



CICERONI
T R A V E L

SPANISH ADVENTURE CASTILE & THE FORMATION OF SPAIN

TUESDAY 4 – FRIDAY 14 JUNE 2019 (11 DAYS)

LECTURER: TOM DUNCAN

£3675

- **Discover Castile - the heart of medieval & modern Spain**
- **We stay in each of Segovia, Lerma, León & Salamanca**
- **Wonderful range of castles, palaces & churches**
- **Many sites associated with the famous *Camino*, the pilgrimage route to Santiago de Compostela**
- **Excellent food & wine**
- **Comfortable 3, 4 & 5* hotels located in the heart of four historic city & town centres**



Salamanca, New Cathedral Gateway

OVERVIEW

We sometimes forget how recently Spain has emerged as a nation. Richard Ford's phrase "Spain is a bundle of local units, tied together by a rope of sand" is a poetic summary of a land still unhappily divided through its formation. The marriage of Isabel of Castile and Ferdinand of Aragon in 1469 united the two largest kingdoms in Spain. *Los Reyes Católicos* (the Catholic Monarchs) proved adept in their role, completing the re-conquest of the Moorish territories, launching Columbus on his discovery of the New World and linking their family to the Imperial House of Habsburg through marriage. To their grandson, the Emperor Charles V and his son, Phillip II of Spain, they bequeathed the bones of what became the modern Spanish nation.

Bones need flesh and the process of building Spain into a viable nation was difficult. Each of the former medieval kingdoms had its own traditions and none wished to see these disturbed. Tensions between the strong regional parts and the newly established Madrid-based monarchy shaped the nation, a dynamic that still lives on today.

Castile emerged as the most powerful kingdom of the Iberian Peninsula in late medieval times. It was an agriculturally rich area and traded its wool with Flanders to huge financial advantage. Its long tradition of military activity in defence of Catholicism had a double edge: it enshrined intolerance and bigotry towards the Moors and Jews, while creating a remarkably varied range of fortified cities, spectacular castles and richly endowed churches of every sort. It is this rich artistic patrimony which gives Castile its particular 'ambience'.

Segovia has the great Roman aqueduct and nearby is the great royal hunting palace of La Granja de San Ildefonso. Nearby, Avila has the most astonishing medieval walls in Spain and within those walls some remarkable churches. Lerma reflects how the vision of a single man can shape a renaissance town while not far away Burgos has the most beautiful medieval churches of all Spain. León is more stately and an ideal base from which to explore the lovely countryside. Salamanca is one of the most atmospheric cities in the country, full of wonderful buildings and a permanent air of festivity as our journey comes full circle.

Memorable food and wine are produced in abundance in Castile and we shall take advantage of nature's bounty. Meals are a very important part of the day and so we have chosen where we shall eat carefully, with restaurants using the finest local ingredients to reflect both traditional and contemporary dining traditions.

We have also chosen some of the most atmospheric hotels available for this visit, several of which occupy historic buildings in central locations. In Segovia we use the **4* Parador** overlooking the town; in Lerma the **4* Parador** in the renaissance palace of the Dukes of Lerma; in Leon the **3* Hotel Real Colegiata de San Isidoro** and in Salamanca we use the **5* Hotel Palacio de San Esteban**.

ITINERARY OUTLINE

Day 1: Tuesday 4 June – We fly to **Madrid**, transferring by coach to Segovia. We stay for three nights in the 4* Parador. We have dinner in the hotel - wine, water and coffee are included with all group lunches and dinners.

Day 2: Wednesday 5 June – **La Granja** is home to one of the finest eighteenth century palace complexes in Spain, built in emulation of Versailles. **Segovia** has the wonderful **Roman Aqueduct** and fine medieval buildings. Lunch is not included today and we have dinner in a restaurant in Segovia.

Day 3: Thursday 6 June – It is a short drive to **Ávila**, a small city contained within what many consider the finest extant **medieval city walls** in Spain. Within those walls we shall explore the city on foot, not ignoring its most famous daughter, St Theresa. We have a group lunch in Ávila and on our return to Segovia, a free evening.

Day 4: Friday 7 June – We leave for **Santa Domingo de Silos**, one of the most atmospheric Benedictine monasteries in Spain. We visit the monastery and if timings allow attend a sung service. We continue to **Lerma**, a magnificent town built in the early seventeenth century by Phillip III's chief minister. We spend two nights in the 4* **Parador de Lerma**. We lunch in the Parador and after our afternoon guided walk the evening will be free.

Day 5: Saturday 8 June – We drive to **Burgos** where we visit the lovely **Miraflores Monastery** on the city outskirts, followed by a guided walk to include the truly amazing **Cathedral**. After some free time for lunch, not included, we visit the impressive Monasterio Las Huelgas. We return to Lerma and have dinner in the Parador.

Day 6: Sunday 9 June – **Fromista** is no larger than an outsized village but it has a jewel of Spanish Romanesque church architecture. We have a group lunch in **Saldaña** and end our day at the extraordinary museum created from a huge **Roman Villa** at **La Olmeda**. We continue to Leon to stay for three nights at the 3* **Hotel Real Colegiata de San Isidoro**, where the evening will be free.

Day 7: Monday 10 June – We have a leisurely morning exploring **León** with visits to the **Real Colegiata Basilica de San Isidoro**, the nearby and huge **Cathedral** and other historic sites. Lunch is not included and the afternoon will be at leisure. There will be a group dinner in an excellent country restaurant.

Day 8: Tuesday 11 June – **Astorga** is another pretty town with an excellent **Roman Museum**, a good **Cathedral** and a **Bishop's Palace** designed by Antoni Gaudí. Nearby, **Ponferrada** has a wonderful **Castle**. We have a group lunch in Ponferrada and on our return to León the evening will be free.

Day 9: Wednesday 12 June – We leave León and drive south to **Zamora**, a fine town with a remarkable group of medieval **Churches**, plus a **Museum** with fabulous tapestries. After a group lunch in the local Parador we continue to **Salamanca**, for a two-night stay in the 5* **Hotel Palacio de San Esteban**; the evening will be free.

Day 10: Thursday 13 June – We explore **Salamanca** on foot, visiting the two **Cathedrals**, the atmospheric **University** quarter, the **Casa de las Conchas** and much else. We have a final group dinner that evening.

Day 11: Friday 14 June – We leave our hotel for Madrid Airport and the return flight to Heathrow.

PRACTICALITIES

Price £3675 **Price without flights** £3495 **Deposit** £350 **Single Supplement** £590 (Double for Sole Use)

Hotels 3 nights at the 4* Parador de Segovia; 2 nights at the 4* Parador de Lerma; 3 nights at the 3* Hotel Real Colegiata de San Isidoro, León; 2 nights at the 5* Hotel Palacio de San Esteban, Salamanca. All hotels on a bed & breakfast basis.

Flights Iberia on behalf of British Airways

Outward: **IB3169** Depart London Heathrow (Terminal 5) **1135**, arrive Madrid **1500**

Return: **IB3172** Depart Madrid **1500**, arrive London Heathrow (Terminal 5) **1625**

Price includes 5 dinners & 5 lunches with water, wine & coffee, all local transfers, entry fees & gratuities, services of Tom Duncan & our local tour manager, David Sketchley

Not included Travel to/from Heathrow, 5 dinners & 5 lunches



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