

Trek the Cathar Trail

Trip style: Guided trails

Destination: 📍 France

Trip code: XAZ07-LDW13

Grades: 1, 4

Carbon Footprint: 🚲 470kg CO2



HOLIDAY OVERVIEW

One for the history buffs and fans of Dan Brown's Da Vinci Code, this walk takes you through the Pyrenees mountains along the Cathar Trail – a 58-mile long-distance route that crosses from France into Spain. Explore an incredible lineup of ruined castles and chateaux that tell the tragic tale of the Cathars – a persecuted religious group destroyed by the Spanish Inquisition in the 14th century. Highlights include Chateau de Foix, the spa town of Ax-les-Thermes, and Cadí-Moixeró Natural Park – a mountainous wonderland with peaks that reach over 2,500 metres.

WHAT YOU'LL LOVE

- Exploring the stunning French and Spanish Pyrenees on foot
- Visiting medieval towns, ruined castles, and charming chateaux
- Learning about the history of the Cathars
- Conquering one of Europe's most historic trails
- An incredible variety of scenery and wildlife-spotting opportunities
- Walking through the heart of Cadí-Moixeró Natural Park
- A more personalised experience thanks to small group sizes (maximum 14 people)

WHAT'S INCLUDED

- Return flights from London Heathrow, including baggage and transfers
- Guided trail walking with a local leader
- 7 nights' accommodation
- 7 breakfasts, 6 packed lunches & 7 dinners
- All in-destination transport
- Luggage transfers on walking days

TRIP SUITABILITY

This is a level 4 activity. 58 miles with 7-14 miles and up to 3,300 feet of ascent and 4,000 feet of descent in a day.

ITINERARY

Day 1: Arrival in Toulouse

Transfer from Toulouse to the medieval town of Foix, where you spend the first night. If time allows take time to visit the castle of Count Gaston Fébus or stroll around the medieval city.

Day 2: Montségur to Comus

A coach transfer of 45 minutes will take you to the beginning of today's walk at Montségur and to meet your leader. You'll meet at the Castle where you can enjoy magnificent views of the valleys and mountains around you. You'll also enjoy an introduction to Cathar history and legend on your visit to this famous castle, before traversing the spectacular Frau gorges where the Mediterranean influence is more present. You'll walk from Ariège to the Plateau de Sault before a 30-minute coach journey to the spa town of Ax-les-Thermes for the night with its hot springs and thermal baths. (If time allows, you can relax in the wellness centre "Les Bains du Couloubret" - €20.00 for 2 hours). 9½ miles (15km) with 3,000 feet (900m) of ascent and 2,700 feet (800m) of descent.

Day 3: Ax-les-Thermes to Mérens

Today we take a short train transfer to Mérens and a beautiful walk, giving close-up views of the high mountains of Ariège. Taking shepherds' paths and forest trails, we reach the high-point of the day with spectacular far-reaching views of the Pyrenean chain. Descending through the meadows and woods surrounding the village of Mérens, we can revive our feet in the natural springs, before taking the short train or bus journey back to Ax-les-Thermes. 8 miles (13km), with 2,500 feet (750m) of ascent and 2,500 feet (750m) of descent.

Day 4: Porta to Bellver de Cerdanya

Today we take a 40 minute coach journey on the famous route to Porté Puymorens and the Mediterranean Pyrenees. From here we begin our ascent to the Portella Blanca (8,257ft above sea level), and the border of France, Andorra and Spain. Crossing into Spain, the landscape changes yet again, as we are greeted by the stunning sight of the Sierra del Cadi. You'll be rewarded by beautiful scenery as you cross into Spain. A short transfer from the end of your walk takes you to your hotel. This is the longest day, as you cross the border and it involves a very early start. 14½ miles (23km), with 3,700 feet (1,100m) of ascent and 3,700 feet (1,100m) of descent.

Day 5: Bellver de Cerdanya

Today, on the agenda, a nice loop on the heights of Bellver de Cerdanya. It allows you to discover the geological richness of the Sierra de Cadi and undoubtedly admire the wild vultures, these Pyrenean giants, from very close up. 7 miles (11km), with 2,000 feet (600m) of ascent and 2,000 feet (600m) of descent.

Day 6: Baga to Gosol

From Bellver we take a 20 minute transfer to Gisclareny where we begin our walk through the heart of the Cadi-Moixero national park and in the shadows of the emblematic fortress of Pedraforca's Peak. Our trail ends today at the town of Gosol with its castle, a place of refuge for many Cathars. 10 miles (15km), with 2,400 feet (700m) of ascent

and 2,000 feet (600m) of descent.

