



Andalucían cities

What to see and do, and good places to stay, eat and drink in three exuberant Spanish cities – **Seville, Granada and Córdoba**

Not only does Seville, Granada and Córdoba enjoy an individual flavour, but each one boasts a spectacular centrepiece. Seville is famed for its stunning Islamic palace and cathedral. In Granada, the great belvedere citadel, the Alhambra, takes centre stage, and Córdoba is celebrated for its vast ancient *mezquita* (mosque) that still dominates the town centre.

The three cities witnessed their extensive flowering between the Islamic invasion of 711 and the Christian 'reconquista' in 1492, when each in turn joined the ranks of the richest and most influential cities in Europe. The Iberian Catholics put an end to the glorious Islamic chapter in Spanish history. Fernando III of Castile began the process when he invaded Córdoba and Seville in the mid-13th century. And some 250 years later in 1492, Granada, the last Islamic bastion on the Iberian Peninsula, fell to the Catholic monarchs Isobel and Ferdinand.

These two layers of history have left behind a wonderful and bizarre heritage in Andalucía. The great cathedral of Seville, which was built over the city's *mezquita*, kept the towering minaret and turned it into a bell tower. Córdoba retained its vast *mezquita*, but saw fit to build a cathedral slap bang in its centre, and Granada left its grand Islamic citadel to rot on a hilltop only to create another city in the valley below.

The bars, cafés and restaurants also require a thorough investigation. Granada is the home of tapas, Córdoba is renowned for its haute cuisine (many of the best restaurants are tucked away in its old Jewish quarter), while Seville has its share of tapas bars and bijou restaurants, but it tops the bill for its vibrant restaurants with alfresco pavement seating.

GETTING THERE

Direct flights to Malaga

- **BMIbaby** (www.bmibaby.com) Belfast, Nottingham
- **Easyjet** (www.easyjet.com) Bristol, Glasgow, Liverpool, London: Gatwick, Luton and Stansted, Newcastle, Nottingham
- **Jet2.com** (www.jet2.com) Belfast, Blackpool
- **Ryanair** (www.ryanair.com) Belfast, Edinburgh and Liverpool

Bus from Malaga

- **ALSA** (www.alsa.es)
- Bus times from
- **Córdoba**: 2½ hours
- **Granada**: 2 hours
- **Seville**: 2 hours, 45 mins

Train from Malaga

- **RENFE** (www.renfe.es)
- Train times from
- **Córdoba**: 1 hour
- **Granada**: 2 hours – one station change. (Use the English language RENFE web page for train times at www.renfe.es/horarios/english/index.html. The Spanish language option appears to list direct train services only).
- **Seville**: 2 hours

Direct flights to Seville

- **Iberia** (www.iberia.com/gb/flights) from Liverpool and London Gatwick and Stansted
- **Ryanair** (www.ryanair.com) flights from London Gatwick

Bus from Seville

- **ALSA** (www.alsa.es)
- Bus times from
- **Córdoba**: 2 hours
- **Granada**: 2 hours, 45 mins

Trains from Seville

- **RENFE** (www.renfe.es)
- Train times from
- **Córdoba**: 45 minutes
- **Granada**: 3 hours

GETTING AROUND

By bus

- **ALSA** (www.alsa.es)
- Timetable from Córdoba-Granada: 2hrs, 30mins

By train

- **RENFE** (www.renfe.es)
- Timetable from Córdoba-Granada: 2hrs, 30mins. See 'Getting there' for Seville-Cordoba-Granada bus and train services.

■ For advice on cheap train fares, see the April issue of the *Which? Holiday* report on rail travel in Europe ('Delight at the end of the tunnel', pg 44).

USEFUL INFORMATION

Recommended book

- **Lonely Planet Andalucía**, £12.99 (ISBN 978-1-74059-973-3)
- **Spanish Tourist Office**
Tel 020 7317 2010
www.spain.info
- International dialling code 0034



For the full magazine report on Andalucían cities, see p26 of the April 2009 issue of *Which? Holiday*



Seville

Seville is the largest of the three cities, but the main attractions, restaurants and hotels are all within easy walking distance of the cathedral.

