



# The Freedom Trail

In the footsteps of heroes! Adventure from France into Spain, across the high Pyrenees mountains, following a World War 2 escape and evasion route used by those wanting to escape Nazi persecution.



Tami Hass and the 3 Generations Team crossing the border (Summer 2017).

Pyrenees Mountain Adventure specialises in organising bespoke treks for small groups along The Freedom Trail /Chemin de la Liberté, which during WW2 was one of the toughest escape and evasion routes across the Pyrenees from France to Spain. The scenery is stunning, the mountain refuges spectacularly located and the area is rich in both flora and fauna.

**The trek is a living memorial with a vivid history. Experience what it was like for downed Allied aircrew, spies, escaped prisoners of war and Jews to cross the mountains from occupied France to 'neutral' Spain and 'freedom'. Learn about the escape and evasion lines and the brave men and women who risked their lives running them.**

Pyrenees Mountain Adventure is a small, independent trekking company offering excellent customer care and flexibility. We have 10 years experience of guiding groups along the Freedom Trail and many satisfied customers including D of E Gold groups and clients from Canada, the United States, Israel, New Zealand and Australia. We are here to help you every step of the way.

**You choose your own dates to suit your group and help you to find the cheapest air fares to Toulouse, we look after the rest! The basic trek is 4 days but why not add a 5th day to summit Mont Valier. It really could not be easier with Pyrenees Mountain Adventure.**

We look forward to seeing you in the Pyrenees soon,

**Paul and the Pyrenees Mountain Adventure team.**

## Highlights:

Very experienced and knowledgeable English guide/tour leader with 10 years experience of guiding this trek, passionate about the history of WW2 escape and evasion lines.

One of the hardest high level WW2 escape routes across the Pyrenees.

2, 4 and 5 day treks possible depending on the time available.

Add an extra day to the 'classic' 4 day trek to ascend Mont Valier for the stunning 360° panorama.

Mountain fauna (marmots, isard, vultures) and mountain flowers.

High mountain cols offering amazing views of the surrounding peaks.

A world of quiet and calm with a stunning mountain backdrop.

Airport transfers and transport back to France at the end of the trek.

Pre trek accommodation in 3\*\*\* Hotel.

Guided visit to the Freedom Trail museum in Saint Giron.

£100 reduction for those arriving in Toulouse from the UK by train and other more environmentally friendly methods than the plane.

**£1050 per person for the classic 4 day trek.**

### Freedom Trail/Chemin de la Liberté - Basic Itinerary.

Day	What	Accommodation	Notes
Day 1	<b>Travel.</b> Arrive Toulouse. Transfer from airport.	Night in 3*** hotel (TBC)	If you arrive at the hotel with time to spare (morning arrival best), we can visit the Chemin de la Liberté museum. I have the keys so it can be a visit 'out of hours' if needed. Transfer is 1h30
Day 2	<b>Trek day 1</b>	Night in mountain refuge	You will be sleeping in dormitory style accommodation ie no individual rooms.
Day 3	<b>Trek day 2</b>	Night in shepherd's shelter	Very basic shelter. Minimal facilities. No showers, no toilets, no warden. Fire place and tap (cold running water). We must prepare our own food. Really gives an idea of what it was like for those who made the crossing during WW2. Tents provided if shelter is full.
Day 4	<b>Trek day 3</b>	Night in mountain refuge	You will be sleeping in dormitory style accommodation ie no individual rooms but in this refuge because I know the guardians well, the whole group will be in their own dormitory.
OPTIONAL DAY	<b>OPTIONAL Mont Valier summit day +£150 per person</b>	Night in mountain refuge	You will be sleeping in dormitory style accommodation ie no individual rooms but in this refuge because I know the guardians well, the whole group will be in their own dormitory.
Day 5	<b>Trek day 4. Cross the border into Spain.</b>	Night in mountain refuge	You will be sleeping in dormitory style accommodation ie no individual rooms.
Day 6	<b>Travel.</b> Transfer back to France from Spain. Transfer to airport Depart Toulouse.		Spain to France 3 hours Saint Giron to Toulouse airport 1 hour 30 mins Afternoon flight after 5pm is best.

**Your 'classic' 4 day trek itinerary costs £1050 per person and includes:**

**Vehicle Transfers:**

Transfer back from Spain at the end of the walk (3 hours) and airport transfers Toulouse – Saint Girons x 2 (1 hour 30)

**Guiding:** 4 days guiding by a qualified International Mountain Leader with 10 years experience of leading groups on this trek and passionate about WW2 escape and evasion lines. First aid trained and with satellite telephone. (Mobile coverage is lost during a day and a half of the trek.)

**Accommodation:** 1 night in a 3\*\*\* hotel before the trek, 3 nights mountain refuge (similar to an English Youth Hostel) and 1 night in shepherd's shelter. At the shepherd's shelter we stay in the part for walkers while the shepherd stays in the other half. Facilities are **minimal** – similar to a Scottish bothy. Running water, sink, table, benches, mattresses, fire place. No showers, no toilet. This experience really helps to understand what it was like for people making the crossing to save their lives during WWII.

