

Catalan cooking holiday in Spain



Highlights

A foodie's week from heaven taking in Catalan cooking classes, wine tours and superb restaurants. All this set in a beautiful part of Spain with medieval rural villages and pine and olive tree clad countryside, how could you not be tempted?.

The Emporda is the historical term for a the region of Catalonia taking in the Costa Brava to the French border. Like any coast in Spain, it has some dubious stretches, but taken as a whole this is perhaps Spain's finest. It is wild and rugged with rocky outcrops, small coves and pastel fishing villages. Inland, the cork, wild olive and pine trees dominate amidst the medieval stone villages. The area has a rich culinary heritage and plays host to some of the finest restaurants and chefs in the world. The Catalan cuisine, simple and bold, plays heavily on the abundance of fresh produce from the sea and the land with local ingredients such as salt cod, anchovies, wild game, prawns and sea urchins.

This week long expert-led fully guided cooking holiday in Spain, gives a real insight into Catalan cuisine. You'll be based in a superb rural inn (famed for its restaurant, of course!) from where you'll enjoy Catalan cooking classes and explore the region on guided trips to local villages, food markets and world class restaurants. The cooking classes are relaxed affairs accompanied by tutored tastings of the best local wines. There is time too for exploring, with the coast only 17 miles away and a network of paths to explore by foot or bike from the hotel (bikes are available free of charge).

Is it for me?

This is most definitely a holiday for the food and wine enthusiast. There is a serious focus on food and wine throughout the holiday with all meals pre-arranged (wine provided and chosen for you in many cases) and cooking classes or demonstrations on most days. On the other hand you won't exactly be spending all week in a cooking school, far from it, with meals in world leading restaurants, visits to fish auctions and local markets. It will be a feast for the senses (sorry for the cliché) which at times will be indulgent, at times luxurious and at times demanding for some. You will get some time to yourself and this really is a fantastic way to take in the highlights of the region and its food. What better way is there to get under the skin of a place? This holiday is available as a small group tour with scheduled departures, or can be booked on request as a private holiday (minimum two people) at a time more suitable for you.

Accommodation

You'll be based at the Hotel La Place in Madramenya, a beautiful walled village near Girona (worth a visit!). Owners Jaume Vidal and Assumpta Puig have created a homage to their passion for food and design. The hotel is set in a 14th Century village townhouse surrounded by fields of sunflowers (when in season of course!). All rooms are deluxe suites with private terraces.

Being a foodie holiday, the food and wine will of course be a highlight. Private cooking classes are graciously favoured by wine tasting sessions. Daily breakfast, five lunches and evening meals (with wine) are included in the holiday. Even the wines accompanying meals will be chosen by the hotel's sommelier. The breakfast isn't overlooked either with local cheeses, meats and pastries accompanied by fresh fruit and yoghurts. Your instructor for the week is Vicenç, the chef of the renowned hotel restaurant (specialising in regional Catalan cuisine with a modern twist). All in, it is a real foodie find.

Prices from

2,501 GBP (6 days) per person

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Itinerary

Day 1: You'll meet Vicenç, your chef and tutor, for a well deserved glass of cava and tapas. Vicenç will prepare a specially designed menu of regional, seasonal specialities.

Day 2: After breakfast, you'll explore two nearby medieval villages, visit a local cheesery or vineyard, then head on to a small coastal town on one of the finest stretches of the Costa Brava (Wild Coast). A superb lunch is put on in a famed restaurant and after a gentle walk along the beach you'll return to the hotel for a free afternoon. In the evening you'll have your first cooking class and a tour-of-Spain wine tasting led by Monica, the Somellier.

Day 3: Today is all about exploring home cooking. You'll head to Palafrugel and the home of Conxa, an outstanding local cook. You'll shop for ingredients together at the local market before returning for a hands-on class preparing dishes such as faves a la catalana (Catalan style beans), esqueixada (salt cod salad), mar i muntanya (surf and turf), or canalons (cannelloni). You'll see a fish auction in the afternoon at the port of Palamos. After a short rest at the hotel, dinner is booked in a traditional Catalan restaurant in a nearby medieval village.

Day 4: You'll visit Girona's superb food markets with Jaume (the owner of the hotel) to pick up ingredients for a cooking class back at the hotel. The dishes cooked vary by season but will always include fresh local seafood, meat and produce. After a four course lunch paired with local wines, the remainder of the day is free. An ideal opportunity for a walk or cycle in the surrounding countryside. For dinner you'll enjoy another fine meal at the hotel.

Day 5: Today's cooking class is all about seafood, preparing Catalan style stews, fish soups and rice dishes. After a relaxed lunch and afternoon to yourself you'll head to Girona (a must visit in the area), visit the medieval Jewish quarter and enjoy dinner at the two-Michelin starred El Celler de Can Roca. El Celler de Can Roca was recently voted the fifth best restaurant in the world.

Day 6: You'll delve into the local Emporda DOC wineries. Wine production in the region is experiencing somewhat of a renaissance with modern methods and new grape varieties. You'll visit a biodynamic winery near the coast and enjoy a lunch of lamb chops grilled over grape vine cuttings. After lunch you'll visit an olive oil mill for a tasting of oils from Arbequina and Argudell olives. For your final evening, there will be a cooking demonstration followed by a last dinner with local wine and cava.

Details

Getting there

Transfers provided from Girona, which has an International Airport

Price includes

Accommodation for 6 nights
Daily breakfast
5 lunches and 5 dinners with wine
4 cooking classes
1 cooking demonstration
Olive oil tasting
Wine tasting
English-speaking guide and cooking instructors
Winery visits
Visit to artisan cheese producer
Olive oil mill tour
Transport for group excursions
Restaurant gratuities

Price details

\$3825 for 2

\$3100 for 3-4

\$2650 for 5-6

Prices are per person, double occupancy. No single supplement. 12 people maximum

When is best

Dates available upon request for 2 or more people

Typical Duration

1 week

Comfort level

Refined (boutique or luxury accommodation and food)

Experience required

A reasonable level of fitness and interest is all that is needed

