



Escorted Tours in Andalusia

SPRING TOUR:

AN INTRODUCTION TO SPANISH CULTURE, GASTRONOMY & GARDENS

(Small exclusive group tour 6-12 people)

The **Andalusia** of legends is brought to life on this dream trip. This Spring tour is the perfect introduction to the gastronomy, culture and gardens of Southern Spain. This season is truly the best time to visit our beautiful corner of the world, flowers are in full bloom and there's an ambiance of celebration in the air.

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 delve into this unique and immersive opportunity to explore our historical heritage, and to visit the best selection of Moorish, Renaissance and Tropical gardens in this culturally rich 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
- 4* Boutique hotels
- Breakfasts & all meals mentioned in the itinerary
- Fluent English speaking Tour Leader
- Fluent English speaking art historian guide
- Skip the line access
- Tips & Gratuities

What's not Included?

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

HIGHLIGHTS

- Small exclusive group tour (6-12 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.



Just Explore Holidays & Tours SL

T: +34 957 022 902

M: +34 639 933 717

E: info@just-explore.com

www.just-explore.com

Spanish Licence: CIAN-146473-2

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's Gardens

After breakfast and check-out you will enjoy a lovely walk along the **Alameda del Tajo**: a public garden from the 19th century which houses a wonderful selection of full-grown trees typical to the Malageño ornamental gardening style. Your walk will end at the city's most famous viewpoint which offers impressive views of the imposing gorge below.

On this guided tour, you'll visit the most representative gardens in Ronda, starting with the gardens of **Casa del Rey Moro**: 18th-century mansion built on Morish foundations. These gardens were constructed in 1912 by Forestier and offer excellent views of the Tajo gorge and the surrounding mountains.

Next, you will visit the **Palacio de Mondragón**: a 14th-century palace which was the residence to the Moorish kings and is made up of three Mudejar courtyards that still have the original stuccowork and mosaics perfectly preserved.

Finally you'll visit the **Casa don Bosco**, a modernist palace built at the beginning of the 20th century. It is worth highlighting its beautiful interior patio decorated with Nasrid flooring and a large collection of ceramics from the region; as well as its tapestries dating from the 19th century and its magnificent walnut furniture, the fireplace in its main living room is the dearest example of Ronda's craftsmanship in the purest Castilian style. The gardens are very interesting, due to its placement, being a natural balcony on to the mountains.

Lunch (included) will be served with stunning views over the bridge. You will have the opportunity to sample Ronda's fantastic local wines as well.

Afternoon: Transfer to Sevilla

After lunch, it's on to Sevilla (aprx. 1h 45mins) where you will be staying at a beautiful hotel located right in the city center.

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 breath taking. 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.



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!



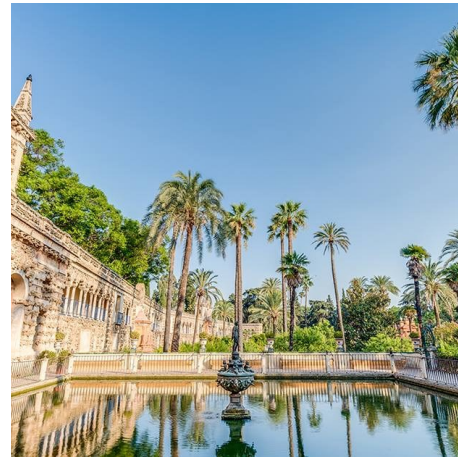
*Some cities blast you away, others slowly win you over. **Sevilla** disarms and seduces you. Its historic centre lorded over by a colossal Gothic cathedral, is an intoxicating mix of resplendent Mudéjar palaces, baroque churches and winding medieval lanes. Flamenco clubs keep the intimacy and intensity 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 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 mudejar style)

Arabian spa

Shopping

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



*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.*

Evening Optional activity*: Unique Feria experience FERIA DE ABRIL (Sevilla's April fair)

**As this is an event that changes dates every year, this activity may not always be available.*

We will inform you when this tour coincides with the April fair.

Private tour with a local flamenco & culinary guide (Length: 4h)

Additional cost to the tour price per person: 350 euros

Ready for a truly local immersion evening?

This week Sevilla is celebrating its main Spring festival, its famous Feria! You could not miss this unique opportunity and we have arranged the most exclusive experience to become one of the highlights of your trip: you will live the Feria like locals do!

Your local flamenco guide together with your tour leader (2 very Andalusia girls!) will take you to the Arenal Fairground in a horse carriage (the distance from your hotel to the horse carriage pick up is approx 10 min walk).

Once at the fairground, you will experience the atmosphere and local vibe by getting into a couple of the public casetas (booths) where locals eat, drink, dance and pretty much socialize. Do not be shy to dance and enjoy yourself.

It is Feria and you are in good hands!! You will be sampling local tapas and drinks, such as rebujito, the typical drink of the April Fair (a mix of Manzanilla sherry and Seven Up) (all included in the price).

You'll then head back to the hotel (approx 40 min walk or taxi - cost not included)

Local tips for the Feria:

- Dress code: smart (if possible, dress or skirt for women and shirt and trousers for men. As our local guide says: " a la feria se va guapo or guapa". You go to the feria looking all handsome and gorgeous!)
- Get hydrated
- Get a fan

La Feria de Abril (the April fair), the creme de la creme of Spanish festivals, begins today!

As the temperatures rise and the orange trees begin to flower, two weeks after Semana Santa, Sevillanos get together for the Feria de Abril; an annual celebration of food, fun, and frivolity. This is when the locals take the opportunity to wear their finest traditional dresses, ride horses, and drink sherry...

The April fair, like most fairs in the region, initially started as a cattle fair, it has since evolved and become a very popular and international event, where people come together to have fun until the wee hours.

