

NEW

## Family Iberian Adventure (Lite version)

8 days

Portugal, Spain - Trip code FLA



## Family Iberian Adventure (Lite version)

Based in an undiscovered corner of Western Europe, bathed under sunny skies, this great value multi activity week includes mountain biking, kayaking and walking in a traditional and untouched area of Andalucía and Southern Portugal. Discover a landscape of forested hills, mountain villages and shimmering lakes. Spend three nights in a lovingly converted village house, cycle amongst pristine forests and lakes and kayak and cruise along the scenic Guadiana River to the small resort town of Alcoutim. This Explore Family holiday 'lite' option has been designed to offer you maximum flexibility; a great value price with many activities included but also the option to pick and choose additional activities you want to try. If half the family want to head out of a four wheel drive excursion into the interior whilst the other half want to take it easy, relaxing overlooking the Guadiana River - no problem, everyone can be accommodated! A full breakdown of the costs of each of the activities suggested on this trip are detailed in the downloadable trip notes - optional excursions section. Please note all activities are paid locally and are in addition to the basic holiday price on this Explore 'lite' family holiday.

## Trip highlights

- ★ **Castañó Del Robledo** - Stay in a converted traditional village house in the untouched Sierra de Aracena.
- ★ **Aracena National Park** - Mountain biking along rural Andalusian tracks through lovely countryside with superb lake views.
- ★ **Guadiana River** - Kayaking through picturesque and peaceful surroundings.
- ★ **Mertola** - One of the most stunning and historical towns in the region.
- ★ **Alcoutim** - Travel back in time with the option to Zip wire from Spain into Portugal (one hour time difference between the two countries)

#### ACCOMMODATION GRADE:

##### Standard

Our standard, mid-range accommodation offers a good level of service, often with other amenities such as a restaurant, bar, garden or swimming pool. Generally rooms will be comfortable with en suite facilities.

#### TRIP PACE:

##### Moderate

Moderate pace tours are ideal if you want a holiday which combines exciting activities and experiences with plenty of time to relax and unwind. Typically you'll be active and busy for part of the day but then also have time to rest and recharge your batteries.

#### GROUP SIZE:

##### 10 - 16

Maximum group size ranges from between 6 to 20 people, depending on the type of trip, the transport and accommodation used and activities included. We rarely have groups that are smaller than five or six people and the average is 12 people plus an Explore leader.

## Itinerary

Itineraries on some departure dates may differ, please select the itinerary that you wish to explore.

### DAY 1 - Join tour Seville Airport, drive to our base at the Castaño del Robledo.

Arrive at Seville airport, drive 110km (1.5 hours) deep into rural Andalucía to a beautifully converted guesthouse in the heart of the Sierra Aracena Natural Park. Set amidst rural landscapes of cork and chestnut groves, Castaño del Robledo is the highest village in the park. Depending on the arrival time of the flight from London, there may be time for a short wander around the village and the chance to sample some of the great local food.



**Accommodation: Posada del Castano** (or similar)



Simple Guesthouse



Meals Provided: None

### DAY 2 - Explore untouched Andalucía at its best, walking along ancient cobbled pathways to Alájar.

After breakfast head out along a trail to the picturesque 'pueblo blanco' (white village) of Alájar. The trail initially climbs through chestnut groves on an ancient cobbled pathway overhung by huge cork trees. After crossing a low pass, the walking becomes easier as we begin our long descent to Alájar. The views looking southwards over the hills are magnificent, it's possible to pick out the famous, historic mines of Rio Tinto in the far distance. Set in a deep valley, Alájar village is famed for the imposing 17th century shrine of Arias Montano which occupies a rocky outcrop high above the village. The shrine is the focal point of an annual pilgrimage each September, which attracts thousands of people, many on horseback or in colourfully decorated horse drawn carts, who head to Alájar from all the surrounding villages to spend the day eating, drinking, singing and dancing. It's possible to have lunch in one of several bars in the village or alternatively picnic in the surrounding countryside. In July and August we'll return to Castaño by taxi from where we can spend the afternoon by the pool or relax on the terrace of the Posada. Alternatively, there is the option of a horse-ride from the nearby village of Galaroza. Outside of the summer months we plan to return to Castaño on foot via the tiny hamlet of El Calabacino - a stiff but rewarding climb on yet another breath-taking route. Even if returning on foot there is time to go

horse riding this afternoon, experience is needed to take part in this activity. Today's hike covers a distance of 10 kilometres in approximately 5 hours, except in July and August when we return to Castaño by taxi and cover 5 kilometres in approximately 2 hours.



