

**PILGRIM ROUTE**

**CICERONE**

# **WALKING THE CAMINO DE SANTIAGO - VIA PODIENSIS**

**Le Puy to the Pyrenees on the GR65**



**Dave Whitson**

# ROUTE SUMMARY TABLES

VIA PODIENSIS						
Stage	Start	Distance (km)	Time (hr:min)	Total ascent (m)	Total descent (m)	Page
1	Le Puy-en-Velay	16.7	4:15	520	100	40
2	Montbonnet	26.1	8:00	805	950	48
3	Saugues	19.3	5:15	635	305	55
4	Domaine du Sauvage	28.2	7:30	480	725	60
5	Aumont-Aubrac	27.3	6:45	550	430	67
6	Nasbinals	32.7	10:00	640	1440	73
7	Saint-Côme-d'Olt	21.3	6:00	570	615	83
8	Estaing	35.3	10:00	980	1010	90
9	Conques	24.3	7:30	780	865	99
10	Livinhac-le-Haut	23.2	6:15	495	510	106
11	Figeac	30.8	8:15	620	670	113
12	Cajarc	27.5	7:00	510	340	119
13	Varaire	32.5	7:15	365	550	124
14	Cahors	23.8	6:30	475	415	136
15	Lascabanes	23.7	6:45	615	595	140
16	Lauzerte	27.8	7:30	475	605	145
17	Moissac	19.8	4:30	135	105	152
18	Auvillar	32.8	8:15	590	535	156
19	Lectoure	32.1	8:30	610	695	163
20	Condom	33.8	7:30	460	390	170
21	Éauze	21.0	4:45	250	300	177
22	Nogaro	27.6	6:15	230	255	181
23	Aire-sur-l'Adour	33.8	7:30	485	330	186
24	Arzacq-Arraziguet	30.2	7:30	460	495	191
25	Arthez-de-Béarn	31.6	8:00	475	550	196
26	Navarrenx	19.5	4:15	275	290	202
27	Aroue	24.0	7:00	645	585	206
28	Ostabat-Asme	22.2	5:00	325	310	212
	Saint-Jean-Pied-de-Port					
	TOTAL	748.9	194:00	14,455	14,965	

### CÉLÉ VALLEY VARIANT

Stage	Start	Distance (km)	Time (hr:min)	Total ascent (m)	Total descent (m)	Page
C1	Figeac	25.7	6:30	475	510	220
C2	Espagnac-Sainte-Eulalie	15.9	5:00	535	555	225
C3	Marcihac-sur-Célé	18.3	5:45	585	605	229
C4	Cabrerets	10.7	3:30	330	240	233
C5	Saint-Cirq-Lapopie	33.2	9:00	575	675	238
	Cahors					
	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>103.8</b>	<b>29:45</b>	<b>2500</b>	<b>2585</b>	

### ROCAMADOUR VARIANT

Stage	Start	Distance (km)	Time (hr:min)	Total ascent (m)	Total descent (m)	Page
R1	Figeac	22.8	6:00	560	375	246
R2	Lacapelle-Marival	24.0	5:30	270	380	250
R3	Gramat	12.4	3:15	185	280	255
R4	Rocamadour	25.5	7:15	745	460	259
R5	Labastide-Murat	24.2	6:00	280	580	263
R6	Vers	16.3	3:30	160	190	267
	Cahors					
	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>125.2</b>	<b>31:30</b>	<b>2170</b>	<b>2235</b>	

### CONNECTING TO THE CAMINO DEL NORTE

	Start	Distance (km)	Time	Total ascent (m)	Total descent (m)	Page
The GR10	Saint-Jean-Pied-de-Port	99.2	5 days	5875	6065	271
The Voie Nive Bidassoa	Saint-Jean-Pied-de-Port	77.2	3–4 days	1850	2040	279

# CAMINO DE SANTIAGO - VIA PODIENSIS

LE PUY TO THE PYRENEES ON THE GR65

by Dave Whitson

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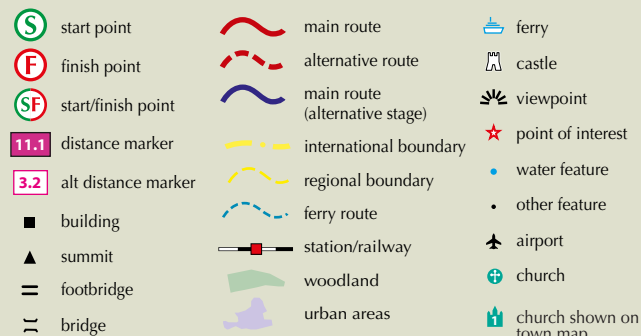
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## Dedication

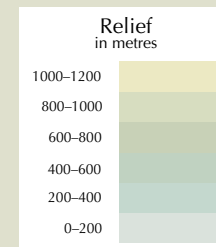
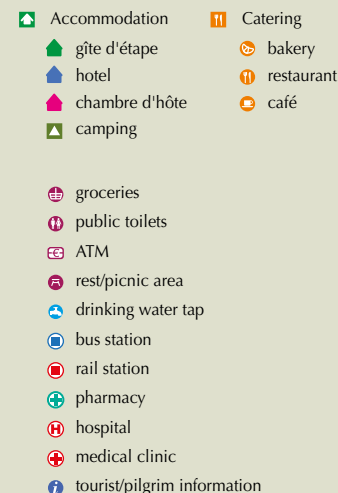
This book is dedicated to Alison Raju, who led the way; to all of the students who have accompanied me on pilgrimage, across many different summers; to the hosts in gîtes who have cared for us and so many others, like Sabine and Sylvain, Eden, Rom and Aideen, and Corinne; and to Bronwen Perry and Sandy Brown, for their support, encouragement, and inspiration.

