



1266 66th Street, Suite 4
Emeryville, California

T: +1 510 594 6000
I 888 MTSOBEK (687 6235)
F: +1 510 594 6001
info@mtsobek.com
www.mtsobek.com



©Anne Wood (Mountain Travel Sobek staff)

ACROSS THE PYRENEES

A Classic Trek Through the Mountains of Spain and France

TRIP DETAILS

9 days ~ Spain & France

*7 days moderate to strenuous
hiking on varied terrain
(maximum elevation 9,900'),
some long drives*

*8 nights hotels or
paradores*

2010 DATES

Jul 17–Jul 25

*Sep 18–Sep 26**

**Extend your adventure!
You can do the September
departure back to back with*

Hiking the Picos de Europa.

*Call or visit us online for a
separate itinerary.*

2010 LAND COST

*\$4,495 per person
(2-16 members)*

\$1,200 single supplement

TRIP LEVEL
STRENUOUS

HIGHLIGHTS

- *Exhilarating hiking in the Pyrenees' Ordesa National Park, Spain's answer to Yosemite, with its 1,500-foot waterfalls*
- *Stay in lovely, historic paradores in beautiful settings and enjoy delicious gourmet dinners*
- *Visit Bilbao's celebrated Guggenheim Museum, noted for its collections of avant-garde art*
- *Diverse itinerary with city and art tours in addition to the great hikes*
- *End the trip in Barcelona, with its wonderful mix of Spanish and Mediterranean influences*



ACROSS THE PYRENEES

A Classic Trek Through the Mountains of Spain and France

Erik Perez, trip leader for our popular *Hiking in the Picos de Europa* trips in northwest Spain, ventures farther afield from his homeland of Asturias to lead this traverse across the Pyrenees (or *Pirineos*, to Erik). The Pyrenees, a dazzling mountain range crowning the border between France and Spain, is an irresistible draw to hikers and adventurers, with its enchanting landscapes of flower-filled meadows, sparkling lakes, spectacular mountain cirques, and ancient passes steeped in smugglers' lore. It's one of the most rewarding destinations in Europe for avid hikers.

Our challenging hike is mostly on the Spanish side, where it's sunny and warmer (but we do venture over the border into France to appease the Francophiles among you!). Beginning in the lively town of Bilbao, home of the celebrated Guggenheim Museum, you'll make a traverse from west to east through some of the area's gorgeous national parks, ending in Barcelona, a favorite city of many a seasoned traveler. Baggage will be transported separately by van.

Besides the great hikes, you'll get an eclectic taste of Basque, Aragon, and Catalan culture while staying at picturesque country inns and luxurious *paradores* that are among the most romantic and historic hotels of Spain. And the fine, hearty food and wine of northern Spain will delight and sustain you in your mountain forays.



ITINERARY

☞ This trip begins with a rendezvous at the Hotel Ercilla in Bilbao, Spain at 11 a.m. on Day 1. Those arriving in Bilbao the morning of Day 1 will be picked up at the airport and transferred to the rendezvous hotel. Please arrange your flight schedule so you arrive on Day 1 in the morning. We recommend you consider arriving in Spain a day or two early to rest from the long international flight and to have time to look around on your own. You can also extend your visit after the trip to include other cities in Spain, such as Barcelona (our final destination) or Madrid. See *Extend your Adventure!* below for details.

DAY 1 ~ Arrive in Bilbao, Spain

Arrive in Bilbao in the early morning in time to rendezvous with trip leader Erik Perez and the rest of the group at 11:00 a.m. We'll have a short trip briefing, then visit the futuristic cathedral-like Guggenheim Museum, noted for its permanent collections of avant-garde art displaying the works of 20th-century artists such as Vasily Kandinsky, Willem de Kooning, and many leading Basque and Spanish artists.

