



HILLS OF LEGEND

Hiking, food and wine



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1 Introduction

Ancient mountains, glittering sea, rich gastronomy, historic cities and fine wines. Five elements that make this trip exceptionally unforgettable. It is in very few places in the world where one can enjoy these five elements in such close geographical proximity as the Basque Country, La Rioja and Navarra.

Enjoy hiking from the pastoral landscapes of the middle mountains of the Basque Country, to the high levels of the Navarrese Pyrenees. Test yourself on the Cantabrian waves and visit hamlets where you can taste the typical artisanal cheeses of the area. Get carried away by the historic towns and picturesque streets of cities like San Sebastián, Vitoria and Pamplona. Relax while taking in the views of the endless vineyards in La Rioja, and taste the wines that bloom from their vines. Throughout the trip, we will have endless opportunities to savor one of the most famous gastronomies in Spain and the world! Welcome to northern Spain, land of legends, vineyards, waves and mountains.

2 Destination

The Basque Country, Euskadi, is a very special land. Culture wise, it keeps its singular traditions, which are very different from the rest of Spain, and as for the language, euskera, which origins are still unknown, is one of the four official languages of Spain. Also, the Basque Country is the birthplace of

some of the best alpinist specialized in the Himalayas, like for example Edurne Pasabán, the first woman to summit the 14 eight thousand meters high mountains. In the same way, there are surfers like Artiz Aranburu, the only Spaniard that has competed at the highest level. This give us an idea of the great passion for sports that have the people from the Basque Country, as well as their love for the mountains and the sea.

In history, La Rioja has been an area of transit, a crossroad, a land of borders, a battlefield and also a place where different, people, cultures and civilizations met. Geographically, the territory is divided by 7 rivers that run from the mountains towards the river Ebro, which vertebrates de region. It is because of this that La Rioja is often referred to as “the one of the seven valleys”.

The north of the region, where the valley is, has a Mediterranean climate, whereas the south, with the mountains, has a wetter and more continental climate. It is very well known by the wine production with DOC La Rioja, the oldest in Spain, producing some of the most internationally acclaimed wines.

And finally, Navarra, which means “flat land surrounded by mountains”, it is one of the former kingdoms of the Iberian Peninsula. Despite of its small size, its geography is very varied, but we are going to focus on its norther half, where it is dominated by the Pyrenees and where we will have time to climb its most representative mountain. And, of course, its famous capital city Pamplona, worldwide known thanks to the writer Hemingway and his experience in the festivities of San Fermín and the running of the bulls.

3 Basic facts

Destination: Spain. Basque Country, La Rioja and Navarra.

Type of activity: Hiking.

Physical level: *. Technical Level: **.

Duration: 9 days.

Time of the year: February to November

Minimun-maximun group size: 4-8 people.

3.1 Physical level and type of terrain

	Total elevation	Physical condition
*	Up to 700 m	Fair: ocasional sport practise
**	Up to 1200 m	Good: regular sport practise
***	Up to 1500 m	Very Good: follows a strict sports plan

Type of terrain	
*	Good conditioned forest tracks and trails
**	Good conditioned trails. Presence of stones and roots on the way requiring attentive hike.
***	Bumpy, stone loose tracks, including off trails

4 Programme

4.1 Programme outline

Day 1. Flight to Spain. Bilbao airport (BIO). Optional flight to Madrid and transfer to the Basque Country. Reception of participants. Transfer to our accommodation.

Briefing of the trip. Depending on the arrival time, we will do a cycling or a walking tour of the city. Visit of the old town and dinner with the traditional “pintxos” to have an introduction to the famed Basque gastronomy.

Night in **San Sebastián**.

Day 2. Visit to **Zarautz**. Optional **surf** lesson, **trawler paddle** and visit to **Txaboli cellar**.

Day 3. Hike in **Murrumendi**, Mandubia Pass, in Astigarreta-Beasáin (Gipuzkoa). Afternoon in **Tolosa**.

Length 10km, elevation +500m -500m. (There is the option to make the itinerary more or less demanding).

Night in **San Sebastián**.

Day 4. Hike in **Txindoki**, Larraitz. In the afternoon we will visit a traditional “caserío” where we will see the elaboration of the **Idiazabal cheese**.

Length 11km, elevation +900m -900m. (There is the option to make the itinerary more or less demanding).

