



the meridian way: heart of the pyrenees

active europe for you

GRADE:



Founded in 1973, Sherpa Expeditions is specialised in self-guided and escorted holidays throughout Europe and across the globe. We offer a wide range of self-guided inn-to-inn walking and cycling tours, escorted walks, as well as Walker's Britain, a pioneering collection of over 20 British walking tours which include the Coast-to-Coast Trail and Hadrian's Wall. We have refined self-guided holidays to an art. Over many years, our leaders, local representatives and clients have all contributed to the detailed trail notes provided to walkers, making them the definitive guide to the areas we visit, which includes 16 iconic European walking destinations across France, Spain, Italy, Cyprus and much more. Sherpa Expeditions has now joined forces with UTracks <<http://www.utracks.com>> and the World Expeditions Travel Group <<http://www.worldexpeditions.com>> to bring you the most exciting and extensive range of active European holidays available, all at great value. This means you have access to over 300 active itineraries covering more than 25 European countries, from Iceland to Greece, and from Ireland to Cyprus. UTracks offers affordable, self-guided and small group-guided active holidays across Europe. Choose from a wide variety of quintessential European outdoor experiences from trekking the French Alps, cycling through Tuscany, exploring the islands of Greece, Croatia or Turkey by bike and ship, making a pilgrimage along the Compostela Trail, or discovering the lesser known trails in Bulgaria, Romania, and Slovenia. UTracks offers many family-friendly itineraries and can also tailor make tours for private groups. Cycling or walking, 2-star or 4-star, small groups or self-guided, land or sea, introductory level or more challenging - Sherpa Expeditions and UTracks can help you explore Europe exactly the way you want.

TRIP COST

Joining Lourdes : \$1650

Trip Concludes: Gavarnie

All prices are per person

OPTIONS & SUPPLEMENTS

→ single supplement: \$260

→ single traveller surcharge: \$360

As the trip price is based on twinshare, a single supplement is payable if a single room is required - or a single traveller supplement if you are travelling solo*. Please refer to the price options for costs or ask our office for details.

Note regarding single rooms - The single supplement guarantees the privacy of your own room, however, rooms can at times be small and in some places may not enjoy the same facilities as double/twin rooms.

...*The single traveller surcharge is only available on trips deemed suitable for solo travellers. It is usually more expensive than the single supplement due to the extra cost for luggage transfers and organisation.

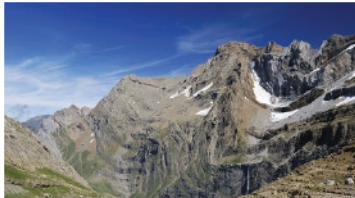
TRIP NAME:	THE MERIDIAN WAY: HEART OF THE PYRENEES
TRIP CODE:	JMX
TRIP DURATION:	8 DAYS
GRADE TEXT:	MODERATE TO CHALLENGING - 4
ACTIVITY:	SELF-GUIDED WALKING
ACCOMMODATION:	7 NIGHTS HOTELS
DATE DETAILS:	DAILY FROM 15 MAY TO 24 OCT



highlights

- Hike part of the famous GR10, the 700 kms footpath from the Atlantic to the Mediterranean
- Walk into the heart of the Pyrénées
- Visit the World Heritage site of the Cirque de Gavarnie
- Optional walk to the Breche de Roland





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the trip

A fascinating trip following the Meridian Way, a route that closely follows the International Greenwich Meridian through the French département of the Hautes Pyrénées. Starting in the attractive foothills the route builds up to a climax at Gavarnie in the heart of the mountains with a visit to the dramatic Cirque de Gavarnie, a World Heritage site. Some of the route follows part of the famous long distance trail GR10, a 700 kms route from the Atlantic to the Mediterranean. When the Greenwich Meridian was agreed upon as the international standard in 1884 the fact that it passed through some of the most impressive scenery in the French Pyrénées was probably not a major consideration. However the new Meridian Way allows us to explore this spectacular area. Our trip starts at the famous pilgrimage town of Lourdes from where we take a funicular railway to the summit of the Pic du Jer (890 m) where there are excellent views looking back over the town. From the summit we follow a network of paths and tracks above the east side of the main river, the Gave du Pau, before dropping down to the attractive spa town of Argelès-Gazost for the second night. The following day we climb old shepherds' tracks to the picturesque village of St Savin where there is a 12th Century abbey church. We continue along the valley side before dropping down to Pierrefitte Nestalas where a bus ride takes us up through the narrow gorge to Luz St. Sauveur with time to visit the town and fortified "Templar" church. Two nights are spent here giving the option of a rest day and time to visit the local spa facilities or take a short bus ride to the village of Barèges for a delightful walk down the Bastan valley back to Luz St. Sauveur mainly following the GR10. The next day we again follow the GR10 to Gèdre, a small village in a magnificent location with soaring mountains on three sides. Heading south from Gèdre we approach Gavarnie via footpaths crossing high summer pastures before descending into the village. Two nights at Gavarnie give time for a visit to the Cirque de Gavarnie, a natural amphitheatre some 1400 metres from top to bottom, and the Grande Cascade with a 423 metre drop – the longest in Europe. Local transport can be arranged to the Col des Tentes for the fitter to visit the famous Brèche de Roland (2807 m) a 100 metre by 40 metre "doorway" into Spain and then walk down to the Cirque de Gavarnie.



