

RAIL HOLIDAYS TO SPAIN

Spain's vast territories and its ancient regional capitals are linked brilliantly with an ever-increasing network of high speed as well as regional trains. You can travel to Spain from Paris in a day, you can use fast services for inter-city routes or take your time exploring within a region with the local service. There are even luxury, traditional trains in the north of Spain and Andalusia that are a holiday experience in their own right.

TRAVELLING BY TRAIN TO SPAIN and within Spain is an excellent option. Distances in Spain tend to be quite long in between places of interest and travelling by train makes sense. High speed AVE trains link Spain's main cities, making for example train the best means of travelling between Madrid and the Andalusian cities of Cordoba, Granada and Seville or between Barcelona and Bilbao.

Now you can also travel by high speed train from the UK to Spain by taking Eurostar from London to Paris and then taking the high speed service from Paris to Barcelona or to San Sebastian, before continuing your journey by local train or by hire-car. Timings are simple: you can either leave Paris Gare de Lyon at 14.07 and reach Barcelona Sants by 8.33 pm or if you stay over in Paris you can take the train at 07.15 to reach Barcelona at 13.30.

Extend your holiday by stopping in Paris for a night or two on the way. Another option is to combine rail and air so take the train one way and fly the other.

FULL RANGE OF OUR RAIL HOLIDAYS TO SPAIN

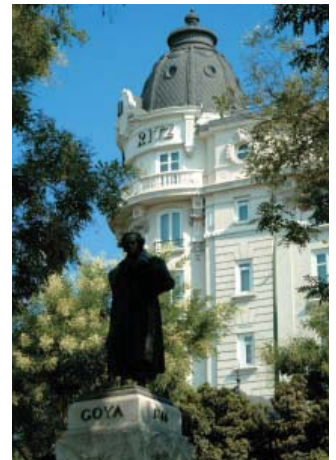
Andalusia and Madrid	by air and rail
Grand Tour of Spain	flight, hire-car and rail
Spanish Art and Architecture tour	by air and rail
The Basque Country and Catalonia	by rail
Barcelona, La Rioja and Bilbao	by air and rail



Andalusian village



Charm of Andalusia



Goya statue in Madrid



Costa Brava



Rioja

SPANISH ART AND ARCHITECTURE TOUR

This tour by air and rail is a delightful introduction to the artistic and architectural heritage of Spain, visiting 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, then visit world-class art museums in the country's capital city. Travel between the cities by rail, allowing you to relax in comfort and watch the Spanish scenery pass by.

By air and rail 8 nights / 9 days

SUGGESTED TOURING ITINERARY

Day one

Start your touring holiday by flying into Bilbao. Travel to your hotel, the five-star modernistic Gran Hotel Silken Domine, which enjoys a privileged position overlooking the iconic Guggenheim Museum. Stay for two nights.

Day two

You have the whole day here in Bilbao to feast on the art and architectural wonders of this vibrant city, perhaps starting off with a visit to the Guggenheim Museum. Designed by Frank Gehry, the 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, but they will also see works by renowned artists including El Greco, Goya and Gauguin. 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.

Day three

More exploring this morning before you take a mid-afternoon train to Barcelona, arriving just after 10pm. Here you will stay for three nights at Casa Fuster, itself a remarkable building which has been designed in the 'Modernista' style that is typical of Barcelona.

Days four and five

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, while other famous works of art featuring Gaudí's trademark curved lines, decorated chimneys, elaborate wrought iron and mosaic decorations include Parc Guell, Casa Batlló and La Pedrera. There are a number of outstanding art museums within the city, including the Picasso Museum which traces the life and works of Pablo Picasso, the Joan Miró Foundation which is dedicated to works by the Catalan painter, and the National Art Museum of Catalonia, which holds a vast collection of Catalan art from through the ages. The Gothic quarter is also home to outstanding

