

GRANADA TRIP

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Erasmus Student Network Vigo
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ÚBEDA

The first stop in this great journey to the south of Spain is the Andalusian town of Úbeda, in the province of Jaén. Úbeda was declared a World Heritage Site by Unesco in 2003, along with the neighboring village of Baeza. Located between the valley of the Guadalquivir river ("the big river" in Arabic) and the Sierra Mágina, and surrounded by wide fields full of olive trees (it is one of the main points of production of olive oil in Spain), it is known as "the city of the hills" for its geographical features, to the point of being the key of a Spanish popular proverb: when you are carrying a conversation to a point which is no longer related to the main topic, when you are beating about the bush, they may tell you you're going "over the hills of Úbeda" ("te estás yendo por los cerros de Úbeda"). This town is also the birthplace of the popular singer-songwriter Joaquín Sabina.



Plaza Vázquez de Molina

This square is the main district of the city in regard to monuments and its model of urban planning is unprecedented in Spain. Its main building is the Sacred Chapel of

Salvador ("*Sacra Capilla del Salvador*"), the most representative and appreciated monument in the whole village. The fresh market on the front is also important, as it assumes the function of sacred theater, originally having its proscenium in the atrium of the temple and the scene in the lithographic altarpiece of the cover.

In this square you can also find the emblematic *Iglesia Mayor* ("main church"), the *Basílica de Santa María de los Reales Alcázares* (a basilica which is considered a national monument), the *Palacio de las Cadenas* (meaning literally "the palace of the chains", which is currently the town hall), the *Palacio del Deán Ortega* (literally "the palace of the dean Ortega", being a touristy hotel-museum since 1928), the *Palacio del Marqués de Mancera* (literally "the palace of the Marquess of Mancera". The latter is a typical "alcázar" (a fortified castle built by the Moors) which is considered a cultural heritage and has a big tower. In the square you can also find the *Cárcel del Obispo o Emparedamiento* (literally "the prison of the Bishop or of the Immurement"), which nowadays is a courthouse and under which there are the remains of an ancient Iberian graveyard from about the 1200-1400 b.C., and the *Casa del Regidor* ("the alderman's house"), situated between the Santa María temple and the *Cárcel del Obispo*. In the centre of the square you can find a statue dedicated to Vandelvira.

The Alcázar

This building, known as the *Reales Alcázares* (royal 'alcázares') and located next to the Vázquez de Molina square, houses the archeological remains of the ancient castle over the Ibiut hill. Its most important feature is the Torre de Tierra ("*tower of the Earth*"), formerly Asdrúbal tower, the site where the city was founded according to legends. Here you can also find the Santa María de los Alcázares basilica, which was formerly a mosque.

This was also for some time the Jewish quarter. For this reason, nowadays there are still some genuine Jewish houses in this site.

Muralla

The “muralla” (wall) was declared a National Monument and you can still notice nowadays that it dealt as a defensive stronghold during many years. It was also used as customs for merchants and for controlling the plague. In spite of being neglected, it is still well preserved. Three of its former gates are to be highlighted: the Losal gate (a sample of the 14th century *Mudéjar* art), the Granada gate and the Santa Lucía gate. In regard to the towers, three are the most important: the *Torre de las Arcas* (“tower of the coffers”), the *Torre de los Caballeros* (“tower of the knights”, which is open to the public and houses an important joint centre for studies on the wall) and the *Torre del Reloj* (“clock tower”).

In the South part of the ensemble you can find a huge promenade which is divided in two sections, full with lookout points. From these points you can enjoy the beautiful landscape: the *Sierra Mágina* (the Mágina mountain range), the *Sierra de Cazorla* (the Cazorla mountain range) and the typical olive trees, a symbol of Andalusia, lined over the little hills of the Guadalquivir valley.

Outside the wall

Out of the walls you can find important monuments, such as the Gothic temple San Nicolás, the *Hospital de Santiago* (“Santiago hospital”, currently an exhibition hall which is full with frescos and has a wonderful backyard with a garden) and the *Iglesia de San Isidoro* (“San Isidoro church”), formerly a Moorish castle.

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JAÉN

Jaén is the capital of the andalusian province with the same name, though they also consider it the “world capital of the olive oil”. It has always been a city with a strategical location, a leading city first in the Muslim Spain (Al-Andalus) and later in the Christian Spain (Kingdom of Castile), constituting the border between both for a long time. Like Úbeda, it is located at the bottom of a hill and surrounded both by wide olive fields and by the Jaén and Jabalcuz mountain ranges. Because of this location, the city’s infrastructure is a particular one, with steep streets which give way to plains in the new neighbourhoods and boulevards.

