



# Pre-Departure Information

## HIKING THE FRENCH PYRENEES



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# Reminders Before You Go

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## WELCOME!

We're delighted to welcome you on this adventure! This booklet is designed to guide you in the practical details for preparing for your trip. As you read, if any questions come to mind, feel free to give us a call or send us an email—we're here to help.

## PLEASE SEND US

- Trip Application:** Complete, sign, and return your Trip Application form as soon as possible if you have not already done so.
- Medical Form:** Complete, sign, and return your Medical Form as soon as possible if you have not already done so.
- Air Schedule:** Please forward a copy of your email confirmation, which shows your exact flight arrival and departure times. Refer to the Arrival & Departure section of the Detailed Itinerary for instructions. Please feel free to review your proposed schedule with Wilderness Travel before purchasing your tickets if you have any questions about the timing of your arrival and departure flights or would like to confirm we have the required minimum number of participants to operate the trip.
- Vaccination Card:** Please send us a photo or scanned copy of your completed Covid-19 Vaccination Card if you have not already done so. Just the front side of the card is sufficient.

## PLEASE CAREFULLY REVIEW

- Travel Documents & Medical Information:** Carefully review the Travel Documents and Medical Information sections of this booklet to familiarize yourself with Passport and Visa entry requirements for your destination, as well as any recommended inoculations.
- Optional Travel Insurance:** Review the Trip Cancellation & Transfer Fee Schedule included in the Detailed Itinerary. We recommend that all trip members purchase Travel Insurance.
- Final Documents:** Approximately three weeks before your trip, we will send you final departure documents, including hotel and local contact information and rendezvous instructions.

## QUESTIONS?

Call: 1-800-368-2794, go to our **website** ([www.wildernesstravel.com](http://www.wildernesstravel.com)) or e-mail us at: [info@wildernesstravel.com](mailto:info@wildernesstravel.com).

# Travel Information

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## PASSPORT

A valid passport is required for your trip. Be sure to check the expiration date. Your passport must be valid for three months after your date of exit from France. In addition, we recommend your passport have at least two completely blank visa pages for every country you will be visiting. It is very important that the blank pages say “Visas” at the top. The last few pages of your passport, which say “Amendments and Endorsements,” and the final page of your passport, which may not have a page number, are not considered to be legitimate visa pages. The service of adding pages for visas was discontinued as of January 1, 2016. You can request a new passport through **US Passport Services Office** (<http://travel.state.gov/passport>) or use a visa service agency, which can take care of your passport renewal and expedite the process, if needed. We recommend **Passport Visas Express** (<http://www.passportvisasexpress.com/?affId=2120>). Be sure to allow sufficient time to acquire this before your trip.

It is a good idea to carry photocopies of your passport’s photo page and any acquired visa pages for your trip (if applicable) in case your passport is lost or as an additional piece of identification, as well as two extra passport photos.

## VISAS

US citizens do not need a visa for countries visited on this trip. If you are a citizen of any country other than the US, check with a local consulate for entry requirements.

## MONEY

The Euro is the official currency of France. The most convenient way to obtain Euros is to use your bank ATM card at automatic tellers. If you plan to get cash this way, it’s wise to get a list of ATM locations in advance online or from your bank. Traveler’s checks are not recommended as they can be difficult and time-consuming to cash. Your Trip Leaders will advise you where and when money can be changed. Major credit cards are accepted in most shops in cities and larger towns.

To use an ATM internationally, you must have a four-digit PIN. If you plan to use your credit cards, inform your credit card company before your departure that you will be using the card abroad.

You will need to budget spending money for gratuities, any meals not included in the trip itinerary, international and domestic airport departure taxes, and personal items such as beverages. Meals can be expensive. Dinners in a middle-range restaurant can easily cost \$30.

## TIPPING

Tipping is completely discretionary, but over the years, clients have asked us for tipping guidelines to reward guides for outstanding service. A range of reference would be \$75-100 USD per trip member for each Trip Leader and \$50 USD for the driver, which can be given in either US Dollars or local currency. The Trip Leader takes care of gratuities for luggage handling, waiters at restaurants, and local guides who may be with the group for only a short time.

## SPECIAL DIETS

We will do our best to accommodate special dietary needs, however, please keep in mind that certain cultural differences or limitations due to logistics can make it extremely difficult and at times impossible to accommodate dietary restrictions. Please inform us at least eight weeks before your trip if you have a restricted diet. It is important to bring a flexible attitude and supplemental snacks.

