

London, Paris, Barcelona, Madrid – working itinerary

Day 1 Flight

Overnight flight to Great Britain

Day 2 London

Arrival in London • Touch down in London, Europe's largest city. After clearing customs, you are greeted by your EF Tour Director, who will remain with you throughout your stay. **EF walking tour of London** • Stroll through the heart of London on our EF walking tour, which begins along the banks of the River Thames. These shadowy waters gave the city its name, which derives from Llyn-Dyn, Celtic for "city of the lake." Walk along the Strand and see the spot considered to be London's geographic center; all measurements of distances to London end here. Enter Trafalgar Square and pause at Nelson's Column, built to commemorate his 1805 victory in the Battle of Trafalgar. Continue on to Leicester Square, where duelists once fought to the death. Then saunter through London's tiny Chinatown. Your walk ends at chic Covent Garden, where you'll enjoy watching street performers (or "buskers") amuse the lively crowds. (The exact walking route may vary, depending on your hotel location and the day's other activities.)

Day 3 London

Guided sightseeing of London • A local guide leads you on a panoramic tour of London. Begin in Grosvenor Square, which is sometimes called "Little America" because it's the site of the U.S. embassy and the house where Eisenhower once lived. Continue to Hyde Park Corner, located at the southeast corner of Hyde Park, one of London's largest parks. At bustling Piccadilly Circus, the intersection of five busy streets, check out the bright lights and big-city displays, before heading to Trafalgar Square. Pass Speaker's Corner, where anyone with something to say is invited to speak his or her mind. Snap a photo of the Houses of Parliament and continue along London's South Bank for views of the famous Tower of London and London Bridge.

Visit to the Tower of London • The history of London comes to life at this complex of 20 towers surrounding Tower Green. The oldest tower, known as the White Tower, was completed in 1097, when it was the tallest building in London. The Tower buildings have had many uses over the years; perhaps the most infamous was as a jail for political prisoners, not to mention two of Henry VIII's wives. The most famous exhibits at the Tower are the British Crown Jewels. Aside from a short interruption during WWII, these splendid baubles have been locked behind the Tower's walls for centuries.

Day 4 London

Optional excursion to Canterbury and Leeds Castle • Opt for a journey to Canterbury, the destination city of Chaucer's pilgrims in the legendary *Canterbury Tales*. Visit the town's magnificent Gothic cathedral (the seat of the Church of England) and see where four of the king's knights murdered Archbishop Thomas à Becket in 1170 as part of a long running debate over church and state. The excursion also includes a visit to stately Leeds Castle. Surrounded by rolling countryside, this was a favorite estate of Henry VIII. • Alternatively, enjoy free time in London. You might wish to visit the original Hard Rock Cafe or Madame Tussauds wax museum, take a cruise down the Thames or browse through the countless stores along Oxford Street. Attend a Shakespearean drama at a replica of the Globe Theatre, or visit the fascinating, hands-on exhibits of London's Natural History Museum.

Day 5 London • Paris

Transfer via the Eurostar from London to Paris • In London, board the high-speed Eurostar (train) that runs through the tunnel connecting Britain with continental Europe.
Arrival in Paris • Welcome to Paris, cosmopolitan City of Light.

Day 6 Paris

Guided sightseeing of Paris • Discover the city on the Seine, beginning with the imposing Arc de Triomphe, commemorating Napoleon's Grande Armée. Take a drive down the elegant Champs-Élysées to the Place de la Concorde. Pass the Conciergerie, where prisoners of the Revolution spent their final days, and see Les Invalides, Louis XIV's grand retirement home for wounded soldiers. You'll also see the École Militaire, where Napoleon graduated to lieutenant and was told he'd go far if circumstances allowed. Next, make a photo stop at the Eiffel Tower to marvel at the 6,000-ton centerpiece for the 1889 World's Fair. You'll hear the story of how this impressive—but once highly controversial—symbol of Paris was spared the wrecking ball in 1909. Pass the Opéra Garnier, where the famous Phantom of the Opera haunted his dear Christine, and marvel at Église de la Madeleine, designed as a temple of glory for Napoleon's army. Continue past the geometric gardens of the Tuileries as you make your way to the Place Vendôme, a vast square surrounded by elegant 17th-century façades. **Optional excursion to Versailles** • Join an optional excursion to Versailles, the elaborate palace of Louis XIV. Here, the Sun King held court in the most lavish style imaginable. At one point, 1,000 nobles were attended by 4,000 servants inside the palace, while 15,000 soldiers and servants inhabited the annexes. Stroll through the elegantly landscaped gardens, designed by André Le Nôtre, tour the State Apartments of the King himself, walk through the historic Hall of Mirrors, and admire the ornate decor of the State Apartments of the Queen. (Please note: Because of the extreme popularity of Versailles, guided visits of the interior cannot be guaranteed during peak seasons. In this case, your group will hear a presentation from your guide before entering the palace. Please also note that Versailles is closed on Mondays.)

