



CARROS DE FUEGO

**The High-level route in the
Pyrenees with Snowshoes**



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1 Introduction

The concept of high routes (or haute routes) was born in the Alps in the late nineteenth century by the Alpine Club (UK) who proposed a summer itinerary between Chamonix (France) and Zermatt (Switzerland) which they called "**The High Level Route**".

It was not until 1911, when the trip was completed on skis for the first time, that both the concept and the High Route (Haute Route) name became popular. Since then, all mountain routes lasting several days from hut to hut are known as high routes.

If there is an area in the Pyrenees that is associated with high routes, then it is the **Parc National d' Aigüestortes and Sant Maurici**, and if there is a route that can be categorized as high route, it is the "**Carros de foc**".

The National Park incorporates all the elements that characterise the high Pyrenees, featuring a dazzling and diverse landscape of snow, rivers, waterfalls and lakes. With a breath-taking geography interested with a chain of mountain huts, this is the ideal setting for a high route trail.

The story of "Carros de foc" began a little over twenty years ago with courtesy visits between mountain huts guards in the park, but since then has become a Pyrenees classic.

2 Destination

The National Park of **Aigüestortes i Estany de Sant Maurici** is one of the fourteen national parks of Spain. Located in the Catalan Pyrenees is, together with the National Park of Ordesa and Monteperdido (in the Aragonese Pyrenees) and the National Park National of Pyrénées (in the French departments of Pyrénées-Atlantiques and Hautes-Pyrénées), an excellent representation of the main ecosystems Of the Pyrenees.

Its main hallmark is water, which runs through rivers, canyons and waterfalls and stagnates in lakes and peat lands. All this is located between mountains of more than three thousand meters altitude and leafy forests of black pine, spruce, wild pine, birch and beech.

In the park there is an extensive network of sheltered mountain huts that allow mountain lovers to discover all corners with all comfort and at any time of the year. In winter, when the park is covered in white and its more than 200 lakes freeze, it becomes a perfect and beautiful stage for crossings with mountain skis or snowshoes.

Following the trail left in the Middle Ages by Romanesque art in the **Boí Valley** is another way of approaching this place. **The church of Sant Climent de Taüll** with its slender square-shaped bell tower is the most well-known image of the eight churches built in the valley under the influence of the Lombard Romanesque and they are declared a World Heritage Site by UNESCO.

The natural products that this land brings to its gastronomy are such as vegetables from the garden, game meat, mushrooms, forest fruits (such as blueberries, wild strawberries, currants or raspberries) or honey. Hence the *civet* of wild boar, the Aranese pot or the *truhada*.

3 Basic information

Destination: Aigüestortes and Estany de Sant Maurici (Spain).

Activity: Snowshoes.

Difficulty: **

Length: 5 days.

Season: From February to April.

Minimum-maximum group: 4-8 people.

3.1 Required physical condition and type of terrain

Physical level	Total elevation	Kms	Physical Condition
*	Up to 600 m	Up to 16 km	Normal: occasional sport practice
**	Up to 1200 m	Up to 23 km	Good: regular sport practice
***	Up to 1400 m	Over. 23 km	Very good: strict sport practice

Physical level category does not have to correspond exactly with given ascent and kilometers at the same time. It is advisable to have previous experience on snowshoeing excursions. Physical level to face slopes of between 800 and 1000 meters daily at a calm but comfortable pace.

4 Programme

4.1 Programme outline

Day 1. Estany de Cavallers (1.800 m)- Ventosa y Calvell mountain hut (2.200 m) - Port de Caldes - Colomers Hut (2.130 m)

Distance: 12 km. Elevation gain + 800m - 550m. Time: 6h

Day 2. Colomers Hut (2.130 m)- Port de Ratera (2.572 m) - Amitges mountain hut (2.378 m).

Distance: 9 km. Elevation gain + 550m - 400m. Time: 4-5h

Day 3. Amitges Hut (2.378 m) - J.M.Blanc Hut (2.326 m).

Distance: 14, 5 km. Ascent elevation 850 m Descending descent 900 m Time 5-6 h

Day 4. J.M.Blanc Hut (2.326 m) - Estany Llong Hut (1.985 m).

Distance: 18 km. Elevation gain + 700m - 800m. Time: 6-7h

Day 5. Estany Llong Hut (1.985 m) - Estany de Cavallers (1.800 m)-

Elevation gain + 50m -600 m. Time: 3-4 h

The second option is to ascend the Contraix Col (2.743 m).

