

# **Inntravel**

The *Slow Holiday* people

## ***Sample Inntravel Walking Notes***

***These documents demonstrate the supportive style of the notes that we supply with the ticketing pack for your independent holiday. Please note that details in sample documents are not updated or checked for accuracy, and in some cases they are for holidays no longer available through Inntravel.***

# **Pilgrim Paths of Gascony**

This walk takes you through the gentle, unknown countryside of Gascony, taking in some wonderful medieval bastide villages and some historic sites. Your evenings will be enhanced by enjoyment of the excellent food and fine wines of the region.

We wish you a very pleasant holiday.

# Pilgrim Paths of Gascony

## **We hope that you're looking forward to your holiday with Inntravel**

You should already have received the following documents, either with your holiday confirmation/invoice, or by links on your MyInntravel webpage (please let us know if you have not received them):

- Your insurance policy documents (if applicable)
- 'Preparing for your walking holiday' document
- 'Driving in Europe' document (if you are driving)
- Eurostar (if you are travelling by train)
- 'France' Country Information document

This pack now completes all of the documentation that you will need for the trip; in addition to the following pages, you should also find in this pack:

- Itinerary
- Tickets or e - tickets (please check these)
- Maps IGN blue:
  - 1741E Mezin
  - 1841SB Condom
  - 1842E Fleurance
- 'Walk Safely' leaflet
- Luggage labels
- A copy of your outline itinerary

## Pilgrim Paths of Gascony

### **These notes are divided in to three sections –**

- General Information, where you will find important contact details, along with advice on practical matters, the weather, and some background information for the holiday.
- 
- Travel Information, which includes details for travel to the start of the holiday, as well as returning from the end, and information on arriving at your first accommodation.
- 
- Route Information, which, in addition to the daily walking notes, gives more detail on the overall route, and advice on how to make the most of the notes.

# Pilgrim Paths of Gascony

## Contact details

The following pages contain contact information for emergency services, Inntavel, your hoteliers. **We recommend that you take this information with you each day.**

In the rare event that you should encounter any problems during your stay, please contact the owners/agents in the first instance as they act as our representatives. Please do not wait to report any serious dissatisfaction until you return home as problems can only be rectified if you give us the chance to do so at the time.

### Emergency:

The local emergency services in France can be summoned on **112**

If you need to contact Inntavel on urgent matters, please phone

**+44 (0)1653 XXXXXX.**

Note that the international dialling code for the UK is +44.

Outside our office hours, your initial call to this number will be taken by our emergency assistance service. Please provide them with your contact telephone number, location, booking reference number (if you have this easily to hand) and a brief description of your problem; they will then immediately contact Inntavel's 24-hour Duty Officer, who will call you to assist. If you are unable to reach us on this number at any time, you should call **+44 (0)XXXX XXXXXX** as an alternative way of reaching our emergency assistance service.

Please **do not** call the emergency numbers for routine matters or enquiries. These can be most effectively handled by our full team during office hours by calling +44 (0)1653 XXXXXX

The international dialling code for France is **+33**

Pilgrim Paths of Gascony

# General Information

# Pilgrim Paths of Gascony

## **Accommodation:**

### **Le Logis des Cordeliers**

2 rue de la Paix

32000 Condom

Tel: +33 (0)5 XX XX XX XX

Email: xxxxx@xxxxxxxxxxxxx.com

### **Hotel de Bastard**

Rue Lagrange

32700 Lectoure

Tel: +33 (0)5 XX XX XX XX

Email: xxxxx@xxxxxxxxxxxxx.com

### **Bénazit** (Chambre d'hôte)

32500 Castelnau d'Arbieu

Tel: +33 (0)5 XX XX XX XX

Email: xxxxx@xxxxxxxxxxxxx.com

**Taxi XXX:** +33 (0)5 XX XX XX XX

## Pilgrim Paths of Gascony

### Practicalities:

**NB** *It is important that you read the enclosed 'Walk Safely' notes for our full advice regarding walking holidays, and we trust that you have already read the 'Preparing for your walking holiday' document. The following information below is additional to these, and should be read in conjunction with them:*

**What you need to take:** In particular, it is essential to bring a hat and high-factor sun-barrier cream. Take a **plentiful supply of water** with you each day (about 1.5 - 2 litres per person per day). We recommend lightweight walking boots for this holiday, although early and late in the season waterproof ones might be an advantage. **Bring mosquito repellent if your trip falls in the summer, and carry it with you on your walks.** Three of the four hotels have swimming pools, so don't forget your swimming costume!

