

THE SAINT JAMES OF COMPOSTELA PILGRIMS' WAY

From Le Puy-en-Velay to Conques

For hundreds of years, these tracks have been used by pilgrims and walkers. Following these footpaths which are steeped in history and visit so many different places, you will be captivated by both the variety and interest of the countryside you pass through. This long-distance walk may be the world's oldest, following as it does the Roman road known as the "Via Agrippa" which linked Lyon and Toulouse.

PROGRAMME

12 days, 11 nights and 10 days of walking

DAY 1 : LE PUY EN VELAY 625m

Arrive at the hotel at the end of the afternoon, dinner and overnight stay.

DAY 2 : LE PUY EN VELAY – ST PRIVAT D'ALLIER 23km

As you leave the hotel, on the way out of Le Puy, you will have time to explore some of the old town. For example you will be able to climb the huge stairways that lead up to the cathedral (which dates from the 11th and 12th centuries). Leaving Le Puy, you will see wonderful views over the whole area. After this you will cross the Velay (a land famous for its lentils and black sheep), passing through La Roche, St Christophe sur Dolaizon, Montbonnet and then St Privat d'Allier.

DAY 3 : ST PRIVAT D'ALLIER – SAUGUES 18km

Between these two places you will pass through widely differing types of countryside, going from the narrow stony path through Rochegude (an interesting viewpoint overlooking the depths of the Allier gorges), crossing these gorges at Monistrol (followed by an impressive climb from the Allier past the Madeleine chapel, carved out of the rock in the 17th century) and arriving on to the plateau of the Margeride before you get to Saugues.

DAY 4 : SAUGUES – LES FAUX 1113m 26km

In this section you discover the Margeride plateau with its characteristic villages, its secluded hamlets, its crosses and its pastures hemmed in by stone walls. Each village has charming features (for example granite houses with carved doorways, cottage gardens ...). Among these are: : Le Pinet , La Clauze (with its strange perched tower!) , Le Falzet, Contaldès farm, the country estate of Le Sauvage, the St Roch chapel, and then, 1km off the main track, you will come to the village of Les Faux.

DAY 5 : LES FAUX - AUMONT AUBRAC 1050m 21 Km

This section continues across the plateau of the Margeride as far as Aumont: the gateway to Aubrac. Between Le Rouget, St Alban and Les Estrets you will find pretty hamlets, and churches with 'comb-style' belfries (with a wall of belfries supporting another smaller belfry).

DAY 6 : AUMONT AUBRAC - NASBINALS 26km



This is a long section, but not difficult. Here we leave the Margeride to cross the plateau of the Aubrac (a wide plateau full of pastures, old barns, drystone walls, and swathes of flowers – depending on the season!!). We pass through La Chaze de Peyre, Lasbros, Rieutort d'Aubrac and Montgros before arriving at NASBINALS. Here there is a superb 14th century Romanesque church built of brown basalt.

DAY 7 : NASBINALS -ST CHELY D'AUBRAC 17km

This is a magnificent traverse of the Aubrac all the way to Aubrac village (a little village where you will find a picturesque bar!!). It is in this village that Adalard, a Compostela pilgrim, founded the Hospice of Aubrac to shelter and care for pilgrims: this happened between 1120 and 1122.

Next you will begin your descent towards Belvezet (remains of chateaux and the Boraldes valley) and then St Chely d'Aubrac where there is a 16th century wayside cross.

**DAY 8 : ST CHELY D'AUBRAC-ESPALION 342m 22 km About 5-6 hours or
ST CHELY D'AUBRAC – ST COME 17km About 4-5 hours**

We have now got down into the valley of the Lot. Having crossed part of the Rouergue, we go through the small town of St Côme d'Olt (“one of the most beautiful villages in France”) before coming to Espalion. Late on in the walk there is a steep 100m slope which makes the end of this section a bit difficult.

**DAY 9 : ESPALION – ESTAING 320m 11 km About 3-4 hours or
ST COME – ESTAING: 17 km About 3-4 hours**

This is a relatively short section, with time for relaxation although in this section too there is a bigish climb of 160m. This takes you to the village of ESTAING – one of the most beautiful in France.

**DAY 10 : ESTAING – ESPEYRAC 369M 25 km About 6-7 hours or
ESTAING – GOLINHAC 16km About 4 -5 hours**

This stage too contains a climb: the ascent to Golin hac is fairly testing since it is done on tarmac and is 350m. After that you go to Campagnac and then down again to ESPEYRAC.

**DAY 11: ESPEYRAC – CONQUES 280m 13 km About 3-4 hours or
GOLINHAC- CONQUES 21 km About 5-6 hours**

Another relatively short section, though here again, after the beginning, there is a fairly steep climb of 220m before going down into Conques, which there will be time to explore in the afternoon.

