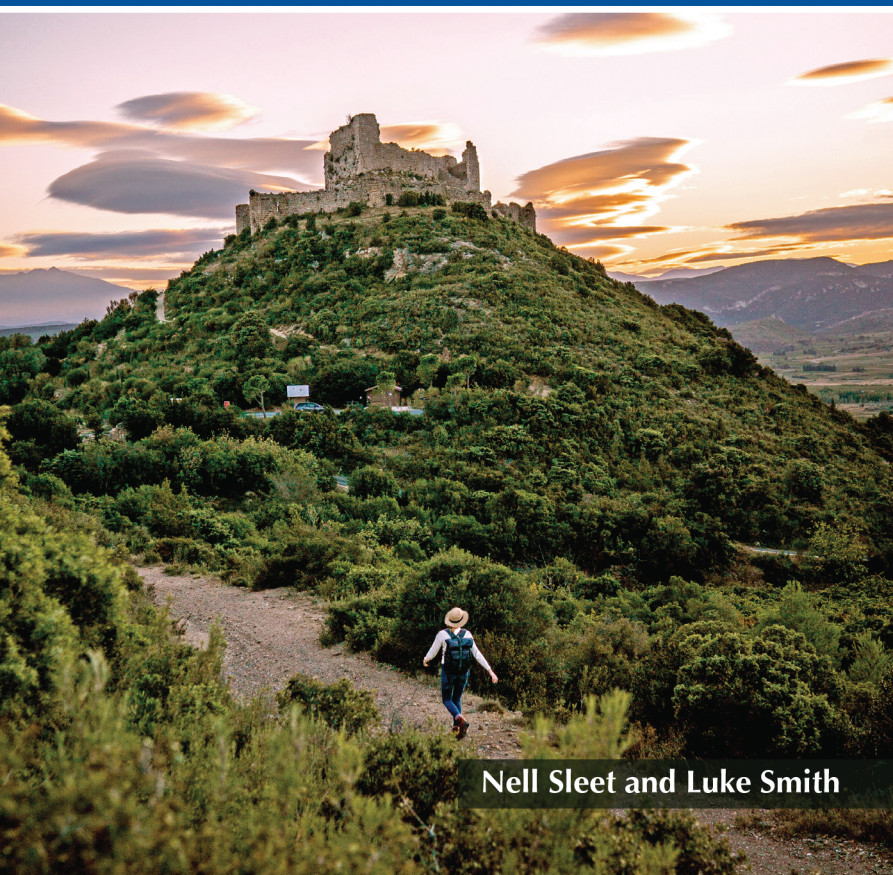


CICERONE

TREKKING THE CATHAR WAY

The GR367 Sentier Cathare in
southern France



Nell Sleet and Luke Smith

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**THE GR367 SENTIER CATHARE IN SOUTHERN
FRANCE**

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by Nell Sleet and Luke Smith

CICERONE

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All photographs are by the authors unless otherwise stated.

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In the creation of this book we relied on help from a few sources. We'd first like to thank the people of Languedoc that we met: the friendly tourism officers, hoteliers, hosts and locals. The book is all the better for your tips and insider knowledge.

Thanks also to Cicerone – particularly Siân, Andrea and Georgia – who have guided us with a sureness of hand that has been really appreciated.

Our thanks also go to Alan Mattingly, author of Cicerone's previous edition of the English guide to the Cathar Way. We used his book to walk and research the route ourselves, and his directions and guidance were invaluable in creating this new guide. We hope that in bringing the English guide up to date we will encourage many more people to explore this rich and thought-provoking trail.

Front cover: On the Cathar Way with Aguilar Castle ahead (Stage 2)

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Updates to this Guide

While every effort is made by our authors to ensure the accuracy of guidebooks as they go to print, changes can occur during the lifetime of an edition. This guidebook was researched and written before the COVID-19 pandemic. While we are not aware of any significant changes to routes or facilities at the time of printing, it is likely that the current situation will give rise to more changes than would usually be expected. Any updates that we know of for this guide will be on the Cicerone website (www.cicerone.co.uk/1047/updates), so please check before planning your trip. We also advise that you check information about such things as transport, accommodation and shops locally. Even rights of way can be altered over time.

We are always grateful for information about any discrepancies between a guidebook and the facts on the ground, sent by email to updates@cicerone.co.uk or by post to Cicerone, Juniper House, Murley Moss, Oxenholme Road, Kendal, LA9 7RL.

Register your book: to sign up to receive free updates, special offers and GPX files where available, register your book at www.cicerone.co.uk.

