

TRAVEL QUEST

Spring 2016

**Portugal and Spain:
The Age of Discovery**

**Eclipse 2016: Total Success
in Indonesia!**

TRAVEL **QUEST**
international



TRAVEL QUEST

Features

Portugal and Spain: The Age of Discovery

Discover the homeland of the Portuguese and Spanish explorers who braved the oceans, discovered new lands, and brought back treasures unimaginable.

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Eclipse 2016: Total Success in Indonesia

On land in Sulawesi and at sea on *Le Soléal*, TravelQuest travelers reveled in the Moon's shadow. TQ astronomers Rick Fienberg and Jay Anderson describe Eclipse Day.

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The Alhambra in Granada, Spain, is a masterpiece of Islamic architecture.



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Courtesy Rick Fienberg.



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As time goes by, I become more set in my ways. Routines that make up a day in my life have become well defined. Beliefs too. I suspect this is common for most of us.

As a young man, some people in my life had a major impact on who I was as a person. In the blink of an eye, often during a conversation, a core belief of mine could be flipped 180 degrees. Be it an exceptional university teacher or my first trip aboard, at the time certain people and events exposed me to concepts that shifted my beliefs and understanding of the world around me in very profound ways.

Today, with many miles behind me, moving my “change needle” even a little bit is not so easy. And to alter my “needle of belief” now takes a significant event, such as the loss of a dear loved one or 9/11.

However, this past March during my journey from Darwin, Australia, to Kota Kinabalu, Borneo, with 85 TQ travelers, I had my needle of belief moved. Just a little, mind you, but still it moved. It all had to do with something on many of our minds — tolerance and understanding.

At the time of the tour, the religious overtones to the bombings in Europe made many of us leery of people possessing ‘other’ beliefs. During that cruise we stopped at small, seldom-visited Indonesian islands, principally

populated by Muslims. Leading up to that first port of call in Banda Neira, many of us on the cruise wondered what sort of reception a boat load of predominantly western people would receive.

Well, we were amazed and delighted to be welcomed so completely: smiles, requests to take our pictures, children and adults alike asking us questions such as where we lived and if we liked their island.

Honestly, I’m still trying to reconcile this ever-so-human experience with what I see — every day of the week — on TV and online. And while the media tend to push to promote the differences between all peoples on our planet, I will never forget my wonderful experience on the islands of Banda Neira and Ternate.

This is all about getting off the sofa and experiencing life — be it volunteering in our community, or chasing eclipses into other lands. By doing these sorts of things we create the potential to move our own needle. 



Aram Kaprielian

Notebook

Sometimes when you’re looking up, you never know who (or what) is looking back down at you. On March 9, 2016, as TQ eclipse chasers looked up toward the totally eclipsed Sun, NASA’s DSCOVR spacecraft looked down from space and captured the shadow of the Moon marching across Earth’s sunlit face.

This frame (*right*), from a sequence of 13, shows the lunar shadow (the dark umbra in the center surrounded by the lighter penumbra) as it passed over Indonesia where our two TravelQuest groups waited for totality. The satellite normally records images once every 108 minutes. For this eclipse, the control team collected images every 20 minutes. This allowed DSCOVR to gather 13 images spanning the entire eclipse. You can find those images (and an animation) [here](#). 



Paul Deans



Portugal and Spain: The Age of Discovery

by the TravelQuest Team

We are all explorers. The need to explore “strange new worlds” seems to be in our DNA. In ages past, adventurers often set out seeking fame or fortune...and if they were lucky, they might find both.

Today we explore for different reasons — we seek knowledge, understanding, beauty, unusual sights, unique experiences. We prefer to travel to lesser-known places that are off the beaten path. But sometimes, a familiar sight or a ‘tourist’ stop helps ground us and put our journey into context. This September, TravelQuest will take you on just such a journey — to the Iberian Peninsula and **Portugal & Spain: The Age of Discovery**.

From the Iberian Peninsula, Christopher Columbus, Vasco da Gama, Amerigo Vespucci, and many others struck out into the uncharted oceans that lay to the west and south of Portugal and Spain. They returned bearing unusual cargoes and telling extravagant tales of new lands and strange peoples.

Join us, and explore the homeland of these explorers who, by their discoveries, shook the foundations of knowledge of the 15th century. But unlike those adventurers who faced difficult journeys and incredible hardships, we’ll enjoy exploring the many facets of Portugal and Spain: spectacular coastlines, historic landmarks, superb wine and cuisine, and fascinating discussions about the land and its people with Cesar Higuera — TQ’s expert on Iberian history and culture.



