Traverse of the Picos de Europa

Trip Code: SPE

Version:

WALK & TREK	GUIDED GROUP	8 CHALLENGING



HIGHLIGHTS

- Overnight beneath Naranjo de Bulnes, the msot famous piece of rock in the Picos de Europa
- Summit the viewpoint of Torre de los Horcados Rojos (2500m) on a wild, west-to-east traverse
- Descend the dramatic carved path of the limestone Cares Gorge, one of the region's classic walks
- Stay in remote mountain refuges and quaint traditional villages, unsupported for much of the route

AT A GLANCE

- 6 Days trekking
- Max altitude - 2500 metres
- Join at Bilbao

ACCOMMODATIONS & MEALS

VIEW DATES, PRICES & BOOK YOUR HOLIDAY HERE

Introduction

Close to Spain's northern coast, the Picos de Europa is a region of stunning steep-sided valleys, isolated villages and picturesque limestone peaks. Under the expert direction of our knowledable local guide, this fantastic walking holiday makes a continuous west to east traverse passing through the separate massifs that comprise this dramatic mountain range. From the pretty country town of Cangas de Onis, we hike by way of the Vegarredonda Refuge to our first objective, Pico Cotalba (2026m). We then descend the 1500 metre-deep Garganta del Cares, following a spectacular cliff-side path that is one of the great Picos walks. Climbing back up into the central massif, we overnight at a refuge beneath the awe-inspiring Naranjo de Bulnes and continue walking across a lunar landscape to the superb viewpoint summit of Torre de los Horcadas Rojos (2500m). A picturesque final day's hike to down into Espinama concludes this gem of a walking holiday. Don't settle for walks on the periphery; mountain lovers will adore the Picos, and by making use of the charming mountain refuges, we're really able to get out there and enjoy the very best of the region and complete a real mountain journey.

Is this holiday for you?

This is a real mountain journey with a significant amount of ascent and descent on most days. The trails are predominantly good but there are large sections on scree, over bare rock and across boulder fields. We will be walking for between 7 and 10 hours each day, with over 800-1000m of ascent and/or descent each day and up to 2000m on some days! This holiday is suitable for experienced trekkers seeking an excellent week of mountain walking in a quiet region relatively untouched by tourism. Three of the refuges that we use during the holiday are not accessible by vehicle and this means that group members will need to carry minimal personal equipment for the first 5 days of the trek, with access to your main luggage at the hotel in Puente Poncebos after the first 3 days. In reality, since sleeping bags and camping mats are not needed, you should be able to keep the weight of your daysack down to no more than 7 or 8 kg. The fact that this walking holiday is not vehicle supported does affect the overall difficulty. As with any mountain environment, weather in the Picos is changeable and can shift quickly, even during the summer months. You should be prepared for a variety of conditions – from warm sunshine to rain, wind, and cooler temperatures at altitude.

Itinerary

Version:

Holiday Information

What's Included

- A professional and qualified tour leader
- Single timed group airport transfers
- All accommodation as described
- All meals
- All land transport required by the itinerary
- All baggage transfers required by the itinerary

Joining Arrangements & Transfers

The group will meet at the group hotel in Soto de Cangas.

A single-timed transfer from Bilbao Airport to the group hotel is provided on Day 1 of the Land Only itinerary. This transfer is timed to meet the arrival of flights from Gatwick with Vueling and will leave the airport in the early afternoon.

On the last day of the itinerary, there will be a single transfer back to Bilbao Airport timed for the check-in of flights leaving at 1000 at the earliest.

Anyone may join the group transfers by prior arrangement. Travelling as a group or on public transport saves energy. If your flight schedules do not fit with these airport transfers, you will need to make your own way to the group hotel/back to the airport. A one-way taxi from Santander airport to Soto de Cangas will take around 1.5hrs and cost about €150. A taxi from Bilbao Airport will take around 2.5hrs and will cost around €250.

Hotel contact details and a contact number will be provided with your booking confirmation.

Meal Plan

All meals are included in the holiday price. A packed lunch will be provided for each day and you will need to allow space in your daypack for 2 picnic lunches.

Food & Water

Breakfasts are usually coffee, tea, cereals, bread or toast and jam with fruit or yogurt. Dinner tends to be served late at the refuges and usually involves soup and a hearty main meal such as bean stew, with or without sausage. Packed lunches are also provided, although you may choose to add to these with chocolate bars etc.. (which can be bought at the refuges).