Mountain safety

Every mountain walk has its dangers, and those described in this guidebook are no exception. All who walk or climb in the mountains should recognise this and take responsibility for themselves and their companions along the way. The author and publisher have made every effort to ensure that the information contained in this guide was correct when it went to press, but, except for any liability that cannot be excluded by law, they cannot accept responsibility for any loss, injury or inconvenience sustained by any person using this book.

International distress signal *(emergency only)*

Six blasts on a whistle (and flashes with a torch after dark) spaced evenly for one minute, followed by a minute's pause. Repeat until an answer is received. The response is three signals per minute followed by a minute's pause.

Helicopter rescue

The following signals are used to communicate with a helicopter:

Help needed:
raise both arms
above head to
form a 'Y'



Help not needed:
raise one arm
above head, extend
other arm downward



Emergency telephone numbers

If telephoning from the UK the dialling code is 0033.

PGHM (Peloton de Gendarmerie de Haute Montagne): tel 04 68 04 51 03

Emergency services: tel 112 (mobile phones)

Weather reports

www.meteo.fr

Mountain rescue can be very expensive – be adequately insured.

Note on Mapping

The route maps in this guide are derived from publicly available data, databases and crowd-sourced data. As such they have not been through the detailed checking procedures that would generally be applied to a published map from an official mapping agency. However, we have reviewed them closely in the light of local knowledge as part of the preparation of this guide.

ROUTE SUMMARY TABLE

Stage	Start	Finish	Distance	Ascent	Descent	Time	Page
Port-la-Nouvelle to Cucugnan							
1	Port-la-Nouvelle	Durban-Corbières	27.5km	710m	620m	7hr	30
2	Durban-Corbières	Tuchan	27.5km	1000m	930m	8hr	39
3	Tuchan	Cucugnan	18km	790m	650m	5hr	46
4	Cucugnan	Saint-Paul-de-Fenouillet	23.5 or 27.5km	1110 or 1330m	1150 or 1370m	7 or 9hr	54
5	Saint-Paul-de-Fenouillet	Caudiès-de-Fenouillèdes	22 or 13.5km	930 or 460m	840 or 370m	7 or 4hr	64
6	Caudiès-de-Fenouillèdes	Axat	21.75km	920m	850m	6hr	71
7	Axat	Quirbajou	12.25km	950m	550m	5hr	79
8	Quirbajou	Puivert	21.5km	600m	930m	6hr	84

Cucugnan to Puivert: north variant							
4a	Cucugnan	Camps-sur-l'Agly	20.5 or 24.5km	1130 or 1350m	930 or 1150m	6½ or 8½hr	92
5a	Camps-sur-l'Agly	Bugarach	11.5km	580m	630m	4hr	96
6a	Bugarach	Quillan	23.25km	980m	1150m	7hr	101
7a	Quillan	Puivert	20km	840m	650m	6hr	108
Puivert to Foix							
9	Puivert	Espezel	16.75km	650m	240m	5hr	111
10	Espezel	Comus	20km	730m	440m	6hr	117
11	Comus	Montségur	14km	700m	950m	5hr	123
12	Montségur	Roquefixade	16.5 or 17.75km	690m or 840m	840m or 990m	5 or 6½hr	129
13	Roquefixade	Foix	20.25 or 21km	680m or 745m	1060m or 1125m	6 or 7hr	134
Total (main route)			253km–267.5km	9990m–10,895m	9580m–10,485m	13 days (75hr–82½hr)	
Total (north variant)			235.75km–241.75km	9480m–9915m	9090m–9525m	12 days (70½hr–75hr)	



Walking toward Puilaurens Castle, its intact battlements stark against the sky (Stage 6)

INTRODUCTION



Quéribus Castle sitting above the Corbières landscape (Stage 3)

The Cathar Way, or *Sentier Cathare*, is a voyage into the past. A trail of some 260km through the foothills of the Pyrenees in Languedoc, southern France, it links a chain of ruined medieval castles and retraces the dark history of the Languedoc Cathars – a divergent Christian sect whose brutal fate would shift the very foundations of France.

The Cathars thrived in medieval Languedoc, then a fiercely independent region ruled by its own southern nobility. But this liberty was not to last: the Catholic Church declared the Cathars heretics and in 1209 launched a crusade against them in Languedoc. Meeting resistance from the outraged southerners, the crusaders soon

wrought violent devastation on the whole region, and ultimately destroyed the autonomy of Languedoc forever.

The nine castles visited on the Cathar Way are known as the ‘Cathar castles’ and each has its own history, Cathar related and not. Most long since left to rack and ruin, these crumbling fortresses perched high on rocky pinnacles are still formidable sights to behold, and elicit the eerie feeling that this history is both long past, and yet almost within touching distance.

