



the way of st. james

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 Le Puy-en-Velay : \$2090

Trip Concludes: Conques

All prices are per person

OPTIONS & SUPPLEMENTS

→ single supplement: \$520

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.

*Solo Traveller Supplements are payable when the cost per bag of moving luggage increases. Please ask us for costs if you are a solo traveller.

TRIP NAME:	THE WAY OF ST. JAMES
TRIP CODE:	JPT
TRIP DURATION:	12 DAYS
GRADE TEXT:	MODERATE TO CHALLENGING - 4
ACTIVITY:	SELF-GUIDED WALKING
ACCOMMODATION:	11 NIGHTS HOTEL/GUESTHOUSE
DATE DETAILS:	DAILY FROM 1 MAY TO 6 OCT



highlights

- Walking Through the Auvergne & Languedoc
- Ancient Pilgrim's Route
- Classic Landscapes of Rural France
- Historic Le Puy and Conques

the trip

This was one of our original hotel treks and has been a consistently popular tour over the past twenty years for those who love rural France and wish to visit some of its more unusual, less visited landscapes. The route covers a large swathe of the uplands of the Massif Central taking a path that the early Pilgrims walked on their way to Santiago de Compostela in Spain - one of the great journeys of history. Obviously this is just a 200km section of that 1700 km route. It goes up and down valley through some of the marvelous remote bucolic countryside of the Massif Central, including the plateau of the Aubrac, with its amazing drystone walls that resemble parts of the Yorkshire Dales, then there is the valley of the Lot and the green hills of the Aveyron. In spring the fields are festooned with a tapestry of flowers including Alpine varieties. This is a walk in deepest France, for those who really want a bit of peace and quiet away from it all, a flavour of the past with a dose of religious history and the echoes of The Hundred Year War. The accommodation in some cases is fairly simple - one and two star hotels, reflecting the nature of the country we are traveling through, but if two words aptly describe this route it would be rustic and charming. There is also the sense of achievement that comes with completing a Grande Randonnee, in this case the GR65.





itinerary at a glance

Day 1	Arrive Le Puy-en-Velay
Day 2	Le Puy to St Privat d'Allier - 23.5 km/14.6 miles, 5 - 6 h
Day 3	St Privat d'Allier to Saugues - 19 km/11.8 miles, 4 - 5 h
Day 4	Saugues to les Faux - 27.5 km/17.8 miles, 6 - 7 h
Day 5	Les Faux to Aumont - 21 km/13 miles, 5 - 6 h
Day 6	Aumont to Nasbinals - 26 km/16. miles, 7 - 8 h
Day 7	Nasbinals to St Chely d'Aubrac - 17 km/10.5 miles, 4 - 5 h
Day 8	St Chely d'Aubrac to St Come d'Olt - 16 km/10 miles, 4 - 5 h
Day 9	St Come d'Olt to Estaing - 17 km/10.5 miles, 4 - 5 h
Day 10	Estaing to Golin hac - 16 km/10 miles, 4 - 5 h
Day 11	Golin hac to Conques - 21.5 km/13 miles, 5 - 6 h
Day 12	Arrangements end after breakfast