After lunch at the museum, we'll have the better part of the afternoon to visit the different art collections and observe the building's architecture. At about 4:30 p.m., we'll transfer two hours to Pamplona, the capital of Navarre province. (Pamplona is best known as the locale for the famous "running of the bulls" during the Fiesta de San Fermín early July of each year.) We'll have a walking tour of the city, which dates back to Roman times, at 8:00 p.m., followed by a tasty dinner at the hotel. Overnight at the four-star Hotel Tres Reyes.

L,D...Hotel Tres Reyes, Pamplona

DAY 2 ~ Roncal & Hecho Valleys

One-hour transfer to the ancient mountain village of Isaba in the Roncal Valley of the Navarre Pyrenees. Isaba is an exquisite and perfectly preserved architectural gem in the stately style of Pyrenees villages. From Isaba, we'll hike to Zuriza (5,280') in the Roncal and Hecho Valleys, following pasturelands and gentle mountains where Basque Navarran shepherds tend their flocks of cattle and sheep. It is from these valleys that many Basque communities emigrated to settle in the mountain states of Idaho and Nevada in the western U.S. Picnic lunch en route. Upon arrival in Zuriza at about 4:00 p.m. we'll transfer two hours to the village of Torla, a well-preserved Pyrenean village of slate-roofed houses at the entrance to the Ordesa National Park. (5 hours easy hiking; total altitude gain/loss 1,850'/270'.)

B,L,D...Hotel Bujaruelo or similar, Torla

DAY 3 ~ Gavarnie

After breakfast we have a short 20-minute transfer to the trailhead for a hike along the banks of the Ara River through beech and pine forests to San Nicolas de Bujaruelo. Here we cross an old bridge, the remains of the medieval road between Torla and Gavarnie. Continue through meadows and high pastures to Bujaruelo Pass (7,920') and the French border. Descend into the French town of Gavarnie by about 5:00 p.m., enjoying spectacular bird's-eye views of the majestic, enormous stone amphitheater of Gavarnie, where foaming waterfalls pour off 3,000-foot walls. (6-7 hours moderate hiking on good trails; total altitude gain/loss 3,201'/2,937'.)

B,L,D...Grand Hotel Vignemale, Gavarnie

"...at a sudden turn, there flashed on us in all its beauty the glorious vision of the 'Cirque du Gavarnie.' The whole valley seems shut in by a lofty half-moon of rock crowned by ice and snow. The rock is broken up into shapes, which seem to take the outline of battlements and bastions to protect the village."

*Harold Spender
Through the High Pyrenees*

DAY 4 ~ Monte Perdido

Our hike today is in the area of Monte Perdido (11,000') in Ordesa National Park (Parque Nacional Ordesa y Monte Perdido). From Gavarnie (4,554'), we cross again to the Spanish side via Espuguettes-Puerto Nuevo de Pineta (9,441') and the Circo de Pineta, ending at the Parador Nacional de Bielsa (also known as Parador Monte Perdido) in the Valle de Pineta in the province of Aragón. (9 hours strenuous hiking, some scree; total altitude gain/loss 4,700'/4,000'. A shorter, less strenuous option is available.)

B,L,D...Parador Nacional de Bielsa, Monte Perdido

DAY 5 ~ Monte Perdido

Today we'll do a day hike from the parador, traversing from the Circo de Pineta to the Balcon de Pineta and Lago Helado de Marboré—a hike along the highest part of the base of two high peaks of the area, Pico Marboré (10,653') and Monte Perdido (11,000'). (8 hours strenuous hiking.) Highest elevation reached is 9,900'. We have the option of taking shorter hikes back to the hotel at the end of the day. (Total altitude gain/loss 4,158'. A shorter option is available.)

B,L,D...Parador Nacional de Bielsa, Monte Perdido

DAY 6 ~ Aneto

Transfer two hours from Bielsa to Benasque, with its narrow streets and winding alleys lined with old seignorial mansions. Continue to Puerto de La Besurta and hike below Aneto (11,168'), the highest peak in the Pyrenees, to the Valle de Aran (7,755'), where we will stay in the Parador de Arties. The evening is free to stroll through the town or swim in the parador's outdoor pool. (6 hours moderate hiking; total altitude gain/loss 1,944'/3,200'.)

