



Collett's
MOUNTAIN HOLIDAYS

BASQUE COUNTRY HILL WALKING

A 7 night self-guided route
Explore this quiet corner of the Northern Spain with its captivating views and unspoilt nature
Daily luggage transfers included

At a glance

The Enchanted Villages route is a 7-night self-guided exploration of the mountains, villages and culture of the Navarre region of Spain which, whilst not strictly speaking in the Basque region of Spain, is authentically Basque in all but name! This route weaves through the foothills of the Pyrenees through varied scenery and terrain, passing through numerous ancient villages, each with its own unique history.

Take in the 360° views from the summits as you traverse the border of France and Spain, sometimes with a foot in each country, before descending to a nearby village for the night to discover for yourself the strength of the region's identity through the cuisine, stories and language. If you wish, you can also spend a day or two visiting the vibrant Basque city of San Sebastián before or after your walking adventure in Navarre.

Dates & Prices

Available from April to mid-October

The best months to visit are May, early June & September

Low Season – April, May, June, September & October £895 pp

High Season Supplement – July, August & September £50 pp

Transfers available from Biarritz Airport (€95 for 2-4 pax) or Bilbao Airport (€200 for 2-4 pax) are available on request

You may start this itinerary any day although availability is limited for Thursday and Friday arrivals.

Prices are per person and based on two people sharing a twin or double room.

Please note that all bookings are subject to availability in the hotels.

Please do not make any travel arrangements until we have confirmed your accommodation dates.

The minimum party size is two (for reasons of safety no single travelers are permitted)

Grade : Moderate to Moderate-Long

Ascents: 275m to 950m each day

Descents : 450m to 950m each day

Walking Time : 5 to 8 hours each day

Terrain : Much of the walking in the Basque Country is along clear footpaths, tracks and some road walking where necessary. The path is often waymarked but also makes use of farm tracks so attention to the map and route cards is necessary. Ascents and descents are generally well-graded and will pose no difficulty to a moderately fit walker. Some days appear long but there are plenty of opportunities to shorten days with the taxi that carries your luggage. *If you are in any doubt whether this holiday is suitable for you, please call the office on 01799 513331 or email enquiries@colletts.co.uk and we will be happy to discuss the route in more detail with you.*

Included in the price

- 7 nights B&B accommodation in comfortable, handpicked hotels and rural guest houses
- 4 three course evening meals (on nights 1, 2, 3, and 6)
- Packed lunch each walking day
- Luggage transfers each day from hotel to hotel
- Transfer from San Sebastián to Bera
- Welcome Meeting with Javier at Bera hotel
- Detailed route cards (including maps and route descriptions)
- 24/7 Telephone support throughout your holiday
- Transfer from Elizondo to San Sebastián on the final day

Not included in the price

- Flights & Travel Insurance
- Transport from the airport to San Sebastián on your arrival day (See Travel Section below for your options)
- Dinners (on the three non-inclusive nights)
- Drinks and all "extras"



Basque Country Villages – The Itinerary

Day 1 - Arrive, Travel to Bera & Settle in

After arriving at either Bilbao or Biarritz airport, you will take a bus to San Sebastián (not included) where you will be met by Javier and transferred to your hotel in Bera, 35 minutes away. Alternatively, you can transfer directly from Biarritz or Bilbao airports to your hotel in Bera (for a supplement) – see the Travel & Other Info Tab above for more details. Once at your hotel you will enjoy a Welcome Briefing given by Javier. **Overnight in Bera** (Dinner included).

Day 2 - Bera to Etxalar

17km, 6 ½ hours walking time, 950m ascent/descent

Quickly leaving behind the village of Bera, your path takes you up into the mountains and away from the bustle of the valley. Surrounded by expansive views of the Pyrenean foothills, you descend to the medieval village centre of Lesaka before continuing over the next ridge line on the beginnings of the GR11 to the lively village of Etxalar. **Overnight in Etxalar** (Dinner is included at the village bar).

Day 3 – Etxalar to Zugarramurdi

13km (+ optional 2km), 6 hours (+ optional 1 ½hrs) walking time, 790m ascent (+ optional 200m)

This is a beautiful stage that runs along the top of the mountains that separate France and Spain. Walking with one foot in one country and the other foot in the other with vultures likely soaring overhead, traverse the border on one of the many old smugglers' routes. The views are exceptional on both sides, especially from the summit of Arxuria (758m) that can be optionally climbed before descending through the meadows below to the next cosy country house where you will spend the night, in Zugarramurdi, in a beautiful natural setting.

Overnight in Zugarramurdi or its surrounds, depending on availability (Dinner included).

Day 4 – Zugarramurdi to Dantxarinea or Urdax

14km, 5 ½ hours walking time, 275m ascent

This short stage is very easy to walk and meanders between many interesting places. Allow yourself to be enchanted by the Witches Cave in Zugarramurdi and it's accompanying museum, astounded by the natural rock formations at the Urdax caves and relax with a croissant in the picturesque village of Ainhoa, voted one of the prettiest villages in France.

