

Frequently Asked Questions

FAQs

Please read before booking to understand and appreciate the style and format of our tours

Welcome and thank you so much for considering a tour with us.

Please take time to read through this FAQs document, since it covers a wide range of topics, many of the questions that past guests have raised, and information relating to the tours and your holiday with us.

We feel it will be very useful preparation for your trip.

It is written in an easy plain English style and it is not a contractual document, purely for information.

Its main purpose is to help you understand how we work, the style of our tours and to assist you in deciding if we are the type of company you want to deliver your tour/holiday of the region.

We want to avoid guests arriving with expectations that are different to how we operate and how we deliver our tours.

Very rarely does it occur that a guest has different expectations to the format and style of our tours, but occasionally it happens, so we try, before you book, to ensure you are the type of relaxed independent traveller who is suited to our style of tours.

We don't want any guest to not have their expectations met, so we try to define, as clearly as we possibly can, how we run our tours and the type of guest they are suited to.

The FAQs document also explicitly defines what the tour price includes and what it doesn't. With the aim of avoiding any ambiguity that could arise.

If you do book, we recommend that you print this document and bring it with you and you can always read it again, whilst in transit.

To introduce ourselves, we are a small specialist tour operator who truly care for the experience our guests have and we will go out of our way to try to make your holiday wonderful and memorable.

We run high quality tours, with well balanced, comprehensive itineraries.

Our small group tours are 'micro' tours, consisting of between 2 and 12 guests, travelling in one or two '7 passenger seat' tour vehicles.

Whilst you will have lightly guided walking tours around most of the locations, we don't 'hold your hand' all the time and you will have plenty of free time to explore the locations on your own and at your own pace.

Appreciating that you may only visit the region once, we want to make it as special as we can.

This document aims to answer questions you may have and help to set your expectation for the level of guidance, free time, and overall philosophy/ethos that we apply to our tours.

And, most importantly, as we say on our website, what we expect from you is to come in a friendly and relaxed manner, so that you can engage with us, and other guests, to have an experience that ranks right up there with some of the best travel experiences you have had.

We are very different to the large group coach tours and you will be treated as mature, competent adults.

We try, as hard as we possibly can, and it is really important for us, to discourage people of a demanding, or 'over-bearing', nature joining our tours.

We are not a 'high volume' tour operator and we want to encourage friendly, easy going guests, to ensure our guests relate to each other wonderfully and everyone thoroughly enjoys every single day. Previous guests have said it was like visiting distant friends or relatives, which sums it up pretty well.

Honestly, if you are a person who prefers a less intimate and more formal type of experience, that includes prescribed guided tours, you will be far better opting for one of the coach tours than our tours. Please think about this, because we do not want you to come with expectations that may be different to what we deliver.

We love to welcome guests who arrive with smiles on their faces and, being on holiday, there's no reason for you not to.

Our tours are not as rigid as a conventional coach tour and we do not contract City tour guides to guide you around the locations holding an umbrella or a stick with a flag on and speaking to you via a microphone and ear piece.

Whilst some of our Tour Leaders may also be licenced Andalusia monument guides, others are not and the Tour Leaders do not enter the monuments with you.

They will share their knowledge with you, but please appreciate that they are not all experts in the detailed history of all of the monuments. You can always read later about any that you found sparked your interest.

All of our Tour Leaders have been fully trained, but as individuals, they will have different depths of knowledge and experience. They are fun, enjoyable to spend time with and truly want to make sure you have a great time.

You will immerse yourself in the incredible history this region offers, but you are on your vacation, here to enjoy yourself and we recognise and appreciate that.

That is why our tours are designed to offer a good balance of visiting sites and free time for you to wander on your own or simply relax.

It is undeniable, that the tours are pretty full on, but they are definitely not a 'boot camp'.

Spain is a laid-back country and can be more bureaucratic and frustrating than many other Western countries, so don't get annoyed at any little problems or issues that may occur, they can all normally be resolved relatively easily.

Relax, participate and allow this wonderful region of Europe to enchant you.

Staff in restaurants don't rush, dishes come out individually, not all together, they take their time in presenting you with the bill..... it almost certainly will be a totally different style of service to what you find at home and you may find it somewhat chaotic and frustrating.

It's not unusual for starters and main courses to be served together or someone's desert to be served before you have had your main course. Crazy, but it's the way Spain is.

It seems chaotic, but for the most part works, just different from what you are used to.

So, recognise it is a different culture, relax, enjoy it and the experience.

You are visiting them, their country and their culture, respect and appreciate this.

Nobody enjoys visitors who complain because things aren't comparable to what they are used to at home. Of course, it will not be the same, don't expect it to be.

It is a different country, a different culture and a main reason for travel is to experience different cultures. If it was the same as home then what would be the point of travelling ?

Where would be the enjoyment and fun in that ?'

You are on vacation, be easy going, a little adventurous and explore.

'Spanish time' is very different to many other countries.

People eat dinner later than you will almost certainly be used to, but by the time you return from your day's touring, and rest a little, it will be nearly 8pm, which is when most restaurant kitchens open.

Our range of accommodation is primarily 'boutique', exceptionally clean and comfortable.

Our Guest House Villa is stylish, with character, and the hotels we use are carefully selected.

Our vehicles are comfortable and safely driven.

They are all air conditioned.

Our Tour Leaders and staff are wonderful people, highly professional and very friendly.

However, if you want detailed historical information about the monuments in each City, you won't get this from our tours and a more formal coach tour with a contracted guide in each City will serve you better.

You will get some interesting facts and information relating to characters and background to the Cities, delivered in a story telling style. We try to make short video clips play out in your mind rather than a more flat lecture or lesson of facts. And we will walk you through the best places and routes in the historic City Centres, so you don't miss anything.

The places you will visit are beautiful, fascinating, cultural and historic.

The independent reviews about our tours, and our company, are amongst the highest rated on Trip Advisor. We are very proud of this and we will do our utmost to keep it that way. If we attract the wrong type of guest, it won't remain that way.

Come in the right frame of mind, looking forward to having a wonderful time and we will deliver you a great experience that will last in your memory for a long time.

Hopefully, you are the type of guests we strive to attract and our tours are the type of tour you are looking for.

If you feel you would prefer a more formal coach group style of tour, then that's no problem at all and there are many to choose from, but if we have a match, we can't wait to welcome you upon one of our tours.



Gary Montagu
Owner Tour Andalusia

It's worthwhile to read all the questions and answers in this FAQs document, but to assist you in navigating it, we have attempted to group together questions that we think relate to similar categories.

