

COSTA BLANCA MOUNTAIN WALKERS - WALK DESCRIPTION

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Walk description originally prepared by:-	Vivien & Philip Freakley
Last Updated	26/08/2019
Title of Walk	2 day frontier crossing circuit from Llanos de Hospital Day 1: Hospital de Benasque Hotel to Hospice de France via Port de la Picada & Pas de la Escaleta Day 2: Hospice de France to Hospital de Benasque via Puerto de la Glera
Location of Start (include name of nearest village/town at start of description)	Benasque Hospital de Benasque Hotel
Key Statistics for walk - Distance in km	Day 1: 13.6km Day 2: 13.7km
Key Statistics for walk - Ascent in m	Day 1: 800m (+ 70m opt detour to Port/Portillon de Benasque) Day 2: 970m
Key Statistics for walk - Walking time and total completion time including any stops	Day 1: 5hrs 25 (+ 30mins opt detour) walking 6hrs 45mins total time (inc detour) Day 2: 6hrs 10mins walking 7hrs 30mins total time
Key Statistics for walk - Grade (using CBMW system)	VS/B
Grid reference of start point (if known)	Lat: 42.684089, Long: 0.612481
Directions to Start	The N260 runs E-W along the central part of N Spain. From this find the A139 heading N to Benasque. Follow this road past Benasque for several kilometers to reach a turning on the R signed to Hospital de Benasque. Take this road past a large parking are on the LHS (you might have to park here and walk up to the hotel in high season) and a little way further on drop down to the parking area of the hotel on the LHS. You can normally park here with no difficulty if there is no barrier across.
Short walk description	A challenging 2 day adventure with 2 very different high mountain frontier crossings between Spain and France, using 2 historic (restored) inns for comfortable overnight stays. Good stamina needed for demanding walking. Clear paths with no difficulties. <u>Only to be attempted once the snow has cleared, from late July to early September.</u>

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Full Walk Description	Elapsed Walking Time/Distance so far
DAY ONE	
Walk across the car park in front of the hotel and exit slightly R down a track and over a bridge. At the far side of the bridge turn half R away from the river to reach a wall which we pass through and then turn R beside it. Follow this up until you thread through the wall and drop down to cross a bridge back across a smaller stream.	
Now continue ahead on the path to a junction with finger post where you continue directly ahead (with the stream on your LHS and signed to Portillon de Benasque) ignoring the GR11 path going off uphill to the R.	660m 11min
Follow this braided path as it ascends on the RHS of the stream and just below some slabs keep up to the R on a grassy but indistinct path soon doubling back L to reach a finger post above the slabs which points you to the Portillon (indicated as 1hr 30mins)	1.2km 26min
The path is indistinct for a while but soon improves with parallel green stripes to indicate the route as it climbs up in zig-zags (always best to ignore the short cuts!)and after numerous twists and turns (some showing signs of the original stone paving) you reach a natural ramp aiming up to the R.	
Follow this to turn a spur to the L.....	2.8km 1hr 10
and now continue up through a high grassy corrie with the ridge line visible above you to soon reach a finger post with slate stone erected and indicating the distances to Luchon and Benasque. Here multiple paths meet.	4km 1hr 44
Uphill to the L the line continues with R/W markers to reach a rocky col on the R which is the Portillon. The views down into France from here are spectacular although a little hemmed in by the rocky walls. (The descent on the far side is very steep)	4.3km, 2hrs
Returning to the standing stone, avoid the R/W marked path descending straight on and turn left on a clear path which descends gently, contouring the flanks of the Pic de la Mina. Evidence of the mining is all around as the path, visible far ahead, crosses grassy and shaley slopes before rising steeply up to reach the Port de la Picada.	6.5km 3hrs
Cross the Picada and descend on the obvious path towards a small col, the Pas de la Escaleta, which is in fact the frontier crossing. A few paths converge here but our route is obvious: a signpost indicates the Hospice de France and from now on the path is marked in yellow.	7.3km 3hrs 30
Ignore paths descending to the right and left and follow the obvious paved and built path climbing dramatically up the ridge ahead. This soon emerges onto a broad grassy plateau and the path can be seen traversing below the Tuc de la Escaleta. It remains very clear and easy to follow as it rejoins the ridge between France and the Val d'Aran to descend easily to the Pas de la Mountjoye/Montjoia at the frontier marker 23.	9.4km 4hrs 20
Turn left at the marker to continue the gentle descent across pasture until a junction of paths and a marker post indicating a left turn to the Hospice de France and the start of a steeper descent.	12km 5hrs 20

