



CAMPAIGNS
and Culture

With Wellington Across Spain
1809-1812, 15 days
Bespoke Peninsular War tour

“Expertise, enthusiasm, ability ... and you kept us well fed!”

Welcome to our With Wellington Across Spain tour

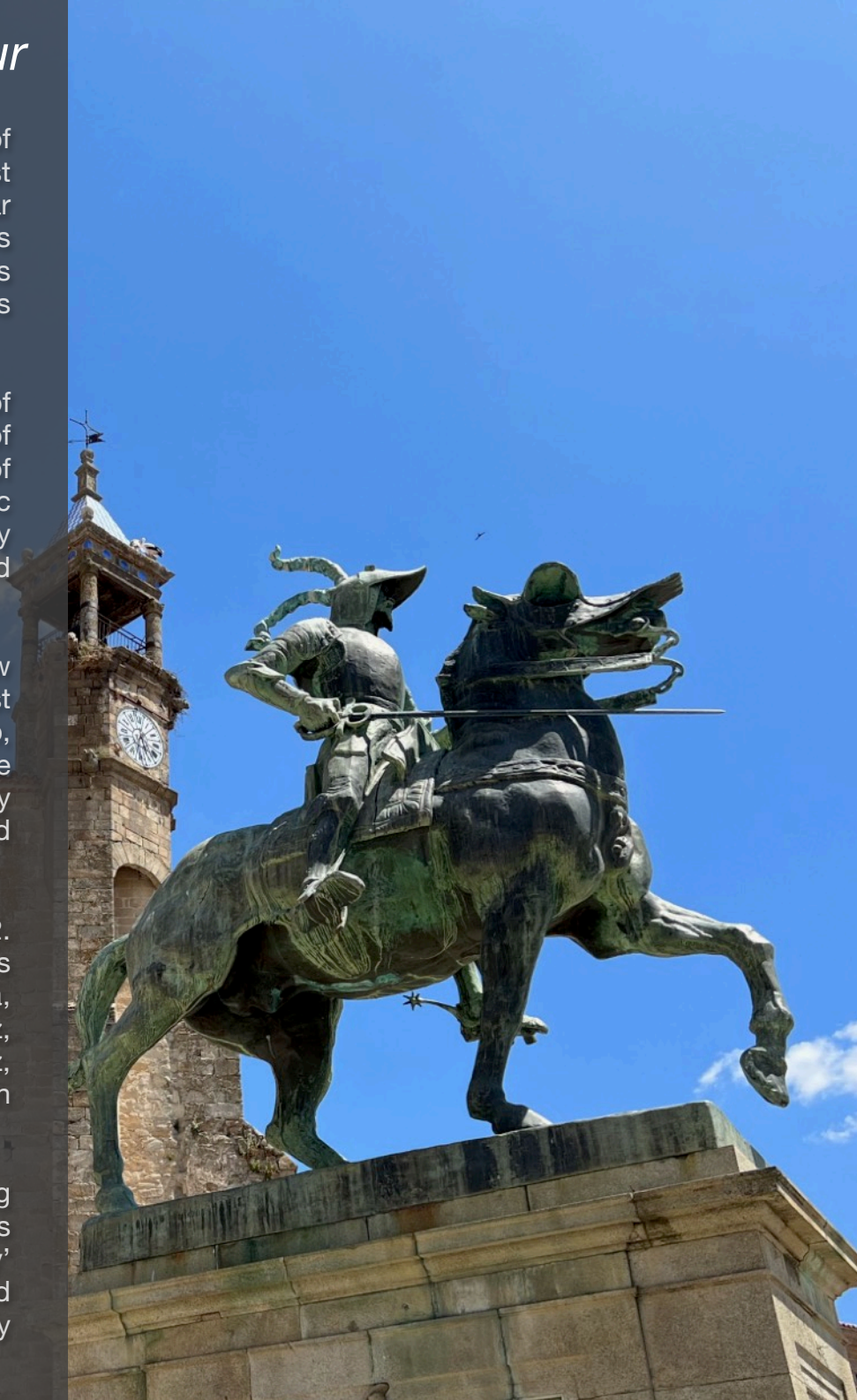
Repulsing three French invasions from Portugal, General Wellesley, the future Duke of Wellington, advances into Spain in a major turning point in the war against Napoleonic France. This Spanish dimension dramatically transformed the Peninsular War, 'Napoleon's Ulcer', to a fully offensive operation, helping to inspire Britain's allies across Europe to once more take up arms against Napoleon. We bring this fascinating period to life on a truly inspiring historical and cultural journey across Spain and Portuguese border country. The historic grandeur is staggering.

