

# Morocco and Spain: Moor than a Myth

**Marrakech, Morocco, Africa to Barcelona, Spain, Europe (MOS)**

## Day 1 Marrakech, Morocco

Welcome to Morocco. On arrival at Marrakech Airport make your way to the Arrivals Hall, to meet our Aurora Expeditions representative, followed by a transfer to our group hotel. At the hotel, visit our hospitality desk in the lobby to meet our team who will provide you with useful information regarding pre-embarkation procedures and about your time in Marrakech. You will also receive cabin tags for your luggage. Please clearly label the tags with your name and your cabin number on the ship. This evening offers time to relax in preparation for our big day tomorrow. Our group hotel has several restaurants and is close to Marrakech's popular restaurants should you wish to explore the city and try some local cuisine. **Accommodation:** Mövenpick Marrakech (or similar). **Meals:** Lunch for those arriving prior 13:00



## Day 2 Marrakech

Waking to our first adhan, the Islamic call to prayer, the muezzin's emotive call conjures visions of magic carpets and spice-scented medinas. Located at the foothills of the Atlas Mountains, Marrakech is an eclectic mix of centuries-old architectural styles. The fabled ochre city was founded over 1,000 years ago during the Almoravid dynasty, and still beats to an age-old rhythm. Famed for its outstanding artisanship, the city has boomed as one of Africa's key hubs for contemporary art, architecture and design. After breakfast, we meet our born-and-bred Moroccan guides whose passion for their homeland is infectious. This morning, we explore the city's main attractions, including the Almohad wonders of the Koutoubia Mosque, the

geometric zellij (mosaics) and intricate cedarwood of the former Koranic college, Ben Youssef Medersa, and one of Marrakech's oldest surviving buildings – the mausoleum of Almoravid Koubba. We discover bustling souks (Arabic for market or stall), walk through a maze of laneways and covered markets bursting with energy, and stop by the Spice Square, where everything from herbs, spices, snakeskins and chameleons have been sold for centuries. Our morning is completed by our first taste of Morocco as we lunch at the popular Ksar El Hamra restaurant, before continuing to Le Jardin Secret. This eclectic space dates to the Saadi dynasty, for which Marrakech was its capital more than 400 years ago. Rebuilt in the 19th century at the behest of an influential kaid from the Atlas Mountains who came into possession of the land, Le Jardin Secret has been the home of some of Morocco's and Marrakech's most important political figures. We discover its gardens and stately buildings, which are outstanding examples of Islamic art and architecture, before returning to our hotel for you to enjoy some free time. No day in Marrakech is complete without a visit to the fabled Djemâa el Fna Square. Here, we are immersed in the captivating energy of this mythical square, one of the world's great spectacles, where for centuries locals have gathered to watch storytellers, magicians and performers. The city's residents spill out to eat at its street food stalls and revel in the entertainment on offer. If you want to meet an authentic snake charmer, feel the pulse of the Gnawa drums or be mesmerised by circus-style entertainers, Djemâa el Fna is the place to be. Our evening continues when we indulge in a Moroccan feast, while belly dancers and traditional troops entertain us, as we welcome you to 'Morocco'.

Accommodation: Mövenpick Marrakech (or similar) Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Welcome Event dinner.

### **Day 3 Embark Casablanca (Port: Casablanca)**

This morning, we leave the old Imperial city of Marrakech for the coastal shores of the Atlantic Ocean, as we travel to the modern-day mecca of Casablanca. Morocco's largest coastal city, Casablanca's fame hit new heights when Hollywood set the ultimate romantic motion picture amongst the city's wartime streets. Where else would one dine in Casablanca other than Rick's mythical saloon – Rick's Café. This rundown 1930s riad has been transformed into an iconic Casablanca landmark. The restaurant's current manager Issam, who also doubles as the Café's resident piano player, will share with us the story of how the legendary 'gin joint' of cinematic fame was brought to life by Bill Willis, a renowned Marrakech-based American designer who first discovered the delights of Morocco with Talitha and John Paul Getty Junior. As we farewell Rick and Issa, we step

into modern-day Casablanca at the monumental Hassan II Mosque. The largest mosque in Africa, with a 60-storey high minaret, it is the tallest religious structure in the world. This architectural masterpiece is the most ambitious structure ever built in Morocco, taking 35,000 workers seven years to complete. We savour the atmosphere of this venerated place, and learn about the mosque's key architectural features, which beautifully blends modernism with traditional Islamic, Moorish and Moroccan elements. In the late afternoon, our voyage begins as we embark Douglas Mawson. We enjoy a Welcome Dinner where we will meet our Aurora Expedition Team, as we sail north to the tip of Africa. Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner onboard

