

# Purely PYRENEES

walking and cycling holidays

## Carcassonne, Cathar Castles & Corbieres Vineyards By Bike



*Wonderful cycling country. Magnificent Carcassonne. Inspiring Cathar castles. Innovative Corbieres vineyards. Historic villages. Authentic accommodation. Tasty regional cuisine. All to be discovered on two wheels.*

### 6 nights - 5 days cycling

- Minimum required 2
- From point to point
- With luggage transportation
- Self-guided

Code :  
**FP9PUCA**

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### ***The plus points***

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- **Carcassonne, Rennes-le-Chateau, Montsegur and many more**
- **Corbieres vineyards, medieval abbeys, traditional villages, historic towns**
- **Authentic, high quality, characterful accommodation with most meals included**
- **Comfortable distances and enjoyable cycling with the option of an electric bikes**

*Before departure, please check that you have an updated fact sheet.*

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[https://www.purelypyrenees.com/carcassonne\\_cathar\\_castles\\_corbieres\\_vineyards\\_electric\\_bike.html](https://www.purelypyrenees.com/carcassonne_cathar_castles_corbieres_vineyards_electric_bike.html)

*We are always committed to packing in as many highlights as is comfortable into our itineraries, and never more so than with this itinerary - thanks to bikes, and in particular the electric bike if you choose that option. Indeed, this is great cycling country - rolling hills not mountains with only short steep sections up to some of the castles - and some with views to the not-so-distant Mediterranean. You start and finish in the superb walled city of Carcassonne. You cycle through fascinating vineyards, and even stay with natural wine viticulteurs. And you visit most of the great Cathar sites, some you will know, others not so much, but we believe they all will leave you with haunting memories. You stay in Paradise Valley, in attractive 3 star hotels and excellent chambres d'hotes. You will drink, we're sure, local wines, and definitely eat really good regional cuisine. Panoramic views come as standard, and marvellous memories are guaranteed.*

## ■ THE PROGRAMME

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### DAY 1

Standard programme: You make your own way to the first hotel

With extra airport pick up : We meet you at Carcassonne airport or rail station, and take you to your hotel in this magnificent medieval city that we are sure you already know about, and are eager to visit.

The three star Hôtel Aragon is a very comfortable, well appointed hotel with swimming pool, and, just as importantly, is 50 yards from the main gate into the city - the best of both worlds. You stay on a bed and breakfast basis leaving you free to choose a restaurant inside the great walls of the city.

**Transfer time: 10 minutes.**

### DAY 2

**Carcassonne to Cascastel des Corbières.** After a leisurely breakfast, you choose the bike that suits you best: a road bike, a chunkier hybrid bike, or an electric bike. Whichever, you will be given as full instructions. You leave the city alongside those magnificent city walls and the plane tree shaded canal. Obviously, you can choose to visit what most interests you, but we'd suggest the first highlight is the abbey of Lagrasse (use the steeply arched medieval bridge) founded in the 8th century with a 11th century Romanesque chapel (decorated walls) and a delightful 18th century cloister. Then it's the attractive village of Villerouge-Termenès and its almost miniature, village-centre castle, which Simon de Montfort took in 1210, then in 1321 the last Cathar "parfait" (some prefer the term Bon Homme) was burnt alive here. More happily, today's journey ends in the lovely town of Cascastel, surrounded by vineyards. There: Carcassonne, Cathars & vineyards all in one day!

In Paradise Valley (Vallee du Paradis), Séverine and Gilles have not only made their impressive, stone built 19th home into a superb chambres d'hotes - you eat with them so get the whole inside story as well as all the comforts of home, including en suite facilities, of course - they have also developed their own domaine with a growing reputation for natural wines, both red and white. Taste and try courtesy of the viticulteurs themselves.

