

Snowshoeing Pyrenees Escape

Europe | 2,833m



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EXPEDITIONS

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Snowshoeing

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The charming mountain spa town of Luchon, also known as the Queen of the Pyrenees, is your base for this invigorating weekend of snow-shoeing. Time stands still when you roam through the heart of the Luchon valley with mountains rising in every direction and a magical network of paths and lesser discovered routes to choose from.

Snowshoe through snow-topped forest, follow freshly beaten trails from valley bottoms and wind up above the clouds. It doesn't take long to feel you have truly escaped, as you step out into remote stretches of hillside with just your fellow explorers for company.

If you are lucky you may well catch a cloud inversion as you rise above Luchon and catch some of the most awe-inspiring views one could wish for. A worthy reward for your

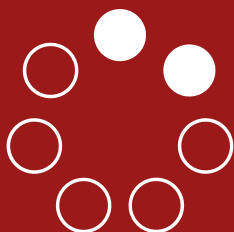
snowshoeing efforts!

Whether you are new to snowshoeing or have just got the bug and need your next fix, this is an ultimate haven for snowshoeing and experiencing remoteness in a short space of time.

Snowshoeing

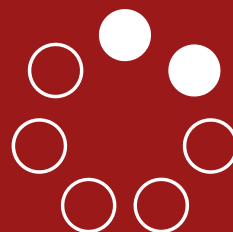
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Physical – P2

This trip is challenging and a good solid fitness level is required. There will be prolonged walking over varied terrain and you should be training to comfortably walk for 6 to 8 hours, over undulating terrain, with a few punchy uphill climbs, carrying a pack up to 6kg in weight.



Technical – T2

Consider this a trek, although there may be occasion to use hands for short sections of easy scrambling. No previous climbing or trekking experience is necessary.

Please note that the grading system used is a rough guide only.



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ITINERARY

DAY 1 : Arrive into Toulouse. Drive to Luchon.

Today we are greeted by the impressive Pyrenees peaks that appear to grow into giants as we near the charming spa town of Luchon.

This is the largest mountain town on the French side of the mountains and provides a perfect base to perfect the art of snow-shoeing over the weekend – or at least land butt-first in the snow in a heap of giggles!

Once we have settled into our accommodation we will be handed our snow-shoes and equipment and given an introduction to snowshoe techniques, as well as familiarising ourselves with some safety procedures.

Depending on flight times, we may have the chance to put theory into practice and experience our first taste of snow-shoeing. We climb up to a scenic look-out and complete a short warm-up loop from which the entire Pyrenean range opens before you.

(Travel time 1 hr 40 mins Toulouse–Luchon, Snowshoeing time: 1–3 hours depending on flight times)

DAY 2 : Adventure time! Snowshoeing from Artigue

Beginning from the quaint mountain village of Artigue the escape into the wilderness begins. We set off on a mixture of well-beaten track and fresh trail. Entering into a true winter wonderland, we wind our way across blanketed hillside and through snow-topped forest.

We'll stop for lunch near a shepherd's hut with sprawling vistas of the valley below, if we are extra lucky we may even see a cloud inversion from the top.

We complete the loop by zigzagging back down, edging closer to the town of Luchon all the while looking out for wildlife and embracing the tranquil surroundings.

We'll have dinner and a briefing and perhaps a game of cards or two, before bedtime.

(Transfer time 15 min drive, Snowshoeing time 7–8 hours)

(B, L, D)

DAY 3 : More snowshoeing fun

Waking up in good time, we have an early breakfast and get on our way for another day of exploring.

It will be a short drive to the start line, ready to delve into another notch in the Luchon valley decorated with frozen waterfalls, endless lines of forest laden with snow and perfect silence – broken only by birdsong and the group's excitement.

As we reach the pinnacle of our adventure, the vista breaks open into a plateau with towering peaks either side and barely touched blankets of snow as far as the eye can see.

We'll stop for lunch before looping back down through forest, catching more frozen waterfalls and tranquil trails.

(Snowshoeing time 6–7 hours)

(B, L, D)

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ITINERARY

DAY 4 : Exploring the town - Drive from Luchon to Toulouse

Today is a slower start, with chance to explore the town of Luchon and stretch your legs without your snow-shoes.

You can stroll to the nearby waterfall, which may be frozen or may be ready for anyone braving a particularly fresh dip!

