

Overseas Adventure Travel[®]

THE LEADER IN PERSONALIZED SMALL GROUP ADVENTURES SINCE 1978

Your O.A.T. Adventure Travel Planning Guide[®]



Northern Spain & Portugal: Pilgrimage into the Past 2024

Small groups of 8-16 travelers (average of 13)—guaranteed

Dear Traveler,

I'm thrilled that you're considering exploring the world with O.A.T. There are so many wonderful destinations to discover, and our *Northern Spain & Portugal* itinerary described inside is a perfect way to fulfil a travel dream.

Exactly how your adventure unfolds is up to you because you can **personalize and tailor your experience** any way you want. We strongly recommend that you take advantage of our personalization options—which are not offered at other travel companies. You can arrive early in the first destination of your adventure, stay later in the last destination, add a pre- or post-trip extension, spend time in a Stopover city, or even combine two or more trips. More than 87% of our travelers choose to tailor their adventure. Also, because we're the leader in Solo Women Travel, we're offering 20 exclusive women's departures in 2024 —just one reason why we continue to be **the leader in Solo Women Travel**.

As for *Northern Spain & Portugal*, thanks to your small group of 16 Travelers Maximum (Average of 13) you can expect some unforgettable experiences. Here's one that stood out for me:

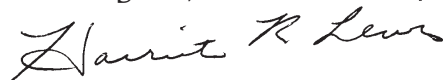
When I stepped into Santa Colomba de Somoza, a rural village nestled in La Maragatería region, I felt an overwhelming sense of community—a small group bonded by their unique cultural identity as Maragatos, believed to be the last living descendents of the Berbers. You'll see what I mean when you experience *A Day in the Life* here, including a visit to the Maragato Crafts Center—a new partner of Grand Circle Foundation. You'll also meet a local resident and hear about what community leaders are doing to preserve Maragato traditions in a modern world.

The Basque Coast is another region with a distinct cultural identity, including its own language and traditions. I was saddened to learn of the mistreatment that the Basque people suffered following the Spanish Civil War, which led to the beginnings of the Basque independence movement. In Bilbao, you'll hear from a local resident with strong pro-independence views about a radical wing of the Basque Independence Party known as the ETA. We'll hear their perspective on the persecution of the Basque people and they will share their personal experiences as a witness to some of the ETA's controversial methods in the fight for independence.

So you'll experience the true culture, we make sure all our Trip Experience Leaders are “insiders” who live in the country. Along with introducing you to the history and culture of their homeland, these local experts will gladly help you out with any special requests to make your trip even more special. You may be nudged out of your comfort zone, but you will also be inspired by the wonderful people you meet.

If you have any questions, please don't hesitate to contact one of our Regional Adventure Counselors at **1-800-955-1925**.

Warm regards,



Harriet R. Lewis

Chair

Overseas Adventure Travel

P.S. To view Dates & Prices, watch videos, and read traveler reviews about this popular adventure, visit our website at **www.oattravel.com/spg2024**.

CONTENTS

A Letter from Harriet Lewis	2
Your Choice • Your Adventure • Your Way	4
The O.A.T. Difference	6
Travel Solo, But Never Alone	8
Grand Circle Foundation	10

NORTHERN SPAIN & PORTUGAL: PILGRIMAGE INTO THE PAST

Your Adventure at a Glance:	
Where You're Going, What it Costs, and What's Included	12
Your Detailed Day-To-Day Itinerary	14
Pre-Trip Extension	33
Post-Trip Extension	39

ESSENTIAL TRAVEL INFORMATION

Travel Documents & Entry Requirements ...	44
Rigors, Vaccines & General Health	46
Money Matters: Local Currency & Tipping Guidelines	49
Air, Optional Tours & Staying in Touch	52
Packing: What to Bring & Luggage Limits ...	55
Climate & Average Temperatures	61

ABOUT YOUR DESTINATIONS: CULTURE, ETIQUETTE & MORE

Spanish & Portuguese Culture	64
Shopping: What to Buy, Customs, Shipping & More	71

DEMOGRAPHICS & HISTORY

Spain	74
Portugal	76
France	78

RESOURCES

Suggested Reading	81
Suggested Films & Videos	82
Useful Websites	85
Useful Apps	86

Notes	87
Map	91

Your Choice • Your Adventure • Your Way

87% OF TRAVELERS CHOOSE TO PERSONALIZE AND TAILOR THEIR EXPERIENCE



Glacier viewpoint, Diavolezza, Switzerland

O.A.T. is the *only* travel company to offer this level of flexibility and choice

Arrive Early, Stay Later

40% of our travelers spend two, three, or more days abroad before or after their adventure

We strongly recommend that you take advantage of this opportunity to arrive early and stay later. Why? By arriving early or staying later, you get to spend extra time exploring the destination in depth.

Pre- or Post-Trip Extensions

Join the 60% of O.A.T. travelers who maximize their discoveries

When you choose to take a pre- or post-trip extension, you'll take advantage of your included airfare, and you'll usually travel with the same group and Trip Experience Leader from your main trip.

Stopover in Popular Cities

From \$595-\$995 per person

O.A.T. offers the opportunity to Stopover in popular cities. Your price includes 3 nights in a centrally-located hotel, daily breakfasts, and roundtrip private airport transfers.

Combine & Tailor Your Experiences

More than 5,000 travelers combined two or more adventures in 2022

If you're already overseas, why not see more of the world and maximize your value by avoiding the expense and length of another international flight?

Air Preferences

54% of travelers are personalizing their air itineraries

You can choose your departure date, departure city, and airline, decide to depart from one city and return to another, upgrading your seat to Premium Economy or Business Class, and more.

Freedom of Choice

Carefully crafted itineraries to provide included activities and independent exploration

Your main trip features a number of off-the-beaten path activities, designed by our team of local experts with women travelers in mind, allowing you to make the most of your explorations.

“Spend two or three extra nights in a city before or after your tour. That way, you can do what you want, whenever you want.”

— Linda Rutherford
8-time traveler from Montara, CA



A market in Catania, Sicily

To discover how you can personalize your adventure, visit www.oattravel.com/personalize

The O.A.T. Difference

THE LEADER IN SMALL GROUPS ON THE ROAD LESS TRAVELED SINCE 1978



Hiking in Tuscany, Italy

Small groups of 8–16 travelers (average of 13)—guaranteed

Unsurpassed value

Our unbeatable per diems mean that you'll travel at the lowest prices per day while enjoying a wealth of included features, like all accommodations, most meals, daily cultural activities and even most gratuities. No other travel company offers you more world discovery for less.

The leader in solo friendly travel

More than 120,000 solo travelers have explored with us since 2015.

Personalize and tailor your experience

Make your trip your own like the **87% of our travelers** who arrive early, stay later, combine trips, add extensions, and more. Plus, each itinerary is crafted to balance included activities with time for independent exploring.

Local Trip Experience Leaders

These residents of the region you visit share their culture and bring your destination to life.

Authentic cultural connections

Our small group size allows us to seamlessly blend with local culture to enjoy memorable activities like *A Day in the Life* experiences and Home-Hosted meals.

Local transport & unique lodgings

Travel like the locals do on anything from cyclo-rickshaws to canoes and camels, and stay in more intimate lodgings that better reflect our surroundings.

29 worldwide offices

With more than 2,000 regional associates worldwide, enjoy a sense of comfort knowing that our O.A.T. team is always close by.

“The interactions with locals created memories that will last forever.”

— Alicia & Detlef Rethage
first-time travelers from Milford, MA

Our Pillars of Discovery

People-to-People connections that immerse you in local culture

A Day in the Life: Meet the locals where they live, work, and play. You might help out with farming chores, learn to make ricotta cheese, or even participate in an indigenous healing ceremony.

Home-Hosted Experiences: In groups of 4-5 travelers, you'll join a local family in their home and see how sharing a meal and conversation is the best recipe for cross-cultural exchange.

Controversial Topics: During exclusive conversations with local experts, you'll gain insights into a wide range of issues affecting the lives of locals—from immigration and sustainability to violence against women.

Grand Circle Foundation (GCF) Visit: Established in 1992 to give back to the world we travel, Grand Circle Foundation has pledged or donated more than \$250 million for more than 500 projects in 50 countries.



Cheese-making outside Lisbon, Portugal

Travel Solo, But Never Alone

THE LEADER IN SMALL GROUP SOLO-FRIENDLY TRAVEL



Val Gardena, the Dolomites, Italy

Here's why more than 120,000 solo travelers have explored with O.A.T. since 2015

Who is a solo traveler?

Some solo travelers may bring a friend or family member along, others enjoy exploring independently with the security and camaraderie of group travel. However you travel, you're in good company with the leader in solo-friendly travel.

You'll always feel safe and secure

With 2,000 O.A.T. associates in 29 regional offices around the world and a local Trip Experience Leader with you every step of the way, someone is always available 24/7 should anything arise during your adventure. Plus, your Trip Experience Leader is there to ensure you always feel part of the group.

FREE or low-cost Single Supplements

As the leader in solo-friendly travel, 94% of our single spaces are available with a FREE Single Supplement. The remaining 6% have the lowest single supplements in the industry. Details at www.oattravel.com/solo.

Travel among friends

Our small group size makes it easier for solo travelers to bond with other members of the group. Since **one in four travelers explores with us solo**, you're sure to find friends as you experience the world.

Exclusive Women's Departures

We're also offering **20 exclusive women's departures** of some of our most popular adventures in 2023, an opportunity to enjoy the special camaraderie of exploring with like-minded intrepid women travelers.

"On O.A.T.'s trips, the rest of the group is so welcoming that it never feels like you're alone."

— Patricia Calzi
27-time traveler from Brighton, CO

THE LEADER IN SOLO-FRIENDLY TRAVEL

Over 60%

of O.A.T. travelers are solo women

30,000 Single Spaces

are being offered in both 2023 & 2024
across all O.A.T. adventures

94%

of our 30,000 single spaces have FREE Single Supplements. The remaining 6% have the lowest single supplements in the industry

20 Women's Departures

on some of our most popular itineraries in 2023



101+ TIPS FOR SOLO WOMEN TRAVELERS



This complimentary, 96-page booklet is a comprehensive collection of savvy tips specifically for seasoned women travelers going solo. Scan this code to view an online copy or to request one by mail.



Changing People's Lives

ONE VILLAGE, ONE SCHOOL, ONE PERSON AT A TIME



Through the kind generosity of our travelers and associates, Grand Circle Foundation has provided more than \$3 million of relief aid to Ukrainian refugees forced to flee their homes.



Dear Traveler,

In 1992 we established Grand Circle Foundation, an entity of the Lewis Family Foundation, as a means to give back to the world that had already given us so much. Since then, we've pledged or donated more than \$225 million to about 600 organizations worldwide, including some 300 schools in 90 villages where we travel.

Grand Circle Foundation is also there when crisis unfolds. Russia's invasion of Ukraine has resulted in an unprecedented outpouring of support for Ukrainian refugees and orphans. Through the generosity of our travelers and associates, more than \$3 million of relief aid in the form of clothing, food, medicine, and other items in short supply are getting directly into the hands of Ukrainian refugees at shelters in Poland and Romania.

Another crisis is unfolding more slowly but potentially just as devastating. With drought conditions creating water shortages across East Africa, the Foundation's Vice President, Jan Byrnes, has been spearheading a project to bring water to villages and schools we support in Tanzania. In partnership with Wine to Water, an organization led by our friend Doc Hendley, we funded a water drilling rig and team of operators to bring more immediate relief to those in need. In July, Jan took her 13-year-old grandson Aiden to Tanzania and met up with Doc just as initial drilling got underway. Within days, clean water began flowing for the Eluway primary school in Karatu—with more to come.

None of this would be possible without your help. Thank you for traveling with us, and for helping to change people's lives.

Warm regards,

Harriet R. Lewis
Chair, Grand Circle Foundation



Young students at school in Eswatini (Swaziland).



Learn how Moroccan women are bettering their lives with workshops at the Imik Simik Women's Association



Wine to Water founder Doc Hendley and Grand Circle Foundation Vice President Jan Byrnes take a quick work break in Tanzania.

How you can help

If you visit the Foundation's home page at www.grandcirclefoundation.org, you can click on our "Donate to Ukrainian Refugee Relief" section. To learn about many more ongoing Foundation projects, you can sign up for our weekly e-newsletter, *the Inside Scoop*, at www.oattravel.com/the-inside-scoop.

Learn more about the many ways we help change lives together at www.grandcirclefoundation.org

Northern Spain & Portugal: Pilgrimage into the Past

Small Group Adventure

Spain: Bilbao, San Sebastian, Pamplona, León, Santiago de Compostela | Portugal: Douro Valley, Porto

Small groups of 8–16 travelers
(average of 13)—guaranteed

FROM
\$5195 | PER DAY
\$306 | DAYS
17

Including international airfare
FREE Single Supplement

Maximize Your Discoveries & Value

Optional extensions:

Carcassonne, Bayonne & French
Basque Country
5 nights pre-trip from **\$1995**

Lisbon, Sintra Palace &
Seaside Cascais
4 nights post-trip from **\$1595**

It's Included

- Explore in a small group of 8–16 travelers (average of 13)—guaranteed
- International airfare, airport transfers, government taxes, fees, and airline fuel surcharges unless you choose to make your own air arrangements
- All land transportation
- Accommodations for 15 nights
- 33 meals—16 breakfasts, 9 lunches, and 8 dinners (including 1 Home-Hosted Lunch)
- 15 small group activities
- Services of a local O.A.T. Trip Experience Leader
- Gratuities for local guides, drivers, and luggage porters
- 5% Frequent Traveler Credit toward your next adventure

Bilbao, Spain

Itinerary Summary

Pre-trip extension: 5 nights in Carcassonne, Bayonne & French Basque Country

DAYS	DESTINATION
1	Fly to Bilbao, Spain
2-4	Bilbao
5-6	Pamplona
7-8	León
9-11	Santiago de Compostela
12-13	Douro Valley, Portugal
14-16	Porto
17	Return to U.S.

Post-trip extension: 4 nights in Lisbon, Sintra Palace & Seaside Cascais

Arrive Early, Stay Later

We recommend that you relax after a long flight or explore more in depth before or after your trip. Prices shown include accommodations and private airport transfer.

- Arrive early in **Carcassonne** before your France pre-trip extension for **\$200** per person, per night
- Arrive early in **Bilbao** before your main trip for **\$175** per person, per night
- Conclude your main trip with more time in **Porto** for **\$225** per person, per night
- Spend more time in **Lisbon** after your Portugal post-trip extension for **\$150 per person** per night

More than **88%** of travelers rated this trip excellent

www.oattravel.com/spg



What to Expect

① ② **③** ④ ⑤ MODERATE

Pacing: 6 locations in 16 days

Physical requirements: Walk over cobble streets, uneven ground, unpaved roads, steep forest terrain, and steep stairs. A mile-long hike on a steep, unpaved road and a 2.5-mile hike on forest trails.

Flight time: Travel time will be 9-20 hours and will most likely have two connections

View all physical requirements at www.oattravel.com/spg

Spain & Portugal: The O.A.T. Difference

Unbeatable Value: Travel at the lowest price and per diems in the industry.

People-to-People Experiences: Walk along the Camino de Santiago, where we might meet modern-day pilgrims—including those traversing the French Way, one of the historic pilgrimage routes recognized on UNESCO's World Heritage List—and hear their candid perspective on what the journey means to them. Plus, visit a family-owned winery for a tasting of *txakoli* wine, a sparkling dry white that was once just a homemade favorite, and meet the people who make this Basque favorite. We'll also enjoy a **Home-Hosted Lunch** with a local, middle-class family in Chaves.

O.A.T. Exclusives: Delve into a conversation about the radical wing of the Basque Independence Party—known as ETA—from a local who's in favor of Basque independence. Plus, you'll discover **A Day in the Life** of a rural Spanish farm outside of León, where you'll meet the farm's owner, explore the property, see the animals, and sit down to a farm-fresh lunch.

Information & Reservations **1-800-955-1925**

Northern Spain & Portugal: Pilgrimage into the Past

YOUR DETAILED ITINERARY

BEGIN YOUR ADVENTURE WITH AN OPTIONAL PRE-TRIP EXTENSION

5 nights in *Carcassonne, Bayonne & French Basque Country*

Day 1 Depart U.S.

Day 2 Arrive in Toulouse, France •
Overland to Carcassonne

Day 3 Explore Carcassonne

Day 4 Explore Carcassonne •
Optional Albi tour

Day 5 Overland to Bayonne •
Explore Auch

Day 6 Explore Bayonne • Discover
Basque Country

Day 7 Overland to Bilbao, Spain • Explore
Biarritz • Begin main trip

Day 1 Depart U.S.

- Destination: Bilbao

You depart today on your overnight flight from the U.S. to Bilbao, Spain.

Day 2 Arrive in Bilbao, Spain

- Destination: Bilbao
- Accommodations: Hotel Abando or similar

Morning: You'll arrive in Bilbao, the capital of Spain's Biscay province, in the mid- to late-morning, depending on your specific flight arrangements. An O.A.T. representative will meet you at the airport and then you'll transfer to your hotel via bus—a transfer of about 25 minutes, depending on traffic. Here we'll be joined by travelers who took our optional *Carcassonne, Bayonne & French Basque Country* extension and those who arrived early in Bilbao before the main adventure.

For those who arrive before check in time, your Trip Experience Leader will organize an optional orientation walk to help travelers get familiarized with the area.

Lunch: On your own. You are free to settle in at the hotel restaurant, or venture out to start your explorations of Bilbao independently. Perhaps you'll seek out "*bonito de norte*," a traditional tuna dish, or "*jamon de bellota*," an Iberian ham dish. Your Trip Experience Leader will provide recommendations based on his or her favorite local spots.

Afternoon: After 2pm, you will check in and receive your room assignment. We stay for three nights in our hotel—depending on which hotel we stay at, we're likely to be in walking distance of two renowned Basque Country museums, the Bilbao Guggenheim and the Bilbao Fine Arts Museum. On-site amenities may include a restaurant and bar; and your

room is likely to feature air-conditioning, a minibar, TV, safe, and private bath with hair dryer.

The rest of the afternoon is yours, with the freedom to rest in your room, explore the hotel grounds, or stroll to the nearby Gardens of Albia. You'll also have a chance to take an elective orientation walk around the hotel and surrounding area. This gives us a chance to get acclimated, find an ATM, or seek out a local market.

Dinner: On your own this evening. Bilbao is world-renowned for its dining scene, with culinary traditions and flavors distinct from the rest of Spain. Your Trip Experience Leader is sure to have suggestions for a fitting introduction to the acclaimed local cuisine. You may want to venture to Zaharra, a nearby restaurant offering fantastic *tortilla de txipis*, large tortillas with candied onions. Or, give Basque Vintage Restaurant a try, where *chuleton con piquillo*—or beef with pepper—attracts repeat customers.

Evening: You are free to rest in your room after your flight, or reach out to your Trip Experience Leader for recommendations on how to discover this cultural hub.

Freedom To Explore: Make the most of your time in Bilbao with these suggestions for independent exploration from our local regional office. Your Trip Experience Leader will lead the activity with the most traveler interest.

- Take a **local bus with your Trip Experience Leader** and visit the **Vizcaya Bridge:** Discover this architectural wonder, which combines modern elements and historical iron-working techniques. You can ascend this UNESCO World Heritage Site in an elevator and walk across the top of it or see the bridge from a unique perspective by taking a boat ride underneath it. Originally built in 1893, the

bridge was designed by Alberto Palacio, who studied under noted architect Gustave Eiffel. The bridge is the world's oldest transporter bridge and continues to be used by locals on their daily commute.

- **How to get there:** A 25-minute bus ride with your Trip Experience Leader from the hotel, runs every 30 minutes from 8am-11pm.
- **Hours:** 5:45am-10pm, Monday-Friday; 8am-10pm, Saturday; and 10am-10pm, Sunday.
- **Cost:** About \$1 USD.
- Explore the **Azkuna Zentroa Cultural Center:** First built in 1905, this former wine warehouse was transformed into a vibrant, multi-use complex by Philippe Starck in 2010. Today, it offers visitors an assortment of activities and a blend of architectural styles. Comprised of three buildings, the structure is supported by 43 unique columns of varied textures, colors, and designs.
 - **How to get there:** A 15- to 20-minute walk.
 - **Hours:** 8:30am-11pm, daily.
 - **Cost:** Free.
- Visit **Sombreros Gorostiaga** to find a traditional Basque hat: Founded in 1857, this family-run shop offers a range of *txapelas*, a classic Basque-style hat that has become part of the region's cultural identity. Discover the art of hat making and how to wear them from the shop owners and salespeople. The shop specializes in artisan-made and custom *txapelas*.
 - **How to get there:** A 10- to 15-minute walk.
 - **Hours:** 10am-1:30pm and 4pm-7:30pm, Monday-Saturday.
 - **Cost:** Free.

Day 3 Explore Bilbao

- Destination: Bilbao
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Dinner
- Accommodations: Hotel Abando or similar

Breakfast: Served buffet-style at the hotel beginning at 7:30am, with Spanish and international options available.

Morning: Around 9:15am, we'll gather in the hotel and meet with our Trip Experience Leader for a Welcome Briefing. During this briefing, we will introduce ourselves and review our itinerary in more detail (including any changes that may need to occur). Our Trip Experience Leader will also discuss logistics, safety and emergency procedures, and answer any questions we may have. Then around 10am, we'll begin our walking tour with a stroll through the medieval Old Town. This area is also known as the "Seven Streets" neighborhood because in the heart of the Old Town are Bilbao's original seven streets, which date to the 14th century and are the origin of the city.

Next, we'll board our bus around 11am and set off for a panoramic tour of Bilbao. Since at least the 14th century, Bilbao has been a scene of industry and culture, known especially for its ironworks—Shakespeare even refers to swords as "bilboes" in *Merry Wives of Windsor*. As the centuries passed, the city developed into a shipbuilding center; by 1900, it was the wealthiest city in all of Spain. But the middle of the 20th century saw natural disasters and civil war cripple the city, to the point that some believed Bilbao's glory days were past. Happily, in the late 1990s the city came roaring back to life.

