

Andalusia (Southern Spain)

Enjoy the rugged mountains, cultural diversity and ancient landscapes of Andalusia on two wheels, catching the early and late season sun and warmth this region has to offer!

Summary

WHERE: Andalusia

DISTANCE: to suit you

TIME : 6 days

PRICE : see website

DATES: May & October



Highlights

Flexible itinerary to suit everyone

Perfect cycling climate with late season sun

3 nights in the historic town of Ronda

Climbs include El Torcal de Antequera, Puerto de las Palomas & Caminito del Rey



Showcased by the Vuelta every August, Andalusia (Andalucía in Spanish) has to be one of the best places in Europe to ride a road bike. The scenery is varied, the roads well surfaced and there are lots of beautiful climbs to be done. On this cycling holiday we explore the province of Málaga, home to several Natural Parks, the geological sculptures of El Torcal de Antequera, the gravity-defying walkway of El Chorro and the beautiful Moorish hill town of Ronda, where we spend 3 nights.

With an abundance of flights from Europe and beyond, a favourable climate, nice hotels and mouth-watering Andalusian cuisine, there are very few reasons not to come on this road cycling holiday!

Assisted by two exceptional guides in fully kitted-out support vehicles, you can ride at your own pace and tailor each day with the route choices available. Daily 'optional extras' (challenge route) make this holiday also suitable for those looking to really push themselves, so it is an ideal holiday for mixed ability groups or couples.

Regardless of whether you opt for the Classic or Challenge route (or a few days of either!) this week is definitely a 'holiday' and riding through the ancient landscape, enjoying the far reaching and dramatic views will leave you feeling invigorated and with a sense of achievement.

We also offer Classic Cols holidays in the Alps, Picos, Dolomites and Pyrenees as well as in Catalonia, Provence, Cevennes & Ardeche, Sardinia and Corsica - please [check our website](#) for more details.

Itinerary

Day 0 - Travel Out

Included transfers from Málaga AGP airport to start hotel (30min). Check-in, assemble bikes and share a hearty meal in preparation for the adventure ahead! Those of you on early flights may want to head out on the bikes to explore the Costa del Sol or stretch your legs exploring the historic town centre.

Day 1: Málaga to Loja through the Montes de Málaga Natural Park

The mountains of the Montes de Málaga Natural Park rise sharply to the north of the city. This is our playground for today! We start by climbing the **Puerto del León (940m)** on a spectacular road, which even does a couple of 'loop-the-loops' to gain altitude. The views are breathtaking and the sparse forest a delight.

Our Classic route continues on quiet roads over the **Puerto de los Alazores (1028m)** through an interesting landscape to our hotel, which commands dramatic views over the town of Loja.

The ride can be made longer and more challenging by taking on the appropriately named **Puerto del Sol (1080m)**.

Classic Route

Puerto del León + Puerto de los Alazores
[80km with 1700m ascent]

Harder Route

Puertos del León + del Sol + de los Alazores
[100km with 2200m ascent]

Challenge Route

Puertos del León + del Sol + de los Alazores
[118km with 2700m ascent]

Day 2: Loja to El Chorro via El Torcal de Antequera

The view from the swimming pool of our hotel in El Chorro should be enough to motivate you to get to our destination today!

We start by undulating through the olive groves to the historical town of Antequera. The horizon is dominated by the wind etched geological masterpiece of **El Torcal de Antequera (1215m)**. Those on the Classic route will enjoy the spectacular ride around the base of this mighty mountain and if you want more, then the harder and challenge routes take you on a loop around the



mountain or all the way up to **El Torcal de Antequera (1215m)**.

The ride finishes in El Chorro on a great little road, linking a series of picturesque reservoirs. Here you have the option of relaxing or continue cycling up to the **Mirador Tajo Encantada / Alto de la Mesa (603m)**.

Classic Route

Antequera [89km with 1150m ascent]

Harder Route

Puerto de Antequera [115km with 2000m ascent]

Challenge Route

El Torcal de Antequera [122km with 2300m ascent]

Day 3: El Chorro to Ronda

The Caminito del Rey is a stunning walkway pinned along the steep walls of a narrow gorge in El Chorro. Whilst it is certainly no place to take a road bike, we start the day inspired, looking up at this masterpiece of engineering.

Our destination is the historic and beautiful town of Ronda (where we stay in a town centre hotel for the next 3 nights) and we take a slightly obscure route over the stunning **Puerto del Viento (1078m)** to get there.