**Luggage:** On each of the mornings when you are moving on, please make sure you leave your luggage in reception and inform someone that it is there, ready for the transfer. Please use the Inntravel **luggage transfer** label to indicate the name of each hotel you will be visiting and the date, so that the hoteliers and taxi drivers can easily see where your bags are to be taken. Use the **party name** as shown on your itinerary and ensure that each piece of luggage is clearly marked with this name.

**Diet:** We have informed the hotels of any special dietary requirements you may have, but we suggest that you reconfirm this with each hotel on arrival.

**Meals:** Two picnics are included in your holiday – on your moving on days. These sometimes include salads with a runny dressing, so you might like to take your own plastic box with a tight - fitting lid to prevent spillage.

**Money:** ATMs are available en route in the towns and villages you stay in or pass through and of course of course you can obtain local currency on arrival at the airport, if you have not already procured it before travelling. All of the hotels accept major card payments for extras, and payment cards are widely accepted in restaurants etc.

**Restaurants:** This is a deeply traditional area and restaurants are often closed on a Sunday evening and Monday. We have identified places that you can eat on these days, but it is always worth checking with your hotel reception regarding any seasonal changes.

# Pilgrim Paths of Gascony

## Gascony and the Gers

Your holiday takes place in a region of old France known as Gascony – a territory that once stretched from the Pyrenees to the south, to the Garonne river in the north. Today, old Gascony spans the modern regions of Aquitaine and the Midi-Pyrenees, with your holiday taking place in an area of the Midi-Pyrenees known as the Gers; a tranquil and sparsely populated land of rolling hills, woodlands, and sleepy, fortified medieval villages. Much of the landscape has been shaped by long forgotten battles, by the Hundred Years War and the radical political and social change that accompanied the decline of feudalism. During the last century, rural depopulation and modernisation of farming methods has created a rolling landscape of grain, garlic and grass. Islands of woodland and mirror lakes dot the landscape, creating a 'parkland' of quiet, understated beauty. And across it all lies a network of traditional routes which overlap a medieval lacework of pilgrim paths.

### Climate

Like the landscape, the climate is one of few extremes. It is rare to find snow here, even in the depths of winter, and summer temperatures tend to average around 20°C. Atlantic winds can bring in sudden squalls, but overall the rainfall averages approximately 700mm per year at Auch (the regional capital), and declines as you move both west and east. Be prepared for plenty of sun but also rain in any month – the wettest time is late spring, early autumn.

### Pilgrim paths and the rise of the Medieval cult of St James

It was against the background of these times that the cult of St James took hold. According to tradition and following Christ's death, St James travelled as a missionary to Galicia in northwest Spain, but finding few converts James soon returned to Palestine where he was imprisoned by King Herodes Agrippa I and beheaded. After James' death it seems that his disciples brought his body back to Galicia in "a miraculous boat that went without sails, steered by God himself".

During the 9th century, beset by Moorish invaders, Spain was desperately in need of a warrior saint. In 834, when the Moors were defeated at the battle of Clavijo, the Christian forces became convinced that James had interceded on their behalf. James' cult status was reinforced when his remains were miraculously revealed to a shepherd named Pelagius.

## Pilgrim Paths of Gascony

Seeing strange lights hovering above a nearby forest, he summoned the local bishop and drawing upon the familiar myth of the three kings, the bishop was then guided to the relics of St James by a star. Inspired by this revelation, French monks in Cluny began to promise complete absolution to all those who completed a pilgrimage to the tomb of St James at Santiago de Compostela. The Bishop of Le Puy in France, Gottsalk, was the first pilgrim to make the trip in the year 950 and by the 12th century there were up to two million pilgrims per year taking part - making it the third most important centre of pilgrimage in the world after Jerusalem and Rome. The pilgrims travelled along four main routes that originated in northern Europe, starting at places like Vezelay in Burgundy, le Puy in the Massif Central, and Arles. The routes became rich from the passage of millions of pilgrims; hostels were set up, bridges and paved paths built and having completed the arduous trek, pilgrims would sew scallop shells – the symbol of the pilgrimage to St. James – to their hats or cloaks for the return journey as proof of their achievement.

Two versions of the most common myth about the origin of the symbolic scallop shell concern events surrounding the death of Saint James. In the first story, when his disciples shipped James' body to Galicia, a heavy storm hit the ship and the body was lost to the ocean. After some time however, the body washed ashore undamaged, covered in scallops. In the second, as James' ship approached land, a wedding was taking place on the shore. The young bridegroom was on horseback, and on seeing the ship approaching, his horse got spooked, and the horse and rider plunged into the sea. Through miraculous intervention, the horse and rider emerged from the water alive, covered in seashells.

