

# Purely PYRENEES

walking and cycling holidays

## The Very Best Of the Spanish Pyrenean Lakeland

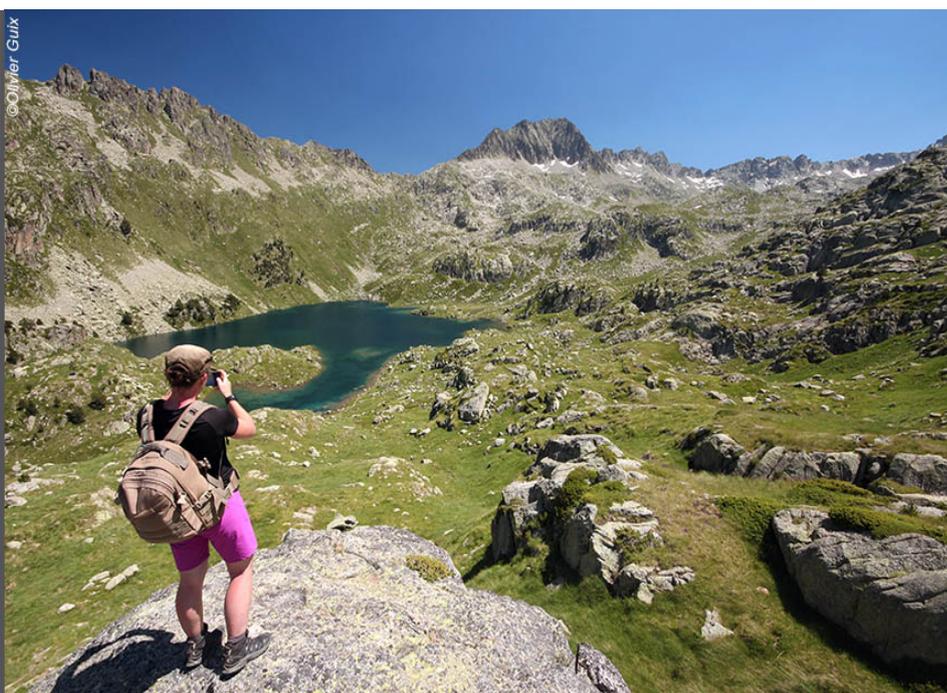


**Probably the best "lakes and mountains" walking holiday in Europe. More lakes. More high mountains. More ancient footpaths. More attractive villages. More authentic cuisine and stylish accommodation. The sunny Catalan Pyrenees awaits you!**

**7 nights, 7 walking days**

- Minimum required 2 (For safety reasons.)
- From point to point
- With luggage transportation
- Self-guided

Code :  
**FP2PUAR**



### ***The plus points***

- **Transfers from and to Toulouse**
- **Luggage transfers every day (except one) so you only carry a daysack**
- **Authentic hotels with dinner included - and one night in a mountain refuge**
- **24/7 customer service**

*Before departure, please check that you have an updated fact sheet.*

[http://www.purelypyrenees.com/very\\_best\\_spanish\\_pyrenean\\_lakeland.html](http://www.purelypyrenees.com/very_best_spanish_pyrenean_lakeland.html)

*The region of the Italian Lakes has five major lakes. Britain's Lake District has less than 30 lakes, tarns and reservoirs. Spain's Encantats Lakeland has over 300, and on this holiday you can walk past and/or see at least 100. What's more, it is a dramatically beautiful region, and the lakes, with their crystal clear waters, reflect the sunshine, blue skies, high mountain peaks and deep green forests that typify this region - largely undiscovered by foreign visitors but granted iconic, almost sacred, status by Spaniards.*

*If you like lakes and mountains, you will love this. If you also like ancient footpaths, typical villages, historic churches, wonderful cuisine and a warm welcome then you will adore this region.*

*This itinerary includes daily private transfers to enable you to only walk the "best bits". Inevitably, this adds to the holiday cost, so the overall price cannot be directly compared with apparently similar holidays.*

## ■ PROGRAMME

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### DAY 1

#### Arrival at Salardu

**Standard option:** You make your own way to Salardù in your own car. You will be able to use it for walk transfers on day 2 (but not all days because some of the dirt tracks are restricted to taxis only).

