EXPLORE! Tour Notes

PRICE GUARANTEE 100% NO SURCHARGES

2013 Standard Itinerary (UCP)

CYCLING

TOURDURAT
8
DAYS

Tour Type: Tailormade | **tour Code:** UCP

Tour Highlights - 2013 Standard Itinerary

- ✓ Among the many highlights featured on this tour, we particularly mention:
- ✓ **Self-guided trip** - relax and enjoy the routes at your own pace
- ✓ **Foothills of the Pyrenees** - Beautiful cycling along tranquil 'greenways'.
- ✓ **Girona** - Exploring medieval backstreets.
- ✓ **Volcano Natural Park** - Calderas, forests and rivers.
- ✓ **St Feliu De Guixols** - Relaxing on the Mediterranean Coast.
- ✓ **Barcelona** - Catalonia's grand capital city.

Tour Essentials

Accommodation:
Included Meals: 7 breakfasts, 0 lunches, 0 dinners
Transport:
Countries: Spain

Pyrenees to the Med - Self-Guided

Suitability

We've given each of our tours a comfort rating and a tour pace, walking or cycling grade to give you a general idea about the level of activity on each tour and the standard of accommodation you will be staying in at the end of your day's adventure.

Often you'll stay in different styles of accommodation during your tour; so we make an average rating across the entire tour. For more information on where you'll stay each night, please refer to the day by day tour itinerary.

Your tour itinerary

Tour itinerary notes

While our intention is to adhere to the day-by-day itinerary as printed below, a degree of flexibility is built in. Overnight stops may vary from those suggested.

Your Tour Leader

A Tour Leader is an integral part of any Explore tour and your tour will be led by one of our experienced tour leaders who have been handpicked and expertly trained. We believe that our Tour Leaders are the key to the success of our tours; they are passionate travellers who are bursting with first-hand local knowledge which they love to share. Your tour Leader will also take care of all the planning and organisation throughout your journey. Their passionate approach will make this tour fun and inspiring, bringing the destination to life whether you’re travelling alone or with others.

DAY 1 Arrive Ripoll

Upon arrival in Ripoll, your hotel is within walking distance of the train station. This afternoon, depending on your arrival time, there may be time for a wander through the town, where the remains of the monastery remind us of the glorious days when this was the centre of power of the first Catalan counts; Guife el Pelos (‘Willy the Hairy’) is considered to be the founder of Catalonia, when he started uniting the different counties in the 9th century and thus gradually creating independence from France. The monastery itself used to house one of the finest medieval libraries in Europe and still preserves the splendid Romanesque portal from the 12th century. This evening, you'll pick up your bikes from reception, where they'll be with your name on. At 8pm you will be met by an English speaking local rep giving you a short briefing for the trip and answering questions you might have.

Why Book this tour?

Self-Guided - Travel at your own pace and independently, not as part of a group or with a group leader. Bike hire is included and you are fully supported by route notes, hotel reservations and luggage transfers.

Please contact us for prices on 0844 875 1890.

Included Meals: None

DAY 2 Cycling to Sant Joan de Les Abadesses and Olot

Your first day takes you on the Camino de Ferro, the first section of the graded bike trail which was originally built in the late 19th century as a railway line serving local coal mines. This incredibly green and lush valley is surrounded by mountains up to 2100 metres high. There's a lovely place to stop for lunch, at the top of the Coll de Santigosa mountain pass, from where there are lovely views. Your route leads all the way to Sant Joan de les Abadesses, another important site from early medieval days, and you may wish to stop here for a visit to the 9th century monastery with its delightful alabaster windows. Gradually ascending a mountain pass, and enjoying lunch at the top, we arrive in Olot in the late afternoon after an easy route downhill into the town. The capital of the Garrotxa region, Olot is surely one of the few places in the world that was built in between several volcanoes. It is worth a walk through the old center of the town, especially after 5 pm when the shops open again and the narrow streets really begin to bustle with life. (Approx. 35km cycling; 395m ascent)

Included Meals: Breakfast

DAY 3 Cycling in the Garrotxa National Park

Today's ride is dedicated to exploring the volcanic scenery in the heart of the Garrotxa Natural Park. You start cycling through the Fajeda de n'Jorda, the largest beech wood forest on the Iberian peninsula, and eventually reach the Croscat volcano. Here you can see the structure of the crater as decades ago a huge chunk was cut out for use as construction material. All the volcanoes in the area are covered by lush forest. From the volcano, it's worth cycling to Santa Pau, one of the most authentic and picturesque 14th century villages in Catalonia. (Approx. 17.6km cycling). NB, if you'd like to do more cycling today, there are various roads and trails you can try out after returning to Olot, which will be about an extra 8km of cycling.

