

Pilgrimage to Spain & Italy: Sacred Sites in Southern Europe

Experience Historical and Holy Sites, and Walk Where Saints Walked

Full Pilgrimage — May 21 – Jun 11, 2016

May 21 – June 4, 2016 – Spain

June 4 – June 11, 2016 – Italy



Dear Pilgrim,

Here is the proposed itinerary for the Spain and Italy Pilgrimage. Some details may change as we go along but this gives a solid picture of what to expect. We will stay in 3+ and 4 star hotels along with one monastery in Avila; two meals per day and admission fees to the sights on the itinerary are provided; comfortable air conditioned buses will transport us around and experienced guides will provide local knowledge. We will be with you to make sure your needs are taken care of; we'll tell stories about the saints lives we will be visiting and provide spiritual inspiration wherever possible.

Please don't hesitate to ask any questions or voice concerns. This is the itinerary only. We will send other information, hotel changes, if any, and suggestions on what to bring, etc. separately from this.

We very much look forward to traveling with you to these deeply inspiring places.

Blessings and joy,
Krishnadas and Mantradevi

What's included in this trip

Start time and location:

Madrid, Spain
Hotel Emperador

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Finish time and location:

Madrid, Spain
Hotel Emperador

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Leader Information

1 English Speaking Leader
Local Guides in:
Madrid: 2 full days
Seville: half day (for Alcazar
and Giralda)
Cordoba: For Mezquita
Toledo: Full day
Segovia: Full day

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Meals/Drinks

14 Breakfasts, 14 Dinners

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Accommodation

Hotel (12 nights)
Monastery (2nights)

Rooming Requirements

Twin share, private is extra

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Transport

Air conditioned vehicle transfers
throughout.

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Included Activities

- Please refer to day by day itinerary
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Entrance/Admission Fees:

Where applicable

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Airport Transfers:

Group Arrival and Departures
Transfers Included
**Flight info needed 45 days

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Exclusions:

- International arrival/departures flights
 - International airport departure tax
 - Any visas required
 - Services not mentioned in the itinerary
 - Late check out at hotels
 - Meals and drinks not mentioned in the itinerary
 - Tips for leaders, guide and driver
 - Expenditure of personal nature
 - Personal Travel Insurance
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Pilgrimage in Spain – 15 days

21 May – 4 June 2016

Full Itinerary

Day 1 - Madrid

Date: 21-May-16

Meal Plan (-/-/D)

Hola Pilgrims! Welcome to Spain.

With incredible restaurants, art galleries, cathedrals, churches, and shopping to offer, Madrid is truly a world-class city that exudes confidence and style through every pore.

On arrival, please take a bus, train or taxi to the centrally located **Hotel Emperador**. Your pilgrimage begins with dinner at the hotel. (Taxis will run around \$25-\$35 USD. For those who travel light, want a 15-minute walk, and wish to take public transit, there are several public buses and trains that will take you from the airport to the heart of downtown. This will cost around \$5 USD or less.)

Included Activities

- Welcome dinner
- Orientation

Accommodation

Hotel Emperador or similar

<http://www.emperadorhotel.com/en>

Day 2-3 – Madrid

Date: 22-23 May 16

Meal Plan (B/-/D)

We will start our sightseeing in Madrid with a walk to visit to **Almudena Cathedral**, dedicated to Virgin Almudena, the female patron saint of Madrid. Taking more than one hundred years to complete, the massive and beautiful cathedral houses a richly decorated statue of Our Lady of Almudena, set in front of a magnificent altarpiece and an impressive crypt, with neo-Romanesque vaulting.

We continue with a visit to the nearby **Royal Palace**. Rich in history and magnificence, it is the official residence of the Spanish Royal Family, but is now only used for state ceremonies. It is the largest palace in Europe with 1,450,000 square feet of floor space and 3,418 rooms. It contains a wealth and a variety of art forms by many famous artists.

On our itinerary is the **Del Prado Museum**. A huge museum, we may have to pick and choose what parts to see. It features one of the world's finest collections of European art, from the 12th century to the early 19th century. The Del Prado has the most complete collection of Spanish painting, and

numerous masterpieces by great universal artists such as El Greco, Velázquez, Goya, Bosch, Titian, Van Dyck and Rembrandt. We'll visit it either today or tomorrow.

