

## Planning my future winters (Initially in Spain)!

From December 2017 my winter lifestyle is changing, from being aboard boat in the Caribbean (early 2001 – April 2017) to exploring new horizons, in the first instance Spain. As a start I've been researching the cities of Spain that I would like to visit, not just for a short time, but for an appropriate length of time to permit full exploration of the culture and lifestyles of local people. Note however that I spent the autumn of 2015 in Tenerife, one of the Canary Islands, and the autumns of 2016 and 2017 in Málaga, on the Costa del Sol of southern Spain. This document therefore provides information about the places of interest in Spain that I hope to be able to visit over the coming year.

*Please note that places already visited as of 8 February 2018 are headlined in red.*



*Some of the major cities of Spain (Excluding the Canary Islands)*

(The following cities are worth researching, but do not represent a definitive list of places to be visited)

### **Malaga:**

Malaga is a stunning, arty and culturally rich city you won't want to miss. Packed with museums, theatres and monuments to discover including the remains of a Roman amphitheatre, the 1,000-year-old Gibralfaro castle, 13th century Alcazaba as well as several art museums dedicated to the city's most famous son: Pablo Picasso. Wander around the atmospheric, pedestrianised historic centre and stop off at the stunning cathedral or amble through the historical botanical gardens before heading to one of the many sumptuous tapas bars. For a bit of retail therapy, head to one of Spain's most elegant shopping streets, the marble-lined Calle Marques de Larios which is worth a visit for the architecture alone. Boasting views of the Mediterranean and surrounded by lush gardens, Málaga's five-star Hotel Miramar was once a place to see and be seen for Spanish royalty and bourgeoisie. Now, 90 years after it was inaugurated by King Alfonso XIII, it sits empty. Construction workers mill about the site meticulously working to restore the hotel to its former glory so that it may one day reopen. For Málaga's mayor, Francisco de la Torre, the rebirth of Hotel Miramar is a sign that his €100m gamble on rebranding the city is paying off. During his 15 years in office he has led an aggressive campaign to turn Málaga into a place brimming with culture. This southern city of 570,000 people now has more than 30 museums, most of them added under Torre's watch. "This city doesn't have a heritage that's as striking as the Alhambra in Granada or the Córdoba mosque or the Giralda of Seville," he told the Guardian as he shuttled between museum openings this week. "But now we have museums." His campaign reached new heights this week with the opening of the first foreign outposts of two high-profile museums: the Centre Pompidou Málaga and the Málaga branch of the St Petersburg State Russian Museum. France's Centre Pompidou has signed a five-year agreement allowing Málaga to house a popup Pompidou, with the Spanish city paying €1m a year for the rights to use its name as well as pieces from its vast collection. The Málaga branch of the Russian museum, the subject of a 10-year agreement, opened its doors on Wednesday. Housed in an old tobacco factory refurbished for more than €500,000, its opening display is dedicated to Russian art of the 16th to 20th centuries, featuring works by Ilya Repin, Wassily Kandinsky and Vladimir Tatlin. After touring the Russian museum on Wednesday, De la Torre said he was thrilled to see the latest phase in the city's transformation. "It's a feeling of great satisfaction for me," said the fast-talking mayor. While his People's party colleagues across the country have been accused of crippling the country's cultural sector with tax hikes and cuts to subsidies, De la Torre has done the opposite, pouring tens of

millions into turning Málaga into a big-name arts hub. The Pompidou sits in the city's "mile of art", as it has been dubbed by some media, near the Picasso Museum and the Centre for Contemporary Art, both of which opened in 2003, as well as the Carmen Thyssen Museum, which features 250 pieces from Baroness Thyssen-Bornemisza's collection on loan to the city. The city's investment in culture isn't just about attracting tourists, according to De la Torre, although tourism is a factor. "Years ago all the tourists would turn right as they left the airport, heading directly to the Costa del Sol. Now they're coming to Málaga," he said. In 10 years the number of visitors to the city has increased by 127%, to 3.5 million last year. The mayor argued that Málaga could also use culture to attract top talent from around the world to work in fields such as technology and innovation. "To have a city like Málaga that has everything from medieval to contemporary art, it gives us a certain security that Málaga is competitive when it comes to attracting talent." As the city searched for its identity, culture was an obvious direction given the city's links with Pablo Picasso, said José María Luna, who heads the public agency that oversees several of the city's most prominent museums. "We're tremendously lucky in that one of the icons of 20th-century painting was born in Málaga. It felt natural for culture to be the backbone of our identity." From this starting point, the city's ambitions kept growing, he said. "I think there's nothing like it anywhere else, in terms of square metre of museum per inhabitant." In a region where one in three people is unemployed, the mayor's decision to pour money into culture hasn't been without controversy. This year Málaga – a city carrying a debt of €600m – is poised to spend €4.2m on the Pompidou and €3.7m euros on the Russian museum alone. In the past 10 years the city has spent €100m on arts and culture, say opposition councillors, who last year called an emergency council meeting to address the issue. "They finance whatever interests them from a political point of view, without thinking about their own citizens," said María Gámez, a Socialist member of the city council. Eduardo Zorilla, a United Left councillor, called the spending an "excessive waste", arguing that the funds could be better spent on social housing or policies to create employment. De la Torre passionately defended his decisions. "We're not spending exaggerated quantities. And what we have spent has had exceptionally clear impact," he said, pointing to the rise in tourists. "Along with wealth, tourists bring jobs, and that's the best social policy, the creation of jobs. The reality is that both within and outside of Spain, other cities are looking at us with envy." De la Torre, who hopes to be re-elected when Málaga goes to the polls in May, said he wasn't quite done building museums just yet. "We can always add on, there's always room for more projects. We have to evaluate our resources, but I think it's worth pushing forward," he said. He smiled as he added: "It's a beautiful line: Málaga, city of museums."

### ***Santiago de Compostela:***

Santiago has one of the most magnificent old towns in Europe, with a labyrinth of cobble stone streets laced with gothic buildings galore which are, according to locals, at their best when it rains. Galicia's capital is the final stop in the Camino de Santiago pilgrimage, also known in the UK as the Way of St. James, but a more sedate stroll is recommended, as the medieval streets take on an old world vibe after dark. Head to the Rua do Franco towards the cathedral for a wonderful dining experience; the tapas bars and taverns here are legendary. "Galician-style octopus" goes down very nicely with the local Albariño wine.

### ***Granada:***

Granada, the final stronghold of the Islamic occupation in Spain, has a fascinating blend of Moorish and Spanish heritage. Set against the backdrop of the snow-capped Sierra Nevada mountain range and boasting an Arabic quarter, a stunning old town filled with authentic flamenco shows as well as Spain's most visited building, the Alhambra Palace, this Andalusian city is breathtaking. Romantics can enjoy watching the sun set over the Alhambra Palace from the Mirador de San Nicolas in the Albaicín Quarter. After exploring the maze-like streets, head to one of the bustling bars where the tapas are still free; a must for foodies.

At the foot of the Sierra Nevada mountains, between the rivers Darro and Genil, lies one of the most interesting cities in Eastern Andalusia. As well as its impressive Al-Andalus heritage, there are Renaissance architectural gems and the most modern facilities, fit for the 21st century. Granada has an unmistakable Moorish essence, due to the fact that it was the last city to be reconquered by the Catholic Monarchs in 1492. The gastronomy, craftwork and urban planning are influenced by its glorious past. Fountains, viewpoints and "Cármenes", houses surrounded by typical gardens of this city, create unforgettable corners in the city. It is no surprise that one of its old neighbourhoods, the Albaicín, has been awarded the World Heritage designation, together with the Alhambra and Generalife. It was an important cultural centre for many centuries, under the Moors and the Christians too, and nowadays it boasts a broad cultural and leisure programme. Film, music or theatre festivals are complemented with permanent or travelling exhibitions on all fields of knowledge. Old Renaissance palaces hold seminars, conferences and discussions, while the most innovative infrastructures are prepared for great events.

Granada has a vast network of accommodation, including historic buildings, such as the old convent of Santa Paula (AC Hotel) and the convent of San Francisco (Parador de Turismo located inside the Alhambra), "cármenes" (traditional villas with gardens) in the Albaicín, and cave houses in Sacromonte. Because of its

great communications, its marvellous climate, its beaches, and its snowy mountains, Granada is a unique destination for cultural, adventure and business travel.