A list of the main monuments and sites of interest in the city is presented below:

Cathedral

The Asunción de la Virgen cathedral, predominantly of a Renaissance style, is located at the Santa María square, opposite from the *Palacio Municipal* (“local palace”) and the *Palacio Episcopal* (“Episcopal palace”). The cathedral was originally built over a mosque, just like many other important temples in the south of Spain. Its initially Gothic nave, its chapter house and its sacristy are leading examples of the Spanish Gothic architecture, though the cathedral also has a combination of architectural styles: its main façade is baroque and it as a neoclassical choir.



Its main feature, well taken care of, is the *reliquia del Santo Rostro* (the Holy Countenance relic), also called “*la Verónica*”, the cloth with which Jesus Christ’s face is said to have been cleaned with while he carried the cross to the Calvary. It can be seen framed in silver with gems, to the style of orthodox icons, placed into a golden.

Castle

The Jaén castle, at the top of the Santa Catalina hill and overlooking the city, is actually a military ensemble composed of three fortresses enclosed together: the *Alcázar Viejo* (“old ‘alcázar’”), the *Alcázar Nuevo* (“new ‘alcázar’”) and the most recent one, the Abrehuí. Its most important point is the *Torre del Homenaje* (“keep”), in the *Alcázar Nuevo*.

Its origins can be traced back to Aníbal Barca, who constructed the first towers, while it kept being improved and fortified as centuries went by. It was overrun by the Granada Nasrid kingdom and left progressively after this kingdom fell, in the last stages of the 15th century. It suffered a number of attacks by the Napoleonic troops in the 19th century, which affected mainly the *Alcázar Viejo*. The Abrehuí is posterior to the conquest of this territory by the kingdom of Castile.

Judería

The Jaén Jewish quarter (*Judería* in Spanish), also called Santa Cruz district, is an ensemble of narrow streets and steep slopes with magnificent samples of the city history. This district grew during the twelve centuries of Hebrew presence in the city, a time when numerous historical news, legends and traditions were born. Nowadays it is under recovery.

Its most important features are the San Andrés church (a former synagogue), the Villardompardo palace (where the Arab baths are located), and the *menorah* in the *Plaza de los Huérfanos* (“the square of the orphans”). This site is an icon of the Spain of the three cultures (Christian, Islamic and Hebrew).

Arab baths

The Arab baths of Jaén (also known as *Baño del Niño* [“baths of the child”]) are located in the Jewish quarter, concretely in the cellars of the Villardompardo palace. These are

the biggest traditional Arab baths preserved in European ground and they reflect precisely the Almoravid and Almohad art of the peninsula. These baths, which are extremely important in the Islamic culture, were also used by Jews and Christians when the Muslims did not use them.

Alameda de los Capuchinos

The Alameda de los Capuchinos is a park which was built by Capuchin friars in the 16th century, a time when they used most of the lands as an orchard. Its current plan includes several round fountains and a central avenue some carriages use during the day.

The park houses an auditorium and is surrounded by the Bernardas nunnery and a bullring.

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GRANADA

The gem of the south, a city which displays history, culture and beauty in every single corner. Granada, located at the bottom of the mountain range Sierra Nevada, was the capital of the Nasrid kingdom, the last retreat of the Islamic Spain in the light of the advance of the Christian reigns, culminating in 1492. The city is home to the fourth university in Spain in number of students and the main destiny for those taking part in the Erasmus programme.



The main example of its patrimony, the Alhambra, was its principal relic. Its patrimonial, la Alhambra, was finalist in the vote for the New Seven Wonders of the World, celebrated on July 7th, 2007.

Albaicín

Located at the east of the city, the Albaicín district (the name comes from an Arab word, usual in the south of Spain, which refers to neighbourhoods located in high positions and quite far from the rest of the city), is a part of the monumental ensemble which was declared a World Heritage Site by



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Unesco in 1994. This ensemble includes the Alhambra and the Generalife.

Its narrow and steep roads house a combination of monuments from the Nasrid and Renaissance times, such as a wall of the 11th century (with towers and gates like the *Puerta Nueva* or *Arco de las Pesas*, the *Puerta Monaita* and the *Puerta de Elvira*). Other monuments in the Albaicín district are the Nasrid palace Dar al-Horra (“house of the woman”, which was the place of residence of Aixa, the queen who was the mother of Boabdil, the last Islamic king of the Iberian peninsula), the *Bañuelo* (which houses a spacious *hamman* or Arab bath), the Renaissance Castril house (currently house to the Granada Archeological Museum) and the San Pedro and San Pablo church, an accurate reflection of the combination of the Spanish Mudejár and Renaissance styles.

