

# WILD PHOTOGRAPHY HOLIDAYS



## NORTH SPAIN

**MOUNTAINS,  
ABANDONED VILLAGES  
AND COAST WORKSHOP**

### HIGHLIGHTS

- Dramatic mountain scenery
- Island of San Juan de Gaztelugatxe
- Abandoned villages of Los Beyos, Ponga
- Soft morning mists with superb light
- Los Lagos spectacular high mountain lakes
- Traditional local hotels
- Delicious local food
- Medieval churches
- Cable car into the mountains
- High mountain hotel
- Mountain funicular railway
- Unique seascapes
- Traditional fishing villages

*"I returned home with a whole load of new skills including some ace tips on how to get the best results from my new iPhone 13 Pro Max."*

Veiga B. Sept 2022

*"Our photography trip in North Spain with WPH was outstanding, the landscapes and the light exceeded all our expectations. Once again, thanks Geraldine, you looked after us and demonstrated a great knowledge of the area and its culture. Thanks Martin for your endless patience and good humour whilst helping us to get the best shots and how to develop them."*

Chris and Wendy 2019

### INTRODUCTION – NEW ITINERARY

This is an exciting new 10-day itinerary starting and finishing in Bilbao. In all there will be three nights on the coast and 6 nights in the mountains. The soaring and pinnacled mountains of Spain's iconic mountains known as the Picos de Europa are often likened to Italy's Dolomites. This photography workshop explores fabulous mountain scenery, quaint old villages, a culture from years gone by, some gorgeous forests and breathtaking coastal scenery. Photographers who come here for the first time are usually amazed that all of these lovely landscapes are not thronging with tourists. Here in north Spain you will encounter a truly magical photographic destination where wolves and bears still wander in the old forests, it is strongly reminiscent of Tolkien's 'Hobbit Land'! Bizarre



lunar landscapes with knife edge ridges rise sharply from lush high mountain meadows and soft morning mists shroud abandoned villages. Unbelievably it is only a short drive down from the mountains to discover superb sandy beaches with fine rock architecture. This whole wild rugged 'Bay of Biscay' coastline is known as the Costa Verde. The area enjoys a laid back approach to life with a strong Celtic culture.

We stay in delightfully located hotels often run by families we have known for a long time. A sense of adventure together with a desire to be creative photographically is all that is needed to thoroughly enjoy this workshop which offers many excellent opportunities to develop a fine collection of images from this diverse and highly photogenic area.

#### YOUR TUTORS

[Martin Sammlen](#) and [Geraldine Westrupp](#) have a base in Asturias and together they know North Spain intimately. Their connection with this dramatic part of the Iberian

Peninsula goes back more than two decades. They have been running workshops, tours and holidays here for many years. Creating this new workshop has been an absolute joy for them and they are truly excited to share their local knowledge with you.

#### DAILY ITINERARY

##### Day 1: Arrive and Transfer to Mundaka, Basque Country

Our first meeting as a group for introductions and a trip briefing will be at our hotel in Mundaka at 17:00. The local airport is Bilbao and is well served with flights from many European hubs. Please contact the office if you require further information. We will include transfers to the hotel meeting flights coming into Bilbao Airport between 10:00 and 16:00 on Day 1. If you choose to stay in Bilbao the night before Day 1 then contact our office for transfer details. If you are arriving outside of these times, taxis are available at the airport and cost around 40€. Following our introductory meeting we will go out locally for sunset. Huge swells roll in from the Bay of Biscay and



slam into the rocky coastline of the Basque Country. The estuary at Mundaka has created a perfect sandbar which forms a famous world class surfing wave that can be watched from the town's harbour wall. Our hotel is located in one of the prettiest areas of Mundaka where we find the old port area with colourful traditional Basque houses, small fishing boats, a lovely little sandy beach and a great tidal estuary. If the light is good we will head to San Juan de Gaztelugatxe. The island is connected to the mainland by a man-made stone bridge. These steps are recognised as one of the world's grandest staircases. We will return for dinner in a local restaurant.

Hotel Mundaka (B,L,D)

##### Day 2: Drive to Fuente De, Cantabria

This morning before breakfast we will photograph a very striking church close to our hotel. After a breakfast at the hotel we will set off for the pretty drive to Fuente De. Leaving the urban areas of Bilbao and Santander, we will pass through some lovely countryside and small market

towns including Potes. En route we will enjoy a lunch in a traditional restaurant and photograph a small picturesque church. By late afternoon we will arrive at our mountain hotel in Fuente De and explore the local area. Our hotel is located amidst these peaks.

