

THE GR10 TRAIL

About the Author

Since taking early retirement from his career as a physics and sports teacher, Brian Johnson has found time for three through-hikes of the Pacific Crest Trail, a 2700-mile round-Britain walk, six hikes across the Pyrenees from the Atlantic to the Mediterranean, a hike along the Via de la Plata from Seville to Santiago and a single summer compleation of the Munros (Scotland's 3000ft mountains) as well as climbing all the Corbetts (Scotland's 2500ft–3000ft mountains) and most of the Grahams (Scotland's 2000–2500ft mountains). He has also completed a 2200-mile cycle tour of Spain and France and done multi-week canoe tours in Sweden, France, Spain and Portugal.

In his younger days, Brian's main sport was orienteering. He competed at a high level and coached both Bishop Wordsworth's School and South-West Junior Orienteering Squads. He also surveyed and drew many orienteering maps. He has walked and climbed extensively in summer and winter conditions in Britain, the Alps, the Pyrenees and California, often leading school groups.

As a fanatical sportsman and games player, Brian competed to a high level in cricket, hockey, bridge and chess. His crowning achievement was winning the 1995/96 World Amateur Chess Championships.

Other Cicerone guides by the author

The Pacific Crest Trail

Walking the Corbetts Volume one: South of the Great Glen

Walking the Corbetts Volume two: North of the Great Glen

The GR11 – La Senda: through the Spanish Pyrenees

THE GR10 TRAIL

THROUGH THE FRENCH PYRENEES

by Brian Johnson

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 Kendal LA9 7RL.

The route maps in this guide are derived from publicly-available data,
 databases and crowd-sourced data. As such they have not been through the
 detailed checking procedures that would generally be applied to a published
 map from an official mapping agency, although naturally we have reviewed them
 closely in the light of local knowledge as part of the preparation of this guide.

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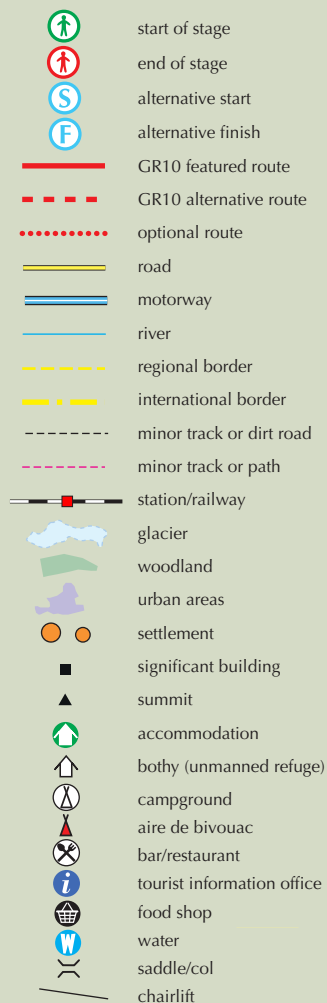
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Symbols used on route maps

Relief
in metres

SCALE: 1:100,000



Contour lines are drawn
at 50m intervals and
highlighted at 200m
intervals.

Mountain safety

Every mountain walk has its dangers, and those described in this guidebook are no exception. All who walk or climb in the mountains should recognise this and take responsibility for themselves and their companions along the way. The author and publisher have made every effort to ensure that the information contained in this guide was correct when it went to press, but, except for any liability that cannot be excluded by law, they cannot accept responsibility for any loss, injury or inconvenience sustained by any person using this book.

International distress signal (*emergency only*)

Six blasts on a whistle (and flashes with a torch after dark) spaced evenly for one minute, followed by a minute's pause. Repeat until an answer is received. The response is three signals per minute followed by a minute's pause.

Helicopter rescue

The following signals are used to communicate with a helicopter:

Help needed:
raise both arms
above head to
form a 'Y'



Help not needed:
raise one arm
above head, extend
other arm downward

**Emergency telephone numbers**

If telephoning from the UK the dialling codes are:

France: 0033; Italy: 0039; Switzerland: 0041

France: PGHM (Peloton de Gendarmerie de Haute Montagne):

tel 04 50 53 16 89; Emergency services: tel 112 (mobile phones)

Italy: Carabinieri: tel 0165 84 22 25; Emergency Services: tel 118

Switzerland: OCVS (Organisation Cantonale Valaisanne de Secours): tel 144

Weather reports

France: Chamonix: tel 08 92 68 02 74, www.meteo.fr or tel 3250

Italy: tel 0165 44 113

Switzerland: tel 162 (in French, German or Italian), www.meteoschweiz.ch/en

Mountain rescue can be very expensive – be adequately insured.

