



Escorted Tours in Andalusia

GARDEN TOUR: THE SCENT OF ANDALUCIA

(Small exclusive group tour 4-12 people)

The **Andalusia** of legends is brought to life on this dream trip.

As you explore Southern Spain and discover its hidden treasures, allow yourself to be captivated by its finest flourishing gardens and inspired by the countless fragrant orange trees that line the cobblestoned streets of Andalusia's ancient cities.

We invite you to join us for this unique opportunity to visit the best selection of Moorish, Renaissance and Tropical gardens hidden in this culturally rich and historic corner of Spain.

SUMMARY (7 Nights)

Start & End Point: Malaga

1 Night Ronda

2 Night Sevilla

2 Nights Cordoba

2 Nights Granada

What's Included?

- All private transfers
- Hotels (3/4*)
- Breakfasts & all meals mentioned in the itinerary
- Fluent English speaking Tour Leader
- Fluent English speaking art historian guide
- Skip the line access

What's not Included?

- International Air Flights
- Medical/Travel Insurance
- Meals & Drinks, other than those mentioned in the itinerary
- Tips & Gratuities

HIGHLIGHTS

- Small exclusive group tour (4-12 people maximum)
- Discover the main UNESCO World Heritage sites in Spain such as the Alhambra Palace in Granada, the Mosque of Córdoba and the Gothic Cathedral in Sevilla.
- The explosion of colours in the Andalusian courtyards, the deep smell of orange blossoms on the streets and the water silence of the fountains will make you feel in paradise.
- Enjoy some privileged spots on this land of castles, palaces and gardens.
- Some private houses will open their gardens to you so you can meet the owners, try their food and toast with local wines.
- Stay in character historic buildings converted into charming accommodations for a real feel of the Andalusian architecture.



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ITINERARY

DAY 1: Malaga

Morning: Meet & Greet. Concepcion Botanical Gardens

The morning time and meeting place (either Malaga Maria Zambrano railway station or Malaga airport) will be confirmed 30 days before the trip departure.

After meeting your tour leader and group, we will take you to La Concepcion Botanical Gardens, located just 6 km outside Malaga city centre. These gardens are a tropical paradise with over 800 species.

After your 1h guided tour of the gardens with a botanic expert, you'll have some **lunch** at the coffee shop of the Botanical gardens, we will drive you to the picturesque town of Ronda on a beautiful scenic road connecting the Mediterranean coast and the Serrania mountains.

Check-in at your dramatically located hotel in Ronda which overlooks the Tajo gorge and cliffs.



Free evening & welcome dinner

After settled in your room, it's time to relax and enjoy a nice welcome dinner with amazing views

The Concepcion botanical and historical gardens were initially created in 1855 by the Marquis of Casa Loring and his wife. The Gardens were subsequently expanded by their second owners, the Echevarria-Echevarrieta family, who acquired the estate in 1911. They were officially declared gardens of historical and artistic importance in 1943 and have now achieved the "BIC" status (Building of Cultural Interest). status (Building of Cultural Interest). In 1990, they were taken over by Malaga city council and were opened to the public on 21st June 1994.

Meals included: Lunch & dinner

DAY 2: Ronda & Sevilla

Morning: Ronda guided tour

After breakfast, we will visit the most representative gardens in Ronda, starting with the gardens of Casa del Rey Moro: XVIII century mansion built on Moorish foundations.

The gardens were constructed in 1912 by Forestier and offer excellent views of the Tajo gorge and the surrounding mountains. We will visit next the Palacio de Mondragón: XIV century palace which was the residence to the Moorish kings. Three Mudejar courtyards preserving original stuccowork and mosaics. Walk along the Alameda del Tajo: public garden from the XIX century representing a selection of mature trees typical in ornamental gardening in the Málaga province to end up at the most famous viewpoint to stare down into the gorge.



Lunch will be offered in a beautiful traditional restaurant in the old town, where you can sample the local wines from Ronda.

