

France/Spain: The Vermillion Coast

Tour code: JVC

Revised: Nov 06

This walk along 'La Cote Vermeille' follows the steep coastline where the Pyrenees meet the 'Big Blue', as the Mediterranean is called in these parts. Our route takes you over the frontier from French Catalunya to Spanish Catalonia. It starts in the former fishing village of Collioure, where the colourful Fauve school of painting began and follows waymarked paths between the vineyards of Roussillon and through heavily scented maquis to the seaport of Banyuls, home of the great French sculptor Aristide Maillol and also renowned for its sweet aperitif wine. After crossing the frontier you descend on the Spanish side to the little town of Port-Bou and continue past rocky bays to the more modern resort of Llanca. The walk then climbs inland over a high col and along the mountains to the monastery of San Pere de Rodes, before descending steeply, passing ancient Dolmans to the attractive fishing village of Port de la Selva. You can watch the catch come in, get iced and then marketed. From here the trails become more remote as you head into the recently established Natural Park of Cap de Creus to complete the longest walk of the tour into the beautiful whitewashed old town of Cadaques. Nearby, at Port Lligat, is the former residence of Salvador Dali (now open to the public). On your departure day you may find enough time to visit the Dali museum at Figueras. On your way throughout the tour you will be able to sample the wines of Roussillon, delicious local honeys and, of course, the Catalan cuisine.



Travel Information

Season: September to mid June. This tour is not available in summer – it is normally far too hot for this walk and getting accommodation can be very difficult at this time of the year.

Travel options from the UK:

In 2007 we are not offering an Air Travel option (i.e. flights included in tour price) for this tour. From the UK the starting and end points of this tour are best served by 'low-cost' airlines, which offer direct bookings to customers. Increasingly the low-cost airlines are offering 'one-way' flights at low prices, which could be useful for this tour as it starts in France and ends in Spain. However in some cases one-way flights can be more expensive than return (round trip) flights, and customers should watch out for this problem.

Outward flights: London Stansted to Perpignan or Girona by Ryanair. Perpignan is the more convenient for the starting point of the tour at Collioure (20min by train to get to Collioure from Perpignan, but limited trains).

Return flights: Girona to London Stansted with Ryanair or from Barcelona to London Stansted by Easyjet. Perpignan to Stansted is a possible alternative, although less convenient.

The timing, cost and availability of these low-cost flights may change at short notice, and are not the responsibility of Sherpa Expeditions. These low-cost flights are usually non-changeable and non-refundable, so we advise you to

book the land-only part of the tour with Sherpa before finally committing to your flights.

There is now a direct hourly train service to Stansted Airport from Birmingham New Street via Leicester, Peterborough and Cambridge as well as a fast train service every 30 minutes throughout the day from London Liverpool Street. From London Victoria coach station there is a bus service to Stansted Airport departing every 30 minutes round the clock.

Stansted Airport is easily accessible from the M11 motorway and has extensive parking facilities.

Level of Difficulty

Fitness: This walk is best described as moderate and should present no difficulties for anyone in reasonable condition and accustomed to walking up and down 2500 feet/700 metres or so in a day.

Day stages: Of up to **22 km / 13.6 miles**, the daily ascents up to 700m/2500 feet make each day a full one.

Waymarks: Variable in quality. Little waymarking in vicinity of towns and villages, but well marked on GRs (GR 10, Gr 11, Gr92). The coastal route on the Spanish side is fairly well used and not hard to follow.

General Information

Baths: it is not normal for your room to have a bath, the main reason being that it takes up a lot of space, some hotels/guesthouses may have a separate room in the house where a bath is available to guests, but in the main it is showers.

Breakfast: In France & Spain is usually continental : coffee and bread/croissant and jams etc. if you want more for breakfast then we would suggest you purchase some food the night before. It is important for you to tell us if you have any dietary requirements when you book your holiday so that we can inform everyone that you are staying with.

Language: When travelling in less frequented areas you will not necessarily come across people speaking English. Remember you have left home to find things different. Buy a phrase book and try to learn a bit of French and Spanish!

Luggage: When staying in hotels, sometimes your luggage will have been taken to your room awaiting your arrival. However don't be surprised if your luggage is waiting for you to take it up to your room.

Accommodation & Meals

Accommodation is in small hotels/pensions on a half board basis (evening meal and breakfast) on 4 nights, bed and breakfast only on 3 nights. Picnic lunches on walking days are not included in the tour cost, but picnic materials can readily be bought in local shops or a packed lunch ordered the night before from your accommodation.

