

ITINERARY

03

THE TOUR OF THE PYRENEES

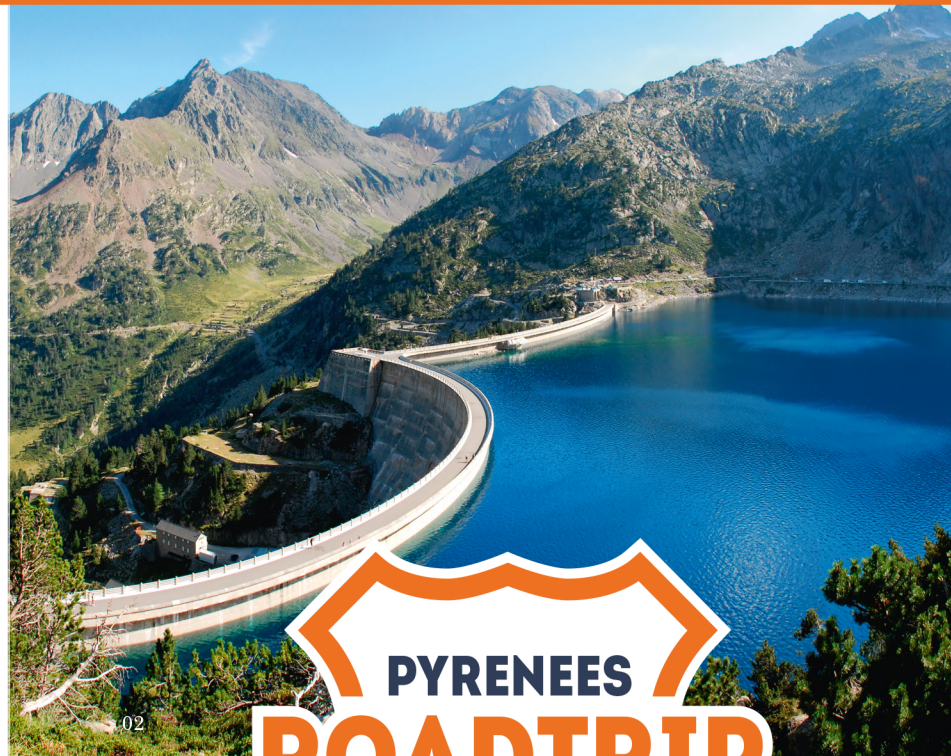
7 DAYS/7 NIGHTS

2 NIGHTS IN SPAIN

597 km

Panoramic mountain passes, spectacular Cirques, deep and dramatic canyons, sparkling mountain lakes, picturesque mountain villages, such delights follow one after the other in this circuit at the heart of the Pyrenees with its World Heritage sites.

- 01. Mountain barn in the **Gavarnie Monte Perdido** massif
- 02. **The dam at Cap-de-Long** on the edge of the Neouvielle National Nature Reserve, one of the largest reservoirs in the Pyrenees
- 03. **The Ordesa canyon**, a UNESCO World Heritage site.



