

Granada & the Alpujarras

A brilliant legacy

Nowhere is the Arabic influence on Europe so evident. Walking in flower-filled meadows of Alpujarras we find elaborate stone-built irrigation systems left by the Moors, whilst the Alhambra in Granada, we find a palace of almost incredible elegance, ingenuity and beauty.

FITNESS RATING: 24+

TRIP LENGTH: 5 days

DAYS OF WALKING: 2, plus city walks

SHORTEST/LONGEST DAY'S WALK: 4/5 hrs

DATES

09 Jun-13 Jun

06 Oct-10 Oct



'almost incredible elegance, ingenuity and beauty'

THE TRIP

Andalucia, christened Al-Andalus by Spain's muslim invaders in the 8C, is considered one of the most beautiful and varied regions of Spain, and the area where Spain's Moorish past is most in evidence. The resorts of the Costa del Sol contrast with the mountainous interior and peaceful white villages. The area we walk in is on the edge of the Sierra Nevada National Park, whose snowy north face provides the white backdrop for Granada for much of the year. The south facing slopes of the Alpujarras are much more temperate, with clear air, and hours of bright sunshine.

The white villages we visit there were inherited from Spain's Moorish conquerors at the beginning of the 17C when the last of the settlers were finally forced out of this last enclave of Moorish Spain. For many years the mountains and bad roads meant that this area was until recently unchanged and largely unvisited. Now it has been discovered as a

wonderful area for walking, and tourism has brought more wealth, meaning more young people stay here to live. Traditional ways of life are still maintained, and the water systems put in place by the Moors who first lived in the area are still extensively used.

The area boasts incredibly rich flora and fauna, with great biodiversity, from alpine plants at in the high peaks, (Mulhacen at 3482m is mainland Spain's highest peak), to fruit trees first brought over by the moors, on the lower slopes. Granada is probably best known as being home to one of the most impressive and beautiful palaces left by Spain's Moorish rulers, the Alhambra. But it is also known today for its *tapas* and lively atmosphere.

ATG
Oxford
QUALITY
&
VALUE

Call Outdoor Travel for reservations 1800 331 582

ACCOMMODATION

The hotels we stay in are characteristic of the area and the towns we visit. You will appreciate that the accommodation is inevitably varied. International country code for Spain: 34.



Bubion Villa Turística ★★★

Barrio alto s/n, E-18412
Bubion, Granada
Tel: 958 763 909

Mountain village of converted local houses set in National Park (nights 1&2)



Cádiar Alquería de Morayma ★★★

Ctra A-348 Cádiar-
Torvizcón, 18440 Cádiar
Tel: 958 343221
Fax: 958 343221

Traditional style set among vineyards and olive groves hotel with views (night 3)



Granada Casa de los Migueletes ★★★

Calle Benalúa 11 (Plaza
Nueva), 18010 Granada
Tel: 958 210700
Fax: 958 210702

Restored 17C house in the heart of Albayzin (night 4)

ITINERARY

Day 1 After arrival at Malaga airport we drive to our first hotel in the village of Bubion, in the Alpujarras (3 hours).

Day 2 We walk along a track up to the village of Capileira, at the top of the Poqueira valley, which we visit, before continuing our ascent on a quiet road, to reach the next valley of the Taha, passing through its main town of Pitres. We slowly descend to the valley below, stopping for a picnic lunch, before continuing down almost to the River Trevez, which we follow to the village of Busquizar, the last village in the valley, from where we transfer back to our hotel in Bubion (10 miles).

Day 3 We drive to Trevez, from where we begin our walk to Cadiar. After climbing out of the Trevez valley, the highest village in

the area, we descend gently to Cadiar in the Guadalfeo valley, where we spend the night (11.6 miles).

Day 4 We transfer back to Granada, stopping for lunch in the spa town of Lanjaron, with views to its ruined Moorish castle (2 hours). After driving to our hotel situated in the old Moorish town, the Albaycin, we take a walking tour around this and the Sacramonte, Granada's gypsy quarter.

Day 5 Morning visit to the Alhambra, followed by lunch and a walking tour around the centre of Granada, with opportunities to visit some of Granada's other monuments, including the cathedral, sample some tapas bars, and shop, before driving back to Malaga airport (1 hour 45 mins).

