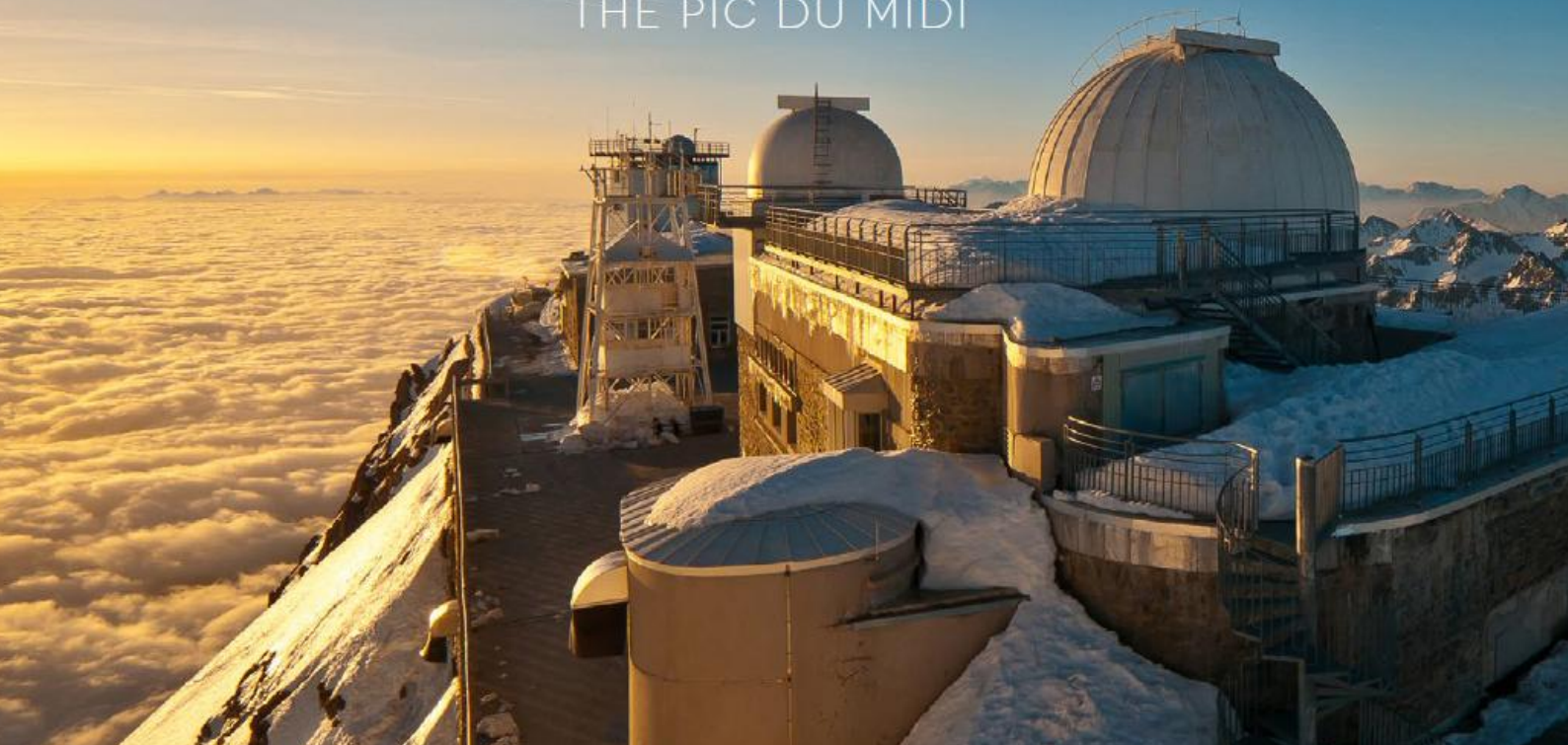




Pic du Midi  
PYRÉNÉES FRANCE

# *Bienvenue* **AU PIC DU MIDI**

WELCOME TO  
THE PIC DU MIDI



## **PIC DU MIDI** **PRESS RELEASE**

Press inquiries

Laurence de Boerio

00 33 6 03 10 16 56 - [rplb@deboerio.net](mailto:rplb@deboerio.net)

[www.picdumidi.com](http://www.picdumidi.com)



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# A REAL TOURIST ATTRACTION

Le Pic du Midi was opened to the general public in the year 2000. In 2003, it was classified as a **National Nature Site** because of the beauty of its surroundings. On 19 December 2013, it received the **International Dark Sky Reserve** accreditation - the 1<sup>st</sup> place of its kind to do so in France. Space scientists and engineers have been observing, analysing and photographing the sky, its planets and far-distant galaxies in this breathtaking location for over 140 years. As a result, astronomy (the study of celestial objects) is this Pyrenean site's area of expertise, together with the study of the sun and the planets.



The scientists' daily wonderment at this panorama and the secrets they discovered - previously the preserve of just a handful of privileged people - is now available for all to enjoy.

Visitors set off in a cable car from the centre of La Mongie, a ski resort in le Grand Tourmalet. It takes 15 minutes to reach the summit, which rises to 2,877 metres. This is how the great adventure that is the le Pic experience begins...

## A MOUNTAIN SUMMIT WITH FAR-REACHING VIEWS

### *The prominent Pyrenean lookout point*

Le Pic du Midi's location 3,000 m up and with an open view across the Pyrenees makes it a simply stunning viewpoint for tourists. The whole Pyrenean mountain range from Catalonia to the Basque country can be enjoyed from the summit. Stretching east to west, the panorama encompasses over 300 km of mountains.

The view to the north from the large 750 m<sup>2</sup> terrace overlooks the lowlands in the south-west as far as the foothills of the Massif Central. Viewpoint indicators point out the main peaks that can be picked out in this vast panoramic view.



However, what makes le Pic du Midi so remarkable and unique is the special light and atmospheric stability that results from its geographic position. The purity of the air creates unique conditions for observing the sky and enjoying the panoramic view.



## VISITS : FROM MORNING AND ON INTO THE NIGHT

Open all year round, the Pic du Midi reveals its secrets and magic during the day, in the evening, and also throughout the night. A range of products adapted to all expectations and all types of clientele has been developed. The Pic du Midi also opens the doors of its scientific sector to organized groups. The Midi-Pyrénées Observatory presents its scientific installations and research work to the general public. A unique opportunity to discover the daily life of the staff, researchers, and technicians who work at the summit.

### *A discovery day at the summit*

Beyond the simple discovery of the panorama, the sky is now revealed to all thanks to major animations.

### All aboard for the **planetarium**, the highest in Europe

A planetarium with a diameter of 8 meters takes its place in the dome. On the ground, there are 45 reclining seats that allow for total immersion in the show. Session reservations are made on the [picdumidi.com](http://picdumidi.com) website. Each session lasts about 1 hour and includes 2 films: 'The Epic of the Pic' (17 minutes) allows you to discover the history and secrets of the Pic and the people who bring it to life. Additionally, one film from the following selection:

- 'Sky Navigator' (35 minutes), presents the dream come true of writer and science reporter Serge Brunier. The film retraces the incredible adventure of this tireless traveler who, to create a photo of our entire galaxy, toured the world's observatories, of course passing through the Pic du Midi... a photo composed of several hundred shots!
- 'We are Stars' (26 minutes), an immersive scientific documentary for all audiences. This experience seeks to answer some of the greatest questions of all time. What are we made of? Where does it all come from?

Thus, the Pic du Midi invites us on a true journey through the universe, an instructive journey to better understand the world around us.



## The pontoon in the sky : a journey across the landscape

Imagine, suspended over the void, a 12-meter-long metal walkway that touches the clouds for a unique and dizzying viewpoint. The visitor advances on an experiential territory with the impression of flying. They cling to the horizon to brave the vertigo and avoid dizziness. Since December 2019, all those able to face the void have enjoyed this experience to take selfies. To capture this moment, the Pic du Midi has installed a free Photopoint. Everyone can thus retrieve their photo to share it on social networks or send it to friends.



