TRIP DOSSIER

The Classic GR10

FRANCE

• One of Europe’s most challenging walks
• Daily walks through scenic mountains
• Walk through lush green valleys, high peaks and pass sparkling lakes

Self-Guided Departures
Walking Grade: C – Demanding

Trip Code: TFGR

For dates and prices visit
www.walksworldwide.com
Introduction

Who wouldn’t be tempted by this inspiring journey and one of the world’s classic treks - traversing from end to end the entire Pyrenean chain of mountains on foot? The mythical GR10 starts at the Atlantic Ocean and crosses over more than 850km of dazzling mountains to arrive at the Mediterranean coast. Walking through scenic grandeur that varies enormously from flower-filled meadows and sparkling lakes to cirques and high summits, you will enjoy ever varied landscapes and contrasting geography, vegetation and architectural styles. Each valley you pass through has its own distinct flavour and you will get a taste of many different cultures from the Basque country through to Catalonia. The Pyrenees is a unique blend of people and walking the GR10 is a superb way to explore local life and absorb the differences. Wild massifs, snow topped peaks, lush green valleys and a rich Pyrenean flora and fauna are some of the pleasures you will remember for a lifetime. As the trail draws to an end you descend through gentle rolling vineyards and sun baked coastal terraces to the Mediterranean. Here you can slip into another rhythm, sample some late night dining and local seafood specialities.

Quieter than the Alps yet offering as many splendid mountain vistas and more pockets of remote wilderness, the Pyrenees are worth returning to time and time again with new aspects to discover, a huge variety of terrain and numerous National Parks on both the French and Spanish sides. They stretch for 400 kilometres between the Atlantic and Mediterranean, creating a barrier between France and the Iberian Peninsula. For most of this distance the frontier range consists of major peaks and forms the watershed between these two countries. The mountains are full of high peaks and contrasts with lush green valleys falling away steeply on the French side and drier, more confused ranges, to the southern Spanish side. A truly magnificent mountain range with its own innate identity.

Our suggested self-guided walk focuses on section 4 of the GR10 – Cauterets to Luchon. This is a particularly hilly section. The walks are on good footpaths and trails but the terrain is varied and sometimes rocky.
Your holiday

Life on trek
You will need to carry a small day sack (30 – 35litres), with everything needed for a day's hike in the mountains e.g. water bottle, camera, picnic, fleece or warm layers, first aid kit, sunscreen, hat, sunglasses and waterproofs. Your main luggage will be transported by vehicle between the different hotels. On certain days you will need to carry your personal gear for the night, please refer to the different sections for more details ie for the refuges. Access to your main luggage on these nights is not possible.

Walking conditions
The walks are mostly along footpaths and trails that are well marked. You need to be used to walking in fairly mountainous terrain and take regular exercise to enjoy this holiday. There is between five hours and seven hours walking each day and the ascents and descents are constant. There will be between 830 and 1160m average altitude gain per day. However, the effective walking time is an indication of how long it will take, though walking speed varies enormously. The estimations do not take into account time for route finding and stops along the way. The average altitude gain is given at the start of each day and some sections will be hillier than others. A full explanation of the trip grading can be found in our brochure or online at www.walksworldwide.com. You should ensure you are comfortable walking at this level of grading and are physically prepared for the trip.

Self-Guided Holidays
As the name suggests, self-guided holidays are for those that prefer to be independent. Within reason you are able to dictate your own schedule, as well as walk at your own pace with the aid of route notes and maps. All your accommodation has been reserved in advance and unless otherwise stated within this trip dossier, your main baggage is transferred between each accommodation along the way, so there’s no need to worry about carrying heavy loads and having to back pack. This means you only need to walk each day and carry your usual lightweight daypack. However, it is important that you are entirely comfortable with being independent whilst on a walking holiday.

We will provide you with the route notes and maps and plan all the necessary logistics; leaving you free to enjoy the trial at your own pace. All you need to do is to choose the best dates and enjoy the journey. Departures for the GR10 depart on Sundays.

For detailed information as to what a self-guided holiday entails please read the self-guided walking holidays section at Types of Trip section on www.walksworldwide.com before booking your self-guided walking holiday.

