

THE **RiIDE** GUIDE TO **SPAIN** & **PORTUGAL**

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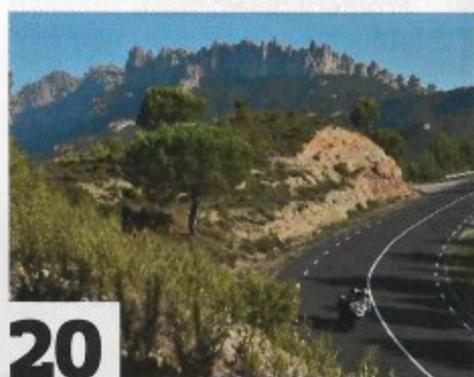
FOR THE RIDE



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14 tours from six days to three weeks as well as four MotoGP trips



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More great travel advice inside every issue

This guide is brought to you by RiDE, which has detailed touring routes each month. Every issue is filled with used-bike buying guides, detailed road tests and inspirational travel stories as well as product news and tests.

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www.greatmagazines.co.uk/RiDE



Welcome



IS THERE A better place to ride a bike than Spain? Well, possibly Portugal... but both countries and their amazing roads are covered by this updated, in-depth guide to touring the Iberian peninsula.

Since our first *Guide to Spain* in 2014 (and Portugal in our *Tour 2016* supplement) we've had so many suggestions for other great roads to ride and places to visit that updating the guide had to be done.

Though Spain and Portugal are a long way from the UK, the riding is so good and the rest of the experience so outstanding that it is always worth going – and with this guide, touring there should be effortless. Enjoy the 2018 *Guide to Spain and Portugal...* and enjoy discovering these amazing countries on your bike.

Simon Weir
RiDE editor

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Free with the September 2018 issue of RiDE

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www.triumphmotorcycles.co.uk

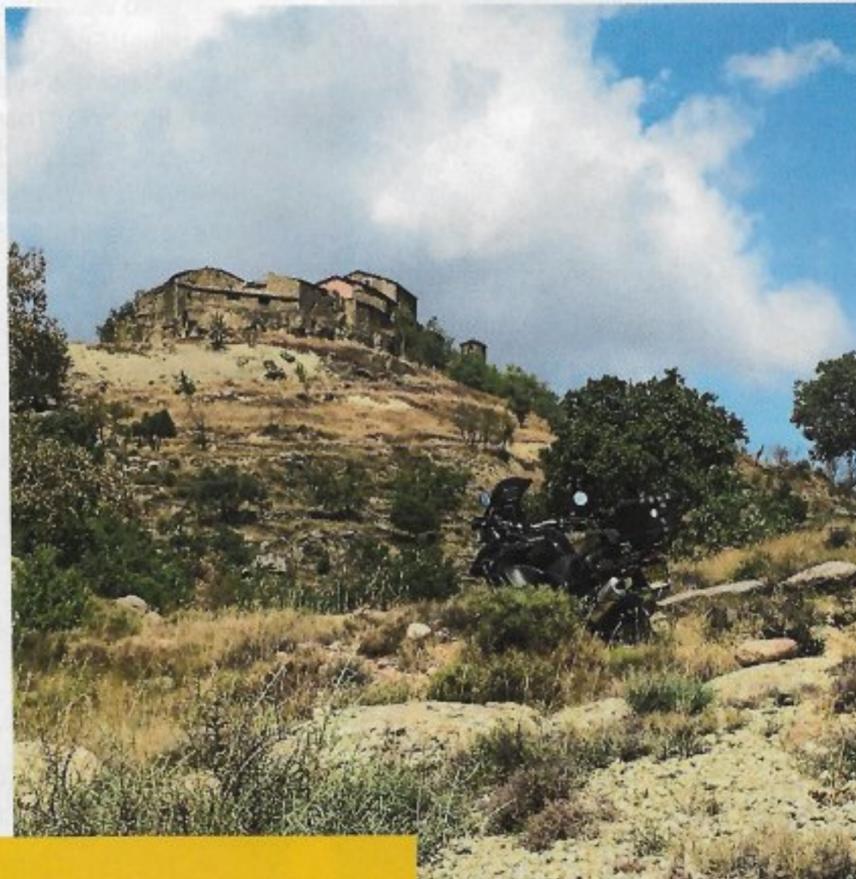
TRIUMPH

YOUR RIDES IN Spain and Portugal

Spain and Portugal are already popular with RiDE readers. Here's where you've already been

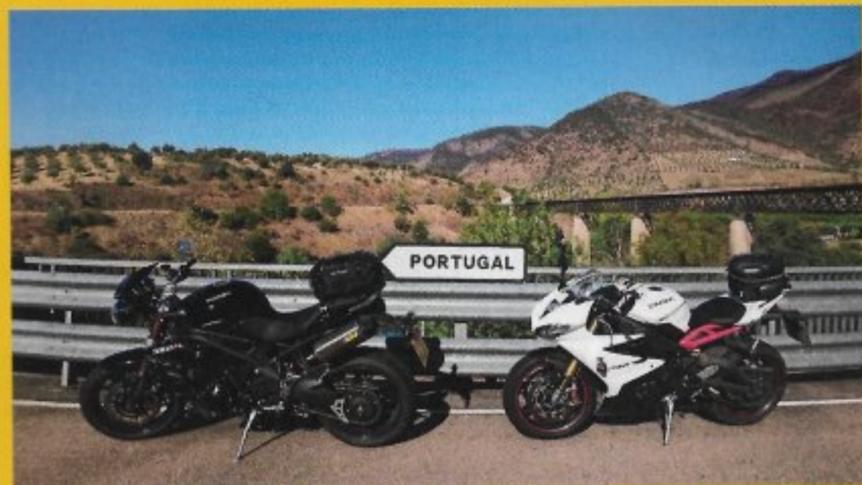


▲ Beautiful morning and superb scenery in the Picos, with a very long, complicated and incredibly quiet route to Portugal ahead of me.
Pete Wolstenholme



◆ I did a 12-day trip from Northern Ireland to the Spanish Pyrenees. I had three off-road days, with this photo taken outside Tremp, Spain. I covered almost 2700 miles by the time I got home. It was an outstanding journey with amazing roads and scenery.
Alex Hildtch

▼ We visited the Picos National Park, the Rioja region and then the Pyrenees – two Johns and two Steves at Frontera del Portalet.
John Fenwick



◆ At the Portuguese Border. Travelling light – wife on her comfy Daytona, me on my 2011 Speedy. Great two-week trip via the Santander ferry – too many bends to mention!
Sel Dixon

▼ My wife Denise in awe of the Griffin Vultures we came across outside Ronda in Spain – absolute biking utopia!
Selwyn Hansford



▼ Heather and me at the MotoGP in Aragon – our first time abroad. Great roads – now to plan for next year.
Adrian Hayes



▲ Here's me and two buddies in the Picos de Europa, part-way through a tour to the MotoGP round at Barcelona.
Paul Scammell





▲ Just had a great week in Spain touring the Picos de Europa mountains and heading west to Cape Finisterre. Me and my 'Old Man' (Bob Webb). **Paul Webb**



▲ Great views from the Port de la Bonaigua on the C-28 traversing the Spanish Pyrenees from Vielha to Esterrri d'Aneu. First big ride after a ten-year lay-off. Loved it so much that we then did a Portsmouth to Santander trip and rode across Spain. **Martyn Ward**

◆ My son Kane and I on a ride through Portugal and Spain – glorious roads and weather. **Pete Calladine**



▲ My brother Reece's bike and mine on our return leg of the RiDE Pyrenees tour. Amazing roads, scenery and people. We departed on June 1 and the roads and hotels were deserted. **Nathan Harrison**

► Inspired by an article in RiDE, I found myself cruising the roads of Northern Spain on my trusty Honda Fireblade. Great expectations turned into a great experience. **Pavel Vebr**



THE ULTIMATE BIKE TRIP

Great weather, amazing roads, fantastic food, spectacular scenery – not to mention the most bike-friendly locals in Europe. Spain and Portugal might just be the best places you'll ever ride

Why tour in Spain or Portugal?

Quite simply, it's the riding. The Iberian peninsula is huge, with every kind of landscape you could imagine – from verdant Galicia on the north-west Atlantic coast to sun-baked Murcia on the Mediterranean. There are towering snow-tipped mountains, vast hot plains, surf-kissed sandy beaches, aromatic vineyards and fascinating towns full of interesting places to visit. And joining it all together is a spectacular network of great biking roads.

There's all kinds of riding – whether you like cruising along two-up or hairing along head-down, whether you



'THE IBERIAN PENINSULA IS HUGE, WITH EVERY KIND OF LANDSCAPE'

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want mountains or coastlines or even unpaved roads, whether you want long days on empty highways or short days with lots of stops, there's something for everyone.

So when should I go?

It's best to avoid the highest summer season: August gets painfully hot and with Europe on holiday, even otherwise-quiet areas get a bit busier. For us, September is the perfect time to visit Spain or Portugal. It's generally hot without being too oppressive, even in the south. With kids back at school and family holidays over, even the popular vacation areas are relatively quiet.

But there is a long riding season. You may have to gamble slightly more with the weather, especially on the North Coast, but if you get a good way south you're far more likely to have a warm, dry ride in early November or late March than practically anywhere else in mainland Europe.

If you're not ready to book a trip for this September, hang on to this magazine and use it to plan next summer's trip. Whenever you go to Spain or Portugal, you won't regret it.

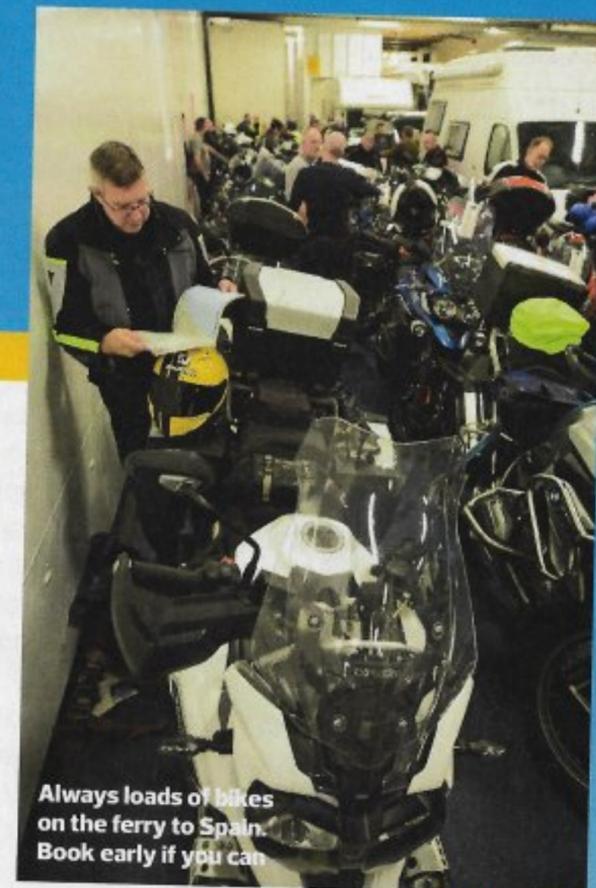
What documents do I need to take?

Just the basics. Your passport and your driving licence, obviously. You should also take a copy of your insurance certificate and the original V5 logbook for the bike. We'd recommend taking a colour copy of this as well, so in case you're stopped the police can keep the copy.

BIKES ON FERRIES

The fastest, easiest and best way to get to Spain is by sea – Brittany Ferries runs services to Bilbao or Santander. When you board, just remember that the deck is metal so don't ride fast. Just stay in first gear, ride as slowly as you can, use your back brake if you have to (not your front brake) and keep looking well ahead for hazards.

The deckhands will direct you to where you should park the bike – usually down a ramp (again, go slowly and use lots of back brake). When you park, leave the bike in gear and roll it forward until the gear stops the bike moving, then put it on the



Always loads of bikes on the ferry to Spain. Book early if you can.

sidestand. The deckhands will put a pad on the seat to protect it, then ratchet the bike down securely for the crossing. You don't have to do anything other than take your kit to your cabin, then head for the bar...

■ For ferry timetables see www.brittany-ferries.co.uk



The EX-103 from Puebla de Alcocer in Extremadura

www.triumphmotorcycles.co.uk

TRIUMPH 

Do I need extra insurance?

We'd strongly recommend a travel insurance policy that includes medical cover – though you will have to shop around to find a policy that covers you for a motorcycle trip.

In theory, until Brexit happens, you should be covered for medical treatment in Spain or Portugal as long as you have a valid European Health Insurance Card (EHIC – the E111 card – free from www.ehic.org.uk). In practice, health cover avoids any issues. As with all insurance, you don't want to need it – but it's best to have it just in case.

Your bike policy will probably cover you for riding in Europe for up to 30 days but always check your policy before going. It's good practice to notify the insurer of the dates when you will be in Europe.

We would recommend getting breakdown insurance but shop around for a policy that includes provision to repatriate both you and the bike to the UK, not just ship it to a local garage for repair work. Always check the fine print to make sure it covers crashes as well as mere mechanical mishaps just in case.

What about money?

We've never had any trouble using credit cards – in places that accept cards. You may find that some smaller restaurants, cafés and shops don't take cards (especially in Portugal, we found), so you will need to take cash for

'YOU CAN OFTEN EAT LUNCH LIKE A KING FOR €10'

lunches and drinks on the road. Petrol stations, most hotels and larger shops aren't normally a problem. In fact, you may find automated fuel pumps that require cards.

How much money will I need?

That's a bit how-long-is-a-piece-of-string... but as a rule, Portugal and Spain are a fair bit cheaper than France or Britain. Petrol is roughly the same but food and drink are often cheaper. You can often eat like a king at lunchtime for €10 with a *menu del dia* (dish of the day) and evening meals are usually good value. Whatever you'd allow for food and drink when touring in the UK, expect to save about a third in Spain or Portugal.

Accommodation can be less expensive than many other European destinations – or of a higher quality for what you'd pay elsewhere – especially if you pre-book. This will help you establish your budget before even setting off,

I've never ridden on the right...

Don't worry: riding bikes in Europe is simple – far easier than driving a right-hand drive car over there. Our top tip sounds stupid: just say to yourself: "Ride on the right" before selecting first gear. The only time most people get confused is when setting off, turning out of the first junction of the day or after filling up: actively telling yourself to ride on the right really can do the trick.

For the rest of it, it's all straightforward – exactly like riding at home. You're unlikely to ever go the wrong way round a roundabout – the entrances and chevron boards will point you in the right direction. Take care on roundabouts in Spain, though: Spanish drivers stay in the outside lane all the way round, even if they want the last exit.



TYRES

This is important: don't set off with worn tyres. The roads in Spain and especially Portugal can be abrasive, accelerating tyre wear. Replacing a worn-out tyre mid-trip is costly and can really spoil the holiday.

So before going, check your tyres. If they're close to half worn, get a set of replacements fitted (save the older ones to refit later). Fit a quality sports touring tyre like the Bridgestone T31 or, for adventure bikes, a dual-sport tyre like the A41.

though it does reduce flexibility – you can't just stop whenever you feel like it; you have to use the hotel you reserved. However, we favour pre-booking in Spain and Portugal because while there are plenty of hotels in the bigger towns, they can be fairly thin on the ground in more rural areas.

Wet weather

If it rains and the roads look shiny and slippery, there's a reason for that: they're shiny and slippery. Exercise extreme caution on wet roads in Iberia. They may be gloriously grippy when warm and dry but many minor Spanish and Portuguese roads can be exceedingly treacherous when wet.

How do I prepare the bike?

If the bike's road legal and mechanically sound, with fresh tyres, then all you need to do is add luggage and get going. You don't need to

THE LAW

The police in Spain and Portugal tend to take a dim view of excessive speeding. On-the-spot fines are stiff, rising to eye-watering. Spain has a zero-tolerance approach to speeding and even 1kph over the limit can theoretically earn a fine – and the Guardia Civil will impound bikes if speeds are too high. Take extra care on rural roads in Spain, as speed limits can change around junctions. Many towns or villages have 30kph or even 20kph limits in the centre.

But don't get paranoid: there are fewer speed cameras than in the UK and they are well signed in advance. We haven't heard of anyone on a British bike receiving a ticket at home for setting one off but

the law does not preclude that. We have also seen speed traps set up a few miles after static cameras and spot-check road blocks in Spain and Portugal (but been waved through in both when the GB sticker was seen).

Traffic lights

Many villages and towns will have a set of flashing amber lights just as you enter the speed limit, with another set of lights – normally on red – a few hundred feet further on. If you're at or below the speed limit when you pass the first lights, the second ones will flash amber as you reach them so you can keep riding. If you're going too fast, they'll stay red.

Radar detectors

In one word: illegal. If police spot one, it will earn you an on-the-spot fine and will be confiscated. Sat navs are allowed to warn you of fixed speed camera locations in Spain: the police understand that knowing there's a camera ahead makes people slow down...

Proud to be British

You must have a GB identifier on the bike. If your registration plate doesn't include one, put a GB sticker on there somewhere – we'd suggest on a pannier. Otherwise, potentially, it's another on-the-spot fine.

Extra specs

In Spain, if you need glasses to ride, you must have a spare pair with you.

■ Check Spanish traffic police "N332" Facebook page for info and advice.

SPANISH SPEED LIMITS

	Town/village	Rural road	Dual carriageway	Motorway
Speed limit	20-50kph	60-100kph	110kph	130kph

Amazing riding – and easy to enjoy. Pack light, be sensible and book the boat

adjust the headlight aim – you should be off the bike before the sun goes down. If it's not mechanically sound, fix it!

What should I pack?

Less than you think. The secret is to travel light: take the essentials but not much more. Wearing lightweight base layers that can be rinsed at the end of the day means you can save shirts to do a couple of evenings each. Shorts and flip-flops (or trainers) are more comfortable off the bike and take up less space than jeans and boots.

You shouldn't need loads of tools or spares for a well-prepped modern bike (though if it's a classic, you'll know what you need). If there's space, it makes sense to take a puncture repair kit, a multitool, half-a-dozen cable ties and some gaffer tape, just in case.

And don't forget your phone charger. Or a European plug adaptor. Or your sunglasses...

Where should I go?

Wherever you like – but that's what this guide is for. We have daytrips all over Iberia, if you want to pick a town for a base and have a few riding days. Alternatively, we have complete tours that move from place to place – with relaxed and high-mile ones to cater to different tastes. Pick the one that appeals.

What about off-road?

There's lots of great off-roading in Spain, but it's not covered in this guide. We'd suggest getting specialist help: start with The Spanish Biker (thespanishbiker.wordpress.com)

Who can I ride with?

If you don't have a group of mates to go with – and you don't fancy going alone – join a guided tour. Not as cheap as organising your own trip but you'll have an expert guide, a new set of riding buddies and a great time.

BOOK IT!

Plan your trip before booking the ferry and call Brittany Ferries, rather than booking online. You can book into partner hotels (listed on www.brittany-ferries.co.uk). Book three or more for a discount on the ferry and hotels.

Alternatively, we used the Casas Cantabras travel agency (www.casas.co.uk). As well as offering deals on ferry-plus-accommodation packages, they provide excellent guides – which you can read on your phone – to help get more from your trip.

Top of your list of touring essentials

www.bridgestone.co.uk/motorcycle-tyres/

BATTLAX SPORT TOURING T31

Our routes

Some great roads to ride wherever you want to go in Spain and Portugal



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FRANCE



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How to use our routes

► All the routes described in this magazine are available as **GPX files** for sat navs, compatible with BMW, Garmin and TomTom devices, from the RIDE website (www.ride.co.uk/Spain18). To preview a route, click on its title. This will open it in **Google Maps** – but please note that if a road is closed (say, by snow in winter or by roadworks) the previews may not show the true route.

To download a route, simply click the "Download the route" link. It will be downloaded as a **Zip file**, which needs to be opened with Stuffit Xpander, WinZip or a similar application (on a Mac, the Disc Utility) to get the **GPX file** you can use.

► If you have a **Garmin** or **BMW** sat nav, we recommend using Garmin's free **Basecamp** software to open the route: go to its File menu and select "import". You need your sat nav connected to the computer, as Basecamp uses its maps. Occasionally, the route will appear as straight lines



– don't panic. Double-click the route to open it and select the "Recalculate" option to make it snap to the roads. Then select "Send to Device" in the top-left corner of the screen to install the route on your sat nav.

► If you have a **TomTom Rider 400** (or a later model), you can drag and drop the route straight onto the unit's **SD card** – it will process the GPX file just fine. If you have an older TomTom, it's worth going to the www.myrouteapp.com website – TomTom's new planning platform – and uploading the GPX file. You can then re-save it to your computer as an **ITN file**, which older TomToms will process happily.

But I don't have a sat nav...

You can still use our website to help you ride the routes. Open the preview links – or download the GPX files and open them in MyRouteApp – to see the roads we use. Then make your



own road book of directions or mark the routes on a map, to make sure you get to enjoy these tours. We'd always suggest taking a map with the routes marked on it, even if you do use a sat nav.

www.triumphmotorcycles.co.uk

TRIUMPH

NORTHERN SPAIN

The North Coast



TRIUMPH 

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An amazing ride through the Picos de Europa can erase all memories of an earlier rainstorm...

THE DRIZZLE FALLING as we get off the ferry thickens to proper rain as we pull out of Santander on the motorway, headed east towards Bilbao. This should be the first pop of the cork, the moment that tells you something good has started... But it's dismal. "It's worse than it was in England," moans snapper Weeble when we stop for lunch after 40 miles.

