

ROUTE 5

SIERRAS DE GREDOS AND GUADARRAMA

ROUTE SUMMARY

From	To	km	Type	Cycling time
Airport	Navalcarnero	61	City then rolling plain	3hr 50min
Navalcarnero	Piedralaves	69	River valley then wooded hills	5hr 10min
Piedralaves	Burgohondo	75	Mountainous	5hr 25min
Burgohondo	Ávila	37	Mountainous	2hr 50min
Ávila	Segovia	75	Rolling plain then hills	4hr 40min
Segovia	Cercedilla	43	Mountains	4hr 20min
Cercedilla	Airport	70	Hills then rolling plain	4hr 10min

Central Spain takes some beating for the sheer variety of cycling available. South of Madrid is the flat plain of La Mancha, and to the west and the north are the mountains of the Sierras de Gredos and de Guadarrama. The granite Sierras are very scenic and offer very rewarding cycling. In addition to the numerous towns and villages worth a visit in their own right this route includes the walled city of Ávila and Segovia, famous for its Roman aqueduct. An exploration of Madrid can be made by breaking Stage one, or as a day trip from Cercedilla.

This route requires at least two of the 1:200 000 maps from the Instituto Geográfico Nacional. The options are the Mapa Guía Madrid y su Entorno and the Mapa Provincial of Ávila, or the three Mapas Provinciales Madrid, Ávila and Segovia. The Michelin 1:400 000 map no 576, Extremadura, Castilla-La Mancha, Madrid, is good, as is their 1:170 000 map, 121 Madrid y Alrededores, in the Zoom series but it does not cover the very western end. Most of the route is covered by Geoplaneta 1:250 000 map Comunidad de Madrid, which also contains an excellent street map of central Madrid. The *Rough Guide to Spain* gives reasonable coverage of the area too.

The climate of central Spain can be summarised as lots of sunshine, wet and freezing cold winters and baking hot summers. By late summer the plants die back leaving a dry, barren scene. The route is centred on Madrid at 650m above sea level. The route peaks at 1800m, and so based on the 1°C drop per 100m ascent rule expect temperatures there to be considerably colder. Winter snow may linger on the higher hills into March and April. See below for a guide to the best time to go.

The route is described in seven stages, but consideration should be given to spending more time exploring the cities and countryside. This route is a concentrated cycling and cultural feast.

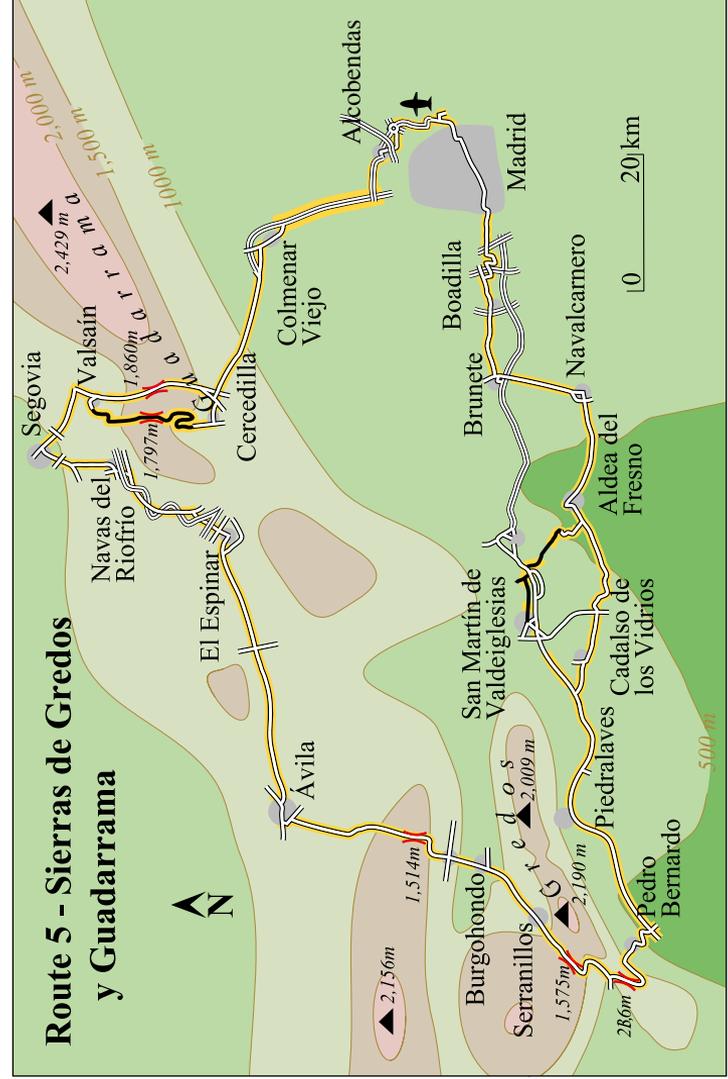
Public holidays

Comunidad de Madrid: 2 May
City of Madrid: 15 May and 9 November
Province of Ávila: 22 June and 15 October
Province of Segovia: 29 June and 25 October

ROUTE 5: CLIMATE DETAILS

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Madrid												
av min temp °C	2	2	5	7	10	14	17	17	14	9	5	2
av max temp °C	9	11	15	18	21	27	31	30	25	19	13	9
rainfall mm	39	34	43	48	47	27	11	15	32	53	47	48
Ávila												
av min temp °C	-2	-1	1	3	6	10	13	13	10	6	2	0
av max temp °C	7	8	11	14	17	23	28	27	22	16	10	7
rainfall mm	22	13	29	37	62	36	13	19	36	33	36	35
Madrid												
sunrise	08:37	08:24	07:48	07:58	07:14	06:47	06:48	07:11	07:42	08:11	07:45	08:20
sunset	17:57	18:30	19:06	20:38	21:10	21:39	21:48	21:29	20:48	19:57	18:13	17:50
Best time	-	-	VG	VG	VG	-	-	-	G	VG	-	-

(C= good time to go; VG = best time to go)



STAGE 1

Madrid–Barajas airport to Navas del Rey

Distance	61km (38 miles)
Type	City then rolling plain
Climb	390m (1280ft)
Cycling time	3hr 50min

Madrid airport is not ideally situated for cyclists. The majority of connecting roads are either motorway, or of motorway standard, where cycling is either not permitted or not recommended. For those heading west without excessive deviation, this means passing through the centre of Madrid. The route is fairly obvious and the experience is more like cycling through a large town than a capital city. The standard of driving is generally courteous, while at the same time being the worst in Spain! Be cautious and plan ahead. Remember: the city will recede and rural Spain will take over.

Follow the route out of the airport as described in the revised Appendix 5 to the Avenida de Logroño. At the T-junction with the Avenida turn right to head north. At the combination of traffic lights and roundabout double back to head south. At the motorway roundabout with chapel continue straight ahead keeping to the Avenida de Logroño. Pass under the railway then continue straight ahead at the roundabout under the motorway. Continue straight ahead at the roundabout over the A2 autopista and join the Calle de Alcalá heading southwest. The Calle de Alcalá is a cañada or drover's road and is still used so do not be too surprised if you come across the odd flock of sheep.

Keep to the Calle de Alcalá into the centre of Madrid. Pass the Plaza de Toros and the Parque de Eva Peron.

Unfortunately the road goes underground near to the Parque del Buen Retiro. To avoid this turn sharp right onto the Calle de Velázquez then turn first left and then turn third left to rejoin the Calle de Alcalá at the Puerta de Al-

calá. The Puerta is one of the remaining medieval gates of the city. Its appearance is that of a large stone arch. Continue straight ahead at the Plaza de Cibeles and shortly fork right onto the Gran Vía at the Metropolis building.

At the park like Plaza de España turn left at the near side and descend into the underpass at the far side of the Plaza. At the subterranean roundabout continue straight ahead bearing southwest then west. Fork right and climb up to the roundabout with a monument to avoid another underpass. At the roundabout take the second exit (Paseo de la Virgen del Puerto) which should be signed to the Casa del Campo. Continue south before turning right (Paseo de Extremadura) then right again (Paseo de la Virgen del Angel) before entering the Casa del Campo.

Motor vehicles are now banned from most of the Casa del Campo. Pass the Metro station and at the roundabout turn left (Paseo de los Castaños). Follow the road west though the park and fork left at the y-junction towards the Zoo. Continue straight on taking the right fork at the second y-junction. No longer towards the Zoo. Continue straight on at the roundabout and exit the park at the Puerta de Rodajos.

Upon leaving the park take the second exit at the roundabout (Avda de Rodajos). At the next roundabout turn left and pass over the M502. Continue straight ahead (Calle Prado del Rey) at the next 2 roundabouts. At the third turn left (Paseo de la Finca) and continue straight ahead at the next two. At the third bear right (Calle Cañada de las Carreras) and then straight on at the next. At the second turn right and north to parallel the **M40 autopista**. At the next roundabout turn left and cross over the M40. Turn right onto the unsurfaced road (Calle Cañada de las Carreras) and continue northwest to the M513. Turn left at this roundabout heading towards Boadilla del Monte. ▶

Continue west on the well signed M513 with its many roundabouts bypassing **Boadilla del Monte**, pass Guadamonte and approach **Brunete**. All the time Madrid recedes. Turn left and south on the M600 and follow it to **Navalcarnero**. Follow the signs to the centre of town.

Note: there is a cycle shop in the centre of Boadilla – 'Rider Bike'.

STAGE 2

Navalcarnero to Piedralaves

This stage cuts across the western extremity of the Sierra de Guadarrama before traversing the south side of the Sierra de Gredos. Between the mountain chains there is the option to experience some off-road riding in the peaceful beauty of the Spanish countryside.

Distance	69km (42.9 miles)
Type	River valley then wooded hills
Climb	813m (2667ft)
Cycling time	5hr 10min

From the centre of Navalcarnero leave town following the signs to Aldea del Fresno M507. Cross the bypass. The route is through undulating farmland before entering a shallow valley around Villamanta. Staying on the M507 pass through **Aldea del Fresno** and cross the Río Alberche. Pass the Presa de Picadas turnoff where the Option route starts.

Beyond Villa del Prado the country starts to change. The road becomes hillier, twistier and there are more trees. Soon we will be sweeping and swooping through mature pine forest on a rollercoaster of a ride. Exhilarating stuff! At the N403 continue straight across. The excellence continues but this time with granite exposed as huge boulders, tors and cliffs. The road climbs to **Cadalso de los Vidrios**. This is a smashing village to overnight in. It has a superb location and its own wine. In Cadalso turn left keeping on the M507 to Rozas de Puerto Real. Another hilltop village. Pass through and descend to the Tiétar valley.

At the M501 turn left heading west to Piedralaves. The M501 now skirts the southern limit of the **Sierra de Gredos**, the imposing mountain range to the north. This is very pleasant cycling and allows rapid progress. Pass through the villages of Santa María del Tiétar, Sotillo and La Adrada which has a ruined castle well worth a visit for its views over the mountains.

Piedralaves has the feel of a mountain village. Its buildings are constructed largely of granite and most have

balconies. The streets are narrow and squares small. It is very picturesque with the Gredos as a backdrop. There are several hotels in town but only the Hostal Mainz on the main through road seems to be open all year. It has a bar, good value restaurant and takes care of bikes. It is highly recommended.

