Australia 1300 888 225
New Zealand 0800 440 055
info@odysseytraveller.com



From
€8,595 EUR

Single Room
€9,925 EUR
Twin Room
€8,595 EUR

Prices valid until
30th December 2024

20 days
Duration

Spain
Destination

Level 3 - Moderate to Challenging
Activity

Via de la Plata: Small Group Walking Tour in the Footsteps of Pilgrims

May 16 2024 to Jun 04 2024



Via de la Plata Walking Tour

Odyssey offers easy, convenient, and relaxed escorted small group tours across Spain and beyond. We explore Spain's natural beauty, its ancient Roman, and Imperial heritage, its World Heritage Sites, and world famous cities, all with some truly spectacular scenery along the way on this walk. This and more is all waiting to be explored on one of Odyssey's small group tours of Spain, designed for the senior traveller,

and led by experienced, and enthusiastic like minded people.

Odyssey Traveller's **Via de la Plata Walking Tour** will guide you on an unforgettable trip through the longest of the pilgrim routes in Spain, an ancient causeway that has been in use for centuries. This tour traverses Spain south to north, from the Andalusian capital of Seville to Leon, weaving through scenic rural countryside, lively cities, and places of historical significance.

This small group walking tour is rich in history and heritage, stopping in three towns included in the list of UNESCO Heritage sites—Mérida (listed in 1993), Caceres (1986), and Salamanca (1988). Seville, on its own, has three UNESCO Heritage sites listed in 1987.

Typically we will walk between 5 to 15 kilometres per day, and explore key places of interest with local guides along "The Silver Way". This program includes more than 25 admissions and entrances to places of interest along the way, as well as the services of 11 different local guides who will share their local knowledge and history of the place visited with you.







Walk "The Silver Way" with our Via de la Plata Walking Tour

Via de la Plata's name translates to 'the Silver Way'or 'the Silver Route' and although the walk does follow an old Roman road toward metal mines in northern Spain, its name has nothing to do with the extraction or trade of this precious metal. The *plata* in its name most likely originates from the Latin *platea* (wide road) or the Arabic *ballatta* (road). It merges with the well-known and well-trodden Camino Frances, the route that goes across northern Spain from the Pyrenees to Santiago de Compostela.

Join us in tracing the footsteps of the Romans transporting goods and metal across the country, the Islamic forces advancing into northern Spain, and the Spanish taking back their territory during the Reconquista, returning the route to Christian pilgrims tirelessly making

their way to the tomb of the apostle Saint James.

Below are some of the tour highlights:







Seville

You can't ask for a better starting point for this journey than Seville. Founded as the Roman city Hispalis and now the capital of the Andalusia region, this lively and disarming city is itself a popular tourist destination. Forming a monumental complex in the heart of Seville are the UNESCO Heritage sites the Alcázar (fortress) of Seville, now the oldest royal palace still in use in Europe and the Seville Cathedral (or the Catedral de Santa María de la Sede), the largest Gothic cathedral in the world.

Just 10 kilometres outside Seville, directly on the route of the Via de la Plata, lies the ruins of the ancient Roman settlement of Italica, with beautiful mosaic floors and an impressive and well-preserved Roman theatre.

Zafra

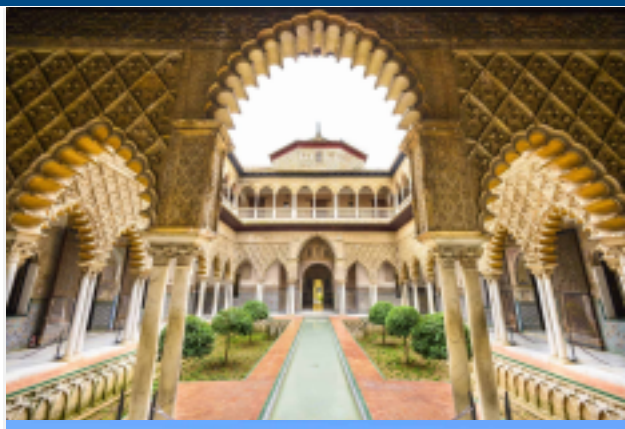
Zafra sits at the foot of the mountains of the Sierra de Castellar. Zafra is dominated by two interconnected squares, the Plazas Grande and Chica, and its 15th century Alcázar, once used by the Dukes of Feria and now restored and converted into a hotel (the Parador de Turismo). Zafra shares architectural similarities with Seville, and is often referred to as "La Sevilla Chica" or "little Seville".

