

THE WALKING PARTY

ITINERARY FOR THE SAINT JAMES'S WAY: Le Puy to Conques

Distance : 88 km

Walking : moderate +



Day 1 You will be met at Toulouse Blagnac airport by James and Diana and driven to Le Puy en Velay for your first night. Stop for lunch at St Geniez d'Olt. We will continue driving to Le Puy to arrive by 17.00. Dinner will be in Puy. You will stay in the three star Hotel Regina. All bedrooms have bathrooms en suite. There will be time to wander around the old town and to get an idea of the history of this historic place.

Day 2 There is a blessing for the pilgrims in Le Puy cathedral (Notre Dame de l'Annonciation) church of St Mary at 7.00am for those interested but as we are only doing a part of the Way then I feel this is not compulsory. You will set off from the cathedral on foot down the steps and climb the hill to meet Mag, Patrick and the donkeys. After this hill, the going is flat and we will walk towards St Christophe before having a picnic on the plateau surround by the distant soft undulating volcanic hills of the Auvergne. In the afternoon you continue on foot with the donkeys to the well at Rambourouscle where the vehicles will pick you up and drive you to Saugues. Here you stay in a comfortable hotel in the town. Saugues has a good history and is centred around the stories of the Beast of Gévaudan which relates a sort of man-eating Baskerville wolf that was as big as a calf in the 18th century. You will stay at La Terrasse situated in the heart of the town. All bedrooms have bathrooms en suite.

Walk: 15km

Day 3 After an early morning breakfast, we leave with the donkeys and James and Mag for Le Villeret. After lunch we will drive to start the afternoon walk on the GR4 in the beauty of the Margeride. We will start at St Paul le Froid through the pine woods and pasture fields stone-walled and laden with beautiful cattle. You finish in St Eulalie before returning to Saugues for your last night at La Terrasse.



Day 4 We drive to Lasbros where we start our walk with donkeys in tow. Today you wander through the beauty of the Aubrac. This is very much a landscape of moors. You are quite high here at 1300 metres and it is barren and strewn with large rocks and threaded with small burns. It is a landscape for Kathy and Heathcliff or the Baskerville hounds! It is relatively flat still and we walk across this to the lovely town of Nasbinals. From here you will be driven to Aubrac to your next rest place. You will stay in a beautifully converted hotel. All bedrooms have bathrooms en suite and simply but very carefully decorated with great taste. This is a lovely atmosphere in a beautiful remote setting. We will eat out in the village. You will spend two nights here. *8 km*

Day 5 You leave on foot from Aubrac with donkeys to begin walking towards the Lot Valley. This will be the start of the slightly hillier days. Picnic lunch on the way before we arrive near St Come d'Olt. The vehicles will pick you up and continue to the village of St Come. This is a very pretty village on the banks of the river Lot with a strange medieval church spire that twists as if it were a mistake. We shall have a drink here before returning to Aubrac for our last night on the moors. Dinner will be at the hotel. *15 km*

Day 6 We drive out of Aubrac to Estaing which sits on the river Lot. Estaing is where the family of Giscard d'Estaing comes from and is another very beautiful village. We climb out of Estaing on our way to the village of Villecomtal where the architecture changes to a delicious deep pink stone. Lunch in Villecomtal before we drive for the afternoons walk to Espeyrac. After a lovely walk to this village we drive to Estaing to sleep overlooking the banks and the bridge of the river.

Day 7 We drive out of Estaing and start our walk to Conques from Espeyrac with donkeys, Mag and James in tow. After three hours and a half we should arrive in the village of Conques and there will be time in the afternoon to visit the fabulous cathedral and the medieval streets of this unique village.

Day 8 We drive to Toulouse from Conques for the return midday flight.



***NOTE:** This tour starts and ends at Toulouse airport. The itinerary is subject to change according to local conditions. All mileages shown are approximate.*