



Gastronomic Andalucía

Food, wine, art and architecture

13–20 March 2022 (M1 267)

8 days • £3,560

Lecturer: Gijs van Hensbergen

Starting in Málaga, journey in a sweeping curve through Andalucía: Úbeda, Córdoba, Seville, Jerez, Aracena.

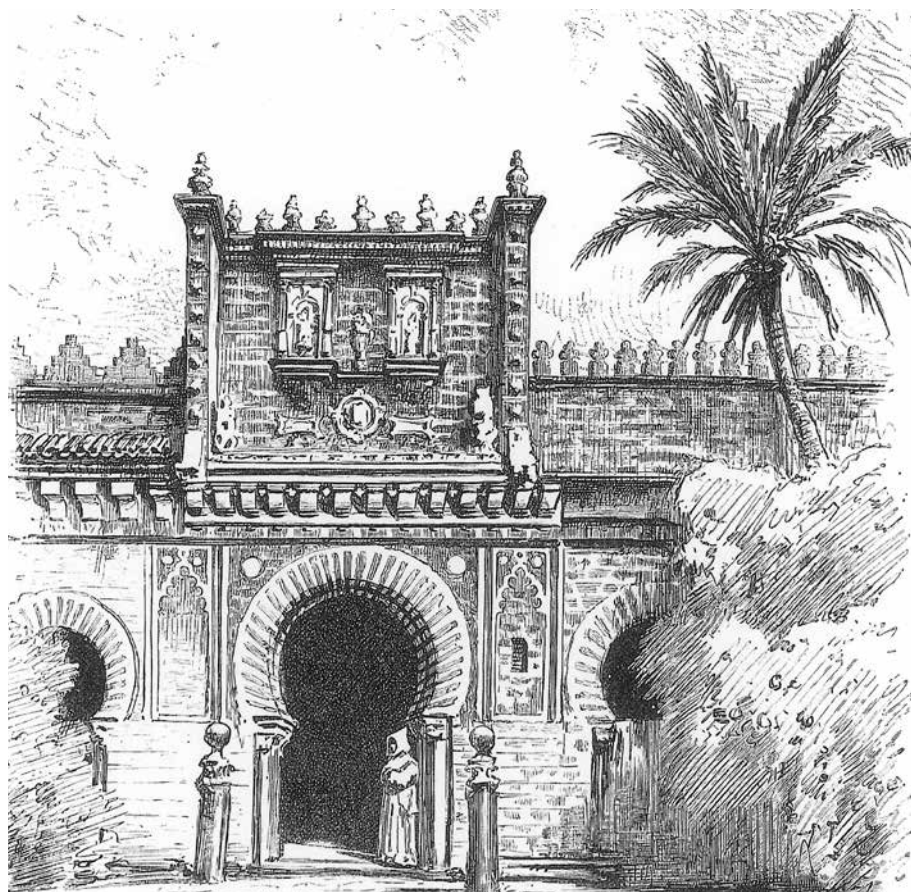
Surveys the history of the region with its cuisine: Roman, Jewish, Moorish, Christian; from the simplest cooking to the elaborate and contemporary.

Some of Spain's greatest monuments are here including the mosque at Córdoba and Seville Cathedral, as well as some lesser-known treasures: wonderful museums, small towns and spectacular countryside.

'Al-Andalus' (the Andalucía of the Moors) are words which immediately evoke fantasies of displays of sweetmeats, saffron-stained rice and jewels of vivid red pomegranate. Exotic flavour combinations are countered by the simplicity of perfectly prepared fish; flaking, moist and ivory white. Sophisticated techniques are often tempered by the deeply felt philosophy that, yes, less can be more.

Gastronomic Andalucía is a true feast of the senses: earthy smells are countered by elusive and piquant tastes; sherries, montillas and punchy red *caldos* of La Mancha wine stand up perfectly to the pickled *escabeches* of game, the deep-flavoured fish soups, and the marriage of almonds, lemon-steeped olives and air-dried tenderloin of albacore tuna. The backdrop of Gastronomic Andalucía is no less exotic: Úbeda and Baeza, the twin cities of Spain's Renaissance, are surrounded by stands of olive trees that lead the eye out to the horizon and the sierras beyond. The mosque in Córdoba, at the very heart of the Caliphate, makes a complete nonsense of the received wisdom about the so-called Dark Ages. Seville's *barrio* of Santa Cruz still offers up phantom vistas of an extraordinary cosmopolitan past.

Andalucía, it must be remembered, has a large variety of climates. In the mountains above Seville, the hams of the wild Iberian pig dry perfectly into a product that is second to none. Sea breezes around Sanlúcar signal the flavour of salt on the tongue. South to Baeza, off the tourist track, we enter the land of olives, and a tasting at the family run Castillo de Canena, where Spain's former Business Woman of the Year, Rosa Vañó, inducts us into the arcane wonders of olive oil tasting. Córdoba, of



Córdoba, La Mezquita, engraving, 1883.

course, needs no advertising; our lunch here at two Michelin-starred Noor transports us back to Al-Andalus, with a menu made exclusively from ingredients available in the Caliphate in the tenth century.

Perfectly fried aubergines are a foil for the oxtail, fillets of fish with herbs and oil are trapped in a flash, in a film of the lightest batter and laid out on a bed of the speciality, fried lettuce. Oaky Montilla wine is taken standing.

