

## ON BOTH SIDES OF THE PYRENEES

*History, Architecture, Culture and Music  
in Northern Spain & Southern France*

### Itinerary/Programme

#### Day 1 Friday 21 Sept. **L**

ARRIVAL IN SPAIN (at the time of a four-day festive weekend)

(Note : the programme over the four days in Barcelona is very much a provisional one, as the Festival programme, city arrangements, opening hours for the city's institutions and galleries over the weekend will not be known until about May next year, so that some re-adjustments to the programme may well be necessary).

Arrival in Barcelona. Time to be confirmed later : assume arrive centre city approx 11am. Day's programme will depend on arrival times but probably an early organised lunch on or near the Rambla before access to rooms is possible.

After settling in hotel, a relaxed guided walking tour around the very centre of Barcelona, including the Placa Reial, the Gothic quarter, and the marvellous church of Santa Maria del Mar which is unforgettable and offers the finest example of Catalan gothic architecture . The walking tour will finish at the Picasso museum (entries paid but free visit so that those who don't want to see the museum can wander back to the hotel).

Free for the rest of the evening. No organised meals. (Note that the hotel is close to the Rambla, where there is an extraordinary choice of restaurants, tapas bars, etc)

#### Day 2 Saturday 22 Sept. **B D**

Morning : guided tour on the theme of "Barcelona, the capital of modernist architecture : Gaudi" starting with a visit to the *Sagrada Familia* (even more impressive than ever now since the authorities decided to continue to finish building the cathedral), and terminating in the Casa Mila or the Guell Palace. Time for lunch

Tour of Barcelona continues with a guided visit to the Juan Miro Foundation, named after Barcelona's most celebrated painter, followed by the discovery of the extraordinary and fascinating Guell Park designed by Gaudi.

Early evening recital : Double bass and piano arranged by Chris.

Welcome Dinner : one of the real gastronomic treats in Barcelona is to have a good festive meal in one of the fish/seafood restaurants which line the old port.

#### Day 3 Sunday 23 Sept. **B D**

Morning : guided visit to the workshops of the famous organ builder Gerhard Grenzing (who has promised to welcome the group personally as long as his timetable permits in Sept 2007). (Grenzing has built the new organ in Brussels cathedral, those of the Conservatoires in Paris and Lyon, and for various churches in countries as far away as Korea and Japan. In Spain, he has been responsible for the restoration of the cathedral organs of Burgos, Seville and Saragossa, as well as that in the great church of Santa Maria del Mar...). The morning will terminate either with a visit to the Fortepiano workshop of Paul Poletti, or with a visit to the Grand Liceum Theatre completely reconstructed after the terrible fire of 1994, and where all the Spanish "greats" have performed – Caballe, Carreras, de los Angeles, Aragall, etc.

After lunch, first a guided tour of the Catalan Music Palace, the work of Gaudi's contemporary, Domenech i Montaner at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century (with its famous inverted coupola), Barcelona's main concert hall dedicated to Wagner and Beethoven as much as to Catalan music.

This will be followed by a visit to the newly restored Musical Instrument Museum (reopening in early 2007 as part of the new Barcelona Auditorium Complex. Considered one of the finest musical instrument museums in Europe, the permanent displays include superb collections of stringed, wind and keyboard instruments, as well as possibly the finest collection of guitars in the world, and a more recent collection showing the history of music reproduction equipment.

Early evening concert of baroque chamber music organised by Chris, followed by dinner.

Day 4 Monday 24 Sept. **BD** The national Catalan day of festival : *Festes de la Mercè*. (This will be a walking day, as the following day Day 5 will be a very long day in the coach).

Morning : guided walking tour. Starting with the Gothic Quarter and the cathedral (not one of Spain's great cathedrals!), then via the Placa del Rei, to visit one of the most extraordinary experiences anywhere, the Roman town which has been excavated beneath this central area of the city : visit Barcelona from the 4<sup>th</sup> – 7<sup>th</sup> centuries (completely underground), an eerie and exhilarating experience unparalleled perhaps anywhere in Europe. The walking tour finishes with a walk through the historic Jewish quarter to finish at the Catalan National Art Gallery, one of the cultural show-pieces of the city, including an absolutely fabulous collection of roman and gothic treasures all found in the region.

