



Andalucía

Andalucía *Holidays*



Andalucía



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Introduction

ANDALUSIA, OPEN TO THE WORLD

Each and every year more and more travellers and tourists experience the feeling of confidence that Andalusia generates. There are places waiting to be enjoyed by anyone who comes to this part of the world and this publication presents an array of unique options for better exploring and learning about Andalusia, whose tourism offer is so extensive and varied as to be unlike anywhere else on earth. It is hard to find in other parts of this world a place that combines in a single area history, traditions, leisure activities, nature and beaches to the degree found in Andalusia.

Our suggestions are directed toward those visitors who are looking for something more in tourism than sun, sand and relaxation. Andalusia's rich and diverse history reveals itself in the Andalusian people and their traditions as manifested in fiestas that, whether of a religious or entertainment nature, are always fascinating to those who become part of it. The people of Andalusia know how to work and they work hard, but they also know how to enjoy themselves and to preserve traditions that have strengthened their way of life. The list of 128 festivals of tourist interest, suggested getaways, gastronomic events and tourist routes that we offer is an extremely attractive assortment filled with light and colour. To include any of these festivals on your personal schedule means to enjoy life.

And, in a land where cultures have left such numerous and indelible traces, one really must take time to enjoy the cuisine. The gastronomic festivals that are held from one end of Andalusia to the other have as a common denominator the fact that they are based on Mediterranean products. Everyone has the opportunity to enjoy a good "fritura" or plate of "pescado de roca" or "carne retinta", or to delight the palate with the supreme flavour of the world famous "pata negra" ham. And don't forget an olive oil that is unique in all the world and perfect for seasoning garden products, or the superb vintages from the regions of Jerez, El Condado, Montilla and Moriles or the Alpujarra Mountains of Almería. There are 32 reports for you to enjoy.

Live cultural performances are another good reason to plan a quick escape to Andalusia. In the silence of the night at countless flamenco festivals you can hear the characteristic "cracked voice" with the Spanish guitar as its faithful companion. There are also well-established cinema, musical and theatrical festivals. There are 24 proposals from which to choose.

And since there is more to experience than entertainment alone, we have selected 24 historical sites that are not well enough known since they are situated outside the usual tourist routes. A visit to any of them will immerse you in the rich history of Andalusia.

If you wish to learn about even more options, Andalusia is always but one click away. Just visit www.andalucia.org.

We are waiting for you. Andalusia is waiting for you in confidence.



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July 2011

M	T	W	T	F	S	S
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August 2011

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September 2011

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November 2011

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January 2012

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February 2012

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March 2012

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April 2012

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May 2012

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June 2012

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Activities





FRUITS FOR SAINT MARK

ADRA

Fiestas Virgen del Carmen: 16 July.

San Marcos Festivities: 25 April.

Tourist Office: 950 560 826. www.ayuntamientoadra.es

The municipality of Adra, a town with a maritime tradition, lies in south-western Almería and boasts important historical remains, a rich cultural heritage, beautiful beaches and the La Albufera Natural Preserve.

The most interesting ecclesiastical buildings in Adra include the parish church of La Inmaculada Concepción, a sixteenth century church-fortress that houses such outstanding figures as that of “El Cristo de la Expiración” (Christ of the Expiration); the late seventeenth century San Sebastián Hermitage, in whose subsoil traces of Roman dried fish factories have been found; the church of Nuestra Señora de las Angustias (Our Lady of Anguish), the oldest in the municipality, and the eighteenth century hermitage (“ermita”) of San Isidro, an example of Alpujarra popular architecture.

In addition to its interesting historical legacy Adra has a wetland of great ecological importance: the coastal lagoons of Las Albuferas de Adra, which have been designated as a Natural Preserve.

If you exercise a bit of patience you may observe amid the beautiful vegetation the “ranita meridional” (Mediterranean tree frog), the ladder snake, the least weasel or the “malvasía”, an endangered species of diving duck that comes to Las Albuferas to winter and breed.

This municipality also offers a series of little-frequented beaches that have won various distinctions, such as the “Q” for tourism quality and the Blue Flag. On 25 April Adra holds one of its most popular fiestas, that of San Marcos (Saint Mark), which has been declared of Tourist Interest in Andalusia. The year’s good harvest is celebrated during this colourful fiesta with a breakfast of “rosquillas” (a spiral pastry) blessed by the saint, whose image is borne in a procession and venerated with offers of fruits and vegetables.



SKY ROCKETS AND FIRECRACKERS FOR CHRIST OF THE LIGHT

DALÍAS

San Juan Festivities: 24 June.

Santo Cristo de la Luz Fiestas: 18 September.

Town Hall: 950 494 411. www.dalias.es

The Santa María de Ambrox Church in Dalías is a faithful reflection of the vicissitudes to which this municipality has been subject. Until thirty years ago, before El Ejido was separated from it, it occupied all of western Almería. Present-day Dalías is the direct descendant of the Dalías of the Arabian mountains, with narrow, irregularly laid out and often crooked streets and an abundance of small plazas and houses with orchards. The church was founded in 1501 but destroyed in 1568 during the Morisco Rebellion in the Alpujarra region. It was rebuilt and in 1804 an earthquake destroyed it again, and it was rebuilt yet again in 1817. In 1993 a new earthquake destroyed the roof and several altars and images.

This temple hosts what has become one of the most popular celebrations in the Province of Almería: the Fiesta of El Santísimo Cristo de la Luz (Holy Christ of the Light), which has been declared of Tourist Interest in Andalusia. It is held on the third Sunday in September and attracts thousands of pilgrims from the region who come to accompany El Cristo de la Luz along the processional route through the lower village amid a thunderous barrage of sky rockets, firecrackers, Roman candles and other fireworks and the pealing of church bells.

There is no better way to follow up the fiesta than by exploring the past and present of Dalías. Prehistoric sites—from the Bronze Age, to be specific—have been found at El Cerrón, and there are still ruins of Arabic fortresses and towers at Cerro de Janda in the outskirts of the village. You can also visit Los Baños de la Reina (Bathhouses of the Queen) in the Al-Hizán area near the Aljíz Hermitage.

In the environs of the Celín stream there are trails for hiking the foothills of the Gádor Mountains and enjoying the characteristic scenery of Almería’s Alpujarra region, accompanied by the babble of water in the fountains and irrigation channels that dot the route.



BEAUTIFUL "LA PEQUEÑICA"

ALBOX

Romería de la Virgen del Saliente (pilgrimage): 7 and 8 September. San Francisco Fiestas: 4 October.
Town Hall: 950 120 908. www.albox.es

Albox lies in the centre of the River Almanzora basin in the northern part of the Province of Almería, lodged between the steep Las Estancias and Los Filabres mountain ranges. Relics have been found indicating that there were already human settlements in this area during the Neolithic Age. The Phoenicians extracted silver from its soil but it was the Muslims who gave the breath of life to this municipality, which is now enjoying vigorous growth and is one of the most important in the region.

Albox, which means "the forest" in Arabic, was then as now a strategic location between Andalusia and the Spanish Levante. Some traces left by its inhabitants in their passage are still to be found. "La Torre" (the Tower) and "El Aljibe" (the Cistern) in Aljambra remain from the Arabic settlement. The Santa María Church displays an altarpiece by Alonso Cano. You should also visit the seventeenth century hermitage of San Antonio and the Nuestra Señora del Saliente Sanctuary, where tradition has it that there was an appearance by the Virgin Mary and which is the site of an important pilgrimage.

The sanctuary was originally a modest hermitage that was completed in 1716. The present sanctuary was erected in the eighteenth century and is a majestic structure with five altars that is more in keeping with the devotion inspired by Our Lady of El Saliente, known as "La Pequeñica" (the Little One) for her diminutive image (some sixty centimetres tall). The pilgrimage ("romería") begins on the eve of 8 September with a pilgrims' mass and a merry procession that climbs the hill, carrying offerings and victuals and anything else that may be needed for the trip.

The following day there is a High Mass and the Virgin is borne in a procession. Tradition requires that a "caldereta" (stew) be shared with the poor and alms seekers. The noise of fireworks is a usual feature of the procession. In earlier times the accompaniment was gunfire, but that has been prohibited. The Virgin pauses overlooking the valley as the Salve Regina is sung.



SEASIDE NIGHTS

ROQUETAS DE MAR

Santa Ana Fiestas: 22 to 26 July.
Cien Horas de Deporte (100 Hours of Sports): August.
Town Hall: 950 338 585. www.aytoroquetas.org

Roquetas de Mar, in western Almería, is one of that province's great tourist attractions. Notable structures in its patrimony of architectural landmarks include the Santa Ana Castle, a seventeenth century fortification that for years served as a refuge for the few residents of the municipality during that era, and the lighthouse (El Faro) next to the castle, which has been reconditioned to host a large part of the municipality's cultural shows and expositions.

The numerous scattered population centres within the municipal limits of Roquetas have resulted in this locality having fiestas practically the year round, but those that draw the largest crowds and have the longest tradition are La Virgen del Carmen (Our Lady of Mount Carmel) in Aguadulce, Santa Ana in El Puerto and La Virgen del Rosario (the Virgin of the Rosary) in central Roquetas. Mention should also be made of San Juan Night in June and "Las Moragas" in December, when tens of thousands of people enjoy a night at the seaside next to the bonfires that are ignited all along the coast.

The Santa Ana Fiestas in El Puerto are held in late July and have been declared of Tourist Interest in Andalusia. They are preceded by a three-day bullfight fair which is followed by a fair in honour of the two female patron saints, La Virgen del Carmen and Santa Ana. In addition to bearing the image of the patron saint in a marine procession the residents of Roquetas divert themselves devote themselves to having fun at the day fair, where gastronomy plays the lead role, and the night fair, with its lively booths and a multitude of entertainment activities.

This village's maritime inclinations are obvious from the two ports, the leisure one and the shallow fishing port ("puerto de bajura"). The Aguadulce leisure port has an impressive leisure offer as well as the best berths on the coast of Almería. For its part, the Port of Roquetas concentrates on the picturesque activity of traditional fishing, while not forgetting its sporting aspects.



ANIMATION IN THE STREETS

CÁDIZ

Carnival: 16 to 26 February.

Nuestra Señora del Rosario Festivities: 7 October.

Town Hall: 956 241 000. www.cadiz.es

The Cádiz Carnival, a Fiesta of International Tourist Interest, is held during the ten days falling between the Thursday before Ash Wednesday and the next Sunday (Piñata Sunday). While these are, properly speaking, the festive days, the Cádiz Carnival itself lasts for much longer since a large part of it revolves around the carnival groups that take part in the Official Competition and begin preparations practically from the first of September. During this period the predominant activities are dress rehearsals by clubs, neighbourhood associations and assorted civic groups, along with the holding of the competition itself, whose opening date varies depending on the number of groups entered. These groups are divided into four categories:

choruses, “comparsas” (costumed street performers), “chirigotas” (satirical groups) and quartets. The forte of the quartets is parody and that of the choruses is the tango, while the comparsas specialise in the pasodoble and the chirigotas in the mischievous “cuplé” verses.

On the first official day of the Carnival the Goddess of the Carnival and the “Ninfas” (Nymphs) are proclaimed on San Antonio Plaza. The starting shot of the Carnival is the final round of the Groups Competition, held in the Gran Teatro Falla theatre. The next day’s more significant events include the “Pregón” (opening proclamation), delivered by a prominent Cádiz personage on a central plaza in the city’s historic old quarter. After the gala event at the Gran Teatro Falla the Carnival takes to the streets with the first of the street performances. This is one of its most animated nights as disguises abound and the streets are filled with people moving from one “tablao” to the next, flooding the city with light, colour and merriment.



A WEEK OF LIGHT AND COLOUR

ALGECIRAS

Feria Real de Algeciras (fair): 16 to 24 June.

Virgen de la Palma Patron Saint Fiestas: 1 to 15 August.

Town Hall: 956 67 27 00. www.ayto-algeciras.es

Its location on the western end of the Bay of Algeciras facing Gibraltar has made this Cádiz municipality one of Europe’s most important ports. One of the oldest areas, with the most history and interesting landmarks to visit, is the San Isidro neighbourhood, this municipality’s nerve centre. There you will find such iconic structures as the eighteenth century church of Nuestra Señora de la Palma (Our Lady of La Palma, the city’s patron saint) and the seventeenth century Nuestra Señora de Europa Parish Church.

Algeciras’ beaches are a large part of its appeal to tourists. The more outstanding include El Rinconcillo, located inside the bay and stretching to the mouth of the River Palmones, and the beach of San García and Getares with its fine white sand.

Algeciras’ most festive month is June thanks to the Carnival, whose celebrations get underway in the second week with the “Jornadas de Tauromaquia Ciudad de Algeciras” (City of Algeciras Art of Bullfighting Seminars). This is the best known and most prestigious event of its kind in the bullfight world, attracting bullfighters, cattlemen, leading figures in the fiesta, intellectuals and personalities connected in any way with fighting bulls. Cultural events pertaining to the world of bullfighting are held in parallel with it. It lasts five days and always comes a week before the opening of the “Feria Real de Algeciras (Royal Fair of Algeciras, which has been declared of Tourist Interest in Andalusia).

The fair begins with the Proclaiming Cavalcade (“Cabalgata Anunciadora”). 10,000 kilos of caramels are tossed along its route as it makes its way to the fairground to carry out the fair’s traditional artistic lighting ceremony.

For nine days the Feria Real de Algeciras alternates bullfights and flamenco events in typical “casetas” (stalls), with an extraordinary fireworks show bringing down the curtain on Algeciras’ big week par excellence.



SEA AND FLAMENCO

SAN FERNANDO

Feria del Carmen y de la Sal (fair): 12 to 17 July.
Ruta de Camarón and Ruta de la Isla de las Cortes tourist routes.
Town Hall: 956 944 000. www.aytosanfernado.org

The city of San Fernando sits square on the Bay of Cádiz, making it a pleasant and accessible place and a good starting point for numerous tourist routes to other points in the Province of Cádiz, such as the White Villages Route (Ruta de los Pueblos Blancos), the Wine Route (Ruta del Vino), Coastal Route (Ruta de la Costa), Bull Route (Ruta del Toro) and the Horses Route (Ruta del Caballo), among others.

This city played a vitally important role in the events of the War of Independence that led to the first Spanish Constitution of 1812, historic occurrences that can be remembered thanks to the Isla de las Cortes tourist route. This route allows you to visit those iconic sites where these and other events played out, such as the Town Hall (Ayuntamiento) where the deputies to the legislature (Las Cortes Generales) met for the first time in 1810; the Royal Theatre (Real Teatro) of Las Cortes, where this legislature remained until 20 February 1811 or “La Compañía de María”, the place that during the War of Independence sheltered the Regency of the Kingdom.

In 2012, the second centennial of the Constitution of Cádiz, San Fernando will host numerous commemorations of this historic event.

San Fernando is also the birthplace of one of the greatest flamenco singers of all time, “Camarón de la Isla”, whose career and life history can be explored along another tourist route: Isla de Camarón.

Around 16 July this history-rich city celebrates the religious festivity of La Virgen del Carmen (Our Lady of Mount Carmel) and the Fair of El Carmen and of Salt (“Feria del Carmen y de la Sal”, declared of Tourist Interest in Andalusia), which pays homage to the patron saint, and to salt as a substance identified with the economy of San Fernando throughout its history.



MULTITUDES SURROUNDING THE BLACK VIRGIN

CHIPIONA

Virgen del Carmen Fiesta: 14 to 16 July.
Velada de Nuestra Señora de Regla: 4 to 8 September.
Tourist Office: 956 377 150. www.chipiona.es

Chipiona lies on the coast of Cádiz between Sanlúcar de Barrameda and Rota. During the summer months its population triples due to its spectacular beaches of fine white sand. The most outstanding is “Playa La Regla”, located between El Faro and Punta de Camarón. With its 1,700 metres of sandy shore it is considered one of the most remarkable beaches in Andalusia. On another one, Playa Cruz del Mar, you will find Los Corrales (fish traps). This is a site that has been used as a fishing facility since the Roman era and has now been declared a natural landmark. Here, algae formations have grown that solidified over time, thus forming natural fish farms that, at low tide, trap many marine creatures.

Chipiona’s other attractions include its architectural landmarks, such as El Faro (lighthouse), El Castillo (castle) and the Regla Sanctuary. El Faro is the tallest lighthouse in Spain, the third tallest in Europe and the fifth tallest in the world. It has 344 steps and rises to 72 metres above sea level. It was built on the point of Punta del Perro to show the entrance to the River Guadalquivir. The Gothic style Regla Sanctuary, also known as El Monasterio (monastery), possesses three outstanding features: the fifteenth century Mudéjar cloister, the library and the “Camarín de la Virgen” (Shrine of the Virgin).

The first procession of the Virgin of Regla took place in 1588 and was organised by the Duchess of Medina Sidonia to pray for the success of the Invincible Armada commanded by her husband.

The “velada” (evening celebration) in honour of this black Marian image that inspires so much fervour among the Catholic faithful is held from 4 to 8 September as part of the Virgin of Regla festivities. This fiesta, which has been declared of Tourist Interest in Andalusia and has all the ingredients of a fair, concludes on 8 September with the Virgin being carried in a procession that begins at her sanctuary facing the sea.



FLORAL MAGIC

CÓRDOBA

Concurso de Patios (Courtyards Competition): second and third week in May.

Feria de Nuestra Señora de la Salud (fair): last week in May.

Tourist office: 957 491 677. www.turismodecordoba.es

Due to Córdoba's hot and dry climate the city's residents—first the Romans and later the Muslims—modified the popular residential architecture to fit their needs, constructing dwellings around a courtyard ("patio") that ordinarily had a fountain in the centre and often a cistern that collected rainwater. The Muslims further adapted this scheme with a "zaguán" (entrance hall) to provide access from the street and by placing abundant vegetation for the cooling effect.

These days there is a huge collection of courtyards, ranging from that of La Mezquita-Catedral (the Mosque-Church) to very tiny ones. Most courtyards are used for patio housing ("corrales" or "casas de vecinos"), others are found in public buildings, palaces and convents, but they all form the centre of the building. The Town Hall has organized a Courtyards and Crosses ("Patios y Cruces") competition in May ever since 1918 in which owners of courtyards assiduously adorn their dwellings to earn the prestigious award. At the same time there is a festival with numerous folklore performances where the world's best "cantaores" and "bailaores" (traditional Andalusian flamenco singers and dancers) gather. All this is accompanied by Montilla-Moriles wine, the local "fino", with traditional "tapas" (appetisers).

It is a unique experience to tour the courtyards during the day and to enjoy them in the twilight amid the fragrance of jasmine and orange blossoms, flamenco music and the conversation of friends.

The most remarkable courtyards are those known as "Patios Populares", which are in private dwellings that are usually occupied by several families who care for them the year round. May is the ideal time to see them, although many are open throughout the year.



CANTICLES AMIDST FLOWERS

LUCENA

Fiestas Aracelitanas: first Sunday in May.

International Piano Festival: late August.

Tourist Office: 957 509 074. www.turlucena.com

No visit to Sierra Subbética Natural Park would be complete without seeing Lucena and the lovely scenery surrounding it. This Royal Burgh is strategically located on a very ancient crossroads and is famous, among other things, for the fact that Boabdil, the last Moorish king of Granada, was a prisoner in its El Moral Castle. The town had its moment of splendour as the main Jewish community in Al Ándalus. During that era Lucena, the "Sephardic Pearl", boasted an important Hebrew University that was the training ground of sages and doctors.

Reminders of the three cultures pop up all around the city but the most unforgettable is the imposing Baroque sanctuary of La Virgen de Araceli (Virgin of Araceli, the patron saint of the village and rural Andalusia). It stands on the summit of the Aras Mountains.

The "Fiestas Aracelitanas" have been declared of National Tourist Interest and unquestionably rank, along with Holy Week, among Lucena's most popular and deeply rooted traditions.

The Floral Offering ("Ofrenda de Flores") is one of the most beautiful events. It takes place on the Saturday before the first Sunday in May, when thousands of people bring their flowers to the patron saint of Lucena.

On the first Sunday in May, the day of the Virgen de Araceli festivities, the solemn religious service in honour of the patron saint begins at the hour of the morning Angelus after a joyful and thunderous reveille. At 6:00 pm, with the venerated image already on its Baroque throne, the main parish church is opened to the public to await the procession, which takes place at eight o'clock. The procession travels over the main streets and plazas of the city with the image on the shoulders of the bearers. After a triumphal and devout journey the procession makes its entrance onto Plaza Nueva at 11:30 pm, the starting signal for a spectacular fireworks show.



'ALBOREÁ' FOR THE VIRGEN

CABRA

Romería de los Gitanos (pilgrimage): third weekend in June.
La Virgen de Cabra Patron Saint Fiestas: 3 to 8 September.
Town Hall: 957 520 766. www.cabra.net

Cabra sits at the geographic centre of Andalusia in the very heart of the Sierras Subbéticas Natural Park. This city has an enormous patrimony of monumental architecture, mostly from the Baroque period; ancestral fiestas and traditions that have been guarded by the mountains, and springs and natural areas of major importance.

Water and marble are an important pairing in the history of the "Egabrenses", as the natives of Cabra are known. The area has been settled by humans since the prehistoric era. La Egabro, a major Roman city, began the exploitation of its soil in search of the red marble that was so prized for columns, inscribed stones and sculptures, or of the white stone, both of which are present in the façades of Cabra's houses and monuments. You should be sure to visit the La Villa medieval district, the oldest in Cabra. This neighbourhood is the site of the remnants of the Arabic city wall and of the La Asunción Parish Church and the castle of Los Condes de Cabra (Counts of Cabra), a medieval fortress from the fifteenth century. Its "Torre del Homenaje" (Castle Keep) encloses a vaulted chamber.

In addition to its Holy Week, a tribute to the passion and expressivity of Cordoban Baroque, Cabra has another fiesta that has been declared of Tourist Interest in Andalusia: the "Romería de los Gitanos" (Pilgrimage of the Gypsies). The pilgrimage is held at the sanctuary of La Virgen de la Sierra (the Virgin of the Mountains, the patron saint of the village). After the Gypsy Mass the image of the Virgin is carried on the shoulders of her bearers, amid singing, shouting and acclamations, around the sanctuary. The pilgrims camp here the evening before and continually approach the Virgin to offer flowers and canticles. Later there is a sung Gypsy Mass.

After the mass the image is carried in a procession amid cheers and canticles, which accompany her until she is returned to the altar. It is traditional to sing the "Alboreá" (a Gypsy wedding song) and to throw "peladillas" (toasted almonds) as she passes by.



WITH ORIGINS IN THE CRUSADES

POZOBLANCO

Romería de la Virgen de la Luna (Pilgrimage): February.
Feria de Nuestra Señora de las Mercedes (Fair): 22 to 25 September. Town Hall: 957 770 050. www.pozoblanco.es

The Sexagesima Sunday celebration nearly always falls in February. According to tradition, during the time of Muslim rule the Virgin appeared to a little shepherd in the hollow of an evergreen oak on the grazing lands of Navarredonda and revealed to him that she wanted to have a hermitage built for her in that place.

The Brotherhood, half religious and half military, seems to have been founded in the fifteenth century during the Crusades, although its bylaws were not set down until the nineteenth century. The Brothers have the privilege of keeping their heads covered before the image of the Virgin of La Luna. Their present-day uniform is very austere: severely black suits with red silk cords that form loops over the back and are finished off with two tassels. They carry a small sword, shotgun and powder horn.

During the days leading up the pilgrimage, which has been declared of Tourist Interest in Andalusia, a drummer travels through the streets proclaiming the event, accompanied by the local children. He plays a traditional dance at the doors of Brothers' houses.

A mass is said in the La Jara Hermitage, followed by a pledge of allegiance by new Brothers and an offering to the Virgin. The Brotherhood holds a banquet in its hall while the local people enjoy lunch in the area around the sanctuary. In the evening the Virgin is transported on the shoulders of her devotees to Pozoblanco. When the retinue arrives at Arroyo Hondo the authorities welcome them and present them with the keys to the city. The Salve Regina is sung and children make offerings of traditional "hornazos" (a type of pastry) while the Brothers fire their shotguns and the flag ripples.



IN DEFENCE OF THE VIRGIN

BAZA Y GUADIX

Cascamorras Fiestas: 6 and 9 September.
 Guadix Town Hall: 958 664 986. www.guadix.es
 Baza Town Hall: 958 700 395. www.baza.es

Baza, the homeland of the celebrated Lady that takes its name, is the most populous city on the "Altiplano", or Plateau, and also its business and communications centre. In this city visitors will find an interesting museum, tranquil Moorish alleys with balconied houses and its popular Arabic baths, and can enjoy its famous September Fair in the company of its starring character, "El Cascamorras".

Among the things that visitors to the Altiplano find most surprising are the "Casas Cueva" (Cave Houses), the ultimate traditional dwelling. They were excavated centuries ago to form residences with high quality thermals and acoustics. For decades they were used by poor sectors of the population and by agricultural workers as a temporary home while they gathered their crops. These days they have become highly prized for splendid projects to adapt them for use as rural lodging.

In early September Baza shares the popular Cascamorras Fiesta with its neighbour Guadix. This peculiar event has been declared a Fiesta of National Tourist Interest and consists of this character, El Cascamorras, recovering the Visigothic figure of the Virgin of Piety (Virgen de la Piedad) from a church in Baza. The undertaking won't be easy, however, as the residents of Baza will do everything in their power to keep him from achieving his objective as they have done for more than five hundred years. With the aid of black paint and eggs he is dissuaded from his plans.

But if it is hard to get the image, returning to Guadix on the ninth will be worse. All the townspeople will be waiting for him and will likewise douse him with paint for not having recovered the Virgin. On 8 September, the Virgin's commemoration day, the image is borne in a procession accompanied by the people from both communities.



GUNPOWDER AND FIRECRACKERS

QUÉNTAR

Moros y Cristianos Fiestas: mid-September.
 San Sebastián Fiesta: 20 January.
 Town Hall: 958 485 001. www.turgranada.es

Quéntar lies in the depression separating the massive Sierra Nevada mountain range from the Sierra de Huétor Natural Park. It has retained the feel of the mountain villages near the city of the Alhambra. The River Aguas Blancas flows across its territory, and in its environs you will find such points of interest as Collado de Gumiel, Cerro de las Calaveras (Hill of the Skulls), Loma del Carril and the reservoir, one of the most important hydraulic projects in the province. Quéntar is a good starting point for hiking the trails of the Sierra Nevada Park as it sits at its entrance.

Quite a few traces remain of its Arabic past. One is a popular fiesta, "Moros y Cristianos" (Moors and Christians), that is held in October and which has been declared of Tourist Interest in Andalusia.

This ancestral fiesta is a theatrical commemoration of events that occurred in the last third of the sixteenth century during the Alpujarra Civil War, which was caused by the rebellion of the Moriscos of Granada under the command of Aben-Humeya against the Christian rule of Felipe II.

The members of the "Moros y Cristianos" Brotherhood present an enactment that uses as its stage the urban district and the surrounding hills, to which the "Moors" carry the Virgin. She is rescued by the "Christians" after fierce fighting, with the thunderous reports of the matchlock arquebuses and the colourful costumes making for a show well worth seeing. The verbal confrontations between the two sides go on throughout these two days, and their texts reflect fragments of the history of this region between 1568 and 1571.



"PIONONOS" AT THE SURRENDER OF GRANADA

SANTA FE

Las Capitulaciones Fiestas: mid-April.

Humour Theatre Festival: October.

Town Hall: 958 440 000. www.santafe.es

Santa Fe arose in the very heart of the river lowlands of Granada as a direct consequence of the Conquest of Granada, as it was here that the military encampment of the Catholic Monarchs was established during the siege of the city of the Alhambra.

On 25 November 1491 the Terms of Capitulation ("Las Capitulaciones") between King Boabdil and the Catholic Monarchs for the surrender of Granada were signed. These terms of capitulation would allow Christopher Columbus to set out on his voyage to discover America. By this agreement the Crown agreed to finance the admiral's voyage in search of a route to the Indies. During the centuries following these events Santa Fe enjoyed innumerable privileges, being one of the most important cities in Spain during its Golden Age.

The "Las Capitulaciones" celebration has been held ever since the formation of the first democratic government as an assertion of the Columbian and Americanist nature of the city. Santa Fe celebrates this chapter of its history for two weeks with a fiesta that has been declared of Tourist Interest in Andalusia. It is a good time to learn about its wealth of history as there are dramatised visits by a theatrical group that conducts visitors and the curious through doors that breathe the ambience of that era.

Starting at Plaza de España—formerly the "plaza de armas" or parade ground of the military city—you can view the four monumental gates that overlook the historical district and which in their day were the only entrances to the military encampment: the Gates ("Puertas") of Granada, Jaén, Loja and Seville. These days Santa Fe also hosts a medieval market, stage productions, musical and dance shows and countless expositions pertaining to its age of grandeur.



BATTLES AND PAPERS

BENAMAUREL

San León Magno Fiestas: 11 April.

Moros y Cristianos Fiestas: last Sunday in April.

Town Hall: 958 733 011. www.benamaurel.com

The Granadan village of Benamaurel has managed to combine the splendour and brilliance of fiestas from Spain's Levante, or eastern, region with the traditions and the cultural, historical and religious heritage bequeathed them by their ancestors. Along the various processional routes more than 800 celebrants, divided into groups of Moors, Christians and "Pakkos del Guardal", and decked out in lavish costumes, parade with their patron saint, Our Lady the Virgin of La Cabeza, accompanied by bands playing the music characteristic of each particular "comparsa".

