

TOP 10

From

Halal
Getaways

Parent Company of Andalusian Routes

ISLAMIC SPAIN

10 reasons why
every Muslim
should visit
Islamic Spain

TRAVEL
AND SEEK
KNOWLEDGE

Your guide to the 10 must see
sites for Muslims in Spain

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Introduction

Welcome

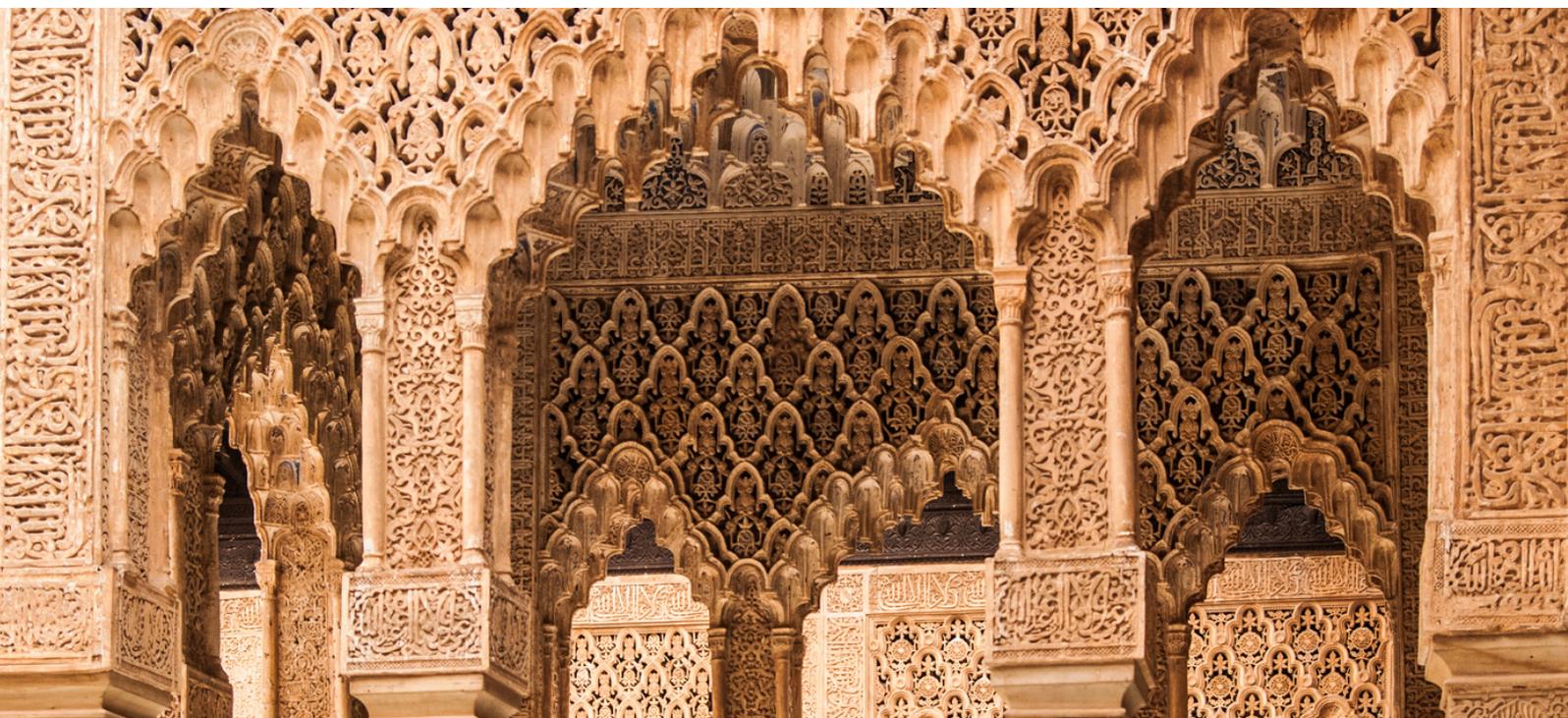
We at Halal Getaways have been doing tours of Islamic Spain through our sister company Andalucian Routes for over 18 years. Thousands of Muslims have travelled with us to discover the lost treasures of Islamic Spain. We have worked with key scholars from Muslim world as well as with countless youth organisations, schools and Islamic Institutes to encourage a better understanding of the Islamic history in Spain. We teach 750 years of history in a way that is retainable and relevant. We use expert guides and deliver Islamic history lectures and presentations throughout our tours. For many of those who have travelled in our group tours to Spain it has been a life changing and emotional experience

