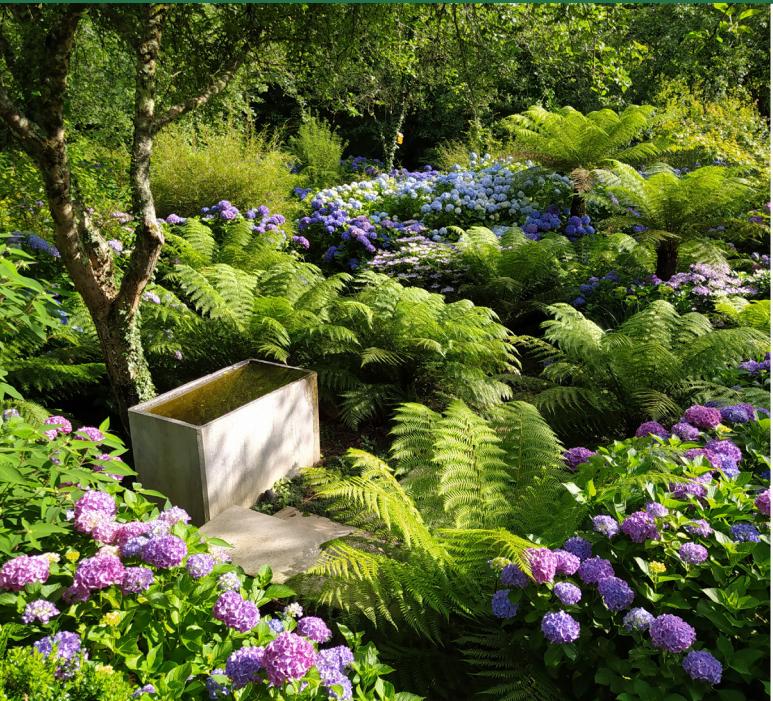


Visiting Gardens

The Garden Club of America

The Spanish Atlantic with The Basque Country, Segovia & Madrid

September 7 - 17, 2026



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WELCOME TO SPAIN

Our journey begins in San Sebastian in the Bay of Biscay, one of the most fashionable resorts of Europe in the 19th century. From here we visit gardens by world renowned designers, Piet Oudolf and Basque landscape architect Iñigo Segurola, as well as the private home and garden of the late painter Ignacio de Zuloaga. There will be a day exploring gardens in the French Basque Country, with a visit to Saint-Jean-de-Luz. Traveling west along the scenic coastline, we will spend a morning in Bilbao, seeing its iconic landmark buildings, including the Guggenheim. We continue into Cantabria to stay in Santander, visiting the Pereda Park, landscaped by Fernando Caruncho, the Palace of the Marquis de Comillas and El Capricho, a villa designed by Gaudi. Next we drive across the mountains to Burgos for lunch, before staying near Segovia, to visit the historic gardens of the Royal Palace of La Granja de San Ildefonso. Following a day of private gardens in Avila, we cross the Guadarrama Mountains to Madrid, where highlights include an out-of-hours visit to the Prado and a tour of the Royal Botanical Gardens. Throughout the tour we benefit from the insight of garden expert and art historian Sofia Barroso. We will also be received by owners for drinks, lunch and *tapas* at a number of enchanting private homes and gardens, hidden from public view.

Our accommodations are 4-star and 5-star properties that range from a grand dame Belle Époque hotel, to a spectacular beachside location in Santander, followed by the Parador, originally a palace for the Royal children. We end the tour in Madrid at the intimate and luxurious Santo Mauro hotel. Restaurants have also been carefully selected to reflect the best of Spanish cuisine with San Sebastian as one of the top culinary destinations in the country.



ITINERARY

DAY 1: MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 7

USA / SAN SEBASTIAN

Arrive at either San Sebastian Airport or Bilbao Airport, where you will be met by your Tour Managers and transfer to the hotel.

Lunch independently.

From 3pm, check into your rooms at the Hotel Maria Cristina where we will stay for three nights.

Leave for an orientation and see the trio of sculptures by Edward Chillida, *Comb of the Wind*.