The categories are:

General & Background

Arrival/Departure

Tour Logistics & Accommodation

Tours, Prices & Monuments

Travel to the Cities & Vehicles

Restaurants and Meals

Booking and Payment

Tipping

Why should we come on your tour

Our Guests

Contact Numbers

General & Background

Q. How long have you been running the tours ?

A. We were the original company in the region to offer 'small group' and private tours. Our first tours were in 2009, so we have a high level of experience of running tours in Andalusia.

We established ourselves to offer an alternative for guests who wanted to make the most of their visit to the region, without the hassle of driving themselves and those that did not want to be part of a large coach tour.

Each of our group sizes are normally only up to six guests with a Tour Leader and from time to time, we may have two groups running alongside each other.

Our guests tend to be professional, respectful, friendly and quite independent who enjoy culture and visiting historic sites and Cities.

Q. How far from Málaga are located and where is your base ?

A. We are 45 minutes North of Málaga and we operate from central Andalusia, in the village/town of Mollina, just 15km from the large town of Antequera,.

Q. Do we need to be able to speak Spanish ?

A. Not at all, we will help you when required.

All of the Cities are familiar with tourists and English is widely spoken.

In the villages, however, not so much, and very few people speak English.

Q. What age demographic come on your tours ?

A. This is quite difficult to answer, because we have guests of all ages and often groups are of mixed ages.

However, we would say that, typically, 70% are over 60, 25% between 35 - 60 and 5% between 20 - 35. Very occasionally, we have a family with teenage children on tours.

We rarely have any young children on a tour and we don't run tours to 'mixed' groups with young children on them, only private tours for the family.

Q. What time of year is best to come ?

A. Andalusía is renowned as having one of the best climates in Europe.

We would say March/April/May/June and September/October/November are traditionally the best months, but we often have great weather in the other months.

Tour Andalusia Limited - 5 Brayford Square - London - E1 0SG

www.tourandalusia.com info@tourandalusia.com

Tel. +44 7928 495328 email info@tourandalusia.com Company Registration 13526246

It is normally very hot in July, August and early September.

Unfortunately, with global warming, it isn't easy to predict what the weather will be like, other than summer is hot.

Q. If we want to stay a few more days in the Villa/Hotel at the end of the tour is this possible ?

A. Yes, this may be possible.

See the Prices page on our website for the cost of additional nights.

We also have a range of formal tour extensions which you can add to your tour.

Q. Are you on Trip Advisor ?

A. Yes we are on Trip Advisor and we are pleased to have one of the highest ratings of any travel company on Trip Advisor.

http://www.tripadvisor.co.uk/Attraction_Review-g187438-d5555289-Reviews-Tour_Andalusia_International_Day_Tours-Malaga_Costa_del_Sol_Province_of_Malaga_An.html

Q. Do we need any Visas or special passport conditions to come to Spain ?

A. You will need to check, depending on the Country of issue of your passport.

Please remember, that your passport may need to be valid for several months after the date of travel, so check its expiry date to make sure that you fulfil any travel requirements.

Spain is part of the Schengen Area, which means that it has Visa free travel agreements with many countries.

A search on the internet, or government travel websites, should provide this information.

Q. What are the standards of hygiene like in Spain ?

A. Hygiene standards in Spain are high, we rarely have guests suffer with 'dodgy tummies'.

You should drink plenty of water each day on the tour, because it is easy to become dehydrated and this will make you feel unwell.

If the weather is hot, we recommend a 'minimum' of two litres a day.

Arrival/Departure

Q. What time do we need to arrive in Málaga ?

A. You can arrive at any 'reasonable time' in the morning, afternoon or evening.

We collect you from the airport, local hotel or train station and, subject to the time of arrival, either spend some time in the mountain village of Mijas or just transfer to the accommodation.

There is a supplement applicable for any collections or drop-offs required outside of our normal working hours and our 'Booking Terms & Conditions' detail this.

Q. Can we arrive in Málaga by train ?

A. Yes.

Arrival by train from Madrid is probably a better option than flying. It takes less than 3 hours from Madrid to the main Málaga train station 'Maria Zambrano'.

However, if you are arriving from Barcelona, then you would be better to fly, unless you particularly like long train journeys.

For train departures back to Madrid, from the Villa/Antequera tours, we actually recommend departing from the local train station, Antequera Santa Ana, not from Málaga.

This can save you up to 2 hours on your overall journey, since it negates travelling to Málaga (1 hour), arriving with contingency (30 minutes) and then travelling back up to Antequera on train (20 minutes), where certain high speed trains stop on the way to Madrid..

Antequera Santa Ana train station is only 10 minutes from our Villa in Mollina and 20 minutes from central Antequera.

If you require specific advice, please do not hesitate to contact us for a recommendation based on your travel plans, we are highly experienced in assisting guests with practical recommendations.

For collections in central Málaga, we have an easily accessible meeting point.

We will provide you details, which include telephone contact numbers for our Tour Leaders.

Q. What time departure flight/train/drop off do we need to have ?

A. The departure transfers, on the official tour end day, for our centrally based tours, are included in the price of our tour and we can take you to the airport/train station for any 'reasonable' departure time.

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However, if you need to arrive at the airport/train station outside of our normal operating hours, there is a supplementary charge of €60 which is payable directly to the driver.

If your tour involves a final night in a hotel in Málaga, then you make your own way for onward departure. Usually by taxi to the airport or train station at the appropriate time.

The tour itineraries detail which tours end with the final night at a Málaga Hotel.

If you arrive in Málaga before the official tour start date, you make your own way to your accommodation and we arrange collection from our meeting point on the tour start day.

Please also see our Terms & Conditions, which provide more specific information.

Q. Why do you not include the departure transfer for tours that finish with a final night in the hotel in Málaga, in particular, the Ultimate Andalusia tour ?

A. It is only a 15 to 20 minute taxi ride to the train station or airport from the hotel and there are taxis available right by the hotel we normally use.

We are based one hour North of Málaga and, for us to provide the departure transfer for these tours, we would need to allocate a Tour Leader for the whole day just to undertake a short transfer and we would need to increase our tour prices, accordingly, to incorporate this.

Additionally, guests regularly have different plans for onward travel, some stay for a few extra nights in Málaga, some are travelling to other European destinations or elsewhere in Spain, others renting a car, so not everyone's plan for departure is the same.

Hence, it is far more sensible for departure, for the tours that end with a final night in a hotel in Málaga, for our guests to take a short taxi ride to the airport or train station at the appropriate time for their departure.

Q. Where are your meeting and collection points upon arrival ?

A. We have meeting points in Málaga Airport and Málaga train station and we will email these to you.

We also have a meeting point in central Málaga.

We will always confirm the pick-up location by email to you.

