

Pyrenean Adventure, July 2016



The Vignemale Massif from the refuge des Oulettes

A couple of days into the summer break, 15 brave Dragons (and a couple of teachers) headed out to the French Pyrenees for a week's worth of trekking and exploration through the high mountains. Having flown to Toulouse and transferred to the spa town of Cauterets, the trip began with the gentle but spectacular climb of the GR10 up to the Refuge Clot at Pont d'Espagne, which would be our base for the rest of the week.

A long circular walk took us around the spectacular Marcadau valley and up to the Lac du Pourtet at 2404m, giving us a first taste of steep, scree-lined ascents and high altitude walking, as we prepared for the week's main goal – the ascent of the 3032m crest of the Petit Vignemale. The next day's walking took us the Refuge des Oulettes de Gaube, in the shadow of the Vignemale massif, before an early-morning start and our successful climb to the summit, and its spectacular views to the Franco-Spanish border and beyond.

As the temperatures rose into the 30s, the glacial streams proved a welcome respite on the downward leg, before an orienteering exercise in and around the valley allowed the children the opportunity to put their map-reading and French language skills into practice, rounding off an exhausting – but thoroughly enjoyable – week's walking, where – all things considered – we covered over 100km and climbed more than 3000m in the process.

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