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Global trips for women

## **Spain – walking and eating 15 days**

### **Day 1 - Madrid**

Upon independent arrival in Madrid, make your way to the hotel to settle in. Madrid is the Spanish capital and one of Europe's most liveable cities. Our hotel is centrally located, and is a good base to poke around the downtown, with its grand plazas, imposing architecture, and side streets full of interesting bookstores, designer clothing boutiques and more! In the evening we meet up for an orientation talk and then off to one of Madrid's many restaurants for a welcome dinner. Overnight

Meals - D



### **Day 2 - Madrid**

Time for a bit of culture! This morning we enjoy a guided walking tour of the "Madrid of the Austrias", in the the oldest parts of the

city. We visit the sumptuous Royal Palace, built in 1734, which boasts paintings by famous Spanish artists as well as frescoes, tapestries of and innumerable antiques. In the afternoon you'll have fun discovering the city a little better yourself and perhaps enjoying a walk in the lovely urban park of El Retiro.

Meals - B,L, Optional tapas night with the Tour Leader (food and drinks not included)



### **Day 3 - Córdoba**

We are on the move today as we travel by high-speed train across the plains of La Mancha to the ancient city of Córdoba. It was once known as the "Ornament of the World" - Córdoba is the best showcase for Spain's Moorish legacy. On a tour this afternoon with an expert local guide you will see the incredible building that is the current-day Cathedral, built around the original 8 th century Mosque - a truly unique fusion of religions, architecture, and aesthetics. Córdoba is known for its mouthwatering cuisine, so dinner tonight will be a delight! But before dinner we enjoy a very special event: the equestrian show with Andalucian horses in the former Royal Stables.

Meals - B,D



#### **Day 4 - Granada**

Spain is well-known for its healthy Mediterranean diet, the pillar of which is the olive! Also known as "liquid gold", olive oil is an essential and age-old part of not just of Andalusia's cuisines but also its economic, agricultural, and social life. Out in the countryside, just beyond the pretty white village of Zuheros, in the mountains south of Córdoba, a local resident will explain many secrets about olives and olive oil as we visit his 1 hectare plot of olives. Walking back into Zuheros (2km) through fields of spring flowers, hawthorn bushes and wild oaks, we can appreciate why this landscape is often termed a "sea of olives". In our host's village home, we will enjoy a delicious lunch of regional dishes, many using extra virgin olive oil in their preparation.

Enjoy tasting the different oils - like wines they are all different! After lunch, we continue our journey south to the beautiful city of Granada, home to the legendary Alhambra palaces, built between 13th and 15th centuries. After checking in at your hotel, you will meet your guide for an orientation walk around the city and you will also get to try some tasty tapas morsels.

Meals - B,L,D



### **Day 5 - Granada**

Prepare to be amazed today as we take in a guided visit to the amazing Alhambra. You will quite literally be blown away by this amazing complex of palaces, fortress, urban areas and gardens. It is a unique testimony to the Nasrid sultans whose 250 year reign in Granada proved to be the final chapter in the eight centuries of Muslim rule on the Iberian Peninsula. It is also the most visited monument in Spain, and this morning's guided tour is sure to be a highlight of your time in Spain. Entrance tickets and an expert local guide are included. In the afternoon you have some time to relax, and then in the evening you all meet with your guide to enjoy an evening Tapas Tour in Granada. Overnight Granada.

Meals - B,D



### **Day 6 - Granada**

Right next to Granada is some beautiful countryside for hiking in! We head off this morning on a 12km easy walk that goes through pine and oak woods above the Alhambra, descends to the verdant valley of the Rio Darro, and then passes through the fascinating

district of the Sacromonte, an area famous for the flamenco shows performed in cave-houses by gypsy families. In the afternoon you are in for a treat! We enjoy the perfect relaxation after our walk: a soak in the luxurious Arab baths of the Hammam Al Andalus. Located at the foot of the Alhambra and on the ruins of an old hammam, these recreate the style of bathing that was once the norm in Moorish times, before the closure of the bath houses under Christian rule in the early 16 th century. Enjoy the baths, with a soothing massage, and the aromas and tastes of the past.

Meals - B



## **Day 7 - Alpujarra**

We depart Granada today and head for the hills! The Alpujarra, on the southern slopes of the Sierra Nevada range of mountains, is a corner of Andalucia which shows rural life as it has been lived for centuries. Criss-crossed by trails which meander through orchards, cultivated terraces, meadows and crystal-clear mountain streams, the area offers some great walking. On the steep slopes of the Poqueira Gorge we will find three charming white villages, with crafts such as basketwork, weaving, and pottery. We walk between three villages in the Poqueira Valley - a downhill distance of around 4kms.

The undoubted star of the excellent local cuisine is the "jamón serrano" (mountain-cured ham), and we will see how this is produced when we visit a secadero and sample this quintessential Spanish delicacy. Capileira, the village where we are staying, is a delightful place, its flower-filled streets providing a welcome to all visitors. Overnight Capileira.

