

Touring holidays of Spain

Expressions



A grand tour of Spain



A grand tour of Spain

14 NIGHTS / 15 DAYS

Seville
Granada
Cordoba
Madrid
Barcelona
San Sebastian
Lerma
Leon
Santiago de Compostela



This 14-night touring holiday of Spain travel by air, rail and hire-car, taking advantage of convenient rail connections for some journeys and allowing you to travel at your own pace for others. You fly to Seville and start this grand tour with two nights in Seville in southern Spain, where you soak up the Andalusian culture and visit some well-known tourist attractions, which bear the eccentric mark of traditional Moorish influence. Next, spend one night in Granada, amidst the glory of the Alhambra Palace. The Arabic influence on this region continues in Còrdoba and the Mezquita. From here, travel north to Madrid, and spend two days exploring the extensive artistic heritage of the city before travelling eastwards to Barcelona. Spend a few days in this cosmopolitan seaside city, meandering around its several distinct and vibrant districts, before heading northwest to the Basque Country. Two nights in San Sebastián allow you to get a taste for Basque cuisine, as well as sample the delights of the vivid blue ocean. From here, travel westwards through historic cities in northern Spain, stopping off at a 17th century palace in Lerma, in the historic of León, and ending your holiday in Santiago de Compostela in the western region of Galicia.

PRICES

From £2,820 per person

Based on two people sharing a double room. First class rail travel can be added at a supplement.

DATES

This holiday can be arranged throughout the year. Additional nights can be added at any point on this itinerary. Timings can vary depending on the month and day of the week. Flights from Santiago de Compostela do not operate every day of the week.

WHAT'S INCLUDED

- Flights with Easy Jet from Gatwick to Seville and Santiago de Compostela to Gatwick
- Standard class rail from Cordoba to Madrid,

Madrid to Barcelona and Barcelona to San Sebastian

- Hire of a Group B car for eight days (three in Andalusia and give in northern Spain)
- 2 nights' bed and breakfast in a Standard double room at the Corral del Rey in Seville
- 1 night's bed and breakfast in a Standard double room at the Hotel Alhambra Palace in Granada
- 1 night's bed and breakfast in a Standard double room at Las Casas de la Juderia de Cordoba
- 2 nights' bed and breakfast in a Standard double room at the Hotel Urban in Madrid
- 2 nights' bed and breakfast in a Standard double room at the Grand Hotel Central in Barcelona
- 2 nights' bed and breakfast in a Standard double room at the Villa Soro in San Sebastian
- 1 night's bed and breakfast in a Standard double room at the Parador de Lerma

- 1 night's bed and breakfast in a Standard double room at the NH Collection Plaza Mayor in Leon
- 2 nights' bed and breakfast in a Standard double room at the Hotel Spa A Quinta da Auga in Santiago de Compostela
- Concierge service and Expressions Holidays regional helpful hints

WHAT'S NOT INCLUDED

- Early check-in or late check-out at any hotels (although we can arrange this on request at additional cost)
- Any other services not mentioned above, such as transfers and meals except breakfast at hotels
- Personal holiday insurance. This is essential and cover should be in place from when you book the holiday.
- Local tourist tax, usually between Euros 1 and 3 per person per night

Day one Arrive in Seville

Begin your touring holiday by flying into Seville, and travelling to the Corral del Rey hotel, where you will spend two nights. This boutique property is set in the city's historic quarter, and is therefore the ideal place from which to begin exploration of Seville, the capital of Andalucía and Spain's fourth largest city.

Day two in Seville

Art and architecture are of the utmost importance here, and the centre is formed of a maze of narrow lanes and hidden plazas. Be sure to explore the Barrio de Santa Cruz, the most popular neighbourhood in Seville, characterised by pretty lanes lined with trees, shrubs, and the traditional white Spanish houses. This neighbourhood is also home to the Real Alcázar, a royal palace of Moorish, Muslim origins. This building remains one of the most beautiful sights in Seville, with its highly embellished cusped and keyhole arches, its intricate golden ornamentation, and the pools that occupy its inner courtyards. Also surrounded by landscaped gardens, the Real Alcázar is the well-suited for an afternoon's stroll. The Cathedral and La Giralda bell tower also possess traces of Moorish influence. La Giralda itself resembles the minarets of Marrakech, while the main building is punctuated more obviously by traditional rounded archways and vast stone domes. The eccentricity and variety of architectural styles and features displayed on this cathedral make it an essential landmark to visit as part of this tour. The market stalls around the Plaza del Salvador offer a wide selection of colourful local produce, from the vibrant palate of fruit and vegetables, to the brilliant examples of local art, including the azulejos – locally-made glazed ceramic tiles. Your hotel is an intimate building, whose interior seems to have been inspired by Seville's entire heritage combined. Winding wooden-floored corridors lead you up to the bedrooms or down into the arched dining rooms, and intricate carvings, paintings, and embroidery, decorate each of the spaces with a uniqueness that feels quintessentially Sevillian.