Fuel up on a traditional galette or crepe on the high street and a well-earnt beer before you are transferred to Toulouse airport as a group ready for your flight home.

(Travel time 1 hr 40 mins Luchon-Toulouse)

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KIT LIST

Bags & Packs

Rucksack

Approx. 40-50L rucksack. Your day to day pack that you carry with your daily essentials including lunch, water and layers, and fitted with shoulder straps and importantly a waist belt.

Waterproof rucksack cover

To protect rucksack from rain

Headwear

Warm headgear

This can be a warm hat, beanie, balaclava, anything to reduce the heat loss from your head

Wide brimmed hat

Keeps the sun off exposed areas like ears and the nape of the neck

Buff/Scarf

Essential for protection from the sun

Sunglasses

Worth spending money on good UV filters. Category 4 wrap around style are essential due to the strength of UV rays at altitude. Julbo is our preferred supplier

Sunblock

Essential for protection from the sun

Lip salve

Sun cream will not work on your lips and they are very susceptible to burn without proper protection

Upper Body

Waterproof jacket (Outer layer)

Gore-Tex or event seam sealed are recommended and big enough to fit over a couple of layers. This jacket will also serve as a great windproof too

Base layer x 2-3

This is the layer closest to the skin and its principal function is to draw (wick) moisture and sweat away from the skin. You can also get thermal base layers for use at higher altitudes that provide an additional insulative layer while still drawing sweat during times of high exertion

Mid layer (long sleeved fleece tops)

These are typically lightweight microfleece or similar technology that provide varying degrees of warmth and insulation without being overly bulky or heavy to pack

Duvet jacket

Synthetic jackets recommended as they stay warm if wet. Arc'teryx recommended

Warm gloves

Consider liners or a light polartec pair for lower altitudes and evenings, and a thicker waterproof pair like ski gloves for higher altitudes

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KIT LIST

Lower Body

Trekking trousers x 1-2

These tend to be polyester so they dry quickly after a shower and weigh little in your pack. Consider perhaps a pair with detachable lower legs as an alternative to shorts

Waterproof trousers

A lightweight pair of Goretex/eVent trousers that will act as a great windproof too

Long Johns

Thermal insulation for the lower body

Underwear

Merino or wicking material, not cotton. How many pairs you take is entirely up to you

Feet

Walking boots

Well worn in 4 season waterproof boots with mid to high ankle support

Gaiters

Gaiters are essential for keeping the snow out of your boots

Trekking socks

Single layer or wearing 2 pairs is a personal choice and lighter weight merino wool is a good option

Hydration

Water bottles / bladder

Begin each day with a full water bottle and make sure to stay hydrated throughout

Evening Wear

Change of clothing for evenings

Comfortable clothes for the evening

Toiletries

Wash kit

Keep it simple on the mountain. Essentials are toothbrush, toothpaste and deodorant. Moisturiser is advisable, everything else is a luxury!

Travel towel

Travel towels from the likes of Lifesystems are perfect

Wet wipes

Preferably biodegradable, these are great for washing when modern shower facilities become a thing of the past

Alcohol gel

A must have for good camp hygiene

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KIT LIST

Medications

Personal first aid kit

The 360 med kits are designed to be used in emergencies and akin to an A&E rather than a pharmacy on Expeditions so please come prepared with useful meds for yourself such as painkillers (Ibuprofen if you can take it and a Paracetamol) plus blister plasters, plasters, antiseptic, rehydration sachets and any muscle rubs you wish to use.

Personal medication

Keep this in your daysack

Miscellaneous

Trekking poles with snow baskets

Head torch

We recommend Petzl head torches. Bring spare batteries.

Ear plugs

For protection against the inevitable snorers!

Camera

Bring plenty of spare batteries and memory cards

Snacks

Feel free to call us to ask for advice – shortbread, flapjacks, chocolate, cheese cubes and nuts are all handy snacks to pack especially in the cold.

Documentation

Passport

Don't forget this! Your passport should have at least 6 months validity. With your passport expiry date at least six months after the final day of travel.

Copy of passport

Just in case

Travel insurance

Copy of own travel insurance details. And relevant contact numbers. We have a partnership with True Traveller and would recommend that you contact them when looking for travel insurance for your trip with 360. However, it is vital that you ensure that the insurance cover they offer is suitable for you, taking your personal circumstances (items to be insured, cancellation cover, medical history) into account. Many other insurance providers are available and we do recommend that you shop around to get the best cover for you on the expedition you are undertaking. It is your responsibility to ensure that you have the appropriate insurance for your intended trip. To include medical evacuation and coverage up to the maximum altitude of this trip.