The more noteworthy events during the "Moors and Christians" fiestas include the Floral Offering and the Triumphal Entry of the Comparsas (costumed street performance groups), which each year draws residents and visitors to the front steps of the church where the fantasies embodied in the costumes of each band come alive. Upon their arrival at La Plaza Mayor the Moorish and Christian Queens are crowned at the feet of the Virgin of La Cabeza.

The pilgrimage (romería) on Sunday morning is also well attended, attracting a multitude of visitors who accompany the Virgin to her hermitage.

Gunpowder is a basic element of this community's fiestas.

During the morning the strings of firecrackers offered in vows detonate incessantly all along the route. Another important event is the "Las Barracas y Las Calles" (Barracks and Streets) Fiesta, where the different groups fraternise and a multitude of people clad in Moorish djellabas have a good time.

Another important event is the Captivity and Rescue ("El Cautiverio y Rescate", also known as "Los Papeles") of Our Lady the Virgin of La Cabeza by means of "battles" between the two sides. This is the fiesta's main theatrical event and is acted out on Sunday (the Captivity) and Monday evening (the Rescue). The Moors and Christian Fiestas have been declared of Tourist Interest in Andalusia.



MARIANITE FERVOUR

ALMONTE

El Rocío (Pilgrimage): 27 to 29 May.
Saca de las Yeguas (Roundup of the Mares): 26 June.
Town Hall: 959 450 029. www.almonte.es

El Rocío is one of the pilgrimages most fervently supported by the people. It has been declared of National Tourist Interest and is held on Pentecost Monday, a date that varies depending on the date of the Easter Triduum during Holy Week (fifty days after that). The Matriz de Almonte Brotherhood of Huelva, the guardian of Rocío traditions, begins to await the pilgrims in the community on the previous Wednesday.

The pilgrimage (romería) begins Saturday at midnight on the eve of Pentecost with the presentation of the affiliated Brotherhoods, with meticulous regard for seniority, before the doors of the sanctuary where they are welcomed by a sizable delegation from the Matriz de Almonte Brotherhood.

Each of these Brotherhoods briefly halts with the cart carrying its Simpecado insignia facing the main door of the sanctuary and sings a canticle dedicated to the Virgin. The pilgrims file past on foot, on horseback or in decorated carts pulled by mules or oxen, thus bringing to an end one more trek over the ancient and dusty trails. This colourful procession, at once moving and solemn, impregnated with dust, sweat and faith, is one of the most spectacular moments of the El Rocío Pilgrimage.

On Pentecost, the day of the White Dove and the Virgin of El Rocío, emotions overflow at the hermitage after the tension of a year of waiting. In the pre-dawn hours of what is known as Rocío Monday the residents of Almonte gather at the feet of their Mother and Lady and wait until, without any cue, they leap over the gate. Once they have the Virgin in their care the procession begins; the silver support beams seem to navigate a sea of fervour. The entire neighbourhood takes to the streets, the bells ring madly and incessantly and the air resounds with cheers and more cheers amid showers of rose petals and floral offerings.



DEVOTION ON LA PEÑA

ALÁJAR

Romería de la Reina de los Ángeles (Pilgrimage): 7 and 8 September. Romería de San Bartolomé (Pilgrimage): late August.
Town Hall: 959 125 710. www.mancomunidadribera.com

The preamble to the La Virgen de los Ángeles Pilgrimage, which has been declared of Tourist Interest in Andalusia, begins on 31 August with the first novena. This novena is held from 31 August until 8 September, with each day being devoted to one or two Brotherhoods. Everything leads up to the two big days, 7 and 8 September.

On the 7th the traditional "Poleo" is held, a horseback trek from the village of Alájar to the Rock (La Peña) of Arias Montano. The group is made up of the village authorities, the Alájar Brotherhood, the clergy and the people of the village. The word "Poleo" comes from the verb "to spur horses" (espoloar) up this ascent from the village to La Peña.

This fiesta dates back to very ancient times—it was first described in 1528—but it was in 1843 that it began to be firmly established as such, when the Ecclesiastical Confiscations of Mendizábal in Spain were carried out and the Church's lands were expropriated. La Peña de Arias Montano belonged to the Church, and to keep anyone from purchasing this beautiful site it turned it over to the people of Alájar. That is what is celebrated on this day, the people of Alájar taking possession of La Peña.

Upon arrival at La Peña an offering is made of products from the Aracena Mountains, as the village lies in Sierra de Aracena y Picos de Aroche Natural Park. The 8th is the big day, the day of the Virgin and of the Pilgrimage. There is a reception for all the affiliated Brotherhoods on La Peña, followed in due course by the procession of the Virgin at the Real de la Peña fairground, where the people look out over the wall and sing the Salve Regina, followed by acclamations for the Patron Saint of the Mountains and a Solemnity Mass.



CELEBRATING THE DISCOVERY

HUELVA

Fiestas Colombinas: 28 July to 3 August.

Virgen de la Cinta Fiestas: around 8 September.

Tourist Office: 959 650 200. www.huelva.es

The Fiestas Colombinas are Huelva's biggest party. They have been held since 1882 in recognition of the seamen and navigators who set sail from the port of Palos with their admiral Christopher Columbus en route to the Indies. The Fiestas Colombinas have been declared of National Tourist Interest and are held on some land next to the river's mouth where the fairground is located, at the edge of the urban centre. The Discovery of America is the historical event that sets the tone for these fiestas. The departure of the three caravels on 3 August 1492 is the date commemorated and thus the big day. For six days the city is flooded with merriment.

The events prior to 3 August include, among others, the "Pregón" (Proclamation) of the International Colombian Nautical Week, water sports competitions (swimming, canoeing, sailing, fishing, etc.), a special test of the lighting and the bullfight proclamation.

There will be no shortage of musical programmes or bullfights, whether mounted or on foot, during the festival. Commemorative expositions and events also make up part of the celebration.

In addition to sea-related sports competitions, other disciplines fit into the festive schedule: the Colombian Golf Trophy match, petanque, archery and handball. Football has its own special place with the Colombian Football Trophy, in which the dean of Spanish football teams, Recreativo de Huelva, competes.

It all gets officially underway with the inaugural ceremony at the Portada (entrance) and a magnificent fireworks display.

The fairground is transformed into a small city filled with colour, light and music. Its more than 75 booths and clubs open their doors to anyone who comes to dance, eat or drink.



MASQUERADES AND STREET PARTIES

ISLA CRISTINA

Isla Cristina Carnival: mid-February.

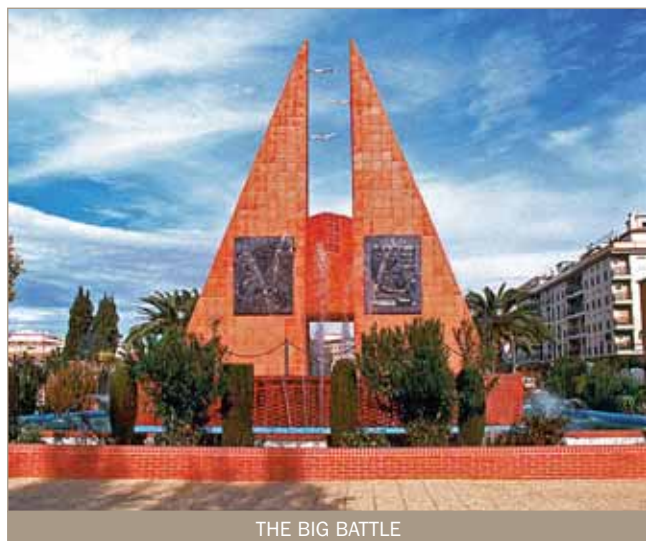
Virgen del Carmen Fiesta: 16 July.

Tourist Office: 959 332 694. www.islacistina.es

The Isla Cristina Carnival is one of the oldest and most famous in Spain. It has been designated a Fiesta of Tourist Interest in Andalusia and is, after those of Cádiz and Santa Cruz de Tenerife, one of those that arouse the most interest. It is held forty days before Holy Week and its "Entierro de la Sardina" (Burial of the Sardine) falls on Ash Wednesday. Both the local people and visitors take an active part in "comparsas" (costumed street performer groups), float parades, dances and masquerades. After the week of theatre (which can extend to fourteen days or even more) comes the Grand Carnival Cavalcade, generally held on Sunday, the day after the completion of the theatrical competition. The theatrical awards are generally presented Saturday night. The carnival continues with Street Week, when activity spreads throughout the city. The "Entierro de la Sardina" is this week's big day. It concludes with a salvo of fireworks followed by "El Baile de las Viudas" (Widows' Dance). Last of all, the children break piñatas on the following Sunday, known as "Piñata Sunday".

A visitor to Isla Cristina will also be able to enjoy beautiful beaches with fine golden sands and crystal-clear waters, as well as incomparable natural areas that are habitats for remarkable flora and fauna. As a complement to the sun and sand, three tourist itineraries have been drawn up for exploring the charms of Isla Cristina: the Chameleon Route (Ruta del Camaleón), the Salt Flats Route (Ruta de las Salinas) and the Sunsets Route (Ruta de las Puestas del Sol).

If you visit Isla Cristina in summer don't fail to attend the Virgen del Carmen (Our Lady of Mt. Carmel) Fiestas in July.



THE BIG BATTLE

BAILÉN

Battle of Bailén Commemorative Fiestas: 17 to 22 July.
 Romería de Zocueca (pilgrimage): 26 September.
 Town Hall: 953 678 540. www.ayto-bailen.com

The city of Bailén is known throughout Europe as the place where the Emperor Napoleon was defeated for the first time in a full-scale battle: the Battle of Bailén on 19 July 1808.

For nearly 200 years now, ever since 1817, the Bailén Town Hall has commemorated the battle with a full programme of civil and religious activities. Each year some 20,000 people attend the re-enactment of the Battle of Bailén, which begins as it did more than 200 years ago with the French vanguard advancing resolutely upon the Spanish front.

The spectacular re-enactment, with more than 300 kilos of gunpowder and some forty horses and a dozen cannon contributing to its tremendous realism, transports the spectator back in time to that historic moment.

For the entire weekend Bailén relives its past by means of such scheduled activities as marches by troops through the city streets, street theatre at Mercado de la Independencia, tributes to heroes of the battle, a period “campamento” or military encampment that recreates the life of a soldier in the War of Independence, and staged combat in the streets of this locality in Jaén.

You should take this opportunity to visit Bailén’s beautiful natural surroundings. They include such places as Zocueca, the site of one of the jewels of its vast heritage of architectural landmarks: the Nuestra Señora de Zocueca Sanctuary. Several hermitages have also been preserved, such as that of Nuestra Señora de Soledad (Our Lady of Solitude), of Gothic style, and those of Jesús and El Cristo, both of which have Baroque decorations done in gypsum. The fifteenth century church of Nuestra Señora de la Encarnación is also well worth a visit.



THE OLDEST PILGRIMAGE

ANDÚJAR

Romería de la Virgen de la Cabeza (pilgrimage): last weekend in April. Feria de Septiembre (fair): 7 to 12 September.
 Town Hall: 953 508 200. www.ayto-andujar.es

Andújar is located deep in the La Campiña region of Jaén and borders the Sierra de Andújar Natural Park, in the very heart of the Sierra Morena Mountains of Jaén.

One of the most important religious buildings in Andújar is Santa María Church on the plaza that bears its name. This temple was built between the fifteenth and seventeenth centuries and is noteworthy for its tower with Mudéjar decoration and its Renaissance façade. One of the most remarkable properties contained in this church is a painting by El Greco. In this same plaza can be seen the Torre del Reloj (Clock Tower) that was erected in 1535 by the city in honour of King Carlos I. The Gothic church of San Miguel, with a very spacious interior, is another of the religious buildings. Notable examples of secular architecture include the palace of Los Niños de Don Gome, a façade with tower that was built between the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. The city contains such other interesting buildings as the fifteenth to seventeenth century San Bartolomé Church; Santiago Church, from the fourteenth century; the church of Santa Marina (the first temple erected in the city), and the sanctuary of La Virgen de la Cabeza, from the sixteenth century and later rebuilt.

In April this sanctuary hosts one of Spain’s oldest pilgrimages, the “Romería de la Virgen de la Cabeza”. Famous Miguel de Cervantes refers to this event in his work *Los trabajos de Persiles y Segismunda* (*The Travails of Persiles and Segismunda*, 1617). The pilgrimage lasts seven days and should be performed in a cart, on horseback or afoot through the mountains. There is an emotional procession on Sunday in which everyone wishes to touch a garment to the beams bearing the Virgin, and the Trinitarian Monks raise the children in their arms to the figure. People dance and sing around the Virgin and there are fervent and emotional scenes in homage to the Queen of the Sierra Morena Mountains.



BONFIRES ANDALUSIAN STYLE

MANCHA REAL

Hogueras de San José (fiesta): 19 March.

Romería de la Virgen del Rosario (pilgrimage): October.

Town Hall: 953 350 157. www.manchareal.es

Mancha Real came into being as the result of a decree by Emperor Carlos V in 1539. At the time it was known as La Manchuela de Jaén and later, after the visit by Felipe II, it took the name of Mancha Real ("Royal" Mancha). It lies at the base of Peña del Águila (Eagle Rock), the natural entrance to the Sierra Mágina Natural Park.

This village harbours several interesting landmarks, such as the Renaissance-style church of San Juan Evangelista. On the street of Calle Maestra there is a stone portal built by Andrés de Vandelvira. Another landmark structure to keep in mind is the former Carmelita Convent, which was founded by San Juan de la Cruz (Saint John of the Cross) in 1586 and of which the ruins remain. The city also has two hermitages: the seventeenth century one of San Marcos (Saint Mark, male patron saint of the city) and that of La Inmaculada Concepción (the Immaculate Conception, female patron saint of Mancha Real).

The municipality of Mancha Real is intimately linked to olive cultivation and the furniture industry, being the main wooden furniture manufacturing centre in the Province of Jaén. During the San José festivities (19 March) it renders homage to the patron saint of carpenters with the "Hogueras de San José" (Bonfires of Saint Joseph), whose main event is the burning of a "falla" (effigy) that alludes to some important occurrence of the past year. The event has been declared of Tourist Interest in Andalusia.

The fiestas of La Virgen del Rosario (the Virgin of the Rosary) also have a very long tradition. They sprang up in the eighteenth century and are celebrated during the second two weeks in August with sports competitions, concerts and popular "verbenas" (traditional soirées). The "Pipirrana Flamenca" is one of the most eagerly awaited events. This is a "cante jondo" (traditional Andalusian flamenco singing) festival in which renowned "cantaors" (flamenco singers) take part. The religious services honouring the female patron saint wait until the Virgin's name day in October.



EIGHT CENTURIES OF VENERATION

PORCUNA

Romería de la Virgen de Alharilla (pilgrimage): second Sunday in May. Feria Real (fair): 3 to 6 September.

Town Hall: 953 544 004. www.porcuna.es

Porcuna is located in the south-western part of the La Campiña region in the lowlands along the River Guadalquivir, 42 kilometres from Jaén.

The Virgin of La Alharilla is the village's patron saint, and a pilgrimage ("romería") is held in her honour on the second Sunday in May.

According to ancient legends in the trove of folklore handed down from one generation to the next, an image of the Virgin appeared in the area some four kilometres from Porcuna that the Arabs called Alhara. A hermitage was built for her there and a famous pilgrimage has been held in its environs since the late fifteenth century.

On the evening before, horses play the fiesta's lead role in the popular parade through the main streets of the community. The horse show will begin at about 6:00 pm and end when the first lights come on, the moment that the local residents will relocate to the hermitage area to spend the night in an atmosphere of "verbenas" (traditional soirées), partying and devotion.

On Sunday, the fiesta's big day, the residents are awoken quite early by fireworks and a merry reveille so as not to miss any part of the outset of the pilgrimage to the plain of Alharilla. At 5:00 pm, as tradition dictates, the Virgin of Alharilla will pass majestically through the area on the shoulders of her tireless image bearers.

Don't fail to visit the Boabdil Tower, which is now the Obulco Archaeological Museum. It is considered one of the finest examples of military architecture from the ancient Kingdom of Jaén. It gets its name from the incarceration of the last King of Granada, who was captured in the Battle of Lucena.

You should also tour the Cerrillo Blanco Archaeological Park, a necropolis from the Tartessian era with 24 tombs that would afterwards be used by the Iberians.



A FAIR WITH MUCH HISTORY

ANTEQUERA

Real Feria de Agosto: 16 to 21 August.

Holy Week: 1 to 8 April.

Tourist Office: 952 702 505. www.antequera.es

The Real Feria de Agosto (Royal August Fair, a Fiesta of Tourist Interest in Andalusia) is one of our country's oldest. It dates back to 1748, the date King Fernando VI granted to Antequera the privilege of holding this annual fair.

The Real Feria de Agosto's programme is extensive and varied and endeavours to satisfy the tastes of all who attend it. On the eve of the Real Feria the official "pregón" (proclamation) is delivered, a function customarily performed by illustrious residents of the city. Also of special note is the pilgrimage (romería) of El Señor de Verónica, which begins each year with a Rocío Mass at the Plaza de Toros (bullring), followed by a procession along various city streets to the hermitage where this image so venerated by the people of Antequera is kept.

The official lighting ceremony kicks off the Real Feria. Beginning that night, the city parties for an entire week. For several years now, the fair has been divided into two stages as is done in the case of Málaga: the Day Fair and the Night Fair, which are held in different settings. In the mornings the people flock to locations in the urban centre that associations and Brotherhoods are in charge of preparing for these dates. At night the party shifts to the fairgrounds in the vicinity of the bullring where are found the municipal booth and the rest of the Andalusian booths, the fair attractions and the street vendor sites that pique the curiosity of all passers-by. Over the course of these days numerous shows entertain the citizens: musical performances, bull-fights, horse and carriage exhibitions, children's activities, etc., in an extremely varied and thrilling programme that reaches its climax with a burst of fireworks on the last night of Antequera's Real Feria de Agosto.



MOORISH MAGIC

CASARABONELA

Feria de Julio (fair): late July.

Virgen de los Rondeles Fiesta: 12 December.

Town Hall: 952 456 501. www.casarabonela.es

Casarabonela, with white houses lining streets that wind along the slopes, has preserved the colour and flavour of the White Villages of Andalusia, with secluded plazas such as that at the Town Hall ("Ayuntamiento"), with its small building with protruding balconies with lintels and its little lamps and its clock on a pediment, and houses that frequently display image niches in which certain figures of popular devotion are venerated.

Within its municipal boundaries you can enjoy exceptionally beautiful mountain scenery, such as the Sierra Prieta Mountains on whose slope this white village lies. From the summit of this small range you will have one of the best views of the Guadalhorce Valley, where water is one of the most symbolic elements of the landscape. This area of Casarabonela is in fact known for the quality and quantity of its aquifers, attested to by the countless fountains and spouts distributed about its urban district. Be sure to visit the ruins of its Arabic castle with a beautiful Andalusian garden at its base, the mill of Los Mizos or the cactus garden, which contains one of the best collections in Europe. If you come to Casarabonela in December you can attend one of the most unusual fiestas in the Province of Málaga, "Los Rondeles", which has been declared of Tourist Interest in Andalusia.

On the night of 12 December the light produced by people bearing oil-soaked and ignited "capachos" (a type of crude basket) illuminates the procession of the Divine Shepherdess ("Divina Pastora") along a route through the steep and narrow streets, a legacy of what was once an Islamic city. The mixture of fire, smoke, the smell of olive oil and the sound of such peculiar instruments as Moorish castanets creates a surreal atmosphere, with flames casting phantasmagorical shadows upon the façades of the buildings that line the route of this remarkable procession that gives thanks for the year's good harvest.



ANDALUSIAN TRADITIONS

BENALAURÍA

Feria de Santo Domingo de Guzmán (Moors and Christians fair): first week in August. Feria de Artesanía Valle del Genal (handicrafts fair): December.

Town Hall: 952 152 502. www.benaulauria.es

Benalauría lies in the Middle Genal Valley of the Ronda Mountains at an elevation of 667 metres. Its territory extends from the River Guadiaro in the west to the River Genal in the east, forming a slender tongue that stretches along that river all the way to La Hoz de las Buitreras.

In their passage through Benalauría the Arabs left their mark in form of narrow and contorted whitewashed streets and windows decorated with wrought iron and flowers. The Christian Re-Conquest consolidated the village as such.

Benalauría has preserved the traditional economy as the main source of income for its people. The two main activities are livestock raising and agriculture. In recent years a flourishing active tourism industry has also sprung up, favoured by improvements in the municipality's infrastructure.

The more remarkable properties of its historical and architectural patrimony include the Ethnographic Museum in the upper part of the village, Santo Domingo Church, the Town Hall, La Casa Archivo (House of Archives) and Las Parras, like a balcony overlooking the village.

This village's fiesta to end all fiestas is the "Moros y Cristianos" (Moors and Christians) on the first Sunday in August, a celebration that dates back five centuries. In this case the dispute between the two sides is over the kidnapping of the image of Santo Domingo de Guzmán, the village's patron saint. The clash ends when the victorious Christians enter the castle and the infidels have no recourse but to embrace the Christian religion. In this production, organised by the Moors and Christians Association, that re-enacts and commemorates the Mudéjar uprising of 1051 in the Sierra Bermeja Mountains virtually the entire village takes part, dressed in splendid garb inspired by the dress of that era.



ANCESTRAL MUSIC

VILLANUEVA DE LA CONCEPCIÓN

Los Verdiales Festival: August.

La Inmaculada Concepción Fiestas: around 15 August.

Town Hall: 952 753 368. www.villanuevaconcepcion.es

In 2009 the Council of Government of the Assembly of Andalusia approved separating the municipality of Villanueva de la Concepción from that of Antequera, to which it had belonged up to that time. Thus Andalusia came to have 771 municipalities and the Province of Málaga 101.

Villanueva de la Concepción's territory, at almost the geographic centre of the province, stretches from the foot of the El Torcal Mountains to the Málaga Mountains. These lands whose horizon is dominated by the imposing El Torcal massif have large and bountiful olive and almond groves and wheat fields.

One of its most famous traditions is the Los Verdiales Festival, the oldest in the Province of Málaga and which will be held for the 31st time this August. The "verdiales" (a type of traditional Andalusian song) are a manifestation of popular Málaga culture, of a peasant culture dating back centuries, and their origin is hard to pinpoint due to the lack of documentation and historical references. Some writers point to the survival of archaic and Moorish features in the verdiales, while others hold that they are a collective manifestation of the people and date back to pre-Roman times. "Pandas de verdiales" (verdiales bands) from different municipalities in the province attend this fiesta and represent the three styles of verdiales (Almogía, Montes and Comares). The streets and plazas are filled with music and movement from dusk until the wee hours of the morning.

The sound of guitars, violins and large tambourines, the different styles of singing and the verdiales dances are one of the province's greatest demonstrations of popular lore.



AN EPHEMERAL CITY

SEVILLA

Holy Week: 1 to 8 April.

Feria de Abril (fair): 24 to 29 April.

Turismo de Sevilla: 954 486 800. www.turismosevilla.org

Spring brings the party fever to Sevilla. There are parties of widely varying types, with the Sevillanos outdoing themselves to make each one unique. First comes Holy Week (1 to 8 April), days of devotion during which the streets of the Andalusian capital gleam with the beauty of its processional stages. After the devotion and reflection comes the time for fun. The April Fair (Feria de Abril) is held from 24 to 29 April. This is the Andalusian capital's most iconic fiesta, an ephemeral city in which for one week friends and gatherings become the focus of life.

Each year an entrance portico to the premises of this highly colourful festival is built that commemorates some monument in the city. Down through the years the fair's location has changed several times and it is now held in the Los Remedios district.

Since most of the booths are privately owned, it is advisable that you come to the April Fair in the company of friends from Sevilla, who can lead you along their habitual itinerary of friends' and acquaintances' booths. The nature of the fair is different during the day from what it is at night. The daytime is noteworthy for horseback parades around the fairgrounds, whereas at night there is flamenco, dancing and drinking into the pre-dawn hours. More than a thousand booths are set up at the fairgrounds, belonging to families, clubs, entities and districts (with free admission to the last category), and there are more than 400 fair activities on the Calle del Infierno esplanade. An event not to be missed is the alumbrado (lighting ceremony), when the entrance portico is lighted up and kilo upon kilo of *pescaito frito* (small fried fish) is passed out.

Needless to say, the national spectacle of bullfighting is on display: 28 events make up the programme of the 2012 season at the Real Maestranza de Sevilla (Royal Riding School of Sevilla, the bullring location), where the most important figures of the bullfighting world will perform.



DEVOTION EVER SINCE THE RE-CONQUEST

DOS HERMANAS

Romería de la Virgen de Valme (Pilgrimage): 16 October.

Feria de Primavera (Spring Fair): mid-May.

Town Hall: 954 919 501. www.doshermanas.es

Since 1894 the Brotherhood of Nuestra Señora de Valme has organised on the third Sunday in October a pilgrimage that attracts visitors and devotees from widely varying locations and which is considered, along with that of Rocío, the most famous in Andalusia.

The story of the origin of this devotional event comes down to us through a legend which tells how Fernando III "The Saint" entrusted himself to the protection of a small image barely seventy centimetres tall before launching the final attack to re-conquer Seville. The King entered the city in 1248 after a siege of sixteen months and fulfilled the promise he had made to the Virgin to build a chapel and to place at the feet of the image the pennant seized from the Muslim king.

The devotion of the residents of Dos Hermanas caused the Virgin to be conveyed in a procession several times from the hermitage to the village church in order to intercede on their behalf against epidemics and catastrophes that were decimating the population.

The Virgin is transported from the parish church of Santa María de la Magdalena to the Cuarto Hermitage in a cart decorated with silk paper flowers of different colours and pulled by a yoke of oxen. The pilgrims accompany the Virgin along the route in a retinue that observes a pilgrimage protocol: first the horsemen, followed by the Virgin's cart surrounded by pilgrims on foot and finally the rest of the carts and the "galeras", a type of vehicle larger than a cart. Once at the hermitage the Virgin is transferred to the altarpiece and a mass is said. Afterwards the pilgrims gather for lunch in the vicinity of the hermitage, and in addition to food and drink there is never any shortage of song and dance. At five o'clock in the evening they pray the rosary, and after installing the Virgin in her cart they begin the return journey.



A SHOWER OF PETALS

CANTILLANA

Fiestas in Honour of Nuestra Señora de la Asunción: mid-September.

La Divina Pastora Fiesta: 8 September and last weekend in September.

Town Hall: 955 731 700. www.cantillana.es

Cantillana, a Royal Burgh, lies northwest of the capital of Seville, occupying the terrace formed by the River Guadalquivir where it joins the Vía. The first foothills of the Sierra Morena Mountains rise behind the village, overlooking the La Vega (river meadows) region to which this municipality's territory belongs.

During the Roman era it was called Ilipa Naeva and was a municipality whose residents had Roman citizenship. Traces remain of the ancient Latin city, mainly hydraulic works and tombstones among other discoveries. In addition to the ruins of the fortified Roman settlement you can visit the churches of Nuestra Señora de la Asunción (Our Lady of the Assumption) and San Bartolomé, both from the fifteenth century, and the hermitage of Nuestra Señora de la Soledad (Our Lady of Solitude), which dates from the eighteenth century.

The fiestas of La Divina Pastora de las Almas (The Divine Shepherdess of Souls), declared of Tourist Interest in Andalusia, take place in September. The main "La Pastora" fiesta day is 8 September. Bands playing reveille and the thunder of thousands of fireworks awaken the people of Cantillana at dawn. The whole town breathes the festive spirit throughout the day and the church remains open while thousands of people draw near to venerate the Divine Shepherdess on her stage. At 22:00 hours, surrounded by the devout in their thousands, the Divine Shepherdess is borne in a triumphal Glorious Procession through the village streets amid the overflowing devotion of the parishioners. At the street of Calle Martín Rey the Virgin is relieved of her sombrero amid a shower of rose petals, releasing of doves, explosion of fireworks and an outburst of jubilee by the people.



FLAMENCO CROSSES

LEBRIJA

Cruces de Mayo (fiesta): first two weekends in May.

La Caracolá Flamenca Festival: July/August

Town Hall: 955 974 525. www.lebrija.es

In Lebrija Cruces de Mayo (May Crosses) is known as the women's fiesta due to the extremely high level of participation by the women of Lebrija in this very traditional festivity that is held during the first two weekends in May. Cruces de Mayo has been declared a Fiesta of Tourist Interest in Andalusia because of its unique character and its distinctive portrayal of the most deeply rooted values and traditions of its people. The local men and women "dress" the cross and sing and dance around it all night long. The special gastronomy and the crosses' distinctive ornamentation, as well as the massive participation by the people of Lebrija, keeps the fiesta going in the streets. The traditional elements used to "dress" the cross are flowerpots, metal utensils and garlands of flowers.

All these objects are provided by the local women themselves, who cover the walls with antique quilts. The most beautiful thing to see is the way each female resident leaves the best flowerpots from her courtyard at the cross, along with decorative items from her house.

