SAMPLE ITINERARY

Spain by Train

Madrid – Granada- Seville - Barcelona

Day 1  MADRID
10:05 am Arrival in Madrid on flight AA 36 Meet your English-speaking driver as you come out
of the security area for your private transfer to the hotel.

On arrival you will receive the information folder that we have left for you at the reception desk.
This will contain your hotel vouchers, train tickets, updated itinerary and contact information,
and information on the cities you will visit.

Day 2  MADRID

Madrid Orientation with Panoramic tour (Up to 4 hrs):
Panoramic, Old Quarter, 1 monument of your choice.

Your guide and your driver with Mercedes sedan will meet you in the hotel lobby for a half day
tour of the city. Start with a panoramic drive to see the most important monuments including
Cibeles Square, Bullring Las Ventas, Plaza Neptuno, Puerta del Sol and Santiago Bernabeu
stadium. Also visit one monument of your choice and then continue into the Old Quarter for a
stroll including the Plaza Mayor and the San Miguel Market.

Monuments:
- The Prado Museum houses one of the finest art collections in the world. Your visit will focus on
  the Spanish masters such as Velázquez, Murillo, Zurbarán and Goya; The Museum also
  contains Flemish works collected by the Catholic monarchs, as well as Italian paintings by Titian
  and Tintoretto and masterpieces by great universal artists such as El Greco, Bosch, Van Dyck
  and Rembrandt.
- The Thyssen Museum houses the private collection of the Baron Von Thyssen as well as an entire annex dedicated to the Baroness’s private collection containing a good example of Impressionist art. The museum is housed in the Palace of Villahermosa, which was renovated for this collection by the architect Rafael Moneo. 1,000 years of European art history in one place, amazing!

- The Reina Sofia Contemporary Art Center is where Picasso’s Guernica is housed. Once a historic hospital, it now boasts a new addition designed by Jean Nouvel, the French architect known for his work on the Cartier Foundation. Nouvel transformed a triangular patch of land behind the original, neo-Classical building with a metallic red roof that hovers above a central plaza with modern sculptures, an upscale restaurant, shops and three see-through art buildings. The Museum contains perhaps the best collection of 20th century art by Spanish artists.

-The Royal Palace was built by the Spanish bourbon monarchy. The visit includes the Royal Pharmacy, state apartments, armoury and chapel.

Day 3 MADRID – Valencia excursion

Day trip Madrid – Valencia (approx. 10 hours)

Take the high speed train (1h30m) to Valencia, where you will be met by our English speaking guide and our driver on arrival.

Begin your visit with a panoramic drive of the city including the Serrano Towers, the bullring and town hall square. From here we arrive in the old town, one of the largest and best preserved historical quarters of Europe. Visit the La Lonja (silk exchange), decorated with typical colourful Valencian ceramic tiles and the only UNESCO World Heritage site in Valencia. Opposite La Lonja is the central (food) market which was opened in 1928, and is a masterpiece of modernist architecture. (closed Sundays). Continue the visit walking through the El Carmen quarter where we will admire the typical narrow and winding streets. See the Cathedral and the Basilica de la Virgen de los Desamparados, the patron Saint of the city, the Serrano’s Towers, and time-permitting, the Marques de dos Aguas Palace (ceramics museum). Stop at horchateria Santa Catalina to taste the delicious “horchata”. It is a sweet drink made from tiger nut milk, originally from the town of Alboraya, north of Valencia, where the chufa (tiger nut) flourishes in the sandy soil. Likewise you could try their wonderful hot chocolate, and don’t miss their typical pastries called Fartons.

Finish your tour with an outside view of the City of Arts & Sciences complex, designed by local architect Santiago Calatrava. The complex comprises the Palau de les Arts, Hemispheric and Science Museum “Príncipe Felipe”. Return to the train station for your return to Madrid.
The city of Toledo, Unesco World Heritage Site, is the capital of Castilla-La Mancha. Known as the City of Three Cultures, Toledo is a meeting place for history and tradition. Here you can enjoy something that very few cities in the world contain: a combination of Christian, Islamic and Jewish fingerprints found throughout the old quarter. Long the spiritual capital of Spain, Toledo is perched atop a rocky mount with steep golden hills rising on either side and is bound on three sides by the Río Tajo (Tagus River). When the Romans arrived here in 192 BC, they built their fortress, the Alcázar, on the highest point of the rock. Later, the Visigoths remodeled the stronghold (which now houses the National Army Museum). In the 8th century, the Moors arrived and strengthened Toledo's reputation as a center of religion and learning. Unusual tolerance was extended to those who practiced Christianity (the Mozarabs) and to the city's exceptionally large Jewish population. Today, the Moorish legacy is evident in Toledo's strong crafts tradition (watch swords being crafted in the traditional way midweek), the mazelike streets, and the predominance of brick (rather than the stone of many of Spain's historical cities). For the Moors, beauty was to be savored from within rather than displayed on the surface. Even Toledo's cathedral—one of the most richly endowed in Spain—is hard to see from the outside, largely obscured by the warren of houses around it.