## COMMUNICATIONS

### **Telephone**

The international dialing code for France is 33. Please contact your cell phone company for specific instructions for international use.

### **Email & Internet Access**

Email access is available at some of our lodges.

## ELECTRICITY

Europe has 220-volt current. Plugs usually have two or three prongs.

# Medical Information

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The following recommendations should be used as a guideline only; consult your physician for medical advice. It is vital that you let Wilderness Travel know of any medical problems, allergies, or physical limitations you may have. Please fill out and return the personal medical questionnaire, and feel free to consult us if you have any questions about your ability to undertake this particular trip.

Wilderness Travel is not a medical facility and has no expertise or responsibility regarding what medications or inoculations you and your physician decide are necessary for your safe participation in the trip.

Traveler's health information is available from the **Centers for Disease Control**. (<http://www.cdc.gov/travel/index.htm>)  
Medical travel products are available from **Travel Health Medicine** (<http://www.travmed.com>) and from **Magellan's Travel Supplies**. (<http://www.magellans.com>)

## INOCULATIONS

No inoculations are required. However, it is easy to get a small cut, so a tetanus booster is strongly recommended (good for 10 years). If you take prescription medicines, be sure to bring enough for the duration of your trip.

## STAYING HEALTHY

You can reduce your risk of getting sick on the trip by washing your hands often and not touching your face with unwashed hands. If you arrive on the trip with a cold or feel the symptoms of a cold, avoid close contact with others and move away from people before coughing or sneezing. The CDC recommends coughing or sneezing into a tissue or into the crook of your elbow or upper sleeve, not your hands.



# Helpful Information

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## PHOTOGRAPHY

### Camera Recommendations

With the many advances in digital technology, a simple compact digital camera or even your smartphone is capable of taking pictures suitable for the needs of most people. For higher quality images and the ability to use long lenses for closer wildlife pictures, a DSLR camera is well worthwhile, though heavier. Most digital cameras and phones have good video options, but you may want to consider a GoPro for a lightweight, waterproof option. Always practice ahead of time with new equipment and bring your manual with you. Camera equipment is available for rent from **Borrow Lenses** (<https://www.borrowlenses.com/discount/wildernesstravel>), with a 10% discount offered to Wilderness Travel clients. This is an especially good idea for renting large zoom lenses that you may need for just one trip.

### Camera Accessories

We recommend bringing at least two large capacity memory cards or a small digital storage unit (or tablet) to back up your photos, freeing space on your memory cards. Don't forget to bring a battery charger and a backup battery so one is always charged and ready to use. For trips where you may be away from power sources for multiple days, consider looking into a solar-powered battery charger or buying additional backup batteries, and check that you have the appropriate adapter for the electrical outlets in your destination.

### Sharing Your Images

We would love for you to share photos from your trip, and with your permission, may even use your photos in our marketing materials or on our photo blog. We request that you send us a small sample of your best images. Please email your photos to [wtphotoblog@gmail.com](mailto:wtphotoblog@gmail.com) or tag us **@WildernessTravel** on social media.

### Photography Etiquette

When taking pictures of local people, be aware of cultural considerations. Approaching people with a warm smile and using polite gestures or simple phrases to ask permission to photograph them usually works well. It is always recommended to engage people in conversation before asking to photograph them, but if people do not wish to have their photo taken, please honor their requests. We urge travelers to avoid giving money in exchange for photo opportunities, which makes it harder for future travelers to have a meaningful personal interaction with local people. Please always heed your Trip Leader's guidelines for what is appropriate.

## BEING A CONSIDERATE TRAVELER

Please show respect for the cultures we are visiting by observing local customs concerning appropriate dress, particularly in sacred places. Your Trip Leader is always available to answer any questions that you may have regarding this. If it is necessary to use a cell phone during the trip, please do so privately. Smoking is rarely an issue these days, but if you do smoke, please do so only away from the group.

# Packing List

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## THE ESSENTIALS

- Air tickets (or E-tickets)
- Passport
- One other picture ID, such as a driver's license
- Expense money

## WT GEAR STORE

To help you prepare for your next WT adventure, we've put together a great collection of top brands including Patagonia, Outdoor Research, Eagle Creek, and more at our **WT Gear Store** (<http://wildernesstravel.newheadings.com>).

