

Pyrénées-Mont Perdu (France/Spain)

No 773bis

Identification

<i>Nomination</i>	Pyrénées-Mont Perdu - extension
<i>Location</i>	France: Midi-Pyrénées Region, Hautes-Pyrénées Département, Commune de Gèdre
<i>State Party</i>	France
<i>Date</i>	26 August 1999

Original Inscription: Justification

This large mixed site was inscribed on the World Heritage List in 1997 under natural criteria i and iii and cultural criteria iii, iv, and v. The citation for inscription read: "The Pyrénées-Mont Perdu area between France and Spain is an outstanding cultural landscape which combines scenic beauty with a socio-economic structure that has its roots in the past and illustrates a mountain way of life that has almost disappeared elsewhere in Europe."

History and Description

The area proposed for extension covers 550ha (ie less than 2% of the total area of the inscribed site) on the French side. It includes the northern side of the upper Héas valley, the southern side of which is in the World Heritage site.

The hamlet of Héas, part of the commune of Gèdre, is located in a magnificent site at c 1500m above sea level. It dates back to the 13th century, when a small hospital for travellers on this formidable mountain route between France and Spain was founded. A small community grew up around the hospital, with its own church, later elevated to a priory. The fraternity (*confrérie*) of Notre-Dame de Héas, founded in 1638, made this a notable place of pilgrimage and the community prospered.

The village began to decline in the later 18th century, when trading patterns changed, and it was severely damaged by an avalanche in 1915. The ruined church was rebuilt and still attracts pilgrims, and the village was permanently occupied until 1960. Since that time it has been used by eight families who live there for six to eight months each year, practising the traditional transhumance that is such a notable feature of the region and using the long-established upland pastures of the valley. These

Management and Protection

Legal status

The nominated area is a protected site (*site classé*) under the provisions of the decree of 26 December 1941 relating to Gavarnie, Troumouse, and Estaubé. It is also included in two *Zones naturelles d'intérêt écologique, faunistique et floristique* (ZNIEFF).

Management

The entire area is in private ownership: individual proprietors and the *Commission syndicale de Barèges pour les pâturages*, an independent association dedicated to the rehabilitation of the upland pastures of the valley. It comes within the boundaries of the buffer zone of the Parc National des Pyrénées, created by decree in 1967.

Regulatory control is exercised by central government as a result of the protected site (*site classé*) designation, whilst the land-use planning instrument (*Plan d'occupation des sols* – POS), which is fully accepted by the commune authorities, ensures that all proposals for development of any kind are scrutinized so as to maintain the quality of the landscape.

The management plan for the World Heritage site, prepared by the national parks and local authorities in France and Spain, will come into force in 2000 and will apply in the proposed extension.

The commune of Gèdre is currently engaged, with the active support of central and local government and the Parc National in the rehabilitation of the buildings of Héas and the revival of pastoral activities in the area. The Camplong meadows come within the proposed extension.

Evaluation

ICOMOS consulted the expert who had visited the area on its behalf originally inscribed on the World Heritage List in 1997, including that which constitutes the proposal for extension. The expert fully supported the present proposal.

Recommendation

That this extension be *approved*.

ICOMOS, November 1999