



Paradores & Pousadas

Historic Lodgings of Spain & Portugal

You're invited on a distinctive small group journey through the Iberian Peninsula to the intimate lodgings of Spain's paradores and Portugal's pousadas: medieval monasteries, historic fortresses, and stately palaces, each reflecting the spirit of its region. We feel the spell of Iberia's rich Roman and Moorish past – and the pull of its vibrant contemporary life.

**With an Post-Tour Extension:
Barcelona – On Your Own**

Itinerary

Created on Feb 29, 2024

Paradores & Pousadas

Day-by-Day Itinerary

DAY 1: Depart U.S. for Lisbon, Portugal

DAY 2: Arrive Lisbon

We arrive in the Portuguese capital and transfer to our hotel. As guests' arrival times vary, we have no group activities planned during the day. Tonight we enjoy a welcome dinner.

Accommodations: Corinthia Lisbon

Meals: Dinner

DAY 3: Lisbon/Queluz

This morning's city tour includes the Jerónimos Monastery, a masterpiece of Manueline architecture and the place where, in 1497, Vasco da Gama and his crew spent their last night in prayer before leaving on their historic journey around Africa's Cape of Good Hope; iconic Belém Tower; and the Monument to the Discoveries, commemorating Portugal's storied explorers. Then we visit the National Palace of Queluz, the former residence of Portuguese royalty now used for state occasions. After returning to Lisbon, the remainder of the day is at leisure to explore as we wish, perhaps with a visit to a local club offering Portugal's haunting, traditional *Fado* music.

Accommodations: Corinthia Lisbon

Meals: Breakfast

DAY 4: Lisbon/Evora

Leaving Lisbon this morning, we travel through the rolling hills of the agricultural Alentejo district, with its bountiful fields of wheat, fragrant vineyards, and stands of olive and cork trees. After stopping for lunch outside the fortified hilltop town of Monsaraz, we head to a local winery, where we learn about the wine making tradition in this region, enjoy stunning views of the vineyards, and of course, sample the delicious wine. Late this afternoon we arrive in Evora, capital of the Alentejo and site of our *pousada*. A restored 15th-century convent, Pousada dos Loios is considered one of the most beautiful lodgings in Portugal and the country's finest *pousada*.

Accommodations: Pousada dos Loios

Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

DAY 5: Evora

Our morning walking tour of Evora introduces us to the many charms of this architectural gem – a university town, prosperous regional capital, and UNESCO site, thanks to the many relics of its Roman and Moorish heritage. The tour includes a Roman temple; the Cathedral of Evora, built in the late 12th century; Giraldo Square, one of Evora's primary town centers; and the Church of St. Francis, home of the Chapel of Bones. This afternoon we are free to visit the tiny shops and cafés that line the streets of this “Golden Age” city, and bask in the splendid scenery that surrounds us. Dinner this evening is at our *pousada*.

Accommodations: Pousada dos Loios

Meals: Breakfast, Dinner

DAY 6: Evora/Mérida, Spain/Carmona

Today we travel east through countryside peppered with the ruins of fortresses and castles to the Spanish border town of Mérida. Once the capital of ancient Lusitania (Latin for the kingdoms of Spain and Portugal), Mérida boasts outstanding Roman ruins. There's time to explore and eat lunch on our own before we continue on to Carmona and our *parador*, a restored 14th-century Arab fortress built on the site of the medieval castle of Peter of Castile.

Accommodations: Parador de Carmona

Meals: Breakfast, Dinner

DAY 7: Carmona/Seville

This morning we visit splendid Seville, Moorish capital of Spain's Andalusia region and city of beauty and romance. This is the place that inspired *Carmen* and *Don Giovanni* and where fragrant orange trees and flower-bedecked balconies delight the senses. It is also home of the renowned Catedral, the world's largest Gothic building. After a tour that includes Alcázar, the palace noted for its signature *mudejar* (Moorish) architecture, and the Arab quarter, the afternoon is free to explore independently. We return to Carmona late afternoon and dine at our *parador* this evening.

Accommodations: Parador de Carmona

Meals: Breakfast, Dinner

DAY 8: Carmona/Cordoba

Today's visit to this cultural gem promises to be special indeed. First the capital of Roman Spain, then of Moorish Spain, Cordoba features some of the country's most important monuments, including the Old Quarter built around the magnificent Mezquita mosque. It was here that the Moors ruled from the 8th to the 11th centuries and fostered a culture of learning and religious harmony known the world over. Our walking tour takes in many of the highlights, including the atmospheric Old Quarter with its narrow, winding streets, whitewashed houses, and revered Mezquita Mosque-Cathedral. With more than 500 columns and graceful arches, the Mezquita incorporates Roman and Gothic elements into its architecture. Cordoba also is home to Andalusia's only synagogue to survive the expulsion of Spain's Jews in the 15th century. After touring these and other highlights, we have free time to explore on our own. Late this afternoon we return to our *parador*, where we dine tonight.

