

THE GARDENS OF SPAIN CATALUNYA & ANDALUCÍA, 4-14 OCTOBER 2018



This eleven day tour will explore botanical and private gardens in two contrasting regions of Spain: Catalunya in the north-east, and the southern lands of Andalucía. While the formal gardens of Catalunya tend more to French and Italian conventions and tastes, reflecting the region's "European" identity and aspirations, the orchards, farms and gardens of Andalucía owe their origins to the long Moorish dominion in the middle ages and indeed rank as one of their great legacies to medieval Christian Spain. The Moors' culture of plants, used for both food and medicine, left a legacy which later was transmitted across Europe and which still to this day features prominently in the distinctive character and landscape of southern Spain.

We will uncover many aspects of this fascinating contrast in cultures with an excellent selection of public and private gardens in the Costa Brava, north of Barcelona, as well as in the southern cities of Sevilla, Córdoba and Granada. Highlights include the stunning Mediterranean coastal setting of the gardens of Marimurtra and Santa Clotilde, and the meditative calm of the Generalife - the "Gardens of the Architect" of the Alhambra - and of the Real Alcázar in Sevilla.

Daily Itinerary

Day 1: Arrival Barcelona (THURSDAY October 4, 2018)

Welcome Drink

Independent arrival to Barcelona airport, where you will be met by a chauffeur for a private transfer to the hotel, the **Hotel H10 Cubik** (for hotel details see below). In the early evening we will begin the Tour with an informal lecture-talk by our local Barcelona guide on the history, current social & political dynamics of Catalunya and Spain, accompanied by a complimentary Welcome Drink in the hotel bar. The rest of the evening is free, allowing you to choose the dining style that suits you best (restaurant recommendations will be provided in your Tour literature and local guides will be happy to offer their own suggestions throughout the trip).

Day 2: full day in Barcelona, with Cooking Class (FRIDAY October 5)

B L

Barcelona is endowed with some of the finest architecture in Europe and today's guided visits focus on its two great centres, the old medieval city founded by the Romans, the "*Ciutat Vella*" in Catalan, and the extension to that city, the "*Eixample*", planned and executed in the late c.19 and c.20. In the latter we find the unfinished masterpiece of Antoni Gaudí, the greatest architect of that period, the soaring basilica of La Sagrada Familia, as well as his housing project-cum-park, the playful and idiosyncratic Park Guell. In the morning, our guide will show us some of the treasures of the Gothic quarter, such as the church of seafarers, Santa Maria del Mar, and the imposing Gothic cathedral of La Seu. In between the two tours a culinary break: a tour of one of the city's extraordinarily colourful covered markets to buy ingredients which you will then be shown how to use in a cooking class, which is a relaxed and fun way to enjoy a delicious lunch of Catalan dishes. Free evening in Barcelona.

Day 3: excursion to gardens on the Costa Brava (SATURDAY October 6)

B L

The Costa Brava – "wild coast" – is quintessential Mediterranean scenery: steep, craggy cliffs, studded with pine trees, rising from an azure sea. Commanding superb views along this coast are several landscaped gardens, two of which we visit today, Marimurtra and Santa Clotilde, either side of lunch in the picturesque resort town of Tossa de Mar, with its medieval castle walls and artists' houses. Marimurtra botanical garden boasts more than 4,000 species, dedicated primarily to Mediterranean and sub-tropical flora. It has wonderful collections of cacti and other plants from arid regions of southern Africa and Central America, as well as plants endemic to Catalunya. Santa Clotilde is a fine specimen of the spirit that animated the *Noucentista* movement in Catalunya - an early twentieth-century movement for intellectual and aesthetic renewal. The gardens were designed in the manner of the Italian Renaissance, following the designs of Jean-Claude Forestier, one of the legendary greats of European landscape gardening. Free evening in Barcelona.

Day 4: train to Sevilla, capital of Andalucía (SUNDAY October 7)

B

Today we leave Barcelona to cross the length and almost the breadth of Spain in an amazingly short time, thanks to the high-speed AVE train that has us in Sevilla in only 5 hours 30 minutes. Enjoy the changing scenery as the train travels at speeds of up to 200mph – we'll be in Sevilla in time to spend a relaxing afternoon visiting the home and gardens of one of Europe's most aristocratic families, the House of Alba, in their Sevilla residence of the

Palacio de las Dueñas. Your hotel is **Hotel Casas de la Judería**, in the Santa Cruz area, the heart of historic Sevilla. Free evening in Sevilla.