WHAT TO SEE AND DO

State museums are usually shut on Mondays.

■ The Cathedral and La Giralda

You can't fail to be enthralled by the sheer vastness and beauty of the 15th-century edifice, the star of the show is the golden altarpiece or retablo. An audio guide here is essential if you want more than just a summary impression. Allow 2-3 hours for a visit.

Seville's most famous landmark, La Giralda, is now the cathedral's bell tower but in its previous Islamic life it was the mosque's minaret. On the way up six inner niches along the way containing artefacts, map out the tower's history. The final vista over the city from the bell platform is superb. **Open** Mon-Sat 11am-5pm, Sun 2.30-6pm
Admission €7.50

■ The Alcázar

Seville's Moorish citadel is smaller than its more famous counterpart in Granada, but it's every bit as splendid. The star of the show is the sensuous Mudèjar Palace, created in 1364 by Fernando III's grandson Pedro I. **Open** 1 April-30 Sept, 9.30am-7pm, Sun 9.30am-5pm
1 Oct-31 Mar, 9.30am-1.30pm, Sun 9.30am-1.30pm
Admission €7

■ Royal apartments

Visit the sumptuous apartments of the Spanish Royal family. **Open** tours every 30 mins between 9.30am-7pm (visits available when the royal family are not in residence)
Admission €4

■ Toros de Sevilla

www.realmaestranza.com
Visit 'the oldest bullring in the world'. **Open** daily 9.30am-2.40pm, tours every 20 mins

■ Hermandad de la Santa Caridad

The hospital's highly ornate Baroque chapel is a sight to be seen. **Open** Mon-Sat 9am-1.30pm and 3.30-7.30pm, Sun 9am-1pm
Admission €5

■ Museo de Bellas Artes

An excellent art collection concentrating on the Seville painting school. **Open** Tue 2.30-8.30pm, Wed-Sat 9am-8.30pm, Sun 9am-2.30pm
Admission free

GOOD PLACES TO STAY

Prices are for the cheapest double room, including breakfast and taxes, in June 2009.

■ Alfonso XIII

Calle San Fernando 2
41004 Sevilla
Tel 95491 7000
www.Luxurycollection.com/alfonsoxiii
This grand hotel of the old school in the centre of town was built by King Alfonso XIII to house the European elite who had come to the city for the 1929 Seville exhibition. Set within a landscaped garden, the ornate mansion with its prominent tower, slender-columned arches and inner loggia is built in the Andalusia Mudèjar style. Richly furnished public rooms, dripping with chandeliers, connect to a huge patio with an ornate central fountain and cool vapour side sprays that shield seated guests from the intense summer heat. Bedrooms and suites are decorated and furnished to a sumptuous degree that befits such a palatial hotel. **Price** €305 (£270)
Facilities pool, shops, gym, hairdressers
Disabled access lift and 1 room

■ Las Casas de la Judería

Plaza Santa Maria la Blanca
Tel 95441 5150
www.casasypalacios.com
A block containing a complex of 15th-century

buildings and a winding street in Santa Cruz, the old Jewish area, has been converted into a superb hotel. Also linked by tunnel, bedrooms, suites, bars and the smart restaurant are set on three levels around tiny courtyards and terraces. Tastefully furnished rooms are spacious and individually decorated with plush carpets on parquet floors, antique prints on walls and marble trim in the bathrooms. **Price** €166 (£149)
Facilities pool
Disabled access lift and two modified rooms

