

# Andalucía



Practical guide



## A Natural Paradise

Andalusia has plenty to offer: dense lush forests, volcanic deserts, the highest peaks in the Iberian Peninsula, extensive wetlands, stretches of unspoilt coast and untamed nature; and places where one can improve one's knowledge and education, practice all kinds of sports, or simply while away the hours in a relaxing and quiet atmosphere. Andalusia is one of the leading Spanish regions in the implementation of measures for the protection of

environmental heritage. 18% of its territory is included within a broad network of more than 80 **Natural Areas** comprising 24 **natural parks** which spread over **mountainous ranges, woodland** (with true botanical jewels such as the **Spanish fir** which can be found in the **Sierra de Grazalema and Sierra de las Nieves natural parks**), and coastal areas, such as the **Cabo de Gata-Níjar natural park**. Additionally, the region has

ecological importance such as the **National Parks of Doñana** (a safe haven for the Iberian lynx) and the **Sierra Nevada** (with the **highest peaks** in the Iberian Peninsula - **Mulhacén**, 3,481 m. and **Veleta**, 3,392 m.), both of which have been declared **Biosphere Reserves** by Unesco. There are also (28) **nature reserves** and (32) **natural sites**. Smaller in size than the parks, the nature reserves are mostly wetlands which play a vital ecological role in

supporting a wide range of plants and animals, particularly birds, whereas the natural sites offer a **wide variety of unusual landscape** features ranging from the undulating karst formations to be found at **El Torcal in Antequera**, to **Tabernas in Almería**, the **only desert in Europe**. The region also boasts a number of spectacular natural monuments such as the **Cueva de Nerja**, the **Gruta de las Maravillas**, and **Los Infernos de Loja**.



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### NATURAL BEAUTY

The region's incredible variety of landscapes and geographical contrasts range from the snow-capped peaks of the Sierra Nevada to the warm campiñas in the Valley of the Guadalquivir, volcanic landscapes like the Tabernas desert, and the lush medium-height sierras.

Stretching for almost **900 kilometres**, the region's coastline is dotted with towns and beaches. The Mediterranean section includes the **Costa de Almería**, the **Granadan Costa Tropical**, and Malaga's **Costa del Sol**, whereas the **Costa de la Luz** between Cadiz and Huelva is on the Atlantic. There are **fine golden beaches** and **concealed coves** with warm crystalline waters and exceptional underwater scenery. The **Doñana National Park**, declared a **World Heritage Site** in 1994, is the largest nature reserve in Europe and one of the natural jewels of Andalusia.



### GOLF, WATER SPORTS AND ACTIVE TOURISM



With its natural wealth Andalusia offers a huge range of possibilities for outdoor pursuits in natural surroundings: walking, potholing, mountain climbing, abseiling, paragliding, free flying, horse riding, hunting, fishing, diving, surfing, skiing... The eight Andalusian provinces have well equipped **modern facilities for professional competition sports** which make the region an ideal destination for sports enthusiasts. Additionally,

there is a comprehensive network of high performance and professional sports centres and facilities which host **international sporting events**. Examples include: the **Sierra Nevada Ski Station**, the **Motor Racing Track in Jerez**, hundreds of golf courses which can be found throughout the region but especially on the Costa del Sol (an area which contains the largest number of courses in the whole of Europe), and 39 **marinas** of international prestige such as the famous one in Puerto Banús, Malaga.



### MONUMENTS AND CULTURAL ROUTES

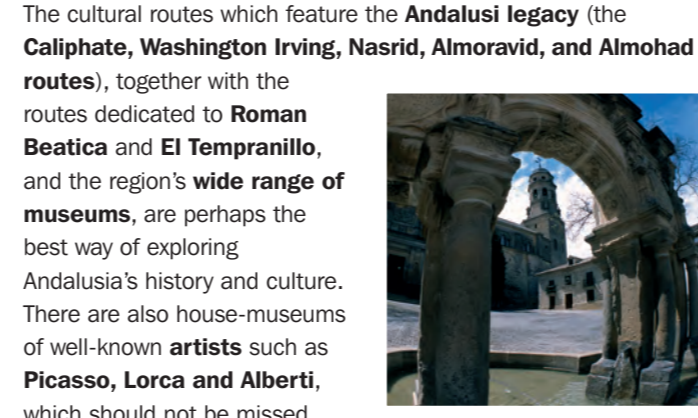
Throughout its thousands of years of history Andalusia has accumulated an impressive

