

EXPLORE!



On Foot in the Picos de Europa

8 days

Spain - Trip code PC

On Foot in the Picos de Europa

This week-long trekking adventure takes us into the beautiful high mountain scenery of Picos de Europa National Park. We base ourselves in Sotres - the highest inhabited village in the Picos and the ideal location to enjoy some of Spain's finest scenery. Explore the area in depth with walks in the unspoilt and wild landscapes of the western, central and eastern massifs. Hike to the base of the iconic peak Naranjo de Bulnes, and a trek along cliff-cut pathways through the imposing Cares Gorge - over 1,000m deep and 12 kilometres long.

Trip highlights

- ★ **Sotres** - Stay in the highest village in the breathtaking Picos de Europa
- ★ **Covadonga** - Walk via the imposing Basilica Santa Maria to the stunning glacial lakes of the Western Massif
- ★ **Naranjo De Bulnes** - Trek to the base of this iconic limestone peak dating from the Paleozoic Era
- ★ **Garganta de Cares** - Walk along cliff-cut pathways along this dramatic 1000m deep and twelve kilometre long gorge
- ★ **Eastern Massif** - Enjoy spectacular mountain scenery on the ascent to Aldea Col at 1850m

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.

WALKING GRADE:

Moderate

For those who are fit and active, these moderate walks are normally on good paths and tracks at low altitude. Days may include some fairly demanding ascents and descents, so previous experience is preferable but not essential.

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 Asturias (Oviedo) airport; drive to Benia de Onis

Arrive Asturias airport, transfer to Benia de Onis and check-in at hotel. We spend our first night in this tranquil mountain town.



Accommodation: Hotel Maria Manuela (or similar)



Premium Hotel



Swimming pool available



Single room available



Meals Provided: Dinner

DAY 2 - Drive to Covadonga Lakes; Walk to Vegarredonda Refuge

We drive a short distance to Covadonga Lakes visiting the Basilica Santa Maria la Real of Covadonga on route. We start today's trek at Lake Ercina (1,100m) from where we will climb to the refuge at Vegarredonda (1,500m), a walkers rest stop and an opportunity to enjoy a warm drink in the open. From here we will return to the lakes and travel by minibus to Sotres, where we will spend the next six nights. Approximately 6 hours walking (16km, +400 m / - 400 m).



Accommodation: Casa Cipriano Hotel (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast, Lunch & Dinner

DAY 3 - Walk from El Collado de la Caballar to Arenas de Cabrales

We start our day with a short transfer to El Collado de la Caballar (1,100m) from where we start today's walk. We start with a gentle descent to Tobaos Majada (900m) then start our ascent to Collado de Pasadoir (1,215m). We follow the ridge through the pastures of Portudera, Tambrim, and Todrin with some spectacular views (weather permitting) along the ridge of all three massifs before we start our descent to the outskirts of the Arenas de Cabrales - where we join and follow an original cobbled roman road for one and a half kilometres. We return to Sotres for the night. Approximately seven hours walking (17km, +350m / -550m).



Accommodation: Casa Cipriano Hotel (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast, Lunch & Dinner

DAY 4 - Walk to the iconic Naranjo de Bulnes mountain

We drive the short distance down to the collection of red-roofed buildings known as Invernales de Cabao and cross the river. Then, ascending along a series of switch-backs, we gain height quickly to reach a viewpoint looking back towards Sotres. The track levels out now, ascending more gradually onto a plateau. Here stands the tiny hamlet of Pandebano, where, in AD718, a battle took place between the Visigothic Christians and the remnants of a somewhat depleted Moorish army. Leaving our vehicle, we walk up to a 'saddle', where the huge monolith of the Naranjo de Bulnes (Pico Urriellu 2,519m) comes into view. Rearing straight up from the surrounding rockscape, this rust-coloured mountain is the famous iconic image of the Picos. We walk up to the base where there is a refuge and the chance to see climbers attempting to scale the improbable sheer face. We retrace our steps to Pandebano where our transport awaits us to return to our hotel. Approximately seven hours walking (16km, +800m / -800m)