Our tour takes us to the heart of Wellington's Spanish battlefields, and those of Generals Beresford and Hill, sharing expert analysis derived from decades of extensive exploration, unique insight and fresh research. We enjoy countryside of stunning natural beauty with ancient castles, monasteries, bridges, palaces, gothic cathedrals, dramatic mountain tops, gorges and rivers, remote locations missed by almost all travellers to Spain. We have truly fallen in love with this countryside, and we expect you will too!

You'll enjoy great Cathedral cities and tiny medieval villages. Most of the now beautiful and peaceful battlefields we visit are lightly populated and rarely visited, just as they would have been over two centuries ago. Cultural highlights include Toledo, Oropesa, Trujillo, Merida, Elvas, Evora, Ciudad Rodrigo, Salamanca, Burgos and the vineyards of Ribera del Duero, travelling at a comfortable pace, with time to enjoy and absorb, staying in the best hotels, many of them former palaces and monasteries, and dining in the finest establishments.

Each location has significant relevance to Wellington's campaigns from 1809 to 1812. We spend time at, explain and explore from numerous viewpoints and perspectives the battlefields of Talavera, Almaraz, Arroyomolinos, La Albuera, Alcantara, Salamanca, the actions of Barba del Puerco, Barquilla, El Bodon, Garci Hernandez, Mirabete, Tordesillas, Venta del Pozo, the French and Allied sieges of Badajoz, Olivenza, Ciudad Rodrigo, Salamanca forts, Burgos castle, Elvas and the Spanish battles of Arzobispo, Alba de Tormes and Somosierra Pass.

Those who know our tours know just how much they appeal to those seeking historical excellence and fresh thinking. We stand, see and hear where history was made. But importantly our tours also delight their partners who might rate 'history' lower down the scale; anyone who takes pleasure in gorgeous landscapes and architecture, culture, superb hotels, à la carte dining, wine and vineyards will truly relish our approach to touring.





Robert Pocock

Adventurer in Chief, Campaigns & Culture

An ongoing commitment to extensive on-location research over many years provides us with an intimate knowledge of these battlefields and campaign routes.

A leading authority on Waterloo and Peninsular battlefields as both guide and explorer, I'll explain every step of history from numerous vantage points, sharing old maps, memoirs, the context of history, our own discoveries and the latest expert and revisionist thinking.

Both Spain and Portugal deliver culture in spades, adding enormously to the touring experience and memories. Our tiny tours also enable us to share the hidden places that other tours can't reach, dedicating more time to your personal interests at each location. You're also in great hands with the food & wine!

We hope you like what you see, but if you'd like any further honest persuasion please just get in touch.

Without any initial commitment on your part, please contact us to reserve your places. Our Small Group Tours can fill up fast, so we recommend being nimble.

We are here to chat over any questions or queries you may have, and look forward to hearing from you soon.

Robert



Key Highlights



Dates

Bespoke touring 2024 from May to October
Scheduled tour working dates 25th May - 8th June 2025
Bespoke touring 2025 from July to October

Duration

Fifteen days / Fourteen nights.

All-Inclusive Premium

We start and end our tour at Madrid airport, travelling to Toledo for our first two nights. Throughout we stay in top local 4 & 5-star hotels, with superior rooms, travel in premium transport with frequent comfort stops.

All guiding, transport, hotel rooms, breakfasts, light lunches, a la carte dinners with wine, entrance fees and tastings are included, plus a few extra treats along the way.

