

# EXPLORE!



## Why book this trip?

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On this cycling adventure in southern Spain we discover Murcia's whitewashed villages and Moorish towers, endless orchards, ancient irrigation channels and layers of history. Murcia enjoys mild winters, a semi-arid climate and averages more than 320 days of sun per year.

- **Peaceful cycling** - Ride on scenic and quiet backroads and cycle paths through varied landscapes
- **White** - washed villages - typical Spanish villages in the Ricote Valley with Moorish roots
- **Tapas y Vino** - Reward yourself with and refuel on delicious Spanish food and wine.



**INCLUDED MEALS**  
Breakfast: 6



**TRIP STAFF**  
Explore Tour  
Leader / Cycle  
guide  
Driver(s)



**TRANSPORT**  
Bus  
Bicycle



**ACCOMMODATION**  
6 nights standard  
hotel



**CYCLING GRADE:**  
Moderate



**GROUP SIZE:**  
10 - 16

## Itinerary

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

### DAY 1 - Tour starts in Murcia. Optional short ride

For those interested there is an optional self-guided ride today to the Fuensanta Sanctuary. The hotel will be able to instruct but you should make your way to the bike rental shop to meet the Leader, where you will be given and fitted with a bike for the week ahead, as well as route notes to follow for the ride. Anybody that doesn't ride today will be given their bike tomorrow morning and will have time to make any necessary adjustments. Please note there is a charge for this optional ride and you pay the bike rental office directly. We recommend you start this at 3pm latest from November to February or 4pm in other months. Later this evening you can meet your fellow travellers properly at the first group dinner. Explore provide airport transfers from Murcia Airport. If you prefer to fly into Alicante airport there is a regular bus service from the airport to Murcia bus station (Alsa, departs every 2 hrs approx, journey takes 1hr approx) (<https://www.alicante-airport.net/bus.php>).

Our total cycling distance today is approximately 18 kilometres (Total 100 metres ascent and descent) (optional).



**ACCOMMODATION:**  
Hotel Arco de San Juan (or similar)

**Grade: Standard Hotel**



**SINGLE ROOM AVAILABLE**



## DAY 2 - Cycle to Caravaca de la Cruz

We drive out from Murcia after breakfast on the only vehicle transfer of the holiday, other than getting to and from the airport. After 45 mins we reach the town of Bullas where we start our ride on the gently graded via verde del noroeste cycle path (a converted railway track). Those that didn't ride yesterday will be given and fitted with their bike this morning. The cycle path leads all the way to Caravaca but we leave it mid-section to ride on quiet country roads up to the hilltop town and interesting old quarter of Cehegin and along the river Argos. We return to the cycle path and on to Caravaca de la Cruz where we spend the next two nights. One of the world's five Holy Cities according to the Vatican (the others are Rome, Jerusalem, Santiago de Compostela and Santo Toribio in the Lebanon), Caravaca de la Cruz becomes busier with Catholic pilgrims during a Holy Year (every seven years). Pilgrims can obtain Eternal Forgiveness in the Holy Year by visiting the church.

Our total cycling distance today is approximately 39 kilometres (300 metres total accumulated ascent and descent).



ACCOMMODATION:  
Hospederia del Carmen (or similar)



Grade: Standard Hotel



SINGLE ROOM AVAILABLE



MEALS PROVIDED: BREAKFAST

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## DAY 3 - Circular ride around Caravaca

On today's ride we discover the nature, beauty and history of the area surrounding Caravaca. Cycling past irrigation channels and elm groves, the route takes us from fountain to fountain passing sites with the remains of Paleolithic, Iberian, Roman and Medieval settlements. The day starts with an ascent of 400 metres spread over 16.5 km to reach the Celtiberian village of Archivel. Then we pick up a waymarked route - 'Itinerario Ecoturístico Archivel-La Encarnación' - that leads us past tiny villages downhill to La Encarnación and eventually back to Caravaca. The final section of around 10 km is along an unsurfaced track that takes us to our hotel in Caravaca. This evening you can enjoy a stroll on the Plaza del Arco square along with the locals and there should be the option to take taxis out to a local restaurant that also brews their own beers.