Vallée de la Canau (Stage 19)



AUTHOR'S PREFACE

Having walked the Pyrenean High-level Route and GR11 many times, I was apprehensive that the GR10 would be the poor relation to these coast to coast routes across the Pyrenees. However, I was delighted to find the GR10 to be every bit as good as these two magnificent routes.

The first Cicerone guide to the GR10 by Alan Castle was published in 1990. His work was taken on by Paul Lucia whose new guide was published in 2002. Unfortunately Paul died in 2007 and, despite updates by Ton Joosten, it was time for a new guide as the GR10 had gradually evolved, with improvements to the route and changes to accommodation and other facilities. This completely new guide includes all changes made to the route up to 2015.

It is now just about possible to walk the GR10 without camping or using bothies and this guide is organised into 55 stages for the benefit of those who are using accommodation along the route. Walkers who, like the author, prefer wild camping in the mountains will find much greater flexibility in their planning.

Brian Johnson



Mont Valier from ponds below the Bouche d'Aula (Stage 34)

INTRODUCTION



The north face of Vignemale from Oulètes de Gaube (Stages 18 and 19)

The Pyrenees, the mountain chain which forms the border between France and Spain, stretches over 400km from the Atlantic Ocean to the Mediterranean Sea. The GR10 is the easiest, oldest and most popular of the three long-distance routes that traverse the mountain range.

It is an extremely well-waymarked route following good mountain paths, with only a few tough stages with boulderfields to cross and occasional scrambling. Towns and villages are frequent so finding accommodation and supplies is rarely a problem.

Initially the GR10 follows ridges over the steep rolling hills of the Basque Country before reaching the

impressive limestone peaks at the western end of the High Pyrenees. The fantastic Alpine scenery of the High Pyrenees includes a number of tourist hotspots, including the Pic du Midi d'Ossau, Vignemale and Gavarnie. After Bagnères-de-Luchon the GR10 passes into the less-frequented Ariège where the route crosses a succession of deep valleys with occasional returns to spectacular Alpine terrain. As the Mediterranean is approached the Canigou massif dominates the scene and the terrain remains mountainous with the final 1000m peak being only a few miles from the route's end at Banyuls-sur-Mer.

1 HENDAYE-PLAGE TO ETSAUT

KEY INFORMATION

Distance	221km
Total ascent	11,300m
Time	68hr walking
Maps	IGN Carte de Randonnées 1:50,000 maps 1–3



*Plateau de Lhers
(Stage 12)*

The first nine stages to Sainte-Engrâce are over the steep rolling hills of the Basque Country. This is followed by a rapid transition to the steep limestone peaks of the High Pyrenees. This is the easiest section of the GR10, but in early season there could be problems with snow in the final stages.

Getting to the start from Hendaye railway station

Head NE from the station, then turn left over the railway and follow the road all the way to the old casino on the seafront at Hendaye-Plage (40mins). If you are on a local train it is quicker to get off at les Deux Jumeaux station and then head N to the seafront.

