

# Spain: Sierras de Cazorla, Segura y Las Villas

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**Tour Organiser: Tony Gore**

**Sunday 10th to Thursday 28th May 2026**

This is a revised repeat of a classic tour through a remote and little known part of south-eastern Spain. The territory straddles the fringes of Andalucia, Castilla-La Mancha and Murcia, and consists of a series of rugged mountain ranges (or 'sierras') running from south-west to north-east. The area's great ecological value is underlined by its status as both a Natural Park and a UNESCO Biosphere Reserve. Riding through these mountains involves climbing over a succession of ridges and passes, or up to towns and villages precariously perched on top of or just below towering rock outcrops. Down below lie a series of rocky incised valleys and gorges, in places filled by reservoirs to provide irrigation water for the fertile plains downstream. Varied daily distances, quiet well graded roads, stunning vistas, historic towns and villages plus abundant wildlife make this an ideal trip for reasonably fit cyclists who like to be out all day. Six two-night stays allow thorough exploration of the area via circular or return day rides, or alternatively offer time for recovery and relaxation. Start and finish is at Totana, around 45 kilometres from both Murcia International Airport (RMU) and the railway station in the city of Murcia.

## Itinerary

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### **Sunday 10th May 2026 Arrival and Rendezvous**

Arrive at base hotel in Totana, Murcia; reassemble bikes (if required); meet with rest of group over pre-dinner drinks

- No cycling
- Accommodation: Three star hotel
- Meals: (D)

### **Monday 11th May 2026 Totana to Caravaca de la Cruz**

Leaving the fertile coastal plain, we climb into the Murcian hinterland, skirting the well wooded Sierra Espuña Regional Park on our way to the Bullas wine region. From there we follow the course of an old railway (or 'via verde') to the fifth most holy site in the Catholic Church, famed for its fragment of the original cross: Caravaca de la Cruz.

- Route distance: 80.0km
- Route altitude gain: 1470m
- Accommodation: Three star hotel
- Meals: (B, D)

## **Tuesday 12th May 2026 Caravaca de la Cruz to Nerpio**

Heading westwards from Caravaca, we have the chance to admire one of the world's finest collections of ethnic musical instruments in the museum at Barranda. From there, we climb gradually through the Sierra de las Cabras Natural Reserve, before heading down the rocky Taibilla valley with its impressive swathes of walnut trees.

- Route distance: 85.0km
- Route altitude gain: 1400m
- Accommodation: One star hotel
- Meals: (B, D)

## **Wednesday 13th May 2026 Nerpio to Yeste**

A shorter but tougher day, with two substantial climbs in the second half of the route. The first part is more undulating, taking us past the attractive Taibilla reservoir and along the lower reaches of the valley, before we tackle the long drag up to the highest point of the day at the Puerto de la Borriqueta. After descending to the lovely Segura valley, we finish by heading upwards once more to the hillside town of Yeste.

- Route distance: 63.0km
- Route altitude gain: 1680m
- Accommodation: One star hotel
- Meals: (B, D)

## **Thursday 14th May 2026 Circuits of the Upper Tus Valley**

A loop around the sheltered but hilly headwaters of the Tus river, dramatically surrounded on three sides by towering crags. This must be one of the most remote places in the whole of Spain.

- Route distance: 43.0km
- Route altitude gain: 910m
- Accommodation: 1 star hotel
- Meals: (B, D)

## **Thursday 14th May 2026 Circuits of the Upper Tus Valley Alternate Route**

A loop around the sheltered but hilly headwaters of the Tus river, dramatically surrounded on three sides by towering crags. This must be one of the most remote places in the whole of Spain. This slightly longer route includes a second loop through Moropeche on the return leg.

- Route distance: 53.0km
- Route altitude gain: 1230m
- Accommodation: 1 star hotel
- Meals: (B, D)

## Friday 15th May 2026 Yeste to Elche de la Sierra

An undulating day through alternating stretches of almond and fruit orchards on the one hand, and rocky forested hills on the other. The main staging post for the day is the town of Letur, which boasts a well-hidden natural pool where you might be able to have a dip. Towards the end we cross the Segura river once more, though its waters are much reduced here due to abstraction further upstream.

