

Cycling Safaris

Rioja – The Descent of the River Ebro

Self Guided Tour 2018

289 – 370km | 8 days / 7-nights



A superb trip, following the River Ebro, the longest in Spain, as it flows from its source in the Cantabrian Mountains down to the distant Mediterranean. The very name of the Iberian Peninsula comes from this river – Iberia, the country of the Ebro. Our route follows what begins as a tiny mountain stream flowing through the green pastures of Cantabria, beautiful valleys, imposing canyons, vineyards, past pretty and unknown villages, witnessing the changes in the landscape and the river itself. Finally we arrive in La Rioja, home of the finest wines produced in Spain. A sea of vineyards dotted with ancient villages, castles and wine-producing *bodegas*, all with the limestone mountains of the Sierra de Cantabria in the background. A magnificent trip for those who wish to visit parts of Spain the tourists never see.

TOUR ITINERARY

Day 1

Transfer to Campoo

Arrival in Santander or Bilbao and transfer to our hotel in Campoo. Test bikes.

Day 2

Campoo – Villanueva de la Nía

53km or 90 km

This stage takes us through some fabulous and unspoilt scenery. From the green mountain pastures of the Cantabrian Mountains, along the shores of the Ebro Reservoir, past the Monastery of Montesclaros surrounded by forests to finally rejoin the Ebro in the Valley of Valderredible and tonight's stop in Villanueva de la Nía. Those on the short version follow the river direct to Villanueva. The longer version circumnavigates the Ebro Reservoir.

Day 3 Villanueva de la Nía – Pesquera de Ebro 53km

We begin by cycling through the open valley of Valderredible. Take the opportunity to visit the Romanesque church of San Martín de Elines and also the churches carved into the very rock which are so characteristic of this region. As we progress down the river, the sides of the valley begin to close in until we find ourselves in a marvellous canyon of ever-increasing dimensions, where eagles and vultures soar overhead. Stop to visit the fairytale village of Orbaneja del Castillo with its cascades running through the village. As we approach Pesquera, the canyon of the Ebro reaches unbelievable dimensions before we finally reach the attractive village that will be tonight's resting-place. Route extensions are available today.

Day 4 Pesquera de Ebro – Medina de Pomar 36km or 63 km

A beautiful route which follows a huge bend of the river through the most picturesque and undiscovered villages. An optional extension takes us to the dramatic village of Puente de Nela, built on a natural rock bridge over the River Nela. Tonight we stay in the Castilian town of Medina de Pomar with its old Jewish quarter and the castle dominating the town and the surrounding landscape. (63 km – 39 miles with route extension to Puente de Nela)

Day 5 Medina de Pomar – Frías 56 km

From Medina, we head back to the Ebro, The route then takes us along a quiet country road running parallel to the river where the valley begins to open out again. Visit the Romanesque church of San Pedro de Tejada and soon we are cycling through yet another canyon, which then opens out into the fertile valley around Frías. This is a spectacular village built around its castle and enjoying fine views of the Ebro Valley.

Day 6 Frías – Haro 41 km or 58 km

As we leave Frías / Herrán, the valley begins to close in on us again until we find ourselves in another spectacular canyon. The road runs along the shores of a reservoir surrounded by high mountains and through short tunnels carved out of the rock. The route crosses the little town of Miranda del Ebro before passing through imposing peaks that signal the gateway to the enormous open valley of La Rioja. Tonight is spent in the wine-producing village of Haro, with a chance to drink a glass or two of Rioja in its birthplace. Our shorter route terminates in Miranda and we transfer you to Haro.

Day 7 Haro – Laguardia 50 km

We begin day seven with a visit to one of the many famous bodegas in Haro, complete with wine tasting. We then cycle through endless vineyards and numerous picturesque villages of La Rioja, with the backdrop of the Sierra de Cantabria mountains and the Ebro never too far away. We finally reach the superb walled medieval village of Laguardia where, as in Haro, wine is almost a way of life. Short 25 km – 15 miles, Long 50 km – 31 miles

Day 8 End of services

After breakfast you will be transferred from Laguardia to Bilbao at 9am .

2018 TOUR PRICES

High Season Price (from July & August)

€1195 per person sharing
€1525 per single occupancy

Low Season Price

€1100 per person sharing
€1375 per single occupancy

If you wish to bring your own bike there is a reduction of €100.

2018 TOUR DATES

Tour can start on any Sunday. High season supplement included for arrivals in July & August

WHAT IS INCLUDED IN THE TOUR PRICE

Included

- › Accommodation with en-suite bathroom
- › Luggage transport
- › Continental style breakfast
- › 5 evening meals with wine (Campoo, Polientes, Pesquera de Ebro, Medina de Pomar, Frías)
- › Set Transport from Santander or Bilbao to Campoo on arrival day
- › Set Transport from Laguardia to Bilbao on departure day at 9am
- › Information Pack (Route Guide and maps)
- › Bicycle hire

BACK-UP SERVICE

As this is a self led trip you do not have the back-up of a guide and support van. Our aim is to allow you feel like an independent traveller, free to cycle each day at your own pace while at the same time having the security of knowing that your luggage will be waiting for you in your next accommodation. On some stages cyclists are also transferred part of the way to avoid unnecessary climbs (details in individual route descriptions).

