Walking the Picos de Europa and Asturias



Trip style:	Destination:	Walking Grade	Carbon Footprint:
Guided Walking Holidays	Spain	4 & 6	739kg CO2

HOLIDAY OVERVIEW

Think you know Spain? Think again. Discover another side to Europe's most popular holiday destination with this trip to Asturias - the rugged region that forms Spain's cooler, greener, north. Stroll along unspoilt beaches in pastel-coloured seaside towns, sample authentic local foods, and explore Picos de Europa National Park where guided walks lead to high-altitude lakes, ancient cheese caves, and mountain villages seemingly untouched by time.

WHAT YOU'LL LOVE

- Walks in Picos de Europa National Park
- Exploring the glacial Covadonga lakes
- Discovering some of the best sections of the Camino del Norte pilgrimage route
- Spending time in the medieval coastal town of Llanes
- Visiting the 'bufones' geysers and the Arenas de Cabrales cheese caves

WHAT'S INCLUDED

- Return flights from London Gatwick, including baggage and transfers
- A choice of 2 guided walks per day with local leaders (on walking days)

- HF Holidays Tour Manager
- 7 nights' accommodation in Ribadesella
- 7 breakfasts & 7 dinners at the hotel
- All in-destination transport

ITINERARY - ITINERARY

Day 1 Arrival Day

Arrive at our hotel in Ribadesella.

Day 2 Camino del Norte between Berbes or Playa Espasa and Ribadesella

Our first day of walking is spent on the Camino del Norte, on what is considered one of the most beautiful stages of this northern variant of the pilgrimage route to Santiago de Compostela.

Option 1 – Berbes to Ribadesella

Distance: 9.5km / 6 miles

Ascent: 200m / 650 feet

Descent: 200m / 650 feet

This morning, we travel by coach west of Ribadesella to the charming village of Berbes. We make our way back on foot from beach to beach and across meadows on the clifftop with stunning views of the Cantabrian Sea. We pass the coastal village of Vega and as we approach Ribadesella we will walk along the Santa Marina Promenade lined with elegant early 19th and late 20th-century mansions.

Option 2 – Playa Espasa to Ribadesella

Distance: 14.5km / 9 miles

Ascent: 435m / 1,400 feet

Descent: 435m / 1,400 feet

We travel past Berbes, the start of the option 1 walk, to Playa Espasa where we start our walk eastward on the wide, sandy beach. We walk past green pastures and small coves, possibly meeting other pilgrims who are heading west to Santiago. When we reach the village of Berbes we follow the same route as option 1 back to the hotel.

Day 3 Arena de Cabrales: the cheese valley

Not only is Cabrales one of the main gateways to Picos de Europa National Park, but it also has great appeal to cheese lovers since a blue cheese is produced here by local farmers. After our walk we visit the Queso Cabrales Museum which is housed in a cave still used to mature and mould the cheese in a centuries-old tradition.

Option 1 – Arenas de Cabrales circular walk

Distance: 9.5km / 6 miles

Ascent: 420m / 1,380 feet

Descent: 420 m / 1,380 feet

This walk starts in the centre of Arenas de Cabrales and gives a good overview of traditional land use in the Picos. From the authentic villages, stony footpaths lead up through holm oak and chestnut forests to mountain pastures. Many of these paths have been widened to cart tracks and are therefore easily passable. During this walk we will stop at the Poo de Cabrales *chigre*, a typical village bar which is also a farm shop and meeting point. We finish our day with a visit to the Queso Museum.

Option 2: Piedra de Raos and the old royal footpath

Distance: 12km / 7.5 miles

Ascent: 445m / 1,450 feet

Descent: 715m / 2,350 feet

This walk starts in Ortiguero and proceeds to Pandiello, a hamlet with magnificent views over the Picos de Europa. From here, we walk north towards Piedra de Raos, a mountain pass where a large market was held every week in the Middle Ages, and mountain people, fishermen and traders sold their produce. We then head east along the old royal footpath to Asiego, perhaps for a cup of coffee or organic apple juice in the village café. Afterwards we continue past Carreña to Arena de Cabrales for a visit to the Queso Museum.

Day 4 The rural interior of Llanes, the fishermen's town

Between the high peaks of the Picos and the spectacular coastline of Llanes lays a rural interior where you can stroll for hours along quite country lanes and dirt roads without seeing many tourists.

Option 1 – Rural Piedra to coastal Llanes

Distance: 10.5 km / 6.5 miles

Ascent: 215 m / 700 feet

Descent: 250 m / 820 feet

This walk starts west of Llanes, in the village of Piedra, and follows paved and unpaved paths that pass through hamlets showcasing many fine examples of traditional architecture. In picturesque Porrua, with its stone houses and narrow streets, we stop for a coffee at the village square before continuing to Llanes. We have some time to stroll around the medieval town which has a unique blend of coastal charm and mountain views. The old town is home to 13th century walls, a Gothic Basilica and elegant mansions.

