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Hiking the Basque Country of Spain & France – 2017

Trip Summary

Dates

September 23 - October 1, 2017

Cost

\$4,595 (\$800 deposit) from Hondarribia, Spain

Rating

Moderate with 2 days of High Energy

Activities

- Anthropology
- Archeology
- Cultural Exploration
- Hiking
- Historical Sites
- Natural History
- Sightseeing
- Photography
- Wine Tasting

The Basque Country is the name given to the home of the Basque people in the western Pyrenees that spans the border between France and Spain on the Atlantic coast. Straddling two nations, this ancient, free-spirited land of the Basques is a region that is full of delights: lush vistas, trout filled streams and picturesque villages unchanged over the centuries. Its natural barrier between the two countries is the snow-capped mountain range at the foothills of the Pyrenees. These peaks provide an impressive backdrop to one of Europe's most traditional and beautiful regions, where peaceful villages nestle in verdant valleys.

Although neither French or Spanish in terms of its architecture, traditions, food or language, the Basques have been invaded many times over and their rich cultural heritage reflects this turbulent history. Their cuisine is a mixture of both Spanish and French influences, while the Basque language is an even more complex mixture of cultures. It is actually thought to be closer to Armenian than either French or Spanish! We'll try "poulet a la basquaise" (chicken in a spicy sauce of tomatoes and peppers) and creamy Brebis mountain cheese made from sheep's milk, served in the traditional manner with a black cherry conserve.

We'll explore such distinctive towns as sophisticated and stunning San Sebastián; Hondarribia, a colorful fishing village that is both rich in architecture as well as in gastronomy; Zugarramurdi, a town that was the focus of one of the largest witch trials in history during the Spanish Inquisition; Sare, known for its festivals, love of tradition, its great food, and considered one of the most beautiful villages in France; and St. Jean Pied de Port, a beautiful bustling French market town in the foothills of the Pyrenees, and the traditional starting point for the Camino Frances.

This beautiful Basque region is ideal for exploring on foot along the many small paths that criss-cross the area. We'll follow some of Europe's most scenic and historic long distance footpaths as we walk beside mountain streams, through terraced vineyards, past old world cathedrals, breathtaking landscapes, and lush pastures. We'll make our way through traditional whitewashed villages, their houses adorned with red roofs and red shutters - all along pathways that were walked on by pilgrims over 1,000 years ago. Why don't you remove yourself from the hustle and bustle of modern life, and join us on this amazing journey?

Main Attractions

- Explore the spectacular Basque Country's coastline, foothills, traditional whitewashed villages and breathtaking landscapes of the Pyrenees, in southwest France and northwest Spain.
- Visit the small town of Zugarramurdi, which contains a large series of caves said to be the home of witchcraft and sorcery during the Spanish Inquisition.
- Discover the Basque village of Sare, cradled in the Pyrenees foothills, and recognized as one of the most beautiful villages in France.
- Hike sections of the GR10 and GR11, 2 of the great long distance footpaths that connect the Atlantic and Mediterranean coast.
- Trace the pilgrim's path to St. Jean Pied de Port, the traditional starting point for the Camino Frances, the most popular of all the Camino de Santiago routes walked on by pilgrims for over 1,000 years.
- Stay in historic and charming accommodations in both Spain and France, and enjoy the rich cultural heritage reflected in the mixture of Spanish and French influences in Basque cuisine.

What's Included:

- 8 days/7 nights, with lodging in twin-bedded, double-occupancy rooms with private baths in fine hotels and family run inns.
- Transportation and all transfers in Spain and France, beginning from, and ending at, the San Sebastián Airport, Spain.
- Fully guided hikes each day with Gillian Arthur, our Italian-based guide.
- All luggage transfers.
- Meals specified in the daily itinerary including 7 breakfasts, 2 lunches, and 5 dinners.
- All gratuities for meals covered in the itinerary.

What's Not Included:

- Round-trip airfare to San Sebastián Airport, Spain.
- Meals not specified in the itinerary.
- All drinks, including alcoholic beverages, wine, and beer.
- A recommended tip to your main guide is \$100 per person, assistant guide is \$50 per person.

