

Tour 6: Tour of the Picos – Reinoso to Oviedo



Saturday 17th to Saturday 24th September

The Picos de Europa, or simply Picos, is a mountainous National Park region running along the northern coast of Spain from Oviedo in the west to Santander in the east. The area is criss-crossed with numerous country roads running over some high passes, through spectacular limestone gorges and up to some fiercely steep peaks. The local cyclists are rightly proud of what their region has to offer and some of it has been shown to the world over the years by the Vuelta à España. Although the climbs here may not be as famous as some of their French cousins they are of equal merit and rightly justify the fanaticism of the Spanish fans that line the roads every year when the pro-races pass by. It is because of this that Team Infinity has planned the Tour of the Picos. It is a week long ride taking in more than 10 passes or peaks from the Vuelta à España. With 6 days back-to-back riding covering a total distance of 712km and ascending 15,928m this really is a Grand Tour-like challenge. Riding this tour with Team Infinity [will have](#) the feel of a pro-team experience.

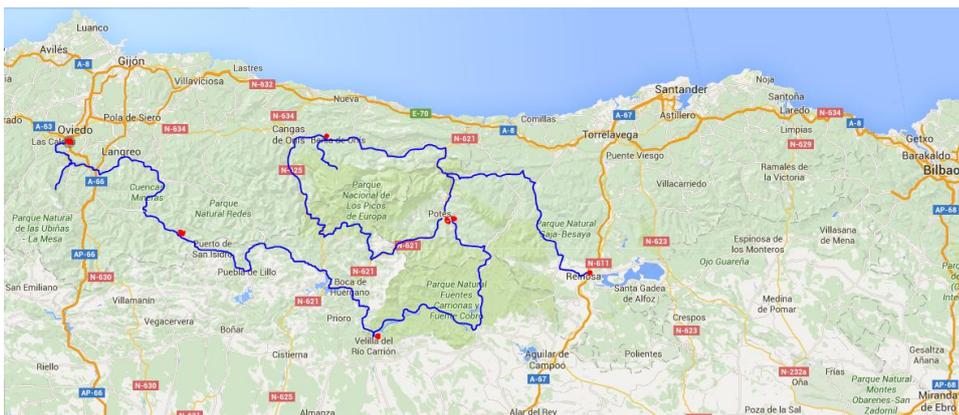
The Tour takes us from Reinoso, a small town inland from Santander, through the heart of the Picos to finish on Alto de Angliru, probably the hardest climb of the pro-peloton. It will take place from Saturday 17th to Saturday 24th September. Ride days are Sunday 25th to and including Friday 23rd September. At this time of year, the weather is perfect for riding with daytime temperatures in the low 20s °C. However, beware that as in any mountain range there is always a chance of wet days. Just two weeks after the 2016 Vuelta finishes the Picos will be cycling crazy – what better time to visit and get into the atmosphere of the Grand Tour with Team Infinity.

With 2 Rider Guides and 2 support vehicles per group of 12 riders you will have all the physical and moral support required to successfully complete this trip and share the fun with likeminded riders. Having followed Team Infinity's training programme for the last few weeks you will be in great shape and excited to get going. Spare clothing, food, drink and mechanical support is never far away

leaving you to enjoy the day's riding. Morning coffee and lunch stops will be taken to separate the big climbs to allow some rest, recovery, refuelling and banter to take place before the rides continue into the early afternoon. Rides will finish with a warm down, stretching and protein recovery drinks.

