



ADVENTURE TRAVEL
VOLUNTEER-LED EXCURSIONS WORLDWIDE

Exploring the French & Spanish Eastern Pyrénées October 6-20, 2017

AMC Adventure Travel trip# 1739



Fort at Mont Louis

General Introduction

The Pyrenees mountain range forms the 500 kilometre frontier between France and Spain. We start the trek towards the eastern end in an area which spans the frontier, the northern half in France is known as *Cerdagne* and the southern half in Spain is *Cerdanya* forming part of Catalonia in Spain. We spend time on both sides of the border as we follow the mountains eastwards to where they drop into the Mediterranean Sea. We then swing south for the last three days following sections of the popular “Collioure to Cadequès” route which takes in some dramatic coastal scenery and some delightful fishing ports.

The scenery is extremely varied - the frontier ridge contains some impressive mountains reaching almost 3000 metres whilst towards the Mediterranean coast the mountains give way to hills sheltering vineyards, old forests of cork oak trees and pretty stone-built villages.

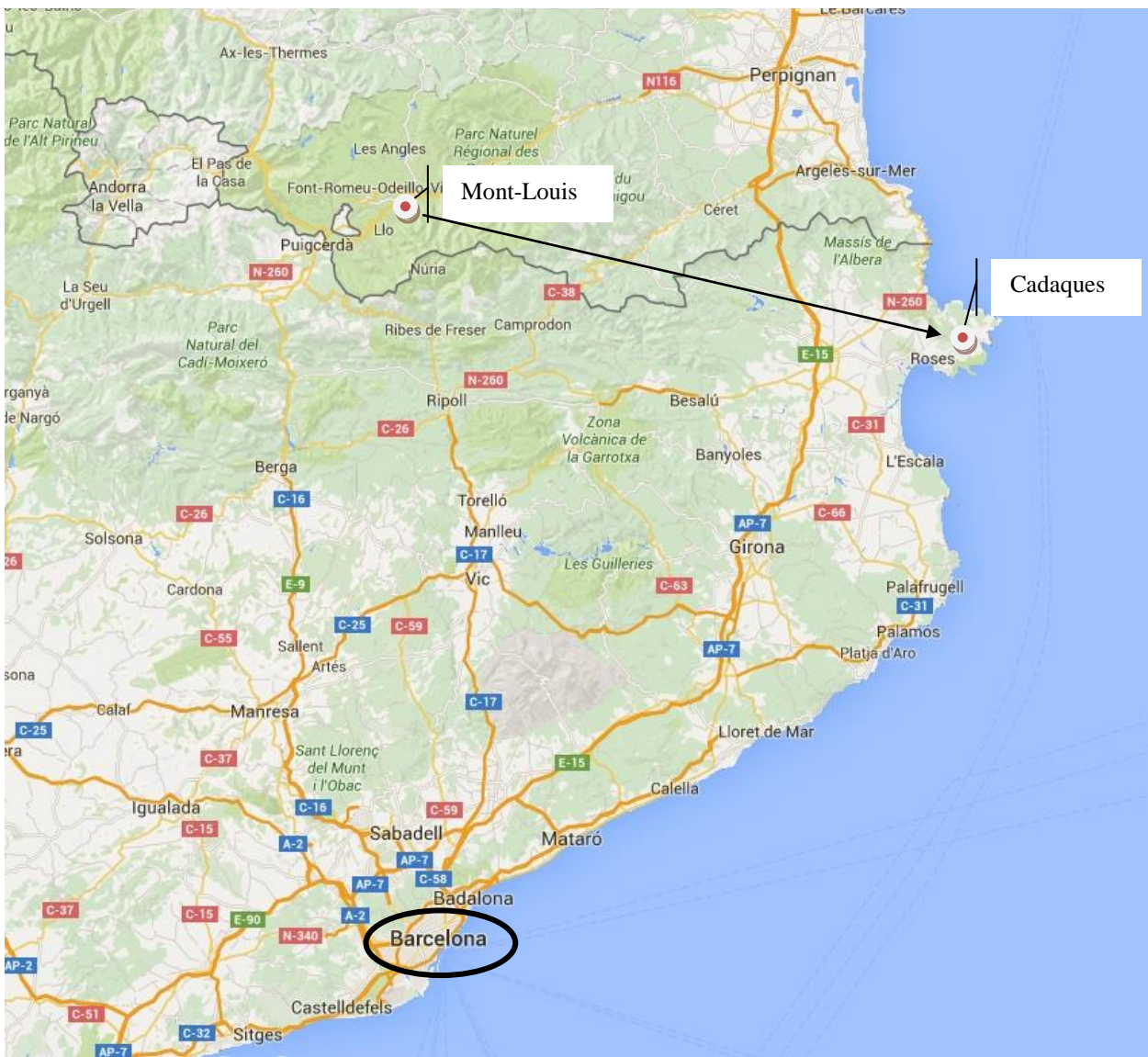
Much of the hike follows well defined “Grande Randonnée” routes – a network of long distance paths. It includes sections of the French GR10 - a 700 km route that traverses the whole mountain range from the Atlantic to the Mediterranean Sea. We also hike part of the GR11 – the wilder Spanish equivalent to the GR10.

