

Córdoba

Practical city guide / Map



Córdoba



Geography and history Monuments and museums Festivals and traditions Gastronomy and crafts

The city of Córdoba was built where the largest river in Andalucía, the Guadalquivir, was no longer navigable. The Roman General Claudio Marcelo established a permanent camp on the banks of the river in the year 164 before Christ. That modest Roman Imperial settlement multiplied its population in a few years and two centuries later it competed in beauty

importance and magnificent with the Imperial capital. The capital of Andalucía or Bética: Córdoba, birth place of Séneca and his nephew Lucano, with a Roman Theatre almost as big and a circus as big as the ones in Rome. The fall of the Roman Empire coincided with the height of the Visigothic culture. The arrival of the Moors to Spain in 711 made Córdoba the headquarters of the Emirate founded by the Omniad leader Abd al-Rahman the first. His descendants made Moorish Córdoba the richest and most sumptuous city in the know world, so much so that in the first third of the tenth century, in 929, Abd al-Rahman the third proclaimed an independent Caliphate and made Córdoba the capital of al-Andalus. A few decades later, after the death of the son of the first Caliph al-Hakam the second and the leader Almanzor, Córdoba became the object of a bloody civil war between different Moorish factions and its immense power was relegated to a modest and weakened Moorish kingdom. Finally in 1236, the Christian army led by the King of Castile, Fernando the third the Saint, took Córdoba and the Mosque, the most emblematic monument of the Spanish-Moslem culture, was consecrated as a Christian temple. Later a Cathedral was built in the centre of the great building. The following centuries saw the great metropolis develop in keeping with the aesthetics dictated by the Christians. Afterwards, the city became an agricultural and artisan centre. It was a crossroads when the nineteenth century writers and travellers rediscovered the city through curious eyes and with poetry. Under the dictates of baroque churches and palaces were built in the Jewish quarter or in suburbs like the Ajerquía, in the shadows of the churches built by King Fernando. Today, Córdoba is a modern city, the seat of one of the most powerful universities in Andalucía and a centre of communications between the higher and lower parts of Andalucía. Córdoba has over three thousand hours of sunshine a year and an average temperature of 21°C.

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Holy Week in Córdoba is silent and serious, different to other cities. The most representative procession is of Christ of Remedio de Ánimas on Holy Monday leaving from the church of San Lorenzo. The battle of Flowers is just before the May Crosses, one of the most traditional festivals in Córdoba. In May the city of Córdoba shines more than at any other time of the year. The Crosses are made of brightly coloured flowers in the most picturesque plazas, streets and avenues of city. The first Sunday of May the local people celebrate the romería type pilgrimage in honour of the Virgen de Linares. However it is in the middle of May when the main celebration of the city takes place. The Córdoba Festival of Patios, Windows and Balconies makes the city a showcase of colour, atmosphere and lovely aromas. The Córdoba fair is held in honour of Our Lady of Health Nuestra Señora de la Salud. It takes place the last week of May on the fairground in el Arenal. During the fair top matadors head the programme of bullfights in los Califas bullring which used to be the ancient plaza de los Tejares. The month of July comes round bringing with it many cultural activities. The International Festival of Sephardic Music is held in the middle of the month just before the Guitarr Festival, one of the most important flamenco events of the year in Andalucía. This competition attracts new flamenco guitarists and is the starting pistol for the cycle of Flamenco Nights in the Old Part of the City, a series of night concerts that carry on until the end of November, bringing together promising young flamenco artists and established artists in the Caballerizas Reales, at the Casa de las Campanas and in the Plaza del Potro. The festival of San Rafael is on the 24th October, custodian of the city of Córdoba. According to tradition you visit the church of San Rafael, close to the church of San Lorenzo, for the religious services. At midday thousands of cordobeses head for nature areas in the mountains, especially the forest park of Los Villares, to eat their "perro" which is a kind of paella, washed down with wine from Montilla-Moriles.