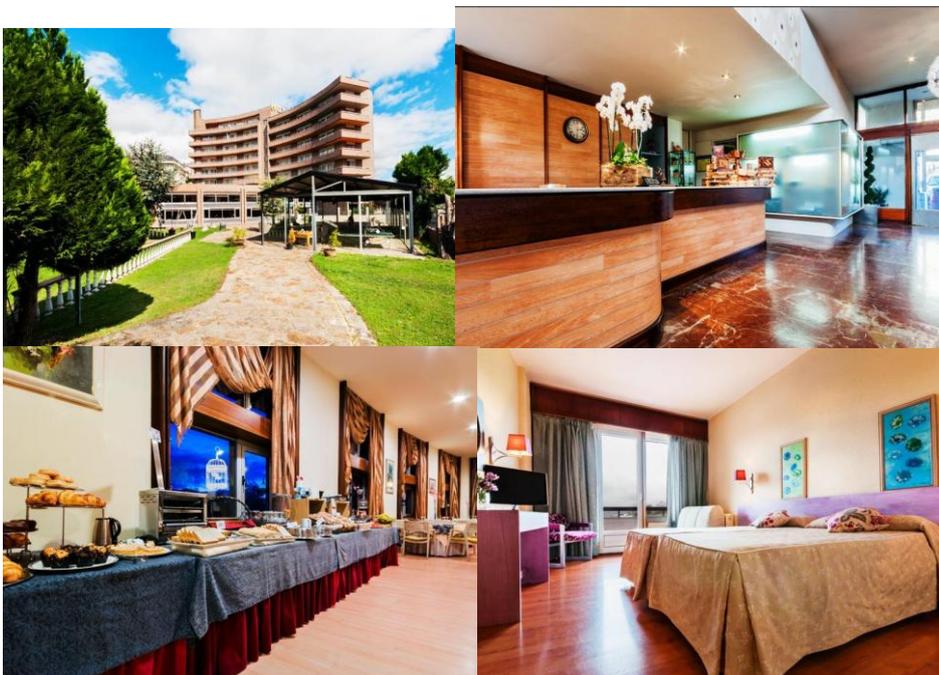
At 712km the overall distance on this Tour is longer than the other Team Infinity Tours, but the aggregated height climbed, at 15,928m is much less. However, some of the climbing is much steeper, so when compared with the other tour offerings please take this into account. The Tour is a challenge from the start, and with Stage 3 being the toughest it is only fair that Stages 4 and 5 are easier before the magnificent finish at the end of Stage 6 on the Angliru. To whet your appetite, here is the list of climbs we go over on this Tour of the Picos: -

- Puerto de Palombera
- Collado de Carmona
- Collado de Ozalba
- Collado de Hoz
- Alto de Ortiguera
- Lagos de Covadonga
- Puerto del Ponton
- Puerto de Panderruedas
- Puerto de las Piedrasluengas
- Puerto de Pandetrave
- Puerto San Gloria
- Puerto de Tarna
- Las Señales
- Puerto San Isidro
- Alto de La Colladonna
- Alto de Angliru



Accommodation on the route is top class with predominantly 3-star hotels, many specifically catering for cyclists and some offering sauna and/or swimming facilities. [Rooms are all twins at half board.](#) The first hotel on the arrival night of Saturday 17th September is the 3-star rated Hotel Vejo in Reinoso, just outside Santander. This is a top quality hotel [offering a friendly](#) welcome to Team Infinity. The closest airport is Bilbao. Transfer to and from Bilbao at the start and end is included in the price. Transfer to Oviedo Airport is also available at the end of the Tour. The hotel has all the facilities you expect but perhaps all we will have time to fully enjoy are the dining and sleeping amenities. After a warm welcome everyone will be keen to eat, get to know each other and discuss the plans for the coming days. [Depending on personal preferences it may be an early morning or late night re-building and adjusting bikes.](#)

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Stage 1 - <https://www.strava.com/routes/3816832>

Date: Sunday 18th September

Route: Reinoso to Potes

Cols: Puerto de Palombera, Collado de Carmona, Collado de Ozalba and Collado de Hoz

Distance: - 111km

Ascent: - 2691m.