Day three Seville to Granada

Collect your hire-car and drive approximately two and a half hours eastwards to Granada, passing through the undulating Andalusian landscape and past miles of olive groves. En-route is the town of Osuna, with its grand church and ornate Palacio del Marques de la Gomera, which may serve as an ideal stop-off point. Further on is the town of Estepa, famous for its biscuits. Once you reach



Granada

Granada, head straight for the Hotel Alhambra Palace, a well-established hotel on the hillside within the grounds of its namesake. Spend the rest of the afternoon and evening exploring the Alhambra Palace and gardens. Officially dating back to the 13th and 14th centuries, this collection of buildings, forming almost an entire walled town in itself, was the jewel in the crown of the Emirate of Granada, and now it stands as a testament to the beauty of Arabic art. Its name comes from the red colour of the material that was used to build the original 9th century building that once stood in its place. The vastness of this complex calls for in-depth self-guided exploration, and we would highly recommend spending time in the Palacio de los Leones in Alhambra, and the Palacio de Carlos V. The former is encircled with some 124 thin columns, while the latter is evidence of some later Renaissance development, which breaks the flow of the rest of Alhambra, but nonetheless forms a formidable edifice. Within Granada itself, visit the Generalife, also formerly belonging to the Nasrid Kings, offering them a welcome retreat from the politics of the palace. To complete your experience of Granada, perhaps on the morning of your fourth day, trace the narrow streets of the Albaicin quarter, rich as it is in the shared Spanish-Arabic heritage.

Day four Granada to Cordoba

Just two hours' drive northwest of Granada is the city of Córdoba, a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Drop off your hire car on arrival, and navigate the city by taxi or, to make the

most of your time here, on foot. Your hotel for the night is the Hotel Las Casas de la Judería, a charming hotel that occupies a fortress in the city's Jewish quarter. Traditional Moorish keyhole arches in the lounge, and dark wood beams in the bedrooms, hint at the more exotic roots of the hotel and the city as whole. At the city's heart is the astounding Mezquita de Córdoba, a mediaeval mosque turned Catholic cathedral, characterised particularly by the rows of red- and white-striped stone pillars that fill its central hall. Its golden altar, though now pertaining to Catholic saints, serves as a beautifully intricate and ornate centre-piece which certainly draws the eye, accompanied by portraits, and the carved crossed-arches that define the ceiling. Other highlights in Córdoba include the fascinating Jewish quarter, laced with uneven stairways that snake their way down narrow streets, and the abundance of Roman ruins.

Day five Cordoba to Madrid

Catch a late morning train to Madrid, arriving around two hours later. Stay at the five-star Hotel Urban, located within easy reach of the city's three world-class art galleries and the relaxing Parque del Retiro.

Day six in Madrid

You have the whole day to explore the city, with its many attractive plazas and museums. The Prado Art Gallery might be the first of the three that you visit, and houses a vast collection of works from between the 12th

and 19th century, including works by Goya, Rubens, and Murillo, all within a magnificent classical building. Next, walk ten minutes to the Reina Sofia gallery, which specialises in modern art, ranging from paintings, including Picasso's 'Guernica', and sculpture, to film, such as a collaborative work of Luis Buñuel and Salvador Dalí. Finally, walk to the Thyssen-Bornemisza, believed to be one of the best private collections of 13th to 20th century art in the world, featuring masterpieces of Goya, Degas, Renoir, and Kandinsky, among others. As this is a private gallery, it is essential to book your tickets in advance, and consider organising a tour to ensure you get the most out of your trip. The hotel itself sits in contrast with the other hotels visited so far on this touring holiday, though its focus is still on indulgence and luxury, it is highly modern in design. Sleek, chic bedrooms are decorated with dark wood floors and beautifully tactile furnishings, as well as having brand new state-of-the-art technology. To put it simply, the rooms are a multisensory delight. The main façade of the hotel, as well as the dining room, are predominantly made of glass, as is the canopy that covers the half-indoor half-outdoor terrace. In Old Madrid, visit the grand arcaded Plaza Mayor at the centre of the city, and the Royal Palace, official residence of the Spanish Royal family, which is often open, at least in part, to the public. Inside, pay particular attention to the use of Spanish marble, the ornate stucco carvings, the frescoes painted by the likes of Giaquinto, Tiepolo, and Bayeu, and perhaps spend time in the Royal Armoury or Royal Pharmacy.