Afternoon: Transfer to Sevilla

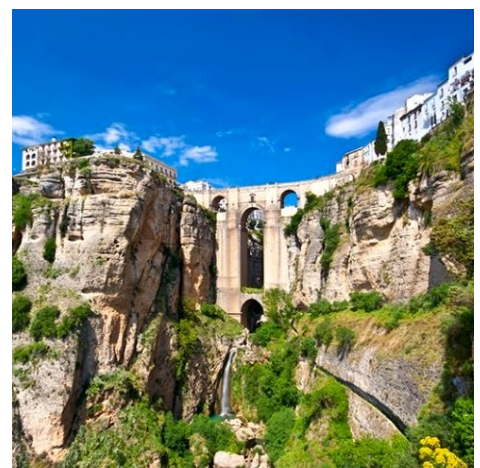
After lunch, you will be transferred to magic Sevilla, the capital of Southern Spain (approx. 1:45h drive) Check-in at a charming hotel in the Jewish quarter.

Free evening

You will have the evening free to enjoy Sevilla at your leisure

Ronda is a mountaintop city that sits in the heart of the Serrania de Ronda. Set dramatically above a deep gorge and surrounded by lush river valleys, it is a place that is absolutely breathtaking. The gorge, El Tajo, separates the city's 15th-century new town from its Moorish old town. Puente Nuevo, a stone bridge spanning the gorge, has a lookout offering stunning views and the new town's Plaza de Toros, a legendary 18th-century bullring, is one of the city's most recognizable landmarks.

Meals included: Breakfast & lunch



DAY 3: Sevilla

Morning: Sevilla guided tour

After breakfast, meet your local art historian guide in the lobby of the hotel to embark you on a 3.5h guided walking tour of the historical centre of Sevilla (one of the largest in Europe), including the Casa Pilatos (XV century Andalus palace and courtyards with a harmonious mixture of Mudéjar, Gothic and Renaissance styles), the Barrio de Santa Cruz (the old Jewish quarter with a labyrinth of tiny alleys and white houses with traditional Moorish courtyards), the Reales Alcazares gardens (an active Royal residence boasting impressive gardens and fountains from the XIV century) and finally the great Cathedral (the third largest Gothic cathedral in the world). The tour will finish at the Giralda tower (Cathedral's bell tower), where you can walk up to the very top (104 m high over ramps, no steps) at your own pace. Later your tour guide will meet you by the exit gate of the Cathedral for a 2h tapas tour, the Sevilla way!!



Free afternoon (suggestions)

Murillo gardens

Take a magical afternoon tea experience at one of the oldest & most beautiful hotels in Sevilla (Alfonso XIII, purely mudéjar style)

Arabian spa

Shopping

Metropol panoramic view (the wooden mushrooms, Plaza Encarnacion)...



Evening: Flamenco show & dinner

Flamenco venue and dinner. Your tour guide will meet you at the lobby of your hotel to take you to one of the most emblematic "Tablaos" in Sevilla. With more than 40 years of experience this "Tablao" offers the purest Flamenco you can find in Andalusia.

Probably the best place in Sevilla to live the excitement and duende of flamenco. Prior to the performance, à la carte dinner with dishes of high Andalusian cuisine will be served (all drinks are included).

Towards the end of the dinner, the show will start and last approximately 1.30h. This show features up to 15 of the most professional flamenco artists in the whole Spain.

Excitement and enjoyment are guaranteed!

*Some cities blast you away, others slowly win you over. **Sevilla** disarms and seduces you. Its historic centre lorded over by a colossal Gothic cathedral, is an intoxicating mix of resplendent Mudéjar palaces, baroque churches and winding medieval lanes. Flamenco clubs keep the intimacy and intensity of this centuries-old tradition alive whilst aristocratic mansions recall the city's past as a showcase Moorish capital and, later, a 16th-century metropolis rich on the back of New World trade.*



Meals included: Breakfast, Lunch & Dinner

DAY 4: Sevilla & Portocarrero

Morning: Maria Luisa Park & Plaza de España (Sevilla) & Lunch in Carmona

After breakfast, meet your local art historian guide in the lobby of the hotel for a private guided visit to M^a Luisa Park and the spectacular Plaza de España.

After your tour, a private transfer to the picturesque town of Carmona (aprx.30 mins drive)

You will enjoy a delicious **lunch** at the Parador Hotel. The restaurant here offers the most spectacular views over the Guadalquivir valley and crops.