Front cover: Pilgrims on the cliffside trail after Sauliac-sur-Célé (Stage C3)

## Symbols used on maps



## Facilities



SCALE: 1:100,000



## MAP SCALES

Route maps at 1:100,000  
Town maps are at 1:40,000  
unless otherwise indicated  
(see scale bar)

GPX files for all routes can be downloaded free at [www.cicerone.co.uk/1102/GPX](http://www.cicerone.co.uk/1102/GPX).



## CONTENTS

Route summary tables . . . . .	1
Map key . . . . .	5

<b>INTRODUCTION</b> . . . . .	11
The stories of St James and St Roch . . . . .	13
The Via Podiensis: yesterday and today . . . . .	15
Regions encountered along the route . . . . .	16
A turbulent history . . . . .	19

<b>PLANNING YOUR WALK</b> . . . . .	21
Choosing your route . . . . .	21
When to go . . . . .	23
Preparation and planning . . . . .	23
Being a pilgrim . . . . .	24
Getting there and back . . . . .	26
Where to stay . . . . .	27

<b>TIPS FOR MAKING THE MOST OF YOUR WALK</b> . . . . .	29
What to pack . . . . .	29
Food and drink . . . . .	30
Postal services and baggage transportation . . . . .	32
Telephones and internet . . . . .	32
Other local facilities . . . . .	33

<b>HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE</b> . . . . .	34
Route descriptions . . . . .	34
Route summary information . . . . .	34
Walking directions and waymarking . . . . .	35
Municipality information headings . . . . .	37
Accommodation listings . . . . .	37
Elevation profiles . . . . .	38
Maps . . . . .	38
GPX tracks . . . . .	38
Planning tools . . . . .	38

<b>THE VIA PODIENSIS</b> . . . . .	39
Stage 1 Le Puy-en-Velay to Montbonnet . . . . .	40
Stage 2 Montbonnet to Saugues . . . . .	48
Stage 3 Saugues to Domaine du Sauvage . . . . .	55
Stage 4 Domaine du Sauvage to Aumont-Aubrac . . . . .	60
Stage 5 Aumont-Aubrac to Nasbinals . . . . .	67

Stage 6 Nasbinals to Saint-Côme-d'Olt . . . . .	73
Stage 7 Saint-Côme-d'Olt to Estaing . . . . .	83
Stage 8 Estaing to Conques . . . . .	90
Stage 9 Conques to Livinhac-le-Haut . . . . .	99
Stage 10 Livinhac-le-Haut to Figeac . . . . .	106
Stage 11 Figeac to Cajarc . . . . .	113
Stage 12 Cajarc to Varaire . . . . .	119
Stage 13 Varaire to Cahors . . . . .	124
Stage 14 Cahors to Lascabanes . . . . .	136
Stage 15 Lascabanes to Lauzerte . . . . .	140
Stage 16 Lauzerte to Moissac . . . . .	145
Stage 17 Moissac to Auvillar . . . . .	152
Stage 18 Auvillar to Lectoure . . . . .	156
Stage 19 Lectoure to Condom . . . . .	163
Stage 20 Condom to Éauze . . . . .	170
Stage 21 Éauze to Nogaro . . . . .	177
Stage 22 Nogaro to Aire-sur-l'Adour . . . . .	181
Stage 23 Aire-sur-l'Adour to Arzacq-Arraziguet . . . . .	186
Stage 24 Arzacq-Arraziguet to Arthez-de-Béarn . . . . .	191
Stage 25 Arthez-de-Béarn to Navarrenx . . . . .	196
Stage 26 Navarrenx to Aroue . . . . .	202
Stage 27 Aroue to Ostabat-Asme . . . . .	206
Stage 28 Ostabat-Asme to Saint-Jean-Pied-de-Port . . . . .	212

<b>CÉLÉ VALLEY VARIANT</b> . . . . .	219
Stage C1 Figeac to Espagnac-Sainte-Eulalie . . . . .	220
Stage C2 Espagnac-Sainte-Eulalie to Marcilhac-sur-Célé . . . . .	225
Stage C3 Marcilhac-sur-Célé to Cabrerets . . . . .	229
Stage C4 Cabrerets to Saint-Cirq-Lapopie . . . . .	233
Stage C5 Saint-Cirq-Lapopie to Cahors . . . . .	238

<b>ROCAMADOUR VARIANT</b> . . . . .	245
Stage R1 Figeac to Lacapelle-Marival . . . . .	246
Stage R2 Lacapelle-Marival to Gramat . . . . .	250
Stage R3 Gramat to Rocamadour . . . . .	255
Stage R4 Rocamadour to Labastide-Murat . . . . .	259
Stage R5 Labastide-Murat to Vers . . . . .	263
Stage R6 Vers to Cahors . . . . .	267

<b>CONNECTING TO THE CAMINO DEL NORTE</b> . . . . .	269
The GR10 . . . . .	271
The Voie Nive Bidassoa . . . . .	279

<b>Appendix A</b>	Stage planning tables . . . . .	283
<b>Appendix B</b>	Useful sources of information . . . . .	287
<b>Appendix C</b>	English–French glossary . . . . .	290
<b>Appendix D</b>	Further reading . . . . .	292
<b>Appendix E</b>	Major festivals along the way . . . . .	294

### Updates to this guide

While every effort is made by our authors to ensure the accuracy of guidebooks as they go to print, changes can occur during the lifetime of an edition. Any updates that we know of for this guide will be on the Cicerone website ([www.cicerone.co.uk/1102/updates](http://www.cicerone.co.uk/1102/updates)), so please check before planning your trip. We also advise that you check information about such things as transport, accommodation and shops locally. Even rights of way can be altered over time.

