

# Walk Spain

## Picos Self Drive



Picos de Europa mountains – beautiful coastline – rugged mountains – peaceful villages – beautiful walking – varied activities – sandy beaches – charming inns and hotels – freedom to explore

Enjoy a tailor made walking holiday to the lovely Picos de Europa mountains.

See an incredible variety of scenery within just a few square miles.

Rugged peaks, green valleys, hidden beaches and charming villages.

Travel independently but armed with lots of detailed local information and the support of Pura's guides.

Stay in a selection of our handpicked small hotels and inns.

This is a Pura *handmade* holiday with an activity level of *medium* and a comfort rating of *first*.



Beautiful and peaceful high mountain walks.



**"The scenery is stunning, the hotels excellent, unspoiled area, welcoming and friendly people everywhere."** Gavin & Elaine M

## Holiday Itinerary

### Summary

The beauty of a self-drive holiday with Pura Aventura is that it is an independent holiday but without any of the guesswork – no more stumbling across the best restaurant on the last day.

Your holiday starts with a day of private guiding in order to get you settled in and used to the area.

From then on you are free to choose what you do each day. We send you armed with Pura's own in-depth local information, walking notes and detailed maps so you are never short of options.

For walkers, it is a perfect environment because of the sheer variety of scenery and walking routes.

The Picos de Europa National Park is a little known mountain range along the central north coast of Spain.

It is generally considered to be one of the most beautiful areas of Europe.

There are walks to suit almost any ability level – indeed many of the walks are out and back along the same path so you can simply shorten or lengthen to suit.

All in all, we think that the Picos make a wonderful setting for an active and comfortable holiday.

We are proud to say that this holiday was chosen by BBC1's Holiday programme as number one in their Ten Best 'hidden gems' around the world.

### Day 01 | Picos | **arrive and settle in**

Arrive in northern Spain. Collect your car at the airport and drive to your first hotel.

We tailor each of these holidays to your needs so the description below should be taken as a suggestion rather than a fixed itinerary.

We assume that you stay in two different hotels over the course of your stay.

One is to the north west of the mountains, near the town of Cangas de Onis. This is ideal for access to walks such as the Lagos de Covadonga, the Cares Gorge and the coast.

The second hotel is to the south east of the mountains in the Liebana Valley. This is ideal for access to walks between villages and to the high mountain peaks at Fuente Dé.

You arrive in Spain with walking notes, local information and maps to make the most of your holiday.

In general you will be armed with upwards of 10 different walking routes so you will have plenty to choose from.

### Day 02 | Picos | **guided mountain walk**

Spend today with your private Pura guide. Having a local guide with you gives you the opportunity to learn about the area and settle in so that you can enjoy the rest of your holiday all the more.

To book or for more information call us on **01273 676 712**

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The spectacular but relatively gentle walk along the Cares gorge.



Take time to relax and enjoy the views.

One of the most stunning walks is to a viewpoint from where you can see all three massifs of the Picos range.

Walking up a steep initial section, you make it up to the top of a ridge from where you have views of the highest peaks to the south and the sea to your north.

In Roman times, the Picos were inhabited by much feared tribes. As hard as they tried, the Romans could not cope with the guerilla tactics used in the mountains.

In the end they decided to simply drive a road diagonally across the range from north west to south east. With this access, they finally managed to exert a degree of control.

It is rare to come across other people walking up here despite the views and the history surrounding you.

There are several of us at Pura Aventura who consider this to be one of the most beautiful walks in Europe.

Walk 12km, 6hrs,  $\triangle$  950m,  $\nabla$  450m

Return to your hotel to relax. Tonight you might like to eat at your hotel or try one of our restaurant recommendations in the area. (b)

### **Day 03 | Picos | walk through a gorge**

The most famous walk in the Picos, probably in all of Spain, is the Cares Gorge.

The walk starts you uphill on a winding, gravelly path before levelling out and leading into the gorge opening up ahead. The path runs along the wall of the gorge, cut into the rock, narrowing to just two metres in places.

The path is fairly level, so the river starts off far below you at the bottom of the gorge.

As you head further into the gorge the river rises to meet you.

Towards the end of the gorge you pass through a series of short tunnels and over bridges as the path criss-crosses the river below.

The far end of the gorge is a great place to have your picnic lunch on the banks of the river just before it heads downstream into the gorge.

