

THE MOORS IN SPAIN

MADRID, CORDOBA, SEVILLE & GRANADA

Alhambra, Granada

OVERVIEW

Spain's remarkable history makes it a compelling destination for travellers, and few stories capture the imagination as much as those of Al-Andalus, the Moorish kingdom that once covered the Iberian Peninsula.

Arriving from the Maghreb in the 8th century, the Moors established a presence in southern Spain which was to expand and contract over the coming centuries. Al-Andalus was the centre of their kingdom and the cities of Cordoba, Seville, and Granada its crown jewels – places of culture and learning filled with extraordinary palaces, gardens, and mosques.

Led by Dr Jeni Ryde, this 14-day tour takes us from Madrid to Toledo then down through modern day Andalusia, looking at a region which flourished economically and intellectually under the Moors and, following the conquest in 1492, gradually found a way to preserve and integrate elements of this outstanding period in history into its art, architecture, and culture.

As well as the great cities of Al-Andalus, we experience the broad sweep of the fertile plains and rugged mountains which once formed a frontier between the armies of the Moors and Christians, dotted with the characteristic white hilltop villages of the region which still retain vestiges of their Moorish past.



TOUR LEADER

Dr Jeni Ryde is a linguist and art history specialist with over 15 years experience leading tours to Spain. Jeni speaks fluent Spanish.

TOUR DATES

March 25 - April 7, 2025 | 14 Days

TOUR PRICE

\$11,720 per person, twin share
\$2,320 single supplement

TOUR DEPOSIT

A **\$1,000** non-refundable deposit is required per person to confirm your booking on tour.

GROUP SIZE

Maximum number of **16** in group

ITINERARY

Madrid (2 nights), Seville (4 nights), Córdoba (3 nights), Granada (4 nights)

INCLUSIONS

13 nights' accommodation in centrally located 4-star hotels. All breakfasts, 2 lunches, 4 dinners and a wine tasting. Services of an expert tour leader and an experienced tour manager throughout. All ground transport, entrance fees and tipping.



DETAILED ITINERARY

Start & Finish

The tour starts at 6.00pm on Tuesday 25 March, at the H10 Puerta de Alcalá, Madrid.

The tour ends after breakfast on Monday 7 April, at the Villa Oniria, Granada.

Included meals are indicated with B, L, D and WT for Wine Tasting.

TOUR HIGHLIGHTS

Alhambra of Granada

A superb example of traditional Moorish architecture, the serene 13th-century palace of the Nasrid sultans with its beautiful gardens and waterways is set against the stunning backdrop of the Sierra Nevada mountains.

Mezquita of Córdoba

Supported by a forest of palm-like columns, the mezquita is one of the most important monuments of the Western Islamic world, creating an atmosphere of quiet reverence in a city which was an important seat of learning.

Seville's Real Alcázar

Dating from the 14th century, decorated with exquisite tiles and a carved wooden ceiling, the Alcázar is a superb example of Seville's striking Mudéjar architecture, combining Christian and Moorish influences.

Toledo and the Convivencia

Spectacularly perched on a rocky promontory, the medieval heart of Toledo reflects the time of the Convivencia, a period of co-existence between Moors, Christians, and Jews.

Hilltop towns of Andalusia

The hilltop location of Andalusia's lovely Pueblos Blancos hints strongly at their role as the gateway at La Frontera, the frontier between Moorish and Christian Spain.

Tuesday 25 March

Arrival

Following individual travel arrangements to Madrid, we meet tour leader and tour manager in the hotel early this evening. After an introductory talk on the Moors in Spain we then head out for dinner at a local restaurant. Overnight Madrid (D)