Hotel Fuente De, (B,L,D)

### **Day 3: Espinama in Liébana**

Our sunrise photography will be close to the hotel where the first rays of sun light up the surrounding jagged peaks and valleys. We will return to the hotel for breakfast before taking the first cable car up into the central massif of the Picos de Europa. The excursion offers dazzling views of the whole area; some dramatic locations on top of the world in the very heart of a remarkable lunar rock landscape. This is a wildly graphic landscape of towers and sheer rock faces carved during the ice age is a magnificent place to capture striking images. Quite often we will see the Rebecos which are very sure footed small deer, rather like Alpine Ibex. We return to the tiny village of Espinama for lunch followed by an exploration of the village. Late afternoon we will drive up into the mountains again to photograph an abandoned village location where there are lots of old stone buildings with attractive red tiled roofs located amidst fine mountain scenery. Our evening meal will be at the hotel.

Hotel, Fuente De (B,L,D)

### **Day 4: Potes and Drive to Cain**

This morning en route we will explore Potes a traditional market town with interesting cobbled streets and traditional architecture. This is the perfect place to sit outside one of the excellent street Cafes to watch the world go by



whilst enjoying a coffee or something stronger. Potes is a good place to buy local products and souvenirs. Late morning we begin the spectacular drive to Valdeon south of the Picos in the region of Castilla de Leon. Our journey will be punctuated by stops to photograph many special places. We will enjoy a picnic lunch on the Saint Glorio Pass at 1600 metres. Here there are fine views of the mountains of the Picos de Europa. During our afternoon drive we pass through pastoral mountain landscapes where we will witness a traditional way of life where the locals work in the fields, men scythe the meadows and wear clogs! Our hotel is well located in the pretty village of Valdeon a short distance from the start of the phenomenal Gargantua del Cares. This Gorge is a remarkable water filled ravine cutting dramatically through the Central and Eastern massifs of the mountains.

Hotel Valdeon (B,L,D)

### **Day 5: The Cares Gorge**

Our sunrise location this morning allows us to shoot the remarkable limestone walls of rock being lit by the morning sun. We return to our hotel for breakfast. After picking up a picnic lunch we set off on foot to explore locations in the Cares Gorge which is arguably one of Spains most memorable walks. At first the river meanders gently before plunging abruptly into a deep ravine. Trees grow haphazardly from the dizzying cliffs and the ever-changing light will make for some exciting and interesting photography. At each and every turn there is something to catch our eyes and take our breath away. Look out for the wild goats leaping nimbly on the precipitous cliffs and griffon vultures soaring in the thermals high above. Alpine Chough often gather in large numbers in the Cares Gorge. If we



are extremely lucky we may get a glimpse of the tiny Wallcreeper an extremely elusive bird that lives on steep mountain cliffs and resembles a butterfly when it flashes its brilliant, crimson-patterned wings. We return to our hotel late afternoon in time for a pre dinner get together outside on the terrace.

Hotel Valdeon (B,L,D)

### **Day 6: Abandoned Villages of the Beyos**

Our route today passes through some isolated and memorable locations. We will travel by road visiting some of the most traditional and picturesque villages that Asturias and Leon have to offer; this is surely one of the most lovely drives in Spain. We visit Los Beyos in Ponga, the wildest and most unexplored corner of the area. Deep ravines, ancient forests and towering limestone walls have limited the development of villages to the river's edge or in the high meadows where they cluster together. Some, like Viboli with only 10 inhabitants, are almost totally abandoned. We will photograph some fine examples of

traditional Beyos architecture. Our last location is the abandoned village of Casielles seemingly on the roof of the Picos with fine 360 deg vistas. This is a busy but rewarding day photographically. This evening we go out for dinner in Cangas de Onis one of the main market towns of Asturias.

