

Valencia. The Soul of Mediterranean Cuisine - 6 Nights / 7 Days

The city and region of Valencia, Castellon del Alt Maestrazgo, El Puig, Roman Sagunto and the Wine Region of Utiel-Requena.

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You'll arrive in Valencia, Spain's third largest city. Located on the white sand beaches of **La Costa Blanca** in the heart of the Spanish Riviera. With year-round, near-perfect temperatures, it's not hard to understand why the capital of Valencia and this region is Spain's favorite vacation destination. During your tour you're not only going to explore many of the region's historic sites, such as the medieval county of **El Puig** and Roman **Sagunto** where **El Cid** left his mark, but you'll discover why Valencia is also known as the heart of Spain's Mediterranean Cuisine.

You'll dine in some of Valencia's best restaurants, and learn how to prepare many of the region's most popular dishes under the tutelage of the **AldeaRoqueta's** own traditional cook, **Vincenta**.



You'll also be the guest of one of Spain's upcoming Chefs, **Ximo Saez**, known for his own innovative take on traditional Valencia gastronomy.

Day 01 – Valencia - Castellon del Alt Maestrazgo

Today you'll be greeted at the airport and driven to the county Castellon north of Valencia, to your rural hamlet accommodations at the lovely **AldeaRoqueta** in the picturesque valley of the **Sierra Engarcerán**, within the historic county of **Castellon del Alt Maestrazgo**, known as "the Tuscany of Spain". After resting,



your host will take you on a tour of this historic hamlet, whose history dates back to the Templars. This quaint village, with



its lovely square and narrow passageways, has been carefully and lovingly restored to recall its former glory.

eighteen spacious and secluded suites that are spread throughout the hamlet. Tonight you'll join the rest of the guests for welcome cocktails and sampling of the wines unique to this area of Valencia. This will be followed by a welcome dinner, where you'll be introduced to the local cuisine.

Your hotel couldn't be more perfectly designed to partake and enjoy this panoramic and tranquil landscape. AldeaRoqueta has

Day 02 – Cooking with Vino in Maestrazgo

After a typical country breakfast you're going to embark on your first great adventure into **Valencia's** creative Mediterranean cuisine. You'll join **Vincenta**, the **AldeaRoqueta's** known traditional cook, in preparing several of the region's most popular home dishes. You'll choose from several favorite local recipes, such as **Arroz Caldoso con Pollo y Conejo**, rice with chicken and rabbit, or **Tomblet**, a special lamb stew or **Olla del Maeztrazgo**, stew made with lamb, pork and vegetables, or **Alcachofas Rellenas**

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(Stuffed artichokes). Then enjoy the fruits of your labor during **La Comida** (lunch).

In the afternoon, become acquainted with some of the various nearby family-owned wineries. They are well known for their Cabernet-Sauvignons, Syrah and Merlot wines, like **Mas de Rander, Gabriel Mayo or Vicente Flors Bodegas**, established wineries where you'll partake of excellent wine tasting. You'll also find out why the rich soils of the **Maestrazgo** plains make it possible for the Valencia region to produce some of Spain's most unique wines. This evening relax back at the **AldeaRoqueta** before a country dinner.



Day 03 – El Puig

Today you'll travel to **El Puig** County, where you'll visit a number of historic sites of importance dating back to the time of **El Cid**. You'll start with a tour of the fascinating **Monastery El Puig**, which was founded by King **James I of Aragon**, who conquered Valencia from the Moors in the 13th century. It's now the home of 240 paintings from the 16th through the 18th centuries. It also documents the development of the printing press and exhibits the first book to have been printed in Spain in 1474. You'll visit **El Puig's** two famous Chapels: **Ermita de San Jorge** and **Ermita de Santa Bárbara**.

Then it's on to **Sagunto** for lunch, where you'll enjoy '**paella**' in the land where it was invented. Here you'll explore this city, which played a crucial role in Spain's ancient history. In 219 BC, this **Roman** Fortress was sacked by **Hannibal**. All the inhabitants were killed or killed themselves rather than fall into the hands of the Carthaginians. But the history of "**Saguntum**" dates back even further. In fact in this one location, you can explore the excavated remains of all five of Spain's great civilizations. The **Iberians, Carthaginians, Romans, Moors**, and early **Visigoth Christian Kingdoms**.

Your visit will end with the *infamous Roman limestone amphitheatre*, which was controversially restored using modern materials. Then return to your relaxing accommodations in **AldeaRoqueta**, where you'll join **Vicenta** for more hands-on training preparing local culinary delights, which you'll get to savor during dinner.



Day 04 – Alto Turia and the great Wines of Utiel–Requena - Valencia

This morning travel along the upper reaches of the **Rio Turia** through country picturesque hills in order to reach the world renowned wine region **of Utiel– Requena**. Here you'll have the opportunity to tour some of the region's great **bodegas**. Like the **Gandia Brothers** or the **Hoya de Cadena Wineries**, surrounded by acres and acres of magnificent lush vineyards. If you choose to you can enjoy a balloon ride which takes you over the valley (optional). Your tour will ends with a wine tasting and an informative discussion on how to pair their different exquisite wines with the rich local cuisine. Then continue to the modern and historical city of Valencia, for a relaxing evening in your 4* elegant and comfortable hotel.

Day 05 – Historic Valencia

This morning after breakfast enjoy a private walking tour of **Valencia's rich historic Quarter**. Your visit will start with the public market, an art-deco masterpiece of iron, glass and tile, where you'll have a chance to admire an immense assortment of local produce. The market is visited daily by local chefs, searching for fresh produce for their restaurants.



Then continue your visit of the famed **Serranos Towers**, the great Cathedral of Valencia of 1262, with its three famous portals, each built in a different architectural style: Romanesque, Baroque and Gothic; next to the **Miguelete Tower**, the city's landmark. Finish your with **La Lonja Silk Exchange**, a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Built in 1482 and decorated with massive gargoyles, it's considered a Gothic masterpiece.

Before lunch, in the heart of the historic quarter, you'll have the opportunity to visit one of the local popular café/bars where you can drink a cool glass of authentic **horchata**, a very popular drink made of the **chufa** root. Afternoon on your own to relax and do some last minute shopping.

Day 06 – Valencia, First City of the New Millennium

Today you're going to see architecture so advanced and futuristic, it has given Valencia the reputation of being the First City of the New Millennium. Of course, we're talking about the avant-garde **Ciudad de Artes y Ciencias**, the City of Arts and Sciences, designed by Valencia's own master architect, Santiago de Calatrava. This futuristic collection of buildings includes the Opera House, IMAX cinema, Planetarium, Hall for the Performing Arts, Science Museum, Oceanographic Park and an under-water restaurant.



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You'll also visit the home of the renowned **Lladro Ceramics Factory**. Here you'll learn and admire the various techniques used by the professional local **artesanos** who have made the name Lladro an international favorite.



This evening we have something very special in store for you. You're invited to be the personal guest of one of Spain's great upcoming Chefs, **Ximo Saez**, known for his twist on regional and 'nouveaux cuisine'. He is the President of the Rice Association. For your farewell dinner, he'll prepare variations of **Paellas Valencianas**, along with other unique dishes that have placed him at the forefront of great Spanish gastronomy. He has promised to share some of his ingredients so you can amaze your friends back home.

Day 07 – Valencia - Return Home

This morning after your week long adventure in the Soul of Mediterranean Cuisine, you'll be driven to Valencia's International Airport for your flight back home. You'll arrive with plenty of great stories and delicious recipes to share with your friends.