The trail also explores the wild, sun-baked Languedoc landscape. Beginning at the Mediterranean coast and ending far inland, it traverses the rocky hill ranges heading towards the Ariège Pyrenees, and meanders

through woodland, vineyards, ancient villages, gorges and plateaux – including some places that have lain largely undisturbed for hundreds of years.

But beyond being simply a walking tour of Languedoc, the Cathar Way can tell us something of the human story of the Cathars: their lives, their deaths and the destruction of Languedoc as it was. We would echo the previous author of this guide in urging you to read more about the Cathars before you begin walking this trail, to fully appreciate the sites and what they represent – see Appendix E for some suggested titles.

LANGUEDOC HISTORY

The name ‘Languedoc’ comes from the phrase *langue d’Oc*, a reference

to the Occitan language, then spoken all over the medieval provinces of what is now southern France. Languedoc at that time had little in common with the France of the north where, in contrast, the *langue d’Oil* was spoken. It was a difference not just of languages and geography, but of whole kingdoms and cultures.

Medieval Languedoc was then a large, sprawling region, essentially free from the control of northern France, and broken up into disparate feudal principalities. These were governed by an extended assortment of lords, counts and barons, with the most powerful of all being the ruling Count of Toulouse.

Under this dissipated power structure, throughout the 12th century Languedoc grew and evolved. The region enjoyed a period of

increased trade and economic growth. The courts of the nobility had long been highly cultured places of entertainment and finery, attracting the famous roving troubadours – musical poets who sang about romantic love (notably in Occitan rather than Latin).

It was in this time and place of independence, increased prosperity and tolerance, with people and ideas freely intermingling along travel and trade routes, that Catharism began to take root and spread.

THE CATHARS AND THE CRUSADE

The Cathars were a Christian dualist sect that flourished in several parts of Western Europe in the Middle Ages, and in Languedoc particularly from the 12th century onwards. The name ‘Cathars’ was in fact coined by the Catholic medieval clerics who saw them as heretics, perhaps to imply a mocking ‘pure’ (the Latin *Cathari* derives from the Greek *katharoi* – ‘the pure’). Along similar lines, the word for Cathar priests, ‘Perfects’, was actually shorthand for ‘perfect heretic’. The names Cathars gave themselves were simply Christians and Good Men/Good Women (*Bons Hommes/Bonnes Femmes*). Yet although they may have seen themselves as simple Christians, with growing popularity and beliefs markedly different from

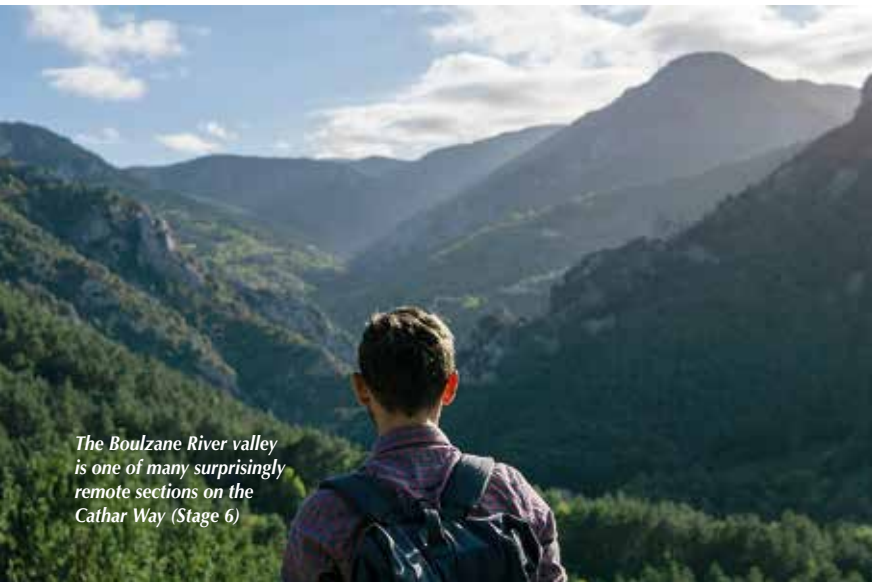
the established church, the Cathars were in a dangerous position.

The radical Cathar belief that set them apart was the dualist idea that good and evil were separate governing principles. They concluded from this that physical (material) reality was in fact of evil creation, and that in order to gain salvation it had to be rejected. Perfects were therefore ascetic, eschewing wealth, marriage and social distinctions – women were also allowed into the ranks of the ordained. The Cathars gained followers throughout the classes, both rich and poor.

The Catholic establishment could not tolerate such a heretical diversion from the dogma of the Church. Several papal legates were sent to Languedoc in the latter part of the 12th century to preach and persuade, but to little avail. The lords of Languedoc, such as Raymond VI Count of Toulouse, didn’t help much either; some of the nobility even had Cathar family members themselves.

