

This CORK & FORK sample itinerary with pricing has been developed based on a group of 4 and is provided merely as a glimpse of the sort of customized travel experience CORK & FORK would delight in developing for independent travelers and groups.



Spain Food, Wine & Culture

Basque Country, La Rioja & Barcelona

Highlights:

- 9-Day/8-Night handcrafted Epicurean Travel program to Spain focused on the Basque Country (include Rioja Alavesa Wine Country) and Catalonia, the country's most cutting-edge gastronomic regions
- 8 Nights of deluxe accommodations at superb four-star, boutique properties
- Two private, chef-led culinary lessons (one in the Basque Country and one in Barcelona) designed as hands-on exposure to both the traditional and modern adaptations of these exceptional regional cuisines
- A full-day wine tour to La Rioja in the Basque Province of Alva. The excursion will include private visits and tastings at two top producers in addition to a Riojan lunch and a walking tour of the impossibly-charming hilltop wine town of Laguardia. In Catalonia, a half-day excursion to the top Catalan appellation of Penedes, best known for Cava, but also for hidden gem and great value reds and whites.
- Private Epicurean Walking Tours of both Belle Epoque San Sebastian and vibrant Barcelona. Your guides will expose you to rich history, exceptional food markets including the sensational Boqueria market in Barcelona's old town, and gourmet food shops at which you will learn about regional gourmet specialties and enjoy tastings.
- A private epicurean excursion to the beautiful Basque Coast to include private visits to a Txakoli bodega and an innovative, young artisan Basque cheesemaker along with lunch in the ancient fishing village of Getaria
- A customized dining program that will expose you to authentic regional cuisine as well as modern interpretations of traditional classics featuring leading chefs of the moment
- Attention to the minutest detail, a CORK & FORK hallmark



Contact Jim Dondero at CORK & FORK to discuss this itinerary.

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Day One: Arrival to Bilbao, capital of Spanish Basque Country. Private transfer 1 hr 15 min to San Sebastian via Mercedes luxury minivan. En route, stop off at the Guggenheim Museum Bilbao, the masterwork of Canadian-American architect Frank Gehry. You may wish to enjoy lunch at the wonderful museum bistro (cost of lunch not included). The museum is primarily an exhibit museum and we will share information on exhibits being staged during your visit. A walk around the outside and inside of the museum is reason enough to visit this landmark structure. Continue on to San Sebastian. Balance of the day at leisure. Accommodations: Villa Soro, an elegant boutique hotel and historic landmark built in 1898

Day Two: At 10:00 a.m., meet your guide, one of our top epicurean guides (anywhere!) who is regarded as the leading observer of the Basque culinary scene. Your day will begin with an Epicurean Walking Tour of the food-obsessed town of San Sebastian, which is home to more Michelin-starred restaurants than are many European capitals and once was the summer destination of choice for European royalty. Begin the day with a private guided stroll through the charming old town with attention to key cultural sites and the splendid art nouveau architecture. Following visits to La Bretxa market as well as gourmet food shops (tastings are included), you will proceed to your guide's informal culinary studio in the old town where you will participate in an interactive culinary lesson with chef, Josetxo, a highly-experienced Basque culinary instructor. The session will include exposure both to traditional and modern Basque cuisine. Lunch with wine pairings will follow. The day will conclude at approximately 3:30 p.m. Please note that your accommodations are located a leisurely, 10-minute stroll from Parte Vieja, San Sebastian's old town. A light tapas dinner might be in order after this lunch! Of course, CORK & FORK will provide recommendations on the best tapas spots. Accommodations: Villa Soro

Day Three: Today, we have organized a half-day (approximately 4.5 hour, 11:00 a.m. – 3:30 p.m.) private excursion led by your guide to the scenic and very green Basque Coast of Spain, where coastal mountains hug the coastline. In Zarautz, you will pass by the beautifully-situated Basque vineyards overlooking the Atlantic. This is the epicenter of Txakoli, the slightly effervescent, high acidity, low alcohol Basque white wine produced from the indigenous Hondarribi Zuri and Hondarribi Beltza grapes. While your specific visit cannot be confirmed this far in advance, you likely will visit Bodegas Txomin Etxaniz, located in the heart of the ancient fishing village of Getaria. Lunch (cost of lunch not included) can be at Kaia, famed for its simple preparation of fish that is grilled outdoors over charcoal to flaky perfection and perfectly paired with a lively Txakoli. You also will visit a young, artisan Basque cheesemaker, who is renowned for his diverse range of innovative Basque cheeses, which most certainly are a regional gastronomic highlight. During the day, your guide will share insight into the unique Basque culture and traditions such as their love affair with the sea. Transfers for the day will be via Mercedes luxury minivan. Balance of the day at leisure. Suggestions for time at leisure include the following:

