

The 2 Idiots Travel Blog  
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## Ultimate Itinerary and Travel guide for driving Through Southern Spain

### WHY THE 2 IDIOTS RECOMMEND DRIVING THROUGH SOUTHERN SPAIN?

Spain is our favorite country, and having fallen in love [with Barcelona](#), we fell even more in love with Spain after driving along its southern coastline. Had we not tried a road trip, we would have missed small towns that are filled with Roman ruins and friendly people, amazing seafood and wine, and a beautiful countryside filled with sunshine -- not to mention an area covered in such a large expanse of white greenhouses that it can be seen from space (more on that later)! We did a lot of research planning our trip, trying to pick stops that were unique and would offer a different perspective on Spain. Here's where to go and what to see when traveling in Southern Spain.

### WHERE TO STAY

We prefer to stay in AirBnBs when we travel because it offers a more home-like environment with a kitchen and living space. On a road trip through Southern Spain, however, we found we only needed a night or two in each place and that made AirBnBs a little trickier, so we did a mixture with hotels, staying near the Old Towns of larger cities, like Seville. Our rule of thumb is to stick to an AirBnB if we stay in a place for more than a couple of nights, and no matter where we travel, we like to stay in the center of town so we could park the car and then walk around during our visit, as streets can be narrow and tough to navigate. (Just be sure where you are staying offers parking.)

### LOGISTICS

Rent a mid-sized car for a one-way trip from Barcelona to Seville. Although we prefer roomier SUVs, we discovered the small towns we visited had small roads and parking was tough. A mid-sized car will be comfortable and more manageable. You'll have to pay a fee for not doing a round trip, but take a train back to Barcelona versus driving and save yourself more hours in a car. The train will get you from Seville to Barcelona in 5.5 hours and driving back can take almost 10 hours! One more tip: Be sure to rent an automatic, if you cannot drive a manual stick shift. This is something we were assuming and we accidentally ended up with a stick shift

because we didn't notice it at booking. So, Natasha didn't do any driving during our tour and got to relax in the passenger seat the entire drive.

## CREATING AN IDEAL ITINERARY

After [visiting Barcelona](#) for a few days, rent a car for a road trip from Barcelona to Seville. Leaving the city behind, you'll travel for a week with stops in historical and charming small towns like Tarragona, Cartagena and Malaga before arriving in the wonderful Seville. Follow in our path with this ideal itinerary:

Days	Itinerary
Day 1	Leave Barcelona and drive to Tarragona (1.5-hour drive) Spend day and night in Tarragona
Day 2	Spend day in Tarragona Leave for Cartagena in the afternoon (5-hour drive) Stay overnight in Cartagena
Day 3	Spend day in Cartagena Leave for Malaga in the afternoon (4-hour drive) Stay overnight in Malaga
Day 4	Spend day and night in Malaga
Day 5	Spend day in Malaga Leave for Seville in the afternoon (2.5 hour drive) Stay overnight in Seville
Day 6	Spend day and night in Seville
Day 7	Spend day in Seville Leave for Barcelona via train

### *Day 1: Explore Tarragona*

An hour from Barcelona, Tarragona is a port city dating back to the Roman times, and it is evident in its ruins. We absolutely loved this seaside town and were stunned to encounter such ancient history in the heart of a modern city. Plan to spend two days here to truly get a sense of the seafaring city, and be sure to read [our full guide on Tarragona](#).

- After arrival, first visit the Cathedral de Tarragona, which was constructed in the 1100s on the site of a Roman temple. You'll spend a couple of hours here to see medieval pieces and religious art, combined with Moorish architecture.

- Next, get lost in the city by walking from the cathedral to the Mediterranean Balcony along Rambla Nova. Less crowded and touristy than Las Ramblas in Barcelona, you'll find these pedestrian streets more friendly for kids, and filled with shops and restaurants to give you a sense of the city. Stop here for lunch – and let us highly recommend La Tagliatella for the best Italian food we've had outside of Spain.
- After lunch and shopping, allow your children to play along the Mediterranean Balcony. Overlooking the sea, this “balcony” has plenty of space to take in the unbelievable views of the Med, as well as nearby ruins.
- When you're done taking in the views, walk over to Circa Roma's open-air park that once held chariot races during the Roman Empire. Your children can run and play as long as you are careful of the ruins. Explore the caves and see ancient Roman tablets in this stroller-friendly spot.
- Unlike Barcelona, Tarragona's dinnertime doesn't go into the witching hour, but the Spanish do wait until 8 p.m. for dinner. Take a break at your hotel and feed your children, then to the waterfront for fresh seafood. One of our top 10 restaurants we had on our worldwide trip is El Posit del Serrallo, which serves up seafood with a modern approach.