## Day 4 Tangier (Port: Tangier)

Unique amongst Moroccan cities, Tangier has a chequered past, affording us one of Europe's most egocentric stories. Designated an 'International Zone' in the early 20th century, Tangier harboured no drug laws, no taxes, no banking restrictions, no censorship laws and no morality laws.

Attracting a worldly mix of expat residents, it played host to everyone from eccentric British nobility to American authors, Franco's civil war army to Nazi spies, while it awaited its inclusion in the post-war nation of Morocco. Stories of illicit affairs, underworld deals, and espionage abound in this city which remains as colourful as its history suggests. Our morning offers two popular options, immersing you in the city's highlights, before we sail early afternoon for the Spanish coast. Personalise your exploration with our included 'Your Choice' experiences. Option 1 - Morning experience: Tangier Kasbah district, Kasbah Museum and American Legation Museum. We begin our journey at Tangier's fabled Kasbah. Largely unchanged since Roman times, the Kasbah was the traditional residence of the Sultan and his harem and is now one of the most fashionable residential areas of Tangier. During a guided stroll we discover the Grand Socco. This café filled plaza serves as the gateway to Tangier's medina and was once the haunt of Paul Bowles, William Burroughs and their Beatnik friends who gathered here to discuss life and literature while mingling among double agents and expats during the notorious time of international rule. Our next stop is at the American Legation. The first American public property outside the United States, the American Legation is now a museum that traces the history of the two countries relationship. As one of the first countries to recognize America's independence, Morocco permitted the new United States government to establish a legation in Tangier in 1821. It is the only historical monument to have remained in American possession since the

birth of the American nation. Amongst several displays here is a letter from George Washington to the Sultan - Mbulay Abdellah

Option 2 – Morning experience: A Taste of Tangier

This 'foodie' tour of Tangier allows you to dive into the city's culinary journey. Tangier's cuisine reflects a fascinating blend of Moorish and Spanish influences, with each bite telling a story of its past. From the Moorish tradition of intricate spice blends to Spanish touches like rich, savory stews, and delicious colonial French deserts, the food here is a testament to the city's eclectic past.

Stroll through the historic Msallah and the old town district, where narrow alleyways and traditional architecture set the stage. Taste local delights like caliente, stuffed dates, and bissara, each crafted with time-honoured techniques. As you visit bustling markets and interact with artisans, your guide will reveal how these diverse cultural influences have shaped Tangier's unique identity, while we snack like a true local.

## Day 5 Seville, Spain (Port: Seville)

Formed as a brotherhood of Islam, the conglomerate of Arabs, Berbers and North African's known as the Moors arrived in the Iberian Peninsula in the 8th century. Like a child leaving home, they matured and stayed away from their homelands for a further 700 years. Tolerant of other faiths they lived in relative peace with the Christian and Jewish members of their communities, ruling the land as small Kingdoms dominated by castle-topped villages and fortified cities. Their legacy of mathematical expertise, astronomy and Moorish architecture changed the European world.

We wake this morning, on the banks of the Guadalquivir River in the Andalusian city of Seville. The southern lands of Andalusia became the Moors' crowning glory. Its jewel – Seville. On our excursion, we navigate the narrow Guadalquivir River to moor at Seville, where we absorb its spirited vibe by day and night. Much of Seville's sensuality and charm derives from the legacy of the Moors. The blend of Moorish and Christian architecture, known as Mudejar, built between the 13th and 16th centuries is on display in abundance throughout its streets, squares and palatial buildings.

