

CIRCA



TOURS

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Plaza Mayor - Madrid

Photos by Circa Tours

A Taste of Spain

Barcelona - Madrid - Andalusia
(10 days - 8 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 (10 days - 8 nights)

DAY	ACTIVITIES	NIGHT
1	Leave U.S.	
2	Arrive in Barcelona . Airport transfer	Barcelona
3	Tour Barcelona	Barcelona
4	Day trip to Figueres and Girona	Barcelona
5	High-speed train to Madrid . Walking tour	Madrid
6	Half-day trip to Toledo . Explore Madrid at leisure	Madrid
7	High-speed train to Seville . Walking tour	Seville
8	Day trip to Cordoba	Seville
9	Day trip to Granada	Seville
10	Airport transfer. Fly to Barcelona. Return to U.S.	

ITINERARY (for more options, see our "Spain Highlights")

Day 1: Leave U.S.

Day 2: Arrive in Barcelona. 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 Gothic and Ribera (Born) quarters and perhaps take a stroll on Las Ramblas before dinner.

Day 3: 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.



Day 4: Today you'll 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. You'll also visit Figueres, with its surrealist Teatre-Museu Dalí, and see the famous jewelry called "Dalí Joies."

Day 5: Enjoy the countryside of Catalonia, Aragon and Castilla la Mancha as you travel





by high-speed train to **Madrid**. There, your guide will take you on a walking tour of the city, including the **Royal Palace**. This elegant building, one of the most popular attractions in Madrid, 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 6: This morning, you're off to **Toledo**. Your tour includes the following visits: Outside view of the Cathedral; the Church of St. Tomé with El Greco's masterpiece, *The Burial of the Count of Orgaz*; Synagogue of Santa María la Blanca; Museum of Victorio Macho; Monastery of San Juan de los Reyes; famous technique of Damasquinado (encrusting of precious metals in steel) and panoramic sightseeing of the city. Explore Madrid at leisure in the afternoon. You may want to take in one of the city's famous museums: El Prado, the Reina Sofía or the Thyssen-Bornemisza. Please note: the Prado and Thyssen Bornemisza museums are closed on Mondays. The Reina Sophia museum is closed on Tuesdays.

Day 7: 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.

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 grand 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** (Spanish "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: Your day trip to **Cordoba** will include visits of La Mezquita, the Alcazar 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 then 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 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 9: Saving perhaps the best for last, you will travel to **Granada** to visit the Alhambra.

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 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.

Day 10: End your trip with a private airport transfer to catch your early morning flight to Barcelona. Return to U.S.

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