Most frequently used hotels are described below but alternatives are used on occasion when room availability is limited.

- ❑ **Nights 1 & 2: Collioure.** A comfortable 3* hotel overlooking the harbour and citadel of this port which has long attracted artists. (Bed and Breakfast only)
- ❑ **Night 3: Banyuls-sur-Mer.** Here we use two different hotels, both 2* with 'gastronomique' restaurants specialising in seafood. One is a family run hotel by the sea shore with a terrace restaurant overlooking the Mediterranean. Rooms have private facilities and TV. The other hotel is smaller, all with private facilities, direct telephone and satellite TV. Here too there is a shaded terrace overlooking the water. (Dinner included)
- ❑ **Night 4 : Port-Bou.** A small town just on the Spanish side of the border. Dinner is included normally on the first night in a local restaurant. **You may have a second night here if we cannot book you in at Llanca for tomorrow.**
- ❑ **Night 5: Llanca:** a small resort development with an attractive old town a mile inland. We stay at a small hotel on the front that was one of the first to appear here and has changed through the decades as the pictures inside it show. You are here on a bed and breakfast basis, but the accommodation has an attractive restaurant.
- ❑ **Night 6: Port de la Selva.** A traditional fishing village that has largely escaped development for the mass tourism market. Here we stay at a 2* pension. Where the friendly proprietors provide good meals. (Dinner included)
- ❑ **Night 7: Cadaques.** Our normal hotel overlooks the sea on one side and faces the mountains on the other side. The hotel has excellent facilities, including a pool and a sauna. (Dinner included).

Outline Itinerary

- ❑ **Day 1.** Arrive Collioure. This former fishing port was the birthplace of the Fauve movement of painters in the early 20th century. Overnight Collioure.
- ❑ **Day 2.** Transfer by road from Collioure to the Gorges de Lavall (240m) and walk back past Tour de Massane (793m) to Collioure. 14km/8 miles. 5 hours walking. Overnight Collioure.
- ❑ **Day 3.** Collioure to Banyuls. Walk up from Collioure (sea level) to Tour Madeloc (656m), then descend to Col des Gascons and follow the GR10 long distance trail among vines to down Banyuls. 15km/9 miles. 6 hours walking. Overnight Banyuls.
- ❑ **Day 4.** Banyuls to Port-Bou. Walk up from Banyuls (sea level) to Pic Joan (437m), a summit with a magnificent view of the indented coastline. Optional ascent to the Tour de Querroig/Tour Carroig, a ruined fort on the frontier (670m). Then steep descent on the Spanish side of the frontier to Port-Bou. 13km/8 miles. 5 hours walking. Overnight Port-Bou.
- ❑ **Day 5.** Port-Bou to Llanca. Walk up to Colle de Frare (202m) for wonderful coastal views then descend to the coast at Colera and then through a chain of pretty bays and headlands to the traditional fishing port of Llanca. From here you will need to take the train back to Portbou if we cannot get you into accommodation at Llanca. We aim to provide train timetables (but you will need to check times locally). The train journey takes 10minutes. 5 hours walking. 12 km / 7 miles. Overnight in Llanca if possible.
- ❑ **Day 6.** Llanca to Port de la Selva. A steep climb from sea level to the Monastery of Sant Pere de Rodes near the summit of San Salvador peak (670m), descending along the forested Serrat de la Guerra ridge. 12km/7 miles. Ascent and descent 570m/1900 feet. 5 hours walking. Overnight Port de la Selva.
- ❑ **Day 7.** The longest day 22 km / 13.6 miles: Port de la Selva through rugged maquis landscape to Cap de Creus (easternmost point on the Spanish mainland) 16.5km/10.5 miles/6 hours to Cap Creus. Height gain/loss 440m. From Cap de Creus 6km/4 miles paths to Cadaques. You will pass close to Port Lligat (former home of Salvador Dali) on the approach to Cadaques. Overnight Cadaques.
- ❑ **Day 8.** Depart from Cadaques. There is limited public transport out of the town, just one or two early morning buses. For those who wish to visit the Dali Museum at Figueras before returning to Collioure or to the airport at Barcelona or Perpignan an early start by bus or taxi is advisable. For those travelling by train direct to an airport the most convenient train station is also at Figueres.

Extra nights

A second night at Collioure is included in the tour. An extra night at Cadaques would round the trip off well, with an opportunity to see some more of the landscapes which inspired Dali. Please enquire for rates.

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Route notes, photocopied walking route maps at different scales, local information.