We are always grateful for information about any discrepancies between a guidebook and the facts on the ground, sent by email to [updates@cicerone.co.uk](mailto:updates@cicerone.co.uk) or by post to Cicerone, Juniper House, Murley Moss, Oxenholme Road, Kendal, LA9 7RL.

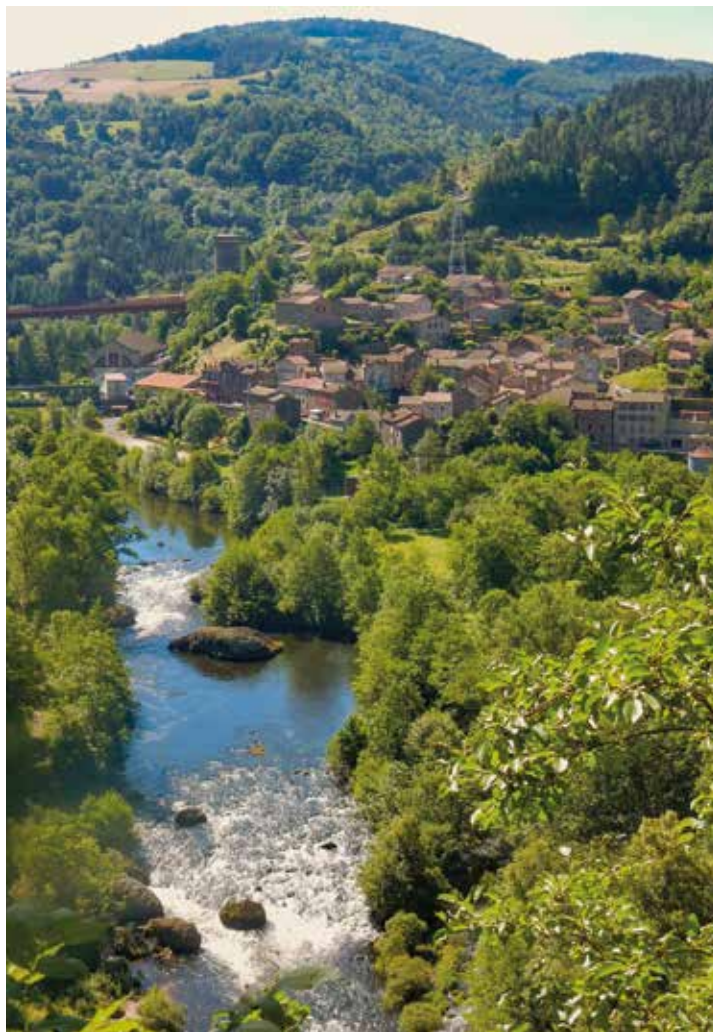
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### Note on mapping

The route maps in this guide are derived from publicly available data, databases and crowd-sourced data. As such they have not been through the detailed checking procedures that would generally be applied to a published map from an official mapping agency. However, we have reviewed them closely in the light of local knowledge as part of the preparation of this guide.

*Pilgrims walk through a field of sunflowers near Lascabanes (Stage 14)*





(Above) Looking back from the chemin towards Monistrol-d'Allier (Stage 2)  
(Opposite) Setting forth: the view on departure from Le Puy's cathedral (Stage 1)



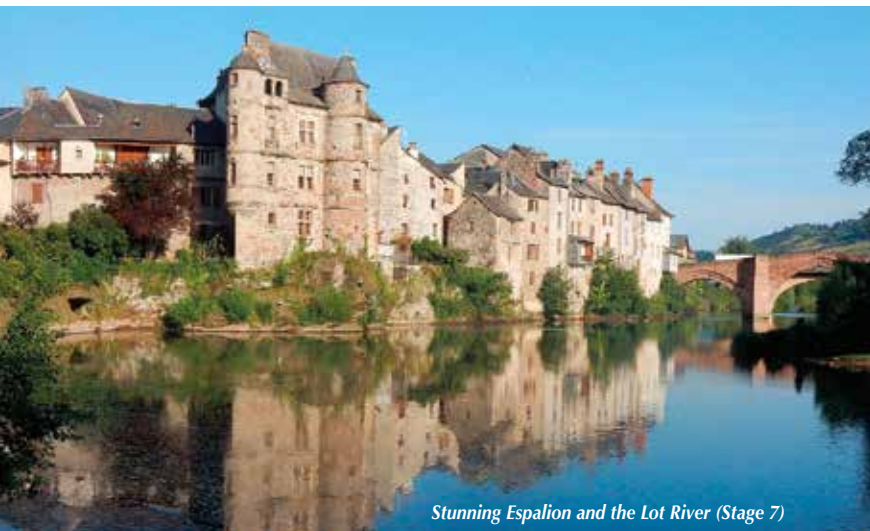
## INTRODUCTION

Be warned: if you journey forth on pilgrimage on the Via Podiensis, you will spend the rest of your days longing to return. Distinguished by delightful and historic French villages and pleasing walking through idyllic countryside, the route offers tranquility and charm in equal measure. With small bakeries churning out *pain au chocolat* in the morning, rustic cafés offering delicious lunches, and home-cooked dinners served with warm hospitality each evening, it's hard not to feel an all-encompassing *joie de vivre*. And behind it all is the sacred and profound pilgrimage tradition that has brought countless faithful along these paths over the centuries,

headed for a destination that sits some 1500km and another country away.

