

Examen the Call: An Ignatian Pilgrimage to Spain and France

11 days / 9 nights

St. Ignatius considered the ‘examen’ (a general examination of the conscience or spiritual self-review) to be the “most useful way for the cleansing of the soul”—for according to this Spanish knight, hermit, theologian and Priest (since 1537) who founded the Society of Jesus (Jesuits), “in order to choose anything well, it is our duty with a pure and single eye to consider for what purpose we were created”. As we pilgrimage through the scenically beautiful and spiritually rich lands of Spain and France, to follow in the footsteps of beloved St. Ignatius and to visit its holiest of places, we will have opportunity to gratefully consider the sacrifice and wisdom of a timeless saint, and to renew our commitment to the roots of our Catholic faith. The masses and meditations we celebrate along the way will remind us “how all gifts and good things come down from heaven.” (All quotes are from *The Spiritual Exercises of the Holy Father* by St. Ignatius.)

Day 1: Departure from the USA

Soul of Christ, sanctify me./Blood of Christ, inebriate me./Water of the side of Christ, wash me./Passion of Christ, strengthen me. (First portion of the Prayer from *The Spiritual Exercises of the Holy Father* by St. Ignatius).

Our pilgrimage begins with an overnight flight to Madrid, Spain.

Day 2: Madrid Arrival

“For as to walk, to travel, and to run, are bodily exercises: so also to prepare and disperse the soul... to seek and find the will of God with respect to the ordering of one’s life and the salvation of one’s soul, are called Spiritual Exercises” (*The Spiritual Exercises of the Holy Father* by St. Ignatius).

Welcome to Madrid, the capital and largest city in Spain. Although we will find Madrid a modern city, we can’t help but be captivated by its rich history, art and spirit. After arriving at our hotel, a little rest and relaxation might be in order. Or, for the more adventurous and energetic, suggested sights and walking trails can be provided upon request.

Day 3: Madrid & El Escorial

“For it is not the abundance of the knowledge, but the interior feeling and taste of things, which is accustomed to satisfy the desire of the Soul.” (*The Spiritual Exercises of the Holy Father* by St. Ignatius).

Some contend that the original name of Madrid was "Ursaria" ("land of bears") due to the high number of these animals found in the adjacent forests, which, together with the strawberry tree (madroño), have been emblems of the city from ancient times. We begin our day by visiting many of its remarkable landmarks, including the Prado Museum, which hosts one of the finest art collections in the world – including important Spanish and Flemish paintings, classical statues purchased from Italy, medieval religious treasures and even some Romanesque frescoes. We will also explore Buen Retiro Park, founded in 1631, and the immense Royal Palace of Madrid. This afternoon we’ll travel about 28 miles northwest to El Escorial, situated at the foot of Mt. Abantos in the Sierra de Guadarrama, a semi-forested, wind-swept place that owes its name to nearby piles of slag or tailings (*scoria*) from old iron mines. El Escorial, built by King Philip II to mark his victory over the French at San-Quentin in 1557, is not only a historical residence of the King (and famous burial site for most of the Spanish kings for the last five centuries) but also functions as a monastery, royal palace, museum, and school. The monastery contains important works of art by famous artists like El Greco and Velazquez, and in the Capitulary and the Sacristy Rooms, paintings such as *Joseph's Coat* by Velázquez, *The Last Supper* by Titian, or *The Adoration of the Sacred Host* by Charles II by Claudio Coello are on display. We continue our excursion to a striking memorial to those who



died in the Spanish Civil War in the nearby Valley of the Fallen where we will see a basilica built into the mountain which contains the tombs of many soldiers from both sides of the conflict. Toward day's end, we return to Madrid for dinner and overnight.

Day 4: Madrid/Avila/Arévalo/Salamanca

"... while we converse vocally or mentally with the Lord God or His Saints, a greater reverence is required of us..." (The Spiritual Exercises of the Holy Father by St. Ignatius).

We depart from Madrid this morning and head through Spain's magnificent countryside to first visit Avila, birth place of St. Teresa of Avila and known for its medieval city walls constructed of brown granite and containing eighty-eight towers and nine gateways that are still in excellent condition. Just beyond the medieval walls is the Convento de la Encarnación (Convent of the Incarnation), where Teresa lived, wrote, and experienced many of her mystical experiences. Next we head to Arévalo, the city where Ignatius spent several years of his young life to be educated as a gentleman under the tutelage of Juan Velázquez de Cuéllar, friend to Ignatius' father and chief treasurer to King Ferdinand. We then continue on to Salamanca, nicknamed *La Ciudad Dorada* ("The Golden City") because of its Renaissance sandstone buildings and the golden glow of its Villamayor Stone (a type of sandstone coming from a quarry close by). It is here that we'll enjoy dinner and an overnight stay.

