



Aragnouet - Le port Vieux

This mule track, full of history, will bring you through the beautiful pastoral valley of « la Géla » until the « Port Vieux », a place of crossing and ancestrals exchanges between France and Spain.



Duration: 5h15 A/R Ascent : 978 m Difficulty: hard

- > Location : Place called « Le Plan », at 14 km from the west of St Lary-Soulan by the D929, D18 and D173
- > Car park : at the intersection between D118 and D173, follow the « Tunnel de Bielsa » and park after the first hairpin bend at the roadside.

- > Pyrenees National Park : dogs are not allowed, even on a leash
- > High mountain path : only go with good weather

1- Take the wide passable path that goes up, it rises regularly over 2 km along the right bank of « la Neste de la Géla ». After crossing a gate, the valley opens up and the way goes along the torrent in the middle of lawns. Walk until a junction.

2- Leaving a footbridge on the right, go straight, on the right bank, at the horizontal, to reach the cabin of « la Géla » (1700m – you can shelter from the bad weather in the 2nd refuge further down). Continue towards the south, keeping the left, at the bottom of slope, at the edge of the flat area at far end of valley.

3- Take the way that climbs up on the left. It rises gradually and then makes large sharp bends towards the east. Don't follow a grassy path on the right (that brings you to the remains of some old mines) and continue the progression. The path goes up along the torrent's right bank, at the limit of the National Park (pyrenean chamois head's emblem). Higher, the path crosses the national park, makes a large curve to the right, and after 3 sharps bends, reaches the « Port Vieux » (2378 m)

> Variation itinerary : from the « port vieux », you have the possibility to go up until the « Pic de l'Aiguillette » (2517 m -30 min round trip – viewing point) – Arriving at the col, follow the little path that climbs on the left in the lawns.

4- Make the return by the same way.



Church « Notre Dame de l'Assomption » – Registered on the list of the properties of « the way of Saint James »

Located in Aure's valley at the place called « Le Plan », on a way followed by pilgrims, merchants and travellers that are going to Spain by the col of Bielsa, the « Notre Dame de l'Assomption » church or the Templars church was built in the XIth century. Established by the monks soldiers of the Order of St John of Jerusalem, a hospital, attached to the church, was built in fortified walls, as testified the arrowslits still visible in the retaining walls of the bell tower.

The chapel, built around 1160, has kept its pure Roman style. The portal, with a tympanum-chrism (the area above a portal, sculpted with chi-rhô symbol) on the top, is magnificent. The very narrow original openings have, on top, full round arch. A cornice with modillions shows the origin of this building.

The same purity of style is found inside. The unique nave is covered with a vault full arch, extended by a semi circular apse. The restoration work revealed the murals in the apse, representing the Nativity. Recent work has highlighted the interior of the structure. The installation of a wooden floor and the application of a whitewash distemper, coupled with new lighting, creates a warmer atmosphere and a better presentation of the movable heritage.

The XIVth century painted paneling, depicting the conversions of St Paul, St Catherine the martyr, St Michael and the XIth century statues of « the Madonna and the Child », have a rare beauty.



In the XIth century, the collapse of the riverbanks of the «Neste de la Géla » took away the bell tower, the nave's west wall and the hospital. A bell gable was erected in 1876 on the hospital ruins. It is inspired by a Roman bell tower composed with a superposition of 2 geminated blinds arcades standing on stone columns with sculpted capitals. The positioning of the steeple, dissociated from the church, constitute an ensemble unusual and atypical.