



Spain to Portugal Private Journey

HIKING BILBAO TO PORTO: EL CAMINO TRAILS, MOUNTAIN
HAMLETS, AND DOURO VINEYARDS



Wilderness Travel



Spain to Portugal Private Journey

WHEN TO GO

April to October

ABOUT PRIVATE JOURNEYS

Wilderness Travel Private Journeys are designed for people who want to travel with their own small private group, but who still want to experience the same superb itinerary design, great accommodations, and signature quality of Wilderness Travel's escorted group trips. These Private Journeys allow you to choose your own dates and your traveling companions—yet still enjoy a guided adventure.

Contact us for availability, questions, or to book your adventure!

Hike the legendary pilgrim trails of El Camino de Santiago, stay in historic paradors, and soak up the atmosphere of some of northern Spain and Portugal's most historic towns and villages. With your private guide, you'll begin in Bilbao, capital of Spain's Basque country, then head to the pilgrim town of Burgos. As you hike from Burgos to León, crossing thousand-year-old pilgrim trails dotted with Romanesque churches and fields of sunflowers, you'll be immersed in the lore of El Camino, then enter medieval León on foot, as did pilgrims of yore. As you move into Spain's remote Sanabria region and closer to Portugal, your hikes bring you through lakeside chestnut forests in a nature reserve. You'll enter Portugal the WT way—on a hike across the border and into a national park, then by way of the Via Nova, a stone-paved Roman road still marked by many of its original Roman milestones. Cap off your adventure in the coastal city of Porto to enjoy its famous Port wine, cobbled-street charm, and dazzling architecture.



Itinerary



TRIP DETAILS AT-A-GLANCE

- Length:** 10 days
- Arrive:** Bilbao, Spain
- Depart:** Porto, Portugal
- Lodging:** 9 nights hotels and paradors
- Meals:** All meals per the itinerary (B=Breakfast, L=Lunch, D=Dinner)
- Activity:** Hiking / Trekking, Walking
- Trip Level:** 1 2 3 4 5 6
A mix of easy to moderate hikes, cultural explorations, and walking tours

Note: You will need to arrive in Bilbao the day before your Private Journey begins. We are happy to book an extra night for you at our recommended hotel, an “on your own” expense.

DAY 1 BILBAO, SPAIN

Arrive in Bilbao and transfer on your own to the Hotel Carlton, a classic European-style hotel in downtown Bilbao. You will meet your private guide at 9:00 am in the hotel lobby. After a brief orientation, head out with your guide to explore this fascinating city, including the Guggenheim Museum, just a 10-minute walk from the hotel. This landmark building, designed by Canadian-American architect Frank Gehry, is a striking example of contemporary art and has transformed the entire city into a cultural metropolis. You’ll also explore the Old Town area and the nearby port of Portugaete with its Vizcaya Bridge (“Hanging Bridge”), an engineering marvel and a UNESCO World Heritage Site. For lunch, you’ll dine as the locals do—going from bar to bar in the Old Town to sample the day’s pintxos (Basque “tapas”). The remainder of the day is free to rest and relax before gathering in the evening for a Welcome Dinner at a superb Michelin-starred restaurant. Overnight at the Hotel Carlton...LD

Note: As you will be meeting your guide at 9:00 am, we recommend you arrive in Bilbao at least one day prior to Day 1.

DAY 2 VILAFRANCA MONTES DE OCA / HIKE THE EL CAMINO TRAIL / BURGOS

A drive from the coast to the mountains brings you to Villafranca Montes de Oca, a medieval pilgrim town on the Meseta Central, Spain’s great interior plateau. Here you’ll set off for a morning hike on a section of the historic El Camino de Santiago, passing through heather and oak forests en route to the hamlet of San

Juan de Ortega, one of the landmark towns on the El Camino because of its remarkable 13th century church. Lunch is either picnic-style or at a local café, and in the late afternoon, you'll head to the historic town of Burgos, capital of Castile until 1087. Burgos' riverside promenade is one of Spain's loveliest, and you'll visit the famous Gothic cathedral that has been recognized as a World Heritage Site. The evening is free for dinner on your own. Your guide will be happy to make suggestions, depending on how fancy or casual you wish to go. Overnight at AC Hotel Burgos, just a two-minute walk to the cathedral...BL