We will be staying in a mixture of 2* and 3* hotels some of which are situated in stunning unique locations and some with spa facilities.

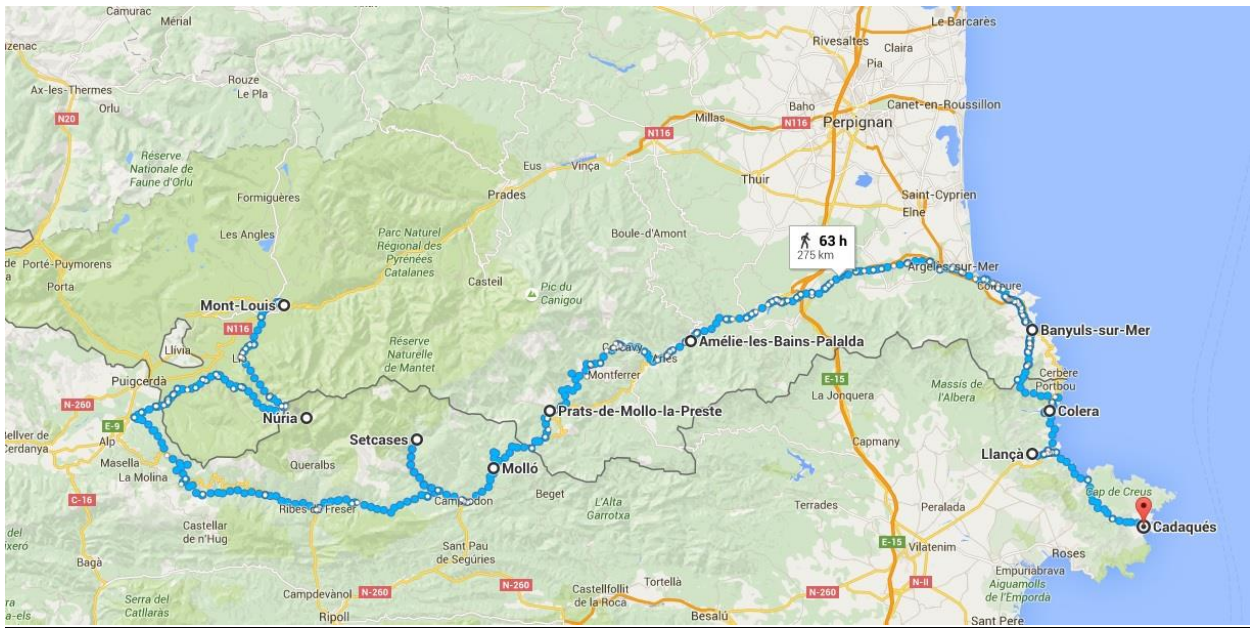
Towards the end of the trip it may be possible to organise a visit to the extraordinary Salvador Dali museum at Figueres.

The Itinerary

We start our trek in Mont-Louis, France and in Cadaques, France, but stay several nights on the Spanish side of the border.



Trek route overview: Fly into Barcelona, bus to Mont-Louis then hike to Cadaques on the coast



Trek route detail

Day 0 Friday October 6 Depart US

Day 1: Saturday October 7. Arrival at Barcelona with the night in a hotel close to the city centre.

Day 2: Sunday October 8. Transfer to the village of Mont-Louis, which nestles inside massive fortifications, built in 1680. Possibility to visit the world’s first solar furnace developed in the late 1940s.

Day 3: Monday October 9. A short bus ride before we ascend the Eyne valley, a renowned nature reserve. The gently rising valley leads to the Col de Nuria (2683 m) where we cross into Spain. This high mountain pass allows us to appreciate magnificent views before we continue down to our hotel situated at Nuria. This former pilgrimage centre, **inaccessible by road**, has a stunning location. **On this day we will have to manage without baggage.** 14 kms, 6 hrs, 1100 m ascent, 750 m descent, highest point 2683 m.