- Route distance: 59.0km
- Route altitude gain: 1050m
- Accommodation: Two star hotel
- Meals: (B, D)

## Saturday 16th May 2026 Ayna

A loop through the hills flanking the deeply incised Mundo river, which we briefly follow in two places. The highlight of the day is the town of Ayna, situated where the craggy valley opens out slightly to allow its buildings to nestle along its sides. The view over it from the 'mirador' above is simply breathtaking.

- Route distance: 74.0km
- Route altitude gain: 1380m
- Accommodation: Two star hotel
- Meals: (B, D)

## Saturday 16th May 2026 Ayna Alternate Route

A shorter mostly out-and-back route to visit the town of Ayna, situated where the craggy valley opens out slightly to allow its buildings to nestle along its sides. The view over it from the 'mirador' above is simply breathtaking.

- Route distance: 60.0km
- Route altitude gain: 1230m
- Accommodation: Two star hotel
- Meals: (B, D)

## Sunday 17th May 2026 Elche de la Sierra to Siles

Another day exploring stretches of the Mundo valley, mainly on minor roads and through small hamlets with few facilities. After a stop at the former industrial town of Riópar (now a centre for outdoor tourism), the last part of the route includes a side excursion to the river's source at a high waterfall.

- Route distance: 75.0km
- Route altitude gain: 1620m
- Accommodation: One star hotel
- Meals: (B, D)

## Monday 18th May 2026 Circular rides from Siles

A loop around the hills and crags of the Sierra de Calderón, with two main climbs followed by an attractive stretch along the Guadalimar valley.

- Route distance: 62.0km
- Route altitude gain: 1250m
- Accommodation: One star hotel
- Meals: (B, D)

## Monday 18th May 2026 Circular rides from Siles Alternate Route

A shorter, not so hilly loop around the olive groves of the Guadalimar and Hornos valleys, with the possibility of a visit to an olive oil museum in La Puerta de Segura.

- Route distance: 46.0km
- Route altitude gain: 710m
- Accommodation: One star hotel
- Meals: (B, D)

## Tuesday 19th May 2026 Siles to Las Juntas

Today we head south into the Sierra de Segura, starting with a lengthy climb on a delightful twisting minor road through pine woods and around rocky bluffs. From the top we roughly follow the Madera valley along an ever deepening valley, which becomes even more emphatic after its confluence with the Segura in the latter part of the route.

- Route distance: 61.0km
- Route altitude gain: 1380m
- Accommodation: Three star hotel
- Meals: (B, D)

## Wednesday 20th May 2026 Return rides from Las Juntas

An extended out-and-back ride to visit the source of the Segura river, with a climb over the Puerto de Almorchón in both directions.

- Route distance: 81.0km
- Route altitude gain: 1860m
- Accommodation: Three star hotel
- Meals: (B, D)

## Wednesday 20th May 2026 Return rides from Las Juntas Alternate Route

A simple out-and-back ride along the spectacular Zumeta valley.

- Route distance: 43.0km
- Route altitude gain: 1040m
- Accommodation: Three star hotel
- Meals: (B, D)

## Thursday 21st May 2026 Las Juntas to Segura de la Sierra

Another tough ride through the Sierra de Segura, first retracing along the stunning Segura/Madera valley, before climbing over to the village of Hornos, perched perilously on its crag overlooking El Tranco reservoir. From there we drop further into a tributary valley of the Guadalquivir, ending with a sinuous climb to the spectacular mountain village of Segura de la Sierra.

- Route distance: 75.0km
- Route altitude gain: 1970m
- Accommodation: Two star hotel
- Meals: (B, D)

## Friday 22nd May 2026 Rides from Segura de la Sierra

A circular ride mixing forested mountains and agricultural plain, the latter once more dominated by olive trees. The last part wends its way along the pleasant Guadalimar valley before the gradual climb back up to our base in Segura de la Sierra.

