

CIRCA



TOURS

A division of Circa Terras, Inc.



Palace and Gardens - La Granja de San Ildefonso

Photos by Circa Tours

Grand Tour of Spain

Madrid - Andalusia - Barcelona
(16 days - 14 nights)

Circa Tours - 30919 Brassie Lane - Temecula - CA - 92591
Tel: 951-676-6117 - Fax: 951-676-6118 - www.circatours.com - CST 2081474-40
© Copyright Circa Tours and Circa Terras, Inc. All rights reserved

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 (16 days - 14 nights)

DAY	ACTIVITIES	NIGHT
1	Leave U.S.	
2	Arrive in Madrid . Airport transfer. At leisure	Madrid
3	Walking tour. Afternoon at leisure	Madrid
4	Day trip to Avila , Segovia and La Granja gardens	Madrid
5	Day trip to Toledo	Madrid
6	Train to Seville . Walking tour. At leisure	Seville
7	Day trip to Jerez de la Frontera (Royal Equestrian Show) and Cadiz	Seville
8	Day trip to Ronda . Visit oil mill in Zahara	Seville
9	Half-day trip to Roman Italica . At leisure. Evening flamenco show	Seville
10	Day trip to Cordoba . Walking tour. Visit Carmona	Seville
11	Train to Granada . Walking tour	Granada
12	Visit Alhambra. Afternoon at leisure. Overnight train to Barcelona	Barcelona
13	Day at leisure	Barcelona
14	Day tour of Barcelona	Barcelona
15	Day trip to Montserrat and the Penedes wine country	Barcelona
16	Airport transfer. Return to U.S.	

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

Day 1: Leave U.S.

Day 2: Arrive in **Madrid**. Relax during your private airport transfer to your hotel. Enjoy the rest of the day on your own. You might want to start with a museum or two. Please note: the Prado and Thyssen Bornemisza museums are closed on Mondays. The Reina Sophia museum is closed on Tuesdays.

The **Prado Museum** is one of Europe’s top museums, and it is also one of Madrid’s best attractions. Built in the late 18th century in Neoclassical style, it emphasizes Spanish art up to the 19th century. Goya's *El Tres de Mayo*, Velazquez's *Las Meninas*, and El Greco's *Adoracion de los Pastores* (*the Adoration of the Shepherds*) are some of the most famous pieces on display, but there are many more artists represented: Ribera, Murillo, and Zurbaran, to name a few. There is a substantial collection of Dutch and Italian masters as well.

The **Reina Sofia Museum** occupies an 18th-century building that has been renovated in a modern, avant-garde style by architect Jean Nouvel. As a modern art museum, it houses treasures of contemporary Spanish art such as works by Pablo Picasso, Salvador Dali, Juan Miro and many more. Since 1992, it has been the home of *Guernica*, Picasso's famed work depicting the 1937 Civil War bombing of a small Basque village by the German air force. This is a very dramatic painting and, as such, a major draw for history and modern art enthusiasts.

The **Thyssen-Bornemisza Museum** displays over 600 works of art ranging from medieval to modern pieces, giving the viewer a chance to enjoy an overall understanding of the history of Western art. The collection includes world-class examples of Italian, Flemish, Renaissance, Baroque, Impressionist, and even 20th-century American paintings. The Thyssen’s more “human-size” display is a fine complement to the Prado’s massive collection.





Plaza Mayor. One would not conceive of going to Madrid without a stroll around the cobble-stoned Plaza Mayor and down the narrow streets of the nearby old section of the city. Built in 1619 and once the site of public executions and bullfights, the plaza is the heart of the city. It is a quiet, pedestrian-only enclosed square with ancient arcades surrounded on all four sides by restaurants, bars and shops. Stop for refreshment at one of the outdoor cafes and watch the world go by while listening to the melodic tunes of the street musicians.