Day 7: Fumanya to Berga

The final chapter in this legendary journey leads us from Fumanya (after a short transfer from Berga), to the Cathar sanctuary of Queralt, the 'balcony of Catalonia', and through the Mediterranean forest to Berga, where we can toast the life and legend of the "Bon Hommes", and enjoy the final section of our journey. 9½ miles (15km), with 1,400 feet (400m) of ascent and 3,000 feet (900m) of descent.

Day 8: Departure Day

Free time in Berga before your transfer to Barcelona airport which takes just over an hour.

Hotel Lons - Cathar Crossing

The Hotel Lons (1 night) is located in the historic centre of Foix, 5 minutes walk from the imposing castle, "Château de Foix". Formerly a coaching inn, Hotel Lons has been owned and run as a hotel by the Lons family for over half a century.

Le Chalet or Hotel Restaurant Le Bellevue - Cathar Crossing

You will stay at one of the following small family-run hotels in Ax-les-Thermes: Le Chalet (2 nights) - The hotel has recently been refurbished, with light and airy rooms, and is renowned for its restaurant. Hotel Restaurant Le Bellevue (2 nights) - is a comfortable hotel located close to all the local amenities in Ax-les-Thermes.

Hotel Bellavista - Cathar Crossing

A family-run hotel (2 nights) from which you can enjoy the spectacular scenery of northern Catalonia. The hotel is located in the mountainous area of Cerdanya, part of the Spanish Pyrenees, just a short distance from the French border and Andorra. All rooms are outward-facing and en-suite with telephones and TV. Free Wi-Fi is available throughout the hotel. During the summer months, guests can enjoy a game of tennis on the Bellavista's own court or a dip in the open-air swimming pool.

Hotel Estel - Cathar Crossing

This comfortable, family-run 2-star hotel (2 nights) is located just a few minutes' walk from the centre of town. All bedrooms have an en-suite bathroom and television. Facilities include: Sun terrace, coffee house, snack bar, bar & restaurant.

Vaccinations & health information - SHARED WITH ALL EU NEW 2026

Before booking, you should check with your doctor to see whether any health precautions are needed for your trip. Health advice and requirements can change, so we recommend doing this in good time before travel. As a general rule, travellers should ensure they are up to date with routine UK vaccinations and boosters, including, for example, MMR and diphtheria, tetanus and polio. Some countries may require you to have specific vaccinations such as Malaria, Rabies and Yellow Fever. Please check with your GP if you are unsure. Please note that the use or possession of some common prescription or over-the-counter medicines is restricted or banned in certain countries. If you will be carrying medication, you should check with the relevant embassy or consulate before travelling. As an extra precaution, we recommend keeping medication in its original packaging, carrying a copy of your prescription, and, where possible, asking your pharmacist to provide the medication name in the language of the country you are visiting. For further country-specific health advice, visit www.fitfortravel.nhs.uk or www.traveldoctor.co.uk. If you are travelling from outside the UK, please consult your own doctor and check local entry requirements.

Passport & Visa information - SHARED FOR ALL EU NEW 2026

This information is for those travelling with a full 'British Citizen' passport; for all other nationalities or passport holders, please check with your local consulate for advice. **Passport Requirements** This information applies to travellers holding a full British Citizen passport. Entry requirements vary by destination and can change at short notice. For most EU and worldwide destinations, passports must be valid for the entire duration of your stay. Some countries also require a minimum period of validity remaining on your passport (often up to 6 months beyond your return date), even if you are not staying that long. We strongly recommend ensuring your passport has at least six months' validity remaining at the time of travel to avoid any issues. If you hold a different type of British passport or a passport issued by another country, you must check the requirements with the relevant embassy, consulate, or official government website. **Visa Requirements** Visa rules depend on your nationality, destination, length of stay, and purpose of travel, and they can change frequently. It is your responsibility to check whether you require a visa before travelling. British passport holders should check the latest entry, passport validity and visa requirements for their destination on the UK government's Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office (FCDO) website: <https://www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice>

Packing list - Overseas Guided Walking

It's best to be prepared for all weather conditions. To make it easier, here is a list of items you should consider packing. **Essentials** Walking boots Waterproof jacket Waterproof trousers Insulated jacket/top Walking clothing Walking socks (plus spares) Sunhat Gloves/mitts and warm hat Water bottle (minimum 2 litre capacity) Headtorch High-factor sunscreen (minimum SPF 30) Sunglasses with a dark lens Rucksack (15-30 litres) Mobile phone Personal first aid kit (containing your medication, blister plasters, etc.) Passport Visa (if applicable) Copy of your travel insurance policy UK Global Health Insurance Card (formerly known as EHIC) Recommended Collapsible walking poles Swimwear and travel towel Snacks Dry bags Rubbish bags Insect repellent Optional extras Camera Sit mat Flask for hot drinks Durable lunch box Gaiters GPS device (excluding Bhutan, Georgia and India)