Behind the Prado Museum is a most beautiful, very famous church, **San Jerónimo el Real** (St. Jerome Royal Church). The area itself is absolutely beautiful. A wonderful green oasis in Madrid.

On the way from the Prado Museum to the Convent of the Royal Barefoot Nuns we will pass by the **Biblioteca Nacional**, where a beautiful statue of Alfonso X El Sabio resides in the entranceway. Alfonso X was the son of San Ferdinand of Castille, Spanish King and saint.

The **Convent of the Royal Barefoot Nuns** (Monasterios de las Descalzas Reales), a 16th century Renaissance palace in the heart of Madrid that serves as a convent for Franciscan nuns.

Later in the day we may go by and view the **Temple Debod**. It's an Egyptian temple given to Spain In 1968 by the Egyptian government in gratitude for helping to save the Abu Simbel Temple from flooding by the Aswan Dam. Sunset is the best time to visit this unique place to get a stunning view of the city.

Another sight within walking distance is **San Francisco el Grande Basilica** (approx. 20-30 min walk) In 1214 St. Francis of Assisi came to Spain on a pilgrimage to the tomb of St. James in Santiago de Compostela. He built a modest home for his companions and himself where the church now stands. The Basilica de San Francisco el Grande, a neo-classic style church, dedicated to Our Lady of the Angels, is now one of Madrid's grandest old churches. Its extravagantly frescoed dome is, by some estimates, is the largest in Spain and the fourth largest in the world, with a height of 56m and diameter of 33m.

Included Activities

- Almudena Cathedral admission
- Royal Palace admission
- Temple of Debod admission
- San Francisco el Grande Basilica admission
- Monastery of the Royal Barefoot Nuns admission
- Prado Museum admission
- Local licensed guide

Accommodation

Hotel Emperador or similar
<http://www.emperadorhotel.com/en>

Day 4 – Madrid/ Avila

Date: 24-May-16

Meal Plan (B/-/D)

Today we will travel to the town of Avila. the birth place of St Teresa of Avila (St. Teresa of Jesus.) This medieval city is known for its walls constructed of Brown granite in 1090. We'll visit places where she spent many years, such as the **Monastery of the Incarnation** and **the Monastery of St. Joseph**.

We'll visit the **Convent of St. Teresa**. It was built in the 17th-century, after the canonization of St. Teresa, over the house where she was born. The convent contains her relics, along with those of her friend St. John of the Cross, in a small museum.

A new experience will be staying in a monastery / convent. **Casa Diocesana de Ejercicios** is set on the site of the Diocese of Avila. It has been turned into a Retreat Center that hosts groups from all over the world, has its own farm, and is close to the historical sights of Avila.

Included Activities

- Monastery of the Incarnation admission
- Monastery of St Joseph admission

Accommodation

Casa Diocesana de Ejercicios

<https://sites.google.com/site/casadeejerciciosdeavila/>

Day 5 – Avila/ Segovia

Date: 25-May-16

Meal Plan (B/-/D)

Today we will enjoy a day trip to the city of Segovia. On our exploration of Segovia we'll visit the **Convent of the Carmelitas Descalzos**. In a church called **La Fuencisia**, adjacent to the convent lies the mausoleum of Saint John of the Cross. We'll visit his monastery and tomb, and the cave where he meditated.

We will also make a stop at **La Vera Cruz Church**, Next to Saint John's monastery, is this wonderful and unusual church built by the Templars. We can walk on the path that Saint John used on his way to Segovia. The monastery is just a five-minute car drive from the old city or a 20 or 30-minute walk, with benches to sit on along the way.

There will be time to walk around old Segovia and see local sights such as the ancient Roman aqueduct, Jewish reminiscences, decorative Casa de los Picos and charming shops with regional crafts and wares.

Included Activities

- Convent of the Carmelitas Descalzos admission
- Vera Cruz church admission
- Local licensed guide

Accommodation

Casa Diocesana de Ejercicios (Convent)

<https://sites.google.com/site/casadeejerciciosdeavila/>

Today we travel further west to the city of Salamanca. There we will visit the Romanesque 12th century **Cathedral of Salamanca**, whose vault of the apse was frescoed by the early Renaissance painter Nicolas Florentino. In the treasury is a bronze crucifix that was carried into battle before El Cid.

