

Le Puy-en-Velay: so much to see

Walking St James' Way in Comfort

An accommodation-led experience along the classic Compostella trail

Tour Highlights

- ☞ Discover yourself along France's Classic Pilgrimage trail.
- ☞ Choose from two high-level accommodation-led formats to suit you - and experience the difference.
- ☞ Explore the cultural heritage of three of France's most inviting ancient regions: Velay, Margeride and Aubrac.
- ☞ Fine start - Le Puy en Velay and its World Heritage sites.
- ☞ Great Finish: the 'UNESCO' section from Nasbinals to St Chely across the Aubrac Plateau.



Fact File

- ✓ 7-night, self-guided, inn-to-inn walking tour through rural France.
- ✓ Graded as a moderate challenge - you average 12 miles/ 19 kms a day and walk 82.5 miles/133 kms in total.
- ✓ Convenient access from Lyon.
- ✓ Start any day from 1st April to 4th October.
- ✓ Luggage transfers throughout.



Theme

Walking St James' Way in Comfort in France is one of the two 'must do' walking tours in The Hexagon. This adventure takes you along the most popular of the four 'French Ways', the Via Podiensis or Le Puy Route from Le Puy en Velay to St Chely d'Aubrac.

Walking St James' Way in Comfort is a special, human experience. Our customers have their own personal reasons for wanting to join El Camino Francés. However, what unites you is that you are not pilgrims and so have no desire to suffer along the Way. Far from it, the objective is to walk the walk in moderate stages, talk the talk with other international travellers, and then 'eat the eat' and 'sleep the sleep' in the welcoming environment of exceptional guest houses or the best of local hotels. There you have the essential ingredients of our tour: an accommodation-led opportunity to enjoy the best of what the Way of St James has to offer in two formats to suit. **What differentiates this trip from other 'Camino' tours is the emphasis on accommodation excellence.** You only get one bite at the cherry, so here's your chance to do it in style.





The magnificent Dolaizon Valley

Of course, we haven't talked about the walking yet - but then, can thirty-five thousand and counting on-foot travellers a year really be hiking up the wrong path? We think not. And the most noteworthy aspect of the terrain and, the trail itself is, without doubt, its diversity - there is something for everyone; and the changes occur on a daily basis as you meander through two departments [Haute Loire and Lozère] and two regions [Auvergne-Rhone Alpes and Occitanie].

St. James' Way in Comfort will also help you address the burning issue of your Work-Life balance as part of your Walk-Life balance. Well, this is France, the home of philosophy! Chill out and exchange life's lessons with complete strangers in 'the middle of nowhere' and then re-join 'normal life' re-charged and re-vitalised.

Walking St. James' Way in Comfort is the French self-discovery trail 'par excellence.' Whether you opt for the 'Home Comforts' or 'By Hotel' format, you will experience something unique and 'ecumenical' along the Way and return home better for it. If you seek one week's total immersion in rural France, then choose the first section of the Le Puy Route and do it in style.

*Chapelle de Bastide
near La Chaze de
Peyre*



Walking St. James' Way: seven-night tour itinerary

[All distances, times and elevation figures are approximate] ¹

Day 1 Arrive in Le Puy en Velay.

Steeped in Christian history, the monuments and squares of Le Puy merit your attention - get there early, check into your centrally-located 3-star hotel and have a good look around.

Night in Le Puy.

Day 2 Le Puy to St Privat d'Allier.

[14½ miles-23½ kms, approx. 7 hrs, +600 ms -300 ms].

Climb out of the Puy basin to the Velay Plateau and its volcanic cones and follow the trail above the Dolaizon river to St Christophe. Cross the Devès, France's largest basalt Plateau, via a series of charming villages and arrive at St Privat, with its Roman-style church and castle vestiges.

Night in or near St Privat.



Day 3 St Privat d'Allier to Saugues.

[12 miles-19 kms, approx. 6 hrs, +600 ms -500 ms]

You climb to a majestic belvedere before gaining RocheGude with its fine hillside chapel and castle ruins on the Velay-Gevaudan border. Then descend into the Allier Gorge with its own 'Pao de Açucar' outcrop before crossing the Eiffel bridge and climbing up past the semi-troglodyte St Madeleine chapel and into the granite mountains of Margeride. The descent to Saugues is a delight.

Night in Saugues.

Day 4 Saugues to St Alban sur Limagnole. [20 miles-32½ kms, 8 hrs, +370ms -390ms]

The option exists to split day 4 into two with an extra night in Saugues - please ask our advice. Alternatively, a short morning transfer option can reduce the day's length.

The hamlet of La Clauze is dominated by its 12th century tower perched atop a vast granite outcrop. Further on, the walk along the Virlange Valley is a treat and the climb up through the Ranchoulet woods never dull. Say hello to the friendly 'wild horses' before descending to Le Sauvage for lunch.

From there you climb to Hospitalet col and visit the Chapelle de Saint Roche before crossing into Lozère [Occitanie] and descending to St Alban and its Romanesque church.

Night in or near St Alban.