Seville and Jerez are worlds of their own. Sherry houses are famous for producing unique tastes. Less known are the *almacenistas*, passionate amateurs, whose houses, basements, shops and even living rooms are turned over to storing and nursing their barrels. In Seville, Michelin-starred Julio Fernández Quinteiro offers us his take on Andalusian cuisine at Restaurante Abantal.

The tour culminates with a seafood feast at Aponiente in El Puerto de Santa María, holder of three Michelin stars. Ángel León,

the self-proclaimed 'Chef of the Sea', comes from a fishing background and has built his imaginative menu around his love for seafood, while his use of avant-garde techniques and unusual ingredients have earned him a reputation as a visionary chef.

Itinerary

Day 1: Málaga. Fly at c. 1.15pm (British Airways) from London City to Málaga. with a tapas dinner on arrival. Overnight in Málaga.

Day 2: Málaga, Úbeda. Begin at the Carmen Thyssen museum, with its fine collection of old masters and 19th-century Spanish painting. The magnificent Picasso Museum combines Phoenician ruins beneath a fine 16th-century palace and a collection which places emphasis on his earlier works and the women in his life. A light lunch and wine tasting before an afternoon drive to the handsome town of

Gastronomic Andalucía
continued

Úbeda, whose streets and squares are lined with palaces, one of which is our hotel. First of two nights in Úbeda.

Day 3: Úbeda. The town of Úbeda thrived in the 16th century and is richly endowed with Renaissance monuments. Lunch is at the town's most innovative restaurant, Antique. The Arab Castle of Canena is deep in olive-grove country of the Guadalquivir valley and home to the Vañó family, famed producers; tasting and visit here.

Day 4: Córdoba, Seville. Drive west to Córdoba and focus on La Mezquita, one of the largest and most beautiful mosques in the world, and within it the 16th-century cathedral. Walk through the old Jewish quarter, with 14th-century synagogue, before a Moorish lunch at Noor (2 Michelin stars), where chef Paco Morales only uses ingredients that were available in 10th-century Al-Andalus. Continue to Seville for the first of four nights.

Day 5: Seville. Begin at the Alcázar, one of Spain's greatest buildings, built by Moorish architects for Spanish kings, with its courtyards, gardens and magnificent tapestries. The 15th-century cathedral is one of the largest Gothic churches anywhere, with a Late Gothic retable and paintings by Murillo, Zurbarán and Goya. In the afternoon visit the Fine Arts Museum, the finest collection in Spain after the Prado. Dinner is at a tapas restaurant in the atmospheric *barrio* of Santa Cruz.

Day 6: Sierra de Aracena, Jabugo. Drive north to the Sierra de Aracena, the low mountains which form the border with Extremadura. Here we taste the exquisite *jamón ibérico*. There is an optional walk in the foothills along farm tracks lined with oak, chestnut and olive trees and livestock. Alternatively remain in the town of Aracena. The evening is spent at Restaurante Abantal, whose chef was the first in Seville to win a Michelin star.

Day 7: Jerez de la Frontera, El Puerto de Santa María. Drive south to Jerez, at the heart of sherry production. Visit and tasting at Bodegas Tradición, also home to an impressive art collection. Continue to El Puerto de Santa María for lunch at one of Spain's most renowned restaurants, Aponiente (3 Michelin stars). Chef Ángel León is known for his creativity and experimental techniques, and his menu offers an innovative take on seafood.

Day 8: Seville. Free day in Seville perhaps to visit the 15th-century Casa de Pilatos, a mix of Mudéjar, Gothic and Renaissance styles, or the church and hospital of the Caridad, Seville's most striking 17th-century building, with paintings by Murillo and Valdés Leal. Drive to Seville airport for the flight to London Heathrow, arriving at c. 6.00pm. *Please note that this tour departs from London City and returns to London Heathrow.*

Lecturer

Gijs van Hensbergen. Art historian and author specialising in Spain and the USA. His books include *Gaudi*, *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: £3,560 or £3,400 without flights. **Single occupancy:** £3,780 or £3,620 without flights.

By train: London – Paris – Barcelona – Málaga: c. 28 hours. Contact us for more information.

Included: air travel (economy class) with British Airways (Airbus 319 & 320); travel by private coach; accommodation as described below; breakfasts, 5 lunches and 4 dinners (including 1 light lunch) with water, wine or beer, soft drinks and tea or coffee; all admissions; all tips for waiters, drivers and guides; all taxes; the services of the lecturer, tour manager and local guides.

Accommodation. **Hotel Molina Lario**, Málaga (hotelmolinalario.com): functional, comfortable 4-star hotel in the centre. **Parador de Úbeda** (parador.es): 4-star *parador* in a Renaissance palace on the most handsome square in town; comfortable rooms, traditionally furnished. **Hotel Las Casas de la Judería, Seville** (lascasasdelajuderiasevilla.com): charming 4-star hotel in the Barrio Sta Cruz created from several contiguous buildings connected by open-air patios. *Single rooms are doubles for sole use throughout.*

How strenuous? There is quite a lot of walking over uneven ground and up and down hill (as well as an optional countryside walk) and some days involve a lot of driving. Average distance by coach per day: 100 miles. Dinners tend to be at 8.30 or 9.00pm in Spain, so you might get to bed later than you would usually.

Group size: between 10 and 22 participants.