

THE FRENCH PYRENEES SUMMER HIGHLIGHTS 2019

Summer in the French Pyrenees - including the Pyrenees- Atlantiques; the Hautes-Pyrenees; the Haute-Garonne; the Ariège-Pyrenees; the Aude and the Pyrenees-Orientales.

Here are a few highlights of Summer 2019 from each department.

Ariège-Pyrenees



The Ariège Pyrenees is home to the incredible Prehistoric Cave, the **Grotte de Niaux** which sits within the Parc de la Préhistoire in Tarascon-sur-Ariège. This park, come museum offers workshops, presentations and hands on experiences where visitors can learn to hunt, to paint on walls, to carve flint, to light fire as they did 14,000 years. The newly lit 'Grand Atelier' museum space of 2,500m² showcases the 'Giants of the Ice Age'. Take a tour in to the Grotte de Niaux and discover the Salon Noir with its preserved paintings. www.sites-touristiques-ariege.co.uk

The **Château de Foix** – a huge renovation, inside and out over a 6 month project and 8 million+ investment. Inside the castle, the large ceremonial room, the weapons room etc. Every room has been made even more realistic. At the foot of the castle, a brand new 2000m² museum space has been created. Guests can take workshops to learn how to handle weapons used in war, to forge, to cut stone or to operate huge machinery used in war and construction. www.sites-touristiques-ariege.co.uk

Watersport Fun - Waterski in Mercus

A suspended cable tows eight water- skiers at the same time on a 760m course. Beginners can start with kneel boarding before moving on to classic waterskis, mono-ski or wake-board and then the jumps and tricks. This nautical base also offers: pedalo paddle boats, paddleboards, beach, beach volleyball, children's games. Open: mid-June to early September, 7days/week from 13h30 to 19h30. Rates: Ski lift 14 € per hour. Pedalo and stand up paddle 12 € New! Paddle XXL: Package of 25 € for 1 to 8 people. www.basenautiquemercus.fr

New Summer Sledging in Guzet

The Guzet Express is one of the longest luge rides in Europe at 1.6 km with a vertical drop of 357 meters. The departure is at 1,700 meters above sea level after a superb ascent by chairlift. A great fun toboggan mounted on metal rail. <https://couserans-pyrenees.fr/luge-guzet-express/>

On Your Bike: Tour de France – 21 July

The Tour will get the best mountain views as it crosses the Ariège Pyrenees on 'the road of the castles' on 21st July 2019. Riders will leave Limoux to join the mountains of Foix Au Prat D'albis. Located 1200 m above sea level, this site of pastoralism, hiking and paragliding, the Prat d'Albis will for the first time, host this Great Loop. Local organizers are committed to preserving the natural site. Montségur, Roquefixade, Miglos, Montreal de Sos will be the backdrop to this 15th stage. <https://www.pyrenees-ariegeoises.com/en/diary/le-tour-de-france-arrive-au-prat-d-albis-a-foix-1302296>

Hautes-Pyrenees



Skyvall, is a new gondola, part of a 30 million euro development, linking Loudenvielle in the Louron Valley to the mountain village of Peyragudes. Peyragudes resort sits at 1,600 meters for biking and hiking in summer and ski in/out village in winter. This 3 km link with a 650 m vertical drop is part of a plan to create a year round destination and reduce CO2 pollution on the road up to Peyragudes. Also new for December 2019 is the opening of a 4* Residence alongside the base of the new lift. <http://www.vallee-du-louron.com/>

Sleep in a Moountain Bubble

<http://www.moountain-bubble.com/>

Enjoy a wonderful off grid experience under the stars from just 100 euros per night for a Bubble sleeping 2 people with mini fridge, eco shower and facilities, bedding, and stunning views of the French Pyrenees being 650m above sea level. Enjoy breakfast on the 65m2 terrace. The closest market village of Argeles Gazost has a weekly market in the town centre for fresh supplies. www.moountain-bubble.com

Pyrenees Cyclin'Trip – Follow in the footsteps of the Tour de France racers, cycling to your heart's content in complete safety on the cyclist-only mountain passes in the Hautes-Pyrenees on this **new bike event** which takes place from 30 July – 2 August and covers 108km of ascent. The legendary mountain passes will be closed to motorised traffic and reserved for cyclists in the morning, with no charges, no restrictions, no registration, no rankings and no start or finish.

