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THE GARDENS & PATIOS OF SPAIN - ITINERARY

DATE: MAY 14TH - 26TH, 2020

12 NIGHTS / 13 DAYS





Join your host Rob Howard on this wonderful tour highlighting the Garden and Patios of Spain!

Includes the Festival de los Patios in Cordoba and visits to Seville, Granada, Toledo, Madrid & Barcelona.

Rob Howard: Garden columnist for The Hamilton Spectator; garden speaker; organizer of Hamilton Spectator Open Garden Week.



Awards: Landscape Ontario Garden Writer of the Year 2010



May 14th - 26th, 2020

DAY 1: 14 MAY (Thu) CÓRDOBA

Meals Include: Dinner

On arrival in Spain from our international flight the group and Rob Howard will be met by our Spanish Tour Escort and transferred to our hotel by private motor coach. Once checked in at the NH Collection Amistad Hotel, lunch and the remainder of the day, until dinner, is at leisure.

OVERNIGHT: NH Collection Amistad Hotel – superior room

History surrounds you the second you step inside the NH Collection Amistad Córdoba hotel. Made up of two 18th century palaces, its traditional courtyards, archways and woodwork have been restored to their 18th-century glory, with a few carefully-chosen modern touches. Plus it's right in the historic heart of Córdoba, 5 minutes' walk from the city's shops and sites.

The quiet, contemporary-style rooms all come with views of pretty courtyards, Maimonides Square or the historic wall which once separated the Jewish and Christian sections of Cordoba.

The stylish courtyard café and restaurant offers up local dishes while 2 open-air patios are a place to unwind with a drink. Plus there's an in-house gym and swimming pools.



DAY 2: 15 MAY (Fri) CÓRDOBA

Meals Include: Breakfast & Lunch

After our included breakfast this morning we will have a leisurely start and enjoy a private walking tour in Córdoba **visiting 4 patios** with our guide followed by lunch at a local restaurant.

Every spring Córdoba bursts into bloom with special festivities for the month of May. Starting off with a parade known as the “Battle of the Flowers” the city officially launches into its spring celebrations which are followed by the Patio Contests that for 2020 go from May 6th to May 19th.

We will be in the thick of it!

Due to a hot, dry climate homes in [Córdoba](#) were built with a central patio even back in the days of the Romans. This tradition was continued by the Moors and persists in many homes even today. Filling the central patio with plants and water features has always been a way to keep local homes cool.



After our included lunch we will enjoy an afternoon walking tour in Córdoba with our local guide including the Mosque–Cathedral of Córdoba.

We will also visit Alcazar de los Reyes Cristianos, an old fortress that became the of the Catholic Monarchs for eight years. The gardens, distributed in three terraces, consist of a large variety of vegetation, pools, fountains and the walk of the kings where you will find sculptures of monarchs including the Christian Kings.



The remainder of the day and evening are at leisure...maybe a soak in our hotel pool is in order.

OVERNIGHT: NH Collection Amistad Hotel – superior room



DAY 3: 16 MAY (Sat) SEVILLE Day Trip
Meals Include: Breakfast & Lunch

Today we will enjoy a full day tour to Seville. On arrival the coach will take us on a panoramic tour in Seville. Lunch in a local restaurant is included and then we are off for a walking tour in the Santa Cruz Quarter including entrance tickets to Alcázar and Casa de Pilatos

Sevilles Casa de Pilatos was built in the 16th century and is an outstanding example of Seville's civil palace architecture. It is a splendid blend of the Renaissance, Mudejar and Baroque styles. The humanist character of the building makes it a quintessential Renaissance mansion, with a fascinating interior and some of the finest classical and marble sculptures.

This palace dates from the union of the nd Ribera families in the last quarter of the 15th century. During the 16th century, it underwent profound changes as a result of the close relationship of leading family members with Italy, serving as a conduit for the new forms and tastes of **the Renaissance** to enter **Seville**.

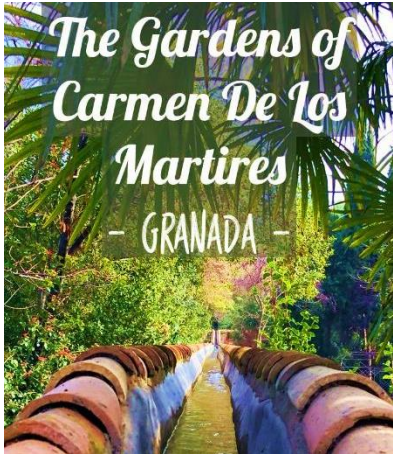


After a full day in Seville we return to our hotel in Cordoba.