"Don't worry - we're headed inland," I say.

"Through the Picos? It always rains in the Picos," he cries.

This is patently not true. Sometimes it's sunny in the Picos de Europa. Most of the time, in fact. But these mountains on Spain's northern coast can trap warm, wet air blowing in from the Bay of Biscay, condensing it into clouds that sometimes turns the day grey but the hills green, as the regular rain ensures this is a lush landscape.

Once we get into the hills, the weather does improve. We

head inland on the N-629 - a superbly flowing, twisting bit of road that then scrambles into the clouds themselves. I put the Triumph Explorer's fog lights on. They don't help me see any further but at least they must make me more visible to the five or six vehicles crawling in the opposite direction. I'm down to 30mph as we crest the Los Tornos Pass. "It's majestic when you can see it," I tell Weeble.

Thankfully, this is the end of the weather. Another few miles and the sun starts peeking out shyly from behind white clouds. Dry Tarmac and fantastic bends... This is the kind of riding we've crossed the sea to find. The big Triumph dances through the bends effortlessly - corners coming thick and fast as we join the N-232 and take a short detour up the hairpins of the CL-629. That leads on to Burgos, so we turn back and continue on the serpentine N-232, then peel off to the BU-530 alongside the vast Ebro river, ducking through tunnels and dodging the rocky outcrops that line the road. By the time we reach the hotel, the early rain is forgotten. All we're talking about is the amazing afternoon ride... and what we'll find tomorrow.

Empty roads, spectacular views... this is why we come to the Picos. But in this bit of Spain, it pays to pack waterproofs too



Top of your list of touring essentials
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BATTLAX SPORT TOURING **T31**

Eastern Picos

Even just leaving the ferry port is an excuse for a stunning ride through the Picos mountains



FINDING GREAT RIDING near the ports of Santander and Bilbao is as easy as A,B,C... Asturias, the Basque Country and Cantabria (and La Rioja as well). There are the twin attractions of the coast, with its sleepy fishing villages and golden beaches, and the mountains. The chain of Cantabrian mountains – which includes the Picos de Europa – delivers spectacular scenery, as grey-tipped peaks rise above verdant slopes, with fabulously twisty roads climbing passes and cutting through limestone gorges.

WHERE TO STAY

LAREDO

Midway between Bilbao and Santander is the Cantabrian resort of Laredo – famed for its massive sandy beach. It should be famous for the quality of the riding in the hills around it.

Routes 3, 4 & 5

Hotel tip Hotel Montecristo, <https://hotelmontecristo.es>

POTES

A picturesque stone-built town

nestled in the heart of the Picos, within an easy ride of the Santander ferry. A great base for exploring the mountains, with plenty of hotels and restaurants in its traditional centre.

Routes 1 & 2

Hotel tip Hotel Valdecoro, www.hotelvaldecoro.es

ZARAUTZ

This small Basque beach town attracts hordes of surfers in summer and has a suitably laid-back atmosphere. An easy ride from Santander or Bilbao.

Routes 6, 7 & 8

Hotel tip Hotel Zarautz, www.hotelzarautz.com

OFF THE BIKE

COVADONGA

This tiny village high in the Picos was where the Christian reconquest of Spain began, evicting the Moors. There's a spectacular church and even-more-beautiful lakes.

A real must-visit destination. www.santuariodecovadonga.com

COVALANAS CAVE

Beat the heat with a trip into the cool of this huge, spectacular cave, featuring prehistoric paintings. Tours cost just €3, last 45 minutes and leave once an hour. Short but steep walk from the parking area to the entrance. Best booked in advance.

<http://cuevas.culturadecantabria.com>

FUENTE DÉ

A spectacular cliff-lined bowl at the foot of a peak – with a

MUST-RIDE ROAD

N-621 Potes to Riaño, Puerto de San Glorio

Fabulous views, incredible corners – no wonder it's one of the most popular riding roads in the Picos.

BATTLAX ADVENTURE A41

Satisfy your inner adventure

www.bridgestone.co.uk/motorcycle-tyres/

'FINDING GREAT RIDING NEAR SANTANDER OR BILBAO IS AS EASY AS A, B, C...'

The CL-629 in the Cantabrian mountains. Busy, isn't it?

difference. For €17 you can ride Europe's longest single-span cable car all the way to the top, over a belly-flipping 753m drop... The views are incredible. www.cantur.com

GUERNICA

Immortalised by Picasso's painting, the Basque town of Guernica was savagely bombed in the Spanish Civil War. Now rebuilt, it has become a symbol of reconstruction and peace. Make sure to visit the Biscayan Assembly House. www.gernika-lumo.net

GUGGENHEIM BILBAO

For high culture, the Guggenheim Museum in Bilbao is on another level. The spectacular modernist building sets the tone for the

exhibitions it houses. Admission cost is €10.

www.guggenheim-bilbao.es

LAGUARDIA

This fabulous medieval walled town is perched on a low hill, its towered church visible from miles away. Packed with surprises – from caves to cafés – it's a great daytrip destination. Don't skip the nearby Ysios Bodega.

www.laguardia-alava.com

LOGROÑO

La Rioja is filled with lovely towns, but the capital of the region has the most to see and do. Eat tapas on Calle Laurel and visit the museum. Or splash out on a vineyard tour and wine-tasting (from €38 – plus tax!!)

www.marquesdemurrieta.com



OUR ROUTES

Eastern Picos & Basque Country

1 POTES TRIANGLE

Start/finish Potes
Distance 125 miles
Riding time 4 hours
 One of the most famous rides in the Picos de Europa: Potes to Riaño to Cangas de Onís and back to Potes. Mountain passes, gorges, lakes and amazing views – there's no wonder it's so popular.

2 POTES – COAST AND PASSES

Start/finish Potes
Distance 215 miles
Riding time 6.5 hours
 This longer day's ride reverses some of the roads from the Potes triangle, heading out to the seaside town of Ribadesella for lunch before heading even higher into the Picos mountains.

3 LAREDO LONG LOOP

Start/finish Laredo
Distance 245 miles
Riding time 7.5 hours
 From the beautiful coastal town of Laredo, this long day's ride swoops through the beautiful coastal mountains all the way to the plains – and back again. An epic ride.

4 LAREDO LOOP 2

Start/finish Laredo
Distance 175 miles
Riding time 6 hours
 Think mountain roads aren't pillion-friendly? Think again: this is a full day on wide, well-surfaced roads with spectacular mountain scenery.

5 LAREDO LOOP 3 – WILD CANTABRIA

Start/finish Laredo
Distance 155 miles
Riding time 6 hours
 This one's not really pillion friendly as it uses some challenging single-track roads to unlock some of the wildest, most spectacular areas of the Cantabrian mountains.

6 ZARAUTZ ROUTE 1

Start/finish Zarautz
Distance 155 miles
Riding time 5.5 hours
 The well-wooded slopes of the mountains of the Basque Country are packed with fiendishly twisting roads – and many offer a sea view. This route also passes Guernica, if you want to take time off to visit the peace museum.

7 ZARAUTZ ROUTE 2

Start/finish Zarautz
Distance 145 miles
Riding time 5 hours
 Another route through the spectacular mountains of the Basque Country, taking in Arala park and hugging the foothills of Aizkorri, the highest peak.

8 ZARAUTZ ROUTE 3 – WILD BASQUE COUNTRY

Start/finish Zarautz
Distance 150 miles
Riding time 6 hours
 Throwing single-track roads into the mix opens up some of the wildest and most beautiful scenery in Basque Country.

www.triumphmotorcycles.co.uk



Asturias and Galicia

Moving west from the ports reveals a less well-trodden network of riding roads

THE FURTHER WEST along the Spanish north coast you go, the wilder the scenery becomes. The mountains seem higher, the gorges deeper... and the roads emptier, the villages quieter. The Atlantic winds increase the chances of a shower, even in summer, but they also keep the countryside rich, green and beautiful. So many riders never get this far west, which is a tragedy as some of the finest riding is in Galicia and Asturias.

WHERE TO STAY

LUARCA

A sleepy fishing village curled around its hill-fringed harbour, this is traditional Spain at its least touristy. A perfect base for exploring hilly Asturias.

Routes 11 & 12

Hotel tip Hotel Baltico, www.hotelbaltico.com

MIERES DEL CAMINO

Oviedo's a big city – bustling and cosmopolitan but it still has a nice historic centre. However, for us the towns and villages in the hills outside are quieter and quite a lot more charming.

Routes 9 & 10

Hotel tip Hotel Cenera, www.valledecenera.com

OURENSE

Straddling the line between small city and large town, Ourense has all the facilities that a visiting motorcyclist needs – from hot springs to a Roman bridge, not to mention easy access to some truly mind-blowing roads.

Routes 13 & 14

Hotel tip Hotel Puente Romano, <http://www.hotusa.es/hoteles/espana/ourense/>

PONFERRADA

Technically, this town on the southern edge of the Picos is in Castilla y León – but it's a perfect base for exploring north into the

mountains or south, towards Portugal. It has a fabulous Knights Templar castle too.

Routes 15 & 16

Hotel tip El Castillo, http://www.hotelopia.com/h/hotel-el-castillo_leon_139285/

OFF THE BIKE

ASTORGA

This quiet town sits at the crossroads of two historic routes – the pilgrims way, the Camino de Santiago, and the Roman Ruta de la Plata, the 'Silver Route'. The medieval core is fabulous but it's the Episcopal Palace designed by Gaudi that draws the biggest



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OUR ROUTES

Western Picos & Galicia

9 OVIEDO HILLS – ROUTE 1

Start/finish Mieres del Camino

Distance 175 miles

Riding time 5.5 hours

Our route starts just inland from the city of Oviedo, writhing through the mountains on some of the quietest and most beautiful roads in the Picos, including the Ventana and San Isidro passes.

10 OVIEDO HILLS – ROUTE 2

Start/finish Mieres del Camino

Distance 175 miles

Riding time 5.5 hours

An alternative route through the stunning mountains inland from Oviedo, over the Somiedo and Pajares passes.

11 LUARCA LOOP 1

Start/finish Luarca

Distance 160 miles

Riding time 5 hours

The phrase “flowing corners” gets bandied about a lot. The bends on this route don’t so

much flow as flood through the mountains in a traffic-free torrent of brilliant riding.

12 LUARCA LOOP 2

Start/finish Luarca

Distance 195 miles

Riding time 5.5 hours

This route starts with 20 minutes of motorway to save time (easily skipped by staying on the N-634 from Luarca) before powering through the mountains on another succession of amazing roads.

13 OURENSE ROUTE 1

Start/finish Ourense

Distance 170 miles

Riding time 4.5 hours

Wide, flowing roads – with one or two narrower stretches – cut an unforgettable path through quiet, scenic hills. Even the main N-120 doesn’t do traffic like a British trunk road.

14 OURENSE ROUTE 2

Start/finish Ourense

Distance 215 miles

Riding time 6 hours
More memorable riding on the broad, flowing roads through the quiet hills around Ourense. They’re big on views and corners and light on traffic in this part of the world.

15 PONFERRADA TO PORTUGAL

Start/finish Ponferrada

Distance 240 miles

Riding time 7 hours

Staggering riding – mile after incredibly twisty mile of quiet

roads with vast views, cutting over the border to Portugal before returning to Ponferrada.

16 PONFERRADA TO PICOS

Start/finish Ponferrada

Distance 190 miles

Riding time 6 hours

Ponferrada lies nestled at the foot of the Picos de Europa range – and the roads that climb into the highlands to the north of the city offer some truly astonishing riding.



crowds. Visits are €5 or €8 for a guided tour.

www.palaciodegaudi.es

CAPE FINISTERRE

Not actually the most westerly point in Europe (or even in Spain, for that matter), Finisterre has nonetheless been part of the pilgrimage route for centuries. It’s a beautiful place and a great daytrip destination.

www.concellofisterria.com

CIDER

You can’t go to Asturias and not sample the local cider – but you must get a local to pour it for you.

It’s tipped from above head height, to land in the glass that is held at waist height... Better still, go the whole hog and treat yourself to a visit to a *sidreria* (cider house) with a slap-up meal. And a taxi home... www.tierra-astur.com

PONTEVEDRA

Back in the day, Christopher Columbus set sail on his first voyage in a ship built here. It’s a large town, with a well-preserved historic centre that repays exploring – the circular pilgrim church is a proper must-see. www.turismo.gal

SAMOS

A small town with a huge monastery – still home to a community of Benedictine monks. A popular stop on the Camino, but also well worth a visit for touring bikers. www.abadiadesamos.com

SANTIAGO DE COMPOSTELA

The Camino de Santiago is the pilgrimage route that draws Christians to the huge cathedral with the shrine to St James. Even if you’re not a believer, the cathedral is a must-see. <http://catedraldesantiago.es>

MUST-RIDE ROAD

AS-14 Puerto de Palo

Every inch is fantastic, from the moment it turns off the almost-as-epic AS-15 to Grandas de Salime 35 miles later. A sublime road.

The CL-626 around the Barrios de Luna reservoir on the way to the Picos de Europa mountains

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OTHER ROUTES ON THE North Coast

17 REINOSA ROUTE

Start/finish Reinosa
Distance 175 miles
Riding time 5 hours
 Reinosa's a short, easy ride from Santander (you can even take the motorway if you want). It's surrounded by absolutely glorious mountains stuffed with beautiful lakes – all on this laid-back day's ride.

18 VINTAGE RIOJA

Start/finish Logroño
Distance 140 miles
Riding time 4 hours
 Perfect road surfaces, sweeping bends, majestic views – the riding in La Rioja is intoxicatingly good. Just take it steady with the local grape juice before heading out on this ride!

19 BILBAO BACKROADS

Start/finish Laudio
Distance 170 miles
Riding time 5.5 hours
 Rather than staying in the city, we'd base ourselves in the hills

outside Bilbao – ready to romp off on the brilliant roads that head inland from the Basque port. With commercial traffic on the motorways, these mountain roads are virtually empty.

20 TO THE LIGHTHOUSE

Start/finish Vilalba
Distance 215 miles
Riding time 6.5 hours
 From the historic town of Vilalba, out to the north coast and the amazing sea views at the Cabo Ortegal lighthouse. Mostly wide, smooth roads but with some tight single-track ones on Cape Ortegal to keep you awake.

21 SANTIAGO SEAS

Start/finish Santiago de Compostela
Distance 185 miles
Riding time 6 hours
 Some amazingly twisty roads from Santiago to Cap Finisterre and Cap Touriñán (Spain's most westerly point) and then north to Malpica on the Costa Morte.

'THESE MOUNTAIN ROADS REALLY ARE VIRTUALLY EMPTY'

Every road in the Picos has the potential to be the best you have ever ridden



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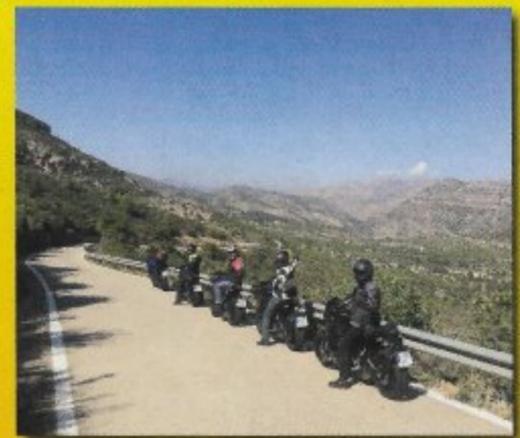


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The North East

There's more to see here than just the Pyrenees... so much more

OUR FAR-FROM CIRCULAR lap of the Iberian peninsula brings us into Catalonia from the south. By this time, we've become almost blasé about the sight of another immaculate ribbon of traffic-free tarmac stretching out in front of us.

That doesn't last long when we get to Catalonia. We take the N-240 and C-128 to Flix and pick up some of the most scenic roads of the entire trip – the T-703 and 702 to Margalef and the beautiful but crazily twisty T-713 ("I'm getting dizzy," moans Weeble when we stop). Just when I think the riding can't get any better, we turn onto the road that has it all – the C-242. It's utterly spectacular, with bends tight enough for me without being too fiddly for Weeble, set in the widest-screen landscape so far today.

At the top of the Albarca pass we turn off onto the T-700. This is another corner-heavy road, rising to Prades and then heading out into the woods. "It's almost like the Black Forest when the trees close in," notes Weeble. Our plan is to shoot the very twistiest section... But we find the road closed by a policeman and a guy with a radio. "We're testing a rally car. It'll be ten minutes," they explain. Sure enough, a World Rally Car arrives, yanks the handbrake to turn, then disappears again. When we ride down the road, there's rubber tracing his lines through half the corners and stones scattered over the rest. No pics here, then...

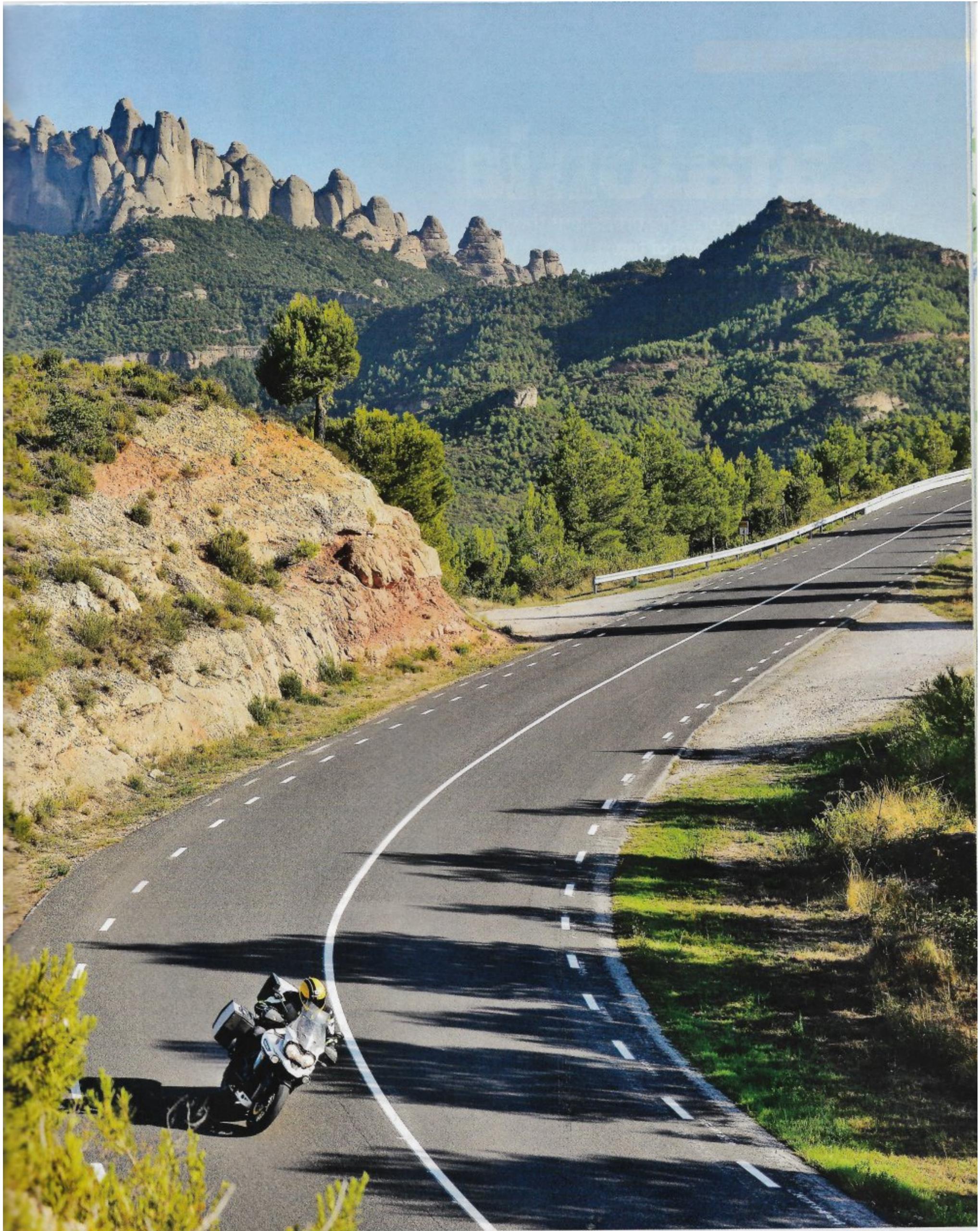
So we press on to Montserrat, which isn't quite as close as I'd thought. The cross-country C-241 is pleasant enough, but it has a weak hand in the scenery stakes after what we've already ridden through. At Igualada we jump on the motorway for a couple of junctions, then head up and around the rock massif of Montserrat. It's beautiful – the maddest scenery of the day. It's also brilliant to ride. Despite being so close to bustling Barcelona, the roads are pretty much deserted. It's as close to heaven as I can imagine getting. No wonder they built a monastery here.

Sadly, it's a long way from our overnight stop. We drop down to Manresa and pick up the C-25 which hurries into the Pyrenees. Tomorrow, it's mountains...

