Nature Occitane
VOYAGES SPORTS & NATURE
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HIKING TRIP IN THE MEDITERRANEAN CÉVENNES - SELF GUIDED



Itinerant walking holiday
"A land of intricate blue Hills" RL Stevenson

The Mediterranean Cévennes holiday takes you off the beaten track and explores the ridges and valleys of the southern Cévennes. It is a week of contrasts between the sheltered valleys, with clusters of tiny hamlets, and the breezy ridges, offering panoramic views, soft mountain air and alpine flowers. You follow ancient drovers paths, "drailles", still used for the transhumance, the seasonal migration of sheep between the valleys and the mountains. Eagles soar on the thermals and little disturbs the daily peace but the sound of distant sheep bells carried on the breeze.

ITINERARY

DAY 1: ARRIVAL IN LE VIGAN

Transfer (10mins) to your auberge

We will meet you in Le Vigan* to drive you to your first B&B set in a quiet village in the foothills of the Cévennes. This comfortable B&B with pretty gardens, charming rooms and a swimming pool will be your oasis for the next 2 nights.. Your hostess is a qualified chef and will serve you with creative and delicious dinners using seasonal, local produce.

DAY 2: CÉVENOL LANDSCAPES – SILK AND CHESTNUTS

4h walking, 10km / 6.3 miles, ascent/descent: 400m

A circular walk takes you through an isolated hamlet, situated on one of the main 'drailles' (drovers' paths) into the mountains. Passages through woods of evergreen oak and sweet chestnuts are interspersed with fine views. The importance of silk production in previous centuries is evident both in the architecture and by the presence of numerous old mulberry trees.

DAY 3: INTO THE MOUNTAINS

5h walking, 8.75 miles / 14km ascent 753m, descent 214m

You have a 5 minute transfer to the start of today's walk to lessen the ascent, although this is gradual and rewarded by fine views throughout. An ancient drovers' path takes you to a mountain village just below Mont Aiguoal. Rocky paths for the first half of the day give way to springy forest tracks in the afternoon. You stay in a simple mountain hotel (2*) where your day's efforts are rewarded by warm hospitality and good home cooking.

DAY 4: RETURN TO THE VALLEYS

5h walking, 20km/12.5 miles, ascent 420m, descent 1120m

Today's walk offers you some of the most exhilarating views of the southern Cévennes. Once again you follow a drovers' path, climbing up to a col at 1300m, then descending gradually to a peaceful auberge set just outside a south facing village. You stay here for the next 2 nights with plenty of time to make the most of the swimming pool.

DAY 5: HIDDEN VALLEYS AND SWEET ONIONS

4h walking, 12 km/7.5 miles, 380m ascent/descent

Small paths lead you through beautifully restored old terraces now used to cultivate the "oignon doux des Cévennes" or sweet onions for which these valleys are famous. You descend to a hamlet where once silk production was the mainstay of the ecomony but today apples and onions are the all important crops. A delightful walk on tiny paths, winding through a succession of picturesque villages. Alternatively you may choose to have a leisurely day, making the most of the peace and quiet of your rural auberge to recuperate mid-trip.

DAY 6: THE COL DE PEYREFICHE

4h30 walking, 11km / 6.9 miles, ascent 330m, descent 620m

A gentle climb up through chestnut woods brings you to a pass with stunning mountain views. From here you flank the hillside on a tiny path

before descending to the village of Saint André de Majencoules. Time for a village tour or a cool drink in the square before continuing your descent to the the valley of the Hérault. On the way you pass an unusual and fascinating garden which you may enjoy visiting.
Your B&B is set in the heart of a tiny hamlet.

DAY 7: THE COL DE PEYRAUBE

4h30 walking, 10.6km/6.6 miles, ascent 365m, descent 440m

Today you climb gently up to a ridge, offering views back to Mont Aigoual. You pass through a couple of small villages before descending back to the valley where a 13th century château awaits you for your final evening.

DAY 8: DEPARTURE DAY

Transport back to Nîmes and Montpellier from outside the château

Buses to Nimes or Montpellier (1h30) leave from just outside the chateau. Alternatively, we will be happy to book a local taxi for you at whatever time is needed for your onward travel plans.

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Disclaimer
The above itinerary may be modified due to weather or terrain conditions, equipment concerns or the physical condition of the participants. The final choice of the walks will be decided by the guide who may adapt the programme for reasons of security.

DATES & PRICES

SEASON DATES
From the 2nd May to the 30th September 2018.
Choose whatever dates suit you best within this season.

NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS :
From 2

PRICE OF THE HOLIDAY:
965 €

OUR PRICE INCLUDES :
Advice from a local 'Accompagnateur en Montagne' (mountain leader) at the start of the holiday
Telephone back up throughout your holiday to ensure all runs smoothly
7 nights half board accommodation in a shared double room: 2 nights in a rural auberge, 2 nights in simple country hotels, 2 night in charming, characterful B&Bs.
Transfers between Le Vigan and your accommodation at the start and end of your holiday
Picnics on the 6 walking days
Bag moves throughout the trip
Maps and detailed directions that are checked and updated regularly

OUR PRICE DOES NOT INCLUDE:
Travel to reach Le Vigan
Booking fees (15€ per person) – FREE if you pay by French cheque or by bank transfer
Personal expenses, drinks
Cancellation or repatriation insurance
In a general sense, everything that is not included in 'Our price includes'

OPTIONS

PRACTICAL INFO

MEETING POINT:
We will meet you in Le Vigan and drive you to your first auberge (10mins). Le Vigan is served by regular buses from Montpellier and Nîmes.
NB: If you prefer not to use public transport to reach Le Vigan we can book you a taxi (not included in the holiday price). Please request this as soon as possible in advance.

AT THE END OF THE HOLIDAY:
On day 8, buses leave to Nîmes and Montpellier leave from just outside your château B&B. As for arrival, if you prefer to use a taxi for the

return leg of your journey (not included in the holiday price) please request this as soon as possible in advance.

MANAGEMENT:

A local Accompagnateur en Montagne (mountain leader) will oversee your holiday. They will meet you at, or near, the start of your trip (dependant on availability) to answer any questions that you may have and remain contactable by telephone should you be in need of assistance.

HOW TO GET HERE:

In order to limit your carbon missions, we encourage you to use public transport.

IF YOU COME BY TRAIN:

Montpellier or Nîmes train station

IF YOU COME BY CAR:

You will receive the address of your B&Bs before departure

IF YOU COME BY PLANE:

Montpellier or Nîmes airport

EQUIPMENT

RUCKSACK

This should be large enough to carry your personal affairs for the day, ie. around 30 litres. A rucksack with a hip belt will be more comfortable (as this allows the weight to be spread more evenly, notably across the hips), padded shoulder straps, and a chest strap. You should always carry a warm piece of clothing, a rain coat, water bottle, first aid kit and personal items including part of the picnic.As well as these daily necessities, a bin bag and 2 freezer bags are invaluable to protect your belongings in case of rain.

LUGGAGE

This will be transported for you between your hotels/B&Bs, all you need to carry with you are your peronal affairs for the day (see above).

WALKING BOOTS

Choose boots with ankle support and non-slip but supple soles. Your shoes are one of the most important elements of your walking holiday. They should be above all comfortable, light, water proof and breathable. **Do not come on holiday with brand new shoes ! Make sure that you have already done at least 2 or 3 walks in them before your trip.**

CLOTHES

- A wind and waterproof jacket that is breathable (GORETEX or similar). Ponchos are not acceptable.
- A fleece (the mountain weather can be changeable and turn cold)
- A pair of walking trousers, a pair of shorts, t-shirts (choose modern breathable, fast drying materials rather than cotton)
- A change of clothes for the evenings
- A swimming costume and towel

OTHER ITEMS

- Water bottle (2 litre minimum per person).
- A pair of telescopic walking poles (highly recommended)
- Sun glasses and sun cream
- Sun hat
- Personal tolietries and a towel
- A pair of sandals/comfortable shoes (for the evenings)
- Camera
- Small first aid kit (plasters, compeed, elastoplast, head ache pills, after bite etc)

LEVEL OF DIFFICULTY OF THE WALKS :

Medium (M) – between 4h and 6h30 walking per day. Between 400m et 1200m uphill each day.

AMOUNT CARRIED :

All you need to carry each day is a small rucksack with your water, picnic, first aid kit and other personal essentials (see equipment list).

PUBLIC :

You should exercise regularly and undertake an endurance sport (walking, cycling) at least twice a week for the 2 months prior to the trip.

NATURE OF THE TERRAIN :

The walking is on the whole easy but is on rocky paths that may be uneven and steep in places. Accessible to all those in good physical condition.

WALKING TIMES:

These are given as a general guideline only and take into account the terrain. They are based on an average walking speed and do not allow for breaks, picnic stops etc. They are calculated by using an average speed of 300m per hour for a climb uphill and 450m per hour for a descent.

WATER:

The use of a "camel back" (water pouch which fits in your rucksack with a tube and mouth piece) is recommended. (You may also want to bring a small thermos flask for a tea or coffee during your walk).

THE WALKING ITINERARIES:

These may be modified due to weather or terrain conditions, equipment concerns or the physical condition of the participants. The final choice of the walks will be decided by the guide who may adapt the programme for reasons of security.

THE CLIMATE:

This is dominated by a Mediterrannean influence. Conditions can change quickly in the mountains. For local forecast see link: Meteo France