Alhambra

The most visited tourist attraction in Spain cannot be summed up saying it is a monument, a temple, a palace... it is far more than that. It is a whole andalusi city which comprises palaces, gardens and a great fortress or alcázar, which dealt as a residence for the Nasrid dynasty and as seat of the court in the medieval Kingdom of Granada. The Alhambra, a name which evolved from an Arab word which means “the red one”, was built on the Sabika hill, one of the highest points in the city.

This city was settled in Roman times, though it was not until 1238, when Muhammad ibn Nasr (the first Nasrid king) decided to transfer the royal residence there and commissioned the construction of a self-sufficient water supply.

There are enough things to visit inside the Alhambra as to spend a whole day in it, such as the following:



Alcazaba

Typical from the time of the caliphs of the 11th century, the Alcazaba, located at the most western part of the hill, was the centre for defence and vigilance of the ensemble. Surrounding it there are a number of gardens, squares and towers, the most prominent of the latter being the *Torre del Homenaje* (the keep) and the *Torre de los Hidalgos* (“the tower of the hidalgos”).

Nasrid palaces

The Nasrid palaces are the core element of the ensemble and date back to the first third of the 14th century, being so posterior to the Alcazaba and to the Generalife. The biggest one of them is the majestic Comares palace. In this last palace you can find the Patio de los Arrayanes, the most iconic and photographed part of Alhambra, owing mainly to its pond, which reflects the Comares tower. The fountains and the ponds are a common feature in the classical Arab architecture, being so also present in the Alhambra.

You can access the **Palacio de los Leones** (“the lions palace”), the private harem and private area of the king through a passage. This palace was organized around its central yard, the *patio de los leones* (“the lions’ yard”) with its characteristic combination of pond and fountain and the lions’ statues as a base. The most ancient part is the **Mexuar**, which in the Arab times dealt as a courtroom and was in turn a liturgical place in Christian times.



North to this ensemble you can find **El Partal**, the name given to the remains of the residence of the sultan Yusuf III. There you can enjoy, among majestic gardens, typical manorial andalusian houses, such as the *Palacio de la Cautiva* (“palace of the captive

woman”) or the *Palacio de las Infantas* (“infantas palace”), which inspired the *Tales of the Alhambra*, a book by Washington Irving.

Generalife

The Generalife is not exactly a part of the Alhambra, but its proximity to it causes it to be considered as such, same as the Albaicín. It is a villa with breathtaking gardens which was the retreat and resting place of the Granada kings. Its most interesting features are the *Patio de la Acequia* (“Court of the Water Channel or Water-Garden Courtyard”), in the *Sala Regia*, with an elongated shape which has a pond in the centre, and the *Jardines Altos de Palacio* (the gardens of the palace), which can be accessed by the innovative *Escalera del Agua* (“water stairs”).

Old town

The old town centre reflects also the simultaneity of the Islamic and Christian cultures which, especially in the architecture, is so noticeable. One of the things you can’t miss is the ***Catedral de la Encarnación*** (“Encarnación cathedral”), built on the Gran Mezquita (the Nasri Big Mosque”) in the beginning of the 16th century, in the main time of the Renaissance in Spain. Initially the construction began taking the Toledo cathedral (the biggest exponent of Gothic architecture in Spain) as a model, but later it was built slightly more Renaissance. In its Capilla Mayor (“main chapel”) you can find the praying statues of Fernando and Isabel, the Catholic Monarchs, who besieged the last Nasri king, Boabdil, and added the Kingdom of Granada, the last Islamic dominion in the peninsula, to the Kingdom of Castile.



The Catholic Monarchs are buried in the **Capilla Real** (“Royal Chapel”), situated next to the cathedral and the biggest exponent of Gothic architecture in the city. This chapel was built on purpose to be the mausoleum of the kings and their successors, their daughter Joanna the mad and their son-in-law, Philip the Handsome, son of Maximilian I of Habsburg, the holy Roman emperor. Inside the chapel you can also contemplate paintings by Berruguete, Botticelli, Juan de Flandes and Van der Weyden.