Hiking Details: 7.5 miles, elevation gain 328 feet

Driving Details: Bilbao to Villafranca Montes de Oca. 1.5 hours; San Juan de Ortega to Burgos, 35-40 minutes

DAY 3 CARRIÓN DE LOS CONDES

Hike from Itero de la Vega into the quintessential Castilian landscape of fields of green and gold, and on to the small village of Boadilla del Camino where you can visit La Iglesia de Nuestra Señora de la Asunción, a national historic monument. Later enjoy a one-hour boat ride through the Canal de Castilla. The canal is a feat of 18th century hydraulic

engineering built to facilitate the transport from Castile to the great ports of the north. The boat ride ends in Frómista, the southernmost city along the Camino Francés and the epicenter of wheat growing in Spain, where you'll savor lunch in a local tavern and later visit the beautiful church of San Martin de Fromista, one of the jewels of romanesque architecture in Europe. Head to the ancient town of Carrión de los Condes, home to two 12th century Romanesque churches, with optional stop at the church of Villalcazar de Sirga en route. Overnight at Hotel Real Monasterio San Zoilo...BL

Hiking Details: approximately 5.7 miles, 2 hours, 100 feet ascent/descent

Driving Details: Burgos to Frómista: 50 minutes; Frómista to Carrión de los Condes: 20 minutes

DAY 4 HIKE THE EL CAMINO TRAIL TO LEÓN

Starting at the old town of Villarente, noted for its medieval arched bridge, enjoy a beautiful day's hike on the Camino. This hike offers the opportunity to enter the engaging city of León on foot, just as pilgrims of yore did. Upon arrival in León, a lively university town with great tapas bars, you'll



have lunch and time to explore on your own. Stroll around the leafy squares and later enjoy a guided visit to the towering Gothic cathedral, with its superb stained glass. Even older than the cathedral is León's stunning Romanesque Basílica de San Isidoro, the first Royal Pantheon of the kings of Spain. Your elegant hotel is the historic Parador de León, the former convent of San Marcos, one of the greatest Renaissance architectural gems of Spain. Overnight in León...B

Hiking Details: 8 miles, 220 feet ascent

DAY 5 HIKE IN SANABRIA LAKE NATURAL PARK / PUEBLA DE SANABRIA

In the remote Sanabria region, close to Portugal, set off for a pleasant walk around Lago de Sanabria through chestnut, oak, and birch forests, and past small villages. The trout-filled lake, the largest lake of glacial origin on the Iberian Peninsula, is protected within Sanabria Lake Natural Park. Overnight in the mountain hamlet of Puebla de Sanabria, with its twisting medieval alleyways and 15th century castle, the Condes de Benavente, crowning the hilltop. Your accommodation is the modern Parador de Puebla de Sanabria, just across the Tera River from the Old Town with a spectacular view of it...BL

Hiking Details: 8.6 miles, 1,140 feet ascent. A shorter hike is available.

Driving Details: León to Puebla de Sanabria, 1.75 hours

DAY 6 HIKE THE SOTILLO FALLS / PUEBLA DE SANABRIA

Sanabria Lake Natural Park features a vast network of trails, and today's hike brings you to Sotillo Falls, hidden in a chestnut forest. The trail starts in the remote mountain village of Sotillo (3,176') then continues into dense forest. Along the way, you'll cross streams amidst lush fern, birch, walnut and chestnut trees. During the hike, you can see local birds, insects, small animals such as hares, toads, frogs and newts, and possibly deer and boar. Return to Puebla de Sanabria for overnight...BL

