



From west to east, it starts with the rolling green hills of Basque Country, followed by the high mountains and glacially sculpted landscapes of the Central Pyrenees.

- ↑ The gorgeous Marcadau Valley, located southwest of the town of Cauterets.
- Gavarnie's towering limestone walls rise 1,500m from the valley floor.
- ↗ Stepping stones, meandering streams, and alpine meadows.
- Expansive mountain views from the Cabane du col long d'Ayous.



and Mérens-les-Vals (accessible by train from Toulouse), it represents roughly half of the GR10's total distance, and if you're short on time, is the best choice for a long section hike of the border-straddling range. Among the segment's many highlights are the cliff-hugging Chemin de la Mâtre (see Background) and the jaw-dropping 39-km (24.2-mi) stretch between Cauterets and Gavarnie. The latter is typically covered over two days, during which you'll traverse the magnificent Gaube Valley and pass by its gorgeous namesake lake (Lac de Gaube). Later, you'll go up and over the pass of Hourquette d'Ossoue (2,734m/8,970ft), the highest point on the GR10. From this lofty perch, it's a short (less than 2 km/1.2mi) out-and-back side trip to the summit of Petit Vignemale (3,032 m/9,948ft), which affords stunning views of the surrounding peaks along with the Glacier d'Ossoue, the second-largest glacier in the Pyrenees (after Aneto Glacier). The *pièce de résistance* of the Cauterets to Gavarnie section is the latter's namesake glacial cirque, one of the Pyrenees' most iconic landmarks. With a circumference of 6.5 kilometers (4mi), walls that measure up to 1,500m (4,921ft) high, and one of Europe's largest waterfalls, the majestic beauty of the Cirque de Gavarnie has been celebrated for centuries and, in 1843, was described by famed author Victor Hugo as the "the Colosseum of nature."

Entering the eastern region of the Pyrenees, the environment gradually transitions from alpine to Mediterranean. The charming >