Then in 1208 one of the legates, Pierre de Castelnau, was assassinated. It proved a turning point, as Pope Innocent III promptly pinned the blame on Raymond VI and called for a crusade against the Cathars.

And so began what would be known as the Albigensian Crusade, named after the nearby Languedoc town of Albi. The key events are summarised here, with castles on the Cathar Way highlighted in bold:



The Boulzane River valley is one of many surprisingly remote sections on the Cathar Way (Stage 6)

THE ALBIGENSIAN CRUSADE

1209 – Pope Innocent III launches a crusade against the Cathars of Languedoc and a host of soldiers is assembled from Northern France.

July 1209 – Sacking of the city of Béziers by French forces. In an act of astonishing violence, all inhabitants are slaughtered – Cathar and Catholic alike – and the city is razed.

August 1209 – Siege and quick surrender of the important city of Carcassonne. The young Viscount of Carcassonne and Béziers, Raymond Roger Trencavel, is imprisoned, but the people of Carcassonne are allowed to flee unharmed. Trencavel then dies in prison in November. A talented new military commander is appointed to lead the crusade: the ruthless Simon de Montfort (father of the better-known Simon de Montfort, 6th Earl of Leicester, considered one of the progenitors of modern parliamentary democracy).



*Vertiginous sights from within
Peyrepertuse Castle, on the windswept
Saint-Louis stairs (Stage 4)*

1210 – De Montfort attacks and successfully captures castles all over Languedoc, burning Cathars and killing anyone who resists. Termes Castle falls, as well as **Aguilar Castle** (Stage 2, abandoned by the Cathar family that owns Termes) and **Puivert Castle** (Stage 8). Infamously, at Bram the captured Cathars have their eyes gouged out and ears and lips cut off and are sent marching to nearby Lastours as a warning. Minerve settlement also surrenders and the Cathars living there choose to burn over recanting.

1211 – Cabaret (Lastours) surrenders, Lavour falls, Toulouse is besieged, and the Battle of Castelnaudary erupts, where the Counts of Foix and Toulouse fail to defeat Simon de Montfort's superior forces.

1213 – Battle of Muret is fought and Peter II, the King of Aragon who had come to the aid of the south, is killed – a major blow to the south.

1215 – At the Fourth Lateran Council in Rome, Pope Innocent III reavows his condemnation of heresies such as the Cathars. Raymond VI of Toulouse is stripped of his titles and lands, which go to Simon de Montfort. **Foix Castle** (Stage 13) is also surrendered to the Pope's legate.

1217 – Raymond VI successfully takes back Toulouse.

1218 – Simon de Montfort is killed in a skirmish. Stories from the time suggest it was by a missile from a slingshot operated by women. His son Amaury succeeds him but steadily loses much of the lands his father held, and the crusade loses its impetus.

1226 – The crusade is relaunched by Louis VIII, the French king.

1229 – Treaty of Paris is signed and Raymond VII submits, annexing the Count of Toulouse's lands to France, signalling both the end of the crusade and effectively the end of Languedoc independence – but not the Cathar influence.

1233 – Pope Gregory IX launches the Inquisition in Languedoc to root out the remaining Cathars. The pitiless Inquisitors become a much-hated presence in the region.

1240 – A band of knights led by Raymond de Trencavel attempts and fails to take back Carcassonne. **Peyrepertuse Castle** (Stage 4) falls.

1242 – Inquisition officials are murdered in Avignonet by Cathar knights from Montségur.

1243–1244 – **Montségur Castle** (Stage 11) is besieged over a long and bitter winter. Eventually surrendering, the Cathars who sheltered there are ordered to repent or die and 225 Cathars perish in a mass burning at the castle base.

1255 – Surrender of **Quéribus Castle** (Stage 3), one of the last redoubts of the Cathars, after the capture of Cathar lord Chabert de Barbaïra. At a similar time, the king of France orders fortifications to be added to **Puilaurens Castle**

