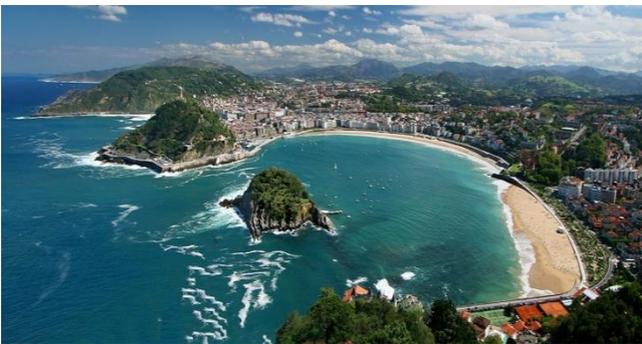


# Discover Spain's northern coast by private train and experience the best of the Rioja wine region

A 17-day luxury tour in June, 2017\*

(\*Tour start date to be set once train schedule for 2017 is announced.)



## A truly memorable holiday

Join us in June 2017 for an unforgettable journey across a part of Spain that we know will captivate you with its beauty, history and unexpected surprises. This bespoke tour of Spain's enchanting 'Costa Verde' and world famous Rioja region will allow you to:

- Experience one of the world's great rail journeys aboard a luxury train reserved exclusively for our group, featuring outstanding cuisine and wines, spectacular scenery and daily excursions that will showcase the best of Northern Spain.
- Beyond the 8-day train journey, prepare to be seduced by the natural beauty and colourful ambience of San Sebastian, before exploring the famous Rioja wine region on the way to our final destination, Madrid.
- Dine at a number of Michelin-starred restaurants and some less well-known venues that will leave you in no doubt as to why Spain is regarded as a gastronomic paradise.
- Travel in a private bus that offers ample space and comfort, and that will take us on our daily excursions whilst on the train journey and on the pre and post-train legs of our adventure.
- Benefit from the expert knowledge and first-hand insights of local guides who will enhance your appreciation of each destination.
- Benefit from the value, ease and comprehensive itinerary of an escorted group tour, filled with special touches that will enhance your enjoyment of this fascinating part of Spain.
- Have the freedom and flexibility for 'private time' each day, so that you can decide how to use the available free time. Be part of a group, yet independent.
- Enjoy the personalised attention and camaraderie that being part of one of our small group tours offers. You will come to understand why being part of a like-minded group of travellers can be so much fun!

## The details

Our tour will be limited to 26 travellers and will commence in Santiago de Compostela in June, 2017, with the exact date to be set when the train schedule is announced.

With demand for travel on the *El Transcantábrico Gran Lujo* train being so high, securing exclusive use of the train for our group means that we need to identify all of the 26 travellers who will be joining us for this memorable journey by June 30, 2016.

Once all places are filled, we will engage with each and every fellow traveller to get to know your preferences and to tailor the final finer details of the journey so as to deliver as many surprises as possible.

We know all too well that it is the little touches that make the difference between a normal holiday and a truly memorable one, and we are committed to giving you an experience that you will treasure for all time.

For now, we invite you to read on to learn what is planned and just how much is included in the tour.

It then only remains for you to let us know if you would like to be amongst the 26 travellers who will be joining us for this exciting journey.

To enhance the experience, we invite you to share this information with your friends and see if they would like to join you and thus form a group within the group. This will only enhance your enjoyment of this magical holiday.

The camaraderie of like-minded travellers has always been a feature of all our tours since we started in 2004 and has been the secret to making them so enjoyable!

Your hosts,  
Jose & Leona Blanco

## The star of the tour

The *El Transcantábrico Gran Lujo* train is the epitome of luxury on rails. There are only a handful of such great trains in the world and this experience is bound to leave you with memories that will last a lifetime.



Every night the train will be stationary to allow us a peaceful sleep. Each morning a luxury bus and a very knowledgeable guide will be waiting to take us to some fantastic sites in Northern Spain.

