

French Catalonia Guided Walking Holiday

Tour Style: European Centre Based

Destinations: France, Catalonia & Mediterranean

Trip code: ABLCL

2 & 4



HOLIDAY OVERVIEW

Nestled between the Pyrenees and the Mediterranean Sea in the Languedoc, Argelès-sur-Mer in northern Catalonia offers superb walks taking in secluded coves, pretty beaches and wild landscapes. Enjoy a mixture of green inland hills and rocky coastline, including the outstanding section made famous by the Cadaques to Collioure long distance path. Inland, the routes feel 'off the beaten track' near the Spanish border and are filled with incredible history including WWII forts.

WHAT'S INCLUDED

- A full programme of guided walks with 2 options every walking day
- All transport to and from walks
- The services of experienced HF Holidays' leaders
- Return flights from the UK and hotel transfers on 'with flight' holidays
- 7 nights' accommodation in en-suite rooms
- Half Board – continental buffet breakfast and 3-course evening meal

HOLIDAYS HIGHLIGHTS

- Fantastic coastal walking along the famous Sentier du Littoral
- Enjoy delicious meals with a view of the sea at the well-appointed Grand Hotel du Lido
- Discover shaded routes between pretty French towns or with far-reaching sea views, or visit local markets to soak up culture

TRIP SUITABILITY

This is a level 2 and level 4 graded Activity, Easier walks: 5 to 8 miles (8 to 13km) on good paths, with some rocky sections. Up to 1,500 feet (450m) of ascent in a day. Harder walks: 7 to 10 miles (11 to 16km) on good paths, with some rocky sections. Up to 2,500 feet (750m) of ascent in a day.



ITINERARY

Day 1: Arrival Day

Welcome to Grand Hotel du Lido. Unpack and settle in.

Day 2: Argelès And The Sentier Du Littoral Coastal Path

Today both walks will start from the hotel and follow a section of the Sentier Littoral, a long distance path that follows the coastline all the way to the Spanish frontier. The section we follow is known as the côte Vermeille (Red coast) because of the rock colour and both groups will visit the picturesque Mediterranean fishing village of Collioure, set in a beautiful natural bay framed by the bell-tower of Notre Dame des Anges.

Option 1 - The Sentier Littoral From Argelès To Collioure

Distance: 5½ miles (8½km)

Total ascent: 500 feet (150m)

In summary: We will leave directly from the hotel to follow the level beach promenade path initially shaded by pines, passing the centre of Argelès plage. The promenade continues through the modern port of Argelès and on to a small beach resort of La Racou. From here the path becomes more rugged as it ascends clifftops where there are good coastal views at an orientation table and descends to visit remote beaches. We pass ruined clifftop fortifications along the way, before the final descent into the attractive colourful narrow streets of Collioure, where guests will have time to wander themselves and discover its charm before the short coach journey home.

Highlight: The colourful streets of Collioure and the fascinating museums, including Chateau Royal.

Option 2 - The Sentier Littoral From Argelès To Port Vendres

Distance: 8½ miles (13½km)

Total ascent: 1,000 feet (300m)

In summary: The harder group also leave directly from the hotel following the same route as the easier group passing Argelès plage and its port following the Sentier Littoral coastal path as far as Collioure. At Collioure we follow the promenade around the complete bay taking in the everchanging vistas of this pretty fishing port that so attracted painters like Matisse and Derain. Climbing to follow the clifftops along the Sentier Littoral again passing ancient fortifications and defences we have good views along the coast at the headland of Cap Gros. Finally, the path descends to arrive in the large commercial harbour of Port Vendres.

Highlight: Amazing coastal views.

Day 3: Walks In The Hills Above Laroque Des Alberes

A short coach ride brings us to the attractive medieval village of Laroque des Albères, from where many paths climb steeply into the wooded slopes of the massif des Albères hills. Both groups will make pleasant but different circuits into the interior discovering some of its natural and man-made treasures along the way, before returning to the village.

Option 1 - Laroque Des Alberes To The Puits A Glace And Refuge.

