

Rail holidays of Spain

Expressions



Rail holiday to
Barcelona, La Rioja
and Bilbao



Rail holiday to Barcelona, La Rioja and Bilbao

8 NIGHTS / 9 DAYS

Barcelona

La Rioja wine region

Bilbao

Option: Paris



Travel by train from the UK to the capital of Catalonia, the vineyards of La Rioja, and the Basque city of Bilbao. Enjoy relaxing and scenic journeys as you travel through France and Spain at the beginning of this touring holiday, passing forested hills and picturesque towns as you head from the Mediterranean towards the Atlantic Ocean. Following your time in Bilbao, you can choose to take a flight back to the UK or embark on a larger tour of Spain by rail.

PRICES

From £1,860 per person

Based on standard class rail travel and 4 star hotel accommodation.

First class rail travel and hotel upgrades can be added for a supplement.

DATES

This holiday can be arranged throughout the year. Timings can vary depending on the month and day of the week.

WHAT'S INCLUDED

Accommodation on bed and breakfast as below:

- 3 nights in a Standard room at the Granados 83 in Barcelona
- 3 nights in a Standard room at the Hotel Viura in La Rioja
- 2 nights in a Standard room at the Hotel Miro in Bilbao

First or second class rail travel on all trains including Eurostar

One-way return flight from Bilbao to London
3 days Group A car hire in La Rioja

WHAT'S NOT INCLUDED

Optional extra nights at hotels
Transfers between stations and hotels
Meals other than breakfast

DAY ONE: Catch a train from London to Barcelona, where you will spend three nights

Start your rail holiday by leaving London St Pancras at around 8am, and travelling on the Eurostar to Paris Gare du Nord. Take a taxi to Paris Lyon station to catch the daytime train to Barcelona, where you arrive just before 9pm. Your hotel for three nights is either the Grand Hotel Central Barcelona or the Granados 83, both of which are stylish and elegant hotels in central locations.

DAYS TWO AND THREE: Barcelona

Spend two days exploring this vast and diverse city. There are a huge number of must-see attractions in Barcelona, which make for a hugely exciting and fulfilling stay. Discover the modernista architecture of Gaudi and his contemporaries by visiting the Parc Güell in the Zona Alta with its fluid mosaics and bright colours, the more reserved Palau Güell in El Raval, and, of course, the iconic Sagrada Familia church which scores the Barcelonan skyline in the Eixample. Its fairy-tale exterior gives way to a cavernous and captivating interior built in the shape of a traditional Latin cross. Walk along the famous La Rambla to enjoy the quirky shops and street entertainment, as well as to sample the Catalan cuisine. The La Boqueria Market is famed for its oysters. Spend a few hours one morning exploring the maze-like mediaeval Gothic quarter, seeking out the enchanting squares, the palaces, and the excellent shops that punctuate the winding pathways. Perhaps visit the museums of La Ribera, which were once the palaces of merchants, or the Romanesque monastery of Sant Pau in El Raval. Pass the modernista architecture that lines the Passeig de Gràcia on your way to the Sagrada Familia, or take in the sombre elegance of the Montjuic Castle. The Montjuic quarter is also home to the minimalist Fundació Joan Miró, and the recently established Museu Nacional d'Art de Catalunya. In the evenings, enjoy the best seafood in Barcelona in one of the chic restaurants that line the promenades on any one of the 6 Blue Flag beaches. Once you have got your fill of Barcelona, perhaps take an afternoon excursion to one of the towns and cities nearby, such as Girona, Vic or Figueres, home of the Dali Museum. Retire at the end of each day to the contemporary comforts of the Grand Hotel Central or Granados 83, perhaps taking a final dip in one of the rooftop pools as you watch the sun go down.



Hotel Marques de Riscal

DAY FOUR: Travel from Barcelona to Elciego in La Rioja for your next three nights

In Barcelona, board a train at about 2pm, which will take you north-west across northern Spain, passing Lleida and Zaragoza in the Ebro valley on the way to Logrono, where you will arrive just before 6pm. On arrival in the capital of La Rioja, collect a hire-car and continue to the Marques de Riscal, a strikingly modern hotel which forms part of a long-established winery, or the Hotel Viura, another striking hotel with a geometric, chaotic façade to contrast the fluid metallic lines of the Marques.

