

Seville Information

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Plaza de España

Some cities have looks, other cities have personality. The sevillanos are blessed with both, courtesy of their flamboyant, charismatic, ever-evolving Andalusian metropolis founded, according to myth, 3000 years ago by the Greek god Hercules. Drenched for most of the year in spirit-enriching sunlight, this is a city of feelings as much as sights, with different seasons prompting vastly contrasting moods: solemn for Semana Santa, flirtatious for the spring fiesta and soporific for the gasping heat of summer.

Like all great cities, Seville has historical layers. Roman ruins testify the settlement's earliest face, memories of the Moorish era flicker like medieval engravings in the Santa Cruz quarter, while the riverside Arenal reeks of lost colonial glory. Yet, one of the most remarkable things about modern Seville is its ability to adapt and etch fresh new brushstrokes onto an ancient canvas.

According to legend, Sevilla was founded by Hercules and its origins are linked with the Tartessian civilisation. It was called Hispalis under the Romans and Isbiliya with the Moors. The high point in its history was following the discovery of America in 1492. For all its important monuments and fascinating history, Sevilla is universally famous for being a joyous town, whilst the Sevillians are known for their wit and sparkle, and the city itself is striking for its vitality.

Seville is the capital and largest city of the autonomous community of Andalusia and the province of Seville, Spain. It is situated on the plain of the River Guadalquivir. Seville has a municipal population of about metropolitan population of about 1.5 million, making it the fourth-largest city in Spain and the 30th most populous municipality in the European Union. Its Old Town, the third largest in Europe with an area of 4 square kilometres (2 sq mi), contains three UNESCO World Heritage Sites: the Alcázar palace complex, the Cathedral and the General Archive of the Indies. The Seville harbour, located about 80 kilometres (50 miles) from the Atlantic Ocean, is the only river port in Spain.

In Sevilla, you will want to visit the old city, with the Cathedral and the Giralda tower at its heart. (You can climb the steps inside the tower for a magnificent view of the City). Very close by are the royal Mudéjar palace known as the Alcazar with marvellous gardens and the Santa Cruz quarter, with cramped streets, flowered balconies, richly decorated facades, hidden patios. Other sights not to be missed are, in the old city, the Casa de Pilatos, a large sixteenth-century mansion where Mudéjar, Gothic and Renaissance styles blend harmoniously amidst exuberant patios and gardens and, crossing the Triana bridge over the large Guadalquivir River, the lively popular quarter of Triana with charming narrow streets around the church of Santa Ana and traditional ceramic factories.

Many civilisations have come and gone in the city of Seville. The Tartessians founded Hispalis, and the Romans built the famous Itálica next to it in 207 BC.

Founded by General Scipio, two Roman emperors were born there: Trajan and Adrian. The long presence of the Moors, from 711 to 1248 AD, left permanent imprints on the city. The end of the Caliphate of Cordoba

(11th century) brought about the splendour of the Taifa Kingdom of Seville, especially under the reign of al-Mutamid, the poet king. The years of highest splendour in Seville happened after the discovery of America. During the 16th and 17th century its port was one of the most important in Spain, because it had the monopoly of the foreign trade by sea. Thanks to the trade carried out during that period in Seville, many mansions, stately homes, churches and convents were built. The main monuments in town - the cathedral, the Reales Alcázares Palace and the General Archive of the Indies - have the UNESCO World Heritage designation. The Gothic cathedral stands in the white-washed Santa Cruz neighbourhood, built on the Almohad Great Mosque of Seville. Some of the Moorish elements still remain - the old minaret, which is the famous Giralda, and the Orange Tree Courtyard. Next to the cathedral you can find the Reales Alcázares Palace, which is also built on the site of a 9th-century Moorish fortress, but it was Pedro I the Cruel (14th century) who introduced the Mudejar decoration. Many rooms, magnificent halls and romantic courtyards are enclosed behind the walls. Vast gardens, with Moorish and Renaissance elements, surround the building. The other monument, the General Archive of the Indies takes us to Spanish Renaissance art. It is one of Europe's most important document centres relating to the conquest of the New World. Another important Renaissance construction in the city is the Casa de Pilatos house, a palace which combines Gothic and Mudejar elements with imported Italian Renaissance details.