Wednesday 26 March

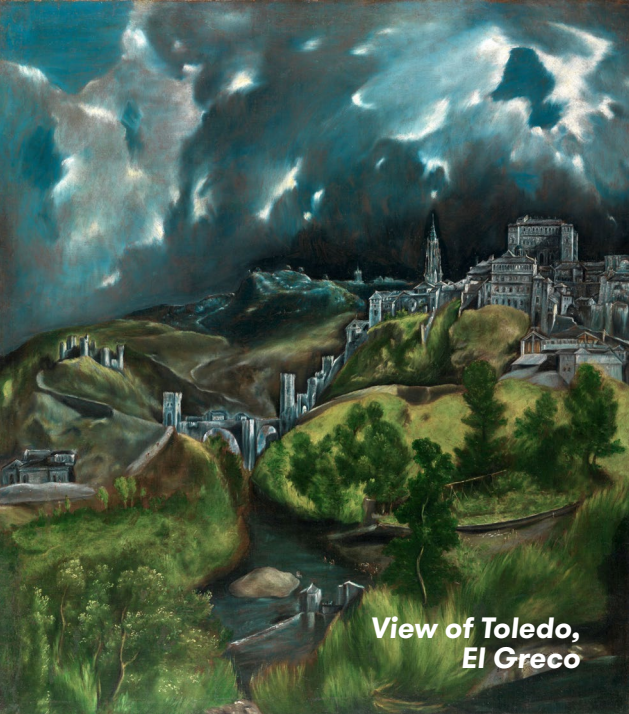
Toledo

We travel the short distance from Madrid to the beautiful city of Toledo today. One of Spain's oldest cities, Toledo occupies a rugged promontory above the Tagus River which once gave it strategic advantage and now offers exceptional views across the surrounding landscape. The city is a fusion of Moorish, Christian and Jewish influences and our visit includes the 10th-century Mesquita del Cristo de la Luz, a small but beautifully preserved mosque and the Sinagoga del Transito with its Islamic inspired architecture. In the 14th-century Iglesia di Santo Tomé, which incorporates elements of the former mosque on which it was built, we will see El Greco's monumental masterpiece, *The Burial of the Count Orgaz*, dedicated to the church's benefactor. There is time to explore this lovely and accessible city before we return to Madrid. Overnight Madrid (B)

Thursday 27 March

Madrid

Madrid's excellent archaeological museum is our first destination this morning where our visit will focus on archaeological and ethnographic finds from the Iberian Peninsula. After a break for lunch, we collect our bags and, in the early afternoon, join the fast train to Seville. Arriving in Seville we check in to our hotel and there is time to relax before we meet for a talk followed by dinner at a local restaurant. Overnight Seville (B, D)

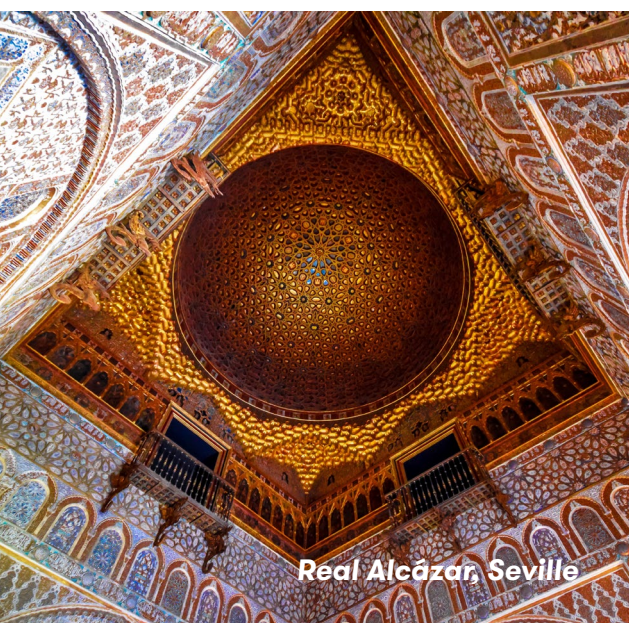


View of Toledo,
El Greco

Friday 28 March

Seville

Seville is the quintessential Andalusian city, and we begin our visit this morning at the magnificent cathedral, the largest gothic church in the world. Work commenced on the cathedral in 1402 and was completed in just over a century – a monumental achievement given its size and splendour. Our guided tour includes the Chancel, Royal Chapel and the treasury, where we can see works by Goya and Murillo. Little remains of the original 12th-century mosque on the site apart from the lovely Patio de los Naranjos – the traditional ablutions area for the mosque – and the 12th-century Giralda, a beautiful 98-metre-high minaret which offers excellent views from the top. We also visit the Torre del Oro, the 12th-century “tower of gold” which was part of the Moorish city wall and controlled shipping on the Guadalquivir. After a break for lunch, we visit the stunning Real Alcázar. Dating from the 14th century and built in pure Mudéjar style, the Alcázar is still used as a residence when the Royal family visit Seville. Our tour includes the beautiful gardens which adjoin the complex. This evening we attend a performance of flamenco with drinks to follow at the intimate Casa de la Memoria. Overnight Seville (B)



Real Alcázar, Seville

Saturday 29 March

Jerez de la Frontera

Today we take a coach to Jerez de la Frontera, a town which once sat on the border between Moorish and Christian regions on the Iberian Peninsula and gave its name to the superb, fortified wine produced here. We begin our visit at a local winery or bodega, where we sample the famous Jerez or sherry, a smooth tipple which has little in common with its English namesake, before making our way to the town centre. Here we tour the Alcázar, an 11th-century fortress which retains many of its original Islamic architectural elements including a mosque and baths. We then continue to Vejer, one of the stunning white hilltop villages of the region, perched above the Barbate River. We'll enjoy lunch at a panoramic terraced restaurant with time to wander the cobbled streets of the town before returning to Seville in the late afternoon. Overnight Seville (B, L)



