

## **A Pilgrims' Route in France: Via Podiensis**

**June 8 - 29, 2021**

Due to the popularity of this unique long-distance hiking experience, we repeat the pilgrimage along the Via Podiensis. Anybody thinking of walking to Santiago de Compostela ought to consider starting the journey in Le Puy. The first written account of the walk from Le-Puy-en-Velay to Santiago is from the 10<sup>th</sup> century, more than one thousand years ago!



We invite you to walk with us along the first part of this historic route through some of France's most remote and picturesque regions where hidden architectural, historical and culinary treasures abound. The trail leads steadily southwest and generally from higher to lower elevations, and from springtime on the high plains to summer in the verdant valleys of the Midi. On a typical day, we hit the trail right after breakfast, stop for lunch, and continue walking in the afternoon—all along stopping to take pictures, meet other walkers, and

visit sites of cultural, historic or touristic importance. Most nights we stay at small hotels and guesthouses with rooms with private bathrooms, although there are a few occasions where our accommodations will be more basic, i.e. with facilities down the hall.

*This is something more than a long-distance hike...*

*People in the past went on pilgrimage for many reasons: to fulfill a promise that they'd made, to perform penance, as an expression of their faith. It's also clear that some also enjoyed the sights along the way and the "differentness" of being somewhere else. Is this something you'd like to do?*

*In the last several decades pilgrimage has again become popular. As in the past, walkers do it for a variety of reasons, only some of them religious. It's not necessary to be a Christian—or even particularly religious—to find a pilgrimage journey worthwhile. But it is something more than an "extended hike"....*

*It helps if one is open to thinking about what pilgrimage meant to people in the past. We are walking—at the present tail end, as it were—of a very long line of people. This gives us a different perspective on ourselves, puts us in our place. What did it mean to them, and what was it like for them? Compared to them, we travel in considerable luxury, yet each day we get out on the road and put one foot in front of the other, just as they did. So we have this in common. When they looked at some of the things that we will see—the shrines and churches, for instance—what did it mean to them? What did they feel? It may not be the same as what we feel, but just consider it.*

*It helps if one has some interest in art and architecture, and the relics of the past. Or is willing to be interested. Expertise is not required. But think, among other things, what did it mean to the people who built some of the things that we'll see? Some of them took years and years, more than a hundred years. What does this say about them?*

*It helps to regard the journey as one's own opportunity for contemplation. Walking like this, sometimes walking for most of the day, gives you a lot of time to think. Without the pressures of our regular, daily lives, it can be an opportunity to reconnect with oneself, to come to a better understanding—or reaffirmation—of what is most important in our individual lives. Or it can be a chance to let the mind relax and roam where it will, without having to feel that it's a waste of time.*

*If one is religious and approaches this journey as a person of faith, you can still make use of these other suggestions. They will not detract from the meaning that you have assigned to the journey.*

### **Trip Dates and Estimated Costs**

June 7 – 22: Lyon - Le-Puy-en-Velay – Figeac: \$3,270 (16 days / 15 nights)

June 7 – 28: Lyon - Le-Puy-en-Velay – Cahors - Toulouse: \$3,895 (22 days / 21 nights)

### **Itinerary Outline**

<b>2021</b>	<b>Day</b>	<b>Start Point</b>	<b>End Point</b>	<b>Walking Miles</b>
Tuesday, June 8	1	Meet at Lyon Airport, transfer to Le Puy-en-Velay		
Wednesday, June 9	2	in Le-Puy-en-Velay		
Thursday, June 10	3	Le-Puy-en-Velay	Saint Privat d'Allier	14.6
Friday, June 11	4	Saint Privat d'Allier	Saugues	11.8
Saturday, June 12	5	Saugues	Le Sauvage*	12.1

Sunday, June 13	6	Le Sauvage	Bigose	13.4
Monday, June 14	7	Bigose	Montgros, partially by bus	11.8
Tuesday, June 15	8	Montgros	St-Chély d'Aubrac	12.4
Wednesday, June 16	9	St-Chély d'Aubrac	Espalion	13.7
Thursday, June 17	10	Espalion	Estaing	6.8
Friday, June 18	11	Estaing	Espeyrac	14.9
Saturday, June 19	12	Espeyrac	Conques*	7.8
Sunday, June 20	13	Conques	Figeac, partially by bus	
Monday, June 21	14	In Figeac		9.3
Tuesday, June 22	15	Figeac (or end of program)	Espagnac*	
Wednesday, June 23	16	Espagnac	Marcilhac*	10.6
Thursday, June 24	17	Marcilhac	Cabrerets, partially by kayak	6.8
Friday, June 25	18	Cabrerets	Saint-Cirq-Lapopie	4
Saturday, June 26	19	Saint-Cirq-Lapopie	Cahors, mostly by bus	5
Sunday, June 27	20	Cahors - Toulouse by train		2
Monday, June 28	21	In Toulouse		
Sunday, June 29	22	Toulouse	end of program	<b>157</b>
*Multi-bedded rooms and/or bathrooms down the hall are a distinct possibility				

### Included Services:

- Accommodation in twin-bedded rooms (single rooms difficult to arrange), mostly with private facilities; however, on 4 nights multi-bedded rooms and/or bathrooms down the hall are a distinct possibility.
- Breakfast and dinner daily - dinner includes a beverage (mineral water, soft drink, wine or beer)
- Transportation along the way as indicated in the itinerary
- Transportation of one bag from Le-Puy-en-Velay to Figeac/Cahors
- Tours with private guide in Le Puy, Conques, Figeac, Cahors, and Toulouse
- Experienced leadership by 2 leaders with first aid certification
- Tips, taxes, and service charges
- Detailed fact sheets for each hiking day with maps and trail descriptions

### Not Included

- Air transportation from/to the United States
- Lunches

- Cancellation and medical insurance, although required
- Optional excursions
- Expenses (transportation, meals, lodging) when deviating from the group's itinerary
  - Medical and Trip Cancellation Insurance

**Reservation**

To receive a reservation form, payment schedule, cancellation policy, as well as terms and conditions please send an email to [hiking@sunriseteam.com](mailto:hiking@sunriseteam.com). Since this trip is limited to 12 participants, an early inquiry is important.