



Northern Spain: Basque Country to Madrid

12 days | 14 days with Madrid extension

Travelers who venture to northern Spain will discover well-preserved medieval villages, postcard-perfect mountains and beaches, and some of the best food the country has to offer. On this tour of the region, you'll explore historical, cultural, and culinary treasures in Bilbao, San Sebastián, Santander, Oviedo, and Santiago de Compostela. Then, head south, to the Castilla and Leon region, where you'll explore Salamanca's 13th-century university and marvel at Segovia's imposing Roman aqueduct before making your final stop in bustling, cosmopolitan Madrid.



Your tour package includes

- 10 nights in handpicked hotels
- 10 breakfasts
- 4 dinners with beer or wine
- 1 cider tasting
- 1 food tasting
- 8 sightseeing tours
- Expert Tour Director & local guides
- Private deluxe motor coach

Included highlights

- Guggenheim Museum
- San Sebastián
- Altamira Cave Museum
- Oviedo Cathedral
- Asturias cheese tasting
- Cidery visit & tasting
- Lugo
- Santiago de Compostela Cathedral
- University of Salamanca
- Alcázar of Segovia

Tour pace

On this guided tour, you'll walk for about 1 hour daily across moderately uneven terrain, including paved roads and cobblestone streets, with some hills.

Group size

15–38

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Overnight Flight → 1 night

Day 1: Overnight flight

Board your overnight flight to Bilbao today.

Bilbao → 2 nights

Day 2: Arrival in Bilbao

Included meals: welcome dinner

Welcome to Spain! Arrive in Bilbao, an industrial port city in the Basque Country that's home to the iconic, Frank Gehry-designed Guggenheim Museum, as well as a world-renowned dining scene. Get to know your Tour Director and fellow group members at tonight's welcome dinner.

Day 3: Sightseeing tour of Bilbao

Included meals: breakfast

Set off on a guided sightseeing tour of the port city of Bilbao with your Tour Director.

- Admire the architecture in Bilbao's Old Quarter, known as Casco Viejo
- Enter the Frank Gehry-designed Guggenheim Museum, a showplace of modern and contemporary art, and admire the unique architecture alongside a local guide

Spend a free afternoon in the city or add an excursion.

+ Guernica, the Basque Coast & Pintxos Dinner

Santander → 2 nights

Day 4: Santander via San Sebastián

Included meals: breakfast

En route to the beautiful coastal city of Santander, join a local guide for a walking tour of San Sebastián, a town considered by many to be the culinary capital of Spain.

- Pass by Playa de la Concha and make your way through the Old Quarter
- Wander through the city's main square, Plaza de la Constitución, a site that previously played host to bullfights
- Take a moment to gaze up at the balconies of the buildings surrounding the square; they once served as box seating for bullfights held in the plaza below

- Walk through the city's fish market to see a variety of fresh, local catches on display
- Learn from your local guide where in town to go pintxos-hopping and how to make the most of this regional dining experience
- Enjoy free time to explore and to grab a bite to eat

Continue on to the coastal city of Santander, the capital of Spain's Cantabria province. Enjoy a walking tour through the city's center and past historic landmarks, such as the Cathedral of Santander and the Plaza Porticada.

Day 5: Free day in Santander

Included meals: breakfast

Enjoy a free day in Santander or add an excursion.

+ Picos de Europa

Oviedo → 1 night

Day 6: Oviedo via Santillana del Mar & Altamira National Museum

Included meals: breakfast, tasting, dinner

Head toward Oviedo, stopping to take in some of Spain's impressive historical sites.

- Take a guided tour of the Altamira National Museum and Research Centre, which houses an exact replica of the Altamira Caves and the Paleolithic cave paintings that revolutionized archaeology when Marcelino Sanz de Sautuola discovered them in 1879
- Enjoy a leisurely stroll through the well-preserved medieval village of Santillana del Mar
- View the 11th-century Collegiate Church before enjoying free time

Then, continue on to Oviedo—capital of Spain's Asturias province and home to several UNESCO World Heritage sites—and take in its highlights on a walking tour with a local guide.

- Make your way through the Gothic Quarter and enter the Roman Catholic Oviedo Cathedral, an important pilgrimage site along the Camino del Norte route
- Sample some local Asturias cheese to cap off your tour

This evening, tour a cider house and learn about the cider production process from a staffer.

Afterward, sample hard ciders, including some straight out of the barrel. Then, sit down for an included dinner at the cider house.