### ***Salamanca:***

Salamanca is considered to be one of the most beautiful cities in Spain with an old town listed as a UNESCO World Heritage Site and an exceptional Plaza Mayor regarded as one of the country's most elegant city squares. The Plaza is illuminated at night, making it one of the city's more unforgettable highlights. Salamanca has a huge student population that keeps the city buzzing with a youthful energy. The renowned university, which is thought to be the third oldest in Europe, was founded in 1218 and is well worth a visit. It is one of the many architectural wonders built from local sandstone which over the years have acquired a soft glow, giving rise to Salamanca's moniker: the 'Golden City'. For one of the city's most iconic views, head to the Patio Chico, where you can see both the old and new cathedrals of Salamanca. La Universidad de Salamanca has gained an enviable reputation, attracting students from around the world. The façade of the university hides a surprise: a frog. People usually spend a lot of time trying to find it due to its small size. However, it is worth the effort as finding the animal is supposed to bring luck. Moreover, La Celestina, a renowned play written in 1499, is said to have taken place there. La Plaza Mayor, of Baroque style, is the icon of the city, and it is always crowded with students and tourists. La Casa de las Conchas is another important and original building, decorated with more than 300 shells, symbols of the order of Santiago. La Nochevieja Universitaria takes place in December every year, when students have to eat 12 sweets in order to celebrate the new year with their classmates before going back home. Located in central Spain, Salamanca owes its breathtaking beauty to the nearby sandstone quarries from which many of the city's buildings were constructed. The glowing light that emanates from the stone at sunset has earned Salamanca the nickname "The Golden City." A university town since 1218, Salamanca is still home to one of Europe's finest universities. The city is filled with historic architecture, including the 12th-century Catedral Vieja and Casa de las Conchas, a 15th-century structure ornamented with hundreds of sandstone shells. Visits to Salamanca often begin at the Plaza Major, a Baroque square where students gather at all hours to eat, drink and sing. Their enthusiasm and confidence offer assurance that Salamanca's future will be as bright as its golden past.

### ***Valencia:***

Valencia has so much to offer, from fabulous Modernist architecture and elegant art nouveau buildings to great museums and a characterful old quarter. History lovers and culture vultures can head to the UNESCO-listed La Lonja de la Seda (Silk Exchange), the Valencia and Mercado Cathedrals and the Museo de Bellas Artes. Gourmet cuisine is one of the great pleasures of Valencia, with long lunches and dinners a must. The coastal city is surrounded by fertile, fruit-and-vegetable growing farmlands and is famed for its rice dishes like paella; but its dining and nightlife scene offers plenty more.

### ***Toledo:***

Dramatic Toledo is a diverse and compelling city, home to some of Spain's finest monuments. It was known as the 'city of three cultures' in the Middle Ages when Muslim, Christian and Jewish communities lived peacefully together for centuries behind its impressive city walls. The result of this rich multicultural heritage is a treasure chest of an old town full of churches, palaces, fortresses, mosques and synagogues, earning it the reputation of an open air museum and a UNESCO Heritage Site award in 1986. Surrounded by the River Tajo on three sides, Toledo sits atop a gorge and is small enough to explore on foot, although one of the best ways to discover the city is to wander aimlessly around the city's medieval streets while seeking out the works of famous artist, El Greco. Also known as 'The Imperial City,' Toledo used to be home to Muslims, Jews and Christians, who co-existed peacefully for almost two centuries. El Greco, a well-known painter that spent part of his life in Toledo, is the icon of the city. If you ever go to Toledo, you can't miss his most famous painting El Entierro del Conde Orgaz (The Burial of the Count of Orgaz). Its city center is also outstanding, featuring beautiful structures like the Gothic Cathedral or the synagogue, la Sinagoga del tránsito. Encircled on three sides by bends in the Tagus River, Toledo served as a natural fortress for a succession of Roman, Visigoth, Muslim and Christian rulers. Getting lost in the Old Quarter in Toledo is one of the great charms of a trip to this medieval city, as visitors have only to head uphill to the Plaza de Zocodover to recover their bearings. Among the must-see attractions in Toledo are the city's Cathedral, a resplendent structure ornamented with gold relief, and the El Greco Museum, a recreation of the artist's home that features several important paintings. Spain's former capital until the mid-15th century, Toledo is home to a large chunk of the country's monuments. It's known as the city of three cultures as Arabs, Christians and Jews lived together for centuries behind its impressive city walls. The old town is a treasure chest of churches, palaces, fortresses, mosques and synagogues, earning it the reputation of an open air museum and a UNESCO Heritage Site award in 1986. Almost an island city as it is surrounded by the River Tajo on three sides, Toledo is small enough to explore on foot, although one of the best ways to discover the city is to literally get lost by wandering aimlessly around the city's medieval streets. This is especially exciting at night as you feel like you've been transported back to the middle ages.

Toledo is one of the Spanish cities with the greatest wealth of monuments. Known as the “city of the three cultures”, because Christians, Arabs and Jews lived together there for centuries, behind its walls Toledo preserves an artistic and cultural legacy in the form of churches, palaces, fortresses, mosques and synagogues. This great diversity of artistic styles makes the old quarter of the capital of Castile - La Mancha a real open-air museum, which has led to it being declared a World Heritage Site.

Toledo is also a city linked to deep popular traditions, as the procession of the Most Holy Corpus Christi, a festival declared of International Tourist Interest, demonstrates every year. The city of Toledo has its origins in Toletum, the name the Romans gave to this settlement on the banks of the River Tagus after its conquest in 190 BC. The city maintained its importance for centuries and, in the Visigothic era, became the capital of Hispania (6th C.). The arrival of the Arabs in the 8th century, together with the presence of Christians and Jews, made Toledo the “city of the three cultures”. This was one of the Toledo's most splendid periods when, among other important events, the Toledo School of Translators was founded. Later, when Carlos V came to the throne in 1519, the city became an imperial capital. The way that Christians, Arabs and Jews lived side by side for centuries has been reflected in the form of a great artistic and cultural legacy. The maze of streets making up the historic centre of Toledo is only bounded by walls in which many gates were opened. The Bisagra gate, presided over by two bodies and a great imperial shield forms the main access to the city within the walls. This noble gate, of Muslim origin, includes a central courtyard and was altered during the reign of Carlos I (Emperor Carlos V). The Alfonso VI gate or Vieja de Bisagra gate, built in 838, is one of the most faithful reflections of Muslim art in the city. The Sol gate was built in the 13th century in Mudejar style and contains the remains of a paleochristian sarcophagus. Via these and other entrances you can reach picturesque places, like the Plaza de Zocodover. In the Arab period, this central space housed an important market, and festivals and all kinds of social events were held here. Nowadays the square, surrounded by buildings with porches, continues to be one of the busiest places in the city. Synagogues, mosques and churches jostle in the narrow streets of Toledo, which is characterised by the mixture of artistic styles. The Mosque of Cristo de la Luz, which predates the Christian reconquest, was built in 999 as a copy of the Mosque at Córdoba. It is an unusual building with a square floor plan covered by nine caliphal vaults (a type of groined vault leaving the centre free). To this, a Romanesque-Mudejar sanctuary was added in the 12th century. Good examples from the Mozarabs (Christians who lived under Moslem rule) are the churches of San Sebastián and Santa Eulalia, while the Mudejars left in Toledo a style with rich Arab decoration. Horseshoe arches, lobed windows and other architectural elements can be appreciated in various buildings in Toledo. Santiago del Arrabal is one of the best examples of this style in the city, which has led this church also being known as the Mudejar Cathedral. The origin of its construction is uncertain, although it was probably in the time of King Alfonso VI when the church was built, taking advantage of an old mosque. The outstanding features of the early structure are a tower which recalls a Muslim minaret. The same Mudejar style can be seen in the church of Santo Tomé, famous for housing El Greco's famous picture entitled “El entierro del Conde Orgaz” (The burial of Count Orgaz). A 14th-century Mudejar tower stands above the rest of the building, which dates from the 12th century and has Visigothic elements on its main façade. If there is one person's name that defines Toledo it is that of El Greco (16th-17th C.). His House-Museum, a palace with the atmosphere of the period, exhibits some of the best works of the painter who made the city world famous. Remains of the Jewish community are still preserved in the city in the synagogues of Santa María la Blanca and El Tránsito. The former, built possibly in the 12th century, is also a good example of Toledo's Mudejar art. It has five naves with decreasing heights as well as the characteristic geometrical and botanical decoration and horseshoe arches. Meanwhile, in the synagogue of El Tránsito, built in 1357, you can admire one of the best Mudejar coffered ceilings of all those preserved in Toledo, along with walls richly decorated with geometrical and botanical designs and Hebrew inscriptions. Nowadays, this Jewish place of worship houses the Sephardic Museum, in which an interesting collection of pieces of art and various objects used in Jewish ceremonies are exhibited. One of the most outstanding buildings in the city is the Cathedral, considered one of the high points of Gothic art. The construction of this monumental building, with a basilica floor plan and five naves, because in 1226, although it was not finished until the 15th century. This is reflected in the great superimposition of styles in the building and the large number of renowned artists who left their mark on the church: from Pedro Berruguete, to Enrique Egás, Petrus Petri and Juan Guas. On its main facade the outstanding feature is the doorway, made up of three doors: Infierno (Hell), Perdón (Forgiveness) and Juicio (Judgement). The exterior is topped by the two cathedral towers, one of them in flamboyant Gothic style and the other in Gothic-Renaissance. Inside, the choir stalls, located in the building's central nave, are outstanding. Other main features are the beautiful flamboyant Gothic reredos in the main chapel as well as the many minor chapels, like those of San Ildefonso and El Sagrario, where the Arfe Processional Monstrance is housed. This is a huge piece of precious metalwork decorated with 260 images and made of silver bathed in gold by Enrique de Arfe between 1517 and 1524. The treasure, at 2.5 metres high and weighing more than 160 kilos, takes the leading role in the procession of the Most Holy Corpus Christi, a festival declared of International Tourist Interest. Meanwhile, the Cathedral Museum houses a rich collection of works by painters like Goya, El Greco, Lucas Jordán and Van Dyck. Also Gothic are the San Martín bridge, which was built in the 13th century with its two characteristic defensive towers, and the

