

ITINERARY

02

THE GREAT TRAVERSE OF THE PYRENEES

7 DAYS / 7 NIGHTS

1 NIGHT IN SPAIN

463 km

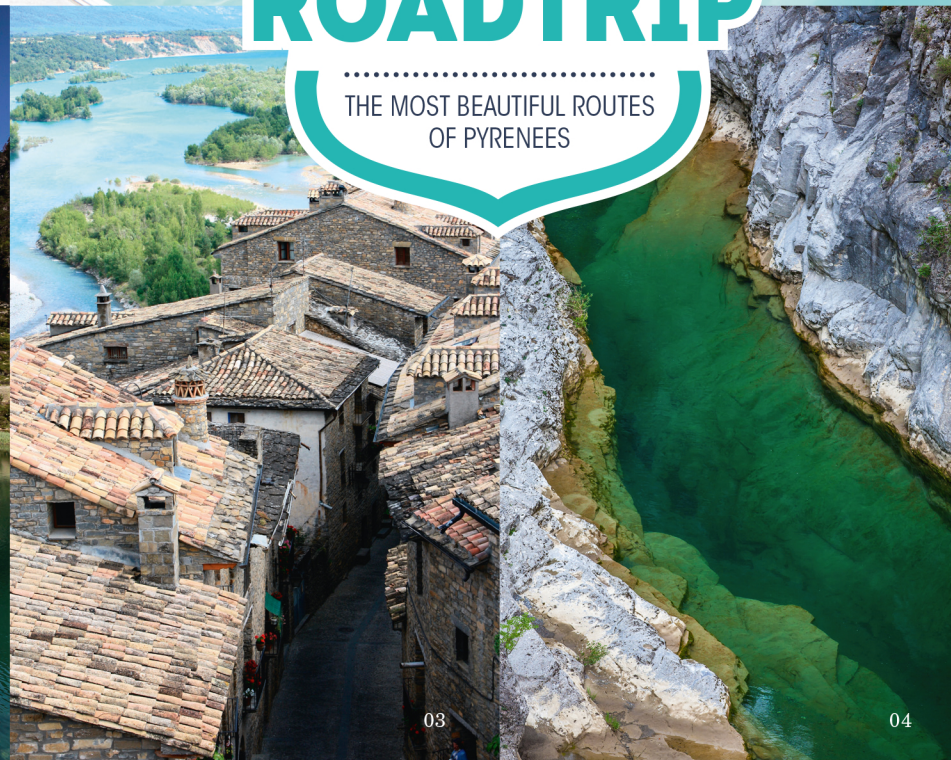
Here is an itinerary which, from east to west, follows the highest roads in the range - taking in the classic Tour de France 'cols', with a crossing into Spain through the very heart of these mountains.

- 01. Mountain tarns in the Neouvielle National Nature Reserve
- 02. Balnea, the premier spa centre in the French Pyrenees, on the shores of the Genos Loudenvielle lake
- 03. Aerial view of the village of Ainsa with its lake below
- 04. The Bellos river flowing through the Añisclo canyon in the Ordesa / Monte Perdido National Park



