

# Confraternity of Saint James

**Pilgrim Guides to the Roads through France**

## 5. The Voie Littorale: Soulac to Hendaye



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### 9km Hendaye (375km) Population 14,400

Hendaye is both industrial border town and popular coastal resort with long beach. All facilities.

Office de Tourisme [www.hendaye-tourisme.fr](http://www.hendaye-tourisme.fr) Tel 05 59 20 00 34

Bus service to St Jean de Luz. Two railway stations with connections to Biarritz, Bordeaux, Paris (TGV). EuskoTren, a narrow gauge railway, starts from the International Railway Station and serves towns along the north Spanish coast as far as Bilbao.

For hotels, chambres d'hôtes, campsites, see OT website. Hôtel La Palombe Bleue (300m off route at end of bridge, opposite station) is inexpensive out of season. Tel 05 59 20 43 80

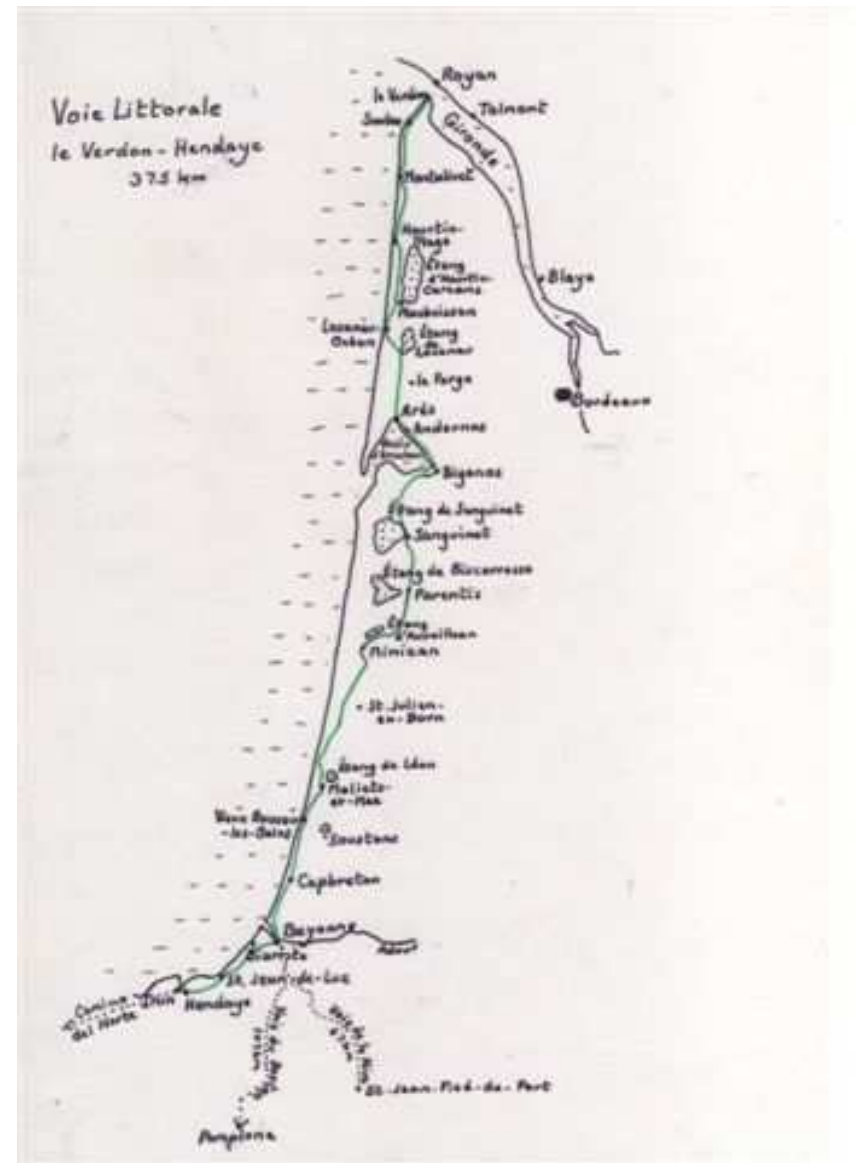
Gîte du Littoral Côte Basque (1, Rue la Fontaine, 600m off route in town centre – R off D358) offers walkers and cyclists bed and breakfast in dormitories at 20 euros/person. Tel 06 11 50 00 35

Maison de Vacances 'Temps Libre', Rue Hélène Boucher (2km off route, near promenade) offers B & B for 29euros/person outside school holidays. Tel 05 59 20 07 07

Refugio in Irún at Calle Lucas de Berroa 18 (approx. 1km from end of bridge). 40 beds. Donations.

#### \*\* Notes for cyclists

Cyclists should find few problems in following the walkers' route in this section. There are just one or two short stretches off tarmac, where a bike might need to be pushed.



The Voie Littorale – sketch map



St James in the Basilica at Soulac

overgrown) and climb the hill to arrive at a broad track. Bear R on this track (you are now briefly on the GR10, a long-distance path that traverses the length of Pyrenees) and KSO to a tarmacked road immediately before a telecommunications tower. Turn L downhill, and after 150m take a road on the R. This descends with good views of the bay and harbour to meet a main road (D358) in Hendaye. Turn L on the D358, and at the roundabout in 300m, turn R. At a second roundabout 300m later turn L on the Rue de Santiago (initially a wide road but dwindling as you progress). Reaching a small roundabout (400m), bear ahead-right to descend to a main road (N111) at a complicated junction. Cross over, bearing half-right to a road SP Irún. This quickly climbs to arrive at the Pont St Jacques / Puerte de Santiago, the bridge over the Bidassoa that will carry you into Irún to continue the journey.



The bridge to Spain

*The Château d'Urturbie is a fine building with fortifications dating from the 14<sup>th</sup> century. Various kings of France have stayed there. Today it offers high quality chambre d'hôte accommodation.*

From the château climb again to the N10 and pick your way alongside for 200m or so before branching R at the roundabout. This road now leads to the church at the centre of Urrugne

**5.5km Urrugne (366km)** Population 7,700

*Small town at the foot of the Pyrenees. All facilities.*

*Office de Tourisme [www.urrugne.com](http://www.urrugne.com) Tel 05 59 54 60 80*

*Bus service to St Jean-de-Luz, Hendaye*

*Hotel Mendi-Bichta in centre of town. Tel 05 59 54 30 30*

From the church continue ahead downhill to meet the N10 once more. Cross diagonally R to continue on a narrow road that was once the main route into Spain. Note the farm on the left that bears a plaque to say it was once a pilgrim hospice. Now KSO for around 2km and then, at the cross-roads, keep straight ahead. In 200m bear R on a road that continues as a rough earthen track, climbing steeply. At the top, bear L on the tarmacked road and still climbing, KSO for 500m to meet the N10 again. This time cross it diagonally L, and KSO downhill to a cross-roads in 700m (views of coast to right). Here turn L (Route d'Orio) and descend again. On a right-hand bend (500m), take a track plunging steeply into a valley on the left. At the bottom cross straight over another track and KSO to reach a gate in 100m. Turn L here (both tracks reach the same point but the right-hand one is more

## INTRODUCTION

### The Voie Littorale – a little history

The Voie Littorale was not mentioned by Aimery Picaud in his 12<sup>th</sup> century *Pilgrim's Guide*, Book V of the *Codex Calixtinus*, although it was in fact the fifth most popular pilgrim route through France at that time.

The route has the alternative names of Voie de Soulac and Voie des Anglais – the latter on account of the large number of English pilgrims who favoured this way. They came by sea, landing either at Soulac itself or, if they had hitched a lift on a merchant vessel, at one of the commercial ports of the estuary. Gathering at the basilica at Soulac and at the nearby hospital at Grayan, they were joined by others who had arrived by crossing the Gironde. Some of these had travelled from Normandy, others were Bretons who had crossed the western Loire, while yet more had diverted from the main Paris route via Talmont.

The terrain these early pilgrims embarked upon was very different from the vast swathes of forest facing pilgrims today. At that time this west coast was for the most part a sandy swamp, with poor vegetation and sparse habitation. Not for our forbears the bustling holiday resorts either – although some of these were already in existence as small fishing villages. In the Médoc peninsula the route taken was also very different in that it passed to the east of the long line of natural lakes at its heart. This route has since been covered in tarmac (the D3) and when the Voie Littorale was reviewed for waymarking a decade or so ago, it seemed wise instead to make use of cycle tracks on the western side. This means of course that no

relics of former pilgrimage are encountered on the early part of the journey, although perhaps cyclists might at least like to divert off-route as far as Carcans (7km) to admire the fine 17<sup>th</sup> century statue of St James in its church.

After circumnavigating the Baie d'Arcachon, the present Voie Littorale is clearly on the original route at Mimizan, where the bell tower of an ancient pilgrim hospital has been accorded a place on the World Heritage list. This bell tower is being restored, and if you take one of the guided tours on offer you can see the oldest representation of St James as a pilgrim in France. The great twin-spired cathedral at Bayonne is also known to have been a focal point of early pilgrimage, but sadly the only surviving evidence here is one statue of St James carrying a staff. Pilgrims calling today should at least find a member of the *Amis de St Jacques* who will stamp their passports.

From Bayonne the present Voie Littorale continues largely on roads as it heads for the border at Hendaye, with Irún, the start of the Spanish Camino del Norte (and also of the Tunnel Route), across the river. This is the way most medieval pilgrims would have continued, but there were - and are - two other possibilities branching off the Voie Littorale at Bayonne. One of these is the Voie de la Nive, following the river valley inland to join the start of the Camino Francés at Saint-Jean Pied-de-Port, while the other is the once-time popular Voie du Baztan, making its own western crossing of the Pyrenees to Pamplona.

Immediately after passing under the road bridge, turn up steps on the L to cross the Nivelle. At the end of the bridge bear R alongside the port for 50m. Cross the road in the direction of the church, but then bear L on the Rue Agoretta (not passing the church, which is left on the R). At a multiple junction, bear L, going gently uphill on the Rue Ebaniste Bagnol. This descends to a road junction known as the Croix Blanche

*The Croix Blanche was once the site of a pilgrim hospital, as recorded by the cross on the left.*

Walk L downhill from here, and in 100m bear R on the Rue Lopenea, which runs down to the main road, the N10. Turn R alongside the road, then branch off on the 2<sup>nd</sup> on the R, an unnamed narrow road (white house on corner), climbing again. Where the road swings R, continue ahead on a rough road going down to the railway. At the bottom turn L and, opposite the old buildings, take steps up on the R. At the top turn R to cross the railway and KSO beside the N10 to take the 1<sup>st</sup> road on the R (before the Peugeot garage). This little road climbs, then turns sharp L to descend again (Look out for the building that was once a pilgrim hospital on your L as you go downhill). At the bottom, cross over the road (D913) and KSO to cross a stream and reach a junction. Bear L here and KSO past Camping Larrouleta (own tent necessary) to meet the N10 again. Turn R alongside it for a few metres, then branch R at a restaurant sign on a downhill track, only to climb back to the road again. A few more metres alongside and you are signed down an access road to the Château d'Urturbie.