## Room for interpretation : science within everyone's reach

Scientific space side, in a nocturnal atmosphere, the furniture seems to float between two dimensions. The journey, punctuated by interactive screens and projected books, blends colors and shapes. Optical illusions play tricks on the eyes for an adventure full of surprises.

Stars, planets, artistic creations, and explanations from an astronomer support the research and studies carried out at Pic du Midi. Five thematic islands present the sciences dear to Pic du Midi: the atmosphere ("journey to the center of the clouds"), light ("a brief history of light"), the sun ("objective sun"), the moon and small solar system bodies ("from the moon to Earth"), and cosmic rays ("mysterious particles").



The International Dark Sky Reserve also takes on its full meaning. The traveler experiences a new unit of space and merges with it. Perceptions change. Better than virtual, reality becomes poetry of the infinite.

The final space highlights the richness of the built and natural heritage of Pic du Midi. It is dedicated to the treasures of the Observatory, whether scientific instruments, porter bags, or everyday objects from 140 years of history. The Gallery of Wonders aims to become the showcase of these treasures from the past. Unique and exceptional pieces are exhibited, including the second coronagraph by Bernard Lyot, the Lunar Atlas from the Lunar Manchester Program, and the barometer canes of Ramond de Carbonnières.



## The cupola of the Observatory getting even closer to the stars.

Since the summer 2019 day-time visitors can discover all the secrets of how the cupola functions. At the very centre of the ancient installation is the Siderostat (an instrument used for keeping the image of a celestial object in a fixed position), and the latest generation of telescope which allows one to observe the sun in real time. For the show 27 spectators install themselves to enjoy a visual spectacle with soundtrack. The show alternates between animated images which are projected before them and the live view from the telescope, all is accompanied by a fabulous son et lumière, where the images are projected on to the dome above the heads of the audience.

Visitors can listen to the many secrets emanating from the constellations and rediscover their place in the universe. They learn all the fundamentals of astronomical observation (how, why and where to observe the night sky and the stars), and learn how a cupola and its instrumentation function. The possibility of observing the sun 'live' is a once in a lifetime experience.

If weather conditions do not allow live observation there is a film showing all the different means of observation at the Pic du Midi - the T60, the Coronagraphs, the one metre telescope (T1M) and the Bernard Lyot telescope.



## *An evening under the stars*

To share the magic of the site at sunset and discover the starry sky, the Pic du Midi organizes concerts during the summer (Zaho de Sagazan, Les Frangines, Boulevard des Airs, Murray Head, Fakear, Synapson...) and remains open during the Christmas and February holidays until nightfall.

The program covers four highlights : a tour of the space museum and the equipment at le Pic, watching the sun set from the panoramic viewpoint of the terrace and astronomy workshops (to include an introduction to the top-of-range instruments, observation of the sky and the constellations with the naked eye and a slide show of the actual sky followed by a question and answer session with astronomers). This all takes place in a friendly, unhurried atmosphere and is complemented by a traditional evening meal of regional delights made with quality local produce.



## ***A night at the roof of the Pyrénées***

At night, the site reveals its full dimension... and the magic happens. Accompanied by an astronomy specialist, the group, consisting of a maximum of 27 people, spends an unforgettable night observing and studying the stars with the naked eye and through a 400 mm telescope at the heart of the Charvin Dome. A traditional dinner, prepared with locally certified and AOC-labeled products, is served in the restaurant.

The rooms are those traditionally used by researchers. Each offers a breathtaking view of the Pyrenees mountain range. The somewhat Spartan character of the accommodation has been deliberately preserved during renovations, as a tribute to the incredible human adventure of Pic du Midi.



To round off this tête à tête with the stars, and after enjoying the sunrise the following morning, these lucky people can find out about the science domes and share in a few moments of the scientist's lives (this is only available to people who have spent the night at the Pic du Midi). 'Nights at the Summit' are available to book throughout the year.

## **A VIRTUAL REALITY VISIT USING THE HISTOPAD**

Discover the epic journey of Pic du Midi, travel back 100 years, and relive the human and scientific adventure of this unique observatory in the world. Since December 1, 2018, all visitors to Pic du Midi have been able to experience this incredible journey through the HistoPad, a touchscreen tablet tour guide, historically validated.

The HistoPad leads the public on an immersive voyage through the past, following in the steps of the first scientific pioneers of the Pic du Midi. With 3D images and the use of Rich Media, many areas of the Pic are reconstructed in 3D, exactly as they would have been in the first half of the twentieth century. For instance the Baillaud cupola (nowadays the Planetarium), the gallery, the library, the kitchens and the bedrooms. To be able to see the living spaces of these pioneers is to understand their formidable quest to conquer the skies and the stars, it shows just why the Pic du Midi gained its international reputation.

Throughout the interactive visit one can manipulate numerous meteorological measuring instruments, used as part of daily life at the start of the twentieth century. The visitor can also gain an insight from an archive of photographs and newspaper articles of the time. Visitors equally can take part in a treasure hunt, in search of the Coronograph invented by Bernard Lyot, now reconstructed for the first time in 3D.



By using the Histopad the visitor can admire and interrogate the magnificent 360 degree panorama, in all weathers, day or night. It also measures the importance of the International Clear Sky Reserve at the Pic du Midi, it protects the sky from unnecessary light pollution. One can also discover the flora and fauna of the Pyrenees. The adventurous can even set off on an extreme off-piste descent on skis!

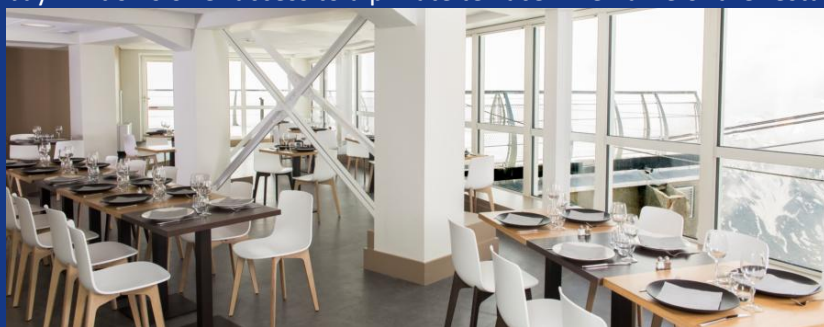
And finally an interactive 3D model allows one to construct or deconstruct the Pic, to really feel involved with the building project from the time the very first stone was laid in 1876 through to the works taking place today.

## **A VARIED RANGE OF SERVICES**

Whether for companies or individuals the Pic du Midi offers an unforgettable experience.

### **Le 2077, the panoramic restaurant**

As part of the major transformation plan a new restaurant with a contemporary design has opened, it can now welcome 80 diners simultaneously. The menu, from starters to desserts, is all home-made using the very best locally sourced produce. The large bay windows offer a magnificent panorama over the Pyrenees. The bay windows offer access to a private terrace. The name of the restaurant is obviously... Le 2077!



The Pic du Midi restaurant has set itself a real challenge showcasing the expertise of the chefs with a traditional cuisine using exclusively local produce. Each day the team work miracles to propose an original menu using solely top quality local ingredients. Appellation Controlee and guaranteed regional produce are to the fore in all the dishes served.

For example one can enjoy Porc Noir de Bigorre, Duroc Pork, Tarbes haricot beans, Pyrenean trout, profiteroles from Philippe Uraca (award winning patissier)... and a selection of regional wines. There are also vegetarian dishes on offer. The menus of both the restaurant and the bistro/bar are within everyone's budget. A number of daily formulas are offered.