Mérida

Mérida, the capital of the Extremadura region, was established by the Romans on the banks of the river at an important junction linking Salamanca with Italica. Its modern name is derived from its Roman title "Emerita Augusta", after the Emperor Augustus. The strong Roman influences are very apparent in the city, from the bronze sculpture of Remus and Romulus suckling a wolf to the Roman theatre built for an audience of 6,000 still standing in this modern city.

Caceres

Caceres has a rich history reflected in the blend of Roman, Islamic, Gothic, and Italian Renaissance styles in its architecture. Originally a Celtic settlement, it was occupied by the Romans and named “Castra Caeclii” after one of its commanders. Its name is derived from the Arabic “Al Qazris”, the title bestowed by the Moorish forces who took over the city after the Romans.



Salamanca

Salamanca offers an exceptional skyline showcasing the Romanesque towers of its cathedral. It is home to the oldest university in Spain, the University of Salamanca, founded in 1134, and numerous museums and palatial buildings.



Zamora

Formerly the Roman town of *Ocellum Duri*, Zamora has several Romanesque churches and buildings that retained their original features. The Zamora Cathedral is hailed as one of the most important examples of Romanesque architecture in Spain, with its distinctive dome based upon Istanbul’s Hagia Sophia serving as a symbol of the city.



Astorga

Astorga was established by the Romans in 14 BC as *Asturica Augusta*. Astorga houses many architectural marvels, one of which is the late 19th century Episcopal Palace designed by the Modernist architect Antoni Gaudi, famous for his design of the Sagrada Familia church in Barcelona.

Leon

We end the tour in Leon, home to many notable historical buildings, including the iconic Leon Cathedral and the neo-Gothic Casa Botines, designed by Gaudi.

Articles published by Odyssey Traveller to prepare you for the Via de la Plata Walking Tour

- article on Selecting walking shoes for women
- article on footwear and walking shoes
- article on what to pack when travelling.
- article on maintaining muscle fitness in senior and mature age travellers
- article on selecting socks for walking
- article detailing six great short walks in Britain
- article on preparing for a walking holiday
- article on Pilgrim walks in Europe
- article on walking in there Lake District

Other articles of possible interest is this two–part post filled with travelling tips for seniors, an article on the many nifty gizmos and gadgets you can bring on your trips, and an important article about practising responsible travel.



Articles about Spain published by Odyssey Traveller

The following list of articles published by odyssey Traveller for mature aged and senior travellers to maximise their knowledge and enjoyment of Spain when visiting;

- 15 of the best places in Spain to visit.
- Travel notes for Barcelona
- Ten of the best books published on Spain
- Ten of the Best art galleries in Europe to visit.

External articles to assist you on your walk along the Via de la Plata (the silver way)

- What should I know about Walking Via de la Plata
- Meals on the Via de la Plata, advice on what to eat
- Selecting your coffee on the Via de la Plata
- UNESCO World Heritage sites of Spain.

The Camino (St James way) pilgrimage walk

Odyssey Traveller also offer this historic pilgrimage walk during the shoulder seasons, when the weather is good for walking and the crowds have eased. Via de la Plata and the Camino de Santiago are scheduled so you can enjoy both tours one after the other should you choose.