DAYS FIVE AND SIX: La Rioja

You have three nights to spend in La Rioja, which will provide plenty of time to relax, explore the countryside, and visit the nearby towns and villages. The Marques de Riscal is around 15 miles from Logrono in the town of Elciego, where it is surrounded by the vineyards and wineries of this famous region that produce wine mainly from the Tempranillo and Garnacha grapes. The Marques de Riscal was the most significant producer of Rioja Alavesa wines in the 19th century, and was central to the growth of the economy in Elciego. The wineries in Logrono itself may be open for wine-tasting tours during the time of your visit, or, alternatively, tour the vineyards and wine cellar of the Marques de Riscal. In the small village of Elciego, the main cultural attraction, aside from the vineyards, may

be the Parish Church of Elciego. Though it is unassuming from the outside, the inside is given a charming golden glow by the Retablo Mayor. The Plaza Mayor in Elciego is a mysterious square far removed from the hustle and bustle of the larger nearby towns, with a highly affecting feeling of peace and quiet. Should you choose to stay at the Hotel Viura in Villabuena de Alava, Elciego will still prove an enjoyable day out. The Hotel Viura, however, sits at the very heart of La Rioja, and also offers wine-tasting tours in its vineyards and cellar. From here, you are perfectly placed to visit the Yuso and Suso Monasteries, which are atmospheric terracotta coloured buildings amidst the rolling green hills and valleys of a wine region famous since Roman times. The nearby villages of Santo Domingo de la Calzada, situated on the Saint James Pilgrimage Route to Santiago de Compostela, has numerous quiet streets and peaceful plazas that make for a thoroughly relaxing few hours excursion. For a taste of the more lively nearby towns, Logrono makes a very fulfilling day out. We would recommend visiting the Concatedral de Santa Maria de la Redonda, whose main façade was designed to resemble an altarpiece. The two front towers, known as Las Gemelas, or 'the twins,' were built in the Baroque style, and inside, there is a painting of the crucifixion by Michelangelo. The Santo Sepulcro in one of the cathedral's chapels is unusually detailed in tortoiseshell, silver, and wood. This three night stay in Elciego or Villabuena de Alava offers an insight into a pocket of culture that forms and maintains one of Spain's most famous industries. The

dynamic, contemporary design of both hotels and the large windows that open each room out onto the vineyards ensure the utmost comfort after you have dined in either the Michelin-starred restaurant at the Marques de Riscal or in the indulgent restaurant at Hotel Viura.

DAY SEVEN: Catch a train from Elciego to Bilbao for your final two nights in Spain

Return your hire car to Logrono station before catching a mid-morning train northwards to Bilbao, a journey of around two and a half hours. Stay at the Hotel Carlton, or the Hotel Miro, for two nights, both of which are stylish hotels in privileged locations just a short walk from the Guggenheim Museum.

DAY EIGHT: Bilbao

Take time to explore the Basque city's sights, perhaps starting with a visit to the Guggenheim itself, which will offer a valuable introduction to the city's opulent heritage. Designed by Frank Gehry, this futuristic building, with its shimmering curves of titanium and glass, is home to a permanent collection of contemporary art and regularly hosts temporary exhibitions. Only a few minutes' walk away from the hotel is the Bilbao Fine Arts Museum, which houses an extensive collection ranging from 12th Century sculptures to 20th Century paintings, and is a picturesque building in its own right. Along the riverbank is Bilbao's old town. Comprised of tightly-packed colourful houses, and long, steep stairways, this part of the city takes you back to a more traditional Spain. Also worth a visit is the Gothic Santiago Cathedral, which dates back to the 14th century. This building's front framed archway mirrors the beautiful criss-crossed arches of the ceiling within, and the circular window above the door lets in an ethereal light. Head down towards the seafront to see the eclectic Mercado de la Ribera, the largest covered market in Europe. It was built in 1929 and still sources some of the best seafood in Bilbao. The city has a vibrant evening scene with bars and restaurants, offering a more cosmopolitan vibe after your peaceful stay in La Rioja. After taking in the views across the river and in the squares, return to the grand and welcoming Hotel Carlton, which seamlessly blends the traditional and the contemporary aspects of Bilbao, or the ultra-modern and chic Hotel Miro.

DAY NINE: Return to the UK

Perhaps enjoy breakfast in one of the city centre cafes to make the most of your final morning in Bilbao. Then, take a taxi to Bilbao airport for your flight back to the UK.

OPTIONAL

It is possible to add extra nights in Paris, Barcelona, La Rioja and Bilbao. Speak to one of our Personal Travel Specialists for ideas on other additional locations.



Grand Hotel Central

HOTELS

We recommend a choice of two hotels in each destination including in this itinerary. Please contact one of our Personal Travel Specialists for further information and options.