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FAQ'S

Guides

Are your guides qualified?

All the guides working on our courses hold the International Mountain Leader (IML) which is equivalent to the French "Accompagnateur de Montagne". We are all also registered to work in France which is a legal requirement in France.

Food and water

Where do we get drinking water from?

All drinking water is carried with us for each day of the adventure – the guide will carry extra water as spare.

What is the food like?

The food at the traditional French gite is plentiful and of very good quality, often using locally sourced ingredients.

Breakfasts consist of pastries, fresh bread and jams and you can expect a three course meal in the evenings.

Lunch will be packed, either provided by the accommodation for each day or picked up from the local shop. We encourage you to pack extra snacks.

Can allergies be catered for?

Absolutely, please inform the office of any allergies or intolerance's and we will ensure that these are taken into account on the trek.

What if I run out of snacks ...are there places to buy stuff?

360 provides some snacks for your days on the mountain, however do bring some of your favourite snacks from home, a range of fast and slow release energy snacks.

The pure 'energy' style bars which are solid are quite tough to eat on the mountain so go with simple things. Flapjacks, shortbread, sweets, nuts and chocolate are great, snacks that you're going to really look forward to eating and which will give you energy.

Accommodation

What is the accommodation like?

You will be staying in a traditional local gite in the heart of the stunning mountain town of Luchon – full of character, cosy and a fantastic place to nestle back to after a day out snowshoeing.

We have chose not to be hut based so to give the most flexibility. This means we can easily head to the very best areas with great snow conditions on each of our trekking dates while having a warm comfy bed, log fire and great food to retire back to in the evening.

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FAQ'S

Health and Safety

What happens if there is a problem on the mountain?

360 Expeditions have conducted detailed risk assessments and put the necessary plans in place to cope with any accidents or illness whilst out on the snowshoeing expedition. Our expedition leaders are highly qualified and experienced mountain leaders who hold expedition first aid qualifications and are used to working in remote environments. Their training allows them to deal with situations quickly and safely.

Should someone find themselves requiring further medical attention, the leader will organise for that individual to be taken from the trail and transferred to the nearest hospital. The leader and the 360 office team will also be on hand to offer guidance and support for insurance claims and contacting next-of-kin.

Am I likely to suffer from altitude sickness on this expedition?

At this altitude it is unlikely that you will suffer from altitude sickness.

Kit

Can I bring my own snow shoes and/or poles?

If you have your own snow shoes which you like this is fine. We strongly recommend that you have heel raisers and please also bring some spare items such as straps which are specific to the snow shoe in case you need to repair them. We carry a generic snow shoe repair kit for breakages but the specific ones are much better.

Trekking poles need to go in checked in luggage and can not be carried in hand luggage.

The Trek

What do I do if I arrive early on the pickup day?

There are regular buses and trams into Toulouse centre from Toulouse airport. They can drop you right outside Toulouse central train station where there are left luggage facilities. Toulouse is a beautiful city to explore and it is definitely worth the 20 minute journey.

Training

What training do we need for this if any?

Some fitness training is a good idea if you do not walk regularly in the mountains. Any cardiovascular training and hill work will stand you in good stead and make your holiday much more enjoyable.

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FAQ'S

Weather

What's the weather like up there?

During the day temperatures can be warm and can even reach to the mid teens C. In the evening higher up, it could drop to below freezing and with a distinct chill in the air. For early spring or late autumn ascents there can be snow from the refuge up and the temperatures on the summit well below freezing.

As you will be trekking in a mountain environment, the weather can rapidly change for the worse so you need to be prepared for all conditions. Even in good weather it is not uncommon to have short heavy downpours or snowstorms.

What happens if there is limited snow?

Please do not worry too much as the area is absolutely stunning, snow or no snow. To reassure you, it is extremely rare to have no snow on the spectacular routes we have chosen. However, we do always have plan Bs and Cs which are ready to kick in. It's all part of the adventure!

Travel

Flights aren't included what time should I arrive and depart to Toulouse?

We haven't included flights as this gives you options from the UK. There are many flights that come to Toulouse daily from many different airports.

