

CIRCA



TOURS

*A division of Circa Terras, Inc.*



City of Arts and Sciences - Valencia

Photos by Circa Tours

## *Northeastern Spain by Train*

Madrid - Valencia - Barcelona - Bilbao  
(13 days - 11 nights)

Circa Tours - 30919 Brassie Lane - Temecula - CA - 92591  
Tel: 951-676-6117 - Fax: 951-676-6118 - [www.circatours.com](http://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 (13 days - 11 nights)

DAY	ACTIVITIES	NIGHT
1	Leave U.S.	
2	Arrive in <b>Madrid</b> . Airport transfer	Madrid
3	Morning walking tour. Afternoon at leisure	Madrid
4	Day trip to <b>Toledo</b> OR <b>Avila</b> and <b>Segovia</b>	Madrid
5	Morning at leisure. Afternoon train to <b>Valencia</b>	Valencia
6	Morning walking tour. Afternoon at leisure	Valencia
7	Morning train to <b>Barcelona</b> . Afternoon at leisure	Barcelona
8	Full-day city tour	Barcelona
9	Day trip to <b>Girona</b> and Dali Museum in <b>Figueres</b> OR <b>Montserrat</b> shrine and <b>Penedes</b> wine region	Barcelona
10	Morning train to <b>Bilbao</b> . Afternoon at leisure	Bilbao
11	Day trip to <b>Vitoria</b> and <b>La Rioja</b> wine region	Bilbao
12	Day trip to <b>San Sebastian</b> and <b>Biarriz</b> , France	Bilbao
13	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 may want to start exploring the Plaza Mayor, Plaza del Sol, Gran Via, Cibeles Fountain, etc.

**Day 3:** Your local guide will welcome you to Spain and introduce you to the capital city. A walking tour will include the Royal Palace and old parts of Madrid. Later you can visit the Prado, Thyssen, Sorolla or Reina Sofia Museums at your own pace. Please note: the Prado, Thyssen Bornemisza and Sorolla museums are closed on Mondays. The Reina Sophia museum is closed on Tuesdays.



**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:** 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.

OR, the alternative today is an excursion to Segovia 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. Next is **Avila** with its massive ramparts. Have a leisurely stroll through the old town where the famous mystic Santa Teresa lived.



**Day 5:** Spend the morning in Madrid for more sightseeing. Then, board the train for a 4-hour smooth and comfortable ride to the Mediterranean city of **Valencia**. Please note: all trains on this trip are “regular” trains (not high-speed), giving you more time to appreciate the scenery.

**Day 6:** Welcome to **Valencia** and enjoy being taken around this exciting city by your own private guide.

Valencia, Spain's third largest city, is the home of the famous Lladro porcelain factory, the birthplace of paella, horchata, Impressionist painter Joaquin Sorolla and famous architect Santiago Calatrava.

Valencia's crowning tourist attraction is the 90-acre City of Arts and Sciences Park designed by Santiago Calatrava. This ultra-modern complex includes a museum, a planetarium, a covered promenade, a performing arts center and a recently finished sports center and new bridge, plus the Oceanografic, a futuristic marine park created by another Spanish architect, Felix Candela - all within easy walking distance of one another.

This vibrant, “wild” and modern Mediterranean city also boasts an old town: A 13<sup>th</sup>-century cathedral with a massive octagonal bell tower, El Miguelete, and what some believe to be the Holy Grail on the inside; the Torres de Serranos, two 14<sup>th</sup>-century towers that protected the entrance to the city; la Lonja de la Seda (Silk Exchange), a hall from the 15<sup>th</sup> century with Flamboyant Gothic architecture displaying grotesque sculptures and gargoyles on its façade. Other churches and museums can be seen in the old quarter, some of the most unusual being the Museo de Ceramica; the Museo Fallero showing “ninots” (figures made of papier-mache) from past Fallas Festivals; and the Museo San Pio V, a fine arts museum considered one of the best in Spain, with works by Velazquez, El Greco, Goya and Sorolla.



**Day 7:** Spend the morning in Valencia for more sightseeing. Then, board the train for a 3-hour smooth and comfortable ride to the Barcelona. Enjoy the soft rocking motion of the train while watching the countryside go by! Afternoon at leisure in Barcelona.