As always, there are extra options for those wanting more of a challenge. Starting the day by nipping up to the **Mirador Tajo Encantada / Alto de la Mesa (603m)** is a good option, as is detouring over the **Puerto de los Martínez (713m)** and **Puerto de las Abejas (823m)**.

Classic Route

Puerto de las Atalayas + Puerto del Viento
[71km with 1720m ascent]

Challenge Route

Mirador Tajo Encantada + Puertos de los Martinez, las Abejas & del Viento
[103km with 2550m ascent]



Day 4: Day ride from Ronda - Puerto de Encinas Borrachas

You have the choice of taking today as a rest day to explore the many beautiful and historic sights of Ronda.

Options galore, we head over the **Alto de Benaoján (707m)** on smooth surfaces linking together picture-perfect whitewashed villages. Here you can choose to head back to Ronda over the **Puerto de Encinas Borrachas (1029m)** with spectacular views, or detour further over the **Puerto del Espino (780m)** and the **Cañada del Real Tesoro (625m)**. For those wanting that bit more, the **Sendero El Pimpollar (700m)** is a tempting addition!

Tonight's dinner is not included so you can explore the many fine restaurants in town.

Easier Route

[50km with 1200m ascent]

Classic Route

[77km with 1660m ascent]

Challenge Route

[104km with 2300m ascent]

Day 5: Day ride from Ronda - Puerto de las Palomas

The Parque Natural de la Sierra de Grazalema to the west of Ronda is a total delight for a road cyclist looking for a good day out on the bike. Heading over the **Puerto de Montejaque (714m)** we enjoy a wonderful descent to the base of the challenging **Puerto de las Palomas (1189m)**. Here you have the option of returning to Ronda or looping down to the cork tree plantations and back over the **Puerto del Boyar (1111m)** – certainly a challenging optional extra!

Whatever you decide to do – you are bound to be happy today!

Classic Route

Puerto de las Palomas [85km with 1600m ascent]

Challenge Route

Puertos de las Palomas + del Boyar
[141km with 2900m ascent]

Day 6: Ronda to Mijas

Bidding farewell to Ronda, we skirt the eastern edge of the Sierra de las Nieves Natural Park. Our route takes in the **Puerto El Saltillo (885m)** and the rural plains to the **Puerto del Aire (950m)**. This is all beautiful cycling country!

From El Burgo, we continue south over the **Puerto de las Abejas (823m)**, heading to the Mediterranean. We finish our tour of Andalusia with a glorious traverse around the base of the Sierra de Mijas to our hotel for the evening.

Those choosing the challenge route, however, must first take on the savage gradients of the **Antena Mirador Benalmadena (920m)** – the views are worth it!

Easier Route

[85km with 1500m ascent]

Classic Route

[104km with 1800m ascent]

Challenge Route

[118km with 2300m ascent]

Day 7 - Travel Back

We offer transfers back to Málaga AGP airport throughout the morning (30 min transfer). For those of you on the later transfers, there is plenty to be done in Mijas and the hotel swimming pool has a particularly nice view!



Start & End

Start: Hotel Zenit Málaga: C/ Cuba, 1-3, 29013 Málaga (+34 952 252 000)

End: Hotel Ilunion Mijas: Carretera de Mijas - Fuengirola, Km 4, 29620 Mijas (+34 952 486 400)

Travel

Finding flights

We recommend using a comparison tool such as www.skyscanner.net when searching for direct or indirect flights from various airports/regions/countries. It can be helpful if you search for one-way flights, giving results of all direct routes available, eg. 'UK to AGP'. Search results may change as airlines release their schedules for the following year at varying times.

If you are flying long haul, we recommend arriving into Málaga a day early in order to get over any jet lag before you start cycling. We can generally only offer an airport transfer on the start/finish days of the itinerary but can certainly arrange a taxi transfer for you (payable direct to your driver) on other days.

It is very easy to extend this holiday - Málaga is well connected and has an interesting historic town centre. There are many hotels in Málaga and if you extend your stay we recommend you choose one to your liking. Our hotels are chosen with cyclists and location in mind rather than accessibility to the town's attractions. Granada with its famous Alhambra is accessible with public transport or a car rental and worth the journey.

If you are travelling in a group of 6 or more and are unable to join the group airport transfers, we may be able to organise a private transfer for you. Please contact us to discuss.

Under your own steam...

If you are going to meet us at the start hotel or are leaving independently at the end of your trip to go on elsewhere, please let us know so we can plan accordingly; we may also be able to help you with your travel plans, so do get in touch if you need assistance.

Foreign Travel Advice

For the latest travel advice from the Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office including security and local laws, plus passport and visa information, check www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice.

