

Marian Shrines - Portugal, Spain & France

13 days / 11 nights

"Blessed Are You Among Women: Meeting Christ in the Marian Shrines of Portugal, Spain & France. Mary's "Yes" as the Mother of God is the model of faith for all Christians. She is also known as Theotokos – "the God-bearer". As pilgrims we will experience the deep faith of Mary's response to God's call. Through her life and faith we meet Jesus, the Christ, our Lord and Savior.

Day 1 – Departure from the USA

But one thing is needful: and Mary hath chosen that good part, which shall not be taken away from her (Luke 10:42).

Our pilgrimage begins with an overnight flight to Lisbon, Portugal.

Day 2 – Arrival

Your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil (Genesis 3:5).

Welcome to "Europe", a word thought to mean "wide gazing"! We'll greet the new day with eyes wide open in Europe's westernmost capital city, Lisbon, Portugal. After a brief tour of this beautiful city rich in art, architecture and spirit, and home to many saints, we will visit St. Anthony's Church. St. Anthony was strongly attracted to the simple good lifestyle of the Franciscan friars. When St. Anthony died, it is said that the children cried in the streets and that all the bells of the churches rang of their own accord, rung by angels come to earth to honor the death of this saint. St. Anthony is known in Portugal as a marriage saint, because legend has him as a conciliator of couples. The invocation of his name might also be associated with locating lost objects. We'll enjoy dinner and another overnight stay in Lisbon.



Day 3 – Santarem & Fatima

May Portugal never forget the heavenly message of Fátima, which, before anybody else she was blessed to hear. To keep Fátima in your heart and to translate Fatima into deeds is the best guarantee for ever more graces (Pope Pius XII).

After breakfast we'll travel some 45 miles north of Lisbon to Portugal's third largest city, Santarem, site of many notable churches including the Church of the Holy Miracle (*Igreja do Santissimo Milagre*) which contains a 13th century Eucharistic miracle on continuous display since 1269. The host is enshrined in its miraculous crystal pyx in a silver monstrance and placed on display atop a tabernacle. Four paintings and 16th-century glazed tiles depict the miracle. We then continue on to Fatima, home of one of most well known Marian shrines in the world, the Shrine of Our Lady of Fatima (*Nossa Senhora do Rosário da Fátima*). Each year as many as four million people visit the Shrine of Our Lady of Fatima because they are drawn by the reports of three local shepherd children who in 1917 saw the Virgin Mary. On the 13th of each month from May to October 1917, the Virgin Mary is said to have appeared to Lúcia dos Santos (age 10) and her cousins Jacinta (age 7) and Francisco Marto (age 9) in a pasture called the Cova da Iria near Fatima. We will enjoy dinner and an overnight stay in Fatima.



Day 4 – Shrine of Fatima

Yes, I shall take Jacinta and Francisco soon, but you will remain a little longer, since Jesus wishes you to make me known and loved on earth. He wishes also for you to establish devotion in the world to my Immaculate Heart (Mary's words to Lucia when

Lucia asked the Virgin to take her and her cousins to heaven soon (as per Lucia's account)).

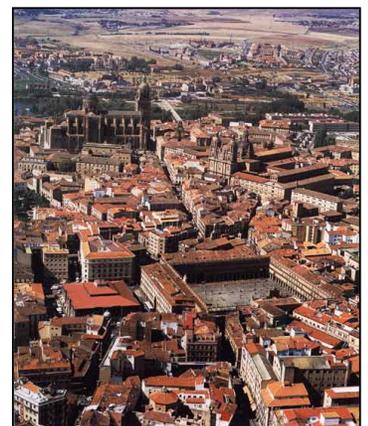
We'll begin the day by celebrating Mass, after which we'll visit the Tombs of Francisco and Jacinta as well as other sites related to the miraculous appearances of Mary to the children. According to Lúcia's account, Mary exhorted the children to say the Rosary every day and reiterated many times that devotion to the Rosary was the key to personal and world peace. We will have time in Fatima for our own devotions and prayers at the Hungarian Stations of the Cross, consisting of fourteen small chapels along walkways leading to a marble monument of Christ on the cross. Towards evening, we will be treated to a wonderful dinner and show (show of the ancient kings and queens) at Ourem Castle originally built between the 12th and 13th centuries and situated at the top of the hill overlooking the city. The Castle of Ourém is also known as the "Castle of the Queen of the World" because the light that transported Our Lady to her apparitions at Fatima in 1917 was seen to form directly above the castle mount. The shrine of Fatima has played an important role in recent times. On May 13, 1967, Pope Paul VI prayed at the shrine with Sister Lucia, and Pope John Paul II credited Our Lady of Fátima with saving his life during the assassination attempt in 1981. He came to Fatima as a pilgrim on May 12, 1987, to express his gratitude, and the following day, he officially consecrated the human race to the Immaculate Heart of the Virgin, as Pius XII had done before him. We will have much to prayerfully consider as we enjoy dinner and our last overnight in Fatima.



