

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

Guided GR10, Part 6 : 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 accomodation, 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 Aulus les Bains and Mérens**
- **Duration: 7 days / 6 nights**

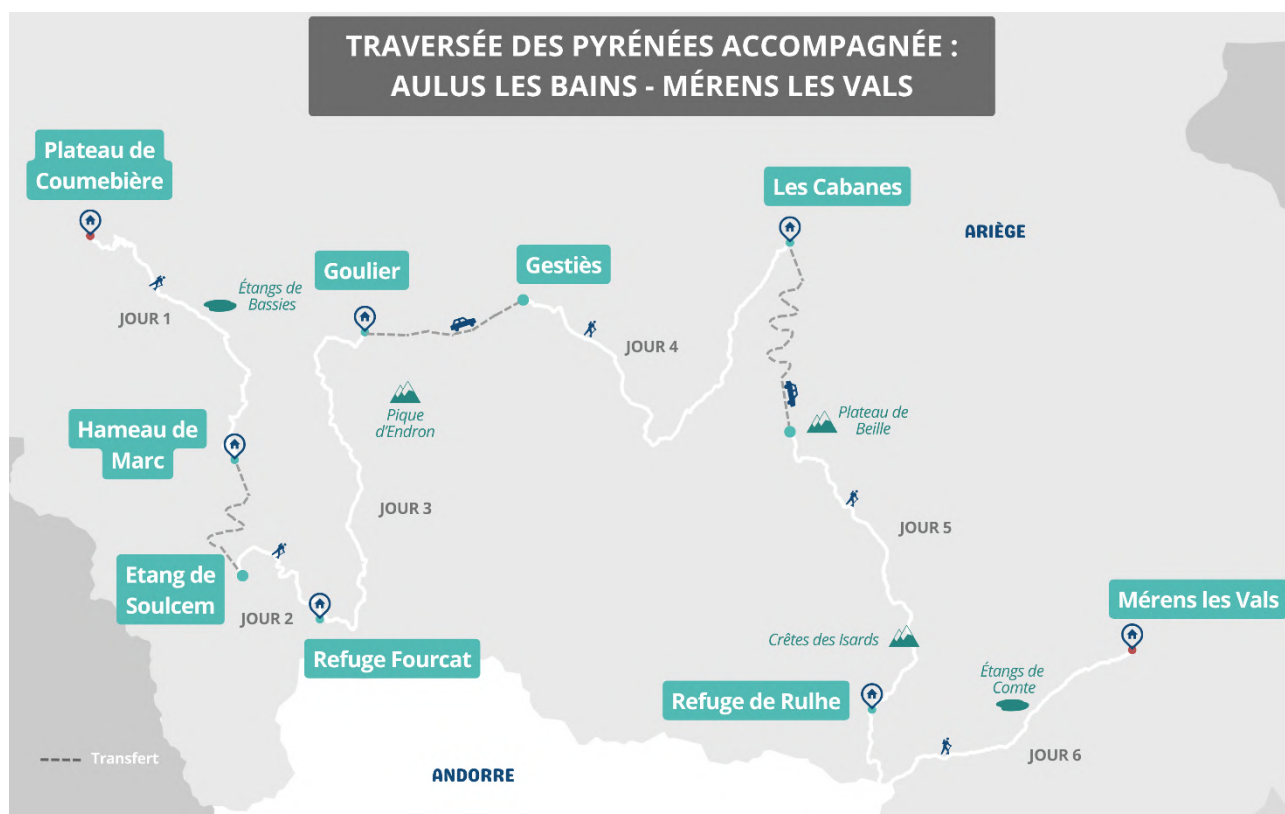
Highlights

- 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 8:15 AM in Aulus les Bains for a transfer to the Coumebière parking lot, the starting point of the hike (15 min). 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: +650 m, descent: -1050 m.

Day 2: From Soulcem Pond to the Fourcat Refuge



Transfer from Marc to Soulcem (15 min). A typically Ariège-style stage: wild, rugged, and mountainous! Indeed, the route gains altitude and, via a steep climb, reaches the magnificent Picot ponds, nestled in a stark rocky cirque. From there, you still have to cross the Malcaras ridges through a mineral landscape cluttered with boulders. Up there, the view is stunning over the Montcalm massif, the Bassies ridges, and the Fourcat ponds. The Fourcat Refuge, the highest in Ariège, sits among these ponds, in the heart of an exceptional and unmissable site.

- Distance: 7 km, duration: approximately 5h45, ascent: +1200 m, descent: -300 m.

Day 3: From the Fourcat Refuge to Goulrier



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 Goulrier.