STAGE 1

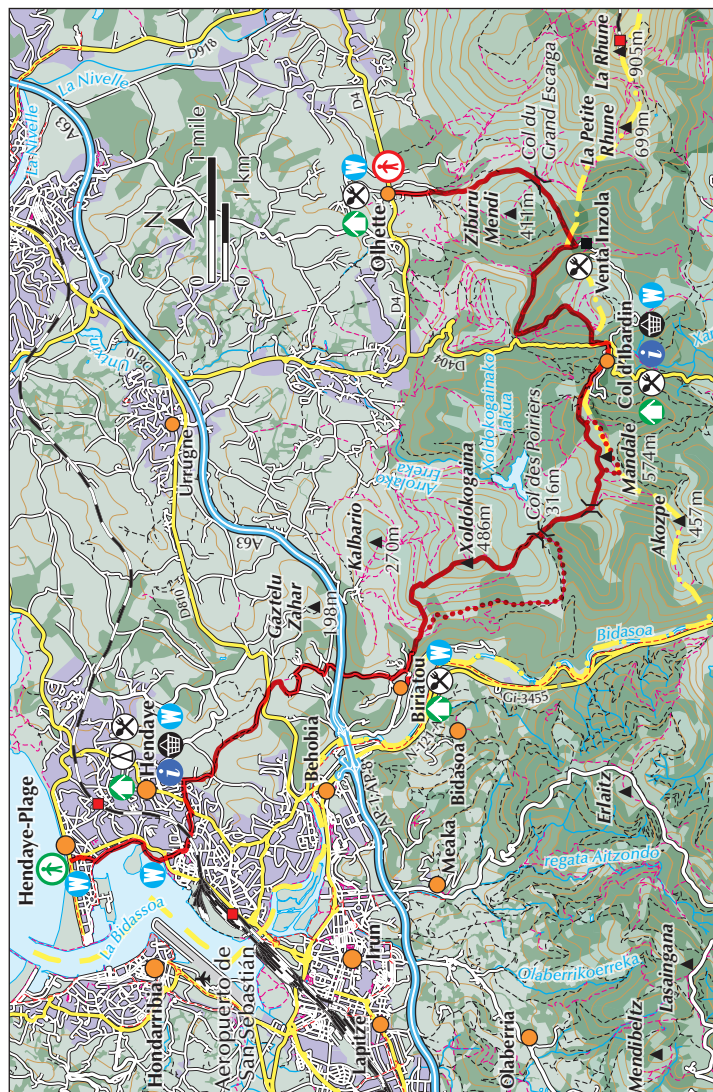
Hendaye-Plage to Olhette

Start	Résidence Croisière (old casino), Hendaye-Plage
Distance	21km
Total ascent	1200m
Total descent	1100m
Time	6hr 5min
High point	N slopes of Mandale (530m)
Note	Although Coleman-style camping gas is difficult to find in Hendaye, all types of camping gas are available at the Decathlon store on the Txingudi commercial area at the southwest end of Irún near junction 2 of the A-8 autopista in Spain.

Once Hendaye is left behind the GR10 provides easy walking, through a mixture of woodland and pasture, over the steep rolling hills of the Basque Country.



The old 'casino' in Hendaye-Plage



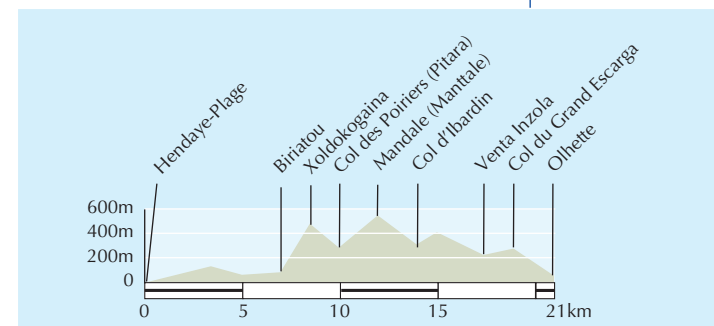
Hendaye has the international railway station and the main shopping areas while the beach resort of Hendaye-Plage, with its 3km sandy beach, has most of the accommodation and tourist facilities. There are toilets just along the seafront to the W of the start.

The town of Hendaye is only separated from the Spanish town of Irún by la Bidassoa river. The GR10 starts at the Résidence Croisière on the seafront. ► For those who are travelling light, the E end of the beach is costumes-optional.

Head S down the Boulevard du Général Leclerc and, at a large roundabout, veer right down Rue des Citronniers to reach la Baie de Chingoudy. Turn left along the promenade, passing two sets of [toilets](#) and a [waterpoint](#) by a play area, to reach the Stade Bixente Lizarazu football ground. Veer left round the far end of the pitch, pass another [waterpoint](#) and go under the bridge to a roundabout. Keep straight on along a passage between flats and veer left up a minor road and along a footpath to another roundabout. Keep straight on up the Chemin de Biaténia which merges with the Boulevard de l'Empereur (30min). [Turn right here if you need the large Intermarché supermarket \(15min\)](#), which sells original and easy-click camping gas.

Turn left for the GR10 and fork right up Rue Errondenia. At the top of the road turn right up the Rue

This magnificent building, built in 1885 in neo-Moorish style, was originally a casino but is now occupied by a selection of restaurants and tourist shops.



de Pausoa and out of town. At the top of the hill turn left down a track, soon forking right and right again for your first wild **camping** opportunity (50min). Fork left to the top of Migeltxoeborda (132m) and veer left down to the **D810** road (formerly N10). Turn left along the road and, after 100m, fork right down a track which soon becomes a path. At a junction, fork right along a track which becomes a small tarmac road. Then it's left at a junction, fork right at the top of a hill, straight on at the next junction, sharp left, left again and next right to reach a tunnel which takes you under the **A63 motorway**. Ignore a sharp left turn and some tarmac drives to reach a junction at the top of the hill (1hr 40min).

Turn right if you want to visit the hamlet of Biriadou. There is a waterpoint in the hotel car park and public toilets with waterpoint near the auberge, below the church. If you visit Biriadou you can rejoin the G10 by following the signs rather than returning to the junction.

In bad weather the old GR10 route is preferable following the track traversing S to a 4-way junction. Take the right-hand of the two left turns and climb to rejoin the GR10 at Col de Poiriers (Pitara).