For flight arrivals, we arrive at the meeting point 30 minutes after your flight arrival time, it takes at least this time for you to disembark, clear passport control, collect luggage and arrive there.

If you land early, there is a cafe 'La Manon' inside the terminal where you can have a drink and wait and this is also our meeting point in Málaga Airport.

Q. If we want to spend some days at the end of the tour in the region can you help ?

A. Yes, we can almost certainly help you. If it is within 15 km of Málaga City, we can take you there free of charge.

If it is more than this, then we charge €60 per additional hour, or part thereof.

Q. What do we do if there is nobody waiting to collect us at the expected time ?

A. Firstly, please do not panic.

We have an unparalleled level of punctuality in meeting and collecting our guests and we have never left a guest stranded.

However, occasionally, and for many different reasons, we may be slightly delayed.

Please be patient, you are on holiday, relax and we will arrive as quickly as possible.

Similarly, if we agree a time to meet for departure at the end of the day, and the Tour Leader arrives late, just relax and do not get annoyed.

It isn't that they have forgotten, but sometimes we need to move vehicles in the afternoon, and there may be a traffic problem, parking problems or a blocked road, that we have been caught up in.

The delay will purely be because we are trying to make the service to you as good as we possibly can, no other reason.

You can call Gary or any of the other Tour Leaders, the telephone numbers are at the end of this document and in the meeting point details we send you.

Leave a message if you get put through to voicemail, or send a text/WhatsApp message, since we may well be driving or parking.

We stress that it is extremely rare that we do not meet you as planned.

If there has been a serious delay, such as a vehicle breakdown, or traffic accident, where possible, we plan to have back-up capability to send someone to collect you.

We tend to use WhatsApp for messaging communication and it's a good idea to make contact with the Tour Leader before the tour commences.

We will normally confirm who will meet you upon arrival.

Tour Logistics & Accommodation

Q. What time in the mornings do we leave for the City trips and when do we return back ?

A. For the Villa, or Antequera based tours, we normally leave either at 09:00 or 09:30 depending on where we are visiting that day. We usually arrive back around 19:00 most days.

However, for the Granada visit, we spend the evening in the atmospheric Albayzin to see the Alhambra lit up at night and we have dinner in a 'Bistro Style' restaurant that has a very good local and 'authentic' Flamenco performance, so we don't arrive back until late in the evening.

For the Seville visit, we normally take an early dinner in Seville and arrive back around 20.45.

If you are on a 'circuit' style tour, such as a Private tour, or the Ultimate Andalusia tour, then you stay in the Cities each night.

Q. How much time do we have in the Cities if we are on the centrally based tours ?

A. It depends on the City, but each visit is typically around 7 hours.

We take you to the City and show you the monuments and places to visit on a lightly guided walking tour.

We try to adopt an interesting 'story telling' style rather than just dry history.

We do not enter the monuments with you, or give you guided tours of them.

We leave you to enter the monuments on your own to explore and appreciate them.

If you want to have a private guided tour of the Alhambra, for instance, we can organise this for you and you would pay the guide directly.

Ronda is less itinerary based than the larger Cities and, after an initial orientation, you are left to explore on your own.

For the Ronda day, we first visit 'Setenil de las Bodegas, where the cliffs overhang the village and on the Málaga day, subject to weather conditions, we visit the stunning National Park 'El Torcal'. Consequentially, you will spend less time in these locations than you will in the other Cities.

Please see the tour itineraries, which provide more detailed information.

Approximately, 40% of your time in the 'major' Cities will be with the Tour Leader and 60% on your own, with a mixture of inside the monuments and free time.

Q. Do we do something on departure day ?

A. This depends on your flight/train departure times.

We plan to get you to the airport a minimum of 2 hours before your flight departure time and to the train station, at least 40 minutes before departure.

We often visit Antequera and some of the scenic local areas on the way to Málaga.

If it is realistic to visit somewhere on departure day, we will.

Q. What accommodation do you have to offer ?

A. We have a range of accommodation.

Our 'centrally' based tours are run from either 'Caserio Castaño' our lovely Guest House Villa located in the large village of Mollina, which is 15km from historic Antequera. Photos and details of this are on our website <https://tourandalucia.com/accommodation/>

Or from one of the 4* Antequera Hotels, normally the Antequera Parador Hotel if it has availability <https://paradores.es/en/parador-de-antequera>

The tour schedule details which tours are based from the Villa and which tours are based from the Hotel.

For logistical reasons, we try to avoid the situation where some guests on the same tour are based in the Villa and some in the Hotel.

For the 'circuit' style tours, you stay in high quality hotels in the centre of the Cities.

Where possible, and available, we try to use 'boutique' style hotels with character.

The tour itineraries contain a list of the hotels we tend to use for circuit tours.

If certain hotels lack availability, then we source alternatives of similar quality.

Q. We normally stay in hotels, so how different is the Villa accommodation ?

A. It is a different experience and less formal.

The Villa is a very relaxed environment and it is maintained to a high standard.

Most guests tend to socialise together in the evenings, but it's not mandatory. It's a very friendly environment, where you should feel at home for the week.

You have your own comfortable bedroom with 'en-suite/master' shower room.

In the warm evenings, guests can sit outside on one of the terraces, or by the pool.

We have a couple of housekeepers who make breakfast and clean your room each day.

Q. Are all of the tours run to a published schedule ?

A. No.

The small group tours are run to a published schedule, but the private tours are scheduled to meet our guests' required dates and, as such, are dedicated to the couple or private group.

Q. What days of the week do the tours normally start ?

A. Most of the 'non-private' tours tend to start on either a Saturday or Wednesday, but consult the tour schedule for the actual day and dates.

Feel free to contact us if you have any specific dates and we will see if it is possible to accommodate these.

Q. How do the tour extensions work ?

A. You choose any of the tour extensions and, on day 7 of the normal tour when the other guests are departing, you are taken by a Tour Leader for the first day of your tour extension.

The details are published on our website and the associated pdf itineraries.

Q. What facilities does the Villa have ?

A. All the rooms have private 'en-suite/master' bathrooms.

We supply towels, hair dryers, shampoo, shower gel, bathrobes.

There are also tea and coffee making facilities in each room.

Details of the Villa are published with photographs on our website on the 'Accommodation' page <https://tourandalucia.com/accommodation/>

Q. Do you have laundry facilities in the Villa ?

A. Yes. There is a laundry service offered by the Housekeeper, who charges €10 for a plastic carrier bag size of washing. This includes washing, drying and folding, but not ironing.

Typically laundry is returned the next day.

We do not allow guests to undertake their own washing using the washing machine.