Option 2 – The rugged Asturian coastline

Distance: 14 km / 8.7 miles

Ascent: 415 m / 1,360 feet

Descent: 455 m / 1,490 feet

The hamlet of Pendueles is the start of this walk and from here we will follow both flat, dirt roads and limestone footpaths which have been worn by the elements. Here rainwater and seawater have shaped rivers, caves, grottoes, bays and geysers, known as bufones – small natural features that can only be reached on foot. The final section of our walk follows the Camino del Norte where we pass some of these bufones as well as the mouth of the river where wild sea otters live. Our arrival into Llanes leads us to the door of the Gothic Santa Maria del Consejo basilica.

Day 5 Free day

Today is yours to explore Ribadesella at your own pace. Stroll along the seafront promenade, relax on the beach, or sample local pastries like casadielles in a café. You might wander the old town's narrow streets and lively squares or visit a traditional cider house. For history lovers, the nearby Tito Bustillo Caves and Museum Art Centre are a must. A UNESCO World Heritage Site, the caves feature remarkable Palaeolithic art dating back over 35,000 years. Pre-booking is essential.

For stunning views, take the 2 km walk to the Ermita de la Guía. This 16th-century Renaissance-era chapel, perched on a clifftop, overlooks the town, mountains, and Cantabrian Sea. Its restored stonework and historic cannons recall Ribadesella's maritime past, making it one of the area's most impressive vantage points.

Day 6 Lagos de Covadonga: the heart of the Picos de Europa

A whole day for a visit of the Lagos de Covadonga, the stunning glacial lakes in the heart of the Picos de Europa National Park, which was established in 1918 as the first National Park in Spain. We will drive up to the karst lakes which are located at 1,050 metres and were formed during the Ice Age from here a choice of two walks is available.

Option 1: Lagos de Covadonga

Distance: 6.5km / 4 miles

Ascent: 225m / 740 feet

Descent: 225m / 740 feet

This walks sees us do a loop around the two lakes which make up the Lagos de Covadonga – Lago Enol and Lago Ercina. Alpine meadows and crystal clear lakes with panoramic views of the Picos de Europa peaks greet us. We have the opportunity to learn more about the National Park at the visitor centre. We travel to the pilgrimage site of Covadonga to visit the basilica, one of the most important religious and historical sites in Northern Spain, and the cave where the Virgin of Convadonga is housed. Our final stop of the day is Cangas de Onis, whose Roman Bridge is one of the most photographed landmarks in Asturias, where we have some free time before returning to Ribadesella.

Option 2: Lagos de Covadonga

Distance: 11km / 7 miles

Ascent: 325m / 1,060 feet

Descent: 575m / 1,889 feet

After walking the loop around the lakes as option 1, our route continues to the Mirador de la Reina, a vast natural basin and viewpoint which offers sweeping views of the mountains and valleys. We then join with option 1 walkers to visit the pilgrimage site of Covandonga and Cangas de Onis.

Day 7 Camino del Norte between Nueva and Ribadesella

On our last day we return to the Camino del Norte pilgrimage route, starting in the village of Nueva, where the weekly market is held. You might want to buy some tasty pastries, sandwiches and fruit before we start our walk.

Option 1- Nueva to Ribadesella via Toriello

Distance: 12km / 8 miles

Ascent: 250m / 820 feet

Descent: 325m / 1,060 feet

A long but relatively flat walk following the Camino del Norte, along paved and unpaved roads country roads and through fields, where the yellow arrows and scallop shells keep you on the right track. We may strike up conversations with passersby as pilgrims usually enjoy exchanging experiences. We walk past traditional Asturian Villages including Toriello a picturesque village with views of the Cantabrian coast.

Option 2 - Nueva to Ribadesella via Guadamia

Distance: 15.2km / 9 miles

Ascent: 535m / 1,755 feet

Descent: 585m / 1,919 feet

This walk follows the fishermen's trails along the coast, which can be stony and may be slippy on rainy days. One of the highlights of this section is the medieval bridge over the Guadamia River which was built by the Romans and rebuilt in the Middle Ages. The path leads to Guadamia beach, a spectacular inlet between the cliffs and from here we continue on the path close to the cliffs offering us stunning views of the Cantabrian Sea.

Day 8 Departure day

We hope to see you again soon.

DAILY WALK OPTIONS



Gentle walking grade 4

The most active Gentle grade, with longer walks, some ascent, and possible steps, stiles, or off-path uneven ground. Typically, 6-7 miles (10-12km) with around 1,000ft (300m) of ascent.



