



Medieval villages

The St-Giles Way - Part One

Medieval Christendom's fourth-most-important pilgrimage

Tour Highlights

- ☞ Discover France's very own pilgrimage trail.
- ☞ Explore Gaul's earliest north-south trading route.
- ☞ Follow in the tracks of Kings, Archbishops and Crusaders & escape the Way of St James' crowds.
- ☞ Hike the path taken by The Reformation.
- ☞ Marvel at the ruts engraved by medieval mule drivers, with its distinctive village architecture.
- ☞ Visit medieval villages, The Chassezac Gorge and enjoy a night on the banks of Lake Villefort.

Fact File

- ✓ Self-guided, inn-to-inn tour across central massif and Gorge, and through schist valley to Cevennes foothills and Mediterranean flora.
- ✓ 7-night moderate tour from Le Puy en Velay to Portes Castle, near Alès.
- ✓ Average 6 hours and 14 miles-22½ kms a day.
- ✓ Convenient access from Lyon and departure from Alès.
- ✓ Departures any day from mid-April to mid-October.
- ✓ Luggage transfers throughout and tour's end transfer.
- ✓ Welcoming mix of auberges, guest houses and hotels.



Theme

St-Giles Way - Part One is the northern section of the important pilgrimage route that linked Le Puy-en-Velay with Saint-Gilles-du-Gard in Lower Languedoc. Dating back to the dawn of man (the trail follows a natural geological fault-line through a chain of mountains south of La Bastide), it became the most easterly route of the nascent Gaul in the early Middle Ages and an important pilgrimage route in its own right: to St Gilles cathedral and beyond - a strategic point of departure for St Jacques de Compostella [Voie d'Arles], the Holy Land (St Gilles was a Port at the time) and Rome. Six centuries later it became the route by which the ideas of The Reformation proselytised the industrious peoples of Lower Languedoc, irrespective of social class.

Whilst most of the original surface has long been destroyed, some of it still remains to be enjoyed. The fascinating villages that punctuated its length still remain, some in an advanced state of decay, others in historical 'suspended animation', whilst others lie somewhere between the two. Whatever the state of the trail, or its linear settlements, the impressive scenery has changed little over the centuries, but for the construction of Le Cevenol mountain railway in the mid-nineteenth century.





The view from Pradelles

Some of the highlights along the trail include medieval Pradelles and Garde-Guerin on the Chassezac Gorge; the castles of Garde-Guerin, Luc, Montjoie and Portes; the ancient sections of the trail both before and after Lake Villefort; and the appreciation of one thousand years of French history that makes this trails such an important part of Gallic heritage.

St-Giles Way - Part One poses a moderate physical challenge and is there to be enjoyed from April to October thanks to our carefully-selected and welcoming mix of accommodation bolstered by luggage transfers. Assess to Le Puy is convenient and departure from Alès is simple by short train-ride to Nimes.

If you like Pilgrimage trails, then the re-birth of the St-Giles trail should appeal. Escape from the hordes that march the over-trodden St Jacques routes, discover France's quintessential pilgrimage, and follow in the footsteps of French Kings, Simon de Montfort, Archbishops, Crusaders, clergy and an army of medieval traders - not to mention modern-day pilgrims who tend to arrive in St-Gilles in late August for a personal welcome by the Abbot.



Approaching Garde-Guerin



7-night Itinerary¹

Cote Bayard

Day 1 Arrival in Le Puy.

Hotel check-in and tour of Le Puy - which merits a day's stay itself, so much history is there here to enjoy. Night in Le Puy.

Day 2 Le Puy to Costaros.

[13 miles-19.5 kms, 6 hrs, +430 ms]

Climb to over 1100 metres, cross the volcanic plateau via a series of isolated hamlets en route to Chadernac castle before descending to Costaros. Collection and night near Costaros.

Day 3 Costaros to Pradelles.

[11.5 miles-17 kms, 5 hrs, +140 ms -80 ms]

Return to Costaros. The black ash volcanic trails are replaced by terra cotta, as you cross gently from Auvergne into Lozère and Knights' Templar country, over the 'Pont des Anglais' and onward to the granite charms of medieval Pradelles. Night in Pradelles.

Day 4 Pradelles to La Bastide. [16.5 miles-25 kms, approx. 6.5 hrs, +390 ms -480 ms]

You follow the forgotten medieval route par excellence through lost villages to Luc for lunch. Then stride out along the Allier river to La Bastide. Night in La Bastide.

Day 5 La Bastide to Villefort. [10.5 miles/16 Kms, approx. 5.5 hrs, +175 ms -540 ms]

An unforgettable walk through French history, along hill crest and volcanic plateau to a medieval village on the Chaussezac gorge and then onto Lake Villefort. Night in Villefort.