Our total cycling distance today is approximately 45 kilometres (450 metres total accumulated ascent and descent).





**ACCOMMODATION:**

Hospedería del Carmen (or similar)



**Grade: Standard Hotel**



SINGLE ROOM AVAILABLE



MEALS PROVIDED: BREAKFAST

### **DAY 4 - Cycle to Calasparra via 15th century Moratalla fortress**

We leave Caravaca this morning after breakfast and cycle to Calasparra. As with yesterday, a lot of the ascent is tackled in the morning with two steep ascents of note (150m each), after which the route is mainly downhill to our hotel in Calasparra. We plan to arrive into Moratalla around lunchtime and allow some free time to explore its steep, narrow lanes and 15th-century Christian fortress featuring the 'Torre del Homenaje' (a reconstruction of a Moorish fortress) and 16th-century church of Santa María de la Asunción. On the next section of the ride after leaving Moratalla the countryside becomes more barren, with huge groves of olive trees, almond trees and farmed fields. Wherever you find a bit of water and a river nearby, the orchards and vegetable gardens reappear, as do the rice paddies as you near Calasparra.

Our total cycling distance today is approximately 44 kilometres (450 metres total accumulated ascent and 740 metres descent).



**ACCOMMODATION:**

Hotel Constitucion (or similar)



**Grade: Standard Hotel**



SINGLE ROOM AVAILABLE



MEALS PROVIDED: BREAKFAST

### **DAY 5 - Cycle past almond and apricot orchards to Cieza**

This morning we ride out to the 'Virgen de la Esperanza Sanctuary' (Our Lady of Hope), the patron saint of Calasparra whose 12th century shrine is a cave carved into the rock face over the banks of the Segura

river. From here our cycle ride heads on to Cieza and along the way we will encounter very few villages, riding on peaceful country roads, with views to the surrounding hills and past the Alfonso XIII Reservoir. As we return to the Segura river the landscape turns into a patchwork of almond and apricot orchards, a symphony in shades of pink with springtime blossom. Known locally as La Floracion, the spring blossom is best in the countryside surrounding Cieza. The bloom usually runs from mid-Feb to late March. The final 6.5 km follows a quiet road along the river to reach the lively town of Cieza. It is possible to shorten the ride today by 13km if you do not visit the Esperanza Sanctuary. Those interested can cycle (uphill) out of Cieza to visit the Moorish archaeological site of Siyasa, returning the same way.

Our total cycling distance today is approximately 46 kilometres (480 metres total accumulated ascent and 630 metres descent).



ACCOMMODATION:  
Hotel San Sebastian (or similar)

Grade: Standard Hotel



SINGLE ROOM AVAILABLE



MEALS PROVIDED: BREAKFAST

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## DAY 6 - Ride through the scenic Ricote Valley back to Murcia

The Segura River and ancient irrigation channels will mark our way from the pleasant town of Cieza to Archena. The scenery changes today as we ride in the Ricote Valley whose arid slopes contrast with the oasis-like orchards studded with palm trees fed by the river. We pass villages, such as Abaran, Blanca, Ojos and Ulea that were Murcia's last Moorish stronghold in the 15th century. From Archena we follow roads through some industrial areas and busy small towns before a peaceful final section of via verde cycle path for 12km along the banks of the Segura river back into Murcia. Around 10% of today's route is on unpaved surfaces. Tonight we can reflect on and celebrate the week with a final supper in Murcia.

Our total cycling distance today is approximately 57 kilometres (200 metres total accumulated ascent and 340 metres descent).



ACCOMMODATION:  
Hotel Arco de San Juan (or similar)

Grade: Standard Hotel





SINGLE ROOM AVAILABLE



MEALS PROVIDED: BREAKFAST

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### **DAY 7 - Trip ends in Murcia**

Our trip ends this morning in Murcia after breakfast.