Reinoso - Oviedo Stage 1

110.6 km **2,691 m**
Distance Elevation Gain

Est. Moving Time 4:38:26

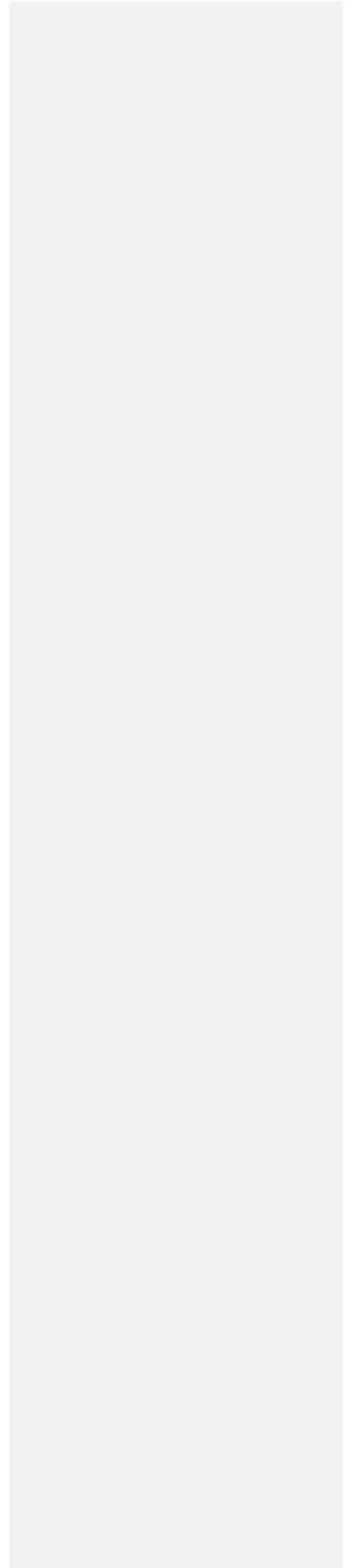
Stage 1 is a fine introduction to riding in the Picos. There are some lovely quiet country roads and the scenery is typical of the region with the drier arid conditions on the southern side of the mountains compared with the greener areas to the north. The day starts gently enough with a steady 10km run before the hills rise over the first pass of the Tour: Puerto de Palombera. This short climb is only 5km long and consistently at 7% gradient. It is a good chance for us all to stretch our legs after a day travelling to get here. There's no need to get competitive (yet!) as the day and week have only just begun.

Unlike most of our tours Stage 1 has an enjoyable long descent so soon by virtue of our high starting position. From the pass at Palombera there is a 28 km descent to the village of Valle. A short 5km hop over the Collado de Carmona at 7% gradient

is closely followed by another descent. This time it is not quite so long as the first at 10km. This brings us to Puentenansa where there are several cafes/bars in which to top up our reserves. We will probably take an hour's break here depending on how we are all feeling before tackling the second half of the day over the 2 passes named Collado de Ozalba and Collado de Hoz.

It was over these two small passes that Alberto Contador rescued his 2012 Vuelta with an attack that surprised not only race leader Joaquim Rodriguez but most of the race pundits. The attack created a gap that grew; Contador reached and passed the early breakaway group and only Alejandro Valverde managed to follow but at a distance. Our afternoon ride follows the same route that Contador took, over the passes and into the gorge following the Rio Deva up to Potes. Here our route deviates: Contador and the Vuelta turned right to finish at Fuente De, whereas we turn left and head towards Piedrasluengas.

One kilometre beyond Potes we take a left turn to Aniezo – the mountain village that will be our resting place for the night. The sting in the tail is that Aniezo is a 250m climb but the rewards are well worth it. The chalet style Casa La Pisa offers a warm welcome and some great food. All rooms are twin bedded with ensuite shower facilities. The garden is a great place for us to enjoy a beer and a chat whilst looking at the views of the surrounding valleys and mountains