- Route distance: 84.5km
- Route altitude gain: 1670m
- Accommodation: Two star hotel
- Meals: (B, D)

## Friday 22nd May 2026 Rides from Segura de la Sierra Alternate Route

Loop ride on back roads through another part of the scenic Sierra de Segura, descending to the village of Orcera and including a side trip to the Amurjo natural pool for a possible swim. The loop is completed with the gradual climb back up to our base in Segura de la Sierra.

- Route distance: 28.0km
- Route altitude gain: 740m
- Accommodation: Two star hotel
- Meals: (B, D)

## Saturday 23rd May 2026 Segura de la Sierra to Cazorla

After descending from our mountain base, today we head southwards up the Guadalquivir valley into the Sierra de Cazorla, part of the way alongside the extensive El Tranco

reservoir. The final section of the ride involves a long climb to Puerto de las Palomas, before a twisty descent into the town of Cazorla itself.

- Route distance: 89.5km
- Route altitude gain: 1620m
- Accommodation: Three star hotel
- Meals: (B, D)

## **Sunday 24th May 2026 Circular ride; or rest day**

For those wanting to ride there is a possible loop around the olive groves surrounding the villages of Mogón and Santo Tomé, punctuated by a short stretch through hilly woodland.

- Route distance: 65.0km
- Route altitude gain: 1330m
- Accommodation: Three star hotel
- Meals: (B, D)

## **Sunday 24th May 2026 Circular ride; or rest day Alternate Route**

Although fairly small, Cazorla has lots of nooks and crannies to explore for those who are ready for a day off the bike.

- Route distance: 0.0km
- Route altitude gain: 0m
- Accommodation: Three star hotel
- Meals: (B, D)

## **Monday 25th May 2026 Cazorla to Castril**

Another hilly day as we skirt the fringes of the Sierra de Cazorla before heading directly through the Sierra de Quesada via the Puerto de Tiscar. Again we traverse alternating agricultural and mountain landscapes, with olive trees dominating the former and towering rocky crags the latter.

- Route distance: 74.0km
- Route altitude gain: 1580m
- Accommodation: Two star apartments
- Meals: (B, D)

## **Tuesday 26th May 2026 Castril to Vélez Blanco**

Though we are now heading out of the mountains proper, the terrain is still rugged and we have three climbs that each take us above 1000m. A particular feature of the area around Galera and Orce are the numerous underground houses excavated directly into the hillside.

- Route distance: 82.0km
- Route altitude gain: 1080m

- Accommodation: Three star hotel
- Meals: (B, D)

## Wednesday 27th May 2026 Vélez Blanco to Totana

Our final day of riding, and by far the easiest of all. We head down the valley of the Vélez river, skirt the large town of Lorca with its imposing castle, and then pick our way across the fertile coastal plain to our base hotel on the outskirts of Totana.

- Route distance: 76.0km
- Route altitude gain: 370m
- Accommodation: Three star hotel
- Meals: (B, D)

## Thursday 28th May 2026 Departure

Tour finishes after breakfast.

- No cycling
- Accommodation: N/A
- Meals: (B)

# Dates and Prices

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## Cost

- Land only price: £1800

## Payment Schedule

A deposit of £200 per person is required as soon as possible once the Tour Organiser has processed your Booking Form (see below), with the final balance of £1,600 per person to be paid no later than ten weeks prior to departure, by 1st March 2026.

Price includes:

- 18 nights hotel on half board basis, sharing room.
- Luggage transfer (where available).
- Tour information pack.
- Bikexplore costs.

Price does not include:

- Travel to and from the start/finish in Totana, Murcia.
- Drinks with evening meals.
- Lunches or refreshments during the day.
- Any extra travel costs due to inclement weather or sickness.