**With extra airport pick-up:** We will pick you up at Toulouse airport or railway station and take you to Salardù.

Salardù is located in the beautiful Aran valley, on the Spanish side of the border. You stay for the first three nights in Salardu because it is at the very centre of endless wonderful walks in the Encantats Lakeland - as you will discover!

You stay at the welcoming Hôtel Deth Pais (it means Country Hotel in the local Aranese language - different to Spanish or Catalan), which combines the best of traditional values and modern facilities. It also makes the best of its admirable location: in the high altitude village of Salardu right next to one of the most renowned 13th century Romanesque churches (wonderful paintings and sculpture), and facing, across the valley, the highest mountain in the whole of the Pyrenees, the 11,000 feet Aneto, as well as having lovely views down the Aran valley. We are confident you will really enjoy your dinner, and the good breakfast here.

**Transfer time : 2h45.**

### DAY 2

#### Baciver lakes

Your first walk is a circular one that enables you to begin to appreciate the majesty of this Pyrenean Lakeland, while keeping an eye out for the Pyrenean chamois (more goat than deer in its behaviour), and, overhead, a variety of eagles and birds of prey, not least the magnificent Griffon Vultures. There is a short transfer so your walk can begin on the lovely Beret plateau (close to the celebrated ski resort of Baqueira-Beret) with a gentle walk through narrow granite valleys and pine forests before the landscape opens out into large glacial "amphitheatre" where you will find the first Baciver lakes. You follow a looping path that passes several lakes, almost all ridiculously photogenic, and gradually climbs to the Tuc de Rosari where you have unforgettably panoramic views across the Encantats "massif" to the magnificent Aneto itself. You can take a longer route, or simply descend by another path to the Beret plateau, and Salardu. A great start, we promise!

For your second night in Salardu, you stay at the Hôtel Deth Pais, but eat in a very good village restaurant. If you have your own car, you can use it for today's transfer.

**Walking time : 4h30 or 6h. Distance : 9,5km or 12,5km. Elevation : + 500m or + 800m / - 500m or - 800m. Transfer time : 15 minutes.**

### **DAY 3**

#### **Colomers lakes**

Today there is a spectacular drive up to the beginning of the justly famous Colomers valley. You will enjoy the magnificent circular path that passes close to 50 (yes fifty) lakes - some admittedly more ponds than lakes, but the banks of some resembling artistically landscaped gardens rather than the entirely natural places they actually are. The often emerald coloured waters reflect the surrounding alpine meadows, pine trees and mountains, but the scenery is constantly changing with delightful surprises around almost every corner. For those of us used to visiting just one lake, it is an almost overwhelming experience to see so many lovely lakes, especially with so very few other people around, and no coaches or souvenir shops!

For your final night in Salardu, you stay at the Hôtel Deth Pais again.

**Walking time : 5h. Distance : 11,5km. Elevation : + 450m / - 650m. Transfer time : 35 minutes.**

### **DAY 4**

#### **Salardu - Val de Ruda - Saboredo - Refuge d'Amitges**

We begin the day by transferring you to the Ruda valley (4x4 taxi necessary) so that you can explore the numerous lakes of the Saboredo valley, gradually climbing up to the 8,398 feet col at Ratera d'Espot (but remember that you start at somewhere around 5,000 feet so the climb is not that great!). Here there is a small mountain refuge of Saboredo where they serve food at lunchtime, and drinks at other times. You now make a short descent by a mountain "balcony" path to the wonderfully located refuge d'Amitges where you will spend a truly unforgettable night in the heart of the Pyrenees. For many this is the highlight of the journey.

The large, stone built refuge could not be better located: beside a lake with the San Maurici valley and numerous lakes below, and the magnificent granite peaks around you - and over which the sun rises. Whether you are up in time to see that depends entirely on you, but we would certainly recommend it. Life in a mountain refuge is relaxed, friendly and communal. You sleep in a dormitory, share the private bathrooms (hot showers), eat at communal long tables, and will almost certainly enjoy meeting a wide range of interesting people - from millionaire bankers to impecunious adventurers, from super-fit 25 year olds to grizzled walkers well into their 70s!

