Highlights of Andalucia

Duration 7 days/6 nights

The Highlights of Andalucía tour is a centrally based 'hub' tour that takes you to visit the main Cities of Andalucía, including Granada, Cordoba, Seville, Malaga and Ronda. Our most popular tour, you can add tour extensions should you wish to include additional places to visit.



Each tour group is for a maximum of up to seven guests, with its own Tour Vehicle and Tour Leader. The travelling times to most Cities are around 1 hour and 1 hour 30 minutes to Seville.

Depending on the tour dates, accommodation is either at our beautiful Villa located in the large Spanish village of Mollina or in the 4* Parador or 4* Antequera Hills Hotel in nearby Antequera.

This itinerary is for tours that start on a Saturday. The sequence of the City visits will be slightly different for the tour if it starts on another day.

Day 1: ARRIVAL

We collect you in Málaga from the airport, train station or local hotel and, subject to time, we take you to visit the pretty '*Pueblo Blanco*' white village of Mijas. You can wander the pretty lanes with colourful trailing geraniums in bright blue pots contrasting against the white walls.

Have a tapas lunch and maybe make some purchases from the craft stores that surround the main Plaza. The quality of the leather goods in Mijas is exceptionally high.



Originally founded by the Tartessians in prehistoric times, the Romans used to mine Marble from the area, calling the village *Tamisa* before it became a Moorish mining town *Mixa* which morphed later on into *Mijas*.

The Mijas residents resisted the attacks from the Catholic Monarchs during the siege of Málaga in 1487, but after Málaga fell, the inhabitants surrendered.

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A beautiful jewel of the Costa Del Sol, it sits 400m above sea level offering superb vistas all around. It is the ideal location to ease yourself into a holiday frame of mind and relax.

During the Spanish Civil War, which started in 1936, Manuel Cortés Quero (1906-1991), aka *'El Topo de Mijas',* The Mole of Mijas, was the last Republican Mayor during the Civil War. On 6 February b



1937, Cortés fled Mijas, together with his wife, Juliana, and their daughter, María, aged one year and a half. One day later, he asked Juliana to go back to Mijas with Maria and joined a group of fighters heading to Almería.

Secretly back to Mijas on the evening of 17 April 1939, after the disbanding of his unit in Valencia, Cortés hid in his own house for the next three decades in a secret room with the entrance through a wardrobe.

On 28 March 1969, he heard on the radio the amnesty granted by the Government for all "crimes" committed between 18 July 1936 and 1 April 1939. After his "re-birth", some 30 years later, Cortés said to his friends: "The war is finally over for me".

A replica of the bedroom has been reconstructed in the Folk Museum of the village.

Day 2: SETENIL DE LAS BODEGAS & RONDA

At 09:30, we depart to visit the spectacular *'Pueblos Blancos'* of Setenil de las Bodegas and Ronda.



At Setenil, the cliffs and rocks overhang the buildings and you can have a drink sitting at the bottom of the gorge that has been cut through the village by the river that runs through it.

Have a wander and enjoy the remarkable setting.

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Named after its once flourishing wineries '*Bodegas'*, it is said that the Romans used to store their wines cut into the rocks to retain a more constant, all year-round, temperature.

Unique among the white villages of Andalucia, it developed out of caves in the cliffs rather than being perched on top of them. The white houses seem to emerge from the rocks being totally integrated with them.



Ronda was first settled in the 6th Century BC by the early *Celts* naming it '*Arunda'*.

The current Ronda, though, is of Roman origins, having been founded as a fortified post in the Second Punic War, by Scipio Africanus. Ronda received the title of 'City' at the time of Julius Caesar.

Famous for its impressive gorge upon which the town straddles.

It was the hometown of a very talented and busy man, the polymath '*Abbas Ibn Firnas'* (810–887), an Inventor, Engineer, Aviator, Chemist, Physician, Muslim poet, and Andalusian musician !

In the early 19th century, the Napoleonic invasion caused much suffering in Ronda, whose inhabitants were reduced from 15,600 to 5,000 in three years.