PORT-LA-NOUVELLE TO PUIVERT

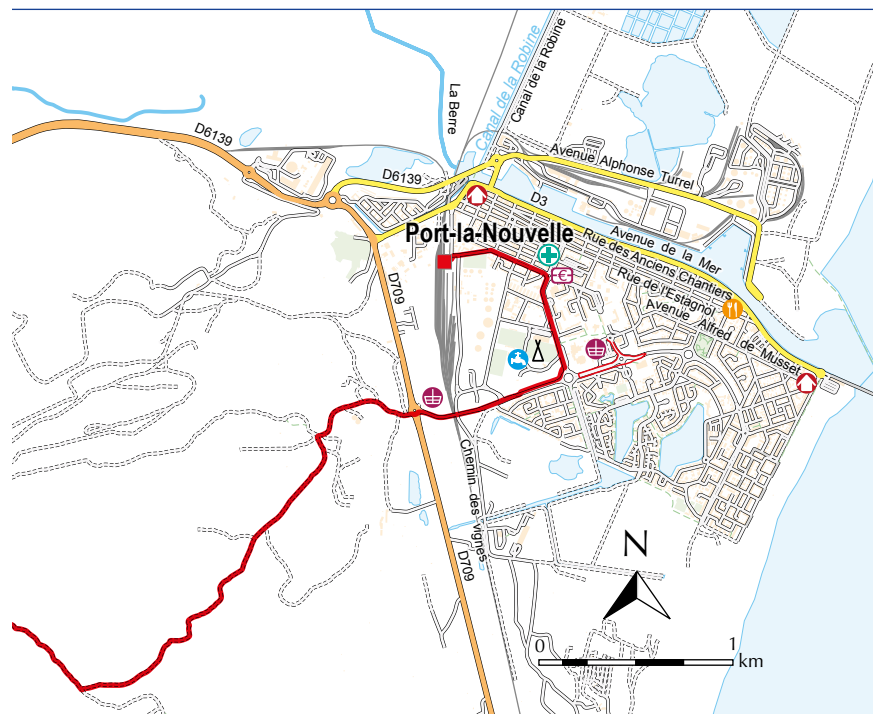
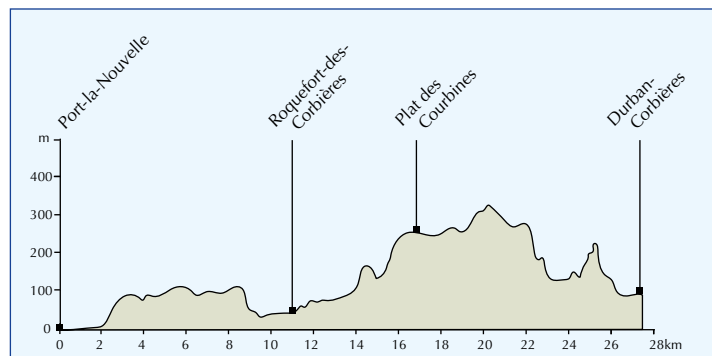
STAGE 1

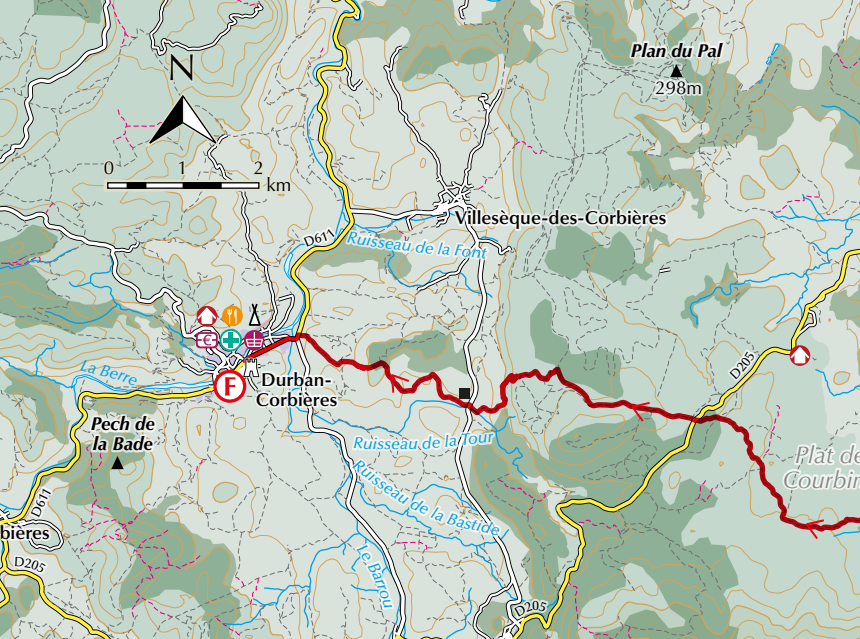
Port-la-Nouvelle to Durban-Corbières

Start	Port-la-Nouvelle rail station
Finish	Durban-Corbières town centre
Distance	27.5km
Ascent	710m
Descent	620m
Time	7hr
Refreshments	Port-la-Nouvelle has a supermarket along with a campsite to fill up on water. There are also some small restaurants on the outskirts of the village of Roquefort-des-Corbières and Durban-Corbières has most amenities including a food shop.
Public transport	There are direct trains between Port-la-Nouvelle and Perpignan. Train connections are from Béziers, or from Carcassonne and Toulouse via Narbonne.

