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You’d need months to poke into every corner of Andalucía, but two weeks will pack in the highlights. This greatest-hits itinerary is ideal for first-timers or those with a limited time ration.

The best starting point is exceptional Seville, deserving of three days, where the Gothic cathedral and Mudéjar Alcázar stand side by side in surreal juxtaposition. Travel 150km northeast by train and several centuries back in time to Córdoba, site of flower-filled patios and the resplendent Mezquita. Free tapas, shadowy tea rooms and the incomparable Alhambra beckon southeast in Granada, where you could fill at least three days reclining in Moorish-style bathhouses, wandering the Albayzín and deciphering the Lorca legend. Easily reached by bus, Málaga is understated by comparison; spend a couple of days enjoying the galleries, museums and fresh seafood. To the west (by bus or car), mountain-ringed Ronda is a dramatic contrast, doused in rebel-rousing history. West again, Jerez de la Frontera is famous for its flamenco, festivals, horses and sherry bodegas. A 45-minute train trip southwest, Cádiz has an abundance of free sights, including a fine city museum and a romantic malecón (sea drive), plus a majestic cathedral, buzzy beaches and an aficionados’ flamenco club.
To understand every nuance of Andalucía, take a four- to five-week ‘grand tour’ of all eight provinces. This busy, expansive itinerary will see you staggering home with a virtual PhD in Andalucian culture but also gives you freedom to pick and choose.

Start in Seville, visiting the famous (the cathedral, the Alcázar) and less obvious (Casa de Pilatos, Triana) sights. Westward sorts lead into Huelva province; there’s prime hiking in the province’s north, between the sleepy villages and gentle hills of the Sierra de Aracena. Passing back through Seville, head east, stopping in history-rich Carmona before escaping north into the Parque Natural Sierra Norte de Sevilla. For week two, head to Córdoba, marvelling at its labyrinthine streets, hidden patios, Roman relics and splendid Islamic architecture. Tracking east into Jaén province takes you through a land of olive groves and weighty Renaissance architecture. The latter is concentrated in the twin towns of Baeza and Úbeda. Further east, Cazorla is the gateway to Andalucía’s largest protected area, the Parque Natural Sierras de Cazorla, Segura y Las Villas.

Granada, at the start of week three, has a classic allure, loaded with exotic majesty and guarded by the marvellous Alhambra. To visit all eight provinces, consider circumnavigating the Sierra Nevada to reach Almería (with its impressive Alcazaba) and the protected Cabo de Gata. Hit the coast at the unadulterated Spanish town of Almuñécar and follow it west, dropping in at delightful Nerja, to Málaga, a provincial capital with a booming art, museum and food scene. Start week four in white-town ‘capital’ Ronda; with its plunging gorge, it’s been on most itineraries since Hemingway visited. The white towns continue west across the border in Cádiz province; choose between Olvera, Grazalema and Zahara de la Sierra (or visit them all!), and hike through the surrounding Parque Natural Sierra de Grazalema. Tracking west, Arcos de la Frontera reels visitors in with its spectacular cliff-top setting, whitewashed alleys and down-to-earth tapas bars.

Spend your final week delving into Andalucian culture in Jerez de la Frontera and Cádiz, two ancient cities packed with history, flamenco, sherry and a stash of worthwhile sights. Finally, hop across the Río Guadalquivir from Sanlúcar de Barrameda to explore the wilds of the ethereal Parque Nacional de Doñana.
Already seen the Alhambra and hiked the Sierra Nevada? Then go west to the self-styled cradle of Andalucian culture.

