GeoCultura

TAKING YOU BEYOND THE LANDSCAPE

Discover the landscapes of Aragon, Spanish Pyrenees: 7-day small group tour



Discover the landscapes of Aragon, Spanish Pyrenees: 7-day small group tour

Discover the landscapes of Aragon, Spanish Pyrenees: 7-day small group tour

Highlights

- Discover the amazing processes behind the formation of mountain belts as you're immersed in the spectacular scenery and geological structures of the central Pyrenees.
- Explore ancient mountain villages, sample superb Pyrenean and Spanish cuisine, and visit the little-known wine region of Somontano.
- Enjoy short walks in dramatic mountainous landscapes with an optional longer walk along part of the Camino de Santiago.
- Travel with Henry Pettingill and Oriol Oms, both knowledgeable and enthusiastic expert geologists.
- Stay in charming, welcoming hotels, each a unique reflection of its locality.
- Price includes all accommodation, all breakfasts, lunches and dinners, all transport and entry fees. Group size 6-12.



Explore Barcelona and Meet Your Group

Explore Barcelona

Explore Barcelona, Spain's second largest city, with attractions ranging from the iconic Sagrada Familia Cathedral to galleries of modern and historic art, and everything in-between.

Group introductions and trip briefing

Gather at 5pm in the evening to meet your Tour Expert and the rest of the group, followed by drinks, dinner and a review of the trip ahead.

Group dinner

Group dinner with your Tour Expert and the rest of the group after introductions.

Hotel Casa Elliot

Check into the Hotel Casa Elliot, a boutique hotel with just 38 rooms in a building full of history in central Barcelona, which combines elegance, modernity and comfort.



Day 2 - Barcelona to Boltaña - mountains, monasteries and sects

Journey from Barcelona to Boltaña via Montserrat and Somontano

Visit Montserrat Monastery

Your first stop will be Montserrat, an iconic and distinctive mountain, important to Catalan culture and with geological significance. Here you will visit the lavish mountaintop monastery, which dates to 1025 CE, and take the funicular to see magnificent views of the surrounding region. The spectacular cliffs were created by the formation and erosion of the Pyrenees during continental collision.

Winery tour and tasting in Somontano

You will then move to the vineyards of Somontano and visit a bodega for a winery tour, tasting and an overview of local Spanish wine.

View Monasterio de Torreciudad

The next stop is a view of the Monasterio de Torreciudad, the seat of Opus Dei, a Catholic sect founded in 1928 and controversially portrayed in The DaVinci Code by Dan Brown. It's an excellent location from which to observe and discuss the evolution of the Pyrenees, and appreciate the colossal forces that led to nearly 100km (62 miles) of crustal shortening. These geological upheavals also provided natural locations for dams built after the Civil War, not without controversy and cost to local populations.

Lunch en route

Lunch will be taken en route, after which you will pass by Abizanda and its spectacular examples of medieval architecture.

Pass by Abizanda

After lunch, you will pass by Abizanda and its spectacular examples of medieval architecture.

Hotel Monasterio de Boltaña

In the late afternoon, you will arrive in the village of Boltaña, just outside Aínsa, in sight of the towering mountains of the axial zone of the Catalan Pyrenees. Check-in to the Hotel Monasterio de Boltaña, your base for the next three

nights.

Hotel Monasterio de Boltaña

Group dinner

Group dinner at Hotel Monasterio de Boltaña.



Day 3 - Folded mountains and village life in Aínsa

Explore Santa María del Buil, Guaso, Campodarbe, and Aínsa

Visit Santa María del Buil and viewpoint walk

Your day begins with a visit to the village of Santa María del Buil. There is an optional short walk to the viewpoint above the village – a 3km (2 miles) round trip with an ascent of 80m (260 ft). From above, we'll take in views of the Axial Zone of the Pyrenees to the north, including the distinctive peaks of Las Tres Marias and Monte Perdido (the Pyrenees' third highest mountain), and a superb view of the Boltaña Anticline, a famous geological structure that shows how mountain building compresses and folds once-flat rock layers.

Village church and photo exhibition

Back in the village, we will visit the church where a photo exhibition reveals early 20th-century village life, and will discuss the use of local building stones, formed from massive gravity-driven submarine flows from local mountain ranges. Some of these building stones are packed with beautiful, small fossil shells, called nummulites.