Night in **Vitoria**.

Day 5. **La Rioja’s vineyards and cellars**. Day trip to **Montes Obarenes** and visit to **Bodega Muga’s vineyards**.

Night in **Vitoria**.

Day 6. Hike in **Urbasa Natural Park**

Length 7km, elevation +60m -60m. (There is the option to make the itinerary more or less demanding).

Day 7. Hike in **Valle de Hecho**. Circular route of **Ibón del Acherito**.

Length 11,4km, elevation +743m -734m.

Night at **Hotel Uson**. Visit to the hotel’s brewery.

Day 8. Day trip to the surroundings of **la Mesa de los Tres Reyes** and visit to **Kortariko Gasna** cheese factory.

Length 18km, elevation +500m -500m.

Night in **Pamplona**.

Day 9. Transfer to the airport. Outbound flight. End of trip.

4.2 Detailed programme

Day 1. Flight to Spain. Bilbao airport (BIO). Optional flight to Madrid and transfer to the Basque Country. Reception of participants. Transfer to our accommodation.

Briefing of the trip. Depending on the arrival time, we will do a cycling or a walking tour of the city. Visit of the old town and dinner with the traditional “pintxos” to have an introduction to the famed Basque gastronomy.

Night in **San Sebastián**.

Day 2. Visit to Zarautz. Optional surf lesson, trawler paddle and visit to Txaboli cellar.

Transfer to Zarautz, one of the most famous coastal villages of the Basque Country and the Cantabrian coast. Its beach has been the cuna of great surf champions, and its waters are a frequent background of surf competitions thanks to the good quality of the waves. We will have the opportunity of enjoying a surf lesson with the Shelter Surf's teachers, managed by Artiz Aranburu, the only Spaniard to have competed at the highest level.

<http://shelter.surf>

<http://www.aritzaranburu.com>

The other option is an authentic experience with trawler paddle, one of the most traditional sports from de Basque Country, with several clubs in different locations, and which biggest event is Regata de la Concha in San Sebastián. Today, we will have the chance to row with the Club Remo Olímpico [Orio Arraunketa Elkartea](http://www.orio-ae.com/es/), one of the most reputable clubs in the Basque Country. We will receive a lesson of team work while we enjoy the landscapes of Ría Orio. Let's see what happens when we get to open waters!

<https://www.orio-ae.com/es/>

In the afternoon we will combine a visit to a Txakoli cellar (a speciality link to the Basque Country) called Talai Berri, a small cellar located on the sunbathed slopes of Zarautz. From there you will have great views of Zarautz's old town with its beautiful buildings and its "bares de pintxos".

<http://www.talaiberri.com>

Day 3. Hike in Murrumendi, Mandubia Pass, in Astigarreta-Beasáin (Gipuzkoa). Afternoon in Tolosa.

The Basque mythology is a kingdom of devils, witches and fairies. A refuge for old legends, myths and fascinating landscapes for hillwalking. We will travel to Mandubia pass, in Astigarreta-Beasáin, where we will start an easy walk that goes up to the pastures of Pagota and the shepherd huts of Larrarte. The remains of an old dolmen can be found at this place. The path continues close to **Murumendi's** summit (868 m). The walk is a comfortable stroll between birches, pine trees and American cedars that goes along the small settlements of **Astigarreta**. The last stage leaves the long-distance Trail on the left to climb up to the top of the hill. On the vertical rocks of the south face we will find Muru's cave, one of the entrances to the Basque mythological word that inhabits the region's underground.

Length 10km, elevation +500 -500 (There is the option to make the itinerary more or less demanding).

In the afternoon, we will visit the historic town of Tolosa, situated next to the river Oria. It is a very important location on the way between the kingdoms of Navarra, Castilla and France, and the Cantabrian sea ports. Tolosa was for centuries, the big toll of the north. It presents great urban design with magnificence buildings that show the importance and the character of the great old times.

<https://www.tolosaldea.eus/>

Night in **San Sebastián**.

Day 4. Hike in **Txindoki**, Larraitz. In the afternoon we will visit a traditional “caserío” where we will see the elaboration of the **Idiazabal cheese**.

Today we step up on intensity to summit a first-class mountain, an important landmark for the traditional mountaineering in the Basque Country.