Santiago de Compostela → 2 nights

Day 7: Santiago de Compostela via Lugo

Included meals: breakfast

En route to Santiago de Compostela, stop in the city of Lugo to explore its massive, UNESCO-listed Roman walls, which date back to the third century.

Continue along your way, and stop at the hilltop viewpoint known as Monte Viso to enjoy panoramic vistas of the Santiago de Compostela skyline.

Day 8: Sightseeing tour of Santiago de Compostela

Included meals: breakfast

Walk through Santiago de Compostela, a town that once ranked just behind Jerusalem and Rome as one of Christendom's most important pilgrimage sites.

- Stroll along the ancient city's narrow streets and stop at Parque de la Alameda
- Enter the Gothic Santiago de Compostela Cathedral, which marks the end of the Way of St. James

Enjoy free time in Santiago de Compostela or add an excursion.

+ Rías Baixas Cruise & Galician Lunch

Salamanca → 2 nights

Day 9: Transfer to Salamanca

Included meals: breakfast, dinner

Travel to the Castile and León region today to explore Salamanca, a city known for its ornate, sandstone architecture and its 13th-century university. Then, enjoy free time for the rest of the day or add an excursion.

Enjoy an included dinner with your group this evening in Salamanca.

Day 10: Sightseeing tour of Salamanca

Included meals: breakfast

Get to know UNESCO-listed Salamanca, whose yellow-toned, sandstone buildings earned it the nickname the Golden City, on a guided tour this morning.

- Explore Salamanca’s historic city center
- Walk through Plaza Mayor as you make your way to Las Torres de la Clerecía, and to the Gothic-style, 15th-century Casa de las Conchas, whose facade features more than 300 carvings of scallop shells
- Explore the 13th-century University of Salamanca, including the Escuelas Menores courtyard, the “Salamanca Sky” (or “Cielo de Salamanca”) mural, the Escuelas Mayores main building, and the Arzobispo Fonseca School
- View Anaya Palace and the city’s new and old cathedrals

Spend a free afternoon in Salamanca or add an excursion.
+ Salamanca Countryside Food & Wine Tasting Tour

Madrid → 1 night

Day 11: Madrid via Ávila & Segovia

Included meals: breakfast, farewell dinner
Make your way to Madrid, stopping first at a scenic viewpoint to snap photos of the Medieval Walls of Ávila, a UNESCO World Heritage site. Afterward, take a short ride to Segovia and join a local guide for a walking tour of the city, which is a UNESCO World Heritage site and home to a towering, well-preserved Roman aqueduct.

- Explore the aqueduct, which was built in the first century A.D. and supplied water from the Frío River to the city into the 20th century
- Visit Segovia’s Gothic-style, Roman Catholic cathedral, and the adjacent Plaza Mayor
- Enter the Alcázar, the fairy-tale castle on the far end of the Old City
- Spend some time exploring the city on your own, perhaps by trying its famous roast suckling pig

Continue on to Madrid and celebrate your trip with your fellow travelers at tonight’s farewell dinner.

Flight Home

Day 12: Departure

Included meals: breakfast (excluding early morning departures)

Transfer to the airport for your flight home or extend your stay to explore Madrid.

+ Madrid extension

Soak in more of Spain’s grand architecture—and the energetic buzz of modern, urban life—in Madrid, the country’s vibrant and cosmopolitan capital city. Alongside local guides, explore the city’s many cultural and historical treasures, with highlights including the Royal Palace, the Temple of Debod, and the Prado museum.

Madrid → 2 nights

Day 12: Sightseeing tour of Madrid

Included meals: breakfast
Get acquainted with Spain’s cosmopolitan capital city with the help of a local guide.

- View the Royal Palace, Spain’s largest royal residence
- Pass by the Temple of Debod, a reassembled temple from ancient Egypt
- View the city’s many squares, including Plaza Colón and Plaza Neptune
- Explore the Prado, a world-class art museum that began as the private collection of the Spanish monarchy and is home to the works of Goya, Velázquez, and more

Day 13: Free day in Madrid

Included meals: breakfast
Enjoy a free day in Madrid or add an excursion. Tonight, enjoy a farewell drink as you celebrate your trip with your fellow group members.
+ Toledo

Flight Home

Day 14: Departure

Included meals: breakfast (excluding early morning departures)
Transfer to the airport for your flight home.