**Walking time : 5 to 6h. Distance : 11km. Elevation : + 900m / - 200m. Transfer time : 45 minutes.**

## **DAY 5**

### **Refuge d'Amitges - San Maurici Lake - Portarro d'Espot - Estanny Llong - Erill la Vall**

Sadly (we expect!), you will leave the refuge, but will soon recover your spirits as you walk down a hidden valley with tumbling streams and crystal-clear waterfalls more populated with deer than people, and arrive at the heart of the Aiguestortes and San Maurici Lake National Park - little known outside Spain, but an iconic, almost sacred, must-visit destination for the Spanish. You will experience for yourself just why that is the case.

You take a superb path above San Maurici lake with magnificent views of the famous twin peaks dominating it, and arrive at the Portarro d'Espot col at more than 7,000 feet - and the crossroads right at the heart of the Encantats. Your camera might just be used here before you gently descend to the gorgeous Lake Long ( the most attractive one in the region?) then through meadows and forests beside the "tortuous waters" of the Aiguestortes river itself, which gradually calms and meanders as it reaches the valley floor. We collect you to avoid the short but tiring (at the end of a great day's) walk to the village of Erill la Vall.

For some technical reason, the charming, recently refurbished and simply delightful chalet style Hôtel l'Aüt is a one star hotel, despite having an attractive restaurant (with good regional cuisine), beautifully refurbished en suite bedrooms featuring local stone and wood, and in a great location in the pretty, medieval village of Erill la Vall - and a few steps away from the famous Romanesque church of Santa Eulalia. We like it a lot.

**Walking time : 5h. Distance : 12km. Elevation : + 300m / - 850m. Transfer time : 40 minutes.**

## **DAY 6**

### **Boi valley**

Erill la Vall is in the heart of the Boi valley, renowned for its Romanesque churches, and today you take a circular walk that takes in all its highlights: the ancient footpaths; the village of Boi with its remarkable stone houses, and restored frescoes in Sant Joan church; the lovely village of Taüll with its 2 churches, Sant Climent being the most famous in the whole region because of its bell tower and superbly restored frescoes; a return walk beside a picture book stream - and the option of taking a "balcony" path up to the village of Durro.

You stay a second night at the Hôtel l'Aüt appreciating its well earned comforts and cuisine.

**Walking time : 4h or 5h30. Distance : 9km or 14km. Elevation : + 500m or + 700m / - 500m or - 700m.**

## **DAY 7**

### **Erill la Vall - Cavallers lake - Refuge de Ventosa - Port de Rius - Restanca - Vielha**

Today begins with a short taxi transfer to the bottom of the valley, and the man-made, but nonetheless attractive, Cavallers lake with the surrounding granite mountains (popular with climbers) reflected in its crystal clear waters. You walk up from there to the stone built refuge at Ventosa y Calvell, beautifully situated on a rocky spur above the Black Lake, which usually is not black at all, and neither are the mountains rising all around it, including the impressive 9,000 feet plus Besiberris range. In fact, you will probably be walking in glorious sunshine across a lovely plateau that features the Travessani lakes before reaching the col de Crestada, and descending past numerous other high altitude lakes to arrive at the Restanca refuge. The pick-up point is just a little further down the hill, from where we will drive you to Vielha. Alternatively, there is a shorter walking option returning to the Cavallers lake, but resulting in a longer transfer.

**Standard option:** At the end of your walk you will have a transfer back to Salardù to collect your car. You then have just a 7-mile drive to your last night's hotel in Vielha. This way you will be free to leave when you want the following morning.

**With extra airport pick-up:** At the end of your walk you will be taken directly to the hotel in Vielha.

Vielha is the main town in the Aran valley, and the 3 star Hôtel Riu Nere is a stone building well situated in the pedestrianised zone in the centre of the old village. It has been designer refurbished with style, and a lot of wonderful local timber. The restaurant offers high quality regional gastronomy, but you might also want to wander the streets in search of a plate of tapas or two. A fine end to your journey anyway.

**Walking time : 4h or 6h. Distance : 8km or 11,5km. Elevation : + 500m or + 700m / - 500m or - 850m. Transfer time : 30 minutes or 1h15.**

## **DAY 8**

### **End of Stay**

**Standard option:** Your holiday ends after breakfast.

**With extra airport transfer:** We will pick you up from your hotel after breakfast and transfer you back to Toulouse airport or railway station.

