

C061-ST Esterel mountains



No walk in Esterel Mountains from end of June to mid-September due to maximum fire risks



Between the Mediterranean Sea and Provence, Esterel is a low-altitude, deeply-gullied volcanic massif with tortured relief. These dark red mountains intensively contrast with the blue sky and the transparent water of the Mediterranean which infiltrates the massif, producing calanques with abrupt walls, headlands, capes, creeks and beautiful fine-sand beaches. Accessible only by great effort, remote and avoided for a long time, hideout of brigands and former convicts, Esterel will charm you by its varied landscape of mountain, forest and sea, its quietness ... and its sun.

Itinerary

Day 1 - Arrival at ST RAPHAEL. This city stretches out between the Mediterranean Sea and the Massif de l'Esterel. You will be completely charmed by this city, both an ancient medieval settlement and a modern seaside resort, popular with the tourists. Upon your arrival, take time to discover the city of St Raphaël. You will be charmed by the old church of St Pierre, surrounded by ancient neighborhoods, the archaeological museum and the villas built along the beach, proof of the wild, bacchanal spirit of the past century. *Lodging and breakfast in a 2-star hotel at seaside*

Day 2 - LES ADRETS – ST RAPHAEL (21 km – 6 and a half hour walk). Escort by taxi to the Auberge des Adrets (now a four-star hotel). From the Pont de l'Esterel (the Esterel bridge), you will trek up to the Maison Forestière de la Duchesse. From there, the most courageous among you might choose to climb Mont Vinaigre (highest point of the massif : 618 meters), taking a narrow, rocky path that could prove a challenge. Those of you less foolhardy will follow the Route des Cols which spirals around the mount to reach the Maison forestière du Malpey, where you will join the others. Continuing from there on the well-marked paths that pass through cork-oak, holing oak and pine forests – from which rise up enormous blocks of red porphyry – you will arrive in St Raphaël. The undergrowth consists of numerous species of shrub trees, arbutus and lavender among them.



For decades, the forest has suffered from devastating fires, destroying large portions and turning it into scrub. Despite the efforts of the National Forests Office to plant new trees, and to protect and preserve this wonderful area of natural and delicate beauty, the zone continues to degrade. You will emerge at the upper quarters of St Raphaël and will pass through them to reach your hotel at the water's edge. *Lodging and breakfast in the same hotel*

Day 3 - LES ADRETS – MIRAMAR (city of THEOULE SUR MER) – (26 or 17 km). You will return to the Pont de l'Esterel (the Esterel bridge) by taxi and will climb once again up to the Maison Forestière de la Duchesse. Two possibilities : a grade 3 walk of 26 km, about a 7 and a half hour walk, or a grade 2 walk of 17 km taking about 5 and a half hours.

1st route : You will turn your back to the Mont Vinaigre and will disappear into the massif, following the paths which pass through the undergrowth and offer you great views of the massif. You will make your way east to Les Servières and then head south to the Pic de Perthus (Perthus Peak). From the Perthus Pass, you will begin a descent into the Ravin de Mal Infernet (Mal Infernet Ravine), one of the most beautiful spots in the Esterel. You will walk up along the banks of the mountain stream to the L'Ecureuil Lake and will skirt around the Pic de l'Ours



(Ours Peak) to join the Notre-Dame pass and discover a gorgeous panorama of the Corniche d'Or (Golden Cornice) and the Mediterranean sea. You will then join the Trayas pass and soon reach the seaside and your hotel for a deserved evening of rest.

2nd route : We offer you an alternative to the vigorous hike above, one a bit less athletic. Following the paths of National Forests Office, you will cross the massif by way of La Baisse Violette, the Forest house, the passes of Trois Termes and La Cadière, and finally the Trayas Pass. Then, you will walk down to the seaside where your hotel is located - *Dinner, lodging and breakfast in a 2-star hotel at seaside*

Day 4 - MIRAMAR – AGAY (21 km – 7 hour walk). The day starts with a walk along the La Figueirette beach. You will leave the water's edge and pass through the sloping village streets of Trayas to reach the Notre-Dame Pass. You will join the Lentiques pass by following the cornice road which overhangs the coast. Before you lies a great jagged landscape of glimmering red rocks and impressive panoramas. From the pass, you will walk to the top of the Pic d'Aurelle (Aurelle Peak), presenting yet another astounding panorama, and you will continue to make your way to the Evêque Pass, the Sainte Baume Grotto, transformed into chapel, and will walk up to the top of the Pic du Cap Roux (Cap Roux Peak) to admire the wonderful view of the massif and the Esterel Cornice. You will make your descent now towards the Antheor Plateau, crossing the Cap Roux and St Pilon passes, arriving finally on the long Agay beach. If you like, take a little detour to the viewpoint of Le Rastel d'Agay. *Dinner, lodging and breakfast in a 2-star hotel*



promenades that run along the beach and bring you into downtown Saint Raphaël, where sits a Neo-Byzantine church built around the early 20th century. *Lodging and breakfast in a 2-star hotel at seaside*

Day 5 - AGAY – ST RAPHAEL (15 km – 4 hour walk). You will walk along the Agay Bay up to the beach of Camp Long. You will join the coastal path and follow it along the seaside to St Raphaël. You will cross the Le Dramont Cape and the Le Dramont headland (opposite the Ile d'Or) to arrive at the Le Dramont beach where the 36th American Division landed on the 15th of August, 1944. You might choose to climb up to the semaphore for a lovely view of the bay, the Esterel Cornice and Le Dramont beach. This gorgeous path is very well arranged and runs along the red rocks, following the land as it varies between forelands, creeks and beaches, up to the Santa Lucia yachting harbour. Finally, you will follow the

Day 6 - ST RAPHAEL. Tour ends after breakfast.

Season

From Mid-April to end of October except in summer time when the Esterel Mountains paths are closed due to maximum risks of fire

What's included?

- ✓ 5 nights' accommodation in 2-star hotels
- ✓ 5 breakfasts – 2 dinners
- ✓ Hotel to hotel luggage transfer along the trail.
- ✓ Taxi transfers
- ✓ 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 – Entrance fees -Drinks - Additional meals -Spending of personal nature e.g. laundry, souvenirs, phone calls,... are not included

Walk difficulty

Grade 3 – the stages require 6 to 8 hours of walk per day. Some of them can cover 25-30 kilometres. We are on very undulating, broken or mountainous ground. The total ascent is about 500 to 700 meters per day. You need to be in a good shape and well-prepared before.

Getting there and away

By train: St Raphaël is served by TGV Sud-Est (more than 20 trains a day)

By car: A8 highway (Aix en Provence-Nice) – Exit 38 Frejus/St Raphaël, then drive towards St Raphaël

Where to park : Several pay guarded parkings are available nearby the hotel