All the way from Geneva

Day 5 St Alban sur Limagnole to Aumont-Aubrac.
[9 miles-14½ kms, 4 hrs, +280ms -185ms.]

You finish crossing the granite Margeride and enter volcanic Aubrac. A short day full of fine and varied trails and boulder-speckled scenery.

Night in Aumont-Aubrac.

Day 6 Aumont-Aubrac to Nasbinals.

[16½ miles-26½ kms, approx. 7½ hrs, +340ms -190ms, with option to reduce the day by approx. 1½ miles-2½ kms]

Our favourite day takes you to La Chaze de Peyre, with its fine [still used] communal oven, then onto the charming Chapelle de Bastide before you arrive at Les Quatre Chemins and a welcome beverage. By now the forest has given way to enormous expanses of rolling green and cattle-laden pastures.

Night in Nasbinals.

Day 7 Nasbinals to St Chely d'Aubrac.

[10½ miles-17 kms, approx. 4½ hrs, +135ms -490ms.]

The grand finale, a World Heritage-rated walk, is blessed with more fabulous rolling hillsides before you descend to the picturesque village of Aubrac, overseen by its white porcelain statue of the Virgin Mary. A fine lunch-spot, with its Tour des Anglais, you then commence your protracted descent into the Lot Valley and enjoy your final over-nighter in charming St Chely.

Night in St Chely.

Day 8 End of St James' Way tour.

Breakfast followed by check out. Please enquire about our transfers to Aumont-Aubrac or Le Puy. Bonne continuation and we hope to see you next year.





En route to Nasbinals

What's Included

- ✓ 7 nights' bed and breakfast /B & B [incl. local taxes] in carefully-selected accommodation.
- ✓ 3 evening meals [Chambres d'hotes du charme-led], or 6 evening meals [Hotel-led] & all local taxes.
- ✓ Themed dossier, Hiking Insight Notes and 1: 50,000 maps. The Way is very well way marked and we consider this scale map as entirely adequate for this particular trail.
- ✓ Luggage transfers throughout ²
- ✓ Telephone help-line service with 7/7 native English and locally-based support from 8 'till late.



Not included

- ⊗ Remaining meals and all drinks and extras - lunch and dinner options are listed in your dossier and walking notes.
- ⊗ 1: 25,000 scale maps: nine of these would be required to cover the tour, which we are happy to supply at a supplement. Please enquire.
- ⊗ Personal expenses
- ⊗ Entrances into any optional cultural visits and venues
- ⊗ Hiking, personal and travel insurances
- ⊗ Single rooms - unless booked at the single-person rate
- ⊗ Travel to and from the tour start and finish points.





St Privat d'Allier in the morning sunshine

Comfortable Hotels and Superior guest houses

“Carefully-selected accommodation based on knowing our partners well.”

We have literally combed the trail and its surrounding villages to find the best accommodation that the St. James' Way has to offer so that you enjoy the over-night stay as much as the hiking. We are thus delighted to bring you two options from which you can choose according to your own personal tastes:

1. **St. James' Way [Chambres d'hotes du charme-led]** sets out with the express aim of placing our customers in fine guest houses at every stage along the trail. **Bedrooms are all, of course, en suite and comfort levels are high.** The objective is to allow you to meet interesting travellers along the Way, who value the same comforts as you, and spend time with hosts who know the area and its history and enjoy sharing it with their guests.



The human factor and the personal touch is thus writ large in this option. Your hosts are accustomed to welcoming Anglophones into their homes although, as with anything in life, your extra effort will be handsomely rewarded and so practicing some French [however rudimentary] is highly recommended.

The homes are on the Way itself. Three of your hosts do not provide an evening meal, simply because the village in question offers a multitude of local options to suit most tastes less than 200 metres away.

2. **St. James' Way [Hotel-led]** allows you to experience the trail by day whilst focussing the evenings on you, your family and close companions. You set the social agenda in the welcoming environment of your hotel bar, restaurant or room. **Hotels are on the trail (bar one, where your hosts collect you from, and return you to, the trail the next morning).** **There are four 3-star hotels, two 2-star and a recently-upgraded auberge/gite.**



This is the most popular stretch of France's Way of St James and so early booking is advised. Nevertheless, availability is like a moving escalator and things can change from day to day. Our commitment is to bring you your preferred accommodation option, St. James' Way [Guest house-led] or St. James' Way [Hotel-led], in its purest form. However, we cannot guarantee that corresponding accommodation will always be available at each stage and so this cannot be a precondition of your booking. Where we are unable to accommodate you in the desired chambres d'hotes or hotel stay on a particular night, you will be placed in the equivalent hotel or guest house, respectively; with your final bill adjusted accordingly, up or down.

Access & Departure

How to get to Le Puy-en-Velay

Arrival:

- By air: to Lyon or Paris
- By rail: see bahn.com

From UK, Eurostar to Lille and change for Lyon

From Paris to Lyon by TGV in 3½ hours .

From Lyon, change for regional [TER] train to Le Puy via St Etienne in 2½ hours.

- By car: leave your car in the central Le Puy car park as us for details.

