

Route of Washington Irving



This Route is one of the vital arteries of *The Routes of El legado andalusí*: it links the lands of Huelva, Seville, Málaga and Granada. This itinerary relives the voyages made by the Romantic American writer and diplomat, attracted by the exoticism and exuberance of the “Arab” vestiges of Andalusia and by the admiration he felt for the figure of Christopher Columbus and his Discovery of America. While living in Seville, Irving started his journey to the Columbian sites of Moguer, Palos de la Frontera and La Rábida in order to investigate the character of Christopher Columbus. This is how his close relationship with Huelva began in 1928. A year later he would undertake his journey from Seville to Granada, a suggestive route that meant that from the beginning of the 19th century the Romantic image of Andalusia was to be projected in Europe, attracting a multitude of artists, writers, curious onlookers and all kinds of travellers. This route invites the traveller to live experiences and to enjoy a mild climate and incomparable cities. The voyager will enjoy the welcoming hospitality and the open character of the people. The landscape offers spectacular marshlands and beautiful pine forests, extensive countryside villages and craggy villas at the foot of citadels and castles, towns that gather extraordinary monuments in the midst of natural areas of incomparable interest. The uses, customs and traditions that cheer up the life of these villages, where agriculture is the main activity, offer an additional incentive for a fascinating journey.

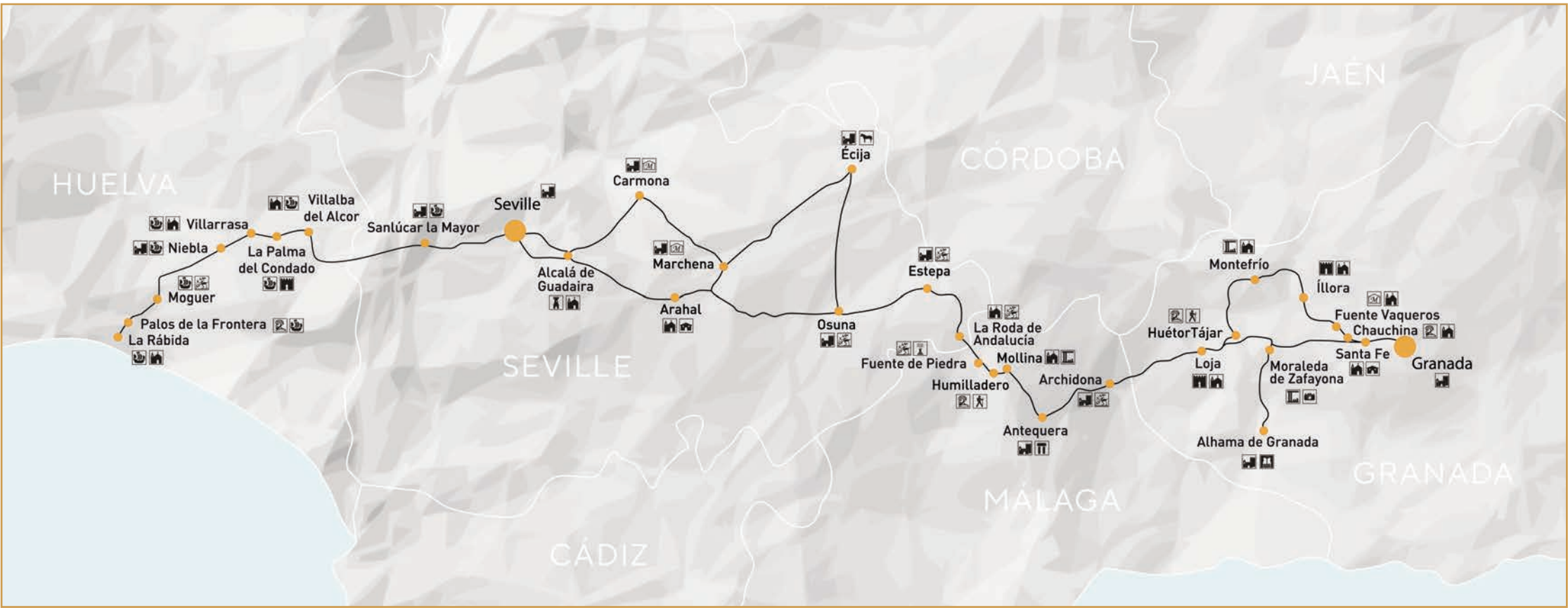
El legado andalusí

The Iberian Peninsula went through one of the most privileged periods in its history during the Muslim era, which resulted in a brilliant civilization. During this time, Andalusia became the cultural focus of Europe and the link between East and West.

The Routes of El legado andalusí go through those paths which connected the kingdom of Granada with the rest of al-Andalus in the past. Along this itinerary the travellers have the possibility of enjoying wonderful landscapes on a quiet journey, tasting exquisite dishes and giving free rein to their imagination by turning past events into a present experience.

