

## Frequently Asked Questions

Version 19

## Welcome

Thank you for considering a tour with us.

We highly recommend that you take time to read through this FAQs document, since it covers a wide range of topics and many of the questions that past guests have raised and information relating to the tours and your holiday with us. It will only take you a short time to read and will be useful preparation for your trip.

It is written in an easy plain English style and it is not a contractual document, purely for information. Its main purpose is to help you understand how we work, the style of our tours and to help you decide if we are the type of company you want to deliver your tour/holiday of the region. If you do book, we recommend that you print this document and bring it with you, you can always read it again whilst in transit.

We are a small specialist operator who truly care for the experience our guests have whilst in Andalucía.

We will go out of our way to make your holiday and tour a wonderful and memorable experience.

Appreciating that you may only visit the region once in your life, we want to make it as special as we can.

This document aims to answer questions you may have and set your expectation for the level of guidance, free time, and overall philosophy and ethos that apply to our tours.

As we say on our website, what we expect from you is to come in a friendly and relaxed manner so that you can engage with us and other guests to have an experience that ranks right up there with some of the best travel experiences you have had.

We try to discourage people of a 'demanding' nature coming on our tours and we love to welcome guests who arrive with a smile on their face. Whilst you will immerse yourself in the incredible history this region offers, you are on holiday and here to enjoy yourself and we appreciate that. Be easy going, a little adventurous and explore.

Spain is a laid-back country and can be more bureaucratic than many other Western countries, so don't get annoyed at any little problems or issues that may occur, they can all normally be resolved relatively easily. Relax, participate and allow this wonderful region of Europe to imbue you.

Our range of accommodation is comfortable and 'boutique' and our vehicles are comfortable and safely driven. Our Tour Leaders are friendly and knowledgeable and the places we visit are beautiful, fascinating, cultural and historic.

Come in the right frame of mind, looking forward to having a good time and we will deliver you a great experience.

We really hope we have the opportunity to welcome you upon one of our tours.



**Gary Montagu**  
**Owner Tour Andalucía International**

Q. How long have you been running the tours?

A. We were the first company to offer 'small group' and private tours as a fully registered and insured Spanish company. Our first tours were run in 2009, so we have a high level of experience of running tours in Andalucía.

Q. What time do we need to arrive in Malaga?

A. You can arrive at any 'reasonable time' in the morning, afternoon or evening. We collect you from the airport and, subject to the time of arrival, either spend some time in the mountain village of Mijas, Antequera or just transfer to the accommodation. Please see our terms & conditions detailed in the booking form for the supplement applicable for collection and drop off required outside of our normal working hours.

Q. How far from Malaga are you based?

A. We are 45 minutes North of Malaga.

Q. Can we arrive by train or be collected from a local hotel?

A. Yes.

If you are arriving by train (*normally from Madrid*), we suggest that you come to Malaga train station if your train arrives before 15:00, since we can then spend a couple of hours in Mijas mountain village before transfer to the accommodation. This is a nice way to start your holiday. The train journey from Madrid is around 2 hours 40 minutes.

If your train arrives after 15:00, and you are staying centrally on either the Villa or Antequera tour, then we recommend that you come to Antequera Santa Ana (*on the same Madrid – Malaga line*) because it will be too late to go to Mijas and this station is only 10 minutes from us.

For train departures, we would normally recommend leaving from Antequera Santa Ana, if you are on the Antequera or Villa tour, so that you can maximise your departure day and avoid unnecessary travel.

Please contact us for a specific recommendation based on your travel plans.

Q. What time departure flight/train/drop off do we need to have?

A. The departure transfers are included in the price of our tour and we can take you to the airport/train station for any 'reasonable' departure time.

However, if you need to arrive at the airport/train station outside of our normal hours, there is a supplementary charge of €30 which is payable directly to the driver to compensate them for this. Please see the Terms & Conditions in the Booking Form which provides more information and specifies the times.

Q. What time in the mornings do we leave for the City trips and when do we return back?

A. For the Villa or Antequera based tours, we normally leave either at 09:00 or 09:30 depending on where we are visiting that day. We usually arrive back between 19:00 and 20:00. On the Granada visit, we spend the evening in the atmospheric

Albayzin to see the Alhambra lit up at night and we have dinner in a 'Bistro Style' restaurant that has a very good local Flamenco performance, so we don't arrive back until late in the evening.

If you are on the 5\* tour or the Ultimate Andalucia tour, then you stay in the Cities each night, so we will arrange a meeting time each day depending on the City and the planned itinerary.

Q. What accommodation do you have to offer?

A. For the Villa tours, we provide B&B accommodation in our Guest House Villa in the large village of Mollina, near Antequera. We may also be able to offer a 'self-catering' private 4 bedroom Villa option for small groups or families.

For the 'Antequera' tour you stay in the 4\* Hotel Antequera Golf in historic Antequera or you can upgrade to the 4\* Antequera Parador Hotel.

