

# The Spanish Pyrenees

## Naturetrek Tour Itinerary

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### Outline itinerary

<b>Day 1</b>	Fly Zaragoza or Bilbao and transfer to Berdún
<b>Day 2/7</b>	Berdún
<b>Day 8</b>	Fly London

### Departs

May

### Focus

Birds, plants and butterflies

### Grading

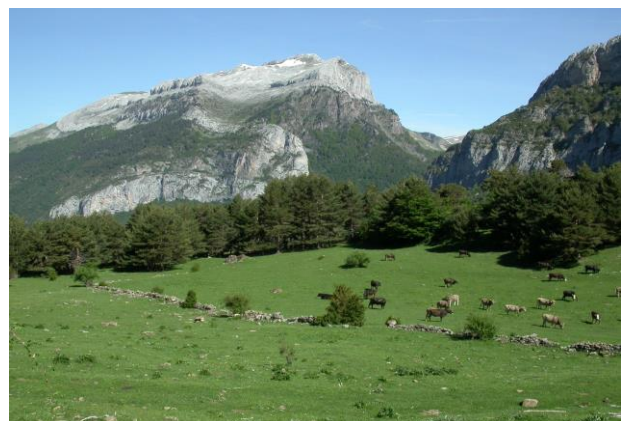
Day walks only. Some Grade B

### Dates and Prices

See Website (tour code ESP16) or brochure

### Highlights

- An ideal mountain holiday for the all-round naturalist
- Birds, butterflies & alpine flowers galore!
- Spectacular Pyrenean scenery & delicious picnics in flower-filled meadows
- Look out for Marmots & Chamois
- Golden Eagles, Lammergeiers & Griffon Vultures
- Wallcreeper, Rock Thrush, Alpine Accentor & Citril Finch possible.
- A wealth of butterfly species (50+), including Pyrenean specialities.



From top: Trumpet Gentian, Lady's Slipper Orchid and the scenic Pyrenees.



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**NB.** Please note that the itinerary below offers our planned programme of excursions. However, adverse weather & other local considerations can necessitate some re-ordering of the programme during the course of the tour, though this will always be done to maximise best use of the time and weather conditions available.

## Day 1

Sunday

### Berdun

We depart from London on a flight direct to Zaragoza or Bilbao. From the airport we will pick up our hired minibuses and continue on to Berdun, stopping en route if time allows and should anything of interest be sighted. Previous journeys have certainly offered us a good variety of birds of prey, as well as spectacular scenery.

Berdun is a spectacular old hilltop village, sitting amidst the floodplains of the Aragon and Veral rivers, yet surrounded by the mountains and foothills of the Spanish Pyrenees.



Berdun

Nearby is Jaca, once the capital of the kingdom of Aragon, now a small historic town situated in the Aragon Valley in the southern foothills of the central Pyrenees. The town has a 15th century fort and an interesting 11th Century Romanesque cathedral - the first indeed to be built in that style surrounded by a maze of medieval streets.

## Day 2

Monday

### Berdun

Today we shall explore the bird and plant-rich areas right on our doorstep - around Berdun. We shall walk in the Aragon and Veral Valleys, looking for such bird species as Griffon and Egyptian Vultures, Booted and Short-toed Eagles, Black and Red Kites, Quails, Bee-eaters, Golden Orioles, Hoopoes, Spotless Starlings, Rock Thrushes, Crested Larks, Tawny Pipits, Rock Sparrows and an excellent variety of typically Mediterranean warblers.



Woodcock Orchid

Amongst the exciting plants we might hope to find during the day are Violet Horned Poppy (*Roemeria hybrida*), Cupid's Dart (*Catananche caerulea*), Dwarf Blue Thistle (*Carduncellus mitissimus*), Coris (*Coris monspeliensis*), Blue Grass Lily (*Aphyllanthes monspeliensis*) and Large Mediterranean Rattle (*Rhinanthus mediterraneus*). Likely orchids include Woodcock (*Ophrys scolopax*), Early Spider (*O.*



*sphegodes*), Bug (*Orchis coriophora*), Pyramidal (*Anacamptis pyramidalis*), Southern Marsh (*Dactylorhiza praetermissa*), Lesser Butterfly (*Platanthera bifolia*) and Marsh Helleborine (*Epipactis palustris*).