■ Doña Maria

C/Don Remondo 19
Tel 95422 4990
www.hdmaria.com
The greatest strength of 14th-century Doña Maria hotel is its rooftop pool with bar terrace that feels to be within touching distance La Giralda. Lying back on a sunbed and sipping a sun-downer, while watching the jackdaw and parakeet day shift replaced by an evening shift of bats leaving the towering belfry opposite, is a pure delight. Inside, the pleasant open-plan lounge and bar has a plentiful supply of sofas and armchairs arranged in small groups. Even though the breakfast room is set out to resemble a garden patio it is still a rather dull affair, but breakfast doesn't take forever. Spruce bedrooms are tastefully furnished although they can be on the small side. **Price** €187 (£166)
Facilities pool
Disabled access lift, 4 modified rooms

■ Inglaterra

Plaza Nueva 7
Tel 95422 4970
www.hotelinglaterra.es
An old hotel, now in a 20th century building is sited on the main square. The original 150 year-old antique fittings and fixtures tastefully compliment an art-nouveau-style balustrade and stylish modern furniture. It's not only the antiques that are enjoying a new lease of life. Everything in the hotel's Irish pub, from the furniture to the

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wet green place. Reasonably sized bedrooms are well turned-out and come with large beds and attractive soft-furnishings done out in gentle pastel colours.

Price €134 (£120)

Facilities pub

Disabled access lift, 2 modified rooms

■ Murillo

Lope de Rueda 7 & 9

Tel 95421 6095

www.hotelmurillo.com

On a narrow street in the old Jewish area of Santa Cruz, the 1960s hotel is in a beautifully reconstruction of an 18th-century building. From the bar roof terrace the views across the rooftops to the cathedral are simply superb. The focus on detail is impressive. Carved Mudèjar style panelled ceiling and doors blend in beautifully with the modern furnished lounge. Tastefully designed bedrooms come in a range of modern styles with wrought iron and wooden framed beds.

Price €82 (£74)

Facilities roof terrace

Disabled access one wheelchair modified room

■ San Gil

Tel 95490 6811

www.hotelsangil.com

At three miles from the centre of Seville, the early 19th-century San Gil might not be the most obvious choice, but the price is right, the Andalusian décor lovely and the garden with pool is a pleasant peaceful haven. Clad in traditional colourful tiles the open-plan reception and lounge leads to the bar and breakfast room, furnished with smart comfy sofas and wrought iron-backed chairs. Appealing bedrooms are decorated in matching greens and yellows.

Price €146 (£131)

Rooms 61

Facilities pool

Disable access lift

■ Taberna del Alabarder

Zaragoza 20

41004 Sevilla

Tel 95450 2721

www.tabernadelalabardero.es

We can't recommend this restaurant with rooms enough. Housed in a smart 19th-century building, the lounges and five elegant dining rooms are set around a spacious arcade patio. But this is a restaurant with a difference. The friendly and formally attired staff are students who, overseen by highly skilled teachers, are here to learn the niceties of the restaurant trade. The choice of dishes and wine is as impressive (as is the décor), and, after having eaten and sipped your way through the exquisite fare on offer, you can retire to one of the seven stylish, trim bedrooms.

Price €130 (£115)

Facilities rooftop sun terrace

Disabled access lifts

GOOD PLACES TO EAT

■ Bar Citroen

Avenida de Portugal 4

Tel 95423 6242

The best place to position yourself is under the trees on the edge of the Maria Luisa Park at this great little snack bar on Maria Luisa Plaza. A cold beer and a potato salad will cost €6.

■ Egaña Robles

C/San Fernando 41

954 227211

Behind the grand Alfonso XIII hotel this lovely airy restaurant is in a huge conservatory-style dining room with planted areas and green wrought iron pillars that double up as lamp posts. Service is brisk and professional and the dishes agreeably presented and prepared. A white asparagus in tomato vinaigrette, a main of roasted leg of lamb and seasonal vegetables and a dessert lemon sorbet with rich custard and rosemary biscuit costs around €65.

■ Sacrista

Mateos Gago 18

Tel 95421 9207

A classy tapas bar, 100 metres from the cathedral has some pavement seating, while inside heavy rustic furniture is set attractively against brick exposed walls under a timber-beamed ceiling. A selection of tapas and small meal portions start from €6.

