

# The entire Cathar Trail by mountain bike

## Level 3

### From the sea to the mountains

**6 days - 5 nights including 6 days of mountain biking**

**Physical Difficulty Level 3/3**

**Technical Level 2/3**



From the Mediterranean to Foix: the entire famous Cathar Trail by mountain bike. Zero transfers, really beautiful mountain biking - dynamic, technical, playful... there is something for everyone ! From the Mediterranean beaches to the mountains of Haute-Ariège, you cross over the garrigues, hills, gorges, forests...without forgetting the Cathar fortresses !

The Cathar Trail by mountain bike: this is true mountain biking, across different terrains and through varied, beautiful landscapes - an incredible historical and spiritual epic.

#### **KEY POINTS :**

- The entire trail by mountain bike without any transfers (except the return transfer to the departure point, included)
- Real mountain biking (rolling and technical), across varied terrains.
- Famous Cathar chateaux

## PROGRAMME

### **Day 1 : From Port la Nouvelle to Tuchan.**

#### **52km Altitude Difference: +1062 -953**

Depart from Port La Nouvelle beach and ride your mountain bike towards the limestone hills of the Corbières. Little by little you leave behind the Mediterranean garrigue and head into the vineyards of Fitou. Via single tracks you reach the gîte, perched above Tuchan.

Night in Tuchan.

### **Day 2 : From Tuchan to La Bastide.**

#### **50km. Altitude Difference: +1700 -1320**

From brilliant mountain biking to discovering the imposing Cathar fortresses of Quéribus and Peyrepertuse, perched on the hilltops of the Corbières. Take time to enjoy the Cathar history and a fantastic panorama over the Pyrénées and Canigou. Then, a superb technical descent directs you to the foot of the Gorges de Galamus from where you will climb up to the hamlet of La Bastide

Night in a farmer's home, in a gîte or B&B.

### **Day 3 : From La Bastide to Quillan.**

#### **66 km Altitude Difference: + 1930 – 2045 (Option to reduce the stage)**

A pretty descent via a single-track takes you to the foot of the Pech de Bugarach (summit of the Corbières - 1230m). Cross through green meadows before plunging into the 'maquis', defended by three castles - the work of the Lords of Fenouillet. Discover the fortress of the Castle of Puilaurens, perched high on its rocky peak, before riding peacefully through the beautiful forest of Fanges and its giant pine trees. Then, a beautiful descent down a single-track road towards the town of Quillan.

Night in Quillan.

### **Day 4 : From Quillan to Comus.**

#### **56 km Altitude Difference: + 1310 - 300**

Climb up onto the Plateau de Nébias, passing close to the beautiful Château de Puivert. You can also visit the museum to see musical instruments from the Middle Ages.

Next, continue on towards the vast forest of the Plateau de Sault. Finally, a 'balcony' track along the Langarail hilltops takes you straight into Comus. From this small mountain village, you discover the Pyrénées.

Night in Comus.

### **Day 5 : From Comus to Montségur**

#### **41 km Altitude Difference: + 1100 - 1400**

Ascend the Col de Balagués to admire the superb view across the Pyrénées. Then a crazy descent, fast and then technical, to cross the fantastic Gorges de la Frau. Arrive in Montségur via the Col du Liam or the Vallée de Fougax. Optional climb up to the Pog (castle), an impenetrable citadel and refuge for the Cathar church. Night in Montségur.

### **Day 6 : From Montségur to Foix.**

#### **32km +1150 -1700**

A cross-country stage with a succession of descents along single-tracks. This circuit leads you to the foot of the Château de Roquefixade. Pass over small mountain passes to reach the heights of the Pech de Foix and a panoramic view across the whole surrounding area. Then, the final descent: a technical single-track takes you down towards Montgailhard and on to the county town of Foix and its château. Return transfer to Port-la-Nouvelle and the end of the trip.

For organised groups, we offer the option to be accompanied by a guide and we can adapt the level, duration, price and programme on demand. Contact us !

