

# Spanish Culture & Cuisine

*Paradores, Palaces & the biggest show in Spain!*

*El Sueño de Toledo*

*Wednesday 1st - Sunday 5<sup>th</sup> September 2021*



## Highlights of the tour



We will make our way from Jávea to Almansa where, after time for refreshments, we will visit the 16<sup>th</sup> century *Palacio de los Condes de Cirat* (now the town hall). In the courtyard/garden we can also see the *Open Museum of Contemporary Sculpture*. The works belong to the internationally renowned Almansa sculptor José Luis Sánchez. A visit to the nearby *Museo Batalla de Almansa* will follow where, in three interactive rooms, it is possible to discover all the details of the day that changed the history of Spain. The visit ends with an audio-visual spectacle. The Battle of Almansa is comparable to Waterloo and it marked a milestone in the history of Europe because it chose the heir of the Spanish Crown and its huge American empire. With the active participation of France and England, the War of Succession ended in Almansa and Felipe V of Spain was the winner. The Bourbon rise marked the beginning of the modernisation of Spain.



Free time for lunch or perhaps to visit the recently restored *Castle of Almansa*, before making our way to Albacete.



Our first 2 nights will be on a half-board basis (breakfast and dinner with drinks included) at the Parador de Albacete.

The next day we will have a free morning in Albacete, the largest city in the region of Castilla-La Mancha, for own sightseeing and lunch; perhaps visit the:



**Passage of Lodares:** One of the only three modernist galleries in Spain. The passage sits on Renaissance columns, between which are the shops and its ceiling is a skylight with an iron structure and sheets of glass that allow the light to pass through. The interior facades have distinct adornments based in mythology, with an abundance of heads of Mercury, god of commerce. The

iron bars on balconies and doors are distinguished examples of the ironwork craftsmanship of the town.



**The Gothic church of San Juan** has been given the status of cathedral. Built on the site of the old church of San Juan, it was started at the beginning of the 16th century. Later, part was remodelled in Renaissance style. Inside there are beautiful, interesting old altarpieces, such as

that of the Virgen de los Llanos chapel, 16th-century, work of the "Maestro de Albacete". Free admission, 10:45 am-12:45 pm.



**El Museo Municipal de la Cuchillería de Albacete** is an original and curious museum in which you will learn about the evolution of the art of cutlery throughout history, with video in English. General admission: €3; seniors (65+): €0.50, 10 am - 2 pm.

The city park or the **Museum of Realistic Art**.



Walking map provided, or download the "Audioguía de Albacete" from Googleplay.

Return to the Parador de Albacete with the rest of the afternoon free, followed by an included dinner in the evening.



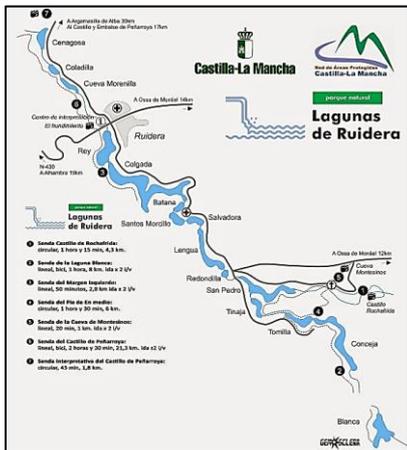
The most beautiful wetland in the Iberian Peninsula.

The next morning we will make our way to the **Lagunas de Ruidera Natural Park**, a chain of fifteen lagoons which form an open space of lakes and rivers that are unique to la Mancha's steppes



Between the first lagoon, Blanca and that of Cenegal, there is a drop of 120 metres and the remaining lagoons form a chain which are connected via waterfalls, brooks and underground currents. Las Lagunas de Ruidera are considered to be the source of the river Guadiana. The main vegetation is made up of reeds, bulrushes, rushes

near the lagoons, as well as junipers and holm oaks. In their waters you can spot carp, pike, water snakes and tortoises.



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Our starting point will be the **Ruidera Visitor Center**, which will provide us with information about the lagoons; the exhibition hall displays its geology, fauna and flora, with information panels, aquariums and models; and there is a botanical garden with the most interesting trees and shrubs in the park.

We will then make our way to Toledo and check in to the 4\* Hotel Sercotel Alfonso VI, a traditional hotel in the heart of historic Toledo, opposite the Alcázar and 300 metres from Toledo Cathedral. All of the rooms have satellite TV, a safe and a hairdryer and are decorated in typical Castilian style.



The rest of the afternoon will be free.

In the evening we will experience the highlight of the tour: Puy du Fou España presents the biggest show in Spain: **"El Sueño de Toledo"**: From the kingdom of Recaredo (a 6<sup>th</sup> century Visigothic king of Hispania whose reign marked a climactic shift in history, with the king's renunciation of Arianism in favour of Catholicism in 587AD) to Las Navas de Tolosa ( the battle

took place on 16<sup>th</sup> July 1212 and was an important turning point in the Reconquista and in the medieval history of Spain) - the discovery of America - to the arrival of the railroad, this epic fresco takes visitors through 1,500 years of history, brought to life with spectacular special effects. The shows will have simultaneous translations in English and French through a free smartphone app for the park (remember to bring your headphone).



Entrance with superior seating in the gallery will be included. The show involves 185 riders and actors on stage and more than 2,000 characters, 1,200 costumes and uses special effects such as fountains, fireworks, light show and drones (800 projectors, 60 water jets and 28 full HD video projectors).



Before the show, take a stroll through the El Arrabal food court: at this medieval market, merchants have gone back in time to set up their stalls and there will be several restaurants offering dinner or just a drink.

