



The Cirque of Troumouse, a UNESCO World Heritage site



The Pic du Midi cable-car takes you to the viewing terraces at 2,877 m of altitude.



Waterfalls at Cauterets Pont d'Espagne in the Pyrenees National Park

ITINERARY
05

INTENSE PLEASURES OF THE PYRENEES


Three days over which to enjoy sublime relaxation in the naturally warm spa waters, the best view in France from the top of the Pic du Midi, to marvel at the incredible grandeur of the mighty Cirque de Gavarnie, enjoy spell in paradise in the Garden of Eden of the Pyrenees of Cauterets/Pont d'Espagne, then discover the mysticism of Lourdes.

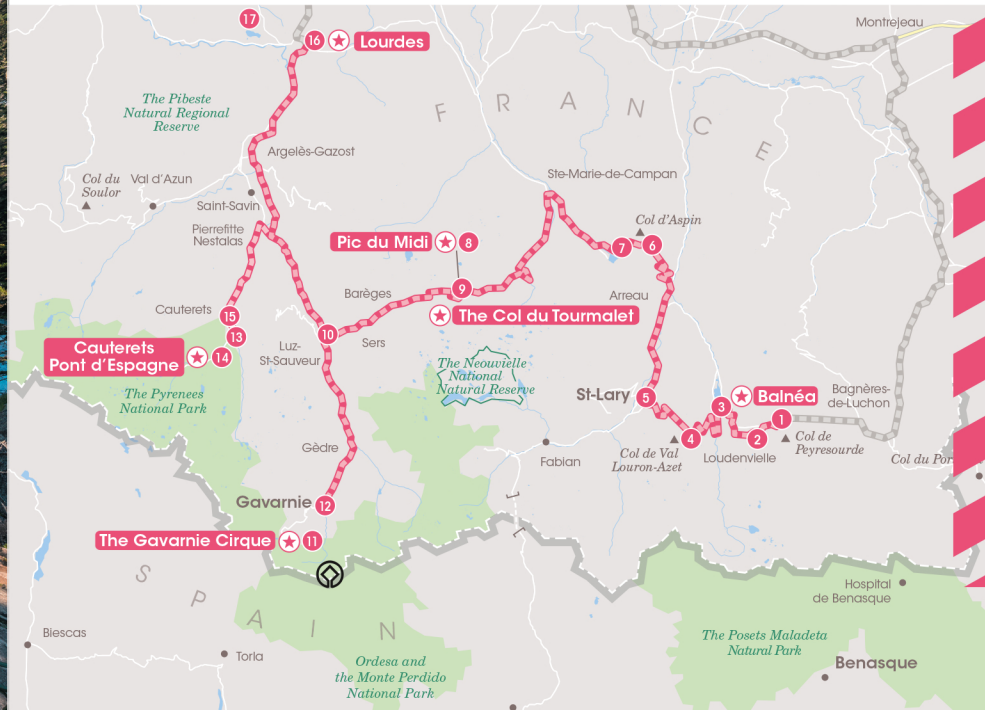
3 DAYS/3 NIGHTS

- > **DAY 1:**
LOUDENVIELLE/BALNÉA/SAINT-LARY
- > **DAY 2:**
SAINT-LARY/PIC DU MIDI/GAVARNIE
- > **DAY 3:**
GAVARNIE/CAUTERETS-PONT D'ESPAGNE/LOURDES
- > **DEPARTURE**

 **DISTANCE COVERED**
> 202 km

 **BEST PHOTO STOP**
> The Tourmalet Giant - p.92
> The 360 degree panorama from the Pic du Midi - p.92

 **SPA PAUSE**
> Balnéa - p.91
> Les Bains du Rocher - p.95



INTENSE PLEASURES OF THE PYRENEES

LOUDENVIELLE/BALNÉA/ SAINT-LARY

DAY 1

21 km/33 mins

Loudenvielle > Saint-Lary: 21 km/33 mins

> Leave the A64 towards Luchon (40km/46mins). > Cross through Luchon, take the direction of the Col de Peyresourde (14km/22mins). > Cross and descend the Col, after Estarvielle turn right towards Loudenvielle (10km/16mins). > Leave Loudenvielle towards Génos (2km/3mins). > In Génos, take the direction of the Col de Val Louron – Azet to your left until you reach Saint-Lary (19km/30mins).

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 Genos Loudenvielle lake**. The Pyrénées 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 range of mountains. After this relaxing pause it is back on the road for one last mountain pass, the **Col de Val Louron-Azet**, which will take you into the valley of **Saint-Lary**, a famous Pyrenean valley, for your luxurious overnight stop.

▲ 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 a 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 Genos 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 3,000m 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

II 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

> 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, au bord du lac de Génos-Loudenvielle.

☎ +335 62 49 19 19

▲ The col de Val Louron-Azet 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!