Afternoon: Portocarrero Palace

Your driver and tour guide will take you to **Portocarrero Palace** (approx. 45mins), located in Palma del Rio, which is between the historic cities of Cordoba and Sevilla, by the river bank of the Guadalquivir.

You will enjoy a private guided tour of aprx 1.5h of the Palace, courtyards, and gardens. This lovely visit will be completed with a tasting of delicious fresh orange juice from the orchards, accompanied by tea and pastries.

Cristina Ybarra, the current owner has her main art studio inside the Palace and she is always pleased to show and share her artwork with those discerning travellers who are interested in painting.

After this magical escape to paradise, it's on to your hotel in Cordoba (aprx. 1h).

Evening Equestrian Show in Cordoba

Tonight you will enjoy a marvellous equestrian exhibition in which pure bred Spanish horses are the main protagonists. The stage; an emblematic and magical historical building, once the birthplace of the Andalusian Horse and now an unparalleled setting for this enchanting 1-hour equestrian show. The Royal Stables are located next to the Royal Alcázar and just a 5 mins walk from your hotel.

After the show, you can have dinner (cost not included) at one of the local restaurants in the nearby and authentic "San Basilio" district.

Carmona, known as the "shining star of Andalusia" is a hidden gem sited on a low hill overlooking a fertile plain. A major Roman town, it was also an important Taifa state in Moorish times.

Following the Reconquista, Pedro the Cruel built a palace within its walls, which he used as a provincial royal residence (now hosting the well known Parador of Carmona).

Córdoba was an important Roman city and a major Islamic centre in the Middle Ages. It's best known for La Mezquita, an immense mosque dating from 784 A.D., featuring a columned prayer hall and older Byzantine mosaics. After it became a Catholic church in 1236, a Renaissance-style nave was added in the 17th century.

*The rich history of the **Portocarrero Palace** goes back 2000 years to Roman times making this palace a real gem to be discovered. This 16th-century castle is surrounded by Almohad walls from the 12th-century when the building used as a Alcazar/fortress. Owned by just two families over the past 700 years with its current owners (Ybarra family) having lived here for 6 generations. The Palace, declared a site of cultural interest, features Hispano-Arabic gardens complete with the original Arab irrigation system, a large citrus collection & possibly the oldest centenary orange orchard. In 2005, the Palace was chosen by Ridley Scott as a filming location for the "Kingdom of Heaven".*

*The emblematic and historic building which houses the **Royal Stables** was founded in 1570 by King Felipe II, a great horse lover with the dream of making a pure Spanish thoroughbred.*

Meals included: Breakfast & lunch



DAY 5: Cordoba

Morning: The Viana Palace and the Royal Alcázar gardens

Your local guide will pick you up at your hotel and will take you for a walking tour of apr 3 hrs to explore the nicest gardens and courtyards of Córdoba. You will first visit the Palacio de Viana in the Santa Marina neighbourhood, a 17th- century manor with 13 interconnected delightful patios and gardens. Then it's time to explore the old town and its Jewish quarter with an interesting introduction to the historic importance of the Mezquita (Mosque/Cathedral) which you will be visiting tonight. The guided tour will end at the Royal Alcazar where you will enjoy the beauty of its gardens.

Lunch will be served at a lovely patio house.



Back at your hotel, use the couple of hours of **free time in the afternoon** to have a little rest as the evening & night are full with exciting activities.

Evening: Exploring San Basilio, Patios Tour & Flowers tasting

This 2 h experience includes a short orientation walk to explore one of the most popular areas of Cordoba, the San Basilio quarter, where you will admire the architecture and unique decoration of some of the most representative courtyards ("Patios") declared Intangible Cultural Heritage by the Unesco in 2012.

Have you ever wondered what a carnation, a pansy, a Snapdragon or a rose petal taste like? Today, you will have the unique opportunity of attending an amazing flower tasting to find out. This very fantastic experience makes us pioneers in offering something like this in Andalusia. All the flowers you'll taste are edible and will be paired with two excellent local "sherry"-style wines (Palo Cortado and sweet Pedro Ximenez).

This experience is an absolute must-try for any flower lover visiting Cordoba in Springtime!