You will be responsible for your personal travel insurance and any non-itinerary purchases or extras required by you, such as room service, additional drinks and any medical treatment.

Getting There

Madrid is very well served by international airlines and from regional airports in the UK.

If you wish to arrive early or stay after we can book extra hotel nights for you, which we are happy to do at cost.

Getting Home

At the end of your tour you can fly home from Madrid.

UNESCO World Heritage

We'll visit and stay in five Unesco listed sites on our tour (see below).

Zero Deposit

We only request payment once we start making payments to our suppliers. We believe your money is better in your hands until we really need it. Any client money that we hold is insured, ring-fenced and secure.

More than the Battlefields

Battlefields: We visit the over 20 battlefields, skirmishes and actions:
1808 Spanish battle of Somosierra Pass

1809: Spanish battle of Alba de Tormes, Alcántara, Arzobispo, Talavera

1810: Barba del Puerco, Barquilla, French siege of Ciudad Rodrigo

1811: French Siege of Olivenza, First (French) & Second (Allied) Siege of Badajoz, La Albuera, El Bodón, Arroyo dos Molinos

1812: Allied capture of Ciudad Rodrigo, Allied capture of Badajoz, Almaraz, Mirabete, Salamanca forts, Salamanca, Alba de Tormes, Garcia Hernández, Siege of Burgos, Venta del Pozo, Tordesillas

Cathedrals: Toledo, Salamanca, Burgos.

Cultural Highlights: Toledo, Trujillo, Merida, Evora, Alcantara, Salamanca, Tordesillas, Burgos, Penafiel.

Wine

We have a love of great wine, so we open jolly good bottles every night with dinner. On our first full day we enjoy a professional wine tasting in Toledo, and on our last but one day visit a wine museum and a bodega in the Ribera del Duero.

Tried, Tested & Much Loved

We've done so much repeated exploring and touring that we know these special places like the back of our hand!

Our quality hotels, restaurants and locations have also been tried and tested multiple times in person. Only the best make the grade.

Testimonials & Videos

We're rated "**Outstanding**" by our tour guests and enjoy exceptional levels of repeat business.

Action Required

To reserve your option to join us, without cost or commitment, please contact us.

Historical Summary



1808

Napoleon appoints his brother Joseph as King of Spain. Popular resistance opposes the French forces of Marshal Murat and Napoleon himself leads an army to Madrid. Wellesley's British forces land in Portugal (see our Rifles in Portugal tour).

1809

Wellesley co-operates with the Spanish General Cuesta leading to the Battle of Talavera de la Reina and subsequent withdrawal. Wellesley becomes Viscount Wellington and Baron Douro.

1810

French Marshal Massena leads the third French invasion of Portugal, seizing the Spanish border fortress of Ciudad Rodrigo.

1811

The French seize the Spanish border fortress of Badajoz. Allied forces under Beresford attempt the re-capture of Badajoz, and attain victory over Marshal Soult at the bloody battle of Albuera.

1812

Wellington recaptures both Ciudad Rodrigo and Badajoz, before heading deep into Spain. A great victory over Marshal Marmont at Salamanca, the liberation of Madrid and advance to Burgos follow. Wellington becomes Earl then Marquess of Wellington.

Our Battlefields



1808

Napoleon's victory at Somosierra Pass

1809

Kellerman's victory at Alba de Tormes,
Victor's victory at Alcántara
Wellesley's victory at Talavera

1810

95th Rifles action at Barba del Puerco
Craufurd's action at Barquilla
French siege of Ciudad Rodrigo

1811

French Siege of Olivenza
First (French) & Second (Allied) sieges of Badajoz
Beresford's victory at La Albuera
Battle of El Bodon
Hill's victory at Arroyomolinos

1812

Wellington's siege of Ciudad Rodrigo
Wellington's siege of Badajoz
Hill's victory at Almaraz, Mirabete
Siege of Salamanca forts
Wellington's victory at Salamanca
Action at Garcia Hernández
Siege of Burgos
Action of Venta del Pozo / Villadrigo
Action of Tordesillas



Our Hotels & Restaurants

*A Blend of City, Palace, Monastery & Fortress,
4 to 5 Stars & Superior rooms*

Our tour takes in 8 top quality hotels, repeatedly tried and tested by us for quality and comfort, reflecting the very best character of each location.