detailed itinerary

DAY 1	Arrive Le Puy-en-Velay
	<p>For your first nights accommodation you stay in the historic city of Le Puy. Le Puy is a wonderful town to explore and you may wish to add an extra night. Its most striking attraction is the Cathédrale Notre-Dame du Puy, dating chiefly from the first half of the 12th century. Each morning, pilgrims gather at the cathedral to be blessed before starting their journey to Santiago de Compostela. The cathedral has been a Unesco World Heritage Site since 1998, as part of the "Routes of Santiago de Compostela in France". The iron statue of Notre-Dame de France (The Virgin Mary) overlooking the town was designed by the French sculptor Jean-Marie Bonnassieux, and is made from 213 Russian cannons taken in the Siege of Sevastopol (1854–1855). Fountain Crozatier is also worth visiting in the centre of town.</p> <p>Accommodation: This elegant and well equipped 3 star hotel is centrally situated a short walk from the train station. All rooms have en suite facilities.</p> <p>meals: D</p>
DAY 2	Le Puy to St Privat d'Allier - 23.5 km/14.6 miles, 5 - 6 h
	<p>Climb out of Le Puy onto a plateau overlooking a winding ravine type valley. Pass through black basalt villages like La Roche, then cross a watershed to reach St Privat, perched above the Allier gorge with its much modified castle dating from the Hundred Years War. St Privat d'Allier is a quiet village of 200 inhabitants.</p> <p>Accommodation: 1 star medium-sized Logis de France listed hotel. Rooms are basic, but there is a lovely old restaurant with green lentils the local specialty.</p> <p>meals: B,D</p>



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DAY 3 St Privat d'Allier to Saugues - 19 km/11.8 miles, 4 - 5 h

Much of the day is spent crossing the valley of the River Allier; starting with a level walk to Rochegude, where the Saint Jacques chapel dominates the Allier pass, providing beautiful views. Descend to the river at Monistrol (Romanesque church) and climb steeply up the other side past some striking geological formations. Easy tracks across an agrarian and forest plateau at about 1000m take you to Saugues, the meeting-point for all pilgrims coming from the Auvergne. This town features in the history of the Hundred Years war and in the 1700s as a marshalling point for hunters of the giant man eating wolves that terrorized the region for a few years.

Accommodation: 2 star Logis de France small hotel with 17 rooms. A lovely atmosphere and shaded terrace.

meals: **B,D**

DAY 4 Saugues to les Faux - 27.5 km/17.8 miles, 6 - 7 h

Stick closely to the route the pilgrims took as you start off through the tiny hamlet of Pinet where many of the pilgrims stayed. Gradually climb up the valley and follow the Villange River upstream to Clauze with its ancient tower impossibly still clinging to a boulder - the remains of a 12th century castle. The walk is long but not steep through wooded landscapes, moors of broom pine woods and meadows enclosed by granite posts. Head off into forests and around a huge estate called Le Sauvage with its massive solid stone barns, ramps and courtyard. Interesting dammed ponds kept water supplied to the place. On the way you pass the pilgrim's chapel at St. Roch, before detouring off the GR route to a pleasant rural stay at the small village of Les Faux.

Accommodation: A small village hotel with 13 rooms about 1 km off the route. The rooms normally ensuite with either a bath or shower. A couple of rooms however have shared facilities. Set in the quiet picturesque hilly area over the River Limagnole, it is nice to sit with a cool drink in the garden.

meals: **B,D**

DAY 5 Les Faux to Aumont - 21 km/13 miles, 5 - 6 h

You make your way to the village of St Alban with its Romanesque church dating back to the 11th century and interesting chateau which has been partially restored. Climb upwards for a couple of hours, into rolling bucolic landscapes, enjoying the views of St Alban and the lush Limagnole Valley. You emerge on to the Margeride plateau at around 900m, before descending down to Aumont a pleasant market town with a beautiful church. A fine little town - one of those delightful undiscovered parts of France.

Accommodation: 2 star small modern hotel in the centre of the town. The rooms are ensuite and the hotel has a lovely restaurant.

meals: **B,D**

DAY 6 Aumont to Nasbinals - 26 km/16. miles, 7 - 8 h

The walk starts off through the small town with its 16th and 17th century houses, until joining a forest path. Pass through the villages of La Chaze and Lasbros where you start to cross the vast and remote plateau of Aubrac. This is a desolate region of wild flowers, dry stone walls, largely treeless and empty of people. Part of the route here follows Agrippa's old Roman road. Our route takes you through tiny hamlets and farmsteads crossing streams over ancient granite bridges, past huge granite boulders and piles until arriving at Nasbinals, a herding village with a beautiful church. May time is fantastic for the flowers in the fields including large stands of narcissus and orchids in damper niches.