Enthusiasm for the pilgrimage lasted until the C16th, after which numbers waned until the resurgence of interest in the C20th. Your route traces part of the way known as the Via Podiensis, originating in Puy-en-Velay and crossing the most northern part of the Gers into the Landes at Aire Sur l'Ardour, and during the pilgrimage season, you are likely to cross paths with many interesting people especially on the stretches between Abrin and Marsolan (day 2) and Lectoure to Miradoux (day 4).

### **The 'English years'.**

In 1058, the Duchy of Vasconia (Gascony) and Aquitaine merged under the rule of William VIII, Duke of Aquitaine. Over the next century, the Duchy of Aquitaine was held by the Count of Poitiers, until, in 1137, it passed to the

## Pilgrim Paths of Gascony

Kingdom of France when Eleanor of Aquitaine married Louis VII. Unfortunately, they didn't get on very well and their marriage was expediently annulled (on the basis of consanguinity), whereupon Eleanor married her northern neighbour, the younger and more handsome Henry of Anjou. Henry became the 'Anjevin' Henry II of England two years later, and through this judicious marriage secured the whole of southwestern France for the English throne.

England ruled this vast area for the next 300 years and it was during this period that many of the *bastide* towns were built and settled. The *bastides* were new towns planned and built as a single unit by a single founder; these developed throughout the southwest region initially in response to the destruction wrought in the neighbouring County of Toulouse by the Crusades against the heretical Cathars.

Farmers who elected to move their families to *bastides* were no longer vassals of the local lord — they became free men; thus the creation of *bastides* became a powerful force in the waning of feudalism. The new inhabitants were encouraged to work the land around the *bastide*, which in turn attracted trade in the form of merchants and markets. The lord taxed dwellings in the *bastides* and all trade in the market, raising money in taxes rather than tithes. Planned on a grid pattern and fortified, often located on higher ground, they had unusually wide streets (to take carts) with a network of narrower pedestrian alleyways. The focal point was always an arcaded square, partly providing shade and shelter but mainly to offer a market area, the *halle*, where goods could be traded.

Thus, this was a time of expansion and prosperity. Intellectual and economic development was helped by the flow of pilgrims to Santiago de Compostela, bringing new ideas and money to the area.

Unsurprisingly, the rulers of the rest of France were keen to regain the territory, and by 1337 had won some of it back. In this year Charles IV of France died, and the English King Edward III claimed the throne. Rejected by the French, Edward went to war over the issue. The first battle in what became known as the Hundred Years War was fought at Crécy in 1346, where the French were defeated. Edward's son, the Black Prince, won a further victory at Poitiers, but slowly the English were forced to retreat until they held only Bordeaux. The situation was reversed by the English victory under Henry V at Agincourt in 1415, but by the middle of the same century the English were finally routed. During this turbulent period of the 100

## Pilgrim Paths of Gascony

Years War (1337-1453), lasting damage was visited on the economy of the region, and some of the villages were so badly damaged that they were abandoned. However, many still survive; your route takes you past Valence, La Romieu, and Larressingle, to name but three.

### **Gascony today**

Today, the historic County of Gascony no longer exists and the old landholdings are split between the regions of the Midi-Pyrenees (to the east) and of Aquitaine (to the west) - with your holiday taking place in the Gers, a département of the Midi-Pyrenees. In relatively recent history (1850), the Gers was one of the most heavily populated areas in Gascony. However, during the late-20th century, the population halved. It won't come as a surprise as you look around, that over one third of the population still works on the land, although the 20th century has seen large changes in land use. Today, the fields are planted with rapeseed, sunflowers, wheat and maize which rotate with the specialist crops such as garlic and melons.

In the 1950s it was discovered that the clay and limestone soil and the local climate produced particularly sweet Charentais melons and almost 5000 tons of fruits are now harvested from late June onwards. There is even a *fête du melon* which takes place mid-August every year in Lectoure! The same soil conditions are also ideal for growing a specific variety of garlic - the white garlic of Lomagne (from the eastern end of the Gers between the rivers Gers and Garonne). It has a pearly white bulb often streaked with violet and is harvested in late June. In 2008, the Ail de Lomagne was awarded a "PGI" or "Protected Geographical Indication" – similar to appellation controlee for wines – and a third of the country's garlic is produced in this region.

### **Eating and Drinking**

The food of this region is much like that of the rest of south-west France, rich and sometimes spicy and based particularly on poultry. A particular local dish is *cassoulet*, a rich casserole dish containing duck, spicy sausage, haricot beans and vegetables. This is a must, if you have never tasted it before. Large numbers of duck and geese are reared in this region for *foie gras d'oie* (goose liver), or *de canard* (duck). It can be eaten raw (*nature*) after being marinated, or partly cooked in the oven or a frying pan (*mi-cuit*). It is best eaten with toasted local bread and a little *gelée*.