The Cathedral and Giralda:

Seville's immense cathedral, one of the largest Christian churches in the world, is awe-inspiring in its scale and sheer majesty. It stands on the site of the great 12th-century Almohad mosque, with the mosque's minaret (the Giralda) still towering beside it.

After Seville fell to the Christians in 1248, the mosque was used as a church until 1401. Then, in view of its decaying state, the church authorities decided to knock it down and start again. 'Let's construct a church so large future generations will think we were mad,' they quipped (or so legend has it). When it was completed in 1502 after one hundred years of hard labour, the Catedral de Santa María de la Sede, as it is officially known, was (and remains) the largest church in the world by volume and pretty much defines the word 'Gothic'. It is also a veritable art gallery replete with notable works by Zurbarán, Murillo, Goya and others.

The St. Mary of the See Cathedral was built from 1401–1519 after the Reconquista on the former site of the city's mosque. It is among the largest of all medieval and Gothic cathedrals, in terms of both area and volume. The interior is the longest nave in Spain, and is lavishly decorated, with a large quantity of gold evident. La Giralda is a tower attached to the Cathedral that dates back to the twelfth century. It was originally built as part of a mosque when the Moors ruled in Spain and was later added onto by the Christians. Tourists today can climb the tower by walking up a series of ramps that were previously used by officials who rode their horses to the top of the tower. La Giralda gets its name from the weathervane attached to the very top of it, as "gira" means "turning one" in the Spanish language.

The cathedral stands on the site of what was, in the 12th century, the Great Mosque. Today, the only part which remains of this structure is the minaret, also known as the Giralda due to the weather vane added to the top in the 16th century. The Abluciones courtyard and today's Puerta del Perdón door are also parts of the old mosque. It was converted into a Christian church when the city was conquered by Ferdinand III of Castile in 1248. Several stages of building can be seen, with examples of the Mudéjar, Gothic, Renaissance, Baroque and Neo-classical styles. Access to the cathedral is through the Plaza Virgen de los Reyes square. It has five naves (the main nave has a height of 36 metres) and a rectangular floor plan. The remains of Christopher Columbus lie in the cathedral.

The Real Alcázar:

If heaven really does exist, then let's hope it looks a little bit like the inside of Seville's Alcázar. Built primarily in the 1300s during the so-called 'dark ages' in Europe, the castle's intricate architecture is anything but dark. Indeed, compared to our modern-day shopping malls, the Alcázar marks one of history's architectural high points. Unesco agreed, making it a World Heritage site in 1987.

The Alcázar facing the cathedral was developed from a previous Moorish Palace. Construction was started in 1181 and continued for over 500 years, mainly in the Mudéjar style, but also in the Renaissance style. The popular TV show Game of Thrones has shot many scenes at this location.

The Real Alcázar in Seville is a group of palaces surrounded by a wall. Peter the Cruel rebuilt the old Almohad building to establish a royal residence in the 14th century. It has contributions from all periods, although Mudejar and Renaissance styles are predominant. The use of the Upper Palace, on the upper level of the Mudejar Palace, is administered by National Heritage. It includes: the foyer, built in the times of the Catholic Monarchs; the oratory of the Catholic Monarchs; the banquet hall built during the reign of Philip II of Spain; the viewpoint of the Catholic Monarchs, influenced by Granada and built subsequent to 1492, the

bedroom of Peter of Castile, which is one of the rooms from the 14th-century Mudejar palace; and the official or audience chamber. Visits to it are managed by the Board of Management for the Real Alcázar Palace of Seville. The rest of the group of buildings, also managed by the Board of Management for the Real del Alcázar Palace of Seville, contain different areas, including: The Courtroom, The Admiral's Room, Peter the Cruel's Palace, the Catholic Monarchs' Hall, The Hall of Ambassadors, the Las Doncellas Courtyard, the Royal Bedchamber, the Pasos Perdidos Ballroom, the Los Infantes Hall, The Prince's Garden, The English Garden, Charles V Pavilion and the Marchena Gate.