Hotel Soto de Onis (B,L,D)

### **Day 7: Los Lagos and Traditional Villages**

This morning we have a relaxed breakfast. Early risers can take a walk around the local area. After breakfast we will drive to Arenas de Cabrales named after the famous mouth numbing blue cheese that this area is famous for. We will take the through-mountain funicular railway to the tiny village of Bulnes where a lively river flows under old bridges, through trees and past old stone houses. We will have lunch here. After breakfast we will drive to Poncebos which is at the North end of the Cares Gorge. From here we take a mountain funicular train to the tiny village of Bulnes. Upper Bulnes gives us some lovely vistas of the surrounding area. We will enjoy lunch in this high village before returning to the gorge on the train. On our return



drive we may have views of the high summits of Picos de Europa including the most dramatic of all, El Naranjo. Our evening sunset location is the serene Los Lagos. These high lakes are set against a back-drop of limestone peaks providing excellent sunset colours and reflections. After our sunset shoot we head back to our hotel and dinner in the local village.

Hotel Soto de Onis (B,L,D)

### **Day 8: La Franca Beach Cantabria**

After breakfast we will have the opportunity to explore the market town of Cangas De Onis including its magnificent Roman bridge. After coffee we head north over the mountains towards the north coast where we drive east to the historic Santillana del Mar. This is a couple of hours drive with photographic stops en route including the fishing village of Tazones. Our sunset photography will be at a fairly local beach where we find an interesting Hermitage set scenically in the cliffs. We return to a local restaurant for dinner. Hotel Santillana del Mar (B,L,D)



### **Day 9: to Bilbao**

This morning after a leisurely breakfast we will explore the historic town of Santillana del Mar. Our journey to the Basque city of Bilbao takes around 1.5 hrs, we will have lunch en route. Our final meal together will be in the historic Old Town of Bilbao famed for its Pinchos/Tapas Hotel Bilbao (B,L,D)

### **Day 10: Departure**

This morning our trip finishes after breakfast. Your return flights will probably be at different times today. You will be free to leave at any time after breakfast although there will be an 11:00 AM checkout from the hotel. If you have homeward flights morning/early afternoon we will transfer you to the airport. If not then you will need to get a taxi. It is worth considering an extra night in Bilbao to explore

this famous and unique Basque city. The dining and tapas bars are world famous as is the Guggenheim museum. We would be able to drop you at a hotel leaving you with the day and evening to explore.

(B)

### **ACCOMMODATION**

We stay in small scenically located mountain and coastal hotels with single/double rooms and private bathrooms. Most of the hotels are small and family run, chosen for their locations and our long connections with the owners.

### **JOINING ARRANGEMENTS AND TRANSFERS**

The local airport is Bilbao, which is well served with flights from many international hubs. Please contact the office if you require further information. We will provide

transfers to the hotel meeting flights coming into Bilbao Airport between 10:00 and 15:00 on Day 9. If you are arriving/departing outside our official transfer times, taxis will be available at both the airport and the hotel. They cost around 45€ each way. If you arrive a day early then you would need to get a taxi from your hotel to the airport for the WPH transfer to Mundaka.

### **WHAT'S INCLUDED**

- 9 nights accommodation
- 9 breakfasts, 8 lunches, 9 dinners
- Airport transfers

### **WHAT'S NOT INCLUDED**

- International flights
- Alcoholic beverages

- Extra snacks, soft drinks and hot beverages between meals
- Travel Insurance

### FOOD

The food will be Spanish, wholesome and filling local dishes. Breakfast is taken in the hotel. There will be a substantial picnic lunch on most days making good use of local bread, cheeses, meats and salad. Dinner is usually three courses with a starter, main course and dessert.

### SPENDING MONEY

Depending on whether or not you intend to buy presents, souvenirs we would suggest around 150 Euros. Credit- & debit cards are widely accepted and ATMs are available in most places..

