LOURDES PYRÉNÉES
ROAD TRIPS

www.lourdes-infotourisme.com
The unique experience that you have enjoyed at Lourdes would not be complete without exploring further afield in the beautiful Pyrenean region.

Whether you’re travelling in a group, as a couple or en famille, in this brochure we suggest various trips you can combine by car to put together your own unforgettable holiday.

**THEME 1: CULTURAL AND SPIRITUAL HERITAGE**

01 - Gouffre d’Esparros cave and the altarpieces in the churches of Haut Adour (half day or full day)
02 - It’s a miracle! The Sanctuary of Notre Dame de Bétharram (half day)
03 - The Life of Bernadette: Lourdes and Bartrès (half day)
04 - From Garaison to Escaladieu: spiritual wonders in sacred places (full day)
05 - The treasures of Val d’Azun and Saint Savin (full day)
06 - A day’s jaunt to Tarbes (full day)

**THEME 2: GREAT TOURIST SITES**

01 - Bétharram Caverns: Journey to the centre of the Earth (half day)
02 - Meet the stars of the show: Pic du Midi - Gavarnie - Cauterets (3 days)

**THEME 3: LOCAL FLAVOUR**

01 - Good King Henry’s country: Jurançon wines and the Château de Pau (full day)

**THÈME 4 : LOURDES**

01 - The other side of Lourdes: a lovely day exploring the town on foot (full day)
Settled in turn by the Romans, Visigoths, Moors and Cathars, the Pyrenees have witnessed a fascinating religious history. And even after Christianity took hold, mythology and folklore remained part of the mix. Churches, chapels and religious art are part of any visit to Hautes-Pyrénées, and this tour is packed with religious interest.

This tour takes you through the little-known countryside of the Baronnies, starting with the wonder of nature that is the Gouffre d’Esparros cavern, a treasure trove of stalactites, stalagmites, crystals and concretions in a mineral wonderland.

The next stop en route is the village of Sarrancolin. Nestling in the heart of this little fortified medieval town is the Church of St Ebons, built in the 11th and 12th centuries, boasting a distinctive Greek-cross plan, imposing square bell tower and 15th century choir.

You then continue over the Col d’Aspin mountain pass and on via Arreau, descending the Campan Valley. (Alternatively, you can return to Lourdes via Bagnères-de-Bigorre.)

From here, return to Lourdes or complete the full-day tour to see the altarpieces in the churches of Haut Adour.

From its source in the Bigourdane region’s Campan Valley, the River Adour runs all the way to the River Nive at Bayonne. Like the other Pyrenean valleys, places of Christian worship abound here, with chapels, churches, wayside shrines and mountainside pietàs everywhere you look. As three generations of sculptors – the famous Ferrère family – knew only too well.

At a time when fashionable Paris was a world away from this little Pyrenean idyll, Jean Ferrère, known as Jean I, began to carve sought-after Baroque works of art. In 1647 he built a new studio, from where he produced stunning works to decorate the churches of his valley. Later, his son Marc was to take over. The churches and chapels here, sometimes austere-looking on the outside, are home to countless Ferrère treasures including altarpieces, tabernacles, pulpets and lecterns. Later, Marc’s two sons Jean II and Dominique continued the skilled family tradition, innovating by inlaying marble in their exquisitely carved wooden objects and magnificent canopies. This route through the upper Adour Valley takes you on a tour of discovery of their work.

Campan, nestling below the slopes of the Pic du Midi de Bigorre, is home to three churches. Two are listed as Historical Monuments, and it is the oldest of them that contains the most stunning works by Marc Ferrère. Since 1700, the Church of St John the Baptist of Campan, built in the 16th century, has contained a gilded Baroque altarpiece with columns decorated with winding vegetation. The triptych is formed by two statues flanking the central painting.

The next stop comes in the neighbouring village of Beaudéan. Here, Marc Ferrère’s stunning work is in evidence in the 16th century Church of St Martin. Further down the valley, in the village of Asté, you’ll find La Maison des Ferrère et du Baroque Pyrénéen, on the site of the family’s art studio. Here, you can also see the Church of St Saturnin, which contains works by Jean II. In the 18th century this little Pyrenean village was a centre for the arts, home to carpenters, sculptors, gilders and more, artists whose work won fame far beyond the borders of Bigorre. From here you head back to Lourdes, passing through Bagnères-de-Bigorre and stopping off in the village of Pouzac to admire the work of the dynasty’s founder Jean I in the Church of St Saturnin. The monumental 17th century Baroque altarpiece under a wooden vault representing the starry heavens is awe-inspiring.
MORNING

Lourdes > Esparros 46 km
Esparros > Sarrancolin 14 km
bus and car parking available in the villages

GOUFFRE D’ESPARROS CAVE

INFORMATION
65130 ESPARROS
Tel.: +33 (0)5 62 39 11 80
Website: gouffre-esparros.fr
Visit duration: 1 hour / Temperature: 13°C
Booking is strongly advised all year and essential in June, July and August.