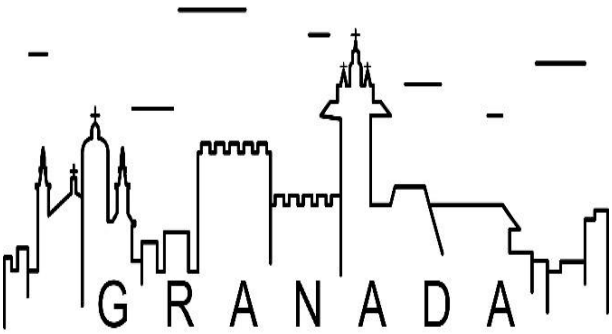
The Ronda area became the base of numerous bandits, whose deeds inspired artists and folklore.

The iconic Puente Nuevo Bridge, towering 100m above the river below, spans the two parts of the town and the famous bullring, now a museum, is the oldest in Spain.

You are free to lunch, wander the narrow lanes of the old quarter and visit any of the monuments before we meet up at 17:00 for the one hour journey back to your accommodation.

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Day 3: GRANADA

At 09:00, we depart to visit the *'Jewel of Andalucia'* the City of Granada.

'Gar-anat' meaning *'Hill of the Pilgrims'* or *'Hill of the Strangers'*, now known as Granada, nestles at the bottom of the towering mountain range, the Sierra Nevada.

Romantic and Majestic, it was once wealthy and the home of both Sultans and Christian Monarchs, including the famous Ferdinand and Isabella, who made it their final resting and burial place.



The Islamic Kingdom of Granada held on for nearly a quarter of a millennium after the rest of the Iberian Peninsula was recaptured by the Christian *'Reconquista'* and imposing Islamic Fortresses spread throughout the region.

The outer walls of the City can be seen today, spreading over the surrounding hills and covering many kilometres.

Now a vibrant City of Education and Business, the reminder of its great importance looms high and visible in the form of the Alhambra, the spectacular royal complex of Fortress and Palaces and one of Europe's most visited sites.



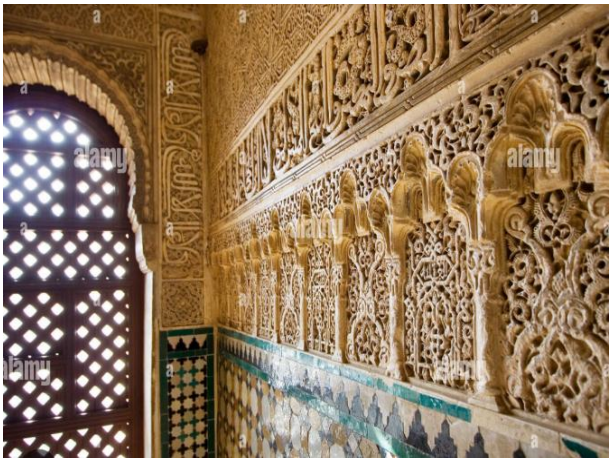
'al-Qal'at al-Hamrã' the *'Red Fortress'*, sits proudly on top of the hill of *'La Sabika'*, the *'Hill of Gold'*, as an imposing gesture of the dynasties that once ruled this land.

Granada is located at the confluence of four rivers, the Darro, the Genil, the Monachil and the Beiro. It has an elevation of 738m (2,421 ft).

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The University of Granada is highly regarded and has an estimated 82,000 students spread over five campuses around the City.



After the collapse of the Umayyad Caliphate, when '*al-Andalus*' broke down into a series of '*Taifas*' or small independent kingdoms, the Berber, '*Zawi ben Ziri*', established the Taifa of Granada, which was essentially, and surprisingly, a Jewish state in all but name. The Muslim King being mainly a symbolic figurehead, the power and control of the Taifa and its armies were under Jewish control. It was the centre of the Jewish Sephardi culture and learning.

Early Arabic writers often refer to the Taifa of Granada as '*Garnata al-Yahud*', Granada of the Jews.

The Royal City Complex of the Alhambra is by far the most famous monument in Granada. It is a renowned Islamic historical legacy set of buildings, Palaces, Fortress and Gardens.

Originally constructed in 889, as a fortress on top of older Roman fortifications, it remained almost a set of ruins until renovation in the mid-13th century by the Nasrid Emir '*Mohammed ben al-Ahmar*' who added the Palaces and walls.



Moorish poets describe it as a '*pearl set in emeralds*' in reference to the colour of its buildings and the surrounding woods. It is also, often referred to as a ship sailing towards the City of Granada with the large watch tower of the Alcazaba fortress being the prow. The Gardens and pools of the Alhambra are spectacular with fragrant flowers in abundance.