WALKING

This is a 5 day trip with 2 days of walking in the mountains of the Alpujarras, and 2 half days walking around the city of Granada. Hours of walking, which may vary from group to group, means hours of actual walking and does not include stops for lunch, sightseeing, rests or siestas.

On both days walking in the mountains we will be walking on rugged terrain – please make sure that your footwear provides sufficient ankle support. Some of our walks are very weather sensitive. If it is not possible to do a walk due to inclement weather, an alternative will be organised. Any such decision is at the discretion of the Tour Leader.

The scenery is very dramatic, with the backdrop of the high peaks of the Sierra Nevada in whose foothills we will be walking, ascending and descending the sides of the valleys. The paths are varied, sometimes landrover track and tarmac, mostly small ancient routes connecting the villages which are never far from one another. The tracks are all good, sometimes rocky, and people who suffer from vertigo should not have trouble, in that we do not walk along any narrow paths beside any sheer drops, although those with

very bad vertigo may find the general steepness of the valleys offputting. If in doubt, please check with your Tour Leader.

CLIMATE

As these mountains are such a long way south, it is possible to walk here all year round. However, the preferred seasons are spring and autumn, hence by coming in June and October the villages will be quieter and the days should still be warm with cooler evenings in both June and October. Clouds envelop the mountains in autumn and winter, making the air much cooler and damper, but as long as the sun shines temperatures don't drop too low even in winter, and in summer, the cooler air is welcome.

SPECIAL FEATURES

The Sierra Nevada is one of the most important regions in Europe for biodiversity, and there are eagles, as well as many species of migrating birds. The area is also home to the biggest population of *ibex* (mountain goats) in Spain. There are many endemic plants and insects in the higher peaks, and abundant flowers and fruit trees lower down, with the intricate water systems (*acequias*) providing water all year round.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The Alpujarras is the area where the moors had their last stronghold after the reconquest of Spain finally ended in 1492 when the Catholic Kings Fernando and Isabella succeeded in retaking Granada. The inhabitants were allowed to retire to the Alpujarras, until an uprising in 1568 was brutally put down and all moors were expelled from Spain in 1608. The area was previously inhabited by Ibero Celts, and the romans passed through.

PLACES ON ROUTE

Bubion The middle village in the Poqueira

valley, Bubion, like its neighbours is built into the steep valley sides, the narrow streets of pretty whitewashed houses winding down from the road to the church square. The houses are often built into the hillside, creating a cave like atmosphere which is warm in winter and cool in summer, with other architectural features unique to this area. It's a quiet village with approximately 350 inhabitants, which comes alive during July and August when Spanish holiday makers enjoy the local fiestas and cooler temperatures. The rest of the year it survives on weekend tourism and groups of

walkers. There is a museum of local life and history, and in the village artisans can be visited in their workshops. On clear winter evenings the mountains of Morocco are sometimes visible across the sea.

Taha, Busquistar The Taha (from Arabic meaning group of villages which shared watering rights) is made up of seven villages which used to be known in Moorish times for the quality of their silk, and the valley was the scene of many battles during the reconquest between Christians and Moors. The valley is full of ancient chestnut trees, natural mineral springs, almond and other fruit trees. In January the fields are white with the blossom.

Trevez The highest village in the Alpujarras at more than 1,500m, it is one of several villages which makes the claim to be the highest in Spain. It is well known for its hams, cured here in the dry high mountain air.

Cadiar This village in the Guadalfeo valley marks the end of the western Alpujarras, and the landscape starts to change and open out from the steep river valleys of the higher mountains. It is also closer to the wine growing area of the Contraviesa.

Lanjaron Lanjaron is the gateway to the Alpujarras from the East and Granada, It has over 4,000 inhabitants and is at 700m above sea level. It is a spa town and its waters are believed to have curative properties, in addition to the mineral water that is bottled here and shipped all over Spain. It has many shops selling local handicrafts, and the ruins of a Moorish castle.

Granada Most famous for being the city of the Alhambra, the 'red palace' built between the eleventh and fourteenth centuries, consisting of fortress, gardens, and palaces finished during the flourishing of the Nasrid dynasty. Granada is today a flourishing university city, with many different quarters to explore. The Albaycin, where our hotel is situated, facing the Alhambra, where the old Moorish town was situated, with the same narrow winding streets and unexpected plazas as the villages of the Alpujarras. Sacramonte, even steeper and less accessible, up by the old city walls where Granada's gypsies have traditionally lived, and still home to spontaneous flamenco sessions, as well as places where shows are put on for tourists.

