



EXAMPLE ITINERARY

## BORDEAUX & NORTHERN SPAIN

France & Spain

This fantastic itinerary begins in Bordeaux, where we invite you to explore France's 'Petit Paris' (little Paris) and the biggest urban World Heritage site in the world. Let yourself be seduced by some of France's finest wines and inspired by the city's incredible culinary scene.

Allow this voyage of the senses to take you south, to the Basque country (both French and then Spanish) where art, culture and gastronomy are a fundamental part of the local tradition.

Your cultural pilgrimage will culminate in Santiago de Compostela; Galicia's capital known for receiving thousands of visitors every year, many of them attracted to its ancient history and religious heritage.

On this trip, delicious food, inspiring wine, rich culture and splendid art are on the menu!

### Summary (13 Nights)

- Start Point: Bordeaux (France)
- End Point: A Coruña (Spain)
- 4 N Bordeaux
- 3 N San Sebastian
- 3 N Bilbao
- 3 N Santiago de Compostela

### What's included?

- All private transfers
- Boutique 4-star hotels
- Breakfasts & all meals mentioned in the itinerary
- Guided tours with fluent English speaking guides.
- Skip the line entrance tickets

### What's not included?

- International Air Flights
- Travel/medical Insurance
- Meals & Drinks, other than those mentioned in the itinerary
- Tips & Gratuities

*This is an example itinerary which can always be adjusted to meet your individual requirements and budget.*



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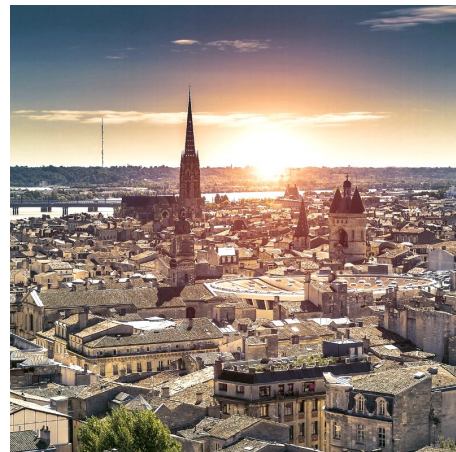
## SAMPLE ITINERARY

### DAY 1: Arrival

Upon arrival in Bordeaux, we will arrange for a private transfer to your hotel in the city centre.

First afternoon & evening free to rest and get acquainted with this cosmopolitan city and the vibrant atmosphere that it will offer over your stay.

We will provide you with good recommendations for places to eat, drink and tips for city walks or any entertainment/events happening during your travel dates.



### DAY 2: Bordeaux

#### Morning: Half day Bordeaux city tour & gourmet visit (3 hr)

Discover the UNESCO World Heritage Site of Bordeaux on a private walking tour of its major attractions.

Your private guide will pick you up from your hotel and will take you on a walking tour of the city during which its most famous landmarks will be highlighted: The Grand Theatre located in the heart of downtown; the Place de la Bourse built by King Louis XV in the early 1700's as the Royal Plaza, the Triangle d'Or one of the richest and most beautiful neighbourhoods in Bordeaux and some private mansions. Discover the unique cityscape where traditional buildings contrast with more recent modern constructions.

On this walk, you will talk about French customs and culture. Your guide will share their local knowledge and french experience. This tour offers an excellent synopsis of the history of Bordeaux and is a great starting point to further explore this city. You will also make stops to taste some of the best culinary specialties from the South West of France: Hams, Cheese, Canelés...

*Bordeaux: An intoxicating cocktail of 18th-century savoir-faire, millennial hi-tech and urban street life, France's sixth largest city is among Europe's most exciting and gutsy players. This is the world's largest urban World Heritage Site, cradling half the city (18 sq km) in its Unesco-listed treasure chest. From the elegant symmetry of place de la Bourse, palaces strung with stone-sculpted mascarons (faces), to tree-shaded boulevards laced with hôtels particuliers (mansions) built for 18th century wine merchants, Bordeaux architecture is world-class. Contemporary architects continue the trend for excellence, with breathtakingly wild and beautiful creations resembling giant wine decanters, gleaming white pebbles, all sorts. An interesting portfolio of art museums embracing all periods and genres is the icing on the cake to this magnificent architectural heritage. Previously named "the sleeping beauty", the city is coming out of a 20-year renovation program that has brought it back to its former glory.*

#### Free afternoon & evening

Meals included: Breakfast & tastings





## DAY 3: Arcachon Bay

### Full day trip with private driver/guide (Length: aprx 7h)

Escape the bustle of Bordeaux for some seaside therapy on this full day trip to the Bay of Arcachon.

