



## Pilgrimage Via Podiensis

**Le Puy-en-Velay - Aumont-Aubrac – Conques  
Central Massif  
France**

**Guided by An Paridaen & Gerard Beltman, Wandel naar Jezelf**

**When:** September 2021  
**Duration:** 6 or 8 or 14 days  
**Distance:** average a day: 15–24 km / 9 –15 mi  
**Price:** from € 755

The pilgrimage has two parts. You can book both or one of them:

1. Le Puy-en-Velay – Aumont-Aubrac
  - 8 days, 6 stages
  - Total distance 103 km / 64 mi;
  - September 4-12 2021
2. Aumont-Aubrac – Conques
  - 6 days, 6 stages
  - Total distance 114 km / 70 mi
  - September 12-18 2021

It's a guided pilgrimage while you are free to walk alone and at your own pace or walk together with other people of the group. A good level of endurance and fitness is required but it is always possible to shorten or skip a stage.

During your pilgrimage An and Gerard provides a save and light space for every participant.

### Landscape and culture

The Via Podiensis is more than a thousand years old and is one of the 4 main pilgrim routes through France to Santiago de Compostelle. 3 of the 4 routes come together in Saint-Jean-Pied-de-Port in the Pyrenees. After Saint Jean, it goes as one route, the

Camino Frances, to Santiago. We start in the medieval city of Le Puy with its numerous historic and charming streets. Le Puy is certainly worth a more extensive visit. First of all, there is the Notre-Dame Cathedral, which has been the starting point for centuries and the place of passage for the pilgrimages to Santiago de Compostelle. The chapel 'Chapelle Saint-Michel d'Aiguilhe' is located in the middle of the city on a huge top of lava of eighty meters high. Even higher is the Statue Notre Dame de France on the Rocher Corneille. Both the chapel and the statue can be climbed!

### Part 1 (September 4-12)

From Le Puy, located in an old volcanic landscape, we climb up the solid mass of the Auvergne. We walk through a green and rocky landscape and pass the picturesque village of Saint Privat d'Allier. The river Allier has cut deep into the massif. Saugues is a cozy village with the monumental Eglise Saint-Médard. We walk through picturesque villages over the plateau of the Gevaudan with beautiful views. It is a sparsely populated region, alternately rugged and natural, woody and agricultural where industry is completely absent. We especially hear the silence. Various chapels and crosses remind us of St. James.

### Part 2 (September 12-18)

From Aumont-Aubrac we cross the impressive landscape of the Aubrac. On this undulating plateau we pass distant hamlets and lonely farms. Human activities are scarce and are limited to cattle breeding and the production of regional cheeses. After the Aubrac we arrive in a varied area with forests and meadows, small villages and reach the river Lot. We spend the night in three villages that carry the label 'The most beautiful villages in France': Saint-Côme-d'Olt, Estaing and Conques. They are gems with an ancient history where the typical French culture has been preserved.

## Rhythm of the pilgrimage



In principle every day has the same rythme:

- 7.00 getting up, 8.00 breakfast, 9.00 departure
- During the first our we walk in silence
- Coffee and lunchbreak
- 6 pm sharing experiences of the day
- 7 pm dinner
- 10 pm bed-time



## **The pilgrimage from day to day**

### **Part 1 Le Puy-en-Velay - Aumont-Aubrac**

#### Saturday 4 and Sunday September 5

Arrival at Le Puy-en-Velay. We gather at 3 pm at the top of the stairs in front of the entrance of the Notre-Dame Cathedral. We make a joint walk through the town followed by a (vegetarian) dinner.

It is definitely worth it to arrive on Saturday already and take some extra time for Le Puy.

#### Monday September 6

Stage 1: 19 km, 11 mi. We take care of our lunch ourselves that day (you can best already buy something on Sunday). We start at 7.00 in the cathedral with a mass followed by the blessing of the pilgrims. We leave the town, climbing into the hills. At 9 km we pass the village of Saint Christophe with catering for coffee and / or lunch.

#### Tuesday September 7

Stage 2: 15 km, 9,5 mi. You will have a packed lunch. After a short climb we reach a height of 1200 m, after which we descend this day mainly in wooded area to the river Allier at 600 m. At 7 km we pass the village Saint-Privat-d'Allier with possibility for coffee.



#### Wednesday September 8

Stage 3: 16 km, 10 miles. A short (climb) stage. You will have a packed lunch. We leave the valley of the Allier. It is a nice climb with beautiful views over the river. We spend the night in an attractive accommodation in the village of Saugues.

#### Thursday September 9

Stage 4; 21 km, 13 mi. Today the longest stage where we cumulatively climb about 650 m. Lunch at 12 km in a restaurant on a farm. We walk through a thinly populated agricultural area with alternating woods and small hamlets. We stay at an altitude of 1300 m on a former castle farm, in a remote location.