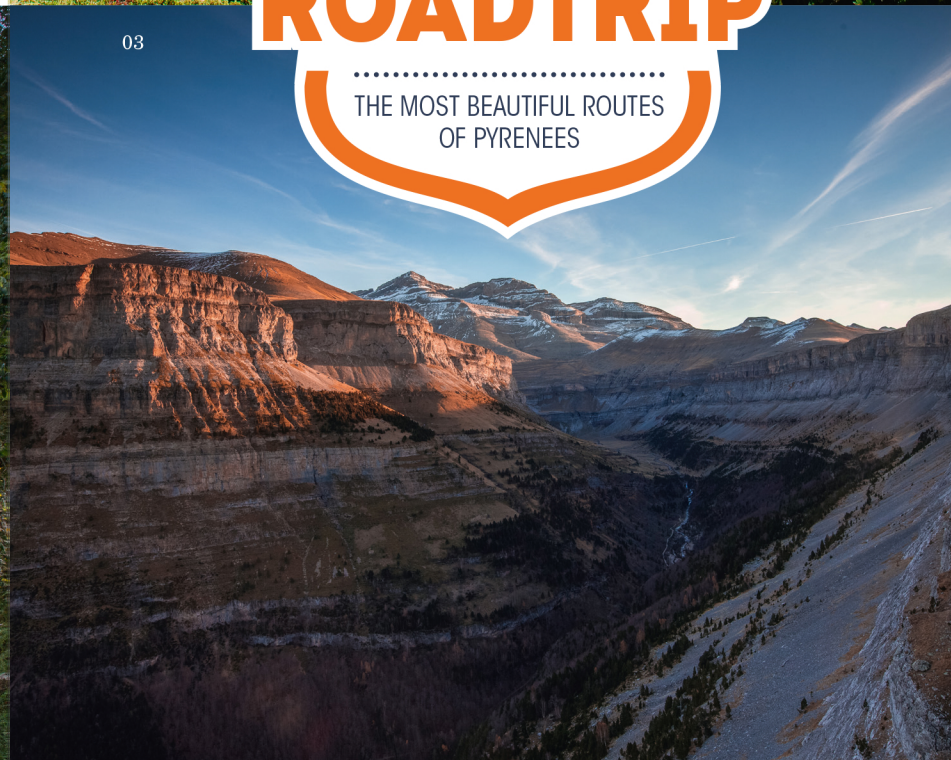
**PYRENEES
ROADTRIP**

THE MOST BEAUTIFUL ROUTES
OF PYRENEES

01



03



THE TOUR OF THE PYRENEES

7 DAYS / 7 NIGHTS

- > **DAY 1:** LOURDES/JACA > **DAY 2:** JACA/ORDESA CANYON /AINSA
- > **DAY 3:** AINSA/ANISCLO CANYON /SAINT-LARY > **DAY 4:** SAINT-LARY/BALNÉA /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