PYRENEES ROADTRIP

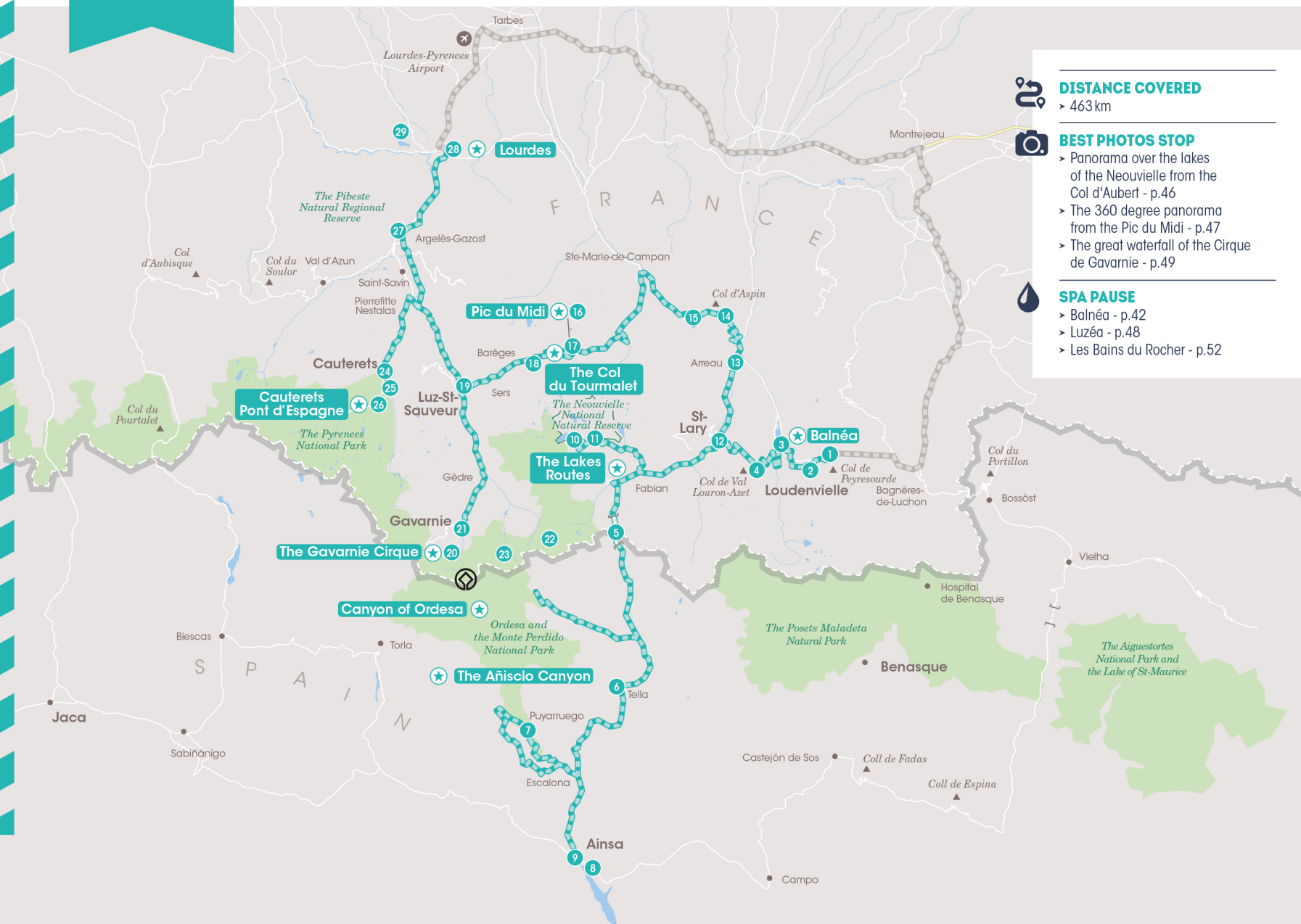
THE MOST BEAUTIFUL ROUTES OF PYRENEES



THE GREAT TRAVERSE OF THE PYRENEES

7 DAYS / 7 NIGHTS

- > **DAY 1:** LOUDENVIELLE/BALNÉA > **DAY 2:** LOUDENVIELLE/AINSA
- > **DAY 3:** AINSA/THE MOUNTAIN LAKES ROUTE/SAINT-LARY
- > **DAY 4:** SAINT-LARY/PIC DU MIDI/LUZ-SAINT-SAUVEUR > **DAY 5:** LUZ-SAINT-SAUVEUR/GAVARNIE
- > **DAY 6:** GAVARNIE/CAUTERETS-PONT D'ESPAGNE
- > **DAY 7:** CAUTERETS/SAINT-SAVIN/LOURDES > **DEPARTURE**



DISTANCE COVERED

> 463 km



BEST PHOTOS STOP

- > Panorama over the lakes of the Neouvielle from the Col d'Aubert - p.46
- > The 360 degree panorama from the Pic du Midi - p.47
- > The great waterfall of the Cirque de Gavarnie - p.49



SPA PAUSE

- > Balnéa - p.42
- > Luzéa - p.48
- > Les Bains du Rocher - p.52

THE GREAT TRAVERSE OF THE PYRENEES

LOUDÈNVIELLE/ BALNÉA

DAY 1

64 km/1 h 24

> Exit the A64 heading towards Luchon (40km/46mins). > Cross through Luchon, heading towards the Col de Peyresourde (14km/22mins). > After crossing the mountain pass turn right after Estarvielle, head towards Loudenvielle (10km/16mins).

After passing through Luchon, you will arrive over the **Col de Peyresourde** mountain pass. Take the time to stop at the top to admire the view. Once going back down through the **Louron valley**, head towards the **Génos-Loudenvielle lake**. The Pyrenees here welcome you with a bath in the naturally warm and comforting spa waters, it is in the open air with a view towards a magnificent barrier of mountain tops, some more than 3000 metres high.

▲ The Col de Peyresourde 1

The pass is wide and the view magnificent. Do stop at the famous wooden cafe for a crepe, just 50 cents each, 12 for €4.50, go for it! Whilst the patron is making the crepes he will show you his collection of Chinese puzzles. But we had better get going... as you continue up the pass there are many interesting villages along the way, each has its own treasures - Roman chapels, precious treasures, superb frescos to thank God for the rewarding exchange of goods, mainly leather and wool with Spain, taking place after the discovery of the New World.


The Mont village and its Roman chapel, listed Historical Monument 2

On the way down from the mountain pass, Mont is a superb village of just 20 inhabitants that has exceptional views. Its church is unique, with its exterior fresco that represents scenes of the Last Judgment,

preserved since the 13th century. The interior is also decorated with fantastic paintings. For 2 euros a soundtrack will give you a comprehensive explanation.

The Genos Loudenvielle lake 3

As you are still coming down from the col and at the village of Estarvielle, head for the bottom of the valley and the Génos-Loudenvielle lake. There are many lovely walks along the water's edge.

 There is an circuit of an hour maximum and on the flat. But take the time to climb to the towers of Genos and Loudenvielle to enjoy the view. A local legend says that an underground passage connects them both.


 Yellow waymarkings. ☀ 1 hour.

★ BALNÉA 3

The premier spa centre in the French Pyrenees

It is finally time to slip into the arming waters of the Balnéa spa. The view from the waters is of 3000m peaks dressed like a wall as if to protect the quiet of the valley. Admire this view from the soothing warm waters of the outdoor lagoons, remembering that just a few hours ago you were up amongst these summits.

2 hours pass. Massages by reservation.

 On the shore of the Genos Loudenvielle lake.
www.balnea.fr

🌙 Evening and night in Loudenvielle 3

A LOVELY DIVERSION

> Chez Roger, at Loudenvielle

A real institution in this village! It has been open continuously since 1930, initially run by Lulu and Roger, it was then taken over by their daughter Josette. Claire, their grand daughter, and Laura as well as Flavie, great-grand daughters, can also be seen around. Tourists and locals all find something to love in this bistrot, where everyone comes together to play Belote and sing the songs of the Pyrenees.

📍 11 chemin de Clarabide - 65510 Loudenvielle

RECOMMENDED RESTAURANTS

> La Table de Saoussas at Loudenvielle

This friendly and welcoming restaurant specialises in cooking using local produce. There is also the opportunity to visit the watermill on the other side of the road, it has a beautiful pastoral setting.

📍 Chemin Saoussas - 65510 Loudenvielle
☎ +335 62 99 96 40

> Chez Lily at Germ

A new establishment, atypical and full of surprising flavours. This bistrot has also an artistic and cultural vocation and is set up in Lily's ancient sheep fold. Chez Lily offers tapas and market cuisine using local produce.

📍 Centre de Montagne, Le Village - 65240 Germ
☎ +335 62 39 23 03



Balnea spa center.

