



# PYRÉNÉES ROADTRIP

.....  
LES PLUS BEAUX ITINÉRAIRES  
DES PYRÉNÉES

## CARNET DE VOYAGE

Mrs AFMAN & DRENTH  
JUNE 2024





*We hope you will enjoy your trip to discover the Pyrenees. We've put together this program and selected several places especially for you to make your trip unforgettable. Don't hesitate to come back to us if you need anything, or simply to give us your comments. We invite you to share your trip experiences on the social-networks with the #destinationpyrénées ou #pyrénéestrip.*

*Enjoy your trip to the Pyrenees !*



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# **PYRÉNÉES ROAD TRIP**

## **FROM THE 20<sup>TH</sup> TO 24<sup>TH</sup> JUNE 2024**

**DAY 1 – TUESDAY 20<sup>TH</sup> JUNE**

### **ARRIVAL IN LOURDES**

Night with breakfasts included in Lourdes – Grand Hôtel Gallia & Londres 4\*

**DAY 2 – FRIDAY 21<sup>ST</sup> JUNE**

### **CAUTERETS-PONT D'ESPAGNE – PARC NATIONAL DES PYRÉNÉES – LAC DE GAUBE – LUZ-SAINT-SAUVEUR PAYS TOY – LE CIRQUE DE GAVARNIE - UNESCO**

Night with half-board included in Viella – Bed&Breakfast « Les Gentianes »

**DAY 3 – SATURDAY 22<sup>ND</sup> JUNE**

### **COL DU TOURMALET – PIC DU MIDI – LAC DE PAYOLLE – COL D'ASPIN – VALLÉE DU LOURON – BALNÉA**

Night with half-board included in Loudenvielle – Hôtel Mercure Peyragudes Loudenvielle Pyrénées 4\*

**DAY 4 – SUNDAY 23<sup>RD</sup> JUNE**

### **COL DE VAL-LOURON AZET – ARAGON – VALLÉE DE CHISTAU – SAINT-LARY**

Night with half-board included in Azet – Bed&Breakfast Maison Seignou

**DAY 5 – MONDAY 24<sup>TH</sup> JUNE**

### **ROUTE DES LACS DE HAUTE MONTAGNE – RÉSERVE NATURELLE NATIONALE DU NÉOUVIELLE**



## VOTRE PROGRAMME

### ✘ DAY 1 – Thursday 20<sup>th</sup> June

#### ARRIVAL IN LOURDES

*Your Pyrenean Road trip starts in **Lourdes**, a unique place in the world. You can freely visit **the Sanctuary** by the river, a unique architectural **complex** in France. In the evening, you can also take part in the **torchlight procession**, a wonderful event on the esplanade of the basilica, by the river. As well as the must-see Sanctuary, you can also visit the **lac de Lourdes**, discover the **château** perched on its rocky peak and climb the **Pic du Jer** aboard a cable car.*

*Welcome to the Pyrenees.*

#### **Lourdes**

In this world city of faith nestled at the entrance to the Pyrenees, the whole world can be found. Everywhere around you will hear songs and prayers in all languages as if it were possible to reconcile humanity. With simple gestures such as caressing the rock of the Grotto, burning a candle, splashing themselves with water from the fountains or even bathing in the pools, each one, even though marginal compared to the church, can have an original, personal experience that is meaningful.

Don't hesitate to stroll around the Domaine du Sanctuaire before or after the torchlight procession that will take place tonight.

#### ★ THE SANCTUARY OF LOURDES

The Sanctuary is the area around the grotto where Bernadette saw apparitions of the Virgin Mary. They are situated on the riverbank and it is the area where people come to pray, there are three basilicas.

- **The Grotto** : It is here that the heart of Lourdes beats, in this grotto, the site of the 18 Apparitions. In the opening where the Virgin Mary is believed to have appeared, a statue has been left.
- **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 6am until midnight - [www.lourdes-infotourisme.com](http://www.lourdes-infotourisme.com)*

### ★ THE TORCHLIGHT PROCESSION

To be experienced once in a lifetime. Every 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](http://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](http://www.lourdes-infotourisme.com)*

### The Lourdes castle and its Pyrenean museum

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](http://www.lourdes-infotourisme.com)*

### Lac de Lourdes

The lake lends itself to contemplation or walking: an easy 6-km path with an elevation gain of only 50m around the lake. Perfect for a break close to nature.

*📍 Lourdes > Lac de Lourdes: 12 min, 5 km. Follow the D914 towards Pau then turn left towards the Lac de Lourdes. On site: Fishing, walking and mountain-biking routes, golf, play and picnic area, food - [www.lourdes-infotourisme.com](http://www.lourdes-infotourisme.com)*



### **Recommended restaurants (information for the article) :**

• **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:** *Da Marco takes great pleasure in mixing Pyrenean and Italian cuisine: crunchy pizzas, squid linguini, Gascon pork charcuterie and good cheer!*

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

### **Overnight with breakfasts included in Lourdes – Grand Hôtel Gallia & Londres 4\***



#### **YOUR ACCOMODATION**

#### **Grand Hôtel Gallia & Londres 4\* in Lourdes**

Just a stone's throw from the Sanctuary, this hotel proudly displays its Belle Epoque façade. Character, wide open spaces, top-of-the-range services, the NUXE spa, a haven of peace and serenity ideally designed for recharging your batteries, a large park with trees over a hundred years old, private parking... All the elements are there for you to discover Lourdes in a relaxed, VIP atmosphere. From the panoramic rooms

or suites, the unobstructed view of the Sanctuary adds to the sense of calm. As soon as you arrive, you are immersed in the classic-chic world of the early 20th century. The cosy red armchairs illuminate the thick carpet in the bar, the frescoes on the walls depict history, and the damask curtains give the dining room a hushed ambience. At the table, the chef delights with subtle, gourmet flavours from here and abroad. With its premium services, this hotel promises a wonderful experience in Lourdes.

**Your hotel** has a private spa area with jacuzzi, hammam and sauna, a park, a restaurant, a terrace bar-brasserie and a private car park with direct access to the hotel. The hotel has air conditioning and free Wi-Fi.

Hotel with Altamonta label for cyclists with bike room, repair and cleaning kit, adapted menu.

*📍 GRAND HOTEL GALLIA & LONDRES -26 Avenue Bernadette Soubirous – 65100 LOURDES - 05 62 94 35 44 - [www.hotelsvinales.com/fr/hotels-lourdes](http://www.hotelsvinales.com/fr/hotels-lourdes)*

## ✘ DAY 2 – Friday 21<sup>st</sup> June

### CAUTERETS-PONT D'ESPAGNE – PARC NATIONAL DES PYRÉNÉES – LAC DE GAUBE – LUZ-SAINT-SAUVEUR PAYS TOY – LE CIRQUE DE GAVARNIE - UNESCO

DEPARTURE : LOURDES >>> ARRIVAL : VIELLA

110 km / 2h43

➡ Lourdes > Argelès-Gazost : 13 km / 13 min

Leave Lourdes in direction of Argelès-Gazost.

➡ Argelès-Gazost > Cauterets : 17 km / 27 min

Leave Argelès-Gazost then follow the direction of Pierrefitte-Nestalas, then Cauterets.

➡ Cauterets > Cauterets-Pont d'Espagne (Puntas car park): 8 km / 15 min

From the village of Cauterets, follow the D920 to the end of the route: the Puntas car park.

➡ Cauterets-Pont d'Espagne (Puntas car park) > Cauterets: 8 km / 15 min

Take the same route as the outward journey.

➡ Cauterets > Luz-Saint-Sauveur : 23 km / 35 min

Leave Cauterets in direction of Pierrefitte-Nestalas, then follow the direction of Luz-Saint-Sauveur, Gavarnie.

