



Spanish Art and Architecture



Spanish Art and Architecture

8 NIGHTS / 9 DAYS

Bilbao

Barcelona

Madrid



Guggenheim Museum, Bilbao

This tour by air and rail is a delightful introduction to the artistic and architectural heritage of Spain, stopping in three cities which are home to iconic Spanish buildings and a number of outstanding art collections. Witness the contemporary art and architecture of the Basque city of Bilbao; discover the Catalan Art Nouveau style of Barcelona; and then visit the world-class art museums of the country's capital city. Travel between the cities by rail, relaxing in comfort, and watching the Spanish scenery pass by.

Begin your luxury tour of Spain's best artistic spots with your arrival in Madrid. Catch a train as soon as you arrive and travel north to Bilbao in the Basque Country. Spend two nights at the Hotel Carlton, a property that seamlessly blends Bilbao's traditional Spanish heritage with the touches of contemporary design that reflect its glamorous neighbour: the Guggenheim Museum. During the day, explore the collections and exhibitions housed within this striking building, enjoy the other attractions, and seek out Bilbao's most charming architecture. Then, catch a train across northern Spain and into Catalonia, for three nights at the Hotel Casa Fuster in Barcelona. Begin by exploring the modernista style, established by Antoni Gaudí and his contemporaries, which informed the design of your hotel. Perhaps start with the iconic Sagrada Família, before walking down the Passeig de Gràcia and venturing into the Zona Alta to see the Parc Guell. Also take the time to visit the maze-like Gothic quarter, Montjuïc Castle, and the old merchant palaces of La Ribera. To reach your final stop on this tour, catch a high-speed train back to the capital of Spain, Madrid. Stay for three nights at the

Hotel Urban, a property that lives up to its name in both its impeccable design and its excellent location, exploring the three world-class art museums that form a triangle around the city's centre. On your final full day in Spain, visit two Royal residences and take in the lively atmosphere of this bustling city. Then, on Day Nine, return to the UK via a flight from Madrid Airport.

PRICES

From £1,670 per person

Based on double occupancy in the aforementioned hotels and second class rail travel.

DATES

This holiday can be arranged throughout the year. Timings can vary depending on the month and day of the week.

WHAT'S INCLUDED

- Flights from London to Madrid return
- Second class rail travel from Madrid to Bilbao, Bilbao to Barcelona, and Barcelona to Madrid
- 2 nights' bed and breakfast in Bilbao
- 3 nights' bed and breakfast in Barcelona
- 3 nights' bed and breakfast in Madrid

WHAT'S NOT INCLUDED

- Optional extra nights in Bilbao, Barcelona, Madrid, or any other destination.
- First class rail travel or additional use of hire car.

DAY-BY-DAY ITINERARY

Bilbao - Barcelona - Madrid

Expressions

Days one to two: Madrid to Bilbao

Start your touring holiday by flying into Madrid before catching an afternoon train northwards to Bilbao, arriving in the late evening. Travel to your hotel, the five-star Hotel Carlton, which enjoys a privileged position a few steps from the Plaza de Don Federico Moyúa and a short distance from the iconic Guggenheim Museum. Stay for two nights in either a room decorated in chic, contemporary colours, or a room designed with a more traditional Spain in mind. On your first evening, either dine in the elegant dining room, or seek out one of the many excellent restaurants in the city to try some of the hearty local gastronomy. You have the whole of Day Two to feast on the artistic and architectural wonders of this vibrant city, perhaps starting off with a visit to the Guggenheim Museum. Designed by Frank Gehry, this futuristic building, with its shimmering curves of titanium and glass, is home to a permanent collection of contemporary art and regularly hosts temporary exhibitions. Only a few minutes' walk away from the hotel is the Bilbao Fine Arts Museum, which houses an extensive collection ranging from 12th Century sculptures to 20th Century paintings. Not only will visitors find a number of works by Basque artists, they will see works by renowned artists including El Greco, Goya and Gauguin. To witness some of Bilbao's more traditional architecture, we would recommend entering Bilbao's old quarter through the Plaza Circular, kicking back on the grand Plaza Nueva, with its pavement cafes and weekly market, and finding the beautiful Teatro Arriaga, with its curved façade, statuettes, and ornate stonework. The Church of Saint Anthony the Great and the Basilica of Begoña offer an insight into the religious architecture of the city, and both have radiantly lit interior chambers, and very traditional layouts and towers. Around 20 miles east of Bilbao is the town of Guernica, the namesake of Picasso's famous painting which was inspired by the town's bombing during the Spanish Civil War, which makes for an excellent excursion by bus or train. As the sun sets, wander down the Gran Vía de Don Diego López de Haro to soak up the lively street entertainment, dip in and out of the shops, and enjoy the cosmopolitan side to Spain.