### *Day 2: Step Back in Time in Tarragona*

- On your second day in Tarragona, uncover more ruins and history with a visit to the Amphitheatre, which was built to host gladiator games during the Augustin period.
- After your visit, depart for Cartagena. But, before you go, drive to Les Ferress Aqueduct, also known as Pont del Diable. The bridge is about 15 minutes outside of the city and is impressive -- you can walk across a structure estimated to be built around 27 A.D.
- Be sure before you depart that you have provisions in the car, as your next stop is five hours away: Cartagena. (If your child is young, it could take six hours to get there.) Leave by the afternoon so you can arrive and have dinner and relax.

### *Day 3: A Quick Visit to Cartagena*

We chose our route to stop in Cartagena, without fully understanding how recent its ruins have been uncovered. The city is off the beaten tourist path, so we really were able to explore and get right into history -- go, before others discover it!

- Our love with the city began where you should start your day: the Museum of the Roman Theater. This Roman landmark was only uncovered in 1988, which meant the site is hardly touched or visited. Unlike other ruins that are roped off, we were able to walk around right in the heart of a theater older than the modern city. Amazingly, two-thirds of the original building material was found so historians could reconstruct and repair areas. At the Museum of the Roman Theater of Cartagena, our son loved walking up and down all of the stairs and running around, while we were just amazed at how this discovery was lying just below the current city.
- From ancient history to modern day, visit the pedestrian street, Calle Mayor, paved with entirely blue marble tiles! The street is spotless and filled with shops and restaurants. Grab lunch, perhaps tapas (small plates) here before you leave the city. (We actually spent two days in Cartagena but really felt a day was enough.)
- Leave in the afternoon for your next stop: Malaga. It's a four-hour drive, so again, be sure you have provisions in the car, and plan to be there for dinner. Once we left Cartagena, we kept seeing miles and miles of white and had no clue what they were. As we continued to drive, we just had to check our cell phones to figure out what they were and just how far they were going to stretch. We discovered that what we were seeing was hundreds of miles of greenhouses! Turns out that this peninsula of Southern Spain – 26,000 hectares – is covered in greenhouses that can be seen from space! In fact, they reflect so much sunlight, the temperature here has been lowered and has been a huge boost to the economy of Southern Spain.

#### *Day 4: Explore Malaga*

By the time we entered Malaga, Natasha was cathedraled out (is that a travel term?). Turns out, this was the perfect place for a break from history, and you'll find this port city is so energetic it feels like the Miami of Spain, complete with tons of beaches and beautiful people.

- Begin in Plaza de la Constitucion (Constitution Square) in the heart of the city, which has been the city's main public square since the 15th century. There are cool cathedrals and sights around the city but we skipped those for this square filled with street artists and touristy things like Semana Santa procession and festivals throughout the year. The square is adorned in its Spanish architecture, fountains, palm trees, and alleyways filled with shops and dining; it has a great energy.
- One of the most unique museums we have ever visited should be your next stop: [the Automobile and Fashion Museum](#). It may sound odd to combine cars and clothes, yet it's a perfect combination. More than 6,000 square feet are filled with antique cars mixed with the fashion of the era in which they existed – Chanel, Oscar de la Renta. Although Natasha loves fashion, she was skeptical about a museum with automobiles. Yet we both found the juxtaposition of cars from different decades paired with the clothing of the era to be quite cool. Kids, who may not be as impressed, can run around here and there is a play room, as well.

- After the museum, head toward the sea. We spent a lot of time in Parque de Malaga, a large park by the sea, which had a bar on the side. Picture this: locals hanging out and having drinks while their kids played in the park. It captures the ambience of Spain and, honestly, is Natasha's dream come true!
- In the evening, feed your children before heading out later in the evening to enjoy some of the energy spilling into the streets from the Malaga nightlife. Head to the historic area near Constitution Square, with streets like Calle Beata and Calle Granada offering outdoor dining. If your child can sleep in a stroller, as our son did, you can eat late and people watch as they head out to dance the night away.