Santiago de Compostela, whose cathedral houses the relics of St James, or Saint-Jacques, was one of three major centers of Catholic pilgrimage in the Middle Ages, along with Rome and Jerusalem. Inspired by religious zeal – particularly the desire to connect more deeply with God through relics, such as the bones of deceased saints – pilgrims from all over the Christian world made the dangerous journey to these celebrated sites. There was no single route to Santiago; the trail began at one's doorstep. But as pilgrims approached Spain, many converged on a handful of routes





Stunning Espalion and the Lot River (Stage 7)

known historically as the Caminos de Santiago, the Ways of St James, or the Chemins de Saint-Jacques. In France, four major branches of the pilgrim road developed: the Chemin de Tours (from Paris), the Chemin de Vézelay, the Chemin d'Arles, and the Chemin du Puy, from Le Puy-en-Velay.

Those pilgrim roads have experienced a popular resurgence in modern times and are today walked not just by traditional pilgrims but by people from all manner of backgrounds and places. The most frequented branch, Spain's Camino Francés, draws hundreds of thousands of people annually, leading to it often being thought of as *the* Camino de Santiago. However, the French *chemins* are well loved by the smaller subsection of pilgrims that have branched out beyond Spain. The Via

Podiensis – also known as the Chemin du Puy and the GR65 – is specially regarded for its outstanding walking and hospitality.

The Via Podiensis spans roughly 750km through Southern France, from Le Puy-en-Velay to Saint-Jean-Pied-de-Port. The full route takes 4–6 weeks to complete. There are two optional major variants to consider – the Célé Valley and Rocamadour routes – both diverging from the Via Podiensis between Figeac and Cahors. These are described in full detail in this guide. Pilgrims continuing onward to Santiago can proceed directly from Saint-Jean on the Camino Francés. Some, however, may wish to transition over to the Camino del Norte; a skeletal outline of the routes linking Saint-Jean and Irún, Spain is also included.

### THE STORIES OF ST JAMES AND ST ROCH

While countless pilgrimage shrines exist within the Catholic world, three cities stand out as major centers of pilgrimage. Two are obvious: Jerusalem is intimately associated with the life of Jesus, while Rome houses the relics of Saints Peter and Paul, not to mention St Peter's Basilica. The third center, situated in an otherwise forgotten corner of Spain, is much more surprising. Santiago de Compostela, in Spain's northwestern region of Galicia, has a history built on equal parts rumor and legend.

Of Jesus's 12 apostles, perhaps less is known about **St James** (or Santiago) than any other. The brother of John and the son of an assertive mother, James was one of Jesus's first followers – and the first to be martyred. However,

mystery surrounds James's life following the crucifixion of Christ. Spanish legend asserts that he brought the good word to the Iberian peninsula, but with minimal success, winning few followers. That said, on his subsequent return to the Holy Land he fared worse; he was decapitated by Herod Agrippa in AD44.

After James's death, so the story goes, his disciples smuggled his body to the coast, where it was placed on a stone boat – lacking sails, oars, and sailors – and put to sea. Amazingly, and perhaps under the guidance of angels, this boat maneuvered westward across the Mediterranean and north into the Atlantic, before ultimately making landfall at today's Padrón on the Galician coast. Once there, two disciples met the boat, took James's body, and eventually buried him in present-day Santiago de Compostela.



Saint James and St Roch, as portrayed in Éauze's Cathédrale Saint-Luperc

Almost eight centuries later, in 813, the hermit Pelayo had a vision in which a star shined brightly on a nearby field. Digging there, Pelayo made a stunning discovery: the very bones of St James, buried and forgotten so many years earlier. The timing couldn't have been better for local Christians. With the Moorish conquest of the Iberian peninsula nearly complete, their armies enjoying victory after victory behind the 'arm of Mohammed,' the Christian kingdom of Asturias in northern Spain was in dire straits. However, according to legend, the tide turned at the pivotal (and fictional) Battle of Clavijo. As the Asturian army prepared to face the much larger Muslim force, St James appeared on his white horse and led them into battle, and so began the legend of Santiago Matamoros ('St James the Moor-killer') – one of the saint's two faces along the *camino*, along with Santiago Peregrino ('pilgrim').

The cult of Santiago grew gradually over the next two centuries, before two major developments in the 12th century propelled Compostela to the forefront of the Christian world. First, Diego Gelmírez became the bishop of Santiago in 1101 (and archbishop in 1120), and quickly devoted his life to the aggrandizement of Compostela. Second, the *Codex Calixtinus* emerged sometime in the 1130s or 1140s. The first 'guidebook' to the Camino de Santiago, it included, among other things, a list of miracles attributed to St James, the history of the route, and a collection of practical advice for travelers, including warnings about 'evil toll gatherers' and 'barbarous' locals.

In France, most representations of St James feature him in pilgrim garb, complete with a brown cloak, a broad

hat adorned with a scallop shell, and a staff with attached gourd. However, he is not the only saint dressed in this manner. Indeed, along the Via Podiensis, St James might be outshone by **St Roch**. Born to a noble family around 1295 in Montpellier, France, Roch was a blessing to his otherwise childless, older parents. After both parents died, Roch gave his inheritance to the poor, keeping nothing but a pilgrim's garb and the minimal means necessary for survival. He journeyed on pilgrimage to Rome. When he reached Acquapendente, still a stop on today's Via Francigena, he found the town ravaged by plague and offered to treat the ill. While he later reached Rome, plague was a recurring companion, and he continued serving those in need.

Inevitably, Roch too fell ill with the plague. When that happened, in Piacenza, he was chased from town by those he had healed. Taking shelter in a riverside hut, he suffered through privation, until God miraculously intervened, with rainfall to refresh his thirst and a dutiful dog delivering bread. Eventually he recovered and, at age 27, decided to return home. After many years and extended illness, he was now unrecognizable, and was swiftly imprisoned as a suspected spy. He spent five years in jail, only to pass away upon release, at which point he was recognized. In the succeeding decades, miracles followed Roch's name, as he was invoked in defense against the plague.

