



Lourdes used to be a bit of a backwater, but thanks to the Lady of the Immaculate Conception, with a bit of help from Bernadette Soubirous, around 5 million people a year make the pilgrimage. However, it's also a great place to start exploring the Pyrenees and you can catch a bus from here to **Gavarnie** or **Cauterets**.



Strolls

- **[A wander to the sanctuary and around town \(4.5km red\)](#)**
- **[Ukrainian church detour \(1km blue\)](#)**
- **[Pic du Jer \(3km green - includes funicular railway ride\)](#)**

Interactive Map

Here is a [link to a map](#) that can help you find your bearings.



Cinema

Cross the bridge and the road and take the steps down to Place Jeanne d'Arc which also leads from the station into town. This road (becoming Boulevard de la Grotte) leads to the sanctuary and there are plenty of places to buy rosaries and 'Lourdes'-branded water bottles.



shops

Cross the river and go through the gates where around 5 million pilgrims a year come to take the water. A candle-lit service takes place each day at 9pm in this square. In the centre is a statue of Mary, a.k.a. the Lady of the Immaculate Conception. (2)



Mary



Basilica

But the dominating feature is the Basilica (3), which is well worth a nosey around. The grotto where Bernadette had her visions is round the corner to the right and there are rolling services for the visitors from different places. (4)



Grotto



Holy water fountains

You can also get water here - but whatever its healing properties, don't drink it.

Exit via the porte de Saint-Joseph (which takes you past the official gift shop), which empties out into the main area for gift shops, restaurants and hotels. Turn left and then on your right is one of Lourdes' many hotels, [Grand Hôtel Moderne](#) (5) which was started by Bernadette's entrepreneurial nephew to cater for the flock of visitors..



Grand Hôtel Moderne

Continue along Avenue Soubrouis and over the bridge to your left (Pont Vieux) and up the slope of Rue de la Grotte and past Lourdes' own version of Madame Tussauds, the [Musée de Cire](#) (6). You'll also see the old fortress poking above the buildings, which we will go past later.



Fort Museum



Les Halles

If none of the eateries along this road take your fancy, then our next stop Les Halles, is a good place to grab great local produce. To get there, continue along Rue de la Grotte and then turn right down Chaussée du Bourg which leads to Les Halles (7). The tourist information office is in the square behind.

If you have the time, you can get a great view of the town and the whole surrounding area by taking the funicular up to the Pic du Jer (green route below).

When you have finished, let's return via Rue de la Halle which leads (via a little staircase and some narrow alleys) on to Rue de la Grotte. Turn left and then right on to Rue des Petits Fossés which leads to Le Cachot (8), a former prison and the place Bernadette lived with her impoverished family at the time of her apparitions. It is now a museum.

At the end of the street is an Indian restaurant, one of many in the town which caters for the large number of Indians and Sri Lankans who come to Lourdes each year.

Turn left - at the end is the old fortress, the Château Fort Musée Pyrénéen (9), which is now a museum and you can learn about the town's history before Bernadette.



Indian restaurant



Fort Museum

Turn right down Rue du Bourg and walk all the way to the end which wiggles back on to Boulevard de la Grotte, but not before passing two little houses which have been dwarfed by the commercial properties around them. One of these being Bernadette's birthplace, and feels like something of a metaphor for Lourdes. (10)(11)



Maison Paternelle



Bernadette's birthplace

On Boulevard de la Grotte, if you have time, you might want to visit the Ukrainian Church which helps provide a deeper understanding of religion and history in Central and Eastern Europe. Otherwise, turn right and make your way up the gentle slope back to the station.

Ukrainian church detour (1km blue)

This short walk takes us over the railway track and main road to the Ukrainian church which was consecrated in 1982 and paid for by members of the Ukrainian diaspora.

The byzantine frescoes are worth a look and the sort of thing you might expect in any Greek or Eastern Orthodox church. (12)



Orthodox church

Pic du Jer (3km green - includes funicular railway ride)

This walk takes us to the funicular railway that leads to the Pic where we can get some great views.



Leave Les Halles and cross the road. The Avenue du Maréchal Foch has Hôtel de Ville (13) and adjoining buildings like the Villa Rachel, which give an idea of the wealth brought in by religious tourism.

Continue down the road all the way until you see an entrance to the Funiculaire du Pic du Jer. The railway will take you to the top where you can follow a path around the Pic/hill and you can also visit the caves.



Pic du Jer