DAY 12: The walking holiday ends in Conques after breakfast.

DATES

These walking holidays can be arranged between the 1st May and the beginning of November, at any time convenient to you and subject to the availability of hotels.

Please indicate on the booking sheet any other dates which would suit you (for example if you were able to change the dates of your walking holiday by one or two days either before or after your preferred date ...): this is in case one or several hotels etc are not available on your preferred date.

We would also ask you to **make your booking as early as possible**. We don't keep permanent reservations and certain places of accommodation can be filled up several months in advance.

THE PRICE INCLUDES

Half board; the carriage of luggage and a guidebook (one guidebook for 1-2 people); the tourist tax ('taxe de séjour')



THE PRICE DOES NOT INCLUDE

The midday picnic; insurance; drinks; personal spending; the cost of getting from your home to the starting point, or getting home again after the holiday; any taxis or shuttles taking you back to your car; any extra transport for shortening sections of the walk; parking fees, booking fees, extra charge for postage outside France.

RECEPTION/CONCLUSION

Reception for the walking tour takes place at the first hotel, the evening before your first day's walking. For those arriving by car, there is the possibility of leaving your vehicle in the underground car park.

Your walking tour ends the morning after your last day's walking, after breakfast.

LEVEL OF DIFFICULTY

Suitable for everyone; 3 to 8 hours' walking per day.
Gentle slopes.

ACCOMMODATION

This will be in one and two star hotels. Showers and WCs may be on landings or on the next floor in certain establishments.

NB: Bedrooms will only be available after 4pm.

When two hotels are full, we will have to arrange for you to pass two nights at the same establishment and organise transport for the walk. (This will not change the route of your day's walk.) Details of this kind will be noted on your booking confirmation, should they be necessary. *You may be asked to pay a supplement.*

FOOD

Breakfasts will be traditional (often taking the form of buffets) and are served at around 8am.

If you want an earlier breakfast than this, talk about it to the hotel-keeper the evening before to find out if it is possible.

Dinner is usually served from 7.30pm onwards. It usually consists of the meal of the day. Most hotels do not offer a choice of menu unless you pay a supplement.

MIDDAY MEAL

Packed lunches are not included in our prices.

You can order them directly from the hotel the night before (by paying around 7-9€ for each person at the time – depending on the establishment). Alternatively you can buy food in the villages, where there are shops etc.

TRANSPORT OF BAGGAGE

Your baggage will be transported by TRANSBAGAGES (tel: 04 66 65 27 75) between each of the places where you spend the night, **either late in the morning or during the course of the afternoon.**

A supplement may be payable for the transportation of baggage after October.



NB: We ask you to put your bags in the lounge/hallway of each hotel every morning at 8am. **We also insist that each person has only one bag of belongings for transportation, and that no bag must weigh more than 14 kilos.** If you have more than one bag, or if your bag weighs more than 14kg, the transporter can either demand a supplement at the end of the walking tour, or simply refuse altogether to carry your baggage if it is too cumbersome. You are advised not to take ordinary suitcases, but to use a strong, solidly-made travelling bag.

You are advised to take a small day-sack or rucksack to carry your personal belongings during the day's walk.

If you are part of a group, we require you to show clearly on your luggage labels the name of your group leader (i.e. the person who booked your walking tour).

TRAVELLING TO AND FROM THE WALKING TOUR

Train:

Arriving: Gare SNCF du Puy en Velay (Le Puy en Velay railway station)

Go to the main station. Do not get off at Lafayette.

Returning home:

Either:

1. Gare SNCF de Rodez (Rodez railway station)

There is a bus service between Conques and Rodez railway station This does not run on Saturdays, Sundays or public holidays. The cost is 6€.

Or:

2. Gare SNCF at St Christophe Vallon.

You can hire a taxi to get you from Conques to St Christophe Vallon (18km)

It is important to book as early as possible. NB: we cannot pay for this journey and the cost of it is not included in the price of the walking holiday.

Avoid trying to plan your departure for a weekend or public holiday. Making connections on French railways are much more difficult on these days.

Further information about trains can be obtained by telephoning 36 35 or by looking on the SNCF website: www.sncf.fr

Car:

Arriving:

Le Puy en Velay is in the department of Haute-Loire, 514km from Paris and 132km from Clermont-Ferrand (using the RN 102 road).

Michelin map 76; fold 7.

You can leave your car in Le Puy en Velay in the underground car park in the Place du Breuil. This is open every day except Sundays and public holidays from 6.30am to 7pm. It costs about 20€ per week, and the parking is secure.

If you need to get your car out of this underground car park on a Sunday, it is possible to do so by asking in advance for a magnetic card from the staff at the main car park check-out.