This fiesta's rituals, originally performed around a tree and later the cross, derive from pagan celebrations in honour of the goddess Maia, for whom the month of May is named and to whom is attributed the worship of fertility. In Lebrija Cruces de Mayo is strongly characterised by popular participation. People travel from cross to cross and are attended to by the residents of each neighbourhood. The most traditional practice is to "dress" an "hornacina" (niche), an architectural feature that is found in the façades of some Lebrija houses and in which a cross remains throughout the year.



"PEROLES DE MIGAS" FOR THE SAINT

ARMUÑA DE ALMANZORA

Migas de San Antón Fiesta: 17 January.

La Virgen del Rosario Fiesta: 7 October.

Town Hall: 950 420 461. www.armunadealmanzora.es

In Armuña de Almanzora the fiesta of San Antón Abad (Saint Anthony the Abbot) is celebrated in the tradition of the Saints Antón and Sebastián of Los Filabres by tossing caramels, pastries and popcorn as the saint's procession passes by. In this municipality it is traditional on this day to have the so-called "Migas de San Antón" celebration, attended by local residents and numerous groups of young people from the region. This delicious dish (made of fried bread crumbs) is accompanied by a soup of paprika, peppers, fried dry tomatoes, fish and delicious cuts of meat, all washed down with a local wine.

Oral tradition has it that it was once customary for the parish priest to buy a pig in May and let it run loose in the streets—"marranico (little pig) of San Antón" it was called—to be cared for by the villagers and fed from the leftovers of each house. At the San Antón Fiesta, which occurs during the hog slaughtering season, the pig was raffled off among the residents in order to obtain funds to purchase the oil that was burned in the saint's lamp. This lamp was always kept lighted as a petition to keep all the pigs alive until they were slaughtered by each household.

These days the fiesta serves to reunite many families and is made complete by the procession and the banquet of traditional gastronomy, with "rabo de cerdo" (pig's tail) or "migas" cooked by the most knowledgeable housewives. Armuña de Almanzora cuisine includes such characteristically Andalusian dishes as "potaje blanco" (white stew), "sopa de ajo" (garlic soup), "olla de trigo" (a wheat-based porridge), "gurullos" (a pasta dish), "gachas" (a porridge), "patas de cordero estofadas" (stewed lambs' feet) and "hornazos" (a type of pastry). And don't forget the delicious peaches and apricots grown in this part of the Almanzora region.



A HAM-PRODUCING VILLAGE

SERÓN

Feía del Jamón (fair): first weekend in July.

La Virgen de los Remedios Fiesta: 15 August.

Town Hall: 950 426 001. www.seron.es

One travels through the vividly green landscape of the Almanzora Valley to arrive at Serón, a beautiful village on the north slope of the Los Filabres Mountains. On the highest point in the village and cloaked by a network of narrow streets stands Serón Castle, a thirteenth century Nasrid structure that has undergone a number of transformations down through the centuries. One example of this is the Neo-Classic tower added in the nineteenth century. This fortress is responsible for Serón being included in the Castles Route through the territory of Andalusia. It has the exceedingly beautiful Los Filabres mountain range as a backdrop to the south, the River Almanzora at its front and, in the distance, the Las Estancias Mountains, the deep ravine of Arroyo de Bolonor and the green hill of Alcoinaza with its beautiful views. The attractions in the area around Serón include the various caves such as La Sarna and La Morciguilla, where Neolithic relics have been found, and such exquisitely beautiful natural areas as the Las Menas-Pozo de las Nieves Route and the Los Angostos-Jordana Route.

Any traveller wishing to sample the delicacies of its traditional cuisine should also try such dishes as "migas cortijeras" (a dish made from fried bread", "gurullos" (a pastry preparation) with hare, rabbit or partridge, "hormigos", "gachas" (a porridge) or "andrajos" (a stew containing flour and spices), in addition to the ham and other cured pork products. Its sweets and pastries include "hornazos", "mantecados carrasqueños" and "leche frita".

During the first weekend in July a ham and cured meats fair will be held in this ham-producing village. This festivity draws more than twelve thousand visitors on its "Día del Jamón" (Ham Day), when attendees sample more than 300 hams and 2,000 kilos of sausage from the surrounding area. All the meat is cut manually, and there is a ham-cutting competition for the more expert butchers.



WINE FROM THE SUMMITS

LAUJAR DE ANDARAX

Feria del Vino (fair): late April.

Fiestas in honour of Nuestra Señora de la Salud: 15 to 19 September. Town Hall: 950 513 475. www.laujardeandarax.es

The Andarax Valley, on the plateau of the Alpujarra region in Almería at an elevation of 900 metres, is a perfect place for growing grapes, and in other times was famous for its late-maturing table grapes that were exported throughout the world. These days the vines that grow in terraces on the steep slopes of the mountains are a reminder of that epoch.

Twenty years ago when the Valle de Laujar winery began to work the land around Laujar de Andarax and prepare it for setting out grapevines no one dreamed that this municipality would come to host an important fair for promoting the wine produced in the Alpujarra region. Laujar de Andarax is becoming famous for its wines, which are made not only from native grapes but also from such introduced varieties as Cabernet Franc, Sauvignon Blanc, Syrah and Merlot. There is no better accompaniment to these vintages from the mountain summits than this village's varied cuisine, which is notable for "gachas" (a porridge), "choto al ajillo cabañil" (kid or veal with garlic) and "encebollado de matanza" (a pork and onion dish). Its most characteristic traditional sweets and pastries include: "roscos de sartén", "mantecados", "soplillos", "rosquillos de vino", "borrachillos", "leche frita", "pebetes de calabaza", "merengues" and "buñuelos".

Laujar de Andarax nestles within the Sierra Nevada Natural Park and its surroundings are well worth a short getaway. Come and relax as you learn of the rich history of this Alpujarra village with its white streets and steep slopes and, distributed among its plazas, numerous fountains from which flow pristine waters from the Sierra Nevada mountain range. There are routes in the vicinity that you can travel by foot, bicycle or horseback, such as the Monterrey and Los Cerecillos-El Encinar trails and that of El Aguadero. There are also several recreational areas, including El Nacimiento del Río Andarax (Headwaters of the River Andarax), El Cerecillo and Monterrey.



CULINARY ART FROM BULLS

VERA

Feria de Vera (fair): late September.

Jornadas del Toro Bravo: late November.

Town Hall: 950 467 475. www.vera.es

The Terraza Carmona Restaurant has been designated as a permanent ambassador of the city of Vera. Dozens and dozens of famous personalities from all walks of life have passed through this establishment and sat down to savour the gastronomic delights of its kitchen. To speak of Terraza Carmona is to speak of Vera, of an old outdoor cinema terrace that was the starting point of the present establishment that took its first steps way back in 1947, a family business that the grandchildren continue to operate.

Respecting the inherited culinary tradition and cooking according to it have from the first moment been the ambition of the present chef, Antonio Carmona, one of the greatest specialists in fighting bull meat-based cuisine, to which he devotes some exceptional gastronomic seminars ("jornadas") each year in his restaurant. Quality products and loving attention in the kitchen are the hallmark of this chef who surrounds himself with cooks from throughout the country to provide delight with such creations as "vieiras caramelizadas" (caramelised scallops), "cabeza de añojo" (yearling calf's head), "gelatina de vinagre de frambuesa" (raspberry vinegar gelatine), cream of foie gras with green pepper and coleslaw, or "paté de cinqueño al alimón" with pistachios and mushrooms, among other delicacies based on the meat of fighting bulls.

Since you are visiting Vera you should be sure to take advantage of its sun and beach tourism. Vera offers a modern seafront promenade and three beaches with fine sand and crystalline waters: El Playazo, the most visited by nudists; Las Marinas and Puerto Rey.



THE SEA'S BOUNTY FOR THE CARNIVAL

CÁDIZ

Carnival: 16 to 26 February.

The three gastronomic festivals are held in mid-January.

La Virgen del Rosario Fiesta: 7 October.

Town Hall: 956 241 000. www.cadiz.es

The Cádiz Carnival, a Fiesta of International Tourist Interest, plays out over the ten-day period between the Thursday before Ash Wednesday and the following Sunday ("Piñata Sunday"). Three gastronomic events are closely linked to the carnival preparations and draw thousands of people to three very picturesque corners of Cádiz: the La Viña and Mentidero districts and San Francisco Plaza. These are the sites of the "Erizada" (sea urchin festival), the "Ostionada" (oyster festival) and the "Pestiñada" ("pestiño" pastry festival). Here you can enjoy these delicacies while being among the first to hear a number of groups that will play a very prominent part in the Carnival Group Competition and afterwards in the carnival's big week.

The Pestiñada comes first and is always held on Saturday at San Francisco Plaza beginning at 10:30 pm and stretching into the pre-dawn hours.

This is a well attended event where eating pestiños is just an excuse to get together and stroll the streets and listen to the guitars, "bandurrias" (a mandolin-like instrument) and snare drums. The next day, Sunday, the Erizada and Ostionada are held in the La Viña district and on San Antonio Plaza, respectively.

The sea urchin is the star of the first fiesta. It is opened with a spoon and eaten raw. Only its reddish meat is consumed and you must exercise the greatest care not to swallow a spine along with it. It has a strong and delicious taste. The second fiesta is devoted to the "ostiön", a mollusc similar to the common oyster but with a stronger flavour that is eaten raw with a few drops of lemon. The fiesta has a starting time, around noon when a ton of "ostiönes" start to be distributed, but no set closing time. People throng the streets as long as they can hold out but they always have to keep in mind that the next day is Monday and they will have to get back to work.



A FAIR WITH THE FLAVOUR OF THE SEA

ROTA

Urta Fiesta: 4 to 7 August.

El Rosario Fiesta: first week in October.

Town Hall: 956 810 099. www.rota.es

The Urta Fiesta has been declared of Tourist Interest in Andalusia. This is a fair that promotes the emblematic dish of Rota: "urta a la Roteña", in which the sea and garden combine their tomatoes, onions, green peppers, garlic and, naturally, "urta" (red-banded sea bream) itself, to produce the flavour of quintessential Rota cuisine.

Due to its low proportion of fat the "urta" is classified as a whitefish. It is plump, with a pink back and head, and feeds on crustaceans, to which it owes the characteristic seafood flavour of its flesh.

It is not a sedentary fish but rather passes along the Cádiz coasts in July and August, and is caught when the water is very clear. One day of the fair is devoted to a contest for preparing "urta a la Roteña", after which the audience samples the dishes. The fair is an ideal time for learning about the rich Rota cuisine, which is intimately linked to the sea and the countryside: sea urchins ("erizos") accompanied by bread and a fine wine, "burgaillos" (periwinkles) cooked with salt and water; fried "ortiguillas" (a type of sea anemone) or steamed "verdigones" (cockles). The thick, sweet and fruity "Tintilla" occupies a place of honour among its wines and will please the most demanding palate.

Don't pass up the chance to visit Los Corrales de Rota, a designated Natural Landmark, on the rocky edge of La Almadraba Beach. These are semicircular Roman-era stone walls on the coast in which fish—mainly cuttlefish, octopus and mullet—are trapped when the tide goes out, as it does twice per day.



PRAWNS AND GOLDEN LIQUID

SANLÚCAR DE BARRAMEDA

Manzanilla Fair: 1 to 5 June.

Carnival: 16 to 26 February.

Town Hall: 956 388 000. www.sanlucardebarrameda.es

If there is one thing Sanlúcar de Barrameda is famous for it is manzanilla wine. Manzanilla reigns over the gastronomic paradise of Sanlúcar since that is the only place it can be produced due to the soil, the microclimate and the method of preparation. It is a golden straw colour and has a pungent aroma and dry flavour, with little acid, and an official alcohol content between 19% and 25%. The city of Sanlúcar de Barrameda benefits from a microclimate caused by a combination of the mouth of the River Guadalquivir, the Coto de Doñana natural area, the marshes and the westerly Atlantic winds. Manzanilla is an ideal wine to accompany fish and seafood, so it is no wonder that the city dedicates its greatest fiesta to this beverage.

The Manzanilla Fair is one of the most popular in Andalusia and is held from 1 to 5 June at the La Calzada fairgrounds. If manzanilla is the queen, the "langostino" (prawn) is the king. This, the most outstanding of all Sanlúcar's seafood, owes its well deserved fame to feeding on the plankton in the waters bordering Doñana.

Sanlúcar's cuisine is based primarily on the broad array of fish that are caught along its long coastline. Some, such as "acedía" (a type of sole) and "urta" (red-banded sea bream) can't be enjoyed anywhere but in this region. Many others, such as "dorada" (gilt-head bream), "pargo" (red porgy), "rodaballo" (turbot), "lenguado" (sole) and "salmonete" (mullet), along with such seafood as prawns, "cigala" (a small lobster), "cañailla" (a sea snail), "bocas" and the famous Sanlúcar prawns round out the extensive offer. A fried plate ("fritura") of small fish is a fine art in this city and the seafood stews are a delight to the palate. You should be sure to try the famous "bienmesabe" (marinated and fried school shark). The pastries are of Arabic origin, with "alfajores de Medina" and convent sweets, "turrón" (an almond sweet) and "tocino de cielo" (an egg custard) as the main delicacies.



THE BIRTH OF A WINE

JEREZ DE LA FRONTERA

La Vendimia Fiestas: 10 to 18 September.

Feria del Caballo (fair): second week in May.

Town Hall: 956 149 300. www.jerez.es

Jerez has been the capital of the wine culture since time immemorial. Its bountiful soil and the fine climate favoured the establishment of vineyards whose wines came to form the base of a commercial powerhouse of the first magnitude during the era of commerce with the Indies. The history of "el jerez" (sherry, the generic term for its wines) is packed with adventure, and for the last 2,000 years has linked Jerez de la Frontera with other peoples and cultures through its commerce. Such kings as Alfonso X "The Wise" and Enrique II perceived it as unique and beyond price and protected it, and it was a prize sought by pirates, scientists, writers and artists, who through its effects and benefits were inspired to create timeless works. Even Shakespeare, a monumental figure in the history of the United Kingdom, makes reference to the wines from Jerez.

The mythology associated with the birth of the wine, the new cycle beginning each September, the aspects of Jerez de la Frontera's culture that were inspired by its land... these are forces that mould the strength, temperance and nobility of this region and its people. Concerts, street shows, the international puppet exhibition, the "bulería" (traditional Andalusian song) fiesta, horse shows, the master wine tasting events, the magical act of trampling grapes, the best flamenco... a full array of options for a few unforgettable days during the "Vendimia" (Grape Harvest).

While wine culture is important to Jerez, flamenco and horses are no less so. In May González Hontoria Park hosts the Horse Fair (Feria del Caballo), which has been declared of International Tourist Interest. Before that, in late February, is held the Jerez Flamenco Festival. For three weeks it presents an extensive and high quality demonstration of the city's purest artistic manifestation, serving as the standard by which events of this type are measured throughout the world.



THE WINE CULTURE

MONTILLA

La Vendimia Fiesta: 3 to 5 September.

Holy Week: 1 to 8 April.

Town Hall: 957 650 150. www.montilla.es

Montilla's La Vendimia (Grape Harvest) Fiesta has been declared of National Tourist Interest and is one of the oldest in Spain. It is held on the first weekend in September to celebrate the harvest of the grapes from the vineyards that make up the prestigious Montilla-Moriles Designation of Origin.

Each year the organising committee appoints an honorary "capataz" or foreman who receives the keys and is entrusted with the duty to stand as guardian and defender of the local wines throughout the year. This ceremony takes place at noon on the first Sunday in September in the house that for more than thirty years was the residence of "The Inca", Garcilaso de la Vega, considered one of the greatest chroniclers of the Americas and one of the best writers of prose of the Hispanic Renaissance. That night the traditional "Pisa de la Uva" (Grape Treading) occurs in the picturesque El Gran Capitán neighbourhood, when the grape juice is extracted in the old fashioned way and offered to the Virgin of Las Viñas (the Vineyards).

The Cata Flamenca, one of the most prestigious flamenco festivals in the country, is held in the locality and coincides with the Montilla-Moriles Vendimia Fiesta, as do the Wine and Tapa Fiesta, the "Destreza en el Oficio" (Professional Skill) Competition—which attracts cellar masters, wine pourers and coopers from the entire region—the horse show, the "pregón" (proclamation) of the fiesta and numerous musical and sports performances.

You should take advantage of your visit to the region to travel the Wine Route (Ruta del Vino). It runs through the Campiña Sur region of Córdoba, an eminently agricultural area noted for a prestigious wine Designation of Origin, that of Montilla-Moriles. The route runs through the municipalities of Córdoba, Montemayor, Montilla, Moriles, Aguilar de la Frontera, Lucena, La Rambla, Fernán Núñez and Puente Genil.



ACORNS AND PASTURES

VILLANUEVA DE CÓRDOBA

Feria del Jamón (fair): 8 October.

Romería de la Virgen de la Luna (pilgrimage): second Sunday in October. Town Hall: 957 120 000. www.villanuevadeCORDOBA.es

No one should pass up the chance to visit Villanueva de Córdoba in October, when the Acorn-fed Iberian Ham Fair (Feria del Jamón Ibérico de Bellota) is held in Los Pedroches and the Acorn-fed Iberian Ham Day in Villanueva de Córdoba. Two of the more important events are the Ham Cutters Competition, which is certified by the National Association of Meatcutters and in which the best meat cutters take part, and the Best Acorn-fed Iberian Ham Competition in Los Pedroches. A jury of experts will deliver the awards to the best meat cutters who will be graded on twelve criteria, notably the initial cleanness of the primal cut, the cutter's style, the straightness of the cut, the thickness of the slices and the creativity in presenting and utilising the primal cut.

Few regions have a patrimony that is as interesting and offers as many options as Villanueva. The various natural areas make it a place filled with opportunities for such activities as hiking, trail biking and horseback riding. One of the most attractive routes is the one that runs through the Los Pedroches Valley, which is cloaked with centuries-old holm oak forests that produce the acorns that the Iberian hogs are raised on.

Other interesting routes are the one to the headwaters of the River Gato and the El Granito route, which runs along the ancient road that connected Pedroche to Córdoba on its passage through Villanueva in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. This Royal Burgh's most iconic ecclesiastical and secular buildings stand along this centuries-old road, notably the San Miguel Parish Church, the Cristo Rey Convent, the Las Obreras Convent and the aristocratic houses of the urban district, where the granite that is so abundant in this region has given rise to an extremely solid, architraved style of architecture of very pleasing aesthetics.



WINE AND EGGS FOR SAINT ISIDORE

VILAFRANCA DE CÓRDOBA

La Gran Huevada (fiesta): 14 May.

Romería de San Isidro (pilgrimage): 15 May.

Town Hall: 957 190 016. www.villafrancadecordoba.es

This Cordoban municipality at the foot of the Sierra Morena Mountains in the Upper Guadalquivir region celebrates the San Isidro (Saint Isidore) festivities with a day devoted to gastronomy. On the evening of 14 May a Rocío choir sings Mass in the parish church. After the worship service the image of San Isidro (called “El Chiquito”, or the Little One) is borne in a procession to Las Cespedillas Park where children in traditional costumes make offerings to it of products from the countryside. Afterwards the pilgrimage fiesta kicks off with the “Gran Huevada” (Great Egg Party), organised by the San Isidro Labrador Brotherhood and sponsored by the Town Hall. More than 10,000 fried eggs are accompanied by bread and free wine poured with a traditional “venencia” (dipper) while a musical group entertains the diners. Beginning at midnight on the Sunday before the Gran Huevada the “Gran Marranada” (Great Pig Party) is celebrated by sampling the pork that has been roasting all day long.

The Pilgrimage (“Romería”) of San Isidro takes place the day after the Gran Huevada, on 15 May. It begins with the carts, floats and horseback riders gathering in the morning on the main street. This retinue accompanies the image of the saint to the estate of La Huertezuela. It is customary to halt at the hermitage of Nuestra Señora de los Remedios (Our Lady of the Remedies) to sing a Salve Regina to her. Upon arrival at the estate there is a blessing of the fields. Prizes are awarded for the best-decorated floats and to the best riders, and groups of family and friends prepare the classic “perol” (a type of stew).



A VILLAGE BUILT ON CHEESE

ZUHEROS

Feria del Queso (fair): 23 to 25 September.

Holy Week: 1 to 8 April.

Town Hall: 957 694 514. www.zuheros.es

Zuheros is a small village in the Subbética Mountains region in the south-eastern part of the Province of Córdoba. Its location makes it a natural dividing line between the Sierra Subbética Natural Park and the Campiña region of Córdoba.

Zuheros is one of those villages that have managed to preserve the charm of a prior age down through the years. Its streets are narrow and winding, with a multitude of little plazas and secluded spots with a traditional feel. Its flavourful goat cheese is one of this Royal Burgh's culinary attractions, and the Zuheros Cheese Fair (Feria del Queso) revolves around it. Each September it attracts some 15,000 people to sample thirty varieties of cheese, in total about 8,000 kilos.

The fiesta is organised by the Los Balanchales cheese company and is already well established. Its purpose is to promote homemade cheese and to serve as a vehicle for the promotion of tourism in the area. This Cheese Fair's programme includes a new feature, a cheese workshop in the Los Balanchales facility.

Zuheros also offers visitors a broad array of options for indulging all five senses. One example is the cave of Los Murciélagos (The Bats), an archaeological site of great beauty and significance that has been declared a Natural Landmark. A good complement to a trip through Los Murciélagos Cave would be a visit to the cave's Learning Centre (Centro de Interpretación) and the local Archaeological Museum, which has a collection of finds linked to Los Murciélagos and other neighbouring sites. The scenery around Zuheros and its setting in the heart of the mountains make it an ideal base for enjoying nature by hiking the trails along the River Bailón or travelling over the La Subbética Green Route (Vía Verde).



A FOUNTAIN OF WINE

CÁDIAR

La Fuente del Vino (festival): 7 to 10 October.

San Blas Fiesta: 3 March.

Town Hall: 958 768 031. www.turgranada.es

This community is made up of the villages of Cádiar, Narila and Yátor and lies between the majestic Sierra Nevada and Contraviesa mountain ranges on the banks of the River Guadalfeo. It is well worth the effort to take to the streets and explore the distinctive and picturesque Barrio Bajo, an architectural complex in the purest Alpujarra tradition.

Just as the author and student of the Hispanic world Gerald Brenan said, Cádiar is the very centre of Granada's Alpujarra region, its "navel". In the words of that British writer, it is a "joyful and prosperous" community that is certainly an ideal location for any travellers in need of a renewal of energy of any type. "Arroz al liberal" (a rice dish) with partridge or rabbit, grilled meats and traditional Moorish pastries are the village's specialties, and we must not forget its magnificent wines.

Aside from these culinary attractions, in October Cádiar holds its traditional Feria de Otoño (Autumn Fair) in honour of El Santo Cristo de la Salud (Holy Christ of Health). A new feature was introduced in 1967 that would become the main attraction on its programme and be declared a Fiesta of Tourist Interest in Andalusia. A fountain was set up with two taps, from one of which flowed free wine every day of the fiestas while from the other water with which to wash the glasses.

The idea for the Fuente del Vino (Wine Fountain) originated with the local poet Enrique Morón and some of his friends and was adopted two years later by the Town Hall, which since that time has been responsible for setting up and supplying the wine-dispensing device. The fountain is furnished with local wine, the incomparable and traditional "costa" from grapes grown on farms in the Contraviesa Mountains. Every year during the fiestas the contents of an entire tank lorry are consumed.



THERMAL SPRINGS AND GOOD WINE

ALHAMA DE GRANADA

Romería del Vino (pilgrimage): 15 August.

Carnival: 16 to 26 February.

Town Hall: 958 350 161. www.alhama.org

The Wine Pilgrimage (Romería del Vino), along with the Carnival, has become part of the tradition of Alhama and the 2012 pilgrimage will be the thirtieth since it began in 1982. It was born out of an excellent wine harvest. Faced with such a surplus, the producers of Alhama decided to share their wine in a picnic with their village neighbours.

The tradition consists of a day spent in the country enjoying the local food and wines. The residents of Alhama adorn tractors with pilgrim motifs and use them for floats to travel to the site known as "El Motor".

When they arrive a fiesta takes place in which local people and visitors enjoy a rural outing accompanied by local food and wines.

The attendees can sample the traditional "olla jameña", a stew made from chickpeas, aged bacon, chicken, fresh bacon and "panceta" (pork belly), and also try the wine from this region. There are also horseback ribbon races on this day.

Don't pass up the chance to relax at the Balneario de Alhama spa, one of the best known thermal and medicinal water sites in the country and one with a very long history.

The Andalusí Legacy (Legado Andalusí) Foundation includes Alhama in the Route of Ibn al-Battuta, as he refers in his book *A través del Islam (Through the Islamic World)* to passing through the city while travelling between Málaga and Granada in 1350. He says of Alhama: "A small community with a marvellously placed and very well constructed mosque. There are some hot springs on the edge of the river about a mile from the village with separate bathing facilities for men and women."

Baño Fuerte, or Manantial Prehistórico (Prehistoric Spring), was designated as a Property of Cultural Interest in 1931.



ASPARAGUS WITH A DENOMINATION OF ORIGIN

HUÉTOR-TAJAR

Nuestro Padre Jesús Nazareno Fiestas: 15 September.

La Recogida del Espárrago Fiesta: early May.

Town Hall: 958 332 403. www.huetortajar.org

Huétor-Tájar is a municipality in western Granada whose location in the fertile bottomlands of the River Genil has bestowed upon it significant agricultural wealth, and it is particularly noted for the cultivation of asparagus with a Denomination of Origin. The effectiveness of the greenish-purple asparagus from Huétor-Tájar as a diuretic and in preventing tumours, which was discovered by researchers from Seville and the Regulatory Council of this Denomination of Origin, has helped promote it as a product beneficial to health.

An important agri-food industry concentrated on preserving asparagus and other products such as artichokes has grown up over this agricultural base. The greenish-purple asparagus is the most characteristic product and the one of which the residents of this community are the most proud. This fiesta is held in its honour and combines gastronomic activities (competitions and tastings) with a full programme of concerts by prestigious bands that attracts some 5,000 people per year. This fiesta is the former “Espárrago Rock” (Asparagus Rock) festival that, due to size to which it had grown, had to be relocated first to Granada and finally to Jerez de la Frontera. In 2005, the fifteenth anniversary of Espárrago Rock, it was reorganised in a more modest form under the name “Fiesta de la Recogida del Espárrago” (Asparagus Harvest Fiesta).

Three fiestas ago a gigantic omelette, three metres long by three metres wide, was prepared using 350 kilos of this vegetable, 1,500 eggs and ten litres of olive oil, making it the largest such omelette in the world. It has been listed ever since in the Guinness Book of World Records.



“MAURACAS” AND CHESTNUT TREES

CAPILEIRA

La Castaña Fiesta: 1 November.

La Virgen de la Cabeza Fiestas: last weekend in April.

Town Hall: 958 763 051. www.capileira.es

The municipality of Capileira lies in one of the most extraordinary natural areas in all of Granada, the canyon of El Barranco de Poqueira. This place on the southern slopes of the Sierra Nevada Mountains is listed as an Artistic and Historical Complex and forms part of the Natural Park. It sits close under Veleta Peak, with the villages of Capileira, Bubión and Pampaneira clinging to its sides. Capileira offers splendid natural areas, with leafy vegetation and breathtaking views. Its urban district has maintained intact the traditional Alpujarra architecture, with flat-roofed white houses that give form to its steep and zigzagging streets. From the guardrails of El Mirador overlook, above the canyon itself, you can see the neighbouring villages and the Sierra Nevada Mountains and, on clear days, one or two African peaks on the Mediterranean. Eras de Aldeire and the shelter at 2,500 metres above sea level are other tourist attractions in the area of Capileira, an ideal community from which to set out on excursions—observing the obligatory precautions—to the peaks of Mulhacén and Veleta. Its countryside abounds with chestnut trees, some of them centuries old and more than two metres in diameter, that have become genuine natural monuments. Chestnuts have been a source of wealth for centuries in this region, and it is rich in recipes based on this product.

During the “Mauraca”, or Chestnut Fiesta (“Fiesta de la Castaña”), villagers and outsiders alike gather on the village plaza and after nightfall make a great “mauraca”, or bonfire over whose embers the chestnuts are roasted. The festive atmosphere lasts all night long and it is traditional to eat roasted chestnuts and drink anise liqueur. Cookies, sweets and marmalade used to be made from the chestnut flour. Now as then, they are boiled or roasted in perforated skillets.



HOMAGE TO THE GRAPEVINE

LA PALMA DEL CONDADO

"La Vendimia" Fair and Fiestas: September.

Nuestra Señora del Valle Fiestas: 15 August.

Town Hall: 959 402 319. www.lapalmadelcondado.org

La Palma del Condado's Royal Fair (Real Feria), a Fiesta of Tourist Interest in Andalusia and one of the oldest in the Autonomous Community having been held since 1398, takes place in September. The fair has evolved down through the years, from its economic character in early times to the present festive atmosphere in which the city pays homage to its famous wines, brandies and vinegars. The La Palma fairgrounds are on La Zarcilla Avenue, an area that during the fair is taken over by merriment, colour, lights and Chinese lanterns, veritably flooded with festivities. Some fifty booths, all of them free of admission, allow anyone who happens to be visiting La Palma during these days to enjoy the local wine and cuisine. You are guaranteed to enjoy yourself if you take part in any of the activities scheduled by the Town Hall to raise the profile of this event. Sunday morning is certainly special. The fairground is made even more colourful by the horse and carriage parade, with prizes awarded to the showiest entrants. Morning, afternoon and night flow seamlessly together during the La Palma Fair. On the last day the fireworks show brings this popular fiesta to a splendid close. One of the most attractive routes to travel during these fiestas is the one that passes through the city's wine cellars.

