



France & Spain: Paris, Bordeaux & Madrid

10 days | 13 days with Madrid & Valencia extension

Paris has its food. Madrid has its art. But the capitals of France and Spain are just an appetizer for all these countries have to offer. Using them as bookends, this tour will lead you through the wine country of Bordeaux, the Basque Country of Northern Spain, and the open country that superlatives simply can't describe. Breathe in the coastal bliss of Biarritz, and cross paths with pintxo-hoppers and pilgrims in San Sebastián and Burgos. It's all enough to fill your cup—but if you find yourself craving a little more of everything, tack on this trip's three-night extension. One more day in Madrid, followed by two in the seaside city of Valencia? Olé.



Your tour package includes

- 8 nights in handpicked hotels
- 8 breakfasts
- 3 dinners with beer or wine
- 1 food tasting
- 5 sightseeing tours
- Expert Tour Director & local guides
- Private deluxe motor coach
- 1 train ride

Included highlights

- Eiffel Tower photo stop
- Hôtel des Invalides
- Bordeaux's Port de la Lune
- French pastry tasting
- Biarritz's Rocher de la Vierge
- San Sebastián
- Burgos Cathedral
- Madrid's Prado Museum

Tour pace

You'll walk for at least 1.5 hours daily across mostly flat terrain, including paved roads and cobblestone streets, with few hills or stairs.

Group size

15–38

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Overnight Flight → 1 night

Day 1: Travel day

Board your overnight flight to Paris today.

Paris → 2 nights

Day 2: Arrival in Paris

Included meals: welcome dinner

Bonne arrivée! After clearing arrivals, transfer from the airport to your hotel to recharge. This evening, join your fellow travelers at a local restaurant for a welcome dinner, served with beer or wine, and let your first impression of Paris leave you enchanté.

Day 3: Sightseeing tour of Paris

Included meals: breakfast

Ready to be dazzled by the City of Light? Begin your first full day in France with a tour of its splendid capital, Paris. With a local guide leading the way, you'll get an overview of its most recognizable landmarks and a feel for the character of its arrondissements. (That's French for "districts," and it's how Parisians refer to the city's neighborhoods.)

- Drive down the sycamore-lined Avenue des Champs-Élysées—an icon of France that's lined with majestic monuments, glitzy restaurants, and glamorous storefronts. Continue to its western end and take in the magnificent Arc de Triomphe, originally built to commemorate one of Napoleon's many conquests. A dozen different avenues spoke from this epic arch, making it Paris' symbolic heart.
- Pass the 16th-century Pont Neuf, the oldest stone bridge in Paris, and Notre-Dame Cathedral. Watching over its arrondissement from an island in the Seine River, this French Gothic masterwork is one of the city's enduring sights.
- Make a photo stop at the Eiffel Tower (you know this one!) before viewing the Palais Garnier opera house and the Place de la Concorde, the city's grandest square.
- Pass by the I.M. Pei-designed Louvre Pyramid—the grandiose glass gateway to the world's preeminent art museum. Then, marvel

at the Hôtel des Invalides: Erected in the 17th century and built to a height of roughly 350 feet, this gold-domed structure is the largest church building in all of Paris and serves as the final resting place of its greatest military leaders.

If you need a break from the buzz of this electric city, seek royal refuge by adding an afternoon outing to the Palace and Gardens of Versailles. You'll encounter gilded walkways, fresco-adorned ceilings, and close to 2,000 acres of immaculate green space—all just a few miles west of Paris. Or, stay in town and use your free time to return to the Champ-de-Mars and savor a picnic in the shadow of the Eiffel Tower.
+ Versailles Palace & Gardens

Bordeaux → 2 nights

Day 4: Train ride to Bordeaux & sightseeing tour

Included meals: breakfast, tasting

Begin your journey into French wine country by transferring to the Gare Montparnasse and boarding the TGV. (That stands for Train à Grande Vitesse—literally "high-speed train." With speeds capping out at 200 mph, they really meant it!) After a zippy ride through landscapes that inspired France's most virtuosic artists, arrive at your final destination: Bordeaux. Here, link up with a local guide for a tour of its Old Town and wade through over 2,000 years of history.

- Begin in the Place des Quinconces, a 63-acre city square that ranks as one of the largest in all of Europe. At its core soars the Monument aux Girondins: Drenched in symbolism and protected by bronze sculptures of soldiers and horses, it memorializes local politicians who were executed during the Reign of Terror in the wake of the French Revolution.
- Head into the UNESCO-listed Port de la Lune harbor district to see the Place de la Bourse: the "Stock Market Square," centered on a reflecting pool that mirrors the neoclassical buildings framing the plaza. From there, cross the Pont de Pierre—the first bridge in Bordeaux to span the Garonne River—and

stop on the Cours Victor Hugo. This stately avenue, named after one of the city's most famous residents, is lined with historic buildings, funneling you to the Palais Rohan (Bordeaux's city hall).

