

# LSO TRAVEL & EVENTS

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## Paradores of Spain:

Toledo, Granada, Ronda, Carmona, and Mérida

Consisting of restored castles, monasteries, convents, fortresses, manor houses, and palaces, Spanish Paradores are found in the most beautiful corners of the Iberian Peninsula. These unique hotels offer guests a chance to "feel" history during their stay, and partake in regional cuisine and wines.

### INCLUSIONS

- 2 Nights Parador de Toledo
- Private Toledo Walking Tour with Cathedral & Synagogue
- 2 Nights Parador de Granada
- Private Tour of Alhambra Palace & Gardens

- 1 Night Parador de Ronda
- Private Ronda Walking Tour with Bullring
- 1 Night Parador de Carmona
- Flamenco Show with Tapas Dinner in Seville

- 1 Night Parador de Mérida
- 8-Day Compact Manual Car Rental
- Daily Breakfast



## MADRID TO TOLEDO:

Pick up your rental car at Madrid Airport or city center for your short drive to the historic UNESCO World Heritage city of Toledo. Take a stroll in this walled city with ancient stone gateways, and narrow cobblestone lanes, far too narrow for cars. It's the ideal place to discover the traces left behind by three cultures: Muslim, Jewish, and Christian. Relax at a terrace café along the banks of the Tagus, or perhaps sample tapas in the bars of the Santa Teresa quarter.

*(Accommodations, Toledo)*

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## TOLEDO:

Today after the buffet breakfast, meet your guide for your private walking tour. Some of the attractions include the Monastery of San Juan de los Reyes, an imposing 15th-century Franciscan monastery and church that was founded in the heart of the Jewish quarter by the Catholic monarchs Isabel and Fernando. The highlight is the amazing two-level cloister, complete with elaborate arches and gargoyles that surround a lush garden with orange trees and roses.

Sinagoga del Tránsito; This magnificent synagogue was built in 1355 and now houses the Museo Sefardi. The main prayer hall has been restored, and the numerous exhibits provide an insight into the history of Jewish culture in Spain.

Right at the top of the town on a hill overlooking the city, you'll find Toledo's Alcazar. Built before the 3rd century, it's one of the oldest buildings in the city, and has been a fortress, a palace and, now, holds the magnificent Army Museum.

You cannot visit Toledo without going to the El Greco Museum, in what used to be his home. One of Spain's most famous painters, El Greco is a native son. Rooms are set up in the style when El Greco lived here, as well as an excellent collection of his paintings. At Saint Mary's Cathedral, you will see an impressive example of medieval Gothic architecture. The highlight of all, however, is the sacristía (sacristy), which contains a gallery with paintings by such masters as El Greco, Zurbarán, Caravaggio, Titian, Raphael and Velázquez.

*(Breakfast & Accommodations, Toledo)*

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## TOLEDO TO GRANADA:

After breakfast, as you make your way towards Andalusia, a convenient stop will be in the charming town of Jaén (khah-AYN). As you near the city, the imposing Santa Catalina castle will be looming on the horizon. Order some tapas for lunch, and you'll most likely get a dish of preserved olives. After all, you're in the epicenter of olive country; and in fact, Jaén accounts for a third of Spain's olive oil production. After arriving in historic Granada, you may want to explore a few neighborhoods like the vibrant Albacin or Albayzin quarter. It's the perfect way to work up an appetite for dinner, as generally restaurants will not be open until 8:30pm.

*(Breakfast, Toledo; Accommodations, Granada)*

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## GRANADA:

After breakfast, meet your guide for your private tour of the Alhambra and the Generalife Gardens. Tour all the must-visit Alhambra highlights like Alcazaba Fortress, the Nasrid Palaces and Generalife Gardens, while learning about its Moorish history. In the afternoon, there's still time to explore on your own. The La Cartuja Monastery, the 11th Century Arab bath house (perhaps one of the best preserved in Spain), and the Parque de las Ciencias (Science Park), are just some of the city's infinite treasures. If you wander up the hill in the Sacromonte quarter in the evening, you'll have the opportunity to see a zambra (gypsy dance) in one of the famous caves.

*(Breakfast & Accommodations, Granada)*

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## GRANADA TO RONDA:

If you depart early, you'll have time to stop in Antequera. This traditional Andalusian town has two claims to fame. The first consists of three fine prehistoric dolmens barely outside the town itself. The second is the Torcal de Antequera, a mountain top covered with huge and wonderfully shaped limestone, formed millions of years ago when the whole area was underwater. Arrive in Ronda early enough to explore this picturesque town. Your parador is situated in a spectacular spot in the heart of the city, beside Ronda's emblematic Puente Nuevo (New Bridge). The New Bridge is an incredible piece of work 320 ft in height, and immortalized in Ernest Hemingway's book "For whom the Bell Tolls". It was built using ashlar quarried at the bottom of the Tagus Gorge and designed to connect the city's old town with the modern Mercadillo quarter.

*(Breakfast, Granada; Accommodations, Ronda)*

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## RONDA TO SEVILLE:

After breakfast, meet your guide for your private walking tour. Immerse yourself in Spanish tradition during this 2-hour walking tour of Ronda, the birthplace of modern bullfighting. See some of the city's most famous landmarks, including Mondragon Palace and the stunning Nuestra Señora de la Paz church, and walk across the famous New Bridge. Then visit the bullring of the Royal Cavalry of Ronda for a look at a central tenet of Spanish culture. One of the oldest bullrings in Spain, known for its rich history and stunning architecture, it remains an important symbol for the city of Ronda. After the tour, and less than 2 hours away, you'll arrive at the Parador de Carmona, voted as one of the top ten paradors to visit in Spain. This castle hotel started out life in 14th century Spain, and witnessed events such as the Catholic Kings' expulsion of the Moors.

Its proximity to Seville (only 30 minutes), makes it convenient to tour the capital city of Andalusia. Seville is home to some of the most spectacular sights in Spain, including the Giralda, the bell tower of the cathedral, Torre del Oro (Golden Tower), Triana neighborhood and Reales Alcázares palace complex. That evening, enjoy a deliciously authentic tapas dinner at El Patio Sevillano, while taking in a lively Flamenco show.

*(Breakfast, Ronda; Dinner, Seville; Accommodations, Carmona)*

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### SEVILLE TO MÉRIDA:

After breakfast, a short drive to Mérida. Known by some as the “Spanish Rome”, Mérida is home to more ancient Roman monuments than any other Spanish city. Located in the heart of the city, your parador offers the opportunity to discover a wealth of heritage without having to worry about driving. It’s only five minutes from the Roman amphitheater; the jewel of Mérida’s monuments, with an incredible stage that still hosts performances. The amphitheater, where gladiatorial games were held, the Roman circus, one of the grandest and best preserved in the Empire and the Los Milagros Aqueduct are other must-sees.

*(Breakfast, Carmona; Accommodations, Mérida)*

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### DEPART:

After a leisurely breakfast, depart for your return trip to Madrid.

*(Breakfast, Mérida)*

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Enter Your Name and Agency Information Here