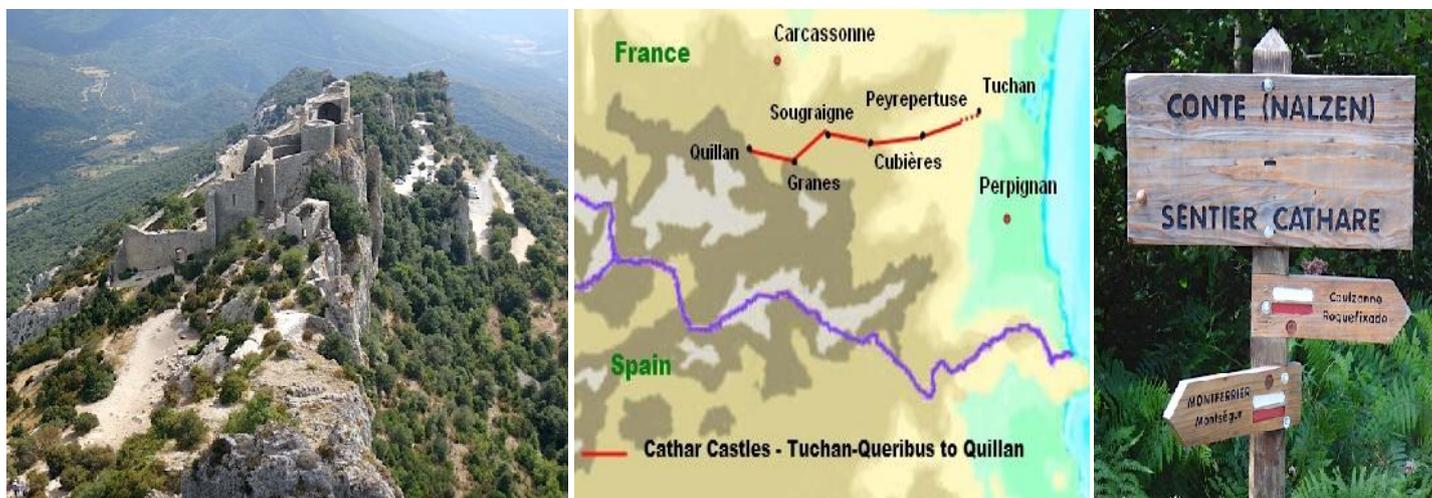


FRANCE: CATHAR CASTLES OF THE PYRENEES

VALUE TOUR

One and Two week **SELF-GUIDED** inn-to-inn walks from Tuchan to Quillan & to Foix



Tucked away in the Languedoc region of France, between the Pyrenees and the Canal du Midi, is an undiscovered landscape steeped in history. The secret trails and castles of the Pyrenees are best discovered on foot, as you follow the 'Sentier Cathar' – the famous Cathar Trail, a path in the foothills of the eastern Pyrenees, which stretched between the historic strongholds of the Cathars, members of a Christian sect in the 12th and 13th Centuries who were declared heretics and brutally suppressed by the Catholic Church. These astonishing forts and castle ruins, often perched precariously on the cliff edges, provide a dramatic insight into the cultural heritage and somewhat mysterious history of medieval France.

Between the Pyrenees and Mediterranean Sea, in the heart of the sunny Corbières region of south-west France, this walk progresses from wild countryside to mountains and sun-kissed vineyards, interspersed with Cathar castles, and small, unspoilt Pyrenean villages. A region full of charm it has its own culinary secrets: the Corbière wines and dishes, like 'cassoulet', that leave a memorable reminder and a taste of a warm welcome.

Dates: **Daily** on demand from April to October.

Difficulty: **Moderate to challenging** - you will need to be reasonably fit, prepared to walk 12 to 25km in a day (5 to 7 hours of walking), with daily ascents / descents of up to 650 metres and read maps.

Costs:

Tuchan to Quillan 7 days (6 nights) from **\$1340** per person twin share Single supplement \$275
Solo Traveller Supplement \$385

Quillan to Foix 8 days (7 nights) from **\$1375** per person twin share Single supplement \$270
Solo Traveller Supplement \$330

Includes: Breakfast daily, dinner on 5 nights each week, luggage transfers, route descriptions, maps, tax and service charges, telephone support (if required).