Lunch: On your own after about 12pm. Perhaps you'll cross the Nervión River from our hotel—about 10 minutes away by bus—to dine at one of the many restaurants

in the area. Some favorite local dishes include *huevos rellenos*—stuffed boiled eggs and tortillas—and *pintxos*, small finger foods served throughout Basque country.

Afternoon: You have the freedom to enjoy this fascinating city independently. You might choose to pay a visit to Indautxu Square: In this urban redesign project, a pedestrian-only plaza has been studded with maple, birch, and yew trees, as well as leaf-shaped lighting fixtures, all encircling a ring of benches beneath glass canopies. Perhaps you'll discover modern art at the Guggenheim Museum and explore the grounds of this innovative architectural landmark. (Your Trip Experience Leader will provide entry tickets.) Or you may prefer to find a local café at which you can savor a glass of *zurito*, beer served in a small glass—the popular way to order and enjoy the beverage here. We will reconvene at the hotel around 6:15pm to walk about 10 minutes to dinner.

Dinner: At about 6:30pm, we'll enjoy a Welcome Dinner at a local restaurant.

Evening: We'll walk back to the hotel around 8pm and the remainder of the evening will be on your own. Your Trip Experience Leader will be happy to provide recommendations on how you can spend this free time—perhaps you'll seek out the Teatro Arriaga. Inspired by the Palais Garnier in Paris, this riverside Neo-baroque opera house is particularly special when the exterior is illuminated at night.

Day 4 Bilbao • Conversation about Basque independence • Discover Guernica • *Txakoli* wine tasting

- Destination: Bilbao
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch
- Accommodations: Hotel Abando or similar

Breakfast: Served buffet-style at the hotel beginning at 7am, with Spanish and international options available.

Morning: Around 8:45am, we'll set off to explore the Basque Coast, beginning with a bus journey to Guernica. In 1937, the German Luftwaffe bombed Guernica nonstop for more than three hours, laying waste to almost all of it—a nightmare immortalized by Picasso in the famous painting that bears the town's name. Upon arrival around 9:30am, we'll discover Picasso's famous "Guernica" mural. Our Trip Experience Leader will share some of the history behind the mural before we continue on to one of the few buildings to survive the Nazi bombing.

Then, we'll meet a local expert to learn about the Basque independence movement, and in particular, a radical (and often violent) wing of the Basque Independence Party called Euskadi Ta Askatasuna (meaning "Basque Motherland and Freedom" in the native Basque language). The goal of ETA, as the organization is known, is simple: for the Basque state to become its own self-governing country, independent from Spain.

Around 11:45am, we board our bus to continue on to a family-run winery, arriving about one hour later. At the wine cellar, we'll learn about *txakoli* wine. This sparkling dry white was once just a homemade favorite. Because its shelf life is short—it has to be poured and enjoyed within a year of its bottling—it was treated more like canning or preserves, an annual ritual as part of the harvest season. It

wasn't until the end of the 20th century that several vineyards sought and won Designation of Origin certification, which boosted *txakoli*'s name recognition and introduced it to an enthusiastically receptive wider audience. During our visit, we'll meet the people who make this Basque favorite—and, thanks to our small group size, we'll have the opportunity to connect with them one-on-one. As we stroll through the vineyards, we'll learn about the history of the wine and its unique flavor profile. We'll put that knowledge to the test when we a chance to sample *txakoli* for ourselves.

Lunch: Around 1pm at the winery. We'll enjoy a meal with the winery owner who will share insight into their daily lives and the local culture.

Afternoon: After lunch around 2pm, we'll spend about 30 minutes touring the production area of the winery to enrich our understanding of the full life cycle of *txakoli*. Then, we'll begin the 1-hour return trip to Bilbao by bus, arriving at our hotel around 3:15pm. The rest of the afternoon is free to explore at your leisure.

Dinner: On your own. You're free to seek out your own Basque culinary experience, and your Trip Experience Leader is happy to provide you recommendations. Perhaps you'll want to sample *txangurros* (spider crabs), which are typically stuffed with crab meat, onion, tomato, herbs, and bread crumbs before they're baked in the oven. Or, you'll delve into the world of *pinxtos*, the Basque answer to tapas.

Evening: If you'd like, you have the freedom to rest up before tomorrow's transfer to Pamplona. Or, you can ask your Trip Experience Leader for tips on how to spend your final evening in Bilbao.

Day 5 Bilbao • San Sebastian excursion with Basque lunch • Overland to Pamplona

- Destination: Pamplona
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch
- Accommodations: Tres Reyes Hotel or similar

Activity Note: Today's transfer from Bilbao to Pamplona will involve a 3-hour bus ride with stops along the way, including a 2-hour walking tour.

Breakfast: Served buffet-style at the hotel beginning at 7am, with Spanish and international options available.

Morning: We bid farewell to Bilbao around 9am this morning, when we board our bus for our full-day journey (with stops along the way) to Pamplona, in the heart of Basque country. While experts have traced references to "Basque" all the way back to the mid-16th century, the original etymology of the word remains up for debate. The rolling landscapes we'll witness during this morning's journey make a convincing case for one of the theories: "the mountain people." Today, however, the word is commonly used to describe regions in Spain and France in which the indigenous Basque ethnic group dwells.

While Pamplona is nestled inland, within a rounded valley, we'll take the coastal route to get there—which gives us the opportunity to visit seaside San Sebastian, Spain's gourmet capital, along the way. We'll arrive in San Sebastian proper around 10:30am, and get to know the city by foot during a walking tour. The city's longtime commercial success will be on display as we pass grand 19th-century buildings and lovely gardens. Around 11:45am, we'll continue from Miramar Gardens along the Concha Bay to the labyrinthine streets of the old quarter, finishing up near the local market.

Around 12:45pm, we will walk about 15 minutes to lunch.

Lunch: At a local restaurant in San Sebastian around 1pm, featuring Basque options.

Afternoon: At about 2:45pm, we'll head back to our bus and continue our travels inland to Pamplona, located about an hour and a half to the south. After arriving at our hotel, we'll check in, get our room assignments, and enjoy some free time to settle in. Depending on which hotel we stay at, we're likely to be within walking distance of some of the city's most well-known features—Pamplona Cathedral, the Museo de Navarre, and Plaza del Castillo. On-site amenities may include a bar/lounge, while your room is likely to feature a TV, minibar, safe, wireless Internet, and a private bath with hair dryer. After enjoying some time to get settled in, you may choose to join an optional orientation walk with our Trip Experience Leader around the vicinity of our hotel.

Dinner: On your own. Your Trip Experience Leader is always happy to provide suggestions. Some notable restaurants in the area that you may want to try include El Gaucho and La Cocina de Alex Múgica.

Evening: On your own, with freedom to relax in your room, linger over a drink at the bar, or venture out into Pamplona to begin your discoveries independently. Your Trip Experience Leader can provide recommendations for where to go and what to try.

Freedom To Explore: Make the most of your time in Pamplona with these suggestions for independent exploration from our local regional office. Your Trip Experience Leader will lead the activity with the most traveler interest.

- **Walk with your Trip Experience Leader to La Taconera Park:** Voted by the locals as the most charming green space in the city, La Taconera is also Pamplona’s oldest park. First appearing on city planning maps in 1719, the park is filled with gardens, flowerbeds, and fountains. You can join the locals who like to come here to stroll along the nature paths that crisscross the park, relax by a pond and watch the swans, or see if you can spot the peacocks, rabbits, deer, and other wildlife roaming the grounds.

- **How to get there:** A 5- to 10-minute walk with your Trip Experience Leader.
- **Hours:** Open 24 hours, 7 days a week.
- **Cost:** Free.

- **People-watch in Riverside Park:** This pedestrian- and bicycle-friendly park lines the Agra, Elorz, and Sadar rivers, and provides a calm and green respite from the bustling city center. Spanning almost 250 acres (approximately half of a square mile), stroll along the 10 miles of pathways and discover this city’s Roman heritage, including a 3,000-year-old bridge. Enjoy a leisurely walk or perhaps observe the locals rowing or fishing along the riverbanks.

- **How to get there:** A 10- to 15-minute walk.
- **Hours:** Open 24 hours, 7 days a week.
- **Cost:** Free.

- **Walk along the walls of Pamplona:** Discover Pamplona’s 16th-century history as you walk along the city’s three miles of walls, designed in the shape of a pentagon. Frequented by pilgrims and locals, nearly 75% of the wall has been preserved and serves as one of Spain’s most well-preserved military structures.

You can learn more about the history of this fortification by visiting the Interpretation Centre of the Fortifications of Pamplona.

- **How to get there:** A 5- to 10-minute walk.
- **Hours:** 11am-2pm and 4pm-7pm, Tuesday-Saturday; and 11am-2pm, Sunday.
- **Cost:** Free.

Day 6 Conversation about the running of the bulls • Walk the Camino de Santiago • Pamplona

- Destination: Pamplona
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch
- Accommodations: Tres Reyes Hotel or similar

Activity Note: Today is a very rigorous day, as we embark on a mile-long hike on a steep, unpaved road, and then a 2.5-mile hike along forest trails. If you’ve brought a hiking stick with you on this adventure, today is a day you will want to have it on hand—to best allow you to experience these historic and popular treks.

Breakfast: Served buffet-style at the hotel beginning at 7am, with Spanish and international options available.

Morning: This morning, we’ll board the bus around 9:30am for a 45-minute ride to Roncesvalles, a village known as the setting of the defeat of Charlemagne. Here, we’ll begin to discover the Camino de Santiago, one of Europe’s most important pilgrimage routes. During the Middle Ages, the three great Christian pilgrimage destinations were Rome, Jerusalem, and Spain’s Santiago de Compostela, where it was believed a cathedral housed the bones of St. James. “The Way of St. James” is a series of walking routes that led from various locations in Spain, Portugal, and France to the Cathedral of Santiago de Compostela (the most popular trek is known as the French Way, which crossed the Pyrenees). Today, the route remains

a popular journey for the devout—as well as a beloved itinerary for hikers and cyclists. Foreigners and people from Spain alike travel here to witness the historic, scenic locale, and we’re starting here in Roncesvalles because that’s the way many pilgrims have begun the trek over the centuries. The meaning of the route will come to life along the way, as we walk the first mile of our journey. Our small group size gives us the chance to talk to pilgrims who are making the hike for spiritual reasons, and to hear their candid perspective on what the journey means to them.

Then, we’ll take a second walk, approximately two miles in length through the northern Spanish forests before boarding the bus around 12:30pm for a 5-minute drive to a local restaurant for lunch.

Lunch: We’ll pause around 12:30pm for lunch at a local restaurant, which gives us the opportunity to rest our legs and fuel up for the afternoon.

Afternoon: Around 1:45pm, we’ll depart for the drive back to our hotel in Pamplona, arriving around 3:15pm.

Then, around 4pm we’ll meet a local resident who will lead us on a 1.5-hour walking tour of their home city, Pamplona, made famous by the San Fermin festival—and specifically, its raucous (and sometimes deadly) running of the bulls. This breakneck event, during which bulls tear through the crowded streets of Pamplona before ultimately meeting their demise in the city’s bullring, has been a tradition since the 13th century. However, over the last 15 years, many Spaniards have grown concerned about the bulls’ welfare and have begun calling for an end to the race, which they see as outdated and cruel. As a long-time resident of Pamplona, our local guide has had a front-row seat to the mounting controversy, and will join us for a conversation about this divisive local tradition.

As we follow the route of the *encierro* (bull run), he or she will share personal stories from past festivals and explain why despite the controversy surround it, the bull run still retains such a romantic appeal for some. The backlash against the event has also swept up the art of bullfighting as a whole. The sport is protected by the constitution as part of Spain’s cultural heritage, but a recent poll revealed that it’s falling out of favor: 60% of Spaniards are opposed to bullfighting. During this informal dialogue, you’re free to ask any questions you have about San Fermin, the bull runs, or bullfighting—from how the bulls are chosen, to the impact tourism has had on the festival.

Our walk concludes at Café Iruna, Ernest Hemingway’s beloved haunt on the Plaza del Castillo, around 6pm. Then, the rest of the day is free for you to explore at your own pace.

Dinner: On your own. Your Trip Experience Leader can provide recommendations on where to dine tonight—and you may decide to seek out *estofado de toro*. This traditional stew not only features vegetables like potato, carrot and onion, it also includes bull’s tail for a fitting nod to Pamplona’s fame.

Evening: You’re free to explore on your own tonight. Perhaps you’ll opt for a leisurely stroll through Pamplona’s Riverside Park, where you’ll witness Roman ruins tucked into tranquil natural scenery.

Day 7 Explore Ubidea • Overland to León

- Destination: León
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner
- Accommodations: Sercotel Alfonso V or similar

Breakfast: Served buffet-style at the hotel beginning at 7am, with Spanish and international options available.

Morning: Around 9am, we'll board our bus to set off for the Basque countryside to discover Ubidea. Matriarchal societies are the norm in this remote region of Spain; during our explorations today, we'll learn more about the impact of female leadership on everyday life. At approximately 10:30am, we'll arrive in Ubidea.

With just 175 inhabitants, Ubidea is one of the smallest towns in Basque Country. As you stroll along its ancient streets, you may feel as though you've stepped back into the Middle Ages. Around 10:45am we'll set out to explore Ubidea's archaeological center. During our visit, we'll meet with an archaeologist and visit the laboratory to learn what the skeletal remains from this region can tell us about the past and the present.

Lunch: At approximately 11:30am, we'll head to a local tavern to enjoy a light lunch. The highlight of our meal will be *pagobieta*, a hard sheep's milk cheese typical of the Basque countryside.

Afternoon: We'll continue our journey to León around 12:30pm.

We'll arrive in León around 4:15pm, when we'll check in to our hotel and get our room assignments. Depending on which hotel we stay at, we're likely to be right in the city's main square, near iconic sites and a variety of bustling restaurants and tapas bars. Your air-conditioned room may include a minibar, TV, wireless Internet, coffee- and tea-making facilities, and a private bath with hair dryer.

You'll have some free time to settle in or begin exploring on your own.

Dinner: Around 6:45pm at local restaurant featuring regional specialties.

Evening: Free for you to rest after the highly active past two days, or venture out into the city. Our Trip Experience Leader is ready to offer recommendations, if you wish.

Freedom To Explore: Make the most of your time in León with these suggestions for independent exploration from our local regional office. Your Trip Experience Leader will lead the activity with the most traveler interest.

- **Walk with your Trip Experience Leader** to the pilgrimage route of the **Camino de Santiago** through León: Marked by brass scallop shells throughout the city, León's Camino de Santiago route is well pronounced. As you follow in the footsteps of pilgrims, you will pass iconic sites like León's Cathedral, Palacio de Los Guzmanes, and Casa de Botines. At the end of your journey, you will make it to the Convento de San Marcos, a 15th-century hostel originally built to shelter pilgrims on their long journey. Today, this building serves as a hotel, the Parador de León, where you can enjoy a drink at the bar or a meal in their picturesque courtyard.
 - **How to get there:** A 15- to 20-minute walk with your Trip Experience Leader.
 - **Hours:** Open 24 hours, 7 days a week.
 - **Cost:** Free; prices vary at the Parador de León.
- **Enjoy tapas in Barrio Húmedo:** Get a taste of daily life in the Barrio Húmedo district, also known as the old town. Discover ruins of the Roman city walls or stroll through the Plaza de San Martín en route to a variety of bars and tapas restaurants where you can sample some popular drinks and cuisine. Literally translating to "wet district," this part of the city is known for the highest concentration of bars in the city.
 - **How to get there:** A 5- to 10-minute walk.
 - **Hours:** Schedules of the bars vary.
 - **Cost:** Tapas cost varies.

- Visit the **rooftop terrace at Camarote Hotel:** Nestled in the heart of León, the terrace at the Camarote Hotel is an ideal spot for taking in views of the city—especially at night, when its historic skyline is bathed in golden light. Order a drink at the bar, pull up a chair, and enjoy the picturesque serenity.
 - **How to get there:** A 5- to 10-minute walk.
 - **Hours:** 9am–1:30am, daily.
 - **Cost:** Free.

Day 8 *A Day in the Life of a Spanish farm* • Discovery walking tour of León

- Destination: León
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch
- Accommodations: Sercotel Alfonso V or similar

Exclusive O.A.T. Activities: We'll visit the Spanish countryside today to experience ***A Day in the Life*** of a rural farm. After meeting the farm's owner, we'll explore the property, see the animals, and sit down to a farm-fresh lunch. Read more about these activities below.

Breakfast: Served buffet-style at the hotel beginning at 7am, with Spanish and international options available.

Morning: Around 9:00am, we'll depart by bus for the hour-long drive through the countryside to spend ***A Day in the Life*** of a rural farm. Upon arrival, we'll be greeted by the farm's owner, who will share a bit about her life and her passion for the land with us. Then, we'll explore the property, learning about what is grown here, meeting the animals, and perhaps lending a hand with some of the daily farm chores. We'll get to see the farm's sheep dogs in action as they round up the livestock and keep things on the farm running smoothly. We'll also learn about the process of cheese-making as it is made here on the farm.

Lunch: Around 12:45pm, we'll head back to the farmhouse and sit down to a traditional Spanish meal with the farm's owner and some of the workers. This is a great opportunity to get to know more about what our hosts' daily lives are like, and the traditions and values that are important to them. We'll dine on farm-fresh ingredients that are typical in the Spanish countryside, and perhaps even some of the farm's cheese.

Afternoon: After lunch, we'll depart around 2:15pm for the drive back to León, arriving around 3:15pm. We'll then enjoy some free time in León. Discover this celebratory city, known not only for its religious processions during *Semana Santa* (Holy Week) but its love of fun. Two summer festivals annually transform the city into an outdoor party, and one of the Holy Week rituals even celebrates drinking alcohol.

Around 5pm, join a local guide for a discovery walk around León. Originally founded as a Roman military base, and designated as a UNESCO World Heritage Site for its place in history as the first established location of a European parliament, witness the city's long history, with a mix of medieval, Gothic, Renaissance, and Modernist architecture. Among the many highlights is the 13th-century "House of Light," León Cathedral. The site on which the cathedral was built was already rich with history before construction began: Originally home to second-century Roman baths, it became home to a palace in the seventh century. But the space began to take on its current form and Gothic grandeur in 1205: Most of the cathedral was completed by 1301, followed by the cloister and north tower (14th century), and then the south tower (15th century).

Dinner: On your own. Your Trip Experience Leader can provide suggestions for restaurants to suit a variety of tastes.

Evening: Free to spend as you'd like.

Day 9 Overland to Santiago de Compostela • Visit Santa Coloma de Samoza

- Destination: Santiago de Compostela
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch
- Accommodations: Hotel Palacio del Carmen or similar

Activity Note: Today includes a total of about six hours of bus travel, with stops along the way. Roads may be bumpy or uneven at times.

Breakfast: Served buffet-style at the hotel beginning at 7am, with Spanish and international options available.

Morning: We'll begin our overland journey to Santiago around 9:30am this morning, making several stops along the way.

Our first stop, around 10:45am, is to Santa Coloma de Somoza, a small village nestled in the historical region of la Maragatería. Residents of this remote region of Spain are known as Maragatos, and they are believed to be the last living descendants of the North African Berbers who arrived in Iberia in the eighth century. Unlike other Moorish groups who assimilated to Spanish culture after the Christian Reconquista in the 15th century, the agrarian Maragatos isolated themselves in the hills outside of León, and thus retained their own distinct identity. Women were known for their colorful head coverings and oversized jewelry, and houses were made of stone and featured doors large enough for wagons to pass through. The Maragatos were extremely successful traders for hundreds of years, but as Spain began to modernize in the 19th century, the Maragatos' rural way of life fell out of favor

and the younger generations began emigrating to larger towns where work was more readily available.

Upon arrival in this tiny hamlet, we'll delve into the village's agrarian roots when we visit a local beekeeper named Oscar. Honey production has long been an important trade in this region, and in the León province as whole. Around 1,000 beekeepers can be found in León, and the sweet syrup they produce regularly makes its way into local desserts. We'll spend about 30 minutes conversing with Oscar about his bees and observing the tools of his trade. Oscar is quite passionate about his profession, and he'll be eager to answer any questions we have about his methods.

Lunch: Around 11:30am we'll take a short walk to a Maragato traditional house for lunch. We'll be greeted by Pepa and her daughter, Laura, and then help prepare our seasonally-inspired meal together. Pay close attention to the size of the courtyard when you enter: In most Maragato homes, they are large enough to accommodate mules. These days, Maragato homes receive far less livestock than people: Out of economic necessity, many have been converted to guesthouses for pilgrims making their way to Santiago de Compostela.

Afternoon: We'll board our bus around 2pm and drive about 45 minutes to Villafranca del Bierzo, the last important town along El Camino before Santiago. The town is known for its twelfth-century Romanesque church, narrow cobbled streets, and picturesque small-town life. You'll have about 45 minutes here to explore town and perhaps take a stroll along the river. Then, shortly before 3pm, we'll continue our drive to Santiago de Compostela.

Upon arrival at our hotel around 4:45pm, we'll check in and get our room assignments. We'll spend the next three nights here in Santiago de Compostela, and depending on which hotel

we stay at, we may be situated right in the heart of the city. Typical on-site amenities include a bar and café, with rooms featuring a minibar, safe, satellite TV, wireless Internet, and private bath with hair dryer. Join your Trip Experience Leader for an elective orientation walk around 6pm.

Dinner: On your own. During our discovery walk, our Trip Experience Leader will be happy to point out delicious options serving local fare.

Evening: On your own around 8:30pm, with freedom to enjoy a drink at the hotel bar, or venture out into Santiago de Compostela for independent discovery. Your Trip Experience Leader can provide recommendations.

