

C255-ST Saint James way

Via Podiensis from Aire sur l'Adour to St Jean Pied de Port



Via Podiensis is one of the four main pilgrimage routes to the Spanish sanctuary of Santiago de Compostela from Le Puy en Velay, a Marian sanctuary since the fifth century. Since the Middle-Ages, millions of pilgrims have left from Le Puy to journey to the Spanish Galicia, at the extremity of the Iberian Peninsula, to venerate the relics of Saint James, one of Christ's apostles. This pilgrimage is today registered on the World Heritage list of UNESCO.

From Aire-sur-l'Adour, you will progressively bring yourself to the base of the Pyrenees Mountains. You will cross the vineyards of Le Tursan, next through La Chalosse – a region of grain-production and animal breeding –, and then the forests of Le Béarn. Your hike will bring you finally to the green hills of the Basque Country. To the south of Saint Palais you will notice the Cross of Gibraltar, the supposed meeting point of the different pilgrimage

paths of Santiago de Compostela. These paths bring pilgrims from all over Europe to Saint-Jean-Pied-de-Port, the last stop of the route in France, and the limit of Via Podiensis.

Itinerary

Day 1 - Arrival at AIRE SUR L'ADOUR. An ancient city built on the site of a Gallic oppidum, Aire has had an active history that spans many centuries. Today, a few signs of the past are still evident in the city, of which the most famous is, without argument, the Sainte Quitterie Church, built in the 13th and 14th centuries. It has a gorgeous Gothic façade, and, hidden away in the darkness of the crypt, the 4th century burial place of Sainte Quitterie, sculpted out of a brilliant white marble. The lower city is home to the Saint Jean Baptiste Cathedral, the ancient rectory (now transformed into the town hall), and a beautiful octagonal grain market. *Dinner, Lodging and breakfast in a 2-star hotel.*

Day 2 - AIRE – MIRAMONT (20 km – 5.30 hour walk). You will have time this morning to continue to discover the main monuments of the city before starting the walk. Don't miss the cathedral and Ste Quitterie church which houses a beautiful white marble sarcophagus in the crypt. You will begin by crossing Le Tursan, a vast, multicolored plateau planted with corn, tobacco, and vineyards which produce Tursan-AOC. You will cross the village of Latrille with its typical church and some hamlet before reaching Miramont where is located the guest house - *Dinner, night and breakfast in a guesthouse*

Day 3 – MIRAMONT –LARREULE (25 km – 7.00 hour walk). You continue the trail to Sensacq. Here, you will visit the small, Romanesque church which houses Carolinian baptismal fonts. Next on the route is Pimbo, a village perched on a lush hilltop. It is one of the oldest villages of Les Landes, having been founded in 1268. Its church dates to the 12th century. you will head to Arzacq Arraziguët, an english bastide (walled town) before entering Bearn and walk through beautiful and picturesque villages like Louvigny. Finally you will reach Larreule and his church, the only remains an abbey founded at the end of the 10th century. This church dominates the village surrounded by ditches that keeps traces of bastide (walled town) it became in 13th century. Transfer by car to Casteide Candau - *Dinner, night and breakfast in a guesthouse*





Day 4 –CASTEIDE – MASLACQ (23 km – 6.00 hour walk) From Casteide you will reach Poms where you meet again the St James way and continue to Castillon. Then you will climb to the chapel of Caubin, the remains of what was once a sign of the prosperity of the Order of the Malts, also a hospital. You will continue to Arthez de Béarn, a small city perched above the Gave Valley, and will follow the path that runs along the hilltops to Argagnon and the Château de Champetier de Ribes. You will then cross Le Gave de Pau and the highway. Finally you will arrive in Maslacq, a lovely village of homes encircling a château. Transfer by taxi from Maslacq to Navarrenx - *Dinner, lodging and breakfast in a 2-star hotel in Navarrenx*