Hiking Details: 5 miles, elevation gain 1,300 feet, moderate difficulty

DAY 7 HIKE INTO PORTUGAL / PARQUE NACIONAL DA PENEDA-GERÊS / BRAGA

From Portela do Hommen, a pass on the border between Spain and Portugal, hike into Parque Nacional da Peneda-Gerês, Portugal's only national park and one of the





best preserved forests in the country. The park covers a mountainous border region of about 17,000 acres and has 18 endemic plant species. The hike follows the historic Via Nova, a path created by Emperor Vespasian in AD 80 to join two of the westernmost cities of the Roman Empire: Astorga in Spain and Braga in Portugal. This Roman road preserves the largest number of milestones (stone obelisk mile-markers) in Europe and follows along the Hommen River. Most of the path is a gentle downhill hike through forests, following the riverbank to the mountain hamlet of Campo de Geres. Overnight in the elegant city of Braga, with its Baroque churches and splendid plazas. Braga's elaborate religious festivals, including Holy Week (Easter), are famous throughout the country. Your accommodation is the centrally located Vila Galé Collection Braga...BL

Hiking Details: 5 miles

Driving Details: Puebla de Sanabria to Portela do Hommen, 2.25 hours; Campo de Geres to Braga, 1.25 hours

DAY 8 HIKE IN THE DOURO RIVER VINEYARDS / LUNCH AT A WINE ESTATE / PINHÃO / PORTO

Today you'll drive into the splendid Douro River Valley, one of the most famous wine areas of Europe. It became the world's first demarcated wine region in 1756. Sheltered from the damp Atlantic air by a string of mountains, the valley has hot, dry summers and cold, wet winters. Together with unique shale soils, this provides ideal grape-growing conditions. Visit the town of Sabrosa, birthplace of Ferdinand Magellan, then drive through the breathtaking wine terraces of the Douro hillside. Narrow roads take you to Quinta Nova, a superb private winery for lunch and a wine tasting. Take a walk in the vineyards of the property, overlooking the incredible bow of the river Douro, one of the most beautiful wine cultural landscapes of the world (class by UNESCO).



After lunch, drive to the lovely town of Pinhão, set on a bend along the Douro River. On a boat cruise savor the Douro's landscape of terraced vineyards from the water as you navigate along the river around Pinhao. Transfer back to Porto by minivan. Overnight in Porto at the Pestana Vintage Porto, set along the banks of the Douro River...BL

Hiking Details: 2.5 miles

Driving Details: Braga to Sabrosa, 1.5 hours; Pinhao to Porto, 1.75 hours

DAY 9 WALKING TOUR OF PORTO / FAREWELL DINNER

The coastal city of Porto is full of cobbled-street charm and dazzling architecture. Its Old Town, built on hills overlooking the Douro River, is a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Enjoy a walking tour of Porto this morning, including the famous railway station decorated with 20,000 blue and white azulejo tiles and the bustling Mercado do Bolhao market. Lunch is on your own. In the early evening, walk across the iconic Dom Luis I bridge into the heart of Porto's Port wine production area, where you'll enjoy Port wine-tasting and a Farewell Dinner. Overnight in Porto...BD

DAY 10 DEPART

Transfer on your own to the airport and depart on homeward-bound flights...B

Trip Details

DATE AND PRICING INFORMATION

TRIP COST

Prices are per person, valid through 2024

\$7,995 (7-14 members)

\$8,995 (5-6 members)

\$9,995 (4 members)

Single supplement: \$1,090

Make it *Your* Trip!

The prices above are for the ready-to-book adventure outlined in this Detailed Itinerary, a popular option that has been handcrafted by our Area Specialists to include the best of every destination. While many travelers choose to book this tour as is, our Area Specialists are also happy to work with you to customize this Private Journey to suit your specific interests and style of travel. We can arrange for longer or shorter stays, offer hotel upgrades (see below for sample costs), or add an extension to additional places of interest. We can even add special activities or customize excursions depending on your interests. We invite you to contact us to discuss your options!

TRIP COST INCLUDES

- Expert private guide and private transportation throughout the trip
- Accommodations in hotels and paradors
- All meals per the itinerary (B=Breakfast, L=Lunch, D=Dinner)
- Sightseeing as noted

TRIP COST DOES NOT INCLUDE

International airfare, any meals not specified after each itinerary day, airport transfers, airport departure taxes, optional tipping or gratuities to guides or staff, additional hotel nights that may be necessitated by airline schedule changes or other factors; pre-trip expenses of medical immunizations (if any), travel insurance, or passports and visas; and other expenses of a personal nature (alcoholic beverages, laundry, etc.).

