

# POLKA DOT CYCLING

## La Vuelta España

Telephone: +44 (0)1869 278 130

www.polkadotcycling.com

*The Hidden Gem of the Grand Tours, featuring the Natural Parks of North West Spain.*

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### Tour Summary

We're thrilled to present to you our 2017 La Vuelta Tour, taking in the most stunning locations of North- West Spain.

The tour has been carefully designed to experience up close, some of the most exciting deciding stages of La Vuelta through the Picos de Europa and other stunning natural parks dotted through the Basque and Asturias regions.

Unlike many organized tours, we will spend days away from the race, on quiet back-roads and riding for as long or as little as you like. You will enjoy staying at the finest hotels and Paradors, tasting regional food and wine that this part of Spain is renowned for.

Tour locations will include the seaside towns of Biarritz and San Sebastian as well as Liampas, Cangas di Onis and Oviedo.

Other hi-lights include riding the famous climbs of Covadonga, Angliru and other 'testing' climbs in the region, seeing the most exciting deciding stages of La Vuelta, staying in the finest Paradors and of course being taken care of the Polka Dot Team the entire way!

With the tour limited to only 14 places, we hope you decide that 2017 is your year of experiencing what many now claim is the best of the Grand Tours, La Vuelta!



Dates: 2<sup>nd</sup> September – 11<sup>th</sup> September 2017

Days: 10

Deposit: \$1000 AUD

Price: \$6290 AUD

Arrival: Biarritz, France

Departure: Oviedo, Spain

Contact: [steve@polkadotcycling.com](mailto:steve@polkadotcycling.com)

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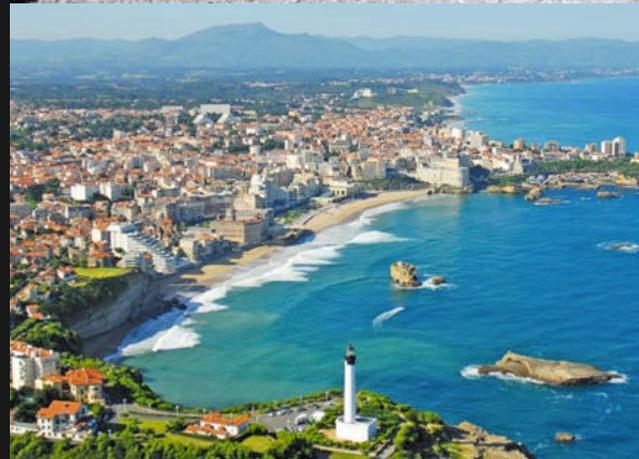
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### TOUR HIGHLIGHTS AND SERVICES

- Catch key final stages of the La Vuelta including the Stage 17 atop the Monumenta Vaca Pasiega, the hardest stage in the tour and Collada de Carmons, Collada de Ozalba and Collada de la Hoz.
- Ride classic climbs like the Covadonga, Angliru, Jaizkibel and many more.
- Discover the overlooked splendour of the Spanish mountains including the Picos de Europa, Aiko Harria National Park and the Gatztelugatxe Isle.
- Spend time in Spain's most famous seaside town, San Sebastian.
- Explore beautiful Paradors and the surrounds with the opportunity to see the Basque country.
- Full on-road support including vehicles and guides to ensure all you have to think about is riding your bike and enjoying La Vuelta.
- Flexible ride options each day, so you can choose to ride as much or as little as you like.
- Tour leader, Steve Cunningham (of [procyclingskills.com](http://procyclingskills.com)) on hand to provide all the tour insights into the race and provide you with climbing and descending tips and techniques.
- Non-riding partners extremely well catered for with activities and sightseeing while your cycling partner rides.
- buffet breakfasts to charge you up for each day.
- Wonderful 3 course dinners included on many of the nights, including carefully selected regional wines.
- Bike mechanic support and full soigneur service including baggage handling, dietary requirements and more with no request being ignored.
- On and off road photography taken by the team to capture your holiday.



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Day 1 Arrival Day 2<sup>nd</sup> September

On arrival at Biarritz Airport or Train Station you will be met by your friendly guide team and transferred to our hotel located by the beach where we will stay tonight. You may choose to arrive a day or two earlier to settle in before the ride begins and we're happy to help with your travel plans.

Once settled into the hotel we will provide assistance unpacking your bike or introducing you to your hire bike. This is always a great opportunity to get to know everyone and for the guide team to give you a briefing on the trip ahead.

We will put on a ride or two during the day along the coast so to loosen the legs off and soak up the scenery of this most beautiful location. This afternoon you will have a chance to wander the shops of San Sebastian, relax on the beach or in a seaside bar. Our hotel is located close to the old Latin quarter, lined with pedestrian streets, full of bars, cafes and specialty shops.

