

*Holidays made memorable by the special touches*

Dear Travellers,

We are pleased to invite you to join us in northern Spain in September 2012, as we travel from Santiago de Compostela to San Sebastian, enjoying spectacular scenery, historic locations, regional cuisine and much more.

- Enjoy the personalised attention that only comes from being part of a small group of less than 22 guests.
- Benefit from the value, ease and comprehensive itinerary of an escorted group tour, filled with special touches.
- Have the luxury of spending 2 or 3 nights in most cities so as to truly experience the local ambience.
- Travel in a private bus that has been modified to provide ample space and comfort.
- Have the freedom and flexibility for ample 'private time' each day.

If you're not familiar with our passion for travel, take a moment to visit our website at [www.blancotouringcompany.com](http://www.blancotouringcompany.com) to read about the philosophy that makes each and every one of our journeys a truly memorable experience.

Your tour hosts  
Jose & Leona Blanco

**September 2012** [N.B. Please click on any of the hotel or restaurant names highlighted to open the respective websites]

**DAY 01 SANTIAGO DE COMPOSTELA**

Arrive in Santiago de Compostela (you are welcome to make your own arrangements or to have our travel partner book your preferred flights) and transfer to the majestic **Hotel Hostal dos Reis Catolicos**, which has been used as a royal hospital for pilgrims and an inn since the late 1400's and today is a 5 star hotel that is simply the best place to stay in Santiago de Compostela. The afternoon is free for you to acquaint yourself with the wonders of this famous city, before gathering in the evening for our welcome cocktail and a degustation dinner at the intimate and inspiring, **Casa Marcelo**. [Overnight. D]

**DAY 02 SANTIAGO DE COMPOSTELA**

Our morning (*we never rise too early*) is devoted to a walking tour of the city, its old quarter and the cathedral with an expert local guide. With its narrow streets and old squares, the city centre is compact enough to explore on foot. The Praza do Obradoiro is one of the finest squares in the world and is the focal point for pilgrims arriving in the city on the Route of St James. The cathedral's baroque facade dominates the square, much of it remaining virtually unchanged since the 11th century.

The tour continues on our private bus to the Ribera del Ulla region, which was incorporated into the Rias Baixas wine region in the year 2000 and runs north of the city of Pontevedra. We will visit a local winery before exploring the gardens of Pazo de Oca, a typical Galician manor house with origins that date back to the



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13<sup>th</sup>C. Much of what can be seen today bears testimony to the transformation the property underwent in the mid 18<sup>th</sup> C, when the beautiful gardens surrounding the house were designed. In the evening we will gather for dinner in the historic dining room of the **Parador**. [Overnight. B. D]

**DAY 03 SANTIAGO DE COMPOSTELA – BAIONA – SANTO ESTEVO**

Our morning will see us driven along a scenic coastline, shaped by fjord-like “rías”, an abundant land of wooded slopes and pretty stone villages. It is on and around the spectacularly indented coastline of the Rías Baixas where the famous Galician seafood collectors harvest the shellfish for which the province is famous. Our first stop is the lovely town of Baiona, from where in 1493 “La Pinta” became the first caravel to reach port after the voyage of discovery to the New World. Then on to the town of La Guardia on the frontier between Spain and Portugal. This fishing-village is known for its fantastic extensive sandy beaches. The Celtic settlement, dating back 5000 years, halfway up the Monte Santa Telca is certainly worth a visit, as we make our way to the top of the mountain, from where we will enjoy breathtaking views over the Atlantic Ocean, the river Miño, La Guardia and the Portuguese mountainous landscape. The summit also has the benefit of two restaurants where we can watch the Atlantic Ocean crash against the rocky shore below whilst enjoying tapas and a cool glass of the famous Albariño wine. Our accommodation this evening awaits us at the **Parador de Santo Estevo Luintra**, a former Benedictine monastery. [Overnight. B]



**DAY 04 SANTO ESTEVO**



Today we indulge ourselves with a selection of winery visits in this up and coming wine region of the Ribeira Sacra Valley (‘Ribeira Sacra’ means sacred hillside). Our first visit is a winery that many consider to be the region’s best – Abadía da Cova. Located in the Concello of Escairon, overlooking the Miño river, this is arguably the most spectacular winery of the area. We then make our way to the **Adega Algueira** winery, which is rated a “must” visit and is housed in an ancient stone house near the majestic terraced wine valley of the Ribeira



