

Cycling the Basque Country: From Hendaye to St Jean Pied de Port

Your route in brief

- Hybrid bike tour without a guide
- Itinerant trip with several levels of difficulty
- Comfortable accommodation with nights in hotels** and hotels***.
- Transport of your luggage between accommodations
- Easy access and return from Hendaye and Saint Jean Pied de Port train stations
- E-bike hire available
- Duration 6 days / 5 nights

Strong points

- Discovery of the coast and the landscapes of the Basque mid-mountain
- The charm of the villages we pass through: Sare, Ainhoa, Itxassou, Espelette, Baigorry, St Jean Pied de Port...
- A well-established local terroir: gastronomy, culture, architecture...
- Beautiful, little-travelled mid-mountain roads
- A few incursions on the Spanish side
- Departure from the Atlantic Ocean, feet in the water



From Hendaye to Saint-Jean-Pied-de-Port, come and discover on your bicycle the multi-faceted Basque Country! Just by the water side, you will start the week on a wonderful road linking Hendaye to Saint-Jean-de-Luz, weaving along the Basque corniche overlooking the Ocean. Then, the time will come to go further inland and reach the first Pyrenean massif: the Rhune, emblematic mountain of the Basque Country. Later on, you will discover many traditional villages with plenty of character, such as Sare, Ainhoa, Espelette, Itxassou, Saint-Etienne-de-Baigorry... You will have the opportunity to taste and enjoy the tasty local food: the famous piment d'Espelette (Espelette pepper), the Irouleguy wine, the Itxassou cherry are waiting for you. Finally, your trip will come to an end in Saint-Jean-Pied-de-Port, the small capital of the Basque Country and a not-to-be-missed place for the pilgrims of Santiago de Compostela, with more mountainous and more sporty stages!

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• PROGRAM

Day 1 : Start of your holiday in Hendaye

Check-in at your hotel in Hendaye. You can either choose to visit the city or to do a walk to discover the famous Domain of Abbadia, remarkable 65ha natural site located on the seafront, within varied landscapes. In this amazing biological reserve, you will be able to visit the well-known Gothic Revival castle of Antoine d'Abbadie, according to the opening hours.

- Distance : 5.5km, altitude gain : +80m, descent : -80m.

Day 2 : From Hendaye to Sare

From Hendaye you will ride the Basque Corniche along the Ocean to reach the lovely port town of Saint-Jean-de-Luz. Then, you cycle to Ascaïn and pass the Saint Ignace col where you will have the opportunity to opt for a return journey by train to the Rhune, the emblematic mountain of the Basque Country. From the pass, a short descent will lead you to Sare, amazing Basque village. You can also choose a longer version from Ascaïn : you will cycle round the Rhune on the Spanish slope via the Ibardin pass, before reaching Sare through the Lizuniaga pass.

- Distance : 24,5 km, altitude gain : +325m, descent : -255m (via St Ignace Pass)
- Distance : 43,40 km, altitude gain : +670m, descent : -600m (via Ibardin Pass)

Day 3 : From Sare to Itxassou

The stage of the day takes you through many typical villages, such as Ainhoa, Espelette or Ixtassou, some of them being designated « Plus beaux villages de France » (most beautiful villages of France). In these villages, a break is a must to be able to feel and enjoy their unique charm and atmosphere. Depending on the itinerary you will choose, you will discover Cambo les Bains, famous spa town, and the wonderful gardens of Arnaga. A short incursion in Spain will add some diversity to this already very lively day! The route via the Legarre pass is reserved for those who like steep climbs!

- Distance : 26km, altitude gain : +290m, descent : -275m
- Distance : 34km, altitude gain : +485m, descent : -470m (via Spain)
- Distance : 38 km, altitude gain : +710m, descent : -695m (via Spain and Legarre pass)

Day 4 : From Itxassou to Saint Etienne de Baigorry

Two different itineraries which differ in many ways are proposed for this stage. The first one passes through the Col de Roland, a place steeped in history and legend. Then, the route follows the river Nive to the lovely village of Bidarray. Later, you cycle up to the Gastigar Pass on the mountainside and the crests of Iparla, before descending to Saint Etienne de Baigorry. The other itinerary is set on the other side of the Nive, it goes round the two mountains of Ursuya and Mount Baigura and meets the banks of the river Nive before reaching Saint Etienne de Baigorry.

