

THE RW GUIDE TO RUNNING HOLIDAYS

2014

Go off training grid with these runners' holidays that are guaranteed to reboot your mojo, boost your health and refresh body and mind

THE HIGH LIFE
Joe Mackle goes coastal



STRAIGHT UP
Run through the streets of Begur

GETAWAYS



THE DETAILS

When: Year-round, with itineraries that are tailored to your preferences/ability

Price: Packages start with single day, from €84 (£68), to 7 days/6 nights, from €939 (£763)

Get there: Ryanair flies to Girona from several UK airports (ryanair.com)

Contact: runningcostabrava.com

BY THE NUMBERS

- 12 Greatest number of miles covered in a single day
- 1 Guitar-playing nudist spotted while we were running
- 0 Days without drinking wine
- 1 Michelin-starred restaurant visited (hotelcasamar.net)
- 110 Pablo's enthusiasm measured in per cent
- 238 (approx.) Catalan flags spotted (they're a proud people)
- 1 Luxury spa visited (hotelmastorrent.com)
- 6 "Storeys" of people in the traditional Catalan human tower (marrecs.cat) at the Girona Flower Festival

Discover a surprise runner's paradise on the Costa Brava

Joe Mackle, RW Deputy Editor

My recipe for the perfect holiday: three parts running on spectacular coastal paths, forest trails and through historic Catalan towns; two parts sunshine; some great food; a splash of wine; and a magical final ingredient – zest of Pablo.

Pablo Rodriguez, our host and guide at **Running Costa Brava**, cut an inspirational figure on the runs – gliding along, fluid and mercurial in sandals that were more minimalist than Kardashian beachwear. He has spent years scouting the trails we ran on (barefoot, of course) and his itinerary showcased the best of the natural setting and Catalonia's cultural charms. And his infectious enthusiasm – for running, for this beautiful corner of the world and for life itself – was enough to fire the weariest running mojo.

Not that mine needed firing. I sensed I was in for a special few days when our first pre-run fuel stop involved a 1,000 year-old farmhouse, sugared sausage and a glug of wine El Porró-style (no glasses). And it just got better – we later ran on scented forest trails, past ancient Iberian

ruins, cave-pocked cliffs, colourful boat sheds and a surreal hut built by former local Salvador Dali. We picnicked in a secluded cove, then kayaked to Calella. I took a dip in the Mediterranean, then strolled up the beach for a massage and some Michelin-starred 'refuelling'. And that was just day one.

Over the following three days we ran on more coastal paths, across beaches and through towns such as Begur and Pals. We trotted past Neolithic ruins and the imposing **Sant Pere de Rodes Monastery**. We made a white-muscle descent on a rocky hillside trail, and flew through the narrow, empty streets of Valle de la Santa Creu. We soaked at a luxury spa and refuelled al fresco at the Perafita Winery.

After a lively night in Cadaqués, we caught the opening of Girona's Flower Festival, then ran and mountain-biked our final miles to the hilltop luxury of the **Castell d'Empordà** for stunning food and wine to toast a holiday that, like the region's fabulous cuisine, had all the right ingredients, perfectly blended.

Photography: @alastairhogg