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<p>Shortly after starting this descent there is a welcome spring on the right. The path now enters woodland and emerges on a broad track leading to the Hospice de France.</p>	13.6km 5hrs 55
<p><u>DAY TWO</u></p>	
<p>Leave the Hospice by the path immediately opposite and descend to cross the stream. Carry straight on, ignoring paths to left and right to reach and cross a bridge, the Passerelle de Penjat. Here a signpost indicates a path to the left which climbs steeply up the valley to the Bous (lakes) of the Port de Benasque and our path to the right for the Cirque de la Glere, along the Chemin de l'Imperatrice.</p>	0.8km 12mins
<p>Turn right along the Empress's broad path to climb gently through mixed woodland, ascending only 150m in 1hr 30mins. Nevertheless, care is needed where the path is eroded at a few places and where it crosses streams. Although we are not climbing, the valley to the right is dropping away dramatically. The path eventually descends a little and emerges from the forest to give a sudden and dramatic view of immense waterfalls of the Cirque de la Glere.</p>	5.3km 1hr 30
<p>Continue on the main path, which includes a number of itineraries marked in yellow, including number 33 which will take us to the Port de la Glere/Puerto de la Glera. The path trends firstly to the left to begin a rising traverse around the cirque, crossing many streams as it passes below the waterfalls. Path 34 leaves to the right but we continue straight on, climbing more steeply.</p>	6.2km 2hrs
<p>At the next junction, path 33 makes a sharp turn to the left and continues on its own.</p>	6.8km 2hr 30
<p>The way becomes spectacular as the path, sometimes built up, sometimes cut in, traverses back across the main cliffs of the cirque before emerging onto a grassy hillside.</p>	7.7km 3hrs
<p>Zigs-zags climb easily up the grass and reach the stony bowl below the Port. At this point the path becomes very steep and stony and it is important to follow the yellow markers to find the best route. Stone supporting walls make the path very safe for hikers but it took these hikers a full hour of plodding up the steep section to reach the Puerto. THIS SECTION SHOULD NEVER BE UNDERTAKEN IN SNOW – IT IS STEEP AND PRONE TO AVALANCHE.</p>	
<p>The Puerto de la Glera at 2364m is broad with outstanding views of the Maladeta massif.</p>	9.5km 4hrs 30
<p>Begin the descent with a turn to the left – avoiding the path straight ahead which climbs the Pic de Sacroux. The path leads clearly down to the Gorgutes lake – an excellent place for a well-earned rest.</p>	9.8km 4hrs 45
<p>From this point on the route is marked in 2 shades of green and is very clear on the ground. Leaving the lake, it bends to the left to descend below the peaks on the frontier ridge and passes above 2 small lakes. Immediately after, look out for a sharp right turn and continue down to join the Gorgutes stream at a bridge.</p>	11.4km 5hrs 10
<p>On the other side of the stream, care is needed to ensure the green markers are followed. The many paths (some made by the hundreds of cows that pasture here in summer) can be confusing but the main path has plenty of markers. It is an awkward path to descend, complicated by tangles of roots and rocks but eventually it does come down to a road.</p>	12.7km 5hrs 40

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Continue down the road for 500metres before turning sharp left onto an obvious path leading down to the ruins of one of several previous Hospitals (information board). From here it only remains to stroll down on to the grassy plain and continuing over a couple of bridges until the Hospice/Hotel comes into view. Turn right to cross the last of the bridges and head for the café.

13.7km 6hrs 10

Spanish maps included within these descriptions are provided courtesy of the Spanish IGN and remain © Instituto Geográfico Nacional

Walk Recommendations or restrictions

This is a high mountain walk and should be treated with respect; never undertaken until all the snow has gone and avoided if the cloud is down and visibility is poor. Warm clothing and extra emergency rations should be carried.

