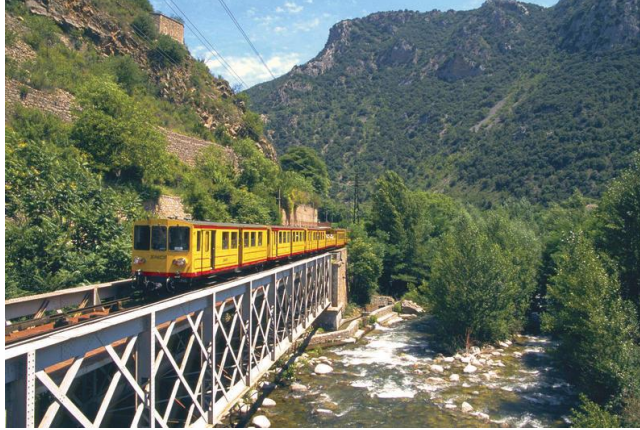


# Spanish Culture & Cuisine

*"From the Coast to Catalonia & the Little Trains of the Pyrenees"*

*Monday 13<sup>th</sup> - Monday 27<sup>th</sup> June 2022*

The Pyrenees Mountain range create a natural border between France and Spain and the little trains with their colourful carriages and panoramic windows are a fantastic way to explore them. The trip includes journeys on three of the best, encompassing rolling meadows, wooded valleys, remote villages, spectacular viaducts and much more.



## PROGRAMME

### MONDAY 13<sup>th</sup> JUNE

**Day 1: JAVEA/CASTELLON 200 km / CASTELLON/TORTOSA 120 km**

08.00 hrs: First pickup in layby, Calle Bruselas (Arenal); 2<sup>nd</sup> pick up at Interiors (Javea port, opposite side of the road). We can also make a pickup at Mas-y-Mas on the N332 if required. We will make our way to Castellon, with a comfort stop en-route.

11.15 hrs: Arrival in Castellon and free time for refreshments and own sight-seeing.

Castellón de la Plana, more commonly known as "Castellón", has an historical centre, several parks and squares, numerous café bars, restaurants and plenty of museums. You will be given a self-guided walking tour so that you can do as much or as little as you please, choosing your own time and venue for refreshments/lunch breaks.



**Plaza Mayor and Santa Maria Cathedral**, which dates from the 12<sup>th</sup> century and having had extensive reformations in the 14<sup>th</sup> century following a fire. The cathedral and its adjacent bell tower had to be completely rebuilt after suffering extensive damage during the Spanish Civil War in 1939. The bell tower is separated from the main body of the church. This octagonal-shaped edifice was built in the sixteenth century and is known locally as 'El Fadri'.



### **Ayuntamiento de Castellón**

The Castellon town hall, the former Palacio Municipal, is a building of cultural interest, dating from 1689. Over the years the building has undergone numerous alterations and changes in style. Today, the town hall has 3 floors, with a Tuscan-style facade.



**Plaza Huerto Sogueros**, sculpture by the artist Ripollés, and the **Teatro Principal**



### ***El Mercado Central Edificio de Correos y Telégrafos La Llotja del Cànem***

A large 17th Century Baroque-style building, originally used to store hemp cloth, an important commodity in those days. Llotja del Carmen was declared an historic-artistic monument in 1984 and is now part of the Universidad Jaume I, playing host to exhibitions and cultural activities.

15.00 hrs: Re-board our coach for the journey to Tortosa.

17.00 hrs: Check in to the Parador de Tortosa.

20.00 hrs: Dinner at the hotel (included).



The Parador de Tortosa is situated in the spectacular Zuda Castle in the Beceite Mountains. with views over the green Ebro Valley and the ancient city of Tortosa. It was originally built by the Moorish King Abderramán III, but over the centuries has been updated in a Gothic style. The interior is traditionally Christian, with vaulted ceilings, wood beams and antique style, wooden furniture.

## **TUESDAY 14<sup>th</sup> JUNE**

### **Day 2: TORTOSA/TARRAGONA 88 km**

08.00 hrs: Breakfast.

09.45 hrs: Check-out and leave luggage in reception/storage room.

10.00 hrs: 2½ hour guided walking tour of Tortosa.



**Tortosa**



**Palacio Episcopal**



**Cathedral of Santa Maria**



**Palau Despuig**



Tortosa is a beautiful old town which is steeped in history; we will have a 2½ hour guided walking tour which will give an insight into Tortosa in the Renaissance period, visiting the old town, the Cathedral, Palau Despuig, Palau Oliver de Boteller and Palau Episcopal.