Day 7 Paris • Night Train

Visit to the Louvre • Built to defend the city in the 13th century, the Louvre today safeguards one of the world's greatest art collections. Enter the museum through world renowned architect I.M. Pei's glass pyramid, constructed in 1989. Inside, discover priceless antiquities from Asia, Greece and Rome. You'll also see precious objects from the Middle Ages and the Renaissance, as well as iconic European paintings such as the *Mona Lisa*. **Walking tour of Paris** • Meander through the Latin Quarter, an area dominated by the Sorbonne, Paris' most famous university, founded in 1253. As you stroll, look for the Panthéon, created by Louis XV because of a promise he made to build a church dedicated to Sainte-Geneviève if he survived a severe illness. You'll also explore Boulevard St. Michel and spend some time browsing the stacks at the famous Shakespeare and Company bookstore, which published James Joyce's *Ulysses* in 1922. As you make your way along the Seine, you'll also have the chance to browse the literary materials sold at *les bouquinistes*, the bookstalls that sell old books, maps, art prints and postcards. It's the perfect place to pick up some authentic souvenirs! **Visit to Notre Dame Cathedral** • Built between 1163 and 1361 over the remains of an ancient Roman temple, it was here that Napoleon crowned himself emperor in 1804. Victor Hugo once described the sculptured façade of Notre Dame as "a vast symphony in stone." However, had it not been for the creation of his famous hunchback, Quasimodo, the cathedral might never have returned to its former glory. Hugo's novel *The Hunchback of Notre Dame* helped inspire a 23-year restoration of the cathedral that began in 1841. Step inside to admire the stained-glass rose

windows and seemingly weightless vaulted ceilings. **Night train to Spain** • Tonight, enjoy couchette accommodations aboard your overnight train bound for Barcelona.

Day 8 Barcelona

Arrival in Barcelona • Arrive in Barcelona, Spain's second-largest city and the capital of Cataluña. Queen Isabella and King Ferdinand V received Columbus in Barcelona upon his return from the Americas in 1493. Barcelona played a prominent role in the overthrow of Spain's monarchy in 1931, and was also the last

city in Spain to surrender to Franco in 1939. **Guided sightseeing of Barcelona** • Your guided tour takes you past the controversial and still-unfinished La Sagrada Familia (the Church of the Holy Family), where you will

make a photo stop. This masterpiece of twisting spires and colorful mosaics was designed by Gaudí, who estimated it would take 200 years to complete. You will also see some of Gaudí's other works during our panoramic bus tour of Paseo de Gracia, one of Spain's most cosmopolitan streets. Check out Plaza de

Catalunya and Plaza España, a bustling sixstreet intersection that boasts the Magic Fountain of Montjuïc, a fountain that puts on a fabulous show of water, lights and music on the weekends. Then enjoy a marvelous harbor view from atop Montjuïc Hill, where much of the 1992 Olympics took place. Here, you will see the former stadium and the Olympic Rings. Continue to the Plaza de Colon, a square built in honor of Christopher Columbus ("Columbus" is *Colon* in Spanish). Finish your tour in the 14th-century Barrio Gótico, the oldest surviving part of the city and home to the stunning Barcelona Cathedral, built in the Mediterranean Gothic style. **Visit to Parque Guell** • You'll also

visit Parque Guell, a World Heritage Site designed by Antoni Gaudí. The beautifully landscaped park is decorated with playful Modernist mosaics. Visit the Room of a Hundred Columns, a covered market with 84 pillars, and see the Casa-Museu, where Gaudí lived from 1906 to 1926.

Day 9 Barcelona

EF walking tour of Barcelona • Barcelona, known as "La Gran Encisera" (the Great Enchantress) has inspired countless artists— Miró, Picasso and Dalí all lived or studied here at the beginning of their careers. Experience the spirit and romance of Barcelona on our EF walking tour. Your tour director takes you down Las Ramblas, the tree-lined pedestrian boulevard that W. Somerset Maugham called "the most beautiful street in the world." Wander among the newspaper kiosks, flower and bird stalls, and performers, from human statues to street musicians to fortune tellers. Restaurants, cafés and hotels abound, as do

tourists and locals alike. **Optional Flamenco Evening** • To better understand the soul of Spain, choose to attend an optional flamenco performance. Born of Indian, Moorish, Arabian and gypsy influences, flamenco dance is a passionate display of intricate heelwork and clapping, accompanied by songs and guitar.

Day 10 • Barcelona • Madrid

Transfer via AVE train from Barcelona to Madrid • Board Spain's high-speed train, dubbed the AVE—*Alta Velocidad Española*. The first AVE train was inaugurated in 1992 with the completion of the Madrid-Sevilla

line. The train will reach a maximum speed of more than 180 miles per hour before arriving in Madrid.

Arrival in Madrid • Arrive in Madrid. At 2,100 feet, this is Europe's highest capital.

Madrid orientation tour • Your tour director continues to show you Madrid. Travel back in time to Spain's Golden Age, when painters such as Goya and Velázquez ruled and the Royal Court reigned. Get acquainted with the center of Iberia and its biggest draw—the friendly *madrileños* who inhabit the cafés,

tascas and flea markets that pack the city. And discover what makes Pedro Almodóvar want to immortalize the Madrid scene in his films.

Visit to the Prado • You'll also visit the world-renowned Prado, filled with works collected by the Spanish monarchy. One of the museum's most famous paintings is *Las Meninas* by Velázquez. You'll also find Goya's paired canvases *The Clothed Maja* and *The Naked Maja*, along with works by Bosch, El Greco and many others.

Day 11 • Madrid

Guided sightseeing of Madrid • Your sightseeing adventure begins with a panoramic tour of Spain's capital city. At the Puerta del Sol, the center of Madrid, pass through one of the nine arched gateways leading to the Plaza Mayor, the Renaissance hub of the city. This grand square has witnessed events ranging from bullfights to royal weddings to public executions. Continue to the Plaza de Oriente, Madrid's largest square, outside of the Palacio Real (Royal Palace). Next, you will explore this magnificent palace, built by Bourbon King Philip V. Once the seat of the most powerful court in the world, it was here that Spain officially joined the European Community in 1986. The palace boasts more than 2,000 rooms, including one with extravagant ceramic walls. Marvel at the splendid marble staircase, the golden Throne Room and the incredible variety of priceless frescoes and chandeliers.

Day 12 • Home

Return home • Transfer to airport for flight home.