



Spain

Madrid – Andalucía – Barcelona
18 days | May 2023

Day 1 – 14 May

Madrid

Welcome to Madrid, the Spanish capital and one of Europe's most lively cities, full of culture, beautiful gardens, art galleries, grand plazas, imposing architecture, and side streets crammed with interesting bookstores, boutiques and antique shops.

In the evening we will meet up for an orientation talk, and then off to one of Madrid's many bars for a meal of tapas - those little portions of food that the Spanish eat along with their vinos and cervezas, and which make bar-hopping such fun!

Overnight Madrid

Meals - D

Day 2 – 15 May

Madrid

There is no better way to discover Madrid than on a walking tour. We explore the oldest parts of the city, visiting the sumptuous Royal Palace, built in 1734 in the reign of Philip V, a superb example of the Baroque in Spanish architecture and which boasts paintings by artists such as Caravaggio, Velázquez and Goya, frescoes and tapestries of great worth, and innumerable antiques.

After lunch you are free to do what interests you most: explore the city, visit some art galleries, trawl the shops, relax in a cafe and people watch - or be Spanish and have a siesta! We meet again in the evening for dinner. Spaniards eat late - most nights we won't be eating before 8pm as it is just not possible, so we adapt to Spanish time.

Overnight Madrid

Meals - B,L,D

Day 3 – 16 May

Madrid to Córdoba

We are on the move today as we travel (around 2 hours) by high-speed train across the plains of La Mancha to the ancient city of Córdoba. Córdoba is the best showcase for Spain's 8 centuries of Moorish legacy. You will have some free time after checking in to

explore the interesting white-washed, cobbled streets. We take a late afternoon tour with an expert guide and will see the incredible building that is the current-day Cathedral, built around the original 8th century Mosque - a truly unique fusion of religions, architecture and aesthetics. This evening we dine in a local restaurant; Córdoba is known for its excellent cuisine. After dinner we enjoy a very special event: the equestrian show with Andalusian horses inside the Alcazar-Palace.

Overnight Córdoba

Meals - B,D

Day 4 – 17 May **Córdoba to Granada**

We drive to Granada today, but on the way stop off for an easy hike in the Spanish countryside, enjoying sweeping views over a sea of olive groves. We end up in the tiny village of Zuheros, where we learn about olive oil, an essential and age-old part of Andalucía's economic, agricultural, and social life, as well as its cuisine.

In Zuheros, we'll meet with a local who makes his own oil, and of course, we will do a tasting - oils like wines are all different! We sit down to a lunch of some of the countless dishes which use olive oil. After a lazy long lunch we continue on for around another hour to Granada, a lively city of cobbled stone streets, fun bars and cafes, Bohemians, gypsies, artists, and of course the stunning Alhambra palaces.

Overnight Granada

Meals - B,L,D

Day 5 – 18 May **Granada**

This morning we take a stroll for a couple of hours through the Albaicín, the city's atmospheric former Moorish quarter and one of the city's TWO World Heritage Sites recognized by UNESCO. It is a fascinating maze of cobbled streets and alleyways, crammed with bustling cafés, markets and historic sites.

Free afternoon to explore some of the many historic sites all of which are within walking distance of our hotel. After lunch you will take part in either a Ceramic Tile Painting class or a Moorish & Middle Eastern cooking demonstration. We'll form two small groups for these activities and switch the groups over tomorrow.

Ceramic Tile Painting: In an absorbing 3 hour class you will learn how to hand-paint ceramic tiles under the guidance and inspiration of a local artist, working in her charming studio in her house. Suitable for all levels of artistic aptitude, this is a great activity, and the tiles you paint are yours to take away - a unique souvenir of Granada.

Middle Eastern and Moorish Cooking Demonstration: a menu of Middle Eastern and Moorish-inspired cuisine is prepared by a charismatic local resident in the kitchen of her small town house in the upper Albaicín district. A cross-cultural experience that ends with a relaxed dinner with wine and chat!

Overnight Granada

Meals - B

Day 6 – 19 May

Granada

This morning we visit the stunningly beautiful and interesting Alhambra (please note this is an optional extra and not a compulsory visit). This complex of palaces, fortress, urban areas and gardens is a unique testimony to the Nasrid sultans whose 250 year reign in Granada proved to be the swansong of Muslim rule on the Iberian Peninsula. Admire the beautiful tile work, decorative plaster walls, fountains, and serene gardens. The whole visit takes 2-3 hours and you can do it at your leisure.

