

## Ruta Mariana, 5 sanctuaries

### MONTSERRAT – MERITXELL – LOURDES TORRECIUDAD – EL PILAR

Duration: 8 days / 7 nights

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#### Day 1.- Arrival to the Sanctuary of Montserrat

Arrival to the [Sanctuary of Montserrat](#), located 65 km. from Barcelona. It is the main sacred destination of Catalonia. Nested within the **Natural Park of the Montserrat Mountain**, the sanctuary is protected by the rocks, along with the **Monastery** and the **Basilica**. Pilgrims and faithful arrived from everywhere on a daily basis to venerate the image of Our Lady of Montserrat, popularly known as "**The Moreneta**".



One of the events that generates more interest between the faithful and visitors is the performance of the kids choir (**the Escolania**) in the basilica. Every day, at 1 p.m., the Escolania sings the 'Salve and the Virolai'

During the afternoon, our recommendation would be to take one of the visits/excursions that start from the complex and assist to the singing of the 'Salve Montserratina' (alternating polyphony and Gregorian chant with the monks choir) and a motete polyphonic motet at 7:10p.m (also by the 'Escolania').

- Santa Cueva (funicular railway)
- Fray Garí viewpoint or the degotalls path
- Saint Joan o Saint Miquel chapel
- The **Montserrat Museum**, one of most interesting ones in Catalonia and this is due to the variety and importance of the pieces that exhibits. Such as Caravaggio, El Greco, Picasso, Dalí, Monet, Sorolla, Zuloaga, Julio Romero de Torres...



Panoramic view of the Montserrat Mountain

Diner and accommodation at a hotel in Montserrat or nearby.

**Day 2.- Montserrat – Principality of Andorra [165 km. – 2,30 h.]**

Breakfast and departure to the **Principality of Andorra**. It is a small independent country located in the heart of the Pyrenees, between France and Spain. a. Arrival and visit of the [Sanctuary of Meritxell](#). It has a very special meaning for the Andorran people. The complex, surrounded by nature y amazing scenery, houses the **Virgin de Meritxell**, spiritual guide of the Andorran people, as well as a light for the life of the citizens. Guided visit of the complex (old and new sanctuary) and time to participate en the religious celebrations.



New sanctuary of Meritxell



Old Meritxell sanctuary. Refurbished in 1994

During the afternoon, chance to visit some of the **Romanesque churches, museums**, enjoy **nature**, relax with **thermal waters** ('Caldea e Inuu' complex) or just walk around the shopping district...



Romanesque & Nature. Two great treasures that can be enjoyed in the Principality

Diner & accommodation.

### **Día 3º.- Principality of Andorra – Lourdes [270 km. – 4 h.]**

Breakfast and departure to the [Lourdes Shrine](#), cosmopolitan place of faith, is one of the most visited Marian destinations in the world. Located in the small city of Lourdes, it is surrounded by **beautiful landscapes. Faith & devotion** to the Virgining of Lourdes are characteristics that go side by side with the life of this region.

Free time to participate in the different celebrations and that take place daily in the sanctuary: The Rosary in the Grotto and the Mass, Parade of the image of Jesus Christ, the Marian Torch Parade, the Bathing Pools, The Water Path, the Via Crucis, etc. (see schedule).



Diner and accommodation at a hotel in Lourdes.

### **Day 4.- Sanctuary of Lourdes**

Breakfast and full day in Lourdes, so everyone can take part in the sanctuary events.

Possible visits:

- Bernardette related paces: **The Mill of Boly, the Jail (le Cachot), the old Parochial House, the orphanage, the Museum of Sint Bernardette or the Sacred Heart Parochial Church.**
- **Castle of Lourdes**, magnificent example of the Pyreneean fortress that overlooks the city. It has been declared 'Historic Monument' & **Pico del Jer**, reachable vía funicular that offers the amazing views to the passengers.
- **The Bétharram Grotto**, a fantastic tour through 5 different levels in the grotto. They are spectacular and they can be found across 2700 ft. incline. Most part of the tour takes place on a boat, as it goes over the water that runs in the interior.