The Iberian Peninsula. Courtesy ESA/Copernicus Sentinel data.

The Moorish Influence

For most of the Middle Ages the Iberian Peninsula, surrounded by water on three sides and isolated from the rest of Europe by the Pyrenees Mountains to the north, was a battleground. Christian states in the north fought among themselves while simultaneously battling the Moors to the south.

Portugal traces its national origin to a battle in 1128. Some 100 years later the Portuguese pushed the Moors out of what is now southern Portugal (the Algarve region). But it wasn’t until January 2, 1492, that the last Moorish stronghold — Grenada — surrendered to the Spanish. Almost exactly seven months later, Christopher Columbus set sail from Palos, Spain, on his epic voyage west.

The Moorish influence remains throughout much of Spain, but nowhere is it more evident than in the southern portion of the country. In Córdoba we’ll visit the Great Mosque, most notable for its arcaded hall with its roof supported by 856 columns of jasper, onyx,



The Great Mosque in Córdoba, Spain.



Rossio Square in Lisbon, at the north end of the Baixa.

marble, and granite. We'll spend a full day exploring medieval Granada to do justice to this UNESCO World Heritage Site. Climb to a lookout opposite the Alhambra for the best views of the palace (*see the cover*), wander through narrow medieval streets to the cathedral complex, and see the magnificent sepulcher of the Catholic Monarchs — best remembered for their sponsorship of a “dubious expedition” to the west that dramatically changed the course of history.

Lisbon Reborn

On the morning of November 1, 1755, an enormous earthquake struck Lisbon. (Modern estimates put the quake's magnitude between 8.5 and 9.0.) Combined with subsequent fires and a tsunami, Lisbon and some adjoining areas were almost completely destroyed.

From that devastation, a new city center emerged: the Baixa or Lower Town. It's an orderly grid of wide



A view over the roofs of the Alfama district in Lisbon. The dome is the Church of St Vincent de Fora, the church of St Etienne is to the right, and the Tagus River is in the background.

streets lined with cafes and shops and interspersed with elegant plazas — all tied together via beautiful 18th-century architecture. At the Baixa's riverfront end is the Praça do Comércio (Commerce Square), a large, rectangular square flanked on three sides by buildings and open toward the Tagus River.

But all of Lisbon is not so orderly. The earthquake didn't destroy the Alfama district (east of the Baixa), which remains a labyrinth of narrow streets and small squares. The historic Belém district to the west is where Lisbon's elite resided in centuries past. And from the harbor of Belém, Portuguese ships set sail on numerous voyages of discovery during the 15th century.



The Santa Maria lighthouse and Museum in Cascais, Portugal.

To the west of Lisbon is the westernmost spit of land in Portugal...and Europe: Cabo da Roca. Imagine standing on the deck of a tiny 50-foot-long, three-masted caravel watching that cape and Portugal disappear below the ocean horizon and wondering if you'd ever see that land, your home, again.

To the south of Cabo da Roca is the very charming seaside town of Cascais. Situated at the mouth of the Tagus River, it has a long history as a fishing port. These days it's a popular vacation spot for Portuguese and foreign visitors alike. (Our seafood lunch in town, prepared by local chefs, should be exquisite.)

The Age of Discovery

The “Age of Discovery” is a loosely defined period of European history that began in the early 15th century and continued for roughly 300 years. For much of the 1400s, it was Portugal doing most of the discovering. Spain was still busy battling the Moors, while future



rivals England and the Netherlands were slow off the mark. But once the Moors surrendered Grenada in 1492, and Columbus discovered the “New World” a year later, competition between Spain and Portugal heated up.

For most of the 16th century, the two countries were fierce rivals when it came to discovering new lands and new trade routes to

those lands. At Palos de la Frontera in Spain, stroll the Wharf of the Caravels to see where Columbus began his world-changing voyage on August 3, 1492. The site includes full-size replicas of his three famous ships — *La Niña*, *La Pinta*, and *Santa María*. Full size indeed, but all astonishingly small.

To the southeast of Palos, the port city of Cadiz boomed during the Age of Discovery. Columbus sailed from there on his second (1493) and fourth (1502) voyages. Later the city emerged as the home port of the Spanish treasure fleet from the West Indies — not necessarily a good thing as that made Cadiz a major target of Spain's enemies.