Andalusian Public Foundation
El legado andalusí
Calle Mariana Pineda s/n. Corral del Carbón. 18009, Granada, Spain.
Tel.: +34 958 225 995.
www.legadoandalusi.es - info@legadoandalusi.es.
Facebook y Twitter: legadoandalusi

Corral del Carbón. Headquarters of El legado andalusí Andalusian Public Foundation.



ITINERARY AND DISTANCES

The Route of Washington Irving follows an itinerary of about 360 km (223 miles) starting from La Rábida, in Huelva, known for the monastery founded at the beginning of the 15th century where Christopher Columbus conceived and managed his project to find a new route to the Indies, and which led him to discover the American continent. It continues on to Palos de la Frontera and Moguer and other villages that the traveller passed through on his way back and forth between Seville and Huelva. All of them are described in his diary: Villarrasa, Niebla, La Palma del Condado and Villalba del Alcor. The route traverses Sanlúcar la Mayor before reaching Seville, the city where Washington Irving lived for 14 months. The road linking Seville and Granada historically had a marked frontier character. It was an artery of communications established many centuries before that in the late Middle Ages served as a trade route between the Christian peninsular south and the Nasrid kingdom of Granada. The Route largely follows the outline of the A-92 highway. From Seville, it reaches initially Alcalá de Guadaira and Arahál. It makes incursions on both sides of this central axis: firstly, on the north, it approaches Carmona, Marchena and Écija. It runs across lands of Antequera and further on it turns North again, heading to Montefrío and Íllora, finally visiting Alhama de Granada, several kilometers to the south. North of the A-92, the road leads us to Montefrío and Íllora, returning through Fuente Vaqueros and Chauchina to the main route before ending in Santa Fe and Granada.

LANDSCAPE

At the beginning of the route the traveller will find a great diversity of landscapes, including the Odiel Marshes –Biosphere Reserve–, one of the most important wetlands of the Iberian Peninsula, and Doñana National Park, declared World Heritage Site by UNESCO. The undulations of the countryside make way to a more rugged landscape upon reaching Estepa, where the foothills of the sub-Baetic mountain range start to appear, as the itinerary opens up to plains and hills between Seville and Granada, between two river valleys, those of the Guadalquivir and its main tributary, the Genil. The route is dotted with lagoons, particularly Fuente de Piedra lagoon. We will also come across whimsical limestone formations in the Torcal de Antequera, precursor to the *Vega* (river fertile valley) that will lead the traveller to Granada.



WASHINGTON IRVING



Columbian themes, he undertook a journey to Moguer, Palos de la Frontera and La Rábida in order to better document Christopher Columbus.

ARCHITECTURE

MUSLIM, BAROQUE, POPULAR

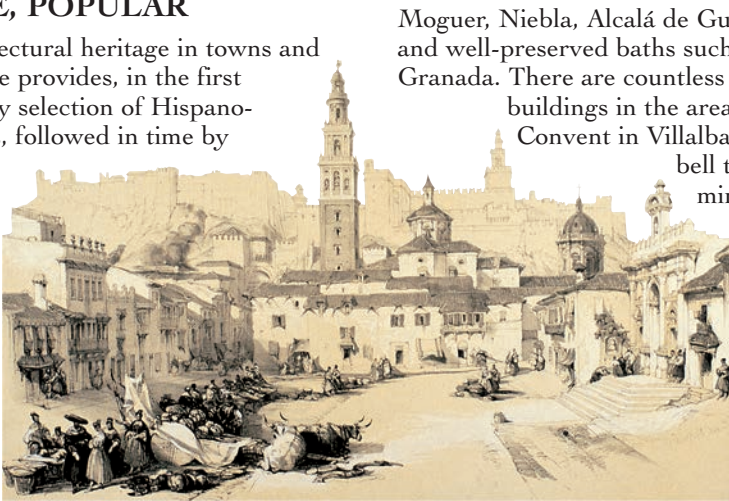
The considerable architectural heritage in towns and villages along the route provides, in the first place, an extraordinary selection of Hispano-Muslim (Andalusi) buildings, followed in time by Mudéjar, Baroque and popular artistic manifestations. Together with the outstanding examples of Muslim art in Seville –Giralda and Alcázar– and in Granada –Alhambra–, towns and villages along the way also provide equally notable buildings –castles and fortresses such as those of

Above, a Romantic view of Carmona. In the background, the tower of San Pedro, inspired by the Giralda tower, looking like a minaret, and the thick walls of the Alcázar of Seville Gateway, originally Roman and reformed by the Almohads.

Below, variety of landscapes along the Route.

- Monuments
- Legendary
- Columbian Places
- Andalusí Castle
- Museum
- Arab baths
- Church
- Medieval Castle
- Nature
- Hiking
- Panoramic viewpoint
- Civilian building
- Archaeological Site
- Historical Fountain
- Dolmen
- Horses

In 1829 he travelled from Seville to Granada, where he stayed for a time. His writing at this period was full of Hispano-Moorish references, such as the world-renowned *The Alhambra tales*, that contributed so much to shape the Romantic image of Andalusia.