A big plus... When the weather is fine the visitors can eat outdoors on the terrace!

### ***The souvenirs shop***

The shop is located in La Mongie at the cable car exit. It offers exclusive and original high-quality products, scientific books, and educational games. Unique creations suitable for all budgets and ages are also available: postcards, posters, textiles, souvenirs—all in the colors of Pic du Midi.

### ***The conference rooms***

Facilities are available at le Pic du Midi for businesses wishing to organise work meetings, seminars and business lunches at the summit.

Le Pic has available : two meeting rooms to accommodate up to 100 people with UHF microphones, projector, WiFi internet access, flip chart and business pack ; an individual catering service for breaks, aperitifs, buffets, etc. ; a private dining area offering traditional cuisine using local produce.



# LE PIC FOR SPORT ENTHUSIASTS

At the summit of the Pyrenees, Pic du Midi is a destination where numerous sporting experiences can be enjoyed, such as skiing and snowboarding in winter or mountain biking in summer. This year, it also offers the opportunity to try ice climbing.

## **A 100% FREERIDING ZONE HAS BEEN CREATED FOR THE 1<sup>ST</sup> TIME IN THE PYRENEES**

In December 2013, le Pic du Midi opened a unique skiing area in the Pyrenees similar to those at Aiguille du Midi in Chamonix and La Grave in the Alps. As a result, the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> sections of the cable car, La Mongie-Le Taoulet and Le Taoulet-Pic du Midi, were opened to advanced skiers. These two cable car sections are the gateway to a superb high mountain skiing area that stretches over the slopes of the Pic du Midi.



**TO KNOW :** the Pic du Midi ranked among the 50 most beautiful freeride sites in the world

Patrick Thorne, journalist reporter nicknamed "the snowhunter" has retained the Pic du Midi in his guide on the most beautiful spots freeride of the world. It qualifies it as unique: "With a view of the peaks and the valley more than 300 km, it is imperative to enjoy this 360 ° panorama. In addition, in clear weather, the night sky is tapering. The off-pistes of the Pic du Midi are lost in the beauty of the winter horizons and offer a descent to incredible sensations. All above an important layer of powder snow for the greatest pleasure of the skiers. "

4 fabulous off-piste descents are available for skiers from le Pic du Midi :

- La Coume du Pic. A long descent on the La Mongie side down to Artigues-Campan, 10km in length with 1700m of height loss. A free transport service is available to bring skiers back to La Mongie.
- La Classique. On the south face, 45 minutes of descent with 1000m of height loss down to join the ski runs of the Grand Tourmalet on the Bareges side of the Col.
- La Roche Noir. Strictly for expert skiers, the route passes underneath the cable-car to arrive in La Mongie.
- La Jardin Botanique. This route runs close to the preceding Roche Noir route but it is much easier, the skier will feel like they are on a regular ski run, the slope is only 45 degrees and faces due south.

The 'Yellow', 'Green' and 'Purple' routes can be reached via the mid station at le Taoulet at 2,341 m.

Skiers therefore have access to a superb high mountain area at about 3,000 metres in altitude. Good knowledge of high mountain regions and suitable equipment are a must as these areas are not monitored, managed or signposted. Consequently, it is strongly recommended that you are accompanied by a mountain guide so that you can benefit from the sound advice available and enjoy these magnificent slopes to the full.

A new type of pass is now available. The Pic du Midi Unlimited pass gives unlimited access during the day to the two ski lifts on le Pic du Midi. Please note that the Grand Tourmalet seasonal pass includes unlimited access to le Pic du Midi as well as the pass for 6 days or more.

### ***Strong partnerships***

The Freeride Map company in partnership with the Pic du Midi has created a topographic map dedicated to the representation of the different routes and off-piste areas of the sector. We can also mention various partnerships with brands recognized in the freeride business such as Dynastar, Julbo, Sidas, Sweet Protection.

### **MOUNTAIN BIKE DESCENT FROM LE PIC DU MIDI**

Mountain biking enthusiasts can freely enjoy their favorite sport during the summer and take advantage of an exceptional descent in an equally exceptional high-mountain setting. From July 1 to September 30, cyclists set off freely from Pic du Midi, tackling over 1,700 meters of elevation change. To facilitate this descent, two cable cars per day are reserved for thirty biking enthusiasts: 15 bikes departing at 8:50 AM and another 15 at 4:45 PM (or more if necessary).

There is no need to be a professional cyclist to practice this discipline at Pic du Midi. However, safety instructions must be followed, and appropriate equipment is required (helmet, knee pads, gloves, mountain bike with suspensions, etc.). Minors who are not accompanied by a legal guardian are not permitted to descend.

TO BE KNOWN : in 2008, le Pic du Midi received the 'Les Etoiles du Tourisme' award in the sport and adventure category (organised by La Maison de la France and Le Point magazine) as the jury liked the innovative nature of the mountain bike descent from le Pic du Midi.



## AN ICE WATERFALL TO INITIATE ALPINISM

Asserting through the notoriety of the Pic du Midi that the Pyrenees are a high place of mountaineering and enriching the tourist offer of this emblematic site with real adventures to live, such is the will displayed by the Pic du Midi by creating an ice waterfall accessible to as many people as possible since January 2022. Usually reserved for expert practitioners, ice climbing scares as much as it fascinates. The waterfall at the summit will allow the general public to initiate this spectacular climb, in complete safety.

The north cliff located near the Pontoon in the sky, is icy all winter. In winter, the water brought to the summit from Lake Oncet is kept circulating so as not to freeze and the excess water in the circuit is poured back onto the north face, thus forming a real ice waterfall. In spring, this water returns to its natural environment.

With a length of 25 meters for 45 meters wide, the ice waterfall of the Pic du Midi offers 4 different climbing lines and can accommodate 2 guides with 2 clients at the same time. The Pontoon in the sky has thus transformed into one of the most unusual stands.

Initiation with a guide Accessible to beginners provided they want to experience some sensations, this initiation to ice waterfall climbing is to be experienced with a high mountain guide. All mountaineering equipment (helmet, crampons, ice axes, harness) is provided. It is directly accessible from the observatory terrace, a secure system allowing to swing into the void. Then all you have to do is climb and enjoy a rare moment, secured by a professional. Duration: 3h - Indicative price 370€ for 3 people including cable car tickets - Reservation required on [www.picdumidi.com](http://www.picdumidi.com)



And for the real adventurers, after spending the morning on the ice waterfall, having lunch at 2,877, visiting the summit facilities... why not continue with the ski descent from the Pic!



# LE PIC DU MIDI

## A HUMAN VENTURE

Before being associated with astronomy, the scientific history of le Pic du Midi was based in meteorology. However, the history is mainly one of men who fought to build and protect a great heritage for more than 150 years.

### LE PIC'S PIONEERS

The Observatory at le Pic du Midi was created from a combination of men filled with a thirst for knowledge and a mountain. These men include 18<sup>th</sup> century pioneers, designers from the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and a whole series of scholars, astronomers, physicists and botanists who built its reputation.

In 1774, Monge and Darcet climbed le Pic du Midi to study the atmospheric pressure there. Général de Nansouty set up a temporary weather station on le Pic du Midi in 1873 where he measured pressure, temperature, humidity and other kinds of meteorological values of interest. The engineer, Xavier Vaussenat was attracted by the venture and was interested in all aspects of the region's science and history.



In 1908, Benjamin Baillaud, the director of the Observatory in Toulouse, had a dome built on le Pic du Midi that was 8m in diameter. The transportation of this would prove to be a real achievement. The Col de Sencours could be reached on foot via a single dirt track. The Col du Tourmalet could then be reached from there. Scientists reached the summit on a rough, stony path by foot.