Other places of interest:

- **Retiro Park.** A few blocks east of the Prado Museum, a 300-acre park good for strolling, picnicking or boating on the lake.
- **Botanical Gardens** with rare plants and trees, next to the Prado Museum.
- **Sorolla Museum.** The house of famous painter Joaquin Sorolla (1863-1923) with some of his luminous paintings and portraits.
- **Chapel of San Antonio de la Florida.** Francisco Goya's tomb with some of his beautiful frescoes painted on the ceiling of the cupola up above.
- **Alcalá de Henares,** birthplace of famous author Miguel de Cervantes, only a short train ride from Madrid.

Day 3: This morning, your local guide will welcome you to Spain and take you on a walking tour of the Royal Palace and old parts of Madrid. You'll have time after lunch to visit more of the capital city on your own.

The Royal Palace is one of the most popular attractions in Madrid. This elegant building is one of Europe's greatest palaces, in close competition with the likes of Versailles in Paris, Schonbrunn in Vienna and the Winter Palace in St. Petersburg. It was built in the 1700s by King Philip V, the grandson of Louis XIV. With over 2,000 rooms - only a handful of which can be visited, of course - it is full of sumptuous interiors: luxurious tapestries, priceless porcelain, elegant furniture and more. (The palace is still used for official state receptions, so it is sometimes closed to the public.)



Day 4: Today's excursion takes you to Segovia, La Granja and Avila. Enjoy a walking tour of **Segovia** with its 8 mile-long Roman aqueduct, Jewish quarter and its many Romanesque, Gothic, Renaissance and Baroque monuments. The handsome Alcazar, a perfectly restored medieval castle, rounds out this tour. Then on to **La Granja** (Spain's mini-Versailles) to admire its splendid palace and glorious gardens. Next is **Avila** with its massive ramparts. Enjoy a leisurely stroll through the old town where the famous mystic Santa Teresa lived.

Day 5: This morning, you're off to **Toledo**. On your walking tour through the old quarter, you'll see ancient palaces, convents and churches. Visit the Visigoth Museum, the Transito Synagogue, the church of St Tome with El Greco's famous painting *The Burial of the Count of Orgaz* and the impressive Gothic Cathedral, among many other architectural and cultural jewels.

Day 6: Today, it's on to **Seville** by high-speed train. Enjoy a walking tour with visits of the Cathedral and Giralda bell tower, the Alcazar and the Jewish quarter of Santa Cruz. Spend the rest of the day exploring this elegant city.



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.

Other places of interest:

- **Plaza de España** and **María Luisa Park**, both built for the 1929 Exposición Ibero-Americana international fair. The ceramic tile decorations illustrating provinces of Spain are exquisite.
- **Basilica de la Macarena** with its Weeping Virgin and floats from the "Semana Santa" (Holy Week) religious processions that are performed every spring in Seville.
- The **Torre de Oro** (golden tower)
- **Casa de Pilatos**, a magnificent Mudéjar-style palace dating back to the 16th century.
- **La Isla Mágica** (Magic Island) theme park
- **Museo Palacio de la Condesa de Lebrija**, a stunningly beautiful 18th-century aristocratic mansion furnished with Phoenician, Greek, and Roman artifacts
- **La Maestranza** bull ring
- **Salvador church** is the second largest church of Seville after the Cathedral
- **Museum of Fine Arts** where lesser-known but still top-notch art by Zurbarán, Murillo and others is on display
- Various other museums including a **Flamenco Museum**, which explains the history, technique and art of Andalusia's signature dance.

Day 7: Travel to **Jerez**, where you'll attend a Royal Horse Show, and **Cádiz**. The name of Jerez de la Frontera comes from the Arabic name *Xerez* or *Xeres*, and *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. "Sherry" - the name of the famous fortified wine that 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.

Cádiz is an ancient port dating back to the Phoenicians and the Romans. In Christopher Columbus' day, it was a major staging point for treasure-hunting adventures to the New World. This bustling city on the Atlantic has an important port and a quaint old section with narrow streets lined with whitewashed, sun-bleached, Moorish-styled houses. The cathedral holds the tomb of native son composer Manuel de Falla.