SARRANCOLIN

INFORMATION
Church of St Ebons

AFTERNOON

Sarrancolin > Campan 43 km
OR Sarrancolin > Arreau > Col d’Aspin
> Campan 36 km
Campan > Beaudéan 2 km
Beaudéan > Asté 2 km
Asté > Pouzac 7 km
Pouzac > Lourdes 20 km

CAMPAN

INFORMATION
> Church of St John the Baptist at Campan

BEAUDÉAN

INFORMATION
Church of St Martin

ASTÉ

MAISON DES FERRÈRE ET DU BAROQUE PYRÉNÉEN

INFORMATION
16, rue de l’église - 65200 ASTÉ
Tel.: +33 (0)5 62 91 61 28

POUZAC

INFORMATION
Church of St Saturnin

www.lourdes-infotourisme.com
Lestelle-Bétharram, on the Gave de Pau River a short drive from Lourdes, is an essential stop on the Pyrenean Foothills route of St James’s Way pilgrimage trail (the GR78). It is also a charming village with a history marked by three miracles. And the Marian Sanctuary there is regarded as a masterpiece of Baroque art unrivalled in the Béarn region.

The Sanctuary came about in the 14th century after shepherds tending their flock on the banks of the Gave were attracted by a bright light. Finding a statue of the Virgin Mary in a bush on the riverbank, the villagers resolved to build the Chapel of Our Lady of the Star on the sacred spot. The second miracle took place in 1616. Five peasants from the neighbouring village of Montaut were resting in the fields when a fierce storm blew up over the hill overlooking Lestelle-Bétharram. The large cross recently erected over the Sanctuary was blown over by the gale but miraculously rose up moments later in a dazzling light. This was Our Lady of the Calvary, which became the starting point for a Way of the Cross featuring bas-relief carvings considered to be masterpieces. The last miracle occurred in the 17th century when a little girl was saved from drowning in an eddy in the Gave by the Virgin Mary, who held out a branch to her. In a show of gratitude, the little girl carried a golden branch, or ‘beth-arram’ (‘beautiful branch’ in the local patois) to the Virgin of the Sanctuary. The Baroque chapel there today, paid for by the king of France Louis XIII, was built in the 17th century and is listed as a Historical Monument. The chapel has a beautiful façade depicting the four evangelists with the Virgin Mary in the centre, and the interior is decorated in gold, blue and red and features a number of imposing oil-on-canvas paintings of the Life of Christ, a fine organ case and loft, and a monumental altarpiece.

Next to Notre Dame de Bétharram is a monument built in 1924 and dedicated to St Michel Garicoïts. This plain-looking chapel has no façade on to the street, no dome and no external bell tower, but inside it is beautifully decorated with stained-glass windows, fine wrought ironwork and an effigy of Father Garicoïts at rest, his hands facing outwards, in a delicately carved gilded bronze reliquary. Father Garicoïts, a priest from a modest Basque family, came to Lestelle-Bétharram in 1825 and founded the Congregation of the Priests of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, which to this day remains an internationally influential religious group. He met Bernadette Soubirous several times because she regularly went to see him for advice with her parents. Interestingly, both were beatified within a few years of each other.

You continue your visit with the Musée de Bétharram. There are four rooms, given over mostly to relics and artefacts from the former monastery here: paintings, mother-of-pearl objects, precious wooden boxes, statues and personal items connected with St Michel Garicoïts.

Before you leave, make sure you walk the calm, peaceful Way of the Cross, built between 1867 and 1873, which takes you up onto the neighbouring hill. This impressive walkway is visible from the road, climbing the hill to end at a shady esplanade. There are 15 stations of the cross, each with a Romanesque-style wayside shrine to the Passion of the Saviour, the finest of which contain bas-relief carvings by the sculptor Joseph-Alexandre Renoir, a relative of the famous artist Auguste Renoir.

**IT’S A MIRACLE! THE SANCTUARY OF NOTRE DAME DE BÉTHARRAM**
MORNING

SANCTUARY OF BÉTHARRAM

INFORMATION
Place Saint-Michel Garicoïts - 64800 LESTELLE-BÉTHARRAM
Tel.: +33 (0)6 43 25 48 04
Website: www.betharram.fr
Email: sanctuairesdebetharram@gmail.com
Accessible to mobility-impaired visitors.
Parking for cars and coaches nearby.
Lourdes, the Marian City, and Bartrès, a little village in the surrounding hills, have something in common: they were both once home to Bernadette Soubirous, the daughter of a modest family who became famous all over the world.

ITINERARY

3.00 PM
Visit Moulin de Boly mill and the Cachot

5.00 PM
Arrive in Bartrès. See the shepherd's hut and village

6.00 PM
End of tour

This half-day tour can be combined with tour No. 2, theme 1, It's a miracle! The Sanctuary of Notre Dame de Bétharram, or tour No. 1, theme 2, Bétharram Caverns: Journey to the centre of the Earth.

Lourdes and Bartrès both play an important part in the history of the young girl to whom the Virgin Mary famously appeared. The story begins in Lourdes in the autumn of 1857. With not enough money to continue running the Moulin de Boly water mill where they lived, the Soubirous family were forced to move in to the Cachot, a former prison, where they lived in just one cold, dark room.

