

Granada Information



(With thanks to Wikipedia, Wiki travel, Lonely Planet and other websites for the following information)

General Information:

Granada is the capital city of the province of Granada, in Andalusia, Spain, and is located at the foot of the Sierra Nevada Mountains, at the confluence of four rivers, the Beiro, the Darro, the Genil and the Monachil. It sits at an average elevation of 738 m above sea level, yet is only one hour by car from the Mediterranean coast, the Costa Tropical.

Internationally revered for its lavish Alhambra palace, and enshrined in medieval history as the last stronghold of the Moors in Western Europe, Granada is the darker, more complicated cousin of sunny, exuberant Seville. Humming with a feisty cosmopolitanism and awash with riddles, question marks, contradictions and myths, this is a place to put down your guidebook and let your intuition lead the way – through the narrow ascending streets of the Albayzín, and the tumbling white-walled house gardens of the Realejo quarter. Elegant yet edgy, grandiose but gritty, monumental but marked by pockets of stirring graffiti, 21st-century Granada is anything but straightforward. Instead, this sometimes stunning, sometimes ugly city set spectacularly in the crook of the Sierra Nevada is an enigmatic place where – if the mood is right – you sense you might find something that you've long been looking for. A free tapa, perhaps? An inspirational piece of street art? A flamenco performance that finally unmasks the intangible spirit of dude? Endowed with relics from various epochs of history, there's lots to do and plenty to admire in Granada: the mausoleum of the Catholic monarchs, old-school bars selling generous tapas, bohemian teterías where Arabic youths smoke cachimbas (hookah pipes), and an exciting nightlife that bristles with the creative aura of counterculture.

Granada History:

Granada has been continuously inhabited by humans for at least 2500 years, originating as an Ibero-Celtic settlement prior to the establishment of a Greek colony in the area. Under Ancient Roman rule Granada developed as an economic centre of Roman Hispania, with the construction of aqueducts, roads, and other infrastructure. With the fall of the Roman Empire the city was ruled by the Visigoths before being again

conquered by the Byzantine Empire, all the time being maintained as a strategic military and economic hub for the region. The Moorish conquest of 711 brought Islamic rule to the Iberian Peninsula and Granada was quickly established as one of the main cities of Al-Andalus, the Muslim name for the region. New agricultural practices were introduced as the old Roman infrastructure was put to use for irrigation, leading to a major expansion of the city as it grew from the river valley up to the hills currently occupied by the Alhambra and the Albayzín, with a major Jewish settlement, the Realejo, existing within the town. Following the fall of Córdoba in 1236 to the Christian Reconquista, the city became the capital of the Emirate of Granada, and for the next 250 years Granada stood as the heart of a powerful and self-sufficient kingdom with the construction of the royal palace and fortress, the Alhambra. Skirmishes continued between the Emirate of Granada and the Crown of Castile, and in the late 15th century the Christian Reconquista set its sights on Granada. Following a military campaign led by King Ferdinand II of Aragon and Queen Isabella I of Castile, which included a siege of the walled town, King Boabdil of Granada was ultimately forced to surrender the town in 1492, bringing an end to Moorish rule in the Iberian peninsula and marking the end of the Reconquista. The fall of Granada came at a crucial moment for Christian Spain, as it was that same year that Christopher Columbus made his first voyage to the Americas, bringing back reports of the wealth and resources that could be gained there. Flushed with the success of the Reconquista, Spaniards conquered much of the Americas and brought great wealth to the new Spanish Empire. In the case of Granada, the Christians soon forced the existing Jewish and Muslim residents to convert and began making significant changes to the appearance of the city in an attempt to hide its Muslim character, including replacing the city's primary mosque with the massive Cathedral and constructing a large Christian palace in the heart of the Alhambra. Persecution against the Muslims and Jews took its toll, and over time the city began to suffer economically as these populations abandoned their homes in the area. Granada remained a largely medieval-style city well into the 19th century, going through many economic slumps and seeing much of its architectural heritage destroyed. However, the last half of the 19th century saw Granada incorporated into the national rail network and the first stirrings of tourism thanks to reports of sites like the Alhambra to a global audience. However, the Spanish Civil War of the 1930s sunk Granada's economy, and it persisted largely as a bureaucratic and university town until the late 20th century, when the city underwent a massive period of modernization and development which brought new business and visitors to the city. Today you can still see this modernization in the reconstruction of old buildings in the city centre and expansion of the town along the edges of the city.