This variety adds your experience whilst, crucially, shortening our journey times, so we can spend more time at our favoured locations, with time to relax.

From modern to historic, charming to boutique, each hotel is a special place designed to give us a great end to the day, a good night's sleep and a refreshing start. We book superior rooms for your enjoyment of comfort, space and views.

We believe that these carefully tried and tested hotels offer the best facilities in each location. We've hand-picked each one to best suit your enjoyment on tour.

Toledo, Modern 4-star, Superior rooms, 2 nights
Trujillo, Palace 4-star, Superior rooms, 1 night
Merida, Palace 5-star, Superior rooms, 1 night
Elvas, Monastery 4-star, Superior rooms, 3 nights
Fort Concepcion, 4-star, Superior rooms, 2 nights
Salamanca, Monastery, Superior, 5-star, 2 nights
Burgos, Palace 4-star, Superior rooms, 2 nights
Ribera del Duero, Monastery 5-star, 1 night

Each dining experience, either within the hotel or elsewhere is a foodie and hospitality delight, often with a local twist but always to excellent international standards.

Truly memorable experiences!



UNESCO World Heritage Sites



Many of our stays are in the heart of UNESCO renowned World Heritage sites:

Historic City of Toledo

Archaeological Ensemble of Mérida

Garrison Border Town of Elvas and its Fortifications

Old City of Salamanca

Burgos Cathedral

We also pass the Prehistoric Rock Art Sites of the Siega Verde which we can visit as a replacement for another item on the itinerary.

There are many more Cultural highlights that we surround ourselves with, the centuries that we cover culturally dating back to Roman times. All form a wondrous stage-set to our focus on Napoleonic times.



Day by Day Itinerary

Getting there and back

Your tour starts and ends in Madrid Airport where we meet up, or we can meet you at our Toledo hotel. This leaves you free to book your own flights, selecting the departure airports and times that suit you best. If you choose to fly in early we can book extra hotel nights for you. We are happy to help and advise, but this does not form part of your tour or price.

DAY 1: Meet & Greet, journey to Toledo & Royal Monastery

We gather at Madrid Airport for a warm welcome, heading straight to our Toledo hotel. Our four star Superior rooms boast a great view toward this historic UNESCO World Heritage city, the 'city of three cultures'. Following a tour introduction, outline of the history of the era and presentation of our unique leather campaign journals, we'll walk through a historic portion of Toledo, visiting the ancient Monastery San Juan de los Reyes before admiring the city from one of the best viewpoints, dining in our hotel overlooking the illuminated city.

DAY 2: A day in Toledo, the Alcázar, Cathedral & Wine

Today we head back into Toledo for the day, starting at the exceptional Alcázar military museum; a wonderful grounding in the history of Spain, heroic resistance against Napoleonic France, even a Spanish victory over Nelson, to the haunting events that took place here during the Spanish Civil War.

Outside again we grab a light lunch before visiting the Cathedral, then a professional wine tasting where we'll identify the wine styles we most enjoy, informing our choices for the rest of our journey together. The afternoon is spent amongst the ancient bridges, gates and Cathedral before heading back to our hotel. We dine out.

DAY 3: Battles of Talavera, Arzobispo, Almaraz, Mirabete, Medieval Trujillo

We make a detailed visit to the first major battle fought by Wellington alongside the Spanish in 1809 at Talavera de la Reina, a campaign with many lessons in the military art of co-operation, outposts, information, hard fighting, competing priorities, logistics and the bravery of the French opponents. We'll view and discuss the battlefield and its features from numerous original vantage points and perspectives as we describe the unfolding battle.