■ Taberna del Alabarder

Zaragoza 20

41004 Sevilla

Tel 95450 2721

www.tabernadelalabardero.es

An evening spent savouring the excellent meals produced at this restaurant school is a delight. Individually decorated, the five elegant dining rooms are set around the spacious arcade patio. Walls are panelled in dark hardwood or painted in pastel colours, elegant chandeliers hang from moulded ceiling roses and tied back drapes frame the tall windows. Supervised by their tutors, the young restaurant team is friendly and informative, and run an impressive professional service. Guacamole salad accompanied by shrimps in sauce and palm hearts in cream, a main course of bloody pigeon with macaroni and wild mushrooms, and a fruit meringue dessert come to around €50.

■ PLEASE SEE THE FOLLOWING PAGES FOR THE GRANADA AND CORDOBA FACTFILES



Granada

Never a dull moment, Granada is a university town with character and verve that makes for an exhilarating visit.

The historic Islamic centre (the Alhambra and the Albayzín) is divided in two parts that straddle two steep opposing hills, while the Gothic catholic quarter radiates across the centre from the Río Darro valley below.

Shuttle buses 30 and 32 link the Alhambra with the Albayzín and leave from the Plaza Nueva.

WHAT TO SEE AND DO

■ The Alhambra

Either walk up to the Alhambra or take a bus. The citadel complex is free to walk around, but a paid entrance ticket is needed to enter the Islamic palaces and Generalife (the architect's garden).

■ Palacio Nazaríes

The three remaining palaces (originally there were five) that make up the 14th century Palacio Nazaríes, were constructed in the 14th-century and largely attributed to Yusuf I and his son Mohammed V of the Nazrid dynasty.

Open summer daily 8.30am-8pm; winter daily 8.30am-6pm.

Night visit 10am-11.30pm (Palacio Nazaríes only)

Admission €13 (Islamic palaces and the Generalife gardens)

■ The Albayzín

This pretty village-like area was the city's original Islamic settlement that predates the Alhambra by some five centuries. Hilly though it is, the most satisfying way of visiting the Albayzín is by foot.

Rather than start a walk in Albayzín, begin just around the corner in neighbouring Sacromonte. This is the cave dwelling area (over 80% of the houses are caves) and still home to Granadian gypsies and Flamenco bars.

■ Museo Cuevas del Sacromonte

www.sacromontegrana.com

The natural history of the area is explained and a string of original cave dwellings are beautifully

fitted out with traditional early 20th century furniture.

Open April-Oct, 10am-2pm and 5-9pm.

Nov-Mar 10am-2pm and 4-6pm

Admission €5

■ San Salvador church (Colegiata de nuestra Salvador)

In the Albayzín, the church's inner courtyard retains the original arcade of horseshoe arches that once bordered the patio of the main Albayzín mosque.

Open daily 10.30am-1pm

Admission €1

■ Plaza de Aliatar

If you're in need of some liquid refreshment go 100 yards uphill from San Salvador to the pavement cafés in this pretty square.

■ Plaza San Nicolás

The tiny square has the best views of the Alhambra and fills with an evening crowd who come to marvel at the glowing effects of the setting sun on the citadel.

■ The Carmen Museum

A traditional Albayzín-house-now-museum that once belonged to Belgian artist Max Moreau. His work is exhibited among the artist's domestic paraphernalia.

Open daily 10.30am-1.30pm and 5-7pm

Admission free

■ Palacio de Dar-al-Horra

Just 400 yards away off Santa Isabel la Real, the small palace of Aixa, the mother of Granada's last sultan, Boabdil, (closed at the time of our visit) is reputed to be a 'mini Alhambra'.

Open Tue and Thur only, 10am-2pm

Admission free

BAROQUE GRANADA

■ The Cathedral and Royal Chapel

The carved gilded retablo is layered according to rank that begins with the bishops and culminates

with Christ and his heavenly realm, makes visiting this vast white space worthwhile.