- Trade the stark facade of the Palais Rohan for the opulent columns of the Grand Théâtre, Bordeaux's opera house and the centerpiece of the Place de la Comédie. The city's main streets converge on this lively square, making it an excellent place to people-watch.
- Wrap up your guided tour by sampling local treats like merveilles (diamond-shaped beignets), canelés (caramelized pastries spiced with rum and vanilla), and bouchons de Bordeaux (almonds and grapes macerated in brandy and wrapped in thin dough).

Please note: Porterage isn't included on train transfers. You should be comfortable lifting and carrying your luggage over steps, onto platforms, and into storage.

Day 5: Free day in Bordeaux

Included meals: breakfast

Wine is Bordeaux's calling card for a reason, and Saint-Émilion produces some of its finest vintages. Explore this cute commune by sight and taste on today's optional outing, or hang back and enjoy a free day in the city. Art lovers should check out La Base Sous-Marine. Built by the Axis powers during World War II, this Brutalist hulk originally functioned as a submarine base. Instead of subs, it now hosts the largest digital art center in the world.
+ Saint-Émilion, Bordeaux Wine Tasting & Lunch

San Sebastián → 2 nights

Day 6: San Sebastián via Biarritz

Included meals: breakfast, dinner

Before crossing into Spain, pay a visit to the resort town of Biarritz. Sitting on the Bay of Biscay just 22 miles from the Spanish border, it's famous for its surf breaks and five-star hotels, and on this detour, you'll get to snap some photos of its most impressive natural landmark: the Rocher de la Vierge. The "Rock of the Virgin" sprouts up from the water, connected to the

mainland by a footbridge and watched over by a statue of the Virgin Mary. Walk through the ancient stone and bask in the coastal panorama playing out before you, then return to town for some free time to explore.

Once you've soaked up your fair share of sunshine, continue to your hotel in San Sebastián. Unwind for a spell, then reconvene in the evening for an included dinner, served with beer or wine.

Day 7: Sightseeing tour of San Sebastián

Included meals: breakfast

Alongside Bilbao and Vitoria-Gasteiz, San Sebastián is a bastion of the Basque Country: a stretch of land running from Spain to France that boasts a distinct linguistic and cultural heritage. Today, get a taste of Donostia—as it's known in Euskara, the Basque language—on a sightseeing tour, courtesy of a local guide. Pass by Playa de La Concha, named for its resemblance to a seashell, and make your way to the Old Town. Wander through Plaza de la Constitución and take a beat to gaze at the balconies of the buildings surrounding the square. (They once served as box seating for bullfights held in the plaza below.)

What Madrid and Barcelona are to culture, San Sebastián is to cuisine. After the morning's sightseeing, you can extend your exploration by adding an optional walking tour and indulging in the local art of the pintxo crawl. Bounce from bar to bar, snacking on gildas (a potent combination of anchovies, olives, and pickled peppers), txistorras (cured sausage with a kick), and more. For all its culinary pedigree, some of San Sebastián's best bites are its simplest; one taste's all it takes to understand why.

If you're fueled up and ready to explore some more, head north from the Old Town and set your sights on the Baluarte del Mirador. Set on the slopes of Monte Urgull, this observation deck crowns an old military fort. A five-minute walk from Plaza de la Constitución is all that separates you from end-to-end views of the Bay of Biscay.

+ San Sebastián Pintxos Walking Tour

Madrid → 2 nights

Day 8: Madrid via Burgos

Included meals: breakfast

Today ends in Madrid—but before you arrive in Spain's biggest city, head southwest from San Sebastián, detouring to Burgos. A provincial

capital of the autonomous community of Castilla y León, it's a major stop along the Camino de Santiago—the pilgrimage route known in English as the Way of St. James—and has the cultural cachet to match.

Stroll through the historic city center, following your guide through a weaving network of narrow lanes, and arrive at Burgos Cathedral. This imposing UNESCO World Heritage Site took close to 600 years to complete and incorporates elements of Romanesque, Renaissance, Baroque, and Gothic styles. It's much simpler to see than visualize; step inside and feel the power of its awe-inspiring architecture. (The cathedral also happens to house the tombs of the medieval hero El Cid and his wife, Doña Jimena. Don't worry: You'll see them, too!)

Leave Burgos behind, driving due south to Madrid. Settle into your hotel and spend your evening how you'd like. May we suggest tracking down some churros con chocolate? For a satisfying snack after a day of travel, it's hard to beat perfectly fried dough served with a cup of thick melted chocolate for dipping.

Day 9: Sightseeing tour of Madrid

Included meals: breakfast, farewell dinner

Spain's beating heart, the cosmopolitan capital of Madrid has anchored the Iberian Peninsula since the 8th century A.D. It's a massive place, but with the help of a local guide, you'll get a comprehensive introduction.