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itinerary at a glance

Day 1	Arrive Lourdes
Day 2	Lourdes to Argelès-Gazost - 20 km/12.5 miles, 5.5 h +370m
Day 3	Argelès-Gazost to Luz St. Sauveur - 14 km/8.7 miles, 4.5 h +650m
Day 4	Explore Luz St. Sauveur - 15 km/9.3 miles, 4.5 h +250m/-800m
Day 5	Luz St. Sauveur to Gèdre - 15 km/9.3 miles, 4.5 h +650m
Day 6	Gèdre to Gavarnie - 20 km/12.5 miles, 6 h +930m or 13 km/8 miles, 4 h +650m
Day 7	Explore Gavarnie
Day 8	Arrangements end after breakfast

detailed itinerary

DAY 1	Arrive Lourdes <p>Make your own way to Lourdes. Try and find time to explore this extraordinary pilgrimage town and the area around the grotto where Bernadette is reported to have seen the apparitions of the Virgin Mary on many occasions. Lourdes is the largest Catholic pilgrimage destination in France and one of the most popular Catholic shrines in the world. The small town of only 17,000 inhabitants receives more than 5 million pilgrims and tourists each year. The Sanctuary of Our Lady of Lourdes incorporates 52 hectares of property and 22 places of worship, including a sacred grotto, two basilicas, and a variety of buildings for pilgrims and the sick. Outside the sanctuary, many pilgrims also visit the home of the young visionary, St. Bernadette.</p> <p>Accommodation: Your first night is spent in a 3 star hotel in a quiet area of the town not far from the Gave du Pau River.</p> <p>meals: D</p>
DAY 2	Lourdes to Argelès-Gazost - 20 km/12.5 miles, 5.5 h +370m <p>From the hotel it is a short walk across to the lower station of the funicular railway that takes you up almost to the summit of the Pic de Jer (890m) from where there are excellent views looking back over the town. From the summit follow a network of paths and tracks above the East side of the main river, the Gave du Pau. After passing through a number of typically Pyrenean villages, drop down to the attractive spa town of Argelès-Gazost.</p> <p>Accommodation: Our 2 star hotel has a pleasant garden area and a large and popular restaurant.</p> <p>meals: B,D</p>
DAY 3	Argelès-Gazost to Luz St. Sauveur - 14 km/8.7 miles, 4.5 h +650m <p>From the hotel it is a short walk to the edge of the town from where a path climbs through the mixed deciduous forest to reach the grazing land above. A combination of easy tracks and quiet roads take you through to the cobbled main street of St Savin where it is possible to visit the impressive 12th Century abbey church and perhaps enjoy a drink at the café opposite the Post Office. The route continues past the Chapelle de Piétat where there are excellent views back to St Savin and then climbs again to a former hermitage the Chapelle de Poueyaspé. Descending through the forest of mainly beech the route arrives at a cycle way, which you follow through a tunnel to the town of Pierrefitte. From here you catch a bus to take you through the narrow gorge to Luz St Sauveur.</p> <p>Accommodation: Spend two nights in a traditional family run 2 star hotel.</p> <p>meals: B,D</p>





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DAY 4 Explore Luz St. Sauveur - 15 km/9.3 miles, 4.5 h +250m/-800m

With two nights at Luz St. Sauveur it is possible to have a day off and enjoy the town which has plenty of shops, cafés and restaurants. The ruined castle of Sainte-Marie can be visited as well as the unusual fortified 12th Century "Templar" church of Saint André. The spa facilities may also tempt those with aching legs! For those who prefer a more energetic day a short bus ride up to the village of Barèges takes you to the start of a lovely walk mainly following the GR10 through the Bastan valley back to Luz.

meals: B,D

DAY 5 Luz St. Sauveur to Gèdre - 15 km/9.3 miles, 4.5 h +650m

Within half an hour of leaving the hotel at Luz the route following the GR10 takes you over the impressive Pont Napoleon, which in one graceful arch spans the gorge and river 66 metres below. After climbing through the forest and past a series of waterfalls the route reaches the Croix de Sia on a promontory overlooking the valley. From here follow the GR10 up the valley for another 1.5 hours before using a combination of tracks and quiet roads to reach the village of Gèdre.

