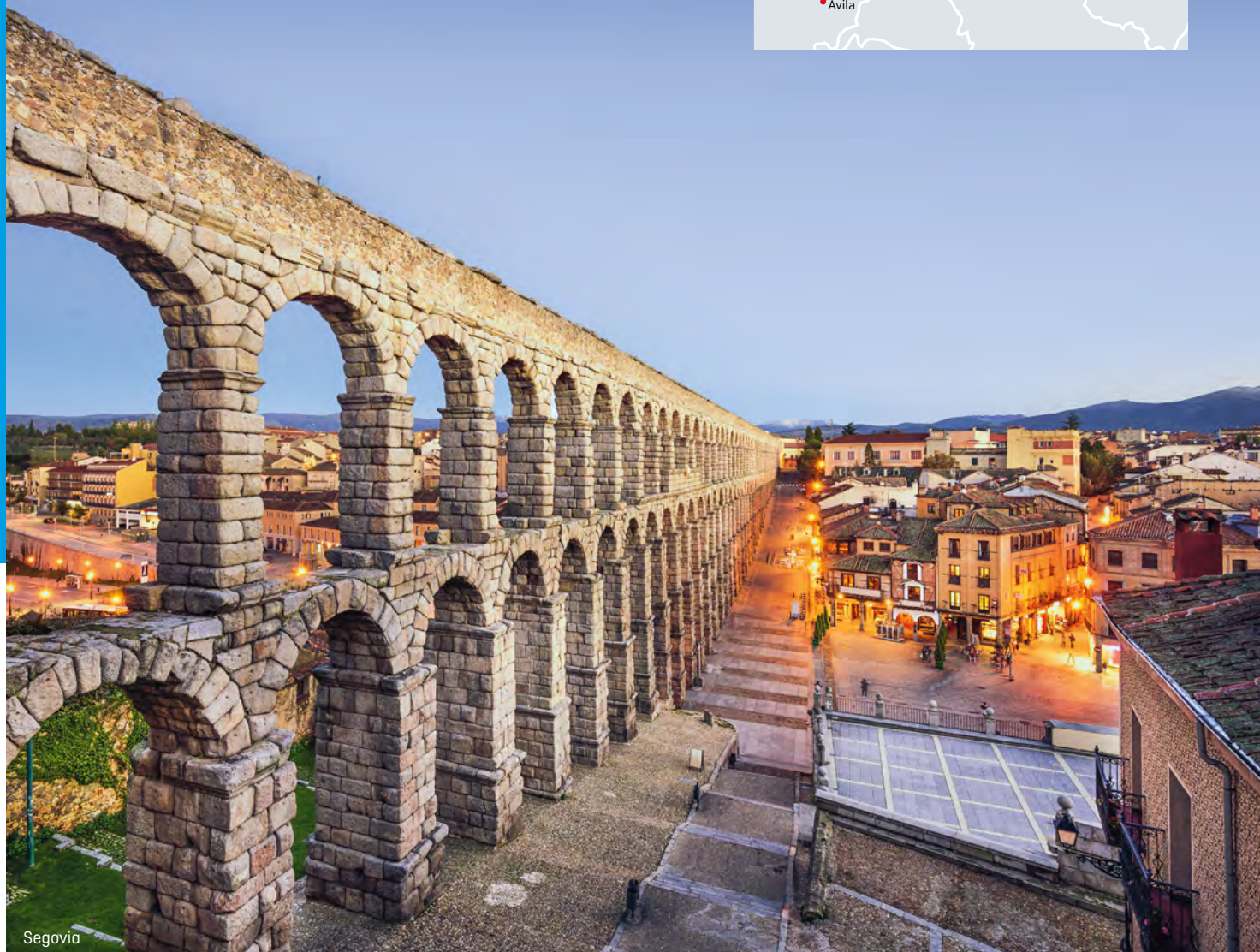


Medieval Spain

5 Night Parador Tour - Half Board

Your itinerary

The following pages contain general information about your car or motorcycle tour and the locations where you will stay. The order in which they appear may not be the order your hotels have been confirmed for you - for your individual itinerary please refer to your holiday documentation.





