

Technical sheet | Self-guided hike | Level 2/5   | 5 days of hike

Cathar Country and its major sites : from Carcassonne to Foix

Your hike :

- Self-guided hike, without a guide
- Walk with your family, your friends or as a couple
- 3 nights in a hotel, 2 nights in a guesthouse and 1 night in a hikers lodge in a room
- A warm and sunny climate, suitable for hiking almost all year long
- Access to your main luggage every evening
- 7 days / 6 nights

Highlights :

- Hiking in the heart of Cathar country, between castles, vineyards and breathtaking gorges
- Discover the main sites and castles of the Cathar country
- Hiking through two very distinct areas, between Aude and Ariège
- Discovering Carcassonne and Foix
- Crossing the stunning Galamus and St Jaumes



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. 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, this 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.

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•PROGRAM

Day 1 : Beginning of the holiday in Carcassonne

Beginning of your holiday in Carcassonne, check-in at your accommodation.

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 : 10km, duration : around 3h, ascent : +200m, descent : -450m.

Day 3 : From Duilhac sous Peyrepertuse to Cubières sur Cinoble

Picturesque itinerary with the visit of 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 defense of the « five Carcassonne sons ». You will then cross the Galamus 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. During the hike, you will also have a stop to visit the Galamus Hermitage: this is a humble house and a sanctuary set in a cave, surrounded by box trees and evergreen oaks – an exceptional natural site.

- Distance : 16km, duration : around 5h30, altitude gain : +700m, descent : -700m.
- Distance : 19km, duration : around 6h30, altitude gain : +850m, descent : -750m (with round trip to Peyrepertuse castle).

Day 4 : From Caudies de Fenouillèdes to Puilaurens Castle

In the morning, transfer from Cubières to Caudies de Fenouillèdes. You will then hike towards the superb Puilaurens castle, perched on a rocky spur at 697m of altitude, in the heart of a coniferous forest. Before reaching it, you will walk through the St Jaumes and Aigues Bonnes gorges. From the bottom of the gorge, the path carved in the rock leads to the Saint Pierre and Castel Sabarda castles. Transfer to your accommodation in Quillan at the end of the day.

- Distance : 14,5km, duration : around 5h, ascent : +650m ; descent : -550m

Day 5 : From Quillan to Puivert

Starting from Quillan, you will discover the transition from the Mediterranean influence to the Pyrenean influence. From small valleys to hills, the impressive Puivert fortress will appear to you – a 12th century feudal castle and a former meeting place for the most famous troubadours. The village of Puivert is also very interesting, with its remnants from the past and its Quercorb Museum that thoroughly reports and evokes the life in the Quercorb region at the end of the last century.

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

Day 6 : From Montségur to Foix

In the morning, transfer from Puivert to Montségur. A 1-hour visit of the Montségur castle that 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. After the visit of the castle, transfer from Montségur to Roquefixade and hike until Foix through a beautiful panoramic itinerary.

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

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

Your trip ends in Foix. Possibility to visit the old town center and its narrow streets filled with History, and the castle perched on its rock. Its has been greatly revamped after a 2-year-long work!

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.

• DATES AND PRICES

Departures

Every day, from the beginning of April to the end of October (depending on availabilities).

Booking from 2 people (solo travelers : please contact us).

Price : From 01/04/2024 to 30/10/2024

Price per person for a group of 2 persons	895€
Price per person for a group of 3 persons	790€
Price per person for a group of 4 persons	735€
Price per person for a group of 5 persons	700€
Price per person for a group of 6 persons	675€

Extras :

- Single room extra : 175€/pers
- Extra 4 picnics: 50€/pers
- Transfer back from Foix to Carcassonne on a week day: 215€/transfer
- Transfer back from Foix to Carcassonne on a Sunday or Public Holiday: 265€/transfer
- Extra night in Carcassonne Bed & Breakfast double room : 55€/pers
- Extra night in Carcassonne Bed & Breakfast single room : 90€/pers
- Extra night in Foix Bed & Breakfast double room : 60€/pers
- Extra night in Foix Bed & Breakfast single room : 80€/pers

The price includes:

- Half-board accommodation except on days 1 and 6 in bed & breakfast
- Luggage transfers
- Transfers on Day 2, 4 and 6
- 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:

- Travel insurance
- Dinners on Day 1 and Day 6
- Visits and entrance tickets to the castles
- Drinks and picnics
- Booking fees : 15€

• 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
Tél : 0033 5 34 14 51 50
gaetan@respyrenees.com

• 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 and we organize your transfers mentioned in the program; 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 your stay :

Day 2 : At 12:30, transfer from your accommodation in Carcassonne to the Quéribus castle.

Day 4 : At 8:30, short transfer from Cubières to Caudies de Fenouillèdes where the hike starts.

Day 4 : At 16:30, transfer from Puilaurens to your accommodation in Quillan.

Day 6 : At 8:00, transfer from your accommodation in Puivert to Montsegur, then from Montsegur to Roquefixade at the start of the 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 hike, without a 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 Day 1 and Day 6 (night and breakfast)

3 nights in hotels in room on Days 1, 4 and 6

2 nights in a guesthouse in room on Day 2 and 3

1 night in gite in room on Day 5

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. For dinners on Day 1 and Day 6, restaurants on spot.

- 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 are not included

• PRACTICAL INFORMATION

Start : On Day 1 at your accommodation in Carcassonne (11), depending on your arrival time.

End : On Day 7 in Foix (09), after your breakfast.

How to get to Carcassonne :

- By train :

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

- 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.

- By plane :

Carcassonne Airport

Toulouse-Blagnac Airport

CAR PARK :

Non guarded and free car park next to collège le Bastion, 24 Boulevard de Varsovie, 11000 Carcassonne.

How to leave from Foix :

Many trains from Foix to Toulouse. Connections to many cities in France from Toulouse (including Carcassonne, if you left your car there).

• 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 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.