For the 5\* tour you stay in very nice 4\* or 5\* hotels in each of the Cities on a B&B basis. We confirm which ones at the time of booking, since they are subject to room availability.

For the Ultimate Andalucia tour, you normally stay in good quality 3\* or 4\* hotels in the Cities. We confirm which hotels we have sourced for any particular tour. Our tour itineraries detail the hotels we normally use.

Q. Which do most guests prefer between the Villa and the Hotel for the 'Villa' or 'Antequera' tours?

A. The most popular choice is the Villa. Most guests prefer the less formal environment and the freedom to sit around the pool/terraces and lounge areas.

Q. What happens if the Villa is fully booked, since we understand you have a limited amount of rooms available?

A. There is another Guest House in Mollina, 'Puesta del Sol' run by a lovely English couple, which normally has rooms available. Whilst the Villas are different in style, it is a very nice Guest House with large clean and comfortable bedrooms with en-suite bathrooms, a large swimming pool, guest lounge, outside seating areas and they also provide a substantial breakfast. It is a good alternative if you prefer to stay in the local village rather than one of the hotels in Antequera. It is just down the road, about 7 minutes walking, from our Villa and we collect you from there and drop you back there each day. We regularly utilise this if our Villa is fully booked. They have ground floor rooms, so if stairs are a problem for you, this is the preferable option.

Q. We normally stay in hotels, so how different is the Villa accommodation.

A. It is a different experience. There is no reception and it is a little bit like staying in a large house with some friends. Typically, there will be no more than another 4 to 8 guests staying in the Villa at the same time and most guests tend to socialise together in the evenings, but it's not mandatory. It's a friendly environment where you should feel at home for the week and nowhere near as formal as a hotel. You have your own bedroom with 'en-suite' shower, but share other areas. Our Villa is the converted farmhouse and because of this, the bedrooms are different sizes, but you only really sleep in the rooms since we are out all day and generally in the village in the evening. Bedrooms are allocated on a first come first serve basis unless you pre-book the apartment or one of the Suites, see the Prices page on our website. In the warm evenings, many guests sit outside on one of the terraces outside of the rooms or downstairs by the pool. We have a housekeeper who makes breakfast and cleans your rooms each day.

- Q. If we prefer to stay in the hotel in Antequera, should we select the Antequera Golf Hotel or the Parador Hotel?
- A. The Parador is a nicer hotel and closer to the centre of town. The Antequera Golf is functional and comfortable, but the Parador definitely has the edge and is more luxurious. The decision revolves around price and availability. The Parador does carry a higher supplement because their rooms are more expensive than the rooms at the Antequera Golf Hotel.

Antequera is becoming a more popular tourist destination, so at peak times both hotels can be fully booked.

If you don't mind paying extra, then our recommendation is the Parador.

- Q. What are the typical costs for lunch and dinner?
- A. Most days you have a Tapas lunch which is typically €10 - €15 a head or you can just have a sandwich. Dinner locally is good value, typically costing €12 - €20 for 'large' main courses and drinks. If you don't have a large appetite, the restaurants have no problem with people sharing one main course and/or a salad and usually offer 'half sized' portions.

If you are on the 5\* tour or the Ultimate Andalucía tour, we recommend some nice restaurants in each of the Cities.

- Q. We could not find any tour schedules on your website for the 'Villa' or 'Antequera' tours?
- A. We do not publish the tour schedules on the website. The schedules are regularly updated during the year, so please email us to request the latest schedule. We run tours weekly throughout the whole year.

- Q. Are the tours fully guided?

- A. No, they are 'semi-guided'.

We offer a mix of light guidance around the key Cities from our Tour Leaders. They will tell you some background of the Cities and history. However, they will NOT enter the monuments with you. We know a considerable amount about the history and culture of the region from the Roman period and, in particular, when the Moors occupied the region and we are happy to share this with you, but we are not historical 'experts'.

The major monuments offer audio & audio/visual guides in the form of 'handheld' units which you can rent from the entrance for a few euros. We recommend these at the Alhambra (Granada), the Royal Alcazar (Seville) and the Mesquita (Cordoba). It is personal preference if you want an audio guide, many of our guests prefer to visit the monuments and then read a little about them after their visit in some of the wonderful guide books available. It is entirely up to you.

Each City has their own City based licenced monument guides who just cover that City. We cover 5 to 7 Cities in the course of our tours, so we provide general guidance in each and interesting background information.

Normally we will give you an orientation walking tour of the City with some, history and facts in the morning/mid-day. Then we will take a tapas lunch and you visit the monuments in the afternoon. Our style of delivery tends to be interactive story telling about what happened in the past rather than just flat facts. We have found that our guests enjoy this a lot.

Many guests say that we gave them a wealth of historical and cultural information, but different guests expect different levels of guidance, so we prefer to describe ours as 'light guidance', which we find is the appropriate level for most of our guests.