Your driver-guide will meet you in the lobby of your hotel and will take you to the quaint Cap Ferret in the Arcachon Bay, famous for its brightly coloured wooden huts and oyster farming, it is a genuine picture-postcard village.

Once at this spectacular protected spot located on the western French coast you'll enjoy some time on the Atlantic Ocean by boarding a Pinasse (a traditional wooden bay boat).

Sit back and relax while you tour the famed Arcachon Bay, one of the most popular resort towns on the French Atlantic Coast and home to a plethora of waterfront restaurants and Oyster farms. On this superb boat tour, you'll, of course, get to enjoy an exclusive close-up view of the region's oyster parks.

With your local skipper, you get an insider's tour and will discover the authentic side of this area and will get to learn all there is to know about the trade, traditions & hidden cultural treasures belonging to this beautiful part of France!

You will make a stop at the Cap Ferret to taste its famous oysters accompanied by a glass of white wine & a breath-taking view of the Dune du Pyla – Europe's highest sand dune.

**Lunch** at La Coorniche (Cost not included) located in Philippe Starck's trendy hotel of the same name from where the view over the Cap Ferret peninsula is incomparable and absolutely breath-taking.

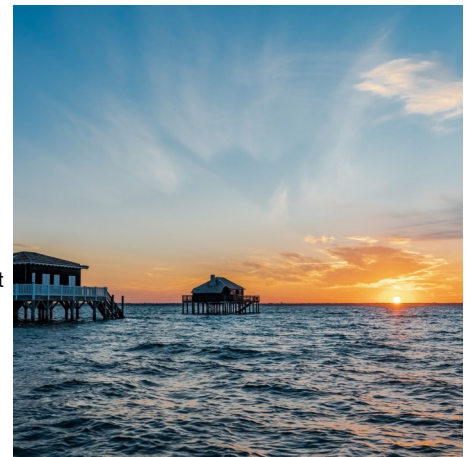
After lunch, transfer back to Bordeaux.

**Free evening** in Bordeaux to enjoy at your leisure.

*Situated in **Arcachon Bay** in southwest France, Arcachon is one of the most popular resort towns on the French Atlantic Coast. It's known for its white sandy beaches, fresh seafood restaurants, and laidback coastal lifestyle, as well as its proximity to **Dune du Pilat**, Europe's highest sand dune, and **Gascogne Landes Regional Nature Park**. This part of the inland lagoon is the weekend fashionable venue of Bordeaux - famous for its tiny wooden oystermen villages. "A small, interior sea", opens to the Atlantic, and backed by the pine forest. A wide, triangular slash, hemmed by picturesque villages, and punctuated by the incessant come-and-go of the tides, the Bay of Arcachon is an incomparable site that you discover each time for the first time.*

***Pyla-sur-Mer** is a seaside resort on the Atlantic coast extending from the top of the Arcachon basin, until the dune of Pilat, famous for being the highest sand dune in Europe. The resort was created at the start of the First World War by an entrepreneur, Daniel Meller, after an exchange of land with the state. It was named Pyla which means "mount" in Gascon. Between the two wars, a second promoter expanded the resort to the south. All these buildings were carefully constructed however to protect the surrounding forest. Pyla-sur-Mer and its dune are certainly worth seeing, both for its natural beauty and its abundance of cultural and leisure activities that surround it. **Dune de Pilat**, the highest sand dune in Europe which rises to 374 ft (114m) above sea level and stretches south from Arcachon Bay for almost two miles. Climbing the dune, taking a walk in the surrounding pine forests and relaxing on the sandy beaches has been de rigueur here ever since the aristocracy discovered this privileged part of the world during the belle époque. The romantic seaside town and French oyster-harvesting center of Arcachon is a three-mile (5 km) north and the cosmopolitan city of Bordeaux.*

Meals included: Breakfast, oyster & wine tasting



## DAY 4: St Emilion wine region

### Full-day trip with private driver/guide (Length: aprx 8h)

Spend a day sipping French reds and whites in the Saint-Emilion and Pomerol wine region.

