TOUR CODE

ZPF

ADVENTURESABROAD

PORTUGAL & SPAIN

Paradores & Pousadas

14 days

Updated 24/05/2012

Day 1 ***Arrive in Lisbon***

Today we arrive in Lisbon and transfer 12 km to the Pousada Dona Maria, located in the building formerly used by the Royal Guard of the Court in the Palace of Queluz, known as the "Portuguese Versailles."

This Pousada features air conditioning and elevators.

NOTE: Due to extremely tight availability, requests for extra nights before or after the tour may NOT be accommodated in the Pousada / Parador being used on the tour.

Overnight near Lisbon. Pousada Dona Maria. Meal plan: Dinner, if required.

Day 2 ***Lisbon: City Tour***

Lisbon was the centre of Europe's first and largest overseas empire. As a result, the city has a feeling of colonial elegance. We include a half-day sightseeing tour along the banks of the River Tagus. Here we see the Belem Tower (UNESCO protected) guarding the mouth of the River Tagus and Jeronimo's Monastery with the tomb of Vasco da Gamma. We also drive along the Avenida da Liberdade, a fashionable tree-lined street through the centre of town. Later we will stroll through the charming ancient Moorish quarter of Alfama, with its narrow winding streets and picturesque whitewashed houses. We also include a visit to the Palace of Queluz.

We return to our Pousada. You may choose to explore Lisbon and return to the pousada on your own later this afternoon.

Overnight near Lisbon. Pousada Dona Maria. Meal plan: Breakfast and dinner.

Day 3 ***Lisbon - Sintra - Obidos - Ourem / Fatima***

From Lisbon, we travel to the fairytale town of Sintra. One of the oldest towns in Portugal and a UNESCO World Heritage Site, Sintra is situated on a hillside and is abundant with flora: camellias, ferns, colourful bougainvillaea, geraniums, eucalyptus, groves of lemon trees, and honey-sweet mimosa, to name a few. We visit the Palacio Nacional de Sintra which was a royal palace until early this century. Inside the palace we see the Room of the Sirens, one of the most elegant in the palace, and we also see many of the Iberian tapestries and fabulous paintings that adorn the interior. Later in the afternoon we travel to obidos, known for its typical white houses with blue trim, flowered windows, narrow streets and steps paved with beautiful stone.

On arrival in Obidos we embark on a walking tour. We pass through the 18th Century entry arch covered in glazed tiles (azulejos). Small bright white houses lining narrow cobblestone streets, flower pots on window-sills, Gothic and Renaissance churches--especially the beautiful Church of Santa Maria--reminds the importance of Obidos's past.

We continue to our Pousada accommodation within the magnificent walled town of Ourem a few kilometres from Fatima, one of Europe's main pilgrimage destinations. The Pousada was built from a cluster of medieval houses, renovated with all modern amenities. From the belvedere, enjoy the breathtaking view of the Seica River Valley, and catch a glimpse of the world-famous Sanctuary of Fatima. This pousada features air conditioning and a swimming pool.

Overnight in Ourem. Meal plan: Breakfast and dinner.

Day 4 *Ourem - Fatima - Nazare - Ourem*

This morning we travel to Nazare, the most famous fishing town in Portugal. Among the bright coloured rowing-boats moored on the beach bathed by the Atlantic Ocean, one may watch the fisher folk bring in the nets. A superb view is enjoyed from the "Sitio", a belvedere on top of the hill while in the streets you may observe women still wearing the traditional seven-skirted costumes.

We continue to Fatima, the well known Roman Catholic Marian Shrine. We visit the Basilica and the Chapel of Apparitions that marks the spot where the three shepherd children had visions in 1917. Balance of the day at leisure.

Overnight in Ourem. Pousada Ourem / Fatima. Meal plan: Breakfast and dinner.

Day 5 *Ourem - Evora*

This morning we head south-east to the historic centre of Evora, a city classified by UNESCO as a World Heritage Site.