Day 5 - MASLACQ – NAVARRENX (22 km – 6 hour walk). Return to Maslacq by taxi in the morning. Once past Maslacq, the path climbs up towards Notre-Dame-de-Muret. The oratory was built in the 1930's on the site of one of the oldest sanctuaries of the Béarn region and on the ruins of an ancient convent. Crossing fields and hills, you will reach the Laà Valley and the Sauvelade Abbey, founded by the Benedictines in 1128 and taken over by the Cistercians at the end of the 13th century. The monastery that lies adjacent the church dates to the 17th century. You will continue your hike across the wooded hills towards Boussac and Méritein, in the Gave d'Oloron Valley, and arrive in the end at the ramparts of Navarrenx. The city was fortified at the end of the 16th century, based on an Italian model, and holds two principal doorways, one facing France, the other towards Spain. Spend time visiting this wonderful village, the lovely church and military buildings, the Arsenal, the powder magazine, the barracks, and the recently restored military fountain. *Dinner, lodging and breakfast in the same hotel*

Day 6 - NAVARRENX – AROUE (18.5 km – 5 hour walk). You will leave the village through the Porte Saint Antoine and cross over the Gave by a bridge whose grand arch dates to the 13th century. You will pass through the village of Castelnaud-Camblong, one of the last Béarnais villages on this hike. Passing through forests and fields, you will come to the Château de Mongaston and will then cross over the Saison river, border between Le Béarn and the Basque Country. You will continue through Lichos to Aroue. *A taxi will then bring you to Saint Palais for the night. Dinner, lodging and breakfast in a 2-star hotel at St Palais*

Day 7 - SAINT PALAIS– LARCEVEAU (18 km –5 hour walk). You will join the route of Santiago de Compostela heading to Gibraltar, a place where a stone marker indicates the assumed point at which the three northern pilgrimage routes – Le Puy, Vézelay, and Tours – join to form one path. You will climb to the Soyarza Chapel and continue towards the small village of Harambeltz. Here is located the Saint Nicolas Chapel, the last remains of a Benedictine priory and hospital. You will next arrive in Ostabat, once an important centre for the gathering of pilgrims coming from different corners of Europe. Your day will end at Larceveau, where you will overnight. *Dinner, lodging and breakfast in a 2 star hotel or guesthouse.*

Day 8 - LARCEVEAU – SAINT JEAN PIED DE PORT (19.5 km – 5 hour walk). The last stage of the Pilgrimage of Santiago de Compostela on French soil! The landscape is breathtaking and the route takes small trails and paths in the countryside. The path will lead you to discover beautiful villages full of historical richness. You will arrive in Saint Jean le Vieux, the last roman village before entering the Pyrenees Mountains. You will follow the banks of the Laurhibar River into Saint-Jean-Pied-de-Port, a small, 14th century village on the banks of the Nive River. The higher city is encircled by ramparts and was crossed by many pilgrims' journeys. They entered by the Doorway of Saint James, passed before the church of Notre-Dame, passed over the old medieval bridge to cross the Nive River, and left again through the Doorway of Spain to trek the Pyrenees – *Dinner, lodging and breakfast in a 2-star hotel*



Day 9 – SAINT JEAN PIED DE PORT. Tour ends after breakfast.

Season

From April to middle of October but be careful this trail is more and more popular and we recommend to reserve earlier to get (the best) rooms. Best time is May, June and September

What's included?

- 8 nights' accommodation in 2-star hotels or guesthouses with breakfasts
- 8 dinners
- Hotel to hotel luggage transfer along the trail.
- Taxi transfers
- A set of maps (1/25 000 scale) or topoguide (with translation) 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 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

Getting there and away

By plane: domestic airport at Pau connecting with Paris Lyon or Marseille. Connection with Aire sur l'Adour by bus (1 bus a day except Sundays) or taxi

By car: From Bordeaux take the A62 and then A65 motorways to reach Aire sur l'Adour.

Taxis from St Jean Pied de Port to Aire sur l'Adour for trip back (contact us for reservation)

Where to park: free unattended car park in Aire sur l'Adour.

By train: From Paris or Bordeaux train to Mont de Marsan rail station and then bus to Aire sur l'Adour. On return scheduled bus and trains from St Jean pied de Port to Bayonne on the line Paris-Hendaye.