This morning your driver-guide will meet you at your hotel & will take you for a full day tour of Saint Emilion.

You will first enjoy a walk around the enchanting medieval village of Saint-Emilion, classified by Unesco in 1999. This luminous, ochre-colored jewel built of limestone and Roman roof tiles, perched on a plateau and completely surrounded by a sea of vineyards is a maze of steep and narrow cobblestone streets lined with remnants of monasteries and convents dating from the 11th to 18th centuries. Your walk will also include a visit of the very impressive underground monuments.

Then, it's on to the world-famous vineyards of Saint Emilion, also listed by UNESCO as World Heritage. The vineyards include 18 "Premiers Grands Crus Classés" (A & B) and 65 "Grands Crus Classes", and thousands of lesser-known family estates which also produce excellent wines, all mainly made from Merlot and Cabernet Franc grape varieties.

You will enjoy a private visit and tasting at Château Troplong Mondot, Premier Grand Cru Classé Saint Emilion Château. Troplong Mondot distinguishes itself by the elegance of its wine which starts in its vineyards that are masterfully cultivated like gardens

**Lunch** will be at the restaurant La Terrasse Rouge (cost not included). This restaurant is a « chic » brasserie built upon the high tech cellar designed by Jean Nouvel and offers a unique view over the vineyard of Saint Emilion.

**After lunch**, you will enjoy a private visit and tasting (including a barrel tasting) at Chateau de Ferrand, Grand Cru Classé Saint Emilion.

After a visit of the property, park, and cellars, your sommelier will guide you through a tasting straight from the barrel!

**Free evening** in Bordeaux to enjoy at your leisure.

*Saint Emilion could be the oldest active wine producing appellation in the Bordeaux region with a history that dates back to the times of the ancient Romans. While St. Emilion claims credit for being the home of the famous Roman poet and wine lover, Decimus Magnus Ausonius, (who served as the inspiration for the name of the now famous, Chateau Ausone) the area takes its name from a Benedictine Monk who was known as Emilian. Emilian lived in the area and is responsible for starting to create the uniquely designed, limestone church that in the center of the village of St. Emilion. Today, the village of St. Emilion is a protected, Unesco, world heritage site. St. Emilion also lays claim to having the oldest, wine society in France.*

*The story of Troplong Mondot is rich with charismatic and cultured personalities who were at the head of their field by leading with excellence a singular vision. By trusting Aymeric de Gironde for the general management of Troplong Mondot, SCOR has been bringing a new spirit since 2017 while respecting the values and the spirit of the place.*

*In 300 years, Chateau de Ferrand has known only two families, making it one of the oldest and most consistent properties of Saint-Emilion: Elie de Bétoulaud and his descendant the Marquis de Mons. Then the family of Baron Bich, founder of the company Bic. Built in 1702, the château is a perfect illustration of classical rigor. The charm of the property, the elegance of its architecture, the caves dug "as an eternal monument to the glory of King Louis the Great" give this site a unique character.*

Meals included: Breakfast





## DAY 5: French Basque Coastline

### Full day trip with private driver/guide (Length: aprx 8h)

Experience the delights of the French Basque coast between Bordeaux and San Sebastian. Today, you will experience a private and unique guided tour through the whole French Basque Coast on the way to San Sebastian (Gipuzkoa), visiting its most beautiful coastal villages: Bayonne, Biarritz and St Jean de Luz. On a very scenic drive along the magnificent coastal road, you will first stop at the quaint city of Bayonne, before arriving at the famed seaside town of Biarritz, just few kilometres away. The "Queen of resorts and the resort of Kings" was a magnet for celebrities and royalty figures like Napoleon III, Gary Cooper or Frank Sinatra and still, nowadays it is a very important tourist reference point. You will enjoy a walk along the "Grande Plage", the main beach in town, where surfers from all over the world come to ride the waves.

Don't miss the cozy fishing port nestled in the rocks which is considered by many as a tiny village within the city of Biarritz.

After the fishing port, it's off to the Rock of the Virgin. This "island" is only accessible by an imposing bridge which was constructed by Gustave Eiffel, the same architect who, of course, designed the famous Eiffel Tower in Paris. You'll make a stop for **lunch** at Chez Albert (not included). Located near the harbour, chez Albert serves fish and seafood exclusively from the auction house of Saint-Jean de Luz.

