

THE WALKING PARTY

and introducing Minette Constant MW

ITINERARY FOR A TASTE OF THE BASQUE PYRENEES

Dates: 19th – 27th April, 27th September – 5th October

Price: 2890 euros per person Single supplement: 370 euros

Guggenheim day supplement: 210 euros per person

Distance: 47 miles Walking: not too difficult



James and Diana Tamlyn moved to their 18th century farmhouse in France 15 years ago, enthused by the romance and beauty of the area. James' love of the flora and fauna, their combined fascination for the food, wine and local traditions and personal contacts make the week a special experience that you could not enjoy as an individual traveller.

Minette Constant is a British Master of Wine and a great friend of James and Diana. Minette lives with her family in the Béarn, overlooking the Pyrenees. She will be delighted to introduce you to the wonderful variety of wines from this corner of France as well as enjoying more general wine conversation, naturally with a good bottle or two!

Day 1 After meeting James and Diana and the rest of the group at Biarritz airport you will be driven to a beautiful manor house standing in undulating countryside overlooking the Pyrenees. This is a very pretty eighteenth century house with a swimming pool and with six spacious bedrooms all with bathrooms en suite and which overlooks the distant Pyrenean peaks. You will meet the proprietor who will be with us and who is a fabulous cook. You will eat with her on Day 3. Dinner at a local restaurant in a local village.

Day 2 We set off in the vehicles for a fifteen minute drive to be dropped off for a beautiful walk back to the Manor House for a picnic lunch. There are lovely views of the Pyrenees as

we wander along the lanes. Lunch at the Manor House before an optional afternoon walk into the medieval village of Sauveterre to see the old witches bridge. Return to the house by car for a wine tasting with Minette Constant who will show you the diversity of wines from south-west France. Dinner in a local village with James, Diana and Minette.

Walk: 7 miles

Day 3 We drive for a walk to take us from the Béarn into the Soule country. This is a small region half way between the Bearn and the Basque which claims to be part of neither! A traditional lunch in a Soule village before walking through the undulating countryside to the village of Ainharp. Return by car for a champagne tasting with Minette. And for dinner, having focused on the excellent regional wines on the first two nights, we will now splash out on some of the greater reds and whites from the south west. *Walk: 9 miles*

Day 4 We leave the Manor House and drive to St Etienne de Baigorry. Here we will visit an Irouleguy vineyard. Irouleguy was wine first made by monks for the pilgrims on their way to Saint Jacques de la Compostelle. Now a great wine, one of the classic reds of the south west, made with the tannat grape grown on red sandstone terraces. We will eat trout at the riverside village of Banca before a 'walk' in the car up hill for a beautiful walk by foot downhill to see the Basque pigs in the Aldude valley. In the evening we arrive at Sare for our next three nights in the lovely hotel situated to the side of the central square of this pretty Basque village. Here we are surrounded by Pyrenean peaks. *Walk: 6 miles*

Day 5 We leave the hotel and the central square of Sare to walk towards the village of Ainhoa. A little up and down in the small hills between the two villages in this almost crater like bowl before arriving in the classic Basque village dotted with red and white painted houses and with wonderful charm. Lunch in Ainhoa before a voluntary walk up hill to the tiny chapel for outstanding views over to the Atlantic and the foothills as a whole, known locally as the Pyrenankles. Dinner outside in the square.

Walk: 12 miles



Day 6 Again up in the morning for another lovely French breakfast of dark black coffee and freshly baked croissants before we set off into the mountains for Spain! This is not too difficult a walk as there is a lovely way through the mountains towards the village of Bera.

We will picnic on the way with some delicious Spanish wines and fantastic Basque ham (this is the ham that comes from the free roaming pigs that feed on chestnuts which lends it the delicious characteristic sweet flavour). You then return to Sare by car for a fabulous dinner of Basque beauty! *Walk: 13 miles*

Day 7 We drive to Hendaye and catch the pedestrian ferry across the bay to Hondarribia (Fuenterrabia). This is a very beautiful port of almost Moresque beauty with balconies and brightly coloured facades and extraordinary boxed windows three storeys high. We will lunch here and enjoy wandering around the old port before continuing for our last night in San Sebastian. This is a very special city, a sort of nineteenth century Brighton with a perfect bay and a small island in the middle of the bay's pincer edges. It is known as the gastronomic city of Europe. We will have a fabulous fish dinner near the bay. This is a wonderful restaurant. You will be staying your last night or two over-looking the bay.

Day 8 The Guggenheim day. *The Guggenheim Museum was designed by Frank Gehry and sponsored by the Solomon Guggenheim Foundation. This museum was specifically built to house exhibitions of monumental works and is I think one of the most beautiful buildings in Europe. Frank Gehry designed it around the idea of boat lines and fish and it has a wonderfully curvilinear and scaly quality to it with a tremendous sense of light. The fact that Jeff Koons' 15 metre puppy guards it like Cerberus is an added bonus of floral contrasting with metallic. Well worth the detour!!*

For those doing the Guggenheim day we leave after a relaxed breakfast for Bilbao and visit the Museum in the morning. A *paella* or salad lunch in a famous café where Unamuno and other early twentieth century intellectuals would eat before we drive back to San Sebastian for the most delicious tapas followed by the most stunning T bone steak you could ever wish for.



Day 9 We leave San Sebastian for the famous French port of S Jean de Luz. A moment to shop in the pretty streets and see the wonderful church where Louis IV married the Infanta of Spain in 1654. A small light lunch in the town before leaving for Biarritz airport.

NOTE: *The itinerary is subject to change according to local conditions. All mileages shown are approximate.*