The Torre del Oro:

The Torre del Oro was built as a watchtower and defensive barrier on the river. A chain was strung through the water from the base of the tower to prevent boats from travelling into the river port.

The City Hall:

This impressive 15th-century town hall was designed in the Plateresque style by Diego de Riaño. The intricately carved reliefs on the southern facade depict figures from historical stories and mythology as well as emblems of the storied founders of the city, Hercules and Caesar. The building was renovated in the 19th century with a Neo classical main facade that looks out onto the Plaza Nueva. A small archway connects the town hall building to the adjacent Franciscan monastery. Tourists may make an appointment to visit the interior, which contains several important artistic works including a painting of the town's patron saints, Justa and Rufina.

The Palace of San Telmo:

The Palace of San Telmo, formerly the University of Sailors, and later the Seminary, is now the seat for the Andalusian Autonomous Government. It is one of the most emblematic buildings of baroque architecture, mainly to its world-renowned churrigueresque principal façade and the impressive chapel.

The Royal Tobacco Factory:

The Royal Tobacco Factory is housed on the original site of the first tobacco factory in Europe, a vast 18th century building in Baroque style and the purported inspiration for the opera Carmen.

The Metropol Parasol:

The Metropol Parasol, in La Encarnación square, is the world's largest wooden structure.[38] A monumental umbrella-like building designed by the German architect Jürgen Mayer, finished in 2011. This modern architecture structure houses the central market and an underground archaeological complex. The terrace roof is a city viewpoint.[39]

The General Archive of the Indies:

The General Archive of the Indies, is the repository of extremely valuable archival documents illustrating the history of the Spanish Empire in the Americas and the Philippines. The building itself, an unusually serene and Italianate example of Spanish Renaissance architecture, was designed by Juan de Herrera.

Parque de María Luisa and Plaza de España:

The lungs of central Seville are the dreamy Parque de María Luisa, which is a delightful place to escape from the noise of the city, with duck ponds, snoozing sevillanos and paths snaking under the trees. If you'd rather continue your cultural education than commune with the flowers, the park contains a couple of sites that'll keep you smiling. Curving round the Plaza de España, with its fountains and mini-canals, is the most grandiose of the buildings built for the 1929 Exposición Iberoamericana, a brick-and-tile confection featuring Seville tilework at its gaudiest, with a map and historical scene for each Spanish province.

Inside the Parque de María Luisa, the Plaza de España is one of Seville's most impressive landmarks because of its scale and grandeur. The enormous 50,000-square-meter plaza is surrounded by the balustraded balconies of a Renaissance Neo-Moorish style building. This semicircular building curves around, following the shape of the canal running through the square. A monumental fountain is a graceful centerpiece of the square, while the peaceful canal is crossed by four footbridges. Tourists can rent a rowboat for the afternoon to experience the "Venice of Seville" or opt for an equally romantic horse-drawn carriage ride through the park.

The Parque de María Luisa, with the Plaza de España at its center, was the site of the Exposiciones Universales in 1929. The park is close to the river, and the main entrance is at the Avenida de Isabel la Católica. This expansive and beautiful green space was created by the Infanta María Luisa Fernanda de Borbón. The grounds are filled with exotic palms, orange trees, elms, and Mediterranean pines. Lovely historic buildings and colorful tiled benches add to the dreamy ambience, and the landscaping features decorative flower beds, shady avenues, Moorish fountains, and ornamental pools. Visitors will enjoy a

leisurely stroll through the park, while discovering hidden surprises along the way such as ponds and pavilions.

Real Maestranza Bull Ring and Bullfighting Museum:

The Real Maestranza is one of the finest bullrings in Spain, and with seating for 14,000 spectators, it is also one of the largest. Built in 1761, the Real Maestranza is an emblematic landmark of Seville and its famous tradition of bullfighting. Designed in Baroque style, the Real Maestranza features graceful arcaded seating that provides welcome shade on sunny days. The bullring has an oval shape, which is unique among Spanish bullrings. Housed within the bullring is a museum. The collection exhibits traditional costumes, photographs, and paintings related to the dramatic art of bullfighting.