

Caminho - Camino: Two Ways to Santiago September 7 - 19, 2014



Lisbon - the castle of S. Jorge

city and the Tagus River, and see the Belem Tower and the exquisite Monastery of Jeronimos. The afternoon and evening are free for independent exploration. **(B) Overnight: Lisbon**

Wednesday, September 10th. A full day excursion through the Ribatejo region to the north east of Lisbon. First a short visit to Fatima before heading east to Tomar. Fatima has been the fountainhead of religious devotion in Portugal since the first apparition of the Virgin Mary in May 1917. Today it is one of the most important centres of Pilgrimage in the Roman Catholic world. Its history reads like something out of a Dan Brown novel with the third great secret of Fatima locked in a drawer of the Pope's desk in the Vatican until the year 2000, supposedly too horrible to be revealed! The Convento de Cristo at Tomar is an artistic tour de force. The Order of the Knights Templar and their successors, The Order of Christ, employed experts in Romanesque, Manueline and Renaissance architecture to expand the convent in a manner worthy of their power, prestige and wealth. Time permitting, on the way back to Lisbon through the rich pasturelands of the Ribatejo, we will call in to the once impregnable fortress town of Santarem. This evening we'll sample a local restaurant where we can experience the soulful beauty of fado, Portugal's traditional music, as we dine out. **(B, D) Overnight: Lisbon**

Thursday, September 11th. Leaving Lisbon this morning, we head east through the vast plains of the Alentejo region, passing cork forests and Moorish hill top villages. First a stop at the spectacular medieval town of Evora, which rises mysteriously from the plain. A walking tour with a local guide introduces the architectural and cultural treasures which fill Evora's tangled web of streets and alleyways. After free time for lunch and a chance to experience the bustle of the Praca do Giraldo, Evora's main square, we'll continue westward to Spain. Before crossing the border, we stop at the charming village of Monsaraz, known locally as "Ninho das Aguias" (Eagles' Nest). From its heights, the landscape of the Alentejo takes on a magical, timeless quality....the Rio Guadiana has brought life and human activity to the region for thousands of years, a fact brought home by the giant menhirs, with their symbolic engravings, close by at Bulhoa. As the shadows lengthen and the storks fly from their nests to feed, we will arrive at our tranquil oasis, the Convento de La Parra, south of Badajoz. Dinner will be at the convent. **(B, D) Overnight: La Parra**

Friday, September 12th. This morning it's on with the walking boots! A short drive will bring us to the Camino de Plata north of Calzadilla de los Barros. From here we will set off on the five mile hike to the tiny village of Puebla de Sancho Perez. Time to rest and enjoy a well-deserved coffee in the village square before we head off to Merida for the afternoon. Merida (a corruption of Augusta Emerita) contains more Roman remains than any other city in Spain. Even for the casually interested, the experience is compelling. Our guided tour will focus on the Roman theatre and the Museum of Roman Art. Later, there will be free time in Zafra to enjoy the ambience of the beautiful arcaded plazas, maybe even some light shopping, or tea on the terrace of the parador, before returning to the convent for the evening. **(B) Overnight: La Parra**

Saturday September 13th. Driving north through the harsh, yet mesmerizing, landscape of Extremadura, you will begin to understand why this area spawned so many conquistadors. This land of horizons and distant mountains can only conjure thoughts of "What's beyond?" Many returned from their adventures in South America loaded with chests of silver and gold. To

Sunday, September 7th. Departure from Washington.. **(D) Overnight: Plane**

Monday, September 8th. On arrival at Lisbon Airport, we will go directly to the coastal resort of Cascais, just north of the city, for lunch overlooking the Atlantic. Refreshed and revitalised we'll turn inland to the beautiful hill town of Sintra. Sweeping up through the eucalyptus woods we will visit the Palace of Pena, a wild fantasy of domes, towers and ramparts, before heading back to Lisbon. After checking in to our hotel, Chiado 16, there will be time to rest before dinner. **(D) Overnight: Lisbon**

Tuesday, September 9th. Panoramic sightseeing this morning, with a local guide, introduces this fascinating city; from the grand neo-classical buildings of the Baixa district to the narrow cobbled alleys of the Moorish Alfama quarter, you'll experience the rich variety which is Lisbon today. We'll stop for visits to the Castelo de Sao Jorge, a hilltop fortification with magnificent views over the



