

The Spanish Total Solar Eclipse

August 7 - 15, 2026

Featuring Professor Dr. Jean-Luc Margot
Department of Earth, Planetary, and Space Sciences



Madrid · Peñafiel · San Sebastian

Dear UCLA Alumni and Friends,

Join UCLA Alumni Travel to view a total solar eclipse as it sweeps across a narrow path of the Iberian Peninsula – Europe’s first in 27 years. To experience this rare celestial event, we will be based in the heart of Spain in the Castile–León region, a sprawling land of ancient Spanish kingdoms, dotted with beautiful towns, each with its own castle and cathedral offering spectacular views of the surrounding landscape.

We begin our program with three nights in Madrid staying right by the Plaza Mayor, a vast, symmetrical square framed by ochre-colored buildings. Explore the cobbled streets and centuries-old facades close to the hotel and visit the Royal Observatory Museum which houses a large equatorial telescope built by Thomas Grubb in 1858. Head north to UNESCO-designated Avila with its magnificent city wall — an unbroken circuit of formidable stone ramparts, studded with 88 semi-circular towers and nine gates. Arrive in Peñafiel, rich in wine and history and our home for the next two nights. Spend a day exploring the area before watching the eclipse from a viewing site that will maximize your enjoyment of this eclipse. Our final two nights are in San Sebastian framed by a picturesque bayfront promenade, a medieval old town and world-renowned restaurants helmed by innovative chefs. In 2023, San Sebastian won the Condé Nast Traveler award for one of the most loved cities in the world and its popularity is growing!

Accompanying us will be Professor Jean–Luc Margot, a planetary astronomer who teaches at the Department of Earth, Planetary, and Space Sciences at UCLA. Professor Margot has served as the faculty host on two previous UCLA total eclipse tours and will be providing lectures and discussions during our tour on solar eclipses and astronomy.

Sincerely,



Christel Aragon, Director, Alumni Travel
310-206-0613 travel@alumni.ucla.edu



Shadow Over Spain: Our 2026 Eclipse Journey

AUGUST 7, FRIDAY.

Depart the USA.

AUGUST 8, SATURDAY. MADRID.

Make your own way to the hotel.

This evening enjoy a welcome reception with a large variety of local tapas.

Pestana Plaza Mayor Hotel. R.

AUGUST 9, SUNDAY. MADRID.

Begin the day with a city walking tour. Step into the Plaza Mayor, which was built during the reign of King Phillip II on the site of a ramshackle 15th-century market. Through the centuries, the plaza has served as a bullring, royal parade field, executioner's stage, and central meeting place. Stop by the **Arco de Cuchilleros**. Reached by a flight of stone steps, it was once where the city's cutlers and sword makers plied their trade.

Exit through the Arco de Chucilleros toward the **Plaza de la Villa**, a picturesque intimate square surrounded by wonderfully preserved examples of 17th-century Madrid-style baroque architecture. Visit the **Casa de la Villa** or town hall, a perfect example of 17th-century classic Hapsburg architecture — baroque and imposing. The building served both as town hall and prison, hence the two symmetrical doors. The left one gave entrance to the prison, the other one to the town hall. Connected via an arch is the elaborate palace next door — **Casa de Cisneros**, built in 1537 in plateresque style. On the opposite side of the square is the Gothic **Casa de los Lujanes**, whose brickwork tower is said to have been home to the imprisoned French monarch François I after his capture in the Battle of Pavia in 1525.

Depart the plaza and continue walking to **Cathedral de la Almudena** — Madrid's main cathedral which took more than a hundred years to complete. Soon after King Philip II made Madrid the capital of Spain in 1561, he wanted a cathedral for

his new capital. However, partly due to political turbulence and strong opposition by the powerful archdiocese of the then larger city Toledo, the construction was constantly postponed until 1879 and was finally finished in 1992.



Royal Observatory, Madrid

Enjoy a traditional lunch at a local restaurant.

After lunch, head to the newly revamped **Prado Museum**. With the termination of Rafael Moneo's project around the area of the Church of the Jerónimos, the Museo del Prado has completed the most important extension to its building in its almost 200 years of history. This project, which includes the creation of new exhibition galleries and the restoration of the former Jerónimos Cloister, is part of an ongoing expansion project that involves the incorporation of various nearby buildings into the Prado, including the Casón and the Salón de Reinos, the last surviving remains of the Buen Retiro Palace. When completed, the Prado will constitute a unique museum campus that will enormously increase the already outstanding cultural facilities to be found in one of the most important art and cultural districts in the world, known as the "Paseo del Prado" and located in the Spanish capital.