DISTANCE COVERED

> 597 km



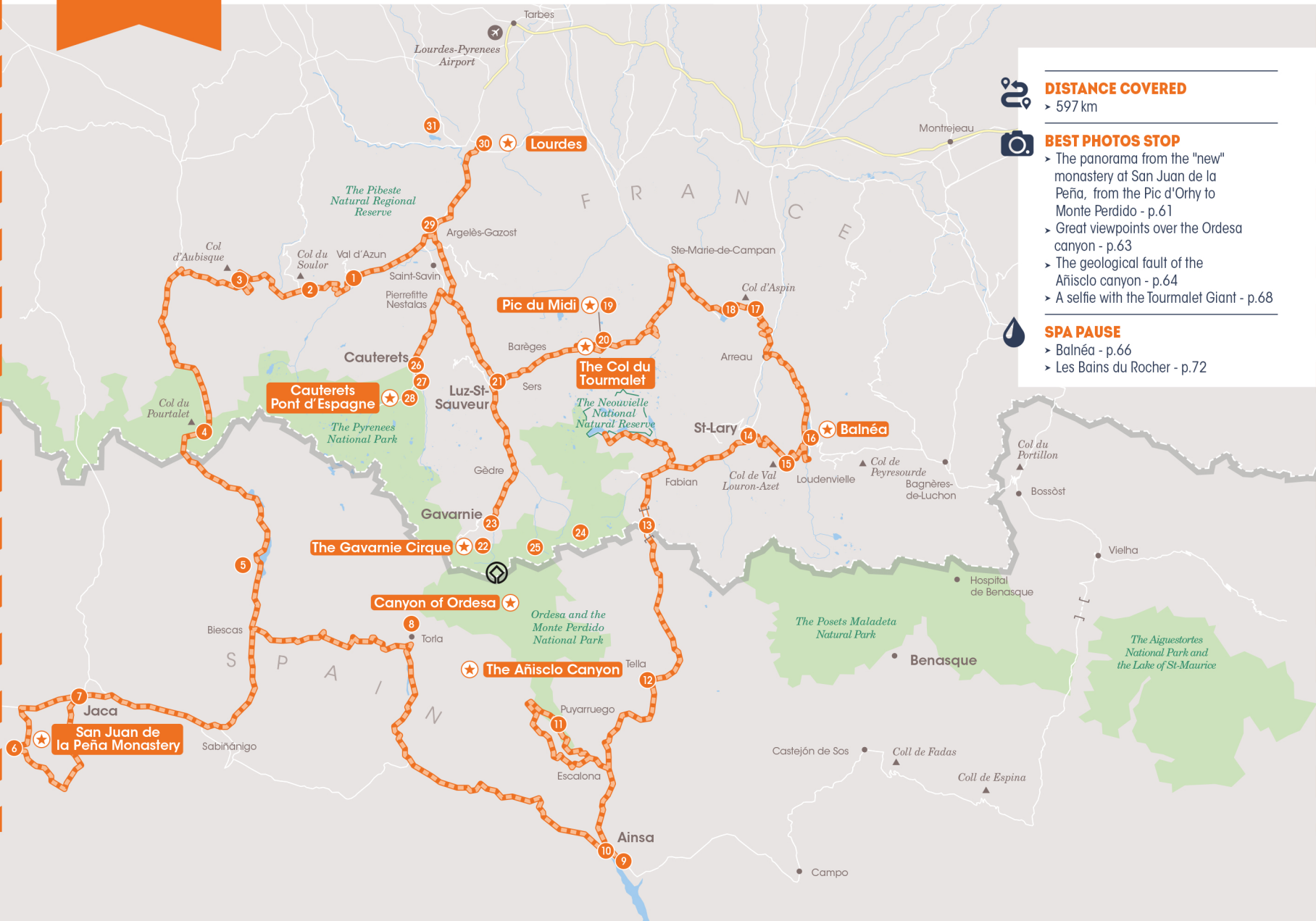
BEST PHOTOS STOP

- > The panorama from the "new" monastery at San Juan de la Peña, from the Pic d'Orhy to Monte Perdido - p.61
- > Great viewpoints over the Ordesa canyon - p.63
- > The geological fault of the Anisclo canyon - p.64
- > A selfie with the Tourmalet Giant - p.68



SPA PAUSE

- > Balnéa - p.66
- > Les Bains du Rocher - p.72



ITINERARY
03THE TOUR
OF THE
PYRENEESLOURDES/
JACAVia
Bernués **180km/3h53**Via Santa Cruz
de la Serós **158km/3h17**

DAY 1

Lourdes > Col du Pourtalet (Spain): 88 km/1 h 57

> Leave Lourdes airport or for those coming by car leave the A64 autoroute at the junction for Lourdes. At Lourdes follow Argeles-Gazost on the D821 (23km/12 mins). At Argeles follow Arrens-Marsous on the D918. Follow the D918 to the Col du Soulor (29km/50 mins), then onto the Col d'Aubisque (2km/4 mins). Follow the road as it descends the Col d'Aubisque, now in the Pyrenees Atlantique department, to the village of Eaux Bonnes. As you leave the village turn left towards Spain on the D934. Passage of the Col du Pourtalet (44km/51 mins) to enter Spain, the D934 becomes the A136.

Col du Pourtalet > Jaca: 54 km/58 mins

> Descend the Tena valley to Jaca (54km/58mins).

Jaca > San Juan de la Peña Monastery (via Bernués): 38 km/1 h**Jaca > San Juan de la Peña Monastery (via Santa Cruz de la Serós): 13 km/16 mins**

> Cross Jaca and follow the Pamplona direction, and San Juan de la Peña Monastery by the col d'Oroel and Bernués (38km/1h). > Or the direction of San Juan de la Peña Monastery by Santa Cruz de la Serós (13km/16mins).

GOOD TO KNOW: *If your departure point or your plane's arrival time do not allow you to complete the whole of this itinerary on day 1, we can offer a hotel around Jaca or in the Tena valley (we will adapt according to your timings). You can then visit the Monastery of San Juan de la Peña the following day before heading to the Ordesa canyon.*

For this first day you will leap straight into some dramatic scenery... on the border crossing, and the spectacular cols of the Soulor, Aubisque and the Pourtalet, it is a great introduction to the Pyrenees. You will discover your first Pyrenean marvel, the Monastery of San Juan de la Peña.