Salamanca

enrich their families, they bought land and built grand mansions to boot. Caceres is home to many of these ‘elevated’ families and our local guide will take us along the cobbled streets past these imposing, escutcheoned villas before ending the tour in the exquisite Gothic church of Santa Maria. After lunch, we continue north towards Salamanca. At Bejar we make a detour through the Sierra de Pena de Francia arriving at La Alberca, a village where donkeys still take precedence over vans, and goats, sheep and poultry often block the streets. Continuing the theme of ‘Old Spain’, our home for the next two nights is the Hotel Dona Teresa. La Alberca was the first Spanish town to be declared an “historic/artistic” site in 1940. After checking in our hotel, there will be time to relax and freshen up before we gather for dinner. **(B, D) Overnight: La Alberca**

Sunday September 14th. This morning, we will start gently! After a relaxing breakfast, we will pick up the Camino de Plata to the south and take a short hike into Salamanca, the most graceful city in Spain. For four centuries it was the seat of one of the most prestigious universities in the world. The city is small in scale and its architecture is given gorgeous harmony by the golden sandstone from which nearly every building seems to be constructed. Before lunch, there will be time to rest, shop or perhaps pay a visit to the quirky Art Nouveau and Art Deco museum. This afternoon, our tour with a local guide will take us through the Old and New Cathedrals, one Gothic and the other Romanesque. We will head back to La Alberca in time to rest a while, and then gather for drinks before dinner. **(B, D) Overnight: La Alberca**



The Cathedral of Santiago de Compostela

Monday September 15th. Today we head back into Portugal. But first we drive north to Zamora to connect with the river Douro which will lead us west to the border. In medieval romances, Zamora was known as “la bien cercada” (the closed one) on account of its impressive fortifications. We will have time to stroll along the river bank beneath the medieval walls and feast our eyes on the beautiful architecture that resulted from the victorious campaigns against the Moors by Alfonso VI and El Cid. A circuitous but spectacular drive this afternoon will bring us to the border town of Miranda do Douro and then deep into the Douro valley to our sumptuous riverside mansion house, Casa do Visconde de Chanceliros. Stunning views over the river and valley will be our backdrop for the next two nights. Dinner will be at the hotel. **(B, D) Overnight: Chanceliros**

Tuesday, September 16th. Today we explore the Douro Valley. This is the wonderfully fertile region that stretches inland from Portugal’s second largest city of Porto on the coast. We’ll take a short river cruise and stop at a traditional “quinta” where you can taste the local delicacies – Port, of course, and the lovely local white wine, which is often very slightly sparkling, known as Vinho Verde. The thousands of narrow terraces, on which the vines grow, have been chiseled out of the steep river banks and remind us of the centuries of backbreaking labour which this region has endured and which continues, largely unchanged, today. We’ll return to our pousada for a free evening. **(B) Overnight: Chanceliros**

Wednesday, September 17th. Leaving the Douro valley this morning, we drive west to the delightful city of Braga - sometimes known as the religious capital of Portugal, due to the influence of its archbishops who can trace their line back to the 6th century. Our next stop will be at the pilgrimage site of Bom Jesus do Monte, the extraordinary 18th-century religious sanctuary which takes the form of a giant stairway, literally an ascending spiritual journey. After time for lunch, we will travel up the beautiful coast of northwest Spain, past Vigo and Pontevedra, finally arriving at our fondly remembered Galician ‘home’ outside Santiago, Pazo Cibran. No doubt Maica will be there to give us the warmest of Galician welcomes. There will be time to relax and enjoy a refreshing glass of local white wine before dinner at the Pazo. **(B, D) Overnight: Pazo Cibran**

Thursday, September 18th. Our excursion today will take us north along the coast from Santiago to the end of the world – at least that is the derivation of the name of Cape Finisterre. Traditionally this was the last leg of the pilgrimage and the weary travellers would ritually burn their boots while gazing out over the Atlantic Ocean from this, the westernmost point of Spain. We will walk the last few miles of the Camino, and then, following the more modern tradition, burn our boots, and clothes, before taking a plunge in the refreshing Atlantic waters! After a picnic lunch (weather permitting) we’ll return to Pazo Cibran in time to start packing before our farewell dinner at the magnificent Roberto’s. **(B, D) Overnight: Pazo Cibran**



The End of the Road

Friday September 19th. Morning transfers to Santiago de Compostela Airport for returning flights to the U.S. **(B) Overnight: Home**

Key to included meals: B - breakfast, L - lunch, D - dinner