This evening enjoy a wonderful dinner and Flamenco show.

B,L,D

AUGUST 10, MONDAY. MADRID.

After the first lecture by Professor Jean-Luc Margot, continue to the **Retiro Park** and the Villanueva Building to visit the **Royal Observatory Museum** which houses an important collection of antique instruments used for different purposes in astronomy and meteorology. The collection includes a meridian circle, a selection of precision timepieces and a bronze mirror polished by W. Herschel. A Foucault pendulum in the central rotunda illustrates the daily rotation of the earth. There is a reconstruction of the 25-foot reflecting telescope with a diameter of 24 inches designed for the observatory at the end of the 18th century by the famous astronomer, William



El Retiro Park, Madrid



Reina Sofia Museum, Madrid



Flamenco Dancer, Madrid



Peñafiel Castle, Peñafiel

Herschel. The building itself is crowned by Grubb's large equatorial telescope dating from 1912. Another particular highlight is the library, which conserves one of the most ancient and extensive collections of documents on astronomical subjects.

Since its origins, the Royal Observatory has carried out functions in the fields of astronomy and earth sciences (solar and stellar physics, celestial mechanics, official time keeping, geodesy, cartography, geomagnetism, seismology and meteorology). Today, it is home to the headquarters of the National Astronomical Observatory and the Central Geophysical Observatory. In recent decades, the observatory has been a pioneer in the development of radio-astronomy in Spain and its applications.

After lunch, explore the contemporary **Reina Sofia Museum** whose impressive expansion was opened in 2005. French architect, Jean Nouvel was brought to Spain to create a showplace for the work of contemporary artists. Appropriately, Nouvel's new building sits directly across a small plaza from the Estacio de Atocha, the glorious steel-and-glass Beaux-Arts train station, for which another famous Frenchman, Gustave Eiffel, contributed designs. The Nouvel wing at the Reina Sofia is a showcase for an outspread triangular roof, strategically pierced with openings to allow in the sun and air. The roof appears to soar above the new complex — an assemblage of glass, steel and fiberglass-composite structures that houses special exhibition galleries.

With the expansion, the Reina Sofia can display more of its impressive collection, which includes must-see icons such as Picasso's *Guernica* as well as dozens of equally seminal works by Miro, Dali, Chillida and Barcelo.

Dinner this evening at leisure. **B,L**

AUGUST 11, TUESDAY. PEÑAFIEL.

Depart Madrid this morning for **Peñafiel** driving through the rolling hills, vineyards, and ancient olive groves of the Spanish countryside.

Our first stop will be in **Avila**, a UNESCO-listed city which boasts a rich history of Romanesque churches, medieval convents, and Renaissance palaces with one of the best preserved medieval walled enclosures in Spain. In the 11th century the city was occupied by many noble families, though the town gained importance in the 16th century when it became an important pilgrimage destination for the followers of a Carmelite nun and prominent Spanish mystic and religious reformer known as Santa Theresa de Jesus.

Enjoy a short walking tour of the city including the intact city walls. These magnificent city walls rise from the barren, sun baked Spanish plains like something straight out of a fairytale.

After lunch continue on to **Peñafiel**, a picturesque town nestled in the province of Valladolid, within Spain's Castile and León region. Renowned for its rich history, architectural landmarks, and deep-rooted wine culture, it offers a blend of medieval charm and a rich tapestry of culture.

Check into the 4-star AZZ Peñafiel Las Claras Hotel & SPA housed in a beautifully restored 17th-century convent.

Enjoy dinner this evening in a local restaurant. The prepared dishes here are deeply rooted in traditional Castilian cuisine, known for its rustic, hearty, and meat-forward character. Cheese lovers will appreciate queso de oveja, a rich sheep's cheese often aged and paired with quince jelly or nuts. Local legumes, including lentils and chickpeas, feature in warming stews that reflect the region's agrarian roots. All of this is naturally paired with the robust red wines of the Ribera del Duero, whose vineyards surround the town. Peñafiel's cuisine is not only a reflection of Castilian tradition but also a perfect complement to its celebrated wine heritage.