Choose to spend your day in Seville, or combine time spent in the city independently with a visit to the nearby medieval city of Carmona. Our pilot joins us mid-afternoon to guide us down the Guadalquivir River to the coast. Relax and watch the world go by as we sail Spain's only navigable river. The Guadalquivir has been a central part of Seville's history and a launchpad for significant voyages. From its banks, explorers like Ferdinand Magellan embarked on their landmark journeys, including Magellan's famous 1519 expedition to circumnavigate the globe. The river was also crucial for trade, linking Seville with distant lands and shaping global

commercePersonalise your exploration with our included 'Your Choice' experiences

**Option 1 - Morning experience: Walking the Heart of Seville**

Our local guide tells a tale of Seville supported by a host of history's famed conquerors, stories of the 'new world' and a clash of cultures should read as famous as the buildings we visit. Built in the 14th century as a Mudejar style palace, The Alcázar is the oldest European monarchical residence still in use. Moorish influences join forces with tokens of Gothic, Renaissance, and baroque style added by later Christian kings, all with harmonious charm. Islam and Christianity vied for power in this city, with the might of Christianity being victorious by building Europe's third largest cathedral right over the top of a 12th century mosque. The largest Gothic structure in the world, the cathedral houses many famous souls. In 1899, 400 years after his death, the renowned explorer, Christopher Columbus, finally found an eternal place to rest, in Seville Cathedral. Towering over the cathedral is Seville's crowning glory – UNESCO World Heritage listed Giralda tower, which was inspired by Marrakech's Katoubia mosque. Christian overlords allowed this Islamic minaret to remain albeit as the cathedral's bell tower. Its top storey heralds a Renaissance motif, that was added in the 16th century, affording travellers one of the greatest cityscapes throughout Spain. Our stroll of Seville continues through the Barrio Santa Cruz, Seville's once-thriving Jewish quarter. This maze of alleyways is full of plazas, tile-covered patios, and whitewashed houses draped in flowers, leading us to Plaza de España, Seville's spectacular central square – the perfect end to a delightful amble through Seville

**Option 2 - Morning experience: The Medieval Town of Carmona**

Situated on the plains of the river Corbones, Carmona tells a tale of the various cultures that have populated the peninsula throughout its extensive history. Churches, palaces, and city walls form part of the city's heritage in its historic quarter, dominated by the imposing Alcazar. Its impenetrable Gate of Seville is a warning to marauding armies. A testament to sound engineering this ancient gatehouse dates to the ninth century and thanks its solid design to the Romans, and its horseshoe archways to the Moors. Indeed, the culture of all the inhabitants of the peninsula, whether they be the western Mediterranean peoples, the Phoenicians, the Carthaginians, the Romans, the Moors and, finally, the Christians, can be said to have been engraved on the ashlar stone of Carmona's Gate of Seville. We explore the town before returning to Seville, where you have the afternoon to explore independently.

## Day 6 Cádiz, Andalusia (Port: Cádiz)

The proud city of Cádiz sits at the mouth of the Guadalquivir River. As the gateway to the Mediterranean, Cádiz is touted as the oldest continuously inhabited settlement in Europe, with its dominant families claiming ancestry dating back to Roman times, when the city was called Ceret, and the wine, Vinum Cderetensis. Moorish rule over the port, which was renamed Jazīrat Qādis, lasted for 500 years, with the capture of Cádiz by Alfonso X of Castile. Its renewed prosperity dated from the discovery of America in 1492, when it became the headquarters of the Spanish treasure fleets, and the port to nearby Jerez, which produced liquid gold.

**Personalise your exploration with our included 'Your Choice' experiences**

**Option 1 – Morning experience: Jerez and the Story of Sherry**

Head west to the coastal town of Jerez to discover a rich mix of Islamic and Christian monuments surrounding the Alcázar, as we journey through the region's history and learn how each ruling empire left a lasting impression on the city's culture. It is the fortified wine, known worldwide as sherry, which has dictated the fate of Jerez. Introduced by the Phoenicians in 1100 BCE, this popular wine has brought both wealth and strife. Jerez's bodegas and local rural wineries remain the world's largest producers of sherry, which although considered by some as a wine that has seen better days, is as popular in Spain today as it was in centuries past. After a short walk of the historic centre of Jerez, we spend time with a wine expert who will teach us how to differentiate good wine from bad wine, while sampling a few good wines for ourselves.