- View the Palacio Real. Backed up against the Manzanares, this 1,450,000-square-foot behemoth of a building—built in the Baroque and Classicist styles—is the largest royal palace in all of Europe.
- Walk by the Plaza de España, distinguished by a stone monument honoring the writer Miguel de Cervantes, and pass the Templo de Debod. Donated to Spain by the Egyptian government in 1968, this ancient Nubian temple was taken apart, reassembled, and placed in a public park in the center of the city. (Needless to say, it's one of Madrid's most unexpected attractions.)
- Check out Madrid's many squares, including Plaza Colón and Plaza de Neptuno. The latter marks the approach to the day's final stop: the Museo Nacional del Prado. Initially the private collection of the Spanish monarchy, this art museum has grown into a world-class attraction, filled with works by Francisco Goya, Diego Velázquez, and other masters. You could spend days exploring its many halls; even with a couple of hours, you could admire a treasure trove of art.

Tonight, celebrate your trip with your group during a farewell dinner, served with beer or wine.

Flight Home

Day 10: Departure

Included meals: breakfast (excluding early morning departures)

Transfer to the airport for your flight home. Not ready to say “adios” to Spain? Extend your stay by a few more days and tack Valencia—Spain's modern coastal paradise—onto your itinerary.

+ Madrid & Valencia extension

Eclectic architecture unlike anything around the world. A strong local culture cherished by its residents. Golden beaches that deserve to be plastered on postcards. If you're thinking “Barcelona,” you aren't far off; you'll find all of this just a few hours down Spain's Balearic Coast in Valencia. This city's packed with everything from Roman history to uber-modern cultural sites, and you'll get a quick taste on this tour's extension—along with a healthy plate of paella.

Madrid → 1 night

Day 10: Free day in Madrid

Included meals: breakfast

For an extra helping of high culture, spend your free day in the Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía and the Museo Nacional Thyssen-Bornemisza—a pair of museums that, together with the Prado, make up Madrid's UNESCO-listed Golden Triangle of Art. For something more peaceful, amble through El Retiro Park—a huge swath of green space filled with ponds, rose gardens, and more.

Interested in ticking another UNESCO World Heritage Site off your list? Join our optional trip to Toledo—a multifaceted town revered for its swordsmithing and known as the “City of Three Cultures” for the way Christians, Jews, and Muslims peacefully coexisted there in the Middle Ages.

+ Toledo

Valencia → 2 nights

Day 11: Train to Valencia & sightseeing tour

Included meals: breakfast, tasting

Ride your bus from your hotel to the Puerta de Atocha train station, where you'll board an AVE high-speed train bound for seaside Valencia. Relax for the ride, then transfer to the city center and head out on a sightseeing tour with a local guide.

- Begin with a photo stop at the Ciutat de les Arts i les Ciències—the Valencian name for the City of Arts and Sciences. Composed of three fantastical buildings, this cultural complex showcases modernist architecture at its finest.
- See a trio of landmarks: the Torres dels Serrans, one of the few surviving pieces of the city's ancient walls; the Mercat de Colom, a paragon of Valencian Art Nouveau design; and the Museu Nacional de Ceràmica i de les Arts Sumptuàries, an exhibition that celebrates the region's millennia-long heritage of ceramic production.
- Walk through El Carmen, a lovely district tucked away in the northwest of the Old Town, and make your way to the Llotja de la Seda—a UNESCO-listed structure and long-standing reminder of Valencia's former status as a great mercantile city. Admire it in passing, then continue to the Plaça de la Verge, a marble-floored square made even more beautiful by the bordering Valencia Cathedral. (Some say this unique church, built atop an ancient Roman temple in the Valencian Gothic style, houses the legendary Holy Grail.)
- Finish up with a horchata tasting—and not the kind you might be used to. In Spain, the drink is made with ground tiger nuts; known as horchata de chufa, it traces its origins back to North Africa.

Day 12: Free day in Valencia

Included meals: breakfast

Born in Valencia and beloved by the world, the humble paella has sustained generations of Spaniards. Learn how to make it yourself during today's optional cooking class, then eat your fill in celebration. (Between perfectly seasoned rice and fall-off-the-bone meat, you'll leave satisfied—trust us!) For a more low-key last day in Spain, grab a towel and lay out on La Malvarrosa. Deemed a Blue Flag Beach for its cleanliness and environmental protection, this pristine stretch of shore is everything a Mediterranean beach should be.

This evening, enjoy a farewell drink as you celebrate your trip with your fellow group members.

+ Valencia Cooking Class & Lunch

Flight Home

Day 13: Departure

Included meals: breakfast (excluding early morning departures)

Transfer to the airport for your flight home.