Freedom To Explore: Make the most of your time in Santiago de Compostela with these suggestions for independent exploration from our local regional office. Your Trip Experience Leader will lead the activity with the most traveler interest.

- **Take a bus with your Trip Experience Leader to the End of the Way:** Join thousands of pilgrims as they walk the last half mile of the pilgrimage to Santiago de Compostela. From the French town of Saint-Jean-Pied-Port, you'll trek across the top of Spain, immersing yourself in this holy and age-old experience along the way. You may have opportunities to speak with pilgrims about this journey and learn why it's significant to them.

- **How to get there:** A 1-hour bus ride. Check with your Trip Experience Leader for details.

- **Hours:** Check with your Trip Experience Leader.

- **Cost:** Check with your Trip Experience Leader.

- Discover the **Museum of Pilgrimages & Santiago:** Gain more historical context about the pilgrimages to Santiago in this

informative museum. Established in 1951, the museum aims to preserve and document materials related to pilgrimages. The collection features diverse pieces, including items that were excavated through archaeological projects and hosts temporary exhibits dedicated to pilgrimages across other cultures. The museum is now located in a building known as the "Bank of Spain," situated adjacent to the cathedral which marks the end of the pilgrimage. Plan to spend about 30 minutes exploring the exhibits.

- **How to get there:** A 5- to 10-minute walk.

- **Hours:** 9:30am-8:30pm, Tuesday-Friday; 11am-7:30pm, Saturday; 10:15am-2:45pm, Sunday.

- **Cost:** About \$3 USD.

- Admire **handwoven lace** at Bolillos Santiago: Learn about this intricate craft, which dates back centuries. In addition to seeing elaborate examples of handmade textiles—from table linens to shawls—you'll also find tools of the trade. If you feel inclined to make your own lace, you might sign up for an introductory class.

- **How to get there:** A 5-minute walk.

- **Hours:** 10am-1:30pm, Monday-Friday; 4pm-8pm, Saturday.

- **Cost:** Free.

Day 10 Explore Santiago

- Destination: Santiago de Compostela
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Dinner
- Accommodations: Hotel Palacio del Carmen or similar

Activity Note: Today includes about three miles of walking, on surfaces that may be uneven.

Breakfast: Served buffet-style at the hotel beginning at 7am, with Spanish and international options available.

Morning: Around 9:30am, we'll begin a full-morning exploration—fittingly, by foot—of Santiago de Compostela, the city that has been the destination of so many Catholic pilgrims over the centuries. According to legend, a ninth-century shepherd witnessed a moving star and followed it; the light eventually leading him to a burial site. The local bishop examined the bones found there and proclaimed them to be those of Jesus' apostle, James, the patron saint of Spain. Hearing the news, the Spanish king ordered a cathedral be built on the spot in 1075. In doing so, he not only transformed Santiago de Compostela into one of the most sacred Catholic destinations in the world, but he also nurtured the budding relationship between the Spanish monarchy and the Catholic Church that would eventually come to dominate Spanish history and culture.

Our walking tour will conclude—as all successful pilgrimages do—at the cathedral, around 11:30am, where we'll take in its ornate Romanesque and Baroque facades.

Lunch: On your own around 12:30pm. Your Trip Experience Leader can offer recommendations. You may choose to seek out one of the local takes on Spanish *empanadas*—tuna is a particularly popular filling here in Santiago. Or, you could go to Los Caracoles, a popular restaurant whose specialty is a homemade ham shoulder with turnip tops.

Afternoon: The afternoon is yours to relax, or you are free to soak in the historic pleasures of another of the city's grand squares, the Plaza de España, with its palaces and 16th-century hospital. Or explore the Casco Antiguo (Old Town), following the Rúa Nueva and the Rúa del Villar—a pair of pedestrian-friendly streets where cafés, restaurants, and boutiques line arcades beneath red-tile roofs.

Dinner: Around 7pm, we'll depart the hotel for a 5-minute walk to a local restaurant for dinner.

Evening: On your own around 8pm, and you're free to explore as you'd like. Your Trip Experience Leader will be happy to provide recommendations.

Day 11 Santiago • Optional Tour to Pontevedra & Combarro

- Destination: Santiago de Compostela
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Dinner
- Accommodations: Hotel Palacio del Carmen or similar

Breakfast: Served buffet-style at the hotel beginning at 7am, with Spanish and international options available.

Morning: Enjoy this day to explore on your own, or join an optional tour to the small towns of Pontevedra and Combarro.

For those who opt to join the almost full-day tour, we depart the hotel around 8:30am for the 1-hour ride to Pontevedra, a riverside city in northwest Spain known for its well-preserved old town sprinkled with shops, markets, cafés, and tapas bars. The town also serves as a stop along the Portuguese Way, and in the 16th century, was Galicia's biggest city and considered an important port. We'll embark on a 1-hour walking tour beginning in the old quarter around 9:30am.

Around 10:30am, we'll depart for the 30-minute ride to Combarro, a small fishing village famous for its *hórreos*, traditional stone grain stores on stilts. This village is one of the only towns in the region to feature this kind of stonework, making it a unique opportunity to observe another way of life. We'll begin a walking tour around 11am, exploring the narrow streets, admiring the numerous

cruceiros (typical Galician stone crosses), and you may want to sample *licor café*, a native liquor produced with coffee.

Lunch: For those travelers on our optional tour, you will enjoy lunch around 1pm at a local restaurant alongside your Trip Experience Leader. For travelers not on the optional tour, lunch is on your own.

Afternoon: Around 2:30pm, travelers on the optional tour will make the 1-hour drive back to Santiago de Compostela, arriving at the hotel around 3:30pm. Your afternoon is free to spend as you wish. Your Trip Experience Leader can assist in planning your time.

Around 6:30pm, you may wish to join an elective, 1-hour discovery walk to Alameda Park. Designed to evoke thoughts of a 19th-century country estate, this large park is home to oaks, eucalyptus, and fountains, and offers lovely views of Santiago and its cathedral.

Dinner: We'll enjoy a light dinner featuring local specialties at a nearby restaurant at approximately 7:30pm.

Evening: You're free to continue your explorations, or you may prefer to meet up with fellow travelers for a drink.

Day 12 Overland to Douro Valley • Home-Hosted Lunch • Explore Chaves

- Destination: Lamego, Portugal
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner
- Accommodations: Lamego Hotel & Life or similar

Exclusive O.A.T. Activity: Today you'll savor an authentic slice of Portuguese life during a **Home-Hosted Lunch** with a family in Chaves. In smaller groups of no more than 5, you'll dine on traditional, homemade cuisine and enjoy spirited conversation about local customs and lifestyles. Read more about this activity below.

Activity Note: Today's journey to Portugal includes about 3.5 hours of non-continuous bus travel. Roads may be bumpy or uneven at times. When we cross the border into Portugal, the clock will change back one hour.

Breakfast: Served buffet-style at the hotel beginning at 7:30am, with Spanish and international options available.

Morning: Around 9:30am, we'll board our bus and begin our transfer to Portugal. We'll enter the second country of our adventure, and set our clocks back an hour, when we reach Chaves, Portugal around 11:30am.

Home to just 18,000 people, Chaves is a rural retreat just a stone's throw from Spain. Natural thermal springs are the city's claim to fame: The Romans were the first to indulge in its mineral-rich baths, and visitors have been delighting in Chaves's restorative spas ever since. We'll learn more about Chaves's history, and even get a chance to walk on a Roman bridge dating to the first century, during a discovery walk with a local guide. In addition to its hot springs, Chaves has long been prized for its military value. Forts, battlements, and towers—ranging from the medieval era to the 18th century—dot the landscape here.

Then, we'll get a special look into daily life here when we split up into even smaller groups of no more than 5 travelers to enjoy a **Home-Hosted Lunch** with a local, middle-class family.

Lunch: A brief walk will bring us to our host family's home around 1pm. After welcoming us in and giving us a brief tour, our hosts will invite us to join them around their dining table for a hearty, seasonal lunch. The Portuguese are famous for their love of *bacalhau* (codfish), and this might be your first chance to sample some prepared the traditional way. Stewed veal

with potatoes is another local favorite that you might enjoy. No matter what's on the menu, it's sure to be served with a glass of regional wine.

As the *vinho* flows, so too will the conversation. It's customary for several generations to live under the same roof in Chaves, so we'll enjoy a well-rounded perspective on life in this remote region. The local economy is largely service-based, though agriculture, granite production, and handicrafts are also popular industries. Our hosts will be happy to discuss their work and hobbies, and they'll shed light on the opportunities that exist for younger generations. You might also want to inquire about life in the community or about the influence neighboring Spain has on the local culture. If you'd like, you may also bring a small gift with you to present to our hosts as a token of appreciation. Your Trip Experience Leader will be happy to recommend a local item, or you may choose to give them a small trinket from your hometown.

Afternoon: Following our Home-Hosted Lunch, we'll resume our journey to Lamego around 2:30pm, and we'll arrive at our destination in the Douro Valley around 3:45pm. Ever since the ancient Romans first cultivated grape vines here in the third century, this mountainous region has been a wine-growing powerhouse, especially known for port wine. Today, this region—one of the oldest wine-producing areas in the world—is not only a popular travel destination, but also a UNESCO World Heritage Site.

After arriving at our hotel, we'll check in and receive our room assignments. Our hotel for the next two nights is nestled in the heart of the Douro Valley. Depending on which hotel we stay at, on-site amenities may include an outdoor pool, gardens, and fitness center, and

typical room features include a flat-screen TV, minibar, wireless Internet, and a private bath with hair dryer.

Dinner: Around 7pm at the hotel, featuring a set menu of regional cuisine.

Evening: On your own around 8:30pm, with freedom to explore the hotel, relax with a book, or chat with your fellow travelers about your favorite adventure moments thus far.

Day 13 Discover Douro Valley • Douro River cruise • Quinta visit with lunch

- Destination: Lamego
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner
- Accommodations: Lamego Hotel & Life or similar

Breakfast: Served buffet-style at the hotel beginning at 7am, with Portuguese and international options available.

Morning: Setting off by bus around 9am, we'll embark on an exploration of port wine country along the Douro River. The first detailed account of port production came from Englishmen in 1678 after they visited the Abbot of Lamego, a vicar and vintner who served them red wine fortified with brandy. The Englishmen described it as "very agreeable, sweetish, and extremely smooth," and purchased the Abbot's entire stock to ship to England, where it was a hit within their social circles. Quickly, the Abbot's wine—as well as other port made similarly—became a commodity. By the middle of the next century, it was a formally protected wine with a Designation of Origin to control quality (and not, as legend has it, the creation of British sailors spiking wine with brandy to make it last longer). Around 9:45am we'll arrive in Pinhao. From there, we'll get to see the Douro Valley from a different perspective: by

boat. During our 45-minute cruise, enjoy views of the rolling hills, terraced vineyards, and Portuguese countryside as they pass you by.

Port wine exclusively originates on the terraced vineyards that crawl up alongside the Douro on *quintas* (wine farms). We'll visit a *quinta* today to trace the path of port, from grape to glass, beginning around 11am. With a local expert as our guide, we'll stroll through the vineyards and the cellars to learn about the production of this unique spirit. After exploring the *quinta*, we'll learn how to make port wine cocktails that are so popular in this area, as well as enjoy some traditional snacks to accompany our drinks.

Lunch: At about 1pm, we'll have lunch at the *quinta* featuring regional specialties. The views from the restaurant here are quite inspiring: vineyard-covered terraces as far as the eye can see.

Afternoon: We'll make the return drive back to our hotel around 2:15pm. Upon arrival, about 45 minutes later, you're free to relax and refresh.

Dinner: Around 7pm, we'll reconvene with our fellow travelers at a local restaurant, where we'll enjoy dinner featuring local cuisine.

Evening: On your own around 9pm, with the freedom to relax with a book, or enjoy a drink at the hotel bar.

Day 14 Overland to Porto

- Destination: Porto
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner
- Accommodations: Hotel Porto Royal Bridges or similar

Activity Note: Please note that on days when the Palácio da Bolsa is closed, we will visit the São Francisco Church instead.

Breakfast: Served buffet-style at the hotel beginning at 7am, with Portuguese and international options available.

Morning: We'll gather as a group around 9am to board our bus for the journey west to coastal Porto. Established two millennia ago, it is one of Europe's oldest cities, as well as the settlement that gave Portugal its name (when the town was known as Portus Cale in the ninth century). This was also the launchpad of myriad journeys during the 14th- and 15th-century Age of Discovery, when Portuguese sailors were the world's leading explorers.

Arriving in Porto around 10:15am, we'll jump into our discoveries with a panoramic driving tour—a helpful introduction to some of the city's famous sites, including the Ribeira district. We'll witness highlights of the city that are seemingly piled one atop the other as they cascade down steep cliffs to the banks of the Douro River. Then, we'll get off the bus and explore Porto's 2,000-year-old streets on foot. We'll discover the Palácio da Bolsa: Serving as the city's stock market, this Neo-classical building and UNESCO World Heritage Site was constructed in the 19th century, after a fire destroyed the Franciscan convent that originally stood on the spot. The interior boasts magnificent rooms, each decorated by a different artist. The most famous of these is the gilded Arab Room, designed in the Moorish Revival style—a very popular motif during the Romantic period.

Lunch: Around 12:45pm at a local restaurant, featuring regional fare.

Afternoon: We'll board our bus around 2pm and take a quick drive to our hotel, at which point we'll check in and receive our room assignments. Depending on our hotel, we'll spend the next three nights with convenient access to local attractions like the Palácio da Bolsa, Ribeira Square, and the Centro

de Congressos da Alfândega. Typical room amenities include a safe, wireless Internet, and a private bath with hair dryer.

Dinner: Around 7pm at a local restaurant, featuring cuisine typical of the region.

Evening: On your own, with the opportunity to seek out some of Porto's delights independently.

Freedom To Explore: Make the most of your time in Porto with these suggestions for independent exploration from our local regional office. Your Trip Experience Leader will lead the activity with the most traveler interest.

- **Walk with your Trip Experience Leader to a vintage bookstore:** Porto's second-hand bookstore, A Chamine, is a haven for literature fans and antique lovers alike. Nestled alongside the rows of timeworn tomes are vintage curiosities, like playful posters and old typewriters. But the biggest surprises are the shop's wooden, wind-up music boxes. Though they're all 200 to 300 hundred years old, they still play perfectly.

- **How to get there:** A 5- to 10-minute walk with your Trip Experience Leader.
- **Hours:** 9:30am-12:30pm & 2:30pm-7pm, Monday-Friday; 9:30am-1pm, Saturday.
- **Cost:** Free.

- Discover the **art of silversmithing:** Since 1902, the artisans at Alcino Pratas, have been crafting silver goods by hand using traditional techniques. The small workshop is tucked behind the Alcino silver gallery on an unassuming corner—but it's no secret to in-the-know locals. The Alcino family of silver masters have occupied the historic building for generations. When you walk through its doors, you'll witness expert

craftspeople hard at work, and you'll see the fine decorative pieces that have made the Alcino name famous.

- **How to get there:** A 5-minute walk.
 - **Hours:** 10am-1pm & 2pm-7pm, Monday-Friday; 10am-7pm, Saturday.
 - **Cost:** About \$6 USD.
- Visit the only **Holocaust Museum** in Iberia: Opened in 2021, Porto's Holocaust Museum reveals the horrors inflicted on Europe's Jewish population during World War II. Exhibits include recreated dorms from the Auschwitz concentration camp, a room adorned with the names of the Holocaust's victims, and an eternal flame dedicated to the more than six million people killed by the Nazis. The museum also features letters, testimony, and official documents from Jewish refugees who attempted to book passage to the United States from Portugal to escape Hitler's "Final Solution."
 - **How to get there:** A 10- to 15-minute taxi ride, about \$6 USD one way.
 - **Hours:** 10am-5pm, daily.
 - **Cost:** Free.

Day 15 Explore Porto • Optional Arouca Tour

- Destination: Porto
- Included Meals: Breakfast
- Accommodations: Hotel Porto Royal Bridges or similar

Breakfast: Served buffet-style at the hotel beginning at 7am, with Portuguese and international options available.

Morning: Enjoy a full day to explore on your own, or you are welcome to join us for an Optional Tour of Arouca village and Arouca Monastery, classified as a national monument.

Before it closed down in 1886, this monastery was one of the most prominent women's monasteries in the region. If you choose to join, board the motorcoach around 8:30am for the 27-minute drive to Arouca. Upon arrival, we'll tour the monastery grounds and sample some sweets, whose recipe dates back to the last nuns who inhabited the convent. Following our discoveries here, we'll drive 30 minutes to explore the quaint village of Arouca, which played an integral part in World War II by supplying the German and English sides with the mineral wolframite.

Then, we'll set off to traverse the wilds of the record-breaking Arouca Bridge and Geopark—a UNESCO World Heritage Site—from a bird's-eye perspective. Upon arrival by bus around noon, we'll cross the 1700-foot-long suspension bridge, hanging over the cascading rapids of the Paiva River, and enjoy views of the Aguieiras Waterfall, Paiva walkways, and Paiva Gorge. Following your discoveries, we'll board our bus and head to a local restaurant for lunch, arriving around 1:30pm.

Lunch: For those on the optional tour, lunch will be provided at a local restaurant in Arouca around 1:30pm, featuring regional dishes. If you're not on the optional tour, then lunch is on your own. Your Trip Experience Leader is happy to provide local recommendations.

Afternoon: For those on our optional tour, around 2:30pm, we'll depart from lunch and drive back to Porto. The afternoon is yours for independent discovery. Perhaps you'll stroll along the river and view the iconic Dom Luís I Bridge or explore the Porto Cathedral.

Around 6:30pm, you may choose to join your Trip Experience Leader for a tasting of *francesinha*, a type of sandwich beloved by the Portuguese. A tradition *francesinha* consists of various meats (such as ham, linguica, sausage and steak) on bread, then smothered

in cheese and a special sauce, and served alongside French fries. Your Trip Experience Leader will explain the cultural importance of the *francesinha* and you may even have a chance to try a bite yourself.

Dinner: On your own, whenever you'd like.

Evening: On your own around 8:30pm—with freedom to explore as you'd like. Perhaps you'll seek out a café and linger over a glass of port or sangria. Your Trip Experience Leader will be happy to provide recommendations, if you'd like.

Day 16 Explore Porto • Portuguese youth emigration conversation

- Destination: Porto
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Dinner
- Accommodations: Hotel Porto Royal Bridges or similar

Breakfast: Served buffet-style at the hotel beginning at 7am, with Portuguese and international options available.

Morning: Around 9am, after breakfast, we'll explore more of Portugal's second-largest city on an included walking tour where we'll see the Parque das Virtudes, the Clérigos Church, and more. Around 11am, we'll visit a local coffee shop that has been the setting of many political encounters and debates since its founding in 1909. Here, we'll meet with local students to discuss educated young people emigrating from Portugal. At the conclusion of our 1-hour conversation, we'll walk back to our hotel and you have the rest of the morning and afternoon to make independent discoveries.

Lunch: On your own. Your Trip Experience Leader can provide dining recommendations today. You may want to try Antiga Leitaria Bistro, known for their delicious shrimp stew.

Afternoon: You're free to explore as you'd like. Perhaps you'll visit the Foz do Douro district where you can stroll along the beach or sit at a bar and soak up scenes of everyday life. Around 7:30pm, we'll depart the hotel by bus and drive 15 minutes to dinner.

Dinner: At about 7:45pm, we'll gather at a local restaurant to toast to our adventure and the memories we've made. Our Farewell Dinner will feature local cuisine and includes an appetizer, main course, and dessert. Bottled water, soft drinks, and a glass of beer, or wine are included.

Evening: On your own around 9pm, with the freedom to prepare for tomorrow's travel day, or to seek out additional discoveries during your final night in Portugal. Your Trip Experience Leader will be ready with recommendations, if you'd like.

Day 17 Return to U.S. or begin post-trip extension

- Included Meals: Breakfast

Breakfast: Served buffet-style at the hotel beginning at 7am, with Portuguese and international options available.

Morning: Board a bus with your luggage and take a 20-minute ride to the airport this morning for your return flight home. Travelers taking the post-trip extension to *Lisbon, Sintra Palace & Seaside Cascais* will depart via bus around 9am. Travelers staying later in Porto after the main adventure will remain at the hotel, or transfer to another hotel in Porto.

END YOUR ADVENTURE WITH AN OPTIONAL POST-TRIP EXTENSION

4 nights in *Lisbon, Sintra Palace & Seaside Cascais*

Day 1 Overland to Lisbon • Explore Aveiro

Day 2 Explore Lisbon

Day 3 Explore Sintra & Cascais

Day 4 Explore Lisbon

Day 5 Return to U.S.

OPTIONAL TOURS

During your trip you will be able to book optional tours directly with your Trip Experience Leader. He or she will ask you to confirm the payment for these tours by filling out a payment form. Optional tours can only be purchased with a credit or debit card. We accept Visa, MasterCard, and Discover credit cards. We also accept Visa and MasterCard debit cards, but it must be a debit card that allows you to sign for purchases.

In order to correctly process these charges, there can be a delay of 2–3 months from the date of your return for the charges to be posted to your account. Therefore we ask that you use a card that will not expire in the 2–3 months following your return.

Please note: *Optional tour prices are listed in U.S. dollar estimates determined at the time of publication and are subject to change. Optional tours may vary.*

Pontevedra & Combarro

(Day 11 \$100 per person)

Journey to the small towns of Pontevedra and Combarro to take a deep dive into local history and culture. Pontevedra is a city in northwest Spain known for its well-preserved old town laden with shops, markets, cafés, and tapas bars. The town also serves as a stop along the Portuguese Way. Combarro is a small fishing village famous for its hórreos, traditional stone grain stores on stilts. Explore the narrow streets, admire the numerous cruceiros (typical Galician stone crosses), and be sure to sample licor café, a liquor native to this region and produced with coffee.

you'll explore the quaint village of Arouca, which played an integral part in World War II by supplying the German and English sides with the mineral wolframite.