If you particularly want to have a licenced City guide give you a detailed tour in any of the Cities, and you are prepared to hire them, then please let us know, since we have contact with many of them. They normally charge around €150 for up to 2 hours. They are subject to availability, due to the many large tour groups that visit Andalucía.

Q. Do you recommend us hiring one of the licenced City Guides.

A. The coach tours tend to contract the City Guides, who walk them around in large groups of 50 or more people.

Our approach is totally different to this and our tours tend to appeal to more independent professional person who do not want to be part of a large coach tour, but enjoy the interaction with a small number of similar like-minded people. Many coming from different countries around the world.

We feel that having a lightly guided tour from one of our Tour Leaders in a group of 2 to 7 guests is a much more appealing option, where you can take your time, interact and get the most out of your visit to the Cities.

Q. What does the Flamenco show in Granada cost and do you recommend it?

A. The Flamenco performance is at a lovely 'bistro style' restaurant 'Jardines de Zoraya' at the top of the Albayzin, the hill opposite the Alhambra, and the atmospheric Arab quarter. The food at the restaurant is good. They provide a '3-course' dinner from which you have selections of dishes for a special price for Tour Andalucía of €39, including the performance. Normally the price is €49 so it is a worthwhile reduction. The dinner and show is **not** included in the tour price. You pay the restaurant at the end of your meal just like any other restaurant. You can also just select from the 'a la carte' menu and, as a guest of Tour Andalucía, pay a reduced amount for the performance.

The performance is by a small group of talented artists, it is a genuine Flamenco performance and not a 'tourist' show and we recommend it wholeheartedly. However, it is loud and intense, so be prepared for this.

If you do not wish to eat at the restaurant, or see the performance, then please let us know. There are other restaurants in the Albayzin where you can have dinner, but we think the experience in Jardines de Zoraya is a great addition to your holiday.

Because this evening is a part of our tour itinerary, unless universally agreed by all guests on the tour, we stay in Granada until after the dinner and performance and return back to the Villas or Hotel late in the evening.

After, or before if dark, the dinner/show, we go to the Mirador San Nicolas to see the Alhambra lit up at night from the viewing point.

Q. How much are the entrance fees into the monuments?

A. If you are over 65 or a student there may be concessions, otherwise they range from €3 to €10.

Your entrance to the Alhambra will have already been booked and paid for at £14 (€15) a ticket, either by us if available on the Agents System, or by you on the Public System if the Agents System is sold out. If appropriate, we will send you the link to the online Public System, it is very simple to use. You have to provide your personal information including passport number as part of the booking.

We suggest budgeting around €35 - €40 per person for all of the entrance fees whilst you are here. If you think you may qualify for any 'age related' discounts, then make sure you ask at each monument if it is not clearly published and you must **have a copy of your passport or other photo identification at hand** to prove your age.

Q. I suffer from motion sickness, will that be a problem.

A. Motion sickness can range from a slight feeling of sickness to an extremely bad feeling. Normally for each journey you will spend no more than 1 hour in the vehicle before we reach our destination or have a break. If, however, your motion sickness is acute then possibly a touring holiday isn't the best option, since it does involve covering a large distance during the week. We have had guests in the past request to sit up front every day because of their motion sickness, but this is a little unfair, you need to consider other guests in the vehicle and, whilst the vehicles are relatively spacious, it is only reasonable to rotate around and let other guests in the vehicle have the opportunity to sit up front if they would like to.

Q. How much free time do we have during the tour?

A. We take you to each City and show you the monuments and places to visit. We tell you some background about them. In Granada, Seville, Cordoba & Malaga this includes a walk around the old town and small lanes with 'light guidance' covering historical and cultural information. We try to adopt an interesting 'story telling' style rather than just dry history. But, as stated, **we do not enter the monuments with you**. We leave you to go into the monuments on your own to explore and appreciate them. Please rent the handheld guides if you want detailed information about the monuments.

Ronda, is less itinerary based than the Cities and after an initial orientation, you are left to explore these on your own. For the Ronda and Malaga days, we spend the morning at a fascinating historical site and at the National Park 'El Torcal' respectively, before we reach our destination. Consequentially, you will spend less time in these locations than you will in the other Cities. Please see the tour itineraries which provide an overview of the typical structure in each location.

You can envisage (envision) that about 50% of your time in the 'major' Cities will be with the Tour Leader and 50% on your own.

Q. Do we have to eat at the restaurants you recommend for lunch?

No. We may suggest good value places for lunch, which we know serve tasty typical 'Andalucian' food, but you are free to eat wherever you wish. We have no allegiance with any particular restaurants and we do not take commission from any. One of the other reasons we have recommended restaurants in some Cities, is that we know they are efficient in time taken to serve, so you don't spend too long at lunch, leaving plenty of time for sightseeing.

