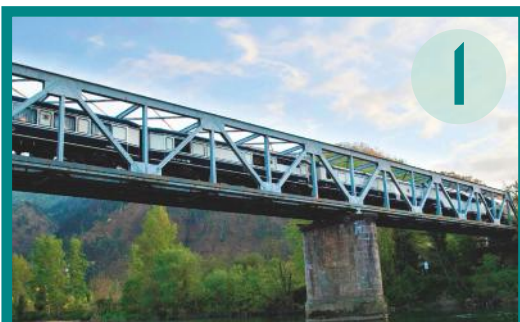


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BEST

SPAIN RAIL JOURNEYS

A varied rail network means there's much to gain from taking the train in Spain, writes **Rhodri Andrews**



TAKE THE COSTA VERDE EXPRESS

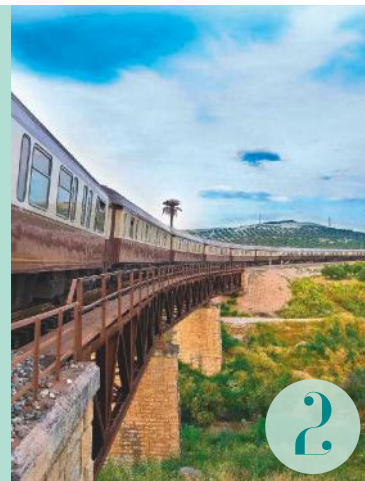
Clients can see why the Cantabrian Coast is called 'Green Spain' on this Bilbao to Santiago de Compostela trip. The Costa Verde Express (*pictured*) is one of Spain's most historic trains, its ornate carriages an echo of the golden age of rail. But northern Spain's lush landscapes are every bit its match as it rolls past medieval villages, ancient cathedrals and pristine scenery including Santillana del Mar, the Picos de Europa mountains and Gijón.

Book it: Great Rail Journeys' eight-day tour, La Costa Verde Express, Bilbao to Santiago de Compostela, starts from £5,035 and includes all accommodation and return flights.
greatrail.com

CLIMB ABOARD THE AL-ANDALUS

The Al-Andalus (*pictured*) was built in 1929 and was once the transport of choice for the British royal family. Today, clients can enjoy a taste of the regal lifestyle on a Kirker Holidays trip. They'll spend six nights aboard, leaving their lavish cocoons for several pit stops to see the Moorish cities of Granada and Córdoba, the Renaissance architecture of Ubeda and Baeza plus the city of Ronda, which teeters dramatically over a gorge.

Book it: Kirker Holidays' eight-night The Al-Andalus Train itinerary starts from £6,196 and includes flights, private transfers, accommodation and all train meals.
kirkerholidays.com



GO PETITE IN THE PYRENEES

Short mountain routes make up this Little Trains of the Pyrenees tour, including the Roses Express road train along the Catalan coast and the Rack Railway through the Núria Valley (*pictured*). Hop over to France for the Yellow Train to the country's highest station and the Red Train's views of vineyards and mountains.

Book it: Newmarket Holidays' seven-night Little Trains of the Pyrenees trip starts at £1,228 including flights, accommodation and three heritage train journeys.
newmarketholidays.co.uk

SNAKE THROUGH MAJORCA

Rail journeys may not spring to mind when thinking about Majorca, but clients can discover the Balearic isle anew on this Ffestiniog Travel tour. They'll take day trips from Palma to uncover the pearl heritage of Manacor, the market town of Inca and rural Sa Pobla. But it's the narrow-gauge Sóller Train (*pictured*) – which first ran in 1912 – that takes centre stage as it winds through the Tramuntana Mountains.

Book it: Ffestiniog Travel's Mallorca Narrow Gauge Private Group Tour starts from £1,980 including flights, rail travel, excursions, accommodation with breakfast and a dinner.
ffestiniogtravel.com



SEE SPAIN'S CITIES AT HIGH SPEED

Spanish rail operator Renfe's new Spain Rail Pass has unlocked the country's network for visitors, with high-speed trains making it easy to see several major cities. Clients on this Railbookers itinerary can gaze at the Gaudí masterpieces of Barcelona, marvel at the Moorish grandeur of Seville (*pictured*) and lap up the artistic and culinary wonders of Madrid.

Book it: Railbookers' nine-day Barcelona, Seville and Madrid trip starts from £1,449 and includes flights, rail travel, accommodation with breakfast and some tours.
railbookers.co.uk



PICTURES: Shutterstock/Constancy, LucVi