Route Notes - Help keep them up to date
Things can and do change along the routes that self-guided walking holidays follow. A sign may have been changed, or even removed, a path may have been obstructed, even re-routed, a landmark the route notes refer to may simply no longer exist. It is clearly impossible to keep track of all the changes that may occur outside the local tour operators control and knowledge. It may be the route notes translation can be improved (they are translated into several languages by the local operator after all) too. Clearly a case of “last person to walk the route” has the most up to date information. In the spirit of camaraderie amongst walkers and in an effort to constantly keep route notes updated and improved upon, the local operator (contact details in your final joining instructions) will always welcome notification of any changes along the way/recommendations for improvement if you would care to forward any useful and specific information to them. Alternatively, send to Walks Worldwide and we will forward accordingly.

Detailed itinerary

Day 1 Arrive Cauterets
Arrive at your accommodation in Cauterets. Situated at 950m altitude, Cauterets has an authentic, Pyrenean mountain charm and is well known for its thermal spas. Time to discover and enjoy the town or time permitting take an optional walk to the thermal station. (See ‘How to join and depart this trip’ section later in this Trip Dossier).
Optional Walking duration: 3 hours / 7km
Ascent: 450m / Descent 450m

Hotel

Day 2 Cauterets to Luz Saint Sauveur
From Cauterets, the walk will lead you to Luz-Saint-Sauveur, another well-known thermal spa spot. You will pass the col de Riou, that separates the valley of Cauterets and the valley of Luz. From the col the panorama is immense there are views across the valley of Barèges, Néouvielle massif, the cirque of Troumouse and at your feet you have Luz Ardiden ski station.

Walking duration: 7 hrs / 24 km
Ascent: 1250m / Descent 1470m

Hotel (breakfast and dinner)

Day 3 Luz Saint Sauveur to Barèges
Today’s walk will allow you to discover the flora and fauna of the Pyrenees, such as the mountain isards and the playful marmottes. The valley of light, ‘vallée lumière’ is a real joy for walkers. Overnight in Barèges.

Walking duration: 5 hrs / 34km
Ascent: 810m / Descent 270m

Hotel (breakfast and dinner)

Day 4 Barèges to the Lac Oredon
Today’s walk is in the sumptuous natural reserve of Néouvielle particularly appreciated by walkers for its beauty. The col Madamète and the lakes Aumar, Aubert, Lacquettes and Orédon are on today’s itinerary.

Walking duration: 6 hrs / 16km
Ascent: 1040m / Descent 680m

Gite (breakfast and dinner)

Day 5 Artigusse to Saint-Lary-Soulan
From the parking area in Artigusse, you walk for about 40mins before arriving at the lake de l'Oule. A track leads to the Col de Portet. From the col the trail passes via the ski resort of Saint Lary. It makes its way across high altitude pastures before descending to the village of Vieille-Aure and on to Saint-Lary-Soulan.

Walking duration: 6 hrs / 20km
Ascent: 740m / Descent 1660m

Hotel (breakfast and dinner)

Day 6 Germ to the Espingo refuge
From Germ you can enjoy some superb views of the French/Spanish summits. The mountain lifestyle and agricultural traditions reign heavily in this area. From the village the GR crosses the Pas de Couret at an altitude of 2131m, this passage takes you into the domaine of Luchon. The ascension towards Espingo lake, the Granges d'Astau and the Lac d'Oo make for scenery that is a pure marvel. Overnight bag and sleeping bag is required today. You will be reunited with your main luggage the following day at Luchon.

Walking duration: 8 hrs / 17km
Ascent: 1820m / Descent 1200m

Mountain Refuge – sleeping bag liner recommended (breakfast and dinner)

Day 7 Refuge d’Espingo to Luchon
The walk to Luchon will plunge you into a high mountain decor. You will traverse the Hourquette des Hounts at a high altitude of 2275m, before crossing the mountain pass, the Col de la Coume de Bourg at 2272m. From here you can choose to do the variant that is off the GR10, the ascension of the Pic de Céciré. This magnificent summit offers stunning views in the direction of Maladetta massif and the Spigoeles that will capture your regard. The descent towards Luchon passes by the ski resort of Superbagnères.

Walking duration: 7 hrs / 17km
Ascent: 830m / Descent 2150m

Hotel (breakfast and dinner)

Day 8 Depart Luchon
Depart Luchon after breakfast.

Practical Information

How to join and depart this trip
The joining point for this trip is Cauterets on day 1 of the above itinerary. The nearest international airport is either Lourdes-Tarbes Airport (35km), Toulouse-Blagnac Airport (204km) or Pau-Pyrenees Airport (80km).