Monastery of San Juan de los Reyes. This superb example of flamboyant Gothic was one of the masterpieces of Juan Guas, who carried out the scheme commissioned by the Catholic Monarchs. The building, in flamboyant Gothic style, has a church which is outstanding for its great ornamentation and for its cloister, of great sculptural value. The Renaissance mark on Toledo can be appreciated in the Hospital de Tavera, turned into a museum housing pictures by El Greco, Ribera and Titian, among others. Important architects of the period, like Covarrubias, Berruguete and Bustamante took part in its construction. Inside, the outstanding features are its courtyard, the tomb of Cardinal Tavera, the work of Berruguete, and the pharmacy, which maintains its original appearance. The palaces of Lorenzana, the site of the University, and Fuensalida are in Baroque style. Meanwhile, the Fortress, of medieval origin, presides over the whole city with its imposing image and contains a military museum and one of the largest public libraries in Spain. In its time it was an imperial residence, although the current building was later than the work carried out by Covarrubias and Herrera on the commission of Carlos I. Behind its thick walls it hides a large central courtyard and the imperial staircase. Meanwhile, on its southern façade, the oldest that remains, it has a viewpoint enabling you to see a beautiful view of the River Tagus and the city's surroundings. Cuisine, festivals and surroundings Toledo's cuisine has various specialities based on game products, like stewed partridge, Toledo-style quail or venison with wild mushrooms. With the other provinces of La Mancha it shares pisto (based on pepper, tomato and onion), Castilian soup and migas (dish made with breadcrumbs and pork products). To round it off there is the famous La Mancha cheese and marzipan (made from ground almonds and sugar). These dishes may be accompanied with the wines of La Mancha and Méntrida, each with a Denomination of Origin. The most important date in Toledo's calendar is Corpus Christi, which is celebrated nine weeks after Easter. This festival, which has centuries of tradition and has been declared of International Tourist Interest, has its culminating moment in a large and colourful procession going round the historic centre of the capital of La Mancha. There are many possibilities for accommodation in the city, although it is advisable to book well enough in advance at any time of year. One of the best options is the Toledo Parador, situated on the neighbouring Emperador Hill and from where you can get a wonderful view of the city. Other interesting places in the province of Toledo are Talavera de la Reina, with its Collegiate Church of Santa María la Mayor; Ocaña, with its Gothic-Mudejar church of San Juan Bautista; Guadamur, with a beautiful castle; and Oropesa, whose 14th-century castle-palace houses the local Parador de Turismo. In the south of the province, at the foot of the Montes de Toledo, is the Cabañeros National Park, a protected area that combines Mediterranean woodland in the mountains and meadows on the wide plains.

### **Barcelona:**

Famous for iconic architecture, excellent food and pulsing nightlife, Barcelona is a vibrant seaside city packed with excitement. La Rambla is the city's beating heart, filled with restaurants, shops and entertainers. Head through La Rambla to the must-see medieval Gothic Quarter, which brims with beautiful churches, narrow streets and grand, palm-tree filled plazas. No visit to Barcelona would be complete without visiting Gaudi's famous La Sagrada Familia Basilica. The masterpiece has been under construction since 1882 and is not expected to be completed until 2041.

Barcelona, the capital of Catalonia, is a Mediterranean and cosmopolitan city with Roman remains, medieval quarters and the most beautiful examples of 20th century Modernism and avant-garde. It is no surprise that emblematic constructions by the Catalan architects Antoni Gaudí and Lluís Doménech i Montaner have been declared World Heritage Sites by UNESCO. The city's origins are Roman, and its long history and economic dynamism have made Barcelona a cultural city, which can be seen in the historic-artistic heritage and the promotion of the most innovative artistic trends. A wide cultural programme will take visitors to museums, exhibitions, open-air sculptures... and many concerts, plays and dances.

Popular culture also has its manifestations in this city, which still conserves its most cherished traditions, like the fiestas of La Mercè or the festivities in the neighbourhoods of Gràcia, Sants and Poblenou. These are all exceptional opportunities for getting to know the city's more festive side. Tradition and modernity can also be seen in its innovative and imaginative gastronomy, based on fresh garden produce, fresh fish, a wide variety of sausages and olive oil. Traditional handmade cakes and pastries and sparkling wines are some of the other highlights in this brief overview of Barcelona's gastronomic culture.

Strolling around the streets of Barcelona will bring surprises at every turn. Pedestrian streets in the old quarter, green spaces, and a splendid seafront with a range of modern facilities are a reflection of its multi-faceted character. Barcelona has cleverly succeeded in embracing its past without forgetting its commitment to the future. The city is endowed with some exceptional infrastructures which are in demand as venues for seminars, symposia and international events. Its exceptional transport connections, the Mediterranean climate and the multitude of attractions for visitors make Barcelona one of the world's leading business cities. Business parks and exhibition and conference centres host a wide range of initiatives. Visitors coming to Barcelona for pleasure or on business can also enjoy the city's Mediterranean character, which can so clearly be seen on the Barcelona coast. The city also has lovely urban beaches,

marine resorts, and golf courses on the seashore. Nature lovers will not have to go far to explore the mountains in the Cordillera Litoral range and the Catalan Pyrenees.

### **Seville:**

The sultry city of Seville is known as the frying pan of Spain, but a cool city vibe, Moorish architecture and ancient streets make it a perfect city to explore over a few days. The capital of Andalusia is famous for its flamenco, tapas bars and orange trees – the fragrance of which hang in the air. To further indulge the senses there's the excellent Cathedral of Saint Mary, Plaza de Espana, the Alcázar palace as well as the Jewish Quarter of Santa Cruz, a beautifully preserved Jewish District. The capital of Andalusia is mostly known for its high temperatures – in Summer 40°C is considered normal – and Triana, the most popular neighborhood situated on the west bank of the Guadalquivir River. However, it has more to offer. The Gothic Cathedral is outstanding and a contrast to La Giralda, a tower built in the 12th century by the Moors. La Giralda will offer you the best views of the city... after 35 ramps (they built ramps instead of stairs in order to be able to climb up on horseback). La Plaza de España is an outstanding and enormous square built in the 20th century for the Ibero-American Exposition. It includes a great amount of tiled walls representing different Spanish regions. In April, Seville is all decked out for La Feria de Abril. On the first day, at midnight, the city is illuminated (el alumbrado) and during six consequent days attendees dance Sevillanas (Sevillian flamenco songs) and enjoy local food and drink in casetas. Bullfighting also plays an important role, lately leading to a nation-wide debate.

