

Cycling Safaris

Atlantic to Mediterranean Cycle (San Sebastian to Barcelona) 16th - 22nd May 2015

This challenge is to ride from one coast to the other, from San Sebastian on the Bay of Biscay to Barcelona on the Mediterranean. Although not flat, the basic route sticks to the foothills of the Pyrenees and does not seek out any of the great climbs. The route in fact mixes days of being beside the mountains to riding across the plains - hence a long day in the middle to steer away from the really difficult mountain climbs.

There is however options for the more experienced cyclists and those looking for a greater challenge, to tackle some hillier terrain in the Pyrenees, although perhaps not as well known as the Tour de France, the Vuelta still offers some exciting cycling and features some very challenging climbs!

DAY 1 Saturday May 16

Fight from Dublin Airport to Bilbao (Flights Tues/Thurs/Sat/Sun) or Ryanair to Biarritz (Sat).

Known as Donostia in Basque, San Sebastian is probably one of the most wonderful cities in Europe.

The fabulous Playa de la Concha Beach is the city beach and sweeps around in a curve separated from the lush surrounding countryside by a cosmopolitan old town. It is in the old town that the famous local Pintxo can be tried.

We meet up at our accommodation in the evening and after a chat from the guides we will arrange dinner in the city.

Arrive at the Atlantic



DAY 2 Sunday May 17



San Sebastian to Pamplona

100kms / 1167m

Probably the toughest day as we leave sea level and follow the Rio Urumea into the surrounding hills passing the Parque Natural de Aiako Harria where the road is sheltered amongst the fine trees of the park.

For those looking for some climbs the Hachueta, from the 2014 Vuelta at 12km long and with an average gradient of 7.4% is an afternoon option.

Pamplona is known the world over for its running over the bulls festival. Once the madness of Sanfermines is over, then Pamplona is a charming city with great food and friendly people.



It is the first main city on the Way of St James (Camino de Santiago) and has a beautiful medieval centre, historic citadel and many parks.

DAY 3 Monday May 18

Pamplona to Huesca

163km/1052m



By far the longest day of the ride but with some spectacular scenery for motivation! We leave the city following the river Elorz. This road has some very scenic sections of surrounding mountains before following the edge of the Embalse de Yesa, a large man made lake.

Our route then heads through the village of Murrilo offering great views of the spectacular conglomerate rock formations of the Mallos de Riglos.

Our destination is Huesca, a charming medieval town with a lovely cathedral.

DAY 4 Tuesday May 19

Huesca to Balaguer

127km/750m

Leaving Huesca we follow some lovely quiet backroads across the plains that link together a number of small medieval villages.

Our Lunch stop is Monzon, notable for the castle of the knights Templar. A desert like landscape starts to give way to the mountains of Lleida as they come into view. Balaguer has a unique heritage and as such boasts a Moorish Quarter, Jewish Quarter and medieval quarter as well as a gothic cathedral.



DAY 5 Wednesday May 20

Balaguer to Cardona

105kms/991m



Today is a shorter day that allows a bit more time for the slightly hillier terrain, but also to give another climbing option, this time the Coll de Jou. At 6km it is not the longest climb, but it is 7.9% average. There are also two climbs to get to the start, so an additional 1100metres and 45km are added to the day making it a very attractive and challenging climb.

Cardona is a wonderful historic town boasting a spectacular castle originally constructed in the 9th century.

This castle is also a Parador hotel and our accommodation for the night.



DAY 6

Thursday May 21

Cardona to Barcelona

110km/1167m



The last day sees us venture into Montserrat National park. Here there is a wonderful backdrop of mountain scenery and forested roads.

Gradually the mountains give way to foothills and we lose elevation and start to pick up views of our final destination as the city of Barcelona opens up before us.



DAY 7

Friday May 22

Departure

The tour officially finishes up after breakfast and participants make their own way home. We carefully pack the bikes into our vans to bring them back to Dublin.