MEALS PROVIDED: BREAKFAST

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## **Trip information**

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### **Country information**

#### **Spain**

##### **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

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### **Budgeting and packing**

#### **Optional activities**

The following excursions and/or activities are usually available and may be arranged locally. Estimated costs are provided below for guidance only, are on a per person basis unless shown otherwise, and may depend on the number of participants. Prices quoted are correct as of the date these tour notes were

originally issued but may change at any time due to currency fluctuations. Please note: These activities are booked and paid for direct with the supplier and do not form part of your Explore holiday contract.

Murcia - day 1 optional ride bike hire 15 Euros

Caravaca de la Cruz - Museum of the Caballos del Vino 3 Euros, Hospedería Molino del Rio dinner and taxi 35 Euros

Moratalla - 15th-century Christian fortress 2 Euros, 16th-century church of Santa María de la Asunción free entry

Calasparra - Virgen de la Esperanza Sanctuary free entry, donations welcomed

Cieza - Museo Siyasa free entry

## Clothing

When cycling: quick drying cycle tops, padded cycle shorts, lightweight wind and water proof jacket and warmer breathable layers where local conditions require. Cycling gloves are strongly recommended as they will protect you from sunburn and may also help protect your hands if you fall.

General: Pack essentially for hot or mild weather depending on the time of the year. A warm sweater or fleece and long trousers are advisable for the evenings especially in early and late season when the weather tends to be cooler. A rain jacket is also recommended.

## Footwear

If you are not bringing cycle shoes then try to bring stiff-soled shoes as these are better for cycling - transmitting your energy into the pedals more efficiently. This becomes more relevant and recommended the more demanding the grade and distances to cover. SPD cycle shoes are not well suited to tours that combine sightseeing with cycling so please check the trip notes.

Comfortable shoes, trainers, sandals or flip flops are useful when not on the bike.

## Luggage

20kg

### Luggage: On tour

We recommend you bring a daypack and one main piece of luggage (total allowance: 44lb/20kg) which will be transported between hotels while you cycle. Check the bike details section to see if a pannier or handlebar bag is provided on the bike. Remember you are expected to carry your own luggage so don't overload yourself.

## Equipment

On all Explore cycle holidays we strongly recommend you bring along and wear your cycle helmet. It is a legal requirement in Spain to wear a helmet that meets current safety criteria. In case of an accident resulting in personal injury, certain insurance policies are invalidated in cases where a helmet was not being worn.

Cycle glasses to protect against dust, pollen and the sun, padded cycle gloves and a water bottle or water delivery system (e.g. camelback or platypus) are also useful. You may choose to bring your own gel seat cover for added comfort. If a handle bar bag or pannier is not provided (check bike details) then you may like to bring a small rucksack to wear while cycling. Other items to consider bringing are a sunhat and sun

cream, torch, earplugs and insect repellent. Please carry some or all of your cycling equipment e.g. helmet as part of your hand luggage. You may find it useful to bring along a penknife and fork for the picnic lunches.

## 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.

10% tip is recommended at meal times.

## Spain

### 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.

<b>Lunch price</b>	<b>Dinner price</b>	<b>Beer price</b>
£8.00 - 12.00	£16.00 - 20.00	£1.50 - 3.50 (depending on the region/area in Spain)

**Water price**  
£1.4

### Foreign Exchange

<b>Local currency</b>	<b>Recommended Currency For Exchange</b>
Euros	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.



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## Transport, Accommodation & Meals

### Transport Information

Bus, Bicycle

### Accommodation notes

Standard - Our 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.

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### 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.

#### Price Guarantee

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 and Passport 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](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.

It is your responsibility to ensure that you are in possession of a full passport, with the correct validity for your chosen destination.