OPTION 1

*Navalcarnero to Piedralaves
via the Vía Verde del Alberche and
San Martin de Valdeiglesias*

Distance	71km (44 miles)
Type	Quiet waterside and forest tracks then river plain
Climb	474m (1555ft)
Cycling time	4hr 40min

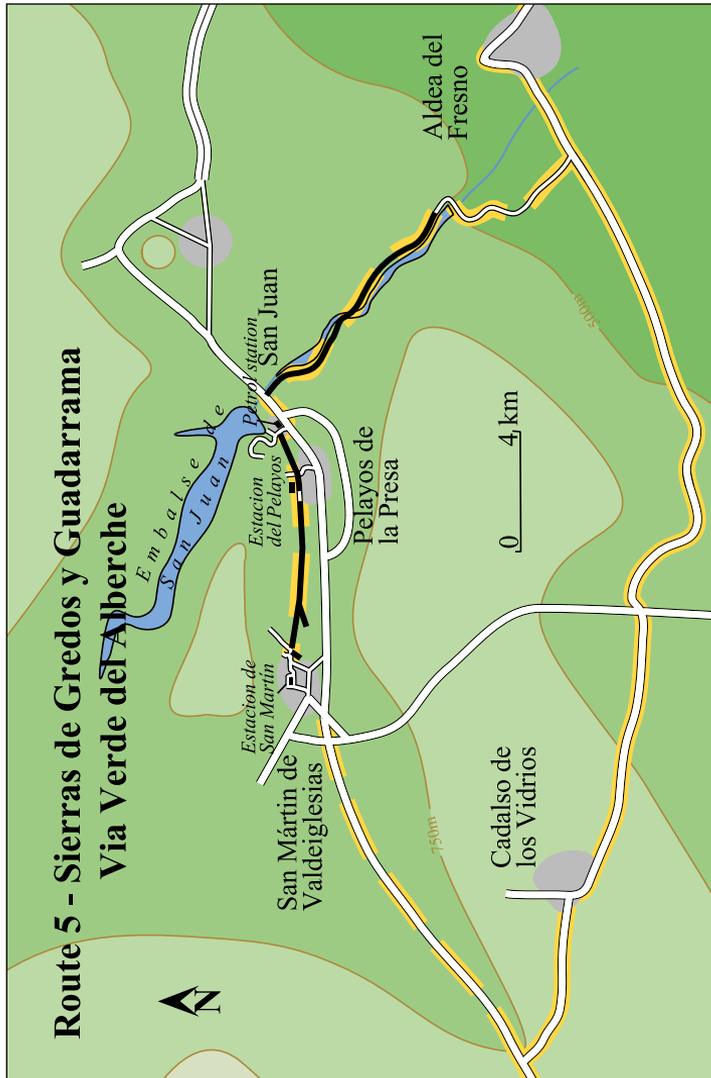
From the main route turn right at the Presa de Picadas junction. Continue on this road following the signs for Presa de Picadas. After the houses it starts to climb, narrows and the surface deteriorates.

After 3km keep left and away from the Ermita de Santa Teresa. After a further 500m, by the house, keep straight on. Descend and cross the dam. Pass the buildings and the barrier at the end of the road.

From here the route continues as a well consolidated hardcore track alongside the embalse crossing over where it narrows. After the kayaking centre in the fenced compound bear right and downhill leaving the old trackbed. Keep straight on and after a short climb turn left at the main road for a climb and descent to San Juan.

Continue straight ahead at the roundabout then turn right immediately after the petrol station to take the road signed to the **Embalse de San Juan**. The road at first dips slightly then climbs, ignore the gravel road to the left. The road swings first right and then left. Just before it

This option detours from the main route for those who enjoy a bit of gentle off road action. It follows the disused railway line firstly alongside the Embalse de Picadas then through pinewoods to San Martin de Valdeiglesias.



straightens slightly there is a broad, flat, level and fairly wide grit road off to the left. Take it, this is the Vía Verde, expect no signs. This former railway track has an excellent riding surface with a slight incline to San Martín. The route is easy to follow, just follow your nose. Cross the asphalt road, pass the **old station** for Pelayos de la Presa.

Vía Verde, San Juan

The track becomes asphalt for a few hundred metres as it passes through the north of town. Ignore all junctions until San Martín is approached. At the crossroad continue straight ahead on the asphalt road and again where a cobbled road cuts the road at an angle. With a kink to the left the road leads to the **disused station** which has been converted into the local Turismo.

San Martín de Valdeiglesias is worth at least a brief look around. It has a cycle shop, food shops, restaurants and hotels and a town walk. From the station simply head downhill through town to pick up signs for the M501.

Rejoin the M501 heading west to Piedralaves. The next eleven kilometres are undulating with a gradual height gain before entering the valley of the Río Tiétar with the main route coming in from the left.

Staying on in San Martín de Valdeiglesias

There is a pleasant town walk taking in the town hall, parish church (16th century), hermitages, bullring and castle. Details are available from 'La Estación', the former railway station.

Around San Martín de Valdeiglesias

Cycling: a short ride takes you north out of town to the western end of the Embalse de San Juan, a very pretty and peaceful spot.

STAGE 3

Piedralaves to Burgohondo via the Collado de Serranillos

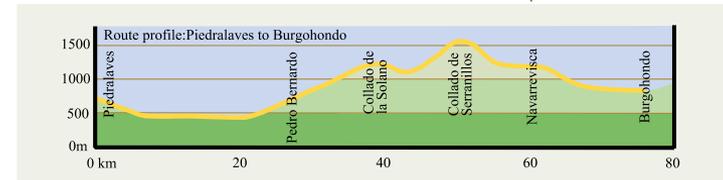
Distance	75km (46.6 miles)
Type	Mountainous
Climb	1219m (3998ft)
Cycling time	5hr 25min

Rejoin the M501 and head west out of Piedralaves. There is a gentle descent for 21km; very agreeable cycling through very pretty countryside. Turn right and climb to **Pedro Bernardo**, leaving behind grazing cows and passing through olive groves and cultivated fields. This 7km stretch, much of which is hard going, gives the chance to perfect gear-changing techniques and to adjust pace after a few days on benign roads.

Pedro Bernardo is a pleasant mountain village that caters for its visitors in a quiet way. Its Balcón de Tiétar provides views to the south and west and is a welcome place to rest. However, although the cobbled streets may be attractive to the eye they are painful to the rest of the body!

Continue on the through road and leave Pedro Bernardo. The road climbs relentlessly through pine forest for 12km to the Collado de la Solano (1236m and unnamed on most maps). The Puerto is a good place to stop, eat and water. The far side has views over to the

Two passes over the Sierra de Gredos lead to Burgohondo. The Puerto de Mijares (1570m) is the lower and shorter route. The more interesting, longer way, with more climb, is over the Collado de Serranillos (1575m/1590m, depending on the data source). This is a great day's cycling.



Puerto del Pico from Collado de la Solano



Puerto del Pico (1395m) on the main Ávila to Talavera road. The air here is a lot cooler than in the valley bottom, having gained 800m of height. From the pass the road drops steeply for 3km to the San Esteban junction; put on some windproof gear for the descent, otherwise the wind-chill effect can make things painfully cold.

Turn right at the T-junction to restart the climb: 480m of ascent in 9km. The only respite is where bridges span streams to give short sections of almost level road. As height is gained the valley widens and the roadside vegetation becomes tougher and less penetrable. All too soon the climb ends at the Collado de Serranillos, either 1590m (Michelin) or 1575m (road sign). Prepare for the downhill by donning warm and windproof clothes. The ride down is excellent; the scenery is superb, often with snow-clad mountains (up to 2190m) on either side. Surprisingly, after passing through the small village of **Serranillos** oakwoods appear.

The road continues directly to **Burgohondo** via Navarvisca. The countryside is bleakly stunning, especially when the broad valley of the Río Alberche is joined. There are granite tors and boulders, and patches of deciduous and coniferous woods on the hillsides above the river.

In Burgohondo the Hostal El Alberche provided a welcome overnight stay, with the ground floor bar/ restaurant providing food.

STAGE 4

Burgohondo to Ávila

Distance	37km (22.9 miles)
Type	Mountainous
Climb	726m (2382ft)
Cycling time	2hr 50min

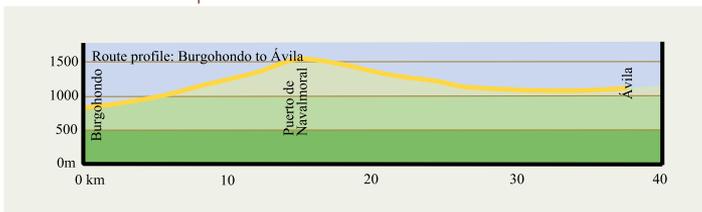
Leave Burgohondo on the main through road heading north to Navalmoral. The road gently climbs through more granite boulder country. The fields on the right are

Following on from the effort required to cover Stage 3, the ride to Ávila is a lot shorter but still has the Puerto de Navalmoral to contend with. There will be plenty of time to explore Ávila.

well looked after and quite lush by contrast those on the left that have been abandoned. The drystone walls are made of single-width granite blocks split along natural fissures caused by land movements long after the mountains were formed. Pass straight through Navalmoral and straight ahead at the crossroads. Navalmoral is the last shopping opportunity before Ávila.

Although the Puerto de Navalmoral is high (1514m) the climb is well graded (this stage did start at 840m), and is not too long or tiring. As height is gained cultivated fields are left behind and boulder-covered rough pasture is encountered. The pass is 8km from Navalmoral. A high stone wall surrounds the Hermitita de San Cristoba and provides shelter in poor weather. From the pass it is downhill all the way to Ávila; warm and windproof clothes are recommended to avoid wind chill. Near Aldea del Rey Niño the country changes dramatically from boulder-strewn mountain to fertile plain and the road suddenly levels off.

The classic approach to **Ávila** is from the west at sunset when the sandstone city walls turn gold in the last rays of light. The lack of development west of the city increases the effect, which unfortunately cannot be replicated by an easterly exit early in the morning. There are plenty of places to stay within the walled part of the city; the Turismo is located in the Plaza de la Catedral. The most characterful accommodation is the Pensión Continental (sometimes called the Hostal Continental) next to the Turismo. It is a grand hotel of the old style that has missed out on renovation, so expect askew stairs and warm rather than hot water. The rooms are large and cheap, and some



overlook the square and cathedral. Bikes are stored in the spacious indoor patio. The popular restaurant behind the bar of Casa Felipe in the Plaza de la Victoria provides an excellent tourist menu.

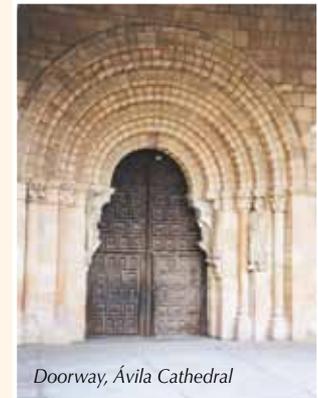
Staying on in Ávila

Try the Turismo in the Plaza de la Catedral for an up-to-date town map and details of things to do. The walls – with 88 towers – enclose the old city, and were built by Muslim prisoners after the city's Reconquest in 1090. Exploring them makes a pleasant walk. The town itself is worth exploring, with its myriad of medieval streets, compact squares and stork-inhabited Romanesque churches.

What to see in Ávila

Saint Teresa sites: Saint James and Santa Teresa are the joint patron saints of Spain. Three convents – de Santa Teresa, de la Encarnación and de San José – and Los Cuatro Postes make up the Santa Teresa sites.

Cathedral: this wonderful creation, built into the city walls, is a mix of styles with no regard for theme or continuity. When viewed from the plaza it is obvious that granite is not the prettiest of building materials. The southern tower is incomplete and seems to have a brick-built lean-to on the top. The nave is Gothic, the pointed windows letting in plenty of light, while the older, darker altar end is Romanesque, with rounded window arches. There is an intricately carved trascoro (screen behind the choir), showing the adoration of the Magi, murder of the innocents and presentation in the temple. In contrast the trasaltar (screen round behind the altar) is a much later and poorer work, in which it is hard to find any religious significance. The cathedral museum is worth a look and includes works by El Greco and Jose Ribero.



Doorway, Ávila Cathedral

STAGE 5

Ávila to Segovia

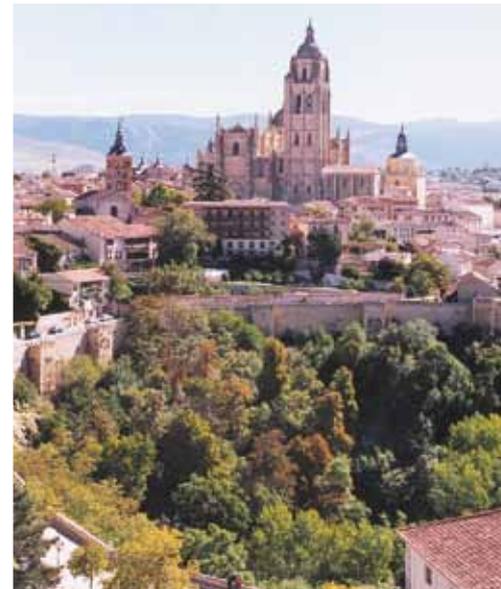
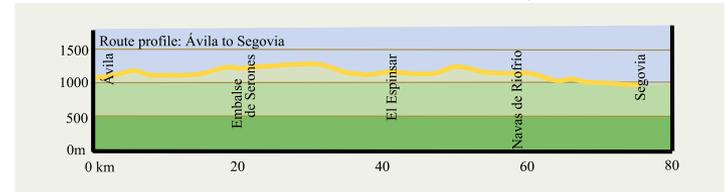
There are two roads between Ávila and Segovia, the direct N110 or the quieter SG500 to the south. The route takes the quieter option.