Continue to Chillida-Leku, Edward Chillida's spectacular sculpture park and museum. Enjoy a guided tour of the museum and garden, designed by landscape designer Piet Oudolf with the help of Alvaro de la Rosa Maura.

Drinks at Chillida-Leku, with an introduction to the tour by art historian Sofia Barroso, followed by dinner.

Return to the hotel.

Hotel Maria Cristina

This Belle Époque hotel opened its doors in 1912. Historically a favourite amongst royalty and aristocrats, the hotel embodies 5-star luxury and elegance. Presiding over the old town with river views, it is less than a five minute walk from the beach.

DAY 2: TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 8

SAN SEBASTIAN

Leave by minibuses for Oiarzun, to visit the LUR Garden, designed by Basque landscape architect Iñigo Segurola. He has created one of the most interesting contemporary gardens of the Basque Country, a small paradise in the woodland.

Continue to the fishing village of Getaria, to visit the Balenciaga Museum, devoted to the great Basque fashion designer.

Following lunch overlooking the port, visit the private home and garden of the painter Ignacio de Zuloaga (1870-1945), now a family foundation.

Return to San Sebastian for dinner in a restaurant.



DAY 3: WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 9

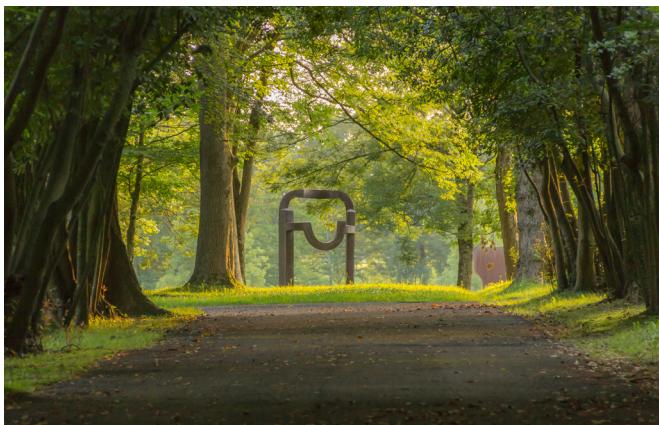
FRENCH BASQUE COUNTRY

Drive into the French Basque Country to visit Villa Arnaga, the traditional Basque home and garden of French author Edmond de Rostand. The French poet and dramatist is associated with neo-romanticism and is known best for his 1897 play *Cyrano de Bergerac*. His charming garden is full of Basque flair.

Continue to Arcangues, for lunch at Atelier Gaztelur, located in a magnificent manor house. The property has a beautiful garden and an antique and decorative arts shop, as well as a florist.

After lunch, continue to Saint-Jean-de-Luz, visit the Church of St-Jean-Baptiste, where Louis XIV married the Spanish Habsburg infanta, Maria Theresa.

Visit a private garden before returning to San Sebastian for dinner independently. An opportunity to visit a Basque Pintxos bar or one of the many Michelin-starred restaurants that showcase the rich Basque culinary traditions.



DAY 4: THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 10 SAN SEBASTIAN/ BILBAO/ SANTANDER

Check out of the hotel and enjoy a scenic drive to Bilbao.

Take a guided architectural walking tour of the city's landmarks to see the metro, by Norman Foster, the walking bridge by Santiago Calatrava, and works by Rafael Moneo and Alvaro Siza. We will also see new parks that have been landscaped under the guidance of landscape architect Diana Balmori. The tour concludes with a visit to the Museum of Fine Arts, with the new extension designed by Sir Norman Foster.

Walk to the Guggenheim Museum for lunch at the museum's Bistro Restaurant.

After lunch admire Frank Gehry's unique architectural design for one of the 20th century's most important buildings and see the special collections.

Leave by coach for the charming coastal town of Santander in the region of Cantabria. On arrival there will be a panoramic tour of the city. Check into the 4-star Gran Hotel Sardinero where we stay for three nights.

Dinner at the hotel.