While Roch is easily confused with James in church statuary and paintings, there are two distinct elements. First, Roch's loyal dog typically appears at his side, bread roll readily accessible. Second, Roch often has his robe lifted,



exposing one bare leg, to highlight (depending upon the story) a birthmark or plague sore.

In the Middle Ages, hundreds of thousands of pilgrims made the journey to Santiago de Compostela. After a decline following the Reformation and a near-total collapse during the Enlightenment, the Camino de Santiago returned to prominence in the late 20th century.

#### THE VIA PODIENSIS: YESTERDAY AND TODAY

As Edwin Mullins explains in his excellent overview of the four French pilgrimage routes, *The Four Roads to Heaven*, the Via Podiensis is historically the least documented. However, today's pilgrims benefit from its relative isolation and lack of modern development, with

well-preserved medieval villages and towns lining the route.

That said, Le Puy-en-Velay was a sacred destination even before St James's relics were rediscovered. Indeed, Charlemagne, the Holy Roman Emperor, celebrated mass here on two separate occasions. By the 10th century, Le Puy was a pilgrimage destination in its own right. The town's link to Compostela was secured, though, by Bishop Godescalc, who in 950 journeyed on pilgrimage from Le Puy to Santiago. Mullins observes that this may have been the first 'official' visit to Compostela by such a high-ranking church official. Upon returning to Le Puy, Godescalc ordered the construction of the chapel of Saint-Michel-d'Aiguilhe, the town's most distinctive sight, perched atop a tall volcanic spire.

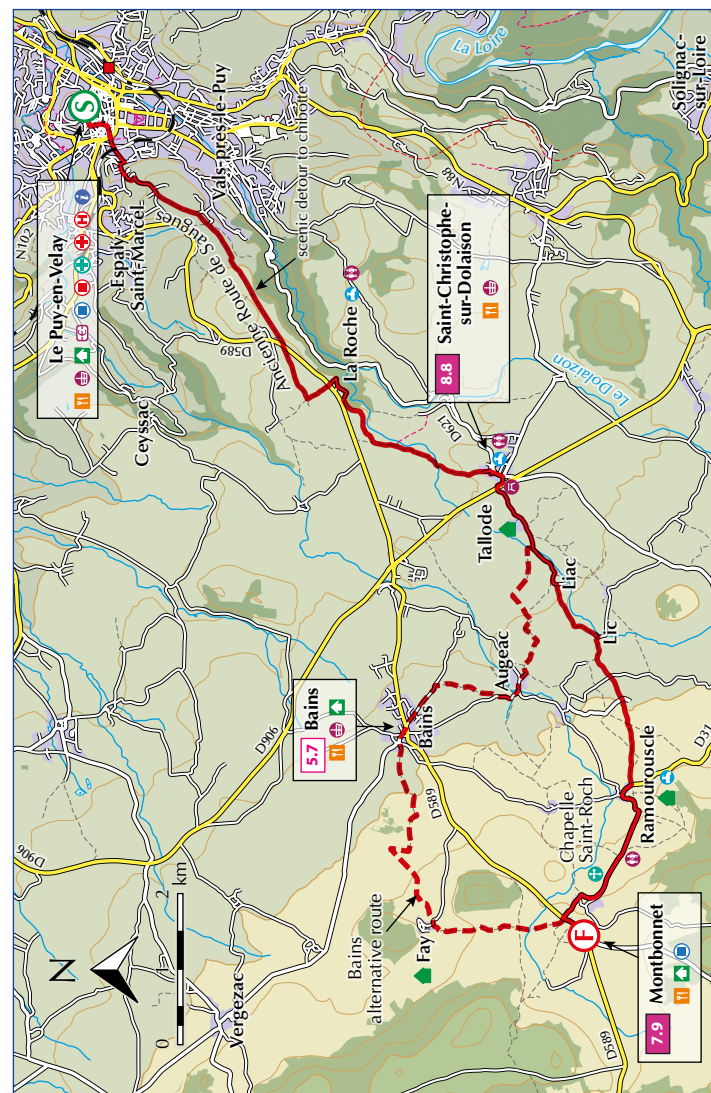
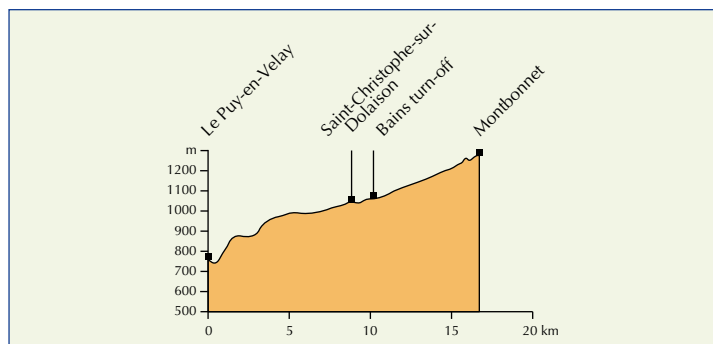
While Le Puy drew many pilgrims in the Middle Ages, with three hospitals

## STAGE 1

## Le Puy-en-Velay to Montbonnet

<b>Start</b>	Cathédrale Notre-Dame-du-Puy, Le Puy-en-Velay
<b>Finish</b>	Bar Saint Jacques, Montbonnet
<b>Distance</b>	16.7km (19.9km via Bains)
<b>Total ascent</b>	520m (530m via Bains)
<b>Total descent</b>	100m (110m via Bains)
<b>Difficulty</b>	Easy-to-moderate
<b>Time</b>	4hr 15min (5hr via Bains)
<b>Percentage paved</b>	45% (30% via Bains)
<b>Gîtes</b>	Le Puy-en-Velay, Tallode 9.7km, Ramourouscle 14.2km, Montbonnet 16.7km, Fay 17.8km (via Bains)