In 1929, Bernard Lyot, a young astronomer from the Meudon Observatory began the bold undertaking of observing the solar corona when the sun was not in eclipse. He was able to achieve this in 1931 with the development of a machine called a coronagraph. Scientists could now study the smallest details of the sun. The discovery that the lunar surface was covered in a layer of dust was largely due to the images obtained from le Pic du Midi during the 1940s. This crucial detail made the Observatory on le Pic du Midi the centre for the detailed mapping of the lunar surface for NASA's Apollo missions.

In 1952, a second cable car was built which linked la Mongie to the summit via the mid station at le Taoulet. The site had some difficult years during the 1980s due to problems with equipment and finances, as well as the extreme living conditions resulting from the altitude. The high costs only allowed 120 nights of observation on average per year. There was talk of shutting the site down...



### THE THREAT OF CLOSURE FOR LE PIC AND ITS RESCUE

In 1995, the Ministry for Higher Education and Research announced the closure of le Pic at the end of 1998 due to budget cuts. However, they had not made allowances for the determination of people to put their all into saving the site.

First and foremost, the scientific community fought hard to keep le Pic du Midi open, pointing out the recent success of the TBL instruments (2m Bernard Lyot telescope) in particular.

In addition to this, a whole range of local bodies, such as local and regional groups, universities, manufacturers and journalists, etc. joined forces to find an alternative solution. After a period of consultation and consideration, the General Council for the Hautes-Pyrénées, the Regional Council for the Midi-Pyrénées and communes neighbouring le Pic du Midi, met and decided to create a Joint Association for the Touristic Value of le Pic du Midi. It was to take responsibility for investigating what was necessary to maintain scientific activity at the site and to develop its tourism potential, as well as realising investments to achieve this.

### ***The investments made to save le Pic du Midi***

On July 23 1996, the Joint Association was awarded a works and public service concession by the State (who owns the facilities) for the development and operation of some of the premises at the summit and its access by cable car. Work at the le Pic du Midi site itself began soon after. The observatory continued to operate throughout all the development work.

The changes required to prevent the site from closing represented a total investment of €38, 979, 703. This comprised the complete renovation of areas used for science (accommodation, eating facilities, domes, laboratories and technical installations), the development of a tourist area (eating facilities, shop, terrace and space museum) and the completion of up to date infrastructures (cable cars, water treatment plant, etc.).

As regards access, the route enabling le Pic du Midi to be reached was strengthened. In addition, two cable cars and the departure and mid station were built to transport tourists in complete safety to the summit. This represented almost half of the investments. The ascent is at the speed of 12m per second and each gondola can accommodate 45 people.

The first summer visitors arrived at the summit in June 2000. The site was finally open all year round after the summer of 2011. 700 people can be welcomed at one time in the summer and 300 people during the winter months. On busiest days, le Pic du Midi can welcome 2, 800 people.

All the hard work was rewarded in 2003 when le Pic du Midi was classified as a National Nature Site because of the beauty of its surroundings. 10 years later, it became the 1<sup>st</sup> International Dark Sky Reserve in France.

## **LE PIC DU MIDI TODAY**

Tourists who come up to le Pic du Midi see only the tip of the iceberg. The site actually houses several facilities and activities which share the same space on a daily basis. There are 3 principal uses :

### ***The Interministerial Building***

This building, classified as militarily sensitive, is completely self-sufficient. It is basically a telecommunications base. Télédiffusion de France (TDF) is located on the western ridge and has a 101m high mast which is the regional radio and TV transmitter. It has a transmission radius of over 400 km, which is equal to 1/10th of France.





The main building houses a strategic telecommunications base for the army and air force, the Directorate General for Civil Aviation (DGAC) and operators for France Telecom's terrestrial telecommunications. Météo France also has an automatic weather station there.

### ***The buildings reserved for science***

Of particular note is the 2m telescope (TBL), the Robley Dome housing a 55cm telescope, the coronagraph (for studying the solar corona every day of the year), the Tourelle Dome (for studying the surface of the sun), the Gentili Dome and its 1m telescope financed by NASA and the Bernard Lyot telescope. 5 to 30 people work around the clock at le Pic du Midi Observatory.

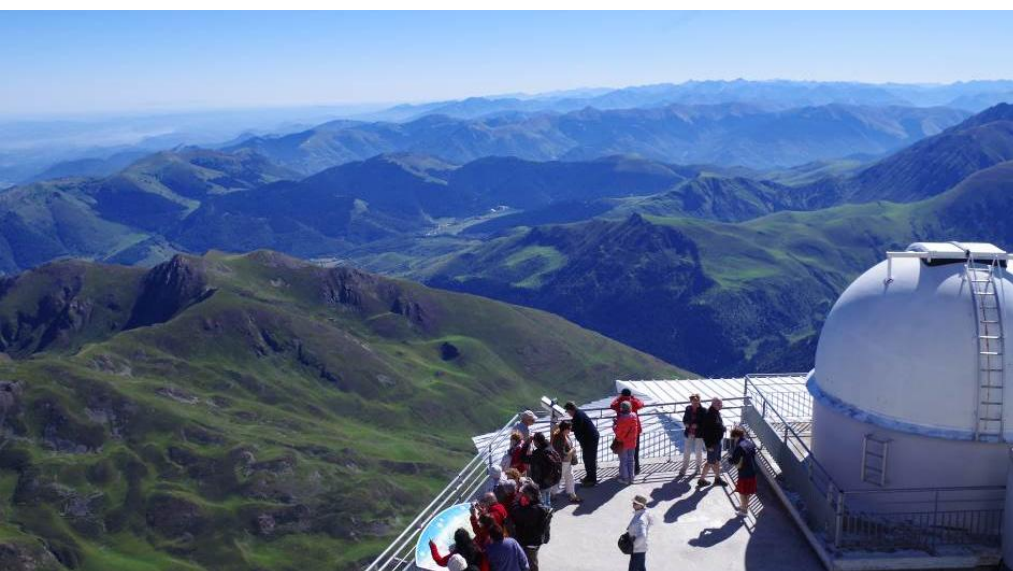
They are part of the Midi-Pyrénées Observatory (OMP) which employs over 400 people, of which about half are scientists. The OMP comprises 4 facilities:

- The head office in Toulouse which is made up of 6 laboratories and 17 research and administration observation services.
- Le Pic du Midi Observatory
- A back office in Tarbes with the night activity team, aerology, technicians and astronomers
- The atmospheric instrumentation centre in Lannemezan

### ***Areas that are open to the public***

These areas include the cable car station, the Baillaud terrace (which has free access for hikers), the interpretive center, the shop, the restaurants and the charvin Dome (an area dedicated to stargazing devices).

To sum up, today le Pic du Midi covers a built area of 10, 000m<sup>2</sup> which comprises 6 levels and 5km of corridors linking all the buildings and allowing people to move about whatever the weather, two 1,200 KWA transformers, one 850 KWA power generator and one water treatment plant.



Since the arrival of tourism to the site, a genuine dialogue between scientists and tourists has taken place and astronomers hope that it will make their scientific work more well known among the general public.



# AN ENTERPRISE

## WHICH BOOSTS ITS LOCAL AREA

The management of le Pic du Midi is directly covered by 'La Régie du Syndicat Mixte pour la Valorisation Touristique du Pic du Midi' (the Joint Association for the Touristic Value of le Pic du Midi Group) which is made up of the Midi-Pyrénées region, the Hautes-Pyrénées département and local groups in the area (the Community of Communes in La Haute Bigorre, the Communes of Bagnères de Bigorre, Campan and Sers, the Management Committee of La Vallée de Barèges and the Inter-communal Group of Le Tourmalet).

Daniel Soucaze des Soucaze, Director of 'La Régie du Syndicat Mixte pour la Valorisation du Pic du Midi', is assisted by a team of 75 to ensure the management and marketing of this unusual site.