LOUDENVIELLE/ AINSA

DAY 2

Loudenvielle > Escalona (the Añisclo canyon): 76 km/1 h 31

121 km/2h 42

> Leave Loudenvielle towards Genos (2km/3 mins). > Once in Genos, follow the signs to the Col de Val Louron – Azet, on the left, until Sailhan (16km/21 mins). > Turn left towards Spain > Pass through the Bielsa-Aragouet tunnel (22 km/24 mins). > Before following the A138 all the way to Escalona (31 km/38 mins).

Añisclo canyon loop: 34 km/59 mins

> Directly after Escalona, turn left towards the Añisclo canyon. During the summer, this is a one-way road that loops back around. Follow the signs to Buerba, then Puyarruego and Escalona. Return then to the route of the main itinerary.

Escalona > Ainsa: 10 km/9 mins

> Leave Escalona southwards towards Ainsa.

Before you reach the valley bottom you will see the morning sun shining on the higher peaks. It is time to get going! From **Génos**, follow the hairpin bends to the Col de **Val Louron-Azet**. It might be difficult to keep the your eyes on the road with this magnificent view of all the mountain peaks along the border with Spain. Our objective: get to the other side side of the mountains, into **Spanish Aragon**.

▲ The Col de Val Louron mountain pass 4

At the top the road passes through vast pastures, a favourite take-off point for paragliders and hanggliders. On the way back down from the mountain pass, around Sailhan, after having passed the original marble fountain adorned with four water troughs, it is time to cross into Spain!

▶ Crossing into Spain 5

Just 3 kilometres of tunnel separates you from Spain. On the other side: Spanish Aragon. Here, everything is ochre and bathed in sunlight. Head towards Ainsa, the capital of Sobrarbe; it is built on a high promontory around the ancient castle. Allow yourself to time to explore!

▶ Tella 6

5 km after Lafortunada, follow the road bearing right. It leads to the village of Tella, an ancient watchpoint over the valley, with one of the best panoramas in the Pyrenees: to the west, Ordesa and the Monte Perdido, to the east, the Peña Montanesa and the Cinca valley.

★ THE AÑISCLO GRAND CANYON 7

World Heritage Site

Head back towards Ainsa, just before going through Escalona, and follow the road on the right that goes back up through the Añisclo Canyon, towards Fanlo. The road goes deep into the canyon. Do not let the narrow road worry you, as it is one way only. After about 10km, a parking spot situated on a hairpin bend demarcates a trailhead, which with only 30 minutes

walking leads to the Ermita de San Urbez (one of the most emblematic Saints of High Aragon), nestled in the cliffs.

Then back on the road until the next junction; head left towards Buerba. Stop for a moment at the mountain pass, to take in the fantastic view of the Añisclo canyon fault and Monte Perdido. Back to the road, and finish the loop at Puyarruego, where you can bathe in the natural river pools. Return then to the main itinerary at Escalona.

▶ The Ainsa lake 8

When you arrive in Ainsa do not go straight to the higher town. We recommend that you see the magnificent lake with its turquoise waters, it is a great spot for a swim. A single bell tower pokes out from the lake, the last remnants of a flooded village. A surprising sight.

▶ The Plaza Mayor in Ainsa 9

You can relive the times of the Reconquistadors in the Plaza Mayor in Ainsa, the capital of the kingdom of Sobrarbe! Situated between the mountains and the plains it was here that Muslims and Christians fought. The high town of Ainsa is situated on a natural promontory and is surrounded by walls, its bell towers resembles a minaret, testimony to its past. The Plaza is monumental and entirely cobbled, the dwellings are connected by arcades. During the summer the balconies of the ochre facades are decorated with hundreds of hanging flower baskets, a lovely place for a drink on the terrace of one of the many cafes.

📍 A large car-park is situated at the entry to the higher town.

🌙 Evening and night in Ainsa 9

🔗 MIX AND MATCH

Combine with «The Sierra de Guara». A one-day adventure exploring the Sierra, which has 70 canyons. p.109

RECOMMENDED RESTAURANTS

> Casa Angela at Puyarruego

A typical Spanish auberge within a traditional house, it is perched on a hillside with a superb terrace and a magnificent view over the Bellos river. The cooking is 100% home-made from Angela and served by her son Paco. Lovely people to meet in a super setting.

📍 Plaza Mayor s/n - 22363 Puyarruego
☎ +34 974 50 50 13

> La Carrasca Tapas Bar at Ainsa

At the corner of the old village square, this tapas bar immediately whets your appetite. The colourful and varied 'Pinxos', 'Raciones' and 'Tapas' displayed on the bar are a feast for the eyes. The cooking

is 100% local. You can eat on the pretty terrace or inside seated on wine barrels. Expect a cheerful welcome.

📍 Plaza Mayor, 18 - 22 330 Ainsa
☎ +34 974 500 021

> Callizo at Ainsa

Located in the Plaza Mayor of Ainsa this restaurant offers all the flavours of Aragon. Summer truffles, beef from the Broto valley. Only two tasting menus are available but what menus! Each dish is a work of art and promises an explosion of flavour created by the chef. It is a superb gastronomic experience.

📍 Plaza Mayor s/n. - 22330 Ainsa
☎ +34 974 500 385

AINSA/THE MOUNTAIN LAKES ROUTE/SAINT-LARY

DAY 3

86 km/1h 55

Ainsa > Orédon lake parking : 67 km/1 h 23

> Leave Ainsa heading north, towards France, until you get to the Bielsa-Aragnouet tunnel > Pass through the tunnel, and follow the D173 road towards Saint-Lary > Go through Aragnouet. > Once at Fabian, turn left towards the lakes.

Orédon lake parking > Saint-Lary: 19 km/32 mins

> Leave the parking of the Orédon lake, head to Fabian. > Once in Fabian, turn left towards Saint-Lary-Soulan.