To keep the costs down and to provide greater flexibility for selecting your flights arrival airport transfers are not included for those on self-guided, so you should
make your way on arrival to the joining point (full details of the joining hotel will be sent 2-3 weeks before your trip departs). However, if you prefer, our consultants can arrange an arrival transfer for you if you request this - please contact us for prices. Alternatively, a licensed, metered taxi or local, public transport may be available from the airport. 

The departure point for this trip is our tour hotel in Luchon, and you can plan your departure anytime on day 8 of the trip itinerary. Departure airport transfers are also not included for those on a self-guided holiday. If you prefer, our consultants can arrange a departure transfer for you on request - please contact us for prices. Alternatively, a licensed, metered taxi or local, public transport may be arranged from the hotel to take you to the airport.

**Flight Inclusive**

We recommend that you book this trip as a ‘Flight Inclusive’ package. Booking your international flights through Walks Worldwide guarantees you peace of mind and provides 100% financial protection under our CAA ATOL licence. What's more, if you book your flights with us as well as your ground arrangements, we will manage these flight arrangements both before and during your trip. As an ATOL Licence holder, we are able to secure and arrange competitively-priced airfares with most major airlines from the UK, as well as the option of regional departures too.

**Land Only**

If you would prefer to arrange your own international travel you can book this trip as a ‘Land Only’ package, where the price does not include international flights. Please note that if you are booking your own flights there are certain risks you should be aware of. Many airline tickets purchased directly are non-refundable and often do not provide you with any financial protection (unlike booking your flights with ourselves where you would be 100% protected under our CAA ATOL licence). For this reason we strongly advise that you check the rules of any flight booking you make, and check the limitations under any insurance policy you may have in relation to cancellation or date changes. We cannot be held liable for any losses incurred or consequences of any flight bookings or related travel arrangements you have made yourself, such as if your international flights were delayed or cancelled and you could not join or depart your holiday on time. If you do decide to book Land Only, we strongly advise that you do not book international flights or make other travel arrangements (especially if there are financial penalties for cancellation or change) until your chosen holiday is guaranteed to run. Please also ensure when making your own international travel arrangements that they enable you to join and depart this trip in accordance with the criteria specified in the How to join and depart this trip section of this Trip Dossier.

**Local transport**

There are local train and bus services to Cauterets. To see the best route available visit [www.rometorio.com](http://www.rometorio.com). You can take the train from Toulouse Airport to Cauterets SNCF train station. Or there is a bus service from Lourdes-Tarbes Airport to Cauterets. There is a train (or SNCF bus) from Luchon train station to Montréal (then T.E.R train from Montréal to Lourdes, line Toulouse to Irun), from Lourdes, SNCF bus to Cauterets.

**Accommodation**

You will be using simple village accommodation (hotel /hostel), gites and refuges depending on the various sections. En-suite facilities are not guaranteed and in refuges and certain gites sleeping arrangements will be in dormitories. At gites and refuges bedding is usually available for hire at a small cost, but most people prefer to take their own sleeping-bag/liner.

**Food**

Meals included are shown in the outline itinerary. Evening meals (where included) usually include a soup starter, followed by a main course (usually with meat although vegetarian meals can be requested) with sauce and vegetables, followed by a dessert e.g. cheese, fruit or a flan. Drinks are additional and not included in the price of your holiday. On trek, food is most important; you must eat well to provide the energy needed to do the trekking. It is important to eat as much carbohydrate as possible (bread, rice, potato, pasta). Breakfasts are usually included unless otherwise stated and will normally consist of a hot drink, cereal, bread and jam. Lunches are not included and will be carried as picnics purchased in the villages on the way or ordered from the refuges. We recommend you take a Tupperware box and cutlery for your picnic. Details on...
this will be given together with all the trip information when you arrive at your start accommodation along with the route notes and topographical information

Climate
It is of course impossible to predict the precise weather conditions you will encounter during the course of your holiday.

You should always be prepared for inclement weather conditions in the Pyrenees. Summer storms are entirely possible, and even in August snow fall is not uncommon at higher elevations. For climate statistics visit www.worldweather.org

In general there tends to be a 10-day weather cycle. It begins with clear skies in morning and clouds building up towards evening. Gradually through the cycle clouds build until day 10 when a storm occurs, clearing the air and the cycle repeats itself. However, this is only general. The weather tends to be cloudier and cooler on the French side and warmer and clearer on the Spanish. Day temperatures average around the mid 20 – 28 °C (70 – 80 °F) depending upon altitude. During the night it should always keep well above freezing even at the highest refuge. Lower down will be similar to English summer night temperatures.