## DURING YOUR STAY

### **KEY INFORMATION:**

#### **4 options to choose from:**

##### **Self-guided mountain biking with luggage transfer by taxi. (For 2+ people):**

You set off alone, equipped with the orientation equipment provided by us: maps with marked routes and GPS tracks to discover the circuit which has been designed by our team. The use of GPS is indispensable and allows you to orientate yourself with ease. It is possible to rent a GPS from LaRébenne, subject to availability.

##### **Self-guided mountain biking with assistance vehicle. (From 6+ people):**

The assistance vehicle will meet you at several points throughout the day's stage, and will bring you your picnic, water, your extra clothes, as well as a complete toolkit in case of any mechanical issues. As a result, you can fully enjoy your day with only a light bag. The driver will also give you advice for each stage, helping you to manage your ride and progress and will, most of the time, be able to answer any questions you may have about the local area.

##### **Mountain biking with a mountain bike guide with luggage transfer by taxi: (From 6+ people):**

Accompanied by a professional who has obtained a state-sponsored mountain biking qualification, you ride without any worries about having to follow a map. Our qualified specialist, who has an in-depth knowledge of the region, will guide you throughout the trip and, if you wish, provide you with advice to help you become an outstanding mountain biker. Thanks to their detailed knowledge of the route, they will adapt the itinerary to your group and manage the schedule and effort required throughout the day. Free from having to manage the group, your only worry will be to enjoy your mountain biking!

##### **Mountain biking with state-qualified guide and assistance vehicle: (From 8+ people)**

### **LUGGAGE :**

You only carry what is needed for the day and your picnic. Luggage will be transported by vehicle (or by the assistance vehicle).

**1 bag/person and limited to 15kg/bag.**

### **ACCOMMODATION: on a full-board basis**

Accommodation options to choose from:

**'Gite' option:** Gites are selected specifically for their warm welcome and friendly atmosphere. More often than not, you will share a dormitory of 4-6 beds. Sheets and towels are not provided.

**Double bedroom option :** You will sleep in a comfortable hotel, B&B or, sometimes, a 'gite', in a bedroom for 2 people. Sheets and towels are provided.

### **FOOD:**

This is not the time to go on a diet! Instead, it is an opportunity to taste local cuisine and specialities. The quality of your food is paramount and we take great care to ensure a good dietary balance, sufficient calorie intake and that each meal includes local specialities.

Picnics are prepared by cooks in your gite or hotel. In order to avoid unnecessary waste, we ask you to provide a plastic lunchbox that the cooks can fill with delights each morning !

## **NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS:**

- Departure from 2 people for the self-guided with luggage transfer by taxi option.
- Departure from 6 people for the self-guided with assistance vehicle option.
- Departure from 6 people for the option with mountain-biking guide and luggage transfer by taxi.
- Departure from 9 people for the option with mountain-biking guide with assistance vehicle.

## **BEFORE YOUR DEPARTURE**

### **PRICES:**

See the price table on our website <http://www.larebenne.com>

### **REGISTER:**

At La Rébenne, we place great importance on having contact with our travellers. We love to talk to you about our travels and trips and would like to maintain a close relationship with you. Exchanging, sharing and enjoyment remain the key objectives for every La Rébenne trip.

To contact us and register it's easy! Call us or send us a quick email.

contact@larebenne.com Tél +33(0)5 61 65 20 93 Ou +33(0)6 81 53 77 75
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### **Sales contract and deposit**

We will send you the sales contract, the insurance form, as well as the general sales conditions and any special sales conditions. Registration is complete once we have received your signed contract with a deposit of 40% of the total cost of the stay. A receipt will then be sent to you for your records.

### **Payment of outstanding balance :**

The total balance must be paid one month before the departure date. If you register less than one month before departure, you will pay the full cost of the trip when you register.

### **Validation and confirmation :**

Upon receipt of the total balance, you will be sent your 'trip file'. This will include details of the meeting point, the list of required equipment as well as all necessary contact details, etc.

### **Formalities**

- A valid official ID.
- We recommend travel insurance with repatriation included.

