



Seville & Andalucía's Hill Towns

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Best Places to See Flamenco

- Casa de la Memoria (p595)
- Peña Flamenca La Perla (p613)
- Museo del Baile Flamenco (p584)
- Peña Flamenca Tomás El Nitri (p616)
- Damajuana (p624)

Best Tapas

- La Brunilda (p592)
- Vinería San Telmo (p592)
- El Aljibe (p612)
- Casa Balbino (p618)

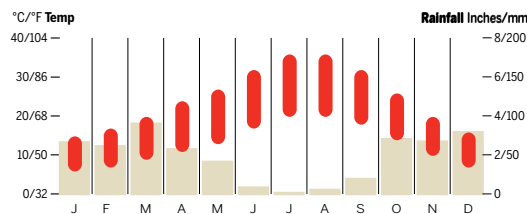
Why Go?

A parched region fertile with culture, a conquered land that went on to conquer, a fiercely traditional place that has accepted rapid modernisation: western Andalucía has multiple faces. Here, in the cradle of quintessential Spain, the questions are often as intriguing as the answers. Who first concocted flamenco? How did tapas become a national obsession? Could Cádiz be Europe's oldest settlement? Are those *really* Christopher Columbus' bones inside Seville cathedral? And where on earth did the audacious builders of Córdoba's Mezquita get their divine inspiration from? Putting together the missing pieces of the puzzle is what makes travel in the region the glorious adventure that it is.

Seville is western Andalucía's Holy Grail, Córdoba deserves more than a day trip, while the white towns will lure you into quieter rural areas and perhaps inspire you to visit the region's only national park amid the bird-rich wetlands of Doñana.

When to Go

Seville



Apr Sombre Semana Santa processions are followed by the exuberance of the spring fairs.

May Relatively cool weather. Many towns and villages celebrate *romerías* (pilgrimages).

Late Sep The heat diminishes, the crowds go home – but it's still warm enough for the beach.

TOP TIP

Plan your trip to coincide with one of Andalucía's festivals, but remember to book accommodation well ahead.

Top Five Food Experiences

- ➔ Digging into seafood in Sanlúcar de Barrameda (p618).
- ➔ Visiting a sherry bodega in Jerez de la Frontera (p621).
- ➔ Sampling nouveau tapas in Seville (p591).
- ➔ Taking a language and cooking course in Vejer de la Frontera (p632).
- ➔ Tasting raw sea urchins in Cádiz (p612).

Best Places to Stay

- ➔ Palacio San Bartolomé (p615)
- ➔ Hotel Casa 1800 (p590)
- ➔ V... (p632)
- ➔ Bed and Be (p645)

Bus Companies

- ➔ **Alsa** Serves Andalucía's major cities.
- ➔ **Amarillos** Links smaller towns in western Andalucía.
- ➔ **Dumas** Primarily serves Huelva province.
- ➔ **Comes** Covers Cádiz province including many white towns.
- ➔ **Carrera** Serves Cordoba province.
- ➔ **Portillo** Links Costa del Sol resorts.

Wine Regions

Western Andalucía has four *Denominaciones de Origen* (DO).

Jerez-Xerez-Sherry The legendary sherry region was Spain's first DO in 1933 and uses mainly palomino grapes to make some of the world's oldest wines. Varietals span from dry *fino* seco to sweet Pedro Ximénez.

Manzanilla Sanlúcar de Barrameda Although it uses the same grapes as Jerez, Sanlúcar's coastal microclimate produces a more delicate, suave sherry with a faint salty essence known as manzanilla.

Condado de Huelva The white wines in this understated DO are primarily made from zalema grapes, which produce fresh, light, if unspectacular, wines that go well with seafood.

Montilla-Moriles This DO in southern Córdoba province centers on the town of Montilla and produces sweet dessert wines closely related to sherry using Pedro Ximénez and moscatel (muscat) grapes.

SPAIN'S FINEST RAILWAY

The most spectacular train ride in Spain? The Ronda-Algeciras line is certainly a contender. Opened in 1892 to allow bored British military personnel bivouacked in Gibraltar access to the (then) hidden wonders of Spain, the line was engineered and financed by a couple of wealthy Brits who furnished the towns at each end with two magnificent Victorian hotels: the Reina Victoria (Ronda) and the Reina Cristina (Algeciras). Still running on single track, the line traverses some of Andalucía's finest scenery including cork oak forest, Moorish white towns, boulder-strewn mountainscapes and diminutive *Thomas the Tank Engine* stations. Trains run three times a day in either direction.

Learning Spanish

Privately run language schools are scattered all over Spain and many of them are excellent. But, with most courses requiring a minimum of one week's study, it's important to find the right location. **Seville** is a beautiful city in which to linger for a week or two and has an abundance of top-notch language schools. If you'd prefer a slightly smaller city with instant access to history and beaches, **Cádiz** has a couple of good schools located in the old quarter. For a more rural experience in a diminutive hilltop town close to the coast, you can't beat **Vejer de la Frontera**.

Best schools:

- ➔ CLIC (p588) in Seville.
- ➔ K2 Internacional (p611) in Cádiz.
- ➔ La Janda (p632) in Vejer de la Frontera.