Evora stands out quite distinctly on the vast horizon of the Alentejo plain, on the top of a gentle hill, dominated by its imposing cathedral. Its historical centre, protected by a vast ring of fortified walls, is typical of "golden age" cities, with its urban landscape exhibiting features from the architecture of countries in other continents where Portugal established a presence, particularly Brazil. The city has more than two millennia of history, its narrow streets evoking memories of the Moorish presence, in sharp contrast to its squares, which are flooded with sunlight.

Today we have a walking tour of Evora, including a visit to the cathedral, a fortified church with a number of Gothic elements and the largest cathedral in Portugal, located just outside our pousada. Also in the vicinity is the Palacio dos Duques de Cadaval, surmounted by an imposing tower and a fine example of military architecture. If you walk down any one of the streets in front of the cathedral, you will soon come to Praca do Giraldo. With a public arcade on one side, this square acts as a kind of city forum, enlivened by its welcoming and friendly pavement cafes and with a beautiful sixteenth-century marble fountain surmounted by a bronze crown. The far end of the square is occupied by the Igreja de Santo Antão, built between 1557 and 1563.

The Loios Pousada was originally the Convento de Sao Joao Evangelista (fifteenth century), and is one of Evora's most precious architectural buildings. This pousada features air conditioning, a traditional pub, and a swimming pool.

Overnight in Evora. Loios Pousada. Meal plan: Breakfast and dinner.

Day 6 *Evora, Portugal - Caceres, Spain - Merida*

Today we cross into Spain and travel the short distance to Caceres, a UNESCO World Heritage Site, located in the remote land of Extremadura in western Spain. Founded in Roman times, it presents excellent examples of two very different parts of the city's heritage--the Moorish fortress and the feudal city. Because of its remote location, the citizens have been able to preserve and promote one of the most complete Medieval and Renaissance quarters in the

world.

On arrival we will have an easy walking tour through the labyrinth of streets and tiny plazas, passing under arches, past towers and walls, between churches, beautiful convents and innumerable palaces. You will discover an incredible mix of architectural design ranging from Moorish to Northern Gothic to the Italian Renaissance.

We continue (56 km) to Merida for our overnight. The Merida Parador conserves the structure of the former 18th c. convent, installed on the remains of a temple dedicated to the Concordia de Augusto, and offers the guest the opportunity to experience the rich heritage of the beautiful town of Merida and surrounding natural areas. Some of the most noteworthy spaces are the living room, the inner patio and the beautiful gardens where the 'Jardin de Antiguedades' (Garden of Antiquities) is located. The garden is an archeological ensemble made up of Roman, Mudejar and Visigothic elements.

Air conditioning, Satellite TV, minibar, pool, elevator.

Overnight Parador de Merida. Meal plan: Breakfast and dinner.

Day 7 *Merida - Cordoba*

Merida is one of Spain's justly famous cities. As the capital of Lusitania--Imperial Rome's vast province covering western Spain and most of Portugal. The Romans left here a lavish legacy of monuments, including the famous bridge over the Guadiana River still in use many centuries after its construction. It is the Roman theatre, however, which is the gem of these remains and still attracts sell-out audiences during the annual International Festival of Classical Drama. The nearby Museum of Roman Art houses a marvellous collection of art and mosaics while just to the north is an amazingly well-preserved rich villa from the end of the First Century whose mosaic floor depicts Roman residents crushing grapes with their feet to make the beverage most consumed in Spain!

After touring Merida we travel to Cordoba and check in to the Parador de Cordoba.

Located on the ruins of the small summer palace of Abderraman I, a hill surrounded by vegetation at the foot of the Cordoba mountain range, the Parador offers an exceptional panoramic view of the legendary city of the caliphs. The serene atmosphere is accentuated by its swimming pool and surrounding gardens, where the first palm trees of Europe are located. The inner rooms are elegant and very bright, with large living rooms and spacious bedrooms. The decoration mixes the Arabic with the Andalusian; earthy colours, wood floors and an abundance of plants.