Stage 1 of the Cathar Way is distinct from the other stages: rather than involving castles and mountain villages, the route starts near the sea and heads into Mediterranean coastal countryside, traversing rugged *garrigue* (a type of scrubland), wide-open limestone plateaux and tranquil Corbières vineyards. Think of this stage as being less about the Cathars and more about quiet and strikingly wild landscapes.

It is quite a long day, with plenty of ascent, so there is an option to divide it into two by stopping after 19km at the D205 road. The only accommodation is a rural B&B – Domaine Castelsec – which is just under 2km away to the north and does evening meals. Contact the owner to check if it's possible to be picked up and dropped off the next morning to continue the journey.

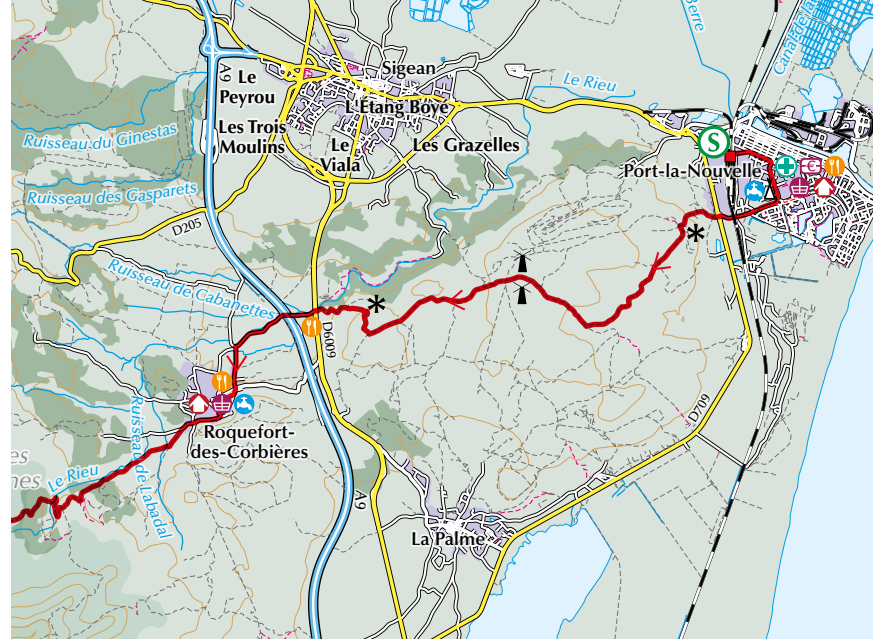




To begin the Cathar Way, exit the railway station in **Port-la-Nouvelle** and turn left through the car park onto Avenue Jean Moulin. Turn right and follow it towards the coast.

Port-la-Nouvelle is an unassuming coastal town which does boast long sections of wide sandy beach. If you've arrived here having walked the Cathar Way from west to east, you might well be tempted to dip your toes in the sea.

At the road end turn right onto Boulevard l'Avenir and walk to a roundabout. Take the right turning down the road lined with palm trees that bends to the left. Pass a sports centre, then a **campsite** on your right, and just before another roundabout take the footpath on the right, marked with a yellow Cathar Way sign. This gives a brief respite from the road, so follow it for 250 metres before crossing back over the road as marked



by the red-and-white *balise* (waymark). Continue over the bridge to reach another roundabout with an **ALDI supermarket** off to the right. From here take the gravel track leading up into the hills as waymarked.

There is also a **small scallop shell waymark** here, the symbol of the pilgrimage route Voie de Piémont. It starts in Narbonne and heads to Santiago de Compostela in Spain, slicing through the Pyrenees as it goes.

After 200 metres on the gravel track continue uphill to the left, signposted Cathar Way GR367. Shortly afterwards pass a local footpath map on the right, ignoring the track on the left. After a further 400 metres there are two parking areas – one on either side of the path. ▶

Carry straight on between the car parks to reach a three-way fork of tracks shortly afterwards. Take the furthest left. A little further on the path forks again: go to

From the viewing platform in the car park on the left there are expansive views of industrial Port-la-Nouvelle and the vast ocean beyond.

the right to walk over a wide open limestone plateau, sparsely vegetated save for a few wild herbs. After just over 1km follow the rocky path as it bends slightly to the right and descends into a small valley. Walk through the valley for another 1km to reach a T-junction with a 'Garrigue Haute' signpost (meaning an area of high coastal scrubland).

FLORA

There's a beautiful and aromatic array of flowers and plants on this coastal part of the Cathar Way, particularly of course in spring. The most commonly found in this area are wild thyme, rosemary and the bright pink *Cistus albidus* (grey-leaved cistus).