Sacra. From this tiny winery, in a dizzyingly steep and beautiful vineyard, in a practically unknown hidden corner of Galicia, came an aged Mencia wine that was awarded a 95 Parker rating last year! Enjoy the wines and lunch on the rustic terrace overlooking the grounds. After lunch, consider taking a walk to reach the beautiful Mirador Pena do Castelo, which offers spectacular views across the valley. We then change our focus and visit the forge of Gundivós, where a traditional craftsman will show us skills from a bygone era. Afterwards we return to Santo Estevo to enjoy some free time and a relaxed evening. [Overnight. B. L]

**DAY 05 SANTO ESTEVO - OVIEDO**

After breakfast, we bid farewell to Santo Estevo and head north to El Pito to visit the Selgas Fagalde Foundation, widely acclaimed as the ‘Versailles of Asturias’. The property and gardens are stunning and the collection of artwork impressive. Continuing across the Asturian coast our destination is Oviedo, but on the way we will travel to the Monte del Naranco mountain, where two of the most magnificent Pre-Romanesque churches are located. Santa Maria del Naranco has a large barrel-vaulted hall on the main floor and arcaded galleries at either end. The largest



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of all the Pre-Romanesque churches is the early 9th century church of San Julian de los Prados which stands on the road leading out of Oviedo and is particularly noted for the frescoes which once covered the whole of its interiors.

In the afternoon we arrive at the magnificent, **Hotel de la Reconquista**, which resides inside the former 18th century Hospital of the Principality of Asturias and is located in the centre of the city of Oviedo's residential and business neighbourhood. The afternoon is at leisure, allowing you the option of a restful siesta, a walk into the old quarter of town or an exploration of the elegant shops for which Oviedo is famous. **Tierra Astur** will be our venue this evening for a typical Asturian feast at one of the province's best 'sidrerias'. [Overnight. B. D]

**DAY 06 OVIEDO**

An excursion to Covadonga and the nearby Los Lagos in the Picos de Europa National park awaits us today, along with a stop at the charming town of Cangas de Onis. Covadonga is an exceptionally beautiful scenic site from where the reconquest of Spain from the Moors was launched. Major points of interest are the 16th century Collegiate Church, the 19th century Basilica of the Virgen de Las Batallas, and the magnificent cave where the famous statue of the Virgin Mary is preserved together with King Pelayo's crown and tomb.



Afterwards, we will journey to nearby Arriondas for a special degustation lunch at the 1 Michelin star restaurant, '**Casa Marcial**', which will showcase the best of Asturian cuisine. We then make our way back to Oviedo, where we will have the remainder of afternoon at leisure. [Overnight. B. L]

**DAY 07 OVIEDO - SANTANDER**



With Santander as our next destination, our journey takes us along the famed Costa Verde, with its numerous fishing villages and towns. We pass through the resort town of Llanes, with its charming fishing harbour and stately homes, and continue on through to San Vicente de la Barquera, where we will have time to wander around. San Vicente's old quarter was declared to be of Cultural Interest in 1987 because of its interesting collection of monuments, which include the church of Santa María de los Ángeles, built between the 13th and 16th centuries, the castle and the remains of a wall. Early afternoon sees us arriving in the elegant city of Santander, where accommodation awaits us at the imperial **Hotel Real**. The cosmopolitan city of Santander lies near the mouth of a deep bay and is the capital of the region of Cantabria. Close to the hotel is El Sardinero, a beautiful beach and small resort with gardens and cafes, which displays a fine example of aristocratic facades so typical of northern Spain. After a guided tour of the city, the remainder of the afternoon is at leisure, before we gather in the evening for a special dinner at **La Sal**. [Overnight. B. D]

**DAY 08 SANTANDER**

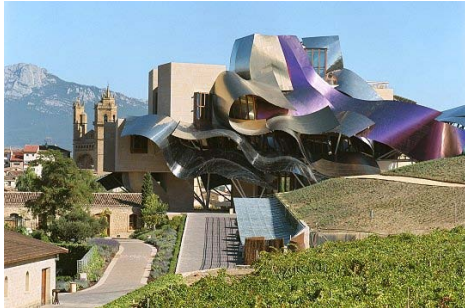
Today we enjoy a morning excursion to Santillana del Mar, a charming medieval and Renaissance town with an ensemble of 15th - 17th century stone houses that survive largely intact. The town grew up around the Romanesque monastery, which was an important pilgrimage centre called La Colegiata. The church houses the tomb of the local medieval martyr, St Juliana. We then venture to the coastal town of Comillas, where lunch awaits us at **El Capricho de Gaudi**, a truly unique venue from which to enjoy what promises to be a special meal. The afternoon and evening are at our leisure to enjoy the many delights that Santander has to offer. [Overnight. B. L]