Other Odyssey Tours

Walking the Via de la Plata is only one of the many walking tours offered by Odyssey Traveller. These tours are designed for the active senior traveller to enjoy in a small group holiday and learning environment. You might also want to check out our other departures to Spain and Portugal .

For more details about this tour, click the ‘Top 5’ or ‘Itinerary’ buttons above! If you’re keen to experience this tour, please call or send an email. Or, to book, simply fill in the form on the right hand side of this page.





Tour Notes

- A high level of fitness is required for this tour.
- This tour will commence before and after the Camino de Santiago program also offered by Odyssey Traveller, with two (2) departures/year.



Highlights

1. Immerse yourself in the sights of the Seville Cathedral, the largest Gothic cathedral in the world.
2. Be amazed by the the ruins of the ancient Roman settlement of Italica.
3. Cross the kilometre-long Puente Romano, an important Roman bridge built in the first century.
4. Enjoy a stroll through Spain's oldest university, the University of Salamanca.
5. View the architectural marvels designed by Modernist architect Antoni Gaudi.

Itinerary

Day 1

Locations: SEVILLE

Overview:

Upon arrival at Seville, we will make our own way to the hotel. Remainder of the day is free. In the evening, we will come together to enjoy a welcome dinner.

Accommodation:

3 Nights at the Hotel Fernando III or similar









Day 2

Locations: SEVILLE

Overview:

After a hearty breakfast, we will head out to view the UNESCO-listed World Heritage Site of Seville, the monumental complex in the heart of the city consisting of the Seville Cathedral with the Giralda minaret, the Alcázar (fortress), and the Archivo de Indias. The Seville Cathedral is the largest Gothic cathedral in the world with its Giralda tower standing at 96 meters. Once an Almohad mosque, it was turned into a Catholic Cathedral following the Reconquista in 1248 and now holds the remains of Juan of Aragon, son of Ferdinand and Isabella, and Christopher Columbus. The Alcázar (fortress) of Seville, imbued with Moorish influences, is the oldest royal palace still in use in Europe. The Lonja, which became the Archivo de Indias (General Archive of the Indies), contains valuable documents illustrating the reach of the Spanish Empire in the Americas and in Asia.

Accommodation:

3 Nights at the Hotel Fernando III or similar

Day 3

Locations: SEVILLE

Overview:

Today we begin the walking stages of the tour. We will cross the bridge over Guandalquivir River, the longest river in the Iberian Peninsula, and enter Santiponce to view the 14th century San Isidoro del Campo Monastery, listed by Spain as a Historic Artistic Site of National Interest *(Bien de Interés Cultural)* in 1872. Built on the site of a Mozarab hermitage, it was said to be where San Isidoro was buried until he was moved to Leon in 1063. We will continue our walk and visit the ruins of the ancient Roman settlement of Italica, with its beautiful mosaic floors

and an impressive and well-preserved Roman theatre (7 km).

We will have lunch after the tour and drive back to Seville to enjoy the rest of our day at our leisure.

Accommodation:

3 Nights at the Hotel Fernando III or similar







Day 4

Locations: SEVILLE TO ZAFRA

Overview:

We will travel from Seville to the municipality of Monesterio and walk to Arroyo del Bodion Chico (14 km), passing by picturesque grazing and cereal fields. From Arroyo del Bodion Chico we will drive to Fuente de Cantos for lunch (own arrangements) and if time allows, stop for a brief visit at the Casa Museo de Zurbaran, the house-museum of Francisco Zurbaran, a major painter of the Spanish Baroque era and an artist well-known for his religious artwork. After lunch, we will drive to Calzadilla de los Barros to visit the Parish Church of El Salvador which has one of the most beautiful and intricate Gothic altarpieces in the Extremadura region. From there we drive to Puebla de Sancho Perez for wine-tasting at the Bodegas Toribio. Finally we leave Seville and travel to the next stop on the Silver Way: Zafra.