We will enjoy our welcome dinner this evening.

**RIDE** Up to 50 km  
**STAY** San Sebastian 4\* hotel  
**DINNER** Welcome dinner



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### Day 2 Ride the Coast 3<sup>rd</sup> September

After a great breakfast, we'll leave from the hotel for a morning out on the bikes. Riding along the northern coast of Spain sounds flat, well it is in parts, but we will enjoy some elevations along the way and taking in breath-taking views of the rugged coastline and passing through ancient seaside villages.

A highlight today will be crossing over the Spanish border and beginning the climb of Jaizkibel, some 455m above sea level and a climb that has often featured in both La Vuelta and is the high point of the Classica San Sebastian.

We will return to San Sebastian for an afternoon of relaxing. Being September, the holiday crowds have started to disperse, so we will enjoy the tapas bars with a lot more elbow room!

<b>RIDE</b>	Up to 80 km	Up to 1000 vm
<b>STAY</b>	San Sebastian 4* hotel	
<b>DINNER</b>	Prepared	



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Day 3 Basque Country 4<sup>th</sup> September

Today we will enjoy a ride south of the coast through the Aiko Harria, which was declared a Natural Park in 1995. This is classic Basque Country where we will enjoy kilometre after kilometre with barely a car in sight, only goats, sheep and cattle that all produce some of the finest cheeses of Spain.

This exceptional setting of some 6000 hectares with Penas de Aia its peak, you will have the option today to take in a full 120km loop including 3 climbs, including the Bianditz Pass, or opt to shorten your ride so to return to San Sebastian for more sightseeing or relaxing.

The afternoon will be spent enjoying the many things San Sebastian has to offer including a visit to the 12<sup>th</sup> Century Castillo de la Mota, the 15<sup>th</sup> Century Basilica, the Museo de San Telmo or just relax on the white sands.

Tonight, enjoy a night on the town in the Latin Quarter passing through countless Tapas bars, or even splash out for a Michelin Star experience!

**RIDE** Up to 120 km Up to 2000 vm  
**STAY** San Sebastian 4\* hotel  
**DINNER** At your leisure



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Day 4 East to West 5<sup>th</sup> September

Today we bid farewell to San Sebastian and make our way further west toward the Asturias region of Spain and to our Parador accommodation.

It's a day of coastline riding, but don't be fooled, there are plenty of hills to keep you on your toes, with some 2000m of climbing over the 100km, this is a coastal ride like none other. Passing through seaside villages of Lekeitio, Bermio and Plentzia, a highlight today will be a visit to the dramatic Gatztelugatxe on-route - an islet that houses this 9<sup>th</sup> century chapel dedicated to John the Baptist.

Those not riding today will have the chance to walk to the chapel and spend time soaking up the ambiance of this historic site.

We will then make the short transfer by van to our accommodation, which is sure to impress the most discerning of travellers.

<b>RIDE</b>	Up to 100 km	Up to 2000 vm
<b>STAY</b>	Parador 4* hotel	
<b>DINNER</b>	Prepared	



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Day 5 Vuelta Stage 17 6<sup>th</sup> September

After some wonderful days exploring the Basque Country, today is the day many of you have been looking forward to – Welcome to La Vuelta!

Today we leave on bike from the Parador and take in a fantastic loop in the region, riding in the Collados del Asson Natural Park and on the race route itself!

Today is arguably the hardest stage of the tour, Stage 17, with the finish in the heart of the Collados del Asson atop the Monumenta Vaca Pasiega. This is a brutal climb for the peloton after some 170km of racing - the road only the width of a car, and with gradients exceeding 20% in parts we are sure to know who the eventual winner of La Vuelta will be today.

Today you will have the option to climb the Monumenta Vaca Pasiega before the race arrives, then see all the action of La Vuelta and compare your performance to theirs!

**RIDE** Up to 90 km Up to 1500 vm  
**STAY** Parador 4\* hotel  
**DINNER** At your leisure



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Day 6 Vuelta Stage 18 7<sup>th</sup> September

Today we have something very special planned. A chance to ride 70km of the race route, taking in up to 3 categorised climbs.

We will start our ride from Cabezon de la Sal, and starting with a flat warm-up before climbing the Collada de Carmons (Cat3), followed by the Collada de Ozalba (Cat3) and the Collada de la Hoz (Cat2). What a fantastic opportunity to ride ahead of the race, be cheered on by people lining the roads and taking in some of the regions finest scenery.

We will then settle in along the final stages of the race route in La Hermida where we will watch the race come charging then following the dying km's in our restaurant. We'll then set off to a short transfer to our next Parador accommodation and get ready for our assault on the mighty Covadonga tomorrow!

