

Spain's Catholic Heritage

13 days / 11 nights

Life is a book. Those who do not travel read only one page! (St. Augustine). Far more than just experiencing a new land or seeing new sights, our Pilgrimage from Madrid to Barcelona takes us through the spiritually rich and beautiful countryside of Spain where we will reflect, come closer to God, and gratefully consider the sacrifices and dedication of those who have gone before. As we walk on holy ground, behold sacred shrines and experience timeless works of art regarded as the most awe-inspiring and important of the world – we will renew our commitment to the roots of our Catholic faith. The masses and meditations we celebrate along the way will draw us together as a community. They will remind us of our blessings and the call to stewardship as followers of Jesus Christ.

Day 1 – USA to Madrid

Known as the mystical center of the Church, Spain offers hope and healing for its pilgrims.

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

Day 2 – Madrid Arrival

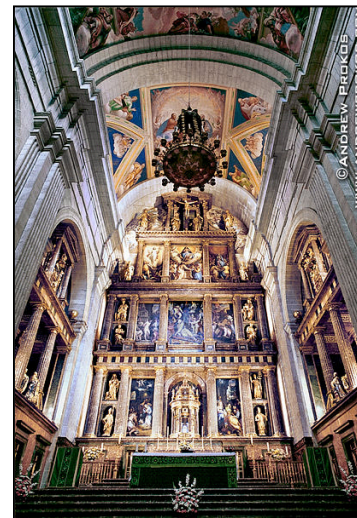
History is in a manner a sacred thing, so far as it contains truth; for where truth is, the Supreme Father of it may also be said to be (Miguel de Cervantes, Don Quixote, pt. II, III, 6, p. 479).

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

I sing of his elegance with words that groan, and I remember a sad breeze through the olive trees (Federico Garcia Lorca – best-known writer of modern Spain re some of the tragic events in his country).

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 - Toledo

By a small sample we may judge of the whole piece (Miguel de Cervantes, Don Quixote, and pt. I, I, 4, p. 25).

"Holy Toledo" isn't just a popular expression! This historic city and notable place of pilgrimage is about 42 miles southwest of Madrid. We'll begin our journey early this morning because we won't want to miss anything in this ancient capital that so inspired El Greco in the 16th century and that has remained relatively unchanged since his time. Old churches and houses fill the city where you can still stroll through streets barely wide enough for a man and his donkey. The great monuments left by the three monotheistic religions are most impressive although all are dominated by the Toledo Cathedral which is ranked among the greatest Gothic structures of Europe. Inside the cathedral are many important masterpieces including a spectacular baroque high altar and two paintings by El Greco. Other fascinating churches in Toledo include the Mezquita del Cristo de la Luz (Mosque of Christ of the Light), dated from the 10th century and the only surviving mosque in Toledo (out of ten), and the Church of San Román which has been deconsecrated and now houses the Museo de Arte Visigótico, a collection of Visigothic artifacts includes statuary, illuminated manuscripts, and gold and silver treasures. It is worth noting that "Holy Toledo" is the capital of the Catholic Church in Spain. We will have enjoyed a full, rich day as we return for dinner and another overnight stay in Madrid.

Day 5 – Avila

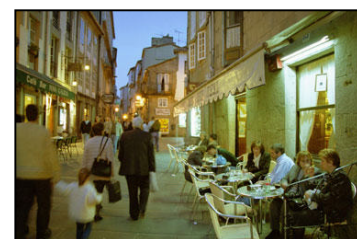
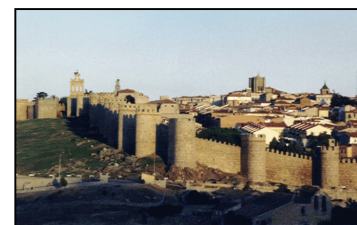
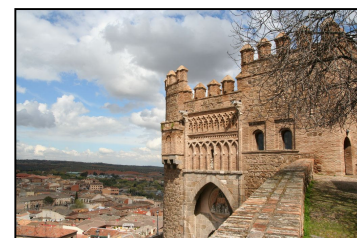
The angel appeared to me to be thrusting the spear of fire into my heart and piercing my very entrails; when he drew it out, he seemed to draw them out also, and left me all on fire with a great love of God (St. Teresa of Avila).