Then, set off to traverse the wilds of the record-breaking Arouca Bridge and Geopark—a UNESCO World Heritage Site—from a bird's-eye perspective. Cross the 1700-foot-long suspension bridge, hanging over the cascading rapids of the Paiva River, and enjoy views of the Aguieiras Waterfall, Paiva walkways, and Paiva Gorge. Following your discoveries, you'll enjoy lunch in a local restaurant.

Arouca

(Day 15 \$125 per person)

Enjoy a morning of discovery as you visit Arouca village and Arouca Monastery, classified as a national monument. Before it closed down in 1886, this monastery was one of the most prominent women's monasteries in the region. You'll tour the grounds and sample some sweets, whose recipe dates back to the last nuns who inhabited the convent. Afterwards,

PRE-TRIP

Carcassonne, Bayonne & French Basque Country

INCLUDED IN YOUR PRICE

- » Accommodations for 5 nights
- » 9 meals—5 breakfasts and 4 lunches
- » 7 small group activities
- » Services of a local O.A.T. Trip Experience Leader
- » Gratuities for local guides, drivers, and luggage porters
- » All transfers

PRE-TRIP EXTENSION ITINERARY

Southern France is a land of lush forests, abundant historic sites, and the gifts of the sea on prominent display. Experience two of its most distinct regions, beginning in the foothills of the Pyrenees, where you'll discover the fortified city of Carcassonne. Then, explore the pride of French Basque country in Bayonne.

Day 1 Depart U.S.

You depart today on your overnight flight from the U.S. to Toulouse, France.

Day 2 Arrive in Toulouse, France • Overland to Carcassonne

- Destination: Carcassonne
- Accommodations: Tribe Carcassonne or similar

Morning: You'll arrive at the airport in Toulouse, France in the morning or afternoon, depending on your specific flight arrangements. An O.A.T. representative will meet you at the airport and escort you to your hotel via minibus—a transfer of about 1.5 hours.

Upon arrival, you will check in and receive your room assignment. Depending on what hotel we stay at, we'll likely be centrally located near major sites. Typical onsite amenities include a bar and a restaurant; rooms are likely to feature

air conditioning, satellite TV, safe, minibar, wireless Internet, and private bath with hair dryer.

Lunch: On your own—you're free to seek out lunch options that suit your flight schedule and preferences.

Afternoon: On your own to settle into your room or explore the area outside your hotel. At about 6pm, we'll join our fellow travelers—including those who arrived early in Carcassonne before their pre-trip extension—and our Trip Experience Leader, who will take us a 20-minute orientation walk around the area surrounding our hotel to point out ATMs, shops, and restaurants.

Dinner: You have the freedom to begin your culinary discoveries as you'd like. Your Trip Experience Leader will be happy to recommend local restaurants and dishes.

Evening: You're free to make your own discoveries. You may choose to relax in your room after your overnight flight, or ask your Trip Experience Leader for recommendations.

Freedom To Explore: Make the most of your time in Carcassonne with these suggestions for independent exploration from our local regional office. Your Trip Experience Leader will lead the activity with the most traveler interest.

- Discover Carcassonne's lower city, **Bastide Saint Louis:** Dating back to the 13th century, this collection of streets and squares was originally built outside the city walls. Off the beaten path for visitors, these shops, cafes, and restaurants—such as those in Place Carnot square—offer a glimpse into local life.
 - **How to get there:** A 20- to 30-minute walk, or a 5- to 10-minute taxi ride, about \$10 USD one way.
 - **Hours:** 24 hours a day, seven days a week.
 - **Cost:** Free.
- Explore the **Musée des Beaux Arts:** In addition to more than 300 years of French, Flemish, and Dutch art, this museum is home to a telescope used by Napoleon in 1815. The museum was established in 1836 and features eight galleries, including exhibits dedicated to Flemish and Dutch art from the 1600s and 19th-century French ceramics.
 - **How to get there:** A 20- to 25-minute walk.
 - **Hours:** 10am-12pm and 2pm-6pm, Tuesday-Saturday.
 - **Cost:** Free.
- Enjoy a boat ride along the **Canal du Midi:** Witness the serene splendors along the banks of this scenic canal, a UNESCO World Heritage Site. The canals span approximately 150 miles and features 91 working locks, connecting Toulouse to the Mediterranean. Depending on

the season, two to eight boat rides are offered daily. Plan to spend about 1.5-hours cruising the banks of the canal.

- **How to get there:** A 15- to 30-minute walk.
- **Hours:** Open daily
- **Cost:** About \$12 USD.

Day 3 Explore Carcassonne

- Destination: Carcassonne
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch
- Accommodations: Tribe Carcassonne or similar

Breakfast: Served buffet-style at the hotel beginning at 7:30am, with French and American options available.

Morning: Around 9:30am, we'll set the stage for our pre-trip discoveries with a Welcome Briefing in the hotel. This briefing gives us the chance to introduce ourselves and meet our Trip Experience Leader. We will also review our itinerary in more detail (including any changes that may need to occur). Our Trip Experience Leader will also discuss logistics, safety and emergency procedures, and answer questions we may have. Then around 10am, we'll get to know historic Carcassonne during a morning walking tour, which will last approximately 2.5 hours. We'll stroll through La Cité, with its double-lined ramparts before we stop into a local café and sip coffee while getting a feel for daily life as we watch locals go about their typical routines.

Afternoon: Around 2:30pm, we'll walk to the Musée De L'école, a museum dedicated to showcasing the history of primary education in France. From old desks and rudimentary projectors, to ink blotters and abacuses, we'll enjoy a snapshot of student life from the 1880s to the 1960s during our 1-hour tour, and we'll consider how it compares to our own educational experiences. Our visit concludes around 3:30pm, at which time you're free to

explore independently. Perhaps you'll take a stroll along the Pont-Vieux, the oldest of the city's seven bridges. The pedestrian bridge is one of the few remaining medieval bridges in all of France and has been in use since the 14th century.

Dinner: On your own. Ask your Trip Experience Leader for some local dining options.

Evening: On your own around 8pm—you're free to explore as you'd like, or ask your Trip Experience Leader for recommendations.

Day 4 Explore Carcassonne • Optional Albi tour

- Destination: Carcassonne
- Included Meals: Breakfast
- Accommodations: Tribe Carcassonne or similar

Activity Note: The Toulouse-Lautrec museum is closed on Mondays from October through May, as well as bank holidays.

Breakfast: Served buffet-style at the hotel beginning at 6:30am, with French and American options available.

Morning: You are free to spend this morning as you wish. Perhaps you'll explore Le Musée International du Dessin Animé, a museum devoted to cartoons.

Or, you're welcome to join us for an optional excursion to the medieval town of Albi this morning. At about 8am, we'll board our bus for a 2-hour drive north to this UNESCO World Heritage Site on the banks of the Tarn River. During a full morning of exploration, we'll visit Albi's magnificent brick cathedral and the birthplace of the French artist Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec, and we'll marvel at the city's old brick-and-timber homes and Renaissance mansions. Our discoveries also include the chance to connect with locals here,

as we explore a market and visit a blacksmith shop. We'll also witness the world's largest collection of Toulouse-Lautrec's works during a visit to his museum in Albi.

Lunch: On your own in Carcassonne if you chose not to take the optional tour. Your Trip Experience Leader will be happy to provide recommendations on local dishes and restaurants. If you join the optional tour, we'll gather at a local restaurant around 1pm.

Afternoon: You have the freedom to explore or enjoy an afternoon of relaxation in our hotel. If you join the optional tour, we'll depart Albi at around 2:15pm, with a 45-minute stop in Castres, a former hub of the textile industry that is now a quaint town with a strong cultural identity. We'll depart Castres around 4pm, and arrive at our hotel around 5:15pm.

Dinner: On your own. If you'd like recommendations, your Trip Experience Leader can provide their favorite spots.

Evening: You're free to explore independently. Perhaps you'll take in the view of St. Vincent's Church, an example of 15th-century Gothic architecture.

Day 5 Overland to Bayonne • Explore Auch

- Destination: Bayonne
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch
- Accommodations: Mercure Bayonne Centre Le Grand Hotel or similar

Activity Note: Today we'll travel by bus for a total of about six hours, with stops along the way.

Breakfast: Served buffet-style at the hotel beginning at 6:30am, with French and American options available.

Morning: Around 8:30am, we'll say goodbye to Carcassonne, boarding our bus for a 3-hour ride northwest to Auch. By the time the Romans conquered this region in the first century BC, Auch was already settled. In the two millennia since, it has shifted in personality from a Roman provincial capital to the seat of Catholic archbishops. Today, however, it is a quiet town known for its street markets. Eight hundred years of the town's history are on display along the Gers River, with the medieval district on one side (up the *Escalier Monumental*, a flight of 232 steps) and more recent architecture of the 19th and 20th centuries on the opposite bank.

Auch was also the birthplace of the real-life French Musketeer who inspired d'Artagnan in *The Three Musketeers*—and during our 1-hour discovery walk this morning, we'll hear tales of the Musketeers' escapades. Our Trip Experience Leader will also point out the city's Medieval cathedral and explain why UNESCO declared it World Heritage Site on the road to Santiago de Compostela.

Lunch: Around 12:30pm, we'll arrive at a local restaurant in Auch.

Afternoon: Boarding our bus around 1:45pm, we'll continue to Bayonne. Built at the intersection of two rivers, Bayonne's colorful half-timbered buildings teeter along the waterfront and enliven its charming old town. Bayonne's history stretches back more than 2,000 years, but its sweetest achievement came about in the 17th century, when it became the unofficial chocolate capital of France. Arriving at our hotel around 4:30pm, we'll check in and get our room assignments. Depending on which hotel we stay at, we're likely to spend the next two nights in the center of Bayonne, a short walk to Bayonne Cathedral and the Basque Museum. A bar/lounge may be available onsite, and your room will likely to include a TV, safe,

wireless Internet, and private bath. At about 6pm, we'll gather for a 45-minute walk to familiarize ourselves with the area.

Dinner: On your own. As the epicenter of northern Basque culture, the cuisine here includes a variety of tapas and seafood dishes. You're free to seek them out—and your Trip Experience Leader can help you find a place to sample *jambon de Bayonne*, the air-dried salted ham for which the city is well known.

Evening: You're free to explore Bayonne as you'd like.

Freedom To Explore: Make the most of your time in Bayonne with these suggestions for independent exploration from our local regional office. Your Trip Experience Leader will lead the activity with the most traveler interest.

- Explore the **Musée Basque:** A former home dating back to the 16th century is now home to a large collection of Basque cultural icons. Opened in 1924, the museum was designated as a historical monument in 1991 and features over 2,000 artifacts and artwork spread across 20 rooms.
 - **How to get there:** A 5- to 10-minute walk.
 - **Hours:** 10:30am–6pm, Tuesday–Sunday.
 - **Cost:** About \$7 USD.
- Soak in the splendor of the **Bayonne Botanical Gardens:** Opened in the 1990s, the highlight of this public park is its resplendent Japanese garden, complete with a scenic bridge, pools, and flora. Relax as you stroll through the garden and look for wildlife such as turtles or colorful fish.
 - **How to get there:** A 5- to 10-minute walk.
 - **Hours:** 9:30am–12pm and 2pm–6pm, daily.
 - **Cost:** Free.
- Learn how **Bayonne ham** is produced: Venture to the workshop of Pierre Ibaialde to discover the traditional techniques imbued

in every leg of Bayonne ham. A descendant of Basque farmers, Ibaialde has spent 30 years perfecting his *jambon*. During your visit, a member of Pierre's small team will explain the ham-making process—from the government regulations regarding pig-rearing to the ideal conditions for curing the meat. Afterward, you're welcome to visit the salting tub and the drying room to witness the ruddy hams and inhale their savory aroma. Plan to spend about 1 hour here.

- **How to get there:** A 10-minute walk from the hotel.
- **Hours:** 9am–7pm, daily.
- **Cost:** About \$6 USD.

Day 6 Explore Bayonne • Discover Basque Country

- Destination: Bayonne
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch
- Accommodations: Mercure Bayonne Centre Le Grand Hotel or similar

Breakfast: Served buffet-style at the hotel beginning at 7:30am, with French and American options available.

Morning: Around 9:30am, we'll set off by foot to discover Bayonne. Bayonne has long been as much Basque as French, sharing a culture with northern Spain. Before the French Revolution, the Basque people enjoyed a great degree of autonomy, with their own fleet of sailors, as well as successful whalers and arms makers. (The word bayonet is a nod to the local weapon-makers.) Later arrivals included Jewish chocolate-makers, whose contributions became a staple of Basque life. As we explore Bayonne during our 2-hour tour, we'll often see the traditional Basque colors of red and green adorning shutters of the townhouses that line the cobbled streets. Around 11:45am, we will walk 15 minutes to our lunch spot.

Lunch: Around noon at a local restaurant, featuring a selection of traditional dishes.

Afternoon: We'll board a bus around 1:30pm and drive 20 minutes to discover life in *Pays Basque* (Basque Country). Around 2:45pm, we'll stop to visit Espellete, a town that makes the red pepper that flavors Bayonne ham. A sailor who traveled with Christopher Columbus brought the peppers home to Espelette in 1650, and the community has been drying them to make into spices ever since. The peppers are always a visible part of the culture, hanging outside shops and homes throughout the town. They are so key to the town's identity that they merit their own festival every fall. At about 4:15pm, we'll begin our trip back to Bayonne, arriving at our hotel about 45 minutes later.

Dinner: On your own. Your Trip Experience Leader will be happy to provide a recommendation for one final dinner in Bayonne.

Evening: You're free to retire to your room, enjoy a drink at the hotel bar, or venture back out into Bayonne for the evening. Your Trip Experience Leader is ready with recommendations.

Day 7 Overland to Bilbao, Spain • Explore Biarritz • Begin main trip

- Destination: Bilbao, Spain
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch

Breakfast: Served buffet-style at the hotel beginning at 7:30am, with French and American options available.

Morning: Around 9am, we'll board our bus for a short, 20-minute ride to Biarritz, the chic seaside playground of French Basque Country. Ever since Napoleon III's wife Empress Eugenie built herself a palace on the beach, it has been a desirable getaway for everyone from British and Spanish royalty to celebrities like Coco Chanel

and Charlie Chaplin. We'll witness Empress Eugenie's prized summer palace—now the luxurious Hotel Palais—during our panoramic tour. We'll also gaze upon the golden sands of Grand Plage, Biarritz's wide and rambling central beach.

We'll continue on at about 10:45am, riding another 45 minutes toward Saint-Jean-de-Luz, and picturesque town perched on a bay. Here the 17th- and 18th-century architecture gives testimony to the heyday of Basque shippers and traders, while half-timbered Basque homes imbue the town with a down-to-earth charm. More casual in flavor than Biarritz, Saint-Jean-de-Luz is a singular blend of

working fishing village and historic site, as the backdrop for the wedding of Louis XIV and Maria Theresa of Spain. Around 1pm, we'll begin a 15-minute walk to a local restaurant.

Lunch: Around 1:15pm, at a local restaurant in Saint-Jean-de-Luz.

Afternoon: We'll resume our bus travels around 2:30pm, admiring the diverse and surprising scenery that unfurls before us during our 1.5-hour journey to Spain. We'll reach our hotel in Bilbao around 4pm, at which point we will check in, get room assignments, and join our fellow travelers for our main adventure.

OPTIONAL TOUR

Albi

(Day 4 \$150 per person)

Journey to Albi, a lovely medieval town perched on the banks of the Tarn River. Our discoveries will include a visit to the Cathédrale Ste-Cécile, a 13th-century fortress that represents one of France's most monumental Gothic structures. The portion of Albi known as "the Episcopal City"—a city within the city—is a UNESCO World Heritage Site encompassing the Old Bridge and medieval residences. Albi is also the birthplace of Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec; we'll witness his birthplace and tour the museum that houses an extensive collection of his works. After lunch at a local restaurant, we'll return to Carcassonne.

POST-TRIP

Lisbon, Sintra Palace & Seaside Cascais

INCLUDED IN YOUR PRICE

- » Accommodations for 4 nights
- » 8 meals—4 breakfasts, 3 lunches, and 1 dinner
- » 7 small group activities
- » Services of a local O.A.T. Trip Experience Leader
- » Gratuities for local guides, drivers, and luggage porters
- » All transfers

POST-TRIP EXTENSION ITINERARY

Perched above the Tagus River, Lisbon has been the launch pad for discoveries since the time of Henry the Navigator. A leisurely stay in this city of hills allows time to explore centuries of history in its oldest neighborhoods, as well as its renaissance as a global hotspot, known for its music and dining.

Day 1 Overland to Lisbon • Explore Aveiro

- Destination: Lisbon
- Included Meals: Lunch
- Accommodations: Hotel Lisboa Plaza or similar

Morning: As our main adventure ends, we'll board the bus at our hotel around 9am and set our sights on Lisbon, Portugal's capital city. En route, we'll stop in Aveiro, a city of canals plied by colorful wooden boats. These *moliceiros* were once used to collect seaweed and algae, which were sold as fertilizer; now, they're used primarily for pleasure cruises. We'll discover another one of Aveiro's maritime industries around 9am, when we venture to the Noeirinha salt flats. Locals have been harvesting fine, powder-white sea salt here for more than a thousand years. While industrial salt production has lessened the demand for Aveiro's home-grown *flor de sal*, the Portuguese tradition lives on in a handful of *salinas* here. We'll watch the workers scrape the fresh salt

into pails and pile it in glittering pyramids, and we'll have the chance to ask them about their work, before returning to the city center around 10am for a discovery walk.

Lunch: Around noon at a local restaurant.

Afternoon: We'll have approximately 1 hour of free time to explore Aveiro independently before we reboard our bus around 2pm for the final 2.5-hour ride to Lisbon. Upon arriving at our hotel at about 4:30pm, we'll check in and receive our room assignments. Depending on which hotel we stay at, we're likely to be located in the heart of downtown Lisbon with an outdoor pool and spa on site. Typical room amenities include a TV, safe, minibar, air-conditioning, wireless Internet, and a private bath with hair dryer. After we check in, you're free to settle into your room, or venture out into Lisbon to begin your discoveries here early.

Dinner: On your own this evening. Your Trip Experience Leader will be happy to provide recommendations, whether you'd prefer to taste the local cuisine or dine on familiar American standards.

Evening: On your own tonight, with the freedom to continue your discoveries as you'd like. Your Trip Experience Leader can provide recommendations on how to make the most of your time.

Freedom To Explore: Make the most of your time in Lisbon with these suggestions for independent exploration from our local regional office. Your Trip Experience Leader will lead the activity with the most traveler interest.

- Feel like a local aboard a **Cacilheiro**: Take a ride on a traditional *cacilheiro* or ferry boat. These local modes of transportation are utilized by residents who live across the river and commute in to the city. Aboard the boat, you'll enjoy sweeping views of the river bank and city skyline.
 - **How to get there:** A 25-minute walk.
 - **Hours:** Daily.
 - **Cost:** About \$2 USD per person.
- **Alongside your Trip Experience Leader**, take a ride on a **cacilheiro (ferry)**: Admire Lisbon from a different vantage point when you cruise the Tagus River aboard one of the city's bright orange ferries. As you cross, you'll witness Lisbon's various monuments, and you might even spot the Atlantic in the distance. Depending on when you ride, you may be joined by local business people and students, who rely on their ferry for their daily commutes. Upon arrival on the south bank,

you may want to enjoy *petiscos* (Portuguese tapas) at one of the many seaside restaurants before cruising back to the heart of Lisbon.

- **How to get there:** A 20-minute subway ride; about \$1.75 USD.
- **Hours:** 5am–2am, daily.
- **Cost:** About \$3.50 USD per person.
- Discover the myriad cultural treasures at **LX Factory**: Explore this renovated industrial complex that has been transformed into a creative hub of restaurants, libraries, workshops, and more. You may want to check out *Ler Devagar (Read Slowly)*, a trendy bookshop and gathering spot for artistic expression.
 - **How to get there:** A 15- to 20-minute taxi ride, about \$6 USD one way.
 - **Hours:** 11am–9pm, Monday; 11am–11pm, Tuesday–Thursday; 11am–1am, Friday; 11am–9pm, Sunday.
 - **Cost:** Free.

Day 2 Explore Lisbon

- Destination: Lisbon
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch
- Accommodations: Hotel Lisboa Plaza or similar

Breakfast: Served buffet-style at the hotel beginning at 7am, with Portuguese and international options available.

Morning: Around 9am, we'll set out by bus to get an introduction—and immersion—into the gems of historic Lisbon. Spread out on seven low hills overlooking the Tagus River, Portugal's legendary capital has enticed traders and settlers for more than 20 centuries. Our discoveries begin in Belem, the historic neighborhood overlooking the harbor where we'll disembark our bus for a walking tour around 9:45am. Belem is the home of two UNESCO World Heritage Sites dating from the early 16th century: Belem Tower and Jerónimos Monastery, where Vasco da Gama prayed for

success before sailing to India. As we'll see, da Gama is among the heroes immortalized in the Monument to the Discoveries, the massive stone sculpture depicting 33 legendary Portuguese explorers and artists, including Magellan and Henry the Navigator.

We'll return to our bus around 10:45am for a 30-minute drive to the Alfama district, which rises upward from the sea, topped by a stone castle. Once the entirety of the city, Alfama remains its oldest district, as we'll learn during our walking tour. Our walk ends at a local restaurant.

Lunch: Around 12:30pm at a local restaurant.

Afternoon: Beginning at 2pm, your afternoon is yours, with the freedom to discover Lisbon as you'd like. Your Trip Experience Leader will be happy to provide you recommendations. You may choose to explore the city by its historic, famed trams—a fun and practical way to navigate this city of hills.

Dinner: On your own this evening. Your Trip Experience Leader is sure to have good suggestions for local fare, including the seafood for which the city is known.

Evening: You're free to continue your discoveries as you'd like. Your Trip Experience Leader can provide recommendations on how to make the most of your time, whether you'd like to seek out a sweet treat or stroll through a nearby neighborhood.