Although inland, Sevilla is connected to the Atlantic Ocean via the Guadalquivir River. After the journeys of Columbus, Sevilla was awarded the royal monopoly for trade with the Spanish colonies in America, and hence enjoyed a golden age of development. In a few years, this inland port city became one of the wealthiest centers on the Continent. There are many connections to the Age of Discovery in Sevilla, from the sepulcher of Columbus (within the Seville Cathedral, the world’s largest gothic cathedral) to the Archive of the Indies, the only archival building declared a UNESCO World Heritage Site. The echo of footsteps off the cobblestone



The tiled 'Province Alcoves' along the walls of the Plaza de España in Sevilla, Spain.

streets in the old town give the sense of being followed by the ghosts of Columbus, Cortes, Pizarro, and countless other Spanish adventurers.

Back to the Present

Traveling inland and northward, it is as if we’re moving forward through time.

Departing the ancient Moorish city of Cordoba, we pass through La Mancha, land of Don Quixote. Yes, such a land does exist — it’s a fertile, elevated plateau in central Spain, south of Madrid. And yes, those windmills that Don Quixote tilted at also exist, even today.



And now, Madrid — a modern bustling city with deep historical roots. In 1561, Philip II of Spain moved his court to Madrid. Suddenly, this town of 30,000 suddenly became the political center of the monarchy and the capital of Spain. History is everywhere in Madrid, and not just in its architecture.

Madrid is some 350 kilometers from an ocean (the Mediterranean Sea). This makes Spain’s capital an odd place for a Naval Museum, but there it is. And it is the repository of a fascinating artifact from the Age of Discovery: the first map of America by Juan de la Cosa,



Gran Vía ("Great Way") is an ornate and upscale shopping street located in central Madrid. The Metropolis Building, topped by the statue "Winged Victory," is in mid-image.

dating from 1500. In the Prado, Madrid's renowned art museum, a magnificent collection includes many paintings illuminating the impact of the New World on Spain. A fitting end to an unusual journey — viewing art that portrays the impact of the Age of Discovery on Europe...as depicted by the European artists whose ancestors lived through those revolutionary times. 

If this journey sounds intriguing, it's not too late to join us. There are still a limited number of spaces available for our Spain & Portugal: Age of Discovery trip, which begins **Saturday September 3, 2016.** Please call TravelQuest at 800-830-1998 (US and Canada only) or 1-928-445-7754 for more details.

Eclipse 2016: Total Success in Indonesia

Totality on the World's 11th-Largest Island
story and images by Jay Anderson

We had a great eclipse on Sulawesi, Indonesia, with totality embedded in thin cloud. Most of the newcomers weren't disturbed by the cloud, and many said it added to the appreciation of the event. A few of the more experienced watchers thought that the cloud "evened out" the eclipse intensity, drawing their attention to details they might otherwise have missed. It was not an eclipse for great beads, but the diamond ring and the stunning prominence made up for other shortcomings.



A large bead beside the amazing prominence at second contact..

contact, but only a few people took part; most of the Indonesians just watched the prayer ceremony. For the TQ crowd, the ceremony proved to be one of the hallmarks of the day. The Indonesian Vice President, Jusuf Kalla, was gracious and visited with a number of people, chatted with TQ Trip Leaders Paul Swart and Michel Girardin, and generally made himself approachable.

All of the "formal" interaction was filmed, presumably for national TV. There were lots of media around, and I talked with them several times, usually not on camera. They wanted to know what would happen, but when it was over, they were ecstatic. "It was the best two minutes of my life." was a common sentiment. At least one of our guides was in tears.



Before the eclipse, Palu had a competition to design the best costume to represent the eclipse. This is but one of a rich palette of samples. It was spectacular — very over the top.

the eclipse and then by the reception given to us by the

At totality, a murmur of awe went through the crowd, adding to our experience, because it gave us a connection with the average citizen of Palu. The awe came back at the final diamond ring — it was quite incredible to be immersed in a group of so many first-time eclipse watchers.

Our TravelQuest first timers were also overtaken by

people of the city of Palu. “Over the top” was the best expression, but it really was incredible. Everywhere we went, people wanted to take photos, shake hands, wave as we passed, and practice rudimentary English.

We took a tour in the afternoon, first to an historical palace and then to the local bridge. It is a source of great pride to the town, as it’s the largest of its kind in the world. They blocked the bridge traffic so we could get out on top and view the city and river, and then, as we walked down the bridge, greeted us with dancers, music, and hundreds of well-wishers. What a warm feeling!

