SPAIN - SIERRAS DE CAZORLA, SEGURA Y ALCARAZ - £1,500

25th May 2020 - 12th June 2020 (19 days)

This is a revised repeat tour through a remote and little visited part of eastern Spain. The territory covered straddles the borders between Andalucia, Castilla-La Mancha and Murcia, and consists of a series of mountain ranges (or ‘sierras’) running from south-west to north-east. Riding through these mountains involves climbing over a succession of ridges and passes, or up to towns and villages precariously perched on top of or just below towering rock outcrops. Although some of these ascents are quite long, they are on the whole well graded. Much of the area has been protected for many years by Natural Park status and remains fairly wild, while many fringe valleys contain reservoirs that provide irrigation water for the surrounding fertile plains. Varied daily distances, quiet roads, stunning scenery, historic villages and abundant wildlife make this an ideal trip for reasonably fit cyclists who like to be out all day. Six two-night stays allow thorough exploration of the area via circular day rides (without luggage), or alternatively they offer time for recovery and relaxation. Coach transfer between the airport and the first/last nights’ hotel will be provided, and we will be staying mainly in family-run hotels.

HOLIDAY TYPE: Guided
TOUR MANAGER: Tony Gore
GRADE: Challenging
BOOKING STATUS: Places Available
ACCOMMODATION: Hotel
BOARD BASIS: Half Board
TRAVEL ARRANGEMENTS: Air
ROAD / OFF ROAD: Road
HOLIDAY STYLE: Moving-on
VEHICLE SUPPORT: Carry Own Luggage
HOLIDAY REF NO: 03337

Holiday Itinerary

Monday 25th May
Fly from Birmingham to Murcia (Corvera) on Jet2 flight LS1331 departing 1530, arriving 1910 (local time). Vehicle transfer to hotel in Lorca. Stay 1 night. Meals: D

Tuesday 26th May
Assemble bikes. Cycle to Vélez Blanco via Embalse de Puentes and La Parroquia (56km). Stay 1 night. Meals: B D

Wednesday 27th May
Cycle to Fátima via Orce and Galera (79km). Stay 2 nights. Meals: B D

Thursday 28th May
Circular cycle ride via Huéscar through the Bravatas valley and the Sierra de la Sagra (86km). Meals: B D

Friday 29th May
Cycle to Cazorla via Pozo Alcón, Tíscar and Quesada (80km). Stay 1 night. Meals: B D
Saturday 30th May
Cycle to Cañada Morales via the Puerto de las Palomas, Arroyo Frio and the Tranco de Beas reservoir (69km). Stay 2 nights. Meals: B D

Sunday 31st May
Choice of circular cycle rides, either to La Puerta de Segura (50km) or to Villanueva del Arzobispo and the Guadalquivir valley (81km), or possible rest day. Meals: B D

Monday 1st June
Cycle to Las Juntas via Hornos and Santiago de la Espada (75km). Stay 2 nights. Meals: B D

Tuesday 2nd June
Choice of out-and-back cycle rides along the Segura valley: northwards to Plañel (32km) or southwards to Santiago de la Espada (41km), or possible rest day. Meals: B D

Wednesday 3rd June
Cycle to Siles via the Madera valley, Segura de la Sierra and Orcera (80km). Stay 2 nights. Meals: B D

Thursday 4th June
Circular cycle ride via Torres de Albanchez, Bienservida and Puerto del Bellotar (62km), or possible rest day. Meals: B D

Friday 5th June
Cycle to Las Mohedas via the source of the Río Mundo, Riñar and Puerto de las Crucetillas (64km). Stay 2 nights. Meals: B D

Saturday 6th June
Circular cycle ride via Paterna de Madera, Puerto del Barrancazo, Alcaraz and Peñascosa (73km), or possible rest day. Meals: B D

Sunday 7th June
Cycle to Yeste via Ayna, Molinicos and Fuensanta reservoir (84km). Stay 2 nights. Meals: B D

Monday 8th June
Circular cycle ride around the remote Tús valley to Los Gile, returning via Moropeche (53km), or possible rest day. Meals: B D

Tuesday 9th June
Cycle to Nerpio via Graya, Vizcable and the Taibilla reservoir (62km). Stay 1 night. Meals: B D

Wednesday 10th June
Cycle to Caravaca de la Cruz via El Sabinar and Archivel (57km). Stay 1 night. Meals: B D

Thursday 11th June
Cycle to Lorca via Burete and La Paca (65km). Pack bikes. Stay 1 night. Meals: B D

Friday 12th June
After breakfast, vehicle transfer to Murcia (Corvera) airport for Jet2 flight LS1332 to Birmingham, departing 1230, arriving 1410 (local time), where the holiday ends. Meals: B

Meals: B = Breakfast  D = Dinner

Holiday Summary

Accommodation & Meals
Accommodation will be mainly in family-run 2 and 3 star hotels and hostals, usually in twin rooms. Single occupancy may be possible, but this is subject to availability and the payment of an appropriate supplement. Breakfast and dinner will be provided each day, usually in the hotel, but occasionally elsewhere. Vegetarians can be catered for if the request is made on the Booking Form, but options may be limited. Non-meat eaters should indicate if they will eat fish.