The *chemin* begins with a short stage, allowing new pilgrims to ease into their walk while also enjoying a leisurely morning in Le Puy. The morning pilgrim mass and blessing is a must, providing an opportunity to meet many new companions, and most gîtes serve breakfast afterward. If you haven't previously visited the St Michel d'Aigulhe chapel, consider squeezing that in as well. As for the walk, it's fairly mellow, with a consistently moderate ascent early, along mostly agreeable surfaces. Saint-Christophe offers a good spot for lunch, while an alternative route via Bains is worth considering for additional facilities. There's not much in Montbonnet, and for that reason some will push on to Saint-Privat, but it does offer several accommodations with excellent hospitality.





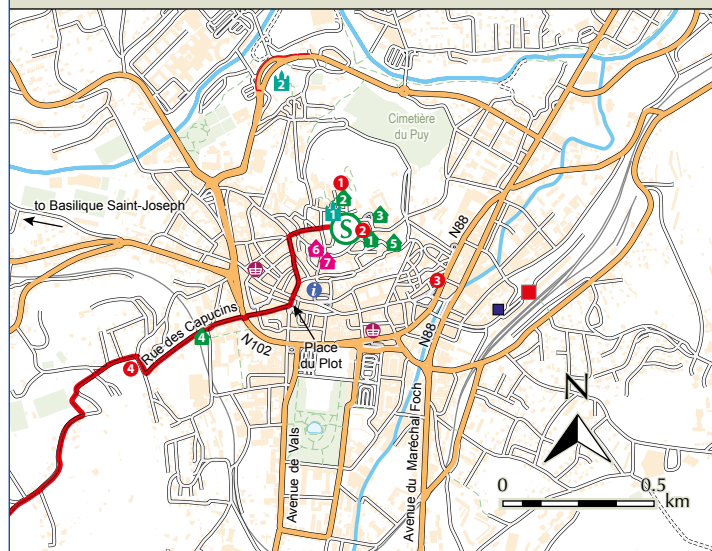
**LE PUY-EN-VELAY (ELEV 690M, POP 19,000)**   
(748.9KM)

Markets on Wednesday and Sunday mornings in **Place du Plot**.

Set in a volcanic landscape and the capital of the Haute-Loire department, Le Puy has been a center of pilgrimage for well over a millennium; indeed, as many as 300,000 pilgrims are claimed to have visited the site in 1622. Originally a Roman temple, the cathedral site was turned over to Christianity in 430 when a sanctuary was built to the Virgin Mary. Legend holds that a feverish woman was

## Le Puy-en-Velay

- |  |   |
|--|---|
|  Cathédrale Notre-Dame-du-Puy         |  Relais du Pèlerin St-Jacques        |
|  Rocher St Michel d'Aigulhe           |  Accueil St-François                 |
|  Statue of Notre-Dame de France       |  Accueil St-Georges                  |
|  Le Camino Museum and Pilgrim Welcome |  Les Capucins                        |
|  Pilgrim mural                        |  Auberge de Jeunesse Pierre Cardinal |
|  Pilgrim sculpture                    |  La Maison au Loup                   |
|  |  La Demeure du Lac de Fugères        |



called to a dolmen; after a brief rest, her fever had broken and the Virgin Mary was with her. Mary called for a church to be built in that location; a helpful stag had even marked out the floor plan in the snow. Lacking funds, the bishop settled for planting a hedge to mark the perimeter, only to see it fully bloomed the next morning. Following a miraculous healing, Rome provided Le Puy with funds and permission to build the cathedral. That dolmen remains inside the cathedral today, known as the 'Throne of Mary.'

**Cathedral** construction spanned a millennium, although the bulk of it occurred in the 11th–12th centuries. It is heavily fortified, reflecting its bishops' quarrels with local lords over sovereignty. It is perhaps most famous for its statue of the Black Virgin. The original suffered an ignominious fate in the French Revolution; when the cathedral was seized, the statue was confiscated, transported to trial in a manure cart, and then burned. A local artist crafted a replacement soon after. Much historical speculation has circled around the phenomenon of the Black Virgins (another can be seen in Rocamadour); are they relics from Coptic Christians, or attempts at more authentic historic representation, or an accidental byproduct of oxidized silver? There is no consensus. In the cathedral's front entrance, the Golden Doorway stands atop the staircase and features scenes from the Nativity on the left and Christ's Passion on the right. Meanwhile, the Romanesque cloister features polychrome mosaics, an allegorical Romanesque frieze, and a celebrated Renaissance fresco in the Reliquary Chapel. Pilgrim mass takes place in the cathedral at 7am daily, with pilgrim credentials (€5) available in the gift shop afterward. The building is open from 6.30am to 7.30pm daily with free access, although there's a fee (€5) to visit the cloisters. Just above the cathedral is a **statue of Notre-Dame de France**, made from metal salvaged from 213 Russian cannons in the Crimean War. It's possible to enter the statue and climb to the top (€4). The nearby chapel on **Rocher St Michel d'Aigulhe** (the Needle) is Le Puy's most iconic site (€5). Built by Godescalc, Bishop of Le Puy, after his pilgrimage to Santiago in 951, it's worth the short trip. Prior to its construction, some accounts attest to agile men scaling the peak; think about that as you wearily climb its 268 steps! A legend holds that a maid, accused of misconduct, was compelled to leap from the peak to prove her purity. She survived. Challenged to confirm the verdict, she leapt safely again. Growing conceited, she made the leap a third time and died. Take those stairs down.

