

All Spain is an art gallery, from Barcelona to Bilbao, from San Sebastian to Toledo, from the narrow streets of medieval villages to modern sculpture in many cities.

In Spain one can see examples of virtually every type of art and architectural movement, including Classicism, Modernism, Dadaism, Surrealism, Cubism, Expressionism, Abstract Expressionism, Impressionism, Romanticism, Symbolism, and, after the elections in March, Socialism. Before the Socialists took over, Spain endured, among others, Romans, Visigoths, Muslims, Christians, Napoleon, and Nationalists—most having some impact on the art and architecture of this country on the Iberian Peninsula.

Unfortunately, it would take years to see and savor everything in this 194,898-square-mile country (Nuevo México is 121,593 square miles), and the ideal way to get around would be by car, which gives tourists eager to learn the freedom to linger here and take a side trip there.

Here is one layman's 10-day limited guide to the art and architecture of Spain.

Madrid

A Barcelona newspaper recently carried a story telling how the Catalans, that is, people from Catalonia, of which Barcelona is the capital, were controlling the conduct of cultural affairs in Madrid, the federal capital. This is nothing new in Spain, for Catalonia has produced many great artists in different fields. But of many of their great works are displayed in Madrid or elsewhere, not in Catalonia.

Start with the Centro de Arte Reina Sofia, a former hospital, that displays the works of such Spanish notables as Gris, Miró, Dalí and Picasso. It is Picasso's "Guernica" that commands everyone's attention. In it he depicts the horror of the German bombing and subsequent massacre of perhaps as many as 1600 non-combatant residents of that Basque city in 1937. Ironically, the museum is just across the street from the city's main train station, one of the targets of terrorists on 3.11, and so it reads like a timeless condemnation of all terrorism.



Two generations of the Thyssen-Bornemisza family collected art that is now part of public displays in Barcelona and Madrid. The museum in Madrid has more than 800 pieces that range from the classics and the Renaissance to the modern, that cover Europe and North America and include Georgia O'Keeffe's Wild Iris #7. Also featured are El Greco, Rembrandt, Watteau, Canaletto, Caravaggio, Sargent,

Homer, Pollock and Rothko. And the museum has marble sculptures by Rodin.

The most famous museum in Madrid, if not all of Spain, is the Prado. There one can see the works of Spain's most treasured painters—El Greco, Goya, Velázquez. Non-Spanish masters include Rubens, Bosch, Raphael and Tintoretto. You can see works by Impressionists and post-Impressionists.

And if you visit Plaza Mayor, for example, you'll be delighted by a building covered with paintings. Plaza Mayor was the center of the old city founded by the Moors.

Barcelona



“Madrid is for fun,” a native of Madrid told me; “Barcelona is for the architecture.” Indeed, Barcelona is a sculptural city dominated by the Temple de la Sagrada Família, for which the architect Antoni Gaudí, a Catalan, receives the most credit. Started in 1882, the church is still under construction as modern architects seek to finish the building in a way that respectfully mimics Gaudí’s vision of using innovative geometric shapes. (Gaudí’s original plans were destroyed during the Civil War.) Finished are eight of 12 bell towers dedicated to the Apostles and rising more than 300 feet. Tourists enter the church from the post-Gaudí side and exit on the side Gaudí designed.

The architect, by the way, is buried in the church, and you can peer down into his crypt, or get a better view from a television monitor.

Besides the church, Barcelona holds other Gaudí creations, one of Gaudí’s early homes (a traditional building by Gaudí standards), a museum and a park that features his concepts and designs.

The Picasso Museum, housed in a medieval palace, provides a simple timeline that starts with some portraits he painted as a young artist and generally traces his life until his death at 91 in 1973. Included in the display are ceramics by his second wife, Jacqueline Roque. However, his major works are elsewhere.

Native Catalan Joan Miró sculpted, drew and painted, and 10,000 of the surrealist’s works are housed in the Miró Museum, although hardly that many are available for public view. Miró greatly influenced Alexander Calder and some of his works are also on display.

Barcelona was chosen as the inaugural host for a traveling exhibit that honors Dalí’s centenary. Composed of 300 works of oil paintings, drawings, photographs, films and objects, the exhibit opened in the Caixaforum, once a textile factory, and will eventually be shown, among other places, at the Philadelphia Museum of Art, and at the Dalí Museum in St. Petersburg, Fla. (More information is available at www.dali2004.org.)