We depart from Madrid this morning and head north to Leon through Spain's magnificent countryside. En-route we will visit 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 area as it is the site that has been sanctified more than any other with the presence of Christ. 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. We will also enter Spain's first cathedral constructed in spectacular gothic style. Late in the afternoon we will reach León where we will enjoy dinner and an overnight stay.

Day 6 – Leon & Santiago de Compostela

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

With its rich history and beautiful art, León, which was founded as a military outpost, will captivate us as we spend the morning exploring its old-world charm and incredible spirit. We might even notice how the city glows because of the golden stone used in many of its monuments. The *Universidad de León* (University of León), founded in 1218, is one of the oldest in Europe. The old Leonese language, considered an



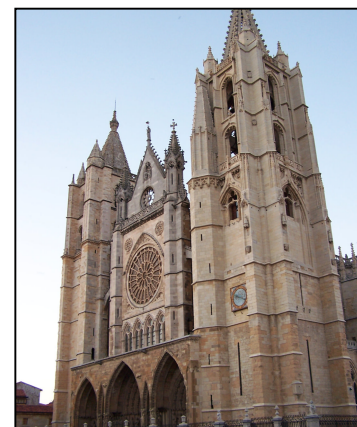
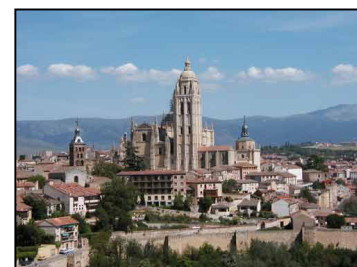
endangered language and deriving directly from the Latin of the Middle Ages, is taught at the University. As of 2009, there were more than one hundred students studying this ancient language. Leon has two major cathedrals, one built in the Romanesque style: the Pantheon of St. Isidoro, which was built in the 11th century and houses the remains of St. Isidoro, and the other, called the “Leonina,” which belongs to the Gothic school and has beautiful stained glass windows. Long established customs in León include the Semana Santa (“Holy Week”), featuring numerous processions through the center of the city. One called “Procession of the Meeting”, acts out the meeting of three groups representing St. John, the Virgin Mary and Christ in the esplanade in front of the city’s Cathedral. If time permits, we will visit the Santa Maria de Leon Cathedral, also called *The House of Light* or the *Pulchra Leonina*, and built on the site of previous Roman baths of the 2nd century. After lunch, we will head for Santiago de Compostela where we will enjoy dinner and an overnight stay.



Day 7 -Santiago de Compostela

Live as if you had to die tonight, work as if you had to remain forever in this world (Archbishop Bartolomé de Raxoi whose bust and motto can be found at the Paxo de Raxoi near the Cathedral of Santiago).

Today we join the 1000-year old pilgrimage down the narrow streets of the city to the shrine of St. James in the Cathedral of Santiago de Compostela known in English as the Way of St. James and in Spanish as the *Camino de Santiago*. The cathedral, built on the spot where the remains of the Apostle James were said to have been found, borders the main plaza of the old and well-preserved city. We will have much to ponder as we admire the beauty of the sculptures and architecture, and pay tribute to his mortal remains. The remainder of the day is ours to visit the city. We might explore sites near the cathedral including the Praza do Obradoiro, the expansive square named after the workshops set up during the construction of the cathedral in the 11th century, the Colexio de San Xerome, witness to Santiago’s status as a seat of learning since the late middle ages, and the Paxo de Raxoi – an elegant neoclassical palace and former seminary which today houses the regional government of Galicia. On the north side of the square is the Hostal de los Reyes Católicos, a Renaissance building commissioned by Isabella and Ferdinand in 1499 as a pilgrims’ sanctuary. We will enjoy dinner and another overnight stay in this beautiful place of pilgrimage.



