



Western Andalucía

Seville and Cádiz, with Jerez and Carmona

22–29 April 2024 (MK 235)

8 days • £3,250

Lecturer: Gijs van Hensbergen

Time to explore the magnificent city of Seville in detail: Moorish Alcázar, Spain's largest cathedral, first-rate Fine Arts Museum plus Jewish Quarter, hidden corners, squares, parks, churches.

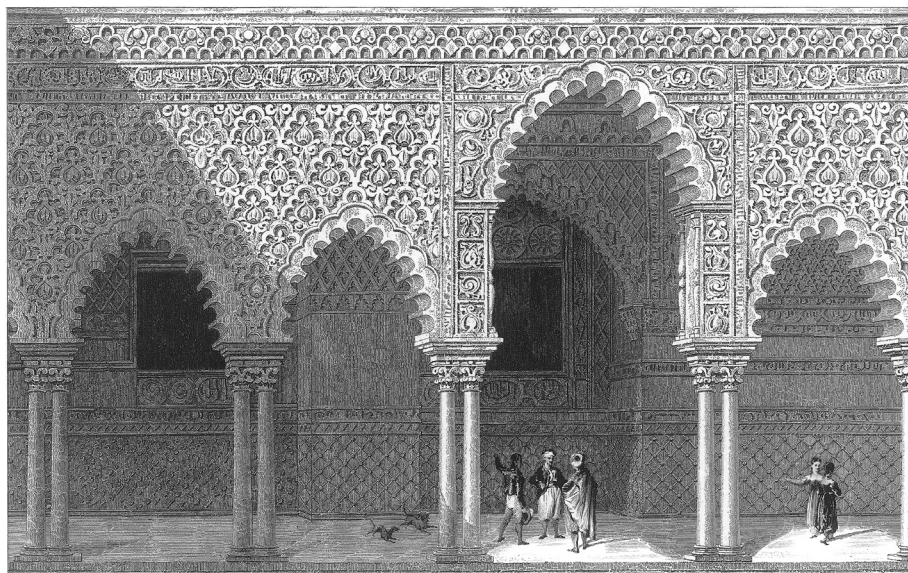
The lesser-known town of Cádiz has an old centre of much charm, good works of art and a spectacular fish market.

Also includes sherry tasting in Jerez and Carmona's Roman necropolis.

Was it from Tartessus that King Hiram of Tyre and King Solomon's ships returned laden with silver and gold? Greeks, Phoenicians and Carthaginians risked everything to cross through the Pillars of Hercules into the perilous unknown, where across Cádiz's salt-flats you could witness the sun sizzling at night as it was swallowed up by the Atlantic brine.

Western Andalucía is the land of romance and Homeric myth where recent archaeological discoveries transform our understanding of our classical and orientalising past. Even Rome took two full centuries to force the indigenous Celto-Iberians to take the toga and create a united polity. But, once subdued, Hispania offered Rome untold wealth, its crack elite centurions, 25% of the Senate and successive Emperors Trajan and Hadrian. Just east of Seville, from Carmona's imposing walls we can look across a landscape that witnessed the passing of Hannibal's elephants en-route to start the 2nd Punic War.

It is Cádiz – Gadir – that rightly claims its ancient precedence as the oldest city in Europe, but it was Seville that would become the trading powerhouse of the Spanish Empire. As Roman Hispania fell prey to the Vandal hordes it was the Visigothic kings, converting in the 6th century to Roman Catholicism, that produced a cultural renaissance spearheaded by the encyclopaedic Isidore of Seville, "the last scholar of the ancient world." Catholic orthodoxy was quickly swept aside in 712 AD by the Moors and an Islamic powerhouse that over half a millennium would create a lasting cultural imprint on Al-Andalus. Vibrant silks, elaborate plaster carvings and marble fountains provided a sybaritic backdrop to Emir poet-Kings who celebrated and lamented the fugitive nature of dying love. Al-Andalus was, on a



Seville, the Alcázar, engraving 1840

practical level, the cradle of the agricultural Green Revolution that provided Europe with its exotic larder of citrics, spices and the staple rice.

After the *reconquista* of Seville for Christendom in 1258 it became a trading powerhouse graphically demonstrated by the construction of the largest of all Gothic cathedrals – a perfect symbol of overreaching ambition and hubris. Seville's Golden Age was boosted by the discovery of the Americas in 1492, as it became the administrative and commercial hub of an Empire on which the sun never set. Entrepreneurs, bankers from Genoa, traders from Flanders, and fortune seekers poured in from all over Europe, prey to the pickpocket picaros, who lived off their wits. New World gold funded extravagant palaces and lavish benefactions to churches and monasteries, but the irregular layout of a Muslim city proved delightfully resistant to change.

Seville's seventeenth century gave birth to the genius of Velázquez, Zurbarán and Murillo. But the devastating plague of 1648 and the loss of the Low Countries signalled that Seville was already in decline. The Guadalquivir was silting up, American bullion trapped on the sandbars at Bonanza further downstream was quickly dissipated as the burden of bureaucracy and taxation bled Spain's ability to act as the pre-eminent trans-Atlantic superpower.