Due to its distance from La Mongie, le Pic du Midi has to maintain its operation by preserving the natural surroundings and taking the appropriate steps to avoid any pollution risks. In March 2007, le Pic du Midi undertook voluntary environmental steps to reduce the impact on the natural surroundings. The site was awarded the international certification 'quality, safety, environment' via the ISO standard 14001.

Within this framework, le Pic du Midi complies with the following regulations: to respect the requirements to which the organisation subscribes (regulations, standards or similar), to control energy use and use of water as a raw material, to ensure the proper treatment of waste and management of hazardous material.

In June 2013, le Pic du Midi decided to commit to efficient energy use in line with the other N'PY skiing areas. An assessment of its energy performance during the previous winter allowed sources for energy saving to be identified and cost-effective measures to control energy use to be deployed. In view of the results, it was decided to create an energy management system based on the ISO 50 001 standard in order to reduce energy use and GHG emissions (greenhouse gas) and to optimise the costs of energy in the process (ski lifts in particular).

## A TRUE NETWORK

Because together we are stronger, the Pic du Midi decided to join N'PY in 2007. The first actor in the French Pyrenees, N'PY is a unique brand that brings together seven Pyrenean winter sports resorts: Peyragudes, Piau, Grand Tourmalet, Luz-Ardiden, Cauterets, Gourette and La Pierre Saint Martin. To these 7 ski areas are added 4 Nordic areas (Piau-Pineta, Payolle, Cauterets-Pont d'Espagne, La Pierre Saint Martin-Le Braca) and 2 major tourist sites: the Pic du Midi and Cauterets-Pont d'Espagne. Everyone has been able to draw the best from others, compare practices, question customers and define paths of progress, innovate and create new products (telepassage, reloading of packages on the Internet, Smartphone application, website n-py.com...).

This dynamic has been recognized by the Occitanie Region and the Banque des Territoires, which have chosen to rely on the experience of N'PY to support the future development of all the Pyrenean resorts. To affirm this change and the expansion of its intervention to the entire Pyrenean chain, the SAEM N'PY transformed itself in October 2020 into the SAEM Compagnie des Pyrénées and saw its capital increase from 60,800 € to 3.8 M€. The ambition is to revolutionize the model of medium-sized mountain resorts, allow them to adapt and continue the development of N'PY, the collective brand to conquer new markets.

In addition to the two existing subsidiaries, SAS N'PY RESA (communication/marketing) and Skylodge (operation of hostels), the SAS Compagnie des Pyrénées Participations has been added, which aims to take stakes in the capital of local mountain resort operating companies. The commercial brand N'PY, which identifies the products and services emanating from the company and allows it to ensure their exclusivity, is strengthened with prospects for deployment throughout the Pyrenean chain. Finally, the Foncière des Pyrénées, of which the SAEM Compagnie des Pyrénées is a shareholder, aims to promote the creation of "warm beds".

## PROTECTING THE ENVIRONMENT AS A PRIORITY

### ***The Pic du Midi International Dark Sky Reserve***

In December 2013, the Pic du Midi International Dark Sky Reserve (RICE) was recognized by the International Dark Sky Association, becoming the first RICE in France and continental Europe. This designation certified Pic du Midi's commitment—alongside the Departmental Energy Syndicate (SDE 65) and the Pyrenees National Park—in the fight against light pollution. It acknowledged the creation of an innovative territorial action model: 250 municipalities around Pic du Midi committed to implementing a large-scale improvement plan for artificial lighting, aiming to protect the night and make it a resource for local development.

In 2022, the Starlight Foundation also recognized Pic du Midi's RICE, certifying its dedication to promoting tourism focused on the night sky and the stars. Pic du Midi's RICE became the first in Europe to be acknowledged by both international organizations dedicated to protecting the starry sky.



*A massive reduction in light pollution:* since 2013, more than 40% of the 40,000 streetlights of the RICE of the Pic du Midi have been replaced by lighting technologies that meet the requirements of the reserve. Each operation on a light reduces light pollution by 95%. The quality of the sky and the nocturnal environment measured in the RICE of the Pic du Midi has thus improved by nearly 40% in 10 years! This result is all the more striking when compared to the figure for the increase in light pollution in Europe: since the 1990s, the phenomenon has been increasing by 6% per year. Finally, each lighting improvement operation in the RICE of the Pic du Midi results in a reduction of 30 to 50% in electricity consumption.

*A change in public perceptions:* the improvement in lighting is the most visible result of the RICE of the Pic du Midi. It is made possible by a work as diffuse as it is decisive: public awareness. Ten years earlier, the term light pollution was unknown to the general public. The night was synonymous with darkness and fears, it is now apprehended as a natural environment to protect. In order to share the issues of preserving the starry sky and its valorization, the RICE of the Midi hosted, in September 2023, the first congress of starry sky reserves at the Pic. With the aim of raising awareness among the inhabitants of the valleys, it has also organized starry sky festivals in the last two years. The managers of the RICE of the Pic du Midi wish to strengthen their awareness-raising actions to reach even more public.

*Pioneering advances in the protection of the nocturnal environment :* ten years ago, knowledge and practices in the protection of nocturnal biodiversity were very embryonic. Yet, 64% of invertebrates and 28% of vertebrates are exclusively nocturnal. In a decade, the RICE of the Pic du Midi has been the scene of a rich study and mapping work of nocturnal biodiversity. This strengthening of knowledge has made it possible to implement the concept of black frames. These frames identify ecological continuities (areas, paths and passages constituting the nocturnal habitat) in order to apply specific protections, including measures on lighting.

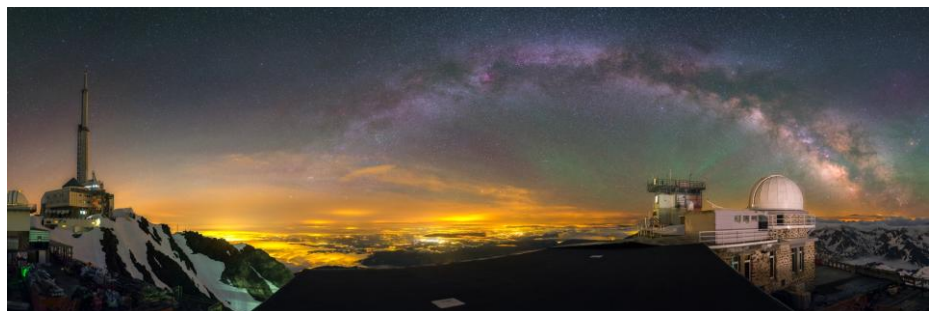
*10 years of exploring a potential for tourist development:* transforming the starry sky and the night into vectors of tourist development, easier said than done. And yet. In a decade, achievements and initiatives have multiplied within the RICE of the Pic du Midi, offering results that confirm its development potential. The Pic du Midi leads the way by offering a range of experiences and products whose attractiveness is no longer to be demonstrated. The initiatives of communities, individuals and socio-professionals are also

multiplying within it: developed sites, events, accommodations, products and offers of night discoveries, etc. Strengthened by this observation, the Department of Hautes-Pyrénées launched in 2022 a development project in the field of tourism to enrich the positioning of the Hautes-Pyrénées destination by relying on the RICE of the Pic du Midi.

*Entry of the Department of Hautes-Pyrénées into the governance of the RICE of the Pic du Midi:* despite its advances, the RICE of the Pic du Midi remains fragile over time and limited in the realization of its potential. The entry of the Department of Hautes-Pyrénées in December 2013 into the governance of this territorial project must respond to certain limits. It will be a question of facilitating the implementation of objectives requiring skills and an intervention capacity at the departmental level. Two strategic priorities are part of the RICE program of the Department of Hautes-Pyrénées: the development of a “night tourism offer” and the valorization and communication of the RICE of the Pic du Midi to the territories and inhabitants.