Day 8 – Santiago de Compostela, Lugo & Cangas de Onis

Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning (James: 1:17).

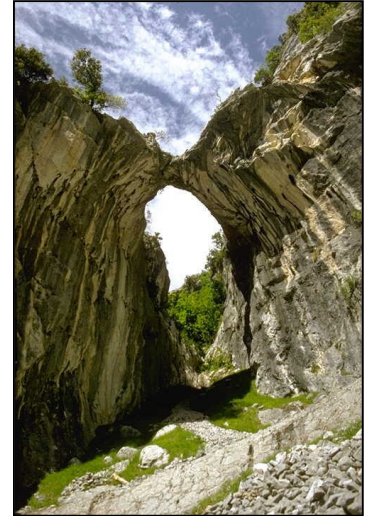
Although our final destination today is the region of Asturias, we will stop in Lugo, the only city in Europe to be surrounded by completely intact Roman walls from the 3rd century. The walk along the top of the walls (which reach a height of 10 to 15 meters) is continuous along a circuit ringed with 71 towers and ten gates. We will visit the Cathedral of Lugo, built in the early 12th century and incorporating many styles of architecture including Romanesque, Gothic, Baroque and Neoclassicist. The cathedral, which received from the Pope the privilege to permanently expose the Holy Sacrament, houses the patron virgin of the city, the Virgin of the Big Eyes, with a sculpture as beautiful as her name. After lunch, we continue our journey towards Asturias where we stop in Cangas de Onis, the first capital of the Iberian peninsula after the reconquest from the Arabs by the Christians and site of the first church constructed in that era: *Santa Cruz de Cangas de Onis* (737). Here is where we will enjoy dinner an overnight stay.



Day 9 – Covadonga & San Sebastian

For it is in giving that we receive (Portion of prayer attributed to St. Francis of Assisi).

Leaving behind Cangas de Onis, birthplace of today's Spain, we enter the *Parque nacional de los Picos de Europa*, wherein lies the village of Covadonga. The word "Covadonga" stems from the Latin: *Cova Dominica* meaning "Cavern of the Lady." Covadonga is where the battle of Covadonga (722), the first major victory by a Christian military force in Iberia, took place. There, situated halfway up a mountain, we find the cavern and sanctuary of Our Lady of the Covadonga, and nearby, an image of the Virgin Mary. We will resume our travel along a breathtakingly beautiful route along the Cantabrian Coast to San Sebastian in Basque Country, where we enjoy dinner and spend the night.



Day 10 - Zaragoza

Know this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience (James 1:3).

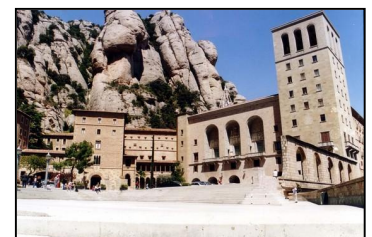
We'll arise early to leave for Zaragoza (also called Saragossa), the capital city of the Zaragoza province and linked to the beginnings of Christianity in Spain. As we make our way through the area, we'll see a variety of landscapes, ranging from desert (*Los Monegros*) to thick forest, meadows and mountains. When we reach the city, we will visit the Basilica-Cathedral of Our Lady of the Pillar whose history stems from the dawn of Christianity in Spain attributing to the Blessed Virgin Mary appearing to St. James the apostle who brought Christianity to the country. This is the only known apparition of Mary to have occurred before her Assumption. Many of the kings of Spain as well as foreign rulers and saints including St. John of the Cross, St. Teresa of Avila, and St. Ignatius of Loyola have paid their devotion before the statue of Mary at the Basilica of Our Lady of the Pillar. The event marking this apparition is called "Las Fiestas del Pilar", celebrated on October 12th and coinciding in 1492 with the discovery of the Americas by Christopher Columbus. "El Pilar" is celebrated for nine days with speeches, fireworks, bands, dances, procession of *gigantes y cabezudos* (carnival figures made of papier mache), concerts, exhibitions, and the famous "vaquillas" bulls and the bull festival. Another important feature of the celebration is the *Ofrenda de Flores* (Flower offering) to the virgin on the 12th, when an enormous cloak is made of the flowers. We'll enjoy dinner and an overnight stay in this memorable city.



