

THE ULTIMATE TRAVEL COMPANY

THE WALKING PARTY

DRAFT ITINERARY FOR A FIVE DAY BASQUE PYRENEES

Price: £1070 Single Supplement: £240

Dates: 24th – 28th September 2010

Distance: 15 miles Walking: not too difficult but a couple of ‘gentle pulls’



James and Diana Tamlyn moved to their 18th century farmhouse in France 15 years ago, enthused by the romance and beauty of the area. James' love of the flora and fauna, their combined fascination for the food, wine and local traditions and personal contacts make the week a special experience that you could not enjoy as an individual traveller.

Day 1 After meeting James and Diana and the rest of the group at Biarritz airport you will be driven to Sare for your first three nights in the lovely Hotel Arraya situated to the side of the central square of this very pretty quintessentially Basque village with its white houses, bare stone corner stones and blood red or dark green shutters. Here we are surrounded by the Pyrenean peaks and at the foot of the Basque sacred mountain 'La Rhune'. Dinner at the Hotel Arraya.

Day 2 We leave the Arraya and the central square of Sare to walk towards the village of Ainhoa. A little up and down in the small hills between the two villages in this almost crater like bowl before arriving in another beautiful Basque village dotted with red and white painted houses and with wonderful charm. Lunch in Ainhoa before a voluntary walk up hill to the tiny chapel for outstanding views over to the Atlantic and the foothills as a whole, known locally as the Pyrenankles. For those not wishing to walk, a voluntary visit to the local Gateau Basque museum for those interested. Dinner at the Hotel Arraya. *Walk: 9 miles*

Day 3 Again up in the morning for another lovely French breakfast of dark black coffee and freshly baked croissants before we set off into the mountains for Spain! This is not too difficult a walk but there are a couple of short 'pulls'. It is a lovely way through the mountains towards the village of Bera. We will picnic on the way with some delicious Spanish wines and fantastic Basque ham (this is the ham that comes from the free roaming

pigs that feed on chestnuts which lends it the delicious characteristic sweet flavour). After the picnic we continue on to Bera for a *café cortado* or *cerveza* before returning to Sare by car for a classic Basque dinner in the village. *Walk: 6 miles*

Day 4 We drive to Hendaye and catch the pedestrian ferry across the bay to Hondarribia. This is a very beautiful port of almost Moresque beauty with balconies and brightly coloured facades and extraordinary boxed windows three storeys high. We will have a coffee/brandy here before driving for lunch at Bilbao. After lunch we will visit the wonderful Guggenheim Museum.

The Guggenheim Museum was designed by Frank Gehry and sponsored by the Solomon Guggenheim Foundation. This museum was specifically built to house exhibitions of monumental works and is I think one of the most beautiful buildings in Europe. Frank Gehry designed it around the idea of boat lines and fish and it has a wonderfully curvilinear and scaly quality to it with a tremendous sense of light. The fact that Jeff Koons' 15 metre puppy guards it like Cerberus is an added bonus of floral contrasting with metallic. Well worth the drive!

From here we move back to the beautiful city of San Sebastian, a sort of nineteenth century Brighton with a perfect bay and a small island in the middle of the bay's pincer edges. It is known as the gastronomic city of Europe having more starred Michelin restaurants per square metre of city than any other! The last night is at the Niza hotel over-looking the bay.



Day 5 We leave San Sebastian for the famous French port of S Jean de Luz. A moment to shop in the pretty streets and see the wonderful church where Louis IV married the Infanta of Spain in 1654. A small light lunch in the town before leaving for Biarritz airport.

NOTE: The itinerary is subject to change according to local conditions. All mileages shown are approximate.

**For further information and reservations please contact
Jane Robinson on 020 7386 4695**