

EXPLORE!



Self-Guided Rioja Cycling

7 days

Spain - Trip code CSRR

Self-Guided Rioja Cycling

This self-guided cycling trip takes you through the vineyards, rolling countryside and picturesque villages of La Rioja. Planting, harvesting and wine-making rule the local calendar, while historic towns adorn the countryside. Along your route you can visit impressive wine estates and soak up the history and culture of this fascinating region. Each evening, look forward to the famous regional gastronomy.

Trip highlights

- ★ **Cycle La Rioja** - Ride past the famed vineyards of the Ebro Valley and visit historic villages
- ★ **Wine and Tapas** - Excellent local wines complimented by superb regional cuisine
- ★ **Sierra de la Demanda** - Cycle the foothills of the Demanda range to the birthplace of the Spanish language
- ★ **Camino de Santiago** - Cross the pilgrims' trail (St James' Way) at Santo Domingo de la Calzada

ACCOMMODATION GRADE:

Premium

Our premium accommodation is hand-picked and chosen for its character, location or local importance. These properties have excellent facilities and a higher level of comfort and service. They provide the perfect wind down after an active day.

CYCLING GRADE:

Easy To Moderate

This grade is ideal if you want to enjoy both easy and moderate rides on the same tour. You'll be cycling through flat or gently undulating terrain, with the occasional more energetic ascent.

Itinerary

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

DAY 1 - Trip starts in Ezcaray

Your holiday starts at Santo Domingo bus station where you will be met and driven to your accommodation in Ezcaray. You can travel to Santo Domingo bus station by public transport or private transfer; alternatively a direct taxi transfer from the airport to Ezcaray can also be arranged at additional cost. Sitting in the foothills of the Sierra de la Demanda Mountains, the pretty town of Ezcaray is an hour and a half's bus journey from Bilbao Airport. Here, the first two nights of your holiday are spent in a welcoming and family-run hotel in the pedestrianized town centre. Depending on your arrival time, you may choose to visit the bicycle shop and test out the bikes on a 20 kilometre ride through the foothill villages of Posada, Zaldierna and Urdante. You will be required to sign an agreement of care upon receipt of the bike. We also recommend taking time to explore your host town. Built between the 12th and 14th centuries, the church of Santa María la Mayor is worth a visit. Its impressive Aragonese Gothic style is unique in La Rioja. Ezcaray offers a good choice of restaurants and tapas bars for this evening's dinner.

Your total optional cycling distance today is approximately 20 kilometres (160 metres total ascent, 160 metres total descent).

Hotel Casa Masip

This boutique hotel is centrally located in the village of Ezcaray and run by the charming Masip family. Facilities include a lounge area, restaurant and gastrobar.



Accommodation: Hotel Casa Masip (or similar)



Premium Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: None

DAY 2 - Circular route via Santo Domingo de la Calzada

On your first day of cycling, a circular route will take you through La Rioja's beautiful painter's palette of grain fields, orchards and sunflowers, as well as shady woodlands. After riding downstream through the Oja River Valley, you head into the hills. Stopping off in Santo Domingo de la Calzada, the cathedral here merits a visit. You may be struck by the number of pilgrims passing through this town on their journey to Santiago de Compostela. Your return route takes you along the Via Verde - an old railway track that has been converted into a cycling path.

Your total cycling distance today is approximately 48 kilometres (300 metres total ascent, 300 metres total descent).



Accommodation: Hotel Casa Masip (or similar)



Premium Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

DAY 3 - Pedal to Badarán via UNESCO World Heritage monasteries

The first part of this morning's route takes you back along the Via Verde, but in the opposite direction. After turning off onto gravel tracks to the village of Gallinero de la Rioja (the Riojan Chicken Coop), you will follow a tarmac road to San Millán de la Cogolla. This remote village at the foot of the Sierra de Demanda is home to the UNESCO World Heritage monasteries of Yuso and Suso. A fine Romanesque church built to honour St Millán still stands at the site of Suso. It was here that the first literature was produced in Castilian, from which the Spanish language derived. In the early 16th century, the monks moved to the neighbouring monastery of Yuso and it remains a thriving community today. You may choose to take a guided tour of these treasures before continuing north to the wine-producing village of Badarán - your base for tonight.