Nuria Valley



the way to Setcases

Day 4: Tuesday October 10. Nuria to Setcases. The whole day above 2000 m altitude! Mainly following the GR11 we return to the heights of the frontier and cross a series of high passes below the Pic du Geant (2881 m). Our route leads to the mountain refuge d'Ulldeter (2235 m) before finishing at the Hostal d'Alta Muntanya Pastuira (2000 m) where we will be met by a bus to take us down to our overnight stay at the historical village of Setcases. 14 kms, 5 ½ hrs, 1040 m ascent, On

1000 m descent, highest point 2775 m.

Day 5: Wednesday October 11. Setcases to Mollo. A shorter day following the GR11. After a climb out of the village through the forest we spend the rest of the day above the tree line with excellent views into Spain. The route leads to the picturesque village of Mollo with its magnificent Romanesque church. 13 kms, 5 hrs, 630 m ascent, 730 m descent, highest point 1900 m.



Setcases



Fort Lagarde, *Prats de Mollo*

Day 6: Thursday October 12. Mollo to Prats de Mollo. Passing through the village of Epinavell and climbing the cobbled streets we take old smugglers' paths to cross back into France. In the afternoon we can visit the "Tour de Mir" an ancient lookout tower and descend to the delightful small walled village of Prats de Mollo. 16 kms, 6 hrs, 480 m ascent, 910 m descent, highest point 1654 m.

Day 7: Friday October 13. A well deserved day off here. As well as some local walks and restaurants there are some sites worth visiting, for example the nearby 17th Century Fort Lagarde connected to the village by a covered and partially underground passageway.

Day 8: Saturday October 14. From Prats de Mollo we take transport up to the small town of Coustouges and then climb gently through the hills up to the magnificent viewpoint at Pilo de Belmaig. The afternoon is spent hiking down to Amélie-Les-Bains on a mixture of footpaths and old muletrails. 20 kms, 6 hrs, 800 m ascent, 1400 m descent, highest point 1280 m.



Pilo de Belmaig and the path to Amélie



Tour de la Madeloc

Day 9: Sunday October 15. We take a bus from Amélie-Les-Bains up to our start point back close to the frontier at Puig Neulos (1240 m). The long and spectacular frontier ridge leads us east towards the sea passing the Tour de la Madeloc and we then descend through cork oak woods and vineyards to the Banyuls-sur-Mer, a delightful seaside resort. 24 kms, 7 ¼ hrs, 520 m ascent, 1580 m descent, highest point 1250 m.

Day 10: Monday October 16. Day off at Banyuls. Lots of choice of things to do here as well as a lazy day. Perhaps a 25 minute bus ride to Collioure a town much favoured by artists in the early 20th Century. Or visit local art galleries, wine cellars, the local spa. Sit on the beach!



Banyuls sur Mer



Llança

Day 11: Tuesday October 17. Banyuls to Llança. A short bus ride out of the town enables us to avoid the road and start gently climbing on old tracks through vineyards and then a footpath to the Spanish border from where there are good views down to the coast and Llança. Using a mixture of footpaths and tracks we head down to the Mediterranean Sea arriving at the town of Colera. From here we follow the coastline for the final 2 hours, an interesting mixture of cliffs and beachside paths. 19 kms, 6 hrs, 630 m ascent, 770 m descent, highest point 563 m.

Day 12: Wednesday October 18. Llança to Port de Selva. A shorter day which will allow us to visit en-route the extraordinary monastery of St Pere de Rodes parts of which date back to the 11th Century. The route continues down to the charming fishing port of Selva. 16 kms, 5 hrs, 630 m ascent, 630 m descent, highest point 550 m.



Port de Selva



Cadaqués

Day 13: Thursday October 19. Port de Selva to Cadaqués. We follow the GR11 eastwards passing the abandoned Monastery of Saint Baldiri. From there we cross the hills before descending to the pretty coastal village of Cadaqués. 17 kms, 5 hrs, 450 m ascent, 450 m descent, highest point not very high at all!

Day 14: Friday October 20. Departure from Cadaquès.

Accommodations

Day 1. Barcelona. Hotel Continental 3*. www.hotelcontinental.com/hotelcontinentalbarcelona/en
Central location. Room and buffet breakfast. 1 night.

Day 2. Mont-Louis. Hotel Clos Cerdan 2*. www.lecloscerdan.com
Access to spa facilities. Evening meal, bed & breakfast. 1 night.

Day 3. Nuria. Hotel Val de Nuria 3*. www.husa.es/fr/hotel-husa-vall-de-nuria.htm
Evening meal, bed & breakfast. 1 night.