Distance: 14,5 km. Elevation gain + 800m - 1.100m. Time: 6-7 h

4.2 Detailed programme

Day 1. Estany de Cavallers (1.800 m)- Ventosa y Calvell mountain hut (2.200 m) - Port de Caldes - Colomers Hut (2.130 m)

We begin the journey by accessing the National Park from Cavallers Valley. Skirting the Estany de Cavallers to gain height we'll reach the Ventosa and Calvell hut. From here we continue going up to reach the Port of Caldes. We will only have a nice descent to the Colomers Circus and on the banks of the Colomers Major Lake we will find the Hut.

Distance: 12 km. Elevation gain + 800m - 550m. Time: 6h

Day 2. Colomers Hut (2.130 m)- Port de Ratera (2.572 m) - Amitges mountain hut (2.378 m).

On the way to Port de Ratera, we will cross several *ibones* (mountain lakes) originated by the over excavation of the glaciers, that were developed thousands of years ago in these mountains. Once you reach the Port de

Ratera we will descend to the hut of Amitges located in a beautiful spot. Along this part of the way we will have nice views over Els Encantats (beautiful mountain) and the Estany de Sant Maurici.

Distance: 9 km. Elevation gain + 550m - 400m. Time: 4-5h

Day 3. Amitges Hut (2.378 m) - J.M.Blanc Hut (2.326 m).

We will descend towards the **Estany de Sant Maurici** with the impressive views of **Els Encantats**. Ascent to the Monestero Col (2,877 m). We only have to go down to **Estany Negre** and reach the mountain hut. We emphasize the peculiar and beautiful place where is the J.M.Blanc Hut, surrounded by *ibones* (mountain lakes) and mountains.

Distance: 14, 5 km. Ascent elevation 850 m Descending descent 900 m Time 5-6 h

Day 4. J.M.Blanc Hut (2.326 m) - Estany Llong Hut (1.985 m).

From the **Col of Saburó** we will pass the Colomina hut, and then we will cross a section of "**carrilet**" an old construction that takes advantage of the relatively flat orography of this stretch plagued of lakes. Then we will face the **hill of Dellui** to finish this long stage in the **Estany Llong hut**. This mountain hut is located in this valley, away from any population and with a long access, an ideal place to relax away from civilization.

Distance: 18 km. Elevation gain + 700m - 800m. Time: 6-7h

Day 5. Estany Llong Hut (1.985 m) - Estany de Cavallers (1.800 m)-

We have two options to finish our adventure in this last trekking day. The first option is to go down the main valley following the River of Sant Nicolau. The valley holds a beautiful forest and the path is comfortable.

Elevation gain + 50m -600 m. Time: 3-4 h

The second option is to ascend the Contraix Col (2.743 m). Descent through the **Colieto Valley** to the **Ventosa and Calvell hut**, to continue in clear ascent to the starting point of the first day. This section requires that the conditions of stability of the snow cover are very good since the descent through the **Contraix** pass is a delicate place and where some avalanche accidents have unfortunately occurred. End of our journey.

Distance: 14,5 km. Elevation gain + 800m - 1.100m. Time: 6-7 h

Distance short option: 5 km. Elevation gain +50 m -250 m. Time 2-3h

5 More information

Price. **490 euros**.

5.1 Included

- Mountain Guide service during the trekking.
- 4 nights of half-board accommodation in the mountain huts (breakfast and dinner).
- Common safety equipment.
- Rescue and accident insurance.
- Trip organization and management.

5.2 Not included

- Flights (Muntania offer this service for an additional cost of 15€)
- Transfers to the starting point. Muntania could manage this service.
- Beverages that are not included in the accommodations' half-board menus.
- Lunches (they will take place in the mountain).
- Any change due to unexpected incidents (weather, etc.) that inquire in higher expenses than the ones budgeted for the client and the guide.
- Any additional nights before/after the trek at Pont de Suert Guesthouse:
 - 54 euros p/p in a double room breakfast included.
 - 72 euros in a single room breakfast included.

5.3 Required equipment

It is important to carry little weight in the backpack to walk comfortably, so it is recommended to take only the essential material and clothing. We will inform you so you backpack weighs no more than 6-8 kilos.

- Backpack (between 30-35 litres).
- Snowshoes and folding trekking poles.
- Crampons and ice axes.
- Clothing:
 - Socks.
 - Long and short trekking pants
 - Thermal shirt (first layer). A spare change.
 - Fleece jacket or similar (second layer).
 - Gore-Tex type jacket and pants (third layer).
 - Primaloft jacket or light down insulated jacket.
 - Fleece, light type of gloves.
 - Thick snow gloves.
 - Hat and suncap.
- Sunglasses.
- Head lamp (extra batteries).
- Cotton or silk sheet-sleeping bag and very light towel.
- Water bottle or water bag Camelback type of minimum capacity 1 liter. In case of opting for bag type Camelbak keep in mind that the tube can get frozen.
- First aid kit and essential toiletries.
- Sunscreen and protection lip balm.
- Camera.