Overnight in Dantxarinea or Urdax, depending on availability (Dinner not included).

Day 5 – Dantxarinea to Erratzu

22km, 7½ hours walking time, 685m ascent – with options to shorten the day

Don't be put off by the statistics of today's walk – you can choose to shorten it considerably by traveling by taxi (together with your luggage) some of the way! The well-graded forest path ascends the northern slopes of Alkarruntz from the peaceful village of Urdax, affording views of Arxuria to the north. From the Otsondo pass you can choose to extend your walk to include the summit of Alkarruntz at 934m (additional 1hr, 5km, 360m ascent/descent), from where on a good day you will have expansive views of the surrounding mountains and valleys. Descend through the meadows and past numerous megalithic remains to the valley below, passing through the historic villages of Amaiur with the remains of its historic castle, and Bozate to reach Erratzu where you will stay in an impressive rural house with over 400 years of history.

Overnight in Erratzu or its surrounds, depending on availability (Dinner not included).

Day 6 - Erratzu to Beartzun

13km, 4 ½ hours walking time, 600m ascent

Another short, but very pleasant stage. The day begins by winding through agricultural land and meadows, passing through the colourful hamlet of Gorostapolo before descending to the river. Take a worthwhile diversion to the Xorroxin waterfalls where, if the temperature of the water permits, you can take a refreshing dip in the plunge pool before continuing on your way. Follow the ancient cobbled path used by local peasants traveling between valleys in bygone times before ascending easily to the Basagar pass where there are many megalithic remains. A short walk will then take you to Beartzun (straddling the border with France) and a cosy rural house where you will spend the night.

Overnight in Beartzun (Dinner included).

Day 7 - Urruska to Elizondo

20.5km, 7 ¼ hours walking time, 575m ascent

The final day is a perfect way to say goodbye to the beautiful Baztan Valley. An easy walk to the scenic summit of Soalar, affords you a great summary of the terrain you have passed through in the past few days. Descend on wide tracks to the pretty village of Arizkun where you can finish your day early and arrange for a taxi to take you back to San Sebastián. Alternatively, continue all the way to exquisite Elizondo through the remaining hillside hamlets and their stunning views of the valley, where a taxi will take you to San Sebastián.

Overnight in San Sebastián (Dinner not included, but there are plenty of local restaurants in the city to suit all budgets and tastes).

Day 8 - Departure

Independent onward travel or the possibility to extend your stay. Your hotel is a ten-minute taxi ride (€9 approx.) from the bus station in San Sebastián, where you can catch a bus to Bilbao or Biarritz. Please call us to discuss the options for independent onward travel or the possibility to extend your stay.

Travel

This holiday is designed so that guests can arrive into both Bilbao (Spain) and Biarritz (France) airports.

Bilbao Arrivals

Bilbao Airport is well served by regular buses to San Sebastián. Buses leave the airport every 45 minutes and take approximately 1 hour 10 minutes (€17pp). From San Sebastian, a free transfer (35 mins) will take you directly to your first nights accommodation in Bera. Alternatively we can organise a private transfer from Bilbao airport direct to your hotel in Bera at a supplement of €200 for 2-4 people.

Biarritz Arrivals

Biarritz airport is closer to San Sebastián so the journey is shorter at 35 minutes, but there are fewer buses per day. Please contact us for more information. Alternatively, we can organise a private transfer from Biarritz airport direct to your hotel in Bera at a supplement of €95 for 2-4 people.

‘At Your Own Risk’

Your self-guided “Basque Country Hill Walking – Enchanted Villages” holiday will be spent entirely at your own risk and it is important that you understand that whilst the route notes are accurate at the time of writing, the situation on the ground may change and this itinerary relies on your sound judgement and decision making throughout. Our self-guided “Basque Country Hill Walking – Enchanted Villages” has been organised so that you might enjoy a route and associated accommodation you may not otherwise have discovered having organised the itinerary yourself. It represents nothing more than the opportunity to go out on a beautiful walk in a part of this wonderful walking area, with the support of knowing that many of the logistics have been arranged for you. It is a fact that hill walking can and is associated with personal injury and death. By coming to such areas, you are exposing yourself and your party to the possibility of personal injury or even death. In such an event, Collett’s Limited trading as Collett’s Mountain Holidays will not be held responsible for your interest in the outdoors and your involvement in mountain and coastal walking, which can occasionally have tragic consequences. The information provided uses only marked paths which are in use at the time of writing, however, it is your responsibility to continually assess the suitability and safety of the route throughout the walk and to undertake any action necessary to avoid any terrain which each or any member of the group is not comfortable with. The route choice also assumes an ability to read maps and navigate competently. It is the responsibility of each individual in the group to make an assessment of the information provided, and to make an informed decision about whether the itinerary is suitable for them. Finally, during your holiday with Collett’s Mountain Holidays you act at your own risk on any ideas, information and opinions included in any material prepared by us to help you get the most from the area.