Between April and mid October, the Association des Amis de Saint-Jacques du Velay welcomes pilgrims each evening (5.30–7.30pm) for drinks and conversation in its salon behind the cathedral (2 Rue de la Manecanterie). It also issues credentials and stamps. Le Puy's evening light show, Puy de Lumières, runs from late April through September. Short, dramatic programs are projected across eight different structures, including the cathedral and the Needle. Combine those events with a dinner featuring the local specialty, green *lentilles du Puy*, and

you'll have a very memorable first evening! Note that your next supermarket won't come until Saugues (end of Stage 2), unless you take the Bains variant.

▲ **Relais du Pèlerin St-Jacques** Donation, 28 Rue Cardinal de Polignac, 0471094392, open Apr–mid Oct

▲ **Accueil St-François** 6 Rue St Mayol, gîte. sfrancois@wanadoo.fr, 0471059886, English spoken

▲ **Accueil St-Georges** 4 Rue Saint-Georges, grandseminaire43@live.fr, 0471099310, camping €4/ person, English spoken

▲ **Les Capucins** contact@lescappucins.net, 0471042874, English spoken

▲ **Auberge de Jeunesse Pierre Cardinal** 9 Rue Jules Vallès, auberge.jeunesse@lepuyenvelay.fr, 0471055240, closed weekends in offseason, breakfast €4.50, English spoken

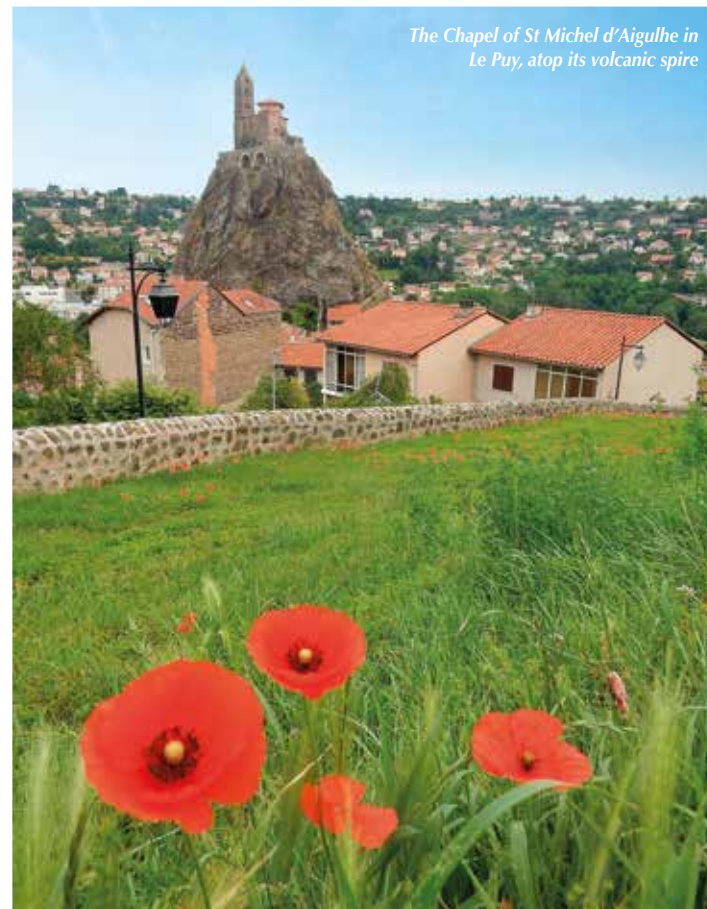
▲ **La Maison au Loup** 10 Rue du Prat du Loup, maisonauloup@gmail.com, 0619533359, open mid Apr–mid Oct

▲ **La Demeure du Lac de Fugères** 2 Rue Cardinal de Polignac, fugeres@hotmail.com, 0785894907

Throughout Le Puy, watch for the characteristic red-and-white stripes (blazes) marking the way, along with occasional scallop-shell wall plates on buildings. A red-and-white X marks a wrong turn! The Via Podiensis commences from the cathedral's front steps. Descend, continue ahead on Rue des Tables, then turn left onto Rue Raphael/des Farges. Fork right onto Rue Chênebouterie and proceed into **Place du Plot**, a lively little square. Turn right out of the plaza's back corner on Rue Saint-Jacques (distance marker to Santiago on the corner building) and then leave the old town, crossing Boulevard Saint-Louis (0.6km).

A steady ascent begins, leading away from town. Continue straight ahead, passing **Gîte Des Capucins**. Turn right on Rue de Compostelle, passing a **pilgrim sculpture** and noting the views back towards Le Puy (0.7km). After a short, sharp climb up a footpath, join the **Ancienne Route de Saugues**.

You are now in the **Devès**, France's largest basalt plateau, a consequence of long-ago lava flows. The fertile hills left behind have for two millennia yielded the Puy green lentils, known locally as 'the poor man's caviar.' Some 30 chibottes – round, stone shepherd huts from the 17th–18th centuries – survive in this section and two are accessible via waymarked detours.



*The Chapel of St Michel d'Aigulhe in Le Puy, atop its volcanic spire*

Cross **D589** and continue straight on a dirt road through the Dolaison hills (4.1km). Turn left onto the La Roche village road and then cross D589 again into **La Roche**. After winding through the village, passing a pilgrim shelter in the middle and a **fountain/WC** at the end, join a footpath into the countryside, eventually turning left onto a dirt track (0.8km). This leads through a wooded area, featuring ash trees. Transition back onto pavement at the entrance to

**8.8KM SAINT-CHRISTOPHE-SUR-DOLAISON (ELEV 915M, POP 950)**

🏠 🚻 (740.1KM)

Fountain and WC across from the church, outside the *mairie*. The 12th-century church, built of pink basalt (volcanic rock), features a statue of St Roch. While its façade has been rebuilt, two gargoyles survive from the original structure. The town's castle was destroyed in the Wars of Religion; now restored, it is privately owned.