Moguer, Niebla, Alcalá de Guadaira, Antequera and Loja, and well-preserved baths such as those in Alhama de Granada. There are countless Mudéjar and Baroque buildings in the area, such as the Carmelite Convent in Villalba del Alcor, churches with bell towers that are reminders of

minarets, lace-like plaster decorative motifs recalling Muslim crafts, as well as palaces and public buildings. This route also offers a plain popular architecture that can be found in the urban constructions and in the farms and country houses along the way.



Above, typical Moorish baths, al-hammam in Arabic, origin of the name Alhama. They consist of a courtyard, a hall, a cold room, a warm room with a pool and the hot room, where the steam and hot water are produced by a boiler.

TRADITIONS

FOOD

The local products found along this route are the basis for a tasty gastronomy. Bread such as that from Alcalá de Guadaira and Antequera, with *mollejos* (sort of soft rolls), are very famous. Extra virgin olive oil can be savoured all along the route, as well as high quality natural products such as asparagus from Villarrasa and Huétor-Tájar, and a great variety of vegetables that give their flavour to different stews and casseroles, *gazpachos*, *porras* (tomato creamy soup) and salads. The cured meats, meat dishes have great quality, as well as fish and seafood from Palos de la Frontera (white prawns, king prawns and langoustines) and Iberian ham are of great quality. In Moguer and Palos de la Frontera, strawberries and other red fruits such as raspberries, blackberries and blueberries are



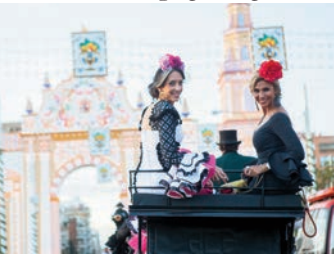
grown and exported all over Europe. We must not forget to mention the sweets, some made by cloistered nuns: fried *roscos*, *buñuelos*, *empanadillas*, *roscas de miel*, *torrijas* with wine and honey, and the tasty *pestiños* (fritters).

HANDICRAFTS

From La Rábida to Granada there are countless workshops, where some of the most representative Andalusian handicrafts are manufactured. Pottery and metalwork are outstanding, as well as wood and leather crafts applied in saddlery and bookbinding. The Route of Washington Irving includes municipalities that are heirs to a great craft tradition that includes cooperage, bobbin lace-making, embroidery, and typical Andalusian or flamenco dressmaking. Labour with vegetable fibres and other specialities such as jewellery and guitar-making complete the artisan scenery along the Route.

FEASTS

The cycle of festivities in places along the route of Washington Irving follows the usual pattern in Andalusia. It includes Easter, fairs and celebrations in honour of patron saints. The season begins in spring, followed by a very busy schedule in summer; Corpus Christi is very popular and so are the different pilgrimages. Flamenco is an unmistakable



feature of popular culture throughout this area, to which many festivals and fairs stand witness. Grape harvest festivals are worthy of great interest. Some of them have had a long tradition, such as the one celebrated in La Palma del Condado.

HORSEMANSHIP

An old saying maintains that the reason why horses in the countryside of Seville are so fleet of foot is because the amares are made pregnant by the wind; this is an example of equine lore surrounding the tremendous popularity of the local breed along the route. An image of these swift animals is associated, furthermore, with travellers and with the legendary bandits that frequently featured as part of the landscape. It can be confirmed that the horses bred today in the American continent, both in the North and in the South, have their origins in Andalusia, specifically in Doñana marshes. From there, they were taken along in Christopher Columbus' second voyage and on successive expeditions to these lands, where the use of horses was totally unknown hitherto. Pilgrimages and Horses are common themes in these territories. Many of the villages and towns along the Route offer a wide variety of festive-religious events in which the horse is one of the main protagonists. There are studs along the Route in Niebla, Écija, Marchena, Osuna,



Antequera, Loja and even nearer Granada devoted to thoroughbred Spanish horses and sometimes, Arabs also. It is, therefore, a route where riding part of the way is a real possibility.



