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Sagrada Familia - Barcelona

Photos by Circa Tours

## *Catalonia and Andalusia*

Barcelona - Granada - Seville  
(11 days - 9 nights)

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# SAMPLE ITINERARY

This is an example of a possible itinerary. It can be resized, reorganized and customized to fit your interests, budget and schedule. It can also be combined with other tours.

## HIGHLIGHTS (11 days - 9 nights)

DAY	ACTIVITIES	NIGHT
1	Leave U.S.	
2	Arrival in Barcelona. Airport transfer	Barcelona
3	Full-day private tour with chauffeur and guide	Barcelona
4	Explore <b>Barcelona</b> on your own	Barcelona
5	Fly to <b>Granada</b> (airport transfers in Barcelona and Granada) Private guided walking tour of Granada	Granada
6	Granada and <b>Alhambra</b> on your own	Granada
7	Bus to <b>Seville</b> - Private walking tour	Seville
8	Day trip to <b>Jerez</b> and <b>Arcos de la Frontera</b>	Seville
9	Day trip to <b>Cordoba</b> (high-speed train + private walking tour)	Seville
10	Explore Seville on your own	Seville
11	Airport transfer. Return to U.S.	

## ITINERARY (for more options, see our “Spain Highlights”)

**Day 1** - Leave the U.S.

**Day 2** - Arrival in **Barcelona**: Private airport transfer to your hotel. Relax on your own the rest of the day. You may want to start exploring the Gothic and Ribera (Born) quarters near the hotel and perhaps take in the Picasso Museum.

**Day 3** - Start your journey with a private eight-hour tour with your own chauffeur and guide. Choose your visits and/or let your guide advise you on the best places to see. Here are some of your options:

**Casa Batllo** and **Casa Mila**, also known as La Pedrera (Catalan word for “Quarry”): Two fanciful buildings designed by Antoni Gaudí in the Modernista (Art Nouveau) style at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. They are both located on one of Barcelona’s widest boulevards, the **Passeig de Gracia**. They are particularly remarkable because of Gaudí’s avoidance of straight lines and his use of colorful ceramic tiles and curving wrought iron. The non-traditional architectural features of Casa Batlló’s arched roof mimic the back of a dragon. The dozen or so surrealistic chimneys on top of La Pedrera resemble warriors in a science fiction movie.

**Park Güell**, a public park created by Antoni Gaudí. This complex displays the architect’s flamboyant creativity at its best: a mosaic dragon fountain at the main entrance, a long bench in the form of a sea serpent covered with multicolored tiles snaking around the main terrace (with panoramic vistas over the entire city) and a covered area with a forest of columns reminiscent of the ancient temples of upper Egypt.

**La Sagrada Familia** (“Expiatory Church of the Holy Family”), a massive, privately-funded Roman Catholic church still under construction. It is the crowning achievement of renowned Catalan architect Antoni Gaudí (1852–1926). The building's scale and idiosyncratic architecture have made it one of Spain's top tourist attractions. The architecture is unlike anything ever built anywhere. The older section looks like it was carved out of a massive rock. The statuary in the newer section is reminiscent of the characters in a Star Wars movie. The inside shows a clear Gothic influence. The





piece of architecture!

grandiose design and the magnitude of the project are absolutely mind boggling. It is a masterpiece of creativity and imagination.

**Las Ramblas**, a large mile-long pedestrian boulevard in downtown Barcelona that connects Placa de Catalunya and the Christopher Columbus monument by the harbor. Strolling the shaded tree-lined avenue is a favorite for both tourists and locals. Cafes, flower stands, artists, the vibrant Boqueria market nearby and the many whimsical street performers bring a festive atmosphere to this busy and sometimes crowded place.

**Palau de la Música Catalana** (Palace of Catalan Music) a concert hall in the Modernista style created by architect Lluís Domènech i Montaner, which opened in 1908. The design and architecture of this building are incredibly ornate (Baroque in many ways). During the day, it is entirely lit by natural light coming from the outside. This is achieved by walls that are made of stained-glass windows set in magnificent arches and the ceiling, an enormous skylight also made of stained glass (like an oversized Tiffany lamp shade) with hues of gold and blue that suggest the sun and the sky overhead. A “brilliantly” colorful

**Day 4** - Continue visiting Barcelona on your own. Many downtown sites are within walking distance. The Hop-on-Hop-off double-decker buses will get you to most tourist sites around the city and there is a good subway system. Other places of interest:

- **Picasso Museum**, with some of his early works
- **Catalan Art Museum**. A world-class collection of works by Catalonian artists
- **Church of Santa Maria del Mar**. A Gothic church in the Ribera district
- **Joan Miro Foundation**. Abstract art and sculpture
- **Plaza de Espana** with its ornate fountain
- **Montjuic Park** with panoramic views over the city
- **Barrio Gotico** (Gothic Quarter) with the Cathedral
- **Poble Espanyol** (Spanish Village), recreating architectural styles around Spain
- **Tibidabo**. An amusement park on top of a hill
- **Barceloneta's** beaches, restaurants and night life



**Day 5** - Transfer to Barcelona airport. Fly to Granada. Transfer to your hotel. This afternoon, a local expert guide will welcome you to ancient Granada and take you on a walking tour of the Old City:

The **Albaicín** is Granada's ancient Moorish quarter reminiscent of a long-gone, mysterious world. Of particular interest is the Plaza de San Nicolas with breathtaking views of the mighty Alhambra fortress on the hill facing it.