12.30 hrs: Free time for own refreshments.

13.30 hrs: Re-board our coach for the journey to Tarragona.

15.00 hrs: Check in to the 4\* Hotel SB Ciutat de Tarragona (2 nights B&B).

Remainder of the afternoon/evening free





The hotel is close to the Monument Als Castellers and the Nova Rambla, whilst the hop-on-off tourist train has a stop at the nearby Plaça de la Imperial Tarraco. You may wish to visit the Cathedral and Diocesan Museum, beautifully lit up at night.

## WEDNESDAY 15<sup>th</sup> JUNE

### Day 3: TARRAGONA



Breakfast: free day/evening to explore Tarragona, a port city which contains many ancient ruins from its time as the Roman colony of Tarraco: the Amphitheatre Romà, a 2nd-century arena facing the Mediterranean; the Necropolis contains Roman tombs and traces of the Forum stand among the alleys of the walled, medieval Old Town.

(UNESCO World Heritage Site).



### Day 4: TARRAGONA / VILAFRANCA DEL PENEDES 56 km / MONTSERRAT 51 km

08.00 hrs: Breakfast

09.00 hrs: Departure from the hotel and travel to Vilafranca del Penedès

10.00 hrs: Free time to wander through the historical centre of Vilafranca del Penedès, founded in the middle of the 12th century and nicknamed the "Capital of Wine" as it is the centre for the local cava and wine industry, along with neighbouring Sant Sadurní d'Anoia; perhaps visiting the gothic church of Santa Maria, or to admire the old merchants' houses such as the Palau Baltà and the Casal del Marquès d'Alfarràs.



Palau Baltà

Plaça de Jaume I

Basilica Santa Maria



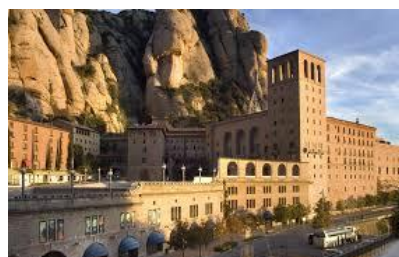


11.55 hrs: Meet the group in front of the Palau Reial, which dates from the 13th century and houses the town museum and Vinseum, Catalonia's largest wine museum; self-guided tour (with audio guides) which ends in the Museum's Tavern with a tasting of cava and tapas (included, but not compulsory if you prefer to take refreshments in the old quarter in your own time).

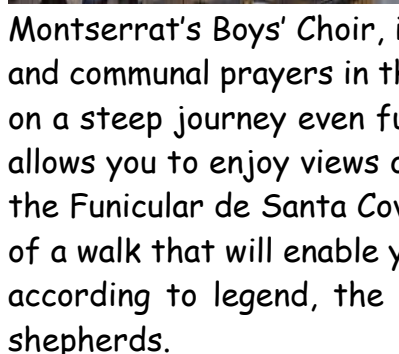


14.00 hrs: Re-board our coach for the journey to Montserrat.

14.30 hrs: Check in to the 3\* Hotel Abat Cisneros Montserrat (the coach will drop us off in the car park - 5 mins flat walk to the hotel reception; luggage transport included).



The rest of the afternoon is free for independent sight-seeing; perhaps visit the Benedictine Monastery Santa Maria de Montserrat, high up in the mountain offering a panoramic view far into the hinterland of Catalonia. Montserrat, whose name means 'serrated mountain', is Catalonia's most important religious retreat and the Virgin of Montserrat is Catalonia's favourite saint. The Escolania, Montserrat's Boys' Choir, is one of the oldest in Europe, and performs during religious ceremonies and communal prayers in the basilica; have a ride on the Funicular de Sant Joan which will take you on a steep journey even further up the mountain to its very peak. A glass ceiling on the funicular allows you to enjoy views of the whole of Montserrat as you climb up the side of the mountain; or the Funicular de Santa Cova which takes you slightly back down the mountain to the starting point of a walk that will enable you to visit the cave chapel known as Santa Cova. This is the cave where, according to legend, the image of Mare de Deu de Montserrat (the Virgin Mary) was seen by shepherds.





20.00 hrs: dinner included for the group in the hotel restaurant.