Open Summer Mon-Sat, 10.45am-1.30pm

and 4-8pm, Sun 4-8pm. Winter Mon-Sat,

10.30am-12.45pm and 3.30-6.15pm,

Sun 11am-12.45pm and 3.30-6.15pm

Admission €3.50

■ The Royal Chapel

Now principally a museum, one of the cathedral's side chapels is dedicated to Isobel and Ferdinand. Exhibits on display include Isabel's beautifully illustrated prayer book and Ferdinand's sword along with paintings by Botticelli and Flemish artist Hans Memling.

Open Summer Mon-Sat, 10.30am-12.45pm

and 4-8pm, Sun 11am-1pm and 4-7pm.

Winter 10.30am-12.45pm and 3.30-6.30pm,

Sun 11am-12.45pm and 3.30-6.15pm

Admission €3.50

■ Monasterio de San Jerónimo

This 16th-century monastery of St Jerome's is a gothic fantasia with a cornucopia of sculptures and vibrantly painted from top to toe.

Open Summer 10am-2pm and 4-7.30pm daily.

Winter 10am-2.30pm and 3-6.30pm daily

Admission €3.50

GOOD PLACES TO STAY

Prices are for the cheapest double room, including breakfast and taxes, in June 2009.

■ América

Tel 95822 7471

www.hotelamericagranada.com

Step out of the door and you are in the heart of the Alhambra. Formally an aristocrat's house the hotel is loaded with character. At the rear the restaurant courtyard is an appealing intimate space filled with plants in ceramic pots and overhung by a dense vine and small trees. Bequeathed with a wonderful jumble of furniture and ornaments collected across the generations the lounge is a lovely cool space to relax out of

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the sun. Terracotta-tiled bedrooms hold a few pieces of chunky antique wood furniture and wood-beamed ceilings.

Price €90 (£80)

Rooms 17

Disabled access 2 groundfloor rooms, 1 wheelchair modified

■ Carmen

Tel 95825 8300

www.hotelcarmen.com

Off a busy road this large hotel is popular and buzzy, and with views to the Alhambra, the rooftop bar terrace with small pool is a real advantage for a centrally based hotel. Its extensive restaurant has some modern flourishes although its overall design is rather stuck in the 1980s. The bar on the other hand is an appealing space with a mix of modern and antique furniture and a feature trompe l'oeil vine painted around a central golden pillar.

Price €50 (£45)

Rooms 260

Facilities pool

Disabled access Lift

■ Casa del Pilar

Tel 95821 6217

www.hotelcasadelpilar.com

Below the Alhambra, on a narrow cobbled street, this 18th-century house was restored in 2008. Smart though it is, many of the original fixtures and fittings are still in place, which affords an old-world charm and elegance. Bedecked with plants, the lovely patio bar and restaurant with its central fountain is the hotel's focal point and a cool place in which to relax. Reasonably sized bedrooms are attractively furnished with plush red soft furnishings against cool cream walls.

Price €106 (£95)

Rooms 11

Disabled access lift, 1 wheelchair adapted room

■ Hesperia Granada

Tel 95801 8400

www.hoteles-hesperia.es

Built to traditional Moorish design, remarkably this centrally sited smart hotel was only built four years ago. The atrium courtyard, tastefully covered with a stain glass effect ceiling, is the hotel's elegant arcaded sitting room. Beyond, the breakfast room is light and bright and comes complete with a stone arch taken from a Cordoban palace. Decorative bedrooms are medium-sized with antique furniture on polished parquet floors.

Price €104 (£93)

Rooms 69

Disabled access 1 wheelchair adapted room

■ Parador de Granada

Tel 95822 1441

www.parador.es

A 15th-century convent turned chic hotel in a quiet corner of the Alhambra is sited within its

own gardens. The old convent courtyard adorned with tinkling fountains and a sprinkling of scented plants has sofas and garden furniture placed under the cloister. Set in a large courtyard and shaded by pergolas and small trees, the restaurant is popular among hotel residents and day trippers. Modern plush bedrooms are similarly furnished and come with tiny balconies. Bathrooms are large and smartly turned out.

