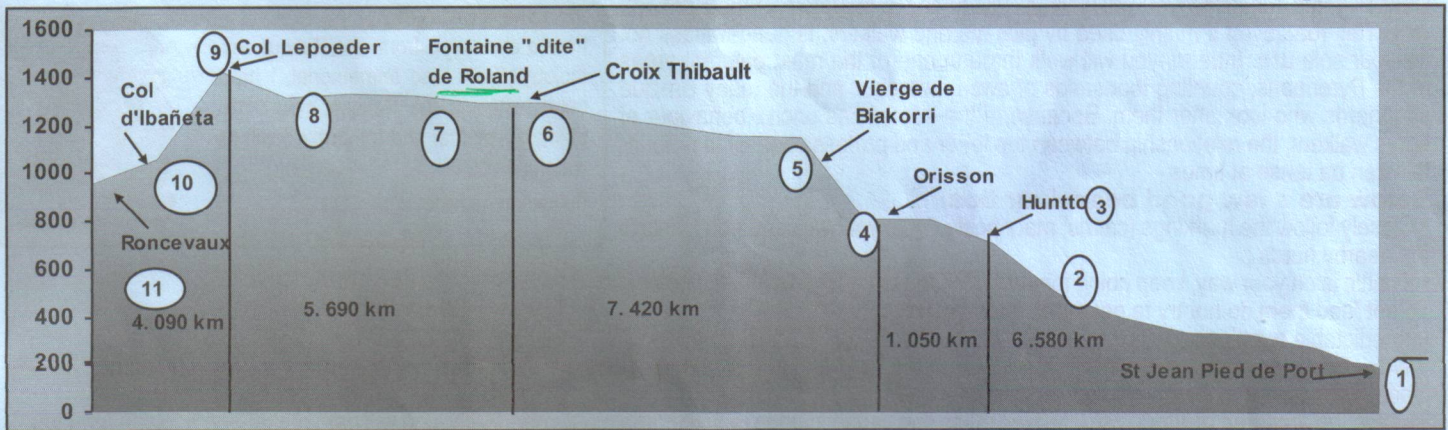




SAINT-JEAN PIED DE PORT – RONCEVAUX

BY THE CIZE PASSES

Les Amis du Chemin
de Saint-Jacques /P.A.



Itinerary : GR65 to the border, then at Bentarte Pass, the GR12 to the right to Ibañeta Pass via the Lepoeder Pass.

Elevations: gain: 1240 meters; loss: 469 meters

Average time for this section/segment: 7 to 7 1/2 hours (not counting any stops) - **Distance:** 24.830 kilometers (by GPS)

150 meters after la Porte d'Espagne, a signpost on the wall indicates: route Napoleon and the Cize Passes straight ahead (GR marking and the waymarking for the Way of Saint James) or the way to Valcarlos on the right (green marking and the waymarking for the Way of Saint James).

After a steep slope, the grade eases up considerably for 3 kilometers, until Erreculus, a farm, where the climb to Huntto (2) begins. The slope climbs steadily for 2,800 km, it's best to maintain a reasonable rhythm and not rush.

Half-way up, after passing the inn at Ithurburua (a shelter, you have to book), leave the paved road briefly as it curves to the south to continue the climb on a winding dirt road as far as the viewpoint (3), where you pick up the paved road at the fountain.

The Kayola refugio is on your left as you continue up the road, just after the orientation table (sleeps 10, kitchen, reserve at the Orisson refugio).

The road climbs again for several hundred meters, then becomes almost flat as far as the refugio at Orisson (4), where you can find refreshments (half board by reservation, public toilets)

From there, the course climbs progressively, ignore the tracks that go off to the right and left towards the shepherds' huts and follow the red and white GR marking and the waymarking for the Way of Saint James.

At kilometre 11 410, a little off the trail, is the Biakorri Virgin (5) protectress of the shepherds.

