

MARIAN SANCTUARIES: PORTUGAL, SPAIN AND FRANCE

Every year, more and more Catholic believers gather at the two greatest sanctuaries of Marian apparitions in Europe, Lourdes and Fátima. Within the pleasant natural surrounding awaits the beautiful experience of visiting and living, discovering and participating in the religious message. Our visit to these three countries will take us along the path of the most revered saints of the Church, Saint Teresa of Ávila and Saint John of the Cross. We will visit some of the oldest sanctuaries such as Montserrat and El Pilar, both of which have played important roles in local as well as national history. There is always a possibility of attending mass within their walls.



Day 1 Arrival in Lisbon. We will discover the different districts of Portugal's capital, Lisbon such as Alfama, El Chiado and La Baixa with its urban development subsequent to the 1755 earthquake.

We will also visit Belém with the Hieronymites Monastery -pantheon to both the Royal family and Vasco da Gama- in the Manuelino style from the early 16th century. With every step Portuguese history comes alive in our minds and can be easily understood at the Monument of the Discoveries. Travel to Fátima for overnight.

Day 2 The appearance of the Virgin in 1917 transformed the small town of Fátima into the destination of the millions of believers who make the pilgrimage every year and gather on the great esplanade outside the great Neo-Baroque Basilica with its colonnades and Chapel of Apparitions. In the afternoon we will visit Valinhos and Aljustrel. Possibility of celebrating or attending Holy Mass as well as participating in the religious activities and evening procession. Overnight in Fátima.

Day 3 Coimbra, the former capital city for more than one hundred years, boasts the oldest university of Portugal. We will visit the university's library and Romanesque Cathedral, prior to strolling down the narrow streets to the Carmelite convent where Sor Lucía, one of the Fátima shepherds lived and died. After a brief stop in the border town of Ciudad Rodrigo, we will arrive in Salamanca which is now, and has

always been, more than anything a university city. Enjoy an evening stroll and enter Salamanca from the south, crossing the well preserved Roman Bridge. The homogenous mix of students and visitors beckons us to stroll through its lively streets and to indulge in the festive atmosphere. Notable monuments include the University, the Plaza Mayor and the two Cathedrals among others. Overnight in Salamanca.

Day 4 This morning we will make a brief stop in the town of Alba de Tormes, where Santa Teresa died and is buried and where the Discalced Carmelites preserve her memory. Further on we will arrive at Ávila, Saint Teresa's birthplace, which welcomes us with its impressive walls and Cathedral, the Saint Vincent Basilica and noble homes as well as the Carmelite Monastery of the Incarnation, and the house where Santa Teresa was born. Possibility of celebrating or attending Holy Mass. Continue to Segovia for overnight.

Day 5 We will enjoy the visit of Segovia strolling from its Roman aqueduct, passing by the Gothic Cathedral, to the medieval citadel. Along the way we will discover noble houses and palaces, its Jewish Quarter and countless Romanesque churches. Later we will head down to the Fuencisla Sanctuary and the Discalced Carmelites Convent -burial site of the great mystic and poet Saint John of the Cross, reformer of the masculine branch of the order-. In the afternoon we will travel to Burgos, stopping briefly in Aranda de Duero, capital of the Ribera del Duero wine region. Possibility of visiting a local winery with tasting. Overnight in Burgos.

Day 6 In the morning, we will discover Burgos -one of the most important stops on the Path of Saint James- with its outstanding Gothic Cathedral, World Heritage site. Possibility of celebrating or attending Holy Mass. We will travel to San Sebastian, where we can enjoy a walk along La Concha beach before heading towards France. Possibility of organizing lunch in a traditional Sidrería. Overnight in Lourdes.

Day 7 In the 19th century, a sanctuary was created in this lovely Pyrenees valley surrounding the Grotto where the Virgin appeared to Bernadette in 1858. We will have an opportunity to visit the Neo-Gothic Basilica, the Rosario Church, the underground Basilica, the Via Crucis and Saint Bernadette's home. The day ends with a torch-led procession. Possibility of celebrating or attending Holy Mass as well as participating in the religious activities and evening procession. Overnight in Lourdes.

Day 8 In the morning we will travel along the French Pyrenean valleys, crossing the mountain range by way of Andorra. This tiny country has turned into a small commercial enclave. We will enter Spain and will arrive -in the very heart of Catalonia- at Montserrat, a peculiar geological formation, declared a natural park, picturesque from any angle. Here we will find the Marian Sanctuary of Montserrat with "La Moreneta". Possibility of celebrating or attending Holy Mass as

well as renewing wedding vows. Overnight in Montserrat.

Day 9 Travel to Barcelona and enjoy a panoramic tour visiting the grand avenues of the Eixample district with its modernist buildings -notably the homes on the Paseo de Gracia such as Lleó Morera, Amatller, Batlló and Milá- and the Sagrada Familia, masterpiece of architect Gaudí.

Following a stop in another of his better known works, the Güell Park, we will arrive at the top of Montjuich with its magnificent views of the city and the coast. We will explore the vast historical district on foot and visit Santa Maria del Mar, the Gothic quarter, the Cathedral and Las Ramblas, the emblematic pedestrian walkway. Possibility of organizing a tapas lunch in Barcelona. Return to Montserrat for overnight.

Day 10 This morning we will leave Catalonia and shall enter Aragón, discovering its capital Zaragoza. The city has important monuments including the Aljafería -the ancient palace of the Arab emir-, its Gothic Cathedral the Seo of San Salvador and the Basilica del Pilar, site of the Virgin's appearance to apostle Santiago. Possibility of celebrating or attending Holy Mass. Continue to Madrid for overnight.

Day 11 A first glimpse of Madrid provided by a scenic tour will allow us to appreciate the dimension and beauty of this city as well as its vital points such as Paseo de la Castellana, Gran Vía, Alcalá Street and Plaza de España. Nearby we find one of the best examples of the Bourbon urban layout: the Paseo del Prado with its fountains, gardens and museums. Of special interest are the Mile of Art, Prado Museum, the Reina Sofia Museum and the Thyssen-Bornemisza Museum. We will also visit its Cathedral La Almudena as well as the historical center with the Main Square and the Puerta del Sol. Possibility of organizing a farewell dinner or attending a flamenco show. Overnight in Madrid.

Day 12 Transfer to the Madrid Airport.

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12 days

Day 1	✈ LISBON - FÁTIMA
Day 2	FÁTIMA
Day 3	FÁTIMA - COIMBRA - CIUDAD RODRIGO - SALAMANCA
Day 4	SALAMANCA - ALBA DE TORMES - ÁVILA - SEGOVIA
Day 5	SEGOVIA - ARANDA DE DUERO - BURGOS
Day 6	BURGOS - SAN SEBASTIÁN - LOURDES
Day 7	LOURDES
Day 8	LOURDES - ANDORRA - MONTSERRAT
Day 9	EXCURSION BARCELONA
Day 10	MONTSERRAT - ZARAGOZA - MADRID
Day 11	MADRID
Day 12	MADRID ✈



Salamanca. Virgen de La Soledad. Foto cedida por: Marcial Mora