Q. If we want to have something light for dinner and don't want to go out can we?

If you are staying in the Villa, there is a local supermarket close by and you can buy provisions and eat these at the Villa either outside on the terraces or by the pool or inside. If you are in the hotel, you can take items back to your room.

Q. Do we need to be able to speak Spanish?

A. Not at all, we will help you when necessary, however, all of the Cities are familiar with tourists and nearly all of the people there speak English.

Q. If we are on the 'Villa' or 'Antequera' tour, how long does it take to get to the Cities each day?

A. It takes roughly 1 hour to reach the start of each City, other than Seville which takes about 1 hour 30 minutes. It can take us a further 10 – 15 minutes to then make our way through the City to the parking places near the centre of the old quarter. Because the journey to Seville is a bit longer then, on the way to Seville, we take a short toilet and coffee break after 1 hour of driving.

For the 5\* tour and Ultimate Andalucía tour, the journeys are slightly different, because we normally travel at the end of each afternoon, or at the beginning of the day, to the next City to check into the hotel and the journey times are between 1.5 – 2 hours. On these 'circuit style' tours you spend the evenings in the Cities.

Q. What age demographic come on your tours?

A. This is difficult to answer because we have guests of all ages and often groups are of mixed ages. However, we would say that, typically, 60% are over 60, 30% are 35 – 60 and 10% 20 – 35. Occasionally we have a family with teenage children on tours. We rarely have any young children on the tour and we don't run tours to 'mixed' groups with young children on them, only private tours for the family.

Q. Is the 5\* tour run to a published schedule?

A. No. The 'Villa', 'Antequera' and 'Ultimate Andalucía' tours are run on a published schedule and consist of small groups of guests. The 5\* tour is scheduled to meet our guests' required dates and, as such, is dedicated to the couple or small private group.

Q. Do you cater for single guests or just couples/groups?

A. If you are a single traveller then we are delighted to include you in our tours and we have many single guests come on them.

There are single room occupancy supplements on the tour prices. The Prices Page on our website details the appropriate supplements. We try to keep the supplements as low as possible, but accommodation prices to us are often based on the room and the not the number of occupants.

Q. What is the minimum number of guests you require to confirm a tour is taking place.

Unlike most tour operators, who require quite a lot of guests booked before they confirm the tour, we run most of our tours and tour extensions subject to a minimum of just two guests booked on them.

The 'Ultimate Andalucía' tour is an exception, where we require a minimum of 4 guests before the tour is confirmed. So for this tour, we recommend considering the Villa/Antequera tour with the Western Andalucía extension as a back-up option if there are just two of you, since this goes to the same places and typically starts on the same Saturday.

Q. How many people are there in a tour group?

A. For the Villa and Antequera tours, our tour groups are normally no more than 7 guests per group.

We run each vehicle with driver/guide 'Tour Leader' as a separate tour group. We may be running more than one tour group on a tour concurrently, but each has its own Tour Leader. Sometimes, due to demand, we may use a second driver driving a tour vehicle, who isn't as knowledgeable as our more experienced Tour Leaders, and, in these cases, we may merge the two groups into one slightly larger group when we are guiding you around the Cities. Even in these instances, the group will be no more than a dozen.

The 5\* tour, however, is a dedicated private tour for the couple or small group booking the tour.

Q. Is the booking deposit per person?

A. No, it covers the booking for up to four guests.

Q. What is the deposit if we have more than four guests?

A. We charge a deposit of 15% of the total tour price for more than four guests.

Q. Is the deposit refundable if we need to cancel after we have paid it?

A. Please see our Terms & Conditions regarding Cancellation. These are contained in the booking form. The deposit is non-refundable, since it covers planning, administration and potentially other costs. We recommend having travel insurance which covers any costs you may have incurred if you have to cancel your holiday.

Q. We see that you use Paypal for the deposit payment, do we need a Paypal account?

A. No. Most guests pay by Credit/Debit Card. We just use Paypal to process the payments on their secure site because they offer good security. If you have a Paypal account you can utilise this.

Q. How do we pay the balance, can we pay by your website?

A. You cannot pay the balance via our website, this is only for the booking deposit.

It is preferable to us that you pay the balance by bank transfer to our UK, Spanish or one of our international bank accounts. We have international accounts, hosted by 'TransferWise' in some Countries, including USA & Australia, which may give you the option to make payment in your own currency and avoid any hefty exchange rates. Please contact us for details if this is attractive for you.

If you want to make payment by Credit/Debit Card, then we use PayPal to provide this facility and issue you with a PayPal 'Request for Payment' email. Then Paypal convert the rate to your local currency. This takes you to their secure site where you can select the option to pay by Card.

Balance payments must be made no later than 10 days before the tour start date.

But, if you prefer not to pay in advance of arrival, we can accept cash upon arrival at your accommodation, but only in Euros or £GBP.

You need to let us know you wish to do this and payment **must be made** on the day of arrival when you reach the accommodation. So please ensure you have sufficient Euros or £GBP with you to settle your account.

