

The Northern Illinois University Alumni Association
& The Office of Alumni Relations

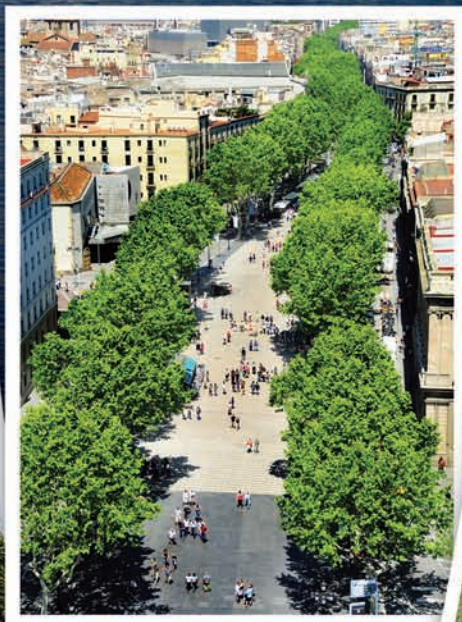
Present

Spectacular Spain

Valencia and Barcelona

March 8 – 17, 2012

\$3,109 per person, double occupancy from Chicago



This is an exclusive travel program presented by the Northern Illinois University Alumni Association and the Office of Alumni Relations.

Day by Day Itinerary

Thurs., March 8 – CHICAGO/EN ROUTE (I)

We depart Chicago's O'Hare International Airport this afternoon by scheduled service of Iberia Airlines on the overnight transatlantic flight to Madrid, Spain.

Fri., March 9 – VALENCIA (I,D)

As the sun begins to rise on the Iberian Peninsula we will arrive in Madrid and continue by connecting flight to the city of Valencia, located on the east coast of Spain along the banks of the Turia River, looking out over the Mediterranean Sea. On arrival, we'll meet our local Tour Guide and travel to our downtown hotel where the afternoon is at leisure. This evening we'll enjoy a dinner of Spanish specialties at a local restaurant. As we'll soon find out, Valencia is home to a rich and historic architectural heritage.

Sat., March 10 – VALENCIA (B)

This morning we will enjoy an introductory tour of Spain's third largest city, a great combination of the new and old, where we'll find former palaces, medieval cathedrals and more than 300 bell towers. A walking tour will begin in the heart of the city as we take in the Serranos Towers, a well preserved, massive and inspiring defensive fortification that helped protect Valencia beginning in the 14th century. Then we're headed to the Plaza de la Virgen. With its refreshing fountain as the centerpiece, the plaza offers views of some of the most beautiful buildings in the city. From here, we'll make our way to the Plaza de la Reina where we'll find the El Miguelete Bell Tower and Valencia Cathedral. Inside the cathedral, we'll view the most celebrated treasure in Valencia, the chalice claimed to be the Holy Grail. Afterward, we'll navigate the narrow streets to see La Lonja, the former 15th century Silk Market, one of the most beautiful examples of classic Gothic architecture found in Europe. Our tour will come to an end as we reach the grand Plaza del Ayuntamiento, a popular meeting spot for local Valencians.

Following our tour the afternoon is free to begin exploring the city of Valencia on your own. If you prefer, an optional tour will be offered to Requena, a small and idyllic getaway rich in history and culture. We'll enjoy a walking tour and visit one of the oldest caves in the region. On our return to Valencia, we'll stop at a local wine cellar and learn about Spanish wine production and have the chance to taste red and white "cava", Spanish sparkling wine.

Sun., March 11 – VALENCIA (Sagunto) (B)

This morning we head north to the historic town of Sagunto. We'll start at the Plaza Mayor where we'll see the gothic

parish church of Santa Maria, with its striking alabaster windows. We'll also stop to visit the Teatro Romano; built out of limestone on the hillside above the town in the 1st century AD, the restored theater is now used as a venue for music and plays. Winding up the road from the Teatro Romano our last stop on the city tour is the Castillo de Sagunto, home to the excavated remains of various civilizations, including the Iberians, the Carthaginians, the Romans, and the Moors. Before making our way back to Valencia, we'll embark on a boat exploration of Europe's longest navigable underground river at the San Jose Caves, with highlights that include the Blue Pond, the Bat Room, and Diana and Devil Lakes as well as remains of Paleolithic sites and cave paintings.