- Stroll the Paseo de la Concha beachfront promenade
- Ride the funicular to the top of Monte Igueldo to take in the magnificent views
- Shop! – the main commercial area is centered around the cathedral – shop for leather goods, jewelry and clothing

Day Four: With your driver/guide, depart San Sebastian for Rioja Alavesa, the premier section of the world wine capital of La Rioja, which is located in the southern Basque province of Alava and, of course, is known as the region where the Tempranillo wine grape reaches its fullest potential. The full-day excursion to this most majestic wine region will include a guided walk through the charming hilltop wine village of Laguardia, which was founded in 900 and once was home to hundreds of underground wineries. Full of cobbled streets, old palaces and mostly-intact city walls, the town has changed little since the medieval period.

During the day, your guide will escort you on private visits and tastings to two leading boutique bodegas. We will better understand your wine knowledge and interests to ensure we select the most appropriate bodegas. At the majority of bodegas, our clients are hosted by the winemaker or owner, but a number of these individuals do not speak English in which case your guide will serve as the translator. While it is too early to confirm specific bodega visits, examples of bodegas that you might visit include Remirez de Ganunza, home to some of the best Tempranillo vineyards in La Rioja. Wine guru Robert Parker recently awarded a perfect 100 rating to the Remirez Gran Reserva 2004. Another client favourite is Casa Primicia, a relatively-new boutique bodega located in one of Laguardia's oldest civic buildings in the fully-restored cellars of a centuries-old bodega. As with all these private visits, you will learn about the bodega's story and its wine from a key player followed by private tastings that we have organized on your behalf. Lunch with wine pairings, which is included today, will be at Hector Oribe, one of the area's top restaurants, which features innovative Riojan cuisine.

Depart La Rioja and continue 1 hr 20 mins to Bilbao. Accommodations: Gran Hotel Domine, a stylish and contemporary property overlooking the Guggenheim Museum.

Day Five: Private transfer 20 min via Mercedes luxury minivan to Bilbao Airport for 1 hr 10 min morning flight to Barcelona via Spanair, one of the country's top air carriers. Upon arrival to Barcelona, meet your driver in the airport arrivals hall for a 35 min transfer to your hotel overlooking the Barcelona seafront. At 12:30 p.m., your guide, who you will soon learn is as vibrant as the city of Barcelona, will meet you for an afternoon Epicurean and Cultural Walking Tour of the old town – El Born and the Gothic Quarter. Your guide will share with you the city's Roman, Jewish and Catalan histories. You will see Roman ruins, fine medieval churches such as the Santa Maria del Mar and the city's cathedral, as well as out-of-the-way gothic alleys and palaces. At the start of the visit, you will make three Epicurean visits in the alleyways of El Born. These will include: Vila Viniteca, one of our favorite wine shops, which operates a gourmet food shop serving up exceptional sausages and cheeses which pair so well with Tempranillo; Bubo, a Pastelería de Diseño (designer pastry shop); and Torradors Gispert, an atmospheric, 160 year-old shop which has been roasting nuts in the same oven since opening in the mid-19th century. Other gourmet specialties sold here include olives, spices and saffron, marmelade, chocolate, oils, salt and all sorts of dried nuts and fruits. Tasting are included. Your guide also will join you for a tapas lunch (cost of lunch not included). Your guide is quite knowledgeable on the works of modernist architect Antoni Gaudi, so we suggest a guided visit to the iconic Sagrada Familia temple. She will leave you at your hotel at approximately 5:30 p.m. Accommodations: Duquesa de Cardona, a wonderful boutique property housed in a 19th-century structure and situated in the old part of the city on the maritime promenade.

Day Six: We expect today will be one of the highlights of your program. You will begin the day by meeting Chef Jaume Brichs at 10:00 a.m. and proceeding to the fabulous Boqueria market, which is hundreds of years old and is arguably the leading food market in all of Europe. Jaume is a well-known Barcelona chef who currently serves as a pastry chef, culinary instructor and consultant to Barcelona restaurants. He thoroughly enjoys sharing his passion for Catalan cuisine with visitors via private culinary lessons. Jaume has been shopping at the Boqueria for years. You will visit some of the top vendors, while Jaume purchases ingredients for your culinary lesson. We particularly like the seafood displays at the Boqueria, but there is so much more here. The people watching isn't bad either and you might stop for a coffee to savor the market goings-on. Only after getting your fill of this wonderful market, you will proceed with Jaume to the north of the city to a private penthouse apartment, which features a large, well-equipped kitchen and a lovely terrace overlooking Mount Tibidabo. Once at the apartment and after rolling up your sleeves, Jaume will lead you on a 3.5 hour, interactive culinary lesson focusing on a traditional Catalan menu. Past menus have included salted cod salad with olives and peppers, negro (black squid ink) rice with tiny cuttlefish, salted red mullet, pan tomate with wonderful rustic bread and various types of olive oils and wonderful dessert. Weather permitting, you will enjoy lunch on the terrace. The session will conclude at approximately 3:30 p.m. We suggest a taxi back to your hotel (cost of taxi not included). Balance of the day at leisure. Plan on another light tapas dinner for tonight! Accommodations: Duquesa de Cardona