**Option 2 – Morning experience: The Captains of Cádiz**

The port city of Cádiz has long been the stage for seafaring legends whose destinies were shaped by its ship-lined shores. Christopher Columbus, driven by the audacity of his patrons, embarked from this very port on voyages that would redefine the world. Centuries later, Sir Francis Drake, the relentless privateer, unleashed fire, and fury upon Cádiz, delaying the Spanish Armada and leaving the city smouldering in his wake. Then came Admiral Nelson, whose disciplined daring secured victory near Cádiz, though at the cost of his life. The legacies of these men, and those who sailed with them, are now woven into the very fabric of Cádiz. As the waves lap against its ancient docks, they carry the echoes of those who once navigated these waters. It is a story that fills our morning in Cádiz.

**Option 3 – Morning experience: Vejer de la Frontera.**

Our morning is spent in the hilltop town of Vejer de la Frontera, a historic stronghold that once marked the border between Muslim territories and encroaching Catholic lands. Renowned as one of the most authentic of the Pueblos Blancos, Vejer's whitewashed buildings are designed to reflect the sun and ward off the intense summer heat. As we stroll through its narrow, winding streets, we will be inspired by the ancient Moorish Castle, the majestic Church of the Divine Saviour, and the vibrant Plaza España, all while uncovering tales of Moorish conquerors, Castilian kings, and feudal uprisings. With views to

the coast, Vejer offers a glimpse into the rich history that defines the hilltop towns of Andalusia and their connection to the surrounding lowlands, linking inland Spain to the coastline. (Note: This excursion originally visited Arcos de la Frontera. However, changes to the coach drop-off points have made access challenging, requiring a steep and lengthy walk to enter the town, often amidst crowds. As a result, we have chosen to visit Vejer de la Frontera which offers easier access and a more pleasant experience.).

## **Day 7 Gibraltar, UK, Ronda and Málaga, Spain (Ports: Gibraltar and Málaga)**

In the wake of centuries of maritime vessels, we sail into the Port of Gibraltar at sunrise. Choose to join us on a full-day experience highlighting the story of Gibraltar, before travelling inland to the Andalusian town of Ronda and the city of Málaga, where we meet the ship, or remain onboard for a relaxing day 'at sea' Option 1 – Full day experience: The Rock and Ronda More than just an array of Royal Mail red pillar boxes, fish and chip shops and corner pubs, Gibraltar is a British Overseas Territory and naval stronghold, strategically located at the base of the Iberian Peninsula. Caught up in the War of the Spanish Succession, Gibraltar became embroiled in European politics when the King of Spain died without an heir. In 1713, Sir George Rooke, an English naval commander, captured it for England's King George I, and Gibraltar has remained a British territory ever since. Three hundred years of swashbuckling pirates, fierce naval battles, yellow fever outbreaks and world wars tell a tale, as we visit this tiny slice of Britain, simply known by those who live here as 'The Rock'. We spend time in Gibraltar this morning, hearing its stories of past and present Leaving Gibraltar, we head north to Andalusia's favourite 'whitewashed town' – Ronda. This famed city excites visitors with a fascinating story of early guerilla warfare and its part in the eventual demise of the Moorish Empire. Straddling the El Tajo gorge, Ronda was once an Islamic stronghold. Here, we visit La Mina de Agua, the former gateway to the city and located at the bottom of the gorge. Because Ronda was an Islamic city, all those who entered were obliged to wash and pray beforehand. In 1485, Ronda was besieged by Christian armies, which cut off the city's water supply. Within 10 days, Ronda fell, and in less than a decade, the Spanish decreed that all Muslims must leave the peninsula or convert to Christianity. Twenty-first century Ronda is also famed for its bullring, Plaza de Toros. The 'modern style' of bullfighting began in Ronda in the 18th century, and even into the 20th century, continued to attract blood-sport aficionados from around the world, among them Ernest Hemingway and Orson Welles – whose ashes

are buried here. From Ronda we follow the Sierra Nevada Mountain range to Málaga where the land meets the ocean. Option 2 – Sail the coastline: If you would prefer to remain on board, the Douglas Mawson will be sailing the coastline, departing Gibraltar as soon as the shore excursion 'The Rock and Ronda' has departed. We will arrive in the city of Málaga late afternoon affording you a relaxing day at sea.