Spain today, is a country with a majority population of Christians. But a lesser known fact is that Muslims conquered ruled over the whole of the Iberian Peninsula, today's Spain and Portugal for several centuries. Although the border in the northern between the Muslim and Christian kingdoms fluctuated back and forth the region today known as Andalusia remained in Muslim control for more than 750 years. These days were some of the most prosperous times in the history of Spain and Europe, and one of the best examples of minorities' -the Christians and Jews- living peacefully during the Umayyad rule which lasted from 756 to 1031, and was referred to as "the golden age of tolerance".

At Halal Getaways we are keen to encourage Muslims to travel to Spain and learn about this history. This Ebook will give you an introduction to some of the most famous Islamic sites in Spain and where you can go to discover and witness the huge Muslim contribution to Europe and the rest of the world. We encourage all who embark on a journey to Andalusia to travel and seek knowledge for Allah says in the Quran: "Have they not travelled through the earth and observed how was the end of those before them? They were greater than them in power."

Al Andalus

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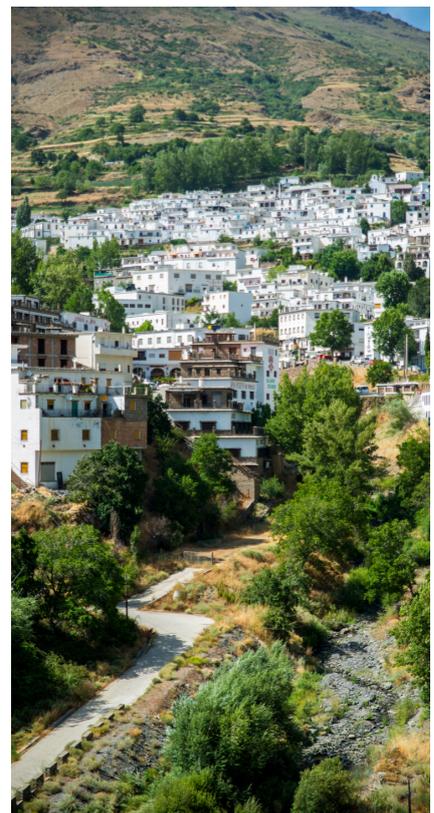
Alpujarra Mountains

Teteria Baraka

One of the the popular excursions on our tours is the Al Pujarra Mountains. The AlPujarra region is in the foothills of the Sierra Nevada mountain range. Its is the rural mountainous area that many Muslims were driven out to and found refuge in after the fall of Granada. It is the place of "the Moors last sigh" where the last Muslim Sultan turned his back on his lost kingdom forever and his mother famously rebuked him. As you travel through the Al Pujarra mountains we always stop in Orgiva, a beautiful rural town. Here you will find Teteria Baraka a culinary echo of the Moorish past. It is run by Qassim Bario, a Spanish revert to Islam. This place offers tagines, ajoblanco (chilled garlic and almond soup), amazing salads, shawarma and falafel, plus homemade lemonade, ice-cream and so much more. Soak up the vibe at a mosaic table and watch the world go by at the weekly local market. All food at this beautiful restaurant is locally sourced and halal.