## LUGGAGE

Luggage space is limited in our van, so we ask that you restrict your luggage to one piece, plus your daypack. Soft-sided suitcase with small TSA-approved padlock

- Daypack, large enough for a jacket or rain gear, water bottle, and items you want on the trail
- (Optional) Small roll-up bag to carry home purchases

## NOTES ON CLOTHING

The clothing list below is provided as a guideline only. Bring clothes you find most comfortable for hiking. Dressing in layers is the best way to stay comfortable. You'll want a change of clothes for the evening, but nothing dressy is necessary. Casual wear is fine, and coats and ties are not required.

Although airline service to Europe is generally reliable, it is best to wear or carry your hiking boots with you on your flights in the event that your luggage is lost or delayed. Nearly everything else can be replaced in case of baggage loss, but not a pair of well-fitted, fully broken-in hiking boots. Likewise, don't pack valuables, such as travel documents, camera gear, or prescription medicines in your checked luggage.



## CLOTHING

In a two-week period, you are likely to experience a full range of weather conditions. Be prepared! Rain gear, such as a Gore-Tex rain/wind shell jacket with hood, and Gore-Tex rain/wind pants

- Fleece jacket or nylon windbreaker
- Light fleece sweater or sweatshirt
- Down or fleece vest (optional)
- Long-sleeved shirt. Quick-drying “travel” fabrics like nylon are recommended.
- T-shirts or short-sleeved shirts
- Hiking pants. Lightweight cotton or synthetic hiking pants are a practical choice. Jeans are not recommended because they can be hot and they take a long time to dry if they get wet.
- Hiking shorts. Quick-drying fabrics are recommended.
- Shade hat with wide brim—preferably a waterproof one you can use as a rain hat as well
- Medium- to heavyweight hiking boots designed for on- and off-trail hiking with multi-day hikes in mind. They must be waterproof, comfortable, and broken in.
- Texas or walking shoes for sightseeing in towns
- Hiking socks. Some people like thick Thorlo-type socks with padded toes/heels, or an outer sock and synthetic liner sock.
- Underwear/sleepwear. Synthetics dry faster.
- Bathing suit
- Casual city/hotel attire
- Gloves
- Warm hat

## EQUIPMENT

- Trekking poles with snow baskets
- Gaiters (essential for keeping possible snow out of your boots, important for those who plan on doing the Breche du Roland hike)
- Reusable water bottle, one or two, 1 qt. capacity
- Good quality sunglasses with case. A spare pair of sunglasses is a good idea should your first pair be broken or lost.
- Flashlight and extra batteries
- Stuff sacks or plastic bags to compartmentalize items, Ziploc-style bags to carry small items during the day
- Money belt or neck pouch (optional). It’s a good idea to carry your passport, credit cards, and cash with you in a money belt or neck pouch tucked down inside your shirt or blouse.

## PERSONAL FIRST AID SUPPLIES

Every trip member should bring a small kit for personal use. Your own experience will influence your choices.

- Sunscreen SPF 30 or higher and lip balm with sunscreen. We recommend mineral-based sunscreens with zinc oxide or titanium dioxide because they do not contain harsh chemicals that are harmful to the environment. Brands such as Honest Company, Badger, and Alba Botanica are found in most sporting goods stores and drugstores.
- Aspirin, ibuprofen, or Tylenol for muscle pain or headache, Tylenol PM for sleep
- Blister kit. Look for the long-lasting gel-type bandages that you can apply directly on blisters, such as Band-Aid Advanced Healing Bandages or Curad Gel Multi-Day Bandages. “Liquid band-aids,” such as New-Skin, are useful because they dry rapidly to form a tough protective cover over a blister.
- Prescription medications properly labeled
- Spare contact lenses or spare prescription glasses

## OPTIONAL ITEMS

- Voltage converter and plug adapter for appliance use in hotels
- Sports bra for women
- Camera, spare batteries
- Reading/writing material
- Bandannas (many uses)
- Lightweight binoculars
- Travel clock
- Small umbrella
- Laundry soap for hand-washing clothes
- Wash cloth, if you like to use one (most European hotels do not provide them)

# Reading List

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## ESSENTIAL READING

### **Boundaries, The Making of France and Spain in the Pyrenees**

*Peter Sahlins*

1991, 351 PAGES

A study of national identity in Catalonia, Cerdanya and the border lands between France and Spain, with an overview of their demarcation and arbitrary division in 1659.

### **The Cathedral Builders of the Middle Ages**

*Alain Erlande-Brandenburg*

2010, 175 PAGES

This pocket-size encyclopedia of the art, architecture and culture of the Middle Ages features hundreds of drawings, color illustrations and a brief chronology.