Aisa Valley

## Day 3

### Berdun

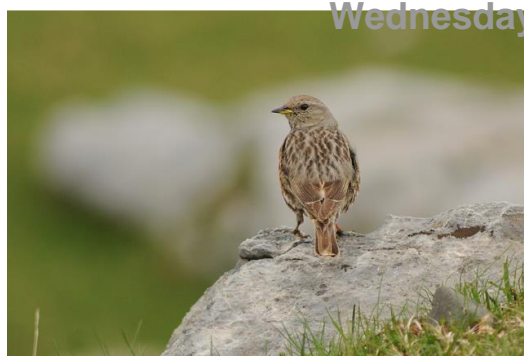
Today we will explore the hills and limestone outcrops to the south of Berdun. We will stop at Embalse de la Pena and enjoy good views of Crag Martin and look for the beautiful Ramonda (*Ramonda myconi*) and Pyrenean Saxifrage (*Saxifraga longifolia*) on the rock face. We move on to visit the spectacular red rock pinnacles at Riglos, home to vultures and Red-billed Chough, as well as western Europe's most northerly outposts of Blue Rock Thrushes and Black Wheatears. Typical shrubs of the (maquis) matorral can be found here, including Rosemary, Helichrysum and Lavender.

After lunch we will visit the 11th century Castillo de Loarre, set beautifully into the hillside with superb views south over the plains. Around the castle we will look for Rock Thrush, Rock Bunting, Rock Sparrow, Hoopoe and in the pine woods watch Crested Tit and Red Squirrel. We will also be enjoying the butterflies found in these areas.

## Day 4

### Berdun

Today we will head to the French border at Portalet, north-east of Jaca. We will stop at Formigal to look at roadside orchids including Elder-flowered (*Dactylorhiza sambucina*) and Lady Slipper (*Cypripedium calceolus*). Overhead we will listen for Water Pipit and look out for Golden Eagles. We will spend the whole day exploring the meadows around Portalet, a good area for Lammergeier, Golden Eagle, Water Pipits and Wheatear. For those with a lot of energy, a climb to higher ground should yield Alpine Accentor. The botanical interest here includes Spring Gentian (*Gentiana verna*), Pyrenean Trumpet Gentian (*Gentiana occidentalis*), Alpine Snowbell (*Soldanella alpine*) and Pyrenean Fritillary (*Fritillaria pyrenaica*).



Alpine Accentor

## Day 5

### Berdun

Today we drive up the Hecho Valley, watching large numbers of Black and Red Kites hunting over fields and shrikes perched on the roadside wires on the way. We spend the morning surrounded by stunning scenery looking out for birds of prey which may include Lammergeier, Griffon and Egyptian Vulture. A walk through the woodland usually produces Short-toed Treecreeper, Firecrest and Crested Tit. Nearby, Citril

## Thursday

Finch, Black Woodpecker and the elusive Wallcreeper can be seen with some luck. For the botanists there are two wintergreens, Birdsnest Orchid (*Neottia nidus-avis*) and Trumpet Gentian (*Gentiana acaulis*).

In the afternoon we visit the monasteries of San Juan de la Pena and look at roadside plants such as Wild Tulip (*Tulipa australis*), Green Winged Orchid (*Orchis morio* ssp. *champagneuxii*), Pyrenean Hyacinth (*Brimeura amethystina*), Rue-leaved Isopyrum (*Isopyrum thalictroides*) and Pink Rock-rose (*Helianthemum nummularium* ssp. *pyrenaicum*). Several colourful species of Flax (*Linum*) should also be seen here. Views towards the high Pyrenees are stunning and it's a good place to watch birds of prey with Lammergeier possible here.