### *Day 5: Discover Seville*

After a morning in Malaga, the next drive will feel quite quick: it's just 2.5 hours to Seville, one of our favorite cities. We have been back three times! The capital of the Andalusia region, you're close to Gibraltar and the architecture is superb, not to mention the food and the culture -- it's such an amazing city and so unlike its counterparts in Southern Spain. If you have additional time to spend on this tour, definitely save the extra dates for Seville; two days just isn't enough for more than a taste. Still, if you only have two days, follow our steps:

- Once you have settled into your hotel, your first stop (perhaps after lunch) should be the Alcazar of Seville, a royal palace. This was the set for the film "Lawrence of Arabia" and is a UNESCO World Heritage Site. It is a combination of Spanish and Moorish architecture and stunning. Plus, it's quite open and easy for children to run around as you roam the grounds. Oh yes! And, there are live peacocks roaming the grounds!
- After the Alcazar, visit the Gothic Seville Cathedral, which houses Christopher Columbus's tomb. Although a controversial figure in "the New World," Spain takes great pride in their explorer and a pilgrimage must be made.
- Although bullfighting is also highly controversial, the once-popular sport reigned over the city. Make your way to the Plaza de Toros de la Maestranza, which dates back to the 18<sup>th</sup> century. Today, you can visit a museum to learn more about the sport, and, if so inclined, watch a live bullfight, of which there are about 20 per year.

### *Day 6: Sightseeing in Seville*

- On your second day in the city, visit the Old Jewish Quarter and roam its tiny "kissing" streets. Known as Barrio Santa Cruz, this is the main tourist area for Seville and you can spend hours walking around and discovering cute streets and charming shops. This is a good place to have lunch, as well.
- Feed your child some food and then take part in a morning food tour, such as those by [Devour Seville Food Tours](#). We love doing tours after feeding our son because would nap in his

stroller as we walked around. The foods of Spain are so unique that a food tour can really help you explore the foods of the region -- such as delicious Iberian Peninsula ham (Jamón Iberico de Bellota), seafood like Cazón en Adobo, and Espinacas con Garbanzos (Spinach and Chickpeas), one of Seville's most iconic tapas. Most tours are three to four hours in length.

- Next, visit the Plaza de Espana, which is a large plaza built for an exposition in the early 1900s. Combining Moorish, Renaissance and Revival styles, the buildings are impressive. It's now a park where you can find horse and carriage rides, gondola rides, bike rentals and more. It's the perfect place for kids, especially after an afternoon nap – it's also a great place for a picnic!
- In the evening, before dinner, go see a Flamenco dance show. There are several in town and you can find the highest rated shows by [clicking here](#). Use [devices and technology](#) to keep your child entertained – but don't miss this!
- After the show, go cross the Guadalquivir river using the iconic Puente de Triana (Isabel II bridge) and head over to Triana, which is a vibrant old quarter in Seville and is beautiful at night. Many restaurants overlook the river on Calle Bettis and you can enjoy dinner with picture-perfect views you'll want to capture on camera. After dinner, walk alongside Calle Bettis and enjoy Spanish nightlife – you might even get to see some Flamenco dancing spill out to the streets.

### *Day 7: Back to Barcelona*

It will take nearly six hours by train to get back to Barcelona, so after breakfast in Seville, make your way to the train station for your journey back.

## **KID-FRIENDLY TIPS**

- Ensure you adjust kids schedule for Spanish times, which means sleeping late and waking up later. Dinnertime starts after 8 p.m., and the city stays lively through midnight. Adjusting your schedule will mean you can enjoy Barcelona the way its residents do.
- Be prepared to walk a lot... and make sure you have a [good stroller](#)! In Seville, especially, the streets are very narrow. (Our stroller worked perfectly, though!)
- There will be some long drive times between towns, so read our tips for [traveling in a car with your child](#).

## **OTHER TIPS**

- Be sure to try Sangria and tapas. Sangria is a punch made with wine and fresh fruit that originated in Spain, available in both red and white. We loved both! Also, our favorite tapas are albondigas, patatas bravas, Gambas al ajillo andg Gazpacho.

- Try to visit Malaga on a weekend night, the city feels like Miami and is filled with energy and people dressed to the nines. Even if you can't go to a club, you'll enjoy the vibe of the city best on a Friday or Saturday.
- Specify when you rent a car if you want a manual or automatic. Most rentals in Europe are automatically manual gear and if you cannot drive a stick, they may not have an automatic unless you have booked in advance. Automatics cost more because they have fewer cars. Also, find out whether the car will take regular petrol or diesel fuel – it's a mistake you don't want to make. Trust us!
- If you have more time, spend it in Seville. But, if you have even more days to fill, stop in Granada which is less than a couple of hours from Seville.
- Spain is renowned for its afternoon naps, called siestas, which takes place during the peak of afternoon heat. Take advantage of siesta time and have long lunches or early dinners.