Distance: 6 miles (9km)

Total ascent: 1,600 feet (480m)

In summary: This leaves the village on a gently ascending shaded path passing the old watermill and spring. A further steady climb through woods on paths that are quite rough and steep in places allows us to discover the site of an ancient snow trap built to provide a supply of ice during summer, constructed in the 16th century but hidden in this wooded environment. Climbing higher and crossing a stream we reach the highest point of today's walk at the Casot del Guarda refuge hut. From here we make our slow steady descent back to the village on a mixture of wide stony tracks and narrow woodland paths, which are rutted in places but with views down the valley. In the village there is an option to visit the ruined tower of its ancient castle for more views.

Highlight: A local interest guide will accompany the walks today and give an insight into the area we are walking.

Option 2 - A Circuit From Laroque Des Alberes Via The Font Del La Vernosa

Distance: 7 miles (11km)

Total ascent: 2,100 feet (630m)

In summary: The initial route leaving the village follows the same gentle path taken by the easier group, but we soon branch off following a steeply climbing path, rutted in places by water erosion, up the side of the valley with some shade in places. At the top of the climb when the path levels we walk through woodland populated with chestnut and cork trees to arrive at the site of the Vernosa spring with great views over the plain of Roussillon below. Continuing our climb, we arrive at the Casot del Guarda refuge hut, from here we descend to cross a stream before viewing the puits a glace (snow trap used for making ice in summer) seen by the easier group. Continuing our descent on a pleasant woodland path we eventually meet our outward path for the final return to the village.

Highlight: A local interest guide will accompany the walks today and give an insight into the area we are walking.

Day 4: Coastal Routes To Banyuls-sur-mer

For today's walks we have a short coach journey to Port Vendres. The walks will start from different places in the town and take different routes but both groups will have the opportunity to visit the museum at Paulilles en route finishing at the pleasant beach resort of Banyuls sur mer and perhaps sample the drink of the same name.

Option 1 - Port Vendres To Banyuls Sur Mer Via Paulilles Museum

Distance: 6 miles (9½km)

Total ascent: 1,100 feet (330m)

In summary: We leave Port Vendres passing the railway station and gently climbing to the fertile terraced slopes behind the town. Weaving our way on stony paths through the vines we have good views towards the coast, before descending, passing under the railway to arrive at Paulilles. The free open-air museum here tells the fascinating history of the former dynamite manufacturing complex in a very attractive setting overlooking a small sheltered beach, where we will have time to look around. Leaving the museum, we re-join the sentier Littoral coastal trail which climbs and descends the cliff top all the way to Banyuls.

Highlight: Discover the fascinating history behind the dynamite museum.

Option 2 - Port Vendres To Banyuls Sur Mer Via Cap Bear

Distance: 7 miles (11km)

Total ascent: 1,500 feet (450m)

In summary: The harder group starts at a minor road on the far side of the large commercial port of Port Vendres. From here we pick up the sentier littoral again initially on a level path passing ruined port defences, but soon climbing to a narrow balcony path that takes us out to the remote headland at Cap Bear and its lighthouse. Our route continues to follow the undulating coastal path descending to visit small coves and climbing to remote dwellings perched above the sea before also arriving at Paulilles beach and its museum; where if time permits a brief visit should be possible. Our route from here continues along the sentier littoral, the same as that taken by the easier group, until our final destination at Banyuls comes into view and a well-earned refreshment is available.

Highlight: Sample the Banyuls wine

Day 5: Free Day

Each week there is a free day when no guided walks are offered. Your free day offers the chance to relax in this beachside setting, visit the medieval centre of nearby Perpignan or travel by train into Spain to the Dali museum in Figueres.

Day 6: The Vallespir Valley Around Ceret

Today we will travel by coach inland from the coast to the neighbouring region of Vallespir and the attractive small town of Ceret, known for its modern art museum and annual cherry festival. Setting off from different locations both groups will finish the day in Ceret.

Option 1 - Ceret Pilgrim Route To The Chapel Of St Ferreol

Distance: 6 miles (9½km)

Total ascent: 1,100 feet (330m)

In summary: The walk starts near the old medieval bridge below Ceret, ascending to the remote chapel of St Ferreol, on tracks and narrow paths where we are rewarded with great views. We descend from the chapel before another short climb brings us to a view point. From here we descend to the valley bottom using minor roads and narrow paths and cross the ancient bridge we saw at the beginning (Pont de Diable). Afterwards, a gentle climb takes the group up to the centre of Ceret.

