



## SPAIN

*Savor the distinctive wine, food, art, history, and traditions of this elegant country*

September 2019 / 14 days

### HIGHLIGHTS

- Stay in 4-star+ hotels in the centers of the culturally rich cities of Madrid, Seville, and Barcelona plus two elegant Spanish Paradors, restored medieval monasteries, in Almagro and Granada
- Tour vineyards and wineries to taste regional wines and food in five of Spain's renowned wine regions: Ribera del Duero, Valdepeñas, Jerez, Málaga, and Penedés
- Dine with local hosts, sampling traditional food and wine from the different regions
- Visit Spain's spiritual capital Toledo, the Roman/Moorish capital Córdoba, the cliff-perched town of Ronda, the frontier city Jerez, and the windmills of Don Quixote fame in La Mancha
- View masterpieces of the greatest Spanish artists in Madrid and Toledo and the architectural genius of Gaudí in Barcelona
- Attend an exquisite equestrian performance of the Royal Andalusian School of Equestrian Art
- Enjoy flamenco music and dance at its finest in Seville
- Learn about the history of Spanish bullfighting at Spain's first professional bullring in Ronda
- Tour the magnificent palace of the ancient Moors, the Alhambra

### DAILY ITINERARY

1. Arrive in Madrid, Spain's grand and vibrant capital. After checking in to the hotel, take some time to relax and refresh before joining your friends for a visit to Madrid's *Royal Palace*, one of the most elaborate and best preserved palaces in Europe. Stroll through the royal neighborhood surrounding the palace and learn about Spain's infamous kings and queens. Enjoy a cup of coffee or a glass of wine at Café de Oriente, an elegant coffee house and restaurant frequented by Spain's royal family.

**Hotel Paseo del Prado – 3 nights**

[www.nh-collection.com/es/hotel/nh-collection-madrid-paseo-del-prado](http://www.nh-collection.com/es/hotel/nh-collection-madrid-paseo-del-prado)

2. This morning, take a guided walking tour of artistic and literary Madrid. With your Madrid art expert, visit one of the world's most impressive art museums, *The Prado*, home to masterpieces by Velasquez, Goya, and El Greco. Wander the nearby streets of Madrid's literary neighborhood, *Las Letras*, where buildings and monuments keep alive the memory of writers such as Cervantes and Lope de Vega. End the tour at the magnificent *Plaza Mayor*, a vast square and stage where important historical events have taken place since the 17<sup>th</sup> century. Enjoy a leisurely lunch at one of the many outdoor cafés on the plaza. In the evening, meet your Spanish host to participate in a two centuries-old tradition, "the tapas", visiting several tapas bars each with their own specialty. Tapas are small portions of different dishes that are shared and accompanied by the house wine and lively conversation. This is an opportunity to exchange views with your Spanish host to learn about topics of interest such as Spanish traditions, history, family life, politics, food, and wine. (B, D)