Places to visit:

The Cathedral (Basílica San Juan de Dios):

The cathedral of Granada is built over the Nasrid Great Mosque of Granada, in the center of the city. Its construction began during the Spanish Renaissance in the early 16th century, shortly after the conquest of Granada by the Catholic Monarchs, who commissioned the works to Juan Gil de Hontañón and Enrique Egas. Numerous grand buildings were built in the reign of Charles V, Holy Roman Emperor, so that the cathedral is contemporary to the Christian palace of the Alhambra, the University and the Real Chancillería (supreme court).

The church was conceived on the model of the Cathedral of Toledo, for what initially was a Gothic architectural project, as was customary in Spain in the early decades of the 16th century. However, Egas was relieved by the Catholic hierarchy in 1529, and the continuation of the work was assigned to Diego Siloe, who built upon the example of his predecessor, but changed the approach towards a fully Renaissance aesthetic.

The architect drew new Renaissance lines for the whole building over the Gothic foundations, with an ambulatory and five naves instead of the usual three. Over time, the bishopric continued to commission new architectural projects of importance, such as the redesign of the main façade, undertaken in 1664 by Alonso Cano (1601–1667) to introduce Baroque elements. In 1706 Francisco de Hurtado Izquierdo and later his collaborator José Bada built the current tabernacle of the cathedral.

Highlights of the church's components include the main chapel, where may be found the praying statues of the Catholic Monarchs, which consists of a series of Corinthian columns with the entablature resting on their capitals, and the vault over all. The spaces of the walls between the columns are perforated by a series of windows. The design of the tabernacle of 1706 preserves the classic proportions of the church, with its multiple columns crossing the forms of Diego de Siloé

Royal Chapel of Granada (Capilla Real):

Here they lie, Spain's notorious Catholic Monarchs, entombed in a chapel adjoining Granada's cathedral; far more peaceful in death than their tumultuous lives would have suggested. Isabel and Fernando commissioned the elaborate Isabelline-Gothic-style mausoleum that was to house them, but it was not completed until 1521, hence their temporary interment in the Alhambra's Convento de San Francisco's. The monarchs lie in simple lead coffins in the crypt beneath their marble monuments in the chancel, enclosed by a stunning gilded wrought-iron screen created in 1520 by Bartolomé de Jaén. Also here are the coffins of Isabel and Fernando's unfortunate daughter, Juana the Mad, and her husband, Philip of Flanges. The sacristy contains a small but impressive museum, with Fernando's sword and Isabel's sceptre, silver crown and personal art collection, which is mainly Flemish but also includes Botticelli's Prayer in the Garden of Olives. Felipe de Vigarni's two fine early-16th-century statues of the Catholic Monarchs at prayer are also here.

The Catholic Monarchs chose the city of Granada as their burial site by a royal decree dated September 13, 1504. The Royal Chapel of Granada, built over the former terrace of the Great Mosque, ranks with other important Granadan buildings such as the Lonja and the Catedral e Iglesia del Sagrario. In it are buried the Catholic Monarchs, their daughter Joanna of Castile (Juana la Loca) and her husband Felipe I (Felipe el Hermoso). Construction of the Chapel started in 1505, directed by its designer, Enrique Egas. Built in several stages, the continuing evolution of its design joined Gothic construction and decoration with Renaissance ideals, as seen in the tombs and the 17th and 18th century Granadan art in the Chapel of Santa Cruz. Over the years the church acquired a treasury of works of art, liturgical objects and relics.

The Royal Chapel was declared a Historic Artistic Monument on May 19, 1884, taking consideration of BIC (Bien de Interés Cultural) status in the current legislation of Spanish Historical Heritage (Law 16/1985 of 25 June). The most important parts of the chapel are its main retablo, grid and vault. In the Sacristy-Museum is the legacy of the Catholic Monarchs. Its art gallery is highlighted by works of the Flemish, Italian and Spanish schools

The Alhambra:

The Alhambra is a Nasrid "palace city". It was declared a World Heritage Site by UNESCO in 1984. It is certainly Granada's most emblematic monument and one of the most visited in Spain. It consists of a defensive zone, the Alcazaba, together with others of a residential and formal state character, the Nasrid Palaces and, lastly, the palace, gardens and orchards of El Generalife.