The BP-1101, with the Montserrat massif in the background. As close to heaven as you can get on two wheels

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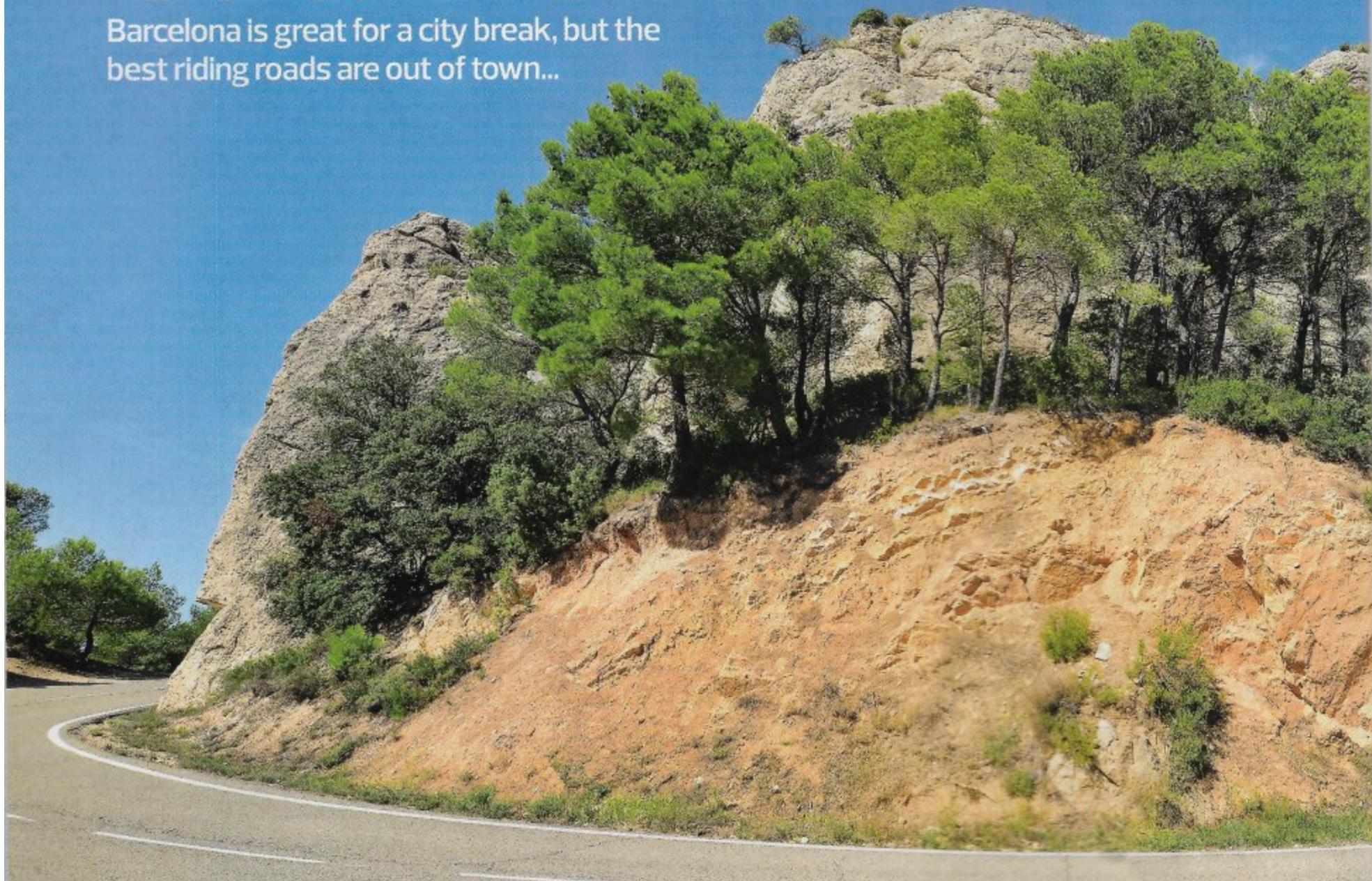


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TRIUMPH 

Catalonia

Barcelona is great for a city break, but the best riding roads are out of town...



THERE'S SO MUCH more to Catalonia than just Barcelona. This huge and prosperous province extends from the Pyrenees down to the mouth of the Ebro river – and in between is a land rich in landscapes. Mountains, plains, rolling hills, forests, farmland and ancient towns... Catalonia has it all. It feels different to other parts of Spain, busier in places – which makes the miles of empty, curling tarmac all the more rewarding.

WHERE TO STAY

COLERA

Colera nestles on the coast, where the Pyrenees meet the sea. Quieter than bustling Tossa, it's an ideal base for biking with a bit of a beach break thrown in. *Route 26*
Hotel tip Hotel Totsompops, www.totsompops.com

REUS

Tarragona's a fascinating city – it makes a great base. Reus, just a

few miles inland, has less to do off the bike but is better value and is even closer to some of the best roads in all of Spain. Both are brilliant but we've based our two routes around Reus. *Routes 27 & 28*
Hotel tip Brea's Hotel, www.breashotel.es

TERRASSA

Like all huge cities, Barcelona's ringed by satellite towns and suburbs where you get more for your money. Terrassa's handy both for getting into the city, if you want to explore it, and for getting out into the hills. *Routes 22 & 23*
Hotel tip Don Candido, www.hoteldoncandido.com

TOSSA DE MAR

Halfway between Barcelona and the French border is the fabulous seaside resort of Tossa de Mar. Yes, it's a touristy place... which

makes it perfect for bike tourists. Especially with the array of amazing roads around it. *Route 25*
Hotel tip Hotel Windsor, www.hotelwindortossa.es

OFF THE BIKE

BARCELONA

The capital of Catalonia is packed with culture. There's an efficient public transport system if you want to enjoy the nightlife, too. From Gaudi's Sagrada Familia cathedral and other mad buildings and Güell Park, to the Las Ramblas promenade or the

MUST-RIDE ROAD

BP-1103 Montserrat

Hugging the foot of the mountain, joining the equally scenic BP-1101 – a brilliant riding road in a landscape like a sci-fi movie set: out of this world.

TRIUMPH 

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Catalonia has so many amazing roads – this is the C-242 outside Tarragona



museums in Montjuïc (get there on the cable car), there's something for everyone. www.barcelonaturisme.com

DALI

Salvador Dali was born in the Catalan town of Figueres – and he designed the museum here dedicated to his life and work. Well worth a visit (tickets are €14). You can also visit his house in nearby Cadaqués (€11). www.salvador-dali.org

LLEIDA

Dominated by its huge cathedral, set in the walls of an ancient fortress, Lleida's a fascinating small city packed with monuments. As well as the La Suda cathedral, be sure to visit

the Templar Castle of Gardeny while you're there. www.turismedelleida.cat

MONTSERRAT

Perched on the side of a mountain like the setting for a *Game of Thrones* siege, the Abbey of Montserrat – still home to monks – is truly impressive. You can ride up to it or arrive in style by cable car... www.abadiamontserrat.cat

ROSES

This small seaside town is packed with history – from megaliths to fortresses. It's also home to three-Michelin-starred El Bulli, one of the best restaurants in the world: don't turn up in bike gear... www.visit.roses.cat



OUR ROUTES

Catalonia

22 MONTSERRAT MAJOR

Start/finish Terrassa

Distance 170 miles

Riding time 6 hours

Loosely based on routes for bike launches, this ride takes in the majestic Montserrat massif before rushing off on quieter, twistier roads.

23 MONTSERRAT MINOR

Start/finish Terrassa

Distance 150 miles

Riding time 5 hours

Running in the other direction, this alternative loop throws in a few different roads before climaxing with the run up the majestic Montserrat range.

24 WEST OF BARCELONA

Start/finish Castelldefels

Distance 155 miles

Riding time 5 hours

This route starts with broad, smooth roads in the morning, but things get narrower in the afternoon, before crossing Sitges to return on the coast road. A crazy corner count.

25 WHO GIVES A... TOSSA DE MAR

Start/finish Tossa de Mar

Distance 160 miles

Riding time 5.5 hours

Another route that combines madly twisty coastal roads with the insane inland mountain roads of Catalonia. Measure it not in miles per hour but corners per hour.

26 COLERA

Start/finish Colera

Distance 200 miles

Riding time 6.5 hours

Biking surf 'n' turf: from the coast to the peaks. This full day in the saddle takes the incredibly twisty N-260 over the border to France, hugging the coast to the tourist favourite Collioure, before piling into the Pyrenees.

27 REUS ROUTE 1

Start/finish Reus

Distance 160 miles

Riding time 5 hours

Even in a country packed with amazing riding, the roads around Reus are something else. So many corners you could get dizzy? Maybe...

28 REUS ROUTE 2

Start/finish Reus

Distance 220 miles

Riding time 7 hours

An alternative route, with even more astonishingly twisty roads. Most are broad, some are narrow, all are beautifully surfaced. A long day's ride.



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BATTLAX ADVENTURE A41

The Pyrenees

When it comes to mountain roads and border-hopping, the Pyrenees have it all

YOU MIGHT JUST have the ride of your life in the Pyrenees. They have everything – from swooping, rolling hill-country roads to towering passes with hairpins and huge vistas, not to mention tiny roads and hidden villages. The most famous road is the N-260, running the length of the mountains and delivering a fabulous ride – but there's so much more to discover. You could spend the next ten years exploring the Pyrenees and never have a dull ride.

WHERE TO STAY

AINSA

This quiet town in the central Pyrenees really is at the heart of this great riding area. Whichever way you go, there's a great road. Routes 31, 32 & 33

Hotel tip Mesón de l'Ainsa, <http://mesonainsa.com>

PAMPLONA

There's much more to the beautiful city of Pamplona than the annual festival that sees the running of the bulls. It's packed with character and history – and

it's the perfect base for exploring. Routes 29 & 30

Hotel tip Pamplona Catedral, www.pamplonacatedralhotel.com

RIPOLL

This Catalan ski town might just be the ultimate Pyrenean base. There's a wide selection of hotels, the town centre bustles with life and it's ideal for exploring both the Spanish and French sides of the mountains. Routes 34, 35, 36 & 37

Hotel tip La Trobada, <http://latrobadahotel.com>

OFF THE BIKE

BARDENAS REALES

Not so much off the bike as off the tarmac. This is Spain's northern desert (where desert scenes for *Game of Thrones* were filmed). It's 42,500 wildly beautiful hectares. www.bardenasreales.es

CASTLES

Plenty of impressive fortifications to visit. The fabulous Javier and Loarre castles are on our two-castle route (route 40) but the most impressive is the fairy-tale spec Royal Palace of Olite. www.turismo.navarra.es

GORGES

Between Pamplona and Jaca are two gorgeous gorges: Foz de Lumbier and Foz de Arbayún.

Great views... or pack walking shoes to explore properly. www.turismo.navarra.es

ISABENA RALLY

A light-hearted organised rally – mostly on the road, with a little light off-roading on simple tracks. It's based around a bike-friendly camp site (also has chalets). The Rally is on September 1-2; the campsite's good all year round. www.isabena.eu/en

SAN JUAN DE LA PEÑA

In the hills south of Jaca is a monastery built into a cliff. San Juan de la Peña's as impressive as it is bizarre – well worth a visit. www.monasteriosanjuan.com

SOS DEL REY CATÓLICO

A well-preserved walled town with a 12th century castle, Gothic

The N-260 is the most famous road in the Spanish Pyrenees... for a reason. It's utterly brilliant

MUST-RIDE ROAD

C-28 Sort to Vielha

Climbing high into the mountains, towards France, it's two lanes of perfect tarmac with the finest hairpins and best views in the Pyrenees.

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palace and impressive church. Like stepping back in history. www.sosdelreycatolico.com

TORRECIUDAD

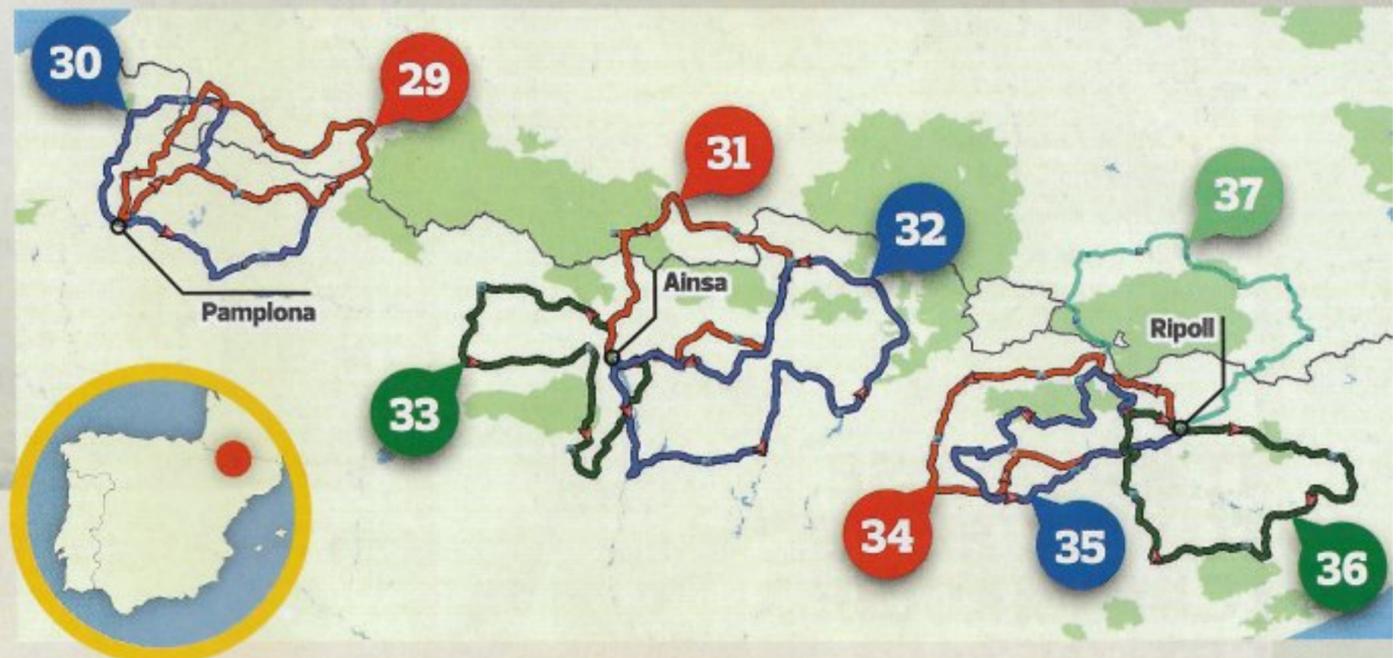
Perched on a hilltop with a spectacular view to the south of Ainsa, Torreciudad is a religious centre that even the secular can appreciate. www.torreciudad.org

ZARAGOZA

Okay, not so much in the mountains as in the plains below them, but Aragon's largest city has a spectacular cathedral and the biggest Moorish site outside Andalusia, the Aljaferia palace. www.zaragoza.es



The spectacular BV-4241 — ride it on Ripoll Route 1



OUR ROUTES

The Pyrenees

29 PAMPLONA TO FRANCE

Start/finish Pamplona
Distance 195 miles
Riding time 6 hours
 From Pamplona into the Pyrenees, across the epic Col de la Pierre St Martin, riding along the quiet, twisty French side of the mountains to St-Jean-Pied-de-Port, then back on the even twistier Col de Garzela.

30 BASQUE PYRENEES

Start/finish Pamplona
Distance 175 miles
Riding time 5.5 hours
 Never mind France or Spain, this route's Basque all the way... regardless of the national flags. It's a full day of glorious gorges and passes, mostly on the Spanish side of the mountains, with a short detour to the French side — but ask the locals and it's all one country.

31 AINSA ROUTE 1

Start/finish Ainsa
Distance 165 miles
Riding time 5 hours
 A relaxed taste of high-mountain riding (including the impressive Vielha and Aragnouet tunnels) looping into France before returning to Ainsa.

32 AINSA ROUTE 2

Start/finish Ainsa
Distance 235 miles
Riding time 6 hours
 A longer day in the saddle, sweeping through the foothills of the Pyrenees before climbing into the peaks with mile after mile of amazing riding.

33 AINSA ROUTE 3

Start/finish Ainsa
Distance 190 miles
Riding time 6 hours
 A mix of broad, smooth roads and narrow, bumpy, fiendishly

twisty ones through the majestically untamed mountains. Ideal for adventure bikes, not so suitable for pillions.

34 RIPOLL ROUTE 1

Start/finish Ripoll
Distance 170 miles
Riding time 5 hours
 Some of the twistiest roads you'll ever ride — wide, well-surfaced and guaranteed to put a smile on your face. Spectacular views are just a part of the package.

35 RIPOLL ROUTE 2

Start/finish Ripoll
Distance 190 mile
Riding time 6 hours
 Got a taste for the mountains? Try this longer ride that takes in even twistier, occasionally narrower roads. If you like corners, the GI-402 might just blow your mind.

36 RIPOLL ROUTE 3

Start/finish Ripoll
Distance 195 miles
Riding time 6 hours
 How many bends do you want to ride on one trip? This full-day's ride skirts the cities of Girona and Vic, stringing together another seemingly endless succession of madly twisty roads.

37 RIPOLL ROUTE 4 — FRENCH ADVENTURE

Start/finish Ripoll
Distance 220 miles
Riding time 7 hours
 A seriously challenging day in the saddle, crossing the border to ride the narrow, often bumpy passes and gorges of the French Pyrenees — including the awesome Col de Pailhères. Great for adventure bikes, tough on passengers though.

OTHER ROUTES IN North-East Spain

38 SORT-ED

Start/finish Sort
Distance 220 miles
Riding time 6 hours

This route has everything: fast sweepers; tight hairpins; quiet roads; epic views... For a shorter version, stay on the C-13 from Tremp to La Pobla de Segur.

39 JACA ALL TRADES

Start/finish Jaca
Distance 205 miles
Riding time 6 hours

Some spectacular roads (and

one rough one, for a few miles outside Ansó) on both sides of the mountains. The route can be shortened on the motorway to Jaca from Sabiñánigo.

40 TWO-CASTLE LOOP

Start/finish Sos del Rey Católico
Distance 170 miles
Riding time 4.5 hours

From the beautifully preserved medieval town of Sos del Rey Católico, it's a short ride to Javier Castle. A longer run gets you to

Loarre Castle. There are plenty of narrow roads to ride, so don't spend too long prowling the battlements before getting back on the bike.

41 BARDENAS REALES

Start/finish Tauste
Distance 125 miles
Riding time 5.5 hours

Half of this route is on unpaved roads through the Bardenas Reales desert – ideal for adventure bikes; not recommended for road bikes

(though it has been done). It returns to tarmac to head to a lunch stop, so take your own water and stop/drink regularly while riding in the Bardenas.

42 IGUALADA – DONE

Start/finish Igualada
Distance 165 miles
Riding time 5 hours

A laid-back ride from the foothills of the Montserrat massif to the foothills of the Pyrenees. Lovely flowing roads with hardly a trace of traffic.