3. Enjoy a full day excursion to the Ribera del Duero Wine Region and the famous *López Cristobal Winery*. The López family have dedicated their lives to constantly improving their vineyards and winemaking processes. The Bodega López Cristóbal vineyards have mostly Tempranillo grapes with some Merlot and Albillo grapes. The soil is unique in its mineral content and especially conducive to producing red wines. Enjoy an informal tapas lunch with your host, sampling the local delicatessen and wines and discussing the Ribera lifestyle. (B, L)
4. Depart Madrid with your private driver for Toledo, the well preserved medieval city that is one of Spain's artistic highlights and the country's spiritual capital. With its rich mix of Roman, Jewish, Visigothic, Moorish, and Christian heritages, the entire city has been declared a national monument. With a local expert guide, explore the highlights of Toledo: the magnificent *Cathedral*, the ancient *Synagogue*, and El Greco paintings. Have lunch at your leisure and then continue on to the town of Almagro in the region of La Mancha, stopping by the windmills that Don Quixote once battled. After a leisurely dinner in the village town square or at the parador's fine dining restaurant, sleep soundly in a beautifully restored medieval monastery, established in the 15<sup>th</sup> century. (B)  
**Parador de Almagro – 2 nights** [www.parador.es/es/paradores/parador-de-almagro](http://www.parador.es/es/paradores/parador-de-almagro)
5. This morning, sleep in, relax among the fountains, and wander the quiet village streets. In the late afternoon, visit *La Bodega de las Estrellas*, a traditional winery with thick clay walls, Arabic tiles, and a rock cave hewn out by hand. Learn about the history of wine growing in the Valdepeñas region where wine has been produced since Roman times. Learn about the unique traditions of this winery and how organic wine is processed. The evening is at your leisure, relaxing at the parador or joining the locals as they gather for the evening *paseo* on the plaza. (B, D)
6. Travel to Córdoba to enjoy a self-guided walking tour of this ancient capital of the Roman and Moorish empires. Visit the magnificent *Mezquita*, the Moorish mosque turned Catholic cathedral, and the charming historical *Jewish Quarter*. Have lunch at your leisure before continuing on to Seville in the afternoon. (There are professional Bullfights in Seville on some Sunday evenings in June and held at Spain's most architecturally striking bullring, *Maestranza*. For those interested, it may be possible to get tickets once the 2018 bullfighting schedule is available.) (B)  
**Hotel Casa del Poeta – 3 nights** [www.casadelpoeta.es](http://www.casadelpoeta.es)
7. Explore the historical center and neighborhoods of the sophisticated city of Seville by horse and carriage. Visit the *Cathedral*, the third largest in the world and the final resting place of Christopher Columbus, and the Moorish-inspired *Alcazar Castle*, still used by the King of Spain today. Enjoy the afternoon at your leisure shopping, dining, or wandering the labyrinth of ancient streets near the hotel. In the evening, take a short walking tour of the *Barrio Santa Cruz* on the way to the flamenco show. Flamenco, with its Moorish, Jewish, and Gypsy (Romano) influences, is a music and dance form unique to Spain. (B)
8. This morning travel to Jerez, a city renowned for its grand palaces, finely bred horses and fighting bulls, passionate flamenco, and sherry wine. At noon, you will attend a performance of the Royal Andalusian School of Equestrian Art – an amazing equestrian ballet that brings horse and rider into perfect harmony with choreography, Spanish music, and 19<sup>th</sup> century costumes. Before the show, visit the gardens, palace, training grounds, and museum of the Royal Equestrian School. After the performance, enjoy a private visit to *Díez Mérito Winery*. This winery began two hundred years ago and the majestic building dates from 1730. During the visit, enjoy the patios and gardens where you can smell and sense one of the oldest wines in the world: the prestigious Fino Imperial. End the visit with a delicious tapas lunch of local products and tastings of sherry wines. (B, L)

9. Travel south to visit the cliff-top town of Ronda, one of the White Hill Towns, located on the top of the spectacular Tajo Gorge. Take a self-guided tour of the old city and the historic bullring. In the early afternoon, enjoy a unique visit to *Los Descalzos Viejos Winery* and wine tasting with one of the owners of the winery, the Retamero Salesi Family. Set in an old convent founded in 1505, the buildings, vineyards, gardens, orchards, ponds, and fountains have been lovingly restored. Located in the Málaga wine region, some of the varieties produced here are Cabernet Sauvignon, Syrah, Garnacha, and Merlot. After spending the afternoon at the winery, continue on to Granada, the fabled city located in the foothills of the snow-capped Sierra Nevada. Check in to the luxurious Parador de Granada, an elegantly restored convent originally built by Queen Isabel after conquering the last stronghold of the Moors, located on the grounds of the Alhambra with stunning views of the mountains and the city of Granada. (B, L)

**Parador de Granada – 2 nights** [www.parador.es/es/paradores/parador-de-granada](http://www.parador.es/es/paradores/parador-de-granada)