### Suites

The suites on the Gran Lujo have a 150cms wide by 200cms long double bed, with some having the option of twin beds. Each suite has a sofa and a writing table. Each features hardwood panelling and large windows, as well as a luxuriously large bathroom with sauna/steam shower and hydro massage. All offer the modern conveniences that are necessary for a truly comfortable journey.



### Dining Car

The elegant dining car will be the venue for each morning's buffet breakfast and for other occasional meals.

### Lounge Cars

*El Transcantabrico Gran Lujo* has four sumptuous lounge cars, made more than a century ago, thus exuding a feeling of a bygone, elegant era.



These include the bar car with its own dance floor, creating a small night-club, where entertainment is provided every night until the early hours of the morning. Another lounge car also has a bar where you can sit back to enjoy a quiet drink whilst reflecting on the passing scenery. There is a library with newspapers and magazines; and DVDs and television are available on board, but are unlikely to be required.

### Catering

Each breakfast and some lunches and dinners are taken on the train, but dining also takes place in local restaurants, enabling us to sample northern Spanish cuisine from Asturias, Cantabria, Galicia and the Basque country, using the finest ingredients, frequently locally-sourced. The cheeses, sausages, meat, vegetables, fish and seafood are all universally renowned. All menus include a selection of local wines, coffee and liqueurs.

[N.B. Please click on any of the hotel names highlighted to open the respective websites.  
The inclusions refer to: Overnight = Accommodation in nominated hotel; B = Breakfast; L = Lunch; D = Dinner]

## DAY 01 SANTIAGO DE COMPOSTELA



Arrive in Santiago de Compostela (you are welcome to make your own arrangements or to have our travel partner book your preferred flights) and transfer to the majestic **Hotel Hostal dos Reis Catolicos**, which has been used as a royal hospital for pilgrims and an inn since the late 1400's and today is a 5-star hotel that is simply the best place to stay in Santiago de Compostela. The day is reserved for you to acquaint yourself with the wonders of this famous city. However, as the day draws to a close, we will gather for a welcome cocktail and the first of what we are sure will be many memorable dinners. [Included: Overnight. D]

## DAY 02 SANTIAGO DE COMPOSTELA

After breakfast in the Parador (*bear in mind that we never rise too early*), today is devoted to an excursion on our private bus that will take us out of Santiago de Compostela and allow us to experience some of the spectacular scenery of Spain's most western province, Galicia. We will visit Pontevedra, a city of Celtic origin which flourished as a major trading centre during the Middle Ages, and that today retains a charming old quarter, as well as streets and squares adorned with stone crosses. Before we return to Santiago de Compostela we will have lunch at one of the local restaurants where we can sample the seafood for which this part of Spain is famous. After we return to the parador, the remainder of the day is at your leisure so that you can enjoy the ambience of this great city and choose to do whatever takes your fancy. As the sun starts to set, take your pick from one of the many cafes, bars or fine restaurants on offer. [Included: Overnight. B. L.]



## DAY 03 SANTIAGO DE COMPOSTELA – VIVIERO

Today, we will take a tour of the city centre, whose narrow streets and old squares make it ideal to explore on foot. The Praza do Obradoiro is one of the finest squares in the world and is the focal point for pilgrims arriving in the city on the Camino de Santiago (also known as the 'Route of St James'). The cathedral's baroque facade dominates the square, much of it remaining virtually unchanged since the 11th century. After lunch we will go by private bus to the city of Ferrol, to commence our special journey aboard the '**El Transcantabrico Gran Lujo**', our luxury home on wheels for the next seven days. The train's crew will be waiting to welcome us and to help us settle into our suites. The train will then make its way to the historic town of Viveiro, capital of the region of A Marina Occidental, where we will have dinner and spend the night. [Included: Overnight. B. L. D.]



