

Cycling Europe

NORTHERN SPAIN 2018 RIOJA WINE COUNTRY 7 NIGHTS / 8 DAYS SELF GUIDED CYCLING

La Rioja is a delight in every way. Known for its excellent wines, much of Rioja's gently rolling terrain is carpeted with grapevines. The other side of La Rioja is open farmland, with ever-changing landscapes throughout the day and throughout the year. Planting, harvesting and wine-making rule the local calendar, while historic towns, impressive estates, large homes, stone walls and ancient bridges adorn the countryside. Every hilltop sports a monumental church or castle and avant-garde wineries hide among the vineyards like secret artistic mushrooms, intriguing enclaves where some of the world's greatest wines are produced.



Our cycling program offers a chance to discover the many facets of La Rioja, while enjoying local wines and regional cuisine at three welcoming accommodations: a 17th century estate run by a young winemaker with a taste for creative cooking; a luxurious accommodation housed in the historic Monastery of Yuso; and a comfortable family-run hotel situated in the lovely town centre of Ezcaray, with nearby restaurants and tapas bars serving haute cuisine. Relaxing cycling routes of 35km to 50km daily, on gently rolling terrain, mostly following quiet country roads. Optional walking routes in the Sierras of Cantabria and La Demanda and a change to taste the delicious elixirs which bear the region's name. Early spring to early summer and autumn are ideal times of year for this cycling trip.

Tour Highlights:

- **Easy cycling on gentle terrain through farmland, orchards and vineyards**
- **Historic towns in wine country and the Camino de Santiago**
- **State-of-the-art wineries with intriguing modern architecture**
- **Some of the world's best wines to accompany creative cuisine based on traditional recipes**
- **Comfortable accommodation at excellent rural hotels.**

ITINERARY:

Day 1: Abalos

Arrive in Abalos where you will spend the first three nights at a comfortable hotel. The owner of your accommodation is a young wine-maker and oenologist, whose first commercial wine won the prestigious Bachuss de Oro in the year 2006.

Day 2: Circular route in La Rioja Alavesa

Today you cycle to the east of Álbalos, into the Basque section of Rioja Wine Country. Every square inch of fertile soil across this rolling landscape has been covered in grapevines, and medieval villages sit on hilltops throughout. You'll see historic Laguardia and the wine-making village of Elciego, with architect Frank Gehry's intriguing winery and avant-garde hotel designed for the vintners at the Marques de Riscal Estate. On your way back to Álbalos, you cycle on quiet country lanes through vineyards near Navaridas and Eskuernaga, with the limestone peaks of the Sierra de Cantabria in the distance.



Cycling: Approximately 35km. Ascent 350m, Descent 350m

Day 3: Circular route via Haro

Today you cycle south toward the River Ebro which you follow as it winds its way to Haro. En route, you see lovely spots such as San Vicente de la Sonsierra, with its beautiful medieval bridge and impressively situated Gothic church. In Briones, you have the option of visiting the private collection at Vivanco winery: a display of almost anything to do with

wine-making, with some 3500 corkscrews of interest to wine enthusiasts and art-lovers alike. In addition, their gardens are home to over 200 varieties of grapevines.

Cycling: Approximately 30km (42km if you visit Haro). 350m Ascent, 350m Descent

Day 4: Álbalos to San Millán

Today you cross the Ebro and cycle south through gently rolling terrain with vineyards, fields of grain and orchards. By way of Alesanco and Badarán, you reach the monasteries of Yuso and Suso, set in an open valley at the foot of the Sierra de Demanda. Your accommodation is a Baroque monastery turned luxurious hotel, situated on the village square. If you still have some extra energy, you can walk up to the older Monastery of Suso, with its chapel built in Mozarabic style.

Cycling: Approximately 39km. 420m in Ascent / Descent



Day 5: San Millán de la Cogolla to Ezcaray

You cycle a short stretch back to Badarán then ride along winding country roads toward Santo Domingo de la Calzada, an essential stopover for Christians, on the Camino de Santiago. Leaving the vineyards behind, you cycle into the grain-producing area of La Rioja. A converted railway used to transport

coal in the 19th century is now a surfaced cycling path which leads directly to Ezcaray, where you'll spend the next three nights at a welcoming family-run hotel in the historical town centre. There are a wide selection of restaurants, bodegas and tapas bars in which to sample the local wines.