Vehicle Support
No vehicle support is provided. Participants will need to carry their own luggage on moving-on days

Passports, Visa & Health
EU citizens must hold a passport that is still valid on the date of their return to their home country. Holders of non-EU passports are advised to check whether they require a visa. There are no compulsory health related requirements for UK residents, but you are strongly advised to check that your tetanus protection has not expired. You must also carry your European Health Insurance Card.

Travel Insurance
Our Booking Conditions stipulate that, for holidays outside the UK, travel Insurance is mandatory. Details of the level of cover needed and other conditions you should check are stated in the Booking Conditions. CTC Cycling Holidays & Tours Ltd cannot accept responsibility for any costs that may be incurred due to insufficient insurance cover.
Accommodation & Meals

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welcome rest days. The tour concludes with a couple of days riding back through the hills and plains of Murcia, including an overnight stop in Caravaca de

peaks, scented pine forests and abundant wildlife (including its own indigenous type of lizard). Further two-night stops allow a choice of unladen rides or

include the source of the Río Mundo, an impressive Vauclusian spring gushing from beneath a limestone cliff, and the Tús valley, a quiet oasis with rocky

valley sides of the Río Mundo. There will also be a chance to visit the fine Renaissance buildings in the town of Alcaraz. Other points of interest en route

overlooked by the obligatory Moorish castle. We will also pass through Ayna, a town clinging dramatically below towering red crags to the precipitous

with unspoilt medieval towns and villages, such as Bienservida, Yeste and Nerpio. These generally feature narrow meandering streets, and many are

a “mosaic of contrasts”, from the high peaks through winding and deeply incised valleys and undulating forested hills to fertile plains. The area is dotted

the Arabic word for ‘cherries’, indicating the productive nature of the lands surrounding the mountain range. Indeed, in this part of the trip the landscape is

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Area Covered By The Holiday

This is a revised repeat of a successful tour run four years ago. It explores the remote and mountainous frontier area that straddles the three historic

Spanish regions of Andalucía, Castilla-La Mancha and Murcia. The various mountain ranges (or ‘sierras’) that comprise the area run in a south-west to

north-east direction, roughly between the cities of Granada and Albacete, and separating the coastal plain and foothills to the east and the Meseta

plateau to the north. This is classic Spanish mountain territory, with towering rocky crags and high forested hills overlooking incised valleys containing

crystal-clear trout-filled streams and occasional reservoirs. The rugged nature of the terrain means that the area has always supported a sparse

population, resulting in an area renowned for its welcome peace and tranquillity. Most of it has been designated as the most extensive Natural Park and

UNESCO biosphere reserve in the whole of Spain.

The roads that traverse these mountains tend to be narrow and winding and carry little traffic. Travelling anywhere takes a fair amount of time and effort,

especially on a bike, but you are rewarded with panoramic views of jagged rock formations, deeply incised gorges, chains of hills stretching into the

distance and little towns and villages clustering for comfort into their nook or beneath their fortress. In cycling terms, of course, this means lots of hills, but

these are generally well-graded, with good surfaces on the whole. There are plenty of opportunities to stop and rest, especially as you will want to drink in

the views, take photos, and admire the wild flora and fauna. Once over the top of a climb, there is usually the reward of a lovely long freewheel down the

other side.

Rides & Rest Days

The tour route has been designed to follow the most scenic minor roads wherever possible. It follows a very rough clockwise loop from our starting point

in the ancient town of Lorca. The first day takes you to the typical Andalucian ‘white village’ of Velez Blanco, followed by a gradual climb through the

Sierra de María before a fairly gentle spin north-westwards to Fátima. From here the first unladen ride takes you north along the Río Bravatas valley and through the Sierra de la Sagra and its astronomical observatory. The route then loops south around the Sierra de Pozo to Cazorla, strewed across a hillside below a restored Moorish fortress, and the main gateway to the Natural Park. The next week is spent exploring this protected area, visiting picturesque hilltop villages such as Hornos and Segura de la Sierra and following dramatic valleys like the Guadalquivir, Madera, Segura and Zumeta.