**Distance: 40 miles. Ascent/descent: +1400m/-1350m**

## DAY 3

**Cascastel des Corbières to Bugarach.** You are now not only in the heart of Corbieres wine country, you are firmly on the Cathar Castels Route with five castles on today's route. The first is the double walled 12th century Cathar castle of Aguilar which dominates the Tuchan plateau. Then its on to the picturesque village of Cucugnan (gifted to Lagrasse Abbey in 951; do have a stroll around its narrow lanes) where the last Cathar stronghold of Quéribus dominates the landscape as it is not only on the highest mountain in the area, it was almost impossibly built on sheer cliffs. Your electric bike takes you joyfully on to Duilhac-sous-Peyrepertuse with its 11th century castle perched precariously at nearly 2,500 feet above the village with unforgettable views across the Corbieres and to the Mediterranean. Journey's end is at the foot of the 4,000 feet Pic de Bugarach, the highest in the region, and known as the upside down mountain as older rock layers are under newer ones.

Nobody knew about its upsidedown-ness when it was founded in the 10th century, and while it was renowned for its 18th century wooden tools and hats, it is today a New Age centre as some (very few, we hope) believe aliens live inside the mountain. You, however, will stay in what was once Bugarach's very Christian presbytery, now Rommie & Sander's naturally chic chambres d'hotels in a lovely honey coloured stone building with wonderful views of the mountain - and excellent updated regional cuisine.

**Distance: 36 miles. Ascent/descent: +1200m/-900m**

## DAY 4

**Bugarach to Bélesta.** There's a lot to see and do today - but at an unhurried pace! First the facts about Rennes-le-Château: it has Neolithic, Roman, Visigoth and Cathar traces, the Tour Magdalena (Mary Magdalene), the 19th century church and restored castle worth visiting, and, yes, it did feature in that novel The Da Vinci Code. The story of its 19th century priest finding immense treasure and its church's devilish sculptures is for you to decide about. On firmer ground, you ride comfortably (due to the battery rather than a devilish sale of your soul) to one of our favourite towns, Quillan: authentic, pleasant, really French, architecturally interesting, beautifully located and good for a lunch stop. Then it's on to Puivert castle, currently being restored by its private owners, and associated with annual troubadour festivals as much as Cathars, before arriving at the unspoilt, riverside village of Bélesta. Many ships' masts once came from its nearby forest.

Hotel Restaurant Palais-Cathare is, despite its name, an unpretentious and welcoming hotel that offers many comforts, good bedrooms, good food, and has an excellent reputation among both locals and more distant visitors. We like staying here, and think you will too.

**Distance: 35 miles. Ascent/descent: +1150m/-1150m**

## DAY 5

**Bélesta - Chalabre.** A Cathar highlight today with a visit to the impressive (and somewhat depressive) remains of Montségur castle. Yet another amazing location that partly explains its ability to withstand a 10 month seige, and why it is the fulcrum of much of the Cathar story, good and bad. But there are more castles: Roquefixade (lesser known Cathar castle overlooking a verdant valley), Lavelanet (pleasant town, impressive castle on a rock outcrop), Montbel (no castle, but, perhaps better, a lovely lake for a refreshing swim), and finally Chalabre (castle occupied by Simon de Montfort well worth visiting).

The 3 star Hotel de France is one of those impressive 19th century mansions in the middle of this pleasant town. It's retained all the traditions of style, hospitality and service, while updating its rooms and restaurant, both of which are really good.

**Distance: 28 miles. Ascent/descent: +900m/-1000m**

## **DAY 6**

Chalabre - Carcassonne. On this last cycling day you wend your way back to Carcassonne - a satisfyingly round trip - with a celebratory visit to Limoux, renowned for its gently fizzing "blanquette". It's the last day, it's lunch time, and you might just let yourself have a glass (and perhaps a bottle tonight?). It's a historic, stylish town worth a stroll or ride around too. Then its a very pleasant and easy ride back into Carcassonne with enough time to really explore its delights, if you haven't done so already.