## Pilgrim Paths of Gascony

Duck and goose breast is grilled and called *magret* in Gascony (*maigret* in the rest of France). Both duck and goose are sometimes oven-cooked and then preserved in their own fat. This makes the flesh as soft as butter, and when reheated in the oven it produces the rich and flavoursome dish known as *confit*. The gizzard (*gésiers*) is used in salad, especially *salade landaise*. *Cèps* – small, well-flavoured mushrooms - are added to many dishes. The prunes from Agen and the Armagnac make wonderful desserts, especially the *soufflé aux pruneaux avec armagnac*.

Do take the opportunity to sample some of the now-celebrated local wines. Gascony itself produces red wines such as *Madiran* (described as 'spicy') and dry whites or sweet ones such as *Pacherenc* – this goes particularly well with *foie gras* served nature. The great wine-producing region of Bordeaux is just to the north, of course.

The Gers is particularly known for its production of Armagnac, a beverage of much more ancient lineage than Cognac, which is scorned locally as a cheap imitation of the real thing. Armagnac is made from designated white grapes and distilled once, producing a colourless *eau de vie* which is matured in oak barrels to impart colour and taste. The array of bottles is daunting and some are expensive. The cost depends on the year, maker and length of time in the oak. Three-star is the lowest quality, with just two years in the barrel, followed by VO, VSOP and Réserve with five years in the barrel, Extra, Napoléon and Vieille Réserve with six, and Hors d'Age with at least 10 years. Once bottled, the maturation process ceases. The best Armagnacs are said to come from Bas Armagnac, but ones from Ténarèze or Haut-Armagnac seem just as good. Some Armagnacs are blended. A little Armagnac mixed with Gascon wine provides a local apéritif called *Floc de Gascogne*, with the alcoholic strength of port. In St Puy they make a liqueur based on Armagnac and orange called *Pousse-Rapière*, which can be mixed with champagne to form an apéritif. There is a Museum of Armagnac in Condom and a number of places to taste and buy Armagnac.

Pilgrim Paths of Gascony

# Travel Information

# Pilgrim Paths of Gascony

## Arrival by Air/Rail

### If you have booked transfers through Inntavel:

**Toulouse Airport:** You will be met in Arrivals for the 1 hour 45 minute transfer to Le Logis des Cordeliers by a driver from Taxi Riu who will be holding an Inntavel sign.

**From Bordeaux airport** there is a direct shuttle bus which runs daily from the airport to the main station (Gare St Jean). The journey takes approximately 30 minutes in normal traffic conditions.

Bordeaux Airport (exit 11) - Bordeaux Saint Jean Railway Station: 0800 - 2300

Bordeaux Saint Jean Railway Station - Bordeaux Airport: 0600\* to 2100

\*1st 0600 departure Monday to Friday only

Single approx. 7.20€; return approx. 12.30€

Tickets can be bought online in advance at <http://www.boutique-navetteaeroportbordeaux.com/en/> for a slightly reduced fare.

**Trains from/to Bordeaux St Jean:** The train journey to Agen is direct and takes about 1 hour. Please refer to your Itinerary for onward rail details. Your rail ticket will show the journey booked for you. Please double check all train connections locally – services are subject to alteration and can be reduced on public holidays. You must validate (*'composter'*) your rail ticket before commencing your journey by inserting it into one of the waist-high machines on the platform to get it stamped.

A taxi transfer is included in our arrangements from Agen rail station to the first hotel.

As the driver will meet the train shown on your itinerary, **please call the taxi company if you will not arrive at the time shown on your itinerary for any reason.**

**Return journey:** Taxi XXX will transfer you to Agen railway station to catch the train shown on your Itinerary back to Bordeaux or if you are flying from Toulouse and have asked for our transfers, will transfer you directly to Toulouse airport.

## Pilgrim Paths of Gascony

### Arrival in Condom

#### Le Logis des Cordeliers

Tel: +33 (0)5 XX XX XX XX

This simple hotel is tucked away from the hustle and bustle of Condom, with the majority of the bedrooms overlooking the large swimming pool. Your stay here is on a bed-and-breakfast basis, leaving you free to choose from Condom's many restaurants, which are within easy walking distance. However, it's worth noting that many restaurants' opening hours are seasonal (more likely to be open every day in July and August and closed on Sunday evenings and Monday during the rest of the year). The Michelin Guide recommended 'Les Jardins de la Baïse' in the Continental Hotel (on the other side of the river) is always open.