➡ Luz-Saint-Sauveur > Gavarnie (village) : 19 km / 26 min

Leave Luz-Saint-Sauveur, in direction of Gavarnie.

➡ Gavarnie (village) > Luz-Saint-Sauveur : 19 km / 26 min

Leave Gavarnie, in direction of Luz-Saint-Sauveur.

➡ Luz-Saint-Sauveur > Viella : 3 km / 6 min

Leave Luz-Saint-Sauveur in direction of the Col du Tourmalet and follow until Viella.

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*You'll love discovering **Cauterets-Pont d'Espagne**, an emblematic site in the **Pyrenees National Park**, a veritable Garden of Eden. The Puntas gondola lift and the Gaube chairlift provide an effortless way to visit. You can have lunch next to **the Pont d'Espagne waterfalls** or on the banks of the splendid **Lac de Gaube** at the foot of the **Vignemale**, the highest peak in the French Pyrenees.*

*With the north face of the Vignemale (3,298 m), the highest peak in the French Pyrenees, as a backdrop, **Lac de Gaube** offers one of the most picture-perfect views of the Pyrenees. The site was dear to the hearts of many writers who came to stay in the Pyrenees in the 19th century, and was often mentioned in Parisian salons for its beauty and the calm of its waters. It's worth noting that it was visited by the crème de la crème of the literary world*

and the beau monde of the time: Victor Hugo, Alfred de Vigny, Chateaubriand, George Sand, Queen Hortense de Beauharnais, Napoleon III and more!

Hold on a second! ... you're in the heart of the **Pyrenees National Park**, where you can admire tumultuous waterfalls, lush forests, meadows covered in wildflowers and shy marmots!

At the end of the day, you'll head for the Pays Toy where **Patrick**, a shepherd, will be waiting for you in his guest house.

But first, you'll discover the intense and spectacular scenery of the **Cirque de Gavarnie**, listed as a World Heritage Site by UNESCO. More than just a geological curiosity, its semi-circular wall creates a grandiose landscape that is out of this world. It looks like pure invention. « A miracle, a dream » said Victor Hugo.

The birthplace of Pyreneanism, this exceptional site has attracted scientists, painters and poets since the 16th century. Anyone arriving in front of this prodigious wall, 1,500 m high and 6 km in circumference, it's easy to see why. Its concentric tiers follow one another in almost perfect symmetry, dominated by a cohort of giants: the Casque (3,006m), the Marboré (3,248m), the Taillon (3,144m) and the legendary **Brèche de Roland**. Not forgetting, in the background, one of the highest waterfalls in Europe, at 423m...

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## ★ 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.

### • The ancient bus station

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.

[!\[\]\(f95dab70c751fda7d824b8b03650f7aa\_img.jpg\) Cauterets – Place de la Gare](#)

### • The National Park centre

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.

[!\[\]\(4688aadfd656ded00cd6bdfae55089a9\_img.jpg\) Cauterets – Place de la Gare](#)

### • Berlingots

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.

*📍 To La Reine Margot (M. Aguillon) Av. du Mamelon Vert – Tél. : 05 62 92 58 67 ☐ Aux Délices (M. Lestable) Place Clémenceau – Tél. : 05 62 92 07 08 ☐ Confiserie Marinette (M. Millet) Av. du Mamelon Vert – Tél. : 05 62 92 53 07 ☐ L’Ourson (M. Beaugé) Place Clémenceau – Tél. : 05 62 92 51 12.*



### **Recommended restaurants (information for the article) :**

• **L’Abri du Benquès 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.

*📍 Route de la Raillère - 65110 CAUTERETS - 05 62 92 50 15*

• **Le Refuge de la Raillère** : Brasserie and creperie facing the Lutour waterfall. Traditional menu, pancakes and “homemade” pastries. With a souvenir shop attached to the restaurant.

*📍 Route du Pont d’Espagne – 65110 CAUTERETS - 05 62 32 72 75*

• **« O’RÉGENT » à Cauterets** : Philippe, the chef, enjoys working with fresh and local products. He concocts traditional and regional dishes such as black pork from Bigorre, lamb from the Pyrenees but also fish, notably hake or sole.

*📍 1 place Maréchal Foch - 65110 CAUTERETS - 05 62 92 50 10*



### **Land of Shopping :**

#### **The Pavillon des Abeilles**

More than just a shop, the Pavillon des Abeilles is a real invitation to discovery: living beehive behind glass, film projection, tastings, visit of the honey-producing flower garden, introduction to gentle bee-keeping... The shop offers a wide range of organic honeys from the Pyrenees, gingerbread and even honey candles, while in the beauty area, you can find organic preparations made with apiculture products: shampoo, creams, treatments, etc. and even honey massages!

*📍 23 bis av. du Mamelon Vert – 65110 CAUTERETS - 05 62 92 50 66*

### ★ RELAXATION AT THE BAINS DU ROCHER SPA CENTER :

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...

**GOOD IDEA: If you want to enjoy a personalized treatment, remember to book it in advance by contacting the Bains du Rocher directly.**

*📍 Opening between 10am at 12:45pm and between 2pm at 8pm - 65110 CAUTERETS - 05 62 92 14 20 - [www.bains-rocher.fr](http://www.bains-rocher.fr)*

### • The great “Golden Age” hotels

Many of the monumental buildings so typical of the 19th century have been preserved. The most important hotels in the city (the Grand Hotel d'Angleterre, the Grand Hotel Continental ...) were built in the late 1800s by the same architect from the city of Pau. The result is a great unity of style, that of the new urbanism of the big cities, Paris and Bordeaux in particular: monumental façades, adorned with balconies and statues, caryatids, vast living rooms and luxurious dining rooms lit by chandeliers and large windows.

### The Lutour and Cerisey waterfalls from Cauterets village

From Cauterets village, 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 : The Garden of Eden of the Pyrenees

Once you arrive at the Puntas car park, keep your eyes peeled as you prepare to enter the Cauterets-Pont d'Espagne site, one of the most visited places in the Pyrenees National Park. Here, every nook and cranny is teeming with life. The mountain pines grow right out of the rock, the rivers leap, the red frogs croak, the marmots swoon in the sun, the Pyrenean chamois watch you, the ibex squabble, the meadows are covered in flowers... In the fresh air you can smell that scent of resin and wild thyme. We just want to jump for joy at the abundance of life and harmony. But there's more to come. Higher up, the splendid Lac de Gaube waits patiently beneath the fascinating Vignemale, the highest massif in the French Pyrenees. If he's up for it, you'll have the pleasure of seeing his reflection on the turquoise waters. It's magical.

Numerous facilities and footpaths offer a wide range of walking options, making it easy to enjoy this Garden of Eden in the Pyrenees. We recommend you take the two successive lifts, the Puntas gondola lift and the Gaube chairlift, to reach the Lac de Gaube after a short 15-minute walk. You can then explore the site on your way back down, either on foot or by chairlift.

📞 05 62 92 53 68 / 06 71 01 46 86 - [www.cauterets.com](http://www.cauterets.com)

### 📌 **Our good ideas at Pont d'Espagne :**

- **Effortlessly, one of the most beautiful lakes of the Pyrenees:** From the Puntas car park, a gondola lift followed by a chairlift will take you to a wide track. From there, after a 15-minute ride down, you will discover the beautiful Lac de Gaube. A must-see in the Pyrenees. Get back by the chairlift or by going down the trail.

*By the trail: Duration: 3 hrs round trip. Min. alt.: 1,460 m. – Max. alt.: 1,725 m. Gradient: 265 m. – Level: easy Starting point: Pont d'Espagne, Puntas car park.*

- **Idyllic excursion around the Cayan Plateau:** This is a pleasant excursion, ideal for picnicking at the edge of the water - take a nap under the pines and see a marmot. From the car park, the path from the gondola leads quickly to the Clot Plateau and lodge. The track then runs along the River Gave gently to the end of the Plateau. There you will find the little bridge of Cayan. Get back by the river bank on the other side.