It's the three star Hôtel Aragon for your last night, and again you stay on a bed and breakfast basis so you can choose a restaurant that feels appropriate for the achievements and many pleasurable experiences of this holiday. Weigh it up: is it one of your best holidays? We think (hope) it might well be.

**Distance: 36 miles. Ascent/descent: +830m/-1100m**

## **DAY 7**

Carcassonne.

Standard programme: End of the trip after breakfast.

With extra airport pick up : Transfer to the airport or station at Carcassonne after breakfast.

Elements beyond our control (the weather, your levels of fitness, logistical risks, other miscellaneous reasons) may lead us to modify the programme. We aim to please, but your safety will always be our priority.

## **■ PRACTICAL INFORMATION**

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### **DATES DE PROGRAMMATION**

Mid-April to the end of October.

### **RENDEZ-VOUS**

We meet you at Carcassonne airport or rail station.

### **END OF YOUR TRIP**

End of your trip in Carcassonne , after breakfast. Transfer to airport or station

### **PARKING**

There is public parking in Carcassonne.

### **DÉPART GARANTI À PARTIR DE (PERS.)**

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### **LEVEL OF DIFFICULTY**

This itinerary features cycling that is rarely challenging, and never so if you choose an electric bike. All the same, it is suitable for people who are reasonably fit and enjoy a good day's walking or cycling. While we have designed a route that is usually on quiet roads and lanes, there is inevitably traffic, and it may be quite busy on some sections, especially in July and August.

## **LUGGAGE TRANSFERS**

We will transfer your luggage to the next hotel, so all you need carry is a daysack with your choice of essentials. There are plenty of places to get drinks and food as you walk, so you need carry very little of either.

## **TYPE OF TRIP**

This is an independent, self-guided holiday.

## **ACCOMMODATION**

You stay in double-twin rooms in authentic hotels with en suite facilities that are 2 and 3 star, and in characterful high quality chambres d'hotels.

## **REPAS**

## **THE PRICE INCLUDES**

4 nights dinner, bed and breakfast; 2 nights bed and breakfast as described; luggage transfers each day as required (one bag per person, maximum 20 kgs); detailed route directions; 1:25,000 maps as required; GPS tracking if required; 24/7 customer phone service.

## **THE PRICE DOES NOT INCLUDE**

The journey to the start point and from the finishing point (Carcassonne airport or rail station); dinners on days 1, and 6; menu choices at extra cost; all drinks; lunches; entry fees; personal and travel insurance.

## **FORMALITIES**

You need to keep your passport with you at all times, and ideally insurance information. You need to make your own arrangements to claim local healthcare. There are requirements in France and Spain for all vehicles to carry safety equipment.

## **CONTENTS OF YOUR TRAVEL FOLDER**

When we have received the balance of payment for your holiday, and in the month before your departure, we send you all the documentation you need: a detailed itinerary showing dates, times, contact addresses etc; a detailed guide to your walking routes, often also including a lot of cultural, historical and nature background information; formal documents (invoices, contractual terms and conditions etc); luggage labels etc. If you book at the last minute, we can send information to the first night's accommodation.

## **■ EQUIPMENT**

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### **MAKING THE RIGHT CHOICE**

**For your upper body:** in all countries and in all seasons, the principal of wearing 3 breathable layers works well in most situations (T-shirt - warmer layer - waterproof and windproof outer layer). Choose clothes that dry quickly (synthetic fibres) and avoid cotton (dries too slowly => discomfort). Wool is a natural fibre that also has excellent properties and has recently made a great comeback in the outdoor clothing industry due to new manufacturing processes. Make sure you cover up before you get too cold, but above all make sure that you take layers off before you get too hot - sweat should be seen as an enemy for a cyclist (especially in winter) as it dampens clothing which can later freeze or cool too quickly. Avoid anoraks - they can turn a pleasant ride into a absolute nightmare!

**For your lower body:** shorts and trousers made from tough, synthetic fabrics that dry quickly and therefore allow for greater comfort. Be particularly careful in your choice of socks: bring tough, reinforced cycling socks with flat seams (to avoid blisters). In winter, choose warm socks. You should also avoid cotton socks (even if they have been blessed!).