Not included: Daily lunches, dinners not mentioned, drinks, personal expenses including entrance fees, extra nights of accommodation or arrival/departure transfers (these can be arranged at extra cost)

Arrival & Departure:

Nearest major centres: Carcassonne, Perpignan or Toulouse

Nearest train stations: Perpignan (for Tuchan), Quillan train station, Foix train station

Accommodation & Meals: Accommodation is in small, comfortable Chambre d'hote and 2 or 3-star hotels in rooms with private bathroom facilities, breakfast daily and 5 dinners per week. Picnic lunches on walking days are not included in the tour cost, but picnic materials can readily be bought in local shops or a packed lunch ordered the night before from your accommodation.

Call OUTDOOR TRAVEL on 1800 331 582 for details or reservations

Suggested Itinerary:

TUCHAN-QUERIBUS TO QUILLAN

7 days / 6 nights self-guided inn-to-inn walk

Day 1: Arrive Tuchan.

Make your way to Tuchan. Plan to arrive by mid to late afternoon, allowing time to settle in before dinner.

Day 2: Tuchan to Peyrepertuse

walking distance @ 16km (5 hours)

After short transfer, you walk through the early medieval village of Mollet and past the wine centre at Cucugnan. View the imposing 13th Century castles at Padern and Quéribus. Tonight stay in a charming small hotel in Duilhac sous Peyrepertuse, at the foot of the Peyrepertuse fortress.

Day 3: Peyrepertuse to Cubières

walking distance @ 16km (5 hours)

Today's walk takes you past the fortress of Peyrepertuse, the awe-inspiring Galamus Gorges, and the hermitage of St Antoine de Galamus, clinging to the cliff face. Dinner and overnight at a friendly chambre d'hôte in Cubières.

Day 4: Cubières to Sougraigne

walking distance @ 15km (5 hours)

The walk from Cubières to Sougraigne is in the very heart of Cathar country. The path winds between the ranges of the Fenouilledes and the Corbières, with impressive scenery throughout. You traverse the limestone Bugarach massif (the highest point in the Corbières) and the Salso Col before arriving in the beautiful small village of Sougraigne.

Day 5: Sougraigne to Granes

walking distance @ 19km (6 hours)

Today pass the village of Rennes les Bains, known for its thermal baths since Roman times, and Rennes le Château with its small castle dominating the surrounding hills. Your accommodation tonight is at a delightful chambre d'hôte in Granes.

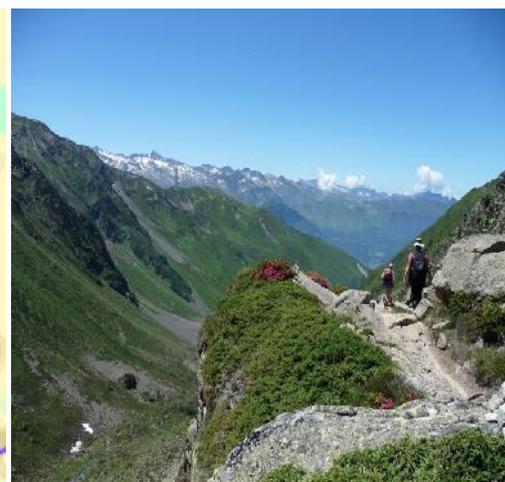
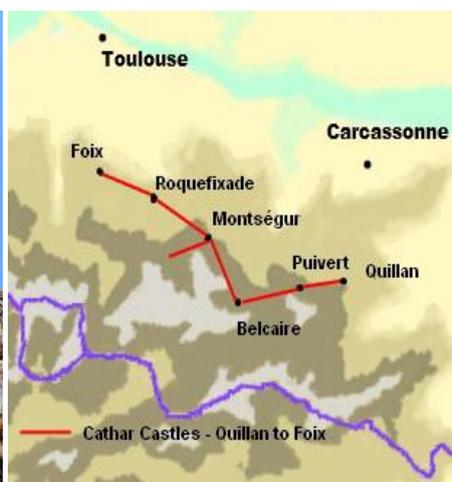
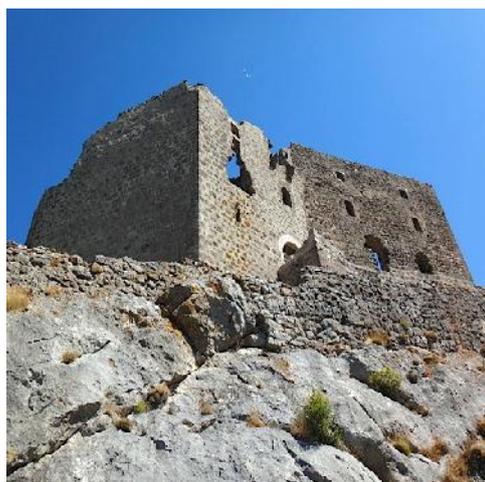
Day 6: Granes to Quillan

walking distance @ 18km (5 hours)