Be sure also to visit La Palma del Condado's historical district, which has been declared a Property of Cultural Interest for the peculiarities of its houses and for its pavilions, churches and secular buildings. La Casa de los Arcos (House of the Arches, on Plaza España) is especially noteworthy. This residence of the sixteenth century Mudéjar style is the oldest secular structure still standing in this locality. The El Valle Church, of Mudéjar style from the second half of the fifteenth century, is the oldest ecclesiastical building.



GOOD HAM

ARACENA

Feria Regional del Jamón y del Cerdo Ibérico (fair): 1 to 4 June.

Feria Grande (fair): August.

Town Hall: 959 126 250. www.aracena.es

The Regional Ham and Iberian Hog Fair (Feria Regional del Jamón y del Cerdo Ibérico - Iberjamón) is held in early June in Aracena. Its purpose is to serve as an expositions venue and a forum for meetings and discussions about the pork industry and Iberian hog products, which have been of the utmost importance in these lands since time immemorial. All the Iberian hog raisers and processors meet at the Livestock Fair Facility (Recinto Ferial del Ganado) along with all lovers of good ham and Iberian hog products. The activities are many and varied, and include ham cutting competitions, tastings and raffles of products from the hog slaughter.

A few days before this fair devoted to the Iberian hog, Aracena hosts a native livestock conformation competition to show off the livestock that is raised in these grazing lands the year round. The livestock producers choose their finest specimens to display at the fairground, a meeting and bargaining place for members of the livestock industry of Aracena and the La Sierra region that is so important to the mountain economy.

Another of Aracena's attractions is the architectural legacy bequeathed it by the Sevillian regionalist architect Aníbal González, the chief architect for the preparatory works for Seville's Ibero-American Exposition of 1929. The La Aracena neighbourhood, the Town Hall, the Arias Montano House and the Lavadero Público (Public Laundry Shed) are some examples of this. From the Lavadero Público you can see the street that leads straight to Las Maravillas Cave (Gruta de las Maravillas). This is a natural landmark and the region's premier tourist destination, and Aníbal González enhanced its appeal even more with its receptions building.



WINE AND HORSES

BOLLULLOS PAR DEL CONDADO

"La Vendimia" Fiestas and Fair: 13 to 17 September.

"Quema de las Gamonitas" (Burning of the Asphodels) and La Inmaculada Day: 7 and 8 December.

Town Hall: 959 412 094. www.bollullospardelcondado.es

Bollullos' main celebrations are, without a doubt, the Grape Harvest Fair and Fiestas (Fiestas y Feria de la Vendimia) in September. They begin with the day honouring the local patron saint, the Virgin of Mercy (Virgen de las Mercedes), followed by a lighting ceremony and an explosion of fireworks to open the fairground.

On the morning of the thirteenth is the traditional parade of "Gigantes y Cabezudos" ("Giants and Big Heads", costumed figures) through the city streets for the entertainment of young and old alike. Musical performances and cultural events occur throughout the five days of the fiesta. The Wine Exaltation Ceremony comes as the opening act to the grape harvest. In honour of this economic and cultural mainstay the residents of Bollullos attend the birth of the new wine from the year's grape harvest, an activity that has become established as the maximum expression of the wine culture in the region. The famous Concurso de Frutos de la Comarca (Regional Fruits Competition), in which awards are given for weight, originality, rarity, etc., enjoys a long tradition. The Concurso de Frutos booth is the most long-established. In it are displayed marvellous forms created by nature, and there you can sample the finest wines.

The equestrian activities also play an important role. The Horse Day (Día del Caballo) show comes as a prelude to the fair in El Condado. This is the most important equestrian event in the entire province, with the best Doma Vaquera and Alta Escuela horsemen, as well as a selection of the finest horse teams and carriages of all types.



DELICACIES FROM THE SEA

PUNTA UMBRÍA

"La Gamba y la Chirla" National Fair: late June.

Town Hall: 959 495 100. www.ayto-puntaumbria.es

Punta Umbría is sea, nature, nature, gastronomy, leisure and fun all rolled into one. All this, together with its privileged geographic setting and its excellent transportation links, make it an ideal base for exploring the Costa de Luz, Huelva, the Columbian Sites, Doñana National Park, the Arcena Mountains and Picos de Aroche, the Ríotinto mining district and nearby Seville. Any visit has to include the marshes ("marismas") of the River Odiel, an important wetland on the right side of the river that has been designated as a Biosphere Preserve by UNESCO. You also must see its beaches, characterised by golden sand and surrounding green belts. The most outstanding is Punta Umbría Beach. It is one of the most visited and offers numerous services including restaurants, bares and "chiringuitos" (beach bars), and has been awarded a Blue Flag. The Mata Negra Beach, a paradisiacal place with dunes and crystalline waters, is also very highly regarded.

This coastal village boasts a rich cuisine based on the sea's yield. Notable dishes include "fritos de pescado" (fried fish) with roast peppers or "calamares del campo", "coquinos al ajillo" (a shellfish and garlic dish), "raya en pimentón" (skate with paprika), "guisos marineros" (seafood stews) with monkfish ("rape"), croaker ("corvina") or swordfish ("pez espada"), "adobos de pescado" (fish marinades), fried cuttlefish ("chocos"), "fideos con caba-lla" (mackerel with noodles) and, above, the "mariscos" (invertebrate seafood), especially Huelva prawns ("gambas"), "coquinas" and "chirlas".

These last three even have their own fiesta. During the National Prawn and Chirla Fair in late June thousands of people—some 70,000 during the last fair—gather to enjoy hundreds of kilos of these tasty marine delicacies, to which in recent years other species such as anchovies, sea bass and sea bream have been added.



CELEBRATING THE HARVEST

MARTOS

San Bartolomé Fair and Fiestas: late August.

Fiesta de la Aceituna: 8 December.

Town Hall: 953 704 005. www.martos.es

Martos, deep in the Sierra Sur region, offers beautiful and distinctive rural scenery with olive groves as the most prominent feature. Its plains and gentle hills stretch out and are lost in the distance, forming a remarkable and unique image. This municipality is encircled by interesting and visually striking heights, notably La Peña, the Caracolera Mountains and the La Grana Mountains.

The life of its people is intimately linked to the olive, which is vitally important not only to its economy but to its very culture. Martos, with an average annual yield of about 80 million kilos of olives and 20 million kilos of olive oil, ranks as the foremost olive oil producer in the world. Of the 25,000 hectares that make up its municipal territory, 21,227 are devoted to raising olives.

The predominant variety is what is known as “picual” or “marteña”. Two great tourist attractions are related to this product. One is the Vía Verde del Aceite (Olive Oil Green Route), which utilises the right of way of the old railroad and offers unique landscapes in a setting of olive groves. The other is the Fiesta de la Aceituna (Olive Fiesta) that is held from 4 to 8 December, during which a series of cultural and technical exhibitions pay homage to the men and women who raise olives, while at the same time reporting on innovations in the world of olives. 8 December, the date of the Olive Fiesta, is the official start of the harvest season. There is a floral offering at the Olive Growers’ Monument (Monumento a los Aceituneros). Next an “hoyo aceitunero”, a dish of bread, olive oil, cod and olives, is served while local masters of the art of wine pressing extract the year’s first oil by means of a manual screw press.



CHERRIES PREPARED IN A THOUSAND WAYS

CASTILLO DE LOCUBÍN

La Candelaria Fiesta: 2 February.

Fiesta de la Cereza: mid-June.

Town Hall: 953 591 364. www.castillodelocubin.es

Castillo de Locubín is a municipality in the very heart of the Sierra Sur mountain range. Its territory has very broken terrain that opens out into the bottomlands of the River San Juan to the northwest. 70% of the municipal area is under cultivation. Economic activity is based on agriculture and livestock raising, with the main crop being olives and cherries the second most important. The river meadowlands are very rich in gardens and orchards, particularly of cherries, a fruit to which several days of fiestas are dedicated in June. This is the Cherry Fair (Feria de la Cereza), by which Castillo de Locubín pays tribute to one of the most famous of its orchard products. Every third weekend in June, with the harvest beginning, there is a recipe contest for desserts, liqueurs and special dishes, with the only requirement being that this highly prized fruit be the primary ingredient. The prepared dishes are exhibited to the public in showcases set up in the park. You can sample and buy cherries, cherry liqueurs and products indigenous to the Castillo de Locubín area.

All this is enlivened by musical and cultural performances. This fiesta becomes more popular by the year, with a very large number of visitors now coming to sample both the cherries themselves and the dishes, desserts and liqueurs prepared from this famous fruit, and visiting Castillo and its enchanting surroundings while here. In fact, the local trove of recipes has already introduced cherries into various dishes: bread with olive and cherries, “gazpacho de segadores” (a cold soup) with cherries, “pimientos rellenos de cereza” (peppers stuffed with cherries) and cherry marmalade are some of the specialties you can buy during this week of gastronomy. These days cherries from Castillo de Locubín are exported to the most varied locations, and by their own merits have earned a place among the most exquisite preserves from all of Europe.



THE ART OF EATING WELL

ÚBEDA

Jornadas Gastronómicas del Renacimiento (fair): from January to March.
International Music and Dance Festival: late May and early June.
Tourist Office: 953 750 897. www.ubeda.es

The Renaissance Gastronomy Fair (Jornadas Gastronómicas del Renacimiento), organised by the Úbeda Town Hall together with the five participating restaurants, will be held for the eleventh time this year. The fair begins in the middle of January and continues until March. Over the course of these weeks this World Heritage city will use this region's finest cuisine and its art of cookery to promote itself.

The restaurants that, together with the Town Hall, organise this gastronomic event that emphasises the art of eating well are: Restaurante Zeitúm, the Condestable Dávalos Tourist Parador, the El Zaguán Restaurant, the Restaurante Antique and the Restaurante Cantina La Estación.

This initiative seeks to make gastronomy a vehicle of culture, promoting both the cuisine and native assets such as the cultural and historical heritage.

The participating restaurants select and prepare some amazing recipes for this fair that combine ancestral flavours with new contributions from the most modern cuisine.

Orchard and garden products prepared with its excellent olive oil are the featured ingredients of Úbeda cuisine. Some of its most characteristic dishes that you will be able to try are "pipirrana" (a vegetable salad), "lomo de cerdo en adobo" (marinated pork loin), "andrajós" (stewed potatoes with rabbit, hare or cod) and the tasty "morcilla en caldera" (a filler of wrapperless sautéed black pudding). As for pastries, "ochíos", a type of olive oil cake, are very typical of the region. Whereas in most places they are eaten as a sugary sweet, in Úbeda and its environs they are spiced with salt and sweet peppers, producing a reddish ball that, stuffed with assorted delicacies, reigns supreme among the local "tapas".



STEW AND WINE

FRAILES

Fiesta del Vino: late March.

Festividad de la Patrona Santa Lucía (patron saint festivity): 13 December. Town Hall: 953 593 002. www.frailes.es

The Wine Fiesta (Fiesta del Vino) is a magnificent occasion for visiting Frailes and sharing with its residents its traditions and modernity, its culture and gastronomy. This fiesta puts on a delectable luncheon that is attended by thousands of people in which wine flows like a river. The fiesta's main event is held at the fairground where crowds gather to sample the dish par excellence of that day, "potaje" (a hearty stew), which is accompanied both by wine of the Syrap class and the type called "del terreno", or local.

Frailes, in the Comarca Sur or Southern Region of Jaén very close to Alcalá la Real, has an enviable climate, with very cool summers. The locality is spoken of as a "water paradise" for the large number of springs that issue forth along its streets and in its environs, especially the spring of El Nacimiento. Its urban district preserves architectural features from other eras. The most notable example is the parish church of Santa Lucía, which dates back to the second half of the sixteenth century.

Some of the last craftsmen to make utensils by hand from esparto grass, an art handed down from the Arabs, are to be found in Frailes. Frailes' local wine is also made by hand and it is a rare household here that does not prepare a few jugs as its private reserve. It is a young, full bodied wine that should be drunk promptly, and it is steadily becoming more appreciated outside this locality.

A traveller wishing to try the distinctive delicacies of the local cuisine should order such dishes as "migas con melón" (a dish made from fried bread crumbs, with cantaloupe), "remoión" (a preparation of oranges and olive oil), "arroz caldoso", (boiled rice), "callos frailerros" (tripe) or "choto al ajillo" (kid or veal with garlic). Those with a sweet tooth should ask for such sweets as "empanadillas" (a stuffed pastry), "magdalenas" (small sponge cakes), "borrachuelos" (a Christmas pastry) or the so-called "mantas", a sweet loaf.



"MIGAS" AND GOOD WINE

TORROX

"Día de las Migas": 18 December.

Feria de Torrox (fair): first weekend in October.

Town Hall: 952 538 200. www.torrox.es

Torrox, in the La Axarquía region of Málaga, is sheltered by the Tejeda and Almijara mountain ranges, a situation that decades ago gave rise to the motto it still bears of "the best climate in Europe", with temperate winters and mild summers.

This village's Roman and Arabic heritages are still to be seen in its steep white streets, its cuisine and its handicrafts.

Each year shortly before Christmas this Royal Burgh holds its traditional Migas Day ("Día de las Migas"), which has been declared of Tourist Interest in Andalusia. The municipality pays tribute to the most fundamental item of its cuisine (a dish made of fried bread crumbs), inviting all who wish to join the celebration to a plate of migas, sardines, herring and a nice glass of wine. The ingredients and seasonings used in the preparation of migas make it a perfect dish for agricultural workers. It used to be that when lunch time arrived for labourers in vineyards and olive groves the employer sounded the "caracola" (a sea snail shell used as a horn) to inform them that the migas were done and ready to eat.

On the Sunday before the Christmas festivities thousands of kilos of migas are prepared next to Mercadillo de la Almazara and offered to all residents and visitors to Torrox. The blowing of the caracola is the signal for everyone to come and get their plate of migas. A glass of wine and an "ensalada arriera" ("teamster's salad" of tomatoes, onions, oranges, olives, virgin olive oil, vinegar, salt and black pepper) accompany the meal, which takes place in a splendidly festive atmosphere. The music and dance continue on La Constitución Plaza, with "pandas de verdiales" (traditional Andalusian bands) as the star attraction.



STEWED PORK

ARDALES

Fiesta de la Matanza: 13 February.

Feria de Ardales (fair): early September.

Town Hall: 952 458 087. www.ardales.es

The "Fiesta de la Matanza" (Hog Slaughter Fiesta) is a cultural event that has been celebrated in Ardales every February since 1997 with a gastronomic fair in tribute to homemade sausage and other pork products. Its geographic location, just 53 kilometres from Málaga where the natural regions of the Ronda Mountains, the agricultural plains ("La Campiña") of Antequera and the Guadalhorce Valley meet, helps make this a must-see event.

You can sample "botones" (bread rolls) stuffed with local sausages (morci-lla, salchichón and chorizo), that are passed out free of charge. A products fair begins at noon in which some one thousand kilos of products from the hog slaughter are given away, and the municipal plaza fills with vendors' sites where you can acquire characteristic local products.

A huge pork stew ("caldereta"), large enough for thousands of servings of this typical Ardales recipe, is prepared at noon using "magro" (lean pork), onions, garlic, peppers, bay leaves, salt, thyme, etc.

Visitors to this fiesta will enjoy the peculiar physiognomy of the streets of Ardales as well as its important and treasured architectural patrimony: the sixteenth century Nuestra Señora de los Remedios (Our Lady of Remedies) Parish Church, noteworthy for its square balustraded tower topped by a spire covered with glazed tile; the recently restored San Sebastián Convent; the Museum of Prehistory; Ardales Cave, with cave paintings from the Solutrean Age; the Bobastro ruins, an important Neolithic architectural site, and the gorge of Desfiladero de los Gaitanes.



IN HONOUR OF BACCHUS

CÓMPETA

Feria de Verano (Summer Fair): late July.

La Noche del Vino (fiesta): 15 August.

Town Hall: 952 516 006. www.competa.es

From the slopes of the Almijara Mountains in the north-eastern part of Málaga's La Axarquía region the white houses of Cómpeta look out over a landscape that, with the great heights of the Tejeda and Almijara mountain ranges at its back, stretches towards the Mediterranean across gentle hills covered by terraces on which grow the grapevines that yield its famous wine. The Muscat, semi-sweet and dry varieties are known within and without the province of Málaga.

15 August holds special meaning for the people of Cómpeta. For one thing, they pay homage to the village's patron saint, Nuestra Señora de la Asunción (Our Lady of the Assumption), but it has also always been the date for bidding farewell to the agricultural workers who departed the following day to begin the grape harvest ("la vendimia"). What began spontaneously in 1974, however, over the years was to become one of Cómpeta's most outstanding fiestas. It is all due to the fact that on that date the idea occurred to a local resident, Aurelio Fernández Navas, to make a gift of the wine that was consumed that night in the village.

Today this celebration is one of the main tourist attractions of the summer and has acquired international importance. Briefly, the activities during "La Noche del Vino" (Wine Night) include a cultural aspect with participation by artists, poets and writers as well as a folklore element with performances by dance groups and flamenco singers and, last of all, the feature that gave rise to the fiesta: free samplings of the fine wine made from Muscat grapes grown in the region.

Don't pass up the opportunity to stroll through the village along one or other of the routes that start at Almijara Plaza, for instance the one that leads to several scenic overlooks that afford panoramic views of the village and valley that will awe you by their rugged white beauty.



"LA VEGA" IN A BOWL OF SOUP

ÁLORA

Feria de Álora (fair): late July.

"El Día de las Sopas Perotas" (fiesta): 10 October.

Town Hall: 952 496 100. www.alora.es

Álora lies in the northeastern part of the Guadalhorce Valley region, forty miles from the provincial capital and 78 kilometres from Ronda. The area offers a wonderful diversity of landscapes, ranging from rugged mountains of considerable height such as the Sierra de Huma range, which rises to 1,191 metres, to the gentle riverside terrain along the Guadalhorce, and including the imposing gorge of Desfiladero de los Gaitanes, certainly one of the most striking geographic features to be found in Spain.

One of the most important events on the cultural and gastronomic calendar of Málaga occurs in this village in early October: "El Día de las Sopas Perotas" (Perota Soup Day), when it remembers the workers who used to till the soil and the labourers who spent the entire day in the fields. They all put this quick, easy and economical recipe to good use to replenish their exhausted energy during the work day.

The fame of the "sopas perotas" has to some extent distracted attention from the marvellous variety of this region's cuisine, which is based mainly on the excellent products from its fertile river bottomlands, known as "La Vega". The sopa perota recipe is simple in principle, as the ingredients are no more than a "sofrito" sauce consisting of garlic, tomatoes and onions in oil, mixed with water and pieces of bread and customarily accompanied by whatever fruits and vegetables that happen to be in season (grapes, prickly pear fruits, oranges or even cucumbers and raw onions). The complicated part is using just the right proportions and coaxing out the very special flavour of this dish.

"Salmorejo" (a creamy tomato soup), "migás" (made from fried leftover bread), "gachas" (a type of porridge), "majillo de espárragos" (a dish of asparagus and potatoes) and such desserts as "empanadillas de polvo de batata" (sweet potato pastries) and "roscos de puerta de horno" (spiral pastries), along with pork derivatives and Álora olives, round out the traditional cuisine of Álora, and one should not forget the "bolos", a type of stir fry prepared from perota leftovers, a little olive oil and green onions.



BREAD FOR ALL

LORA DEL RÍO

"Aquí Hay Miga" (fiesta): 23 January.

Romería de Setefilla (pilgrimage): 8 September.

Town Hall: 955 802 025. www.loradelrio.es

Lora del Río occupies an enviable position that offers views of the mountains, the river meadows or the rural countryside ("La Campiña") of Seville. For more than a decade now this Sevillian municipality has held a peculiar gastronomic fiesta in which "migas" play the starring role. "Aquí hay Miga" (Migas Here!), held in late January when there is still a nip in the air, is an event organised by the Brotherhood of El Santo Entierro (the Holy Burial) and the local Town Hall. As has been customary since its creation, 1600 kilos of migas (a dish made of diced bread, garlic, olive oil, pork belly and salt) are cooked and passed out free of charge among more than 15,000 attendees at this fiesta, making this the largest quantity of this traditional dish prepared anywhere in Spain.

In addition to the miga event there is an open-house exhibition of the local architectural patrimony to facilitate visitation to the municipality's most iconic landmarks and buildings. Notable landmarks among its ecclesiastical buildings include the Virgen de Setefilla Convent, constructed between the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries; the Inmaculada Concepción Convent, with its valuable canvases and precious metalwork, the Santa Ana Hermitage and the Nuestro Padre Jesús Hermitage, of Sevillian Baroque style. Other structures worthy of mention include the houses of Las Columnas and Los Leones and the Casa Consistorial (Town Hall), all erected during the seventeenth century.

Archaeological ruins from the Bronze Age have been preserved within its municipal territory at the Tartessian settlement of Mesa de Setefilla.



THE CRADLE OF THE TABLE OLIVE

ARAHAL

Verdeo Fiesta: 1 to 4 September.

Carnival: February.

Town Hall: 955 841 033. www.arahal.es

With a harvest of about thirty million kilos of the manzanilla and gordal varieties, the municipality of Arahal in Seville's La Campiña region is the foremost producer of table olives in Spain. The "verdeo" is the act of gathering the still-green olives (manzanilla, gordal, etc.) for table use. The verdeo begins in September and concludes in October or November. The way it is done in Arahal is special, as the week before it starts (the first week in September) the Verdeo Fiesta is held. The fiesta kicks off with the coronation Thursday night on Santo Cristo Plaza of the Queen of the Verdeo, who will be the representative for Arahal's marvellous olive oil products throughout the province. When the discussion turns to the landmark structures of Arahal, nobody will deny that the most important ones are those of a religious nature. The churches include those of Nuestra Señora de la Victoria, from the sixteenth century and with a lovely Mudéjar coffered ceiling; Santa María Magdalena, built in the eighteenth century over a hermitage destroyed in the Lisbon earthquake whose tower, tabernacle and a side door have been preserved; Santo Cristo de la Misericordia (Holy Christ of Mercy), from the eighteenth century and displaying Colonial, Baroque and Plateresque features, and the seventeenth century church and former convent of San Roque.

Other religious structures you can also visit include the seventeenth century Nuestra Señora del Rosario Convent with its Baroque altarpiece and the Veracruz Chapel and the San Antonio Hermitage, both from the seventeenth century.

This locality's characteristic gastronomy products are "aceitunas aderezadas" (seasoned olives), tomato soup with "hierbabuena" and "chicharos con bacalao en amarillo" (peas and cod). The sweets prepared in the Nuestra Señora del Rosario Convent are delicious, especially the "canapés de almendra" (almond canapés), "tortas de ajonjolí" (sesame cakes), "costrada" (an egg pastry), "brazo de gitano" (Swiss roll) and "tocinos de cielo" (a caramel flan).



THE BOUNTY OF THE MARSHES

ISLA MAYOR

Fiestas del Arroz (Rice Fiestas): 28 February.

Fiesta del Cangrejo (Crayfish Fiesta): 2 October.

Town Hall: 955 773 000. www.islamayor.es

The Sevillian municipality of Isla Mayor lies within the “marismas” (marshes) of the Lower Guadalquivir, occupying part of the beautiful Doñana Natural Park. Its urban centre, at the river’s mouth, is surrounded by canals and rice fields. Part of its history is marked by the exploitation of its soil for rice cultivation, which brought with it first English and, later, Valencian colonists. The influence of the British colonists is obvious in the so-called “Casitas de los Ingleses” (Englishmen’s Little Houses) that are still to be found scattered around the municipality. Its magnificent natural setting is known as the “water paradise” by the residents of Isla Mayor themselves. Part of it is protected, making Isla Mayor an especially suitable destination for lovers of nature and the sporting activities carried out there, such as hunting, fishing, trail walking and horseback riding, among others. A traveller wishing to sample the delicacies most closely identified with the municipality should try, naturally, its different varieties of rice. We should not forget that Isla Mayor makes up a part of the Rice Route (“Ruta del Arroz”) through the territory of Seville, but crayfish (cangrejos del río), shrimp (camarones) and “albur” (flat-head mullet) also play a prominent part in its traditional cuisine. On 28 February, Andalusia Day and Rice Day (“El Día del Arroz”) are celebrated with free samplings of paella and the La Marisma Exhibitions Fair (“La Feria de Muestras de la Marisma”). In late September or early October Red Crayfish Day (“El Día del Cangrejo Rojo”), an agri-food fair, is held. It has a competition for creative recipes for red crayfish and free samplings of this product and of typical dishes made from it.



A “PATA NEGRA” FAIR

ALMADÉN DE LA PLATA

Feria del Jamón (fair): early April.

Feria de la Virgen de Gracia (fair): mid-August.

Town Hall: 954 735 082. www.almadendelaplata.es

The Royal Burgh of Almadén de la Plata, in the northwest part of the Province of Seville, sits between the rivers Viar and Cala in the very heart of the Sierra Morena Natural Park and is dwarfed by the high and rugged mountains that tilt it towards the valleys of the Guadalquivir.

With the coming of spring in early April Almadén de la Plata holds its popular Ham Fair (Feria del Jamón) to promote the traditional products of Almadén and the region, which represent such very diverse sectors as handicrafts, the agri-food industry and rural tourism and, needless to say, to show off and supply samples of its star products: the “Pata Negra” ham and cured meats of Almadén de la Plata. This business activity is one of the mainstays of the economy, as the locality has several companies that produce ham and other Iberian hog derivatives.

The fair has activities for all ages and inclinations. Visitors can view the entire exhibition and the main local tourist attractions. During the mornings samples are provided of the traditional “desayuno molinero” (miller’s breakfast) of coffee, bread with olive oil and ham) and at noon of the star product, ham with a glass of wine or very cold beer.

Almadén de la Plata is one of the most suitable destinations for those who enjoy rural tourism. It is a magnificent site for nature lovers as it forms a part of the Sierra Norte Natural Park. Its territory has been inhabited since the prehistoric era as is shown by the different archaeological relics that have been found in it, notably those from Los Covachos and the La Travesía complex, which has been declared a Historic Legacy of Spain. The latter site encompasses a Bronze Age necropolis and a settlement on the crest of the La Travesía Hill.



A SEA AND FLAMENCO FIESTA

ALMERÍA

Flamenco Festival: last weekend in August.
www.aytoalmeria.es

The Almería Flamenco Festival ranks, along with that of Mairena del Alcor (Seville), the "Fiesta de la Bulería" in Jerez (Cádiz) and that of Puente Genil (Córdoba), as one of the oldest in Andalusia, and is one of the most traditional and prestigious events of the Almería Fair and of national and international flamenco.

This flamenco gathering will take place for the forty-fifth time this year and as always will be held during the last week of August in the courtyard of the La Salle School in the capital of Almería. For three days lovers of this authentically Andalusian art form will be able to enjoy an ample and high quality programme of traditional flamenco, a programme replete with great flamenco singers and guitarists that will delight both the general public and the most orthodox enthusiasts.

In accordance with custom, no artist from last year's festival will perform during this year's programme with the exception of the flamenco guitarist "Tomatito", an artist from Almería who shows up with a different format each year and whose presence is indispensable due to his status as an internationally known performer who has made the name of Almería known throughout the world. Such modern figures as the recently deceased Enrique Morente, "El Cabrero", "El Lebrijano", Miguel Poveda, "Rancapino", José Mercé Arcángel and Marina Heredia are just a few of the artists who have graced the stage during recent festivals. These figures rub shoulders with the emerging performers from Almería, to whom the festival dedicates a segment.

This veteran show is just one of the attractions each year at the Almería Fair ("Feria"), which is held in honour of La Virgen del Mar (the Virgin of the Sea) and with whose dates it coincides. At noon visitors will have the opportunity to enjoy the regional cuisine before dropping by the Royal Fairground ("Real de la Feria"), a sizable facility where entertainment is assured until dawn. The fairground is located next to the Mediterranean Games Palace ("Palacio de los Juegos Mediterráneos"), which hosts concerts by great artists. The Bullfight Fair ("Feria Taurina"), for its part, will again put forth an extraordinary cartel of the greatest bullfighters on the national scene.



THE THEATRE FESTIVAL

EL EJIDO

Theatre Festival: late May.
www.festivalteatro.elejido.es

The Theatre Festival of El Ejido (Almería) is considered one of the foremost events in the Spanish artistic world. It has received numerous national awards during its thirty-four years of existence and its stage has become an indispensable stop for the great theatrical companies. The last festival drew more than 35,000 spectators. During the last days of May and the first days of June this municipality in Almería becomes a grand mosaic of artistic disciplines to delight the senses, with a high concentration of shows representing every kind of artistic and theatrical trend, especially contemporary and avant-garde. Half a hundred national and international companies act out their works on different stages in El Ejido, such as Guardias Viejas Castle, hotel terraces, theatres, courtyards and plazas.