After visiting ancient Oropesa for a late lunch we head on to Hill's 1812 raid on Almaraz, site of the famous bridge of boats and the Mirabete mountain-top fort, an exceptional action which had such a positive impact on Wellington's freedom of movement.

We end the day relaxing in the enchanting medieval town of Trujillo and our hotel, a former Palace, with Superior rooms. Before dinner we enjoy a wander up to the moorish castle, and down to explore the Plaza Mayor, Spain's finest medieval square with its Conquistador family histories and palaces.





DAY 4: Battle of Arroyomolinos, Mérida

After time to wander a little more in Trujillo up to the hilltop moorish castle, we visit the charming, sleepy village of Arroyomolinos, scene of Hill's overwhelming night action against Girard, and follow the route of his rout across the countryside.

Then on to the former Roman provincial capital, Mérida, checking in for the night at our 5-star Palace on the main square. This is the place to see a somewhat forgotten location that was critical for communication and movement during the Peninsular War, whilst admiring the depth of history that exists across these forgotten parts of Spain. We visit the fascinating UNESCO Roman theatre, circus, temple, walls and bridge.



DAY 5: The Sieges of Badajoz, Elvas

We head for Badajoz, subject of three horrifying sieges during our era alone, and yet more suffering before and since. These haunted walls brought Wellington to tears.

We take time to explore this remarkable border fortress and city, its defences, breaches, castle, supporting forts and delightful museum, bearing witness to the remarkable fortitude of both the attacker and defender and the sorry fate of the hapless civilians who have repeatedly been on the receiving end of some of the worst excesses of history.

It is then a delight to head across the border into Portugal to mighty Elvas, the border fortress of Wellington's Anglo-Portuguese armies. We consider how Elvas and its neighbour Evora featured in the early stages of the Peninsular War at a time when the French sought to occupy and quell dissent across this region.

We stay in a wonderful four star recently converted monastery within the town, our base for three nights, and dine in tonight, and out tomorrow.



DAY 6: Olivenza, La Albuera, Nossa Senhora da Graça

Crossing the once contested border back into Spain, we stop to admire the ancient bridge en-route to Olivenza, seeing how engineers of the time blew bridges to delay or deprive the enemy of their use. On to Olivenza itself, scene of a successful siege for Marshal Soult, before heading on to 'Bloody Albuera'.

We explore the intimate folds and gentle slopes of La Albuera, the bridge, village, museum and landscape of vineyards, identifying the initial plans of Beresford and Soult, how events unfolded, how they responded, where each famous event took place, understanding just how deceptive this rolling topography can be. Many of the famous faces of the battle went on to lead fascinating lives, and we share many of our favourites.

British and Spanish infantry demonstrated remarkable heroics here, yet we learn how very different the reports of these two allied nations were, how argument and blame continued within the British army for decades, a wonderful lesson in interrogating wider history.

We head back to the delightful hilltop Nossa Senhora da Graça Fortress overlooking Elvas.





DAY 7: Elvas British Cemetery, Evora

Remaining in Portugal to catch our breath after a steady stream of battles, in Elvas we visit the atmospheric and unique British Cemetery to share tales, often tragic, of the officers remembered here, and of the border towns north of Elvas that formed a chain of border fortifications. This is your time to wander the town or take a swim at the hotel.

We can also offer an optional sightseeing trip to the nearby ancient town of Évora, scene of French General Loison's victory and retribution against the local Portuguese, now boasting beautiful old architecture, a Roman temple, Portugal's largest medieval Cathedral and the famous chapel of bones. There is also a rather splendid little restaurant we know!



DAY 8: Alcantara, Sabugal, Fort Concepcion

From Elvas we drive to the mighty bridge of Alcantara, spanning the Tagus and scene of a famous Portuguese action, an exceptional example of nature's power and human engineering, both ancient and modern.

Our drive North along the Portuguese border takes us to Sabugal, seen as the battle that drove the French out of Portugal for good. We then settle into our superior rooms at Fort Concepcion for 2 nights, close to the Portuguese border, a deeply atmospheric hotel in an isolated location, witness to its own Napoleonic experiences and explosions! We dine in.