Customize your experience

Customize your tour by adding excursion options. Excursions offered on the same day will occur at different times, so there's no need to choose. Save \$10 when you book your excursion up to three days before your tour departs.* Excursions requiring advance reservation only list this discounted price. Call or go online to customize your tour: goaheadtours.com/NSP | 1-800-597-0350

Day 3: Guernica, the Basque Coast & Pintxos Dinner

\$105/\$115* (6 hours, departs in the afternoon, includes dinner)

Travel to the town of Guernica, where you'll meet up with a local guide and hear about the history of the bombings that took place in the city during the Spanish Civil War. Pass by important icons of the city, including the Tree of Guernica and the Assembly House, and view a mural of Picasso's world-famous Guernica painting. Afterward, travel along the Basque coast to the colorful village of Bermeo. Explore the harbor and meet with the neskatillas, or women of the sea, in the fishing village. Sit down at a local restaurant for a delicious pintxos dinner served with txakoli wine. As you continue along the coast, stop to enjoy panoramic views of the Islet of San Juan de Gaztelugatxe—a popular Game of Thrones filming spot—and to watch the sunset on Bakio's Beach before returning to Bilbao.

Day 5: Picos de Europa

\$119/\$129* (9 hours, departs in the morning with lunch)

Arrive at the Picos de Europa, or the Peaks of Europe, so named because they were often the first sight of land for sailors returning to Europe from the Atlantic. Once there, enter the caves and basilica of Covadonga Sanctuary to see the famous shrine to the Virgin of Covadonga. Then, board your coach for the short drive into Picos de Europa National Park to visit the glacial Lakes of Covadonga. Enjoy a brief walk along the lakes to snap photos and soak in the park's grand, mountain scenery. From there, continue on to Cangas de Onís, Spain's first capital city, for a walking tour that includes a visit to its ancient Roman Bridge. Enjoy a three-course lunch in town, followed by free time to explore on your own.

Day 8: Rías Baixas Cruise & Galician Lunch

\$119/\$129* (5 hours, departs in the afternoon, includes lunch)

Start the afternoon with a traditional Galician seafood lunch in Rías Baixas before making your way to the tiny fishing town of O Grove for a cruise. Then, enjoy a cruise along the Rías Baixas, the coastal inlets and estuaries of western Galicia. Sailing through the town's harbor, you'll discover this region's maritime heritage. Get a taste of local cuisine; you'll be treated to local mussels and Albariño wine while aboard the boat. After disembarking your cruise, travel to the beautiful fishing village of Combarro, which is built atop a rock. Here, you'll walk through the winding streets, admiring traditional Galician houses and horreos, or fishermen houses, before returning to Santiago de Compostela. Please note: The cruise portion of this excursion is dependent upon weather.

Day 10: Salamanca Countryside Food & Wine Tasting Tour

\$109/\$119* (5 hours, departs in the afternoon)

Make your way to the countryside outside of Salamanca, where you'll be treated to some of the area's most delicious products. Visit a local finca farmhouse and sit down for a tasting of house-made wine and cheese. After, head to a jamon factory to learn about Spain's finest ham and to sample jamon and other local products.

Extension excursion options

Day 13: Toledo

\$105/\$115* (8 hours, departure time varies)

Today, discover Toledo, the clifftop city often referred to as La Ciudad Imperial ("The Imperial City"). Upon arrival, you'll have some free time to explore. Later in the afternoon, you'll kick off a guided tour at Toledo Cathedral: a massive Gothic structure housing a treasure trove of stained glass windows and golden artifacts. Gaze upon its sacristy, containing masterpieces by the likes of Van Dyck, El Greco, Rubens, and Titian. After exploring the labyrinth of medieval alleyways in the heart of the city, you'll visit the Church of Santo Tomé—a former mosque, dating to the 12th century, graced by one of El Greco's finest works, "The Burial of the Count of Orgaz." End your day with a stop at Santa María la Blanca, a museum that ranks as one of the oldest synagogues in Europe. Please note: This tour involves some walking over uneven terrain. Also, depending on the day of the week, the sites you visit may change.

*Optional excursions may be purchased up to three days prior to departure or while on tour. Pre-purchased optional excursions cannot be canceled within three days prior to departure or while on tour. Select optional excursions require advance booking and cannot be purchased or canceled after the advanced reservation deadline. GAT accepts payment by cash, Visa or MasterCard for optional excursions purchased on tour. Additional fees may apply for optional excursions purchased on tour. Excursions require a minimum number of participants to operate. Details and prices are subject to change. Due to seasonal hours of operation and availability, some excursions may not operate. If this occurs, you will be refunded any payments made for that excursion post-tour. Learn more at goaheadtours.com/terms