Day 3 Explore Sintra & Cascais

- Destination: Sintra
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch
- Accommodations: Hotel Lisboa Plaza or similar

Breakfast: Served buffet-style at the hotel beginning at 7am, with Portuguese and international options available.

Morning: At 9am, we'll board our bus to venture out of Lisbon for the day. We'll travel about 45 minutes west—and inland—to begin our discoveries in Sintra, a village dating back to the Middle Ages. With its fairytale landscape of lush forests, turreted palaces, and castle ruins, it's easy to see why Lord Byron proclaimed this town “the most beautiful in the world.”

Our time in Sintra begins around 9:45am with a visit to a humble national treasure, the Convent of the Capuchos. This tiny monastery was built into a rocky nook in the woods of the Sintra mountains. Its appearance calls to mind a hobbit shire, and indeed its quarters are famously small. Founded by eight monks in 1560, the site was a place of worship and meditation, and its occupants were required to live austerely. None of them took this quite as far as Friar Honório, who spent 30 years living inside a small hole within the convent. We'll explore the convent during a guided tour lasting a little over an hour.

Then, around 11am, we'll drive about a half-hour to the most enigmatic and singular of Sintra's estates: Regaleira Palace. Nicknamed “the Palace of the Millionaire” after the wealth of its owner, António Augusto Carvalho Monteiro, Regaleira is a towering palace of Gothic design, surrounded by decadent landscaping. Fountains, grottoes, winding footpaths, a lake, and underground tunnels add to the aesthetic here. The grounds are also given an air of mystery, courtesy of a collection of small buildings and structures laden with symbols—of alchemy, the Knights Templar, and the Rosicrucians.

Lunch: We'll enjoy a light lunch around 1pm.

Afternoon: After lunch, you'll enjoy approximately 45 minutes of free time to explore Sintra independently. We'll depart around 2:45pm for the 30-minute drive to

Cascais. You'll have time to explore this former fishing village on your own, known for its sandy beaches, mosaic sidewalks, and pastel-colored buildings. Around 4:15pm, we'll depart for the 45-minute drive back to our hotel in Lisbon. You'll have some free time to unwind in your room, or continue exploring the city on your own.

Dinner: On your own this evening; ask your Trip Experience Leader where you can find a Portugal's favorite dish: *bacalhau*. For at least 500 years, Lisboners have been catching codfish and then sun-drying it to preserve it. The dried codfish is known as *bacalhau*, and even months later, all it needs is a 24-hour soak to reconstitute and be used in countless recipes. Actually, the local wisdom is that there is a number: 365 *bacalhau* dishes, one for each day of the year.

Evening: You're free to explore on your own tonight. This is a great opportunity to hear some of the Lisbon's musical soul—the powerful, expressive, and emotional music known as *fado*. Your Trip Experience Leader will be happy to recommend the best spots to hear *fado* at its most authentic.

Day 4 Explore Lisbon

- Destination: Lisbon
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Dinner
- Accommodations: Hotel Lisboa Plaza or similar

Breakfast: Served buffet-style at the hotel beginning at 7am, with Portuguese and American options available.

Breakfast: Served buffet-style at the hotel beginning at 7am, with Portuguese and American options available.

Morning: We explore Lisbon on foot this morning, departing our hotel around 9:30am to follow cobbled lanes and soak in the city's rich

history, modern pleasures, and water views. Our stroll will take us through two of Lisbon's most iconic neighborhoods: Chiado, the city's historic heart and cultural center, and Bairro Alto, the literal "Upper District" that is packed with bohemian shops and bars. During our 3-hour exploration, we'll also enjoy rides on local public transportation—including one of the city's famous trams. This will not only give our small group a better sense of daily life for those who live and work here, but will also offer us unique vantage points from which to view the city.

Around 11:30am, we'll stop at a local cafe that overlooks the ruins of Carmo Convent, which was destroyed by an earthquake in the 18th century. As we sip our *bica* (coffee), our Trip Experience Leader will explain how this site inspired a revolution that eventually toppled Portugal's dictator.

Lunch: Our walk concludes around 12:30pm, at which time you're free to see out lunch on your own.

Afternoon: After lunch, you are free to venture back to the hotel to prepare for tomorrow's journey home, or to make the most of every moment here in Lisbon. Perhaps you'll seek out the city's iconic dessert, *Pasteis de Nata*, a small egg custard tart.

Dinner: Around 7pm, we'll gather at a local restaurant to toast to our discoveries (and savor one final taste of Portugal) during our Farewell Dinner together.

Evening: On your own. You're free to retire to your room around 8:30pm to rest up for tomorrow's travels, or ask your Trip Experience Leader for a recommendation for one last bit of adventure.

Day 5 Return to U.S.

- Included Meals: Breakfast

Breakfast: Served buffet-style at the hotel beginning at 7am, with Portuguese and American options available.

Morning: Board a bus with your luggage this morning and travel about 25 minutes to the airport in Lisbon for your return flight home. Travelers staying later in Lisbon after their post-trip extension will remain at the hotel, or transfer to another hotel in Lisbon.

TRAVEL DOCUMENTS & ENTRY REQUIREMENTS

Your Passport

- Must be in good condition
- Must be valid for at least 6 months after your scheduled return to the U.S.
- Must have the required number of blank pages (details below)
- The blank pages must be labeled “Visas” at the top. Pages labeled “Amendments and Endorsements” are not acceptable

Need to Renew Your Passport?

Contact the National Passport Information Center (NPIC) at **1-877-487-2778**, or visit their website at **www.travel.state.gov** for information on obtaining a new passport or renewing your existing passport. You may also contact our recommended visa service company, PVS International, at **1-800-556-9990** for help with your passport

Recommended Blank Pages

Please confirm that your passport has enough blank pages for this vacation.

- **Main trip:** You will need 2 blank passport pages.
- **Carcassonne, France pre-extension:** You will need an additional blank passport page, for a total of 3.
- **Lisbon, Portugal post trip extension:** You do not need any additional passport pages, beyond the 2 needed for the main trip.
- **Stopover in Amsterdam, Helsinki, Munich, or Rome:** You will need to add 2 additional pages to the applicable total listed above.
- **Stopover in Barcelona, Copenhagen, Istanbul, London, Madrid, or Paris:** You will need to add an additional page to the applicable total listed above.

No Visas Required

We'll be sending you a detailed Visa Packet with instructions, application forms, and fees about 90 days prior to your departure. All visas information listed is only applicable if you are taking an optional stopover extension to a country with a required visa. In the meantime, we're providing the information below as a guideline on what to expect. This information is for U.S. citizens only. All visas and fees are subject to change.

- **Turkey (optional stopover only): Visa required.** We suggest you obtain an e-visa in advance through the Turkish government's website as visas cannot be obtained upon arrival.

Traveling Without a U.S. Passport?

If you are not a U.S. citizen, or if your passport is from any country other than the U.S., it is your responsibility to check with your local consulate, embassy, or a visa services company about visa requirements. We recommend the services of PVS International, a national visa service located in Washington D.C.; they can be reached at **1-800-556-9990** or **www.pvsinternational.org**.

Traveling With a Minor?

Some governments may require certain documentation for minors to enter and depart the country or to obtain a visa (if applicable). For further detail on the required documentation, please contact your local embassy or consulate.

Emergency Photocopies of Key Documents

We recommend you carry color photocopies of key documents including the photo page of your passport plus any applicable visas, air itinerary, credit cards (front and back), and an alternative form of ID. Add emergency phone numbers like your credit card company and the number for your travel protection plan. Store copies separate from the originals.

If you plan to email this information to yourself, please keep in mind that email is not always secure; consider using password protection or encryption. Also email is not always available worldwide. As an alternative, you could load these documents onto a flash drive instead, which can do double-duty as a place to backup photos during your trip.

Overseas Taxes & Fees

This tour may have taxes and fees that cannot be included in your airline ticket price because you are required to pay them in person onsite. All taxes are subject to change without notice and can be paid in cash (either U.S. or local currency). If applicable, you will receive a list of these fees with your Final Documents.

RIGORS, VACCINES & GENERAL HEALTH

Is This Adventure Right for You?

Please review the information below prior to departing on this adventure. We reserve the right for our Trip Experience Leaders to modify participation, or in some circumstances send travelers home, if their condition would adversely affect the health, safety, or enjoyment of themselves or of other travelers.

PACING

- 6 locations in 16 days

PHYSICAL REQUIREMENTS

- Not appropriate for travelers using wheelchairs, walkers, or other mobility aids
- You must be able to walk 5-8 miles unassisted in the course of each day and to participate in 6-8 hours of physical activities each day, as well as being able to stand unassisted for up to 30 minutes at a time
- Our activities involve three hikes along the Santiago pilgrimage route. These include a mile-long hike on a steep, unpaved road and a 2.5-mile hike on forest trails on Day 6.
- We reserve the right for Trip Experience Leaders to restrict participation, or in some circumstances send travelers home, if their limitations impact the group's experience

CLIMATE

- Spain and Portugal offer warm-to-hot summers and cold winters; snow is common in the north in the months of March and November, which you may experience during hikes
- Daytime temperatures in July and August often reach above 90°F

TERRAIN & TRANSPORTATION

- Walk over cobbled streets, uneven ground, unpaved roads, steep forest terrain, and steep stairs
- Travel via private, air-conditioned bus

ACCOMMODATIONS & FACILITIES

- Hotel rooms are smaller than those in the U.S. and offer basic amenities
- All accommodations feature private baths with showers

Steps to Take Before Your Trip

Before you leave on this adventure, we recommend the following:

- Check with the CDC for their recommendations for the countries you'll be visiting. You can contact them online at www.cdc.gov/travel or by phone at **1-800-232-4636**.
- Have a medical checkup with your doctor at least 6 weeks before your trip.
- Pick up any necessary medications, both prescription and over-the-counter.
- Have a dental and/or eye checkup. (Recommended, but less urgent)

Vaccines Required

COVID-19

Overseas Adventure Travel requires that all travelers are fully vaccinated against COVID-19 and are able to provide proof of their vaccination upon arrival at their destination. We consider "fully vaccinated" to be when all required primary doses have been received, as per CDC guidelines. O.A.T. does not require a Booster shot; however, if a country on your itinerary requires one, you must adhere to their guidelines.

Other Vaccines

At the time of writing there were no additional required vaccines for this trip. The CDC recommends that all travelers be up to date on their routine vaccinations and on basic travel vaccines like Hepatitis A and Typhoid, but these are suggestions only. However, this could change in future so we encourage you to check with the CDC yourself before meeting with your doctor.

Medication Suggestions

- An antibiotic medication for gastrointestinal illness
- A pain medication, in the unlikely event of an injury in a location where medical attention would be delayed

Traveling with Medications

- **Pack medications in your carry-on bag** to avoid loss and to have them handy.
- **Keep medicines in their original, labeled containers** for a quicker security screen at the airport and a better experience if you get stopped by customs while overseas.
- **Bring copies of your prescriptions**, written using the generic drug name rather than a brand name to be prepared for any unforeseen loss of your medications.

We recommend checking with the State Department for medication restrictions by country: travel.state.gov (Go to "Find International Travel Information", select "Country Information", then enter the country into the search bar; if you don't see any medications specifically mentioned under the "Health" section, then you can presume major U.S. brands should be OK).

Staying Healthy on Your Trip

Jet Lag Tips

- Start your trip well-rested.
- Begin a gradual transition to your new time zone before you leave or switch to your destination time zone when you get on the plane.
- Attempt to sleep and eat according to the new schedule.
- Avoid heavy eating and drinking caffeine or alcoholic beverages right before—and during—your flight.
- Drink plenty of water and/or fruit juice while flying
- Stretch your legs, neck, and back periodically while seated on the plane.
- After arrival, avoid the temptation to nap.
- Don't push yourself to see a lot on your first day.
- Try to stay awake your first day until after dinner.

Allergies

If you have any serious allergies or dietary restrictions, we advise you to notify us at least 30 days prior to your departure. Please call our Traveler Support team at **1-800-221-0814**, and we will communicate them to our regional office. Every effort will be made to accommodate you.

Water

- Tap water in the region is safe to drink, but is processed differently than in the U.S. so it can still upset your stomach or feel “heavy”. Therefore, we suggest drinking bottle water instead.
- Bottled water is readily available and inexpensive. (Bottled water is not included in the price of your tour.)

Food

- We've carefully chosen the restaurants for your group meals. Your Trip Experience Leader can suggest restaurants for the meal you take on your own.
- Be very careful with food sold from vendors on the street, and with uncooked foods.

MONEY MATTERS: LOCAL CURRENCY & TIPPING GUIDELINES

Top Three Tips

- **Carry a mix of different types of payments**, such as local currency, an ATM card, and a credit card.
- **Traveler's checks are not recommended.** They can be extremely difficult to exchange and the commission fee for cashing them is quite high.
- **You will not be able to pay with U.S. dollars on this trip;** you will need euros instead. Most banks in Europe will only exchange money for their customers, so we recommend that you change some money before your trip. (Once on the trip you can use ATMs and/or exchange offices.)

Local Currency

For current exchange rates, please refer to an online converter tool like www.xe.com/currencyconverter, your bank, or the financial section of your newspaper.

Euro Countries: European Euro (€)

How to Exchange Money

If you want to exchange money before your trip, you can usually do so through your bank or at an exchange office. Your departure airport in the U.S., a travel agent, or an AAA office are also possible outlets. Or you can wait and change money on the trip instead—but it might be helpful to arrive with some local currency in case you run into a bank holiday or an “out of order” ATM.

On your trip, the easiest way to obtain local currency is to withdraw funds from a local ATM. The ATM will give you local money and your bank at home will convert that into U.S. dollars, which depending on the bank might add conversion fees, so please check with your bank for the applicable values.

You may be able to exchange cash at some hotels and money exchange offices, however they do not typically offer good exchange rates and can be difficult to find. To exchange cash, you'll usually need your passport and bills in good condition (not worn, torn, or dirty). New bills (post 2004) are best.

Please note that many banks in Europe will only exchange money for their own customers. Never exchange money on the street. All exchange methods involve fees, which may be built into the conversion rate; ask beforehand.

ATMs

When using the ATM, keep in mind that it may only accept cards from local banks, and may not allow cash advances on credit cards; you might need to try more than one ATM or more than one card.

Many banks charge a fee of \$1–\$10 each time you use a foreign ATM. Others may charge you a percentage of the amount you withdraw. We recommend that you check with your bank before you depart.

Lastly, don't forget to memorize the actual digits of your card's PIN number (many keypads at foreign ATMs do not include letters on their keys—they only display numbers.)

In most countries, ATMs are widely available in major cities. If you are in a rural location, it will likely be harder to find an ATM.

Credit & Debit Cards

While traveling, most countries and major cities will accept credit cards. Even if you don't plan on using a credit card during your trip, we still suggest that you bring one or two as a backup, especially if you are planning a large purchase (artwork, jewelry). We also suggest that you bring more than one brand of card (i.e. Visa, MasterCard, American Express) if possible, because not every shop will take every card. For example, although Discover and American Express cards are accepted in some countries outside the U.S., they are not widely adopted, so other brands will work at a much larger range of stores, restaurants, etc.

If you are visiting a country that does not commonly accept credit cards, they will be listed below.

Spain: Visa and MasterCard credit cards are fairly common in Spain, but may not be accepted for small purchases or in the markets. American Express is not commonly accepted.

Portugal: Visa and MasterCard credit cards are fairly common in Portugal, but may not be accepted for small purchases or in the markets. American Express is not commonly accepted.

France: Credit and debit cards are widely accepted in France. For small purchases or markets, you may need cash instead.

Chip Cards

Many countries have adopted credit cards that have an embedded computer chip. These cards are inserted into the reader instead of swiped. The card owner then authorizes the purchase using a PIN instead of signing.

Though this technology is common in the U.S., occasionally there are machines in other countries that can't read U.S. cards or the machine can read the card, but asks for a PIN. This doesn't happen often, and is nothing to worry about. You can usually resolve the situation by asking the cashier to let you sign. (If you don't speak the language, just mime signing on your hand.) If you are not able to sign for a purchase, such as at an automated ticket booth, you can use another form of payment, such as a debit card that has a PIN.

Notify Card Providers of Upcoming Travel

Many credit card companies and banks have fraud alert departments that will freeze your card if they see suspicious charges—such as charges or withdrawals from another country. To avoid an accidental security block, it is a good idea to notify your credit card company and/or bank you will be using your cards abroad. You can do this by calling their customer service number a week or two before your departure. Some banks or credit card companies will also let you do this online.

You should also double-check what phone number you could call if you have a problem with a card while you are abroad. Don't assume you can use the 1-800 number printed on the back of your card—most 1 800 numbers don't work outside of the U.S.!

Tipping Guidelines

Of course, whether you tip, and how much, is always at your own discretion. But for those of you who have asked for tipping suggestions, we offer these guidelines.

- **O.A.T. Trip Experience Leader:** It is customary to express a personal “thank you” to your Trip Experience Leader at the end of your trip. As a guideline, many travelers give \$8-\$12 USD (or equivalent in local currency) per person for each day their Trip Experience Leader is with them. *Please note that these tips can only be in cash. If you are taking any of the optional extensions, your Trip Experience Leader during the extension(s) may not be the same as the one on your main trip.*
- **Housekeeping staff at hotels:** \$1-2 per room, per night
- **Waiters:** When dining as a group, your tip is included—there is no need for you to leave an additional tip. When dining on your own, check your bill for a service charge. If a service charge is not included in your bill, we suggest you leave about 10% of the check.
- **Taxi drivers:** The practice of tipping taxi drivers in Portugal and Spain varies from city to city. In some cities it is expected and in others it is discretionary. Your Trip Experience Leader can advise you what the practice is in each area that you visit.

Please Note: Your tour price includes gratuities on the main trip and optional extensions for local guides, drivers, and luggage porters that may assist you during the scheduled activities on your adventure. All tips are quoted in U.S. dollars; tips can be converted and paid in local currency or in U.S. dollars. Please do not use personal or traveler's checks for tips.

AIR, OPTIONAL TOURS & STAYING IN TOUCH

Land Only Travelers & Personalized Air

Quick Definitions

- **Land Only:** You will be booking your own international flights. Airport transfers are not included.
- **Air-Inclusive:** You booked international air with us. Airport transfers are included as long as you didn't customize your trip's dates (see next bullet).
- **Arrive Early, Stay Later, or Stopover (select adventures only):** If you chose one of these Personalization options and purchased air through O.A.T, accommodations and airport transfers are included. However, if you chose one of our Personalization options, but did not purchase air through O.A.T., accommodations are included, but airport transfers are not. If you chose one of our Personalization options, and purchase air through O.A.T. but not the accommodations, the airport transfers are not included. You will need to arrange for your own transfers. We have included transfer options below.
- **Personalization on Your Own:** If you have not purchased air through O.A.T. and decided to arrive early, stay longer, or stop in a connecting city on your own, you are responsible for airport transfers and accommodations. For your convenience, a preliminary list of your included hotels is available on your My Planner at www.oattravel.com/myplanner under "My Reservations" to help you with selecting a hotel for your additional time.

Airport Transfers Cannot Be Purchased

If you booked flights on your own, airport transfers upon your arrival and prior to your return will not be included. These transfers cannot be purchased through O.A.T. prior to your departure or onsite. As you will need to arrange your own transfers, please see our recommended options below:

- **Taxis:** Upon arrival at the airport, there are often taxis waiting outside to transfer you directly to your hotel. For your return transfer, you can also request your hotel concierge arrange for a pick-up in your name.
- **Public Transit:** Most airports around the world either have a shuttle bus or a train system in place to transfer you into the nearest city. You would then be able to take a taxi, board additional public transportation, or walk to your hotel. You can find out the best method of transportation at a Tourist Information Desk at the airport upon your arrival or, prior to your flight, research using either our recommended transfer website, Rome to Rio (www.rome2rio.com) or Google Maps.

Optional Tours

Optional tours are additional add-on tours that allow you to personalize your adventure by tailoring it to your tastes and needs. And if you decide not to join an optional tour? Then you'll have free time to relax or explore on your own—it's about options, not obligations.

What You Need to Know

- All optional tours are subject to change and availability.
- Optional tours that are reserved with your Trip Experience Leader can be paid for using credit/debit cards only. We accept MasterCard, Visa, and Discover credit cards; we can also take MasterCard or Visa debit cards as long as the card allows you to sign for purchases. (You won't be able to enter a PIN.)
- To ensure that you are charged in U.S. dollars, your payment will be processed by our U.S. headquarters in Boston. This process can take up to three months, so we ask that you only use a card that will still be valid three months after your trip is over. The charge may appear on your credit card statement as being from Boston, MA or may be labeled as "OPT Boston".
- Your Trip Experience Leader will give you details on the optional tours while you're on the trip. But if you'd like to look over descriptions of them earlier, you can do so at any time by referring to your Day-to-Day Itinerary (available online by signing into My Planner at www.oattravel.com/myplanner).

Communicating with Home from Abroad

Cell Phones

If you want to use your cell phone on the trip, check with your phone provider to see if your phone and service will work outside of the U.S. It may turn out to be cheaper to rent an international phone or buy a SIM card onsite. If you want to use a local SIM, just make certain your phone can accept one.

Calling Apps

Another option is to use a smartphone app like Skype or FaceTime. These services are usually less expensive than making a traditional call, but you'll need a Wi-Fi connection and the calls may count towards your phone plan's data allowance. Many smartphones—and some tablets or laptops—come with one of these apps pre-installed or you can download them for free from the appropriate apps store.

Calling Cards and 1-800 Numbers

When calling the U.S. from a foreign country, a prepaid calling card can be useful because it circumvents unexpected charges from the hotel. Calling cards purchased locally are typically the best (less expensive, more likely to work with the local phones, etc.).

One reminder: Do not call U.S. 1-800 numbers outside the continental United States. This can result in costly long distance fees, since 1-800 numbers do not work outside the country.