Cycling: Approximately 39km. 400m in Ascent, 325m in Descent

Day 6: Ezcaray Valley or Walking in Sierra de Demanda

Do you fancy a day of walking? There's an optional walking tour into the Sierra de Demanda. If you prefer to stick with wheels, you can cycle into the foothills, to remote villages with just a few resident farmers. After 10km cycle you'll begin to see a completely different side of La Rioja, one undiscovered until now.

Cycling: Approximately 21km Cycling route.

150m in Ascent / Descent

Walking route 20km. 330m in Ascent / Descent



2018 SCHEDULE:

Start any day

LEVEL OF DIFFICULTY:

Cycling routes of 30km to 45km a day on flat or gently rolling terrain.

ACCOMMODATION:

Accommodation (three star) includes a young winemaker's 17th century estate, the historic Monastery of Yuso and a family-run hotel in the lovely town centre of Ezcaray.

2018 COSTS PER PERSON IN EUROS:

Double / Twin Share	€ 762
Triple Share	€ 813
Single Room	€1038
Single Room Solo Traveller	€ 845
Bike Hire	€ 110
Optional Transfer Bilbao airport to Abalos	€210 (car for up to 4 people)
Optional Transfer Ezcaray to Bilbao airport	€185 (car for 2 people)

SEASONALITY:

Please note that temperatures in July and August can reach 40° C, though averages are around 22° (highs of 30° and lows of 15°). The month of August is busy with Spanish tourists and there is more traffic on these usually quiet country roads.

Day 7: Circular cycling route via Santo Domingo de la Calzada

Your last day of cycling offers a circular route through waving fields of grain: first through the nearly flat Oja River Valley then up into the hills. Orchards, sunflowers and shady woodlands along the way. There is also an optional visit to Santo Domingo de la Calzada. Your return route is by way of the Via Verde to Ezcaray.



Cycling: Approximately 49 or 50km. 300m in Ascent / Descent

Day 8: End of programme

After breakfast your cycling trip comes to an end.

INCLUDED:

- 7 nights accommodation in comfortable hotels rooms with private bathroom
- 7 breakfasts, continental buffet style
- 2 dinners (on Days 1 and 4)
- Luggage transport on Days 4 and 5

NOT INCLUDED:

- Lunches
- Other dinners
- Taxi transfer on Day 1 from Bilbao Airport to Abalos. These services can be booked separately.
- Taxi transfer on Day 8
- Bicycle hire (Must be booked separately)

BIKE RENTAL:

Specialised brand hybrid bicycles, A1 premium aluminium frame, Shimano parts, specialized brand Hemisphere tyres (700x38c), comfort grips, comfort plus seats with dual density cushion and springs.

The bikes come with map carrier, front and back mud rails, rack on back, 2 cycling bags (panniers at back), water bottle carrier, helmet (optional), one spare inner tube, pump and lock.

Bicycles are delivered on the morning of Day 2 at 9.30 am. The supplier is available while clients adjust bikes, ask questions, etc. They are also in charge of luggage transport throughout the week. If clients need assistance during their trip, they can ask in the morning when they come to collect the luggage. Of course, they can also phone the bike hire company.

GETTING THERE AND RETURN:

Getting There (Transfers can be pre-booked, prices approximate)

Take a flight to Bilbao and transfer by bus or taxi to La Rioja and the village of Abalos.

Bilbao – Haro by bus (Autobuses La Unión), 4-6 services a day, travel time approximately 1 hour.

Tickets approx €12 per person. Transfer from bus station Haro – Ábalos €73

Taxi transfer Bilbao Airport – Ábalos €210 (max 4 passengers)

Return

Santo Domingo – Haro - Bilbao by bus (Autobuses La Unión), 4-6 services a day. Travel time approximately 1 hour, 30 minutes. Tickets approx €13 per person. Direct services are available twice a day (Santo Domingo-Bilbao)

Taxi transfer Ezcaray – Bilbao Airport €185 (max 2 passengers)

EXTENSION HOTELS:

Extra nights can be booked at any accommodation included in this trip.

Book through:

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