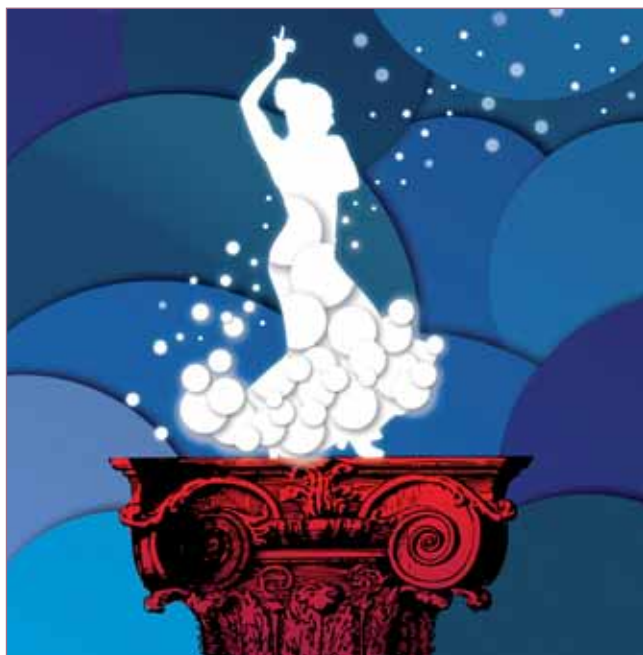
At the conclusion of the Theatre Festival El Ejido enthusiastically celebrates the fiestas in honour of Saint Isidore (San Isidro). For five days El Ejido puts on its party clothes and all roads lead to the Fairground ("Recinto Ferial"), the focal point for the excitement, music, light and merriment that young and old alike share with anyone who is visiting the village. People come from all over to join in with the fiesta honouring Saint Isidore, the patron saint of farmers and the fields, of the men and women who with such toil and determination cultivate the best horticultural products of the Mediterranean coast. In August El Ejido places its bets on the cultural future with two internationally important festivals that concentrate on pop, rock and electronic music, "Creamfields Andalucía" and "Ola Festival", in the setting of the "Guardias Viejas" Castle.

**ALMERÍA, IN BRIEF****ALMERÍA**

International Short Film ("Cortometraje") Festival: early December. www.almeriaencorto.es

This competition was created to pay tribute to and to revive the splendour enjoyed by the Province of Almería between the 1950's and the 1980's because of the famous "spaghetti westerns", Hispano-Italian co-productions that were filmed in the Desert ("Desierto") of Tabernas due to its similarity to the North American deserts. We can point to titles such as *For a Few Dollars More* or *For a Fistful of Dollars*, such directors as Sergio Leone, music like that of Ennio Morricone and such actors as Clint Eastwood. The festival is organised by the Provincial Delegation and began as an internationally publicised event in 2000.

This festival takes place in December and short films from every continent are entered in an open competition. There are more and better films each year, which are viewed by a professional jury and by any member of the public who wishes to attend the multiple sessions that are presented in the Cervantes Theatre and other localities in the province. The jury's decision as to the most representative short films of those screened at the festival is revealed at a gala final ceremony. A national video competition is held in parallel with the international competition. Since 2006 the first place winner, in addition to a cash prize, has been awarded the opportunity to produce a short film using any of the fabulous natural and historic areas in the Province of Almería. There is also an extensive programme that includes screening sessions, a grand exposition on some theme relating to the cinematic world in Almería, conferences and seminars by experts and the traditional tribute to some person, such as Brigitte Bardot previously, who is important to the film industry in Almería.

**EXALTATION OF FLAMENCO****JEREZ DE LA FRONTERA**

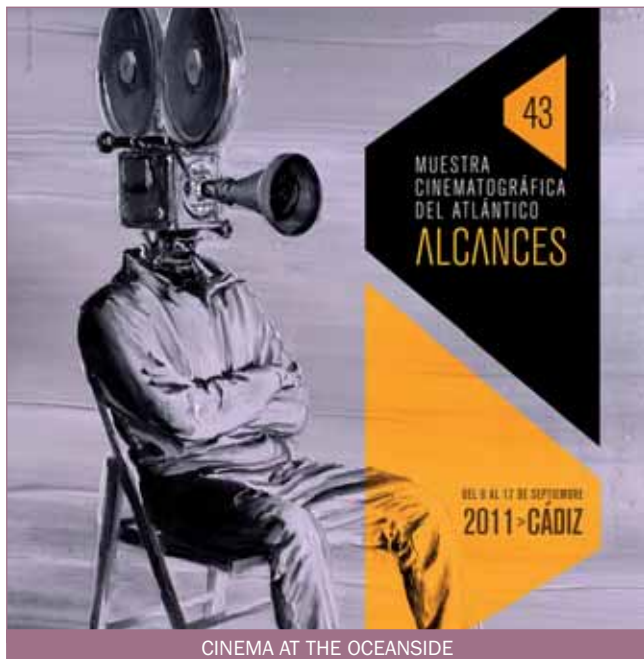
Jerez Festival: late February.
www.jerez.es

The seventeenth Jerez Festival, held from late February until mid-March, reflects the artistic concerns, guided by the common desire to seduce, enamour and excite, of several generations of flamenco song, dance and guitar. The festival presents series related to flamenco dance, singing and guitar and to its fusion with other types of music, in addition to a training element that includes nearly half a hundred courses and workshops. There are also supplementary activities in the form of a presentations forum, chats and debates about anything that is going on that is flamenco-related, as the Jerez Festival takes an overall view of this art form in all its different manifestations.

Each festival is marked by the recognition of a splendid present-day era, represented by a generation that is now at full creative maturity and offering its best work. And the truth is that at the Jerez Festival the young people are coming on strong, driven by their initiative that leads to the creation of new companies and the presentation of new projects.

Nor should we neglect the classics, eternal touchstones and very fruitful sources of inspiration.

The quality of the Jerez Festival's offer is recognised by both critics and the public. 34,000 people participated in the competition during the last festival, with the occupancy rate during the 135 scheduled activities at 93%.



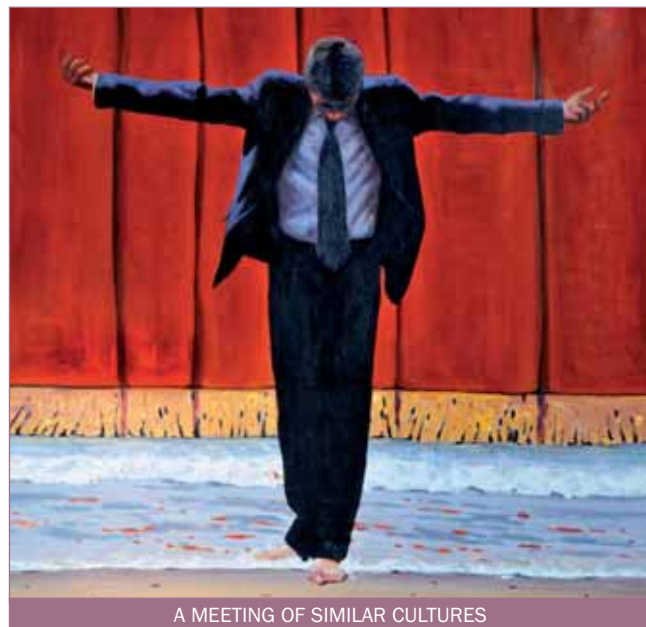
CÁDIZ
“Muestra Cinematográfica del Atlántico”: 8 to 17 September.
www.alcances.org

Each September the Atlantic Cinematography Show (“Muestra Cinematográfica del Atlántico” – ALCANCES) of Cádiz opens a window onto the international cinematic culture.

In its last few productions it has come to be a festival concentrating on documentaries, digging deep into this fast-growing genre that has an ever-growing number of viewers.

Ever since the first “Muestra”—and this year’s will be the 43rd—ALCANCES has taken it upon itself to bring the world of cinema, in all its manifestations and with due regard for its cultural value, closer to the greater public. The Muestra boasts a full and extensive programme that includes a competitive segment—the Official Section that includes three categories: full length, medium length and short documentaries—as well as monographic series, one on the international scene, screenings of documentary cinema from several continents, thematic series and conferences or round tables.

During each Muestra homage is paid to great figures in Spanish cinema, who become the subject of extensive retrospectives on their output. Attractions include outdoor screenings at Baluarte de la Candelaria, a fortification from 1672 that, protected by a strong wall, serves as a breakwater against the Atlantic, as well as a series of activities at that same place intended to exhibit the more timely aspects of the festival, such as workshops and expositions that make up an ample offer of parallel activities.



CÁDIZ
Festival Iberoamericano de Teatro de Cádiz: 18 to 29 October.
www.fitdecadiz.org

The Ibero-American Theatre Festival (Festival Iberoamericano de Teatro de Cádiz - FIT) was conceived and designed upon these premises: it was to be a grand festival of the performing arts that would serve as a cultural catalyst and project the international image of the city of Cádiz through a reencounter of Spanish and Latin American theatre. Thus in 1986, through the use of the performing arts, the city opened a great window to reveal that it was more Creole and Mestizo than Roman and Moorish, more American than European, more Atlantic than Mediterranean.

FIT sprang up at a time of expansion of festivals throughout Spain. Some, such as the classic ones of Mérida and Almagro, were of long lineage. Others—and they were the majority—were derivative and trivial and totally without theatrical programming. The situation in the Americas was different but this type of festival was not that abundant there either. The most important ones at the time were those in Córdoba (Argentina), Caracas (Venezuela), Manizales (Colombia), and La Muestra in Montevideo (Uruguay). Since that time the FIT has received numerous awards for its work in Spain and Ibero-America, most notably the Gold Medal of Merit in the Fine Arts in 2003.

The festival alternates performances in the streets of Cádiz with stage productions in various enclaves of the city, such as the theatre of Gran Teatro Falla, the Sala Central Lechera auditorium and the fortress of El Baluarte de la Candelaria.



FOR LOVERS OF THE SIX STRINGS

CÓRDOBA

Festival de la Guitarra: 5 to 16 July.

www.guitarracordoba.com

In July Córdoba becomes the “City of the Guitar”. The Guitar Festival (“Festival de la Guitarra”) is the city’s gold standard for culture and entertainment during this part of the Cordoban summer. This festival, which is turning thirty-one years old, has a well-earned national and international reputation among guitar lovers due to the high quality of the players and instructors that take part.

This famous competition offers two complementary sections in its programming. On the one hand is the so-called instructional programme, with courses and master classes on ancient, classic, flamenco, contemporary and modern guitar; composition classes for the guitar and flamenco song and dance courses (Manuel Barrueco, Pepe Romero, Pat Metheny, Marcus Miller, Paul O’Dette, Leo Brouwer, Manolo Sanlúcar, Ralph Tower, Shin Ichi Fukuda, Egberto Gismonti, David Russell, Jayme Marques, Mike Stern, Robben Ford, Stanley Jordan and others).

On the other hand is the concert programme, which is presented in iconic premises and plazas of the city (Gran Teatro, La Axarquía Theatre, Teatro Cómico Principal [Main Comical Theatre], Palacio de Congresos [Congresses Palace], La Corredera Plaza, etc.) and which makes the Cordoban night a genuine delight.

Figures of flamenco guitar of the stature of Paco de Lucía, Paco Peña, Manolo Sanlúcar, Vicente Amigo, “Sabicas” and “Tomatito”, among others, have appeared at the Córdoba festival. Flamenco guitar does not play the sole role, however. Supporting acts included jazz and the modern guitar, with such legendary names as B. B. King, Chuck Berry, Gary Moore, Bob Dylan, Mark Knopfler, Pat Metheny, Carlos Santana, “Toquinho”, Raimundo Amador, George Benson, the Pretenders, Roger Hodgson, John Mayall and many others.



A CITY OF POETS

CÓRDOBA

Cosmopoética (Poetic Cosmos): late March and early April.

www.cosmopoetica.es

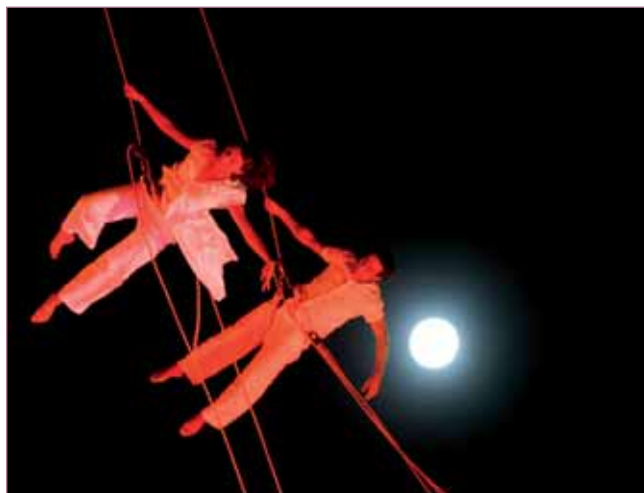
One of the most important international poetry gatherings takes place each March and April in Córdoba, and this year will be held for the ninth time. “Cosmopoética, Poetas del Mundo en Córdoba” (Poetic Cosmos, Poets of the World in Córdoba) has become one of the most important events of its type on the international scene. The festival is organised by the Córdoba Town Hall and sponsored by the Córdoba Deputation, the Assembly of Andalusia and the Ministry of Culture.

Córdoba speaks in verse during these days. Poets come to the city from all over the world and make their voices heard: over the course of the week they will roll out their metaphors verse by verse and street by street, from schools to bars. About half a hundred authors visit the city and wax poetic on the banks of the Guadalquivir.

Cosmopoética seeks to bring together poets of different styles and ages, from different countries, the hallowed and the yet-unpublished, who go outside the boundaries and push poetry to its limits and relate it to music, cinema or science.

Outstanding authors who have participated in the festival include the Nobel Prize recipients Seamus Heaney, Derek Walcott and Dario Fo, as well as other such important writers as Michel Houellebecq, Adam Zagajewski, Jorie Graham, Edoardo Sanguineti, Mark Strand, Henrik Nordbrandt, Mahmud Darwix, Robert Hass, Ángel González, Antonio Gamoneda, Juan Gelman and Antonio Cisneros.

In 2009, the Cosmopoética was honoured with the National Award for the Promotion of Reading for having made reading and literature a trademark of the city of Córdoba by hosting an international festival that may inspire similar initiatives.



ON-STAGE TALENT

PALMA DEL RÍO

Feria de Teatro en el Sur: first two weeks in July.
www.escenapalma.es

The “Feria de Teatro en el Sur” (Theatre Fair in the South) is held each July in Palma del Río and is a forum for dialogue between Andalusia and the outside world. Palma del Río’s Theatre Fair in the South has become with time one of the most important events devoted to the performing arts in the country, as is evidenced by the quality of its offer, the following it receives in the media and the interest programmers display in attending it.

Over the 29 years of the fair’s life Palma del Río has been at the forefront in fostering and defending Andalusian theatre and has served as a platform for distributing and promoting the shows, being conscious of their quality and the need to support talent.

Since its creation in 1984 it has selected Andalusian projects that may prove attractive to the national programmers in attendance, but also Spanish and international productions that, through their search for innovative ideas, may stimulate production in our autonomous community.

Special attention is also paid to street theatre, in tune with that Andalusian spirit that knows how to avail itself of the possibilities presented by exterior locations.

The Theatre Fair also serves as a forum for discussing and analysing the world of the performing arts, hosting such professional activities as seminars and master classes on the concepts and forms of current theatre, meetings and workshops on specific aspects of the theatrical sector and presentations of projects and ideas in order to foster cooperation among professionals interested in joining some project. Palma del Río’s Fair also thinks of itself as a place for conducting business, and for that purpose has set up the “Mercado de la Escena” (Stage Market).



EMOTION AT THE ALHAMBRA

GRANADA

International Festival of Music and Dance: between June and July.
www.granadafestival.org

Granada’s International Festival of Music and Dance has its origins in the orchestra concerts that had been held since 1883 at the Carlos V Palace during the Corpus Christi fiestas. The “Concurs de Cante Jondo” (a traditional Andalusian music show) called together in 1922 by García Lorca, Falla and other intellectuals and artists of the age such as Andrés Segovia, Fernando de los Ríos, Zuloaga, Manuel Ángeles Ortiz, Turina and Rusiñol, was also of great importance.

It has become at the present day, as it celebrates its sixtieth anniversary, one of Granada’s most attractive and emblematic cultural events. It is held between June and July in the Alhambra palaces and the main landmark buildings and locations in the city.

The festival has become known for the extraordinary settings of its shows and for appearances by the greatest performers of the moment, along with its shrewd bets on young artists destined to be future masters. Images of Arthur Rubinstein, Victoria de los Ángeles and Andrés Segovia in the most beautiful courtyards of the Alhambra, of Carl Schuricht, Herbert Von Karajan and Sergiu Celibidache conducting in the Carlos V Palace, and of Margot Fonteyn and Rudolf Nureyev dancing in the El Generalife Gardens, to list just a few outstanding examples, have been seen around the world, but the Festival can also pride itself on having welcomed very early in their careers such figures as Teresa Berganza, Lorin Maazel, Antonio “El Bailarín”, Jessye Norman, Montserrat Caballé and Joaquín Achúcarro, among others. This mission is still carried on today, with outstanding young artists, musicians and dancers being on the programme along with the great figures of music and dance, and the inclusion of eminent professionals who are backing interesting and novel projects.



THE BEST JAZZ IN SUMMER AND WINTER

GRANADA

International Jazz Festival of Granada: November.
 "Jazz en la Costa": 17 to 23 July.
www.jazzgranada.es

The International Jazz Festival in Granada is one of the oldest and most important in Europe and the only Spanish member of the Europe Jazz Network. Throughout the thirty-two years since the first festival in 1980 its history has played out in parallel with that of modern jazz and its most outstanding figures on both the national and international scenes, such as Miles Davis, Oscar Peterson, Charlie Haden, Art Blakey, Tete Montoliu, Dizzy Gillespie, Wayne Shorter, Herbie Hancock, Chano Domínguez and a long list of others.

The presence of such great names has given rise to an authentic jazz movement in Granada that has borne fruit in the creation of a stable big band sound, jazz sessions in various locations in the metropolitan area and seminars and publications that foster contact and exchange of experiences between local and foreign musicians.

Beforehand, in July, the "Festival Jazz en la Costa" (Jazz Festival on the Coast) is held in Almuñécar. It is celebrating its twenty-fourth anniversary and solidifying its status as the most important event of its type on the entire coast of Andalusia.

"Jazz en la Costa" is an especially pleasant experience. The tropical vegetation, the blue of the Mediterranean, the historical legacy of the city of Almuñécar and the privilege of listening to music on a paradisiacal open stage watched over by the Arabic fortress of San Miguel and flanked by ancient Phoenician ruins make the Majuelo Park stage unique. On it have appeared figures of the stature of Paquito D'Rivera, Danilo Pérez, Rosa Passos, Branford Marsalis, Tete Montoliú, Kenny Barron, Joe Zawinul, Dave Holland, Chano Domínguez, Joshua Redman and Chucho Valdés, among many others.



A GYPSY SPELL

GRANADA

Flamenco Festival of El Albaicín: August.
www.turgranada.es

Granada is one of the main bastions of flamenco in Spain, and El Sacromonte is one of its cradles. This Gypsy neighbourhood is the epicentre of what experts call "jondura" and "duende" and is the birthplace of "la zambra", a flamenco song and dance fiesta that dates back to the sixteenth century, specifically to the nuptial rituals of the city's Moorish population.

El Sacromonte presents what is perhaps the quintessential image of flamenco: caves filled with people admiring the art of dancing, especially of "la zambra". Just a few metres from these caves is the La Chumbera Municipal Auditorium, which in addition to being the site of the International Centre of Gypsy Studies serves as the stage of "Patrimonio Flamenco" (Flamenco Heritage). The latter is a recital series that is held each year with the Alhambra as an incomparable backdrop.

Flamenco also has another and different face in El Albaicín, however, one dominated by such clubs as La Platería, the dean of all flamenco clubs in our country. In these clubs you can enjoy flamenco recitals to your heart's content. In addition, many recognised performers such as Juan Carmona or the Montoya clan gather in taverns such as that of Jaime el Parrón. The Flamenco Festival of El Albaicín, one of those most venerated by the people of Granada, is also held in this district in September at the end of the summer season.

In Loja, in the Western Granada region, an important flamenco gathering occurs in August: the festival known as "La Volaera Flamenca". Other festivals that ooze tradition in the art of "cante jondo" are that of Ogjares, near the provincial capital, and the one known as "Festival Flamenco Lucero del Alba" (Morning Star Flamenco Festival) that is held in August in Salobreña, on the Costa Tropical.



HISTORY AMONG CASTLE WALLS AND TOWERS

NIEBLA

"Festival de Teatro y Danza Castillo de Niebla": July and August.
www.aytoniebla.es

One of Huelva's most important festivals will be back for another year: the Niebla Castle Theatre and Dance Festival ("Festival de Teatro y Danza Castillo de Niebla"), which is celebrating its twenty-seventh anniversary. This festival is celebrated from early July until the last week in August at the famous Niebla Castle, also known as the Los Guzmanes Castle. This walled compound has its origins in the Roman era, but owes its present appearance to the Arabic period. It consists of five gates and forty towers, and contains such landmark structures as the San Martín Church, the former mosque of Santa María de la Granada and the castle itself. Niebla Castle has retained some features of the Arabic alcázar (fortified castle) but its present ground plan dates from the fifteenth century. At this time the castle has thematic galleries that recreate past eras, such as the "Cámara de la Condesa" (Countess' Chamber), the "Armería" (Armoury) and the dreaded "Mazmorras" (Dungeons), two underground levels displaying more than thirty torture instruments and machines.

The Castle's fortification towers also afford a panoramic view of the River Tinto and the city.

This year the festival will present a very full and entertaining programme, with very high quality productions in an idyllic setting of beautiful battlements, high towers and imposing castle walls. The festival will offer eight different productions, six of theatre and two of dance. This festival is of great importance to Huelva as it is considered one of the most outstanding of the summer season.



A LINK BETWEEN CULTURES

HUELVA

Huelva Ibero-American Film Festival: November.
www.festicinehuelva.com

The Huelva Ibero-American Film Festival has been held since 1974 in the city of Huelva and is devoted to Ibero-American cinema created in Spanish- and Portuguese-speaking countries in Europe and the Americas. Its main prize is known as the "Colón de Oro" (Golden Columbus). The festival's objectives include promoting Ibero-American cinema in Europe as well as defending and developing it. Its international projection makes it one of the city and province of Huelva's main cultural events.

559 films from eighteen countries were entered in the last fair, a record in the history of the competition as it had never reached that number although it had had more than 500 films entered in previous years.

The countries that are traditionally most represented are Spain, Mexico, Argentina and Brazil, but in recent years there has been increasing representation from the emerging cinematic industries of other Ibero-American countries and a growing trend of co-productions between European and Ibero-American countries.

Another of the competition's attractions is the facility where it is held: "Casa Colón" (Columbus House, the site of the Huelva Expositions and Congresses Palace), which is listed in the General Catalogue of Andalusian Historical Patrimony. This building, which originally served as a hotel for foreign businessmen who came to exploit the mines of Huelva, was constructed between 1881 and 1883.



FLAMENCO AT THE EDGE OF DOÑANA

MOGUER

"Festival de Cante Flamenco de Moguer": second Saturday in July.
www.moguer.es

The Moguer Flamenco Song Festival ("Festival de Cante Flamenco de Moguer") is, without any doubt, one of Andalusia's most serious and representative flamenco festivals for its format and its traditions and heritage. This fiesta, organised by the "Peña de Cante Jondo" Club of Moguer, has been celebrated on the second Saturday in July since 1975, and throughout those years great figures of "cante jondo" (a type of traditional Andalusian singing) have taken part in it, either new or established performers but always the most important of the moment.

The thirty-seventh festival bears the slogan "Y por fin Huelva..." (Huelva, at Last...). The intent is to project some of the province's great artistic potential, and to do that four of the best voices of Huelva at the moment will perform: "Pitingo", "Argentina", Guillermo Cano and Juan Hernández Tragachinas. The performances will be on the stage of the La Parrala booth at the fair-ground on 9 July, along with those by Niño de Pura, Juan Carmona Habichuela, José Quevedo, Eugenio Iglesia and José María de Lepe. María Canea will be responsible for the dancing during this flamenco night.

The beach of Mazagón has to be one of the greatest tourist attractions Moguer can offer. It is one of the few strips of seacoast in Spain that still retain a wild and rugged character, making it especially attractive for those seeking contact with nature. The Mazagón coastline is surrounded by numerous areas that are protected due to their ecological value. Doñana National Park, Las Marismas del Odiel (Marshes of the River Odiel Natural Area), Laguna de las Madres (Las Madres Lagoon), the estuary ("estero") of Domingo Rubio...natural paradises accessible by all.



AN ARTISTIC JUNCTION

BAEZA

"Semana Flamenca" in Baeza: mid-December.
www.baeza.net

In mid-December the Heritage of Humanity city of Baeza holds its "Semana Flamenca" (Flamenco Week), an initiative that encompasses a series of projects relating to flamenco culture that offer a different way to enjoy the Christmas festive season.

This Semana Flamenca's programme includes supplementary courses on dance and guitar accompaniment, both of a mid- to high-level and taught by professionals in the field to the participating student body, who may also enjoy other ancillary inducements such as a guided tour of the city's most representative localities and a fellowship dinner.

An instructional workshop, "Conocer el Flamenco" (Getting to Know Flamenco), is also offered. The "cherry on the cake", however, is provided by the performers who will present a flamenco recital on the stage of the Montemar Theatre. In the gala event the artists and course instructors delight the attending public with the marvels of flamenco song and dance, so deeply rooted in this Renaissance city.

This is a city that merits an unhurried visit. Baeza in its entirety is a splendid monumental complex of hushed streets and gilded stone, where art and history have left the most beautiful relics.



MELODIES FROM YESTERYEAR

ÚBEDA Y BAEZA

"Festival de Música Antigua de Úbeda y Baeza": mid-November.
www.festivalubedaybaeza.org

The Ancient Music Festival of Úbeda and Baeza ("Festival de Música Antigua de Úbeda y Baeza"), was born in 1997 with the idea of promoting the candidacy of both cities to be designated as Heritages of Humanity by UNESCO, which in 2003 recognised the cultural union and the important contributions of both cities toward introducing Renaissance ideas from Italy into Spain, as well as exporting its artistic postulates to Latin America. The festival has established itself as a cultural standard of reference in Andalusia and as one of the specialised festivals with the greatest projection on the entire continent, as evidenced by the winning of the Best Cultural Institution in Andalusia Award in 2005 and the festival's membership since May 2007 in the European Network of Ancient Music and since November 2008 in FestClásica (Spanish Classical Music Festival Association), which include the best European and Spanish ancient music festivals, respectively. Despite being united by their Renaissance spirits and the important roles they have played in the history and culture of central Jaén, Úbeda and Baeza have different personalities. Úbeda, the city of hills, directed its talents and interests toward the architecture of private life and the civil authority, while Baeza is a prime example of public and ecclesiastical architecture. Úbeda and Baeza's enormous artistic and architectural patrimony (palaces, aristocratic houses, churches and convents totalling more than one hundred structures) took shape during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. The festival makes use of this extensive array of premises.

The people who attend the festival enjoy the music in a unique setting, as the auditoriums chosen for the concerts are two clear examples of Spanish Renaissance architecture: The El Santiago Hospital in Úbeda and the San Francisco Ruins in Baeza.



THEATRE IN THE HEART OF NATURE

CAZORLA

International Theatre Festival of Cazorla: mid-October.
www.cazorla.es

The Cazorla Theatre Festival dates back to 1996, when five companies presented their performing arts projects in the recently remodelled La Merced Theatre. The contributions of El Centro Andaluz de Teatro (Andalusian Theatrical Centre) and the Andalusian Dance Company were particularly important. An intensive street theatre programme has evolved in parallel with the festival, and in 2004 it included seventeen companies from a variety of countries. The Cazorla festival has set as one of its primary objectives the creation of a quality supplementary offer for the thousands of visitors who come to Cazorla and the National Park each autumn. The foremost figures of the performing arts who have passed through Cazorla include Adolfo Marsillach, Tricicle, Lola Herrera, Nuria Espert, Rafael Álvarez "El Brujo", "Yllana", Berta Riaza, Agustín González, Awner, Juan Luis Galiardo, "La Troppa", Gonzalo Suárez, Jorge Sanz, Ur Teatro and many others.

This show is a standard of reference for many theatrical companies in Spain that aspire to participate or are proud of having participated in one of the events, as the Cazorla Theatre Festival is remarkable for the interest it has aroused among adults, children and young people who are attracted by these outstanding and innovative shows and by new forms of body, musical and circus language.

The street performances are a good pretext for a stroll through the locality, in whose streets you can visit the Palace House ("Casa Palacio") of Las Cadenas, constructed where El Santo Cristo Park begins. This mansion belonged to illustrious local families. You will find a fountain with the same name —"La Fuente de Las Cadenas"— that was built in the seventeenth century in honour of Felipe II. It is one of Cazorla's most representative landmarks, along with the sixteenth century church of Santa María.