Accommodation: 2 star a hotel in the centre of the village, close to the church. You may be staying at a hotel 500m away, but will eat at the central hotel in communal style with other walkers.

meals: **B,D**



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DAY 7 Nasbinals to St Chely d'Aubrac - 17 km/10.5 miles, 4 - 5 h

An exhilarating day, much of it on open hillsides and grassy drove roads, passing gorgeous beech forests and reaching 1368m – the highest point of the walk. Pass through the great herding centre of Aubrac (church of 1220 and Tour des Anglais). There is a new interpretation centre here and a fantastic inn, an ideal place to take refuge if it is cold, where huge slices of fruit flan are served for a few Euros! After Aubrac you drop steeply past the ruins of Knights Templar Belvezet castle to pretty St Chely in its secluded valley.

Accommodation: A small 2 star hotel with comfortable rooms in the centre of a small village, run by a young couple. The restaurant offers regional specialities.

meals: B,D

DAY 8 St Chely d'Aubrac to St Come d'Olt - 16 km/10 miles, 4 - 5 h

Contour along beech-clad slopes onto an open ridge, and then descend through chestnut woods to the 'Cancels' stream crossing a few little bridges to ascend suddenly steeply to the hamlet of La Roziere. There is a bit more undulation until finally you descend to St Come d'Olt, with its mediaeval gateways and twisted church spire. This is a pretty little walled village, very much a part of the original Way of St. James, and has a great patisserie.

Accommodation: Refurbished convent with ensuite rooms located 200m from the village or guesthouse (Chambre d'hôte) a 19th century Aveyronnaise house located in the entrance of Saint-Come d'Olt. If we cannot secure accommodation here, you will need to walk on a further 6 km/3.7 miles to Espalion where you will stay in a pleasant 'fin de siècle' town hotel with a great restaurant.

meals: B,D

DAY 9 St Come d'Olt to Estaing - 17 km/10.5 miles, 4 - 5 h

Leave St. Come d'Olt with good views across the Lot back to the village. It really feels as if you are leaving the Massif Central region and into more productive farmlands from now on. The route then splits with a higher or lower path to the important market town of Espalion, perhaps too early for lunch, but there are plenty of places for coffee and time to admire the old arched bridge dating from the 13th century, the regal houses and the 16th century turreted chateau overlooking the River Lot. Continuing on pass the exquisite little chapel at the picturesque hamlet called Bessuejoul, which has a concealed upper chapel in the belfry. There follows quite a muddy section climbing through oak woods to a ridge with extensive views over the Lot valley, and then pass between vines and tobacco-fields to reach Estaing. Estaing has preserved vividly the memory of the passage of pilgrims to Compostela. The famous festival of St Fleuret is held yearly on the first Sunday in July, during which hundreds of costumed people follow a procession to commemorate Saint Jacques and other pilgrims. An imposing castle dominates the town, and is gradually being restored for the public. Estaing is one of the most beautiful villages of France.

Accommodation: This Logis de France 2 star hotel is situated on the bank of the River Lot in front of the castle. It has 40 comfortable rooms with all modern conveniences. The dinner in the fine traditional restaurant is perhaps the best of the tour.

meals: B,D

DAY 10 Estaing to Golinac - 16 km/10 miles, 4 - 5 h

After a short stint along the banks of the Lot, climb up to the Campeux plateau. Continue along the left bank of the Lot until Rouquette and then through beautiful villages to the tiny hilltop village of Golinac, with some commanding views over the countryside.

