

Pyrenees Spring Adventure 2012



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Journey

Starting from the first camp in Bossòst, on the Spanish side of the Pyrenees, travel East to enter Andorra through the 'Smuggler's Pass'. Take the chance to explore this tiny tax-haven, and the stunning mountain trails that surround it. Then, over the course of the second week, work south and east to Cadaqués, finishing the adventure at Cap de Creus, the easternmost tip of Spain.

Distances

Calais - Bossòst	1100Km
Bossòst - Cadaqués (about 60% track work)	900Km
Cadaqués - Calais	1220Km

Brief Itinerary

Monday 16th April	Leave UK Folkestone-Calais Eurotunnel
Tuesday 17th April	Evening Arrive Bossòst
Wednesday 18th April	First day on tracks
Saturday 21st April	Arrive Andorra
Sunday 22nd April	Rest Day/Explore Andorra La Vella
Monday 23rd April	Explore mountainous area to south
Tuesday 24th April	Leave region heading east
Thursday 26th April	Leave mountains, camp near Cadaqués
Friday 27th April	Visit Cadaqués - Photos at Cap de Creus
Saturday 28th April	Start two day journey back to UK
Sunday 29th April	Arrive UK via Eurotunnel

More detail.....

The trip officially starts on the Tuesday night when drivers are expected to arrive at our camp on the outskirts of Bossòst. However, I will publicise the time which I take the Eurotunnel on Monday morning and welcome people to join me for the two day transit down through France. I usually spend the Monday evening near Orlean. This is a good option for those that have not travelled on the continent before, or just prefer to get into the swing and meet others on the trip.

On Wednesday, we call into Bossòst and pick up some fresh bread and croissant (would be a crime not to!) and leave the town behind in a series of switchbacks, climbing to 1800 metres for our first view across the mountains.



At this time of year, there will still be a lot of snow visible on the mountains, so the views are spectacular.

The next few days are spent driving east, picking our way through the mountains. Some of the passes are well above the snow line, and may be blocked. Or, passable with a certain amount of determination!

There is plenty of opportunity to flex driving skills at the front, or those that prefer can grab a shovel and help clear a path. Either way, the only way to get through this section is team work - and lots of it!

There are other hazards that may present. In 2011, the team came across a rockfall blocking the way! We had to use the rocks to build a makeshift road.





At the end of a few enjoyable days, the group will enter the tiny village of Tor. Just beyond lies the 'Smuggler's Pass' which we will climb to enter Andorra at a height of just over 2300m.

Andorra La Vella (the capital city) is a fascinating place. Hi-Tec electronics stores are nestled between old fashioned cafes. Large department stores sell a variety of goods at prices reflecting Andorra's tax haven status.

On the Monday morning, though, its time to hit the tracks again and leave Andorra on a southerly routing, through another mountain pass joined by climbing out of the city to a height of 2100 metres.

If the snow permits, we will follow an old mountain track right to the edge of a precipice for another spectacular view at over 2600 metres.



For the next few days, we follow the network of tracks heading south and east as the weather gets warmer towards the coast.



There are still some tricky sections to get through, and stories to swap at the evening camps.

Eventually, the tracks will bring us lower until we hit the tarmac to reach the coast and a well-deserved cold one and a bite in the harbour at Cadaqués.



Conditions

Spring in the Pyrenees usually consists of warm days - think a nice May or even June day in England. Temperatures drop later though, especially on clear nights and very high up in the mountains, above the snow line, the wind can be biting.

Most of the routes that we drive are gravel tracks. Occasionally, especially at this time of year, gravel and dirt can give way to mud. Higher up, we can still expect the tracks to be covered in snow. Sometimes the snow will have drifted to make a track impassable.

I would classify the off-road driving on this trip to mainly be at the level of 'fun'. Whilst there are pinch-points where the group will exit the vehicles to be spotted through one at a time, the driving will be within the range of skills developed by someone who is familiar with their vehicle and the basics of safe off-road driving. I would, however, always recommend formal training for anyone who plans to take their vehicle off-road. The tracks would be classified as non-damaging.

Each driving day will consist of about 3 hours in the morning, an hour or so for lunch, followed by 3 hours in the afternoon. Mudrut groups are always kept small to ensure that each individual gets the best possible experience. There is usually plenty of time in the evening to unwind, socialise with the group or do your own thing. It is, after all, *your* adventure!

Vehicle Preparation

As with all overlanding trips, the most important thing is to be using a vehicle that is properly serviced and reliable. In order, the following are suggested modifications

Essentials

- All Terrain or Mud Terrain Tyres
- Front and rear recovery points
- Basic recovery gear
- CB
- Odyssey replacement vehicle battery
- Fridge
- Tyre Inflation/Deflation equipment

'Nice-to-haves'

- Underbody Protection
- Raised Air Intake
- Auxilliary Lighting
- Dual Battery System
- Upgraded Suspension
- Winch
- Difflock/Traction aids



Kit

Each of the nights in the Pyrenees will be spent camping. Most nights, we will be located in a camp site. These do vary in the facilities available from just toilets and showers to full laundry facilities and a bar. Regardless, you will need to carry a tent (or roof tent) and bedding appropriate to the climate. It is unlikely that we will camp above the snowline. Even so, the ground temperature can approach freezing during the night at this time of year.



The rest of the equipment needed would be similar to that carried for a UK camping trip. A full suggested kit list will be provided as part of the joining instruction pack.

Costs

£950 (including VAT) per person
assuming two occupants per vehicle

Included

Lead vehicle/support truck carrying additional equipment, spares, satellite phone

Two Mudrut guides.

Magazine quality photographic portfolio of you and your truck supplied upon return

Video of trip edited and provided online within two weeks of return

Camping Fees for entire trip

Estimated additional costs (per vehicle)

Fuel	£400
Food	£400
Tolls	£100
Eurotunnel Crossing	£69 each way
Lodging in France	£70 each way

