

Route of the Almorávids and Almohads

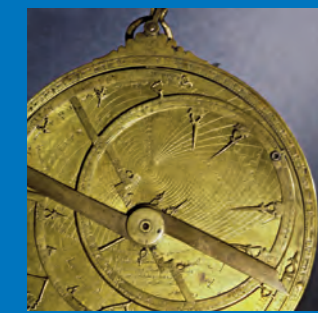


This Route evokes the long and profound relationship between two continents, barely separated by a narrow strip of sea. This fascinating journey revolves around the strategic crossroads, where Africa and Europe face each other, sharing the foundations of the mythical Pillars of Hercules. The old people, with expressive sensitivity, call this region, "The Two Banks" due to their proximity and mutual dependence. It is a region linked by the dense network of paths that crossed and converged, multiplying the ties between men. The essence of this fruitful contact has survived: a common cultural and artistic source and a special art of living. What better way to discover and enjoy it but to follow the path taken by the Almorávids and Almohads, the people from the Sahara, who, between the 11th and 12th centuries, moulded the Western Maghreb and al-Andalus into a huge empire. Following its African prelude, this cultural route commences in Tarifa, which together with Algeciras, are the starting points of the trip. The journey reveals the irresistible charms of the coast, the cultivated plains and the sierras of Cadiz and Malaga, with villages and towns which preserve the most pure Andalusian charm. Breathtaking landscapes, legendary towns and castles, monuments, traditions, along with the warm hospitality of its people, are the ingredients of this irresistible itinerary, which traverses valleys and mountains and ends in the final magical destination of Granada.



Pavilion of al-Andalus and Science

The Pavilion of al-Andalus and Science in the Macroscop building of the Science Park of Granada offers the visitor a view of the Arabic scientific legacy and the different contributions made by Andalusian civilization. Its exhibits offer an insight into the period of al-Andalus, the Arabic-Muslim scientific legacy and its contributions to the world of science, and its subsequent development. The museum resources used in the different permanent and temporary exhibition spaces are spread over two floors that house the different subject areas, lecture rooms, a bookshop and a multi-purpose hall. It covers almost 4,500 square metres and aims to promote cultural exchanges between Spain and the Arab World by implementing the latest trends in museology and an up-to-date, diverse methodology.



View of the Macroscop. The Pavilion of al-Andalus and Science is inside. Science Park, Granada.

The group of small towns and whitewashed villages that stand out in the beautiful countryside of the sierras between Arcos and Ronda, the so-called Pueblos Blancos (White Villages), constitute an essential section of this route. Their romantic appearance, clustered around castles and churches and dominating the horizon from cliff tops and hilltops, or sheltered under imposing mountains, impress and captivate the traveller. The same feeling occurs when the visitor enters the charming maze of the old town centers, with winding streets that still retain all the essence of medieval times and the atmosphere of an architecture which embodies the ideal of typically Andalusian construction: sober elegant façades, whitewashed walls, empty gables enclosed by wrought iron grills, roofs of red tiles and, inside, patios with wells, flowerpots and plants that are a haven of intimacy. Arcos, Zahara de la Sierra, Grazaalema, Olvera, Setenil de las Bodegas and a whole bunch of villages, make up one of the most attractive itineraries of popular architecture that can be followed in Andalusia.



ITINERARIES AND DISTANCES

The route covers a stretch of about 500 to 450 kilometers between Algeciras and Granada, depending on the options of path chosen. From Algeciras and Tarifa a first branch goes directly to Ronda through the serranía, and passing through Castellár, Jimena de la Frontera, Gaucín and the villages located in the Genal river valley, along the A-369 road. The western branch of the route, on the other hand, covers longer distances. It passes through Alcalá de los Gazules and Medina Sidonia, connected by the A-581 and goes on to Cadiz, El Puerto de Santa María and Jerez. From here it follows the A-382 towards Arcos and the White Villages of Cadiz: Grazaalema, Zahara, Algodonales, Olvera, Setenil, until it reaches Ronda. The route then rises up the A-367 to Teba and Campillos, where it joins the N-531 and the C-340 towards Vélez-Málaga. After the route along the villages in the province of Granada, we shall arrive at our goal: Granada



The Route of the Almorávids and Almohads connects the coast and the villages of the Straits with Granada via Cadiz, Jerez and Ronda, following the main means of communication of the network that linked the north of Africa and the south of al-Andalus. The stretch that runs through the provinces of Cadiz, Malaga and Granada, splits into two branches in Algeciras, which converge in Ronda, from where a single final section goes on to Granada. Today the journey follows a modern network of roads (A-369, A-381, A-382, A-92, A-367, N-331 and A-369).