Start in Huelva province’s Parque Nacional de Doñana, arguably Andalucía’s finest natural attraction. Seville has a wealth of well-known sights, while its hinterland is less heralded. Visit Carmona, with its Alcázar, and Osuna, with its grand palaces. South, rugged Ronda is on the tourist map, though most visitors don’t stay overnight; if time allows, sidestep west to white towns Zahara de la Sierra and/or Grazalema. Exciting stops en route east from Ronda could be El Chorro gorge (home to the Caminito del Rey) or ancient Antequera. Lively Málaga has great seafood and excellent galleries and museums. With time, you can head southwest to Cádiz province’s less-trodden spots, including Jimena de la Frontera, a good base for hiking in the Parque Natural Los Alcornocales. To the south, Gibraltar lures Brits missing roast beef. Track southwest and stay in cool Tarifa, before checking out the Costa de la Luz and overnighting in Vejer de la Frontera. Save time for culturally intense Cádiz, with a detour to Jerez de la Frontera.

If you had to pick a smaller region-within-a-region that best sums up Andalucía’s essence, it would probably be the triangle of territory between Seville, Cádiz and Jerez de la Frontera.

Seville is your best starting point. Lap up the Moorish-meets-Gothic architecture and seemingly limitless festivals for a day or two. Fast trains forge south to Jerez de la Frontera, first stop on the Sherry Triangle, where you can spend two days mixing bodega tours with horse shows, tabanco tapas, authentic flamenco and a hammam session. Continuing west (easily by bus) to Sanlúcar de Barrameda allows you to compare fino with manzanilla and savour some of Spain’s finest seafood tapas. This is also a good base for forays into Huelva’s biodiverse Parque Nacional de Doñana. Buses link Sanlúcar with El Puerto de Santa María, home of more bodegas, festivals and fish restaurants. A catamaran ride across the bay, ancient, sea-surrounded Cádiz feels like the edge of Europe. The blonde beaches here are famously broad and beautiful, continuing southeast along the Costa de la Luz. Explore them from Vejer de la Frontera, a dramatically perched white town with a fashionable feel.
The Coast

Lapping five of its eight provinces, the Andalucian coastline is one of the region’s delights. Empires were built here, though more recently resorts have colonised the shore. Most coastal towns are linked by bus.

Start with Almería’s protected Cabo de Gata, a spectacular combination of cliffs, salt flats and sandy beaches. Tracking west, Almería is worth a stop for its Moorish Alcazaba. Granada’s Costa Tropical is precipitous and authentic: Almuñécar makes a great base and low-key La Herradura offers water sports. Further west, Málaga province’s Nerja has tempered its development, and excellent inland hiking beckons in La Axarquia. Málaga deserves three days; its international reputation has skyrocketed thanks to its fine gastronomy and growing art and museum scene. Marbella is the most interesting stop on the tourististed Costa del Sol, though Mijas merits a day trip. Southwest, British-owned Gibraltar guards the jaws of Europe. Extending northwest from kitesurfing capital Tarifa, Cádiz’ Costa de la Luz offers water sports, coastal hikes, Roman ruins, beaches and great cuisine. Stay in Vejer de la Frontera, visiting Zahara de los Atunes and Los Caños de Meca, before a grand two-day finale in Cádiz.

The East in Detail

Spend three days in each of the two big-hitter cities, then branch out (you’re best off with your own wheels).

Córdoba is an unmissable city graced by one of the finest mosques ever built. To the southeast, Granada has the dazzling Alhambra, Albayzín and Moorish-style bathhouses. Beyond the cities, Córdoba province’s wilderness includes the Parque Natural Sierras Subbéticas, while Granada offers the Parque Nacional Sierra Nevada and Las Alpujarras, the village-dotted valleys on the Sierra’s southern slopes. Granada-province detours might include Guadix, with its inhabited caves, and coastal Almuñécar, a slice of domitic seaside bliss North from Granada, Jaén provides fine tapas bars, while Baeza and Úbeda are unique for their Renaissance architecture. Continue east to the Parque Natural Sierras de Cazorla, Segura y Las Villas for rugged mountain scenery, hilltop castles and abundant wildlife.