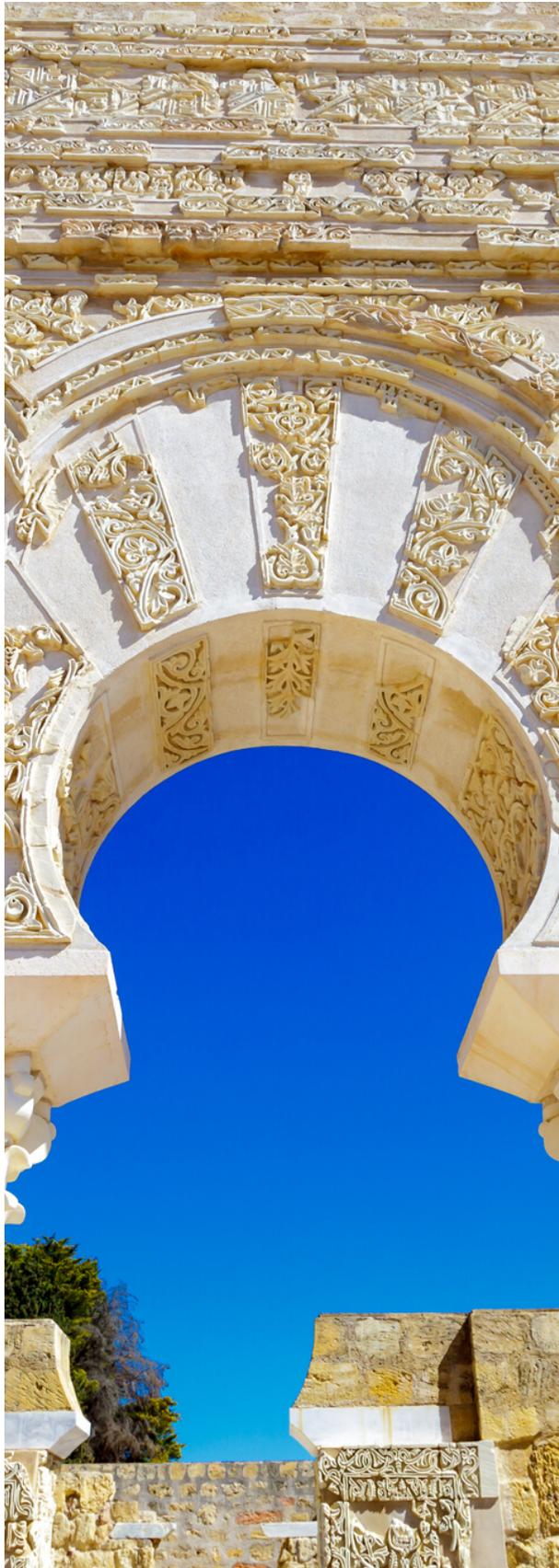
Alpujarra Mountains

Cafe Baraka



Madinat Al Zahra

The city of Europe Caliph



The Brilliant City

Built by Abdul Rahman III when he declared himself Caliph when the Umayyads of Spain reached their peak in Al Andalus a visit to the ruined city of Medina Azahara is an absolute must if you are visiting Andalucia and want to experience what Al Andalus was like at it's peak. The archeological site is situated roughly 10 kilometres outside of Cordoba. When walking around the ruins you will be in awe and amazement at how impressive this city was. When the rest of Europe was nestled in the dark ages Madinat al Zahra had running water, baths and street lamps. Today, most of the city that remains are the ruins of the once majestic city-palace, but there are several fragments of the buildings remaining. You can visit the palaces, the offices of former government heads, the sprawling gardens and the Abd ar-Rahman III hall, one of the most beautiful and ornamental places in the entire city. built by Abd ar-Rahman III, the first Umayyad Caliphate of Cordoba. It took him 10 years to build the city, and it was magnificent in its day. He chose this place to build his palace because of its beautiful landscape, as it lay facing the valley of Guadalquivir (Wadi Al Kabir) river. Attached to the site is a museum where you can watch an animated film that will recreate what the city originally looked like. Interesting Fact - the city only lasted for 60 years before its demise.



Albaicin (UNESCO World heritage)

The Arab Quarter

Albaicin or Albayzin as it was known then is the old Muslim quarter of Granada. The whole district is a UNESCO world heritage site. It is a favourite for many Muslim and non Muslim tourists alike. It is rich in history with white washed houses, narrow hilly cobble stoned streets, and views that will literally take your breath away. This area is known as the Arab quarter and is one of the best places to visit Moorish architecture in all of its glory. Even today, you can see the narrow winding streets as it existed during the days of the Nasrid Kingdom of Granada. The geranium filled balconies, glimpses of the Alhambra at every turn, the silence and the sound of running water in numerous fountains all give the Albayzin a romantic slightly enchanted atmosphere. You will find many Halal restaurants and eateries in this area. There is also a masjid called Masjid al Taqwa if you ask any of the local shop owner's they will all be able to direct you. Interesting Fact about the Albaicin . After the fall of Granada, having broken all the promises that