- Distance : 26km, altitude gain : +590m, descent : -525m (left riverbank of the Nive)
- Distance : 43,3km, altitude gain : +620m, descent : -555m (right riverbank of the Nive)

Day 5 : From Saint Etienne de Baigorry to Saint-Jean-Pied-de-Port

Today, the road rises! The two itineraries you are proposed to follow will make you cross passes that very nearly go up as high as 1000 metres above the sea level. They will reward you with dramatic views on the East side mountains of the Basque Country. After a bit of effort and once you will have reached the top of these passes, you will have to initiate the descent to Saint-Jean-Pied-de-Port, highlight of the Basque Country.

- Distance : 23km, altitude gain : +785m, descent : -775m (Via Aharza Pass, Urdanzia Pass and Lasse). Itinerary adapted to bike.
- Distance : 32km, altitude gain : +900m, descent : -890m (Via Urdiako Pass, Urdanzia Path and Lasse) Itinerary adapted to the VTC including 2 kilometers of easy track, you may have to push your bike.

Day 6 : Loops of Saint-Jean-Pied-de-Port

Starting from Saint Jean pied de port, three loops are proposed according to your level. The first one crosses the vineyards of Irouleguy until you discover a very beautiful panorama at the top of Jara. The second will take you from pass to pass through varied landscapes, small roads and remote villages in the Basque countryside. You can enjoy a gastronomic break at the Gamia pass and restaurant before your last descent of the week. Finally, for the more sporty,

we suggest you discover the superb site of Iraty, a plateau in the heart of the largest beech forest in Europe, the climb will be made along one of the most beautiful and most demanding roads in the region.

- Distance : 28,5km, altitude gain : +800m, descent : -800m (summit of Jara)
- Distance: 53km, altitude gain: 970m, descent: -970m (Col de Gamia)
- Distance : 56km, altitude gain : +1350m, descent : -1350m (Iraty)

This program is an example of the itinerary we aim to adhere to. It may be necessary, if situations arise that are beyond our control, for the itinerary to be modified.

• DATES AND PRICES

Departure

Every day from the beginning of April to the end of October.
Booking from 2 people (solo travelers : please contact us).

Price : From 01/04/2021 to 30/10/2022 :

Price per person for a group of 2 persons	590€
Price per person for a group of 3 persons	535€
Price per person for a group of 4 persons	520€
Price per person for a group of 5 persons	510€
Price per person for a group of 6 persons	505€

Extras :

- Single Room option : 175€/pers.
- Extra High season (July y August) : 15€/pers
- Extra VTC bike + bike bags hire 5 days : 135€/pers
- Extra E-bike + bike bags hire 5 days : 195€/pers
- Extra transfer back from Saint Jean Pied de Port to Hendaye on a week day: 145€/transfer
- Extra transfer back from Saint Jean Pied de Port to Hendaye on a Sunday or Public Holiday: 165€/transfer
- Extra night in St Jean-Pied-de-Port and/or Hendaye: Please, consult us

The price includes :

- Half board accommodation days 2, 3 and 4
- Bed & Breakfast days 1 and 5
- Luggage transfers
- Dossier containing maps, route notes (1 for 4 persons, given in 1st accommodation)
- GPS tracks if you ask us + access to the detailed itinerary on the Mhikes GPS mobile application

The price does not include :

- Holiday and travel insurance
- Evening meals days 1 and 5 ~~and 6~~
- Entrance fees
- Drinks and picnics
- Bike rental
- 15€ booking fees

• TAILOR MADE HOLIDAY

We can put together a suitable holiday for you taking into account all your specific requests and budget. Many individuals and trekking companies have relied on us for years. With our tailor-made holidays we always aim to provide you with the best quality at the fairest price.