*Elements beyond our control (the weather, level of the group, logistical risks, other miscellaneous reasons...) may lead our team to modify the programme. We aim to please, but your safety will systematically be our priority.*

**WARNING :** This winter (2017/18) has given us a lot of snow in the Pyrenees and the spring season is also giving us unusually low temperatures. The amount of snow still lying is therefore exceptional for the time of year. Depending on the speed at which the remaining snow cover continues to melt, we may be forced to move your holiday to a later date (in spite of the theoretical possible departure dates) or modify the proposed itineraries. Thank-you for your comprehension.

## ■ **USEFUL INFORMATION**

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### **PROGRAMME OF DEPARTURES**

20 June to 30 September

### **MEETING POINT**

**Standard option:** You make your own way to Salardù in your own car. You will be able to use it for walk transfers on some days (but not all days because some of the dirt tracks are restricted to taxis only).

**With extra airport pick-up:** We will pick you up at Toulouse airport of railway station and take you to Salardù.

### **END OF STAY**

**Standard option:** Your holiday ends after breakfast. You will be at Vielha with your own car at this point.

**With extra airport transfer:** We will pick you up from your hotel after breakfast and transfer you back to Toulouse airport of railway station.

### **TO GET TO THE MEETING POINT**

SNCF runs overnight sleeper trains, and daytime trains go to Toulouse. There are frequent flights to Toulouse from London and Paris as well as less frequent ones from at least ten British and European cities, and from Canada in the height of summer. Or you can drive directly to Salardù.

### **CAR SHARING**

To reduce your travel costs as well as carbon emissions, think about car sharing, whether you are a driver or passenger. Connect to [Blablacar](#) it's simple and practical.

We recommend that you compare the cost of various different means of accessing your circuit start point by using the website [Comparabus](#). Contrary to what the name suggests, this site proposes several different means of completing a journey, including, flights, trains, buses or car sharing.

### **PARKING**

If you arrive by car on Day 1 you can pay the hotel 5 Euros/day for secure parking (book this with the hotel beforehand). Otherwise, there is also free public parking in Salardù which is not far from the hotel.

### **IF YOU WANT TO ARRIVE THE NIGHT BEFORE OR STAY AFTER THE TRIP**

You can book extra nights before, during or after the holiday. Just contact us.

## **GUARANTEED DEPARTURE FROM (PERS)**

2 (For safety reasons, not recommended for one person)

### **LEVEL**

This holiday features mostly comfortable but some fairly challenging walking, so is suitable for reasonably fit people used to walking for much of a day. On several days there are choices of itineraries, which you can decide for yourselves each day. It can get a little hot in July and August, as well as more crowded. We would recommend June and from mid-August through September as the best months.

### **LUGGAGE TRANSPORTATION**

We will transfer your luggage between each hotel, so all you need to carry when walking is a daysack with whatever you regard as essentials. However, for the night in the refuge you do need to carry whatever washing things, and change of clothes you think necessary - plus a lightweight sleepingbag-liner (blankets provided).

### **SUPERVISION**

This is an independent, self-guided holiday.

### **ACCOMODATION**

You stay in double or twin rooms for one night in three star hotel, 3 nights in two star hotels, two nights in particularly good two star hotels, and one night in a comfortable mountain refuge where you sleep in a dormitory with shared bathrooms and hot showers.

### **MEALS**

You will eat well. Dinners are based on set menus featuring regional specialities usually with 3 or 4 choices for each of three courses, but you can pay locally for upgraded choices. At the mountain refuge there may be no or little choice for dinner. Breakfast is included every morning as are picnics on days when there are no shops or cafes/restaurants - and, anyway, you can always ask the hotel the night before to make a picnic, which you can pay for locally

### **TRANSFERS**

Usually transfers are in people carriers, mini-buses, cars or taxis. Often they will be exclusively for you.

### **THE PRICE INCLUDES**

7 nights dinner, bed and breakfast; 1 picnic; people transfers; luggage transfers (except for the night at the mountain refuge); detailed walking instructions; map; 24/7 customer phone service

### **THE PRICE DOES NOT INCLUDE**

The journey to the start point, and from the finish point, except as specified; lunches except 1 picnic; drinks with meals; non-standard menu items; entry fees; personal and travel insurance.

## **FORMALITIES**

You need to keep your passport with you at all times, and ideally insurance information. You need to make your own arrangements to claim local healthcare. There are requirements in France and Spain for all vehicles to carry safety equipment.

