

Battlefield Travel

"Ladies Only" Spain & France 2018 Including Bilbao, Biarritz, Toulouse & Barcelona April 18th - May 1st, 2018

I (sort of) agree with the sentiment attributed to Ernest Hemingway: "If you visit only one foreign country in your lifetime, make it Spain." He might have added that after your first visit, you might not be tempted to go anywhere else. No other country is quite as flamboyantly alive as Spain. Except, perhaps, France. France seduces travelers with its irresistible culture, woven around cafe terraces, village-square markets and lace-curtained bistros with their plat du jour chalked on the board. Experience the allure of both and join us in 2018 on our "Ladies Only" Spain and France 2018 experience.

Wednesday April 18th, 2018

Toronto/Bilbao

We depart Toronto on an overnight flight to Bilbao via Amsterdam with KLM

Thursday April 19, 2018

Bilbao

Meals include Dinner

We arrive at Bilbao airport mid-morning and transfer to the **Hotel Sercotel Gran Bilbao**. The remainder of the afternoon is at leisure - and tonight there is a light welcome dinner included at the hotel.

In coastal Northern Spain, otherwise known as Basque Country, San Sebastián and Guernica may be considered the most popular destinations. But hiding slightly inland and roughly an hour's drive from the former is Bilbao. A city of contrasts, Bilbao has the unexpected duality of things to do, see and eat in an urban landscape dotted with elements of a country setting. Look to the left, and you'll see a futuristic tram silently gliding along the old street—to the right, the river is lined with pastel, crackling buildings seemingly untouched since they were built. The Guggenheim Museum Bilbao takes up much of the modern landscape, with its silver gilded architecture hanging over the water and backed by lush, green mountains. It, along with the bright red arches of the La Salve bridge and the stark white, tiered linear Zubizuri footbridge, make for the perfect view.



Every corner in Bilbao yields a highly visual and oddly surprising twist. The old-school fish markets meld with hidden high-end boutiques that disappear if you blink once.

Thursday April 19, 2018

Bilbao

Meals include Dinner

The Hotel Sercotel Gran is a 4* modern property and you are going to love the location with its proximity to the city centre; just 500 yards from the old town, restaurants and shopping and a 10 minute walk to Siete Calles, one of the main areas in the city for leisure.

Dinner will be enjoyed at the hotel this evening.

Overnight: Hotel Sercotel Gran Bilbao

Friday April 20th, 2018

Bilbao City Tour

Meals include Breakfast

Breakfast is included at our hotel.

This morning we will enjoy a guided half day city bus tour including a visit of the Guggenheim Museum. The Guggenheim Museum Bilbao is a museum of modern and contemporary art, designed by Canadian-American architect Frank Gehry. Built alongside the Nervion River, which runs through the city of Bilbao to the Cantabrian Sea, it is one of several museums belonging to the Guggenheim Foundation and features permanent and visiting exhibits of works by Spanish and international artists. It is one of the largest museums in Spain.

The remainder of the day at leisure.

Overnight: Hotel Sercotel Gran Bilbao

Saturday April 21st, 2018

Bilbao/Pinxos Evening Tour

Meals include Breakfast & Dinner

Enjoy breakfast included at our hotel.

Today is at leisure for amazing Spanish shopping in Bilbao.

This evening we have arranged a private Pinxos (Tapas) tour where we will indulge in the finest pintxos Bilbao has to offer in the company of a culinary expert who will guide us through the vibrant quarters of the city. We dive straight into the culinary heart of the city for a night of eating and drinking (several drinks are included...lol) unlike any you've ever experienced. The pintxo hunt changes but always features a range of traditional food and chic, avant-garde bars.

Overnight: Hotel Sercotel Gran Bilbao

Sunday April 22nd, 2018

Bilboa/San Sebastian/Biarritz, France

Meals include Breakfast & Dinner

After breakfast included at our hotel we depart Bilbao for San Sebastian. On arrival we will enjoy a walking tour of this quaint town.

We leave Spain for now and cross into France stopping in St. Jean de Luz for some free time in this little village by the sea. In this quaint fishing town people used to announce their catch by singing through the town. Even today, as we walk around, you might hear people - just walking alone - singing out loud to old basque tales and melodies.

When we arrive in Biarritz we will check into the **Hotel du Palais**. The Hotel du Palais is a 5*plus boutique property with a history. It was built for Napoleon's wife, Princess Eugenie, in the shape of an 'E' for her name. It has beautifully decorated rooms with antique furniture, as if you were stepping back in time. Enjoy a gorgeous breakfast in a sun room that overlooks the main beach in Biarritz. A unique experience to be sure.

Dinner is included tonight at a local restaurant.