Distance	75km (46.6 miles)
Type	Rolling plain, then hills
Climb	355m (1165ft)
Cycling time	4hr 40min

Leave the walled city heading north of east, and pick up the signs for Segovia via the N110. Follow these signs and ignore the right turn for El Escorial via the C505. Pass under the railway and turn right at the roundabout signed 'Guardia Civil'. This is the SG500, and at the first bend there is a sign for Bernúy-Salinero. The road skirts the south side of modern Ávila and soon the city is left behind.

The terrain is undulating and the road straight; the initial *dehesa* is replaced by prairie. This is an excellent ride in the sunshine with a tail wind (and the opposite in the cold rain with a chilling headwind!). There are dolmens signed from Bernúy-Salinero. The undulations become more pronounced and the straight road makes no effort to contour round them. After crossing the Embalse de Serones on a causeway continue straight ahead at the crossroads. Enter the province of Segovia. After 8km the road stops its gradual ascent; the gentle descent is through lush cattle-grazed pasture interspersed with woodland.

El Espinar is at the halfway point and is the only substantial town on this stage. It provides a welcome break, though the downside is its location – on top of a hill. At the bottom of the hill on the approach to El Espinar turn left where the main road swings right. Climb into the town on the narrow road. At the top of the hill turn right and descend to the centre of town. There are numerous places to eat and drink. The church is unusual in that



Segovia

storks have built nests on the roof of the nave rather than on the tower.

Leave El Espinar, following the signs towards Segovia NVI and the Estación de Espinar. Cross the NVI then pass under the A6. Ignore the right turn for the Estación de El Espinar. Descend then climb to the N603. Turn left at the T-junction towards Segovia. The road is busy and climbs steeply. Although the road continues to Segovia the route detours north. About 2km beyond Rivera

de los Molinos on the main road, turn left towards the palace and deer park of Riofrío. Turn right at the crossroads immediately after the railway crossing and pass through the village of **Navas de Riofrío**. The road drops into and climbs out of a very steep-sided valley (a high price to pay for the peace and quiet!).

Continue straight ahead at the crossroads and right at the T-junction. Pass Hontoria and under **Segovia's** bypass. Follow the road into the city and from the outskirts follow the road signs for the 'Centro histórico'. The route leads downhill past what looks like the end of a low wall made of granite blocks with a small house on top. This 'wall' starts next to a set of traffic lights on the main road. The road continues downhill, then bends left into the valley that gave the walled city a defensive helping hand. Rounding the bend the city's Roman aqueduct is revealed in all its glory. That 'wall' has grown, and now spans the valley in a series of layered arches topped by a water channel.

There are plenty of places to stay and eat within the walled city. By evening most of the trippers will have gone, and the city regains its quiet medieval peace and beauty.

Segovia Cathedral



*The Roman Aqueduct,
Segovia*

Staying on in Segovia

The city's history goes back to 192BC when the Romans defeated the Celtiberian inhabitants. There is masses to see and do. Most of the visitor attractions are located inside the city walls that ring a limestone plateau, rising out of the plain. The clichéd view is the galleon of Segovia sailing on a sea of wheat, with the Alcázar as the bow, the cathedral the main mast and the aqueduct the rudder. The Turismo in the Plaza Mayor gives out excellent city maps that can be supplemented by more detailed multilingual guides available at the specific sites.

What to see in Segovia

The Alcázar (castle): this stands on its own platform slightly detached from the city, and from the 12th century was occupied by a series of Castilian kings. A fire in the 19th century and its subsequent restoration led to its current appearance, with round fairy-tale towers with pointed slate roofs. Inside there is a museum which includes a fine collection of armour. Well worth a visit.

The cathedral: the last Gothic cathedral to be built in Europe, it is extremely ornate on the outside but somewhat plain on the inside.

The aqueduct: world famous, with 20,000 free-standing granite blocks making up the 166 arches and 120 pillars. It is 28m tall at its highest point, and was part of a system that carried water underground from the Riofrío for 14km, then over the 1.2km-long aqueduct and into the city.

STAGE 6

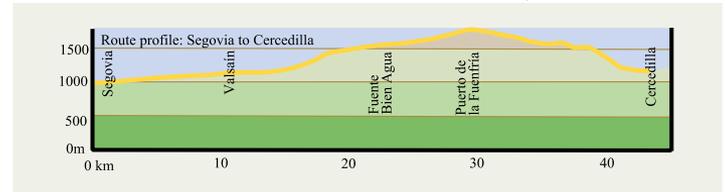
Segovia to Cercedilla

Distance	43km (26.7 miles)
Type	Mountain, significant section off-road
Climb	804m (2638ft)
Cycling time	4hr 20min

This stage is an excellent ride and provides the highest point of the main route, the Puerto de la Fuenfría (1797m).

The route detours from the main road and provides the best route though the mountains and most scenic entry into the province of Madrid. The off-road section is suitable for reasonably robust bikes. An alternative road route goes via the higher Puerto de Navacerrada (1860m).

Return to the Plaza del Azoguejo where the aqueduct is at its highest. With the aqueduct on your left head south. At the no entry sign duck under the arches and continue on the pavement until it is safe to rejoin the road. At the end of the aqueduct join the main road and head south towards La Granja and Navacerrada. Continue straight ahead at all the roundabouts and under the new bypass. The road continues to climb to the Bourbon palace of San Ildefonso La Granja, built to rival Versailles, and its surrounding village. There are many picnic spots in the woods either side of the road, but stop before the Embalse Ponton Alta as just beyond is the local sewerage works. At La Granja turn right at the roundabout,

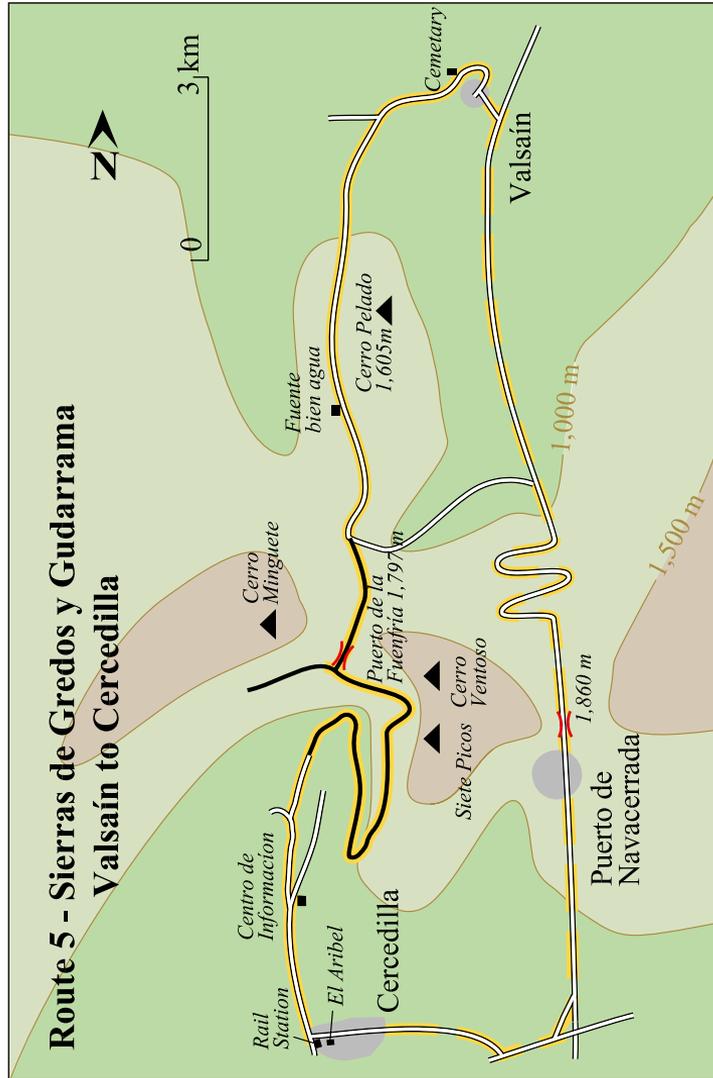


staying on the CL601. The road climbs through mature deciduous woodland.

At Pradera de Navalhorno the route leaves the main road for the Puerto de la Fuenfría. (The alternative is to continue on the main road as described below.) Turn sharp right to Valsain and cross the river. Climb to **Valsain**, ignore the first left turn and turn right at the crossroads. Pass the wooden sheds on the right and continue straight ahead at the signposted crossroads with the fenced builders' yard on the right. Pass the village cemetery on the right. There is a concrete bunker just before the entrance to the forest.

After the initial steep climb the route joins the route of the Roman road between Cercedilla and Segovia. A number of yellow arrows indicate that you are on the Camino de Santiago from Madrid. South of the Puerto the route joins up with a forest road system that is open to and popular with walkers and cyclists.

Pass the barrier and enter the forest. The asphalt road is narrow with a stiff climb at the outset. Initially the woodland is scrubby deciduous with cattle pasture over the fence on the left. In the open pasture ignore the turn to the right and continue the climb. From the pasture there is a good view back over Segovia which can clearly be seen 'sailing' across the plain. The forest soon changes to mature coniferous trees which continues for almost the entire stage. The road climbs over the ridgeline. The valley to the right contains the Riofrío on its 'over ground' way

*Puerta de la Fuenfría*

to Segovia. As the road climbs the surface becomes more broken and patched. This is more than compensated for by the beauty and tranquillity of the forest, the sound of birds and the absence of traffic. ▶

Shortly after passing through a large clearing there is a road junction. The asphalt road drops sharply down and returns to the CL601. Take the unsurfaced forest road to the right, which climbs for a further 3km to the Puerto. The road is well graded and perfectly rideable, and may be the course of the old Roman road. Only snow would cause a problem. Pass through the gate immediately before the crossroads of the Puerto de la Fuenfría (1797m). The right turn leads nowhere.

Straight ahead is La Calzada Romana (Roman road) with many of the original stones still in place. This road has many sharp bends as it zigzags its way up the hillside, making one wonder how a legion could march in step on a hairpin bend – do not even think about cycling down it. Turn left, heading east of south. At first the grit road is rough with many fist-sized loose stones which are surprisingly black – this is still granite country. After a couple of kilometres the surface improves and is most acceptable by the time the Pradera de Navarrruque is passed. If the road

About 8km from Valsain is the 'Fuente bien agua', a spring of cold, invigorating water, drunk from several times without ill effect.



Fuente bien agua, Sierra de Guadarrama

is wet, clags of gritty clay are thrown up which grind down brake blocks better than any power sander. At the mirador on the big bend there are poems painted onto the rocks. The road continues downhill past a couple of barriers and via the one-way system in the car parks to the asphalt road to **Cercedilla**. Pass the Centro de Información which gives out free guides to walks in the valley.

The alternative route is to stay on the CL601 at Pradera de Navalhorno and enter the province of Madrid via the **Puerto de Navacerrada** (1860m). The Puerto has all the feel of an out-of-season ski resort (which is what it is for most of the year). Staying on what is now the M601 follow the signs to **Cercedilla** from the outskirts of the town of Navacerrada. The Hostal El Aribel can be reached by continuing through the town to the railway station.

The only accommodation in town is the Hostal El Aribel, just uphill from the station. Bikes are stored in the kitchen along with those of the owners. It also has a hose out the back for rinsing off the clag.

Staying on in Cercedilla

Cercedilla is a popular spot with the *Madrileños* who come to escape the city heat in the summer. At weekends the town and surroundings are busy with walkers and mountain bikers.