Our Professional Guide

Born in England, Gillian lived much of her life in Australia and for the past twenty five years has lived in Italy with her daughter and husband. She has been designing and leading trips in Europe for AdventureWomen for almost 20 years. Gillian's knowledge, her enthusiasm for the great outdoors, and her passion for good food and wine always creates a truly memorable experience on the AdventureWomen trips that she guides. She has recently been awarded the Diploma of Wine from WSET (London). Her expertise in wine on this trip will be truly appreciated! When not researching and guiding tours, Gillian divides her time between Friuli, Italy and Scotland.

Passports and Money

Citizens of the U.S. must possess a valid passport to travel to Spain/France. There is no visa required. If you do not have a passport, **APPLY NOW!** You should always carry two extra photos, just in case of emergency (i.e., if your passport is stolen).

*Credit cards are widely accepted in Spain/France and ATM machines are accessible in many towns (see the next paragraph!). You should bring a few hundred dollars in cash, which you can exchange into Euros, for your spending money and tips. Tips are also accepted in U.S. Dollars.

***Important information about credit cards! Please note:** You should bring **at least one smart card, usually referred to as a chip card, or chip-and-PIN credit card** for travel to Europe and to other overseas destinations. These new cards are more secure and you are more protected from credit card fraud.

These so-called smart cards have embedded microchips in them. You will see the silver or gold microchip on the front of your card. They also have the traditional magnetic stripe, so can be used the same as your regular credit/debit card. You'll either sign for purchases, or enter a 4 digit PIN into a terminal. (Confirm with your bank that your PIN, or 4 digit number, will be the number that you use the FIRST time that a PIN is required for use with your new card. So just make sure you remember it for all future transactions!)

It is best to have your chip card as a VISA or MasterCard, since American Express is often not accepted in many places. In Europe and in parts of Asia, they simply don't acknowledge magnetic-strip cards anymore unless they are chip-and-PIN enabled. In addition, in any automated transactions such as train stations and gas stations, **ONLY** chip-and-PIN cards are accepted.

Chip-and-PIN cards have become standard in many European countries because of their superior fraud-prevention abilities. Now countries in Asia, North America and South America, and Canada are doing the same.

Health Requirements and Physical Condition Required

This AdventureWomen trip is rated as **Moderate with 2 days of High Energy** and requires that you be in very good physical condition, and be able to hike 5 - 8 miles a day. Some of the landscape is quite mountainous. Many of the hikes are on footpaths through the woods or on old stone staircases, while others are on well surfaced roads. Paths are through rolling terrain and can be rough and uneven, so good hiking boots are recommended, as well as a walking stick if you prefer to hike with one. A typical day consists of 3 to 5 hours of leisurely hiking, with stops that include plenty of time for lunch, and exploring villages, cultural, and historical sites. The most you will carry is a small day pack with your rain gear, camera, water, etc.

You MUST have your own health insurance, and not have any physical problems or conditions that would be adversely affected by participating in any of the planned trip activities and the rigors of international travel.

How To Register

First, call (800-804-8686) or email (trips@adventurewomen.com) the AdventureWomen office to determine space availability. As a courtesy, we will hold your space for 5 days while you are completing the registration process, and making personal and travel arrangements.

Next, complete and sign the Trip Registration and International Passenger Information forms on our Web site by clicking "Sign Up for this Trip" on the trip page. We can also fax or email them to you. Include, with your forms, the required deposit that can be made by credit card (Visa, MasterCard, or Discover), personal check, money order, or cashier's check. You can also give us your credit card number over the phone. Once we receive **your deposit and BOTH forms**, we will mail you a trip confirmation/information packet verifying your registration.

Traveling to Spain: Arrival and Departure

We suggest you work with **Ciretta Green at Travel Café (800-247-3538)** in Bozeman, MT to coordinate your flights with our group pick-up and drop-off times at the San Sebastián Airport (EAS), which is located near the town of Hondarribia.

On Sunday, September 24, 2017 you must be at the San Sebastián Airport by 1:30 pm for the group pick up and transfer to your first night's hotel in Hondarribia. It is a tiny airport, so you will meet Gillian in the Arrivals Area. Flights to San Sebastián connect through Madrid or Barcelona.

Gillian will wait until 2:00 pm before the van departs. If your flight is late, you will have to arrange to get to our first night's hotel on your own. It is only a 10--15 minute ride, and will cost approximately 20 Euros.

If you come a day early, you can also easily get a taxi into Hondarribia.

On October 1, you will be transferred back to the San Sebastián Airport by 11 am.