Accommodation: The night is spent in a 3 star hotel which is one of the oldest dwellings in the village with mountain view from most of the bedrooms.

meals: B,D

DAY 6 Gèdre to Gavarnie - 20 km/12.5 miles, 6 h +930m or 13 km/8 miles, 4 h +650m

A quiet road, which becomes a dirt track leads you away from Gèdre back to the GR10. The route then climbs through a beech & fir forest to reach high summer pasture land with stunning views in all directions. The route crosses the Plateau de Saugé with views ahead of the Cirque de Gavarnie growing larger by the minute. The final descent into the village of Gavarnie ends a memorable day best rounded off with a cold drink on the terrace of one of the several cafés. The shorter walking option takes a more direct route from Gèdre to the Plateau de Saugé.

Accommodation: Your last two nights are spent in a comfortable 2 star hotel located in the heart of the village facing the cirque.

meals: B,D

DAY 7 Explore Gavarnie

You have a full day to explore this spectacular area. Detailed route notes are provided for four alternative walks. An excellent circular walk taking in the Cirque de Gavarnie and the slopes above both sides of the valley not only crosses the Greenwich Meridian twice but has a couple of shortcut options too. 12km – 18 km/ 660m – 930m ascent/ 4 - 5.5 h. Alternatively it is possible to hire a taxi to the Col de Tentes (2208m) and walk back to the village of Gavarnie taking in the famous Brèche de Roland or more directly by the delightful Pouey Aspé valley. 16 kms/ 660m or 500m ascent/1400m or 1300m descent/ 6 hrs or 5.5 h.

meals: B,D

DAY 8 Arrangements end after breakfast

Depart Gavarnie after breakfast

meals: B

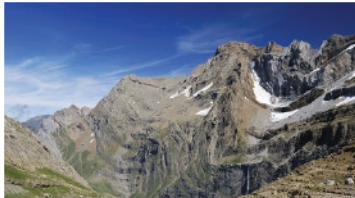
additional supplements

At the time of booking we aim to offer our usual choice of accommodation, however if these are not available then alternatives are used (and on occasion a small supplement may apply). If these are of a different standard and / or a supplement applies you will be informed on confirmation of your booking.

inclusions

- 7 breakfasts, 7 dinners
- 7 nights accommodation in 2-3 star hotels on a twin share basis





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- Luggage transfer
- Information pack including route notes & maps
- Emergency hotline

items not included

- Lunches & beverages
- Entrance fees
- Travel insurance
- Travel to the start and from the end point of the trip
- Transport within the tour approx. €50 - funicular, bus to Luz & Bareges, taxi day 7
- Personal expenses such as laundry and phone calls
- Unscheduled transfers required during the trip

trip grading - moderate to challenging

This is a very subjective matter on this tour. Sherpa walking grades presume a certain standard common to similar tours and an individual's perception of their own fitness in relation to a grading will vary. (Grade 4) The walking on this tour is varies between moderate and quite challenging. A reasonable level of fitness, a reasonable head for heights and an ability to cope on rocky paths is required on some days. You need good boots throughout the tour: The trails are generally good, but on occasion there are steep or winding sections of loose limestone shingle. Carry plenty of drinking water and adequate protection against the sun, including a sun hat. There are steep ascents / descents sometimes in hot weather. You will need to take care walking on this tour. Day stages: In the region of 12km to 20km per day with average altitude gains of 500m (maximum 800 m). 5 to 6 hours walking per day for most people. Slow walkers will take longer.

way marking

The trail follows in the main well-established paths, much of the way being waymarked with the distinctive white/red/white GR (Grande Randonnee) waymarks and presents no special difficulties. Other sections have yellow or red paint marks. A compass and the skill to use it can be desirable at one or two points.

route notes

Please note that one set of route notes per room booked is included in the cost of the holiday. If you require more sets of notes then there is a charge of £30 per set ordered. For bookings received four weeks or less prior to the tour departure, courier fees may be applicable to ensure you receive your final documentation in time. As rates are variable, please contact your consultant for details. Sherpa will try to avoid these costs where possible.