**cultural and historic heritage**. Thanks to its mild climate, fertile soil, and rich mineral resources, the region has been continually inhabited since Prehistoric times, the **Tartessians, Phoenicians, Iberians and Carthaginians** being the first peoples who settled there. In 206 BC, the city of Gadir (Cadiz), the last stronghold of Carthaginian Iberia, surrendered to the Roman army. This was the beginning of the Romanisation of Andalusia, where Augustus established an imperial province known as **Beaetia**. The flourishing Roman period, which left its imprint in cities like **Itálica**, in Santiponce (Seville), was followed by the Visigoths and Byzantines, and then the Muslims who invaded the peninsula in the year 711. The Andalusian culture, the root of many



Andalusian customs, was responsible for some of the most impressive Andalusian monuments, many of which have been declared **World Heritage Sites: Cordoba's Mosque-Cathedral and its historic centre; the Alhambra, Generalife Gardens and Albayzín in Granada; and the Giralda**

**tower and Alcázar, in Seville**. However, traces of a splendid past are not only visible in the capital cities. Most Andalusian villages and towns boast magnificent monuments which reflect their long history and rich artistic and cultural legacy. Valuable examples of Islamic, renaissance, and baroque architecture can be found in the numerous fortresses, castles, churches, convents, palaces and other constructions which make up Andalusia's historic heritage. Fine examples of this are the **renaissance complexes** in towns like **Úbeda and Baeza**, which have also been declared World Heritage Sites. The cultural routes which feature the **Andalusian legacy** (the **Caliphate, Washington Irving, Nasrid, Almoravid, and Almohad routes**), together with the routes dedicated to **Roman Beatica and El Tempranillo**, and the region's **wide range of museums**, are perhaps the best way of exploring Andalusia's history and culture. There are also house-museums of well-known **artists** such as **Picasso, Lorca and Alberti**, which should not be missed.