Around Cercedilla

Cycling: El Escorial is an easy if not-too-pleasant bike ride away. El Escorial is the stern palace, built by Felipe II, from where he ruled the Spanish Empire. En route is the Valle de los Caídos, Franco's memorial to the dead of both sides in the Civil War. There is an entrance charge.

Visit Madrid: there are frequent trains into the city from the station next to the hotel.

Walking: return to the Valle de la Fuenfría to the Centro de Información and pick up a guide, in English or Spanish, to local walks. There are six waymarked routes, including one up La Calzada Romana. However, do not expect to be alone.

STAGE 7

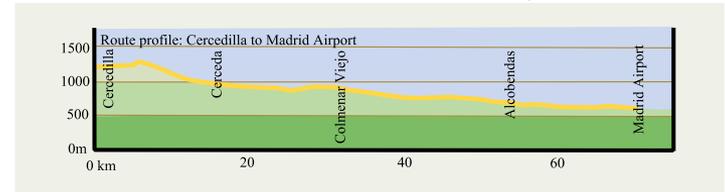
Cercedilla to Madrid–Barajas airport

Distance	70km (43.3 miles)
Type	Hills then rolling plain
Climb	207m (679ft)
Cycling time	4hr 10min

From the Hostal El Aribel climb up to and pass through the centre of Cercedilla. Leave in the direction of Navacerrada. The first 3km are uphill but make up the only real climb of the day. At the T-junction turn left to join the M607 all the way to **Colmenar Viejo**. The road becomes a pleasant descent, and by Cerceda the foothills of the Sierra de Guadarrama are left behind. Not that the road is flat or level; the mountains that rise so dramatically out of the undulating plain gradually recede.

On reaching the start of the dual carriageway turn right and follow the road through the centre of **Colmenar Viejo**. This is about halfway and provides a convenient break point. Continue through the town to join the M607 dual carriageway heading south towards Madrid. As far as dual carriageways go this is a good one; at the junction there are signs to alert motorists to the presence of cyclists and the cycle lane is a smooth-topped track on which the going is easy. The cycle lane starts off beside the dual carriage way but soon changes into a two-lane segregated cycle lane. The views to the right are quite pleasant.

After about 14km the cycle lane crosses over the M607 just before the motorised vehicle junction for Alcobendas. Once over the M607 keep right, pass under the spur road and fork left to parallel the spur road. At the roundabout, after 4.4km of this dual carriageway, take the exit signed to the centre of town. Continue straight on heading east. Ignore every sign for ‘all di-



rections’, as they lead to motorways. After 2.6km a T-junction is reached where the road becomes a one-way system. Turn right and descend to the kidney-shaped roundabout.

From the kidney-shaped roundabout take the third exit (Bulevar de Salvador Allende). Turn right and downhill immediately after the Hostal Fronton. Turn left at the next roundabout (Avda Olimpica) then right at the next (Calle de Anabel Segura). Continue straight ahead at the dual carriageway, the roundabout and pass under the A1 autovía where the road continues uphill as the Camino Ancho. Go straight ahead at the roundabout. Ignore the Paseo Conde de los Gaitanes turn on the right but after 100m turn left into the road of the same name heading east. Continue straight on to the large roundabout over the M12 autopista. Take the second exit signed Antigua M110 and Barajas.

Keep on this remarkably quiet dual carriageway heading south. Signing is virtually non-existent, expect the odd one for ‘Urbanización sur’ or ‘Barajas’. Pass to the right of the Repsol service station. Those returning to T4 follow the signs for Salidas at the third roundabout. South of T4 at a larger than usual roundabout keep with the dual carriageway as it turns left and east before continuing straight ahead at the next two roundabouts. At the third larger roundabout take the fourth exit signed Zona Industrial Aeropuerto and T3 T2 T1. This little road will take you to the roundabout with the pink infill on the Barajas map.

From there follow the signs to your terminal.

ACCOMMODATION ON OR CLOSE TO ROUTE 5

Please note that this is not an exhaustive list. Hotel guide prices are in Euros, based on a double room with an en suite bathroom at high season. Rooms without en suite are typically 20% cheaper, as are single rooms. Please note that hotels are constantly opening, closing or being refurbished; it is always advisable to book ahead. Prices (where known) are indicated as follows: (1) up to 24 Euros; (2) 24–45 Euros; (3) over 45 Euros.

Boadilla del Monte

- (3+) Partner Boadilla Palacio, Plaza de la Concordia, s/n (tel: 916 33 31 15)
- (3+) Husa Prado de Boadilla, Labradores, s/n (tel: 916 32 46 80)

Brunete

- (3) Brunete, Paseo Boadilla Monte, 25 (tel: 918 15 80 81)
- (2) Casa Mae, Paseo de Ronda, 6 (tel: 918 15 97 75)
- (2) Brunetex, Paseo Ronda, 4 (tel: 918 16 37 95)
- Julián, Paseo Ronda, 2 (tel: 918 15 84 35)

Navalcarnero

- (3) La Mansion de Navalcarnero, Jacinto Gonzáles, 24 (tel: 918 10 12 50)
- (3) El Labrador, Ctra. Extremadura, km 36.8 (tel: 918 13 94 20)
- (2) Casa Julián, Pozo del Concejo, 59 (tel: 699 05 29 66)
- Cruz Verde, Calle Cruz Verde, 3 (tel: 918 10 10 03)
- (3) Villa de Navalcarnero, Paseo Alpararache, 19 (tel: 918 10 16 45)

Aldea del Fresno

- (3) El Jardín, Ctra. Madrid, 12 (tel: 918 63 72 94)

Villa del Prado

- El Extremeño, Avda. Generalísimo, 78 (tel: 918 62 24 28)

Pelayos de la Presa

- (3) La Calle 42, Camino Valdeyernos, 22 (tel: 918 64 41 81)
- Camping La Enfermería, Ctra. San Ramon (tel: 918 64 54 12)

San Martín de Valdeiglesias

- (2) Casa de Labranza, Arco, 3 (tel: 918 61 16 53)
- (2) San Martín, Anchuelas, 5 (tel: 918 61 02 82)
- Plaza del Pilar, Pza. Pilar, 1 (tel: 918 61 51 14)
- Camping Ardilla Roja (tel: 918 64 41 19)

Cadalso de los Vidrios

- (2) San José, Dr. Menéndez, 2 (tel: 918 64 01 57)
- (3) Cadalso, Ronda de Sangre, 2 (tel: 918 64 10 11)
- (3) Ermita de Santa Ana, El Coso, 32 (tel: 918 64 06 28)

Sotillo de la Adrada

- (3) Chico, Los Guijuelos, 11 (tel: 918 66 82 67)

Piedralaves

- (3) Almanzor, Progreso, 2 (tel: 918 66 50 00)
- (3) Mainz, Avda. Castilla y León, 9 (tel: 918 66 56 12)
- (3) Posada Quinta San José, Avda. De Castilla y León, 82 (tel: 918 66 55 11)

Casavieja

- (3) Niágara, Del Puerto, 24 (tel: 918 67 85 81)
- Camping Fuente Helecha, Paraje Fuente Helecha (tel: 918 67 88 28)

Mijares

- (3) Barbacedo, Miguel Gellego, 2 (tel: 920 38 50 07)
- (2) La Posada, Esquinilla, 9 (tel: 920 38 53 47)

Gavilanes

- (3) Mirador del Tiétar, Risquillo, 22 (tel: 920 38 48 67)

Pedro Bernardo

- (2) El Cerro, Avda. Duprier, 1 (tel: 920 38 91 03)
- (2) Nuestra Señora de las Caudales, Pso. del Rollo, 4 (tel: 920 38 91 03)

Villanueva de Ávila

- (3) Los Arroyuelos, Ctra. Casavieja, 43 (tel: 920 29 59 50)

Burgohondo

- (2) El Alberche, Ctra. Ávila-Casavieja, 39 (tel: 920 28 30 34)
- Camping La Isla, Paraje La Isla (tel: 920 28 70 11)

Navalmoral

- (3) Arpa, Avda. de Gredos, 1 (tel: 920 28 00 66)
- (2) La Paramera, Avda. de Gredos, 60 (tel: 920 28 02 86)

Ávila

Only hotels costing less than 60 Euros and within or very close to the city walls are listed.

- (2) Bellas, Caballeros, 19 (tel: 920 21 29 10)
- (2) Casa Felipe, Plaza Mecado Chico, 12 (tel: 920 21 39 24)
- (3) Hostería de Bracamonte, Bracamonte, 6 (tel: 920 25 12 80)
- (2) El Rastro, Plaza del Rastro, 1 (tel: 920 21 12 19)
- (2) Don Diego, Marqués de Canales y Chozas, 5 (tel: 920 25 54 75)
- (2) Jardín, San Seguro, 38 (tel: 920 21 10 74)
- (1) Continental, Plaza de la Catedral, 6 (tel: 920 21 15 02)
- Camping Sonsoles, Ctra. N403 km 133 (tel: 920 25 63 36)

El Espinar

- (2) Marino, Marqués de Perales, 11 (tel: 921 18 23 39)
- (3) Siete Picos, Martí Estévez, 10 (tel: 921 18 10 84)
- (2) Lucía, Alto de León, 5 (tel: 921 17 10 02)
- (3) La Cigüeña, Antonia Machado, 3 (tel: 921 18 23 88)

Segovia

There are 20 hotels in Segovia, only those costing less than 60 Euros and located within the city walls or close to the aqueduct are listed.

- (2) El Hidalgo, José Canalejas, 3-5 (tel: 921 46 35 29)
- (2) Hidalgo II, Juan Bravo, 21 (tel: 921 46 35 29)
- (2) Juan Bravo, Juan Bravo, 12 (tel: 921 46 34 13)
- (2) Don Jaime, Ochoa Ondategui, 8 (tel: 921 44 47 87)
- (2) Plaza, Cronista Lecea, 11 (tel: 921 46 03 03)
- (2) Don Jaime II, Ochoa Ondategui, 11 (tel: 921 47 87)
- Camping Acueducto, Ctra. local 601 km112 (tel: 921 42 50 00)

La Granja

- (3) Las Fuentes, Padre Claret, 6 (tel: 921 47 10 24)
- (3) Roma, Guardas, 2 (tel: 921 47 07 52)
- San Luis, Barco, 8 (tel: 921 47 21 21)

Puerto de Navacerrada

- (2) Pasadoiro, Ctra M601 km 60 (tel: 918 52 14 27)

Cercedilla

- (2) El Aribel, Emilio Serrano, 41 (tel: 918 52 15 11)
- (3+) Lucas de Poniente, Lina de Ávila, 4 (tel: 918 52 55 87)
- Pensión Peña Pintada, Emilio Serrano, 34
- (3+) Los Robles, Cantos Gordos, 77 (tel: 918 52 14 54)

Navacerrada

- (2) Mayte, Avda Madrid, 5 (tel: 918 56 02 97)
- (3) Navas Real, Las Huertas, s/n (tel: 918 53 13 00)

Manzanares El Real

- (3) Parque Real, Padre Damián, 4 (tel: 918 53 99 12)
- (2) El Tranco, Tranco, 4 (tel: 918 53 00 63)
- Camping El Ortigal, La Pedriza (tel: 918 53 01 20)

Colmenar Viejo

- (3) El Chiscón, Frailes, 91 (tel: 918 45 29 61)

Tres Cantos

- (3) Tres Cantos, Avenida Viñuelas, 39 (tel: 918 03 71 17)

Alcobendas

- (3) Arba, Huesca, 37 (tel: 916 54 34 12)
- (2) Los Angeles, Miño, 14 (tel: 916 51 50 06)
- (3) Frontón, Bulevar Salvador Allende, 16 (tel: 916 52 34 37)
- (3) Grand Prix, Bulevar Salvador Allende, 10 (tel: 916 52 46 00)
- (3) Miraflores, Miraflores, 9 (tel: 916 63 97 17)

ROUTE 6

MADRID TO BILBAO

VIA THE SIERRA DE LA DEMANDA

ROUTE SUMMARY

From	To	km	Type	Cycling time
Madrid airport	Cogolludo	94	Undulating plains	5hr 50min
Cogolludo	Galve de Sorbe	50	Steady climb through hills	3hr 25min
Galve de Sorbe	San Esteban	57	Undulating descent	3hr 35min
San Esteban	Quintanar	66	Undulating plain and hills	4hr 10min
Quintanar	Anguiano	71	Hills and extended valley	4hr 25min
Anguiano	Miranda	72	Plain and hills	4hr 25min
Miranda	Amurrio	53	Plain and hills	3hr 20min
Amurrio	Bilbao	37	Valleys	2hr 20min

Option 1

Najerilla valley	Santo Domingo	59	Mountains and plain	4hr 10min
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Option 2

Sierra de la Demanda loop		94	Plain and mountains	6hr 25min
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In any country cycling from the centre to the coast has its own appeal. This route is for those who prefer scenery to spectacle; those who are happy with hills but prefer to cycle between mountains rather than over them. Apart from the reduced physical challenge there are no other compromises. The roads are quiet, the towns small and friendly, and the countryside very pretty.