Picnic lunch at Guaso

We will have a picnic lunch at Guaso, a picturesque village with panoramic views. The bell tower is a useful landmark for orientation as we explore the village and its surroundings, including stone-wall-terraced slopes with stunning rows of ancient olive trees.

Visit Campodarbe for geological observation

Next is a visit to the nearby Campodarbe to observe one of the geological secrets of the Pyrenees. We will see how to 'read the rocks' and uncover the story of the drowning of a carbonate platform back in deep time: a superbly exposed rock contact records the onset of the sinking into the deepwater and shows the origins of the Pyrenees.

Explore medieval town of Aínsa

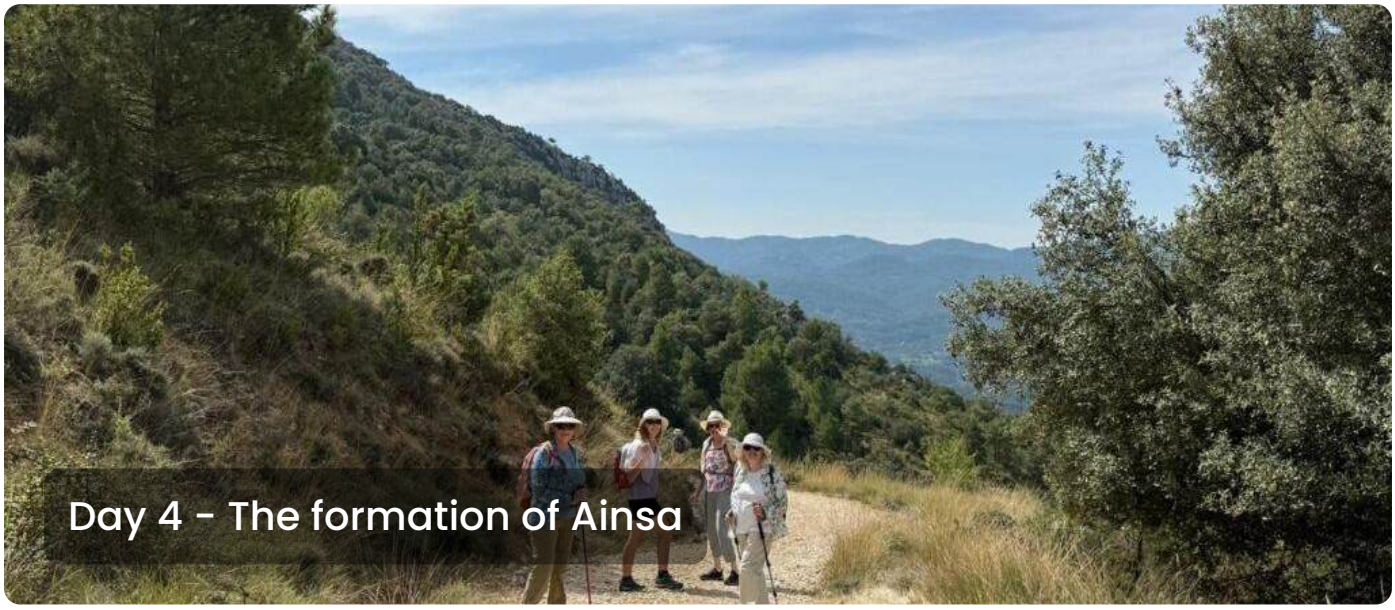
Finally, we will explore the medieval town of Aínsa, a major city of the ancient kingdom of Aragón and a magnificent example of medieval urban development. We will regroup for drinks and a group meal in Aínsa's atmospheric medieval square.

Hotel Monasterio de Boltaña

Hotel: Hotel Monasterio de Boltaña, Boltaña.

Group dinner in the old town of Aínsa

Group dinner in the old town of Aínsa.



Explore Ainsa Basin, Samitier, and Local History

Optional walk above Samitier to ancient hermitage

The day begins with an optional walk (4km/2.5 miles round trip with a climb of 210m/690 ft) above the village of Samitier to visit an ancient hermitage perched on a limestone ridge. This vantage point has a view of the entire Ainsa region, key landmarks, and geological structures and, on a clear day, the high Pyrenees and surrounding national parks. There are dramatic views of the Mediano reservoir and dam, where you can see the top of the bell tower of the flooded village of Mediano – a poignant reminder of the human cost of development.