Day 4. Setcases. Hotel La Cabanya 2*. www.lacabanya.net
Evening meal, bed & breakfast. 1 night.

Day 5. Mollo. Hotel Calixto 3*. www.hotelcalixto.com/?lang=en_us
Evening meal, bed & breakfast. 1 night.

Days 6 & 7. Prats de Mollo. Hotel Bellevue 2* www.hotel-le-bellevue.fr
Maison Mauro luxury B&B www.maisonmauro.fr
Bed & breakfast 2 nights.

Day 8. Amélie-Les-Bains. Hotel La Reine Amélie 3* www.reineamelie.com
Evening meal, bed & breakfast. 1 night.

Days 9 & 10. Banyuls-sur-Mer. Hotel des Elmes 3* www.hotel-des-elmes.com
Evening meal, bed & breakfast. 1 night. Bed & breakfast 1 night.

Day 11. Llança. Hotel Goleta 2*. www.hotellagoleta.com/index.php?idm=4
Evening meal, bed & breakfast. 1 night.

Day 12. Port de Selva. Hotel Cap de Creus 3* <http://www.hotelportdelaselva.com/fr/hotel-spa-cap-de-creus/>
Evening meal, bed & breakfast. 1 night.

Day 13. Cadaquès. Hotel Octavia 3*. www.hoteloctavia.net/en
Bed & breakfast. 1 night.

Arrival & departure

Arrival. Private bus transfer direct from Barcelona to Mont Louis. Included in trip fee.

Departure. 1) Private bus transfer direct from Cadaqués to Barcelona airport. Optional, but highly recommended. Cost is \$80. 2) assuming one is taking the bus, flights should be scheduled starting at 3PM on Friday October 20.

Baggage transfers

During the trip all baggage transfers will be arranged between hotels except on Day 3 when we ascend to Nuria. We will be one night without baggage.

Local transport included

There are also a few days when transport will be organised to take us to the start of the walk.

The following transport of the group is included in the trip price:

- Day 2: From Barcelona to Mont-Louis
- Day 3: From Mont-Louis to start of hike.
- Day 4: Transport down to Setcases at the end of the hike.
- Day 8: From Prats de Mollo to St Laurent-de-Cerdans
- Day 9 : From Amèlie-les-Bains to start of hike.
- Day 11: From Banyuls to start of hike.

What is not included

1. Transport from the airport to the first hotel at Barcelona.
2. Transport from the last hotel at Cadaquès to the Barcelona airport.
3. Lunches. It will be possible to buy food in all the villages/towns where we stay.
4. Evening meals on 5 days when the hotels are booked just for bed & breakfast.
5. Medical & travel insurance.
6. Personal expenses including drinks at the hotel.
7. Entrance fees (if any)

WHAT IS EXPECTED OF YOU



How we like to end a great day of hiking

You should be curious about other cultures and comfortable traveling in areas which are unfamiliar to you. You should recognize that you may find yourself in closer quarters or be less comfortable than you are used to at home. You should make it a priority to help others on the trip and contribute to their having a great time. If you do that, I guarantee that you will have a great time. You must be able to hike six or seven hours a day, not including breaks at a moderate pace, with elevation gains of up to 3,400 feet, while carrying enough equipment in your back pack to keep you safe in the

event of bad weather or injury. While no technical climbing is required, there are areas

with narrow trails bordered by steep drop-offs: where appropriate there are steel cables for protection.

SAFETY AND RISKS

Participant safety is a high priority for all AMC-sponsored events. Participants should be aware that there are risks associated with outdoor adventure activities, including but not limited to adverse weather and environmental conditions, remote locations of our trips, and transportation in vehicles or on foot. Aside from any personal medical problems, participants should be aware of the possibilities of bug bites, dehydration, sun burn and other heat or cold related problems. You should regularly use sun screen, take care to be adequately hydrated and bring water on all day trips. Please carefully read and sign the AMC Participant Acknowledgement and Assumption of Risks and Release and Indemnity Agreement.

COST

The trip cost is \$2,800 for AMC members. Non-members can join for \$50, and get the same price. This will cover the following items:

Your transportation to Spain and back is your responsibility. The trip leader will advise you as much as you need and will facilitate group travel. At this time, we estimate that the cost for a round trip ticket between the East Coast and Barcelona will be in the vicinity of \$1,000.

The final trip cost will be adjusted in accordance with the best final arrangements we can make and currency fluctuations. Any savings we achieve, as well as any cost increases, will be passed back to you. Our cost estimates are conservative, and so a refund is considerably more likely than a price increase.