After lunch, free to participate in the festivities around the centre of Barcelona, including the celebrated processions of giants and other historical personages. Always a once-in-a-life-time sight for those visiting Barcelona on the 24<sup>th</sup> of September!

Dinner : for the last meal in Barcelona, a festive Tapas dinner – always a great success!

Evening : a spectacle of Catalan Contemporary Dance or Music.

DAY 5 Tuesday 25 Sept. **BLD** Long coach drive from Barcelona to Jaca.

Itinerary will depend on weather conditions as we approach the mountains. Hopefully : after an early breakfast a 250 km drive to BARBASTRO for lunch and time to wander round the historic old part.. (We're approaching the Pyrenees, and the local wine here is well known!) (Exploring possibility of wine-tasting and lunch to break the day).

The afternoon drive is frankly scenic, if not spectacular, first to Ainsa, then running along the edge of the most grandiose national park in Spain, the Ordesa Park, via Biescas and then into JACA

Day 6 Wednesday 26 Sept. **BD**

Morning guided tour of Jaca – it is here that we join one of the most important Compostela roads in Spain, from Jaca to Burgos. Best known for its situation (Jaca hopes to host the Winter Olympics of 2014), its cathedral was the first romanesque cathedral to be built in Spain, and considered in the 11<sup>th</sup> century of highly daring proportions – and as Jaca was then the capital of the kingdom of Aragon, it was fitting that they should build the finest cathedral of the times! But the historic centre and old town have much to interest the visitor. Chris gives a late-morning recital on the superb organ with a singer joining him.

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After an early lunch, drive first to BERDUN, a small medieval town, which has retained much of its historic atmosphere, and which rises, beautiful and impressive, high out of the flat land along which we drive. After time for a short visit, we continue first via Lake Yesa, and then to the Monastery of LEYRE. (There are splendid panoramic views, and the monastery is one of the most ancient and important in the history of Spain – it was here that kings, bishops, and nobles sought refuge during the Islamic conquests of Spain – and a visit to the 11<sup>th</sup> century crypt is a must! We will try to programme arrival here at a time for a late afternoon mass with Gregorian chant, but the monastery cannot yet confirm its timetable for this date next year).

Then into PAMPLONA for the evening. (A one-night stand, Pamplona has little of interest for the tourist, celebrated especially for its bull fighting festivals!) The only recommendation will be to visit the 13<sup>th</sup> century cathedral cloister, considered one of the richest examples of medieval church architecture in Europe. The cloister is open until 7pm, so we will try to arrive no later than 6pm.

#### Day 7 Thursday 27 Sept. **B L D**

After breakfast, short drive to the celebrated Puente la Reina, the historic meeting place for the Spanish and French pilgrims on the way to Compostela. Cross the ancient 11<sup>th</sup> century bridge on foot. Then a short drive to ESTELLA with 2 hours to explore this town, which is perhaps the most evocative of them all of the days of medieval pilgrimages with its ancient romanesque and medieval centre (including the 12<sup>th</sup> century palace of the kings of Navarre, as well as the famous church of San Pedro de la Rua just opposite. Always reputed for its excellent food and wine, as well as its hospitality, the city authorities in 1991 set up a fountain at the entrance to the town for the pilgrims to refresh and fortify themselves for the journey ahead – from the fountain flows a very reasonable local red wine!!)

Then on to LOGROÑO for lunch and time to visit. Logroño is not only rich in history, and a major halt for pilgrims on the way to Santiago, it is also the capital of the most famous wine-growing area of Spain, the Rioja, so here there will be a wine-tasting + lunch.

A late-afternoon stop at Santo Domingo de la Calzada will be made if time.

Into World Heritage city of BURGOS for the evening.

#### Day 8 Friday 28 Sept. **B D**

Burgos is a place of great historical and artistic importance, and one of the major stopping-places for pilgrims on the way to Santiago.

