

Granada Province



There are some places in this world that seem to have it all: the looks, the jewels, the sense of fun, a streetwise edge. Granada is one of those places. Millions of people pour into the town just to see its crown gem: the Alhambra, a place that carries with it coffers-full of stories, dreams and mysteries of the last 2½ centuries of a great civilisation. Washington Irving, an unsuspecting diplomat and writer, fell in love with the Alhambra so deeply that he had to move in and live here while he wrote his half-fact, half-fiction *Tales of the Alhambra* back in 1823. His contagious fascination put the magnificent building back among the world's greatest architectural treasures.

But then, Granada is much more than the Alhambra. The old Islamic quarter, the Albayzín, is like a tangled string of pearls with its white-washed houses and narrow streets. The ever-present tapas-mania, hanging out till dawn in flamenco *peñas* or in Andalucía's best nightclub are just some of the highlights of this fabulous city. The growing North African community shows Granada to be more open-minded than any of its Andalusian sisters.

And Granada the province offers more surprises: there's skiing and climbing in the snowy Sierra Nevada, and walking in the amazing Las Alpujarras, where villages house locals, New Age hippies, and expat Brits, simultaneously. You can check out cave life on the Altiplano (high plain) or forget it all and go swimming and eating mangos on Costa Tropical, Granada's Mediterranean coastline.