Your total cycling distance today is approximately 40 or 44 kilometres (400 metres total ascent, 585 metres total descent).

Hotel Conde de Badaran

Located on the outskirts of the quaint little town Badaran, this hotel offers great views of the mountains and surrounding countryside. The hotel also has a great restaurant serving traditional meals, but is also within walking distance of the town.



Accommodation: Hotel Conde de Badaran (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

DAY 4 - Bike across plains to San Vicente de la Sonsierra

Today's route to San Vicente de la Sonsierra takes you across the plains of the Rioja Alta, by way of Alesanco, Azofre and Briones. On your way, you may choose to visit Vivanco winery, with its vast collection of wine-making paraphernalia, including some 3500 corkscrews. In addition, their gardens are home to over 200 varieties of grapevines. With its beautiful Medieval bridge and impressive Gothic church, the pretty town of San Vicente de la Sonsierra will be your base for the last three nights of the holiday. Your cosy hotel here is situated in the historic town centre.

Your total cycling distance today is approximately 30 kilometres (200 metres total ascent, 325 metres total descent).

Hotel Villa Sonsierra

Located in the 'High Rioja' in the historic village of San Vicente de la Sonsierra, the Hotel Villa Sonsierra is on the hill close to a marvellous castle and the church of Santa Maria la Mayor. The decoration of each of the thirteen rooms is unique and related to the local wines and vineyards. Facilities include a breakfast room, restaurant, wine cellar and library dedicated to the world of wine and local production.



Accommodation: Hotel Villa Sonsierra (or similar)



Premium Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

DAY 5 - Loop ride into Alava

Today's circular route takes you into Alava - the Basque province of the Rioja wine region. Here, every square inch of fertile soil across this rolling landscape has been covered in grapevines, with Medieval villages sitting on hilltops. On your route, you will pedal through the historic town of Laguardia and the wine-making village of Elciego, where you will find the intriguing and avant-guard Marques de Riscal Estate, designed by Frank Gehry. Your return route to San Nicente takes you along quiet country lanes through vineyards near the River Ebro.

Your total cycling distance today is approximately 41 kilometres (580 metres total ascent, 580 metres total descent).



Accommodation: Hotel Villa Sonsierra (or similar)



Premium Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

DAY 6 - Circular route along the River Ebro to Haro

Today's circular route takes you along the banks of the winding River Ebro to the Rioja wine capital of Haro. Along the way, you'll pedal past lovely spots, such as La Bastide and Abalos. Should you prefer, there is the option of doing the first section along gravel roads instead of the slightly longer tarmac route.

Your total cycling distance today is approximately 28 or 31 kilometres (285 metres total ascent, 285 metres total descent), depending on the route you take.



Accommodation: Hotel Villa Sonsierra (or similar)



Premium Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

DAY 7 - Trip ends in San Vicente de la Sonsierra

After breakfast, at a designated time you will be driven to Haro bus station where the organised part of your holiday comes to an end. From Haro bus station you can catch a bus back to Bilbao. A direct taxi transfer to Bilbao can also be arranged.

 Meals Provided: Breakfast

Cycling information

DAILY DISTANCE



General cycling information

On this journey you cycle 187 km over five days (an average of 37 km per day) with further optional rides available. The terrain is mostly gently undulating, more pronounced on days 3, 5 and 6, with some flat sections mixed in. Most of the route is on tarmac roads with about 15% on gravel roads in good condition. We have graded the route as easy to moderate.

Bike included

24 gear Specialized Crosstrail hybrid bike with front suspension.

Bike information

Your included bike is a 24 gear Specialised Crosstrail hybrid bike with front suspension and will be the correct frame size for your height. Each bike is fitted with a lateral pannier bag (30 litre capacity) as well as a handlebar map note holder. A water bottle holder is provided as well as the facility to fit your own pedals (9.5mm) or saddle post (27.2mm) if you wish to bring them. A lock, pump, spare inner tube and puncture repair kit with tyre levers will be provided. You will be required to sign an agreement of care upon receipt of the bike. All you need to bring is your own helmet.