AZZ Peñafiel Las Claras Hotel & SPA. B,L,D

SANTA CLARA DE ASIS FEAST DAY

Today is a day of festivity in Peñafiel. On August 11th each year, several towns and villages across Spain celebrate the feast day of **Santa Clara de Asís**, a revered saint and follower of Saint Francis of Assisi who founded the Order of Saint Clare. The day holds particular significance in communities where the Order of Saint Clare has long been a spiritual and cultural presence. This is an important celebration in **Peñafiel** where the former monastery of Santa Clara now serves as our hotel. Residents, often dressed in traditional attire, pay homage to Santa Clara's life of humility, devotion, and contemplation. The celebration here also blends with cultural and festive elements such as plaza gatherings, folk dances, and performances that bring the community together. Stalls selling sweets—particularly **conventual pastries** often associated with the Poor Clare nuns—are popular, as are crafts and local wines. It's a day of reflection, festivity, and local pride, honoring the legacy of a saint who gave up worldly wealth to embrace a life of spiritual richness. It is very likely that there will be music and celebrations into the early morning hours.

AUGUST 12, WEDNESDAY. PEÑAFIEL.

Spend the day exploring the **Ribera del Duero** region, which gets its name from the Duero River that runs throughout its vineyards, feeding its grapes every step of the way. The Spanish 'Ribera', means 'river bank', meaning that literally the name of this wine region is the river bank of the Duero



Traditional Dancers, Peñafiel

River. Majestic on its path through Aranda, and calm as it flows by Valladolid, the River offers beautiful opportunities to walk along its banks and appreciate the nature that surrounds it.

Perched dramatically over the town of Peñafiel, the castle houses the state-of-the-art **Museo Provincial del Vino**. Showcasing a comprehensive story of the region's wines, this wonderful museum has interactive displays, dioramas and wine-tasting. The crenellated walls of the castle are impressive. They were built and modified over 400 years, from the 10th century onward. Historically significant during the 9th and 10th centuries, it was an important line of defense of the Duero River for both the Christians and the Moors.

Close by is one of Spain's most unusual town squares. The **Plaza del Coso** is a rectangular, sandy-floored 15th-century 'square' which was one of the first to be laid out for this purpose. It's considered one of the most important forerunners to the plazas mayores across Spain. It's still used for bullfights on ceremonial occasions, and it's watched over by distinctive, half-timbered facades, as well as the grande dame of the castle up on the hill. This area is home to a wealth of tiny and small villages that have so much untouched history to discover. Stop at **Aranda de Duero** with its main square, churches and bridge that runs over the River Duero for a wine-tasting lunch.

Return to the hotel after lunch for Professor Jean-Luc's second lecture and prepare for the solar eclipse.

We have selected an ideal spot from which to view the eclipse with an open vista to the horizon as this phenomena will occur during the sun's setting position. The partial eclipse will begin at 7:34 PM local time, and totality will start at 8:29:47 with the sun fully setting at 9:21 PM. The duration of totality in Peñafiel will be approximately 1 minute and 38 seconds with the sun's position at 8 degrees above the horizon. We will witness a rare celestial crossing that occurs at a given location only once every 300-400 years!



Medieval town of Laguardia

Enjoy a celebratory dinner this evening at a local restaurant after the solar eclipse viewing. **B,L,D**

AUGUST 13, THURSDAY. SAN SEBASTIAN.

Head north this morning and explore **Burgos**, the provincial capital of Castilla y León and an important stop along the Camino de Santiago route. We will walk through its winding streets and majestic plazas, stopping at the **Burgos Cathedral**, one of the most impressive in the whole of Spain. A UNESCO World Heritage Site, it began life as a simple Romanesque cathedral, and from 1221 to 1261, it was turned into the grand structure it is today. The main altar is particularly striking with its brilliant gold plating and ornate carvings, as is the magnificent star-vaulted dome under which is the tomb of El Cid, a nobleman and military leader during medieval times and Castilla y León's local hero.

Lunch has been arranged in the quaint historical town of **Laguardia**. Surrounded by vineyards and located at the foot of the Sierra Cantabria, the capital of the Rioja Alavesa region, is a walled town full of attractions and charm.

Continue on to **San Sebastian** and the **Hotel Arrizul Congress**, a modern 4-star boutique hotel situated in the Gros district of San Sebastián. It is within walking distance of the city's renowned Old Town where you can find upscale shops, vibrant pintxo bars pairing local wines with bite-sized eats.

Enjoy an evening at leisure. **B,L**

AUGUST 14, FRIDAY. SAN SEBASTIAN.

Join Professor Jean-Luc for his third and final lecture. Afterwards, depart the hotel for a short walking tour of the old town including the **San Telmo Museum**, which is set at the foot of **Monte Urgull** in the city's old town. A space known as the **San Telmo Museoa** has existed here since 1902, but the collection moved to its present-day setting in a 16th-century convent in the 1930s, with a brand-new building added alongside a few years ago. Admire a collection focusing on photography, religion, and local art as well as temporary exhibitions spotlighting topics such as vintage tourism posters.