**Accommodation: Posada del Castano** (or similar)



Simple Guesthouse



Meals Provided: Breakfast

### DAY 3 - Mountain biking to one of Sierra's great lakes. Afternoon visit to the charming town of Aracena.

After breakfast drive 15 km to Aracena where we pick up our mountain bikes and, after a safety briefing, set off on a 12½ km ride through pretty countryside down to the shores of one of the Sierra's great lakes. The first eight kilometres descends using an unpaved road through the long, scenic Valley of the "Fuente del Rey". Pass small orchards of Almond, Cherry, Olive and Pomegranate. Further along the trail the landscape becomes wilder with steep wooded hillsides of Pine, Holm Oak and Poplar. Finally we emerge onto the quiet patchy asphalt road that continues another four kilometres along the lakeshore to a picnic area at the head of the lake. We are accompanied throughout by a support vehicle so there is plenty of room to bring lunch, bathing costumes and cold drinks. There's even the opportunity for a limited number of participants to ride in the support vehicle if some feel they no longer wish to cycle. After lunch there is time to take a swim in the lake and then take taxis for the 10km drive to Aracena, returning by a different route. The largest town in the region, Aracena is overlooked by an impressive 13th century Knights Templar church and ruined castle with fine views across the surrounding countryside. The town is most famous for the stunning 'Cave of the Wonders', an extensive collection of huge underground caverns, subterranean lakes and many chambers that are exquisitely adorned with all manner of stalagmites and stalactites. It's one of the largest cave systems in Spain with 12 caverns, 6 underground lakes and galleries with a combined length of over 2 km. Our time here is free to do as you wish and there will be an opportunity to visit the caves (optional), or perhaps enjoying some of the other delights the town has on offer, such as a visit to the castle, or time just to relax and soak up the atmosphere from the street cafes that line the "Gran Via" and the town's pleasant plaza. We return to Castaño del Robledo by charter bus where we can have dinner in one of the village's two restaurants.



**Accommodation: Posada del Castano** (or similar)



Simple Guesthouse



Meals Provided: Breakfast

### DAY 4 - Drive to Mértola in Portugal. Afternoon kayaking on the Guadiana River.

Bidding farewell to Spain, a scenic descent from the sierra brings us to Portugal and the stunning town of Mértola above the confluence of the Oeiras and Guadiana Rivers. Our journey takes us via Serpa, a classic walled town of narrow streets and picturesque houses, blanketed in colourful swathes of bougainvillea. Dominated by the remains of its castle, Serpa provides us with a welcome respite along the way and we will spend a little time exploring the delights of its tranquil streets and castle ramparts before continuing our journey. Look out for White Storks along the route. From January to July virtually all of the posts that carry the electricity cables lining our route have been turned into convenient nesting spots by these ungainly looking birds. After time to have lunch and settle into the hotel in Mertola we take to the waters of the Guadiana River in kayaks. First we drive 18km by road (½ hour) to the ruined stone watermills of Canais at a point on the river some seven kilometres upstream from Mertola in the heart of the Vale do Guadiana Natural Park. The river here is 60 to 80m wide and the journey downstream takes approximately 2 ½ hours through an undulating landscape unspoiled by roads or habitation. Using double seater, fibreglass kayaks this excursion is suitable for all levels and full safety equipment and instruction will be given, however it is essential that any participants are able to swim at least 25m unaided.



