Cyclorama: Take a Cycling Tour of Spain by Frederick Pollard

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For adventure enthusiasts, Spain is the ideal country for a cycle-tour. With diverse topography and exciting cycling trails across mountains, beaches, quaint fishing villages and bustling towns, you can be sure of a great trip!

Check about the cycling regulations. Most cities have designated cycle lanes. Biking on highways is forbidden. Only riders above 14 are allowed and this must always be on the shoulder, or in the cycle lane. Helmets are mandatory. Riding parallel is allowed only for two but groups can ride in dual columns. Lights must be used at night and inside tunnels, under bridges and in rain/sleet/fog. Reflective clothing is mandated.

Check the weather-conditions before you book, as summers can be grueling and winters in the mountain regions may not be suitable for cycling. April-May and September-October are generally the most pleasant months to plan your trip.

Several tour operators offer cycling-tours and you can book on-line. You can also cycle part of your holiday and the rest by other means. The most popular cycling-routes are through Northern Spain, the Picos de Europa mountains and along the sea-coast, or Andalucia with its contrasting topography, the Baleriac islands route or through Catalonia. Check with the tour operator about the difficulty-levels, as there are different options for first-timers and the experienced.

Packages include visits to historical/cultural sites/places of interest along the route. E.g. the Andalucia route may include visits to the magnificent city of Granada, Moorish castles, Christian strongholds and fortresses, churches and National Parks. An islands-tour is more laid-back, with stops at charming fishing villages and eateries to sample the Mediterranean-style cuisine, seafood and wines, through stunning coastal landscapes. Wine-and-cheese trails, saffron-and-paprika harvest route, riding through the green Asturias region, the famous Pilgrim's Route or the Northern route, across the scenic mountain and ocean routes are some of the options. Another wonderful route follows Spain's longest river, the Ebro, from its source in the Sierra Cantabria, down to the Mediterranean, through fertile plains and Rioja vineyards.

Most cycling-trips are seven to ten days long and include accommodation in hostels or luxury hotels, depending on your budget. Luggage-services are available on some tours and baggage is transferred to each hotel as you travel, though these trips can be longer, as you have to stay two nights at every hotel. However, the intervening free-day allows you to explore. On some routes, you can take part in other adventure activities like sailing, swimming, snorkeling, walking, horse-riding etc.

A cycling -trip is probably the best way to see the countryside, experience the different cultures and customs and indulge to your heart's content, guilt-free, as you can definitely work off those heavy paellas and rich desserts each day!

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Frederick Pollard - About Author:
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