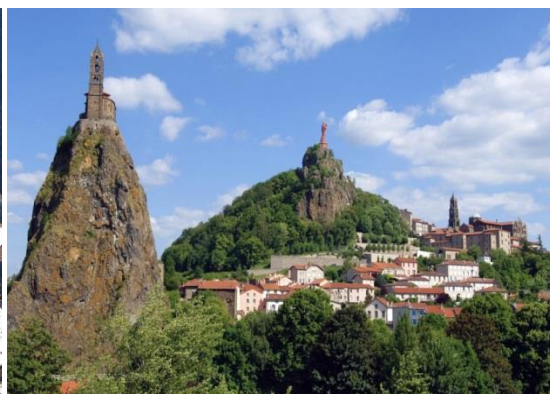


FRANCE: THE WAY OF SAINT JAMES

7-days / 6-nights **QUALITY** inn-to-inn **GUIDED** walks from Le Puy to Conques or from Figeac to Cahors

The *Way of St James*, also known as the *Camino de Santiago* or *Chemin St Jacques*, is one of the most important Christian pilgrimage routes in existence today. The way from Le Puy en Velay in the Auvergne, France, to Santiago in Galicia, Spain, is the oldest way and one of the most interesting. It was first walked by Bishop Godescalc of Le Puy in 951AD. It is a path through some beautifully distinct and diverse landscapes.

The volcanic lands of the Velay in France's Auvergne comprise gentle rolling hills and plains with distant views. The Margeride is an Elysian landscape of dense forests, dry stone walls and pastures. The high plains of the Aubrac are moorlands with crystal clear streams and large expanses of scrub with scattered rocks as if thrown there by giants. The Lot valley has castles, stone bridges and the UNESCO listed wonder of Conques. The Célé valley offers beautiful medieval villages, dramatic cliffs and prehistoric caves and dolmens.



Le Puy en Velay to Conques
Cost from:

Departs: Ask for details
\$4640 per person (twin share)

Single room supplement: \$745

Figeac to Cahors
Cost from:

Departs: Ask for details
\$4985 per person (twin share)

Single room supplement: \$745

Includes: A choice or two different walks with 6 nights' accommodation in carefully chosen 2, 3 or 4-star hotels or *logis de France* (reflecting the idea of pilgrimage but with comfort, charm and character), with en suite facilities. All meals from dinner on day 1 to breakfast on day 7, including picnics *en plein air* or café lunches and wonderful restaurant dinners accompanied by selected wines. Tours are conducted in English with an experienced host and walking guide. There is also a support vehicle each day as required.

Not included: Transport to and from the walk and personal expenses

Grading: Walking distance is approximately 85km of moderate to challenging walking. A typical walking day will cover 15km. We suggest taking the morning walks and then encourage an optional afternoon walk too. Reasonable fitness is required for these walks as there are some long hills with undulations and gradients.

Call OUTDOOR TRAVEL on 1800 331 582 for details or reservations



WEEK 1: LE PUY EN VELAY TO CONQUES

Suggested itinerary:

Day 1: Arrive Le Puy

Meet at Toulouse Blagnac airport at a set time and transfer to Le Puy en Velay for our first night. On the way, we stop for lunch at Rodez and view the Pierre Soulages museum. Pierre Soulages deals with light through painting in black which is quite an apt way to start the Way of St James! We drive on to Le Puy, arriving in the evening in time for dinner. Le Puy is a great place to explore – especially around the old town – we suggest you allow time to learn of the pilgrimage history and lacemaking in the Massif Central region.

Day 2: Le Puy – Saugues

walking @15km

After breakfast we start our journey at Le Puy cathedral (Notre Dame de l'Annonciation) church of St Mary (there is a pilgrims' blessing at the cathedral at 7.00am for those interested, just a short walk from the hotel). We set off from the cathedral on foot down the steps commanding a view of the route ahead. After the first hill, the going is flat and we walk towards St Christophe before a picnic on the plateau surrounded by the undulating volcanic hills of the Auvergne. In the afternoon we continue on foot to the well at Rambourouscle where we meet our vehicles for the drive to Saugues. Here we stay in a comfortable hotel situated in the heart of the town. Saugues has a good history including many stories of the Beast of Gévaudan which relates to a sort of man-eating wolf, as big as a calf, in the 18th Century.