Walking along the town's oldest streets, which in those days were inside the town fortifications, you will come to these two old dwellings which provide a fascinating insight into daily life here in the 19th century.

Bernadette, who had previously contracted cholera, suffered from asthma, and the noisy, damp town of Lourdes, huddled around the base of the castle, was not a suitable place for a girl in poor health. Her father, struggling to find the wherewithal to feed his family, decided to send Bernadette to live with Marie Lagües, who had been her wet nurse and who lived in the little village of Bartrès in the hills a few kilometres away. Marie paid Bernadette to keep house, fetch water and wood and to mind her sheep, and so Bernadette would walk to the family shepherd's hut just outside the village and take the sheep to graze on the hillside at Puyono. The shepherd's hut is still standing today, just outside the village. Stop and take in the view, the same view that Bernadette would also have contemplated.

Bernadette's shepherd's hut

You can walk to the village of Bartrès from Lourdes on the Chemin de Bernadette trail, which initially follows the footpath to Lannedarré and then joins the GR101 long-distance footpath, a branch of the St James's Way pilgrims' trail from Maubourguet.

The return journey is eight kilometres of fairly easy walking (allow around 2½ hours).

In Bartrès, Bernadette was not able to go to school or complete her catechism classes, and she was worried that she would not be able to take her First Communion. Unable to read or write at the age of 13, she asked if she could return to Lourdes, where the local priest agreed to prepare her for her Communion. Who could have guessed that just three weeks later, on 11 February 1858, a «lady dressed in white» would appear to her at Massabielle Grotto.
CULTURAL & SPIRITUAL HERITAGE TOUR SHEET

03
THEME 1

Réserve Naturelle Régionale du massif de Pibeste

Val d’Azun

Argelès-Gazost

Moulin de Boly in Lourdes

INFORMATION
12, rue Bernadette Soubirous - 65100 LOURDES
Tel.: +33 (0)5 62 94 22 51

The Cachot in Lourdes

INFORMATION
15, rue des Petits Fossés - 65100 LOURDES
Tel.: +33 (0)5 62 94 51 30

Bernadette’s Shepherd’s Hut

INFORMATION
Route de Lourdes - 65100 BARTRÈS
Accessible on foot via the Chemin de Bernadette (GR101, 4 km from Lourdes)

Church of Bartrès

INFORMATION
65100 BARTRÈS

www.lourdes-infotourisme.com

Office de Tourisme de Lourdes
Today, you turn your back on the mountains and Lourdes and head out on a pilgrimage to eastern Hautes Pyrénées and the villages of Monléon-Magnoac and Bonnemazon, home to two of the most important sites in the religious history of the Pyrenees.

A few kilometres north of Lannemezan there is a tract of sparse heathland that for centuries was regarded as the realm of devils and sorcerers and barely worth grazing sheep on! It was in this bleak place in 1515 that the Virgin Mary appeared, on three occasions, to a poor young shepherdess called Angèle de Sagazan, imploring her to build a chapel. In 1540 the chapel was built on the very spot where the Virgin had appeared. Promoted by the local bishop and the Missionary Sisters of the Immaculate Conception, the Sanctuary of Our Lady of Garaison at Monléon-Magnoac became an important place of pilgrimage until the French Revolution. After the Revolution, the site was given over mainly to providing a home and education for children. Today, the institution of Our Lady of Garaison has some 600 pupils, and members of the religious community here receive the visitors who come to admire the Baroque Sanctuary, including the paintings in the narthex (which forms the transition between the secular exterior and the church interior) and the depictions of the pilgrims journeying along St James’s Way.

The Sanctuary is also home to an impressive and well-preserved collection of altarpieces, including one depicting the Flight from Egypt and the altarpiece of the high altar, which features a group of figures from the Old and New Testaments. You then head back south-west to the village of Bonnemazon, where you can stop for lunch at a restaurant or perhaps picnic in the grounds of Escaladieu Abbey. This site was chosen by a small group of Cistercian monks following their failure to establish an abbey higher up in the mountains, where the climate was too cold and inhospitable. Satisfied with the uninterrupted view of the Pyrenees from this new site, they established their Scala Dei (Ladder of God) on the sunny hillside here in around 1130-1137. An important stopping point on St James’s Way to Santiago de Compostela, the powerful abbey was the resting place of the counts of Bigorre from the 12th to the 14th century. Ravaged and ransacked during the Wars of Religion in the 14th century and restored on several occasions, it was finally listed as a Historical Monument in 1939. Soak up the simple, tranquil charm of the abbey’s fine Cistercian architecture, the chapterhouse with Romanesque façade and the delicate-pink and deep-red hues of the Campan marbles adorning the different halls and rooms. Owned by the Hautes-Pyrénées Département since 1997, the abbey regularly hosts fascinating temporary exhibitions. Allow around 50 minutes to return to Lourdes by car. If you’re feeling peckish, you can do worse than stop off on the way back at the Védère biscuit factory between Bagnères-de-Bigorre and Montgaillard, where you can tuck in to succulent madeleines, tarts and fine biscuits in the unusual surroundings of a vintage railway dining car that ran on the Tarbes - Bagnères-de-Bigorre line until 1970. After having your fill of spirituality, we recommend you fill up on tasty treats…
**CULTURAL & SPIRITUAL HERITAGE TOUR SHEET**