The Capilla Real of the Cathedral houses the tombs of the Catholic Kings, as well as their collection of paintings, and many artefacts associated with this most famous period in Spanish history (c1492). The streets in the newer town are full of houses of architectural and cultural interest, and tapas bars are found at every turn.

RESTAURANTS

We dine out at restaurants on 3 of the 4 nights. You may like to dress up in the evening, but none of the restaurants requires you to do so, or to wear a jacket or tie. In the mountains it is often cool at night, so it is always good to have an extra layer. In Granada people dress up more in the evening.

Photo: Jessica Begg



FACILITIES EN ROUTE

Banks: There is an ATM machine in Bubion, and banks in Capileira and Pitres.

Hospitals: There is a hospital in Granada, and a medical centre in Pitres.

Chemists: There are chemists in Bubion, Capileira, Pitres, Trevez and Granada.

EQUIPMENT/EXTRA ITEMS

Walking sticks are very useful as there are many ascents and descents. Hats and gloves may also be useful, as weather can change quickly in the mountains. Sun cream is essential, as at this high altitude the sun burns, as are hats.

MOBILE PHONES

Following complaints from clients we would ask you not to use your mobile phones during the walk or any other group activity.

SECURITY WARNING

Please be especially vigilant in all tourist centres as we have received reports of increased problems with petty theft and pick-pocketing. Take care of your valuables at all times. When out sightseeing, leave spare cash and items of value in your hotel safe along with your passport (but carry a photocopy of it for identification purposes). Beware of bag-snatchers and pickpockets, especially in crowded tourist centres. Don't leave luggage unattended, especially at railway stations. If you are robbed you should report it to the local police.

CUISINE

Today local cuisine mixes Arabic influences with local tastes, although traditional tapas tend to consist of sausages and meats, cooked and cured, and local sheep and goat cheeses, served on a piece of bread. A tapa traditionally accompanies a drink in a bar at certain times of the day, before lunch and dinner, and often can substitute either meal, and Granada is the only province where they are still free to drinkers. The traditional cuisine is country mountain cooking with hot and powerful soups and stews, meat, a little fish that is brought up fresh from the coast, or the occasional trout from the rivers. More restaurants are now experimenting with Arabic influenced cuisine, with very good results.

WINES

The villages of the Alpujarras have always produced their own wine for personal consumption, a light looking but powerful rose which is drunk young, and the hills between these villages and the sea, known as the Contraviesa, is where some wine makers are improving and continuing to bottle and sell locally their wines, the white is surprisingly good, and the red and rose very drinkable. Wines from the Rioja and Ribera del Duero and other areas of Spain are also widely available.

TRAVEL INFORMATION

TRAVEL TO SPAIN

The recommended destination airport for this trip is Malaga.

The recommended check-in time is 2 hours. For those who have requested a vegetarian meal on the plane, we recommend that you reconfirm this at the check-in. It is a good idea to check the destination on the luggage tag that is stuck onto your ticket/your luggage at the check-in desk - this helps lessen the possibility of luggage going astray.

Please collect your luggage before proceeding through Customs. In the unlikely event of

finding on arrival that your luggage has gone astray en route, please inform the Tour Manager and Tour Leader as soon as possible.

MEETING AT THE AIRPORT

The meeting point is at the arrivals area of Malaga airport. Our Tour Leader and Tour Manager will be waiting to meet you for the minibus transfer to the first hotel. The Tour Leader and Manager will be wearing polo shirts of the same colour and embroidered with the same design as the luggage labels. Please do not entrust your luggage to anyone not wearing an ATG 'uniform'. There are notoriously helpful luggage thieves at busy airports!

ATG minibus transfer to the first hotel

We will use two 8 seater minibuses for the transfer to the first hotel, which will depart no later than 12.30pm, in order to ensure that the group arrives at the first hotel before dinner. The Tour Manager and Tour Leader will be at the airport to meet you from 11.30am.

If you would like a transfer to the first hotel, please ensure that you inform us of this and advise us of your arrival time and flight number as soon as possible. Please also ensure that your flight arrives at the destination airport by 11.30am to give you sufficient time to pass through customs and collect your luggage.

One month prior to departure we will confirm the transfer time to the first hotel, taking into account the arrival times of the group.