### 13km St Jean-de-Luz (360.5km) Population 13,600

*Resort with some handsome architecture, splendidly situated on its own bay at the mouth of the Nivelle. 'Twin town' of Ciboure on the opposite bank of the river. All facilities.*

*Office de Tourisme [www.saint-jean-de-luz.com](http://www.saint-jean-de-luz.com) Tel 05 59 26 03 16*

*Bus services to Bayonne, Hendaye. Rail connections to Biarritz, Bordeaux, Hendaye.*

*Wide choice of hotel and chambre d'hôte accommodation – see website.*

*Pension Léo-Lagrange Borda Zahar in Ciboure (500m off route – turn R after crossing river, then L down Rue du Dr Micé) offers inexpensive accommodation in 2, 3, 4, 6 bedded rooms. [www.leolagrange-bordazahar.eu](http://www.leolagrange-bordazahar.eu) Tel 05 59 47 04 79*

*Le Centre PEP Socoa in Ciboure (Chemin des blocs, 2km off route –turn R on main road after crossing river) offers unspecified pilgrim accommodation outside July and August. Tel 05 59 57 04 14*

*St Jean-de-Luz has always been an important staging point on the pilgrim trail. At one time there was a pilgrim hospital near the port, and later another larger one near the present site of the Pergola on the seafront. To this day, a statue of St James presides over the council chamber in the Mairie. Ask and you will be taken up to see it (To find the Mairie, turn R soon after passing the end of the river bridges to reach the picturesque Place Louis XIV).*

*The Église St Jean Baptiste (in sight from the Place Louis XIV) has a 19<sup>th</sup> century stained glass window of St James as a pilgrim.*

### The Voie Littorale today

The Voie Littorale runs for 375km down the west coast of France from the mouth of the Gironde to the Spanish border at Irún. The route is a splendid walk in its own right. Much of it is on rough track through the extensive forest of Landes, but this is never boring and rather offers welcome shade and the chance to spot some wildlife. In contrast there are sections beside a whole series of delightful inland lakes, a magnificent stretch around the beautiful Baie d'Arcachon, and the possibility of lodging in an assortment of small resorts along the wild Atlantic coast. The part through fashionable Hossegor, Capbreton and Biarritz is full of interest, and the classical Basque countryside around St Jean-de-Luz makes a memorable conclusion.

As a pilgrim route, the Voie Littorale currently lacks the basic ingredient of pilgrims – and all the infrastructure associated with them. This is changing though, as evidenced by the lengthening list of pilgrim-orientated accommodation produced each year by the local *Amis de St Jacques*. In 2010, the first pilgrim refuge on the route will open in St Paul-en-Born. Perhaps the increasing popularity of the route's natural continuation in Spain, the Camino del Norte, is having an effect. The Voie Littorale is both a historic and a scenic route, its waymarking is easy to follow throughout, and it certainly deserves a lot more popularity of its own.

## How to get there

There are basically three ways of reaching the starting point of the Voie Littorale at le Verdon

1 **Ferry:** Aesthetically best is definitely the ferry across the mouth of the Gironde from Royan. At least you are arriving by sea, as did your ancestors! Royan has a railway station about 15 minutes walk from the ferry departure point, but at present (2009) it is served by only 1 useful train a day from Angoulême, arriving 4.30pm. Angoulême itself is on a TGV route from Paris (Montparnasse), and has rail connections with Poitiers (airport with Ryanair flights from Edinburgh and Stansted) and la Rochelle (airport with Easyjet flights from Gatwick and Bristol). [www.voyages-sncf.com](http://www.voyages-sncf.com) or [www.bahn.de](http://www.bahn.de) will help with the rail travel, [http://www.bernezac.com/passages\\_eau\\_royan\\_verdon\\_uk.htm](http://www.bernezac.com/passages_eau_royan_verdon_uk.htm) gives details of ferry times

2 **Train:** Both le Verdon and Soulac can be accessed by train from Bordeaux. Bordeaux has an airport, with flights from Gatwick, Luton, Liverpool, Bristol (Easyjet) and Edinburgh (Ryanair). It is also on a TGV route from Paris

3 **Bus:** A very slow bus from Bordeaux wanders up the Médoc peninsula to Soulac and then on to le Verdon. There are around 6 departures a day. Tel. 05 56 43 68 43 or 05 57 57 88 88 for details

At a lone pine tree, the track swings R, descending to cross a stream and then climbing out of the valley again. Reaching a narrow tarmacked road at the top, turn L and KSO, crossing the stream again to arrive at a road junction in 800m. Turn R with the road here, and continue for 1km to a junction with a much busier road. Turn L (take care – poor verges) and in 300m take a lesser road on the R, the Chemin de Chantaco (possibly a corruption of Santiago). This road now descends for 2km to meet the main D918 running along the bank of the Nivelle. Turn R here, keeping to the right of the road until under the autoroute bridge, then crossing to the promenade beside the river. KSO for almost 2km to pass under rail and road bridges side-by-side, very close to the centre of St Jean-de-Luz.



Walking into St Jean-de-Luz

**Guéthary (2km off route)** Population 1,300

*Small coastal resort. All facilities. 17<sup>th</sup> century church of St Nicholas is classically Basque, with ornate wooden galleries. Fine view from the churchyard.*

*Office de Tourisme [www.guethary-france.com](http://www.guethary-france.com) Tel 05 59 26 56 60*

*Railway station – connections to Biarritz, Hendaye. Bus service to St Jean-de-Luz, Biarritz.*

*For hotels and chambres d'hôtes, see website*



View from the church at Guéthary

At the T-junction turn L (SP Ahetze) and KSO for just over a kilometre to a junction with a fairly busy road. Turn R on this road, then in 300m (in front of a house), turn L down a rough hard-surfaced road (Chemin de la Lande). The road soon becomes an earthen track heading south through fields with a splendid prospect of the jagged Pyrenees ahead.

**And back –**

1 Bus and rail connections (if any) are listed with each town along the way. Most useful stopping/starting again points might be Lacanau-Océan, from where there is a bus service to Bordeaux; Biganos with a similar rail connection; Mimizan and the coastal towns to the south, all served by buses going to Bayonne; and Bayonne/Biarritz itself, with its airport. Details are given in the appropriate place in the text.

2 The airport at Biarritz (Aéroport Biarritz-Anglet-Bayonne, also known as Biarritz-Parme) has flights to Bristol, Gatwick (Easyjet), Birmingham, Dublin, Stansted (Ryanair). It is very easy to walk right up to the airport from Biarritz station (La Négresse), which is on the route of the Voie Littorale – see Section 5 for details. Otherwise, a no 6 bus from Bayonne station goes to the airport.

3 Hendaye and St Jean-de-Luz have both rail and bus connections with Biarritz.

4 Those continuing into Spain on the Camino del Norte have other flight options from Santander and Bilbao, and the possibility of a sea crossing from Santander to Portsmouth or Plymouth.

## Internet resources

[www.csj.org.uk](http://www.csj.org.uk) The website of the Confraternity of Saint James contains a huge amount of information on all aspects of pilgrimage, including an overview of the Voie Littorale.

<http://www.xacobeo.fr/ZE1.11.Agu.Lit> A French website with the route descriptions (in sections) all the way from le Verdon through to Irún. There are also maps, but it is worth noting that in the *département* of Gironde, the line drawn on the maps is the cyclists' route. Later on in Landes, the route drawn sometimes varies from that waymarked on the ground. Directions are good, but you need to be a little cautious about distances.

[www.compostelle-landes.com](http://www.compostelle-landes.com) This is the site of the *Société Landaise des Amis de St Jacques et d'Études Compostellanes*. It contains (in French) a fairly detailed step-by-step account of the Voie Littorale through the *département* of Landes (Sanguinet – Tarnos). Again beware distances. Suggestions for accommodation are also given (those available in 2010 have all been included in this guide)

<http://pagesperso-orange.fr/vtt.compostelle/littoral.htm> A description (French) of the route from le Verdon to Bayonne for both walkers and cyclists. Directions are accurate, but not very precise, and without distances.

[www.aucoeurduchemin.org](http://www.aucoeurduchemin.org). Website of the *Amis de Saint-Jacques de Compostelle Pyrénées-Atlantiques*. Information on all pilgrim routes in Pyrénées-Atlantiques, including suggestions for lodging (all available in 2010 have been included in this guide)



Bidart

Bear L in the square to take a descending path to the left of the church. An underpass takes you to the far side of the D911. Cross the little road, descend through the first car park, and keep to the right in the second. A path here takes you down into a valley and up the far side. Meeting a tarmacked road, cross to a wide grassy track opposite. The track finally becomes tarmacked and meets another road. Cross straight over here, then cross the railway line and a bridge over a stream (the Uhabia) to pass underneath the autoroute. At a cross-roads, take the road diagonally L, climbing past houses and becoming a rough track under the pines. Meeting the D655, turn R, and then take the second road on the R, the Chemin Dorea. Follow this road with fine views of the Pyrenees for 2km (its central section is rough track rather than tarmac) to reach a T-junction. At this point the village of Guéthary is 2km to the right.

*The airport is now only 500m to your R, but it is a busy dual carriageway, with no safe pavements or verges. One solution is to walk up the central reservation; the other is to cross over the roundabout to take the road opposite (Avenue du Maréchal Juin) into the suburb of Ranquine. In 500m, turn R on the Rue André Borde to reach the roundabout with the airport entrance.*

To continue with the route, leave the station on your right, and take the first L under the flyover (Rue des Mouettes). This descends to skirt the attractive Lac de Mouriscot (Auberge de Jeunesse 100m off on right on way down). After approx. 1km the road continues as a wide track. Keep ahead on this, then at the fork, go L uphill. At the road at the top, turn R and continue for 700m to meet the main road (D911).

Turn L on this road and walk on the pavement as far as the fork in 500m. Keep R here and cross to the grass verge on the opposite side. At the top of the hill turn R (Avenue des Italiens), and at its end, bear L. Now KSO on this road with elevated views of the bay, finally continuing on an earthen track to meet the D911 again at a junction. Turn R (Rue Erretegia) and KSO to the centre of Bidart.

### **15km Bidart (347.5km) Population 5,600**

*Attractive small Basque resort. All facilities.*

*Office de Tourisme [www.bidarttourisme.com](http://www.bidarttourisme.com) Tel 05 59 54 93 85*

*Bus service to St Jean-de-Luz, Biarritz*

*Wide range of hotels and chambres d'hôtes – see website*

## **On the trail**

Other volumes contain all you might want to know about the origins of the pilgrimage to Santiago de Compostela, and about the considerations when setting out on pilgrimage. The points below relate particularly to the Voie Littorale.

### **Early planning**

- **Other pilgrims.** At the time of writing (2009) there are few pilgrims on the Voie Littorale, and most of these are cyclists. Hopefully things will change! But at present if you are a walker without a companion you may well find this a very lonely route.
- **When to go.** July and August are probably best avoided as temperatures can soar into the 30s, the resorts are very busy, accommodation is at its most expensive, and almost everywhere gets booked up well ahead of time. The winter months (approx October to Easter) are also difficult because many hotels and just about all campsites close down. May, June and September are possibly best.

### **Route-finding**

- **Waymarking.** This is excellent all the way. In the *département* of Gironde sturdy posts have been erected to display the scallop signs, each of which is set so that its point is the direction of travel. In the *département* of Landes, small plastic markers attached to trees and the like replace the posts and sharper eyes are needed, but again these markers are plentiful. Similar waymarking is found after Bayonne in Pyrénées-Atlantiques. It must be said

that often there is no waymarking in towns, and that just occasionally you arrive at a remote junction with absolutely nothing in sight. Hopefully this text will help.

**Maps.** It would be wonderful if there was one good map that encompassed all the Voie Littorale but it simply is not so. For an overview, see the website <http://www.xacobeo.fr/ZE1.11.Aqu.Lit> but be aware that the route marked in Gironde is generally that for cyclists, and even that in Landes does not always tie up with what is marked on the ground. The IGN Touring Map of Aquitaine (scale 1:280,000) shows a route marked as the Voie Littorale, but again it is a cyclists variation. For walkers wanting a scale big enough to visualise the tracks in the forest, the only solution is to invest in all 10 IGN □Top 25□ maps that cover the route. This means an outlay of approx £10 each if they are to be bought in the UK (a little cheaper in France), but it is definitely worth checking websites for best deals and occasional offers. The maps you will need are 1433OT, 1434OT, 1336ET, 1337ET, 1339ET, 1340ET, 1341ET, 1343OT, 1344OT, 1245OT

### Accommodation

- **Where to stay.** The first small dedicated pilgrim hostel will open in 2010 (at Saint-Paul-en-Born). Elsewhere there are hotels, chambres d'hôtes, campsites (some offering the use of a mobile home or a tent for the night), holiday centres with group accommodation, and a couple of Village de Vacances that offer pilgrims a night's lodging in a chalet at an excellent rate.

