

The Picos de Europa

7 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.





Maps and route planning

To help plan your trip we provide you with an excellent map of Spain. It's also useful to go to travel websites such as Google maps, viamichelin.com* or www.theaa.co.uk.

*Motorway tolls, where applicable, are indicated on this site.

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 3 course set menu dinner included.

You are about to visit some of the most beautiful mountain scenery in Spain. Divided into three sections, or Massifs as they are called, the Picos de Europa is Spain's first National Park and is shared by three different regional governments - Cantabria, Asturias and León in Castile. Largely unknown to British visitors the mountains are amongst the most spectacular and unspoilt in Europe and although they are known to provide exceptionally good walking, this is not as developed as in the Alps or Pyrenees and refuges are few and far between.

The tour is a circuit of the Picos which encompasses many interesting hamlets, villages and gorges following some incredibly scenic routes. The flora and fauna is exceptional and you can see a large number of birds, including eagles and vultures - you may even be lucky enough to spot chamois and wild goats. The mountain flowers can be breathtaking too, particularly early in the season.

The weather in this area is very changeable and with the sea never



Basilica of Covadonga

far away, all four seasons can be experienced in a single day - it could be pouring torrents in the mountains but drive a few miles to the coast and the sun may well be shining.

Cangas de Onis

Cangas is a bustling little town with a wonderful medieval bridge over the river Sella (shown here) and is a popular starting point for walks or bus trips to nearby Covadonga which has a famous sanctuary.



Cangas de Onis

A recommended detour is to Ribadesella, a popular coastal resort which has the Tito Bustillo caves (just outside town) and holds an international canoeing festival in August. Just west of Ribadesella are some more lovely beaches including Colunga, another pretty seaside village, and from here you can follow signs for the Mirador del Fitu (3k south) for a fantastic panorama of the coast and Picos mountains.



Ribadesella



Picos scenery

Fuente Dé



If driving to Fuente Dé from Cangas (via Panes on the AS114 and Potes on the N621) this road follows the gorges of the rivers Cares and Deva, through the **Hermida Gorge** which is an attraction in itself. You could also take a detour to see the **Covadonga** sanctuary.

At the top of the San Glorio Pass on the N621 a short diversion to the left (2k) takes you to the **Mirador de Llesba** - a viewpoint which has an impressive outlook over Fuente Dé and the peaks.

You may also like to stop in **Potes**, the capital of the Liébana valley and an interesting market town with many bars and restaurants as well as some medieval lanes. You can take a jeep excursion from Potes into the mountains. **Fuente Dé** is the departure point for the Teleferico cable car which takes you high up into the Picos with its magnificent scenery. The Parador has information on many walks and excursions that can be made from here.

Cervera de Pisuerga

Cervera is in an excellent position to explore the breathtaking scenery of the surrounding lakes and mountains. It's also a good base for seeing some of the Romanesque architecture of the region, which is considered to be the most abundant in Europe.

The nearby town of **Aguilar de Campó** has some good examples of this as well as some picturesque medieval houses with bold coats of arms. The town sits in a green valley below a ruined castle dating from the 11th century and near a man made lake (Embalse de Aguilar de Campó) where there are beaches and watersports.



Santillana del Mar

Santillana 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 example of Romanesque architecture in Cantabria. At holiday times, particularly Easter and August the village becomes extremely busy, drawing visitors from all around, so during these times it's best to go into the village 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 19th century. The original caves cannot be visited except by special request made a long time in advance but you can visit the museum where there are also the replicated caves and see a video describing the vividly coloured paintings.

Suances (5k from Santillana) is a fishing village and small seaside resort with 2 good beaches including one popular with surfers.

Santander and Bilbao

Santander is one of the most traditional holiday resorts of northern Spain where many of the Spanish people choose to holiday, escaping the more arid inland areas. There is a superb sandy beach, modern leisure amenities and an attractive promenade with flower borders and trees. The city has wonderful restaurants and shops plus a variety of nightlife and entertainment.



Over recent years **Bilbao** has been transformed into a vibrant modern city with plenty to attract tourists. In addition to the **Guggenheim** museum there is much more to see (and best explored on foot) - the old quarter, remarkable architecture, stunning bridges, lovely parks, museums, art galleries and great shopping.

