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A Quick Tour of Spain

By Linda Plummer

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by: **Linda Plummer**

With over fifty million tourists visiting Spain each year, this popular West European country must have something special which attracts the visitor. What exactly is it ...?

The main beauty of this lovely land can be summed up in just one word – variety – and, as you all well know, variety is the spice of life!

Whether you are referring to its climate, geography, history, culture or cuisine ... there is something to appeal to all tastes, ages and pockets.

The tourist explosion which took place in the 60s was originally due to its marvellous beaches. And, with good reason, for the Foundation for Environmental Education states that "Spanish beaches are the most environmentally healthy in Europe" and has awarded the much-coveted Blue Flag to 450 of the country's beaches – more than any other participating country.

But maybe lolling about on the beach all day is not your thing and you prefer more action ... a touch of sophistication?

Should this be the case then Spain's major cities are ideal for you ... jam-packed full of history, and an art-lover's dream. Yet, with their abundance of parks and wide open spaces, good shops and pulsating night-life, they are a joy for everyone – children included.

So ... mooch around the truly marvellous museums and monuments of Madrid. Enjoy the bustle of stylish Barcelona bursting with vibrant Gaudí influence. Savor the delights of romantic Mediterranean cities such as Valencia and Alicante. Or journey further south to the exotic cities of Granada, Seville and Málaga. Immerse yourself in their haunting Islamic palaces, the brilliant colors and sounds of flamenco, and in the birth-place and works of Picasso.

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Maybe you hunger for the peace and quiet of a hideaway hotel in an unspoiled village? Then rural Spain is for you: full of forgotten villages, bursting at the seams with medieval castles, and offering prolific flora and fauna, it is ideal for walking holidays, painting, photography or just plain "get away from it all" holidays. Not to mention ski-ing opportunities for the more active amongst Spain's snow-capped peaks.

Should you fancy a mix of all three – beach, city and rural – then that is also easy to arrange. Although Spain is the largest country in Western Europe after France, it is certainly no problem to get around. Littered with airports – both national and international – it also offers a good train service, though the cheapest and most convenient method of internal travel is by using the national bus/coach system.

For those who are a little tired of the stereo-typed hotel chains, Spain has a unique alternative on offer in its state-established "paradores". In these, you will find accommodation in converted castles, palaces, fortresses, monasteries, convents ...

The aim of the "paradores" is to offer high standards at reasonable prices in a noteworthy building or location and to help preserve the traditions of regional cooking by serving the best of local cuisine in the "parador" restaurants.

Which brings us on to yet another delight that Spain has to offer – its rich and varied cuisine. Whichever region of Spain you decide to visit, you will surely encounter scrumptious Spanish food!

What's more, the traditional Spanish diet, with the liquid gold of its olive oil, its rich supply of wine (in moderation!), its wide variety of fresh fruit and vegetables, plus an abundance of seafood, all mean that it is extremely good for the heart. On top of that, it is affordable!

Even their "caviar" of cured hams – "jamón Ibérico" – has fat unusually high in oleic acid which is known to lower cholesterol levels! Now I ask you, where else can you get something pleasurable, that is cheap, and also good for you?!

Even if you fancy picking between meals you can opt for their tempting "tapas" – much healthier for you than a packet of crisps or a donut!

Tapas originate from the large, southerly region of Andalucia and it is this region that we also have to thank for flamenco and the Spanish guitar. Which holiday would be complete without visiting an authentic flamenco show or dancing the night away to the beat of romantic Spanish music?

So ... come visit this land where the warmth of its climate is only surpassed by the warmth of its people. You are bound to have a great time!

After living in Spain for 20 years, Linda Plummer compiled

offering

information on Spain for the traveler or expatriate.

San Diego Harbor Bay Tour

By Burt Cotton

As vast as the San Diego harbor is, a simple walk around it doesn't do it justice! To partake in the beauty that is San Diego Harbor, you need to take a tour of the bay. San Diego Harbor Excursion can help you do that, as they are the most established tour company throughout the bay.

As a guest, they will treat you with as one of them, helping to bring your cruise to life. There are a few parts to the tour, ensuring that you get the most out of your time on the cruise.

Tour of the North Bay On your tour of the North Bay, you'll see the North Island Naval Air Station, Shelter Islands, and even the Naval Sub Base. If you look closely, you'll also be able see the Cabrillo National Monument as well.

The tour of the North Bay is around 12 miles in length and lasts about an hour. This is a fine tour for anyone interested in the Navy as well. During your tour the guides will explain everything to you as you see it. This way, you'll always know what's going on.

Tour of the South Bay Your tour of the South Bay consists of the Star of India, the Naval surface fleet, Coronado Bay Bridge, and the shipyards. This is a very busy and hectic area, which makes a tour excellent to see everything that this area has to offer.

The tour of South Bay is roughly 12 miles in length and also lasts around an hour. The guides will explain things here to you as well, ensuring that you know exactly what you are seeing.

Tour of the Bay Those of you who are looking to see it all should go for the deluxe tour of the entire bay. You'll see everything covered in the North and South Bay, along with everything else the bay has to offer. The tour is around 25 miles in length and lasts around 2 hours.

To get started on your tour, all you need to do is contact the Harbor Excursion. The price for the tour is very reasonable, considering everything you'll be seeing.

If you happen to live in San Diego, taking the tour is easier than ever. Those of you who are visiting or on vacation should give the tour a shot as well. This way you'll get to experience everything that San Diego Bay has to offer you without having to walk around. And best of all – tour guides will explain the sights to you – so you'll never miss a second.

Burt Cotton

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