Stage 2 - <https://www.strava.com/routes/3791760>

Date: Monday 19th September

Route: Aniezo to Soto de Cangas

Cols: Alto de Ortiguera and Lagos de Covadonga

Distance: - 122km

Ascent: - 2839m



Reinoso - Oviedo Stage 2

122.5 km **2,839 m**
Distance Elevation Gain

Est. Moving Time 5:05:34

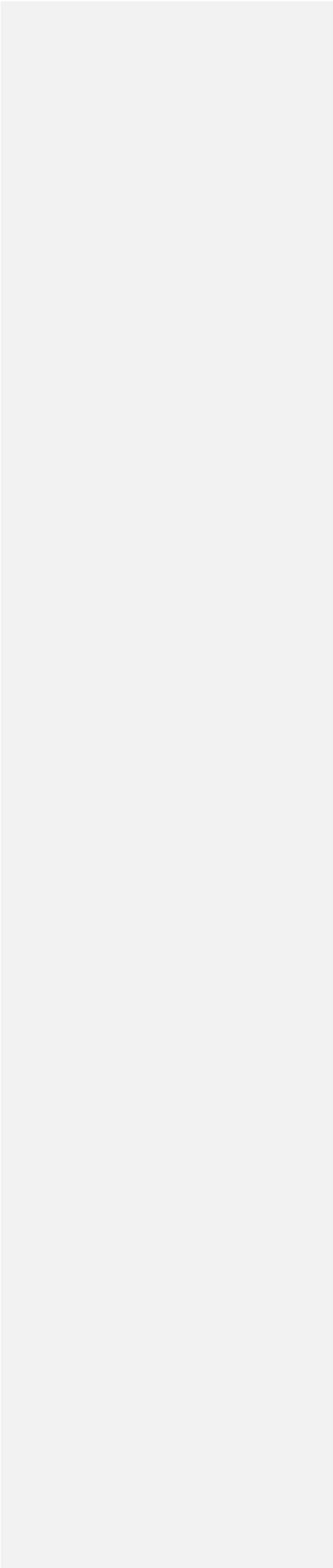
Stage 2 is a classic day finishing at Lagos de Covadonga. This famous climb is one of the hardest of the Vuelta and therefore one of the stiffest in pro-cycling. The Stage, however, is not just about the finish – the approach to the start of the Covadonga climb is a good ride itself. First there is the downhill from Aniezo to Potes where we can reap the rewards for yesterday's steep finish; then there is the meandering descent through the Rio Deva gorge to Pones which is a great place to ride fast "a gruppetto". After that the route follows the wide open river valley with a slow but steady climb up to the village of Ortiguera on top of the pass. This road is perfect for riding together using the advantage of the group to shelter and share the load. A great sweeping descent from Alto de Ortiguera, done at speed, takes us towards Soto de Cangas where a left turn starts the long ascent to the Lagos de

Covadonga.

The ascent to Lagos de Covadonga can be split into three parts. The first, from Soto, is a gentle approach alongside the river and is sheltered in open woodland. Once the village of Covadonga is reached the angle changes dramatically, first climbing at 7% through the lower slopes before the trees disappear and the road rears up in a straight killer section at 13% known as the "Huesera" or "graveyard" in English. The road then twists its way through several more bends before the angle relents and the final third is reached. The road actually descends for a while and it is here that some respite can be taken, or perhaps you'd like to take advantage of the downhill and build some speed before a short final climb to the end of the road and a welcome café stop.

After a short break we can enjoy the same road once more. This time with less effort. The descent is fast, especially the steep straight section midway down. At the roundabout at Covadonga village it is nice to regroup to check everyone has arrived safely before commencing the last 10km to our accommodation. We can use this last part to warm down in preparation for the biggest stage of the Tour tomorrow. Tonight we will stay at Casa de Campo in the village of Celorio adjacent to Soto de

Cangas. This 3-star hotel is renowned for its restaurant which serves traditional Asturian dishes as well as having its own swimming pool and outdoor heated spa – just perfect to relax our tired legs.



Stage 3 - <https://www.strava.com/routes/3791786>

Date: Tuesday 20th September

Route: Soto de Cangas to Aniezo

Cols: Puerto del Ponton, Puerto de Panderruedas, Puerto de Pandetrave and Puerto San Gloria