Price €349 (£309)

Rooms 20

Disabled access lift, 2 groundfloor rooms, 2 wheelchair modified rooms

■ Santa Isabel la Real

Tel 95829 4658

www.hotelsantaisabellareal.com

This traditional building was reconstructed two years ago and given a new lease of life when it was returned to its original 16th-century design. The Del Castillo family have created a sophisticated little retreat high up in the Albayzín with a view across to the Alhambra. A delightful small inner patio gives way to a plush sitting room adorned with 17th-century antiques and furniture. The attractive white, bright breakfast room has stone exposed walls and pillars strewn with hanging carpets. Well-designed Bedrooms are ornate and tastefully decorated using Granadian artisan-made carpets and pictures painted by local artists (the most desirable is the tower room with an excellent view of the Alhambra). Bathrooms are modern and reasonably sized.

Price €105 (£93)

Rooms 11

Disabled access 2 groundfloor rooms

GOOD PLACES TO EAT

Tapas bars Don't be put off by the heaving crowds inside the bars in Granada – it's all part of the fun and service is almost always unbelievably fast.

■ Los Diamantes

C/Navas 26

Utilitarian, popular and buzzing, there is always an early evening crowd in this tiny bar. Family snaps and mirrors adorn white plaster walls, but it's the long bar dominates the room. Three glasses of wine with three tapas and two plates of seafood came to €17.50

■ La Chicotá

C/Navas 20

Tel 95822 0349

Somewhere between a restaurant and tapas bar, this fashionable little eatery, with terracotta tiled flooring and brick-exposed walls, also has a row of pavement-placed tables (these are popular so get there early to procure a place). A combination of red peppers stuffed with fish, broad bean and ham salad, meatballs and potatoes and cheesecake with strawberries costs €30.

■ Fogón de Galicia

C/Navas 29

A chic rustic-style bar with timber ceiling and impressive wine rack comes complete with its own stone grain store (*hórreo*), usually only seen in northwest Spain's Galician fields. The seafood tapas is best washed down with a beer or the light yeasty Galician wine called Ribero, drunk from a small bowl. Four bowls and four tapas is €8.40.

■ The Albayzín

Meson Casa Blas

Plaza San Miguel Bajo 15

Tel 95827 3111

A pleasant and conveniently placed restaurant, for anyone heading down from the Albayzín to the baroque quarter, has extensive seating under the square's plane trees. A large mixed salad, sea bass with fries and runner beans and a beer is around €25.

■ Ruta del Azafran

Paseo de los tristes 1

Tel 95822 6882

www.restauranterutadelazafran.com

Sit at a riverside terrace beneath the Alhambra for an informal, romantic evening meal. Riverside seats come at a 10% premium but it's worth paying the extra to enjoy the lovely position. Meals are tasty and service brisk in this tourist's favourite. Broad beans with ham and chanterelle mushrooms braised in sherry, duck breast in peach sauce and two glasses of wine and a coffee comes to €40.

■ San Nicolás

C/San Nicolás

Tel 95880 4262

www.restaurantesannicolas.com

The dining room on the second floor of this well turned-out restaurant with timer-beamed ceiling and marble-tiled floor offers superb views of the Alhambra from its row of large French windows. Presided over by a small team of attentive waiters, excellent dishes are delivered at a leisurely pace. A three-course meal of smoked fish tartar with apple caviar and trout roe, hake filled with spider crab meat with crustacean cream sauce, and a glass of wine is €37.

■ PLEASE SEE THE NEXT PAGE FOR THE CORDOBA FACTFILE



Córdoba

'Aubergines are bad for men. Peaches are one of the worst fruits, they can cause altered moods. Plums are a good purgative when eaten before meals. Wine is the most exquisite of foods it nourishes, it is good for you and it helps the digestive system.' So declared Córdoba's most famous Jewish theologian Ben Maimónides on his 14th-century treatise on food and drink.

