



ACADEMY TRAVEL

TAILORED
SMALL GROUP
JOURNEYS

MADRID

PRE-TOUR EXTENSION

El Escorial

OVERVIEW

Madrid is home to some of Europe's finest art galleries and has a captivating history. Castile was at the centre of the discovery of the New World and the vast wealth that flooded back from the colonies instigated monumental palatial projects and a thriving arts scene. This former Islamic military outpost became the centre of a fearless Spanish Empire that straddled the Atlantic.

Led by artist Elena Ortega, a Madrid resident, our time in the capital concentrates on the city's Golden Age and wealth of art, with extended walking tours and guided visits of palaces, museums and galleries, including the famed Golden Art Triangle – the superlative Prado, with its treasures of Spanish and European art dating from the 12th to the early 20th centuries; the vast private collection of the Museo Thyssen-Bornemisza, once the second largest private collection in the world, and the Reina Sofía Art Centre, home to Picasso's *Guernica*.

A day trip to Felipe II's austere Monastery Palace El Escorial and the sophisticated hill city of Segovia offers further insight into the history and cultural wealth of Spain. Accommodation is in the comfortable four-star H10 Puerta de Alcalá, allowing a seamless transition into the main tour program.



TOUR LEADER

Elena Ortega is Spanish born, living between Australia and Spain since 1992. She has a passion for Fine Arts and European history, with a Bachelor of Arts from Sydney University and a Bachelor of Fine Arts at the National Art School.

EXTENSION DATES

October 5-8, 2024

EXTENSION PRICE

\$2,870 per person, twin share
\$590 single supplement

GROUP SIZE

Maximum number of **16** in group

ITINERARY

Madrid (3 nights)

INCLUSIONS

3 nights' accommodation in a centrally located 4-star hotel. All breakfasts and 1 dinner. Services of an expert tour leader throughout. All ground transport, entrance fees and tipping.

HOTEL

The **H10 Puerta de Alcalá** is located near El Retiro Park, in Madrid's exclusive Salamanca district, which houses the best boutiques of the city. The hotel features an impressive rooftop terrace and bar, with plunge pool and panoramic views of the city.



EXTENSION ITINERARY

Included meals are indicated with B and D.

Saturday 5 October **Modern Spanish Art**

We meet our tour leader Elena Ortega in the hotel this afternoon before making our way to the Museo Reina Sofía, whose exceptional collection of modern Spanish art includes works by Juan Gris, Joan Miró, Salvador Dalí and Pablo Picasso. A highlight here is Picasso's *Guernica*, painted in response to atrocities committed during the Spanish Civil War. On our way back to the hotel, we take a stroll around the nearby El Retiro Park, a favourite place for Madrileños to relax. The park dates from the 16th century and was once owned by the Royal family. We finish the day with tapas and drinks near our hotel. Overnight Madrid (D)

Sunday 6 October **Escorial & Segovia**

This morning we head out of Madrid to the Monastery of San Lorenzo del Escorial. Commissioned by Phillip II to commemorate the defeat of the French at St Quentin, this vast structure of over 4,000 rooms was both monastery and austere royal residence. Our tour takes us through the monastery, royal apartments, basilica and library as well as the mausoleum, the final resting place of almost all Spanish monarchs since Charles V was interred in 1558. After a break for lunch, we then make our way to Segovia, beautifully sited on a rocky ridge above the Castilian plain with an impressive Roman aqueduct at its heart. We enjoy a walking tour of the centre before making our way up to the cathedral and past the extraordinary Alcázar, a beautiful turreted fantasy which reputedly inspired Walt Disney. The evening is at leisure. Overnight Madrid (B)

Monday 7 October **Prado & Madrid de los Austrias**

Our day begins at the Museo Nacional del Prado, one of the world's foremost collections of Old Master paintings. The Spanish Habsburg and Bourbon monarchs had acquired an exceptional collection of art over the centuries, and their collections became the core of the new public museum in 1819. The Prado has many iconic masterpieces by artists such as Velasquez, Goya and El Greco and we enjoy a guided tour of key works in the collection, followed by time to explore the museum independently. Following a break for lunch in the Prado café, we then embark on an extended walking tour of Habsburg Madrid (El Madrid de los Austrias), taking in the main squares, the vast Royal Palace, the Almudena Cathedral and the Market of San Miguel, a food lover's delight. The evening is set aside for a performance of Flamenco in a celebrated and intimate 'Tablao'. Whilst the dance originated in Andalusia, the finest performers come to Madrid to advance their careers. Overnight Madrid (B)

Tuesday 8 October **Thyssen & Sorolla Museums**

The morning is devoted to the last part of the Art Triangle, as we visit the Museo Thyssen-Bornemisza, an exceptional private collection with over 800 works dating from the 13th century to the present day. Partially acquired by the state in 1993 from Baron Hans Heinrich Thyssen-Bornemisza (and the deal is continually renegotiated), the collection includes magnificent works by Raphael, Titian, the Impressionists and many other artists. Following a break for lunch, we then make our way to the glamorous former home and studio of Joaquín Sorolla – one of Spain's most celebrated painters, best known for his sun-dappled images of frolicking children and fashionable ladies enjoying the seaside. Sorolla lived well, and our tour of the house museum and gardens open a window into that vanished world. Returning to the hotel in the late afternoon, our main tour program commences with an introductory talk by Dr Jeni Ryde. (B)