From La Rábida (Huelva) to Seville and Granada

Route of Washington Irving

Cultural Route of the Council of Europe

The Routes of El legado andalusí

Informations Points		
LA RÁBIDA Monasterio de Santa María de la Rábida. Monasterio Tel. 959 350 411	ALCALÁ DE GUADAIRA Oficina Municipal de Turismo. Avda. Tren de los Panaderos s/n. Tel. 955 796 474	ARCHIDONA Oficina Municipal de Turismo. Plaza Ochavada, 2. Tel. 952 716 479
PALOS DE LA FRONTERA Oficina de Turismo. C/ Rábida 7. Tel. 959 991 092	ARAHAL Oficina de Turismo. Calle Serrano, 6. Tel. 955 841 417	LOJA Oficina Municipal de Turismo. Plaza de la Constitución 1. Tel. 958 321 520
MOGUER Oficina de Turismo. Teatro Felipe Godínez. Calle Andalucía Tel. 959 371 898	CARMONA Oficina Municipal de Turismo. Alcázar de la Puerta de Sevilla s/n. Tel. 954 190 955	HUÉTOR-TÁJAR Casa de la Cultura. Plaza Gregorio Peláez s/n. Tel. 645 596 752
NIEBLA Oficina de Turismo. Calle Arrabal, 36 Tel. 959 363 700	MARCHENA Oficina de Municipal de Turismo. Calle Las Torres, 40. Museo Lorenzo Coullaut Valera. Tel. 955 321 010 Ext. 175	MORALEDA DE ZAFAYONA Ayuntamiento. Ctra. del Canal, 6. Tel. 958 443 002
VILLARRASA Ayuntamiento. Plaza de España Tel. 959 419 238	ÉCIJA Oficina Municipal de Turismo. Palacio de Benamejil. Calle Elvira s/n. Tel. 955 902 933	ALHAMA DE GRANADA Oficina Municipal de Turismo. Carrera Francisco Toledo, 10. Tel. 958 360 686
LA PALMA DEL CONDADO Oficina de Turismo. Plaza de España. Tel. 959 402 409/ 630 878 903	OSUNA Oficina Municipal de Turismo. Calle Sevilla, 37. Tel. 955 815 732	MONTEFRÍO Oficina de Turismo. Plaza de España, 1. Tel. 958 336 004
VILLALBA DEL ALCOR Ayuntamiento. Plaza de España, 1. Tel. 959 421 224	ESTEPA Oficina Municipal de Turismo. Ayuntamiento. Calle Aguilón y Cano, s/n. Tel. 955 912 717 (Ext. 526)	ÍLLORA Oficina Municipal de Turismo. Av. San Rogelio, s/n. Tel. 672 152 766
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Oficina de Turismo de la Provincia de Sevilla Plaza del Triunfo, 1. Tel. 954 210 005	MOLINA Ayuntamiento. Calle de la Alameda, 1. Tel. 952 740 044	GRANADA Oficina de Turismo de la Junta de Andalucía. Plaza Nueva, Santa Ana, 4. Tel. 958 575 202
	ANTEQUERA Oficina de Información Turística del Patronato Provincial. Calle Cárnel Baja 3. Tel. 958 247 128	Oficina Municipal de Información Turística Ayuntamiento de Granada. Plaza del Carmen s/n. Tel. 958 248 280

LA RÁBIDA

La Rábida is an enclave belonging to the municipality of Palos de la Frontera, located 5 km from the place from where Christopher Columbus set out on his voyage to America. La Rábida is mainly known for the monastery founded at the beginning of the 15th century. It was here that Christopher Columbus stayed with his son Diego, and the place where he conceived and managed his project to find a new route to the Indies, which led him to discover the American continent. In 1949 it was declared "First Historical Monument of the Hispanic peoples" and is considered to be the most emblematic monument for the Discovery of the New World. In *Muelle de las Carabelas* (dock of caravels), inaugurated on 15 March 1994, in addition to the replicas of the ships, the main tourist attraction is the Museum, consisting of an interpretation centre, the medieval quarter (recreated around the dock) and *Lola del Encuentro* (encounter island), where the indigenous culture of the island of Guanahani, the first American land on which the discoverer set his foot, has been recreated.



PALOS DE LA FRONTERA



Palos de la Frontera is known worldwide as the cradle of the Discovery of America. On 3 August 1492, two caravels, La Pinta and La Niña, and the ship Santa María set sail from this port commanded by Admiral Christopher Columbus and the Pinzón brothers carrying a crew of sailors from Palos and the surrounding area, bound for the unknown. Only a few ruins remain today of the existing medieval fortress, next to the church. In his diary, Washington Irving accounts for his visit to Martín Alonso Pinzón's House, now turned into a museum: *The house is placed on a hill among vineyards belonging to the Pinzón family, which cover a large part of what was once the old town of Palos*. The descendants of the Pinzón family have lived here until a few years ago. The visit to this municipality is completed with the Parish Church of San Jorge and the Fontanilla de Colón where, according to tradition, the ships were supplied with water before setting sail to America.

MOGUER



During the times of al-Andalus, Moguer used to be a farmhouse belonging to the powerful Taifa kingdom of Niebla. It was the birthplace of Juan Ramón Jiménez, winner of the Nobel Prize for Literature, whose house-museum can be visited. The monuments of the town include the Monastery of Santa Clara, declared as National Monument in 1951. From the period of al-Andalus, the Castle of Moguer, an Almohad military construction, has been preserved. A visit to Almirante Hernández-Pinzón's House is also worth of visiting. It was here where Washington Irving stayed during his trip to the Columbian Places in 1828. Furthermore, 3,590 hectares of the municipal area of Moguer are part of Doñana National and Natural Park, declared a World Heritage Site by UNESCO in 1994.