You will have a few hours free time to do some more sight-seeing or shopping after your visit of the Alhambra. In the late afternoon, enjoy either the Tile Painting Class or the Moorish Cooking Class, the groups reversing from yesterday.

Overnight Granada

Meals - B

Day 7 – 20 May

Granada

Granada offers the chance of hiking in beautiful countryside in its immediate surroundings. This morning we walk about 3-4 hours through pine and oak woods above the Alhambra, descending to the valley of the Río Darro and passing through the fascinating cave house district of Sacromonte, before ending in downtown Plaza Nueva. As usual you will have a couple of hours free to complete your exploring of the sights and shops and to have lunch or a siesta.

In the afternoon, the perfect relaxation after our walk: a soak in the luxurious Arab baths of the "Hammam Al Andalus". Soak in one of the warm or hot pools, relax in the candle-lit atmosphere, the air filled with soothing music and the sweet smell of aromatic oil - what a relaxing treat for mind and body! If you have any energy left after this beautiful experience, you might like to go for dinner, or you might just be ready for bed!

Overnight Granada

Meals - B

Day 8 – 21 May

Granada - Capileira village

We depart Granada today and head for the hills! The Alpujarra, on the southern slopes of the Sierra Nevada mountains, is a corner of Andalusia which shows rural life as it has been lived for centuries. Next to the Poqueira Gorge there are three charming white villages, with crafts such as basketwork and weaving. We take an hour long walk through these villages, and then enjoy a fabulous lunch.

The star of the excellent local cuisine is the "jamón serrano" (mountain-cured ham): we visit a secadero and sample this uniquely Spanish delicacy.

Overnight Capileira

Meal - B,L

Day 9 – 22 May

Capileira - Ronda

A spectacular 2.5 hr drive takes us past the Mediterranean coast, along the "Costa Tropical", and then inland to a stunning gorge, El Chorro. Here we cool off with a couple of hours of fun kayaking on turquoise waters, popular with Spanish as a picnic spot and camping area. Paella is on the menu for lunch today, overlooking the lake in a rural restaurant.

In the late afternoon we arrive in Ronda, the "Queen of the White Towns", set atop a rocky plateau. Free time this evening to explore the old parts of Ronda and maybe a bar or two for wine and tapas. There is usually a flamenco dance show or Spanish guitar concert happening somewhere in town - ask at your hotel reception - highly recommend you do this one evening whilst here!

Overnight Ronda

Meal - B,L

Day 10 – 23 May Ronda

Ronda was a key bastion to both Moors and Christians. You have a free day to visit the monuments, of which there are many: besides the churches, for something different and uniquely Spanish we recommend the Bandit museum (museo de Bandolero), the Arab baths (Banos Arabes), the bull fighting museum inside the Ronda bull ring which dates back to 1785 (not gorey!) and maybe a walk around the old city walls.

A great sunset/photo spot is the Alameda del Tajo. In the late afternoon we head off to a restored 16th century convent which has been converted into a bodega for a prestigious organic boutique winery. Here you will taste the smooth reds that the winery now produces.

Overnight Ronda

Meals - B

Day 11 – 24 May Ronda - Vejer de la Frontera

After leaving Ronda, we descend to the coast via a beautiful drive and reach the border between Spain and Gibraltar. Known as "the Rock", Gibraltar is a British colony that clings to a steep, rugged rock. Situated at the entrance to the Mediterranean Sea, Gibraltar has maintained a commanding and important military presence throughout history. We take a guided tour around this quirky but fascinating town and then you are free to explore and have lunch where you like.

Our charming overnight stop, Vejer de la Frontera, is a classically white, Moorish-looking hill town high above the Atlantic coast. Explore the brilliant white, labyrinthine alleyways, wandering past iron-grilled windows, balconies, and patios. We'll enjoy dinner tonight in one of its several excellent local restaurants.

