



Decorative Arts of Iberia

with HALI Magazine

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13 days • £5,190

Lecturer: Gijs van Hensbergen

A wealth of Andalusí silk textiles and woollen carpets, including special access to some collections not normally open to the public.

Also visits world-class museums, from the Gulbenkian in Lisbon to the Prado, and some of Spain's most beautiful cities.

Carefully-selected 4- and 5-star accommodation throughout.

HALI is a UK-based quarterly magazine specialising in the antique textile arts of the world. As co-organiser it brings its unique, informed perspective to this Iberian tour.

During the late Middle Ages, Renaissance and the mythic Golden Age, Spain and Portugal spent almost one tenth of their national wealth on architectural extravagances and the decorative arts. Despite the ravages of wars and internal turmoil, the region still houses a treasure trove of glorious masterpieces. Having divided world trade in 1494 at the Treaty of Tordesillas, the two countries became Europe's front door to the Indies and the New World.

The European Catholic heritage is vividly expressed through many of the Flemish and Spanish tapestries to be seen during the tour. In addition, Spain and Portugal share a rich history of sophisticated Islamic influence. This is seen in a wealth of fabulous Andalusí silk textiles and woollen carpets.

Madrid's Instituto Valencia de Don Juan houses the 15th-century 'Admiral' carpets, made by Muslim weavers for high officials of the Spanish state. Then there are the rare textile relics of the final years of Nasrid domination of the Iberian Peninsula preserved in Spanish Church treasuries. In Portugal, we find an extremely important collection of classical oriental carpets at the Calouste Gulbenkian Museum, incorporating Persian, Indian, Turkish and Caucasian pieces collected by the Armenian entrepreneur and philanthropist.

The Decorative Arts of Iberia takes a journey from the glimmering tiles of the Manueline Gothic of Portugal to the restrained honey sandstone of Castile and the austerity of the Escorial's cold granite walls. From the Gulbenkian to the Prado we visit some of the greatest museums in the world.

What sets The Decorative Arts of Iberia



'Sanguszko' medallion carpet, Kerman region, south-central Iran, ca. 1550-1575. Instituto de Valencia de Don Juan, Madrid (courtesy of HALI).

apart is its focus on works that should be far better known. In Madrid's Museo Lázaro Galdiano sits the bronze feline jug from the legendary kingdom of Tartassus. In Pastrana in Quixote's La Mancha we encounter the greatest Gothic tapestries, restored in Belgium, depicting Alfonso V of Portugal's sacking of Tangiers. From majolica to Meissen, from La Granja glass to the great gazelle vases manufactured for the Nasrid Alhambra, The Decorative Arts of Iberia offers a cornucopia of treasures that is the envy of the world.

Itinerary

Day 1: Lisbon. Meet at 12.00 midday for a light lunch in the hotel before a visit to the Gulbenkian Museum, an outstanding private art collection given to the city of Lisbon and beautifully displayed in a modern building. First of two nights in Lisbon.

Day 2: Lisbon. Morning visit to be confirmed. The Museu Nacional do Azulejo has a fine collection of tiles dating from the 15th century to the present day, housed in a former Baroque convent.

Day 3: Lisbon, Madrid. Fly at c. 12.30pm from Lisbon to Madrid (Iberia Airlines). In the afternoon visit the recently renovated Archaeological Museum, good on Iberian civilizations and Roman Spain, and the perfect

introduction to subsequent visits focussing on the decorative arts. First of six nights in Madrid.

Day 4: Madrid. The Lázaro Galdiano museum with works by El Greco, Goya and Murillo and a beautifully curated collection of Spain's textile culture through arab silks to glorious religious regalia. Continue to a private visit at the Instituto Valencia de Don Juan, housing a collection that includes Islamic tapestries from the 15th-century as well as an impressive collection of ceramics and other decorative arts. In the afternoon visit the Museum of Decorative Arts, with a collection of some of the most well preserved carpets in Spain from Cuenca and Alcaraz, ranging from the 15th to 18th centuries.

Day 5: Madrid. Begin at the Monasterio de las Descalzas Reales with tapestries woven to designs by Rubens. There is some free time for independent exploration of Madrid before visiting Factum Arte, an art conservation company that uses new technologies to aid contemporary artists in creating challenging and innovative new works.

Day 6: Pastrana, Cuenca. All-day excursion to see some of the finest surviving Gothic tapestries at Pastrana, depicting the conquests in Morocco by Alfonso V, King of Portugal (1432–1481). Continue to Cuenca, whose old town sits high on a narrow ridge bound by

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continued

rivers, the castle ramparts at the top affording spectacular views. The predominantly Gothic cathedral has plateresque portals and carved wooden ceilings. One museum has two works by El Greco, another has Roman remains and an extensive collection of carpets from the Cuenca school of the 16th-18th centuries.

Day 7: Toledo. Crammed onto the crown of a river-girt promontory, Toledo displays the masonry residue of a greater mix of peoples and civilizations than perhaps any other city in the world. The Synagogue of El Tránsito contains impressive Mudéjar decoration. The church of Santo Tomé has El Greco's Burial of Count Orgaz, his greatest work (private view). See more of his work and his burial place at the convent of Sto Domingo. The Gothic cathedral is Spain's largest and the most richly endowed with paintings (El Greco, Velázquez, Titian) and a large collection of tapestries from Europe.