Pass around the church, then fork right on **D31**. Take the next right, pass under **D906**, then bear left, leading to **Tallode (0.5km, 📍 Gîte La Maison Vieille** 📍 📍 📍 📍 📍, 4/14, €22.5/-/-, DP18, [michel.allegre38@sfr.fr](mailto:michel.allegre38@sfr.fr), 0471031778, open Mar–Oct, English spoken). Soon after, arrive at the **Bains turn-off (0.5km)**, where you have the option of detouring to make use of Bains' facilities.

**Official track through Chapelle Saint-Roch (6.4km)**

Pass through **Liac (0.6km)**, not to be confused with **Lic**, which comes next (**1km**). A longer stretch of dirt track follows, before the *chemin* turns right onto **D621**, leading into **Ramoursoucle (2.4km, fountain at junction, 📍 Gîte Lenti-You** 📍 📍 📍 📍 📍, 2/11, €23/-/-, DP14, [tchap.limis@gmail.com](mailto:tchap.limis@gmail.com), 0644906470, camping €9.20/person). Note the 17th-century wayside cross and the *travail à ferrer* – a device for securing livestock while they get shod. Turn left in the village and follow this minor paved road as it winds through quiet fields, past the **Chapelle Saint-Roch (1.4km, WC)**. This 13th-century chapel, now dedicated to St Roch, was formerly devoted to St James. Watch the waymarks carefully through the scattered village of **Montbonnet**, finally turning left onto **D589**.

**Alternative route through Bains (9.6km)**

Turning right off the official route, follow a dirt road as it winds through fields (**2.1km**). Soon after pavement resumes, turn right into **Augeac**, navigating a series of quick turns (**0.7km**). Leaving the village, fork right onto a dirt track (**0.9km**). Turn left on Route de Jales and proceed directly into

**5.7KM BAINS (ELEV 985M, POP 1350) 🏠 🚻 (737.6KM)**

WC on right, before the church; fountain outside its entrance. The 12th-century Église Sainte-Foy, built of volcanic rock, features a Romanesque portal that is dominated by a Moorish-inspired multifoil arch.

📍 **La Ferme de Saint-Jacques** 📍 📍 📍 📍 📍, €-/34/52/-, DP21, 808 Route de Gévaudan, [patricia.r43@hotmail.fr](mailto:patricia.r43@hotmail.fr), 0471575179, English spoken



Saint James as he appears in the Église Sainte-Foy in Bains

Fork right and then left around the church. Soon after, fork left and then right to leave town (**0.3km**). Join a dirt road past a grove of trees; turn right at a T and then make a sharp left (**2.2km**). Bear right through woods, skirting **Fay (0.8km, 📍 Gîte du Velay** 📍 📍 📍 📍 📍, DP18.5, [sylvetteetlaurent@grand-gite.fr](mailto:sylvetteetlaurent@grand-gite.fr), 0471027160 or 0647759642, dorm open Apr–Oct, donkey parking, English spoken). Just before Montbonnet, transition back onto pavement (**1.8km**). Turn right on D589 to rejoin the GR65 (**0.1km**).

The routes converge at most of the services, including Bar Saint-Jacques, in

**7.9KM MONTBONNET (ELEV 1110M) 🏠 🚻 📶 (732.2KM)**

A small castle once stood atop the now barren hilltop, established in the early 1200s. Following the Hundred Years' War, the region suffered significant decline, as bandits seized control and ravaged the countryside. The Cardinal Richelieu, famously memorialized as the villain in *The Three Musketeers*, oversaw the further dismantling of many fortifications in the Velay region, including Montbonnet, in 1632.

📍 **Gîte La Grange** 📍 📍 📍 📍 📍, 4/15, €15/-/-, DP18, [christiangentes@orange.fr](mailto:christiangentes@orange.fr), 0620744743, open Apr–Oct

📍 **Gîte L'Escole** 📍 📍 📍 📍 📍, 4/15, €15.5/-/-, DP17.4, 39 Escole Impasse, [gite@lescole.com](mailto:gite@lescole.com), 0471575103, open 10 Mar–5 Oct, camping €7.20/person

📍 **Gîte La 1ère Étape** 📍 📍 📍 📍 📍, 4/14, €18/-/57/-, DP21, [gr65etape1@gmail.com](mailto:gr65etape1@gmail.com), 0621471896, camping €6/person, English spoken

📍 **Auberge La Barbelotte** 📍 📍 📍 📍 📍, €-/54/88/-, DP15, [labarbelotte@gmail.com](mailto:labarbelotte@gmail.com), 0603940219, open Mar–Oct





• pilgrim route through France • from Le Puy-en-Velay to Saint-Jean-Pied-de-Port • describes Célé Valley and Rocamadour variants • includes links to Camino del Norte

The 735km Via Podiensis or Chemin du Puy leads pilgrims and walkers through the best of French village life. Linking magnificent Le Puy-en-Velay with Saint-Jean-Pied-de-Port (where many pilgrims begin walking the Camino de Santiago through Spain), this French 'chemin' goes through beautiful villages, evocative places like Estaing, Saint-Cirq-Lapopie and Lauzerte, as well as famous pilgrimage shrines such as Conques and Rocamadour. Along the way, it winds through some of Southern France's most memorable terrain, including the high-level Aubrac plateau, the Lot and Célé river valleys gorged deeply into limestone cliffs, and the rich agricultural fields of historic Gascony.

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