Accommodations: Parador de Carmona

Meals: Breakfast, Dinner

DAY 9: Carmona/Ronda

Leaving Carmona this morning, we travel south to tiny Ronda, one of Spain's oldest and most aristocratic towns. It's set high in the mountains with whitewashed houses clinging improbably to the edge of El Tajo Gorge – 500 feet deep and 300 feet wide.

Accommodations: Parador de Ronda

Meals: Breakfast, Dinner

DAY 10: Ronda

This morning we take a walking tour of Ronda; highlights include the graceful cathedral of Santa Maria Mayor in the town's Old Quarter, two 17th- and 18th-century bridges, and the Casa de Mondragon, which legend holds was once home to Moorish kings. We return to our *parador*, Ronda's original town hall, for a special *tapas* lunch and then the rest of the day is free for independent exploration.

Accommodations: Parador de Ronda

Meals: Breakfast, Lunch

DAY 11: Ronda/Granada/Úbeda

Continuing our journey, we travel today to Granada, the former stronghold of Moorish Spain set in the foothills of the snowcapped Sierra Nevada. The city's undisputed highlight is the Alhambra, the extraordinary palace of Spain's last Moorish rulers. Sprawled across a hilltop above the Darro River, the Alhambra commands breathtaking views of the city below, as we see on our afternoon tour of this splendid citadel. We also visit the Granadian-style Generalife, the palace's acclaimed gardens. Late this afternoon we travel north to Úbeda and our next *parador*, where we dine tonight.

Accommodations: Parador de Úbeda

Meals: Breakfast, Dinner

DAY 12: Úbeda/Toledo/Madrid

A highlight is in store today as we visit Toledo, capital of medieval Spain. Declared a Spanish National Landmark, the city is little changed visually from its 16th-century days as a subject for the artist El Greco. Toledo boasts an incomparable hilltop setting overlooking the Castilian plains and surrounded on three sides by the Tagus River. After lunch on our own, we see Toledo's most important sights on our guided tour, including the massive Gothic Cathedral, begun in 1226 and not finished until 1493, and the Sinagoga del Tránsito, erected in 1357 with imported cedars from Lebanon, just as Solomon requested when constructing the First Temple in Jerusalem. Our tour of Toledo concludes with a stop at Santo Tomás, home of El Greco's most famous painting: *The Burial of Count Orgaz*. Then we continue on to Madrid, arriving late this afternoon. Dinner tonight is on our own, perhaps to dine late as the *Madrileños* do.

Accommodations: Wellington Hotel & Spa Madrid

Meals: Breakfast

DAY 13: Madrid

Our morning tour of this monumental and dignified capital city includes vast Plaza Mayor, in the heart of Old Madrid; the Moorish medieval district; and opulent 18th-century Palacio Real (Royal Palace), with its 2,800 rooms. Among the attractions at the Royal Palace: the oddly decorated private apartments, two-ton crystal chandelier, 140-seat banquet hall, and grand throne room. Then we sample some of Madrid's specialties over a lunch of *tapas*. Our tour ends at the Prado, one of the world's greatest museums, displaying treasures by Spanish masters Goya, El Greco, and Velazquez. The remainder of the day is free for independent exploration in this most cosmopolitan city. Well known for its "foodie" culture, Madrid offers a bounty of restaurants for dinner on our own tonight.

Accommodations: Wellington Hotel & Spa Madrid

Meals: Breakfast, Lunch

DAY 14: Madrid

Today is at leisure to enjoy the Spanish capital as we wish, perhaps to stroll along the city's broad boulevards, see Picasso's famed painting *Guernica* at the Reina Sofia Museum, poke around the weekly El Rastro Market, visit the renowned Thyssen-Bornemisza museum, or simply take in the vibe at a local café. Tonight we bid "*adios*" to Spain and our fellow travelers at a farewell dinner.

Accommodations: Wellington Hotel & Spa Madrid

Meals: Breakfast, Dinner

DAY 15: Depart for U.S

We transfer to the airport this morning for our connecting flights to the U.S.

Meals: Breakfast

This tour itinerary was generated for Paradores & Pousadas on Feb 29, 2024. Please visit the Paradores & Pousadas page at <https://www.odysseys-unlimited.com/tours/europe/paradores-pousadas/> for the latest and most accurate information.