'IT'S AS CLOSE TO HEAVEN AS I CAN IMAGINE GETTING'



The climb to the Montserrat monastery

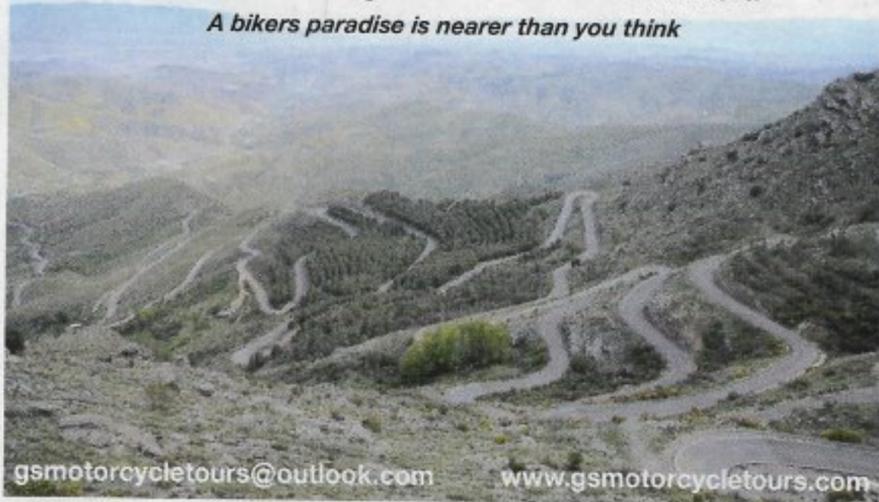
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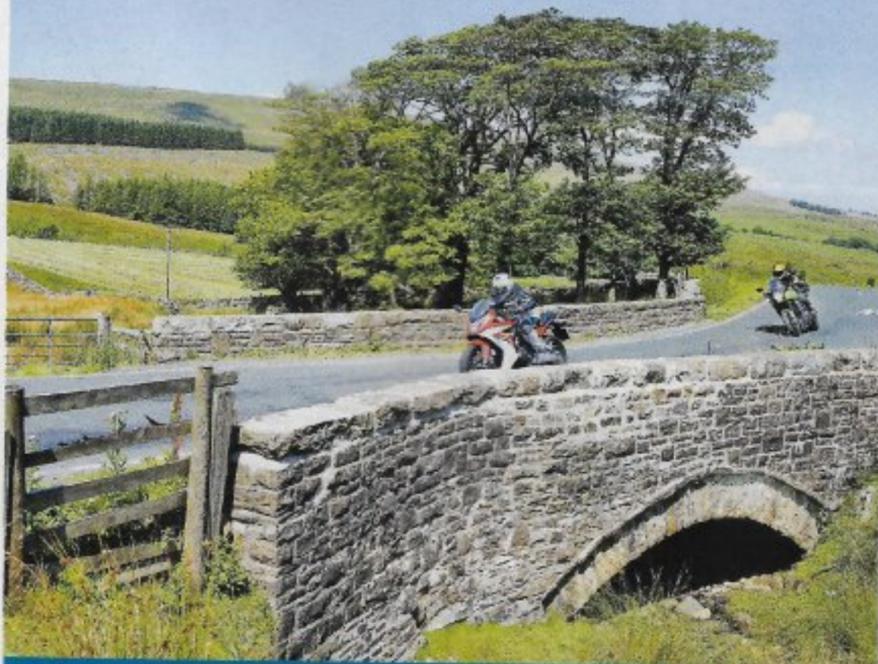
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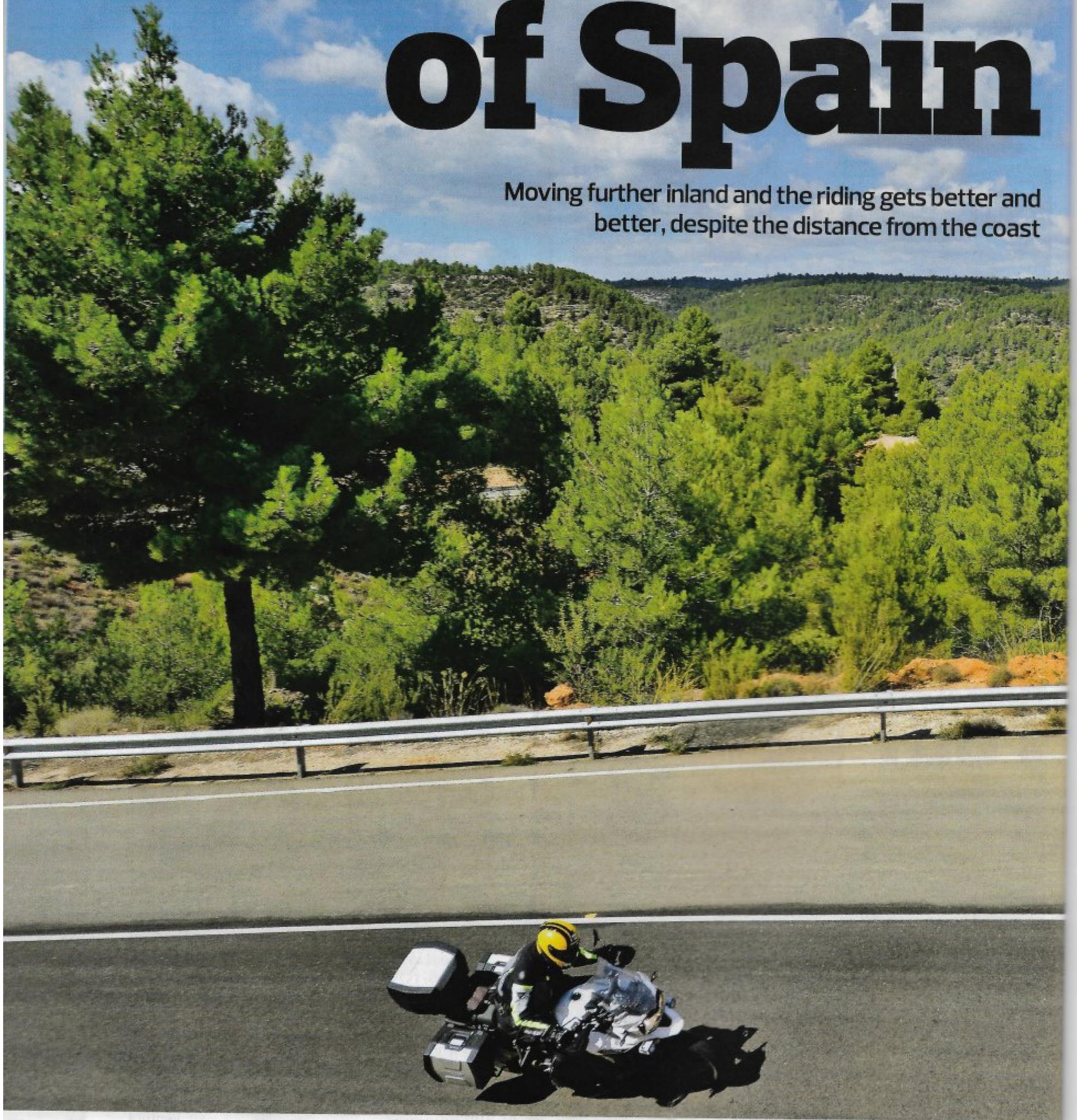
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CENTRAL SPAIN

The heart of Spain

Moving further inland and the riding gets better and better, despite the distance from the coast



TRIUMPH 

www.triumphmotorcycles.co.uk

I EXPECT THE CV-580 to be a decent road, as it was recommended by one of Triumph's test riders. The first few miles are good – and then it gets better... It climbs like a rocket, leaving a twisting trail of Tarmac up the steep sides of the hills. Then it roars across a scrubby plateau, deserted straights linked by just enough corners. But then, as the River Xuquer comes into view, the road starts to descend again.

There are two massive understatements in the previous sentence: first, it's no mere river that appears – it's a vast gorge, its towering rocky ramparts flecked green here and there by hardy trees, the river almost lost in the shadows at the bottom. Second, the CV-580 does not merely 'descend'. This isn't going down a flight of stairs. This is the stuff of legend. It runs out along the edge of the abyss, folding into a hairpin before carving its way downwards in steady traverses that echo the sinuous shape of the river far below. Another hairpin and then it's falling in broad arcs

cut into the cliffs. It gets to water level as it slices through the village of Millares, before it climbs to Dos Aguas, where we stop for a drink and try to decide if it's as great a ride as France's Gorge du Verdon: I say yes, Weeble's not so sure.

We can't argue the toss for too long, though: we have a long way to go today and it's all on proper roads. From Dos Aguas we carry on along the CV-580 (still awesome) to pick up the CV-425 and the N-330. This is another one of those utterly brilliant Spanish roads that manages to pack fantastic riding into a supremely useful bit of road planning as it runs more-or-less straight between Teruel at its northern end and Almansa in the south... Except, it's anything but straight with plenty of elevation changes too.

Then at Manzaneruela we detour onto the N330a: a gem of a road with a perfect surface and every corner you could want, packed into five fabulous miles. "This might just be the best road of the trip," says Weeble. "When we've finished taking pictures, can we just ride it again?"

The N330a: If those corners look inviting, remember that the whole road's as good as this. Central Spain can be brilliant

**'THIS MIGHT JUST
BE THE BEST ROAD
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BATTLAX ADVENTURE A41

The staggering CV-580: gorge-ous
 Right: Rehydrating In Dos Aguas
 Far right: The truly awesome N330a

East of Madrid

Wide-open spaces and shady sierras – where the ride of your life is just around the next corner

THE CENTRE OF Spain's a conundrum. It would be easy to dismiss it as flat and dusty and dull... Easy – and totally wrong. There are large expanses of sun-baked plains traversed by arrow-straight highways, but there are also successive chains of hills where fragrant pine forests shade twisty roads and deep gorges provide spectacular views. The heart of Spain's a land of contradictions: big cities and tiny villages, Roman bridges beside modern motorways. It's easy to rush south on the boring roads, but it's so much better to get off them.

WHERE TO STAY

ALBARRACIN

One of the best-preserved villages in Spain: Albarracín. Explore the steep, narrow streets and soak up the atmosphere.
 Route 45

Hotel tip Hotel Dona Blanca, www.albarracindonablanca.com

CUENCA

Surrounded by high hills, Cuenca's a gem. Explore the old town and visit the hanging houses, clinging to the cliffs.
 Routes 46 & 47

Hotel tip Hotel Torremangana, www.hotelorremangana.com

SORIA

The compact city of Soria is a charming slice of old-school Spain – with a fabulous main square, narrow streets and unspoilt atmosphere – surrounded by modern suburbs with all the amenities the visiting biker needs.

Routes 43 & 44

Hotel tip: Parador de Soria, www.parador.es

VALENCIA

It's a massive city, but a fascinating one – and best enjoyed when it's not MotoGP weekend. From the central market to the modern "city of arts and sciences" to museums to the nightlife, it's a fabulous place to visit.

Routes 48 & 49

Hotel tip Hotel Vista al Sol, <https://hotelvistaalsol.com>

OFF THE BIKE

ALCAÑIZ

The nearest town to the Motorland Aragon GP circuit, Alcañiz is dominated by the huge castle frowning down from the hill above the town. Try the local delicacy sausages and cakes while you're there.

www.alcaniz.es

ARES DEL MAESTRE

One of the most dramatic villages imaginable, on a spur of a mountain with a towering flat peak rising above it.

www.turismoruralcastellon.com

BELMONTE

Huge and well-preserved castle is a treat to tour at any time. On September 22-23 it's hosting a medieval combat championship...
<http://castillodebelmonte.com>

MOLINOS CRYSTAL CAVES

It can get hot in central Spain but it's always cool in the caves. These ones are dripping with spectacular crystals. Entry is €7.
www.grutasdecristal.com

MORELLA

One of our favourite towns in

MUST-RIDE ROAD

CV-580 Dos Aguas to Bicorp

There are so many brilliant roads but this long, beautiful gorge-road south of Valencia is truly mind-blowing.

BATTLAX SPORT TOURING T31

Top of your list of touring essentials
www.bridgestone.co.uk/motorcycle-tyres/

Spain and a great base (see route 59), it's a fascinating historic gem of a place, still encircled by walls to this day and crowned with a massive castle.

www.morellaturistica.com

SAGUNTO

History has left its mark on Sagunto — Hannibal kicked the Romans out on his way to Italy, El Cid temporarily evicted the Moors and even Napoleon had a crack at it. Lots to see and do, but the castle's the star.

www.aytosagunto.es

SANTO DOMINGO DE SILOS

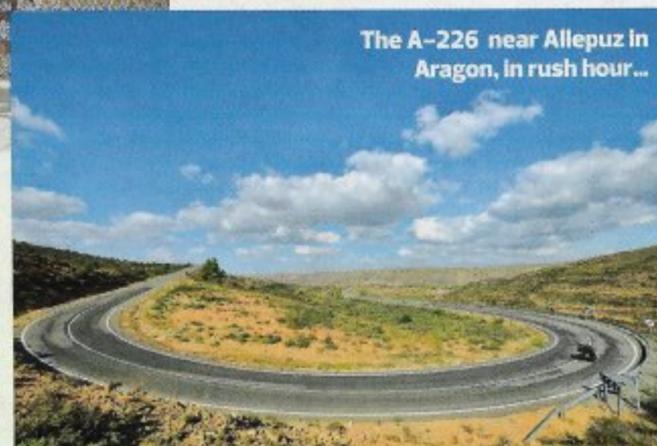
This village's cemetery may look familiar: Sergio Leone filmed the climax of *The Good, The Bad and the Ugly* here. Ironic, as it's a beautiful, well-preserved place and a huge abbey.

www.turismocastillayleon.com

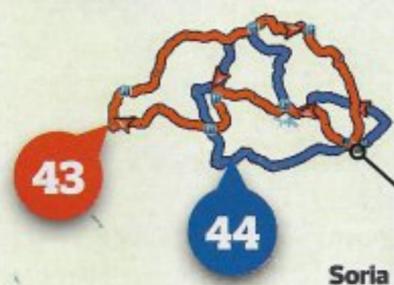
SIGÜENZA

A fabulous historic town with a spectacular cathedral and well-preserved castle (now a particularly luxurious Parador).

www.siguenza.es



The A-226 near Allepuz in Aragon, in rush hour...



MADRID



OUR ROUTES

East of Madrid

43 SORIA LAKES

Start/finish Soria

Distance 190 miles

Riding time 5.5 hours

This route runs from the sleepy little city of Soria through woods and past a number of lakes to Santo Domingo de Silos. It's a real mix of riding with everything from broad, straight roads to narrow hairpins.

44 SORIA – MORE DEMANDA

Start/finish Soria

Distance 170 miles

Riding time 5.5 hours

Another run up into the beautiful Sierra de la Demanda — using some more demanding roads as well as the mostly broad, smooth ones. An ideal

run for adventure bikes, with some spectacular views.

45 RAH-SIN, NOT RACIN'

Start/finish Albarracín

Distance 165 miles

Riding time 5 hours

One of the more popular routes in our original *Guide to Spain* was this ride around the city of Teruel — now adjusted to run from the charmingly authentic town of Albarracín, with some extra recommended roads engineered in to make the ride even better.

46 CUENCA LOOP 1

Start/finish Cuenca

Distance 210 miles

Riding time 6.5 hours

Cuenca is an absolute gem: it's a small city that is packed with history. Better still, it's surrounded by amazing roads. This route — which has been developed from another popular ride in the 2014 guide — swoops out through the Serranía de Cuenca national park and the rolling foothills beyond.

47 CUENCA LOOP 2

Start/finish Cuenca

Distance 210 miles

Riding time 6.5 hours

With so many great roads in the Serranía de Cuenca, one route isn't enough... This one uses many of the "you should have ridden..." suggestions we received after the first guide was published.

48 VALENCIA ROUTE 1

Start/finish Valencia

Distance 210 miles

Riding time 6.5 hours

There's some truly staggering riding to be found in the hills inland from Valencia. This first route uses mostly broad, flowing roads that curl across the rugged hillsides, between olive and orange groves.

49 VALENCIA ROUTE 2

Start/finish Valencia

Distance 170 miles

Riding time 6 hours

This alternative route through the wild hills inland from Valencia includes some of the more challenging single-lane roads as well as the broader, faster and more flowing ones.

www.triumphmotorcycles.co.uk

TRIUMPH

West of Madrid

Heading towards Portugal, the scenery changes but the riding stays awesome

THE PLAINS OF Castile & Leon can seem to stretch on forever... but in fact they soon give way to more entertaining roads as successive chains of hills and low mountains arc west from the north of Madrid, through Extremadura to the Portuguese border. The riding here can be truly exceptional – whether you want broad, fast, sweeping roads or tighter, more challenging ones. And as for culture, you're truly spoilt for choice.

WHERE TO STAY

CIUDAD RODRIGO

Have dinner in the main square of this small, friendly walled town. It is unspoilt Spain at its finest.
Routes 54 & 55

Hotel tip Parador de Ciudad Rodrigo, www.parador.es

EL BARCO DE ÁVILA

Sleepy town on the north-west edge of the Sierra de Gredos and ideal for exploring the hills of Extremadura.

Routes 56 & 57

Hotel tip Hotel Mirador de Gredos, www.hotelmiradordegredos.com

GUADALUPE

A fabulous town surrounded by astonishing roads – but worth exploring off the bike as well, especially the huge monastery.
Routes 52 & 53

Hotel tip Parador de Guadalupe, www.parador.es

SEGOVIA

Spoilt for choice for things to see in Segovia, from the aqueduct to the Alcázar. A fabulous place to explore – and if you must go into Madrid, stay here and take the train in to town.

Routes 50 & 51

Hotel tip Hotel Eurostars Convento Capuchinos, www.eurostarshotels.com

OFF THE BIKE

ÁVILA

If you want a walled city, you've come to the right place. A fabulously preserved old town with lots to see.

www.avilaturismo.com

CÁCARES

The old town's called *Ciudad Monumental*... tells you all you need to know. Fascinating, well-preserved and beautiful.
www.turismoextremadura.com

CASTLES

Lots of fantastic castles to visit. Start with Coca, Mombeltán and Manzanares el Real... but most major towns will have a historic fort somewhere nearby.

MÉRIDA

Forget Italy... if you want Roman history, come to Mérida. There's a huge bridge, an aqueduct, not one but two theatres, a chariot-racing track and more... Just a stunning place to explore.
<http://turismomerida.org>

SALAMANCA

Think you've seen an impressive main square? Not until you've been to Salamanca. Plenty more to see in the historic core of this busy city, too.
www.salamanca.es

SAN LORENZO DE EL ESCORIAL

A small town with a gigantic monastery – like Hogwarts, only bigger. Beautiful and fascinating in equal measure.
<https://el-escorial.com>

TOLEDO

So much to see in Toledo – from the Moorish Alcázar to the Christian cathedral and the white synagogue, not to mention the

MUST-RIDE ROAD

N-502 Ávila to Espiel

This is a thrilling road climbing over the Sierra de Gredos at Puerto del Pico and delivering thrills all the way from Avila to Andalusia.



TRIUMPH 

www.triumphmotorcycles.co.uk

**'THE RIDING HERE
CAN BE TRULY
EXCEPTIONAL'**

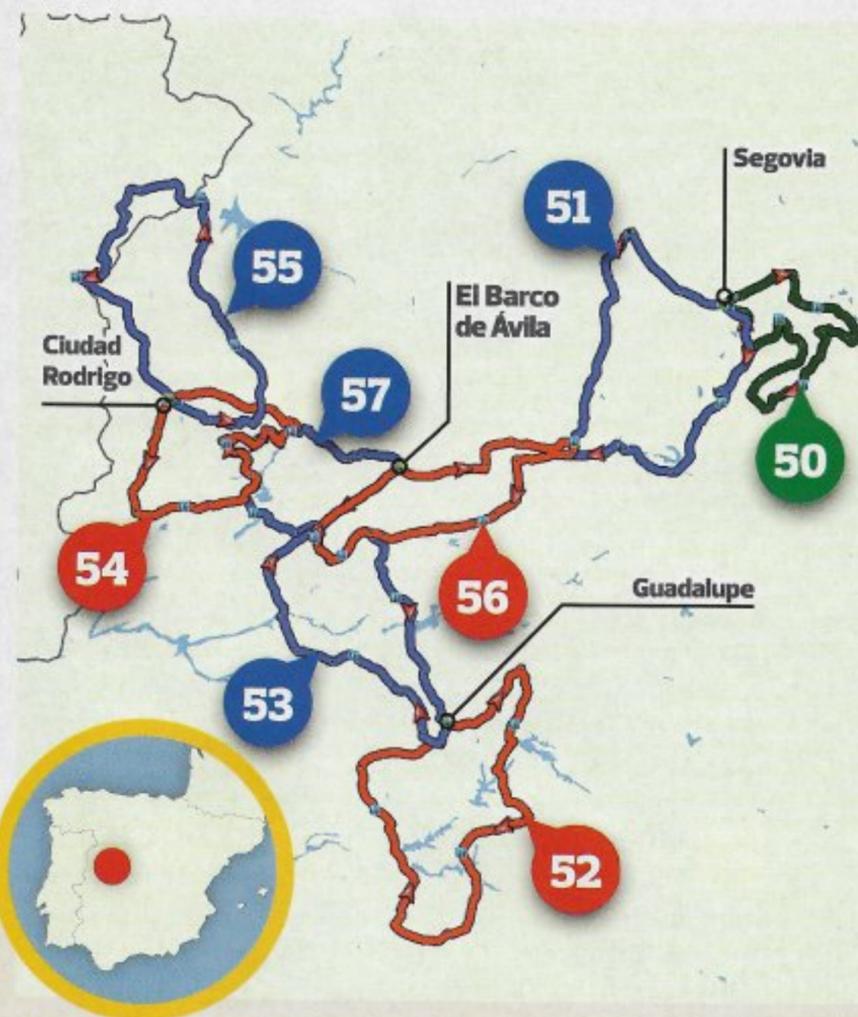


walls, the bridges, the sword makers... Fabulous place.
www.turismo.toledo.es

VALLEY OF THE FALLEN

A sombre memorial to the dead of the Spanish Civil War, and also features the world's largest free-standing cross.
www.valledeloscaidos.es

Coca Castle – just one of Spain's historic gems
Above: Segovia aqueduct
Top: The EX-322 at the La Serena reservoir



OUR ROUTES

West of Madrid

50 SEGOVIA FORESTS

Start/finish Segovia
Distance 175 miles
Riding time 6 hours

This loop from the historic city of Segovia heads out through the nearby hills, climaxing with the climb through the thickly forested Sierra de Guadarrama.

51 SEGOVIA SIGHTSEEING

Start/finish Segovia
Distance 200 miles
Riding time 5.5 hours
A full day with lots to see – from the Valley of the Fallen and the huge Hogwarts-like monastery at San Lorenzo de El Escorial to Coca castle. And that's without detouring into historic Ávila...

52 GUADALUPE LAKES

Start/finish Guadalupe
Distance 226 miles
Riding time 6 hours
There's only one word to describe the riding around Guadalupe: extraordinary. Stringing together scenic lakes, this route has a few straight stretches to give you a break from the madly twisty roads.

53 GUADALUPE TO GREDOS

Start/finish Guadalupe
Distance 200 miles
Riding time 6 hours
It's a cliché to call Spanish roads "perfectly surfaced" or "traffic-free". But that's the only way to describe the roads on this ride from Guadalupe to the Sierra de Gredos.

54 EXTREME-MADURA

Start/finish Ciudad Rodrigo
Distance 175 miles
Riding time 5.5 hours
Ciudad Rodrigo's a strong candidate for our favourite stop on our photoshoot trip: a lovely main square, great restaurants, non-touristy. Real Spain. Better still, it's the ideal jumping-off point for one of our favourite rides, through the wild hills of Extremadura. Sublime roads and beautiful scenery.

