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Historic Iberia.

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SPAIN AND PORTUGAL | 11DAYS / 10NIGHTS

Route: Round-trip from and to Madrid

Type of tour: Culture

TOUR OVERVIEW

The Iberian Peninsula is one of Europe's most beautiful regions and has a wealth of treasures dating back to pre-history. Spain and Portugal boast a combined 60 UNESCO World Heritage Sites and over 11 unforgettable days, this tour of the southwest of the peninsula visits eight of those sites as well as some of its most interesting cities, including the two capitals. Discover ancient Roman ruins, admire majestic Moorish palaces and historic mosques and synagogues. Travel through the mythical La Mancha that so beguiled Don Quixote, the undulating olive plantations of Andalusia and the arid landscapes of Extremadura. Immerse yourself in the fascinating history of the Iberian Peninsula and discover the cultural riches of both Spain and Portugal.

TOUR HIGHLIGHTS

DURATION: 11 days / 10 nights



Start & finish destination
1. Madrid

Destinations

| | |
|------------|------------|
| 2. Granada | 4. Lisbon |
| 3. Seville | 5. Caceres |

Granada: Be dazzled by the jewel in Andalusia's crown with a visit to the amazing Alhambra palace and Generalife gardens as well as a stroll through the ancient Albaicin district

Cordoba: Discover the magnificent Great Mosque and wander through the old town and the former Jewish district

Seville: Explore the elegant capital of Andalusia, visiting the world-famous Plaza de España, the former royal palace and cathedral as well as strolling through old Jewish quarter

Evora: Wander the whitewashed streets of the old town and admire the ancient Roman ruins, the Renaissance palaces, the baroque churches and the Romanesque-Gothic cathedral

Lisbon: Enjoy a panoramic tour of the Portuguese capital and admire the historic Tower of Belem from which the great navigators sailed

Caceres: This UNESCO World Heritage Site has a walled town with more than 50 historic buildings

Madrid: Visit Europe's largest palace and the Reina Sofia Museum, where Picasso's harrowing Guernica is among the masterpieces on display

DON'T MISS

Tinto de verano: This refreshing drink made from chilled red wine and lemonade is very popular in Andalusia

Crème de la crème: For centuries visitors to Lisbon have been making the pilgrimage to Belem to taste its delicious cream cakes

Art house: The Sorolla Museum in Madrid is the former home and studio of Spain's greatest impressionist artist

DAY BY DAY

DAY 1 | ARRIVAL IN MADRID

Meet and greet service at Madrid Barajas Airport and transfer to your hotel with the rest of the day at leisure. The Spanish capital is one of Europe's liveliest and most elegant cities, boasting beautiful boulevards, vast parks, bustling plazas and numerous historic churches and palaces. Madrid is also home to the legendary 'golden triangle' of art galleries, which house some of the world's most treasured masterpieces.

- Overnight in Madrid hotel on a half-board basis.

DAY 2 | MADRID – GRANADA (420km – 6 hrs)

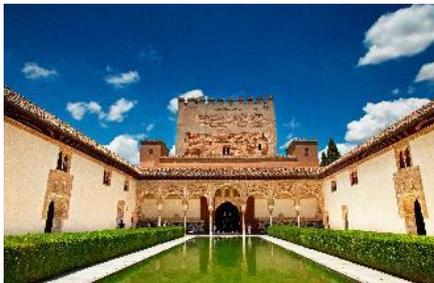
Take to the road after breakfast with a scenic drive south through the historic region of La Mancha towards Granada. Enjoy a stop en route at Puerto Lapice in the heart of the windmill country made famous by Miguel de Cervantes in his classic novel, Don Quixote. See the windmills dotted on the horizon in the countryside surrounding the town, which itself was where Don Quixote rested after a battle with the windmill 'giants'. Continue to Granada for check-in at the hotel.

- Overnight in Granada hotel on a half-board basis.

DAY 3 | GRANADA

Enjoy breakfast at the hotel before exploring the historic city of Granada and its greatest treasure, the **Alhambra** palace. For more than a thousand years, this 'pearl set in emeralds' has stood atop Sabika hill overlooking the city, gaining in importance during the Moorish Nasrid dynasty, which turned the original castle into the palace of today. The royal complex and gardens were built to be 'heaven on earth', with cool patios, fountains and intricate carvings. Marvel at the rooms such as the **Court of the Myrtles** and the **Hall of the Ambassadors**, which are decorated in elaborate honeycomb arabesque plasterwork. Admire, too, the **Court of Lions**, which medieval Islamic poets described as the physical realisation of paradise. Stroll over to the **Generalife** Palace and its lush gardens, where the Nasrid emirs retreated during the summer heat, and hear the soothing sound of the water running in channels. Cross the verdant ravine of the River Darro to the historic **Albaicin** quarter, which has existed since Moorish times and still maintains its original chaotic layout. Narrow cobblestone alleys of tightly packed whitewashed houses snake their way upwards to the various vantage points offering breathtaking views of the Alhambra nestled under the Sierra Nevada.

- Overnight in Granada hotel on a half-board basis.