Accommodation:

Overnight at the Parador de Zafra - Palacio de los Duques de Feria or similar

Day 5

Locations: ZAFRA TO ALANGE

Overview:

We will take a pleasant stroll around Zafra in the morning, visiting the historic 16th century Colegiata de la Candelaria with its altarpieces created by Zurbaran, whom we've encountered in Seville, and renowned sculptor José Benito de Churriguera. We will walk around the Plazas Grande and Chica and view Zafra's 15th century Alcázar, once used by the Dukes of Feria and now restored and converted into a hotel

(the Parador de Turismo).

We will continue our walk to Los Santos de Maimona (5 km) to explore the town, enjoy some lunch (own arrangements), and visit the French Gothic Church of Nuestra Señora de los Angeles. We will hop on our touring coach and drive to Villafranca de los Barros, also known as the “City of Music” due to its long musical tradition, to view the local churches and the Plaza de Espana. We drive to Alange and end the day with a three-course dinner.

Accommodation:

Overnight at the Gran Hotel Aqualange - Balneario de Alange or similar

Day 6

Locations: ALANGE TO MERIDA

Overview:

From Alange we drive for a brief stop at the small and peaceful town of Torremejia, which has just a little over 2,000 residents. We continue on to the beginning of the walking path to Merida. From this starting point, we pass through agricultural fields and take the Puente Romano (9 km). The Puente Romano is an important Roman bridge built in the first century over the Guadiana River. The granite bridge stretches nearly a kilometre (or half a mile) and is supported by 60 arches.

We check in at our hotel and have lunch at a local restaurant. We take the afternoon off to nap, chat, or explore, until we meet again for dinner.

Accommodation:

2 Nights at the Parador de Merida or similar

Day 7

Locations: MERIDA

Overview:

We spend the whole day exploring the city of Merida. We will view the Roman theatre built in the Classical style of theatres in Rome, for an audience of 6,000. Connected to the theatre through a tunnel is the Amphitheatre, which once witnessed gladiatorial combat and chariot

races during the city's days as a Roman territory. Another well-preserved Roman monument we will visit is the Roman Circus of Merida, which used to house 30,000 spectators. Near the river is the archaeological area of Moreria, which will give us an idea of the evolution of the city from Roman to modern times.

We will visit the Alcazaba, the Moorish fortification near the Puente Romano, to get a taste of Merida's Islamic influences. We will view the mosaics and mural paintings inside Casa del Mitreo, the ruins of a Classical Roman house with connections to the cult of Mitra, followers of a secret religion which flourished in the Roman Empire from the 1st to 4th centuries. The nearby Los Columbarios will take us on a journey through the funerary rites and burials throughout the history of Mérida.

We will also visit the crypt of Santa Eulalia, the city's patron saint.

Accommodation:

2 Nights at the Parador de Merida or similar

Day 8

Locations: MERIDA TO CACERES

Overview:

Following breakfast, we will walk from Merida to Proserpina along the aqueduct called Los Milagros ("the miracles") because of its impressive construction. The 10-km aqueduct was used to transport water from the Proserpina dam, an earth dam built by the Romans in the 1st century, to Merida. The end of our walk will allow us to view the earth dam so exquisitely built that it still stands today.

From Proserpina we will drive to Santa Lucia del Trampal in Alcuescar and visit its 7th century basilica, one of the few surviving Visigothic churches in the world. We will walk from the basilica to the town, where we will have free time for the rest of the afternoon. We then drive to Caceres and have dinner at the hotel.