Examine architecture of the ancient Ainsa basin

We will then zoom in to several more locations to examine the architecture of the ancient Ainsa basin. This will include recognising ancient submarine channels, and discussing how these migrated around the sea floor.

Lunch in Escalona

As a welcome break, we'll lunch in Escalona midway through the day, before exploring additional places of interest in Ainsa over the afternoon.

Explore additional places of interest in Ainsa

Explore additional places of interest in Ainsa over the afternoon.

Visit San Vicente Romanesque church

Rounding off the day, we'll travel to the village of San Vicente to visit a beautiful Romanesque church.

Evening with local history expert or film viewing

Spend an evening with local history expert Angel Cheliz to discover the history of Sobrarbe; or an optional viewing of The Way, a film depicting modern day travellers along the historic Camino de Santiago path.

Hotel Monasterio de Boltaña

Hotel: Hotel Monasterio de Boltaña, Boltaña.

Group dinner

Group dinner.



Day 5 - Ainsa to Riglos - lost mountains, tapas and a pilgrimage of the Pyrenees, Spain

Journey through Ara Gorge, Ordesa, Jaca, and Riglos

Travel through Ara River gorge and Boltaña Anticline

This morning, a westward route will be taken through the Ara River gorge that cuts through another classical geological feature of the Pyrenees: the Boltaña Anticline, formed of folded rock layers where the now near-vertical strata provides a natural location for dam and reservoir construction. You will view the abandoned village of Janovás and discuss the social implications of industrialisation.

Traverse Parque de Ordesa and visit Bal de Broto cheese maker

Continuing towards Jaca, you will traverse the western extremity of the Parque de Ordesa (Ordesa national park), through stunning scenery and mountain communities. In Sarvise, there will be a brief stop at the Bal de Broto to visit a local artisan cheese maker to view the main factory room with an explanation of the cheese-making operation, while sampling some of their unique Pyrenean cheese.

Lunch in Jaca

In Jaca, we will have lunch and, time permitting, will visit the local cathedral, where you can obtain Camino de Santiago "passports" – originally the letter of safe-conduct given to pilgrims in the Middle Ages.

Optional stop at Fuente de Torrijos

After lunch, the tour continues westward, with spectacular views and an optional stop at Fuente de Torrijos, where the group can review the signs of submarine processes essential to the development of the mountain belt.

Visit Mallos de Gallego natural towers near Riglos

The day's final stop will be at the famous Mallos de Gallego natural towers near Riglos. These astonishing rock towers and cliffs are formed from resistant pebble beds (conglomerates) that rise up to 300m (1,000 ft) above the Ebro Plain.

Villa de Alquézar

Your hotel in the area will be the charmingly-restored Villa de Alquézar, sitting comfortably on the edge of Sierra y Cañones de Guara Natural Park.

Free evening

Free evening.



Day 6 - Alquézar environs and Sierra de Guara Park

Walk Alquézar's Ruta de Pasarelas and Vineyard Tour

Walk along Alquézar's Ruta de Pasarelas

The day begins with a pleasant walk along Alquézar's scenic Ruta de Pasarelas, whose paths and spectacular catwalks overlook the River Vero canyon.

Vineyard tour and lunch at Bodega Viñas del Vero

This will be followed by a vineyard tour and lunch at the Bodega Viñas del Vero.

Overlook of Sierra de Guara Park

We then travel on to an overlook of the Sierra de Guara Park.

Explore Alquézar town

Later return to Alquézar, where there will be more time for an exploration of the town.

Villa de Alquézar

Hotel: Villa de Alquézar, Alquézar.

Final group dinner at Casa Pardiña

Final group dinner, at Casa Pardiña.



Day 7 - Return to Barcelona

Coach Transfer to Barcelona and Tour End

Coach transfer to Barcelona Airport or city

Departure: **Alquézar** | Destination: **Barcelona Airport or central Barcelona**

In the mid-morning, the group will depart by coach at 12pm for Barcelona Airport, or you can be dropped off in central Barcelona if you want to continue your visit. Alternatively, if you prefer to travel on to Madrid, you may take a train from nearby Huesca (a 45-minute taxi ride from Barbastro).