## **CONTENTS OF YOUR TRAVEL FOLDER**

When we have received your balance of payment for your holiday, and in the month before departure, we send you all the documentation you need: detailed itinerary showing dates, times, contact details etc; a detailed guide to your walking route (with options) and lots of cultural, historical and nature background information; formal documents (invoices, contracts etc); luggage labels etc. If you book at the last minute, we can send this information to your first night hotel.

## **■ EQUIPMENT**

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**Do** pack everything into one suitcase (preferably soft form) and a weatherproof daysack (small rucksack) each. We transport your luggage, and large rucksacks are difficult for flights and cars.

**Do** invest in "tech" clothing - light, waterproof, breathable, quick drying etc - and good boots.

**Do** simplify your "tech" equipment if you can: for example, can you get communications, internet access, entertainment, music and books all on your smartphone? There's plenty of space in your luggage for a Kindle, but do you need to take 3 or 4 books?

**Do** choose comfortable clothing for evenings too - usually people dress casual, or at most smart casual, but you are staying and dining in quality hotels.

**Do** remember that while you are enjoying some of the most unspoilt and magnificent scenery and landscapes in the world, and walking for hours without seeing another soul, you will be staying in villages and towns with shops that have most of the things you might need as replacements, or if you've forgotten stuff. After all, you are in France and Spain!

## **LUGGAGE**

- A soft travel bag, avoid suitcases, which are more cumbersome and limit the weight of your belongings to 10 kg.
- A small backpack of 30 litres minimum for your daytime requirements.

## **CLOTHES**

- A waterproof and breathable jacket (Gore-Tex type)
- A fleece or a sweater
- A raincoat (poncho)
- Walking trousers
- 1 pair of gloves
- 1 hat
- Shorts
- A bathing suit + towel
- Several pairs of socks (not too large)
- Underwear
- 1 pair of trainers
- Loose clothing for the evening

## EQUIPMENT TO BRING

- 1 pair of walking shoes that have been used before
- Sunglasses, sunscreen and lip protection
- 1 bottle (allow 2 to 3 litres per person per day in summer)
- A Tupperware type plastic bowl for the picnic + cutlery
- 1 compass
- Waterproof map cover (advised)
- 1 head torch in your rucksack (for safety)
- 1 survival cover (from a chemist)
- 1 mobile phone (advised)
- Camera and why not a novel, your watercolours or other desires...
- Your identification documents
- **Sleeping bag liner** : your itinerary includes a night in a mountain refuge, then you will need a sleeping bag liner as the refuge will supply sleeping bags and/or blankets. Sleeping bag liners range greatly in size (avoid a "mummy" shape if you are a larger person) and material (from nylon through cotton to silk), so we think it is better for you to buy and bring one that suits you.

## FIRST AID KIT

- A small personal kit (gauze, Elastoplast, analgesic, double skin for blisters, earplugs...)

## ■ MORE INFORMATION

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### THE AREA

If you continue south along the River Garonne from Toulouse you will eventually end up in a valley that is somewhat of an anomaly: the "Val d'Aran". This valley is in the north-west corner of Catalonia, on the Spanish side of the border, and yet it is a north facing valley irrigated by the River Garonne! Perhaps this is why so many French people come to ski at Baqueira, the valley's enormous ski resort.

The local language that is spoken here (Aranese) is also much more similar to French Occitan than it is to either Catalan or Spanish. It is the mother tongue of around 25% of the valley's population. It is an official language within the autonomous region of Catalonia, but is not an official language of the Spanish state.

To the south of this valley there lies another gem of the Pyrenees: the National Park of Aigüestortes and the Encantats. Here we can find the highest concentration of lakes in the whole of the Pyrenees: 190 larger lakes and over 450 smaller lakes that may dry up during the summer months. When you go walking here, there is literally a lake around every corner!

In addition, we are very near to the highest mountain in the whole of the Pyrenees (El Aneto, 3404m) and just a short drive away from the beautiful valley of Boí and its Romanesque churches that are in the UNESCO world heritage catalogue.

Politically, this area forms part of Spanish Catalonia. Recently (2017), Catalonia claimed independence from Spain. This independence has not been officially recognised by any other European nation, but many people will insist that they are now independent. The situation is likely to develop significantly over the coming years, but the subject can be quite a thorny one, so you should be aware that the opinions of local people should be respected whether you happen to agree with them or not.