Ammenities include: Swimming pool, elevator, bar, air conditioning.

Overnight at the Parador de Cordoba. Meal plan: Breakfast and dinner.

Day 8 *Cordoba*

This morning we have a half-day guided tour of Cordoba, once one of the world's greatest cities and a former capital of Muslim Spain. For three centuries, this region formed the heart of the Western Islamic Empire, the great Medieval Caliphate of the Moors. Yesterday's Cordoba is remembered by its lovely Arab and Jewish quarters, with their narrow, winding streets, neatly aligned with flowers hanging from the towering balconies.

The heart of Cordoba is the old Jewish quarter, situated to the west of the Mezquita's towering walls. A walk around this area gives the sensation that little has changed since the 10th century when this was one of the greatest cities in the Western world. Wrought ironwork decorates cobbled streets too narrow for cars, where silversmiths create fine jewelry

in their workshops. Most of the chief sights are here, while modern city life takes place some blocks north around the Plaza de Tendillas. To the east of this square is the Plaza de la Corredera, a 17th century arcaded square with a daily market.

We see the city's incomparable treasure, the Mezquita, or Great Mosque. The mosque is a forest of stone pillars and arches that is so vast that the cathedral inside it seems almost lost in the shadowy aisles. We visit the Juderia quarter, with its white-washed houses that remain from the caliphate times. Here we see the Calleja de las Flores (Alley of Flowers), a flower-filled lane that offers postcard views of the Mezquita.

The balance of the day is your to explore Cordoba, or return to the Parador to relax and enjoy its views and amenities.

Overnight at the Parador de Cordoba. Meal plan: Breakfast and dinner.

Day 9 *Cordoba - Ubeda*

Today we journey to the Parador de Ubeda. This Parador rises up in the most Renaissance square of the aristocratic and monumental town of Ubeda, next to some of the most beautiful buildings, in a former palace built in the 16th century and altered in the 17th, which belonged to the dean of the Sacred chapel of El Salvador. The facade of the Parador conceals a very beautiful inner courtyard with a double gallery whose upper part is glazed. Its friendly and comfortable bedrooms stand out for the height of their ceilings.

Free time to explore the city and its renaissance buildings. This 16th century Renaissance town in Jaen, a Northern Andalusian province, produces as much olive oil as Greece.

Overnight at Ubeda. Meal plan: Breakfast and dinner.

Day 10 *Ubeda - Jaen - Granada*

Today we travel to Granada via Jaen.

Jaen is rich in history, with great monuments such as the Cathedral, built between the 16th and 18th centuries, and the adjoining parish church or "El Sagrario". The city's Moorish castle sits majestically on top of Mount Santa Catalina, and atop a nearby hill stands a monumental cross, engraved with a moving poem by Almendros Aguilar. It's worth climbing to the top just to see the spectacular view of the city and the rolling olive groves of Jaen.

Jaen has several fascinating churches, such as La Santa Capilla de San Andres, the Convent of Santo Domingo, the Church of La Magdalena with its charming courtyard, the Church of San Ildefonso, the Convent of Las Bernardas and the Churches of San Bartolome and San Juan.

We continue to Granada and check in to the superlative Alhambra Palace Hotel, one of the most noble and welcoming hotels of the world, inaugurated by King Alfonso XIII on the first of January 1910. The building with its aristocratic air and magnificent interiors, which have preserved all the grace and splendor of the "belle epoche", is located in a setting of a dominant Islamic influence, where every window, terrace or balcony overlooks landscapes of extraordinary beauty, formed by the background of Sierra Nevada's ever-white peaks or the green plains of the Vega.

Overnight in Granada. Meal plan: Breakfast and dinner.