It's no secret that San Sebastian is one of the top destinations in the world for food lovers. We will split the group up into smaller groups for a San Sebastian cooking class. The plan is to make some traditional Basque dishes. As the chef shows you the techniques involved in bringing each dish to life, your guide will share the stories behind the recipes. Each dish will be paired with a carefully selected drink: Basque cider, red and white wine, and iced apple cider.

Enjoy some free time before our farewell dinner. **B,L,D**

AUGUST 15, SATURDAY. SAN SEBASTIAN.

Make your own way to the airport for return flights home.



TOUR LECTURER

Professor Jean-Luc Margot

Department of Earth, Planetary, and Space Sciences

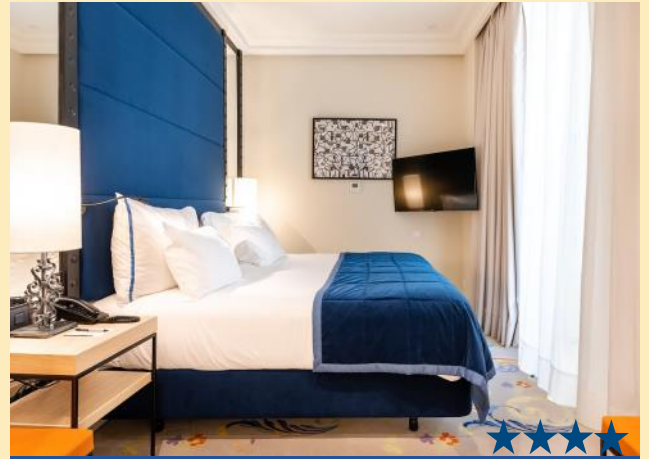
Dr. Jean-Luc Margot is a planetary astronomer and UCLA professor who conducts research on the properties of planetary bodies with a variety of spacecraft and telescopes. He uses high-precision observations to reveal the interior structure of planetary bodies. He leads the UCLA SETI initiative and has collaborated with more than 100 UCLA students, alumni, and friends in the search for life in the universe. Margot was the faculty host for UCLA Alumni Association's previous solar eclipse trips to Chile in 2019 and Texas in 2024. He has also observed a total solar eclipse in Oregon in 2017, an annular solar eclipse in Japan in 2012, and the Venus transits in 2004 and 2008.

SEMANA GRANDE

We will be in San Sebastian during **Semana Grande** (Aste Nagusia in Basque), meaning "Big Week." It is the city's most iconic summer celebration, held annually in mid-August in honor of the Virgin of the Assumption. This week-long festival transforms the elegant city into a vibrant stage for cultural events, concerts, fireworks, and traditional Basque competitions. During the day, there are parades, live music, street theater, and giant puppet processions. Traditional sports like herri kirolak — Basque rural games such as stone lifting, wood chopping, and tug-of-war—are held in various plazas, showcasing local strength and heritage.



ACCOMMODATIONS



Pestana Plaza Mayor, Madrid



AZZ Peñafiel Las Claras Hotel & SPA, Peñafiel



Hotel Arrizul Congress, San Sebastian

Pricing:

Tour Price: \$6,895 per person, double occupancy

Single Supplement: \$1,840 (Limited availability)

Terms, Conditions, and Inclusions:

Reservations and Payments:

Reservations for this tour require a deposit of \$750 per person and an application form signed by the participant. The deposit can be put on a credit card. Final payment is due January 23, 2026, and must be paid by check or wire transfer.

Tour Price Includes:

Hotel Accommodations: Accommodations in hotels as outlined in the itinerary based on double occupancy. There are a very limited number of single rooms.

Meals: American breakfast (B), lunches (L) and dinners (D) are included as specified in the itinerary.

All Land Travel Listed: Including transportation in air-conditioned motor coaches, the services of Distant Horizons tour managers, special activities, an educational program of lectures as quoted in the itinerary, all entrance fees and basic gratuities to all local guides, tour managers, and drivers.

Tour cost is based on rates of currency exchange at time of printing (June 2025) and is subject to change with or without previous notice.

Tour Price Does Not Include:

International air to/from Spain, any meals not listed in the program, transportation from/to airport to the hotel (people will arrive on different flights and Uber works really well), trip insurance which we recommend you seriously consider purchasing to protect your trip investment and any item not listed.

