



Maestrazgo –Labyrinth of Silence (self-guided tour)

This is an exciting journey between the highlands of Castellón and Teruel, in a wild, mountainous landscape of strong contrasts; peaks and ravines, rivers and moorlands. With the protagonism of its medieval villages founded by the Knights Templar this land will gradually reveal its culture, life and past. You will soon find yourself lost in the maze of narrow streets of Mirambel, Cantavieja and Molinos. Here you will enjoy your time for walking, contemplation or a chat with friends. All you need is the will to have a good time!

Special highlights:

- **Los Molinos** was once a milling center where farmers would bring their harvest via donkey to be ground. The valley is scattered with abandoned buildings, a few old mills and caves with troughs for the animals, who often slept there with their owners while waiting their turn in the busy season's overnight queue.

Itinerary:

Day 1: You arrive in Barcelona and then by public transport reach Alcorisa (if it is more convenient you may travel to Alcaniz town instead). You will find detailed bus/train schedules in the road book. A private transfer might be arranged upon request (410 EUR). Here you meet our agent who will give you the maps, vouchers, road book and all the needed information for the trip. You have transfer to Molinos – a small village (170 inhabitants). In the afternoon you may take a walk along its gothic little square

and church (15th century). You may also visit the "Grutas de Cristal" (not included in the price). You stay overnight in Molinos.
/dinner/

Day 2: Molinos-Ejolve-Montoro de Mezquita

Today you will observe the transition between the low and the high Maestrazgo. Lonely hillsides, covered with thyme, rosemary, lavender, and mixed forests of pine and oak await you along the route. Walking through the ravine of the river Guadalopillo you reach Ejolve village, with its old mills of flour now in ruins. You have a short transfer to Montoro de Mezquita (20 min.) On the way you will visit a huge geological rock structure with the shape of church organs (instrument). You stay overnight in Montoro de Mezquita (10 inhabitants), hidden away at the bottom of a beautiful valley.

Walking distance: 19 km.
Walking time: 5 hours
/breakfast, dinner/

Day 3: Montoro de Mezquita - Pitarque

Follow the path used by the pilgrims to San Pedro's Hermitage. You cross mountain ranges running parallel with each other and intersected with little valleys and streams, with short but steep ascents and descents.. You reach Pitarque, where you stay overnight.

Walking distance: 11 km.
Walking time: 4 hours
/breakfast, dinner/

Day 4: Pitarque -La Cañada de Benatanduz

You start on a path along a shady gully (cliff) to the source of the river Pitarque. Maples, walnuts and hazel trees constitute one of best Mediterranean river bank forests of the area. You will pass a small hydro electric power station with its defences built against the attacks of the maquis - resistance against Franco which fought from 1949 to1954. Go on to La Cañada de Benatanduz. You will enjoy the beauty of one of the most isolated areas of Spain. You stay overnight in La Cañada de Benatanduz.

Walking distance: 15.5 km.
Walking time: 5 hours
/breakfast, dinner/

Day 5: La Cañada de Benatanduz-Cantavieja

Today you walk in the high parts of Maestrazgo with an altitude of 1700 m. The landscape is painted by pine forest and alpine grass. Also it is the area with most historical buildings in the district, there are six municipalities declared of Historical-artistic interest. You stay overnight in Cantavieja.

Walking distance: 17.5 km,
walking time: 5.5 hours
/breakfast, dinner/

Day 6: Cantavieja

Free day: you may rest in the village or take a walk around La Iglesuela

del Cid. You stay overnight in Cantavieja
/breakfast, dinner/

Day 7: Cantavieja-Mirambel

The landscape this day is devoid of wood or forest as they were cut down in the XVI century to provide more pasture for sheep as the area was thriving economically from wool. You stay overnight in Mirambel, a beautiful medieval village with stone structures, decorated with bold wooden eaves.

Walking distance: 14 km,

Walking time: 5 hours

/breakfast, dinner/

Day 8: Departure

You will have a transfer to Alcorisa and from there you to Barcelona by public transport. A private transfer directly to Barcelona might be arranged upon request (appr. 410 EUR).

DETAILED ROAD BOOK AND MAP WILL BE PROVIDED BY E-MAIL

Accommodation & luggage transportation:

You stay overnight in small rural hotels and Casa Rurales. These are old buildings that have been converted for tourist accommodation. Breakfast and dinner are included every day in the hotel or a local restaurant. Accommodation is in double rooms with private facilities. Your luggage is transferred for you daily to your next hotel so that you can enjoy the walking with just a day pack.

Tour type: IT

Difficulty grade: B

Group size: Minimum 1 person

Best period: Year round except for June and July, when the weather is too hot.

Equipment and clothing

Nothing is compulsory. For the full list with recommended items see "General".

General remarks:

The route often follows the route of long distance path GR-8. You will walk on footpaths and drovers routes used for generations by villagers and farmers. The paths are of good quality but rough underfoot in places. A walking day would normally be between 4 to 7 hours long. Altitude gain is between 300 to 780 m. There are no vertiginous sections.

Weather:

In April, May and the first half of June the mornings and evenings are fresh, the

afternoons are sunny with ideal temperatures for walking, with possible occasional fresh spring rains.

In September and October the weather is dry and warm, with possible significant drop in temperatures in the end of the period.

The price includes:

Half board on twin share accommodation, all transfers as described in the program, luggage transport, map and detailed route notes, 24 hrs assistance by our local agent, VAT 7%

The price does not include:

Flight tickets, transport to local start point (Alcorisa) and to Barcelona airport, lunches, alcohol, cigarettes, other personal expenses

Price of extra services:

Visit to Cristal Caves (5 eur/person)
Walking day around La Iglesuela del Cid - 25 EUR return transfer (1-4 people).
Private transfer from/to Barcelona: 410 EUR

GENERAL

TOUR TYPES & GRADES

We provide different varieties of tours as regards to their types and difficulty grades! Whether you will choose individual and group tours with a guide or combined tours with a guide for some part of the trip depends on you. We emphasize on using local experienced guides with knowledge of the local language, culture, history, art, etc. The tours are conducted in the English language. Guides in other languages are available upon request.