BARCELONA

Grand Hotel Central 5 star

With avant-garde design, this stylish and elegant hotel has a great location in Catalonia's capital city, on the Via Laietana which connects the seafront to the old town. There are 147 comfortable rooms decorated in a modern style with soft colours. The hotel has a sky terrace and infinity pool with beautiful views over Barcelona, which is the perfect place to relax after a busy day in the vibrant city. City Bar & Restaurant serves fresh, relaxed Mediterranean cooking - perfect for sharing.

Granados 83 4 star

Located in a former hospital, Granados 83 is an art-deco style hotel with interiors which are reminiscent of a New York loft; with exposed brickwork and leather furnishings. The 77 guestrooms and suites are arranged around a central courtyard with a glass ceiling, and there is a rooftop terrace with a small pool. The hotel is located in a lively part of the city surrounded by shops, restaurants and open-air terraces. The hotel also has its own restaurant and bar.

LA RIOJA

Marques de Riscal 5 star

Designed by Frank O. Gehry (as is Bilbao's Guggenheim museum) – the hotel has a strikingly modern design and forms part of the Marques de Riscal City of Wine. Marques de Riscal was the first wine cellar of the area – built in 1858. The hotel is clad in sandstone with great sweeping panels of titanium and stainless steel. Somehow this does not look out of place in the traditional, medieval town of El Ciego. The hotel provides the perfect base to explore the tradition, gastronomy and landscape associated with wine. There is a wine spa offering beauty and anti-stress treatment based on grapes and wine.



Marques de Riscal

Hotel Viura 4 star

A member of the Small Luxury Hotels of the World, Hotel Viura has a very unusual modern design, resembling a pile of precariously placed cubes, terraces, and balconies. There are 33 rooms and suites with floor to ceiling windows looking out over the village of Villabuena de Alava or the mountains of the Sierra de Cantabria. Within a short distance of the hotel are prestigious wine cellars, medieval villages, monasteries and churches. The hotel restaurant features wine barrels suspended from the ceiling and services typical food of La Rioja and the Basque Country. Of course there is a comprehensive wine list.

Spanish hotel. The style of the hotel lends itself easily to both contemporary, chic design, and more traditional decoration, something which becomes clear in the eclectic, but highly comfortable, individual rooms. The excellent positioning of this hotel puts you in the very heart of the city.

Hotel Miro 4 star

Located very close to Bilbao's Guggenheim museum, the Hotel Miro is a small design hotel, decorated by Barcelona fashion designer Antonio Miro. There are 50 chic, simply furnished rooms and suites several of which have a view of the Guggenheim. The hotel is close to the Museum of Fine Arts and just a short walk from the city's shopping area and Old Quarter. The hotel doesn't have its own restaurant but there are plenty of places to choose from in the surrounding area.

BILBAO

Hotel Carlton 5 star

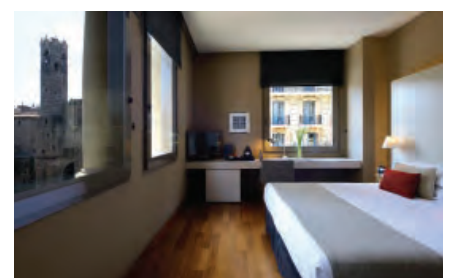
The five star Hotel Carlton in Bilbao oozes French Second Empire Style, and was completed in 1926. Its grandiose, ornate architectural style is characterised by flourished archways, staircases, balustrades, cornices, and symmetry, all of which add to the all-encompassing sense of luxury at this



Granados 83



Hotel Carlton Bilbao



Grand Hotel Central

MAP OF RAIL HOLIDAY TO BARCELONA, LA RIOJA AND BILBAO

The map below illustrates the route outlined in this touring itinerary, with overnight stops and places of interest highlighted.



GENERAL INFORMATION

This tailor-made touring holiday is one of several suggested touring holidays we can offer you exactly as it is but also with any alterations you might want including extra nights in one or more places or adding in extra places. All our tours can be extended so that you can include a longer stay at the included destinations or add additional stops. Do call to discuss the options with our travel consultants.

OUR TOURS

Our rail tours are for individuals travelling on their own or in their own family group. You do not join a group and you are not escorted.

FLEXIBLE ARRANGEMENTS

Our arrangements are very flexible in that you choose to travel on any day you want, subject to availability of trains and hotels. As mentioned above, additional nights can be added at any point.

EUROSTAR

Rail holidays from the UK start with a journey by Eurostar from London St Pancras, Ebbsfleet or Ashford stations to either Paris Gare du Nord, Brussels or Lille Europe. In summer months there are direct trains on Saturdays from London St Pancras to Avignon with no change required.