Accommodation: Casa Cipriano Hotel (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast, Lunch & Dinner

DAY 5 - Walk via Treviso to Urdon, La Hermida Gorge; drive to Sotres

We start this morning with a short drive to Jito de Escarandi from where we start our walk at 1,395m. We follow old shepherds' paths down through the Valdediezma beech forest and pastures to Sobra Valley and up to Treviso where we will stop for a lunch break en route. After lunch we will continue down the Balcon de Pilatos to Urdon where we will meet our bus and return to Sotres for the evening. Approximately five hours walking (10km, -1,150m)



Accommodation: Casa Cipriano Hotel (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast, Lunch & Dinner

DAY 6 - Drive to Puente Poncebos; walk the Cares Gorge to Cain and back; drive to Sotres

This morning we drive down through Alpine scenery to Puente Poncebos at 218 m. Here the medieval pack horse bridge spans the Cares river. This marks the starting point for the walk through the dramatic gorge of the Garganta del Cares - a cleft over 1000 m deep and some 12 km long. The path literally cuts into the cliffs in places; only with the aid of tunnels and bridges is it possible to traverse its entire length. This is one of the highlights of any visit to northern Spain and is a six hour round trip on foot, although walkers can turn back at any point and return to Poncebos where there are places to eat and drink if you wish before we return by vehicle to Sotres for a well-earned rest. Approximately six hours walking (24km, +300m / -300m)



Accommodation: Casa Cipriano Hotel (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast, Lunch & Dinner

DAY 7 - Drive to Jito de Escarandi. Walk to Caseton de Andara via Aldea Col; drive to Sotres

A short drive to Jito de Escarandi (1,300m) takes us to the start of our walk to the Caseton Refuge (1,225m) via Aldea Col (1,850m) and the Andara Vegas pastures. From the Col we descend around Macondiu mountain (summit 2,050m) to the refuge for lunch, then continue onto Jito de Escarandi (1,300m) where the minibus will be waiting to return us to Sotres. We will arrange a transfer back to the hotel or you may choose to walk the final 30 minutes back to Sotres. Approximately four and a half hours walking (12km, +/- 1,300m)



Accommodation: Casa Cipriano Hotel (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast & Lunch

DAY 8 - Drive to Asturias (Oviedo) airport

After breakfast we can take in the mountain scenery a final time en route to the airport, where our trip ends.



Meals Provided: Breakfast

Walking and Trekking information

DAILY DISTANCES

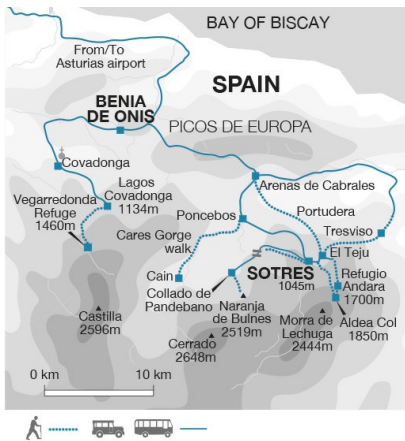
Day 2	23km
Day 3	17km
Day 4	16km
Day 5	10km
Day 6	24km
Day 7	12km

Walking grade

Moderate

Trek details

We walk on 6 days for an average of 4 to 6 hours each day, mainly along mountain paths. We have graded this trek as moderate.



Why book this trip

Situated in the heart of the region's highest village of Sotres, Casa Cipriano is a small family-run hotel perfectly located as a base for exploring the spectacular and little known Picos de Europa mountain range in the heart of northern Spain's Asturias region. A walk through the village leads to a viewpoint of the surrounding peaks. In the evenings relax in the cosy hotel bar and enjoy JuanJo and Sonia's hearty homemade food - On most days breakfast, a picnic lunch and dinner are provided.

