

# EXPLORE!

**Highlights of Old Castile**  
8 days

Spain - Trip code HOO

## Highlights of Old Castile

An action packed trip blending historic towns with beautiful countryside - this is no coach tour, we explore on foot. We'll stroll along the famous city walls of Avila, walk beneath the Gredos Mountains through lost villages and have ample time to experience the sights of Salamanca. You'll see the classic cities of Toledo, Avila and Segovia and have the chance to climb impressive ramparts, walking along ancient walls to admire beautiful countryside. You will also visit the largest mountain range in Central Spain, sip wine and sample tapas in bustling Madrid, visit Egyptian temples and a cathedral made out of recycled materials!

## Trip highlights

- ★ **Toledo** - Explore one of Spain's finest and most dramatically situated cities on foot
- ★ **Gredos Mountains** - Easy walks beneath the jagged peaks of this superb mountain range
- ★ **Madrid** - Opportunity to discover rich culture, delicious food and amazing architecture from contemporary to medieval in this buzzing city
- ★ **Mejorada del Campo** - Visit the remarkable Catedral de Justo - made out of recycled materials!
- ★ **Avila** - Stride out past stork nests along the ramparts of one of Europe's most impressive walled cities
- ★ **Salamanca** - Chance to sip wine and watch the world go by in the Plaza Mayor

### ACCOMMODATION GRADE:

#### Standard

Our standard, mid-range accommodation offers a good level of service, often with other amenities such as a restaurant, bar, garden or swimming pool. Generally rooms will be comfortable with en suite facilities.

#### TRIP PACE:

##### Full on

Full on paced trips are for travellers who like their holidays packed with activities and experiences, moving on quickly from place to place with lots of early starts and long, busy days. Some may find them tiring, but others get a buzz from packing their precious holiday-time as chock-a-block full of new experiences as possible!

#### GROUP SIZE:

##### 10 - 16

Maximum group size ranges from between 6 to 20 people, depending on the type of trip, the transport and accommodation used and activities included. We rarely have groups that are smaller than five or six people and the average is 12 people plus an Explore leader.

## Itinerary

Itineraries on some departure dates may differ, please select the itinerary that you wish to explore.

### DAY 1 - Join trip in Madrid

Madrid is located on the Meseta Central, the inner plateau set at a lofty 600 metres, which helps to lessen the summer heat. It is a fitting start to our exploration of Castile and one of those places that draws people back time and time again, either for its rich culture, great food and architecture ranging from contemporary to Medieval or simply to sit outside on a busy plaza watching the Madrilenos enjoying themselves. This evening there is free time for you to have dinner and Madrid comes to life after dark!



**Accommodation: Hotel Dos Castillas** (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: None

### DAY 2 - Discover the old town of Madrid on foot and Toledo by local train

This morning we set off on foot to wander through the old town, getting some off-the-beaten track impressions of the past and modern life in this buzzing city. Amongst other things we'll see the Templo de Debod, which was originally from ancient Egypt. It was given to Spain in 1968 as a thank you for the country's help in saving the temples at Abu Simbel during the Aswan Dam's construction. It now stands in Parque del Oeste and is one of the few ancient Egyptian temples to be found outside its native country. Our walk will finish at Plaza de Sol, where you are free to grab a coffee or continue your exploration.

Early afternoon we take taxis to Atocha Station; it's so large it once had its own nightclub and now has a covered tropical botanical garden. A short journey by rail takes us to Toledo, an incredible city rising high above the River Tajo. The only way to experience this remarkable place is on foot and we spend the rest of the day (and evening) exploring its backstreets, which include a heady combination of churches, mosques and synagogues. Most day-trippers return before dusk but we will stay overnight to further absorb its atmosphere.



## Accommodation: Hostal Puerta Bisagra (or similar)



Standard Guesthouse



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

## DAY 3 - Drive to the rugged Sierra de Guadarrama and historic Segovia

We start this morning by driving to the extremely unorthodox Catedral de Justo. Not technically a place of worship, this building located in a rather down at heel industrial estate has been made out of recycled materials over a period of 50 years by the eccentric Justo Gallego - in recognition of being cured of tuberculosis. After this rather surreal visit we head into the rugged Sierra de Guadarrama. Here we stretch our legs for an hour or so exploring the most peculiar rock formations and forest of La Pedriza surrounding the Manzanares River and have the opportunity for a picnic lunch in the great outdoors.