*The future of the RICE of the Pic du Midi:*

in these times when states and public policies are increasingly taking up the issue of light pollution, what place and role do starry sky reserves have to play? The answer lies in their very nature: they are territories of project and innovation that have locally accelerated the responses to the problem of light pollution. There is still much to be done in the field. The RICE of the Pic du Midi will thus have to meet three major challenges:



- The reduction of light pollution is mainly achieved through actions on public lighting, which represents only half of the sources of artificial lighting. The challenge is to build solutions to act on the other half: the large family of private lights.
- Changing the representations of our modern societies about the night requires a sustained effort to raise public awareness. The RICE of the Pic du Midi offers exceptional potential to reach audiences and encourage their commitment to the protection of the night. The development of the night tourism offer is one of the innovative means of this awareness-raising issue: protecting the night and the stars can become a real resource.
- According to the most recent global mapping of light pollution, 99% of Europeans and 1/3 of humanity no longer have access to a starry sky and a preserved night. In this context, starry sky reserves must continue to strengthen their means to guarantee the preservation of these windows on the Universe, which have become as rare as they are inspiring. The RICE of the Pic du Midi, as a pioneer in Europe, must show the way.

**TO KNOW:** the Pic du Midi is in the TOP 10 of the best places in the world to observe the stars

The British journalist Jamie Carter of the Telegraph has placed the Pic du Midi in 6th position as part of its ranking of the 10 best places in the world to observe the sky ... A real consecration for the Pyrenean site which is found alongside Fuerteventura in the Canary Islands From the Atacama Desert in Chile to the planetarium of Cuzco in Peru ... Jamie Carter was seduced by the site of the Pic du Midi and its history when he came in September 2014.

### ***A completely secure site***

Le Pic du Midi which operates as an independent town is the only tourist site at altitude to independently reach the level of safety required to receive the public. This includes internal firefighting procedures (5 firefighters available around the clock), the capacity to accommodate 600 people over 5 days during the summer and to provide them with somewhere to eat and sleep or for 300 people over 10 days in the winter, a fully-stocked pharmacy, a hospital equipped with a hyperbaric decompression chamber, a semiautomatic defibrillator and a direct link with SAMU 65 (emergency medical assistance service) and the Fire and Emergency Service for the Département.



Le Pic du Midi has been certified since 2002 with ISO 9001 Version 2000 concerning safety, infrastructure maintenance and the management of hospitality of the public. In addition, le Pic du Midi has OHSAS 18001 Certification for the implementation of a management system for health and safety at work.

## TWO MAJOR PROJECTS

### ***The Hôtellerie des Laquets, horizon 2026***

Expanding the accommodation offer at Pic du Midi by providing high-altitude quality facilities, including 16 half-board rooms, a bistronomic restaurant, and a quick-service dining option for passing hikers coming from the Col du Tourmalet on their way to Pic du Midi—this is the ambition behind the rehabilitation of Hôtellerie des Laquets. A witness to the golden age of Pyreneism, this 1930s building, typical of mountain constructions from that era, will come back to life in the summer of 2026. The renovation work began in the summer of 2024, with a total budget of €10.2 million.

#### *A project included in Pic du Midi's UNESCO candidacy*

The history of the Pic du Midi observatory has always been closely tied to tourism. As early as 1852, the Sencours hostel welcomed hikers ascending towards Pic du Midi. The arrival of the tramway in 1914 ( Lourdes/Bagnères/Artigues and Tarbes/Bagnères/Artigues ) made it easier for tourists staying in Lourdes and Bagnères to access the summit. The road from Col du Tourmalet to Laquets was built between 1927 and 1930 by the Société des Chemins de Fer et Hôtel de Montagne.

Built between 1930 and 1933 and subsequently operated by the Compagnie des Hôtels de Montagne, the Hôtellerie des Laquets has always been an essential stop on the route to Pic du Midi. Accessible by car and bus via a toll road, it was originally connected to Pic du Midi in 1962 by a cable car, which was dismantled in the 1980s due to aging infrastructure.

Until 1996, the Hôtellerie des Laquets played a crucial role in providing accommodation for scientists, Pyrenean explorers, writers, and journalists who witnessed the golden age of sky observation and the mapping of the Pyrenees.

During the signing of the agreement between the French government and the Syndicat Mixte de Valorisation Touristique du Pic du Midi to save Pic du Midi, the 1996 statutes already anticipated the possibility of expanding connections, including in the Laquets sector. In October 2019, the Syndicat Mixte de Valorisation du Pic du Midi and its associated communities gave a preliminary approval to begin studies on the renovation of Hôtellerie des Laquets and its cable car. By October 2022, the restructuring and expansion of Hôtellerie des Laquets were officially validated, along with the creation of a new link between Laquets and Pic du Midi.



#### *Objectives*

The aim of reopening the Hôtellerie des Laquets is to enhance the heritage and develop the tourism offering at Pic du Midi by creating a comfortable high-altitude accommodation. This hotel will be connected to Pic du Midi via a small cable car.

With an annual overnight occupancy rate of 96% at Pic du Midi , the Hôtellerie des Laquets will help meet the high demand that currently cannot be fulfilled during certain periods. The goal is to provide a

complementary lodging experience to that of Pic du Midi . This experiential hotel will offer high-quality services , with a cozy and nature-inspired mountain chalet ambiance , focused on contemplation . The opening periods of Hôtellerie des Laquets will align with those of Pic du Midi .

It is worth noting that the cable car between Laquets and Pic du Midi will be a reversible system with a single cabin , requiring no pylons or station construction . Besides transporting only guests of the Hôtellerie des Laquets , it will also serve a safety function , enabling evacuation via the elevator and road access to Col du Tourmalet .

#### *What is the project?*

The Hôtellerie des Laquets features typical Pyrenean mountain architecture that nearly merges with its environment: a vaulted roof and stone walls made from materials extracted on site. To integrate the building seamlessly with its surroundings, the architects relied on the original stone structure of the historic construction. The initial approach, with a continuous, curved line, stems from the existing structure, unifying the old and new under a single vaulted roof to achieve a cohesive design.

In terms of scale and alignment, the expansion proposed by the Toulouse-based architecture firm 360 distinguishes itself clearly from the old building while fostering a reciprocal enhancement dialogue. The substructure of concrete piles recalls stone, while the wooden framework is clad in shingles with brown, gray, and reddish tones. The roof will be renovated (insulated and waterproofed with stainless steel) and extended over the new wing, supported by wooden framing. This approach preserves the unique identity of Laquets .

Inside, all living spaces open outward. Belvedere terraces extend the bar and restaurant areas, including a Nordic bath terrace that faces the setting sun over the Pyrenean mountain range. Against this backdrop, 16 rooms (2 family duplexes, 14 double rooms, including one adapted for persons with reduced mobility—currently unavailable at Pic du Midi ) will be available. Each room will feature its own bathroom and toilet, accommodating up to 36 guests nightly. A cozy lounge with a fireplace and bar will allow guests to enjoy the panoramic view in complete comfort.

The original wing will feature furnishings, objects, and engravings that reference Pyrenean culture in a "rustic chic" ambiance. In the new wing , the interior design adopts a Nordic-inspired minimalist aesthetic , emphasizing the panoramic views. During winter, service will only be available at night.

In summer, the bar and a snack service will be accessible during the day for hikers, who can relax on the 80 m² terrace overlooking the Pyrenees.

The project earned the Bâtiment Durable Occitanie medal for its sustainability.

#### ***Pic du Midi candidate for UNESCO World Heritage***

It is well known that registering a site as a World Heritage Site is a long and demanding process. The Pic du Midi Observatory, a candidate for UNESCO World Heritage status, is no exception to this rule but has recently entered a decisive phase for World Heritage registration! Since 2014, the French government, the University of Toulouse III-Paul Sabatier, and the Syndicat Mixte pour la Valorisation Touristique du Pic du Midi have been engaged in this initiative, driven by a shared desire to protect the observatory for future generations and to counter any threats to the site's integrity and activities.