☾ Evening and night Saint-Lary 5

> La Grange at Saint-Lary

Selected by Michelin inspectors 'a restaurant chic and welcoming with a strong mountain ambience. The food is tasty and flavourful, made from the best local ingredients, trout tartare, local lamb chops, plum tarts... a very good restaurant.'

📍 13, Route d'Autun - 65170 Saint-Lary-Soulan.

☎ +335 62 40 07 14

👁 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.

SAINT-LARY/PIC DU MIDI/ GAVARNIE

DAY 2

93 km/2 h 07

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 > Gavarnie: 42 km/1 h

> Leave La Mongie and continue up the Col du Tourmalet (4 km/6 mins), then descend to Luz-Saint-Sauveur (19 km/24 mins). > In Luz turn left in the Gavarnie direction, keep going until you reach Gavarnie village (19 km/30 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 the sensational setting of Gavarnie.

▲ The col d'Aspin 6

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 7

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 8

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, scientist live up her 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 9

A mythical summit

4k 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 9

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 10

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 CIRQUE DE GAVARNIE ①

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 minutes 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

🌙 Evening and night in Gavarnie ⑫

① RECOMMENDED RESTAURANTS

➤ **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)

➤ **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 (9km).*

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/LOURDES

DAY 3
88 km/2 h 16
Gavarnie > Cauterets-Pont d'Espagne : 50 km/1 h 18

> Leave Gavarnie towards Luz-Saint-Sauveur / RD 921 (20km). > Just before Luz turn left direction Sassis/D12. > Continue for 2km. > At the next junction turn left towards Lourdes / D921. > Continue for 9km. > At the round about take the the second exit towards Cauterets/D921. > Follow up the valley to Cauterets for 11km, then from Cauterets to Pont d'Espagne (7km).

Cauterets-Pont d'Espagne > Lourdes : 38 km / 58 mins

> Leave Cauterets-Pont d'Espagne, pass through Cauterets village, take the RD 920.
> Continue 10km to the village of Soulom. Take the direction of Lourdes (18,5km).

Today will be gentle, peaceful and revitalising. After an exploration of the Garden of Eden of the Pyrenees that is Pont d'Espagne we head for Lourdes for an unusual experience. And if you can get up early you can start the day with a relaxing session in the soothing waters of the Bains de Rocher spa centre in Cauterets.

The Lutour and Cerisey waterfalls 15

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 15
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. 7 km after Cauterets.
www.cauterets.com

Cauterets 15

As you come down from Pont d'Espagne, do stop in the lovely historical village of Cauterets. 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

💧 Relaxation at the Bains de Rocher spa centre 15

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.fr

The Sanctuary of Lourdes 16

The Sanctuary is the area around the grotto where Bernadette saw apparitions of the

Virgin Mary. They are 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 are 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 TORCHLIGHT PROCESSION 16

To be experienced once in a lifetime

From Cauterets it is down to Lourdes for a most unusual experience. 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 16**

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.

📍 Pont d'Espagne, lake of Gaube.
☎ +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

> **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

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



The Cerise waterfall

DEPARTURE

Before you leave the Pyrenees we suggest you rest a while in Lourdes to see its astonishing funicular railway, the castle and its lovely lake.

The Pic du Jer funicular railway ¹⁶

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-Lagarrière)
www.lourdes-infotourisme.com

The Lourdes Castle and its Pyrenean Museum ¹⁶

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 ¹⁷

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 Lourdes lake.

ITINERARY

05

From > **278€**/pers.
(BASE 2 PERSONNES)

PACKAGE 3 DAYS / 3 NIGHTS

3 nights in chambre d'hotes and 4 and 3 star hotels, with breakfast included, staying in Saint-Lary, Gavarnie, 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 Balnéa and Les Bains du Rocher spa centres with indoor baths, outdoor lagoon, sauna, hammam, jacuzzi..
Based on 2 persons.



**ALL INCLUSIVE
PACKAGE
+ CAR RENTAL**

Preferential rates
for a 7 days car hire.

From > **358€**/pers.
(BASED ON 2 PERSONS)



YOUR PYRENEES ROAD TRIP ALL-INCLUSIVE!

Julie, Monique, Nathalie et Sabine are here to create your made-to-measure holiday, they have designed all-inclusive versions for the various itineraries of the Pyrenees Road Trips. They will help organise every stage according to your wishes, and if you wish, organise everything ; accommodation (1, 2, 3, 4 or 5 star hotels), restaurants, activities, passes for the spa centres, in fact everything you will find along the way. They will also provide a free guide showing the must see places, the best restaurants, ideas for walks and the most spectacular sites to visit... Each of the team knows the Pyrenees very well, it would be a shame not to take their advice!

FORMULA 100% PERSONALISED

If you prefer one particular formula, but you want a different type of accommodation or another activity, or if you wish quite simply to totally personalise your itinerary, we can do it! Just ask.

Pyrenees holiday shop :
+335 62 56 70 00
www.pyrenees-trip.uk