**THEME 1**

**MORNING**

**SANCTUARY OF OUR LADY OF GARAISSON**

*INFORMATION*

65670 - MONLEON MAGNOAC
Tel.: +33(0)5 62 99 49 00
Website: www.garaison.com
Email: pascal.garcon@cscfrance.org

**AFTERNOON**

**CISTERCIAN ESCALADIEU ABBEY**

*INFORMATION*

65130 - BONNEMAZON
Tel.: +33 (0)5 31 74 39 50
Website: www.abbaye-escaladieu.com
Email: abbaye.escaladieu@ha-py.fr
Free parking / picnic area

**VÉDÈRE BISCUIT FACTORY**

*INFORMATION*

423, route de la Gare - 65200 MONTGAILLARD
Tel.: +33 (0)5 62 91 63 33
Website: www.biscuiterievedere.com

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**SANCTUARY OF OUR LADY OF GARAISSON**

*INFORMATION*

65670 - MONLEON MAGNOAC
Tel.: +33(0)5 62 99 49 00
Website: www.garaison.com
Email: pascal.garcon@cscfrance.org

**CISTERCIAN ESCALADIEU ABBEY**

*INFORMATION*

65130 - BONNEMAZON
Tel.: +33 (0)5 31 74 39 50
Website: www.abbaye-escaladieu.com
Email: abbaye.escaladieu@ha-py.fr
Free parking / picnic area

**VÉDÈRE BISCUIT FACTORY**

*INFORMATION*

423, route de la Gare - 65200 MONTGAILLARD
Tel.: +33 (0)5 62 91 63 33
Website: www.biscuiterievedere.com
Since the Middle Ages, the villages of Arrens-Marsous and Saint Savin have been a draw for pilgrims making their way along St James’s Way to Spain. Here you will find three religious buildings remarkable for their architecture and their fascinating histories, in the magnificent surroundings of the Pyrenees National Park.

**MORNING**

**VAL D’AZUN**

Head for Arrens-Marsous in Val d’Azun to see one of the region’s most beautiful religious buildings: Pouey-Laün Chapel, stopping off first at the Maison du Val d’Azun in the village centre to ask for the keys. Built on top of a rock in the Middle Ages, the chapel was used as a place of prayer by the pilgrims lodging at the old hospital and those en route to Santiago de Compostela. With a domed bell tower and lavish interior reclaimed from the old Marian sanctuary, the ‘golden chapel’ (capera daurada) boasts gold-leaf wall decoration and a blue vault representing the starry heavens. Rebuilt in the 17th century following a major earthquake and later used as a barracks during the French Revolution, the chapel was then sold off as a national asset. The bishop of Tarbes, Mgr Laurence, restored the chapel and tasked the Fathers of Garsoun with looking after it. After the First World War, a children’s sanatorium and later a medical institute (from 1973 to 2012) was run on the premises of the former novitiate of the Missionaries of the Immaculate Conception. After your visit remember to return the keys, and while you are there it is worth spending time at the Maison du Val d’Azun and the Treasure Museum in the chapel. In the visitor centre and sacristy, which contains a collection of precious religious artefacts, including statues, monastic books and sacred vessels. Close by the abbey church, standing on the rocky promontory to one side of the village, is the Chapel of Our Lady of Piety.

**SAINT-SAVIN**

After a well-earned lunch break, it’s time to head for one of the region’s most beautiful villages, Saint Savin, in a stunning location on a promontory overlooking the Gaves Valley. Here you will find a historical gem, and a great centre of influence until the French Revolution: the Abbey Church of Saint Savin.

A 13th century masterpiece listed as a Historical Monument in 1840, this Benedictine monastery is today a parish church containing a fascinating collection that recounts the life of St Savin, a monk of Catalan origin who lived as a hermit for 13 years on the Pouey-Aspé Promontory. Inside, you will see not only St Savin’s sarcophagus but also Romanesque fonts, a 14th century wooden statue of Christ, the Renaissance organ dating from 1557 (one of the oldest in France) and wood paintings depicting the miracles performed by the saint and episodes from his life. To see more of St Savin’s heritage, visit the Treasure Museum in the chapterhouse and sacristy, which contains a collection of precious religious artefacts, including statues, monastic books and sacred vessels. Close by the abbey church, standing on the rocky promontory to one side of the village, is the Chapel of Our Lady of Piety. It is worth taking a look at this magnificent oratory dating from 1493, listed as a Historical Monument in 1935, which today is mainly used for pilgrimage masses.
ROAD TRIPS

CULTURAL & SPIRITUAL HERITAGE TOUR SHEET

05 THEME 1

MORNING

POUEY-LAÜN CHAPEL

INFORMATION
Route d’Aste - 65400 ARRENS-MARSOUS
Tel.: +33 (0)5 62 97 49 49
Website: www.vallesdegavarnie.com
Email: infotourisme@vallesdegavarnie.com

SAINT SAVIN ABBEY CHURCH

INFORMATION
9, place du castet - 65400 SAINT-SAVIN
Tel.: +33 (0)5 62 97 02 23
Email: presbytere3@wanadoo.fr
Parking for cars and coaches nearby.