The Val d'Azun 1

A lovely green valley dotted with picturesque villages of stone houses with their slate roofs. It has strong farming traditions and the local cheese is famous.

www.valdazun.com

▲ The col du Soulor 2

A beautiful view from this 1,474 m high mountain pass. The surrounding high mountain pastures are grazed by cows, horses and sheep. It is a great spot to observe vultures and other birds of prey. The Soulor is also home to the only collective cheese maturing facility in the Hautes Pyrenees. Jojo tends to over 3,000 cheeses brought to him by the farmers of the Arbest valley and the Bearn.

▲ The col d'Aubisque 3

After a further 10km you are on the top of the Col d'Aubisque at 1,709 metres of altitude. The top is grassy and rolling and offers fine views over the Uozom valley and the surrounding peaks. The descent is in a series of zig-zags and passing through several tunnels. You will no doubt see the sheep, cows and horses which roam in total freedom.

▲ The col du Pourtalet 4

At 1,794 m of altitude this mountain pass is located between the peaks of the Pourtalet and the sharp summit of Aneau to the west. The view from the top is vast, for Count Henry Russell the colours of the gentle rolling scenery on the Spanish side offer a first taste of Africa.

★ THE MONASTERY OF SAN JUAN DE LA PEÑA 6

An obligatory stop for the pilgrims of Santiago de Compostella

After your descent of the lovely Tella valley we now take to the higher ground on the Sierra de Peña, a great area to admire the Pyrenees and the kingdom of Aragon. As you leave Jaca in the Pamplona direction there are signs indicating San Juan de la Peña by two routes. Do not hesitate in taking the longer itinerary, on your left by the Col d'Oreol and Bernués. The road has more zig-zags but it passes through some wonderful scenery and offers many superb panoramas over Aragon. It is a great way to reach the ancient monastery of San Juan de la Peña. It is built into the red rock which almost seems to be eating it up, or maybe just protecting it. The monastery is a masterpiece of Romanic art, and is unique in its style in the Pyrenees.

The site actually has two monasteries: the lower older one from the 11th and 12th centuries, and the higher newer and baroque one from the 17th century, which houses two historical information centres. Follow the Pamplona direction, signs will show San Juan de la Peña. There is parking at the newer monastery. The older one is reached on foot.

www.monasteriosanjuan.com

🚶 A short walk on the balcony of the pyrenees

From the parking pass behind the new monastery, follow the walls of the building, the start point for the route is at the angle of the building. Follow the path to the first junction then turn right and follow the alley to the 'balcony over the Pyrenees', a magnificent viewpoint with a panoramic view over the range from the Pic d'Orhy in the west to Monte Perdido in the east. Return by the same route.

🕒 20 mins there and back.

🌙 Evening and night in Jaca and its surroundings 7

📍 WORTH A DETOUR

The Animal Park of Lacuniacha at Piedrafita de Jaca 5

This animal park is situated in a magnificent forest at 1380 m of altitude. Follow the waymarked trail to discover bison, deer, wolves, lynx, horses... you can watch them eat, sleep, looking after their young ones, there are many fine viewpoints over the surrounding countryside. The circuit takes about 3 hours but one could easily spend a whole day in the park without needing to complete the circuit. There are picnic spots and a cafe serving drinks, sandwiches, coffee, ice-creams...

📍 *Piedrafita de Jaca. As you descend the Col du Pourtalet (at kilometre 19/22 mins), turn right towards Piedrafita de Jaca on the HU-V-6102*
www.lacuniacha.es

RECOMMENDED RESTAURANTS

> **The Biarritz at Jaca**

At the corner of the street, with its red frontage and beautiful terrace, this restaurant specialises in charcoal-grilled meats. Francis is the 'Asador' who officiates in the dining room, and will ensure you enjoy your meal. Aragonese cuisine is well represented.

📍 Av. Primer Viernes de Mayo, 12- 22700 Jaca
☎ +34 974 361 632

> **The Tasca de Ana at Jaca**

This traditional 'Tapera' restaurant will surprise you with the diversity of its menu - tapas, raciones, pinxos, tostadas... the complete art of tapas is here to be savoured in a convivial setting. You must try the house speciality, the 'Rodolfo', a breaded prawn served with its own dipping sauce. The decoration is typically Spanish with stone walls, wooden beams, painted and tiled ceiling. The restaurant is very popular and does not take reservations, so get there early!