## Day 8 Granada and Alpujarra (Port: Motril)

The port of Motril affords us access to the ultimate Moorish city, Granada, and the southern slopes of the Sierra Nevada; the Alpujarra's. We immerse ourselves in the past, with a choice to spend time with the rural descendants of those who have lived here for generations or to walk among the greatest architectural achievements of the Moorish Empire and Christian monarchical periods. Personalise your exploration with our included 'Your Choice' experiences. Option 1 – Full-day experience: Moorish Granada. More than any former Moorish stronghold, Granada affords visitors an insight into the sophisticated society assembled by the Moors, and the determination of the Christian monarchy to establish their dominance by forcing them out of the Iberian Peninsula. Scattered throughout the city are monuments to the days when each empire ruled the peninsula, the wealth and power they wielded and the expansion of their influence worldwide. Crested by the famed Alhambra, the city revels in the wake of its past. Unable to recreate Allah's physical features due to their religious beliefs, the scholars and craftsmen of the Moorish Empire worked verses and poems of praise from the Qur'an into their art, architecture and gardens, the best examples of which are the wonders that are the Alhambra and the geometric gardens of the Generalife. Without the filigree masonry work of Alhambra, Spain would not be Spain. Exquisite handcrafted wooden calligraphy fills the arches, ceilings and corners of this former palace while intricately patterned ceramic tiles hint at religious fervour. Capped off by clever engineering disguised in the form of water features and fountains, Alhambra is a story unto itself. Even its 15th-century addition represents the conquest and reconquest of La Reconquista, with Charles V, who was considered at the time to be the most powerful man in the world, building his palace directly on top of the original ramparts. Option 2 – Full-day experience: The Alpujarra. Strewn with almond trees and whitewashed towns, the Alpujarra is the food basket of Andalusia. Cuisine is high on the list here with speciality pastries and cakes made from recipes dating back to the time of the Moors, and techniques used to cure meat coming straight from early Christian cookbooks. During the early days of the Arab invasion, the Alpujarra was a nucleus of Christian resistance,



but it was the Muslim domination of Al-Andalus that allowed the Alpujarra to thrive. When the region fell to the Catholic monarchs, all Muslims were forced to be baptised or emigrate; those who chose the first option were known as Moriscos. Languages were suppressed and customs lost. In recent times, the people of the Alpujarra have supported a resurgence of former traditions. Villages, such as Pampaneira and Trevélez, are returning to their roots. We visit an Andalusian village to learn about the past and present before enjoying lunch at a typical Alquería de Mbrayma – a small farm and farmhouse – to meet some of the Moriscos' descendants and hear their story.

## **Day 9 Cartagena (Port: Cartagena)**

The naval city of Cartagena hosts us this afternoon, after a morning at sea. Fought over by Carthage and Rome, its nearby silver mines gifted it wealth, and a natural harbour etched its name into history as a port of importance. Standing on the sprawling battlements of the hilltop castle, you can all but see layer upon layer of history spread beneath you. The wharf – once home to Phoenician traders. The city streets – once marched by Roman legionaries. The plaza – once a mosque where Islamic Spain prayed to Allah. The surrounding hills – once a stronghold for armies of the Christian Reconquista who arrived in force. Our locally guided tour takes us through 2,500 years of history as we discover firsthand the city's significant landmarks. We visit the Roman Theatre built between 5 and 1 BCE which, in 3CE, crumbled, as did the Roman Empire, and became a marketplace. This region of Spain bears the influence of the Moors who ruled for centuries before being driven out in the Christian reconquest. The Moors left many fine monuments, including the foundations of the castle that gazes down over the old city. We visit the National Museum of Underwater Archaeology, which displays treasure retrieved over 50 years from wrecks found along the nearby coastline. This includes 14 tonnes of treasure salvaged from the 19th century Spanish frigate Nuestra Señora de las Mercedes, which caused an international feud when over 500,000 silver and gold coins were discovered in the wreck.