NIEBLA



The walls of Niebla owe their present-day style to the Almohads. The Castle of Los Guzmanes stands inside the walls. Despite its Roman origins, it has undergone several alterations by successive peoples:

Visigoths, Arabs and Christians. The Church of Santa María de la Granada was considered in the Muslim period as the main mosque. The Church of San Martín, on the other hand, was the minor mosque. Alphonso X granted this temple to the Jews of Niebla as a synagogue and was later turned into a church by the Christians. One of the best-known architectural features of Niebla is the Roman Bridge over the river Tinto, just at the entrance to the town.

VILLARRASA



Villarrasa is a place where a multitude of cultures have historically succeeded each other: Carthaginians, Romans, Visigoths and Muslims have all left their mark. It is located in a privileged position, with quick access to different communication routes. Its monuments include the Church of Nuestra Señora de las Angustias (Place of Cultural Interest), the Hermitage of Nuestra Señora de los Remedios, whose structure is crowned by a bellry and a dome, and the Church of San Vicente Mártir, the town's parish church. Outside the town centre is the ancient Gadea Bridge, built in 1935 over the river Tinto, a landmark in the landscape of this enclave.

LA PALMA DEL CONDADO



the town itself, we can visit the Torreón del Valle, a crenelated tower originally from the Almohad period. Above it is the hermitage-castle devoted to Nuestra Señora del Valle, built in the 15th century in Mudejar style. The church of San Juan Bautista also stands out. Worthy of mention are manor houses and wine cellars. In September, La Palma del Condado celebrates one of the oldest fairs in Spain, known as the *Real Feria* (Royal Fair). This title was granted in 1398 by the King Henry III *el Doliente*.

VILLALBA DEL ALCOR



The origins of Villalba del Alcor were due to its attractiveness as a border area for Christians and Muslims. The high strategic value of the town led to the construction of a fortress, which was also a mosque in that period. It belonged to Niebla until 1253, when it was reconquered by Alphonso X the Wise. Later on, it passed into the hands of Leonor Núñez, daughter of the high sheriff of Niebla. Around 1350, the town was bought by Alvar Pérez de Guzmán, and his lineage settled there until the 15th century. A walk around the streets reveals us the intimate town of Villalba, that takes us back to the past; a town of churches such as San Bartolomé and convents such as the Carmelite, built in Baroque architecture, and that of Allitllo friars; a stately Villalba, where old manor houses stand out, such as the Casa del Cañón; a modest Villalba, as shown in the ancient Hospital de la Misericordia, from the 17th century and a wine-producing Villalba, where the smell of the wine from old cellars is still in the air.

SANLÚCAR LA MAYOR



castle, also from the Almohad period, whose function was to protect the west flank of Seville. The Almohad minarets that have been converted into bell towers in the churches of San Pedro and Santa María date from this period. On the outskirts of Sanlúcar la Mayor we will found the farmsteads Benazuza, to the south of the town, and al-Yamanah, with similar gardens to those of the Maria Luisa Park in Seville.

SEVILLE

History, scenery, art and atmosphere come together in one of the most captivating cities, where light, air and colour create a gamut of sensations on the banks of the Guadalquivir, 'big river' in Arabic. The legend says that Seville was founded by Hercules over 2,500 years ago; it flourished in the times of Tartessos and Rome and achieved the rank of what might be termed metropolis in the course of the nearly 550 years of Muslim history. The extensive old town centre –surrounded by walls of which there are still extant sections, such as that of La Macarena– was formed in the 12th and 13th centuries, when *Ishbiliya* became the peninsular capital of the Almohad caliphs, vying with Marrakech in grand buildings. Signs of that past are visible in countless corners and buildings: the Santa Cruz district, the Jewry, centre, Triana and the Alameda quarter, as well as the neighbourhood of the Cathedral –where the mosque's courtyard is now the Cathedral's courtyard and the Giralda tower, the Alcázar, a set of palaces and gardens built between the 10th to 15th centuries; the Atarazanas –the old shipyards–, the towers of Silver and of Gold by the river and the old mosque where El Salvador church now stands are all outstanding among the places in Seville that are worthy of note.



ALCALÁ DE GUADEÍRA



Here Irving noticed *packs of mules and donkeys loaded with large baskets of leaves and rolls* referring to the well-known baking tradition in Alcalá, still applicable nowadays. The Arabic name *al-Qalat*, the fortress, reveals its importance at the time. The Almohads built a gigantic fortification on a hill overlooking the village with some splendid buildings, as well as a pretty Mudejar church. Below, the Guadaira river, *Wad-Shira* –river of abundance–flows, whose current moved the old flour mills that can still be seen. From Alcalá to Carmona, the way passes Gandul, an enchanting village with an Almohad tower beside a Baroque palace, among Roman ruins and medieval remains.

ARAHAL

We drive ahead on A-92 highway, going across the core of the Sevillian fertile countryside until we reach Arahál, a land of uncertain origin that seems to deepen its roots in Arab times. A great variety of tourist attractions can be enjoyed in the town, from its assorted range of cooking specialties to the deepest traditions. Arahál displays a rich architectural heritage, with many monuments worth visiting, among them the Church-Hospital of Santo Cristo de la Misericordia and the Church of Santa María Magdalena.