Plaza de España, Seville

Sunday 30 March

Mudéjar Sevilla

Following the Reconquista, when the Christians took the Iberian Peninsula back from the Moors, they often chose to occupy rather than destroy the existing Moorish structures which so complemented the climate and landscape. Adapting them to their use or building new structures which combined the Moorish and the Gothic, this new style of architecture was called Mudéjar, after the less than complimentary name given to Moors who



Córdoba



Mosque-Cathedral
of Córdoba



Alcázar, Córdoba

had remained in Spain following the reconquest. While the Real Alcázar is one of the most important examples of this style, this morning our relaxed walking tour takes us past more of Seville's fine Mudéjar buildings. We also visit the Museo de Bellas Artes, a fine art museum which holds an excellent collection from the golden age of Sevillian painting. After a break for lunch, we continue to the Casa de Pilatos, a palatial residence still belonging to one of Spain's aristocratic families, where our guided tour takes us through this beautifully preserved 16th-century building which combines Gothic, Mudéjar and Italian Renaissance features. Returning to our hotel the evening is at leisure. Overnight Seville (B)

Monday 31 March **Basilippo & Carmona**

We depart Seville today and join our coach for Córdoba, stopping en route at Basilippo, a family-owned producer of fine virgin olive oil where we enjoy a short tour and tasting before continuing on to Carmona. We'll explore this small, picturesque town overlooking the Corbones River and climb the imposing Puerta de Sevilla, a fortified Roman gateway with Carthaginian and Moorish elements, for a wonderful view of the surrounding area. After a break for lunch, we rejoin our coach and continue to Córdoba. On arrival at the hotel, the evening is at leisure. Overnight Córdoba (B)

Tuesday 1 April **Córdoba**

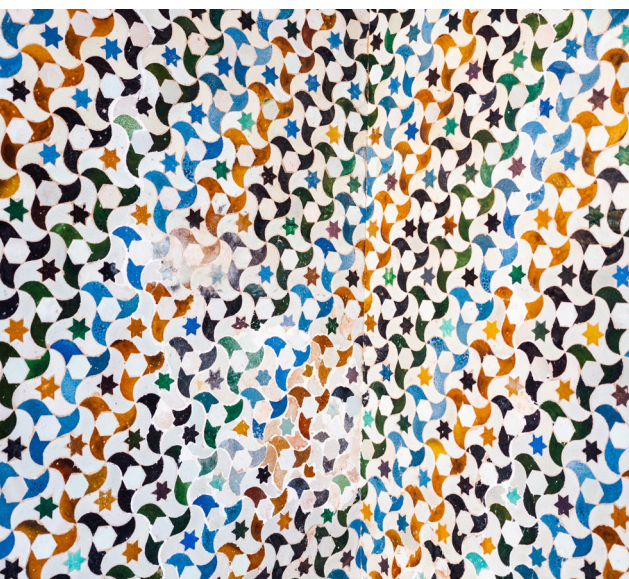
Once the largest city in Roman Spain, Córdoba's period of greatest glory was under the caliphate of the Moors and its beautiful mezquita, or mosque, constructed around 780 CE on the ruins of an old Visigothic church, dates from this period. Our guided walking tour takes us through the mosque itself as well as the surrounding areas in Córdoba's historic centre. After a break for lunch, we visit the 14th-century Alcázar, an imposing fortress whose external appearance belies its more welcoming interior and beautiful, terraced gardens before continuing to the synagogue, one of only three in Spain to survive the Jewish expulsion of 1492 and one of the best preserved in Spain. Tonight we head out for dinner at Ermita de la Candelaria, a beautifully restored former 15th-century monastery which now offers an exceptional regional menu using locally sourced products. Overnight Córdoba (B, D)

Wednesday 2 April **Medina Azahara**

This morning we head northwest of the city to Medina Azahara, the site of a once sumptuous palatine city built by caliph Abd al-Rahman III in the 10th century. At its peak the site extended over three terraces, and in addition to the palace buildings included a zoo, an aviary, numerous



Alhambra, Granada



View over
Granada

baths, and a weapons factory. Sacked by Berber invaders in 1010 and then abandoned, excavations only began on the site in 1910. Today we can see parts of the palace and mosque and a section of reconstructed gardens, and visit the world-class and award-winning museum. Returning to Córdoba the afternoon is at leisure and you may like to visit the plant-filled patios of the Palacio Viana, or simply explore the city. We meet back at the hotel in the early evening for a talk and your tour leader and manager will have suggestions for activities this evening. Overnight Córdoba (B)