Accommodation:

3 Nights at the Gran Hotel Don Manuel Atiram Hotels or similar

Day 9

Locations: CACERES

Overview:

For the ninth day of the tour, we will explore Caceres. We will visit and view the vast collections inside Museo de Caceres. The museum is housed inside Casa de las Veletas (House of the Weather Vanes), a 16th century palace built on the site of a Moorish fortification, of which only the cistern (underground freshwater reservoir) remains. We will also visit the city's religious centre, the Caceres Church Cathedral of Santa Maria, which has a 16th century altarpiece made of cedar and pine wood and dedicated to the Assumption of the Virgin Mary. It houses the chapel of the crucified Cristo Negro (Black Christ), the highlight of the Catholic procession in Caceres during Holy Week. We will view the Bujaco Tower, built by the Arabs in the 12th Century; the Arco de la Estrella, the entrance to the walled enclosure of medieval Caceres; and the Cave of Maltravieso , which has cave art dating back 64,000 years.

Accommodation:

3 Nights at the Gran Hotel Don Manuel Atiram Hotels or similar

Day 10

Locations: CACERES

Overview:

Today we enjoy a day-long break from the tour. We will take this time to rest our feet to get ready for the upcoming walks.

Accommodation:

3 Nights at the Gran Hotel Don Manuel Atiram Hotels or similar

Day 11

Locations: CACERES TO EL BARCO DE AVILA

Overview:

We return to the Silver Way on Day 11 with a drive from Caceres to Grimaldo, and a walk under the shade of cork oaks from Grimaldo to

Riolobos (8 km). After a brief stop, we will drive to the charming Roman town of Baños de Montemayor, once the site of Roman baths with thermal waters said to provide remedy to those suffering from muscular and respiratory ailments. We will visit the modern spa Balneario Baños de Montemayor built on the old Roman baths, now with thermal swimming pools and a tropical shower and various beauty treatments on offer.

After a relaxing stay at the spa, we drive to La Calzada de Bejar where we can roam at our leisure, and finally travel to El Barco de Avila.

Accommodation:

Overnight at the Izan Puerta de Gredos or similar.

Day 12

Locations: EL BARCO DE AVILA TO SALAMANCA

Overview:

From El Barco de Avila, we drive to Miranda de Azan, the starting point of our walk to the city of Salamanca (9 km). Salamanca offers its own, albeit smaller, Puente Romano to visitors entering its city, but despite being less imposing than its Méridan counterpart, Salamanca's bridge offers an exceptional skyline showcasing the Romanesque towers of its cathedral. With a guide, we will walk and visit the city's main attractions, including the Old and New Cathedrals of Salamanca and the Convento de San Esteban.

Accommodation:

2 Nights at the NH Collection Salamanca Palacio de Castellanos or similar

Day 13

Locations: SALAMANCA

Overview:

We continue our tour of Salamanca, starting with the beautiful Plaza Mayor, the city's large public square built in the Baroque style and lined with restaurants and shops. We will visit the aptly named Casa de las Conchas (House of Shells), its outer walls covered in more than three

hundred shells which is a symbol associated with Santiago de Compostela. The Casa currently houses the city's public library and an information office. Salamanca is home to the oldest university in Spain, the University of Salamanca founded in 1134, which we will visit as well to admire its architecture and know more about its history.

We will visit the Casa Lis Art Noveau and Art Deco Museum, which has a permanent exhibition of decorative arts dating from the end of the 19th century until World War II.

Finally, we will climb up the Puerta de la Torre, accessible through Salamanca's New Cathedral, to enjoy a fantastic view of the city.

Accommodation:

2 Nights at the NH Collection Salamanca Palacio de Castellanos or similar

Day 14

Locations: SALAMANCA TO ZAMORA

Overview:

On Day 14 we will drive to Aldeaseca de la Armuna, where we will begin our walk to the small town of Castellanos de Villiquera (5 km) where we will visit the church of San Juan Bautista and view its 16th century paintings and Renaissance carvings. From there we will drive to El Cubo de Tierra del Vino, where we will visit the church of Santo Domingo de Guzman and enjoy some free time to go to the underground wine cellar restaurants. We then drive to Zamora and have dinner before retiring for the night.

