

C010-LU Vermilion Coast



The Vermilion Coast is the eastern part of the Pyrenees mountains range. The mountain hurls down into the Mediterranean sea giving the coast a jagged edge. The sheer waters flow into inlets and small, charming ports, among which are Collioure, Port Vendres, Banyuls and Cerbère. The surrounding lands are rich in the wine-growing tradition, where the vineyards grow on small terraces enclosed by low sitting stone walls. The mountainous hinterland grows wild and almost inaccessible with Mediterranean vegetation smelling of thyme, lavender and rosemary. The Vermilion coast offers sun, sea, mountains, and the fragrances of the Midi. It is indeed heaven on earth!



Highlights : Collioure, Port Vendres, Phare Bear, Banyuls, Cerbère, the tower of Querroig, the tower of la Madeloc

Itinerary

D1 : Arrival at COLLIOURE. Collioure is one of the most beautiful little ports of the Mediterranean. It has seduced artists for years, bringing them to its doors with its light and Catalan sun. Collioure is a village of art and of food, famous for Fauvism (created by Matisse and Derain) and its anchovies. It is also a village of history and architecture, well-known for the belfry of its old, fortified church and for the ancient château that separates its two small ports. Lodging and breakfast in a three-star hotel (rec. GM, GR)* close to the harbor.

D2 : COLLIOURE – PORT VENDRES (3 hour walk – ascent : 350 meters). You will follow the Route des Vignes out of the village of Collioure and find yourself in the midst of a vineyard that is quite out of the ordinary. The slope on which the vines have been planted is at such an angle that the use of machines is not an option. All the work done in this vineyard is done by hand. These vines produce what is known as AOC of Banyuls and Collioure. Once you have passed the Col Mollo you will discover the fortresses of Dugommier and Saint Elme which were built in 1552 by the Spanish Emperor Charles Quint to defend the coast. You will move down towards Port Vendres, named after the temple dedicated to Venus, which sits overlooking the inlet below. Today, the Port Vendres is a typical example of Mediterranean life, animated by one of the most active fishing communities of the Roussillon coast, its many commerces, and its pleasure sailing.

Dinner, lodging and breakfast in a two-star hotel (rec. GR)* on the seaside

D3 : PORT VENDRES- BANYULS (3.30 hour walk). You will follow the Tamarins beach out of the port and will walk to the Fort Mailly and to the end of the jetty by the Feu du Môle to get a gorgeous view of the Port Vendres bay. You will come back towards the city to visit the Redoute Bear and continue to the Bear lighthouse, which sits 80 meters above the sea. You will then cross through the Anse des Paulilles and the Col de Pere Carrera to arrive in Banyuls. Dinner, lodging and breakfast in a two-star, sea-front hotel (rec. GR)*

D4 : CERBERE – BANYULS (5 and a half hour walk – ascent : 670 meters). Escort by taxi to Cerbère. After having crossed through this very typical Catalan village (the last town in France before crossing the Spanish border and an important stop on the international railway line Paris – Barcelona), you will enter into the first hinterlands of the Pyrenees. The road takes you on a winding journey through the vineyards, giving you a view of the Pyrenees – still snow-capped in mid-May – and the Mediterranean Sea. You will reach the first pass (col de la Fareille – 309 meters) and then continue the steep climb to the ruins of La Tour de Querroig. This tower was built in the 10th century by Spanish monks to keep watch over their properties. From here you will have a magnificent view of Cerbère, the Catalan coast, and the Pyrenees massif. You will follow the ridge that leads to Le Puig Joan, pass by the Tour d'En Pagès, and head down towards Banyuls.

Dinner, lodging and breakfast in the same two-star hotel

D5 : BANYULS – COLLIOURE (5 hour walk – ascent : 400 meters). Spend the morning hours visiting the Catalan city of Banyuls, with its numerous wine cellars and 11th century Romanesque church Rectorie, surrounded by cemeteries and cypress trees. You will leave the city by way of Mas d'En Reig (the first place inhabited in Banyuls, around the 12th century) and make your way through the pine forest to the Notre-Dame-de-la-Salette chapel which overlooks Banyuls. You will continue to the Col des Gascons, which sits in the shadows of the Tour de la Madeloc, follow the road past the old military forts and barracks that sprinkle the landscape, and look out over the Catalan coast. You will return to Collioure by passing through the Fort Saint Elme (a beautifully restored oil mill) and the Pams gardens. In Collioure you might visit the museum, the curious construction "la Gloriette", the château de Collioure, constructed on an ancient roman camp, and the harbor.

Lodging and breakfast in a three-star hotel (rec. GM, GR)* close to the harbor.

D6 : TOUR OF THE MASSIF DE LA MADELOC (6 hour walk – ascent : 650 meters). After having left Collioure, you will climb along the vineyards to l'Ermitage Notre-Dame-de-la-Consolation and continue on to the Col de la Serre. Following a steep, rocky path, you will climb towards Taillefer battery, down again to the Col de Taillefer, and then start another steep ascent to the Tour de la Madeloc that sits at 650 meters above the sea. This tower was built in 1285 as a lookout and signal tower. All along this pathway, take note of the splendid views of Collioure, the Catalan coast, the Tour de la Massane and the Pyrenees. You will descend again, passing by the 500 Battery and the Col des Gascons, the ruins of the Reig wine cellars and the Col de Formigo, to reach the Col de la Baillaury. Follow the path that runs along the aqueduct and skirts the Madeloc massif until you arrive at the Col de Serre. You will arrive at Collioure by taking the Col Mollo and the Route des Vignes.

Lodging and breakfast in the same three-star hotel

D7 : COLLIOURE. The tour ends after breakfast.

* these hotels are listed by the well-known guidebooks Guide Michelin (GR) and/or Guide Gault-Millau (GM)

Season

All round the year but be careful this area is very crowded in summer time and we recommend you (if you can) to come outside this period. Nevertheless this area attracts a lot of tourists and you have to reserve earlier to get the best rooms.

What's included?

- 6 nights accommodation in selected 2 & 3-star hotels
- 6 breakfasts – 3 gourmet dinners
- hotel to hotel luggage transfer along the trail.
- Taxi transfer : Banyuls-Cerbere
- A set of maps (1/25 000 scale) with the route marked on and detailed route notes describing the trail.
- A daily itinerary together with information about facilities and places of interest along the trail.
- Emergency assistance.

Visa fees - transportation fees to and from the walk area - Insurance (strongly recommended on all trips) - Transfers except those mentioned above – Drinks - Additional meals - Spending of personal nature e.g. laundry, souvenirs, phone calls,...are not included

Walk difficulty

Grade 3 : walks of between 5 and 8 hours a day with ascents up to 700 m. Some hiking experience is advisable. A reasonable level of fitness and some stamina are required for these walks. You may cover long distances in remote countryside and the terrain will be rough underfoot. In mountainous areas you will encounter some sustained ascents and descents. We offer you some alternative grade 2 routes in day 3, 4 and 5

Getting there and away

By train : TGV trains Paris-Perpignan or Marseille – Perpignan and connection to Collioure

By car : Take the motorway A9, exit Perpignan Sud then take the road towards Elne and Argeles-sur-Mer. Continue either by the coast road or by RN 114 road to Collioure

Where to park : Free unguarded or pay guarded parking available close to the hotel