We use the prevailing rate on [www.xe.com](http://www.xe.com) to calculate the balance in €uros, on the day of payment, if you prefer to pay the balance upon arrival.

Please note that we do not accept any form of check/cheques, either personal, company or bank.

Please, ensure that you put the lead guest name as the reference on any bank transfers or payments, so that we can match the payment up to your booking. Please use the name of the person we have been email corresponding with. We often receive transfers with no obvious reference to who this is from, which can cause a problem in being able to tie up the payment with the booking. Send us an email when you make payment and we will confirm back to you receipt of the payment.

Q. Is it possible for us to pay the balance in our local currency?

A. As mentioned above, we have 'local' bank accounts in some of the leading international currencies. These are hosted for us by 'TransferWise'. These include \$US & \$AU. So, if you want to make the balance payment in any of these currencies, then let us know and we can send you the bank information for a bank transfer. We use [www.xe.com](http://www.xe.com) to convert the balance from £GBP into your local currency.

Q. What transport do you have?

A. We currently have seven tour vehicles and we are regularly enhancing and adding to our fleet.

Four of these are 9 seat vehicles and can accommodate a driver and up to 8 guests and the other three are 7 seat vehicles that can accommodate a driver and up to 6 guests.

They all have passenger zone air conditioning.

For your comfort, we normally have no more than 7 guests in the 9 seat vehicles, but occasionally if it is sensible for a particular day trip, we may request to take 8 passengers in the one vehicle.

Most of our vehicles are Mercedes passenger transport vehicles.

Q. Can we see what the vehicles look like?

A. Yes, here are photos of three of them.



- Q. Is there any particular dress code for any of the religious monuments, such as Cathedrals?
- A. No, Spain does not enforce any specific codes of dress, you do not need to cover your head, wear long sleeves and you can wear shorts. Just be sensible.
- Q. If we want to spend a few days at the end of the tour somewhere in the region can you help?
- A. Yes, we can almost certainly help you. If it is close to Malaga then we can take you there free of charge instead of the airport transfer. If it is more than 1 hour drive away, then we can do this for €45 per hour, the first hour is inclusive in your tour price. If you want us to book the hotels for you, pay them in advance and add the cost onto your tour balance, then please ask us. We have relationships with many hotels.
- Q. Do we do something on departure day?
- A. This depends on your flight/train departure times. We plan to get you to the airport 2 hours before your flight departure time and to the train station 45 minutes before departure. We often visit Antequera and some of the scenic local areas on the way to Malaga. If it is realistic to visit somewhere on departure day for we will include this.
- Q. How much walking is involved?
- A. There is a reasonable amount of walking on the tour because the Cities and monuments are quite large. The amount of walking normally varies between 5km - 8km a day depending on the City. We take things quite slowly so you can appreciate the environment and there is plenty of time to just sit and enjoy the atmosphere of the Cities if you wish.
- Q. What time of year is best to come?
- A. Andalucía is renowned as having one of the best climates in Europe. We would say March/April/May/June and September/October/November are traditionally the best months, but we often have great weather in the other months. You can get rain during November/December/January/February, but it is unusual for it to last for extended periods. It is normally very hot in July/August.
- Q. If we wanted to stay a few more days in the Villa or Hotel at the end of the tour is this possible?
- A. Yes, this is possible.
- See the Prices page on our website for the cost of additional nights. We also have a range of formal tour extensions which you can add to your tour.
- Q. Do the tours always start on a Wednesday or Saturday?
- A. For the Villa/Antequera tours, we publish a tour schedule with the tours normally starting on Wednesdays or Saturdays on alternate weeks. However, some of our guests cannot make the scheduled dates and, if we can, we will accommodate them arriving and departing on different dates and integrate them into existing or planned tours. Feel free to contact us if you have any specific dates and we will see if we can propose something for you.

Q. Do you have laundry facilities in the Villa?

A. Yes. There is a charge of €10 for a plastic carrier bag size of washing. This includes washing, drying and folding, but not ironing.

Guests **cannot** undertake their own washing directly using the washing machine. The laundry facilities are required every day by the housekeeper for towels, bed linen etc. and they need to schedule the washing accordingly.

Q. Does the local village 'Mollina' have restaurants?

A. Yes, the local village has a few small good value restaurants within walking distance.

Q. Is food available in the Villas?

A. We provide a comprehensive breakfast. This includes cereal, yoghurt, fruit, scrambled eggs, toast etc. but not a full English breakfast.

You can bring back food from the local supermarket and eat it on the terraces or guest lounges. Sometimes we have a Paella and/or Barbeque evening at the Villa. These are subject to a minimum of 10 guests and dependent on the weather. The charge for these evenings are €20 per person and this includes free drink, Sangria, Wine, Beer, Soft Drinks. We put on some music and sit by the pool lit up at night.

