

European Total Solar Eclipse French Basque Country, Andorra & Spain Twelve Day Tour ~ August 10-21, 2026

Highlights: Airfare Newark to Bordeaux and Nonstop Airfare Barcelona to Newark • Four Dreamy Nights at Hotel La Reserve, Saint John de Luz, French Basque Country • Three Relaxing Nights at Hotel Coma, Ordino, Andorra • Two Tranquil Nights at El Jardins de la Martana Hotel, Besalu Spain • Splendid Saint John de Luz • Villa Arnaga • Puyodebat Chocolate Museum • Beautiful Bidart • Chateau d'Abbadia • Adorable Ainhoa • Stunning Sare • Prehistoric Caves of Sare • Ortillopitx Basque House • Enchanting Esplette & its Famous Peppers • Pas de Roland Scenic Walk • Spectacular Saint Jean Pied de Port • Esplette Pepper Workshop Tour • Alluring Ascaïn • Cogwheel Train to La Rhune Summit • Sensational Salies de Bearn • Remarkable Rieux Volvestre • Cascada des les Moles • Andorra's Legendary Tamarros • Cute Canillo • Mirador Roc del Quer • Pont Tibeta Canillo • Toll Bullidor Waterfall • Sanctuary of Meritxell Basilica • Cami des les Pardines Scenic Walk to Engolasters Lake • Outstanding Ordino • Casa d'Areny-Plandolit Museum • Thrilling Tristaina Solar Viewpoint • La Massana Waterfall Walk • Magic Labyrinth of the Pyrenees • Beguiling Besalu • Gaudi's Artigas Gardens • Monastery of Santa Maria de Lillet • All Breakfasts • Four Lunches • One Dinner • Fully Escorted

Another Total Solar Eclipse is coming our way, but this time is only visible in parts of Europe, Greenland, and Iceland. If you appreciate experiencing natural wonders in uncrowded places, then this is the trip for you! August is already high season for travel in all places along the path of totality, meaning very large crowds and extremely high prices that can easily result in a diminished and disappointing experience for a 2 minute event which may not even be visible due to unexpected weather conditions. This eclipse is extra challenging in that its start is right before sunset and close to the horizon, so you need an uncomplicated landscape in order to view this phenomenon. So, let's go a bit out of totality where it's still 99.5% to the coast of French Basque Country where our views are as good as anywhere else, where the crowds are less, and where countless memorable and intriguing places are waiting to be explored. We'll take a leisurely trek back towards Spain with a stopover in the vast mountainous nature of Andorra and then into the medieval atmosphere of Besalu. So why not get into the adventurous spirit and be part of this celestial event in the ancient, free-spirited land of the Basques filled with charming, colorful villages and their unique distinctive architecture along with soaring mountains and rolling hills leading to the deep azure blue of the sea.

Day 1. Get comfortable and after a few winks of sleep on our overnight flight, we'll wake up in France!

Day 2. After arriving in Bordeaux, we'll make our way south through the beautiful French countryside straight into the unique Basque region with centuries of history, culture, and age-old traditions. If time allows, we'll stop in an ideal Basque village to take in our first sights of colorfully charming homes that could tell you more than 700 years of stories and history if you stop to take a listen. Onto our lovely home for the next four nights at La Reserve, nestled in a serene setting atop the sparkling sea. Take in all the amazing atmosphere, and join us for an included dinner before settling in for a tranquil night's sleep.



Traditional Basque Village



Andorra Mountain Road

Day 3. Today is Eclipse Day, but we have so much time to explore the area before the big celestial event, so let's get started! A house of dreams inspired by white walled, red timbered Basque farms surrounded by an astonishing French and English styled garden is our first destination. Villa Arnaga built for Edmond Rostand, famous poet and author of *Cyrano de Bergerac*, will entice your senses as you wander through its belle epoque interior filled with collections and art masterpieces to impress the most influential and famous. A walk through the enchanting garden with a sunrise and sunset side will reveal all the poet's romantic secret places. A delicious delight is next at the Puyodebat Chocolate Museum where we'll see firsthand the process of chocolate making in the Basque Country then indulge in a delectable taste test. It's time to discover another delight in the coastal Basque village of Bidart. Wander through the perfect picture post card village center and find a tasty lunch. If you're up for a spectacular scenic stroll, join us as we seek amazing coastal views along the paved path among the cliffs and sparking sea. Overhanging the cliffs of Hendaye lies the bewitching, fairy tale manor house Chateau d'Abbadia where we'll wander in wonder of all its majesty. Now we go back home to the beautiful La Reserve to wait for the sunset and upcoming celestial wonder!