Days three to five: Bilbao to Barcelona

Spend the morning exploring anything you might have missed in Bilbao, before you take a mid-afternoon train to Barcelona, arriving in the Catalan capital just after 10pm. Here you will stay for three nights at Hotel Casa Fuster, itself a remarkable building which



Parc Guell, Barcelona

has been designed in the eclectic and vibrant 'Modernista' style that is typical of Barcelona. Spend two days in Barcelona. The Casa Fuster is located just to the north of the Eixample District, an area which is full of unique buildings designed in the Catalan Art Nouveau style by Antoni Gaudí and his contemporaries. The most famous landmark is the Sagrada Família, an unconventional church building which is filled with symbolism and fulfilled Gaudí's dream of combining religious reverence with a dramatically sculpted skyline. The other famous works of art that feature Gaudí's trademark curved lines, decorated chimneys, elaborate wrought iron, and mosaic decorations include Parc Guell in the Zona Alta, the more Gothic Palau Guell, and Casa Batlló and La Pedrera on the Passeig de Gràcia. There are a number of outstanding art museums within the city, including the Picasso Museum in the La Ribera quarter, housed in a converted merchant's palace, which traces the life and works of Pablo Picasso, the Joan Miró Foundation dedicated to works by the eponymous Catalan painter, and the National Art Museum of Catalonia, which holds a vast collection of Catalan art from throughout the ages. The Gothic quarter, or Barri Gotic, is also home to outstanding architecture dating back to mediaeval times, including the cathedral, and Barcelona's best shops. An easy day trip by train from Barcelona is to Figueres, a small city around 90 miles to the north, which is known for being the birthplace of Salvador Dalí. Figueres is home to the renowned Dalí Theatre-Museum, with its pink exterior walls, egg-shaped battlements,

and extensive collection of the artist's works, as well as pieces by other artists such as El Greco. Also essential to any visit to Barcelona is a walk down La Rambla, stopping off at La Boqueria Market to sample the famous oysters, a few hours spent on one of the 6 Blue Flag beaches, known also for the restaurants that serve the best seafood in the city, and a visit to Montjuïc Castle, the tallest monument in the city. In the evenings, dine on Mediterranean cuisine on the Mirador Blue View Terrace at Casa Fuster, in the unique Café Vienès, or at the avant-garde Restaurant Galaxó.

Days six to eight: Barcelona to Madrid

From Barcelona, catch one of the hourly high-speed trains to Madrid, arriving around three hours later. Stay at the Hotel Urban, a five-star hotel in the cultural centre of the city. Your two days in Madrid will be packed with prestigious art and architecture from throughout the centuries. The hotel is within walking distance of all three of the world-class art museums which make up Madrid's Golden Triangle of Art. The Prado Museum is one of the largest art galleries in the world and contains an impressive selection of Spanish paintings, including works by Goya and El Greco; the Reina Sofia Museum is Spain's premier collection of modern 20th and 21st century art including Picasso's 'Guernica,' films by Luis Buñuel and Salvador Dalí, and an abundance of striking sculpture; and the Thyssen-Bornemisza Museum, one of the best private collections of 13th to 20th