Accommodation

For our nights in Cangas de Onis, Puente Poncebos and Espinama we will stay in small, comfortable, family-run hotels.

On the other 4 nights we will stay in comfortable mountain refuges, which offer restaurant facilities and dormitory style sleeping arrangements. Toilet and washing facilities are shared at these refuges and in some cases may be outside the main building. Sleeping bags are not required as bedding is supplied. However, you may choose to carry a cotton or silk sheet sleeping bag.

You do not have access to your baggage on days 2, 3, 5 and 6. You will have to carry your overnight things with you during these days as well as your lunches and a set of dry clothes.

Due to the size of the properties we use it is not possible to pre book single rooms, however if you wish to have a single room it may be possible to request and pay for this locally depending on availability.

Group Leader & Support Staff

The group will be led by a professional and qualified tour leader.

Altitude

This holiday involves going to moderately high altitude. During the course of your trip you will reach altitudes in excess of 2500 metres. Most people will have no difficulty with this level of altitude but before coming on the holiday, we recommend you read the advice on trekking at high altitude. You can also talk to one of our trekking experts if you have any concerns about altitude.

Spending Money

We estimate that €100-€150 should be sufficient to cover miscellaneous expenses, including bar bills and snack items, showers at refuges, chocolate bars etc. This will also allow you to pay reasonable tips to the local guide and driver. Money can be withdrawn from ATMs in Bilbao Airport. If you prefer to bring all your travel money with you, we recommend that you carry this in the form of euros cash. Card payments are not accepted at refuges. If you are intending to buy expensive souvenirs, you should budget accordingly (credit cards can be useful in this respect).

Baggage Allowance

Since you will be carrying your personal equipment for several days during the holiday, you should make every effort to keep the weight of your gear to a minimum. We recommend that you have a trial walk with your packed rucksack. With careful planning and considering that you will not have to carry a sleeping bag or a camping mattress, it should be possible to keep the weight of your sack down to about 8 kgs / 18lbs. Your main luggage will be transferred to all overnight stops that are accessible by road. You will have access to this bag on the evening of Day 1, Day 4 and Day 7.

For international flights please check your baggage allowance with your airline.

Group Size & Holiday Status

For each holiday there is a minimum number of participants required to enable it to go ahead. Once the minimum number is reached, the trip status will change from 'Available' to 'Guaranteed to run'. You can check the trip status for each departure in the ‘Dates and Prices’ table. Other than in exceptional circumstances, we will not cancel a trip once it has achieved this guaranteed to run status so you are free to proceed with your international flight booking and other travel arrangements.

General Information

Passport & Visas

Europe

Your passport must meet 2 requirements. It must be:

- less than 10 years old on the day you enter (check the 'date of issue')
- valid for at least 3 months after the day you plan to leave (check the 'expiry date')

For the latest details on visiting countries within the EU or the European Economic Area (EEA), please check the UK Government website

The information that we provide is for UK passport holders.

A passport with 6 months remaining validity at the end of your stay is generally required**,** and you should have at least 2 blank pages for each country that you visit.

For other nationalities, please refer to your own Government website for the latest information.

It is your responsibility to ensure that you have the correct travel documents including vaccinations and health certificates *(see Health & Vaccinations below),* **and visas for your holiday.** Please ensure that you check the FCDO for the latest advice for **each country visited** before travel.

Health & Vaccinations

Vaccinations:

You should be up to date with the routine vaccinations recommended in the UK for overseas travel.

You must also contact your doctor or travel clinic to check if there are specific vaccinations or other preventive measures that you need for the area you are visiting, in good time before you are due to depart.

Please ensure you are looking at the recommendations for all countries visited on your holiday plus recommendations for any borders you cross.

On holidays to more remote areas you should also have a dental check-up.

It is your responsibility to ensure that you have the correct travel documents including vaccinations and health certificates.

Please check the FCDO and Travel Health Pro. For all of your intended destinations for up-to-date advice.

Severe Allergies:

If you have a severe allergy please inform the KE office before you travel. We will do all we can to help, but we cannot guarantee an allergy free environment on KE trips.

Currency

The currency for part or all of this holiday is the Euro.

Preparing for your Holiday

Getting some additional exercise before coming on an active holiday makes a lot of sense. The fitter you are, after all, the more enjoyable you will find the experience.