These days more than a thousand "casetas" (temporary bars) line the streets of the fairground. Most of them private with limited access for visitors and tourists, but don't worry, there are also a number of public "casetas", where you can enjoy the music and food while watching the fairgoers, many in traditional costume, dancing the popular Flamenco dance known as "Sevillanas". There are also bullfights every afternoon at the Plaza de Toros de la Maestranza.

Meals included: Breakfast & Lunch



DAY 4: Sevilla & Portocarrero

Morning: María Luisa Park & Plaza de España (Sevilla)

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, you'll head to Portocarrero (aprx 1h 15mins), located in Palma del Rio, right in between the historic cities of Cordoba and Sevilla, by the riverbank of the Guadalquivir.

Afternoon: Portocarrero Palace - Visit, tasting & lunch

You will enjoy a private guided tour of the Palace, courtyards, and gardens. This lovely visit will be completed with a tasting of delicious fresh orange juice from the orchards and a light **lunch** in the palace.

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.

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

Cordoba highlights: Viana Palace, Jewish quarter and the Great Mosque/Cathedral

Your local guide will pick you up at your hotel and will take you for a walking tour of approx 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.

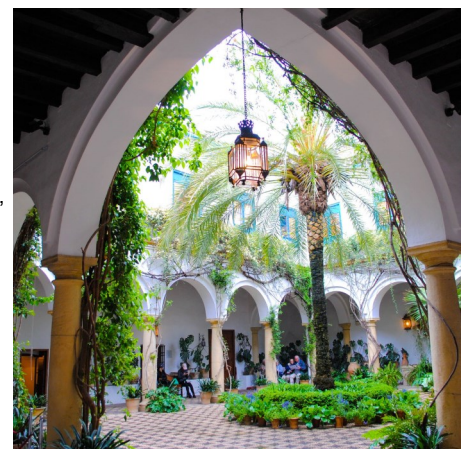
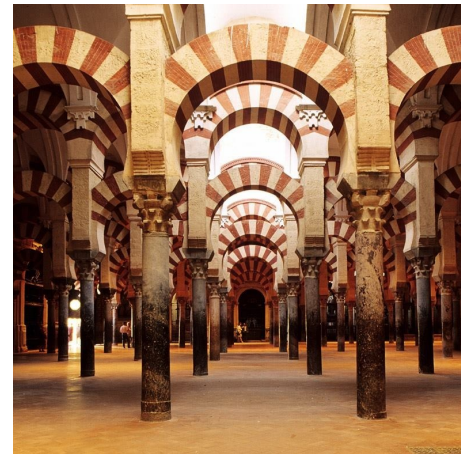
Then it's time to explore the old town and its **Jewish quarter** including, of course, a guided visit to the famed **Mosque/Cathedral** (La Mezquita), a monumental site which encapsulates this city's identity like few other buildings can, with the layers of its beautifully complex history visibly integrated in its walls and bearing the marks of the various and diverse cultures and civilizations that helped shape this fascinating city.

Lunch will be served at a lovely patio house located in the heart of the Jewish quarter.

Evening: Exploring San Basilio, Patios & Flower tasting

This 2h 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? Well, today, you will also have the unique opportunity of attending an amazing flower tasting to find out. This very interesting and totally different experience makes us pioneer in offering something like this in Andalucía. All the flowers you will be tasting are totally edible and will be paired with two excellent local wines, "sherry" style (Palo Cortado and sweet Pedro Ximenez). This experience is an absolute must-try for any flower lover visiting Cordoba in Springtime!



Cordoba is a great cultural reference point in Europe thanks to the various civilizations that chose to settle here throughout history (Visigoth, Roman, Muslim, Jewish, and Christian). Very few places in the world can boast of having been the capital of a Roman province (Hispania Ulterior), the capital of an Arab State (Al-Andalus) and a Caliphate and such splendor is palpable in the intellectual wealth of this city, that saw the birth of prominent figures such as Séneca, Averroes and Maimonides.

*The city famously houses the **Mezquita**, a symbol of the worldly, sophisticated culture that flourished here more than a millennium ago when Córdoba was western Europe's largest city. The Great Mosque of Cordoba's impressive size and height are true artistic and architectural achievements for its time. It was, in fact, an important influence on Western Islamic art from the 8th to the 19th century. The Mezquita is a perdurable testimony of the Caliphate of Cordoba and one of the most emblematic monuments of Islamic architecture with the second largest surface area, after the Holy Mosque in Mecca.*

*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 Viana Palace has eleven courtyards – all unique and immensely beautiful – with evocative names like the Patio of the Gardeners, the Madame, the Well, the Iron Bars, or the Orange Trees. It also has a garden covering almost 1,200 m², in the Baroque style with touches reminiscent of the Arab culture.*

*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.*



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 a couple of interesting places in the heart of the Andalusian countryside surrounded by hundred year-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 local **family-run boutique winery** located right in the heart of the Sierra de **Montilla**, 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 your orientation walk of Granada's city centre (1.5hrs) so you could get the bearings and the feel of the city.

A great way to complete this evening tour would be with a tasting of 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 the 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 & the Albaycín

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, 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 walk along the Darro river promenade and through the maze of tiny, narrow cobbled streets of the picturesque Albaycín Moorish district.

During the walk, you will stop at some of the most spectacular viewpoints to admire the legendary Alhambra Palace and take the best pictures.

Free afternoon to do some shopping or simply relax on this final day.

Farewell dinner to say good bye to Granada and Andalusia.

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.

Meals included: Breakfast, lunch & dinner



DAY 8: Transfer back to Malaga

Morning:

After breakfast and check-out, 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