After your short escapade in Aragon, we invite you to leave the Spanish Pyrenees, which are deprived of the ever present rushing waters of the French side. You will now enter one of the most beautiful areas of the French Pyrenees: **the Neouvielle National Nature Reserve and National Park**, with its 70 lakes. Before crossing the border, the **Pineta valley** is worth a detour. The day's itinerary ends at **Saint-Lary**, whose architecture is very reminiscent of the villages in Aragon.

It is like a real fjord and is surrounded by the cliffs of the Pic de Néouvielle. There are 40 k of galleries dug into the mountain which allow the waters to be used by the hydroelectric power plant in Pragnère in the neighbouring Gavarnie valley. It took 7 years (1946 to 1953) and over 6,000 workers to build this exceptional construction.

📍 On the road down from the tunnel, after traversing Aragnouet, just before the Fabian hamlet, follow the D929 to the left, towards Cap-De-Long.

★ THE LAKES ROUTE ①

The Neouvielle National Reserve

Make a U-turn at the Cap-de-Long dam. Take the first road on the left, towards Orédon. The highest road through the lakes

The Cap-de-Long dam ⑩

It is a monumental construction totalling over 100 metres in height, this dam is one of the largest water reservoirs of the Pyrenees.

of the Pyrénées starts here, it leads to the Orédon lake (1,849m), the Aumar lake (2,198m) and the Aubert lake (2,150). On the edge of the Pyrenean National Park, and in the heart of the Néouvielle Natural Reserve, this wonderland is an absolute must-see.

From June 1st to September 30th, in the aim of preserving these sites, the access to the Aumar and Aubert lakes is closed to vehicles between 9:30am and 6:30pm. You can leave your vehicle at the Orédon lake parking, and take a shuttle bus (one every 30 minutes) to reach the Aumar and Aubert lakes (it takes about 15 minutes). There is a commentary and a description of the sites given on the way. Note however that the vehicles can make their way down from the lakes throughout the day.



The lakes circuit

A wonderful walking circuit where the lakes follow one another in a magnificent setting of mountain pines, rhododendrons and granite outcrops.

From the Orédon lake parking (1,856m), take the path rising on the left of the road that follows the lake. This path passes through a pine forest before reaching the Aubert mountain pass (45 mins). Take the Laquettes path on the left, you will then pass through more woodland to reach the first small lake. The view then opens up with a magnificent view, as astounding as it is beautiful, where small lakes dot the landscape as drops of azure, surrounded by luxuriant grasslands and mountain pines. It is a small corner of paradise. The Laquette path then steepens towards the end, eventually reaching the Aubert lake (2,150m) and its surprising spit of land, almost an island. To continue on to the next lake, follow the large path towards the parking. And within minutes you are there! Another splendid setting. The Aumar lake (2198m, 1h30) is nestled in the middle of the sumptuous grasslands, and watched over by the great Vignemale. After this 1h30 walk, you can go back to the Orédon parking for the shuttle bus, but it is also possible to loop back around on foot: follow the path along the Aumar lake on the right until you reach its outfall, then cross the footbridge. Follow straight on through the Passades d'Aumar pine forest to the Estoudou mountain pass (2,260m). Just before the pass, turn right and descend into the forest, follow to the refuge and eventually back to the Orédon lake parking (3h45).

☉ Length: 3h45 round trip. Incline: 300 metres. Level: easy and family-friendly.

📍 Start and end-point: Orédon lake parking.



Col d'Aubert (Hourquette d'Aubert)

Follow the signposted Hourquette d'Aubert path, which skirts around the north eastern part of the Aubert lake. This 2,498m mountain pass offers a stunning panorama onto the lakes and their surrounding pine forests, a beautiful blend of verdant greens and turquoise blues. On the other side of the pass is another fantastic view, towards the Barèges valley.

☉ Length: 3h round trip. Ascent: 350 metres.

Level: medium. 📍 Start and end-point: Aubert lake (accessible by shuttle bus from the Orédon lake parking).



Evening and night in Saint-Lary



WORTH A DETOUR

> The Pineta valley

After leaving Ainsa, and on the road towards the tunnel, turn left just after Bielsa towards the secret valley of Pineta. Follow the river until you are stopped by the giant Monte Perdido, 3555 metres tall, the second highest mountain in the Pyrenees! This is the final stop: the Parador hotel provides a pleasant stop and is surrounded by grandiose scenery. On the other side of the massive wall of rock which is the frontier lies the momental Cirque de Gavarnie. You will get to look at this in just a few days...



RECOMMENDED RESTAURANTS

> Hotel d'Orédon chalet

Perfectly situated in the middle of the pine trees on the lakeside, with a pretty panoramic terrace.

📍 Orédon lake - 65170 Aragnouet
☎ +336 23 05 72 60

> La Mangeoire at Saint-Lary

The chef, Clément, carefully blends local flavours, gently bastes meats in their juices and artistically garnishes his dishes. Each plate brings together his creativity, warm heart and high expectations. A complete delight for the eyes and tastebuds.

📍 18 route de Soulan - 65170 Saint-Lary-Soulan
☎ +335 62 99 50 20

SAINT-LARY/PIC DU MIDI/ LUZ-SAINT-SAUVEUR

DAY 4

74 km/1h 37

Saint-Lary > Pic du Midi : 51 km/1 h 07

> Leave Saint-Lary and follow the RD929 towards Arreau (12 km/17 mins). > As you leave Arreau turn left on to the Col d'Aspin (16 km/22 mins). > Pass over and descend the Col and continue to Sainte-Marie-de-Campan (8 km/10 mins). > Turn left on to the Col du Tourmalet, continue to La Mongie (18 km/23 mins).


Pic du Midi > Luz-Saint-Sauveur : 23 km/30 mins

> Leave La Mongie, continue climbing the Col du Tourmalet. On the other side of the mountain pass (4 km/6 mins) descend to Luz-Saint-Sauveur (19 km/24 mins).

