

DISCOVERING SPAIN.....“It’s authenticity, heart & soul”

Hill Walking with a difference...culture, history, gastronomy & more...

Picos de Europa (Nth Spain) including caves of Valporquero & medieval Leon



Proposed tour dates: 31 May to 6 June 2017 and 23 to 29 August 2017

Spain is full of diversity. However, most of us are only familiar with the sun, sand, sangría of the Med regions. But Spain offers so much more. Different languages are spoken, Castellano(Spanish), Gallego, Basque, are among the most common. In many of the Med tourist areas English or German or Russian is as commonly heard spoken as Spanish & the experience of food & wines there are often mere creations for the unsuspecting tourists & not the delicious culinary diversity of the “real Spain”. The histories of the Celts, Romans, Phoenicians, Moors have shaped much of Spain’s traditions & culture & the authenticity of the gastronomy, wines, music & so much more. The weather too has as many variants From the sweltering summer sun of the Med & Madrid, to the more temperate climes of the North Spain in the Provinces of Asturias, Cantabria, Castille y Leon & Galicia. It is here you find the authentic heart & soul of the “Real Spain” & the diversity of language, food, wines, culture & history . Here is where the iconic mountain range of the Picos de Europa embraces these provinces as it is bordered to the North by the Bay of Biscay & to the South by Castille y Leon it’s mountains - Montes de Leon & it’s medieval city Leon itself.

Our tours will take you there to experience that diversity, the heart & authenticity of Spain. Fly direct from Dublin to Santander. We take you direct to the Picos de Europa to the Romanesque town of Cangas de Onis. We start the first of 4 walking routes here. It takes you through the most spectacular & emblematic places of the Picos, including the three Massifs of the mountain range where you will enjoy the different landscapes that comprise this National Park. The walks vary from 13km – 15km of exciting hill walking, guided by a local profesional guide who shares with you his knowledge of the flora, fauna, geology & much of the local history.

Each walk finishes in a picturesque local village deep in the valleys where you will stay in a rustic hotel, called “hostal”, meet the local people, interact with them, enjoy their culture, customs & cuisine.

We will visit the Valporquero caves of the Montes de Leon with an option to take on a 3.5km exploration through the heart of the cave system. Finally we visit the city of León, originally constructed by Roman Legio VI Victrix in 28BC. It is the city of the first parliament in Europe in 1188 & where the Kingdom of Spain began with Alfonso IX. Medieval León boasts Gaudi architecture, Gothic cathedral with stunning stained glass, Barrio de Humedo & the Chalice of the Last Supper. You return home via the AVE “bullet train” to Madrid & fly back to Dublin filled with the joys of discovery of a Spain you never knew about & leaving a want in you to discover more.

Program details – ideal for groups of 20+ people

Website: www.guheko.com

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/TheRealSpainHillWalkingPicosdeEuropaandmuchmore/?ref=bookmarks>

Day 1 – Wed 31 May 2017

Fly at 1305 from Dublin on Ryanair arriving in Santander at 1605

You will be picked up by the tour bus at Santander airport & taken to the village of Cangas de Onis, a town with Roman origins. This is one of the most important & loveliest little towns on the Asturian slopes of the Picos. Here we will take a walk around the town to soak up the atmosphere & enjoy the beginning of our week of immersion in a stunning part of authentic Spain.

- Stay the first night in the Hostal Fermin in Cangas de Onís in shared rooms.

Day 2 – Thurs 1 June 2017



Route 1 – Lago de la Ercina - Vega de Enol – Covadonga (Lagos de Covadonga)

The day begins with a stunning drive to the Peaks & startpoint at the Lakes of Covadonga. We walk through the ancient Asturian pastures of the unique vacas Asturiana breed. We follow the trail through the Vega(valley) de Orandi along by the river to the cave. Hugging a trout river we descend through native oak & beech forest to the Basilica of Covadonga built within a cave system & fronted by a waterfall

gushing from the cliff face of the limestone mountain. This rose coloured limestone site is named via “La Matona” that continues along a trail traversing Monte Auseva to the village of Covadonga, the home of the Virgin of Asturias.

- Distance: 13 km
- Ascent 300 m – Descent 800 m
- Duration: 4-5 hours
- Transfer Covadonga a Soto de Sajambre.- 1hr 15min
- Stay night two in Hostal Pena Santa in Soto de Sajambre in shared accommodation



Day 3 – Friday 2nd June 2017

Route 2 - Soto de Sajambre – Posada de Valdeón



The day begins walking through a canopy of beech trees with spectacular vistas of snow peaked mountains peeking through the trees of the native forest of Bosques de Vegabano. Majestic ancient oaks dwarf their neighbours. Try wrapping your arms around the trunk of the massive & oldest oak in the Picos, hand in hand with at least 6 of your friends. The route then takes us to the top of the mountain range at Collado del Frade where you will feel on top of the world looking down on a sea of clouds. With a keen eye, look over to the snow patches & you’ll see the shy unique native “chamois”/”rebeco” resting after grazing the heathers & nutritious herbs. After a stop for a picnic we climb again & from the top look down the valley to the villages below. You will see the similarity between the Alpine plants here & the Burren. A lovely pallet of colours of the wild flowers. Ending our day takes us on a leisurely walk into the village of Posada de Valdeón.