### Bayonne 332.5km

Walk around to the south side of the cathedral (Rue de Luc) and continue ahead downhill on the Rue Poissonerie. At the bottom of the hill turn R along the banks of the Nive. Cross over the road and continue beside the river, where three routes are now signed (Voie de la Côte, Voie du Baztan, Voie de la Nive). KSO on the riverside track for 2km. Immediately after the big white house (Maison Celaya) the routes diverge. Turn R here (now following only the signs for the Voie de la Côte) to climb up the Rue Dr Voulgre, which crosses the railway line. At the top of the road, bear L on the D932 and continue over two small roundabouts to a 3<sup>rd</sup> large roundabout at Maignon (1.5km). Turn L here (SP Cambo), cross the road immediately, and after 200m take a road on the R dipping down beside the railway lines. KSO to a roundabout (300m) and cross straight over. The road climbs and then bends left to skirt the perimeter fence of the airport. Eventually this rough road swings left and descends again. Turn R on the main road at the bottom and KSO over a roundabout to reach a 2<sup>nd</sup> little roundabout (500m). Turn L here on the Rue d'Arcangues, which descends through a residential area to cross a stream and then the railway line. Turn R on the road immediately afterwards and keep ahead through the village of Chapelet, then bearing R to join a main road. KSO to a roundabout opposite the railway station of Biarritz (la Négresse) (2km). Turn R to cross over the lines.

*This is the nearest point on the Chemin to Biarritz airport, whose entrance is 1.5km away. Turn R into the station forecourt, walk past the buildings and take the first road on the L. This meanders uphill to emerge at a big roundabout with the Campanile Hotel on your left.*

## Section 5 Bayonne to Hendaye / Irún 42.5km

The urban section through Bayonne-Anglet-Biarritz is well waymarked, and more pleasant than you might expect. The far side is hilly, and a different world from the flat forests and rolling ocean of the Landes. This is classically Basque country – white houses with subtly coloured woodwork, churches with tiered wooden galleries, countryfolk wearing black berets, sheep with bells round their necks, and always the jagged Pyrenees for backdrop. The *Côte Basque* is spectacular, but the Chemin turns inland at Bidart and even at St Jean-de-Luz a diversion is necessary to admire the splendid sea front. The descent into Hendaye offers distant glimpses of the coast, but the signs then lead you undramatically through the back streets to the Pont St Jacques and the Spanish border.



Sign beside the Nive at Bayonne

- **Equipment.** Whereas hotels and chambres d'hôtes will obviously provide bed linen, for a night in a chalet, gîte, mobile home or tent you will need to have your own sheet sleeping bag. Blankets or other covers are normally provided. Simple cooking facilities should also be available.
- **Prices.** In this guide, hotel prices have been omitted and the hotels have been described only as either 'inexpensive' or 'moderately priced', with the division somewhere around 45euros/night. The most expensive hotels have been left out entirely. Where campsites, Villages de Vacances etc. are quoting special pilgrim rates for 2010, these have been listed.
- **Office de Tourisme websites.** It is always worth consulting these - the accommodation possibilities listed in this guide are by no means exhaustive. The *départements* of Landes and Pyrénées-Atlantiques have published their own lists of pilgrim-friendly accommodation (mostly on account of its low cost) and their suggestions have all been included in this text.
- **Booking.** It would be wise to reserve all accommodation at least a few days in advance. You might feel more comfortable if you book it all from home before leaving. In some ways this ties you down, but few places require deposits and you can – and should – cancel any booked accommodation immediately if you can see it has become impracticable.

### Food and drink

- **Water.** There are long sections of this route that pass no habitation of any kind, and certainly no convenient tap. Make sure you carry enough water with you, and look for possible points where bottles can be refilled before you set out, particularly on a hot day. It may be helpful to know that most cemeteries have a cold water tap.
- **Food.** In the larger towns you should find shops and restaurants open all year round. In more remote places, opening of both can be seasonal – and even then they can always be closed at the whim of the proprietor. He may be taking a day off, or even his own annual holiday, so it would be wise to carry food for the day (and even think about the next), and never to rely on any single restaurant or shop.
- **Don't forget the long lunch-hour** in France. You probably won't find a shop open between 12.30 and 2.30pm, but they may well stay open until 6 or 7 at night. Boulangeries and some charcuteries open as early as 7 or 8 a.m.

### Others

- **Medical.** Before you leave make sure you have an EHIC (European Health Insurance Card), obtainable online, by phone or by post. It will be needed should you want to reclaim the cost of consulting a doctor. In France, chemists can be consulted for minor ailments such as coughs, colds, sprained ankles and the like. Unfortunately you will not be reimbursed for a chemist's treatment.



Bayonne Cathedral

*The cathedral of Sainte-Marie was built between the 13<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries, with the spires being a later 19<sup>th</sup> century addition. It has a long tradition of welcoming pilgrims, but the only evidence today is the statue of St James bearing a pilgrim staff in the sacristy. You should find a member of the local Amis de St Jacques in the cathedral, who will stamp your passport.*

### \*\* Notes for Cyclists

This whole section is passable for all-terrain bikes. The only difficulties occur early on, between Moliets and the Étang de Moisan, where there are some stretches of narrow path and occasional sandy patches. To avoid these entirely, cyclists could leave Moliets on the road to Azur (signed), pick up the cycle track in 500m, and continue south on this all the way to Vieux-Boucau (and indeed to Bayonne).

Good local bus service throughout Bayonne/Anglet/Biarritz area ([www.bus-stab.com](http://www.bus-stab.com)). No 6 bus goes between Bayonne station and airport. Also buses from the station to Capbreton, Vieux-Boucau and other coastal towns.

Railway : Bayonne station at St Esprit (just off route, north of the Adour) and Biarritz station at la Négresse (on route) both have TGV connections to Bordeaux, Paris (Montparnasse), Hendaye.

Direct rail line from Bayonne to St Jean Pied-de-Port

Airport at Anglet (Aéroport-Biarritz-Anglet-Bayonne), 1.5km off route.

For walking directions from the Chemin, see text in Section 5. Flights to Bristol, Gatwick (Easyjet), Birmingham, Dublin, Stansted (Ryanair)

A wide range of hotels and chambres d'hôtes can be found on the OT website.

Maison Diocésaine (10, Ave Jean Darrigrand – in University quarter, approx 1.5km from Cathedral, bus no 7.2 or 7.3) offers pilgrims inexpensive B & B accommodation. Closed Sundays and Bank Holidays. Tel 05 59 58 47 47

Auberge de Jeunesse near La Négresse station, 100m off route. Take first R off Rue des Mouettes. Tel 05 59 41 70 00.

[www.fuaj.org/Biarritz#](http://www.fuaj.org/Biarritz#). Open April to mid-December

Pilgrims traditionally crossed the Adour at a point beyond the confluence of the Nive, about 1km upstream of the bridge on the route today.

Earliest pilgrims hired a ferryman, before the first wooden bridge across the river was built in 1125. Even so this vulnerable crossing point attracted the attentions of brigands and thieves. In the 15<sup>th</sup> century, Louis XI built the church of St Esprit at the end of the bridge as part of a larger complex to shelter pilgrims.

- **Emergency numbers.** It could be wise to write down these emergency phone numbers to carry with you
  - 15 Ambulance (SAMU – paramedics)
  - 17 Police
  - 18 Fire brigade (*sapeurs-pompiers*), who will deal with just about anything
  - 112 A number that can be used throughout the EEC covering all three emergency services. You can expect to be connected to someone who speaks English.
- **Ticks.** All forests are home to ticks, creatures like tiny black spiders, who live on forest animals and just occasionally attach themselves to passing walkers. Long trousers and insect-repellent are preventive measures, but you might like to take along a small pair of tweezers for removal, just in case. Most tick bites are of no consequence. The problem is that the odd tick carries Lyme Disease, which first manifests itself as a red ring around the bite a few days or even weeks later. Antibiotics at this stage are curative – should this happen, consult a doctor. More information on [www.nhs.uk/conditions/Lyme-disease](http://www.nhs.uk/conditions/Lyme-disease)
- **Language.** This is holiday France, and English is fairly widely spoken. Even so, it is worth getting to grips with as much French as possible before you go. Any attempt at French is appreciated – and even a cheerful 'Bonjour!' can work wonders.

- **Abbreviations.** These have been kept to a minimum – simply R (right), L (left), KSO (keep straight on), and SP (signposted)
- **French words used without translation in this book**
  - Arènes: Bull-ring.
  - Chambres d'hôtes: Private home accommodation, usually with breakfast provided. In some it may also be possible to have an evening meal.
  - Coquille: Scallop
  - Département: A division of France roughly the equivalent of a county in Britain.
  - Étang: Pond
  - Fontaine: Well
  - Fronton: The wall of a Pelotte (Pelota in Spanish) court. Pelotte is something like outdoor squash, and is very popular in Basque country.
  - Gîte: self-catering 'cottage'.
  - Lac: Lake
  - Plage: Beach
  - Village de Vacances: Holiday Village

*Unfortunately the marked route does not pass this fine church, but instead goes via the much more modern (1895) Église des Forges de Tarnos.*

At the roundabout at Tarnos Plage, cross straight over to follow the cycle track. This runs south for 2.5km before reaching a T-junction with a rough gravelled road. Turn L here, and continue after it becomes tarmacked, finally glancing L on to a main road. At the traffic lights cross straight over, then immediately turn R and walk down to the Église des Forges, clearly visible ahead.

Opposite the main door of the church, take the Rue de Saint Charles, and at its end turn L. KSO, and with the railway lines ahead, the last scallop sign before the cathedral points you over the lines to the R. You are now on the main if rather narrow road in the suburb of Picquessary. KSO and follow the main road along the banks of the Adour (Do not be tempted to cross the rail lines again to follow the road closer to the river – there are no pavements or verges and the traffic is fast and heavy). After about 3km (in which there is pavement) the main road bears L to a roundabout. Turn R at this, and KSO over another roundabout to cross the bridge over the Adour. At the far side, turn R down the steps, double back under the bridge, and continue along the river bank. After a huge car park (400m), turn R and walk up to the twin-spired Cathedral of Bayonne.

### **10km Bayonne (332.5km) Population 45,600**

*Large city at the confluence of the Nive and the Adour. Adjoins the conurbations of Anglet and Biarritz. All facilities*

*Office de Tourisme [www.bayonne-tourisme.com](http://www.bayonne-tourisme.com) Tel 08 20 42 64 64*

direction, then at the road's end, bear L to cross the bridge over the railway. At the road junction in 150m bear R, then 300m later bear L to join the main road in Picquessary. You are now on the route described from the *Église des Forges*, and can continue with it along the side of the Adour into Bayonne

To continue with the waymarked route, just before reaching the roundabout on the fast road, take a wide track on the R, heading into the Site Naturel Protégé du Metro (a protected area of evergreen woodland). Continue ahead on the track for 1km, then at the T-junction turn L and KSO for a further kilometre, passing a lake on your right. Finally the track bears L and arrives at a roundabout at Tarnos Plage.