MONDAY 30th JULY: COLS DE PEYRESOURDE, DE VAL LOURON-AZET, COL DU PORTET

TUESDAY 31st JULY: COL D'ASPIN/ **WEDNESDAY 1st AUGUST:** COL DU TOURMALET, MONTÉE DE LUZ ARDIDEN

THURSDAY 2nd AUGUST: MONTÉE DU HAUTACAM, COL DE COURADUQUE

FRIDAY 3rd AUGUST: COLS DES BORDÈRES, DU SOULOR, D'AUBISQUE

<http://www.pyrenees-holiday.com/Treks-and-Thrills/Cycling>

Experience a **Pyrenees Road Trip** -The Hautes-Pyrenees, France in association with Huesca, Spain, has introduced a series of 3, 4 or 7 day Road Trip itineraries taking in some of the most iconic landmarks in the Pyrenees as well as routes linking the French and Spanish borders. The **Family specific itinerary** includes some of the best of family activities in the Hautes-Pyrenees. <http://www.pyrenees-trip.uk/offre/fiche/family-trip/SEJMIP065V5021BB>

At 2877m of altitude, for 140 years **the Pic du Midi** has been at centre of astronomy, space research and also holds the highest planetarium in Europe. With its 12m 'Pontoon in the sky' it offers one of the most beautiful views of the Pyrénées and guests can descent by mountain bike in the summer or stay for a night near the stars and enjoy a meal in the new restaurant 'Le 2877'. In winter the descent rivals the best in the Alps for freeride and off piste. www.picdumidi.com

Haute-Garonne



Discover the Félix Trombe /Henne Morte cave network, one of the great French networks of underground caves, in the **Massif de Arbas in Haute Garonne**. Explore over 116km tunnels underground –Easy access for families to the caves with www.cocktailaventure.fr

One yurt and a donkey: If you are looking for a holiday in the mountains, combining comfort and hiking, stay in a yurt camp and hike every day with your own donkey. In addition to escape in to nature, with your donkey, have time and freedom to go down to the village to shop, brush and feed the donkey, feed etc. Ideal for families with young children. Local donkeys are used from one day to several day trips. Donkeys accompany you along your route to carry your belongings and / or children in case of fatigue. Cost from 50 euros per night and per day with a donkey hike. They are also instrumental in the breeding and reintroduction of donkeys in the Pyrenees. www.lafermedoulanbat.fr

By air – Take the 500m cable car which runs from the town of from Luchon to Superbagnères and enjoy the new restaurant inside the chapel. Whilst there take a parapent for the ultimate view of the Pyrenees. Stunning views of Lake Oô , Lake Espiau, Perdiguère peak, Port of Venasque. Local guide Thomas Charlès will fly with you in a 30 minute flight, let you have a try at steering and give yourself an adrenalin fix. Suitable from 5years+. To book: +33 06 17 39 61 45

Luchon Flower Festival –the thermal spa town of Luchon celebrates 120 years of the flower festival from August 22-25. One of the most colourful festivals of the Hautes-Garonne. Fabulous parade, bands in the streets, celebratory fayre in the village. <http://uk.luchon.com/fete-des-fleurs/bagneres-de-luchon/tabid/41908/offreid/60116323-ab9d-4acb-837b-57645ac88903/detail.aspx>

Medieval city of **Saint Bertrand de Comminges** Discover the beautiful, hill top ancient Roman city, still being discovered by archaeologists. Take the guest train up to the peak and explore the old narrow streets, look out over the valley from the remains of the Roman amphitheatre. Situated on the Way of St James (Santiago de Compostela pilgrim route), the UNESCO Sainte Marie cathedral dominates the village, with its Roman and Gothic styles alongside the pretty 15th Century village houses. <https://www.hautegaronnetourisme.com/ete/saint-bertrand-de-comminges-un-site-des-siecles>

Pyrenees-Orientales



The Little Yellow Train 'Le Train Jaune' runs for 63km on a narrow gauge railway from Villefranche-de-Conflent to the Spanish border at Latour de Carol, the highest railway station in France. Enjoy a journey through the Pyrenees and marvel at the engineering, over viaducts, across mountain gorges, and mostly in the original carriages introduced in the early 1900s. The line rises through dramatic scenery from an altitude of 427 metres at its lower terminus at Villefranche de Conflent, to a summit at Bolquère Eyne, at an altitude of 1592 metres (5226 ft) above sea level. From £12 one way <https://www.tourisme-pyreneesorientales.com/le-train-jaune-0>