The route starts at Madrid airport on the central plain before heading north over the gentle hills of Guadalajara and the wooded ranges of Soria. The valley of the Río Najerilla is used to avoid crossing over the Sierra de la Demanda. Continuing north the route crosses the plain of the Río Ebro before catching the eastern end of the Cordillera Cantábrica and descending through wooded valleys into Bilbao. The route ends in the centre of Bilbao at its main railway station rather than its rather stylish airport. Much effort has gone into finding a safe route between the city and its airport, and many promising roads end up as motorways. The advice is to take a taxi. The railway station is the focus for many of the car rental agencies.

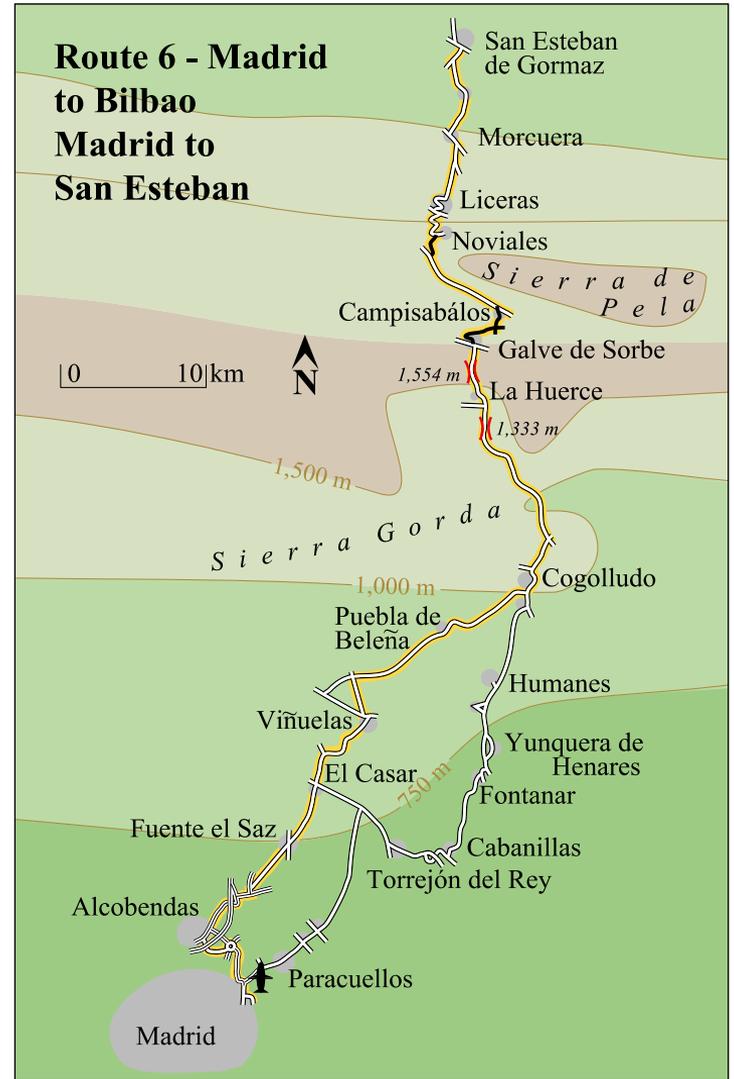
ROUTE 6: CLIMATE DETAILS

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Soria												
av min temp °C	-2	-1	1	3	6	10	12	12	10	5	1	-1
av max temp °C	7	9	12	15	18	24	28	27	24	16	11	7
rainfall mm	49	48	46	51	65	54	30	32	51	48	48	57
Santander												
av min temp °C	7	7	8	10	11	14	16	16	15	12	10	8
av max temp °C	12	12	14	15	17	20	22	22	21	18	15	12
rainfall mm	119	88	78	83	89	63	54	84	114	733	125	129
Madrid												
sunrise	08:37	08:24	07:48	07:58	07:14	06:47	06:48	07:11	07:42	08:11	07:45	08:20
sunset	17:57	18:30	19:06	20:38	21:10	21:39	21:48	21:29	20:48	19:57	18:13	17:50
Best time	-	-	G	G	VG	VG	-	-	VG	VG	G	G

(C = good time to go; VG = best time to go)

Public holidays

Comunidad de Madrid: 2 May
Province of La Rioja: 9 June
Álava Guipúzcoa and Vizcaya: Easter Monday
Bilbao: 31 July and first Friday after 15 August
Province of Guadalajara: 8 and 14 September
Province of Soria: 28 June and 2 October



Michelin Regional 1:400 000 maps 576 Extremadura, Castilla-La Mancha, Madrid, 575 Castilla y León and 573 La Rioja, País Vasco/Euskadi are required for the entire route.. The Instituto Geográfico 1:200 000 Mapas Provinciales Madrid y su entono, Soria, La Rioja and Álava Guipúzcoa & Vizcaya also cover the route. Although it also passes through the provinces of Segovia and Burgos the maps listed contain sufficient detail for navigation. Readily available guidebooks provide scant coverage, and the *Rough Guide to Spain* is as good as any.

The route moves from the centre of Spain, with low rainfall, freezing cold winters and baking hot summers, to the north coast with its mild winters, warm summers and plentiful rain. This route starts in Madrid, some 650m above sea level, and peaks at 1500m. Based on the 1°C per 100m rule expect temperatures to be cooler than Madrid but not that much colder than Soria (1063m). The 'Climate details' table will help you work out the best time for your trip.

STAGE 1

Madrid–Barajas airport to Cogolludo

Distance	93km (57.8 miles)
Type	Town then mesa with some steep valleys
Climb	849m (2786ft)
Cycling time	5hr 15min

Those starting at T1 T2 or T3 should use the map in Appendix 5 and make their way to the roundabout with the pink infil. From there exit heading north immediately passing under a flyover. Follow this road as it parallels the M13 Autovía. After 2 small and 1 large roundabouts there is a large and busier fourth. Take the second exit. The first exit is signed M111 to Paracuellos. At the time

of writing our turn has only one sign and that is a 5m height restriction. Keep on this dual carriageway to the outskirts of Alcobendas. No doubt the poor signposted is to encourage use of the motorway system but this does not help us cyclists. There are occasional signs for 'Alcobendas' and 'Urbanización norte'. At the third roundabout turn right and north. Continue straight ahead at the next but at the one after bear left of straight ahead. Keep heading north at all roundabouts including the one by the Repsol service station.

Those starting at T4 should head for the multi-storey car parks opposite; make their way to the ground floor and exit turning right and north. After the pay booths continue straight ahead. Take the right fork immediately before the flyovers and again fork right after them. At the roundabout next to the Repsol service station turn right onto the dual carriageway to join the route from the other terminals.

At the large roundabout over the motorways, some 9km from the pink roundabout, take the second exit signed La Moraleja. Continue west on this suburban road (Paseo Conde de los Gaitanes) and at the end turn right (Camino Ancho). After 100m fork right to stay on the Camino Ancho which becomes the Calle de Anabel Segura. Continue north and straight ahead under the Autovía, over the roundabout, the dual carriageway with the wide grassed centre and climb to the next roundabout. Here turn left (Avda Olimpica) and at the next turn right. Turn right onto the dual carriageway ((Bulevar de Salvador Allende) next to the Hostal Fronton. Continue straight ahead and northeast on this road which becomes the Avda de Europa.

Seven kilometres from the Hostal Fronton pass under the A1 Autovía and at the roundabout turn right towards Algete. At the large roundabout turn left signed M111 Fuente el Saz and almost immediately bear right to leave it. At the roundabout take the first exit signed Urbanización Prado Norte. Keep on this road to and then through Fuente el Saz. At the roundabout take the M117 to El Casar. All the while the hustle and bustle of Alcoben-

This first stage is long but relatively flat. Those who get away from the airport late should consider breaking the stage into two.

das fades behind as the emptiness of Castile takes over. There is even a bit of a climb up to El Casar.

At the national road turn right and the immediately left towards Mesones. However, before Mesones bear right to Valdenuño-Fernández and then Viñuelas. Here the cycling in on high but level mesas at an altitude of around 900m which is good making headway and for big panoramas. There are arroyos cut into the mesa which means it isn't all easy going. At the far side of Viñuelas turn left then right to Villaseca de Uceda. Pass through the village. At the cross roads with the CM1001 turn right and keep on this road all the way to Cogolludo.

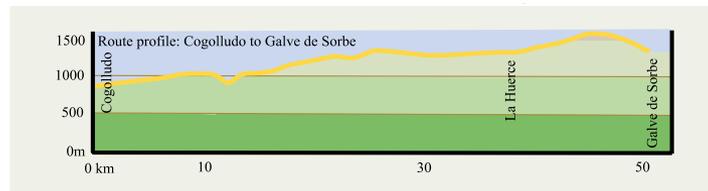
The cycling is good as are the views. Apart from one arroyo the road is fairly flat as far as Puebla de Beleña from where the road becomes more interesting. Some might say hilly. A few kilometres before Cogolludo turn left at the t-junction and then follow the road into town.

Cogolludo is a charming and interesting village. It has an enormous colonnaded 14th-century Plaza Major complete with medieval snow hole, 16th-century churches one of which was built over a Roman temple, a 15th-century Palacio de los Duques de Medinaceli, quiet squares, a ruined castle and a couple of hotels. A lot of history for the towns 600 residents.

STAGE 2

Cogolludo to Galve de Sorbe

Distance	50km (31 miles)
Type	Steady climb through hills
Climb	763m (2503ft)
Cycling time	3hr 25min



Return to the main road. Turn left at the roundabout and cycle round the outside of the village before dropping to the river. Ignore the left turn to Tamajón. The road climbs a steep hill with pine forest on top; having reached the trees the climb eases.

Turn left at the roundabout, heading west. The road remains level for a while before descending in a cutting through pine forest. Cross the Arroyo Hondo and climb steeply at first onto a broad ridge. Ignore all turns. The views to the north and east are excellent. Descend into the extended but gentle dip before the climb to an unmarked col at 1333m. Continue along the forested eastern side of the Río Sorbe valley; there are good views to the west with the Sierra de Ayllón prominent. The soil is poor and the vegetation scrubby, with rocks and crags breaking through.

Ignore the Tourist Route left turn towards Valverde. Continue the climb and leave the forest before passing above the villages of **La Huerce** and Valdepinillos. Enter more pine forest and cross the Sierra de Alto Rey (1554m). Descend to **Galve de Sorbe**, which is set in open pasture.

Galve de Sorbe is a small and isolated village. However, it does have a ruined 14th-century Castillo de los Zúñigas, a 16th-century church, two hermitages, an antique four-spout fountain and a hotel.



STAGE 3

Galve de Sorbe to San Esteban

Distance	57km (35.4 miles)
Type	Undulating descent
Climb	269m (883ft)
Cycling time	3 hours 35 minutes

A second short day of cycling with only a couple of hills. Enjoy the relaxed pace.

It was along this stretch of road that I saw my first Spanish fox. It was larger and stouter than its British cousins, and its coat brown and grey rather than red.

Leave Galve de Sorbe on the narrow road leading out of the north-west corner of the village square, heading towards the castle. The walled road changes to a well-made grit road. Turn right immediately before the castle. The road gently bends right to head north-west through rich pasture in a broad valley surrounded by limestone ridges. Ignore the grit road turn to the left. ◀

Turn left at the grit crossroads next to the picnic site. The road climbs up a limestone scarp. Ignore the left turn. This is lovely limestone country with rocky ridges, crags and dry valleys covered with scrub and lush green pasture in between. Continue into **Campisábalos** with its 12th-century Romanesque church of San Bartolomé containing a chapel to San Galindo. Leave the village heading north, and at the T-junction with the main road turn left.