Making Travel Arrangements to Spain

Ciretta Green is at **Travel Café, Montana's Travel Agency**. After booking your trip, please call Ciretta to discuss your air schedule based on the arrival and departure times we have set for the group pick-up and departure.

1-800-247-3538 OR FAX 1-406-586-1959
email: ciretta@travelcafeonline.com
CANADIAN RESIDENTS, please call 406-587-1188

When calling, please identify yourself as an AdventureWomen traveler. If you leave a message on Ciretta's voice mail, she will return your call promptly. She will be happy to discuss your travel plans and help you decide when to purchase your ticket for the best rate. If you purchase your ticket through her, she can also help you with hotels, should you want to come early, stay longer, or share

a hotel room with another participant. If you do not purchase your air ticket through Travel Café, you are responsible for making your own arrangement for hotels, rental cars, trip extensions, transfers, etc.

NOTE: The recent trend in travel is for travelers to finalize their plans much closer to departure time than was customary in the past. While we try to be as flexible as possible booking last minute registrants, we must often relinquish hotel space and air reservations up to 6 – 12 weeks prior to departure!

Please keep this in mind when making your travel plans.

Liability Form and Final Payment

Part of what AdventureWomen, Inc. hopes to foster is the taking of more self-responsibility for our own lives, health, and safety. Please read the LIABILITY FORM carefully, return it with the remainder of your balance due by JUNE 26, 2017.

Cancellations and Refunds

Notification of cancellations must be received in writing. Full payment is due 90 days prior to departure date, and 50% of the registration deposit is non-refundable.

For cancellations received 60-89 days prior to the trip departure date: 50% of the total trip cost is non-refundable. For cancellations received 1-59 days prior to the trip departure date: 100% of the total trip cost is non-refundable.

You are highly encouraged to purchase trip cancellation insurance to cover emergency situations. A brochure will be sent to you in your registration packet.

Switching Trips

Before your final balance due date, you may change your deposit to another trip within the same calendar year by paying a \$75 fee to switch. You may not switch your deposit to a trip in another calendar year.

No Smoking Policy

Beginning in 1995, our trips became smoke free. Please note that there will be no smoking by any participants on AdventureWomen vacations.

Trip Itinerary

DAY 1

Saturday, September 23, 2017

Depart from the United States to Hondarribia, Spain

Meals enroute

DAY 2

Sunday, September 24

Arrival in Hondarribia, Spain

You will rendezvous at the San Sebastián Airport, at 1:30 pm for our group pick up, and be transferred to the medieval, walled town of Hondarribia, located on the border of France and Spain.

This afternoon we head out for a cliff-top walk, with magnificent views of the Bay of Biscay. On a clear day you can see all the way down the coast to San Sebastián. Our trail takes us right down to the sea, where some of you (brave souls) might want to take a dip in the chilly Atlantic!

Hondarribia is one of the most beautiful towns along the coast in the Basque Country, with its brightly painted houses, balconies overflowing with flowers, and a colorful working fishing fleet bobbing in the harbor. Hondarribia (Fuenterrabía in Spanish) is both rich in architecture as well as in gastronomy - a feast for the eyes and also for the stomach. It has a well-preserved old town that is surrounded by a fortified wall, the only one to be found in Guipuzcoa province. The Old Town is a maze of cobblestoned streets, old baroque buildings, and beautiful Basque houses, most having wooden balconies that are painted in a myriad of colors.

We celebrate our first dinner together at one of the best restaurants in town, within walking distance of our hotel.

(3 hour hike)

Dinner

Our hotel for the next two nights is **Hotel Jaizkibel**

Baserritar Etorbidea 1, 20280 Hondarribia (Gipuzkoa) Spain

Tel: +34 943 64 60 40

www.hoteljaizkibel.com

Straddling the French border, the Jaizkibel Hotel is a boutique, four-star hotel, of cutting-edge design, located in Hondarribia-Fuenterrabia, an exclusive coastal enclave on the Txingudi Bay. Just a few minutes from one of the Basque Country's finest golden beaches, it is just a stone's throw from San Sebastián airport, and 20 minutes away from San Sebastián.

DAY 3

Monday, September 25

Coastal Walk with Spectacular Views!

Today we have a short transfer to the beginning of our walk, the first part of the northern route of St. James, which is better known as the Camino de Santiago. This is where many pilgrims started their long journey to Santiago de Compostela. We will probably bump into a few pilgrims along the way!

