North-Eastern Navarre

North-Eastern Navarre has the gentlest mountains in the Pyrenees. It deserves to be a better known destination – but visitors are few. Only the more leisurely travellers find time to explore the region.

Almost all road traffic from France to North Spain uses the motorway along the Atlantic coast, north of Navarre; routes over the Pyrenees are not only slow and weather-affected, but most of them take you south rather than west, extending the distance. However, if time allows, then taking these quiet and scenic roads is a lovely alternative – even if one does not pause for long in Navarre. There are just seven passes leading from France into Navarre; however none of them are major roads.

Port de Larrau

The ancient pilgrim routes throgh France converged at St Jean Pied de Port and the walking route to

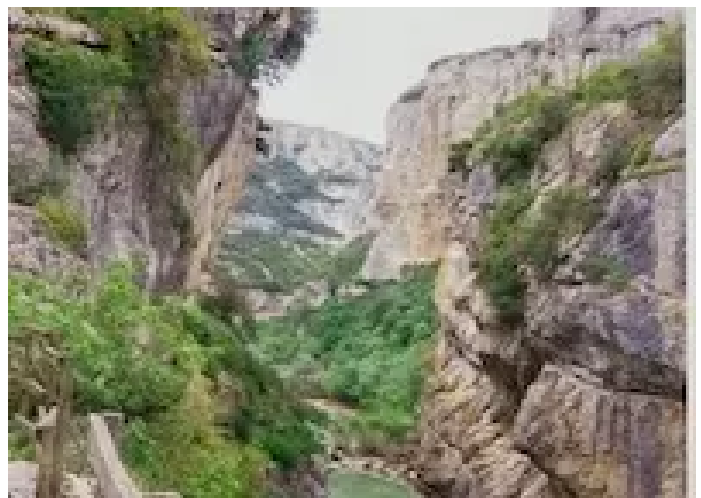Roncesvalles in Spain is still used by modern pilgrims. Road traffic from St Jean Pied de Port has the choice of three routes. The first is a direct route to Roncesvalles, continuing towards Pamplona.   A rather less direct route passes through the Aldudes and enters Spain in the Quinto Real, a small territory shared by France and Spain. Empty roads continue west, and north of Pamplona one can stay in the attractive small town of Lantz.

In the Aldudes

One can also leave France by the Puerto de Izpegui, which provides a short cut into the lovely Baztan valley, and towards the north-west.

Following the Pyrenees south-east a further 75 km, there is no major road before the Somport tunnel. But, still in Navarre, there are two interesting minor routes. From the French village of Larrau (with its Logis) one climbs to the Puerto de Larrau by a narrow road, then descends into Spain joining the Roncal valley. Another pass, right on the border with Aragon, leads into the head of the Roncal valley. After travelling down the valley and eventually turning towards Pamplona, one reaches a spectacular region where rivers have carved canyons; one of these is the Foz de Lumbier.

Foz de Lumbier