Continue heading approximately north-west on this fairly level road. The flat pine *dehesa* to the south is home to wild boar. To the north are the limestone ridges of Sierras de Pela and Grado. The province of Segovia is entered, but not for long. Ignore the left turn to Grado and in approximately 3km turn right onto a dirt road to Noviales;

Limestone country, Galve de Sorbe

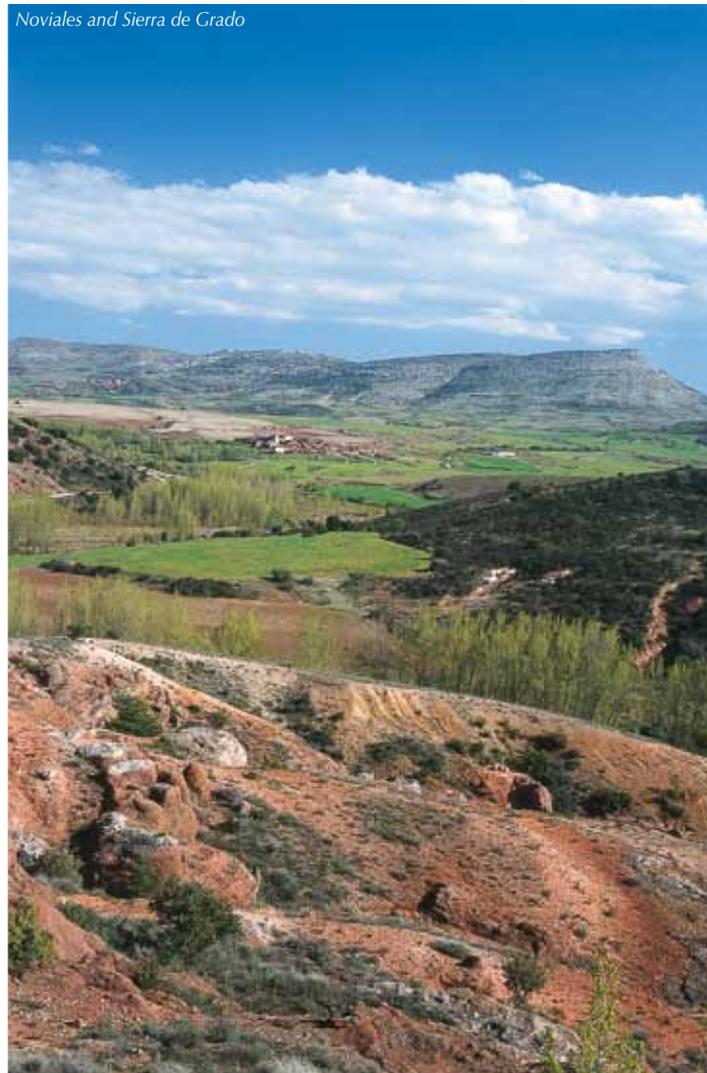


the turn is not too obvious. Turn left after a short while and after another short distance fork right. The track enters Soria and is fairly rough. After initial scrub the road passes through big fields of red soil. **Noviales** is a tightly packed red sandstone hamlet. Approaching the village turn left at the T-junction with the asphalt road. This leads away from the village. Cross the Río Pedro and diagonally climb the steep bare sandstone scarp slope. This line of sandstone stretches either side as far as the eye can see and the views from the top are excellent.

From the top the road descends to Liceras. Approaching **Liceras** turn left at the T-junction for a short distance, then turn right to enter the village. The through road bends before leaving the village. Climb the second steep scarp slope. From the top the road descends to the end of the stage. Continue north across the undulating plateau of rocky fields, *dehesa*, scrub and natural pine forest. Turn left at the T-junction and pass through more of the same, but this time with the odd fertile field. At the second T-junction turn left. Pass through **Morcuera** and turn right and north on the far side. Here the big fields are located on top of eroded scarp slopes, and rocky areas support oak trees. Pass through Atauta and descend to the fertile river plain. Cross the Canal de Inés and ignore the road to the right. Turn right at the T-junction with the main road. Cross the Río Duero on the 16-arch medieval bridge to enter **San Esteban de Gormaz**.

San Esteban established its place in history in AD883 during the Reconquests, when Duero became the established boundary between the Moors and Christians. North of the town are several steep sandstone hills, one of which houses the remains of a castle. There is a smashing town square with colonnaded and galleried buildings reached through the town arch. The 11th- and 12th-century churches of San Miguel and Nuestra Señora del Rivero are striking in both appearance and location.

Noviales and Sierra de Grado



STAGE 4

San Esteban to Quintanar

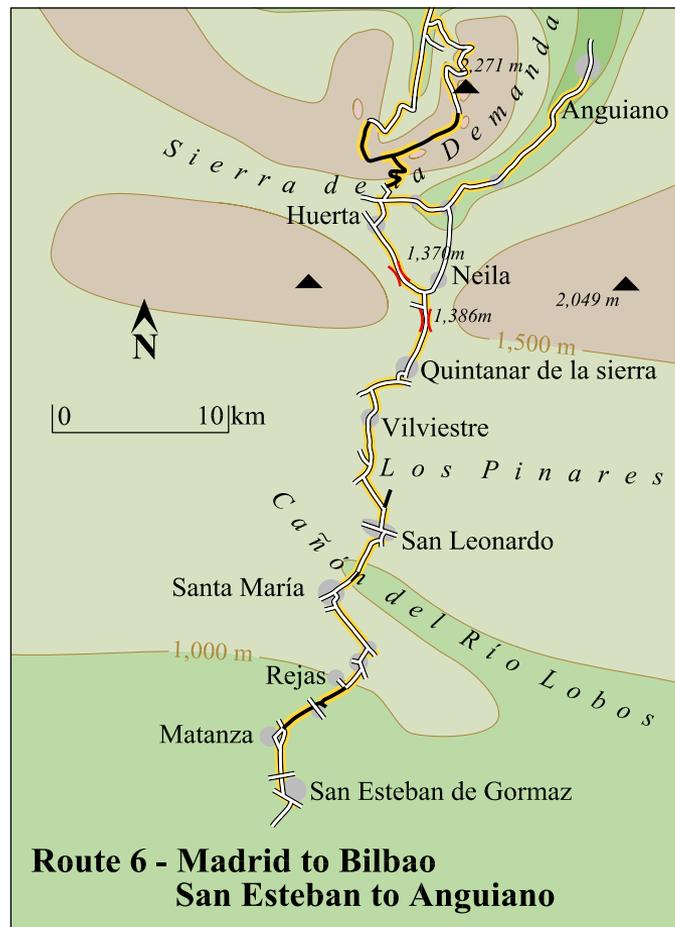
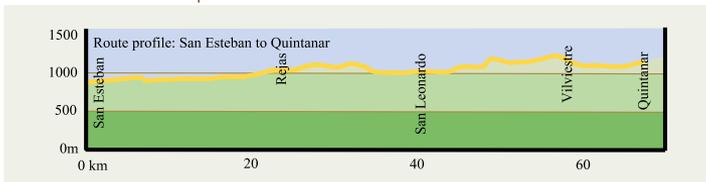
Distance	66km (40.9 miles)
Type	Undulating plain and hills
Climb	549m (1801ft)
Cycling time	4hr 10min

This stage takes in the popular Parque Natural Cañón del Río Lobos as well as the lonelier pine-forested ridges of Los Pinares. Expect a very good day's riding.

From the north side of the medieval bridge head west on the main road towards Aranda de Duero. Turn right after 0.5km and pass under the town's northern bypass, heading north. Cross the gently undulating flood plain of the Río Duero.

At **Matanza de Soria** ignore the left turn into the village and continue on its bypass to where the through road rejoins the bypass. Turn right onto the Camino Rurales and head north-east (do not take the earlier Camino Rurales halfway round the bypass which heads east). These Camino Rurales are well-made grit roads and are perfectly suitable for cycling. The road passes through undulating fields some with vines. Continue straight on and ignore any turns.

At Berzoa continue straight across the asphalt road, then bend to the right at the far side of the village. Turn left at the junction and head north-east. Continue straight ahead through flat countryside in a shallow valley. The grit road ends at the left turn for Valdealbín. Ignore this turn and continue straight ahead on the asphalt road. Turn left at the T-junction to **Rejas de Ucero**. In the vil-



lage turn right beside the church. Turn left at the next T-junction and pass through Nafra de Ucero. The road is fairly level, with a dominant wooded ridge paralleling it 1km to the north. An area of pine *dehesa* is encountered as Santa María de las Hoyas (of the Holes) is neared.

There are numerous waymarked tracks through the forest on which bikes are welcome as long as pedestrians are given priority. These are an excellent way to explore this beautiful forested canyon with its spectacular rock formations.

Pass through the eastern side of **Santa María** and at the T-junction with the main road turn right, heading north-west. Climb over the bare limestone scarp. The top is pine forest with lovely views over the Parque Natural. A bendy descent leads to the wide valley floor where there is an information centre and picnic sites. ◀

Cross the Río Lobos heading north in a wide, open valley surrounded by wooded hills. The exit from the canyon is not the expected steep climb. Turn left at the T-junction north of Arganza and left again at the second T-junction, this time in **San Leonardo de Yagüe**. After 300m turn right opposite the memorial onto the Camino



Los Pinares, San Leonardo de Yagüe

Forestal, an asphalt road of varying quality. The town borders mature pine forest with fantastic rock formations. Enter the forest. Head north in a steep-sided valley set out with picnic areas. Turn left after 2.7km to stay on the asphalt road to pass through a delicious mix of spur and valley topography. Turn right at the T-junction and enter the province of Burgos. Turn right where the road forks, following the signs for Vilviestre rather than Palacios. The road continues to climb over a couple of low summits before descending to **Vilviestre del Pinar**, set on a hillside amongst pasture.

Pass through Vilviestre, cross the Río Arlanza and turn right at the T-junction. After 3.8km turn left and climb up to **Quintanar de la Sierra**, a pleasant mountain resort with swimming pool, campsite and hotels.

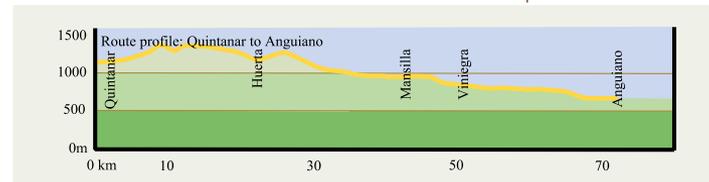
STAGE 5

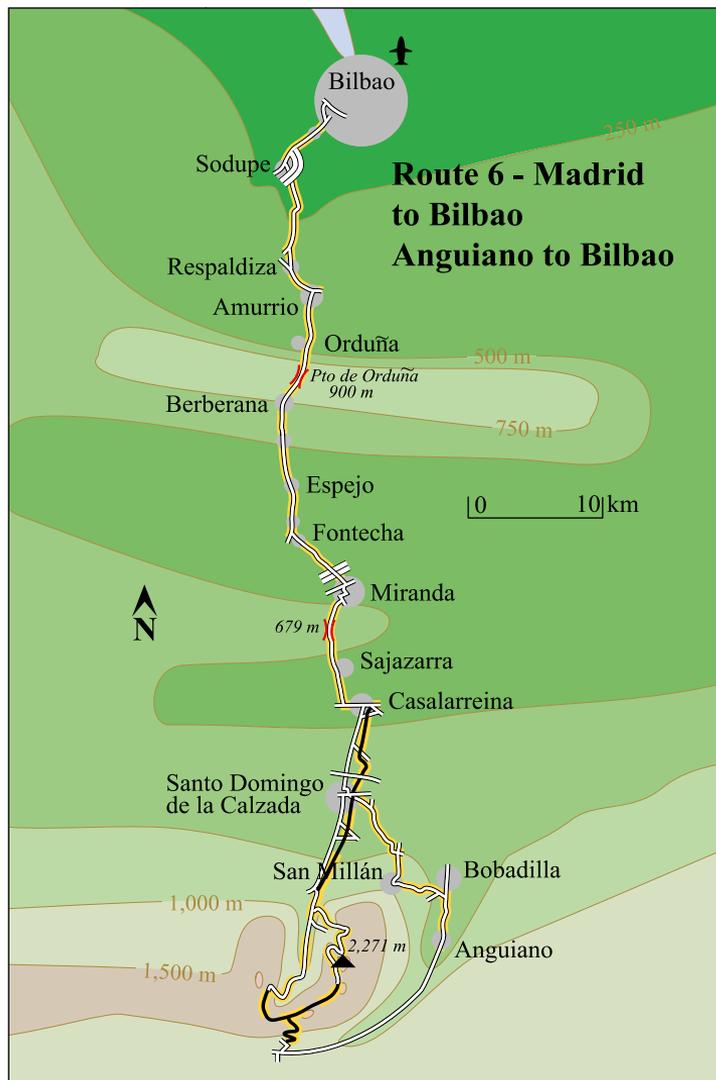
Quintanar to Anguiano

Distance	71km (44.1 miles)
Type	Hills and extended valley
Climb	458m (1503ft)
Cycling time	4hr 25min

Leave Quintanar heading north-east on the main through road. Ignore the right turn to the Necropolis. Climb into mature pine forest high above the river to the east. As height is gained the road becomes more twisty and crags protrude as the trees become more sparse.