Then, it's off to St-Jean de Luz where you'll enjoy a town tour which will include a visit of the church where Louis XIV (France's Sun King) wed the Spanish Infante Marie-Therese in 1660, ending decades of war and defining once and for all the territorial borders of the two nations.

Saint Jean de Luz also has a rich history of maritime activities, including pirating practices which brought enormous wealth into the town as evidenced by some of the more opulent villas that dot the bay area and square where local artists paint during the warm weather months. Cross the Spanish border & arrive in San Sebastian.

You will be dropped off at your hotel in San Sebastian.



*As you enter **Bayonne** you may hear in Basque "Ongi etorri eskual herrian"; "welcome to the Basque Country", or "Adiou", which means "hello" in Gascon, for Bayonne lies on the junction of the two cultures. The Nive and Adour rivers meet in the heart of the town and divide Bayonne into three distinct areas. Bayonne also happens to be where chocolate was first introduced into Europe and is still one of the largest importers of brut chocolate.*

***Biarritz** has been a favourite seaside getaway ever since Napoléon III and his Spanish-born wife Eugénie arrived during the mid-19th century. It's been a glamorous spot ever since, lined with elegant villas and heritage-listed residences that glitter with belle époque and art deco details. Today, Biarritz remains one of the Southwest's seaside gems, known for its famous beaches, therapeutic waters, and a thriving surf scene, Biarritz offers visitors a unique atmosphere. This is a place where posh restaurants and spas live harmoniously side-by-side with laid-back pizza joints and surf shops.*

*The former Basque Corsairs' capital, **Saint Jean de Luz** is a small enchanting fishing village which became rich in the 16th century thanks to fishing, whaling, and interestingly, piracy. The 'finest moment' for the town was in 1660 when Louis XIV married Marie-Thérèse of Spain in the town church – the Basque church of St John the Baptist. St. Jean de Luz has an active fishing harbour filled with colourfully painted boats and a sprawling bay area. Its boutique-lined pedestrian streets and art galleries make this town a "must-see" when visiting the Basque Country.*



Meals included: Breakfast

## DAY 6: San Sebastian

### Full day panoramic & walking tour + Pintxos tastings with private driver/guide (Length: aprx. 6h)

Today, on this private panoramic tour, your guide will take you to admire San Sebastian from its best viewpoint starting with a drive up **Mount Igeldo** with your private driver. From here, you will have a complete view of the city, and the chance to take the best postcard pictures of San Sebastian.

You will also make a short stop in the **"Peine del Viento"** to visit the most symbolic place of the city, as well as in Sagues, for a different perspective of the city from its surfing beach area.

This will be followed by a walk through the city center and **Old Town**, visiting the Constitution Square, **La Concha Bay**, the Cathedrals, **La Bretxa Market**, and the city centre area. On this walk, you will be entertained by multiple stories and tales about San Sebastian's history which you will most definitely not find in the History books!

Once you get to the Old Town, you will be able to enjoy the region's famous miniature food: Pintxos! Just the way the locals do. You will be taken to the best 5 places in town and will be introduced to this fantastic local custom. You will enjoy a special selection of 5 pintxos (Basque tapas) paired with 5 Spanish wines (or water or soft drinks or beer) in up to 5 bars - A great way to have an informal meal, all the while learning about local customs and tasting the best specialties in our favourite bars!

*San Sebastian's unique location by the sea and backed by the foothills of the Pyrenees the first sight of the La Concha bay, considered as the best beach of Europe in the last 2 years, replete with crescents of golden sand and turquoise waves, pairing this natural beauty with the unrivaled local cuisine — from decadent Michelin-starred feasts to delectable bite-sized pintxos (Basque-style tapas) — will make you fall in love forever with our wonderful city.*

### Free afternoon & evening

Meals included: Breakfast & lunch



## DAY 7: San Sebastian

We highly recommend spending the day at your own leisure relaxing by the beach. San Sebastian has three beautiful beaches: La Concha Beach, Ondarreta and Zurriola Beach (also known as Gros Beach).

But San Sebastian is much more than just a beach town, it has four main areas for you to explore:

- The Parte Vieja (old town): known for having the highest concentration of bars in the world.
- Área Romántica (Romantic Centre): Filled with beautiful buildings from the late 19th century and has plenty of clothing stores, bars, and restaurants.
- The district of Gros: a pleasant enclave with a relaxed ambiance and the surfing beach of Playa de Gros.
- Playa de Ondarreta (essentially a continuation of Playa de la Concha), a very upmarket district known as a millionaires' belt on account of its lavish holiday home

San Sebastian is also known as one of the top foodie destinations in Europe with more Michelin-stars here per inhabitant than anywhere else in the world.