*Duration round trip: 2 hrs. Level: easy. Starting point: Pont d'Espagne, Puntas car park.*

- **Chemin des Cascades, from La Raillère to the Pont d'Espagne:** This is a classic route to discover the tumultuous waterfalls for which Cauterets is renowned. In the Val de Jeret, the trail follows the course of the River Gave. According to the terrain, you will discover the many waterfalls, some with clear and limpid waters, while others are bubbling and tumultuous, like the Cascade du Cerisey. The path allows you to get a closer look at the continuous sparkling spray.

*Duration: 3.5 hrs return trip. Min. alt.: 1,053 m. – Max. alt.: 1,460 m. Gradient: 407 m.*

*Level: easy - Starting point: La Raillère car park.*

- **The refuge des Oulettes de Gaube (2,151m), at the foot of the Vignemale limestone giant and its glacier:** Follow the markings from Gaube Lake. On the path, look out for Iberian ibexes! *Duration: 2.5 hours (one way) from Gaube Lake. Level: easy. Starting point: Pont d'Espagne, Puntas car park. Incline: 426m.*



### **Recommended restaurants (information for the article) :**

- **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.

*Site de 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.

*Site de Cauterets-Pont d'Espagne 65110 Cauterets • +335 62 92 54 10*



### **Land of Shopping :**

#### **La Carde, Fabrication of blankets & Woollen fabrics from the Pyrenees**

In Pays Toy, breeding is a tradition. Sheep have always been a mainstay of local agriculture.

For as long as we can remember, this little zone has been a land of weavers. This was why, from 1891, Joseph Cazenave and his wife Marie, great-great grandparents of the last generation of Lafond, were already trading and spinning made-to-order yarn. Their son Louis and his wife Catherine followed suit and created La Carde. Their daughter, Marie, married Marcel Lafond: natural-born entrepreneurs, together they introduced the Tissu des Pyrénées trade and blanket weaving. A business that their son took over, with his wife Martine in the 1980s.

Today, their time has come to hand over the business to their children, Aude and Damien, who intend to continue this company as a tribute to those who worked hard and built it for them.

*📍 La Carde - 36 avenue du Barèges - 65120 ESQUIEZE SERE – 05 62 92 81 95 - [contact@lacarde-pyrenees.com](mailto:contact@lacarde-pyrenees.com)*

#### **Luz-Saint-Sauveur, capital of Pays-Toy**

The town of Luz-Saint-Sauveur is unmissable location at the heart of the most prestigious locations in the Pyrenees. Welcome to the home of the "Toys", Gascon for "handsome boys". A charming sort of Asterix village that's always held Counts and Kings at arm's length. Once an autonomous Republic, this region remains fiercely loyal to its roots, traditions and identity, and holds onto the solidarity of countryside folk. The Toys are very proud of the sheep raised on their hilly slopes, producing the France's only AOC sheep meat: the inimitable Barèges-Gavarnie! It is the flowery slopes of the Hautes-Pyrenees that give this aromatic meat its distinctive flavour, tinged with notes of the wild thyme and licorice that carpet these blessed mountain sides.



### **Recommended restaurants (information for the article) :**

- **L'Auberge de Viella** : Patrick suggest you his own production: sheep, duck, pork ... in a typical and friendly atmosphere.

*📍 65120 VIELLA - 06 73 83 08 05*

- **L'atelier in Luz-Saint-Sauveur**: In the former family tailor's shop, which opened in 1910, local boy Bruno offers 'hand sewn' dishes full of Pyrenean flavours.

He has a wealth of experience with the greatest chefs and will thrill you with his skill in historic surroundings with a pretty terrace facing the peaks.

*📍 12 avenue de Saint Sauveur - 65120 LUZ SAINT SAUVEUR - +33 (0)5 62 92 85 22*

- **"Luz et Coutumes" in Luz-Saint-Sauveur (in the evening only, booking required)**:

In Christine's restaurant-museum, you'll feel right at home! This former country home invites you to discover traditions and objects of the local heritage.

In the dining room, the tables set with antique crockery await you for either a sweet treat or to sample some specialities, such as the great garbure or local cheeses.

The furniture and the walls, decorated with a thousand utensils that the people of Luz often bring along, will take you back in time.

In the barn, a table to dine in complete privacy takes centre stage in the middle of each "bargas" (stable for the farm animals). An unusual and unique place in Pays Toy.

*📍 10 route de Barèges – 65120 LUZ SAINT SAUVEUR - 07 82 85 88 13*

### **The Pont Napoléon in Luz-Saint-Sauveur**

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 GAVARNIE CIRQUE

### A UNESCO world heritage site

Fifty million years ago, the erosion of rain and ice hollowed out a group of unusually perfect natural cirques in the Pyrenees. Gavarnie is one of them – the best-known, and the most impressive as well. Gavarnie looks invented – an immense invention placed among the Pyrenees. It is more than five kilometers in diameter, with vertical walls 1,500 meters high, and hundreds of waterfalls. Master of words Victor Hugo described it like this: “It is the most mysterious edifice from the most mysterious of architects; it’s the colosseum of nature – it’s Gavarnie”. Looking at this exceptional colossus, it’s hard to believe that it’s not the only one but Estaubé and Troumouse are there too, just a stone’s throw away.

Like Gavarnie, they are real masterpieces. These spectacular cirques are right up against the canyons of Spanish High-Aragon, and together they form the “Gavarnie-Mont Perdu” site, a unique piece of the Pyrenees, a sacred mountain listed by Unesco as a World Heritage site.

*📍 At the entrance of the village, large car park. It is the starting point for walks to discover the Circus. • Tel: +335 62 92 49 10 • [www.gavarnie.com](http://www.gavarnie.com)*

### The Gavarnie cemetery

How can you not be moved by the graves of the great Pyrenean mountaineers buried here? Amongst them, the brothers Laurent and Hippolyte Passet, along with their sons Henri and of course Célestin who was born in 1845. Célestin Passet was the great hero of Pyrenean mountaineering.

For more than thirty years he broke many records, culminating in the triumph of 7 August 1889, when he cut 1,300 steps into the ice in order to climb the formidable Couloir de Gaube - a feat that was not repeated for a further 44 years.

*📍 Gavarnie - by the church.*

### 📍 Our good ideas :

• **Gavarnie - Walk to the Courade plateau facing the circus:** In 30 minutes, an easy and fascinating walk along the Gave de Pau and across the plateau of the Courade: you reach on foot, horseback or donkey the orientation table of the circus.

*📍 Takes: 1h A / R - Departure from the village of Gavarnie.*

• **The footpath between the Tentes mountain pass and the Port de Bucharou :** A very easy walk, on the level, which takes you into Spain! Fabulous views over the 3000m

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.

① *From Gavarnie village take the road to the ski resort, continue to the parking at the Tentes mountain pass (about 10 km).*

• **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 Marbora, 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.

① *Take the road towards the ski resort, pull into the parking at the Grange de Holle refuge after 1.5km.*

 **Recommended restaurants (information for the article) :**

• **Hotel-Restaurant "La Brèche de Roland" in Gèdre:** housed in one of Gèdre's oldest, elegantly restored residences. Odile and Philippe Pujo are just like their beautiful home: cheerful and warm. The setting is refined and the cuisine gourmet.

① *65120 GEDRE - +33 05 62 92 48 54*

*Open every day*

• **Claire Montagne in Gavarnie:** A small, friendly eatery in a mountain setting. The team is welcoming. The menu is simple and unpretentious, but the dishes are hearty, tasty and affordable.