Customize your experience

Customize your tour by adding excursion options. Excursions offered on the same day will occur at different times, so there's no need to choose. Save \$10 when you book your excursion up to three days before your tour departs.* Excursions requiring advance reservation only list this discounted price. Call or go online to customize your tour: goaheadtours.ca/FSP | 1-800-754-5066

Day 3: Versailles Palace & Gardens

\$199CAD (5 hours, departure time varies)

The reign of Louis XIV, known as the “Sun King,” set new standards for decadence among the crowned heads of Europe. It took 50 years and 35,000 workers to turn Versailles, once a small hunting lodge, into the most magnificent château in all of France and the envy of royalty worldwide. On this excursion, you'll see the palace in all its glory as you tour the State Apartments and the glittering Hall of Mirrors. Then, stroll through the lavish gardens to admire their fine statuary, splendid fountains, and colorful flowerbeds. Please note: Versailles Palace is closed on Mondays. The optional excursion may be moved to a different day on tour to accommodate schedules. This excursion requires advance reservation and must be booked at least 45 days prior to departure.

Day 5: Saint-Émilion, Bordeaux Wine Tasting & Lunch

\$199CAD/\$209CAD* (4.5 hours, departs in the morning, includes light lunch)

Beautiful villages dot the wine country surrounding Bordeaux—and Saint-Émilion might be the prettiest of the bunch. A cluster of quaint, tan buildings emerging from a ring of verdant vineyards, this UNESCO-listed commune has produced wine continuously since Roman times. This morning, you'll get to explore it alongside your Tour Director before enjoying free time in the medieval town center. After a group lunch, you'll venture out to a nearby winery for a tour of its cellars and vineyards. Learn about the vinification process, then cap it all off with a tasting, featuring Grands Crus and other famous local varietals.

Day 7: San Sebastián Pintxos Walking Tour

\$115CAD/\$125CAD* (3 hours, departs in the afternoon)

Like tapas? You'll love pintxos (“PEEN-tchos”): small servings of meat, fish, and other toppings skewered through bread with a toothpick, or “pintxo.” Today, set out into San Sebastián with a local guide to savor these uniquely Basque snacks. Begin by wandering the stalls of one of the city's most popular fish markets before partaking in a beloved local tradition—the pintxo crawl. Pop into a handful of spots, sampling sips and snacks at one before moving on to the next. Our must-try's: txakoli (“tcha-co-LEE,” a super-dry, slightly sparkling white wine), San Sebastián cheesecake (a regional specialty typified by its caramelized exterior), and whatever pintxo's the house specialty.

Extension excursion options

Day 10: Toledo

\$145CAD/\$155CAD* (8 hours, departure time varies)

Today, discover Toledo, the clifftop city often referred to as La Ciudad Imperial (“The Imperial City”). Upon arrival, you'll have some free time to explore. Later in the afternoon, you'll kick off a guided tour at Toledo Cathedral: a massive Gothic structure housing a treasure trove of stained glass windows and golden artifacts. Gaze upon its sacristy, containing masterpieces by the likes of Van Dyck, El Greco, Rubens, and Titian. After exploring the labyrinth of medieval alleyways in the heart of the city, you'll visit the Church of Santo Tomé—a former mosque, dating to the 12th century, graced by one of El Greco's finest works, “The Burial of the Count of Orgaz.” End your day with a stop at Santa María la Blanca, a museum that ranks as one of the oldest synagogues in Europe. Please note: This tour involves some walking over uneven terrain. Also, depending on the day of the week, the sites you visit may change.

Day 12: Valencia Cooking Class & Lunch

\$175CAD/\$185CAD* (3 hours, departs in the morning, includes lunch)

Begin your day with an expert-led cooking class in the heart of Valencia, where you'll learn how to make one of its most famous plates: paella Valenciana. This dish is typical of the city (it was invented here, after all), and since the region heavily relies on farming, it doesn't feature any seafood—just meat and vegetables. Before jumping in, munch on traditional Spanish appetizers and discover how to make the perfect sangria. With your appetite whetted, you'll team up with other travelers to prepare a paella, learning about the fresh ingredients and cooking techniques used to make it as you go. Finish up by savoring the fruits of your labor, served with sangria and followed by a tasty dessert.

*Optional excursions may be purchased up to three days prior to departure or while on tour. Pre-purchased optional excursions cannot be canceled within three days prior to departure or while on tour. Select optional excursions require advance booking and cannot be purchased or canceled after the advanced reservation deadline. GAT accepts payment by cash, Visa or MasterCard for optional excursions purchased on tour. Additional fees may apply for optional excursions purchased on tour. Excursions require a minimum number of participants to operate. Details and prices are subject to change. Due to seasonal hours of operation and availability, some excursions may not operate. If this occurs, you will be refunded any payments made for that excursion post-tour. Learn more at goaheadtours.ca/terms