#### Picnics

There is a small **supermarket** (closed Monday) on the high street by the Cathedral where you can pick up supplies for a picnic and a second one near the market, which is open on Mondays. Both open at 0900 and are closed in the middle of the day (like all French shops), and are also closed on Sundays after 1145. To find either, see **Directions to local services** below. If you need a larger shop, then the 'Intermarché' is within walking distance.

However, if you prefer to have a picnic made up for you, let the hotel know the night before and pay locally. There is a menu in each room with a list of the snacks and drinks available on request.

# Pilgrim Paths of Gascony

## Restaurants in Condom

We have listed some restaurants below and there is also a guide to the local area in reception.

### **La Table des Cordeliers** (tel: 05 XX XX XX XX)

This is the place for a special treat! It is a very smart restaurant with sophisticated menus, ranging between €30-60pp and upwards. There is a pleasant terrace for outdoor summer dining (closed Sunday evenings and Monday).

### **Table des Mousquetaires** (tel: 05 XX XX XX XX)

Specialising in fish, this is a reasonably priced (around €25pp) and well regarded restaurant with friendly owners (closed Sunday evening / Mondays except in July and August when it's open every day).

### **Le Jardin de la Baise** (tel: 05 XX XX XX XX)

Further away than the first two recommendations (650m / 10min walk), but Michelin Guide recommended, and **open every day**. It serves traditional French/regional food at reasonable prices.

In addition, there is the **Creperie Saint Pierre** (serves other dishes, not just crêpes), and **Origan** (a pizzeria with wood-fired pizza oven) and the **Café des Sports** (typical French brasserie food).

## Pilgrim Paths of Gascony

### Condom

Condom is a typical Gascon town and the second city of the Gers (after Auch). Its past and present prosperity is based on agriculture and on the presence of visitors from outside the region: pilgrims in the Middle Ages, and tourists today. The dominant feature is the Cathedral of St Peter rebuilt in the Gothic style early in the 15th century and with a magnificent belfry. There are some beautiful mansions built of local limestone by prosperous merchants. The town is surprisingly peaceful for a large place.

#### **Directions to local services – restaurants/banks/supermarket/tourist office**

- Cross the garden of the hotel to meet the road and turn R.
- 40m later come to a T-junction and turn R, passing **Cordeliers Restaurant**.
- In 80m, meet the main boulevard of Rue Jean Jaures (with an avenue of plane trees in the centre), and cross obliquely L, following the signs for the tourist information office.
- Head along the un-named street with a no entry sign at its start.
- Immediately pass the Poste de Police Municipal on the L.
- 40m later you pass **the L'Origan restaurant**.
- In 70m more, come to the Place Pencens: maintain your direction SA along Rue Bonnamy.
- Pass a **pharmacy** and **public telephone**, before reaching the Cathedral square (where there are **banks and cash points**). The main **tourist office** is up L as well as a small **supermarket** (closed Mondays).
- For a second **supermarket** when the first is closed, cross the Cathedral square diagonally R as you arrive and take a street steeply downhill between Credit Agricole Bank and a grocer's shop.

# Pilgrim Paths of Gascony

## Things to do in Condom

The **tourist office** in the cathedral square has a good town plan and has a number of suggested routes around the town that take in the main sights. Opening hours: May, June and September, 0900-1200 and 1400-1830; Mid July-Mid August, 0900-1900, Sundays 1030-1300; April and October 0900-1200 and 1400-1800.

*The Museum of Armagnac*, at 2 rue Jules Ferry in the former bishop's palace, is open daily except Tuesdays April to October 1000-1200 and 1500-1800. It is closed on public holidays.

*Château Cugnac* at 36 rue Jean Jaurès houses the Ryst Dupeyron Armagnac museum. Free entrance, 10 minute audio-visual (available in English) and opportunity to taste. Open 1000 – 1200 & 1400 – 1830 Monday to Friday, also Sat & Sun afternoons in July and August.

If you fancy messing about on the river you could contact Gascogne Navigation at La Capitainerie, Port de Condom who rent boats and also run trips.

**Market day** in Condom is on a Wednesday.

Pilgrim Paths of Gascony

# Route Information

# Pilgrim Paths of Gascony

## About Your route

As you walk, please use both the map and the notes. Your route follows a variety of paths, tracks and quiet country roads – old tracks that have now become asphalted. You will encounter different kinds of waymarks, including for Grande Randonnée (GR) paths in red and white stripes and local paths (PR) in yellow or orange. The long distance path that crosses Gascony ('Pays Coeur de Gascogne') is red and yellow flashed and the pilgrim route of Saint Jaques is marked by yellow shells. A wrong direction is denoted by crossed stripes. Please use both the map and the notes, and read through the notes for each day before you set off, so that you are aware of any potential good picnic spots, points of interest or difficulties. The timings given for each section exclude stops and are an indication only – you may take more or less time, depending on how quickly you walk and on how much you stop to admire your surroundings!