MAISON DU VAL D’AZUN ET DU PARC NATIONAL DES PYRÉNÉES

INFORMATION
65400 ARRENS-MARSOUS
Tel.: +33 (0)5 62 97 49 49
Website: www.vallesdegavarnie.com
E-mail: infotourisme@vallesdegavarnie.com

AFTERNOON

CHAPEL OF OUR LADY OF PIETY

INFORMATION
65400 - SAINT-SAVIN

www.lourdes-infotourisme.com

OFFICE DE TOURISME DE LOURDES
Tarbes was established by the Romans and became the administrative capital of the Hautes-Pyrénées Département in 1800. In 1806, Napoleon I founded the National Stud here, where the local Tarbais horse was crossed to create the Anglo-Arabian breed. In 1859 the railway from Paris reached Tarbes, continuing to Lourdes a few years later which helped to boost pilgrim numbers there.

Before exploring Tarbes, stop off in the village of Ibos (one of the largest towns in the Bigorre region in the Middle Ages) to see the magnificent collegiate church there, built by the king of France, Philippe VI of Valois. First, you will have to call in at the Mairie (town hall) to ask for the keys to this imposing Gothic building. Listed as a Historical Monument in 1862, the collegiate church contains a pulpit by Marc Ferrière and fine 17th and 18th century furniture. Interestingly, the locals say that the Greenwich Meridian passes directly through the bell tower…

On leaving Ibos it will take you less than ten minutes by car to get to Tarbes, where your first destination is the Cathedral of Our Lady of the Seat (the seat being that of the bishop). Built in the 12th century on a site that was first Gallo-Roman and later a Merovingian cemetery, this Romanesque building has been modified over the centuries. The Gothic nave was added in the 14th century and a number of magnificent features, including the vast Baroque marble canopy above the high altar, were added in the 18th century. Don’t leave without looking in at the Chapel of the Holy Virgin, where the will and testament of king Louis XVI is carved on a marble wall.

For lunch, there is a wide choice of restaurants in the city centre. We recommend you try some of the local specialities, such as haricots tarbais beans and Bigorre Noir pork. Bon appétit!

After lunch, why not take a stroll around the magnificent Massey Gardens to help your food go down? Officially recognised as a ‘Jardin Remarquable’, this 11-hectare haven of peace and quiet contains some real treasures: a 15th century 40-arch cloister from Saint-Sever-de-Rustan Abbey, a bandstand, an orangery, and a beautiful old house built in the Moorish style with a striking observation tower, which is home to the Musée Massey.

This recently completely refurbished museum contains two collections: one of Fine Arts, with a display of European paintings from the 15th to the 20th century, and the other recounting the history of the Hussars, the light cavalry of Hungarian origin. The latter features a series of historical sections that take you through the timeline of Hussars regiments in France and around the world (including some impressive uniforms on display), which forged the reputation of this fighting force over more than four centuries.

Before you indulge in a city-centre shopping spree, we highly recommend a visit to the National Stud, Tarbes’ iconic 8-hectare show-piece in the middle of the city. This Historical Monument was originally built for the cavalry. It is worth going on a guided tour to learn about the history of the cavalry through the historical collections, which include carriages, antique saddles and tack, and also the famous Anglo-Arabian horse bred in Tarbes. You can also visit the Maison du Cheval built by Gustave Eiffel (of Tower fame), which includes a section about the image of the horse in Occitania.
**Morning**

**IBOS COLLEGIATE CHURCH**
- INFORMATION
  - Rue de la Collégiale - 65420 IBOS

**CATHEDRAL OF OUR LADY OF THE SEAT**
- INFORMATION
  - 5, place Général de Gaulle - 65000 TARBES

**Afternoon**

**MASSEY GARDENS**
- INFORMATION
  - Rue Massey - 65000 TARBES

**MUSÉE MASSEY, INTERNATIONAL HUSSARS MUSEUM**
- INFORMATION
  - Au sein du Jardin Massey
  - Rue Achille Jubinal - 65000 TARBES
  - Tel.: +33 (0)5 62 44 36 95
  - Website: www.musee-massey.com
  - Email: publics.musees@mairie-tarbes.fr

**THE ORANGERY**
- INFORMATION
  - Au sein du Jardin Massey

**NATIONAL STUD**
- INFORMATION
  - Chemin Mauhourat - 65000 TARBES
  - Tel.: +33 (0)6 32 44 87 13
  - Tel.: + 33 (0)6 14 12 30 30
  - Email: guide.haras@mairie-tarbes.fr

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**Cultural & Spiritual Heritage Tour Sheet**

**06**

**Theme 1**
This is a great option to keep up your sleeve for a rainy day (or when it’s just too hot outdoors!). Bétharram Caverns have a reputation for being the most beautiful in Europe and these vast caves with such a variety of natural features will amaze you and provide a fascinating insight into the geology of this part of the Pyrenees.