You can choose how far you walk: the Cares Gorge is a real spectacle no matter how far in you go. Walk up to 22km, 6hrs,  $\triangle$  250m,  $\nabla$  250m (b)

### **Day 04 | Picos | walk along the coast**

The coast of northern Spain is defined by rolling hills breaking off into the sea to reveal hidden sandy coves and beaches.

What makes this stretch of coastline so unusual and special is that you can see the high mountain peaks, some up to 2,600m, whilst standing on the sand.

Today's walk takes you out along the edge of the coastal mountain range and then down to the sea to ride along the undulating cliff tops.

Depending on the time of year, you might like to have a picnic on the beach. If the weather is cooler and it is a weekend, stop for lunch in a converted cider barn where they serve fantastic grilled meats.

Walk 12km, 4hrs,  $\triangle$  250m,  $\nabla$  250m (b)

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### What is a Pura Self Drive Holiday?

At the heart of the concept is an independent holiday with the guesswork taken out.

### What is included?

What Pura do is book your cars and hotels so that you have the basic structure of your holiday set out.

We then give you the information to fill the days in a way that suits you best.

That means that you travel with detailed information about the areas you are visiting. This ranges from advice on the best beaches, market days, our favourite restaurants, what to do on a rainy day, etc.

You also have a series of walking scale maps with our own walking notes. You will invariably have more walking notes than days to walk so you can choose which ones to do and which ones to save for a return visit.

To help you make the best choices, at the start of your trip you spend a full day with a Pura guide.

### How tailored is it?

Here in the UK we tailor the itinerary to your needs as closely as possible.

Of course, once you are actually on holiday you can choose to stick to the letter of the itinerary or change it as you go along.

Your Pura guide also helps you map out the best possible holiday according to weather forecasts, local festivals, your energy levels, etc. They can also help you make any calls you need to book optional activities. Think of it as a bit of fine-tuning.



*Freedom and flexibility without the guesswork.*

### What about the cars?

The cars we book for you are good sized small cars – Seat Ibiza or VW Golf type things. Because you are generally going into mountain environments, we make sure that the cars are suitably powerful.

### And hotels?

The hotels we use are generally small and family run.

The standard varies from luxurious, boutique style to simple, comfortable rustic type places. Rooms are en suite.

We always believe that when you wake up you should know where in the world you are so we place character, location and comfort at the top of the list.

If you want uniformed staff, look elsewhere!

### Day 05 | Picos | **choice of walks**

At some point during your visit, you should visit the Bearded Vulture Foundation visitor centre you're your hotel. This centre is dedicated to the preservation of not only the birds but the traditional lifestyles which sustain them.

The person in charge of the centre is closely linked to Pura Aventura and should be available to welcome you to the centre.

You might like to take a short walk along the nearby Rio Casano before you change hotels and drive towards the lush Liebana Valley.

Drive though the narrow, winding Hermida Gorge and into the lush Liebana Valley where you stay in a small inn near the town of Potes.

Look out over spectacular views across the valley to the sheer mountains. (b)

### Day 06 | Picos | **walk through meadows**

The Liebana Valley has many red-roofed villages perched on green valley walls where the way of life has changed little in many years.

Find your walking legs today with a circular walk to the high sides of the valley.

Set off walking on ancient trails across the meadows that join the nearby villages.

Walk a steep uphill route to a small shrine, site of a popular annual pilgrimage, set on a natural balcony with views over the valley and mountains beyond.

Once you reach the shrine you can drink from the spring and enjoy a picnic with gorgeous views across the valley to the limestone uplands of the Picos.

Return to the village walking down through woods and across pretty meadows. Walk 12km, 5hrs,  $\uparrow$ 650m,  $\downarrow$ 650m (b)

### Day 07 | Picos | **hike to a high peak**

The cable-car at Fuente Dé provides a spectacular ride up 1,000m to the upper reaches of the mountains in the heart of the National Park.

The contrast with the green valley floor is striking as you step out into a moon-like landscape of splintered rocks, jagged peaks and deep ravines.

You will usually see chamois goats perched on the cliffs and vultures circling below.

Enjoy stunning views back down the forested Liebana Valley and ahead to the high limestone cliffs.

Loop around the back of the first set of these peaks and you find a reasonably steady climb up to the peak of Horcados Rojos, one of the highest peaks in the Picos.

At the very end of the walk there is a short section which is not good for anyone with vertigo but otherwise this is a walk and not a climb.