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**DAY 09 SANTANDER – ELCIEGO**

Bilbao and its famous Guggenheim museum await us today. To showcase the museum and its collection of outstanding works we have arranged a private tour. Afterwards, we travel to the tiny town of Axpe, for lunch at **Asador Etxebarri**, a truly unique restaurant that is winning worldwide acclaim for its innovative cuisine. This is bound to be one of the highlights of the tour. After lunch, we will continue on further into the famous La Rioja wine region and to our residence for the next two nights, the magnificent **Marques de Riscal winery/hotel** in Elciego. This is another Frank Gehry design that places the hotel at the cutting edge of winery design. If time permits, we will visit the wine museum, Dinastia Vivanco and the winery at Marques de Riscal. The evening is ours to enjoy the delights of a special venue. [Overnight. B. L]



**DAY 10 ELCIEGO**

Our first winery of the day is a surprise, one of the historical wineries in Rioja, dating back to the second half of the nineteenth century. It has remained in the same family throughout many generations and the traditional methods of production are remarkable to witness, with the winery even having their own in-house barrel makers and cobblers. We will then travel on to the strikingly modern Bodegas Ysios. Designed by the Spanish architect, Santiago de Calatrava, the winery takes the form of an extraordinary, curving and rippling shape, not untypical of Calatrava's other projects. Following these visits and tastings, we will head to the medieval village of Laguardia, reminiscent of a Tuscan hilltop village, where we will lunch at the intimate **Posada Mayor de Migueloa**. After a leisurely lunch and some free time in the town, we will return to Elciego to continue enjoying the delights of the Hotel Marques de Riscal. [Overnight. B. L]



**DAY 11 EL CIEGO – SAN SEBASTIAN**

An exciting day awaits us, as we enjoy a guided tour and tasting at Bodegas Muga, located in the historical Barrio de La Estación (railway station district) in Haro, featuring facilities that are two centuries old and built mainly of stone and oak. We then move to the more modern Bodegas Roda, which dates from the 1980s and uses old vines to produce very fine tempranillo and grenache grapes that evolve into award-winning wines.



To reward ourselves for a morning's 'job well done', we venture to nearby Casalarreina for lunch at **La Vieja Bodega**, where we will feast on oven-roasted lamb. After lunch, we make our way to Bodegas Ramón Bilbao, winner of 'Winery of the Year 2009' from Gourmet Wine readers in Spain.

In the heart of the Rioja Alta, the famous tempranillo country, the estate produces some of the region's finest wines. Afterwards, we depart for San Sebastian, the gastronomic capital of the country and the last city in our journey together. Our accommodation will be the majestic **Hotel Maria Cristina**, which is surrounded by promenades and gardens, and situated between the beaches of La Concha and La Zurriola, and in front of the Urumea River and the Victoria Eugenia Theatre. The evening is ours to explore the beauty and romance of one of Spain's premier cities, including exploring its world-famous tapas bars. [Overnight. B, L]



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**DAY 12**

**SAN SEBASTIAN**

This morning, we are invited to a special "Culinary Experience", featuring a private cooking class and beginning with a visit to the local market. Our host and instructor is Aritz, an accomplished chef who is often called upon to cater lunches and dinners for San Sebastian's elite. We will spend the morning learning the basics of traditional dishes and discussing Basque cuisine. Once prepared, we will enjoy the fruits of our labour over lunch, accompanied by matched local wines, in the gastronomic society's egalitarian dining area. The remainder of the day is available for you to continue your familiarisation with the local culture - a siesta, visits to museums, shopping or just watching the world pass by. In the evening, some of the best tapas bars in Spain await your visit. [Overnight. B, L]



**DAY 13**

**SAN SEBASTIAN**

A day entirely at leisure, to enable you to relax and enjoy the city and to explore the areas of greatest interest in a city that became a fashionable resort in the late 19th century and has been popular with the Spanish aristocracy ever since. The city is renowned for its great summer arts festivals, including the Jazz festival in July, a Classical festival in August and then the International Film Festival in September. This evening we gather for our final meal together at what will undoubtedly be one of the gastronomic highlights of our journey, as we dine at the 3 Michelin-starred restaurant, **Arzak**, one of the world's great restaurants. [Overnight. B, D]



