Basque-speaking, wet and green in the west; craggy, snowy, Gascon-influenced in the middle; dry, Mediterranean and Catalan-speaking in the east – **the Pyrenees** are physically beautiful, culturally varied and less developed than the Alps. The whole range is marvellous walkers’ country, especially the central region around the Parc National des Pyrénées, with its 3000-metre-high peaks, streams, forests and wildlife. If you’re a committed hiker, it’s possible to traverse these mountains, usually from the Atlantic to the Mediterranean, along the GR10. As for the more conventional tourist attractions, the Côte Basque – peppered with fun-loving towns like [**Bayonne**](https://www.roughguides.com/destinations/europe/france/pyrenees/pays-basque/bayonne/) and [**Biarritz**](https://www.roughguides.com/destinations/europe/france/pyrenees/pays-basque/biarritz/)– is lovely, sandy but very popular, and suffers from seaside sprawl and a surfeit of caravan-colonized campsites. The foothill towns are on the whole rather dull, although [**Pau**](https://www.roughguides.com/destinations/europe/france/pyrenees/central-pyrenees/pau/) merits at least a day, while monstrously kitsch [**Lourdes**](https://www.roughguides.com/destinations/europe/france/pyrenees/central-pyrenees/lourdes/) has to be seen whether you’re a devout pilgrim or not. [**Roussillon**](https://www.roughguides.com/destinations/europe/france/pyrenees/eastern-pyrenees/roussillon/) in the east, focused on busy [**Perpignan**](file:///C:\destinations\europe\france\pyrenees\eastern-pyrenees\roussillon\perpignan\), has beaches every bit as popular as those of the Côte Basque, some nestled into the compact coves of its southern rocky coast, while its interior consists of craggy terrain split by spectacular canyons and sprouting a crop of fine Romanesque abbeys and churches – St-Michel-de-Cuixà and St-Martin-du-Canigou in the [**Tet vâlley**](https://www.roughguides.com/destinations/europe/france/pyrenees/eastern-pyrenees/the-tet-valley/) and the **[Prieuré de Serrabona](https://www.roughguides.com/destinations/europe/france/pyrenees/eastern-pyrenees/prieure-de-serrabona/" \o "Prieuré de Serrabona)** being the most dramatic – and a landscape bathed in Mediterranean light. Finally, the sun-drenched foothills just to the northwest harbour the famous [**Cathar castles**](https://www.roughguides.com/destinations/europe/france/pyrenees/eastern-pyrenees/cathar-castles/), legacies of the once-independent and ever-rebellious inhabitants of southwestern Languedoc.