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

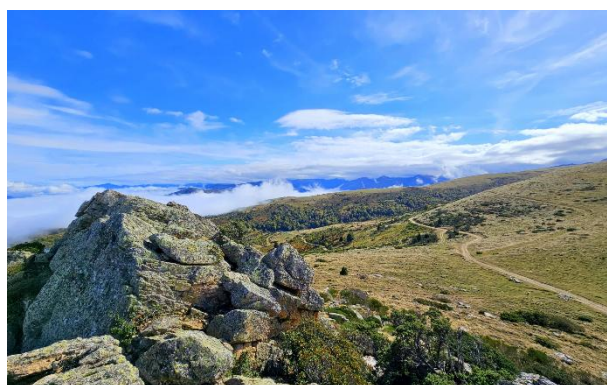
Day 4: From Gestières to Les Cabannes



Transfer from Goulier to Gestières at the start of the hike (20 min). From Gestières, after an initial forest climb, you will reach the panoramic Bède ridge, leading to the summit of Pla de Montcamp, a wonderful viewpoint shaped like a vast high-altitude plateau with 360° views over the Ariège mountains. From there, a beautiful crossing on the ridge, to reach Larcac. Afterward, the trail descends toward the Ariège valley and the village of Les Cabannes.

- **Distance: 18 km, duration: approximately 7h, ascent: +980 m, descent: -1350 m.**

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: +800 m, descent: -400 m.**

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 Jocular 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: +500 m, descent: -1600 m.**

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 8:15 AM in Aulus les Bains 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 25/07/2027 to Saturday 31/07/2027

From Sunday 08/08/2027 to Saturday 14/08/2027

From Sunday 29/08/2027 to Saturday 04/09/2027

From Sunday 19/09/2027 to Saturday 25/09/2027

Price: €965 per person

Extras:

- Return transfer from Mérens-les-Vals to Aulus les Bains: €90 per person
- Additional night in Aulus les Bains 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).

Your Luggage Service

Your luggage must be dropped off at the reception of your accommodation no later than 9:00 AM. It will be delivered to your next accommodation before 5:00 PM. Only one piece of luggage per person will be accepted. For logistical reasons, we ask that you limit the weight of your luggage to a maximum of 15 kg and avoid hard-shell suitcases: our logistics team and transport partners handle dozens of bags per day, often on staircases. The transporter may charge an additional fee at the end of the hike if the luggage is too heavy or too numerous.

• ACCOMMODATION/FOOD

Accommodation

Full Board (overnight stay + dinner + breakfast + packed lunch)

- 3 nights in a gîte d'étape with shared dormitories on days 1, 3, 4, and 6
- 2 nights in a mountain refuge with shared dormitories on days 2 and 5

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 Aulus les Bains by public transport:

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

Bus from Boussens to Aulus les Bains (Ariège - Ligne 452 - Navette touristique thermale - Boussens > St Giron > Seix > Aulus) : <https://www.lio-occitanie.fr/horaires-et-plans/>

How to leave Mérens les Vals by public transport:

From Mérens les Vals, train to main towns (with connections) : <https://www.sncf-connect.com/en-en/>

How to reach Aulus les Bains from Mérens les Vals by public transport:

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

Bus from Foix to Saint Giron (Ariège - Ligne 454 - Foix > St Giron) : <https://www.lio-occitanie.fr/horaires-et-plans/>

Bus from Saint Giron to Aulus les Bains (Ariège - Ligne 457 - Aulus > Massat > St Giron > St Lizier OR Ligne 452 - Navette touristique thermale - Boussens > St Giron > Seix > Aulus) : <https://www.lio-occitanie.fr/horaires-et-plans/>

Nearest airport :

Toulouse-Blagnac airport

Parking lot in Aulus les Bains :

Parking lot in the village, along the road at the entrance (free and unguarded/supervised)

Mérens les Vals parking lot:

Parking lot in the village, at the train station or at the Auberge du Nabre (free and unguarded/supervised)

If you are leaving your vehicle for the duration of your stay, please check with the tourist office to find out if there are any events (festivals, markets, etc.) at your parking location.

We recommend to arrive by train to avoid returns to departure to recover your car, because itineraries can be very long and badly served and very expensive if you take a taxi. If you insist to come with your car, we recommend you to leave your car on the arrival point the first day and to do the run to the departure point because the first day you have plenty of time to do the run and you will not be tired by a week walking.

Option to book a return shuttle to Aulus les Bains : 90€/person

•WHAT TO BRING AND PACK

Your Luggage Service

Your luggage must be dropped off at the reception of your accommodation no later than 9:00 AM. It will be delivered to your next accommodation before 5:00 PM. Only one piece of luggage per person will be accepted. For logistical reasons, we ask that you limit the weight of your luggage to a maximum of 15 kg and avoid hard-shell suitcases: our logistics team and transport partners handle dozens of bags per day, often on staircases. The transporter may charge an additional fee at the end of the hike if the luggage is too heavy or too numerous.

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.