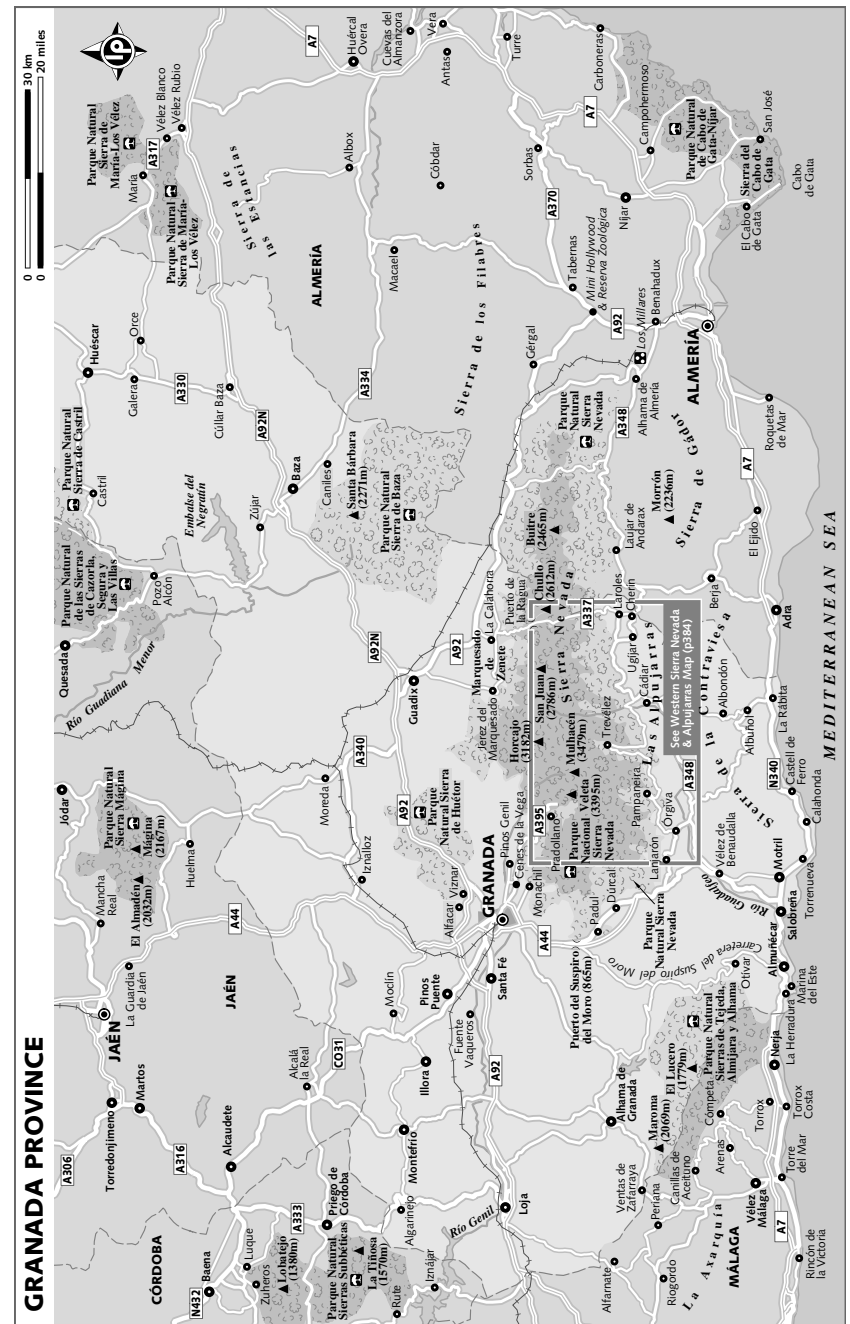
GRANADA PROVINCE

HIGHLIGHTS

- Imagine the drama and intrigue that once took place in the architectural splendour of the **Alhambra** (p359) and the **Generalife** gardens (p364)
- Walk the white-washed, winding streets of the **Albayzín** (p367), and catch some incredible views of the Alhambra
- Hit the tapas **bars** (p377), **clubs** (p377) and **midnight flamenco** (p378) of Granada's nightlife
- Try out cave living and tourist-free tapas bars at the little-visited **Guadix** (p380)
- Explore the wonderful valleys of **Las Alpujarras** (p386) and climb, walk or ski in the snowy **Sierra Nevada** (p382)
- Dance till dawn at Granada's **Festival Internacional de Música y Danza** (p372) and see special reverence at **Semana Santa** (p372)



■ POPULATION: 828,000	■ GRANADA AV DAILY HIGH: JAN/AUG 11°C/27°C	■ ALTITUDE RANGE: 0M–3479M
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GRANADA PROVINCE

GRANADA

pop 237,000 / elevation 685m

Seville may have the *pasión* and Córdoba a pretty quaintness, but Granada has an edge. Overshadowed for most visitors by the allure of the Alhambra and the mystery of the winding streets of the Albayzín, what you'll find if you stick around is Andalucía's hippest, most youthful city, with a free-tapas culture, innovative bars, tiny flamenco holes, and large, thumping clubs. Here, unlike in any other city in Andalucía, the Islamic past feels recent. A growing North African population has filled the Albayzín with steaming kebab and cake shops, and slipper-and-tea nooks. Granada is also home to thousands of students, which means that there is always something going on, be it the crusty jugglers on Calle de Elvira, skater kids in the university area, or students lounging in the relaxed Realejo. Uphill from the Albayzín is Granada's loud and lively *gitano* (Roma) neighbourhood, Sacromonte, where you can perhaps witness a spot of real flamenco.

In addition, Granada's proximity to both mountain and sea means you can go skiing in the morning in the almost always snow-covered Sierra Nevada and swimming in the afternoon on the ambitiously named Costa Tropical, and be back in the city in time for *la marcha* (nightlife).

HISTORY

Granada's history reads like an excellent thriller, with complicated plots, conspiracies, hedonism and tricky love-affairs. The city began life as an Iberian and then a Roman settlement, but its real development started when Muslim forces took over from the Visigoths in AD 711, with the aid of the Jewish community, around the foot of the Alhambra hill in what was called Garnata al-Jahud, from which the name Granada derives. ('Granada' also happens to be the Spanish word for pomegranate, the fruit on the city's coat of arms.)

With the crumbling of the Almohad state that ruled Al-Andalus in the 13th century, a minor potentate called Mohammed ibn Yusuf ibn Nasr formed the Nasrid emirate, an independent emirate centred on Granada. Soon after, Granada was flooded

with Muslim refugees from the fall of Córdoba (1236) and Seville (1248) to Christian Castile. The Nasrid emirate became the last bastion of Al-Andalus, stretching from the Strait of Gibraltar to east of Almería. Despite his isolation, Mohammed ibn Yusuf ibn Nasr went on to develop the Alhambra as his royal court, palace and fortress, and the Nasrids ruled from this increasingly lavish complex for 250 years. Under their rule Granada became one of the richest cities in Europe, flourishing especially under emirs Yusuf I and Mohammed V in the 14th century, and developing the talents of its big population of traders and artisans.