B,L,D...Parador de Arties, Lleida

DAY 7 ~ Catalonia

We are now in the Catalonia (Cataluña) region of the Pyrenees, which has a separate identity from the rest of Spain. After a 90-minute transfer, we'll hike from a meadow below the Puerto de la Bonaigua (6,270') up to Lagos de Gerver (7,300'), then descend to the road where we will be picked up by the bus and transferred three hours to the surroundings of Montserrat near Barcelona. (5 hours easy hiking; total altitude gain/loss about 1,000'.)

B,L,D...Parador de Cardona, Catalonia

DAY 8 ~ Montserrat

Montserrat is the sacred mountain of the Catalans. This famous mountain range, the setting of Wagner's opera *Parsifal*, is a mystical landscape of towering pillars and fantastic smooth pinnacles. Today we'll transfer one hour to the cable train of Montserrat and hike via the Pla de Ocells and below the impressive sandstone pinnacles of Cavall Bernat (4,950'). Descend to Montserrat monastery, a 9th-century Benedictine monastery and shrine of the Black Madonna. In the early afternoon we'll transfer one hour to Barcelona. After checking into the hotel at about 4:00 p.m., we'll have a sightseeing tour of the city, including a visit to the Gaudi monuments. Festive farewell dinner with the group. (3 hours hiking; total altitude gain/loss 860'/2,392'.)

B,L,D...Hotel Gallery, Barcelona

DAY 9 ~ Fly Home

Transfer on your own to the Barcelona International Airport and depart on homeward-bound flights (or to other destinations in Europe). Your flight can depart at any time.

B...

2010 LAND COST

\$4,495 per person (2-16 members)

Rates quoted are per person, based on sharing double accommodations.

Single Supplement—\$1,200 for “requested” singles. If you prefer single accommodations, you must pay the Single Supplement Fee. If you’re traveling alone and wish to share accommodations, we’ll try our best to find you a roommate. If we cannot, you must pay the \$1,200 Single Supplement Fee.

What’s Included

- ◆ expert leadership
- ◆ accommodations in hotels or paradors
- ◆ meals as noted (B=Breakfast, L=Lunch, D=Dinner)
- ◆ airport transfers for the scheduled arrival and departure dates
- ◆ sightseeing as noted in the itinerary
- ◆ ground transportation
- ◆ basic medical and evacuation insurance

What’s Not

International airfare; meals not noted in itinerary; insurance other than basic medical and evacuation insurance as noted above (we strongly recommend you purchase the supplementary trip insurance offered by Mountain Travel Sobek, which includes trip cancellation insurance); optional tipping to leader, guides and local staff; excess baggage charges; airport transfers in Barcelona other than on scheduled departure date; airport taxes; and items of a personal nature (sodas, alcoholic beverages, laundry, etc.).

Air Travel

Airfare is not included in the land cost of our trips. For air reservations, we recommend you contact the airlines directly, either by phone or the Internet. In addition, many travelers elect to use their “frequent flyer” miles when traveling with us. **But please check with our staff before purchasing or obtaining your tickets.** We need to verify your arrival and departure schedule and ensure we have enough participants to operate the trip.

WHAT YOU CAN EXPECT

Expert Leadership

Expert leadership is the key to an exciting, unforgettable experience. Our trips feature gifted leaders for whom leading trips is a true vocation. Besides showing you wonders you'd never find on your own, they make sure everything runs smoothly and safely without a hitch. They are knowledgeable about all aspects of your trip, and take great pleasure in sharing their insights with you. More than just guides, they positively elevate your experience by being teachers, companions, and the best of friends. You'll be in good hands with them every step of the way.