Founded almost 500 years ago by king Charles I, the **Granada University** is the fourth in Spain in number of students and the only one in Europe with two campuses on African ground, in the Spanish cities Ceuta and Melilla. It is a direct heir of the **Madraza** (Islamic school) of the Nasrid kingdom, whose seat is the most emblematic building of the university, nowadays a place devoted to cultural activities.

Realejo

The Realejo is the quintessential Jewish quarter in Granada. It was changed partially so as to use it with military purposes after the Christian conquest of the city. Nowadays, it has remains of the Jewish Granada together with a more contemporary version of the villa. Its highest part is built on the slope of the Mauror hill, coming down from the Torres Bermejas fortress, generating so generando así a maze of steep streets with cármenes, typical houses in traditional neighbourhoods with a garden and an orchard enclosed by white wall structures.

Its heart is the *Campo del Príncipe* (“field of the prince”), presided by the cross of the *Cristo de los Favores* (“Christ of the favours”), around which Christian people of Granada pray every Good Friday to ask for four favours.

Night life

The big amount of students, Spanish and foreigners, who live in Granada year after year make it into one of the biggest spots of university students partying in Spain. The charm of its traditional neighbourhoods can be felt in the terraces, which are perfect to

begin the night with the typical *tapas* routes. You've understood well, the "gem of the south" is a must visit also regarding *tapas*! The *Paseo de los Tristes* ("promenade of the sad people", at the feet of the Alhambra), the Albaicín or the *Campo del Príncipe* ("field of the prince") have ideal *tapas* places, with especial dishes like snails or *pescaíto frito* (fried little fishes).

The city combines tradition and modernity. You can enjoy different experiences which range from genuine flamenco shows at the *Cuevas del Sacromonte* ("Sacromonte caves"), where many Gypsy families live, to relaxing at an Arab tea room at the Plaza Nueva ("new square") or dancing and listening to music in a variety of discos in the Pedro Antonio de Alarcón area.

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SEGOVIA

And, in order for you not to have a taste only of the south, in the way back we will stop at one of the little gems in the inland Spain, at the heart of Castile. At only 90 km far from Madrid, at the feet of the Guadarrama mountain range: that is where Segovia is located. This city was born in Celtic-Iberian times and had a particular Visigoth and Roman influence, having almost no contact with the Islamic peoples. Its old town and Roman aqueduct were declared a World Heritage Site by Unesco in 1985.

Aqueduct

With 818 metres of length in its most visible part and a height of 29, the aqueduct is the most important and best preserved civil engineering work in Spain. It was built in the II century AD and, in the time of the emperor Trajano, it carried water from a reservoir in the mountain range, 17 km away, to the city. It features more than 170 arches and its most visited point is in the downtown square *Plaza del Azoguejo*. This monument is a distinctive symbol of the city and was constructed with ashlar granite stones without any mortar in between.



Cathedral

The Santa María cathedral is the last Gothic cathedral to be constructed in Spain and one of the last ones in Europe. Its origins date back to the 16th and 17th centuries, when the Renaissance was already the most widespread style in Spain, so the cathedral acquired some aspects of this style in its particular late Gothic. It was constructed on

the ruins of the previous cathedral, which had the same name and was destroyed in 1520, during the Revolt of the Comuneros, which saw the comuneros (members of the urban working class) fight the dominant members of the nobility. Inside the cathedral there is an element which should be highlighted: the *capilla del Santísimo Sacramento* (“the holy sacrament chapel”), with an altarpiece designed by Juan de Churriguera.

Alcázar

The Alcázar of Segovia, built over a hill where the rivers Eresma and Clamores meet, is one of the most known castle-palaces in Spain and in the whole of Europe because of its boat bow shape. In its origins it was built as a fortress, but since then it has dealt as royal palace, a state prison, an artillery centre and even as a military academy.



This castle appeared first in a document in the 12th century and was constructed in the time when Romanesque was giving way to Gothic. It has some Mudéjar art, which was in its peak then, influences in its halls.

The building has two yards and two towers, the keep and the Juan II tower. It was the favourite residence of the kings Alfonso X of Castile and Henry IV of Castile. Isabella I of Castile departed from this castle to be crowned as the queen of Castile in the main square. The castle suffered a fire in 1862 and was rebuilt later. Nowadays it houses the General Military archive of Segovia and the museum of the Royal College of Artillery.

As a curiosity, nowadays the Alcázar is considered together with the Neuschwanstein castle (Bavaria, Germany) as a possible inspiration for Walt Disney’s Cinderella castle.

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