The gps track is for both days combined as one.

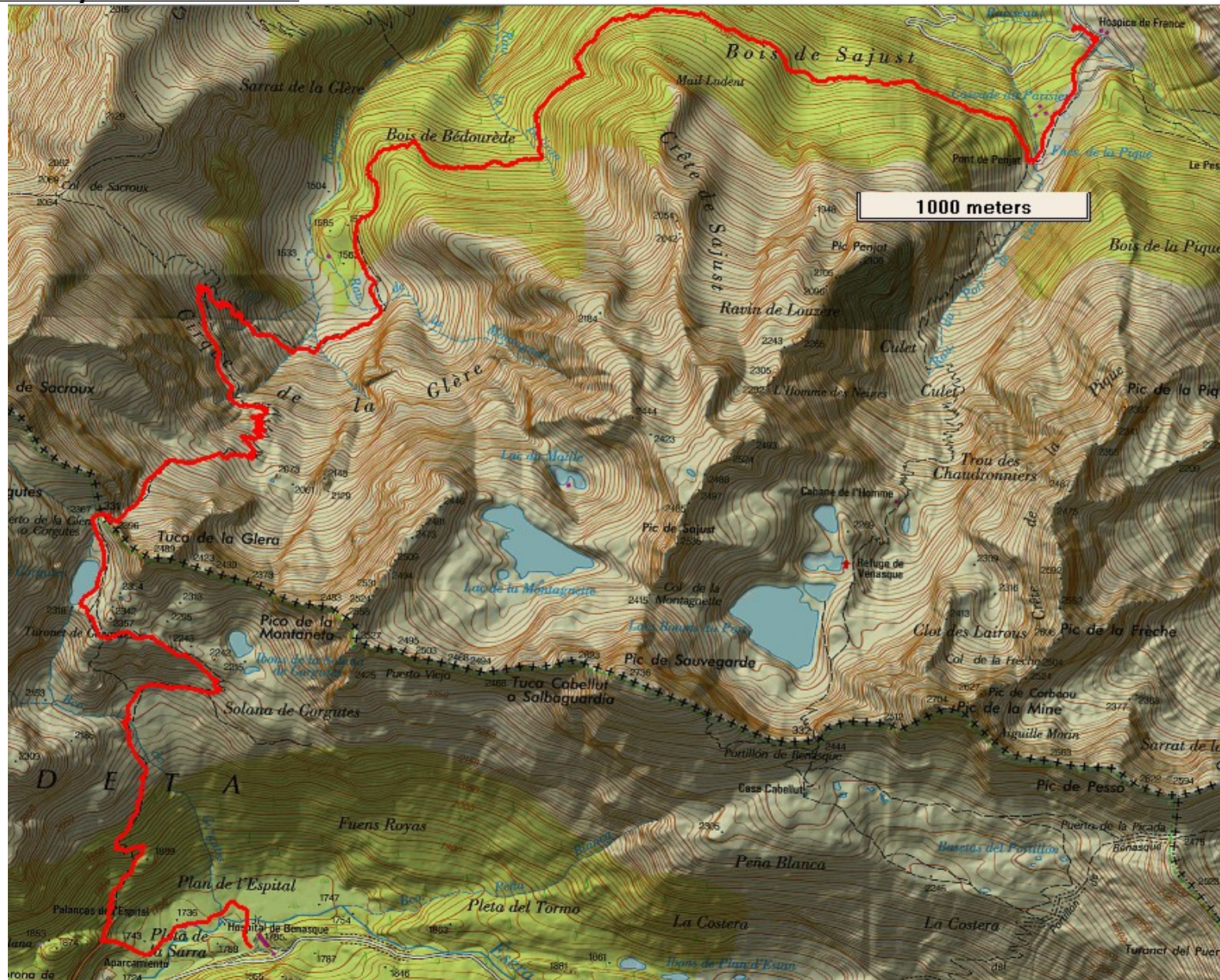
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Route followed on Day 1 is outlined in Red



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Route followed on Day 2 is outlined in Red



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