2015 TOUR DATES

16th - 22nd May

2015 TOUR PRICE

- €1125.00 per person sharing
- € 285.00 single occupancy

WHAT THE TOUR PRICE INCLUDES

- 6 Nights Accommodation (Mainly 3* & 4* including 1 night in Parador)
- 6 x dinners
- 5 x lunches
- Bike transfers to/from Belfield, University College Dublin
- Support vehicle with mechanic
- Snacks en-route
- Cycling Guide(s) ratio of 1:10 approx
- Fully researched route

ACCOMMODATION

The accommodation is allocated on a twin-sharing basis.

We will send out full accommodation details one month before departure but to give you an idea of the kind of accommodation used, below is the hotel list for 2014...

San Sebastian	NH Aranzazu (www.nh-hotels.com/nh/en/hotels/spain/san-sebastian/nh-aranzazu.htm)
Pamplona	Hotel Maisonnave (www.hotelmaisonnave.es)
Huesca	Hotel Pedro I Reception (www.booking.com/hotel/es/pedro-i-de-aragon.html)
Balaguer	Hotel Santuari (www.hotelsantuari.com)
	Hotel Balaguer (www.hotelbalaguer.com)
Cardona	Parador Cardona (www.booking.com/hotel/es/parador-de-cardona.en-gb.html)
Barcelona	Hotel Chic & Basic Rambles (www.chicandbasic.com/en)

MEALS

Breakfast

This is included every day in your hotel.

Breakfast is available from 6.30am. Please allow time to take breakfast before departure – it is important to ensure you take on board necessary calories for strenuous exercise.

Lunch

Lunch stops are organised to take place in Café's/pubs. Much like the snack stops these are organised to take place on a rolling basis, so each group will arrive and partake of lunch that is already prepared. These will typically consist of a filled baguette, snack and drink. This will minimise the waiting times and help to ensure cyclists do not get cold.

Dinners

We will all eat together each night as a group at either 7.30pm or 8.00pm.

Each night we will have dinner in our hotel except in Barcelona where we will be in a nearby local restaurant.

After dinner each evening a briefing will take place regarding the next day.

Snack Stops

For each day of cycling there will be a snack station both in the morning and afternoon. This will be a good opportunity to refill with water, take on board some food/energy bars etc. These stops will be organised so as when coupled with the lunch stops we ensure a chance of refuelling every 25-30kms.

These stops will be on a rolling basis – ie each group will come in together and leave together, with no need to wait for subsequent groups. It is important when cycling long distance to make breaks relatively short so as not to allow the muscles to cool down.

Additional water and snack stops may be organised each day if necessary.

If you have a particular brand of snack or energy drink that you prefer when cycling please remember to bring it with you.

GROUP, GUIDE AND BACK UP SERVICE

Teams

Based upon the questionnaire that you have filled out you will be allocated to a team based upon your ability. Each team will have approx. 10 members and their own guide for the duration of the event.

If requested we will endeavour to keep friends and those who cycle regularly with each other in the same group. We cannot guarantee that we will be able to accommodate all individual requests but we will do our best.

It is important to remember that this is not a race or an individual event, but a charity cycle as a group.

You must remain with your guide and group at all times during the cycle. There will be no solo cyclists.

This is important for a number of reasons, not least of which is the requirement to know where each participant is throughout the ride. This ensures that no one individual gets lost, everyone has the support of a guide and that in the event of an incident proper support can be given as quickly as possible.

Movement between groups may be possible on the ride with the agreement of your guide and tour organisers

Your guide will have the route and tour information needed each day.

Each team will operate as a unit, cycling together, looking out for one another and supporting each other in achieving this fantastic goal. We want everyone to complete this challenge, enjoy the experience, making new friends whilst supporting a fantastic cause.

Each morning we will stagger the start to avoid bunching in the towns. This will also give more time to slower groups. Each evening your guide will let you know what time your team will set off the following morning.