10. Enjoy a self-guided walking tour of the world-famous *Alhambra*, the exquisite Moorish palace surrounded by the beautiful Generalife Gardens. All the refinement, wealth and delicacy of Islamic art and architecture reached its height in the South of Spain in this unique complex. The Alhambra is a stunning fortress/city once alive with royal palaces and harems, homes and shops, gardens and orchards, and an elaborate water system that provided running water from the nearby mountains to the palace's bath houses, gardens, and fountains. In the afternoon, visit the *Artisan Market* in the city center and the *Royal Chapel*, final resting place of the Catholic monarchs, Isabel and Ferdinand. From there, you can walk or taxi up the hill to the *Albaicin*, the ancient Moorish neighborhood not much changed for hundreds of years. If you choose, have dinner at a traditional *Carmen*, an intimate restaurant with a patio and garden and a view across the river of the sun setting on the Alhambra. (B)

11. Wander the peaceful grounds of the *Alhambra* one last time before taking an early afternoon flight to Barcelona, one of Europe's most visually stunning cities and renowned as the new culinary capital of Europe. In fact, this evening you will experience a unique cultural and culinary event. Stroll down the pedestrian boulevard, *La Rambla*, where flower vendors, street entertainers, and café patrons flow to the sea. Meet your hosts at a private apartment just off La Rambla for a hands-on paella cooking experience. After helping to prepare a traditional four-course meal, join in lively conversation around the table while enjoying fine cuisine accompanied by Sangria and wines from Tarragona. (B, D)

**Hotel Condes de Barcelona – 3 nights** [www.condesdebarcelona.com](http://www.condesdebarcelona.com)

12. This morning take a guided tour of *Modernista* and *Gaudí* architecture with a local art expert. Antoni Gaudí is renowned as Spain's most imaginative architect who designed buildings with ornate curves and gables. Experience *La Sagrada Familia*, an architecturally complex building full of nature and religious symbolism. The great genius dedicated more than 40 years to his work and after his death in 1926, the project continues according to Gaudí's original plans and drawings. Visit *Parc Guell*, Gaudí's planned whimsical, self-contained neighborhood now a stunning park above the city. After lunch, on a self-guided tour, wander the winding streets of Barcelona's historical *Gothic Quarter* to view ancient Roman walls and medieval architecture. In this same neighborhood, you can make an optional visit to the *Picasso Museum*, designed by Pablo Picasso himself. In the evening, enjoy drinks and appetizers on the hotel's terrace bar, overlooking the city wide fireworks and party celebrations of Barcelona's most important festival, celebrating both the Feast of Sant Joan and the Summer Solstice, the shortest night of the year. (B)

13. On your last full day in Spain, enjoy a full day excursion to the famed *Penedés Wine Region* where prestigious wines of exceptional quality are produced in this region of Catalonia. This is where another renowned drink is also produced – Cava, sparkling white wine. At the first winery, *Can Rafols dels Cau*, enjoy a freshly-prepared private lunch followed by a premium wine tasting. Continue on to a second winery rich in history and traditions for an additional tasting of premium wines and local foods. Later in the evening enjoy one last neighborhood stroll, stopping for dessert at an outdoor café. (B, L)

14. Depart Barcelona for your return flight home. Adiós a España. Hasta la proxima vez.

**SMALL GROUP DELUXE TOUR includes:**

- Daily breakfast plus dining experiences listed in the itinerary
- Accommodations in 4-star+ centrally located hotels and paradors
- Wine tasting with food pairings at 5 regional wineries
- Wine/food tasting experiences with a local guide in Madrid and in a private home in Barcelona
- All entrance fees for events listed in the itinerary
- Local expert guides in Madrid, Toledo, and Barcelona
- Full time services of a bilingual tour escort and amateur Spain tour guide
- In-country flight from Granada to Barcelona
- Transportation in modern vehicles with professional, experienced drivers
- Gratuities for guides and drivers

**\$4,950 per person (double)**

(Not included: optional events; round trip airfare to/from US; airport/hotel transfers; travel insurance)



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