📍 C/ Ramiro I, 3. - 22700 Jaca
☎ +34 974 363 621

JACA/ORDESA CANYON/AINSA

DAY 2

101 km/1 h 59

Jaca > Torla (Ordesa Canyon): 57 km/1 h 05

> Leave Jaca towards the east direction Sabiñanigo. > Before entering Sabiñanigo turn left towards Biescas on the N260. > Cross Biescas, turn right and follow the N260 towards Torla.

Torla > Ainsa: 44 km/54 mins

> Leave Torla on the N260 towards Broto. > Pass through Broto, continue on the N260 to Ainsa.

After having admired it from afar, from the balcony of the Pyrenees, today you will enter into the very heart of the canyon, whose immense sheer walls remind one of the Grand Canyon in Colorado. Together with the **Gavarnie-Monte Perdido** range it is a World Heritage site, once you have feasted your eyes on its magnificent and colossal beauty one can see why. Gavarnie and Ordesa, on opposite sides of the same mountain are the two most spectacular sites of the whole range.

★ THE ORDESA CANYON ⑥

A World Heritage site

This is a place to explore on foot, over and over again... One can walk along the canyon floor, following the rio, in the shade of the luxuriant vegetation. One can also take the high ground and follow one of the famous balcony routes like the Faja de Pelay, the Racun, or Las Flores. Enjoy the panoramas with breathtaking views over the whole canyon and the magnificent flora. These are very special routes and unique in Europe.

📍 To get to Torla. In the height of the season the road to the canyon is closed at Torla, a frequent shuttle bus service connects Torla with the parking at La Pradera, the starting point for most walks.



The Ordesa Valley

From the parking at La Pradera follow the wide trail that leads towards the World Heritage site monument. Follow the GR11 alongside the river Arazas. You will soon reach the Mirador de Aripas waterfalls. Water is ever present along this route on the canyon floor. You will pass close to the Cueva and Estrecho waterfalls. The footpath then leaves the forest. Above you are the gigantic canyon walls of the Sierra de Cutas. You will soon reach the famous Gradas de Soaso, a natural staircase shaped by the waters, a series of small waterfalls as if created for giants en-route for Monte Perdido. Progressively you will reach the head of the canyon and the Cirque de Soasa. Take the time to make a small detour to admire the beautiful Soaso waterfall (the 'Horse's Tail').

☉ Allow 5 hours return.
Incline : 450 m.

A shorter option

Those who do not wish to go as far as the Cirque de Soasa can stop at the Estrecho waterfall then descend towards the Aripas bridge beneath the balcony. Cross the bridge to return to your starting point by the opposite bank of the river.

☉ Allow 2 hours return.



La Faja de Pelay

Follow the itinerary of the Ordesa valley to the Soasa waterfall. At the end of the canyon you will start your return by the Faja de Pelay on the other side of the river after crossing the Soasa bridge. As you have climbed to 1,900m there is a superb view over Monte Perdido (3,335m) and the Soum de Ramond. The footpath runs horizontally along this natural balcony for nearly 8k. You will pass through pines and cross grasslands covered in many alpine flowers including Edelweiss. At the end of the walk you will come across the small hunters' refuge (Calcilaruego). A platform construction makes this a fabulous viewpoint, opposite are the Cirques of Carriata and Cotatuero carved into the canyon walls. As a backdrop are all the 3,000m peaks of Gavarnie, a marvellous spectacle. To the west under the pyramid shaped Mondarruego is the Senda de la Cazadores (the hunters' path), the only difficult part of the route with a steep

and sinuous 500m descent back to the parking, take care.

☉ Allow 6 - 8 hours return.
Incline approx. 700m
Waymarked trails.

The Ainsa Lake 9

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 10

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 10



MIX AND MATCH

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

RECOMMENDED RESTAURANTS

> **El Duende at Torla**

This is a famous restaurant of the region and very popular. The cooking is excellent and the food well presented. The decor of rustic chic reflects the local village architecture. Whether your preference is for meat or fish, you will not be disappointed. We recommend the house special - rib of beef. It is best to book, and in high season at least two days ahead.

📍 C/ de la Iglesia - 22376 Torla.
☎ +34 974 486 032

> **La cocinilla at Torla**

A bright and spacious restaurant, a fine stone building with a rustic chic decor. The restaurant specialises in meats cooked over an oak fire, you can eat in the dining room or on the terrace. All the produce is local from the Broto valley.