SIGNING UP FOR A TRIP

Early reservations are recommended since accommodations often sell out far in advance. Please call 1-800-368-2794 and ask for our Europe Manager or email us at europa@wildernesstravel.com with any questions that you may have about this trip. To reserve your Private Journey, we will need to know your preferred dates of travel. We will then check availability and send you a proposed itinerary with exact pricing for your adventure. We can typically hold a provisional booking for one week. At that time, we must collect your initial deposit or accommodations will be released. We accept Visa, Mastercard, or American Express card. Upon receipt of your deposit, we will send you a Welcome Packet that includes a letter of confirmation, Detailed Itinerary, Trip Application, Medical Form, and Pre-Departure Information Booklet with information to help you prepare for your adventure. Please see our Cancellations and Transfer Fee Schedule for specific payment information.

PAYMENT SCHEDULE

At time of reservation: 25%

90 days prior to departure: Balance

CANCELLATION AND TRANSFER FEE SCHEDULE

Minimum fee: 25% of trip cost

90 days or less: 100% of trip cost

*Please note that this differs from our regular catalog departures.

TRAVEL INSURANCE

We highly recommend you purchase travel insurance. You can take advantage of a comprehensive Travel Protection Plan designed for Wilderness Travel by Travelex, or purchase other insurance on your own. See our website for details:

<http://www.wildernesstravel.com/toucan/travel-insurance>

Arrival & Departure

Upon confirming your trip reservation, we will send you a Welcome Packet that includes a list of documents (passport, visas, etc.) required for your trip. Please feel free to call if you would like this information before making your air arrangements.

If you have booked extra services before or after the trip, an Extra Services Confirmation will be sent with your Final Documents.

ARRIVAL & MEETING PLACE

Bilbao, Spain

Day 1, 9:00 am in the lobby of the Carlton Hotel.

Suggested Airport: Bilbao Airport (BIO)

Suggested Date & Time: anytime, but we recommend you arrive a day early to further enjoy the delights of Bilbao.

Meeting Place: Upon arrival, transfer on your own to the hotel. You will meet with your private guide at 9:00 am on Day 1. The trip begins with a city tour of Bilbao.

DEPARTURE

Porto, Portugal

Suggested Airport: Francisco Sá Carneiro Airport (OPO)

Suggested Date & Time: Day 10, anytime

The transfer from the hotel to the airport will be on your own and takes approximately 25 minutes. The guide can assist you with making these arrangements.

INTERNATIONAL AIR TRAVEL

You are responsible for making your own arrangements for flights to Spain and return from Portugal. There are many online consolidators for booking travel, but for more personal help arranging air transport, you can contact Exito Travel at 1-800-655-4053 in the US or 1-800-670-2605 in Canada. They are very adept at putting flight itineraries together, to even the most far-flung places. More information can be found at www.exitotravel.com.

Depending on your routing, it is necessary to depart from the US one or possibly two days prior to Day 1 of the trip itinerary. The name on your airline ticket must match the name on your passport exactly, and your passport must be valid for at least six months after your date of return to the US.

Please do not purchase your tickets until you are confirmed on the trip. Once tickets are purchased, please forward a copy of your email flight confirmation from the airline. It is your responsibility to ensure your flight times coordinate with the arrival and departure logistics for this trip.

Lodging



HOTEL CARLTON

Bilbao, Spain
Day 1 (1 night)

The Hotel Carlton, built in 1919, is an impressive Beaux Arts monument in the grand style of its era. It is centrally located in the Old Town on Plaza de Federico Moyúa and just a short walk to the Guggenheim Museum. The hotel was the seat of the Basque government during the Spanish Civil War.



AC HOTEL BURGOS

Burgos, Spain
Day 2 (1 night)

The AC hotel has an excellent location in a pedestrian zone on a riverside boulevard in the heart of Burgos. It's close to the Gothic cathedral and several of the city's lively tapas bars. Built at the beginning of the 20th century, the Beaux-Arts style building has been excellently restored. Guest rooms are modern, clean, and spacious.