Highlight: Ceret, a very historic walled town with a modern art museum and art trails to discover.

Option 2 - Walking In The Shadow Of Canigou From Pont De Reynes To Ceret.

Distance: 6 miles (9½km)

Total ascent: 1,800 feet (540m)

In summary: Starting at the small village of Le Pont de Reynes and its disused railway bridge, the group climb up woodland paths giving good views of Canigou, a mountain of great Catalan significance. Reaching the attractive village of Reynes in its own secluded valley, we leave the valley along a minor road and then descend an old mule track to the next valley before a short climb to the coll de Bossells. From here we descend with views over the Tech valley to the centre of Ceret.

Highlight: Be rewarded with great views of the pic du Canigou.

Day 7: Foothills Of The Pyrenees

Both groups will discover the hinterland behind Argelès on today's walks. The easier group will walk directly from the hotel, while the harder group will start with a short land train journey. Both walks explore paths in the wooded slopes of the foothills that form the final part of the Pyrenees as they meet the sea. Finishing at the pristine white exterior of Château Valmy, a slightly incongruous sight in this region, provides a fitting end to today's walks.

Option 1 - Argelès Village And Chapel Of St Laurent

Distance: 7 miles (11km)

Total ascent: 1,400 feet (420m)

In summary: Walking from the hotel a level path beside a small stream takes us into Argelès village where a small artisan market has occupied the streets below the bell tower and church for centuries. It is tempting to linger but not for too long as we must continue our route along quiet lanes across the fertile plain behind the town. Our path starts to climb the wooded slopes, and after a steeper climb, we are rewarded with great views across the plain below towards the coast. We arrive at the remote chapel of St Laurent in a wooded clearing. From here our route descends on wide rough tracks to arrive at Château Valmy with time to visit the botanical park perhaps while awaiting our return transport.

Highlight: Spectacular glimpses of Argeles and the coastal plain.

Option 2 - Tour De La Massane (Torre De La Macana) From Valmy

Distance: 7½ miles (12km)

Total ascent: 2,500 feet (750m)

In summary: The harder walk starts at the Château Valmy car park, from where we skirt the château and vineyards to ascend on the track used by the easier group on their return. However, we soon leave it and climb steadily on narrow paths to reach the Roc de Grill. The path levels briefly before a further climb towards the tower of Massane seen ahead on the horizon. The final ascent to the tower is above the tree-line and the commanding views are spectacular. From here you can appreciate why this defensive signal tower was constructed, and we have seen it all week on the skyline from the hotel. Leaving the tower, we descend the same way to start but soon a different narrow path descends to bring us onto a wider track. Our descent is rough and rutted in places passing a pre-historic stone tomb and good views of the château below where we finish and await our return transport with drinks in a nearby cafe.

Highlight: 360o views from the Tour de la Massane

Day 8: Departure Day

We hope to see you again soon.

ACCOMMODATION

Grand Hotel Du Lido - French Catalonia

The family Lormand offers our guests a warm Catalan welcome to their 3-star Grand Hotel Du Lido that sits on the seafront in Argelès-sur-Mer. Boasting stunning views over the Mediterranean sea and with its own private beach surrounded by towering Pine trees the hotel is a peaceful haven to retreat to after a day out walking. The shops and services of Argelès-sur-Mer are only a short walk away.

Accommodation Info

Rooms

The Grand Hotel le Lido has 66 well-equipped en-suite bedrooms, most of which have a balcony or terrace

Each bedroom has:

- Air conditioning
- TV
- Telephone
- Hairdryer
- Safety deposit box
- Fridge

Facilities

Guests can enjoy:

- The shaded gardens
- A private beach
- A Restaurant with panoramic views
- Heated outdoor swimming pool

Food & Drink

Holidays at Argelès-sur-Mer are Half Board with continental breakfast and 3-course evening meal.

Breakfast

Argelès-sur-Mer offers a self-select buffet breakfast with cold and hot beverages, fruit, and selection of breads and pastries.

Evening Meal

Dinner is a 3-course evening meal served to the table. Vegetarian and special diets are catered for; we ask you to take a few moments to talk with the management on arrival.

Drinks

The hotel has a well-stocked bar serving beer, wine and spirits.