On October 27, 2022, a significant milestone was reached with the inclusion of "the Pic du Midi de Bigorre Observatory, a pioneer in high-altitude exploration," on France's Tentative List for UNESCO World Heritage status. A further step forward has been achieved with the creation of a GIP (Public Interest Group), bringing together the Syndicat Mixte pour la Valorisation Touristique du Pic du Midi and the University of Toulouse III-Paul Sabatier. The clear objective: to pool resources to bring the project to completion.

#### *A History of a Relationship Between a Mountain and Humanity*

Founded in 1878 by the Ramond Society (a learned and Pyreneist society), the Pic du Midi Observatory was placed under the responsibility of the French State in 1880. In 1915, it was placed under the authority of the Toulouse Observatory. Observations have been carried out there continuously for over 150 years. Its potential as a high-altitude observatory allows it to host numerous scientists eager to make advancements and discoveries thanks to its exceptional location: meteorology, astronomy, botany, atmospheric studies, etc. Today, its scope has expanded, as it has become an environmental sentinel, studying the impact of human activities on the biosphere.

The origins and pioneering spirit of the observatory can be traced to the convergence of science and tourism that emerged in the mid-19th century. At the time, part of the European elite traveled to the foothills of Pic du Midi for spa retreats. It was in this vibrant atmosphere of scientific and cultural salons that the observatory project was born. The station at Col de Sencours in 1851 marked its first milestone, merging two goals: creating a hotel and welcoming the public to finance the observatory.

Local populations were immediately involved in its construction, supply, and operations. From the very beginning, the development and future of the observatory became a shared endeavor for both local communities and the scientific world.

Threatened multiple times throughout its history, the observatory has always escaped closure thanks to the mobilization of its communities, including in the early 1990s. At that time, the French State, the University of Toulouse III - Paul Sabatier, and local authorities decided to position tourism at the heart of the site's operations to ensure the continuity of scientific activity. Thus, in 1995, the local authorities united to form a joint association to support the development project of Pic du Midi (bringing together the communities surrounding the Pic, the Hautes-Pyrénées department, and the Occitanie region).

This strategy, shared by both the State and local authorities, fosters a broader vision: to make Pic du Midi and its observatory key drivers of new territorial development.

Today, the summit facilities remain the property of the State, which has assigned a major portion of the summit's surface to the University of Toulouse III - Paul Sabatier. The scientific activities and spaces are managed by the Midi-Pyrénées Observatory, which is affiliated with the University of Toulouse III - Paul Sabatier. A 30-year concession agreement (2000–2029) allocates a large part of this area to the joint association of Pic du Midi, ensuring its tourism development and public service mission, including the maintenance of life-supporting and access infrastructures.

The administration, operation, and activities of the observatory are exclusively managed by public institutions. A third partner, Télédiffusion de France (TDF), oversees the interministerial building, primarily enabling the broadcasting of digital television and FM radio.

#### *Why Apply for World Heritage Status?*

The Pic du Midi Observatory will soon celebrate 150 years of activity . The site's longevity and vitality today should not overshadow the challenges and threats it has faced throughout its history. This vitality has mobilized an entire territory and a community that identifies with this beacon, which has become much more than just a mountain—it is also the emblem of the International Dark Sky Reserve .

Moreover, Pic du Midi and its observatory symbolize an idea —a universal achievement born from humanity's daring relationship with the mountain . Through this peaceful and scientific conquest of the high-altitude terrain, humanity has sought to rise, to find answers to the questions and challenges of its time. The local and scientific communities that have worked—and continue to work—on Pic du Midi have experienced and embraced this dedication, pushing the limits of exploration.

This profound relationship has gifted us an exceptional landscape , an iconic mountain crowned by its observatory city , whose image resonates both locally and internationally



A World Heritage listing would ensure the activity and future of this site, protect it from potential closure threats, preserve and pass on its Outstanding Universal Value (OUV) to as many people as possible, and pass the torch to the next generation.

This OUV defines the unique characteristics and heritage qualities of the candidate site. These elements must have universal significance, an international scope, and constitute an exceptional or even unprecedented contribution to the World Heritage list. The OUV, which forms the core of the application, guides and frames all actions of the candidates, whether it concerns boundaries, protection, or site management.

#### *Project Progress*

Since its inclusion on France's Tentative List in October 2022, the Pic du Midi and its observatory's application have entered a phase of monitoring and support by the French World Heritage Committee. This monitoring involves three hearings, each focusing on specific elements of the final dossier. The first hearing, dedicated to demonstrating the site's Outstanding Universal Value, took place in April 2024 and concluded with a "favorable" opinion to proceed with the application. The second hearing, held in October 2024 and focused on the site's boundaries and protections, received a "very favorable" opinion.

On April 10, 2025, the third and final hearing evaluated the management plan, which encompasses the organization, strategy, and resources assembled by the candidates to secure the future of this prospective World Heritage site. The momentum of the application and the commitment of stakeholders will allow for a swift determination of the timeline. At the end of this process, the French government will decide when to formally submit its candidate to UNESCO.

Once submitted, the final major step is UNESCO's evaluation. At this stage, the dossier is in the hands of the World Heritage Committee and assessed by international experts from ICOMOS (the International Council on Monuments and Sites). This international procedure lasts approximately 18 months and culminates in either a favorable or unfavorable decision on the site's World Heritage listing.

In the most optimistic scenario, project leaders hope for the Pic du Midi's inscription by 2027. The road ahead remains long, but there is no doubt that the determination and resources mobilized by stakeholders are firmly in place!

# THE HOUSE OF TOURMALET

As part of a European cross-border program for the preservation of biodiversity linked to light pollution (POCTEFA PLN EFA 233/16 - Pyrenees The Night), the Pic du Midi has decided to enhance its surroundings by building “the House of Tourmalet”.

Initially planned in the Municipality of Bagnères de Bigorre, in the Salut valley, the Pic du Midi decided to implement its project at the Tourmalet pass, in the Municipality of Sers. The Tourmalet pass, well known to cyclists in summer and skiers in winter, has become an obvious choice to create the House of Tourmalet which has structured the tourist reception of this emblematic place since 2023. Shop, services and immersive 360° night show become the entrance to the summit facilities.

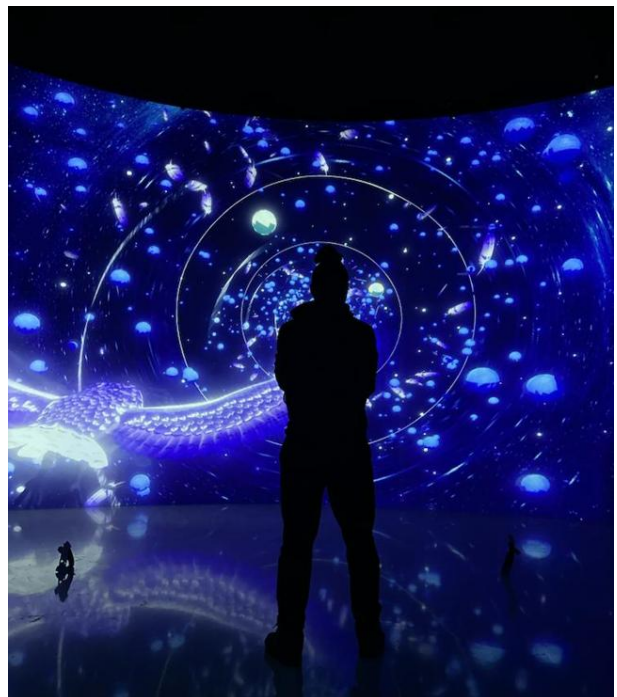
## THE NIGHT AT THE HEART OF THE PROJECT

The House of Tourmalet is composed of a reception/information/shop area and the Dome of the Night, the operations center of this cross-border program. Open in summer and winter holidays, the House of Tourmalet becomes a center of animations and mediation around the themes of the impact of light pollution on biodiversity for the general public, but also for groups and schools, with notably a 15-minute immersive show.