Day 3: Saugues – Nasbinals – Aubrac

walking @ 13km

After an early morning breakfast, we walk to the sleepy village of Le Villeret. After lunch we drive to our afternoon walk, through the beauty of the Aubrac. This is very much a landscape of high moors (1300m), barren and strewn with large rocks and threaded with small streams. Our walk is relatively flat still and we reach the lovely town of Nasbinals. From here we drive to Aubrac where we stay in a beautifully converted hotel for 2 nights. All bedrooms have bathrooms en suite and are simply but tastefully decorated. This is a lovely atmosphere in a beautiful remote setting.

Day 4: Nasbinals – St Chely d'Aubrac – Aubrac

walking @12km

We return to Nasbinals for a beautiful walk across the moors with far reaching views to Aubrac. Picnic lunch at the hotel and then we continue on foot, descending gently to St Chely d'Aubrac. Beer and wine or tea in the bar before returning to Aubrac. Dinner will be at the hotel.

Day 5: Aubrac – Estaing

walking @12km

We drive from Aubrac to Estaing beside the river Lot. Estaing is where the family of former French President Valéry Giscard d'Estaing comes from and is another very beautiful village. We explore this charming village with its castle, before starting a walk to another beautiful picnic spot with far reaching views. Later, drive back to Estaing for an overnight stay with dinner at the hotel.

Day 6: Estaing – Espeyrac – Conques

walking @ 12km

We transfer by vehicle to Espeyrac for our walk to Conques. We have a picnic lunch at a small church then descend to the remarkable medieval village of Conques with time in the afternoon to visit the small cathedral and the narrow cobbled streets of this unique UNESCO Heritage listed village.

Day 7: Departure day

There is an optional early morning transfer to Toulouse airport, or make your own onward travel arrangements from Conques.

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WEEK 2: FIGEAC TO CAHORS –

Suggested itinerary:

Day 1: Arrive Figeac

Meet at Toulouse Blagnac airport at a set time and transfer to Figeac. On the way, we stop for lunch at Rodez and view the Pierre Soulages museum. Figeac is a very beautiful medieval town and there will be time to relax and wander before dinner. We stay in a comfortable hotel overlooking the river Célé.

Day 2: Figeac – Cajarc

walking @12km

After breakfast we take a short drive to the start of our walk towards Cajarc on the famous pilgrimage route now named the GR65. This is reputed to be the original route taken by Bishop Godescalc in 951AD. The Vikings once sailed the Lot as far as Cajarc in days of yore. We walk along the plateau with drystone walls and scrub oaks and junipers. We stay in a beautiful fortified house with a swimming pool on the outskirts of Cajarc.

Day 3: Cajarc – Limoges

walking @ 12km

After breakfast, again we drive to the start of our walk into the heart of the *causses*, stopping to enjoy a picnic lunch on the way. This is characteristic scrubland with oak woods and dotted with ancient dolmens and drystone shepherd huts. We arrive in Limoges for cold beers and other drinks before driving back to the house near Cajarc for dinner and a third night.

Day 4: Cajarc – St Cirq Lapopie

walking @ 15km

We drive north to a little village on the river Célé and leave the GR65 walking route to walk the GR65a. This is what makes the week so interesting as we are using two well-known tracks of the pilgrimage to show the contrast of the *causses* with the dramatic cliff-lined valley of the Célé river. We walk alongside the Célé river and atop the cliffs stopping for a riverside picnic. Tonight we stay in a charming hotel in the centre of one of the prettiest villages of France, overlooking the river Lot at St Cirq Lapopie

Day 5: St Sulpice – Cabrerets – St Cirq

walking @ 15km

After breakfast drive to Saint Sulpice to continue our walk along the Célé valley with its stunning scenery. We picnic by the river in Marcilhac then continue into Cabrerets, with a visit on the way to the famous prehistoric cave of Pech Merle. This is a highly important original cave with wonderful geological features as well as paintings. Return to St Cirq walking along the tow path, a famous art of the St James Way. That evening enjoy drinks in St Cirq before dinner in the village.

Day 6: Limogne – Cahors

walking @ 10km

Today we drive to the small town of Limogne, with a walk through the *causses* to a beautiful chateau set in a large estate in the middle of nowhere. We have lunch in a very popular local auberge nearby before re-joining the river Lot for a beautiful river walk into Cahors. Tonight, stay at a beautiful Chateau with an outstanding position, rooms with stunning views and a Michelin-starred restaurant. We enjoy dinner at the hotel, a most prestigious place to end our holiday, especially for those who have walked both weeks of the St James Way.

Day 7: Departure day

There is an optional early morning transfer is to Toulouse airport, or make your own onward travel arrangements from Cahors.

Contact OUTDOOR TRAVEL for more details and reservations

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