Picnic Lunch

This hotel offers a packed lunches at an additional cost. Alternatively, ingredients for a picnic lunch can be purchased from local shops and on certain days it may be possible to eat in local cafès; your leader will advise you of these options.

Your Evenings

The friendly atmosphere of our Guided Walking holidays continue into the evening.

Enjoy a glass of wine or beer whilst listening to our leaders telling you about the next day's walk. After dinner you may like to join your group on a walk along the beach, go for coffee in a local cafè, or listening to live music.

Your leader will be checking for any local events going on nearby. Or you may like to stay in the hotel relaxing and chatting to your fellow guests.

Travel Details

THE HASSLE-FREE OPTION

Book your holiday 'with flight' and choose between Heathrow or Manchester flights to Barcelona airport. For flight times and prices please see the Dates & Prices tab.

If you choose this option we automatically include return transfers between the airport and the hotel. The coach transfer takes approx 2½ hours to the Grand Hotel du Lido.

Please note London Heathrow and Manchester flights arrive into different terminals at Barcelona airport. Our coach transfer will depart from Terminal 1. Guests on the Manchester flight will need to make their way from Terminal 2 via the free shuttle bus located outside the arrivals hall. There is plenty of time for this journey as the London flight is scheduled to arrive later.

THE FLEXIBLE TRAVEL OPTION

Alternatively, tailor your journey to suit you by booking your holiday 'without flight' allowing you the freedom to book your own flights from your local airport.

If you choose this option, transfers are not included in the price. However, below are some suggestions to help you reach your destination:

- We can book you a seat on the **HF Holidays' transfer coach** from Barcelona airport. This is timed to meet the HF Holidays' flights* (provisional flight times can be found on the dates and prices tab or you can call us on 020 8732 1220 for more information). Cost per single journey is £36.50. **Please note** that if your flight arrives into Terminal 2 you will need to transfer to Terminal 1 via the free shuttle bus located outside the arrivals hall. Transfers are timed to meet the London Heathrow flight.

Transfers must be pre-booked. Please call 020 8732 1220 for more details

USEFUL HOLIDAY INFORMATION

What To Bring

Essential Equipment

To enjoy walking/hiking comfortably and safely, footwear, clothing and equipment needs to be suitable for the conditions. Safety and comfort are our priorities, so our advice is to come prepared for all eventualities.

- Footwear with a good grip on the sole (e.g. Vibram sole) is the key to avoiding accidents.
- Walking/hiking boots providing ankle support and good grip are recommended (ideally worn in), and specialist walking socks to avoid blisters.
- Several layers of clothing, which can be added or removed, are better than a single layer (include spares).
- Fabrics (lightweight and fast drying) designed for the outdoors are recommended.
- Waterproof jacket and waterproof over trousers.
- Warm hat and gloves.
- Denim jeans and capes are not suitable on any walks.
- Rucksack with a waterproof liner.
- Thermos flask for hot drink.
- Water bottle (at least 2 litre).
- Spare high-energy food such as a chocolate bar.
- Small torch.

- First aid kit – your leader's first aid kit doesn't contain any medication or blister kits (such as Compeed).
- Sun hat and sunglasses
- Sun cream.

Optional Equipment

- Walking poles are useful, particularly for descents.
- Insect repellent.
- Camera.
- Gaiters.

Useful Information

The local language is French.

Is considered safe to drink, but if you prefer, bottled mineral water can be purchased from the hotel or local supermarkets.

If the international number you wish to call starts with a 0, you must drop the starting digit when dialling the number.

To dial a UK number 0044

To dial a French number 0033

Local Currency

The local currency is the Euro.

Electricity

220 Volt AC with round two pin plugs; you will need an adaptor for any appliances brought from the UK.

ATM Availability

There are several ATM machines in Argelès-sur-mer where you can obtain money.

HOW TO BOOK

When you're ready to book, you can choose to **book online** or book **over the phone**. Our website offers secure online booking for our holidays, is available 24/7, and offers more in-depth information about all our holidays. If you prefer to call us, our experienced and knowledgeable team are available to answer any specific questions you have and can offer guidance as to which holiday is best suited to your needs.