Gran Hotel Sardinero

With spectacular sea views, overlooking the famous El Sardinero beach, this traditional 4-star hotel has been carefully restored with modern amenities.



DAY 5: FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 11 - CANTABRIA

Depart for Puente de San Miguel and visit the atmospheric private gardens of the Botín family, by special arrangement. The manor house is surrounded by centuries-old, carefully cared for trees, with specimens of metasequoia, sequoias, horse chestnuts, Cedars of Lebanon, Irish yew and a eucalyptus planted in 1867. One of the gardens was designed by landscape designer Carmen Añón.

Continue to Santillana del Mar, walk through the village and visit the Romanesque Collegiate church and see its beautiful cloister.

Visit the contemporary art collection and garden of Jesús Polanco and Pancho Pérez González at Torre de Don Borja.

After a lunch of regional specialties at the Parador, visit two private gardens on the way to Comillas. In the 19th century Comillas was made fashionable by Count Güell, Gaudí's patron, and Antonia Lopez y Lopez, first Marquis of Comillas, who was Gaudí's father-in-law. On arrival, see the Palace of the Marquis de Comillas and El Capricho, a villa designed by Gaudí.

Return to Santander for dinner independently.





DAY 6: SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 12 SANTANDER & ESLES

This morning, leave by coach for the Pereda Park, landscaped by Fernando Caruncho and the Cristina Iglesias fountains surrounding the Botín Foundation by Renzo Piano.

Continue to the charming village of Esles to visit the private gardens of the Gonzalez Camino family, followed by lunch.

In the afternoon we visit the garden and studio of artist Manuel Saro and Fernando Bermejo.

Return to Santander for a *tapas* dinner at a local restaurant.

DAY 7: SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 13 SANTANDER/ BURGOS/ SEGOVIA

Check out of the hotel and depart by coach, for a scenic drive across the mountains to Burgos.

Lunch at the Landa Palace hotel, see the attractive garden landscaped by the owner's husband, the architect Santiago Almeda.

Continue to La Granja de San Ildefonso, near Segovia and check into the 5-star Parador de la Granja, located in the Casa de los Infantes, the 18th-century palace built for the Royal children.

This afternoon visit the gardens of the Royal Palace of La Granja de San Ildefonso, built in the 18th century by Felipe V, the first Bourbon King, as a summer residence. With an abundance of water from the Guadarrama Mountains, the King created extensive gardens with elaborate fountains and around the palace a small town was built.

Dinner at the Parador.

Parador de la Granja

The Parador de la Granja is in the Casa de los Infantes, in the town of San Ildefonso, near Segovia. Originally an 18th-century palace built by Charles III for his two sons, it has been carefully converted into a 4-star Parador hotel. A wonderful base to explore the Royal Palace gardens and Segovia.

DAY 8: MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 14 AVILA & SEGOVIA

Depart for Avila, to visit a beautiful private garden designed by landscape architects Miguel Urquijo and his wife Renate Kästner.

Return to Segovia to visit another private garden, landscaped and owned by Leandro Silva.

Continue by coach to the private monastery of Santa María de la Sierra. Built in the 12th century in a natural pine woodland, the abandoned monastery was recently transformed into a weaving center and garden of plants used for dyes.

Continue to Pedraza to visit the beautiful home and garden of the widow of the great Spanish interior decorator Paco Muñoz, with *tapas* and drinks.

Return to the Parador.



DAY 9: TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 15

SEGOVIA/ MADRID

Check out of the hotel and leave by coach, crossing the Guadarrama Mountains to Madrid.

On arrival in Madrid visit the new Gallery of Royal Collections. The museum displays highlights of the collections of the Spanish Habsburg and Bourbon dynasties.

Following lunch at the museum, check into the 5-star Santo Mauro hotel for two-nights' stay.

Dinner in a local restaurant.

Santa Mauro

The 5-star hotel is a Marriott Luxury Collection Hotel. Centrally located in Madrid's elegant Barrio de Salamanca, there are many restaurants, shops, and galleries nearby, as well as the Retiro Park. It is an intimate and elegant hotel with 19th century design features.