The laundry facilities are required every day by the Housekeeper for towels, bed linen etc. and they need to schedule the washing and drying accordingly.

Q. If we stay in the Villa, can we spend an evening in Antequera ?

A. We often arrange an evening dinner in Antequera at a good Spanish restaurant.

Q. What is the village of Mollina like ?

A. It is a typical large Spanish village of around 4,000 people.

There is a mixture of older and modern houses.

There is a small square in the village with a church. It is a relatively flat village.

It is very functional for our tours and, most conveniently, it is centrally located.

There are not a lot of shops in the village, however, it does have a good supermarket within walking distance of the Villa.

It is very safe to walk in the evening in the village and the local people are friendly. It is a working, agricultural village with mainly Spanish, but some British, residents.

It is an excellent base for travelling to and from the Cities, the nature of a 'hub' tour.

You can use Google Maps Street View to tour around the village, if you wish.

Q. What classification of room do we have in the hotels ?

A. All the hotels are very nice.

The rooms included in our tour prices are for Standard Double or Standard Twin rooms.

We will request double or twin beds in the rooms if you inform us when making your booking and, whilst some of the hotels will generally not guarantee this, they normally meet our requests.

Room upgrades to 'Premium' rooms or 'Suites' may be available, if you want, for a supplement.

Please ask if you require this.

Tours, Prices & Monuments

Q. What exactly is included in the tour price and what is excluded ?

A. Our tour prices include

- Bed & breakfast accommodation for the specified duration for the tour.
- Tour Leader with tour vehicle for the duration of the tour, as specified in the itinerary.
- Transfers as detailed in the itineraries, note if the final night is in Málaga, you make your own way for onward travel/departure.
- A guided walking tour in the historic centres, given by the Tour Leader. This does not include entering the monuments with you.

The tour price excludes

- Other meals, including dinner at the Flamenco show in Granada, the Churros/Coffees at the Churreria or the fish lunch at the Chiringuito in Malaga. The only meal included in the tour price is breakfast.
- Any train/taxi/air fares.
- Any shows/performances, monument entrance fees.
- Any expenditure that is not included above.

If you have any specific queries about what is included, that is not covered here, please raise them and we will be delighted to respond.

Q. One of the key reasons for our visit to Andalusia is to visit the Alhambra. Can you guarantee tickets ?

A. We cannot guarantee tickets for the Alhambra.

However, we have had thousands of guests over the years and in excess of 99% of them visited the Alhambra. The only ones who didn't, were guests who made last minute bookings with us and by then, all tickets were sold out.

So if you book three months or more in advance, you will almost certainly be able to purchase the entrance ticket online.

Q. How do we purchase tickets for the Alhambra and other monuments ?

A. We email you simple instructions to print out and follow to make the purchases.

As soon as you book, we send you the instructions to purchase your Alhambra entrances and a month or so before arrival, we send you instructions to purchase some other monument entrance tickets.

Q. Why don't you purchase the tickets for us ?

A. Each guest will normally purchase either 4 or 5 monument entrance tickets online, following the instructions we send them.

We have around 350 guests each year participate in our tours and, for us to do this for each of our guests, would require significant spare resource that we don't have.

Several tickets require you to enter names, passport numbers, email addresses and there are often age related discounts. So it is better for guests to purchase the tickets online directly.

Q. We could not find any tour schedules on your website ?

A. We do not publish the tour schedules on the website.

The schedules are regularly updated during the year, please email us to request the latest schedule.

We run tours most weeks throughout the year.

We may have a tour marked as 'Sold Out' but then subsequently receive a cancellation, so we update the schedule on an ongoing basis to show availability.

Private tours are organised to meet your dates, these do not run to a schedule.

Q. Are the tours fully guided ?

A. The tours are 'semi-guided'.

We offer a mix of light guidance around the key Cities from our Tour Leaders.

However, as stated and explained, they will not enter the monuments with you.

We know a considerable amount about the history and culture of the region from the Roman period and, in particular, when the Moors occupied 'al-Andalus' and are pleased to pass some of this knowledge to you in a captivating story telling style, but we are not Academics.

The major monuments offer audio/visual guides, which you can rent from the entrance for a few euros. The use of an audio guide is a personal preference.

Many of our guests prefer to visit the monuments and then read a little about them after their visit. It is entirely your choice. Some guests prefer to read about them beforehand.

You may also be able to download APPS to your mobile/cell phone, or tablet, for some sites.

Each City has their own City based licenced monument guides who just cover that City. We cover 5 to 7 Cities in the course of our tours, so we provide general guidance in each, along with some interesting background information.

The typical structure of a visit is as follows:

In the morning we will give you an orientation walking tour of the historic areas of the City, with some background history and interesting facts/stories.

Then we will take a tapas lunch and in the afternoon you visit the monuments and have some free time. You are not obliged to take lunch in a group, or where we recommend, but most guests prefer to. It is your choice.

Our style of delivery of the background information and history, tends to be interactive story telling about what happened in the past, rather than just flat facts. We have found that our guests enjoy this a lot.

Many guests say that we gave them a wealth of historical and cultural information, but different guests expect different levels of guidance, so we prefer to describe ours as 'light guidance', which we find is the appropriate level for most of our guests.

If you particularly want to have a licenced City guide give you a detailed tour in any of the Cities, and you are prepared to hire them, then please let us know, since we have contact with several of them. As an example, the charge for a private guided 3 hour tour of the Alhambra is €180. They are subject to availability.

Q. Do you recommend us hiring one of the licenced City Guides at any location ?

A. As mentioned, the vast majority of our guests prefer to have the introductory walking tour with our Tour Leaders and hire an audio guide at the main monuments, if they want one.

Unless you are part of a large group, then we think this is ideal and, because we have small groups, we can interact with you on a more personal basis.

The coach tours tend to contract the City Guides, who walk them around in large groups of 30 to 50 people.

This suits a certain type of person, but we feel that, In our small groups, you are significantly more involved in exploring the Cities and have a better experience from this.

Our tours tend to appeal to more independent professional people, who do not want to be part of a large coach tour.

They enjoy the interaction with a small number of similar like-minded people, many coming from different countries around the world.

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We feel that having a lightly guided tour from one of our Tour Leaders, in a group of 2 to 7 guests, is a much more appealing option, where you can take your time, interact and get the most out of your visit to the Cities.

Q. What does the Flamenco show in Granada cost and do you recommend it ?

A. The Flamenco performance is at a lovely 'bistro style' restaurant 'Jardines de Zoraya' at the top of the Albayzin, the hill opposite the Alhambra, and the atmospheric Arab quarter.

Hopefully, you will have got the impression by now, that we tend to opt for the smaller, more personal and intimate experience, rather than a large volume experience.