CARMONA



Perched on the highest point of Los Alcores, an area of hills extending eastwards from Seville, we come upon Carmona, whose name apparently has Punic origins –*Kar-Hannun*, city of the god Hammon. In Roman times it became one of the leading towns in this part of the countryside, deduced from the monumental size of the Gateways of Córdoba and of Seville, as well as from the remarkable Necropolis in what used to be the outskirts, but is now in the town, which also shows

that it must have been quite important. In times of al-Andalus, *Qarmana* even turned into the main town of an independent principality and provided itself with staunch walls. The Alcázar de Arriba belongs to this period and so do the reinforcements to the Gateway of Seville and layout of the old centre of town. In the neighbourhood of San Fernando square, the church of Santa María is worth pointing out, built over the main mosque, it still has the courtyard of ablutions and minaret. Also in this area are the town's museum in a lovely Baroque palace beside the church, and other handsome mansions, churches and convents. The church of Santiago is interesting and there are several Mudéjar churches such as that of San Felipe and the convent of Santa Clara, that has a revolving 'dumb waiter' that mysteriously dispatches delicious sweetmeats.

MARCHENA



Lying to the south west of Carmona, Marchena is an essentially farming community with a most remarkable artistic heritage. It was known as *Colonia Martia* by the Romans and *Marsona'anb* in Arabic. After the reconquest by the Christians, it was awarded to the Duke of Arcos who provided it with many imposing buildings. La Mota castle

is in the higher part of the town, it was the bastion of the Almohad precincts of the 12th and 13th centuries with the Gates of Seville and of Morón. Santa María, Plaza Ducal, the church of San Juan Bautista, that houses nine paintings by Zurbarán, the municipal archaeological collection and a permanent exhibition of the sculptures of Coullaut-Valera are some of the things that can be seen on a visit.

ÉCIJA



The route continues over rolling cultivated fields, only some patches of scrub and olive groves, till we get to Écija in a dip in the landscape, bathed by the Genil river, with cool waters from Sierra Nevada. This town has remote

origins and it was one of the three main towns of Roman Baetica. It was *Autigi* to the Romans and there are a few remains from those times, on view in the church of Santa María and of El Cabildo, together with vestiges of medieval art and other later ones. At the time of al-Andalus, Écija flourished and it even became the centre of one of the countless Taifa principalities for a very brief moment. The Almohads built walls and towers in the 12th c. and it achieved its present general outlines at that time. There is a compact historical centre and numerous 18th c. buildings, making it an outstanding representative of Andalusian Baroque, with a skyline of many graceful bell towers. Apart from being known as «the town of towers», it is also called «the frying pan of Andalusia» for the very high temperature that is reached in summer. Of note in this town is the main square –Plaza Mayor–, called El Salón, showing characteristic houses with galleries. While strolling about the town, we can see the churches of Santa María, Santa Cruz, Santiago and San Gil, the palaces of Peñarlor and Benamejí and other delightful buildings, among which we can get glimpses of artisans' workshops.

OSUNA

Standing on the slope of a low rise, this town has one of the most remarkable architectural and artistic heritages in the country. It was known as *Uroo* to the Iberians and Romans and it was *Osona* in Arabic until it became Osuna when it was reconquered by the Castilians. It became the main town of a powerful dukedom. There are examples of its past in the higher part of town: the quarries and the Roman necropolis, the University building in front of another outstanding Renaissance building, the Collegiate church –a really imposing creation overlooking the town. Inside, there is a collection of jewels, the Ducal Pantheon and a museum with splendid oil paintings by José de Ribera. Below stands the Baroque convent of La *Encarnación*, containing an assortment of religious art and tiles. There is also the Archaeological Museum housed in Torre del Agua. Continuing downwards, the Plaza Mayor opens out and long streets lead out, such as Sevilla and San Pedro, full of churches, convents and mansions.



ÉSTEPA



Approaching the eastern border of the province of Seville, the route of Washington Irving arrives in Estepa, perched on the slopes of a hill that foreshadows the sierras to come. It was *Asupa* to the Iberians who bravely resisted the Romans. In Arabic it was called *Utubha*, acquiring some relevance owing to its strategic location on a crossroads. It was reconquered by the Castilians in 1249 and played an important part in the war of Granada. There is a splendid view of the countryside from the castle on top of the hill; the church of Santa María and the convent of Santa Clara are worth mentioning. Further down, there are the Museum, the Baroque tower of La Victoria and some Baroque churches, such as El Carmen and Los Remedios. The aroma of spices used for making *polvorones* and *manteados* (eaten nearly exclusively at Christmas) pervades the atmosphere; there is a small monographic museum on these sweetmeats.

LA RODA DE ANDALUCÍA



Found in the midst of an ocean of olive trees on the road from Seville to the province of Málaga. It was founded in 1546 in an area that had not been inhabited for centuries owing to its location in non-man's land on the Moorish-Castilian border. The church of *Nuestra Señora de los Llanos* is worth noting and so are the hermitages. It is best known for the delicious virgin olive oil it produces.