Mon., March 12 – VALENCIA (B)

Today is at leisure in Valencia. In the new town wander wide balmy avenues and simply observe and enjoy the Mediterranean way of life. It is here where world-famous architect Santiago Calatrava has left his mark with the impressive City of Arts and Sciences. This beautiful complex consists of a cinema, garden, theater, planetarium, science museum and more. Calatrava is also responsible for the Alameda Bridge and Valencia's striking new Opera House. Nearby, Valencia offers a wealth of destinations that can be easily reached on day tours, not to mention the white sandy beaches of El Cabanal and La Malvarrosa.

Tues., March 13 – VALENCIA/BARCELONA (Sitges) (B)

This morning we depart Valencia and travel north to the Catalonia Coast where we'll stop to visit the picturesque seaside resort of Sitges, famous for its beautiful beaches, cultural atmosphere and narrow winding streets. Take it easy and meander while enjoying the alluring charm of the village with its cobbled streets, beloved cafés, fashion and antique shops. This afternoon we're headed further north to the city of Barcelona. Exuberant, sophisticated Barcelona is barely contained by its ring of mountains and magnificent harbor at the edge of the Mediterranean.

Wed., March 14 – BARCELONA (B)

Today we will discover Barcelona, one of the most beautiful and vibrant cities in Spain. We'll begin our day in the Gothic Quarter, the heart of the Old Town, and visit the compact Gothic Cathedral with its Romanesque chapel and beautiful cloisters. Then we stop to view the Royal Palace where Isabel and Fernando received Columbus after his triumphal return from America, before reaching the Plaza de Sant Jaume, home to both the Generalitat, seat of the Catalanian Government since 1403, and the

14th century City Hall. From here, we'll travel down the historic Avenue of Las Ramblas where we'll see the Placa Reial, Barcelona's most lively square, and the Columbus Monument, marking the spot where Columbus stepped ashore in 1493 after discovering America. Next, we'll visit Montjuic Hill for a panoramic view of the city and harbor before stopping at Poble Espanyol. The Spanish Village, built for the International Exhibition in 1929, showcases characteristic houses from all regions of Spain, and is home to numerous shops and traditional restaurants. Here we'll enjoy a Spanish dance lesson.

This afternoon we are headed to the La Ribera District where we'll see Basilica of Santa Maria de Mar, one of the finest examples of Gothic architecture in Catalonia, and the popular 75-acre Ciutadella Park, home to a large lake for boating, orange groves and scores of parrots living in the palm trees. Then we'll take an artistic journey through the city's Eixample District where we'll see the distinctive mark left by the works of Antoni Gaudi, including the Casa Mila and visit the Sagrada Familia Cathedral, Barcelona's most famous landmark. The church stands witness to Gaudi's creative genius and is the best-known work of the famous Spanish architect.

Thurs., March 15 – BARCELONA (B)

After more than two decades of renovations, Barcelona has emerged as one of the most fun and fashionable cities in Europe. Envied for its long stretches of Mediterranean beach, unique architecture, world-class museums and intriguing culture, the next two days are at leisure to immerse yourself in the city's atmosphere. Today we'll

have the option to visit the mountain village of Montserrat, a magnificent setting for Catalonia's holiest place. We'll visit the magical mountain and the Monastery of Montserrat before entering the basilica's sanctuary adorned with a richly enameled altar and paintings. The basilica is also home to the Escolania, one of Europe's oldest boys' choirs.

Fri., March 16 – BARCELONA (B,D)

Today you may wish explore the Gothic Quarter, stroll along Las Ramblas, the fabulous twelve-block long, tree-lined promenade, visit the Olympic Village, home of the 1992 Olympic Games, or travel outside of the city where you'll find a number of interesting destinations.

Barcelona is one of Europe's most glamorous and romantic cities and we'll end our vacation in style with an evening of dancing, dinner and entertainment that is sure to both captivate and seduce you. We'll be treated to an extraordinary live Flamenco show, a genuine Spanish art associated with the South of Spain and the gypsies of this region. More than just a dance, Flamenco is a forceful artistic expression of the sorrows and joys of life.

Sat., March 17 – BARCELONA/CHICAGO (B,I)

This morning we travel to Barcelona Airport in preparation for the return journey home. No better time to reflect on memories of our Spectacular Spain Vacation that will last a lifetime and new friendships made along the way.