The Palaces are highly decorative with beautiful columns, stalactite vaulted ceilings and highly ingenious hydraulic water management systems, as featured in the '*Fountain of the Lions*', where

every hour, one of the twelve white marble lion statues surrounding the fountain would produce water from its mouth. A marvel and baffling visitors of the time.



As you walk around the city you will see the heraldic emblem of Granada cast in rain water downpipes and on other items, the Pomegranate, in Spanish '*Granada*'.

Arriving in Granada, we park and take a short walk to the beautiful Bib Rambla Plaza where we indulge in a treat of '*Churros con Chocolate*' before having a walking tour around the Cathedral area, through the '*Alcaicería*', the Arabic Silk Market.

Interestingly, the name Alcaiceria, Arabic '*al-Kaysar-ia',* means '*Place of Caesar*' in reference to the Arabs being given the rights to manufacture and sell silks in the 6th century by the Byzantine Emperor '*Justinian*'.

You are then free to explore, maybe visit the Cathedral or '*Capilla Real*' now the museum of Granada and the burial place of the Catholic Monarchs Ferdinand and Isabella.



Take a short walk along the banks of the River Darro, with its charming stone bridges and characterful buildings. We return to the tour vehicle to drive up to the Alhambra.

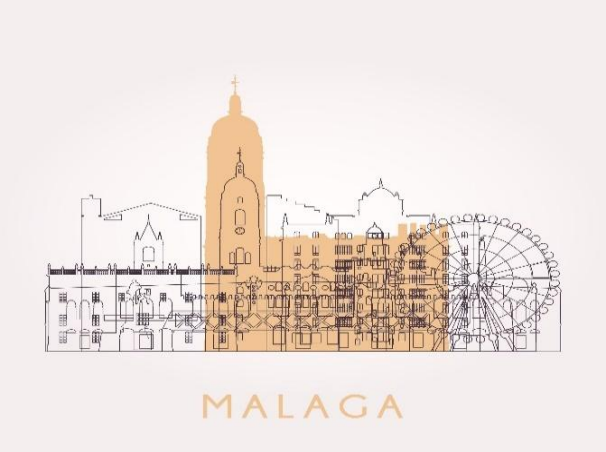
After the visit, we drive to the top of the '*Albayzin*', the old Arab Quarter, with its atmospheric cobbled streets and have dinner at Restaurante Jardines de Zoraya, who have a great menu and an excellent authentic Flamenco Performance by talented local artists.

We also visit the Mirador San Nicolas to see the Alhambra lit up at night from across the valley before returning back to your accommodation. A long but unforgettable day.

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Day 4: MÁLAGA & EL TORCAL



At 09:30, we depart to visit the lovely Mediterranean City of Málaga, one of the most continuously inhabited Cities in the world,

Málaga was a Phoenician seaport and one of the main entry points into the Iberian Peninsula, due to its natural harbour.

The Phoenicians called it '*Malaka*' not too far from how its known today.



A beautiful Mediterranean City, there are marble pavements, a mostly pedestrianised old quarter and often a fresh light breeze blowing in from the sea.

The massive Alcazaba fortress looms over the ancient Roman Theatre and close by is the birthplace of the famous painter and sculptor '*Pablo Picasso*'.

The second largest City in Andalucía, with a municipal population of around 600,000, Málaga is the southernmost large City in Europe and a bustling seaport with goods/cargo passing through daily and it is also on the Cruise Ship circuit.



With its chilled lifestyle, temperate sunny climate, '*Chiringuito*' fresh fish barbeque restaurant shacks on the beach, and full of tapas bars and cafeterias, to be a Malagueño explains why the people are so happy.

But today is not all about the visit to Málaga, in the morning, subject to weather conditions, we visit the stunning '*El Torcal*' National Park.

A magnificent place of towering limestone columns and pancake shaped layered rocks.

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Formed 17 million years ago under the sea, this *Karst* limestone is the result of weathering of the sedimentary layers of the rock. It is possibly the finest example of such formations in Europe.

In the park there is a 45 minute walk of 1.4km which you can undertake, but wear suitable shoes.