DAY-BY-DAY ITINERARY

Barcelona - Tarragona - Valencia - Palma de Mallorca - Canary Islands - Deia

Expressions

century art, illustrates the history of western art and includes pieces by Goya, Degas, Kandinsky and Renoir, but must be booked in advance. After visiting all three of these prestigious museums, enjoy the atmosphere of the capital. Take in the ambience of the Plaza Mayor, the grand arcaded square at the centre of the city. Then, visit the Palacio Real de Madrid, the official residence of the Royal family, which is often open for the public to explore. Inside, the highlights include the Spanish marble, stucco carvings, frescoes painted by Giaquinto, Tiepolo, and Bayeu, and the fully-equipped Royal Armoury. If you are not able to go inside, you can still enjoy the Plaza de Oriente beside the palace, which has statues of the Gothic Kings lining its central walkway, or the Campo del Moro Palace Gardens. The Basilica de San Francisco el Grande has atmospherically lit golden walls, and a blue and green painted dome that is recognised to be one of the best in Spain. Situated just outside the city, the historical residence of the King of Spain, El Escorial, is a vast palace complex with magnificent gardens that is also open to the public. However, you may need to arrange private transportation to reach it. Other, longer day trips include Toledo, the City of Three Cultures, and Segovia, home to the Alcázar that inspired Disney's Cinderella Castle, and an long and well-preserved Roman aqueduct.



Retiro Park, Madrid

Day nine: Return to the UK

Perhaps spend a few hours at leisure in Madrid before you catch your return flight to the UK.

OPTIONAL

Add extra nights in any destination visited on this tour, or combine with others to create a fully tailor-made holiday.

HOTELS

These are the luxury hotels that feature on this tour of Spain's art and architecture. Alternative hotels are available at some destinations - please contact us for full details.

Expressions

BILBAO

Hotel Carlton 5 star

The five star Hotel Carlton in Bilbao oozes French Second Empire Style, and it perfect for luxury holidays spent exploring cultural Northern Spain. Completed in 1926, its grandiose, ornate architectural style is characterised by flourished archways, staircases, balustrades, cornices, and symmetry, all of which add to the all-encompassing sense of luxury at this Spanish hotel. The iconic glass roof that crowns the building comes into its own when you enter the central hall, which is flooded with down-pouring light. The style of the hotel lends itself easily to both contemporary, chic design, and more traditional decoration, something which becomes clear in the eclectic, but highly comfortable, individual rooms. The building's history as the seat of the Basque Government during the Spanish Civil War is evident throughout, in the interior staircases, elegant atmosphere, and its singular stained-glass window that remains from before the war. The feeling of regal importance and elegance that this history brings with it pervades each of the corridors and rooms. Restaurante Carlton, decorated in pleasing pastel colours reminiscent of its 1920s origin, serves a varied menu of hearty Basque and Biscay cuisine, including rice dishes, locally sourced lobster, and bean stew. The excellent positioning of this hotel puts you in the very heart of the city. Each day, you are at your leisure to explore the delights of Bilbao, from the world-famous Guggenheim Art Museum, the many charming plazas, the towering ornate palaces and basilicas, to the green parks and river. We would highly recommend stopping at this luxury five star hotel as part of a larger tour of Northern Spain, sampling the diverse and intriguing culture and history before moving on to coastal cities or further inland. [read more](#)



Hotel Casa Fuster, Barcelona

BARCELONA

Hotel Casa Fuster 5 star

The five-star Hotel Casa Fuster is a remarkable monument in a commanding location in central Barcelona, exuding a style that is evocative of the carefree early 20th century. Standing nobly at the terminus of the tree-lined boulevard of the Passeig de Gracia, its façade is a feat of Catalan modernist glamour. Columns with swirling capitals, neo-gothic arches and Guadi-esque balconies, the spirit of this architecture is of the modernist age and yields a distinct transportative power. Refurbished in 2004, there is an interesting marriage of design ideas inside, with original features such as oversized stone and marble columns, lofty ceilings and arched windows which are complemented by vibrant modern lighting. Spacious guest rooms enjoy views towards the Sagrada Familia church or over the tree-lined Passeig de Gracia, whilst the spectacular suites are located in the towers at the corners of the building and boast views in both directions. High quality furnishings throughout ensure a luxurious and opulent feel. The combination of original and