**Accommodation: Residencial Beira Rio** (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Meals Provided: Breakfast

## DAY 5 - Spend time exploring Mértola, morning guided riverside walk. Optional 4WD

After breakfast there will be a short orientation walk of the town, highlighting the centres of its Roman, Christian and Islamic occupations, as well as the 13th century castle that dominates the town. Follow its history via a series of exhibitions that each traces the various aspects of the rich cultural and historical heritage of the region. Crossing the old bridge to the south of the town we take an eight kilometre riverside walk downstream from Mertola returning over some low hills to town. Looking back upstream we get some of the best views of Mertola's old walled town spread out around its impregnable castle. The rest of the day has been left free to explore Mértola, with the possibility of a half day optional 4x4 excursion into the outlying districts, taking in some of the surrounding villages, the bizarre, multi-coloured rock landscapes surrounding the old copper mines of Sao Domingos, the spectacular waterfalls of Pulo de Lobo and a lovely lakeside beach where you can relax and enjoy the serene setting of a shaded reservoir.



**Accommodation: Residencial Beira Rio** (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Meals Provided: Breakfast

## DAY 6 - Boat trip to Alcoutim, with an orientation walk on arrival, optional kayaking

At the town quay just 200m from our hotel we take our own specially chartered riverboat for the exciting trip down the Guadiana River to Alcoutim. Our departure time depends on tidal conditions and we break the 3 hour trip with a stop at the tiny 19th century port of Pomerão and also some time at anchor, mid river, to enjoy a refreshing dip in the Guadiana which, for the remainder of its course, forms the border between Spain and Portugal. At 760km the Guadiana is one of the Iberian peninsula's longest rivers. Throughout history periodic floods have devastated communities along its length attested to by various plaques in towns such as Mertola which record the remarkable high water points of days gone by. Yet for over 10 years the river's flow has been largely controlled by the completion of the huge Alqueva dam 120km to the north. In Alcoutim we disembark at the hotel wharf and check into our rooms at the Hotel D'Alcoutim, where our luggage awaits us. After lunch we take a short orientation walk around the town. With around 900 inhabitants Alcoutim is a quaint backwater which offers a number of interesting sights and activities all within easy walking distance. Dominated by its 14th century fortress the town is laid out around the confluence of the Ribeira de Cadavais with the main Guadiana river. The former's small but excellent white sand beach is the town's main tourist attraction offering a cooling swim together with refreshments from a rustic bar/café. Although the beach is only 650m walk from the hotel a popular excursion is to hire kayaks at the hotel and paddle there via the Guadiana and its tributary, perhaps sighting a terrapin or two along the way. From a quayside café on the main river you can watch the skiffs and sailing yachts against the backdrop of Alcoutim's twin village of Sanlúcar a mere 100m away on the Spanish side of the river.



**Accommodation: Hotel D'Alcoutim** (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Swimming pool available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

## DAY 7 - Free day for optional activities including biking, kayaking, zip wire, tennis or sightseeing.

We cross by shuttle boat to Sanlúcar in Spain to commence a delightful 5½ km walking trail that hugs the river south of the town. There are bathing opportunities in a tributary river where the trail ends and from there we take taxis for the two kilometres by road back to town. In Sanlúcar you'll have time to explore the village, climb to the Spanish castle of San Marcos, relax on the Spanish fluvial beach or participate in one of the most exciting optional activities in Portugal. The 720m long international aerial runway


operates from a jump platform high on a hill above Sanlúcar. Travelling at speeds of up to 75 km/hr you'll whizz across the river between the two countries in just over a minute and dismount from a platform just 300m from our hotel. It is the only international aerial runway in the world and also the only one that travels back in time! (The Portuguese time zone is one hour earlier). NB. This activity is available only for persons of 14 years or older. After lunch we return to Portugal where the remainder of the day is free to hire mountain bikes, kayaks, relax on the beach or, for the more energetic, play volley ball or tennis or climb to the ruins of the 10th century Moorish fortress less than 1km north of the hotel.



**Accommodation: Hotel D'Alcoutim** (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Swimming pool available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

DAY 8 - Trip ends in Alcoutim.

The trip ends this morning after breakfast. For those flying back to the UK, driver 95km (1.5 hours) to Faro Airport







Meals Provided: Breakfast

# Family information

Minimum age  
7

# What's included?

			
Included meals	Transport	Trip staff	Accommodation
Breakfast: 7	Bicycle Boat Ferry Minibus On Foot	Explore Tour Leader	3 nights simple guesthouse 4 nights standard hotel

# Trip information

## Country information

### Portugal Holidays & Tours

#### Climate

Overall, spring, early summer and autumn are ideal times for a trip to Portugal - though the weather varies enormously from region to region. The northern high plains has both extremes, stiflingly hot in summer, bitterly cold and swept by freezing winds in winter. The Atlantic coast, in contrast, has a tendency to damp and mist, and a relatively brief, humid summer. The Mediterranean south is warm virtually all year round. The islands have very different weather patterns due to their positioning and can have sudden rain falls throughout the year so waterproofs are recommended even in the summer.

