

FRANCE & SPAIN: BASQUE COUNTRY

8-days / 7-nights two-centre GUIDED walking and sightseeing tour



The Basque Country in south-west France and northern Spain, including the Atlantic coast and the foothills of the Pyrenees, seem somewhat removed from both France and Spain. Historically they have been fiercely independent for many centuries giving them more in common with each other than they do with France or Spain. The region offers a rich and unique culture – much in common with Celtic nations – it has its own language, music, unique buildings and architecture and of course cuisine and wine.

On this walking holiday we spend time on both sides of the border so we can see for ourselves the differences and similarities. We are based three nights in picturesque Ascaïn in the foothills of the French Pyrenees, then four nights in the fishing village of Getaria on the Bay of Biscay near San Sebastian in Spain.

In France we explore the *Pays Basque* with its people who are so proud of their heritage and culture. We take a guided walk up Mount Esnaur with the chance to spot the local Pottok horse along the way, and ride a train to the summit of La Rhune for spectacular views towards the Atlantic Coast.

In Spain we are in the *Pais Vasco* with its own rich history, traditions and world-renowned gastronomy. We walk through coastal landscapes and *Txakoli* wines near San Sebastian where we explore the city and its architecture.

Departs: 9th May; 20th June; 5th September, 2020

Cost from: \$3510 per person (twin share) Single room supplement from \$600 (limited availability)

Tour includes: 7 nights in a comfortable hotel room with ensuite bathroom, 7 breakfasts, 7 evening meals, experienced walks leader guiding walks on 5 days, local transport to/from the walks and between centres.

Not included: Meals & drinks not mentioned in the itinerary, personal expenses, transport or excursions on your free day. Transfers from/to Bilbao airport can be pre-booked at extra cost – ask for details when booking.

Accommodation: In France we stay 3 nights at the 3-star Hotel de la Rhune close to the centre of the peaceful town of Ascaïn in the heart of French Basque Country. In Spain we stay 4 nights at the 3-star Hotel Saiaz. This Gothic building in the old town offers historic details and modern comforts, with views over the Bay of Biscay.

Footpath and walking information



Medium Walks: In the Pyrenean foothills walking up to 13km on steeper and rougher terrain with up to 475m of ascent and 855m descent in a day. Many walks are on trails that are rocky and uneven.

Call OUTDOOR TRAVEL on 1800 331 582 for details or reservations



Suggested itinerary: *subject to change at the walking guide's discretion*

Day 1: Arrive Ascaïn. Plan to arrive in Ascaïn mid-afternoon (ask about transfer at set time from Bilbao airport, at extra cost) and after dinner meet your leaders and other walkers.

Day 2: Ascaïn

Enjoy an introduction to the local area with a walk to the summit of Mount Esnaur (273m), one of the mountains near Ascaïn, in the foothills of the Pyrenees. With luck we may see one of the local Pottok horses, a local wild breed of pony, used as pit ponies in mines and by smugglers, due to their size and strength.

Day 3: La Rhune summit

After breakfast it's a short journey by local bus to the Col de Saint Ignace. From here we take a tourist train to the summit of La Rhune where weather depending you will enjoy spectacular views of the Atlantic coast. The summit sits on the border of France and Spain before descending back to the col.

Day 4: Ascaïn – San Sebastian – Getaria

Leaving France we cross into Spain, to the coastal town of Pasaia and we visit the Victor Hugo House museum, where the author lived in 1843. From there we take a small boat across the river to the start of our walk. We follow part of the *Camino Norte* pilgrimage route, a variant of the Camino de Santiago, ascending along stone steps before walking an undulating trail through pine forest and along the coastline. Our coastal walk takes us to San Sebastian we then transfer to Getaria for the next four nights at the Hotel Saiaz.

Day 5: Free day

Each week there is a free day when no guided walks are offered. You may like to simply relax at the hotel, walk independently or visit local places of interest. In Getaria, perhaps visit the church and explore the old city walls and fishing port or go to the Balenciaga fashion museum, or take the train to San Sebastian or Bilbao.

Day 6: Zumaia

In the morning transfer by public transport to the bayside town of Zumaia for a coastal walk following the Camino Norte and GR121. This route takes in some of the finest Spanish Basque coastline and views.

Day 7: Zarautz to Getaria

Take a short transfer by public transport for a walk from the beach at Zarautz back to Getaria. We follow the coastline before taking a loop trail around Getaria amidst the *Txakoli* vineyards.

Day 8: Departure day. Tour ends after breakfast. Ask about transfer to Bilbao airport at set time, at extra cost.

Outdoor Travel offers guided or self-guided walks in most destinations within Europe, including the **Cinque Terre** and **Amalfi Coast** in Italy, **Provence** and the **French Riviera**, the **Cyclades Islands** in Greece and in many areas in the UK such as the popular **Coast to Coast** trail, the **Yorkshire Moors**, **Cotswolds**, **Scottish Highlands**, **Snowdonia** in Wales or the English **Lake District**. Pilgrimage walks are available on the **Camino de Santiago** from Le Puy to Santiago de Compostela in Spain, or the **Via Francigena**, the 'road to Rome'.

Contact **Outdoor Travel** for more details and reservations:

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