## DAY 04 VIVEIRO – RIBADEO - LUARCA



Whilst we enjoy our breakfast, the train will make its way to Ribadeo, located on the border between Galicia and Asturias. From here we will go by bus for an excursion along the coast of Lugo to the Playa de Las Catedrales, so named for the series of cliffs, some over 32 metres high, that erosion has sculpted in the form of arches and vaults to create one of the world's most spectacular beaches. Ribadeo is also where we will have lunch today, with the region's fine seafood sure to figure prominently on the menu. Afterwards we will have some free time to enjoy the town before returning to the train. We then continue our journey crossing the landscapes of western Asturias until we reach Luarca, the 'White Town of the Green Coast', where we will have dinner and spend the night. [Included: Overnight. B. L. D.]

## DAY 05 LUARCA – AVILES – GIJON – OVIEDO – CANDAS

This morning we travel from Luarca to Candas whilst we enjoy breakfast on board and feast on the spectacular scenery. The first visit of the day is to Aviles, the industrial city par excellence that has preserved its valuable historic old town. Then we go to Gijon (*Jose's home town*), a city that is as open to the Cantabrian Sea as it is full of cultural events. Time has been set aside to explore and have lunch in Gijon. In the afternoon we will travel to



nearby Oviedo, capital of the Principality of Asturias and home to a handful of unique Pre-Romanesque monuments. The afternoon will allow you time some free time to explore the city. Dinner will be served on board as the train takes us to Candás, where it will spend the night. [Included: Overnight. B. L. D.]

## DAY 06 CANDAS – ARRIONDAS - LLANES



Today, the train will make its way to Arriondas, from where we will travel by bus to the Picos de Europa National Park, where we will visit its lakes and the Shrine of Covadonga. Lunch will be taken in Cangas de Onís, the first capital of the Kingdom of Asturias, but only after a tour of this picturesque town. Afterwards, we return to the train, which will then take us to Llanes, a charming seaside town in eastern Asturias. The afternoon will be at leisure so that you can explore the town and see why it is rated one of the top summer holiday destinations in northern Spain. Llanes is also where we will have dinner and spend the night. [Included: Overnight. B. L. D.]



## DAY 07 LLANES – POTES – CABEZON DE LA SAL

This morning the train travels the coastal route that connects Asturias and neighbouring Cantabria. We will cross the gorge of La Hermida by bus to reach the Shrine of Santo Toribio de Liebana and later Potes, known as the town of bridges and towers. After visiting this charming town, we will stop for lunch, where we will enjoy a typical Cantabrian meal. There will also be free time in the afternoon to explore the town before making our way on the train to Cabezon de la Sal, where we will have dinner and stay overnight. [Included: Overnight. B. L. D.]

## DAY 08 CABEZON DE LA SAL – SANTILLANA DEL MAR - SANTANDER

After breakfast, we will go by bus to the famous Neocave of Altamira, the greatest example of Upper Palaeolithic cave art. Afterwards we visit Santillana del Mar, with its beautifully preserved medieval old town. In the afternoon, the train will enter Cantabria and take us to its capital, Santander. The afternoon will be at leisure to allow us to explore this elegant city, featuring the Matalenas area, the Sardinero Beach and La Magdalena Peninsula, where King Alfonso XIII had his summer residence. Dinner and overnight will be in Santander. [Included: Overnight. B. L. D.]



## DAY 09 SANTANDER – BILBAO – VILLASANA DE MENA



This morning we arrive in Bilbao, a historic city that has managed to reinvent itself after the decline of its historic heavy industry. Our visit includes entry to the famous Guggenheim Museum, symbol of the new Bilbao. After lunch, the afternoon is free for you to do as you wish. Towards the end of the day we return to the train and make our way to Villasana de Mena, where we will have dinner and spend the night. [Included: Overnight. B. L. D.]