① *Rue principale - 65120 GAVARNIE - +33 05 62 92 49 22*

*Open for lunch*

• **Hôtellerie du Cirque in Gavarnie:** An hour's walk from the village of Gavarnie, but well worth the trip! The view of the waterfalls from the terrace is fantastic. The buffet and à la carte dishes are very good and very reasonably priced.

① *65120 GAVARNIE - +33 05 62 92 48 02*

*Open for lunch every day from 18 May to the end of October*

• **Les Glaciers:** cosy home cooking: hearty "assiette du randonneur" meals, mixed omelettes, duck confit, mutton chops, local cheeses, blueberry tarts... Local specialities in a warm and friendly atmosphere.

① *Rue principale - 65120 GAVARNIE - +33 05 62 92 47 30*

*Open from 18 May to the end of September - Closed on Mondays*

### **Overnight with half-board included in Viella – Bed&Breakfast « Les Gentianes »**



#### **YOUR ACCOMODATION**

#### **Bed&Breakfast « Les Gentianes » in Viella**

Between Barèges and Luz-Saint-Sauveur, Patrick offers you 3 pretty guest rooms. The house faces the Pyrenees; from the windows, you can see the Pic du Midi, Ardiden and below, the Château Sainte Marie.

You'll love the care taken with the decor and furniture, the delicate wooden headboards; you'll be seduced by the spacious bedrooms, which become family rooms under the timber-framed attic; at the top of the staircase, take the time to look at the black and white photos... The mountain spirit so dear to Patrick is everywhere. Your host is first and foremost a farmer and stockbreeder, proud of his origins, and here they are on display as soon as you walk through the door. At the table, Patrick will introduce you to products from the family farm: crispy, grilled chops to enjoy with your fingers, pâtés, sausages, ham to accompany large slices of farmhouse bread...

Your guest rooms have 3 different bedrooms, a relaxation and reading area with television, and a car park. Table d'hôtes.

① *CHAMBRES D'HOTES LES GENTIANES – M. Patrick THEIL – 65120 VIELLA - 05 62 92 85 14 - [www.chambres-hotes-tourmalet.com](http://www.chambres-hotes-tourmalet.com)*



## ✘ DAY 3 – Saturday 22<sup>nd</sup> June

### COL DU TOURMALET – PIC DU MIDI – LAC DE PAYOLLE – COL D'ASPIN – VALLÉE DU LOURON – BALNÉA

DEPARTURE : VIELLA >>> ARRIVAL : LOUDENVIELLE

77 km / 1h46

#### ➡ Viella > Col du Tourmalet: 17 km / 26 min

Drive through Viella towards the Col du Tourmalet. Follow the ascent to the top of the pass.

#### ➡ Col du Tourmalet > La Mongie (Pic du Midi) : 4 km / 6 min

Cross the Col du Tourmalet and follow the descent on the opposite side to La Mongie (departure station for the Pic du Midi cable car).

#### ➡ La Mongie > Lac de Payolle : 22 km / 27 min

Descend to the village of Sainte-Marie de Campan. In the village, turn right towards Lac de Payolle/Col d'Aspin.

#### ➡ Lac de Payolle > Col d'Aspin > Arreau : 19 km / 27 min

Leave Lac de Payolle and head for Col d'Aspin. Cross the pass and descend on the opposite side. At the foot of the pass, head towards Arreau.

#### ➡ Arreau > Loudenvielle : 15 km / 20 min

Go through or around Arreau then follow the signs for the Louron valley, Loudenvielle.

.....  
*The adventure continues! Head for the **Col du Tourmalet**, the highest road pass in the Pyrenees and the highest point on the main pass route. It's an incomparable vantage point: from up there, the panorama is splendid. It's also one of the most dreaded routes for cyclists the world over... It's here that some of the heroic, but also tragic, pages of the world's most famous cycling event were written: the Tour de France.*

*Afterwards, you'll set off to climb the **Pic du Midi**. A spectacular cable car ride takes you to the summit. Take time to visit the site, stroll the terraces and admire the view of the Pyrenees. Exceptional!*

*Finally, you'll pass the **Lac de Payolle**, nestling in a forest of fir trees and known here as the "Little Canada of the Pyrenees", before crossing another pass, the **Col d'Aspin**, to reach the **Louron Valley**. An authentic marvel, the valley also contains many treasures, some of them hidden, such as the **Romanesque chapels**, which are concentrated here in unprecedented numbers. If you have the time, we recommend you visit the chapel at **Mont in particular**.*

*A footpath will take you as far as the one at **Saint-Calixte** (closed to the public), set in the middle of nature, in a bucolic setting with a lovely viewpoint.*

*To round off the day, relax in the thermal lagoons, in the open air, with your eyes riveted on the summits and your lungs filled with pure air. At **Baln a**, you can switch off and recharge your batteries ...*

.....

### ★ **THE COL DU TOURMALET (2 215m)**

#### **The legendary mountain pass**

You are on the summit of Tourmalet, the culmination of the great route of the Cols of the Pyrenees, and now you understand why the name "Tourmalet" resounds like the snap of a flag in a stormy wind for cyclists the world over! It is here that some heroic pages have been written, as well as tragic ones, about the most famous cycling event in the world: the Tour de France. The greatest epic, perhaps, involved Eug ne Christophe, called "Le Vieux Gaulois" (the old Gaul) because of his luxuriant moustache.

In 1913, when he had passed through the col in second position, he was knocked over by a vehicle in the caravan. His fork broken, he took to the route on foot, his bike over his shoulder, to the forge in Sainte- Marie-de-Campan where he repaired his bike himself, which took four hours. Fifty-six years later, Eddy Merckx was given his nickname "The Cannibal" when he won the stage that included Le Tourmalet with a lead of more than seven minutes.

### ★ **LA MAISON DU TOURMALET - PIC DU MIDI**

Just over the Col du Tourmalet, this museum area is the gateway to the summit facilities at the Pic du Midi observatory. Under the dome, a 360  projection takes visitors on a journey through the night, guided by the owl 'Nox'. A fascinating immersive experience to raise awareness of the impact of light pollution and the preservation of nocturnal biodiversity. In a fifteen-minute video, we leave our sleep behind to escape into our dreams and nightmares, twirl around the planets and let ourselves be carried away by the magic of the night.

An exhibition of black and white photographs outside the dome retraces the human history of the Pic du Midi.

*  At the Col du Tourmalet, park on the side of the road (on the La Mongie side). On-site ticket sales for "Nox, le voyage dans la nuit". Free exhibition.*

## ★ PIC DU MIDI

### **The most beautiful view in the world**

The visit starts with a sensational airborne trip in a cable car – 15 minutes' journey over vertiginous drops with 350m of emptiness under your feet! At the top, there are 750 square metres of landscaped terraces that provide wonderful views of an incredible panorama over the Pyrenean mountain range – more than 300km of peaks. In fine weather, it is even possible to make out the first foothills of the Massif Central! Panoramic maps and explanatory panels help you to decipher the horizon, and there are telescopes to study the sun, because the Pic du Midi also houses an observatory. The night sky seen from the Pic du Midi is unusual, thanks to the purity of the air and the great stability of the atmosphere at 2,877 metres above sea level. This quality meant that it has been listed as an "International Dark Sky Reserve".

Le Pic du Midi can be visited during the day or in the evening, or visitors can stay for the night.

**Welcome by Vincent Doutres - +33 06 09 56 96 88**

*Departure from 9:30am to 4:00pm every ¼ hour. Last return: 5:30pm. No access between 12:30 and 2pm Allow about 2 hours to enjoy exploring the Pic du Midi.*

*65200 LA MONGIE - [www.picdumidi.com](http://www.picdumidi.com) - +33 (0)5 62 95 50 71*

• **Lunch at the Pic du Midi:** 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 Payolle Lake**

Lac de Payolle is nestled in a forest at the foot of the Col d'Aspin and Hourquette d'Ancizan. Here you can take the time to escape. The site is ideal for lovely walks between plains and fir trees or a meal by the water.