Meals included: Breakfast





## DAY 8: The Bay of Biscay

### Full day trip with private driver/guide (length: aprx 9h)

In this road trip through the Basque Coast, you will discover amazing beaches, incredible lookouts, cute villages, stunning cliffs, unbelievable islets and a unique bridge.

You will visit the quaint coastal villages that pepper the Basque Coast: Getaria, Zumaia, Guernica and the impressive island of San Juan de Gaztelugache.

Absorb the tranquil ambiance of these picturesque marinas on this enriching day trip.

Your private driver/guide will pick you up from your hotel in San Sebastian to drive along the scenic coastal road N634 which takes you along the Bay of Biscay—the gulf of the northeast Atlantic Ocean located south of the Celtic Sea.

You will have amazing photo opportunities of this wonderful location from 2 spectacular viewpoints (one of them being from the bridge itself), but you will not make the whole walk to the summit of the island and back, as it requires a timeframe of at least 2 hours.

**Lunch** (not included in the cost): your driver/guide will certainly suggest few places on the way to grab some pintxos or raciones but we recommend something quick and casual as the journey is long and you wouldn't want to miss anything...

This stunning drive will end in Bilbao, where you will spend the next few days.

Free **evening** in Bilbao.

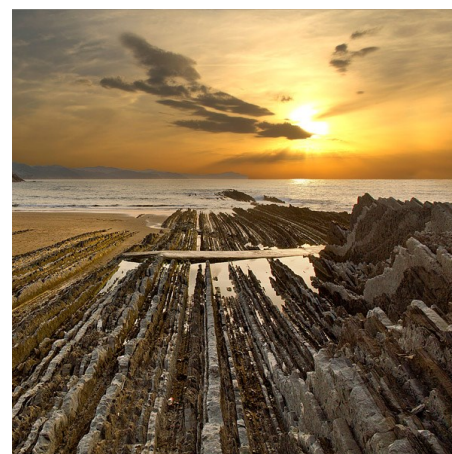
**Getaria:** *The attractive medieval fishing settlement of Getaria is a great place to get a feel for the true coastal Basque culture. The old village tilts gently downhill to a small harbour and a short but very pleasant beach. The town's most famous son, the sailor Juan Sebastián Elcano, was the first man to sail around the world, after the captain of his ship, Magellan, died halfway through the endeavour.*

**Zumaia** *is the place where the green mountains, suddenly meet the Atlantic Ocean! The village is the gateway to wondrous cliffs of the Basque Coast Geopark, a geological wonder spanning 60 million years.*

**Guernika:** *on April 26th 1937, during the Spanish Civil War, the town was razed to the ground by German aircraft, sent by Hitler to support Franco's troops. When Picasso painted the Guernika in 1937, he could not have imagined that its vision of the bombing would become an ant warlike symbol. Be introduced to the Basque History, in the heart of the Basque Nationalism. That harrowing April day left a deep mark on the city's identity. Following the war, Gernika was quickly reconstructed, and although it lost its historic buildings, the narrow lanes of the centre are today brimming with life. You'll find some excellent museums that deal with the bombing as well as the indestructibility of Basque culture through the ages.*

**San Juan de Gaztelugache** *is an awe-inspiring island located just off the shore along the Bay of Biscay and connected to the mainland by a man-made stone bridge. The views to and around the island are simply beautiful. At the highest point of the island, there is a tiny church dedicated to John the Baptist. The island also has an intriguing history. Throughout the years it has housed a convent, served as a prison for Basque witches during the Spanish Inquisition, been used as a defensive outpost for the lords of Biscay, and was even ransacked by Sir Francis Drake.*

Meals included: Breakfast



## DAY 9: Bilbao & surroundings

### Half day guided tour of Bilbao (aprx 5h)

Your private driver/guide will pick you up from your hotel in Bilbao to take you on a 2.5hrs introductory **walking tour of the historic old town** during which you will understand the founding of this city and its fascinating history.