Three two-night stops enable comprehensive coverage of the area, or if you prefer the opportunity for a relaxing rest day. The second week is spent mostly in Albacete province, reached by crossing the Puerto del Arenal into the Sierra de Alcaraz. The name is derived from the Arabic word for “cherries”, indicating the productive nature of the lands surrounding the mountain range. Indeed, in this part of the trip the landscape is a “mosaic of contrasts”, from the high peaks through winding and deeply incised valleys and undulating forested hills to fertile plains. The area is dotted with unspoilt medieval towns and villages, such as Bienservida, Yeste and Nerpio. These generally feature narrow meandering streets, and many are overlooked by the obligatory Moorish castle. We will also pass through Ayna, a town clinging dramatically below towering red crags to the precipitous valley sides of the Río Mundo. There will also be a chance to visit the fine Renaissance buildings in the town of Alcaraz. Other points of interest en route include the source of the Río Mundo, an impressive Vauclusian spring gushing from beneath a limestone cliff, and the Tús valley, a quiet oasis with rocky peaks, scented pine forests and abundant wildlife (including its own indigenous type of lizard). Further two-night stops allow a choice of unladen rides or welcome rest days. The tour concludes with a couple of days riding back through the hills and plains of Murcia, including an overnight stop in Caravaca de la Cruz, designated in 1998 as one of the five holy cities in the Catholic world.
There are three things to note about meals in Spain. First, dinners are not usually served until 2030 to 2100 at the earliest. For many Britons this is very late and difficult to adjust to. The long wait can be eased by adopting the habit of having a snack in the late afternoon or early evening. This might be from your own provisions or you could go to a bar to try out its tapas. Secondly, it is not always easy to cater for vegetarians in Spain (and even harder for vegans), though it has improved in recent years, and our hosts will be forewarned of the need to provide something suitable. However, it is always useful to know whether or not those requesting vegetarian meals are occasionally prepared to eat fish. Finally, because standard hotel breakfasts tend to be insubstantial (apart from those served as a buffet), all hotels are asked if they can provide something more substantial. As interpretation of this request varies widely, you should make sure you have extra rations with you from the start of the day in case your energy levels need an early boost.

Travel
We will be flying with Jet2.com, perhaps the most customer friendly of the UK’s low cost airlines. As well as the flight, the tour price includes extras such as cycle carriage (weight limit 30kg), one checked bag (weight limit 22 kg), internet check-in, pre-allocated seating and meals on both outward and return legs. Transfer between Murcia airport and the first (and last) hotel in Lorca will be by small coach, with our packed bikes carried in a trailer. We will be able to leave our bike bags and cases securely at this hotel during the tour.

Group Information
The maximum number of participants will be 15 excluding the Tour Manager(s).

Weather & Clothing
The weather at this time of year in eastern Spain is generally relatively settled, with warm, even hot days and pleasant mornings and evenings, though it can be a fair bit cooler at higher altitudes. As in most places, the mountains tend to attract any rain that may be around, and there may be thunderstorms towards the end of hot and humid days. You should carry a range of clothing (including good waterproofs) to ensure that you stay warm and dry in bad conditions, but reasonably cool when the sun is out. In these parts the sun can be very powerful, so a high factor sun cream is strongly recommended. Those who intend to go exploring on foot on possible rest days should bring some comfortable shoes and a small rucksack for carrying essential bits and pieces.

Cycles & Equipment
A touring cycle, hybrid or lightweight ATB is suitable for this tour, with new hard-wearing tyres of at least 25mm width recommended. You should ensure your cycle is well maintained, paying particular attention to wheels, tyres and brakes. A low bottom gear (e.g. small chaining at the front with the same or fewer number of teeth than the largest cog on your rear wheel) is recommended. If you are unsure about gears, please discuss with the Tour Manager. Each participant is expected to bring, and carry, all of their own clothing, personal items and spares, so your bike should also have secure pannier racks, or other tried and tested method of carrying luggage. Mudguards are optional but show courtesy to those who are following you in wet weather. Lights are recommended but might not prove essential. Participants will be expected to carry sufficient spares and tools to deal with punctures and minor repairs. A rack top pack or bar bag will also be useful for carrying the gear needed for the circular day rides. You are advised to do some riding before the tour with a similar load to that which you will be carrying during the tour to get a feel for how your bike will handle.

PLEASE NOTE: Spanish law requires cyclists to wear helmets when riding on the road. Although there are exceptions where this does not apply, these remain unclear and open to interpretation. Therefore, you should bring a helmet with you and be prepared to wear it if requested by traffic police or Guardia Civil. Otherwise, they are entitled to impose an on-the-spot fine of 90 Euros or to confiscate your front wheel if you are unable or unwilling to pay. It is now also a legal requirement for cyclists in Spain to wear a ‘hi-viz’ yellow top when cycling at night, but it may be that rainwear with reflective trim is sufficient. However, as we are most unlikely to be still on the road after dark, this rule should not affect us.

Maps & Guides
You should carry a map to help you with route finding and in case you lose your way. There are two main options that cover all or most of the route: Michelin Orange 1:400,000 Regional Road Map No.578 España Sur - Andalucía Three IGN 1:200,000 Provincial Maps (Mapas Provinciales de España): Albacete; Jaén; and Murcia.

Travel Insurance & Advice
In addition to travel insurance, EU nationals should carry a European Health Insurance Card, obtainable from www.nhs.uk/NHSEngland/Healthcareabroad/EHIC. This enables you to take advantage of emergency medical services free or at a discount under a reciprocal provision that exists between EU member states. Your travel insurer may refuse to meet the extra costs of medical treatment if you do not carry this card.

Before booking you should check the latest travel advice from the Foreign & Commonwealth Office including security and local laws, plus passport and visa information, at www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice or on 0845 850 2829.

Other Information
Please consult with the Tour Manager before booking if you are unsure about your ability to do this tour.

Tour Manager’s Contact Details
If you require any assistance, or have any queries, please don’t hesitate to contact the Tour Manager using the information provided below.

Tony Gore
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