■ The Sephardic House

The history of the Córdoba's Sephardic Jews, ruled over by the Moors, before the Catholic monarchs set up the Inquisition.
Open Mon-Sat 11am-7pm, Sun 11am-2pm
Admission €4

■ Synagogue

Built in 1315, this is the only preserved synagogue in Andalucía.
Open Tue-Sat 9.30am-2pm and 3.30-5.30pm, Sun 9.30am-1.30pm

■ Mezquita (mosque)/cathedral

The immense structure was constructed in three phases between 786 and the 960s. The 16th-century Baroque cathedral rises like a barncle from the centre of the Mezquita.
Open Mon-Sat 10am-7pm, Sun 2-7pm
Admission €8 (free between 8.30-10.30am daily)

■ Alcázar de los Reyes Cristianos

The extensive gardens within the old Catholic monarch's residence are the big attraction. With fountains and elongated pools, home to shoals of huge carp, the grounds are a true oasis in the city centre.
Open Tue-Thur 8.30am-2.30pm, Sun 9.30am-2.30pm
Admission €4 (Fri free)

■ Museo de Bellas Artes

www.museosdeandalucia.es
A collection of Spanish artists' work from the 16th to 20th centuries.
Open Tue 2.30-8.30 Wed-Sat 9-2.30
Admission free

■ Museo Julio Romero de Torros

Artist Romero de Torros' highly kitsch but strangely alluring paintings are on display.
Open Tue-Thur 8.30am-2.30pm, Sun 9.30am-2.30pm
Admission €4 (Fri free)

■ Museo Arqueológico y Etnológico

Set in a renaissance palace, the museum exhibits pieces from the prehistoric period to the Middle Ages (the collection only has labels in Spanish, the English guidebook provides cursory info).
Open Tue 2.30-8.30pm, Wed-Sat 9am-8.30pm, Sun 9am-2.30pm
Admission free

■ Madinat al-Zahra

An evening visit to the ruined, 10th century palace, just outside the city, makes a perfect end to the day.
Open 16 Sept-12 April, Tue-Sat 10am-6.30pm, Sun 10am-2pm. 1 May-15 Sept, Tue Sat 10am-8.30pm, Sun 10am-2pm
Admission free

■ The Hammam (Arab baths)

www.hammamspain.com/cordoba
Several rounds of plunging into freezing cold to boiling hot baths with a massage in between will have you back-on-track for another stint of the sights.
Open 10am-12midnight
Admission €24 (baths only). Bath, quiromassage, aromatherapy €31

GOOD PLACES TO STAY

Prices are for the cheapest double room, including breakfast and taxes, in June 2009.

■ Amistad Córdoba

Tel 95742 0335
www.nh-hotels.com
In the heart of La Judería, next to the medieval mosque, two 18th-century mansions were combined to create an upmarket chic hotel. The

Mudéjar-style courtyard takes you through to a smart lobby and on to the ultra-chic atrium restaurant and bar lounge. The large bedrooms are minimalist with olive green and plum-coloured soft furnishings against cream and light beige walls.
Price €123 (£110)

Rooms 88

Facilities pool, gym, Jacuzzi

Disabled access lift, ramps and groundfloor rooms

■ Casa de Los Azulejos

Tel 95747 00000

www.casadelosazulejos.com

Consider this off-beat B&B for a Córdoba stay with a difference. Just a quarter of a mile from the mosque, the attractive white and yellow ochre facade is a clue to the theme here and the moment you step the courtyard, packed with banana palms, you enter a little piece of Mexico. The barrel vaulted restaurant is furnished Mexican style and dishes are of course Mexican. Attractive bedrooms face the courtyard and are decorated in pink and yellow.

