



## Pyrenees/Ripollès (self-guided tour)

### Introduction:

The Pyrenees is unbeatable destination for hikers. The area boasts over 1000km of signposted paths. The mountains constitute the dividing mountain range between France and Spain, with the highest summits reaching approximately 3,000 metres. The nature of these mountains and their foothills varies a lot in different places. On the Spanish side, very dry and arid areas are found, yet alternated with many green and fertile regions. Ripollès, where this arrangement will take you, is a relatively green region. It is a small-scaled area in the foothills of the high mountains with small compact villages which often have an old and original town centre and where the air of the small narrow streets is permeated by the smell of cattle and manure. In the outlying districts of most places new urbanisations are being constructed, which sometimes goes at the expense of the authentic atmosphere of the villages.

### Special highlights:

- Camprodon - the market town of Camprodon, with its 12th-century bridge, Romanesque monastery, small shops, bustling, ancient centre and interesting Art Nouveau quarter  
 - Mollo - Mollo links Camprodon valley with France through the old pass of Coll d'Ares. From that point there is a wonderful view of the neighbouring country. The main attraction of Mollo is its beautiful Romanesque church of Santa Cecilia, with four-storey bell-tower.

- Setcases - a small picturesque village, whose origin dates back to the year 965. It is located at an altitude of 1,270 meters, at the foot of the highest mountain tops.

Walking around Setcases you can enjoy that picturesque village of narrow streets and slate roofs, waterfalls and matchless environments of woods and meadows declared places of natural interest, together with the river Ter, that runs through the village.

- The Sanctuary of Nuria - one of Catalonia's holiest sites, high in the mountains, 1,960 metres above sea level.

### Itinerary

#### Day 1: Arrival in Camprodon.

Arrival at Barcelona Prats airport (please note that some low-cost carriers announce Barcelona as airport but land in Girona; if you land at Girona Airport, which is some 95km to the northeast of Barcelona, you can use the buses from the airport to Barcelona – there are 2-4 buses per hour and the drive takes about 1,30hrs, the ticket costs appr. 12 Euro/one way – timetables at <http://www.sagales.com/index.asp?docId=87&MenuID=87&seccio=2>). From Barcelona Plaza Catalunya station take the train to Ripoll (about 2 hours; trains each 1-2 hours, timetables at <http://www.renfe.es/cercanias/barcelona/index.html>). This would be the option if you wish to see some more landscapes from Catalunya. The shorter option if you

land at Girona Airport is to take a bus to the city of Girona and then another one to Ripoll. The Ripollès is one of the most nicely forested valleys of the Pyrenees, beautiful in any season and particularly so in the autumn when it turns every shade of red and gold. A taxi will be waiting for you at Ripoll to take you to Camprodon (24km; appr. 960m a.s.l.)

where you will spend the night. Please advise in due time approximate time for pick up from Ripoll (as well as exact place).  
**/no meals included/**

#### Day 2: Camprodon - Mollo

This is your first day of trekking during which you will reach the small village of Mollo (appr. 1100m a.s.l.) close to the border with France. There are several options for the trek with duration varying from 7hrs (23km) to 3,30hrs (13km) – you will decide by yourself depending on the weather conditions and your fitness. Overnight in hotel in Mollo.  
 Uphill/downhill walk: 600/460m  
**/breakfast, dinner/**

#### Day 3: Mollo - Setcases

Today's trek will take up about 4,30 hours (13km) and the route passes through the Fembra Morte Pass with a wonderful view over the Pyrenees and Garrotxa. The highest point of this trekking day is 1900m a.s.l. You will spend the night in a nice hotel in Setcases (1265m a.s.l.) - a small

village with cows where the air is filled with cow manure and hay.