Day 5: full day in Sevilla (MONDAY October 8)

B D

Today is devoted to the great city of Sevilla and its splendid parks and monuments. In the morning we will begin in the Murillo gardens and then walk on to the extensive Parque Maria Luisa. A favorite recreation spot for the *sevillanos*, the park assembles hundreds of exotic trees lining shady avenues, with exotic touches provided by colourful tiled benches and Moorish fountains and pools. The park was the site of the Ibero-American Expo of 1929, with the emblematic Plaza de España as its centerpiece. From there our guided tour continues in the Real Alcázar, an official royal residence which is a perfect representation of the “*mudéjar*” form, a synthesis between Moorish and Castilian styles. The extensive gardens continue this fusion, with fountains and painted tiles which give the ensemble a special, Moorish-Christian flavour. We will learn from our guide of the many species in the gardens that came to Europe from the Americas at the time when Sevilla was Spain’s principal port for its transatlantic trade. Dinner this evening is in a couple of local bars, where a local resident guide will introduce us to the world of “*tapas*”, those delicious small plates of food which Spaniards consume along with their wine or beer on an evening out with friends. The tour is therefore both a cultural insight at the same time as a gastronomic experience!

Day 6: coach to Córdoba, visiting two gardens en route (TUESDAY October 9)

B L

Leaving Sevilla we head by coach towards Córdoba, via the plains of the Río Guadalquivir, one of Spain’s great rivers and an important centre of agriculture. Along the way we make two stops: first at the Palacio de Moratalla, a catalogued “Artistic Garden”, designed in the early c.20 in the style of Versailles, where its eight lawned terraces with fountains and gardens surrounded by lush woods and hunting estates were once used by the kings of Spain; and then, after lunch in a local restaurant, the imposing castle of Almodóvar del Río, every inch the archetype of a medieval castle and hence, not surprisingly, a location used in “Game of Thrones”. In Córdoba too we stay in **Hotel Casas de la Judería** – although no relation to the previous hotel in ownership, its style is similar, being a refurbishment of several noble family houses. Free evening in Córdoba.

Day 7: full day in Córdoba (WEDNESDAY October 10)

B

This morning we focus on the rich history of a city which in the year 950 was the second largest in the known world. A population of up to half a million Muslims, Jews and Christians shared an advanced civic culture and infrastructure that earned Córdoba the label of “The Ornament of the World”. Our local expert guide will take us through the complex of narrow streets that surrounds one of the world’s most astonishing religious monuments, the city’s cathedral – built in and around the Grand Mosque from the c.8. We will also walk through the city’s traditional neighborhoods, where many of the houses compete in Córdoba’s famous annual festival of floral patios, to the c.14-17 Palacio de los Viana. This nobleman’s house contains thirteen patio gardens, each showing a different approach to the Andalusian tradition of bringing the garden into close contact with the living quarters.

The afternoon is free – you might wish to visit the city’s fine Botanical Gardens which are considered as among the best academic gardens in Spain. Free evening in Córdoba.

Day 8: coach to Granada, private olive grove visit en route (THURSDAY October 11) B L

Our journey to Granada affords us a look at one of the main bastions of Spanish, and indeed Mediterranean, agriculture: the olive. In the town of Baena the traditional family mill of Núñez de Prado is world-recognized as one of the best producers of premium extra virgin olive oil, from an entirely organic crop; we will visit the mill and see in a short video how the “liquid gold” is extracted from the ripe olives. In the nearby white village of Zuheros on the edge of the Natural Park of Sierra Subbética, we are the guests of Antonio and Coco Zafra, a local couple who farm a hectare of olive groves. Although the smallholding ranks as a hobby, Antonio is intensely involved in and knowledgeable about the world of olives and shares with us some of the insights he has gained into this essential Mediterranean ingredient before we enjoy an *al fresco* lunch of dishes prepared with the extra virgin oil and olives from their own trees.

The rest of the journey to Granada takes us through undulating hills and past solidly built castles, dating from the times when these were the frontier lands between the Christian kingdom of Castille and the last Muslim outpost, the Sultanate of Granada. In Granada we stay in the central **Hotel Villa Oniria**, a five minute walk from the Cathedral. Free evening in Granada.

Day 9: full day in Granada – Albaicín *carmen* gardens (FRIDAY October 12) B L

Granada is renowned for its gardens of *carmenes*, a style of rural estate within the city which the Christian re-settlers of Moorish Granada began to establish in the c.16-17, copying the aesthetics and plantings of the Moors. This morning we will visit two of these walled gardens, both in the Albaicín district, the oldest part of the city and a UNESCO World Heritage Site. The first, the Carmen de los Cipreses, is a typical example of the style, with terraced plantings, fruit trees, fragrant shrubs and - as the name suggests - a prominent feature of cypress trees. The house was notable at the turn of the c.20 for being the gathering place for local intellectuals and artists such as Angel Ganivet and Federico Garcia Lorca. The second, nowadays belonging to the local water company, is the Carmen Aljibe del Rey, which houses a fascinating exhibition on the importance of water in the medieval period under Muslim rule; one can even descend into the (now dry!) cistern. To round off our visit we will have lunch in a restaurant which boasts a charming, small walled garden, itself a former *carmen*. The rest of the day is free to further explore Granada.