## **LUGGAGE**

### **You should bring:**

- 1 travel bag per person (or suitcase with wheels). Make sure they are not too big in order to avoid logistical problems (taking up too much room in transfer vehicles, for example). On holidays where you move from one hotel to another during your stay, try to keep the weight down to 10-12kg (the extra weight can make it difficult to get all the suitcases to certain hotels that are difficult to get to). Be certain not to leave any fragile or valuable objects in your main luggage.
- 1 rucksack (around 30-40 litres) with integrated water-bag (e.g. Camel-Back). These bags are more practical than carrying bottles. The rucksack should also have a waist belt and allow your back to be well ventilated for extra comfort. Keep the total weight of your rucksack plus belongings down to a maximum of 10kg.

## **CLOTHING**

- 1 set of cycling clothes: cycling shorts, breathable T-shirt (long-sleeved or short-sleeved depending on the time of year)
- 1 other pair of shorts or trousers for cycling (padding essential)
- cycling shoes
- comfortable clothes and shoes for the evenings
- underwear
- spare long-sleeved breathable T-shirts (1 for every 2\_3 days) and 1 or 2 short-sleeved T-shirts
- 1 warmer layer (a fleece or water-resistant "softshell" jacket). Or a "primaloft" jacket (warm and easily compacted down to fit into rucksacks).
- 1 breathable, windproof and waterproof out layer (e.g. Gore-Tex) with a hood

## **EQUIPMENT TO BRING**

- 1 large plastic bag to be used as a rucksack liner for protecting your belongings from the rain and/or 1 waterproof rucksack cover
- 1 waterproof bag containing: travel insurance contract, ID or passport, health card, and all other documents mentioned in the "formalities" section.
- 1 pair of good quality sunglasses (protection factor 3) plus high-factor sun cream and sunscreen for your lips (should always be carried in your rucksack)
- 1 folding pen-knife (Swiss Army knife or similar)
- For lunches: cutlery and 1 plastic/tupperware container (0.5 litres minimum). You may end up not using it but it is important to have it just in case
- washbag and 1 quick-drying towel (try to bring only essential items that don't take up too much space, biological soap...)
- 1 swimming costume / pair of swimming trunks
- ear plugs (to protect you from snoring neighbours or other annoying noises)
- 1 sleeping-bag liner if spending a night (or nights) in dormitory accommodation (hostels or refuge huts)
- handkerchiefs
- toilet paper

- 1 cigarette lighter (be careful not to provoke a fire - always use responsibly and not unless you have to)
- 1 torch or head-torch plus a survival blanket: always put this in your rucksack as set-backs due to accidents are always possible, even on easy rides
- spare glasses (if you wear glasses)
- camera, binoculars, paint brushes and canvas... (optional)

Depending on the characteristics of the holiday you are going on (if bike hire is included or not, or if you have indicated that you wish to bring your own bike anyway), it may be a good idea to bring some (or all) of the following cycling kit (please also check in the "bicycle hire" section to see what kit is already provided on the holiday you have chosen):

- cycling gloves (normal or fingerless depending on the time of year)
- 1 bike helmet (legal requirement in most countries)
- 1 or 2 cycling bottles or a hydration system such as a Camel-Back (1.5 litres), whichever you prefer
- 2 inner-tubes
- a few spare spokes (especially on mountain-bike tours)
- 1 spare derailleur
- 1 set of spare brake pads
- 1 spare cable for derailleurs or brakes
- 1 spare chain
- any other kit that you deem to be necessary...

You should try to be self-sufficient for all minor cycling breakdowns typical of these kinds of cycling tours (tyre-lever, puncture repair kit, multi-tool, quick-fix chain link...). If you have disk-brakes or high-tech bikes, be sure to bring the necessary kit for repairs.