<b>RIDE</b>	Race route up to 70 km
<b>STAY</b>	Alternative Parador 4* hotel
<b>DINNER</b>	Prepared



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Day 7 Covadonga 8<sup>th</sup> September

After a wonderful night's slumber, we will start our ride from the Parador to climb one of the most iconic climbs in Spain, the Covadonga, which has been used as the deciding climb of La Vuelta on many occasions.

The Picos de Europa has an exceptional landscape, where high summits alternate with deep gorges and canyons. The park boasts 200 peaks of over 2,000 metres and vertical drops of over 500 metres. It is also often voted the most beautiful place to walk in all of Europe.

After climbing the 16km Hors Category Covadonga, you will also have the option to ride over to the Alto de Sostres (Arenas de Cabrales) which last featured in the 2015 Vuelta. Others may decide to return to the Parador and enjoy a more relaxing afternoon, but whatever you decide, it will be day you will remember for a long time to come.

**RIDE** Up to 70 km Up to 1300 vm  
**STAY** Alternative Parador 4\* hotel  
**DINNER** At your leisure



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We return to La Vuelta today to witness the Queen Stage of the race.

Day 8 Vuelta Stage 19 9<sup>th</sup> September

Today the peloton will tackle what is arguably the most difficult climb on the UCI calendar, the Alto el Angliru.

The climb has a fearsome reputation and you can add it to your resume if you wish! "The climb is extremely tough, almost inhuman" Oscar Sevilla said once.

Today is a recovery day of sorts, with the option to take in an easy ride to the base of the Angliru to watch the race on the slopes before we check into our boutique star hotel in central Oviedo.

Once in the heart of the town of Oviedo, we will discover a beautifully maintained old quarter with a wealth of history, architecture and culture.

**RIDE** Optional 40 km  
**STAY** Oviedo Boutique hotel  
**DINNER** At your leisure



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### Day 9 Return to Angliru 10<sup>th</sup> September

With La Vuelta heading to central Spain for the final Parade stage in Madrid, we have the perfect opportunity to return to the Angliru to climb this most legendary ascent without the crowds.

The Angliru can be broken down into 2 climbs, the first half being a more palatable average of 8% before reaching the stunning plateau. We call this 'basecamp' and this is where you will make the final decision to press on, or relax on the plateau for lunch, in one of the most idyllic peaceful settings in Northern Spain. The second half has an average of 14%, one section averaging 23.5% but with focus or even a pair of sneakers, you can make it! Whatever you achieve today, you will walk away with some incredible stories and can tell your friends that you have ridden the famous slopes of one of the worlds most feared climb.

Tonight, we will enjoy a farewell dinner in the heart of the old town.

<b>RIDE</b>	Up to 100 km	Up to 2000 vm
<b>STAY</b>	Oviedo Boutique hotel	
<b>DINNER</b>	Farewell dinner	



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Day 10 Final Day 11<sup>th</sup> September

Today we bid you farewell to what has been an amazing holiday.

But before doing so, for those that have time for an early morning pedal, we will take in a great little loop out of the town, and return by mid-morning.

As on all Polka Dot Tours, we will provide any assistance you need in checking into the airport near Oviedo or train station, which has direct and access into to Madrid - well worth a visit for a few days before returning home.

Our team can also assist with any pre and post tour ideas for you, additional nights' accommodation in our hotels and so on, so please ask if you would like further information.

We trust you have enjoyed skimming through the itinerary, have got excited about the chance to see La Vuelta up close and ride the iconic roads of the Basque and Asturias regions. We certainly look forward to welcoming you along!

*"I hope you have enjoyed reading through the itinerary, are excited about the prospect of riding the most iconic climbs together with other hidden gems Northern Spain. I look forward to leading this very special tour with the Polk Dot Team and taking you on an unforgettable journey."*

Steve Cunningham



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## AM I FIT ENOUGH?

The Pyrenees are a beautiful mountain-scape with very dramatic profiles. The climbs are mostly at an average of between 6 & 8% but there are a few punchy climbs to offer a challenge, with plenty of flats and descents too. This means that a reasonable level of fitness would help you get the most enjoyment from this trip. If you have any concerns regarding your health please contact your physician and if you wish to talk to us about this issue, please call.

If you are struggling to handle the riding we will encourage you to make use of the minibus, that is what it is for. We reserve the right to make alterations to the route if we have concerns regarding your health and safety. During the week, we are intending for you to have an enjoyable tour, not go home in a heap!

## NAVIGATION

Due to our insistence that our guides cycle on the road with our customers, offer support and advice, they are also able to help you navigate the routes. This means minimal effort on your part to stay on track.

We also make sure to provide the routes on downloadable Garmin files and we also have daily handouts with route profiles, maps and directions to help you, just in case. This also will have the lead guide's phone number so you can always contact them whilst out on the road, if needed.