AMC Adventure Travel trips are run on a non-profit basis. Leaders are volunteers who are not compensated except for their travel costs associated with the trip. The advertised trip cost includes a surcharge which goes toward the administrative expenses of the AMC Adventure Travel program.

The trip fee includes emergency medical and evacuation insurance coverage, which is required by the AMC. It does *not* include insurance for travel delay, interruption, or cancellation, or for baggage loss. If the possibility of such problems concerns you, individual travel insurance is suggested. The AMC has a recommended vendor whose material will be sent to you if your application is accepted.

Any unspent funds will be refunded to the participants. If the trip's financial position is strong enough at the start, the leaders may make partial refunds during the trip, in the form of payments toward some meals and/or free time activities which would otherwise not be included.

REGISTRATION and CANCELLATION

To apply, you must complete and submit the application, confidential medical form, supplemental medical form (if appropriate) and acknowledgement and assumption of risk and release form. You can download them from this website: [Application Documents](#) Mail the registration deposit of \$1,000 and all required forms to Steve Cohen at the address shown on the application form. You will not actually be accepted, and your check will not be deposited, until the leader has determined by telephone conversation with you that you and the trip are a good match. The final balance of \$1,800 is due July 1, 2017. Deposit checks from wait-listed applicants will not be cashed until they are accepted AND they confirm continued interest in joining the trip. All payments by check should be payable to the *Appalachian Mountain Club*.

Our cancellation policy is based on several considerations. Cancellation will not be allowed to raise the cost to the other participants or to the leaders. If you cancel after the trip has been declared a "go", you will be charged a minimum of \$200. If actual costs (expenses already incurred on your behalf, and any unavoidable future expenses that will be incurred as a result of your registration and cancellation) are higher, they will be assessed instead, unless they can be applied toward another acceptable participant.

This trip is likely to fill quickly. If you are interested, you should apply as soon as possible. When registration is complete, we will send all participants the names, addresses, and phone numbers of all those going on the trip.

In the unlikely event that the trip is cancelled because not enough acceptable participants apply, everything you have paid will be refunded in full.

QUESTIONS and REQUESTING APPLICATION MATERIALS

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact Steve: scohen1234@gmail.com 617-997-6861.

TRIP LEADER



Steve Cohen leads three season hikes for the Hiking/Backpacking Committee of the AMC Boston Chapter. Since 2012 Steve has planned and led eleven hiking/trekking-oriented Adventure Travel trips to such destinations the Haute Route (from Chamonix, France to Zermatt, Switzerland), the Alta Via II through the Italian Dolomites, the tour of the Jungfrau region (Switzerland), Patagonia, the high mountains huts of Austria, etc. He lived in Europe for four years and has a good command of both the French and German

languages. Steve is currently chair of Adventure Travel.



GUIDE Originally from England, Malcolm has lived in the Pyrenees over 20 years. He is a UK Certified Mountain Leader who has been leading groups in the Pyrenees since 1994 and delights in showing people the area that he loves. Malcolm speaks fluent French, and has an insider's knowledge of the best hikes, local flora and fauna, and area history and customs.

Note: Photographs of the Fort at Mont-Louis, On the way to Setcases, Fort Lagarde, and Banyul-sur-Mers are all courtesy of Barbara Hazen.

EQUIPMENT LIST

Below is a list of the required and recommended gear for the trip. Note: the trek begins in the high Pyrenees where the temperature in the mountain passes can range from 30 - 70 degree Fahrenheit.

Required and Essential Gear

- broken-in waterproof hiking boots
- at least 2-3 set of hiking socks with liners
- non-cotton shorts (or long pants if you prefer) and shirt for hiking
- day pack
- waterproof wind and rain gear (tops and bottoms)
- wool sweater, or synthetic pile/fleece jacket
- long underwear top and bottom
- hat for warmth, and gloves or mittens
- polypropylene, Coolmax, Bergelene or other synthetic extra layer clothing
- sunglasses
- hat or bandanna for sun protection
- sunscreen
- Texas, Crocs or other non-hiking footwear
- headlamp or flashlight with fresh batteries
- unbreakable bottles or hydration bladder (at least 2 liters total capacity)
- waterproof pack liner and/or pack cover
- high-energy trail snacks
- toiletry kit
- ear plugs
- personal first aid kit (leaders will have a group first aid kit)

Optional Gear

- casual clothing
- gaiters
- hiking poles
- whistle
- knife
- camera
- batteries/recharger/adaptor plug