Tour types Our tours are divided in different tour types, regardless of being guided or not or if someone travels alone or in a group. We have prepared your vacation so that you can concentrate on new impressions and experiences, awaiting you all the time. Here is a description of the various tours:

IT: Individual tours There is no guide on this tour. You travel individually and we are responsible for the hotel overnights and /some/ transfers. Sometimes you will travel together with other people. If you wish a guide can be arranged, if ordered. We take it for granted that you can read maps, provided by us.

Difficulty grades To prepare yourself for the best of your vacation we recommend that you start planning it in an advance. Good physical condition is required. In order to achieve it we advise you to start walking, jogging or cycling everyday.

Swimming a couple of times a week is also highly recommended. You do not need much to get yourself in shape. And don't forget that the most important tip for an unforgettable active holiday is to choose a trip which corresponds to your physical condition!

B: Moderate Most of you, who are used to walking during a long weekend, will be in condition to cope with a tour of this level. You should be in good health condition and not too bad physical condition. We have successive days of longer and more difficult walking and days of lighter walking. Some parts of the day routes are done at a higher altitude. The paths are in good condition. We walk for 5-7h a day. You are free to skip some walks and have a rest.

Equipment and clothing:

You should always remember that you must try to keep the weight of your clothing equipment down to a minimum. Your packed rucksack should weigh no more than 10-15 kilograms.

Recommended items: waterproof rucksack (60 l) & daypack (35 l); walking waterproof boots with suitable ankle support; light casual shoes for walking and/or for travelling; gaiters; loose, casual trousers for trekking; waterproof trousers; fleece windstopper jacket; windproof, waterproof outer shell garment (breathable if possible!); hat for sun protection; sunglasses with UV protection; sunscreen lotion and lip balm; torch (headlamp), water bottle, trekking sticks.

Vaccination

Immunisation against Hepatitis A is recommended two weeks prior departure. Check latest requirements with your travel clinic or doctor prior to departure.

Money and personal expenses:

You will need some extra money to cover meals, drinks and extra trips not included in the tour price. The Euro is Spain's official currency. Money can be changed in any bank, and at most travel agencies, major hotels and airports. American Express, Diners Club, MasterCard and Visa are widely accepted. ATMs are widely available. International traveller's cheques are widely accepted. To avoid additional exchange rate charges, travellers are advised to take traveller's cheques in Euros or Pounds Sterling. Traveller's

cheques should be changed at banks or exchange bureaux.

Below are some examples of costs in Spain (NB: prices in mid-range restaurants!):

- Coffee – 1.5 €
- Tea – 1.5 €
- Beer - 1 €
- Soft drink – 1€
- Bottle of water - 0.6 €
- Bottle of good quality local red wine (0,75 l) – 8-10 €
- Three-course lunch – 10-15 €
- Lunch pack – 5 €

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Cell phone coverage:

Roaming agreements exist with most international mobile phone companies. Coverage is good throughout most of the country.

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Electricity

The standard current in Spain is 220 volts but it is common in older places to find the old 115 volt supply. Both systems use plugs with two round pins. Travel adaptors can be purchased to convert plugs from other countries. Many appliances in Spain are not earthed and it is common to find electric sockets in bathrooms, near water supplies so extreme care should be exercised. In rural areas supply is often interrupted during storms. You can bring your electrical goods to Spain from the UK but not 110V appliances from the USA.

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Brief about Spain:

Territory – 504 782 sq km

Borders: North – Atlantic ocean, North East: France (623), Andorra (63.7 km), East & South – Mediterranean sea, Gibraltar (1.2 km), West: Portugal (1,214 km)

Coastline: 4,964 km

Terrain: large, flat to dissected plateau surrounded by rugged hills; Pyrenees in north

Elevation extremes: *lowest point:* Atlantic Ocean 0 m, *highest point:* Pico de Teide (Tenerife) on Canary Islands 3,718 m, longest river: Tagus (part) – 1 010 km

Population – 40,448,191 (July 2007 est.)

Capital city - Madrid (5 603 292)

Largest metropolitan areas – Madrid (5 603 292), Barcelona (5 328 395), Valencia (1 465 081), Sevilla (1 294 081), Malaga (1 019 292) etc.

Ethnic composition – Spanish – 72,3 %, Catalan – 16,3 %, Galician 8,1 %, Basque – 2,3 %, others – 1 %

Religion - Roman Catholic 94%, other 6%

Major resources – fruit and vegetable crops, coal, iron ore, mercury, uranium, fisheries, tourism

Languages: Castilian Spanish (official) 74%, Catalan 17%, Galician 7%, Basque 2%, are official regionally

Protected areas: 13 National Parks, and hundreds of Natural parks, reserves and other protected areas

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Weather:

The climate is Mediterranean of half mountain / Mediterranean continental. This means contrasts in temperatures depending on height, time of the day and exposure: sunshine or shady areas. In winter: temperature can reach -20 °C although the range goes between 10 to 13 °C. The springs are of soft/warm with sunny morning and fresh afternoons with temperatures from about 18 to 22°C. The hottest months go of middle of June until nearly final of August with temperatures reaching 38 °C at the sun, softened in the highest areas (above the 1000 m of height) September and October are very similar to April and May but fresher and less sunny.

In general rainfalls are scarce with rainier periods in the months of April and May and in the end of October and November.

Last edited by: VK, 26/10/11