DAY 10: WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 16

MADRID

Early this morning, visit the Prado Museum for an out-of-hours visit to see the highlights of the collection. Continue on foot for a tour of the Royal Botanic Garden, founded in 1775.



DAY 10 CONTINUED:

Lunch independently and an afternoon at leisure.

Early evening, leave for a special tour of the Liria Palace, home of the Duke of Alba. The palace has extensive collections and a beautiful garden designed at the beginning of the 20th century by Le Forestier.

Farewell dinner this evening will be at Monteverdi, one of Madrid's most elegant new private clubs.

DAY 11: THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 17

MADRID/ USA

This morning transfer to Madrid Airport for return flights to the USA.



THE SPANISH ATLANTIC TOUR: SEPTEMBER 7-17, 2026

PRICING INFORMATION

Price: \$12,970 per person

Rates are quoted per person based on sharing a double or twin-bedded room.

Single Supplement: \$2,770 per person

A non-refundable deposit of \$2,600 per person is required by January 9, 2026 to register your place on the tour. The second non-refundable deposit of \$2000 is required by February 18, 2026. The balance payment is required no later than May 18, 2026.

THE COST INCLUDES:

- 9 nights' accommodation in 5-star and 4-star hotels as indicated in the program (or similar), including VAT and city tax
- Transportation as per the itinerary, including bottled water on the motor coaches
- Airport transfers (group or individual) upon arrival and departure
- All buffet breakfasts
- 8 lunches, 6 dinners and 2 tapas dinners including wine, water and coffee/tea
- 1 drinks reception
- Entrances into museums, monuments and gardens
- Porterage gratuities
- Local English-speaking guide/s
- Gratuities to guides, drivers and in restaurants
- Whisper system headsets
- The services of lecturer Sofia Barroso
- The services of one Specialtours Tour Manager

THE COST DOES NOT INCLUDE:

- Flights from USA to Spain and return
- Any meals indicated as independent
- Personal extras
- Housekeeping tips
- Travel and/or trip cancellation insurance
- Costs associated with early arrival or late departures
- Entry visas, if required
- Government levies, taxes or visa costs introduced after costing and publication of this programme

Changes to the itinerary: Please note, that certain elements of this itinerary, and/or the order of events, may well be subject to alteration due to circumstances beyond our control.

Accommodation: Hotels are chosen on the basis of category, character and location. Sometimes the style of hotel will mean that not all rooms are of the same size or have the same outlook.



TRIP CANCELLATION:

Tour Participants may cancel their participation on this tour provided that the cancellation is communicated in writing to Specialtours at The Ultimate Travel Company (UTC Ltd.) by the person who signed the registration form. The deposits are non-refundable. After the balance is paid by May 18, 2026, the cancellation charges are as follows:

May 18 to July 28, 2026: 50%

July 29 to August 17, 2026: 75%

August 18, 2026 to start of the tour: 100%

If you choose to cancel your participation in the Tour, your booking may be transferred to a third party on the waiting list and who satisfies the conditions required to take the Tour (the "Substitute"). In this event, the Substitute shall pay UTC Ltd. the non-refundable deposit or, if it is less than 16 weeks prior to the departure date, the full cost of the Tour, and UTC Ltd. will refund to you all amounts paid by you less an administrative fee of \$750. The amounts not refundable by UTC Ltd. may be recoverable, if applicable, under a Tour Participant's personal insurance policy.

Fitness to travel: While we do not impose any upper age limitations on joining a tour, participants must be reasonably fit and able to cope with its specific demands, especially where sustained periods of sightseeing and walking are involved. The tour is not suitable for those who have difficulty in walking, may require wheelchair assistance at any time, or are unable to keep pace with the group. All Tour Participants on the Tour must be eighteen (18) years of age or older to participate in the Tour. If you are in any doubt as to the suitability of the Tour, you must make this known to UTC Ltd. before you book and you will be advised accordingly.

For more information about the tour please contact Verity Smith at verity@specialtours.co.uk or on 833 923 4773 (toll free).

This Visiting Gardens program with The Garden Club of America is offered in collaboration with Specialtours.