



## SELF-GUIDED HUT TO HUT

FRENCH PYRENEES – 7 NIGHT ROUTE

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# FRENCH PYRENEES – The GR10 & Grand Cirques

## 7 Night Route - The Facts

This route crosses five valleys in six days, following sections of the well-known long-distance GR10 walking trail, and all within the French Pyrenees National Park – a tour of some of the most spectacular and challenging scenery in the French Pyrenees. Setting out from the spa town of Cauterets, first into the *Gaube Valley* which sits beneath *Vignemale*; the highest mountain in the French Pyrenees (3298m). You then ascend to its neighbouring peak, *Petit Vignemale* (3032m) for spectacular panoramic views, before descending to *Refuge de Bayselance*; the highest refuge in the French Pyrenees. The long descent that follows the *Ossoue Valley* to *Gavarnie* then introduces you to a softer more pastoral side to these mountains. You then return to the high mountains for three days exploring the three magnificent glacial cirques and valleys which are so characteristic of this region of the French Pyrenees, including the impressive Cirque du Gavarnie and its towering ridge of frontier peaks and the iconic Breche de Roland; an area recognised as a World Heritage site by UNESCO.

## Terrain

A challenging route with some long days across remote and rugged terrain. Mostly waymarked routes, with some sections where the way-finding is more challenging and few markers or signs. Routes vary from well-trodden paths, particularly on sections of the GR10, to steep paths on loose, rocky terrain, with some sections of mild exposure. Scrambling experience would be beneficial when ascending Piméné peak, however this extension is optional. Naturally, in the high mountains a certain level of hiking experience, surefootedness, a good head for heights and a good level of fitness are essential.

*Please note that routes in the high mountains, such as this one, may require you to cross patches of snow early in the season.*

Grade :	Hard - Long
Walking Time :	4 to 7 hours per day (based on 3km/h)
Ascent :	345m - 1020m per day
Descent :	80m - 1586m per day
Distance :	5.8km - 18.8km per day

*Please note that walking time does not include time taken for rests or lunch breaks and is an indication of how long the walking itself will take.*

## Dates & Prices

13<sup>th</sup> July – 21<sup>st</sup> September - *August has more limited availability when the refuges and gites are particularly busy. September is a lovely time to visit and the huts are quieter.*

### £775 per person with Inbound Transfer (from Lourdes)

*Minimum of 2 people (No solo person bookings). Arrive on the day of your choice.*

### Important Notes :

*Accommodation in dormitory rooms for 5 nights and private double/twin room for 2 nights.*

*There are **no shower facilities** on nights 2, 3 and 5 – communal toilets and washbasins only.*

*Some dormitories are sleeping platform bed arrangements, sleeping side by side in a row.*

*All dorms are mixed sex and vary in size from refuge to refuge.*

*Cauterets and Gavarnie have the option to upgrade to a private en suite room in a Hotel, rather than Gite accommodation - this is subject to availability and a supplement of £25 per person per night.*

*No single supplements apply for dormitory accommodation but are applied to private rooms in the Hotels/Gites.*

*You must supply your own sleeping bag liners for all dormitory accommodation.*

*Towels are not provided in any refuge/gite accommodation - please bring your own.*

*Please note that all bookings are subject to availability - please do not book any travel arrangements until we have confirmed your accommodation dates.*

## Included in the price

- *Inbound transfer from Lourdes (airport or train station) to Cauterets.*
- *7 nights' accommodation in gites/refuges/guesthouses.*
- *Full board - Breakfast and 3-course dinner each day, plus 6 packed lunches for walk days.*
- *A meet and greet with our local host in Cauterets on your arrival.*
- *Detailed route laminates and relevant maps.*
- *Detailed pre-departure information including packing suggestions.*

## Not included in the price

- *Flights*
- *Insurance*
- *Drinks/snacks and any other purchases in the accommodation*
- *Homebound transfer from Luz St Sauveur to Lourdes at end of week. Private taxi can be arranged or local buses used.*

# Route Information

## Day 1 – Arrival in Cauterets

Collection from Lourdes and drive to Cauterets (under 1hr), a charming spa town and ski area in the Midi-Pyrenees. Settle in to accommodation and have briefing to discuss each stage of the route and ask any questions. Evening meal taken in nearby restaurant.