DAY 9: Barba del Puerco, El Bodon, Ciudad Rodrigo

We start the day with an optional climb for the intrepid, down to the narrow bridge at Barba del Puerco, an action made famous in the memoirs of the 95th Rifles. Yet it was also the scene of many sadly overlooked stories that we'll bring to life; numerous French incursions and a great escape, to the fury of Wellington. On our Portuguese tour we approach from the Portuguese (British) side, but today we follow the Spanish (French) approach from a village with its own castle for an altogether different experience. We hope to see a family of raptors circling above us as we look up from this deep gorge.

Now on to the site of the desperate battle of El Bodon, where the French caught an over-extended Wellington, and where infantry charged cavalry with the bayonet!

We then head to gorgeous Ciudad Rodrigo where we conduct a full exploration of this famous frontier town. We locate the old site-lines of the attackers, viewing the sieges as both besieger and defender, scene of mighty walls and surrounding heights where the French and British sieges succeeded in very different ways. Here a Spanish hero was born and a much admired British General fell, identifying all the attacks routes into the town.



DAY 10: Ciudad Rodrigo, Salamanca Old City

Back to the amazing Ciudad Rodrigo with its museum, and a final stroll around this gorgeous town's historic square. Then to the distinguished UNESCO Heritage Old City of Salamanca, home to our central 5 star hotel, in superior rooms, for two nights, located within and surrounded by the majesty of ancient religious buildings near the riverside.



A light lunch on the magnificent Plaza Major is followed by an old city of Salamanca walking tour takes in the two Cathedrals, Napoleonic forts, the old bridge whilst explaining the significance of the city and its people to our era. An optional visit to our favourite non-military museum, or time to yourself, before we dine in a great local wine bar.

DAY 11: Battle of Salamanca, Alba de Tormes, Garcí-Hernandez

Salamanca; the 1812 battle that permanently changed French perceptions of Wellington; his sudden seizure of the initiative led to comparisons with Marlborough. We study this remarkable landscape of open plains and commanding heights in the full depth it deserves, stand at the locations of Wellington and Marmont, following the manoeuvres and clashes in a full exploration of the battlefield, the extent of flanks and the depth of positions, mostly off-piste where the larger tours can't go. We including a visit to the museum.

We follow the French escape route across Alba de Tormes, scene of an earlier Spanish battle and French victory, then on to the site of the famed breaking of the French squares at Garcí-Hernandez. We return for another evening in Salamanca, dining in.



DAY 12: Tordesillas, Venta del Pozo, Burgos

Onwards to Tordesillas, scene of French nakedness and frozen Brunswickers, triggers to a furious Wellington. This ancient town is home to far more than Napoleonic history, it is here that the Americas were hubristically divided between Portugal and Spain. We visit the convent where a queen was confined by her son for three decades.

En-route to the jewel that is Burgos we visit the delightful scene of Venta del Pozo, a rearguard action where carefully laid plans were rapidly undone.

We check into superior rooms overlooking the river and across to the cathedral. Across the bridge we head beneath the staggering main gate, into the square overlooked by the extraordinary white stone UNESCO cathedral, witness to the city's experience across history and the statue of El Cid. We dine in a superb steak house and, if you like it enough, we can return here tomorrow too!



DAY 13: Burgos

Today we have a full day in Burgos, we start by entering the interior of Spain's first Gothic and Royal Cathedral (designed by the French!) for some staggering culture.

A vital French staging-post, the city was scene to Wellington's under-resourced and aborted siege. So we head up to the castle to examine Wellington's advance, the outer defences and castle, a successful French defence and Wellington's ultimate withdrawal. This, followed by the terrible retreat back to Portugal, brought a close to the dramatic year of 1812 which transformed the reputation of the army, setting the scene for a victorious 1813.

There is also time for a little shopping and museums as you wish.