MONASTERIO SAN ZOILO

Carrion de los Condes, Spain
Day 3 (1 night)

An atmospheric Benedictine monastery in a serene country setting, this historic property has been artfully transformed into a unique hotel. It was founded in the 10th century and rebuilt in the 16th century with the addition of a beautiful Gothic cloister. It is still church-owned and has a functioning church within it. There are two restaurants, a lovely open courtyard, and an excellent staff.



PARADOR DE LEÓN

León, Spain
Day 4 (1 night)

A former pilgrim hostel, this parador is one of the architectural jewels of the city of León. It was originally constructed in the 16th century to house the western headquarters for the Military Order of Saint James, and its carved facade is absolutely extraordinary. Modern amenities include a bar and restaurant, but the sense of the past is ever present.



PARADOR DE PUEBLA DE SANABRIA

Puebla de Sanabria, Spain

Days 5 to 6 (2 nights)

Fantastic views and a relaxing oasis await you at this modern parador, set in a lovely location overlooking the historic town of Puebla de Sanabria. Guest rooms are well appointed and comfortable. After a day's hike, take a dip in the outdoor pool or relax on the terrace with a cool drink.



VILA GALÉ COLLECTION

Braga, Portugal

Day 7 (1 night)

Dating to the early 1500s, this hotel was once a pilgrim hospice and Templar convent. It has been enlarged and modernized, and has been beautifully renovated—even retaining its original vaulted ceilings. Its prime location in the middle of town makes it a convenient base for exploring Braga's many historical and religious monuments. Amenities include a bar and two restaurants, outdoor areas, gardens, a swimming pool, and spa.



PESTANA VINTAGE PORTO

Porto, Portugal

Days 8 to 9 (2 nights)

The Pestana Porto, set in the heart of Porto's Old Town, occupies part of a block of 16th, 17th, and 18th century former wine warehouses that is recognized as a World Heritage Site. Spacious guestrooms have French-style windows and doors with views across the waterfront to the Port wine warehouses. Be sure to take a stroll along the riverfront or enjoy a glass of port in their chic lounge.

These are our signature accommodations for this trip. Although it is highly unlikely, we may make substitutions when necessary. To see more photos and descriptions, please visit our *Spain to Portugal Private Journey* webpage and click on the "Lodging" tab.

What the Trip is Like

TRIP LEVEL

This trip is rated a Level 2-3 (Easy to Moderate) according to our trip grading system, with hikes of 5-8 miles on most days.

How Tough is This Trip?

Although you'll carry just a light daypack on the trail, you should be fully prepared for the hikes and accustomed to walking in sturdy hiking boots. Most of the lunches are picnics, with city lunches in restaurants and cafes. In the Douro Valley, you'll enjoy lunch in a quinta, or family winery. In Spain and Portugal, people don't usually convene for lunches until around 1:00 pm. Please note that in Spain, the dinner hour is considerably later than what it is in the US.

Getting in Shape

For your own enjoyment of travel, we recommend you make a special effort to be in good physical condition. Daily brisk walking and/or regular hiking (or using a stair-climbing machine at your gym) are excellent preparatory exercises.

TERRAIN

Most of the walks are on dirt roads, rural trails, and loose gravel paths. The trails are well maintained and have little to no exposure.

WEATHER

The weather is likely to be changeable! In general, we expect warm and balmy conditions, with cooling breezes and occasional showers. We should encounter warm and dry weather in Castile, with always a chance for showers in Bilbao and Porto.

ACCOMMODATIONS

Overnights are in top quality hotels, most of them located in historic buildings such as monasteries or castles, with three nights in paradors.

CUISINE

You'll encounter an incredible variety of the best regional cuisines, from a Michelin-starred restaurant in Bilbao to the delicious daily selection of tapas in lively tavernas to the sumptuous seafood in Portugal, the country of a thousand fish recipes. Meals are washed down with some of the most famous wines in the world including Rioja, Ribera del Duero, Mencia, and Port.