📍 Calle Fatás - 22376 Torla. ☎ +34 974 486 243

> **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 - Ainsa
☎ +34 974 500 385

AINSA/THE AÑISCLO CANYON/ SAINT-LARY

DAY 3

102 km/2 h 17

Ainsa > Escalona (the Añisclo canyon): 11 km/12 mins

> Leave Ainsa to the north, direction France keep going to reach Escalona.

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 > Saint-Lary: 56 km/1 h 03

> Continue to the north and towards France. > Pass through the Bielsa Aragnouet tunnel then head for Saint-Lary.


*After visiting the famous and grandiose **Ordesa canyon** you will now enter the wilder and equally magnificent **Añisclo canyon**. You can even swim in the fabulous turquoise pools of the rio. Your route then continues into France by the Aragnouet-Bielsa tunnel.*

THE AÑISCLO GRAND CANYON ①

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 10k, a parking spot situated on a hairpin bend demarcates a trailhead, which with only 30 minutes walking leads to the Ermita

de San Úrbez (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 Ermitage of San Úrbez**
From the parking follow the footpath, cross the superb Roman bridge over the Rio Bellos to reach the troglodyte hermitage of San Úrbez. Return by the same route

🕒 Length : 30 mins return.

A different return route (circuit):
Keep going on the trail after the hermitage to the next junction (close to a spring). Leave the main path to descend to the left towards the Rio Bellos, cross the bridge and follow the trail which climbs opposite. Pass two viewpoints then descend towards the Rio Aso. Cross the footbridge and climb back to your departure point

Incline : 100 metres.

🕒 Length : 1 hour return.

 **A walk into the Añisclo canyon:**
After the hermitage and at the first junction in the trail, close to the spring, follow the wide path opposite, which penetrates into the canyon, follow to the Sangons bridge. Return by the same route.

🕒 Length : 1 extra hour return.

Tella

7km after Escalona, after passing through Hospital, turn immediately left and follow the road which 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 Montañesa and the Cinca valley.

The Aragnouet Bielsa Tunnel

Just 3 kilometres of tunnel separates you from returning to France and the high Aure valley, it is the valley of Saint-Lary. You might not realise just how much altitude you have


gained. The entry to the tunnel is at 1,664m and you leave at 1,821 m. Look out for the many marmots in the roadside fields.

Evening and night in Saint-Lary

WORTH A DETOUR

The Cap-de-Long dam

It is a monumental construction totalling over 100 metres in height, this dam is one of the largest water reservoirs of the Pyrénées. It is like a real fjord and is surrounded by the cliffs of the Pic de Néouvielle. There are 40 km 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.*

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 Pergola at Saint-Lary
This location is as legendary as the name of its owners. For the Mir family, skis on their feet and medals round their necks are a daily occurrence. In this family business, full of family memories, your palate is in for a treat as you sample the valley's cuisine.

 25, rue Vincent Mir - 65 170 Saint-Lary-Soulan

 +335 62 39 40 46

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

DAY 4

97 km/2h 15

Saint-Lary > Balnéa (Loudenvielle): 21 km/32 mins

> Leave Saint-Lary towards Spain and Cap-de-Long on the D929. > As you leave St-Lary, follow Sailhan/Azet to the Col de Val Louron - Azet. > Descend the Col, towards Génos, then Loudenvielle. > Balnéa is situated on the edge of the lake between the villages of Génos and Loudenvielle.

Balnéa (Loudenvielle) > Pic du Midi: 52 km/1 h 12

> Leave Balnéa, follow the D725 towards Arreau (15 km/24 mins). > As you leave Arreau, turn left on to the Col d'Aspin (16 km/19 mins). > Descend the Col, continue to Sainte-Marie-de-Campan (10 km/13 mins). > Turn left towards the Col du Tourmalet, keep climbing to La Mongie (12 km/15 mins).

Pic du Midi > Luz-Saint-Sauveur: 24 km/31 mins

> Leave La Mongie, cross over the Col du Tourmalet, continue to Luz-Saint-Sauveur.

