



**17 Superb Days Madrid to Barcelona
Northern Spain & the Pyrenees**

Sip bubbly where it was invented

Stay 3 nights in Spain's culinary capital of San Sebastián

From the rich, rolling vineyards of the Rioja region, follow Spain's Costa Verde to elegant San Sebastian. Explore the mighty French Pyrenees and stay beside the walled city of Carcassonne. Ride high in mountain cable cars and sip wine and dine as the lucky locals do!

-  Travel in a first-class air-conditioned touring coach
-  A complimentary glass of wine, beer or soft drink with all included dinners
26 meals including breakfast daily (B), 2 lunches (L) 'Fabada' mountain lunch in Potes and beside the Canal du Midi and 8 dinners (D)
Welcome drink on Day 1
-  Hotel portage of 1 bag per person (where available)
16 nights specially selected hotel accommodation
Free WiFi at most hotels (where available)
-  Fully escorted by our experienced Tour Manager
Personal audio system whilst on tour (where available)
ALL tips for your Tour Manager, Driver and Local Guides
Local guides as described in the itinerary
-  Hand Selected Albatross Experiences including cable car rides at the Picos de Europa and Pic du Midi
ALL excursions, scenic drives, sightseeing and entrances as described



Madrid welcome

Day 1



Meliá Madrid Princesa, Madrid



D

Your tour commences this evening in Spain's cosmopolitan capital city, Madrid. Join us tonight for a welcome drink before dinner in your hotel. This is an ideal chance to meet, and get to know, your Tour Manager and fellow travellers.

Burgos El Cid and the Rioja Region

Day 2



Parador de Santo Domingo de la Calzada



B,D

Travelling north, we soon reach Burgos, the historical capital of the Castile and León region, which was one of the four ancient kingdoms of Spain. This stunning medieval city is a masterpiece of Spanish Gothic architecture. We have included a self-guided tour of the UNESCO World Heritage Listed cathedral, where you will find the tomb of the famous, 11th century warrior, El Cid. Later, we enter the famous Rioja region of Spain where we stay three nights in the charming town of Santo Domingo de la Calzada. Set on the banks of the River Oja, this town sits astride the Pilgrims Route to Santiago de Compostela – the Way of St James. The network of medieval streets within the old city walls are declared as a National Historic Site. The rich soil of the Rioja has also enabled the town to become famous for its gastronomy and local wines.

Ancient Pamplona and Olite

Day 3



Parador de Santo Domingo de la Calzada



B

Today we visit the ancient town of Pamplona, in the Navarre Province. Whilst Pamplona is famous for its annual 'Sanfermines' festival of the bulls', it actually has a rich and proud history dating back 2000 years. After time exploring the traditional historical centre with a local guide, make sure you relax in a restaurant or café and sample the local Navarre cuisine with food drawn from the surrounding, fertile, Arga plain. This afternoon we will stop in the small town of Olite to visit the magnificent Palacio Real de Olite - the Royal Palace of the kings of Navarre, one of the ancient kingdoms of Spain. Your evening is at leisure in Santo Domingo de la Calzada.

Haro, Laguardia and Marques de Riscal vineyard

Day 4



Parador de Santo Domingo de la Calzada



B,D

This morning we visit Haro, one of the Rioja's most famous wine producing towns with its beautiful square and wonderful baroque church. After a scenic drive through the famous Rioja wine region, lunchtime is at leisure in the fortified hill top town of Laguardia in Rioja Alavesa, a walled medieval town with spectacular views across the Sierra de Cantabria. On arrival we have included a visit to the Church of Santa Maria De Los Reyes, famous for its late-14th century Gothic doorway, adorned with beautiful sculptures. This afternoon we will make a special stop at the flamboyant Marques de Riscal vineyard. On approach the winery is a sensational sight with a design looking more like a giant chocolate box covered with huge wild colourful ribbons. Here we enjoy a vineyard tour and tasting.

Elegant Vitoria and coastal Santander

Day 5



Hotel Bahia, Santander, Spain



B,D

First stop of the day will be in Vitoria, the capital city of the Basque Country. A local guide joins us for a walking tour of this elegant city of parks, gardens and a beautiful main square. This is also the site of the battle in which the Duke of Wellington defeated Napoleon in the Peninsular War. In the afternoon we reach Santander, capital of the Cantabria region, on the Atlantic Coast. Famous for its wide sandy El Sardinero beach and glamorous hotels, we stay here the next three nights.

Picos de Europa, a Picos lunch in Potes and Santillana del Mar

Day 6



Hotel Bahia, Santander, Spain



B,L

There is nothing like a day in the mountains! Today we drive through the dramatic La Hermida Gorge and venture into the Picos de Europa, northern Spain's highest mountains. At Fuente De we will enjoy a spectacular cable car ride which will take you high up into the jagged mountains, offering terrific views across this remote national park. In the small mountain town of Potes, we enjoy a typical Picos lunch of 'Fabada' – the local mountain stew with beans and sausages, and a glass of Orujo schnapps. Later we will enjoy a relaxing stop nearby in one of Spain's most beautiful towns – Santillana del Mar – with its private noble palaces and romanesque church. The town is also famous for its local handicraft and local produce.