*** * * Welcome Home * * ***

Visit myniu.com to make your reservation.

The Tour Price Includes:

- Pre-trip assistance.
- Informational packet.
- Alumni staff assistance for a worry-free travel experience.
- Economy-class air transportation by scheduled service of Iberia Airlines (or other scheduled airlines). Meals and light beverages served in-flight according to airline schedules.
- Transportation by deluxe private motor coach with accompanying professional Spanish Tour Guide(s).
- Accommodations in first-class hotels in twin-bedded rooms with private bath or shower.
- European-style buffet breakfast each morning and two evening dinners as detailed in the Day by Day Itinerary.
- Sightseeing as detailed in the Day by Day Itinerary including applicable entrance fees.
- Luggage handling and portage charges for one suitcase per person at the hotel.
- Taxes for included ground services, **and airline taxes, fees and fuel surcharges of \$420 per person (subject to change).**

The Tour Price Does Not Include: Items of a personal nature such as passport fees; optional tours and excursions; gratuities to the motor coach driver(s) and local Spanish Tour Guide(s); luggage handling at airports; personal and baggage insurance; and meals other than those stated above.

TOUR CONDITIONS

Tour Deposit and Payment: Reservations may be made by check or credit card (Visa, MC, or Discover). Tour prices do increase every year and it is possible that increases could occur after the printing of this brochure in advance of your tour's departure.

Tour Pricing: This is a package tour in which land tour costs and special group airfares have been combined in the most advantageous way. Should you wish to make any deviation from the package tour by changing your departure and/or return dates, the advantages of the package tour price may be eliminated and additional charges will be assessed.

Travel Insurance: Please review the enclosed USI Travel Insurance Services brochure and letter. This insurance is designed to protect you from trip cancellation/interruption penalties and provide medical expense, medical evacuation, baggage and accidental death coverage, as well as emergency assistance. There is an advantage to early enrollment in this travel insurance program. Purchasing coverage within 15 days (Plus Option) or 21 days (Elite Option) of your initial trip deposit can make you eligible for 1) Waiver of the Pre-Existing Condition Exclusion, to cover certain injuries and illnesses that would not otherwise be covered by the policy 2) Protection for Certain Terrorist Acts if you cancel your trip due to a terrorist incident occurring in any city on your trip itinerary, within 30 days before or after our scheduled departure date, 3) Cancel for Any Reason Coverage, if the Elite Option is purchased, and 4) Protection for Financial Default of an airline, cruise line, or tour operator. If you wish to take advantage of the special above provision, you must enroll within 15 days (21 days for the Elite Option) of the date your initial trip deposit is received. **Please Note:** Although purchasing the Travel Insurance is not mandatory for you to travel with our group, if you purchase insurance, it **must** be through USI Travel Insurance Services.

RESPONSIBILITY

THE NORTHERN ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY ALUMNI ASSOCIATION and/or any travel agency and/or supplier of services pursuant to or in connection with this itinerary shall not be responsible or become liable for any delay incurred by any person in connection with any means of transportation; nor for any loss, damage or injury to person or property by reason of any event beyond the control of any agency or supplier, or occurring without the fault or negligence of such agency or supplier. The right is reserved to substitute the airline to be used; the type of aircraft; and to alter the dates of the tour; the tour routing; or to cancel the trip if a minimum number of bookings is not reached for either the air or land portion of this itinerary. The right is also reserved to substitute hotels for other hotels in available categories. Further, the right is reserved to decline to accept or to retain at any time any person as a participant on any tour or to cancel any tour. No refund will be made for voluntary absence from the tour unless arrangements are made at the time of booking. The schedules contained herein are subject to change without notice. All rates are based on current Tariff and Exchange rates in effect at the time of the printing of this itinerary and are subject to adjustment without prior notification in the event of changes therein or in changes in the number of participants on which the rates are based. The carriers concerned are not to be held responsible for any act, omission or event during the time passengers are not on board their plane or conveyance. The passage contract in use by carrier concerned, when issued, shall constitute the sole contract between the carrier and the purchaser of this tour.

For more information contact the NIU Alumni Association at 815/753-1512.

To make your reservation visit myniu.com and click on travel.

\$100 of the trip cost is tax-deductible as a charitable donation.

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