At the Caverns car park (just a 20-minute drive from Lourdes), you hop on the shuttle that takes you to the entrance, where you are met by your guide. The tour of the caverns covers 2.8 km, with an impressive 80-metre descent along the way.

It’s difficult to tell just how big the first cavern is: the play of light and shadow makes it almost impossible to tell where this one ends and the next begins and how far away the jumble of stalactites, curtains and chasms really are. Opposite you is the main chasm, plunging down to the lowest level open to the public. See that long flight of steps? Gird yourself, it’s a long way down! But first, you explore to the end of the first cavern. The ‘sponge’ ceiling will catch your eye: follow the endlessly branching concretions, formed by the water slowly leaving stone deposits over millennia. It’s then that you notice the vast scale of geology in action in these caves. **Stage one**: the perfectly aligned pairs of stalactites and stalagmites, all set to join up to form a column (you’ll just have to wait a few million years!).

**Stage two**: the complete columns, leading to the water-nymph pools on several levels and the Hall of Chandeliers.

Does the next bit look familiar? You’re back where you started, looking out into the chasm. Now it’s time to descend those steps... You follow the sound of running water and pass a fault line, where you could swear the rocks are hanging high above your head! At this point you are actually crossing the boundary between the Pyrénées-Atlantiques and Hautes Pyrénées Départements. Next, you board the boat for the ride on the underground lake. For the last part of the tour, a little train is waiting (the tunnel for it was dug between 1913 and 1924), saving you the hike up the 250 steps back to the top!

You exit into a glass-and-concrete Art Deco hall built in 1924, where you can get a coffee and buy souvenirs. Outside, there is a covered picnic area for those who have brought their lunch with them. Alternatively, you might like to go for lunch at one of the two restaurants near the Caverns.
GREAT TOURIST SITES TOUR SHEET

MORNING

BÉTHARRAM CAVERNS

INFORMATION
Chemin des grottes - 65270 SAINT-PÉ DE BIGORRE
Tel.: +33 (0)5 62 41 80 04
Website: www.betharram.com
Parking for cars and coaches
> Visit duration: 1 hr 20 min - temperature: 14°C
> Guided tours in 9 languages.

TOP TIP
In July and August the Caverns are less busy in the morning.
How about three days of breath-taking scenery and endless views? From the rushing waterfalls of Pont d’Espagne to the giant ring of rock at Gavarnie, and not forgetting the majestic summit of the Pic du Midi, come with us to meet the stars of Nature’s show here – the Great Tourist Sites of Hautes Pyrénées.

DAY 1

PIC DU MIDI

To make the most of your first day on top of the Pyrenees, leave Lourdes nice and early and head for Bagnères-de-Bigorre then La Mongie ski resort. You won’t forget the cable car ride to the top in a hurry! As you are whisked up the mountainside, spare a thought for the Herculean effort required to build the cable car and carry up the materials to build the summit observatories, transported by men and mules from 1870 onwards. Today you ascend the 1,000 metres altitude in less than 15 minutes in one of the two cable car cabins to the Pic du Midi panoramic observation terrace. From there you can see for miles, over to the Brèche de Roland, and the ‘bear’s head’ of the Pic du Midi d’Ossau in the west. The summit museum is worth visiting, and remember to book your place on the voyage among the stars in Europe’s highest planetarium (recently opened in the Coupole Baillaud, which holds an important place in France’s scientific history). You can also relive the Pic du Midi observatory’s history through augmented reality using an Histopad. For thrill seekers, come and live a dizzying experience with the «pontoon in the sky». Lunch on a selection of local dishes at almost 3,000 metres altitude, or better still, stay the night! Back at the bottom of the mountain, before returning to Lourdes, make a short detour to see the little chapel at La Mongie, one of the few places of worship still going in this busy ski resort. The stone walls, slate roof and unassuming interior of the recently renovated Our Lady of the Snows (built in 1954) are worth a look.

DAY 2

CIRQUE DE GAVARNIE

On day two you become acquainted with a stone giant, Victor Hugo’s «colossus of nature» and an international star now it has been listed as a Unesco World Heritage site: the Cirque de Gavarnie. And you can get up close and personal with this wonder, carved out by the glacier that created the valley here. From the far end of the village of Gavarnie you set off on a three-hour walk (there and back) to the foot of this mighty cirque. Easy to start with, the route becomes more challenging towards the end, but your hard work is doubly rewarded by the sight that greets you at the foot of the monumental waterfall (Europe’s biggest!). And if you’re not up to walk, it’s possible to get there on a donkey or pony. Back in the village, reward yourself with a drink on a sunny café terrace while admiring the view, then trot off to see the Church of St John the Baptist, a Historical Monument and Unesco World Heritage Site as part of the ‘Routes of Santiago de Compostela’. The former chapel of a hospice founded in the 12th century by the Knights of St John of Jerusalem to house and care for travellers, this church has been rebuilt and patched up countless times. Inside you’ll find gems like the Baroque altar-piece with Salomon columns decorated with scallop shells and, in the Romansque north chapel a 14th century polychrome wood statue of Notre Dame du Bon Port, flanked by two 17th century statuettes of pilgrims. Next, return to your car to follow the road down to Luz-Saint-Sauveur. Before you get to the village, stop off at Pont Napoleon to admire this bridge that appears to hang in thin air above the River Gave… don’t look down! The column surmounted by the imperial eagle tells you that this bridge was built on the orders of Napoleon III. The winding back streets of Luz are also worth taking time out to explore, especially when you come to the 11th century fortified Church of the Knights Templar.