Night: Visit of the Mezquita (El Alma de Córdoba)

As you would have had a historical introduction from your local guide earlier this morning, this night visit inside the building is part of a self-guided group. The Mezquita night visit is called 'El Alma de Córdoba' (the Soul of Cordoba) and allows a limited number of visitors each evening to experience its beautifully lit interior. The visit is around 9:30PM (TBC) and lasts approximately one hour. Once at the entrance, you will be provided with an English audio system that you follow during the visit. You will first sit through an introductory movie before you can have access to the different areas of the visit (pictures are not allowed during this night visit).



*The **Alcázar de Los Reyes Cristianos** was built under Castilian rule in the 13th &14th centuries on the remains of a Moorish predecessor and has had many uses since then. Nowadays the building is a Historical Monument and a UNESCO World Heritage Site. The Alcázar's terraced gardens – full of fish ponds, fountains, orange trees, and flowers – are a delight to stroll around.*

*The Roman tradition of the impluvium, combined with the Moorish culture in Cordoba, gave rise to the **Andalusian courtyard or patio**; a protected interior area that served as the focal point of people's social and family lives. Filling the central patio with plants and water features was a way of keeping local homes cool. With time, patio decoration took on a life all its own and today once a year in May, these patios compete and their doors are opened to everyone.*

*A stunning Renaissance palace set around 12 beautiful patios, the **Viana Palace** is a particular delight to visit in spring. Occupied by the aristocratic Marquesses de Viana until 1980, the large building is packed with art and antiques.*



*The **Mezquita-Cathedral** de Cordoba is as complex as the extraordinarily rich history it illustrates an absolute must-see when in Cordoba.*

Meals included: Breakfast & lunch

DAY 6: Montilla-Moriles

Smell & Taste the Andalusian countryside

Morning

After breakfast, we will make our way to our next destination but before heading to Granada, we stop at interesting places in the heart of the Andalusian countryside surrounded by hundred years old olive groves...

First stop is a family-run olive oil mill in **Montilla** where you will discover the full process of olive oil making. You will enjoy a tour of the family groves and learn about the different characteristics, culinary uses and health benefits of olive oil followed by a tasting of two of their delicious varieties along with freshly baked bread made by the very same family!

Then, it's on to the lovely wine estate of Santa Magdalena, a local family-run boutique winery located right in the heart of the Sierra de **Moriles**, a stunning rural landscape with endless vineyards and rolling hills. Upon arrival, you will be welcomed by a truly passionate viticulturist who will lead you through their family vineyards, private garden and wine cellar while telling you about the history of this recently restored ancestral property as well as the unique grape variety that grows exclusively in this region, the popular and worldwide known "Pedro Ximenez".

You will also learn about the entire process and aging system of these singular dry and sweet wines, a process that is probably the oldest in Spain.

The visit will end with a delicious tasting of some of these varieties paired with homemade **lunch** (included) showcasing some of the region's best products.

Afternoon: Transfer to Granada

After lunch you will be transferred to Granada (aprx. 2h drive).

Evening: Orientation walk in Granada

After checking into your hotel in Granada's city centre, you will have some free time to freshen up and relax before meeting up with the group and your tour guide again to go on a short orientation walk of approx. 1.5h. You will walk along the Darro river promenade and through the maze of tiny, narrow cobbled streets of the picturesque Albaycin Moorish district. During the walk you will be stopping at some of the most spectacular viewpoints to admire the stunning Alhambra Palace and take the best pictures shots. A great way to complete this evening tour would be tasting some of the local tapas at some of the most emblematic taverns in town. We invite you to join us for a fun evening to try best food and wine (this is an optional meal that is not included).

*Did you know that Spain is the **largest producer of olive oil in the world** and that 80% of Spanish production is made in Andalusia? The history of olive oil takes us back to the Phoenician and Greek civilizations settled in the Iberian Peninsula over 3,000 years ago. The importance of olive oil to Spanish culture cannot be overstated; locals actually refer to it as "liquid gold". Spain is also home to an abundance of grape varieties; making it the **third-largest wine producers in the world**.*