In the event there is snow crampons and ice axes should be necessities.

5.4 Observations

Flexibility of dates

We always propose several departures with several dates but also adapt the trips to their availability. So do not hesitate to consult us if the dates do not fit you and we will adapt an outing for you.

Itinerary adjustment

According to weather and snow reports, itineraries may be adjusted on a daily basis to ensure security considering group and environment conditions.

Time and place of meeting

Two weeks before the start of the trip we will send you information about the place and time of meeting as well as the name and phone number of the guide that will accompany the group. In addition, we will send more useful information that will facilitate the final preparations.

Further information

- In the huts it is not cold and they have blankets. The primaloft or fine feather jacket will be worn during the activity if the temperature is too low.
- It is not necessary to bring a sleeping bag but you need to bring a silk or cotton travel liner.
- It is recommended to bring very little food since it can be purchased in the mountain huts along the way.
- In all shelters there are slippers so it is not necessary to carry extra shoes.
- The selection of mountain huts may undergo some change in which they can be substituted for any other in the area, depending on the availability at the time of forming the group and depending on the reservation and cancellation conditions that they impose. If we make these changes we will keep you informed.

5.5 Insurance policy

All activities in Spain have an accident insurance included in the price. Yet, if you practise mountain sports regularly and also travel frequently, **we suggest you get a travel insurance**, that as well as covering any accident and rescue it also protect you against many other situations.

If you do not have a travel insurance you can acquire one with our travel agency. Exploring Spain processes all insurances with **Intermundial**. The cost of these insurances is lower if you buy it through Exploring Spain than if you do it directly with Intermundial.

EU RESIDENTS

Ski/Aventure Plus

It is a **travel insurance** and also **covers the practise of many sports and activities**. You can get one for the duration of the trip or for the whole year, being able to choose the starting date. If you get the insurance for a year, it will not only be valid for the trip with Exploring Spain but also it will be valid for any other trips or activities you may do during that year.

Ski/Aventure Plus with Cancelation

It has the same coverage that the previous insurance but also you will be cover in case of cancelation of the trip and tickets in case of force majeure (sickness, injury...) for yourself and/or a relative.

The travel insurance with cancelation that we offer, allows a refund of the costs already paid for up to 1.000 €. If the cost of the trip and flights is higher, you can extend the amount covered (under request).

Multi-assistance Plus with or without Cancelation

Both Multi-assistance Plus with or without Cancelation are **travel insurances with better coverage** than the Ski/Adventure Plus with or without cancelation but they **do not cover the practise of sports**.

This insurance can be of your interest if you already have an accident and rescue insurance that covers the activity that you will be doing in the trip, but you do not have a travel insurance. It can also be useful if you are interested in a trip without practising any sports.

NON EU RESIDENTS

Incoming Cancelation Plus

This insurance covers the costs of the trip and the tickets if you have to cancel the trip before the departure because of different reasons like for example a sickness (see conditions of the insurance).

This insurance can be useful if you already have a travel insurance but it does not cover the cancelation of the trip or if you already have an insurance covering sports and activities.

Incoming Ski/Aventure Plus with Cancelation

It is a **travel insurance** and also **covers the practise of many sports and activities**. You will also be cover in case of cancelation of the trip and tickets in case of force majeure (sickness, injury...) for yourself and/or a relative. You can get one for the duration of the trip or for the whole year, being able to choose the starting date. If you get the insurance for a year, it will not only be valid for the trip with Exploring Spain but also it will be valid for any other trips or activities you may do during that year.

The travel insurance with cancelation that we offer, allows a refund of the costs already paid for up to 2.000 €. If the cost of the trip and flights is higher, you can extend the amount covered (under request).

*Consult prices and conditions for Intermundial insurances with Exploring Spain following this link: <https://www.exploring-spain.com/insurances>

Included accident and rescue insurance

** Included accident and rescue insurance. Nº POLIZA 4020006195 Muntania Outdoors. Assistance phone number 24h 902 09 15 57 (it is the contact number for the insurance company Prebal, Previsión Balear M.P.S).

*** It is the customer's responsibility to inform the insurance company about the accident as soon as possible. Prior the departure for the trip, we will send you an email with the insurance policy number and the assistance number so you can have it during the trip.

**** Depending on where the accident happens, the customer will have to pay in advance if the insurance company indicates it, being the payment refunded by the insurance company within the policy's limits. In any case Exploring Spain – Muntania Outdoors S.L. is responsible for any advance payment required for the rescue or assistance.

5.6 Links of interest

- www.visitvaldaran.com/en/

5.7 Highlights

- Make a high route with snowshoes.
- Visit to an emblematic national park.
- Ideal environment for multi-day snowshoeing.
- Wide network of comfortable High Mountain huts.
- Good snow conditions.

6 Contact

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