The course continues to climb progressively, with some long flat spots, even some gentle descents as far as the Thibault cross (6). Here you abandon definitively the pavement and take a wide track to your right (big sign Roncevaux) that climbs towards the little pass to the west of the peak Leizar Atheka.

After the pass, the track is almost flat, it crosses the border and arrives at the Fountain of Roland (7) (last water source until Roncevaux). 200 meters farther on, at Bentarte Pass, the signage directs you to the right, onto the GR 12 the GRT7 and Orreaga-Roncesvalles... the track crosses a forest, gently undulating, to reach the Izandorre Pass (8), there is a refugio equipped with an emergency radio telephone.

Notice after crossing the border the numbered wooden milestones every 50 meters with the emergency number 112; at milestone 38, your cell phone connects to the Spanish network.

After the pass, the track climbs progressively to reach the Lepoeder pass (9), the highest point at this stage. After admiring the Roncevaux Abbey down in the valley, DO NOT go down the difficult track straight ahead in the forest, it is advisable to take the GR 12 to your right, which follows, with several shortcuts, the old route that descends towards the Ibañeta Pass (10), passage of the international route to Arneguy.

At the Ibañeta Chapel, the track on your left descends into the forest to reach the Abbey of Roncevaux (11) in 1,340 km.

IMPORTANT ADVICE:

A reasonable departure time to do this stage is between 7 and 8 a.m.

You can read the weather forecast concerning the Cize passes at the pilgrim welcome center in St Jean Pied de Port. (specialised service of Météo France).

Respect the document "Proper Conduct in the Basque mountains" (see at the back)

SUPPLIES : take a picnic and some water for the climb, the evening meal at Roncevaux (there are 2 restaurants near the abbey, you need to reserve for a "pilgrim menu") any necessary medicine and first aid kit. Bars open in Burquette (4 km) in the morning for breakfast.

Shops in St Jean Pied de Port: from 8.30 a.m. to 12 p.m. and from 3.00 p.m. to 7.30 p.m.—Bakeries open at 7.00 a.m.

LODGING AT RONCEVAUX:

The pilgrim welcome center at the monastery is open from 10 a.m. to 10 p.m. Price of a bed at the monastery refugio: 10€. No kitchen.—2 Hotels near the abbey—Possible lodging in Burquette (4 km).

Tourist Office in Roncesvalles: 00 34 948 76 03 01.

CHARTER OF GOOD BEHAVIOUR For Pilgrims and users of the Basque mountains

Dear Pilgrims, Tomorrow you will walk up this mythical mountain of the Santiago way. This road, even if mainly used by pilgrims and walkers, is none-the-less not for your sole use. Indeed, you will walk through one of the main pastoral areas of the Pyreneans, counting thousands of ewes, horses... and the many Basque shepherds who look after them. Because of the sometimes uncivil behaviour of some walkers, the relationship between the latter and professionals of the mountain can be tense at times.

Below are a few good behaviour tips:

- Closely follow the markings (cairns, mark posts...) as you walk and don't disturb the nearby herds ;
- If cattle is on your way, keep going forward avoiding big gestures and loud noises, do not feed them, do not try to pet them, they can have unpredictable reactions ;
- While on tared areas, walk on the same side of the road and in a single file if you are in a group – shepherd's vehicles (sometimes heavily-loaded) are bound to cross your way or overtake you ;
- Leave the area free of litter: tins or broken glass can cause injuries to cattle, and most importantly, you will help preserving a "clean mountain" ;
- Natural or artificial cave shelters can be occupied by cattle –in this case the first "occupier" has priority ;
- Bivouac is acceptable where necessary (between 7pm and 7am). Avoid sites where herds are used to spending the night –ask shepherds, they will appreciate you asking ;
- When coming across a shepherd or their vehicle, a little waving sign will always mean more than saying hello in your native language –this will also be taken as a mark of respect ;
- October is ring-dove hunting season on Basque mountain passes –please quickly pass hunter posts (little brick walls) in order not to disturb hunters on the lookout ;
- Dogs must be kept on a leash, please also push back dogs if they have been following you for too long. **Have a nice journey.**

ASS. Amis du chemin de St Jacques des Pyrénées Atlantiques - www.guide-montagne-basque.com

My name is BASAJAUN.