Later, we travel north by bus onto the Castile high plains to arrive at Segovia. With the Guadarrama Mountains as backdrop and the giant Roman aqueduct dominating the vista, Segovia has much to offer including a fine collection of Romanesque churches. Constructed over two thousand years ago and remarkably well preserved, the Roman Aqueduct that stretched over 50 kilometres and straddles historical Segovia remains a mystery.

This evening your Explore Leader will take you on a two hour walking tour of Segovia finishing up in the Old Town where there will be the chance to have dinner this evening before heading to our hotel for the night.



## Accommodation: El Corregidor (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

## DAY 4 - Walk Avila's walls; drive to Candelaria in the Gredos National Park

This morning you'll have a couple of hours free to wander around Segovia at your own pace. You might like to visit the UNESCO listed Alcazar Fortress with its pristine turrets towering above the town below.

This afternoon we drive to Avila. UNESCO have declared this Medieval walled town a World Heritage Site and coined it a 'land of songs and saints'. Time has seemingly stood still within the perimeter of its defensive walls which were constructed over eight centuries ago to protect from the threat of Moorish power. On arrival we climb the impressive ramparts and walk along the top of the ancient walls, admiring the surrounding countryside and to gain a different perspective over the walled town.

Our last stop of the day is La Sierra de Gredos, Central Spain's largest mountain range. We'll stay overnight in Candelario, a gem of a Medieval village on the northern slopes of the mountain range.



## Accommodation: 5 Castanos (or similar)



Standard Hotel

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Single room available

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Meals Provided: Breakfast

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## DAY 5 - Walk in La Sierra de Gredos; arrive in the Moorish city of Salamanca

After a stroll through the narrow, cobbled streets of Candelario we explore the lush and green surroundings with the towering peaks of the Sierra reaching more than 2500 metres as the back drop.

This afternoon we drive to Salamanca, passing through Guijuelo en route; the centre of Iberian ham production in Spain which is a top gourmet product of international reputation. Along the way we'll visit Arapiles where the Battle of Salamanca took place in 1812 and Wellington's forced defeated Napoleons.

We reach Salamanca later this afternoon. In the 12th century Salamanca was establishing itself as one of the leading seats of learning in Europe. Spain was a focal point as the Moorish invaders provided the stepping stone for knowledge to pass from Antiquity to Renaissance. Salamanca is home to some of the finest architecture in Spain and birthplace to the Plateresque style. The sandstone used in most buildings seems to glow golden especially as the sun sets over the hazy plains, playing tricks with the light. At night Salamanca comes to life as it continues to be a lively university town. Spain's grandest Plaza Mayor is a fine place to watch the world go by over a relaxing drink accompanied by some local cuisine.



**Accommodation: Estrella Albatros** (or similar)

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Standard Hotel

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Single room available

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Meals Provided: Breakfast

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## DAY 6 - Morning orientation walk of Salamanca with a free afternoon

This morning your Explore Leader will take you on foot through this magnificent city which is also very easy to explore later on your own. Sometimes the best way is just to lose yourself down the backstreets. You may choose to visit the cathedral or perhaps the university. For those seeking something more contemporary, you could visit the Museum of Art Nouveau and Art Deco. Inside a modernist stained glass building, the collection here dates back to the end of the 19th century. It is also houses a collection of porcelain dolls - one of the largest collections of its kind.



**Accommodation: Estrella Albatros** (or similar)

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Standard Hotel

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Single room available

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Meals Provided: Breakfast

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## DAY 7 - Local train to Madrid; chance to visit the Prado Museum

This morning we will take taxis to the railway station and board a train for the two hour journey back to Madrid for our final night. You'll have the afternoon free to enjoy the city's attractions. You may like to join the Madrilenos in their leisurely stroll around the beautiful Retiro Park before enjoying another favourite pastime 'tapeando', passing from bar to bar sampling the local tapas. Art lovers will revel in the famed galleries of El Prado, the Reina Sofia and Von Thyssen's eclectic private collection. You also have the option of visiting the royal residence of Palacio Real or Huertas, known as the literary district has a variety of good restaurants, bars, squares and shops to browse through. This evening they'll be the opportunity for you to go to a Flamenco show or join a tasty tapas tour.



**Accommodation: Hotel Dos Castillas** (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

## DAY 8 - Trip ends in Madrid

Our trip ends after breakfast at our hotel in Madrid.



