

C001-CO – The capes of the Opal Coast



The Opal Coast stretches from the Belgian border to the Somme Bay and is named after the milky color of its waters. It offers the visitor a varied landscape of vast sandy beaches disappearing into the distance, dunes with beach grass and ragged cliffs fighting a losing battle against the endless wave erosion. All this creates beautiful panoramic views set against England's hazy coast. During this walk you will discover different aspects of this still little known coast: the principal ports of Calais and Boulogne, the fishing villages, and the bathing stations where you can take advantage of the wide range of water sports and beach activities.



Itinerary

Day 1 – Arrival at CALAIS. Visit Calais city centre which was badly damaged during the Second World War. While walking through the city, you will discover: la Tour du Guet, built in the 13th century; Notre-Dame, the only *English* gothic style church in France; and just in front of the town hall Auguste Rodin's statue "Les Bourgeois de Calais", which immortalizes the sacrifice made by the six bourgeois of Calais who, barefooted and wearing nothing more than their shirts and a noose around their necks, presented to their vanquisher, Edward III, King of England, the "Key to the City". Lodging and breakfast in a 3-star hotel.

Day 2 – CALAIS – WISSANT (20 km). Leaving Calais, with its ceaseless toing and froing of cross channel ferries, walk along the beach towards Blérot-Plage. Continue along la Dune de Fort Mahon until you reach Sangatte where you cross over the Channel Tunnel. Then climb up the chalk cliffs of le Cap-Gris-Nez which rise 134 meters above sea level. From this vantage point and on a clear day, you can see the English coast line in the distance and above all the magnificent bay of Wissant which stretches to the rocks of Cap-Gris-Nez. Walk back down the cliff path to reach Wissant, your end of day objective. Lodging and breakfast in a 3-star hotel.

Day 3 – WISSANT – WIMEREUX (23km) transfer by taxi from Calais to Wissant in the morning. Set out today along the huge beach which leads you along la Dune du Châtelet in the direction of Cap-Gris-Nez. From the top excellent views of the English coastline can be seen. Go back down the cliff interspersed with "Crans" (small dried valleys) to the family seaside resorts of Audresselles and Ambleteuse. Cross the river Slack, a natural harbour once protected by Fort Mahon and discover the particular vegetation of the dunes of Slack, now a protected ecosystem. Continue to la Pointe aux Oies before joining the large bathing station of Wimereux. Dinner, lodging and breakfast in a 3-star hotel.



Day 4 - WIMEREUX – BOULOGNE (8 km). This walk is short but offers gorgeous views over the port of Boulogne, France's first fishing port. Take your time to enjoy Nausicaa, the largest aquarium in Europe, then discover the old city of Boulogne. This old city was built on a hill top and dates back to a 4th century Roman port. Its narrow streets and numerous beautiful old buildings are still protected by the ramparts that encircle it. Lodging and breakfast in a 3-star hotel.

Day 5 - BOULOGNE SUR MER. The tour ends after breakfast.

Season

From mid-April to end of October. 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?

- 4 nights' accommodation in selected 2 or 3 star hotels
- 4 breakfasts – 1 dinner
- Hotel to hotel luggage transfer along the trail.
- 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 – Entrance fees - 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



Getting there and away

By sea- many ferries link UK to Calais. Bus from the ferry arrival to Calais centre.

By rail - TGV links between London and the the Eurotunnel Terminal at Coquelles to the West of Calais. Local bus service links the terminal to Calais centre. Many fast trains between Calais or Boulogne and Paris-gare du Nord

By car - Calais is easily accessible by the A1 and A24 motorways from Paris.

Where to park - pay guarded parking available in Calais. Trains from Boulogne to Calais to get your car

Walk difficulty

Grade 2 - walks of 4 to 6 hours a day. Some stages could be more 20 km (13/15 miles) and rolling uplands, ascents mainly gradual than steep of up to 500 m. Ground is flat at sea level and ascents about 100m at the capes . In some places you walk in sand. An average level of fitness or some experience with walking is recommended.