## DAY 10 VILLASANA DE MENA – SAN SEBASTIAN

This morning we bid farewell to our train and will be transported by bus to San Sebastian, where we will have a tour of the city, which is famous for its natural beauty and for its annual film and jazz festivals. After the tour we will transfer to our hotel for the next three nights, the **Hotel de Londres y de Inglaterra**. The remainder of the day will be free for us to explore this spectacular city, which is famous the world over for its spectacular beach, fine cuisine and pintxos bars. [Included: Overnight. B.]

## DAY 11 SAN SEBASTIAN

Once you are in San Sebastian, you will easily understand why today is entirely at your leisure to continue enjoying the ambience of this



memorable city. The old town, Parte Vieja, is wedged between the bay and the Rio Urumea. The alleys of the old town, packed with restaurants and pintxos bars are intensely animated at night. The heart of the old town is the Plaza de la Constitucion where numbers on the balconies date from when the square was used as a



bullring. [OPTIONAL: For those of you who are food aficionados, there will be the option of a degustation dinner at one the famous Michelin-starred restaurants for which the city is famous.] [Included: Overnight. B.]

## DAY 12 SAN SEBASTIAN



Yes, today is yet another day at leisure in San Sebastian. We have scheduled this simply because this is one of the great playgrounds of not only Spain, but also Europe. Rest assured that you will want the clock to stop so that you can stay for as long as possible in this magical city, sampling magnificent food, enjoying one of Spain's finest beaches and taking in the ambience. Our hotel faces the beach and is close to both the old quarter and the more modern streets that are filled with boutiques and other temptations. We are confident that, like us, you will fall in love with San Sebastian. [Included: Overnight. B.]

## DAY 13 SAN SEBASTIAN – ELCIEGO (VIA PAMPLONA)

This morning we depart on our private bus for our journey south into La Rioja, Spain's most famous wine producing region. On the way, we will pass through Pamplona, a city famous for its annual San Fermin 'Running of the Bulls' festival. After lunch we will make our way on to the town of Elciego and our beautiful home for the next two nights, the luxurious Frank Gehry-designed **Hotel Marques de Riscal**. The remainder of the day will be at leisure so that we can enjoy the hotel, explore the town, take in the ambience and have dinner in one of the local restaurants. [Included: Overnight. B. D.]



## DAY 14 ELCIEGO

Today is all about enjoying one of the world's great wine regions, as



we visit some of the finest wine producers that La Rioja has to offer. We will experience a traditional winery in the town of Haro, before visiting one of the modern wineries in Alavesa. Lunch will be taken at the winery, before we return to our hotel, where the choice will be between a well-earned siesta or perhaps a stroll to walk off the lunch! The evening awaits for whatever takes your fancy – even dinner in one of Haro's fine restaurants if you still have the appetite. Alternatively, you could just sample a selection of tapas at one of the many bars in the town centre. [Included: Overnight. B. L.]



## DAY 15 ELCIEGO – COVARRUBIAS – LA GRANJA - MADRID

This morning we head south towards Madrid. We pass through Burgos, before making our way to the beautiful Parador at La Granja de San Ildefonso, just 11km from Segovia.

Located in the town is a 17th Century Royal Palace which is now a national monument of impressive beauty valued not only for its architectural merit, but also for its beautiful gardens decorated with statues and fountains. The Parador, housed in the Casa de los Infantes (Princes' House) and constructed in the 18th century is where we will have lunch. Afterwards we continue our journey south to

Madrid, our final destination. Once we have checked in to our hotel for the next two nights, the **Hotel Orfila**, the remainder of the day is at leisure. [Included: Overnight. B. L.]