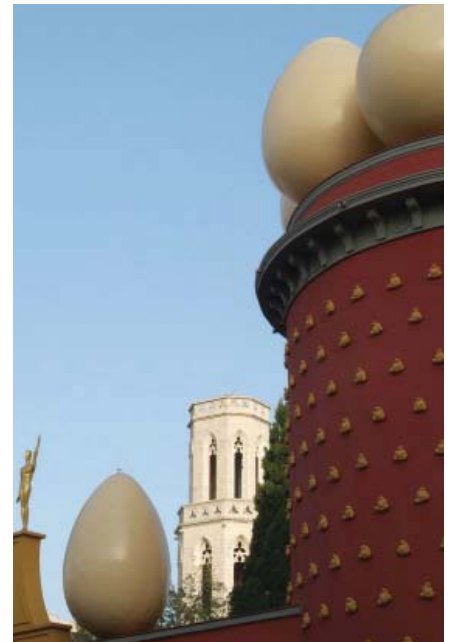
architecture dating from mediaeval times, including the cathedral. An easy day trip from Barcelona is to Figueres, a small city around 90 miles to the north, which is known for being the birthplace of Salvador Dalí. Figueres is home to the renowned Dalí Theatre-Museum, with its extensive collection of the artist's works, as well as pieces by other artists including El Greco.

Day six

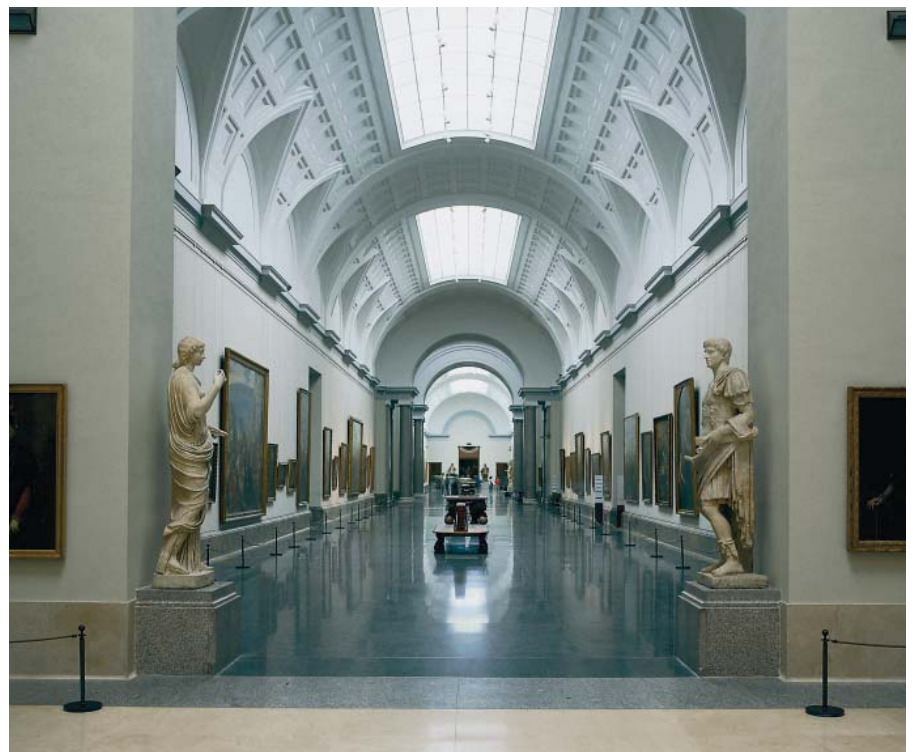
From Barcelona, catch one of the hourly high speed trains to Madrid, arriving around three hours later. Stay at Hotel Urban, a five-star hotel in the cultural centre of the city.

Days seven and eight

Your two days in Madrid will be action-packed with art and architecture 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, Reina Sofía Museum is Spain's premier collection of modern art including



Dalí theatre museum



Inside the Prado

Picasso's 'Guernica', and Thyssen-Bornemisza Museum, a private art collection which illustrates the history of western art and includes pieces by Goya, Degas and Renoir. Don't forget the buildings of Old Madrid and the Royal Palace.

Day nine

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



Bilbao



Goya statue in Madrid

PRICES

Prices from £1,650 per person based on two people sharing

WHAT'S INCLUDED

- Flights with British Airways London Heathrow to Bilbao and Madrid to London Heathrow.
- Second class rail travel from Bilbao to Barcelona, Barcelona to Madrid.
- Accommodation with bed and breakfast at the following hotels, based on two people sharing a standard double room:
Two nights at Gran Hotel Domine in Bilbao
Three nights at Hotel Casa Fuster in Barcelona
Three nights at Hotel Urban in Madrid

First class rail travel also available.



The Prado

THE BASQUE COUNTRY AND CATALONIA

Visit the Basque Country and Catalonia, both fascinating regions with a unique cultural identity. Travel by train from the UK to the French Basque Country, before crossing the border and staying in San Sebastián. The key attraction of the region is its proximity to both countryside and sea; the coastline is spectacular, with sweeping sandy beaches, jagged cliffs and fishing villages, but only a short drive inland are rolling green hills and flower filled fields. You soon leave the greenness of the Basque Country behind and travel eastwards into Catalonia, where you stay in the region's capital, Barcelona before returning home by train.