At the bend in the path, you're sure to come across a family of cows or horses in this mecca of pastoralism.

In the distance, towards the Col d'Aspin, you can see the old pink marble quarries of Payolle.

Veined with white, green and pink, this unique marble adorns some of the most famous places in the world: the Louvre Museum, the Château de Versailles, the Empire State Building... It's also where the 30 columns of the Opéra Garnier in Paris come from.



## Recommended restaurants (information for the article) :

### • **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 blueberries tart.

📍 *Rue le bourg – Payolle - 65710 CAMPAN - 05 62 91 82 16*



## Our good idea :

• **The Payolle “Courtaous”:** The word “courtaou” in the Campan valley refers to a group of pastoral huts visited by shepherds during the summer. Some would contain a significant number of huts. The courtaou des Esclozes has no less than nineteen, built along a real road.

Courtaous are generally built near a river or a spring.

The milk was preserved in the coolness of the “leytés”, little structures built along the water, with a door.

📍 *From the Artigussy car park, follow the markings which follow a vague path crossing over the plateau de la Prade. Head towards a small pass, recognisable thanks to a big rock. At the rock, take the path to the left, going through a light wood. Courtaou d’Artigussy (1,230 m). Continue along the path, the right bank of the valley. Take the bridge over the Gaoube and go back up the path on your right to get to the Courtaou des Esclozes hut (1 440 m), which has been restored and is open. Here, take the path that turns to the right. The markings then tell you to take a ridge line. From the ridge, turn to the left on the slope, and come back to a barn below. Turn right and start following the road for about thirty metres, then leave the road and take a path on your right, then a track, until you get to a crossroads of tracks. Take the one to the right and follow it to the car park.*

📍 *Access: At the entrance to the plateau de Payolle, turn right towards “les Quatres Véziaux – Hourquette d’Ancizan”. At the campsite and bar-restaurant des Quatre Véziaux (on your left), take a little road on your right. It crosses a plateau and enters a little valley. You’ll get to a crossing: turn right until you get to the Artigussy car park (1,170 m). This is the starting point.*

*Duration: 2.5 hours in total • Elevation gain: 200 m • Markings: yellow and signs*

## **Le col d’Aspin (1 490 m)**

The Col d’Aspin is wilder, less frequented and less elevated than its neighbours, but it offers a delightful itinerary with probably the most extensive panorama. Its summit is a listed site, untouched by construction and dedicated to the grazing of cows and horses. There is

a car park where you can park and enjoy the panorama in peace. You'll enjoy a superb view of the Pic du Midi, the Arbizon and the Aure valley. The gentler topography of the pass also makes for some lovely walks along its crests.

Starting from the car park, a panoramic walk from the Plo del Naou follows a ridge to the south, taking in the Aure and Campan valleys. To the north, footpaths lead to the Col de Beyrède and Signal de Bassia.

### **Our good idea :**

• **Le Plo del Naou (1,754 metres) from the col d'Aspin:** The walk follows the crest that separates the waters between the Vallée d'Aure, to the left, and Payolle, to the right. It stumbles over the foothills of the Pic d'Arbizon. The peak is well known to mineralogists for its garnets which were generated through the heating of rocks during the upheaval of the igneous intrusion of Néouvielle. In crystal form, they are used in jewellery, or else as abrasives.

*At the pass, take the slope on the right which goes up towards the forest and keep going until you get to a trough. Keep following the slope (possible to leave the slope and walk on the ridge to the left, until you get to the final prominence). Climb the final prominence and keep following the markings. Summit of the Plo del Naou (1,754 metres). The summit is marked with a little cement cairn. Go back the same way.*

* Access: From Payolle, climb up to the Col d'Aspin (1,489 metre). Park at the Col d'Aspin. This is the starting point.*

*Duration: 2 hours in total • Elevation gain: 270 metres • Markings: yellow and signs*

## **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.

## **The Vallée du Louron**

A pretty valley, discreet without being suppressed, tranquil without being sleepy, conservative without being backwards, innovative and yet respectful of its traditions and way of life. Cradled by majestic peaks, the lake reflects the myriad colours of this idyllic valley nestled between the Peyresoude and Val Louron-Azet cols. Villages are harmoniously scattered along the south-facing mountain sides. Each of them harbours an astonishing Romanesque chapel, precious treasures with splendid mural frescos painted to thank God for the lucrative trade in leather and wool between this French valley and its

Spanish neighbour after the discovery of the New World. These chapels, masterpieces that somehow survived the wars, are now listed as heritage monuments.

### **The Genos Loudenvielle Lake**

There are many lovely walks along the water's edge.

*📍 Length: 1 hour (circular) – Flat.*

### **Moulor tower and Génos château**

An easy, circular route that takes you through forests and fields, passing by the valley's defensive towers, and finishing up at the lake.

*📍 Length: 90 minutes (circular) - Starting point: Loudenvielle Tourist Office – Yellow markers*

### **★ BALNÉA**

#### **The biggest mountain spa**

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.

Making the most of their inimitable natural assets, the Pyrenees have designed a series of spa centres offering pools, Jacuzzis, hammams, saunas, body sculpting with hot stones, beds of bubbles, Ayurvedic massage, a musical bath, and much more. With their eight centres, the High Pyrenees are champions of balneotherapy and Balnéa is their top centre. Nestled in the heart of one of the most beautiful natural areas of the Hautes-Pyrenees on the banks of the Genos Loudenvielle Lake, Balnéa is not content with just doing good to body and mind. It offers pleasure to your eyes, which won't want to close, but would rather stay wide open gazing at the beauty of the Pyrenees.

**INCLUDED IN YOUR PACKAGE: 2 hours pass per person + towels. Reservation made in the name of HPTE.**

*📍 You can book a massage by phone +33 5 62 49 19 19 - On the bank of the Génos-Loudenvielle Lake. - [www.balnea.fr](http://www.balnea.fr) – Opening between 10am and 8pm.*

### **- BALNÉA -**

#### **A voyage to the four corners of the world**

On the edge of the lake and facing the mountains, the Balnea Spa immerses you in a universe of raw beauty and refinement. The spa waters are naturally warm, the inspiration comes from afar, and the relaxation techniques are varied.

- **The Roman area:** Let yourself go in a world of wellbeing. A lagoon of thermal water, massage jets and swan neck jets, musical baths, Jacuzzi baths, hamman, heated benches... the dome with its glass facades bathes the spa in a wonderful natural light and offer magnificent views over the surrounding countryside.

- **The American Indian area:** This space is perfect for families. Geysers, swimming against the current, waterfalls, Jacuzzis, water beds... All beneath the watchful eye of the totem poles.

- **The Tibetan area:** Peace and calm, this space is dedicated to the face and body. Mountain treatments using Arnica, massages with warm sesame seed oil and Tibetan bowls, Thai foot massage and Taiko yoga, traditional Indian massage.

- **In the Inca area** families can enjoy outdoor pools where the waters are at 37C, in a sumptuous decor of bamboo, temples and statues which transports you to Latin America, all to the backing of Peruvian pipe music.

Swimming against the current, jacuzzis, massage jets, and even a beach of stones to take a snow bath in winter... the pure pleasures of warm waters in a delightful and surprising setting.

- **The Onsen area:** Treat yourself to a taste of Japan. 3 outside pools at between 33 and 40 degrees with splendid views over the mountains, a Japanese zen garden, a Japanese pavilion with a room of cryotherapy, 2 saunas with dramatic mountain views.

### **The Mont village and its Roman chapel, listed Historical Monument**

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.