*Our adventure continues and today holds many surprises. From **Saint-Lary** follow the RD929 towards Arreau to reach the **Pic du Midi** by crossing the **Col d'Aspin**. After a thrilling cable-car ride you enjoy the greatest panorama in the Pyrenees from the top at nearly 3,000 metres. You then cross the famous **Col du Tourmalet**, scene of so many dramas of the Tour de France before spending the night in **Luz-Saint-Sauveur**, a town favoured by the Empress Eugénie.*


Arreau

Situated where the Neste d'Aure and Louron rivers meet, Arreau is a typical Pyrenean village which merits a halt for a cafe after admiring its famous market hall, the half-timbered houses, its castle and church.

 As soon as you leave Arreau turn left on to the Col d'Aspin. This road is regularly used by the Tour de France, it initially climbs gently then more abruptly after the village of Aspin Aure to the top at 1489m.

▲ The Col d'Aspin

It is wilder, less visited and lower than many of the neighbouring passes yet the Aspin offers a great itinerary with probably the widest panorama of all from the top. The summit is a protected site, with no buildings, just cows and horses grazing. There is a parking to pull in to to admire the view including the Pic du Midi, the Arbizon and the Aure valley. The gentle terrain at the top is perfect for a walk along the ridge.

 As you leave the parking there is a

panoramic walk at the Pla del Naou along the ridge to the south, it opens up wonderful views into the Aure and Campan valleys. To the north the footpaths lead to the Col de Beyrede and the Signal de Bassia.

The Payolle lake

The descent off the Aspin is through grasslands and pine forest. At the bottom are the ancient marble quarries of Payolle, whose marble was used at Versailles, Grand Central station and the Empire State building no less! A little further on is the Payolle lake surrounded by a pine forest, a lovely place for a stroll where you will most certainly come across a family of cows enjoying the lush grass in this famous grazing area.

MIX AND MATCH

Combine with «The Tour of Baronnie»
A one-day adventure exploring a secret world of hills and valleys. p. 105

PIC DU MIDI

The most beautiful view in the world

After leaving the Payolle lake head towards Sainte-Marie-de-Campan, in the centre of the village turn left on to the Col du Tourmalet and follow it to La Mongie Stop in La Mongie and climb aboard your starship, the cable-car that takes you to the summit of the Pic du Midi, the castle in the sky. In reality it is a working stellar observatory, scientists live up here to scrutinise the skies, study the sun and the galaxies. The Americans mapped the moon

from here before the first lunar landing.

☉ Allow at least 2 hours to fully enjoy your Pic du Midi visit. 📍 In La Mongie, on the road to the Col du Tourmalet. www.picdumidi.com

★ THE COL DU TOURMALET 17

A mythical summit

4km from the cable-car station is the famous Col du Tourmalet pass. At 2,115 m it is the highest road pass in the Pyrenees.

📷 Selfie with the Giant 17

On the top of the Tourmalet you will find a 3m high sculpture, Octave, named after the first rider to cross the Tourmalet in 1910 (Octave Lapize). It represents a rider climbing 'out of the saddle' and is one of the 9 elements of the 'Tour de France sculpture' at the A64 autoroute services between Tarbes and Pau. At the end of each autumn the Giant comes down from the Tourmalet to be taken back up in procession accompanied hundreds of cyclists each June.

The Laquette chairlift 18

The chairlift allows access to a lovely high plateau and the La Laquette cafe, there are many splendid walks and waymarked mountain bike descents. Bikes can be hired and can be taken on the chairlift.

📍 At Tournaboup parking, 3km from Bareges on the road to the Col du Tourmalet.

The Pont Napoléon in Luz-Saint-Sauveur 19

Coming back down from the Col du Tourmalet, you will reach Luz-Saint-Sauveur at the valley bottom, it is situated at the crossroads to most of the prestigious Pyrenean landmarks. This town's many assets are due to the many stays here of the Empress Eugénie, who started the fashion of spa towns. In 1860 on the orders of Napoléon III, who was on a spa cure himself in Luz-Saint-Sauveur with the Empress Eugénie, the Pont Napoléon bridge was constructed. Situated at the exit of the village in the direction of Gavarnie, this spectacular construction is composed of a single arch, 47 metres in diameter, 66 metres high. It provides a crossing point over the Gave river below, it also a favourite bungee jumping spot.

💧 The Luzéa spa centre in Luz-Saint-Sauveur 19

Here is another location immersed in the memories of Eugénie. The grey marble of the Napoleonian architecture is combined with contemporary furniture to provide relaxation and well-being in an intimate and charming setting. The neo-roman mosaics are an invitation to travel back in time. Follow in the footsteps of the Empress Eugénie, one can relax in the fantastic lounge where she used to take her massages.

2 hours pass. Massages available upon reservation. 📍 31 avenue de l'Impératrice Eugénie - 65120 Luz-Saint-Sauveur www.luzea.fr

🌙 Evening and night in Luz-Saint-Sauveur 19

11 RECOMMENDED RESTAURANTS

> *The Auberge des Trois Pics Chez Germaine at Payolle*

A typical mountain auberge, no frills, known for its meats cooked over a beech fire, its garbure and myrtille tart.

📍 Lake of Payolle - 65710 Campan.

☎ +335 62 91 81 10

> *Lunch at the Pic du Midi*

Marc Berger, the chef; "Cooking at altitude is a real challenge, water boils at 92C, the air dries out the food very quickly, the perception of flavour changes too at altitude, and we can only cook by electricity. In these very unusual conditions, my team daily rise to the challenge in our restaurant by offering a range of original dishes made from quality produce, the same goes for our fast-food outlet".

📍 Pic du Midi. (access from La Mongie)

> *L'auberge du Lienz Chez Louise*

One toque in the Gault-Millau guide: «Set in a pastoral environment of great beauty, with the Pic du Midi looking over. Local produce is the star here with Louise Corret. It is a favourite meeting place for all from far and wide, a convivial ambience to enjoy her famous garbure or a pig's foot.»


📍 On the Lienz forest road, 2.5km from Bareges. Head towards the Col du Tourmalet, and turn right before the Tournaboup parking.