Included Meals: Breakfast

DAY 4 Cycling to Girona; explore on foot

In the morning we head off south, following the old railway line on the bike trail. Apart from one little ascent this is the most serene and gentle downhill on the whole trip, taking us through rich and fertile valleys with corn and palm tree plantations surrounded by the dramatic rocks of the Collsacabra Mountains. The trail leads directly into the heart of Girona where we can enjoy first impressions of this stunningly located town, built on a hill between two rivers. Girona was one of the first Paleolithic communities in the region and, under the Romans, a major town on the 'Via Augusta' between Rome and Cadiz. It reached its zenith, however, during the Middle Ages when Catalonian seafaring expansion reached as far as Athens, bringing great wealth to the region. A great place to sit for an early evening coffee is on the Rambla or the Carrer de Forca. (Approx. 60km cycling; 140m ascent).

Included Meals: Breakfast

DAY 5 Cycling to Sant Feliu de Guixos

This morning is free to explore Girona. Visit the ancient city walls for fine views over the surrounding countryside, and then explore the backstreets on foot. Examples of the wealth from Catalonian seafaring days can be seen at the spectacular cathedral, built between the 11th and 15th centuries, which has a Romanesque cloister, Europe's widest Gothic Nave and a five-storey tower. Not to be missed is a visit to the Arabic Baths – built during the 13th century by a noble family who wanted their private bath to be designed in the style of Moorish Spain. It may also be possible to do a quick visit to Figueres (a short train ride away) to visit Salvador Dali's famous Theatre Museum. After lunch head off on the bike trail towards the coast. Soon the scenery changes and the vegetation is increasingly dominated by pine and cork oak trees, as well as eucalyptus. A final descent brings you into Sant Feliu de Guixols. (Approx. 40km cycling; 80m ascent).

Included Meals: Breakfast

DAY 6 Free day on coast; optional cycle to Tossa del Mar

Today is free for you to choose whether you wish to take it easy on the local beaches, visit the old monstery and the historical center of Sant Feliu, or perhaps fancy some more cycling. A very rewarding but challenging ride (there is approximately 1000m of altitude gain) is along the coastal road which connects Sant Feliu with Tossa del Mar. It wasn't until the 1950s that under Franco the road was constructed in order to attract more tourism to the Costa Brava. Tossa del Mar itself had emerged on the world map a few years before when it hosted the shooting of a major Hollywood production with Ava Gardner. The 23 kilometres along the rocky cliffs are probably the most scenic along the entire Spanish Mediterranean, affording splendid views across little bays and the sea. Alternatively, spend time on one of the many lovely local beaches, swimming in the Mediterranean or maybe taking a stroll along the old town's promenade. (Optional approx. 46km cycling, 1000m ascent).

Included Meals: Breakfast

DAY 7 Barcelona

After breakfast, transfer by bus to Barcelona, leaving your bikes at the hotel before you depart. The journey takes about 90 minutes. After you've checked in, you are free to explore Barcelona. You can visit Antoni Gaudi's fascinating Park Guell for a stroll, admiring the beauty of his architecture and enjoying fantastic views across the city and the sea. You may also choose to visit another of Gaudi's famous projects, the Sagrada Familia, the unfinished cathedral. Other examples of Gaudi's work not to be missed are the roof-top of La Pedrera and Casa Battlo both situated on Passeig de Gracia. Alternatively, take a stroll down to the port and the cable car across the harbour to the Jardins de Miramar, and then ascend to the Castell de Montjuic, dating back to the 17th century. Fantastic views are afforded out to the sea and back to the mountains.