**Overnight accommodation – Gite accommodation, Cauterets (960m)**

## Day 2 – Lac de Gaube & Vignemale Glaciers

**14.2km, 1020m ascent, 80m descent** – A wooded path takes you out of Cauterets to join the GR10 route and ascend the Val de Jeret passing a series of impressive waterfalls. From the stone built Pont d’Espagne (1496m), you ascend on a chair lift before reaching the stunning and expansive waters of Lac de Gaube (1731m), an excellent spot for lunch and a paddle. Across the lake to the south, you have a clear view of the snowy peaks and small glaciers of Vignemale (the highest mountain in the French Pyrenees; 3298m), at the far end of the Vallee de Gaube. For the remainder of the day you steadily ascend this valley, passing waterfalls until opening out to an impressive plateau and the well positioned Refuge des Oulettes, perched beneath Vignemale peak.

**Overnight accommodation – Dormitory - Refuge des Oulettes (2151m)**

## Day 3 – Petite Vignemale Peak (3032m)

**5.8km, 885m ascent, 390m descent** – Today is a short day and so you can afford a leisurely start and to take your time, and perhaps spend some time exploring the areas around the Refuges. From Refuge des Oulettes it is a steep but steady ascent out of the valley to the Hourquette d’Ossoue, a saddle sitting at 2734m. From here you ascend approx. 300m on a steep zigzagging path to the summit of Petit Vignemale (3032m), the smaller of the Vignemale peaks but with views to rival. Below is the large Ossoue glacier, which you pass beneath tomorrow. You return via the same path and then descend the other side of the Hourquette saddle to Refuge de Baysellance, which sits below. A simple and rustic hut and the highest in the French Pyrenees.

**Overnight accommodation – Dormitory - Refuge de Baysellance (2651m)**

## Day 4 – Ossoue Valley & Glacier

**16.8km, 345m ascent, 1464m descent** – Today is a long but stunning day for views. From Refuge de Baysellance you descend through the Ossoue Valley toward the village of Gavarnie. You pass beneath the Ossoue glacier, which climbs ascend to reach Vignemale’s main peak; Pique Longue, and pass the caves that eccentric Irish-French count Henri Russell ordered dug in the side of the mountain. You pass through a short section of narrow gorge before emerging at a reservoir, Barrage d’Ossoue, and a welcome paddle. The afternoon is spent traversing the valley-side across grazing pastures and passing shepherd huts and their herds, before reaching your Gite, perched above the village of Gavarnie.

**Overnight accommodation – Dormitory – Gite Grange de Holle, Gavarnie (approx. 1500m)**

## Day 5 – Cirque de Gavarnie & Waterfall

**12.4km, 998m ascent, 423m descent** – After continuing past Gavarnie you enter this glacial valley walking towards the spectacular Cirque de Gavarnie, a horseshoe of high cliff walls, some 1400m from top to bottom; perhaps one of the single most famous sites in the Pyrenees. You walk to its headwall and following an out and back route you can ascend steeply to the foot of the ‘Grande Cascade’, a waterfall with the highest vertical drop in Europe outside of Norway; 423m. After retracing your steps, you leave the GR10 path and ascend on a quiet and impressive balcony path taking you back high above the valley bottom, with views to the frontier peaks and the Breche de Roland. Piméné peak (2801m), which looms over your base for the night, Refuge des Espuguettes, can be added as an extension at the end of today after dropping off your bag, or shortly after beginning tomorrow’s route. It is a great summit but has sections of scrambling and exposure and should only be considered by those with a good head for heights and surefootedness, and in good weather. **Piméné peak extension – extra 8.99km, 818m ascent, 818m descent**