## DAY 16 MADRID

A relaxed start today with breakfast at the hotel before we are met by our local guide for a tour of the city. We will walk through some of the majestic streets of the capital, entering the



Museum quarter where we will enjoy a guided tour of the magnificent Prado Museum. With almost 9,000 exhibits in its permanent collection, the museum houses the world's greatest assembly of Spanish painting - especially works by Velazquez and Goya - ranging from the 12th to the 19th century. The afternoon will be at leisure so that you can



continue exploring one of Europe's great cities, with its historic plazas, wonderful museums and impressive Royal Palace. This evening we will gather for our final dinner. [Included: Overnight. B. D.]

continue exploring one of Europe's great cities, with its historic plazas, wonderful museums and impressive Royal Palace. This evening we will gather for our final dinner. [Included: Overnight. B. D.]

## DAY 17 MADRID

Today we farewell Madrid and one another, as well all depart for our next destination. [Included: B.]



\* \* \* \*

## *Please note....*

**Tour Cost (\*):** Price Per Person: **A\$13,950.00**  
**Single Supplement:** **A\$ 4,950.00** (*Applicable to persons traveling alone*)

As the tour is not till June 2017, the amount quoted is the best estimate that we can make at this point in time, bearing in mind that the cost of the train journey, hotels and other components of the tour may change over the coming 18 months. You also need to allow for possible fluctuations in the exchange rate between the Australian dollar and the Euro.

As you will have read, the tour offers a bespoke experience that should provide you with a lifetime of wonderful memories and some fabulous insights into the way of life in northern Spain. Please review the following information to see all of the inclusions that go to making this tour excellent value.

## *The Reviews of the 2015 Tour:*

*"A brief note of thanks and congratulations to you and Leona for so successfully organising such a memorable tour through selected parts of Spain, with our own El Transcantabrico train such a unique way of covering the north coast. We really enjoyed meeting and touring with the 'team'. The camaraderie of the tour group was great! There were so many highlights for us throughout the trip, and northern Spain really was a revelation - we will definitely return to explore and enjoy further!"*

*"We loved everything about our Spanish experience. Your organisation made the trip a great experience, and I feel we got a deep look into northern Spain. And of course the convivial company made it more special"*

*"Our sincere thanks to you and Leona for coordinating an unforgettable tour that we felt privileged to be part of."*

## *Further Details....*

If you have any questions about the tour or would like to register your place on the tour, please contact:

Jose Blanco

Mobile: 0419 276 130

Email: [jose@blancotouringcompany.com](mailto:jose@blancotouringcompany.com)

Leona Blanco

Mobile: 0418 967 435

Email: [leona@blancotouringcompany.com](mailto:leona@blancotouringcompany.com)

**(\*) Notes:**

- The quoted price is based on 28 persons travelling in the group, being the maximum group size. The price may vary if the final tour group is smaller than indicated and is also subject to fluctuations in the applicable exchange rate.
  - Accommodation is as follows:
    - ✓ Parador 'Hostal dos Reis Catolicos' 5\*, Santiago de Compostela (standard/classic rooms)#
    - ✓ El Transcantabrico Grand Luxe train 5\* (Privilege suites)
    - ✓ Hotel de Londres y de Inglaterra 4\*, San Sebastian (Deluxe sea view rooms)#
    - ✓ Hotel Marques de Riscal 5\*, Elciego (Deluxe rooms)#
    - ✓ Hotel Orfila 5\*, Madrid (City view rooms)#
- [Note: # Room upgrades are available at the applicable cost. To visit the website of each hotel, please click on the corresponding name in the itinerary on the previous pages.]
- All listed non-train transportation will be in a deluxe private bus, both during the train journey and for the prior and subsequent legs of the tour.
  - Meals are included as listed: B: Breakfast / L: Lunch / D: Dinner being:
    - ✓ All breakfasts, other than on the day of arrival
    - ✓ Welcome drinks and dinner on day 1
    - ✓ Lunch in Pontevedra on day 2
    - ✓ Dinner in Elciego on day 13
    - ✓ Lunch in Haro on day 14
    - ✓ Lunch in La Granja de San Ildefonso on day 15
    - ✓ Farewell dinner in Madrid on day 16
  - The 8-day journey on the El Transcantabrico Grand Luxe great train includes;
    - ✓ 7 nights' accommodation on board the El Transcantabrico
    - ✓ 7 breakfasts, 7 dinners and 7 lunches including regional wines, coffee and liqueurs
    - ✓ Professional multilingual tour guide throughout the journey
    - ✓ Live music in the Pub Car
    - ✓ All excursions in the itinerary and entrance fees to all museums, monuments, cathedrals, etc.
    - ✓ Deluxe coach transport for all side trips and restaurants
    - ✓ Daily newspapers and magazines
    - ✓ Security Staff
    - ✓ All local taxes and communication and service costs
  - Full day excursion of regions of Galicia with private guide on day 2
  - Half day tour of Santiago de Compostela with a private guide, including entrance fees, on day 3
  - Escort guide from San Sebastian to Madrid
  - Private excursion to La Rioja including winery visits, lunch and wine tastings
  - Private Half day tour of Madrid including the Museo del Prado, including entrance fees
  - All items not specifically mentioned are not included, such as beverages not listed.
  - The price quoted is on the basis of persons sharing a double room, unless a single supplement is paid.
  - We reserve the right to make changes to the proposed itinerary should circumstances so require.



