

Press Release
September 23, 2019

What's hot for 2020? Leading luxury travel agency Madrid & Beyond provides travel inspiration across Spain and Portugal for the year ahead

There are more reasons than ever to visit Spain and Portugal in 2020 including luxury hotel openings and new flight routes from the US and Canada. Leading luxury travel agency Madrid & Beyond, which specializes in creating authentic, personalized travel experiences for sophisticated travelers who are looking for an in-depth understanding of the people and places they visit, can add to those reasons with new tours, insider access, and exclusive accommodation across the Iberian Peninsula.

As the world celebrates the **50th anniversary of Earth Day**, 2020 is a great time to explore the incredible landscapes of Spain and Portugal. With expert collaborators, including archeologists and historians, Madrid & Beyond can cast a spotlight on natural landscapes that seem from another world. The list is extensive but for starters try Teide National Park in Tenerife, a lunar-like volcanic landscape of lava rocks, lava streams and ash beds; Las Médulas in northern Spain, one of the strangest legacies of the Romans on the mainland; the Cromlech of the Almendres – Portugal's far older answer to Stonehenge; or Los Barruecos in Extremadura, shaped by water and man over centuries and now the location of Game of Thrones' most famous battle scene.

A visit to the verdant and relatively unknown region of **Asturias** in the north of Spain would be a perfect way to celebrate Earth Day. The 'Picos de Europa' mountain range, rising majestically from the coast is breathtaking and travelers are sure to find the greenness of the region astounding, especially if coming from the arid lands of the south. A microcosm of Spain as a whole, Asturias crams into its borders everything from snowy mountains to sandy beaches, humble tapas bars to avant-garde restaurants, and raucous local fiestas to silent valleys where bears and wolves still roam. With Madrid & Beyond's team of insiders, travelers can really get under the skin of rural life here and positively impact the local economy – latest experiences include the opportunity to meet a local shepherd to find out how artisanal 'Gamoneu' cheese is made.

Further along the coast, in **Galicia**, travelers will be surprised by the rolling emerald green hills, medieval castles, stunning coastlines, sandy white beaches, quaint fishing villages, and Celtic traditions. Many will be familiar with Santiago de Compostela, a fascinating town with an extraordinary history and, for thousands of walkers, the final stop of the 'Camino de Santiago', but they may not have thought of walking the 200km-Lighthouse Way, a trail which aims to achieve official accreditation in 2020. 'O Camiño dos Faros' takes in 11 spectacular lighthouses on the Costa de la Morte, so-called because of its history of shipwrecks and drownings. For foodies, Galicia's long Atlantic coastline makes it a prime destination for seafood – you can't visit without trying specialty 'Pulpo a la Gallega' (octopus) or 'percebes', a barnacle which has been riskily harvested by hand for centuries.

Santiago de Compostela is also the final destination on the '**Camino del Portugués**', which combines Spain and Portugal across 616km. For travelers seeking a transformative experience, this route has it all – coastlines, culture, gastronomy – and it's a great way to see Lisbon, Coimbra and Porto. It takes in three wine regions too: the Douro in Portugal and the Ribeiro and Rías Baixas in Spain. Madrid & Beyond is perfectly placed to elevate the 'camino' to a more luxury experience and can match travelers with suitable accommodation and transport providers at every stage. 2020 could be the perfect year to tick this world-famous hiking trail off the bucket list ahead of the 'año santo' in 2021 when pilgrim numbers are anticipated to rise.

For those who are looking to explore beyond the well-trodden streets of Barcelona, Lisbon and Madrid, there are other exciting Iberian cities to explore in 2020. **Valencia**, recently named World Design Capital for 2022, boasts one of Europe's largest fresh-produce markets, work by some of the world's most iconic street artists, and an array of different architectural styles, from the Gothic silk exchange built in the 15th-

century to the City of Arts and Sciences, designed by Santiago Calatrava in 1996. Across the border in the north of Portugal, **Porto** is now well established as a luxury destination. In 2020, its cultural capital increases with the Matadouro, Porto's 19th-century slaughterhouse, abandoned for 40 years due to open as an arts, social and business centre following an ambitious overhaul. Known as a bastion of tradition – it is home to the largest Gothic cathedral in the world and counts Velázquez amongst its most famous former residents – **Seville** is now becoming one of Spain's hippest places to live and work. And with the first ever direct flights from the US expected to launch from Newark in May 2020, Spain's fourth city is on the up as a luxury destination. Madrid & Beyond is inviting travelers to discover a new side to the Andalusian capital in 2020 with a brand-new lifestyle tour. See how the contemporary and traditional have come together to create amazing spaces dedicated to art, fashion, design and architecture. Travelers can expect exclusive encounters with the artists and creators who are reshaping Seville, from visiting the award-winning studio of Japanese ceramicist, Yukiko Kitahara to meeting the owners of a 16th-century private palace.