Day 8: Madrid. Morning visit to the Royal Tapestry Factory, founded in 1721 by Phillip V with designs by Goya, many of which are still reproduced today. Continue to the recently opened Spanish Royal Collection has been beautifully curated in staggering new galleries with views across the sierra - revealing a panoramic *paseo* through Spanish royal taste from the 15th century Catholic Kings, through Hapsburg and Bourbon where works by Velazquez and Caravaggio, amongst others act as backdrops to incredible furniture, decorative arts, a state carriage and some of the finest Flemish tapestries. Spend the afternoon at the Prado, among the world's greatest art galleries, concentrating on the Spanish school.

Day 9: Zamora, Palencia, Burgos. On the Roman road that connected Astorga to Mérida, Zamora rose to importance during the Reconquista as a bastion on the Duero front. Much of its Romanesque architecture survives, including the cathedral of Byzantine influence. The cathedral museum contains many Flemish tapestries from the 15th and 16th centuries. The cathedral in Palencia has a Fatimid tiraz on permanent display. Continue to Burgos for the first of two nights.

Day 10: Burgos. Morning excursion to the monastery at San Salvador de Oña which houses a small royal treasury with fatimid ivory pieces and the oldest-known Umayyad caliphal tiraz, made of silk and gold and displaying an image of the Caliph. Continue to the charming medieval town of Medina de

Pomar with fine Romanesque churches and the Fortress of the Constables of Castile. Private visit to the Monastery of Santa Clara, founded in 1313, with a splendid, 15th century Spanish Holbein carpet. On the outskirts of Burgos is the convent of Las Huelgas Reales with its important early Gothic church and a museum of exceptional medieval textiles taken from the Royal tombs.

Day 11: Santo Domingo de Silos, Covarrubias, Segovia. Santo Domingo de Silos has the finest Romanesque monastery in Spain, outstanding for the sculpture of the 12th-cent. cloister. Covarrubias is an attractive walled village with a medieval Colegiata containing a collection of elegantly embroidered copes and chasubles and a precious selection of coptic and 10th -11th arab textile fragments. Continue to Ábbatte near Segovia, where textiles are hand-woven by local weavers using the finest natural fibres in the Cistercian abbey of Santa María de la Sierra. Continue to Segovia for the first of two nights.

Day 12: Segovia, La Granja. Built on a steep-sided hill, Segovia is one of the loveliest cities in Spain and architecturally one of the most richly endowed. A morning walk includes the cathedral, a soaring Gothic structure. The remarkable roman aqueduct is one of the biggest in Europe. Drive in the afternoon to La Granja de San Ildefonso, the palace constructed for Philip V in the early 18th century, with magnificent formal gardens and Flemish tapestries.

Day 13: El Escorial. This vast retreat-cum-palace-cum-monastery-cum-pantheon was built from 1563 to 1584 for Philip II, successfully embodying his instructions for 'nobility without arrogance, majesty without ostentation, severity in the whole'. The coach continues to the hotel NH Palacio de Tropa, Madrid, arriving c. 2.45pm. It continues to Madrid Barajas airport, arriving c. 3.45pm.

The tour contains a number of special arrangements that are subject to confirmation.

Lecturer

Gijs van Hensbergen. Art historian and author specialising in Spain and the USA. His books include *Gaudi*, *In the Kitchens of Castile* and *Guernica* 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.

Practicalities

Price, per person. Two sharing: £5,190. **Single occupancy:** £6,330. This includes: flights from Lisbon to Madrid; travel by private coach; hotel accommodation as described below; breakfasts, 8 dinners and 2 lunches with wine or beer, soft drinks, water and tea or coffee; all admissions; all tips; all taxes; the services of the lecturer. It also includes one free place for a member of staff from HALI.

Flights: international flights to Lisbon and from Madrid are not included in the price of the tour.

Accommodation. Hotel Aurea Museum, Lisbon (eurostarshotels.co.uk) an attractive 5-star hotel on the edge of the characterful Alfama district. **NH Palacio de Tropa, Madrid** (nh-hotels.com): a small and excellently located 5-star hotel. Rooms are comfortable and décor is contemporary. **NH Palacio de Burgos, Burgos** (nh-hotels.com): a smart 4-star hotel in a converted palace. Rooms are comfortable and richly furnished. **Aurea Convento Capuchinos, Segovia** (eurostarshotels.co.uk): 5-star hotel set in a converted 17th-century church and monastery complex. *Single rooms are doubles for sole use throughout.*

How strenuous? This is a long tour with a lot of walking in town centres, some of it on cobbled streets and uphill, and a lot of standing in museums. It should not be undertaken by anyone who has difficulty with everyday walking and stairclimbing. Average distance by coach per day: 73 miles. 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 22 participants.

Combine this tour with: *Opera in Vienna*, 2-7 April 2024; *Western Andalucía*, 22-29 April 2024, *Malta: prehistoric to present*, 22-28 April 2024. We are happy to advise on linking accommodation and transport.