Thursday 3 April

Antequera

Departing Córdoba this morning we travel to Granada via the town of Antequera at the foot of the dramatic Sierra de El Torcal. While much of the town's late Gothic and Baroque architecture reflects its time of greatest success from the 16th -18th centuries, we start much earlier with a visit to the Menga, Viera, and El Romeral dolmens – astonishing megalithic burial chambers dating back 6,000 years to the Neolithic and Bronze age. We also visit the imposing Alcazaba, a 14th-century Moorish fortress which dominates the town from its hilltop position, ideal for repelling repeated attacks from Spanish troops before the Reconquista. After a break for lunch, we rejoin our coach and continue to Granada where there is time to relax before we meet for a talk early this evening followed by a light dinner in our hotel. Overnight Granada (B, D)

Friday 4 April

Alhambra

The jewel in Granada's crown is indisputably its beautiful Alhambra, the palace fortress of the Nasrid sultans, rulers of the last Spanish Moorish kingdoms. Our tour today takes us through the serene 14th-century Palacios Nazaríes as well as the later Renaissance palace, built within the citadel for Charles V. We also visit the Alcazaba, the earliest part of the fortress around which the Palacio was built, before making our way to the Generalife, the summer palace of the Sultans with its series of patios, enclosed gardens, and waterways. In the afternoon we'll explore the Cathedral and Royal Chapel, a monumental complex built in flamboyant late Gothic style containing the mausoleums of the early Catholic monarchs. We round off the day with a wine tasting with tapas at the stylish Gar Anat Hotel. Overnight Granada (B, WT)

Saturday 5 April

Granada

This morning our relaxed walking tour takes us through the Albaicín, one of the oldest districts in Granada and the place to which the Moors remaining in Granada retreated after the Reconquista. It is now a beguiling mix

HOTELS

Hotels have been selected principally for their central location. All hotels are a comfortable four-star standard.

Madrid, H10 Puerta de Alcalá

(2 nights)

www.h10hotels.com

Seville, Hotel Vincci La Rábida

(4 nights)

www.vinccilarabida.com

Cordoba, Hotel NH Amistad

(3 nights)

www.nh-hotels.com

Granada, Villa Oniria

(4 nights)

www.villaoniria.com

WEATHER

Spring is an excellent time to travel in Spain with moderate temperatures, ranging from about 10°C to 24°C. This is a big country so expect considerable variation in the weather pattern, with mountainous Granada and the city of Madrid high on the plains being cool, but Seville and Córdoba hopefully having warm sunny days. There is generally some rainfall at this time of year so please bring wet weather gear.

FITNESS REQUIREMENTS

Grade Two

This tour is designed for people who lead active lives. You should be able to:

- comfortably participate in up to five hours of physical activity per day, including walking at an easy to regular pace
- keep up with the group at all times
- negotiate challenging archaeological sites, which are often uneven and unstable
- negotiate stairs and bridges
- stand for one to two hours in galleries and museums at a time

of narrow cobbled streets, courtyards, restaurants, and small shops and remains Spain's largest and most characteristic surviving Moorish barrio, or neighbourhood. We visit El Bañuelo, the well-preserved 11th-century Arab hammam or baths, one of the few that survived demolition by the conquering Christians who questioned the morality of public bathing, as well as the Aljibe del Rey, an enormous cistern which furnished water to the Moorish city. The afternoon and evening are at leisure to explore and enjoy this fascinating city. Overnight Granada (B)

Sunday 6 April

Las Alpujarras

Today we head out of the city towards the Sierra Nevada, the mountain range whose snowy peaks form an impressive backdrop to the city of Granada. Our destination are the foothills, or Alpujarras, a very Moorish name and a region to which the Moors retreated to avoid conversion when they were ousted from Granada in the 15th century. The narrow cobbled streets of these whitewashed rural villages, or Pueblos Blancos, are similar to ones you would see in Morocco. We stop at several Pueblos, enjoy a short walk in the countryside and visit a local workshop where they make jarapas – traditional rugs woven from textile scraps for which this region is famous. Before returning to our hotel, we enjoy a farewell lunch in a Moorish restaurant. Overnight Granada (B, L)

Monday 7 April

Departure

The tour ends this morning after breakfast. Please consult your individual travel documents for your ongoing journey. (B)



ENQUIRIES & BOOKINGS

For further information or to secure a place, please contact **Jamal Fairbrother** on 9235 0023 (Sydney) or 1800 639 699 (outside Sydney) or email:

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 info@academytravel.com.au

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