

Western Europe: From Bullrings to Battlefields

Farm Study Tour 2022

Date	Activity	Overnight
DAY 1 Sun, Aug 7	Tour leader: Lloyd O'Connell 0428 724 615 Depart Australian capitals for Madrid. If you would like to do some of your own exploration of Madrid (or elsewhere) before the main tour begins, we can arrange earlier flights and accommodation for you.	On plane
DAY 2 Mon, Aug 8 (L)	On our arrival in Madrid we are met at the airport and transferred to our centrally located hotel. After freshening up, we enjoy an informal welcome reception at the hotel and a chance to say hello to your fellow travellers.	SPAIN Madrid Gran Melia Fenix Hotel www.melia.com/en/hotels/spain/
DAY 3 Tue, Aug 9 (B,L)	Madrid is Spain's central capital and is a city of elegant boulevards and expansive, manicured parks. It's renowned for its rich collections of European art, including the Prado Museum's works by Goya, Velázquez and other Spanish masters. We have a guided tour this morning designed to orientate you to this intriguing and historic city. After an al fresco lunch you have free time this afternoon and evening for your own exploration of the city's sights, beautiful parks and multitude of shopping opportunities. For those interested, we have a meeting with the Madrid office of Austrade this afternoon which will give us a good overview of agricultural trading opportunities in Spain and Portugal as well as the EU more generally. Then it's a free evening.	Madrid Gran Melia Fenix Hotel
DAY 4 Wed, Aug 10 (B,L,D)	This morning we board our (very) fast train from Madrid bound for Granada, around 450 km away in the Andalucian region of southern Spain – but our journey will be covered in just over 3 hours thanks to a brand spanking new high speed rail line! Andalucia is Spain's most populous autonomous community. Compared to the rest of Spain, Andalucia has been a traditionally agricultural region, rich in culture and a strong identity. Many cultural phenomena that are seen internationally as distinctively Spanish are largely or entirely Andalucian in origin. These include flamenco, bullfighting and Hispano-Moorish architectural styles. On our arrival in Granada, we will be met by our driver and charter coach and transferred to lunch in one of Granada's beautiful courtyard restaurants. This afternoon we tour the fabulous Alhambra Palace. Completed towards the end of Muslim rule of Spain in the mid 1300s, the Alhambra is a reflection of the culture of the last centuries of the Muslim rule of southern Spain. It is a place where artists and intellectuals had taken refuge as the Reconquista by Spanish Christians won battles throughout Andalucia. This World Heritage Listed palace and gardens is a testament to Moorish culture in Spain and the skills of Muslim, Jewish, and Christian artisans, craftsmen, and builders of their era.	Granada Palacio de Santa Inés www.palaciosantaines.es/EN/home.html

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DAY 5 Thu, Aug 11 (B,L,D)	<p>We board our coach this morning and travel to the west through rolling farmlands and olive groves that typify the Andalucian landscape. We will enjoy a grain farm visit before arriving at the spectacular mountaintop city of Ronda located dramatically above a deep gorge. The gorge separates the city's 15th-century 'new town' from its old town, dating to Moorish rule. Puente Nuevo is the stone bridge spanning the gorge and offers breathtaking views.</p>	Ronda Hotel Catalonia www.cataloniahotels.com
DAY 6 Fri, Aug 12 (B,L,D)	<p>Spain is the second biggest producer of cotton in the EU after Greece. And where we are in southwest Andalucia is the region for Spanish cotton production. We meet with some cotton growers and researchers today before continuing onto Seville, our overnight destination.</p>	Seville Gran Melia Colon www.melia.com/en/hotels/spain/seville/
DAY 7 Sat, Aug 13 (B)	<p>This morning we enjoy a guided tour of Seville before a free afternoon and evening in this fantastic city.</p> <p>Seville is the capital of Andalucia and is famous for flamenco dancing and bull-fighting – both are very popular regional pastimes. Major landmarks include the ornate Alcázar castle complex, built during the Moorish Almohad dynasty, and the 18th-century Plaza de Toros de la Maestranza bullring. The tomb of Christopher Columbus is also found in Seville.</p>	Seville Gran Melia Colon
DAY 8 Sun, Aug 14 (B,L,D)	<p>We leave Seville this morning and travel northwest and into Portugal. We will travel through the Alentejo region, the heart of grain and olive farming in Portugal. We meet with local farmers before continuing onto Lisbon – a beautiful and cosmopolitan capital city set over a series of hills near the mouth of the River Tagus. It's a place inextricably linked with the sea.</p> <p>Intrepid navigators embarked from here in the 15th and 16th centuries to sail unknown waters and chart new lands. Much of Lisbon's culture is a legacy of this golden Age of Discovery. There is an excellent maritime museum at Belem (a riverside suburb of Lisbon) chronicling this age and – time permitting on Sunday afternoon – we will visit this exhibit.</p> <p>Later this evening, we check into our heritage hotel - the Avenida Palace. Dinner is a short walk from the hotel.</p>	PORTUGAL Lisbon Avenida Palace Hotel www.hotelavenidapalace.pt
DAY 9 Mon, Aug 15 (B,L)	<p>This morning we enjoy a guided walking tour of the historic town centre and waterfront before travelling to the beautiful Atlantic coastline around Sintra. We enjoy a sensational lunch at a Michelin mentioned restaurant, Nortada, before returning to Lisbon for a free evening.</p>	Lisbon Avenida Palace Hotel
DAY 10 Tue, Aug 16 (B,L,D)	<p>This morning we board our coach and travel north towards Porto. Along the way, we call into an extremely diversified farm producing corn, rice, cork, meat, vegetables and eucalyptus (wood) in the fertile Montego River basin.</p> <p>We continue north to Porto, spectacularly located along the Douro River where it enters into the Atlantic. Porto is one of the oldest European centres. Its settlement dates back many centuries, when it was an outpost of the Roman Empire. Its historical core was proclaimed a World Heritage Site in 1996.</p> <p>From the warren of narrow streets that make up the ancient Ribeira district through to the grand plazas of the Avenida dos Aliados, Porto has something for everyone. Guided city tour and then dinner showcasing the best of Porto-inspired cuisine.</p>	Porto Intercontinental Palácio das Cardosas www.ihg.com/intercontinental/hotels/
DAY 11 Wed, Aug 17 (B,L,D)	<p>This morning we board our coach and follow the Douro River Valley upstream. We are travelling through a world Heritage Listed region famous for its fine wine production, particularly port. We stop for lunch at a beautiful restaurant in Regua overlooking the river before boarding our specially chartered boat to continue upstream to Pinhao. This is a quaint and historic river town. Our bus rejoins us at Pinhao to take us to dinner and our overnight destination – a wonderful winery and villa perched at the top of this magnificent river valley.</p>	Pinhao Casa Das Pipas www.quintadoportal.com/en/hotel&idhouse=1