contemporary features can be witnessed in Café Vienés, where armchairs and curving, oversized booths are coated in plush purple fabric. This is a seductive atmosphere for an all-day café which serves a menu of teas and cocktails until midnight. Meanwhile, a menu of Mediterranean offerings is supplied by Galax Restaurant. Another venue ripe for relaxation accompanied by spectacular city-to-sea views is the rooftop El Mirador - 'the lookout'. Take a dip in the rooftop pool by day and seek the trendy atmosphere of the bar, Blue View by Bombay Sapphire, by night. But what is really special and unique to Hotel Casa Fuster is the Jazz Club. Frequented by well-known musicians, guests can combine the entry fee with the Louis Armstrong Tapas menu for a sumptuous night of entertainment. [read more](#)



Hotel Carlton, Bilbao



Hotel Carlton, Bilbao



Hotel Casa Fuster, Barcelona

HOTELS

These are the luxury hotels that feature on this tour of Spain's art and architecture. Alternative hotels are available at some destinations - please contact us for full details.

Expressions

MADRID

Hotel Urban 5 star

The grand luxury five-star Hotel Urban promises a type of style and sophistication that befits its name, located in Madrid's financial, political, commercial and cultural centre. In the thick of the city centre bustle surrounded by bars and restaurants, the building's 21st century façade is a vision of glass and industrial grey tones. Inside, you will experience absolute luxury on a boutique scale, making it easy to feel very at home. The design theme is ultra-contemporary, with materials such as glass, steel and leather giving a sleek and business-like quality. Ambient lighting ensures that public areas remain welcoming, while an atrium at the centre of the building is illuminated from sunlight through the glass ceiling high above. Taking inspiration from the cultural artwork that can be spotted in the guestrooms, throughout the public areas and in the museum which is located in the basement, an earthy colour scheme can be seen to pervade throughout the hotel. Choose from rooms and suites which range up to the exquisite offering of the Suite Lofts, which offer living and sleeping spaces spread across two floors. Some guestrooms look out onto the atrium, whilst others enjoy views of the surrounding suites. You might be surprised to find that there is an outdoor swimming pool hidden within this metropolitan base, located on the hotel's rooftop terrace where you will also find a number of sunbeds. The terrace is also open in the summer months to those looking to dine in the open air La Terraza del Urban, with its outstanding views and exotic menu. Come nightfall, enjoy a cocktail under the stars here or in the Glass Bar, which is the only oyster bar in Spain and fosters an underground, club-like atmosphere. Meanwhile, Europa Deco Restaurant is the place to be for more substantial dinners of creative Mediterranean cuisine.

A number of metro stations can be found within a few minutes' walk of the hotel, whilst Atocha train station is under ten minutes away by taxi, making Hotel Urban an excellent choice for a luxury short break in Madrid.

[read more](#)



Hotel Urban, Madrid



Hotel Casa Fuster, Barcelona



Hotel Urban, Madrid



Hotel Urban, Madrid

MAP OF THIS SPANISH ART AND ARCHITECTURE TOURING HOLIDAY

Expressions

The map below illustrates the route outlined in this touring itinerary, with overnight stops and places of interest highlighted.



GENERAL INFORMATION

This touring holiday is one of several suggested holidays we can offer you exactly as it is, but also with any alterations you might want, including extra nights in one or more places or adding in extra places. All our tours can be extended so that you can include a longer stay in one resort, perhaps at the end of the itinerary. Do call to discuss the options with our travel consultants.

The logo for Expressions, featuring the word "Expressions" in a white, elegant cursive font on a dark blue rectangular background.

OUR TOURS

Your touring holiday can be as simple or as complex as you wish – you can choose to follow one of the sample itineraries which we have created, you can modify one of these itineraries according to your requirements, or you can allow us to develop a whole new itinerary based on your preferences. We will use our expertise to create a bespoke touring holiday just for you, offering advice to ensure that everything runs smoothly. As we work with a large selection of hotels throughout Spain, you have the freedom to choose where you want to stay and how long for. We provide directions to each hotel that you are visiting during your touring holiday, as well as our own suggestions for sightseeing and local visits.