#### Time difference to GMT

0

#### Plugs

2 Pin Round

#### Religion

Roman Catholic

#### Language

Portuguese

### Spain Holidays & Tours

#### Climate

Overall, spring, early summer and autumn are ideal times for a Spanish trip - though the weather varies enormously from region to region. The high central plains suffer from fierce extremes, stiflingly hot in summer, bitterly cold and swept by freezing winds in winter. The Atlantic coast, in contrast, has a tendency to damp and mist, and a relatively brief, humid summer. The Mediterranean south is warm virtually all year round. Spain's Islands the Canaries and Balaerics experience very mild winters and warm summers making them ideal year round destinations.

#### Time difference to GMT

+1

#### Plugs

2 Pin Round

#### Religion

Roman Catholic

#### Language

Castilian Spanish, Catalan, Galician, Basque

## Budgeting and packing

### Optional activities

Please note that whilst many activities are included on this trip, some additional activities are booked and paid for locally and are in addition to the basic holiday price on this Explore 'lite' family holiday. Prices quoted below are based on 2017 rates, 2018 prices will be updated as soon as they become available. Day 2: CastaNo del Robledo - Public pool €2 pp (Only open July and August, closed on Mondays) Day 2: Castaño del Robledo - Horseriding €20 pp for 1 hour, €30 pp for 2 hours. The stables are located in Galaroza, 10km away. Prices exclude transport to/from the stables, the price of which will depend on numbers. Day 3: Aracena - Visit to the Caves on day 3 €8.50 (€6 for under 12's) 50 minute tour, walking around 1.2 kms with 100 steps to climb. Day 5: Mertola - Museum multi entrance ticket €5 Day 5: Mertola - 4x4 excursion on day 5 €35 pp a minimum of 4 and a maximum of 8 participants. The jeep safari lasts around 4 hours. Day 5: Mertola - Abseiling on day 5 fixed price of €250 for a minimum of 8 participants. Days 6 & 7: Alcoutim - Mountain Bike Hire €10 per bike per day (helmet hire available at €5) Days 6 & 7: Alcoutim -

Kayak hire €6 for 1 hour, €10 for half a day Days 6 & 7: Alcoutim - Museum multi entrance ticket €2.50 Days 6 & 7: Alcoutim - International Zipwire €18 pp, minimum age of 14 and maximum weight of 110kg applies. Starts on the Spanish side. Along the 720 metres joining the two countries users cross over the river at speeds between 70 and 80 kilometres per hour, literally flying through time and gaining one hour because of the time zone change between both countries.

## Clothing

Outside of the summer months of June to September Andalucía is generally mild, though the Sierras are subject to some rain, so waterproofs are also recommended for the rare shower. Lightweight cotton clothing is advised from June to September, although for late and early season you may also like to pack a fleece or warm sweater. Don't forget your swimming costumes.

## Footwear

Lightweight walking bootshoes for general travel and sandals/trainers for relaxing. You will also need to bring sandals that you don't mind getting wet - for the canoe excursion.

## Luggage

20kg

## Luggage: On tour

One main piece and a daypack. Remember, you are expected to carry your own luggage - so don't overload yourself.

## Equipment

Insect repellent, high factor suncream (at least factor 15), good quality sunglasses, a torch and a water bottle. You will also need a towel for the canoeing and for swimming and you may want to bring gloves, knee/elbow pads and padded shorts for the cycling. You will need a helmet for your cycle excursion on day 3. You may hire a helmet locally for €5 or you may wish to take your own.

## Tipping

### Local crew

Although entirely voluntary, tipping is a recognized part of life in this region of the world. Some local staff will look to members of the group for personal recognition of particular services provided. In order to make things easier for you, the Tour Leaders may organise a group's tips kitty and if this is the case, they will account for it throughout the tour. Accordingly, you should allow approximately €30 for tipping.