Airport transfers

Marmot Tours offer airport transfers at designated times from the most convenient airport for the start of your trip. Transfers are timed to fit in with as many flights from as many regional airports as possible.

Transfers at set times from and to **Málaga airport (AGP)** are included in the holiday price and take approximately 30min each way.

If you arrive earlier than the transfer time then you will need to wait at the airport for your pick up. If flights are delayed then transfers may also be delayed. If flights are significantly delayed or cancelled then you may need to take a taxi to the start hotel and make a claim on your insurance or to your airline.

You will find our most up to date transfer times on the **Holiday Details** page on the Link (once you've made your booking). If you need to know the timings before booking, please get in touch via email: cycle@marmot-tours.co.uk.

Navigation

We provide you with colour maps and altitude profiles, as well as detailed directions of where to go. Our guides will even aim to be at those 'easy to miss' junctions and as you will see the van and guides regularly, navigation does not tend to be a problem.

For those of you with GPS units, we have GPS files available and will post them on The Link a few weeks before departure, in .gpx, and .tcx formats.

The files can be downloaded onto most units, including Garmin and Wahoo and in their most basic form provide a purple line to follow. With the more recent units you will also receive a set of visual instructions as you approach a turning. Our GPS tracks take you from hotel to hotel.

Am I Fit Enough?

It is normal (and only right) that you should consider whether or not you are fit enough for a cycling holiday in the mountains.

We have created our Classic Cols range of holidays in order to open up the world of road cycling in the mountains to those who may not have experienced it before. Our itinerary warms you up gently to the altitude, the extended climbing and to the technique of descending.

Our Classic Route is an achievable goal for regular and fit cyclists who have never climbed a mountain on a bike before. Our vehicles and guides are on hand to support you on your holiday and can offer advice, moral support and lifts in the van if you are tired.

Other holidays where the Classic route is considered 'easier' are the Classic Cols of the Pyrenees, Pyrenean Foothills, Catalonia, Sardinia, Corsica, Cevennes & Ardeche and Ventoux & the Verdon Gorge, although if you like to test yourself, their Challenge routes certainly pack a punch!

Our goal at Marmot Tours is to create an ambience of non-competitive cycling with no pressure to keep up with anyone else. It is about achieving your own individual goals and having a fabulous time doing it.

Am I too fit?

We have designed our Classic Cols style holidays to be accessible to a wide range of riding ability. Having a quick peek at each day's stats for the Challenge route should reassure you that even if you are a very fit and experienced road cyclist, there will be plenty to entertain you on this holiday.

With our daily route options you have the opportunity to cycle all day long, making yourself very tired indeed! If you do our Challenge Route each day then you are looking at 700km+ with 15,050m of ascent during your week. In terms of comparing our Classic Cols Challenge routes, this itinerary is probably slightly easier than the Pyrenean or Dolomites Challenge routes in terms of overall ascent and similar to our Picos holiday.

What is so nice about this range of holidays is that you can come along with people who are either less or more experienced than you and you can each get out of it what you want by choosing the daily route for you.

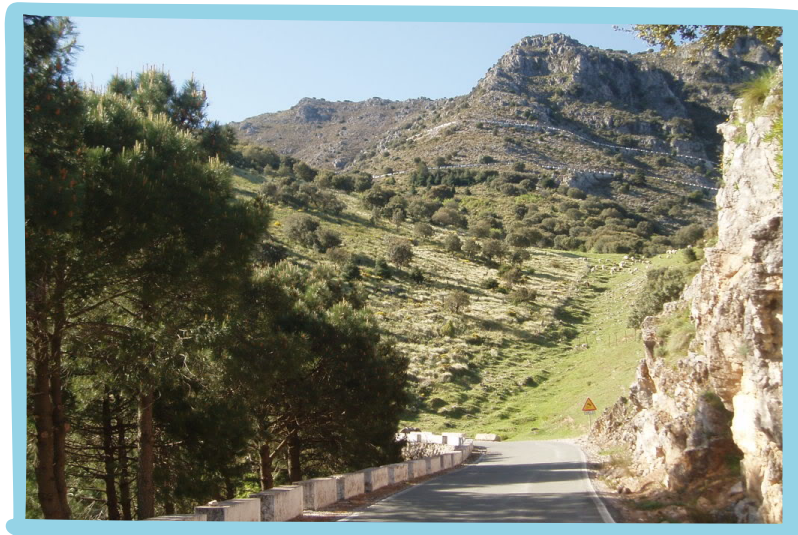
Pacing and Training

As with all sports holidays, the fitter you are, the more you can relax and enjoy the stunning route.