Moderate walking grade 6

Longer full day walks with more ascent and varied terrain. Good fitness and agility are needed. Typically, 9-10 miles (15-16km) with around 1,500ft (460m) of ascent.

ACCOMMODATION

Silken Gran Hotel del Sella 4 star in Ribadesella

The Silken Gran Hotel del Sella is a charming 4star retreat in Ribadesella, perfectly positioned on the golden sands of Santa Marina beach, overlooking the Cantabrian Sea. Part of the property is a stately villa that once served as a summer residence for the Prince of Asturias, offering elegant lounges and sweeping staircases. Alongside it, a modern extension provides bright and contemporary rooms equipped with TV, safe, telephone, fridge and hairdryer.

Your evenings

On the return from your daily excursion, our local leaders will tell you about the the next day's activities and answer any questions you may have. During the evening, why not relax with your tour manager and companions with a drink or two in the bar overlooking the Cantabrian Sea.

FOOD & DRINK

Food

Our holidays in Asturias are on a half-board basis and include breakfast and evening meal. Breakfast is buffet style and dinner is a la carte. Dinner includes water and house wine.

The hotel's restaurant specializes in local cuisine. Opened in 1962, the hotel's restaurant specializes in local cuisine, including freshly caught fish and seafood. There's also a cafeteria where you can enjoy a snack or a drink.

Lunch (payable locally)

You may be able to purchase a picnic lunch from the hotel. Alternatively there is a bakery close to the hotel and a supermarket 400 metres away.

ROOMS

Room

The hotel has 82 rooms in total. You are staying at Silken Club Rooms (21 m^2) with terrace and views to the village of Ribadesella, the mountains and the Sella River mouth.

All rooms have a desk, mini fridge and a flat-screen TV. Rooms feature simple, classic design and include a bathroom with a hairdryer. Free Wi-Fi is also available.

ABOUT YOUR STAY

your stay

There is saltwater swimming pool offering the ideal setting. There is nothing better for the senses than a refreshing swim with sea views. For sports enthusiasts there is paddle tennis courts for the exclusive use of the hotel guests.

The swimming pool is open seasonally from May to October, subject to local weather conditions and at the discretion of hotel management.

You can walk out of the hotel and straight onto the promenade or beach. Alternatively, the walk into the town centre takes about 15 minutes and is a very pleasant one alongside the river.

VACCINATIONS & HEALTH

Vaccinations & health information

Before booking, you should check with your doctor to see whether any health precautions are needed for your trip. Health advice and requirements can change, so we recommend doing this in good time before travel.

As a general rule, travellers should ensure they are up to date with routine UK vaccinations and boosters, including, for example, MMR and diphtheria, tetanus and polio. Some countries may require you to have specific vaccinations such as Malaria, Rabies and Yellow Fever. Please check with your GP if you are unsure.

Please note that the use or possession of some common prescription or over-the-counter medicines is restricted or banned in certain countries. If you will be carrying medication, you should check with the relevant embassy or consulate before travelling. As an extra precaution, we recommend keeping medication in its original packaging, carrying a copy of your prescription, and, where possible, asking your pharmacist to provide the medication name in the language of the country you are visiting.

For further country-specific health advice, visit www.fitfortravel.nhs.uk or www.traveldoctor.co.uk. If you are travelling from outside the UK, please consult your own doctor and check local entry requirements.

PASSPORTS & VISAS

Passport & Visa information

This information is for those travelling with a full 'British Citizen' passport; for all other nationalities or passport holders, please check with your local consulate for advice.

Passport Requirements

This information applies to travellers holding a full British Citizen passport. Entry requirements vary by destination and can change at short notice. For most EU and worldwide destinations, passports must be valid for the entire duration of your stay. Some countries also require a minimum period of validity remaining on your passport (often up to 6 months beyond your return date), even if you are not staying that long.
We strongly recommend ensuring your passport has at least six months' validity remaining at the time of travel to avoid any issues.

If you hold a different type of British passport or a passport issued by another country, you must check the requirements with the relevant embassy, consulate, or official government website.

Visa Requirements

Visa rules depend on your nationality, destination, length of stay, and purpose of travel, and they can change frequently. It is your responsibility to check whether you require a visa before travelling.
British passport holders should check the latest entry, passport validity and visa requirements for their destination on the UK government's Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office (FCDO) website:
https://www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice

ESSENTIAL INFORMATION

Packing list

It's best to be prepared for all weather conditions. To make it easier, here is a list of items you should consider packing.