The whole area of Salamanca is steeped in the vibration of St. Teresa's life. We'll walk on streets where St. Teresa, Saint John, their disciples and friends walked. The scenes, plus stories, will paint a picture that will make their lives become living reality.

We will see the **San Esteban Church**: A convent of the Order of the Dominicans, built in mid 16th century. Gothic style with Plateresque and Baroque decoration, its main panel depicts a scene from the martyrdom of San Esteban, painted by Claudio Coello. The building has three cloisters, the most interesting of which being the Royal Cloister.

The last scheduled sight on this day will be the **Convent "de las Dueñas,"** which is a Dominican convent, founded in 1419 by Juana Rodriguez Maldonado in her own palace. The church and the cloister were built around 1533. The Sisters sell their sweet confections here. It is a gorgeous pentagonal cloister with intricately carved stone pillars and beautiful gardens. Incredibly peaceful.

Included Activities

- Cathedral of Salamanca admission
- San Esteban Church admission
- Las Duenas Convent admission

Accommodation

Silken Rona Dalba Salamanca

<http://www.hoteles-silken.com/en/hotels/rona-dalba-salamanca/>

Today we will take a day trip to Alba de Tormes. Here we'll visit the **Basilica of St. Teresa** where her tomb is. Teresa died from illness on a journey from Burgos to Alba de Tormes in 1582. She was born in 1515 and the 500th anniversary of her birth was celebrated worldwide throughout last year, 2015. St. Teresa was canonized in 1622.

There will also be free time to walk around either Alba de Tormes or Salamanca and enjoy the ambiance of Spain.

Included Activities

- Basilica de St Teresa admission
- **Accommodation**
- Silken Rona Dalba Salamanca
- <http://www.hoteles-silken.com/en/hotels/rona-dalba-salamanca/>

Day 8-11 – Seville

Date: 28-31 May 16 **Meal Plan** (B/-/D)

Now we travel south to the Andalucian city of Seville. During our time in Seville we will visit the famous **Alcázar of Seville**, originally a Moorish fort, which is the oldest royal palace still in use in Europe.

One of the main places we'll experience will be the **Great Cathedral of Seville**, where Saint Ferdinand III of Castile's body lies. San Ferdinand was a Spanish king who is famous for driving the Moors out of Spain. Yogananda said he was this king in a former life. San Ferdinand was canonized a saint and his body is incorrupt. We will visit his tomb on the one day of the year that they open it to the public. Meditate near his tomb and feel the vibrations of this great saint. The famous Giralda (bell) tower that houses 24 bells, and has a bird's eye view of the city, is part of the Great Cathedral of Seville.

We will also visit the **Centro Cultural Santa Clara**, located in the old **Convent of Santa Clara**, which dates from the 16th century. The convent was cloistered until 1996 when it was bought by the Ayuntamiento to be used as a cultural center for art exhibitions. The most interesting part of the building is the Renaissance style cloister, which is quite large and has very old ceramic tile designs. On the upper floor there are two wall paintings of Santa Clara and the Virgin of Guadalupe.

Seville is the birthplace of **flamenco dancing**. We'll enjoy an excellent performance of singing, dancing and guitar playing by some of the best flamenco artists from Seville. The "Fiesta Flamenca" takes place in a unique, cosy theatre, with views of the typical central patio of a 16th century palatial home.

Included Activities

- Alcazar Seville admission
- Cathedral of Seville admission
- Flamenco show
- Local licensed guide (half day)

Accommodation

Hotel Alcazar or similar
<http://www.hotelalcazar.com/en/>

Today we will stop in the city of Cordoba on our way to Toledo. Part of our walking tour of the old centre of Cordoba will include a visit to **The Great Mosque of Cordoba**. It is magnificent and history filled, one of the oldest structures still standing from the time Muslims ruled. It was the home also, of San Ferdinand III of Castile.

We will then continue to our destination for the night: Toledo.