Day 5 – Alba de Tormes & Teresa of Avila

The angel appeared to me to be thrusting the spear of fire into my heart and piercing my very entrails; when he drew it out, he seemed to draw them out also, and left me all on fire with a great love of God (St. Teresa of Avila).

Today we travel to Salamanca in western Spain, by way of Alba de Tormes, burial place of St. Teresa of Avila (1515-1582). St. Teresa died on October 4, 1582 from an illness on a journey from Burgos to Alba de Tormes. Many miracles have been associated with St. Teresa since her death including the "odor of sanctity." The night she died, her monastic cell back in Ávila was said to have filled with a pleasant fragrance and her coffin emitted the same heavenly fragrance when her body was exhumed 330 years later. We will have leisure time before dinner and our overnight in Salamanca, nicknamed *La Ciudad Dorada* ("The Golden City") because of its Renaissance sandstone buildings and the golden glow of the Villamayor Stone, a type of sandstone coming from a quarry close by.

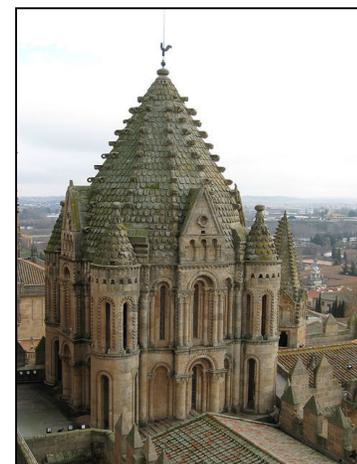


Day 6 – Salamanca, Avila & Burgos

Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints (Psalms 116:15).

We awaken in 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 500-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 before El Cid. The afternoon finds us heading for Avila, birth place of St. Teresa of Avila and known for its medieval city walls constructed of brown granite in 1090 and containing eighty-eight towers and nine gateways that are still in excellent repair. A large part of the city now lies beyond their perimeter. We will visit the church where St. Teresa had frequent visions and ecstatic experiences. We will also see the Convent of St. Teresa,

one of the main destinations for Catholic pilgrims to this city. The 17th-century convent was built after the canonization of St. Teresa over the house where she was born, and contains her relics, along with those of her friend St. John of the Cross, in a small museum. Finally, we make our way to Burgos in northern Spain, home to the wondrous Gothic Cathedral at Burgos, whose construction spanned from the 13th to 15th centuries. Dinner will be at our hotel in Burgos.



Day 7 – 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 (Saint Ignatius of Loyola).

En route to Lourdes, France, we'll stop in 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 travel to the foothills of the Pyrenees Mountains to picturesque Lourdes, site of the largest Catholic pilgrimage destination in France because it was here that St Bernadette to whom Our Lady appeared in 1858 near the Grotto of Massabielle, was born. We'll have time to settle into our hotel and do a little exploring before dinner and a special candlelight service.



Day 8 – The Shrine of Lourdes

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

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. 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.), 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 to the Sanctuary for the Rosary and Torchlight Procession (beginning at about 8:30 p.m. depending on seasonal schedules) after dinner. After the day's rich events, we return to our hotel for a second night's stay in Lourdes.



Day 9 – Lourdes, Paris & Lisieux

In the face of her littleness and nothingness, St. Therese trusted in God to be her sanctity. She wanted to go to Heaven by an entirely new little way. "I wanted to find an elevator that would raise me to Jesus." The elevator, she wrote, would be "the arms of Jesus" lifting her in all her littleness.

We will board an early morning train to Paris, and after enjoying an afternoon picnic on the train, will transfer to motor coach as our journey continues to lovely Lisieux. Lisieux, France's second most important site of pilgrimage (after Lourdes), is characterised by valleys and hedged farmlands and is the home of St. Therese, the Little Flower of Jesus about whom we will learn much. Dinner and comfortable accommodations await us in Lisieux.

Day 10 – St. Therese

In May 1887, Thérèse approached her 63-year old father, Louis, recovering from a small stroke, while he sat in the garden one Sunday afternoon and told him that she wanted to celebrate the anniversary of "her conversion" by entering Carmelite Convent. Louis got up, gently picked a little white flower, root intact, and gave it to her, explaining the care with which God brought it into being and preserved it until that day. Therese later wrote: "while I listened I believed I was hearing my own story." To Therese, the flower seemed a symbol of herself, "destined to live in another soil."

So dear to the heart of millions of Catholics is Thérèse of Lisieux (1873 –1897) or Saint Thérèse also known as *The Little Flower of Jesus*. Therese felt an early call to religious life and at the early age of 15, became a nun in the enclosed Carmelite community of Lisieux, Normandy. The impact of her posthumous publications, including her memoir, *the Story of a Soul*, make her one of the greatest saints of the 20th century. Today we visit the sites that mark the too-brief life of *The Little Flower of Jesus: Les Buissonnets*, the family house in Lisieux where she lived until she entered the Carmel Convent, the Carmel Chapel, and the Basilica of St. Therese which houses the crypt containing the bodies of her parents. We will celebrate Mass at the Basilica of St. Therese, then depart in the late afternoon for Paris where we will enjoy dinner at our hotel.