When considering the altitudes on the route, there is a marked contrast in the course of the journey. The first part runs through villages situated at sea level; Algeciras, Cadiz, El Puerto and in slightly elevated sections of the plains like Alcalá, Medina and Arcos, at altitudes between 100 and 300 m. Further on, the large part of the journey runs through mountainous and highland areas between 500 and 800 m. In altitude, Ronda and Granada are over 700 m. The highest point in the journey is the town of Grazaalema, boxed in by mountains at 812 m.

HISTORY AND ARCHITECTURE

TOWNS, VILLAGES AND CASTLES

The traces of the legacy of al-Andalus become patent along every step of the road, in the compact appearance of the villages, in their defensive and monumental construction and in their traditional architecture; a panorama, which later on was enriched in artistic forms and constructions, which ranged from Mudéjar to Baroque, following the Christian conquest. The Almorávids, like their successors at the head of the Hispano-Muslim empire, the Almohads, were skillful constructors, who notably promoted the enlargement of the Andalusian towns, endowing them with extensive walls, *alcázaras* (fortresses) and other buildings. The period covering the 12th to the 15th centuries was equally decisive, when these lands constituted the western frontier of the Kingdom of Granada, until its fall in 1492. It was then, either on the initiative of the Muslims or the Christians, that the villages along the route acquired the unmistakable and legendary medieval appearance which characterizes them, with tightly grouped centers, surrounded by walls, sheltered by defiant castles and fortresses and connected by a network of fortified towers and watchtowers.



TRADITION

GASTRONOMY

This route could be described as a full gastronomic tour through the provinces of Cadiz, Malaga and Granada, given the variety and quality of products and recipes that can be found all along these itineraries. The Atlantic coast of Cadiz offers delicious and fresh fish and shellfish, while the countryside provides a delight for the palate in its wines from Jerez, along with *gaspachos*, thick soups and other specialities. From the sierras come cured pork products of all kinds, as well as game, casseroles and stews cooked with aromatic herbs, while the plains in the interior round Antequera and Granada, offer vegetables, fruit and olive oil of the highest quality, providing the basis for a rich country cuisine. Special mention has to be made of the wide range of sweets, full of references to al-Andalus, such as *petüñes*, *amarguillos*, *alfajores* and an on-going list of sweets that titillate the taste buds.



HANDICRAFTS

The arts and crafts traditions are still going strong today in the countryside, some inherited directly from the urban guilds, others connected with the agricultural and ranching background so predominant in this area. The diversity of products ranges from high quality book-binding to musical instruments in the workshops of Cadiz and Granada; inlaid woodwork and furniture in Cadiz, Jerez or Ronda; fine wrought iron and metal work in Ronda or Granada. Pottery and ceramics are present everywhere; textiles in Grazaalema, where its well-known woolen blankets are still woven on age-old looms; leather goods, with the principal centers of production in the Sierra of Cadiz; carved woodwork and barrel making, objects made from vegetable fibers and other crafts, like saddle-making, which are all witness to deep popular roots.



FIESTAS AND FESTIVALS

The calendar of festivities along the route is very tight. The Carnival, which has its epicenter in Cadiz, marks the end of winter. In spring, a whole series of events take place: Holy Week with its processions, the first fairs like the Horse Fair in Jerez, the pilgrimages and the Corpus Christi festivities, which precede the endless succession of ferias and fiestas in summer, amongst which there are various festivals of Moors and Christians. Flamenco, which has its most genuine roots here, is present in all these festivals.

