

# DOG-SLEDDING POPULAR IN THE PYRENEES



Spain is almost always associated with the following attractions: sun, sea, sangria, bull fights and flamenco dancing. Mention dog-sledding, however, or anything to do with snow and winter sports, and it would be thought you were describing a different country. However, up in the Pyrenees, the sport is not only popular on an international scale right now, it is growing and is expected to become one of Northern Spain's favorite pastimes within the next few years. It is true that some dog-sledding which starts in Spain, or the Spanish province of Catalonia, does go through parts of France and Andorra. However, most of the related events are considered strictly Spanish as only parts of the race take place outside of the Spanish borders.

The Pyrenees are blessed with an immense amount of snow, making the region perfect for winter sports. However, this does not mean that dogs suitable for racing are available in abundance. This is why 20 kilo Siberian huskies are imported from long distance to take part in the Pirena, a 17 year old race which annually captures the imagination and enthusiasm of Spanish people and others from all parts of Europe. It is extremely well-organised and is now known globally as a multi-faceted enterprise involving teams from Germany, Spain, France, the Czech Republic and Switzerland. It is by no means purely a local event.

It has been suggested that the typically relaxed culture of Northern Spain makes these events particularly special. In this part of the world, siestas are a regular part of everyday life and the local cuisine is not at all reminiscent of a winter country. Indeed, it is quite a unique place, one where it is possible to observe or take part in dog-sledding in the morning then skip off downhill to enjoy a siesta and paella in the warm afternoon sunshine.

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