The route from Granes to Quillan follows the Grand Randonnee footpath along a well-known route that was once an important link and means of communication between small Pyrenean hamlets. You traverse the high saddle of the Col des Trois Quilles before arriving in Quillan. Quillan was a significant town on an ancient winding road linking Carcassonne with Perpignan. The river Aude here traditionally was used to transport timber and other local products to Carcassonne. Dinner tonight is at your own arrangements in Quillan.

Day 7: Departure day

Tour ends after breakfast in Quillan.



QUILLAN TO FOIX

8 days / 7 nights self-guided inn-to-inn walk

Day 1: Arrive Quillan.

Make your way to Quillan, arriving mid to late afternoon. Quillan is located at the foothills of the Pyrenees, on the road between Carcassonne and Perpignan. It is at the top of the Haute Valley of the Aude, giving easy access to the mountains. Dinner is at your own arrangement tonight and there are several restaurants to choose from. Look for *Fréginat*, a traditional type of fricassee made from pork and pig liver with local white beans flavoured with herbs, or *cassoulet* made from white beans and sausage, with a bottle of local wine.

Call OUTDOOR TRAVEL on 1800 331 582 for details or reservations

Day 2: Quillan to Puivert

walking distance @ 21km (6 hours)

Today's walk takes you from olive groves to fir and beech forest. From Quillan walk to the tiny hamlet of Nebias. The walk then follows the Cathar footpath to the 13th Century Chateau of the Troubadours, perched on a hill high above Puivert. Tonight stay in a warm and friendly hotel in Puivert.

Day 3: Puivert to Belcaire

walking distance @ 21km (6 hours)

Today's route takes you through the thick fir Forêt de Puivert and the heart of the Escale and Picaussel forests. Using ancient paths, ascend to the vast airy plateau of Sault, home to a wide variety of animal life. Belcaire, your destination for tonight, is in the heart of the plateau, in the foothills of the Pyrenees.

Day 4: Belcaire to Montségur

walking distance @ 18km (6 hours)

The path takes you from the Pays de Sault plateau to the countryside of Ariège – you may observe the difference in altitude, vegetation and geology between the two. Then follow the route down through the impressive Gorge de Frau (Gorge of Fear) before arriving in the village of Montségur, the heart of Catharism. Stay in a welcoming and comfortable chambre d'hôte in Montségur for two nights.

Day 5: Montségur circuit

walking distance @ 12km (7 hours)

An evocative walk past ancient terraces with panoramic views of the famous Pog de Montségur, the last Cathar strong hold. The ancient Château de Montségur perches high on the top, a hard climb but worth it for the views. Reward yourself with a glass of local wine upon your return to Montségur.

Day 6: Montségur to Roquefixade

walking distance @ 17km (5 hours)

From Montségur the Cathar trail weaves its way to the village of Montferrier via the Modini forest. You may want to ascend to the ruins of Roquefixade castle, high above the medieval walled village of the same name. After your walk, relax in the garden of the small, hospitable inn where you stay in Roquefixade.

Day 7: Roquefixade to Foix

walking distance @ 19km (5 hours)

Today's walk combines superb terrain with stunning views. The trail follows a high ridge to the small town of Foix nestling in the foothills of the Pyrenees. As you approach Foix you have an amazing view of the three towers of its 10th Century chateau. If you have energy left, climb one of the towers for a panorama of Foix and the mountains surrounding it, and see if you can spot the path you walked. Tonight you stay in a quaint family-run hotel in Foix. Dinner is at own arrangements.

Day 8: Departure day

Tour ends after breakfast in Foix.



Other **Outdoor Travel** walking holidays – guided in small groups or self-guided with inn-to-inn luggage transfers and meals – are available in many parts of France, across Europe and the United Kingdom including the spectacular **Mountains to the Sea** walk descending from the Pyrenees to the Mediterranean, the majestic **Vermillion Coast** walk between France and Spain, the **Camino de Santiago** or **Way of St James** from Le Puy in France to Santiago de Compostela in Spain, the **Camino Portuguese** from Porto to Santiago, or the **Via Francigena**, the pilgrim's Road to Rome in Italy.

Contact Outdoor Travel for more itinerary details and reservations

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