Q. If we stay in the Villa, can we spend an evening in Antequera?

A. Yes, we usually arrange an evening dinner in Antequera at a very good Spanish restaurant. Often, we go there straight from Seville.

Q. What is the village of Mollina like?

A. It is a typical large Spanish village of around 4,000 people. There is a mixture of old and modern houses. There is a small square in the village with a church. It is a relatively flat village.

It is very functional for our tours and most conveniently, it is centrally located. There are not a lot of shops in the village, however, it does have a good supermarket within walking distance of the Villa. It is very safe to walk in the evening in the village and the local people are friendly. It is not one of the beautiful 'white' mountain villages that Andalucía is famous for, but most guests enjoy staying in an authentic Spanish village. You will find many English people eating in the restaurants because there are some English retirement parks on the edge of the village and these people enjoy their lifestyle by using the restaurants & bars regularly.

Q. Are you on Trip Advisor?

A. Yes we are on Trip Advisor and we are pleased to have one of the highest ratings of any travel company on Trip Advisor.

[http://www.tripadvisor.co.uk/Attraction\\_Review-g187438-d5555289-Reviews-Tour\\_Alanducia\\_International\\_Day\\_Tours-Malaga\\_Costa\\_del\\_Sol\\_Province\\_of\\_Malaga\\_An.html](http://www.tripadvisor.co.uk/Attraction_Review-g187438-d5555289-Reviews-Tour_Alanducia_International_Day_Tours-Malaga_Costa_del_Sol_Province_of_Malaga_An.html)

Q. Are you registered?

A. Yes, we are a fully registered Spanish Company, TOUR ANDALUCIA INTERNATIONAL XXI S.L. Number B93181758.

We are also a registered 'Agencia de Viaje' with the Andalusian Tourist Office registration number CIAN 296265-2.

CIAN is the Spanish equivalent of ABTA in the UK.

It is essential, whoever you choose to tour Andalucía with, that you check that they are a registered 'Agencia de Viaje' otherwise they are offering the holiday illegally and will not be correctly insured.

Q. What protection do I have if I pay in advance?

A. As a registered 'Agencia de Viaje' we have insurance that covers any monies paid if we cannot provide the holiday you have paid for.

However, better than this, we are the only tour operator that we know of, who do not require you to pay the tour in full before arrival. We offer you the option to pay the balance for your tour in cash upon arrival if you have any concerns whatsoever. Please note that we cannot accept any other form of payment upon arrival, only cash in either £GBP or €euros as mentioned earlier.

Q. Are your vehicles insured for carrying passengers?

A. Yes. We have vehicle insurance in the company name that insures us for carrying private tour passengers.

We also have public liability insurance that is vetted each year by the Junta de Andalucía Office of Tourism in order to issue our Operating Licence.

Q. We saw 'El Torcal' on the itinerary for the Malaga day, what is this?

A. El Torcal (the lime towers) is a National Park at the top of the mountain range near Antequera. It is quite a spectacular area and there is a 50 minute walk (1.4 km) which you can do through the rock formations.

You should wear good quality shoes/trainers to do the walk and if it is early Spring or Winter, it may be cold there since it is very high, so wear warm layered clothing and take a small bottle of water.

Whilst the walk is officially rated 'low' in terms of difficulty, it can be quite arduous and you do have to walk up and down rocks on a narrow track and thread your way through some downhill parts. So, it can be quite 'tricky'. Most of our guests do the walk, but don't underestimate it and walk it carefully.

You do not have to undertake the walk, there is a cafeteria and you can just sit and enjoy the beautiful scenery whilst other guests are on the walk. And is also an interesting reception centre with a nice exhibition.

If you have any walking difficulties you should not do the walk and, if it has been raining and the rocks are wet, then we do not do the walk since they can be slippery, muddy and dangerous. In this instance, we will normally visit Antequera before Malaga or go straight to Malaga.

In accordance with our Terms & Conditions, the walk is undertaken at your own risk.

- Q. If we want to make some purchases of leather goods, where do you recommend?
- A. Several guests have told us, in their opinion, Mijas offers the best quality of leather goods for attractive prices. Because we only normally visit Mijas on arrival day, and this is subject to your arrival time, then we suggest if you see something you like when you are there then buy it as you may not see quite the same quality/value elsewhere.
- Q. We like spending some time in the countryside, do you offer anything?
- A. Yes, we offer a Combination Tour where you take part in the appropriate City Cultural Tour and then you can add some days at the end to stay in the Countryside and enjoy a few walks hosted by our Walking Guide. Prices for this are detailed on our website.
- Q. Why are your prices in £GBP and not in €Euro?
- A. Whilst our guests come from all over the world, the largest single group (around 35%) come from the UK because of the ease of travel to Spain with low cost flights. As such, it makes business sense for us to use this as our base currency.
- Q. What are the standards of hygiene like in Spain?
- A. Hygiene standards in Spain are high, we rarely have guests suffer with 'dodgy tummies'.