Situated on the banks of the Guadalquivir River, Seville has a rich Moorish heritage, and used to be a prosperous port that carried out trade with the Americas. The streets and squares in the historic quarter of the capital of Andalusia are lively and busy. They treasure many constructions that have the World Heritage designation, and many districts are full of traditional culture, like Triana and La Macarena. Seville is a prominent business and service centre in the south of Spain and has many hotels distributed all over the city which enable visitors to discover endless attractions. Museums and art centres, theme parks, cinemas, theatres and clubs are some of the many leisure options that a great city like Seville holds. Without forgetting, of course, the numerous terraces, inns and bars where visitors can practise one of the most deeply-rooted and tasty traditions in the city: "Going out for tapas".

### **Cordoba:**

One of the greatest cities of the medieval world, Cordoba was the capital of the Muslim occupied Iberian Peninsula and home to one of the grandest mosques in the western world – the magnificent Mezquita of Cordoba. The Mezquita is widely regarded as one of the world's greatest pieces of Islamic architecture, made more exceptional by the cathedral which was built at its heart many years after the Christian conquest of the city in 1236. The city is perfect for those who like to explore on foot or by bike as the narrow streets surrounding the Mezquita are filled with beautiful plazas, narrow side-streets and bustling tapas bars and old, moody wine bars.

Cordoba is situated in the interior of Andalusia where past and modernity blend in together. This thousand-year-old city, which has the World Heritage designation, is a living legacy of the different cultures that settled here throughout its history. Not many places in the world can say they have been the capital of Hispania Ulterior (Further Spain) under the Roman Empire, and capital of the Umayyad Caliphate. This splendour can also be seen because of the intellectualism of this city of knowledge, where figures like Seneca, Averroes or Maimonides were born. If you walk round the old quarter you will discover a beautiful network of alleyways, squares and white-washed courtyards surrounding the Great Mosque-Cathedral, which reflects the importance of the city in the Middle Ages, and is the symbol of the city.

### **Antequera:**

Antequera is not just another Andalusian white hill town – not that there's anything wrong with that! Lovely Antequera retains its baroque religious buildings while sitting atop its strangely beautiful landscape. But its air is permeated by history. Here the Christians started their last holy war – removing the Moors from their remaining Iberian holdout – the Granada Empire. This makes the battle for Antequera the beginning of the end for the Moors. The Christians finally took the city in 1410 after 200 years of on-again, off-again warfare. Then the Christians fortified the place to make it their base to attack Granada. Once they succeeded, Antequera flourished, especially in the 16th through 18th centuries when much of what tourists come to see was created. This town has a lot of history – not just the recorded wars between the Christians and Moors. Millennia before that cave men Natural Park lived here and buried their dead in some of the largest tombs (called dolmens) in Europe. (More on that later). Natural history abounds here as well: Antequera sits about 1800 feet above the Mediterranean and is separated from it by the Sierra del Torcal mountain range – a strangely beautiful landscape formed when the African landmass crashed into Eurasia about 20 million years ago. The limestone formed 200 million years ago by all those little sea critters dying at the bottom of the then-ocean was gradually thrust up into scenery such as this, seen at the nearby Natural Park of Torcal.

Antequera is a fascinating town, both architecturally and historically, yet it has somehow avoided being on the coach-tour circuit – which only adds to its charms. The three major influences in the region, Roman, Moorish and Spanish, have left the town with a rich tapestry of architectural gems. The highlight is the opulent Spanish-baroque style that gives the town its character and which the civic authorities have worked hard to restore and maintain. There is also an astonishing number of churches here – more than 30, many with wonderfully ornate interiors. Little wonder that the town is often referred to as the 'Florence of Andalucía'. And there's more! Some of Europe's largest and oldest dolmens (burial chambers built with huge slabs of rock), from around 2500 BC to 1800 BC, can be found just outside the town's centre. The flip side to all this antiquity is a vibrant city centre with some of the best tapas bars this side of Granada.

### ***Logroño:***

The northern city of Logroño was once a fortified medieval town, and the city's Old Quarter is still its greatest attraction. The Casco Antiguo has long served as a stop for pilgrims on their trek to visit the tomb of Saint James at Santiago de Compostela. With its magnificent carvings and statues, the Gothic-style Santa Maria de Palacio is well worth a visit, as is the beautifully sculpted Romanesque front of Church of Saint Bartholomew. As the trade center for wine in the La Rioja region, Logroño is known for its world-class Spanish wines and dining scene as well. Lined with historic gardens, pretty Paseo del Espolón is the best place to join locals for the early evening stroll known as the paseo.

### ***Girona:***

Located in Spain's northeast region of Catalonia, Girona is a small medieval city with a long and varied past. For its ability to withstand invasions from powerful forces for centuries, Girona is known as "The City of a Thousand Sieges." An exploration of the city's Old Quarter takes visitors past Roman walls, Moorish baths and Gothic churches, and it's easy to get lost in time navigating the labyrinth of narrow alleyways and stone lanes. No visit to Girona is complete without climbing the 89 steps to the Girona Cathedral to view its famous "Tapestry of the Creation," an embroidered panel that dates back to the 11th century. The scenic riverside "Rambla de la Llibertat," Girona's main promenade, is lined with cafés, shops and restaurants.

### ***Pamplona:***

The capital of the Navarra region, Pamplona is known the world over as the site of the annual "Running of the Bulls" held during the Fiesta de San Fermín. For visitors not interested in risking life and limb dodging bulls through crowded streets, however, it's best to avoid the city during the week-long festival in early July. Pamplona has plenty to offer visitors the other 51 weeks of the year. In addition to the city's Old Quarter with its pretty park and historic churches, the Museum of Navarra is a can't-miss attraction. Housed in a 16th-century hospital, the museum boasts an impressive collection of Roman artifacts and mosaics as well as 13th-century murals, Renaissance paintings and Goya's portrait of the Marqués de San Adrián.

### ***Jerez de la Frontera:***

Most visitors come to the Andalusian town of Jerez del Frontera for its world-famous sherry, but they often succumb to the city's other charms as well. Jerez del Frontera's history dates back nearly 3,000 years, and remnants of its past are scattered throughout the city. The city's star attraction is the Alcazar, a Moorish fortress built in 1255. The complex features a mosque, Arab baths and picturesque gardens. Jerez de la Frontera has several themed museums too, including a clock museum, a flamenco museum and one about the region's fine wines. The city's Old Quarter is notable for its Mudéjar chapels and for its archeological museum, which has artifacts ranging from a 7th-century-B.C. Greek helmet to a 15th-century blown-glass ceiling lamp.

### ***Cartagena:***

The port of Cartagena, in the Mediterranean's Costa Cálida, has been prized since Carthaginian times. Thanks to its strategic position on the Murcia coast, it has been inhabited by several cultures which have left their mark on its artistic heritage. A tour of the place and its museums will draw us into the history of a city closely tied to the sea.