There are **seven mountain resorts** across the mountain range in the Pyrenees –Orientale: Cambre d’Aze, Font-Romeu Pyrenees 2000, Les Angles, Porte Puymorens, Formiguères, La Quillane and La Station Nordique du Capcir, situated between 1500 and 2700m. In winter they form the ski areas of the Catalan Pyrenees and in the summer a haven for bikers, walkers and guests who want to discover the mountains of the southern Pyrenees. There are more than 60 lakes between 1800 and 2500 m above sea level (1485ha of water) including the lakes of: Lanoux, Bouillouses, Puyvalador, Matemale, Vinça, Caramany and Villeneuve de la Raho. <https://www.tourisme-pyreneesorientales.com/>

The **Abbey of Saint Martin du Canigou** is perched high up on a rocky pinnacle in the heart of the massif of Mt. Canigou. This Romanesque Abbey, built in 1009, over a thousand years old, is at the end of a 1600m long path which starts in the village of Casteil and winds up 300m. Enjoy spectacular views and a spiritual experience. <https://www.tourisme-pyreneesorientales.com/abbaye-saint-martin-du-canigo>

Odeillo, **the largest solar oven in the world**, built in 1969 by Felix Trombe, consisting of a field of 10,000 mirrors, mounted on terraces on the surrounding hillside, which bounce the sun’s rays onto a large concave mirror. The solar energy can produce temperatures in excess of 3200 degrees Centigrade, unique in the world. The location was chosen due to the air quality and the fact that the region boasts approximately 300 sunny days per year. <https://anglophone-direct.com/mont-louisfont-romeu-odeillo-via/>

St Thomas, Llo Baths and Dorres thermal baths- As with all the destinations in the French Pyrenees, spas play a hugely important role. In the Pyrenees-Orientale the thermal water of St Thomas is one of the hottest in the Pyrenees. Discover the three pools and the vast stone amphitheatre with breath-taking views of the mountains! Jacuzzis, steam rooms, massage jets. Rich in sulphur and minerals, the waters of the Llo Baths are known for treating rheumatism and preventing stress. Immerse yourself in one of the three pools and discover the pleasure and pleasure of outdoor baths. Inside, the two pools and the spa area offer a fitness trail and equipment to relieve sore muscles. Relax in the small pool around Dorres at 1450 m altitude with Cambre d’Azeand Puigmal as a backdrop. <https://www.tourisme-pyreneesorientales.com/experience/bains-deaux-chaudes-sulfureuses>

Aude



The Aude stretches from the Mediterranean to the mountains of the French Pyrenees.

The only winter sports resort in Aude, **Camurac** occupies the hills of the Sault country, where forests of beech and fir tree give way in winter to skiers. Dominated by the peaks of St Barthélémy and Soularac at 2,348 meters, this is a beautiful unspoilt family resort (1,600-1,800m).

https://www.audetourisme.com/diffusio/en/activities/leisure/camurac/camurac-ski-area_TFOLOILAR011FS0001D.php

Villeneuve-Minervois, is the indisputable mecca of **truffle production**. Guests visiting the truffle museum, can fully immerse themselves in the history, harvesting and landscape of the truffle. Discover all the secrets of the 'Black Diamond'. Organised by the Association des Trufficulteurs Audois, truffle markets take place on Saturday mornings, once a month, from December to February. Truffles are harvested in the three Aude communes, including Moussoulens and Villeneuve-Minervois. www.maisondelatruffedoccitanie.com

Wine is hugely important to the Aude, the richness of the soil and mixed climate offers the perfect wine growing climate. Look out for: AOP Cabardes, AOP Malepere, La Blanquette et le Crémant de Limoux, AOP Minervois, AOP Fitou, AOP Corbières et Boutenac. Take a wine tour of Corbières and Fitou vineyards in a 2CV: www.vin4heurestour.fr