☎ +335 62 92 67 17

A LOVELY DIVERSION

> *The Creperie at Saint-Justin (Sers)*

Beautifully positioned on a promontory with views over the whole Tourmalet valley and over Luz and the Ardiden massif this little creperie is really worth the visit. Sit on the terrace and enjoy the crepes, Jean-Louis and Guenaëlle, the owners have many stories to tell and great advice on places to visit to offer.

 Access from the footbridge in the centre of Bareges (40mins walk) or from the village of Sers, drive through the village and park after 500m, the path climbs for 700m to reach St-Justin.

LUZ-SAINT-SAUVEUR/ GAVARNIE

DAY 5

38 km/59 mins

Luz-Saint-Sauveur > Gavarnie: 19 km/30 mins

> Leave Luz-Saint-Sauveur heading south towards Gavarnie (19km/30mins).

Gavarnie > Cirque de Troumouse: 19 km/29 mins

> Leaving Gavarnie, follow the D921 to Gèdre. > Just before reaching the village, take the D922 on your right, towards the «Cirque de Troumouse», in the Héas valley.

*Today is the day for the big show! With a ticket to meet a world famous celebrity - the **Cirque de Gavarnie**. It will be a day full of emotion. The cirque is one of the great natural wonders, its immensity is staggering, everybody can only stare in admiration and feel humbled by its enormity and great beauty.*

THE CIRQUE DE GAVARNIE ²⁰

A World Heritage site

Firstly the village, lively and charming and then at the end of the street it appears... It is now that you will be spellbound and words inadequate. The master wordsmith Victor Hugo described it as "a coliseum of nature". With an easy 30 minute walk along the river bank and across the Courade plateau you will reach the orientation point for the Cirque. You can do this on foot, horseback or mule. Go on a bit further and you will reach the Hostellerie de Cirque. From here you can really appreciate the sheer size of the cliffs and admire the longest waterfall in France. But what about the other Cirques?

www.gavarnie.com

The Gavarnie cemetery ²¹

The little cemetery at Gavarnie, next to the church, houses the graves of many great Pyrenean explorers. Amongst them are Laurent and Hippolyte Passet, two brothers, and also their sons Henri and above all Célestin. He is the great hero of Pyrenean exploration and mountaineering. For over 30 years he made many first ascents culminating in his great triumph on the 7th August 1889 when he climbed the redoubtable Couloir de Gaube, a climb which was then not repeated for 44 years. He had to cut 1,300 steps into the ice to do it.

 Gavarnie - next to the church.

The Cirque de Troumouse ²²

Leave Gavarnie on the D921 towards Gèdre, just before the village turn right on to the D922 Direction Cirque de Troumouse and the Héas valley. The road leads directly into the Cirque de Troumouse. Once up and inside the Cirque you will not believe your eyes! Troumouse is gigantic, a Goliath, even bigger than Gavarnie. The famous 18th century explorer Ramond de Carbonnières estimated it could hold 10 million people! Another curiosity is the rolling grasslands within the Cirque which

are a favourite playground for marmots. So after the famous Gavarnie and the gigantic Troumouse it is time to visit the third Cirque, the solitary Estaubé.

📍 On leaving Gavarnie follow the D921 towards Gedre. Just before the village turn right onto the D922 towards Cirque de Troumouse.

The Cirque d'Estaubé 23

As you descend from Troumouse and after passing through Héas, turn left towards the Lac des Gloriettes. There is parking at the lake. It is a superb easy 2 hour walk to reach the Cirque, there is also a waymarked circuit around the lake, allow 1h30. The area is famous for its superb variety of wild flowers.

The Gloriettes lake at the bottom of the valley leading to the Cirque is accessible by car.

📍 Descend from Troumouse, pass Héas, then turn left towards the Lac des Gloriettes.

🌙 Evening and night in Gavarnie 21

📍 RECOMMENDED RESTAURANTS

➤ **Auberge de la Munia at Héas**
A fabulous setting close to the Chapelle Notre-Dame d'Héas. On the menu - local garbure Bigourdan, mutton casserole with Madiran, myrtille clafouti...

📍 Héas - 65120 Gèdre. ☎ +335 62 92 48 39

➤ **The Hostellerie du Cirque at Gavarnie**

An hours walk from Gavarnie village but what a setting! Situated literally beneath the mighty walls of the Cirque with a great view over the waterfall. Snacks and drinks at very reasonable prices.

📍 65120 Gavarnie. ☎ +335 62 92 48 02

➤ **The Hotel - Restaurant La Breche de Roland at Gedre**

The building is one of the finest in Gedre and has been carefully restored. The personality of the owners Odile and Philippe reflects their lovely building, joyous and warm. The interior is refined and the cooking is gourmet.

📍 65120 Gèdre. ☎ +335 62 92 48 54

📍 WORTH A DETOUR

The footpath between the Col des Tentes and the Port de Boucharou

A very easy walk, on the level, which takes you into Spain! Fabulous views over the 3,000m peaks of the Cirque de Gavarnie. The path is just 1.5km long and has a sign board at the start explaining the geology, history and local legends.

📍 *From Gavarnie village take the road to the ski resort, continue to the parking at the Col des Tentes (10km).*

The Breche de Roland

It is a 2 hours walk over difficult terrain from the Port de Boucharou to reach the Sarradets refuge, proper mountain equipment is essential, then less than an hour to reach the Breche and fabulous views into the Spanish Ordesa.

The Panorama from the Pic des Tentes

From the parking at the Pic des Tentes a trail leads up to the Pic des Tentes, a round grassy summit, allow 30 minutes. The view over the surrounding summits is breathtaking, many of whom are over 3,000m - the Marboré, the Taillon, the Vignemale, with a great view to the Breche de Roland too. One can even see the Pic du Midi in the distance.

"Notre Dame des Neiges"

A short walk of 20 mins to reach the statue of Notre Dame de Neiges, from where there is a great view over Gavarnie village and the Cirque. There is also a great view along the Ossoue valley towards the Vignemale and its glacier.