The Pic du Midi, the Instant Science Association and the CPIE 65 (Permanent Center for Environmental Initiatives Bigorre-Pyrenees), French partners of the Pyrenees The Night program, have joined forces to also offer a program of animations during the year.

An external scenographic complement is installed in the form of a belvedere open to the Barèges valley and contemplation equipment at the start of the Pic du Midi road. Outdoor activities extend the indoor installations and experiences during the summer.

€3,228,000 excluding VAT were necessary for the realization of the House of Tourmalet, 65% (or €2,840,000) of which was financed by European Cross-Border funds (PN EFA 233/16), supplemented by financial aid from the State, the Occitanie Region and the Hautes-Pyrénées Department on an equal basis.



## TWO SHOWS THAT HIGHLIGHT THE IMAGINATION

Alongside ‘Nox, the Night Journey’ lasting 15 minutes, the Maison du Tourmalet offers a new immersive 360° show: ‘The Col of Giants’.

For 30 minutes, the heroes of yesterday and today reveal the history of the Col du Tourmalet through the Tour de France. This is how we learn that it was the first pass over 2,000 meters to be crossed by cyclists in 1910, that it is the most frequently used pass by the Tour (again in 2024!), and that it has made the legends of the greatest!

A true video show, 'The Col of Giants' retraces the epic of athletes who have braved the Col du Tourmalet from its first cycling ascent to its latest inclusion in the Tour de France 2024. There is no doubt that fans of the Tour, cyclists, and history enthusiasts will be captivated.

Lasting 15 minutes, 'Nox, the Night Journey', a 360° dome show, immerses the public in the night and lets them experience this little-known environment: night of myths, night of fears, magic of a starry sky, biodiversity... The traveler lives a true experience starting from Toulouse to the Col du Tourmalet, then the Pic du Midi, and rises to the planets beyond the peaks. From the wildest dreams to the most frightening nightmares, the night is a mysterious yet fascinating time. 'Nox, the Night Journey' is an immersive journey that raises awareness about light pollution and offers a new perspective on darkness.

#### **Temporary exhibitions:**

Visitors can also explore history through black and white photos from the Alix collection on the construction of the road leading to the Pic du Midi, with striking images of the work done in the 1930s, or photos of the Tour de France that made the Col du Tourmalet internationally famous

## **A CROSS-BORDER PROJECT**

In 2017, the Pic du Midi joined forces with cross-border structures in the Pyrenees working for the protection of biodiversity and the enhancement of the starry sky to implement a Pyrenean strategy for the protection and improvement of the quality of the night environment.

The actions resulting from this program aim to understand the effect of the alteration of natural darkness in the environment, but also to develop a cross-border strategy highlighting good practices in the use of artificial light for the protection and recognition of the night environment.

This project is developing across a network of various iconic sites in the Pyrenees: Sierra de Montsec, Hautes-Pyrénées, Vallée de Roncal, and the city of Pamplona. The structures involved come from the tourism, mediation, and scientific research sectors, including GAN (Gestion Ambiental de Navarra), NICDO (Planétario de Pamplona, Congress Palace...), CPIE (Permanent Center for Environmental Initiation Bagnères de Bigorre), SVTPM (Pic du Midi), PAM Consejo Comarcal (Montsec Astronomy Park), and the Instant Science association.



## DATA SHEET

<b>Address</b>	Régie du Pic du Midi Rue Lamy Chapelle - 65200 La Mongie
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.picdumidi.com">www.picdumidi.com</a>
<b>Président</b>	Jean-Louis Cazaubon, Mayor of Poueyferré, Vice-Président for Occitanie Region
<b>Director</b>	Daniel Soucaze des Soucaze, Director General Nicolas Bourgeois, Assistant Director
<b>Some figures</b>	144 169 visitors en 2024 (2023 = 141 500) Turnover 2024 : 10,09 M€ taxes included (2023 = 8,14 M€) The occupation rate of the rooms is 96,08 % for the year and 99,16 % for the months of July and August 75 FTE employees (up to 135 in summer)
<b>Prices</b>	Children from 3 to -5 years : free Dynamic pricing ranging from €34 to €52 Group of 20 people or more Planetarium €6 and Observatory Dome €6 Pic Unlimited: from €53 Pic Unlimited + Grand Tourmalet station from €66 Booking schedules and dynamic pricing : <a href="http://www.picdumidi.com">www.picdumidi.com</a>  Starry Night : Single room package from €489/person - Double room package from €539/room
<b>Dates for overnighys satys</b>	All days when the Pic du Midi is open Closed in mai and november
<b>Practical information</b>	The cable car from la Mongie - duration of journey : 15 mins La Mongie-Toulouse : 170 km - La Mongie-Biarritz : 200 km La Mongie-Pau : 90 km - La Mongie-Tarbes : 50 km Shuttle buses operate between Argelès-Gazost, Lourdes, Bagnères-de-Bigorre and la Mongie

## NEAR 150 YEARS OF EXPLORATION

Since the 18th century, le Pic du Midi has been the perfect place for observing the sky because of its exceptionally clear atmosphere.

<b>1873</b>	General Champion de Nansouty organised the first assault on le Pic du Midi for the observation of the weather. The 'Plantade' weather station was created in the Col de Sencours
<b>1874</b>	The road from Col du Tourmalet to reach Barèges from Bagnères was built
<b>1878</b>	The first 1st stone for the Observatory was laid at the summit of le Pic du Midi by Nansouty and Vaussenat
<b>1908</b>	The first dome was completed (the Baillaud Dome)
<b>1930</b>	Bernard Lyot invented the coronagraph. Observation began
<b>1933</b>	A road was constructed between le Col du Tourmalet and les Laquets, where a hostel was built
<b>1952</b>	The 1st cable car was built between la Mongie/Taoulet and le Pic du Midi
<b>1957</b>	Installation of the TDF Radio/ TV mast at the summit of le Pic du Midi
<b>1963</b>	The TDF mast began operation. Installation of the 106 cm telescope in the Gentili dome. Collaboration with NASA for the Apollo missions: mapping of the moon and planetology
<b>1980</b>	The 2m Bernard Lyot telescope began operation, the largest telescope in France
<b>1996</b>	The Joint Association for the Touristic Value of le Pic du Midi was set up
<b>1998</b>	Opening of the new science laboratories
<b>June 2000</b>	Inauguration by Prime Minister Lionel Jospin and the opening of the site to the public. A memorandum of understanding was signed with STPM as a Public Service Concession
<b>January 2001</b>	Creation of the 'Régie du Pic' (le Pic du Midi Governing Body) and the direct control of the commercial management
<b>April 2002</b>	The launch of the application for quality
<b>November 2007</b>	Membership of the N'PY network
<b>December 2013</b>	Accreditation of the le Pic du Midi International Dark Sky Reserve
<b>2016/2019</b>	The Pic du Midi is undergoing a revolution that requires a €7M investment
<b>2022</b>	Accreditation Starlight
<b>2023</b>	Opening of the Maison du Tourmalet at an altitude of 2,115 meters, the gateway to the Pic du Midi International Dark Sky Reserve, with an investment of €3.2 million.
<b>2024</b>	Start of hearings with the French World Heritage Committee for the UNESCO candidacy of the Pic du Midi and its observatory. Start of restoration work on the Hôtellerie des Laquets.