Uphill/downhill walk: 750/585m

**/breakfast, dinner/**

#### **Day 4: Setcases - Setcases**

This day will be spent in the areas around Setcases, spending the night at the same hotel as last night. It is possible to climb Mt. Bastiments (2881m, 6 hrs) or enjoy the trekking to Ulldeter Refuge (2220m) along the Ter Valley - 3,5 hrs. Leaving Setcases northwards there is a narrow road that takes you to Vallter 2000, a skiing area. The GR11 (which is actually the star amongst paths in the southern Pyrenees) follows this valley partly uphill, but before arriving to the skiing area it bends westwards to the Refugi d'Ulldeter, situated at an altitude of more than 2200 metres. You can also continue hiking till the Coll de la Coma de l'Orri, at about 2500 metres. You might find (too) much snow here till the month of May. You can order a transfer to the Valter ski area from the hotel for additional payment if you want to spend more time above 2000m and skip the trekking from Setcases to Valter.

**/breakfast, dinner/**

#### **Day 5: Setcases - Tregura**

From Setcases to Tregura - 4 hrs (10 km). A nice walk passing through several small farm villages, an old Roman church, walking across huge meadows and grasslands with magnificent view.

Uphill/downhill walk: 300/100m

**/breakfast, dinner/**

#### **Day 6: Tregura - Ribes de Freser**

Transfer from Tregura to Llanars. Trekking to Ribes de Freser (1050 m a.s.l.) over Collada Verda Pass - 7 hrs (20km). The route takes you through an exceptionally beautiful valleys, with abundant green and nice views along the rivers Riera d'Abella and El Segadel

Uphill/downhill walk: 750/750m

**/breakfast/**

#### **Day 7. Ribes de Freser – Nuria – Ribes de Freser**

You can decide to spend the day in Ribes de Freser but we highly recommend you to take a dramatic train ride with the small mountain train (funicular) through the valley "Sanctuary of Nuria" high up in the mountains (1960m) (timetables and fares at

<http://www.valldenuria.com/undersite/eng/index.html>).

Nuria is a perfect starting point for climbing the neighbouring mountain tops (reaching 2800m a.s.l.). Your trek through the alpine meadows and rocky plateaus will be accompanied by the marmot whistles, running chamois or with vultures soaring high above your head.

**Penguin Travel DMC-Bulgaria**

**Address: 9 Orfej Str., 1421 Sofia, BULGARIA; Phone: +35924001050; E-mail: info@penguin.bg**

The landscapes today differ greatly compared to the ones from the past days and this walk is no doubt more than merited end of the hiking tour. From here it is possible once again to enjoy the magnificent view before the last trekking takes you back to Ribes de Freser (7-20km, 3-7 hrs).

**/breakfast/**

#### **Day 8. Departure from Ribes**

Train back to Barcelona - 2,30 hrs (timetables and fares are available at [www.renfe.es/cercanias/barcelona/index.html](http://www.renfe.es/cercanias/barcelona/index.html)).

**/breakfast/**

**DETAILED ROAD BOOK WILL BE SENT BY E-MAIL AND MAP WILL BE PROVIDED UPON ARRIVAL**

#### **Accommodation & luggage transportation:**

During this trip you will stay at several hotels, all with comfortable rooms and private WC/bathroom and 2 hostels. Luggage transportation between hotels is included. Halfboard (breakfast and dinner) is included for days 2, 3, 4 & 5, while bed and breakfast stays remain for the rest 3 nights.

**Difficulty grade:** B (days 2, 3, 5 & 6) / C (days 4 & 7)

**Best period:** from May until October

#### **Equipment and clothing:**

Good waterproof boots with suitable ankle support, bottle for water and rain jacket. For the full list with recommended items see "General".

#### **General remarks:**

- Marking is comparatively good.
- You will walk mainly below the tree line on dirt roads and nice forest paths and meadows. On days 4 and 7 you will have the chance to enjoy the alpine landscapes of The Pyrenees climbing up to 2800m. You will walk on alpine meadows and rocky paths.
- Be sure to take enough water during the treks. In high areas you might find cattle grazing, which means you must be careful with drinking water from rivers and brooks.
- Ticks are also possible – check regularly your trousers or legs.
- People suffering from fear of heights are not expected to have any problems on this arrangement, but then again you might have to walk over a steep slope now and then, but never with a huge depth right under you.
- Leave all cattle doors you find on the routes in the same state you found them.

