



Bilbao-RiojaSpain

7 Day Itinerary

Day 1

Spend the morning at the Dinastia Vivanco Wine Museum, where you will be able to explore different aspects of wine production as well as enjoy its splendid art collection with pieces from all ages inspired in wine in an extraordinary exhibition that is the result of a lifetime of collecting beautifully presented in an attractive display.

We suggest lunch at the restaurant of the Marqués de Riscal Winery, designed by Frank Gehry. Here we can follow over 150 years of winemaking and see the evolution from the original cellar to the current premises the best of tradition with new techniques are combined.

Day 2

In the morning a visit to *Lopez de Heredia* will give visitors the opportunity to enjoy a winery that keeps the ancient traditions of winemaking alive. Nowadays wine is made as it was over a century ago.

We can have lunch in the medieval town of Laguardia and explore the narrow cobbled streets within the city walls. The ground below is tunnelled with over 250 wine cellars. Besides serving as Rioja Alavesa's key wine town, Laguardia is also home to a spectacularly painted 14th-century portal at the Gothic Santa Maria de los Reyes church.

Ysios winery is our suggested visit for the afternoon. Designed by the Spanish architect Calatrava, it is fully integrated into the landscape, at the foot of the Sierra de Cantabria Mountains which protect it from the north-westerly winds. The bodega surprises and fascinates everyone due to its design, a suggestion of the outline of a row of barrels.

Day 3

The world heritage site of San Millán is our morning visit. On the fourth of December 1997 the international organisation UNESCO awarded the monasteries of Suso and Yuso distinction of World Heritage Sites. It was in San Millán where the first written phrases in medieval Spanish appeared. This renaissance and baroque construction is markedly different from Suso, a small monastery framed by the dense vegetation of the mountain. The Visigothic, Mozarabic and Romanesque structure surrounds the caves where humble hermits lived.

We suggest visiting the 16th century underground cellars at Federico Paternina in Ollauri which has been lovingly restored to its original state. The winery was an excellent restaurant, El Conde.

Day 4

Logroño, the capital of La Rioja, is a lively small city where you can enjoy in Calle Laurel, a great selection of tapas before enjoying dinner in any of the excellent restaurants in the city. The Old Quarter of the city well worth a visit, admiring the Cubo de Revellín on the ancient wall of the city, the Redonda cathedral and the Palacio and San Bartolomé churches.

Just outside Logroño is Bodegas Juan Alcorta. Its spectacular architecture and the efficiency of its modern winemaking process have placed it at the forefront of the new wine culture, recovering from the past traditional processes such as using gravity instead of pumps and the underground cellar.

We continue to explore Rioja Baja by visiting Calahorra, which stands on a hill overlooking the fertile plain of the Cidacos River, which produces the main source of income for the town: the area's excellent garden produce. As one of the oldest settlements in Spain dating back to Roman times there are still a good many vestiges of its past, such as the Roman arch in its old Muslim quarter or the Cathedral, in a flamboyant Gothic style and with alabaster figures on the façade, dating from the 15th century. We will enjoy lunch here with a menu based on the excellent vegetables of the area.

Our route this afternoon takes us through the Rioja Baja valleys that due to their important natural, cultural, and scenic value have earned the distinction of Biosphere Reserve, awarded by Unesco. These landscapes are covered with forests, rocks and cliffs, where we find historic towns like Arnedillo and one of the largest collections of fossilized dinosaur footprints in the world at Enciso and Munilla.

For dinner we suggest a tour of the tapas bars in the old quarter of Logroño.

Day 5

We start our day at Bodegas Ontañón, outside Logroño where we will see how art and wine are combined in an exquisite manner before sampling their wine.

We will continue on to the village of Puente la Reina with its impressive medieval bridge over the river Ega, over which millions of pilgrims passed on their way to Santiago de Compostela.

Pamplona awaits us in the afternoon. This city with more than 2000 years of history is world famous for its festival featuring the running of the bulls in July, a tradition made world famous by Hemingway. Walking through the centre of city you can still see the remains of the three original burgs and feel the importance it had as capital of the kingdom of Navarre that was originally called the kingdom of Pamplona.

Day 6

Our next stop is Vitoria, capital of the Basque region, famous for its medieval quarter with two cathedrals.

Also well worth a visit is the museum of modern art, ARTIUM and walking streets full of shops, bars and restaurants.

Bilbao, with almost a million inhabitants, is a dynamic city that in the 21st century has achieved an unsurpassed reputation for art and architecture, rebirth and renewal. We suggest a walking tour of the *Casco Viejo* or Old City, home to the *Siete Calles* or seven streets named for medieval guilds. The Mercado de la Ribera where food stalls display a bounty of the land and sea beneath stained glass windows.

After lunch we visit the architectural wonder of the *Guggenheim Museum Bilbao*, a titanium-sheathed museum that lures visitors around its sculptural form. The Guggenheim's expressive architecture reflects different hues as the light changes, mesmerizes visitors at every turn. Along the riverbank you can admire the "Paseo del Arte", a collection of modern sculptures.

Day 7

We head from Bilbao towards the sea to find at the mouth of the Nervión estuary the Transporter bridge, which has been declared a world heritage site. From its upper passageway you can see the Abra, Bilbao's harbour. We continue to Bakio where we can try the local wine: Txakoli with its own denomination of origin.

Continuing along the coast we enter the Reserve of the Biosphere of Urdaibai with spectacular sceneries such as San Juan de Gaztelugatze and well-preserved towns such as the quaint port of Mundaka, where we will have lunch over looking the sea watching surfers on the famous left-hand wave.

In the afternoon we will arrive at Gernika, a name famous due to the painting by Picasso. It is also known for the oak tree that symbolizes the traditions of the Basque people.

Travel Agent

To organise your tour and experience Bilbao-Rioja's many delights, please contact our preferred agent:

Romotur

Euskalduna 11

Ppal Izq. Dpto.6,

48008 Bilbao (Bizkaia)

Spain

Ph: (34) 944 433 463

Fax: (34) 944 420 022

www.romotur.com

david@romotur.com