By rail 7 nights / 8 days

SUGGESTED ITINERARY

Day one

Begin your touring holiday by leaving London at about 8am, changing in Paris for a fast train to St Jean de Luz, arriving in the evening (or with a later start from London you can change in Bordeaux too). It is possible to break the journey in Paris or to continue straight to the small town in the French Basque Country. Spend two nights at the Hotel Parc Victoria, a charming 4 star hotel in gardens within walking distance of the seafront.

Day two

St Jean de Luz is well suited to exploration on foot, with numerous winding lanes, whitewashed houses and tiny shops to discover. Perhaps hire a car for the day to explore the surrounding villages, or relax at the hotel and indulge in the excellent thalassotherapy treatments which are available.

Day three

Following your stay in St Jean de Luz, board a train early afternoon to travel to San Sebastián, changing on the French/Spanish border and arriving after just a few hours. Spend two nights at Hotel Villa Soro, a charming and homely hotel of typical Basque architecture.

Day four

San Sebastián is an elegant city in a beautiful setting on the bay of La Concha which boasts one of the best city beaches in Europe. It is also home to a vast selection of Michelin-starred restaurants and a number of cultural events throughout the year, such as the San Sebastián Jazz Festival and the International Film Festival.

Day five

Leave the Basque Country at about 7.30am, travelling eastwards across the drier centre of northern Spain. This train journey towards Barcelona passes through Pamplona, Zaragoza and Lleida, all interesting cities where you could break the journey. On arrival in the Catalan capital, take a taxi to the Grand Hotel Central Barcelona, a five-star hotel in a prime location which combines 1920s glamour with a modern style.

Days six and seven

Spend three nights in Barcelona, a cosmopolitan city set on a plain that rises up from the sea to wooded hills and has one of the highest concentrations of Gothic architecture in Europe. The city boasts unique architecture, a rich culture with art galleries and museums, gourmet restaurants, lively bars, designer

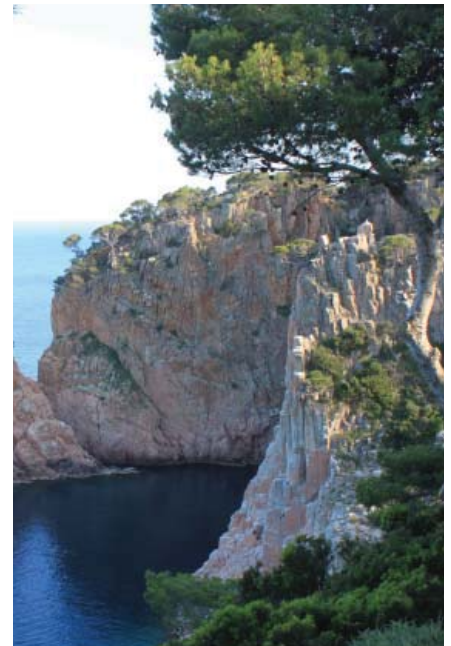
boutiques, golden beaches, parks and gardens; plenty to occupy visitors for a few days.

Day eight

Leave just after 9am on a train to Paris where you arrive mid-afternoon. Catch the Eurostar back to London at



Basque country



Aiguablava, Costa Brava



Walking in the Pyrenees



Typical houses in Mundaka, Basque country

PRICES

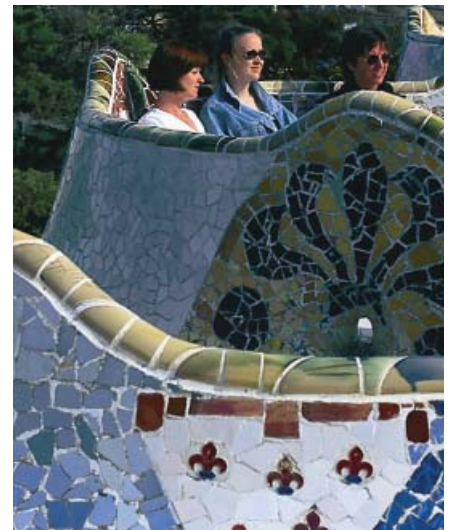
From £1,630 per person for first class rail travel based on two people sharing.
 From £1,450 per person for second class rail travel based on two people sharing.

