



Celebrating Picasso

Special exhibitions in Málaga, Madrid, Barcelona and Paris

21–29 November 2023 (MJ 125)

9 days • £3,830

Lecturer: Gijs van Hensbergen

2023 marks the 50th anniversary of Picasso's death.

Special exhibitions in Málaga, Madrid, Barcelona and Paris, with two nights in each city.

Some of the world's best galleries: eponymous museums in Málaga, Barcelona and Paris; the Reina Sofia and Prado in Madrid.

First-class, high-speed rail travel between cities, from Málaga back to London.

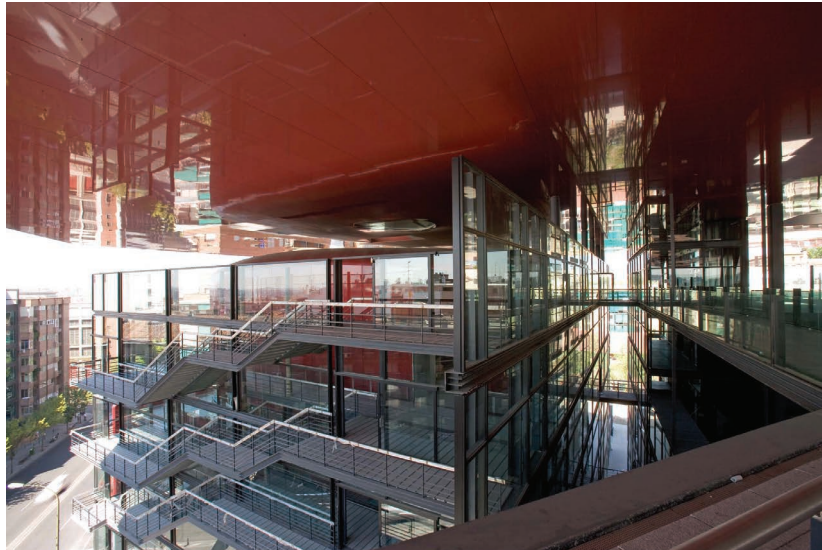
Led by Gijs van Hensbergen, Picasso expert and author of *Guernica: The Biography of a Twentieth-Century Icon*.

No artist dominated the 20th century quite like Pablo Picasso. 50 years after his death we can reflect on his contribution to painting, sculpture, print making, pottery, theatre design, poetry, photography and the status of the artist as media superstar and political provocateur. Picasso was unique, complex, contrary – a fireball of inspiration that transformed everything he touched.

Spanish to the core, for more than 70 of his 92 years Picasso lived in France, where he produced more than 35,000 original works of art. Within his home country during the Franco regime many dismissed Picasso's work as 'the manic doodles of the artist from Málaga' and reviled his outpourings as Communist bunk. Such works as were in Spain were secreted during the regime in clandestine private collections.

All that has now changed. In Barcelona, always keen to thwart Castilian orthodoxy, and the beloved city of Picasso's anarchist youth, he was honoured in the 1960s with the opening of its Picasso museum. An ever-expanding major collection now occupies five adjacent medieval palaces. In 1981, just months after a coup attempt failed to overturn the new post-Franco order, *Guernica* arrived in Madrid to stamp its imprimatur as the world's most famous scream against violence and as a symbol of hope for the young and fragile democracy. In late 2003, his home town of Málaga opened its own Picasso museum.

This tour is not just centred on museums. There is as much to learn about Cubism in the mirrored reflections of Madrid's Café Gijón as



Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía, ©Joaquín Cortés/ Román Lores.

by studying *Girl with Mandolin*. In the country of café culture, understanding of his life and personality can be enlarged in Málaga's Café Chinitas, his father's favourite watering hole, and Barcelona's legendary Els Quatre Gats, where Picasso threw himself in at the deep end of Catalan culture wars as a teenager with his first one man show.

From the Málaga of Picasso's childhood we move north by rail, via Madrid and Barcelona, to Paris, and take in a host of special exhibitions to mark the historic milestone. En route we visit sources of inspiration for the man who claimed the greatest artist was the greatest kleptomaniac. Nothing was too grand or too humble to grip his feverish imagination. Even in his 80's, brooding over homeland Spain, he would refashion scraps of paper, make lightning notations and surrealist doodles while twisting wire bottle tops into pocket sculptures as he rethought the boundaries of the world of art.

Itinerary

Day 1: Málaga. Fly at c. 9.30am from London Gatwick to Málaga (Vueling). An afternoon walk includes the house where Picasso was born, which houses a small collection of his belongings, and the church of his baptism. First of two nights in Málaga.