**Day 8:** Start your sightseeing today with the “Classic Tour” of **Barcelona**. This tour will give you a quick overview of this vibrant city: Plaza de Catalunya, Via Laietana, the Cathedral and its cloister, the Gothic Quarter, Plaza Sant Jaume (Generalitat and Town Hall). Then on to Villa Olimpica (residential complex for the 1992 Olympic games) and Port Olympic. Next, ascend Montjuïc Mountain, with panoramic views over the city and the harbor. Tour the Olympic Stadium, Palau Sant Jordi and the Calatrava-designed radio and television tower. Visit Poble Espanyol (Spanish Village), with its faithful reproductions of typical architectural styles around Spain.



After lunch, continue your exploration of the city on the “Artistic Tour.” Barcelona is the capital of the Modernista style of architecture and the place where the famous Catalan architect, Antonio Gaudi, lived and worked. On this panoramic tour along Passeig de Gràcia, you will see some of his most famous achievements: Casa Batlló and Casa Milà, also known as “La Pedrera”. Then take a stroll around Parc Güell, a large public park and another example of Gaudi’s creative genius. Next, admire the Cathedral of La Sagrada Família, his masterpiece, which is still under construction. On to Santa Maria del Mar, a magnificent Gothic church. The last stop on the tour is the Picasso Museum, which houses some of the artist’s early works. You can visit the museum on your own (closed on Mondays).

**Day 9:** Today you travel north to **Girona, Figueres** and the Dali Museum. On your walking tour of Girona, you’ll discover a city rich in heritage, with one of Europe’s best-preserved Jewish quarters. In Figueres, enjoy surrealist Teatre-Museu Dalí, and see the artist’s famous jewelry called “Dalí Joies.”

OR, as an alternative, take a day trip to the **Montserrat** shrine, up on the mountains above the city, and the **Penedes** wine region, south of the city for a wine tasting of “cava” (Catalonian champagne).

**Day 10:** Hop on an early train this morning for your leisurely trip to the **Basque Country**, going through the history-filled provinces of Aragon and Navarra. Afternoon at leisure. You might want to visit the world-famous Guggenheim Modern Art Museum, Bilbao’s signature monument. The building by itself is an interesting “work of art” designed by architect Frank Gehry.



**Day 11:** Today, treat yourself to some of the finest wine in the world! The famous **La Rioja wine region**, south of Bilbao, is known as the Bordeaux of Spain. Leaving Bilbao, enjoy the lush and verdant mountain scenery before reaching **Vitoria**, the capital of the Alava region. Take some leisure time to stroll around and visit the city’s Old Quarter. Next on the itinerary are **Laguardia** and **Labastida**, two quaint small towns surrounded by vineyards and magnificent wineries. Enjoy an afternoon winery visit with wine tasting before returning to Bilbao.



**Day 12:** On the menu today are two of the finest and most sophisticated seaside resorts in Europe - well on a par with the French Riviera: **San Sebastian**, Spain and **Biarritz**, France. Leaving from Bilbao, the first stop on this tour is Biarritz, just over the border with Spain. Enjoy a panoramic tour of the beautiful beaches (la Grande Plage), the casino, the lighthouse and the Rocher de la Vierge. Admire the Belle-Epoque architecture of luxurious Hotel du Palais, a favorite of Napoleon III and his wife Eugenie. On to the beautiful summer resort of **St. Jean-de-Luz**. Next, you’ll follow the coast to **Hendaye**, at the mouth of Rio Bidasoa to **Hodarribia**, across the estuary and back into Spain. Take a walking tour around the medieval walled city, the castle of Charles V and the many beautiful mansions

adorned with flower-filled balconies. Spend the afternoon in lovely San Sebastian, with its signature La Concha Bay and its Old Quarter. Enjoy a walk up Mount Igeldo for breathtaking views of the bay. Then stroll around the Puerto Viejo, the Church of the Virgen del Coro and the Aquarium or sample the famous gastronomical “Pintxo” (tapas) in a local bar before returning to Bilbao.

**Day 13:** Airport transfer. Return to U.S.

Hello, my name is **Pierre Mainguené**. 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