

Pyrenees & Southwest France

PEAKS TO PLAINS, VALLEYS TO VILLAGES, MOUNTAINS TO MED: the southwest encompasses the French landscape in all its drama and diversity. Stretching from the dog's-tooth peaks of the Pyrenees all the way to the scrubby, sun-baked plains of the Languedoc, it's a region that's made for driving.

In the west, you'll meander across mountain passes and delve into remote valleys where life still feels timeless and traditional. As you move east, you'll discover the two sides of the Languedoc: Bas-Languedoc, with its flat plains, sprawling vineyards and laid-back coastal cities, and Haut-Languedoc, home to the wild hills and rocky gorges of the Parc National des Cévennes.

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29 Pont du Gard to Viaduc du Millau 5 Days

Traverse the crags and causses of the Cévennes, with a landmark bridge at either end. (p317)

30 The Cathar Trail 3 Days

Head into Bas-Languedoc's backcountry to discover its Cathar castles. (p325)

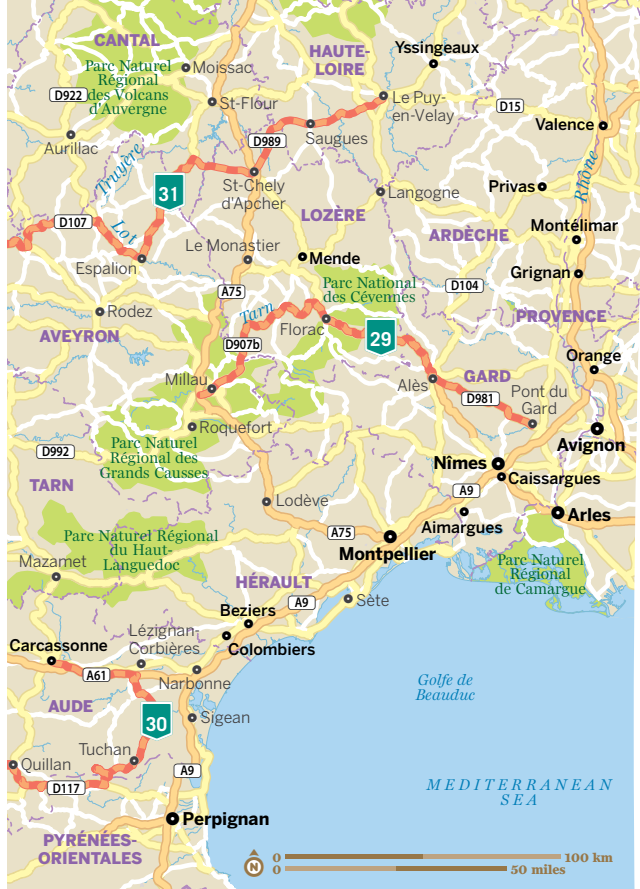
31 Cheat's Compostela 7 Days

Take a spiritual trip along one of France's oldest pilgrimage routes. (p333)

Classic Trip

32 Pyrenees 7 Days

Explore this majestic mountain landscape, easily the equal of the Alps. (p341)



DON'T MISS

Le Puy-en-Velay

Climb inside a giant statue of the Virgin Mary for views across this Auvergnat town. Take them in on Trip **31**

Lac de Gaube

One of the Pyrenees' finest trails leads to the glittering Lac de Gaube. Catch the cable car to the trail on Trip **32**

Chaos de Montpellier-le-Vieux

An otherworldly landscape of limestone pillars has been created here by centuries of natural erosion. Walk among it on Trip **29**

Col d'Aubisque

The col is one of the Pyrenees' highest road passes. Competitors in the Tour de France have to pedal it, so count yourself lucky to just drive it on Trip **32**

Roquefort

Descend into murky, mould-covered cellars to find out how this pungent fromage is made. Sample a piece on Trip **29**



Pont du Gard (Trip 29)