This is a long stage, but the climb comes early on and well over half the total is along the valley of the Río Najerilla: at worst very pretty, at best quite awesome.





At the Puerto del Collado ignore the left turn. Descend steeply, leaving the forest for a short time. At the next junction turn left and climb back into the forest. (Continuing straight ahead through **Neila** would cut the stage short.) Continue over a couple of colls and descend to **Huerta de Arriba**, set in a steep-sided valley amongst scrubby hills. Continue through the village, and at the far end turn right to double back. Fork left at the next junction and follow the sign for Logroño located behind the church. Pass through pasture, then climbing and descending through mature pine and beech forest. Enter the province of La Rioja. Turn right at the T-junction with the main road. After a very short distance there is a left turn. This is the start of the Najerilla valley to Santo Domingo option.

Hemmed in by the Sierra de la Demanda to the north and the Sierra de Castejón to the south, the route takes the easy downhill option. Ignoring the left turn. Heading east then swinging north, the route stays on this road all the way to Anguiano. Enter the limestone Najerilla valley and pass the villages of Canales and Villalalayo before following the north shore of the Embalse de Mansilla. The road swings round inlets made by the tributary valleys, many of which are sheer-sided gorges.

Beyond the *embalse* enter a steep-sided wooded gorge that continues to **Anguiano**. The eroded limestone bedding planes have formed interlocking spurs around which the river has cut its tortuous path. The road tries to follow the river. After the road crosses the river the gorge widens with fields in the bottom. Anguiano is framed by a pair of narrow sandstone ridges that act as gates to the town.

Apart from its spectacular setting **Anguiano** is a pretty town, famous for its stilt dancers. In late July they carry an icon of Mary Magdalena from the church down the Cuesta de los Danzadores to a shrine, and on the last Saturday in September dance the icon back again.

STAGE 6

Anguiano to Miranda

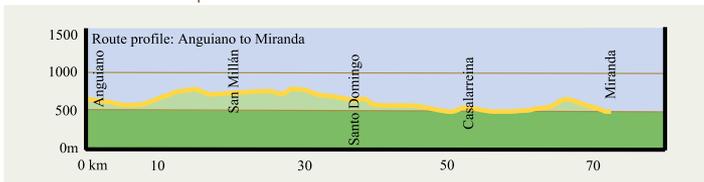
Leave Anguiano on the main through road, heading

Distance	72km (44.7 miles)
Type	Plain and hills
Climb	469m (1539ft)
Cycling time	4hr 25min

north. Pass the fantastic sandstone cliffs, buttresses and razor-sharp ridges. As the flood plain of the Río Ebro is approached the gorge widens. Ignore the turns to Pedrosa and Ledesma. On the approach to **Bobadilla** turn left to San Millán. Ignore the left turn to Matute. The country is fertile eroded sandstone hills. Pass north of Villaverde de Rioja, through San Andres and north of Estollo. Cross the Río Cárdenas and turn right at the T-junction to bypass **San Millán de la Cogolla**. Continue straight through Berceo, ignoring the right turn. Turn left at the crossroads, pass through Villar de Torre and continue straight on, ignoring the turns for Villarejo and Manzanares. Pass through Cirueña with its hop fields. Ignore the right turn for Logroño. At the roundabout continue straight ahead, entering the industrial fringe of **Santo Domingo de la Calzada**. The town has a medieval centre; the cathedral has a detached ornate bell tower, built apart from the main building after the first one fell down and the second threatened to. The town is certainly worth a visit, and is the start point for the Sierra de la Demanda option. ◀

The route uses the Vía Verde, built on the former

Santo Domingo is also an important stop on the pilgrim route to Santiago. The Camino de Santiago passes through the town and is well marked with scallop shell motifs.



railway line from Ezcaray to Casalarreina. The Vía Verde crosses the road east of the town proper where the road forks right to skirt north of the centre. The 'beware of cyclists' road sign is the indicator. Turn right just before the fork and pass round to the rear of the prefabricated steel bullring set up on waste ground. Head north on a well-consolidated grit track. Pass under the town's bypass and bend right, then left, to parallel the Santo Domingo to Casalarreina road. The Vía Verde passes through flat fields. Approaching **Casalarreina** cross the town's eastern bypass. The Vía Verde terminates on a road of little consequence in town. Turn left at the T-junction and then left again at the main road. Continue west through the town centre.

Pass through Tirgo and turn right on the west side of the Río Tirón to head north. Continue straight on, ignoring all turn-offs. Pass the lovely village of **Sajazarra** with its golden stone-built houses, churches and quaint castle. The road gently climbs to a low pass where the province of Burgos is entered. Descend into **Miranda de Ebro**. On the outskirts turn left at the T-junction then turn right, left and right again in response to the one-way system. Cross the Río Ebro. Turn immediately left and parallel the river. Take the left fork and pass under the railway. Follow the road as it bends to the right. Turn right at the T-junction with the main road that passes through the town. Shortly there is a major junction to the left where the next stage begins.

STAGE 7

Miranda to Amurrio

Distance	53km (32.9 miles)
Type	Plain and hills
Climb	445m (1460ft)
Cycling time	3hr 20min

The two remaining stages could be combined for one long, but not too



Start from the centre of Miranda at the junction described at the end of Stage 6. Leave the city heading north-west, paralleling the Río Ebro to the south. The road is flat but not too scenic. Ignore all turns to either side and pass through **Fontecha**. At the T-junction next to the dammed Ebro turn right to head north. Ignore the left turn to Sobrón and pass through the villages of Bergüenda, **Espejo**, Osma and **Berberana** in a rising wide shallow valley. The undulating fields are rimmed by small wooded limestone hills to the east. To the west the limestone mountains of the Cordillera Cantábrica are clearly visible.

From Berberana the road climbs more steeply through country with limestone pavement, oak trees and lush pasture. The tree cover increases with altitude. The road peaks at the **Puerto de Orduña** (900m). Descend the 450m limestone cliff in zigzags through the trees. On both sides the cliff line can be seen stretching into the distance. The fields become more fertile as you descend. Pass under the railway before passing to the east of **Orduña**. Pass through Saracho and into the centre of **Amurrio**.

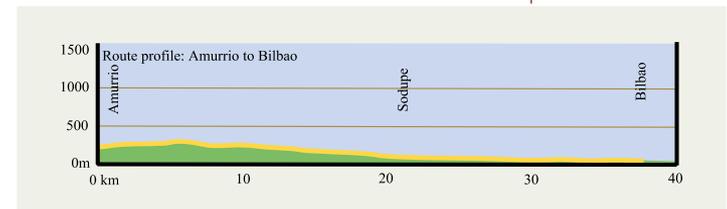
STAGE 8

Amurrio to Bilbao

Distance	37km (22.9 miles)
Type	Valleys
Climb	197m (646ft)
Cycling time	2hr 20min

From the centre of Amurrio head west towards Balmaseda on the main road. Ignore all turn-offs. At **Respaldiza** ignore the first right turn that heads north-east and then east towards Ludio/Llodio. Take the second right turn into the village. The road loops back to the main road. At the top of the hill turn right onto the unsigned road heading north and downhill. Cross the Río Izalde and turn right at the T-junction. Continue downhill to the bottom of a fairly steep-sided lush valley with lots of forestry plantations. The houses are generally stone with low-angled roofs and big eaves. Ignore the turn to Okondo; continue straight ahead at the roundabout under the dual carriageway and climb into **Sodupe**.

Turn right at the T-junction with the main road. This is a very busy and unpleasant section of road so take care. It passes down a steep-sided narrow wooded valley. Pass through Alonsótegui/Alonsotegi; 1.8km further on is the start of the motorway system. Turn left to follow the signs for Zorrotza on the BI3742, also signed for Bilbo/Bilbao. The road parallels the railway and passes a steel works on the left. Pass under the motorway next to Zorrotza railway station. Turn right at the T-junction onto the Avenida de Montevideo and head into the centre of the **Bilbo/Bilbao**. Pass the Hospital Civil de Basurto on the left and under the motorway. Continue along this road – the Avenida de la Autonomía – to the circular Plaza de Zabálburu. Take the fourth exit, the Calle de Hurtado de Amezaga, to the railway Estación de Abando where this route ends. Take a taxi to the airport. The railway station is the focus for many of the car rental agencies.



Staying on in Bilbao

The city's big draw is the titanium-clad Guggenheim Museum; more traditional is the Museo de Bellas Artes. The Casco Viejo (old quarter) is on the east side of the Ría de Bilbao, to the east of the Estación Abando. Here you will find the Gothic cathedral and streets worth exploring.

OPTION 1

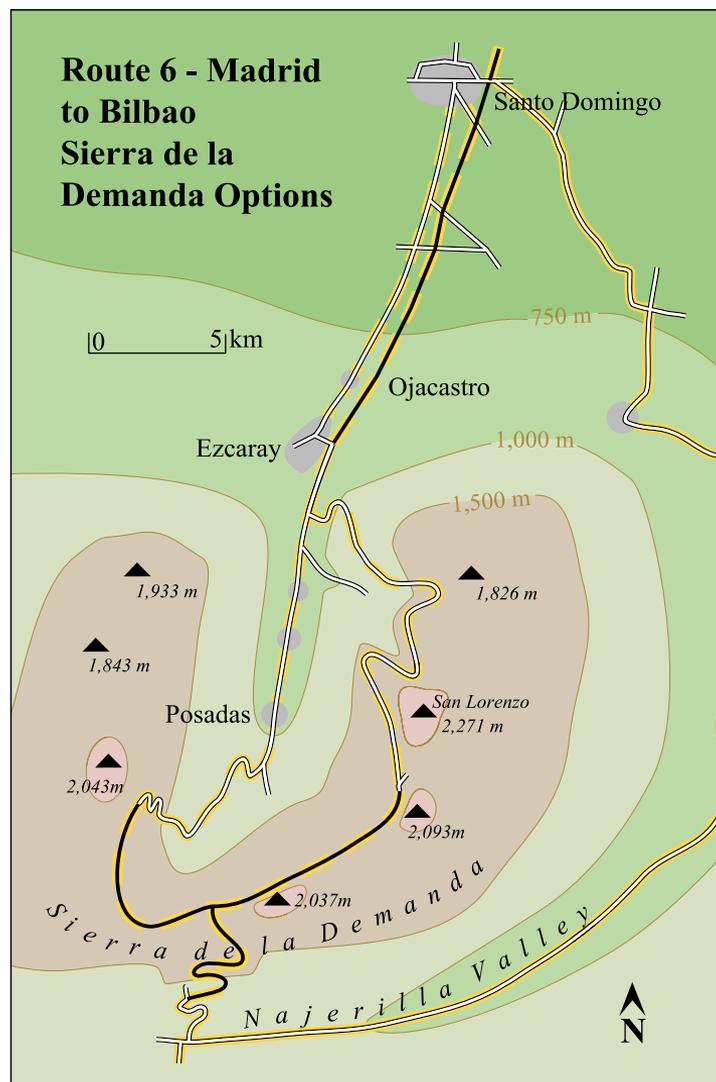
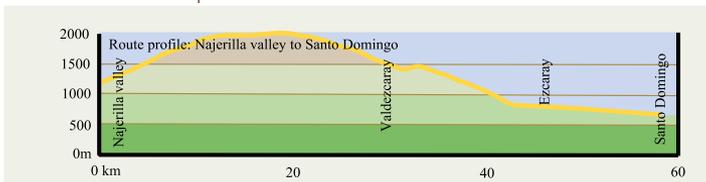
Najerilla valley to Santo Domingo

Distance	59km (36.6 miles)
Type	Mountains and plain
Climb	756m (2480ft)
Cycling time	4hr 10min

An option for those who enjoy a challenging high-level route on mountain roads. The uphill climb is steep and the mountain road rough, but the shale ridge road is in good condition and almost level. The descent is on a good asphalt road. The ridge section provides excellent riding with great views.