You should drink plenty of water each day on the tour, because it is easy to become dehydrated and this will make you feel unwell. We recommend at least two litres a day if the weather is hot.

- Q. How do the tour extensions work?
- A. You choose any of the tour extensions and on day 7 of the normal tour, when the other guests are departing, you are taken by one of us on the first day of your tour extension. You will either remain in the same accommodation or stay in hotels depending on the extension. The details are published on our website.
- Q. Do you book our Alhambra entrances?
- A. As an authorised Agent, we prefer to book the entrances for you and add the price of the tickets to your balance.

However, only a limited number of tickets are made available to Agents and, for some peak months, we may not be able to obtain them.

We submit our requirements for tickets to the Patronato de la Alhambra more than three months in advance and our allocations are made at this point.

If we have not managed to book the tickets for you, we email you a link for you to book the entrances directly on the Public System. And, whilst the Agents System may be sold out, there are nearly always tickets available on this so long as you have a sufficient period of time before the start date of your tour. Agents are not allowed to use the Public System. It is a very simple booking process, but you do need to provide your passport numbers and name for each guest. The Alhambra are very strict in their control of tickets.

Q Do we need to pre-book tickets for any monuments other than the Alhambra?

A. For most monuments you just purchase tickets at the entrance.

However, we advise pre-booking tickets online for the Alcazar Royal Palaces in Seville and we can do this for you when you are here. There is a significant reduction in the entrance price if you are over 65. This avoids waiting in line at the entrance and the lines for the Alcazar can be long at peak times.

Q. Do we need any Visas or special passport conditions to come to Spain.

A. You need to check depending on the Country of issue of your passport. Please remember, that your passport may need to be valid for several months after the date of travel, so check its expiry date to make sure that you fulfil any travel documentation requirements that your own country has. A search on the internet or government travel websites will detail any requirements.

Q. What do you expect from us?

A. We are a small and friendly company and our only expectation is that you come in a friendly 'holiday' frame of mind with a positive attitude.

Smiling and being pleasant makes the holiday wonderful for everyone including us.

Spain is great, sometimes frustrating and sometimes different from other Western Cultures, but a fabulous place to visit.

Come in the right spirit and it will be a great holiday.

We will go out of our way to give you a unique experience and if any problem arises we will address it quickly and as best we can.

We aren't a big uncaring tour operator, we genuinely care about the experience our guests have, so bear that in mind and come prepared to enjoy yourself. Don't be overly demanding, you are here for an authentic experience in a beautiful part of the world.

Remember the whole experience to coming to Spain is not just to replicate what you experience at home. The food will be different, the 'laid back' attitude may be different, the customs, restaurant service.... But that is why you travel!

Spanish people eat later in the evenings, more people smoke (but not inside restaurants), they are noisy, enthusiastic and demonstrative people. Enjoy their zest for life.

If the experience purely replicated of what you have at home, then it would be a waste of time and money coming.

Embrace the difference, adopt a relaxed style and take advantage of the whole experience. Don't complain the waiter is slow or makes mistakes, if the bill/check takes ages to come, it is the way the Spanish do things. We are visiting their country and not trying to change it.

A large part of your holiday with us is to experience a different culture and way of life, not just to see the amazing sites.

Whilst Andalucía has amazing Cities, it is still very much a farming and agriculture region, with Olive Oil, Wine, Hams and Cheeses being the primary produce.

Have fun, see the spectacular sites, enjoy the different food, it is a short visit and most people fall in love with Andalucía.

Spanish people do eat dinner later than what you may be used to, so be prepared for this. Normally though, dinner is available from 20:00 in most restaurants.

Q. Will we have the same driver/guide for the duration of our tour?

A. Some tours have the same Tour leader, some have different ones during the course of the tour. It depends on availability and our schedules. All of our Tour Leaders are personable, friendly and fun. Nearly everyone enjoys their company. We try to allocate a whole tour to the same one, but because of the flexible nature of what we do, this isn't always possible and you may have the company of different ones for some of your tour. Our Tour leaders are neither frivolous or too serious, but professional with a good sense of humour and good company to be with. All are very safe drivers. Whilst they may 'joke around with you', they are all highly competent.

Q. Are your Tour Leaders employed staff?

A. Yes, they are all on registered employment contracts with us and we only use an approved contractor to increase our resources if we need to at peak times.

Q. What is the tipping culture in restaurants?

A. Spain is not a big tipping culture. But people do tip for dinner/lunch, normally you just work on one or two euros per head depending on the size of the bill. You may find in some travel books it says 'Don't tip in Spain', this is somewhat misleading because people do tip, just not at the same level you may do in North America for instance.

You don't normally tip if you are just having a coffee.

Q. Should we tip the Tour Leaders and/or the Housekeeper?

A. The Tour leaders and the housekeeper do not automatically expect tips. If you have enjoyed the tour, and the service they have given you, and you want to express your appreciation in the form of a small 'financial gesture' then they would be delighted, but they do not expect it. It is totally left to your discretion.