TRANSPORTATION

All transfers are by minivan with a private guide/driver. Driving times on most days range from 1 or 2 hours to 3.5 total.

CHOOSING THE RIGHT TRIP

Adventure travel often involves exotic destinations, unusual levels of physical exertion, or activities you may not have participated in previously. We work hard to help you choose the right trip for you, paying attention to your individual interests, abilities, and needs. If you have questions about the level of comfort or any of the activities described in this itinerary, please call Wilderness Travel at 1-800-368-2794 and ask for the Europe Manager or email us at europa@wildernesstravel.com.

REFERENCES

We'd be happy to put you in touch with a past client that has traveled with us on this or a similar trip.

Average Daily Max/Min °F												
	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Bilbao	56/41	58/41	61/42	62/45	68/50	73/55	77/59	78/59	76/56	69/51	62/46	57/43
León	45/31	49/33	55/35	58/37	64/43	74/49	81/54	80/54	73/50	62/44	52/37	46/33
Porto	56/41	59/43	62/45	64/48	67/52	73/57	77/60	77/59	75/57	69/53	62/47	58/44
Rainfall - Inches												
Bilbao	5.0	3.8	3.7	4.9	3.5	2.5	2.4	3.2	2.9	4.8	5/5	4.6
León	2.3	1.8	1.1	2.0	2.3	1.5	1.1	0.9	1.5	2.2	2.3	2.8
Porto	6.2	5.5	3.5	4.6	3.8	1.8	0.7	1.1	2.8	5.4	6.2	7.7

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TOUCAN CLUB / TRAVEL AGENTS

Please note that travel agent commissions and Toucan Club discounts do not apply for our Private Journeys. However, your participation on these trips will count toward your Toucan discount on future departures of Wilderness Travel's regular expeditions. For more information regarding our Toucan Club bonus program, please visit our website at www.wildernesstravel.com/toucan.

VISIT OUR WEBSITE

At www.wildernesstravel.com, you can find out about added departures, last-minute deals, and special WT Expeditions that aren't listed in our catalog. You can also access a complete library of our detailed itineraries and browse the customized reading guides for each of our adventures.

HELPFUL LINKS

Wilderness Travel has compiled a list of useful websites for travelers. Find the Client Forms & Helpful Links page of our website: www.wildernesstravel.com/toucan/links.



Travel Notes



WILDERNESS TRAVEL HAS BEEN AWARDED:

- Best Travel Specialists in the World: *Conde Nast Traveller*, 2020
- Best Wildlife, Hiking & Walking Trips: *AFAR Magazine*, 2020 & 2019
- Best Adventure Travel Companies: *USA Today*, 2020
- World's Best Tour Operators: *Travel + Leisure*, 9-time winner
- Trip of the Year: *Outside Magazine*, 9-time winner
- Best Adventure Travel Companies: *National Geographic Adventure*, 3-time winner
- 50 Tours of a Lifetime: *National Geographic Traveler*, 9 years in a row

Please be advised that California has established a Travel Consumer Restitution Fund under the California Seller of Travel Law that took effect January 1, 1996. This fund is designed to protect consumers from unscrupulous practices by discount airfare ticket sellers or air charter operators. Unfortunately, this law does not cover non-California residents and, even in the case of California residents, it does not cover any foreign travel where the foreign "providers of transportation or travel services" are not in compliance with the Sellers of Travel Law (compliance being defined as registered as a Seller of Travel in California and a participant in the Travel Consumer Restitution Fund). Thus none of Wilderness Travel's tours qualify and we are required by law to advise each client that they are not covered by the California Travel Consumer Restitution Fund. California law requires sellers of travel to maintain a trust account or bond. This business has a trust account. California Seller of Travel #100769640

While as accurate as possible at the time of printing, this itinerary should be considered an approximate indication of the schedule and scope of activities and trip routing, rather than an inflexible schedule of events; it is subject to change due to circumstances beyond our control. This trip is subject to the Limitation of Liability and all the terms and conditions as detailed in the General Information section of the Wilderness Travel Catalog.

Revised: August 31, 2023 2:33 PM



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