But corruption, ambition and great luxury rotted the heavenly state by the late 15th century: the economy had stagnated, the opulent rulers were leading a life of hedonism inside the Alhambra, and violent rivalry developed over the succession. One faction supported emir Abu al-Hasan and his Christian concubine, Zoraya, and the other backed Boabdil (Abu-Abdullah), Abu al-Hasan's son by his wife Aixa. In 1482 Boabdil set off a civil war and, following Abu al-Hasan's death in 1485, won control of the city. The Christians pushed across the rest of the emirate, devastating the countryside, and laid siege to Granada in 1491. After eight months Boabdil agreed to surrender the city in return for the Alpujarras valleys, 30,000 gold coins and political and religious freedom for his subjects. The Reyes Católicos (Catholic Monarchs) Isabel and Fernando agreed and entered the city on 2 January 1492 ceremonially in Muslim dress, to set up court in the Alhambra for several years.

But their promise was as hollow as their intolerance was fierce and soon after the fall of Granada they set about expelling Spain's Jews and persecuting Muslims. The Muslims revolted across the former emirate and were expelled in the early 17th century. Granada thus fell into a decline for two centuries, but the interest from the Romantic movement in the 1830s brought tourists from all over the world to marvel at the city's Islamic heritage, and gave Granada a renewed breath of life.

ORIENTATION

The two major central streets, Gran Vía de Colón and Calle Reyes Católicos, meet at Plaza Isabel La Católica. From here,

Calle Reyes Católicos runs southwest to Puerta Real, an important intersection, and northeast to Plaza Nueva. The street Cuesta de Gómez leads southeast from Plaza Nueva towards the Alhambra on its hilltop. The Albayzín rambles over another hill rising north of Plaza Nueva, separated from the Alhambra hill by the valley of the Río Darro. Below the southern side of the Alhambra is the old Jewish district, Realejo.

Newer parts of the city stretch to the west, south and east. From Puerta Real, Acera del Darro, an important artery, heads southeast to the Río Genil. The bus station (northwest) and train station (west) are out of the centre but linked to it by plenty of buses.

INFORMATION

Bookshops

Cartográfica del Sur (Map pp358-9; ☎ 958 20 49 01; Calle Valle Inclán 2) Just off Camino de Ronda; Granada's best map shop, also good for Spanish guidebooks.

Metro (Map p366; ☎ 958 26 15 65; Calle Gracia 31) Stocks an excellent range of English-language novels, guidebooks and books on Spain, plus plenty of books in French and some in German, Italian and Russian.

Emergency

Policía Nacional (National Police; Map p366; ☎ 958 80 80 00; Plaza de los Campos) The most central police station.

Reporting theft (☎ 902 10 21 12) Police hotline; various languages spoken.

Internet Access

Thanks to Granada's 60,000 students, the city's internet cafés are cheap and open long hours daily.

Internet Elvira (Map p366; Calle de Elvira 64; per hr €1.60, students per hr €1; ☎ 8am-11pm)

N@veg@web (Map p366; Calle Reyes Católicos 55; per hr €1.20; ☎ 8am-11pm) Excellent internet centre just off Plaza Isabel La Católica. Web-cams, Skype, fax and photocopying.

Net Realejo (Map p366; Plaza de los Girones 3; ☎ 8am-11pm); Plaza de la Trinidad (Map p366; Calle Buensuceso; ☎ 8am-11pm)

Internet Resources

Ayuntamiento de Granada (www.granada.org in Spanish) Town hall website with good maps and a broad range of information on what to do, where to stay and so on, with plenty of links. For tourist info, click 'La Ciudad'.

Turismo de Granada (www.turismodegranada.org) Good website of the provincial tourist office, covering the city and other places of interest in the province.