## Day 6

### Berdun

The Aisa Valley offers splendid walking in the stream-side meadows of a high and remote Pyrenean valley. The superb flora includes Pyrenean Buttercup (*Ranunculus pyrenaicus*), Globe Flower (*Trollius europaeus*), Birdseye Primrose (*Primula farinosa*) and its delightful little relatives *Vitaliana primuliflora* and Ciliate Rock Jasmine (*Androsace chamaejasme*), species of Globularia and several orchids including Lady Orchid (*Orchis purpurea*), Frog Orchid (*Coeloglossum viride*), Musk Orchid (*Herminium monorchis*), Broad-leaved Marsh Orchid (*Dactylorhiza majalis*) and Elder Flowered Orchid (*D.sambucina*) while the sharp-eyed might spot Alpine Butterwort (*Pinguicula alpina*) or the elusive little Moonwort (*Botrychium lunaria*). A large colony of cliff-nesting house Martins is to be found here, together with Lammergeiers, Griffon Vultures, Golden Eagles, Buzzards, Choughs, Alpine Choughs, and other high altitude species. The valley's peaceful and remote situation makes it a haven for large numbers of Alpine Marmots and the Pyrenean race of the Chamois - the Iazard; whilst on a hot sunny day a good variety of alpine butterflies may be seen.



Alpine Marmot

## Day 7

## Saturday

### Berdun



Eurasian Griffon

This morning we will explore the very spectacular Foz de Binies, a lowland gorge close to Berdun with a good variety of plants, birds and butterflies. In particular, we shall look out for birds such as Alpine Swift, Dipper, Golden Oriole, Hoopoe and Bonelli's Warbler, plus an excellent range of birds of prey.

The river banks leading to the gorge support Pyramid Orchid (*Anacamptis pyramidalis*) and the Pyrenean Pink Rockrose. Growing on the spectacular gorge face are large bright red clumps

of *Antihrrinum majus*, Euphorbia characias, Pyrenean Saxifrage (*Saxifraga longifolia*), Pyrenean Golden Drops (*Onosma bubani*), Large Yellow Rest Harrow (*Ononis natrix*) and several species of Allium including Yellow Onion (*Allium moly*). We may also find *Petrocoptis hispanica*, a member of the Pink family endemic to the Jaca area.

In the afternoon we will return to the Aragon, visiting a different area along the river with an impressive display of Military Orchid (*O. militaris*); other species include Red Helleborine (*Cephalanthera rubra*) and Fragrant Orchid (*Gymnadenia conopsea*). Birdwatchers can explore the river valley or just go and watch the Bee-eaters perched in the trees.

## Day 8

Sunday

### London

We must rise early this morning for the drive to the airport to check in for our flight back to London. It is likely that we will arrive back at London in the early afternoon.

## Trek grading

From our outstanding base in Berdun we will explore both the foothills and mountains of the Spanish Pyrenees on daily outings, enjoying their natural history by means of gentle day walks. Our pace will be slow, as we look for birds, plants and butterflies, but we shall aim to be outdoors as much as possible covering perhaps between 4 to 5 miles each day. This holiday should suit those of all ages who enjoy natural history and mountain environments. Walks will of course vary in severity with some steeper than others but we will move at a gentle pace with regular stops of course, as we aim to see the areas superb flora and fauna.



Naturetrek group walking in the Spanish Pyrenees

## Weather

We have chosen late May as being an ideal time for the flowering plants, birds and butterflies of this region. However, although we expect plenty of fine, hot and sunny weather (especially at lower altitudes), in the high mountains the weather is never predictable and you must be prepared for such variability and bring a good range of clothing!





Our picturesque accommodation in Berdun

## Food & accommodation

All food and accommodation is included in the price of this holiday.

## How to book your place

In order to book your place on this holiday, please give us a call on 01962 733051 with a credit or debit card, book online at [www.naturetrek.co.uk](http://www.naturetrek.co.uk), or alternatively complete and post the booking form at the back of our main Naturetrek brochure, together with a deposit of 20% of the holiday cost plus any room supplements if required. If you do not have a copy of the brochure, please call us on 01962 733051 or request one via our website. Please stipulate any special requirements, for example extension requests or connecting/regional flights, at the time of booking.