

Purely PYRENEES

walking and cycling holidays

Discovering The Best Of The Pays Basque By Electric Bike



Coast and country, villages and vineyards, red cliffs and green valleys, authentic villages and royal resorts, comfortable hotels and great cuisine, this cycle tour has got the lot. All of it uniquely Basque, all of it in France, and all of it made easy by choosing an electric bike!

6 nights - 5 days
cycling your way

- Minimum required 2
- From point to point
- With luggage transportation
- Self-guided

Code :
FP9PUBA



The plus points

- **A superb itinerary packed with coast and country highlights**
- **85% on quiet lanes and dedicated cycle paths**
- **Pyrenees foothills plus a mountain top by historic rack railway**
- **High quality, authentic accommodation and great food discovery opportunities**



Before departure, please check that you have an updated fact sheet.

https://www.purelypyrenees.com/discovering_best_pays_basque_electric_bike.html

We can't recommend this itinerary highly enough if you like the idea of gently exploring unspoilt countryside, authentic villages, fortified pilgrim towns, and a wonderfully varied coastline - plus a sprinkling of interesting towns - all benefiting from the joys of electric biking. There are no mountains or steep hills, just delightful lanes across rolling countryside. This is France at its traditional best, yet overlaid with a distinctively and delightful Basque culture that positively influences everything from architecture to cuisine, never more so than in the vibrant fishing port of St Jean de Luz where this journey starts and ends. Altogether a great holiday, but then that's what we're all about!

■ PROGRAMME

DAY 1

This holiday begins at your hotel right in the heart of the old town of this vibrant, colourful and typically Basque fishing town, but we can arrange to meet you at Biarritz airport (daily London flights) or its rail station for a supplement. We leave you free to explore the network of cobbled alleys and streets as well as the harbourside, and choose from the many restaurants which one appeals to you most, although you may well end up "snacking" all evening on the Basque equivalent of tapas, pintxos. There's worse ways of spending an evening!

Denise and Bruno have transformed a traditional merchant's house into the delightfully contemporary 7 bedroom, three star boutique Hotel les Almadies with excellent bedrooms (most with a balcony), yet not lost the original character of the building. Of the many hotels in St Jean de Luz, it is definitely our favourite.

Transfer time: 20 minutes (Biarritz airport)

DAY 2

Saint Jean de Luz to Espelette. After a leisurely breakfast, you choose the bike that suits you best: a road bike, a chunkier hybrid bike, or an electric bike. Whichever, you will be given as full instructions as you need, and then it's off on those quiet French lanes that are such a cyclist's delight, especially in the verdant, unspoilt and gently rolling Basque countryside. After your first Basque village, the genuinely pretty Ascaïn, it's a gentle climb to the col de Saint-Ignaceto before Sare where we recommend you take the magnificent rack railway that clatters to the top of La Rhune with its 360 degree views east across the endless Pyrenees, south into Spain, and west to the Atlantic coast. Also look out for pottoks - wild mountain ponies - and red headed sheep. Back on your bike, it's well preserved Ainhoa before valleys to archetypal Espelette. It has an interesting chateau, and an exceptional artisan chocolate producer, but is really famous for its festival of red peppers.

Hotel Chilhar is a real treat in the heart of Espelette. Outside it is traditional Basque. Inside it offers boutique style accommodation, and wonderfully contemporary takes on traditional Basque cuisine as you'll experience at both dinner and breakfast. We are sure you will really enjoy staying here.

Distance: 21 miles. Ascent/descent: +670m/-600m.

DAY 3

Espelette to Saint Jean Pied de Port. Red and green are the colours for today's ride. You ride through valleys presenting a hundred shades of green - even the rivers look green sometimes, and the volcanic cone of Mondarrain is a perfect green, but then comes the village of Ixassou in a "sea" of greenery, yet with a big red reputation as the capital of cherries. The tree covered Nive gorges are highly valued by fishermen for their red spotted trout as they were by Charlemagne and Roland's soldiers as they marched to the Battle of Roncevaux in 778, which ended up being a great Basque victory of green over red. After Bidarray, you cycle past the high red cliffs and peaks of Iparla before entering a vineyards landscape largely dedicated to growing the red Iroulégué wine. And St Jean Pied de Port? Nothing red or green about it, but this is an historic walled city is still popular as the start of the Camino de Santiago route passing over the Pyrenees into Spain.

We are pleased that you are staying at the impressive four star Hotel les Pyrenees close the ancient walls of the city, so it's no distance to stroll in to find medieval looking bars and restaurants as you are free to choose where you dine tonight, although as the hotel has a swimming pool, spacious terraces and a good reputation for food you might not even go that far.

Distance: 25 miles. Ascent/descent: +950m/-850m.

DAY 4

Saint Jean Pied de Port to Hasparren. Having spent the last two days cycling on the foothills of the Pyrenees (and grateful for not having had to go up and over), today you turn away from them into superb cycling country - gently rolling hills, rich river valleys, woods, farms, good surfaces, little traffic, and a series of unspoilt villages encouraging you to stop, have a drink, a snack, and a stroll. What a life! Your destination is the charming town of Hasparren. It has nothing to put it top of any list of tourist attractions, and that's its appeal. It's a real town, architecturally interesting with quiet streets, independent shops, attractive bars and a couple for really good restaurants. The authentic Basque country.