Laundry

Lavandería Duquesa (Map p366; Calle Duquesa 24; ☎ 9.30am-2pm & 4.30-9pm Mon-Fri, 9.30am-2pm Sat) Wash-and-dry service €10.

Lavomatique (Map p366; Calle Paz 19; ☎ 10am-2pm & 5-8pm Mon-Fri, 10am-2pm Sat) Wash €5, dry €3.

Medical Services

These are both central hospitals with good emergency facilities:

Hospital Clínico San Cecilio (Map pp358-9; ☎ 958 02 32 17; Avenida del Doctor Oloriz 16)

Hospital Ruiz de Alda (Map pp358-9; ☎ 958 02 00 09, 958 24 11 00; Avenida de la Constitución 100)

Money

Banks and ATMs abound on Gran Vía de Colón, Plaza Isabel La Católica and Calle Reyes Católicos.

American Express (Map p366; ☎ 958 22 45 12; Calle Reyes Católicos 31)

Post

Expededuría No 37 (Map p366; Acera del Casino 15) If stamps are all you need, avoid the post office queues by slipping around the corner to this *estanco* (tobaccoconist).

Main post office (Map p366; Puerta Real s/n; ☎ 8.30am-8.30pm Mon-Fri, 9.30am-2pm Sat) Often has long queues.

Tourist Information

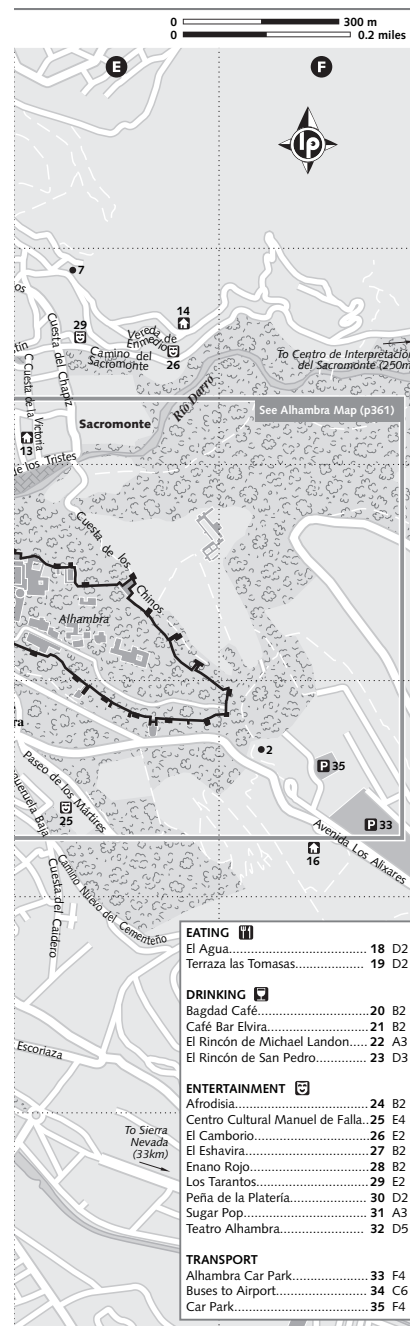
Provincial tourist office (Map p366; ☎ 958 24 71 28; www.turismodegranada.org; Plaza de Mariana Pineda 10;

☎ 9am-9pm Mon-Fri, 10am-2pm & 4-7pm Sat, 10am-3pm Sun May-Sep, 9am-8pm Mon-Fri, 10am-1pm Sat, 10am-3pm Sun Oct-Apr) A short walk east of Puerta Real, with helpful staff, free maps and bountiful material on Granada and its province.

Regional tourist office Plaza Nueva (Map p366; ☎ 958 22 10 22; Calle Santa Ana 1; ☎ 9am-7pm Mon-Sat, 10am-2pm Sun & holidays); Alhambra (Map p361; ☎ 958 22 95 75; Pabellón de Acceso, Avenida del Generalife s/n; ☎ 8am-7.30pm Mon-Fri, 8am-2.30pm & 4-7.30pm Sat & Sun Mar-Oct, 8am-6pm Mon-Fri, 8am-2pm & 4-6pm Sat & Sun Nov-Feb, 9am-1pm holidays) Information on all Andalucía.