#### 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 complimentary transfers will be arranged from the Explore designated airport or train station to your trips joining point, and then back from the ending point to the designated airport or train station. Generally the airport or station that Explore have selected will be the one that is closest to the town or city where the trip starts, or the one nearest to the joining point. It will be either an airport or train station but not both.

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, Polar, 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. The cost of many of our Polar Voyages will exceed the capped amount covered by standard insurance premiums and you will be required to pay an additional premium to cover the full value of your trip. Please ensure that you are covered for the full amount of your holiday cost, as insufficient cover could invalidate a claim under the policy. 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.

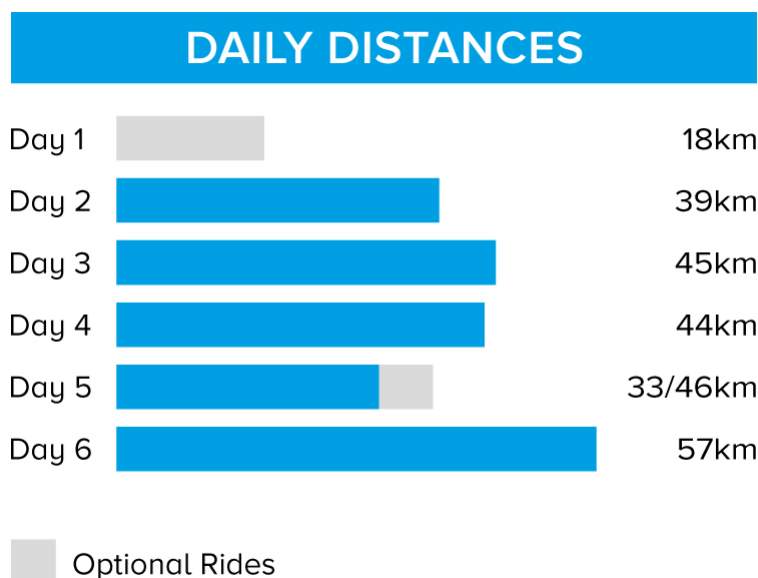
## Spain

### Vaccinations

Nothing compulsory but Tetanus is usually recommended as a precaution. Please check the latest requirements with your travel clinic or doctor prior to departure. The above is not an exhaustive list. Further information regarding vaccinations and travel health advice can be found by following the NHS and NaTHNaC links at Explore Travel Health and from your local healthcare provider. Visa and vaccination requirements are subject to change and should be confirmed by you before travelling.

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## Cycling information



CMU Distance Chart

## General cycling information

On this tour we cycle 218 km over five days (an average of 44 km per day) with a further optional 31 km available. The route mostly follows well-surfaced tarmac lanes and secondary roads with little traffic plus a few dirt tracks. Inevitably, near the larger towns we will encounter more traffic. Apart from on the first optional self-guided ride, the Tour Leader leads the rides while luggage is transferred between hotels. A support vehicle does not accompany the rides. We have graded the

route as moderate.

### **Bike included**

27 gear Bergamont Horizon hybrid bikes with front suspension. Electric bikes (e-bikes) are available for an additional cost for the duration of the holiday. Please contact us for more details or to request your e-bike.

### **Bike information**

Your included bike is a 27 gear Bergamont Horizon hybrid with front suspension or similar make and model and will be the correct frame size for your height. Female and male frames are allocated accordingly when booking unless you specifically request otherwise. A pannier and water bottle holder are included as well as the facility to fit your own pedals or saddle if you wish to bring them. We provide spare parts and take care of the day to day maintenance. All you need to bring is your own helmet.

Electric bikes (available for an additional cost) will be the Ecobike Elegance. Please note this is with a 26" unisex step-through frame. A pannier is included. Please contact us for more details or to request your e-bike.

### **Cycling grade**

Moderate

 <p><b>AWARD WINNING EXPLORE LEADERS</b></p>	 <p><b>PRICE GUARANTEE PROMISE</b></p>	 <p><b>AIRPORT TRANSFERS</b></p>
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