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Pyrenees Coast-to-Coast

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Pyrenees Coast-to-Coast

This emerging new challenge route tours through the *piémont Pyrénéen*—the Pyrenean foothills. From the Atlantic coast at Biarritz to the Mediterranean near Perpignan, you'll experience the scenery of the Pyrenees... without needing Tour de France climbing skills.

Don't think that this is second-best to the high Pyrenees. Far from it. You'll pass through Pau (a Tour favourite), the pilgrim town of Lourdes, and along some particularly fine traffic-free trails, notably the Saint Giron—Foix greenway.

Millions have been ploughed into building the rail-trail sections, with bridges rehabilitated, tunnels secured, and traffic-free underpasses installed. These are still a minority; 75% of the route is currently on-road, usually tiny single-lane routes with just a handful of cars. Perhaps most surprising is that many of these are not much harder work than the rail-trails: well-chosen valley routes minimise the climbing.

There are climbs, of course—after all, if you wanted a totally flat Atlantic—Med route, you'd have chosen the Canal du Midi towpath. But take the 22km ascent from the Aude up to the Col du Linas, the high-point of the route at 667m. Crunch the numbers and you'll see that the gradient averages about 2.5%: we're not exactly talking the sort of climb that would trouble Chris Froome. Along the way you'll pass through the Roman spa of Rennes-les-Bains and the UFO centre of Bugarach (we're not making this up) before reaching the summit. Here, the looming outcrop of the Pic de Bugarach, the highest point in the *piémont Pyrénéen*, pierces the clouds one kilometre to the south.

The route isn't yet finished, so in several places you'll be making your way without the aid of signs. There are so many quiet roads in this part of France, however, that it's not hard to plan an attractive tour. We've filled in the gaps along the lines of the projected final route; use our maps and GPX downloads to find your way.





