Distance: - 130km

Ascent: - 3366m



Reinosa - Oviedo Stage 3

129.5km **3,366m**

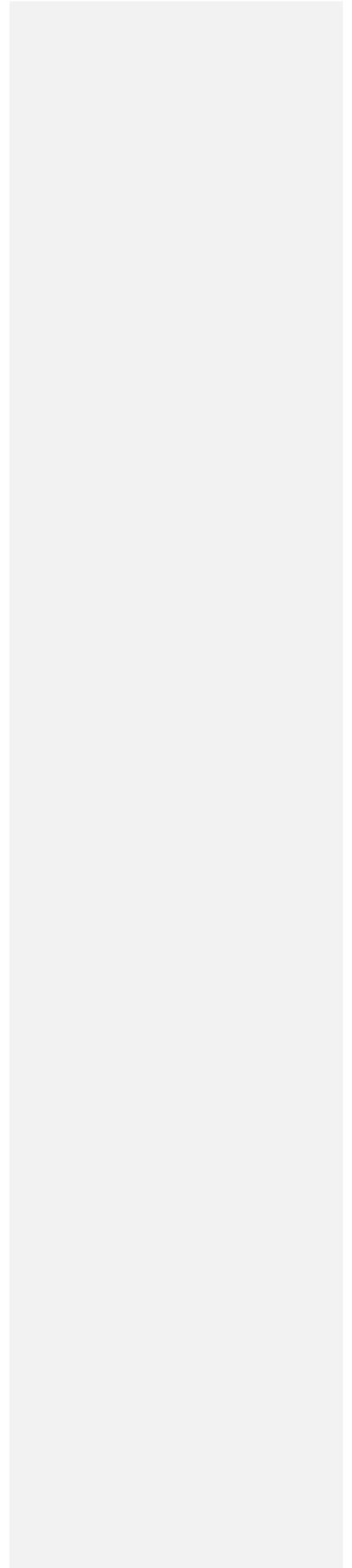
Distance Elevation Gain

Est. Moving Time 5:23:13

Stage 3 is the longest day of the Tour. It is probably the most scenic too with the route threading its way through the heart of the Picos de Europa national park in some spectacular limestone gorges before rising up over numerous passes. The Stage has a gentle start, which is a relief for our tired legs which will be remembering the steep finish up to Covadonga. The roll down to Cangas de Onis is gentle. Here we turn left and head inland following the Rio Sella. The road follows the river for some distance, initially rising steadily, but later with some steeper but short rises, and all the time the gorge getting narrower. The twisting and turning continues all day over the passes of Puerto del Ponton, Puerto de Panderruedas, Puerto de Pandetrave and Puerto San Glorio. The first (Ponton) is a slight rise on the way to Panderruedas which comes 55km into the Stage and at an average of 5% is enjoyable.

Pandetrave is the steepest but at 6.8% is still a shallow climb for these parts of the Picos. The Stage passes through several quaint mountain villages so there are many places for us to stop for a mid-morning and a lunchtime break. This way we cut the longest day into three manageable sections.

The final pass of the day, Puerto San Gloria is 9km long and 4% gradient. The aspect to look forward to whilst climbing this last pass is the 25km long sweeping descent towards Potes. Once this descent is complete our thoughts will turn to the night's rest. Once more we stay in Aniezo at La Pisa and enjoy the hospitality of John and Gwen. There is just the simple task of the final climb to get there!