Accommodation:

2 Nights at the Parador de Zamora or similar

Day 15

Locations: ZAMORA

Overview:

In Zamora, we will enjoy a full-day city tour. We will visit the Zamora Cathedral, hailed as one of the most important examples of

Romanesque architecture in Spain, with its distinctive dome based upon Istanbul's Hagia Sophia serving as a symbol of the city; the Castle of Zamora, dating back to the Middle Ages; and the Santa Maria Magdalena de Zamora, originally a church of the Templars dating back to the 12th century. We will also visit the seven-storey (with three floors built below street level) Castile-Leon Ethnographic Museum, a great way to learn about the culture, traditions, and history of the region.

Accommodation:

2 Nights at the Parador de Zamora or similar

Day 16

Locations: ZAMORA TO ASTORGA

Overview:

We will bid goodbye to Zamora and drive to Castrotorafe to view the ruins of the Roman defensive site on the banks of the Esla River. This ancient town, with its castle well-preserved, is also known as "Zamora la Vieja" or "Old Zamora". From here we walk and stop briefly at Riego del Camino (5 km), before driving to Granja de Moreruela to visit its 12th century monastery and to have lunch (own arrangements) in the town proper. After lunch, we drive to Astorga and enjoy the rest of the day at our leisure.

Accommodation:

Overnight at the Hotel Gaudi or similar.

Day 17

Locations: ASTORGA TO LEON

Overview:

For the first half of the day we will explore Astorga's many architectural marvels, including the late 19th century Episcopal Palace designed by the Modernist architect Antoni Gaudi, famous for his design of the Sagrada Familia church in Barcelona. We will also visit the Astorga Cathedral (Catedral de Santa María de Astorga), its long process of construction (14th to 18th century) apparent in the blend of Renaissance and Baroque styles in the cathedral's architecture. We will also visit the

Museo del Chocolate where we'll learn about the history of chocolate production, as well as the Roman Museum of Astorga.

After the tour, we will transfer to Leon.

Accommodation:

3 Nights at the Eurostars Leon or similar

Day 18

Locations: LEON

Overview:

We go on a tour of Leon, founded by the Romans, once the seat of an independent kingdom, and witness to the first ever Parliament in Europe. Its rich history is mirrored in its wealth of historic buildings. Among those we will visit is the French-Gothic Leon Cathedral, and the fortress-like Casa Botines, designed by Gaudi. Right next to Casa Botines is the the Palace of the Guzamanes, the seat of the provincial government of Leon. We will also visit the Leon Museum, the colourful Museo de Arte Contemporaneo, covered in sheets of glass, and the old convent of San Marcos that is now a stunning luxury hotel, considered to be one of the most important Spanish Renaissance buildings in Spain.

Accommodation:

3 Nights at the Eurostars Leon or similar

Day 19

Locations: LEON

Overview:

We will enjoy some leisure time which we can use to roam the city, do some shopping, or rest. In the evening we will have a farewell dinner at a local restaurant near our accommodation.

Accommodation:

3 Nights at the Eurostars Leon or similar

Day 20

Locations: LEON

Overview:

The end of breakfast also marks the end of our services. Leon has good connections in terms of the main airports, with a direct train to Madrid and internal flights to both Madrid and Barcelona.

Inclusions / Exclusions

What's included in our Tour

- 18 nights of accommodation.
- 18 breakfasts, 4 lunches, and 10 dinners.
- Services of a Tour Leader for the duration of tour.
- Applicable entry fees and services of local guides.
- Gratuities and necessary tips.
- Detailed tour information booklet.

What's not included in our Tour

- International flights and departure taxes.
- Comprehensive travel insurance.
- Items of a personal nature such as telephone calls and laundry.

Level 3 - Moderate to Challenging

Participants must be in excellent health, extremely mobile and live an active lifestyle. Program activities may include up to 6 hours of continuous strenuous, moderate to fast paced activity per day over varied terrain.

Please do not hesitate to contact us with any requests for further information about this tour or any others offered by Odyssey Travel.