Day 4. Follow the cobblestone streets of medieval Saint-Jean-Pied-de-Port past ancient houses adorned with wooden balconies to cute shops selling local specialties and wander the narrow alleyways until your heart's content. Along your wandering way, find a delectable lunch from one of the many restaurants featuring local cuisine. Now it's time for a serene nature walk to Pas de Roland where the Nive Valley's mysterious legends bring the Basque forest to life. An easy, leisurely stroll filled with deep breaths of fresh air and lulling sounds of the rushing, wild Nive River creates a tranquil walk among in nature. As the enchanting, immense rock formation appears, we'll reveal the legends of Roland. The rest of our afternoon will be spicy and hot when we explore the Esplette pepper farm. These small red peppers have made the town famous and here we'll learn all about their cultivation and have a tasting of homemade delights that will tantalize your taste buds. Thousands of dried red peppers dot the village of Esplette as they hang to dry underneath the red shutters of traditional Basque houses. Take your time to wander the village and see what spicy surprises you find! Once back in the serenity of La Reserve, enjoy the ambiance or take a stroll into splendid Saint John de Luz with its traditional fishing village vibe for a nice local dinner experience.

Day 5. Step inside a memory at Ortillopitz, a genuine Basque house dating from the 17th century. As the door opens, you enter and are amazed by the coolness, the smells, the atmosphere, the history. As you wander through this traditional piece of Basque past and its original furnishings, you may get the impression that the builder may pop out around the next corner. Off to stunning Sare with its 15th century picturesque houses colored in blood red, green, and dark wood hues. Take time to wander through the rich local atmosphere and find a tasty lunch while keeping in mind the Sare motto "Saran astia", meaning "in Sare we have time". Also keep an ear out for Basque language as it is still very present in the village. Now we travel to a place where we can feel the echo of human existence that has lasted for millennia, the prehistoric caves of Sare. A guided tour will lead us through this place of myths and origins of the Basque people as we discover what lies beneath the surface. The main street of the small, adorable village of Ainhoa lined with colorful facades of half-timbered houses was built in the 12th century to welcome pilgrims on their way to Santiago de Compostela. Today we get to wander along that same route as we explore the village and all its treasures. Once back at lovely La Reserve, enjoy a restful evening as you please here or take a stroll into town.

Day 6. Spend the morning among the serenity of La Reserve or stroll into Saint Jean de Luz and take in the authentic fishing village atmosphere while browsing quaint shops that feature traditional Basque products from espadrilles to berets to linens along with delectable, sweet baked goodies from local bakeries. A short drive takes us to alluring Ascain, peacefully set along the banks of River Nivelle and at the foot of the sacred La Rhune Mountain. Wander the quaint village center among colorful half-timbered Basque houses including La Maison Blanche, the oldest in town, and enjoy some local cuisine for lunch or a snack. Hop aboard the wooden carriages of La Rhune cogwheel train that will whisk us up 3000 feet to the top where a sweeping panoramic view across the Atlantic and the Pyrenees welcomes you. There's plenty of time at the top to immerse in the scenery before returning down to ground level views. Perhaps we may spot a native pottok, a breed of rural ponies that live among the mountainous terrain, grazing on the tasty mountain grasses. Enjoy the rest of our last evening at La Reserve as you please.

Day 7. It's time to adventure towards the independent country of Andorra hidden in the Pyrenees with stunning valleys that have shaped its culture and traditions for over a thousand years. As we say goodbye to the Basque Country, we'll pass through more regions along the way, each with its own savoir-faire. Let's make a stop in Saillies de Bearn, a place whose history is worth its salt! The historic town filled with charming 17th and 18th century architecture literally wraps around the saltiest water sources in France which have made the town prosperous and has shaped its history. Wander through the streets as you take in all the local legends and folklore and see what unique things cross your path. More charm awaits in Rieux Volvestre, an idyllic village with narrow cobblestone streets and timber framed houses dotted with the red of regional bricks. Take your time to wander the picturesque alleyways leading to the fortified gothic cathedral with its unusual octagonal bell tower and enjoy an included picnic lunch from the local village bakery on a bench overlooking the river Arize. After a scenic, mountainous winding road crosses the border into Andorra, we'll pass the cascading beauty of Cascada de les Moles and stretch our legs before arriving at our home for the next two nights at the peaceful Hotel Coma set in the picturesque

town of Ordino. After getting settled in your new comfy space, enjoy your night! Being a small, unpopulated country among a mountainous setting provides for a special starlight delight, a dark sky free from light pollution where we may have some spectacular stargazing opportunities if the weather allows. So don't forget to look up into the night!