## **DIFFICULTY LEVEL:**

### **Physical Difficulty Level : 3/3**

You have stamina and are in good physical condition. You regularly practice mountain biking throughout the year. Stages vary from 30 to 60km per day, with positive altitude gains of 1100m to 2100m maximum.

### **Technical Difficulty Level : 2/3**

You have control over downhill braking and the trajectory of the bike. You will ride along tracks and paths that can be both fast and technical (steep, with small obstacles).

## **PERIOD :**

From April to October.

## **DEPARTURE AND MEETING POINT:**

Depart from Port-la-Nouvelle (11).

## **How to get there:**

By car: A9 exit n°39, Sigean, then head towards Port-la-Nouvelle.

By train : Port-la-Nouvelle SNCF train station.

By plane : Perpignan airport then train to Port-la-Nouvelle.

## **THE PRICE INCLUDES :**

- Accommodation and reservations
- Half-board and picnics starting from dinner on Day 1 to the picnic on Day 6.
- Luggage transfers
- The return transfer Foix - Port-la-Nouvelle, with your bikes and luggage.
- For the self-guided option: maps, map holder, TopoGuide, GPS with saved tracks, a GPS holder.
- For the option with assistance vehicle: 1 vehicle with 9 places will follow the group for the duration of the trip.
- For the option with a qualified guide: No worries about orientation, the state-qualified guide will take care of everything during the trip.

## **THE PRICE DOES NOT INCLUDE:**

- Accommodation for the night before departure
- Drinks,
- Personal expenses
- Picnic on Day 1
- Personal mountain biking equipment (helmet, gloves)
- Mountain bikes
- Visits to monuments
- Transport to the meeting point
- Insurance

## **OPTIONS :**

- Extra accommodation for the night before departure
- Option of a 3 or 4 day trip, tailor-made programme with 3 or 4 stages chosen by you. Free departure. The conditions are the same as those for the 6 day circuit.
- Single bedroom at an additional cost.

**Contact us.**

## **INSURANCE:**

In accordance with the regulations of our profession, La Rébenne is insured for Professional Civil Liability. However, each participant must hold an individual liability policy as well as individual multi-risk coverage in order to protect themselves from incidents or accidents that may occur before or during the hike or trip.

Any additional insurance shall be invoiced on an individual basis and must be purchased on the day you register for the trip.

## **We offer 2 options - Multi-risk and Cancellation**

**Package no. 1 - Multi-risk:** full guarantee in the case of cancellation, loss of luggage, repatriation assistance, medical expenses, interruption of stay. Coverage provided by APRIL Voyages.

**Package no. 2 - Cancellation:** guarantee only in the case of an impediment prior to departure. Coverage provided by APRIL Voyages.

**Please refer to the price list on our website, practical information - insurance** (infos pratique - assurances): <http://www.larebenne.com/infos-pratiques/assurances.html>

### **RECOMMENDED EQUIPMENT (non-exhaustive list):**

As good preparation is synonymous with a successful trip, here are a few tips regarding equipment you should take to ensure your trip goes as smoothly as possible.

#### **BIKE**

In order to avoid your trip turning into a lesson in bike mechanics, it is strongly advised that you thoroughly service your bike before hitting the road:

- > A well set-up mountain bike computer
- > The tyres are well inflated and in good condition
- > The cables and chain are in good condition
- > Transmission elements are clean and oiled
- > There aren't any leaks around the suspension
- > The wheels are well attached
- > The brakes are in a good state (concerning wear and any leaks)
- > The headset and steering tube have been checked.

And remember, anomalies are easier to spot on a clean bike!