Overnight Vejer de la Frontera

Meals - B,D

Day 12 – 25 May Vejer de la Frontera

Time for another walk! This morning we walk around 6km through pine forests along the coast with great views over the Atlantic ocean. A leisurely lunch in the small resort of Caños de Meca is followed by a short walk along the beach to Cape Trafalgar, site of the legendary naval battle of 1805.

Time afterwards on the beach to take in some rays, before we head back by bus to Vejer. This evening you might like to explore the town's picturesque old quarter, where our charming hotel is located on the pretty Plaza de España.

Overnight: Vejer de la Frontera

Meals - B,L

Day 13 – 26 May**Vejer de la Frontera - Sevilla**

The English word "sherry" is taken from the name of the city where it is produced: Jerez de la Frontera. This city is full of wineries and influences from the English families who founded them. We will learn about (and sample!) these fortified wines in a bodega which produces "Very Old and Rare" sherries and brandies, and which boasts an extraordinary art collection as well.

In the afternoon we drive to Sevilla, the capital of the region of Andalucía and one of Spain's most elegant cities.

Time permitting you might also like to visit Alcazar (optional), which rivals the Alhambra in its magnificence.

Overnight Seville

Meals - B,L

Day 14 – 27 May**Sevilla**

This morning we head off to discover the hidden sights in Sevilla! Our local guide takes us off the beaten track to discover palaces and monasteries. He will bring the city to life with fascinating stories and intriguing anecdotes! The afternoon is free for you to explore the city's many other attractions, perhaps sip a coffee in a plaza and watch the world go by.

Sevilla is a wonderful place for people-watching! This evening we will see live flamenco, an exhilarating art form that is unique to Spain, deeply rooted in Sevilla in particular, and still very much a part of popular culture.

Overnight Seville

Meals - B

Day 15 – 28 May**Sevilla**

Enjoy a free day in Sevilla, this city offers tons of option: the old gypsy quarter of Triana on the far bank of the Guadalquivir River, the elegant Maria Luisa park with its fantasy structure of the Plaza de España, as well as the landmark monuments of the Cathedral and the Alcázar palaces. A fascinating and fun day out exploring is guaranteed!

Overnight Seville

Meals - B

Day 16 – 29 May**Sevilla - Barcelona**

We cross Spain today, travelling to the exciting city of Barcelona! It's history of a sea-faring state with a medieval powerbase in the Mediterranean and a series of foreign alliances against Spanish pretensions, has also shaped an outwards-looking mentality. This is a vibrant, cosmopolitan city, and a fascinating end to our Iberian adventure.

In the late afternoon we take a walking tour of the Barrio Gotico (Gothic quarter) with its superb cathedral, medieval lanes and specialist shops, the lively central boulevard of Las Ramblas where all the world meets, and the famous food market called La Boqueria, where we can try the odd tidbit at stall-side bars. Tonight we have dinner in the downtown area.

Overnight Barcelona

Meals - B,D

Day 17 – 30 May

Barcelona

Free day to do as you please: you might like to visit the incredible works of 19th century genius Antoni Gaudí, whose basilica "la Sagrada Familia" is still under construction and which is one of the dominating features of the Barcelona skyline. Gaudi's houses for wealthy Catalan merchants, the Casas Milà and Battló are also well worth a visit, and the Eixample area in which they are located is also full of designer and brand name fashion stores.

Barcelona is a shopping paradise, so you might just go wild in the shops. We highly recommend doing a hop-on/hop-off bus trip to see the many sights spread across the city. Tonight we have our farewell dinner - what a fantastic trip it has been!

Overnight Barcelona

Meal - B,D

Day 18 – 31 May

Barcelona

Sadly our amazing Spanish adventure is over! We say our farewells over breakfast before going our separate ways.

Meal – B

Price:

- EUR5100 (approx. NZD8500) per person twin share
- Single supplement on application

Includes:

- Local Tour Escort
- Transportation
- 17 nights comfortable accommodation
- Sightseeing entry and local guides as specified
- Meals as specified (B-breakfast, L-lunch, D-dinner)

Excludes:

- International flights
- Travel Insurance (compulsory – ask for a quote)
- Gratuities
- Items of a personal nature, eg. Optional tours, laundry
- Refreshments
- Any meals not already included as per itinerary
- Vaccinations

Group Size:

Minimum 6, Maximum 12



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