55 A TASTE OF DOURO

Start/finish Ciudad Rodrigo
Distance 210 miles
Riding time 6 hours

This route heads into Extremadura's Sierra de Francia mountain range, then dashes across the plains to ride the fabulous, twisty road that traces the course of the Douro River on the Portuguese side of the border.

56 SIERRA DE GREDOS

Start/finish El Barco de Ávila
Distance 195 miles
Riding time 6 hours
This sublime day's riding takes in the beautifully flowing roads along the north and south sides of the rugged Sierra de Gredos, crossing the mountains at the epic Puerto del Pico.

57 EXTRA EXTREMADURA

Start/finish El Barco de Ávila
Distance 170 miles
Riding time 6 hours
Want to ride the Extreme-madura route from Ciudad Rodrigo and the Sierra de Gredos route from El Barco de Ávila? Easy: this version of the Extreme-Madura route runs from El Barco de Ávila...

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OTHER ROUTES IN Central Spain

58 TOO GORGE-OUS

Start/finish Jalance

Distance 180 miles

Riding time 5.5 hours

This route links two of our favourite roads – the CV-580 and CM-3201. One clings to the cliffs of a spectacular gorge, the other leaps across one in a cascade of hairpins. A better day on a bike is hard to imagine.

59 MORELLA, CHERRY PICKED

Start/finish Morella

Distance 220 miles

Riding time 6.5 hours

Morella's a fantastic historic walled town. The only catch: the garage is a walk from the hotel. This day's ride swoops through an astonishing landscape, visiting other fascinating towns.

60 ZOOM-MORE-AH!

Start/finish Zamora

Distance 245 miles

Riding time 7 hours

The plains of Castile & León are mostly flat and are mostly crossed by straight roads. Ah, but if you head towards Portugal from the historic city of Zamora you can find plenty of brilliant bends to enjoy.

61 KEEP IT REAL

Start/finish Ciudad Real

Distance 210 miles

Riding time 6 hours

The Cabañeros hills are crossed by some madly twisty roads – the best of which are used in this flowing, rewarding ride. Note that there aren't many towns or villages here – it's just unspoilt nature – so it's a late lunch stop.

'THE HEART OF SPAIN IS A LAND OF BIG CITIES AND TINY VILLAGES'

El Portillo, on the SA-201 in Extremadura

62 GUADALAJARA

Start/finish Guadalajara

Distance 195 miles

Riding time 5 hours

On the north-east fringes of Madrid is the smart town of Guadalajara. This relaxed route flows out through the surrounding hills and past the Castillo del Cid at Jadraque.

63 TOLEDO

Start/finish Toledo

Distance 215 miles

Riding time 6 hours

Sitting on a bend in a river on the plains south of Madrid, historic Toledo is surrounded by some pretty flat, straight roads – great for a relaxed pillion ride. Especially as they eventually lead to some hillier areas with better, twistier roads...



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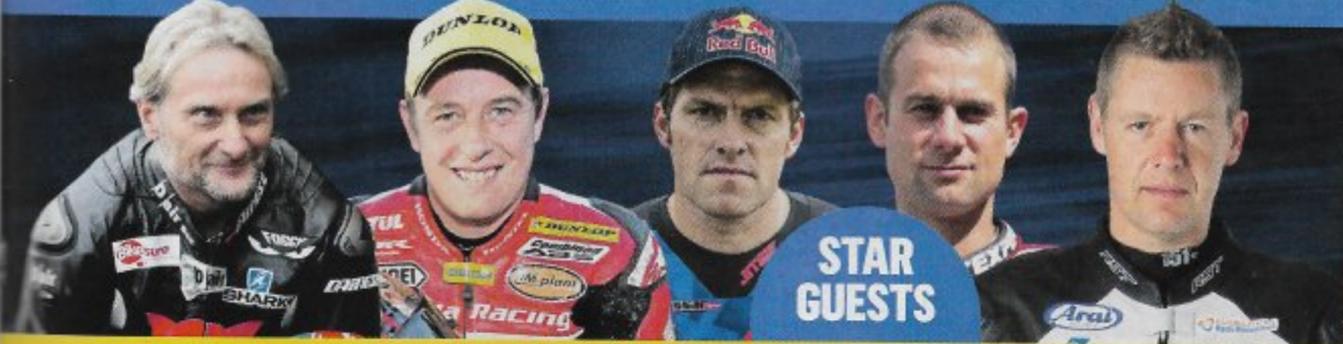
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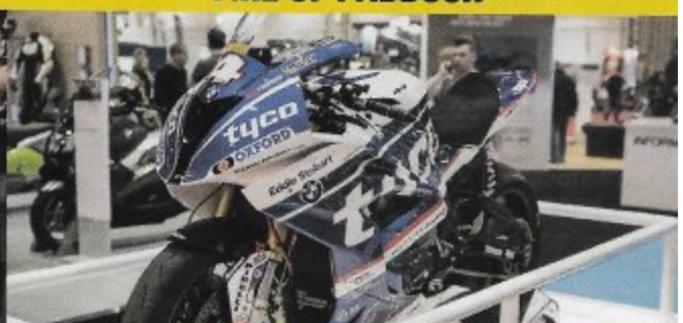
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The South

The sun-baked heart of Moorish Spain is a land of mind-blowing riding for the touring motorcyclist

FOR WHAT SEEM like good reasons at the time, we set off early – in theory to research a recommended road I haven't ridden. Except within two corners of turning onto the A-4152, I recognise it from the launch of the first Triumph Tiger Explorer in 2013. It's a great road – twisty with massive views out across the countryside, though this early in the morning

Vroom with a view: the absolutely staggering A-4025 on the shoulder of the Sierra Nevada, outside Granada in Andalusia

much of the land is still in deep shadow; the contrast when the low sun hits blindingly into my eyes is almost painful.

The road climbs up and over a low pass, the Puerto de los Alazores, before joining the bigger but bumpier A-341 to Loja. It's a good ride, but too short: at Loja we jump on the A92 motorway. There's a heap of brilliant riding between Colmenar and Granada, but we're skipping it to spend as much time in the Sierra Nevada as possible.

In fact, we're barely scratching the surface of the mountains outside Granada on this trip – but we are doing two roads in detail. First on the list is the broad A-395, the main road up the mountain. It hits 3000m at the top,



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making it Europe's highest road... But the top 400m are closed to all but authorised vehicles going to the observatory and the top bit's apparently not paved.

Anyway, the 2000-odd vertical meters you can ride are plenty – 20 steep miles packed with tight turns to keep you on your toes, broad sweepers and sharply inclined straights to work the engine... and, today, a Guardia Civil car to keep us honest. There is a little traffic but it's hardly busy (not on a Tuesday). About half the cars seem shrouded in disruptive wraps, being tested by the factories.

We stop for a coffee at the top, then descend on the – for my money – even better A-4025. It has even tighter

bends, even bigger views and even less traffic. It's simply staggering – a near-perfect mountain road baking in beautiful Mediterranean sunshine.

We turn off it just before it rejoins the A-395 (halfway up the mountain) to take an insanely narrow, twisty, steep back-road to Güéjar Sierra. It's a shortcut to the broad GR-320 above the Rio Genil reservoir and then the GR-3201 – and this is an utterly unmissable road. It has everything, from tight uphill hairpins to fourth-gear sweepers, long straights to chicane-like direction changes. That's southern Spain in a nutshell: amazing but diverse roads and perfect weather. It's biking Nirvana.



www.triumphmotorcycles.co.uk

TRIUMPH 

Granada and Murcia

The bottom corner of Spain has a perfect combination of coast and mountains

WHERE DOES THE south of Spain begin? At the border between Castilla-La Mancha and Andalusia? We've included some of La Mancha in our 'south' as there's a laid-back attitude, a dry heat and a rugged, dusty beauty that transcends the political boundaries of the Spanish provinces. This is a land once ruled by the Moors, the Romans... the Carthaginians. History and geography make it perfect for touring.

WHERE TO STAY

CARBONERAS

Nestled on the south-east corner of Spain is this seaside resort. Plenty of restaurants for the evening, sandy beach for off the bike... and amazing riding. Routes 71 & 72

Hotel tip El Trebol Hotel.
<http://hoteleltrebol.es>

GRANADA

So much to see in Granada. It's a huge city but the old town and the Alhambra are the key attractions. For riding it's better to stay on the edge; for sightseeing, you need a central hotel (or some taxis).

Routes 64 & 65

Hotel tip Hotel Macia Real de la Alhambra.
www.maciarealalhambra.com

RIÓPAR

This sleepy town on the edge of the Sierra de Segura is surrounded by some truly astonishing roads.

Routes 68, 69 & 70

Hotel tip El Cortijo Puente Faco.
www.cortijopuentefaco.es

ROQUETAS DE MAR

Rather than the big city of Almería, why not stay in a proper holiday resort? Roquetas is a charming seaside town with an amazing beach.

Routes 66 & 67

Hotel tip Don Angel.
www.hoteldonangel.com

OFF THE BIKE

THE ALCAZABA OF ALMERIA

Never mind the Alhambra, Almería's Moorish castle is every bit as impressive and half as busy. Lots of walking though: don't try it in bike boots...

www.turismodealmeria.org

THE ALHAMBRA

Not to be done on a whim, or in bike kit. Book ahead, for a morning or afternoon visit, which includes a time slot for entering the Navacelles Palace. It's worth taking a day off the bike for this.

www.alhambra.org

BEACHES

Southern Spain and beaches go together like ice-cream and flakes. For a quality day off, head to Cabo de Gata – an unspoilt coast of beautiful beaches.

www.cabogataspain.com

CAVERNS

In the hills above Alicante is the huge Canelobre Cave, filled with spectacular rock formations. Smaller but no less impressive are the caves of Sorbas.

<https://turismobusot.com>
www.cuevasdesorbas.com

COWBOYS

In the heyday of the spaghetti westerns, the Tabernas desert stood in for the American West. Two film sets are now theme parks. Not suitable for doing in kit and expensive, but memorable.

<http://fortbravoofficial.com>
www.oasysparquetematico.com

ROMANS

It may be named after Rome's enemy Carthage, but there's more trace of the conquering Italians in Cartagena today, with a spectacular amphitheatre.

www.teatroromanocartagena.org

MUST-RIDE ROAD

AL-3102 Tabernas to Tíjola, Alto de Velefique
Makes many 'great' Alpine passes look a bit tame. Imagine Stelvio with a better surface, better bends, better views and none of the traffic.

TRIUMPH 

www.triumphmotorcycles.co.uk

OUR ROUTES

South-eastern Spain

64 GRANDA AND THE SIERRA NEVADA

Start/finish Granada

Distance 190 miles

Riding time 6 hours

This route really builds up – from the foothills of the Sierra Nevada, over the Ragua Pass, then finally climbing the spectacular roads to the summit (or as close as you can go). A stunning day's ride.

65 WILD SIERRA

Start/finish Granada

Distance 205 miles

Riding time 6.5 hours

As well as sharing some of the broad, smooth, fast roads with the main Sierra Nevada route, this longer and more-challenging ride mixes in some stretches of tighter, narrower (and bumpier) roads through a very wild landscape. Suits adventure bikes.

66 ROQUETAS ROUTE 1

Start/finish Roquetas de Mar

Distance 160 miles

Riding time 6.5 hours

From the seaside resort to Roquetas, this route swoops inland over some of the craziest, twistiest roads we know: absolutely staggering. NB: don't panic if the Garmin

maps haven't caught up with which roads are paved and which ones aren't...

67 ROQUETAS ROUTE 2

Start/finish Roquetas de Mar

Distance 165 miles

Riding time 6.5 hours

While it shares some of the roads with the main Roquetas route, this variation uses more of the single-track roads that criss-cross the wild, isolated hills. Brilliant riding but a fair bit more demanding than the alternative route.

68 RIÓPAR ROUTE 1 – DEVILISHLY GOOD

Start/finish Riópar

Distance 160 miles

Riding time 4.5 hours

This route through the isolated hills of Castilla takes its name from two viewpoints (Miradors) it passes: del Diablo and del Infierno. But rather than being hell on wheels, this devilishly fun ride is definitely our idea of heaven.

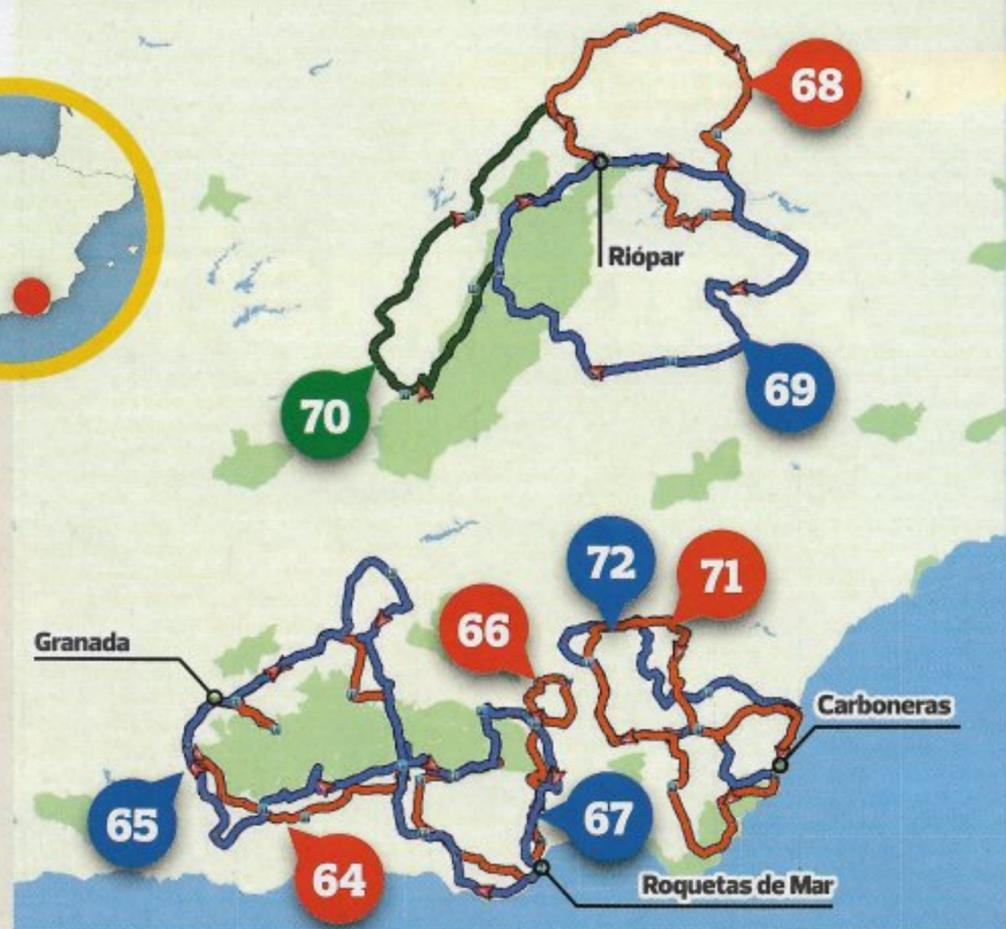
69 RIÓPAR ROUTE 2

Start/finish Riópar

Distance 190 miles

Riding time 6 hours

Our first *Guide to Spain* had a route based at Villanueva del



Arzobispo, purely to let us ride the highlight road of this route: the A-317. Recommendations from RIDE readers have fine-tuned it to produce this mind-blowing ride.

70 RIÓPAR ROUTE 3 – WARREN'S GAME

Start/finish Riópar

Distance 170 miles

Riding time 5.5 hours

The core of this route was shared with us by reader Warren Edwards. Combining his route with ours and some other recommended roads prompted us to shift our base of operations from Villanueva to Riópar. This route combines his favourite road with the others from our original route. Nice work, Warren.

71 SEA TO SKY

Start/finish Carboneras

Distance 190 miles

Riding time 6.5 hours

From the coastal resort of Carboneras, to the hairpin-heaven of Alto de Velefique (think Stelvio Pass without the traffic), this route features a lot of roads that have been used for bike launches. Broad and fast, narrow and challenging.

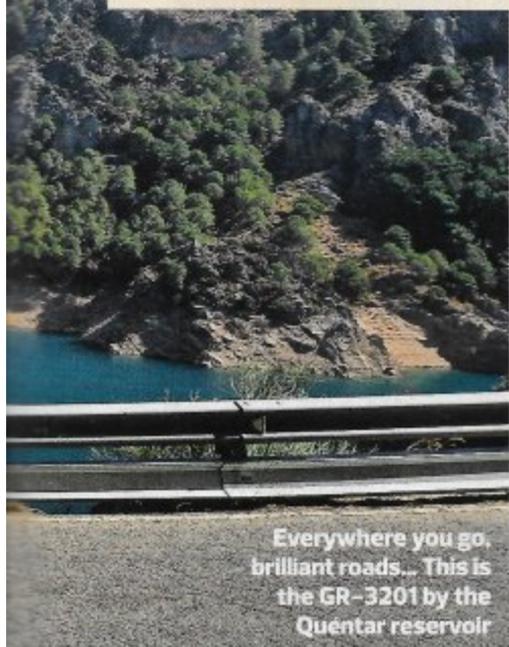
72 ALTER VELEFIQUE

Start/finish Carboneras

Distance 170 miles

Riding time 5.5 hours

This shorter alternative route runs in the opposite direction to the original, with alternative roads, tackling Alto de Velefique as a descent rather than a climb. Just as thrilling.



Everywhere you go, brilliant roads... This is the GR-3201 by the Quentar reservoir



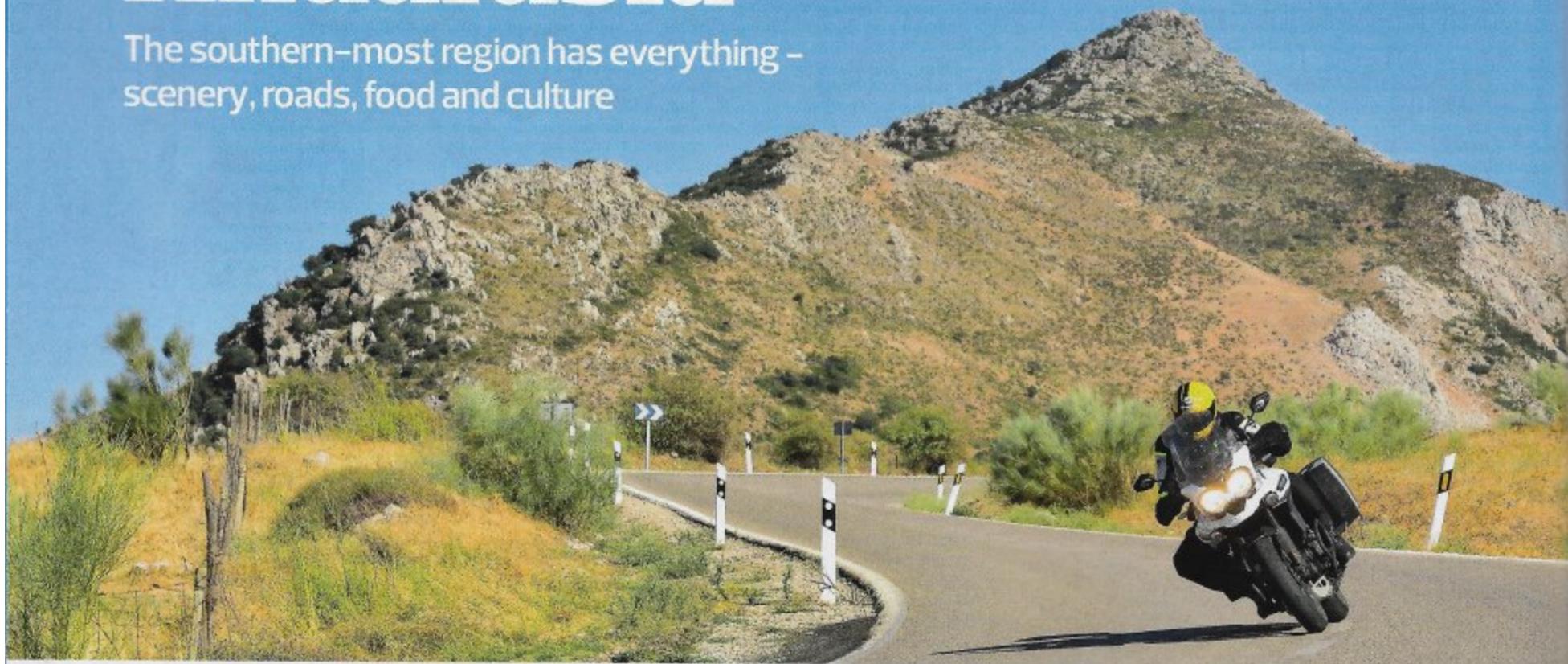
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BATTLAX SPORT TOURING T31

Andalusia

The southern-most region has everything – scenery, roads, food and culture



THE LAND BETWEEN Granada and the Portuguese border is the sunny heart of Andalusia, where white-painted villages hover in the heat haze, surrounded by olive groves. Let the tourists keep the Costa del Sol while we take to the sierras, shaded by cork groves and revelling in the fantastic roads. The riding in Andalusia is so sublimely, transcendently good that even though it's a long way away, it's absolutely worth the effort of getting there.

WHERE TO STAY

ARACENA

A quaint, artsy little town in the hills above the Rio Tinto, with a compact castle and a museum dedicated to ham (with tastings).