DAY 3

CAUTERETS - PONT D’ESPAGNE

Today you follow in the footsteps of authors Georges Sand and Victor Hugo and other great (and lesser-known) figures of 19th century Parisian society, to Cauterets and the famous Pont d’Espagne, in the heart of the Pyrenees National Park. The bridge is so called because it is the last bridge you cross (on foot only) before arriving at the Spanish border. There’s a lovely walk up to the radiant Lac de Gaube at the foot of the mighty peak of Vignemale (around three hours there and back). It’s a stiff climb, but there’s an easy way up via the gondola and chairlift. Picnic by the lake or lunch at one of the lakeside eateries, and set off on the walk to Lac de Gaube. The rush of the River Gave… don’t look down! The column surmounted by the imperial eagle tells you that this bridge was built on the orders of Napoleon III. The winding back streets of Luz are also worth taking time out to explore, especially when you come to the 11th century fortified Church of the Knights Templar.
**DIRECTIONS**

**DAY 1**
- Lourdes > La Mongie via Bagnères-de-Bigorre: 48 km
- Lourdes > La Mongie via the Col du Tourmalet: 54 km (col open only from mid-June to mid-October or other autumn date depending on snow conditions. Up-to-date access information from the Tourist Office).
- Free car and coach parking.

**PIC DU MIDI DE BIGORRE**

INFORMATION

Rue Pierre Lanmy de la Chapelle
65200 LA MONGIE
Website: www.picdumidi.com

**DAY 2**
- Lourdes > Gavarnie: 50 km
- Fee charged for car and coach parking

**GAVARNE**

INFORMATION

Church of St John the Baptist

**LUZ-ST-SAUVEUR**

INFORMATION

Church of the Knights Templar

**DAY 3**
- Lourdes > Pont d’Espagne: 39 km
- Parking for cars and coaches

**PONT D’ESPAGNE**

INFORMATION

Tel.: +33 (0)5 62 92 50 50
Website: www.caunterets.com
Email: infos@caunterets.com

**BAINS DU ROCHER**

INFORMATION

Avenue du docteur Domer - 65110 CAUTERETS
Tel.: +33 (0)5 62 92 14 20
Website: www.bains-rocher.fr

Add-on after 5pm: city-centre shopping for berlingot sweets, ewe’s cheese, bilberry jam and more...

**Afternoon add-on:** Chapel of Our Lady of the Snows. Optional circuit to the Col du Tourmalet, or skiing in winter. Open all year round.
This is a day-long exploration of the Béarn region, home to three AOC wine appellations, the most famous of which is Jurançon, known to have been produced here as far back as the 10th century. Legend has it that when Henry IV was baptised, the priest placed a few drops of Jurançon on his lips... This tour takes in the Jurançon wines and the beautiful city of Pau, certified a Town of Art and History for the castle district where Henry IV was born.

**GOOD KING HENRY’S COUNTRY:**

**JURANÇON WINES AND THE CHÂTEAU DE PAU**

**ITINERARY**

**MORNING**

**CAVE DE GAN JURANÇON**

Fifty minutes from Lourdes is a little village called Gan. Over the years, the Cave de Gan Jurançon winery, with views across to the Pic du Midi d’Ossau and the line of the Pyrenees, has become the third most visited company in France. It is a cooperative of nearly 300 wine growers who produce sweet and dry appellation d’origine contrôlée white wines and Béarn reds and rosés. On the tour, wine buffs gain a fascinating insight into the whole winemaking process, from delivery of the freshly picked grapes to bottling, and including the grape presses, the fermentation vats, the semi-underground ageing cellar and how its construction revealed 4th century Gallo-Roman mosaics, and the bottling centre. To round off the tour, the guide takes you to the shop for a tasting of the wines.

**AFTERNOON**

**CHÂTEAU DE PAU**

Right in the centre of the city, with magnificent views of the Pyrenees, the Château de Pau, built on a rocky spur overlooking the River Gave, is the birthplace of Henry IV, King of France and Navarre. Spanning a history of more than 1,000 years, this castle is today a national museum. In regal surroundings, history buffs can learn all about the history of the Béarn region through a host of artefacts and works of art such as the series of 17th and 18th century tapestries (most were made at the famous Gobelins Manufactory in Paris), and the fascinating collections of historical items. You see the opulently decorated royal apartments and learn about the day-to-day running of the palace, plus objects to do with the life of Henry IV: the famous turtle shell that was his cradle and a host of paintings and sculptures of the great king.