A CINEMA CITY

MÁLAGA

"Festival de Málaga Cine Español": April or May.
www.festivaldemalaga.com

The Málaga Spanish Film Festival ("Festival de Málaga Cine Español") was born in 1998, and each year it has sought to accomplish a series of objectives. These include greater promotion and diffusion of the Spanish film industry, making the festival a national and international standard of reference in all manifestations of cinematography and contributing to the development of Málaga as an open and cultured city. The Málaga Festival, which this year will be held for the fifteenth time, contributes greatly to the evolution of the Spanish-language film industry, presenting its best full-length productions, documentaries, short films, etc., as well as paying homage to different industry personalities and organising series, expositions and parallel activities.

For a week stretching from April to May Málaga becomes the film capital of Spain. Expositions, master classes, meetings with the actors and directors, concerts and an endless number of activities bridge the gap between the public and the Spanish film industry, which introduces some of its new productions in a number of the Málaga capital's most important cultural centres, such as the theatre of Teatro Cervantes and the Picasso and Thyssen museums, among many others.

Aside from this extensive cinematic offer, the city is a rollicking place during these days with the festival hosting numerous activities relating to the Seventh Art and others intended for the entertainment of attendees and visitors.



A GREAT NATURAL AUDITORIUM

NERJA

"Festival de Música y Danza de la Cueva de Nerja": mid-July.
www.cuevadenerja.es

Nerja Cave was discovered by accident in 1959 by a group of boys from the village and opened to the public a year later. Ever since, the silence of centuries has been broken every summer by the now internationally famous Nerja Cave Music and Dance Festival ("Festival de Música y Danza de la Cueva de Nerja").

During the first Festival in 1960 the French group "La Tour de Paris" performed "Swan Lake", the great work of the Russian master Tchaikovsky.

This event had an international impact and ushered in a new cultural era on the Costa del Sol, as for the time in the history of dance a classical ballet work had been performed in the interior of the cave.

In the years since its discovery the cave has become one of the most important cultural and scientific attractions in southern Spain.

Figures of the stature of José Carreras, Ainhoa Arteta, Monserrat Caballé, Remedios Amaya, Joaquín Cortés, Antonio "El Bailarín", Antonio Canales and Joan Manuel Serrat, among many others, have appeared at the Nerja Cave Festival, which will be held for the fifty-second time this year. The foremost orchestras in the world have played there and performed ballet works of the greatest international renown.

Nerja Cave ("Cueva de Nerja"), known as the "Natural Cathedral of the Costa del Sol", lies some 750 metres from the coast on a knoll, about 200 metres above sea level and in the face of the Almirajara Mountains. The galleries and passages open to the public have an area of about 140,000 square metres and a maximum length of 700 metres. The greatest attraction is the huge column in the Cataclysm Hall ("Sala del Cataclismo") which is sixty metres high and eighteen metres around. Another cavity, the Nativity Hall ("Sala del Belén"), connects on its left with another hall, "El Colmillo del Elefante" (the Elephant Tusk). From there the passage descends until opening into a balconied gallery called the Cascade Room ("Sala de la Cascada") or Ballet Room, where the annual festival is held.



THE MAGIC OF FLAMENCO

ALHAURÍN DE LA TORRE

"Torre del Cante" Festival in Alhaurín de la Torre: late June.

www.alhaurin.com

"Castillo del Cante" Festival in Ojén: late July or early August.

www.ojen.es

It has been 38 years now since a group of flamenco enthusiasts decided to organise a festival in Alhaurín de la Torre in response to a passion that had lain dormant for many years. "Fosforito", "El Lebrijano", José Menese, "Chocolate", Calixto Sánchez and Barquerito de Fuengirola made up the programme of the first festival way back in 1974. Since then all the "cante grande" (traditional Andalusian singing) figures have appeared in Alhaurín de la Torre. "Camarón de la Isla", "Pansequito", Enrique Morente, "El Cabrero", "El Turroneiro", "El Sordera", Aurora Vargas, Manuel Agujetas and José Mercé are illustrious names on a long list that makes this festival a standard of reference in the world of flamenco.

In addition to the Alhaurín competition Málaga hosts another very renowned flamenco festival, one that has been held 37 times.

The Royal Burgh of Ojén, a beautiful town near Marbella, also becomes the Málaga capital of flamenco in summer thanks to the "Castillo del Cante" (Castle of "Cante"). It breathes the pure essence of flamenco, the fragrance of rosemary and orange blossoms, complemented each day by a lovingly decorated stage that is transformed into an Andalusian farmhouse, a Málaga courtyard...The festival is customarily held in the last week of July or the first of August, and such distinguished figures in the world of flamenco as the recently deceased Enrique Morente, "Camarón de la Isla", Juan Peña "El Lebrijano", "Chiquetete", "El Cabrero", Juanito Valderrama, Calixto Sánchez, Luis de Córdoba, Rafael Farina and "La Niña de la Puebla" have trod its stage.



MUSIC OF THE PEOPLES

SEVILLA

"Territorios Sevilla" Festival: late May.

www.territoriossevilla.com

"Territorios Sevilla", the International Music of the Peoples Festival, returns each spring with carefully selected groups in an emphatic celebration of multiculturalism. The fifteenth Territorios Sevilla Festival in late May presents about thirty concerts, concentrated in two nights.

Territory has been one of mankind's greatest obsessions since the first bite was taken from the apple...winning it, expanding it by a few more metres, adding the bordering lot. Seville declared peace and decided in 1998 to bring everyone together under a common denominator: music. Since that time, for several days in the capital of Seville everyone speaks the same language, one that knows no accents. Just musical notes, instrumental rhythms and applause from the more than 50,000 in attendance each year at Territorios Sevilla, which went from occupying two weekends on the city's calendar to two or three consecutive days, each devoted to a specific musical genre: rock, pop, hip-hop and the different musics of the world.

Territorios Sevilla has filled a vacuum in the city, as no attention was being paid to this type of music that rarely came to Seville except in the case of very specific concerts. This festival has become a standard of reference in southern Spain, along with "La Mar de Músicas" (Sea of Music) in Cartagena and "Womex" (World Music Expo).

And it is held in a unique setting: Seville's La Cartuja Monastery, the headquarters of the Andalusian Centre of Contemporary Art. The Centre's cultural offer is composed of temporary expositions, seminars, workshops, concerts, conferences and other events, and is supplemented by a tour of the landmark structure itself, which houses an important artistic and archaeological patrimony that is a product of its long history.



SEVILLE, THE CAPITAL OF EUROPE

SEVILLA

European Film Festival: early November.
www.festivaldesevilla.com

The European Film Festival ("Festival de Cine Europeo") of Seville has been held in the capital city of Seville since 2001. This is an event devoted specifically to contemporary European cinema. Its objective is to concentrate on disseminating European cinematic culture by means of dialogues between creative new faces and established figures and by welcoming and incorporating new platforms of expression. In this competition the jury, made up of renowned professionals, awards the Gold and Silver Giralddillo prizes and the Jury's Special Prize.

For the entire history of this festival the public has been able to attend screenings, before their distribution, of films of the calibre of "Caché", by Michael Haneke (winner of a prize at the Seville festival of 2005); "La Vida de los Otros" ("The Lives of Others"; that same year it won the Silver Giralddillo before winning an Oscar and recognition by the entire European cinema world); the excellent films by Fatih Akin (with a prize each, in different years, for "Contra la pared" ["Against the Wall"] and "Al Otro Lado" ["To The Other Side"]); the box office hits "Bienvenidos al Norte" ("Welcome to the North") and "Gomorra" (both receiving prizes in 2008); the screenings of the last films of Claude Chabrol or of the centenarian director Manoel de Oliveira, the tributes to screenwriters and directors and, in short, many moments devoted to the best cinema, such as during the last festival when "Lourdes" took away the Gold Giralddillo.

Seminars, conferences, examination of the status of cinema in Andalusia and ancillary activities round out this fascinating event, which has incorporated a number of interesting new features, such as the prize for novice directors in the "First Films First" section.



THE OLDEST FLAMENCO FIESTA

UTRERA

"Potaje Gitano de Utrera": late June.
www.potajegitano.com

On 15 May, 1957 a dinner given by a Brotherhood with stewed "frijones" (beans) as the main course was to be the germ of the first flamenco festival in Spain: the "Potaje Gitano de Utrera" ("Gypsy Stew of Utrera"). The Brotherhood of Los Gitanos (the Gypsies) came up with a simple banquet with which to celebrate the success of its first procession, an unpretentious festivity that concluded with singing by some of the voices that have written the history of flamenco: "Fernanda", "Bernarda", "Pepa de Utrera", "Perrate", "Manuel de Angustias", "Gaspar" and others.

That remarkable dinner was well remembered by the participants and the next year they asked that it be repeated. Today 1,500 people come to this unusual gathering that is held at the Los Salesianos School and which has served as a model for other competitions, such as "Gazpacho Andaluz" in Morón de la Frontera, "Festival Jondo" in Mairena del Alcor, "La Caracolá" in Lebrija and "La Reunión de Cante Jondo" in La Puebla de Cazalla.

Ever since its second year such important flamenco figures as Antonio Mairena, "El Torronero", "Pansequito", "La Niña de los Peines", Manolo Caracol, "Chocolate", Matilde Coral, "Farruco", "Terremoto", Manuela Carrasco, "Rancapino", "Bambino", José de la Tomasa, Chano Lobato, "Beni de Cádiz", "Camarón", "El Cabrero", "El Lebrijano", Esperanza Fernández and Miguel Poveda have taken part in Potaje Gitano.

Since 1961 each festival has been dedicated to some famous personage, sometimes and sometimes not connected to flamenco but always belonging to the artistic world. This group includes, to mention just a few, Antonio Mairena, Lola Flores, Curro Romero, "El Maestro" Solano, the Seville Deputation, "Lolita", Alejandro Sanz, Isabel Pantoja, "Raphael", Joaquín Cortés and the Rivera Ordóñez dynasty.



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THE CRADLE OF “EL INDALO”

VÉLEZ-BLANCO

Exhibitions Fair and Medieval Days: third week in July.

Santo Cristo de la Yedra Festivals: second week in August.

Town Hall: 950 614 800. www.velezblanco.es

The Almería municipality of Vélez Blanco, overlooking a broad valley in the Sierra de María-Los Vélez Natural Park, is one of the most extraordinary and picturesque urban centres in the region. It is characterised not only by rugged mountains, pine and Holm oak forests and spring waters but also by its cultural wealth. It has the distinction of having the greatest concentration of cave shelter paintings in eastern Spain. Especially remarkable is Cueva de los Letreros (Cave of the Signs, a National Historic Landmark and a Heritage of Humanity). It contains “El Indalo”, the cave painting that has become the symbol of Almería.

Its city centre has jealously preserved the urban layout inherited from the Arabic period, with narrow and winding streets, and is dominated by the impressive Los Fajardo castle-palace, a Renaissance jewel that has been designated a National Historic Landmark. Its urban configuration is characterised by a succession of terraced rows of traditional plastered dwellings with ochre roofs together with palatial houses, and with continuous changes of slope that have created a very homogenous and well preserved scenic environment. It also boasts such unusual buildings as the Santiago Apóstol Church, which shows features from various styles, the San Luís Convent and the Magdalena Church, among others. Its urban centre is a testament to the culture and development of the community and in 2002 was declared a Property of Cultural Interest with the classification of Historical Complex.

Its great natural and inherited wealth is encouraging the development of cultural and rural tourism, which is further stimulated by its inclusion in the Castles Route through Andalusia. “Tortas de aceite” (olive oil cakes) and esparto grass handicrafts are some of its notable local products.



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THE EASTERN GATEWAY TO ANDALUSIA

VÉLEZ RUBIO

Summer Fair and Fiestas: first week in August.

Día de los Inocentes (Day of the Innocent Ones): 28 December.

Town Hall: 950 614 015. www.veleznubio.org

Landscapes that range from the streambeds of “las ramblas” (seasonal watercourses) to plains and hills, and from there to cliffs and high elevations. In this setting at the foot of El Maimón lies the majestic locality of Vélez Rubio, the seat of the Almería region of Los Vélez.

The Romans settled in this cradle of Bronze and Copper Age cultures, taking advantage of the fact that the route linking Carthage and Cástulo passed through here.

Its greatest splendour and economic growth would come in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, coinciding with the creation of its most representative architectural features which are characterised by the variety of styles. Of particular interest in this locality is the architecture of dwellings and aristocratic buildings, which display different styles ranging from lordly Baroque-influenced mansions with imposing façades and wrought iron balconies and windows to modernist or historicist dwellings with cheerful colours and showy decorations.

Vélez-Rubio's heritage is seen to be even more vast when one considers the archaeological sites and traces of past civilisations that it contains, in addition to the religious structures. Notable examples of the former include the Neolithic site of Cerro de los López and the ruins of the Islamic fortress of Cerro del Castellón, where remains of an alcazaba (fortified compound) and an interior cistern have been preserved.

The eighteenth century church of La Encarnación, designated as a National Landmark in 1982, is the finest specimen of the Baroque religious style in Almería. It is remarkable for its ornamented façade, which was modelled on a retablo (altarpiece) and is crowned by two tall square towers, and for its interior altarpiece with Rococo motifs.



JOURNEY TO THE CENTRE OF THE EARTH

SORBAS

San Roque Fiestas: mid-August.

Tourist Office: 950 364 476 - Karst de Yeso.

Information and reservations: 950 364 704. www.sorbas.es

Jules Verne would envy you if he knew you were preparing a trip to the centre of the earth. This dream can come true in Sorbas, a municipality perched on a 40-metre tableland and surrounded by a ravine called Afa that was dug out by the seasonal streams of Moras and Cucador.

The moment you arrive in the village you will be amazed at the sight along the road of a row of houses hanging over the gorge of the River Aguas, and at the contrast between the Arabic layout of the village and such Christian buildings as the church of Santa María—built on the site of the former mosque—and the houses of the Duke of Valoig and the Duke of Alba. Don't fail to take in the views the village affords from its scenic vantage points such as El Porche, El Castillo and El Calvario. From the highest overlooks, those of La Torreta and La Huerta, you will have an incredible view of the village and its surroundings.

After you have enjoyed the village, get ready for the journey that Verne dreamed of: a visit to the natural area of Karst de Yeso, where you can go on a guided tour of the columns, stalactites and stalagmites of crystalline gypsum that cast a brilliant white glow in the darkness. This caprice of nature has an area of 2,357 hectares, in which more than 1,000 cave entrances have been counted. Its characteristics cause it to be considered one of the best examples of gypsum karst in the world. The most interesting caves are El Agua, with eight kilometres for touring, and La Covadura, which is 120 metres deep.



A WATCHTOWER ON THE ATLANTIC

VEJER DE LA FRONTERA

Flamenco Night: 21 August.

Spring Fair: mid-April.

Tourist Office: 956 451 620. www.vejerdelafrontera.es

Vejer de la Frontera stands on a headland that provides a lookout point over the Atlantic Ocean. Its proximity to the ocean means that it boasts within its municipal boundaries or the surrounding area some of the best and most unspoiled beaches in Spain, such as El Palmar, Los Caños de Meca, Conil, Zahara de los Atunes and Bolonia, as well as intriguing natural areas such as La Breña y Marismas del Barbate Natural Park.

Vejer was under Muslim rule for five and a half centuries and was enriched by the splendid Arabic-Islamic culture. Some traces of it still remain, such as the castle gate that has been dated to the eleventh century, part of its city walls and, naturally, the configuration of its steep white streets. One of its most significant landmarks is the castle, located at the highest part of the walled compound. It is noteworthy for its main gate, which dates from the eleventh century and consists of a horseshoe arch framed by a Moorish alfiz (architectonic adornment). It provides access to the main courtyard and the parade ground, whose battlements afford truly breathtaking views. Examples of fifteenth and sixteenth century architecture include the Renaissance-style La Concepción Convent Church and the parish church of El Divino Salvador, which is of Gothic-Mudéjar style and was built over the site of a former mosque. The sanctuary of Nuestra Señora de la Oliva (Our Lady of the Olive) is five kilometres from the village. It houses the image of the Patron Saint of Vejer and its origins go back to the seventh century, when a Visigoth basilica was built that took advantage of the existence at that place of a Roman villa.

Windmills are one of the most widely recognised features of the landscape and one of the images most associated with it. The first windmills in Vejer date back to the 1830's and the arrival of the Liberal Regime. It was the Duke of Medina who built the first two mills, in the area known as Buenavista.



IBERIAN AND ROMAN ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITES

ESPERA

Cristo de la Antigua Fiestas: first Sunday in September.

El Pavo Marathon: 6 January.

Town Hall: 956 720 011. www.espera.es

Espera forms a part of the famous White Villages of Cádiz Route and lies next to the hill of Fatetar. The Muslim Conquest meant the complete destruction of the Romans' Carissa Aurelia and the establishment of the new inhabitants around a new defensive compound, the Fatetar Castle, which was built on the orders of Abderramán III and has been declared a Property of Cultural Interest. In the reign of Fernando III Espera passed into Christian hands and served as a frontier fortress until the fall of the Kingdom of Granada.

Espera possesses such extremely interesting archaeological sites as the Roman ruins of Carissa Aurelia, some seven kilometres from the village. The site is made up of a large necropolis that encircles the city and a walled urban compound whose remains for the most part have yet to be uncovered. The Iberian settlement of Esperilla, an Ibero-Roman city some five kilometres from the municipality, is also in this area. The most remarkable thing about the city of Esperilla is the large number of sculptures that have been discovered there over the years, nearly always as a result of agricultural activity. These sculptures are mainly of lions that were apparently placed over tombs to defend the inviolability of the grave and the final rest of the deceased and to protect the integrity of the tomb furnishings.

A trip to Espera offers the opportunity to explore a number of very interesting monumental buildings such as the Santa María de Gracia church with the magnificent altarpiece by the painter Pablo Legot at its main altar; the hermitage Ermita de Santiago, the only part of Fatetar Castle that has been fully preserved due to its use as a church since the thirteenth century and as a hermitage since the seventeenth, and El Molino de los Diezmos (Mill of the Tithes), a typically Andalusian building from the eighteenth century.



HILLTOP BEAUTY

ARCOS DE LA FRONTERA

Belén Viviente (Living Bethlehem): Christmas.

Toro del Aleluya: late April.

Tourist Office: 956 702 264. www.arcosdelafrontera.es

Arcos de la Frontera is one of the most notable examples of high emplacement (160 metres) and covers the summit and slopes of the Peña Vieja rock on the right bank of the River Guadalete. It is key that opens the White Villages route and is surrounded by neighbouring localities such as Espera, Bornos, El Bosque, Benaocaz and Ubrique.

It has a Historical and Artistic Complex that was so designated in 1962. Its boundaries are the ancient city wall and it is defined as whatever has been preserved of it. There are also two other designated historical and artistic landmarks: the basilica of Santa María de la Asunción and the organ in that same basilica.

We should also not forget the decisive configuration of Arcos in the Muslim era, the layout of its streets, the Alcázar (military castle), the city walls, the mills, etc., or the period when it even came to be a Taifa kingdom, or the complicated Castilian narrative, aided by its privileges that are still preserved in the extensive municipal archives, when the town overflowed its walls and the creation of churches and installation of religious orders reached its zenith between the fifteenth and eighteenth centuries. The tour of landmarks ends at El Cabildo (Town Hall) Plaza, where are located the basilica of Santa María de la Asunción, the castle of the Dukes of Arcos and the marvellous balcony over the River Guadalete, a site for an obligatory snapshot by any visitor.

Arcos' strategic location has made it the starting point for several of the province's most attractive tourist routes. Some of the most outstanding are the River Road (Camino del Río) and the Roman Road (Camino Romano), along with the rural roads that link Las Huertas de Benamahoma with Zahara de la Sierra.



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THE ROUTE OF THE SHIELDS

Dos Torres

Domingo de Loreto: first weekend in May.

San Isidro: weekend closest to 15 May.

Town Hall: 957 134 001. www.dostorres.es

Dos Torres, a Historical Complex since 2003, lies in the Los Pedroches region. The origins of Dos Torres date back to the late Middle Ages, when the two royal burghs sprang up that would lead to the formation of the present municipality: Torremilano and Torrefranca. It was in December 1839 that General Espartero issued the decree merging them into a single municipality with the name of Dos Torres.

An aristocratic and royal burgh, it displays numerous proofs of its important heritage, such as the imposing parish church of La Asunción, a temple of Gothic origins with Renaissance and Baroque alterations. Other examples are the Santiago Apóstol church and the five hermitages in the town, most notably that of Nuestra Señora de Loreto from the sixteenth century. Los Soportales (formerly a jail) on the Plaza Mayor stands out among the secular buildings. Its construction has nothing in common with anything else in the region and resembles Castilian architecture.

The essence of the place is to be found, however, in its distinctive central urban district. It is packed with charming traditional architecture noteworthy for the portals and heraldic shields that adorn the façades of its aristocratic houses and which have led to the creation of the Route of the Shields (Ruta de los Escudos). While strolling through Dos Torres you will alternate between the past and present as though in a fairytale as you learn about its history and people and enjoy its ample cultural, natural and gastronomic heritage.

Dos Torres will also astonish the visitor with the pleasures of its exquisite Iberian products, with the Iberian hog playing the lead role. Nor should you overlook its garden products such as beautiful flowers and the locality's homemade sweets: "roscos", "perrunas", "hornazos" and "piñonate". You are sure to find both activity and relaxation here and in the surrounding area. The municipality boasts natural areas of great importance to hunters, as well as Holm oak forests and the Cañada Real Soriana (Drovers' Trail) that crosses this beautiful area.



Conjuntos Históricos de Andalucía. Red Patrimonia – Susana Glez.

CITY OF CONTRASTS

Montoro

Holy Week: 1 to 8 April

Virgen del Rosario (Virgin of the Rosary) Fair: 7 to 12 October.

Town Hall: 957 160 425. www.montoro.es

Between the Guadalquivir Valley and La Campiña, at the foot of the Sierra Morena Mountains, lies Montoro. It is a city of contrasts, with prehistoric origins and a present that incorporates modernity. The first prehistoric settlements in this municipality date back to the Middle Palaeolithic Period, and the existence is known of an Iberian nucleus in the Late Bronze Age. There were Phoenicians, Greeks and Carthaginians in ancient Epura (Montoro). It achieved greater splendour, however, under the Romans, who accorded it the status of "civitas" of the Baetica region along with Gades, thus demonstrating the importance of this population centre along the Via Augusta.

Montoro stands like a white balcony over the Guadalquivir, imbued with a reddish hue by the "molinaza" stone of its most notable buildings and cloaked by the surrounding olive groves. Its residents are expert leather workers, master blacksmiths and beekeepers. Its Holy Week deserves special mention as it was declared of National Tourist Interest and has a museum devoted to it in the Santiago Church.

In its central urban area marvellously beautiful defensive towers of molinaza stone stand amid Baroque balconies draped with showy flowers. The Plaza de España is the nerve centre of Montoro. The scene there is dominated by the Casa Consistorial (Town Hall), formerly the ducal palace of the House of Alba. The locality's most iconic buildings include the Santa María de la Mota Church, which houses the Archaeological Museum; the parish church of San Bartolomé, with its Plateresque tower and façade; the churches of San Sebastián de Santiago and Nuestra Señora del Carmen and the Baroque-style Jesús Nazareno Hospital, as well as the central fountain that was set up about 1893 to commemorate the arrival of potable water from La Onza.

The extraordinary charm of its central urban district earned it the designation of Historical Complex in 1969.



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BAROQUE AND LORDLY

BUJALANCE

Feria Real (Royal Fair): mid-September.

Holy Week: 1 through 8 April.

Town Hall: 957 170 080. www.aytobujalance.es

The Cordoban municipality of Bujalance, in the very heart of Andalusia, is characterised by its traditional rural environment, its farmhouses and its archaeological remains from the Iberian, Roman and Visigoth eras. All about lies a landscape dominated by olive groves, with priceless gifts of nature. Bujalance has been occupied since the Metals Age, but it was during the Roman era that settlements developed in the region due to the laying out of roads. According to historians the final act of the war between Caesar and Pompey was played out in this locality. In the tenth century the castle-fortress of Bury al-Hansh (Tower of the Serpent) was built to watch over the entrances to the region, and the present name derives from this place name.

Its urban centre clearly shows its Arabic heritage and is dotted by numerous Andalusian Baroque landmarks. It was declared a Historical Complex in 1983. The visitor will delight in its many aristocratic houses from the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, an age of economic splendour deriving from a flourishing textile industry.

Its buildings of greatest historical interest include the Nuestra Señora de la Asunción Church, with its imposing Baroque tower that has been declared a Property of Cultural Interest. Popularly known as "The Asparagus", it is 55 metres tall and of brick and red "molina" stone construction. While it is the tallest tower in the province, it is more remarkable for leaning about a metre and a half off-centre due to an error in its construction that emulates the Tower of Pisa in Italy. The Castillo-Alcázar (Castle-Fortress) from the age of Abd-al-Rahman III is also a Historic Landmark, as is the parish church of San Francisco, a true Baroque gem like many of the aristocratic houses.



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SARAMAGO'S REFUGE

CASTRIL DE LA PEÑA

August Fair: mid-August.

Virgen de los Dolores Fiestas: first weekend in October.

Town Hall: 958 720 001. www.ayuntamientodecastril.es

Castril de la Peña, in the northern part of the Province of Granada and deep in the Castril Mountains, lies on the slopes of the massive rock that gives it its name. It is a National Landmark that preserves traces of a medieval fortress. The mountain range, characterised by its abrupt relief and abundance of flowing streams, contains such chasms as Cueva del Muerto (Cave of the Dead Man) and Cueva de Don Fernando, the deepest in the province. The River Castril, however, crossing from north to south, offers the best opportunities for viewing beautiful scenery. One such is the trail that begins at the very centre of the village and leads to the spectacular gorge of La Cerrada.

This was a frontier enclave from the mid-thirteenth century until the fall of Granada, and passed repeatedly between Arabic and Christian hands. Castril's Arabic heritage is faithfully reflected in its two villas and the entrance arch to them, in its castle and the little plaza of El Cantón and in the enchantment of its narrow whitewashed streets and traditional houses, whose enviable state of preservation has earned the classification of Historical and Artistic Complex.

Standing out over its narrow streets are the sixteenth century Virgen de los Ángeles Church and the modern headquarters of the José Saramago Foundation, a cultural powerhouse of the province that promotes exhibitions, festivals and, above all, the preservation of the ethical legacy of the Nobel Prize winner José Saramago. He was married to the journalist Pilar del Río, a native of Castril.

One of this locality's greatest traditions is glass manufacturing, and the José Saramago Foundation has launched the Andalusian Glass Centre in order to revive this tradition and diffuse glass art and culture, which dates back to the kingdom of the Catholic Monarchs.



THE REIGN OF SILENCE

BUBIÓN

Moors and Christians Festival: penultimate weekend in August.
 San Sebastián and San Antón Fiesta: mid-January.
 Town Hall: 958 763 032. www.bubion.org

The municipality of Bubión nestles in the heart of the Alpujarras region and hangs over Poqueira Gorge, which comes down from Veleta Peak in the Sierra Nevada Mountains. It has been designated as a Historical and Artistic Complex, along with the nearby communities of Pampaneira and Capileira. Its architecture is typical of Berber towns, a landscape of steep streets and terraced dwellings with flat slate roofs, well adapted to the rugged terrain. The Villa Turística is the finest example of rural tourism. From this dwelling, built by the Assembly of Andalusia, visitors can set out on excursions by foot, horseback or all-terrain vehicle. Its orientation towards the Mediterranean Sea insures that, even in winter, the temperatures are mild.

Its Moorish architecture, the purity and tranquillity of its environment and its pleasant Mediterranean climate have made Bubión a refuge for those seeking an alternative lifestyle.

Bubión may date back to the Roman era, since in the nineteenth century burial remains were found from that civilisation. Nevertheless, it was under the Arabs that it achieved greater importance. During the Moorish Uprising the residents took the side of the rebel strongman Fernando de Válor, "Abén Humeya", but they were defeated by John of Austria. Most of the Moors were expelled and the village had to be repopulated with colonists from other Spanish kingdoms.

In a village whose greatest gift is silence, only slightly broken by the babble of water that flows abundantly in fountains and troughs, any street will draw you into a maze of steep and narrow passageways. This is especially true in the southern part of its central urban district where you will also find an assortment of noteworthy buildings to visit, such as the sixteenth century Nuestra Señora del Rosario Church, of Mudéjar style with a bell tower rising over the ruins of a Nasrid fortification. The Casa Alpujarreña (Alpujarras House) stands next to the Town Hall. It is a typical regional structure that now serves as the ethnographic museum.



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ALPUJARRAN BEAUTY

PAMPANEIRA

El Entierro de la Zorra (Burial of the Fox): May and August.
 Feria de Artesanía (Handicrafts Fair): around 12 October.
 Town Hall: 958 763 001. www.pampaneira.es

Pampaneira is the lowest-lying of the three terraced communities making up El Barranco de Poqueira, in the Alpujarras region of Granada. This locality is noteworthy for its extraordinary architecture, which preserves the Alpujarras tradition of flat-roofed white houses with mushroom-shaped chimneys and the distinctive "tinaos" (a type of portico). It is also known for the value and variety of its handicrafts, ranging from ceramics of all types to fabrics such as the traditional thick "jarapa".

Its fountains also deserve special mention. Some provide mineral and medicinal waters and others, such as the Chumpaneira Fountain, even have "matchmaking powers". As you can read on the mural over the trough's three spouts, "This is a fountain of virtue and such is its power that any unmarried man who drinks with the intention of marrying will not fail, as he will instantly have a sweetheart. You'll see!"