### **Mont Saint Calixte**

The Saint Calixte church is the finest example of Romanesque art in the Louron and dates from the eleventh century, it is dedicated to an Aragonese martyr. Legend has it that this Spanish nobleman and his companion Mercurial (honoured in Vielle Louron) died helping the Louron people fight the Moors. The Romanesque church at Mont has remarkable frescos from the sixteenth century including a superb representation of hell on the façade. The church is classified as a historical monument.

*📍 Access: - By the road towards Cazaux-Fréchet, from the col de Peyresourde.*

*- Walking from the Mont village: round trip by the same way, flat, 1h30 round trip.*

## Col de Peyresourde (1,569 m)

The pass is wide and the view is breathtaking. Don't hesitate, come on into this little wooden house, with its superb refreshment bar. 1 crepe: €0.60, 12 crepes: €7. Why not go for 12! While the crepes are being prepared, why not have a go at the owner's array of wooden Chinese puzzles.



### Recommended restaurants (information for the article) :

- **L'auberge de Germ:** A warm welcome and delicious cuisine in a natural setting. Chef Christophe's delicious blend of local produce and a Basque inspiration is a delightful combination.

*📍 Le Village - 65240 GERM - +33 05 62 40 03 97 - +33 06 23 18 64 49*

*Open every day in July and August - Other times closed on Sunday evenings and Monday lunchtimes*

- **L'Ardoise:** A cosy atmosphere combining wood, stone and slate. Very tasty, home-cooked food made with fresh, local produce.

*📍 4 Chemin de Rioutor - 65510 LOUDENVIELLE - +33 05 62 39 24 09*

*Restaurant closed until 29 June*

*Open every day in July and August - Other times closed on Wednesdays and Thursdays*

- **Au Buron in Loudenvielle:** A little outside the village, this restaurant is can go unnoticed - and that's a shame! The dishes are tasty, the produce is fresh and the staff are friendly.

*📍 2 Chemin De Saoussas, 65510 LOUDENVIELLE - +33 05 62 98 25 48*

*Open in July and August every day for lunch and dinner except Thursdays (all day).*

- **L'Oustaou in Loudenvielle:** Charlotte welcomes you to this old family farmhouse, now a restaurant. The restaurant offers simple, tasty dishes based on fresh local produce.

*📍 Place des Badalans - 65510 LOUDENVIELLE - +33 05 62 39 08 24*

*Open in July and August every day except Wednesdays - Other times closed on Tuesdays and Wednesdays*

- **La Table de Saoussas in Loudenvielle:** A friendly family restaurant. Delicious meals cooked with local produce. Take the opportunity to visit the pretty, rural mill across the road.

*📍 Chemin de Saoussas - 65510 LOUDENVIELLE - +33 05 62 99 96 40*



*Open every day in July and August - Other times closed on Sunday evenings and Mondays*

• **"Chez Rogé", Bistrot de Pays in Loudenvielle (bar only):** A real institution! Continuously open since 1930 by "Lulu" Roger, the restaurant was then taken over by Josette, his daughter. Claire, his granddaughter, and Laura and Flavie, his great-granddaughters are also part of the team. Holidaymakers and locals alike come here for a drink, a game of belote and to sing Pyrenean songs.

*📍 11 chemin de Clarabide - 65510 LOUDENVIELLE*

*Open every day*

## **Night with half-board included in Loudenvielle – Hotel Mercure Peyragudes Loudenvielle Pyrénées 4\***



### **YOUR ACCOMODATION**

#### **Hotel Mercure Peyragudes Loudenvielle Pyrénées 4\* in Loudenvielle**

Nestling among the peaks, in one of the most beautiful parts of the Pyrenees, between a high-altitude lake and a charming mountain village, the Mercure Peyragudes Loudenvielle 4\* hotel has all the makings of a luxury retreat.

It is built using local materials: stone, wood and slate. Inside, you'll find a warm, bohemian Pyrenean atmosphere, with a beautiful central fireplace and large sheepskin-covered armchairs arranged around low wooden tables.

Large windows open onto the terrace and its swimming pool with views of the mountains. The hotel's restaurant, "Les Copains", serves tasty, lavish local cuisine such as pan-fried Bigorre black pudding and trout caught in the Lac d'Oô.

On the other side of the river, Balnéa, the Balnéo centre, makes a strong impression with its outdoor lagoons. It's easy to reach from the footbridge that spans the river, so you can enjoy an open-air bath in the warm mountain water, with a view of the peaks.

**The hotel** has 62 rooms, including 2 family suites, most with balconies overlooking the mountains; 1 bar with fireplace; 1 heated outdoor swimming pool and a wellness area and Nuxe spa with massage by appointment; 1 ski room / 1 bike room; 1 restaurant offering gourmet cuisine with Pyrenean flavours.

All rooms are equipped with wifi, TV / chromecast, telephone, bathroom (bath or shower) and separate WC.

Complimentary mineral water in room, courtesy trays with tea/coffee, small fridge, safe. Internet facilities (RJ45 socket, ethernet socket in bedroom, fibre optic).

Cot available on request.

① HOTEL MERCURE PEYRAGUDES LOUDENVIELLE PYRÉNÉES- Chemin du Rioutor – 65510  
LOUDENVIELLE - 05 36 30 30 30 -<https://all.accor.com/hotel/B803/index.fr.shtm>

## ✘ DAY 4 – Sunday 23<sup>rd</sup> June

### COL DE VAL-LOURON AZET – ARAGON – VALLÉE DE CHISTAU – SAINT-LARY

DEPARTURE : LOUDENVIELLE >>> ARRIVAL : AZET

126 km / 2h40

#### ➡ Loudenvielle > Col de Val Louron-Azet > Plan > Gistain : 62 km / 1h20

Leave Loudenvielle heading for Génos. At Génos, follow the signs for the Val Louron-Azet pass. Cross the pass and descend on the opposite side, towards Saint-Lary, then Spain. Cross the border via the Bielsa-Aragnouet tunnel and follow the descent towards Ainsa as far as Salinas. In Salinas, turn left towards Chistau as far as Plan and then Gistain.

#### ➡ Gistain > Salinas: 17 km / 25 min

Leave Gistain and retrace your steps to Salinas.

#### ➡ Salinas > Saint-Lary: 41 km / 46 min

A Salinas, take the direction to the south until Ainsa.

#### ➡ Saint-Lary > Azet: 6 km / 9 min

Before entering Saint-Lary, turn right and follow the signs for Col de Val Louron-Azet as far as Azet.

#### **Worth the detour!**

Plan a diversion of 28 km of track (return) / 1h20. Head down the **Chistau valley**, past Plan, through various tunnels and then towards Saravillo. In Saravillo, follow the signs for "Ibon de Plan" on a forest track. Return by the same route.

.....  
*Today you'll be heading for Aragon, the Spanish side of the Pyrenees, to discover a valley that is overlooked by tourist guides: the **Chistau Valley**. The road winds its way through the gorges of the Río Zinqueta, which give little indication of the beauty of the landscape a few kilometres further on. The valley's abundance of beech, black pine and Scots pine forests, its torrents, its snowfields and the glacial remains in the highest parts make it an incomparable showcase of nature. A short stroll to "El ibon de Plan" (the Plan lake) will take you to a veritable jewel of the Pyrenees. Here, limestone cliffs compete with vast forests, high meadows and the water of the lake and stream to create a landscape of impressive*

*beauty unlike anything you've seen before. The walk is very accessible (40 minutes each way with very little difference in altitude). However, to reach the starting point, you need to follow a forest track for 14 km. The track is passable and does not require a 4x4, but you should allow a good 40 minutes' drive at a moderate pace on a dirt track (1h20 return). Nature in the Chistau valley is still wild and beautiful, but it has suffered from the onslaught of the civil war. Many houses were burnt down and fields ravaged by bombs.*

*The Chistau valley was a major staging post for opponents of Franco's regime who wanted to flee the country. They were called "maquis" because this was where they hid. They would take refuge in the San Mames hermitage, an hour's walk from San Juan, before fleeing to France. Local people acted as guides or smugglers, taking them to the border along mule tracks that only they knew.*

*At the end of the day, you'll reach your guest house in **Azet**, an attractive little village overlooking the **Aure valley**. On the way, stop off at the legendary resort of **Saint-Lary**.*

.....