FLEXIBLE ARRANGEMENTS

Our arrangements are very flexible in that you choose to travel on any day you want, subject to availability of rail tickets, car hire, and hotels. As mentioned above, additional nights can be added at any point.

OUR HOTELS

Each of the hotels that are featured by Spanish Expressions has been personally selected to offer exceptionally high standards of comfort, service and cuisine. Most of the hotels we feature are four or five star, although we have also chosen some small, charming hotels that haven't been officially categorised. In this programme you will find our hand-picked selection of characterful boutique gems, exclusive seaside resorts, modern hotels and rustic properties in a rural setting, some located on large countryside estates. We also feature a number of the renowned Parador hotels, a collection of state-run properties which occupy historic buildings such as former monasteries, mediaeval fortresses and hilltop castles.

HOLIDAYS BY AIR

Most of our suggested touring itineraries are based on scheduled flights with British Airways, although we have used low cost airlines such as Easyjet where more convenient. British Airways operates a number of flight routes to mainland Spain and the Spanish islands, but none go to northern Spain so it is necessary to fly direct with a low-cost airline or to take a connecting flight within Spain. Low –cost airlines operate a large number of flights from regional airports in the UK to destinations throughout Spain. There are also flights within Spain making it easy to combine north and south without driving or spending all day travelling.

HOLIDAYS BY RAIL

Rail travel to and within Spain is an increasingly popular option because it is a great way to see the countryside and to cover long distances in short times. You can travel all the way from the UK to Spain by taking the Eurostar to Paris, then continuing onwards by high-speed train via Catalonia or the Basque Country. It will be necessary to stay overnight in Barcelona or San Sebastian before travelling to your final destination, or you might choose to break your journey in Paris or another French town or city. High-speed AVE trains link Spain's major cities, facilitating travel between regions.

HOLIDAYS WITH A HIRE CAR

A hire-car is essential for many of our hotels with Spain, so is usually included in the price of your holiday. Some of our hotels offer transfers, but it may be more convenient to take a taxi in some city hotels. Hire-car is a very cost-effective and convenient means of getting from the airport to your hotel and back, and also allows you to explore the area during the course of your stay. We work with Avis as they offer a variety of cars at a good range of offices throughout Spain, and have negotiated a number of benefits for you such as theft protection being included and no one-way drop off charge for most car types. It is possible to upgrade your hire-car if required – we include a basic hire-car which is adequate for just two people, a short break or if you don't intend to do much driving, but you might want to up-grade to something larger and more powerful.

OUR PRICES

The sample prices mentioned in this leaflet are generally a 'from' price based on the cheapest season of travel. However, hotel and car hire rates, and flight and rail prices can change (up and down depending on offers), so we give you an accurate price for your holiday when we provide you with a quotation. Our sample prices should be used as an indication of how much a particular combination will cost and to show the differences on average between the hotel categories on offer.

PRICE INFORMATION IN MORE DETAIL

Scheduled British Airways flights from London to Madrid return, second class rail travel, and 8 nights' accommodation at the Hotel Carlton in Bilbao, the Hotel Casa Fuster in Barcelona, and the Hotel Urban in Madrid.
From £1,670 per person

BOOKING CONDITIONS

Our booking conditions apply to all holidays. A copy can be found on our website and a copy is also sent to you with a written quotation and when you make a booking.

FINANCIAL PROTECTION

Expressions Holidays offers full financial protection for all holidays you book with us. If your holiday includes a flight, the ATOL (3076) covers the costs of the holiday. If the holiday does not include a flight, it is the ABTOT bond that protects the cost of the holiday. We are also members of AITO (the Association of Independent Tour Operators) and ABTA.



Expressions Holidays
Lynx House, Pynes Hill, Exeter EX2 5JL

HOW TO BOOK

To make a booking, just phone us on

01392 441217

and we can take you through the details we need and start the booking process. A deposit is required to confirm the arrangements and this can be paid by debit or credit card over the phone. No handling fee is charged on deposits up to £1000. The level of the deposit will be confirmed at the point of booking and will depend on the ticketing deadlines of the rail tickets involved in your booking.