To add to the glow, the evening dinner was also a tour-de-force. Dancers and singers, good food, the Mayor in attendance, and a warm feeling in the crowd. Michel Girardin gave a great welcome to the dignitaries, who returned it in kind. We decided that this would be one of the iconic eclipses, in line with the Great Bolivian Train Ride and the Madagascar Eclipse Camp. 

Jay Anderson was the Trip Astronomer for TravelQuest on TQ’s Bali New Year and Total Solar Eclipse trip. He is also TQ’s eclipse meteorologist.

Monkeying with the Sun and Moon in the Malay Archipelago

story and images by Rick Fienberg

If ever there were a ship made for solar-eclipse cruising, it’d have to be *Le Soléal* (right), built in 2012 for the French cruise line Ponant. Her name itself evokes the Sun (“le soleil” in French), but when I and several other regular TravelQuest eclipse-chasers first stepped aboard in Darwin, Australia, we shared a moment of panic: would there be enough deck space? With barely 100 cozy cabins, *Le Soléal* is a small ship, and it’s designed more like a yacht than an ocean liner.

Thankfully our concerns were misplaced. Captain Mikaël Debien, as enthusiastic and cooperative a ship’s master as you could ever want commanding an eclipse cruise, made sure the decks were cleared of all bulky furniture. He also freed up some premium deck space that’s normally reserved for crew members and directed his staff to gather on the forecastle.

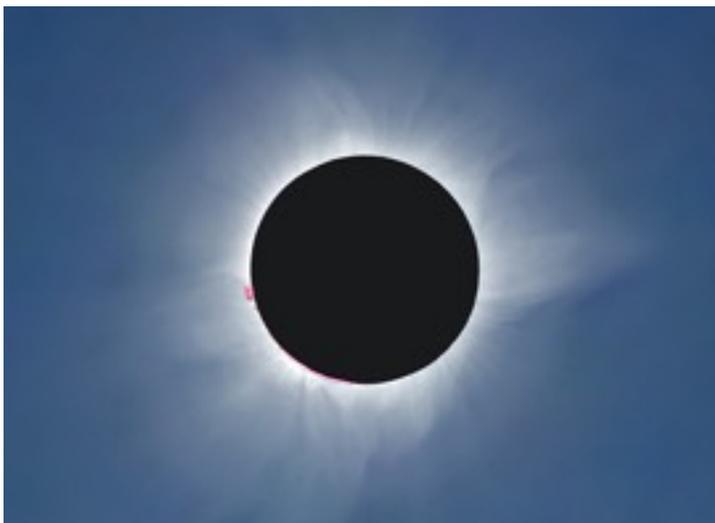


That’s not to say we felt no further trepidation. In the days leading up to the eclipse, I was frequently checking the resources linked from meteorologist Jay Anderson’s online eclipse weather desk, and the forecast wasn’t encouraging. A big cloud system was advancing from the east, and it looked destined to be sitting right over our planned eclipse-watching spot by the morning of the 9th. Capt. Debien and his chief navigator had come to the same conclusion based on their own analysis, so I had no trouble convincing them that we’d need to spend the night before the eclipse racing to a point

about 100 miles west-southwest along the centerline. We'd give up about 10 seconds of totality, but agreed that it'd be better to see the corona for 3 minutes 2 seconds than to miss it for 3 minutes 12 seconds!

Eclipse day dawned mostly clear and calm at our new location, so we looped south for a while and then turned north again so as to cross the centerline during totality with the ship broadside to the Sun (and Moon!) in the east to make viewing most convenient. During the partial phases leading up to totality, the shrinking solar crescent occasionally ducked behind small, thin clouds, but we remained confident that we were going to enjoy a successful eclipse chase. And we did!

Brilliant Venus appeared nearly overhead about 15 minutes before totality, and then dimmer Mercury became visible midway between the Sun and Venus with just minutes to go. At last the Moon's dark umbral shadow overtook us from the west, and the razor-thin crescent Sun dissolved into a spectacular string of Bailey's Beads. Off came the solar filters, and shouts of "diamond ring!" and "corona!" could be heard from all directions. Then came "Oh, my god, look at that prominence!" as we marveled at twin fingers of brilliant magenta extending from the 9 o'clock position on the Moon's silhouette.



While doing my best to actually watch totality, I also managed to shoot a number of photos with my Canon EOS Rebel T3i and Tamron 16- to 300-mm image-stabilized zoom lens at 300 mm, f/8, ISO 800, hand-held. I took 15 of my best exposures, manually adjusted them for image-to-image changes in translation and rotation, and combined them into a high-dynamic-range composite. This image, as far as my memory allows, looks very much like what I saw through binoculars (though not quite as sharp and detailed).