meal inclusions

7 breakfast and 7 evening meals are included. Picnic lunches are not included in the tour cost but are available from hotels or provisions can be bought from local shops before setting off for the day. We indicate in the route notes where there are suitable restaurants or cafes for lunch stops, or recommend you carry food if there are none convenient to the trail. In countries such as France breakfast is usually coffee and toast/bread/croissant, if you want more for breakfast then we would suggest you purchase some food the night before. Special Dietary Requirements: It is important for you to tell us if you have any dietary requirements when you book your holiday so that we can inform everyone that you are staying with.

dietary requirements

Provided we are advised in advance we are able to cater for vegetarian diets and can assist with medically recommended diets (allergies and intolerances). Please ensure you discuss your requirements with us well in advance to determine whether we can cater on your chosen adventure. Please note that options are likely to be limited in remote locations or alternatives may be more expensive or unavailable. There may be times when those with special requirements may need to provide their own food. Passengers must travel with all necessary medications for food allergies and be capable of self-administering these medications.





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accommodation

DURING TOUR

Accommodation is on a half board basis in 2* or 3* hotels. The hotels described are our usual choice of accommodation, however if these are not available then alternatives are used and if these are of a different standard you will be informed at the time of booking. Baths/showers: Many rooms with ensuite/private facilities have a shower rather than a bath, usually because of limited space. Some hotels/guesthouses may however have a separate room in the house where a bath is available to guests.

check in/out

It is generally normal practice when staying in hotels that you check-in on or after 2pm and checkout by 10am the following morning. Guesthouses/bed & breakfast establishments are normally check-in on or after 4pm and checkout by 10am.

luggage

We do not offer porter service on our holidays. You must be able to move your own luggage to and from your rooms. This more than likely involve stairs as many of the properties we stay in do not have lifts. Sometimes your luggage will have been taken to your room awaiting your arrival however do not be surprised if it is waiting for you to take up to your room and you are asked to bring it down again the next morning.

language

When travelling in less frequented areas you will not necessarily come across people speaking English. Remember you are experiencing a different culture, buy a phrase book and try to learn a little of the local language!

getting there

BY CAR

The hotel does not have any private parking available, as is the case with many hotels in Lourdes. However, just across the river from the hotel is a large free car park.

BY TRAIN

Eurostar St Pancras to Paris and then train to Lourdes or trains from Toulouse, Pau & Bayonne to Lourdes. End of tour: Taxi or bus from Gavarnie to Lourdes train station.

BY AIR

The nearest International Airport is Lourdes though with limited direct services. From Toulouse Airport, take the airport shuttle to the train station where you catch the train to Lourdes.

insurance

All clients must have appropriate cover for the activities included for the duration of our trip.

fast facts

COUNTRIES VISITED

France





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VISAS

Visas not required for citizens of Australia, Canada, USA and New Zealand for up to 90 days in a period of 180 days for all Schengen countries (see www.schengenvisainfo.com/schengen-visa-countries-list/ for countries part of the Schengen). Please ensure your passport is stamped on arrival in the Schengen area. For all other nationalities and for longer stays in countries covered by the Schengen Agreement (Australian New Zealand, Canadian and US passport holders), please contact the relevant embassy. Stays of longer than 90 days in the Schengen area require a long stay visa for the country you are spending most time in. However long stay visas are unlikely to be issued unless there is a valid reason (eg. studying in country). Unfortunately we cannot assist in obtaining visas for long stays due to individual country visa requirements.

MIN GROUP SIZE	1
MAX GROUP SIZE	10

how to book

To book this trip go to our website to make a booking online or download our booking form. A booking form can also be found at the back of our Active Europe brochure. If you complete a paper booking form, email, fax or post the form to our office – contact details can be found on our website.

e-newsletter

To keep up to date with our new and exciting adventure opportunities, special promotions and adventure news, subscribe to our monthly e-newsletter! You can do this on line through our website, www.sherpa-walking-holidays.co.uk or contact our office.

social networks

You can make sure you are up to date with all our latest information by liking, following or pinning us on the following social networks:

facebook.com/Sherpa-Expeditions <<http://www.facebook.com/Sherpa-Expeditions>>

http://twitter.com/Sherpa_Exp or @Sherpa_Exp <http://twitter.com/Sherpa_Exp>

www.pinterest.com/sherpaexp <<http://www.pinterest.com/sherpaexp>>

IMPORTANT NOTE

THESE TRIP NOTES REPRESENT THE MOST CURRENT INFORMATION AVAILABLE FOR THIS ITINERARY, AND SUPERSEDE ANY INFORMATION DETAILED IN THE CURRENT BROCHURE, INCLUDING BUT NOT LIMITED TO THE ITINERARY AND PRICE.