Stage 4 - <https://www.strava.com/routes/3791811>

Date: Wednesday 21st September

Route: Aniezo to Velilla del Rio Carrion

Cols: Puerto de Piedrasluengas

Distance: - 116km

Ascent: - 2056m



Reinosa - Oviedo Stage 4

115.9km 2,056m
Distance Elevation Gain

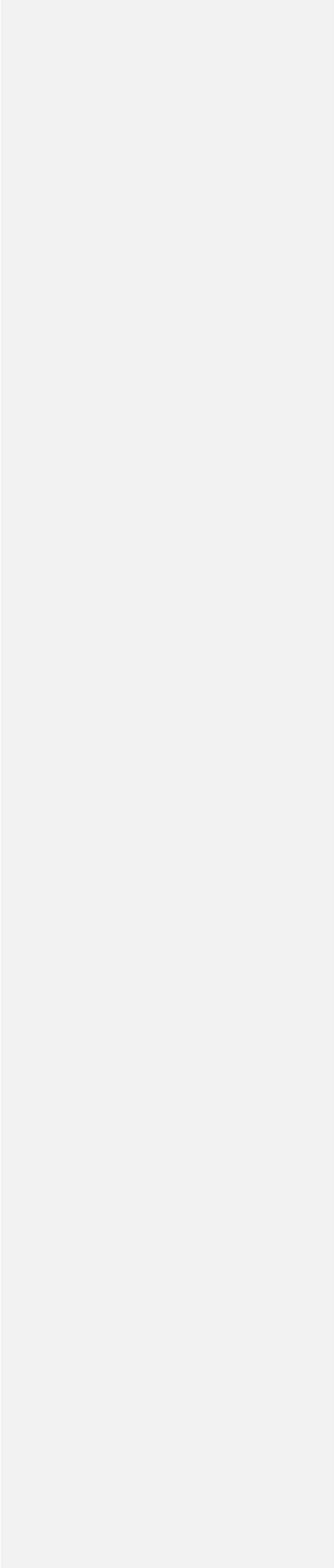
Est. Moving Time 4:49:11

After two particularly tough stages we embark on a couple of easier days. The first of these days, Stage 4, takes us inland and over Puerto de Piedrasluengas and is followed by a scenic, undulating route around the reservoirs of Camporredondo and Compuerto.

From Aniezo the way towards Potes will be familiar. Once at the main road we take a left turn and begin the long but gentle ride up the main climb of the day: Puerto de Piedrasluengas. As climbs go this is a particularly enjoyable one – the road climbs gently through the trees and so is very sheltered from both wind, sun and rain. The angle of ascent is 5% average, so although the climb is 25km long it is not hard. And once we reach the crest there is a long and enjoyable descent to Cervera, although beware of the short steep rise of the Tinamayor climb shortly before the town. Cervera is a good place for an extended

morning break as in the second half of the day we rarely pass through any villages.

After a break the afternoon commences with a climb out of town as we enter open countryside and a scenic ride around the reservoirs. This is an undulating ride at first but the latter half of the afternoon is predominantly spent on fast descents, finally finishing in Velilla del Rio Carrion. A short ride south out of town brings us to our night's stay – Hotel El Tramazal. This modern hotel offers a high standard of accommodation with twin rooms and each having TV, wifi and ensuite shower or bathrooms. The large restaurant is ideal for us to all eat together in the evening and tomorrow at breakfast.



Stage 5 - <https://www.strava.com/routes/3791857>

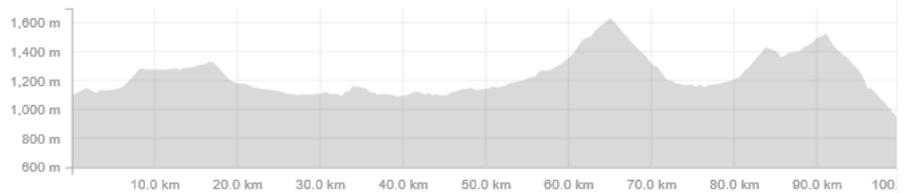
Date: Thursday 22nd September

Route: Velilla del Rio Carrion to Felechosa

Cols: Puerto de Tarna, Las Señales and Puerto San Isidro

Distance: - 105km

Ascent: - 1534m



Reinosa - Oviedo Stage 5

105.5km **1,534m**
Distance Elevation Gain

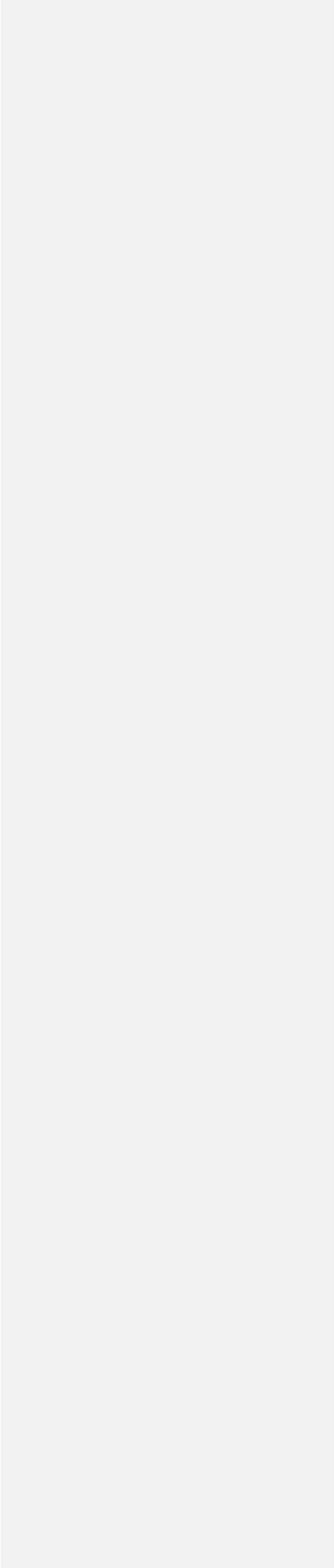
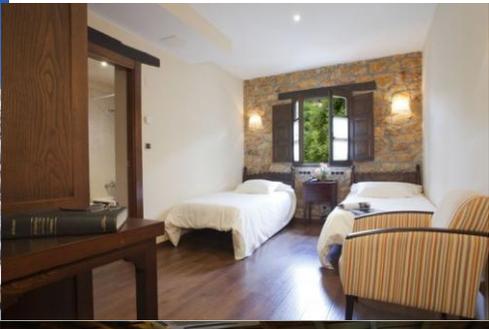
Est. Moving Time 4:23:15