**NB:** Please do not be offended if the hotels supply you with plastic bags on arrival in which to put your walking boots and day-pack. This is a requirement of the local district to avoid any unwelcome insect infestation!

# Pilgrim Paths of Gascony

## Abbreviations

Our directions are written in a concise bullet-point style. Please familiarise yourself with the following abbreviations before setting off:

L	left
R	right
LH(S)	left-hand (side)
RH(S)	right-hand (side)
J	junction
TJ	T-Junction
X-road	crossroad
SA	straight ahead, straight across or straight on
SP	sign post/sign posted to
R/W	red/white signs

Compass directions are also written in abbreviated form.

Note that we try and refer consistently to **track** and **path**. A track could be used by vehicles whereas a path most definitely could not.

**Walking times** given are just that, they do not take into account lunch stops, visits or photo opportunities!

The **scale for the daily route elevation profiles** varies, so ensure that you look at the scale when viewing the profiles, and particularly if comparing one day with another.

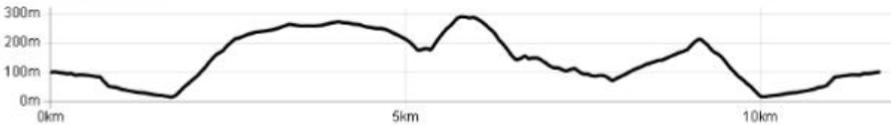
We also include an '**on the map**' section each day; here we detail where our route goes on the accompanying map, allowing you to draw the route on the map in advance should you so wish

# Pilgrim Paths of Gascony

## Day 1: Circuit to Larressingle

**Route info:** 12km/3hrs 30mins ; total ascent and descent 400m

### Route profile



### Overview

This circuit takes you west in a figure-of-eight, at first on quiet country roads, and then on dirt tracks, through undulating farmland to reach the fortified village of Larressingle. Guided visits of Larressingle are available from the tourist office – see main text for details.

### Food & Drink

Laressingle makes a good halfway point to stop for a picnic or sit-down lunch. There is a snack bar, a tearoom and a simple auberge in Larressingle but do not rely on them being open, particularly in low season or on a Sunday or Monday. So, if you would like to eat lunch in Larressingle, then please ask your hotel to kindly call the Auberge (05XX XX XX XX) and the Bar-Crêperie (05 XX XX XX XX) to see if they are open.

Remember that picnics are only included on moving - on days. Extra picnics can always be requested from the hotel (pay locally), preferably the evening before. However, if you'd like to shop for your own picnic ingredients, then please refer to the **Directions to local services** above to find a supermarket, and then begin your walk from the cathedral square.

### Maps:

Condom 1841 O & Mézin 1741 E

### On the map

Starting on the **Condom map**, you cross the southern of the 2 bridges out of Condom across the River Baïse, to then turn L and follow the pink line of the GR65 all the way SW to the LH edge of the map, by La Bourdette.

Now on the **Mézin map**, you continue on the broken orange line of the GR65, WSW as far as the top RH corner of the 3<sup>rd</sup> grid square (bounded to the W by grid-line 285 & to the S by line 4868). Here, at a fork by the 160

## Pilgrim Paths of Gascony

spot-height, keep R on a white lane, leaving the GR & swinging up into the grid square above. Take the 1<sup>st</sup> broken black line on your L, along the S edge of a reservoir, marked S<sup>oc</sup> Captée, then maintaining your course along its continuation as a double broken black line. When this fades out at the word Ruine, head NW through the name Couloumet to reach the road D507, where you turn L to reach Larressingle.

From the multi-J to the NW of Larressingle & almost touching the village walls, head SW on a broken black line, skirting the SE edge of a green area & just touching the 's' of the name Campots. Reach a double broken line at a TJ & turn briefly L to meet a road by the cluster of farm buildings named Bouhebent. Here, turn R as far as the fork by the word Rvoir, where you bear L, picking up again the broken orange line of the GR65, which you follow to the point where you left it earlier by the 160 spot-height.

You now turn L onto a white lane to head N up into the grid square bounded to the W by grid-line 285 & to the S by line 4869. Head N straight across this square, passing the house of Le Cauze & crossing the main D15, to arrive at the cluster of houses named La Blanche at the top of the square. Here, turn R & head E past La Peyrère & the larger hamlet of Goalard, always running parallel to the main D15. From the end of the name Goalard, continue on a white lane E, still parallel to the D15, to leave the RH edge of the map.

Back on the **Condom map**, you arrive on the white lane passing under the cluster of houses named Fezançon, which sweeps NE to meet the road D114. You cross this road to continue NE on the broken black line of a disused railway to meet another white lane, where you wind SE to cross the southern bridge again into Condom.

