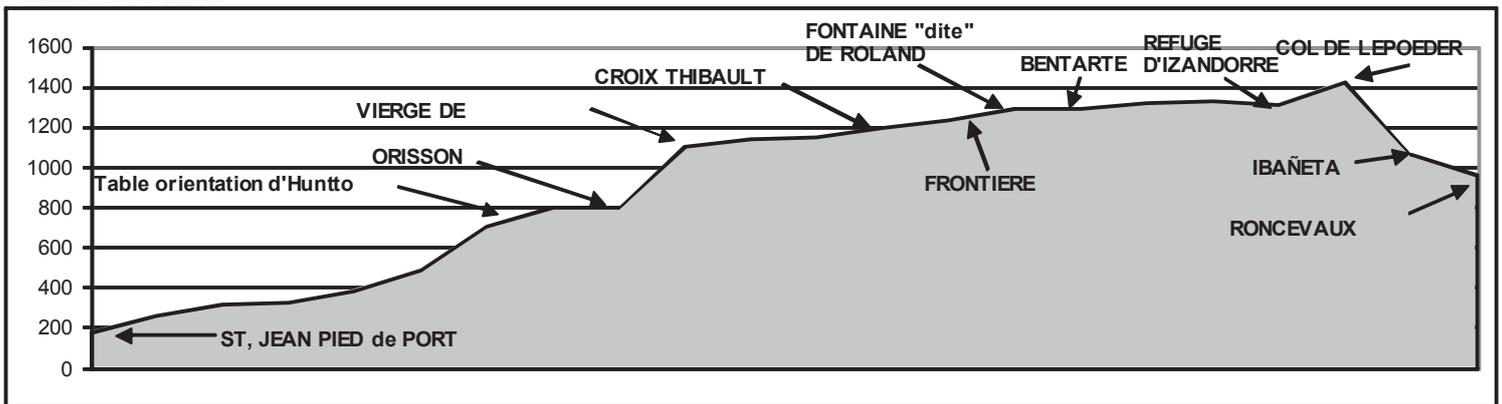




SAINT JEAN PIED DE PORT (DONIBANE GARAZI) RONCEVAUX (ORREAGA) BY THE CIZE PASSES



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 ½ hours (not counting any stops)

Distance: 24.830 kilometers (by GPS)

	Altitude (meters)	Km	Altitude (meters)	Km	Altitude (meters)	Km	
Accueil (Pilgrim Welcome Center) of St Jean Pied de Port :	187	0	Viewpoint indicator at Huntto :	702	6	580	
Porte d'Espagne :	179	400	Orisson refugio :	800	7	630	
Summit of the first hill:	263	1	250	Biakorri Virgin:	1099	11	410
Beginning of the climb to Huntto:	348	4	170	Thibault cross :	1228	15	050
				Roland's fountain:	1317	16	500
				Bentarte Pass :	1325	16	780
				Izandorre refugio :	1300	18	850
				Lepoeder Pass:	1427	20	740
				Ibañeta Pass :	1059	23	490
				Roncevaux:	958	24	830

As soon as you pass through the Porte d'Espagne, there's a first steep slope of a kilometer, then the grade eases up considerably and the way winds past farms and houses for 3 kilometers.

At Erreclus (a farm), the climb to Huntto begins. The slope climbs steadily for 2.8 kilometers. It's best to maintain a reasonable rhythm and not rush.

Half-way up, after passing the inn at Ithurburia, you leave the paved road briefly as it curves to the south, to continue the climb on a dirt road as far as the viewpoint indicator, where you pick up the paved road again at the fountain.

The new Kayola refugio is on your left as you continue up the road, just after an 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, where you can find refreshments. (half board by reservation; public toilets)

From there, the course climbs progressively, always on the pavement (or on the grass that borders it). Ignore the tracks that go off to the right and left towards the shepherds' huts and follow the red and white GR waymarking and the waymarking for the Way of Saint James.

At kilometer 11.410, a little off the trail, is the Biakorri Virgin, protectress of the shepherds.

The course continues to climb progressively, with some long flat spots and even some gentle descents as far as the Thibault cross.

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 Ateka.

After the pass, the track is almost flat, it crosses the border and arrives at the Fountain of Roland (last water source until Roncevaux); 200 meters farther on, at Bentarte Pass, the signage directs you to the right, onto the GR12, the GRT7 and "Orreaga-Roncevalles."

The track crosses a forest, gently undulating, to reach the high Izandorre Pass between Mendi Chipi and Txangoa (two peaks); there is a pretty little 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 after 1.890 kilometers Lepoeder Pass, the highest point of this stage.

After admiring the Burguette plain and the Roncevaux Abbey down in the valley, it is advisable to take the GR12 to your right which follows, with several shortcuts, the old route that descends towards the Ibañeta Pass, passage of the international route to Arneguy.

At the Ibaneta Pass, the track passes near the ornithological center and descends into the forest to reach in 1.340 km. the Abbey of Roncevaux.

At the Lepoeder Pass, the most athletic and toughest could follow the signage for the GRT7 which plunges straight into the forest; this extremely steep and difficult track saves only 400 meters over the entire stage!!!

Important Advice

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

Find out about the weather in the mountains in this area. It is subject to sudden changes due to the mix of ocean and continental influences.

As a result, always have proper clothing for all possible conditions, even in summer.

For weather: Meteo France.com (for local weather type St Jean Pied de Port in the search window)

Respect the document "Proper Conduct in the Basque mountains," which you will receive from the pilgrim welcome center in St Jean Pied de Port.

SUPPLIES : On the high route (Cize Passes), there are NO shops between St. Jean Pied de Port and Burgette, 4 km after Roncevaux.

It is therefore essential that pilgrims purchase, before leaving St. Jean Pied de Port, everything they need for:

- a picnic during the climb —some water (there are 2 sources of water on this route)
- the evening meal at Roncevaux if they do not want to eat at a restaurant — any necessary medicine,
- first aid ki-breakfast, or alternatively the bars at Burguette (4 km) open early

The hours of the stores at St. Jean Pied de Port are 8:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. and 3:00 p.m. to 7:30 p.m., depending on the season. Bakeries open at 7 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 euros. No kitchen.

Two restaurants have pilgrim menus; must reservation before 6 p.m. and present credential.

Tourist Office at Roncevalles: 00 34 948 76 03 01

Useful Web sites:

Association of the Friends of the Way of Saint James in the Pyrenees Atlantique: www.aucoeurduchemin.org —JLA—KATE (translattrass)

CHARTER OF GOOD BEHAVIOUR

For Pilgrims and users of the Basque mountains

Dear Pilgrims, Tomorrow you will walk up this mystical mountain of the Santiago way. This road, even if mainly used by pilgrims and walkers, is nonetheless 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 tarred 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 spend 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

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.