In the mid 18th century ancient Cádiz, still

commanding one of the great natural harbours of the Atlantic seaboard, had a second roll at the dice as it was awarded the monopoly on the Atlantic trade. Much of the fabric of the city today – churches, public buildings and squares and the mighty ramparts – date from the eighteenth century. Since then, Cádiz has settled happily into a low-key existence, its narrow streets, tree-lined boulevards and seafront promenades blissfully free of tourists. Across the bay the refreshing sea breezes sweep across the Golden Triangle of sherry production inland to Jerez de la Frontera to brighten and spritz up the palate of this mythic drink.

Itinerary

Day 1, London to Cádiz. Fly at c. 12.30pm from London Heathrow to Gibraltar (British Airways) and coach transfer to Cádiz. Settle into the hotel and dinner. First of two nights in Cádiz.

Day 2: Cádiz. Walk through Cádiz's enchanting narrow streets to the chapel of the former women's hospital to see a hidden gem, El Greco's St Francis of Assisi, and the elliptical Oratorio de San Felipe Neri with Murillo's Immaculate Conception. Continue to recently discovered Roman and Phoenician remains lying deep beneath the streets, before visiting Cádiz Cathedral, built into the Roman theatre. In the afternoon see the 18th-century Oratorio

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de la Santa Cueva with Goya frescoes. The Cádiz Museum has paintings by Zurbarán and Murillo and a fine archaeological section.

Day 3: Jerez de la Frontera. Drive south to Jerez, at the heart of sherry production. Visit and tasting at Bodegas Tradición. Continue to the Alcázar and its 12th-century mosque and St Miguel's high altar carved by Spain's master *imaginero* Montañés. The Plaza de la Asunción is flanked by the Plateresque town hall and Mudejar church of San Dionisio. Continue by coach to Seville for the first of five nights.

Day 4: Seville. Walk through the Barrio de Santa Cruz, the Jewish quarter, with flower-filled courtyards. Visit one of Spain's greatest buildings, the Alcázar, built by Moorish architects for Spanish kings; courtyards, gardens, magnificent tapestries. In the exhibition space of the Hospital de los Venerables we see early works by Velázquez and Murillo. In the afternoon visit the Plaza España within the Parque de María Luisa, laid out for the Expo. of 1929.

Day 5: Seville. The Triana ceramics quarter across the Guadalquivir is synonymous with flamenco. Visit the intimate Chapel of the Marineros and the Centro de Cerámicas. Crossing back over the river we visit the hospital of the Caridad, Seville's most striking 17th-century building, with paintings by Murillo and Valdés Leal. The church of Santa Maria la Blanca with paintings by Murillo is in the neighbourhood's 14th-century synagogue. Early evening visit to the Fine Arts Museum: the best in Spain after the Prado.

Day 6: Seville. Begin with the 15th-century cathedral; one of the largest Gothic churches anywhere, rightly described as a museum. Among its embellishments and works of art are the Capilla Mayor with a magnificent Gothic retable and paintings by Murillo, Zurbarán and Goya. The bell-tower, La Giralda, is a survival from the preceding mosque. An afternoon visit to the Salvador collegiate church, built over another mosque, is close to the Palacio de la Condesa Lebrija, built around patios of Roman mosaics. A free evening provides the opportunity to attend a flamenco show.

Day 7: Carmona. Drive to Carmona with Roman Necropolis. The walled old town is an attractive blend of whitewashed houses, palaces and churches.

Day 8: Seville. Visit Las Dueñas, palace of the Dukes of Alba followed by the Casa de Pilatos,

belonging to the Dukes of Medinaceli. This is the best of the Mudéjar style palaces, with tiled patios in which Seville's Holy Week processions were invented in the 16th century. Fly at c. 5.30pm from Seville to London Gatwick (Vueling).

Please note this tour departs from London Heathrow and returns to London Gatwick.

Lecturer

Gijs van Hensbergen. Art historian and author specialising in Spain and the USA. His books include Gaudí, In the Kitchens of Castile, Guernica and most recently, La Sagrada Familia, and he has published in the Burlington Magazine and Wall Street Journal. He read languages at Utrecht University and Art History at the Courtauld, and undertook postgraduate studies in American art of the 1960s. He has worked in England, the USA and Spain as exhibitions organiser, TV researcher and critic and is a Fellow of the Cañada Blanch Centre for Contemporary Spanish Studies at the LSE.

Practicalities

Price, per person. Two sharing: £3,250 or £3,060 without flights. **Single occupancy:** £3,510 or £3,320 without flights.

Included: flights (Euro Traveller) with British Airways (Airbus 320) and Vueling (Airbus 319); travel by private coach; hotel accommodation as described below; breakfasts and 6 dinners with wine, water, coffee; all admissions; all tips; all taxes; the services of the lecturer, tour manager and local guides.

Accommodation. Parador de Cádiz (paradores.es): a modern, 4-star Parador with ocean views. **Las Casas de la Judería, Seville** (lascasasdelajuderiasevilla.com): 4-star hotel converted from several contiguous 16th-cent. palaces in the Barrio de Santa Cruz. Bedrooms are grouped around plant-filled, open-air patios. *Single rooms throughout are doubles for sole use have single beds.*

How strenuous? The tour involves a lot of walking historic centres, where coach access is restricted, and a lot of standing in museums and churches. A good level of fitness is essential. You will be on your feet for lengthy stretches of time. Average distance by coach per day: 25 miles.

Group size: between 10 and 22 participants.

Combine this tour with: *Extremadura*, 11–20 April 2024.