Internet

WiFi is readily available in some restaurants, cafes, and hotels. Some businesses will offer free WiFi, and some will charge for the service; charges vary. Cafes and chain restaurants are good places to look for free WiFi, although it is expected that you'll buy a drink while you're in the café. Many hotels will also have a computer in the lobby or in the business center that travelers can use; there may or may not be a fee.

How to Call Overseas

When calling overseas from the U.S., dial 011 for international exchange, then the country code (indicated by a plus sign: +), and then the number. Note that foreign phone numbers may not have the same number of digits as U.S. numbers; even within a country the number of digits can vary depending on the city and if the phone is a land line or cell phone.

Spain: +34

France: +33

Portugal: +351

PACKING: WHAT TO BRING & LUGGAGE LIMITS

Luggage Limits

MAIN TRIP LIMITS	
Pieces per person	One checked bag and one carry-on per person.
Weight restrictions	Varies by international airline. The current industry standard is 50 lbs for checked luggage and 15 lbs for carry-ons .
Size Restrictions	Standard airline size: checked luggage should not exceed 62 linear inches (length+ width + depth) and carry-on should not exceed 45 linear inches.
Luggage Type	A suitcase with wheels.

TRIP EXTENSION(S) LIMITS
Same as the main trip.

REMARKS/SUGGESTIONS
<p>One suitcase and one carry-on bag per person: Due to the space limitations on our coaches in Iberia, you'll be limited to one suitcase and one carry-on bag per person. This is to ensure that we have room for everyone's luggage. We ask that you abide by this limit to avoid inconveniencing your fellow travelers and prevent additional luggage or portage fees (which would be at your own cost). Most airlines now charge to check more than one suitcase per person for flights to Europe and other international flights.</p> <p>Luggage rules: Luggage rules and limits are set by governmental and airline policy. Enforcement of the rules may include spot checks or may be inconsistent. However one thing is the same across the board: If you are found to have oversized or overweight luggage, you will be subject to additional fees, to be assessed by—and paid to—the airline in question.</p>

Don't Forget:

- **These luggage limits may change.** If the airline(s) notify us of any changes, we will include an update in your Final Documents booklet.
- It's a good idea to reconfirm baggage restrictions and fees directly with the airline a week or so prior to departure. For your convenience, we maintain a list of the toll-free numbers for the most common airlines on our website in the FAQ section.
- **Baggage fees are not included in your trip price;** they are payable directly to the airlines.

Your Luggage

- **Checked Luggage:** One suitcase. Look for one with heavy nylon fabric, wrap-around handles, built-in wheels, and a heavy duty lockable zipper. Our staff in Iberia do not recommend duffel bags as they slow down the loading/unloading/delivery of luggage. *In Porto, Portugal our hotel does not offer portorage service before 7 am. This means that if your flight home is early enough that your airport transfer is before 7 am, you will be responsible for bringing your own luggage from the room to the motorcoach, where our driver will load it.*
- **Carry-on Bag:** You are allowed one carry-on bag per person. We suggest a tote or small backpack that can be used as both a carry-on bag for your flight and to carry your daily necessities—water bottle, camera, etc—during your daily activities.
- **Locks:** For flights that originate in the U.S., you can either use a TSA-approved lock or leave your luggage unlocked. Outside of the U.S. we strongly recommend locking your luggage as a theft-prevention measure.

Clothing Suggestions: Functional Tips

As you will experience a range of temperatures and weather conditions, our list suggests several layers of clothing. You'll want good-quality rain gear and a warm jacket for evenings. In fall and winter, you'll need a warm coat, hat, gloves, and a scarf. If you like to hand-wash your clothes, bring socks and underwear, and even shirts and pants, made of silk, synthetics, or a blend that will dry out overnight. You can buy clothing designed especially for travel. Look for clothes that offer warmth and breathability.

- **Footwear:** You'll be on your feet a lot during the trip, and walking over some rough and slippery surfaces. The soles of your shoes should offer good traction.

Style Hints & Dress Codes

- **Dress on our trip is functional and casual.** Generally, Portugal, Spain, and France are informal countries. Even in the fanciest hotels and restaurants men don't need a jacket and tie—though you won't feel out of place wearing them.
- **Shorts are fine for touring except in religious sites,** where men and women are sometimes expected to have legs and arms covered.

Suggested Packing Lists

We have included suggestions from Trip Experience Leaders and former travelers to help you pack. These lists are only jumping-off points—they offer recommendations based on experience, but not requirements. You may also want to consult the “Climate” chapter of this handbook.

And don't forget a reusable water bottle—you'll need it to take advantage of any refills we offer as we are working to eliminate single-use plastic bottles on all of our trips.

Recommended Clothing

- Shirts: A mixture of short and long-sleeved shirts in a breathable fabric, like cotton or cotton-blend. Polo shirts are more versatile than T-shirts.
- Trousers and/or jeans: Comfortable and loose fitting is best. Avoid tight fits.
- Walking shorts: Cut long for modesty. See the “Style Hints” section on the previous page for more details.
- Optional: Travel skirt.
- Shoes and socks: We recommend you wear sturdy walking shoes or supportive sports shoes for our daytime shore excursions.
- Light rain jacket/windbreaker with hood
- Wide-brim sun hat or visor for sun protection
- Light sweater, sweatshirt, or jacket (air conditioning can be cold in museums, motor coaches, etc).
- Underwear and sleepwear
- Swimsuit

Seasonal Clothing Recommendations

For late spring or summer departures:

- Light cotton garment, which are more comfortable than synthetic fabrics.
- A light windbreaker or sweater is still a good idea

For fall and winter departures:

- A light coat and sweaters or sweatshirts to layer.

Essential Items

- Daily essentials: toothbrush, toothpaste, floss, hairbrush or comb, shaving items, deodorant, etc. Our hotels will provide the basics like soap and shampoo, but if you are sensitive to fragrances or new products, you may wish to bring your preferred brands. Most hotels do not provide a washcloth, so you may wish to pack one.
- Spare eyeglasses/contact lenses; sunglasses
- Sunscreen, SPF 15 or stronger

- Insect repellent
- Light folding umbrella
- Pocket-size tissues
- Moist towelettes and/or anti-bacterial “water-free” hand cleanser
- Electrical transformer & plug adapters
- Camera gear with extra batteries or battery charger

Medicines & First Aid Gear

- Your own prescription medicines
- Travel first aid kit: Band-Aids, headache and pain relief, laxatives and anti-diarrhea tablets, something for upset stomach. Maybe a cold remedy, moleskin foot pads, antibiotic cream, or allergy medication.
- An antibiotic medication for gastrointestinal illness
- Optional: A strong prescription pain medication for rare emergency purposes. (Applies more to the extensions than the main trip.)

Optional Gear

- Travel alarm or travel watch with alarm
- Lightweight binoculars (essential if birding)
- Hanging toiletry bag (with hook to hang on doorknob and pockets to organize items)
- Basic sewing kit
- Hand-wash laundry soap and maybe plastic hang-up clothespins
- Reading materials
- Travel journal/note pad and pens
- Home address book
- Photos or post cards from home, small gift for Home-Hosted Visit
- Phrase book

- Folding walking staff, sold in most camping stores
- Pocket-size calculator for exchange rates

Home-Hosted Visits

Many of our adventures feature a visit with a local family, often as part of the *A Day in the Life* experience. It is customary, though not necessary, to return your hosts' generosity with a small gift. If you do bring a gift, we recommend that you bring something the whole family can enjoy, or something that represents your region, state, or hometown. Get creative and keep it small—peach jelly from Georgia, maple sugar candy from New England, orange blossom soap from California; something that can be used or used up is best. When choosing a gift, be certain to consider the local culture as well. For example, we do not recommend alcohol in Muslim countries because it is forbidden in Islam, and your hosts may be religious. Not all O.A.T. adventures include a Home-Hosted Visit; please check your final itinerary before you depart.

Electricity Abroad

When traveling overseas, the voltage is usually different and the plugs might not be the same shape.

Voltage

Electricity in Spain, Portugal, and France is 230 volts. In the U.S., it is 110 volts. Most of the things a traveler will want to plug in—battery chargers, MP3 players, tablets or computers—can run off both 110 and 220–240. But you should check the item or the owner's guide first to confirm this before you plug it in. If you have something that needs 110 volts—like a shaver or a hairdryer—you can bring a transformer to change the current. (But transformers tend to burn out, so it might be better to leave whatever it is at home.)

Plugs

The shape of plugs will vary from country to country, and sometimes even within a country depending on when that building was built. To plug something from the U.S. into a local socket you'll need an adapter that fits between the plug and the socket. Even though you'll only need types C, F, and E for this trip, it may be easier to purchase an all-in-one, universal adapter/converter combo. Versatile and lightweight, these can usually be found at your local electronics goods or hardware stores. Sometimes you can buy them at large retailers too, like Target or Walmart. If you forget to bring an adapter, you might also find them for sale at the airport when you arrive at your destination.

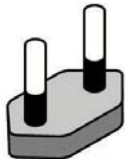
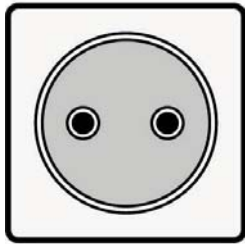
Different plug shapes are named by letters of the alphabet. Standard U.S. plugs are Type A and Type B. Here is the list of plugs for the countries on this trip:

Spain: C and/or F

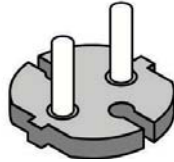
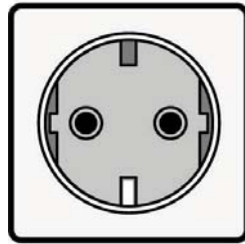
Portugal: C and/or F

France: C and E

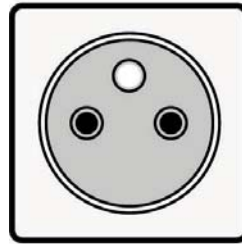
Type C



Type F



Type E



Availability

Barring the occasional and unpredictable power outage, electricity is as readily available on this adventure as it is in the U.S.

CLIMATE & AVERAGE TEMPERATURES

Bilbao, Spain: Along Spain's northern coast, there is an oceanic-maritime climate, with temperate weather year-round and rare major temperature fluctuations or extremes. Spring has average temperatures of 57°F in February, and 61°F in March. Spring, however, can be rainy.

Santiago, Spain: This region has a Mediterranean climate characterized by abundant rainfall with mild, humid winters and warm, dry summers. The coldest months are December, January and February. The summer season lasts about six months, from May to October. July and August are the hottest months with relatively little rainfall.

Porto, Portugal: Porto, the second largest city in Portugal following Lisbon, exhibits a temperate maritime climate. Here, you can expect the summers to be warm, averaging at 77 degrees with frequent rain showers, and the winters to be mild and rainy. In general, Porto is one of the wettest areas in Europe; even during its dry season you can expect showers and bursts of colder weather. Even during its rainiest periods, Porto tends to be sunny and temperatures are mild but could drop into the high 30s-low 40s.

Carcassonne, France (Southwest): Southern France's climate is similar to Spain's northern coast. It has an oceanic-maritime climate, with temperate weather year-round and rare major temperature fluctuations or extremes. The warmer months tend to be in July and August. The cooler months tend to be in December, January, and February.

Lisbon, Portugal: Lisbon is one of the warmest European capitals. Spring and summer months are usually sunny with maximum temperatures close to or above 86 degrees and lows between 59 and 68 degrees. Autumn and winter are typically rainy and windy with some sunny days; the temperature rarely falls below 41 degrees, usually staying at an average of 50. On average, there are 100 days with rain per year. Lisbon's climate is strongly influenced by the Gulf Stream.

NOTE: If you are taking one of our optional stopovers before or after your OAT adventure, please be aware the climate and temperatures might be different from what you experienced during your tour. To prepare for weather differences and pack appropriate clothing, we recommend the following world weather sites:

- www.intellicast.com
- www.weather.com
- www.wunderground.com

Climate Averages & Online Forecast

The following charts reflect the average climate as opposed to exact weather conditions. This means they serve only as general indicators of what can reasonably be expected. An extreme heat wave or cold snap could fall outside these ranges. As your departure approaches, we encourage you to go online to www.oattravel.com/myplanner for your 10-day forecast. If you want to check the forecast for alternate locations not listed, we recommend using www.weather.com, a world weather website

Average Daily High/Low Temperatures (°F), Humidity & Monthly Rainfall

MONTH	BILBAO, SPAIN			SANTIAGO, SPAIN		
	Temp. High-Low	% Relative Humidity (am-pm)	Monthly Rainfall (inches)	Temp. High-Low	% Relative Humidity (avg)	Monthly Rainfall (inches)
JAN	56 to 41	80 to 63	5.0	52 to 39	84	10.2
FEB	58 to 41	79 to 58	3.8	54 to 40	82	8.8
MAR	61 to 42	83 to 58	3.7	58 to 41	77	5.7
APR	62 to 45	84 to 61	4.9	60 to 42	77	5.5
MAY	68 to 50	86 to 61	3.5	64 to 47	77	5.8
JUN	73 to 55	89 to 62	2.5	70 to 51	75	3.2
JUL	77 to 59	90 to 60	2.4	75 to 55	74	1.5
AUG	78 to 59	92 to 61	3.2	76 to 55	74	1.5
SEP	76 to 56	88 to 59	2.9	72 to 53	76	5.0
OCT	69 to 51	83 to 60	4.8	64 to 48	82	7.6
NOV	62 to 46	81 to 62	5.5	57 to 44	85	7.9
DEC	57 to 43	79 to 63	4.6	53 to 41	86	11.1

MONTH	PORTO, PORTUGAL			CARCASSONNE, FRANCE		
	Temp. High-Low	% Relative Humidity (am-pm)	Monthly Rainfall (inches)	Temp. High-Low	% Relative Humidity (avg)	Monthly Rainfall (inches)
JAN	56 to 41	87 to 70	6.2	50 to 38	85	2.7
FEB	59 to 43	88 to 71	5.5	52 to 38	80	2.1
MAR	62 to 45	86 to 66	3.5	58 to 42	75	2.1
APR	64 to 48	86 to 66	4.6	63 to 46	75	2.9
MAY	67 to 52	89 to 67	3.8	70 to 53	75	2.2
JUN	73 to 57	90 to 66	1.8	78 to 59	70	1.8
JUL	77 to 60	91 to 65	0.7	84 to 63	65	1.1
AUG	77 to 60	92 to 64	1.1	83 to 63	65	1.7
SEP	75 to 57	90 to 65	2.8	76 to 57	75	1.7
OCT	69 to 53	89 to 70	5.4	67 to 52	85	2.3
NOV	62 to 47	87 to 70	6.2	56 to 44	85	2.3
DEC	58 to 44	86 to 72	7.7	50 to 39	85	2.5

MONTH	LISBON, PORTUGAL		
	Temp. High-Low	% Relative Humidity (am-pm)	Monthly Rainfall (inches)
JAN	58 to 47	85 to 72	3.8
FEB	61 to 49	84 to 68	3.6
MAR	65 to 51	83 to 61	2.0
APR	67 to 53	83 to 61	2.5
MAY	71 to 56	82 to 57	2.2
JUN	77 to 61	83 to 54	0.7
JUL	82 to 64	80 to 48	0.2
AUG	82 to 65	80 to 48	0.3
SEP	80 to 63	82 to 51	1.1
OCT	72 to 58	84 to 62	3.1
NOV	64 to 53	86 to 71	4.2
DEC	59 to 49	86 to 75	4.8

ABOUT YOUR DESTINATIONS: CULTURE, ETIQUETTE & MORE

O.A.T. Trip Experience Leaders: A World of Difference

During your adventure, you'll be accompanied by one of our local, Trip Experience Leaders. All are fluent in English and possess the skills, certification, and experience necessary to ensure an enriching adventure. As locals of the regions you'll explore with them, our Trip Experience Leaders provide the kind of firsthand knowledge and insight that make local history, culture, and wildlife come alive. Coupled with their unbridled enthusiasm, caring personalities, and ability to bring diverse groups of travelers together, our Trip Experience Leaders ensure that your experience with O.A.T. is one you'll remember for a lifetime.

Spanish & Portuguese Culture

In 1983, the artist Joan Miró created an image for the Spanish Tourist Board that is still used today—a bold red orb encircled by a black shadow, with a vivid yellow penumbra, a star, and the stylized text “España.” Beneath this, the slogan read “Everything under the sun.” It is one of the few bits of advertising that truly captures its subject, for Spain boasts a culture that is strikingly bold, colorful, and lit up by diversity. Phoenicians, Romans, Moors, Jews, Arabs, Goths and many other people have left their imprint here, giving each region a unique cultural identity. In some cases, that identity is very distinct from the mainstream culture, most notably in Galicia, Catalonia, and the Basque Country, which are autonomous communities with their own languages and traditions.

Beyond the regionalism, there is a unifying national identity that is bound up with a deep love of country, a sense of personal honor, and a shared value around sociability that Spaniards are very proud of. That pride is sometimes mistaken by outsiders as haughtiness. But once you get acquainted with a Spaniard, you will usually find that they are informal, candid, and unafraid to show their emotions. Spaniards love to converse and will stick around long after a meal, chatting for hours. This period has a name: *la sobremesa*, which means “over the table.” So don't rush off after your lunch...enjoy a coffee or a digestif, and enjoy the good company.

One reason the *sobremesa* exists has to do with the organization of the typical Spanish day. Spain has some of the longest working hours in Europe—from 9am to 8pm. But there is also a two- to three-hour break in the afternoon, the *siesta*. Once upon a time the *siesta* was a practical way for workers to avoid the midday heat, and recharge their batteries with a little nap. Nowadays, most people do not nap, especially if they work too far from home to commute back for a snooze. Instead, they may linger longer at the table after lunch with colleagues or friends.

Many shops close during the *siesta*, but this is offset by the fact that they remain open late at night. Spain in general is a late-night culture. Most people do not eat dinner until 9pm at the earliest, and it's not unusual to see entire families, children included, socializing in the cafes and plazas until midnight or later. Recently, there has been debate as to whether Spain's traditional working hours make sense. On the other hand, in an age when stress and isolation are serious threats to one's mental and physical health, a forced break to slow down, relax and enjoy some human connection may not be a bad thing.

Among the things Spaniards are proud of is their country's artistic heritage, and here again, we are talking about diversity. You will see it in the striking architecture—from Roman ruins to Mudéjar palaces to Gothic cathedrals and the modernist masterpieces of Antoni Gaudí. Besides contemporary pop music, you are likely to hear Spanish classical guitar, and the flamenco music that arose from the *cante jondo* (deep song) of Andalusia's gypsies. Spanish writer Miguel de Cervantes gave us the first modern novel in 1605 with *Don Quixote*, and others following in his footsteps include the avant-garde Federico Garcia Lorca, Miguel Delibes (a multi-time Nobel nominee), and the contemporary Javier Marías.

As for visual arts, beyond the Golden Age giants like Goya, El Greco, and Velázquez, Spain's modernist pantheon includes Pablo Picasso, Juan Gris, Salvador Dali, Miquel Barceló, and of course, Joan Miró, who was spot-on about that “everything under the sun” thing.

Portuguese culture is shot through with the influences of the Celtic, Lusitanian, Phoenician, Germanic, Visigoth, Viking, Sephardic Jewish, and Moorish people who settled here. Set at Europe's westernmost point, Portugal developed its own easygoing ways, and you'll notice that the pace of life here is more relaxed than in many other parts of Europe. It is one of the most charming aspects of traveling here.

Most visitors find the Portuguese people to be gracious, courteous and helpful—if a little reserved. Part of that stems from the value they place on modesty and humility. They are careful not to boast, be too loud, or cause offense. The Portuguese are arguably more conservative than their neighbors. They tend to uphold and revere old traditions, and religious and family ties are very strong here. As you come to appreciate those things, you'll also begin to feel the Portuguese people's real warmth.

António de Oliveira Salazar, Portugal's onetime dictator from 1926 to 1968, once described the nation's culture in terms of the “Three Fs:” *fado* (the searingly sad folk song), *Fátima* (the Catholic shrine where a miraculous vision is said to have occurred), and *futebol* (soccer). He was being facetious, but there is no denying that the Portuguese people hold these things very dear.

Take *fado*, for instance. This uniquely Portuguese style of folk music is on the UNESCO Intangible Cultural Heritage list. Translating to “destiny” or “fate,” *fado* is mournful, and yet, passionate. The songs are often about homesickness, the sea, lost love and longing—things that would be familiar to many a Portuguese seafarer, of which there are many. It is the musical expression of an important concept called *saudade*, a word connoting longing, melancholy, and nostalgia for something lost. But *saudade* is also bittersweet, tinged with beautiful memories. The Portuguese writer Manuel de Melo called it “a pleasure you suffer, an ailment you enjoy.”

Some very devout people do make pilgrimages (*romarias*) to religious sites like Fátima, but overall, strict religious observance is on the decline in this predominantly Catholic culture. But that is a matter of church attendance and involvement with the organized church. Religion is still interwoven with the larger culture. Most towns are physically centered around a church, which is the nucleus of social events such as the annual village festa (festival). Most people have strong attachments to their hometowns and tend to remain there, or visit often. Grandparents are often involved in helping to care for children when the parents work, and especially in smaller towns (where homes tend to be larger), they often live with their children as part of the extended family.

As for *futebol* (soccer), Portugal's obsession with the sport borders on the religious, and some of the greatest players in the world (like Luís Figo, Eusébio, and Cristiano Ronaldo) hailed from Portugal, and are national heroes. When a big match is on, the whole country seems to stop to cheer their favorite of the so-called "Three Greatest" teams: F.C. Porto, Sporting C.P., and S.L. Benfica. Head to a local tavern, watch the game with the locals, and you are sure to get swept up in the excitement.

If sports are not your thing, you will surely find many other cultural diversions...Portugal has experienced a renaissance, with many talented young designers, artists, musicians, architects, chefs, and entrepreneurs flocking to cities like Lisbon, Porto, and Guimarães—all of which have been named European Capitals of Culture since the advent of this century.