The food at the restaurant is good. The dinner and show is not included in the tour price.

We have an arrangement with them where you pay a discounted price for the show and then you just pay for your meal and drinks, as you would at any restaurant.

Typically, the total is around €50 - €60 per person for a nice meal, a drink and the show. But like any restaurant these days, bottles of wine can increase the bill significantly. It is not a 'fixed' price meal/show aimed at bulk tourism.

The performance is by a small group of talented professional artists, it is a genuine intense and passionate Flamenco and we recommend it.

However, it is loud, powerful and Flamenco is a unique style, so be prepared for this.

If you do not wish to eat at the restaurant, or see the performance, then please let us know.

There are other restaurants in the Albayzin where you can have dinner, but we think the experience is a good addition to your visit to Spain.

Please note that, because this evening is an integral part of our published tour itinerary for the 'Highlights of Andalusia' small group tour, unless universally agreed by all guests on the tour, we stay in Granada until after the dinner and performance and return back to the accommodation late in the evening.

If you are on the 'Ultimate Andalusia' tour, you take a short taxi ride to the restaurant.

You can visit the 'Mirador San Nicolas' to see the Alhambra, lit up at night across the valley.

It is quite a special view.

Q. Do you cater for single guests or just couples/groups ?

A. We have single travellers join our tours and, if you are a single traveller, then we are delighted to have you participate in one of them.

There are single supplements, as detailed on the Prices page of our website.

We try to keep the supplements as low as we realistically can.

Q. What is the minimum number of guests you require to confirm a tour is taking place ?

A. Unlike most tour operators, who require quite a lot of guests booked before they confirm the tour, we run nearly all of our tours, and tour extensions, subject to a minimum of just two guests booked on them.

Q. How many people are there in a tour group ?

A. For the small group tours, the group size is normally no more than six guests per group, occasionally seven.

We run each vehicle, with driver/guide 'Tour Leader', as a separate tour group.

At popular times, we may be running more than one tour group concurrently, but each has its own Tour Leader.

The private tours are dedicated to the couple, or small private group of family or friends, booking the tour.

Q. Do you run coach tours for large groups ?

Occasionally, we run coach tours for 'private' groups of more than 12 guests, for example Colleges, Societies, Special Interest Groups.

These tend to be custom itineraries and we try to meet dates they require.

For such tours, the hotels may have particular booking conditions, which we may have to incorporate and modify our standard terms and conditions accordingly.

Q. Is there any particular dress code for any of the religious monuments, such as Cathedrals ?

A. To a limited degree.

Spain is generally quite relaxed about what you wear to visit religious monuments, such as Cathedrals. But, you must be sensible and respectful.

Shorts are fine, but 'knee length'.

Tee shirts are fine, but with covered shoulders, not vests.

We recommend, that if you intend to visit a religious monument in any location, it is prudent to dress in accordance with any rules they set.

Q. How much walking is involved in the tours ?

A. There is a reasonable amount of walking on the tour, because the Cities and monuments are quite large.

The amount of walking normally varies between 5km - 10km a day, depending on the City.

We take things quite slowly, so you can appreciate the environment, and there is plenty of time to just sit and enjoy the atmosphere of the Cities.

Q. Is there a printed itinerary we can have ?

A. Yes, all the tour itineraries are available in 'pdf' format and can be downloaded from the 'Tours' page on our website <https://tourandalusia.com/tours/>

Note, for the centrally based tours, the sequence of the City visits may be slightly different to the published itinerary, depending on the day they start, but you will visit the same locations.

The reason for any difference in the sequence of the day trips is to avoid visiting Cities on days when certain monuments may be closed.

Q. Why are your prices in £GBP and not in €Euro or \$US ?

A. We are a UK registered company and, as such, all of our Accounting is in £GBP.

Our guests come from different territories, mainly North America, Australia, New Zealand, UK, Middle East, Singapore and other countries where English is widely spoken, however, realistically, we have to price in just one currency, so it makes sense for this to be £GBP to be compatible with our accounting.

Q. We saw 'El Torcal' on the itinerary for the Málaga day, what is this ?

A. El Torcal is a National Park at the top of the mountain range near Antequera.

It is quite a spectacular area and there is a 50 minute walk (1.4 km) which you can take through the stunning rock formations.

You should wear good quality shoes/trainers to do the walk and, if it is early Spring or Winter, it may be cold there, since it is very high, so wear warm layered clothing and take a small bottle of water.

Whilst the walk is officially rated 'low' in terms of difficulty, it can be quite arduous and you do have to walk up and down rocks on a narrow track and thread your way through some downhill parts. So, it can be quite 'tricky'.

Most of our guests do the walk, but don't underestimate it and walk it carefully.

You do not have to undertake the walk and there is an on-site caf eteria where you can just sit and enjoy the beautiful scenery, whilst other guests are on the walk.

There is also an interesting reception centre.

If you have any walking difficulties you should not do the walk.

We have to stress that any walking of this nature is entirely at your own risk and, if you are at all concerned, you should check that your travel insurance covers appropriate activities, such as walking on marked paths in national parks.

Please note, if it has been raining hard and the ground is wet, then we do not undertake the walk, since it will be muddy, slippery and dangerous.

In such an instance, we will normally visit Antequera before travelling to M alaga.

Q. If we want to make some purchases of leather goods, where do you recommend ?

A. Several guests have told us, in their opinion, Mijas offers the best quality of leather goods for attractive prices.

Because we only normally visit Mijas on arrival day, and this is subject to your arrival time, then we suggest if you see something you like when you are there, then buy it, since you may not see quite the same quality/value elsewhere.

Ronda and Granada are best for shoes.

Q. Will we have the same driver/guide for the duration of our tour ?

A. Most tours have the same Tour Leader for the full duration,

Occasionally, we may need to switch Tour Leaders during a tour.

All of our Tour Leaders are personable, friendly and fun. Everyone enjoys their company.

Our Tour Leaders are neither frivolous or too serious, but professional with a good sense of humour and good company to be with.

All are very safe drivers.

They are all knowledgeable and highly competent.

Q. We like spending some time in the countryside, do you offer anything ?

A. Yes, we offer a range of Tour Extensions that you can add at the end of any tour, to take advantage of the Andaluc a countryside and/or white villages. These are detailed on our website.

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www.tourandalusia.com info@tourandalusia.com

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Travel to the Cities & Vehicles

Q. How do we travel to the Cities and around Andalucia ?

A. We transport you in one of our Tour Vehicles.

We have a small fleet of vehicles, mainly Mercedes Vito Tourer or Mercedes V Class vehicles.