Day 10: full day in Granada –Alhambra gardens (SATURDAY October 13) B D

This morning we visit the Alhambra and Generalife, sure to be one of the highlights of the entire trip. The complex dates from the c.13-14 and was the work of the Nasrid sultans whose 250 years’ reign in Granada proved to be the swansong of Muslim rule on the Iberian Peninsula. A local expert guide will take us on a fascinating tour of the palaces and the various gardens, principally those of the Generalife (“the Garden of the Architect”). These exquisite gardens are a recreation of Moorish styles but were also heavily influenced by the European vogues at the time when they were planted, the mid-c.19 and early c. 20, hence they are today an intriguing and quite unique synthesis of styles.

After free time for lunch, we reassemble to continue our visits on the hill of “La Sabika”, where the Alhambra stands, to take in the intimate gardens of painter José María Rodríguez-Acosta. Son of a wealthy banking family, in the 1920's he lived, painted and collected art in this carmen house, a superb example of modernist architecture which sits on the edge of the woods of the Alhambra. The garden has several different terraces looking out over Granada's fertile plain and towards the Sierra Nevada mountains, fragments of walls and columns in pure Modernist style interplay with cypress hedges, and there are pools and statues with classical motifs.

The Tour ends this evening with a Farewell Dinner in a restaurant in the city centre near your hotel.

Day 11: transfer to Málaga, for departure (SUNDAY October 14)

B

The tour package includes a private transfer from Granada to Málaga city (where one can connect via the high-speed AVE rail system with Madrid and Barcelona) or Málaga-Costa del Sol Airport, which has a wide range of domestic and European flights.

Cost per person: \$4,695

Single supplement: \$1,100

Included in the tour price ...

- Expertly-selected 4-star hotels of distinction and quality in Barcelona (3 nights), Sevilla (2 nights), Córdoba (2 nights) and Granada (3 nights), with breakfasts included
- Private air-conditioned coach/minivan for all transfers in the Itinerary from Barcelona to Granada. The travel between Barcelona and Sevilla is by comfortable, high-speed train.
- Private airport transfers are included for arrival (Barcelona) and departure (Málaga – from where there are flights to a wide range of European destinations for connecting flights to the USA)
- Two dinners (three courses with drinks) and five lunches (lighter, two course meals with drinks) as well as restaurant recommendations for free days
- Expert local guides for the visits in each city, including the Eixample and Gothic Quarter (Barcelona), the Real Alcázar and Parque María Luisa (Sevilla), the Mosque-Cathedral and Palacio de los Viana (Córdoba), and the magnificent Alhambra & Generalife complex (Granada).
- Entrances to the many and varied gardens featured in the Itinerary
- Entrances to the featured historical monuments

Not included:

- Airfare from/to USA
- Transport in Spain, other than stated as included in the Itinerary
- Meals other than those stated as included in the Itinerary
- Optional activities and excursions
- Tips at included meals and to local guides
- Items of a personal nature such as passport fees. Passport must be valid for six months beyond return date.

- Travel insurance

Hotels

Barcelona: Hotel H10 Cubik

Enjoying an unrivalled location on the edge of the Gothic Quarter and yet 2 minutes' walk from Plaza Catalunya and the start of the Eixample, the hotel offers a chic boutique style and comfortable, bright rooms. From the eighth floor terrace bar with pool there are spectacular panoramic views of the city.

Sevilla: Hotel Casas de la Judería, Sevilla

A most singular hotel with plenty of character, resulting from the fusion of 27 different houses and 40 patios, it occupies a great location in the Santa Cruz district, within 10 minutes' walk of both the Cathedral and the Plaza de España. With many bars and restaurants in the immediate vicinity, the hotel inside is an oasis of calm.

Córdoba: Hotel Casas de la Judería, Córdoba

A series of town houses on the edge of the old medieval Jewish quarter ("*la Judería*") that have been beautifully restored and amalgamated to form a delightful boutique hotel, full of peaceful patios and courtyards, ideal for reading a book and taking in the historic ambience. In the rooms you will find original and authentic period materials in the furniture, decoration and artwork.

Granada: Hotel Villa Oniria

This elegant city-centre hotel, close to shops, restaurants and monuments, provides a luxurious place to unwind, with traditional Andalusian palatial architecture and a refined decoration. There is a small and well-appointed garden, full of aromatic plants, and a fine restaurant.

END