- Entry fees at attractions visited.
- Travel and personal health insurance.
- Any other personal expenses.
- Single room supplement (limited availability): £350

## Cancellations

Written Notice Received	Cancellation Charge
Up to 1st March 2026	£200 (deposit)
From 2nd March 2026 to departure	£1800 (100%)

The price of £1800 (land only) is based on a minimum number of 8 people taking part in the holiday and is calculated at a rate of 1.107 Euros to £1 Sterling (based on exchange rates published on the Post Office website on Wednesday 11th February 2026; please note Booking Conditions). If there are insufficient bookings by Sunday 01st March 2026, we will contact you and return all monies paid.

## Holiday Information

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### The Area Covered by the Holiday

This classic cycling tour explores the remote and mountainous frontier area that straddles the three historic Spanish regions of Andalucía, Castilla-La Mancha and Murcia. The various mountain ranges (or 'sierras') that comprise the area run in a south-west to north-east direction, roughly between the cities of Granada and Albacete, and separate the coastal plain and foothills to the east and the plains of La Mancha to the north. This is classic Spanish mountain territory, with towering rocky crags and high forested hills overlooking incised valleys containing crystal-clear trout-filled streams and occasional reservoirs. The rugged nature of the terrain means that the area has always supported a sparse population, resulting in an area renowned for its welcome peace and tranquillity. Most of it has been designated as the most extensive Natural Park and UNESCO biosphere reserve in the whole of Spain. Those roads that traverse these mountains tend to be narrow and winding and carry little traffic. Travelling anywhere takes a lot of time and effort, whatever your conveyance, but you are rewarded with panoramic views of jagged rock formations, deeply incised gorges, chains of hills stretching into the distance and little towns and villages clustering for comfort into their nook or beneath their fortress. In cycling terms, of course, this means lots of climbing and descending, but the ascents are generally well-graded, with good surfaces on the whole. There are plenty of opportunities to stop and rest, especially as you will want to drink in the views, take photos, and admire the wild flora and fauna. They also make for steady if swooping descents.

## Travel to the Start/from the Finish

There is no travel included in this tour, thus it is very important that you note that neither the Tour Organiser nor Bikexplore are responsible for you in any way until the appointed time at the designated meeting point. Should you fail to arrive at the appointed time for whatever reason, we will not be responsible for any additional expenses you may incur in order to meet up with the tour group. Before finalising travel arrangements to reach the starting point, you should ensure that you have read and understood the booking conditions. Should the tour not attract sufficient bookings, we may cancel the tour at any time up to 10 weeks before departure. It is therefore recommended that you book fully flexible and refundable transport and accommodation or wait until you have been informed that the tour is going ahead, as in the event of the tour being cancelled, we will not be responsible for any losses incurred.

Two low cost airlines (EasyJet and Ryanair) offer direct flights to and from Murcia (Corvera) airport from several UK airports on the start and finish dates of the tour. These include Bristol, East Midlands, Gatwick, Glasgow, Manchester and Stansted. When booking, remember to add your bike bag or case as an extra hold baggage requirement. You will be charged a supplement for this to be carried on the plane. There will be a secure space for bike boxes and cases to be left at our start-and-finish hotel during the tour. Please note that the hotel itself is approximately 45 kilometres (30 miles) from Corvera airport, so you will need to take a taxi to transfer from there to our first (and last) hotel in Totana. The additional taxi charges are likely to be around 50 to 60 Euros each way. Participants who arrive on the same flight may be able to share the same vehicle, depending on luggage space.

It is possible to travel overland to and from our rendezvous hotel, but you would need to allow a fair amount of additional time for this. There are three main options:

- The first is to traverse through France and most of Spain by train; this could include overnight services through France (Intercités de Nuit - see The Man in Seat 61 website for more details). Note that for some high-speed trains in France, and for all in Spain, you will need to bring a bike that can be disassembled into a compact suitcase.
- Secondly, you can travel with Brittany Ferries to Santander or Bilbao and take the train from there to Alicante and then onward to Murcia. While luggage restrictions apply on high-speed trains, it is possible to make the journey from Santander with a full-size bike on slower trains, with at least one overnight stay required en route. Bike spaces have to be reserved in advance on these services, but this can be done online via the Renfe website (see below).
- The third possibility is to travel without your own bike and hire one locally for the duration of the tour (note that this could be an option for those flying too). You are advised that sourcing, booking and ensuring the quality and appropriateness of any hired cycle is entirely your own responsibility.