#### **Weather:**

There are large variations in climate depending on height. The hiking trips of this arrangement fluctuate between 900 and 2,200 metres. When leaving in April you might find snow in the high areas. From the beginning of May, snow can normally only be found on the mountain tops. In spring and autumn temperatures are usually very pleasant for hiking while in summer, especially in the valleys, it can be quite warm. Generally when it rains it is not for a long time. In summer it is normal to rain in the evenings, but these thunderstorms pass quickly. The average temperature in May is 15-20°C (max. 30°C) and the snowline starts at 2000m. In June-August the temperatures range from 23-26°C reaching a maximum of 35°C sometimes. However lots of shade is available in the forests at that time. The snow is missing at that time. In September-October the average temperatures are between 20-23°C with max 30°C.

**Group size:** Min. 2 persons

**The price includes:** accommodation and boarding as per program; a map and complete description of the routes (road book) in English; transfer from Ripoll to Camprodon (day 1) and from Tregura to Llanars (day 6); luggage transfers

**The price does not include:** optional transfers on day 4, entrance fees and transport tickets, tips, alcohol drinks, cigarettes and other personal expenses.

#### **Optional services:**

Taxi transfer to Ter valley (day 4) approximately: 15 euro/person

#### **GENERAL**

#### **TOUR TYPES & GRADES**

We provide different varieties of tours as regards to their types and difficulty grades! Whether you will choose individual and group tours with a guide or combined tours with a guide for some part of the trip depends on you. We emphasize on using local experienced guides with knowledge of the local language, culture, history, art, etc. The tours are conducted in the English language. Guides in other languages are available upon request.

## Tour types

Our tours are divided in different tour types, regardless of being guided or not or if someone travels alone or in a group. We have prepared your vacation so that you can concentrate on new impressions and experiences, awaiting you all the time. Here is a description of the various tours:

### **IT: Individual tours**

There is no guide on this tour. You travel individually and we are responsible for the hotel overnights and /some/ transfers. Sometimes you will travel together with other people. If you wish a guide can be arranged, if ordered. We take it for granted that you can read maps, provided by us upon arrival.

### **Difficulty grades**

To prepare yourself for the best of your vacation we recommend that you start planning it in an advance. Good physical condition is required. In order to achieve it we advise you to start walking, jogging or cycling everyday. Swimming a couple of times a week is also highly recommended. You do not need much to get yourself in shape. And don't forget that the most important tip for an unforgettable active holiday is to choose a trip which corresponds to your physical condition!

### **B: Moderate**

Most of you, who are used to walking during a long weekend, will be in condition to cope with a tour of this level. You should be in good health condition and not too bad physical condition. We have successive days of longer and more difficult walking and days of lighter walking. Some parts of the day routes are done at a higher altitude. The paths are in good condition. We walk for 5-7h a day. You are free to skip some walks and have a rest.

### **C: Difficult**

These tours include trekking which is a little harder, normally on a challenging terrain. We take it for granted that you are in good condition and fit. You should be physically prepared at home to get the maximum of the tour. Most of the trekking is done at a greater height (max 3000 m). As on other tours you are free to skip some treks and have a rest.

### **Equipment and clothing:**

You should always remember that you must try to keep the weight of your clothing equipment down to a minimum. Your packed rucksack should weigh no more than 10-15 kilograms.

**Recommended items:** waterproof rucksack (60 l) & daypack (35 l); walking waterproof boots with suitable ankle support; light casual shoes for walking and/or for travelling; gaiters; loose, casual trousers for trekking; waterproof trousers; fleece windstopper jacket; windproof, waterproof outer shell garment (breathable if possible!); hat for sun protection; sunglasses with UV protection; sunscreen lotion and lip balm; torch (headlamp), water bottle, trekking sticks.