The Alhambra occupies a small plateau on the southeastern border of the city in the foothills of the Sierra Nevada above the Assabica valley. Some of the buildings may have existed before the arrival of the Moors. The Alhambra as a whole is completely walled, bordered to the north by the valley of the Darro, to the south by the al-Sabika, and to the east of the Cuesta del Rey Chico, which in turn is separated from the Albayzín and Generalife, located in the Cerro del Sol.

In the 11th century the Castle of the Alhambra was developed as a walled town which became a military stronghold that dominated the whole city. But it was in the 13th century, with the arrival of the first monarch of the Nasrid dynasty, Mohammed I ibn Nasr (Mohammed I, 1238–1273), that the royal residence was established in the Alhambra. This marked the beginning of its heyday. The Alhambra became palace, citadel and fortress, and was the residence of the Nasrid sultans and their senior officials, including servants of the court and elite soldiers (13th–14th centuries).

In 1492 the Catholic Monarchs, Ferdinand and Isabela, expelled the final Moors from the city of Granada. They established permanent residency in the Alhambra, and it was here that Christopher Columbus requested royal endorsement for his westward expedition that year.

In 1527 Charles V, Holy Roman Emperor demolished part of the architectural complex to build the Palace which bears his name. Although the Catholic Monarchs had already altered some rooms of the Alhambra after the conquest of the city in 1492, Charles V wanted to construct a permanent residence befitting an emperor. Around 1537 he ordered the construction of the Peinador de la Reina, or Queen's dressing room, where his wife Isabel lived, over the Tower of Abu l-Hayyay.

There was a pause in the ongoing maintenance of the Alhambra from the 18th century for almost a hundred years, and during the French domination substantial portions of the fortress were blown apart. The repair, restoration and conservation that continues to this day did not begin until the 19th century. The complex currently includes the Museum of the Alhambra, with objects mainly from the site of the monument itself and the Museum of Fine Arts.

Palacio de Carlos V:

This huge Renaissance palace sticks out like a sore thumb in the Alhambra, because it clashes spectacularly with the style of its surroundings; were it in a different setting its merits would be more readily appreciated. Begun in 1527 by Pedro Machuca, an architect from Toledo who studied under Michelangelo, it was financed, perversely, from taxes on the Granada area's morisco (converted Muslim) population. Funds dried up after the moriscos rebelled in 1568, and the palace remained roofless until the early 20th century. The main (western) façade features three porticos divided by pairs of fluted columns, with bas-relief battle carvings at their feet. The building is square but contains a two-tiered circular courtyard with 32 columns. This circle inside a square is the only Spanish example of a Renaissance ground plan symbolising the unity of earth and heaven. Inside are two museums: the ground-floor Museo de la Alhambra and the upstairs is the Museo de Bellas Artes (Fine Arts Museum).

Generalife:

The Generalife is a garden area attached to the Alhambra which became a place of recreation and rest for the Granadan Muslim kings when they wanted to flee the tedium of official life in the Palace. It occupies the slopes of the hill Cerro del Sol above the ravines of the Genil and the Darro and is visible from vantage points throughout the city. It was conceived as a rural village, consisting of landscaping, gardens and architecture. The palace and gardens were built during the reign of Muhammed III (1302–1309) and redecorated shortly after by Abu l-Walid Isma'il (1313–1324). It is of the Islamic Nasrid style, and is today one of the biggest attractions in the city of Granada. The Generalife was declared a World Heritage Site by UNESCO in 1984.

It is difficult to know the original appearance of the Generalife, as it has been subject to modifications and reconstructions throughout the Christian period which disfigured many of its former aspects. All buildings of the Generalife are of solid construction, and the overall decor is austere and simple. There is little variety to the Alhambra's decorative plaster, but the aesthetic is tasteful and extremely delicate. In the last third of the 20th century, a part of the garden was destroyed to build an auditorium.