Granada Mosque



500 years in the making

The Mosque of Granada was opened in 2003 and has since become a very important feature of the Albaicin area. It is the first purpose, built mosque in Granada since the fall of the Muslims and so is very significant and symbolic in the current revival of Islam in Spain. It is important for Muslims and non-Muslims to visit the mosque and meet with the local Muslim community there. The mosque has three important features to it, these are the garden, the prayer hall and the centre for Islamic Studies. The Garden looks out over the valley of the River Darro towards a vista of the Alhambra standing on the Mount of Sabika, etched against the peaks of the Sierra Nevada. It has two fountains of classical andalus mosaic surrounded by plants of local Mediterranean species, such as pine, olive, pomegranate, orange and lemon. The Mihrab, prayer niche which indicates the direction towards Mecca, is a replica of the famous mihrab in the Mosque of Cordoba. Panels of cedar wood from the Atlas mountains carry a hand-engraved ayat of Qur'an listing some of the divine attributes. The multi-coloured marble tiles are identical to those of the Al Aqsa Mosque in Jerusalem. The great 'Qibla' windows are replicas from the Blue Mosque in Istanbul. The mosaic fountain in the patio giving on to the prayer hall were manufactured according to a thousand year old Andalusian design and technique by master craftsmen of Fez. The Alminar – the minaret from which the call to prayer, the 'adhan', is given five times daily – is a tower designed and constructed in the original Albaicin style. Under the eaves it bears the Islamic declaration of faith in Kufic lettering, 'There is no god but Allah – Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah'. The Centre for Islamic Studies has a library with texts on Islam in Arabic, Spanish, English and other languages as well as audio visual aids. It has a conference hall with a seating capacity for 140 people along with an exhibition area. The main reception area is on the lower floor in the entrance foyer where a bookshop, craft items and souvenirs of the mosque are located. (Source: The Mosque website)

Mirador de San Nicholas

Postcard views

This is the place for those classic sunset shots of the Alhambra sprawled along a wooded hilltop with the dark Sierra Nevada mountains looming in the background. It's a well-known spot, so expect crowds of camera-toting tourists, students and buskers. The views from here have been known to be some of the best in the world. From here you are able to see a panoramic view of the city of Granada as well as of the Alhambra. The view of the Alhambra has the Sierra Nevada mountain range as its backdrop. The Generalife is on the left and the Queen's Dressing Room (Peinador de la Reina), the Nasrid palaces and the Alcazaba are on the right. The square is located adjacent to the gardens of the mosque of Granada so you can visit both places on the same day.



The Alhambra

The Alhambra Gardens and Palaces are Spain's most visited sites and deserves its status as one of the world's most beautiful architectural places. The name Alhambra comes from an Arabic root which means "red or crimson castle", perhaps due to the hue of the towers and walls that surround the entire hill of La Sabica which by starlight is silver but by sunlight is transformed into gold. But there is another more poetic version, evoked by the Muslim analysts who speak of the construction of the Alhambra fortress "by the light of torches", the reflections of which gave the walls their particular coloration. Created originally for military purposes, the Alhambra was an "alcazaba" (fortress), an "alcázar" (palace) and a small "medina" (city), all in one. This triple character helps to explain many distinctive features of the monument. It was originally built in 889 AD on Roman ruins as a small fortress during the Muslim rule. Afterward, it remained abandoned until its renovations in the mid-13th century.