### FLAMENCO, FIESTAS AND GASTRONOMY

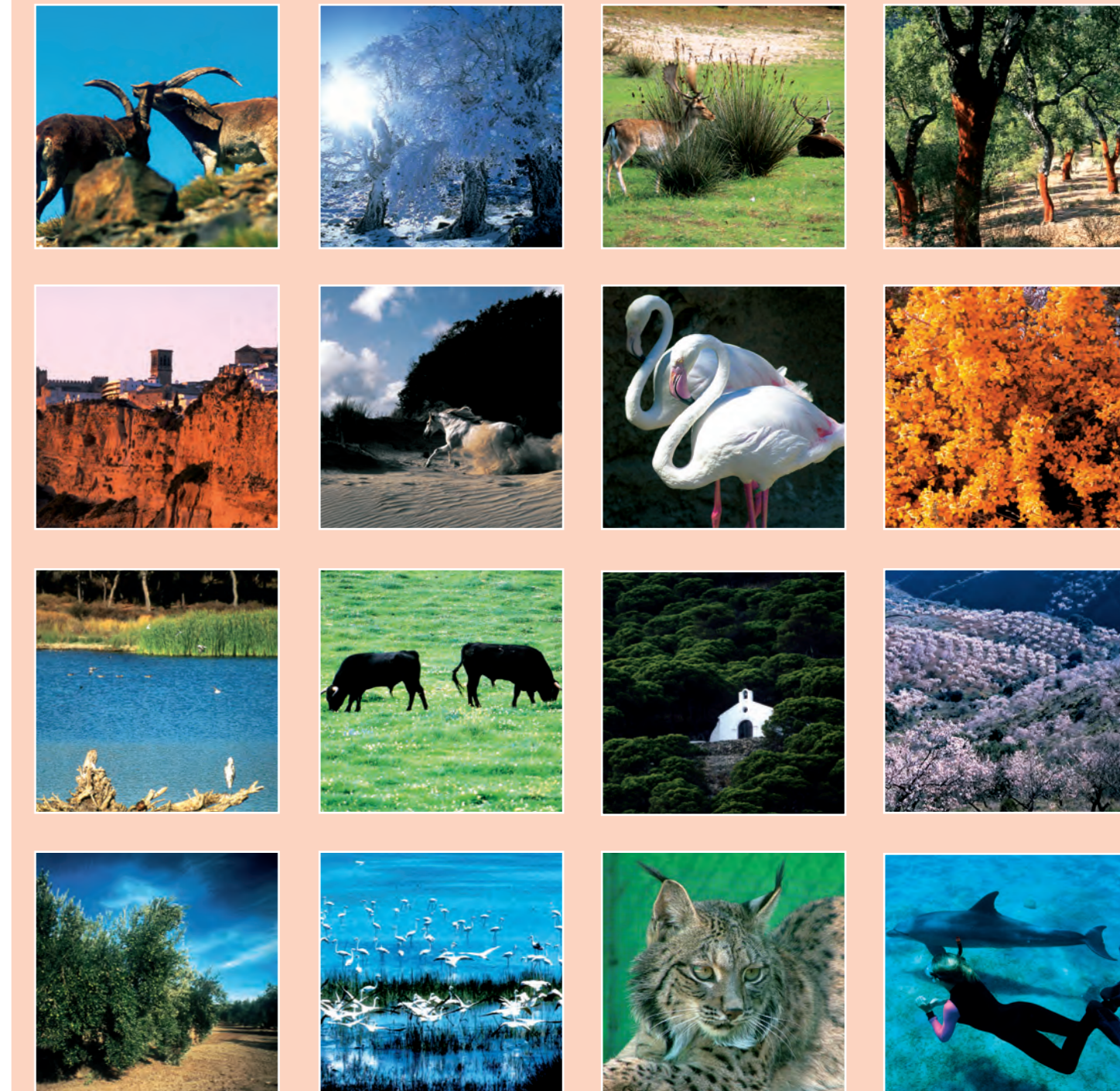
**Flamenco**, one of the most idiosyncratic elements of Andalusian culture and identity, is the central theme of numerous **routes (Los Cantes Básicos, Minera, Huelva and its fandangos, etc.)**. Andalusia and its way of life cannot be fully understood without exploring the fiestas and traditions, and sampling its gastronomy.

The region's festive calendar, which includes popular **pilgrimages**, such as that of **El Rocío, fairs, Easter Week celebrations, and Carnivals**, is as varied as its geographical diversity. Another way of discovering Andalusia is through its gastro-nomy, which is also a source of health. Based on the Mediterranean culinary tradition, with fresh seafood and locally sourced agricultural products, the one essential ingredient of the regional cuisine is olive oil. **Magnificent wines** (the region has six denominations of origin) typical dishes like **gazpacho, fine cured pork products** like the **Iberico ham**, and **delicious homemade cakes and pastries** are amongst the most popular flavours of **Andalusia's gastronomic universe**, which faithfully reflect the **Andalusian legacy**.



### RURAL ANDALUSIA

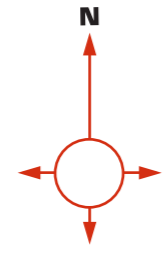
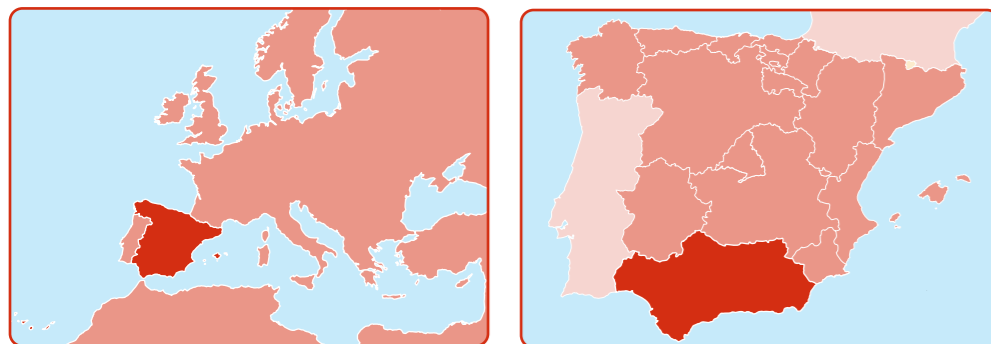
In addition to fine cuisine, Andalusia's **rural areas** also boast picturesque **white villages**, in which time almost seems to have stood still, surrounded by breathtaking natural sites and spectacular countryside. Examples include the **Alpujarras in Granada and Almería** and the **white villages of the Sierras of Cadiz and Malaga**. Its numerous **spas, Arab baths, and health and fitness resorts** also make Andalusia the perfect destination for those who wish to find relaxation and relief from fatigue and stress.