After the tour, get some fresh air in the château grounds, covering a vast area of 22 hectares and certified a Natura 2000 nature area. It’s a haven of greenery in the city, where you can play the game of spotting the commonest flower variety. In the late afternoon, why not explore the city centre and treat yourself to some gourmet local specialities or fashion and decorative items from the big-name stores? And don’t forget to stop for a drink on a café terrace or take a stroll along the famous Boulevard des Pyrénées, from where there is a stunning panoramic view of the Pyrenees which the poet Lamartine described as “affording the finest view on land, as Naples affords the finest view out to sea”.

**LOCAL FLAVOUR TOUR SHEET**

**THEME 3**

**DURATION**

1 DAY

**DISTANCE**

86 KM
MORNING
THE WINE THAT HENRY IV DRANK:
CAVE DE GAN JURANÇON

INFORMATION
53, avenue Henri IV - 64290 GAN
Tel.: +33 (0)5 59 21 57 03
Website: www.cavedejurancon.com
Email: cave@cavedejurancon.com
Groups: advance booking recommended
Tour accessible to mobility-impaired visitors.

AFTERNOON
TOUR OF THE CHÂTEAU DE PAU

INFORMATION
2, rue du Château - 64000 PAU
Tel.: +33 (0)5 59 82 38 00
Website: www.chateau-pau.fr
Email: contact.chateau-de-pau@culture.gouv.fr
Parking for cars and coaches nearby.
We suggest you spend a day strolling the avenues and back streets of Lourdes to soak up the town’s varied cultural and natural interest and hear the sing-song accent of the townsfolk.

LOURDES

Lourdes is a small town that can easily be explored on foot. After visiting the Sanctuary, we suggest you cross the River Gave on the Pont Vieux or the Pont Saint Michel and walk up to the ‘upper town’, where you’ll come to the Castle standing proud on its rocky spur (easy access via the public lift in Rue du Fort). Over the centuries the Castle has had many uses, as a counts’ residence, a royal prison and a barracks, but has withstood the ravages of time. Now listed as a Historical Monument, it is home to the Musée Pyrénéen, which recounts the history and cultures of the French and Spanish Pyrenees from the 19th century onwards (allow 1½ hours). The highlight of the castle are the incredible views from the tower, botanical garden and south terrace, of the town (Pointe du Cavalier), the Sanctuary and the Pyrenees.

From the foot of the castle, there are two options for the next part, the climb to the top of the Pic du Jer on the historical funicular railway: hop on the local bus in the high street, or if you’re feeling energetic you’ll enjoy the 20-minute walk south to the funicular. But before you do so, we recommend a stop at the Market Hall (open every morning from 6.30). There you’ll find dozens of shopkeepers and local producers selling tasty treats for lunch: cured ham, ewe’s cheese, freshly baked baguettes still warm from the oven, fresh fruit and veg, prepared deli dishes, local wines and more... Everything you could possibly want for a mid-morning snack or delicious picnic! And if you want to make more of lunch, the restaurants and brasseries around the market extend a warm welcome – unless you want to wait until you’re on the summit of the Pic.

If so, the funicular is right there (with departures every 30 minutes) for a 10-minute ride up at a relaxed pace. Rising to 945 metres above sea level, the Pic du Jer dominates the town. From the top, the Sanctuary looks tiny, as do the lake and the Gave de Pau, a ribbon of silk dividing the town in two. You can go for a walk on one of the trails or perhaps join a guided tour of the caves. Following your invigorating mountain-top ramble, the local bus will whisk you back to the town centre. To round off the afternoon, why not explore the streets of the old town on foot or on a Segway? You can hire one of these rather futuristic machines to get around effortlessly, taking in the sights: the Fontaine aux Trois Becs, Tour de Gavarnie, Quai Saint-Jean and Rue des Espenettes.

Or perhaps follow one of the town’s two History Trails starting from the Tourist Office: ‘The Life of Bernadette’, both guide you via a series of explanatory boards illustrated with old pictures of the town, explaining all about the history of Lourdes. While you’re in town you can indulge in some retail therapy too, dipping in to some of the shops and boutiques for a souvenir, a local delicacy or perhaps just a spot of window shopping at the fashion stores.

Finish off the day on a café terrace, gazing at the magnificent silhouette of the castle and lovely view of the River Gave and surrounding peaks, or simply people watching...
1. CASTLE AND MUSÉE PYRÉNÉEN

INFORMATION
25, rue du Fort - 65100 LOURDES
Tel.: +33 (0)5 62 42 37 37
Website: www.chateaufort-lourdes.fr
Email: chateaufort.museepyreneen@ville-lourdes.fr

> 2 minutes on foot from the Tourist Office
> 15 minutes on foot from the Sanctuary

Visit duration: 1½ hours approx.

2. LOURDES MARKET HALL

INFORMATION
Place du Champ Commun

3. PIC DU JER FUNICULAR

INFORMATION
59, avenue Francis Lagardère
Tel.: +33 (0)5 62 94 00 41
Website: www.picdujer.fr
Email: picdujer@edeis.com

> Pic du Jer Funicular 20 minutes on foot from the Tourist Office
> 6 minutes by car
> Bus route S4 from April to October, every 30 minutes from Porte St Joseph at the Sanctuary.

History trails: free brochure available from the Tourist Office or downloadable from www.lourdes-infotourisme.com