OVERNIGHT: NH Collection Amistad Hotel – superior room

DAY 4: 17 MAY (Sun) CÓRDOBA – GRANADA

Meals Include: Breakfast & Dinner



After breakfast at our hotel we bid farewell to Cordoba and take the leisurely 2 ½ drive to Granada.

We check into the Melia Granada hotel for the next 2 nights and then in the afternoon we are off to visit the Alhambra Palace and Carmen de los Martires with our local guide.

The Carmen de los Martires is a romantic set of gardens, a successful blend of French and English styling. It has been home to dungeons, a place of torture, a place of worship, and a palace, depending on which century you look at. But don't let the doom and gloom fool you, the gardens are stunning and give away nothing of their darker past. The French Gardens are full of magnolias and urns. Neptune occupies the center of the pond and he is surrounded by statues featuring depictions of the elements and other mythological gods.

The Melia Granada is located in the heart of the city of Granada. We are close to one of the city's main leisure and entertainment areas with numerous tapas bars and restaurants. Meliá Granada is also just a short distance from the most trendy nightspots and major shopping streets such as Reyes Católicos, Recogidas or Mesones.



There are 2 restaurants on site, along with a coffee shop/cafe. You can enjoy a drink at the bar/lounge.

Dinner will be enjoyed tonight at our hotel.

OVERNIGHT: Melia Granada Hotel – Melia Rooms

DAY 5: 18 MAY (Mon) GRANADA

Meals Include: Breakfast & Tapas Dinner

After breakfast this morning at the hotel we are off to enjoy a half day walking tour in the Albaycín Quarter including La Casa de Chapiz. The neighborhood is a protected World Heritage site full of winding pedestrian streets with charming houses offering wonderful views of the city center. The La Casa de Chapiz is a set of two Moorish houses whose origins date back to the fourteenth century. We will have a private guide with our group.

The afternoon is at leisure.

This evening you will enjoy a Flamenco show with tapas menu at El Templo del Flamenco which is in the Albaizin quarter of Granada that we visited this morning. El Templo del Flamenco opened in 2012 in what is one of the largest flamenco cave venues in all of Granada. Local legend describes the cave as a former temple, which explains the larger dimensions as well as the three main chambers forming the shape of a cross. The stage has been carefully placed so seating from each chamber has an unobstructed view of the performance.



OVERNIGHT: Melia Granada Hotel – Melia Rooms

DAY 6: 19 MAY (Tue) GRANADA – TOLEDO – MADRID

Meals Include: Breakfast, Lunch & Dinner

This morning we depart for Madrid with an en route stop in Toledo. Lunch will be enjoyed at a local restaurant in Toledo followed by a walking tour with our private local guide, with entrance tickets to the Cathedral.

About 3 ½ hours drive from Grenada, Toledo is an ancient city set on a hill above the plains of Castilla-La Mancha. The capital of the region, it's known for the medieval Arab, Jewish and Christian monuments in its walled old city. It was also the former home of Mannerist painter El Greco. The Moorish Bisagra Gate and the Sol Gate, in Mudéjar style, open into the old quarter, where the Plaza de Zocodover is a lively meeting place.



With the lion's share of the drive done we only have another hour to reach Madrid this afternoon. Upon arrival in Madrid, we will check-in at our hotel before we are taken to a nearby local restaurant for dinner.

OVERNIGHT: Vincci The Mint 4* – Standard Rooms



Located in the heart of Gran Vía in Madrid is the Vincci The Mint 4* hotel. The hotel offers guests an innovative and cutting-edge concept created by the famous interior designer Jaime Beriestain. Its originality will surprise you the minute you enter the hotel. The traditional front desk has no place at the Vincci The Mint 4* hotel where the experience all starts when you check-in at the bar. Carry out all your transactions there while enjoying a soft drink or a cocktail in the relaxed and informal atmosphere of this unique space. (What a great idea!)

Included amongst the services are free WiFi throughout. This is a unique hotel. Discover its rooftop terrace with stunning views of the Gran Vía, for example, where you can enjoy a snack al fresco in true American style from the foodtruck. Yes we did say foodtruck... how much fun!!!