On later sections of the route these are joined by a riot of other flora, including those particular to the Pyrenees like the beautiful *Fritillaria nigra* (Pyrenean fritillary) and the *Lilium pyrenaicum* (Pyrenean lily).

Turn right towards the wind turbines – a dominant feature in the bare landscape here. After 800 metres there is a drive and a short avenue of cypress trees that leads to a farmhouse. Turn right, away from the house, and continue towards the turbines. Take the dirt track to the left at the fork 100 metres further on.

Go straight ahead when you reach a crossroads of tracks between the **wind turbines**. After a further 200 metres the path forks, with both ways signposted for

Walking over the rocky garrigue and away from the Mediterranean Sea



the Cathar Way. Take the left, going downhill towards Roquefort-des-Corbières. Pass a ruined building on the right, and then at another fork continue to the right, as signposted, for 1km.

When you near a wind turbine and a track joins from the left, continue straight on. After 400 metres take another track to the right, following it across scrubland to emerge at a wide **view** of the Mediterranean Sea and an inland lagoon.

A couple of hundred metres further on there is another fork. Take the footpath to the left towards the precipitous edge of the limestone cliff. Descend the steep rocky path (it's rather loose in parts); you'll see the beginnings of the famous Corbières vineyards below. When you reach the first vineyard continue straight on the path through the undergrowth to emerge at more vines, joining an established winemakers' track and following it to the left.

This track skirts the edges of more vine plots and soon becomes a tarmac lane. The lane quickly comes to another road, which you follow through a little tunnel under the D6009 road. ▶

Out of the tunnel, follow the road to the right and pass under the **A9 motorway**. Beyond the bridge, Roquefort-des-Corbières comes into view. Follow this road, with vineyards on the left, and after 800 metres take the left turn towards the village. As the lane draws closer to Roquefort, the limestone escarpment behind the village looms larger and ever more dramatic.

On entering **Roquefort-des-Corbières** go straight across at the crossroads and up Rue du Rocher de Cancale, passing a lovely little mural of the village on the right. ▶ After 80 metres turn right into Rue Los Castanhers and go across two more crossroads, passing the *mairie* (town hall) and a small selection of shops to reach a T-junction. Turn left up Rue des Trois Moulins.

At the top of the street turn right and then right again onto Rue du Camin del Bosc. Follow this level road for 200 metres to reach a fork. Take the road to the right, which soon becomes Chemin de la Trillole, rising out of the village back into the countryside.

If you're in need of refreshments there are a couple of places up on the D6009 to the left, the nearest being only 250 metres away.

Just up this street there is a drinking tap in the wall.

From this road there are eye-catching views across vineyards to **Pic du Pied du Poul** (596m). This is the eastern end of the Corbières Massif (also known as the Corbières Maritimes), an impressive set of Pyrenean foothills.

At the next fork keep left on the principal lane, and after another 500 metres take a right turn. Follow this lane for 1km until the tarmac ends at a fork, and then continue on the more established track to the left uphill.

Climb steadily on the track for 750 metres to reach a T-junction. Turn right here and snake downwards into a pretty vineyard valley shaped like an amphitheatre. Before reaching the bottom, on a left-hand bend, take a footpath off to the right.

Continue downhill on a rocky path, steep at times, but only for 200 metres or so. Follow the path sharply to the left and begin another climb, again steep in places.

Ignore a path off to the left after 500 metres and continue uphill. ◀ The path soon levels out and you begin to cross the second limestone plateau of the stage – the expansive **Plat des Courbines**. After 750 metres walking on a level path, at a fork, ignore the grassy track to the left and continue to the right. At another fork 100 metres later go left.

Follow this path, ignoring any small side-tracks, for nearly 2km. After entering a conifer plantation you'll reach a three-way fork: take the small footpath in the middle. This rocky little path goes deeper into the conifers and weaves its way out of the trees to the **D205 road**. ◀

To continue on the route, cross the road and walk uphill beyond the barrier on the concrete track, which soon turns to gravel. At a fork ignore a smaller track off to the left and continue descending for 300 metres through fragrant bushes of wild rosemary and thyme until you reach a left turning which is signposted.

Turn left here and almost immediately turn left again onto a footpath through undergrowth. Come out onto the track and turn left. Soon after at a grassy fork,



ignore the track to the left and keep on the waymarked route to the right.

With a field on the left and a circular stone ruin on the right, skirt around the perimeter of the field. The path then becomes rocky, climbs a little and bears left. Where it bears left, turn right on a smaller waymarked path and soon come to the edge of a limestone cliff with a patchwork of vineyards, fields and farmsteads below, including a red-roofed **barn**.