#### Friday September 10

Stage 5; 15 km, 9,5 mi. You will have a packed lunch. We walk through the Margeride, a landscape with many cows and rocks of granite. We will not encounter any catering on our way. We pass the church of Saint-Roch where once a year an open-air mass is held, visited by pilgrims and local people. Over the entire day we descend gradually about 300 m and arrive in the village of Saint-Alban with a beautiful Romanesque church.

Saturday September 11

Stage 6: 17 km, 10,5 mi. You will have a packed lunch. At 9 km there is an inn for a cup of coffee in the valley of the river La Truyère. We arrive in the old Aumont-Aubrac, the final destination of part 1. We spend the night in a gîte with a traditional local (cheese) dish.

Part 2 Aumont-Aubrac - Conques

Sunday September 12

For participants of only part 1: end of the tour after breakfast in Aumont-Aubrac.  
For participants of part 2: welcome (again).

Stage 7; 18 km, 11 mi. You will receive a packed lunch. We walk through the Aubrac, an extensive, unspoilt plateau of granite and basalt with picturesque meadows and stone walls. After 7 km we have a coffee address. Our overnight stay is in a gîte in the remote Aubrac.

Monday September 13

Stage 8; you can choose for 17 km / 10,5 mi or 27 km / 12,5 mi. In the morning on both tracks we continue our way through the impressive landscapes of the Aubrac and enjoy wide views. In Nasbinals everyone can buy in for lunch. We pass, at 1,300 m altitude, the village of Aubrac with catering. We descend to the charming village St.-Chély-d'Aubrac at 800 m altitude.

Tuesday September 14

Stage 9; 17 km, 10,5 mi. You will receive a packed lunch. We now definitively leave the Aubrac plateau. We descend gradually through the forested area. In Lestrade after 7 km there is a coffee. We arrive at the medieval St-Côme-d'Olt on the river Lot. Our overnight stay is at a special location at 1 km from the village.

Wednesday, September 15

Stage 10; 24 km, 15 mi. You will receive a packed lunch. We cross the Lot and walk parallel to the river towards Espalion. It is a challenging stage with some steep climbs in the hills. The typical regional style of houses and farms is striking. We continue along the Lot and arrive in Estaing, one of the most beautiful villages in France. We spend the night in a gîte and have our dinner in a restaurant in the village.



Thursday, September 16

Stage 11; 15 km, 9,5 mi. You will receive a packed lunch. After 4 kilometers we climb from 300 m to 600 m altitude and leave the valley of the Lot. In small-scale farmland we walk to the village of Golinhaç. We spend the night in the gîte and have our dinner in the restaurant of the village.

Friday, September 17

Stage 12; 23 km, 14 mi. You will receive a packed lunch. The final stage to Conques! First, we descend gradually over 9 km to the village of Espeyrac. Here we have our coffee / tea break. We walk through small-scale farmlands, everything very remote. We get a final climb to about 600 m altitude before descending steeply to the Romanesque town of Conques (290 m). We spend the night in a special location next

to Sainte Foy Abbey. After dinner there is a mess for pilgrims in the abbey church. Afterwards the capitals of the church can be visited.

Saturday, September 18

End of the pilgrimage. We say goodbye after breakfast. People can take a bus towards Figeac or back to Le Puy (we can make the reservation for you).

### Difficulty level

We walk daily 15 to 24 km (9 – 15 miles) through low mountain ranges (between 600 and 1300 m); it is regularly climbing and descending but usually not steep. The path can be bumpy and stony. A good level of endurance and fitness is required. We advise to use Nordic walking sticks or at least take them with you for the more difficult stretches.

**It is always possible to shorten or skip a stage if you wish so. We have a car to facilitate this possibility.**

During the day you can stay with the guide or walk in your own pace, alone or with a segment of the group.

### Accommodation and food

We stay in gîte d'étapes (inns with 2 to 6-person rooms) and former abbeys. Although it is occasionally possible to rent sheets it is necessary to bring your own liner (cloth bag), pillowcase and (quick-drying) towels. Rent (if possible) costs on average € 5 p.p.p.night. Blankets are provided everywhere. In the gîtes we have our meal together with other pilgrims.

In part 1 we will have 4x a packet lunch. In part 2 5x.

For the other days you can buy your lunch package yourself in the supermarket. Sometimes you can also have lunch in a restaurant on the way.



### Group

The pilgrimage will be with a minimum of 8 and a maximum of 10 participants.

### Bag transfer

Daily bag transfer service is available. Costs € 6 per day. Luggage (backpack, sports bag or (small) suitcase max. 10 kilos). Reservation and payment at registration or, if unexpected, cash in hand at the organization. Of course you need a small backpack to carry your extra clothes, food and water for the day.

If you prefer to carry your own backpack with luggage: we recommend a maximum weight of 8 to 9 kg: cloth bag or light sleeping bag, light quick drying towels, minimum of clothing/nightwear, toilet requisites, water and some food for the day. You can ask for a checklist.