Routes 78 & 79

Hotel tip Los Castaños, www.loscastanoshotel.com

JAÉN

A fabulous city stuffed with great places to visit – the castle, the cathedra, the Arab baths, the Villardompardo Palace... As fascinating as Granada but half the size. Good riding on the doorstep, too.

Routes 73 & 74

Hotel tip Hotel Infanta Cristina, www.hotelfantacristina.com

MÁLAGA

An easy base with good facilities – especially for fly-ride trips picking up a hire-bike. If you're there for the Feria (August 11-18)

you're in for a treat.

Routes 75 & 76

Hotel tip Hotel Cortijo la Reina, www.hotelcortijolareina.com

RONDA

A popular destination with loads to see – a great old town, spectacular gorge – and amazing roads in every direction.

Route 77

Hotel tip Hotel Sevilla, <http://sevilla.ronda-hotels.com>

OFF THE BIKE

ANTEQUERA

Fabulous old town is well worth a visit – but head out into the hills for the spectacular, bizarre, blasted-rock landscape of El Toral – it's worth a look.

www.torcaldeantequera.com

CÓRDOBA

Possibly the most charming city in Spain, with palaces and gardens galore, a glorious old town... and the Mezquita: a huge mosque with a cathedral superimposed in the centre.

www.mezquitacordoba.org

EL CHORRO

A small village in a giant landscape. Great lakes nearby but the big draw is the Caminito del Rey – a spectacular gorge walk. Book in advance; don't wear bike gear – you'll want cool clothing and walking boots. Awesome.

www.caminitodelrey.info

GRAZALEMA

Our favourite of the *pueblos blancos* – the white towns. Full of character and with great restaurants. Perfect lunch stop.

www.turismograzalema.com

JEREZ DE LA FRONTERA

The home of sherry – and a MotoGP race – Jerez is a fascinating city. It has an alcázar,

a huge cathedral and dancing horses. A wonderful place but it's best when there's no racing.

www.turismojerez.com

MONTEFRÍO

A sleepy but stunning village crowned by a ruined castle – the big attraction is the ride here but it repays a bit of exploring.

www.montefrio.org

SEVILLA

Another big Spanish city that manages to have a small-town feel, thanks to the old town's narrow streets. The Alcázar is spectacular, the cathedral impressive and the Easter parades simply have to be seen to be believed.

www.visitsevilla.es

TARIFA

Nice beaches, quaint castle, some good cafes... but Tarifa's about the sea. On one side, the Atlantic; on the other, the Med. It's a quietly magical place.

<https://turismodetarifa.com>

MUST-RIDE ROAD

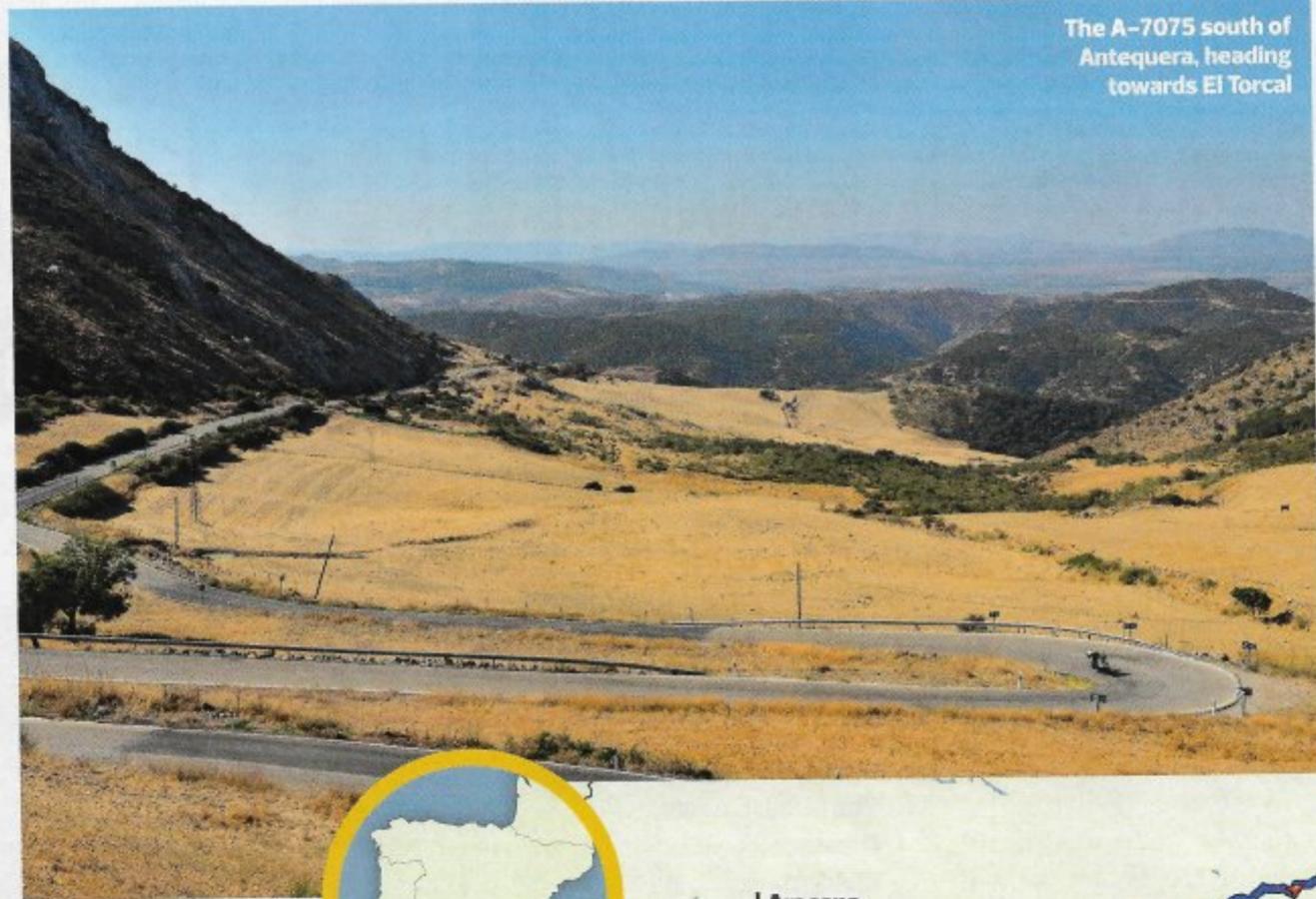
A-397 San Pedro de Alcántara to Ronda

Probably the definitive Andalusian mountain road – long, twisty and thrilling. Just don't ride it at the weekend: too busy.

BATTLAX ADVENTURE A41

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Miles of empty tarmac, great weather, fantastic food, cheap beer... we love riding in Andalusia



The A-7075 south of Antequera, heading towards El Torcal

OUR ROUTES

South-western Spain

73 NOT-SO-PLAIN JAÉN

Start/finish Jaén
Distance 175 miles
Riding time 6 hours
 This route through the olive-growing heartland around Jaén is a fantastic day's ride. Some narrower roads on the first run to Bedmar, broader, flowing roads to Castillo de Locubín, then the amazingly twisty A-6050 to finish.

74 JAÉN'S ADVENTURES

Start/finish Jaén
Distance 230 miles
Riding time 6.5 hours
 This long route heads north from Jaén through the wild Sierra de Andújar, looping back past the beautiful town of Úbeda. A full day's ride with some narrow roads, through mile after mile of unspoilt countryside.

75 MÁLAGA TO MONTEFRIO

Start/finish Málaga
Distance 215 miles
Riding time 7 hours
 This full day's ride is the latest

evolution of one of our favourite rides in Andalusia – from Málaga to the town of Montefrío and on, through the quiet olive groves and hills on smooth, serpentine roads.

76 MÁLAGA TO RONDA

Start/finish Málaga
Distance 210 miles
Riding time 6.5 hours
 This route loops east from Málaga, passing Ronda for lunch by beautiful Lake Zahara, returning past the equally lovely Guadalhorce lakes. Note though that the Garmin maps incorrectly think one stretch of the route is unpaved: it isn't. This is all tarmac.

77 RONDA

Start/finish Ronda
Distance 175 miles
Riding time 6 hours
 All that's great about riding in Andalusia in one route – it's no wonder so many of these roads are used for bike launches (but not our favourite one – the ultra-tight Las Palomas pass between Grazalema and Zahara). Can get busy at weekends.



78 ARACENA AND THE RIO TINTO

Start/finish Aracena
Distance 155 miles
Riding time 4.5 hours
 Aracena's a charming traditional town set in beautiful countryside. But then you ride south and – boom – you're in an apocalyptic landscape of blasted earth and pools of blood-red water at the Rio Tinto mines. Blink and you're back in the countryside. Brilliant riding – and views.

79 ARACENA ALTERNATIVE

Start/finish Aracena
Distance 185 miles
Riding time 5 hours

This alternative route rides the amazing Rio Tinto road but in the opposite direction, with more of the wide, smooth, scenic roads looping through the wild countryside with its changing nature.

80 ARCOS DE LA FRONTERA

Start/finish Arcos de la Frontera
Distance 220 miles
Riding time 6.5 hours
 From inland Arcos to the Trafalga lighthouse and then Tarifa – the southern-most tip of Spain – past Gibraltar and then, inland through the spectacular Sierra de Grazalema: what a ride!

OTHER RIDES IN Southern Spain

81 COSTA BLANCA

Start/finish Alicante

Distance 160 miles

Riding time 5.5 hours

Our old friend Tony Lang met us outside Alicante and showed us some of his favourite roads – which we've hijacked for this stunning route through the mountains that rise behind the beach resorts. Forget the sea, this is where the action is...

82 CARTAGENA COASTLINE

Start/finish Cartagena

Distance 160 miles

Riding time 5.5 hours

This loop around the ancient city

of Cartagena swoops inland to the edge of the Sierra Espuña, before descending to have lunch on a beach, hugging the coast back to Cartagena.

83 ALMERIA THREE-SIERRA LOOP

Start/finish Almeria

Distance 215 miles

Riding time 7 hours

Combining some of the best roads from the Roquetas and Carboneras routes – along with some wilder, narrower stretches and a bit of time-saving motorway – this long day might just be the ultimate Andalusian riding adventure.

84 NERJA SURF AND SIERRA

Start/finish Nerja

Distance 170 miles

Riding time 6 hours

From the sandy beaches of the Med to the mountains of southern Spain, this route has more twists than an Agatha Christie novel. The only mystery here, though, is that the roads are so good and yet so quiet.

85 SEVILLA & THE ROUTE OF 300 CORNERS

Start/finish Seville

Distance 185 miles

Riding time 6 hours

This refinement of a local favourite loops out from the fascinating city of Sevilla to the 'Route of 300 Corners' in the Sierra de Hornachuelos. How many corners in total? A lot more than 300, that's for sure...

86 CÓRDOBA

Start/finish Córdoba

Distance 195 miles

Riding time 6 hours

Plenty to see on this route, from the Mezquita in Córdoba to the Alcazaba in Bujalance – but the real attraction is the sun-kissed tarmac scrolling its way through the empty hills and across the vast, empty plains.

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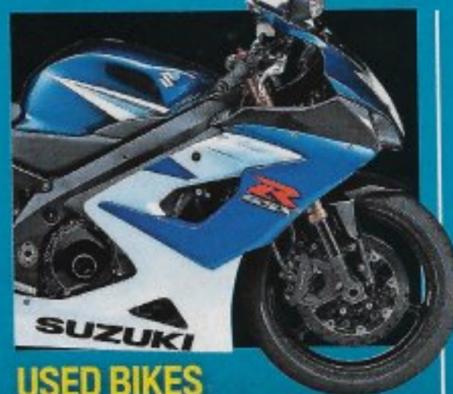


This is the D1006 Col du Mont Genis on the French/Italian border

INSIDE EVERY ISSUE



GOOD GEAR
BRITAIN'S MOST TRUSTED TESTS



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Portugal

So close but so far apart... The culture and riding in Portugal are very different. In a good way.

OUR PORTUGUESE ADVENTURE starts gently, scrolling through the hills to the N-222 at Peso da Régua. Down at river level it's largely straight and flat, but the view across the water to the terraced hills is lovely and I find myself enjoying this relaxed cruise beside the broad flow of the Douro.

The riding goes up a gear as we turn off – as do the views. Clambering up the M-504 opens up an astonishing panorama down over the river. The road's poorly surfaced at first, so I worry it's a mistake – but leaving Valença do Douro it becomes smooth, broad and hugely engaging. Speeds rise as we head south, picking up the N-229 and then the N-330... This is astonishing riding, empty roads that seem to be made up from equal parts of distance-gobbling straights and reproductions of GP corners.

But this is just the warm-up, the support races, if you like. The headline event is looming on the horizon – the brooding mass of the Serra da Estrela mountains. From Gouveia we head into them on the N-232, a liquorice lace draped across a toast rack, climbing to above the tree line.

At Seia we pick up the road we're here to ride: the N-339, often called the 'Portuguese Stelvio'. It's different to the ultra-tight Italian pass but deserves to be mentioned in the same breath as it's absolutely one of the finest rides in Europe. The landscape it crosses is beautiful in an austere, rocky way. There is some greenery, but there's also the insane right-angled retaining walls of the Lake Comprida.

The higher the N-339 climbs, the more awesome it becomes, huge switchbacks and long, constant-radius corners past huge boulder fields and patches of low, scrubby scree and sand. At the top, we have an ice cream.

The descent to Covilhã is no less thrilling. In fact, it might be even more dramatic. The views are wide-screen spectacular, but the straights are longer to start with, cutting down past the Madonna carved into a niche in the rocks, swinging round and down in clipped corners and a couple of dramatic hairpins to the town. What a ride.

The N-339 over the Serra da Estrela mountains – the 'Portuguese Stelvio'. It's awesome...

TRIUMPH 

www.triumphmotorcycles.co.uk

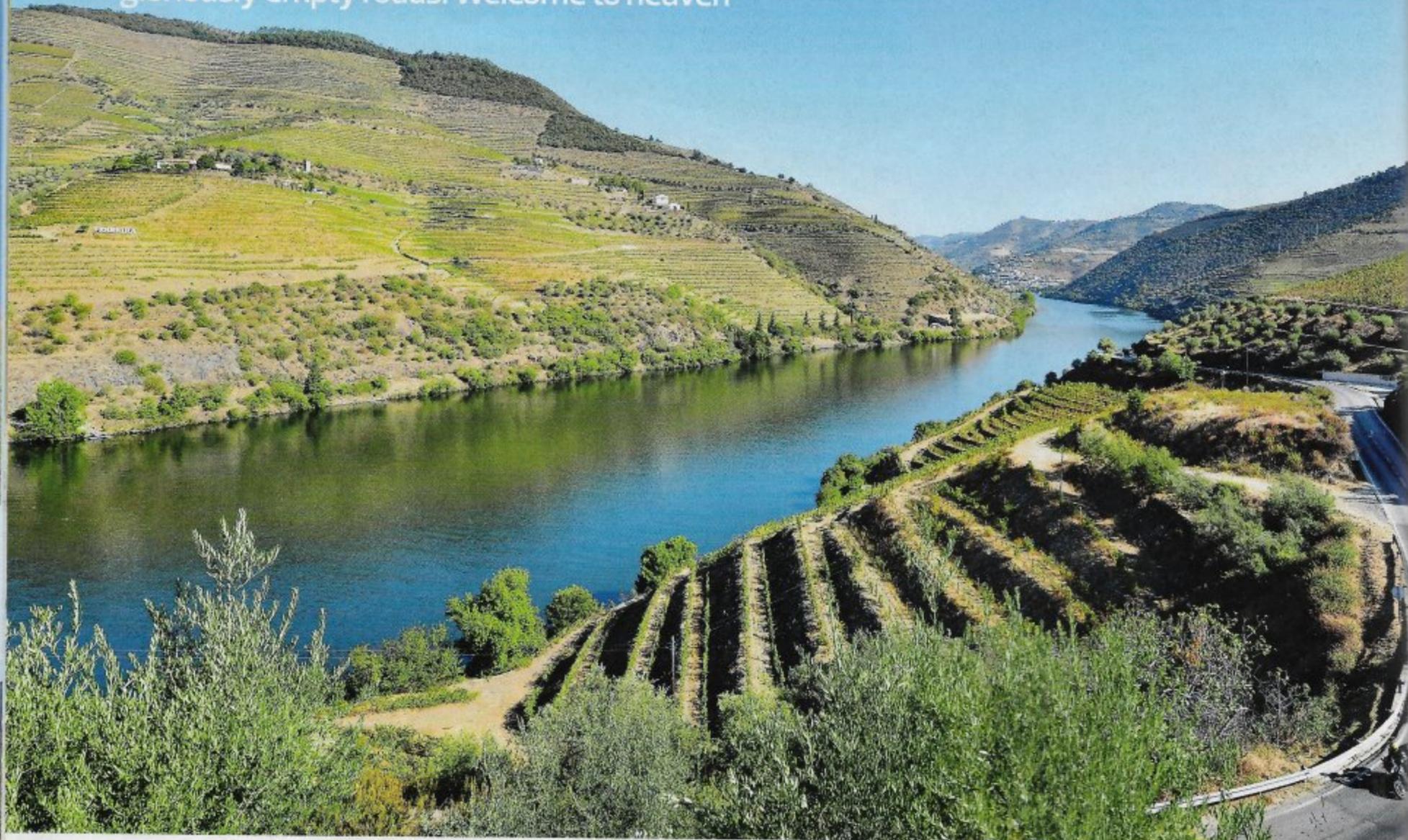


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BATTLAX SPORT TOURING **T31**

Norte and Centro

Mountains, valleys, vineyards, history... and gloriously empty roads. Welcome to heaven



IF ANYONE WONDERED what motorbikes are for, the answer is: Northern Portugal. The riding is simply out of this world – from the steep hills to the terraced vineyards of the Douro Valley and the mountainous Serra da Estrela, with Portugal's highest peak, Torre. The fun does start to fade the closer you get to Porto and the coast: too many speed limits, too much traffic. So stay out in the countryside and enjoy roads that could have been built with bikes in mind.

WHERE TO STAY CHAVES

Five miles south of the border with Spain, Chaves has a Roman bridge and a nice town square. Routes 87, 88 & 89
Hotel tip Forte de São Francisco, www.fortesaofrancisco.com

COVILHÃ

At the foot of the Serra da Estrela, this university town is the ideal place to soak up Portuguese culture off the bike. Routes 90 & 91

Hotel tip Hotel Dos Carqueijais, www.lunahotels.com

SERTÃ

Who needs mountains when you have hills like those around Sertã? It's a restful town. Routes 92 & 93
Hotel tip Convento da Sertã Hotel www.conventodasertahotel.pt

OFF THE BIKE BRAGANÇA

A small city with a smaller-town feel, thanks to the historic core behind the well-preserved old town walls. Lots to see including a sizeable castle, a cathedral, a fine ducal palace and Portugal's oldest town hall. <https://visitbraganca.eu>

COIMBRA

Once the capital of Portugal, Coimbra is crowned by a palace at the top of the hill and stuffed with beautiful historic buildings between there and the lush river banks below. Make sure to visit

the old cathedral. www.sevelha-coimbra.org

DOURO RIVER CRUISE

People can spend days cruising the Douro – but one-hour cruises are available from several points (we'd go for Pinhão or Miranda do Douro). There are several operators, but try www.cenarios.pt

DOURO STEAM TRAIN

If the boat's too slow for you, why not try a steam train instead? Opened in the 1880s, the Douro line still runs a passenger service – now limited from Peso da

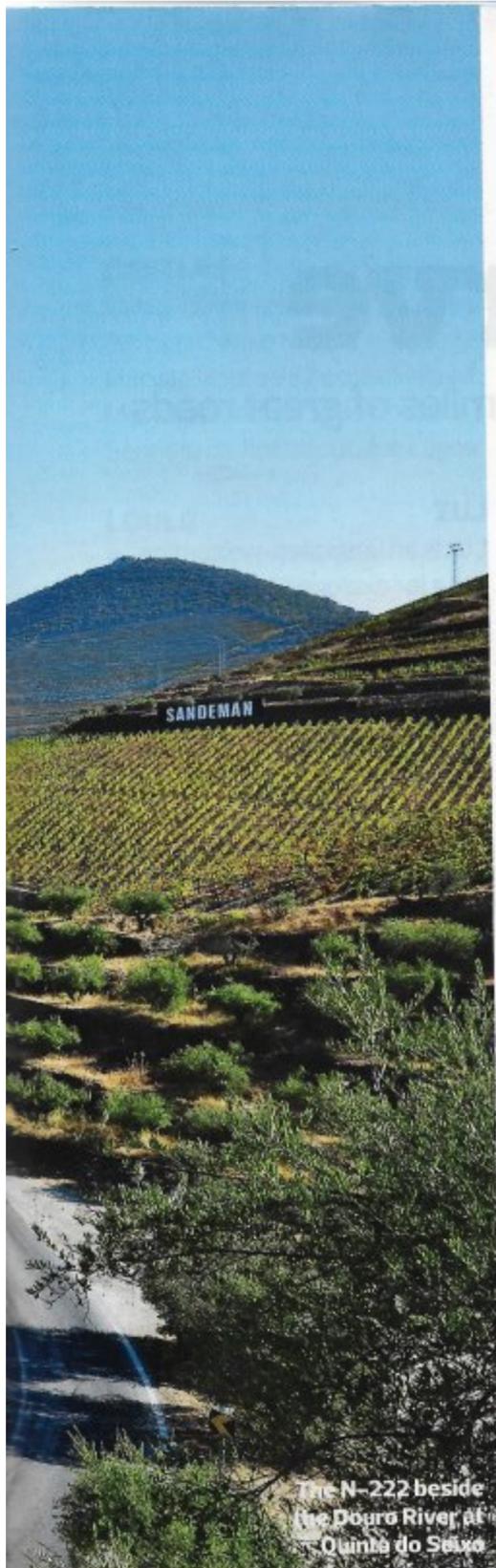
MUST-RIDE ROAD

N-339 Covilhã to Seia

Clambering over the Serra da Estrela mountains in a flurry of hairpins, this awesome road earned the nickname 'the Portuguese Stelvio'.