In Almería province, beachy Mojácar promises a both boho and glitzy vibe; Cabo de Gata is the region’s most unspoiled coastal stretch; and Almería, with its formidable Moorish Alcazaba (fortress), is a kind of Granada-on-the-sea.
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Map Legend

Sights
- Beach
- Bird Sanctuary
- Buddhist
- Castle/Palace
- Christian
- Confucian
- Hindu
- Islamic
- Jain
- Jewish
- Monument
- Museum/Gallery/Historic Building
- Ruin
- Shinto
- Sikh
- Taoist
- Winery/Vineyard
- Zoo/Wildlife Sanctuary
- Other Sight

Activities, Courses & Tours
- Bodysurfing
- Diving
- Canoeing/Kayaking
- Course/Tour
- Sento Hot Baths/Onsen
- Skiing
- Snorkelling
- Surfing
- Swimming/Pool
- Walking
- Windsurfing
- Other Activity

Sleeping
- Sleeping
- Camping
- Hut/Shelter

Eating
- Eating

Drinking & Nightlife
- Drinking & Nightlife
- Cafe

Entertainment
- Entertainment

Shopping
- Shopping

Information
- Bank
- Embassy/Consulate
- Hospital/Medical
- Internet
- Police
- Post Office
- Telephone
- Toilet
- Tourist Information
- Other Information

Geographic
- Beach
- Gate
- Hut/Shelter
- Lighthouse
- Lookout
- Mountain/Volcano
- Oasis
- Park
- Pass
- Picnic Area
- Waterfall

Population
- Capital (National)
- Capital (State/Province)
- City/Large Town
- Town/Village

Transport
- Airport
- Border crossing
- Bus
- Cable car/Funicular
- Cycling
- Ferry
- Metro station
- Monorail
- Parking
- Petrol station
- S-Bahn/Subway station
- Taxi
- T-bane/Tunnelbana station
- Train station/Railway
- Tram
- Tube station
- U-Bahn/Underground station
- Other Transport

Routes
- Tollway
- Freeway
- Primary
- Secondary
- Tertiary
- Lane
- Unsealed road
- Road under construction
- Plaza/Mall
- Steps
- Tunnel
- Pedestrian overpass
- Walking Tour
- Walking Tour detour
- Path/Walking Trail

Boundaries
- International
- State/Province
- Disputed
- Regional/Suburb
- Marine Park
- Cliff
- Wall

Hydrography
- River, Creek
- Intermittent River
- Canal
- Water
- Dry/Salt/Intermittent Lake
- Reef

Areas
- Airport/Runway
- Beach/Desert
- Cemetery (Christian)
- Cemetery (Other)
- Glacier
- Mudflat
- Park/Forest
- Sight (Building)
- Sportsground
- Swamp/Mangrove

Note: Not all symbols displayed above appear on the maps in this book.
OUR STORY

A beat-up old car, a few dollars in the pocket and a sense of adventure. In 1972 that’s all Tony and Maureen Wheeler needed for the trip of a lifetime – across Europe and Asia overland to Australia. It took several months, and at the end – broke but inspired – they sat at their kitchen table writing and stapling together their first travel guide, *Across Asia on the Cheap*. Within a week they’d sold 1500 copies. Lonely Planet was born.

Today, Lonely Planet has offices in Franklin, London, Melbourne, Oakland, Dublin, Beijing and Delhi, with more than 600 staff and writers. We share Tony’s belief that ‘a great guidebook should do three things: inform, educate and amuse’.

OUR WRITERS

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Cádiz Province, Gibraltar  English-Australian on paper but Spanish at heart, Isabella has been wandering the globe since her first round-the-world trip as a one-year-old. Having grown up in a whitewashed Andalucian village, she is a Spain specialist travel journalist, but also writes extensively about India, Thailand, the UK and beyond for Lonely Planet, the *Daily Telegraph* and others. Find Isabella on Twitter and Instagram (@isabellamnoble). Isabella also wrote the Plan section.

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