#### **EQUIPMENT FOR REPAIRS:**

To avoid any unforeseen mechanical problems, it is always better to be well-prepared and carry the basics with you:

- > 3 spare inner tubes (anti-puncture tubes are strongly advised, or anti-puncture strips)
- > A pump
- > Tyre levers
- > A tube repair kit consisting of patches and glue
- > A multi-tool
- > Small pliers
- > A piece of tyre
- > A chain tool

In addition to that, you can put together your own repair kit and we will transfer it along with your larger luggage. You should include:

- > Brake cables (front and back)
- > Derailleur cable
- > A tyre
- > A derailleur hanger
- > Chain oil
- > A rag

#### **EQUIPMENT**

As we say in France, "l'habit ne fait pas le moine" (the tunic doesn't make the monk), and wearing tight shorts won't turn you into a biking champion. However, a minimum of specialist mountain biking equipment is necessary to ensure you stay comfortable on the pedals:

- > A mountain bike helmet (obligatory!)
- > Mountain bike gloves
- > Glasses/sunglasses
- > Shoes adapted to mountain biking (without insoles that slip)
- > Cycle shorts or leggings
- > Breathable t-shirt (avoid cotton)

#### **DAILY BACKPACK**

As it can be uncomfortable to carry a backpack which is too heavy, think carefully about what to include:

- > A CamelBak and/or a bike water bottle (3L/day/person minimum)

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- > 'Race food' (energy bars, dried fruit etc.)
- > Basic equipment for repairs to your mountain bike(see above)
- > A windbreaker (waterproof)
- > Picnic
- > A head torch
- > A knife
- > Suncream (and lip protection)
- > Toilet paper and a lighter
- > A first aid kit
- > Your mobile phone
- > A compass for self-guided trips, an altimeter (optional)

### **PICNIC**

To avoid unnecessary waste at picnic time, please carry:

- > An airtight and waterproof plastic lunchbox, with a section for salad and with your initials marked on both the lid and box, and a large elastic band.
- > Cutlery (fork, folding knife, spoon).

### **LUGGAGE**

Your luggage will be transferred for you during your trip and will be waiting for you at your accommodation each night. In order to make sure you do not forget something important...:

- >A sleeping bag (for trips in 'gites')
- >Changes of clothes
- >A light pair of shoes for the evenings
- >A big jumper or fleece jacket
- >A toilet bag and towel

### **PHARMACY**

On all accompanied stays, the guide will carry a first aid kit. However, it is indispensable to carry some personal medical supplies. Here is a list of some basic supplies to carry with you:

- >Insect repellent
- >Disinfectant and gauze
- >Tape
- >Protective cream for the buttocks
- >Personal medications
- >Water purification tablets
- >A survival blanket

A more complete medical kit should be compiled with the advice of your doctor.

## **A FEW WORDS ON THE HERITAGE OF THE REGION:**

### **Catharism :**

At the end of the twelfth century, an alternative to Christianity spread across the south of France. This deviance boiled down to a belief in two entities: Evil (the material, living world) and Good (the immaterial world, after death) This was considered as profanity by the Church, which, in response, launched a crusade (1208) to eradicate the heretics - the Cathars.

The Cathars were completely integrated into society, existing even in the families of lords (for example the Trencaval, the Counts of Foix...). The battle began, sieges went on for months as the population resisted, or not (Simon de Montfort seized, in the name of the King, Béziers, Narbonne and Carcassonne, amongst others). The Cathars fought on, preferring to end up with their heads on a stake rather than deny their faith.

The Treaty of Paris (1229) marked the end of the conflict, and the beginning of the Inquisition. The Cathars remained outlaws and the Inquisitors used their power to seek them out: putting a price on their heads. The surviving Cathars went into exile, seeking refuge in the castles which guarded the border, where they continued to prosper for a few more years.

They were finally removed by Louis XI, who came to power in 1241. It is for this reason that 'Saint Louis' became known as Louis le Sanguinaire (Louis the Bloodthirsty), in the region.

### **BIBLIOGRAPHY:**

Les Pyrénées, Claude Dendaletche, collection la bibliothèque du naturaliste, éditions Delachaux et Niestlé, 1997

Histoire des Cathares, Michel Roquebert, collection Tempus, éditions Perrin, 1999

## **AFTER YOUR STAY**

Let us know what you think! And to make sure that these fond memories of your trip live on, we'd be delighted to receive any photos, videos, montages or comments you may have made during your tour.

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### **CONTACT**

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