It is getting more and more difficult to find free parking near to the hotel. However, if you do manage to find a place, there is almost no risk. Our region is relatively free of problems.



Returning:

1. Coach service to Rodez (38km approx). (No service on Saturdays, Sundays and public holidays: 6,80 € for the journey.)

2. Taxi from Conques to St Christophe Vallon (18km).

Reservations for these must be made by yourself as early as possible. We cannot pay for this transport and it is not included in the overall price of the holiday.

3. Transport from Conques to Le Puy by taxi. With our help or directly you can make a reservation with TRANSBAGAGES to take you back to Le Puy from Conques (tel: 04 66 65 27 75). This transport will cost 50€ per person.

A booking for this should be made at the earliest possible opportunity. We will carry out the booking for you, but the cost is not included in the overall cost of the walking tour.

By plane:

Going home:

Use Rodez airport (Aéroport de Rodez – Marcillac [free parking])

Tel : 05 65 42 20 30

e-mail : aeroport-rodez-marcillac@wanadoo.fr

Direct flights to Paris and Lyon.

WE ADVISE YOU TO BRING WITH YOU

- a small rucksack for your packed lunch and anything else needed for the day's walk
- basic first aid – eg plasters, antiseptic fluid, alcohol for feet etc
- a good pair of walking boots or shoes, suitable for hill walking. Beware of new boots – test them or break them in first.
- sun-glasses, sun-cream and sun-hat
- waterproof garments
- light shoes for the evening
- water bottle; it is important to drink 1.5 to 2 litres per day
- a knife
- torch (optional)
- binoculars (if desired)
- paper handkerchiefs
- needle, thread, safety pins

Mobile phones

Mobile phones do not work everywhere along the route. You may wish to have a phone card with you as well.

INSURANCE

Our insurances, Contrat Assistance Plus (Assistance étendue) and Contrat Sérénité (Premium) are individual and optional. If you sign up for them it must be **AT THE LATEST, 14 WORKING DAYS** after booking the holiday, and the insurance cannot take effect until after you have paid the full cost of the holiday. Anybody can take out one of our insurances, whatever their country of residence.

The total cost of the Contrat Assistance Plus (insurance for Assistance/Rapatration) is set at 1.70% of the cost of the holiday. It takes into account only the cost of the holiday.



The total cost of the Contrat Sérénité (insurance for Assistance/Repatriation, cancellation and interruption of the holiday) is set at 3.6 % of the price of the holiday. It takes into account the cost of the holiday and the extra charges (for individual bedrooms, for a single holidaymaker, extra nights and possible extra transportation etc).

If you cancel the holiday yourself, if you haven't taken out our insurance for cancellation, the cancellation fees will be retained by us.

The size of the cancellation fee depends on the date of cancellation:

- 1) more than 30 days before the planned departure: 50 € of administration fees per person.
- 2) between 30 days and 22 days before departure: 25% of the total cost of the holiday.
- 3) between 21 days and 15 days before departure: 50% of the total cost of the holiday.
- 4) between 14 days and 8 days before departure: 75% of the total cost of the holiday.
- 5) between 7 days and 2 days before departure: 90% of the total cost of the holiday.
- 6) less than two days before the departure date: 100% of the total cost of the holiday.

In all cases of cancellation, even if it is more than 30 days before the planned starting date of the holiday, a fee of 50 € per person will be retained by us to cover administration costs.

➤➤ If the person with whom you planned to share a bedroom cancels their holiday, you will be billed for the individual supplement for that bedroom.

If you have to cancel your holiday **before you set off**, contact La Pèlerine on +33 (0)4 71 74 47 40, and we will do whatever is necessary.

During your holiday, your first action in such a situation should be either to contact **ASSISTANCE MUTUAIDE** on +33 (0)1 45 16 43 47 (if you have taken out the insurance contrat assistance plus) or **SERVICE SINISTRE ASSURANCE** on +33 (0)5 32 09 21 81 (if you have taken out the insurance contrat sérénité).

If you have any questions about your insurance contract, please contact the Hot Line on **05 32 09 21 81**.

Not turning up at the beginning of the holiday, or abandoning the holiday after you have begun it with no explanation, will disqualify you from reimbursement.

An example of an insurance contract, detailing the guarantees it gives you and the procedures you have to follow to make a claim, will be sent to you either at the time you make your booking – or at any other time if you ask for it.

**CHANGING YOUR BOOKING:
ATTENTION!**

Administration fees (50 €) will be kept by us for **any change you make in a booking already made** (e.g. for type of bedroom, departure dates, number of people etc).

If you want to book **extra nights** at the beginning or the end of your holiday this **must** be done **at the time of booking** and be specified on the booking confirmation sheet. Once bookings have been confirmed, if you want to arrange extra nights this must be done directly with the establishments concerned, and paid for at the time.