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Day 12 Thu, Aug 18 (B,L,D)	<p>After a leisurely start to the morning we continue northeast towards the Spanish border and cross into the autonomous community of Castile and León. More than 60% of Spain's heritage sites are located in Castile and León.</p> <p>We have a farm visit in the Zamora region before continuing on to Valladolid, the de facto capital of Castile and León.</p> <p>With a population of more than 300,000, Valladolid is one of the major cities of northwest Spain. The city is located at the confluence of the Pisuerga and Esgueva rivers 15 km before they join the mighty Douro River.</p>	SPAIN Valladolid Melia Recoletos www.melia.com/en/hotels/spain/valladolid/melia-recoletos/
Day 13 Fri, Aug 19 (B,L,D)	<p>We continue north this morning through rolling farmlands. We enjoy a farm visit before entering the mountainous Basque region of northern Spain. Our destination is San Sebastian – a majestic seaside town on the Bay of Biscay and just inside the Spanish/French border. Dinner tonight is at a beautiful restaurant overlooking the San Sebastian harbour.</p>	San Sebastian Hotel Arrizul Congress www.hotelarrizulcongress.com
Day 14 Sat, Aug 20 (B,L)	<p>We have a guided tour of San Sebastian this morning before we enjoy lunch at a traditional pinxo (tapas) bar in the Old Town. Then it's free time to do your own exploration (shopping??) in this wonderful city.</p>	San Sebastian Hotel Arrizul Congress
Day 15 Sun, Aug 21 (B,L,D)	<p>Continuing north today we cross the border into France. Shortly after crossing the border we enter the historic Gascony natural region of southwestern France – now known as Aquitaine. This is the largest man-made woodland in Western Europe but it also contains some amazing farms and farmers. We visit Tradilandes, a very diverse farm in the heart of the special microclimate of the Landes forest. The farm produces cereals, corn and oilseeds as well as wholesale medicinal plants. The major medicinal plants are Passion Flower and Hamamelis. We continue north and into the postcard perfect Dordogne and Loire Valley regions.</p> <p>Our overnight (and dinner) destination is the Clos de la Ribaudière. With its 18th century roots, this castle hotel is a true testament of the French art of living. Along the edge of this verdant estate runs the Clain River.</p>	FRANCE Chateau du Clos de la Ribaudiere www.ribaudiere.com
Day 16 Mon, Aug 22 (B,L,D)	<p>The Loire Valley is known as the “Garden of France” with its fertile fields, tapestry of vineyards and ancient forests. The area boasts an abundance of fairytale Renaissance châteaux, dotted along France's longest and most beautiful river, the Loire.</p> <p>We tour one of the majestic châteaux and enjoy lunch on the grounds before continuing into the region of France called the Paris Basin. This is one the country's biggest field crop producing regions and has relatively larger farms than other areas of France. We visit one of these farms before continuing onto Paris in time for a Seine River cruise before a Parisian dinner.</p>	Paris M Social Hotel Paris Opera www.millenniumhotels.com/en/paris/m-social-hotel-paris-opera/
Day 17 Tue, Aug 23 (B)	<p>A guided tour this morning of the classic sights of Paris including Tuileries Gardens, the Champs-Elysees, Arc de Triomphe etc before free time to visit one or two of the many museums – and other landmarks – Paris has to offer.</p>	Paris M Social Hotel Paris Opera
Day 18 Wed, Aug 24 (B,L,D)	<p>Time this morning for some last minute Parisian shopping or sightseeing before heading north out of town and into the farmlands of the northern Paris Basin. We visit an arable farm in the Arranville region and continue north to Villers-Bretonneux, the town that was liberated by Australian troops on Anzac Day 1918.</p> <p>This is also the location of the recently opened Sir John Monash Centre. This wonderful exhibit is a very moving commemoration of the Australian men and women who served on the Western Front.</p>	Amiens Amiens Cathedrale Hotel www.all.accor.com/hotel/7076/