That giant prominence initially drew attention from the corona, but the Sun's ethereal outer atmosphere — always the star attraction at a total solar eclipse — eventually captured everyone's gaze. It displayed a tangle of loops, arcs, wisps, and streamers that were especially breathtaking in binoculars.

We're about halfway from the last solar-activity maximum to the next minimum, so it wasn't a big surprise that the corona was relatively bright, round, and compact, as you expect at solar maximum, but that it also exhibited several pronounced streamers, more typical of solar minimum — though even the longest streamer, at 3 o'clock, extended only about one solar diameter.

Passenger George Alers kept track of the temperature and recorded an 8°F (5°C) drop between the beginning of the partial eclipse and the end of totality. Numerous observers commented on the welcome relief from the tropical heat, however fleeting.

Remarkably, the huge prominence at 9 o'clock remained visible throughout all of totality. Then, after 3 minutes — which, as usual, felt like only 8 seconds — the Moon began to uncover the Sun's face. At that moment the brightening Sun slipped behind a thick cloud, which lit up with a colorful halo and made it possible for us to watch an extended diamond-ring phase before having to replace our solar filters. It was a spectacular end to a spectacular show, and amid all the cheers and high-fives, there were quiet tears of joy as many of us savored the awesome experience we'd just shared. 

Rick Fienberg was the Trip Astronomer for TravelQuest on TQ's Indonesia and Borneo Cruise to Totality. This was his 12th journey to totality.

Travel Talk: In Quotes

I've been meaning to do this for a while. So, apropos of nothing in particular, I give you an assortment of travel quotations that I've accumulated and quite like. Yes, they're from the Web, which means that each accreditation may, or may not, be accurate.

Remember what Bilbo used to say: It's a dangerous business, Frodo, going out your door. You step onto the road, and if you don't keep your feet, there's no knowing where you might be swept off to. J.R.R. Tolkien

One's destination is never a place, but a new way of seeing things. Henry Miller

If you reject the food, ignore the customs, fear the religion and avoid the people, you might better stay at home. James Michener

I have found out that there ain't no surer way to find out whether you like people or hate them than to travel with them. Mark Twain

A journey is best measured in friends, rather than miles. Tim Cahill

Traveling – it leaves you speechless, then turns you into a storyteller. Ibn Battuta

Twenty years from now you will be more disappointed by the things you didn't do than by the ones you did do. Mark Twain

Perhaps travel cannot prevent bigotry, but by demonstrating that all peoples cry, laugh, eat, worry, and die, it can introduce the idea that if we try and understand each other, we may even become friends. Maya Angelou

All journeys have secret destinations of which the traveler is unaware. Martin Buber

I never travel without my diary. One should always have something sensational to read in the train. Oscar Wilde

The trouble with traveling back later on is that you can never repeat the same experience. Michael Palin

We live in a wonderful world that is full of beauty, charm and adventure. There is no end to the adventures we can have if only we seek them with our eyes open. Jawaharal Nehru

Reminds me of my safari in Africa. Somebody forgot the corkscrew and for several days we had to live on nothing but food and water. W. C. Fields 

— PD

Upcoming Adventures

Portugal & Spain: The Age of Discovery

Explore the fabled Iberian Peninsula with Cesar Higuera — TravelQuest's expert guide on Iberian history and culture.

September 3-17, 2016

Iceland: Fire, Ice & Aurora

Traverse volcanic landscapes and glaciers by day, and watch for the northern lights by night.

September 23-30, *or* October 1-8, 2016

America's Music Cities Total Solar Eclipse

Take in the music of New Orleans, Memphis, and Nashville, and experience 2 minutes and 40 seconds of totality.

August 14-22, 2017

National Parks of the American West Total Solar Eclipse

Travel the incredibly varied landscape of the American West and enjoy totality in Jackson, Wyoming.

August 13-25, 2017

Northern Parks Discovery Total Solar Eclipse

Yellowstone and Grand Teton provide a stunning backdrop for totality viewed from Jackson, Wyoming.

August 17-23, 2017

Yellowstone & Tetons Family Adventure Total Solar Eclipse

Traverse the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem with expert wilderness guides, and see totality from Jackson, Wyoming.

August 19-26, 2017

Pacific Northwest & San Francisco Total Solar Eclipse

Watch totality near Bend, Oregon, while exploring the west coast from Seattle down to San Francisco.

August 17-26, 2017

To learn more about our other trips, please visit our website:

TravelQuestTours.com 

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