Taking the scenic coastal path, we pass through typical fishing villages of Lezo, Pasajes de San Juan and Pasajes de San Pedro, with beautiful coastal views, ancient stone bridges, and lush scenery. Finishing our walk close to San Sebastián, we'll take a short transfer into the town, a chic coastal city with stunning architecture and the foodie capital of Spain.

It's impossible to lay eyes on stunning San Sebastián (Basque: Donostia) and not fall madly in love. It's a city filled with Michelin-starred restaurants, not to mention pintxo (tapas) culture almost unmatched anywhere else in Spain, and San Sebastián frequently tops lists of the world's best places to eat. Its Playa de la Concha is the equal of any city beach in Europe.

At the end of the day we shuttle back to our hotel, and you are free tonight for dinner to pick one of Hondarribia's wonderful restaurants.

(4 hour hike)

Breakfast and Lunch

Overnight **Hotel Jaizkibel**

DAY 4

Tuesday, September 26

Hike into the Valle de Bidasoa to Urdax

Today we hike one of Europe's long distance footpaths, the GR11, into the serene Valle de Bidasoa. There are more than one hundred long distance trails in Spain, and like in France, these are called GR (Sendero de Gran Recorrido) and marked with red and white signs. Our trail starts in the picturesque village of Extalar and follows small roads and paths through farms and forests to the top of the ridge where there are panoramic views of the Pyrenees and the dramatic Atlantic coastline.

We then descend through the bracken on a scenic trail all the way downhill to Urdax, which is on the Spanish side of the border. The village is named for the canals and bridges which crisscross the town. Urdazubi means water and bridges in Basque.

Our hotel and base is the Irogienea, a tower house built in the 18th century and situated right beside the river Olabidea. This evening we'll wander into the village for dinner at the Casa Palacial.

(4 hour hike)

Breakfast and Dinner

Our hotel for the next two nights is **Hotel Irigoiena**

Bº Iribere s/n, 31711 Urdax, Spain

Tel: +34 948 59 92 67

<http://www.irigoiena.com>

The Hotel Irigoiena is in Urdazubi/Urdax, land of gentle mountains, close to the sea, alternative route of pilgrims on their way to Santiago and very linked to stories of smugglers, covens, witch-burning and legends. Warm guest rooms, carefully decorated, pleasant spaces that invite you to rest, to read in front of the low fire, and to sit around talking...

Guest quotes: "Historic building beautifully restored with lovely views across a quiet valley. The whole place is beautiful... ."

"One of the most beautiful, tranquil places we have stayed... lovingly restored where even the nails in the old beams are handmade from wood, where the gentle owners are so warm and welcoming and so happy to share their local knowledge with you, where you wake up to the smell of fresh baking and have a gourmet breakfast on the terrace with stunning views in their lush garden."

DAY 5

Wednesday, September 27

Walking the Pilgrim's Trail to the Caves at Zugarramurdi

Urdax lies in the heart of the Enchanted Valley. This region is called Xareta, or the woodland, and it consists of four villages, two on either side of the Spanish/French border. It is also situated right on the famous pilgrim's train, the Camino de Santiago. Pilgrims still stop along the way to visit the monastery of San Salvadore.

We begin our day with a visit to the ancient but still functioning water mill, and the cloister of the Abbey of San Salvador, a favorite spot of Queen Isabella. Our trail takes us through the woods to above the tree line before descending to Zugarramurdi.

This village owes its origin to the Urdax monastery. The original inhabitants worked the land for the monks, and it later became famous for smuggling, before settling into farming and crafts. Many of the houses are at least 400 years old and were inhabited by so-called witches, for which the village is famous.

During the Spanish Inquisition, a wide variety of non-believers and accused heretics were punished, and one of the centers of this persecution was the small town of Zugarramurdi which contains a large series of caves said to be home to all manner of witchcraft and sorcery. After identifying the area to be rife with supposed witches, the Inquisition rounded up the accused and tried them in nearby Logroño in the largest trial of its kind in history. In the end, over 7,000 individual cases were tried, mainly focusing on female accused, although a great deal of men and children were included as well.

The Zugarramurdi Witch Museum takes part in the annual celebration of the summer solstice held in the nearby caves. The town seems to have taken back its identity not by distancing itself from its historic tragedy, but by embracing its legacy, warts and all. After lunch we'll visit the caves before returning to Urdax.