## TRAVEL

We ask that you all fly into Biarritz Airport as this is closer to our starting point on this trip, or you can arrive by train. We also ask that you book your departure from Oviedo either by flight or train. We will arrange transfers to and from both airports and stations and local hotels.

For this trip, we ask that you arrive before 5:30 pm so that we can get you to the first hotel with enough time for bike set up, dinner and the briefing about the trip and next day.

## INSURANCE

Travel and Medical insurance is not included, but is a condition of our booking terms and conditions. We want to make sure that no one has any issues that will cause them long term problems. And whilst we take every effort to make sure everyone is well taken care of, sometimes accidents do happen.

We would recommend an Insurance Group called World Nomad, that we like for their level of care and insurance. Visit their website using [this link](#) to get a quote.

## FINANCIAL PROTECTION

We take your financial protection very seriously. In accordance with "The Package Travel, Package Tours Regulations 1992" all passengers booking with Polka Dot Cycling Ltd are fully insured for the initial deposit and subsequently the balance of all monies paid to us, including repatriation if required, arising from the cancellation or curtailment of your travel arrangements due to the insolvency of Polka Dot Cycling Ltd.

We have full insurance for this arranged by Towergate Chapman Stevens through HCCI International Insurance Company PLC.

## GUIDES & SUPPORT

Polka Dot has a high standard for our guides, meaning they must be experienced in the mountains but also approachable for you needs. We have a standard 1:4 guide client ratio which means you will always have someone available to help you; whether with technical help, advice or just an encouraging word.

We have support minibuses out on the road which is fully stocked with carb drink and energy food that will help you keep up your energy and give you a lift if they need it. You will never be far from someone to look after you.

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## FOOD

On our trips, you eat like the pros! With the constant use of energy, we know that the best way for people to be comfortable and keep their energy up; they must eat "little and often". This means no bloating, discomfort and losing energy. We carry a full range of snacks and energy drinks suitable for cyclists along with quiches, baguettes, fruit, cakes, sweets (like the infamous Haribo!), cereal bars, nuts, crisps and more.

## NON-RIDING GUESTS

On our trips, we want to make sure that your guests have as much fun as you, without the cycling. We will have a guide on to take any of our non-riding guests on trips to places of interest, shopping excursions or sight-seeing along the route.

We can then arrange for either a lunch for the non-riders, separately, or we can reunite the whole group so they can eat together.

## ACCOMMODATION

We want our trip to be as comfortable and as enjoyable as possible which means using quality hotels. We use mainly 4\* and Superior 3\* accommodation.

We prefer to use more personal and authentic hotels on our trips, to give you a real feel for the area but we aim for comfort and quality above all else. We vet our accommodations very thoroughly before we use them on our trips. This means no nightmare hotels so you can get a good night sleep.

Please note all prices quoted are based on two people sharing a room. We can of course arrange single occupancy at an extra cost of \$1500/person.

## BIKE HIRE

If you would prefer to not go through the hassle of travelling with your bike, then we can arrange a hire bike for you for the supplement of **\$500**. There is also the possibility of upgrades. Please contact us for more information on the bikes available on your particular trip.

## EXTRAS & UPGRADES

- Single Room Supplement ... \$1200
- BMC or Giant Defy/Avail Bike Hire ... \$500

## INCLUDED IN THE PACKAGE

- 12 spots available making for a personalised tour.
- All transfers including airport pickups and drop-offs.
- 9 nights in carefully selected 4 Star Hotels.
- Daily regional buffet breakfast.
- 5 nights of the finest cuisine including selected wines and beverages.
- 4 evening meals will be left open, giving you the freedom to explore local options that our local experts will recommend and make bookings for you.
- Full on-the-road support, using well-equipped vans to provide quality "ride food & drinks", mechanical support, first aid, shower, changing facilities and WiFi.
- Flexible lunch options with local cafes or Pro musette packed lunches.
- On and off the bike photography by the team, so you can take home those wonderful memories.
- A welcome pack including a Polka Dot Cycling kit, printed maps and profiles, local information and more.

## NOT INCLUDED

- Flights are not included in the price of the holiday, but we always happy to make recommendations.
- Travel, Medical or Bike Insurance

## FINALISE YOUR BOOKING

To assure your place on this tour, please contact Niamh via [niamh@polkadotcycling.com](mailto:niamh@polkadotcycling.com). We will send a pro-forma for you to complete and we will arrange to take a deposit of \$1000 AUS per person.

For any further questions about this tour, please don't hesitate to get in touch with Steve either by phone **0061 (0) 488 918 900** or email [steve@polkadotcycling.com](mailto:steve@polkadotcycling.com).

**We look forward to seeing you out on the Tour with us and creating some unforgettable memories!**