Granada's **Cathedral** is the second largest in Spain after Seville. It was started in the 16<sup>th</sup> century, and the massive structure displays a combination of Renaissance and Baroque styles. The main chapel contains two kneeling effigies of the Catholic Monarchs, Ferdinand and Isabella, who finished the reconquest of Spain from the Moors in 1492.

Originally a Moorish silk market, the **Alcaiceria** is a network of narrow lanes laid out like an Arab bazaar. The atmosphere takes you back centuries. Today, it is still a market of sorts, although the shoppers are mainly tourists.

The lavish **Royal Chapel** is the mausoleum of King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella, the Catholic Monarchs who ruled at the time of the voyages of Christopher Columbus. It also holds the remains of their daughter Queen Juana (Joan the Mad), her husband Philip the Handsome and the Infante Miguel, their oldest grandson. The Chapel's lacy

Plateresque Gothic style is richly ornate and one of the best examples of this style in Spain. The carved marble faces of the two monarchs are considered to be a good likeness of Ferdinand and Isabella. The high altar is one of the finest Renaissance works in all of Spain.

**Day 6** - Today, visit the **Alhambra** and more of Granada on your own. Granada is not a big city. Many sites are within walking distance. The Alhambra is an expansive Moorish palace and fortress with unique architecture and beautiful gardens. This complex is basically a cluster of four different sites perched side by side on top of a hill: the **Nasrid Palace**, an exquisite combination of rooms and courtyards (the famous Courtyard of the Lyons is one of them) where the Muslim rulers lived; the beautifully manicured **Generalife Gardens**, planted in the 1930s; **Charles V's Palace**, Spain's most impressive Renaissance building; and the **Alcázar**, an empty fortress with panoramic views over Granada. The Alhambra is one of the most visited tourist destinations in Europe. The culture and historical events reflected by this place make for an incredible touring experience.



**Day 7** - Enjoy a leisurely bus ride to Seville this morning and admire the Andalusian countryside (about a 3-hour ride). Upon arrival, a local expert guide will take you on a walking tour of historic Seville (Alcazar, La Giralda Cathedral, Santa Cruz Jewish Quarter.)



**Seville**, located on the banks of the Guadalquivir River, is the artistic, cultural, and financial capital of southern Spain. Its known history goes back to Roman times, and since it was controlled by the Moors from 712 to 1248 AD, it was heavily influenced by Arabic culture. It was taken by the Catholic King Ferdinand III during the *Reconquista*.

The 15th-century **Cathedral of Seville** was built on the former site of the city's mosque. It is the largest Gothic cathedral in the world and is lavishly decorated with gold and silver from the New World. The famous Giralda, originally a minaret, was converted into a bell tower. The Cathedral is also known for housing the remains of Christopher Columbus on a large raised platform, although there is some evidence that his remains may be in the Dominican Republic. In any event, the Cathedral and the memorial to Columbus are quite impressive.

The **Alcázar of Seville** ("Alcázares Reales de Sevilla") is a royal palace across from the cathedral. Construction started in 1181 under the Moors and continued for over 500 years. Its peaceful gardens are a blend of Moorish, Andalusian, and Christian traditions. The palace is one of the best remaining examples of mudéjar architecture, and the upper levels are still used by the royal family as their official Seville residence.

The **Barrio de Santa Cruz**, the former Jewish quarter of the medieval city, which is characterized by narrow, winding streets and whitewashed houses

**Day 8** - Today, explore "deep" Andalusia on a private guided tour of Jerez de la Frontera (visit a sherry bodega/wine cellar and the Royal Equestrian School) and Arcos de la Frontera (a picture-perfect "White Village").

The name of **Jerez de la Frontera** comes from the Arabic name Xerez or Xeres. *Frontera* refers to its location on the frontier between the Moorish and Christian regions of Spain during the *Reconquista*, during which the Christians took Spain back from the Moors. The name of the famous fortified wine, sherry, which originated here is an adaptation of the city's Arabic name, which is pronounced *Sherish*.

In addition to being known as the capital of sherry, Jerez is famous as the home of the **Royal Andalusian School of Equestrian Art**, a riding school comparable to the world-famous Spanish Riding School in Vienna.



**Arcos de la Frontera** is one of the famous “white villages” in southern Spain. At the top of the hill is the old town center with the Church of Santa Maria and the old fort across from a palace that has been turned into a Parador hotel. You’ll see rows of white-washed homes descending the narrow streets. The town commands a magnificent view of the peak of San Cristobal and the Guadalete Valley.



**Day 9** - Hop on the smooth riding high-speed train to **Cordoba** this morning and enjoy a private guided tour of the old Moorish city (La Mezquita, the Alcazar and gardens and the Synagogue).