Day 5: Salamanca/Burgos/San Sebastian

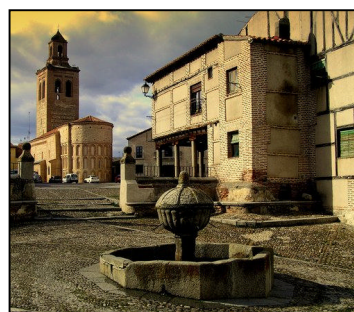
"Man was created for this end, that he might praise and reverence the Lord his God and serving Him, at length, be saved" (The Spiritual Exercises of the Holy Father by St. Ignatius).

This morning we are treated to a brief tour of Salamanca, the Golden City, known both for its monumental sights and its great University. Founded in 1218, it is the oldest university in Spain and the fifth oldest in the western world. The university is, together with tourism, the economic engine of Salamanca. The beautiful Tormes river lies next to Salamanca and is crossed by a five hundred-foot long bridge with more than two dozen arches, fifteen of which are of Roman origin and the rest from the 1500s. We celebrate Mass in the famous old Romanesque Cathedral built in the 12th century, whose vault of the apse was frescoed by the early Renaissance painter, Nicolas Florentino. In the treasury is the bronze crucifix that was carried into battle by El Cid, one of Spain's most famous heroes. Before making our way to the coastal city of San Sebastian in Basque Country, where we'll enjoy dinner and an overnight stay, we'll tour Burgos, historic capital of Castile with many unforgettable landmarks such as the Cathedral of Burgos, burial place of El Cid and famous for its vast size and unique architecture. The cathedral sports a Gothic style from its original construction in 1221 but has Renaissance touches added in the 15th and 16th centuries. Before we continue on to San Sebastian, we'll note that lovely Burgos has a number of other churches as well as palaces, parks and structures from the medieval age.

Day 6: St. Ignatius of Loyola

That we may be altogether of the same mind and in conformity with the Church herself... For we must undoubtingly believe, that the Spirit of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the Spirit of the Orthodox Church His Spouse, by which Spirit we are governed and directed to Salvation, is the same (St. Ignatius).

Today we take a day excursion to Loyola, the birthplace of St Ignatius of Loyola, founder of the Jesuits. St Ignatius of Loyola, a Spanish knight from a Basque noble family, emerged as a religious leader during the Counter Reformation. Loyola's devotion to the Church was characterized by unquestioning obedience to everything said by her hierarchy. He was much influenced by Ludolph of Saxony's *De Vita Christi* where it is



proposed that the reader place himself at the scene of each Gospel story. This is known as a method of prayer called Simple Contemplation and is the basis of the method that St Ignatius set out in his Spiritual Exercises. In Loyola we'll visit the home of St. Ignatius and the 17th Century Basilica dedicated to him. After lunch we'll have time for individual contemplation before our return to St. Sebastian for another dinner and overnight.

Day 7: San Sebastian & Lourdes

"In times of desolation, one must not deliberate on anything, or make any change concerning one's purposes of mind... but persevere in those things settled... during the hour of consolation" (The Spiritual Exercises of the Holy Father by St. Ignatius).

When Bernadette Soubirous was 14 years of age and out gathering firewood with her sister and a friend at the grotto of Massabielle outside Lourdes, she had an experience that completely changed her life and the town of Lourdes where she had lived. It was on this day in 1858 that Bernadette claimed she had the first of 18 visions of what she termed "a small young lady" (*ua petita damisela*) standing in a niche in the rock. The contents of Bernadette's reported visions were simple and mostly focused on the need for prayer and penance. This morning we leave San Sebastian and make our way to Lourdes, one of the most important centers of pilgrimage in the world. Pope John Paul II visited the shrine twice, and in 2007, Pope Benedict XVI authorized special indulgences to mark the 150th anniversary of Our Lady of Lourdes. Tonight we'll enjoy dinner and an overnight stay in Lourdes.

Day 8: The Shrine of Lourdes

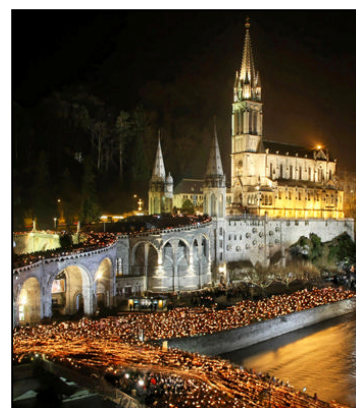
I am the Immaculate Conception (Que soi era immaculada concepcion) (Mary to Bernadette).

