

## THE ANNUAL CLUB HOLIDAY TO THE RIOJA REGION OF SPAIN - MAY 2012

Report by David Jones - Social Secretary

A group of 30 joined together to visit the Rioja Region in Northern Spain, leaving on Tuesday 8 May 2012 and returning on Tuesday 15 May. It was new territory for almost everyone and proved to be a very interesting and enjoyable experience for all concerned.



Brittany Ferry - Pont Aven

Apart from travelling from Portsmouth to Santander, and reverse, by "Pont Aven" we use a luxury coach safely driven throughout by Doug. Doug knew the various areas we visited and shared with us a number of amusing anecdotes. His humour, reliability and calmness were all much appreciated!

The weather was brilliant with blue skies and high temperatures, and it rained only once (during the night). Our base was The Hotel Carlton Rioja in the centre of Logrono and this proved to be very acceptable for everyone. There was a "Spanish" feel throughout our stay, including a variety of Tapas Bars



whenever needed. Salud!

On the first day a local guide, Monica, led a walking tour of Logrono. This was a nice introduction, giving the background history of the area, the Cathedral etc. The rest of the day was free to enjoy at leisure, an opportunity to explore the surroundings.

Next day took us through more of the vine growing area to the delightful Wine Cellar of "Marques de Riscal" at Elciego, Alava. A guided tour was provided which concluded with wine tasting. Everything was very impressive, including some architecture by Frank O. Gehry who designed the Guggenheim Museum in Bilbao. All very nice! Later in the day we visited an older winery in the area, Bodega El Fabulista in Laguardia (a medieval town with much character). This winery produces wine using traditional methods and has cellars seven metres below ground; quite different to the earlier visit in the morning.

Saturday took us Burgos by a route through lovely countryside with arable fields and hills with mountains

in the background. Burgos is one of Spain's most important heritage cities dating back to the 8<sup>th</sup>

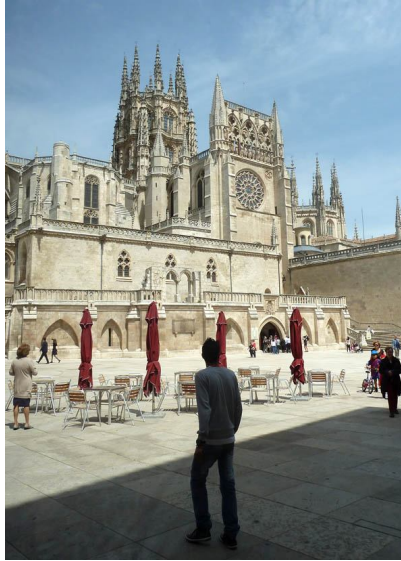
David Jones & Monica



century. The Cathedral dates back to 1221. It really was stunning, outside and inside, built gothic style it is the 3<sup>rd</sup> largest Cathedral in Spain. Certainly not to be missed!

A 40 minute "train" ride around the city gave the opportunity to further assimilate the historic feeling of the city, followed by more food and drink at Tapas bars and/or restaurants. Another enjoyable day and fully recommended!

On Sunday we were taken to Olite, a picturesque town and former residence of the Kings of Navarre. The Royal Palace is a very Logrono



important historic- artistic site in Navarre commissioned by Charles 111, King of Navarre 1387-1425. It became one of the most luxurious palaces in Europe. It deteriorated over the years and was deliberately set on fire in 1813 to prevent French troops from taking a stronghold there. A restoration project began in 1937 and lasted 30 years. An amazing building not to be missed!

Next day was the beginning of the journey home. The holiday had been blessed with good weather, high temperatures, excellent accommodation, interesting excursions, nice friendship and fellowship. It was time well spent and, all being well, there will be a “get together” later in the year to share memories of the visit. It be a nice event to look forward to so do come along if you can.

***Burgos Cathedral***