It can be difficult to find extended climbs for training in the UK, but generally, if you can build up your comfort on the bike (ideally on consecutive days) and your stamina and cardio vascular fitness overall, then you will really benefit when it comes to the holiday itself.

As well as training before the holiday, pacing yourself will go a long way towards you achieving your goals. The joy of a group holiday is that you are likely to find someone to cycle at a similar speed to you, so you don't need to try and keep up with your partner/friend/room mate. The quickest way to injure yourself or burn out is to cycle faster than you feel comfortable going.

We can't emphasise enough that this is your holiday and so, if you want a lift up the hill for whatever reason, your guides will be happy to help.



Strava

Many cyclists nowadays are using apps like Strava and Garmin Connect to track their progress, training and to compare themselves to their peers.

These apps make for great training tools and interesting post-ride analysis but there are obvious risks associated with competitive cycling styles, pushing yourself beyond your usual tolerance and focusing on live feed information whilst on the bike.

We therefore ask our clients to avoid such 'Live Segment' features when cycling on a Marmot Tours holiday, especially descending, and to **focus on the road at all times.**

Gearing/Bikes

Mainly, climbs are not particularly steep (compared to a lot of hills in the UK) but they do go on for a very long time. It is best to make sure that your bike will be suitable for your level of strength/fitness.

For most people a compact (smallest ring on front having 34 teeth), fitted with a 30 or 32 cassette on the rear, is a good choice. It is possible to fit your bike with larger cassettes, using a rear hanger extender, like the WolfTooth RoadLink.

If this all sounds too complicated then we do have some excellent titanium-framed bikes for hire, which are fitted with SRAM 50-34 at the front with 11 speed 11-36 toothed cassettes.

Guiding

Supporting you on your holiday will be two of our experienced, approachable, knowledgeable and fun guides. Despite being passionate about cycling, both guides will be in support vans as this holiday is all about you and your needs. Between them they will have knowledge of the area and the language and be skilled at bike mechanics.

Having two vehicles per group (regardless of the number of bookings up to a group size of around 20) is what allows us to offer you freedom to cycle at your own pace with a level of independence on this holiday. One van stays on the Classic route and one van covers the Challenge route. Due to the distances involved, those cyclists doing the full challenge route may need to be more independent than those on the Classic Route. Our guides are experts at advising you on the routes, where you can expect to see the van, and what you might need with you.

In the event that you need help for a mechanical issue (for example) one of the vans will be able to quickly get to you with full tool kits, spare back wheels and even a spare bike. We hope you won't need us for anything serious but being prepared for all eventualities is what we do exceptionally well.

You can expect to see a support van with water, snacks and your personal day bag 2 - 4 times a day, so you don't need to carry much on your bike, unless the weather is exceptional!

"I truly enjoyed myself on my first ever cycling holiday. The route was amazing and challenging, yet exceptionally beautiful. The support received was wonderful, and made for a trip that I will remember forever." Ian McD

Group Dynamics

Your group will be any number up to around 20 riders. This number works really well - it's big enough for you to find others to cycle with at your pace, but not so huge as to feel impersonal! We get lots of clients booking alone and lots of small groups of friends. If you think you can get a group of 18 - 20 people together then we can offer you a custom departure date.

We love that we get a really big variety in terms of cycling experience... from club cyclists, people training for other events, those raising money for charity, ex-pro cyclists and people who are relatively new to cycling who like to try something new on holiday.

Accommodation

We stay in comfortable 3* hotels with en suite facilities. The hotels have been selected for their customer service towards cyclists and their location. You will be sharing a twin room with another client (of the same gender) unless you book a single room for a supplement (contact cycle@marmot-tours.co.uk for availability). Each hotel has a garage/locked room to ensure that your trusty steed has a comfortable night too.

Food

Breakfast

No surprise that this is the crucial meal of the day. All hotels have a buffet style breakfast with cereals, eggs, meats and cheeses. We supplement hotel breakfasts with cereals and fruit. Breakfast in Spain is generally from 8:30am.

Lunches

You know what you like to eat when you are riding and it is not likely to be the same as what the others in your group will want to eat. We don't include lunches so there are no enforced group stops. We strongly advise that you stop for proper food at lunchtime. Each day we recommend a suitable place serving cyclist friendly food which is great for you, and the locals appreciate your custom. We will be sure to have a van there for your midday faff! Bear in mind that this is Spain, so lunches are generally served from 2pm.