(4 hour hike)

Breakfast and Dinner

Overnight at **Hotel Irigoiena**

DAY 6

Thursday, September 28

Hike the "Blue Pony Trail" to Beautiful Sare

Our destination today is the Basque village of Sare, officially recognized as one of the most beautiful villages in France. It is situated deep in Basque country only about 2 miles from the Spanish border. In fact, Sare residents like to say they can have breakfast in France and lunch in Spain. Cradled in a ring of Pyrenees foothills, the village seems to doze in the shadow of steep, craggy Rhune Mountain. The area surrounding Sare is pastoral with cows and Manech, red-faced sheep, lounging on the green meadows. Wild pottok, which are small and sturdy Basque ponies, graze in the distance.

We pick up our "blue pony trail", which passes the Grottes de Sare and takes us along one of the old smuggler's routes into France, where we cross the border into France and stop for lunch at a venta. Ventas are the places where contraband was exchanged when smuggling was at its height. Today most of them are bars and restaurants, although you can still buy duty-free alcohol and cigarettes here!

We arrive in Sare in the early afternoon when there will be time to relax, explore Sare, or visit the museum (which is dedicated to the regional specialty 'Gateau Basque' a special cake filled with black cherry jam!)

Sare is a major prehistoric site. Though the most ancient traces of human activity in the Basque country date from 200,000 years ago, prehistoric humans stayed in the Caves of Sare from 35,000 to 10,000 BC. The Grottes de Sare are filled with evidence of prehistoric inhabitants. Basque mythology has it that to this day lamiaks, little siren-like creatures, still dwell in the caves!

At the end of the day we transfer to St. Etienne de Baïgorry. The village is named for the rose-colored granite and soil which gives the River Nive a rosy hue when it overflows its banks. We will also see the rose granite used for building farms and houses in the valley.

(5 hour hike)

Breakfast, Lunch and Dinner

Our hotel for the next 3 nights is the **Hotel Arce**

Route Colonel Ispéguy Baïgorry, 64430 Saint-Étienne-de-Baïgorry, France

Tel: +33 5 59 37 40 14

<http://hotel-arce.com/anglais/index.html>

The charming Hotel Arce was a former smuggler's inn beautifully converted to a small hotel. Located at the foot of the Ispéguy pass, this typical Basque style hotel offers an outdoor pool and elegant rooms either overlooking the garden, the river, or the Pyrenees mountains. The setting - by a river in a typical Basque village - is a magical one, best appreciated from the dining terrace, which juts out over the water and is sheltered by a canopy of chestnut trees. Nothing could be more pleasant than a relaxed breakfast by the water's edge.

DAY 7

Friday, September 29

Hike the GR10, the Long Distance Footpath that Connects the Atlantic & Mediterranean Coast

Today we transfer to Bidarray, where we walk on a section of the GR10, the great long distance footpath connecting the Atlantic and Mediterranean coast. Our climb takes us up to 3,000 ft, onto a ridge which is the border between France and Spain. Up here your companions are pottocks, wild horse, sheep and vultures, whose wingspans can measure up to 41/2 feet. We'll have lunch al fresco before descending to St. Etienne di Baïgorry, where the trail brings us down directly behind our hotel.

(5 hour hike)

Breakfast

Overnight at the **Hotel Arce**

DAY 8

Saturday, September 30

Trace the Pilgrim's Path to St. Jean Pied de Port

Like millions of pilgrims before us, today we trace the pilgrim's path to St. Jean Pied de Port. St. Jean Pied de Port is a beautiful bustling French market town in the foothills of the Pyrenees, which creates a natural border between France and Spain. It is the traditional starting point for the Camino Frances, the most popular of all the Camino routes.

The town was so-called because it was the doorway to the Pyrenees, and we will pass through the historic Saint Jacques Gate to enter the town. From here pilgrims left the village by way of the Spanish Gate and then passed into Spain over the Pyrenees. St. Jean is famous for its livestock markets and its sheep cheese, or Brebis. This is also the best place to find a beret, which although adopted by the French, is originally Basque!

In the late afternoon we transfer back to St. Etienne in time for our Farewell Dinner.

(5 hour hike)

Breakfast and Dinner

Overnight at the **Hotel Arce**

DAY 9

Sunday, October 1

Transfer Back to San Sebastián for Departure

This morning you will be transferred back to the San Sebastián Airport by 11 am for departures to the U.S.A. , or other parts of Europe.