ANDALUSIA IN CLOSE-UP

It is not by chance that many Spanish and foreign travellers think that the different stages covered by this route reflect the essential traits of the image of Andalusia, as if in a mirror; splendid vestiges of a Muslim past, which flourish from Algeciras to Ronda and Granada. Towns and fortifications swathed in chivalrous romances, unusually vibrant and dramatic landscapes, the cosmopolitan atmosphere of Cadiz, in contrast to the rustic authenticity of the villages in the sierras. The ubiquitous presence of flamenco as the deepest example of popular expression, and, finally, the importance and interest incited by the horse and the fighting bull, protagonists in so many festivals and places in these lands.



Vertical banner on the right side of the page with decorative patterns and text: 'Route of Almorávids and Almohads', 'The Routes of Vélez-Málaga', 'From Algeciras to Granada, passing through Cadiz, Jerez, Ronda and Algeciras', 'El legado andalusí', 'Andalusia', 'Mayor Cultural Route of the Council of Europe', and 'www.rutaslegadoandalusi.es'.

Information Points

- ALGECIRAS: Oficina Municipal de Turismo de Algeciras, Paseo de la Ciencia s/n, Tel. 952 187 119.
MEDINA SIDONIA: Oficina Municipal de Turismo, Calle de la Constitución, 10, Tel. 956 412 404.
TARIFA: Oficina Municipal de Turismo, Paseo de la Alameda s/n, Tel. 956 680 993.
CASTELLAR DE LA FRONTERA: Oficina de Información Turística, Plaza de Andalucía s/n, Tel. 956 693 001.
JIMENA DE LA FRONTERA: Oficina Municipal de Turismo, Antigua Iglesia de la Magdalena, Tel. 956 640 569.
GAUCÍN: Ayuntamiento, Plaza Guzmán el Bueno, 23, Tel. 952 151 000.
CASARES: Casa Natal de Blas Infante, Carrera, 51, Tel. 952 995 521.
ALGATOCÍN: Ayuntamiento, Fuente, 2, Tel. 952 150 000.
BENALURÍA: Ayuntamiento, Plaza Teniente Viñas, 1, Tel. 952 152 502.
BENALALÍA: Ayuntamiento, Plaza Beni al-Jail, 1, Tel. 952 152 753.
ATAJATE: Ayuntamiento, Plaza de la Constitución, 3, Tel. 952 183 504.
ALCALÁ DE LOS GAZULES: Oficina Municipal de Turismo, Biblioteca, Avda. de los Alcornocales s/n, Tel. 956 420 327.
MEDINA SIDONIA: Oficina Municipal de Turismo, Paseo Blas Infante s/n, Tel. 952 187 119.
TEBA: Ayuntamiento, Plaza de la Constitución, 13, Tel. 952 748 020.
CAMPILLOS: Ayuntamiento, Avda. Sta. Mª del Reposo, 4, Tel. 952 722 168.
VÉLEZ-MÁLAGA: Área de Cultura del Ayuntamiento, Palacio de Beniel s/n, Tel. 952 558 640.
ALCAUCÍN: Oficina de Turismo, Paseo de las Barradas, Tel. 952 530 077.
ZAFARRAYA: Ayuntamiento, Entrada de Granada, 2, Tel. 958 362 560.
LA MALAHÁ: Ayuntamiento, Ronda, 16, Tel. 958 587 101.
LAS GABIAS: Ayuntamiento, Plaza de España, 1, Tel. 958 580 261.
GRANADA: Oficina de Turismo de la Junta de Andalucía, Plaza Nueva, Santa Ana, 4, Tel. 958 575 202.
ALGODONALES: Ayuntamiento, Avda. de Andalucía, 2, Tel. 956137003.
OLVERA: Oficina Municipal de Turismo, Edificio la Olla, Plaza de la Iglesia s/n, Tel. 956 120 816.
SETELIL DE LAS BODEGAS: Oficina Municipal de Turismo, Villa, 2, Tel. 956 134 261.
RONDA: Oficina de Turismo de la Junta de Andalucía, Plaza del Carmen s/n, Tel. 952 189 311.

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