Outside, the Plaza Oriente is lined with statues of the Gothic Kings in the central garden, while the Campo del Moro gardens are interspersed by fountains, trees, and statues as well. If time permits on your sixth or seventh day, consider making a quick trip to Toledo, a historic city around 30 minutes away by train which is known as the City of Three Cultures due to the co-existence of Christianity, Islam and Judaism; or, alternatively, travel to the large royal residence and monastery at El Escorial, located about 45 minutes away.

Day seven Madrid to Barcelona

We recommend catching a morning train to Barcelona, arriving around three hours later. Stay at Grand Hotel Central, a luxury five-star hotel in the Gothic district close to the Picasso Museum and historic cathedral.

Day eight in Barcelona

Spend the day, and the whole of day eight exploring Barcelona, a dynamic and cosmopolitan city which is full of charm and bustle. The capital of Catalonia is famed for its staggering concentration of Gothic architecture such as the cathedral in the heart of the Gothic quarter as well as the Sagrada Familia and other works of Gaudi. Discover the city's unique architecture and rich culture, dine in gourmet restaurants or shop in designer boutiques near Las Ramblas. Divided into a number of different 'quarter's, the capital of Catalonia is a city made of many cities. In La Ribera, the former palaces of merchants have become museums, such as the famous

Museu Picasso. This quarter is also home to the cavernous Santa Maria del Mar, and the Modernist Palau de la Música Catalana, which is fantastically mesmerising in its interior detail. El Raval was once the most prolific red light district in the Mediterranean, but its heritage now lies with the Romanesque monastery of Sant Pau, and Gaudi's Palau Güell. For those who were prompted by their stay in Madrid to look further into Spain's contemporary art, the glassy, modern Museu d'Art Contemporani, is a fantastic afternoon's visit. Along the shore, Barcelona boasts of six Blue Flag beaches, and this is also the place to taste some of the best seafood in Barcelona, with the exception, perhaps, of the oysters at La Boqueria market on Las Ramblas. The Eixample is Barcelona's Modernista centre. For the fullest experience of this quirky and remarkable architectural style, walk along the Passeig de Gràcia, and visit the Manzana de la Discòrdia, Le Pedrera, and of course, Gaudi's most famous temple, the Sagrada Familia. Its startling interior, modified gothic architecture, and incredible impact on Barcelona's skyline, make it Barcelona's most iconic monument, though it stands at a shorter height than Montjuïc Castle, just outside the Montjuïc quarter. Also in Montjuïc is the recently established Museu Nacional d'Art de Catalunya, beautifully landscaped gardens, and the minimalist, white Fundació Joan Miró, which exhibits the best of its namesake's work. In the Zona Alta, slightly out of the central city, sit the colourful mosaics of Parc Güell and Horta's Labyrinth. The density of traditional gothic architecture in the Barri Gòtic also gives Barcelona some of its fame, so we would highly recommend spending some time amidst those winding, maze-like streets. Finish off the day dining back at the hotel, or in one of the gourmet restaurants near Las Ramblas.

Day nine Barcelona to San Sebastian by rail

In the afternoon, catch a train northwest across the depth of the country passing the undulating lands of the ancient provinces of Aragon and Navarre, crossing the Ebro valley near Zaragoza and then entering the Basque country to reach San Sebastián. The journey time is about 6 hours and you arrive in the early evening. In San Sebastian stay at the beautiful 19th Century Villa Soro, surrounded by pristine gardens and lawns.

Day ten in San Sebastian

San Sebastián is an elegant, cosmopolitan seaside resort set on a beautiful bay only a few miles away from the French border. Of particular interest are the golden town hall,



Cordoba

which was formerly the city's Gran Casino before it closed in 1924, and the spa building, La Perla, built for Queen Maria Cristina, which is considered to be one of the most beautiful in the world. Many mansions and palaces, such as the Palacio Miramar, summer-house of the royal family in the 19th century, are available for visits, and offer a glimpse into the traditional architecture influenced by the proximity of the French border. Soak up the unique Basque culture, and perhaps dine in one of the many Michelin-starred restaurants which all serve innovative Spanish cuisine. Be sure to visit la Concha beach and the old-town with its lively tapas bars. Off the coast, visit Mount Igeldo for unrivalled views of the sea and the city, accessible via a funicular railway which is the oldest in the Basque Country, running since 1912. Recently named European Capital of Culture 2016, there is much in the way of art and culture to visit, from the striking San Telmo Museum to the small contemporary art galleries hidden away on the streets of Donostia (the old town). During the hot summer months, the town is host to festivals of jazz, theatre, classical music, and film, which only adds to the city's cultural and artistic feel.