Txindoki (1.343 m) is an attractive mountain, with its sharp lines it is isolated within the orography of **Sierra de Aralar**, where the magic and the legends have their roots between archaeological remains, caves, birch forests and pyramid summits. Usually the routes start from **Larraitz**, attempting all ridges, faces, pastures and drops. The described itinerary follows the normal south face via Egurral and returns via Muitze corrie and Mallaki forests. In Larraitz you will find route markers for either the paths to the summit of Txindoki or for trails that disappear on the calcarean labyrinth of Aralar. Our route follows the markers PR-GI 2005 across the pastures of Gaztesuiko to the gully of Urruzti and the huts of Zirigarate, going around the west side of the massif to reach the col Egurral, below the imponent calcarean towers of Larrunarri. The route goes up to the top from the south face. The summit offers a magnificent panorama of Goierri or “high country” as it is called in the area of Oria. The way down goes returns to the col and continues through Urtzabal gully and Muitze corrie following the path on the east side, and leaves the GI-2005 before descending to the waterfall of Muitze, near the cave of Marizulo. The route draws a circle around the mountain with views to all the faces.

Length 11km, elevation +900m -900m. (There is the option to make the itinerary more or less demanding).

After the walk, we will visit a traditional “caserio” (Basque farm). We will have a guided tour to learn about the production of traditional cheese **Idiazabal**, one of the most famous cheeses from the Basque Country, winner of European and world prizes.

<https://baztarrika.com/>

<https://ongietorribaserriera.com/es/gomiztegi>

Night in **Vitoria**

Day 5. Vineyards and cellars of La Rioja. Day trip to **Montes Obarenes** and visit to **Bodega Muga's** vineyard.

The landscape changes as we enter the most famous wine producing region in Spain: La Rioja.

We will start the day with a walk in the **Montes Obarenes Natural Park**, on the foothills of the Cantabrian Mountain Range. Forests and gorges excavated by the rivers Ebro and Oca will predominate

the landscapes. The abundance of cliffs favours the nesting of many birds like; Griffon Vulture, Egyptian Vulture, Golden Eagle, Goshawk... A very rich landscape that goes with a rich culture as you pass by towns with lots of history like Frias, a place capable of taking you centuries back in time.

<https://www.turismocastillayleon.com/es/rural-naturaleza/espacios-naturales/parque-natural-montes-obarenes>

Later on, we will visit Viña Baltracones, one of the vineyards of Bodegas Muga: with extraordinary views, an especial climate and situated on the foothills of **Montes Obarenes**. The perfect place to immerse ourselves in an interesting journey to learn about the different aspects of the wine making process and, of course, to enjoy one of their wines surrounded by vines.

The visit gives you the option of doing Segway or a balloon flight.

<https://www.bodegasmuga.com/>

Night in **Vitoria**

Day 6. Hike in Urbasa Natural Park.

Today we will visit Urbasa and Andía National Park, a protected space with a wide collection of valuable elements in geology, biology, ecology, landscape, archaeology and culture. Located between 835m at the lowest altitude of Urbasa and 1492m at the highest point in San Donato, it forms the transition area between the mountains and the middle area of Navarra, dominated by forests, meadows and rock vegetation.

<http://www.parquedeurbasa.es/>

We will go over the Shepherds trail that links the Information Centre with the Nature Hall. It mainly follows a cattle route used many years ago to take the sheep to the valleys or to go towards the mountains. We will be able to contemplate beautiful places, representative of the biodiversity of Urbasa; the meadows, the calcarean lands and the birch forests. With the passing of the seasons we can enjoy of the changing symphony of the rhythms, forms and colours.

Length 7km, elevation +60m -60m. (There is the option to make the itinerary more or less demanding).

Transfer to **Valle de Hecho** and night at the **Hotel Uson**, a rural accommodation built following the valley's aesthetics (stone and wood). Situated in a pasture at 1000m high and at 7km away from the village of Hecho, that gives the name to the valley.

<http://www.hoteluson.com/>

Day 7. Hike in Valle de Hecho. Circular route of Ibón del Acherito.

We will go up using the normal route from the bottom of the valley following the Foyas gorge and after that, turning to the west under the **Mallos de las Foyas**. We will start the return going to the west again to reach the head of the valley and then descending on the right-hand side of the river.