*A truly memorable holiday filled with wonderful experiences*

## LUGGAGE

Luggage: 1 piece of luggage (1 suitcase) is the maximum per person for bus travel. If you require an increased luggage capacity, it is your responsibility to advise us at the beginning of the quotation and/or reservation process

## DOCUMENTS AND VISAS

All travellers will require a valid passport with a minimum of 6 months validity. Australian passport holders do not require a visa for Spain. Normally, no vaccinations are required for travel to Spain. However, it is always recommended that you check with your local doctor or the Travellers' Medical and Vaccination Centre in your state, just to be sure.

## RESERVATION AND PAYMENT

A deposit of \$2,000.00 per person is required to start a booking. (or \$2,500.00 per person for a single traveller). No reservation will be processed without this deposit. A further part-payment of 25% will be required 120 days prior to departure. Full balance payment is due 60 days prior to departure.

## TOUR PRICE

All tour prices are based on tariffs and exchange rates in effect at 4 October 2015. Prices are subject to change if such rates vary prior to departure. Important : All prices are subject to change without notice.

All of the costs are best estimates as at 4 October 2015 and must serve as an approximate guide only.

## CANCELLATIONS

If it is necessary to cancel your arrangements, then cancellation fees will be incurred. Notice of cancellation must be in writing. Cancellation fees are as follows;

**Once paid, the El Transcantabrico Grand Luxe portion of the deposit is NON refundable. This amount depends on the standard suite chosen as follows;**

**Double suite..... \$1,500.00 per person**

**Single suite.....\$1,950.00 per person**

Up to 120 days prior to departure ..... : Loss of Full Deposit

Between 119days and 60days ..... :25% of tour cost

Between 59days and 30days ..... :50% of tour cost

Less than 30 days ..... :100% of tour cost

There will be no refunds for services not utilised on the tour.

## TRAVEL INSURANCE

At the time of booking and paying your deposit, it is strongly recommend that you purchase travel insurance. Ensure it is appropriate for all your travel arrangements as well as providing for cancellation charges detailed on this page.

This tour is offered by Blanco Touring Company, which is a business name owned by Coyhaique Pty Limited, incorporated in Victoria, ACN 605 751 522, and by Ibertours Travel, which is the trading name of Australia España Marketing Group Pty Ltd, incorporated in Victoria, ACN 052 536 606, Travel Agents Lic. 31571.

The Terms and Conditions set out herein are to be read in conjunction with the Terms and Conditions that appear on the current company brochure," Spain, Portugal and Morocco - The Iberian Triangle" published by our tour partners, Ibertours Travel. All references therein to Ibertours Travel and/or Australia España Marketing Group Pty Ltd apply equally to Blanco Touring Company and/or Coyhaique Pty Limited.