Monasterio de la Cartuja:

Built between the 16th and 18th centuries by the Carthusian monks themselves, this 16th-century monastery has an imposing sand-coloured stone exterior, but it is the lavish baroque monastery church that people come to see, especially the *sagrario* (sanctuary) behind the main altar, a confection of red, black, white and grey-blue marble, columns with golden capitals, profuse sculpture and a beautiful frescoed cupola. To the left of the main altar lies the *sacristía* (sacristy), the ultimate expression of Spanish late baroque, in effusive 'wedding-cake' stucco and brown-and-white Lanjarón marble (resembling a melange of chocolate mousse and cream). The *sacristía's* cabinets, veneered and inlaid with mahogany, ebony, ivory, shell and silver in the 18th century, represent a high point of Granada's marquetry art. San Bruno, founder of the Carthusian order, can be seen everywhere, looking wan and contemplating a skull; a few of his bones are embedded in the gilt and mirrored altar.

Patio de los Leones:

The Palacio de los Leones is one of the most stunning structures within the Alhambra, and according to some, the royal harem. It was built in the second half of the 14th century under Mohammed V, at the political and artistic peak of Granada's emirate. The rooms of the palace surround Alhambra's most popular symbol, the Patio de los Leones (Lion Courtyard), a marble fountain that channelled water through the mouths of 12 carved marble lions. Carved especially for this palace, the fountain was originally brightly painted, chiefly in gold, but the originals are now being replaced by copies. The patio's four water channels, running to and from the central fountain, represent the four rivers of Islamic paradise and the 12 lions are speculated to symbolise any number of things, perhaps the 12 signs of the zodiac, perhaps the 12 hours of the day, ticking from birth to death. The gallery, including the beautifully ornamented pavilions protruding at its eastern and western ends, is supported by 124 slender marble columns. Imagine this entire space covered in vibrant colours and hung with bright textiles – that's how it was during the 14th century. Of the four halls bordering the patio, the Sala de los Abencerrajes on the southern side is the legendary site of the murders of the noble Abencerraj family, who favoured Boabdil in the palace power struggle. The legend tells that the family was massacred because the family's leader dared to get jiggy with Zoraya, Abu al-Hasan's harem favourite. The rusty stains on the floor are said to be the victims' indelible blood. The room's lovely high-domed ceiling features muqarnas vaulting in an

eight-point star formation. The staircases are supposed to have lead to the harem, where blind eunuchs waited on the women who were jealously kept out of sight. At the very eastern end of the patio is the Sala de los Reyes (Hall of the Kings), whose inner alcoves have leather-lined ceilings painted by 14th-century Christian artists, probably Genoans. The room's name comes from the painting on the ceiling of the central alcove, thought to depict 10 Nasrid emir. On the northern side of the patio is the Sala de las Dos Hermanas (Hall of Two Sisters), as beautiful and richly decorated as the Sala de los Abencerrajes, and probably named after the two slabs of white marble sitting on either side of its fountain. This may have been the room of the emir's favourite paramour. It features a fantastic muqarnas dome with a central star and 5000 tiny cells, reminiscent of the constellations. At its far end is the Sala de los Ajimeces with a beautifully decorated little lookout area, the Mirador de Lindaraja. Through the low-slung windows of the mirador, the room's occupants could enjoy the luxurious view of the Albayzín and countryside while reclining on ottomans and cushions.

Sightseeing on foot:

Walking in Granada is definitely the best way to experience the city, but it can also be confusing at times. Streets are frequently short, winding, narrow, and put you in very close proximity to auto traffic, to say nothing of the multitudes of scooters that dart down narrow alleyways and around cars and buses. Larger streets will have sidewalks separating pedestrian traffic from vehicles, while alleyways will have short iron posts along the side to serve this purpose. With a decent map you can find your way around, but many streets are so short they won't be named on a map. Still, if you keep some of the local landmarks in mind (church towers and hills are frequently good ones) you can maintain a general sense of direction which is often all you need to find your way around. Additionally, Granada has several hilly areas (most notably the Albayzín and the entrances to the Alhambra) with many stairways and steep streets, and climbing them can be strenuous - buses can take you to the major tourist sights if the climb is too much.

