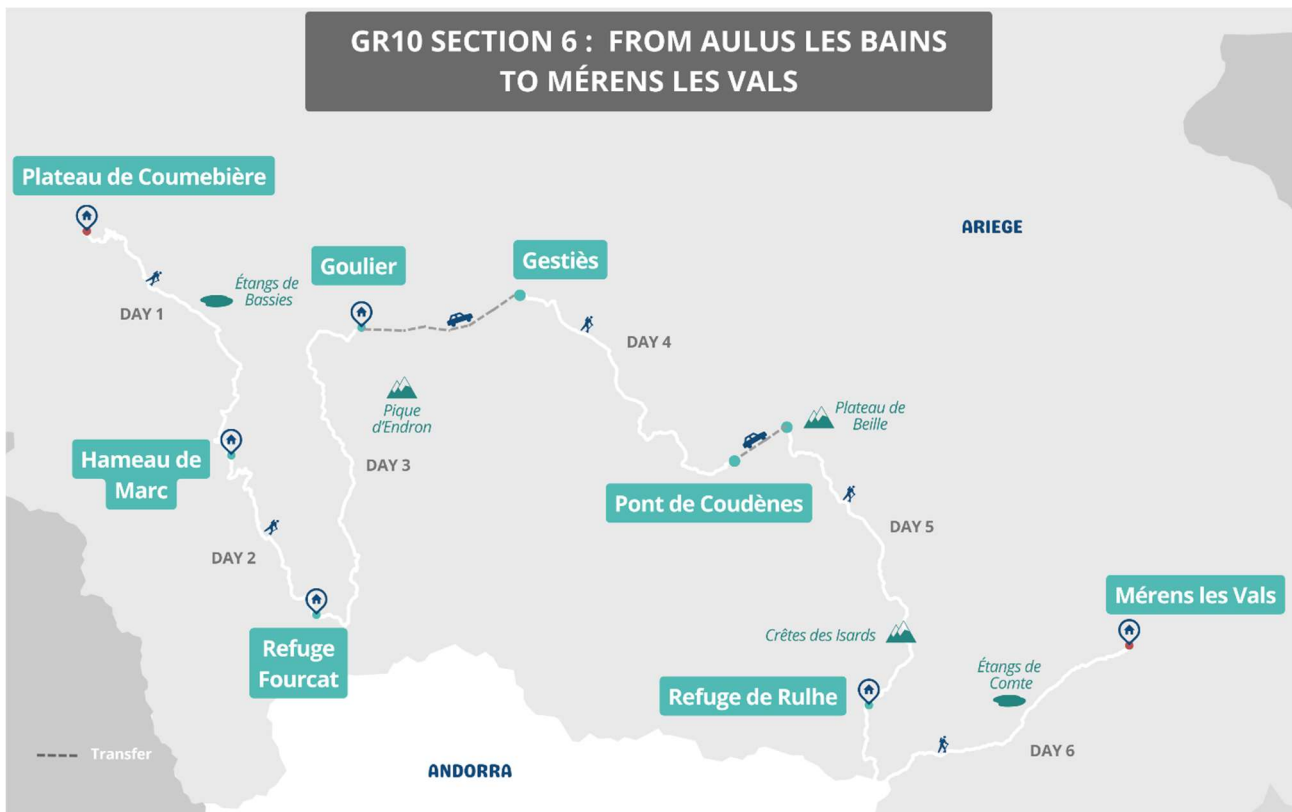
Highlights

- The GR10 as the main route
- Part of the itinerary runs through the Pyrenees Ariégeoises Natural Park
- Well-preserved mountain hamlets
- Numerous lakes along the route
- The wild beauty of Haute Ariège
- The high mountain site of the Fourcat lakes and its refuge
- The lake area of Bassiès lakes
- The wild Aston massif and its lakes
- A diverse itinerary featuring ridges, forests, lakes, high mountains, verdant valleys, and summer pastures



The 6th stage of the Pyrenees Crossing, with the famous GR10 as its guiding thread, leaves the Couserans region for Haute-Ariège and its deep, wild valleys that give this part of the Pyrenees its unique charm. In the heart of the Pyrénées Ariégeoises Natural Park, the route first reaches the Vicdessos Valley via the stunning lake area of the Bassies ponds. Then, following trails with a distinct mountain character, you will arrive at the Fourcat refuge, the highest staffed refuge in Ariège, set in a breathtaking high-mountain landscape surrounded by lakes.