These can seat six to eight passengers, depending on the model. We currently have seven tour vehicles.

They all have passenger zone air conditioning.



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Q. I suffer from motion sickness, will that be a problem ?

A. Motion sickness can range from a slight feeling of sickness to feeling extremely unwell.

Normally for each journey for the centralised based tours, you will spend around 1 hour in the vehicle before we reach our destination (1 hour 30 minutes for Seville).

If your motion sickness is acute, then possibly a touring holiday isn't the best option, since it does involve covering a large distance during the week.

We have had guests in the past request to sit up front every day, because of their motion sickness, but we ask you to consider other guests in the vehicle and, whilst the vehicles are spacious, it is only reasonable to rotate around and let other guests in the vehicle have the opportunity to sit up front if they would like to.

Q. If we are on a centrally based tour, how long does it take to get to the Cities each day ?

A. For the centrally based 'hub' tours, it takes roughly 1 hour to reach each City, other than Seville, which takes about 1 hour 30 minutes. It can take us a further 10 minutes or so to make our way through the City to the parking places near the centre of the old quarter.

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Q. If we are on a circuit style tour, how long does it take to get to the Cities each day ?

For the circuit tours, where you move and stay in different Cities, the journeys are longer, being around 1.5 to 2 hours, but you spend the nights in the Cities and don't have a return journey.

Q. Can I always sit in the same seat ?

A. We request that guests are willing to move around in the vehicle/s, to ensure everyone has a fair and equal opportunity to sit up front, or in the middle row, if they wish.

We don't allocate a seat to a guest for the duration of the tour and we ask you to be considerate and accommodating.

The journeys tend to normally be around 1 hour, sometimes up to 2 hours, depending on the tour, and, if it is a longer journey, we can always make a stop at a roadside 'Venta'.

They are not excessively long journeys.

Most of our guests are fantastic and ask others if they would like to sit up front or in the middle row and this is how we expect you to be, flexible and accommodating, not self-centred.

On very rare occasions in the past, we have had a guest say 'I'm not sitting in the back seats' and we suggest that if you feel like this, then you will be better considering a coach group tour, since you will not be the type of guest we aim to attract and are unlikely to fit in with our other guests.

Q. How large of the seats in your vehicles ?

A. They are similar in size to a standard class airline seat.

The vehicles either have three seats in a row in the middle and rear rows or two seats in the middle and three in the rear. They all have a seat in the front next to the driver.

Typically, the vehicles seat 6 or 7 passengers and we normally have no more than 6 guests in a vehicle.

If we have a guest who is significantly larger than other guests, then it makes sense for them to sit in the front or in the row, or in the row with just two passengers, for the comfort of all of the guests.

We ask you not to get 'hung up' and bothered about where you sit in the tour vehicle. The tour vehicles are the largest available that can be driven without a special coach driver's licence in Spain.

And also the largest that can fit in the underground car parks right in the centre of the City.

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The coaches have to drop off, sometimes at quite a distance away from the centre, and you walk in. We drive to the heart of the historic centres.

They are comfortable and air conditioned and the journeys relatively short.

Restaurants and Meals

Q. Do we have to eat at the restaurants you recommend for lunch ?

A. No.

We may suggest good value places for lunch, which we know serve tasty typical 'Andalucian' food, but you are free to eat wherever you wish.

We have no allegiance with any, and, unlike many of the larger Tour Companies, we do not take commission from them.

One of the reasons we have recommended restaurants in some Cities, is that we know they are efficient in the time taken to serve, so you don't spend too long at lunch, leaving plenty of time for sightseeing.

It is Spanish Culture to take your time in restaurants, since eating out is an important aspect.

Q. If we want to have something light for dinner and don't want to go out can we ?

A. Yes. If you are staying in the Villa, there is a local supermarket close by and you can buy provisions and eat these, either outside on the terraces, by the pool or inside.

You cannot cook meals at the Villa, but can use the kitchen to prepare cold picnic style meals.

The supermarket is closed on Sundays but open every other day until 21.00.

Q. What time do people normally take dinner ?

A. Unless you live in another Southern European region, you will find that people tend to take dinner significantly later than you may normally take it.

Most restaurants do not open their kitchen until 8pm, so you may well be eating dinner from 8.30pm onwards. Most guests accept this and appreciate it is a cultural difference.

You don't have to have a large meal for dinner, the restaurants have lots of choices.

As mentioned, on the 'Highlights of Andalusia' tour, you stay for the evening in Granada and Seville and take dinner there.

Q. What are the typical costs for lunch and dinner during the tour ?

A. Most days you have a Tapas lunch, which is typically around €15 a head.

Dinner locally is reasonably good value, typically costing around €25, including one or two drinks.

If you are on one of the circuit tours, we recommend some nice restaurants in each of the Cities.

Q. Does the local village 'Mollina', where the Villa is located, have restaurants ?

A. There are some local restaurants in the village and some in the neighbouring village, a few minutes' drive away.

Q. Is food available in the Villas ?

A. We provide a comprehensive breakfast.

This includes cereal, yoghurt, fruit, scrambled eggs, omelettes, fried eggs, toast, hams, cheeses etc. but not a full 'English' breakfast.

If you want, you can bring back picnic style food from the local supermarket and eat at the Villa.

Guests can prepare food in the kitchen in the Villa, such as salads, cold cuts....but, as mentioned, guests cannot cook meals for dinner.

It isn't 'self-catering', as such, it is a registered 'guest house'.

Booking & Payment

Q. How do we make a booking ?

A. Once you have checked the tour schedule for availability and wish to book, you email us with the details and we confirm the booking and issue you a booking reference.

You then make payment for the booking deposit, which is deducted from the total tour price.

A single fixed amount deposit covers up to 3 guests and, for 4 to 8 guests, it is 15% of the total tour price.

The deposit can either be paid by transfer into our bank account or, for Credit Card payments, we will issue you an electronic invoice from 'STRIPE' which you can pay by all major debit/credit cards.

The invoice is in £GBP and the financial institution who issue your card will convert it to your local currency when you make payment.

However, if you want to receive a more advantageous exchange rate, than offered by the Credit Card organisations for purchases made in a foreign currency, then consider a 'Wise' account, for payment of the deposit and balance, see one of the following questions.

If the tour is for a 'group' of more than 8 guests, then we may require a different payment profile and payment terms to match any specific conditions imposed by the hotels for group bookings.

Q. Is the booking deposit, or balance payment, refundable if we need to cancel after we have paid it ?

A. If a booking is cancelled by a guest, any payments made are non-refundable, since these cover many operational costs, including planning, administration, retainers for services required and accommodation.