If you want to :

- increase the comfort of your accommodations,
- change the duration of your trip,
- organize additional activities or visits,

Contact Gaetan
Phone : 0033 5 34 14 51 50

gaetan@respyrenees.com

- get a transfer from/to an airport,
- organize an extra night

• ORGANIZATION

We take care of all the bookings for your accommodations during the tour and we transport your luggage that you will find when you arrive in each accommodation. We provide you with the maps and detailed cycling route notes sent on the first accommodation, for 2 to 4 people. Moreover, during your trip, our team will answer all your questions, and will provide all useful advice in order to make this holiday a success.

• TECHNICAL INFORMATION

Level 2/5

Quite easy: 3 to 5 hours of cycling per day, each stage ranging between 23km and 56km. No particular difficulty.

Guide

Self-guided cycling, without a guide.

Carrying

You need to carry a small day bag only with a water bottle, camera, picnic and wind jacket. The main luggage will be transported by vehicle between the different accommodations; it should be easy to carry (see our equipment advice).

• ACCOMMODATION / FOOD

Accommodation

3 nights in half board and 2 nights in bed & breakfast

4 nights in hotels** on days 1, 2, 3 and 4

1 night in hotel*** on day 5

Food

- Continental breakfast (tea, coffee, milk, butter, jam).
- For the dinners that are not included, a choice of restaurants is possible in each stopover.
- Picnics not included. You can do some groceries shopping in each stopover.
- Drinks not included.

• PRACTICAL INFORMATION

Starting : Day 1 at your hotel in Hendaye (64), according to your time of arrival.

Ending : Day 6 at your hotel in Saint-Jean-Pied-de-Port (64), after your cycling day.

How to get to Hendaye :

- **By air :** Biarritz airport (25km) : daily flights via Paris, Londres, Lyon, and the Clermont Ferrand.
- **By train :** Numerous TER trains departing from the main cities in the direction of Bayonne and then Hendaye (<https://www.oui.sncf>).
- **By car :** Bordeaux autoroute A63, 207km. From Toulouse and Bayonne, autoroute A64, 293km, then Bayonne to Hendaye, autoroute A63, 32km.

PARKING :

Parking in Hendaye Free : in the town centre and harbours (Gatzeluzahar pediment)

To pay : Under the médiathèque (contact Mairie, tel 0559482323)

How to leave Saint Jean Pied de Port :

Departure from Saint Jean Pied de Port, bus or train SNCF, direction Bayonne. From Bayonne, possible connections to Hendaye or Biarritz (<https://www.oui.sncf>).

• WHAT TO BRING AND PACK**Your main luggage**

- A bag, rucksack or small suitcase, weighing a maximum of 15kg per person. Please, don't forget to attach the labels we provide you, showing your name and surname.

For cycling

- A personal helmet is compulsory (provided if extra bike rental)
- A day pack to carry your personal belongings during the day (20/25L min) (provided if extra bike rental)
- A warm clothing and a wind and waterproof jacket
- A swimwear and towel, why not?
- Thin gloves and cap depending on the season
- An additional water bottle
- Sunglasses, sun cream and cap (compulsory)
- Appropriate wear for cycle touring: cycling bib shorts + breathable t-shirt or jersey
- For those bringing their one bicycle: a complete repair kit (inner tubes, patches and glue, lubricant, derailleur and brake cables, chain, pump, set of Allen wrenches, fitting kit for tyres), bike lock
- Camera, GPS...

After the exercise:

- Comfortable shoes/trainers or sandal for the evening
- Changing clothes and personal line
- Toiletry kit
- First-aid kit: personal medication
- Your insurance contract

Sleeping :

- Ear plugs

Picnics :

- A sealed plastic box (0,8 L) for salads...
- Cutlery (fork, folding knife)
- Water bottle (1,5 L minimum) or Camelbak, much more convenient

Some little things :

- Comfortable shoes/trainers or sandal for the evening
- Sun cream and glasses
- Hat, cap
- Camera
- A small toiletry kit, with a towel
- A torch light or headlamp
- Toilet paper
- A mini first-aid kit: personal medication, blister plasters, Elastoplast, gauze, disinfectant, pellets of arnica and aspirin for minor illnesses... a survival blanket.