**Food:** breakfast, lunch (a packed lunch) and evening meal each day except:

arrival day (just dinner),

departure day (just breakfast)

and the night at the shepherd's shelter. At the shepherd's shelter you will need an evening meal and also breakfast and packed lunch for the next day. Dehydrated meal packets (just add boiling water) work well for the evening meal and breakfast. Non perishable items for the lunch work well. These 3 meals will need to be carried from the start of the trek.

**Options: OPTION A.** Add another night in the high mountain refuge to give you the chance to get to the top of the nearby Mont Valier peak for the magnificent 360° panorama – **add £150 per person** (includes guiding to the summit of this non technical peak ie no specialist equipment needed) Adding another night at the high mountain refuge also gives you a second chance to enjoy the sunset from the refuge patio.

**Adding a 5<sup>th</sup> day to the 4 day 'classic' itinerary the price per person is £1200**

**Group Size.**

Minimum group size is 4. Max group size is 10.

**What Time of Year?**

Last week of June to first week of October (TBC). Out of this time period there is too much snow on the high passes at 2500 meters.

**How Hard?**

Please note: the trek is a tough physical and mental challenge. Paths are rocky and sometimes very steep. You will be carrying a larger rucksack than for a day walk. **You and your group will enjoy the trek more if you have a good level of general fitness and if you have some experience of walking in the mountains.**

Actual time spent walking each day is 8 hours. Average distance per day is 15km/10 miles. Average height gain per day is 1000 meters/3300 feet. For comparison (for those trekkers from the UK):

Walking from Pen y Pass to the top of Snowdon along the PYG track is 700 meters/2300 feet of ascent/height gain and 13km/8 miles in distance there and back.

Walking from Wasdale Head to the summit of Scafell Pike is 900 meters/2950 feet of ascent/height gain and 9km/6 miles in distance there and back.

## Some Selected Feedback:

**One of the best things I have done this year.** Paul made our trek along the Freedom Trail really special. His kind, calm approach and intimate knowledge of the area and language made our adventure smooth and enjoyable. Paul's thorough planning and preparation was faultless - from collection at the airport, car hire, booked accommodation, trip to the wonderful museum to his excellent guided trek through the mountains. Mo M. 2011.

Thanks to Paul who showed us the beauty of the mountains, who guided us through difficulties and who supported us in sunshine and rain, who showed us not to fear, but to keep the faith. Who showed great care for the mountains and for us.

**It has been a real adventure and we shall never forget it.**

Thank you so much! Lizzie, Marcel, Roel and Hanneka. July 2013.

That was a fantastic four days tackling the Chemin. Thanks for your relaxed professionalism and thorough knowledge of the route and its history throughout. Without your guiding this would have been a very different trip. From arranging hut accommodation to pace-setting to use of your stove and getting us back to St Girons, every step of the way was improved. **Thank you for this unforgettable introduction to the Pyrenees.** Very best, Anthony P. September 2014.

I am enormously grateful to you for guiding us across the Chemin to "freedom"!!! Your calm head filled us with confidence and you never made me feel that we were in any sort of rush.....Your management of our fears was also great and allowed us to achieve things that we previously wouldn't have dreamt possible. **The organisation was seamless....**

Many thanks again. Pip D. 16 September 2015.

**What an incredible experience** ....(Y)ou were invaluable in making it happen. Your care of us from the pace you set to how well you read our needs was amazing. We appreciate the expertise you brought in helping us negotiate the challenges we had and attention to our safety. We also very much valued the warm relationship we developed between us. Your knowledge of the freedom trail and its history enhanced the experience and helped us feel we were walking in the footsteps of our parents. ....(T)hanks ... for making this incredible experience possible. Irene S. July 2016

**I have been singing your praises...you did a great job for us.** Monty Halls, presenter of the Channel 4 'Escaping Hitler – The Freedom Trails' series. July 2017

Such an inspiring trek ..... brought to life by Paul's knowledge, expertise and stories of the trail including a guided visit by Paul to the museum before hand to set the scene. **Paul is a terrific guide with in depth knowledge of the history ..... of the trail which made a huge difference.** Donna C, August 2018

**It was an absolute top few days.** Your professionalism made the expedition so enjoyable on so many levels. You clearly worked hard to ensure that I had a good time. Ian P, July 2019

Thank you so much for an amazing trip. All four of us really enjoyed it. Every moment was brilliant, even the snow, although challenging, made it memorable. I have been singing your praises to a number of my friends and telling them how awesome the Chemin de Liberté is, and if they should ever consider doing it, to use you as a guide. Edward C, September 2022

Thank you so much for all your care and attention during our crossing. The trail was fascinating from an historical context and certainly challenged us physically. .... We both felt a real sense of achievement. Thank you for getting me up the 'hill' on the last day - quite the adrenalin surge! Thank you also for picking David up off the mountain when he took a tumble. Celia K, July 2023

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