Religion and Religious Observance

Catholicism became the official religion of Spain in 589 AD, and since then its influence has pervaded every aspect of Spanish society. But the nature of that influence has shifted over the past century. Though 68.5% of Spaniards identify as Catholic, only 14% of them say they attend mass on a weekly basis. Some of this goes back to the Franco era, when the church's connections with the regime caused many Spanish Catholics to be skeptical of the clergy.

Mistrust of the church hierarchy notwithstanding, there is still a deep embrace of the religious traditions that are now embedded in Spanish culture. There is a church in every neighborhood, and Christian symbols are visible throughout the country. Each region or city has a patron saint who is celebrated on his or her dedicated holiday (*santo*) with processions and fiestas. Easter in Andalucía is marked by locals carrying elaborate floats and statues of Jesus and Mary through their towns. The truly devout may make pilgrimages (*romerías*) to religious shrines, the most famous of which is the *Camino de Santiago de Compostela* (the St. James' Way) in the north of Spain. Even those who are not observant may attend mass on holidays, have religious weddings, or baptize their children.

The second largest religious group in Spain are Muslims, who comprise about 4% of the population. Many are first- or second-generation immigrants from Morocco and other African nations, and they are more likely to be active worshippers than their Catholic counterparts.

The majority of Portuguese people (81%) identify as Catholics. However, apart from major celebrations, church attendance is quite low. Even so, Catholicism is deeply entwined with the national and cultural identity. Even those who are not devout still have religious weddings, baptisms, and funerals, and festivals honoring regional saints are still popular. It was only after the 1974 "carnation revolution" that the church and state were officially separated.

Visiting Churches

Many churches run special services that you are welcome to attend. Otherwise, you are welcome to visit outside of services. Most churches have a dress code, but it is loosely enforced. Out of respect, you should try to cover your shoulders and wear long pants or shorts or skirts that reach the knee. If you'll be traveling during warm weather and want to go sleeveless or wear a tank top,

then we suggest that you throw a light sweater or cover-up into your daypack. A pashmina-type shawl is ideal for covering shoulders or low-cut blouses, or even wrapping around the waist as a sarong.

Language in Spain

The official language that is spoken throughout Spain is Spanish—specifically, the Castilian form of Spanish. Spanish is a Romance language (along with Catalan, French, Italian, Romanian and Portuguese.) But there are many Spanish dialects and even separate regional languages that are widely spoken such as Catalan (spoken in Catalonia), Gallego (spoken in Galicia), Euskara (spoken in the Basque Country), and Aranese (spoken in parts of Catalonia near the Pyrenees.) What language you speak has social and political overtones, and many Spaniards choose to use local dialects at home or in daily business.

English is the most common foreign language, spoken by 27.7% of Spaniards. It is more widely used by young people, and those numbers are destined to rise given that nearly 90% of school-aged children are now learning English in school. In tourist areas, many signs are in English as well as Spanish.

Useful Phrases

Since many people speak English you should have little trouble communicating. And if you know a little Spanish, your hosts will be very appreciative if you make the effort to speak it. Spain has some colorful slang and idiomatic expressions that you may hear. Here are a few:

- *Vale* is a word you will hear a lot. It just means, “okay,” as in “*Vale, vamos!*” (Okay, let’s go.) Sometimes, it is just tacked onto the beginning or end of a sentence, just as we might do in English.
- *No pasa nada* means “no worries” or “it’s nothing,” and is used as a reply when someone thanks you.
- *Que tal* is the informal way of greeting someone, meaning “what’s up?” or “how are you going?”
- You might have learned that *simpático* means “nice” in Spanish, and it does. But a more informal word to use is *majo* or *maja*. Besides meaning “nice” or “pleasant,” it can also mean “pretty.” So you could say, “*Nuestra líder de la gira es muy maja.*” (Our Trip Leader is very nice.)

Language in Portugal

Portuguese is the official language of Portugal. It is a Romance language (along with Catalan, French, Italian, and Romanian), and is closely related to the Galician language spoken in northwest Spain. About 27% of the people also speak English, and that number is growing.

Useful Phrases

Portuguese people will appreciate the effort (even a fractured one) if you try to learn a few words in their language. Please do not try to speak to locals in Spanish—the Portuguese are sensitive to comparisons with their neighbor and are also very proud of their own language. Since enough people speak English, you should have little trouble getting by. Here are some colorful slang expressions that you may hear:

- *Tchau* is pronounced similar to the Italian word *ciao*, and is used as an informal way to say “goodbye”
- *‘Tá bem* is the Portuguese way to say “fine” or “it’s all good.”
- *Fixe* means “cool,” but also “nice” and “good.” It can be used in a variety of contexts, such as *Ele é um tipo fixe* (He’s a cool guy) or *a viagem foi muito fixe* (the trip was really nice.)

Hotel Courtesy in Spain

Like in many other European nations, manners are more formal in Spain than the U.S. Hotel staff will likely address you as “señor” or “señora” and may be caught off guard if you ask a question without greeting them with a quick “hello” or “good day” first. Local staff (and other visiting Europeans) will generally make an effort to be quiet in hallways and common rooms, which are normally used for reading, relaxing, or quiet conversation. For this reason, eating and drinking in any common rooms other than the bar or restaurant is frowned on. If you have any laundry to dry, please keep it inside your room (and not on the balcony).

Getting Around in Spain

Taxi: Taxis are widely available in the area.

Bus: Generally less expensive than both taxi and train travel, bus travel in Spain has increased in recent years.

Trains: Spain has an extensive railway network linking all major towns and cities, and rail travel in Spain is generally comfortable, reliable and often cheaper than many other European countries. Trains are modern and many are high-speed.

Getting Around in Portugal

Taxi: Portuguese taxis are a convenient but expensive method of transportation for long rides. If you are just going across town, prices are more reasonable. Officially metered taxis are ivory colored or black with green tops.

Trains: Portugal’s railway system is not extensive, but it does operate between major cities. On all train fares, passengers 65 and older will be given half-rate fares upon presentation of passport.

Remember to purchase your ticket prior to boarding the train. Once on board, you may be asked to show your ticket. If you do not have one, you will be charged a hefty fine! Tickets are not sold on the train.

Casino Estoril

One of the most famous casinos in Europe is in Estoril, about a thirty-minute taxi ride from Lisbon (cab fare costing about twenty euros). But before you set off, be sure to bring your passport with you, as it is required for entrance.

Taking Photographs

The etiquette of photographing people in most countries is about the same as it would be on the streets of your hometown. You need permission to take a close-up, but not for a crowd scene. Be especially polite if you want to photograph children or older women. If you want to shoot a great portrait, show interest in your subject and try to have a bit of social interaction first. Then use sign language to inquire if a picture is OK.

Please do not take photographs of military personnel, military compounds, or other official institutions/personnel (such as police). This may result in the confiscation of your camera.

In museums or at archaeological sites, there may be restrictions on using your flash. Please obey any signs or directions by staff; the no-flash rule protects the fragile artifacts and artwork from damage by repeated exposure to light. Occasionally, there may also be a small fee levied by the museum or site for the privilege of taking photos.

Safety & Security

As you travel, exercise the same caution and awareness that you would in a large American city. Don't be overly nervous or suspicious, but keep your eyes open. If you are venturing out after dark, go with one or two other people.

Carry a one-day supply of cash, and your passport, in a travel pouch. Don't leave valuables unattended in your hotel room. Most hotels will offer use of a hotel safe at the front desk or an electronic in-room safe (for which you can set your own personal number). Please utilize this.

Pickpockets may create a sudden distraction. In any sort of puzzling street situation, try to keep one hand on your wallet or money belt. If an encounter with a local turns out to be long and complicated and involves money or your valuables, be very careful.

Spanish Cuisine

The 21st century's culinary firmament is lit by a galaxy of superstar chefs from Spain. Among them are the legendary Ferran Adrià (whose former restaurant, El Bulli, launched the "molecular gastronomy" trend), Carme Ruscalleda (the only female chef to be awarded five Michelin stars), octogenarian Juan Mari Arzak (the father of the "New Basque" cuisine), and Jose Andrés, (credited with bringing small plate dining to America). Even if you do not dine in one of their restaurants, they have influenced Spanish chefs in even the humblest establishments, where you might find traditional classics like these:

- **Gambas al ajillo:** Shrimp cooked with Garlic and Chilies
- **Gazpacho:** A chilled soup that hails from Andalusia

- **Jamón Iberico:** A Spanish ham that is dry-cured and hung on the rafters of local bars and restaurants
- **Txangurro:** A baked spider crab stuffed with onions, tomatoes, leeks, brandy, and parsley, topped with breadcrumbs.
- **Pastel Vasco:** A slice of vanilla custard cream with a crunchy crust.

Portuguese Cuisine

Start with rich farms and Europe's oldest vineyards, add in the bounties of the Atlantic and Mediterranean, season with some Moorish spice, and that is a good beginning for Portugal's unique cuisine. Then, you can ramp it up with a variety of novel ingredients that Portuguese explorers brought home during the 15th-century: African vanilla and cinnamon...potatoes from South America...*piri piri* chilies from Brazil (used in a popular chicken dish)...and citrus from the Orient. Here are a few things Portuguese chefs do with all that variety:

- **Caldo verde:** A classic soup of kale, potatoes, onions, and garlic simmered with olive oil in a clay pot. It is often served with cornbread and sometimes made with ham or sausage.
- **Feijoada à transmontane:** A bean stew with cabbage and sausages. It is often served confit-style in a dish called *rojões*, which features white wine and cumin.
- **Francesinha:** A hefty sandwich of thickly sliced bread stuffed with bacon or pork belly, sliced roasted pork, sausage, beefsteak, fried egg, and cheese.
- **Aletria:** A sweet noodle pudding made with *vermicelli* (angel hair) pasta, milk, sugar, egg yolks, cinnamon, and lemon or orange zest.
- **Cataplana:** fish and shellfish cooked with red and green peppers, tomatoes, garlic, wine, and paprika.

French Cuisine

It would be an understatement to say the French have an appreciation for fine food. They have a reverence for it, and it shows in the quality of French cuisine, which was designated by UNESCO as part of the World's Intangible Cultural Heritage. You certainly don't need to dine at a Michelin-starred restaurant to experience the best of French cuisine. A visit to just about any local *marché* (open-air market), *pâtisserie* (pastry shop), *boulangerie* (bakery), *café*, *bistro*, or *brasserie* may well be as memorable an outing as visiting the famed monuments and museums.

Classical French dishes formed the basis of what we once called *haute cuisine*. But some of these dishes were regional in origin. Fortunately, because there is such widespread regard for gastronomy, regional dishes may appear on menus far from home, especially in large cities. Some of these dishes include:

- **Soupe à l'oignon:** a sweet and savory broth of caramelized onions, beef stock, and sherry with a crust of grilled Comté or Gruyère cheese.

- **Coq au vin:** a specialty of Burgundy, made with chicken braised with red Burgundy wine, lardons, mushrooms, and garlic.
- **Entrecôte à la Bordelaise:** A traditional dish in Bordeaux. It is a rib eye steak cooked in a red wine sauce with bone marrow.
- **Bouillabaisse:** A seafood soup made from fish and shellfish cooked in a broth of onions, tomatoes, saffron, and herbs.
- **Coq au Riesling:** A flavorful dish of chicken braised in white Riesling wine, accented with lardons of bacon and button mushrooms, and enriched with a silky touch of crème fraîche
- **flammekueche** (or in French, **tarte flambée**): A chewy flatbread smothered with **fromage blanc** (a tangy fresh cheese), **crème fraîche** or sour cream, slivered onions, and crispy **lardons** of bacon.

Shopping: What to Buy, Customs, Shipping & More

There may be scheduled visits to local shops during your adventure. There is no requirement to make a purchase during these stops, and any purchase made is a direct transaction with the shop in question, subject to the vendor's terms of purchase. O.A.T. is not responsible for purchases you make on your trip or for the shipment of your purchases.

Returns

If you discover an issue with an item, you should contact the vendor directly and expect that any resolution will take longer than it would in the U.S. We recommend that you keep a copy of all your receipts, invoices, or contracts, along with the shop's contact information. Keep in mind, local practice may vary from U.S. standards, so don't assume that you have a certain number of days after the purchase to speak up or that you are guaranteed a refund.

Crafts & Souvenirs

Spain

Leather goods, from supple suede gloves and elegant calf handbags to wineskins that require careful curing (botas), are excellent purchases. Other good buys are shoes, from classical calf pumps to provincial cloth espadrilles; porcelain by Lladro and pottery by regional craftsmen; and wool rugs made by tapestry makers or simple cotton-rag throws.

Siesta: Throughout Spain, most stores and offices close between 1:30 pm and 5 pm. Then they reopen until 7:30 pm (many close even later). Restaurants generally remain open during siesta. In the larger cities you may find that big department stores will stay open from 10am – 10pm.

Value Added Tax: Known in Spain as the IVA, Value Added Tax is levied on most articles, services, and meals. The IVA ranges from 7% to 21% (luxury items, cars). Depending on how much you spend on certain goods, you may be eligible for a partial refund of this tax. Ask the shopkeeper or salesperson about the VAT at time of purchase. Be sure to save all receipts and forms for Customs.

Portugal

Among the recommended buys in Portugal are Atlantis crystal, Vista Alegre porcelain, pottery, tiles, and gold and silver-filigree jewelry. Other local handicrafts include lace, woodwork, cork products, ceramics, embroidered goods, hand-loomed carpets, hand-knit sweaters, crocheted shawls, brass, copper and pewter ware, and baskets.

Europe Tax-Free Shopping: Many stores in Portuguese cities have adopted the “Europe Tax-Free Shopping” (ETS) system, which allows foreign shoppers to easily recover the Value Added Tax (IVA)—which can be anywhere from 6%–23% depending on the item. Stores that participate in the ETS system will clearly display an ETS sign at the entrance. If you make a purchase, ask the shopkeeper for a tax-free form. When you depart Europe, you show the airport customs official your purchases and tax-free forms. You will then receive a cash refund or a credit to your credit card, approximately four weeks following your return to the U.S., for the total amount of your tax-free allowance.

France

Popular French souvenirs include fashion, art, antiques, perfume, food, and wine. Each region has its own specialties, but you can often find them for sale in other parts of the country. If time is short, try checking out a big department store, like Galeries Lafayette or Printemps. Or look for Monoprix chains, which have lower prices and are more for everyday shopping (sort of like the French version of Target).

The French value-added tax (VAT) is typically 19.6% and can be as high as 33.33% on luxury articles. Depending on how much you spend on certain goods, you may be eligible for a partial refund of this tax. Ask the shopkeeper or salesperson at the time of purchase. Be sure to save all receipts for Customs. (Generally, you have to spend over 175€ at the same shop, on the same day, and have filled out a special form for this process.)

U.S. Customs Regulations & Shipping Charges

For all things related to U.S. Customs, the ultimate authority is the U.S. Bureau of Customs & Border Protection. Their website, www.cbp.gov has the answers to the most frequently asked questions. Or you can call them at **1-877-227-5511**.

The top three points to know are:

- At time of writing, your personal duty-free allowance is \$800 for items brought with you. Items totaling more than \$800 are subject to duty fees.
- **Items shipped home are always subject to duty when received in the U.S.** Even when the shop has offered to include shipping and duties in the price, this typically means shipping to the nearest customs facility and payment of the export duties—not door-to-door shipping or payment of the import duties. All additional duties or shipping charges would be your responsibility. Unless an item is small enough to send by parcel service (like FedEx), chances are you will need to arrange shipping or pick-up once the item is in the U.S. and will need to pay customs duties.

- It is illegal to import products made from endangered animal species. U.S. Customs & Border Protection will seize these items, as well as most furs, coral, tortoise shell, reptile skins, feathers, plants, and items made from animal skins.

DEMOGRAPHICS & HISTORY

Spain

Facts, Figures & National Holidays

- **Area:** The mainland occupies approximately 195,364.5 square miles. Off Spain's east coast in the Mediterranean are the Balearic Islands (1,936 square miles), the largest of which is Majorca. Sixty miles west of Africa are the Canary Islands (2,808 square miles).
- **Capital:** Madrid
- **Languages:** Spanish, Basque, Catalan, and Galician. In resort areas, many people also speak English, French, and German.
- **Geography:** Spain's topography consists of a broad central plateau that slopes to the south and east, crossed by a series of mountain ranges and river valleys. It is a land of both towering peaks and endless beaches, as well as fertile landscapes and high, dry plains. Principal rivers are the Ebro in the northeast, the Tajo in the central region, and the Guadalquivir in the south.
- **Population:** 48,958,159 (estimate)
- **Religions:** Roman Catholic 67.8%, atheist 9.1%, other 2.2%, non-believer 18.4%, unspecified 2.5%
- **Time Zone:** Spain is six hours ahead of U.S. Eastern Time.

National Holidays: Spain

In addition to the holidays listed below, Spain celebrates a number of national holidays that follow a lunar calendar, such as Easter. To find out if you will be traveling during these holidays, please visit www.timeanddate.com/holidays.

01/01 New Year's Day

01/06 Epiphany

05/01 Labor Day

08/15 Assumption of Mary

10/12 Hispanic Day

11/01 All Saints Day

12/06 Constitution Day

12/08 Immaculate Conception

12/25 Christmas

Spain: A Brief History

Spain has been continuously inhabited for 1.2 million years, but the bulk of our knowledge about Spain's earliest people begins around 1100 BC, when Phoenicians established trading colonies along the southern coast. These attracted the Greeks; and around the same time, Celts descended in the north, establishing hill villages known as *castros*, many of which still stand in Galicia and northern Portugal.

The Romans arrived in Spain around 206 BC, but had to defeat the Carthaginians for it. Afterwards, the Romans still had a fight on their hands: The Iberian tribes resisted for 200 years. Today, in places like Mérida, Córdoba, Segovia, and Tarragona, you can see remnants of Roman roads, bridges, aqueducts, temples, and amphitheaters. Towards the end of their dominion, the Romans also brought Christianity. But Pax Romana crumbled as Visigoths and Franks swept over the Pyrenees.

The civilized heights of Rome were not equaled until the Moors arrived from North Africa around 711 AD. The enlightened Islamic civilization they established was called Al-Andalus, and it lasted for nearly 800 years. Islamic cities such as Córdoba, Seville, and Granada flourished. Throughout Al-Andalus, Christians, and Jews lived under some restrictions, but were free to worship, work, own property, and trade. When the rest of Europe was struggling through the Dark Ages, the city of Córdoba became a beacon of enlightenment with a celebrated university, palaces, gardens, observatories, libraries, street lamps, and running water. Mathematics, astronomy, literature, music, and architecture flourished.

Córdoba's star began to dim in the 11th century as the caliphate broke into dozens of small kingdoms. Infighting opened a crack for northern Christians to pry open, and the Christian Reconquest pushed south. The last stronghold of the Moors, Granada, fell to King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella in 1491. They instituted a 300-year campaign of terror, the Spanish Inquisition, which sought to root out heretics through the confiscation of property, imprisonment, torture, and execution. It required Muslims and Jews to convert to Christianity or leave Spain, thereby ending a source of valuable cultural contributions.

But Spain's fortunes continued to rise. In 1492, Christopher Columbus opened up the New World to Spain's imperial ambitions. Spain amassed tremendous wealth and a vast empire through Columbus' conquest of the Caribbean, as well as the conquest of Mexico by Cortes (1519–21) and Peru by Pizarro (1532–33). In 1588, Philip II sent his Armada to invade England, but its defeat cost Spain its supremacy. After centuries of dwindling losses, Spain's overseas empire ended with Cuban independence in 1898.

Spain remained neutral during World War I, but was unable to avoid the upheavals that arose in its aftermath. Civil war erupted in 1936, pitting right-wing Nationalists under Francisco Franco against socialist, communist, and centrist Republicans. Nazi Germany and Fascist Italy supported Franco with planes, weapons, and 92,000 troops, making Spain a testing ground for WWII. Franco declared the war over in 1939, but there was no peace. In the ensuing years, his regime killed 100,000 intellectuals, teachers, and dissenters. After World War II (which Spain sat out), a UN-sponsored boycott plunged the nation into "years of hunger." They didn't wane until the 1950s, when U.S. aid and tourism infused the economy. When Franco died in 1975, Juan Carlos I took the throne and Spain transitioned to democracy.

When the 2008 global economic crisis plunged Spain's economy, the conservative government enacted harsh austerity measures. Youth unemployment reached 60%, and by 2017 over 87,000 workers left Spain, creating a brain drain. Recently, the government rolled out a "Return Plan" to lure them back. Also in 2017, a referendum in Catalonia backed separation from Spain. Madrid imposed direct rule, though polls show that 68% of Spaniards prefer dialogue with Catalonia. This issue, along with economic recovery, will dominate Spain for the near future.

Portugal

Facts, Figures & National Holidays

- **Area:** Portugal contains 35,556 square miles, including the Azores and Madeira islands. The Madeira island group occupies 305 square miles. The main island of Madeira is 35 miles long and about 13 miles across at its widest point.
- **Capital:** Lisbon
- **Language:** Portuguese
- **Geography:** Portugal's mainland terrain is mountainous, pastoral, and earthy. Its interior moors and flatlands are circumscribed by 500 miles of gorgeous coastline with long stretches of sandy beaches. Madeira consists of two inhabited islands, Madeira and Porto Santo, and two groups of uninhabited islands. The largest island is Madeira. It is volcanic and mountainous, with its highest peaks in the interior rising to over 6,000 feet. The island contains nearly 100 miles of coastline, but no beaches (except one tiny one at Prainha near the eastern tip of the island). The north coast is untamed and less populated; the western end is forested and cool; and the eastern tip consists of barren reddish rock that extends into the blue sea.
- **Population:** 10,839,514 (estimate)

- **Religion:** Roman Catholic, 81%, Christian and other, 19%
- **Time Zone:** Portugal is ahead of U.S. Eastern Time by five hours; Central Time by six hours; Mountain Time by seven hours; Pacific Time by eight hours.