Santander 'My Time'

Day 7



Hotel Bahia, Santander, Spain



B

Today is at leisure to go shopping and explore the exciting city centre. For the more energetic, maybe take a walk to the Magdalena Palace on the headland with its lush green gardens and sweeping views across the beach and estuary.

Castro Urdiales, Bilbao and San Sebastian

Day 8



Mercure Monte Igueldo, San Sebastian



B,D

Following the Costa Verde or 'Green Coast' we enjoy a morning stop at Castro Urdiales with its colourful fishing fleet and Knights Templar castle. Later we continue to Bilbao, one of Spain's largest cities, where we are joined by a local guide for an orientation tour. Enjoy 'My Time' for lunch in the charming Casco Viejo – the old quarter, or you may choose to visit the world-famous Guggenheim Museum, designed by Frank Gehry, with its extraordinary swirling, groundbreaking design.

Leaving Bilbao behind, we will cross the lush green hills of the Basque country to reach the chic coastal city of San Sebastián, one of Spain's most elegant cities. We will spend three nights here.

San Sebastián sightseeing and 'My Time'

Day 9



Mercure Monte Igueldo, San Sebastian



B

This morning an expert local guide will join us to bring San Sebastián to life. We begin up at the famous Monte Igueldo to take in the amazing views across the horse shoe bay, and the city ringed by mountains. Following that our guide will take us on a guided walk through the narrow streets and old port, before introducing us to the city's famous tapas bars. San Sebastián is noted as the gourmet capital of Europe so it is a perfect time to really focus on enjoying some Pintxo, the local name for tapas, washed down by a glass of local white wine called Taxkoli. The rest of the day is free to explore and shop in this lively, cosmopolitan city.

Seaside Saint Jean-de-Luz and Biarritz

Day 10



Mercure Monte Igueldo, San Sebastian



B,D

Crossing the border into France, we pass through the small town of Ciboure, birthplace of the famous composer Ravel. Our first stop of the day will be in the delightful seaside town of Saint Jean-de-Luz where Louis 14th, the 'Sun King', married Maria Theresa of Spain in the 17th century. Later we will continue to the elegant seaside resort of Biarritz, on the Bay of Biscay. Patronised by European royalty since the 1800s Biarritz is still a very chic and thriving beach resort, with a big surfing influence. Biarritz, with its distinctly French feel, is the perfect place for an afternoon stroll along the seaside promenade. Tonight we enjoy dinner in a local restaurant.

City of Pau, Lourdes and Tarbes

Day 11



Le Rex Hotel, Tarbes, France



B

Crossing into Aquitaine in France we reach the city of Pau. Time to take a stroll along the Boulevard des Pyrenees or visit the Château de Pau, birthplace of France's King Henry IV. On a clear day the views of the Pyrenees are excellent. In the afternoon we will also make a stop in the pilgrimage city of Lourdes where in 1858 a vision of the Virgin Mary is said to have appeared before Bernadette Soubirous in the Grotto of Massabielle. Later we reach Tarbes where we will stay the next two nights.

Hautes-Pyrenees and Pic du Midi cable car

Day 12



Le Rex Hotel, Tarbes, France



B

Today we drive into the heart of the Hautes-Pyrenees and classic Tour de France country. At 2115 metres high, the Col du Tourmalet is the highest paved mountain pass in the French Pyrenees, and one of the most famous climbs on the Tour de France bicycle route. As we climb up higher and higher we see bike signs showing the distance to the top, and the gradient over the next kilometre! Often passing struggling cyclists we will make a stop at the large statue of the famous rider Octave Lapize, gasping for air as he struggles to make the climb. In La Mongie we will board a large cable car which will take us up to the summit of the Pic Du Midi de Bigorre. At 2877 metres or nearly 10,000 feet the views are stupendous. Because of the reliable, clear, blue skies they built a massive white observatory up here, and it is like a scene from a science fiction movie. Here there is also an observatory museum, restaurants and deckchairs to sit in and relax and enjoy the panoramic views – one way down onto the broad French plains and the other along the massive Pyrenees into Spain. Memorable!

Mirepoix and Abbey of St Hilaire in Limoux

Day 13



Mercure La Cité, Carcassonne



B,D

A leisurely start today as we head across the vine covered hills to enjoy lunchtime in the perfectly preserved time capsule of Mirepoix. Without doubt this is one of the most beautiful medieval town squares in Europe, with its colourfully painted, half-timbered houses that date back to between the 13th and 15th centuries. Sitting atop centuries old wooden rafters carved at the ends with monsters, animals and gargoyles, these rows of shuttered houses provide shady covered walkways for cafés and shops. We are now in the 'Pays Cathare', or Cathar country, in the lovely Languedoc Roussillon region. Just south of Carcassonne near Limoux we will make a special visit to the Abbey of St Hilaire, a jewel of Romanesque architecture. Originally dating back possibly 1300 years, the more recently added Abbey church and 14th century cloisters are a delight. The Benedictine monks of the Abbey are also credited with inventing the sparkling wine known as Blanquette de Limoux, a full century before their counterparts created 'bubbly' in Champagne!