# Pilgrim Paths of Gascony

## Walk Notes:

### If you've been to buy a picnic & are leaving from the cathedral square:

- With the cathedral to your R, take the LH of the two streets onwards, **Rue Charron**, immediately passing the Café de Sport (green awning).
- Come to multi-J: keep SA, downhill (ignoring two L turns & one R).
- Pass the blue sign of AXA on the way down.
- Arrive at the river: turn L & then R over the bridge, SP Stade-Piscine.
- Pick up the walk notes from \*\*.

### Leaving from the hotel:

- From the Hotel turn R into the Rue de la Paix and at the TJ, R again into the Rue des Cordeliers.
- At the next TJ, turn L into the **Allées du Gau de Gaulle**, with a raised parking area & with plane trees above you to the R.
- In 150m, you arrive at the **Place de la Liberté**.
- Go SA here down the **Rue Buzon** to a floral roundabout: cross the road to the river embankment.
- Turn R to reach the bridge **Pont des Carmes**, where you cross the river.
- \*\* On the other side, turn L along a footpath, which immediately divides: keep to the higher, level RH (essentially SA) branch that runs along the top of the embankment. (Ignore the LH branch dropping to the riverside.)
- After 600m reach a road crossing you (D931).
- Cross the road and walk SA along a footpath, with tall bamboo to your L.
- In 150m reach a J: here, ignore the main road crossing you, and instead swing sharp back L on a minor country lane, downhill (GR red & white waymarks in 20m on the R).
- In 300m go SA over the first X-roads and in 80m keep SA at another, SP **Chemin Capots de Teste** (GR flashes & Saint-Jacques shell symbol).

## Pilgrim Paths of Gascony

- After about 300m reach a roundabout: turn R.
- Ignore the first two turnings L in quick succession (car parking area & dirt track with barrier) and immediately take 3<sup>rd</sup> L along an asphalted country road, rising.
- After 400m, at the top of the hill, pass the farm of **Ciprionis** on your L, and immediately reach a J: ignore the LH branch descending and take the RH, gently rising (GR flashed).
- Immediately reach another J: go SA (GR flashed).

You are at spot height 114, just below '**le Gay**' on your map.

- In 500m pass a farm wryly called **l'Inquietude** ('anxiety').
- Pass several more farms, and ignore all turnings off, including the RH track to Vignau after another 1.2km (at spot height 129 on your map).
- Keep on your country road, uphill, to come to a fork just 250m after the Vignau turning: here, bear R, heading W.
- 100m later, ignore (but note) a grassy track bearing off down L, SP with a yellow arrow & GR flash & small sign pointing back for 'Variante'.

**This is where you will emerge later, after visiting Larressingle.**

- In 150m more, also ignore a track sharp back down L (X-ed on a post).
- You'll now see a large pond down to your L as your road begins to descend.
- **Careful!** Exactly at the low point of this dip, turn L along a grassy track between fields, in a direct line for the view of the walled village of Larressingle.

(At the time of writing, there were two red & white markers on each side of the road here.)

- You are heading for the pond, generally W.
- In 250m, and about 100m short of the pond, **careful again!** Bear off L to cross a tiny (possibly dry) stream and continue along a path between trees, SP by a yellow PR arrow pointing against you.
- No change of direction –still W.

# Pilgrim Paths of Gascony

- You have a wood to your L and just a line of trees to your R, with the pond soon on the other side.
- Keep SA after the pond between two lines of trees, passing the farm of **Troye** to your R, named on the map.
- Maintain your course after the house, with a hedge of trees to your R, & then between two hedges.
- A good view of Larressingle appears to your L & you soon meet a country road – D507 (after 850m on this path).
- Ignoring an entry track up L into the *auberge* (one of the possible lunch stops in season), bear L towards the fortified village.
- Reach a J with Larressingle in front of you: turn R.
- Immediately meet another J (with Boutique Médiévale on your R): turn L.
- Pass a sign for Visite Guidée du Village (May to August – Reservations at the Tourist Office).
- Turn L over the moat into the village.

**6.5km/ 2hrs**

## **Larressingle**

The Tourist Office is to your L, inside.

Opening hours: 16 May to 31 May: Mon to Fri: 1400-1800 / 1 Jun to 30 Jul & 22 Aug to 30 Sep: Wed to Sun: 1000-1230 & 1430-1830 / 14 Jul to 21 Aug: every day: 1000-1230 & 1430-1830.

Guided Visits: 1530 & 1700 through all above dates, plus 1100 from 1 Jun to 30 Sep.