Snacks

Your support van aka snack-shack will be well stocked with a variety of tasty delectables:

Salty crisps, bars, cakes, fresh fruit (bananas obviously!), nuts & sweets are the staples. We suggest you bring your own favourite energy powders/gels/bars with you as these will not be easily available en route.

Dinner

We eat as a group in the evening - either in the hotel or at a nearby restaurant. Expect three courses (and generous portions) which are tailored to the needs of cyclists. Dinner will be served at around 20:00-20:30 (this is Spanish culture, so you may want to bring some recovery bars, etc. to keep you going until then). Wine at dinner is included, however, coffees/soft drinks and beers are not.

Please note: There are many fine restaurants in Ronda, so dinner on our second night there (at the end of your 4th day of riding) is not included to give you an opportunity to choose for yourself.

Special diets

Please note your special dietary requirements on the booking form or contact us. Our hotels can cater for most dietary needs and allergies if we know well in advance. Please note that we request that you stick to your dietary preference for the entire trip, as it is very complicated for the hotels (and guides) if an individual is vegetarian for some meals and not for others.

What's Included

- 6 days supported riding
- Airport transfers on arrival and departure days at specified times
- Route notes, directions, maps and GPS files
- 7 nights accommodation with breakfast
- Dinner on 6 nights with table wine
- 2 customised and well stocked vehicles with experienced guides, offering moral support, and nutritional, mechanical and first aid assistance, plus snacks & water



Bike Hire

Marmot Tours has an excellently maintained fleet of custom built, titanium framed bikes available to rent for your holiday. Advantages of rental include:

- avoiding hefty fees levied by airlines for transport
- worry free travel (knowing your trusty steed is safely stored away at home!)
- the chance to try a titanium bike built specifically with climbing cols in mind (gearing!)
- relinquishing responsibility for cleaning and maintenance to our experienced team

Please see our [Bike Hire webpage](#) for details like prices as well as full specs and dimensions.

Please note that despite the size of our fleet steadily growing, we cannot guarantee that we will have a bike in your size available. If you would like to hire a bike, please check availability before booking your holiday.

How to Book

1. Email cycle@marmot-tours.co.uk to check availability for your preferred departure date. Remember to also check availability for single room and bike hire if they are your preference.
2. Bag your spot with a provisional booking for a week or so while you get planning.
3. Log on to or register with our online booking system, The Link (link.marmot-tours.co.uk), to make your holiday booking.
4. Pay the £400 deposit by BACS or by card online. Receive a confirmation email.
5. Confirmed single room supplements and bike hire are being added manually to your balance invoices, so may take a day or two to appear.
6. We'll post regular holiday information and updates on the Link (you'll receive an email notification).
7. You can meet your fellow holiday makers via The Link Forum and share training / travel plans etc.

Insurance

Holiday insurance is **essential** for all Marmot Tours holidays and anyone without insurance is not able to take part in the trip. Please arrange your insurance cover at the time of booking, as this will ensure that you are covered if you incur an injury during training and are unable to go on your holiday. We have a very high cancellation rate so are unable to deviate from our [cancellation policy](#).

Your insurance needs to cover you for non-competitive road cycling (cycle touring) at altitude with the following fairly standard inclusions:

- Medical Expenses
- Repatriation

Some clients also like to ensure they have the following optional items:

- Cancellation cover
- Loss or damage to their bike

NB if you are hiring a bike from us there is an insurance element in the fee so you will not need additional cover.

Once you have arranged your insurance, please add the relevant details to the **Before you go...** section of your holiday on [The Link](#). Unlike your passport and emergency contact details, you will need to add insurance details for every trip you are taking.

This ensures we have the most up to date information and are able to assist you in case you have an accident on your holiday.

Financial Protection

Marmot Tours are members of ABTA, the Association of British Travel Agents.

ABTA and ABTA members help holidaymakers to get the most from their travel and assist them when things do not go according to plan.

As part of our membership contract we are obliged to maintain a high standard of service to you by ABTA's Code of Conduct.

- In line with our ABTA membership (no Y6184), we hold an insurance policy that gives you full financial protection for all funds you pay us for your holiday
- We have full Tour Operators Professional and Public Liability Insurance with specialist brokers Campbell Irvine
- We carry out risk assessments on all of our holidays to ensure we have thought through every detail
- We employ staff with the correct experience and skills to ensure you have a safe and fun trip, and have a thorough training programme each season.

For further information about ABTA, the Code of Conduct and the arbitration scheme available to you if you have a complaint, please contact ABTA, 30 Park St, London, SE1 9EQ (Tel 0203 117 0500).