Day 11 *Granada*

Granada is situated between three hills, and is dominated by the beautiful snow-capped Sierra Nevada Mountains. We have a leisurely day to savour Granada's main attraction, the Alhambra, a mighty yet graceful fortress begun by the 13th century ruler, Al-Ahamar. This is one of the most exciting and romantic of all European monuments. This was the palace of the Nasrid Sultans, rulers of the last Spanish Moorish Kingdom. A fantasy of "lace in stone", surrounded by Arabesque gardens and fountains, it affords superb views of the Old Quarter and Sacromonte, a mountain occupied by gypsy cave dwellers. In many ways, the Alhambra represents the Moorish concept of life itself--something glorious to be ennobled by learning and enlivened by every kind of pleasure.

A magical use of space, light, water and decoration characterizes this most sensual piece of architecture. It was built under Ismail I, Yusuf I and Muhammad V, caliphs when the Nasrid dynasty ruled Granada. Seeking to belie an image of waning power, they created their idea of paradise on earth. Modest materials were used (plaster, timber and tiles), but they were superbly worked.

We will also have a chance to stroll down Calle de Elvira, once occupied with artisan's shops in the 17th and 18th centuries. On this street, we will visit the Iglesia de San Andres, which contains interesting paintings and sculptures.

Overnight in Granada. Meal plan: Breakfast and dinner.

Day 12 *Granada - Arcos de la Frontera*

Our destination for today is the Parador de Arcos de la Frontera, in the village of Arcos de la Frontera, 90 minutes from Sevilla.

This spectacular village--the largest of the famed Pueblos Blancos--sits along a ridgeline above the impressive cliff, Pena Nueva, overlooking the winding Guadelete River and its broad valley. The Pueblos Blancos share a history involving the centuries-long fight of the Spaniards to reconquer Spain from the Muslims (Moors). Arcos' name, de la Frontera, reflects this frontier history. Arcos's Castillo, built by the Moors in the 11th century, reflects the Arab occupation. On the border between Castile and Granada, the towns became desirable bounty. Their signature barred window architecture reflects each town's defensive emphasis. The bedrooms with terraces offer magnificent views of Arcos and inside the typical Andalusian courtyard is joined by traditional decorative elements such as latticework and ceramic tiles. Wooden beams, rugs and round arches complete the decoration of the Parador.

This Parador features elevators, telephones, satellite TV, and air conditioning.

Overnight at Parador de Arcos de la Frontera. Meal plan: Breakfast and dinner.

Day 13 *Arcos de la Frontera - Sevilla - Arcos de la Frontera*

Today we make an excursion to nearby Sevilla (Sevilla).

Sevilla, the fourth largest city in Spain, is the picture-perfect image of Andalucia, complete with restored Andalusian architecture, orange groves, flower-filled patios, and castanet-rattling Gypsies. While in Sevilla, we have a guided visit to the largest cathedral in Spain, built in a Gothic style with lovely stained glass windows, choir, and chapels. We visit the Giralda Tower, with its spectacular views of the city. We will also see the Moorish Alcazar Palace, a 14th century palace which is the oldest royal residence in Europe, still in use. King Juan Carlos resides here while in Sevilla, as King Ferdinand II and Queen Isabella once did.

The balance of the day is free to wander the charming narrow streets of Sevilla. Later this afternoon we return to Arcos de la Frontera.

Overnight at Parador de Arcos de la Frontera. Meal plan: Breakfast and dinner.

Day 14 *Arcos de la Frontera - Sevilla - Depart*

Today we transfer (2 hours +/-) to the Sevilla Airport for our departure.

BE FORWARNED: Flights from Sevilla that must make same day connections internationally tend to depart Sevilla quite EARLY in the morning. Still we prefer to stay in Arcos because a) it's stunning, and b) the Paradore in Sevilla is usually either oversold or refuses to accept group reservations outside of low season (Jan / Feb).

BUEN VIAJE! Meal plan: Breakfast.