Day eleven San Sebastian to Lerma

This morning, leave San Sebastian after collecting a hire-car for the two hour drive southwest to Lerma, a town just south of the historic city of Burgos. Perhaps stop off en-route to see the cathedral, dedicated to Our Lady of Burgos, dates back to the 12th century and reputedly depicts the entire history of European Gothic art in its architecture, and unique collections. 1 kilometre to the west of Burgos will bring you to the Abbey of Santa María la Real de Las Huelgas, which is a former monastery of Cistercian nuns. The complex is comprised of a church, monastery, and the walled premises that offered the nuns protection. Its cloister and inner courtyards provide beautifully serene places to stroll of an afternoon, while its halls and chapels convey something of a more rustic attitude. While the Chapter Room is distinctly austere, the 12th century sacristy door is decorated in a more ornate Arabic design. From here, drive south to your hotel, the Parador Hotel in Lerma, set in the beautiful early 17th century Ducal palace. This places you perfectly to spend a few hours on the vast Ducal square, once fully arcaded, which has the austere collegiate church of San Pedro on one side. From here, navigate your way down to the Arlanza River for a pleasant evening stroll, before retiring to the angular towers of



San Sebastian

your hotel. Take a relaxed drink in the hotel's atmospheric, high-ceilinged lounge, that really captures the palatial history of the building.

Day twelve Lerma to Leon

Continue following the route of Saint James as you drive two hours westwards to the mediaeval walled city of León, whose 13th Century cathedral is renowned for its stunning stained glass. Stay at the NH Collection hotel which has a fantastic location on the city's Plaza Mayor central square. Leon's Cathedral is often referred to as The House of Light due to the magnificence of its stained-glass windows. The panes are numerous and cover a large proportion of the building's wall space, filtering the light through their radiantly colourful glass, and casting a golden glow on the cavernous interior. To continue part of the discovery of Barcelona, León is home to the Casa de los Botines, designed by Antoni Gaudi. Though this building is somewhat reserved in comparison to his other works, it has a soft, rounded appearance that is typical of his style, and very pleasing to the eye, as well as tall, thin turrets with curved roofs. León is also home to the revolutionary MUSAC. Its unique outlook on contemporary art means that many of its exhibitions are very experimental, which adds intrigue to your visit, as well as making it even more memorable.

Day thirteen Leon to Santiago de Compostela

Your final city on this grand tour is Santiago de

Compostela, the Galician capital and at the end of a drive through stunning green scenery. You spend two nights at the relaxing Hotel Spa A Quinta Da Auga, which is located just outside the city centre.

Day fourteen in Santiago de Compostela

Santiago de Compostela's main sight is the majestic cathedral, which is the supposed resting place of Saint James the Apostle, and endpoint of the Saint James Pilgrimage, but there are numerous other historic buildings located throughout the city. The Romanesque cathedral dates back, originally, to the 11th century, though work was not completed until the 13th. The wealth of decorative and iconographic exterior additions were not carved or put in place until the beginning of the 18th century, though this façade is now what the cathedral is known for. The sight of its intricacies, that seem to cover every exposed inch of the stone, is not to be missed. Within, its Plateresque cloister is one of the most important in Spain; rooms such as the library, Chapter Room, and Chapel of Relics annex it, though its beauty is great enough to stand alone. During the summer, the cathedral plays host to a number of concerts. It is well-worth driving westwards to the Atlantic coast, either in the evening of day fourteen or before departing on your final day, where you can enjoy the phenomenal scenery of the Rias Baixas inlets, for which Galicia is known, and try some of the excellent shell-fish

and white wine.

Day fifteen Santiago de Compostela to London

Return your hire car to the airport and catch your return flight from Santiago de Compostela to the UK.

TRAVEL TIMES

Seville to Granada by car: 2 hours 30 minutes

Granada to Córdoba by car: 2 hours 15 minutes

Córdoba to Madrid by rail: 1 hour 40 minutes

Madrid to Barcelona by rail: 2 hours 45 minutes

Barcelona to San Sebastián by rail: 5 hours 40 minutes

San Sebastián to Lerma by car: 2 hours 35 minutes

Lerma to León by car: 2 hours

León to Santiago de Compostela by car: 3 hours 30 minutes



Santiago de Compostela



Pontevedra on the Rias Baixas

MAP OF A GRAND TOUR OF SPAIN

The map below illustrates the route outlined in this touring itinerary, with overnight stops and places of interest highlighted.