Erik Perez is scheduled to lead this trip. Erik was born and raised in the province of Asturias in Spain and has been climbing the local mountains since he was a boy. He operates a mountain guide company in Cangas de Onís, Spain, and has written two books about the mountains of Asturias, *Excursiones Selectas de la Montana Asturiana* and *Cinco Montanas Clasicas Asturianas*. He was educated at the University of Oviedo, from which he holds a degree in history. Erik's knowledge of the life and culture of northern Spain, his love for the mountains and his capacity to share that with you, and his friendly rapport with all the people along the trails make him one of our most popular guides. Erik also leads treks for us in the Picos de Europa, Greece, Nepal, and Patagonia.

Activity Level

Mountain Travel Sobek trips are designed for flexible, energetic people who like to be active and have a spirit of adventure and a positive attitude. ***We expect participants to be strong, experienced hikers in good physical condition***, who enjoy hiking, even up steep hills. Many of the trails are quite rocky, and you should have some experience in hiking off-trail. Most hikes are from six to seven hours in length. You need to be in good health and physical condition to enjoy this trip, with adequate muscular strength, cardiovascular endurance, and good balance.

The level of fitness and endurance needed for this trip requires regular aerobic exercise at least one hour 3-4 times per week, performing moderate intensity hiking, cycling, swimming, or other forms of cardiovascular exercise. You must be able to hike four to six hours a day for at least two consecutive days and be comfortable hiking on rough terrain.

If you are not optimally conditioned, we recommend that you start a training program ***at least three months*** before departure, gradually increasing the intensity and duration. If your health is questionable or your physical stamina is limited, please discuss other trip options with us.

THE NEXT STEP

Ready to go? Signing up is easy!

Just call us at 1-888-MTSOBEK (687-6235) and reserve your spot! You can also book a reservation online at our website (www.mtsobek.com). If you prefer to use a travel agent, he or she can book your trip at no extra cost and provide other helpful assistance.

Then Leave the Rest to Us

Before you go, we provide you with extensive pre-departure information, including clothing recommendations, suggested reading lists, and other details.

Why Mountain Travel Sobek is Your First Choice for Adventure

Mountain Travel Sobek is the pioneer in active adventure travel. No other adventure travel company can lay claim to that title. We were the first to take Americans trekking in Nepal, raft the wild rivers of Africa, and open up many previously inaccessible corners of the world to curious travelers. We set the standard for adventure travel and have a strong reputation for excellence that we do everything we can to maintain. Since we are the leading adventure company, we have a lot to live up to, so we make sure we provide safe, quality trips and the best customer service to our passengers.

References

Don't take our word for how great our trips are. We'll be happy to provide you with references of satisfied past travelers.

Questions?

Feel free to call us at 1-888-MTSOBEK (687-6235) if you still have any questions or concerns. We're here to help you. You can also check out our website at www.mtsobek.com.

Note on Itinerary

Although we will do our best to adhere to the itinerary schedule as listed, it is subject to change. Please read the Limitation of Liability and Booking Conditions in the four-page Participant Information Form. You can find all this information on our website at www.mtsobek.com/faq and the form itself at www.mtsobek.com/pdf/participant_info.pdf.

Terms & Conditions

Once you have made a deposit for a trip, you agree to be bound by all our terms and conditions including the Limitation of Liability Clause. The full Terms and Conditions can be found at www.mtsobek.com/faq/#liability or call 1-888-MTSOBEK (687-6235) for a copy. These are partial conditions. Your participation is contingent on your signature on the full list of terms specified in the four-page Participant Information Form (www.mtsobek.com/pdf/participant_info.pdf). Any dispute concerning, relating or referring to the Terms and Conditions, to any literature concerning this trip, or the trip itself, shall be resolved exclusively by binding arbitration in San Francisco, California, according to the then existing commercial rules of the American Arbitration Association. Such proceedings will be governed by substantive California law (but not procedural law) without regard to the California Arbitration Act.

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