DAY 14: Ribera del Duero

We head for Spain's highest rated wine region, Ribera Del Duero. There's interest here for the military minded with cinematic Penafiel Castle, where we spend time in the excellent wine museum, before driving "The Golden Mile", Spain's richest 'terroir' and home to legendary wine estates before booking into our final 5-star hotel, a real star. We visit the beautifully restored monastery (of which the hotel forms part), a staggering delight of sparkling religious art and architecture.

During the afternoon we visit a great little winery for a private tour and tasting; the family owned Tinto Pesquera. Those less intrigued by wine are welcome to enjoy complimentary spa treatments at the hotel which has won "Best Spa in Spain" and hit the Condé Nast Traveller Gold List 2018.



DAY 15: Somosierra Pass & farewell

We return to Madrid Airport for our flights home, climbing the Somosierra mountain pass, scene of Napoleon's Polish lancer-led victory against Spanish artillery. We visit the old road up and the little village memorials. Then on to Madrid Airport for our flights home and a fond farewell.



Our Bespoke arrangements mean that we can always amend this tour to match your requirements, whether it be lengthened, shortened, expanded or focused. Please talk to us and we'll be happy to suggest adjustments to best suit your needs and wishes.



Our Portuguese (1808 - 1811 campaigns) and Pyrenees (1813 - 1814 campaigns) tours are the perfect accompaniments alongside this "With Wellington in Spain" tour to complete Wellington's Peninsular War journeys with us.



Your Journey



TOUR PRICE GUIDE

Bespoke Price guide £11,995 per person, assuming two guests travelling with our guide in one vehicle, guests sharing a double/twin superior room.

Single occupancy supplement £995

Prices may vary depending on season, numbers travelling and bespoke choices made.

LOYALTY REWARDS

Former Campaigns & Culture tour guests receive a loyalty discount of £300 per person on each tour joined.

SCHEDULED TOUR

We plan to operate a Scheduled version of this tour inlet May / early June 2025



Small Group Tours



Historical, Cultural, Gastronomic

Our Small Group tours provide the very best thoughtful, personalised experiences for our tour guests, whether your interests are historical, cultural, geographical, gastronomic or a combination of all.

We plan all our tours to make them as fun, responsive and memorable as they can be, rather than planned down to a cost. We aim to share the very best depths of history with our joy of travel, just as if it were our own holiday.

We journey at a comfortable pace so you have time to appreciate and absorb the incredible beauty of the places we visit.

This is your holiday. So whilst we delight in sharing our knowledge and enthusiasm amongst experts and beginners alike, we promise not to lecture or talk at you - we prefer to converse in a friendly style.

Please feel free to contact us to discuss any details of our chosen battlefields, hotels, restaurants, transport, indeed anything that you'd like to know. We can also take account of your own specific interests and preferences if you share them with us early enough.

Fitness & Footwear



We won't take you on any route-marches, so a few brisk half-hour outdoor walks before the holiday is enough to prepare most of our tour guests very well.

We plan all our routes carefully, and the small-group aspect of our journeys means we have the added flexibility to get you to most points in style and comfort.

You can expect to be walking modest distances, up and down, with regular breaks, on every day of the tour. A few short slopes can be challenging, so we take these at a gentle pace or if possible offer an alternative. Often City walking is the most tiring, so be prepared for being on your feet for extended periods on those days.

Our travels also cover open ground and uneven, occasionally slippery tracks. The optional walk down to (and back up from) the gorge at Barba del Puerco can prove challenging, so discretion is advised for those with certain medical conditions.

One of the many benefits of small group tours is that we can generally make adjustments and travel at your own pace, provided you don't restrict or hold-up the rest of the tour. Of course on our Bespoke tours it is all at your own pace. Please talk to us in advance to discuss.

To cope with rough and cobbled surfaces, well-padded walking shoes or boots with a good grip and hard-soles are essential throughout the tour. We have a guest-favourite brand that we can recommend.





CAMPAIGNS *and Culture*

We're happy to help

To discuss or to reserve your interest please contact us through the website,
by email, or call us on UK 01805 43 1066 (or from overseas +44 1805 43 1066)

We look forward to responding to any questions and welcoming you on tour

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