

Four nights in the Rioja

Spend a luxurious holiday wine tasting in the Rioja



Maribel's Guides for the Sophisticated Traveler TM

October 2016

Tour Highlights:

- VIP Wine Tastings
- Private Chauffeur
- Luxury Accommodations
- Gourmet Dining

The Rioja is one of the Spain's most beautiful wine regions, and a must for lovers of great food and legendary wine. The area has always played a vital role in Spain's long history, from the Phoenicians and Carthaginians to the Romans, Moors and medieval Crusaders. Wineries dating from the time of the Romans still exist in and around the region. Wine making nearly disappeared during the time of the Moors, but returned with the Christian Crusaders, who helped bring trade to the region.

The wine growing region of the Rioja (Alta, Baja and Alavesa), extends approximately 120 km along both sides of the historic River Ebro, running from the northwest to the southeast, and is only 50 km wide at its widest point. The Rioja Alta and Alavesa, bounded on the north by the Sierra de Cantabria mountains and by the Demanda and Urbión mountain ranges to the south, where the peak of San Lorenzo, near Ezcaray reaches a height of 2271 meters (7450 ft), the region's weather is influenced by the Cantabrian Sea, only an hours drive north. The Rioja Baja, lower and drier than the Alta and Alavesa, is strongly influenced by the warmer Mediterranean climate.



Your day by day itinerary:

Wednesday - Day 1

Your driver/guide will meet you upon arrival at Bilbao's airport (BIO) and take you to the nearby village of Larrabetzu (Lezama) for a truly gastronomic delight at the only restaurant in the province with three Michelin stars, **Azurmendi Gourmet**, named the third best restaurant in the world in 2015. You will have the opportunity to meet internationally acclaimed chef *Eneko Atxa* during your visit. Before lunch you are invited to visit the largest txakoli wine cellar in the Basque region, **Bodegas Gorka Izaqirre**.

Following lunch, your driver/guide will take you to the 4-star luxury boutique **Hotel Viura** in the village of Villabuena de Álava, the perfect spot from which to tour the vineyards and bodegas of the Rioja Alta and Alavesa.

Thursday - Day 2

You begin your day in the village of Villabuea de Álava with a tour and tasting at the acclaimed **Bodegas Luis Cañas**. The 90-minute tour includes a visit to the view point overlooking the vineyards where you will taste the wine, discuss the influence of the climate and learn about the characteristics of the soil and the different grape varieties, finishing the tour with a tasting of their reserve wine in the wine bar.

Your next visit will be in the nearby village of Samaniego, with its noble mansions amid a stunning setting. Your second wine tour will be at the cellars of **Remirez de Ganuza**, where the winemaker will take you on a guided tour of the vineyard where you will learn about Rioja's native grape varieties and their style of viticulture, followed by a private VIP tasting of the bodegas outstanding, award winning wines.

Lunch today will be at **Restaurant Héctor Oribe** in the village of Párganos, near the fortress city of Laguardia, capital of the Rioja Alavesa.

Following lunch you will visit the wine estate of **Torre de Oña** in Párganos. The two-hour tour includes a walk through the vineyards and visit to the winery.

Friday - Day 3

This morning you will start the day in Haro at the "**Barrio de la Estación**", where you will visit **Bodegas López de Heredia-Viña Tondonia** one of the most prestigious wine producers in the Rioja Alta, and the most traditional. The 90-minute tour will end

with a tasting in the Zaha Hadid-designed glass wine pavilion, and includes a complimentary bottle of wine.

Your second visit will be at **Bodegas Roda**, which is next door to López de Heredia.

Your luxury private visit will last two hours and includes a tasting of four premium wines. You can also taste their artisan olive oils, Dauro and Aubocassa, two of the best in Spain.

Lunch today will be at **La Bodega de Rivas** in the village of Rivas de Tereso in the heart of the Toloño Mountains.

Following lunch, you will have an afternoon visit **Bodegas Viña Real**, a state-of-the-art winery designed in the shape of a wine barrel by Bordeaux-based architect Philippe Mazières. The winery belongs to the C.V.N.E. Group.

Saturday - Day 4

This morning you start the day with a visit to **Bodegas Baigorri**. Founded in 1996, this strikingly contemporary winery was designed by the Basque architect Iñaki Aspiazu, with the winemaking process completely gravity fed. The tour begins in the glass cube and descends seven levels, to a depth of 35 meters.

Today's second visit will be at **Bodegas Ostatu**, which is across the highway from Baigorri. After a tasting of their outstanding wines, you will visit the medieval walled village of Laguardia before heading to Elciego for lunch.

Lunch will be at the Frank Gehry designed **Marqués de Riscal** in Elciego in the Michelin star and Repsol sun-awarded Restaurant Marques de Riscal, with cuisine created by chef Francis Paniego of Restaurant Echaurren in Ezcaray, the first chef in the Rioja to receive a Michelin star.

After lunch, you will tour the "**City of Wine**" and the oldest cellars of Marqués de Riscal, dating from 1858, before returning to your hotel.

Sunday - Day 5

After breakfast, your driver/guide will return you to Bilbao for your flight home, or continue your adventure in Spain, Portugal or the south of France.

What's Included:

- Accommodations at a luxury boutique hotel in the Rioja, deluxe room
- Private transfers
- English speaking chauffeur/guide
- Breakfast daily at the hotel
- Lunch at the Micheline 3-star Restaurant Azurmendi
- Gourment Lunch daily
- VIP wine tastings
- Local taxes

What's Not Included

- International and domestic flights
- Meals and drinks not specified
- Personal expenses
- Tips and Gratuities
- Travel Insurance (highly recommended)
- Trip Cancellation Insurance

Our Small Group **Wine & Gastronomy Tours** are available from March through early November for a minimum of 2 and a maximum of 16 only.

Contact **Iberian Traveler - Maribel's Guides** for additional information or to reserve your private wine & gastronomy tour in the Rioja.

Email: info@iberiantraveler.com

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Escorted Cultural Tours are also available and have a guaranteed departue with a minimum group of 4, maximum of 16. Larger groups tours are available upon request.