Breakfast

What to Bring

September weather in this climate generally has daytime average temperatures in the comfortable 70s, with nighttime temperatures in the 50s. As in all outdoor activities, you must be well prepared for weather changes.

Ideally, you should bring one suitcase or duffel bag, and your daypack should act as your carry on bag. Your carry on bag should contain one change of clothing, your camera equipment, all medications and your important travel documents. **PACK LIGHTLY!**

- **Medium-weight hiking boots:** It is best not to wear shoes, even if they are walking shoes, because ANKLE support is absolutely essential in mountain terrain. Please do not buy heavy leather boots as there are numerous medium-weight quality hiking boots on the market that will better serve your purpose. Asolo, Garmont, Merrell, Vasque - to name a few - are widely available and designed especially for women. Since they are waterproof, Gore-tex

boots, although a bit more expensive, are our first choice. Other boots should be waterproofed with one of the excellent waterproofing products available such as Nikwax. MAKE SURE your boots fit properly and are well broken-in. Wear them around town to thoroughly break them in. Please do not come on this trip with a pair of boots you have never worn before!

- Rain gear: You should be well prepared for whatever conditions occur. Therefore, it is very important to bring a good water PROOF (not just water REPELLENT) rain suit (jacket and pants). A rain parka or poncho will not keep your legs and feet dry, and it is important that your entire body is covered in a downpour. Many outdoor stores carry inexpensive rain suits, but beware of cheap VINYL gear that may tear easily at the seams. Your rain parka can also act as a lightweight wind jacket.
- Socks – it is best to wear 2 pair of socks inside your hiking boots, such as a pair of wool socks, and a thin pair of liner socks underneath the wool socks. We like Thorlo hiking socks and polypropylene liner socks which wick moisture and reduce blistering. Bring plenty of socks!
- Comfortable shoes for the evening in hotels.
- Medium-weight jacket, fleece jacket, or sweater for cool evenings.
- Pants (loose and comfortable for walking) and two pairs of walking shorts (if you like to wear shorts). Zip off pants are often the most versatile.
- Shirts (long- and short-sleeved) and a few T-shirts.
- Underwear, sleepwear.
- Sun hat and sunglasses with securing strap.
- A spare pair of glasses (if you wear glasses).
- Swimsuit.
- Day pack that is water resistant for carrying rain gear, camera, water bottle, etc., on day trips (you can use this for your carry-on bag). If not waterproof, bring a garbage bag to line the inside of the pack.
- Money belt, waist pouch, or a way to carry your money, passport, and airline tickets. You can leave these valuables at the hotels while day hiking.
- One-quart water bottle. We recommend the 24 oz. Nalgene Everyday OTG Tritan Bottle. Made of Eastman Tritan™ copolyester, the bottle is completely BPA-free. Tritan™ copolyester provides excellent impact resistance and is suitable for both warm and cold beverages.
- Regarding Foot Care: To prevent blisters, many hikers use moleskin. However, we recommend bringing a small roll of ordinary duct tape as an alternative. Applied before the hike, it reduces friction much better than moleskin. If you develop a blister, Spenco “2nd Skin” is a very comforting necessity. Your foot care kit should also include: cloth Band-Aids (not plastic), individually wrapped alcohol pads, a small tube of Neosporin or other antibiotic cream, and foot powder.
- Bandanas. Bring 2 or 3 (100% cotton) for instant sweat bands and other uses too numerous to mention, some of which you have never even dreamed! Besides, it’s a tradition at AdventureWomen!
- Swiss Army knife or equivalent (for picnics, opening wine bottles, cutting cheese, etc.). Be sure to pack this in your checked luggage.
- Sunscreen, lip balm with sunscreen.
- Small flashlight with spare batteries and bulb to use if you need to get up at night and don’t want to wake your roommate by turning on the lights.
- Earplugs. We recommend Mack's Pillow Soft White Moldable Silicone Snore Proof Earplugs, which you can buy at most drug stores, or at www.earplugstore.com. Good to 22 decibels!
- Small travel alarm clock.
- Toiletries, prescription medications, and a washcloth (sometimes not provided in Europe).