### **Vaccination**

Immunsation against Hepatitis A is recommended two weeks prior departure. Check latest requirements with your travel clinic or doctor prior to departure.

### **Money and personal expenses:**

You will need some extra money to cover meals, drinks and extra trips not included in the tour price. The Euro is Spain's official currency. Money can be changed in any bank, and at most travel agencies, major hotels and airports. American Express, Diners Club, MasterCard and Visa are widely accepted. ATMs are widely available. International traveller's cheques are widely accepted. To avoid additional exchange rate charges, travellers are advised to take traveller's cheques in Euros or Pounds Sterling. Traveller's cheques should be changed at banks or exchange bureaux.

Below are some examples of costs in Spain (NB: prices in mid-range restaurants!):

- Coffee – 1.5 €
- Tea – 1.5 €
- Beer - 1 €
- Soft drink – 1€
- Bottle of water - 0.6 €
- Bottle of good quality local red wine (0,75l) – 8-10 €
- Three-course lunch – 10-15 €
- Lunch pack – 5 €

### **Cell phone coverage:**

Roaming agreements exist with most international mobile phone companies. Coverage is good throughout most of the country.

### **Electricity**

The standard current in Spain is 220 volts but it is common in older places to find the old 115 volt supply. Both systems use plugs with two round pins. Travel adaptors can be purchased to convert plugs from other countries. Many appliances in Spain are not earthed and it is common to find electric sockets in bathrooms, near water supplies so extreme care should be exercised. In rural areas supply is often interrupted during storms. You can bring your electrical goods to Spain from the UK but not 110V appliances from the USA.

### **Brief about Spain:**

**Territory** – 504 782 sq km

**Borders:** North – Atlantic ocean, North East: France (623), Andorra (63.7 km), East & South – Mediterranean sea, Gibraltar (1.2 km), West: Portugal (1,214 km)

**Coastline:** 4,964 km

**Terrain:** large, flat to dissected plateau surrounded by rugged hills; Pyrenees in north

**Elevation extremes:** *lowest point:* Atlantic Ocean 0 m, *highest point:* Pico de Teide (Tenerife) on Canary Islands 3,718 m, longest river: Tagus (part) – 1 010 km

**Population** – 40,448,191 (July 2007 est.)

**Capital city** - Madrid (5 603 292)

**Largest metropolitan areas** – Madrid (5 603 292), Barcelona (5 328 395), Valencia (1 465 081), Sevilla (1 294 081), Malaga (1 019 292) etc.

**Ethnic composition** – Spanish – 72,3 %, Catalan – 16,3 %, Galician 8,1 %, Basque – 2,3 %, others – 1 %

**Religion** - Roman Catholic 94%, other 6%

**Major resources** – fruit and vegetable crops, coal, iron ore, mercury, uranium, fisheries, tourism

**Languages:** Castilian Spanish (official) 74%, Catalan 17%, Galician 7%, Basque 2%, are official regionally

**Protected areas:** 13 National Parks, and hundreds of Natural parks, reserves and other protected areas

### **Weather:**

The weather varies considerably across the Pyreneen chain. The general rule is that the West is wet, and the East is much dryer. Furthermore, the Spanish side of the Pyreneen chain is considerably warmer than the French (as it can be thought of as one large south facing slope). The climate year-round is that of temperate mountain regions, in particular short bursts of heavy rainfall can be expected in April and May, and stable periods of high pressure between September through to November give clear blue skies. During the height of summer (especially August), short violent thunderstorms are a regular occurrence mid-afternoon. Occasionally, the onset of winter is heralded by a cold-snap at the start of November, however any snow usually melts away below about 1000m altitude. Winter conditions are to be expected between January and March.

Last edited by: VK, 05/11/10