Each autumn this locality holds a handicraft, agricultural and tourism fair that is considered the most complete of its kind in the entire region. Gastronomic products are also included, mainly Moorish pastries and pork derivatives. Pampaneira's origin dates to the Roman era, but its urban configuration and architecture are clearly Berber. The sixteenth century parish church of Santa Cruz, remarkable for its beautiful Mudéjar coffered ceiling and Baroque features, stands out amidst its mazelike network of streets. Along with Bubión and Capileira, it was declared a Historical and Artistic Complex in 1982. It received the first Village Beautification prize and has twice been awarded the National Tourism Prize.



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AN OPEN BORDER

ALMONASTER LA REAL

Cruces de Mayo (May Crosses): early May. **Romería de Santa Eulalia (Pilgrimage):** around the third Saturday in May.
Town Hall: 959 143 003. www.almonasterlareal.es

Almonaster la Real embodies the mixture inherent in the cultural tradition of Western Europe. It looms into view crowned by a Caliphate-era fortress of which only traces remain, but which preserves in its interior the best vestiges of a rural mosque remaining on the Peninsula. Inside the mosque Roman and Visigoth decorative relics were put to new use under the elegant Omeyyan imprimatur. History played out as a true cultural melting pot within its walls and in the sixteenth century, after assorted transformations, it came to be known as the La Concepción Hermitage.

Almonaster boasts numerous historic landmarks such as the San Martín Church, a splendid specimen of the mixture of Gothic, Mudéjar and Manuelino styles, as well as the Santa Eulalia Hermitage, which incorporates ruins of a first century Roman funerary tower and fifteenth century mural frescos and gives its name to a popular pilgrimage that is held in May.

These buildings together with the El Concejo Fountain and the Tenerías (Tanneries) building, among others, and the beauty of its Islamic-rooted urban configuration, have earned it the classification of Historical Complex. At the present time culture continues to be paramount in Almonaster, which hosts the internationally renowned Islamic Cultural Fair each October when music, conferences and theatrical presentations expose the visitor to other ways of life.

You will also discover a multitude of trails that will lead you into the very heart of the Sierra de Aracena y Picos de Aroche Natural Park. When you stop to rest you can enjoy flavourful and fortifying mountain-style dishes and delicious liqueurs, not to mention those mountain delicacies: ham and mushrooms, never better than when served in a welcoming shelter provided for your rest.



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ROMAN LEGACY

AROCHO

Romería de San Mamés (Pilgrimage): late May.
August Fair: third or fourth week in August.
Town Hall: 959 140 201. www.aytoarchoe.es

Aroche, a majestic community with more than five millennia of history, has Celtic roots and is crowned by an Islamic castle. It nestles within the Sierra de Aracena y Picos de Aroche Natural Park and its scenic beauty is supplemented by the Las Peñas y Sierra Pelada and the Rivera del Aserrador Natural Areas.

Its wealth of fascinating ancient history, with such legacies in its urban centre as numerous aristocratic houses, an Islamic castle, the Nuestra Señora de la Asunción Church and the seventeenth century artillery wall, led to its designation in 1980 as a Historical Complex. Of particular note is the Turóbriga archaeological site, an imposing complex that is the only Roman-era site open to visitors in the Province of Huelva. It represents the culmination of a generalised process of occupation and control of one sector of the territory known as Celtic Baetica.

The various leisure options available to visitors to Aroche include local fiestas, hiking the trails through the park and natural areas, engaging in other outdoor sports, or observing ecologically important plant and animal species such as the cinereous vulture, the black stork or a number of varieties of orchids.



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THE ARABIC PEARL

ZUFRE

Romería Nuestra Señora del Puerto (Pilgrimage): first Sunday in August and third Sunday in September.

Las Candelas (The Candles) Night: 7 December.

Town Hall: 959 198 227. www.mancomunidadribera.com

Zufre, also known as “The Arabic Pearl”, occupies one of the highest points in the Sierra de Aracena y Picos de Aroche Natural Park, surrounded by fine forests of Holm and cork oaks, game-filled hunting preserves and the famous reservoir that bears its name. Zufre, however, is also a village drenched in history, with numerous Neolithic sites such as the more than forty dolmens within its municipal boundaries. Its Arabic heritage is evident in its network of narrow and winding streets and in the ruins of the Almohad wall that in olden times encircled Zufre.

The village’s entire historical district, which is characterised by lime-plastered and red-roofed houses adorned with flowers and with cobblestone pavements called “llanos” at their doors, took shape basically between the twelfth and eighteenth centuries, and in 2002 it received the designation of Historical Complex.

The Purísima Concepción Parish Church, erected in the sixteenth century on the site of a former Gothic-Mudéjar temple, has been declared a National Historic Landmark. Adjacent to it the El Concejo Fountain and the Town Hall, which dates from 1510, look out over the marvellous La Iglesia Plaza. The hermitage of Nuestra Señora del Puerto (Our Lady of the Port), also in that vicinity, is the scene of the popular pilgrimage and fiestas of the same name. There is a balcony around the bullring that affords spectacular views of the mountains and reservoir and is a good place to enjoy the exquisite local dishes, seasoned with ecologically friendly olive oil produced in the region. During the Olive Oil Fair in February you can sample this oil produced by ecologically sound methods and participate in cultural activities that explain the benefits of this product.

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MILLENNIA-OLD ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITES

VILCHES

Romería Nuestra Señora del Castillo (Pilgrimage): 14 and 15 August. Los Mesones Fiesta: second week in May.

Town Hall: 953 630 075. www.vilches.com

Vilches is a small community in the foothills of the Sierra Morena Mountains of Jaén. It is the location of millennia-old settlements, bandit routes and sites of battles that decided the course of history.

More than a hundred archaeological sites have been inventoried within its municipal boundaries. The Santagón site is from the Copper Age. During the Bronze Age developments in metallurgy made possible small settlements, some of them fortified, such as Cañada de Malabrigo, Giribaile and Cerro del Salto.

The community of Giribaile achieved great importance beginning in the seventh century BC since it controlled a large part of the surrounding mining district as well as the roads and natural passes. Another important site from this period is Cuevas de Espeluca (Espeluca Caves), according to tradition an Iberian sanctuary.

These days the first thing one notices of its silhouette on the mountain slope is the ruins of the Arabic castle, which dates from the era that present day Vilches was established and began to thrive. After the Battle of Las Navas de Tolosa it was converted to a sanctuary, the present-day Virgen del Castillo Hermitage. Beginning at that location on the hill of Cerro de la Virgen and descending by the La Canaleja road you will find more than fifteen picturesque cave houses.

Vilches belonged to Al-Ándalus from the eighth century until the thirteenth and acquired the character of a typical Muslim city, as can still be seen in its irregular urban layout. In its historic urban centre the San Miguel Arcángel Church, a former fifteenth century hermitage, preserves assorted trophies captured in the Battle of Las Navas de Tolosa.

Its landscape offers extremely interesting wetlands and natural areas with abundant game and fish, and you can also engage in various water sports in them. You should also remember you can ride on horseback among fighting bulls, go on 4x4 excursions or hike the Cañada Real drovers’ trail.



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THE WATCHTOWER OF THE SIERRA MORENA MOUNTAINS

BAÑOS DE LA ENCINA

Los Esclavos Fiesta: 18, 19 and 20 September.

Cristo del Llano and Virgen de la Encina Fiesta: second Sunday in May.

Tourist Office: 953 613 229. www.bdelaencina.com

Baños de la Encina is an eternal watchtower that for 4,000 years has scanned the horizon of the Sierra Morena Mountains. It is built of stone and mortar and has medieval districts that, squeezed against the defensive wall known as Cerco de los Corvera, have etched its history in stone. The imposing Burch al-Hamman Castle looms like a colossus, displaying in its interior the stonework of the various stages of its history: Bronze Age, Iberian, Roman and Almohad. This royal burgh was declared a Historical and Artistic Complex in 1969 and is one big maze of stone streets with monumental buildings that stand as witness to its history. The parish church of San Mateo stands as the portal to an immense religious heritage of which the hermitage of El Cristo del Llano and the Virgen de la Encina Sanctuary are examples.

The Santo Cristo windmill, displaying a cultural affinity with La Mancha, has opened its doors to "air its history" in an exposition by experts in the field. The Peñalosa archaeological site, lapped by the waters of the Rumbiar, speaks to us of the first miners in prehistoric Europe. Through the course of the years this activity dotted the mountain landscape with such remarkable archaeological sites as the Ibero-Roman oppidum of Salas Galiarda, and reached its zenith in the nineteenth century English mining community of El Centenillo. Like a liquid belt the Rumbiar Reservoir wraps around Dehesa del Santo Cristo, a landmark of natural history filled with archaeological, ethnographic and geological sites that can be explored along various marked trails that lead into Sierra de Andújar Natural Park.

Fiestas with historical roots showplace a gastronomy characterised by virgin olive oil and game, ever-present in "conejo al ajillo" (rabbit with garlic), "cucharro" and "ciervo a la bañusca" (a venison dish).



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UNUSUAL FOLKLORE

ARQUILLOS

Inmaculada Concepción Fiestas: 7, 8 and 9 December.

Fiesta San Antón: 16 January.

Town Hall: 956 633 00. www.arquillos.es

Arquillos lies in the southwestern part of the Linares region. Within its boundaries cultivated areas, especially olive groves, alternate with lands devoted to grazing and small game. The mountainous region contains such very attractive natural areas as those adjacent to the reservoirs of Guadalén and Giribaile. It borders the municipalities of Vilches, Navas de San Juan and Sabiote. As for its historical and artistic heritage, mention should be made of the Inmaculada Concepción Church, built in 1769 following the established model of the other churches from the colonisation era, and also the Torre del Reloj (Clock Tower), built in the eighteenth century. In those days the church bells sounded the hour and it was rather unusual to erect a municipal tower for the only purpose of telling the time. It symbolises the confrontation between the civil and ecclesiastical powers that was going on during the reign of Carlos III.

Another good place to visit is the hamlet of El Porrosillo six kilometres from Arquillos. It was also founded in the eighteenth century and its streets have preserved the right-angle configuration of the colonial era. It is noteworthy for its hermitage.

Once you have seen this charming hamlet you can relax at the Las Peralejas recreational area next to the waters of the River Guadalén. Devotees of hunting (for boar, hare and partridge), fishing and trail walking will find in this enclave a splendid opportunity for enjoying their sports.

The area's traditions are another of its attractions, one example being the San Antón Fiesta and its unusual character "El Pelotero", one of the jewels of the folklore of the Province of Jaén.

Garbed in outlandish attire, he lashes at young and old alike with a whip to whose tip has been tied a traditional sandal known as an "alpargata". El Pelotero is a burlesque representation of the devil and his presence at the festival is a reminder of the temptations to which Saint Anthony (San Antón) was subjected in the desert.



THE CLIFF CITY

RONDA

Pedro Romero Fairs and Fiestas: September.

Holy Week: 1 to 8 April.

Tourist Office: 952 187 119. www.turismoderonda.es

Ronda is one of the most ancient cities in Spain. Its origins are in the Neolithic Age but the presence of man in this region goes back much farther than that. A series of archaeological sites in caves are sufficient proof of this. One particularly important site is the La Pileta Cave, one of the finest examples of Palaeolithic Andalusian cave art.

Numerous traces of the Roman occupation remain, including those discovered within the city of Ronda itself. Without any doubt, however, the most important archaeological site is the Roman city of Acinipo due to its state of preservation and to having some of the most iconic features of a classical city, such as the theatre.

With the conquest of Ronda by the Catholic Monarchs in 1485 came profound cultural and economic transformations that are still to be seen in the physiognomy of its urban structure and in such surviving construction as the Casa del Gigante (House of the Giant, of Nasrid origins) and the Moctezuma Palace, which today is the site of the Joaquín Peinado Museum.

It was during the eighteenth century, however, that the pattern was set for the role that Ronda was to play in the modern age in the context of Andalusia. That is the era when the landmark structures were erected that are the most important and iconic symbols of the aristocracy of that day and of modern Ronda: the Puente Nuevo (New Bridge) over its famed cliff (El Tajo), and the Plaza de Toros (Bullring).

Beginning at that time, and throughout the nineteenth century, the romantic image of the city and its surrounding mountains was forged, with the world of banditry and bullfighting profoundly impressing many renowned romantic travellers such as the author Rainer María Rilke, who wrote "Ronda, the Dreamed-of City".



CITY OF ART

ANTEQUERA

Royal Fair (Real Feria) of August: August.

Holy Week: 8 to 12 April.

Town Hall: 952 708 108. www.antequera.es

Antequera, the crossroads of Andalusia, has been an obligatory stop for travellers throughout the ages. Its strategic location has led to it being called the "heart of Andalusia". When visiting Antequera you may be astonished at Bronze Age ruins such as the Dolmens of Menga, Viera and El Romeral, or at the Roman, Visigoth and Muslim ruins, not to mention the most beautiful reminders of the Renaissance and Baroque periods.

Its origin goes far back in history. On the limestone ridge where the city's Arabic castle sits there was once a fortified Iberian settlement that later became the Roman Antikaria. Antequera began to gain importance as a military frontier fortress in the mid-thirteenth century with the conquest of Seville and Jaén. The Castilian monarchs realised that it was the key to the kingdom of Granada and attempted to conquer it. It was to be the Crown Prince, "Fernando of Antequera", who finally captured it once and for all on 16 September, 1410.

Beginning then, and especially in the sixteenth century, Antequera progressively accumulated an enormously wealthy patrimony. During this period were built the parish churches of San Sebastián; San Juan Bautista y San Pedro; San Isidro and Santa María de la Esperanza, as well as the convents of San Zoilo, San Agustín, El Carmen and La Encarnación. Important secular structures also began to appear, including Arco de los Gigantes (Arch of the Giants), the Temple (Pavilion) of El Papabellotas Castle and the Casa del Cabildo (Town Hall) on Plaza Alta. One of the most iconic landmarks of Baroque Antequera was erected between the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries: the Tower (Torre) of the San Sebastián Collegiate Church.

You can also visit such splendid outdoor locations as La Vega, the El Chorro Reservoir and the Paraje Natural (Natural Area) of El Torcal.



THE LIGHT OF ANDALUSIA

FRIGILIANA

Tres Culturas (Three Cultures) Festival: last weekend in August.
San Antonio Fair: 13 June.

Tourist Office: 952 534 261. www.frigiliana.es

The royal burgh (villa) of Frigiliana juts out over the Mediterranean in the easternmost part of the Axarquía region, in the Sierras de Almijara, Tejeda y Alhama Natural Park. At three hundred metres above sea level and with its own subtropical microclimate, its much-praised and award-winning Moorish historical district rises as though awakening from its past. Its steep, narrow and winding streets; its alleyways, redoubts and footpaths atop fortification walls form a distinctive urban plan of small whitewashed houses seemingly scrambling over one another. Many have described this layout as the purest traditional Arabic architectural complex in the Province of Málaga. The official recognitions it has earned include the National Prize for Spanish Village Beautification.

At its entrance “El Ingenio” (the Sugar Mill) extends an imposing welcome. This building was constructed in the late sixteenth century as an aristocratic manor. It is of Renaissance style and is noteworthy for the worked stone in its portals that came, together with other materials such as balconies, gratings and sundials, from the destroyed Arabic castle. At the present time it houses the only sugar cane syrup factory in Europe as well as an olive oil mill where the pressing is still done almost by hand.

The Old Fountain (Fuente Vieja), the Ecce Homo Hermitage, the Royal Granaries (Reales Pósitos) and the Torreón (Tower) are a few other landmarks you will find on your stroll through Frigiliana’s historical district.

Frigiliana holds the Tres Culturas (Three Cultures) Festival during the last weekend in August, transforming itself into a venue for meetings and fellowship between the Arabic, Jewish and Christian cultures. The festival features musical performances, conferences, expositions, gastronomic symposiums and a demonstration of popular cuisine along the already very successful Tapas Route between different bars in the village.



A STOP IN THE SIERRA NORTE

CAZALLA DE LA SIERRA

Romería Nuestra Señora del Monte (Pilgrimage): second Sunday in August. Sierra Morena de Títeres Festival (Puppet Festival): late August. Town Hall: 954 884 236. www.cazalladelasierra.es

Cazalla de la Sierra lies within the Sierra Norte de Sevilla Natural Park, the habitat of numerous endangered species, and is crisscrossed by a substantial network of trails. In addition to this important natural resource this municipality has managed to preserve intact the main urban features of its heritage, for which it was declared a Historical Complex in 2002.

The archaeological relics discovered in the Santiago Caves show that Cazalla was inhabited since the Neolithic period. During the Roman era it received the name of Castellum and became one of the most important sites along the Silver Route.

The community reached its greatest splendour during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, however, from the exploitation of its vineyards. It became one of the main exporters of this product to the Americas. The fame of its wines was reflected in the works of Cervantes and Lope de Vega.

Its importance led to it becoming the summer residence of King Felipe V and his court in 1730, and it received the designation of “Villa Real” (Royal Burgh). This gilded age left its mark in its urban district, where a sizable assortment of artistically interesting dwellings from the sixteenth to eighteenth centuries have been preserved along with monumental buildings such as the imposing church of Nuestra Señora de la Consolación, the Town Hall (Ayuntamiento) and the Nuestra Señora del Carmen Church. The fifteenth century Madre de Dios Convent is a good example of a Renaissance cloister, as is the San Benito Church of the Gothic Mudéjar style.

In the surrounding area, the former La Cartuja de la Inmaculada Concepción Monastery has been declared a National Landmark.

No product of the Sierra Norte region has travelled so far beyond its borders as its brandy (aguardiente), which is known simply as “cazalla”.



BETWEEN THE WIND AND THE WATER

GUADALCANAL

Holy Week: 1 to 8 April.

Romería Nuestra Señora de Guaditoca (Pilgrimage): last Saturday in April and last Saturday in September.

Town Hall: 954 886 001. www.guadalcanal.es

Guadalcanal, in a valley between the mountain ranges of El Viento (The Wind) and El Agua (The Water) in the heart of the Sierra Norte region of Seville, traces its origins to the Upper Paleolithic. It is remarkable both for its natural wealth and for the historic and artistic character of its central urban district, which has been declared a Historical Complex.

Its name derives from the Islamic settlement called "Wad Al - Kanal". In 1241 Guadalcanal was re-conquered by the Knights of the Order of Santiago, which has left a trace of medieval mysticism in Guadalcanal's oral traditions.

Throughout its history Guadalcanal has managed to keep the essence of its urban district, preserving unchanged its houses in the local style of lime-plastered façades and Arabic tile roofs, as well as a number of aristocratic houses that show the influence of eighteenth century Baroque palace architecture.

In this harmonious urban complex there are a good number of remarkable landmark buildings of a religious character, such as the La Asunción Church, the Santa Ana Church, the San Vicente Chapel and the hermitages of San Benito and Nuestra Señora de Guaditoca, among others. Its urban district, described as a good example of the communities in the Sierra Norte region of Seville, was designated in 2004 as a Property of Cultural Interest with the classification of Historical Complex.

Guadalcanal is remarkable for its handmade furniture, wrought iron, embroidery and Brotherhood (Cofradía) items. This municipality's Holy Week has earned recognition as a Fiesta of Tourist Interest in Andalusia.

Guadalcanal is an excellent choice for travellers who enjoy trail walking and outdoor sports because of the multitude of open spaces and trails that lead to the interior of the Sierra Norte Natural Park.



NATURE AND HISTORY

CONSTANTINA

Constantina Fair: mid-August.

Holy Week: 1 to 8 April.

Town Hall: 955 880 700. www.constantina.org

The marvellous forest of chestnut trees that is Constantina has won international recognition as a Biosphere Preserve, and to this should be added the village itself. It lies lodged between such beautiful hills as El Almendro, where traces were found of an ancient fortress, and the hill of the fourteenth and fifteenth century castle, on whose slopes huddles the medieval neighbourhood of La Morería. Constantina's peculiar urban composition was finally declared a Historical Complex in 2004.

In its urban fabric a class of buildings still exist of a style related to lordly and bourgeois houses, as well as such noteworthy buildings as the parish church of Nuestra Señora de la Encarnación, a mudéjar temple from the XIV century which Hernán Ruiz II made alterations to in the sixteenth century, building its magnificent tower/façade whose image still symbolises the city.

Also noteworthy are the Nuestro Padre Jesús Church, an 18th century building with a single vaulted nave; the La Concepción Church and the Santa Clara Convent, which retain their façades, and the former El Tardón Convent, which has now been converted into courtyard housing.

There are examples of aristocratic dwellings among the houses of the predominant style, mainly concentrated in the more representative areas of the historical district. Those that have been preserved around the plazas of Padre Félix, Blas Infante, El Llano del Sol and España, as well as along the streets of Mesones, Carnicerías, El Santo Cristo and El Peso are especially remarkable. They are laid out around a central courtyard and have Neo-Classic and Regionalist façades. This part of the urban fabric includes facilities that have been preserved for transforming natural resources, mainly those relating to wine, olives and meat products and particularly makers of anise products and family wineries that have preserved wine presses.



CABO DE GATA-NÍJAR NATURAL PARK - MEDITERRANEAN SPLENDOUR

Carboneras

San Antonio Fiesta: 13 June.
Fisherman and Tourist (Pescador
y Turista) Fair: 15 August.
Town Hall: 950 454 238.
www.carboneras.es

Níjar

San José Fiestas: 5 through 7
August. Villa de Níjar Jazz
Festival: late August.
Town Hall: 950 360 012.
www.nijar.es

Cabo de Gata-Níjar was created in 1987. It is the first sea/land Natural Park in Andalusia and includes one of the most beautiful coastal strips on the Mediterranean.

At Cabo de Gata, the most arid enclave in Western Europe, you can admire a stretch of coast dotted with cliffs, small isolated coves, broad beaches and even reefs. Notwithstanding its desert appearance it harbours very unusual animal and plant species, which caused it to be declared a Biosphere Preserve in 1997. This park with an area of almost 50,000 hectares displays great diversity and its flora includes a significant number of endemic species, such as “dragoncillo”, “clavelina” and “palmito”, the only palm native to the European continent. The fauna, for its part, is noteworthy for the presence of such steppe birdlife as the stone curlew, the sand grouse and the black-bellied sand grouse as well as for the great diversity of waterfowl in its salt water lagoons, including the black-winged stilt, avocets, flamingos and the rare Audouin gulls.

The Cabo de Gata Mountains, the most important volcanic formation in all the Iberian Peninsula, are found within its boundaries. They extend all the way to the coast, where they form cliffs more than 100 metres high and a chain of salt water lagoons and sandy belts of fixed dunes.

Another of Cabo de Gata's great treasures lies beneath the sea. The sea floor of the park is formed by meadows of oceanic Posidonia. Numerous species of crustaceans, molluscs and fish find food and shelter in these extensive green areas, making it a paradise for divers.

For those who prefer enjoying themselves on land there are the beaches (El Playazo, El Mónsul, Los Escullos and Las Negras) and the various defensive emplacements that dot its coast, such as the San Felipe Battery, Rodalquilar Castle and Los Genoveses Tower, among others.



DESIERTO DE TABERNAS NATURAL AREA - A NATURAL STAGE

Gádor

San Sebastián Fiestas: 22 to 24
January.
Nuestra Señora del Rosario Fair
and Fiestas: 8 to 12 October.
Town Hall: 950 645 211.
www.gador.es

Alboloduy

San Isidro Fiesta: 15 May.
San Roque Fiestas: 14 through
17 August.
Town Hall: 950 644 848.
www.alboloduy.es

This 11,625-hectare area north of the city of Almería between the Filabres and Alhamilla mountain ranges is distinguished by a number of gorges through which flow genuine wadis (torrential desert streams) that only carry water, mud and stones during flash floods. It is considered to be the only desert in the true sense of the word on the entire continent of Europe, and offers tremendously evocative and spellbinding scenery. Average precipitation of less than 250 mm per year and average temperatures higher than 17°C combine to form a type of terrain known as badlands that lies below the high country of Filabres, Alhamilla, Gádor and the Sierra Nevada Mountains. It is interesting both scenically and geologically and is valuable for its plant and animal life, with rare species that in many cases are unique in Europe and even the world.

It became world famous in the early 1960's when Hollywood chose it as a natural stage for many of its productions. Desierto de Tabernas and Cabo de Gata are identified with the arrival of Sergio Leone and the “spaghetti western” but even before that major movies had been filmed in this enormous outdoor studio, including such productions as Rey de Reyes (King of Kings, by Nicholas Ray); El Cid, by Anthony Mann; Cleopatra, by J. L. Mankiewicz and Lawrence of Arabia, by David Lean. More recently actors such as Harrison Ford (Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade), Álex de la Iglesia (800 Bullets) and Pedro Almodóvar (Speak to Her) have been to Tabernas.

There is no better way to learn about this extraordinary natural cinema stage than by visiting Hollywood-Texas, Mini Hollywood or Poblado Leone (Leone Village). You can also visit the recently opened Cinema Museum on the outskirts of Almería.



SIERRA DE GRAZALEMA NATURAL PARK - CAVES AND GROTTOES

Zahara de la Sierra

Corpus Christi: 23 June.

Town Hall: 956 123 004.

www.zaharadelasierra.es

Ubrique

Crujía de los Gamones: 3 May.

Town Hall: 956 461 290.

www.ubrique.es

The Sierra de Grazalema Natural Park, a UNESCO Biosphere Preserve, lies on the borders of Cádiz and Málaga. It covers 51,695 hectares in the westernmost part of the Baetica Mountains. This mountain range lay on the frontier between the Muslim Kingdom of Granada and Castile during the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries and was the scene of frequent conflict.

A total of thirteen municipalities are included in the park : Grazalema, Zahara de la Sierra, Villaluenga del Rosario, Benaocaz, Ubrique, El Bosque, Prado del Rey and El Gastor, in the Province of Cádiz, and Benaoján, Montejaque, Cortes de la Frontera, Jimena de Líbar and Ronda in the Province of Málaga.

This highland chain is a region of extremely broken terrain, with vertical-walled valleys such as Garganta Verde (Green Gorge), with depths up to 400 metres. There are also many caves and grottos, including the Hundidero-Gato Complex, the largest cave in Andalusia, and La Pileta Cave, known the world over for its prehistoric relics. There is a magnificent forest of Spanish firs (pinsapos) in the El Pinar Mountains that is the best preserved stand of this conifer that is unique to the Ronda Mountains. The fauna, for its part, is noteworthy for the griffon vulture, which has one of its largest colonies in Europe here.

Ancient handicrafts remain as a legacy of the Muslim culture, including the making of fine leather goods and garments in Ubrique, Prado del Rey and Cortes de la Frontera. The area is remarkable for its cork products, roofing thatch made from heath, Arabic roof tiles and coppersmith work. Basketry, esparto grass and honey are other important resources.

The region's gastronomy is also part of its cultural wealth. In any of its villages you can savour homemade cured meats, hearty stews and exquisite sweets.



LA BREÑA Y LAS MARISMAS DE BARBATE NATURAL PARK - ENDLESS DUNES

Vejer de la Frontera

Noche Flamenca (Flamenco

Night): late August

Town Hall: 956 451 736.

www.vejerdelafrontera.es

Barbate

Fair (Feria) of La Virgen del Carmen

(Our Lady of Mt. Carmel): mid-July.

Town Hall: 956 063 600.

www.barbate.es

The Natural Park of La Breña y las Marismas de Barbate, on the Atlantic coast of the Province of Cádiz, includes a specially protected maritime zone. It shelters landscapes of great ecological value, such as the forests of piñonero pine that extend to the coast, the beaches and sea cliffs, the tidal marshes ("marismas"), a continental platform of sea beds and a small dune system. Its location on the Strait of Gibraltar makes it a stage on the route of migratory birds, especially in the tidal marshes of the River Barbate. This park covers 4,863 hectares, of which 940 belong to its important marine preserve.

There is no urban district to be found in this natural park. Vejer de la Frontera, Barbate and Caños de Meca (which belongs to Barbate) are the closest municipalities. Barbate is known the world over for its "almadraba" method of fishing with seines, which has been used since the time of the Romans and Phoenicians for catching tuna.

Outstanding places of interest include the signal tower called Torre del Tajo (Cliff Tower) on the highest point of the sea cliff. It is a coastal watchtower built in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries and stands on a site of great scenic beauty. From this tower 200 years ago one could have observed the naval battle between the English and Franco-Spanish fleets off the Cape of Trafalgar.

Other very important watchtowers include the Torre de Trafalgar and the Torre de Meca. You should also be sure to visit the beaches of Hierbabuena, Caños de Meca, Zahora and El Palmar.

There are many activities to be enjoyed in this protected environment: trips by horseback or bicycle through the park, to the Cape of Trafalgar or Caños de Meca, ship excursions, sailing, diving, and hiking along the coastal cliffs or through the dense pine forests to the unspoiled beaches of Trafalgar.