WHAT'S INCLUDED

- First or second class rail travel (as above) on all trains including Eurostar
- Accommodation with bed and breakfast at the following hotels, based on two people sharing a standard double room:
 Two nights at the Hotel Parc Victoria in St Jean de Luz
 Two nights at Hotel Villa Soro in San Sebastian
 Three nights at Grand Hotel Central in Barcelona



Paintings in Alaiza church, Basque country



Park Guell, Barcelona



La Concha beach at San Sebastian

ANDALUCIA AND MADRID

Discover authentic Andalusian culture with this rail holiday, the ideal way to travel to around the southernmost region in Spain. Begin by flying into Madrid, where you spend your first night before travelling by train between the three greatest cities of Andalusia's: Seville, Cordoba and Granada. Home to mediaeval Islamic architecture, bullfighting and flamenco, sherry and tapas, these historic and atmospheric cities can be explored with the help of a number of included excursions to help you make the most of your touring holiday.

By air and rail 7 nights / 8 Days

SUGGESTED TOURING ITINERARY

Day one

Begin your holiday by flying from London to Madrid, where you spend one night at Hospes Madrid, a boutique hotel conveniently located next to Parque del Retiro. You have the rest of the day to explore the city, with its many attractive plaza and museums, including the Prado, the Museo Thyssen-Bornemisza and the Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofia which houses Picasso's Guernica. In Old Madrid visit the Plaza Mayor and the Royal Palace.

Day two

Leave Madrid the following morning at about 9 am (or later if you want more time to explore the capital), travelling by high-speed train and arriving into Granada at lunchtime. Spend two nights in Granada, staying at Hospes Palacio de los Patos, a 19th Century palace with a striking modern wing.

Day three

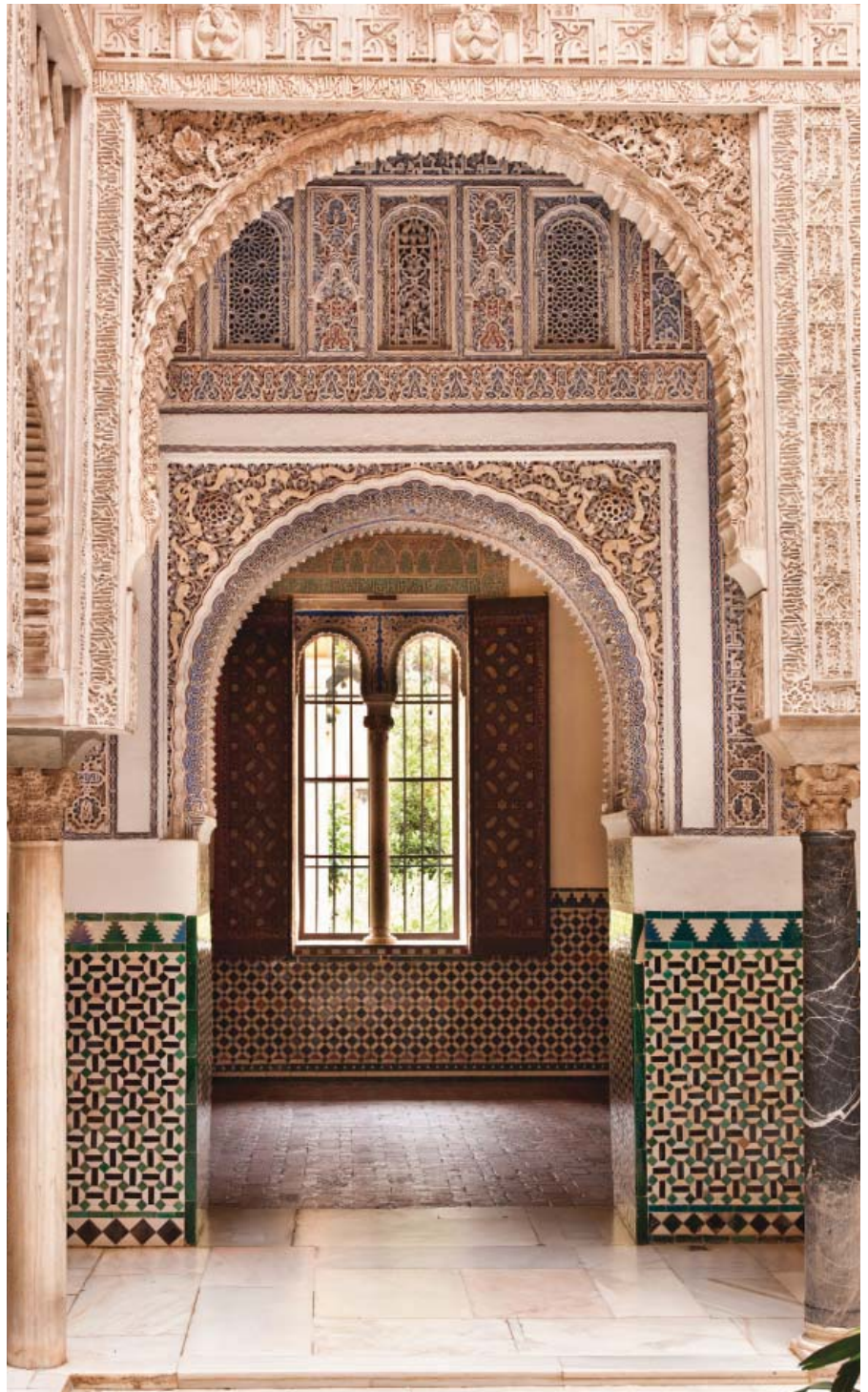
Granada, nestling at the edge of the Sierra Nevada mountains, is one of Spain's most fascinating cities. During your stay we include a shared tour of the Alhambra palace, a UNESCO world heritage site, started in 1232 by the rulers of the Nasrid dynasty. The tour includes visits to the Royal Palaces, Gardens and Carlos V's Palace, after which you have the rest of the day at leisure to explore Granada. An authentic Andalusian Flamenco show is included in the evening. The rest of your time here in Granada is yours to explore perhaps visiting the narrow streets of the Albaicin quarter or the Generalife, the country estate of the Nasrid kings.