**Overnight accommodation – Dormitory - Refuge des Espuguettes (2027m)**

## Day 6 – Cirque d’Estaubé & Lac des Gloriettes

**16.3km, 713m ascent, 1229m descent** – This morning, for those with the energy, you have the option to add the out and back extension to Piméné peak (2801m) not long after leaving Refuge des Espuguettes – this requires an early start and makes for a big day. You then rejoin the path ascending to the Hourquette d’Alans, a pass at 2430m and the gateway into the dramatic Cirque d’Estaubé. You descend steeply at first from the saddle before levelling out to pass through this quiet and remote valley, which is home to families of marmots, alongside grazing cows and horses. You descend all the way to the Gloriettes lake and dam wall (1668m), and whilst it is not a swimming lake, its stream and small bridge make for a great lunch spot. Then you traverse a mountainside towards the Cirque de Troumouse before descending to the pretty hamlet of Héas (1519m). **Piméné peak extension – extra 5.5km, 550m ascent, 550m descent**

**Overnight accommodation – Dormitory - Auberge accommodation, Héas/Maillet (approx. 1600m)**

## Day 7 – Cirque de Troumouse

**13.1km, 660m ascent, 813m descent** – From Héas you ascend the hillside on a zigzagging path, passing a series of small waterfalls and entering a hanging valley, before setting your sights on the Cirque de Troumouse. At 14km across, it is the largest limestone cirque in Europe and quite a sight to behold. You approach the cirque on a spectacular balcony path, which is rarely trodden and will test your navigation skills. After crossing one side of the plateau you descend steeply to the valley bottom and return to Auberge de La Munia, where you will be collected and driven (approx. 30min) to the spa town of Luz Saint Sauveur and guesthouse for the night. A relatively short day, which allows for time to explore the sights and shops of Luz. Evening meal taken in nearby restaurant.

**Overnight accommodation – Private en suite room – 2\* Guesthouse, Luz Saint Sauveur (710m)**

## Day 8 – Departure Day

**Onward independent travel from Luz Saint Sauveur**

We can help with public transport information and timetables, or we can pre-book a private taxi to take you back to Lourdes.

## At Your Own Risk

*Your self-guided hut to hut itinerary will be spent entirely at your own risk and it is important that you understand that whilst these routes are accurate at the time of writing, the situation on the ground may change and the itineraries rely on your sound judgement and decision making throughout.*

*Our self-guided hut to hut itineraries are put together on a basis of goodwill so that you might enjoy a route you may not otherwise have discovered having organised the itinerary yourself. It represents nothing more than the opportunity to go out on a beautiful walk in a part of this wonderful walking area, with the support of knowing that many of the logistics have been arranged for you.*

*It is a fact that mountains, mountainous areas and activities undertaken in them are associated with personal injury and death. By coming to such areas, you are exposing yourself and your party to the possibility of personal injury or even death. In such an event, Collett's Mountain Holidays will not be held responsible for your interest in mountainous areas and your involvement in mountain pursuits, which can occasionally have tragic consequences.*

*It is important that you understand that these routes are put together using our extensive knowledge of the area, to provide a route which we believe will be enjoyable and realistic for people who decide that they have the appropriate level of fitness and ability in order to complete the itinerary safely. The information provided uses only marked paths which are in use at the time of writing, however, it is your responsibility to continually assess the suitability and safety of the route throughout the walk and to undertake any action necessary to avoid any terrain which each or any member of the group is not comfortable with. The route choice also assumes an ability to read maps and navigate competently.*

*It is the responsibility of each individual in the group to make an assessment of the information provided, and to make an informed decision about whether the itinerary is suitable for them.*

*Finally, during your holiday with Collett's Mountain Holidays you act at your own risk on any ideas, information and opinions included in any material prepared by us to help you get the most from the area.*