This beautiful walled village was built in the 13th century to protect the Bishops of Condom. It has a castle keep, a simple, beautiful Romanesque church with a barrel-vaulted roof, and several well-restored medieval houses. In the castle wall there is a bust to Edouard Mortier, Duc de Trevisé, who linked the restoration project with a supporting organisation in Boston in 1926, to which there is also a plaque of thanks. There is a cockle shell to the right of the castle door as a reminder that we are on the pilgrim route. A folk museum has displays of traditional life at various times in Larressingle's history, with models in appropriate costume. From 17

## Pilgrim Paths of Gascony

February to 11 November It is open daily during school holidays, and on Saturdays and Sundays from 1400-1800. From 1 June to 30 September opening hours are 1030 – 1230 and 1400 – 1900 daily (entrance fee around €5).

There is a *bar-crêperie* in the village, open in the afternoon at weekends and in school holidays. Next door is *salon de thé*.

- Leave the village again by the bridge over the moat: turn L, passing between the village and the graveyard.
- Come immediately on your R to the walled garden, Jardin de Larressingle, which can also be visited, but only in season.
- Continue downhill past the garden entrance on a grassy track which soon begins to rise. Great view of the fortified village.
- Keep SA up a narrow path between two lines of trees.
- Pass a smart new house in 300m and rise to reach a track crossing you in 50m more: here, turn down L to immediately meet a country road (a PR arrow points back the way you've come).

Here, pause to look L at the good view of Larressingle.

- Turn R up the road, immediately passing the farm of **Bouhebert** (named on the map).
- To your L, you can see the large pond you passed earlier & also the interesting farmstead of **Péninon**, with dovecot.
- **Careful!** In 550m, as your tarmac road bends R, leave it to the L on a dirt and stone track, SP Péninon, with a line of trees to your L.
- In 200m, as the track swings L through a gate, you bear off R (essentially SA) on a grassy track, flashed red & white.

The flash shows we are briefly back on the GR65 – the pilgrims' route which you will use more often as the week progresses.

- Soon, gently downhill between two lines of trees.
- After 600m, you meet a country road crossing you – the same one you were on before you set off past the pond.

A PR arrow points back the way you've come & 'Variante' points SA.

- Here, turn up L.

# Pilgrim Paths of Gascony

- Ignore all tracks off now (including one at the bottom of a dip in the road, where you set off for Larressingle earlier).
- Keep going till you reach a X-roads in 850m: here, cross SA the main D15.
- In 100m, ignore a little road L for Château de Beauhas.

As you rise, it's worth looking back at Larressingle again.

- Reach a J in 250m: turn R onto a minor country lane, with bungalows to your L.

On the map, you are just below the name **La Blanche**.

- After 450m, reach a TJ: turn down R and then next L 40m later.
- In 700m you are passing through the hamlet of **Le Goalard**.

Whilst walking through the hamlet, glance down streets on your L till you spot a little chapel. (The turning comes 25m before an old village notice board and a '30kmph' speed limit sign facing the other way.) It's worth walking to the chapel, as there is a good view from here across the countryside to the north, including a windmill on the sky-line.

- Continuing, then, along the country lane, **careful!** Just 40m after the reversed 30km speed limit sign (which also has a Slow for Children warning), the road forks: take the LH branch (gently rising at first) & ignore the RH which slopes down towards the main road.
- Keep with this road as it swings L, passing a few bungalows, & then R, to then straighten out in a direct line with Condom ahead.
- Ignore turnings off as you follow the road now for about 1.6km past houses and fields, with Condom ahead of you.
- You reach a J with the main D114, with the entry sign to Condom to your R.
- Cross the road diagonally R to take a track opposite with a barrier across (the old railway line).
- In 250m, a country road crosses you: turn R down the road.
- Reach a main road: cross over to take the street opposite, **Rue de la Honlade** (with a Pressing shop on the corner).
- Meet another main road (**Rue de Faubourg de la Bouquerie**): bear L.

## Pilgrim Paths of Gascony

- Come to the bridge you exited town on at the start of the walk - **Pont des Carmes**: keep SA across the bridge.
- After the bridge, swing R up to a floral roundabout: here, turn L up **Rue Buzon**.
- At the top of the rise, reach **Place de la Liberté**, with Café des Allées on the R: keep SA along the raised parking area with plane trees.
- At the top end of this area, reach a band-stand: here, turn R across the road on a zebra crossing.
- Opposite you, take the RH of two streets, **Rue des Cordeliers**, SP for the hotel.
- At the top of this slope, take 1<sup>st</sup> L, SP for the hotel.
- Then turn L into the hotel car park.

**12km / 3hrs 30mins**

# Pilgrim Paths of Gascony