Included Meals: Breakfast

DAY 8 Trip ends Barcelona

Today is the end of your adventures - waving farewell to this beautiful region of Spain.

Included Meals: Breakfast

Accommodation and Meals

Food & Drink

Included meals: 7 breakfasts, 0 lunches,0 dinners included in the price of this tour. Please be prepared to pay for non-included meals. Please note that costs for drinks and meals can vary depending on location.

Budgeting for your Tour

You will need some extra money to cover meals and drinks not included in the tour price, any optional sightseeing, souvenirs and items of a personal nature such as laundry.

Food

The costs for meals may vary depending upon location, type of restaurant and number of courses eaten and so the prices given are an average guide.Local restaurants located off the beaten track may be less expensive, whereas an upmarket restaurant located in the centre of a major city may charge more.

Spain

Lunch £: 8.00

Dinner £: 15.00

Drink

The prices for drinks can vary greatly depending upon location and the prices detailed below are an average guide. In general you would expect that drinks purchased in a supermarket or local bar to be less expensive, whilst drinks in an upmarket bar or restaurant may be more expensive.

Spain

Bottle of Beer £: 2.5

Water £: 1.40

Foreign Exchange

Spain

ATM Availability: In cities and most major towns.

Credit Card Acceptance: Visa and Mastercard are generally accepted in larger restaurants and some shops.

Travellers Cheques: Not recommended.

Local Currency: Euros

Recommended Currency for Exchange: We recommend you take the majority of your spending money in Euros cash.

Where to Exchange: We recommend that you change any currency into Euros prior to arrival. Bureau de Change are generally only found in major cities and large airports.

Joining your Tour

Flight Information

You are able to book this tour on a 'land only' basis or as a ‘flight inclusive’ package. Your flight inclusive package will be fully protected by the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) ATOL protection scheme.

Booking a land only package with Explore

Customers who have chosen to book on the ‘Land Only’ arrangements of our tour, please ensure that you have checked your tour specific ‘Joining Instructions’ prior to booking your own travel arrangements. Your joining instructions can be found on our website at www.explore.co.uk, in the tour specific dates and prices section.

You may also be eligible for the Free Explore Transfer. For more information please refer to https://www.explore.co.uk/transfers.

Joining Tour Abroad

Customers booked on the ‘Land Only’ arrangements will now receive a Free Transfer, provided you arrive and depart on the tour only itinerary start and end dates. The transfers will be from the Explore designated airport or train station to the joining point of your tour, and then back from the ending point to the designated airport or train station. The exception to this rule is customers who are booked on a tour where the joining and ending point is at the designated airport or train station.

If you are not eligible for the Free Transfer then you will need to make your own way through to the joining and ending point. On a majority of our tours Explore will be able to provide a private transfer at an additional cost. Please ask for a quote at the time of booking.

For more information regarding the Explore Free Transfer please refer to https://www.explore.co.uk/transfers.

Free transfers are not available for Self-Guided, Tailormade or Tours for Churches customers.

Booking a flight inclusive package with Explore

We have a good selection of flights not only from London but from many regional airports around the UK allowing us to compare fares between scheduled carriers as well as low cost and charter airlines. Our dedicated flights team will match the best flight options to your arrival and departure airport.

On our website we display a UK flight inclusive package guide price which is generally based on a London departure. To avoid paying supplements or to secure your preferred flight option, we recommend booking as early as possible, especially for peak travel dates.

Important Information

Travel Insurance

It is a condition of joining any of our tours that you must have valid travel insurance. It must indicate that you have cover for (at least) medical expenses and emergency repatriation in the event of illness or injury. Medical and repatriation insurance cover is not mandatory for UK residents who are travelling in England and Scotland. We also strongly recommend your policy includes curtailment, personal effects and cancellation protection as all deposits paid are non-refundable. You will also need to ensure your travel policy covers you for all activities you intend to do whilst on tour.

We are delighted to include FREE travel insurance **for all qualifying customers** who book an Explore trip from 01 January 2015.