Overnight: Hotel du Palais

Monday April 23rd, 2018

Biarritz

Meals include Breakfast & Dinner

This morning after included breakfast at the hotel we will enjoy a morning walking tour of Biarritz including a visit to the Chocolate Museum. The Basque area is one of the first places to start making chocolate in all of Europe, dating back to the 1600's. We will enjoy free time for lunch.

In the afternoon we drive to the Basque villages in the mountains - Ainoa and Espelette. Espelette is a cute village where the custom is to hang peppers (some of the world's hottest) to dry outside of the homes. Try the local specialty of chocolate spiced with peppers.

Tonight we enjoy a Basque evening in a cider house including a typical basque dinner, unlimited various ciders, and local basque singers. Going to a basque cider house is an amazing opportunity to really live life like the locals. There are massive cider barrels that historically were cemented into the walls, where the taps flow free with unlimited cider throughout the evening. The local custom is to make a game of seeing who can catch the cider from the farthest back as it shoots out of the barrel and splashes around, trying to find its' way into your glass. Be sure not to wear your best clothes this evening - and be sure to take lots of pictures to share!

Overnight: Hotel du Palais.

Tuesday April 24th, 2018

Biarritz/Lourdes/Toulouse

Meals include Breakfast & Dinner

Today, after we enjoy breakfast at the hotel we depart from Biarritz to Lourdes. We will have an included guided visit of Lourdes sanctuary. Lourdes is nestled in a valley in the southwestern part of the Hautes-Pyrénées and according to believers, the Virgin Mary appeared to Marie-Bernadette Soubirous on a total of eighteen occasions at Lourdes, and since Lourdes has become a major place of Roman Catholic pilgrimage and of miraculous healings.

After free time for lunch we continue to Toulouse through the French countryside. Life in Toulouse, as we will see, revolves around the events and merchants in the main square.

We spend the next 3 nights at the **Grand Hotel de L'Opera**. This hotel is a 4*plus property and is a converted covenant refurbished from the XVII's century and is located in the heart of the city square.

As the old capital of Languedoc and France's fourth-largest city, Toulouse is the major city of the southwest of France, and the gateway to the Pyrenees mountain range. It is an ancient city with a stormy history: Once it was the capital of the Visigoths and later the center of the comtes de Toulouse. Ochre rooftops and blushing brick churches earned Toulouse the nickname 'La Ville Rose' (the pink city). Its enchanting Vieux Quartier is a dreamy jumble of coral-coloured shopfronts and churches. Beyond the old town, Toulouse sprawls into France's fourth-largest metropolis. It's an animated, hectic place, but Toulouse - nestled between a bend in the Garonne River and the mighty Canal du Midi - is invigorated by its waterways.

Tonight we enjoy a dinner soiree Cassoulet in a typical restaurant.

Overnight: Grand Hotel de L'Opera

Wednesday April 25th, 2018

Toulouse

Meals include Breakfast & Lunch

We enjoy included breakfast this morning at our hotel, followed by a morning at leisure. Maybe do a bit of shopping...oui? Like most major cities, Toulouse holds a great historical heritage that you can discover through its many museums. For those who want to enjoy the more natural sights and sounds of Toulouse, you can choose to spend some time in one of the many public green spaces in the city, such as the Jardin des Plantes.

Overnight: Grand Hotel de L'Opera

Wednesday April 25th, 2018

Toulouse & Cooking Class

Meals include Breakfast & Lunch

This afternoon is reserved for a cooking class and lunch! Learn to cook 1 main meal and 1 dessert. Also included is a Valrhona chocolate tasting with coffee.

The remainder of the day and evening at leisure.

Overnight: Grand Hotel de L'Opera

Thursday April 26th, 2018

Toulouse/Albi & Toulouse Lautrec Museum

Meals include Breakfast & Lunch

After included breakfast at our hotel we take a drive to Albi. This town may look like any French countryside town upon first glance, but looks can be deceiving! There is a red-brick Cathedral in this town with a bell tower that stands 256ft tall. The drab exterior was used as a decoy during wars and hostilities to deter those attacking from the frescos and gold inside. The Cathedral is similar to Russian dolls in that it is a Cathedral within a Cathedral within a Cathedral! Absolutely stunning, the innards remain nearly intact with gold plater ornaments and frescos throughout.

Our walking tour of fascinating Albi will include a visit to the Toulouse Lautrec Museum, lunch at Cordes sur Cieland, and wine tasting in a Gaillac winery. What a lovely day!

Dinner time is spent at leisure.