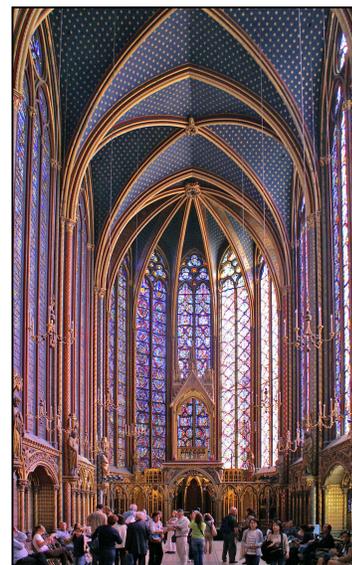
Day 11 – Notre Dame, Sacre Coeur & St. Chapelle

As an artist, a man has no home in Europe save in Paris (Friedrich Wilhelm Nietzsche).

Arise in what has been described as one of the most beautiful and vibrant cities in the world. Paris, known as "The City of Light" or "The Illuminated City" is also arguably one of the most influential in terms of politics, education, entertainment, fashion, culture and the arts; we will also be reminded that Paris is a spiritual city and an important site of pilgrimage. After breakfast, we begin with a visit to Notre Dame Cathedral (*Cathédrale Notre-Dame de Paris - "Our Lady of Paris"*). A beautiful cathedral begun in 1163 and mostly completed by 1250, Notre Dame is an important example of French Gothic architecture, sculpture and stained glass. Where Notre Dame now stands, the Romans once built a temple to Jupiter. In 1160, Bishop Maurice de Sully, who devoted his life and wealth to its construction, sketched his vision for the new cathedral in the dirt outside of the original church. Notre-Dame's stained glass windows remain an important and beautiful work of 13th-century Gothic art. The highlight, and the greatest survival of original glass, is the set of three beautiful rose windows, which shine like jewels over the west door and in the north and south transept. Next we visit Sainte-Chapelle ("Holy Chapel"), a 13th-century Gothic chapel on the Île de la Cité in the heart of the City of Light. Sainte-Chapelle was founded by the ultra-devout King Louis IX of France, who constructed as a chapel to house precious relics. Unlike many aristocrats who regularly



swiped sacred relics, the saintly Louis purchased the crown of thorns, a piece of the True Cross, and other relics, making Sainte-Chapelle a valuable reliquary. However, most of Louis' precious relics were lost or destroyed in the French Revolution; the few that remain are in the treasury of the Notre Dame Cathedral. Sainte-Chapelle, whose interior gives a sense of fragile beauty, is among the high points of French High Gothic architecture. The most visually beautiful aspects of the chapel, and considered the best of their type in the world, are its stained glass windows. In the afternoon, we continue to experience the wonders of Paris as we visit the picturesque and charming district of Montmartre, once an area of wine growers and plaster miners centered around a 15th-century monastery. Montmartre, an officially designated historic district, has limited development allowed in order to maintain its historic character. The Basilica of the Sacred Heart (Sacre Coeur) is located at the summit of the *butte Montmartre*, and is the highest point in the city. Sacré-Cœur 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. The Basilica of the Sacred Heart is where we celebrate Mass this afternoon. We'll then have time to explore the quaint area where many famous artists had studios or worked such as Salvador Dali, Amedeo Modigliani, Claude Monet, Pablo Picasso and Vincent van Gogh. After dinner at the hotel, we'll enjoy another overnight stay in Paris.



Day 12 – Miraculous Medal

God has plans for you (The words spoken by St. Vincent-de-Paul in St Catherine Labouret's dream as a young girl).

Another day in “The Illuminated City” before us! We 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. The Chapel of Our Lady of the Miraculous Medal was enlarged after the apparitions to accommodate all those who wished to pray at the altar, and the chapel was further renovated for its centenary in 1930. Today's visitors and pilgrims to the chapel can see the altar at which the Virgin Mary promised prayers will be answered, and the incorrupt body of St. Catherine, on display in a glass case. The walls are beautifully decorated with mosaics and murals. Sculpted in 1850, a white marble statue of Mary, crowned with 12 stars and rays of graces lead from her outstretched palms to the floor, stands over the altar. Our last day of Paris includes a mostly panoramic sightseeing tour of sites such 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.'*”), L'Arc de Triomphe (The triumphal arch honors those who have fought for France, particularly during the Napoleonic Wars and World War I.), and a drive through one of the most famous streets in the world, the *Avenue des Champs-Élysées*. There is much to see, to contemplate and to marvel at in our last leisurely afternoon of our pilgrimage. Later in the evening, we'll gather for a farewell dinner.



Day 13 – Return to the USA

We will let the power of the holy shrines and priceless relics settle over us, then like other pilgrims of other times, go back to our lives with renewed faith and readiness.

We leave our hotel and head for the airport to return to the US.



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