Advance planning

To decide on places to see and plan your route it's useful to refer to tourist office and travel websites such as Google maps, viamichelin.com (which will also show motorway tolls if applicable) or theaa.co.uk.

Hotel directions

With your travel documents is an information sheet for each hotel which has been booked for you giving directions together with some further details.

Arrival

Unless stated, you will be expected to arrive at each of the hotels pre-booked for you by 6pm each day. This should allow time for a fairly leisurely drive between overnight stops but if you find you will be arriving later than this please ring the hotel so your room is held for you.

This tour is on a half board basis, with breakfast and set menu dinner included.

Giving you a taste of Spain's wealth of history and culture, the itinerary takes you through a varied landscape of vineyards, mountains, green countryside and some picturesque towns and villages. Magnificent fortresses, palaces, monasteries and cathedrals - here we give suggestions of some of these you may like to see along the way.



Santo Domingo de la Calzada

Santo Domingo de la Calzada

Santo Domingo was once an important staging post on the old Pilgrim Way of St James and the medieval streets of the town centre with its wonderful old walls, cathedral and Pilgrims' hospital have been classified as a site of National Historic Interest.

Close to Santo Domingo are some of Spain's most attractive medieval villages including **Laguardia** which is enclosed by 13th century ramparts (and happens to have some of the best bodegas around). The village was built on a hilltop above a mass of underground cellars - originally used as a place of refuge for villagers in times of war and subsequently used for wine production and storage. Surrounded by vineyards, Laguardia produces a very nice fruity red that is best drunk 'young'. Many good restaurants and wine bars are found in the narrow streets which are ideally explored on foot.

A short drive away is the village of **Elciego** which has the very striking and distinctive Marques de Riscal cellar and hotel designed by Frank Gehry.

Haro (20k north of Santo Domingo) is another place to note - a small picturesque town and capital of the Rioja wine region. It has some impressive civil and religious architecture and is a very lively place with a good selection of tapas bars plus wine cellars and shops, and the old town is full of historical houses. The wine museum is well worth a visit and at the end of June a famous fiesta takes place in the mountains around Haro.



Laguardia

Sos del Rey Catolico

On the drive between Santo Domingo and Sos del Rey you may like to stop at the wonderful city of **Pamplona**, the capital of Navarra, best known for its 'Los Sanfermines' fiesta held annually for 8 days in July. At other times of year Pamplona offers plenty to see and do with most things being within walking distance of the elegant tree-lined Plaza del Castillo in the heart of the city. There is a wealth of fabulous buildings such as the huge Gothic cathedral in the centre of the old town, boasting one of the most beautiful cloisters found anywhere and some amazing sculptural work. It's also worth visiting the old medieval walls and seeing the Roman artefacts and art in the Museum of Navarre.



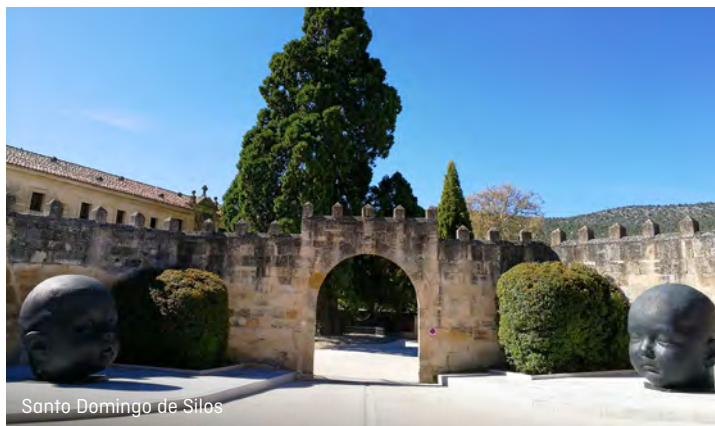
Plaza del Castillo, Pamplona

Or you may like to visit **Olite** - this charming small city is listed as a Historic-Artistic site and has a restored Royal Palace built for the extravagant French born king of Navarra, Charles III, that resembles a fairytale castle with lots of towers. There are also two very impressive medieval churches.