And if museums don't satisfy your interest in art, try a hospital, specifically the Hospital de la Santa Creu, which dates to 1401, and is a collection of 18 buildings (called pavilions) that remind one of a college campus. (In fact, I saw an anti-war poster taped to one of the buildings.) The architecture is worthy in its own right, but it's enhanced by Christian sculptures, mosaics and stained glass. It might have more stained glass than many churches. Looking out the main entrance, you can see the Temple de la Sagrada Família and its two construction cranes towering above the towers a few blocks away.

Bilbao

It would be interesting to know what Gaudí would say about the Guggenheim Museum in Bilbao in the Basque country of Spain. Built as part of \$1.5 billion effort to revive Spain's fifth-largest city, the Guggenheim was designed by Frank Gehry, an American architect, to look like a whale. It has no straight lines whatsoever and its titanium siding makes it stand out even though it's really no higher than the nearby seven- and eight-story apartment buildings. The permanent collection includes pop art by Americans such as Warhol, Dine, Lichtenstein, Oldenburg and van Bruggen. Warhol, a native of Pittsburgh, Pa., would no doubt appreciate being exhibited in an industrial city that is changing its complexion the way Pittsburgh did in the past 50 years from a steel city to a city of finance and culture.

San Sebastián

Not far from Bilbao is the seaside resort of San Sebastián. Most prominent, if not the only thing prominent there, is the Chillida-Leku Museum, a mostly outdoor area displaying the works of Eduardo Chillida, who was born in and who died in San Sebastián, although like many other Spanish artists, he did live in Paris for a short time. A sculptor, Chillida worked mostly in iron and granite. The almost 30-acre museum includes an old farmhouse that Chillida had gutted and turned into a display area for some of his work. Walking around Chillida-Leku is as enjoyable as walking around Shidoni.



One useful web site for planning a museum tour of Spain is <http://icom.museum/vlmp/spain.html#list>, which lists 138 museums and cultural institutions and provides a directory and other related links.

Church tour

Churches in Spain provide history as well as art and architecture. For example, the Cathedral of Burgos, between Bilbao and Madrid, contains the remains of El Cid and his wife. The original building was shaped like a Latin cross, but that design has been altered by the addition of several chapels and a cloister.

In Toledo, which is south of Madrid, tourists can see a museum that was once a synagogue. Although it contains Christian icons side by

side with Jewish icons, its interior style is Moorish, with columns and curved arches, thus showing in one room in one medieval town the mixture and blend of influences on Spain.

Nearby at the entrance to the Jewish quarter, St. Thomas church contains a large painting by El Greco, “Entierro del Señor de Orgaz,” which was commissioned in 1586. The church itself dates to the 11th century and was also built in Moorish style.



The Cathedral of Toledo dominates all other religious buildings in the city. The church is so large, with an internal walled-off pulpit and choir section, that many worshipers watch mass on flat-panel screen suspended from ancient columns. What adds to the art lover’s delight is a room filled with portraits, most by El Greco, showing religious figures.

One of the more interesting and old churches in Spain is off the beaten path in the medieval town of Sos del Rey Católico. It is the Church of San Esteban, whose 50-something priest has been there for 30 years and who, for one Euro per capita, will lead tours. It’s easy to understand, when one sees peeling frescoes, including one of St. Christopher carrying a young Jesus, why photography is not permitted. Sos del Rey Católico, by the way, is about 30 miles from Pamplona, should you want to coordinate your visit with the running of the bulls.

In Zaragoza, where Goya was born, the Basilica de Nuestra Señora del Pilar, a sacred pilgrimage site, has two holes in its roof left over from the Spanish Civil War when it was hit by bombs that did not go off. The bombs, now defused, are on display in the church. George Orwell fought near here and reported that he could see Zaragoza. He spent 151 days on that front line then returned to Barcelona and subsequently to England to write Homage to Catalonia.

In Barcelona, two of many worthy churches are Catedral de la Seu, a Gothic-style building constructed on a site once occupied by a Roman temple and than a mosque, and the Church of Santa Maria of the Sea, named in honor of Columbus’ flagship, which ran aground off Haiti on the admiral’s first voyage. The church contains a small model of the ship. Both churches are in the old city and near the Picasso Museum.

So much to see, so little time. Bullet trains run between Madrid and Seville and are planned for other routes, but they will bypass the quaint villages that hide historical gems. Sos del Rey Católico, for example, is a Spanish version of Acoma, only a little easier to reach. From the interstate highways one sees small towns that pop up and delight the way Laguna Pueblo does along I40—the church always at the

center of the community and usually on the highest point. Walking around any town large or small yields visual delights not listed in tour guides. Noticing how apartment dwellers make their balconies unique attractive could keep one busy. Just watching people for a few hours in a plaza provides some sense of the community you're in.

“How easy it is to make friends in Spain!” Orwell wrote. He was right. And they become part of the art of the country.

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