BATTLAX ADVENTURE A41

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The N-222 beside the Douro River at Quinta do Seixo

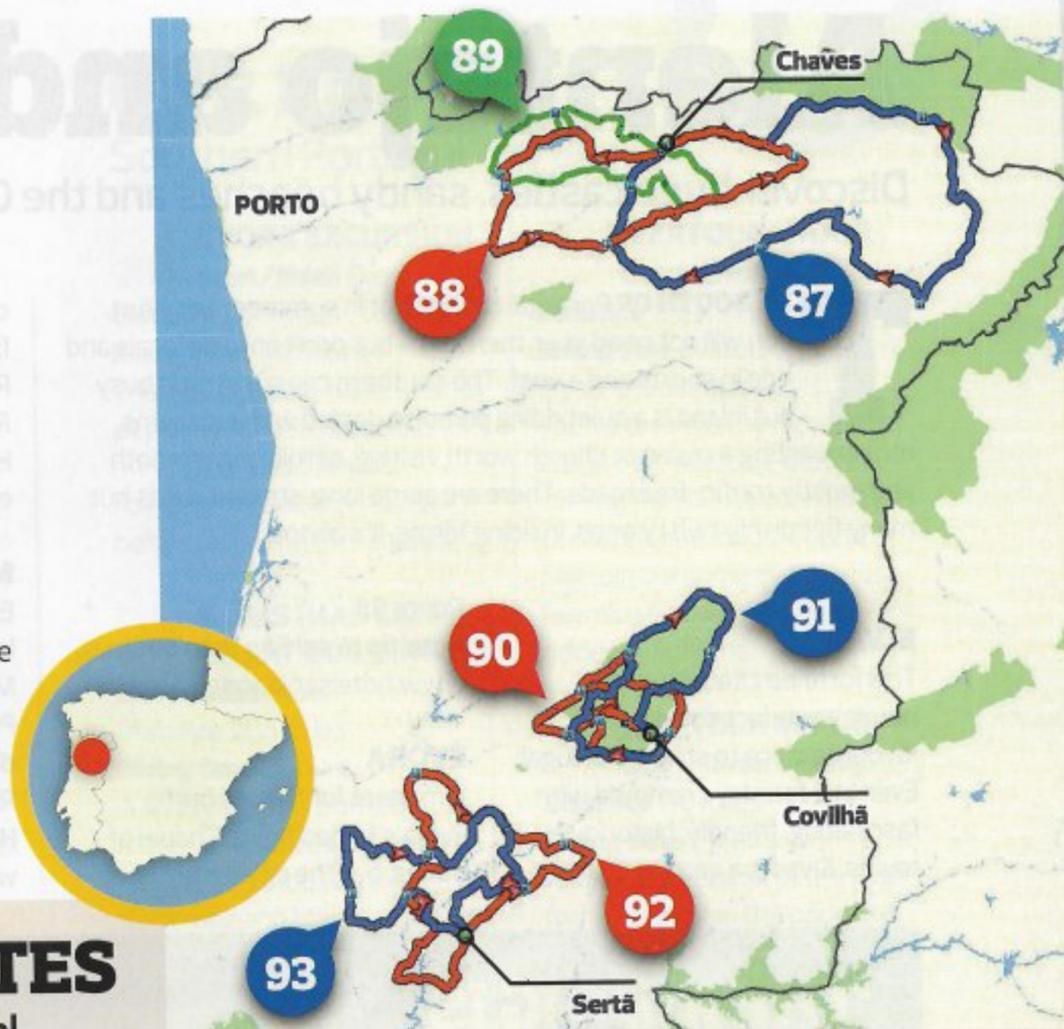
Quinta do Seixo vineyards or the cellars in Porto.
www.sandeman.com

TOMAR

A small town with big monuments: if the Convent of Christ looks remarkably tough, that's because it was built by the Knights Templar as part of their huge, fortified headquarters. Mind-blowing.
www.conventocristo.gov.pt

VILA NOVA DE FOZ CÔA

Huge views of the terraced vineyards are just the start of the spectacle: prehistoric rock art is scattered through the valleys that feed into the Douro. Start with a visit to the museum.
www.arte-coa.pt



OUR ROUTES

Northern Portugal

87 CHAVES WEST LOOP

Start/finish Chaves
Distance 170 miles
Riding time 5.5 hours
 This route from the quiet town of Chaves is so good it could ruin other roads for you forever. Why can't all rides be on such perfect surfaces, with such brilliant bends, with so little traffic? At the end of the ride you'll be wishing all roads could be as good as this... The good news is round here, they are!

88 CHAVES EAST LOOP

Start/finish Chaves
Distance 230 miles
Riding time 7 hours
 This long day in the saddle is packed with simply mind-blowingly good roads. Long, gently arcing 'straights' feed in to sweepers that lead to tighter turns – and the occasional hairpin. With perfect surfaces and low traffic, it's a fabulously rewarding ride. NB: just in case your sat nav starts to misbehave, you need to stay on the N-15 that runs parallel to the motorway: don't get on the A4.

89 CHAVES THIRD LOOP

Start/finish Chaves
Distance 140 miles
Riding time 4.5 hours
 So many good roads around Chaves – it'd be criminal not to ride the N-311 when you're in the area so we had to make a third route. This is a shorter loop, so there may be time to visit the compact castle in Montalegre.

90 THE PORTUGUESE STELVIO

Start/finish Covilhã
Distance 180 miles
Riding time 6.5 hours
 This route has taken some refining... but we're finally convinced it's the definitive loop of all the must-ride roads in the Serra da Estrela mountains, including riding the N-330 – the so-called 'Portuguese Stelvio' in both directions.

91 A LAP OF THE SERRA DA ESTRELA

Start/finish Covilhã
Distance 145 miles
Riding time 4.5 hours
 Alright, there were one or two

roads we couldn't cram into the 'Portuguese Stelvio' route. But they're in this one instead, which hugs the lower slopes of the mountains rather than clambering over the top. It's another blindingly good ride.

92 SERTÃ LONG LOOP

Start/finish Sertã
Distance 190 miles
Riding time 6 hours
 Central Portugal is blessed with three things that make it ideal for biking: great weather; spectacular hills riven by deep gorges; and madly twisty roads. It really is a great route for adventure bikes.

93 SERTÃ SHORT LOOP

Start/finish Sertã
Distance 160 miles
Riding time 5.5 hours
 More crazily twisty roads through the quiet hills around the Zêzere River. Though lower in mileage than the other Sertã route, this version – using all broad, smooth roads – is more or less the same length of ride, as the roads are so twisty.

Régua to Tua – along the most beautiful stretch of the Douro.
www.cp.pt

PORTO

It's a popular city break – and Porto is a great place, but not for riding. Enjoy the sights (the Clerigos church, the Dom Luís I bridge, the museums and the Foz do Douro lighthouse) and the fabulous food and drink.
<http://uk.visitportoandnorth.travel>

QUINTA DO SEIXO

If you have time off the bike in the Douro Valley, a port-tasting tour is practically compulsory. Options range from the short and affordable to day-long €150+ junkets for connoisseurs. We'd suggest starting with a Premium or Classic tour of Sandeman's

Alentejo and Algarve

Discover huge castles, sandy beaches and the Chapel of Bones – and miles of great roads

THE SOUTH OF Portugal can get hot in summer... very hot. You will not need your thermals – but don't ape the locals and ride in shorts and a vest. The southern coastal strip is busy but inland is a quiet riding paradise dotted with old towns, most boasting a castle or church worth visiting, all linked by smooth and mostly traffic-free roads. There are some long, straight roads but many fiendishly twisty ones. In riding terms, it's all hot...

WHERE TO STAY

ELVAS

This fortified citadel with its heroic aqueduct could be our favourite place to stay in Portugal. Even in a country crammed with fascinating, friendly, historic towns, Elvas is a gem.

Route 95

Hotel tip Hotel São João de Deus, www.hotelsaojoaodeus.com

ÉVORA

A magnet for history buffs, Évora's famed for its Chapel of Bones, but the city centre is

crammed with fascinating sights, from the massive cathedral to a Roman temple.

Route 94

Hotel tip Évora Hotel, evorahotel.pt

MÉRTOLA

Elvas and Évora are quite well know but the fortified town of Mértola is far quieter. This is a Portugal the tourists haven't discovered yet.

Routes 96 & 97

Hotel tip Hotel Beira Rio, www.beirario.pt

LUZ

Luz is an unspoiled, welcoming base for exploring inland and also enjoying a beach break.

Route 98

Hotel tip Hotel Belavista da Luz, www.belavistadaluz.com

OFF THE BIKE

CABO DA ROCA

If you want land's end, this is it: the western-most tip of the European mainland. It's a pleasant ride to the lighthouse, or use public transport from Sintra. www.sintraromantica.net

'THE RIDING IS
SIMPLY OUT OF
THIS WORLD'



TRIUMPH 

www.triumphmotorcycles.co.uk



CASTLES

Plenty of impressive fortresses in Portugal. Make time to visit huge Marvão (route 95), pocket-sized Monsaraz and Forte de Nossa Senhora da Rocha outside Lagos.

LOULÉ

Just inland from the Algarve coast, Loulé has a nice old town and an amazing church, the Chapel of São Lourenço. www.cm-loule.pt

LISBON

We generally avoid big cities, but Lisbon has many of Portugal's finest sights – especially heading west to Sintra, where you'll find the Castle of the Moors, the Quinta da Regaleira, Monserrate and Pena Palaces. www.parquesdesintra.pt

MONCHIQUE

There are so many reasons to visit Monchique – though the ride to the top of the mountain is the main one. But once you're at the top, kick back with an ice cream and enjoy the breath-taking views. www.monchiqueuncovered.com

PONTA DA PIEDADE

Spectacular coastal scenery just south of Lagos. Ride down, get yourself an ice-cream and stroll along the headland – or go into Lagos and book a boat trip. Try the Grotto trip from www.bluefleet.pt

VILA VIÇOSA

Halfway between Elvas and Évora, this lovely town is home to a tidy castle and the enormous ducal palace, with its massive courtyard and fabulous formal gardens. A real must-see. www.fcbraganca.pt

OUR ROUTES

Southern Portugal

94 ÉVORA EXCURSION

Start/finish Évora

Distance 200 miles

Riding time 5.5 hours

This ride from the historic small city of Évora heads north until it meets the River Targus, hugging the southern bank before returning to the start.

95 ELVAS (HAS LEFT GREAT BUILDINGS)

Start/finish Elvas

Distance 205 miles

Riding time 6 hours

A fortifying ride, from the massive defences of the Elvas citadel with stops at the Estremoz and Marvão castles with the option of detouring to Campo Maior and Forte de Nossa Senhora de Graça.

96 MÉRTOLA MAJOR

Start/finish Mértola

Distance 195 miles

Riding time 5 hours

If you're looking for twisties, you've come to the right place... A pun that would be better coming from Elvas (doh!) but the fact is the roads around Mértola are some of the most relentlessly twisty we've ever ridden. Awesome.

97 MÉRTOLA MINOR

Start/finish Mértola

Distance 110 miles

Riding time 3 hours

A half-day version of the main route, running in the opposite direction – which makes the roads feel totally different (but no less twisty). Ideal if you want a late start or an afternoon off the bike.

98 ALGARVE & INLAND

Start/finish Luz

Distance 170 miles

Riding time 5 hours

The southern Algarve coast is pleasant but busy. Head inland and you find quiet, epic roads – including the climb to the top of Monchique – before heading to the golden beaches of the western Atlantic shore.

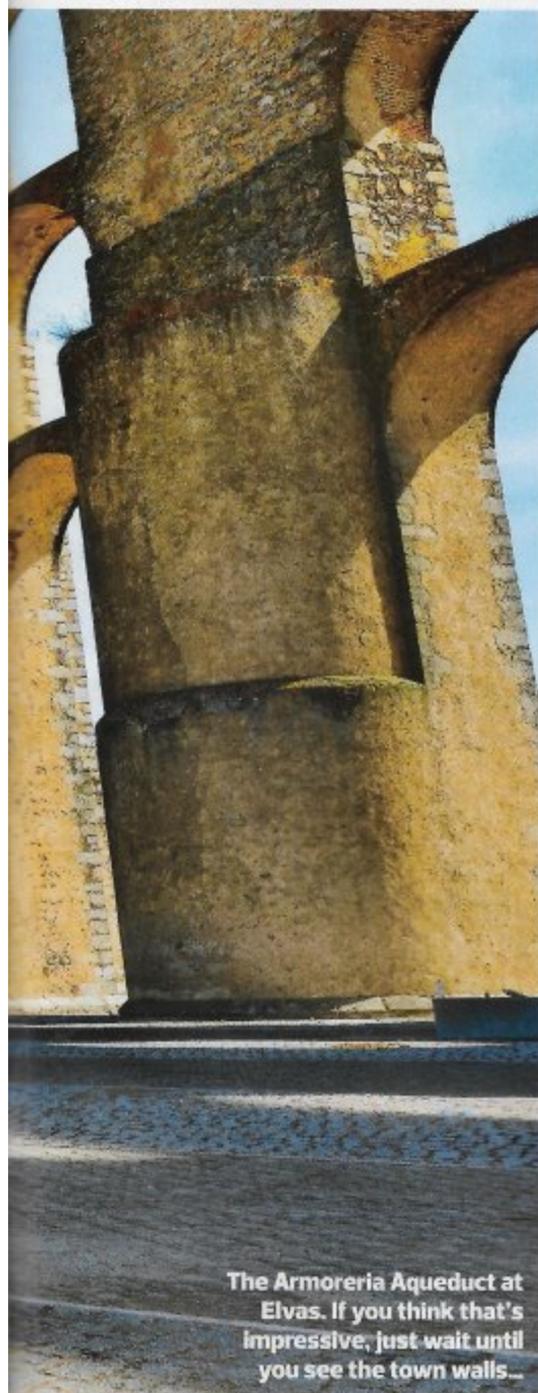
99 SINES... QUA NON

Start/finish Sines

Distance 205 miles

Riding time 6 hours

This route has a bit of everything: smooth roads; rough roads; long straights; tight corners; rolling hills; sea views... But it'd be nothing without a great town to serve as a base – and that's the quaint fishing town of Sines.



The Armoreria Aqueduct at Elvas. If you think that's impressive, just wait until you see the town walls...

MUST-RIDE ROAD

N-124 São Bartolomeu to Balurcas

What's better than a ride in perfect weather? A ride on a perfect surface, with perfect bends, with no traffic – for 60 miles. It's perfect!

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BATTLAX SPORT TOURING T31

WORLD'S NOT BIKING WEEKLY EVERY #MOTORCYCLE

OTHER ROUTES IN Portugal

100 THE DOURO VALLEY

Start/finish Vila Real

Distance 185 miles

Riding time 6 hours

The Douro Valley is famed for its Port-growing vineyards, but it should be famous for the amazing roads that scramble through the steep, terraced hills. The riding's so good it's intoxicating – it's a candidate for the best day's ride in this guide.

101 GERÊS

Start/finish Gerês

Distance 145 miles

Riding time 5 hours

There's a wild beauty to the Gerês National Park – and to the roads around it. This route loops over the border into Spain before the final, twisty descent along the toll road through the park.

102 VISEU VIEWS

Start/finish Viseu

Distance 200 miles

Riding time 7 hours

Viseu's a big city, but it's surrounded by amazingly empty

hills. This full day's ride puts the corner count off the chart as it spirals its way through fragrant forests, getting as far north as the River Douro.

103 CASTELO BRANCO

Start/finish

Castelo Branco

Distance 170 miles

Riding time 5.5 hours

Castelo Branco's a nice small city on the edge of Portugal's rugged hinterland. That lets this route build up, with the roads getting twistier as the day goes on. An absolutely belting ride in an amazing landscape.

104 WANT MOURA?

Start/finish Moura

Distance 195 miles

Riding time 5 hours

A rewarding day of smooth riding. Ideal for a pillion couple looking for a long but not taxing day. Crosses briefly into Spain, before looping back through some of the quietest countryside you'll find in Portugal.

'IT'S A GOOD CANDIDATE FOR THE BEST RIDE IN THIS GUIDE'

The N-339 on the shoulder of Torre, Portugal's highest peak



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PICOS DE EUROPA TOUR

6 DAYS 1005 MILES

OUT Plymouth/Santander (Sunday)

BACK Santander/Portsmouth (Saturday evening)



- Day 1** Santander to Potes, 100 mls/4 hrs
- Day 2** Potes to Luarca, 190 mls/6 hrs
- Day 3** Luarca to Santiago de Compostela, 210 mls/6 hrs
- Day 4** Santiago de Compostela to Ourense, 95 mls/3 hrs
- Day 5** Ourense to León, 210 mls/6 hrs
- Day 6** León to Santander, 200 mls/6 hrs



We had a six-day Picos tour in the original *Guide to Spain*. This version has been updated, with feedback from those who did that first version (and some local tips). Day Four is short, to allow some sightseeing in Santiago de Compostela, but the final day is a full one, for the Saturday evening sailing.

SPANISH PYRENEES TOUR

6 DAYS 1305 MILES

OUT Plymouth/Santander (Sunday)

BACK Santander/Portsmouth (Saturday evening)



- Day 1** Santander to Pamplona, 175 mls/4.5 hrs
- Day 2** Pamplona to Vielha, 245 mls/6.5 hrs
- Day 3** Vielha to Ripoll, 220 mls/6.5 hrs
- Day 4** Ripoll to Ainsa, 225 mls/6 hrs
- Day 5** Ainsa to Olaberria, 230 mls/6.5 hrs
- Day 6** Olaberria to Santander, 210 mls/7 hrs



This corner-heavy tour focuses on the Spanish side of the mountains, with longer days in the saddle. The long final day ties into the Saturday evening sailing, but if you want to ride a couple of daytrips, use the shorter final day of the eight-day trip to catch the Monday afternoon sailing.

SPANISH & FRENCH PYRENEES TOUR

8 DAYS 1385 MILES

OUT Plymouth/Santander (Sunday)

BACK Santander/Portsmouth (Monday)



- Day 1** Santander to Zarautz, 150 mls/4.5 hrs
- Day 2** Zarautz to Argelès-Gazost, 185 mls/5.5 hrs
- Day 3** Argelès-Gazost to Foix, 170 mls/5 hrs
- Day 4** Foix to Carcassonne, 180 mls/5 hrs
- Day 5** Carcassonne to La Seu d'Urgell, 180 mls/5.5 hrs
- Day 6** La Seu d'Urgell to Jaca, 205 mls/5.5 hrs
- Day 7** Jaca to Olaberria, 180 mls/5 hrs
- Day 8** Olaberria to Santander, 135 mls/4 hrs



This is the latest, gently updated version of our popular, pillion-friendly eight-day trip. The emphasis is on big views, rather than big miles, though each day is still a solid ride. It takes in the French Pyrenees as well as the Spanish – after all, if you're there, why not see both sides of the mountains?

PYRENEES & PICOS HIGH-MILE TOUR

8 DAYS 1680 MILES

OUT Plymouth/Santander (Sunday)

BACK Santander/Portsmouth (Monday)



- Day 1** Santander to Olite, 170 mls/4.5 hrs
- Day 2** Olite to Cellers, 245 mls/6 hrs
- Day 3** Cellers to Vielha, 250 mls/7 hrs
- Day 4** Vielha to Pamplona, 230 mls/6.5 hrs
- Day 5** Pamplona to Potes, 240 mls/7 hrs
- Day 6** Potes to Cangas de Narcea, 210 mls/6.5 hrs
- Day 7** Cangas de Narcea to Ribadesella, 215 mls/7 hrs
- Day 8** Ribadesella to Santander, 120 mls/3.5 hrs



This really is the best of both worlds: eight days, two mountain ranges, one mind-blowing tour. A real mountain-lovers' trip, mileages are high – late starts and long lunches are not recommended. This tour uses several Brittany Ferries partner hotels, but adapt the stops if they don't suit.