**10km Tarnos Plage (322.5km)** Population (Tarnos) 11,400

*The sprawling borough of Tarnos stretches from its Plage in the west to the commercial centre some 5km inland. Facilities are largely concentrated on the town centre – but see below for accommodation Office de Tourisme (serves towns of Ondres, Tarnos and Seignanx) [www.seignanx-tourisme.com](http://www.seignanx-tourisme.com). Tel 05 59 45 19 19*

*Village de Vacances 'La Forêt des Landes' (120m off route – signed from roundabout at Tarnos Plage) offers pilgrims a fully equipped gîte for 10 euros/person/night. Tel 06 88 63 29 34 or e-mail [tarnos.heberg@touristravacances.com](mailto:tarnos.heberg@touristravacances.com). Open April to September.*

*The town of Tarnos was a well-known pilgrim halt. The 12<sup>th</sup> century church of St Vincent Diacre de Tarnos, in the centre of town, has obvious signs of fortification and was once a Commanderie of the Knights of St John of Jerusalem.*

## GUIDE TO THE VOIE LITTORALE

### Section 1 - Le Verdon to Lacanau-Océan (82.5 km)

The first half of this section is almost entirely on cycle tracks through flat wooded terrain, while the second part is more undulating, varying from winding forest paths and to wide sandy firebreaks. Early on the path is very close to the sea for much of the time, although huge dunes prevent any sightings other than at the resorts. The inland stretch before Maubuisson affords some superb views of the Étang d'Hourtin-Carcans, the biggest natural lake in France.

There are no reminders of early pilgrimage in this section because medieval pilgrims took a more inland route, that of the present day D3. But for those who can venture off route a few kilometres, there are fine 17<sup>th</sup> century statues of St James in the churches of Carcans and Lacanau.

#### Pointe de Grave / Le Verdon

*The Pointe de Grave is the tip of the Médoc peninsula. The boat docks at the nearby port, while the town of le Verdon itself is 2km away to the south. The port area comprises a handful of houses, a lighthouse with museum, an assortment of snack bars and restaurants, and the terminus of a tourist train to Soulac.*

Leaving the boat, the first post bearing a stylised scallop waymark stands on the grass opposite. Follow its direction L down the road, and after the last restaurant, turn R. Cross the line of the main railway to reach the terminus of the tourist train. KSO, then bear L with the cycle track to cross the train track and continue into the forest. Eventually the cycle track comes out into the dunes before

reaching a tarmacked road on the outskirts of Soulac. Turn L into the Rue des Arros, which swings R to become the Rue du Prince Noir. At the end of this road turn R, then at the roundabout, cross over bearing slightly L (SP Centre Ville). The road now bends to the R (Rue du Maréchal Galliéni) and continues to the square and the basilica in the centre of town.



The Basilica at Soulac

**8.5km Soulac-sur-Mer (8.5km)** Population 2,700

*Small coastal resort with all facilities. Look out for the numerous red-orange brick 'neo-colonial' villas, belle-époque retreats of the wealthy of Bordeaux*

Office de Tourisme [www.soulac.com](http://www.soulac.com) Tel 05 56 09 86 61

Bus service to Bordeaux [www.pointe-medoc.com/pageLibre00010028.html](http://www.pointe-medoc.com/pageLibre00010028.html)

Railway station (trains to Bordeaux)

Several hotels and campsites (consult OT). Hôtel La Dame de Coeur (13 rooms, opp. basilica) offers good inexpensive accommodation. Tel. 05 56 09 80 80.

At the roundabout keep straight ahead and 1km later, stay with the road as it swings L away from the sea (Rue des Flandres). At the top end of this road a broad track continues into the forest. Fork immediately L on this, and then L again (unsigned). Continue for 200m to cross a wooden bridge over the Anguillère(3). Now keep ahead on the wide main track, ignoring all the many lesser ones branching off. Arriving at a cycle track in 1.3km, turn R (bridge over the Boudigau visible to left) and KSO for 1km to another bridge over the Anguillère. 200m later, leave the cycle track and turn L on to a tarmacked road. Continue on this to its end, where it bends R to meet a main road (800m) on the outskirts of Ondres.

*500m to the left here (follow signs after railway crossing) is Camping le Lac. Open all year round, it offers pilgrims accommodation in a 'bungalow tent' for 15 euros/night outside July and August (own tent necessary in these months). Tel 06 80 26 91 51.*

Turn R on the main road, then in 400m, immediately after Camping Lou Pignada, turn L (SP Tarnos, Boucau). Now KSO for 2km, in the latter part joined on the left by the railway. Eventually the road swings R uphill to run alongside a busy road.

*After this point, the waymarked route is by no means the quickest way into Bayonne. If you want to save about 3km and do not need to stop overnight in Tarnos Plage, keep ahead here to the roundabout. Cross over the busy road with care to take the road opposite and immediately branch L into the Quartier la Plaine. Keep R on the Rue Paul Gauguin, which then bends L to become the Rue Joliot-Curie and continues parallel to the railway (on your left). KSO for 3km in the same*

Now KSO over all junctions for 2km, until the track finally bears R (a track joins from the left) and 400m later emerges at a T-junction. Turn L here on a rough road which shortly becomes tarmacked, and KSO (passing the fenced-off Chapelle Ste Thérèse) to reach a roundabout in Labenne-Océan

### **6.5km Labenne-Océan (312.5km)**

*Small residential village, with campsites and restaurants lining the road from inland Labenne*

*Office de Tourisme [www.tourisme-labenne.com](http://www.tourisme-labenne.com) 05 59 45 40 99. Most accommodation in Labenne itself (4km)*

*Camping Municipal Les Pins Bleus (1km off route – take main road to Labenne and turn L immediately after crossing river) offers tented accommodation for pilgrims at 10 euros/night. Tel 05 59 45 41 13 or e-mail [camping@lespinsbleus.com](mailto:camping@lespinsbleus.com). Open April to early November.*



The bridge over the Anguillère

*The 11<sup>th</sup> century Basilica of Notre-Dame-de-la-Fin-des-Terres was originally a Benedictine abbey, built on the site of a shrine to St Veronique. As such it served the huge numbers of pilgrims passing through the area. Over the centuries westerly gales caused loose sands to drift inland and finally to engulf the basilica. Both Soulac and its basilica were abandoned in 1741. Today's church is the result of excavation and restoration commenced in 1859. Most notable are the finely carved capitals, the 19<sup>th</sup> century wood/polychrome effigy of the Virgin and the 2002 statue of St James. A pilgrim 'coquille' stamp is available at the basilica – ask!*

Standing with your back to the basilica entrance, the road ahead and just to the L is the main street of town, flanked with restaurants and shops selling all the paraphernalia of a seaside resort. Walk down it to the sea front and turn L along the esplanade. Soon a cycle track begins on the right of the road and you need only to follow it, passing the wild dune that is now a nature reserve, to reach l'Amélie.

### **4.5km L'Amélie (13km)**

*Seaside hamlet with several bars/restaurants, tabac, and small supermarket.*

*Municipal campsite of Les Oyats offers pilgrim accommodation and special-rate meals (Open April – September, booking required. Tel 05 56 09 78 54). Several other campsites.*

Turn L with the road (chapel on corner, restaurants etc. to right) and continue to the road junction in 400m. (*Les Oyats* campsite is 300m directly ahead at this point). At this junction, turn R with the cycle track and continue for 2km to reach the beach parking area at la

Négade. Turn L on the cycle track heading into the forest. At the track junction in 1.5km turn R (SP Montalivet) and KSO for 3km to a junction on the edge of a campsite (le Gulp). Turn L and almost immediately R to arrive at a main road. Turn L here, still on cycle track, and in 1km, turn R at the roundabout. KSO on the roadside cycle track.

*After about 1.5km, a road on the left (opposite the naturist holiday camp entrance) is signed to the village of l'Hôpital, 3km distant. Its name derives from a 15<sup>th</sup> century pilgrim hospital run by the Knights of St John of Jerusalem. Sadly nothing of the establishment remains today, but the roundabout in the centre of the village has been endowed with a modern sculpture of pilgrims pointing the way to Santiago*

Where the road turns right (2.3km from the roundabout), keep ahead on the cycle track alongside a forest road. At the junction in 3km turn R with the cycle track, and after a further 1.5km arrive at a tarmacked road with holiday accommodation buildings ahead. Turn L here and KSO through a residential area for just over a kilometre to reach the main thoroughfare in Montalivet. (The seafront, shops and hotels are all to the right here).

### **15km Montalivet-les-Bains (28km)** Population 2,200

*Small coastal resort with all facilities*

*Office de Tourisme [www.ot-vendays-montalivet.fr](http://www.ot-vendays-montalivet.fr) Tel. 05 56 09 30 12*

*Summer bus service to Lesparre railway station*

*Several hotels (see OT), but some seasonal. Hôtel l'Océan, otherwise moderately priced, has a couple of inexpensive*

*Office de Tourisme [www.capbreton-tourisme.com](http://www.capbreton-tourisme.com) Tel 05 58 72 12 11*

*Bus service to Bayonne (station) and Dax*

*Hotels, chambres d'hôtes, campsites – see OT website*

*Chambre d'hôte : Micheline Mallet, 300m off route (near the Pont de la Halle). Tel 05 58 72 41 40. Reasonable rates for pilgrims.*

*Reservation essential in high season.*

From the Église St Nicholas, KSO to cross the Pont de la Halle and continue ahead to a T-junction. Turn L here, then in 500m, turn R up the Rue Barrat (easily missed). At its end, the Rue Barrat continues as a track into the forest. In 100m (alongside garden fences) fork L, then KSO for 500m to reach the banks of a canal. Turn R alongside the water, then bear R to skirt the edge of a campsite. At the end of the fence bear L, then KSO for 500m to a tarmacked road. Cross this diagonally L (beware – there is a second track which you do not want on the right) and continue into the forest.



A pilgrim in the forest

### **5km Hossegor (also known as Soorts-Hossegor) (301.5km)**

Population 3,600 **(1)**

*Resort very popular with surfers (look out for the huge mural on the seafront). All facilities.*

*Office de Tourisme [www.hossegor.fr](http://www.hossegor.fr) Tel 05 58 41 79 00*

*Hotels, campsite by lake – see OT website*

*With its seafront catering largely for surfers, windsurfers and kiteboarders, Hossegor also has a long inland salt-water lake (not visible from the signed route). The lake represents the last vestige of the swamps at the former mouth of the Adour, before the river was canalised in the 16<sup>th</sup> century.*

Continue through Hossegor to the very end of the seafront road, where it bends left to cross the canal on the Pont Notre-Dame. KSO alongside the port with its amazing array of pleasure boats, then at its end, turn R to cross the bridge. Beyond the bridge, take the 2<sup>nd</sup> road on the L, the Avenue Bourret, passing Camping Bel Air. At the roundabout, turn R on the Boulevard des Cigales and KSO for just over 1km, to a big roundabout. Turn R here (SP Centre Ville), passing the 2<sup>nd</sup> roundabout, and then keeping L on the Rue du 19 Mars 1962. Straight ahead now is the pale-stoned Église St Nicholas – bear R, then L to pass directly in front of it. At this point you are in Capbreton, with its main shopping area to the right.