## **FIRST AID KIT**

Let us know about any illness, treatments or allergies that may complicate things should you have a problem or an accident and need taking to hospital during your stay.

- personal medication
- painkillers: preferably Paracetamol
- medication for indigestion
- throat tablets
- elasticated sticky bandage (e.g. Elastoplaste): 2.5m long and 5/8cm wide
- strip plasters (e.g. Steri-Strip)
- set of smaller sticky plasters plus some sterile compresses
- blister plasters (e.g. Compeed)
- hair tweezers (can also be used for extracting splinters and thorns)
- small scissors
- vitamin C tablets
- small bottle of bacterial hand-gel (e.g. Sterilium)

## **■ INSURANCE**

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According to the regulation of our profession, Purely Pyrenees is covered by a Civil Professional Liability. However, each client must hold an individual civil liability as well as an individual multi risk guarantee in order to protect themselves from incidents or accidents that may occur before or during their hiking trip.

We remind you that a credit card covers, in general, only assistance in repatriation and not the cancellation of your trip, and this only provided you use the card to pay for the total of the trip.

We offer a choice of three insurance options which you can purchase at the time of booking.

### **Package 1: simple cancellation insurance at 2.5%**

This insurance provides reimbursement of the amount incurred (excluding fees and the cost of insurance) in case of cancellation due to one of the following causes: serious accident, illness or death of insured, spouse or person accompanying them, and certain family members.

### **Package 2: simple cancellation insurance and assistance / repatriation at 3.7%**

This insurance allows, in addition to the benefits described in the plan No. 1; - To benefit from assistance in case of illness or injury during the trip and covers your return home if necessary. - A reimbursement paid on a pro rata basis (excluding transportation costs and with a waiting period) in the case of an interruption of your trip following an accident, the death of a loved one or other specified accidents.

### **Package 3: Package "super multi-risk": 4.8%**

This insurance offers, in addition to the benefits described in the packages No. 1 and No. 2, - A wider cancellation insurance with the repayment of amounts incurred (net of deductible) in case of cancellation for any justifiable reason including an exceptional and unexpected event. - The management of some of the costs incurred at the time in case of return not linked to an exceptional and unexpected event. - Compensation (capped) for loss, theft or destruction of baggage. - Payment of compensation for delayed baggage delivery of more than 48 hours.

**The rapatriation is not valid for all countries, please check with us before subscribing the insurance.**

You will receive with the confirmation of your booking an extract of the general conditions of contract chosen (in french). Take this document with you on your journey. The validity of all guarantees corresponds with the travel dates indicated on the invoice and applies only to services sold. For departures and returns postponed, please contact us. Warning: If you buy only the contract No. 1 (simple cancellation insurance), this means that you need to have your own insurance, repatriation assistance (related notably to certain credit cards). We advise you to check your contract and cover guaranteed. In this case, we ask you to tell us when you book the name of your insurance company and your policy number. You will assume, therefore, the responsibility of certain risks, especially in the advance payments of certain costs.

Important: If you must use the assistance during the trip, you must obtain the prior consent of Europe Assistance before taking any action or incur any expenditure by telephoning: 33 1 41 85 85 85 and quoting the number of contract: 58662860

## ■ ACTING FOR RESPONSIBLE TOURISM

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Purely Pyrenees is a founding member of Action for Responsible Tourism.

The label "Action for Responsible Tourism" was awarded Purely Pyrenees in 2009. It is controlled, every year, by ECOCERT.

Based on common values of respect, solidarity and quality, ATR aims to harmonize professional practices of its members.

To win the confidence of customers, it focuses on four key commitments, which arise from many activities in the field and at home.

- Clear information and awareness of responsible tourism given to the traveller.
- Selection of providers in the spirit of responsible tourism.
- Setting up of a transfer of competencies to the providers.
- Commitment in relation to the tour operator's own structure.

More information on the label ATR on /[www.tourisme-responsable.org](http://www.tourisme-responsable.org)

## ■ CONTACT US

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