You should be aerobically fit and comfortable with walking 7 to 8 hours for consecutive days. Hill walking, with a good amount of ascent and descent, is the best training. Running, cycling and swimming are also good for developing cardiovascular fitness and stamina.

Climate

This region is known for its changeable weather associated with its mountains and its coastal location. Although most of the region's precipitation occurs between November and February, it can rain at any time of the year. From July to September the weather is generally very good, with clear and sunny days predominating. We can expect daytime valley temperatures of between 20°C and 27°C in July and September, dropping to around 15°C overnight. Temperatures will be rather cooler than this at altitude, with daytime temperatures of between 15°C and 20°C above 1500 metres. At night the temperature could fall as low as 5°C. Conditions will generally be comfortable for trekking in shorts and short sleeved shirts (should you wish). As with any mountain area there is the risk of some poor weather, with rain and even fog.

Books

- Walks and Climbs in Picos de Europa. Cicerone.
- Northern Spain - Picos de Europa. Sunflower Books.

Maps

Picos de Europa 1:25,000. Adrados (2 sheets)

The Picos on two detailed maps, each available either on paper or in a waterproof and tear-resistant edition. Contour interval is 10m (50m for cliff faces), and bold shading and graphic relief, provide an excellent representation of the terrain. Overlay shows hiking routes, mountain huts and refuges. The. map legend is in Spanish and English. Further information on the reverse is in Spanish only.

Equipment Information

Equipment List

Please try to keep the weight of your baggage to a minimum. See the 'baggage allowance' section for further details.

You SHOULD bring the following items:

- Hiking boots
- Walking socks (2 or 3 pairs)
- Trekking trousers
- Trekking poles *
- Lightweight waterproof overtrousers
- Underwear
- Shorts

- Thermal baselayer shirts
- Casual shirts and/or T-shirts
- Fleece jacket or warm jumper
- Lightweight waterproof jacket
- Sunglasses
- Sun cream (including for lips)
- Antibacterial hand wash
- Water bottles 1 Litre (x2) (we encourage re-filling water bottles rather than single use plastic)
- Water purification tablets
- Backpack c.40 litres
- Headtorch and spare batteries
- Washbag and toiletries
- Warm hat
- Gloves
- Sunhat
- Dry bags(s) for daypack/luggage contents (to ensure they keep dry)
- Sheet sleeping bag (for use in the huts) *
- Basic First Aid Kit including: headache tablets, treatment for upset stomach (e.g. Imodium or Pepto Bismol), antiseptic cream, plasters (Band aids) and blister treatment.

The following items are optional:

- Spare laces
- Ear plugs (especially if you are not the one snoring!)
- Trainers/sandals for use in refuges (crocs are provided in most)
- Swimwear
- Small towel / travel towel (towels are not provided at the refuges)
- Camera
- Penkife (remember to pack all sharp objects in hold baggage)
- Insect repellent
- Travel clothes
- Reusable cloth bag for shopping (to avoid plastic bags)

Notes:

Equipment hire: Equipment marked with a * can be hired from KE. This can be reserved when you book your trip or closer to your departure but we advise booking hire equipment as soon as possible to ensure availability, all equipment is on a first come, first served basis - equipment hire must be booked through the KE office prior to your departure. Any hired equipment will be collected on arrival from your guide.

Flight Inclusive Information

The FLIGHT INCLUSIVE dates and prices are based on UK flights from London Heathrow to Bilbao with British Airways. Outbound flights will usually depart from the UK in the morning, arriving mid-morning. Return flights will depart Bilbao usually in the morning of the last day of the itinerary, arriving in the UK later the same morning. Regional departures and/or alternative carriers are available on request.

To avoid paying more for your flight, we recommend that you book as early as possible, especially during peak times as there are only a limited number of seats available at the advertised price. If we are unable to secure seats at the price shown, or you have requested regional departures, we will contact you with an alternative quote. We are also able to quote for premium, business and first class seats. Please be aware that you may be asked to pay for your flights in advance of your final holiday balance. Remember if you book a package including flights with KE you will benefit from full financial protection.

Why Choose KE

Why KE

Kevin Rushby has recently wrote an article for The Guardian on our Traverse of the Picos de Europa trek, click here to read more.

Please Note This document was downloaded on 09/11/2026 and the trip is subject to change