You must be ready each morning at the designated time to set off.

This cycle is a challenge that involves 5 days of strenuous exercise. It is therefore important that the cycling is undertaken at a pace that is well within oneself. It is better to ride all 5 days slowly than to complete 3 days quickly and then need to give up! Some patience may need to be exercised in terms of waiting for slightly slower members of your team.

Medical

Please ensure that your guide is made aware of any medical conditions that you have or any medication that you are taking. If during the course of the event you have any concerns about your health or well-being, please ensure you let your guide know.

Mechanical Support

This ride will have two support vehicles including a bike mechanic with tools and spares.

Only spares for standard bike sizes will be brought along, so if your bike is an unusual brand/size then you should bring necessary spares.

LUGGAGE AND BIKE TRANSFERS

Luggage Transfer

All luggage will be loaded into the support vans in the morning to be transported to your hotel. It is your responsibility to ensure your luggage is brought to reception each morning in time for departure and have removed items required for the day (such as sun cream, mobile phone, rain gear etc).

We will endeavour as much as possible for each team will stay in the same hotel.

Please see below for guidance on what to bring.

Overnight Bike Storage

Each hotel has a different way in which they intend to deal with this – some have meeting rooms they will put bikes in, some have secure garages etc. Please be sure to follow the instructions of your guide and ensure your bike is stored correctly – this will also save time in locating your bike the following morning.

Bike Return/Collection

PRE DEPARTURE

Unless you have chosen to bring your bike on the plane with you it is important that you drop it to our shop in University College Dublin by **Saturday 10th May**. Bikes do not need to be boxed up but will be tagged with your name.

If your bike is not dropped off to the shop before the 10th of May you will have to organise getting it to San Sebastian. Bikes are the only things that can be transported by van, helmets etc must to be brought with you on the flight.

TOUR END

With the exception of those bringing their bikes on the plane, all bikes will be loaded into vans at the end of the ride. Please ensure that a label gets attached to your bike.

No items other than bikes can be taken in our vans back to Dublin.

The van of bikes will arrive back in Dublin at 10am on **Monday 26th May**. Collections should be made at your earliest convenience from this date. Due to limited storage space we reserve the right to levy a storage charge on your bike if it is not collected within 1 week of the finish of the event.

The bikes can be collected from Belfield Bike Shop, UCD Dublin 4. Tel: 01 716 1697

The normal hours of business of the shop are Monday to Friday 9-6 and Saturday 10-2.

Please be sure to bring ID with you when collecting your bike. The shop staff will not know you and will not release a bike to you without your ID matching the name on the tag.

If your bike is going back with you on the plane then please be sure to understand the requirements of the airline in terms of preparation.

WHAT TO BRING

This list is meant to be a guide and is not exhaustive, however it will give you an idea of the types of things you will need. Obviously you will need to take into account your personal preferences and common sense!

Bag – 1 piece of luggage per person clearly labelled. Soft sided luggage only please – no hard sided bags or suitcases.

Passport – Please ensure it is valid and up to date.

EHIC Card (Formerly known as E111) – although your travel insurance covers you adequately, the EHIC is useful as it entitles the holder to medical treatment in Spain without the need for payment up front and then making a subsequent insurance claim. They can be obtained free of charge from your local HSE office with production of your PPS number (on an official document such as a wage slip) and photo ID.

Bike Helmet – Everyone expected to wear one, no ifs or buts.

We highly recommend that you have two water bottle cages put on your bike.

Rainjacket / Windcheater – This is an essential item if you plan to take on any of the extra climbs. You will get hot on the ascent however once you get to the top and descend this will help to keep you warm. There can be a significant temperature difference between the valleys and the top of the mountain. Any other items that you feel will keep you warm such as arm warmers would also be useful.

Sunscreen – make sure you have a factor high enough to suit. Remember you will be outside for much of the day.

Factored Lipsalve & Sunglasses

Bike Shorts(s) – for this type of riding it is worth investing in proper padded shorts.