📍 *Take the road towards the ski resort, pull into the parking at the Grange de Holle refuge after 1.5km.*

GAVARNIE/CAUTERETS -PONT D'ESPAGNE

DAY 6

50 km/1 h 18

> Leave Gavarnie heading towards Luz Saint Sauveur on the RD921 (20km). > Take the turning for Sassis (D12), continue for 2km. > At the junction turn left towards Lourdes (D921). > Continue for 9km. > At the roundabout take the 2nd left to Cauterets (D921). > Follow to Cauterets for 11km, then Cauterets to Pont d'Espagne for another 7km.

*Probably still dizzy from yesterday's grandiose spectacle? Well, it is already time to leave, towards even more new encounters but this time gentler and harmonious. We are heading to **Cauterets and Pont d'Espagne**, the Garden of Eden of the Pyrénées!*

Cauterets ²⁴

This small mountain spa town welcomed Chateaubriand, Victor Hugo, Beaudelaire, Debussy... All the high society came here, it became a centre for the Romantics. Follow in their steps along the Boulevard Latapie Flurin and admire the sculptures and monumental doorways dating from the Belle Epoque period.

www.cauterets.com

The ancient bus station ²⁴

An astonishing building, totally in wood, and located at the entrance to the town. It is actually the Norwegian pavilion from the Universal Exhibition in Paris of 1889.

The National Park centre ²⁴

For a better understanding of the area visit The National Park centre for information on the Isard, the countryside, water and walks. There are tactile markers to explain the walking trails of the valley.

📍 Place de la gare - 65110 Cauterets.

Berlingots ²⁴

At the beginning of the 19th century the local doctors recommended that those coming for the spa waters should suck sweets to take away the sulphurous smell of the waters. So the berlingot

was invented! Nowadays four shops in Cauterets continue to make and sell these sweets.

The Lutour and Cerisey waterfalls ²⁵

Head towards Pont d'Espagne, there are a succession of thundering waterfalls along the roadside, the journey itself is a real show. Firstly stop at La Raillère where the Lutour waterfall is signposted, cross the footbridge and there it is in the forest. Then continue to Pont d'Espagne, the Cerisey falls can be seen from the road, if you approach you will most certainly be drenched in spray.

📍 La Raillère - 2.5 km after Cauterets, towards Pont d'Espagne.

★ CAUTERETS-PONT D'ESPAGNE ²⁶

The Garden of Eden of the Pyrenees

As you reach the Puntas parking area you have already crossed into the National Park and the site of Cauterets / Pont d'Espagne, one of the most visited sites in the Pyrenees National Park. It is a fabulous area, full of life, which water crashing from all directions. The Marcadau valley offers easy walks in a sublime setting of mountain pines, flowery meadows with towering rocky peaks all around. One can take the chairlift to Lac de Gaube, a beautiful turquoise lake beneath the mighty Vignemale, the highest mountain in the French Pyrenees, the setting of the lake is pure magic.

📍 Parking at Puntas. 7km after Cauterets.
www.cauterets.com

🚿 Relaxation at the Bains de Rocher spa centre ²⁴

Before starting your day or at the end of it treat yourself to some soothing relaxation in a lovely refined setting. Huge windows, fine embroidered curtains, floors in jade, mosaics, glass pearls... the outdoor lagoon with its bubbling waters is a great spot to relax, in all weathers, at all times of the day as the waters are at 38°C.

2 hours pass. Massages by reservation.

📍 Cauterets.

www.bains-rocher.com

🌙 Evening and night in Cauterets ²⁴

📍 WORTH A DETOUR

➤ A gourmet stop at the Refuge de Sens, chocolate maker and tea rooms

The hardest thing is to choose amongst all the delicious patisseries and crepes, not to mention the chocolates...

📍 7, rue Richelieu-Galerie des Princes - 65110 Cauterets

📍 RECOMMENDED RESTAURANTS

➤ **Hôtellerie du lac de Gaube**
Sit on the terrace in this magical setting, above the lake and facing the mighty Vignemale, trout and other local produce.

📍 Cauterets-Pont d'Espagne, lake of Gaube.
65110 Cauterets ☎+336 74 51 56 28

➤ **Hôtellerie du Pont d'Espagne**
Opposite the waterfalls of Pont d'Espagne, try their delicious Cèpe omelette or other local delicacies.

📍 Cauterets-Pont d'Espagne.
65110 Cauterets. ☎+335 62 92 54 10

➤ **The Abri du Benques at Cauterets**
Food to please the eyes and the taste buds! A huge choice of carefully prepared dishes, taster dishes served on slate to whet your appetite. Recommended by the Michelin guide.

📍 In Cauterets at La Raillère on the way to Pont d'Espagne.
☎+335 62 92 50 15



Caryatids on the Avenue Latapie Flurin in Cauterets

CAUTERETS/SAINT-SAVIN/ LOURDES

DAY 7

30 km/43 mins

Cauterets > Saint-Savin: 14 km/23 mins

- > Leave Cauterets heading north on the D920, towards Pierrefitte-Nestalas (10 km / 15 mins).
- > On leaving Pierrefitte Nestalas, take a left on the D13 towards Saint Savin (4 km / 8 mins).

Saint-Savin > Lourdes: 16 km/20 mins

- > Leave from Saint-Savin on the D101 heading to Argelès Gazost (2 km / 4 mins). > Pass through Argelès Gazost > Take the second exit on the roundabout out of Argelès Gazost, on the D821 to Lourdes (14 km / 16 mins).

*To conclude our voyage, we invite you to take part today in an exclusive and personal experience. Head to **Lourdes** and its magical torchlight procession. But for the moment this is for later in the day this. Firstly, we are going to make a gastronomic stop with the Saint-Martin family in **Saint-Savin**. We also recommend a visit to the **Parc Animalier Des Pyrénées**, the local wildlife zoo on the outskirts of Argelès-Gazost.*

Stroll to the Notre-Dame-de-Piétat chapel

A charming signposted short walk from the Saint-Savin square leads to the Notre-Dame-de-Piétat chapel, posted atop its promontory overlooking the Gave valley and Argelès Gazost. In the shadow of the linden trees, you can enjoy a superb view of the valley, with Hautacam opposite.