We stay the next three nights beside the UNESCO World Heritage Listed, walled city of Carcassonne.

Carcassonne sightseeing and 'My Time'

Day 14



Mercure La Cité, Carcassonne



B

Dating back to Roman times, the existing 13th century fortress city of Carcassonne is an extraordinary timepiece. This morning we are joined by a local guide as we explore the ramparts and old town of Carcassonne. The medieval castle, with its gigantic double walled fortifications and 53 watchtowers, is the 2nd most visited site in France outside of Paris. We have also included entrance into the château of the Counts of Carcassonne. The rest of the day is completely free to wander amongst the cafés, shops and boutiques within this exceptional town.

Minerve, Le Somail and Canal du Midi

Day 15



Mercure La Cité, Carcassonne



B,L

A leisurely start as we crisscross the Canal du Midi and then head into the Languedoc hills, to the dramatic gorge and perched, stone village of Minerve. In 1210, during the Cathar Crusade, Simon de Montfort destroyed this village stronghold and burned alive 140 'heretics'. Today Minerve boasts a small, sleepy, 12th century church surrounded by cobblestoned streets and narrow alleys, craft shops and restaurants. Perched by the ravine, the town is delightful and the scenery dramatic. Make sure you walk down to the Cassiere River and through the cavernous tunnel which drills right under and through the hillside. Later, we descend through the vineyards of the Minervois region to stop and explore the picturesque hamlet of Le Somail, sitting astride the Canal du Midi. Here we enjoy lunch on the leafy terrace of an Auberge, beside the humped back bridge that crosses the canal. Delightful!

Figueres and Barcelona

Day 16



InterContinental Barcelona, Spain



B,D

Heading into Spain we reach the Girona province where we will enjoy a morning stop in Figueres. This afternoon we reach the vibrant, cosmopolitan city of Barcelona. On arrival we will enjoy a panoramic drive past many of its famous sights, including Gaudi's incredible Sagrada Familia Basilica. Time to stroll amongst the shops of the tree lined La Rambla, the city's shaded central avenue, and stop in one of the café filled squares. Make sure you visit the Placa Gala i Salvador Dali to see the Dali statues. Tonight we will enjoy a farewell dinner in a local restaurant.

Barcelona

Day 17



InterContinental Barcelona, Spain



B

Your tour ends today after breakfast.

Hand Selected Experiences

These are just a few of the very special hand selected experiences that will really make your touring experience exceptional and unique, and don't forget, with Albatross they are always included.



Rioja Wine region
Scenic Drive & Wine Tasting



Picos de Europa
Cable Car Ride &
'Fabada' Lunch



Bilbao
Casco Viejo



San Sebastian
Guided Walking Tour



Saint Jean-de-Luz
Delightful Seaside
Town



Pic du Midi
Stunning Cable Car
Ride



Abbey of St Hilaire
14th Century Cloisters



Carcassonne
Guided Walking Tour



Le Somail
Lunch beside the
Canal du Midi

Dates and Prices

Correct as of 02:50 on 15th January 2026

Start Date	End Date	Twin Price	Solo Price	Guaranteed to Depart	
22 May 2026	07 Jun 2026	AUD\$10,247	AUD\$12,847	✓	 Sold Out
16 Sep 2026	02 Oct 2026	AUD\$10,887	AUD\$13,887	✓	 Sold Out
21 May 2027	06 Jun 2027	TBC	TBC		 Pre-Register
03 Sep 2027	19 Sep 2027	TBC	TBC		 Pre-Register
17 Sep 2027	03 Oct 2027	TBC	TBC		 Pre-Register
24 Sep 2027	10 Oct 2027	TBC	TBC		 Pre-Register

* The itinerary and hotels featured are based on 2026 tour departures and may be subject to change. Any questions, please contact our European Tour Specialists for further details.

Tour Suitability

Our tours require a moderate level of fitness due to the unique places we visit and stay. This tour is not suited to anyone who has mobility issues.

- There are a number of beautiful towns and sites we visit which require exploring on foot.
- We include 2 cable car rides up mountains. Whenever you are at even a moderate altitude breathing becomes a little more laboured when you exert yourself. Having said that, neither summit we visit is very high, and there is no need to do anything but take in the views. So as long as you take things easy and go at a more leisurely pace (and with Albatross we have time!) you will be fine.

Please refer to our Tour Suitability section for more information.

Terms & Conditions

- Information provided is true and correct at time of issue. Airfares not included. For further details please contact your consultant or full terms and conditions may be found at www.albatrossstours.com.au/booking-conditions. Albatross Tours ABN 45 010 585 143. ATIA Accreditation No: A11341. CATO Accreditation No. 69562707