This maritime enclave was already known to the Carthaginians and Romans, and its name today comes from the Latin, Cartago Nova. Cartagena was under Arab domination until Ferdinand III 'the Saint' reconquered it and incorporated it into the kingdom of Castile. Its port played a key role in the War of Succession and the Peninsular War. Historic centre The rich Carthaginian heritage spreads to the shores of its marina. The Muralla del Mar ('Sea Wall'), built by Charles III (18th century), delimits the old quarter. Overlooking the Mediterranean there is an element which is clearly connected with the sea: the prototype of the submarine by the inventor from Cartagena, Isaac Peral. In addition, the National Museum of Underwater Archaeology ARQUA (at Paseo Alfonso XII, 22) houses the National Centre for Underwater Archaeological Research. The findings on display reveal aspects of naval construction, trade and navigation since ancient times. The

entrance to the city centre is dominated by the Town Hall, a gem of modernist architecture dating from the early 20th century. The Old Cathedral is located on the Camino del Parque Torres (behind the Muralla del Mar wall). This is the oldest place of worship in CartagenaCartagena (13th century), and stands on the remains of a Roman theatre discovered in 1987. This construction dates from the first century A.D., and together with the theatre in Mérida, is one of the most important in Spain. The items found on this site can be seen in the Museum of the Roman Theatre. Other examples of Roman splendour to be seen in the city are the archaeological site of El Molinete, the Morería Baja colonnade and the Byzantine Wall, which –despite its name– is also Roman. Particularly worth mentioning are the Augusteum and the Decumanus. The first contains the remains of the old forum, whose importance as a public building can be seen from the luxurious marble floors on display at the site. The second can be visited on the site adjoining the Roman Forum quarter, a key centre for visitors to the city, containing the different rooms in the city's Roman baths. The Casa Fortuna, built in the first century B.C. and belonging to a wealthy family, shows what daily life was like at the time of the Roman Empire. The Torres park is the site of the Concepción castle. Standing atop a hill, it served as a fortress to Carthaginians, Romans, Visigoths, Arabs and Castilians, and now houses the History and Mediaeval Cartagena Visitor Centre. Indeed the city has always had numerous defensive military buildings. A good example is the Navidad Fortress, built in the mid-19th century and today the Visitor Centre for the Defensive Architecture of Cartagena and the Mediterranean. Also worth visiting is the Refuge – Civil War museum, a series of galleries which were used as protection from aerial attack throughout the conflict. (More information at <http://www.cartagenapuertodeculturas.com/>) The best way to learn more about the Modernist architecture of Cartagena is to take a walk along the Calle Mayor, which leads off the Plaza del Ayuntamiento square, and around the surrounding area. Here visitors will find the houses of Cervantes and Llagostera, by the Cartagena architect Victor Beltrí, with their characteristic glassed-in balconies, worked in iron with bronze reliefs of allegorical figures. Other representative buildings of this artistic movement include the Casino, the Gran Hotel, the railway station, and the houses of Maestre and Dorda, all elegant monuments to the bourgeoisie which remain as evidence of the area's economic development, based on mining and industry, in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. More aristocratic are the palaces of Aguirre (whose adjoining modernist building is this side of the Regional Modern Art Museum MURAM) and Pedreño, one in the modernist and the other in the neoclassical style. The Punic Wall stands on Monte Aletes, one of the five hills surrounding Cartagena. This is the location of the Visitor Centre for this site, dating from the third century B.C. Adjoining the historic walled centre is the Military Arsenal, whose construction was concluded during the reign of Charles III. The walls here have the only surviving entrance gateway in the city. More interesting items from the history of Cartagena can be seen in the Naval Museum, located in the old Naval Offices in Paseo de Alfonso XII, which contains an exhibition of old maritime navigation instruments, maps and navigation charts, as well as models of ships of all kinds. The fishing quarter of Santa Lucía is also well worth visiting. The city of Cartagena also has a variety of key cultural events each year, such as the world music festival known as the 'La Mar de Músicas' (Sea of Music). Other highlights include the historical festivities of the Carthaginians and the Romans in the second fortnight of September which commemorate the Punic foundation of the city, and the Roman reconquest.

### ***Burgos:***

The capital of Spain's Castile region for nearly 500 years, Burgos has played a significant role in the country's history. As the home and burial place of the medieval Spanish hero El Cid, the city has long attracted visitors interested in Spain's rich past. A recent push to recognize Burgos as a designated "European City of Culture" has brought the city's best historic attractions to the fore. From its towering spires to the slab of marble that marks the tomb of El Cid, the remarkable Cathedral of Burgos has been restored to its Gothic glory. The Old Quarter is surrounded by green spaces, including the beautiful parks on the banks of the Arlanzón River known as the Paseo de la Isla. Burgos. The cathedral in the city of Burgos was founded in 1221. It is the main Catholic church of Castile. The riverside city of Burgos is another important stopping point along the Camino de Santiago, and is often the city that most pilgrims vow to return to for a longer visit. Dominated by its 13th century gothic cathedral (the third largest in Spain after Seville and Toledo), it is the only one in the country to be awarded a World Heritage title by UNESCO. Many also claim that Burgos has the best gourmet tapas in Spain, while its strategic location between Ribera del Duero and La Rioja wine regions ensure that all food is washed down with some of the country's finest wine. You can still see much of the old city wall, including its 16th century fortified gate – the Arco de Santa Maria – adorned with so many turrets and towers it looks like the entrance to a fairy-tale castle. Meanwhile, one of the most pleasant ways to get to know this city is to follow the tree-lined Río Arlanzón, as it winds through the city centre.

Burgos, a city in Castilla-Leon situated in the Pilgrim's Road to Santiago de Compostela, still preserves important vestiges of its medieval splendour. The city, which was the capital of the unified kingdom of Castilla-Leon for five centuries, boasts a masterpiece of Spanish Gothic architecture: the cathedral of Burgos, declared World Heritage. Aside from a visit to the historic quarter, you can take a quite interesting walk along the banks of the Duero and Arlanza rivers. Great places to approach a delicious, varied cuisine.



## **Cádiz:**

This maritime city fascinated the Phoenicians, the Romans and the Moors. Today, its white sand beaches and its yellow-domed cathedral will fascinate you. The impressive views from the Torre Tavira and the sunset from La Caleta, the most popular beach in the city, are not to be missed. Los Carnavales de Cádiz is one of the best-known carnivals in the whole country, apparently inspired by The Venice Carnival. The festival takes place over ten days in February, when festive costume local music groups take control of the city. Situated in Andalusia on a narrow slice of land surrounded by the sea, Cadiz is considered Spain's oldest continuously inhabited city. Its unique location on the Atlantic Coast has made it an important port for 3,000 years. The Archeological Museum in the Plaza de Mina features stone sarcophagi holding the remains of two of the city's 5th-century Phoenician inhabitants. Christopher Columbus set sail from Cadiz on his second voyage to the New World, and Sir Francis Drake delayed the Spanish Armada when he attacked ships in Cadiz in 1587. Today, a picturesque Old Quarter, several scenic beaches and an annual festival held in February attract visitors from all over the world. This maritime city fascinated the Phoenicians, the Romans and the Moors. Today, its white sand beaches and its yellow-domed cathedral will fascinate you. The impressive views from the Torre Tavira and the sunset from La Caleta, the most popular beach in the city, are not to be missed. Los Carnavales de Cádiz is one of the best-known carnivals in the whole country, apparently inspired by The Venice Carnival. The festival takes place over ten days in February, when festive costume local music groups take control of the city. Stylish, stunning and sun-drenched – Cadiz is one of Andalucía's most underrated cities. Hiding behind its old city walls on a peninsula that juts out from the mainland, Cadiz is under the tourist radar – which is exactly why you should visit. Filled with grand open squares, palm-fringed promenades and countless back streets just waiting to be explored, Cadiz also boasts pristine beaches and plenty of fresh seafood. A great way to get your bearings and explore is to hire a bicycle and circumnavigate the city's edges. Or better still, climb the Torre Tavira – the highest watchtower in the city to soak up the 360 degree views.

Founded 3,000 years ago by the Phoenicians, Cádiz is the oldest city in Western Europe. The different peoples who settled here left an important cultural imprint, whose influence still remains in the character of the city's people. This peninsula, right on the Andalusian Atlantic coast, has been able to preserve an important historical legacy - the result of its commercial importance - together with excellent beaches and an exquisite regional cuisine. The Costa de la Luz, divided between the provinces of Huelva and Cádiz, also offers a multitude of destinations combining culture and leisure. And, for nature lovers, there is nothing better than touring the Doñana National Park, declared a World Heritage Site by UNESCO.