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PORTUGAL HIGH-MILE TOUR

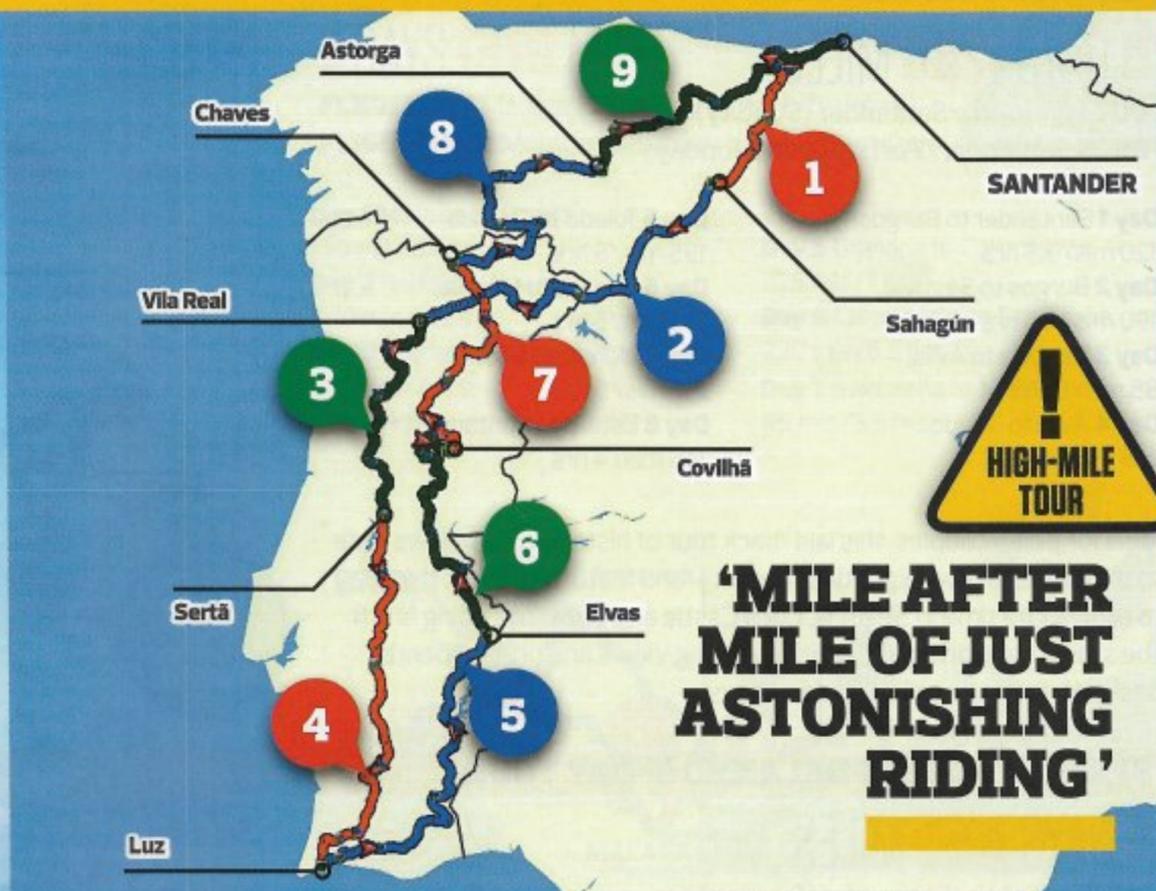
10 DAYS 1990 MILES

OUT Plymouth/Santander (Sunday)

BACK Santander/Plymouth (Wednesday)

- Day 1** Santander to Sahagún, 140 mls/3.5 hrs
- Day 2** Sahagún to Vila Real, 245 mls/6.5 hrs
- Day 3** Vila Real to Sertã, 205 mls/6 hrs
- Day 4** Sertã to Luz, 265 mls/7 hrs
- Day 5** Luz to Elvas, 245 mls/7 hrs
- Day 6** Elvas to Covilhã, 225 mls/6.5 hrs
- Day 7** Covilhã to Chaves, 210 mls/6.5 hrs
- Day 8** Chaves to Astorga, 225 mls/6.5 hrs
- Day 9** Astorga to Santander, 230 mls/6.5 hrs

A fantastic, extended, corner-heavy tour through Portugal – with a rest day included. First printed in our *Tour 2016* supplement, it's become one of the most popular routes we've ever published. From the verdant mountains of the Picos to the terraced slopes of the Douro Valley, the surf-kissed beaches of the Algarve and the summit of Torre in the Serra da Estrela, it's mile after mile of rewarding riding... a lot of riding, hence the rest day.



'MILE AFTER MILE OF JUST ASTONISHING RIDING'

The Serra da Estrela: our tour hits all the best roads through Portugal's highest mountains

PICOS AND NORTHERN PORTUGAL RELAXED TOUR

8 DAYS 1355 MILES

OUT Plymouth/Santander (Sunday)

BACK Santander/Portsmouth (Monday)

- Day 1** Santander to Cangas de Onís, 105 mls/3 hrs
- Day 2** Cangas de Onís to Cangas de Narcea, 165 mls/5.5 hrs
- Day 3** Cangas de Narcea to Chaves, 205 mls/6 hrs
- Day 4** Chaves to Covilhã, 190 mls/6 hrs
- Day 5** Covilhã to Vila Real, 175 mls/6 hrs
- Day 6** Vila Real to Puebla de Sanabria, 190 mls/6 hrs
- Day 7** Puebla de Sanabria to Potes, 190 mls/6 hrs
- Day 8** Potes to Santander, 135 mls/4 hrs



Desperate to see the Douro Valley and the Serra da Estrela, but don't want to miss out on the best bits of the Picos? Then this is for you: all the best bits of Spain's north-coast mountains plus the highlights of the riding in Northern Portugal – all packaged up in pillion-friendly days.

CENTRAL SPAIN AND PORTUGAL TOUR

8 DAYS 1485 MILES

OUT Plymouth/Santander (Sunday)

BACK Santander/Portsmouth (Monday)

- Day 1** Santander to Burgos, 120 mls/3.5 hrs
- Day 2** Burgos to Segovia, 215 mls/5.5 hrs
- Day 3** Segovia to Guadalupe, 215 mls/5.5 hrs
- Day 4** Guadalupe to Castelo Branco, 210 mls/6 hrs
- Day 5** Castelo Branco to Ciudad Rodrigo, 205 mls/6 hrs
- Day 6** Ciudad Rodrigo to Bragança, 190 mls/6 hrs
- Day 7** Bragança to Potes, 210 mls/6 hrs
- Day 8** Potes to Santander, 120 mls/4 hrs



This action-packed trip includes Portugal's Serra da Estrela mountains and Douro Valley, plus plenty of passes in the Picos de Europa and throws in a hearty dose of historic central Spain as well, with stops in Burgos, Segovia and Ciudad Rodrigo. Eight great days in a series of lovely landscapes.

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TRIUMPH

HISTORIC CITIES TOUR

8 DAYS 1280 MILES

OUT Plymouth/Santander (Sunday)

BACK Santander/Portsmouth (Monday)

- Day 1** Santander to Burgos, 120 mls/3.5 hrs
- Day 2** Burgos to Segovia, 190 mls/4.5 hrs
- Day 3** Segovia to Ávila, 85 mls/2.5 hrs
- Day 4** Ávila to Toledo, 145 mls/4.5 hrs

- Day 5** Toledo to Cuenca, 195 mls/5 hrs
- Day 6** Cuenca to Morella, 185 mls/5 hrs
- Day 7** Morella to Estella, 215 mls/5 hrs
- Day 8** Estella to Santander, 145 mls/4 hrs

Ideal for pillion couples, this laid-back tour of historic cities allows time to explore each overnight destination – and features a short third day to allow extra time in Segovia, Coca Castle and Ávila. The riding is still the star attraction though, with stunning views and brilliant bends packed into very easily managed days.



SPANISH FOREST RELAXED 6-DAY TOUR

6 DAYS 1150 MILES

OUT Plymouth/Santander (Sunday)

BACK Santander/Portsmouth (Saturday, evening)

- Day 1** Santander to Logroño, 150 mls/3.5 hrs
- Day 2** Logroño to Segovia, 200 mls/4.5 hrs
- Day 3** Segovia forest daytrip, 175 mls/6 hrs

- Day 4** Segovia optional daytrip, 175 mls/5 hrs
- Day 5** Segovia to Potes, 220 mls/5 hrs
- Day 6** Potes to Santander, 230 mls/7 hrs (for evening sailing)

This tour – first featured in the *Tour 2018* supplement – is built around visiting the historic gem of Segovia, with two daytrip loops radiating from the city. One is all about the riding, heading out through beautiful forests; the other heads out to other sightseeing locations – but can easily be dropped for a day off the bike, exploring Segovia itself. The long final day is for an evening ferry, but is easily shortened if necessary to meet an alternative crossing.



EASTERN SPAIN AND PYRENEES 8-DAY HIGH-MILE TOUR

8 DAYS 1840 MILES

OUT Plymouth/Santander (Sunday)

BACK Santander/Portsmouth (Monday)

- Day 1** Santander to Logroño, 150 mls/4.5 hrs
- Day 2** Logroño to Albarracín, 270 mls/7 hrs
- Day 3** Albarracín to Riópar, 270 mls/7 hrs
- Day 4** Riópar to Requena, 230 mls/6.5 hrs

- Day 5** Requena to Reus, 270 mls/7 hrs
- Day 6** Reus to Sort, 230 mls/7 hrs
- Day 7** Sort to Estella, 270 mls/7 hrs
- Day 8** Estella to Santander, 150 mls/4 hrs

A real 'rider's trip' this one – plenty of miles each day on a succession of astonishing roads. Sweeping through the sierras of central Spain and across the plains, before heading back to Santander through the fabulous Pyrenees, there's every kind of landscape – and corner – imaginable. It's not a trip for the first-time tourist or pillion couples, but it's ideal for solo riders who want the emphasis firmly on the riding.



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EAST SPAIN EIGHT-DAY TOUR

8 DAYS 1615 MILES

OUT Plymouth/Santander (Sunday)

BACK Santander/Portsmouth (Monday)

Day 1 Santander to Logroño,
150 mls/4 hrs

Day 2 Logroño to Albarracín,
250 mls/6 hrs

Day 3 Albarracín to Xàtiva,
190 mls/5.5 hrs

Day 4 Xàtiva to Cartagena,
200 mls/6 hrs

Day 5 Cartagena to Riópar,
205 mls/6 hrs

Day 6 Riópar to Guadalajara,
260 mls/6 hrs

Day 7 Guadalajara to Burgos,
230 mls/5.5 hrs

Day 8 Burgos to Santander,
130 mls/3.5 hrs

From the green slopes of the Picos de Europa to ancient Cartagena on the Mediterranean coast – by way of historic walled towns, empty sierras, dramatic gorges, rolling sun-baked plains and mile after mile of brilliant roads. This is a tour that puts the emphasis on riding satisfaction, getting off the beaten track to explore unspoiled, untouristy parts of Spain. Each day delivers a lot of spectacular riding on twisty Tarmac but with flowing roads and sensible distances it's a tour that will work for confident pillions or bigger groups as well as solo riders and small groups.



ANDALUSIA SEVEN-DAY FLY-RIDE TOUR

7 DAYS 1370 MILES

FLIGHT OUT Málaga (Saturday or early Sunday)

FLIGHT BACK Málaga (Saturday night or Sunday)



Day 1 Málaga to Ronda,
130 mls/3.5 hrs

Day 2 Ronda to Aracena,
240 mls/7 hrs

Day 3 Aracena to Antequera,
235 mls/7 hrs

Day 4 Antequera to Granada,
225 mls/7 hrs

225 mls/7 hrs

Day 5 Granada to Carboneras,
225 mls/7 hrs

Day 6 Carboneras to Salobreña,
220 mls/6.5 hrs

Day 7 Salobreña to Málaga,
95 mls/3.5 hrs



You don't have to ride to Andalusia: you could have your bike shipped out, or hire a bike when you get there, simply flying out and getting on your bike. This seven-day tour uses all our favourite Andalusian twists of Tarmac, from mountain passes to the Mediterranean shore, for an unforgettable trip to one of the world's best riding regions. With short first and last days, it is possible to get an early flight out and a late flight back on those days... but we'd recommend flying the day before and after the trip, so there's no rushing to get or return the bike.

ANDALUSIA HIGH-MILE TOUR

10 DAYS 2325 MILES

OUT Plymouth-Santander (Sunday)

BACK Santander-Plymouth (Wednesday)

Day 1 Santander to Burgos,
120 mls/3.5 hrs

Day 2 Burgos to Cuenca,
270 mls/6.5 hrs

Day 3 Cuenca to Baza,
280 mls/6.5 hrs

Day 4 Baza to Roquetas de Mar,
230 mls/6.5 hrs

Day 5 Roquetas de Mar to Granada,
215 mls/6.5 hrs

Day 6 Granada to Ronda,
225 mls/6.5 hrs

Day 7 Ronda to Aracena,
230 mls/6.5 hrs

Day 8 Aracena to Oropesa,
250 mls/6.5 hrs

Day 9 Oropesa to Soria,
270 mls/6.5 hrs

Day 10 Soria to Santander,
235 mls/7 hrs (for evening sailing)

Andalusia may be a long way from Santander but when the ride there is this good, you know it makes sense. Especially as the riding when you get there is even better... From Alto de Velefique and the Sierra Nevada to the red waters of the Rio Tinto – not to mention all our favourite roads in between – this is a tour that literally drips with wow-factor. It's a long trip and daily mileages are on the high side, making it more suitable for experienced tourists rather than first timers or pillion pairs. Easily extended if you have a full two weeks – just be aware that the final day's route is a long one to meet the Wednesday evening departure: spread it over two days if staying on for a Sunday sailing.



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BATTLAX ADVENTURE A41

SPAIN AND PORTUGAL

The Grand Tour

19 DAYS 4130 MILES

OUT Plymouth-Santander (Sunday)

BACK Santander-Portsmouth (Monday)

Day 1 Santander to Pamplona,
175 mls/4.5 hrs

Day 2 Pamplona to Vielha,
240 mls/6.5 hrs

Day 3 Vielha to Igualada,
210 mls/6 hrs

Day 4 Igualada to Morella,
220 mls/6.5 hrs

Day 5 Morella to Cuenca,
235 mls/6.5 hrs

Day 6 Cuenca to Xàtiva,
210 mls/6 hrs

Day 7 Xàtiva to Riópar,
230 mls/6.5 hrs

Day 8 Riópar to Carboneras,
225 mls/6.5 hrs

Day 9 Carboneras to Granada,
225 mls/6 hrs

Day 10 Granada to Ronda,
200 mls/6.5 hrs

Day 11 Ronda to Mértola,
245 mls/6.5 hrs

Day 12 Mértola to Elvas,
225 mls/6 hrs

Day 13 Elvas to Covilhã,
225 mls/6.5 hrs

Day 14 Covilhã to Guadalupe,
240 mls/6.5 hrs

Day 15 Guadalupe to Ciudad
Rodrigo, 235 mls/6.5 hrs

Day 16 Ciudad Rodrigo to Chaves,
225 mls/6.5 hrs

Day 17 Chaves to Ponferrada,
200 mls/5.5 hrs

Day 18 Ponferrada to Potes,
240 mls/6.5 hrs

Day 19 Potes to Santander,
125 mls/4 hrs



Want to see all the great riding Spain and Portugal have to offer – on one gigantic tour? This one's for you. Booking ferries not one but three weeks apart gives a colossal 19 days in which to explore – starting with the Pyrenees and Catalonia, heading inland to historic Cuenca on the way south. All the must-ride roads in Andalusia are here – from Alto de Velefique and the Sierra Nevada to the famous 'Ronda road' and

the Rio Tinto – before heading to Portugal to take in the fortifications at Elvas, the Serra da Estrela mountains and the Douro Valley.

Finally, the tour returns to Santander through the spectacular Picos de Europa mountains – after almost 4000 sublime miles. It's a lot of riding so even though it's spread over three weeks the schedule still allows for three rest days to be spaced out through the trip.



'WANT TO SEE ALL THAT SPAIN AND PORTUGAL HAVE TO OFFER?'

Montserrat: it would be a highlight... but every day's this good

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MOTOGP TRIPS

All our MotoGP trips are four days long. Take a Sunday Plymouth–Santander crossing to arrive on Thursday night for both days of practice and the race. Take a Tuesday Portsmouth–Bilbao crossing to arrive Saturday evening for just the race.

1 ARAGON

Total distance
785 miles (Santander)
or 830 miles (Bilbao)

Through the Picos de Europa and into central Spain, it's great but relaxed riding all the way to the Aragon circuit. All kinds of landscapes – from mountains to open plains – stopping at some of our must-see sites, with enough time to explore them when you arrive.

Day 1 Santander to Potes, 120 mls/4 hrs
Bilbao to Potes, 165 mls/4.5 hrs
Day 2 Potes to Segovia, 235 mls/6 hrs
Day 3 Segovia to Cuenca, 220 mls/6 hrs
Day 4 Cuenca to Aragon, 210 mls/6 hrs

2 CATALUNYA

Total distance
825 miles (Santander)
or 820 miles (Bilbao)

A tour of the Pyrenees with a MotoGP race at the end of it – what could be better? This trip has everything that a sports tourer could want – with a great tour and spectacular sport... not to mention a lot of corners per mile and some seriously spectacular scenery.

Day 1 Santander to Estella, 145 mls/4 hrs
Bilbao to Estella, 140 mls/4.5 hrs
Day 2 Estella to Sort, 250 mls/6.5 hrs
Day 3 Sort to Ripoll, 225 miles/6.5 hrs
Day 4 Ripoll to Catalunya, 205 mls/6.5 hrs

3 JEREZ

Total distance
895 miles (Santander)
or 945 miles (Bilbao)

It's a long run to southern Spain for the first European GP of the year. Even with so much ground to cover, it's possible to stick to great roads not dull motorway. Our trip is a truly fantastic ride, cutting through the Picos to Extremadura and south, down into Andalusia.

Day 1 Santander to Sahagún, 150 mls/4 hrs
Bilbao to Sahagún, 200 mls/4.5 hrs
Day 2 Sahagún to Ciudad Rodrigo, 240 mls/6.5 hrs
Day 3 Ciudad Rodrigo to Guadalupe, 225 mls/6.5 hrs
Day 4 Guadalupe to Jerez de la Frontera, 280 mls/6.5 hrs

4 VALENCIA

Total distance
810 miles (Santander)
or 800 miles (Bilbao)

End the MotoGP season in style with this amazing trip that combines great roads in the Basque mountains, the Pyrenees, Catalonia and the hilly hinterland of Valencia itself. Doesn't matter who triumphs in the MotoGP race, this is a winning way to finish your riding year.

Day 1 Santander to Zarautz, 140 mls/4 hrs
Bilbao to Zarautz, 130 mls/4.5 hrs
Day 2 Zarautz to Ainsa, 220 mls/6 hrs
Day 3 Ainsa to Tortosa, 235 mls/6.5 hrs
Day 4 Tortosa to Valencia, 215 mls/6.5 hrs



Pick your hero and watch the action in the sun. This is Valencia

SIMON HARGREAVES

How we did it

Months of planning, two intense weeks and 4000+ miles to produce 60 pages... and hundreds of downloadable routes

THE WORK FOR this supplement began almost as soon as the 2014 *Guide to Spain* was published. Every time we got a "you should have been to/ridden..." email, we noted it. As we got closer to setting off to Spain and Portugal to take the pictures for this guide, we sought more assistance from experts to refine our photoshoot route... Then we ran out of time and found ourselves on the ferry.

Rolling onto the quay in Santander, we were hit by a shower that lasted for two hours. That was all the rain we saw until the final day of the trip, rolling back to Santander. For the next

15 days we averaged just over 290 miles a day in temperatures generally between 23°C and 35°C, with about four hours a day spent taking pictures on top of the riding.

Back in the UK at the end of the trip, the real work began: nine months of turning all the notes into the final routes. The research had generated more than 85,000 miles of possible roads to ride – whittled down gradually to the 43,000 miles actually used in the routes for this guide. None of it would have been possible without the help of the RIDE readers and the generous professionals who shared their knowledge with us. **R**

The photographer Mark Manning

The bike Triumph Tiger Sport

www.triumphmotorcycles.co.uk

Price £10,950 **Engine** 1050cc inline triple **Power** 124bhp

Weight 238kg **Fuel capacity** 20 litres

"Fast, agile, comfortable - as happy carving up mountain roads as devouring distance with the cruise control on. All the performance of a sports tourer with a more-forgiving riding position. Ideal for this kind of trip."

Favourite road "The N330a from Manzanareula to Santa Cruz de Moya in Spain." *Route 45, Grand Tour, East Spain Tour*

The writer Simon Weir

The bike Triumph Tiger Explorer XRT

Current version Tiger 1200 XRT

Price £16,150 **Engine** 1215cc inline triple **Power** 139bhp

Kerb weight 242kg **Fuel capacity** 20 litres

"Supremely capable everywhere from bumpy, gravelly minor roads to immaculate hairpins and high-speed sweepers. The big screen's effective, the riding position roomy and miles just fly past - and I mean fly: it's a big bike, but it's real-world fast."

Favourite road "The N339 from Covilha to Seia in Portugal" *Route 90, Grand Tour, Portugal Tour, Picos & Portugal Tour*



Thanks to those who helped with routes: Alpine TT (www.alpine-tt.com); BMW Motohire (www.bmw-motohire.com); Globbusters (www.globbusters.com); Motorrad Tours (www.motorrad-tours.com); The Spanish Biker (thespanishbiker.wordpress.com) and to Rogerio Carmo; Warren Edwards; Tony Lang; Richard Nash; David Perez; Peter Richardson; Joan Santos Sanchez; Paul Watson and all the RIDE readers who suggested roads to ride or places to visit.

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NEW TIGER 1200 **XR**

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