An interesting fact is that Napoleon actually seized the Val d'Aran from the Spanish and the area belonged to France for 5 years between 1810 and 1815.

The valley was badly connected to the rest of Spain and Catalonia for a long time. Two of the most important events in the valley's history were the opening of the Banaigua pass road in 1924 and the opening of the Vielha tunnel in 1948.

In 1944, French troops invaded the Val d'Aran, hoping to re-start the war with Franco again. However, Franco's government was well-informed about the attack and they were easily able to resist.

If eating is your thing, then there is all the traditional Catalan food, but with an emphasis on mountain produce such as cheese and meats. Catalan sausages or crema catalana (or crema aranesa!) are just two of the specialities to be found here, but the pride of the valley is the "olla aranesa", a kind of mountain hot-pot containing lots of different meats, beans and vegetables.

Typical alcoholic drinks include walnut liquor or blackcurrent liquor.

## ■ INSURANCE

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According to the regulation of our profession, Purely Pyrenees is covered by a Civil Professional Liability. However, each client must hold an individual civil liability as well as an individual multi risk guarantee in order to protect themselves from incidents or accidents that may occur before or during their hiking trip.

We remind you that a credit card covers, in general, only assistance in repatriation and not the cancellation of your trip, and this only provided you use the card to pay for the total of the trip.

We offer a choice of three insurance options which you can purchase at the time of booking.

### **Package 1: simple cancellation insurance at 2.5%**

This insurance provides reimbursement of the amount incurred (excluding fees and the cost of insurance) in case of cancellation due to one of the following causes: serious accident, illness or death of insured, spouse or person accompanying them, and certain family members.

### **Package 2: simple cancellation insurance and assistance / repatriation at 3.7%**

This insurance allows, in addition to the benefits described in the plan No. 1; - To benefit from assistance in case of illness or injury during the trip and covers your return home if necessary. - A reimbursement paid on a pro rata basis (excluding transportation costs and with a waiting period) in the case of an interruption of your trip following an accident, the death of a loved one or other specified accidents.

### **Package 3: Package "super multi-risk": 4.8%**

This insurance offers, in addition to the benefits described in the packages No. 1 and No. 2, - A wider cancellation insurance with the repayment of amounts incurred (net of deductible) in case of cancellation for any justifiable reason including an exceptional and unexpected event. - The management of some of the costs incurred at the time in case of return not linked to an exceptional and unexpected event. - Compensation (capped) for loss, theft or destruction of baggage. - Payment of compensation for delayed baggage delivery of more than 48 hours.

**The repatriation is not valid for all countries, please check with us before subscribing the insurance.**

You will receive with the confirmation of your booking an extract of the general conditions of contract chosen (in french). Take this document with you on your journey. The validity of all guarantees corresponds with the travel dates indicated on the invoice and applies only to services sold. For departures and returns postponed, please contact us. Warning: If you buy only the contract No. 1 (simple cancellation insurance), this means that you need to have your own insurance, repatriation assistance (related notably to certain credit cards). We advise you to check your contract and cover guaranteed. In this case, we ask you to tell us when you book the name of your insurance company and your policy number. You will assume, therefore, the responsibility of certain risks, especially in the advance payments of certain costs.

Important: If you must use the assistance during the trip, you must obtain the prior consent of Europe Assistance before taking any action or incur any expenditure by telephoning: 33 1 41 85 85 85 and quoting the number of contract: 58662860

## **■ ACTING FOR RESPONSIBLE TOURISM**

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Purely Pyrenees is a founding member of Action for Responsible Tourism.

The label "Action for Responsible Tourism" was awarded Purely Pyrenees in 2009. It is controlled, every year, by ECOCERT.

Based on common values of respect, solidarity and quality, ATR aims to harmonize professional practices of its members.

To win the confidence of customers, it focuses on four key commitments, which arise from many activities in the field and at home.

- Clear information and awareness of responsible tourism given to the traveller.
- Selection of providers in the spirit of responsible tourism.
- Setting up of a transfer of competencies to the providers.
- Commitment in relation to the tour operator's own structure.

More information on the label ATR on [/www.tourisme-responsable.org](http://www.tourisme-responsable.org)

## ■ CONTACT US

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## ■ NOTES

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