Walk described 12km, 5hrs,  $\uparrow$ 700m,  $\downarrow$ 700m

After a picnic lunch in the spectacular highlands return down the cable car and to the medieval town of Potes, capital of the Liebana Valley. (b)

### Day 08 | travel | **return home**

Drive to the airport for flight home. (b)

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## Holiday Information

### Pura Handmade

This holiday is unique to us.

We have designed and deliver this holiday using our own people and carefully selected local suppliers to create a *Pura Handmade* holiday.

You are looked after by a Pura team on the ground in the Picos. In fact, one of our founders lives there.

The selection of hotels, walks, restaurants, beaches, markets, etc. are unique to us. The hotels we use are often hidden away in tiny villages and are exclusive to Pura Aventura.

In creating this holiday we have been very careful to give you a full insight into the landscapes and culture of this little visited region.

The format of a self-drive whereby you have some time with one of our own guides before heading off on your own is unique to Pura.

### How long?

Eight days as suggested, but can be tailored.

### How active?

Entirely up to you.

Walking is the main activity but you can also canoe, canyon, ride bikes or horses, relax on the beach or make cultural visits.

### How comfortable?

On the standard itinerary you stay in two different hotels. These are typically small inns with 12 rooms or less, locally owned. We try to mix character and comfort. On the whole, little English is spoken.

Both hotels have good restaurants so you can choose to stay in and dine at your hotel after a long day's walk.

### How independent?

With your own car, you're completely independent and flexible but with support available if you need it.

Spend a day with our guide to start your holiday.

We provide you with all the maps, walking notes and local information you will need.

### Why the Picos de Europa?

This is some of the most spectacular, varied and untouched scenery in Europe. It's a world away yet only a couple of hours from home.

The Picos de Europa is a dramatic, compact mountain range on the north coast of Spain.

High mountains rise sheer out of lush green valleys dotted with red-roofed hamlets. The lifestyle is deeply rural.

### How responsible?

Pura Aventura is passionate about the places it visits. To help preserve the integrity of these destinations we:

- Keep groups small to minimise environmental impact.
- Work directly with local businesses and organisations to directly benefit local economies. We use small, locally owned hotels and restaurants.
- Work with local guides so that our holidays are more interesting for clients and more beneficial locally.

Pura Aventura actively supports the Spanish mountain conservation charity [www.quebrantahuesos.org](http://www.quebrantahuesos.org).

### Weather

The Picos mountains are situated on the central north coast of Spain - 'Green Spain'. The warmest & driest months are July-September. You should still be prepared for occasionally cool conditions in the upper park, and the chance of rain at any time. Snow has been known to fall in every month of the year.

May tends to be showery but is also one of the most beautiful months to visit, with snow in the high park and meadows full of spring flowers.

October is changeable but benefits from the beautiful autumnal forests and is often hot and sunny.

In May, June and October you should be prepared for occasional cold, wet mountain conditions.

Altitudes range from sea level to 2,300m. Summer temperatures range between 15° - 28°C.

### Where do I fly to?

*Asturias:* Easyjet has direct flights from London Stansted. It also has indirect flights via Madrid from most places in the UK. 1 hour drive to Picos.

*Santander:* Ryanair has direct flights from London Stansted. 1 hour drive to Picos.

*Bilbao:* Easyjet has direct flights from London Stansted, Iberia has direct flights from London Gatwick. 3 hour drive to Picos.

### Not based in the UK?

We are very happy to discuss your requirements if you are not travelling to and from the UK. Please call us on **+44 1273 676712** between 9am and 6.30pm weekdays.

### Not quite right?

If this holiday's not quite right for you, call us to discuss your ideas or consider:

**Walk Spain: Camino de Santiago Self Drive** Travel at your own pace walking and driving along the Camino from Santander to Santiago de Compostela.

**Walk Spain: Pyrenees Self Drive** Independent walking and activities without the guesswork. Stay in stylish but friendly small rural hotels.

### Prices & departures

2011	Daily, April - October   Guide price range £437 - £569pp
Price includes	Twin/double en suite accommodation; car hire for one driver; one day with a private Pura Aventura guide; walking notes, local information, maps; meals (b,l,d) as per itinerary;
Not included	Flights; meals other than breakfast; personal expenses.
Please note	As a tailor made holiday, prices depend on season, hotels and your final choice of itinerary. Please contact us for a personalized quotation.

Prices are per person based on twin share or double accommodation..  
Prices may be subject to change: please confirm at booking.

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