


C058-ST Basque Pyrenees



The Atlantic Ocean and the Pyrenees combine to give us a wonderful, green paradise, oh so welcoming. The Basque Pyrenees are excellent grounds for tours and are full of charm! From Saint Jean Pied de Port you will walk to the sea, following steep paths over summits and passes between Spain and France. You will cross through forests, moors, meadows and characteristically charming villages where life is pleasant in the shady main square, or near the fronton, a symbol of the Basque region.



Itinerary

Day 1 - Arrival at SAINT JEAN PIED DE PORT. The chief town of Basse Navarre is located at the base of the Roncevaux pass in a charming and lush pocket. The upper part of the city, encircled by fortified walls and the citadel – a fortification which had been built to prevent the Spanish invasions – were developed on the two banks of the Nive River. The city holds a rich patrimony which includes la prison des Evêques (Bishops' Jail), la maison des états de Navarre, and the Romanesque bridge... that you shall not want to miss. *Dinner, lodging and breakfast in a two-star hotel.*

Day 2 - SAINT JEAN PIED DE PORT - ST ETIENNE DE BAÏGORRY (7 hour walk – alt. gain: 900 m). You will leave the city for the small village of Lasse before attempting the first ascent to the Manhoa Summit (1021 m). You will walk through grazing lands down to the Urdanzia Pass and will continue making your way through large, green areas covered with high ferns until you reach the Ahara Pass. You will make your way on the flank of the valley, walking on stony paths through vast grazing fields, and will slowly descend to Saint Etienne de Baïgorry, a Basque village with white houses that stretches out in the valley along the river (lovely, shady square near old plane trees next to the fronton). The church next to the hotel is worth a visit.



Dinner, lodging and breakfast in a two-star hotel.

Day 3 - SAINT ETIENNE DE BAÏGORRY - BIDARRAY (8.30 hour walk – alt. gain: 1400 meters). This is a long and gorgeous walk. After crossing the river and admiring the Romanesque bridge, you will start climbing up to the Buztanzelhay Pass. Walking in turn across summits and passes, you will follow the border between France and Spain and will cross l'Astate and the Pics (peaks) de Toutalia and Iparla. Then the path along the crests distances itself from Spain and progressively descends to the Nive Valley and Bidarray.

Dinner, lodging and breakfast in a two-star hotel.

Day 4 - BIDARRAY - AINHOA (7.30 hour walk – alt. gain : 800 meters). You will meet with the Bastan Torrent at Le Pont d'Enfer (Hell's bridge) and will walk back up the deep valley until you reach the hamlet of Arouchia at the end of the little road. You will continue climbing to the crests' line which marks the border between France and Spain. Along the passes, you will reach the Mehatché Pass, located between the Artzamendi and Iguzki peaks. The path continues along the border and then runs along the flank of the slope under the crest of Mont Bizkayluze. You will pass round the Mont Atxulegi before joining the Troix Croix Pass and walking down to Ainhoa, seeing the Aubépine Chapel on the way. *Dinner, lodging and breakfast in a two-star hotel.*

Day 5 - AINHOA - ASCAIN (8 hour walk – alt. gain: 1050 m). You will leave the village of Ainhoa, walking down the picturesque main street lined with white half-timbered houses with coloured window shutters. You will visit the picturesque church, with its wood ceiling and double gallery. You will arrive at and follow the Nivelle River before climbing to the Franco-Spanish border, passing through forests. You will walk along the border and down to Sare, a nice village characteristic of the Basque country. Sare holds a lovely church with a three-floor gallery. You will then begin your ascent of la Rhune, a famous summit of the Basque Country. You will be rewarded for your efforts by a wonderful view of the ocean, the forest of the Landes region and the Basque Pyrenees. You will finally walk down to Ascain, a charming little Basque village. Dinner, lodging and breakfast in a 2-star hotel.

Day 6 - ASCAIN - HENDAYE (7.30 hour walk – alt. gain: 650 m). Transfer by taxi to the Montobaïta gîte which shortens this walk, cutting out several uninteresting kilometres of asphalt. From here, you will pass around the Cibourne Mountain, cross through a forest to the Ibardin Pass (tourist area) and then descend progressively to Biriadou, a picturesque little village nestling on the flank of the mountain and overlooking la Bidassoa. You will make your way through the green countryside until you reach the seaside and Hendaye, the last stage of this walk. Lodging and breakfast in a two-star hotel.

Day 7 - HENDAYE. Tour ends after breakfast.



Season

From beginning of May to middle of October 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-star hotels
- ✓ 6 breakfasts – 5 dinners
- ✓ Hotel to hotel luggage transfer along the trail.
- ✓ Taxi transfer : Ascain-Gite of Mantobaïta
- ✓ 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 – Entrance fees -Additional meals - Spending of personal nature e.g. laundry, souvenirs, phone calls... are not included

Walk difficulty

Grade 4 - 6 to 9 hours walking a day with long ascents and descents more than 1000 m. You walk big mountains as the Alps or Massif Central, on rough and stony paths. On occasion route-finding may be tricky and request some experience Hill walking experience and a reasonably high standard of fitness and stamina are essential for enjoyment of a grade 4 hike

Getting there and away

By train: The Paris-Hendaye line will bring you to Bayonne then, connection to Saint Jean Pied de Port (3 trains per day). To return many trains from Hendaye to Paris (via Bordeaux).

By car : From Bayonne, D932 road to Cambo-les-Bains where you take D918 road to Saint Jean Pied de Port. From Toulouse, take A64 motorway (La Pyrénéenne) to exit n° 7 towards Salies de Béarn and Saint Jean Pied de Port by D933 road

Where to park: free car-park available in Saint Jean Pied de Port. To return to Saint Jean Pied de Port, trains run from Hendaye (with a connection in Bayonne).