

## Andalucia - white villages and flamenco

Andalucia is the most populated and second largest of the seventeen autonomous communities that constitute Spain. Its capital is Seville and it is bordered on the north by Extremadura and Castilla-La Mancha; on the east by Murcia and the Mediterranean Sea and on the west by Portugal and the Atlantic Ocean.

The British colony of Gibraltar at the south shares its three-quarter-mile land border with the Andalusian province of Cádiz.

Its varied landscapes, the stability of its climate with 3000 hours of sun per year and the friendly character of its population, have turned it into one of the most attractive and most visited regions.

Coastlines of fine sandy beaches characterize the provinces of Huelva and Cadiz, which face the Atlantic Ocean. The Mediterranean coast, from the Strait of Gibraltar to Almeria, on the other hand has a smoother climate with less wind and higher water temperatures.

Visitors to the region are spoiled for choice. From the golden beaches to those beautiful mountain ranges, and the famous "white villages", the possibilities are endless. Sports lovers are well catered for here and anything from skiing in the Sierra Nevada to surfing at the coast of Cadiz can easily be found.

In Andalucia you will live the magic of Flamenco and bullfighting in their most authentic style, and myths like Don Juan and Carmen were born here. This is a land of great traditions, which has understood how to incorporate progress.

The Spanish spoken in the Americas is largely descended from the Andalusian dialect of Spanish due to the role played by Seville as the gateway to Spain's American territories in the 16th and 17th centuries.

### Major Attractions in Andalucia

**Seville:** The Andalusian capital, the third largest city of Spain, is among the most beloved places by tourists, thanks to its unique ambience and its great monuments. The Arabian bell tower Giralda, the city's landmark, the enormous cathedral, Torre del Oro and the old district Barrio Santa Cruz are among the highlights.

**Granada:** The Moorish Jewel, located at the foot of snowy Sierra Nevada mountain range, is a must-see. Most outstanding is certainly the great Arabian palace Alhambra.

**Cordoba:** The long-time centre of Moorish Spain, Cordoba has monuments of outstanding importance. The Mezquita, the great Mosque, is perhaps, most impressive.

**Malaga:** Among its major attractions are the Moorish Alcazaba and the splendid Mediterranean coast. Málaga is also well known as being the birthplace of Pablo Picasso, the painter and sculptor.

**Costa del Sol:** The coast of Malaga is home to some of Spain's most impressive beaches. Among the most famous are in the towns of Marbella, Torremolinos, Benalmadena, Fuengirola and San Pedro de Alcantara.

**Ronda:** In the middle of the bizarre mountain range Serranía de Ronda, at the edge of a canyon of a depth of 120 metres, you will find Ronda - certainly one of the most incredible and beautiful towns in Spain.

**Almeria:** Almeria is among those Andalusian cities that have best preserved their Moorish heritage. The Costa de Almeria is also an area of great tourist attractions.

**Cadiz:** Cadiz is one of the oldest cities in Spain. It is fascinating for its typical Andalusian ambience with whitewashed houses and tropical vegetation. Compared with the spectacular nature of other carnival celebrations, the light-hearted fun and entertainment of the Carnival of Cadiz makes it a unique fiesta which is well worth getting to know.

**Huelva:** Huelva is of great importance as a fishing port as well as for its industry. Christopher Columbus, who started his travel to America from the nearby Palos de la Frontera, marks the city and its surroundings. There you may still visit the monastery where he prepared his travel, alongside with a

reconstruction of the port and the three famous ships.

Doñana National Park: This extensive preserve including beach areas with moving dunes as well as marshy regions of great value concerning their fauna is located next to the outlet of Guadalquivir River, Matalascañas, Acebuche and El Rocio. Numerous species of migrant birds, on their way from Eurasia to Africa, stay here during the breeding phase.

Costa de la Luz: The "Coast of the Light", in the provinces of Huelva and Cadiz at the Atlantic Ocean, offers splendid beaches of fine sand. Major centres of attraction are Punta Umbria, Islantilla, Isla Cristina, Mazagon, Matalascañas, Barbate, Algeciras, Tarifa, Conil de la Frontera, Chiclana de la Frontera, El Puerto de Santa Maria, Rota, Chipiona and Sanlucar de Barrameda.

Jerez de la Frontera: In the hometown of the world-famous Sherry wine several "Bodegas" may be visited. Jerez is the site of a renowned equestrian school. Wine and horses mark the ambience of this manorial town.

Jaen: Its medieval fortress dominates Jaen, which is located inland. Additional attractions are the 11th century Moorish baths and the Renaissance cathedral. The nearby Sierra de Cazorla is an outstanding nature reserve.

#### Andalusian Cuisine

Andalusian cuisine is characterized by gazpacho, fried fish, the jamones of Jabugo and Trevélez and the wines of Jerez, particularly sherry.

#### Fried Foods:

Frying in Andalusian cuisine is dominated by the use of an olive oil that is produced in the provinces of Jaén, Córdoba, Seville and Granada. The foods are dredged in flour 'a la andaluza' (meaning only flour, without egg or other ingredients). They are then fried in a large quantity of hot olive oil.

#### Fish and Shellfish:

With five coastal provinces, the consumption of fish and shellfish is rather high: white shrimp from the Bay of Cádiz; prawns; murex; anchovies; baby squid; cuttlefish, flounder, etc.

#### Desserts:

Andalusian deserts are heavily influenced by medieval Andalusian cuisine. Notable dishes include pestiños (a deep-fried pastry bathed in honey), alfajores, amarguillos (a form of almond macaroons) from Medina Sidonia, the polvorones (almond cookies of Estepa), lard bread, wine doughnuts, churro (a fried-dough pastry-based snack) and torrijas.

#### Music of Andalusia

Andalusia is best known for flamenco, a form of music and dance that is mostly performed by Gypsy people and popular throughout the world.

Improvised flamenco songs of ancient Andalusian origin are called Cante Hondo and are characterized by a reduced tonal ambience, a lack of rhythm and repetition of notes. A single singer performs Cante Hondo songs.

#### About the Author

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