

## Steve's Great Rail Journeys 2013-2017 - SPAIN



In addition to my own journeys round Spain I've led several tours to Spain as a freelance tour manager for Great Rail Journeys. These are my personal highlights of those tours over the past five years.

For more details of each tour visit the GRJ website [www.greatrail.com](http://www.greatrail.com)

If anyone is interested in any of the tours then get in touch and I can provide more details. I'm also happy to provide info for anyone who wishes to visit these areas, under their own steam or as part of an organised group.

### The Beauty of Andalucia



*Inside the mosque / cathedral at Córdoba*

This one-week tour, which I led in 2015, flies to and from Málaga then visits the major sites of Andalucía, staying in Ronda, Sevilla and Granada and visiting Córdoba. There are walking tours of each of these places, including guided tours of the Alhambra in Granada and the mosque/cathedral in Córdoba. The local guides were excellent throughout. The included dinners are eaten in local restaurants, which provides the opportunity to try a range of tapas and local specialities. The tour involved the least train travel of any GRJ tour I've taken (due to Renfe - Spanish railways - rebuilding the line to Granada). There were a couple of glitches along the way, particularly on the first day, which didn't give the best initial impression. However, for many of the group it was their first visit to Spain and several told me later in the tour that they were now planning to return, to visit some of the cities in more depth.

This tour is operating in 2018. There is also a longer version of this tour, the **Andalucian Explorer**, by rail to and from London, including visits to Madrid and Barcelona., and a trip to Jerez. The railway line to Granada is due to reopen at some point in 2018.

### **Roses, Cadaques and the Catalan Coast.**



Since the high speed line between Perpignan and Barcelona opened in 2013 it is now easy to travel from London to Catalunya in a day by train. This journey is used to reach the base for this tour – the small resort of Roses (Rosas in Catalan). The Almadraba Park hotel, where the groups stay for nine nights, is set in its own grounds above a beach, with a huge swimming pool, views across the bay of Roses and excellent food. Excursions to Barcelona, by boat along the coast to Cadaques, and to Figueres and Besalu are included. I have taken the tour twice, in 2013 and 2014.

*Cadaques*



The city tour of Barcelona takes in the main sights and includes some free time to wander round. Cadaques is a pretty unspoilt village which was home to Savador Dali for many years. Figueres is a pleasant little town, where the main feature is the tremendous Dali Mueum. Besalu is a historic town, not well known to British tourists, which is very picturesque, with a few good restaurants for lunch in the main square. On the first tour I laid on an extra trip to Girona, which turned out to be a very attractive city. On the second I hired the 'Roses Express', for the group - a road train that took us for two hours on dusty rough tracks through the natural park near Roses.

*Inside the Dali Museum at Figueres*

In 2014 the journey there and back coincided with a French rail strike. On the outward journey I had to take 37 passengers and their cases on the Paris metro and on the return leg our return train was half-length, double-booked and overcrowded, had no buffet and a stropy train crew not coping well with the crowds. But we made it. This tour is running in 2018....and at the time of writing there are no strikes on the horizon.



*Sunset over the Bay of Roses (top) and Besalu (bottom)*

Over the years I have led other tours to Spain (and en route to Morocco and Portugal), including Madrid, Barcelona, Salamanca, and San Sebastian, but I have limited myself to the past five years.



© Copyright Steve Gillon 2018