



KDavisTravels

Southern Spain

May 4 - 11, 2012

The Spain trip will begin and end in Ronda, Spain. You will need to make your own arrangements to fly to Spain. After the minimum of 10 reservations is reached we will advise you to make your air travel reservations. We will meet at the Hotel San Gabriel in Ronda.

Trip Start: May 4, 2012 - Hotel San Gabriel, Ronda, Spain
Trip Finish: May 11, 2012 - Hotel San Gabriel, Ronda, Spain
Trip Length: 8 days, 7 nights
Trip Cost: \$2590 per person sharing a room
\$2890 for a single room

(Trip cost includes everything except airfare, 2 dinners, 1 lunch, beverages, tips, and all items of a personal nature.)

Day by Day Overview

Friday, May 4 – Arrival in Ronda

We meet at our hotel—Hotel San Gabriel. Located in the heart of historic Ronda, Hotel San Gabriel will be home for our week in southern Spain. Welcome drink at 7pm at our hotel and an overview of the week followed by dinner at a local restaurant.

Lodging: Hotel San Gabriel----Marques de Moctezuma 19; tel: 011 34 952 190 392 - www.hotelsangabriel.com

Saturday, May 5 – Benaoján to Ronda

We take the train from Ronda to Benaoján. This line was an engineering feat and was built by the British as a way of getting their officers out of Gibraltar for their few days' leave. Traditionally they had always gone to Ronda, but on horseback - a 2 day ride! Our walk from Benaoján takes us through grazing land, oak woods, and crosses a beautiful hidden stream valley. The oaks are Holm or Gall oaks...very important because the acorns they produce feed the pigs which give the famous Jamon Ibérico (Iberian ham). Picnic lunch on a ridge looking toward Ronda. Catching glimpses of the town, we arrive in Ronda taking advantage of the best light of the day for photographing the town cliffs and the Puente Nuevo bridge.

- Distance today: 6.8 miles Altitude gain: 1840 ft.
- Dinner together.

Sunday, May 6 – Cork Woods and Green Valley Circuit

This morning we take a bus for about 40 minutes to the heart of the Grazalema Sierra. Introducing us to cork forests here, our guide will explain the local cork-cutting tradition. Spain is second in the world in cork production. Both the forest and the nearby green valley, edged by gray, jagged limestone ridges, are dotted with wildflowers - purple flag iris, tongue orchid, lax-flowered orchid, champagne orchid, Peruvian scilla. Early May is the best time for seeing wildflowers. An old threshing floor makes for an interesting picnic site today. After our walk, we visit the mountain village of Grazalema, a town of Roman and Moorish origins, with cobbled streets and whitewashed houses. There will be time on your own here to explore this village.

- Distance today: 7.5 miles Altitude gain: 260 ft.
- Dinner together.

Monday, May 7 – Pileta Caves and Riverside Walk

Our bus (25 minutes) takes us this morning to the Pileta Caves where we have a guided tour. The oldest of the charcoal and ochre cave paintings dates back over 32,000 years. They are from the Neolithic and Paleolithic periods: Paleolithic paintings depict bulls, goats, other mammals and Neolithic are more symbolic: mountains, calendars, counting systems. These caves were living quarters of prehistoric people during limited periods over tens of thousands of years. The last group left about 4,000 years ago. We have a short walk to our lunch at a wayside inn in Benaoján. Lunch is followed by a hike that takes us along the Guadiaro River flanked by a huge gray limestone ridge. Train back to Ronda.

- Distance today: 7.4 miles Altitude gain: 130 ft.
- Dinner on your own.

Tuesday, May 8 – Ronda

Today we explore the town of Ronda with our city guide. Ronda has a splendid position perched on the top of a deep gorge. For a story referring to this gorge read Hemingway's For Whom the Bell Tolls. We will have a 2hr. tour of Ronda's twisting streets, beautiful carved facades, and Berber style patios. The famous Ronda bullring (Ronda is the birthplace of bullfighting and has one of the oldest bullrings in Spain), the Santa Rosa Church and the Puente Nuevo Bridge are among our stops. The afternoon is free to explore on your own.

- Lunch and dinner on your own.

Wednesday, May 9 – Grazalema to Benaocaz

This is a beautiful route over the ridge of the Sierra del Endrinal, by way of an old deserted farm house. The house stands in a secret valley amidst poplars and encircled by a high wall of sheer rock. We continue through other valleys to reach the white village of Benaocaz with its deserted centuries-old Moorish dwellings.

- Distance today: 7 miles Altitude gain: 300 ft
- Dinner together.

Thursday, May 10 – Green Gorge and Zahara Village

This morning we take a bus for about 35 minutes to the head of the Green Gorge. After hiking along a dirt path, we descend via a stone stairway into this dramatic gorge lined with Mediterranean vegetation of turpentine bushes and carob trees. Always we are anticipating the appearance of Griffon Vultures ---200 pairs live here. As we drop deeper into the gorge on the stone stairway we get our first sighting of the Griffons. A short detour allows us to climb to a viewing platform with good views of nesting sites of the Griffons and also Choughs, Crag-martins & Alpine Swifts. Wildflowers we may spot today are rush-leaved lily, purple Jerusalem sage, a rare brown bluebell and bright yellow toadflax. We have our picnic lunch in the gorge. We climb back out of the gorge and take our bus to the picturesque village of Zahara. A Moorish fort is perched above the village if you wish to explore it. Zahara changed hands more than once in the struggles between the Moors and Christians. Return by bus to Ronda.

- Distance today: 3 miles Altitude gain: 660 ft
- Farewell dinner tonight.

Friday, May 11 – Departure day

After breakfast we say our “adios” and depart from Ronda.

Please Note: The above schedule is subject to change due to weather or other circumstances beyond our control.

Flight and Airport Information:

Getting to Ronda: Flights are direct from the U.S. to Madrid then 4 hrs by train to Ronda. Bus or train connections from Madrid to Seville, Granada, or Malaga and, in turn, those cities will have train/ bus connections to Ronda. From the Ronda train station take taxi to Hotel San Gabriel.

Weather:

Night temperatures are usually in the 60's and day temperatures are usually in the 70's with the possibility of occasional showers.

Helpful Websites:

Spain - www.travelinginspain.com and <http://gospain.about.com/>

Ronda - <http://www.turismoderonda.es/indexeng.htm>

<http://www.rondatoday.com/>

Train info: <http://www.renfe.com/EN/viajeros/index.html>

Hotel in Ronda: www.hotelsangabriel.com