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At present the line from Murcia to Lorca and Aguilas that serves Totana is closed for reconstruction, with bus replacement services having limited luggage capacity. The best option would be to head for the station in Murcia city, and then ride or take a taxi from there to our base hotel (and vice versa at the end).

More information about train travel can be found at <https://www.sncf-voyageurs.com/fr/> for France and <https://www.renfe.com/es/en> for Spain.

## Accommodation & Meals

Overnight stops will be mainly in family-run 1-, 2- and 3-star hotels, in twin or double rooms. Single occupancy may be possible, but this is subject to limited availability and the payment of a supplement. Breakfast and evening meal will be provided each day, mostly in the hotel but occasionally in a separate restaurant. Vegetarians can be catered for if the request is made on the Booking Form, but options may be limited. Non-meat eaters should indicate whether they will eat fish. If you have any other dietary requirements, please note them on the booking form under 'special requests'.

There are three things that you should note about meals in Spain. First, evening meals are not usually served until 8:30 pm at the earliest, and in traditional rural areas like the one we'll be visiting it's more likely to be 9:00 pm. For many Britons this is very late and difficult to adjust to. The long wait can be eased by adopting the habit of having a snack in the late afternoon or early evening. This might be from your own provisions or you could go to a bar to try out its tapas. Secondly, it is not always easy to cater for vegetarians (and even harder for vegans), though it has improved in recent years. Our hosts will certainly be forewarned of the need to provide something suitable, although this may turn out to be a daily dose of tortilla española (Spanish omelette). However, it is always useful to know whether or not those requesting vegetarian meals are occasionally prepared to eat fish. Finally, apart from those served as a buffet hotel breakfasts can be rather meagre. In such cases I always ask if extra items can be provided. As interpretation of this request varies widely, you should make sure you have extra rations with you from the start of the day, just in case your energy levels need an early boost.

## Rides & Rest Days

Starting times each day will depend on when the hotel serves breakfast and how far we have to ride. The general aim will be to set off between 9:30 and 10:00 am. On the first day we may have a delayed start due to adjusting reassembled cycles or replacing any forgotten kit at the local bike shop. However, the expectation is that participants will 'team up' to ride together in smaller like-minded groups. Given the potential diversity of ability and interests amongst riders, plus the hilly nature of the terrain, it would be unreasonable to expect us to ride as a single group all day, every day. In this way, faster riders can forge ahead without feeling held back, while those who like to take time to see the sights or take lots of photos can do so without feeling pressurised to keep up. Smaller groups on the road also make sense in safety terms too, even where traffic volumes are light.



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That said, I will ensure that no-one is left riding on their own all day, unless that is their preference. Each day there will be cafes and other sites of interest marked on the route sheet where we can regroup. I will also try to keep tabs on where people are during the day, but remember that, without a support vehicle, there is a limit to what help can be given.

The tour has been designed so that a reasonably fit regular rider should be able to complete the route without extreme difficulty. Daily distances and altitude gains have been deliberately varied to allow for a more leisurely pace, or longer recovery time after arrival. There are also six possible rest days when you can take the opportunity to recharge your batteries. If you like the look of it but are unsure about your ability to undertake the tour, then please consult with the Tour Organiser before booking.