As you walk through the narrow streets of the Casco Viejo (Old Town), you will uncover its many secrets as well as its highlights such as **Plaza Nueva, Catedral de Santiago, La Ribera Market and San Anton Church.**

After this orientation walk around the historic center, it's off to explore the surroundings of Bilbao and the **picturesque old fishing port of Algorta**, driving through Getxo, an affluent area located at about 12 kilometers North of Bilbao.

In Algorta, you could enjoy a traditional **lunch** at one of the restaurants near the port (lunch cost is not included but we highly recommend trying the local family-owned seafood restaurants of the area).

**After lunch**, you will be driven back to Bilbao where you will spend a couple of hours in the afternoon visiting the **Guggenheim Museum** at your own pace (tickets with audioguides in English will be prebooked to avoid waiting lines)

In the **evening** we highly recommend to experience the vibrant night atmosphere and do your own "Pintxos Tour" following the useful recommendations that we will provide you so you can sample the most authentic and local bars of Bilbao old town.

*Bilbao's main urban core is surrounded by two small mountain ranges (with an average elevation of 400 m). After its foundation in the early 14th century by Diego López V de Haro, head of the powerful Haro family, Bilbao was a commercial hub of the Basque Country and enjoyed significant importance in the region, thanks to its significant port activity centered on the export of iron extracted from the Biscayan quarries. Throughout the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth, Bilbao experienced heavy industrialization, making it the center of the second-most industrialized region of Spain, behind Barcelona. The building of Frank Gehry's Guggenheim Museum in 1997 not only changed the way architects and people think about museums and their relationship with the art they house but also boosted Bilbao's economy with its astounding success. In fact, the phenomenon of a city's transformation following the construction of a significant piece of architecture is now referred to as the "Bilbao Effect."*

*The **Guggenheim Museum**, designed by Canadian-American architect Frank Gehry, is one of the most admired works of contemporary architecture and a landmark of audacious design. The museum, set on the bank of the Nervión River, is a fusion of complex, swirling forms and captivating materials providing an alluring backdrop for the art exhibited in it. The museum notably exhibits large-scale installations by contemporary artists, such as Richard Serra's 100-meter-long (340 ft) Snake, and displays the work of Basque artists, as well as housing a selection of pieces from the Foundation's modern art collection. The only permanent exhibit is *The Matter of Time* a series of weathering steel sculptures designed by Serra, which is housed in the 130-meter Arcelor Gallery.*

***Pintxos** are the Basque Country's answer to Spain's tapas. Traditionally they are small pieces of bread, topped with various traditional ingredients such as local cheese with figs, ham with fried green peppers, cod croquettes or pieces of Spanish omelet. In fact, they could be topped with any manner of ingredients, in any number of combinations. Tapas were actually invented before pintxos, and came about because people would place small pieces of bread on top of their drinks to stop flies and other insects getting in – essentially it became a lid or a 'tapa' in Spanish. The trend reached the Basque Country in the 1930s; not content with ordinary tapas, some bars in the city started to create miniature portions of their dishes, and displayed them along the bar so that customers could try them. To make it easier for their clients and to keep them together, they speared them with wooden cocktail sticks.*



Meals included: Breakfast



## DAY 10: La Rioja wine region

### Full day trip with private driver/guide (length: aprx 10 hrs)

Your private driver/guide will pick you up from your hotel in Bilbao and drive you to La Rioja (aprx. 1h 45mins) for a full day trip (aprx 10hrs)

This tour of La Rioja will be both gastronomic and educational, offering you an overall perspective of La Rioja's winemaking styles, from Rioja Alta to Rioja Alavesa. Along with tasting the most renowned wines in the whole of Spain, you will also get to admire the most impressive and unique architecture this region has to offer.

### First Stop: A CLASSIC RIOJA BOUTIQUE WINERY

Located in the famous Train Station quarter of Haro City, this winery produces a large range of high quality wines, from terroir concept wines to classic *Gran Reservas*, made from the best of its estates, where the grapevines embody the essence of this unique land.

*NOTE: If this winery is not available for some reason, we will select another similar one*

### Second Stop: TASTING SESSIONS IN 2 SMALL BOUTIQUE WINERIES

We will visit 2 other wineries; first, another Classic Rioja winery which will be followed by a small boutique family owned winery, popping into their wine bars, to taste some of their best wines (2 to 4 wines will be served at each winery, all of which have been granted 90 Parker Points or more).