### **4.5km Capbreton (306km)** Population 7,600

*Ancient fishing port now become a tourist resort with large Port de Plaisance.*

*rooms on ground floor (Tel 05 56 41 58 01). Several campsites including Municipal (05 56 09 33 45) and Le Soleil d'Or (on seafront - 05 56 09 31 37)*

To leave the town of Montalivet, cross the main street (Ave. de l'Océan) directly, then cross the car park and continue in the same direction on the other side. Reaching a T-junction, turn L (now on a cycle track beside the road) and at the main road, turn R. KSO on the roadside cycle track for 5.5km, passing a large naturist holiday centre. Where the road swings left\*, KSO on a rough road into the forest. After nearly 2km, this road ends at a forest barrier. Go round the barrier and KSO to a path junction (500m, scallop marker post on corner). Turn right here, then in 100m take the first path on the L (waymark on turn). At the next major track junction (1km - waymark in situ) turn R, then in 200m go L on a more overgrown track. Now KSO for 3km, crossing directly over several junctions to arrive at a wartime memorial beside the back gate of Camping Le Pin Sec. Cross the camp site and leave beside the reception building, then cross the road, and take the waymarked forest track directly opposite. KSO on this wide sandy track for 4km to the Carrefour de Brémontier, a prominent 5-way junction. Bear ahead R here (blue-topped post alongside, but no scallop) and follow the wide former cycle track for 1km to arrive at the road (D101E7) in Hourtin Plage, with Camping la Côte d'Argent on the left.

\* **Cyclists** should continue on their track beside the main road all the way to Hourtin Plage

### 18.5km Hourtin Plage (46.5km)

*Small village resort. Boulangerie, alimentation and several bars and restaurants on main road near sea.*

Office de Tourisme [www.hourtin-medoc.com](http://www.hourtin-medoc.com) Tel. 05 56 09 19 00

*Good campsite (Camping de la Côte d'Argent) with bar/restaurant, supermarket and small hotel attached (open mid-May to mid-September only. Tel 05 56 09 10 25).*

To leave Hourtin Plage, join the cycle track opposite the camp site entrance and in 300m turn L (SP Contaut). The track climbs the dunes steadily to a Col (Col du Château d'Eau, 34m), then descends to a main road (D101E7) at the Maison Forestière du Petit Mont. Cross this road and walk to the R alongside the Lagune de Contaut (Nature Reserve) for 1km to reach the road junction in Contaut.

### 4.5km Contaut (51km)

*Village with restaurants and tabac (on main road, just beyond junction)*

*The main road swings left in Contaut and continues to Hourtin (7km).*

*Hourtin was on the old Voie Littorale and to the south of the town, the now disappeared Priory of Ste-Hélène boasted a pilgrim chapel.*

*Excavations of its cemetery in 1908 brought to light various relics of pilgrimage, including 3 pierced scallop shells and a belt buckle decorated with similar shells. Today it seems that no-one knows the whereabouts of these excavations, and that the cemetery has disappeared.*

Reaching a wide expanse of grass with a small chapel in Contaut, leave the main road and take the lesser road on the R (SP Piqueyrot).

**11.5km Seignosse-Le Penon (296.5km)** Population 2,800  
*A town in two parts - inland Seignosse and coastal le Penon. All facilities.*

Office de Tourisme [www.tourisme-seignosse.com](http://www.tourisme-seignosse.com) Tel 05 58 43 32 15

*Hotels, chambres d'hôtes, camp sites – see OT for details*

*Camping les Chevreuils (on D79 before Seignosse-le Penon) offers unspecified pilgrim accommodation at 10 euros/person/night. Tel 05 58 43 32 80*

On reaching the main road turn L, and follow this wide roller-coaster of a road for about 2km to a fork at a small roundabout. Keep R here (SP les Estagnots), then at a 2<sup>nd</sup> roundabout 400m later, ignore the signs to les Estagnots and keep ahead. At a T-junction in 500m, turn R towards the dunes and KSO down this sandy road. At a roundabout (2km), bear R uphill on to the main road through Hossegor (there are better views of the sea from the promenade behind the buildings on your R here).



The sea front at Hossegor

Office de Tourisme [www.ot-vieux-boucau.fr](http://www.ot-vieux-boucau.fr) Tel 05 58 48 13 47

Bus service to Dax and Bayonne/Biarritz

Selection of hotels and camp sites – for details see website

Village de Vacances 'Le Lac Marin' (at Port d'Albret, on route as you leave Vieux-Boucau) offers pilgrims a fully-equipped gîte for 2 – 4 people at 10 euros/person/night. Open April to late September. Tel 06 16 79 78 67, or e-mail [soustons@touristravacances.com](mailto:soustons@touristravacances.com)

At the end of the Avenue de la Liberté, branch R to walk down a pedestrianised street beside the canal. Reaching the lake at its end (Lac Marin), turn L along the promenade. Before the children's playground, leave the lake (300m), turning L to join the cycle track beside the road. Turn R on the cycle track and KSO to reach the roundabout on the main road. Cross over here, then bear R on the cycle track on the far side (in front of 'Le Lac Marin' Village de Vacances – see above). At the roundabout in 600m the cycle track crosses the road and continues on the opposite side. Keep with this roadside track (there are others branching off) which after 400m bends away into the forest to cut off a corner in the route. 800m later the track reaches and crosses the D79. Turn R alongside this road (not into the forest again) and KSO on the cycle track. At the road junction in 4.5km keep ahead, soon passing the entrance of Camping les Chevreuils (roadside bar and special pilgrim offers – see under Seignosse). KSO to a roundabout (2.5km), turn R (SP Seignosse-le Penon) and continue for 1km to meet the main road in le Penon (Office de Tourisme at junction).

There are no scallop waymarks at this junction, but a wooden signpost points the direction of the Circuit des Lacs Médocains. You will now be following this all the way to Lacanau-Océan, and its waymarks (yellow and/or green-topped posts) will be more prevalent than scallops. It is worth noting its peculiar signing - to turn L, the post is positioned on the left before a junction; to turn R, the post is on the right; and to continue ahead there are posts both before and after the junction.

KSO on this road with first glimpses of the vast Étang d'Hourtin-Carcans before reaching Piqueyrot.

### 2km Piqueyrot (53km)

Attractive small lakeside village. Seasonal snack bar on lakeside. Water and toilets available at sailing club.



The beach at Piqueyrot



The Etang d'Hourtin-Carcans

The road ends at the beach and sailing club, and you can pick up the cycle track on the right hand side. After about 2km, the Chemin is signed off on the right, leaving the cycle track\* only to return to it a few hundred metres later. At this point the marked path crosses and finally leaves the cycle track, and you need to stay with the path,

which is mostly sandy and sometimes scenic. Clear signs lead you on at every forest track crossing until after about 3km you arrive at a major junction with a hard-surfaced forest road ahead. Bear slightly L to join this road (the signed Chemin actually follows it closely on the left) and then keep to it for approx 1.5km to a clearing with a bench near the Maison Forestière de la Gracieuse.

Two paths leave from the Maison Forestière and you have a choice. The signed *Chemin de St Jacques* is sandy underfoot and meanders off into the low dunes on the right. The alternative is the cycle track, a ribbon of concrete currently in need of a little repair, but still easy to follow and generally more even on the contours. The two come together again in a further 2 km or so and then run side by side for a further 4km before reaching a car park at the holiday centre at Bombannes.

\* **Cyclists** should stay on the track here and continue through as signed to Bombannes.

### **13km Bombannes (66km)**

*Holiday village with various sporting facilities. Seasonal snack bar. Campsite (La Dune Bleue – Tel 05 57 70 12 12)*

On leaving the car park keep straight ahead, and at the road junction with a triangle of vegetation, bear L. 300m farther on, at a second triangle junction, bear R on a road that winds down to the beach (snack bar). Now KSO on the metalled road for 1.5km and after passing a big pelotte wall (*a fronton*), bear L on the signed track. This climbs the cliff with superb views of the Étang d'Hourtin-Carcans below, finally descending to the Place du Pôle at the top end of the beach in -

broad cross-track. Turn R on this track, and then in front of the pumping station, bear L. At the top of the rise, make sure to take the 1<sup>st</sup> track on the L (no scallop signs in 2009, but trees have purple flash waymarks). Continue ahead alongside a stream, where the familiar waymarks appear again. On reaching a tarmacked road (500m), cross straight over and continue for 300m to join a hard-surfaced track. Soon bear L and KSO to pass the Étang de Prade on your left. Reaching a road (1.5km) turn R and then 200m later, take a track on the L. Follow this track for 800m to arrive at the foot of a dune. Turn R here and KSO for 500m to a T-junction. Turn L, then keep straight ahead to meet a tarmacked road.

Turn R on this road, and after 300m, take a track on the L immediately after the campsite. KSO on this track, passing a *sémaphore* (signalling station) on your right and then the Étang de Moisan on your left. In 2km arrive at a narrow tarmacked road. Turn L to cross the bridge, then immediately R on a track into the forest. KSO for 500m to a T-junction with camp sites all around. Turn R here, and in front of the entrance to le Vieux Port camp site (400m), turn L. With houses ahead at the end of the road (200m), bear L and KSO to the busy dual-carriageway. Turn L alongside, and at the small roundabout, go R on the Avenue de la Liberté. Pass the *fronton* and the *Arènes* to arrive at the centre of Vieux-Boucau,

**10.5km Vieux-Boucau-les-Bains (285km)** Population 1,600  
*Small modern resort on a salt 'lake' connected with the sea. All facilities*

## **.Section 4 Moliets-et Maa to Bayonne 58km**

This section takes you right through the fashionable resorts of Seignosse-lePenon, Hossegor and Capbreton. Essentially the walking is more urban in character, although there is still a surprising amount of forest track. Seekers of pilgrim heritage will find themselves a little disappointed here. Adverse weather conditions in the 14<sup>th</sup> century changed the course of the Adour, creating a huge swamp in the hinterland that eventually spread as far north as its new exit to the sea at Vieux-Boucau. It was only after 1578, when the Adour was recanalised and returned it to its former path, that this territory became passable again. For this reason medieval pilgrims took a route some 7 or 8 km inland, and passed instead through the villages of Azur and Soustons. Azur has preserved an ancient barn where pilgrims once spent the night, and adjacent to it, a well hung with scallop shells.

Today's signed route does not enter Bayonne directly, but instead takes a wide sweep west to the coast again. This diversion is certainly more rural and attractive, but a quick cut through suburbia is offered as an alternative. The two routes meet to follow the road beside the Adour, finally crossing the river to arrive at the splendid two-spired Cathedral of Bayonne.

### **Moliets-et-Maa (274.5km)**

Reaching the central square with its seats under the plane trees, cross towards the *fronton* to take the Rue des Pèlerins opposite. After 30m turn R on a track signed to the Fontaine Notre Dame. With the Fontaine in the field below you, turn sharp L up a little path that winds through woodland for around 300m, crosses a stream and descends to a

### **4km Maubuisson (70km)**

*Small town with long sandy lake beach. All facilities.*

*Office de Tourisme [www.carcans-maubuisson.com](http://www.carcans-maubuisson.com) Tel 05 56 03 34 94*

*No hotels. Furnished accommodation available for single night rental includes room/apartment (Mme. Cazeneuve 05 56 03 30 75 – on lakeside, 15mins walk from town, May-Oct), chalet (M Dezitter 05 56 38 77 67 – close to town, available all year), mobile home (Camping de Maubuisson 05 56 03 30 12 – close to town, mid-March-mid-Nov). See OT website for more details.*

*The road along the lakeshore leads on to Carcans (8.5km), where the medieval church (now destroyed) was known to have an altar dedicated to St James. The present-day church has a fine 17<sup>th</sup> century wood/polychrome statue of St James.*

At the Place du Pôle turn R, following the cycle track beside the road to Carcans-Plage. At the big roundabout in 400m keep ahead, then almost immediately cross the road to take the cycle track signed to Étang de Cousseau / le Moutchic. After about 600m the Chemin leaves the cycle track on the L, taking an up-and-down route (sandy underfoot) until the two are reunited approx 1km later. KSO for a further 3.5km to a major track junction known as the Carrefour de Cousseau\*. Here keep R, following scallop signs and also the green and yellow bands of the Circuit des Lacs Médocains. 600km later, the sandy Chemin crosses a hard-surfaced cycle track and then soon returns to cross it again. You may prefer to turn R on the cycle track at the first crossing as it is much easier underfoot. Chemin and cycle

track now run side by side for over a kilometre until the Chemin veers away to the L, descending to a parking area beside a main road (D6E1).