We are regularly asked for guidelines on tipping the staff and we feel a little awkward in making suggestions. However, a reasonable guideline would be that, if you are on one of the mixed small group tours, then think of the equivalent of €10 - €20 per couple to the Housekeeper and to your main Tour Leader. If it is a private tour, such as the 5\* tours, then please just use your discretion as to what you feel comfortable with. You should not tip every Tour Leader who may have taken you on a day trip. If you have several Tour Leaders during your stay with us, then you can leave something that is put into a 'pot' which we then share out from time to time to all of the Tour Leaders.

But we reiterate that you are under no obligation to leave any tip and we operate differently to the likes of cruise ships where tipping is automatically expected.

Q. What do we do if there is nobody waiting at the airport, train station or comes to our hotel to collect us at the expected time?

A. Firstly, please do not panic.

We have an unparalleled level of punctuality in meeting and collecting our guests, However, occasionally and for many different reasons, we may be slightly delayed.

Please be patient, you are on holiday, relax and we will arrive as quickly as possible.

Similarly, if we agree a time to meet for departure at the end of the day, and the Tour Leader arrives late, just relax. It isn't that they have forgotten, but sometimes for efficiency we move vehicles in the afternoon whilst you are in monuments or on your own, and there may be a traffic problem, parking problems or a blocked road that we have been caught up in. The delay will purely be because we are trying to make the service to you as good as we possibly can, no other reason.

You can call Gary or any of the other Tour Leaders, the telephone numbers are below and we will also give them to you when you are here.

Do not worry, you will not be left stranded. You may get put through to voicemail because we are driving on our way to collect you, so, if possible, leave a contact number where we can call you back.

We stress that it is extremely rare that we do not meet you as planned. If there has been a serious delay, such as a vehicle breakdown, or traffic accident, we will have back-up capability to send someone to collect you.

It's a good idea to put the contact numbers into your mobile/cell phone before arriving on the tour and then it is easy to make contact.

Q. Is there a printed itinerary we can have?

A. Yes, we email you a copy of the itinerary, which covers what you do and see in each place. The sequence of the day trips is slightly different for a Wednesday or Saturday arrival on the Villa/Antequera Tours, but the City visits are exactly the same. If you are on the 5\* or Ultimate Andalucía tour, then you will receive a customised itinerary which details the hotels you will be staying in.

Q. What facilities does the Villa have?

A. The rooms have private 'en-suite' bathrooms, other than the Twin room which has a large dedicated bathroom opposite the small hallway. We supply towels, hair dryers, shampoo, shower gel, bathrobes. Details of the Villa are published with photographs on our website. The facilities in the local Guest House Villa 'Puesta Del Sol' are similar.

Q. There are quite a few Coach Tours in the region, why do you think we should book with you for one of your tours?

A. It entirely depends what you want from your touring holiday in Andalucía.

We are very different from a coach tour operator. The Coach Tour Operators have much larger marketing and advertising budgets than we do and we are only a fraction of the size of them. They tend to focus on numbers, rather than individuals, since they make money in processing guests in volume.

So, if you are happy to be in a large group of around 50 people and follow a Tour Leader who is holding up an umbrella and talking to you via an electronic device in your ear, then we suggest the coach tour is fine for you.

We are not 'knocking' the large coach tours, they suit some people superbly well, we are just explaining the difference.

Most of the coach tours will pass you over to a City Guide for a formal tour, we tend to be less formal and more flexible.

If you are an 'independent' type of person and want to have genuine conversations with someone knowledgeable about the area and its history, and have a 'true' experience of the region and its culture, then we feel we offer this more than the coach tours.

Our guests tend to be professional people who enjoy the company of other 'like-minded' people from all around the world. But they don't like the idea of being in a large group. They prefer to 'participate' in the Cities rather than simply 'observe' them and feel our small group philosophy endorses this. We have many Doctors, Teachers, Lecturers, Engineers, Company Directors, Accountants, Lawyers, Health Professionals, Business Owners, IT Professionals, Civil Servants..... come on our tours and they find them, and the company of their other guests, stimulating.

We do though, encourage, 'strong' political opinions to be tempered in discussions with other guests !

When you think about it, your choice boils down to one significant factor, which is, if you don't want to be part of a group of 50 or more, and you prefer not to do it yourself, then we offer a great alternative. Because, for roughly the same price of a coach tour, we deliver what we feel is a better experience.

We make it extremely easy for you to turn up in Andalucía and just enjoy the holiday without hassle. Leave the planning and organisation to us and we'll make sure you see and visit the best of these amazing places.

It really is about what suits you best and, hopefully, we will be able to host you on one of our tours.

Telephone contact numbers for the team:

Gary	0034 699 328359
James	0034 659 860900
Rob	0034 679 878239
Antonio	0034 722 417500
Alex	0035 269 1892874
Alan	0034 689 679669