## **Crossing into Spain**

Three short kilometres of tunnel dug into the belly of the Pyrenees and you've got a change of scenery. Welcome to Aragonese Spain. Here, everything is ochre, flooded with light from the powerful sun. Head for Ainsa, the capital of Sobrarbe, built on a promontory around the ancient castle. But don't miss out on some beautiful escapes.

### **Worth the detour!**

#### **La vallée de Pineta**

Just before Bielsa, turn right into the secret Pineta valley. You follow the river before being stopped by the giant Mont-Perdu, which rises to an altitude of 3,555 metres. You're at the end of the line, and the Hotel Parador offers you a pleasant stopover in a magnificent setting. Just on the other side of the stone wall is the monumental Cirque de Gavarnie.

This is the starting point for a lovely hike to the suspended Larri valley and its waterfall (see below)

*📍 Bielsa > Pineta Valley (Hotel Parador car park): 16 km / 24 min (return journey)*

## ★ **CHISTAU VALLEY**

At the foot of the Posets massif (3371m), this valley, which was once an enclave, is off the beaten tourist track. It retains all the charm of its lush green landscapes of high plateaux and woodland pines, with just three small stone villages in a series of steps. Lovers of tranquillity, welcome home. Time seems to slow down and sometimes stop. Here authenticity rhymes with serenity.

## Plan

The cobbled streets and ochre-orange stone houses are typical of the valley. With just over 200 inhabitants, Plan can boast of being the capital of Chistau. As you stroll through the village, find two houses to admire. These are Turmo and Ballarín. Further up the road, the village of San Juan de Plan is home to an ethnological museum. A large collection of traditional objects bears witness to the history of this rural Chistau valley.

## Gistain

Set on a mountainside, Gistain has retained all its charm and authenticity through the ages, like the little medieval fountain on the last bend before you arrive. Nicknamed "the village of three towers", they were once used to defend against barbarian invasions. Two of them are still visible in the village. One is at the casa El Tardan, a 16th-century fortified house, and the second at the church of San Vicente Mártir. Further north in the mountains, the hermitage of San Fabián houses the third on the banks of the River Cinqueta. A village of carpenters, a workshop run by two craftsmen is open to visitors, who can watch them at work on the wood.



### Recommended restaurants :

- **Casa Anita in San Juan de Plan** : A hotel restaurant serving traditional Aragonese cuisine. The dishes are tasty and prepared using produce from the hotel's garden. This is the restaurant with the best views. Ask for a table on the terrace. The terrace overlooks the garden and offers superb views of the mountains. French reception.

*📍 Calle Alta s/n - 22367 SAN JUAN DE PLAN - +34 974 506 211 - <https://hotelcasaanita.com> - Open daily for lunch and dinner except Mondays and Tuesdays*

- **La Capilleta in Plan** : Generous, refined local mountain cuisine with a bistro twist. Roadside brasserie. Reservations required.

*📍 Carretera San Juan de Plan, 7 - 22367 PLAN - +34 974 941 410 - [www.lacapilleta.es](http://www.lacapilleta.es) - Open Friday, Saturday and Sunday for lunch and dinner*

- **Casa Ruche in Plan** : Very good value for money for local cuisine and typical dishes with views of the mountains. Roadside brasserie.

*📍 Carretera San Juan de Plan - 22367 PLAN - +34 974 506 072 - [www.casaruche.com](http://www.casaruche.com) - Open from 15 June to 15 October every day for lunch and dinner - Other periods closed on Mondays and Tuesdays*

• **Casa Alvira in Gistain** : In this old building adjoining the church, simplicity rhymes with authenticity. Traditional cuisine and a pleasant setting make this an ideal place for lunch.

① *Calle Mayor, 18 - 22367 GISTAIN - +34 974 506 078 - [www.casaalvira.com](http://www.casaalvira.com) - Open from 2 June to 31 October every day for lunch and dinner - Other times open on Fridays, Saturdays and Sundays for lunch and dinner.*

### 📌 Our good ideas :

• **Mirador de la Cruz de Puyadase** : On the heights of Gistain, a dirt track leads to a unique viewpoint over the Posets-Maladeta massif. An orientation table helps you spot the surrounding peaks.

① *Accessible by car from Gistain. Signpost indicating the viewpoint.*

• **Ibón de Plan Lake** : This little jewel in the heart of the Cotiella massif contrasts with the steep limestone walls and lush green coniferous forests. If there's a walk in the valley to recommend, this one is well worth the climb. Especially given the short walk involved (just 40 minutes round trip)

① *Hiking map (in French) included in the travel pack. Leaving Plan on the A-2609 towards Bielsa, turn left towards Saravillo. Go through Saravillo and continue along the forest track towards Ibón de Plan and the Lavasar refuge (14 km of forest track passable by car). Duration: 40min return journey. Difference in altitude: 100m D+. Difficulty: easy.*

## La Vallée d'Aure

Without doubt the most exotic valley in the Pyrenees! With its three kilometres of tunnels cut into the mountain's belly, it offers direct access to Spanish Aragon: ochre-coloured villages, powerful sunshine, landscapes flooded with light, rios with crystal-clear waters... And on the French side of the valley, there's plenty to see and do. Starting with the famous and legendary resort of Saint-Lary. The village and its neighbours have a distinct and welcoming identity. The Louron valley, its little neighbour, is full of surprises. And the Néouvielle Reserve promises wonders for those who venture happily along the Route des Lacs de Haute Montagne.

## Saint-Lary

At 830 meters in height, the village is opened on the mountains and really sunny. Very famous in the Pyrenees, Saint-Lary attracts a lot of visitors. Very led, he offers a large range of shops, restaurants, tapas bars, etc. But it kept preserved all the Pyrenean charm with its slate roofs, stony facades and half-timberings.



## Recommended restaurants (information for the article) :

- **Le Böbby in Saint-Lary** : A favourite for many as much for its atmosphere, decor and welcome as for the quality of its cuisine. The place is a great success. It hits all the right notes!

*① 1 route d'Autun - 65170 SAINT LARY SOULAN - +33 06 79 75 08 78*

- **La Grange at Saint-Lary-Soulan** : Described in the Michelin Guide as: « a chic and welcoming restaurant with a resolutely mountain atmosphere. The exquisite, well-flavoured cuisine is made with excellent regional produce and includes trout tartare, local lamb chops and prune tart. An excellent restaurant. »

*① 13, Route d'Autun - 65170 Saint-Lary-Soulan - +33 (0)5 62 40 07 14*

- **La Pergola at Saint-Lary-Soulan** : 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.

*① 25 Rue Vincent Mir - 65 170 Saint-Lary-Soulan - +33 (0)5 62 39 40 46*

- **La Mangeoire at Saint-Lary-Soulan** : The chef 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.

*① 18 route de Soulan - 65170 Saint-Lary-Soulan -+33 (0)5 62 99 50 20*

## Night with half-board included in Azet – Bed&Breakfast Maison Seignou



### YOUR ACCOMODATION

#### Bed&Breakfast Maison Seignou in Loudenvielle

A renovated former barn, this guest house owes its name to its history. Several generations of the family have lived here, right up to the new generation, who will tell you the story in a warm, contemporary mountain setting. Let yourself be tempted by the charm of the surroundings and the relaxation of the spa and massage facilities.