Day 2: Málaga. The Carmen Thyssen museum has a fine collection of old masters and 19th-century Spanish painting. The afternoon is

spent in the Picasso Museum, housed in a fine 16th-century building, where over 200 works from family members span his entire career. *Exhibition: The Echoes of Picasso.*

Day 3: Málaga to Madrid. Travel by high-speed AVE train to Madrid (c. 3 hours). Lunch is served on board. In the afternoon visit the Prado Museum, one of the world's greatest art galleries. First of two nights in Madrid.

Day 4: Madrid. Begin at the Thyssen-Bornemisza Collection, housed in the 18th-century Palacio de Villahermosa, one of the world's largest private art collections until its purchase by the Spanish state in 1993. *Exhibition: Picasso, the Sacred and the Profane.* Lunch nearby at one of Picasso's haunts, then visit the Centro de Arte Reina Sofía, one of the greatest modern art museums and home to Picasso's *Guernica*. *Exhibition: Picasso 1906: The Turning Point.*

Day 5: Madrid to Barcelona. High-speed AVE train from Madrid to Barcelona (c. 3 hours) with lunch on board. Visit the National Museum of Catalan Art with its extraordinary collection of romanesque church frescoes, plus fine Gothic and modern collections. First of two nights in Barcelona.

Day 6: Barcelona. A morning walk takes in Barcelona's Gothic Quarter, the Carrer d'Avinyó, inspiration of Les Demoiselles d'Avignon, and Els Quatre Gats, the bar where Picasso held his first one-man show. The

Celebrating Picasso
continued

afternoon is devoted to the Picasso Museum: portraits, landscape sketches, Blue Period, cubism, late oils. *Exhibition: Miró–Picasso.*

Day 7: Barcelona to Paris. The day is spent travelling by high-speed TGV train, around the Pyrenees and through the French countryside, departing Barcelona mid-morning and arriving late-afternoon in Paris (c. 6 hours 45 minutes). First of two nights in Paris.

Day 8: Paris. Housed in the Hôtel Salé, the Picasso Museum possesses one of the greatest collections of the artist's work, from all periods of his career. We also visit one of the special Picasso exhibitions taking place in Paris (exhibition to be confirmed).

Day 9: Paris. The Pompidou Centre has an extensive collection of modern and contemporary art, and hosts a special exhibition featuring more than 2,000 drawings and prints by Picasso. Afternoon Eurostar to London St Pancras, arriving c. 4.30pm.

Lecturer

Gijs van Hensbergen. Art historian and author specialising in Spain and the USA. His books include *Gaudí, In the Kitchens of Castile, Guernica* and most recently, *La Sagrada Familia*, and he has published in the *Burlington Magazine* and *Wall Street Journal*. He read languages at Utrecht University and Art History at the Courtauld, and undertook postgraduate studies in American art of the 1960s. He has worked in England, the USA and Spain as exhibitions organiser, TV researcher and critic and is a Fellow of the Cañada Blanch Centre for Contemporary Spanish Studies at the LSE.

Practicalities

Price, per person. Two sharing: £3,830 or £3,640 without the flight and Eurostar. **Single occupancy:** £4,530 or £4,340 without the flight and Eurostar. *The trains from Málaga to Madrid, Madrid to Barcelona, and Barcelona to Paris are included for all participants.*

Included: flight from London to Málaga (economy) with Vueling (aircraft: Airbus 320); Eurostar (Standard Premier) from Paris to London; first class train travel between Málaga, Madrid, Barcelona and Paris; travel by private coach; hotel accommodation as described below; breakfasts, 3 lunches (including 2 light meals on the train) and 6 dinners with wine or beer, soft drinks, water and coffee; all admissions; all tips; all taxes; the services of the lecturer and tour manager.

Accommodation. Hotel Molina Lario, Málaga (hotelmolinalario.com): functional 4-star in the centre. **NH Collection Palacio de Tropa, Madrid** (nh-collection.com): small and excellently located 5-star hotel. Rooms are comfortable and décor is contemporary. **NH Collection Gran Hotel Calderón, Barcelona** (nh-collection.com): centrally-located contemporary 5-star hotel. Rooms are modern and comfortable. **Hotel Édouard 7, Paris** (hoteledouard7-paris.com): a comfortable 4-star hotel, located on the Avenue de l'Opéra, a short walk from the Louvre. *Single rooms are doubles for sole use throughout.*

How strenuous? This tour involves three long train journeys and three hotel changes, but driving is kept to a minimum. There is inevitably a lot of standing around in museums and galleries, and so should not be attempted by anyone who has problems with everyday walking and stair climbing. Dinners tend to be at 8.30 or 9.00pm in Spain, so you might get to bed later than you would usually.

Group size: between 10 and 19 participants.