El retorno se hará saliendo hacia el oeste a la cabecera del valle y descendiendo por la margen derecha de su curso principal.

Length 11,4km, elevation +743m -734m.

Night at **Hotel Uson**. Visit to the hotel's brewery.

Day 8. Day trip to the surroundings of la **Mesa de los Tres Reyes** and visit to **Kortariko Gasna** cheese factory.

At 2446m **Mesa de los Tres Reyes** is the roof of Navarra. Its name comes from its location in the borders of Navarra, Huesca (Aragón) and France.

Starting from Belagua, we will carry out a beautiful circular route with a unique calcarean landscape.

Length 18km, elevation +500m -500m.

Depending on the speed of the group we could go all the way up to the summit. There are no technical demanding steps but you will need to be used to walk on rocky terrains with some aerial steps as well as some short and easy scrambles.

Length 18km, elevation +1.263 m – 1.263 m.

After the walk, we will visit the cheese factory Kortariko Gasna, where we will have a guided tour of the the farm and the cheese factory. Also, we will have a demonstration of a shepherd dog working with a flock of sheep and a cheese tasting.

<https://www.kortarikogasna.com/>

Transfer to **Pamplona**. Afternoon visit to the city.

Night in Pamplona

<https://www.pamplona.es/>

Day 9. Transfer to the airport. Outbound flight. End of trip.

5 More Information

Prices.

- Group size between 6-8 people: 2.640 euros per person.
- Group size between 4-5 people: 2.770 euros per person.

- Group size 3 people: 3.060 euros per person.
- Group size 2 people: 3.670 euros per person.

5.1 Included

Accommodation

- 6 nights of hotel **** in a double room with breakfast included, San Sebastián, Vitoria and Pamplona.
- 2 nights in a rural hotel with half board in Valle de Echo(Hotel Usón) <http://www.hoteluson.com/>

Meals

- San Sebastián: 1 dinner of pintxos and 2 dinners at the restaurant Kokotxa <http://www.restaurantekokotxa.com/carta/>
- Vitoria: 2 dinners at the restaurant Maxtete and El Portalón <http://www.matxete.com/es/index.html> <https://www.restauranteelportalon.com/menus.html>
- Pamplona: 1 dinner at the restaurant Palacio Guendulain
- <http://www.palacioguendulain.com/elrestaurante.php>
- 7 packed lunches (for the treks)

Guided tours

- 4 visits to caseríos and wine cellars (with cheese and wine tasting)

Other

- All transfers during the trip (from Bilbao airport). Arrivals from other airports to be confirmed.
- Spanish and English speaking guide.
- Accident and rescue insurance.

5.2 Not included

- Flights
- Alcohol
- Travel insurance
- Surf lessons, trawler paddle, and baloon flight (optionals)
- Entry fees to museum and other visits not described on the program.

5.3 Equipment required

It is important to carry little weight in the backpack to walk comfortably, so it is recommended to take only the essential material and clothing. Each day you may wash some laundry by hand and you do not have to carry food. We will inform you so your backpack weighs no more than 6-8 kilos.

- Backpack (between 20-30 liters).
- Trekking boots or shoes depending on the trekking.
- Folding trekking poles.
- Clothing:

- Socks.
- Long and short trekking pants
- Thermal shirt (first layer). A spare change.
- Fleece jacket or similar (second layer).
- Gore-Tex type jacket and pants (third layer).
- Primaloft jacket or light down insulated jacket.
- Fleece, light type of gloves.
- Hat and cap.
- Sunglasses.
- Water bottle or water bag Camelback type of minimum capacity 1 litter.
- Sunscreen and protection lip balm.
- Camera.

5.4 Observations

Date Flexibility

Aside from the regular travel trip dates, we are flexible to reconsider new dates if those are more convenient to the client's leisure plans. Do not hesitate to contact us should you have any different dates in mind.

Time and meeting point

One week prior to the trip departure date, an email will be sent to each participant to give away the meeting point and time along with the guide contact information. At this point any information considered essential to the trip organization will be shared.

Plane tickets (if applicable)

If case you wish us to handle you plane ticket, please contact us with airport arrival and departure details and number of needed luggage. Before issuing any ticket, Price and details Will be send to the client for its approval.

Muntania fee for plane ticket management is 20€ per person.