Day four

Leave Granada this morning by train to Córdoba, arriving just over two hours later. Stay for two nights at Hospes Palacio del Bailio, which occupies historical buildings surrounding a number of pretty patios.

Day five

Spend the day in Córdoba, a city which is set on the Guadalquivir River at the heart of rural Andalusia, boasting cobbled streets decorated with wrought-iron balconies and many historical attractions as well as restaurants and nightlife. We include a guided tour of Córdoba's mosque (Mezquita), the largest Islamic structure in Western Europe and a UNESCO protected site. Spend the rest of the day exploring this fascinating city, perhaps visiting the workshops of silversmiths or the Alcazar de los Reyes Cristianos



Alcazar of Seville

before enjoying a romantic three-course dinner in an intimate restaurant, where you sample typical Andalusian dishes.

Day six

You leave Cordoba mid-morning and arrive in Seville just 45 minutes later. Spend two nights in Seville at Hospes Las Casas del Rey de Baeza, a four-star townhouse set among the cobbled courtyards in the centre of the city.

Day seven

Seville is the capital of Andalucía and Spain's fourth largest city. Art and architecture are very important here, where the centre is formed of a maze of narrow lanes and hidden plazas. Enjoy a short included guided tour of the city centre, visiting the main sights of the Barrio de Santa Cruz and then in the evening we include an introductory presentation on Iberian ham and ham cutting. Be sure to wander back to visit the Real Alcazar, the Royal Palaces with their Moorish craftsmanship and landscaped gardens, the Cathedral and belltower (La Giralda) and marvel at the numerous colourful azulejos, glazed ceramic tiles.

Day eight

After two nights in Seville, take a taxi to the airport for your flight back to the UK.

PRICES

Prices from £1,520 per person for first class rail travel based on two people sharing.

Or from £1,390 per person for second class rail travel based on two people sharing.

WHAT'S INCLUDED

- Scheduled flights with Easyjet (London Gatwick to Madrid, Seville to London Gatwick)
- First or second class rail travel on all trains within Spain
- Accommodation with bed and breakfast based on two people sharing a standard double room as follows:
 - One night at Hospes Madrid
 - Two nights at Hospes Palacio de los Patos in Granada
 - Two nights at Hospes Palacio del Bailio in Cordoba
 - Two nights at Hospes Las Casas del Rey de Baeza in Seville
- Córdoba: A shared tour of the mosque and a 'Caliphal' dinner which includes a selection of tapas, main course, dessert, coffee and mineral water.
- Granada: A shared tour of the Alhambra and a Tablao Flamenco show.
- Seville: A shared walking tour (2.5 hours) and an Iberian Ham Cutting presentation.



Andalusian village



Alhambra gardens, Granada



Spanish dressage



The mountains of Andalusia