It is essential that you have comprehensive travel insurance that covers any costs you may incur if your trip is cancelled for any personal or 3rd party reasons.

We recommend choosing a specialist travel insurance provider that is based in your home country. Travel insurance policies, nowadays, are normally comprehensive in the cover they provide.

We have had guests cancel their tour for their own personal reasons, or for 3rd party reasons, such as flight cancellations or other events, and subsequently request refunds,

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which we have to refuse, so please be aware that, in all such circumstances, deposits or balances are non-refundable.

They are only refundable or transferable to a future tour should the tour be cancelled due to reasons 'solely' attributed to Tour Andalusia cancelling the tour, which we have never done.

Refunds of any monies paid, including deposits and balances, are not made for 'Force Majeure' events that result in a tour cancellation.

You must insure your travel insurance includes such events.

Please see our Terms & Conditions for full details of our cancellation policy.

Q. How do we pay for the balance ?

A. This is the same as for payment of the booking deposit.

You can pay by bank transfer, by Credit/Debit card or for the best exchange rate, if your local currency isn't £GBP, by 'Wise'.

Balance payments must be made no later than 30 days before the tour start date.

Please note that we do not accept any form of check/cheque.

When you have made the payment, we receive notification, however, we request that you also send us an email informing you have paid and we will confirm receipt back to you.

Please put the lead guest name, as the reference, on any payment, so we can allocate the payment to you.

Q. We have heard of 'Wise' and 'Revolut' and you have made reference to Wise, what are these ?

A. Both Wise and Revolut are registered financial institutions that specialise in offering services for purchasing goods and services to travellers in a foreign currency.

In many ways, they are transforming how travellers pay for goods and services.

We highly recommend them and we personally use Wise for paying all of our suppliers/hotels in their local currency.

Using your Credit Card to pay for items in a foreign currency, such as the tour, meals, or other goods is probably the most expensive option.

This is because the Credit Card companies tend to use the 'retail' exchange rate, and not the 'market/bank' exchange rate, to convert the amount into your local currency and they may also charge a transaction fee.

The currency exchange rate that you see published is generally the 'market/bank' exchange rate, which is a more financially attractive rate.

There is quite a large difference between the two.

Wise and Revolut are free to open and they work by letting you set up any number of foreign currency accounts within their App. These are real accounts and they partner with major registered banks in many countries to host the accounts.

They are both financially regulated organisations.

You transfer some of your local currency, say \$US as an example, from your local bank into your \$US account within Wise or Revolut. This should cost you nothing, or very little, since there is no currency exchange taking place.

You then convert some or all of this into any foreign currency account you have set up. It takes seconds to set up a new currency account.

The exchange rate they use for conversion is the published market/bank rate, so you receive the most financially attractive rate for converting your \$US into say £GBP or €euros

They charge you a small fee for the conversion, and they make their money from millions of these small fees that are taking place every day.

But you now have £GBP or €euros in your own account, which you can use to pay for things.

You can make an instant payment transfer to pay for more expensive items, such as the tour or just make 'contactless' payments from the associated debit card you receive.

It's a Debit card, not a Credit Card, so you can't have credit with the account. It's basically the same as having cash in your wallet/purse. And you can add the Card to your Google or Apple Pay Wallet, the same as any Debit/Credit Card, for contactless payment from your mobile/cell phone.

The transfer from your bank account into the Wise or Revolut account is normally pretty much instant, so you have total control of access to other currencies at the best exchange rate.

And access to the account is totally secure, like most Apps on your phone these days, it is biometrically secured.

If you want to evaluate this, here's a referral link <https://wise.com/invite/ahpc/garym1256>

It's a good way to pay for the tour, both the deposit and the balance, since it could save you money against using your Credit Card.

Q. What protection do I have if the tour is cancelled or I have to cancel the tour ?

A. It is essential that you have comprehensive travel insurance to cover your trip and cancellation for any reason.

We have never cancelled any tours due to reasons solely attributed to us.

The only tours that have been cancelled are the ones where travel was restricted due to the Covid pandemic, a 3rd party 'Force Majeure' event.

In the unlikely event that we have to cancel a tour, due to reasons that we are solely responsible for, then we will transfer your payment to a future tour, or issue a refund, in accordance with our cancellation policy.

However, in all other circumstances, we cannot refund any monies paid and, as previously mentioned, you will need to claim on your travel insurance.

Q. Where do we find your Terms & Conditions ?

A. They are contained in the Booking Form.

Tipping

Q. What is the tipping culture in restaurants ?

A. Spain is not a big tipping culture, but people do tip for dinner/lunch, normally you just work on a couple of euros per head, or around 10%.

You may find in some travel books it says 'Don't tip in Spain', this is somewhat misleading because people do tip, but just not at the same level you may do in North America, for instance.

You don't normally tip if you are just having a coffee or drink.

Q. Should we tip the Tour Leaders and/or the Housekeepers ?

A. The Tour Leaders and the Housekeepers work very hard and diligently to make your trip special.

If you have enjoyed the tour, and the service they have given you, and you want to express your appreciation in the form of a 'financial gesture', then they are delighted if they receive a tip.

It is totally at your discretion, but most guests do like to leave them a tip.

We are regularly asked for guidelines on tipping the staff and, of course, we feel a little awkward in making suggestions.

However, a reasonable figure, for consideration, would be, if you are on one of the mixed small group tours, €10 per guest to the Housekeeper and also to the Chef who makes you breakfast and, for the Tour Leader, maybe around €3 to €5 per day per guest.

If it is a Private tour, then please just use your discretion regarding what you feel comfortable with.

If you have several Tour Leaders during your tour, then you can leave something that is put into a 'pot', which we will share out to the Tour Leaders.

We do stress, however, that it is entirely up to you if you wish to leave any of our staff a tip, but they do appreciate it.

Why should we come on your tour

Q. There are quite a few Coach Tours in the region, why do you think we should book with you for one of your tours ?

A. It entirely depends what you want from your touring holiday in Andalucía.

We are very different from a Coach Tour Operator and we only try to attract the right type of traveller who are suited to the style of tours we offer.

The Coach Tour Operators have much larger marketing and advertising budgets and we are only a fraction of the size of them.

We don't advertise and our marketing budget doesn't exist.