**DAY 14**

**SAN SEBASTIAN**

**Farewell the city, as you depart San Sebastian for your next destination.**

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***Why holiday with Jose and Leona?***

- ✓ *Each tour that we offer is a part of our annual holidays and, as such, we arrange them with all the features that you would expect when the time available is so precious and the objective is to make them as enjoyable and memorable as possible.*
- ✓ *Take a look at each of the hotels where we will be staying and at all of the restaurants where we will be dining (just click on the highlighted name of each on the preceding pages and you will open the corresponding web page) and you will see the quality and uniqueness that is offered. We have selected accommodation that takes you back in history or dazzles you with modern architecture and dining experiences that will reveal the best of Spain's cuisine.*
- ✓ *Our journey will be undertaken in a private air-conditioned bus that will offer extra leg room and will transport us in comfort to each individual destination.*
- ✓ *Take a moment to review all of the inclusions in the tour that are listed on the following page and you will understand the value that is on offer - 5-star accommodation, exclusive tours in many cities and dinners and lunches at restaurants that are amongst the best in northern Spain.*
- ✓ *Every touring day starts off after a leisurely breakfast and we only host either a lunch or dinner each day, knowing that each of these meals during the journey will be an experience (a filling one at that) and that you will enjoy the freedom to do your own thing for the other meal of the day.*
- ✓ *We try to ensure that the itinerary allows each person or couple to have their own time each day, so that you can pursue your own agenda, whether that be shopping, exploring historical sites, taking in the local culture, enjoying a siesta or just sitting at a bar or cafe and watching the world go by.*

**Refer to the following page for further tour details**

*Together with Our Partner for this tour, Ibertours, we would be pleased to provide you with assistance in arranging your flights to and from Spain or you are welcome to make your own arrangements.*

*We are also at your service to arrange extensions to this tour, either prior to its commencement or after its conclusion, so that you can explore even more of the wonders that Spain has to offer.*

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**Tour Cost (\*):**

**Price Per Person:     A\$8,850.00**  
**Single Supplement:    A\$2,050.00**

**(\*) Notes:**

- The quoted price is based on 22 persons travelling in the group, being the maximum group size. The price may vary if the final tour group is smaller than indicated and also subject to fluctuations in the applicable exchange rate.
- Persons who have previously undertaken a Blanco Touring Company tour qualify for a 5% discount.
- **All listed hotels are 5-star, with the exception of the Parador in Santo Estevo, which is 4-star.** To visit the website of each hotel, please click on the corresponding name in the above itinerary.
- All listed land transportation will be in a deluxe bus with a maximum seating capacity of 32 passengers.
- **Meals are included as listed:** B: Breakfast / L: Lunch / D: Dinner being:
  - All breakfasts, other than on the day of arrival
  - Welcome drinks at the reception on the first evening in the Hotel Hostal dos Reis Catolicos
  - Soft drinks / water in our private bus
  - Degustation dinner at Casa Marcelo on Day 1
  - Dinner in the dining room of the Hotel Hostal dos Reis Catolicos on Day 2
  - Lunch at Adega Algueira on Day 4
  - Dinner at Tierra Astur on Day 5
  - Special Tasting Menu at Casa Marcial on Day 6
  - Dinner at La Sal on Day 7
  - Lunch at El Capricho de Gaudi on Day 8
  - Degustation lunch at Asador Extebarri on Day 9
  - Lunch at Posada Mayor de Migueloa on Day 10
  - Lunch at La Vieja Bodega on Day 11
  - Lunch ('Culinary experience') in San Sebastian on Day 12
  - Dinner (Degustation Menu, with matching wines) at Arzak on Day 13
- **Private tours and special experiences** (in addition to the ones listed above) include:
  - City tour of Santiago de Compostela and excursion to the Pazo Gallegos and the gardens of Pazo de Oca.
  - Guided excursion to Ribeira Sacra region and wineries
  - Excursion to Covadonga and Los Lagos
  - City tour of Santander
  - Private tour of Guggenheim Museum
  - Visit to the Dinastia Vivanco wine museum
  - Winery visits, including tastings, in the Laguardia district
  - Winery visits in Haro
- **All local taxes are included in the price quoted, plus tips and gratuities.**
- All items not specifically mentioned are not included, such as beverages not listed.
- The price quoted is on the basis of persons sharing a double room, unless a single supplement is paid.
- We reserve the right to make changes to the proposed itinerary should circumstances so require.
- The price quoted is current as at 20 November, 2011, but may vary prior to payment of final amount.
- Full details of terms and conditions will be provided at the time of booking.