FUENTE DE PIEDRA

The name –meaning 'stone fountain'– comes from the fountain of medicinal water in the middle of the village. It was already known and appreciated in ancient times. This is a quiet small village near Laguna Salada, the largest lagoon in Andalusia, with nearly 1,400 hectares. Migrating birds congregate here, particularly flamingos in large numbers, this being one of the few places where they nest.

HUMILLADERO

This small village was founded as a result of all the comings and goings in the Middle Ages concerned with the conquest of Antequera by the Christians in 1410. It is a quiet agricultural village, set in attractive countryside, mostly among olive trees, some pine woods, Sierra de Humilladero and La Ratosa lagoon to the north, also a refuge for migrating birds, it has been declared a natural reserve.

MOLLINA



We come to the municipal district of Mollina, where there are various archaeological sites dating from Neolithic times up to the end of the Middle Ages. However, Mollina did not really mature into a grown-up town until the 16th c.

for its wine and olive oil. Nearby in Sierra de La Camorra, there are several caves with prehistoric paintings, such as that of Los Porqueros. Not far, in Santillán park there are remains of a Roman fort and temple.

ANTEQUERA

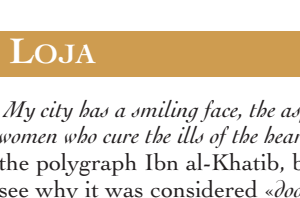
The three monumental dolmens of Menga, Viera and El Romeral, from between 2,000 and 2,500 BC, are colossal funerary reminders from Neolithic times, indicating this town's remote origin. Standing at the confluence of several roads, with the passage of time it has become one of the greater Andalusian historical sites. There is a view of the cultivated plains from the walls. During Muslim times, it belonged to the *ora* (district) of Rayya and then in 1314 it passed on to the *cora* of Ilbira under the Nasrid kingdom of Granada. It was a permanent temptation

for the kings of Castile and at last surrendered during the siege by Prince Ferdinand's forces in 1410. The inhabitants retreated to Archidona nearby, or to Granada, where they formed the district of La Antequeruela. The walls at one time appeared sturdy and strong; among the numerous churches, the ones that stand out are the Royal Collegiate church of Santa María la Mayor that has a magnificent Renaissance façade and the church of San Sebastián standing in a large square alongside the 18th c. Arch of El Nazareno and a 1545 fountain. The Municipal Museum, housed in the 18th c. palace of Nájera, contains a splendid collection of Baroque painting and pieces such as the Ephebe, a Roman bronze from the 1st c. A strange place called El Torcal stands in the hills 13 km (8 miles) from Antequera; it consists of a lunatic landscape of bizarre geological formations shaped by water and wind.



ARCHIDONA

Our route went around El Peñón de los Enamorado's (lovers' rock) with a precipice on one side over our heads. That morning we went through Archidona, standing on the side of a hill where the ruins of a Moorish fortress are visible by a hill with three peaks. This is Washington Irving's description of the town founded by the Turdetani. The Roman name was *Arva Domina* meaning Lady of the Heights, Arabized as *Arwahuna*. Abd ar-Rahman I arrived here before proclaiming the independent Emirate of al-Andalus in Córdoba and under the Caliphate, it became the capital town of the *cora* of Rayya, a name that still exists in a farming property nearby. The defences started being erected in the 9th c. and were rebuilt in the 13th c. on the side of Sierra de Gracia, from where beautiful sunsets may be seen. The hermitage of Nuestra Señora de Gracia stands over the only extant mosque in the province of Málaga. The town extends from the medieval town –Villa Alta– on streets that run from the hills to the plains, with countless squares, such as Plaza Ochavada (eight-sided) with arcades, dating from the 18th c. Excursions are organized from here to surrounding countryside at La Hoz de Marín and to the Lagoons of Archidona, wetlands declared a natural reserve.



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HUÉTOR-TAJAR

This was an old farming property called *Quarriyal Tayara*, under a tall handsome tower that still stands. It was formed by the joining of two settlements at the end of the 15th c., the *morisco* population having stayed behind after the reconquest. The irrigation system put down by the Arabs are in many ways intact, however, now the white mulberries and the silk of those times have given way to asparagus crops. These nourishing vegetables are usually consumed in omelette, soups or sauces. Asparagus plantations can be visited in the orchards by the Genil river.

MORALEDA DE ZAFAYONA



After about 8 km (5 miles) on the A-92 highway, we reach this tiny village to have a short rest and to visit Cerro de la Mora, an old Ibero-Roman settlement, with a most interesting Visigoth necropolis nearby. The road is well paved and offers sights of

Genil river and Cerro del Pino, with the Agicampe watchtower on top.