Bike Jersey(s) – see previously sent information on specific bike clothing

Medication – ensure you bring any medication you normally use and make sure your guide is aware of any allergies/medical conditions.

Money – There is no need to bring excessive amounts of money (Spain is in the euro of course) as ATM's are available during the trip.

Toiletries – Not in excessive quantities. Advisable to also include **Earplugs**

Travel Adaptor – Spain is on the two-pin plug system and 220V, so you will need an adaptor for charging mobile phone etc.

Casual Clothes for evening wear – we will not be eating in fancy restaurants so there is no need for the cocktail dress or Tuxedo! Jeans, T-shirts etc are perfectly adequate. It certainly is not necessary to bring different outfits for different days.

Cycling Mitts – these make long distance riding more comfortable and provide protection in the event of a fall (most people put their hands out to break the fall).

Mobile Phone and Charger – check prior to departure that your phone has plenty of credit on it and is able to make/receive calls internationally. On starting the cycle please put in the IHF number, our local back up staff and also your guides number please.

Flight Confirmation – don't forget to bring your departure and return flight confirmation details

* It is expected that **your bike is serviced and suitable for this ride** and that you carry basic puncture repair equipment to facilitate a quick return to riding. If your bike requires attention owing to being improperly prepared for this event then you will be expected to pay for all parts and servicing costs.

HEALTH & SAFETY

Safety is of paramount importance on an event such as this. All participants are expected to behave in a responsible manner and follow the instructions of their guide. It is important to understand that if the health, level of fitness or conduct of a participant appears likely to endanger the safe, comfortable or happy progress of the ride, the client may be excluded from all or part of the ride without refund or recompense. If anyone commits an illegal act, they will be excluded from the ride, and we will cease to have any responsibility to/for them. In order to facilitate the ride a number of points are listed below. These are by no means exhaustive, but if followed will minimise likely problems.

- 1) All cyclists will wear helmets
- 2) All bikes are to be serviced prior to departure
- 3) This is not a race. It is important that the cycling is carried out at a pace that is comfortable.
- 4) We will be mainly utilising secondary and tertiary roads. However do not forget that these roads are open to traffic (and cycle paths to other cyclists). You will therefore be expected to obey all road signs, stop lights etc, ride within the law and show respect to other road users.
- 5) You are to remain with your group at all times.
- 6) You must follow the instructions of your guide.
- 7) Make sure you drink plenty of water whilst riding and take the opportunity to refill your water bottle at the snack stops. We highly recommend two water bottle cages on your bike.
- 8) Be careful not to drink too much alcohol. This dehydrates you and will seriously affect your ability to cycle the next day.
- 9) Wear Sunscreen – even when the day does not necessarily look sunny. Long days in the saddle will provide plenty of discomfort without getting burnt or worse.
- 10) Wear Sunglasses, not only will this prevent glare and protect your eyes from strong sunlight, it will also prevent insects from getting into your eyes.
- 11) We will issue each of you with a credit card sized card that will have emergency phone numbers, the number of your guide and also the numbers of the accommodations. Please carry this with you on the trip so as to assist you in the event of any problems.
- 12) Be sure to advise your guide and the tour doctor of any medical conditions/medications. If you have any concerns about your health and well-being please seek advice from your doctor before joining the ride. Of course it would be frustrating to raise the money and have done the training not to do the ride, but small nagging injuries can become major ones if not treated. This cycle is a serious undertaking and should be treated with respect. Likewise if you have any concerns during the ride, then please see the doctor.
- 13) When cycling in a group please be sure to warn those behind you of upcoming hazards (pot holes, cars etc) and allow time for those behind you to react to your change of speed/direction.
- 14) No-one is to use their mobile phone or ipod while cycling
- 15) Take care on arriving/leaving towns especially after a long day in the saddle as accidents often occur when you are tired and weary.
- 16) Finally remember in Spain to cycle on the right hand side of the road!