



TRAVEL MAKERS

Journeys beyond Imagination

Al Andalus: Morocco & Southern Spain

May 2018 - 18 days (with optional five day extension)

Tour Leader: Chris Carter

ITINERARY

15 MAY

Arrive Marrakesh, Free time to recuperate. Late afternoon orientation drive around the city. We will have our welcome dinner in a restaurant in the vicinity of Djmaâ el Fnaâ Square.

Overnight: Marrakesh (meals in flight, welcome dinner)

16 MAY

Morning visit to the Majorelle Gardens and Museum. Followed by a visit to the 12th century Koutoubia Mosque - the tallest in Marrakech and the Ben Youssef Madrasa. We will have some free time after lunch before we return to the Djmaâ el Fnaâ Square where we will see stalls of goods, snake charmers and water sellers; fortune tellers and public scribes; tumblers and nakkachat - women applying henna - soothsayers and gnaoua musicians. We will have dinner in the vicinity of the square.

Overnight: Marrakesh (B, L, D)

17 MAY

Morning departure for an excursion into the Atlas Mountains to see a vast array of colored rock cliffs, mountains streams, Berber villages, and local mountain people. We will have an opportunity to visit a Berber home for a cup of tea and homemade Berber bread (Tanourt). We will have lunch at the famous Kasbah Tamadout.

Overnight: Marrakesh (B, L)

18 MAY

Morning departure for the drive Casablanca where we will visit the Hassan II Mosque, the second largest mosque in the Islamic world. We will then set out on a 1.5 hour drive to the Imperial capital of the Kingdom of Morocco, Rabat (R'bat al Fat'h). We will drive through the Méchouar Precinct of the King's Palace (not open to the public) We will then travel on to Chellah, once a prosperous Roman enclave called Sala Colonia and the Mohamed V Mausoleum, located on the southern side of the Great Mosque guarded by the mounted Royal Household Guard.

Overnight: Rabat (B, L)

19 MAY

After breakfast we will drive out past a forest of cork-oak to the Imperial City of Meknes for a brief visit. After lunch we will visit the Roman ruins at Volubilis. We will arrive at Fes during the late afternoon.

Overnight: Fes (B, L)

20 MAY

The two thousand year old Imperial City of Fes is surrounded as it is by 16 kms of ramparts in a narrow valley, strategically positioned on the old caravan crossroads which once connected the one-time Saharan

empires with the Atlantic and Mediterranean trading routes to Europe. The city that was once, after Mecca and Medina, held to be one of the holiest cities in the Islamic world. We will visit the maze of alleyways of the medina and souks, thousands of stalls and shops offering such things as pottery, carpets, brassware, silverware, traditional and modern jewellery, leather goods all amidst the pungent aromas of spices, herbs and oils.

Overnight: Fes (B, L)

21 MAY

Late morning departure for Chefchaouen. After checking into our hotel we will embark on a leisurely walking tour of this delightful blue and white village. From the Palace El Makhzen and the famous square of Ouatta el Hammam we will enter the maze of alleyways in the Medina then on to the crumbling ochre and toffee-coloured Kasbah and on to see the exterior of the El Masjid El Andalous with its octagonal mosque, a style typical to Northern Morocco.

Overnight: Chefchaouen (B, L)

22 MAY

After a leisurely breakfast we will continue our exploration of this fascinating town. This will include a visit to the Ethnographic Museum in the centre of the Medina, with a beautiful Andalusian garden and collections illustrating the customs and popular art of the Chefchaouen region. Afternoon free – there are plenty of shopping opportunities or further exploration of the souks.

Overnight: Chefchaouen (B, D)

23 MAY

We will depart in the morning for our drive to Tangier and the ferry across the Straits of Gibraltar to Algeciras in Spain. We will transfer to our bus at the ferry terminal and we will drive on to Ronda (3.5 hours).

Overnight: Ronda (B, D)

24 MAY

After a leisurely breakfast, we will walk across the El Tajo gorge toward the bull-ring, one of the oldest in Spain. We will then descend the gorge and cross the 'Old' Bridge' to the Arab baths. We will re-enter the old city through one of the medieval gates and see the Cathedral (built directly over a mosque) and the beautiful Palacio de Mondragon, originally built in the 14th century. It was remodelled after the Reconquest but still contains a lovely patio with Moorish mosaics and plasterwork. We will have lunch in the old city.

Overnight Ronda (B, L)

25 MAY

Mid-morning departure for our drive to Sevilla via of the famous pueblos blancos (white villages) - Grazalema is beautifully situated between two

ranges, the Sierra del Pinar to the north and the Sierra del Edrinal to the south. We will arrive in Sevilla during the early afternoon and after checking into our hotel we will embark on a walking tour of the old city, in the footsteps of Carmen, commencing adjacent to the Cathedral, through the Royal Tobacco Factory (now the university), past the old red light district past the Torre del Oro (Gold Tower) to finish on the banks of the Guadalquivir River. A good chance to orientate yourself.