I am a character from the Basque mythology. From time immemorial, I have been watching the Basque mountains, animals, plants, and tomorrow I will be watching you.

Follow my advice.



THE CIZE PASS

"...there are 13 stages. The first goes from the village of St-Michel, at the foot of the Cize Pass on the Gascon side, as far as Viscarret. Here in the Basque country, the way of St James goes by a very high mountain called the Cize Pass ...It is so high that those who climb up there think they're touching the sky. Nearby, to the north, there is the Valcarlos valley, which they take to avoid climbing the mountain."

This extract is from the Liber Sancti Jacobi, which refers to the Cize Pass 14 times.

The western route involved crossing some deep rivers. The eastern route is higher, and more likely to be under snow. The higher route is preferable, because it is easier to orientate yourself; while the valley is densely wooded, deeply ravined, and subject to flooding.

Pre-history Several pieces of evidence indicate that herding and trans-humance were established in this area 3 to 4,000 years ago: the foundations of huts and walls, funerary stone circles (baratz), dolmens, fortified enclosures, and signs of metal-working.

The Roman period

The Antonine itinerary describes this route, as the stage between Immus Pyreneus (the Roman camp at St Jean-le-Vieux) and Summus Pyreneus (which we take to be the Urkulu Tower, or Ibañeta).

8th century

It is highly likely that Charlemagne used this route to cross the mountains on his way back, via Pamplona, from the siege of Sarragossa. According to Einhard, his rearguard was destroyed by the Basques at the top of the pass.

11th century

This was the high point of the Reconquest of Spain from the Moors, and for the pilgrimage. The Benedictine Abbey at Leyre helped pilgrims cross the mountains by maintaining the hospitals of St-Sauveur at Ibañeta and St-Vincent of Cize at St-Michel.

12th century

The Cize pass is found in song and story. The Liber Sancti Jacobi situates one of the 20 miracles of St James here, treating it as a "Mount Joy", where Charlemagne's Cross stands. The Abbey of Roncesvalles is founded by the Bishop of Pamplona and entrusted by him to a College of Canons Regular. Its influence came to extend far to the north and south, through a network of hospitals and agricultural dependencies. In the valley of Luzaide (Valcarlos) alone, there were three hospitals.

13th century

The town of St Jean Pied-de-Port develops around the castle belonging to the King of Navarre, attracting pilgrims who previously passed by St-Michel. The area develops, though the mountain-side remains common-land, under customary law.

16th century

Spanish Navarre is annexed by Aragon and Castile in 1512. St Jean Pied-de-Port remains part of Castile until 1530, but is then given up. The pass is controlled by Chateau-Pignon.

18th century

Cassini's map shows that the higher route is the main one into Spain. The engineer Roussel describes it in 1719: "After the Pertus Pass (in Pyrénées-Orientales), this is the easiest way across the Pyrenees; it is the one most commonly used because it is the regular route between Paris and Madrid. Once the snow has melted, post chaises and even coaches can cross without having to be dismantled."

The Revolution and the Empire

Republican battles in the Pyrenees see the destruction of Chateau-Pignon. In 1813 Marshal Soult uses the high route to bring the imperial artillery back to France.

Late 19th century With the growth of commerce and industry, a hairpin road, at a gradient suitable for mule trains, is opened in 1880 between Varcarlos and Ibañeta.

The pastoral area of Navarre's Cize Pass, in its unspoiled magnificence, is a true cultural and spiritual monument. May it always be a route of discovery and friendship for Europe.