The Pyrenees Animal Park

Located in Argelès-Gazost between Cauterets and Lourdes. It offers a superb way of looking at the natural world of the Pyrenees. Set across a green and rocky hillside you can share the intimate life of the animals, from the great carnivores - bears, wolves and lynx to the smaller ones - martins, otters and stoats, not to mention the mountain species - vultures, deer and Isard.

☉ The visit lasts approximately 2 to 3 hours. Within the park is a restaurant, a bar, a shop, and 3 picnic areas.

📍 60, bis av. des Pyrénées - 65400 Ayzac-Ost.
www.parc-animalier-pyrenees.com

The Pic du Jer funicular Railway

The Pic du Jer towers over Lourdes, it is recognisable by its enormous cross which is illuminated at night. A century old funicular railway takes you to the summit at 1000m of altitude in just a few minutes, a voyage full of history. Once at the top an easy trail takes you to a look-out point from where there is a 360 degree panorama, over Lourdes, Tarbes, Pau the Argeles-Gazost valley and the Pyrenean peaks.

📍 Situated at the entry to Lourdes (59, av. Francis-Lagardère)
www.lourdes-infotourisme.com

The Sanctuary in Lourdes

The sanctuary is the area around the grotto where Bernadette saw apparitions of the Virgin Mary. He is on the river bank and it is the area where people come to pray, there are three basilicas.

The Basilica of the Immaculate Conception, smooth and white, perched on a rocky outcrop above the grotto.

The Basilica of the Rosary, in the lower part, it is decorated by superb Venitian mosaics created by G.D. Facchina, who also decorated the Opera Garnier in Paris.

The Basilica of Pius X is underground beneath the esplanade and can accommodate 20,000 people.

📍 The Sanctuary is situated in the lower town on the river banks. Best to park in the higher town and reach him on foot. There are seven points of entry. We suggest the Port Saint Michel, which opens on to the esplanade and has the best view. Open from 5.30am until midnight.
www.lourdes-infotourisme.com

The Lourdes castle and its Pyrenean museum 28

The castle is perched on a rocky outcrop overlooking the town, it is a classified historical monument. Within its wall is a museum of the Pyrenees. So do hesitate to making an assault on this impressive fortress, climb the 104 steps which lead to the top of the dungeon tower, at the top the view is superb. You can also discover the famous legend of Charlemagne who is celebrated on the crest of Lourdes.

www.lourdes-infotourisme.com

On the beach in Lourdes 29

Over at the lake the town of Lourdes becomes a seaside resort. A floating basin offers a lovely spot for swimming, watched over by lifeguards. There are many activities on offer - pedalos, stand-up paddle, kayaks, 3 graded mountain bike trails, an 18 hole golf course, fishing, or simply a lovely stroll around the lake. There is an easy waymarked trail of 6k. It is a great place for taking lunch, there is a cafe / restaurant on the water's edge.

www.lourdes-infotourisme.com

★ THE TORCHLIGHT PROCESSION 28

To be experienced once in a lifetime

Each evening thousands of pilgrims gather to walk with flaming torches behind a statue of the Virgin Mary. The crowd is dense, the ambience joyous and spontaneous. It is a moving spectacle, everybody is singing in praise of the Virgin Mary. Whether a believer or not one can feel the energy. Join in if you wish.

Every day from april to October, at 9pm (🕒 length 1h30). One can buy torches at the entry to the Sanctuary.

www.lourdes-infotourisme.com

🌙 Evening and night in Lourdes 28

🔗 MIX AND MATCH

Combine with «On the road to Madiran». A one-day adventure in the foothills of the Pyrenees exploring an intimate vineyard. p. 103

📍 A LOVELY DIVERSION

➤ **Breakfast with the Saint-Martin family, at Saint-Savin**
Jean-Pierre and Alexis Saint-Martin welcome you to the Hotel de Viscos in Saint-Savin. A real local institution, you can look forward to a hearty breakfast in this charming village perched atop a rocky outcrop.

📍 RECOMMENDED RESTAURANTS

➤ **Le Viscos at Saint-Savin**
The gastronomic restaurant of the Hautes Pyrénées. A local institution, awarded 2 toques by the Gault-Millau guide.

📍 1, rue Lamarque - 65400 Saint-Savin.
☎ +335 62 97 02 28

➤ **L'Alexandra at Lourdes**
The front facade, covered with pots and pans is most intriguing. A very popular venue for the locals who love its creative cuisine.

📍 3, rue du Fort - 65100 Lourdes.
☎ +335 62 94 31 43

➤ **L'Embarcadère at Lourdes**
The restaurant is located on the bank of the lake of Lourdes. Completely open to the exterior, with its pretty shaded terrace, the place exudes calm and serenity. You will enjoy local dishes, gourmet ice creams and crepes.

📍 Chemin du lac, Lac de Lourdes - 65 100 Lourdes
☎ +335 62 32 50 59

➤ **Pizzeria Da Marco at Lourdes**
A rustic and cosy place, a large selection of pizzas, even as dessert!

📍 45, rue de la Grotte - 65100 Lourdes.
☎ +335 62 94 03 59

ITINERARY

02

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7 days/7 nights in chambres d'hotels and 4 and 3 star hotels, with breakfasts included, in Loudenvielle, Ainsa, Saint-Lary, Luz Saint Sauveur, Gavarnie, Cauterets, Lourdes • 1 Grands Sites pass to Pic du Midi (access to summit by cable car) + Cauterets-Pont d'Espagne (parking, cable-car ride from Puntas and chairlift to Lac de Gaube) • 1 entry (2h) to 3 spa centres of the Hautes-Pyrenees: Balnéa, Luzéa, Les Bains du Rocher with indoor baths, outdoor lagoon, sauna, hammam, jacuzzi.... Travel book with map is included.



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FORMULA 100% PERSONALISED

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