The Great Mosque of Cordoba



The Mezquita of Cordoba is also known as the Great Mosque of Cordoba. In its glory the Mezquita was one of the biggest mosques in the world, and its unique design reflected the harmony between the Muslims, Christians, and Jews. The history of the building goes even beyond Moorish Spain. It was originally a small Visigoth temple. When Muslims arrived to Spain they had to find or build places of worship because in those days the Mosque was the hub for the Muslim Community. Abd Al Rahman set his sights on the Visigoth temple for its location and grandeur. He approached them with an offer to buy half of it for Muslims to pray in and then the other half was bought in 784 and expanded into a mosque. Three later extensions nearly quintupled the size of Abd ar-Rahman I's mosque and brought it to the form you see today – with one major alteration: a Christian cathedral plonked right in the middle of the mosque in the 16th century (hence the often-used description 'Mezquita-Catedral'). For Muslims this can be a very emotional experience and one that can leave you very heavy hearted. It signifies everything Muslims once were (which can be very inspiring) but also signifies everything that we have also lost (which can be very emotional). When visiting the Mezquita you will be told by security that you are not allowed to pray in the Mezquita. As Muslims this rule must be respected and we have to acknowledge that although the Mezquita is still full of Islamic architecture it is actually no longer a mosque but in fact a working cathedral that is used by the Christian community.

The Alcazar of Seville

The Alcazar de Sevilla is a royal palace which was built by Muslim kings of Moorish Spain. It is considered to be one of the most beautiful places in Spain and is an outstanding example of Mudejar architecture in the Iberian Peninsula. In the 12th century, the construction became considerably more established as a palace, along the lines of the one we know today, when the Almohad Caliphate controlled the region. Throughout this period elements were added to the palace and the original structure refurbished in keeping with the Islamic art of the time, including features such as arabesques, calligraphy and geometric patterns. However in the 13th century, the Spanish Reconquista was in full swing and the area was soon reclaimed by the Catholic Kings of Spain who claimed the palace as their own. This marks the beginning of a new era for the palace, one under which elements of Gothic, Renaissance and Romanesque design were combined to the original Islamic structure leading to the unique blend of styles known as Mudéjar. Of the original Islamic style structure only the Patio de Yeso, the Sala de Justicia, the Patio del Crucero and the Patio de la Casa de Contratación remain. The rest of the buildings were either completely rebuilt or added anew to the original structure during the Middle Ages. Although ownership of the palace now belongs to the local council of Seville, the Alcázar is the oldest royal palace still in use, regularly hosting state officials and dignitaries, and since 1987 it has been declared a UNESCO World Heritage site.



The Roman Bridge and Callahora Tower Museum

The Roman Bridge in Cordoba is a "have to" place to visit for people visiting Islamic Spain. It was originally built in the early 1st century BC across the Guadalquivir river, but has been reconstructed at various times since. Most of the present structure dates from the Muslim reconstruction in the 8th century. It currently, after the Islamic reconstruction, has 16 arcades, one less than originally, and a total length of 247 meters. The width is around 9 meters. Once you have crossed the bridge (or before you start crossing depending on which way you are coming from) you must visit the The Calahorra Tower Museum. It offers a captivating journey through the History and Culture of al-Andalus, a unique occasion to discover: - historic figures such as Averroes, Maimonides, Ibn Arabi and King Alfonso X the Wise - the science, the techniques and the music of those golden centuries (from X to XIII centuries) - the magnificent architecture of the Mosque of Córdoba and the Alhambra Palace of Granada. Both of these places are must sees when travelling to Cordoba.



Routes of the Pueblos Blanco

Depending on your itinerary a great way to end any tour of Andalucia is a visit to the White Villages. These white villages or Pueblo Blancos as they are more commonly known in Spain offer a welcome escape to nature and relaxation. Most of the villages are clustered around the Sierra Nevada Mountain Range and the foothills of Las Alpujarras. These white villages, with whitewashed walls, red tiled roofs, cobblestone streets and ornate churches atop cliffs are rich in history. They date back to the Romans and Muslim times and offer spectacular flora & fauna, historical walking routes and are havens for birds watchers & wildlife lovers. Many of the villages along the Route of the Pueblo Blancos are familiar with the recent influxes of tourism, however, some still remain secluded from the outside world, bursting with tradition and charm! One thing they all have in common? The typical architecture of Andalusian villages that you will grow to love as you travel through Andalucia.



Conclusion

By travelling to Spain and to other places that are significant to Islamic History we are confident that you will become closer to your roots as Muslims living in the west, your past and your heritage. It is only by knowing where you have come from can you truly know where you are travelling to. Therefore we encourage every Muslim to not just go on holidays but to really travel and seek knowledge in these lands, see the contribution that Islam has made to the world and see what we can learn from the lessons left behind.

Travel, And Seek Knowledge

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