

# Understand Andalucía

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More than just music, flamenco is a way of life – and an intrinsically Andalusian one at that.

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Some see it as tragedy, others as theatre – whatever your view, bullfighting is intrinsically entwined with Andalusian culture.

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Goodbye France, hello Spain! In case you hadn't noticed, balmi Iberia now leads the way in global cuisine.

# Andalucía Today

In the worst economic crisis that most Spaniards can remember, Andalucía has been hit especially hard. Many people are angry. But despondent? Never. It can be hard to reconcile the warmth and colour of the Andalusian atmosphere with the gloom and doom of the news stories. The music still plays, the fiestas go on. With their gregarious nature, enjoyment of the good things and their optimism, Andalusians still have plenty of fight left in them.

## Best on Film

**Marshland** (2014) Alberto Rodríguez' suspenseful tale of detectives investigating murders in the Guadalquivir delta scooped 10 Goyas (the Spanish 'Oscars').

**The Disappearance of García Lorca** (Marcos Zurinaga; 1997) Journalist investigates the death of the great Spanish playwright (played by Andy García).

**Zindagi Na Milego Dobara** (Zoya Akhtar; 2011) This Bollywood tale inspired a miniboom in Indian tourism to Spain; it includes a full song-and-dance routine set in the village of Alájar; starring Hrithik Roshan and Katrina Kaif.

**South from Granada** (Fernando Colomo; 2003) Touching screen rendition of Gerald Brenan's classic book.

## Best in Print

**South from Granada** (Gerald Brenan; 1957) Village life in Las Alpujarras in the 1920s.

**The Ornament of the World** (María Rosa Menocal; 2002) Examines the tolerance and sophistication of Moorish Andalucía.

**Andalus** (Jason Webster; 2004) Webster's adventurous travels uncover the modern legacy of the Moorish era.

**Driving Over Lemons** (Chris Stewart; 1999) An anecdotal bestseller about life on a small Alpujarras farm.

## Boom & Bust

In 2007, Andalucía had never had it so good. A decade-long boom in construction and property prices, massive EU funds for agriculture and a constant flow of tourists saw unemployment down to 12%, the lowest in memory. Rows and rows of shiny new cars were parked outside shiny new shopping-cum-entertainment complexes. Instead of Andalusians emigrating for jobs – a time-honoured tradition in what has long been one of Spain's poorest regions – hundreds of thousands of immigrants were coming to work in Andalucía.

Then the bubble burst. Credit was crunched, property prices dived, construction ground to a halt. Unemployment doubled in two years and kept on going up. Businesses closed, homes were repossessed, half-built buildings stood silent, charities handed out ever more food to the hungry, Spanish banks were bailed out by the European Union (EU), *la crisis* became a way of life. A wave of anger at corruption and the political and financial elite spread across the country, spearheaded by a protest movement known as Los Indignados (The Indignant Ones). By 2013, 36% of the Andalusian workforce was jobless, with unemployment among 16-to-24-year-olds at a staggering 64%. People were talking of a 'lost generation', and once again Andalusians were leaving home – to Germany, Britain, Latin America – to find jobs. Many were university graduates who found no market for their skills in a region notoriously lacking in industry and where employers of all kinds were feeling the squeeze.

In 2013, with an austerity-minded Partido Popular (PP; People's Party) government now in office in Madrid, the politicians started talking about signs of recovery. Few people took any notice, and if they did, it was usually to comment that they didn't believe anything the corrupt *casta* (political-financial governing 'caste') had