### **Day 5.- Lourdes (by Arreau-St. Lary Soulan–Ainsa) – Torreciudad [200 km. – 3,30 h.]**

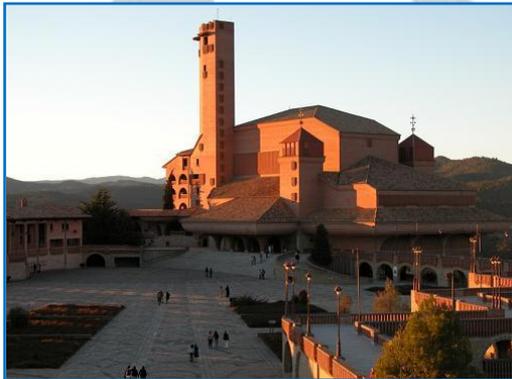


Ainsa

Breakfast and time to continue with a deeper visit of the sanctuary or departure to Torreciudad. In this stage, Our recommended stop is in [Ainsa](#) (back in Spain), The medieval village has been declared 'Historic Artistic Complex'. The medieval walls and historic center (castle, square, cross...) are very well preserved. Lunch at selected restaurant.

Continue to Torreciudad. Arrival and visit of the sanctuary with the possibility of participating in the celebrations and religious events. The visit (previously reserved) consists on a group reception and welcoming, a video projection at the Information Office and an guided tour of the complex.

Its **privilege location** on top of a mount makes this unique place a perfect natural environment, with great landscape views over “lake Grado”. Known as the **Sanctuary the Families**, the complex of buildings (sanctuary, attached buildings and square) is an avant-garde sanctuary of singular characteristics.



General view of the sanctuary and Esplanade



Panoramic view of the 'El Grado' lake and the old hermitage

Lunch in a restaurant in the nearby area.

#### **Day 6.- Torreciudad – Zaragoza [155 km. – 2 h.]**

Breakfast and departure towards **Barbastro**, located on the bank of river Vero and capital of the Somontano Shire. Barbastro has a magnificent gothic cathedral (Catedral de la Asunción) and an excellent Diocesan Museum.



Barbastro Cathedral



D.O. Somontano

Continuing to Zaragoza. Arrival to the hotel and lunch.

During the afternoon, visit of [El Pilar Shrine](#), built on the Ebro river bank, **it is one of the most important sanctuaries in the catholic world**. A must see for anyone visiting Aragón. The temple is a jewel of the baroque Aragonese. The interior is an authentic museum where we can see amazing works of art such as the **altarpiece in the high altar of Plateresque style** that was made by Damián Forment, **the Holly Chapel** that keeps the most appreciated treasure, the image of the Virgin of the Pillar, or the **cupolas painted by the brilliant painter Francisco de Goya**.



View from river Ebro: Basilica of 'El Pilar' & Stone Bridge (14th cent.)



Sanctuary or Our Lady of 'El Pilar'

Diner and accommodation.

### Day 7.- Zaragoza

Breakfast. This 2000 year old city offers multiple options. We recommend no to miss the **San Salvador Cathedral, A.K.A. La Seo** (declared UNESCO World-Heritage), the **Arab Palace of the Aljafería**, , the **new Diocesan Museum** or **the Tapestries Museum**.

You can also walk around the populated shopping downtown streets (España square, Alfonso & Don Jaime streets). By doing so, you will experience the ambience in this city.

Also in the historic center, places such as the **Argillo Palace**, the **San Felipe Church**, the **Roman Theatre** or the **Santa Engracia Basilica**.



View of Spain Square & Independence avenue.



The Aljafería Arab palace(left) & La Seo Cathedral (above)



Diner and accommodation at a hotel in Zaragoza.

**Day 8.- Zaragoza – back to starting point (end of trip)**

Breakfast and departure on a returning stage. End of trip

**In this case, the itinerary has been designed for a group arriving to Barcelona and starting the Marian Route from there.**

- **If the group arrives to Madrid, the trip would be:**  
Madrid-Zaragoza-TorreCiudad-Lourdes-Meritxell-Montserrat (back to Madrid)
- **If the group arrives to Lourdes, the trip would be:**  
Lourdes-Meritxell-Montserrat-Zaragoza-TorreCiudad (back to Lourdes)

**Some groups choose to just travel a section of this route, visiting some of the sanctuaries, but not all five of them. That could shorten the days spent in the Ruta Mariana** (i.e. Zaragoza-TorreCiudad-Lourdes is a popular itinerary for groups that arrived to Madrid).