Using the busses:

The local buses cover nearly all sights of interest and run quite frequently. Routes that begin with C cover the city center/Alhambra/Albayzín areas. For travel further out in the city (such as the intercity bus station), you take the crosstown connector bus called LAC and then transfer. Most city buses travel through the heart of town along Gran Vía (stopping in front of the cathedral). The small red and white minibuses with "Alhambra Bus" printed on the side are the best way to explore Granada, the Albaicín and to get to the Alhambra: routes C3 and C4 connect the city center to the Alhambra, with C1 traveling up to Albayzín. The buses cost €1.20 per trip, but you can also buy a multi-trip card (€5 for 7 trips, €10 for 16, and €20 for 33 trips). The LAC is bus rapid transit - buy the ticket from the machine at the stop and keep your receipt. For other routes buy your ticket from the driver. Keep the receipt - if you transfer to the LAC you will need to scan the barcode to validate the transfer. Timetables for the individual routes are not available, but major bus stops along the main boulevards will have screens telling you when the next bus arrives. If you're at a smaller stop, you can find out when the next bus is coming by sending a text using the system's SMS system - directions are printed with images on each bus stop sign, which are easy to follow even if you don't know much Spanish.

Sightseeing in Central Granada:

Oriented around the intersection of Gran Via de Colon and Calle Reyes Catolicos, central Granada is the historic center and bustling heart of the city, with its many shops, restaurants, bars and attractions situated along narrow cobblestone and brick alleys or on the edge of one of the many serene plazas in the area. Walking through you're sure to take in the sights, smells and sounds of superb architecture, good food, and pleasant conversations among residents. Here are the main attractions:

- *Plaza Isabel la Catolica*, at the intersection of Gran Via de Colon and Calle Reyes Catolicos. At the junction of Granada's two grand boulevards is this small square with a prominent statue of Columbus unfurling a contract with Queen Isabel, outlining the terms of their agreement in preparation for his first voyage to the Americas, an event which likely occurred in Granada. A pleasant fountain surrounds the statue and there are benches nearby, allowing you to relax and take in the passing crowds of vehicles and people.
- *Cathedral of Granada (La Catedral de Granada)*, Gran Via de Colon 5 (enter from Gran Via just north of Plaza Isabel la Catolica; bus stop Gran Via 1). Towering over the surrounding blocks is this spectacular 16th century structure, the second-largest cathedral in Spain and noted for its bright Renaissance interior. Constructed after the Reconquista of Granada to replace the mosque on the site, the cathedral was laid out with Gothic foundations but built in the Renaissance style and decorated with Baroque elements. Upon entering you'll be behind the main altar, located beneath the towering circular Capilla Mayor (sanctuary) with its magnificent domed ceiling. Surrounding the sanctuary and the pews are a series of chapels with magnificent artwork, and the sacristy (tucked away on your right immediately after entering) holds a collection of fine paintings, mirrors, and furnishings. Additionally, the spectacular facade of the cathedral (on the west side of the structure, opposite the Gran Via) is worth walking around outside to view - based on the design of a triumphal arch, it overshadows the small square below.
- *Royal Chapel (Capilla Real)*, c/ Oficios (enter from Calle Oficios, the small alley on the south side of the cathedral; bus stop Gran Via 1). Commissioned after the Reconquista of the city, the Royal Chapel holds the tombs of King Ferdinand II and Queen Isabella I, the famed Catholic Monarchs who conquered the city and decided to be buried at the site of their victory. The chapel was constructed in Gothic style but the intricate marble tombs are done in Renaissance style. Additionally, Ferdinand and Isabella's heirs Juana I (Juana la Loca) and Philip I (Felipe el Hermoso) are buried here. Aside from the beautiful and intricate artwork in the chapel and high altar there is also a museum on-site with a number of objects symbolizing Ferdinand and Isabel's rule, including Isabella's art collection, crown and sceptre and Ferdinand's sword. (No photographing allowed).
- *Madraza Palace*, Calle Oficios (In front of Royal Chapel's entrance): Old islamic university of XIV century and 1st town hall of Granada after reconquist. (Photographing allowed but without flash).
- *Plaza de Bib-Rambla*, a block west of the Cathedral. A pleasant square with a view of the cathedral's tower, this plaza was originally the center of Moorish Granada, a bustling focus point of markets and festivals. Under Christian rule the square was expanded and used as a focal point of Catholic processions. Today the square is a quiet place to relax, enjoy a coffee or a meal, or take in the colorful flowers and bubbling fountain.

The following websites were very useful in the compilation of this page:

[http://wikitravel.org/en/Granada_\(Spain\)](http://wikitravel.org/en/Granada_(Spain))

<https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Granada>

<https://www.lonelyplanet.com/spain/granada>