The park is 1,500m above sea level and there is a very nice cafeteria where you can sit and enjoy the scenery if you don't wish to undertake the walk.

If you are lucky, you may catch glimpses of the Spanish '*Ibex*', a large mountain goat resembling a small deer.



Arriving in East Málaga around lunch time, we go to a locals '*Chiringuito*' to have barbeque of fresh fish cooked on Olive Wood fires. '*Espetos*' fresh sardines on bamboo skewers are a speciality, but the freshly barbequed '*Dorada*' (Sea Bream) or '*Lubina*' (Sea Bass) are delicious, as well as freshly barbequed '*Calamares*'.

After lunch, we drive into the beautiful old quarter of Málaga, park at the smart new Marina and take you on a short walking tour.



Then you have time to visit any of the sites, the large Alcazaba Fortress or the Picasso Museum.

At 18:00 we reconvene and make the return journey to your accommodation.

Day 5 SEVILLE

At 09:00, we depart to elegant and colourful City of Seville. '*Sevilla,* with its impressive buildings, parks and

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culture, is an absolute delight and, just a few years ago, was awarded the Lonely Planet Guide's *'Number 1 City to Visit'*.



Once the wealthiest City in Europe, as a result of trade with the Americas, Seville is located on the banks of the Guadalquivir river, which empties into the Atlantic, some 80km to the west, making Seville once the most inland port in Europe.

The capital of the autonomous region of Andalucia, it has a municipal population of 700,000, making it the fourth largest City in Spain after Madrid, Barcelona and Valencia. With one of the world's largest Cathedrals, Mudéjar Islamic style Palaces, majestic fountains, winding narrow lanes, a day in Seville passes in the blink of an eye.

The *'Reales Alcázares de Sevilla'* are the oldest Royal Palaces in Europe still in use. Built in the style of the Alhambra Palaces, they are spectacular and a delight to visit. The setting for the Epic *'Kingdom of Heaven'* as the Palaces of Jerusalem and also a setting for *'The Game of Thrones'*, the Palaces have made it to TV and the big screen.



The *'Sevillanos'* love to sing and party and truly know how to enjoy themselves.

Originally founded by the Romans, it was called *'Hispalis'* and was taken by the Muslim conquest in 712 and renamed *'Ishbiliyya'*. In 1147, the Almohad Islamic Sect (meaning 'Those who profess the unity of God') invaded *al-Andalus* and made Ishbiliyya their centre.

Great constructors, they built the famous Giralda Tower that looms over the City, now the Cathedral Bell Tower, but once the Minaret of the Great Mosque, which was mainly destroyed as part of the construction of the large Cathedral.

The Patio of the Oranges, some original walls and some entrances into the original Mosque remain.

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Being the economic centre of trade with the Americas, Seville grew extremely wealthy and a new Golden Age of arts and literature followed.

Beautiful impressive Baroque Buildings were built and wealthy merchants commissioned mansions for themselves and their families.

The narrow lanes of the colourful Barrio Santa Cruz district, the old Jewish Quarter, are known as the *'kissing lanes'* since the balconies of the buildings either side of the lanes nearly touch each other.



Opening into pretty little plazas, it is a lovely place to meander.

In 1519, *'Ferdinand Magellan'* departed from Seville for the first circumnavigation of the Earth.

Later, when the Guadalquiver river silted up in 18th century and became no longer navigable, the merchants and trade moved and relocated to Cadiz, deserting Seville and leaving it to enter a serious decline.



The magnificent, *'Plaza de España'* constructed to foster trade with the Americas, has been the setting for several movies, including *'Lawrence of Arabia'* and *'Star Wars'*.

Unfortunately, the exhibition failed to restore trade and its fortunes, but the City has more recently recovered from investment in new industries, services, tourism and the University.

Known as the *'City of Opera'*, Seville is the setting for around 100 operas, the most famous, surely, being *'Carmen'*.

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Renowned composers included Beethoven, Bizet, Mozart, Rossini and Verdi have all been inspired by this fabulous City.

We start our tour from the Plaza España and walk past the large historic buildings of Seville, telling you their background, until we reach the Cathedral Square, where the largest Gothic Cathedral

in the world imposes its presence.

Entering the Barrio Santa Cruz, the old Jewish Quarter with its tiny lanes and cute Plazas, we take a wander and stop for lunch.