## FRIDAY 17<sup>th</sup> JUNE

### Day 5: MONTSERRAT/GIRONA 140 km

08.00 hrs: Breakfast and free morning for further sightseeing.

12.00 hrs: Check out of hotel and travel to Girona.

14.00 hrs: Check in to the 4\* Hotel Gran Ultonia (2 nights B&B), just a short walk from the 14th century cathedral and old quarter. Free afternoon/evening.



The hotel's roof top terrace.



*Pont de Pedra, Girona*

A city of storybook history and medieval might, full of eccentric museums and capped by an impressive Gothic-style cathedral. Well worth a visit is the Jewish Quarter of the city, the best preserved in Western Europe, with a labyrinth of narrow streets packed with fascinating religious buildings, ancient synagogues and cafés hidden away on street corners. You may wish to visit the Jewish Museum which details the lives and cultural influence of the Spanish Jewish community across the entire nation.

## SATURDAY 18<sup>th</sup> JUNE

### Day 6: GIRONA/RIBES 110 km / NURIA / GIRONA

08.00 hrs: Breakfast

09.00 hrs: Depart by coach to Ribes-enllaç; free time for refreshments (not included).

12.00 hrs: Board the Núria Valley Rack Railway of the Pyrenees.

12.30 hrs: Arrival in Núria; free time.

Twinned with the Jungfrau Express in Switzerland, this marvellous rack railway (an electric cog train) allows spectacular views of the steep slopes and superb mountains. The Núria Valley Rack Railway is the only way to access this remote valley and the lack of car traffic makes this the perfect oasis of calm with only sailing boats bobbing on the lake to distract from the magical



surroundings. In the summer months, it is a haven for wildlife and a popular destination for walkers. In the winter months it is a ski resort. Our trip includes ascent on the Rack Train and return; showing of the film "La Valle dels Cinc Elements" (The Valley of the Five Elements); and entry to the Basilica-Sanctuary Church of Nuria and the Visitor Centre.



15.50 hrs: Board the Núria Valley Rack Railway for return journey to Ribes-enllaç.

16.30 hrs: Return by coach to our hotel in Girona; free evening.

## SUNDAY 19<sup>th</sup> JUNE

Day 7: GIRONA/PUBOL 25 km / FIGUERES 39 kms

08.00 hrs: Breakfast

09.00 hrs: After breakfast we will make our way to the *Gala Dali Castle Museum* in Púbol.



Dali bought the medieval castle for his wife Elena Ivanovna Diakonova, better known as Gala. The couple transformed the structure, built on the remains of a 14th-century stone castle, into a home where Gala could both reign and relax. Her husband was only permitted to visit by written invitation. Many works of art, including paintings Dali gave his wife, are on display along with personal items ranging from monogrammed silverware to Gala's burnt-orange Datsun car parked outside on a pebble driveway.

10.30 hrs: Visit to the Gala Dali Castle Museum (included).





11.45 hrs: Re-join our coach for the journey to Figueres, named after the sweet fig trees that once thrived here and check in to the 4\* Sercotel President Hotel (4 nights B&B). Free time for refreshments/lunch (not included) and own sightseeing. A mix of architectural styles can be found in the old town along with various cultural attractions notably an impressive 11<sup>th</sup> century church dedicated to St Peter and the Dalí Museum.



16.00 hrs: meet at the entrance to the Dalí Theatre Museum for a visit to this amazing building, dedicated to the town's most famous son, Dali is also buried here, and his crypt is under the stage. This iconic painter and sculptor was a major figure within the surrealist movement, and his works encompassed paintings, film and writing. Dalí's most famous work is the *Persistence of Memory* painting, depicting a series of melting clocks, with a background inspired by the coastline near Figueres. The Foundation also displays the works of contemporary artists from across the world, on a rotating exhibition basis. Our visit will also include the adjacent Dalí Jewellery Museum.



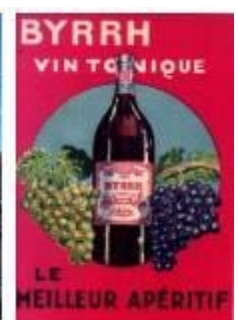
20.00 hrs: Free evening.

## MONDAY 20<sup>th</sup> JUNE

Day 8: FIGUERES/THUIR 58 km/MONT LOUIS 68 km/VILLEFRANCHE/FIGUERES 100 km

07.30 hrs: Breakfast.

08.45 hrs: Board our coach and travel to Thuir, France.