The route then descends in altitude, passing through forested areas dominated by high pastoral plateaus such as the Pla de Montcamp and the Beille plateau, which offer magnificent panoramic views of the Ariège mountains. You will once again experience a beautiful mountain atmosphere as you reach the welcoming Rulhe refuge via the elegant Isards ridge, at the heart of the wild Aston massif. Finally, after a brief incursion into Andorra and the discovery of numerous stunning lakes, you will descend to Mérens-les-Vals, at the gateway to the Pyrénées-Orientales.



• PROGRAM

Day 1: From the Coumebière Plateau to the Marc Hamlet



Meet your guide in the morning at 8:00 AM in Saint Giron (or Aulus-les-Bains if you stayed there the night before) for a transfer to the Coumebière parking lot, the starting point of the hike (45 minutes). From the Coumebière Plateau, you will quickly reach the Port de Saleix (1794m), where you can enjoy views of the Auzat and Vicdessos valleys. Higher up, the Port de Bassies will lead you to the beautiful lake district of the Bassies Refuge and its ponds. After passing along these ponds, you will reach the lower part of the high Vicdessos valley at Marc, a traditional hamlet of the Ariège Pyrenees, at the foot of Montcalm, the last peak over 3000m

heading towards the Mediterranean.

- **Distance: 16 km, duration 6 hours, ascent: +650m, descent: -1050m.**

Day 2: From the Marc Hamlet to the Fourcat Refuge



A typical Ariège stage: wild, rugged, and mountainous! After a calm start in the forest, the route climbs steeply to the magnificent Picot ponds, nestled in a stark rocky cirque. From there, you will cross the Malcaras ridges in a mineral landscape filled with boulders. At the top, the view is spectacular, overlooking the Montcalm massif, the Bassies ridges, and the Fourcat ponds. The Fourcat Refuge, the highest in Ariège, is situated among these ponds, in the heart of an exceptional and unmissable site

- **Distance: 11 km, duration: 6h45, ascent: +1650m, descent: -250m.**

Day 3: From the Fourcat Refuge to Goulïer



After yesterday's ascent, today's stage involves descending into the valley. You will first enjoy the early morning light over the beautiful Fourcat ponds before beginning the descent to the large Izourt pond, set in a lovely green valley. In 1939, this area was the site of a major disaster that claimed the lives of 31 people, including 29 Italian workers during the construction of the dam. A balcony trail

overlooking the lake and valley will then take you to the village of Goulïer.

- **Distance: 16 km, duration 5h45, ascent: +200m, descent: -1500m.**

Day 4: From Gestières to the Pont de Coudènes



Transfer from Goulier to Gestières to start the hike (20 minutes). From Gestières, after a forest ascent, you will reach the panoramic ridge of La Bède, which leads to the summit of Pla de Montcamp, a wonderful viewpoint in the form of a large plateau at high altitude with a 360° view of the Ariège mountains. You will then cross the vast Pla du Four, ideal for grazing animals as evidenced by the sheepfolds of Courtal Marti and Balledreyte. You will then cross the Sirmont pass before descending to the Pont de Coudènes. Transfer from Pont de Coudènes to the Beille Plateau (50 minutes).

- **Distance: 13.5 km, duration: 6h45, ascent: +1350m, descent: -1250m.**

Day 5: From Beille Plateau to the Rulhe Refuge



Today, a beautiful ridge stage with open views all along the route. Starting from the Beille Plateau, famous for its Nordic ski resort and Tour de France passage, you will first cross large natural spaces used by cross-country skiers in winter. Then, you will reach the Col des Finestres and the Col de Didorte, leading to the Isards Ridge. This ridge will take you to the Rulhe Refuge via the Col de Terre Nègre, offering magnificent views of the wild Aston massif.

- **Distance: 14 km, duration: 5h15, ascent: +800m, descent: -400m.**

Day 6: From the Rulhe Refuge to Mérens



Many lakes are on the agenda for today's stage. From the Rulhe Refuge, you will first discover the beautiful Estagnol and Joclar ponds. Higher up, you will cross the Col de Juclar and make a short foray into Andorra above the Estany Primer. Before returning to the French side via the Col de l'Albe, with a grand view of the many lakes and surrounding peaks. Then, the long descent to Mérens will pass quickly with visits to the Albe, Couart, and Comte ponds.