## **Day 10 Valencia (Port: Valencia)**

Sailing north, we reach the sun-drenched city of Valencia by mid-morning. Renowned for its abundant sunshine, delicious oranges, and Spain's iconic dish, paella, Valencia offers a broad range of adventures. After

experiencing a slice of Valencian life, we set sail eastward to the island of Mallorca in the early evening. Valencia's Islamic legacy extends beyond its architectural wonders. It remains entrenched in the soul of the city and its inhabitants. It is reflected in how Valencians live; in the jargon they use and in place names scattered throughout the region. The city's story is one of conquest upon conquest. The home of the mythical El Cid, Valencia was a Moorish town having capitulated without bloodshed, but with the arrival of the Christian armies, its story changed, and it was heavily involved in La Reconquista. Personalise your exploration with our included 'Your Choice' experiences.

**Option 1 – Afternoon experience: The Story of Valencia**

Enjoy lunch on the ship before joining this locally guided tour of Valencia. Our tour highlights the city's eclectic history, with an emphasis on the 500 years of Islamic rule, and La Reconquista – which ended it all. We visit the Plaza de la Reina, Plaza de la Virgen, Plaza Redonda, Plaza del Patriarca and Plaza Ayuntamiento, where we gain an insight into the political and social life of Valencia. We pass through Portal de Valldigna, an entrance to the former Moorish quarter, where we step back in time. It was here that Islamic textiles forged the foundation of a prosperous trade, which became the cornerstone of the Christian city in the 15th century. We visit La Lonja de la Seda de Valencia (The Silk Exchange), which boasts UNESCO World Heritage status. Built between 1482 and 1533, this group of buildings was originally used for trading in silk. They are a masterpiece of late-Gothic architecture, illustrating the power and wealth of Valencia's Christian merchants whose wealth funded the city's most famous landmark – the Valencia Cathedral. Filled with treasures, the cathedral houses a chalice believed to be the Holy Grail.

**Option 2 – Half-day experience with lunch: Albufera**

According to legend, al-buhayra derives from the Arabic word meaning small sea. One of Spain's most important wetlands, the Albufera, is a freshwater lagoon connected to the sea by a sequence of canals and waterways regulated by a series of floodgates. Spanning more than 2,800 hectares, it is the largest freshwater lagoon in Spain. Declared a special bird-protection area, and home to over 300 species of birds, it is accessed on traditional sailboats. Cruising the lagoon, we learn the importance of this waterway to the Valencia's story. Surrounded by paddy fields, this region is known for its rice production, affording it the status as the home of Spain's 'most famous dish – paella. We dine in expert hands at a local restaurant specialising in this iconic dish, before returning to Valencia.

## **Day 11 Mallorca, Balearic Islands (Port: Palma de Mallorca)**

An autonomous region of Spain, the Balearic Islands have seen in recent years an influx of tourists, and Europeans seeking an 'expat' lifestyle on a budget. But there is more to these islands than a suntan and a smile. Their history paints a portrait of brave islanders defending their lands from the threat of sizeable empires. The Carthaginians, Romans, Byzantines, Arabs, British and Spanish have all left their mark, gifting this eclectic archipelago a story waiting to be told. Our morning experiences conclude at Palma's port, where we'll enjoy a leisurely lunch on board the ship. The afternoon is yours to explore and savour this sun-drenched city at your own pace.

Palma's unique blend of cosmopolitan flair and Spanish island charm creates the perfect backdrop for a relaxed stroll. Sample locally produced wine at a cosy wine bar, browse the bustling port filled with fishing boats and yachts, take a refreshing swim at a nearby beach, or hunt for souvenirs. We'll set sail for the mainland in the late afternoon, wrapping up a day of Balearic experiences. Personalise your exploration with our included 'Your Choice' experiences. Option 1 – Morning experience: Palma de Mallorca. The striking city of Palma de Mallorca plays host to a tale of intrigue thanks to its location in 'the Med's' trading sphere. Our locally guided tour takes us to squares, palaces, courtyards and gardens.