Take care going downhill on the rocky path, which zigzags sharply at first and then becomes easier as it follows the contours of the hill. When you reach the field on the valley floor, skirt round its edge to meet the road opposite the red-roofed barn. Cross the road and walk along the track to the left of it.

Follow this flat track for 500 metres and then take the main track uphill away from a vineyard. The track soon bends round to the left and then to the right where it takes you through a small clearing with more vineyards visible beyond.

Follow this vineyard path into a little valley. Follow it to the edge of the vines at the corner of the plot, where the path continues into a thicket of small pine and other Mediterranean vegetation. Ascend gradually for 500 metres to reach a sort of fork, taking the steep (at first) footpath up to the left. The ascent only lasts for 200 metres, at which point you see your goal of Durban-Corbieres, sitting in a new valley.

After the Plat des Courbines you descend to more vineyard-clad valleys

You may see signs to the Bornes Milliaires.

These are two Roman milestones from the Augustan era, intended to guide travellers and pay homage to the emperor.

This is where you can split the day if preferred, and stay at the B&B 2km along this road to the right.

The descent that follows is steep in places and rocky throughout, but you soon come to an easier gravel track which follows an old stone wall. Emerge in due course at a vineyard on the left and a small cottage on the right. After the cottage the track becomes concrete and descends to meet a small tarmac lane. Continue straight on for a short way before turning left onto the larger D611. Cross over the river bridge and follow the road into **Durban-Corbières**.

DURBAN-CORBIÈRES

This ancient town sits peacefully on the banks of the River Berre and has the eye-catching ruins of a castle hunched over its streets. Really a manor house of sorts, all that remains of the castle, which dates to the 11th century, are intact 16th-century windows, and it doesn't appear to have either much connection to the Cathars or a defensive use. The ruins aren't open to the public but they are an arresting sight nonetheless.



Durban-Corbières Castle

Durban-Corbières is a useful town for walkers, with a fair few *chambres d'hôtes* to choose from as well as a café and restaurant. The local library has some tourist information leaflets in English and the shop sells a range of guidebooks and maps along with the usual array of foodstuffs.

STAGE 2

Durban-Corbières to Tuchan

Start	Durban-Corbières town centre
Finish	Tuchan town centre
Distance	27.5km
Ascent	1000m
Descent	930m
Time	8hr (or 8½hr including visit to Aguilar Castle)
Refreshments	Durban-Corbières has a useful grocery shop and a couple of restaurant/café, then nothing until Tuchan
Public transport	Bus 408 from Narbonne serves Durban-Corbières

Hot off the heels of a long first day, the second stage is another lengthy undertaking. It crosses three separate hill ridges, ascending and descending each. Combined with the length and the previous day's efforts, it is quite a challenging section.

The landscape does slowly change over the longer course of the stage: the vineyards and *garrigue* still dominate, but the route also takes you along rivers and down into forests. You will also get to your first Cathar castle: the impressive Aguilar Castle, near the end of the day's route.

Overall though, Stage 2 has a remote, uninhabited air. The one village passed – Embres-et-Castelmaure – has little in it so make sure you take water and supplies for the entire way.

From the bank of the River Berre in **Durban-Corbières**, walk along the main road with the river on the right. After 600 metres take the waymarked left up a little lane, leaving the town.

Snake uphill on a gravel track, rising above vineyards on the left and ignoring any side turnings. At a fork stay on the main track to the right. The path levels out to skirt the side of the hill. At another fork keep to the right and you'll see a waymark on the tree just ahead.

Soon you come to a three-way meeting of tracks: simply take the waymarked path downhill to the right. At



• 260km waymarked trail in 13 stages • Mediterranean coast to the foothills of the Pyrenees • historic route visiting Languedoc's ruined medieval castles

Tracking the tragic history of the Cathars in southern France, the Cathar Way (Sentier Cathare/GR367) explores the unspoilt Languedoc region as it travels from Port-la-Nouvelle on the Mediterranean coast to Foix in the foothills of the Pyrenees. The hiking trail traverses forested valleys, rugged hillsides and dramatic gorges to visit the ruins of nine medieval castles dating back to the 13th-century Albigensian Crusade against the local Cathar sect, who were deemed heretics.

Exploring Languedoc's brutal history, this guidebook provides maps, route description and elevation profiles for all 13 stages of the 260km walk, with information about accommodation, transport and refreshments to help you plan your journey along the Cathar Way.



- 13 stages of 12–27km – an ideal itinerary for a two-week trip
- best walked in spring or autumn as summer sees high temperatures and winter potential snowfall and accommodation closures
- contains practical information alongside insights into the history of the Cathars and their castles

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