- Pre-moistened towelettes or baby wipes.
- Hand sanitizer (alcohol based).
- Ziploc bags in various sizes for dirty boots and dirty clothes, etc.
- A collapsible walking stick (to fit into your suitcase) if you prefer to hike with one.
- Book, notebook, pen, lightweight binoculars (optional).
- Electricity: France and Spain's electric current is 220 volts, 2 prong European outlets, so if you are traveling with electrical appliances you will need an international converter. Cameras only need the 2 prong European adaptor.

Camera Equipment

For many women, photography will be a VERY LARGE part of this trip. The opportunities are endless, and the scenery spectacular! We suggest that you bring many more memory cards and batteries than you think you could ever use!

- Digital camera, memory cards, battery chargers. You will be able to charge all of your batteries in hotels.
- Any camera gear you carry during the trip should be in a backpack or in a bag that will leave your hands free. It is also recommended that a tight sealing camera bag be used to protect your camera equipment from moisture, dust, sand and dirt. Large Ziploc bags are especially handy.

Personal First-Aid Kit (bring in small amounts in small containers)

- Foot powder for moisture absorption; cloth, not plastic Band-aids; about 10 individually wrapped alcohol pads; and a small tube of Neosporin or other antibiotic cream.
- Aspirin/ibuprofen, etc.
- Cold-symptom relief tablets, antihistamine, cough drops.
- Tweezers.
- Ace bandage.
- Systemic antibiotic (prescription)/optional (but not a bad idea to always take this on international trips.)
- Prescription medicines in their original bottles.
- Acidophilus enzyme (available in capsules in health-food stores). This often helps your digestive system get in shape for "new" flora.
- Immodium, Lomotil, or similar anti-diarrhea medicine.
- Pepto-Bismol tablets and/or liquid (in leak-proof bottle).
- Laxative tablets.
- Visine or similar eye drops.

Last Minute Reminders

- Make photocopies of your airline tickets and the first two pages of your passport, and put them in different locations (suitcase, carry-on bag, etc.).
- Bring 2-3 extra passport size photos to use in emergencies.
- Your valuables should be insured for the duration of the trip, but better yet, leave them at home.
- Remove extra credit cards, driver's license, and personal items from wallet or purse.
- Make sure passport and airline tickets are valid and in the correct name.
- Check with airline to reconfirm reservations and departure time.

Some Extra Items to Add to your "What to Pack" List

We are always updating and adding items for all international trips. With 35 years of experience flying around the world, we think these items help make your long airline flights much more comfortable and even more bearable:

- Neck pillow - Inflatable neck pillow for blissful support and deep sleep. For packing, it folds into itself. Self-sealing valve means nothing to close. Soft microfleece cover removes for washing.
- Sleep mask /Comfort eye shade - Ultra lightweight and comfortable, the Comfort Eye Shade screens out light and distractions for a cozier flight. Ultra-soft micro fleece for comfort. Adjustable elastic strap for a perfect fit. Made of Molded Polyester Micro Fleece.
- Travel compression socks - Reduce ankle and leg swelling and reduce the risk of deep vein thrombosis. These doctor-designed socks stimulate circulation through gradual compression that stops swelling and guards against (DVT). Made of coolmax®-lycra®-nylon. The TravelSox® cushion Walk Socks have extra-padded soles and are made of moisture wicking SoftPrim®.
- Noise canceling headphones - Block out unwanted sounds of children crying and airplane engine drone, and/or enjoy great audio sound. Reduce distortion and increase perceived loudness so you can enjoy sound at a lower volume. Get the around the ear design, which is very comfortable.

About Adventure Travel Today - Please Read Carefully!

At AdventureWomen, we would like to ensure that all participants understand that our excursions are *adventure travel vacations*, and not "tours." We define "adventure travel" as travel in which one *actively participates*, as opposed to a "tour," in which one is more or less a passive observer. AdventureWomen designs and organizes vacations all over the world for women who want to experience an *active, out of the ordinary vacation, and meet new friends*. Most of all, we want our trips to be fun!

In this spirit, the successful adventure traveler should be a *good-natured realist* and have a *sense of humor!* *Adventure vacations, by nature, require that participants be self-sufficient, flexible, and able to accept situations as they exist*, and not just as they would have preferred or expected them to exist. The constraints of scheduled group traveling also necessitate that each of us be understanding of and sensitive to others. *Being on time is important*, and contributes to the congeniality, success and well being of both individuals and the group!

Thank you for choosing to travel with AdventureWomen! If you have any questions or concerns, please don't hesitate to call, write or email us.

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