It's important that we check flight schedules before confirming a pickup time with you, as we want to make sure you can actually make it to Toulouse on time. We will confirm what time you should aim to arrive in Toulouse as we draw closer to your departure date.

We will also check flight schedules before deciding what time we do an airport drop off.

Once you know the above, please find flights that work for these timings, or plan to have the night before and/or night after in Toulouse.

If there are any issues with booking your flights, please let us know and we will try and help however it might mean getting a hire car/train or taxi to your start / finish point.

Bagnères de Luchon is 1h 40 mins drive away.

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FAQ'S

Insurance

Do I need insurance?

You must carry individual travel insurance to take part in the expedition. We cannot take you on the mountain without proof of insurance.

It is your responsibility to ensure that you have the appropriate insurance for your intended trip. To include medical evacuation and coverage up to the maximum altitude of this trip.

Your insurance details are requested on the booking form, however this can be arranged at a later date. 360 Expeditions will be requesting your insurance details 8 weeks before your departure.

Finance

What is your cancellation and refund policy?

Please read our terms and conditions carefully before you depart. 360 Expeditions highly recommends trip cancellation insurance for all expeditions. Due to the nature and heavy costs of government and operator permits we must adhere to a stringent refund policy.

Electronics

Will I be able to get WIFI along the way?

You will be able to get WIFI at the Luchon-based accommodation. When in the mountains you will go through spots of 4g coverage but we encourage you to enjoy the digital detox when possible.

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TRAINING PROGRAM

To begin 6 months prior to the expedition where possible.

1. CVS: Cardiovascular exercise which is low impact such as swimming, cycling, cross trainer, rowing.

2. Weekend walk should be done over undulating terrain. Only a light rucksack needs to be carried.

3. For specific exercises it is worth doing static squats and heel raises on a regular basis to improve leg muscles prior to the trip. Static squats are especially useful to help protect the knees. Please remember that it is still important to have a well balanced workout using a variety of muscle groups.

4. It is worth winding down and resting in the week leading up to the trip, doing several light walks to keep things going.

5. When walking going at a pace of a brisk walk with a light sweat and enough to feel breathless is recommended

6. During the program, rather than step up suddenly each month (example, going for 3 one hour walks each week during the weekdays in April to 3 one and half hour walks suddenly in May) it is better to build up gradually each week so there isn't a large transition (example, going for 3 one hour walks during week 1 in April, going for 3 one hour and ten minute walks during week 2 in April, going for 3 one hour and fifteen minute walks during week 3 in April, going for 3 one hour and twenty minute walks during week 4 in April)

6. It is important you seek medical advice prior to starting any training program, especially if you are not used to regular physical exertion

All the best with your training!

MONTH 1

OPT 1

2 x 30 mins weekday walk
1 x 1 hour weekend walk
1 x 10 mins CVS

OPT 2

1 x 30 mins weekday walk
2 x 1 hour weekend walk
1 x 10 mins CVS

MONTH 2

OPT 1

2 x 45 mins weekday walk
1 x 2 hours weekend walk
2 x 10 mins CVS

OPT 2

1 x 45 mins weekday walk
2 x 2 hours weekend walk
2 x 10 mins CVS

MONTH 3

OPT 1

2 x 45 mins weekday walk
1 x 2 hours weekend walk
2 x 10 mins CVS

OPT 2

1 x 45 mins weekday walk
2 x 2 hours weekend walk
2 x 10 mins CVS

MONTH 4

OPT 1

3 x 1 hour weekday walk
1 x 4 hours weekend walk
3 x 15 mins CVS

OPT 2

2 x 1 hour weekday walk
2 x 4 hours weekend walk
3 x 15 mins CVS

MONTH 5

OPT 1

3 x 1.5 hours weekday walk
1 x 5 hours weekend walk
3 x 20 - 25 mins CVS

OPT 2

2 x 1.5 hours weekday walk
2 x 5 hours weekend walk
3 x 20 - 25 mins CVS

MONTH 6

OPT 1

3 x 2 hours weekday walk
1 x 6 hours weekend walk
3 x 30 mins CVS

OPT 2

2 x 3 hours weekday walk
2 x 6 hours weekend walk
3 x 30 mins CVS

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"Life should not be a journey to the grave with the intention of arriving safely in a pretty & well preserved body, but rather to skid in broadside in a cloud of smoke, thoroughly used up, totally worn out & loudly proclaiming 'Wow! What a Ride!' "

Dream it. Plan it. Live it.