If you have arranged to take the minibus transfer to the first hotel but you arrive late and find that the group has left (there is no sign of them in the arrivals hall or our minibuses with the ATG logo outside the terminal building), please check for a message at the information desk and make your own way to the first hotel, letting the ATG office know you're on your way.

The ATG office number is +44 1865 315 678 or outside office hours please call the emergency number which is +44 1865 315 600.

MEETING AT THE FIRST HOTEL

Villa Turística
Barrio alto s/n, E-18412
Bubion, Granada
Tel: 958 763 909

If you are meeting the group at the first hotel, our Tour Consultants will contact you upon their arrival.

TRAVEL TO THE FIRST HOTEL

To make your way from the airport to the first hotel, there are buses from Malaga to Granada, from where you can take a bus to Bubion (there are three per day, departing at 10.30, 12.00 and 17.15, journey time 2 hours 45 mins).

AT THE END OF YOUR TRIP

We can transport you from the last hotel to arrive at Malaga airport for 3.00pm. If your flight is significantly earlier or later, you will need to make your own arrangements.

FURTHER INFORMATION

Please note that ATG cannot advise you on your particular train/bus journey or make bookings for you. The following may be of use in helping you plan your journey:

Timetable information: www.renfe.es

Rail Europe: +44 (0) 8705 848848
www.raileurope.co.uk

International Rail: +44 (0) 1962 773646
www.internationalrail.com

BOOK LIST

Guides

Insight Guides, Southern Spain (Insight Guides 2003)

Interesting essays on a variety of topics and excellent photography. Also regional guide to *Seville, Cordoba & Granada* (Insight Guides 2001).

Granada, Seville, Cordoba: Dana Facoras & Michael Pauls (Codogan Guides 2004)
Good general guide to the area with lots of information on Granada.

Alhambra: Micheal Jacobs (Frances Lincoln 2000)

Architectural guide to the Alhambra and its cultural significance with excellent photographs.

The Alhambra: Robert Irwin (Profile Books 2005)

History of the Alhambra and its representations in art and literature.

People of the Sierra: Julian Pitt-Rivers (Uni of Chicago Press 1972) OUT OF PRINT

A fine anthropological study of Grazalema thinly disguised under the name of 'Aleula de Sierra'.

Wildlife Travelling Companion: Spain: John Measures (Crowood Press 1992) OUT OF PRINT

Essential for wildlife enthusiasts. Good colour photographs and helpful maps.

Literature & Fiction

South from Granada: Gerald Brenan (Penguin 1992)

Explores the festivals and folklore of the Sierra Nevada in the area before the Spanish Civil War.

Two Middle-Aged Ladies in Andalusia: Penelope Chetwode (John Murray 2002)

The wife of John Betjeman follows a rural route in 1962. Her companion was a horse! The original companion disappeared without explanation half-way through the book. A delightful story.

Driving Over Lemons: Chris Stewart (Sort of Books 1999)

Lively account of the authors move to a small rural setting in Andalusia with his family. Good insight into local life and traditions. Also sequel *A Parrot in the Pepper Tree* (Sort of Books 2002)

Food & Wine

The Flavours of Andalusia: Elisabeth Luard (Collins & Brown 1993)

A mouth-watering introduction to the region's cuisine.

The Taste of a Place, Andalusia: Vicky Bennison (Chakula Press 2005)

Illustrated guide to Andalusian food.

Whilst we aim to keep our booklists up to date, books do sometimes go out of print. If you find that any of the books listed are out of print, please do let us know. For any books that are out of print, we recommend that you visit the following website which offers publishers' left-over stock of out-of-print books, and often has second hand copies of books for sale: www.abebooks.co.uk

Photo: Jessica Begg



MAPS

If you are interested in purchasing maps prior to your trip you can contact the following companies, all of whom offer a mail-order service:

The Map Shop

15 The High Street
Upton-Upon-Severn
Worcestershire
WR8 0HJ
Tel: 01684 593146
Fax: 01684 594559
e-mail: Themapshop@btinternet.com
Web site: www.themapshop.co.uk

Stanfords

12-14 Long Acre,
London WC2E 9LP
Tel: 0207 836 1321
Fax: 0207 836 0189.
Web site: www.stanfords.co.uk

Blackwells Mail Order

50 Broad Street
Oxford OX1 3BQ
Tel: 01865 793 550
Fax: 01865 794 143
Email: mail.ox@blackwell.co.uk
Web: www.blackwell.co.uk