Cross this road directly and go round the wooden barrier to join a path winding up the dune. Cross a wide sandy firebreak near the top, then descend to reach a path junction. Turn L here (the post with green and yellow bands placed on the left hand side just before the junction indicates this), then at a fork soon afterwards, keep R as shown by more posts. The path descends to join a concrete ribbon of cycle track. Turn L on the cycle track and KSO for 2km to pass the cemetery on the outskirts of Lacanau-Océan. At the road just beyond, turn R, then first L, after which you can follow signs to reach the seafront (*Front de Mer*).

\* **Cyclists** should continue ahead at the Carrefour de Cousseau, turning R at the first junction. Continue for 3km to the Maison Forestière de l'Alexandre. Turn L here and head south to Lacanau-Océan, arriving at the cemetery.

**12.5km Lacanau-Océan (82.5km)** Population 1,900

*Popular seaside resort with all facilities.*

Office de Tourisme [www.lacanau.com](http://www.lacanau.com) Tel 05 56 03 21 01

Bus service to Lacanau, Bordeaux [www.keolis-gironde.com](http://www.keolis-gironde.com)

Several hotels. *L'Auberge du Marin (05 56 03 26 87) is adequate, inexpensive and central. Camping Airotel Océan (05 56 03 24 45 - near cemetery, open mid-April-Sept) has mobile homes available for single night stay out of season. For other possibilities, see OT website*

### **\*\*Notes for cyclists**

Cyclists should take advantage of their dedicated tracks after Mimizan in order to avoid a lot of sandy forest track. Continue from here in the direction of Mimizan-Plage, then turn south to Contis-Plage. Continue in the same direction to the Maison Forestière de Yons. The walkers' route now joins the cycle track as far as the Maison Forestière de Jaougue. Hereafter cyclists should again keep to their own track, which eventually joins the D328 and bears L to be reunited with the walking route. The next section through the Reserve of the Courant d'Huchet should be passable for all-terrain bikes

**32.5km Moliets-et-Maa (274.5km)** Population 800

*Small town with hotel, restaurant, several small shops (pâtisserie, épicerie, etc)*

*Office de Tourisme [www.moliets.com](http://www.moliets.com) Tel 05 58 48 56 58*

*Hôtel les Ecureuils is moderately priced (much less in low season), near centre of town, open all year. 10 rooms. Tel 05 58 48 58 17*

*Chambres d'hôtes : M Jacques Lafitte, Chemin de Franc, Rue d'Huchet.*

*Inexpensive chambre d'hôte with possible concessions for pilgrims.*

*500m off route (up road to Maa). Tel 05 58 48 51 57 / 06 09 44 14 59*

*Mme Monique Frèches, Route de la Nasse. Moderately priced chambre d'hôte, conveniently placed to shorten the day's walk just a little (off route – 1km ahead on road from track junction on bend at Maquis).*

*Open mid-May to Sept. Tel 05 58 49 22 04 / 06 86 49 38 84*

*Moliets-et-Maa is again almost an inevitable stop. Should accommodation be full, there is always the possibility of Léon, just east of Moliets, and 2.5km off route (actually 31.5km from Lit-et-Mixe).*

**Léon (2.5km off route)** Population 1,700

*Small town with all facilities. Extends to lakeshore 1km north of centre*

*Office de Tourisme [www.ot-leon.fr](http://www.ot-leon.fr) Tel 05 58 48 76 03*

*Two hotels, several chambres d'hôtes, and campsites – consult website*

*Lacanau-Océan's inland counterpart, Lacanau, is 13km away to the east. For anyone who can manage the diversion (there is a bus), the church at Lacanau boasts a 17<sup>th</sup> century statue of St James in gilded wood.*

**\*\* Notes for cyclists**

The three diversions suggested in this section avoid particularly sandy parts of the route.



The sea-front at Lacanau-Océan

## Section 2 - Lacanau-Océan to Sanguinet (85 km)

This is a fascinating section, following the banks of the Étang de Lacanau, then a canal through the forest before skirting the splendid Baie d'Arcachon. The signed route hugs the bay shore and takes in nature reserves, oyster ports, harbours full of pleasure boats, and vistas that change continuously with the huge amplitude of tide. If you have time and energy, it is possible to extend your walk with a tour of the former salt pans jutting out into the bay. At Biganos the bay is left behind, and a long straight cut through the forest crosses the *départementale* border from Gironde into Landes to arrive beside another beautiful lake at Sanguinet.

### Lacanau-Océan (82.5km)

*Before leaving Lacanau-Océan, it is worth noting that there is limited accommodation at le Porge (22km) and that after that, the nearest hotel (le Colibri) and camping (le Canadienne) are on the outskirts of Arès (34 km from Lacanau-Océan)*

From the seafront at Lacanau-Océan, turn up the main thoroughfare, then take the first road on the R (Avenue Lieutenant Durand) to head south behind huge blocks of holiday apartments. Continue downhill, turn R at the bottom (passing the Auberge du Marin) and keep ahead at the roundabout. KSO parallel to the coast to enter the pine woods with parking areas. Where the cycle track crosses the road, turn R on it (picking up the scallop waymarks again) and continue through forest for 2km to a junction at the Maison Forestière du Lion\*.

wide track which becomes a tarmacked road in the village of Maquis. At a bend 300m later, take a signed track doubling back on the R and continue for 1.5km to reach the Chapelle de Maa.



The Chapelle de Maa

*The chapel dates from the time of the Knights Templar. Look through the hole in the door for an interior view.*

KSO past the chapel to a road junction (200m) and turn L on the Chemin de Boussouayre. This track winds through woodland (signed) for 2km to emerge on a main road (D652). Turn R to the roundabout (100m), and here keep R (SP Maa Plage). In 100m take the 1<sup>st</sup> L, the Rue de Magenta, to enter Moliets-et-Maa.

offers pilgrims a gîte or caravan for 10 euros/person/night, and is open 1<sup>st</sup> May to mid-September. Tel 08 90 71 00 01.



In the reserve of the Courant d'Huchet

If you do not want to visit the camp site, leave the cycle track here and keep ahead on what is now an earthen track. The track twists its way through the forest to arrive in 1km at a board announcing that you are entering the Nature Reserve of the Courant d'Huchet. Fork R soon after entering. Now follows a most attractive section through rich vegetation in an area criss-crossed by water channels - look out for the flat-bottomed boats at a little port to the left of the path. After 3km you reach a bridge crossing the racing 'Courant' (the Pont de Nasse) and turn L on the far side. Now continue upstream to the Maison Forestière (200m) where there are wooden benches and more boats. After joining the main path again, you soon leave the reserve. Continue ahead on the

Here turn L (SP Longarisse) and KSO for 5km to reach a tarmacked road. Cross over as signed and continue into Longarisse.

### **9km Longarisse (91.5km)**

*Residential lakeside village with no facilities*

Reaching a small road, turn R and continue parallel to the shore of this lovely bay in the Étang de Lacanau. Where the road ends near the Pointe de Bernos, bear L on the broad track. With the lake ahead, (you are at the Pointe), turn R and continue on a scenic path hugging the shore. After passing the fire tower (2km), still keep to the lakeshore path, reaching a clearing beside the water in about 500m. Keep ahead here, but at a second smaller clearing 200m farther on, look for a parallel sandy track on the R. Cross to this track (no waymarks here) and in 100m or so your route will be confirmed with a wooden signpost.

After a further 700m you reach an unsigned fork in the track. Bear L here and KSO on this path, which in 500m reaches a wire forest fence on the left. The track then bears away R to arrive at a tarmacked road. Turn L and in 600m (before the Pont de l'Esquirot) turn R to continue on the raised bank of the canal. Continue to the first bridge, the Pont du Hourbiel, in 2.5km

*From this bridge you can most easily access the facilities of le Porge (5.2km). Turn L to cross the canal, and KSO on this narrow road to a T-junction in 3km. Turn R and continue into the town (the waymarks lead you at the start, but then turn right on a slightly longer route)*

**Le Porge (off-route – 5.2km from the Pont du Hourbiel, return to Pont Guilhem 4km)**

*Small town with shops, pharmacie, restaurants, cash distributor, one moderately priced hotel and one chambre d'hôte)*

*Office de Tourisme [www.leporge.fr](http://www.leporge.fr) Tel 05 56 26 54 34*

*Bus service to Bordeaux*

*A caravan with beds for 3 people stands behind the presbytery and is offered free to pilgrims (reservation essential – Tel Raymonde on 05 56 26 56 17)*

*Hôtel du Porge [www.hotel-du-porge.com](http://www.hotel-du-porge.com) . Tel 05 57 70 92 92. Open April – Sept). Chambre d'hôte – M et Mme Chaplain-Glorieux, Tel 05 56 26 58 29 / 06 87 35 02 71*

*The 13<sup>th</sup> century church of le Porge, now disappeared under the sand not far from the canal, was regarded as a staging post in the original Voie Littorale. Today's church houses a more recent statue of St James. It is also worth noting that the villages of Saumos and le Temple, each about 9km east of le Porge, were both important halts on the original pilgrim route. At Saumos, the Maltese cross of the Knights of St John of Jerusalem still stands above the church door, while le Temple gets its name from the Knights Templar (although later it, too, came into the possession of the Hospitaliers of St John of Jerusalem)*

then turn R where signed to Cap de l'Homy. (In 300m pass Camping Lessalle on L). KSO on this road with wide verges for 4.5km (passing Camping les Vignes), then turn L on a wide forest road. Continue on this for 3km to the Maison Forestière de Yons

*Just to the left across the grass here is the Source de Yons, a spring known to pilgrims in medieval times. Its waters are said to be good for stomach complaints.*

Continue past the Maison Forestière, bearing R to join the *Piste Cyclable de la Côte* (Coastal Cycle Track). Now follow its signs through the forest for 6.5km to arrive at a tarmacked road (St Girons Plage, Eurosol Camp Site, restaurants 600m to right). Cross straight over the road and in 1km on the same cycle track arrive at the Maison Forestière de la Jaougue. Keep ahead past the buildings, and in 400m the cycle track bears L into the forest again. Now keep to the forest road, ignoring the cycle track (it bends away to the right after a kilometre\*) and KSO for 2.5km. Just after the road becomes tarmacked, at the bottom of a dip, take a track branching away to the L. 700m later, this track meets the cycle track alongside the D328. Turn L on this cycle track and, after it crosses the road in 2km, keep with it as it branches away R behind houses. Meeting a narrow tarmacked road in 500m, turn R. At the end of this road the cycle track bears L

\* **Cyclists** should stay with your own track here

*Follow the cycle track if you want to access Camping du Col Vert, 1km ahead at this point (the camp site is wrongly positioned on the IGN map it is actually by the 'Plage', 600m east). Camping du Col Vert*

concrete bridge. Turn L on the opposite bank of the Courant and KSO for 300m to arrive at a picnic table on the edge of a vast open area grazed by horses (the Plaine de Pigeon). Follow the fairly indistinct track winding across the grass to a gate on the far side. Now keep ahead on the wide track, which in 1km becomes a tarmacked road. KSO to a cross-roads in a further kilometre. Turn R on the Rue Roger Sargos and continue to the main road (Rue Henri Couzet). Turn R here, then take the 1<sup>st</sup> L (Rue de l'Hôtel de Ville) to reach the back of the church in Lit-et-Mixe.