### Travel

#### *Travel to Le-Puy-en-Velay:*

Car: Le Puy-en-Velay is about 1.050 km (650 miles) from Amsterdam and 550 km (340 miles) from Paris. For pilgrims a reduced parking fee applies in the parking garage Place du Breuil of Le-Puy. Costs for a week of parking in September ca € 22

Public transport: Coming from the north: by highspeed-train via Lyons to St Etienne. Hence with a local train to Le Puy. For information and tickets please consult your travel agent.

#### *Travel to Aumont-Aubrac*

Car: There are free parking spaces in Aumont-Aubrac

Public transport: First to Le Puy (see above); overnight in Le Puy and then the next morning (Sunday 13 September) with a mini-bus to Aumont-Aubrac.

Arrival at about 9.00 am after which we start the stage of that day. Costs mini-bus about € 25.

#### *Return from Aumont-Aubrac or Conques to Le Puy-en-Velay*

In Aumont-Aubrac and in Conques, you can take the daily mini-bus to Le Puy.

Costs between € 25 and € 37 p.p.

#### *Return from Conques via Figeac*

From Conques and traveling by train, the fastest way home is by Figeac and Brive. In Conques there is the possibility to travel by minibus to Figeac on Saturday 18 September. Costs about € 31 p.p . In Figeac (worth a visit) you can take the train either to Brive or Toulouse. On Sunday 14 September you can travel back home by train from Brive or Toulouse.

Important: tickets for mini-buses, to be reserved at least 1 week in advance, can be arranged by the organisation.

## Price

<p><b>Part 1 Le Puy – Aumont-Aubrac</b></p> <p><b>Price: € 795</b> for the fully guided pilgrimage by an experienced guide and coach Including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 8 nights 4 -12 September with 1 x bed and breakfast and 7 x half board (dinner, overnight stay, breakfast)</li> <li>• 4 x lunch package</li> <li>• Pilgrim passport</li> <li>• Arrangement of bag transport and transport minibus</li> </ul> <p>Not included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• all matters not mentioned above</li> <li>• rent of sheets and towels (if wanted)</li> <li>• dinner on Sunday 6 September</li> <li>• consumptions in the catering industry</li> <li>• Drinks with meals</li> <li>• Bag transport (€ 5 per day) and transport by minibus</li> <li>• Outward and return journey</li> </ul>	<p><b>Part 2 Aumont-Aubrac - Conques</b></p> <p><b>Price: € 755</b> for the fully guided pilgrimage by an experienced guide and coach Including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 6 nights 12-18 September with 1 x bed and breakfast and 5 x half board (dinner, overnight stay, breakfast)</li> <li>• 5 x lunch package</li> <li>• pilgrim passport</li> <li>• arrange bag transport and transport minibus</li> </ul> <p>Not included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• all matters not mentioned above</li> <li>• rent of sheets and towels (if wanted)</li> <li>• dinner on Wednesday 15 September</li> <li>• consumptions in the catering industry</li> <li>• Drinks with meals</li> <li>• Bag transport costs (€ 6 per day) and transport by minibus</li> <li>• Outward and return journey</li> </ul>
<p><b>Part 1 + part 2 Le Puy - Conques</b></p> <p><b>Price: € 1.495</b> for the fully guided pilgrimage of 14 nights / 12 stages by an experienced guide and coach. For details on what is included and what not: see above.</p>	

## Travel and cancellation insurance

Of course, we do our utmost to ensure a safe journey. Yet the journey is entirely at your own risk. You sign a document before departure that states that neither Wandel Naar Jezelf nor the guide is liable for accidents or injuries. Travel insurance is mandatory for this tour. We also suggest taking cancellation-insurance.



## Preparation

First of course you can ask yourself: why do I want to walk this camino? You can have personal reasons, maybe you want some distance from daily life for reflection. Or you might have religious or spiritual reasons, you want to meet people, to experience nature or even it can be the physical challenge for you.

And of course you will have your physical preparation. You can best prepare yourself by walking regularly, increase the number of kilometres and if necessary, also the weight on your back. Of course, the preparation depends on the physical condition you already have. Good walking shoes is a condition.

After registration you will receive a packing list with various tips. This can help you to take only what you really need. In a hike / pilgrimage it is mainly the art of omission.

## Registration

Booking and inquiries; send an e-mail to [info@wandelnaarjezelf.nl](mailto:info@wandelnaarjezelf.nl) or phone An Paridaen. Landline: 0031 55 5215040. Mobile phone: 00 31 6 47444813.

## About An Paridaen

An offers walking retreats and pilgrimages in the Netherlands and abroad since 2005. She is inspired by nature and what walking in nature can provide. With her events, she intends to create a safe space where people can be themselves and relax. Her website is in Dutch, but an English page is provided as is this brochure.



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