Sos del Rey itself is a fascinating, historic town with much architectural interest including its Palace of Sada. This is an amazingly atmospheric place, unspoilt by commercialism, where you can stroll through the narrow winding cobbled streets and imagine that you are back in time - great for photography.



Olite



Santo Domingo de Silos

Lerma

Not too much of a detour off the route between Sos del Rey and Lerma is one of Spain's undiscovered gems, **El Burgo de Osma**. This small ancient city has a fantastic cathedral and medieval walls, floodlit at night and there are the remains of a Roman bridge over the river Ucero. This is all overlooked by a castle on a hilltop on the outskirts of town.

Another possible place to make a stop is **Soria** on the river Duero which has some splendid Romanesque buildings in its medieval streets. Near here is the hamlet of **Calatañazor**, notorious for a deadly battle which took place in 1002 and there is a tiny fortified hilltop city.

High above the Arlanza river, **Lerma** is a historic little town which can be seen from some distance away as you approach it. The Parador stands in the square on the hilltop, within the Ducal Palace which was built at the beginning of the 16th century for King Felipe III, on the site of a ruined castle. The old quarter is entered by a huge gate set between 2 round towers and it's a fairly steep climb to the top of the hill. Don't miss the collegiate church of San Pedro which is worth a visit and has one of Spain's oldest organs, dating from 1616. For wonderful views of the river and surrounding scenery, to the left of the town hall take the steps up to the ramparts.

About 20 minutes' drive from Lerma is the village of **Covarrubias**, another ancient place with lovely medieval streets to wander through and there are the famous 15th century churches of San Cosme and San Damián. A little further is the 18th century monastery of **Santo Domingo de Silos** where Gregorian chants can be heard and the nearby gorge of **La Yecla** is also worth visiting.



Avila



Segovia

Avila

On this part of the itinerary, between Lerma and Avila are several places worth stopping to visit including **Peñaranda de Duero**, a beautiful medieval village dominated by its castle, situated on the Ribera del Duero wine route.

Also **Aranda de Duero** which has many wineries open to visitors and a network of cellars under the town centre which were built between the 12th and 17th centuries.

The city of **Segovia** is another place on the route which has some outstanding monuments and has been an important town since Roman times when the famous two-tiered aqueduct was built - this is still in operation and one of the finest examples in existence.

Avila is a World Heritage Site and this beautiful ancient city is encircled by magnificent, well preserved walls which can be walked along for wonderful views. It's believed its origins go back to the prehistoric era but certainly there is evidence that the city was inhabited in Roman times. The history of the walls and their 87 turrets is fascinating, and unusually the city's cathedral is actually built into one part.



Santillana del Mar

Santillana del Mar

Around an hour north of Avila in the direction of Santillana is **Coca** - this is a recommended stop to see the huge Mudejar castle built in the late 15th century which is very impressive, particularly from the outside on the approach to it. **Santillana del Mar** is one of northern Spain's most picturesque villages with its wealth of historic buildings including medieval, Baroque and Renaissance styles. The Colegiata church is said to be the best Romanesque architecture in Cantabria. At holiday times, particularly Easter and August the village becomes extremely busy so during these times it's best to visit in the evening after the crowds have gone. **Altamira**, about 20 minutes' walk away has some famous prehistoric cave paintings discovered at the end of the 19thC. The original caves cannot be visited except by special request made well in advance but you can visit the museum where there are also the replicated caves. **Suances** (5k from Santillana) is a fishing village and small seaside resort with 2 good beaches including one popular with surfers.