SIERRA DE HORNACHUELOS NATURAL PARK- THE BLACK FOREST OF THE MEDITERRANEAN

Posadas

May Fair: first weekend in May.
 Corpus Christi Fiesta: 23 June.
 Town Hall: 957 630 013.
www.posadas.es

Almodóvar del Río

Romería Virgen de Fátima
 (Pilgrimage): second Sunday in May.
 El Rosario Fair: first week in October.
 Town Hall: 957 713 602.
www.almodovardelrio.es

A monastery as a stage setting for the Duke of Rivas and as inspiration for Verdi's operas. Hamlets and palaces where the nobility sought repose and contemplation. Today as in olden times the Sierra de Hornachuelos Natural Park offers some of the best preserved sites in the Sierra Morena Mountains. This mountain range presents a tapestry of Mediterranean wild lands dominated by Holm oaks, cork oaks and brush on gentle, erosion-worn hills. The dark colour of its rocks and the leafiness of its vegetation make Hornachuelos a Mediterranean Black Forest. Rivers flow throughout the park: the Bembézar to the north, the Retortillo to the west, the Guadiato to the east and the Guadalquivir to the south. The mountains stand as an enormous preserve for Mediterranean flora and fauna (lynx, golden eagle, black and griffon vultures, otters, etc.) whose survival is threatened in others parts of Andalusia. Due to its abundant populations of red deer and boar Sierra de Hornachuelos is considered a hunting preserve of the first magnitude.

It was designated as a Natural Park in 1989 and covers some 60,000 hectares. It lies in the western part of the Province of Córdoba and takes in part of the municipal territory of Almodóvar del Río, Córdoba, Hornachuelos, Posadas and Villanueva de Córdoba.

Roman relics near Posadas, including mosaics and inscribed stones, as well as Arab-constructed towers such as those of Ochavo and Cabrilla, tell us of the different settlers who have occupied the area. No visitor should fail to explore the historical district of Posadas or the Arabic castle that overlooks Almodóvar del Río on the banks of the Guadalquivir. These are good villages in which to enjoy such fine local cuisine as "chorizo de venado" (venison sausage), "chacinas caseras" (home-cured meats), olive oil, "flamenquines" (a ham and cheese dish) and "salmorejo" (an oil and vinegar sauce).



CARDEÑA Y MONTORO NATURAL PARK - DEEP IN THE MOUNTAINS

Cardena

Romería de San Isidro (Pilgrimage):
 15 May. Cardena Fair: third
 weekend in August.
 Town Hall: 957 174 002.
www.cardena.es

Montoro

Feria del Olivo (Olive Fair): mid-May.
 Cruces y Patios (Crosses and
 Courtyards): first weekend in May.
 Town Hall: 957 160 802.
www.montoro.es

Sierra de Cardena y Montoro Natural Park received that designation in 1989 and covers 38,449 hectares. It lies at the edge of the Los Pedroches region in the north-eastern part of the Province of Córdoba. The rivers Yeguas and Arenoso are the main streams that flow through the park and empty into the Guadalquivir.

It is remarkable for its luxuriant forests that shelter interesting wildlife, notably such endangered species as lynxes, wolves, wildcats and otters. There are specimens of Pyrenean oak of great beauty and botanical interest that are one of the jewels of the park. Several trails began at the hamlet of El Cerezo that enable exploration of the park by foot, horseback or bicycle.

The region of Los Pedroches was settled by man very early in history and is rich in archaeological remains from the Neolithic Period as well as from the Iberian, Roman and Arabic eras. Almost half of Cardena's municipal territory lies within the park, and in the case of Montoro this proportion is more than 25%. 60.4% of the natural park's area belongs to the municipality of Cardena. Montoro, which stands on a large meander of the River Guadalquivir, has numerous Roman ruins that show the importance the village achieved during that era. The castles of La Mota and Julia, which served as military posts, are an indication of its strategic importance.

This area's cuisine is intimately linked to its wealth of game, as in its hunting preserves species such as boar, red deer, rabbit and partridge are to be found in abundance. It is also famous for its olive oil, which has been accorded a Denomination of Origin.



SIERRA NEVADA NATURAL PARK - MOUNTAINS OF THE SUN

Monachil

Romería Nuestra Señora de las Nieves (Pilgrimage): 4 August.
 San Antón: 19 January.
 Town Hall: 958 301 230.
www.monachil.es

Guéjar Sierra

Las Cruces (The Crosses): early May.
 San Roque Fiestas: mid-August.
 Town Hall: 958 484 500.
www.guejarsierra.es

Sierra Nevada Natural Park received that designation in 1999 and covers a large area in the provinces of Granada and Almería (169,239 hectares). It includes more than sixty municipalities in the natural regions of Marquesado del Zenete, the Lecrín Valley, the western Sierra Nevada Mountains, the basin of the River Nacimiento and the Alpujarras region. The largest area is in the last-named region. Its chain of mountain summits includes Mulhacén (3,482 metres, the tallest peak on the Peninsula), but there are a number of other mountains with altitudes over three thousand metres, such as El Veleta and La Alcazaba. The entire range has been marked by glaciers.

The Sierra Nevada mountain range, known as the Mountains of the Sun in the Middle Ages, is an ecologically priceless area and harbours a rich cultural and historical heritage in which the Tartessian, Roman and Visigoth legacies play a large part, particularly in the Alpujarras watershed. The most important contributions from the Muslim era are the sophisticated irrigation techniques, whose channels and ditches on the mountain slopes collect snowmelt and runoffs from rains for traditional uses and activities.

Sempervivum, foxglove, Spanish mugwort, violets, Sierra Nevada poppies and snow star (*plantago nivalis*) are just a few of the more than 2,000 showy and colourful plant species (of which 66 are exclusively endemic) that live in the park. The most characteristic animal species is the mountain goat, a habitué of the high peaks.

Its main tourist attraction is the Sierra Nevada ski resort, the southernmost in Europe. It is known for its mild temperatures and plentiful hours of sunlight. The station, just 20 kilometres from Granada and 165 from the Costa del Sol, has a total of 94.8 kilometres of ski lanes and a change in elevation of 1,200 metres.



SIERRAS DE ALHAMA, TEJEDA Y ALMUJARA NATURAL PARK - AN EDEN UNDER LA MAROMA

Alcaucín

San Sebastián Fiesta: 20 January.
 San Isidro Fiesta: 15 May.
 Town Hall: 952 510 002.
www.alcaucin.es

Alhama de Granada

Carnival: mid-February. Romería del Vino (Wine Pilgrimage): 15 August.
 Town Hall: 958 350 011.
www.alhama.org

Sierras de Alhama, Tejeda y Almijara Natural Park, established in 1999, encompasses 40,662.95 hectares divided almost evenly between the provinces of Granada and Málaga. It includes part of the municipal territory of Alhama de Granada and Arenas del Rey, as well as of the Málaga municipalities of Alcaucín, Canillas de Albaida, Canillas de Aceituno, Cómputa, Frigiliana, Nerja, Salares and Sedella. The El Alcázar site, just a few kilometres from Alcaucín, is one of the most beautiful spots in the park. It is an old farmstead that has been modified for visitors to enjoy. This ecological enclave combines streamside areas with the characteristic Mediterranean forest that serves as a transitional zone in the ascent to the summit of La Maroma, the highest peak in this range at more than two thousand metres.

A notable feature of this area is the El Alcázar stream. It springs forth in the heart of the Sierra Tejeda Mountains and forms scenes of great beauty along its course, with small cascades and shady pools. In the first stages of their ascent to the peak of La Maroma hikers will pass through the massive pine forest that is typical of this area. A visit to El Alcázar is a perfect excuse to learn about the rich history of its setting. Alcaucín, a village of Andalusí origins, is noted for its iconic Cinco Caños Fountain, from which according to residents water has never ceased to flow from a spring in the Tejeda Mountains. You can visit the ruins of the Zália Castle without leaving the limits of Alcaucín. This is a fortress of Phoenician origins that was used during the Arabic era. According to legend the ancient town of Odyscia, where some of the heroic feats of Ulysses occurred, is located in this enclave. You can reach El Boquete de Zafarraya on the border of the neighbouring province by the highway that leads towards Alhama de Granada. This is a prehistoric cave in which the jaw of a Neanderthal man was found.



DOÑANA NATURAL PARK - A NATURAL PARADISE

Almonte

Romería El Rocío (Pilgrimage): 12 June.

Saca de las Yeguas (Roundup of the Mares): 26 June.

Town Hall: 959 450 929.

www.almonte.es

Sanlúcar de Barrameda (Cádiz)

La Manzanilla Fair: 1 through 5 June.

Horse races on the beach: first

round 10 through 12 August.

Second round 25 through 27 August.

Tourist Office: 956 388 000.

www.sanlucardebarrameda.es

The Doñana Natural Area, formed by the natural and national parks of the same name, is a paradise for ornithology enthusiasts. In early autumn and during the winter they can enjoy the presence of thousands of water birds such as ducks, geese and swans that arrive in search of food and a milder climate. Doñana is extraordinary for the variety of landscapes to be found in its surroundings. El Coto del Rey (the King's Hunting Preserve), El Abalarío and the La Algaída pine forest contain extensive stands of piñonero pines and a dense cover of Mediterranean brush that provide a favourable habitat for the iconic Iberian lynx and various species of birds of prey such as the Spanish imperial eagle.

Another of the area's points of interest is the El Asperillo system of fossil dunes that run parallel to the coast. On the beach you can observe the imposing sea cliff (acantilado) of El Asperillo, which has been designated a Natural Landmark for its beauty and distinctive features.

In the northern and southern parts of the natural area is another of the pieces that make up the unrivalled puzzle that is Doñana: the shallow waters of the tidal marshes (marismas) of Marisma Gallega, Lucio del Cangrejo and Marismas de Bonanza. Countless birds feed and breed in them. Visitors can delight in the horizontalness of the landscape, the bird life that inhabits it and the spectacular flight of the flamingos.

These lands have been populated and altered by man throughout their history. Traditional uses such as beekeeping, collecting pine cones and agriculture are still practiced. Although some vocations such as charcoal maker are being lost it is possible to find a number of active charcoal ovens in the park. Its livestock raising tradition of the "Saca de las Yeguas" (roundup of the mares) has been preserved and is held each June in the municipality of Almonte. The pilgrimage of El Rocío, one of the most famous in the country, also takes place here.



SIERRA DE ARACENA Y PICOS DE AROCHE NATURAL PARK - THE PARADISE OF THE IBERIAN HOG

Cortegana

Romería de San Antonio de Padua (Pilgrimage): mid-June.

Jornadas Medievales (Medieval Fair): mid-August.

Town Hall: 959 131 550.

www.cortegana.org

Aracena

Feria Grande (Grand Fair): 24 through 28 August.

Regional Ham and Iberian Hog Fair: third weekend in October.

Tourist Office: 959 129 206.

www.aracena.es

The Sierra de Aracena y Picos de Aroche Natural Park, in the extreme western part of the Sierra Morena region and in the northern part of the Province of Huelva, is characterised by extensive wooded paddocks favourable for raising Iberian hogs, and an industry has sprung up around this activity that sustains the economies of such villages as Cumbres Mayores and Jabugo. You should not depart the area before sampling its exquisite "embutidos" (sausages) and, needless to say, its ham with the Huelva Denomination of Origin. You can learn more about the region's pork-curing tradition at the Ham Museum (Museo del Jamón) in Aracena.

Its varied forests make for an interesting wealth of animal life. In the park's interior it is possible to observe such mammals as the Egyptian mongoose, the common genet, and the elusive otter. The birdlife is also diverse. You can observe vultures, kites and black storks, among other species, soaring through the skies of this natural environment. A good way to learn about this natural patrimony from close at hand is to hike any of the marked trails or take a relaxing horseback ride. In its villages you can visit the monumental complex of Almonaster la Real, made up of the castle, the church and the mosque, or Cortegana Castle, one of the best-preserved castles in the region, or the fortress of Sancho IV in Cumbres Mayores. Another possibility is to explore Gruta de las Maravillas (Grotto of the Marvels) in Aracena or to visit La Peña (the Rock) of Arias Montano in Alájar, both of which are outstanding natural attractions.

This region also offers a varied array of cuisine: game, goat cheese (queso de cabra), cured pork (chacinas) and, naturally, chestnuts, which are prepared in all the different ways. Mushrooms, one of its culinary products, draw lovers of mycology to symposiums and courses each year.



SIERRA DE CAZORLA, SEGURA Y LAS VILLAS NATURAL PARK - TAPAS AND THE BUGLING OF STAGS

Cazorla

La Caracolada: 15 May.
Cristo del Consuelo (Christ of the Consolation) Fiesta: 17 September.
Town Hall: 953 720 000.
www.cazorla.es

Quesada

Virgin of Tíscar Fair and Fiestas: last week in August.
Los Cargos Fiesta: 26 December.
Town Hall: 953 733 025.
www.quesada.es

Cazorla is like an immense and tranquil breath of fresh air. An impressive area of two thousand square kilometres makes Sierras de Cazorla, Segura y Las Villas Natural Park in the Province of Jaén the largest protected area in España. It is always a sure bet for a weekend or short break or even a vacation. Cazorla sounds different during September and October. It is the time of the rut, and the mountains echo with the bugling of red deer stags who proudly brandish their antlers before fighting over the females.

It was probably the environmental publicist Félix Rodríguez de la Fuente who made this fascinating rite known to the wider public. He filmed numerous scenes for the series *Man and the Earth* in Cazorla, and since 2002 a special 16-kilometre marked route at the Tranco de Beas Reservoir has borne his name and makes reference to the documentary about the rut.

The trail starts at the site known as Bujaraiza, goes around the reservoir and crosses to the other side before ending in front of the castle of the same name. It has six observation points with explicatory panels that are located at the same points from which Rodríguez de la Fuente filmed his episode. For thirty euros you can also travel the route with a guide in an all-terrain vehicle on an excursion that lasts a bit more than four hours.

In addition to the rutting season, Cazorla offers remarkable scenery and fauna. The park has more than 1,200 botanical species, almost 30% of all the plant life catalogued on the Peninsula. It also boasts more than 180 species of animal life, ranging from the large ungulates such as mountain goats, red deer, mouflon, fallow deer and boar to the great birds of prey such as golden eagles, Bonelli's eagles, cinerous vultures, griffon vultures, Egyptian vultures, falcons and Eurasian eagle owls. The village of Cazorla also rates a visit. It was declared a Historical and Artistic Complex in 1972 and boasts such landmarks as the La Yedra Castle, the Salvatierra Castle, the churches of Santa María, El Carmen and San Francisco, the Las Cadenas Fountain and the Casa de las Siete Fuentes (House of the Seven Fountains).



SIERRA MÁGINA NATURAL PARK - ON THE ROOF OF JAÉN

Bedmar y Garcíez

San Marcos Fiestas: 23 through 26 April. Romería de la Virgen de Cuadros (Pilgrimage): 25 September.
Town Hall: 953 760 002.
www.bedmargarciez.es

Jimena

Cruz de Mayo (May Cross): 3 May. Fiestas La Virgen del Rosario: first week in September.
Town Hall: 953 357 001.
www.jimena.es

The massif of Sierra Mágina rises out of the Jaén countryside, surrounded by a sea of olive trees. From its summit you will have a magnificent panoramic view. This, the 2,167-metre Peak of Mágina, is the roof of the province which is why the park is often visited by mountain climbers who wish to scale its heights.

In its rather small area of 19,961 hectares this natural park offers a great diversity of landscapes that can be explored by hiking or bicycle tourism. It is worth the trouble to visit the Adelfal de Cuadros (the largest "adelfal" or oleander forest in Spain); the amazing Zurreón Waterfall, a beautiful cascade that freezes in winter; or Pinar de Cánava, a stand of Aleppo pine that has been declared a Natural Landmark.

Footpaths such as that of Gíbralberca allow you to see for yourself the way the vegetation changes with the elevation. This magical mountain range's relief also makes possible other sports and the observation of birds such as the golden eagle and Bonelli's eagle. In addition, the erosion of the limestone rocks by water has created an endless number of cavities and passageways that make it an attractive place for spelunking.

This park was a natural frontier between the Arabic and Christian kingdoms from the thirteenth through the fifteenth centuries, and the region is thus impregnated by a distinctive medieval atmosphere that is apparent in the narrow alleys of its municipalities and in castles such as that of Albánchez de Mágina and of Jódar, which houses a Visitors' Centre. Other attractions include the ruins of defensive towers, fortresses and city walls that can be found in virtually all of its villages. The local cuisine, based on olive oil with its own Denomination of Origin, is another inducement to visit this natural area.



LOS ALCORNOCALES NATURAL PARK - THE WEALTH OF WATER

Cortes de la Frontera

Romería Virgen del Rosario (Pilgrimage): early June.
Fair of San Roque and San Sebastián: 19 to 22 August.
Town Hall: 952 154 000.
www.cortesdelafrontera.es

Alcalá de los Gazules (Cádiz)

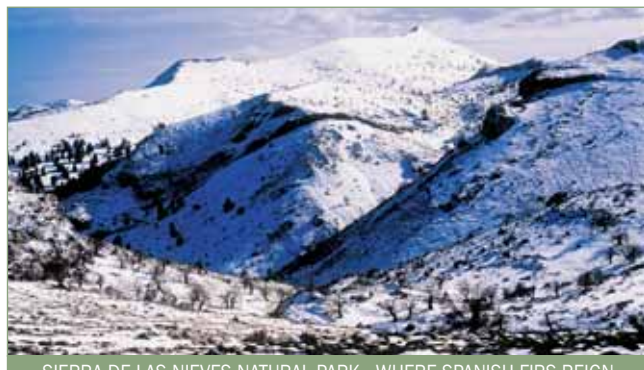
San Jorge Fiesta: late April.
August Fair (Feria de Agosto): last week in August.
Town Hall: 956 420 330.
www.alcaladelosgazules.es

Los Alcornocales Natural Park, lying between the provinces of Cádiz and Málaga, is rated as one of the ten natural wonders of Europe. It was created in 1989 and occupies an extensive strip—167,767 hectares—of land bordering on El Estrecho Natural Park. It preserves the largest mass of productive cork oak forest on the Iberian Peninsula.

The main factor responsible for this wealth is water, which is present in numerous rivers, streams and reservoirs that are suitable for fishing and recreational activities. Most important of all, however, is the humidity that comes in from the coast and accumulates, forming cloud forests in the deep and narrow valleys called “canutos”. A very unusual flora known as “laurel forest” is thus preserved that belongs to the Tertiary Period. You can stroll through this jungle-like setting amidst the fragrance of laurel and the beauty of blossoming rhododendron and elegant viburnum and holly, accompanied by the birdsong of the white-throated dipper and the agile kingfisher, and warblers and finches that hide among the ferns. Mountain goats live in this area along with numerous birds of prey, most notably the griffon vulture, Egyptian vulture, Bonelli’s eagle, Eurasian eagle owl and the peregrine falcon.

In a park as complete and diverse as this other activities are feasible, ranging from mountain climbing on the peak of El Aljibe or El Picacho to spelunking in the Ramblazo-Motillas area or canyoning in the gorge of Garganta de Buitreras, one of the few areas that is set up for this extreme sport and one which has been designated as a Natural Landmark.

It would be appropriate to wind up the visit with a tour of the villages that make up the park: Cortes de la Frontera, Alcalá de los Gazules and Castellar de la Frontera are some of the options. Their rich cultural and gastronomic heritages make them two more of this area’s attractions.



SIERRA DE LAS NIEVES NATURAL PARK - WHERE SPANISH FIRS REIGN

Guaro

Luna Mora (Moorish Moon): mid-September. Las Mayordomas: 7 and 8 December.
Town Hall: 952 457 812.
www.guaro.es

Tolox

San Roque Fiestas: 16 August.
La Mozas Day: 8 December.
Town Hall: 952 487 097.
www.tolox.es

The Las Nieves Mountains are a collection of limestone ranges in the eastern part of the Ronda Highlands. They were declared a Natural Park in 1989 and cover an area of 20,163 hectares, but in 1993 the protected area was increased to 93,930 when UNESCO designated the region as a Biosphere Preserve. Eleven Málaga municipalities have all or part of their territories within its boundaries: Alozaina, Casarabonela, El Burgo, Guaro, Istán, Monda, Ojén, Parauta, Ronda, Tolox and Yunquera.

The natural park lies on the border between the Atlantic and Mediterranean zones of influence and is the site of the highest peak in the province, the 1,919-metre Torrecilla in the Sierra Blanca de Tolox Mountains, as well as the deepest chasm, the Gesm, which at 1,100 metres is the third deepest in the world and attracts numerous spelunking enthusiasts. Rural and active sports such as hiking, rock climbing and spelunking are among its great attractions. Two species reign supreme in this park due to their singularity: the Spanish fir (pinsapo) and the mountain goat. The Spanish fir is the crown jewel of the Las Nieves Mountains, where some specimens have grown in the wild for almost 500 years. This conifer originated in the last ice age and is the most ancient known Mediterranean fir species.

A pleasant way to see them is by one of the mountain bike routes such as that of Monda-Istán. This area has been inhabited by many cultures but the Muslim legacy is the most remarkable. The castles and ancient city walls in Monda, El Burgo, Istán and Tolox are good examples of this. The Arabic influence also shows itself in the gastronomy in such dishes as “gachas de harina con miel” (a dish of flour and honey), “queso de almendras” (cheese with almonds) and “siete ramales” soup (made from tomatoes, garlic, bread and other ingredients). You should be sure to visit Ronda, famous for the cliff El Tajo and for the oldest bullring in the country.



PARQUE NATURAL SIERRA NORTE - THE GREEN WAY

El Pedroso

Romería de la Virgen del Espino (Pilgrimage): 15 August.

Sierra Norte Traditional Products and Handicrafts Fair: early December.

Town Hall: 954 889 001.

www.elpedroso.es

Las Navas de la Concepción

San Pedro Fair: late June.

Romería de la Virgen de Belén (Pilgrimage): 7 and 8 September.

Town Hall: 955 885 800.

www.lasnavasdelaconcepcion.es

The Sierra Norte Natural Park's valuable natural resources have attracted numerous civilisations since olden times. The landscape has been transformed by those who exploited the wealth that the area provided. One example of this change is at the hill Cerro del Hierro, a Natural Landmark, where mineral extraction and water erosion have uncovered a karst landscape that is utilised for rock climbing.

Next to the El Robledo Visitors' Centre is located the botanical garden of the same name. It has a collection of the most characteristic plant species of the Sierra Morena Mountains.

The waters of the rivers Rivera del Huéznar, Viar and Retortillo also play a vital role in its landscape. The first two support magnificent gallery forests and offer trout fishing. Those who opt for trail walking or cycle tourism are recommended to travel the Vía Verde de la Sierra Norte (Sierra Norte Green Way), a former mine railroad right of way that runs between the community of Cerro del Hierro and the Los Prados-Cazalla train station, passing by the Cascadas del Huéznar National Landmark (Waterfalls of the River Huéznar). The ten municipalities that make up the park contribute to its cultural patrimony, providing such interesting historical and artistic landmarks as Arabic castles and hermitages and churches from the Christian tradition. Traces of a more distant past are to be found at Almadén de la Plata, where prehistoric ruins have been uncovered. Such homemade products from Cazalla de la Sierra and Constantina as wines and anise derivatives also enjoy international renown. It is also traditional practice to make sweets in Puebla de los Infantes, olive oil in Guadalcanal and Alanís and sausages in El Real de la Jara and Almadén de la Plata. The cuisine specialising in game is exquisite, a good example being the "caldereta de ciervo" (venison stew) of Las Navas de la Concepción.



CASCADAS DEL HUESNA NATURAL LANDMARK - NATURE AND WATERFALLS

San Nicolás del Puerto

Romería de San Diego Apostol (Pilgrimage): second Sunday in May.

Feria Grande: 24 through 26 July.

Town Hall: 955 886 500

www.sannicolasdelpuerto.es

Constantina

Velá de Santa Ana (evening fiesta): 26 July.

Fair: mid-August.

Town Hall: 955 880 700

www.constantina.org

This Natural Landmark is made up of a series of falls formed by the waters of the River Huesna as they tumble over some unusual formations of the type of limestone known as "travertine". This riverside area, one of the most iconic and well preserved in the Sierra Norte Natural Park, offers idyllic scenery in a cool and pleasant environment and a geological setting that lays bare valuable information about the region's last 30,000 years.

All along this succession of waterfalls known as Las Chorreras the crystalline waters flow beneath a spectacular gallery of ash and willow trees. This natural area also is home to a large number of other plant species such as madroño (strawberry tree), durillo (laurostinus) and myrtle. This natural landmark also shelters a wide variety of fauna, such as grey herons, white-throated dippers, common kingfishers, goshawks, otters, pond turtles and trout. You can get to Cascadas del Huesna by way of the Sierra Norte Green Way, a former railroad right of way that has been adapted for use by foot or bicycle. The nearby municipality of San Nicolás del Puerto, known as Iporci to its Celtic founders, has played host to numerous civilisations who found a fount of riches in the vicinity through the extraction of iron and silver. A few traces of those times still remain, such as the stone Roman bridge over the River Galindón and La Torre (the Tower), which was part of a great Arabic fortress. Don't pass up the chance to travel the Cerro del Hierro trail, which leads to an old mining town and which you can access by way of the highway that links Constantina with San Nicolás del Puerto.

Maps

- Motorway
- Main highway
- Secondary road
- River
- - - - - Railway
- ✈ Airport

Almería



- Motorway
- Main highway
- Secondary road
- River
- - - - - Railway
- ||||| High-Speed Railway
- ✈ Airport

Córdoba



Granada



NOTE: This map is purely illustrative and does not offer an accurate representation of the location of towns or distances. For restrictions of space, only the towns referred to in this guide and other limited reference points are included on the map.

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Maps

- Motorway
- Main highway
- Secondary road
- River
- - - - - Railway



Huelva

Jaén



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- Motorway
- Main highway
- Secondary road
- River
- - - - - Railway
- ||||| High-Speed Railway
- ✈ Airport



Málaga

Sevilla



NOTE: This map is purely illustrative and does not offer an accurate representation of the location of towns or distances. For restrictions of space, only the towns referred to in this guide and other limited reference points are included on the map.

Usefull Addresses

Andalusian Tourism Offices

Almería

Parque Nicolás Salmerón, s/n.
Esquina Martínez Campos
04002 Almería
Tel: 950 175 220
E-mail: otalmeria@andalucia.org

Cádiz

Av. Ramón de Carranza, s/n.
11005 Cádiz.
Tel: 956 203 191 / 192
E-mail: otcadiz@andalucia.org

Algeciras

Pº Río de la Miel, s/n.
11207 Algeciras. Cádiz
Tel: 956 784 131 / 134
E-mail: otalgeciras@andalucia.org

La Línea de la Concepción

Av. del Ejercito, esquina 20 de Abril, s/n.
11300 La Línea de la Concepción. Cádiz
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Tel: 951 294 003
E-mail: otaemalaga@andalucia.org

Ronda

Plz. de España, 9
29400 Ronda. Málaga
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Sevilla

Av. de la Constitución, 21 - B
41004 Sevilla
Tel: 954 787 578
E-mail: otsevilla@andalucia.org

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Autopista San Pablo, s/n.
Buzón nº A027 - 41020 Sevilla
Tel: 954 782 035
E-mail: otaesevilla@andalucia.org

Sevilla Santa Justa

Avda. de Kansas City, s/n.
41007 Sevilla
Tel: 954 782 002 / 003
E-mail: otjusta@andalucia.org

Tourism Promotion Boards

Patronato Provincial de Almería

Plaza Bendicho, s/n.
04001 Almería
Tel: 950 621 117
www.almeria-turismo.org
E-mail: turismo@dipalme.org

Patronato Provincial de Cádiz

Plaza de Madrid, s/n.
Estadio Ramón de Carranza
(Fondo Sur)
11004 Cádiz
Tel: 956 807 061
www.cadizturismo.com
E-mail: turismo@dipucadiz.es

Patronato Provincial de Córdoba

Pza. de las Tendillas Nº5-3º Pl.
14002 Córdoba
Tel: 957 491 677/78/79
www.cordobaturismo.es
E-mail: turismo@cordobaturismo.es

Patronato Provincial de Granada

Pza. Mariana Pineda, Nº10-1º y 2º
18009 Granada
Tel: 958 247 146
www.turgranada.es
E-mail: turismo@dipgra.es
E-mail: turismo@promojaen.es

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Patronato Provincial de Huelva

Fernando el Católico, Nº18. Entreprl.
21003 Huelva
Tel: 959 257 467
www.turismohuelva.org
E-mail: turismo@diphuelva.es

Patronato Turismo de Málaga

Plaza del Siglo, Nº2
29015 Málaga
Tel: 952 126 272
www.visitacostadelsol.com
E-mail: info@visitacostadelsol.com

Patronato Provincial de Jaén

Palacio Provincial
Pza. San Francisco, Nº2
23071 Jaén
Tel: 953 248 000
www.promojaen.es
E-mail: turismo@promojaen.es

Turismo de la Provincia de Sevilla

Plaza del Triunfo, Nº1-3
(Antiguo Archivo Provincial)
41004 Sevilla
Tel: 954 501 001
www.turismosevilla.org
E-mail: infoturismo@prodetur.es

Other Tourist Information Centres

Fundación El Legado Andalusi

Parque de las Ciencias. Pabellón del Al-Andalus.
Avda. de las Ciencias, s/n. - 18006 Granada
Tel: 958 225 995. E-mail: info@legadoandalusi.es
<http://www.legadoandalusi.es>

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Tel: +34 954 190 955. E-mail: beticaromana@carmona.org
www.betica-romana.org

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Recreo de las Cadenas,
Avenida Duque de Abrantes - 11407 Jerez de la Frontera, (Cádiz)
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