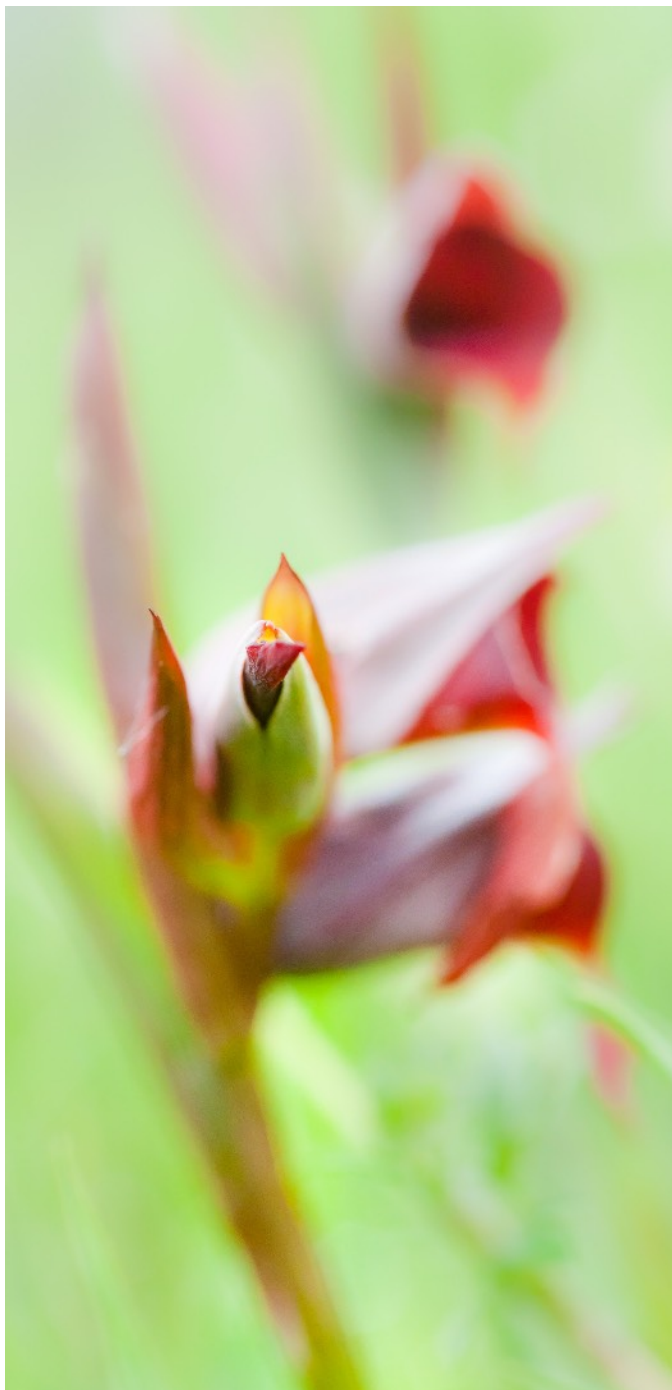
### TRAVEL INSURANCE

It is recommended that you take out appropriate insurance to cover personal accident, medical costs, repatriation, holiday/flight cancellation and loss of baggage. We will need a copy of your travel insurance policy.

### PASSPORT & VISAS

For residents of the European Union, European Economic Area and the UK a passport with 6 months remaining validity is sufficient.

Visas are generally required for all other tourists. Check with the Spanish embassy or consulate in your country of origin. [Also see Spain's official tourism website...](#)



### HEALTH

We will have a first aid kit to hand at all times. Please bring with you any personal medicines and a very simple kit with plasters etc.

### CLIMATE

The Picos de Europa is known for its changeable mountain weather and proximity to the north coast of Spain. Although most of the region's precipitation occurs in winter, it can rain at any time of the year. As with any mountain area there is the risk of some poor weather, with rain and even mist/fog. Cloud inversions can occur providing some surreal and spectacular lighting conditions.

### TRAVEL INFORMATION

Spain is 1 hour ahead of GMT (Greenwich mean time). The currency is Euro and the language Spanish with local dialects just to make it interesting.

### LEVEL OF PHOTOGRAPHY REQUIRED

All levels of photographers are welcome. To get the most out of the tuition offered participants should be familiar with the basic functions of their camera and be enthusiastic about learning to develop their images.

### SUGGESTED CLOTHING

Generally we would hope that the weather will be warm and sunny, but in mountain areas it can rain and become a little chilly at times so a few items of warm clothing should be brought along in addition to your normal casual clothes for travel and the hotel!

- Lightweight trousers
- Warm trousers



- Long sleeved shirt/tee-shirt - sun protection
- Light wool jumper/fleece
- Lightweight waterproof jacket/trousers
- Pair sturdy walking trainers/boots/shoes (either)
- Sun hat
- Shorts
- Light warm hat
- Pair of light gloves
- Scarf (cotton/silk) for protection against sun on neck
- Useful Extras:
  - Very small basic first aid to include plasters, and any personal medicines
  - Litre water bottle
  - Small penknife
  - Sun Protection

Temperatures during the day can be warm and the sun is especially penetrating in the mountains so please ensure that you have some sort of sun protection.