After lunch, you are free to visit the '*Reales Alcazares*', and, if you wish, the Cathedral, which houses the tomb of Christopher Columbus.

We send you links to purchase entrance tickets for these monuments online, before you arrive for the tour. This helps to minimise waiting in line at the entrance.

The Giralda Tower, once the Minaret of the Mosque, and now the Cathedral Bell Tower, has a winding internal ramp up to the top from where you have fantastic views over the City.



Rather than return to the accommodation to take dinner this evening, we stay in Seville for the early evening, so you can have something to eat before we leave. Seville is packed with great restaurants.

We meet at around 19:00 for the journey back to the accommodation.

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Day 6: CÓRDOBA

At 09:30, we depart for the historic City of Córdoba.

Once the Capital of both the Roman and Islamic Empires in the Iberian Peninsula,

Córdoba is a walled City with the largest official old quarter of any European City, much of it a Unesco World Heritage Site.

A fascinating City of charm and history, as a visitor, you are transformed back in time to when the Moorish civilisation was at its zenith.



It was once amongst the most important, largest and powerful Cities in the world in the 10th Century.

Similar in size to Granada, it feels different, a more contained and intimate atmosphere.

The ancient walls of the City are in such good condition that they appear to be only have recently been built, not the centuries old they really are.



They surround the City giving it a true medieval feel.

The first references to a settlement is from the Carthaginians, who named this '*Kartuba*'.

Conquered by the Romans in 206BC, it was then renamed '*Corduba*'.

During the Roman Civil War, the City was sacked by '*Julius Caesar*' in 45BC, due to its Pompeian allegiance. And it was later settled with veterans by the Emperor '*Augustus*'.

In 711, when the Moors invaded the peninsula, Córdoba was captured by the '*Umayyad*' army. The new commanders established themselves within the city and in 716 it became a provincial capital, subordinate to the Caliphate of Damascus.

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Famous for its patios packed to the brim with colourful flowers, the courtyards of Córdoba are a lovely and a cool retreat from the heat of the summer sun.

To many, the mesmerising '*Mesquita*', the greatest ancient Mosque in the Western World, is the most impressive building in the whole of Andalucia and certainly the only Mosque in the world with a Baroque Cathedral right in the centre.

The Saint Vincent Church was shared for worship by Christians and Muslims, until construction of the Córdoba Mosque started on the same spot under the Umayyad Sultan '*Abd-ar-Rahman I*' in 785. Designed along the lines of the Great Umayyad Mosque of Damascus, it is now the greatest Mosque in the Western world.



And the Sultan personally laboured one hour every day laying stones in its construction.

In May 766, Córdoba was chosen as the capital of the independent Umayyad emirate, later caliphate, of '*al-Andalus*'.

Córdoba flourished, becoming a megacity of the time with widely ranging population estimates of between 400,000 and 1,000,000 people.



In the 10th and 11th centuries, Córdoba was one of the most advanced cities in the world, and a great cultural, political, financial and economic centre.

It manufactured goods including leather, metal work, glazed tiles and textiles. Also, agricultural produce, including a range of fruits, vegetables, herbs and spices, and materials such as cotton, flax and silk.

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In particular, *'filigree'* silver work, from silver mined in the Sierra Morena mountains behind the City, is a craft that lives on today with many small workshops producing and selling unique jewellery in this fashion.

It was famous as a centre of learning, home to over 80 libraries and educational institutions, with knowledge of medicine, mathematics, astronomy, botany far exceeding the rest of Europe at the time.

In 936, a powerful ruler Abd-ar-Rahman III was inaugurated as the first *'Caliph of Córdoba'* and became known as the red haired, blue eyed Caliph, due to his non-Arab appearance.

But after his death and several subsequent and weaker rulers, the caliphate collapsed, as did Córdoba's economic and political hegemony, and it subsequently became part of the *'Taifa of Córdoba'*.



Some of the best Olive Oil in the world comes from the province of Córdoba.

The oils regularly win best Olive Oil in the World award, from the World Olive Oil Council, to acknowledge this.

And there are several speciality shops where you can purchase this.

Of all of the places you visit on one of our tours, Córdoba is the place where ghosts of the past come alive and the presence of a glowing Golden Age is most felt.