Savour our authentic gourmet cuisine at the table d'hôtes, for breakfast, picnics and gourmet snacks.

The rooms are south-facing, with panoramic views of the high peaks.

*① MAISON SEIGNOU – 8 Cami du Sarradet – 65170 AZET - 05 62 39 19 03 - [www.maisonseignou.fr](http://www.maisonseignou.fr)*

## ✘ DAY 5 – Monday 24<sup>th</sup> June

### ROUTE DES LACS DE HAUTE MONTAGNE – RÉSERVE NATURELLE NATIONALE DU NÉOUVIELLE

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*It is departure day. Before leaving, we suggest you take **La Route des Lacs de Haute Montagne** to discover one of the most beautiful lakeside landscapes in the mountain range: **Néouvielle National Nature Reserve** and its countless lakes.*

*Take the time to explore this beautiful reserve, dive into this exotic nature, follow the paths that will take you from lake to lake through the pine forests and flower-filled meadows and enjoy the smell of the pine trees... Created in 1936, well before the Pyrénées National Park, the distinctive characteristic of this natural reserve - one of the oldest in France - is that it is home to the highest concentration of lakes in the Pyrenees. They are scattered throughout the landscape and form a string of pretty blue mirrors that sparkle in the midst of meadows, rhododendrons, and the tallest mountain pines in Europe. Home to marmots, this protected area is also a haven for many other wild species. You may spot a bearded vulture swirling above **Néouvielle**, the peak of the French Pyrenees.*

*We hope you've had a lovely stay and that you have made some good memories. The Pyrenees contains many other wonders that we would be happy to share with you for another trip.*

*See you soon !*

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#### ➡ Azet > Saint-Lary : 6 km / 8 min

Continue down the Val Louron-Azet pass to Saint-Lary.

#### ➡ Saint-Lary > Fabian : 9 km / 11 min

Before entering Saint-Lary, follow the signs for Spain. At Fabian, turn right towards Route des lacs de haute montagne.

#### ➡ High mountain lakes route / 'Route des lacs de haute montagne' (Fabian > Lac d'Orédon) : 11 km / 20 min

Follow the signs for "Route des lacs" on the D929 to the car park at Lac d'Orédon. Return by the same route.

#### ★ THE HIGH MOUNTAIN LAKES ROUTE

The highest lakes route in the Pyrenees takes you to Lac de Cap-de-Long (2,161 m), Lac d'Orédon (1,849 m), Lac d'Aumar (2,192 m) and Lac d'Aubert (2,148 m). You'll find

yourself on the edge of the Pyrenees National Park, in the heart of the Néouvielle National Nature Reserve, a small wonderland. A real must-see!

*① From Fabian, the road climbs to a crossroads:*

- *On the left: towards the Cap-de-Long dam, on your way in or out. Free access.*
- *On your right: the car park at Lac d'Orédon (1849 m.)*

*From Orédon a second road leads to Lac d'Aumar (2192 m) and Lac d'Aubert (2148 m). This second route is regulated from June to September to preserve the site. Access to the Aumar and Aubert lakes is therefore closed to private vehicles from 9.30am to 6pm. You can leave your car in the car park at Lac d'Orédon.*

*From mid-June to mid-September, from 9.30am to 6pm, there is a bus service to the Aumar and Aubert lakes. Rotation every 30 minutes or so from the Oredon car park and last return at 6pm from Lac d'Aubert.*

*Single ticket: €4; Return ticket: €7; Free for children under 6. This bus can accommodate people with reduced mobility. Tickets can be purchased at the car park toll booth.*

*Downhill traffic is possible all day long.*

*To reach the Aumar and Aubert lakes on foot, follow the "La rondes des lacs" path.*

*Allow 1 hour 30 mins for the walk. Difference in altitude: 300 m. Easy level.*

### **The monumental Cap-de-Long dam**

A monumental dam over 100 m high, it forms one of the largest water reservoirs in the Pyrenees. Like a real fjord, it is bordered by the cliffs of the Pic du Néouvielle. Forty kilometres of tunnels dug into the mountain drain the water from the dam to supply the Pragnères hydroelectric power station in the neighbouring Gavarnie valley.

It took seven years of work (between 1946 and 1953) and more than 6,000 workers to build this exceptional structure.

*① Before stopping at the Orédon car park (or when leaving the car park), continue to the Cap-de-Long dam. The road takes you there in less than 10 minutes, winding its way up a series of beautiful switchbacks.*

### **Neouvielle National Nature Reserve**

How many are there? Several dozen? A hundred? No one has ever been able to count the lakes in this nature reserve. They are scattered throughout the landscape and form a string of pretty blue mirrors that sparkle in the midst of the mountain pines, meadows and rhododendrons. It is an enchanting landscape with its mix of a wide range of green and turquoise-blue shades. But in Néouvielle, the animals also guarantee a show. The most unobtrusive lives in the streams. It is called the Pyrenean brook salamander. This strange animal is a sort of large newt and boasts of being a contemporary of the dinosaurs. More



common creatures such as solitary foxes, Pyrenean chamois, marmots, griffon vultures and bearded vultures, common frogs, and common midwife toads inhabit this land of wonders.

### **Our good idea :**

• **The lakes circuit :** A superb circular walk following a string of lakes and pools amongst mountain pines, rhododendrons and granite rocks. From the Lac d'Orédon car park (1856m) take the path that leads up to the left of the road that runs alongside the lake. The path goes through a pine wood before meeting the Col d'Aubert road at a bend (45 mins). Take the path to Les Laquettes on the left. The path goes through scrubland before it reaches the first of the Laquettes. A beautiful and astonishing landscape opens out before you with the Laquettes strung out like dabs of azure surrounded by cropped grass and mountain pines. A little paradise. At the end of the Laquettes, the path rises to the right to reach Lac d'Aubert (2,150m) and its surprising peninsula. To reach the next lake, follow a wide path towards the car park. And you're there. Splendid. Lac d'Aumar (2,198m - 1½ hours) is laid out surrounded by close-cropped grass beneath the Pic de Néouvielle. To come back, you can follow the same route in the opposite direction. If you want to walk back, follow the path along the right bank of Lac d'Aumar until you get to the spillway and cross the footbridge.

Carry straight on through the Passades d'Aumar pine forest towards Col d'Estoudou (2,260m). Just before the pass, turn right and go down through the forest to the mountain refuge, then on to the Orédon car park (3 hours 45 mins).

*Takes 3 hours 45 mins • Climb: 300 metres - Level: easy - Suitable for families. Start and finish: Lac d'Orédon car park.*

***If you come back via the same route, plan for 2 hours of walking and an elevation gain of 300 m. "Easy" level.***

### **Recommended restaurants :**

• **Refuge d'Orédon:** Nestling among the mountain pines, on the edge of the lake with a pretty panoramic terrace. The cuisine is simple but always based on local produce. Virginie's blueberry crêpe is our favourite! Please note that the refuge is not equipped with a credit card terminal.

* Lac d'Orédon - 65170 ARAGNOUET - +33 06 23 05 72 60*

*Open from June to September (weekends and public holidays in May)*



## USEFULL INFORMATIONS

### CONTACTS

**Anna Fontan** - anna.fontan@ha-py.fr - +33 6 67 76 99 43

**Mickael Louit** - mickael.louit@ha-py.fr - +33 6 21 03 80 06



**Birgitte Reimers** - birgitte.reimers@crtoccitanie.fr - +33 6 10 30 86 52



05 62 56 70 00

laboutique@ha-py.fr

**[www.pyrenees-trip.com](http://www.pyrenees-trip.com)**

**[www.tourisme-hautes-pyrenees.com](http://www.tourisme-hautes-pyrenees.com)**

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