For more information about Travel insurance and to check whether you are eligible to receive free cover, please visit www.explore.co.uk/insurance. Explore Worldwide Ltd are an Appointed Representative of Campbell Irvine Limited. who are authorised and regulated by the Financial Conduct Authority. The registration number can be checked by visiting the the FCA's website www.fca.gov.uk or by contacting them on 0800 111 6768.

Vaccinations & Protection

Spain

Nothing compulsory but Tetanus is usually recommended as a precaution. Further information regarding vaccinations and travel health advice can be found by following the NHS and NaTHNaC links at http://www.explore.co.uk/Travelhealth/ and from your local healthcare provider. Vaccination requirements are subject to change and should be confirmed before departure.

Preparing for your Tour

Climate

Spain

Overall, spring, early summer and autumn are ideal times for a Spanish trip - though the weather varies enormously from region to region. The high central plains suffer from fierce extremes, stiflingly hot in summer, bitterly cold and swept by freezing winds in winter. The Atlantic coast, in contrast, has a tendency to damp and mist, and a relatively brief, humid summer. The Mediterranean south is warm virtually all year round.

Clothing

Bring cycling gear such as shorts, quick drying tops and cycle gloves. Remember weather is changeable in the mountains and it can be cool, especially at night, so bring a warmer jacket/fleece. Don't forget your swimming costume for the Mediterranean.

Footwear

Lightweight walking shoes/trainers for cycling and comfortable shoes/sandals for evenings and visiting the sites and towns.

Equipment

A cycling helmet is essential and required under Spanish law for all cyclists and must always be worn whilst cycling. We recommend you bring your own helmet for the reasons outlined in the safety section. Bring a water-bottle that clips on to the bike. Elasticated bungy cords are useful for attaching things to your bike, whilst wraparound sunglasses help prevent insects or pollen getting in your eyes. A penknife is useful for picnic lunches. A map and our day to- day notes are provided at the start of the tour, but you should bring your own choice of guidebook to have with you during the day. Padded shorts, trousers or a personal 'gel seat' are recommended but not essential. Cycling gloves are strongly recommended as they will protect you from sunburn and may also help protect your hands if you fall. Please bring a torch. **Please consider carrying all or some of your cycling equipment, e.g. helmet, as part of your hand luggage.**

Luggage allowance on tour:

Unfortunately it does occasionally happen that luggage does not always reach its destination on the same flight as its owner, or possibly it may be damaged in transit. If you are unlucky enough for this to occur, it is important that you file a PIR (Property Irregularity Report) with the airline before leaving the airport. This is essential when you come to make a claim either against the airline or from your travel insurance company

Transport

24 or 27-gear hybrid bikes, with bag-rack & pannier bag for day things.

General Information

Country details

Spain

Population: 46,030,109

Size of Country: 504,782 sq km

Major Language: Castilian Spanish, Catalan, Galician, Basque

Religion: Roman Catholic

Time Difference to GMT: +1

Electric Supply & Plugs

Spain

2 Pin Round

Why Choose Explore

We've been creating award-winning pioneering adventure holidays for over 30 years, earning the trust of thousands of delighted customers, who feel safe in our hands. Our tour leaders have expert local knowledge and our tours are designed to take you off the beaten track to see the most exotic, inspiring and dramatic places in the world.

- With over 30 years' experience, we are passionate about what we do.
- Pioneering small group adventures, self-guided, private journeys & tailormade holidays.
- Award winning tour leaders who you can trust.
- Responsible travel is and always has been one the driving principles of Explore.

Our adventure holidays are full of exciting things to see and do, exploring in small groups travelling by bus, boat, plane, rickshaw, camel, elephant, or any number of unusual forms of transport . Often you will stay in family run hotels and village houses and enjoy authentic local cuisine. In this way, it's easy to discover the true heart of the people and the place you travel to – and make some new friends along the way. Each tour is uniquely different, so please feel free to browse through our tours to see what may whet your appetite.

Our commitment to the environment

We are passionate about sustainable travel and work hard to create tours where your holiday delivers real benefits to the local communities. We minimise our impact by travelling in small groups, respecting local cultures and traditional, reducing waste and offsetting 100% of the CO_2 from our flights.