### Country Information

## Portugal Holidays & Tours

### Food and drink

The costs for meals may vary depending upon location, type of restaurant and number of courses eaten and so the prices given are an average guide. Local restaurants located off the beaten track may be less expensive, whereas an upmarket restaurant located in the centre of a major city may charge more.

#### Dinner price

£15

#### Beer price

£2.00 - 3.00 depending on your location, well touristed areas are usually slightly more expensive.

#### Water price

£1.4

### Foreign Exchange

#### Local currency

Euro.

#### Recommended Currency For Exchange

Take the majority of your spending money in Euros cash.

#### Where To Exchange

We recommend that you change any currency into Euros prior to arrival. Bureau de Change are generally only found in major cities and large airports.

#### ATM Availability

Cash-point machines are available in all major towns. Bankcards with the Cirrus logo are accepted.

**Credit Card Acceptance**

Visa and Mastercard are generally accepted in larger restaurants and some shops.

**Travellers Cheques**

Travellers cheques can be exchanged in all major towns but are not recommended due to the high rate of commission.

## Spain Holidays & Tours

### Food and drink

The costs for meals may vary depending upon location, type of restaurant and number of courses eaten and so the prices given are an average guide. Local restaurants located off the beaten track may be less expensive, whereas an upmarket restaurant located in the centre of a major city may charge more.

**Dinner price**

£12.00 - 16.00

**Beer price**

£1.50 - 2.50 (depending on the region/area in Spain)

**Water price**

£1.4

### Foreign Exchange

**Local currency**

Euros

**Recommended Currency For Exchange**

We recommend you take the majority of your spending money in Euros cash.

**Where To Exchange**

We recommend that you change any currency into Euros prior to arrival. Bureau de Change are generally only found in major cities and large airports.

**ATM Availability**

In cities and most major towns.

**Credit Card Acceptance**

Visa and Mastercard are generally accepted in larger restaurants and some shops.

**Travellers Cheques**

Not recommended.

## Transport, Accommodation & Meals

### Transport Information

Bicycle, Boat, Ferry, Minibus, On Foot

### Accommodation notes

**Booking a Single Room**

All of our group tours are planned and operated on a twin-share basis, meaning that the standard cost is based either on individual travellers sharing accommodation with another group member of the same sex, or people who book together sharing accommodation. Please refer to the tour notes where the single room option availability is detailed on a night by night basis for this tour, and the price for the available nights is detailed on the dates & prices tab by departure date. For Self-Guided trips the Single Room supplement offers the option of a single room each and is charged per person. The Single Room supplement also applies to the third person in a party of three that will be accommodated in a single room.

Located on a narrow cobbled street in the mountain village of Castano del Robledo, Posada del Castano was originally a large



traditional Andalucian village house. Lovingly converted into a simple guesthouse the building retains many of its original features including rustic terracotta floor tiles and chestnut roof beams. The house remains cool in summer and cosy in winter thanks to the thick outer walls, whilst the terrace and courtyard serve as perfect outdoor space to enjoy the sunshine. Facilities include an upstairs small lounge complete with comfortable seating, books and games, and a balcony offering views of the red-tiled roof tops of the village set against the lush green hills beyond. A continental breakfast is served in the largest room of the house, with large antique wooden doors opening out onto a covered terrace overlooking the courtyard below and garden beyond. The courtyard features a shaded cushioned bench and a table, whilst the garden has a lawn bordered with flowers amongst the cherry, plum and persimmon trees. The guesthouse offers eight rooms, of which seven have en-suite bathrooms. Rooms are accessed either through the courtyard, the terrace or the upstairs lounge and all have their own unique character. All feature wooden furniture, terracotta tiled floors and roof beams in line with the rest of the house.

## Essential information

### FCO Advice

We strongly recommend that you check your government's travel advisory for up-to-date information and advice about your destination: safety and security, entry requirements, health, local laws and customs. For UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office advice [click here](#).

For more information from Explore about travel advice, [click here](#)

#### Under 18 immigration guidance

Please note that some countries require proof of parental consent when travelling overseas with under 18s. Please check requirements with the relevant embassy or consular office well in advance of travel if this applies to your party.

