

## *Iberia* October 1 - 14, 2014



*Lisbon - the castle of S. Jorge*

### **Wednesday, October 7th.**

Depart from your chosen U.S. gateway city.

**Overnight: Plane**

### **Thursday, October 2nd**

Individual arrivals at Lisbon Airport will be met for transfer to our hotel in the beautiful hill town of Sintra (about 10 miles from Lisbon Airport). The rest of the day is free to unpack, relax and settle in. This evening we have a reservation in the hotel restaurant for a welcome dinner.

**Overnight: Sintra**

### **Friday, October 3rd**

Leaving Sintra, we take an excursion to explore the coast north of Lisbon. Sweeping up through the eucalyptus woods we will visit the Palace of Pena, a wild fantasy of domes, towers and ramparts, before spending time in the cosmopolitan seaside resort of Cascais. Time permitting we'll also visit the National Palace before we return to our hotel in Sintra for a free evening. **(B)**

**Overnight: Sintra**

### **Saturday, October 4th**

Panoramic sightseeing this morning, with a local guide, introduces the fascinating city of Lisbon; 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 city and the Tagus River, and see the Belem Tower and the exquisite Monastery of Jeronimos. The afternoon is free for independent exploration and this evening we'll sample a local restaurant where we can experience the soulful beauty of fado, Portugal's traditional music. **(B)**

**Overnight: Sintra**

### **Sunday, October 5th**

An excursion today east through the vast plains of the Alentejo region, passing cork forests and Moorish hill top villages. Our destination is 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 and have made the whole town a World heritage Site. After free time for lunch and a chance to experience the bustle of the Praca do Giraldo, Evora's main square we'll return to our hotel in Sintra. **(B)**

**Overnight: Sintra**

### **Monday, October 6th**

Leaving Sintra we head towards the border with Spain, heading for the ancient city of Merida. 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. We'll have time for lunch and then our guided tour will focus on the Roman theatre and the Museum of Roman Art. From here we head south to Seville. **(B)**

**Overnight: Seville**

### **Tuesday, October 7th**

This morning a local guide introduces the city in a walking tour that includes the Seville Cathedral, the largest Gothic building in the world, and the Alcazar, Seville's royal palace. A walk up the steep ramp of the beautiful Moorish bell tower, La Giralda, offers fabulous views over the city. The afternoon is free to stroll the Barrio de Santa Cruz, a romantic, tangled maze of whitewashed alleyways and tree-lined squares, visit the Tower of Gold, or walk through the Plaza de Espana. David will make suggestions for your free evening. **(B)**

**Overnight: Seville**

### **Wednesday, October 8th**

Today we have an excursion east through the area of Los Pueblos Blancos, the "white villages," working agricultural towns whitewashed in the Moorish tradition. We'll stop at the extraordinary city of Ronda, built on either side of a precipitous gorge, and the last Moorish bastion before it fell to Christians in 1485. Ronda's famous bullring is one of the oldest and most important in Spain, and the spiritual home of bullfighting. Arriving back in Seville, the evening is free to sample a local restaurant. **(B)**

**Overnight: Seville**



*Seville - the Plaza de Espana*

**Thursday, October 9th****Overnight: Seville**

A free day in Seville. Just a few miles north of the city, in the nearby village of Santiponce, lies Roman Italica, one of the largest, most important Roman ruins in Spain. David will be happy to arrange an excursion for those interested. This evening we'll attend a Flamenco show. **(B)**

**Friday, October 10th****Overnight: Granada**

Bidding farewell to Seville, we depart for Cordoba, where a local guide introduces us to the city's extraordinary Mezquita. Part of this mosque was destroyed in the 16th century to make room for the construction of a Christian cathedral in its center. We'll also explore the old Jewish quarter and the synagogue built in the Mudejar style. From here, it's a gorgeous drive southeast, past tiny hilltop villages, to our hotel in Granada. Free evening. **(B)**

**Saturday, October 11th****Overnight: Granada**

This morning perhaps the visit you'll remember most, Granada's exquisite Alhambra. This magical fortress-palace encapsulates the beauty and intricacy of the Moorish culture and architecture as the Nasrid dynasty attempted to create their idea of paradise on Earth. We'll also tour the extensive gardens of the nearby Palace of the Generalife. This was the country estate of the Nasrid kings and the grounds still evoke a timeless serenity and tranquility. The remainder of the afternoon is free; wander the picturesque streets of the Albaicin neighborhood or shop in the city center. The evening is free as well; you might choose to dine at one of the restaurants on the side of Sacromonte. **(B)**

**Sunday, October 12th****Overnight: Loja**

The morning is free in Granada before we drive the short distance to the village of Loja to check into our hotel. **(B)**

**Monday, October 13th****Overnight: Loja**

A final free day to enjoy the spa facilities and other options available. **(B)**

**Tuesday, October 14th****Overnight: Home**

Morning transfer to Malaga Airport for returning flights to the U.S. Alternatively stay on for the optional Mallorca extension **(B)**

**Optional Mallorca Extension****Tuesday, October 14th****Overnight: Mallorca**

Afternoon transfer to Malaga Airport for the short flight to Palma de Mallorca. Upon arrival at Palma, your driver will greet you and transfer you to your hotel in Soller. Soller is one of the island's most picturesque towns, spectacularly set in the Tramuntana mountain range. After checking in, the evening is free to wander the small streets and main square of the town in search of dinner. **(B)**

**Wednesday, October 15th****Overnight: Mallorca**

Today's excursion takes us into the capital of the island, Palma, a city of some 300,000 inhabitants. To get there we'll take a ride on a vintage electric train that first ran this route through the mountains in 1912. On arrival in Palma we'll stroll into the historic center of the city for a walking tour that includes visits to the fabulous gothic cathedral, known as "La Seu," and the Moorish Palacio de la Almudaina, with its beautiful gardens featuring an Alexander Calder mobile. Upon returning to Soller, we'll take a ride on the open tram down to the sea and a chance to explore the harbor of the Port de Soller. Why not have dinner at a traditional Mallorquin restaurant overlooking the harbor this evening. **(B)**

**Thursday, October 16th****Overnight: Mallorca**

After a leisurely breakfast we'll head across to the island's east coast and pick up local guide Gavin Miller. Gavin will begin his island tour with a visit to the nearby Monastery of San Salvador, perched on the top of a hill. Crossing back to Mallorca's stunning northern shore, our first stop will be Valldemosa and the monastery where Georges Sand and Frederic Chopin lived during the winter of 1838-39. We'll continue along the mountain coast road through olive grove terraces built by the Moors in the 11-12th centuries to the village of Deia, nestled in the mountains to the south of Soller. Here we'll have time to climb up to the church perched on the top of the hill and visit the grave of the poet Robert Graves, who made the village his home for many years. **(B)**

**Friday, October 17th****Overnight: Home**

Morning transfer to Palma Airport for return flights to Madrid and the U.S. **(B)**