Next day we will visit the **Royal Palace of La Granja of San Ildefonso** dating from the early 18<sup>th</sup> century and inspired by Versailles. It became the summer residence of the Kings of Spain from the 1720s and is surrounded by extensive gardens in the formal Jardin à la Française style with sculptural fountains (only a few of the many fountains are operated each day).



We will then make our way to the Parador de La Granja, a splendid Baroque-style palace and gardens, housed in the Casa de los Infantes built by Charles III in the 18th century as a home for the Infantes Gabriel and Antonio, for lunch (with drinks included).



After lunch there will be a visit to the *Royal Glass Factory La Granja*, rebuilt by King Charles III in 1770 after its predecessor burnt down.



The *Royal Glass Factory* is one of the most important examples of European industrial architecture of the 18<sup>th</sup> century. Today it is the headquarters of the *National Glass Center Foundation* and the *Glass Museum*, which has temporary and permanent collections on European glass from the 16<sup>th</sup> to the 19<sup>th</sup> centuries. Visitors to this centre are invited to learn about the glassmaking techniques of the past two centuries, glass blowing and moulding processes and the special tools and machinery employed. There will be a guided tour and the chance to see glassmakers at work, using the same techniques that were applied during the industry's golden age.

Return to our hotel and the rest of the evening free.

On our final day we will make our way to San Clemente for a walking tour of the main historical sites:



Known as "the square of treasures"

From the old town hall with its impressive double-sectioned façade: a double rounded arcade on the first and beautifully styled glass railings on the second. Next to it, lies the granary from the 16<sup>th</sup> century with a doubled-arched entrance and the shield of the Austrias family between pilasters. Connecting the church and the town hall is the Roman arch that, despite its name, is actually Baroque from the 17<sup>th</sup> century. The Santiago Apóstol church dominates the ensemble with its doorway under a great triumphal rounded arch that offers a barrel vault.



After our guided tour we will travel a short distance to the **Bodega La Venta Restaurante** for lunch (included), prior to our return to Jávea, with a comfort break en route.

## Programme

### Day 1: Wednesday 1<sup>st</sup> September

- 08.30 hrs: Departure from Interiors, Jávea port (opposite side of the road).
- 10.45 hrs: Arrival in Almansa, refreshment break.
- 11.30 hrs: Visit to the Palacio de los Condes de Cirat and the Museo Batalla de Almansa.
- 13.30 hrs: Free time for lunch (not included)/own sightseeing.
- 15.00 hrs: Re-board coach and travel to Albacete.
- 16.00 hrs: Check in to the Parador de Albacete, rest of the afternoon free.
- 20.00 hrs: Dinner (included)

### Day 2: Thursday 2<sup>nd</sup> September

- 08.00 hrs: Breakfast.
- 09.30 hrs: Travel to nearby Albacete.
- 10.00 hrs: Guided walking tour.
- 12.30 hrs: Free time for lunch and own sightseeing.
- 15.30 hrs: Return to the Parador de Albacete, rest of the afternoon free.
- 20.00 hrs: Dinner (included).

### Day 3: Friday 3<sup>rd</sup> September

- 08.00 hrs: Breakfast.
- 09.00 hrs: Board our coach and travel to the Lagunas de Ruidera Natural Park;
- 10.30 hrs: Refreshment break and visit.
- 13.30 hrs: Travel to Toledo.
- 15.30 hrs: Check in to the 4\* Hotel Sercotel Alfonso VI for 2 nights bed and breakfast. Rest of the afternoon free.
- 19.30 hrs: Travel to Puy du Fou España, with time for a snack or a drink prior to the show.
- 21.30 hrs: The performance of *El Sueño de Toledo*.
- 22.45 hrs: Re-board our coach and return to the Parador de Toledo.

### Day 4: Saturday 4<sup>th</sup> September

- 08.00 hrs: Breakfast.
- 09.00 hrs: Board our coach and travel to the Royal Palace of La Granja of San Ildefonso.
- 11.30 hrs: Visit to the Royal Palace of La Granja of San Ildefonso.
- 13.15 hrs: Meet at the entrance to the Royal Palace and walk as a group to the Parador La Granja.
- 13.30 hrs: Lunch at the Parador La Granja (included).
- 15.45 hrs: Walk as a group to the nearby Royal Glass Factory of La Granja.
- 16.00 hrs: Guided visit to the Royal Glass Factory of La Granja.
- 17.30 hrs: Re-board coach and return to Toledo. Rest of the evening free.

### **Day 5: Sunday 5<sup>th</sup> September**

- 08.00 hrs: Breakfast.
- 09.00 hrs: Departure and make our way to San Clemente.
- 11.15 hrs: Refreshment break in San Clemente.
- 12.00 hrs: Guided walking tour.
- 14.00 hrs: Re-board our coach.
- 14.30 hrs: Lunch at the nearby Bodega La Venta Restaurante.
- 16.30 hrs: Return to Javea, comfort break en route.
- 20.00 hrs: Approx. arrival in Javea.

**PRICE: €495 pp sharing twin/double room; €645 for single occupancy.**

**DISCLAIMER:** Members are reminded that they are responsible for their own travel/health insurance. The Javea U3A is not liable in any respect for any loss or injury that may be suffered by members whilst participating in the Association's activities. In the event of a travel agent or hotelier becoming bankrupt, Javea U3A would not be in a position to refund any losses that might occur. We strongly recommend that you ensure that your own personal travel insurance provides cover for any such losses.

**CANCELLATION:** In case of subsequent cancellation of your booking, refund of deposit/s can only be made if your place is sold on to another member/s. You are advised to let the group leaders know as soon as possible as they may have a reserve list of other members wishing to participate in the event/trip.

Group Leaders: Angela & Tony

