

PROPOSED DAY BY DAY ITINERARY

Day 1, Mon, May 09: Depart for Madrid

Make your way to O'Hare Airport (or airport of your choice) where you will board your overnight flight(s). Your meals will be served on board.

Day 2, Tue, May 10: Arrive in Madrid

Upon arrival in Madrid, collect your luggage in the baggage claim area, and continue to the arrival hall where you will be warmly greeted by your tour guide and/or driver. Make your way to the vehicle and start the pilgrimage with a tour of Madrid and visit some of Madrid's most famous sights like: "Puerta de Alcalá", "Puerta del Sol", the Royal Palace and the massive "Cathedral de la Almudena" (Cathedral of Madrid) dedicated to the Virgin Mary. Here group will celebrate Holy Mass. Following Mass visit the Prado Museum housing a collection of masterpieces by Spain's artists Velazquez, Goya and El Greco. Your evening is at leisure to explore or shop on your own. Dinner and overnight in Madrid.

Day 3, Wed, May 11: Madrid – Alcalá – Madrid

Following breakfast visit Alcalá de Henares, city located 22 miles north-east of Madrid where St Ignatius founder of the Jesuit Order attended the school. Group will tour of the University where St Ignatius studied and celebrate Holy Mass at the University Chapel. Enjoy the authentic Spanish lunch at local parador and then continue with visits before group return to Madrid for restful overnight.

Day 4, Thu, May 12: Madrid – Avila

Following breakfast, depart for the medieval city of Avila. The architecture in this city, in which St. Teresa was born, deems its shrines, convents, and churches necessary to visit on any Catholic pilgrimage. Visit the Incarnation Convent, where St. Teresa became a nun. Saint Teresa convinced Saint John of the Cross to reform the male Carmelite order, the reform she started when she met Saint John in Medina del Campo. Group will celebrate Holy Mass and then proceed to check-in hotel. In the afternoon continue with guided walking tour of the old City of Avila including the Shrine of St John of the Cross. Dinner and overnight in Avila.

Day 5, Fri, May 13: Avila – Salamanca

After breakfast continue to Salamanca, a city known for its large university, the oldest in Spain that is still active along with its prominent culture. Here St. Ignatius studied as well. Our walking tour will bring us to the most noteworthy sites, such as: the grand Plaza Mayor, an iconic square filled with food, shopping, and city events. La Clerecia, a church, and college of the Jesuit Order constructed in the seventeenth century. La Casa de las Conchas currently a public library and monument, decorated with shells that symbolize the famous pilgrimage to Santiago (El Camino). The University of Salamanca is the oldest University in Spain and the third oldest in Europe. The Roman Bridge is a national monument that extends along the River Tormes and is among Salamanca's sturdiest bridges. La Iglesia de San Marcos, constructed in the Romanesque style contains breathtaking paintings that portray many scenes of Our Lady's life. La Iglesia de San Martin is a Church devoted to St. Martin de Porres, who is the patron saint of mixed-race people and all those seeking interracial harmony. Visit the inside of the two joint Salamanca Cathedrals (old and new), one Romanesque style and the other Gothic style. Following this eventful day, you will return to your hotel for a delicious meal and overnight at your hotel in Salamanca.

Day 6, Sat, May 14: Salamanca – Burgos – Loyola

This morning, depart Salamanca and drive north to Burgos, an important stop on the famous pilgrimage: El Camino de Santiago (The Way of Saint James). A city in the historic heart of Spain, Burgos served as one of the capitals of Castile and is the birthplace of El Cid, the 11th century hero. During a tour of the city visit the Cathedral of Burgos dedicated to the Blessed Virgin, a masterpiece of Spanish gothic architecture and an UNESCO World Heritage Site. Begun in the 13th century and completed in 1567, it is renowned for its immense size and unique architecture. You will also see the 12th century Las Huelgas Reales Monastery, the Cartuja of Miraflores and the medieval Arco de Santa Maria. Afterwards, continue to Loyola to visit the birthplace of St. Ignatius. Dinner and overnight in Loyola.