If, otherwise, you handle your plane tickets, please coordinate with us before hand to check on arrival and departure information.

Please take into consideration getting with you on your carry-on luggage some set of clothing in case of checked luggage lose.

Trekking Backpack

Very important to carry out just indispensable material and clothing to walk at ease. You would not need to take food supplies and clothing can be hand-wash daily. We recommend backpack weight between 6 to 10 kg.

5.5 Insurance policy

All activities in Spain have an accident insurance included in the price. Yet, if you practise mountain sports regularly and also travel frequently, **we suggest you get a travel insurance**, that as well as covering any accident and rescue it also protect you against many other situations.

If you do not have a travel insurance you can acquire one with our travel agency. Exploring Spain processes all insurances with **Intermundial**. The cost of these insurances is lower if you buy it through Exploring Spain than if you do it directly with Intermundial.

EU RESIDENTS

Ski/Aventure Plus

It is a **travel insurance** and also **covers the practise of many sports and activities**. You can get one for the duration of the trip or for the whole year, being able to choose the starting date. If you get the insurance for a year, it will not only be valid for the trip with Exploring Spain but also it will be valid for any other trips or activities you may do during that year.

Ski/Aventure Plus with Cancelation

It has the same coverage that the previous insurance but also you will be cover in case of cancelation of the trip and tickets in case of force majeure (sickness, injury...) for yourself and/or a relative.

The travel insurance with cancelation that we offer, allows a refund of the costs already paid for up to 1.000 €. If the cost of the trip and flights is higher, you can extend the amount covered (under request).

Multi-assistance Plus with or without Cancelation

Both Multi-assistance Plus with or without Cancelation are **travel insurances with better coverage** than the Ski/Adventure Plus with or without cancelation but they **do not cover the practise of sports**.

This insurance can be of your interest if you already have an accident and rescue insurance that covers the activity that you will be doing in the trip, but you do not have a travel insurance. It can also be useful if you are interested in a trip without practising any sports.

NON EU RESIDENTS

Incoming Cancelation Plus

This insurance covers the costs of the trip and the tickets if you have to cancel the trip before the departure because of different reasons like for example a sickness (see conditions of the insurance).

This insurance can be useful if you already have a travel insurance but it does not cover the cancelation of the trip or if you already have an insurance covering sports and activities.

Incoming Ski/Aventure Plus with Cancelation

It is a **travel insurance** and also **covers the practise of many sports and activities**. You will also be cover in case of cancelation of the trip and tickets in case of force majeure (sickness, injury...) for yourself and/or a relative. You can get one for the duration of the trip or for the whole year, being able to choose the starting date. If you get the insurance for a year, it will not only be valid for the trip with Exploring Spain but also it will be valid for any other trips or activities you may do during that year.

The travel insurance with cancelation that we offer, allows a refund of the costs already paid for up to 2.000 €. If the cost of the trip and flights is higher, you can extend the amount covered (under request).

*Consult prices and conditions for Intermundial insurances with Exploring Spain following this link:
<https://www.exploring-spain.com/insurances>

Included accident and rescue insurance

** Included accident and rescue insurance. Nº POLIZA 4020006195 Muntania Outdoors. Assistance phone number 24h 902 09 15 57 (it is the contact number for the insurance company Prebal, Previsión Balear M.P.S).

*** It is the customer's responsibility to inform the insurance company about the accident as soon as possible. Prior the departure for the trip, we will send you an email with the insurance policy number and the assistance number so you can have it during the trip.

**** Depending on where the accident happens, the customer will have to pay in advance if the insurance company indicates it, being the payment refunded by the insurance company within the policy's limits. In any case Exploring Spain – Muntania Outdoors S.L. is responsible for any advance payment required for the rescue or assistance.

5.6 Highlights

- Trekking, culture and tradition combined trip.
- Beauty of sceneries.
- High quality accommodation.
- Marvellous gastronomy experience.
- Reduced group size.

5.7 Similar trips

- La Palma Island, the hiking Paradise
- Hiking in La Gomera and Tenerife. Canary Islands
- Hiking in the Mediterranean Coast. Cabo de Gata and Axarquía
- Trekking in Picos de Europa. The Circular Route of Central Massif
- Hiking, culture and gastronomy in the Central Mountains-Guadarrama and Gredos. Madrid, Segovia y Ávila.

6 Contact

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