



Snowshoeing in the Pyrenees

Day 1: Evening transfer from Toulouse to Ax

Transfer 1hr 45 mins from Toulouse airport to the your accommodation in the spa resort of Ax les Thermes, which nestles at a height of 720m in the Ax valley.

Day 2: Col du Marmare

The area around the Col du Marmare (1361m) provides us with the perfect terrain with which to get used to the snowshoes. In the summer this limestone plateau provides grazing for the beef cattle but in winter a sea of white stretches across the horizon. Our aim is the Rocher de Scaramus (1868m) which is one of the most Northerly peaks in this part of the Pyrenees and has great views over the planes of Southern France and towards the Mediterranean.

Day 3: Tossa Rodona (2601m).

Starting at the Col du Puymorens (1940m) this high mountain peak is within easy reach and the views from the top are breathtaking. Our route takes us up the wide U shaped valley where sightings of Izzard (Pyrenean Chamois) are fairly common sightings. We return down a snow filled river valley which forms a natural bob-sled run for those wanting to try out the toboggans.

Day 4: The frozen lake of Font Viva (1900m). Today's walk starts in the pine forest around the village of Porte Puymorens and climbs over a jumble of snow covered boulders to the stunning lake in an amphitheatre of towering peaks. This is a favoured winter retreat for a heard of muflon (large horned sheep) and their tracks cross-cross the area making them easy to find.

Day 5: Free Day

Today's challenge is to decide what to do as there is a huge choice of activity from downhill skiing, cross country skiing and dog sledding to a cultural day in Ax, or a relaxing session at the spa with a massage session booked in too! Your evening is also free so you can eat out at one of Ax's many restaurants, and taste some different cuisine.

Day 6: Plateau de Beille (1800 – 2000m).

Renowned as the best cross country skiing area in the Pyrenees, the Plateau de Beille is also a fantastic area to explore on snowshoes. It is a high altitude plateau with stunning panoramic views of the Andorran / French border mountains in almost every direction. Don't be fooled by the name however - for a plateau the route still 'undulates' quite a lot, winding beautifully through the mountain side forests and over rounded peaks. The pine forests are some of the highest in Europe and the contorted trees are home to the majestic Capercaille.

Day 7: The ridges of Chioula (1400 to 1900m).

The aim of this walk is the idyllically located Refuge de Chioula where we will be given a warm welcome with a log fire and a mug of vin chaud! Our route takes us through forests of towering beech trees and out onto the high pastures giving us vies of all the other areas explored during the week. After a final memorable descent on snowshoes we will have an opportunity to show the local kids a thing or two on the purpose built toboggan run!

Day 8: Afternoon Transfer to Toulouse

You get to spend a relaxing morning in Ax before we have to head off to Toulouse after lunch in order to catch flights home. Now is the chance to do something else on the list that you just didn't have time for on the day off!