

FRANCE & SPAIN – WALKING IN THE BASQUE PYRENEES

7-days / 6-nights walk from the Pyrenees, France to San Sebastian, Spain.



In the valleys and mountains of southwest France food and wine play an important role in every itinerary, as do the seasons and seasonal foods and the flowers and wildlife, especially in spring or in the autumn.

For this special itinerary where wine and good food complement beautiful walking, we have invited *Minette Constant MW*, a British Master of Wine who lives with her family in the Béarn, overlooking the Pyrenees, to help with our interpretation of the splendid wines along the route. Minette will introduce you to the wonderful varietals from this corner of France as well as tasting some vintage and non-vintage champagne and enjoying more general wine conversation, naturally with the help of a good bottle or two.

Cost from: **\$4640** per person twin share Single room supplement from \$745 (limited availability)

Departs: Ask for details

Tour includes: 6 nights in comfortable, quality hotels, inns and private homes with ensuite bathroom; All meals and wine (and pre meal evening drinks); Fully guided walking, support staff and vehicle, luggage transfers, All local transport for the walks and knowledgeable guides; Maximum group size of 14.

Not included: Transport to and from the walk and personal expenses



Call OUTDOOR TRAVEL on 1800 331 582 for details or reservations



Suggested itinerary:

Day 1: Arrive Biarritz, transfer to Béthouzet

Meet at Biarritz airport and transfer to accommodation at a beautiful manor house overlooking the Pyrenees, where we stay two nights. This is a very pretty 18th Century property with a swimming pool and six spacious bedrooms all with an en suite bathroom. Dinner is at a restaurant in the nearby village of Laas.

Day 2: Walking & wine tasting

walk @ 11km

After breakfast we drive along country lanes to begin our morning walk. Views of the Pyrenees as we wander back to the manor house for a picnic lunch. In the afternoon there is an optional visit to the lovely Chateau de Laas, set on the banks of the river Gave d'Oléron. Once owned by the former chairman of the French Antiques Society it now boasts an extraordinary antiques collection. We return to the house for wine tasting with Minette Constant and the first of several of wines from southwest France. Dinner at the manor house.

Day 3: St Etienne de Baigorry & Sare

walk @ 10km

We travel to St Etienne de Baigorry and visit an Irouleguy chapel and vineyard. The wine was first made by monks for pilgrims on their way to Santiago de Compostela. Now one of the classic reds of the Southwest, it is made with the Tannat grape grown on red sandstone terraces. We visit a trout farm (renowned for its smoked trout) and then transfer to our downhill walk to the Aldude Valley. Arriving in Sare, we stay for two nights in a lovely, historic 4-star hotel situated on the central square of this pretty Basque village. Dinner is at the hotel.

Day 4: Sare to Ainhoa

walk @ 12km

We walk towards the village of Ainhoa. A little up and down in the small hills between the two villages in this almost crater-like bowl before arriving in this classic Basque village dotted with red and white painted houses. Lunch is in a small restaurant in Ainhoa serving traditional Basque fare before an optional walk uphill to the tiny chapel, rewarded by outstanding views over to the Atlantic and to the foothills of the Pyrenees (known locally as the Pyrenankles). Dinner is at the hotel, outside in the square.

Day 5: Sare to Bera

walk @ 11km

After a traditional breakfast before we set off into the mountains for Spain towards Bera. We picnic on the way, with Spanish wines and Basque ham (from free roaming pigs that feed on local chestnuts which lends the ham a delicious sweet flavour). After lunch we walk on to Bera where there is time for a coffee or *cerveza* before we drive to San Sebastian. We stay two nights in a 3-star hotel overlooking Bahia de la Concha.



Day 6: Guggenheim Museum, Bilbao

We leave for Bilbao and the world-renowned Guggenheim Museum after a relaxed breakfast. Designed by Frank Gehry it was specifically built to house large modern or contemporary art exhibitions of global significance. It is without doubt one of the most beautiful buildings in Europe. Gehry designed it around the

idea of boat lines and fish and, clad in titanium, it has a wonderfully curvilinear and scaly quality, with a tremendous sense of light. Jeff Koons' 15-metre puppy of flowers guards the museum like Cerberus.

In the afternoon we return to San Sebastian. This is a very special city on a perfect bay with a small island. It is known as the gastronomic capital of Europe having more Michelin-starred restaurants per square metre of city than any other! We plan to end the day with a fresh fish dinner at a restaurant on the bay and we stay overnight at a beautifully-positioned hotel overlooking the bay.

Day 7: Departure day

After breakfast we return to France for a light lunch on the main square of Saint Jean de Luz. This is another beautiful French port of historic interest as it was the port where Louis XIV married Marie-Therese. Much of the old port retains its late 17th Century beauty having been rebuilt at this time following the disastrous fire set by the Spanish in 1558. We then continue to Biarritz airport, where tour arrangements end.



Other walking holidays in this style included gastronomic walks in rural **Suffolk** in England in summer and **The Best of the St James Way**, taking in the best of the *Chemin St Jacques* or *Way of St James* from Le Puy en Velay to Conques in France. If you are interested in good food and cooking **Outdoor Travel** also offers **French Cooking and Walking, A Taste of Truffles** – ask for details.

Outdoor Travel's walking holidays, guided in small groups or self-guided inn-to-inn, are available in many parts of Europe. Consider **Tuscany, Umbria, Piedmont, the Amalfi Coast, the Cinque Terre, or the Dolomites** in Italy. In Spain we offer walks in **Andalucia** or in the **Alpajurras Mountains**; in France choose **Provence** or **Burgundy, the Vermillion Coast, Corsica, Burgundy, Alsace, the Loire** or **Auvergne**. For long-distance walks consider the **Via Francigena**, the pilgrims' *road to Rome*, or England's **Coast to Coast**.

Contact OUTDOOR TRAVEL for more details, brochures and reservations

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