

ITINERARY FOR THE TRANSHUMANCE

Distance: 52 km

Walking: moderate



This week involves two Michelin star restaurants from two stars to three stars. They are all set in the beauty of the Aubrac moors and hills of Cantal. The whole week starts with the extraordinary Transhumance festival that takes place in Aubrac and which involves the centuries old tradition of blessing the cowherds and cows on their way from valley to the Spring Summer grazing in the pastures above. Our first night takes you to the two star restaurant of Cyril Attrazic. On Thursday lunch we eat at Sebastien Bras' Le Suquet. These chefs work with local products and flowers and grasses from the pastures which reflects their sheer love of their environment. Bravo to both!

Day 1 You will be met at Toulouse Blagnac airport at 11.00 by James and driven to Aumont Aubrac for your first night. Stop for lunch at Rodez and view the Pierre Soulages museum. Pierre Soulages deals with light through painting in black. He is regarded by some as the most important twentieth century artist in France! This therefore is just another string to the bow of contrast through the week! We will continue driving to Aumont Aubrac to arrive in time to settle in for our first Michelin starred dinner. This is Restaurant Cyril Attrazic, a two star Michelin restaurant where chef Cyril Attrazic will tantalize the palate and the senses. Michelin star cooking has fuss and flare and there is an art to appreciating it as some people find it hard to understand but, like with looking at a painting painted by an Old Master or by a young conceptual artist, once certain points have been made, you start entering the world with passion and energy!

Day 2 TRANSHUMANCE There is a lot of action today! We shall leave in the vehicle for Aubrac by 08.45 in order to understand what is happening for this historic distinctly rural occasion. This is a culture that goes back hundreds of years. The cows will start arriving in their herds around 10.00. Each herd is then blessed in the village square. The cows, bedecked in colourful flowers and extraordinary large garlanded tree branches, ruminate in the square whilst blessed by God. There are a lot of people around and it is fun to amble around for a while before we join one of the blessed herds and follow them up the hill as they low and moo. At one point we shall branch off from the herd to wander back over the pastures full of orchids and narcissi for a picnic lunch (weather permitting) of local produce and wine with far reaching views. After lunch we wander back into the village for time off to enjoy the spectacle of old tradition. You will stay in one of my favourite hotels, La Colonie. There are eccentricities here like beds are not made everyday, taps are strange too but I love it ! It has a simplicity to it but in New York this would be regarded as fashionable simplicity. Your bedrooms are large with plenty of light and the bath-showers have claw and ball feet. Downstairs is a large polished concrete floored room with old leather armchairs and comfortable sofas. If you have a book to write it is here you should write it in these lovely airy rooms in this wonderful setting on the moors! Cyril the owner perhaps a little retiscent to help but I am sure you will enjoy this hotel immensely. We shall stay here four nights. Dinner at the hotel cooked by the chef Stefan. *Walk: 5km*

Day 3 After breakfast we leave La Colonie to walk to Nasbinals. This is a rolling walk across the moors with ever reaching views. You shall have a café lunch in the heart of this charming village before we walk to a local waterfall in the afternoon. We will return to Aubrac by car. Diner at the hotel cooked by James and Alice. *Walk: 12km*



Day 4 After breakfast, we will north drive half an hour north to St Remy to start our walk north. It is pretty countryside as we weave through woods and small villaged valleys. After three hours we will be picked up and driven to St Urcize where we will have lunch. This is one of my favourite restaurants. After lunch we shall walk to Nasbinals before driving back to Aubrac. Optional afternoon wander. Dinner again cooked by Stefan the chef. *Walk: 11km*

Day 5 You leave on foot after breakfast to walk down to St Chely d'Aubrac following the chemin de St Jacques. This is a beautiful walk downhill through woods and fields. A light lunch in the café here before we descend to St Come d'Olt to see the strange witches hat steepled church. Return to Aubrac to relax before dinner at the hotel. Stefan will cook another delicious dinner for us. Eating at the Colonie allows me to present some wines from my own cellar! *Walk: 11km*

Day 6 We set out from Aubrac for a bit of cross country walking to build up an appetite for the wonders of Sebastian Bras at Le Suquet. There will be time to get ready for lunch before we drive then to Le Suquet. This has to be one of the most beautiful restaurants I have eaten in. The building is modern and with a stunning position standing on top of the moors with breath-taking views. Sebastien Bras having achieved his three star status at this restaurant decided he had had enough of the Michelin star system which was too controlling so he asked to leave it. Last year they took him off the list as requested but this year inexplicably they have put him back on the list and demoted him a star. It says a lot for the whole system. I still regard this as a three star for the whole idea of my week but he will be annoyed at the pettiness of their politics. After a long fascinating lunch we shall drive on to the rose coloured city of Albi for your last night in the centre of this historic town. You will stay at the four star Hotel Alchimy. Light dinner at the hotel. *Walk: 11km*



Le Suquet

Day 7 We shall visit the extraordinary cathedral built in the early twelfth century as a statement to all Cathars and other dissenters not to mess with the church again. We then drive to Toulouse from Albi to arrive shortly after midday.



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