Snow is likely to be encountered at any time at higher elevations and pass crossings. Temperatures will vary dramatically according to elevation. In the lower valleys it may be warm/hot, but up in the mountains the temperatures will be colder, especially at night when it can fall to freezing or below. Basically, you need to be prepared for all weather conditions.

Altitude
This trip involves ascending to moderately high altitudes. However, if you are fit and healthy this is not something you should be concerned about, although at higher elevations you may experience a little breathlessness. Walking at a slower than usual pace when ascending and remaining well hydrated (4l-6l of water per day) is of great benefit when trekking at higher elevations. However, if you are fit and healthy this is not something you should be concerned about, although at higher elevations you may experience a little breathlessness. Walking at a slower than usual pace when ascending and remaining well hydrated (4l-6l of water per day) is of great benefit when trekking at higher elevations. We are always happy to give advice on altitude related concerns.

Baggage
Please make sure that your baggage is clearly marked with your name, inside as well as outside, in case the labels get detached. We request you limit your main baggage. During the walking day you'll carry only your usual daypack. As your main baggage will be transported by vehicle a normal suitcase can be used for your main baggage. During the walking day you'll carry only your usual daypack.

Vaccinations & health
We always recommend visiting your doctor and dentist for a check-up before travelling. Your doctor will also be able to discuss any vaccinations and medical precautions for the country you are about to visit. In general, no vaccinations are necessary for the TMB. A useful travel health online resource is www.fitfortravel.scot.nhs.uk

Please make sure that you obtain form EHIC either online www.dh.gov.uk or from your local post office – you will need to produce this if you have to see a doctor.

First Aid
You should always carry your own small, personal first aid kit. This should consist of the following: A general anti-biotic, throat lozenges, painkillers, plasters (Band-Aids), blister treatment, insect repellent (DEET), rehydration salts, antiseptic cream, diarrhoea treatment (e.g. Imodium).

Security
Whilst the vast majority of travellers never experience anything untoward it is worth taking precautions particularly in urban areas. You should take sensible precautions in crowded areas such as street markets and airports, where pick-pocketing is common, and keep clear of any street disturbances. Don't wear jewellery, or leave your bags unattended, keep large amounts of money, cameras and mobile phones out of sight when walking in town centres, and avoid walking in city centres after dark. Keep copies of important documents, including passports, in a separate place to the documents themselves, together with details of credit cards. Leave copies at home with a friend too. Safeguard valuables, important documents and cash and deposit them in hotel safes, where practicable.

Currency
Euros will be required for spending money, purchasing packed lunches, drinks etc. Please refer to www.xe.com for up to date rates. ATM machines are available at the Airport, and at locations where you overnight in a hotel/Auberge.

Language
French is the common language of the GR10. Whilst some people in hotels/refuges may speak good English do not expect English to be readily spoken by all and taking along a French phrase book is recommended.

Tipping
Tipping in restaurants, mountain refuges etc is entirely practicable.

Maps
We recommend Stanfords at 12-14 Long Acre, London WC2E 9LP (Tel: 0207 836 1321) www.stanfords.co.uk.

Travel Insurance
It is a condition of booking any of our holidays that you have comprehensive travel insurance. It is your responsibility to ensure you are covered for medical and personal accident risks for the part of the world you intend to travel and the activities involved. This cover should include repatriation costs, air ambulance and helicopter rescue. It is also advisable to take out cancellation insurance as all deposits paid are non-refundable.

You may arrange either single-trip or annual multi-trip travel insurance through Walks Worldwide. Please call us on 01962 302 085 for a quotation.
Passports & Visas
British passport holders (and other EU passport holders) do not require a visa to (please ensure your passport has at least 6 months validity).

You can obtain the latest visa information, as well as book your visa either by contacting your reservation consultant, or by following the link below to our designated visa service: http://www.walksworldwide.com/information/visa.html

Budgeting for your trip
Please refer to the detailed itinerary for information on what is included in this trip. You will need to budget for meals and drinks not included in the holiday, any optional sightseeing, souvenirs and items of a personal nature such as laundry.

Clothing & Equipment
Please check our website for the most up to date information regarding packing for your trip. The information we provide is our suggested guide to help you with your packing based upon our many years of travelling. Using your own judgment for packing is of course important, especially with regard to casual clothing etc but please do not hesitate to contact us if you have any questions about packing for your trip.

Extensions & Excursions
Please contact us for tailor-made extensions.