Mountain Bike the Black Mountain: The Black Mountain, southern balcony of the Cevennes is a mountain range located at the southwestern end of the The Massif Central. It separates the departments of Tarn, Hérault, Aude and Haute-Garonne. From the foot of the 'Montagne Noire' through the scrubland to the first forests of the mountain, enjoy a range of mountain bike trails. Through gorges dug in the limestone or shales, enjoy incredible views of the chain of Pyrenees. At the end of the trail wind through the "Capitelles", shepherd's shelters built in dry stone. www.audetourisme.com

Hike in in Haute Vallée de l'Aude, along the Aude River which gave its name to the department and offers North to South, from Limoux to Axat, a mix of landscapes between the vineyard hills and the Pyrenean mountains. At the foot of the Pyrenees, when hiking, discover the authentic villages of the Haute Valley of the Aude, incredible landscapes: gorges, golden vineyards, the forest shade, and green rolling hills. Hiking on the trails of the Pyrenees Audoises guests will discover breathtaking views with, for example, the Pic de l'Ourtiset or the Forêt d'En Malo, rich historical heritage with the Château de Puilaurens and Chateau de Puivert, passing through the Labyrinthe Vert or la Route des Sapins. www.audetourisme.com

Pyrenees-Atlantiques



The Train d'Artouste is the highest train in Europe at an altitude of 2000 metres with beautiful landscapes and an exceptional panorama. The ascent by telecabin gradually reveals the Ossau Mountain and the territory of the Pyrénées National Park. The journey on board the train gives a breathtaking view on the Soussouéou Valley before discovering the outstanding Artouste Lake. This 10km route was originally built in 1924, a service cable car was built on the sides of the peak of the salette and then a single 50 cm railway track. With a purely industrial intention, the Compagnie des Chemins de Fer used the narrow gauge track to transport men and equipment for the construction site of the Artouste Lake dam. Over 8 years dam and pipe network was built. Now, Artouste Lake is a water reserve of 24 million m² of. Since 1932, the Artouste site has been open to the public and the train transports thousands of passengers every summer. Departure from Fabrège, 15 min telecabine, then 55-minute train ride to the arrival station. The Artouste Lake is 20 minute walk from the station. www.ossau-pyrenees.com

Climb the Pyrenean Cols: Col d'Aubisque, Col de Marie Blanque or Col du Pourtalet, three mythical cols from the Tour de France - measure yourself against the cycling legends of the TdF : Froome, Contador, Quintana, Hinault, Indurain, Jalabert, Virenque. Enjoy three different routes, each followed by a visit to the "Spa Montagne", where recovery massage and spa facilities are offered. Accommodation provided by "Green Bike Pyrenees" in Louvie Jouzon: safe storage for bikes, bike workshop with tools, nutritional breakfast, cycling local routes with advice and local maps to consult on site, relaxation terrace. From 319 euros B&B 3 nights Info: production@ossau-tourisme.fr

The underground world of **La Verna**: In Pierre-Saint-Martin, this underground cave, discovered in 1953 is the third largest in the world open to the public. Mecca for geologists, this limestone cave and the natural vaults of the hall offer huge dimensions: 250 meters in diameter and 190 meters in height, an area of 5 hectares. Follow a 660m tunnel before discovering the cave. Torchlit only to preserve its environment. www.laverna.fr

Horse Riding on the Bénou Plateau where there are walks and hikes for everyone: donkeys, ponies, larger horses for all abilities. By the Bious-Artigues Lake, at the foot of the Pic du Midi d'Ossau take a ride through the heart of the Pyrenees National Park. Lakeside walks, longer 1-2hour hikes or the whole day (towards the Ayous Lakes) or even stay overnight by bivouac and enjoy a few days of horse riding. <http://travel-ossau-pyrenees.com/summer-activities.html>

The thermal water of **Salies-de-Béarn** is 10 times saltier than sea water. In a beautiful listed building in the Moorish Hispano style, the thermal spa of Salies-de-Bearn offers a brand new concept. www.thermes-de-salies.com

And finally..for cheese lovers, the **Cheese fair** , 'Foire au Fromage' is being hosted in Laruns from 5-6 October: <https://www.foireaufromage.com/>

www.lespyrenees.net

<https://www.facebook.com/gotothefrenchpyrenees/>

ENDS: For further press information and images please contact Vanessa Fisher PR on +44 7957 618525 vanessa@vanessafisher.com