*Today we suggest you take to the naturally warm healing waters of the Pyrenees in the sublime outdoor lagoons of Balnéa, with its magnificent setting – a superb view over the surrounding summits. Once the batteries are recharged it is time to set off to conquer the **Pic du Midi**, reached by crossing the **Col d'Aspin**. Then it is over the famous Col du Tourmalet to spend the night at the Empress Eugénie's favourite destination of **Luz-Saint-Sauveur**.*

▲ The col de Val Louron-Azet ¹⁵

From Saint Lary take the D929 towards Spain. As you leave the village bear left towards the col de Val Louron – Azet. At the top the road passes through vast pastures, a favourite take-off point for paragliders and hanggliders. You will have already have caught sight of the Génos-Loudenvielle lake in the valley, you reach it by continuing your descent of the Col with its regular bends. In Génos turn right towards Balnéa.

★ **BALNÉA ¹⁶**

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 Génos Loudenvielle lake.

www.balnea.fr

Genos-Loudenvielle Lake ¹⁶

Balnéa is located on the edge of the Génos – Loudenvielle lake. There are many lovely walks along its banks.



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.

▲ The col d'Aspin ¹⁷

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 18

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 Baronnies».
A one-day adventure exploring a secret
world of hills and valleys. p.105*

★ **PIC DU MIDI** 19

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** 20

A mythical summit

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



Road in Añisclo Grand Canyon

📷 Selfie with the Giant 20

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 Pont Napoléon in Luz-Saint-Sauveur 21

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 is also a favourite bungee jumping spot.

🌙 Evening and night in Luz-Saint-Sauveur 21

📍 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 Guenaelle, 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.

📍 RECOMMENDED RESTAURANTS

> The Balnéa restaurant

It is not just a palace of relaxation and wellbeing, the Balnéa restaurant offers a range of natural, healthy and well balanced dishes...

📍 Balnéa, on the edge of the Genos-Loudenvielle lake.

☎ +335 62 49 19 19

> 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.

📍 Payolle Lake - 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 Barèges. Head towards the Col du Tourmalet, and turn right before the Tournaboupparking.

☎ +335 62 92 67 17

LUZ-SAINT-SAUVEUR/ GAVARNIE

DAY 5

59 km/38 mins

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

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

Gavarnie > Cirque de Troumouse: 19 km / 29 mins

> Leaving Gavarnie, follow the D921 to Gedre. > Just before reaching the village, take the D922 on your right, towards the « Cirque de Troumouse », in the Heas 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 22

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 23

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 24

Leave Gavarnie on the D921 towards Gedre, just before the village turn right on to the D922 Direction Cirque de Troumouse and the Heas 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 25

As you descend from Troumouse and after passing through Heas, 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 Heas, then turn left towards the Lac des Gloriettes.

🌙 Evening and night in Gavarnie 26

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 (9km).*

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.

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 Canyon.

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.*

RECOMMENDED RESTAURANTS

> **L'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 hour 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

> **Hôtel-Restaurant La Brèche de Roland at Gèdre**
The building is one of the finest in Gèdre 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

GAVARNIE/CAUTERETS -PONT D'ESPAGNE

DAY 6

50 km/1 h 18

Gavarnie > Cauterets: 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 26

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 26

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 26

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.

📍 Cauterets - Place de la Gare.

Berlingots 26

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 27

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 28

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 ²⁶

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.

📍 Avenue du Dr Domer
65110 Cauterets. www.bains-rocher.fr

🌙 Evening and night in Cauterets ²⁶

📍 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 Cepe omelette or other local delicacies.

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

➤ **The Abri de Benques at Cauterets**
Food to please the eyes and the tastebuds! 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

📍 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

Jean-Pierre and Alexis Saint-Martin.
The Hotel Viscos in Saint-Savin



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 - 65 400 Ayzac-Ost.
www.parc-animalier-pyrenees.com

The Sanctuary in Lourdes

The Sanctuary is the area around the grotto where Bernadette saw apparitions of the Virgin Mary. Hi 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 them 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 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 1,000m 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 Lourdes castle and its Pyrenean Museum ³⁰

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 ³¹

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 ³⁰

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 ³⁰

🔗 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, in 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

03

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