Meals - B,L



### **Day 8 - Ronda**

Today we drive down to the Mediterranean to enjoy a drive along the coast, stopping in the attractive seaside town of Almuñécar where we will take a stroll through a park with many sub-tropical varieties of plants, before we climb up to the Moorish era castle which still commands imposing views along the coastline.

We then descend to the beach to enjoy a traditional seafood lunch in a chiringuito (beach restaurant). Continuing our journey along the coast and then heading inland, we arrive at our next destination, the enchanting town of Ronda, where we will stay the next two nights. Often referred to as the "Queen of the White Towns", it is set in the most amazing location atop a rocky plateau with a chasm-like gorge spanned by a 18th century bridge and is one of Spain's most picturesque towns. Dinner on your own in Ronda. Overnight Ronda

Meal - B,L



## **Day 9 - Ronda**

Ronda has a proud history, its fortress-like setting meaning it was a key bastion to Moors and Christians alike. Your local expert guide will tell us of this history as we tour the city and see its attractive parks and noble bull ring, which dates back to 1785. The subject of bullfighting is fundamental to Ronda's history - and is sure to arouse passions one way or the other!

After some free time for you to discover the town, we are off to a unique place: an old convent located in the countryside just outside Ronda converted into a winery. To get there we walk 3.5km through the river valley below the town, enjoying superb views of the bridge that spans the mighty gorge and then past orchards and vineyards, before ascending through pine woods to the winery, with superb views of the lands around. Here you will taste the smooth reds that the boutique winery produces. The coach will collect us and then the rest of the day is on your own. You might just find a flamenco or guitar show on locally, and it is recommended you go if you can!

Meal - B



### **Day 10 - Vejer de la Frontera**

After leaving Ronda, we descend to the coast via a beautiful drive and reach the border between Spain and Gibraltar. Affectionately known as "The Rock", Gibraltar is a British colony that clings to a steep, rugged rock. We enjoy a guided tour around this fascinating town and its Upper Rock Nature Reserve (home to its colony of Barbary Apes) - while enjoying the Spanish sun.

Our overnight stop, Vejer de la Frontera, is altogether different: a classically white, Moorish-looking hill town high above the Atlantic coast. You will have fun randomly exploring the brilliant white, labyrinthine alleyways, wandering past iron-grilled windows, balconies, and patios. Tonight we dine in one of its several excellent local restaurants.

Meals - B,D



## **Day 11 - Vejer de la Frontera**

Guided walk of around 11 kms from Vejer to Caños de Meca, mostly downhill: Our lovely morning walk takes us towards the Atlantic Ocean, along a ridge commanded by windmills old and new, past a hamlet, then through pine forest, before dropping down onto the beach and a leisurely lunch in the small resort of Caños de Meca. This is followed by time on the beach to take in some rays before we walk to an historic site: the cape of Trafalgar where in 1805 the British Admiral Nelson led the Royal Navy into the naval engagement against the French and Spanish Navies that famously cost him his life. We then head back by coach to Vejer. This evening you might like to explore the town's picturesque old quarter, where our charming hotel is located on the pretty Plaza de España, with its ceramic fountains and palm trees.

Meals - B,L



## **Day 12 - Sevilla**

Did someone say Sherry? Yes! The English word "sherry" is taken from the name of the city where it is produced: Jerez de la Frontera. This city is full of wineries and influences from the English families who founded them, giving it a distinct atmosphere. We learn about the process of making these fortified wines, and then we get to sample them, in one of the most interesting of these bodegas! This bodega produces "Very Old and Rare" sherries and brandies, and boasts an amazing art collection as well. After all the sherry we will need to sit down to lunch - at one of our favourite restaurants in Jerez. In the afternoon we drive to Sevilla, the capital of the region of Andalucía and one of Spain's most elegant cities.

Our hotel is in the historic centre. Our Tour Leader will take us on an orientation walk, which ends with dinner in the old quarter as we mingle with the Sevillanos.

Meals - B,L,D



### **Day 13 - Sevilla**

This morning we head off on a tour to visit the highlights of this stunning city: the largest Gothic cathedral in the world, the Real Alcázar, and still a residence of the Spanish royal family. We take in some of the fascinating streets and alleyways of Santa Cruz as our local guide brings the city to life with fascinating stories and intriguing anecdotes! The afternoon is then free for you to explore the city's many other attractions, or perhaps just sip a coffee in a plaza and watch the world go by - Sevilla is a wonderful place for people-watching! This evening we will see live flamenco, an exhilarating and passion-filled art form that is deeply rooted in Sevilla in particular, and still very much a part of popular culture.

Meals - B



## **Day 14 - Sevilla**

Enjoy a free day in Sevilla - this city offers many different options from the old gypsy quarter of Triana on the far bank of the Guadalquivir River, the elegant Maria Luisa Park with its fantasy structure of the Plaza de España, or some of the lesser-known monuments of the city such as the Hospital de la Caridad or the striking modern architecture of the Metropol Parasol. In the evening we get together to swap notes and to say farewell to one another at tonight's Farewell Dinner.

Meals - B,D



### **Day 15 - Sevilla**

And so another amazing Venus Adventure comes to an end. You will take home wonderful memories of this charming and unique part of Spain.

Meals - B