ALHAMA DE GRANADA



Hanging from an enormous rock or peak like an eagle's nest, wrote Théophile Gautier of Alhama, with houses perched over a very impressive ravine. It is famous for the spa, *al-hammam*, whence the name,

but its origins are lost in time. From the Muslim period the Torresolana watchtower and the Pósito, an old 13th c. synagogue, stand out. The features of al-Andalus are noticeable particularly in what is called the Moorish district. The fall of Alhama to the Castilians had enormous psychological effects in Granada. Queen Isabella ordered three churches to be built over three mosques; one of them is the church of La Encarnación, a gothic building from the end of the 15th and beginning of the 16th centuries. Alhama's famous baths with medicinal waters, already known in Roman times, can be accessed through a picturesque gorge made by the river. The arcade over the pool was built around the year 1100 with caliphal arches and vaults with star-shaped openings for lighting. There are lovely gardens on both sides of the river, making the whole scene very attractive. The spa stands at about 850 m. asl.

MONTEFRÍO



The road turns to the north and starts climbing. We suddenly come upon the place chosen by the Nasrid kings, Ismael III, crowned by the Abencerrajes, to set up his court. The village stands at the foot of a large rock that seems to be on the point of flattening the place to oblivion. It was reconquered by the Christian Monarchs in 1486 and they ordered the original church to be built over a mosque, between the walls of the fortress of al-Andalus, a good example of Gothic-Renaissance architecture and a National Monument where Diego de Siloé was later to build the town's church. Proof of habitation throughout the ages is Peña de los Gitanos, one of the largest archaeological sites in the province. On a series of terraces between cultivated fields, there is the outline of a settlement lived in from Palaeolithic times up to the Middle Ages. There are Argaric remains, dolmens, Roman, Visigoth and Muslim sepulchres and a historical treasure that has been sacked repeatedly. Once here, the visitor is recommended to taste game dishes, especially partridge and rabbit and *ceceo al mojeto* (brain stew).

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ÍLLORA



After crossing fields that, according to Ibn al-Khatib, were a *mine of excellent wheat, house and place of cattle*, the traveller goes upon the so-called *oja derecho de Granada* (Granada's darling), on the slopes of Sierra

Parapanda. It was mentioned by Pliny and it was the Suebi, Visigoths and Muslims –particularly the Nasrids– who were responsible for the great fortress around which the village grew. The Christian addition is another elegant church by Diego de Siloé, La Encarnación –built between 1542 and 1573. The first governor was Gonzalo Fernández de Córdoba, the *Gran Capitán*, the ruins of his mansion are visible, showing the coat of arms on the façade.

FUENTE VAQUEROS



I had my first dream of remoteness in this village, wrote Federico García Lorca of the place where he was born in 1898. His family home is one of the most visited buildings in the world. The village, that grew up around a fountain, used to be part of Soto de Roma, a royal game preserve that the Courts of Cádiz

gifted to the first Duke of Wellington in perpetuity in recognition for his service during the War of Independence.

CHAUCHINA



The origin of this name is unknown. It might come from the Roman Sancius, from willow. It was probably one of the many farmsteads that were dotted about Baetica, with excellent wheat, olive oil and wine. In the kingdom of Granada, it became one of the many fortresses. The atmosphere is traditional, with avenues along the side of the river. Two of the typical dishes here are frogs' legs and fried cod.

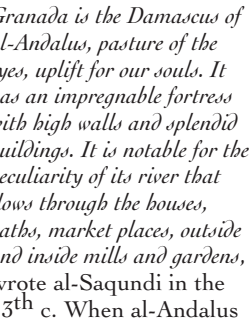
SANTA FE



This is the last town on the A-92 highway before reaching Granada. Founded by Ferdinand and Isabella in 1491 as the quarters during the siege of the Nasrid capital, it has a moat, walls and parade-ground, all

on a grid-like layout. The walls have disappeared, but the four doors are still standing –Granada, Loja, Seville and Jaén. The old centre of town is designated a Historical-Artistic Site, where we can see the *Antigua Casa Real* (old royal house), the parish church, Town Hall and granary. This can be the base for organizing excursions around the *vega* (plains) in this lovely countryside of the hollow of Granada. The most popular feasts are on 12th October –*La Hispanidad*– and *Merenlida* on 25th November. A famous sweet, the *piñonero*, of *morisco* origin, is typical of Santa Fe.

GRANADA



Granada is the Damascus of al-Andalus, pasture of the eyes, uplift for our souls. It has an impregnable fortress with high walls and splendid buildings. It is notable for the peculiarity of its river that flows through the houses, balconies, market places, outside and inside mills and gardens, wrote al-Saqundi in the 13th c. When al-Andalus was wounded to death after the Almohad defeat at Navas de Tolosa, the Nasrid dynasty, founded by Ibn al-Ahmar, upheld the kingdom of Granada until the final downfall. This is the period of which there is more evidence than of any other in this magnificent city, which was to become the inspiration of Romantic writers. Final stage of the Route of Washington Irving, common destination of all the Routes of El legado andalusí and capital city of the last Muslim kingdom of the Iberian Peninsula. Granada preserves in the palace of the Alhambra the memory of a unique civilization that represents one of the most precious treasures of Humanity.