National Holidays: Portugal

In addition to the holidays listed below, Portugal celebrates a number of national holidays that follow a lunar calendar, such as Easter and Corpus Christi. To find out if you will be traveling during these holidays, please visit www.timeanddate.com/holidays.

01/01 New Year's Day

04/25 Liberty Day

05/01 Labor Day

06/10 Portugal Day

08/15 Assumption of Mary

10/05 Republic Implantation

11/01 All Saints' Day

12/01 Restoration of Independence

12/08 Feast of the Immaculate Conception

12/25 Christmas Day

Portugal: A Brief History

Portugal's earliest tribes occupied the Tagus valley, the Alentejo and Estremadura as far back as 8,000 BC. Later, Neolithic clans built hilltop forts called castros in northern Portugal, and around 700 BC these were occupied by Celtic Lusitanians. They were fierce, which led the Carthaginians (who had settled on the south coast) to recruit them around 200 BC to fight off the Romans. The Celtic Lusitanians proved their worth—while it only took Rome seven years to conquer Gaul, it took them nearly 200 to subdue Iberia. By the time that was accomplished, Rome had colonies in Lisbon, Evora, Santarem, and Beja.

Christianity reached Portugal near the end of the 1st century, and by the 3rd century, bishoprics had been founded at Lisbon, Braga, and other towns. As Visigothic invaders crossed the Pyrenees, they made their way to Portugal. But since they ruled from Toledo, their influence was not strong. This made it easy for the Moors, who arrived soon after 711 AD. Portugal's Moors settled mainly in the south, and brought many agrarian reforms as well as a love of culture. They established Muslim supremacy, but allowed Christians and Jews to worship, work, own property, and freely engage in business. Though their cities were grander and larger in Spain, they still left an enduring impact on Portuguese culture.

The Christian Reconquest had some early victories in Portugal, taking Porto back from the Moors by 868 and Coimbra by 1064. Meanwhile, a small kingdom was coalescing around the old Roman settlement of Portus Cale. It was controlled by the kings of Leon and Castile until 1139, when Afonso Henriques won a battle and proclaimed himself King of Portucale. The Algarve was reconquered in 1264, the capital was moved from Coimbra to Lisbon, and Portugal's land boundaries have since remained almost unchanged.

But Portugal's imperial ambitions had no boundaries. In 1415, King John conquered the North African trading post of Ceuta. Under his son Prince Henry the Navigator, advances were made in shipbuilding, navigation, and cartography; and Portuguese *caravels* sailed the coast of Africa. Madeira and the Azores were colonized, and over the next century, explorers like Bartolomeu Dias and Vasco da Gama expanded the empire from Africa to India and southeast Asia, and to Brazil.

In 1580, Spain invaded Portugal and held it for 60 years. Although the Portuguese independence was restored in 1640, Portugal kept fighting back frequent Spanish raids to take over again for about 28 years. By that time, Dutch, English, and French competitors had surpassed Portugal's colonial might. The country's fortunes mostly waned over the next centuries. Portugal was able to end a five-year occupation by Napoleonic forces with the help of Britain. But that alliance did Portugal no good when the 1890 British Ultimatum was delivered, requiring Portugal to give up its claim to land between Mozambique and Angola. Still, Portugal fought in World War I on the Allied side.

A weak postwar governments led to a military coup in 1926, in which Antonio Oliveira Salazar became a Finances Minister, before progressing to dictator in 1933, ruling for almost 40 years. He kept Portugal neutral in World War II, but granted naval and air bases to the Allies after 1943. Portugal joined NATO as a founding member in 1949, but did not gain admission to the United Nations until 1955. Salazar suffered a stroke in 1968 and died in 1970. In 1974, a socialist military coup ended the Salazar era. It was called the "carnation revolution" since civilians placed flowers in the rifles of the military. Directly afterwards, most of Portugal's former colonies were granted their independence. With EU membership in 1986, Portugal entered the European mainstream.

Since the debt crisis of 2008, Portugal's economy has made progress. The government deficit has fallen, as has unemployment. But some of this has been achieved by austerity measures that have hit the young, teachers, health care workers, and others. The future will call for the same kind of resolve and innovation that drove Portugal's golden Age of Discovery so long ago.

France

Facts, Figures & National Holidays

- **Area:** 248,573 square miles
- **Capital:** Paris
- **Language:** French
- **Location:** France is a large country, two and a half times as big as Great Britain, extending for some 600 miles from north to south and from east to west. It has coastlines on both the Atlantic Ocean and the Mediterranean Sea. Its southern land border is Spain; to the north are Belgium, Luxembourg, and Germany; to the east are Switzerland and Italy.
- **Geography:** Except for extreme northern France, which is part of the Flanders plain, the country may be described as four river basins and a plateau. Three of the streams flow west—the Seine into the English Channel, the Loire into the Atlantic, and the Garonne into

the Bay of Biscay. The Rhône flows south into the Mediterranean. For about 100 miles, the Rhine is France's eastern border. In the Alps, near the Italian and Swiss borders, is Europe's highest point—Mont Blanc, at 15,781 feet.

- **Population:** 67,750,000
- **Religion:** Roman Catholic 48%, None 34%, Islam 4%, Protestant 3%, Buddhist 2%, Jewish 1%, Other 2%
- **Time Zone:** France is on Central European Time, six hours ahead of U.S. EST. When it is 6am in Washington D.C., it is noon in Paris. Daylight Saving Time begins the last weekend in March and ends the last weekend in October.

National Holidays: France

In addition to the holidays listed below, France celebrates a number of national holidays that follow a lunar calendar, such as Easter and Whit Monday. To find out if you will be traveling during these holidays, please visit www.timeanddate.com/holidays.

01/01 New Year's Day

05/01 Labor Day

05/08 World War II Victory Day

07/14 Bastille Day

08/15 Assumption of Mary

11/01 All Saints' Day

11/11 Armistice Day

12/25 Christmas Day

France: A Brief History

That the French do things with flair has been borne out by history. Even their most famous prehistoric treasure, the 17,000-year old cave paintings of Lascaux, are a dazzling work of art. The rest of French history is just as dazzling, colored by events and ideas that have impacted all of humanity, far beyond the borders of this hexagon-shaped crucible of culture.

When the Celts arrived in Gaul in the 5th century BC, it was already occupied by Iberians, Ligurians, and Greeks, who established the oldest city in France, Massilia (Marseille). It was a major port with temples, theaters, an agora, and a flourishing wine trade. The city had forged an alliance with Rome by the time Julius Caesar conquered Gaul in 57-52 B.C. Julius often gets credit for founding Lutetia (Paris), but the Gallic Parisii tribe had already established a settlement there on the banks of the Seine. The Romans erected their own magnificent cities whose ruins still stand in Arles, Nimes, Vienne, Lyon, and beyond.

During the 5th century AD, the Franks invaded and converted to Christianity under Clovis I. A national spirit emerged when Charlemagne, King of the Franks, was crowned Holy Roman Emperor in 800 AD. Though his reign left an indelible imprint, French national history is considered to begin in 987, when Hugh Capet centralized the monarchy. During the 12th and 13th centuries, trade prospered, guilds were founded, and cathedrals were built. But the 14th century brought the Hundred Years War with England (1337-1453), whose Norman kings held vast

estates in France. The English were expelled and as in the days of Charlemagne, the throne held a powerful mystique, this time with the aid of Joan of Arc, whose divine voices urged her to lead France to victory at Orleans in 1429 and to champion Charles VII as king.

During the 16th and 17th centuries, France moved closer towards absolute monarchy, best exemplified by Louis XIV, whose reign was unequalled for its autocracy—and magnificent style. From Versailles, he presided over a gloriously gilded France—so resplendent that it earned him the title of “the Sun King.” Ironically, the very splendor of the French monarchy precipitated its downfall, for it was exorbitant to maintain. That burden fell to the peasants and middle class, as nobles and the clergy were exempt from the taxes. That ended with the French Revolution in 1789. King Louis XVI and Marie Antoinette were guillotined, the monarchy was abolished, and the new (but short-lived) First Republic was established.

The ensuing chaos led to the rise of Napoleon, who became emperor in 1804 and built an empire across nearly all of Europe. Though Napoleon was a dictator, his Napoleonic codes brought unprecedented legal rights and civil liberties to his domains, in many places ending feudalism. With his fall in 1814, the monarchy was restored. France’s Third Republic was founded in 1870, during which the groundbreaking Impressionist school of painting emerged, as well as the Modernist movement. From 1914-18, France fought with the Allies in World War I, prevailing but suffering devastating losses. Between wars, France nourished major intellectual movements: Constructivism, Dadaism, Surrealism, and Existentialism.

In 1940, France was invaded by Germany who set up a puppet government in Vichy under Marshal Philippe Petain. On D-Day, June 6, 1944, the Allies landed in Normandy and went on to liberate Paris in August. A provisional government was set up under General Charles de Gaulle. He remained France’s most influential statesman of the 20th (or perhaps any other) century, becoming president in 1958 until his resignation in 1969. Post-war France saw the break-up of its remaining colonial outposts. The country was one of the leaders in the founding of the European Union (1993) and the Eurozone (1999).

More recently France, like its European neighbors, had to contend with the fallout of the 2008 global economic crisis. Unemployment, immigration, structuring the post-Brexit EU, and climate change are some of the issues France must address with its historic resourcefulness—and characteristic flair.

RESOURCES

Suggested Reading

Spain

A Million Steps by Kurt Koontz (2013, Travel Narrative) Follow the author as he walks the Camino de Santiago—a pilgrimage route in Spain that stretches more than 400 miles—a journey that is both physical and spiritual.

Sister Queens: The Noble, Tragic Lives of Katherine of Aragon and Juana, Queen of Castile by Julia Fox (2011, biography). The daughters of Ferdinand and Isabella each lost positions of power—one to the whims of England’s Henry VIII, and the other to madness.

The Shadow of the Wind by Carlos Ruiz Zafon (2005, Fiction) A mix of mystery, romance, and hauntings abound in this international bestseller, set in 1950s Barcelona.

The Last Jew by Noah Gordon (2000, Historical Fiction) A sweeping tale of survival during the Spanish Inquisition.

Traveler’s Tales: Spain edited by Lucy McCauley (1995, Anthology) Incisive, lyrical musings on all aspects of Spain, written by luminaries such as Gabriel Garcia Marquez, Calvin Trillin, and Barbara Kingsolver.

Portugal

A Small Death in Lisbon and ***The Company of Strangers*** by Robert Wilson (1999 and 2001, Fiction) Both these political thrillers are set in Portugal with flashbacks to World War II, when the supposedly neutral nation was a hotbed of espionage.

The Portuguese: The Land and Its People by Marian Kaplan (1991, History) A travel guide and history book all in one that takes you from the Moorish Invasion to the Age of Discovery to modern times.

A Concise History of Portugal by David Birmingham (2018, History) This condensed, illustrated history offers an introduction to Portugal’s people, culture, and evolving role in contemporary Europe.

Baltasar and Blimunda by Jose Saramago (1998, Historical Fiction) Written by the winner of the 1998 Nobel Prize for Literature, this historic romance offers detailed insight into what life was like in Portugal in the late 18th century. Set in 1711, in the midst of the terrors of the Inquisition and the plague, it follows a seemingly mismatched couple as they discover the wonders of love.

France

The Seine: The River That Made Paris by Elaine Sciolino (2020, Nonfiction) Sciolino traces the history, route, and impact of the Seine River through the stories of its people—a riverbank bookseller, the Seine police, a houseboat owner, fishermen, and film directors, to name a few. She also includes a touching chapter on the 2019 Notre Dame fire, which was put out with water pumped from the river.

A Brief History of France by Cecil Jenkins (2017, History) Exactly what the title promises: A compact overview of the history of France. Look for the 2017 edition, which was updated to include more recent events.

The Miracle of Dunkirk: The True Story of Operation Dynamo by Walter Lord (2017, History) A well-written and comprehensive account of the British evacuation from Dunkirk in 1940 with the help of the French. The author has been praised for his ability to weave the personal stories of the survivors—who he interviewed in great depth—into the overall narrative of how events unfolded.

My Life in France by Julia Child with Alex Prud'homme (2007, Memoir) Memoir of the famous chef's first, formative stay in France in 1949. Child describes herself as a “rather loud and unserious Californian,” without a word of French. She enrolled at the Cordon Bleu and toiled with increasing zeal and competence. With the bestselling *Mastering the Art of French Cooking*, she revolutionized the American idea of cooking. This memoir recalls gorgeous meals in bygone Parisian restaurants, and reveals the personality and some of the secret arts of a culinary genius.

Paris to the Moon by Adam Gopnik (2001, Travel Essays) A self-described “comic-sentimental essayist,” Gopnik spent the years from 1995 to 2000 in Paris writing the “Paris Journals” for the *New Yorker*. Collected here are his most charming, insightful, heartfelt, and humorous dispatches on the Parisian people, culture, food, economy, and lifestyle.

Suggested Films & Videos

Spain

Pain and Glory (2019, Drama) Antonio Banderas earned a Best Actor nomination for his portrayal of a legendary director flashing back through his past, and facing a present filled with loss, memory, physical ailments, and imagination. This thinly-veiled autobiographical sketch from director Pedro Almodovar is a rueful reflection on creativity, wrapped up with warmth, humor, and vivid glimpses of life in late 20th-century Spain.

Ocho Apellidos Vascos (released in the U.S. as *Spanish Affair*, 2014, Comedy) Two of Spain's most disparate cultures collide as a jilted bride from the Basque Country goes to Seville, where a skillful Andalusian ladies man is frustrated by his inability to woo her. A fun and warm-hearted look at the differences between northern and southern Spain.

The Way (2010, Drama) A grieving father (Martin Sheen) honors his lost son's desire to finish the journey of a lifetime by competing the historical pilgrimage on the Camino de Santiago. Along the way, he meets other trekkers with their own stories to tell.

Pan's Labyrinth (2006, Fantasy) From director Guillermo del Toro. Following Spain's bloody civil war, young Ofelia enters a world of unimaginable cruelty when she moves in with her new stepfather, a brutal military officer. Armed only with her imagination, Ofelia discovers a labyrinth and a faun who offers her a path to saving herself and her mother. The lines between fantasy and reality begin to blur, and before Ofelia can turn back, she's at the center of a ferocious battle between good and evil.

All About My Mother (1999, Comedy) When her 17-year-old son is tragically killed in a car accident, Manuela sets out to reconnect with her son's father and ends up forging new connections with an outrageous transvestite, a pregnant nun, and her son's favorite actress. This 1999 Oscar winner for Best Foreign Language Film is another from director Pedro Almodovar, whose other acclaimed works include *Women on the Verge of a Nervous Breakdown* and *Volver*.

Portugal

Night Train to Lisbon (2013, Drama) A Swiss schoolteacher (Jeremy Irons) prevents the suicide of a young Portuguese woman, who then disappears. Soon thereafter, he visits a bookshop where he discovers a puzzling memoir written during the Salazar era. Consumed by the idea that he may not be living his life to the fullest, he travels to Lisbon to unravel the mysteries.

Lisbon Story (1994, Drama) A straightforward tale of a German sound engineer who falls in love with Lisbon. Director Wim Wenders takes you through a city that he obviously loves, offering the beauty of old houses, narrow streets, the sounds of the city, a haunting soundtrack, and the lives lived in Portugal's capital.

Amália (2008, Documentary) This biopic tells the story of Amália Rodrigues, Portugal's Queen of Fado.

Porto (2016, Drama) An American expatriate and a French woman spend one intense night together in the titular Portuguese city. Years later, they try to make sense of their connection, the transience of joy, and haphazard nature of life. Filmed in 35, 16 and Super 8 mm, this film sees Porto through a novel and striking lens.

No Reservations: Lisbon (2012, Season 8, Episode 4) Emmy award-winning chef and social critic Anthony Bourdain visited Lisbon just as it was on the verge of becoming a travel sensation. Enjoy his witty commentary, local encounters, and mouth-watering presentations of Lisbon's culinary pleasures.

France

Loving Vincent (2017, Biography) Van Gogh's paintings come to life in this remarkable, animated film created by 125 artists, who hand-painted each of the film's 65,000 frames in the style of Vincent Van Gogh. The plot follows the efforts of a postmaster's son to solve the mystery of van Gogh's life and death in Auvers-sur-Oise.

Midnight in Paris (2011, Comedy) Screenwriter Gil Pender (Owen Wilson) escapes his romantic troubles by roaming the streets of Paris at night, where he is miraculously (and hilariously) transported back to 1920s Paris, where Ernest Hemingway, Gertrude Stein, Salvador Dali, F. Scott Fitzgerald and the entire “Lost Generation” await him.

Amelie (2001, Romantic Comedy) This quirky gem tells the heartwarming story of a shy waitress in Paris who decides to change the lives of those around her for the better, while struggling with her own isolation. The award-winning film is a whimsical depiction of everyday life, sure to capture the hearts of its viewers time and time again.

Chocolat (2000, Drama/Comedy) In this warm and beautifully filmed romance, a lovely chocolatier (Juliet Binoche) falls in love with a handsome gypsy (Johnny Depp), disrupting life in a prim riverside village. Many scenes were filmed in the Dordogne region.

Saving Private Ryan (1998, Drama). Probably the best (and most riveting) depiction of the Normandy D-Day landings and their aftermath. It won Steven Spielberg an Oscar for Best Director.

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www.weather.com
www.wunderground.com

Basic Travel Phrases (80 languages)

www.travlang.com/languages

Packing Tips

www.travelite.org

U.S. Customs & Border Protection

www.cbp.gov/travel

Transportation Security Administration (TSA)

www.tsa.gov

National Passport Information Center

www.travel.state.gov

Holidays Worldwide

www.timeanddate.com/holidays

History & Culture

en.wikipedia.org

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Connects you with locals who share your interests

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Identifies constellations and heavenly bodies

Travello

Find travel friends on the road

ALIX for One

Created by and for women, it identifies solo-friendly dining spots in major international cities

TripWhistle

Maps your location and provides emergency numbers for police, medics, and more

GeoSure

Safely navigate neighborhoods around the world

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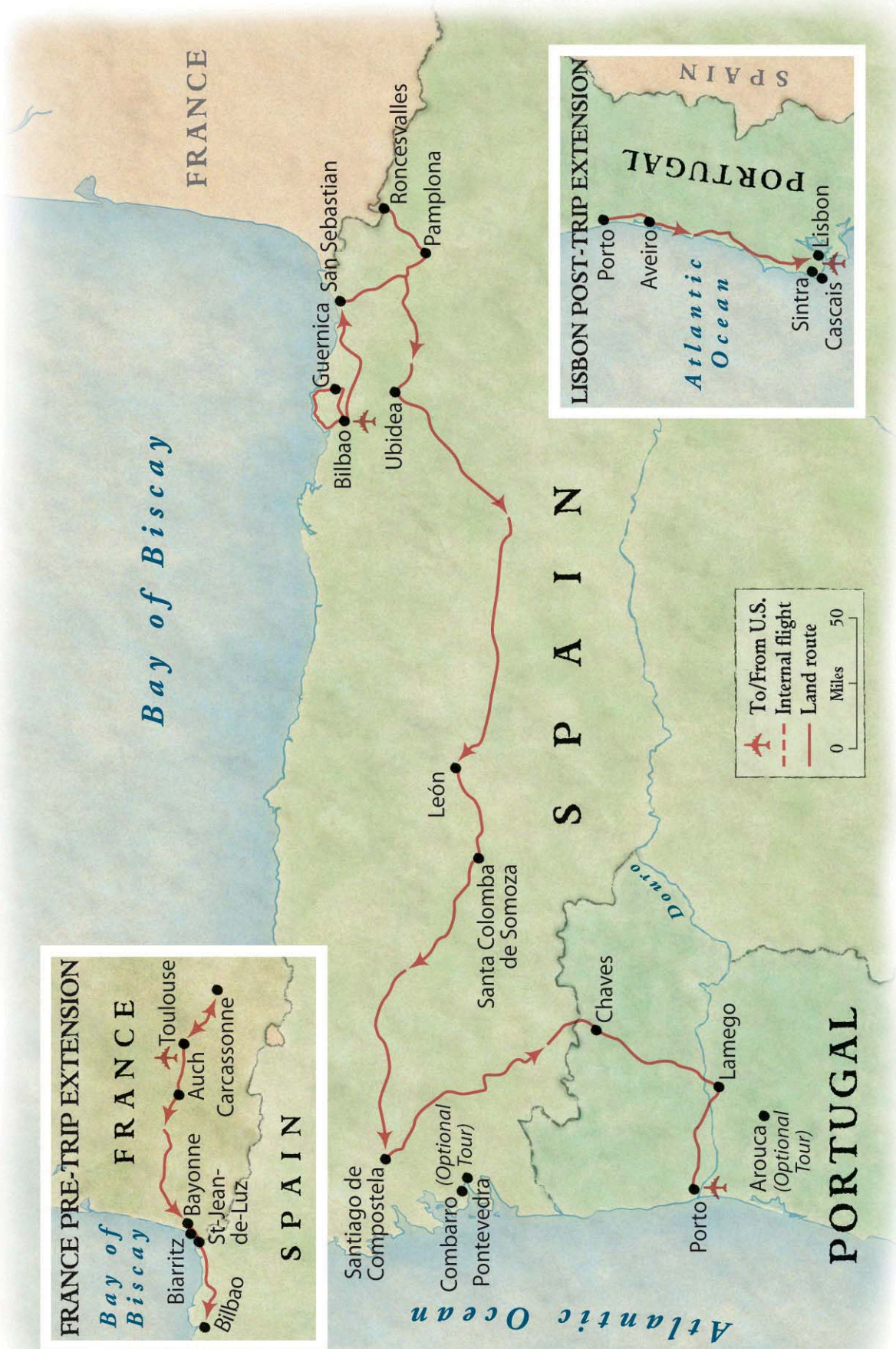
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