DAY 4 | GRANADA – CORDOBA – SEVILLE (350km – 4 hrs)

Bid farewell to Granada after breakfast at the hotel, departing for Cordoba to tour the historic centre before continuing to Seville. Arrive in Cordoba and enjoy a guided tour of the old town, which is a UNESCO World Heritage Site. **Cordoba** was the capital of the Moorish caliphate of Al-Andalus during the height of its powers and glory, and nowhere is this wealth more evident than in the magnificent **Great Mosque**, which is now the Catholic cathedral. Wander through the colonnaded prayer halls, which are decorated with hundreds of marble columns joined by two-tone arches. Admire the mihrab and the side chapels, with their eclectic mix of arabesque and baroque styles. Stroll through the **Patio of the Orange Trees**, an oasis of peace cooled by the shade of 100 trees, and admire the arabesque decorations of exterior doorways. Walk through a labyrinth of whitewashed lanes and patios bedecked in plants and flowers towards the former Jewish Quarter to visit the 14th century synagogue. Continue to Seville for check-in at the hotel with the rest of the day free at leisure.

- Overnight in Seville hotel on a half-board basis.

DAY 5 | SEVILLE

Explore Seville after breakfast at the hotel with a **panoramic bus tour**. Enjoy a photo stop at the magical **Maria Luisa Park** to discover its two impressive squares, **Plaza de España**, with its beautiful tiles, elaborate redbrick towers, bridges and canals, and **Plaza de America**, which is flanked by a number of magnificent neo-Gothic and neo-Mudejar palaces. Then visit the city's top attractions such as the **Royal Alcazar** palace and the cathedral – both UNESCO World Heritage Sites – as well as Santa Cruz, its most picturesque inner city neighbourhood. The Royal Alcazar traces its origins to the 10th century, when it became the palace of a Moorish caliph. Over the centuries, it has been expanded with a series of stunning halls, pavilions, patios and gardens in a variety of styles from Moorish and Mudejar to Gothic, Renaissance and baroque. Admire the elaborate arabesque carvings, the ornate tilework and the fine tapestries and paintings decorating the walls. Behold the brilliance of the inner domes of the Hall of Ambassadors and the **Patio of Dolls**, and wander the tranquil landscaped gardens. Continue to the Cathedral of Saint Mary of the See, whose glorious **Giralda** belfry is Seville's most iconic symbol. The cathedral began life as a mosque in the 12th century and has since grown to become the third-largest church in the world. Discover the 80 chapels and more than 700 works of religious art, see the amazing gilded altarpiece – which took 80 years to make – and stroll through the peaceful Patio of the Orange Trees. Next, explore secluded **Santa**

Cruz, the former Jewish quarter and today the most traditional neighbourhood in the old town. It is a warren of whitewashed lanes, alleys, archways and patios, each with a historical tale to tell.

- Overnight in Seville hotel on a half-board basis.

DAY 6 | SEVILLE – MERIDA – EVORA – LISBON (490km – 5 hrs)

Take to the road after breakfast at the hotel, heading to Merida, which as Emerita Augusta, was one of the Roman capitals of Spain. The classical heritage of **Merida** is breathtaking with a Roman bridge and a theatre that are both still in use. **Visit the Roman theatre** and admire its stunning two-tier colonnaded stage. See the ruins of the adjacent **amphitheatre** and the columns of the **Temple of Diana** in the former Forum. The full ensemble of these ruins have earned Merida's classical monuments the status of UNESCO World Heritage, an honour which is also held by the next destination, **Evora**, thanks to its historic city centre. This living museum also has Roman ruins though its real flowering can be traced to its 15th century golden age, when it became the residence of kings of Portugal. Stroll through its beautiful whitewashed streets of houses decorated with blue-and-white ornamental tiles. Admire the romantic Renaissance palaces and the Gothic glory of the cathedral, which dominates the city's skyline. Continue to Lisbon for check-in at the hotel.

- Overnight in Lisbon hotel on a half-board basis.

DAY 7 | LISBON

Breakfast at the hotel is followed by a panoramic tour of Lisbon and nearby Belem, where there are some important monuments dating back to the Age of Discovery. Stop at the 16th century **Tower of Belem**, a UNESCO World Heritage site, which was the point of departure for the caravels sailing out in search of new worlds. Nearby is the Monument to the Discoveries, commemorating the 500th anniversary of the death of Prince Henry the Navigator. Visit the nearby **Jeronimos monastery** (also a UNESCO World Heritage Site) a masterpiece in the Manueline style with an astonishingly ornate main doorway. Continue the tour in the heart of old Lisbon, discovering Alfama and the areas around Praça do Comercio and the Praça do Rossio and then the Avenida da Liberdade, the city's main thoroughfare.

- Overnight in Lisbon hotel on a half-board basis.