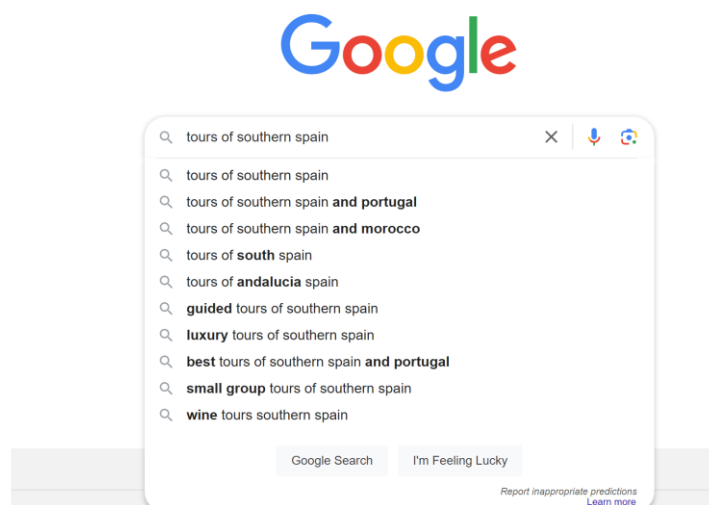
We come up very high, normally on the first page of Google, and other search engines, for relevant internet searches, such as 'Tours in Southern Spain' and we don't pay for this.

The search engines recognise that we are specialists and like to present us, to people searching for tours in the region, as amongst the best matches.

The following screenshots show Page 1 on Google for the search 'Tours in Southern Spain'.

The 'Sponsored' results are paid for, by those companies, to appear in the results and Google annotates them as such.

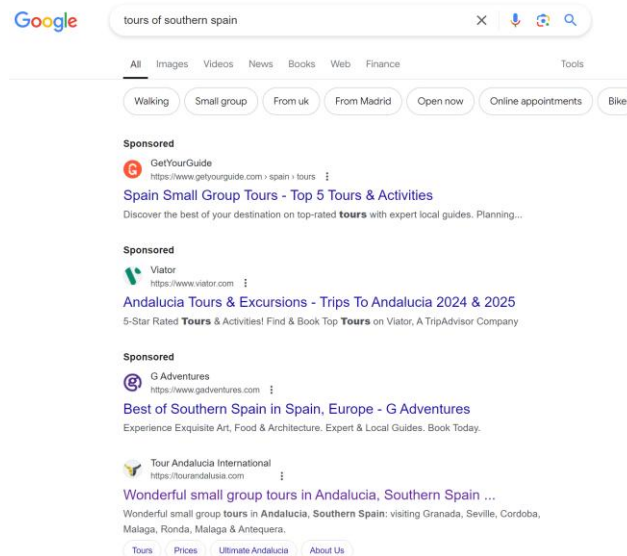
The number 1 'organic/natural' result, or 'non-paid' for result, is us.



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Coach operators tend to focus on numbers, rather than individuals, since they make money in processing guests in volume.

If you are happy to be in a very large group and follow a Tour Leader, who is holding up an umbrella and talking to you via an electronic device in your ear, then the coach tour will be a good match for you.

We are not 'knocking' the large coach tours, their 'rigidness' suit certain types of people superbly well, we are just explaining the difference.

Most of the coach tours will pass you over to a City Guide for a formal tour, we tend to be less formal and more flexible.

If you are an 'independent' type of person and want to have genuine conversations with someone knowledgeable about the area, its history and have a 'true' experience of the region and its culture, then we feel we offer this better than the coach tours.

Our guests tend to be professional people who enjoy the company of other 'like-minded' people from all around the world.

They don't like the idea of being in a large group and prefer to 'participate' in the Cities rather than simply 'observe' them.

They feel our small group philosophy endorses this.

We have many retired and practising: Doctors, Teachers, Lecturers, Engineers, Company Directors, Accountants, Scientists, Lawyers, Health Professionals, Business Owners, IT Professionals, Civil Servants, Social Workers, Construction Professionals..... come on our tours and they find the company of their other guests, stimulating and enjoyable.

We do though request that any particularly strong 'political' opinions to be restrained and tempered. Your vacation is a retreat away from this for a short period.

When you think about it, your choice boils down to one significant factor, which is, if you don't want to be part of a large group, you are social and you prefer not to do it yourself, then we offer a great alternative.

And, for more-or-less the same price of a coach tour, we deliver what we feel is a more appealing experience.

We make it extremely easy for you to turn up in Andalucía and just enjoy the holiday without hassle.

At popular times, our tours are often sold out and many guests come from 'word of mouth' recommendations given by previous guests.

Leave the planning and organisation to us and we'll make sure you see and visit the best of these amazing places.

It really is about what suits you best and, hopefully, we will be able to host you on one of our tours.

Our Guests

Q. What do you expect from us ?

A. We are a small and personable company and our only expectation is that you come in a friendly 'holiday' frame of mind with a positive attitude.

Smiling and being pleasant makes the holiday wonderful for everyone, including us.

We work immensely hard to try and deliver a fantastic experience for you, and it is wonderful if you appreciate this.

Spain is great, sometimes frustrating and sometimes different from other Western Cultures, but a fabulous place to visit.

Come in the right spirit and it will be a great holiday.

We will go out of our way to give you a unique experience and if any problem does arise, we will address it quickly and as best we can.

We aren't a big 'uncaring' tour operator, we genuinely care about the experience our guests have, so bear that in mind and come prepared to enjoy yourself.

Please don't be overly demanding, you are here for an authentic experience in a beautiful part of the world.

Remember that the whole experience of coming to Spain, is not just to replicate what you experience at home.

The food will be different, the 'laid back' attitude may be different, the customs, restaurant service.... But that is precisely why you travel.

Spanish people eat later in the evenings, more people smoke (but not inside restaurants), they are noisy, enthusiastic and demonstrative people.

Enjoy their zest for life.

If the experience purely replicated of what you have at home, then it would be a waste of time and money coming.

Embrace the difference, adopt a relaxed style and take advantage of the whole experience.

Don't complain the waiter is slow or makes mistakes, if the bill/check takes ages to come, it is the way the Spanish do things. We are visiting their country and not trying to change it.

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A large part of your holiday with us is to experience the Spanish culture and way of life, not just to see the amazing sites.

Whilst Andalucía has amazing Cities, it is still very much a farming and agriculture region, with Olive Oil, Wine, Hams and Cheeses being the primary produce.

Have fun, see the spectacular sites, enjoy the different food, it is a short visit and most people fall in love with Andalucía.

We clearly state, and cannot emphasise strongly enough, that we try to discourage visitors of a demanding nature and we wish to attract friendly 'easy going' guests who enjoy the company of other like-minded people.

Contact Numbers

Telephone contact numbers for the Tour Leaders/Drivers:

Gary	+44 7928 49 53 28
Mauricio	+34 632 28 97 94
Alex	+34 722 49 71 13
Rony	+34 654 72 09 40
Anne	+351 926 52 41 20
Juan José	+34 689 03 54 79