Today we will cross from Spain into France and into the French Pyrenees, our excursion beginning in the medieval walled city of Thuir. Located at the foothills of the Pyrenees, it is famed for its vineyards and for the Caves Byrrh, where the aperitif Byrrh is made. This unique drink is a blend of fine Roussillon wines flavoured with plant extracts and quinine, which in the latter half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century was sold as an "hygienic tonic wine".

10.15 hrs: Self-guided visit (with audio guide) at Caves Byrrh, which lasts 1 hr 15 mins and includes a tasting. Discover the largest oak vat and the biggest cellar in the world!

11.45 hrs: Re-board our coach and travel to Mont-Louis, France, founded in the 17th century in response to the order of King Louis to secure the area after the Treaty of the Pyrenees was signed in 1659. It is the highest walled town in France and a UNESCO World Heritage Site, because of Vauban's fortifications.



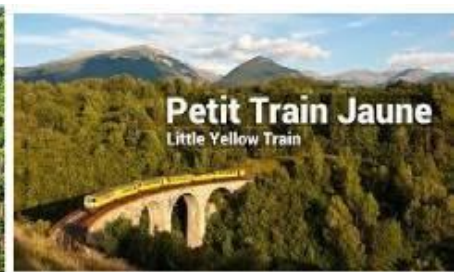


**Citadelle de Mont-Louis**

13.15 hrs: Free time for refreshments/lunch in Mont-Louis and own sightseeing.

15.45 hrs: Re-board our coach for the short journey to the train station in Mont-Louis.

16.09 hrs: Board the yellow train and departure from Mont-Louis for an unforgettable journey through the Pyrenees, through forests and tunnels and across ravines and viaducts, including the Pont Gisclard suspension bridge and the Séjourné viaduct with its dramatic double-decker arches. The train line was originally constructed in 1903, with the yellow/red colours of the train chosen as they are the dominant colours of the Catalan flag. We alight from the train at Villefranche de Conflent and return to our hotel by coach.



17.22 hrs: Arrival in Villefranche-de-Conflent and return by coach to Figueres.  
Free evening.

**TUESDAY 21<sup>st</sup> JUNE** Please note we will be using a local coach company today

**Day 9: FIGUERES/LA POBLA DE LILLET 102 kms/BESALU 78 kms/FIGUERES 37 km.**

08.00 hrs: Breakfast.

09.00 hrs: Travel to La Pobla de L'Illet.



11.00 hrs: Arrival at the old station of La Pobla de L'Illet; time to see the exhibition "Narrow-gauge industrial and tourist railways in the Llobregat Valley", which gives an insight into the most representative elements of the era of the narrow-gauge mining and industrial trains in the valley.

11.30 hrs: Following an introduction to the complex, in English, we will then board the Tren del Cement, for a short journey on the line that historically joined the former Asland cement factory in Castellar de n'Hug with Guardiola de Berguedà. The route lasts approximately 20 minutes, as the diesel-powered locomotive covers the 3.5 km of track.

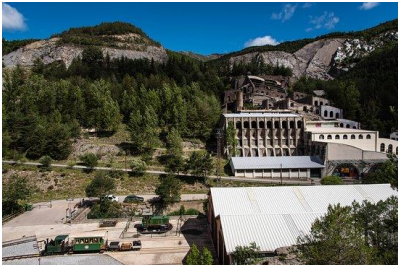




11.44 hrs: Free visit to Los Jardines. The Artigas Gardens are naturalist in style with an emphasis on stone, water and vegetation, and were designed at the beginning of the 20th century by architect Antoni Gaudí.

12.44 hrs: Board the train and travel to the museum.

12.50 hrs: Free visit to the museum. There is a self-service machine on site for refreshments.



The Asland Cement Factory is an impressive Modernist building featuring Catalan vaulting and forged iron structures, built in a terraced way to take advantage of the force of gravity in the cement-manufacturing process. A few years ago the factory was turned into the Museu del Ciment Asland of Castellar de N'Hug.

14.00 hrs: Return by train to La Pobla de L'Illet.

14.30 hrs: Re-board our coach and travel to Besalú.



16.00 hrs: Drop off at the Oficina de Turisme, with a photo opportunity of the adjacent Puente de Besalú, the Romanesque bridge over the river Fluviá.