Start at the road junction described in Stage 5 and head north uphill on the narrow asphalt road through scrubby pasture. Pass through beech, oak and birch woods. About 3.5km from the start the road bends sharply left, with a hardcore mountain road straight ahead. Take this mountain road and climb steeply through scrubby woodland. After a left bend the road levels through high pasture before climbing again steeply through beech woodland.

After 2.8km on the mountain road a right bend leaves the trees behind. Continue along a ridge. After a left bend the mountain road climbs the western side of Gatón (2037m). At an altitude of 1916m a T-junction is encountered; the views now include those over the valley of the Río Oja. The shale road has a lofty and exposed feel as it





Sierra de la Demanda
ridge

runs round the broad ridge. Steep slopes fall away in all directions and the summits are not that much higher than the track. Here beech trees grow to 1700m.

Turn right at the T-junction on a good-quality shale road. Pass north of Gatón then west of Salineros (2093m). In the shallow col between Salineros and San Lorenzo (2271m) the road surface changes to asphalt. Take the left fork and descend the west side of San Lorenzo on an extremely pitted road, which swings round huge spurs as it clings to the steep valley sides. Pass the Valdezcaray ski station where the road improves. Continue contouring round large spurs and valleys with a short climb before a steep hairpin bend descent to the valley road. Turn right at the T-junction on the valley road to **Ezcaray**. The Río Oja joins the road on the left. Where the road bends sharp left into Ezcaray, continue straight ahead to join the Vía Verde. The pink building is clearly the old railway station.

The Vía Verde is easy to follow; simply keep going straight ahead, gently downhill, on the well-made grit track for some 14km. This option ends on the eastern side of **Santo Domingo** directly opposite the start of the

Vía Verde described in Stage 6. A visit into Santo Domingo is recommended.

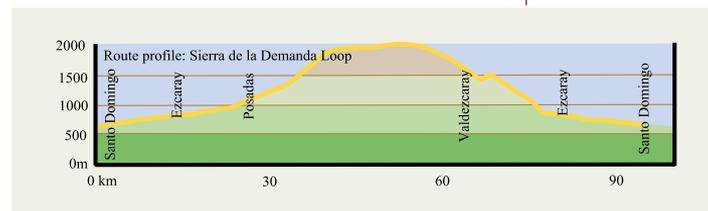
OPTION 2

Sierra de la Demanda loop

Distance	94km (58.4 miles)
Type	Plain and mountains
Climb	1350m (4429ft)
Cycling time	6hr 25min

Leave the centre of Santo Domingo, heading south towards Ezcaray on the LR111. The road climbs gently as it parallels the Río Oja, crossing it just before **Ojacastro**. The mountains gradually hem in the wide river plain. Pass through Ojacastro and into **Ezcaray**. In town turn left where the road bends right again, crossing the river and turning sharp right. It is at this bend that the Vía Verde used on the return begins. Continue up the very pretty valley overlooked by forest-flanked mountains. Ignore the turns for Valdezcaray and Urdanta. Pass the villages of Zaldierna and Azarrulla, and go through Posadas with its substantial stone houses. After Posadas and the bridge across the river take the right fork. The road climbs much more steeply through a series of hairpin bends. The steep rocky hillsides are forested with blocks of beech and pine. The climb eases slightly as it climbs above the treeline, and at the ridge the asphalt road ends

An excellent long day in the hills. Halfway round it joins the Najerilla valley to Santo Domingo option. Most of the route is on asphalt roads, with a well-made shale mountain road on the ridge.



and the shale mountain road begins. (The climb just completed is often used in the Tour of Spain as the end of a stage.) The views now include the valley of the Río Oja and the surrounding mountains. Continue along the shale mountain road, keeping close to the ridgeline. The road heads south before bending left to head south-east. Where the road bends to the north-east there is a track on the right which is where the Najerilla valley option comes in. To complete the loop follow the directions given for Option 1.

ACCOMMODATION ON OR CLOSE TO ROUTE 6

Please note that this is not an exhaustive list. Hotel guide prices are in Euros, based on a double room with an en suite bathroom at high season. Rooms without en suite are typically 20% cheaper, as are single rooms. Please note that hotels are constantly opening, closing or being refurbished; it is always advisable to book ahead. Prices (where known) are indicated as follows: (1) up to 24 Euros; (2) 24–45 Euros; (3) over 45 Euros.

Alcobendas

- (3) Arba, Huesca, 37 (tel: 916 54 34 12)
- (2) Los Ángeles, Miño, 14 (tel: 916 51 50 06)
- (3) Frontón, Bulevar Salvador Allende, 16 (tel: 916 52 34 37)
- (3) Grand Prix, Bulevar Salvador Allende, 10 (tel: 916 52 46 00)
- (3) Miraflores, Miraflores, 9 (tel: 916 63 97 17)

Fuente El Saz

- El Juncal, Palomares, 2 (tel: 916 22 33 49)
- La Imprenta, Avenida Julián Sánchez, 5 (tel: 916 20 02 89)

El Casar

- (3) El Cruce, Polígono Los Charcones, 9 (tel: 949 33 52 67)
- (3) La Jara, Calle Falla, s/n, Urbanización Monte Calderon (tel: 949 33 54 30)

Cogolludo

- (2) Ballester, Comercio, 3 (tel: 949 85 50 34)
- (2) Palacio Palacio, 7 (tel: 949 85 54 11)

Arroyo de las Fraguas

- (2) Alto Rey, Cogolludo, 43 (tel: 949 82 36 03)

Galve de Sorbe

- (2) Pensión Nuestra Señora del Pinar, Los Tallers, s/n (tel: 949 30 30 29)

Montejo de Tiermes

- (3) Tiermes (tel: 975 35 20 55)

San Esteban de Gormaz

- (2) Moreno, Ctra. Valladolid km223 (tel: 975 35 02 17)
- (3) Rivera del Duro, Avda. Valladolid, 131 (tel: 975 35 00 59)

Ucero

- Camping Cañon del Río Lobos (tel: 975 36 35 65)

San Leonardo de Yagüe

- (2) La Posada El Chispo, Real, 15 (tel: 975 37 60 59)
- (2) Torres, Magdalena, 4 (tel: 975 37 61 56)

Quintanar de la Sierra

- (3) Casa Ramón III, Ctra. Neila km 2 (tel: 947 39 60 75)
- (2) Casa Ramón II, Ernesto Sanz y Sanz, 1 (tel: 947 39 50 07)
- (3) La Quinta de Nar, Ctra. Soria, s/n (tel: 947 39 53 50)
- (2) Domingo, General Jordana, 28 (tel: 947 39 50 85)
- Camping Arlanza (tel: 947 39 55 92)

Viniegra de Abajo

- (2) Goyo, Puente del Río Neila, 3 (tel: 941 37 80 07)

Anguiano

- (3) Abadía de Valvanera, Monasterio de Valvanera (tel: 941 37 70 44)
- (2) Valdevenados, Ctra. de Lerma, 12 (tel: 941 37 70 85)

San Millán de Cogolla

- (3) La Calera, Diseminado, 46 (tel: 941 37 32 68)

Santo Domingo de la Calzada

- (3) Hospedería Cisterciense, Pinar, 2 (tel: 941 34 07 00)
- (3+) El Corregidor, Mayor, 14-16 (tel: 941 34 21 28)

Castañares de Rioja

- Camping de la Rioja (tel: 941 30 01 74)

Cuzcurrita de Río Tirón

- (2) El Botero, San Sebastián, s/n (tel: 941 30 15 00)

Miranda

- (3) Tudanca, Ctra. N-1, Madrid-Irún, 318 (tel: 947 31 18 43)
- Achuri, Estación, 86 (tel: 947 34 72 72)
- (3) Hospedería El Convento, San Francisco, 15 (tel: 947 332712)
- (2) Ferrviaria, Ciudad Jardín, 1 (tel: 947 10 03 75)

Sobrón

- (2) Parque del Ebro, La Presa 1 (tel: 945 35 90 76)

CYCLE TOURING IN SPAIN

- (2) Durtzi, La Presa, 12 (tel: 945 35 90 05)
- (2) Tres Hermanos, La Presa, 16 (tel: 945 35 90 37)

Artziniega

- (3) Torre de Artziniega, Cuesta de Luciano, 3 (tel: 945 39 65 00)

Bilbao/Bilbo

The city has some 30 hotels and pensiones. Contact the Turismo at Paseo del Arenal, 1 (tel: 944 79 57 60, fax: 944 79 57 61, www.bilbao.net)

Options 1 and 2

Ezcaray

- (3) Albergue la Cuculla, Las Teñas, 9 (tel: 941 42 73 08)
- (2) Iguareña, Lamberto Felipe Muñoz, 1 (tel: 941 35 41 44)
- (2) Albergue de Ezcaray, Ctra. Santo Domingo, s/n (tel: 941 35 44 74)
- (3) Montes Blancos, Ctra. Santo Domingo, s/n (tel: 941 35 40 00)

Ojacastro

- (3) El Pago, Ctra. Santo Domingo, 29 (tel: 941 42 75 26)

Hay meadow, Galve de Sorbe



APPENDIX 5

Spanish Airports: Routes and Maps

AEROPUERTO DE MADRID-BARAJAS

Like many other major airports Barajas is surrounded by roads from which cyclists are either banned or are highly unpleasant for cycling. However, there are routes that can be used and some are described below.

From T1: Arrivals at T1 find themselves at ground level. Ascend to the Departure area using the stairs, escalator or lifts and leave the building. Once outside turn right and keep to the right hand side of the road heading north. Bear right at the first fork at the end of the terminal building and right again at the second heading towards T2 departures (Salidas). The road bends to the right and is joined by a road from the right, from T2 T3, and then one from the left. This one has priority and it will need crossing to get in the correct lane. Follow this road round the large car park on the left. Pass the terminals on the right and at the next fork keep right and descend to the roundabout at the bottom of the hill. It is marked on the map with pink infill.

From here those heading north and east should go to Route 6 Stage 1 for a description of the route to Alcobendas. Those heading south, west or into Madrid should take the exit marked 'Bolsas de taxi' heading south, pass under the flyover then over the M13 autovía and straight ahead at the two roundabouts. Turn left at the t-junction. After a few



CYCLE TOURING IN SPAIN

metres you will now arrive at the Avenida de Logroño, which is numbered the M110 on most maps.

From T2 and T3: Turn left out of terminal and cycle on the right hand side of the road. Shortly the road splits into three. Take the right hand fork heading towards T2 departures (Salidas). The road bends to the right and is joined by a road on the left from T1. From here follow the route description given from T1.

From T4: Those starting at T4 should head for the multi-storey car parks opposite; make their way to the ground floor and exit turning right and north. After the pay booths continue straight ahead. Take the right fork immediately before the flyovers and again fork right after them. At the roundabout next to the Repsol service station at the dual carriageway turn right for Alcobendas (north and east) and left for Madrid (and west). Follow the map to the Avenida de Logroño and at the roundabout with the chapel join Route 5 Stage 1.

To return to the airport: simply follow the routes in reverse. Departures (Salidas) are well signed. Those using T4 will need to approach from the roundabout southwest of the terminal and hope that cyclists are accepted as authorised vehicles otherwise it will be a detour through the car parks.