There is a lot of art and tradition in the gastronomy of Córdoba. The weight of history and tradition is in the dishes that have been passed down from the Moorish and Jewish past, they are put on the table today with innovating touches and a fusion of tastes. There are dishes that have Córdoba's own special mark like salmorejo (a kind of thick gazpacho), flamenquín (rolled meat, cheese and ham deep fried) made with serrano ham, oxtail (from fighting bulls), lamb in honey sauce or perfumed artichokes with a touch of Montilla wine. With regard to desserts, there is a wide legacy the Spanish Moors left. The list of recipes also includes substantial dishes of game, hams and Iberian pork products that come from the valley of Los Pedroches. In Córdoba the typical custom in Andalucía of going for a few tapas has gained fame and popularity. There are bars around the plaza de La Corredera in the la Ajerquía suburb or in the area around the plaza de Las Tendillas where you can try an endless list of bite-sized dishes that summarise perfectly the exquisite Mediterranean cuisine. Silversmiths and jewellers make up most of the craft activities in Córdoba and they are the main source of income in the city. The silversmiths' and jewellers' workshops are spread all over the city, many of them in private houses. The Córdoba wholesalers distribute the craft worked jewellery all over Europe. The cordovans are also famous, embossed leatherwork evoking the traditional craft work of the Spanish Moors. Córdoba also has important classical and flamenco guitar makers.

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Routes Córdoba

Different cultures have marked the city of Córdoba that was the Roman and Moorish capital city, the centre of Western Europe. Situated on the banks of the river Guadalquivir it welcomed great philosophers like the Roman Séneca, Averroes, Maimónides the Jew, writers like Luis de Góngora, or painters like Julio Romero de Torres. It has great monuments like the Mosque, the ruins of Medina Azahara and a beautiful Jewish quarter have all added to it being declared by the UNESCO to be a World Heritage Site.

A trip through the mountains and the Hermitages

Out of the beautiful mountain landscapes, the mysterious and famous hermitages are worth mentioning. To get there, take the road towards Arruzafa, past the

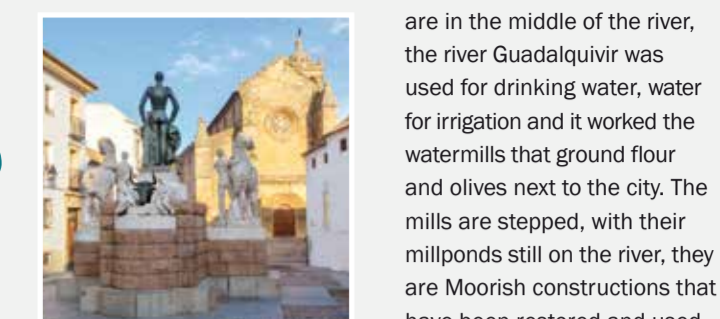


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The Plaza de las Tendillas, in the area around the statue of the Gran Capitán, is the shopping centre of the old city of Córdoba, although it is made up of a mixture of new buildings today. From here walk down the calle de Claudio Marcelo, which soon takes us to the Roman temple (39), it sheight makes us think that it must have been a great building. At the back of the Town Hall, the church of San Pablo is situated, built in the thirteenth century, in Romantic and Gothic style, founded by Fernando third



the river. The Museum of Fine Arts (34) is situated in the same plaza del Potro, housed in the ancient Hospital de la Caridad, that the Christina Monarchs founded. It still has beautiful wood panelled ceilings and magnificent paintings. It also has a collection of Renaissance panels, three paintings of Zurbaran and several canvases from the School of Murillo and the workshop of Ribera. At a short distance from the plaza del Potro you come to the rectangular plaza de la Corredera (38), with brick houses all of the same height, with three floors of balconies over arcades. It used to be the Plaza Mayor and the Plaza del Mercado or market place. It is a beautiful example of civil architecture from the seventeenth century, where plays were staged, bullfights held as well as autos-da-fe. Between the plaza de la Corredera and the Mosque you will find the Archaeological Museum (30), housed in the lovely Renaissance palace of the Páez. It is a compulsory visit for you to get to know the prehistoric past of the area and

especially the valuable works of Roman Iberian and Visigoth art that have been found in the city and the province, as well as Moorish art with exhibit sfrom the Mosque and from Medina Azahara. A stroll along the river past the watermills

On the opposite bank of the Roman bridge you can see the impressive construction of the Moorish tower of Calahorra (4), which was reformed in 1630 and today it houses a museum dedicated to the three cultures that lived together in the city of Córdoba: Christian, Moorish and Jewish. In front of this tower, in the Campo de la Verdad, there was a suburb that Al Hakem I razed to the ground after its inhabitants revolted in 818. The watermills

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