**18.5km Lit-et-Mixe (242km)** Population 1,450

*Small town with all facilities. Hotel (Club Atlantique), several chambres d'hôtes (none very conveniently placed), campsites*

*Office de Tourisme [www.litetmixe.com](http://www.litetmixe.com) Tel 05 58 42 72 47*

*Bus service to Bayonne, Dax*

*Aire Lessalle (farm camping on the route just beyond the town) offers pilgrims the use of a gîte or caravan for the night for 10 euros/person. Breakfast also available (extra). Tel 05 58 42 70 71*

*Although accommodation is fairly limited, staying overnight in Lit-et-Mixe is almost obligatory, because the next possible stopping place on the route is Moliets-et-Maa, 32.5 km away. The only way to avoid doing this long haul in one day is to divert from the route at Vieille St Girons and stay at Camping du Col Vert (24km from Lit-et-Mixe – see below)*

From the back of the church turn L (passing OT, shops, restaurant, bank) and then turn R on the main road to Vieille St Girons (Avenue de Marensin). Continue for 1.2km, passing supermarket and roundabout,

*To return to the Chemin from le Porge, take the Chemin de Greysiou behind the church. After 1.5km turn R on a forest track (yellow-and-green topped marker post just before). At the end of the track, turn R then very soon L to return to the Pont Guilhem (4km in total)*

If you do not want to visit le Porge, cross the road at the Pont du Hourbiel and continue beside the canal for 3.5km to the Pont Guilhem. From here the path continues alongside the canal to the Pont du Pas du Bouc. Turn R on the road here (seasonal Pizzeria/bar on left) and walk uphill for 300m before turning L on a sandy forest track. Keep ahead on this track for 3.5km, to reach a large clearing where trees have been felled. Turn L here, and in 250m, with the canal ahead, bear R and immediately L to take a track alongside again. After 1km cross the D3E17 at a bridge, and in a further kilometre, similarly cross the busier D106E3. Now the canalside path continues as a mere track through the undergrowth, finally crossing the canal on a little bridge. A R turn soon afterwards takes you on a wide gravelled track to meet the fast main road, the D106.

\* **Cyclists** should continue south here, passing le Porge-Océan (seasonal restaurants) and la Jenny to reach the Maison Forestière de Grand Crohot-Océan (18km from Lion). Here you can leave the cycle track and take the road (D106E3) inland for 8km to reach Lège, and then the cycle track beside the D106 expressway. From this it is easy to access Arès or to go on directly to Biganos.

The path walkers now require continues directly across the D106, but it may be wise to turn R for 300m to take the underpass rather than

dice with the traffic. The path continues through woodland, and then swings R at the entrance to a Nature Reserve on the shores of the Bassin d'Arcachon. The path winds past ponds and water courses, with views into the shallow Bassin, until it emerges at a port dealing in oysterculture. Continue on the road around the harbour (modern statue of *la Femme-Océanne*, sea-food restaurant), then on a track above the shore to come out on the seafront at Arès. Continue on the promenade as far as the Office de Tourisme.

**26.5km Arès (118km)** Population 5,300

*Town on the northern shore of the Bassin d'Arcachon. All facilities. The centre of town is easily accessed by taking the road running inland from the tower on the seafront road (Avenue de la Plage)*

*Office de Tourisme [www.ares-tourisme.com](http://www.ares-tourisme.com) Tel 05 56 60 18 07.*

*Bus service to Bordeaux*

*Several hotels, chambres d'hôtes and campsites. La Petite Auberge (21 bis, Avenue du Port, 1<sup>st</sup> R off Ave de la Plage and KSO) tel 05 56 60 37 81) is friendly, inexpensive and central. More expensive but before the town is Hotel le Colibri (Tel 05 56 60 24 91 - on Ave Gen de Gaulle, the road to Lège, just N of the expressway). Camping le Canadienne (tel 05 56 60 22 46) is on the same road, just S of expressway.*

Opposite the Office de Tourisme on the seafront, turn L (Ave de la Plage - tower on corner) and then take the first road on the R (Rue Emilien Barreyre). At its end turn R into the Rue XIV Juillet, and at a junction in 400m, turn sharp R (Rue des Baigneurs). Now take the next L (Boulevard Javal) and KSO for 1km to enter a park. Keep straight

Turn L on the D41 and continue for 250m to a road junction on the edge of the village of La Lette.

*2.5km ahead here is the Hôtel-restaurant La Canotte, at the northern end of St Julien-en-Born.*

From the junction before La Lette, turn R on the roadside cycle track (SP Pont Noir Camping) and in 1km, just after a little bridge, take the track on the R.

*At this point St Julien-en-Born (hotel, shops, etc.) is 3.5km ahead on the road.*

**St Julien-en-Born (3.5km off route)** Population 1,400

*Small town with hotels, municipal camp site, restaurants, pharmacy, shops.*

*Office de Tourisme (joint with Contis-Plage) [www.contis-tourisme.com](http://www.contis-tourisme.com) Tel 05 58 42 89 80*

*Hôtel-restaurant La Canotte (tel 05 58 42 52 77 / 05 58 42 79 50) is a moderately priced hotel open all year (except October – but worth checking). Pilgrims are particularly welcomed. See note above for quickest access.*

The track crosses an area of storm-devastated woodland, where presently (2009) all waymarking is obliterated. Keep ahead on the main track until it emerges at a field. Here turn L and follow a vague track along the woodland edge. The track becomes stronger, traversing an open area before crossing a little bridge over a ditch and dipping into woodland again. Reaching the bank of the fast-flowing Courant de Contis, turn L and walk upstream for 1km to cross a

Now KSO on this minor road, turning R in front of the farm campsite in 1.5km. Keep ahead past the parking area for a little lake (on your right), and continue for a further kilometre to find a marked track branching off into the forest on your left (log piles at the start of this track in 2009). Reaching a sandy firebreak in about 700m, turn R and climb to the top of the dune. Here turn L to descend again, and continue ahead on this track which bends left as it reaches the foot of another dune. Shortly afterwards, where the track starts to climb, leave it and branch L (no waymarks). At a fork approx 150m later, take a track curving back to the R (waymarked again). This track now climbs the dune and descends to cross over two wide tracks in fairly quick succession. At a junction 400m after the 2<sup>nd</sup> cross-track, turn sharp R and climb again on a path bending left. 300m later, still climbing, look for a track leaving on the left to run parallel to but above the track you were on. This track now runs along the top of a dune, reaching a high point (39m) before descending steeply to a hard-surfaced forest road.

Cross this forest road and turn L on a path under the trees, running parallel to the road. In 1km this path returns to the forest road. Cross over here to take a track opposite and KSO for a further 2km. Where a cycle track crosses your path, keep straight ahead for 50m, then turn L. This short track takes you back to the cycle track, which you follow for a further kilometre to reach a road (D41).

*4km to the R here is Contis-Plage, a small modern resort on a dune. The coastal cycle track passes right through it and it could be a convenient halt, but the only accommodation in Contis-Plage is an expensive Spa Hotel (Hôtel de la Plage, <http://www.hotelplagecontis.com> Tel 05 58 42 70 15)*

ahead on the beach beside the small lake, and on its far side take a path bending to the L. In 200m turn R to cross the wooden bridge. Now following the signs and keeping close to the sea there are some fine views across the Bassin before reaching a cluster of ponds on the left, and then arriving beside the oyster port at Andernos. Turn L on the road beside the port with its seafood restaurant and many oyster outlets, and then bear R to cross the head of each arm of the port. Continue between the church and the sea to where the remains of a Roman Villa are being excavated (water tap on R here)



The harbour at Andernos

**4.5km Andernos-les-Bains (122.5km)** Population 10,000  
*Resort town beside the Bassin d'Arcachon. It includes the smaller communities of Taussat, Cassy, Lanton and Audenge. All facilities. Office de Tourisme [www.andernoslesbains.fr](http://www.andernoslesbains.fr) Tel 05 56 82 02 95*  
*Bus service to Bordeaux and railway station Biganos-Facture*  
*For hotels, chambres d'hôtes, camp sites, see OT website*

From the church on the seafront, return to the road and continue ahead (parallel to the sea) to meet the main thoroughfare, with restaurants and shops. Turn L here, then 1<sup>st</sup> R (Ave. Vergniaud), and the scallop markers will now lead you through the back streets of Andernos and finally down Boulevard du Verdon to the back of the beach. Turn L here to cross in front of the École Maternelle and the Capitainerie, and then turn L to continue right around the port. Walk down its far side, taking the 1<sup>st</sup> road on the L (Ave Jacques Chorivit) with views across the grass to the bay on your right. In 300m, where the grass ends, turn R (seasonal snack kiosk). Now follows a magnificent section on a modern promenade along the back of the beach with splendid views across the Bassin. Showers are provided at intervals (welcome on a hot day!) and water is otherwise available beside a toilet block.

At the junction in front of the church in the centre of Mimizan, turn R on to the road signed to Escource. In 600m turn R on the Rue de Lamarée, and after 300m branch L on the Rue de Chéou\*. In 1.5km bear L, staying on the tarmacked road, and then in 120m take the signed track on the R, heading into the forest. 500m later, cross over a broad hard-surfaced track and KSO. Very shortly you are joined by another track from the right, after which the waymarks direct you straight ahead to eventually reach another wide hard-surfaced track (2.5km). Turn R on this track, which in time becomes tarmacked and then swings to the right as you approach a roundabout on the outskirts of Bias (2.5km)

\* **Cyclists** wanting to avoid a lot of forest track should continue west on the cycle track from Mimizan in the direction of Mimizan-Plage. From there, they can turn south on the cycle track to Contis-Plage, and then continue in the same direction.

**8.5km Bias (223.5km)** Population 670  
*Village with hotel-restaurant, campsite and patisserie*  
*Hôtel-restaurant Le Tilleul (Tel 05 58 09 25 94) open all year, moderately priced, friendly. On route, beside the roundabout north of town.*  
*Camping le Tatiou (tel 05 58 82 44 30) open Easter to mid-September, 2km west of town on the road to Lespécier*

At the roundabout just north of Bias (hotel/restaurant alongside), keep straight ahead on the D652 (SP St Julien-en-Born). In 100m take a road on the L, then as it swings left, turn R to arrive at the Fontaine St Michel(3). Bear R in front of the Fontaine to arrive at the D652 again. Turn L (patisserie 200m to R), cross the little bridge, and turn immediately R.

Pilgrims see only Mimizan-Bourg, which offers all facilities.  
Office de Tourisme [www.mimizan.tourisme.com](http://www.mimizan.tourisme.com) Tel. 05 58 09 11 20

Bus service to Bayonne, Dax (RDTL bus services - <http://www.tourador.com/Towns/landbus.htm>) Summertime service to Parentis, and to Mimizan-Plage  
For range of hotels, chambres d'hôtes, campsites, see OT website  
The Clocher-Porche (bell-tower) was originally part of the 13<sup>th</sup> century Priory of Sainte-Marie. Once an important refuge for pilgrims, it houses what is regarded as the earliest sculpture of St James as a pilgrim in France. He is depicted with Christ and the other apostles, and is easily identified by his staff and scallop motifs. The tower was restored in the 1980s and access today is only by guided tour. Details of these can be obtained from the adjacent Museum (Tel 05 58 09 00 61)



*Outside the clocher-porche stands a much more modern sculpture of a 'coquille', reminding pilgrims that from here they have just 1000 km to go to Santiago de Compostela.*



Beside the Basin d'Arcachon

After 1km the esplanade ends at a camp site (Camping la Fontaine-Vieille) and it is necessary to turn L. Turn R on the 1<sup>st</sup> road behind the camp site (Rue Roger Belliard), KSO to pass the head of another pleasure port, then at the roundabout, cross directly over. 100m later turn R, then in 50m L into the Avenue Isabelle. KSO for 700m to reach a junction beside a large green (seafood restaurant on L). Turn R here, then very soon L behind the port (Allée des Tamaris). Where the road swings left, continue straight ahead, crossing a wide grassy expanse with a line of tamarisk trees above the beach. Reaching a parking area beside the Port de Cassy, you have a choice:

- 1 The signed route takes you behind the port and then on into a Nature Reserve area of former salt pans, jutting far out into the bay. Information panels are provided to tell you how the system worked, and to explain how, when the days of salt extraction were over, fish rearing replaced it. It is all very well-waymarked and very interesting, but the total distance walked from here to the junction in Audenge will be 16 km.
- 2 The alternative reduces this distance to 6 km by making use of the cycle track. From the Port de Cassy, walk straight up past the Poissonerie (fish market) to the main road. Cross to take the road diagonally R, and continue for 300m to where the cycle track crosses. Turn R on the track and continue for 5km to the road crossing in Audenge (a sign tells you Port d'Audenge 1.5km; Bourg 0.5km). Turn R here, cross the main road (supermarket, bank, etc to right), and continue to the road junction 100m farther on. Here you rejoin the signed route that has circumnavigated the salt pans.