All day exploring Burgos, including a guided visit of the cathedral, acknowledged as one of the great gothic glories of the world, as well as the other sites of interest, notably the Royal Convent of Las Huelgas and its Museum of Medieval Materials, and to the Miraflores Carthusian Monastery. There will be ample time during the day to just wander round and relax in this very beautiful city. For organ buffs there'll be time to visit the superb organ (restored by Grenzing!)

#### Day 9 Saturday 29 Sept **B L**

Relaxed morning until about 11h30 when we drive some 50 kms to the Monastery of Santo Domingo de Silos, which in addition to possessing perhaps the most beautiful cloister in Spain, is celebrated throughout the musical world for the Gregorian Chant (rather like Solesmnes in France).

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13h00 Mass with Gregorian Chant, and this will be followed by a presentation (hopefully in English – at present they have only one monk capable of addressing the group in English!) – of the history, tradition, and importance of the Gregorian Chant in Spain. Organised late lunch will be taken in Silos before returning to Burgos – rest of time free. Chris has arranged an organ recital during the stay in Burgos, and the group will benefit from items on the musical programme of the cathedral being offered during the period of our stay.

No evening meal arranged.

Day 10 Sunday 30 Sept. **B D**

After breakfast drive by motorway to Bilbao, for a visit to the Guggenheim museum which is a splendid architectural achievement in its own right, plus a visit to one of the exhibitions currently organised, then time for lunch. After lunch a quick trip to see the Vizcaya Bridge at Bilbao, the latest monument in Spain just classified World Heritage. (Built in 1893 it was the first bridge in the world to carry people and traffic on a high suspended gondola and was used as a model for many similar bridges in Europe, Africa and the Americas but only a very few now survive. 160m long and 50m high above the river). Continue through superb scenery to SAN SEBASTIAN

Day 11 Monday 1<sup>st</sup> October **B D**

All day in San Sebastian, one of the principal towns of the Basque country and certainly one of the most beautiful of all the coastal resorts. The city is perhaps one of the most animated places in Spain, while it is also considered the gastronomic capital of the Basque country, so an appropriately festive “Farewell to Spain” festive dinner will be organised!

While in San Sebastian, Chris will organise an organ session here.

It is also hoped that a recital (or at worse attendance at a rehearsal!!) with one of the many good Basque choirs in the region can be arranged. Otherwise (or as well!) a chamber chamber music concert organised by Chris.

Day 12 : Tuesday 2<sup>nd</sup> Oct. **B L D** INTO FRANCE

Morning drive, first by motorway then by smaller roads via Navarrenx to OLORON SAINTE MARIE. This small town, at the foot of the Pyrenees, twinned in many ways - historically, culturally and musically - with Jaca just on the other side of the peaks, rich in history and beautiful just to wander through, is now one of the World Heritage sites in France of those nominated in the Roads to Santiago de Compostela. Lunch, guided visit, and Chris will arrange a musical contribution before continuing into PAU for the evening.

Day 13 Wednesday 3<sup>rd</sup> Oct. **B D**

All day in Pau, the ancient capital of the kingdom of Navarre, where King Henry IV (“good king Henry”) was born. Although Pau does not seem to have been a stopping place for pilgrims, it is a city of considerable historical interest, thanks in particular to its chateau. Its celebrated avenue, the Boulevard des Pyrenees, offers on a fine day one of the most glorious views to be had in the south of France!

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Day 14 Thursday 4<sup>th</sup> Oct. **B L D**

After breakfast, drive to SAINT BERTRAND DE COMMINGES, a small ancient town which, like Oloron, has been declared a World Heritage site on the roads to Santiago. The imposingly massive cathedral stands high above the town, dominating the valley of the river Garonne, and has always been a major centre for pilgrims. Guided visit, lunch, and music. (Chris will give a short recital on the famous organ here)

After Saint Bertrand, a short stop will be made at the exquisite romanesque basilica at Valcabrere. Drive into TOULOUSE late afternoon, early evening (time will depend on the music programme which can be implemented at Saint Bertrand).

Day 15 Friday 5<sup>th</sup> Oct. **B D**

All day in Toulouse, which is quite simply one of France's loveliest cities, and frequently voted by the French as the ideal city in which to live! A guided tour will obviously include the Capitole, the Jacobins, the Musee des Augustins, and especially the great basilica of Saint Sernin – certainly the most famous and the most beautiful of all the great churches in the south of France. Building started in the 11th century on the site of the original church built in the 4<sup>th</sup> century, though the present basilica was not completed until the middle of the 14<sup>th</sup> century.