The former Phoenician Gades and Roman Gadir experienced its most splendid period when, in the 17th Century, it had the Ultramar (Spanish overseas empire) trade monopoly. This rise attracted attacks by pirates, which made the city fortify itself, constructing defensive bastions, castles and watchtowers on each flat roof. These are some of the characteristics of the city, in which the balcony railings are also outstanding. A visit might begin in Puerta Tierra, the entry point through the walls and the dividing line between modern and old Cádiz. On one side, wide avenues, beaches (La Victoria, Santa María and La Cortadura), sailing clubs and modern sporting facilities. On the other, a Cádiz with more flavour and history, that of the old districts: El Pópulo, the old medieval town; La Viña, fishing district and centre of the local tradition of satirical verses, or Santa María, living temple to flamenco. Streets with distinct characters but which have maintained a uniformity in the look of their houses which together form an exceptionally beautiful pattern. On the Atlantic front rise the dome and yellow tiles of the Cathedral, looking towards Campo del Sur. Baroque and Neoclassical in style, its crypt guards the remains of the composer Manuel de Falla. Beside it are the old Roman theatre and the old cathedral. What was a royal square, parade ground and market, originating on land won from the sea, is also worth a visit. This is the Plaza de San Juan de Dios where the Neoclassical structure of Cádiz City Hall stands, looking towards the nearby port. Many lively squares lie along any route. In the Plaza de España, beside the port, stands the palace of the Provincial Government and Monument to the Liberal Cortes (Parliament). In the tree-lined Plaza Mina you can visit the Cádiz Archaeological and Fine Arts Museum, which has interesting Phoenician exhibitions, while in the Plaza de San Francisco you can visit the church of the same name. The city's most important shopping streets begin around the Plaza de las Flores. There is a good reason why the Central Market located here. Another square, that of Tío de la Tiza, is the heart of the district of La Viña, where the Carnival, a Festival of International Tourist Interest, begins with the traditional satirical verses. Cádiz has important religious buildings that tell us of Andalusian religious feeling. In Santa María, the church that gives its name to the district and the Convent of Santo Domingo are important. Near La Viña the parish church of La Palma awaits, while at the other end of the city, next to Candelaria Bastion, stands the church of Carmen. Right in the centre of Cádiz you can visit the Cádiz Municipal Historical Museum, the Tavira Tower, one of the most symbolic in the city, and the Oratory of San Felipe Neri, a National Monument in which the Liberal Constitution of 1812 was debated. And for the best views of the Atlantic Ocean there is nothing like a stroll in the garden walks of the Alameda de la Apodaca, the Genovés Park and La Caleta beach. This beach is the only one in the old town and is framed by the Santa Catalina and San Sebastián castles. Its sands give way to the bathing area of La Palma and El Real. You can

continue as far as the beaches of the modern city, passing through Campo del Sur and stopping at the Mártires, Capuchinos and San Roque bastions. The former Gades offers you its Parador de Turismo, the "Hotel Atlántico". Staying in the heart of the old town in a room with sea views is ideal preparation for tasting the rich cuisine of Cádiz. The capital brings together the wealth of the whole province and offers us langoustines from Sanlúcar, sole from San Fernando, wines from Jerez (sherry) and Cádiz "turrón" (a kind of nougat). Cold meats include Iberian ham, always from the mountains of the interior. The exceptional geographical position of Cádiz enables you to go to beautiful places like the Costa de la Luz, El Puerto de Santa María, Puerto Real (whose old quarter is a historic-artistic site) or Chiclana de la Frontera. At the western end of the Cadiz coast lies Sanlúcar de Barrameda, well known for its manzanilla, with Denomination of Origin, and for being one of the entrances to the Doñana Natural Park, declared a World Heritage Site. Inland, Jerez de la Frontera awaits, a city with one of the most famous wines in Spain, (also with Denomination of Origin) and home to the "cartujano" horses. It is a good starting point for doing the White Villages Route. This way you will discover Serranía de Ronda - the natural parks of Grazalema and Los Alcornocales - as well as places with impeccable white houses like Arcos de la Frontera, Medina Sidonia or Vejer de la Frontera. Another highly recommended tour is the Roman Bética Route, which takes you to places in the former Roman province, from Santiponce (Seville) to Tarifa (Cádiz), a good place for walking in the old town and going windsurfing.

The cathedral took 116 years to complete, and the Neoclassical style was incorporated towards the end of construction. Massive and much-needed restoration work has recently been completed. Located on the coast of the Atlantic Ocean, the huge edifice is decorated entirely in stone, with no gold in sight. It is topped by a yellow tiled dome that adds a Moorish feel to the cathedral. Visitors can climb to the roof for a closer look at the dome and a fine view over Cadiz to the sea. In the atmospheric crypt is the tomb of Manuel de Falla (1876-1946), the great composer of such Andalusia-inspired works as Nights in the Gardens of Spain. The cathedral museum (entry included with cathedral admission) has exhibitions of the city of Cadiz as well as religious paintings and sculptures.

### **Tarragona:**

Always under the shadow of Barcelona, Tarragona is not one of the best known Spanish cities. However, it is a potential tourist destination thanks to its proximity to the coastline, as well as its Roman ruins. For instance, the amphitheater is well-preserved and near the beach, featuring a wonderful landscape. With regards to religious art, La Catedral is outstanding and features an unexpected cloister. If you want to have a look at some splendid views, then you can't miss El balcó del Mediterrani. There, you can see the port, the amphitheater and la Platja del Miracle, one of the best-known beaches in the province. According to local custom, touching its railings gives good luck. The most important celebration in Tarragona is Santa Tecla. It takes place on the 23rd of September, when parades, fireworks, castells and local music fill the city with joy. Castells, also known as 'human castles' in English, are human towers built all over Catalonia during special occasions or festivals. Castellans can be of all ages, but the higher they go, the younger they are.

### **San Sebastián:**

Voted the European Capital of Culture in 2016, San Sebastián is a top-quality destination. Situated between France and Spain, it is known for La Playa de la Concha, a well-known white sand beach, which stretches out for a kilometer and a half; and The San Sebastián International Film Festival, the most important Spanish film festival, which takes place annually in September. The regional speciality, the pintxos, are small snacks similar to tapas, usually accompanied by a glass of wine.

### **Avila:**

This is a good example of a medieval city. Its city wall is the best conserved in Europe, and the old town and the churches to be found outside the walls are on the UNESCO World Heritage list.

### **Cáceres:**

Fortresses, Renaissance palaces and medieval town squares... All in all, an endless catalogue of different monuments. Its old town has the World Heritage designation. A night time visit is also highly recommended on account of the beautiful illumination.

### **Zaragoza:**

Situated on the Ebro River, Zaragoza is a large and bustling city and the capital of Aragon. With a history that stretches back to 25 B.C., the city boasts architectural attractions from every era, from still-standing remnants of Roman walls to the Moorish castle Aljaferia, which Giuseppe Verdi used as his setting for the opera "The Troubadour." Of the city's two magnificent cathedrals, the Cathedral of Our Lady of the Pillar attracts the most visitors.

Zaragoza is the capital and largest city of Aragon in Spain, and one of Spain's five largest cities, yet arguably

the least known outside of Spain. Founded on the river Ebro in times of the Roman Empire as Cesaraugusta, Zaragoza now holds a large cultural and architectural heritage attesting to 2 000 years of affluence and importance. The city is most known for its Basilica del Pilar, built to venerate the apparition of Virgin Mary to Saint James in earliest Christian times, which became a major cultural identity fixture of Christian Spain. In most recent times, the city was again put on a global map by the 2008 Expo, which left it with a whole new modern part developed further for various purposes after the exhibition closed.

Zaragoza is one of Spain's major cities. The capital of the Region of Aragon is located on the banks of the Ebro River, halfway between Madrid and Barcelona. There are many reasons to come to this open, friendly city.

*2,000 years of history:* You will find a stunning legacy of monuments in the streets of the city, vestiges of the Roman, Moorish, Jewish and Christian communities who left their mark on the place: Roman ruins such as the Circus; Aljafería Palace; Mudejar-style churches, with the UNESCO World Heritage designation; Baroque gems like the Pilar Basilica; the work of brilliant artist Francisco de Goya... And also the Expo 2008 site. If you like art, then Zaragoza is the perfect destination for you.