- Distance: 15 km
- Ascent: 900 m – Descent: 900 m
- Duration: 5-6 hours
- We stay the night in shared rooms in Posada de Valdeón in Hostal Campo

Day 4 – Saturday 3 June 2017**Route 3 - Posada de Valdeón – Fuente De (cable car) - Sotres**

An experience of a lifetime awaits you on this day. You start with a 4x4 trip in convoy across a mountain ridge that avoids a long road journey & takes you to the start point at the Fuente De Cable car. The ridge offers astounding views & demands a stop to admire them not just of the mountains & beyond but to enjoy the flora & fauna, soaring eagles & “interested” vultures.



You board the cablecar at Fuente De & feel the sensation of flight as you ascend 1,800m to the top. Our walk takes us through another section of the Picos in the province of Cantabria. You will walk along a route carved from glaciers, a geological feature called morrena (moraine) – locally named La Llama del Toro. The route passes by the world famous refugio, the Hotel Aliva & by the Picos retreat of the Royal family of Spain. We walk down the valley past traditional pastoral houses & finish with an ascent into the village of Sotres the highest in Asturias, 1,050m.

- Distance: 13 km
- Ascent: 250 m – Descent: 1000 m
- Duration: 4-5 hours.
- Stay in Sotres in the Hotel Peña Castil in shared accommodation.

Day 5 – Sunday 4 June 2017**Route 4 - Poncebos – Caín (Ruta del Cares)**

This day begins with a 20min transfer from Sotres to Poncebos to begin our final walk in the Picos, the emblematic & outstanding walk along Ruta del Cares also known as “La Garganta Divina” (The Divine Gorge). It is unique in every sense as you walk you feel the the arms of nature wrapped around you protecting you as you gaze at the turquoise river raging below. See gushing waterfalls spew torrents of cascading water from the cliff face. You are surrounded by mountains over 2,000m.

Our path leads us to our finish point in Cain (in the province of Castilla y León).

- Distance: 12 km
- Ascent 300 m
- Duration: 3-4 hours

We board our bus & drive down the Southern slopes of the Picos to Riaño, another incredibly beautiful place. A short while later we arrive in Vegacervera. This village is at the heart of a biosphere reserve. It is a destination centre for outdoor activities in the Montes de Leon, caves & gorge of Valporquero & much more. We stay here in the charming hotel/alberque Las Rocas. That evening we enjoy a wonderful dinner with a wine tasting experience of the superb wines of the regions we have visited.

Day 6 – Monday 5 June 2017

Activity: Caves of Valporquero & tour of Medieval León

After breakfast we visit the magnificent caves, where we offer you a choice of a guided standard visit or an exhilarating hi octane adrenaline rush of a 3.5km trek which explores the cave system, rappelling down waterfalls, climbing, crawling, swimming as we descend to the final abseil 20m to the ground below. After a light lunch we drive the 50km to León, check in to a charming hotel in the heart of this Medieval City. There we offer a choice to enjoy time on your own or take a guided tour of this historic city, a gem among the most charming of the cities of Spain. Take time to visit the historic sites including the Gothic Cathedral & its spectacular stained glass windows, the Chalice of the Last Supper in the Museo de San Isidoro, Parador de San Marcos, La Plaza Mayor & Plaza de Grano & it's Gaudi architecture.



Day 7 – Tuesday 6 June 2017 – the final day

On this day you have the option to take the “bullet train” at a time of your choice, whatever time suits you best. You may wish to spend more time in León or leave earlier to go shopping in the airport in Madrid. The AVE is a new rail system with trains that travel up to 300kph. It can be reserved online <http://www.renfe.com/EN/viajeros/horarios.html> , Chose the time you prefer to arrive in Madrid & make the train transfer to the airport in sufficient time for the flight you have booked. The AVE train ticket is approximately €30. Normally there is a free connection to the relevant terminal at the airport. Ryanair is the best option for the flight from Madrid to Dublin & departs at 2040.

SPECIAL OFFER – HUGE DISCOUNT FOR GROUPS/CLUBS - €865 PER PERSON*

*We offer groups of 20+ a discount of over €100 per person off our original price!!!!

*We are also offering 1 FREE place when you have confirmed booking 20 people in your group.

Price includes:

- 6 nights shared accommodation in the Picos, Vercevera & in León
- All transport in the Picos & for the scheduled tours
- All breakfasts, dinners in the Picos & Vercevera
- All maps & guides of the 4 walking routes in Picos de Europa & walk in Valporquero caves
- All of the walks are led by English speaking qualified local guides
- Group briefings each morning using maps & 3D bespoke presentations
- Group Leader from Ireland or Spain (English speaking) will accompany the tour daily
- The tour company is www.guheko.com. Guheko terms & Conditions apply

Not included:

- Flights & train or bus ticket León to Madrid
- Dinner in Leon
- Single supplement

HOW TO BOOK

Step 1

- Go to website Guheko the Tour Company www.guheko.com
- Click on the tab “Hill Walking Tours 2017”
- Select the tour “Picos de Europa & Valporquero Caves & Leon”
- See tour details & the terms, conditions & insurance

Step 2

- Contact the Irish Group Leader – Kevin Heery (contact details below)

Step 3

- Make your payment Online through the www.guheko.com website
- Payments accepted – Visa, Mastercard, Bank Transfer

CONTACT DETAILS

Kevin Heery – member of Mountaineering Ireland, Maumturks & Galway Walking Clubs

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