What's included?



Included meals

Breakfast: 7
Lunch: 6
Dinner: 6



Transport

Bus
4WD



Trip staff

Explore Tour Leader
Driver(s)



Accommodation

1 nights premium hotel
6 nights standard hotel

Trip information

Country information

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

Clothing

Waterproofs - Breathable waterproofs made from material such as Goretex not only protects against rain and wind but also stops you from overheating. They breathe and avoid condensation which you will experience from nylon waterproofs. Down Jacket - After sunset, temperatures can fall below freezing at the start and end of the season. A down jacket is the lightest and most convenient way of keeping warm when the temperature drops. Thick jumper/fleece jacket - A thick jumper or fleece jacket is necessary as nights can be very cold at altitude. Make sure that your waterproof jacket is loose enough to wear over your sweater or fleece. Technical t-shirts - Keep skin cool and dry in changeable conditions. Thin layers - Best way to keep warm when outside temperature is variable. Shorts - Shorts can be very comfortable to walk in but you must carry long trousers with you in case you get either sunburned or cold. Gloves - Especially useful in the morning and in the evening at higher altitudes. Also bring a scarf to cover your face and a warm hat/balaclava. Socks - It is best to wear technical socks. This helps to protect your feet against blisters. Long Trousers - For everyday walking, light cotton trousers are the most suitable. Jeans are not recommended as they are often difficult to walk in over longer distances and become cumbersome when wet.

Footwear

Bring well-broken in walking boots and comfortable shoes for the evening and when travelling. Gaiters are also useful to keep snow, if present, out of your boots.

Luggage

20kg

Luggage: On tour

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

Equipment

Bring a large enough daysack (at least 25 -30l) to carry the following: Fleece / down jacket and waterproof jacket and trousers
Water Bottle - At least 1l. Water along the trail must never be considered as drinkable. Energy snacks Torch Sunglasses - A good pair of sunglasses are essential for protection against UV rays and glare at high altitudes. Sun Hat, High Factor Sun Cream/Block & Lip Salve - Choose a high factor suncream (Factor 15 or more) to protect your skin against the sun at high altitudes. Wet wipes / hand gel Personal First Aid Kit - On each trek a first aid kit is carried but you should have your own blister kit, supply of plasters, aspirin etc. For an exclusively designed Explore Medical Kit, visit www.nomadtravel.co.uk/explore Plastic Bags - If you pack bits and pieces in plastic bags inside your day sack they will stay dry in case of rain. Trekking poles - Trekking poles are recommended. Also bring chargers and adaptors - These are very hard to get hold of locally.

Tipping

Explore leader

At your discretion you might also consider tipping your Tour Leader in appreciation of the efficiency and service you receive.

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.

Country Information

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

Bus, 4WD

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.

Situated in the heart of the region's highest village of Sotres, Casa Cipriano is a small family-run hotel perfectly located as a base for exploring the spectacular and little known Picos de Europa mountain range in the heart of northern Spain's Asturias region. A walk through the village leads to a viewpoint of the surrounding peaks. The hotel features a bar as well as a restaurant serving home cooked food - not to be missed is the traditional and very delicious La Fabada Asturiana, a hearty soup made with beans, chorizo and black pudding. In winter an open log fire makes for a comfy nook in the bar, whilst in summer the terrace outside is a popular

spot for guests and locals alike. Next door the family also runs a small shop, selling everything from small locally made souvenirs to cheeses and cured hams. Rooms are simple yet cosy and feature tiled floors, wooden furniture and an en suite bathroom with a shower over a small bath tub. Central heating during the winter ensures a comfortable stay. There is a TV and hairdryer in all rooms.

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: Visas are not required by UK, Australian, New Zealand, US and Canadian citizens. Other nationalities should consult their local embassy or consular office.

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 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.

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.