The celebrated Saint Sernin organ will be incorporated as part of the visit by Chris. Recital and other concert possibilities are being taken care of by Chris either for public performances or more private arrangements.

Day 16 : Saturday 6 Oct. All day coach excursion. **B D**

Early departure : 8h to the small city of AUCH . Auch, was a major centre for pilgrims on the Roads to Compostela, and is now a World Heritage site. It is also intimately associated with the story of the *Three Musketeers*, for d'Artagnan was born only 35 kms from Auch.

10h-12h: Guided walking visits of both the cathedral and the old town. The Cathedral of Sainte Marie, over 100 metres long, is not only one of the largest in France it is one of the most recent in France – started in in 1487 it took 200 years to complete. When finished, it also housed the celebrated Jean de Joyeuse organ, the largest in France at the time of its construction. Also to be seen are the celebrated 133 choir stalls with more than 155 figures carved in the oak.

Chris will give a recital from 12h to 12h30 or 45

The city's museum is one of the oldest in France. Plenty to keep everyone interested for the rest of the day.

There will be an organ and baroque ensemble recital (fine historical cathedral organ.)

Return via GIMONT, celebrated as a a major centre of *foie gras* production, but also an interesting place to serve as an introduction to the phenomenon of “bastides”, the fortified towns so characteristic of this whole region. Chris will make a short presentation of the fine organ here.

Day 17 Sunday 7 Oct. **B L**

Late morning drive to the World Heritage city of CARCASSONE. Guided visit of the medieval city and of the basilica. Carcassonne is celebrated also for its gastronomic delights, so a festive cassoulet lunch at Dame Carcas (Always depending on the weather of course!) Chris will give a short recital on the fine historic organ in the basilica

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Day 18 Monday 8 Oct. **B L D**

An all-day excursion into the spectacular Cathar highland country. The day is planned as a guided coach tour on the theme of the “history and castles of highland Roussillon”, which were so important in the 13<sup>th</sup> century in the crusades against the people of Albi. The scenery is spectacular, the sites of the now ruined castles both magnificent and haunting : after all the luxurious civilisation of Toulouse and Carcassonne, no contrast could be more awe-inspiring.

8h30 Leave Carcassonne with guide.

Drive to Peyrepertuse and guided visit (transport organized from coach to castle)

Lunch : Auberge du Vigneron Cucugnan

Afternoon : look at Queribus and return via Narbonne to have a look at Narbonne before reaching Béziers.

Settle in Hotel

Dinner at Cep d’or or Thélème

Day 19, Tuesday 9 Oct. **B D** (Whole day in Béziers organized by Chris : no coach)

Morning : visit Béziers, cathedral, organ.

Afternoon : free

Evening : dinner and concert at Le Vieux Siège 6 place Trois Six

Day 20 Wednesday 10 Oct. **B D**

Morning : leave Hotel at 9.

9h45-12h15 : Canal du midi with Béziers-Croisières

Drive to Oppidum d’Enserune to have a look at the view

Then drive to Château de Raissac, visit, lunch and music.

18h Cazouls

18h30 : organ and recital in Cazouls church

19h30-23h30 : dinner-concert Cazouls community hall

Day 21 Thursday 11<sup>th</sup> Oct. **B D** :

Morning : Leave Hotel 8h30

10h-11h30 Guided visit of Saint Guilhem

Time for lunch in St Guilhem before driving to Assas via Montpeyroux to visit a “circulade” St Jean de Fos, then drive up the spectacular gorges of the river Hérault then St Martin de Londres, le Mas de Londres, Pic St Loup, and St Mathieu de Trévières.

Musical programme in Assas.

19h30 Farewell dinner-concert at the Minotaure

Day 22 Friday 12<sup>th</sup> Oct

For those who wish : early morning look at the weekly flower market in the centre of Béziers.

9h Leave Béziers

12h-14h Stop in Girona for lunch and a good look at the old town.

Direct to Barcelona airport to be there by 16h.