- **Distance: 16 km, duration: 6h15, ascent: +500m, descent: -1600m.**

Day 7: End of stay in Mérens-les-Vals

End of the stay at your accommodation after breakfast.

The programs have been created based on the latest known information at the time of writing: unforeseen circumstances can arise, and situations beyond our control may alter the schedule. On-site, our guides are the best judges and may need to modify the itinerary depending on the weather or the safety of the group.

• MEETING POINT AND END OF THE TRIP

Meeting Point:

On Day 1 at 8:00 AM in Saint-Girons with your guide: Briefing about the trip, distribution of your picnic for the day, and transfer to the Coumebière plateau, the starting point of the hike. The guide will contact you a few days before the trip to confirm the exact meeting location.

End of the Trip:

On Day 7 at your accommodation in Mérens-les-Vals after breakfast.

• DATES AND PRICES

Number of Participants

Group of 4 to 11 people.

Departure

Guaranteed departure with a minimum of 4 participants.

From Sunday, 20/07/2025 to Saturday, 26/07/2025

From Sunday, 10/08/2025 to Saturday, 16/08/2025

Price: €895 per person

Extras:

- Return transfer from Mérens-les-Vals to Saint-Girons: €85 per person
- Additional night in Saint-Girons and/or Mérens-les-Vals: Price upon request

Price Includes:

- Full-board accommodation from the picnic on Day 1 to breakfast on Day 7
- Luggage transport between accommodations (except for two nights in mountain refuges on Days 2 and 5)
- Transfers mentioned in the program
- Guidance by a certified mountain leader (BE AMM) specialized in the region

Price Does Not Include:

- Insurance
- Transfers not included in the program
- Visits and entrance fees
- €15 booking fee
- Beverages

• TECHNICAL INFORMATION

Terrain

Hiking on well-maintained trails; the terrain is varied but often rocky.

Level 4

For experienced hikers in good physical condition, with prior mountain trekking experience. Expect hikes of 7 to 8 hours per day on average, with elevation gains of 1,000 to 1,300 meters, on accessible trails but also occasionally on rugged terrain (rockslides, scree) and sometimes unmarked paths.

Note: The indicated hiking times are estimates based on actual walking duration and do not include break times. Depending on weather conditions, the hiking pace may vary, ranging from +300m to +500m of ascent per hour.

Guiding

The trek is led by a certified mountain guide (BE AMM) specialized in the region.

Luggage

During the hike, you will only carry your personal items for the day, including your picnic and a sufficient water supply. Exception: On nights spent in mountain refuges (Days 2 & 5), you will need to carry your overnight essentials (sleeping liner, change of clothes, toiletries).

A follow-up bag should be easily transportable (see our equipment recommendations).

• ACCOMMODATION/FOOD

Accommodation

Full board (overnight stay + dinner + breakfast + picnic)

- 3 nights in a gîte d'étape in shared dormitory (Days 1, 3, and 6)
- 2 nights in a mountain refuge in shared dormitory (Days 2 and 5)
- 1 night in a shared yurt/tipi with mattresses on the floor (Day 4)

Private room option: Rooms for 2 to 3 people available.

Meals

- Continental breakfast (tea, coffee, milk, bread, butter, jam)
- Dinner typically featuring local specialties, including a starter, main course, and dessert
- Picnic lunches included
- Drinks not included

• PRACTICAL INFORMATION

How to reach Saint Girons:

- By plane: Toulouse-Blagnac Airport
- By train and bus: TER trains from major cities heading to Bousens (<https://www.oui.sncf>), then a bus from Bousens to Saint Girons.
- By car: From Toulouse, 128 km, highway to Saint-Gaudens; in Saint-Martory, take the direction to Saint Girons. From Lyon, Marseille, Montpellier, head to Carcassonne, then follow the direction to Foix/Mirepoix; from Foix, head to Saint Girons.

Vehicle parking:

Parking at the Saint Girons bus station.

How to leave Mérens les Vals:

TER trains heading to Toulouse (SNCF line La Tour de Carol – Toulouse), with a stop at Foix.

How to reach Saint Girons from Mérens les Vals:

TER trains from Mérens to Foix (SNCF line La Tour de Carol – Toulouse). Bus from Foix to Saint Girons.

Option to book a return shuttle to Saint Girons: 85€/person

•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.