

Optional Excursions

Flamenco Evening (Madrid)

To better understand the soul of Spain, choose to attend an optional flamenco performance. Born of Indian, Moorish, Arabian and gypsy influences, flamenco dance is a passionate display of complex heelwork, dramatic poses and flamboyant costume, accompanied by song and guitar playing. You will marvel at the intricate rhythms created by a dancer's steps and by the use of percussive elements such as castanets (wooden finger symbols) and clapping. (A beverage is included.)

Toledo

This half-day optional excursion will take you to the former Spanish capital of Toledo, where Muslims, Jews and Christians peacefully coexisted for centuries after the arrival of the Moors in the early 8th century. Visit the cathedral that dominates Toledo's skyline before continuing to the Church of Santo Tomé. Here, you'll view El Entierro del Conde de Orgaz (The Burial of the Count Orgaz), one of El Greco's supreme achievements. Then, step inside one of Toledo's synagogues and finish off your excursion with a stop at a local damascene workshop. Damascene is an intricate Muslim craft originating in Damascus and made famous in Toledo.

Versailles

Join an optional excursion to Versailles, the elaborate palace of Louis XIV. Here, the Sun King held court in the most lavish style imaginable. At one point, 1,000 nobles were attended by 4,000 servants inside the palace, while 15,000 soldiers and servants inhabited the annexes. Stroll through the elegantly landscaped gardens, designed by André Le Nôtre, tour the State Apartments of the King himself, walk through the historic Hall of Mirrors and admire the ornate decor of the State Apartments of the Queen. (Please note: Because of the extreme popularity of Versailles, guided visits of the interior cannot be guaranteed during peak seasons. In this case, your group will hear a presentation from your guide before entering the palace. Please also note that Versailles is closed on Mondays. Participants must enroll in this excursion no later than 50 days prior to departure.)

Neckar Valley

Enjoy a meandering cruise along the Neckar River (seasonal), where you'll drink in commanding views of the many Old World castles that perch along the riverbank. The excursion includes a visit to 13th-century Dilsberg Fortress. Set on a high hill overlooking the Valley, Dilsberg was once the most powerful fortress in the region as well as a favorite site of Mark Twain.

On-tour prices may vary. Pre-tour bookings for Optional Excursions must be received by EF by 50 days prior to departure. Optional Excursions require 20 paying travelers in order to run. To achieve this number, we will do our best to combine groups. If the excursion must be cancelled due to low enrollment, a refund for all pre-bookings will be issued upon your return home.