At this junction, turn L if you have come from the cycle track, R if you have come from the salt pans (Rue Pas de Madame). Take the next L (200m), in another 150m turn R, and then KSO on the narrow road heading south. At the T-junction in 2km turn R, and keep ahead to pass the Port des Tuiles. 1km later, where the road bears left, KSO on a track through woodland. Reaching a residential road keep ahead, then immediately after a junction, turn R on a signed track. Where the track

*On the far side of the bridge is a picnic site, and beyond it, the Promenade Fleurie, a floral garden on an island – well worth a diversion*

Pass the Pont de Gombaut on your right (do not cross) and KSO beside the water. Emerging beside the Pont Vignon (on your right), turn L on the main road (SP Plages-Océan). After 500m turn L on the Rue du Prat du Curé, and at the corner of the cemetery, bear to the R, passing behind it. At the far corner take the little road to the L (not the main road), which loops down to the historic Clocher-Porche (see below). Turn L on the main road to reach the centre of Mimizan.



The clocher-porche at Mimizan

**10.5km Mimizan (215km)** Population 6,700  
*A town in two parts – Mimizan Bourg on the Étang d'Aureilhan, and 5km to the west, Mimizan-Plage, facing the Atlantic.*

*cooking facilities. Open all year. Tel 05 58 09 91 17*

Reaching the D47, cross it directly, taking the Chemin de Miqueou opposite. Keep left of the houses to pick up a rough road continuing into St Paul-en-Born

**18km Saint-Paul-en-Born (204.5km)** Population 700  
*Small village with hotel/restaurant and a new pilgrim refuge/gîte d'étape, the first such on the route.*  
*Refuge Municipal (adjacent to the Mairie) will open in 2010, and offers beds for 2-4 pilgrims. Tel 05 58 07 41 08 (weekdays), 05 88 07 41 19 (weekend). Donations.*  
*Hôtel l'Ecureuil (Tel 05 58 07 41 16) is central, inexpensive and friendly.*

Just before reaching the main road in Saint Paul-en-Born (Mairie, hotels, etc), the cycle track crosses your road. Turn R and follow the cycle track as it runs alongside the D626 and crosses over it. After 4km, where the Route des Artisans crosses (SP Lac, Aureilhan Bourg), you have a choice

- 1 Continue ahead on the cycle track to arrive on the south side of Mimizan (turn R to get into town, see the bell tower, etc.)
- 2 Approach Mimizan on the banks of the Étang d'Aureilhan. To do this, turn R on the Route des Artisans, cross the D626, and take the rue de Picaton opposite. Reaching a larger road, turn L and continue for 1km to a car park at the lake shore. Now turn L and follow the cycle track signs beside the lake. KSO on a rough road through woods to emerge near a bridge, the Pont de Gombaut.

meets road, turn R, then at the fork (400m) go sharp L. At a bend in 1km take the signed track on the R (the centre of Biganos is 1km ahead on the road here), bear R immediately, then KSO to the main road (D650) on the outskirts of Biganos.

**8km Biganos (143km)** Population 8,600  
*Large town with all facilities*  
*Office de Tourisme [www.arcachon.com](http://www.arcachon.com) Tel 05 57 70 67 56*  
*Railway station Biganos-Facture (south-east of town, on D650). On line Bordeaux - Irun*  
*Bus service to Andernos*  
*For hotels, chambres d'hôtes see OT website*

On reaching the D650, turn R and KSO for 1.5km on the cycle track alongside. After the second bridge (the one over the Leyre), turn R into the Relais Nature du Pont de Lamothe.

*3km ahead on the D650 is Le Teich, where the 19<sup>th</sup> century church in the middle of town harbours a 17<sup>th</sup> century wood/polychrome statue of St Jacques and an even older one of St Roch.*

At the Relais Nature, double back to take the path passing beneath the road alongside the river. Go under the railway and follow the waymarked path to arrive at the –

**2km Fontaine St Jean (145km)**  
*The Fontaine St Jean dates from the 17<sup>th</sup> century and was always a pilgrim halt on the Voie Littorale. Wooden seats have been provided today. The spring waters were said to be good for skin complaints.*



The Fontaine St Jean

From the Fontaine, KSO on the path, finally passing under the fast A660 with the railway alongside. Turn immediately L, doubling back to cross over the railway and descend to a cross-roads. Turn R here and continue west on a road parallel to the expressway. At the first road junction, KSO on this parallel road which eventually becomes a rough track. Continue for 500m on this track, then turn L on a broad grassy track alongside a drainage channel (no waymarking at this turn, but look out for the little concrete bridge over running water – the Pont Beynel – at the start). Continue south on this straight track for 8.5km to arrive at the D652. Cross over this road and KSO beside the fence on the perimeter of the airfield.

Turn R on the main road in Parentis (supermarket to L) and then take the 2<sup>nd</sup> L (SP Arènes). Continue to a T-junction and turn R, then immediately L (town centre and all facilities are 200m ahead at this point). Pass the *Arènes* (bull-ring) and then the water tower. After the recycling centre, join the cycle track and KSO to the main road, the D652 (2km). Continue on the cycle track, which crosses the road in 1.5km. Shortly afterwards a junction is reached (Resto' hotel on corner).

KSO on D652 (SP Gastes) for almost 2km, then, after a big farm (Montauban), take a marked forest track on the L. At a cross-tracks in 1.5km keep ahead, then in 800m turn R towards a large cultivated field. Turn L to continue around the field boundary. After 1.5km, the track swings away from the field and 100m later reaches the corner of a plantation of tall pines. Keep ahead for a few metres to cross the end of a ditch and immediately turn R (ditch now on your right). After 100m the signed path bears L into the forest. Now KSO following the waymarks through the stands of old pines and eventually into a new plantation. Here the path finally bears right before joining a tarmacked road. Turn R to arrive at the Maison Forestière de Piche (1km). Turn L here and continue on forest road for 4km to meet the D47 near Pontenx-les-Forges (2km to left here)

**Pontenx-les-Forges (2km off route)** Population 1,300  
*Attractive village with shops, restaurants, hotel (Hôtel les Forges), chambres d'hôtes and gîte d'étape*  
*Office de Tourisme as for Mimizan*  
*Gîte d'étape Aerial du Tastot (not far from centre of village, on Route de Saint Trosse). Inexpensive communal accommodation with*

an unsigned track, and immediately keep R. In 1km you reach the road in the village of le Clerq. Turn L on this road, then in 500m, R on the Chemin de Nelson, which continues as a track into the forest.

After approx 1.5km, this forest track arrives at a cross-track. Turn L here, then 50m farther on, bear R and KSO for a further kilometre to another cross-track firebreak. Turn L and continue along the edge of open fields for 2km to reach the Sanguinet – Ychoux road.

KSO on this road (busy, but with wide verges) for 2km. Soon after the water tower, turn R on a lesser road SP Parentis. After 9km on this straight and rather boring road you arrive at the main road in the centre of Parentis.

**19km Parentis-en-Born (186.6km)** Population 4,400  
*Moderately-sized town at the eastern end of the large Étang de Biscarrosse et Parentis (from the route you don't even catch a glimpse of it). All facilities*  
 Office de Tourisme <http://tourisme.parentis.com> Tel 05 58 78 43 60  
 Summertime bus service to Mimizan.  
 Range of hotels, chambres d'hôtes, campsites – see website  
 Chambres d'hôtes des Arènes (100m off route in centre of town) Tel 05 58 78 51 30  
 Resto' hôtel Escale Landaise is an inexpensive 'truckers stop' on the route, 4km beyond Parentis (at the junction of D652 and D46). Terms are half-board – but if you want an early start, take breakfast to your room the night before. Reservation advised (Tel 05 58 78 40 30).



The straight path through the forest

1.5km later this track turns sharp L and you enter the *département* of Landes. KSO for 2.5km to reach a road. Turn L here, and after 300m (at a small roundabout), go R. After passing the camp site, turn R to descend to the shores of the Étang de Cazeau et de Sanguinet. Bear L on the cycle track to pass the snack kiosk (seasonal) and continue along the lakeside. After 1km cross a wooden bridge over the River Gourgue, and 400m later, turn L on the Ave Charles Castets to reach the centre of Sanguinet.



Beside the lake at Sanguinet

**22.5km Sanguinet (167.5km)** Population 2,900  
*Small town on beautiful lake. All facilities. Almost an obligatory halt because of its isolation, Sanguinet as yet has little in the way of overnight accommodation.*

Office de Tourisme [www.sanguinet.com](http://www.sanguinet.com) Tel 05 58 78 67 72

Bus services to Biscarrosse and to railway station at Biganos-Facture  
 One hotel, one chambre d'hôte, several campsites (but none offering one-night rentals)

Hotel : Relais de la Côte d'Argent, in town centre, moderately priced.  
 Tel 05 58 78 63 68

Chambre d'hôte : La Renardière (just off route – take Allée du Lac before wooden bridge). Tel 05 58 78 66 47 (open March – December)

### **\*\*Notes for cyclists**

Cycle tracks will take you all the way from Lacanau-Océan to Biganos. Beyond Biganos it should be possible for all-terrain bikes to follow the long straight path through the forest as far as the airfield, but between there and Sanguinet the path is very sandy. Instead, turn L on the D652

### **Section 3 Sanguinet to Moliets-et-Maa 107 km**

In this section forest paths predominate, with rather less use of cycle tracks. After Mimizan, high pine-clad dunes take over from the formerly flat landscape, and from the summits there are glimpses of their vast extent inland. New coastal resorts (Contis-Plage, St Giron-Plage) just off the route perch precariously on enormous bare dunes. Again the signed path visits several lakes, but these in the *département* of Landes are smaller, and instead of being isolated are each connected to the coast by a *courant*, a fast-flowing river. The section through the nature reserve around the Courant d'Huchet is particularly attractive.

The finest relic of medieval pilgrimage on the Voie Littorale is to be found at Mimizan. The 13<sup>th</sup> century *clocher-porche* (bell-tower) is all that remains of the Priory of Sainte-Marie that once welcomed pilgrims. Now given World Heritage status, its sculptures have been restored, and include the earliest known representation of St James as a pilgrim in France.

### **Sanguinet (167.5km)**

Arriving at the big roundabout at the end of Ave Charles Castets (Office de Tourisme, Mairie, etc. in centre), keep straight ahead. At the cross-roads in 400m, turn L on the Rue de l'Arieste (SP Lugos/Belin), then in a further 700m (just after a left hand bend), turn R where sign-posted to Parentis. At the bend in 350m, branch L on