## Cycles & Equipment

A touring, expedition or gravel bike would be suitable for this tour, with hard-wearing tyres of at least 28mm (or equivalent). The vast majority of the route is on tarmac roads, with a few short stretches of other materials (a little bit of gravel, plus flags, cobbles and occasionally concrete in towns and villages). A bottom gear of between 25" and 30" (small chainring in front smaller (or no larger) than large cog in the rear) is recommended, to make the climbs less of a strain. Bikes should have mudguards to protect both yourself and others in the group in bad conditions, as well as secure pannier racks. Before departure your bike should be given a full check and service to ensure that it is roadworthy and in sound mechanical order. You should also test ride your cycle fully laden before the tour to ensure that it handles as you would wish. You should not need lights, though having them with you is always useful in case of low cloud on the tops or unexpected delays.

Apart from on the first riding day there are no specialist bicycle shops on the route, so you should also carry sufficient inner tubes and other spares for the full 17 days, and have appropriate tools to hand to deal with punctures and minor repairs. Feel free to liaise with other participants if you want to share the load between you.

If you are hiring a bike locally in Spain, it is strongly recommended that you bring your own saddle and pedals with you, and have these fitted properly before riding.

Spanish law requires cyclists to wear helmets when riding on the road. Therefore, you should bring a helmet with you and be prepared to wear it if requested by traffic police or Guardia Civil. Otherwise, they are entitled to impose an on-the-spot fine of around 100 Euros or to confiscate your front wheel if you are unable or unwilling to pay.

It is now also a legal requirement for cyclists in Spain to wear a 'hi-viz' yellow top when cycling at night, but it may be that rainwear with reflective trim is sufficient. However, as we are unlikely to be still on the road after dark, this rule should not affect us.

## Weather & Clothing

The weather during late spring in south-eastern Spain is generally relatively settled, with warm, even hot days and cool but pleasant mornings and evenings, though it can get cold at



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higher altitudes. As in most places, the mountains tend to attract any rain that may be around, and there may be thunderstorms towards the end of hot and humid days. You should carry a range of clothing (including good waterproofs) to ensure that you stay warm and dry in bad conditions but reasonably cool when the sun is out. In these parts the sun can be very powerful, so a high factor sun cream is strongly recommended. Those who intend to go exploring on foot on possible rest days should bring some comfortable shoes and a small rucksack for carrying essential bits and pieces.

## Luggage transfer

Transfer of your bags between hotels when moving on should be available on most days, and is included in the price. However, during the second half of the tour we will be reliant on the availability of local taxis. In case of any absence of such services or cancellation of a prior booking, you are advised to pack your possessions in panniers that you can carry on your bike. That will help you to travel light and avoid bringing stuff that you don't really need.

## Maps & Guides

Although detailed written route instructions and GPS files will be provided, you should also bring a suitable map (or maps) with you in case you lose your way or become separated from the group. The main ones that cover all or part of the route are:

- Michelin 1:400,000 Road Map: No.573 Andalucia;
- IGN 1:200,000 Provincial Maps (Mapas Provinciales de España): Albacete; Jaén; Murcia (please note that the accuracy of these cannot always be assured).

These should all be available online from suppliers such as Stanfords and Maps Worldwide.

## Passport and visa advice

UK citizens must hold a passport that is still valid for at least three months at the end of the tour.

The European Union is currently introducing important changes for non-EU citizens travelling to Europe (including Spain). At present the EU Entry/Exit System (EES) is in operation at EU airports (but may not yet be in place at ferry ports). Under this system you should present your passport for checking as normal on arrival and departure. As part of this you will need to have a photo of your face taken, and your fingerprints scanned.

The follow-up European Travel Information and Authorisation System (ETIAS) is unlikely to be in force by the time of this tour.

## About the Tour Organiser

I have been combining my love of the outdoors and fascination with different places through cycletouring for nearly 45 years, exploring many parts of the British Isles and Europe, as well as further afield in South Africa and the Americas. I was a CTC Tour Leader



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for over 20 years, running more than 40 tours, 15 of which visited different parts of Spain. I have also organised several holidays in Britain, both fixed centre and moving on, and currently I am keen to explore different areas of the UK and Europe that are not especially well known to me.

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Tony Gore