Price €190 (£81)

Rooms 8

Disabled facilities not suitable for wheelchairs

■ Eurostars Maimónides

Tel 95747 1500

www.eurostarsmaimonides.com

In front of the mosque and on the edge of the Jewish quarter, this modern hotel was built to vernacular-style in 1972. The patio is adorned with hanging plants growing from ceramic pots fixed, Córdoba-fashion, to surrounding wrought iron window railings. Stylised mudéjar meets fashionable modernity in the spacious public areas. Slender Romanesque pillars and pilasters support arches and a row of horseshoe arched niches is an effective backdrop to the bistro-style bar. Smart rooms come with queen-sized beds.

Price €100 (£90)

Rooms 82

Disabled access 3 groundfloor rooms

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■ Lola

Tel 95720 0305

www.hotelconencantolola.com

A family run B&B in the old Jewish quarter and 100 yards from the mosque/Cathedral was built as a family house in 1888. From the breezy roof-top terrace there are excellent views of the bell tower and mosque /cathedral. At the ground floor the tiny patio where breakfast is taken is furnished with small tables and banquette seating. The interior is loaded with antiques and all tastefully furnished rooms were lovingly and individually decorated by the owner herself, Lola

Price €190 (£80)

Rooms 8

Disabled access 2 groundfloor rooms, not suitable for wheelchairs

■ Palacio del Bailío

Tel 95749 8995

www.fuenso.com

Once part of a 16th-century mansion this stylish hotel is on the side of a small hill three quarters of a mile from the mosque. At the rear of the property the beautifully designed Andalusian garden has a large pool surrounded by box hedges, orange trees and many flowers. The interior is coloured in cool shades and kitted out with tasteful modern furniture in an unfussy space. The modern lounge with an ample number of sofas and armchairs on a cream marble floor leads to the spacious patio restaurant where tall palms shade the diners below.

Price €226 (£200)

Rooms 53

Facilities pool/spa

Disabled access 2 wheelchair adapted rooms on the groundfloor

■ Posada de Vallina

Tel 95749 8750

www.hhposadadevallina.es

Facing the south side of the mosque on a cobbled street the unassuming building is in an excellent central position. The posada began life in 785 when it housed the Mosque workers, in the middle ages it became an Inn, where some centuries on, explorer Christopher Columbus stayed (in room 204). The interior is smart and full of character. With its wood-panelling walls and frescoes, the lounge is embellished by elegant antique furniture, while the brick exposed inner courtyard patio has a feature ancient water well and chunky rustic furniture. Bedrooms that either face the courtyard or come with views of the mosque are comfortable and agreeably furnished.

Fourteen bedrooms are en suite, 10 rooms have their own bathrooms outside the room.

Price €108 (£96)

Rooms 24

Disabled access 1 groundfloor room (not suitable for wheelchairs)

GOOD PLACES TO EAT

Bodegas Campos

Calle Lineros

Tel 95749 7500

www.bodegascampos.com

The hushed atmosphere in this smart restaurant is a clue to the seriousness that guests take their gastronomic experience. Dining areas are set around a colonnade of white pillars supporting red arches and chairs are richly upholstered. The bar next door is something of an antithesis to the restaurant. The décor is rustic and the clientele lively and raucous. A cold Gazpacho starter followed by shoulder of lamb and vegetables, a superb orange ice cream with a glass of the bodegas own sherry and a glass of Rioja costs €50.

■ Bodegas Mesquita

Corregidor Luis de la Cerda 73

Tel 95749 8117

Simply furnished, arches run the length of the restaurant dividing it into intimate spaces. Modern stone shelves hold bottles of wine and a collection of wood friezes of local bird life. A range of tasty tapas-style dishes such as stuffed peppers hearts of Romaine with garlic and anchovies, white fish with an almond and honey sauce, artichoke hearts with ham and a white wine sauce, with a glass of sherry and half a caraf of sangria costs around €20.

■ El Churras

Romero 16

Tel 95729 0819

In an established restaurant frequented by tourists the dining areas are divided in a glass-covered ornate patio. Waiters almost trip over each other to reach guests within the quaint surround of hanging plants and arched niches that hold a collection of busts and patterned ceramic plates. Carpaccio of salmon, white bean stew with partridge and a glass of Rioja is €27.