DAY 8 | LISBON – FATIMA – MARVAO – CACERES (405km – 5 hrs)

Depart the capital after breakfast at the hotel, heading for Fatima, Portugal's holiest site. The **Sanctuary of Fatima** marks the spot where the Virgin Mary appeared to three shepherd children in 1917, turning a sleepy hamlet into one of the most important pilgrimage sites in the world. Today, an imposing neo-baroque basilica faces a vast modern church either side of a large square that can hold tens of thousands of pilgrims. Continue to **Marvão**, a walled hilltop village in the heart of the Serra de Sao Mamede Natural Park. The sands of time appear to have bypassed Marvão, whose narrow whitewashed streets and alleys lie under the shadow of a medieval castle located on the highest point of the hill. Bid farewell to Portugal and cross the Spanish border just a few minutes away, heading to Caceres in the region of Extremadura.

- Overnight in Caceres hotel on a half-board basis.

DAY 9 | CACERES – TOLEDO – MADRID (335km – 3.5 hrs)

Enjoy free time to explore Caceres after breakfast at the hotel. The **medieval walled old town of Caceres** is a UNESCO World Heritage Site, packed with fortified homes, Renaissance palaces and historic churches. The walled area is compact and there are two main clusters of monuments. In the Santa Maria-Golfines area can be found the Renaissance **Toledo-Moctezuma Palace** as well as the **Co-cathedral of St Mary** while the area around the Plaza de las Veletas-Plaza San Mateo is dominated by the 15th century **Cigüeñas Palace**. Continue to Toledo, a former capital of the Kingdom of Castile, and explore its historic centre, which evokes the mix of Jewish, Muslim and Christian cultures of medieval Castile. Wander through ancient streets with buildings from almost all periods of Spanish history: Moorish, Gothic, Mudejar, Renaissance, Habsburg and baroque. Visit the **cathedral** and admire the Gothic vaulting and the elaborate altarpiece. Continue to **Santo Tome Church** – where El Greco's epic canvas The Burial of the Count of Orgaz is displayed – and the **former synagogue** now known as Santa María la Blanca, whose interior is one of the best-preserved examples of Mudejar architecture in Castile. Take to the road for Madrid, checking in at the hotel on arrival.

- Overnight in Madrid hotel on a half-board basis.

DAY 10 | MADRID

Breakfast at the hotel is followed by a **panoramic tour** of the Spanish capital. See all the main sights and attractions driving through famous locations like the Paseo de la Castellana, the Plaza de los Cibeles and the Gran Vía, and visit the Royal Palace, which is Europe's largest, and the Reina Sofia Museum of modern and contemporary art. The **Royal Palace** has more than 3,000 rooms and the appearance of those seen during the guided tour is an eclectic mix, ranging from cluttered Victorian to exotic oriental décors – much depended on the whim of the reigning monarch. Works of art by great masters such as Caravaggio, Velazquez and Goya adorn the walls while pieces of period furniture grace every room. The lavishness and opulence of the interiors stand in contrast with the sober baroque and neo-classical exterior, which faces the Almudena Cathedral and overlooks the Campo del Moro gardens. The **Reina Sofia Museum** boasts one of the greatest collections of modern art in the world. Admire works by mainly Spanish greats such as Joan Miro, Salvador Dali, Juan Gris and Pablo Picasso, whose vast and haunting Guernica is complemented by an exhibition of other works and resources, which help put the iconic painting in context.

- **Overnight in Madrid hotel on a half-board basis.**

DAY 11 | DEPART MADRID

Transfer to the airport in Madrid for your departure flight.

- **Breakfast included.**

END OF SERVICES

INCLUDED

TOUR GUIDE:

- Operated with professional English-speaking tour guides

ACCOMMODATION:

- Three nights' half-board accommodation in a four-star Madrid hotel; two nights' half-board accommodation in four-star Granada hotel; two nights' half-board accommodation in a four-star Seville hotel; two nights' half-board accommodation in four-star Lisbon hotel; and one night's half-board accommodation in four-star Caceres

MEALS:

- Ten open buffet breakfasts and ten dinners

TRANSPORT:

- Transportation in an air conditioned, non-smoking coach

ENTRANCE FEES AND ACTIVITIES:

- All monuments and visits as indicated: Alhambra Palace, Generalife Gardens and Albaicin tour in Granada; old town tour and Great Mosque in Cordoba; panoramic tour and Royal Alcazar and cathedral visits in Seville; Roman theatre and amphitheatre in Merida; walking tour of Evora; panoramic tour of Lisbon and Belem; Sanctuary visit in Fatima; walking tour of Marvao; old town tour in Caceres; city tour, cathedral, Santo Tome Church and synagogue in Toledo; and panoramic tour, Royal Palace and Reina Sofia Museum in Madrid

NOT INCLUDED

- Items of a personal nature such as alcoholic drinks, laundry, and drinks and meals not stated explicitly in the programme
- Any others expenses which are not mentioned in the included section
- International flights
- All types of insurance
- Entry visas to Spain and Portugal (if applicable)

RECOMMENDATIONS

Comfortable and light clothing is the most suitable for travelling in Spain and Portugal though a warm jumper and jacket are advisable in the cooler months. Visitors should not wear sleeveless shirts, shorts, short skirts or skimpy clothing when visiting religious or official buildings. Sun protection, sun glasses, a hat and mosquito repellent can be very useful during your stay