The city on the Ebro river was originally founded at the turn of the millennium by the Roman Emperor Augustus, and named after him as Caesaraugusta. 2,000 years later, the architectural remains of large public buildings indicate Caesar Augustus' influence over the city. Today you can still admire the city's Forum, Thermal Baths, the River Port or the Great Theatre, archeological remains which reflect the splendour of the city as it was during the Roman Empire. It was on the banks of the river Ebro that Saint James (called Santiago in Spanish) reportedly saw the apparition of Virgin Mary on the pillar, which is seen as the pivotal moment in the foundation of the Spanish Christian heritage.

*Leisure:* a range of activities. Theatres, cinemas, exhibitions, concerts, festivals, fairs... In Zaragoza a spectacular year-round cultural programme awaits you. The cultural life of the city is intense. See for yourself in the city streets or at venues like the Auditorium, the Principal Theatre or the Aragon Conference Centre. You can find all the different artistic styles in this city.

*Delicious gastronomy:* Savour typical regional dishes and, of course, take part in one of the city's great traditions - going out for tapas: small gastronomic creations that delight all those who try them.

A great city for shopping: Zaragoza has a range of shops to suit all tastes. From pedestrian areas to large shopping centres, not forgetting the street markets. Stroll through the streets of the city and feel their bustle and vitality.

*Night-time entertainment:* Enjoy Zaragoza nights. Pubs, nightclubs, bars and terrace bars open their doors until the early hours of the morning. Fun is assured in a city with wonderful nightlife at any time of year. You will see for yourself when you explore the main areas for going out. You will want to come back for more.

*Festive spirit:* Zaragoza is a city that is always ready for a fiesta. You can see this, for example, during Easter week. The processions bring over one hundred thousand visitors to the city each year. Most important, however, are the El Pilar Fiestas in October. Come and take part in events that fill the streets with happiness and bustle: vaquillas (bullfights with young bulls), concerts, sports, religious processions, regional folklore...

*The pleasure of a stroll:* Going for a stroll around Zaragoza is a traditional activity open to all. Dress comfortably and explore the streets. This city is compact, ideal to wander on foot, and its boulevards, avenues and pedestrian areas are perfect for a stroll. This is also the best way to admire its monuments.

*Routes and outings in the surrounding area:* Discover the area surrounding Zaragoza, with a wealth of landscapes, villages, spa resorts, cultural routes and countryside. From Fuentetodos, the birthplace of brilliant artist Francisco de Goya, to Calatayud, where you will find the Piedra Monastery nature area. Follow the Moncayo Route, to the province's highest mountain, just a few kilometres from Tarazona, a Mudejar town packed with art. We would also recommend a visit to the Cinco Villas region, with its medieval atmosphere. These are a few outings that you will enjoy, less than an hour and a half away.

### **Avila:**

The capital city of the province with the same name, Avila claims to have more Romanesque and Gothic churches per capita than any other city in Spain, most notably the San Vicente Basilica with its 13th-century bas-reliefs. The birthplace of Santa Teresa, Avila attracts pilgrims for its religious history as well as for its architectural wonders. Of the latter, the ancient defensive walls of the city are the main draw. Considered the

best preserved in Europe, the three-story high walls offer visitors panoramic views of the city from their more than 2,300 battlements.

### ***Alicante:***

Alicante is a very popular tourist destination because of its beautiful coastline and long sandy beaches. It has long wide seafront promenades that locals and tourists like to walk up and down at night. Often there are cafes on one side and street markets on the other. There are a considerable number of Africans in Alicante who work in the street markets selling their goods. Baroque buildings stand in the city's historical central area.

### ***Merida:***

The capital of Extremadura, has an absolute abundance of Roman remains. In fact back in 1993 the Archaeological Ensemble of Merida became a UNESCO World Heritage site. The city was originally founded in 25BC, by Augustus, and was then named Emerita Augusta. These days you can feel the influence of its neighbour Portugal, who once ruled the city, as did the Moors and the Christians. All of the influences can be spotted in the architecture. Apart from enjoying the feel, sights and tastes of this city, you can also visit the rather unique National Museum of Roman Art, which actually has a Roman street running through it. Another bonus about Merida is that you can wander around it in 3 days or so on foot, and take in its main highlights. If you decide to travel during the summer months of July and August, there are shows put on in the Roman amphitheatre and theatre.

The dry climate of the Extremadura region creates ideal conditions for the preservation of buildings and as such Merida offers a series of historic and architectural buildings that are unique in the Iberian peninsula. In fact the almost perfectly preserved Roman amphitheater is comparable with examples in Greece or Rome itself.

Continuing the Roman theme Merida Spain has one of the most complete museums of life and commerce in the Roman empire outside of the major museums in Europe. Especially interesting is the fact that the excavations for the museum unearthed the main highway and a complete Roman villa which are now located inside the museum building. Perhaps the most beneficial for those visiting Merida is the fact that the museum can be accessed at tariffs befitting of a provincial city!

Merida Spain is a very compact and walker friendly small city with it being possible to cross the entire city center in just 15 minutes! Although the typical visitor will take far longer as one explores the winding narrow streets and stops to admire the historic buildings, enjoy the local products and explore the shops as well as simply lapping up the culture. Recommended is the plaza in the city center which offers a wide range of restaurants serving excellent traditional Extremeña gastronomy at visitor friendly prices! For those very keen on walking, the riverbank offers a mapped 1hr walking route taking in the Medieval and Napoleonic bridges.

### ***Ourense:***

Is considered to be the spa capital of Galicia, with both semi-enclosed and outdoor hot bath areas, which the locals have used for centuries. The city of Ourense has three distinctive parts to it; which are its modern perimeter, the area which was expanded during the 19th century, and its medieval historic quarter. If you don't know about the medieval part, it's easy to pass by on the road that connects Madrid to Vigo, and not bother to visit Ourense's pretty old quarter. This area had become quite dilapidated at one point, however renovation work has been carried out over the years. As is often the case in some of these fine Spanish cities, the Cathedral is considered to be the highlight. Although it was originally founded in 572, the Cathedral of San Martino that you can see today was re-built between the 12th and 13th centuries. It's the second oldest cathedral in Galicia, and the clock tower that is attached to it seems to stand over the old quarter. Part of the charm of the city, is how its appearance has been determined by the River Miño which crosses the city. The old bridge, which can be dated back to Roman times, connects the banks of the river. The old quarter has a lovely main square, which has been the heart of life in the city for centuries. Other buildings of interest are the Episcopal Palace, the City Hall, the church of Santa Maria Madre, and the Archaeological Museum.

Ourense is a provincial capital in Spain's Galicia region situated along the banks of the Miño River. The city is best known for its many scenic bridges, some of which date back to the Roman Era. Although surrounded by urban sprawl, the heart of Orense has been lovingly restored and preserved, and wandering through the Old Quarter can make visitors feel as if they've traveled back in time. The city's oddly sloping Plaza Mayor features structures constructed during the city's 18th-century expansion. Orense is also notable for its "pozas," hot springs that bubble up to the surface throughout the city, including along the banks of the Miño.

### ***Cape Trafalgar:***

Cape Trafalgar is a headland in the Province of Cádiz in the south-west of Spain. The 1805 naval Battle of

Trafalgar, in which the British Royal Navy decisively defeated Napoleon's combined Spanish and French fleet, took place off the Cape. It lies on the shore of the Atlantic Ocean, northwest of the Strait of Gibraltar. The International Hydrographic Organization defines the Western limit of the strait and the Mediterranean Sea as a line that joins Cape Trafalgar to the North to Cape Spartel to the south. The most prominent structure on the cape is a 34-metre-high lighthouse (51 metres above sea level), the faro de Cabo Trafalgar, built in 1860.

When Lord Nelson lay dying on the deck of HMS Victory back in 1805, he could not possibly have foreseen the scenes that would take place in the same waters two centuries later – Daring young men and women being hurled across the very same ocean where the great sea battle took place, at nail-biting speeds on surf boards and wind-assisted kite boards.

Whilst there can be a tendency for an unreasonable amount of exaggeration attached to British history, in which the facts can often get distorted in order to promote Britain's "everlasting greatness", this is certainly not the case with the Battle of Trafalgar and the leadership of Admiral Lord Nelson. The Spanish and French fleets possessed some of the largest warships that the world had ever seen and they outnumbered and out-gunned the British Navy. Nelson's crafty and original tactics coupled with the efficiency and bravery of his ships' crews won the battle and the French and Spanish were literally hammered, while not a single British ship was lost.