Eurostar offers almost hourly departures every day, allowing you to travel from the centre of London to the centre of Paris on the same train in three hours. Not all trains stop at the Ebbsfleet and Ashford stations in Kent, but parking is plentiful at both stations and it allows you to avoid London.

Check-in is 30 minutes prior to departure, customs formalities are completed before boarding and there is no limit to the amount of baggage that can be taken on board. The Eurostar trains themselves have 8 coaches which are split into Standard Class, Standard Premier and Business Premier as well as 2 cafeterias. Standard Premier customers are served a light cold meal and enjoy a more spacious environment than Standard Class, while Business Premier customers receive a hot meal and unlimited beverages as well as lounge access.

TRAIN TIMES

We have planned our itineraries based on train times that work day by day at the time of planning which can be up to a year before you travel. Usually train times stay more or less the same every day, season by season. The times we have planned will be discussed with you at the time you enquire about the holiday and they are detailed to you in your written holiday quotation. It may be that the timetable changes between the planning of the itinerary and when you come to book but we can always adjust the itinerary to suit the actual train times and any requirements you have for particular times of travel.

FIRST OR SECOND CLASS

We will automatically include travel in second class but lots of our clients do upgrade to first class service. On Eurostar this is called Standard Premier for leisure travellers as it gives you an upgraded on-board service and more spacious seating but without paying for the fully-flexible business tickets. On the Inter-city trains, upgrading to first class gives you more spacious seating with increased legroom. The price of upgrading varies from route to route but is something that is not always proportionately a lot more on the price of the overall holiday, so well-worth considering.

TRANSFERS

Transfers in Paris between stations and from the station to each hotel are not automatically included in the price of the holiday. In Paris most clients choose to take a taxi between the stations rather than go on the Metro but we can arrange a private car with driver to take you in between. This is quite useful if you are a family group that can't fit into one Paris taxi.

PRICE INFORMATION

This tailor-made touring holiday is one of several suggested touring holidays we can offer you exactly as it is but also with any alterations you might want including extra nights in one or more places or adding in extra places. All our tours can be extended so that you can include a longer stay at the included destinations or add additional stops. Do call to discuss the options with our travel consultants.

OUR PRICES

The sample prices mentioned in this leaflet are generally a 'from' price based on the cheapest season of travel. However, train fares and hotel rates can change (up and down depending on offers), so we give you an accurate price for your holiday when we provide you with a quotation. Our sample prices should be used as an indication of how much a particular combination will cost and to show the differences on average between the hotel categories on offer.

PRICE INFORMATION IN MORE DETAIL

Rail (standard class on Eurostar and second class on all other trains) from London to Spain and flights back to London at **4 star hotels (eg Granados 83, Hotel Viura and Hotel Miro), from £1,860 per person**

Supplement: Standard premier on Eurostar and first class on all other trains **£160 per person**

Rail (standard class on Eurostar and second class on all other trains) from London to Spain and flights back to London at **5 star hotels (eg Grand Hotel Central, Hotel Marques de Riscal and Hotel Carlton Bilbao), from £2,330 per person**

Supplement: Standard premier on Eurostar and first class on all other trains **£160 per person**

What's included?

3 nights' bed and breakfast accommodation in Barcelona
3 nights' bed and breakfast accommodation in La Rioja
2 nights' bed and breakfast accommodation in Bilbao
First or second class rail travel (as above) on all trains including Eurostar
One way return flight with British Airways from Bilbao to London
3 days Group A hire car in La Rioja

What's not included?

Optional extra nights at hotels
Transfers between stations and hotels
Meals other than breakfast

Expressions

BOOKING CONDITIONS

Our booking conditions apply to all holidays. A copy can be found on our website and a copy is also sent to you with a written quotation and when you make a booking.

FINANCIAL PROTECTION

Expressions Holidays offers full financial protection for all holidays you book with us. If your holiday includes a flight, the ATOL (3076) covers the costs of the holiday. If the holiday does not include a flight, it is the ABTOT bond that protects the cost of the holiday. We are also members of AITO (the Association of Independent Tour Operators) and ABTA.



Expressions Holidays
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HOW TO BOOK

To make a booking, just phone us on

01392 441276

and we can take you through the details we need and start the booking process. A deposit is required to confirm the arrangements and this can be paid by debit or credit card over the phone. The level of the deposit will be confirmed at the point of booking and will depend on the ticketing deadlines of the rail tickets involved in your booking.