Day 8: This morning you'll head off through the Andalusian hills to **Ronda**, one of the many pretty "white villages" of Andalusia. Perched on top of a rocky promontory, its beauty is enhanced by the dramatic location on either side of a 350-ft deep gorge spanned by a massive stone bridge built in the 18th century. The old section offers many beautifully decorated mansions with shaded patios as well as baths and minarets from the Moorish past. The new town has the oldest bullring in Spain, built in the 1700s, complete with a small but informative bullfight museum. Located roughly half-way between Malaga and Seville, it is a very popular destination for visitors.



Day 9: This morning, you'll explore **Italica**, the site of some of Spain's most impressive Roman ruins. This ancient place, a few miles outside Seville, used to be a thriving city of great military importance. Emperors Hadrian and Trajan were born there. Today you can still see a 20,000-spectator amphitheater, mosaic floors, thermal baths and a theater. Return to Seville in time for lunch and some free time before getting ready for an evening flamenco show.

Day 10: You'll spend today in **Cordoba**, with a walking tour of La Mezquita, the Alcazar, the Synagogue and the Jewish quarter. 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*.

La 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 Mudéjar 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.

Other places of interest:

- **Old City Patios.** Private Andalusian courtyards decorated with flowers.
- **Calahorra Tower** with its Museum of Three Cultures (Jewish, Christian and Muslim)

Day 11: The train to **Granada** this morning is a "regular" train, so you will have more time to enjoy the rolling hills of the Andalusian countryside. After checking in at your hotel, enjoy a guided walking tour of the old city: Albaicín, Alcaicería, the Cathedral and the Royal Chapel.



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 on the hill facing it.

Originally a Moorish silk market, the **Alcaicería** 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.



Granada's **Cathedral** is the second largest in Spain after Seville. It was started in the 16th 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.

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 12: This morning's visit is arguably the high point of any Spain tour: the amazing **Alhambra**, an expansive Moorish palace and fortress with unique architecture and beautiful gardens. This complex is 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 Lions is one of them - where the Muslim rulers lived; the beautifully manicured **Generalife Gardens**, planted in the 1930s; the **Palace of Charles V**, Spain's most impressive Renaissance building; and the **Alcazaba**, 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. Enjoy some free time this afternoon before your overnight train to Barcelona.

Day 13: You'll have the whole day in **Barcelona** to relax on the beautiful beaches of Barceloneta, Icaria and more.

Day 14: Spend the day visiting **Barcelona** with a chauffeur and guide. Choose your visits and/or let your guide advise you on the best places to see.

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



Casa Batlló and Casa Milà, 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 20th century. They are both located on one of Barcelona's widest boulevards, the Passeig de Gràcia. 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.

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 piece of architecture!

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 15: Today you'll head into the scenic mountains above Barcelona for a day trip to the Montserrat shrine, followed by an afternoon of wine tasting in the Penedes wine country:

About 40 miles from Barcelona and at 4,000 feet elevation, the Monasterio de **Montserrat** is nestled in a scenic setting of jagged mountains. The place has been Catalonia's most important pilgrimage site for centuries. Montserrat is a Benedictine monastery dating back to 880 AD. It was mostly destroyed by Napoleon's army but was subsequently rebuilt and today is a fine example of Romanesque architecture in pristine condition. It is also known as the sanctuary of the Virgin of Montserrat, the Moreneta, a black madonna and the patron saint of Catalonia. The live-in monks run a boys' school focusing on the study of music - hence the famous Montserrat Escolania choir. The site also boasts an interesting museum with works by El Greco, Picasso, Dalí and a handful of Impressionists.

The **Codorniu winery**, located in Sant Sadurn d'Anoia - in the Penedes region just south of Barcelona - was founded in the middle of the 16th century. It is one of the world's largest producers of sparkling wine (called “cava” in Spain) made by the traditional “méthode champenoise” originally developed in the Champagne region of France. In addition to tasting the wine, a visit to Codorniu offers the added bonus of seeing its stunning Modernista-style building designed by Catalan architect Josep Puig i Cadafalch.



Day 16: You'll end your trip with a private airport transfer to catch your flight home.

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) with out her. Thank you and Carolyn for all of you expertise and care in helping us and doing all of the hard work for us! Thank you! Thank you!!!!” K.B., Iowa