

Art and Culture Travel

Northern Spain, from the Escorial to Bilbao

25th – 29th June 2025



El Escorial

This is a wonderful opportunity to visit beautiful Northern Spain, to explore the Escorial and the cities of Segovia, Salamanca, Valladolid, Burgos and Bilbao. Tutors from Art & Culture Travel will provide guidance full of knowledge and enthusiasm. You need make no more decisions than you want to – we know just where to eat and how best to travel around.

Join us for an uplifting five summer days in beautiful, historic northern Spain.

“Like Spain, I am bound to the past.”

William Burroughs.

Wednesday 25th June

13.00 Meet at Madrid airport for coach transfer to El Escorial. (1 hour)

15.00 -1800 Guided Tour of one of the largest Renaissance buildings in the world. This Royal Site, built between 1563 and 1584 by Philip 2nd and his architect Juan Bautista de Toledo, functions as a monastery, basilica, royal palace, pantheon, library, museum, university, school, and hospital. Declared a World Heritage Site in 1984 it contains one of the most extraordinary collections of art, with masterpieces by Titian, Tintoretto, El Greco, Velazquez, Van der Weyden, Veronese, Bosch and many others.

After the tour the coach takes us to the beautiful city of Segovia (1 hour) where we will spend the night.

20.30 Supper by The Roman Aqueduct



Roman Aqueduct, Segovia

Thursday 26th June

09.30 -12.00 The day starts with a walk through the old town to the Alcazar. This Medieval fortress and castle, declared a World Heritage Site in 1985, contains a stunningly beautiful palace, where we will take a local guide. It is also the inspiration for Disney's fairytale castle in Sleeping Beauty.

13.00 – 14.00 After coffee we walk to Segovia Cathedral, a wonderful example of Flamboyant Gothic Architecture and the last Gothic cathedral built in Spain, between 1525 and 1577.

14.30 – 16.00 Lunch.

16.00 – 18.00 After lunch we take the coach to Tordesillas, arriving around 6pm in our oasis Parador, where we stay for two nights, enjoying the pool and the pine trees.

That evening we have a wine tasting and meal in a beautiful local vineyard.

Friday 27th June

10.00 After breakfast we set off on a day trip to Salamanca (1 hour each way). In the morning we have a walking tour of the Medieval area with its magnificent churches and a visit to the extraordinary 'double' Cathedral.

13.30 – 15.00 Lunch nearby in the splendid Plaza Mayor.

15.00 – 16.30 We visit Casa Lis, an Art Nouveau Museum containing extraordinary glassworks, including some from the houses of Lalique and Gallé. There is also an impressive collection of paintings, and the building itself is the city's earliest example of Modernist architecture.

17.00 – 18.00 We return to the Parador, where you might enjoy an early evening swim or just a few lazy moments on a sun lounger, before supper in the Parador.

Saturday 28th June

09.00 – 09.30 After breakfast we leave Tordesillas and set off for nearby Valladolid.

09.30 – 11.00 We visit the National Sculpture Museum, with its very fine collection of polychrome sculptures.

11.30 – 13.30 Coffee in the impressive Plaza Mayor, then we take the coach to Burgos, a spectacular medieval city.



Tomb of King Alfonso VIII and Queen Leonor, Las Huelgas monastery

14.00 – 15.30 Lunch in Burgos

16.00 – 17.30 A tour with a local guide of the monastery of Santa Maria la Real de Las Huelgas, the Royal Pantheon created by Alfonso VIII in 1187. The tour ends in the textile museum, which contains one of the finest collections of Islamic silks from Al-Andalus, surprisingly re-used as burial vestments and tomb linings for the Catholic royal family and senior clergy, and rediscovered when the tombs were opened in the 1940's.

After the monastery visit, we settle in to the Hotel Palacio de Burgos. Around 7pm we take a short walk around the medieval centre of the city and then go to the 'son et lumière' in the Cathedral, where El Cid is buried. You then have a free evening to explore the many tapas bars and restaurants in this beautiful city centre.

Sunday 29th June

09.00 – 11.00 We take the coach to Bilbao, where we will stop near the Guggenheim Museum for coffee.

After coffee we visit the Guggenheim Collection, housed in the wonderful, titanium building by Frank Gehry, the final delight of the tour.

14.00 – 15.30 We enjoy a farewell lunch in Bilbao.

15.30 – 16.00 Coach to Bilbao airport for a return flight direct to Gatwick, departing at 18.10pm (Vueling).



Frank Gehry Museum of Bilbao

Tutors

Dr. Jacqueline Cockburn is Managing Director of Art & Culture Travel. She was formerly Head of the Department of Art History at Westminster School, Chief Examiner in Art History at Cambridge International Examinations, and an Associate Lecturer at Birkbeck College, University of London.

Ian Cockburn is a director of Art & Culture Travel. He has a BA in History of Art from Birkbeck College, University of London, and an M.A from the Courtauld Institute in medieval Spanish art history.

Both Ian and Jacqueline are also accredited lecturers for The Arts Society.

Fania Weatherby, our third tutor, is an experienced guide, with a B.A in History of Art at St John's College, Oxford University, and an M.A from the Courtauld Institute.

Fees (minimum 12 people/maximum 16 people) £1,875 per person (shared room)

The fee covers four nights' accommodation at Paradors in Segovia and Tordesillas, and at the 4-star Hotel Palacio de Burgos (including all breakfasts); all teaching and guiding by three specialist art historians over five days; all museum and other entry fees; all private coach and taxi journeys (in Spain); all lunches, all suppers except Saturday evening, and other refreshments, including Thursday evening wine-tasting.

Not included in the fees: Flights, travel and medical insurance. Single room supplement 20%.

Fitness: Please note, a good level of fitness and mobility is required for walking and visiting galleries. This is for your own comfort and to ensure your fellow travellers are not inconvenienced.

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