Meals Provided: Breakfast



# What's included?



## Included meals

Breakfast: 7



## Transport

Bus  
Train



## Trip staff

Explore Tour Leader  
Driver(s)



## Accommodation

1 nights standard guesthouse  
6 nights standard hotel

# Trip information

## Country information

### Spain

#### Climate

Overall, spring, early summer and autumn are ideal times for a Spanish trip - though the weather varies enormously from region to region. The high central plains suffer from fierce extremes, stiflingly hot in summer, bitterly cold and swept by freezing winds in winter. The Atlantic coast, in contrast, has a tendency to damp and mist, and a relatively brief, humid summer. The Mediterranean south is warm virtually all year round. Spain's Islands the Canaries and Balaerics experience very mild winters and warm summers making them ideal year round destinations.

#### Time difference to GMT

+1

#### Plugs

2 Pin Round

#### Religion

Roman Catholic

#### Language

Castilian Spanish, Catalan, Galician, Basque

## Budgeting and packing

### Optional activities

The following excursions and/or activities are usually available and may be arranged locally. Estimated costs are provided below for guidance only, are on a per person basis unless shown otherwise, and may depend on the number of participants. Prices quoted are correct as of the date these tour notes were originally issued but may change at any time due to currency fluctuations. Please note: These activities are booked and paid for direct with the supplier and do not form part of your Explore holiday contract.

Salamanca: Cathedral entrance to the tower €5.00; university €10.00.  
Art Noveau Museum €4.00

Madrid: Palacio Real €11.00; Baron Von Thyssen Museum €12.00; Prado Museum €16.00; Reina Sofia Museum €8.00; Flamenco show or tapas tour €40.00-50.00 per person starting at 20.00 or 23.00 at night.

Retiro Park - Free; visit to Huerta district - Free.

## Clothing

Lightweight cotton clothing is best from June to September, light rainwear may be needed at any time of year, but especially after the start of September, and a warm fleece/light jacket is recommended for cooler evenings

## Footwear

Walking shoes or boots are strongly recommended for the walks in the countryside and in the towns, ideally waterproof just in case.

## Luggage

20kg

## Luggage: On tour

One main piece of luggage and a daypack. We recommend a bag you are happy to wheel and lift as we use a variety of public transport and taxis on this tour. A daypack is essential for the walks in the towns and countryside. Remember you are expected to carry your own baggage - so don't overload yourself.

## Equipment

During the summer months we recommend you bring a sunhat, sunglasses and sunscreen. A water bottle is recommended.

## Tipping

### Explore leader

At your discretion you might also consider tipping your Explore Leader in appreciation of the efficiency and service you receive.

### Local crew

Although entirely voluntary, tipping is a recognised part of life in this region of the world. Some local staff will look to members of the group for personal recognition of particular services provided. Accordingly please allow £15.00 for tipping.

In order to make things easier for you, the Explore Leader may organise a group's tips kitty and if this is the case, they will account for it throughout the tour.

## Country Information

### Spain

#### Food and drink

The costs for meals may vary depending upon location, type of restaurant and number of courses eaten and so the prices given are an average guide. Local restaurants located off the beaten track may be less expensive, whereas an upmarket restaurant located in the centre of a major city may charge more.

##### Lunch price

£8.00 - 12.00

##### Dinner price

£16.00 - 20.00

##### Beer price

£1.50 - 2.50 (depending on the region/area in Spain)

##### Water price

£1.4

#### Foreign Exchange

##### Local currency

Euros

##### Recommended Currency For Exchange

We recommend you take the majority of your spending money in Euros cash.

##### Where To Exchange

We recommend that you change any currency into Euros prior to arrival. Bureau de Change are generally only found in

major cities and large airports.

**ATM Availability**

In cities and most major towns.

**Credit Card Acceptance**

Visa and Mastercard are generally accepted in larger restaurants and some shops.

**Travellers Cheques**

Not recommended.

## Transport, Accommodation & Meals

### Transport Information

Bus, Train

## Essential Information

### FCO Advice

We strongly recommend that you check your government's travel advisory for up-to-date information and advice about your destination: safety and security, entry requirements, health, local laws and customs. For UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office advice [click here](#).

For more information from Explore about travel advice, [click here](#)

**Under 18 immigration guidance**

Please note that some countries require proof of parental consent when travelling overseas with under 18s. Please check requirements with the relevant embassy or consular office well in advance of travel if this applies to your party.