Cancellations:

Distant Horizons and the UCLA Alumni Association reserve the right to cancel the tour prior to departure for any reason. If a participant cancels, the following refunds will be available upon written notice of cancellation to Distant Horizons:

Cancellations received from June 1st, 2025 to January 22, 2026 will incur a \$500 cancellation fee. There will be no refunds for cancellations received on or after January 23, 2026.

Responsibility:

The liability of the UCLA Alumni Association as sponsor, and Distant Horizons as tour operator, is strictly limited. Distant Horizons and the UCLA Alumni Association act only in the capacity of agents for the hotels, airlines, bus companies, railroads, ship lines or owners or contractors providing accommodations, transportation or other services. As a result, all coupons, receipts or tickets are issued subject to the terms and conditions specified by the supplier. By acceptance of tour membership, the participant agrees that neither Distant Horizons nor UCLA Alumni Association nor any of their subsidiaries shall become liable or responsible for personal injury, damage to persons or property, loss, delay or irregularity caused by persons not controlled by it, such as (without limitation) airlines, bus and shipping companies, suppliers of accommodations or other services, or resulting from any acts of God, defects in vehicles, strikes, wars, whether declared or otherwise, civil disturbances, medical or customs regulations, acts of terrorism, epidemics or government restrictions. Distant Horizons and UCLA Alumni Association cannot be held responsible for unfavorable weather or closure of access routes due to bad weather conditions. Distant Horizons and UCLA Alumni Association cannot be held responsible if the tour lecturer or leader cancels, and passengers will be advised of a comparable replacement should time permit. Distant Horizons and UCLA Alumni Association are not responsible for any additional expenses or liability sustained or incurred by the participant as a result of the above-mentioned causes.

Assumption of Risk:

Participation in this elective trip carries with it certain inherent risks that cannot be eliminated regardless of the care taken to avoid injury.

Indemnification and Hold Harmless:

Travelers also agree to indemnify and hold the UCLA Alumni Association and Distant Horizons harmless from any and all claims, actions, suits, procedures, costs, expenses, damages and liabilities, including attorney's fees, arising out of his/her involvement in this activity, and to reimburse it for any such expenses incurred.

Tour participant acknowledges receipt of a copy of these terms and conditions and signifies acceptance of, and consents to, all of the terms and conditions set forth herein, on behalf of any participants they may act for and for themselves when registering for, or making payments on, this tour.

Distant Horizons is a California Seller of Travel (CST #2046776-40) and a participant in the California Travel Restitution Fund. Information regarding the rights of California residents to make a claim may be found at tcrinfo.org. California law requires certain sellers of travel to have a trust account or bond. This business has a trust account.



The Spanish Total Solar Eclipse August 7—15, 2026 Reservation Form

Please complete this reservation form and submit it to our office.
Fax: 310-209-4271 | Email: travel@alumni.ucla.edu

Once this request has been received in our office, a Distant Horizons Sales Manager will be in touch to finalize your reservation and deposit. Your reservation is not confirmed until your \$750 per person deposit is paid and processed.

Name (exactly as it appears on passport)

1) _____
Title First Middle Last

_____ Date of birth Email Name you would like on your name badge

2) _____
Title First Middle Last

_____ Date of birth Email Name you would like on your name badge

Street Address _____

City _____ State _____ ZIP _____

Home Phone (_____) _____ Cell Phone (_____) _____

Sharing with _____
Name (Reservation request sent separately)

Room Arrangements

- I would like to share a room with _____
- I would like to request a single room at an additional \$1,840 (pending availability)

UCLA Alumni Travel is an advantage reserved for UCLA Alumni Association sustaining donors. *Select an option below.

- I am currently a sustaining donor
- I have made a \$100 donation at travel.alumni.ucla.edu/donate

**Sustaining donors include Gold, Life and Blue Members as well as anyone that has made a qualifying donation of \$100 or more to the UCLA Alumni Association Support fund in the past year.*

Reservation Deposit: a credit card or check deposit of **\$750** is required for each participant.

Please note that all credit card information will be taken over the phone and all checks must be payable to **Distant Horizons Inc.** and mailed to **350 Elm Avenue, Long Beach, CA 90802.**

**Reservations are subject to availability and processed on a first come, first served basis.*

Reservations to be paid in full by January 23, 2026. **Final payments must be made by check only.*

I/We have read the tour conditions and responsibility clause and agree to all therein (all participants must sign).

Name _____ Signature _____ Date: _____

Name _____ Signature _____ Date: _____



Phone: 310-206-0613