Day 6 Villefort to Genolhac. [11 miles-15 kms, approx. 5 hrs, +280 ms -400 ms]

Visit a cliff top chapel, subject of its own pilgrimage, before you enter the Gard via a fine trail through the villages at the foot of Mont Lozere, with their unique Roman churches, before arriving in charming Genolhac. Night in Genolhac.

Day 7 Genolhac to Portes. [9 miles-13 kms, approx. 4 hrs, +180 ms -270 ms]

Walk through the fine countryside of the Cevennes' most famous writer, J-P Chabrol, over Pont de Rastel and past the château de Montjoie en route to Portes Castle, the 'ship in Cevennes'. Night near Portes*.

Day 8 Departure Day.

Breakfast, check out and transfer to Alès [included in tour] for onward train to Nimes.



¹Apart from the initial section, and a few stretches thereafter, the trail from Portes to Alès has mainly been destroyed over the years and does not lend itself to the 'big finish' that we like to incorporate into our hiking tours. We have thus replaced it by an end-of-tour transfer from Portes to Alès.



The Chassezac Gorge

What's Included

- ✓ 7 nights' carefully- selected and comfortable, en-suite accommodation, with options - see below.
- ✓ 7 breakfasts and 6 evening meals - leaving you free to choose where to eat dinner in Le Puy on arrival.
- ✓ Industry-leading hiking notes, 1:25,000 maps and themed dossier.
- ✓ Luggage transfers throughout. ²
- ✓ People transfers relevant to the tour - see itinerary above - including collection from and return to Costeros the next morning after breakfast [Days 2/3] and transfer from Portes to Alès [Day 8].
- ✓ Telephone help-line service with 7/7 native English support from 8 'till late.



Not included

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- ⊗ Remaining meals and all drinks and extras - lunch and dinner options are listed in your dossier and walking notes
 - ⊗ Personal expenses
 - ⊗ Entrances into any optional cultural visits and venues
 - ⊗ Hiking, health, personal and travel insurances
 - ⊗ Single rooms - unless booked at the single-person rate
 - ⊗ Travel to and from the tour start and finish points.

The volcanic uplands of



Le Pont du Rastel



**2-star
standard
hotels,
auberges
& a fine
guest
house**

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

As always, and subject to availability, our commitment is to offer the best accommodation at every stage along the trail. You stay in comfortable accommodation of a good standard, with private rooms and en suite facilities throughout, that has been carefully selected on the basis of superior cuisine, facilities, location, service and welcome.

Accommodation comprises a range of ‘2-star standard’ hotels supplemented by charming chambres d’hotes [guest houses] and auberges.

Evening meals are included except in Le Puy. This allows you greater choice and personalisation. The contents of packed lunches can be purchased before you commence each day’s walking. Relevant details are in the tour dossier and walking notes.

Since the star ratings in French hotels were reassessed in 2013, most hotels have found it pretty easy to be upgraded by one level or at least stay the same. However, voluntary hotel reassessments do not come cheap and individual hotels pass the costs onto their traditional clientele. Some have decided not to bother, to opt out of the state-run system and remain ‘starless’; whilst others have joined private-sector marketing groups such as ‘Logis de France’. These are thus businesses decisions taken by hoteliers and do not mean that these hotels have suddenly become bad. They continue to meet all the requirements of health and safety and hygiene. However, knowing one’s accommodation suppliers intimately is now more important than ever!





Zig-zags near Villefort

Access & Departure

Access

- **By air:** to Lyon or Paris
- **By rail:**
 - i. From UK, Eurostar to Lille and change for Lyon
 - ii. From Paris, to Lyon in 3½ hours.
 - iii. 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 - ask us for details.



Departure

- **By rail:** from Alès [TER] to Nimes in 40 minutes [please ask us for details] and onward train to Lyon [90 mins], Paris CG airport [3½ hours] or Lille [4½ hours].
- **Departure by air:** from Lyon, Paris, Montpellier, or Nimes to Luton via RyanAir.

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- ❼ 7/7 telephone support in native English
- 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, 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: We'll look after you like one of the family!

Lake Villefort



2024 prices:

Per person in double or
twin-bedded room:
£1095.00 Pounds Sterling
or **€1295.00 Euros**

Booking

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



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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 You are entitled to take ONE piece of luggage per person weighing up to 13 kgs. Supplements are payable for extra or overweight luggage.

Travelling with your luggage must be booked the night before and is subject to a fee of 30.00 Euros per person.



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