Essentials

- Walking boots
- Waterproof jacket
- Waterproof trousers
- Insulated jacket/top
- Walking clothing
- Walking socks (plus spares)
- Sunhat
- Gloves/mitts and warm hat
- Water bottle (minimum 2 litre capacity)
- Headtorch
- High-factor sunscreen (minimum SPF 30)
- Swimcap (compulsory in Itialian resorts)
- Sunglasses with a dark lens
- Rucksack (15-30 litres)
- Mobile phone
- Personal first aid kit (containing your medication, blister plasters, etc.)
- Passport
- Visa (if applicable)
- Copy of your travel insurance policy
- UK Global Health Insurance Card (**formerly known as EHIC**)

Recommended

- Collapsible walking poles
- Swimwear and travel towel
- Snacks
- Dry bags

- Rubbish bags
- Insect repellent

Optional extras

- Camera
- Sit mat
- Flask for hot drinks
- Durable lunch box
- Gaiters
- GPS device (excluding Bhutan, Georgia and India)

JOINING INSTRUCTIONS (WITH FLIGHTS)

With flights

Book your holiday 'with flights' and you can choose to depart from selected UK airports* to your destination. For latest flight times and prices please call us on 0203-974-8865 or email reservations@hfholidays.co.uk

If you choose to book your flights with us, we automatically include return transfers between the destination airport and hotel.

JOINING INSTRUCTIONS (WITHOUT FLIGHTS)

Without flights

Tailor your journey to suit you by booking your holiday 'without flights' and you'll have the freedom to book your own flights from your local airport. If you choose this option, transfers are not included in the price. Unfortunately, we are unable to offer our shared transport service in this destination. Anyone arriving on a separate flight to the HF Holidays group must arrange their own onward travel to and from the destination airport.

USEFUL INFORMATION

Travel Insurance

Travel insurance is a condition of booking. Therefore, if you have not already arranged insurance, it is imperative that you do so before you travel.

For more information about healthcare and its costs, please visit: https://www.nhs.uk/using-the-nhs/healthcare-abroad/

Drinking Water

Drinking Water

Standards for drinking water vary widely around the world. In many destinations, tap water may not be safe to drink, brush your teeth with, or use for making ice. Where advised, you should drink only bottled or treated water and ensure that bottle seals are intact before use. If bottled water is unavailable, water should be boiled or filtered.

Staying well hydrated is particularly important in hot climates and during active holidays. Carry water with you and drink regularly.

If you are unsure about local water safety, check official country-specific health advice before travel, or ask your accommodation or local guides for guidance once you arrive.

Ticks information

Ticks are tiny creatures that live in vegetation and can attach themselves to passing animals or walkers and may carry a risk of Lyme Disease. Please refer to NHS advice and guidelines for information: https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/lyme-disease/

Useful information

Free Day

This day is yours to enjoy at your own pace. You may wish to stroll along the seafront promenade, relax on the beach, or try local pastries such as casadielles in one of the town's cafés. Ribadesella's charming old town, lively squares, and traditional cider houses also make for a delightful day of exploration. For those who enjoy scenic walks, the 2 km route to the Ermita de la Guía offers spectacular views over the town, mountains, and the Cantabrian Sea.

For history and archaeology enthusiasts, a highlight of the area is the Tito Bustillo Caves and Rupestrian Art Museum, a UNESCO World Heritage Site featuring extraordinary Palaeolithic art dating back over 35,000 years.

If you wish to visit the Tito Bustillo Caves, advance booking is essential. Guided tours are the only way to access the caves, and they are conducted in Spanish only. Availability is limited, so we strongly recommend securing your tickets as soon as possible.

When booking online, please note:

You can switch the website to English using the option in the top right corner.

When you proceed to purchase, the page may revert to Spanish, but you can change it back again in the same place.

The Rupestrian Art Museum does not currently have availability issues, so tickets for the museum can be purchased later if preferred. The audio guides are available on site.

TRIPNOTE VALIDITY

TRIP NOTE VALIDITY These Trip Notes are valid based on the date printed at the bottom of the page. They will occasionally be updated post booking and pre-departure. We will send you the latest trip notes prior to departure through a link in your pre departure documents or we can send you a copy in the post if preferred. In booking this trip you should be confident in your ability to participate in all activities described in these Trip Notes. If you have any doubt about your suitability you should call HF Holidays and ask to speak to one of the team about this itinerary. The information in these Trip Notes is given in good faith. Where differences exist between the Trip Notes and our current brochure, the Trip Notes supersede the brochure. All holidays can be subject to unexpected changes; so please be prepared to be flexible where necessary. At times, it may not be possible to follow the itinerary as planned due to weather conditions, political, physical or other factors. In these circumstances we will make the best possible alternative arrangements to maintain the integrity of the original itinerary.

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