Palma's most iconic site is no doubt its cathedral. Taking over 300 years to build, the honeycomb-like attributes of the Catedral-Basilica de Santa Maria de Mallorca depict the city's grandeur in a style called Mediterranean Gothic. Its partner in architecture, the Almudaina Palace, is located next door. The summer residence of the King of Spain, the palace houses royal collections from the past 600 years, including priceless tapestries, paintings and sculptures. On a hilltop above the city is Bellver Castle. Courtesy of its unique design, making it one of Europe's only circular castles, its 360-degree view offers a breathtaking panorama of the city below. Built in the 14th century for King James II of Majorca, its story is one of many political conspiracies, with its use as a prison for high-ranking parliamentary officials a tale to be heard. We take time to explore the city's monarchical wonders, along with its alleys and back streets, gifting us a true insight into the island's capital city. Option 2 – Morning experience:

Mallorca's Famous Olive Oil. The flagship of Spanish cuisine, olive oil is taken seriously, with the highest quality olive oil produced here on the island of Mallorca. Touted as liquid gold by early traders, organic olive oil has in recent years become a trademark of the island. We discover the historical and present-day influence of this gastronomic commodity on the traditions, lifestyle and economy of Mallorca. From production to tasting we discover every element of this quirky fruit, which dominates Spanish cuisine. Option 3 – Morning experience: The Cartoixa de Valldemossa. Our journey takes us 30 minutes inland to the mountains surrounding Palma. Originally a Moorish fortress, the Cartoixa de Valldemossa, or Palace of

King Sancho, tells a rich and varied tale. Rebuilt in 1309, it became a royal residence commissioned by King James II for his son, Sancho. Ninety years later, King Martin I of Aragon donated the royal possessions of Valldemossa to the Carthusian friars. The friars established a charterhouse, transforming the main square into a cloister and cemetery, the five halls into cells, the prison into a refectory, the pantry into a sacristy, and the kitchen into a church. This transformation added significant religious and cultural importance to the site until it was confiscated during the Mendizábal era and passed into private hands. Today, visitors to the Cartoixa de Valldemossa come to hear its story, reflecting those centuries of transformations. The site has hosted notable figures like composer Frédéric Chopin, and writer George Sand, who spent a winter here in the 19th century. Their stay is commemorated in the museum, which houses exhibits of art, historical artefacts, and items related to its famous residents.

## **Day 12 Disembark Barcelona (Port: Barcelona)**

Socially, culturally and industrially, Barcelona shines as a beacon of difference in Spain. Proudly Catalan first and Spanish second, its people are free-spirited, liberal thinkers with a passion for their freedom. In the last 30 years, Barcelonans have sculpted their city into one of Europe's most venerated travel destinations. Its boulevard-style main street, Las Ramblas, is the name on every traveller's lips, and Barcelona's vibrant is as sought after as it was during the Spanish Empire's monarchical peak. A palatial stronghold of the 15th century power couple, Queen Isabella and King Ferdinand, Barcelona greeted a jubilant Christopher Columbus upon his return to Spain and the rest as they say, is history. The city has never looked back. Our tour today celebrates the capital of Catalunya. Famed for its vibrant arts scene, Barcelona shows off its style with works scattered along its plazas and throughout its parks. Miró, Picasso, Vidal, and Montaner all called Barcelona home. But it is the name Antoni Gaudí, which attracts 21st century art aficionados worldwide. We start our day in Barcelona at his masterpiece of modernist architecture – La Sagrada Família. We explore its intricate interior and exterior with our specialist guide and learn about the history and symbolism of this ongoing construction project, before descending to Plaza de España, Gran Vía and the surrounding streets. Next is the elegant avenue of Paseo de Gracia, home to Barcelona's most inspired modernist architecture. Having familiarised yourself with the city, your afternoon is free to explore Barcelona's many attractions. Enjoy a leisurely lunch, stroll along Las Ramblas, visit one of the city's renowned galleries, or shop to your heart's

content. Later in the afternoon, we transfer to our hotel, with time to freshen up before we celebrate the end of our journey with some Spanish flare – Flamenco style. The artform of flamenco combines song, guitar and dance as it weaves its story, rousing an emotional reaction from its audience. Originally performed by the Roma peoples of Andalusia, flamenco creates a state of mind that is difficult to ignore. Its musical style, where the lyrics often express loneliness and heartbreak, can be compared to the US blues scene with the intensity of the performance stirring deep sentiment. Tonight, we immerse ourselves in tales of the past, told by Barcelona's master storytellers in the form of music and dance as we embrace the fervour of flamenco. Accommodation: Barcelona Hotel Meals: Breakfast, Flamenco Farewell Event

## Day 13 Depart Barcelona

After breakfast, check-out of your hotel and transfer to the airport for your onward flight. Meals: Breakfast