Sun Lotion with an SPF for UVA & UVB of 15+; a light-weight hat to protect your head and neck from the sun;

good sunglasses with high quality non-tinted lenses and high degree of UV protection.

### DAILY ROUTINE

You will need to have adventurous approach in both mind and body. We will be transported to many of our locations and there is some walking on trails/paths. There will also be opportunities for some early morning rises to make the best of the dawn light, conditions and locations. We will have substantial picnic lunches on location. Evenings will be relaxed and focused on post processing tuition, socialising, dinner and the opportunity to view images. We will always be happy to answer your technical questions and demonstrate programmes such as Lightroom.

### PHOTOGRAPHIC EQUIPMENT/INFORMATION

- In addition to your chosen camera equipment you will need to carry a day pack that will also hold a few extra items such as water, spare layer etc. Specially designed



camera rucksacks like F-Stop, Lowepro and Peak design will be fine.

- A camera with interchangeable lenses such as a digital SLR or a compact system camera/mirrorless camera.
- A set of lenses to cover the whole range from wide-angle to telephoto, for example...  
For full-frame cameras: 16–35mm wide-angle, 24–105mm mid-range and a 70–200mm or longer tele zoom. For crop format cameras: 10–20mm wide-angle, 17–50mm mid-range and a 70–200mm or longer tele zoom.
- Spare camera (highly recommended)
- Sturdy travel tripod for low light photography
- Remote release to avoid shake on long exposures
- Neutral density, graduated filters and polariser, if you use these. At least one neutral density filter in the range of 4–6 stops would be a good addition to your kit.

- Lens cloth
- Sensor cleaning device (optional)
- Lightweight ‘trekking’ absorbent towel for drying cameras and equipment
- Rain cover for camera and camera bag.
- Sufficient memory cards for the whole holiday as it may not be possible to buy more during the trip.
- Film users should bring enough film, as it may not be possible to buy in many places.
- A laptop or tablet with the image editing applications of your choice, essential for checking and presenting images during the trip and for one-on-one sessions with the tutor. All of the places we stay in have Wi-Fi.
- Backup storage device (optional)
- Spare batteries and chargers
- All the electrical sockets are European two-pin, so you might need a travel plug adapter.

## MAPS

*Picos de Europa: Macizos Central y Oriental (Los Urrieles y Andarra)* Adrados Ediciones,(1:25,000).

One of two detailed hiking maps of the Picos, covering the central and eastern part of the mountains, between the river Cares and Potes. On the reverse of the map there is a panorama drawing of the area and an index of mountain peaks.

There is also a good one of the whole of the Picos by Adrados, 1:250,000, this shows the roads we will be using too. Local maps can be bought in Potes.

## BOOKING THIS HOLIDAY

Contact us [through our website](#), where you can also complete the [online booking form](#), or give us a call on our landline +44 (0)1270 440222.

## PARTNERS

Non-photographer partners will be very welcome. Although this primarily a photography holiday, we also visit some very beautiful and relaxing places. If any participants do not wish to join the walks/photographic sessions they will be able to relax in and around the accommodation. The cost will be the same for photographers and non photographers.

## OUTDOOR TRAVEL

This is an outdoor travel photography holiday and the itinerary will be dependent on the vagaries of the weather, local conditions and other variables. Wild Photography Holidays may use their discretion to change the itinerary should conditions dictate this; your health, safety and enjoyment will always be our primary concern when making such changes.

## MORE INFORMATION

We hope that this information has answered some of your questions about the holiday, It doesn't hope to answer everything. If you have any questions please get in touch.

## LINKS

View [images and information for this tour](#) on the website. Read about [our approach to teaching photography](#)

*“The photographic opportunities presented on this workshop were outstanding. We were never rushed and were encouraged by Martin and Geraldine to develop a creative eye, trying different techniques and avoiding the cliché shots.”*

Megan W. April 2022

*“In addition to some fabulous and totally unexpected mountain and coast locations we enjoyed photo processing sessions, reviews, slideshows and hands-on guidance where needed. A memorable photography workshop in a really beautiful part of Spain!”*

David G. Sept 2020