Day Seven: Today will include a half-day (5.5 hour) excursion to the appellation of Penedes, located just 50 min from the Catalan capital. Best known as Spain's cava region, Penedes also is regarded for its reds and whites. The soil in the Penedes region is mostly limestone and perfect for viticulture. The main grapes used for white wine and Cava production are Parellada, Macabeo, Xarel.lo and Chardonnay, while reds are based on the Garnacha (Grenache), Monastrell and Tempranillo grapes as well as the dominant Bordeaux varietals of Cabernet Sauvignon and Merlot. Your sommelier guide will lead you on a visit to two boutique wineries where you will be hosted by the owners and/or winemakers. While we can't confirm the visits this far in advance, the visits likely will be to Mas Candi and Pardis. A tapas lunch at one of the wineries is included. Founded in 1996, Mas Candi produces a Cava as well as a crisp Xarel.lo, while Pardis, founded a year later, produces a range of wines including a Xarel.lo, a unique rose derived from Cab and Merlot grapes, a single varietal Cab Franc, and it's flagship brand, a Bordeaux blend typically comprised of Cab and Cab Franc. The day will start at approximately 10:00 a.m. and conclude at 3:30 p.m. Balance of the day at leisure. Accommodations: Duquesa de Cardona

Day Eight: Day at leisure in Barcelona. Following are recommended activities at leisure in Barcelona:

- Art Museums: The Picasso Museum in the El Born and the Contemporary Art Museum, the National Art Museum, or the Fundacio Joan Miro, a favorite of many
- Visit Mount Tibidabo
- Visit Casa Mila, located near Casa Fuster and one of the Gaudi buildings that you will not visit on the Monday tour

- Shop either in the Old Quarters or the upscale Eixample
- More Wine Opportunities! We are happy to arrange a tasting at one of the wine emporiums in the city such as Monvinic
- Golf at RCG El Prat, a fine Greg Norman design located in an upscale suburb (we can assist with arrangements)
Half-day excursion to the monastery of Montserrat, situated high in the mountains or even to historic Girona in the Costa Brava (we can assist with arrangements)

Accommodations: Duquesa de Cardona

Day Nine: Private transfer via Mercedes Viano luxury minivan to Barcelona's El Prat Airport for departure.

What's included:

- 8 nights deluxe accommodations: Villa Soro – Double Standard rooms with king and twin-bed options (please note that the standard rooms are located in the more contemporary annex, next to the main building); Gran Hotel Domine – Guggenheim Basic room (3rd category up from standard room, overlooks Guggenheim) with queen and twin-bed options; Duquesa de Cardona – Classic room with queen and twin-bed options (option to a upgrade to a room with marina views)
- Two wine tasting tours: a full-day wine tasting tour of La Rioja including transport, guide services, lunch with wine pairings, private visits and tastings and a half-day visit to Penedes including transport, guide services, a tapas lunch with wine pairings, private visits and tastings
- Two interactive culinary lessons (in San Sebastian and Barcelona) as specified including lunches with wine pairings
- Two Epicurean Walking Tours (in Sebastian and Barcelona) as specified including guide services and tastings
- Basque Coast tour as specified to include visits to a Txakoli bodega and a cheesemaker
- Chef-led shopping tour of the sensational Boqueria market in Barcelona
- Private Mercedes airport transfers as specified
- Spanair Coach Class Airfare from Bilbao to Barcelona
- Breakfast each morning at your hotel
- As noted above, four lunches with wine pairings are included in your program
- Detailed and opinionated dining guide including restaurant bookings
- 24/7 telephone support of a CORK & FORK representative
- All taxes, CORK & FORK fees, and gratuities for services specified in this proposal

Pricing Per Person (based on a group of 4, double occupancy): \$3,990

Pricing is subject to availability and will be confirmed at the time of booking. A 25% deposit is required to activate this itinerary. The balance is required 65 days prior to travel.

Please contact Jim Dondero for further information at 919.536.3200 or jim@corkandfork.net