### **The Way of St James, France: Le Puy to the Pyrenees**

*Alison Raju*

2013, 224 PAGES

A practical guide to walking GR 65, the Via Podiensis, from Le Puy in central France to Saint-Jean-Pied-de-Port in the Pyrenees.

### **Midi Pyrenees Map 525**

*Michelin Travel Publications*

2014

A nicely detailed (1:200,000), frequently updated regional map of the central Pyrenees, centered on Toulouse.

## ALSO RECOMMENDED

### **A Piano in the Pyrenees**

*Tony Hawks*

2007, 352 PAGES

British comic Hawks (Around Ireland with a Fridge) serves up another bumbling adventure in this account of buying a house in the French Pyrenees and trying to teach himself to play (not to mention move) a piano.

### **Birds of Europe**

*Lars Svensson*

2010, 416 PAGES

Featuring 3,500 glorious paintings by Killian Mullarney and Dan Zetterstrom, the second edition of this exquisite guide features updated text and maps.

### **The Gothic Enterprise, A Guide to Understanding the Medieval Cathedral**

*Robert A. Scott*

2005, 294 PAGES

An enthusiast, Scott delves into the history, design, architecture and wonder of Europe's medieval cathedrals and great Abbey churches.

### **Basque-English Dictionary and Phrasebook**

*Joseph Conroy*

1998, 206 PAGES

A shirt-pocket guide to the Basque language, useful for travelers to Northern Spain and Southwest France.

### **Cadogan Guide Gascony & the Pyrenees**

*Michael Pauls*

2007, 364 PAGES

A town-by-town guide to Southwestern France, with 6 color maps.

### **Walks and Climbs in the Pyrenees**

*Kev Reynolds*

2015, 416 PAGES

A compact practical guide to a wide variety of hikes throughout the central Pyrenees.

### **A Traveller's History of France**

*Robert Cole*

2008, 256 PAGES

This fast-moving survey covers the conquests of ancient Gaul through the heady days of revolution to modern times.

### **The Land of My Fathers, A Son's Return to the Basque Country**

*Joyce Laxalt*

1999, 136 PAGES

A portrait of the Basque culture and people through the eyes of Robert Laxalt, who traveled through Basque country in the 60s. This book is based on Laxalt's journals and complemented by his wife's photographs.

### **Walking**

*Henry David Thoreau*

1994, 92 PAGES

Slip this pocket edition of Thoreau's meditations on the spiritual benefits of this most civilized form of travel in your daypack for inspiration.

### **The Pyrenees**

*Kev Reynolds*

2004, 448 PAGES

A guide to the high Pyrenees from the Cirque de Lescun in the west to the Carlit massif and Cerdagne east of Andorrain.

### **The Food of France**

*Waverly Root*

1992, 450 PAGES

An evocative and beautifully written survey of French food. First published in 1958 and revised in the mid-1970s, the book covers the important regions of French cuisine by dividing them into domains of Butter (northern France), Fat (Alsace) and Oil (the south).

### **The Basque History of the World**

*Mark Kurlansky*

2001, 288 PAGES

Kurlansky's engaging portrait of the seven provinces of Basque lands takes in everything from language to culinary heritage, role in the Spanish Civil War and seafaring traditions.

### **The Road from the Past, Traveling through History in France**

*Ina Caro*

1996, 339 PAGES

Time travel through France by way of its finest castles, chateaux, cathedrals and monasteries. This unusual travelogue is an invaluable companion for traveling in Paris, southern France, the Dordogne and the Loire Valley, combining personal observation with large doses of well-presented history.

### **By the River Piedra I Sat Down and Wept**

*Paulo Coelho*

2006, 179 PAGES

From the wildly popular Brazilian author Paulo Coelho comes this magical tale of a woman who follows a former childhood friend through the French Pyrenees.

**The Catalans**

*Patrick O'Brian*

2005, 224 PAGES

Patrick O'Brian's bitingly funny novel of Dr. Alain Roeg, returned home to a family in crisis, beautifully evokes the Languedoc town of Saint-Feliu, where O'Brian made his home.

Revised: October 07, 2021

**A Bite-Sized History of France: Gastronomic Tales of Revolution, War, and Enlightenment**

*Stephane Henaut, et al*

2019, 352 PAGES

A witty account of how the history of France is intimately entwined with its gastronomic pursuits.