TOUR CODE

# ES1

ADVENTURESABROAD

# NORTHERN SPAIN

## 'World Heritage Cities'

**12 days**

Updated 06/03/2013

### Day 1 *Arrival in Spain*

Welcome to Spain! Arrival in Santiago de Compostela, one of Spain's most beautiful cities, built of golden granite and declared a national monument in its entirety. It's a wonderful place to walk with its arcades and flagstone streets.

Overnight in Santiago de Compostela. Meal plan: Dinner, if required.

### Day 2 *Santiago de Compostela: City Tour*

This morning we have a walking city tour of Santiago, a UNESCO World Heritage city. Our tour begins at Obradoiro Square where some of its more prominent monuments can be seen: the Archbishop's residence which preserves some 12th century lounges; the Town Hall, former Raxoy Palace, with its classical facade; the San Jeronimo College, whose facade shows Roman influences.

We also include the city's famous cathedral, a truly grand building adorned with many statues of St James in his familiar pilgrim guise with staff, broad-brimmed hat, and scallop-shell badge. The cathedral's highlight is the Portico de Gloria, with its striking Romanesque sculpture of a host of figures. Christ presides over the main door, flanked by his Apostles, and surrounded by 24 Elders of the Apocalypse playing music. Saint James sits on the central column beneath Christ. So many pilgrims have prayed at this spot with their fingers pressed in to the roots of the marble Tree of Jesse below Saint James that five deep holes have been worn into the marble.

We also visit the Cathedral Museum, the Cloister and finally, the Platerias Gate, the only Romanesque one that is still preserved. You will have some time this afternoon for independent exploration.

Overnight in Santiago de Compostela. Meal plan: Breakfast and dinner.

### Day 3 *Santiago de Compostela - Leon*

This morning we take the train (2nd class) to Leon.*

On arrival in Leon we visit the San Isidoro Collegiate Church, an important piece of western Romanesque, where 23 kings and queens are buried. The cathedral was built in the middle of the 13th century in a gothic style similar to the French cathedrals and is famous for the beauty of more than 100 glazed windows. We also see the facade of the Old Covent of San Marcos, a Spanish Plateresque masterpiece.

Time at leisure.

* NOTE: We use the rail system quite extensively on this tour. YOU MUST BE ABLE TO MANAGE YOUR OWN BAGS ONTO / OFF TRAINS AND IN TRAIN STATIONS. Packing lightly is essential.

Overnight in Leon. Meal plan: Breakfast and dinner.

## Day 4 *Leon - Bilbao*

Our Leon sightseeing continues this morning with the old quarter of the city, which conserves a large part of the medieval wall and some remains of the original Roman wall. One can also find the Casa de Botines, a neo-gothic building and an excellent example of the architecture of Antoni Gaudi.

Later today we travel by train (2nd class) to Bilbao,* tucked into the deep lush folds and clefts of Euskadi's coastal range. The name is "Bilbo" in Basque, but its inhabitants prefer to call it the "botxo," Basque for hole, or orifice. The orifice was originally a scattering of fish hamlets, huddled on the left bank where the hills offered some protection from the Normans and other pirates.

* NOTE: In the event that train schedules have us travelling over the dinner hour, we may include lunch today instead of dinner.

Overnight in Bilbao. Meal plan: Breakfast and dinner.

## Day 5 *Bilbao: The Guggenheim*

This morning we visit the newest and biggest attraction in Bilbao, the Guggenheim Museum. The 31 329 sq m (349,000 sq foot) colossus is one of the focal points of a $1.5 billion redevelopment plan for the city. The Frank Gehry design features a 50 m- (165 foot-) high atrium, more than one-and-a-half times the height of the rotunda of Frank Lloyd Wright's Guggenheim Museum in New York. The museum is devoted to American and European art of the 20th century, featuring the works of such renowned artists as Kandinsky, Mondrian, Picasso, Ernst, Pollock, Lichtenstein, Oldenburg, Serra, and others.

We also explore the Old Town of Bilbao on a walking tour. We travel back in time to Medieval Bilbao with its cobbled streets, charming corners and squares, and trace its development through the centuries.

Overnight in Bilbao. Meal plan: Breakfast and dinner.

## Day 6 *Bilbao - Barcelona*

Today we fly to Barcelona.

Barcelona, located on the Mediterranean Sea in the very north of the Spanish coast, is certainly the most cosmopolitan and economically active city in this country. Of course, Barcelona has an long history, and there are monuments of Romanesque, Gothic and Renaissance periods and before, but most characteristic is what has been built during the last 100 years.

Depending on the timing of today's flight, we may accomplish some sightseeing today upon arrival.