We arrive in Córdoba at the *'Puerta de Sevilla'*, a small entrance into the San Basilio district of the City.

After a short background to the City, we pass through the entrance and see the beauty of the white-washed houses with trailing geraniums in blue pots dangling from the *'rejas'*, window railings.

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We take a short coffee and restroom stop in the lovely Moroccan style patio in a local cafeteria and then walk the cobbled streets to our first visit, a typical Córdoba Patio.



Continuing through the lovely residential barrio, we see the large walls that sub-divided the City into districts and pass the Royal Stables '*Caballerizas Reales*' where they train the famous Andalucian Horses.

A little further up the street we come across the '*Alcázar de los Reyes Cristianos',* the Christian Alcázar, with its beautiful gardens. Here you have a 45 minute visit.



Leaving the Alcázar we take you for a meander through the old Jewish Quarter with its narrow lanes and atmospheric patios before arriving at the site of the Great Mosque of Córdoba, the '*Mesquita*'.

We stop for a relaxed tapas lunch to sample typical dishes from the region and, after lunch, walk up the little lane of the flowers for an iconic photo opportunity.

You then have free time to visit the Mesquita, shop and enjoy the charismatic old quarter.



We meet up at 17.30 at the famous Roman Bridge and return to your accommodation.

Day 7: DEPARTURE

Unless you have booked one of tour extensions, this is your last day with us.

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But we are sure you would have had a wonderful and memorable time.



If your departure tIme allows, we will visit Antequera and the 6,500 year old monumental megalithic Dolmen burial chambers before taking you to your appropriate destination for onward departure.

Antequera, or Ancient City as the Romans called it *'Antikaria'* is a beautiful City of Andalucia with a large Alcazaba Fortress, lovely Plazas and stylish buildings.

Once a wealthy merchant town, it is becoming increasingly popular for tourists to visit.

The head shaped profile of *'La Peña de los Enamorados'* has a *'Romeo and Juliet'* type story of forbidden love between differing religions.

To spend a few hours here on departure day is a nice bonus.

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Tour Price

Accommodation (6 nights)	Per person	Single Supplements
Villa Room upgrade options: Premium Suite Apartment Junior Suite	**£1,795** £130 £85 £95	**£250** N/A N/A N/A
Antequera Parador Hotel	**£1,950**	**£350**



What's included

- All return tour transportation from accommodation to Cities in one of our air conditioned tour vehicles
- Transfers from/to airport, train station and our Málaga Centre meeting point on the tour start and departure days
- Dedicated Tour Leader
- Bed and breakfast accommodation
- Orientation and background walking tour in Cities

What's not included

- Any other meals, drinks, subsistence
- Any shows, performances, including the dinner/Flamenco in Granada
- Monument entrance fees
- Any flight, train, bus, taxi or other transportation
- Any expenditure not detailed above

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Tour Vehicle

We have a small fleet of tour vehicles that seat up to 6/7 passengers.



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Notes (please read)

- Our Tour Leaders will give you background information of the Cities and places we visit, but they will not enter the monuments with you. Audio guides are available for rental at the major monuments if you wish to have one.
- The walking distance during each day can normally vary between 4km and 8km. Wear comfortable shoes, drink lots of water and use sunscreen cream
- All bookings are subject to our terms and conditions, a copy of which are included in the booking form and these contain the contractual information relating to all bookings.
- Please request a copy of the latest tour schedule for the dates of the tours.
- Prices are based on two guests sharing a room.
- As mentioned, the above itinerary is based on tours commencing on Saturdays. Tours starting on other days will have a different sequence of days for the visits to the Cities.
- Prices are in £GBP.
- The tour schedule is regularly updated throughout the year, please request a copy by email.
- The FAQS document details how we run our tours, our company ethos, the type of guests suited to them, along with many other related questions you may have.
- The rooms in the hotels are standard double rooms, with either large double or single beds. Should you wish to upgrade to a Superior Double/Twin room or a Junior Suite, then please let us know and we will inform you of the supplementary costs.
- If you are planning an early departure flight, please note that it may be a late night the previous day, if this is Granada, and also check our terms & conditions relating to the earliest drop off times we can accommodate to return to the airport, which is 1 hour away from the accommodation.

'Come with a smile on your face, be relaxed and easy going and we will give you a wonderful and memorable experience'