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<p>Day 19 Thu, Aug 25 (B,L)</p>	<p>Today we will visit some of the Western Front battlefields and memorials. With a local battlefields historian/guide on board we journey along sections of the Australian Remembrance Trail.</p> <p>We travel on to Ypres (pronounced Ee-Prez). This town occupied a strategic position during WWI because it stood in the path of Germany's planned sweep across the rest of Belgium and into France from the north. Ypres is also the home of The Menin Gate Memorial. We will arrive in Ypres in time for the Last Post Ceremony.</p> <p>Every evening since 1928 (except for a period during WWII when Ypres was occupied by Germany), at precisely 8pm, traffic around the imposing arches of the Menin Gate Memorial has been stopped while <i>The Last Post</i> is sounded beneath the gate by the local fire brigade in honour of the memory of British Empire soldiers who fought and died there. A wreath will be placed at the Menin Gate on behalf of our group.</p> <p>After the ceremony, we continue into south-western Belgium – the region of West Flanders – and on to the beautifully preserved medieval city of Bruges.</p> <p>This is a canal-based city and is sometimes referred to as the 'Venice of the North'. For more than 1000 years Bruges has enjoyed significant economic importance, thanks to its port, and was once one of the world's chief commercial cities. During Hanseatic trading times, its small tidal inlet was crucial to local commerce and was called the "Golden Inlet".</p> <p>Our hotel tonight is the historic Grand Hotel Casselbergh located right beside the Burg, the prettiest of Bruges' two main historic squares, containing the fairytale Town Hall and the Basilica of the Holy Blood.</p>	<p>BELGIUM</p> <p>Bruges</p> <p>Grand Hotel Casselbergh</p> <p>www.grandhotelcasselbergh.be/</p>
<p>Day 20 Fri, Aug 26 (B,L,D)</p>	<p>This morning we enjoy a guided walking tour of the famous old market square area before continuing north into The Netherlands, a country typified by its flat landscape, canals, tulip fields, windmills... and cyclists (be warned!).</p> <p>The Netherlands is a world-leader in intensive and precision agriculture technology and farming techniques. An astounding statistic is that at around US\$95 billion per year, The Netherlands is the world's second-largest exporter (in US\$ value) of food and agricultural products and services. This high ranking is because of the high value of flowers and live plants (supplying nearly half of the global total) and vegetables, particularly tomatoes and chillies). The US tops the list at about US\$150 billion while Australia exports around \$US40 billion a year worth of farm goods and services.</p> <p>We enjoy a farm visit on our way to Amsterdam for overnight.</p>	<p>THE NETHERLANDS</p> <p>Amsterdam</p> <p>Hotel Estherea</p> <p>www.estherea.nl</p>
<p>Day 21 Sat, Aug 27 (B,L,D)</p>	<p>Amsterdam, the capital, is home to many world-famous attractions including the Rijksmuseum, the Van Gogh Museum and the house where Jewish diarist Anne Frank hid during WWII. Canal-side mansions – as well as a trove of works from artists including Van Gogh, Rembrandt and Vermeer – remain from the city's 17th-century 'Golden Age'.</p> <p>This morning we enjoy a canal cruise before a free afternoon to take in some of the many galleries, museums and other attractions.</p> <p>Farewell dinner this evening.</p>	<p>Amsterdam</p> <p>Hotel Estherea</p>
<p>Day 22 Sun, Aug 28 (B)</p>	<p>Today you are transferred to the airport for flights departing Amsterdam for homeward destinations.</p> <p>If you are interested in staying on for more touring of The Netherlands – or Europe in general – there is no better base than Amsterdam.</p>	