Our office is open: Monday to Friday: 9am – 7pm Saturday & Sunday: 9am – 1pm Bank Holiday Monday: 9am – 1pm

PAYING YOUR DEPOSIT

To secure the holiday of your choice, you will need to pay a deposit: UK & European Holidays: £150 per person and Worldwide Holidays: £250 per person. You can pay your deposit by debit or credit card with no additional card fees charged or make an online BACS payment directly into HF's bank account, please see details under BACS payments. You can also pay your deposit by cheque within seven days of booking. Cheques should be made payable to 'HF Holidays Ltd' with your booking reference / Order ID on the back.

ASSOCIATE'S FEE

Non-members can join our holidays by paying an Associate's fee of £10 per person per holiday. Alternatively,

full life membership is available from £100 – visit hfholidays.co.uk/membership for details.

BACS PAYMENTS

Please quote your booking reference / Order ID when you make your payment online: Bank Name: Svenska Handelsbanken AB (publ) Account Name: HF Holidays Ltd Account Number: 35923304 Sort Code: 40-51-62 IBAN: GB92HAND40516235923304 Swift / Bic Code: HANDGB22

Once we have received your booking and deposit, we will send a confirmation invoice to the lead name. Please check this carefully. For bookings 'with flights' it is essential that the names on your booking confirmation invoice match those on your passport for bookings overseas. Please advise us immediately of any errors. Any name changes after the balance of your holiday has been paid will be subject to a fee levied by the airline.

MANAGE MY BOOKINGS

Payments can also be made through the Manage My Booking function on our website. Click on the link at the top of our homepage. This is available to all customers who provide an email address at the time of booking.

YOUR FINAL BALANCE

The balance is due 10 weeks before departure. As with paying your deposit, you can pay your final balance by debit or credit card, make an online BACS payment directly into HF's bank account or pay by cheque.

TRAVEL INSURANCE

Travel insurance is an important part of any booking and essential for one of our holidays. HF Holidays works with specialist. Insurance Brokers Campbell Irvine Direct. For more information or to obtain a quote call them on 01702 427 236 or visit hfholidays.co.uk/insurance

PEACE OF MIND

ATOL:

The air holidays and flights in this brochure are ATOL-protected, since we hold an Air Travel Organiser's Licence granted by the Civil Aviation Authority. Our ATOL number is ATOL 710. In the unlikely event of our insolvency, the CAA will ensure that you are not stranded abroad and will arrange to refund any money you have paid us for advance bookings. For further information visit the ATOL website atol.org.uk

MEMBER OF ABTOT:

HF Holidays is a member of ABTOT (The Association of Bonded Travel Organisers Trust Limited) which provides financial protection under the Package Travel, Package Holidays and Package Tours Regulations 1992 for HF Holidays Ltd and in the event of their insolvency, protection is provided for the following: 1. non-flight packages commencing in and returning to the UK; 2. non-flight packages commencing and returning to a country other than the UK; 3. flight inclusive packages that commence outside of the UK and Republic of Ireland, which are sold to customers outside of the UK and Republic of Ireland. 1, 2 and 3 provides for a refund in the event you have not yet travelled. 1 and 3 provides for repatriation. Please note that bookings made outside the UK and Republic of Ireland are only protected by ABTOT when purchased directly with HF Holidays Ltd.

TRIP NOTE VALIDITY

These Trip Notes are valid based on the date printed at the bottom of the page. They will occasionally be updated post booking and pre-departure. We will send you the latest trip notes prior to departure through a link in your pre departure documents or we can send you a copy in the post if preferred.

In booking this trip you should be confident in your ability to participate in all activities described in these Trip Notes. If you have any doubt about your suitability you should call HF Holidays and ask to speak to one of the team about this itinerary.

The information in these Trip Notes is given in good faith. Where differences exist between the Trip Notes and

our current brochure, the Trip Notes supersede the brochure. All holidays can be subject to unexpected changes; so please be prepared to be flexible where necessary. At times, it may not be possible to follow the itinerary as planned due to weather conditions, political, physical or other factors. In these circumstances we will make the best possible alternative arrangements to maintain the integrity of the original itinerary.

PRICE GUARANTEE

We promise that our earliest published prices will always be the best and if we reduce our holiday price after your booking has been confirmed, we will pass this reduction on to you. Our price promise applies if any subsequent offer price is for an identical holiday, duration, location and date and does not cover any optional extras, flights or additional services.

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