

- Visit the most culturally rich area of Spain
- The famous Roman site at Italica included – birthplace of the Emperor Trajan
- All three major Moorish cities - Cordoba, Seville & Granada – visited in the correct historical order
- Plenty of free time included for independent exploration
- Varied & remarkable scenery
- We stay in comfortable historic & modern hotels & enjoy excellent food & wine



Granada, View of the Alhambra

## OVERVIEW

Andalucía conjures up images of sun-drenched mountain ranges, covered with cork and olive trees, dotted with white-washed villages and walled towns. This is the landscape across which successive waves of conquering peoples – the first settlers, Celto-Iberians, Carthaginians, Romans, Vandals, Visigoths, ‘Arabs’ of many sorts and indeed, Christians - have swept over five millennia. The most vivid reminder of their presence lies in some of the great cities they founded, particularly Cordoba, Seville and Granada.

The architecture of this part of Spain is truly ‘unique’, quite unlike anything else in mainland Europe because of the overriding influence of the ancient Romans and the Moors of North Africa. Their visual cultures mixed and fused in new and exciting ways. Indeed, the Moors may have brought with them a new religion, Islam, but they were also masters of a much older approach to the business of living and enjoyment, be it their food, gardens, music and dance, and of course, the design and decoration of their wonderful buildings.

We shall spend two nights in Cordoba at the **Las Casas de la Judería**, two nights in Seville at the **Hospes Las Casas del Rey de Baeza** and three nights in Granada at the **Alhambra Palace**. Our chosen hotels are all comfortable 4\* examples. In Cordoba and Seville they are in charming historic properties, while in Granada we have chosen a modern hotel due to its proximity to the Alhambra. Andalucía is renowned for the quality of its food and we shall have some truly splendid meals over the course of our visit.

## ITINERARY OUTLINE

**Day 1:** Wednesday 14 October – We fly to **Málaga** arriving mid-afternoon and join our coach for the journey to Córdoba. An introductory lecture on the history of settlement in Andalucía will take place on the coach. On arrival in Córdoba we check into the **4\* Casas de la Judería**, and later that evening there will be a group dinner in a local restaurant. Wine, water and coffee are included with all group lunches and dinners.

**Day 2:** Thursday 15 October – **Córdoba**, or *Corduba*, was originally the greatest Roman city in Spain, though most of its buildings from that period remain underground, with the medieval city built on top. Conquered by the Moors, it enjoyed three centuries as the capital of the Moorish kingdom of *al-Andalus*. We begin with a short drive out to **Medina Azahara**, a wonderful summer palace complex set into a hillside. We return to Cordoba and explore the old historic quarter on foot, ending at the city’s fine **Archaeological Museum**. After some free time for lunch, not included, we visit the city’s greatest monument, the fabulous mosque, or **Mezquita** and now the city’s Cathedral. We return to our hotel and there will be a group dinner later that evening in one of the city’s most innovative, *Michelin* starred restaurants.

**Day 3:** Friday 16 October – We leave Cordoba and drive towards Seville, visiting en route the lovely town of **Carmona**. This is a delightful place, Roman in origin and there is much to see from this, and later, periods. After some free time for lunch, not included, we continue on to the site of Roman **Italica**. The home town of the family which produced two Roman emperors, Trajan and Hadrian, there are important remains, particularly the **Amphitheatre** and fine displays of floor mosaics still in situ in some of the larger houses. We continue to Seville where we check into our hotel, the **4\* Hospes Las Casas del Rey de Baeza**, and there will be a group dinner later that evening in the hotel restaurant.

**Day 4:** Saturday 17 October – **Sevilla** is one of the liveliest and most welcoming of Spanish cities. Our day will focus on the historic centre and we begin with a visit to the **Archaeological Museum**, full of treasures from Italica and other sites. We continue to the **Cathedral**, where the present gothic church was built on the site of the old mosque after the Christian conquest of 1248. After our visit there will be free time for lunch, not included, followed by a welcome siesta. In the early evening we shall have the privilege of a **private** visit to the **Alcázar**, or Royal Palace. Continuously occupied since Roman times, the real joy of the palace is the series of **Mudéjar** patios and rooms dating from the time of Pedro the Cruel (1350–69), a complex of great beauty. We return to our hotel and there will be a group dinner later that evening in a local restaurant.

**Day 5:** Sunday 18 October – This morning we shall have a walk through the medieval part of the city including a visit to the finest sixteenth century private palace in Seville, the ‘**Casa de Pilatos**’, a magnificent survival from the renaissance and still privately owned and lived in. You will then have some free time to explore Seville – perhaps a gentle stroll in the wonderful gardens of the Alcázar? Lunch is included today and we depart for Granada mid afternoon. On arrival in **Granada**, we check into the **4\* Alhambra Palace Hotel**, ideally situated close to the Alhambra itself and within walking distance of the historic centre and the evening will be free.

**Day 6:** Monday 19 October – Our day will concentrate on two of the ‘renaissance’ towns of Andalucía, **Baeza** and **Úbeda**, so described due to the amazing range and quality of buildings erected by the local aristocracy in the sixteenth century. **Baeza** is an intimate place and the town is laid out over a gentle hill, featuring a good cathedral and an enticing range of renaissance palaces. **Úbeda** is equally laid back, and the area around the historic centre has some splendid buildings. This will be a gentle day and a leisurely lunch will be taken in the local Parador, housed in a charming palace. We return to Granada and the evening will be free.

**Day 7:** Tuesday 20 October – **Granada** is surely one of the most evocative cities in Spain? Dominated by the vast **Alhambra**, the red-brick palace-fortress of the Nasrid rulers, this hymn to Moorish visual culture will form a fitting climax to our visit. We spend the morning down in the city centre where we shall visit the city’s famous **Royal Chapel** which houses a series of royal tombs, most famously those of Isabella of Castile and Ferdinand of Aragon, the so-called ‘Catholic Monarchs’ who conquered Granada in 1492. After some free time for lunch, not included, we continue back up to the **Alhambra**, to visit this amazing complex, including the surrounding **Generalife Gardens**. We return to our hotel and later we have our final group dinner in a local restaurant.

**Day 8:** Wednesday 21 October – We leave Granada in the morning for **Antequera** to visit the well preserved group of ancient Bronze Age Dolmens, a talisman from the early settlement period, before travelling onward for the return flight to Gatwick.

## PRACTICALITIES

**Price** £3235    **Price without flights** £3095    **Deposit** £375    **Single Supplement** £595 (Double for Sole Use)

**Hotels** All hotels on a bed & breakfast basis: 2 nights at 4\* Las Casas de la Judería in Cordoba, 2 nights at 4\* Hospes Las Casas del Rey de Baeza in Seville & 3 nights at 4\*Alhambra Palace in Granada

**Flights** British Airways

Outward: **BA2718** Depart London Gatwick (South Terminal) **1240**, arrive Malaga **1635**

Return: **BA2723** Depart Malaga **1725**, arrive London Gatwick (South Terminal) **1930**

**Price includes** 4 dinners & 3 lunches with water, wine & coffee, all local transfers, entry fees & gratuities, services of Tom Duncan & our local tour manager, David Sketchley

**Not included** Travel to/from Gatwick, 3 dinners & 5 lunches



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