*The landscape of the Designation of Origin wine zone known as **Montilla-Moriles** is dry and the soil is a blinding white Albariza (white marl composed of clay, calcium and marine fossils). Its excellent moisture retention is very significant as this area is hotter than almost anywhere else in Spain. The wineries of the Montilla-Moriles Wine Route where the undisputed star is the Pedro Ximénez grape variety and in which the biological aging (for the Fino wine) and the oxidative aging (for the Amontillados, Olorosos, and Pedro Ximénez) take part following the system of criaderas and soleras.*

Meals included: Breakfast & Lunch



DAY 7: Granada - The wonders of the Alhambra

Morning: Alhambra guided tour

After breakfast, our tour leader will take you to the Alhambra where you will be introduced to your local art historian guide who will show you the incomparable Alhambra Palace and the Generalife gardens on a 3h private tour. You will admire the greatest treasure of Moorish Spain.

The Generalife is the image of how paradise is described in the Koran ("shaded, leafy garden refreshed by running water where the fortunate ones may take their rest under tall canopies").

After the guided tour of the Alhambra, you will enjoy a nice lunch at a lovely restaurant nearby with beautiful views.



The Alhambra is Granada's – and Europe's – love letter to Moorish culture, a place where fountains trickle, leaves rustle, and ancient spirits seem to mysteriously linger. Part palace, part fort, part World Heritage site, part lesson in medieval architecture, the Alhambra has long enchanted a never-ending line of expectant visitors. The Generalife was intended to reflect how paradise is described in the Koran ("shaded, leafy garden refreshed by running water where the fortunate ones may take their rest under tall canopies").

Granada was first settled by native tribes in the prehistoric period and was known as Ilbyr. When the Romans colonized southern Spain, they built their own city here and called it Illibris. The Arabs, invading the peninsula in the 8th century, gave it its current name of Granada. It was the last Muslim city to fall to the Christians in 1492, at the hands of Queen Isabel of Castile and her husband Ferdinand of Aragon.



Afternoon: Carmen de los Mártires

We will visit this delightfully tranquil garden filled with palms, cypresses and tinkling fountains. A wonderful oasis where we will spend approx. 2 hours and will take your breathe away... We will make our way down town back to your hotel where you will have the rest of the evening free at your leisure.

Free evening to relax or do some shopping...

Carmen de Los Mártires is a wonderful oasis offering magnificent panoramic views over the city, the valley and the Sierra Nevada. This largest garden in the city of Granada stretches out over seven hectares along the southern slopes of Mauror Hill on a piece of land belonging to the Alhambra and that the Moors referred to as Campo de Ahabul. It was known by Christians as Corral de Los Cautivos (Corral of Captives), and in 1494, the German traveler and humanist Hieronymus Münzer witnessed an area 'filled with pits and dungeons' where infidels were punished by the Moors. Boabdil set out from this spot to deliver the keys of Granada to Isabella I of Castile, who ordered the construction of a hermitage—the city's first church—at the top of the hill, in honor of those Christian martyrs that included the Bishop of Jaén and a number of Franciscan monks. Although the hermitage no longer exists today, its history led to the name of Carmen de Los Mártires, an enormous garden featuring an array of styles that evokes 19th century Romanticism through its lakes, sculptures and hedge mazes. It is no surprise that this is one of the most popular spots in the city for wedding celebrations.



Meals included: Breakfast & Lunch

DAY 8: Granada - More to explore

Morning: Granada walk & Transfer to Malaga

After breakfast and check-out, you can leave luggage at reception for a later pick up and transfer to Malaga.

This last morning, you will be taken on a short walk within the city centre to admire the magnificent Cathedral and Royal Chapel. To say goodbye to Granada and Andalusia, we will take you off the beaten path to be delighted with the incredible views and the beautiful gardens of one of the most emblematic Moorish "Carmens" in the city.

The Andalusian patios are called "Carmens" in Granada and they are little paradises hidden from the outside streets inside the Arabian style houses.

Here we will stay for a nice relaxed lunch and simply admire the stunning views of the Alhambra palace in front...

After lunch, you will be transferred to Malaga either the airport, the train station or the city centre, depending on the rest of your travel plans.



End of your trip

Unfortunately all good things must come to an end.... We hope you enjoyed this small group tour with us.

If you would like to extend the duration of your trip to explore more of Andalucía and/or other regions of Spain, we will be more than happy to create a customised itinerary for the remainder of your stay

Meals included: Breakfast & Lunch

