

Magic! Following its douk in the Glas Allt, my digital camera is working again after drying out for 24 hours. [See photoes below - Ed.] Sally



Lunch on Lochnagar



Jim by the Glas Allt

PICOS DE EUROPA - JULY 2003

The Picos de Europa is a small but dramatic range of mountains in the eastern corner of the Asturias region on Spain's north coast. Separated from the sea by the Sierra de Cuera, the Picos contain rugged limestone peaks interspersed with deep lush valleys, where the rustic way of life has a timeless quality. Home to brown bears, wolves, chamois and many species of birds of prey, these mountains have much to interest the trekker. The walking is second to none in Europe, and many connoisseurs prefer the Picos de Europa to the Alps. The Asturias holds a proud place in the hearts of Spaniards, as it was the only part of the Iberian Peninsula not conquered by the Moors, and the Christian reconquest began here. The area is known as *Green Spain* in reference not only to its lush countryside but also to its excellent national

parks and nature conservation. The Picos was the first national park in Spain.



Refuge hut below Pico Urriello

In July, I flew to Bilbao to join our German guide and 14 other trekkers, an international group from New Zealand, Canada, Germany, Bulgaria, Ireland, England and Scotland. The weather was varied from blue skies and sunshine to very hot and humid. We travelled from mountain hut to mountain hut via valley floors, through deep gorges, and over jagged ridges, reaching a maximum height on La Perdida at 2,600m. This was a strenuous trek requiring a good head for heights: sometimes we had to traverse on cables or abseil down fixed ropes. One of the more spectacular refuge huts we reached was perched on a rock band below the 550m vertical rock pinnacle of Naranjo de Bulnes (2,596m). Known locally as Pico Urriello, this peak is the symbol of Spanish alpinism and ultimate goal of Spanish mountaineers. Even for lesser mortals, it made a most impressive photograph on a good day.

We concluded our trek at a hacienda near the Atlantic coast, to relax with some canoeing, rafting and canyoning - wow, what a trip!

Graham Sangster