17.00 hrs: Board the Aerotren of Besalú at the Oficina de Turisme for a 45-mins. ride and discover the ancient streets of this medieval town, seeing the historic St. Pere Church and the Roman bridge, whilst listening to informative commentary as you take in the Romanesque architecture.

18.00 hrs: Board our coach for the short journey back to our hotel in Figueres; free evening.

**WEDNESDAY 22<sup>ND</sup> JUNE** Please note we will be using a local coach company today

**Day 10: FIGUERES/RIVESALTES (FRANCE) 69 km/AXAT (FRANCE)/ FIGUERES 69 km**

07.30 hrs: Breakfast.

08.15 hrs: Board our coach and travel to Rivesaltes, France.





10.00 hrs: Enjoy another day in the French Pyrenees - this time we join the Train du pays Cathere et du Fenouillèdes (a diesel locomotive with both closed and open-air carriages, affectionately called the Red Train), which passes through a land of vineyards and castles as it slowly climbs over an impressive 60 kms from Rivesaltes to Axat. The journey takes 2 hours 10 minutes in two separate trains changing at St. Paul and going deeper into the Pyrenees.



12.10 hrs: Free time for lunch (not included) and sightseeing in the pretty town of Axat, high in the Aude valley.

15.30 hrs: Re-board the train for the return journey to Rivesaltes, after which our coach will take us back to our hotel in Figueres.

Free evening.

### THURSDAY 23<sup>RD</sup> JUNE

**Day 11: FIGUERES / ROSES 30km /VALLBONA DE LES MONGES 267 km**

07.30 hrs: Breakfast.

08.45 hrs: Check out and departure for Roses, renowned for its splendid wide beaches, all of which have earned Blue Flag status.

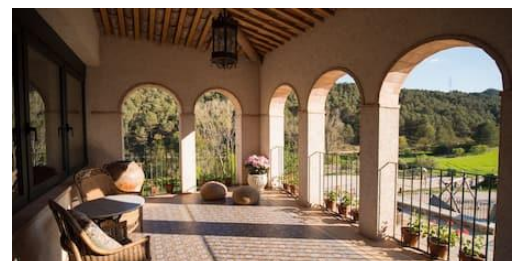
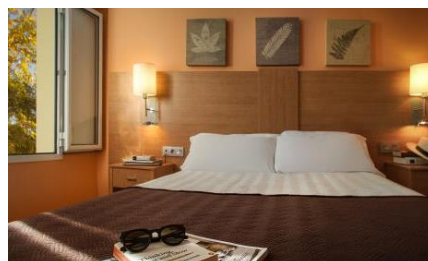


10.00 hrs: We will head towards the citadel on the seafront where we join the Trenet de Cadaques for a 2-hour ride on this little road train. Enjoy the coves and scenery of the Cap de Creus Nature Park until reaching Montjoi and on the return we will stop at the Puig Rom viewpoint to admire the wonderful view of the park, Roses Bay, Medes Islands, Empordà plain and the Pyrenees mountains in the background.

12.00 hrs: Free time for wandering around Roses and lunch (not included)

13.30 hrs: Board our coach for the journey to Vallbona de Les Monges; comfort stop enroute.

17.30 hrs: Check in to the 4\* Hotel Iberik Rocallaura Balneari for 2 nights, dinner & breakfast included (buffet).





20.00 hrs: Dinner

This evening the hotel will have a party atmosphere and there will be a music group playing on the terrace to celebrate the Feast of Sant Joan, which signifies the start of the summer. It is the longest day of the year and what is known as the Summer Solstice in England. It is one of the most important feast days for Catalans and a public holiday. On the night of Sant Joan, the sun reaches its highest point, before beginning to drop.

## **FRIDAY 24<sup>th</sup> JUNE VALLBONA DE LES MONGES / LLEIDA 54 km**

### **Day 12:**

08.00 hrs: Breakfast.

09.00 hrs: Board coach for the journey to Lleida's Monumental Complex.

10.30 hrs: Guided walking visit to Lleida's Monumental Complex, which comprises the Seu Vella (old cathedral), the King's Castle and the military fortifications; (UNESCO World Heritage Site).



12.30 hrs: Free time for refreshments.

14.00 hrs: Return to the Hotel Iberik Rocallaura Balneari; afternoon/evening free.

20.00 hrs: Dinner for the group.

## **SATURDAY 25<sup>th</sup> JUNE**

### **Day 13: VALLBONA DE LES MONGES / MONASTERIO DE SANTA MARIA DE POBLET 23 km/ MONT BLANC 12 KM / ARNES 139 km.**

08.00 hrs: Breakfast.