Departure:

- We can transfer you back to either Aumont-Aubrac or Le Puy-en-Velay after breakfast. Please ask us for details.

Aumont-Aubrac lies on the regional railway line that runs north-south connecting Clermont-Ferrand to Beziers. Onward transport leaves here from around 11am and it takes approx. 2 hours to go north to Clermont-Ferrand or 3½ south to Beziers. Alternatively, you can travel east across by SNCF bus to Mende [the capital of Lozere] followed by onward train to La Bastide-Puy-Laurent and onto Nimes in approx. 5½ hours.



The Aubrac Plateau



Approaching Aubrac

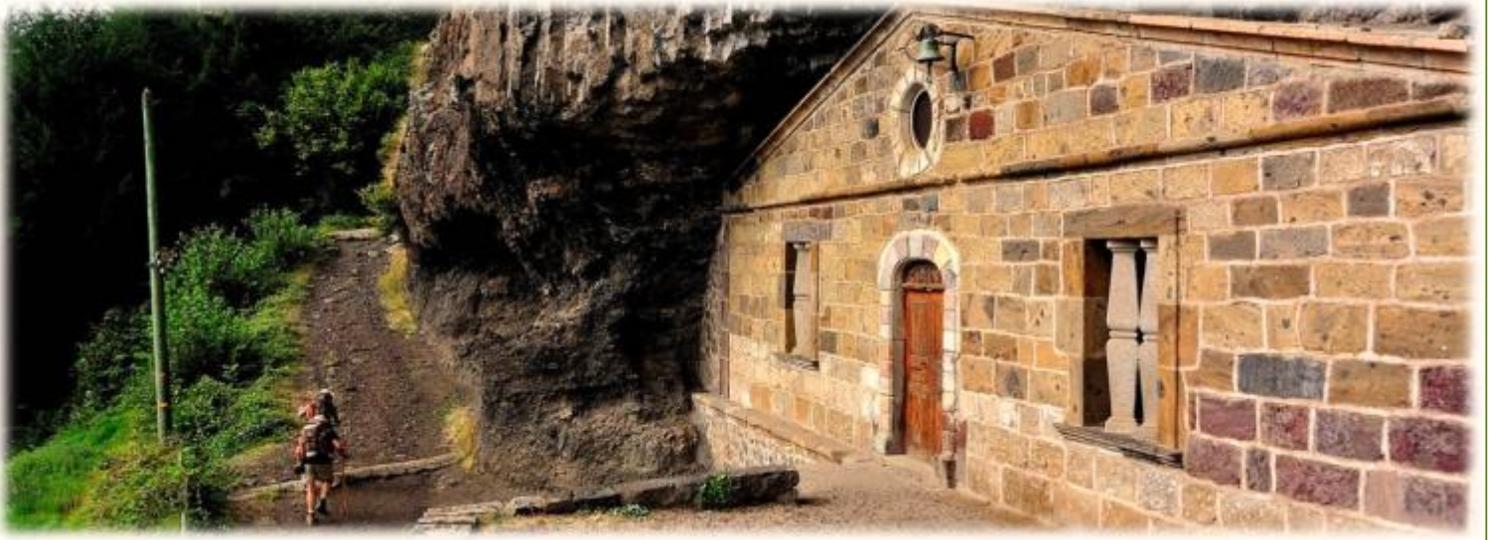


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- ❷ Benefit from French-based expertise and our total focus on France
- ❸ Buy direct from us, the tour provider, and get great value for money
- ❹ Personalise your tour to meet your own preferences
- ❺ Industry-leading walking notes make orientation easy
- ❻ 1:50 000 scale maps & insightful dossier
- ❼ 7/7 telephone support in native English and from 8 'till late
- ❽ We transport your luggage from hotel to hotel. Option to travel along with your luggage if you need a rest day: subject to availability, a supplement and places are limited³.
- ❾ Peace of mind: your money is safe when booking with us - all passengers are fully insured for the initial deposit and balance, irrespective of the means of payment, in the unlikely event of insolvency.
- ❿ Anglo-French family business that tries harder: become one of the family!

*The semi-troglodyte
Chapelle de la
Madeleine above the
Allier Gorge*



Near Finieyroles



Prices 2020

Per person rate in double or twin-bedded room:

St. James' Way [Chambres d'hotels du charme -led]
£645.00 Pounds Sterling# or €755.00 Euros

St. James' Way [Hotel-led]
£785.00 Pounds Sterling# or €915.00 Euros

- Extra nights: On Request
- Want to split days 4 & 5 in two? Ask us for details.

Booking

Email, phone or Skype us and we will email you everything you need to reserve your tour.

Notes

¹ We reserve the right to alter parts of the above programme for the benefit of safety and the quality of the overall experience.

² This covers one piece of luggage per person up to 15 kgs in weight. Supplements apply for overweight luggage and we accept no responsibility for lost valuables. We advise you not to bring computers and business-related equipment.

Travelling with your luggage must be booked the night before and is subject to a fee of 20.00 Euros per person.

Our Guarantee!

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