Day 11 - Montserrat

And now abideth faith, hope, charity, these three; but the greatest of these is charity (Corinthians 13: 13).

Montserrat, on a rugged mountain not far from Barcelona, is one of the most popular pilgrimage destinations in Spain. It is here we journey today to the Monastery of Montserrat, located near the top of the 4,000-foot mountain and home to about 80 monks. The monks welcome visitors and invite them to participate in their daily celebrations of Mass and recitations of the Liturgy of the Hours. We'll visit the Basilica, next to the monastery, which houses the revered *La Moreneta*, or Black Virgin, a small Romanesque statue made of wood, with the child Jesus on her lap. Her dark color is due to changes in the varnish with the passage of time. The basilica also hosts one of the oldest and most renowned boys' choirs in Europe dating from the 13th century. At 1:00 p.m. you might hear them singing "Salve Regina" and the "Virolai" (hymn of Montserrat) in the basilica. The beauty of the landscape adds to our spiritual experience and brings a sweet confirmation of faith. Saint Francis of Assisi and Saint Ignatius of Loyola were drawn here as were many pilgrims of all classes and conditions over the course of a thousand



years. We continue this afternoon to Barcelona, Spain's second largest city, where we will have leisure time to explore and enjoy dinner and an overnight stay.

Day 12 - Barcelona

Those who look for the laws of Nature as a support for their works collaborate with the creator ("God's Architect": Antoni Plàcid Guillem Gaudí i Cornet).

It is fitting that in 1999, Barcelona won the RIBA Royal Gold Medal for architecture (the first and, as of 2009, only time that the winner has been a city and not an individual architect) for we begin the day with a visit to the cutting-edge Art Nouveau Sagrada Familia Church, designed by Antoni Gaudí. Gaudí was a devout Catholic in later years and devoted his life to Catholicism and his *Sagrada Familia*. He designed it to have 18 towers, 12 for the 12 apostles, 4 for the 4 evangelists, one for Mary and one for Jesus. Gaudí never finished the church and was constantly recreating his blueprints, the only existing copy of which was destroyed by in 1938 during the Spanish Civil War. This has made it very difficult for his workers to complete the church in the fashion Gaudí most likely would have wished. It is for this that Gaudí is known to many as "God's Architect". *La Sagrada Familia* is now being completed (as of 2007, completion is planned for 2026), but differences between his work and the new additions can be seen. We will also visit the *Barri Gotic* ("Gothic Quarter") in the centre of the old city of Barcelona where many of the buildings date from medieval times and are World Heritage Sites. We will see the Gothic Saint Eulalia Cathedral and its IV Century Roman Wall, and drive by the Columbus Statue on the well-known Ramblas Blvd. to Catalunya Square to the "Enxample" where we will admire the architecture styles of Catalan's most famous architects, Batlló, Milà and Gaudí. We celebrate Mass at the Basilica of Santa Maria del Mar, a beautiful 14th century church dedicated to Our Lady, after which we will make our way to the Tibidabo Hill where a statue of the Sacred Heart of Jesus with his extended arms overlooks Barcelona below. The afternoon affords us some leisure time to further explore before we gather for our last dinner and overnight stay in Barcelona.



Day 13 – Barcelona to the USA

We will let the power of the holy shrines, priceless relics, and spiritual marvels of Spain 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 U.S.

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