Included Activities

- Mezquita admission
- Guided visit of Mezquita

Accommodation

Hotel Alfonso VI or similar
<http://www.hotelalfonsovi.com/en/>

Today we will enjoy the day in Toledo. We will start our sightseeing with the **Monasterio de San Juan de los Reyes**, a 15th century, late Gothic cloister with Spanish and Flemish influences. To symbolize the victory of the Christians in the years-long Granada campaign, its granite exterior facade is festooned, as per the Queen's order of 1494, with the manacles and shackles worn by Christian prisoners from Granada, held by the Moors and released during the Reconquista.

We will then continue to **Convento de Santa Isabel** which was founded in 1447 and dedicated to Isabel of Hungary. Here is the tomb of Isabel, Queen of Portugal, daughter of Queen Isabella I of Castile and King Ferdinand II of Aragon.

As part of our time in Toledo we will visit the magnificent **Catedral Primada de Toledo**. The Cathedral of Toledo is a place of worship not only to faith, but to great artistic achievement as well. With ornate white limestone façade, it is stunning inside and out, and houses a magnificent collection of works by artists of world renown including Goya, Raphael, and local hero El Greco.

Included:

- Monasterio de San Juan de los Reyes admission
- Convento de Santa Isabel admission
- Catedral Primada de Toledo admission
- Local licensed guide

Accommodation

Hotel Alfonso VI or similar
<http://www.hotelalfonsovi.com/en/>

Day 14 – Toledo/ Madrid

Date: 3-Jun-16

Meal Plan (B/-/D)

Today we return to Madrid where we will enjoy some additional free time. In the evening we'll come together to share the inspirations of our adventure thus far. For those of you who are departing for home it will also be a time to say farewell for now.

Included Activities

- Sharing Inspiration Circle

Accommodation

Hotel Emperador or similar
<http://www.emperadorhotel.com/en>

Day 15 – Madrid/ Depart

Date: 4-Jun-16

Meal Plan (B/-/-)

Our flight to Rome will be an early one, so we can enjoy more of the day at Ananda Assisi. If you have a later flight to somewhere else, you can come to the airport with us or go later on your own.

Now...on to Italy... please scroll down

Pilgrimage in Italy – 8 days

The focus being Assisi and environs, home of St. Francis & St. Clare

June 4 – Jun 11, 2016

Full Itinerary

Day 1 – Rome/ Ananda Assisi

Date: 4-June-16

Meal Plan (B/-/D)

After our morning arrival at the Rome (Fiumicino—FCO) Airport we'll travel to **Ananda Italy**. There we check-in at Ananda Il Rifugio (Retreat House), take a tour of the Ananda Community: the beautiful Moksha Mandir (temple), gardens, new land, art academy, schools, businesses, etc. and then have dinner with the community in Il Rifugio Retreat House. After dinner, we will have a welcome and orientation circle.

Available every day at Ananda Assisi:

Morning Energization and Meditation at the Ananda Temple: 6:45 to 8:45 am.

Breakfast in Il Rifugio dining room: 8:45 am

Dinners are served at 7:30 pm

Included Activities

- Welcome dinner
- Orientation

Accommodation

Ananda Il Rifugio or nearby the Retreat House

<http://www.ananda.it/en/accommodations>

Day 2 - Assisi

Date: 5-June-16

Meal Plan (B/L/D)

With its winding medieval streets, Roman ruins, and sacred shrines, Assisi has been a major pilgrimage destination for many centuries. We will visit these sights over two full days. The order in which we see them may change, so they are simply listed and described.

—The **Porziuncula**, a small chapel within a huge Basilica. St. Francis restored this little church with his own hands, and it became the spiritual heart of his mission. He left his body here on October 3, 1226.

—The **Minerva Temple** was an ancient Roman temple, dedicated to the Goddess of Wisdom. It is now a Christian church dedicated to Mary.

—**St Francis' birthplace and childhood home**, where he grew up and where his father's cloth shop was (now a church).

—**The Basilica of St. Clare**: St Clare joined St Francis when she was 18. She renounced all, for the love of God, and lived most of her life in seclusion, doing prayer, fasting, and meditation. She is the founder of the order of the Poor Clare's. The Basilica of St. Clare houses St. Clare's tomb, along with the cross, which spoke to St. Francis.

—**The Basilica of St. Francis**: It was built shortly after his death, and consists of three levels, including his tomb (and those of his close disciples) where we can sit and meditate. The church is also well known for the beautiful frescos of St Francis' life. Here also is the cell of San Giuseppe of Cupertino. He was a famous levitating saint of the Franciscan order.