### Price Guarantee

Once your booking has been confirmed we guarantee the price will not increase, whatever the circumstances. Before booking please ensure you have read our important tour pricing information. [Booking Conditions](#)

### Visa and Passport Information

Spain: Visas are not required by UK, Australian, New Zealand, US and Canadian citizens.

Other nationalities should consult their local embassy or consular office.

If you do require assistance in obtaining a visa then you may consider applying through Explore's recommended visa service in the UK, Travcour. See [www.travcour.com](http://www.travcour.com) to download the relevant visa application for your trip, if applicable (UK citizens only), along with details of how to apply for your visa through Travcour. The Team at Travcour will be happy to answer specific questions relating to visa applications, please call them directly on 0208 5431846.

It is your responsibility to ensure that you are in possession of a full passport, with the correct validity for your chosen destination.

### Booking conditions

Before booking your Explore trip, please ensure that you read both our [Essential Information](#) and [Booking Conditions](#).

### Transfers

[Find out more about Trip Transfer Terms and Conditions before you book.](#)

**Booking a land only package with Explore**

Customers who have chosen to book on the 'Land Only' arrangements of our tour, please ensure that you have checked your tour specific 'Joining Instructions' prior to booking your own travel arrangements. Your joining instructions can be found below in the dates and prices information.



You may also be eligible for the Free Explore Transfer.

### **Joining Tour Abroad**

Customers booked on the 'Land Only' arrangements will now receive a Free Transfer, provided you arrive and depart on the tour only itinerary start and end dates. The transfers will be from the Explore designated airport or train station to the joining point of your tour, and then back from the ending point to the designated airport or train station. The exception to this rule is customers who are booked on a tour where the joining and ending point is at the designated airport or train station.

Free transfers are not available for Self-Guided, Polar, Tailormade or Tours for Churches customers.

If you are not eligible for the Free Transfer then you will need to make your own way through to the joining and ending point. On a majority of our tours Explore will be able to provide a private transfer at an additional cost. Please ask for a quote at the time of booking.

For more information regarding the Explore Free Transfer click [here](#)

## **Insurance**

It is a condition of booking with Explore that you have adequate valid travel insurance. It is your responsibility to arrange appropriate travel insurance and ensure you have read and understood the full terms and conditions of your travel insurance policy to ensure that you are covered for all activities you intend to undertake whilst on the tour, including all optional activities. Your Insurance Policy must fully cover you for medical expenses and emergency repatriation to your home country. Please ensure your policy includes medical emergency helicopter evacuation in the event of illness or injury and covers the entire duration of your holiday. If you are trekking at altitude please ensure that there is no upper altitude limit which may limit or exclude cover for your trip. The cost of many of our Polar Voyages will exceed the capped amount covered by standard insurance premiums and you will be required to pay an additional premium to cover the full value of your trip. Please ensure that you are covered for the full amount of your holiday cost, as insufficient cover could invalidate a claim under the policy. Medical and repatriation insurance cover is not mandatory for UK residents who are travelling on trips within the United Kingdom.

Read more information about what travel insurance is required.

## **Flight information**

Explore offers a wide range of flexible flying options to make joining and leaving our trips easy. Read more about them [here](#).

### **Flight Information**

You are able to book this tour on a 'land only' basis or as a 'flight inclusive' package. Your flight inclusive package will be fully protected by the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) ATOL protection scheme.

### **Booking a flight inclusive package with Explore**

We have a good selection of flights not only from London but from many regional airports around the UK allowing us to compare fares between scheduled carriers as well as low cost and charter airlines. Our dedicated flights team will match the best flight options to your arrival and departure airport.

On our website we display a UK flight inclusive package guide price which is generally based on a London departure. To avoid paying supplements or to secure your preferred flight option, we recommend booking as early as possible, especially for peak travel dates.

## **Included activities**

This trip is designed to acquaint you with the highlights of Castile in just 8 days. We make the most of our time by using a mix of public transport and charter buses to travel between the cities and in order for you to experience the journey like the locals do. Once we're in the cities our explorations are mostly done on foot, so please bring sensible footwear and be prepared for the busy nature of this enthralling holiday.

## **Non refundable permits**

### **Spain**

#### **Vaccinations**

Nothing compulsory but Tetanus is usually recommended as a precaution. Please check the latest requirements with your travel clinic or doctor prior to departure. The above is not an exhaustive list. Further information regarding vaccinations and travel health advice can be found by following the NHS and NaTHNaC links at [Explore Travel Health](#) and from your local healthcare provider. Visa and vaccination requirements are subject to change and should be confirmed by you before travelling.