DAY 7: 20 MAY (Wed) MADRID

Meals Include: Breakfast & Lunch

This morning after breakfast at our hotel we will enjoy a half day panoramic tour in Madrid with our local guide including entrance tickets to the Prado Museum. After the tour our coach will drop us off near the Royal Botanic Garden for lunch in a local restaurant.



After lunch we will walk to a green oasis in the middle of Madrid - The Royal Botanical Garden (Real Jardín Botánico just south of the Prado). Here we can enjoy a lush and fragrant afternoon break in a sculpted setting, wandering among trees from around the world. It's actually more than a park — it's a museum of plants. Also, Retiro Park invites the visitor to take a shady

siesta or wander through a mosaic of lovers, families, pets walking their masters, and expert bench-sitters.

The best part is we are only a short 15 – 20 minute walk (1.3 KM) from our hotel and because the evening and dinner are at leisure tonight you can wander to your hearts content. (Rob can help arrange taxi sharing for those of you who have walked too much or stayed too long and want to cab it back to our hotel)!

OVERNIGHT: Vincci The Minto 4* – Standard Rooms

DAY 8: 21 MAY (Thu) MADRID

Meals Include: Breakfast, Cooking Class Lunch & Light Tapas Dinner

This morning put your aprons on as we enjoy a Paella and tapas cooking class in the center of Madrid. The class will last 4½ - 5 hrs including buying the ingredients at the market.



The venue is very near our hotel (boy our hotel is well situated) and Rob will walk everyone back. Of course those of you who have eaten too much can always do the “share a cab” thing again.

The afternoon is at leisure – some of you may want to return to the Botanic Garden, others may want to have a siesta and some may want to enjoy a glass of something at the famous Plaza Mayor (1.4 km away)

The original Plaza Mayor (1617) was surrounded on all sides by 6 stories of wooden buildings, but fire struck the city not once, but three times in 1631, 1672 and 1790!

Each time they had to rebuild and modify the design. Currently, it’s surrounded by both residential buildings and restaurants on all sides and only 3 stories, not 6. There are 237 balconies! Don’t you love those murals on the facade?



And don’t forget the hotel is situated right on the Gran Via.

Gran Vía is Madrid’s most famous street, connecting Calle de Alcalá and Plaza de España. Gran Vía has numerous restaurants, bars and clothing stores, cinemas and theaters. Although many

of the theatres and cinemas have closed, Gran Vía retains its reputation as the Spanish Broadway.

This evening, enjoy a walking tapas tour. We will dive into Madrid's famous tapas scene like locals! Discover the local tradition of vermouth on tap at a classic tavern before devouring delicious dishes, each paired with Spanish wine or beer, across unique tapas bars in the old city near our hotel.

OVERNIGHT: Vincci The Mint 4* – Standard Rooms

DAY 9: 22 MAY (Fri) MADRID – BARCELONA by train
Meals Include: Breakfast, Lunch & Dinner

This morning after breakfast the group will transfer to the train station for our high speed train to Barcelona! We decided to take this 2hr 45 minute option rather than the 6 hour plus drive! You're welcome....

Baggage assistance will be provided at the Madrid train station (1 suitcase per participant); however, this service is not available at Barcelona train station. I'm sure we will manage with local porters....

Upon arrival we will enjoy lunch at a local restaurant followed by a half day panoramic tour in Barcelona (Plaza Catalunya, Park Ciutadella, Olympic Port, Port, Montjuic and entrance tickets to The Botanic Garden, Plaza España).

Our hotel in Barcelona for the remaining 4 nights of our tour is the Vincci Gala 4*.

We will again enjoy a modernist hotel in Barcelona in the centre of the city, constructed in an old stately building from 1900 located next to Las Ramblas and Plaza de Catalunya. It is a unique hotel in Barcelona, designed especially for travellers who are looking for something truly special, inspiring and full of character.

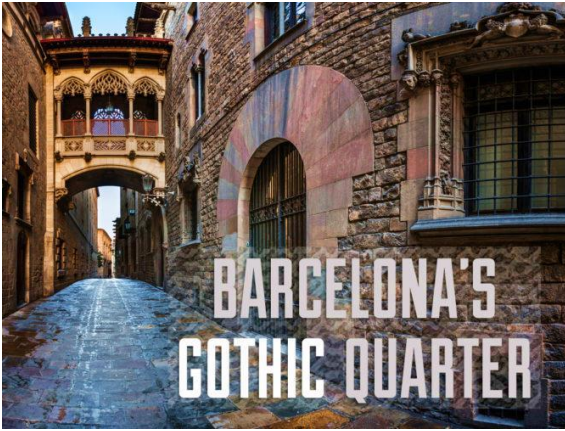
The hotel boasts a patio terrace and no more than 78 exclusive rooms, all of them decorated in a contemporary style.