Day 8. We have a whole country to explore so let's get started! Andorra's landscape is more 90% nature in the form of mountains, forests, rivers, lakes, and meadows. You could actually traverse the entire country on foot, but we promise not to walk that far! We will have a short walk to the Mirador Roc del Quer viewpoint with magnificent Pyrenees scenery that will be etched into your memory forever. Along the observation platform, you will have the unique experience of feeling magically levitated above the vibrant green valleys below. Along the way, we'll have the chance to see our first legendary Tamarro, a mischievous, elusive creature who lives in the forests of the Pyrenees. There are seven who live in Andorra and our journey takes us close to our first, Tamarro Nilo so keep your eyes peeled! Cute Canillo is right nearby, so let's stop for lunch and a wander. Grab something quick if you'd like to take a walk on the wild side across one of the longest Tibetan Bridges in the world suspended at a dizzying height of 518 feet. Unfathomable views of the most spectacular landscape will be your reward for braving the height. Otherwise stay close to the ground in town and enjoy the sights. Another easy, short walk among beautiful Andorra nature will take us to sparkling waters of the spectacular Toll Bullidor waterfall. From here we'll spot a great viewpoint of our next exploration at the Sanctuary of Meritxell Basilica, a place of peace in a setting perfect for contemplation. Along our journey here we'll share the sanctuary's endearing legend and stories of its centuries old history. A lovely, walk along the Cami des les Pardines may be a bit longer but is just as easy as pie, so enjoy a leisurely stroll past a small botanical garden, scenic bridges leading to a waterfall, views of distant dramatic mountains with its ending at alluring Engolasters Lake. Depending where we leave from that day, there may be another hiding Tamarro along the way! Enjoy the rest of your night as you please.

Day 9. It's a short walk through the charming streets of Ordino to the authentic 17th century Andorran House of Casa d'Areny-Plandoit. As we wander through this lavish manor home built for a wealthy noble family of influence, it's interesting to experience the disparity of luxury and comfort unknown at the time to the valleys of Andorra. More magnificent mountainous views are on the agenda for the day, and luckily our scenic journey takes us past the hidden Tamarro Dino, a short walk through a lovely meadow. Our destination is the peak of Peyreguils at 8,800 feet, home of the Tristaina Solar Viewpoint, an amazing working sundial with its own natural phenomenon among the most utterly superb panorama of towering peaks, sparkling lakes, and glistening green valleys. It will be an adventurous day of mountain climbing on first the Tristiana gondola, then the Creussans chair lift, and ending with a short walk to the most amazing scenery you can imagine. We'll stop along the way as we climb the mountain terrain for an included lunch. After making our way back down into the valleys, there's one more easy walk into nature that we just can't miss. We'll follow the serene sounds of the river along the cool forest path, past lovely cascading waterfalls to the last cascading beauty protected by the smiling Tamarro Massa. Now sit back and relax the rest of the night away!

Day 10. As we leave the amazing landscape of Andorra behind, we'll zig zag our way along mountainous roads across the border into Spain where many wonders are awaiting. A very special artistic space is perfect for wandering is found along the paths at the Magical Labyrinth of the Pyrenees. In this open-air museum, hundreds of unique stone sculptures are set perfectly in harmony with nature, creating a peaceful place to freely embrace your own essence and magic. As you wander the pathway maze, take time to contemplate the art, its setting, and your connection with everything. A second special artistic surprise will be experienced at Artigas Gardens, designed by none other than Antoni Gaudi in his magical and spellbinding style. Take a stroll among the ornate railings that seem to come to life past flower gardens, bridges, waterfalls, sculptures, and benches with enchanting viewpoints. But first, we'll fuel up on an included lunch in the town La Pobla de Lillet, where Gaudi was commissioned to design a unique workmen's chalet. The mysterious monastery of Santa Maria de Lillet is not far from town, so let's explore its Romanesque beauty while learning its interesting history. We continue our scenic drive towards the medieval village of beguiling Besalu where we'll make our home at the foot of its 12th century Romanesque bridge at El Jardins de la Martana Hotel. Enjoy the picturesque setting among splendid gardens with an impressive view over the village and once you're settled in, walk into town to find a tasty, al fresco dinner of local cuisine specialties.

Day 11. Today let's take time to explore the medieval historic gem of Besalu. Enjoy a leisurely morning in the peaceful surroundings of our lovely villa hotel, take a stroll in the gardens that stretch down to the river Fluvia or continue along the riverside path for picture perfect views of Besalu's Romanesque bridge. Let's enjoy an included lunch on the terrace right here at the hotel restaurant then spend the remainder of the day in exploration of medieval Besalu. Wander along the ageless stone, bricks, and cobbles that make up the historic village past impressive architecture featuring Romanesque and Gothic facades to anything that captures your eye. There are many sights to see from ancient churches and the historic Jewish Quarter to beautiful viewpoints and quirky chair sculptures. Enjoy our last night here among the medieval atmosphere any way you please.

Day 12. Our celestial adventure that brought us to the varied cultures of Basque France, Andorra, and medieval Spain may be at an end, but our experiences here will last a lifetime. We'll make our way to Barcelona Airport and before we know it, we'll be home sweet home.

Air transportation is provided by United Airlines. A surcharge will apply if United Airlines increases the price of its airfare. One piece of luggage per person (baggage fee by United is included) and one small carry-on are permitted. **A valid, government-issued picture ID is required to board the plane.**

Monday, August 10: Flight # departs Newark at PM and arrives in Paris at AM

Flight # departs Paris at PM and arrives in Bordeaux at PM

Friday, August 21: Flight # departs Barcelona at PM and arrives in Newark at PM

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