### Essential Information

Once your booking has been confirmed we guarantee the price will not increase, whatever the circumstances. Before booking please ensure you have read our important tour pricing information. [Booking Conditions](#)

### Visa Information

Spain and Portugal: Visas are not required by UK, Australian, New Zealand, US and Canadian citizens. Other nationalities should consult their local embassy or consular office. All visa information is subject to change. You should confirm all visa related questions with the relevant Embassy prior to departure.

If you do require assistance in obtaining a visa then you may consider applying through Explore's recommended visa service in the UK, Travcour. See [www.travcour.com](http://www.travcour.com) to download the relevant visa application for your trip, if applicable (UK citizens only), along with details of how to apply for your visa through Travcour. The Team at Travcour will be happy to answer specific questions relating to visa applications, please call them directly on 0208 5431846.

### Booking conditions

Before booking your Explore trip, please ensure that you read both our [Essential Information](#) and [Booking Conditions](#).

### Transfers

[Find out more about Trip Transfer Terms and Conditions before you book.](#)

#### Booking a land only package with Explore

Customers who have chosen to book on the 'Land Only' arrangements of our tour, please ensure that you have checked your tour specific 'Joining Instructions' prior to booking your own travel arrangements. Your joining instructions can be found below in the dates and prices information.

You may also be eligible for the Free Explore Transfer.

#### Joining Tour Abroad

Customers booked on the 'Land Only' arrangements will now receive a Free Transfer, provided you arrive and depart on the tour only itinerary start and end dates. The transfers will be from the Explore designated airport or train station to the joining point of your tour, and then back from the ending point to the designated airport or train station. The exception to this rule is customers who are booked on a tour where the joining and ending point is at the designated airport or train station.

Free transfers are not available for Self-Guided, Tailormade or Tours for Churches customers.

If you are not eligible for the Free Transfer then you will need to make your own way through to the joining and ending point. On a majority of our tours Explore will be able to provide a private transfer at an additional cost. Please ask for a quote at the time of booking.

For more information regarding the Explore Free Transfer [click here](#)

### Insurance

It is a condition of booking with Explore that you have adequate valid travel insurance. It is your responsibility to arrange appropriate travel insurance and ensure you have read and understood the full terms and conditions of your travel insurance policy to ensure that you are covered for all activities you intend to undertake whilst on the tour, including all optional activities. Your Insurance Policy must fully cover you for medical expenses and emergency repatriation to your home country. Please ensure your policy includes medical emergency helicopter evacuation in the event of illness or injury and covers the entire duration of your holiday. If you are trekking at altitude please ensure that there is no upper altitude limit which may limit or exclude cover for your trip. Medical and repatriation insurance cover is not mandatory for UK residents who are travelling on trips within the United Kingdom.

Read more information about what travel insurance is required.

## Flight information

Explore offers a wide range of flexible flying options to make joining and leaving our trips easy. [Read more about them here.](#)

### Flight Information

You are able to book this tour on a 'land only' basis or as a 'flight inclusive' package. Your flight inclusive package will be fully protected by the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) ATOL protection scheme.

### Booking a flight inclusive package with Explore

We have a good selection of flights not only from London but from many regional airports around the UK allowing us to compare fares between scheduled carriers as well as low cost and charter airlines. Our dedicated flights team will match the best flight options to your arrival and departure airport.

On our website we display a UK flight inclusive package guide price which is generally based on a London departure. To avoid paying supplements or to secure your preferred flight option, we recommend booking as early as possible, especially for peak travel dates.

## Non refundable permits

## Portugal Holidays & Tours

### Vaccinations

Nothing compulsory but Tetanus is usually recommended as a precaution. Further information regarding vaccinations and travel health advice can be found by following the NHS and NaTHNaC links at <http://www.explore.co.uk/Travelhealth/> and from your local healthcare provider. Vaccination requirements are subject to change and should be confirmed before departure.

---

## Spain Holidays & Tours

### Vaccinations

Nothing compulsory but Tetanus is usually recommended as a precaution. Further information regarding vaccinations and travel health advice can be found by following the NHS and NaTHNaC links at <http://www.explore.co.uk/Travelhealth/> and from your local healthcare provider. Vaccination requirements are subject to change and should be confirmed before departure.

---