Overnight in Barcelona. Meal plan: Breakfast and dinner.

## Day 7 *Barcelona: City Tour*

This morning we will embark on our Barcelona sightseeing programme (mostly on foot - leisurely pace). Our first stop is Parc Guell, a beautiful place in the morning. We have time to visit the Casa Gaudi with its collection of Gaudi-designed furniture. We'll walk through the Parc, ending up at the main entrance to visit the terrace and pavilion unit and Doric columns.

We continue by bus to Barcelona's most famous and most photographed attraction -- La Sagrada Familia Cathedral (Cathedral of the Holy Family), an amalgam of fantasy and Gothic impulses, and Gaudi's most unique piece of architecture. Our bus stops on the side of the Nativity facade (north) from where we walk around to the Passion facade. We explore the interior and also visit the cathedral museum during our stop.

Balance of the day at leisure.

Overnight in Barcelona. Meal plan: Breakfast and dinner.

## Day 8 *Barcelona: City Tour*

Today we begin with a stroll down the avenue of Las Ramblas, the exotic "spine of Barcelona," with a stop to look at Casa Mila, another Gaudi creation. We continue to Placa Catalunya and Placa Reial via the central market, St Josephis; a very lively place, crowded with stalls selling caged birds and lush plants and the constant clamor of people haggling and selling.

We then walk into Barri Gotic, a densely-packed area of narrow lanes with a fascinating mixture of medieval and stately Renaissance buildings. Then it's onto the Picasso Museum for a +/- 60 minute visit.

Balance of the day at leisure.

Overnight in Barcelona Meal plan: Breakfast and dinner.

## Day 9 *Barcelona - Madrid: Royal Palace*

Today we travel to Madrid by fast train (2.25 hours).

This afternoon we include a tour of the Royal Palace where we see, among other things, its principal staircase, throne, gala dining room, museum of silver, and principal courtyard. This is the official residence of the royal family, but today it is used only state ceremonies. Otherwise known in Spanish as the Palacio Real, the Royal Palace was built during the 18th and 19th centuries, and is a monumental building. It replaced the former medieval Alcazar, which was burnt to the ground in 1794. The present day Royal Palace of Madrid was decorated to the tastes of Charles III, and is extremely lavish inside.

Overnight in Madrid. Meal plan: Breakfast and dinner.

## Day 10 *Madrid: The Prado*

This morning we have a guided tour of the Prado Museum. Our route to the museum likely takes us past Plaza Espana point and the Cervantes Monument.

Originally opened to the public in 1819, the Prado houses all of the finest works collected by Spanish Royalty as well as Spanish paintings gathered from other sources over the past two centuries. The Prado is one of the most important

repositories of art in the world, including a vast collection of Italian paintings. For the purposes of our visit, however, we will concentrate on works by Spanish masters -- Velasquez, Goya, Ribera, El Greco, Zurbaran, to name a few.

After our tour, we'll head off on foot for an informal stroll up Gran Via and into the old quarter of Madrid. You'll then have free time for lunch and an afternoon of independent exploration. Your Tour Leader can help you plan your free time, with recommended shopping, other historical sites and galleries.

Overnight in Madrid. Meal plan: Breakfast and dinner.

## Day 11 *Madrid - Toledo - Madrid*

This morning we travel to Toledo, a city with a unique blend of Arab, Jewish, Christian, Roman, and Visigothic elements. Toledo sits on a rocky promontory isolated on three sides by a looping gorge of the Tagus River. The history of several different cultures is contained within this region, represented by the houses, synagogues, churches, and mosques.

Our excursion includes a visit to the Cathedral, as well as the Santa Maria la Blanca Synagogue, which shows the influence of the Granada Moors. It has an ornate ceiling and carved arabesques, not in Arabic, but in Hebrew. The most elaborate Mudejar interior in the city is hidden behind the deceptively humble facade of this former synagogue, built in the 14th century by Samuel Ha-Levi, the Jewish treasurer to Pedro the Cruel. The interlaced frieze of the lofty prayer hall harmoniously fuses Islamic, Gothic and Hebrew geometric motifs below a wonderful coffered ceiling. Adjoining the synagogue is an interesting museum dedicated to Jewish Sephardi culture.

We also see one of Toledo's most outstanding attractions, El Greco's masterpiece "The Burial of the Count of Orgaz" located inside the Church of Santo Tome.

After lunch and some free time in Toledo, we return to Madrid.

Overnight in Madrid. Meal plan: Breakfast and dinner.

## Day 12 *Departure*

Departure from Madrid.

BUEN VIAJE! Meal plan: Breakfast.