The Battle of Trafalgar was considered to be the greatest sea battle with sailing ships. It was also the last. It took place just off the coast of Cape Trafalgar between Caños de Meca and Conil on the Costa de la Luz. At this time, Napoleon was allied with Spain and reigned supreme in Europe. He was planning an invasion of Britain, but to do this, he needed to be sure of his supremacy on the seas. The British fleet was commanded by Admiral Horatio Nelson and the combined Franco/Spanish fleet by General Villeneuve. For two years, the two fleets chased each other around the Atlantic, the West Indies and the Mediterranean, before finally coming together for the Battle of Trafalgar. Communication and intelligence information at the time was slow and difficult. It could be weeks before a vital piece of information reached its destination, with the result that by the time it arrived, it was often hopelessly out of date. On the 14th August, Villeneuve left northern Spain for Brest but later changed course southwards. On 20th August, he led thirty-nine Franco/Spanish Man o' War ships past four British ships and into the Bay of Cádiz. Napoleon directed Villeneuve to leave Cadiz for Toulon at the first favourable opportunity. Whilst Villeneuve waited, Nelson arrived onboard the Victory, providing valuable reinforcement for the British. Napoleon sent Admiral Rosily to relieve Villeneuve of his command. It took him ten days to travel by road from Madrid to Cadiz. Villeneuve knew it was time to leave the Bay. Villeneuve formed a battle line three miles long with his forty ships. The fleet sailed ahead very slowly and Nelson hoisted a flag signal "England expects every man to do his duty". Nelson's thirty-three ships split into two columns rather than forming the customary parallel battle line, so avoiding the typical long strung-out battle which had been practiced for centuries. This bold strategy caused confusion and resulted in a series of smaller, single combats of bloody ferocity. Nelson paced the quarterdeck, the ribbons of his jacket ablaze with colour, urging his men on. It was during this battle that a French sniper fatally wounded him. Nelson was immediately taken below decks and the great man uttered his famous dying words "Thank God I have done my duty".

Of the thirty-three allied ships engaged, seventeen had surrendered during the Battle and many others were damaged and sunk soon afterwards. Of the forty ships to leave Cadiz, only ten returned. More than 4500 allied lives were lost. The English had far fewer casualties, but had lost their best and beloved admiral, Admiral Nelson. The British ships limped back to the safety of Gibraltar. The Gibraltar Chronicle carried its greatest world exclusive the next day. Nelson's body was brought ashore at Rosia bay and placed in a brandy vat in preparation for the long journey back to England. The sailors who lost their lives were buried at sea. Those who survived the battle but who later died of their wounds, were buried in the Trafalgar Cemetery in Gibraltar. Without a navy, the allied forces were no longer in a position to attack the British Isles. Despite the magnitude of this battle, many historians argue that the fate of the Napoleonic wars were sealed at Cape Trafalgar, and not at Waterloo, ten years later.

No naval face-off rings through the history of this country quite like this struggle with the combined might of the French and Spanish navies, in the midst of the Napoleonic Wars. The Royal Navy's triumph on October 21 1805 would go a good way towards ensuring imperial France's defeat a decade later, and was hugely significant in the establishment of Britannia's rule over the waves, which endured for the next century. Not for nothing has Admiral Horatio Nelson's message to his sailors before the first shots were fired gone down in history – "England expects that every man will do his duty"

Nelson, of course, was both the biggest winner and the most infamous loser of that day – the tactical cunning he demonstrated promoting him to the UK's pantheon of heroes; the bullet he took to his left shoulder and his spine costing him his life in the process. But it is the enduring legend of this brilliant, flawed

man which ensures that, over two centuries after the guns fell silent off the south-west corner of Spain, Trafalgar resounds in modern consciousness and can still be sought out by those who want to explore its story in full.

A huge lighthouse dominates this mini-peninsula. It is whilst gazing at this prominent structure, which is 34-metres high, that the battle of Trafalgar is best imagined, as you look across the Atlantic and see the ghosts of ships and hear the shouts of men and blasts of gunpowder. A plaque commemorating those who lost their lives in the battle was erected at Cape Trafalgar in 2005.

### ***Huelva:***

Huelva may lack the region's star attractions of other provincial capitals, but once you get past the industrial sprawl on its outskirts, the centre is a pleasant place with many pretty plazas, absorbing historical monuments and, as you'd expect from a city with a bustling port, a wealth of seafood bars and restaurants. The mineral wealth of the area north of Huelva brought Phoenicians, Greeks and Romans who, along with the later arrivals of the Moors, left their archaeological mark on the city. Visit the Museo de Huelva to see evidence of their stay in Huelva. Exploitation of copper deposits much later by British interests made Huelva into something of a boom town. Many grand buildings were erected in the late 19th century and the early 20th century, like the Casa Colón, the imposing Gran Teatro and the Clínica Sanz de Frutos.

Located on the mouth of the Odiel and Tinto estuary, Huelva has been an important port since the Phoenicians established it as a major trading post. It reached its zenith in the 15th century, however, with the discovery of America by Christopher Columbus, who recruited local sailors for his voyage and, on his departure and return, prayed to the city's patron saint at the Santuario de Nuestra Señora la Virgen de la Cinta. Today he is commemorated in the Monumento a Coln. Another pivotal point in the port's history was the industrial development in the city in the late 19th century due to mining activity to the north. Foreign mining companies built impressive ironwork loading quays that extended into the estuary that, although decaying, still exist today. The grand neo-Moorish train station, the Estación de Sevilla, was also erected around this time.

Badly damaged in the 1755 Lisbon earthquake, Huelva lacks the architectural splendour of Seville. It does possess, however, several notable churches, like the oldest one in the city, the Iglesia de San Pedro, and the Catedral de la Merced, with a magnificent Baroque façade.

The hub of the city centre today is the palm-lined square, the Plaza de las Monjas, close to the pedestrianized shopping district, along the streets of Concepción to Berdigón. The centre is relatively compact so you can see the sights without having to hop on a bus, although you may want to for the Santuario de la Cinta, located 3km out of town.

### ***White Towns:***

The main towns, villages and other interesting places to visit include (many are on route from Espertinas to Torremolinos, and some close to Ronda):

- Zahara de la Sierra - next to a reservoir - typical Cádiz town (Northwest of Ronda)
- **Mijas Pueblo** - Burro Taxi, Old Cathedral - typical Spanish white village (Near Torremolinos)
- Puerto de las Palomas - splendid views (West of Ronda)
- **Grazalema** - one of the main towns (West of Ronda)
- **Villaluenga del Rosario** - highest of the White Towns and one of the prettiest (West of Ronda)
- Benaocaz - an Arab town with remains of a fortress (West of Ronda)
- Ubrique - largest of the White Towns (West of Ronda)
- Benamahoma - contains the Fuente de Nacimiento of Majaceite River (West of Ronda)
- El Bosque - trout fishing and hang gliding from here. (West of Ronda)
- Puerto Serrano - nice quiet town (Half way between Seville and Málaga)

- Algodonales - 16th-century town with some Roman ruins (Half way between Seville and Málaga)
- El Gastor - Balcón de los Pueblos Blancos with an interesting church (Half way between Seville and Málaga)
- **Setenil de las Bodegas** - village built into the rocks - Arab fortressAlcalá (Half way between Seville and Málaga, and just north of Ronda)
- Alcalá del Valle - pretty town - megalithic standing stones nearby (Half way between Seville and Málaga)
- Torre Alhaquime - good holiday village (Half way between Seville and Málaga)
- Olvera - main town of the area (Half way between Seville and Málaga)
- **Arcos de la Frontera** - perched on a cliff - Baroque churches (South of Seville)
- Algar - up a mountain road (Southeast of Seville)
- **Espera** - panoramic views (Southeast of Seville)
- Bornos and Villamartín - reservoir, Roman ruins (Southeast of Seville)
- Vejer de la Frontera (South of Cádiz)
- Frigiliana - musk wine and olive oil (North of Nerja}
- Casares (West of Marbella)
- Compares (Northeast of Málaga)