We begin this morning with Mass after which we will walk in the footsteps of Bernadette as we visit the Grotto of Massabielle, the site of St. Bernadette's visions of the Virgin Mary (The Blessed Virgin is said to have pointed out a previously undiscovered spring in the grotto and instructed Bernadette to drink from it. The spring water from the grotto is believed to possess healing properties, and the Roman Catholic Church occasionally officially recognizes miraculous healings here.), the home in which St. Bernadette and her family lived at the time the girl saw visions of the Virgin Mary, the parish church, and other holy shrines and sites related to these miraculous visions. We are welcome to participate in the Procession of the Blessed Sacrament and the Blessing of the Sick (depending on seasonal schedules) in the late afternoon, and will return after dinner, to the Sanctuary for the Rosary and Torchlight Procession (beginning at about 8:30 p.m.) depending on seasonal schedules. After the day's rich events, we return to our hotel for a second night's stay in Lourdes.

Day 9: Lourdes & Paris

"... [T]he property of God and every good Angel: to pour into the mind of man true spiritual joy..." (The Spiritual Exercises of the Holy Father by St. Ignatius).

Today a train takes us from Lourdes to one of the most beautiful and vibrant cities in the world: Paris! Also called "The City of Light" or "The Illuminated City", Paris is not only a great center of politics, education, entertainment, fashion, culture and the arts, but it is also an important site of pilgrimage. Upon our arrival, we'll have time to visit such wondrous places as Notre Dame, a stunning cathedral begun in 1163 and mostly completed by 1250. The cathedral, where once stood a Roman temple to Jupiter, is an important example of French Gothic architecture, sculpture and stained glass. We'll also see La Sainte-Chapelle (*The Holy Chapel*), the only surviving building of the Capetian royal palace in the heart of Paris. St. Chapelle was commissioned by King Louis IX of France to house his collection of Passion Relics including the Crown of Thorns (one of



the most important relics from medieval Christendom). The chapel also contains one of the most extensive collections of 13th century stained glass in the world. Tonight we'll enjoy dinner and an overnight stay in the City of Light.

Day 10: Paris

"...[I]t belongs to God alone to console the soul... it being peculiar to the Creator to enter His creature, and turn, draw, and change it altogether to the love of Himself" (The Spiritual Exercises of the Holy Father by St. Ignatius).

A full day in "The Illuminated City" awaits us! We'll first attend Mass at The Chapel of Our Lady of the Miraculous Medal, site of three apparitions of the Virgin Mary in 1830. The Virgin Mary showed Catherine a design for what would become known as the "Miraculous Medal" and further instructed her to *have a medal struck on this model. All those who carry this will receive Grace in abundance, especially if they wear the medal around their neck and say this prayer confidently, they will receive special protection from the Mother of God and abundant graces.* Many miracles were reported in connection with the medal and some 10 million medals were sold during the first 5 years of its creation. Just around the corner on *rue des Sevres* is the Church of St. Lazare where we visit the Tomb of St. Vincent de Paul, a shining example of love for the poor. Next we'll relish a panoramic tour of Paris to see such thrilling sights as the Eiffel Tower (Built as the entrance arch to the 1889 World's Fair, it the most-visited paid monument in the world and named for its designer, engineer Gustave Eiffel. In the newspaper *Le Temps*, Eiffel said: *"Now to what phenomenon did I give primary concern in designing the Tower? It was wind resistance! Well then! I hold that the curvature of the monument... 'will give a great impression of strength and beauty.'"), the L'Arc de Triomphe (The triumphal arch honors those who have fought for France, particularly during the Napoleonic Wars and World War I.), and one of the most famous streets in the world: the *Avenue des Champs-Élysées*. We'll also see Montmartre, an officially designated historic district which has limited its urban development to maintain its historic character. Lastly, the Basilica of the Sacred Heart (Sacr  -C  ur) located at the summit of the *butte Montmartre*, is the highest point of the city. Sacr  -C  ur is built of travertine stone which constantly exudes calcite and ensures that the basilica remains white even with weathering and pollution. A mosaic in the apse, entitled *Christ in Majesty*, is among the largest in the world. The basilica complex includes a garden for meditation, and the top of the dome is open to all who wish to view a spectacular panoramic view of Paris. Before our farewell dinner and last overnight stay in the "City of Light", we'll have some leisure time to ponder all that we have seen and felt, and to further explore the city.*

Day 11: Return to the USA

O good Jesu, hear me;/Within Thy wounds hide me:/Permit me not to be separated from Thee:/From the malignant enemy, defend me:/In the hour of my death, call me/And bid me come to Thee,/that with Thy Saints, I may praise Thee/Forever and ever. Amen (last portion of the Prayer from *The Spiritual Exercises of the Holy Father* by St. Ignatius).

After an unforgettable pilgrimage, we head for the airport to return to the US.

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