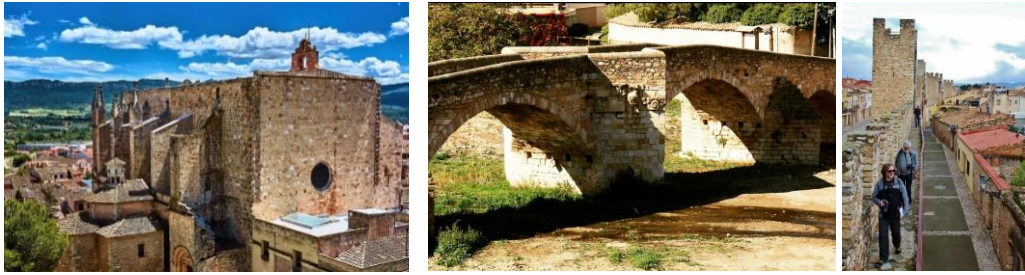
09.30 hrs: Board coach and travel to the Monasterio de Santa Maria de Poblet.

10.30 hrs: 1-hour self-guided tour (download app onto phone) of the Monasterio de Santa Maria de Poblet, which is not only a Catalan site of special historical, artistic, and religious interest, but also one of the largest and most important Cistercian abbeys in the world. It was founded in the 12th century, and during its long existence has also been used as a military complex and as the royal pantheon of the Crown of Aragon's kings. Peter IV of Aragon (1319 - 1387) made it a condition, under solemn oath at the time of his crowning, that all the Aragonese kings be buried there. Only Ferdinand II of Aragon broke the oath, after his kingdom had been merged with the Kingdom of Castile, and was buried in Granada.



11.45 hrs: Travel to the nearby Mont Blanc, a medieval town whose historic centre lies within its defensive walls; free time for own sightseeing/lunch (not inc.)

Perhaps take a walk along the walls or across the Roman bridge; or visit the old Cathedral Santa Maria de Montblanc.



14.30 hrs: Departure by coach for Arnes with a comfort stop en route.

17.00 hrs: Check in to the 4\* Hotel Vilar Rural d'Arnes (2 nights, breakfast & dinner included).



20.00 hrs: Dinner for the group.

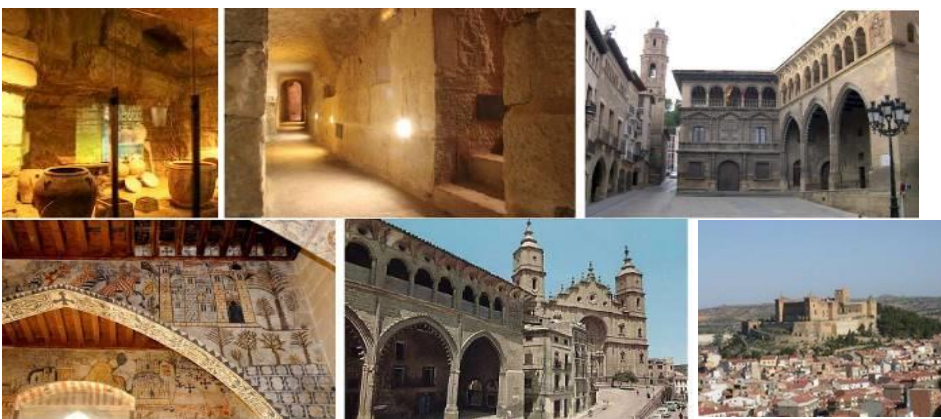
## SUNDAY 26<sup>th</sup> JUNE

### Day 14: ARNES / ALCANIZ 47 km

08.00 hrs: Breakfast.

09.15 hrs: Board our coach for the journey to Alcañiz.

10.30 hrs: Meet our guide for a 2-hour walking tour of Alcañiz, which will include the Castle of the Calatravos (the Parador de Alcañiz), Los Pasadizos (Underground Passages, Cellar and Cold Vault), the Plaza de España, Ayuntamiento and the Iglesia de Santa Maria La Mayor De Alcañiz.



The castle/monastery dates from the 12th-13th centuries. The keep, belfry, sacristy and a section converted into an Aragonese palace have all been preserved. You can enjoy the Gothic murals and Baroque facades and great views of the town and countryside below. The

Torre del Homenaje (tower of homage) is the oldest part of the castle and has walls decorated with frescoes including some rather rude ones on the first floor.