Overnight: Grand Hotel de L'Opera

Friday April 27th, 2018

Carcassonne

Meals include Breakfast & Dinner

After breakfast at our hotel we drive to **Carcassonne** where we will visit the medieval fort city around Carcassonne. The fortifications consist of the inner and outer walls, a double line of ramparts. The epic medieval poems *Chansons de Geste* tell the tale of the origin of the town's name. During a siege by Charlemagne, the populace of the city was starving and near surrender until a local noblewoman, Dame Carcas, reputedly gathered up the last of their wheat, stuffed it into the last remaining pig and threw the animal over the ramparts. The pig's stomach burst, scattering the wheat. Dame Carcas then ordered the trumpets sounded for a parley and cried, "*Carcas sonne!*" ("Carcas is calling!"). The Franks concluded that Carcassonne must have unlimited food supplies if its people were feeding precious grain to their pigs, and thus ended their siege. It's only a legend, of course, as Dame Carcas was the widow of a Saracen king and, being Muslim, would not have been likely to keep pigs. We continue to the beautiful mountain village of Belesta, near Perpignan where you will stay on a vineyard at the **Domaine Riberach**. **The Domaine Riberach** has its own cellars and is designated as an ecolodge with a spa. They boast very comfortable rooms created "in" and "above" the wine vats of the old cooperative winery dating from 1925. Also at the Domain Riberach we can enjoy the Mediterranean spa, starred gastronomic restaurant & wine cellar, natural swimming-pool, lounge terrace, and flower gardens planted with trees. Too bad this is our only 1 night stay!

Dinner is included tonight.

Overnight: Domaine Riberach

Saturday April 28th, 2018

Barcelona

Meals include Breakfast

After included breakfast this morning at the **Domaine Riberach** we start our journey and say good bye to France as we return to Spain.

Our drive takes us to **Barcelona** and when we arrive we check in to **Hotel Roger de Lluria** located in the heart of the city. Awash with surprises and wonderful sights, Barcelona remains one of Europe's must-see cities, full of charm and secrets, world-renowned attractions and hidden nooks, Michelin-starred restaurants and funky neighbourhood bars, an amazing football team and a great climate. Key sites such as Las Ramblas, Passeig de Gracia and Plaça de Catalunya are just five minutes from the hotel, as are Gaudi's masterpieces of La Pedrera and Casa Batlló.

The late afternoon, evening and dinner are at leisure.

Overnight: Hotel Roger de Lluria

Sunday April 29th, 2018

Barcelona

Meals include Breakfast

After breakfast at the hotel we have a morning private guided city tour including entrance to **Sagrada Familia** and the Miro museum.

The afternoon and dinner are at leisure to explore Barcelona. A Gothic and Modernist marvel on the Mediterranean Sea, Barcelona is quirky, cosmopolitan and effortlessly cool. This city breathes life. Pause for a minute, and discover Barcelona's real charm in small details like — the hidden courtyards of Barri Gòtic.

Overnight: Hotel Roger de Lluria

Monday April 30th, 2018

Barcelona

Meals include Breakfast & Farewell Dinner

After included breakfast at the hotel we have the last day of our "Ladies Only" as a day at leisure in this beautiful city for your last minute shopping or sightseeing.

Our Farewell dinner is included this evening.

Overnight: Hotel Roger de Lluria

Tuesday May 1st, 2018

Homeward bound

Meals include Breakfast

Check out and transfer to the airport for our morning flight with Air France back to Toronto via Paris to arrive in Toronto same day.

Our Tour includes...

- ✚ Return economy airfare with KLM and Air France
- ✚ All transfers in Spain and France
- ✚ All breakfasts, 2 lunches and 7 dinners
 - ✚ 12 hotel nights in 4* to 5*plus hotels as listed in the itinerary (or similar)
 - ✚ All sightseeing and entrances as detailed in the itinerary
 - ✚ 7 guided city tours with English speaking guides
 - ✚ All museum entrances & fees as per itinerary
 - ✚ Private coach
 - ✚ Private Canadian Multilingual Escort throughout
- ✚ Most hotel service charges, taxes & portorage (some hotel city taxes must be paid upon check out)
- ✚ taxes & gratuities for included meals
- ✚ beautiful scenery (complimentary)

Wendi says

"This tour will be limited to 20 ladies. If you are looking for a small group to travel with...If you are looking for something very authentic, special and unqiue...

This is the tour for you!"

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Cost Double Occupancy: Only \$5,495.00 per person
plus \$660.00 air tax

✚ We would be pleased to try and arrange
shared accommodation - but
If you would like to travel single, and have a
room to yourself...

Pay by
cheque and
save
\$150.00

Cost Single: \$6,895.00 per person single plus \$660.00 tax

The deposit to reserve your spot on this tour is \$800.00

This cost is based on a minimum of 15 participants and a minimum of 10 participants
utilizing our arranged group airfare.

The cost is also based on the anticipated exchange rate of the Euro for the spring of 2018
and, although not expected, could possibly affect the cost at time of final payment.

To reserve or Inquire

(Remember only 20 spots available!)

please call Wendi ext 15 or Shelley ext 11

at Battlefield Travel at (905) 662-6355 or 1 866 574-8004 or

email wendi@battlefieldtravel.com

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