—**San Damiano**, the sacred and beautiful monastery where St. Claire and her fellow nuns lived and prayed, before they moved inside the city walls.

—**L'Eremo Hermitage** above Assisi, used by hermits and made famous by St Francis and his fellow monks, when they wanted to pray and meditate in isolation. There are several caves, walkways, and churches to explore.

Included Activities

- Admission fees where needed
- Local Ananda guide

Accommodation

Ananda Il Rifugio or nearby the Retreat House
<http://www.ananda.it/en/accommodations>

Day 3 - Cortona

Date: 6-June-16

Meal Plan (B/L/D)

Today we will take a day trip to Cortona from Ananda Assisi. Here we'll visit the cell of Saint Francis at The "Celle" Hermitage and the Church of Santa Margharetta.

—Cortona has excellent shopping opportunities.

—**The "Celle" Hermitage**: In 1211 St Francis along with a few of his followers built the first nine cells of the hermitage. This is believed to be where, in May 1226, four months before his death, St Francis dictated his will. See the tiny cell belonging to St. Francis. A mere 1.8 by 2.5 metres and only 1.9 meters high, the cell has a tiny window, the bed on which St Francis reputedly slept and his desk and painting of the Madonna and Child in front of which he used to pray.

— In the **Church of Santa Margharetta** lies the incorrupt body of Saint Margaret of Cortona.

Included Activities

- Admission fees where needed
- Local Ananda guide

Accommodation

Ananda Il Rifugio or nearby the Retreat House
<http://www.ananda.it/en/accommodations>

Day 4 - Assisi

Date: 7-June-16

Meal Plan (B/L/D)

Today we will again visit **Assisi**, which is a short drive from Ananda Assisi. We'll go to the places that we didn't see the day before last. We'll be in Assisi all day and, weather permitting, enjoy a picnic lunch together. In addition to the other places we'll also visit the rooms of St. Joseph Cupertino. It's also wonderful to stroll the cobblestone Assisi streets lined with interesting shops.

Included Activities

- Admission fees where needed
- Local Ananda guide

Accommodation

Ananda Il Rifugio or nearby the Retreat House
<http://www.ananda.it/en/accommodations>

Day 5 – La Verna

Date: 8-June-16

Meal Plan (B/L/D)

Today we'll take another day trip to **La Verna Monastery**. This beautiful mountain monastery is one of the holiest shrines of Christianity. St Francis received the stigmata (wounds of Christ) here, and had many other visions and experiences of Christ. Enjoy the natural beauty and God's deep presence. There are caves, grottos, little churches, beautiful art by Della Robbia family artists, walking areas and nooks to meditate in.

Accommodation

Ananda Il Rifugio or nearby the Retreat House
<http://www.ananda.it/en/accommodations>

Day 6 - Ananda Italy/Rome**Date:** 9-June-16**Meal Plan** (B/L/D)

Today we'll have free time in morning. There are several options of things to do that can be individually decided on. We'll leave after lunch for Rome. It's about a 3-hour drive.

Accommodation

Hotel in Rome – TBA

Day 7 - Rome**Date:** 10-June-16**Meal Plan** (B/-/D)

Today we'll have a guided tour around Rome, which will include seeing the **Pantheon, Piazza Navona, Trivi Fountain**, viewing or visiting the **Colosseum**, the **Forum** and **Saint Peter's Basilica**. St. Peter's Basilica stands on the traditional site where Peter, the apostle who is considered the first pope, was crucified and buried.

In the evening, after our final dinner, we'll have a closing circle and share the inspirations, illuminations and insights we've gained on Pilgrimage. We'll say good-by for now, but the friendships and love we've gained with each other will be timeless — and priceless.

Included Activities

- Admission fees where needed
- Local Ananda guide
- Final dinner
- Closing Circle

Accommodation

Hotel in Rome – TBA

Day 8 - Rome**Date:** 11-June-16**Meal Plan** (B/-/-)

There are no activities planned for the final day. Group transportation to the Rome airport is provided. If you have an earlier, or later flight, individual arrangements can be made.

Go with Love and Joyful Blessings!