Andalucía se mueve con Europa

Los folletos turísticos de Andalucía elaborados en papel cuentan con certificación FSC® (Forest Stewardship Council®), con el fin de proporcionar beneficios ambientales, sociales y económicos.

# Andalucía



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Forming a natural passage between Europe and Africa and a meeting point between the Atlantic Ocean and the Mediterranean, Andalusia, the old gateway to the Americas, is a miniature tourist universe whose most distinctive feature is its great diversity.

Structured geographically around the River Guadalquivir, which crosses the region from east to west, Andalusia comprises 8 provinces (**Almería, Cádiz, Córdoba, Granada, Huelva, Jaén, Málaga, and Sevilla**), and is the second largest region in Spain, covering some 87,268 km<sup>2</sup>.

## A unique Location

Due to its unique geographical location, **between two continents** and two seas (the **Atlantic Ocean** and the **Mediterranean Sea**), Andalusia is blessed with **ideal climatic conditions**, with dry and warm summers and mild winters. In the **province of Granada**, we find particularly striking contrasts as in just 40 kilometres we leave behind the characteristic **alpine climate of the Sierra Nevada** and enter the **Costa Tropical** with its **mild microclimate**. The region also enjoys **perennial blue skies** and many hours of sunshine per year which play a decisive role in shaping the joyful character of the Andalusian people.

The region's population - some seven million people – is evenly distributed throughout the capital cities, medium-sized towns and small villages. Thus, in addition to the **numerous historic attractions** which can be found in **large towns and cities**, there is a well-developed **tourism industry** which is based on the **natural resources** and traditional character of rural areas.

## Transport network

A **magnificent transport network** provides easy access to the region's tourist attractions. Its modern and comprehensive road network, which covers more than **24,000 kilometres**, includes **motorways, dual carriageways, and conventional roads**.

The **AVE** (the High Speed Train), the jewel in the crown of the Spanish **railway system**, has been a true revolution, allowing the journey time between Madrid and Seville to come down to just under two and a half hours. The introduction of the AVE has also improved communications between Madrid and Málaga.

There are also good rail connections between all the main Andalusian cities. Large modern **airports**, such as those in Málaga, Seville, Jerez, Almería, and Granada offer flights to the main Andalusian and Spanish cities, as well as to Europe and the rest of the world. The **ports** on both the Atlantic and Mediterranean coasts complete this vast transport network. Many are popular destinations for cruise liners but they also offer regular connections to both North Africa and the Canary Islands.

## A world of attractions

The eight provinces of Andalusia offer a world of attractions which make exploring the region a unique and unforgettable experience: monuments, which are widely regarded as **architectural masterpieces** (Córdoba's Mosque, the Alhambra and Generalife, the Giralda, ...); a **wide range of contrasting landscapes** and natural areas; a **huge choice of possibilities for practising sports** in ideal natural surroundings; a comprehensive network of **spas, Arab baths and health and fitness centres** which are perfect for **relaxing and unwinding** from the stresses of daily life; an all-year-round calendar filled with **colourful fiestas and cultural events**; deeply rooted **artistic expressions** like **flamenco and bullfighting**; a rich **gastronomy** with **regional products of exceptional quality**, such as fine **olive oil**; **crafts** which faithfully reflect the legacy of the many peoples who have populated the region over the centuries; **modern and efficient facilities** especially equipped for hosting **events, conferences, trade fairs, and exhibitions**. However, perhaps one of Andalusia's **greatest charms** are the **Andalusians themselves** who with their friendly and welcoming character proudly share their ancient customs and heritage with visitors and make them feel at home.