GENERAL INFORMATION

This tailor-made touring holiday is one of several suggested touring holidays we can offer you exactly as it is but also with any alterations you might want including extra nights in one or more places or adding in extra places. All our tours can be extended so that you can include a longer stay at the included destinations or add additional stops. Do call to discuss the options with our travel consultants.

OUR TOURS

Our rail tours are for individuals travelling on their own or in their own family group. You do not join a group and you are not escorted.

FLEXIBLE ARRANGEMENTS

Our arrangements are very flexible in that you choose to travel on any day you want, subject to availability of trains and hotels. As mentioned above, additional nights can be added at any point.

EUROSTAR

Rail holidays from the UK start with a journey by Eurostar from London St Pancras, Ebbsfleet or Ashford stations to either Paris Gare du Nord, Brussels or Lille Europe. In summer months there are direct trains on Saturdays from London St Pancras to Avignon with no change required.

Eurostar offers almost hourly departures every day, allowing you to travel from the centre of London to the centre of Paris on the same train in three hours. Not all trains stop at the Ebbsfleet and Ashford stations in Kent, but parking is plentiful at both stations and it allows you to avoid London.

Check-in is 30 minutes prior to departure, customs formalities are completed before boarding and there is no limit to the amount of baggage that can be taken on board. The Eurostar trains themselves have 8 coaches which are split into Standard Class, Standard Premier and Business Premier as well as 2 cafeterias. Standard Premier customers are served a light cold meal and enjoy a more spacious environment than Standard Class, while Business Premier customers receive a hot meal and unlimited beverages as well as lounge access.

TRAIN TIMES

We have planned our itineraries based on train times that work day by day at the time of planning which can be up to a year before you travel. Usually train times stay more or less the same every day, season by season. The times we have planned will be discussed with you at the time you enquire about the holiday and they are detailed to you in your written holiday quotation. It may be that the timetable changes between the planning of the itinerary and when you come to book but we can always adjust the itinerary to suit the actual train times and any requirements you have for particular times of travel.

FIRST OR SECOND CLASS

We will automatically include travel in second class but lots of our clients do upgrade to first class service. On Eurostar this is called Standard Premier for leisure travellers as it gives you an upgraded on-board service and more spacious seating but without paying for the fully-flexible business tickets. On the Inter-city trains, upgrading to first class gives you more spacious seating with increased legroom. The price of upgrading varies from route to route but is something that is not always proportionately a lot more on the price of the overall holiday, so well-worth considering.

TRANSFERS

Transfers in Paris between stations and from the station to each hotel are not automatically included in the price of the holiday. In Paris most clients choose to take a taxi between the stations rather than go on the Metro but we can arrange a private car with driver to take you in between. This is quite useful if you are a family group that can't fit into one Paris taxi.

OUR PRICES

The sample prices mentioned in this leaflet are generally a 'from' price based on the cheapest season of travel. However, train fares and hotel rates can change (up and down depending on offers), so we give you an accurate price for your holiday when we provide you with a quotation. Our sample prices should be used as an indication of how much a particular combination will cost and to show the differences on average between the hotel categories on offer.

PRICE INFORMATION IN MORE DETAIL

Prices start at **£2,820 per person**, based on two people sharing a double room. First class rail travel can be added at a supplement

DATES

This holiday can be arranged throughout the year. Additional nights can be added at any point on this itinerary. Timings can vary depending on the month and day of the week. Flights from Santiago de Compostela do not run every day of the week.

Expressions

TOUR CODE

SNFR01

BOOKING CONDITIONS

Our booking conditions apply to all holidays. A copy can be found on our website and a copy is also sent to you with a written quotation and when you make a booking.

FINANCIAL PROTECTION

Expressions Holidays offers full financial protection for all holidays you book with us. If your holiday includes a flight, the ATOL (3076) covers the costs of the holiday. If the holiday does not include a flight, it is the ABTOT bond that protects the cost of the holiday. We are also members of AITO (the Association of Independent Tour Operators).

Expressions Holidays

Lynx House, Pynes Hill, Exeter EX2 5JL



HOW TO BOOK

To make a booking, just phone us on

01392 441250

and we can take you through the details we need and start the booking process.