When you travel with Explore, you are directly contributing to local economies and helping empower the people you meet. We currently support a range of charities and good causes, including: Toilet Twinning (helping to flush away poverty), Lone Buffalo Foundation (a community project based in Laos providing creative skills for young people), Dekamer (a turtle rescue centre in Turkey) and Kids Saving the Rainforest (a wildlife rescue centre in Costa Rica supported through the LATA foundation). We also care passionately about the world's wildlife. We are patrons of the Born Free Organisation and Friends of Conservation.

Cool Earth

Explore are proud to support Cool Earth in their effort to reduce global carbon dioxide levels through the prevention of deforestation in the South America rainforest. Cool Earth focus on areas in immediate danger of deforestation, supporting local communities to be forest guardians. To date 350,000 acres of rainforest has been protected. Saving rainforest also protects rare animals and plants, allows local forest communities to maintain their way of life, and protects a major source of oxygen and fresh water. When you travel on an Explore holiday we make a donation to Cool Earth that exceeds the impact of our customers flights each year.

Earth Matters

- The Travel Foundation

  Explore are active members and supporters of the Travel Foundation which has established a variety of sustainable tourism projects in destinations and works with industry to improve practice. Visit their website www.thetravelfoundation.org.uk
- Tourism Concern

  Explore support the work of Tourism Concern who campaign for fairly and ethically traded tourism, and are part of its Ethical Tour Operator Group www.tourismconcern.org.uk
- For further information on responsible travel go to http://www.explore.co.uk/ResponsibleTourism/

Know before you go

We strongly recommend that you check your government's travel advisory for up-to-date information and advice about your destination: safety andÂ security, entry requirements, health, local laws and customs. ForÂ UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office Advice follow the link atÂ http://www.explore.co.uk/essential-travel-information/travel-resources/travel-safety

Booking Your Holiday

Peace of mind - book with confidence

You can book your Explore holiday with confidence, as all monies paid to us for your trip are fully protected. Explore is a fully bonded tour operator licensed by the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) and by ABTOT.

The air holiday packages (Tours including flights) that we advertise are ATOL protected, since we hold an Air Travel Organiser's LicenceÂ granted by the Civil Aviation Authority.Â Our ATOL number is ATOL 2595. In addition, As a member of the Association of Bonded Travel Organisers Trust Limited (ABTOT), Explore has provided a bond to meet the requirements of the Package Travel, Package Holidays and Package Tours Regulations 1992. Please note that packages booked outside the UK are only protected when purchased directly with Explore.

Reserving your place

To reserve your place on this tour you will need to check availability on the Explore website or through our dedicated call centre based in the UK where you can. Our tours can fill up quickly so you are advised to book as early as possible. If your chosen date is 'Available' or 'Guaranteed' we will be able to provisionally hold you a space for up to 48 hours.

For Self-Guided holidays and Private Journeys simply choose your date of travel and let us know so we can confirm all ground services.

The easiest way to confirm your booking is through our website. When you are ready to book, we normally require a 10% non-refundable deposit, but for some holidays this may be more to cover such items as permit fees, internal flights or other non-refundable services. If your travel starts within 60 days of booking, full payment will be required at the time of booking

100% No Surcharge Guarantee

The price paid for our holidays is no longer subject to change. Once booked and confirmed we will guarantee the price you pay will not increase, whatever the circumstances. You will not be approached to pay fuel surcharges unlike the vast majority of other adventure tour operators. The price guarantee applies to all new bookings departing between 1st January 2014 and 31st December 2015.

Tour Itinerary Versions

Itinerary details may vary depending on departure date and alternative itineraries for this tour may exist. Please refer to the dates and prices page on our website to check which itinerary operates on each departure date.

Please ensure that you have an up-to-date copy of these tour notes immediately before you travel, as from time to time our itineraries may be amended, either for operational reasons or in response to feedback from customers. You will be informed of any major changes to your tour but small changes may just be added to these tour notes.

Please note: itinerary versions are applicable to tours departing in . 1/ itinerary versions are applicable to tours departing from 1st January to 31st December 1.

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