<http://www.hotel-argia.com/fr/>

Distance: 28 miles. Ascent/descent: +900m/-990m.

DAY 5

Hasparren to Bayonne. You move from mountain to ocean today cycling partly on the "Route des Cimes" (peaks) before a thoroughly lovely route on the banks of the Adour river that takes you right into the heart of the port-city of Bayonne - one of our favourite French cities, yet much less visited than it deserves. It is at the confluence of the Nive and Adour rivers, both of which you've cycled beside, and, indeed, Bayonne prides itself on being a cyclists' city with many dedicated routes. For 300 years, and thanks to Richard The Lionheart, it was an English city, and today you can see its wealth and military significance in every grand boulevard, merchant's mansion and defensive rampart, especially on the river banks. It is a comparatively short ride so you'll have plenty of time - and energy - to explore.

Indeed, the superb four star Hotel des Basses Pyrenees is built on one of the ramparts in Vauban in the heart of the city. It offers elegance and comfort, great location and a restaurant that is popular with local gourmets - combining contemporary style with traditional recipes and ingredients in a way we find really pleasing. We are sure you will too when you dine here tonight.

Distance: 17 miles. Ascent/descent: +550m/-650m.

DAY 6

Bayonne to Saint Jean de Luz. It's all about the Atlantic ocean today, or, more accurately, its surprisingly varied coastline. You cycle out of Bayonne following the Adour to the coast before riding between the pine forests and magnificent surfing beaches of Anglet, which couldn't be more different from the Regency style and wealthy "vibe" of Biarritz - the 19th century resort of choice for European royalty and aristocracy. Its Rock of the Virgin, though, highlights the more enduring qualities of religion and nature - and the mysteries of nature are what you see next in the weird and wonderful flysch cliffs and white sand beaches of Bidart and Guéthary. Then it's the best possible way to return to Saint-Jean-de-Luz via the Pointe Sainte-Barbe, which provides a panoramic view of the bay with the Pyrenees rising majestically behind the town. You've been there, you've done it, and now it's time to celebrate your achievements with a night to remember in St Jean de Luz.

We're sure you'll be pleased that your last night is back with Denise and Bruno at their boutique Hotel les Almadies.

Distance: 20 miles. Ascent/descent: +450m/-450m.

DAY 7

Sad to say, you leave after breakfast, or we take you back to Biarritz airport, or St Jean de Luz rail station, if that's what's been arranged.

Elements beyond our control (the weather, your levels of fitness, logistical risks, other miscellaneous reasons) may lead us to modify the programme. We aim to please, but your safety will always be our priority.

■ PRACTICAL INFORMATION

DATES DE PROGRAMMATION

Mid-April to the end of October.

RENDEZ-VOUS

You make your own way to the hotel in St Jean de Luz, or we can meet you at Biarritz airport or rail station.

FIN DU SÉJOUR

The holiday finishes after breakfast on the last day, or we can take you to Biarritz airport or rail station.

PARKING

There is public parking in St Jean de Luz.

DÉPART GARANTI À PARTIR DE (PERS.)

2

NIVEAU

This itinerary features cycling that is rarely challenging, and never so if you choose an electric bike. All the same, it is suitable for people who are reasonably fit and enjoy a good day's walking or cycling. While we have designed a route that is 70% on very quiet roads and lanes, there is inevitably traffic, and it may be quite busy on some sections, especially in July and August. 15% of the route is on dedicated cycle paths.

PORTAGE

We will transfer your luggage to the next hotel, so all you need carry is a daysack with your choice of essentials. There are plenty of places to get drinks and food as you walk, so you need carry very little of either.

ENCADREMENT

This is an independent, self-guided holiday.

HÉBERGEMENT

You stay in double-twin rooms in authentic hotels with en suite facilities that are 2, 3 and 4 star.

CLIMAT

The Basque country is green because it benefits from cooling breezes and comparatively high rainfall. It is not a Mediterranean climate, so does not get so hot in summer, but can be cooler at higher altitudes in spring and autumn.

LE PRIX COMPREND

2 nights dinner, bed and breakfast; 4 nights bed and breakfast as described; bike rental; luggage transfers each day as required (one bag per person, maximum 20 kgs); detailed route directions; 1:25,000 maps as required; GPS tracking if required; 24/7 customer phone service.

LE PRIX NE COMPREND PAS

The journey to the start point and from the finishing point (the St Jean de Luz hotel); dinners on days 1, 3, 5 and 6; menu choices at extra cost; all drinks; lunches; entry fees; personal and travel insurance.

FORMALITÉS

You need to keep your passport with you at all times, and ideally insurance information. You need to make your own arrangements to claim local healthcare. There are requirements in France and Spain for all vehicles to carry safety equipment.

CONTENU Pochette Voyage

When we have received the balance of payment for your holiday, and in the month before your departure, we send you all the documentation you need: a detailed itinerary showing dates, times, contact addresses etc; a detailed guide to your walking routes, often also including a lot of cultural, historical and nature background information; formal documents (invoices, contractual terms and conditions etc); luggage labels etc. If you book at the last minute, we can send information to the first night's accommodation.

■ EQUIPMENT