### Final Stop: A TRADITIONAL HOT & COLD TAPAS LUNCH IN A WINERY

For lunchtime, we will head to a winery, where you will be served a traditional Riojan style Hot & Cold tapas meal paired with, of course, Rioja red wine.

Depending on the weather, this will either be served on an outdoor terrace, overlooking their vineyards or in a unique private cellar carved right out of the bedrock .

*NOTE: If the winery we normally use is not available for lunch, we will upgrade you to a 3-course lunch with wine at one of the local restaurants.*

**After lunch**, we will take you to explore the Medieval hilltop town of Laguardia. Surrounded by a 13th century wall, this picturesque spot is a natural balcony towards the wine region. The streets of Laguardia are full of splendid medieval, Renaissance, Baroque and Neoclassical buildings.

After a short walk through Laguardia and before heading back to your hotel you will get the opportunity of sightseeing two of the most architecturally emblematic wineries of the region: **Bodega Ysios** (flagship of the new Rioja and a symbol of quality and cutting edge technology as well as the only winery in the world designed by Santiago Calatrava) and **Marques de Riscal** (known worldwide for the colored curves of the hotel designed by Frank Gehry).

*The Rioja wine region, Spain's oldest D.O wine-producing region is made up of three distinct subzones; Rioja Alta (whose "capital" is Haro), Rioja Baja (the majority of which lies in the very dry, much hotter south-eastern portion) and Rioja Alavesa (the section of the Rioja that belongs to the Basque Country, found in the province of Alava).*

*Rioja Alavesa, with 13,000 hectares of vineyards, and Rioja Alta boast the most prestigious wineries. There are more than 600 hundred wineries making up the Rioja D.O.C., Spain's largest, with some 300 in the Rioja Alavesa alone and 63,000 hectares of vineyards. The Rioja is a stunningly beautiful and ancient area dating from the Neolithic era, where you'll find atmospheric fortress towns on hills, some with their medieval walls still intact and filled with Noble homes displaying their heraldic shields. There are enormous Gothic churches, each with its own amazing, ornately gilded Baroque altarpiece, but seldom seen, because these churches are kept tightly shut other than for mass. Ancient burial markers (dólmenes), scattered about the fields intermix with the wineries, both boutique and large.*

Meals included: Breakfast & lunch



## DAY 11: Rias Baixas, Galicia

### Morning

You will be dropped off at Bilbao's airport from where you will take the morning flight to Vigo.

Upon arrival in Vigo airport, your private driver/guide will pick you up and take you to explore the Rías Baixas region.

Today, you will discover the Rías of Pontevedra and Arousa which will offer some of the most spectacular landscapes on the coast of Galicia.

You will stop at Cambados, the capital city of Albariño wine, boasting a really well-preserved and interesting historic town. Here, you will visit the Palace of Fefiñanes winery, where you will enjoy a wine tasting.

**Lunch:** cost is not included but your local guide would have made some reservation at a local place so you can choose à la carte and pay on site.

**After lunch,** you will explore the enchanting villages of O-Grove and the Island of Arousa where you will learn about the mussel production in the area and how the river is used as a hatchery.

You'll continue exploring this unique part of the Galician coastline by going through picturesque little fishing towns in the Arousa estuary.

Before heading to your hotel in Santiago de Compostela you will make a final stop in Sanxenxo, a very popular coastal town in the Pontevedra estuary.

Free **evening.**

*The **Rías Baixas** (Galician for "Lower estuaries") are a series of four estuarine inlets located on the southwestern coast of Galicia (Ría de Muros e Noia, the Ría de Arousa, the Ría de Pontevedra, and the Ría de Vigo). The Rías Baixas are synonymous with the best cuisine in Galicia. Fish and seafood that paired with this region's wine which holds the D.O. (Denomination of Origin) of Rías Baixas.*

*The lands of the **Pontevedra** estuary are known for their seafaring tradition. Here, even the last names are reminiscent of the sea: Ons, Aldán, Bueu, Marín... Pontevedra is the capital of the Rías Baixas and a stately city teeming with life, with the largest Old Town in Galicia, after Santiago. Pontevedra is full of attractions such as the "da Ferrería" square, the Basílica de Santa María and the Museo de Pontevedra, which houses a magnificent collection of Celtic jewelry.*

*The **Arousa** estuary has managed to retain all the charms of its natural beauty; from its excellent beaches and islands, such as Sálvora, Cortegada, Arousa or A Toxa with their spas, pine groves and elegant hotels to its Galician seafood farms where one can try their famous freshly harvested clams.*

Meals included: Breakfast





## DAY 12: Santiago de Compostela

Your art historian guide will meet you at the lobby of your hotel for an introductory walking tour of approx 3h to discover the main sites of this Unesco listed city founded in the 9th century with the discovery of Saint James' tomb.