14.00 hrs: Return to the Hotel Vilar Rural d'Arnes; the rest of the afternoon is free to enjoy the hotel's facilities. Alternatively, visit the nearby village of Arnes (800 metres' walk from the hotel).

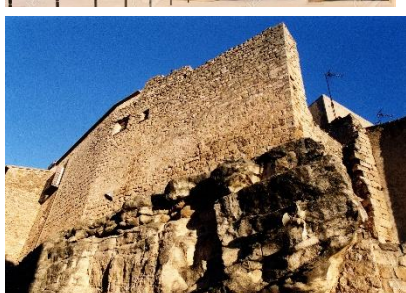




The "**Centre d'Interpretació de la Mel**" the object of which is to preserve and spread the tradition of beekeeping as an essential element of the heritage of the people, as well as to publicize the amazing world of bees.



**Arnes town hall** is the most important building in the town and one of the first Renaissance-style buildings in Catalonia dating from 1584 and was built by Joan Vilabona de Queretes. The Casa de la vila is a magnificent building, with semicircular arches on the ground floor and beautiful windows



**The parish church**, dedicated to Saint Magdalene, is in Baroque style. It was built on the ruins of a Gothic church in 1693. It consists of three naves and has side chapels and a bell tower.

**Castle ruins**

20.00 hrs: Dinner for the group.

## **MONDAY 27<sup>TH</sup> JUNE**

**DAY 15: ARNES/PORT SAPLAYA 224 km / PORT SAPLAYA/JAVEA 120 km**

08.00 hrs: Breakfast

09.30 hrs: Check out and departure for Port Saplaya, with a refreshment break en-route.



13.00 hrs: Free time for lunch (not included) in one of the restaurants over-looking the sea or the canals, and to walk around the picturesque harbour area, known as "Little Venice".

15.30 hrs: Re-board our coach for the journey to Javea (comfort stop en route).

18.00 hrs - 18.30 hrs: Approx. arrival in Javea.

## **What is included**

### **Hotel accommodation as follows:**

4\* Parador de Tortosa: 1 night with dinner & breakfast

4\* Hotel SB Ciutat de Tarragona: 2 nights bed & breakfast

3\* Hotel Abat Cisneros Montserrat: 1 night with dinner & breakfast

4\* Hotel Gran Ultonia, Girona: 2 nights bed & breakfast

4\* Sercotel President Hotel, Figueres: 4 nights bed & breakfast.

4\* Hotel Iberik Rocallaura Balneari: 2 nights dinner & breakfast.

4\* Hotel Vilar Rural d'Arnes: 2 nights with dinner & breakfast.

All local tourist taxes included

### **Train journeys and tours included:**

Tortosa: 2½-hour guided walking tour

Visit to the Vinseum Wine Museum, audio-guides, glass of cava & tapas included  
Núria Valley Rack Railway of the Pyrenees  
Púbol: Gala Dali Castle Museum  
Figueres: Dalí Museum & Dali Museum Jewellery  
Thuir: Caves Byrrrh with tasting  
Le Petit Tren Jaune  
La Pobla de Lillet: Tren del Cement  
Aerotren of Besalú  
Le Petit Tren Rouge  
Roses: Trenet de Cadaques  
Lleida: guided tour of the Monumental Complex  
The Monasterio de Santa Maria de Poblet self-guided tour  
Alcañiz: 2-hr guided walking tour  
With coach transport, local coach hire in Figueres, entry fees for the visits described, local guides where shown, and gratuities.

We regret that this trip is not suitable for anyone with mobility problems as there are walking tours included as well as the necessity to get on and off the various trains.

**Price** in a twin/double room: €1,225 per person; single supplement: €455.

**Cancellation:** we regret that in case of cancellation, refunds can only be given if your place can be sold on to another member.

**Health/Medical/Travel Insurance:** all members on the trip are responsible for ensuring that they have appropriate health/medical/travel insurance for their individual needs.

**NB** Original passports or an official ID card are essential and for members who are not resident in Spain, a copy of your UK EHIC/GHIC card will also be required.

Please see the section "Terms & Conditions" on the group SC&C page on the Javea U3A website.

Group leaders: Angela & Tony  
[spanish.culture.cuisine@u3ajavea.com](mailto:spanish.culture.cuisine@u3ajavea.com)