Day 7, Sun, May 15: Loyola – Azpeita - Loyola

St. Ignatius dedicated himself to becoming a soldier of the Catholic faith, and as a result of many tribulations, he wrote the ever-famous Spiritual Exercises. In Loyola, you will see the 17th-century Basilica dedicated to this remarkable saint the Basilica is part of a series of buildings surrounding the "Holy House," or birthplace of St. Ignatius. When you visit these Holy places, you will also have the opportunity to pray at the most venerated room, where St. Ignatius prayed and began his conversion. After meditating on the life of this founder of the Jesuit Order, enjoy free time for lunch. Following lunch continue to medieval section of the town of Azpeitia and visit the Church where St Ignatius was baptized in 1491 as well as a site where he taught catechism. The sanctuary, castle, basilica and museum recount the important history of Ignatius and the Jesuit Order. Dinner and overnight in Loyola.

Day 8, Mon, May 16: Loyola – Pamplona – Xavier - Sos del Rey Catolico

After breakfast group will board motor coach and continue to the hamlet of Xavier, located nearby Pamplona in the province of Navarra. First stop will be Pamplona where group will be recalling the site where Ignatius received a wound that was to change his life. This event was the starting point for his conversion to Christ. We continue pilgrimage with a visit to Xavier Castle, (a castillo strategically positioned between Navarra and Aragon). We call to mind the life of St. Francis Xavier as we celebrate Holy Mass here. Following Mass group will gather at a local restaurant for our included lunch, followed by a guided tour of the Xavier Castle. Transfer to Sos del Rey Catolico for hotel check in, dinner and overnight.

Day 9, Tue, May 17: Sos del Rey Catolico - Montserrat

We make our way to Montserrat, stopping en route for lunch on our own. We arrive later this afternoon in the spiritual heart of Catalonia and home to the dramatically set Benedictine monastery. This Marian shrine has attracted pilgrims for over 700 years, much as it did Ignatius in March of 1522. We view the Black Madonna of Montserrat before whom Ignatius laid his sword and exchanged his fancy clothes for those of a beggar. We celebrate our Eucharist at the Monastery of Montserrat before gathering for dinner at our accommodations.

Day 10, Wed, May 18: Montserrat – Manresa – Barcelona

We depart for Manresa, a place of profound conversion for Ignatius. We enjoy an audiovisual presentation and a tour of the museum at Manresa. We celebrate Eucharist in the cave on the banks of the Cardoner River where Ignatius received a vision that provided him with deep insights into the spiritual life and altered the course of his own life. From the initial insights he received here, Ignatius went on to compose the "Spiritual Exercises." Ignatius remained in Manresa for about a year and a half before continuing his journey to Barcelona. We take some time for lunch on our own. We continue to Barcelona for dinner and overnight.

Day 11, Thu, May 19: Barcelona

This morning, your day will begin with breakfast and a sightseeing tour of Barcelona! Start a day with a walking tour of the Gothic Quarter containing remains from an ancient Roman village, including the Cathedral of Barcelona. Group will also visit the Church of Santa Maria del Mar, where Ignatius begged for alms for his journey to the Holy Land. Celebrate Holy Mass and continue touring some of the major sites of Barcelona, including Gaudi's masterwork unfinished Roman Catholic Basilica, La Sagrada Familia. The remainder of the day is at leisure to further explore this magnificent city on your own. You may wish to do more sightseeing, shopping or perhaps take time to relax and try some tapas at a sidewalk café. This evening group will gather at a local restaurant for farewell dinner.

Day 12, Fri, May 20: Return Home

Your last day in Spain will begin with breakfast at your hotel, followed by a transfer to Barcelona Airport for your return flight(s) home. You will say "hasta luego" (see you later) to your new friends made on this journey.