Cycling grade

EasyToModerate



Why book this trip

Unlike many other operators, we include the hire of your bike in the overall cost of the holiday: you don't need to bring your own or pay extra to hire one locally. We also provide a pump, lock, spare inner tube and tyre levers. All you need bring is your own helmet.

What's included?



Included meals

Breakfast: 6



Transport

Bicycle
Car



Accommodation

5 nights premium hotel
1 nights standard hotel

Trip information

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

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.

Day 3 - Yuso Monastery is well worth a visit. Open Tuesday to Sunday there are guided visits (entrance costs around 6 Euros). Suso Monastery is also open Tuesday to Sunday. Visits to this site must be booked in advance locally (entrance costs around 4 Euros).

Day 4 - Visit the wine museum in Briones, open Tuesday to Sunday (entrance costs around 7.50 Euros).

Day 5 - Ysios Winery is open Monday to Friday for visits and there are English speaking tours at 16:00 each day. En-route perhaps stop in Laguardia to visit the unusual and ornately decorated church.

Day 6 - Stop off at Haro's Contemporary Art museum (check with local Tourist Board for opening times).

Clothing

Bring cycling gear such as quick drying cycle tops, padded cycle shorts and cycle gloves. Remember weather is slightly more changeable in Ezcaray, at the foot of the Demanda mountains and it can be cool, especially at night and at the start and end of the season, so bring a warmer jacket/fleece. A raincoat is essential at all times in case of rain.

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

Luggage: On tour

Bring one main piece of baggage as per your airline luggage allowance, maximum 20 kg per person. Remember you are expected to carry your own luggage if using public transport so don't overload yourself. Luggage transfers between hotels are normally arranged by the hoteliers. Please note luggage transfers are restricted to 15 kg per person, any additional weight will need to be packed in your day bag or pannier bag. Mark your bags clearly and leave them at the place and time arranged with them. When travelling on public transport you should always take your luggage with you.

Luggage transfer

Included between hotels

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, insects, pollen, sun etc) , cycle gloves (padded for more comfort) and a water bottle or water delivery system (eg camelback or platypus). Please note that it is a legal requirement to wear a helmet while cycling in Spain. In case of an accident resulting in personal injury, certain insurance policies (explore included) are invalidated in cases where a helmet was not being worn. Helmet hire is included and will be provided with the bike, but you may prefer to bring your own. 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. Please carry some or all of your cycling equipment e.g. helmet as part of your hand luggage.

Country Information

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.

Lunch price

£8.00 - 12.00

Dinner price

£16.00 - 20.00

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, Car

Recommended airport

Bilbao

Flying to your destination

We'd recommend outbound and inbound flights into Bilbao Airport which are served by both budget (including Easyjet, Vueling) and non-budget airlines (including Iberia) from multiple airports in the UK.

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.

Premium - Hand-picked and chosen for their character, location or local importance, these properties have excellent facilities and a higher level of comfort and service. They provide the perfect wind down after an active day.

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.

Arrival and departure information

By public transport from Bilbao airport

From Bilbao airport to Bilbao Termibus city centre:

Line 3247 Bizkaibus departs every 20 mins between 6.20am and midnight (duration 30 mins, 1.50Euros)

From Bilbao Termibus to Haro (on the Bilbao - Logroño line)

Timetable information can be found here <http://cuadrabuslineas.com/en/horarios-y-frecuencias/>

From Haro to Santo Domingo de la Calzada there are 7 buses on workdays; 3 on Saturdays and 1 on Sundays (duration 20mins, 7Euros)

For timetable please consult the HARO - STO. DOMINGO pdf:

<http://www.autobuseslaunion.com/en/print-timetables.asp>

By public transport from Haro Bus Station

From Haro to Bilbao Termibus there are 7 buses on workdays, 4 on Saturdays and 3 on Sundays (duration 1hr, 10Euros)

For timetable please consult the BILBAO - HARO pdf:

<http://www.autobuseslaunion.com/en/print-timetables.asp>

From Bilbao Termibus city centre to the airport:

Line 3247 Bizkaibus departs every 20 mins between 6.20am and midnight (duration 30 mins, 1.50Euros)

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, US, New Zealand, US or 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 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 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, 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.