**Cordoba** is a medium-sized city on the Guadalquivir River. It was founded in Roman times and later became the capital of the Caliphate of Córdoba, which governed almost all of the Iberian peninsula. It has been estimated that in the latter half of the 10th century Cordoba, with up to 500,000 inhabitants, was the most populated city in Europe and possibly in the world. It was known as an advanced cultural and economic center. In 1236 it was captured from the Moors by King Ferdinand III during the Spanish *Reconquista*.

The **Mezquita** is a Roman Catholic cathedral originally built as a mosque on the site of what previously had been a Visigothic Christian church. In 784, Emir Abd ar-Rahman I started rebuilding the earlier Visigothic church as a mosque, a process which continued for two centuries. After the capture of Cordoba in 1236, the mosque was turned into a church, with a Gothic cathedral inserted into the center of the large Moorish building. Under Charles V, a Renaissance nave was added in the middle of the structure. Artisans and architects continued to add to the existing structure until the late 18th century. Today, you can really feel the centuries of history as you walk beneath the giant arches of various styles, formed by hundreds of columns of jasper, onyx, marble and granite.

Near the Mezquita on the banks of the Guadalquivir River, is the **Alcázar de los Reyes Cristianos** ("Palace of the Christian Monarchs"). The fortress served as one of the primary residences of Queen Isabella of Castile and her husband King Ferdinand II of Aragon in the 15th century. The two monarchs also used the Alcázar for one of the first permanent tribunals of the Spanish Inquisition and as a headquarters for their campaign against the Nasrid dynasty in Granada, the last remaining Moorish kingdom in the Iberian Peninsula. In 1492, the monarchs met Christopher Columbus in the Alcázar before his first voyage to the Americas. Napoleon Bonaparte used the Alcázar as a garrison in 1810, after which it was turned into a prison.

The **Synagogue**, located in the Jewish Quarter of Córdoba, was built in the Mudejar style in 1315. After the expulsion of the Jews from Spain in 1492, the building was devoted to various functions including a hospital, a chapel for shoemakers and a nursery school, but it retains its original character. It was declared a National Monument in 1885.

**Day 10** - Discover more of Seville on your own today:

- **Plaza de España** and **Maria Luisa Park**, both built for the 1929 Exposición Ibero-Americana
- **Basilica de la Macarena** with its Weeping Virgin
- The **Torre de Oro** (golden tower)
- **La Isla Magica** (Magic Island) theme park
- **La Maestranza** bull ring
- Various museums including a **Flamenco Museum**



**Day 11** - Airport transfer for return flights to US.

Hello, my name is **Pierre Mainguéné**. I personally handcrafted this itinerary.

I am the co-founder and president of Circa Tours. I was born and raised in Brittany, France so, as a native European, I love everything about the “old country” especially France, Spain and Portugal, the three countries we specialize in. I love



their history (and there is lots of it), their art (same thing), their cuisine (especially in France, Catalonia and the Basque Country), their wine (everywhere), their lifestyle and the endless diversity of the local cultures.

In dozens of trips I have taken to Europe, I have traveled to nearly every corner of those countries, and I continue my journey of discovery every year. I am a Travel-Institute certified France and Spain Specialist, and I am also recognized by the Tourist Office of Portugal as a certified Portugal Specialist.

My goal is to create the best possible trip for you. I am always ready to listen to your wishes (however creative) and feedback, and I will always enjoy sharing my experiences with you.

That's me, by the way, in front of a Joaquin Sorolla painting in Madrid. And, the following are some comments made by a few of our clients:

- “Our trip was fantastic! We had such a wonderful time! All went well including getting our train tickets to Seville changed the day of the strike. Our guides were nothing less than phenomenal! We can't thank you and your staff enough for putting together a trip that was worthy of our 30th anniversary celebration!” M.B., Massachusetts
- “Pierre. Thank you for your services. I really enjoyed dealing with you. You are so knowledgeable, pleasant and professional. I certainly will recommend you to friends.” J.L., Colorado
- “It was not a good trip - it was a GREAT trip! Truly everything was fabulous, ran smoothly, and worked well. The guides were excellent, the itinerary perfect. We enjoyed Spain very much and will ask you for assistance on our next journey to southern Europe!” J.K., California
- “Circa Tours did a good job. They worked very closely with us in putting the program together. We were very pleased with how efficient everything ran. The information we received from Circa Tours was done up very well, which allowed us to just pull the appropriate paperwork and be on our way. The tours were very well done. The guides we had with the local travel providers did a very good job of explaining the areas we toured. Pierre at Circa Tours made sure we saw a bit of everything.” D.T., Florida
- “We are all home, safe and sound - very tired, but in a hazy daze of love for France. Thank you and Carolyn SO much for arranging such an amazing trip for all of us. Throughout the trip, my sisters, mom and myself could be heard saying such things as, “THANK YOU, PIERRE”...or, “thank goodness for Pierre!!!” Martine was an excellent guide, by the way...very good, nice, thorough and professional. We wouldn't have been able to do HALF of what we did (and certainly not with nearly as much carefree enjoyment) without her. Thank you and Carolyn for all of your expertise and care in helping us and doing all of the hard work for us! Thank you! Thank you!!!” K.B., Iowa