Overnight Sevilla (B, L)

26 MAY

Walking from our hotel, we will visit the Royal Palaces, beautifully restored buildings built in the Almohad style during the 12th century and renovated many times since. We will also have a chance to walk through the gardens adjoining the palaces. In the afternoon we will visit the Giralda, the third largest cathedral in the world and the location of Columbus' tomb. Those feeling fit may wish to climb the hundreds of steps of the bell-tower, the original minaret.

We will see a flamenco show later in the evening.

Overnight Sevilla (B)

27 MAY

Day free. There is so many sites to see that we have will let you decide which to see You can visit the Museo de Belles Artes where you will see works by such artists as Zubaran, Murillo, Velasquez and El Greco; take a short cruise along the Guadalquivir River; visit the Casa de la Pilatos, one of the most beautiful old (16th century) homes in Sevilla with fine examples of Nasrid, Gothic, Mudejar and Renaissance architecture; or the Hospital de Caridad – originally a hospital but now contains a fine art collection. For dinner you may wish to dine as Sevillanos do and visit a number of tapas bars during the evening – there are several thousand to choose from.

Overnight Sevilla (B)

28 MAY

In the morning we will drive to Italica, a Roman city once located on the banks of the Guadalquivir River, and the birthplace of the Emperor Trajan. Much of the city ruins remain unexcavated but it contains good examples of fine mosaics and one of the largest Roman amphitheatres in existence. While it was a very important city in Roman times, the river gradually changed its course and moved away from the city and it was abandoned as Sevilla grew in importance. We will drive to on to Cordoba to arrive early in the afternoon. We will have lunch after dropping our bags off at hotel and then take an orientation walk around the historic part of the city.

Overnight Cordoba (B, L)

29 MAY

In the morning we will visit the Gran Mezquita (Great Mosque). From the outside this is a less than spectacular building however upon entry you will be amazed at its vast interior and forest of columns and horse-shoe arches. The original mosque was begun in the 8th century by Abd Al Rahman I and progressively enlarged as the Muslim population increased. In the afternoon we will visit the Alcazar de los Reyes Cristianos – the castle of the Christian Monarchs.

Overnight Cordoba (B)

30 MAY

Morning departure for Granada along along the Ruta de Califato – the Caliph's Route – to drive toward Granada. Through rolling hills almost entirely covered by olive groves, we will pass the last remnants of Moorish resistance as Andalusia began to fall to the Christians. We will arrive in the early afternoon and after lunch will have some free time to explore the heart of historic Granada.

Overnight: Granada (B, L)

31 MAY

Morning visit to the Alhambra. This is a huge site that contains a spectacular array of buildings and extensive gardens centred around

the Palaces of the Nasrid kings who ruled the Kingdom of Granada until it fell to the Christians in 1492. We will see the Comares Palace, the Mexuar, the Patio de los Leones, the Generalife, the Alcazaba (fortress) and the Palace of Charles V. The tour will take three or so hours but you are free to spend more time there if you wish. The remainder of the day is free. The Cathedral and Royal Chapel are worth a visit and there are plenty of good shopping areas in the old quarter. Farewell dinner in a restaurant at the foot of the Alhambra.

Overnight Granada (B, D)

1 JUNE

Tour ends. Transfer to airport and homeward flights.

OPTIONAL TOUR

11 MAY

Arrive in Madrid. Welcome dinner in the Plaza de Santa Ana.

Overnight: Madrid (D)

12 MAY

Day tour to Segovia. We will leave the bus at the Roman aqueduct and embark on a walking tour of the old city including a visit to the castle and Cathedral. Around midday we will drive back to La Granja de San Idelfonso where we will have lunch and visit the magnificent gardens of this great site.

Overnight: Madrid (B, L)

13 MAY

Full day tour to Toledo, an early capital of Spain. The old city has many historic buildings that range in age from the Islamic Period through to the Spanish Civil War. We will walk through the historic centre and visit the Cathedral, El Transito Sinagoga and the Monasterio de San Juan de los Reyes.

Overnight: Madrid (B, L)

14 MAY

We will head off on a walking tour. We will walk via the Plaza Mayor and on to the Royal Palace - one of the largest in Europe. After lunch we will visit the Prado Museum - one of the finest collections of art in the world.

Overnight: Madrid (B)

15 MAY

Morning transfer to the airport for our flight to Marrakesh. We will meet up with the rest of the group at the hotel.

PRICES:

MAIN TOUR: \$7252.00 starts ex Marrakesh, finishes in Granada

SINGLE SUPPLEMENT: \$1900.00

OPTIONAL EXTENSION: \$1998.00

SINGLE SUPPLEMENT. \$475.00

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