OVERNIGHT: Vincci Gala Hotel 4* – Standard Rooms

DAY 10: 23 MAY (Sat) BARCELONA
Meals Include: Breakfast & Lunch

After breakfast at our hotel we will enjoy a half day Gaudi tour in Barcelona by motor coach and with our local guide (entrance tickets included to Sagrada Familia and Park Güell.)





We will have an included lunch at a local restaurant in the Gothic Quarter followed by a walking tour.

A patchwork of architecture from the 19th and 20th centuries, complete with Roman and medieval sights to see, you can almost feel the history as you stroll through its labyrinthine cobbled streets. But Barcelona's Gothic Quarter isn't just one for the history-seekers –

with its diverse and colourful array of tucked-away bars and authentic restaurants, music venues and brunch spots, it's a one-stop-shop for all things characterful and charming in Barcelona.

The evening and dinner are at leisure in Barcelona.

OVERNIGHT: Vincci Gala Hotel 4* – Standard Rooms



DAY 11: 24 MAY (Sun) BARCELONA (Full day Costa Brava)

Meals Include: Breakfast & Lunch

Today is a full day tour to Costa Brava. We will have the opportunity to visit 4 gardens, the Jarden Pinya de Rosa & Marimutra in Blanes, Jardin Santa Clotilde in Lloret de Mar and Jardin Cap Roig in Palafrugell. We will have lunch at a local restaurant.



Pinya de Rosa: Costa Brava: 7,000 species of cactus and succulents in a coastal setting with stunning views out to the Mediterranean Sea.

Jardi de Santa Clotilde: “an old vineyard turned into a naturalistic, romantic and dreamlike garden built for the Marquis of Roviralta”.

OVERNIGHT: Vincci Gala Hotel 4* – Standard Rooms



DAY 12: 25 MAY (Mon) BARCELONA

Meals Include: Breakfast, Lunch & Dinner

Today we enjoy another full day tour visiting Oller del Mas Winery with wine tasting and lunch.

After lunch we continue to Montserrat where we will take the cog-wheel train up to the mountain. The Monastery of Montserrat is one of the most famous monasteries in the Catholic world in Europe, as well as a centre for pilgrims. For many tourists, a trip to Montserrat is the highlight of their visit to Spain.



Montserrat is the name of a very distinct multi-peaked mountain range and the natural beauty surrounding the monastery is simply breathtaking. The well known Benedictine abbey, Santa Maria de Montserrat, which hosts the Virgin of Montserrat sanctuary and which is identified by some with the location of the Holy Grail in Arthurian myth.

We bid goodbye to Spain tomorrow – but tonight we enjoy a Farewell dinner at a local restaurant.

OVERNIGHT: Vincci Gala Hotel 4* – Standard Rooms

DAY 13: 26 MAY (Tue) BARCELONA

Meals Include: Breakfast

Today after breakfast at the hotel we transfer to the airport and fly home to Toronto.

Bon Voyage...!

******END OF SERVICES******

What's Included

- 12 nights Hotel as per the itinerary
- **Meals:** all breakfasts, 7 lunches and 7 dinners (5 dinners plus 2 tapas menu dinners)
- English speaking private guide throughout, local guides at each city
- Private coach with driver for the duration
- Entrance fees to monuments and sightseeing as listed in the itinerary
- Hotel taxes
- Personally escorted by Rob Howard - invaluable!
- All land taxes included



The tour cost is based on a minimum of 15 participants.

Only \$6,895.00 CAD *** Based on per person/double occupancy - land taxes included
International Airfare upon request

Inquire about the Single Supplement (Limited number available)

This small group tour will not exceed 22 passengers and will be sold on a first come first served basis. We are now 70% sold out. The deposit required to reserve your spot is **\$700** per person.



To reserve or inquire for this small group tour please call:

Dinesh EXT:2663 - 416 391 0334 or 1800 263 2995

or email: dinesh@tourcanvacations.com

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