



Walking Through the Auvergne & Languedoc

- *Ancient Pilgrim's Route*
- *Classic Landscapes of Rural France*
- *Historic Le Puy and Conques*

Legend has it that the martyred body of the apostle St. James was transported from Palestine to the Atlantic coast of Spain for burial. By the 10th century St. James was regarded as the protector of Christian Europe against the Moslem Moors. The church built on his grave at Compostela in Galicia, became a 'Mecca' for pilgrims who walked there from France along the 'Camino de Santiago'. Our section of the historic route takes us into deepest France and the wonderfully remote countryside of the Massif Central.



Within France, by the 12th century, there were four different routes for pilgrims on the 'Chemin de St. Jacques'. Of the four, the earliest recorded and the best preserved is that which starts at Le Puy on the headwaters of the Loire and crosses the Massif Central from northeast to southwest on its way to Aquitaine and the Pyrenees.

We too start at Le Puy, a fascinating town set among the volcanic plugs of Velay. We follow the GR65 trail over the pastoral basaltic plateau of Deves and across the wooded gorges of the Margeride at the headwaters of the Allier. The way continues along traditional 'drailles' over the almost treeless plateau of the Aubrac.

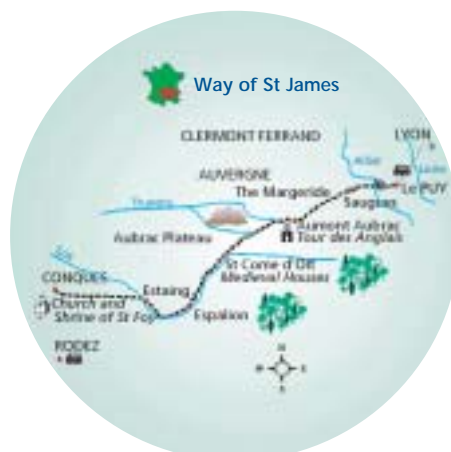
From the Aubrac we descend the winding gorges of the Lot, one of the great rivers which flows from the Massif Central to the plains of Aquitaine. Our pilgrimage ends at Conques, an unspoilt medieval town and in the words of the writer Hal Bishop: 'splendidly situated halfway up a hill between the gorges of the Dourdon and l'Ouche'. The narrow streets of Conques still cluster round the magnificent Abbey church of St. Foy, built astride the trail in the 11th century.

In place of the medieval pilgrim hospices which sprang up along the way, we stay at a succession of delightful small hotels and auberges. The food, which reflects the best of local produce, has also received high praise.



Accommodation

11 nights/12 days - Arriving in Le Puy we stay at an elegant, centrally located 2* hotel. At St Privat we stay in a simple 1* country hotel. The 2* hotel in Sauges, which is the traditional meeting point for the Auvergne pilgrims, has been serving good regional food to pilgrims for 150 years. Hotels in Les Faux and Aumont (2*) are typically French provincial with a good standard of facilities. At Nasbinals we stay at an 2* hotel in the centre of town behind the church. Our 1* hotel in St Chely is right next door to the 11th century church and our small 'chambre d'hotel' guest-house at St. Come d'Olt will give you a warm welcome. In pretty Estaing (2*) we are by the old bridge, with a riverside terrace, and old wooden beams all around. At Espeyrac (2*) , we stay in the centre of the village. The last night is in Conques (1*), famous for its 11th century Abbey Church.



Inn to Inn 12 days

TOUR CODE JPT

Grade	Day Stages
Moderate.	Min 15km, max 28km or 33km.

Waymarking

The route is well waymarked with red and white signs.

Accommodation and Meals

Dinner, bed and breakfast throughout in small country hotels. Private bathroom facilities are not always available.

Start and End of Tour

The nearest international airport is Lyon, train to Le Puy. Bus from Conques to Rodez, train to Lyon or Paris.

Self-Guided Dates and Prices 2008

May - October

For prices please see insert.

▶ For more details request dossier JPT