Our "On Call" service means we are always available for help or advice.



Ladies bike (Trek 7.2)



Men's bike (Trek 7.2)

www.trekbikes.com/us/en/bikes/road/fitness/fx/7_2_fx/#

You are provided with hybrid-type tourist bicycles from Trek with conventional handlebars and with triple chain ring and easy-to-change gear ratios for comfortable and easy cycling. Road bikes may also be available on request. We can also provide tandems, children's bikes, tow bikes and child seats for those with children.

Hybrid bikes will carry a handlebar bag, useful for carrying money, documents, camera and lots of other useful items which may be needed close at hand. This bag is easily removed from its click fastening and carried around with the shoulder strap. They are also equipped with a rear luggage rack and one or two panniers, or a rear rack bag to carry just what you need for each day's cycling. Road bikes carry a seat post bag if required.

In addition, all cycles are equipped with pump, spare inner tube, water bottle, bike lock and basic toolkit. Extras such as lights or toe clips are available on request.

If you wish to bring your own bike there is a reduction of €100

E -bikes are also available at a €65 supplement. Tandems are available on request.

Road bikes are available at a €45 supplement.

GENERAL INFORMATION

Route Guide and Maps

You will be provided with our Route Guide which includes detailed route instructions along with interesting information on landscapes, towns and villages, monuments, alternative route suggestions, timetables for local trains and buses, tips on eating and drinking, an exhaustive gastronomic dictionary and a host of other useful information and suggestions to keep cyclists occupied. Routes are carefully described so no time is wasted on unnecessary deviations. Maps of the area are also provided to support the Route Guide.

Trips that include more than one night in the same destination include optional round rides of differing lengths for these free days so cyclists will never be at a loose end.

Weather and Climate

Many people are put off coming to Spain on a cycling holiday due to the weather. They think it's going to be just too hot – and they are probably right! During the summer months Spain is one of the hottest and driest countries in Europe with temperatures climbing up to 40°C – 105°F or even more – too much for your average cyclist.

Temperatures can vary on this trip. The initial stages are at a higher altitude and cooler. The highest temperatures in Burgos in July and August are 26 °C . The average maximum temperature in April is 13 °C and in October 16 °C.

As we descend the river towards La Rioja, temperatures rise a little and those of Logroño (capital of La Rioja) would be representative of this latter half of the trip – the average highest temperature in July and August there are 29 °C. In Logroño the average temperature in April is 16 °C and in October 19 °C.

Terrain / Gradients

Moderate cycling with some climbs as the route follows the River Ebro as it flows downstream. Some days may involve some climbing when the route moves away from the river.

Holiday extensions

Possibility of spending extra nights in Bilbao or Santander.

Special departures

Special departures may be organised for groups of 8 or more riders. Please consult availability.

TRAVEL INFORMATION

Best arrival points:

Airports - Bilbao or Santander

Ferry ports - Bilbao or Santander

Bus / train stations - Bilbao or Santander

Please note it is more convenient to arrive in Santander and then depart from Bilbao.

By Air

Travellers on the routes of Asturias and Cantabria and also the Rioja route generally arrive at Santander or Bilbao Airport where they are met by our pick up service. Some companies fly directly to Santander or Bilbao from the UK and other European airports.

It is often possible to take connecting flights through Spanish airports such as Madrid or Barcelona or through other European cities. Our nearest airport is Santander connecting with Madrid and Barcelona, although flights are not so frequent. RyanAir has now opened a new route from London, Stansted to Santander Airport, actually closer to our starting point in Santillana del Mar.

You may like to extend your holiday with a mini-cruise. Brittany Ferries runs a service from the UK to Santander and P & O Ferries sail from the UK to Bilbao.

Please note that we do not get involved with travel arrangements as we feel that the customer will get the best possible deal either by searching the Internet or asking the local travel agent to check all possibilities.

By Ferry

Another alternative for these routes is a mini-cruise on the ferry. P & O run a service from Portsmouth to Bilbao which takes 36 hours. Brittany Ferries sail from Plymouth to Santander. The new ferry being brought into service in 2004 will do the crossing in 19 hours. Again, we will pick you up from the Santander or Bilbao ferryports.

Most companies will allow you to transport your own bicycle - check with individual companies for their policy on this.

Trains & Buses

If you are travelling within Spain, there is an excellent network of road transport. The Spanish Intercity train service is called Renfe. The local train service along the coast of the Basque Country, Cantabria & Asturias is called FEVE. The major coach companies, depending on where you are travelling, are Alsa and Continental Auto.