Alentejo, the vast swathe of land that lies south-east of Lisbon, is one of our favorite regions anywhere in the Iberian Peninsula and with new non-stop flights to the Portuguese capital by TAP Air Portugal from San Francisco, Washington D.C. and Chicago on top of existing services from Boston, JFK, Miami, Newark, and Toronto, it is now very accessible to all North American travelers. The opening of Quinta da Comporta in early 2019 has added to the range of luxury accommodation in the region and, in 2020, fashion designer Christian Louboutin is set to add to the list of properties with a new hotel in Melides. Further down the line, in 2021, a new project by Turkish investors will create Umay Melides, a shell-shaped hotel inspired by the undulating landscape with 28 rooms and an overhead pool. One thousand kilometers off the coast, the Portuguese archipelago, made up of the islands of **Madeira**, Porto Santo and the Desertas has been increasing in popularity as a luxury destination with hotel openings in 2019 (The Savoy Palace, The Cliffe Bay, and Pestana Churchill Bay) and new direct flights from San Francisco, Orlando and Washington to Madeira scheduled for 2020. Madeira also picked up the World Travel Award for 'Best European Island Destination' for the sixth time in 2019.

Now is the time to (re)consider the **Balearics** with luxury hotels having opened throughout 2019 and more planned for 2020. Formentera opened its first luxury hotel in May 2019, the Five Flowers Hotel & Spa; and in 2020, wellness brand Six Senses will open a new resort at Cala Xarraca in Ibiza. As one of the more peaceful islands and a UNESCO Biosphere Reserve, Menorca has welcomed two new 'agriturismos' this year (Fontenille Menorca and Menorca Experimental) in keeping with its laid back, environmentally friendly vibe.

The Balearics not only offer impressive beaches and landscapes, but also a rich diversity of cultures, history and gastronomy; each island has a personality, culture, tradition and way of life that characterizes and distinguishes it from the others. With exclusive partnerships and deep insider contacts – the co-owner of Madrid & Beyond is a Menorcan – Madrid & Beyond can introduce discerning travelers to the places and faces that make these islands so special. In **Menorca**, experience the 'fiestas de Sant Joan' as a local to learn about the rich history of the Menorcan horse or discover the island's Bronze Age history with a 4x4 Jeep safari.

Ends

For press enquiries

Nina Rogers, Marketing & PR Manager: +34 697 194 653 / nina@madridandbeyond.com

Notes to the editor

Madrid & Beyond is the leading incoming luxury travel agency for Spain and Portugal based in Madrid, Spain. Founded by Nigel Hack in 1999, Madrid & Beyond creates authentic, personalized travel experiences across the Iberian Peninsula for discerning and sophisticated travelers.

The agency prides itself on being able to offer clients the most unique and unforgettable experiences that cannot be found online or in a guidebook, and on facilitating access to the most interesting people in

MADRID & BEYOND

contemporary Iberia. Madrid & Beyond's extensive and exclusive network of collaborators, including artisans and art restorers, top chefs and winery owners, flamenco musicians and soccer insiders, allows travelers to get under the skin of Spanish and Portuguese culture. Madrid & Beyond also has excellent relationships with the best four and five-star luxury hotels across the Peninsula and takes care of all client logistics and travel requirements.

Hack, a former history teacher based in Madrid for over 20 years, set up the company out of a burning passion for Spain and a genuine desire to share more widely the people and places that had inspired him. Madrid & Beyond now designs hundreds of trips every year for clients from all over the world. The team comprises 26 multi-lingual travel specialists in Spain and the US and boasts a collection of important accolades. Most recently, Hack was named a Conde Nast Traveler "2019 Top Travel Specialist" and was included in Travel + Leisure's 18th annual A-List of top agents and tour operators. For more information visit madridandbeyond.com.

Press images available

Full selection of images available for editorial use including, from top left: Las Médulas, Spain; Los Barruecos, Spain; Douro Valley, Portugal; traditional festival in Menorca, Spain; Santiago de Compostela cathedral, Spain; Metropol Parasol ('Las Setas'), Seville, Spain.