Alfonso VI, aided by El Cid (“Lord Conqueror”), captured the city in 1085 and dubbed himself emperor of Toledo. Under the Christians, the town's strong intellectual life was maintained, and Toledo became famous for its school of translators, who taught Arab medicine, law, culture, and philosophy. Religious tolerance continued, and during the rule of Peter the Cruel (so named because he allegedly had members of his own family murdered to advance his position), a Jewish banker, Samuel Levi, became the royal treasurer and one of the wealthiest men in the booming city. By the early 1600s, however, hostility toward Jews and Arabs had grown as Toledo developed into a bastion of the Catholic Church.

Under Toledo's long line of cardinals—most notably Mendoza, Tavera, and Cisneros—Renaissance Toledo emerged as a center of the humanities. Economically and politically, however, Toledo began to decline at the end of the 15th century. The expulsion of the Jews from Spain in 1492, as part of the Spanish Inquisition, eroded Toledo's economic prowess. When Madrid became the permanent center of the Spanish court in 1561, Toledo lost its political importance, and the expulsion from Spain of the converted Arabs (Moriscos) in 1601 meant the departure of most of the city's artisan community. The years the painter El Greco spent in Toledo—from 1572 to his death in 1614—were those of the city's decline, which is greatly reflected in his works. In the late 19th century, after hundreds of years of neglect, the works of El Greco came to be widely appreciated, and Toledo was transformed into a major tourist destination.

5:25 pm  Departure of return train to Madrid.
Day 5  
**MADRID, Segovia excursion**  
The journey by AVE only takes about half an hour.

Segovia is more than just a pretty face. Outside the perimeter of its old walls lie important religious communities and a mystical shrine of the Knights Templar. In the city proper, Segovia displays a monumental drama from the arches of its Roman aqueduct (Unesco World Heritage site) to the fantasy castle of its Alcázar which was used as a model for Cinderella’s castle. An important military town in Roman times, Segovia was later established by the Moors as a major textile center. Captured by the Christians in 1085, it was enriched by a royal residence, and in 1474 the half-sister of Henry IV, Isabella the Catholic (married to Ferdinand of Aragón), was crowned queen of Castile here.

Day 6  
**EL ESCORIAL**

9:30 am  Meet driver and guide and drive to San Lorenzo de El Escorial.  
Visit the Monastery of El Escorial, see the Royal Apartments, Library and the Pantheon.  
1:00 pm tour ends  
1:30 pm  Back at your hotel.

Day 7  
**MADRID - GRANADA**

8:15 am  Meet your driver for your private transfer to the Atocha Rail Station.  
You will find 3 tickets in Preferente seating in your information folder.  
9:05 am  Departure of your train to Granada  
1:30 pm  Arrival in Granada. Meet your driver for transfer to the hotel
Day 8  GRANADA

Enjoy a morning tour of the Alhambra palaces complex, and the Generalife gardens in your private tour with top local guide. Proceed to the Albayzin district for the best views of the Alhambra and to learn about this charming neighbourhood.

Day 9  GRANADA - SEVILLE

10:30 am  Meet your driver for your private transfer to the train station. You will find 3 tickets in your information folder.
11:24 am  Departure of your train to Seville
2:38 pm  Arrival in Seville. Meet your driver as you come off the platform for transfer to your hotel

Day 10  SEVILLE

Enjoy a half day tour in the heart of old Seville, with top local guide. Visit the Cathedral with the tomb of Christopher Columbus, the Royal Palace with its splendid gardens and architecture and then the Santa Cruz quarter. See the 19th C Maria Luisa park by horse carriage.

Day 11  SEVILLE - BARCELONA

8:00 am  Meet your driver for your private transfer to the Santa Justa Train Station. You will find 3 tickets in Preferente seating in your information folder.
8:50 am  Departure of the AVE high-speed train to Barcelona
2:25 pm  Arrival in Barcelona. Meet your driver for transfer to the hotel
Day 12  BARCELONA

Orientation tour with top local guide to see panoramic view of the city and then a walking tour into the old quarter. Visit the Modernist style Boqueria market, as well as the most emblematic squares in the Gothic Quarter and Borne district. Guided visit of the Picasso museum highlights, or possible the modernist style Palau de la Musica concert hall.

Day 13  BARCELONA

9:30 am  Meet your guide and driver for a full day tour of the major Gaudi architectural sites. Drive to Guell Park and see Casa Gaudi and walk through the park. Then continue to the Church of Sagrada Familia. Gaudi’s unfinished masterpiece. Continue with your driver and guide past the Manzana de la Discordia lined with several Modernist apartment buildings including Casa Batlló by Gaudi.

1.30 pm  Your guide will suggest a nice place for lunch. After lunch, visit Gaudi’s apartment building, Casa Mila, better known as La Pedrera and see a period apartment, the exhibit on Gaudi’s works, Espai Gaudi, located under the eaves of the building, and the rooftop chimneys resembling medieval knights.

5:30 pm  Tour ends back at your hotel.

**NOTE: There are also many other Gaudi buildings if you would like to include some of Gaudi’s works that are more off the beaten path. If this is your choice, please advise which monuments you would be interested in seeing so we can purchase advance entrance tickets and reorganize your tour with the guide.

Day 14  BARCELONA

Excursion by train to medieval city of Gerona this day, or down to the beach town of Sitges or the roman ruins of Tarragona.

Day 15  BARCELONA

Free day for shopping and packing.

Day 16  BARCELONA

8:00 am  Meet your driver for transfer to the airport for your flight home.
10:45 am  Departure of your flight

CONTACT INFORMATION

Valesa Cultural Services
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