Stage 5 and the penultimate stage; this is the easiest day of this Tour but at 105km and 1534m of climbing it should still not be underestimated.

The Stage makes up for the lack of major climbing with its stunning scenery. Like the afternoon of Stage 4 this day meanders around two reservoirs – Embalse de Riaño and Embalse del Porma separated by the climb to the pass Puerto de Tarna on the way to the day's highest climb of Las Señales. Neither the climb to the pass or to the high point are steep so this is one of those days to enjoy the tranquillity of the Picos whilst having some friendly banter on the bike. There are plenty of options for breaks on this day too as we pass through several hamlets, many having cafes at the roadside. There is even one café at the Puerto de Tarna although it can often be found closed.

The second climb of the day to Puerto San Isidro is 14km long and less than 3% gradient overall. The steepest parts are around 7% over an intermediate rise. The descent to Felechosa from the summit is also 14km in length but significantly steeper than the ascent at a steady 7%. Halfway down there are some nice hairpins to give focus, and all too soon we will arrive at our destination. An earlier finish than normal is expected and this is a good opportunity to prepare for the final day and the ascent of one of the hardest climbs of all.

Tonight we will stay at Hotel Rural el Fundil. This is a 3-star establishment that specialises in catering for cyclists so we are in good hands. Expect a hearty local dish here to satisfy your appetite.



Stage 6 - <https://www.strava.com/routes/3794110>

Date: Friday 23rd September

Route: Felechosa to Oviedo

Cols: Alto de La Colladonna, Alto del Angliru

Distance: - 118km

Ascent: - 3474m



The Final Stage! And a grand finale.



Reinoso - Oviedo Stage 6

117.9km **3,474m**

Distance Elevation Gain

Est. Moving Time 5:01:36

Today we tackle probably the hardest climb of all the Grand Tours – Alto del Angliru. First introduced into the Vuelta a Espana in 1999 this has rapidly become the most notorious of all the grand tour climbs. Since its inception it has been used on 5 further occasions and draws large crowds equal to those seen on Alpe d’Huez during the Tour de France. The full climb is nearly 19km, but it is not its length that has made it so famous. The steepest section is over 23%, and there are several other sections almost as steep.

Our approach to the Angliru takes us, initially, further down the valley road than yesterday before turning north on a country road over the gentle climb of Alto de La Colladonna. The descent to Pola de Laviana is followed by a fast ride down the valley passing numerous towns before ascending gently

once more and making our way to Santa Eulalia and the start of the ascent to Angliru. This is a good place to make our final preparations for the big climb. A lunch stop here is advised as the climbing ahead is challenging.

The professional’s trick to climbing the Angliru is to do it fast. For mere mortals, however, this is not possible. The best approach is to ride it steady and have plenty of low gears in reserve for the steepest sections. Also make use of as much of the road width as possible. The rest is down to determination and perseverance. Good luck to all, including the Team Infinity support vehicles!

Tonight we stay and celebrate our achievements at Ayre Hotel Oviedo. This modern luxury 4-star hotel is the perfect setting to end and celebrate our tour successes, and offers everything we need for the final night’s stay. From the summit of the Angliru we retrace our climbing route as far as Santa Eulalia. From there we head towards the city of Oviedo, first along the N630 before turning off

and entering the city through some tiny villages. It's nearly all downhill and we should enjoy this final part of the Tour and rejoice in a successful team trip.