You will discover the famous 11th-century Cathedral, its Museum, and the four squares which surround the Cathedral: Obradoiro, Inmaculada, Quintana, and Platerías.

Then it's on to the Hostal of the Catholic Kings, the old royal hospital in the city, and the Monastery of Saint Martin Pinario, founded in the 16th century by the Benedictine order.

Stroll around the streets of Vilar and Franco, from where you get to admire the beautiful views to the Palace of Fonseca. Your walk will continue on through Cervantes Square and the Mercado de Abastos, the city's local market.

Enjoy a free **afternoon & evening** by simply resting at your hotel or further explore this beautiful city.

*Santiago de Compostela is the capital of the autonomous community of Galicia in north-western Spain. Millions of people from all over the world come to this city every year, many of them reaching the end of the Way of Saint James pilgrimage route. Its historic center has been designated a World Heritage Site by the UNESCO. Santiago de Compostela was originally founded by the Suebi in the early 400s, as part of the collapse of the Roman Empire. In 550 the whole settlement together with the rest of Galicia and northern Portugal was incorporated by Leovigild into the Visigothic kingdom of Spain. Raided from 711 to 739 by the Arabs, Santiago de Compostela was finally conquered by the Visigothic king of Asturias in 754, about 60 years before the identification of remains as those of Saint James the Great, and their acceptance as such by the Pope and Charlemagne, during the reign of Alfonso II of Asturias. With a population of about 96,000 inhabitants, it's one of the most important cities of Galicia and the most touristic of them, receiving thousands of visitors every year, many of them attracted to the ancient history and the religious tradition. The University of Santiago de Compostela (USC) is one of the oldest Spanish universities and it has more than 30,000 students, making Santiago one of the university centers in Spain, with Salamanca and Granada.*

Meals included: Breakfast

## DAY 13: Ribeira Sacra, Galicia

### Full day trip with private driver & guide (Length: approx 10h)

On this tour, not only will you admire the natural beauty of the spectacular and magic landscape of the Ourense province (inland Galicia) but you will also enjoy a truly unique experience: a private boat trip along the River Miño on a Zodiac.

Your private driver and guide will pick you up from your hotel for an unforgettable tour around the Romanesque architecture and the breath-taking landscapes of the inland Galicia bathed by the rivers Sil and Miño (the Ribeira Sacra or sacred riverside).



You will embark on the most amazing experience that the magical land of Galicia has to offer: a private boat trip along the Miño river with the captain Luisa Rubines.

On board of her twelve seater Zodiac you will explore the narrows of the river Miño, admire the spectacular waterfall of Marce, the many Romanesque churches and monasteries.

You will even have the opportunity to swim in its warm water!

**Lunch:** this wonderful experience will be completed with the tasting of some of the local wines and products, beautifully served at Luisa's cozy place just down by the river, the magical "Quinta Sacra".

After lunch, your driver/guide will pick you up from the port where you embarked this morning to take you for an afternoon scenic drive to visit a local Romanesque church in the area and the enchanting Monforte de Lemos, a town of medieval origin where the Monastery of Saint Vicente do Pino is the main highlight.

Free **evening**.



*Ribeira Sacra is the mountainous area in Galicia where the Sil and Miño rivers meet forming a millennial 500 meters deep canyon. At the top of the canyon, above the river, you will find several natural lookouts with impressive views over the area. The Miño riverside is where you'll find vineyards set on terraced structures where winemakers use the traditional Ribeira method. The first people to settle in this area were Christian monks and hermits searching for an ascetic life back in the 12th century. Based on this heritage, the region is full of monasteries that radiate art, culture, and growth to the whole Galician region.*

Meals included: Breakfast & lunch

## DAY 14: Departure

Private transfer to A Coruña airport to connect with your international flight back home

**Unfortunately, all good things must come to an end...**

**We hope you enjoyed your stay with us.**

**Hasta pronto!**

