

# Windows to the Soul

## 8 days / 6 nights

*But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only (James 1:22).* Rich history and deep faith are waiting to be found in the streets, cathedrals and shared moments of prayer in Spain! As pilgrims, we will look at history through the “eyes of faith” and experience Christ’s healing gaze in our own lives. 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**

*I want them to show me a lament like a river which will have sweet mists and deep shores (Federico Garcia Lorca – best-known writer of modern Spain).*

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

### **Day 2 – Madrid Arrival**

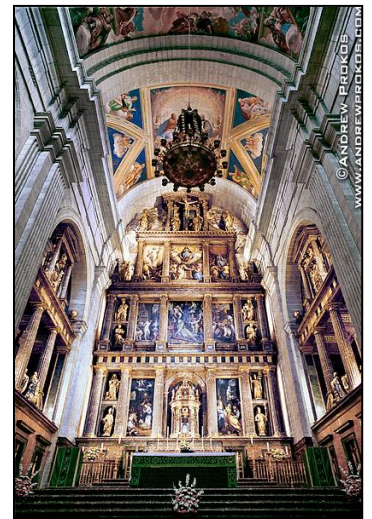
*History is in a manner a sacred thing, so far as it contains truth; for where truth is, the Supreme Father of it may also be said to be (Miguel de Cervantes, Don Quixote, pt. II, III, 6, p. 479).*

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 them found in the adjacent forests. Bears, 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. El Escorial is 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. 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



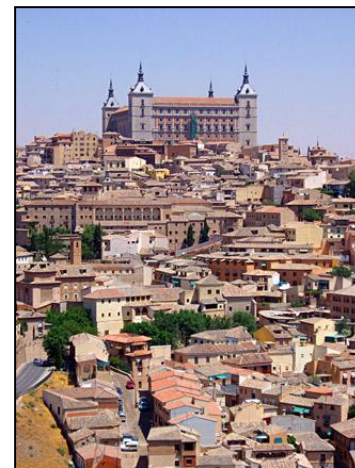
died in the Spanish Civil War in the nearby Valley of the Fallen, where we will see a basilica built into the mountain which contains the tombs of many soldiers from both sides of the conflict. Toward the day's end, we return to Madrid for dinner and overnight.



#### **Day 4 – Toledo**

*By a small sample we may judge of the whole piece (Miguel de Cervantes, Don Quixote, 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 10<sup>th</sup> 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 our last overnight stay in Madrid.



#### **Day 5 – Zaragoza**

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

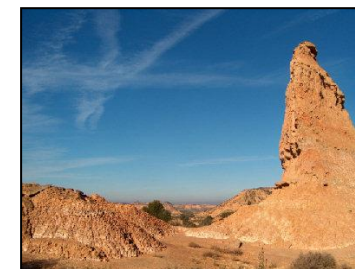
We'll arise early to leave for Zaragoza (also called Saragossa), the capital city of the Zaragoza province, and linked to the beginnings of Christianity in Spain. As we make our way through the area, we'll see a variety of landscapes, ranging from desert (*Los Monegros*) to thick forest. When we reach the city, we will visit the Basilica-Cathedral of Our Lady of the Pillar, whose history begins with the birth of Christianity in Spain (the Blessed Virgin Mary appeared 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. The event marking this apparition is called "Las Fiestas del Pilar," celebrated on October 12<sup>th</sup>, and coinciding 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-mâché), concerts, exhibitions and the famous "vaquillas" bulls. 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.



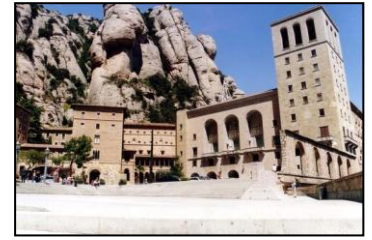
#### **Day 6 – Montserrat**

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

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



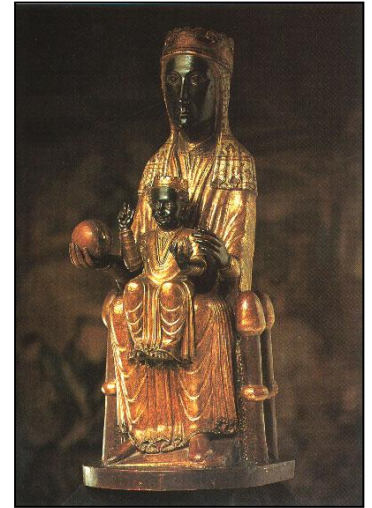
Montserrat, located near the top of the 4,000-foot mountain, and home to about 80 monks. The monks welcome visitors and invite them to participate in their daily celebrations of Mass and recitations of the Liturgy of the Hours. We'll visit the Basilica, next to the monastery, which houses the revered *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, established in 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 for dinner and an overnight stay.



### **Day 7 – 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 2012, 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 Família*. 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 was destroyed 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 Família* is now being completed (completion is planned for 2026), but differences between his work and the new additions can easily be seen. We will also visit the *Barri Gotic* (Gothic Quarter) in the center of the old city of Barcelona, where many of the buildings were built during medieval times and are World Heritage Sites. We will see the Gothic Saint Eulalia Cathedral, and its IV Century Roman Wall. Afterward, we can drive by the Columbus Statue on the well-known Ramblas Blvd. Next, we'll go 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 14<sup>th</sup> century church dedicated to Our Lady. After that, 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 8 – 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.

