

## FRANCE - LA DECOUVERTE **GREAT VALUE** SMALL GROUP WALKS

8-days / 7-nights exploring the Auvergne, Massif Central and headwaters of the Upper Loire



Our two 'discovery' hotels in rural France offer a unique walking holiday concept that is ideal for active people of all ages wanting to explore the magnificent countryside on the French Massif Central. The hotels are ideal for guests who want to **enjoy a walking holiday in a relaxed small village** environment. Each day there is a choice of guided walk offered: '*tranquille*' and '*sportif*' for those wanting more of a challenge. If there is only a small group of walkers, a medium standard of walking is offered. Walks are led by knowledgeable & enthusiastic English speaking guides, both groups meet at lunchtime for a traditional picnic. Each centre has its own minibus providing the transport required for the walks.

There are guided walks each day and a rest day where you can explore on your own, visit the local markets & nearby towns or villages or to just relax at the hotel's pool! On each walking day, you can always arrive or depart with the picnic vehicle - as the mood takes you!

Guests are encouraged to make themselves at home. The hotels provide typical regional cuisine and dinners are table d'hôte enjoyed with fellow guests. French wine and drinks are available. Evenings may be spent at a variety of pursuits, from boules to barbecues.

<u>Saint Bonnet</u>	Per Person (twin share)	Single Supplement	<u>Les Estables</u>	Per Person (twin share)	Single Supplement
Start Date - Sundays			Start Date - Sundays		
May 6	<b>\$835</b>	<b>\$180</b>	May 13	<b>\$995</b>	<b>\$145</b>
June 3	<b>\$835</b>	<b>\$180</b>	May 20	<b>\$995</b>	<b>none</b>
July 1	<b>\$905</b>	<b>\$195</b>	May 27, Jun 3, 10, 17, 24, Jul 1, 8	<b>\$995</b>	<b>\$145</b>
August 26	<b>\$905</b>	<b>\$195</b>	July 15, 22, 29, August 5, 12, 19	<b>\$1075</b>	<b>\$245</b>
September 23	<b>\$835</b>	<b>\$180</b>	August 26, September 2, 9	<b>\$995</b>	<b>\$145</b>
			September 16	<b>\$995</b>	<b>none</b>

**Inclusions:** 7-nights twin/single accommodation with private bathroom in comfortable family run hotels, full board (breakfast, picnic lunch & dinner each day), daily guided walks (with a rest day for sightseeing), local transfers for walks, evening activities. Themed walks may offered on selected dates focussing on language, wine or mushrooms at St Bonnet – please ask for details: these are very popular so early bookings are essential.

**Not included:** Drinks (available at extra cost), Visitors Tax (0.60€ per person per day paid locally), entrance fees for optional sightseeing, gratuities and any personal expenses.

**Transfers:** Standard transfers from & back to **St Etienne Chateaucieux TGV train station** (for St Bonnet) or **Le Puy en Velay train station** (for Les Estables) is included in the cost. Arrival & departure transfers from/to **Lyon Airport** are available at an extra cost of AU\$35pp each way for St Bonnet only.

Weekly departures from May to October – choose one base for a week or two bases for two weeks of walking.

**Call OUTDOOR TRAVEL on 1800 331 582 for details or reservations**



### **Saint Bonnet ~ in the Haute Loire / Auvergne**

The 3-star hotel here is a comfortable haven with leafy gardens, a terrace dining area and indoor swimming pool. It offers delightfully furnished rooms each with its own en-suite bathroom. Situated just outside the village, this quiet corner of the foothills of the French Massif Central is 60km south of Lyon. The hotel is an ideal base with easy access to glorious views over the Doux Valley and the headwaters of the River Doux. Walkers can explore the deep valleys and the forests and lakes of the Haute Loire. Beyond is the Ardeche where tumbled hills, often with exposed ridges and colourful chestnut-forested slopes, eventually descend to the vineyards and cornfields of the Rhone valley. West is the plateau of the Velay: gentler terrain shared by lush pastures, forests and fields of corn. Here, the farming methods are traditional and in May walkers will enjoy bright displays of wild flowers.

### **Les Estables ~ in the Haute Loire / Auvergne**

The hotel at Les Estables is a comfortable modern 2-star hotel with an indoor pool & panoramic views of the high plateaux of the Velay. It lies on one of the highest plateau in the region, on the slopes of Mt Mezenc. The centre is 32km from the historic pilgrimage & lace centre of Le Puy & close to the Gerbier des Joncs, one of the sources of the Loire. The walking takes you to a land of ancient volcanoes and the forested ridges of the Auvergne, with views of the Alps and time for a dip in a mountain lake.

### **Suggested itinerary and examples of day walks** (usually averaging 11-16 kilometres):

**Day 1:** Arrival day. Meet at the designated time at the train station, to be greeted by your host. You will then be transferred to your hotel, to meet your walking party and your guides for the week.

**Day 2–7:** There will be a series of walks over the next few days, of varying standards – you are welcome to choose or to not walk at all & enjoy the hotel and it's surrounds, instead. There is also usually a free day for local, optional sightseeing, if preferred. The daily walking schedule is at the discretion of your walks leaders.

**Volcano walking:** The Auvergne is close to extinct volcano country, with a landscape of clear, circular lakes, as are often found in the extinct volcano cones. Mont Mezenc and the Cirque des Boutieres: hike up to the highest point of the Ardeche & the Haute-Loire.

**Auvergne Villages:** There are a series of pretty villages strung out below the hotel, linked by a series of ancient stone terraces and small waterways. You may also visit some Roman remains.

**Loire Gorges:** Walk alongside the wildest part of the River, a far cry from its tranquil nature downstream!

**To market:** On market day, visit Yssingeaux, by local bus. In the afternoon, you can take a short walk through the volcanic hills that surround the basin of Le Puy.

**Rest day in Le Puy:** A starting point for the St Jacques de Compostela pilgrimage route take time to explore the cobbled streets, museum, the imposing Virgin Mary statue, which overlooks the town and cathedral.

**Walking the Velay:** A large, granite plateau which offers great views & wide vistas, as well as rock pools, peat & moss bogs and ancient stone settlements. Around Rochebonne there is spectacular walking with excellent views of the surrounding landscape, on the way to the ruined castle.

**Day 8:** Departure day.

After breakfast, you will be transferred back to the train station.

Contact **Outdoor Travel** or your travel agent for more details, travel brochures and reservations:

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# ST BONNET-LE-FROID & REGION – CENTRAL FRANCE



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