

GREEN SPAIN

A narrow passage between the mountain and the Cantabrian Sea offers spectacular landscapes and many maritime ports, but also a very different Spain from the rest of the country.

A humid climate and an orographical boundary have kept its occupants, already feared in Latin literature, safe from the larger Mediterranean cultures, allowing them to maintain not only their pre-Roman names but the particular characteristics of each town.

The Basques preserve their millenarian language, different from all others, the Galicians cater to their Celtic heritage, Asturians and Cantabrians their pastoral culture and traditional architecture. In ancient times, only Christianity was allowed to permeate their culture, making them, for better or worse, the cradle and protagonists of the Reconquest, from the Covadonga Sanctuary, passing through the gravesite of the Apostle James, to the birth home of Saint Ignatius of Loyola.



Day 1 The first route of our journey takes us to the Bilbao Airport, designed by the renown architect Calatrava, followed by another landmark of contemporary art, Frank O. Gehry's Guggenheim Museum, the newest icon of the Basque Country's industrial capital city.

We will further explore this refurbished city with a scenic tour that takes us from the newer suburbs to the historic old town and its Seven Streets.

Overnight in Bilbao.

Day 2 Today's visit has us crossing the mountainous Basque countryside towards the Home-Museum of Eduardo Chillida in Hernani. We will again find one of his sculptures, The Comb of the Winds, where we will begin our visit of the San Sebastián's bay and beaches, such as La Concha and Ondarreta.

Notable for its spectacular coastal landscape, it is worthwhile to take a walk through the streets of the port, the old district, and to sample its gastronomy.

Possibility of organizing a traditional lunch at a Basque Sidreria

We will follow the road along the Basque coast, Zarautz and Getaria, until arriving at Loyola, birthplace of Saint Ignatius, with its Baroque sanctuary and his birth site known as the Santa Casa.

Return to Bilbao for overnight.

Day 3 In the morning, the large, medieval Cantabrian ports await us: Castro Urdiales with its famous beach, the fisherman's wharf, and the castle-lighthouse with the Santa Maria church, and Laredo, another summer resort town that nicely preserves the Puebla Vieja, the noblemen palaces and its church. We will arrive at the region's capital city, Santander, which has added to its old district the splendor of the late 19th century, particularly in the peninsula of La Magdalena.

The afternoon will be dedicated to Santillana del Mar, a town slightly inland, where, somewhat protected from enemies overseas, the best preserved palaces of Cantabria are situated: the Merino and Don Borja

Towers, the Barreda Palace, as well as the Collegiate -the heart of this medieval-like town in whose cloister we find one of the exemplary works of the peninsular Romanesque style-. Overnight in Santillana del Mar.

Day 4 Today we will finish our visit of the Federation of the Four Villas which we began in Castro Urdiales, Laredo and Santander with a visit to San Vicente de la Barquera, the most important medieval port that Castile had for Flanders. Located on the embankment between two rivers, it has an attractive port. The Calle Alta takes us to the pilgrimage Hospital, the Castle and the Gothic Church of Santa María.

The famed mountain range Picos de Europa and their striking views await us in Asturias. We will lose ourselves in the very narrow valleys trying to arrive at the Cares pass whose path cuts through the heart of the solid rock mass. Possibility of enjoying a walk.

Possibility of visiting a local cheese producer with tasting. Overnight in Cangas de Onís.

Day 5 Cangas de Onís, the town that became the first capital of the still small Kingdom of Asturias in the 8th century holds several imposing estates and a daring medieval bridge.

A few kilometers away we find the Covadonga Sanctuary, a cave brimming with history and mythology about the origins of medieval Spain.

A beautiful neo-Romanesque Basilica is the crowning monument of this Marian site.

Possibility of enjoying a mountain hike in the lake region Lagos de Enol and La Ercina.

Overnight in Cangas de Onís.

Day 6 While driving towards the main cities of Asturias -Oviedo and Gijón- we will stop at the viewing-point Mirador del Fito that offers us a wonderful sight.

On the coast we will find the important maritime port of Gijón which has a small historical district around which we find endless beaches.

Possibility of organizing a traditional lunch at an Asturian Sidreria

Oviedo, however, has been the residential capital of the region since the end of the 8th century.

In the immediate surrounding area, we find two jewels of that period: the pre-Romanesque churches of Santa María del Naranco and San Miguel de Lillo. Vestiges of 9th century art in the historical district of Oviedo still remain intact: the Foncalada, the apse of San Tirso, the Cámara Santa. The late-Gothic Cathedral looms over the city center that, with its palaces, University, bourgeois homes, convents, and small town squares, reveals a prosperous past that continues to this day. Overnight in Oviedo.

Day 7 We will continue along the Asturian coast stopping at a lookout point to contemplate the slopes and the beaches of the Cantabrian coast. The village of Luarca with its white houses, the cemetery and the fishing port are a good example. In Ribadeo -the gate of entry to Galicia- we will leave the coast behind, as during the early pilgrimages, in search of the most direct route to Santiago by means of Lugo.

This ancient Roman settlement maintains its robust 3rd century walls intact. A stroll atop the walls allows us to view its historical district where we will later visit the Romanesque Cathedral and the Main Square.

Continue to Santiago de Compostela for overnight.

Day 8 A stroll through the narrow charming streets in the historical district will take us to the Cathedral of Santiago, the ultimate goal, since its construction, of Christian pilgrimages, as well as the monumental Plaza del Obradoiro, surrounded by granite art.

We will get to know the medieval old quarter and its traditional Market, squares, churches and convents as well as its magnificent former Pilgrims' Hospital, nowadays a luxurious Parador.

Possibility of organizing a special farewell dinner.

Overnight in Santiago de Compostela.

Day 9 Transfer to the Santiago de Compostela Airport.

Costa occidental de Cantabria. Foto cedida por: Turismo de Cantabria



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9 days

Day 1	✈️ BILBAO
Day 2	EXCURSION SAN SEBASTIÁN and LOYOLA
Day 3	BILBAO - SANTANDER - SANTILLANA
Day 4	SANTILLANA DEL MAR - PICOS DE EUROPA - CANGAS DE ONÍS
Day 5	CANGAS DE ONÍS and COVADONGA
Day 6	CANGAS DE ONÍS - GIJÓN - OVIEDO
Day 7	OVIEDO - LUGO - SANTIAGO
Day 8	SANTIAGO DE COMPOSTELA
Day 9	SANTIAGO DE COMPOSTELA ✈️