Turn left for the GR10, then fork right, turn left, fork right and climb. As the gradient eases, fork right and immediately left up a track (1hr 50min). Right and left forks bring you under powerlines. ◀

The GR10 goes left and immediately right to follow a path, which climbs to the right of the powerlines before reaching a viewpoint, with **picnic table**, under the powerlines at the foot of the rocky NW ridge of Xoldokogaina. After crossing the ridge fork right, right again and then turn right to regain the ridge above the crags. Follow the path easily up to the monument on the summit of **Xoldokogaina** (2hr 55min, 486m).

Descend roughly S to the Col d'Osin, veering left along a better track to the **Col des Poiriers**, which has good dry **campsites** and an ancient tumulus (3hr 15min, 316m). Follow the path, roughly SE, which climbs into the forest and reaches Col des Joncs (419m). Veer left up the ridge, fork right then turn sharp left back onto the ridge and turn right up the ridge.

The remains of an old hill fort, **Redoute de la Baïonette**, are worth visiting in good weather. They are reached by taking a sharp right turn onto the ridge and then following a good path northeast to the summit of Mandale. The remains are found at borderstone 9. After borderstone 10 veer slightly left to rejoin the GR10 for the descent to the Col d'Ibardin.

The GR10 contours the N slopes of **Mandale** (574m). ▶ Eventually, at a switchback, turn right down a small path to reach Elizalde Restaurante at the **Col d'Ibardin** (4hr 5min).

The Col d'Ibardin has a multitude of bar-restaurants and supermarkets offering food and alcohol

The mountain ahead with the communications mast is la Rhune (905m).

A stream below Col d'Ibardin



at Spanish prices. The Elizalde Restaurante offers accommodation. There are public toilets with water at the garage with a tourist office across the road.

Follow the road, which is the border between France and Spain, down to the actual col (317m). Turn left at the roundabout, down the **D404**. You soon fork right up a path, the Sentier des Mulets, turning right just before a gate and climbing steeply before veering right and turning left to descend on an increasingly good track to a barrier. Fork right along a path and turn right just before returning to the D404 (4hr 45min). Descend through woods to the left of a stream and eventually, just after a log bridge, turn right across the stream and follow another stream gently uphill. Stay on the right-hand side of the stream at a log bridge. ◀ Enter Spain at borderstone 18 to arrive at **Venta Inzola** (5hr 15min, 115m) which is a **bar-restaurant**.

Cross the stream immediately N of the Venta and follow the path as it climbs through the woods back into France to reach a complex junction at the **Col du Grand Escarga** (Deskargahandiko Lepoa) (5hr 35min, 273m). This col provides the last obvious **campsites** before Olhette. Follow the right-hand of the two paths, which goes straight on, veering left as it descends gently before forking left on a smaller path. After another left fork you arrive at the roadhead at **Olhette** (6hr 5min, 65m).

Olhette is a hamlet with two gîtes d'étape and one hotel. Gîte d'étape Manttu-Baïta is at the roadhead and the hotel and the Gîte d'étape Trapero Baïta are on the 'main' road about 500m further N. There is a waterpoint at the Gîte d'étape Manttu-Baïta.

You are on a Roman road originally built to serve the mining industry.

FACILITIES FOR STAGE 1

Hendaye

Hendaye tourist office, east of the old casino: tel 05 59 20 00 34, www.hendaye-tourisme.fr

Camping des Deux Jumeaux, along the coast road near the east end of Hendaye-Plage: tel 05 59 20 01 65, www.camping-des-2jumeaux.com

Selected accommodation close to the railway station:

Gîte du Littoral Côte Basque (gîte d'étape): tel 06 30 66 29 95

Hôtel de la Gare: tel 05 59 20 81 90, <http://saintmartinmaite.pagesperso-orange.fr>

Biriatou

Hôtel-restaurant les Jardins de Bakea: tel 05 59 20 02 01, www.bakea.fr

Auberge Hiribarren is a chambres d'hôtes with bar-restaurant: tel 05 59 20 61 83, www.auberge-hiribarren.com

Col d'Ibardin

Elizalde Restaurante offers accommodation: tel 0948 631 024 (Spanish)

Olhette

Gîte d'étape Manttu-Baïta has gîte d'étape and chambres d'hôtes accommodation. Tel: 05 59 54 46 72 or 06 20 43 49 25, www.chambre-d-hote-cote-basque-manttu.fr

Gîte d'étape Trapero Baïta offers accommodation, meals, a swimming pool and possibly camping in the garden. English spoken: tel 05 59 54 42 59, 06 66 08 56 95, leteich@hotmail.fr, www.facebook.com/Chambres-dhotes-trapero-baita-114558492050996

Hôtel-restaurant Trabenia: tel 05 59 54 01 91, www.hotel-trabenia.com