

SPAIN: PICOS DE EUROPA - THE HIGH PEAKS OF GREEN SPAIN8-day / 7-night **SELF-GUIDED** inn-to-inn walk**GREAT VALUE**

The emerald green **Picos de Europa**, the Peaks of Europe, is doubtless the most impressive mountain range in all of Spain. They were the first glimpse of Europe for countless ships returning from the New World. These jewels of northern Spain emerge dramatically from the coastal landscape as a natural frontier between the green north coast and the more arid Castille. The heart of the Picos is made up of three huge and distinctive limestone massifs, not easily crossed by car or on foot.

An 8-day trip on the north side of the range, through the green province of Asturias, this is designed to be an enjoyable and relaxing walking holiday, offering a variety of landscapes in the Eastern and Central Massifs. On many days you have a choice of easier or more difficult day walks, which include an ascent to the mountain hut at the foot of the famous Picu Urriellu.

Trip Highlights:

- an attractive mix of idyllic countryside, mysterious woods, wide glacier valleys and striking limestone rock formations, including the famous Picu Urriellu
- lodging in pleasant family-run hotels in authentic Spanish villages
- tasty regional food, with local ingredients brought straight from garden, kitchen, and alpine pastures
- delicious Cabrales blue cheese and sparkling Asturian apple cider
- a flexible program with many choices, also very suitable for families

Dates: Daily from late April to end of October

Cost from: **\$955** per person twin share. Single room supplement from \$540

Includes: 7 nights' accommodation in spacious rooms with en-suite bathrooms in simple, comfortable family-run hotels, 7 breakfasts, 4 dinners, luggage transport on days 3 and 7, transfers from day 3 to day 7 according to programme (except optional funicular railway on day 7), detailed route descriptions and maps, 24-hour telephone assistance.

Not included: Meals not mentioned, drinks, optional transfers and local transport, admissions and entrance fees of any kind, personal expenses, gratuities, arrival and departure transfers (on request at extra cost, please ask when booking).

Difficulty: Moderate or challenging walks, choice of routes of 3 to 7 hours' walking, 9km to 19km. If you are looking for a more challenging hiking trip, a real mountain trek, consider our longer 12-day trip which traverses the Picos de Europa National Park – please ask for more details.

Arrival and departure: The closest airports are Oviedo-Asturias, Santander or Bilbao, with daily coach connections to/from Arenas de Cabrales. Or, ask us about private transfers at extra cost.

Call OUTDOOR TRAVEL on 1800 331 582 for details or reservations

Suggested itinerary:

Day 1 Arrive in Arenas de Cabrales

Plan to arrive mid-afternoon to settle into your comfortable hotel located in the centre of the village, with time to sample the local apple cider on the hotel terrace or to visit the Romanesque church of Santa Maria de Llas. Arenas has a good shopping centre for walking equipment and picnic provisions.

Day 2 Circular walk from Arenas

walking @ 10km, 4 to 5.5 hours

Begin with a climb up to the summer meadows of Nava, situated 500m above the Cares River with excellent views of the Picos Range. This is a strenuous but very rewarding walk, especially in early summer when the meadows display a multitude of brightly coloured flowers. Alternative shorter walk at a lower elevation.

Day 3 From Arenas to Sotres de Cabrales

walking @ 9km, 4 hours

There is a short transfer to Tielve, one of the most authentic villages in this part of the Picos. Walk to Valfrú, where residents still produce the famous local blue cheese, *Queso de Cabrales*. Gradually ascend through a fairy-tale landscape of heather, old beech woods and streams to a pass at 1240m, then down to Sotres (1050m), one of the highest villages in the Picos de Europa. You stay 4 nights in Sotres with dinner included.

Day 4 Walk from Sotres through Andara Massif

walking @ 13km, 5 hours

A circular walk today through the Eastern Massif of the Picos in an area exploited by mining industries in the 19th Century. Discover a limestone landscape of sharp ridges, deep depressions and bottomless shafts. In some seasons you'll see bright alpine flora among the rocks, and there is a good chance of seeing chamois, vultures, and different types of eagles. There are several options to shorten or extend your walk.

Days 5-6 Several walks from Sotres

walking @ 6 to 19km, 2.5 to 7 hours

Choose from among four walks from Sotres, depending on the weather or how you're feeling. To the Vega de Urriellu mountain refuge and back, reaching an elevation of 2000m at the foot of the imposing Picu Urriellu. Or, through meadows and woods of the neighbouring village of Tresviso, where the very rare Urugallo or local Capercaille lives (this bird is responsible for the dispersal of seeds vital to the Picos environment). Or, up to 1650m through an interesting glacier valley, where sheep, horses and cattle are pastured, an ideal viewing point for European vultures. Alternatively a stroll along farming tracks nearer the hotel.

Day 7 From Sotres back to Arenas

walking @ 12km, 5.5 hours

Walk along farming tracks up to Pandebano Pass (at 1245m), leaving Sotres behind. Descend along an ancient footpath through natural meadows and low vegetation to Bulnes, a truly authentic mountain village accessible only on foot or by funicular railway. Ride the train down through a tunnel to Poncebos or extend the walk through an impressive gorge where vultures nest. Taxi transfer from Poncebos to your hotel in Arenas. If the weather is not the best or you wish to take it easy, you can take the transfer to Poncebos in the morning and walk into the famous Cares Gorge, then return to Arenas by public bus or taxi (at own cost).

Day 8 Departure day

Tour arrangements end after breakfast.



Outdoor Travel offers guided or self-guided with inn-to-inn luggage transfers and meals in many parts of Europe including pilgrimage routes in France and Spain such as the **Camino de Santiago**, the **Camino del Norte** northern route along the coast from San Sebastian, or the **Camino Portuguese** from Porto to Santiago. We offer literary walks such as **Wainwright's Coast to Coast** walk in England, or **Stevenson's Trail** 'travels with a donkey' in the wild **Cévennes** in France. Enjoy mountain walks such as the **Sierra de Grazalema** in Spain's Andalusia, the French and Spanish **Pyrenees**, the **Tour de Mont Blanc** spanning France, Switzerland and Italy.

Contact Outdoor Travel for more details and reservations:

- Call Toll free: 1800 331 582 or (03) 57551743 or Fax (03) 57501020
- Email: info@outdoortravel.com.au
- Web: <http://www.outdoortravel.com.au>
- Mail: Outdoor Travel Pty Ltd, PO Box 286, Bright, VIC 3741, Australia