Accommodation: Basic hotel with a restaurant.

meals: B,D



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DAY 11 Golin hac to Conques - 21.5 km/13 miles, 5 - 6 h

Your last day is a hilly rollercoaster into famous Conques. Out of Golin hac continue through Campagnac and still smaller hamlets until reaching the very tranquil village of Espeyrac. It is an idyllic spot for a morning coffee. Or have one a little later at Senergues with its picturesque castle. There is a bit of climbing and undulating, before following a quiet road maintaining your height for a few km until the final stony descent into Conques. This, one of the finest hill-towns in France, clusters round the magnificent Romanesque abbey of St Foy, patron saint of prisoners: her shrine became an object of pilgrimage in its own right. The village does get its fair share of tourists, but for good reason, it is other worldly and unspoilt. At St. Foy they sometimes do free evening organ recitals. Other attractions include the treasury where some very fine mediaeval treasures are housed. There is also the Romanesque bridge down in the valley which is worth the detour to cross.

Accommodation: The hotel we normally use is a 2 star, 11 room property. The building has medieval origins and so rooms may have low beams. It is situated in the centre of the village and some of the rooms have views across to the belfry of St.Foy. There is an excellent restaurant in which to celebrate your completion of the walk. If this particular accommodation is fully booked, you will be in a guesthouse located in the lower part of village by the beautiful Romanesque bridge.

meals: **B,D**

DAY 12 Arrangements end after breakfast

Depart Conques after breakfast. Limited early morning bus service to Rodez Railway station, otherwise or on weekends, you will need to order a taxi.

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

- 11 breakfasts, 11 dinners
- 11 nights accommodation in small country hotels on a twin share basis with ensuite facilities when available
- 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
- Personal expenses such as laundry and phone calls
- Unscheduled transfers required during the trip

trip grading - moderate to challenging

A moderate to strenuous graded trek (grade 4) that anyone with a reasonable degree of walking experience and current reasonable state of fitness should cope with. The relatively high grade reflects the length of some of the day stages. The terrain in general is not difficult; consisting largely of farm, forest tracks and minor roads. Some can be muddy after wet periods. Day stages: Approximately 14 to 27 km per day with average altitude gains of 600m. (On a couple of days there is over 1000m of gain. This is about 5 to 8 hours of walking.



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way marking

The route is well marked with red and white GR waymarks, wooden directional signs and 'Chemin de St Jacques' scallop shell signs.

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

In France breakfast is continental: coffee/tea and bread/toast/croissant. Sometimes you will also have fruit juice, yoghurt and maybe even cheese. If you want more for breakfast then we would suggest you purchase some food the night before. 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. Lunches: Either get supplies in the villages you pass through or the hotel can normally prepare something. Occasionally there are places enroute with cafes patisseries etc. Dinners: These are normally set meals. Some hotels will offer a limited choice, quite often though a plate of food will just come along and it will often be a regional dish. Please let the hotel know as soon as you arrive if you have peculiar dietary requirements. We do inform them at the time of booking, but this may not be remembered. 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.

accommodation

DURING TOUR

Evening meal, bed and breakfast are included throughout the tour. Two star hotels offer en suite facilities. One star hotels do not always have en suite facilities. Luggage is transferred between hotels every day. 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.



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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 French!

getting there

BY CAR

If you are driving, our Ground Handler can organize for a car to take you back to Le Puy, the journey takes about 4,5 hours and costs around 50 euros per person. This has to be booked in advance.

BY TRAIN

Eurostar rail service from St Pancras via the Channel Tunnel to Paris and Le Puy End of Tour: Conques - travel to Rodez by bus (no service on Saturday or Sundays) and then daily non-TGV train. Or on any weekday and Saturday, taxi to St. Christophe, and non-TGV train to Paris Austerlitz.

BY AIR

The nearest International Airport is Lyon. We recommend a morning flight. On arrival take the Rhone Express tram to Lyon Part Dieu Station which takes 30 minutes. Catch the TGV to St Etienne Chateaufort where you change for Le Puy. Flying into Paris, Charles de Gaulle Roissy Airport there is a TGV Station at the airport that will take you to Lyon to change trains to Le Puy.

insurance

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

fast facts

COUNTRIES VISITED

France

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.



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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.