SIGHTS & ACTIVITIES

Most major sights are within walking distance of the city centre. There are buses if you get fed up with walking uphill.



GRANADA'S BONO TURÍSTICO

Granada's tourist voucher, the Bono Turístico Granada (€23), is a worthwhile investment if you plan to stay a few days. It gives admission to several of the city's major sights – the Alhambra, the cathedral, Capilla Real, La Cartuja and San Jerónimo monasteries, and the Parque de las Ciencias – plus nine rides on city buses, a day pass on the City Sightseeing Granada bus, and discounts in various hotels, restaurants and additional museums.

You can buy the Bono at the Alhambra, Capilla Real and Parque de las Ciencias ticket offices; at the **CajaGranada bank** (Map p366; Plaza Isabel La Católica 6; ☎ 8.30am–2.15pm Mon–Fri) for the slightly higher charge of €25; by credit card over the telephone from the **Bono information line** (☎ 902 10 00 95; English spoken); or on the internet at www.caja-granada.es (in Spanish).

When you buy your Bono you are given a half-hour time slot for entering the Alhambra's Palacio Nazarías, as with all Alhambra tickets.

If you stay two nights or more in one of the scheme's participating hotels, paying the hotel's regular room rate, you are entitled to one free Bono per double room. Information on participating hotels (mostly three- and four-star) is available from the Bono information line and on the internet at www.granadatur.com.

The Nasrid emirs of the 13th and 14th centuries turned the Alhambra into a fortress-palace complex, adjoined by a small town of which only ruins remain. The founder of the Nasrid dynasty, Mohammed ibn Yusuf ibn Nasr, set up home on the hill-top, rebuilding, strengthening and enlarging the Alcazaba. His successors Yusuf I (r 1333–54) and Mohammed V (r 1354–59 and 1362–91) built the Alhambra's crowning glory, the Palacio Nazarías.

After the Reconquista (Christian reconquest) the Catholic Monarchs appointed a Muslim to restore the decoration of Palacio Nazarías. The Alhambra's mosque was replaced with a church, and the Convento de San Francisco (now the Parador de Granada) was built. Carlos I, grandson of the Catholic Monarchs, had a wing of Palacio Nazarías destroyed to make space for a huge Renaissance palace, the Palacio de Carlos V.

In the 18th century the Alhambra was abandoned to thieves and beggars. During the Napoleonic occupation it was used as a barracks and narrowly escaped being blown up. In 1870 it was declared a national monument as a result of the huge interest taken in it by Romantic writers such as Washington Irving, who wrote the wonderful *Tales of the Alhambra* during his stay in the Palacio Nazarías in the 1820s. Since then the Alhambra has been salvaged and heavily restored and has been awarded World Heritage status, together with the Generalife gardens, and the Albayzín. For more on its architectural qualities and importance, see p56.

ADMISSION

Areas of the Alhambra that can be visited at any time without a ticket are the open area around the Palacio de Carlos V and the courtyard inside it, the Plaza de los Aljibes in front of the Alcazaba, and Calle Real de la Alhambra. But the heart of the complex – the Palacio Nazarías and the adjacent Jardines del Partal, the Alcazaba and the Generalife – can only be entered during official opening hours and with a ticket. A maximum of between 5600 and 6600 tickets is available for each day, depending on the season and day of the week. At least 2000 of these tickets are sold at the Pabellón de Acceso each day, but in the busiest seasons (Easter week, July, August and September) these sell out early and you need to start queuing by 7am to be reasonably sure of getting one. Demand is high from April to October. In winter, you should be able to get a ticket at any time of day or week.

It's highly advisable to book in advance (for an extra charge of €0.90). You can book up to a year ahead and there are three ways to do it:

- In person at any branch of the BBVA bank, which has some 4000 branches around Spain and others in London, Paris, Milan and New York. This saves queuing to pick up tickets at the Alhambra ticket office. There is a convenient Granada branch of **BBVA** (Map p366; ☎ 8.30am–2.15pm Mon–Fri year-round & 8.30am–1pm Sat Oct–Mar) on Plaza Isabel La Católica.

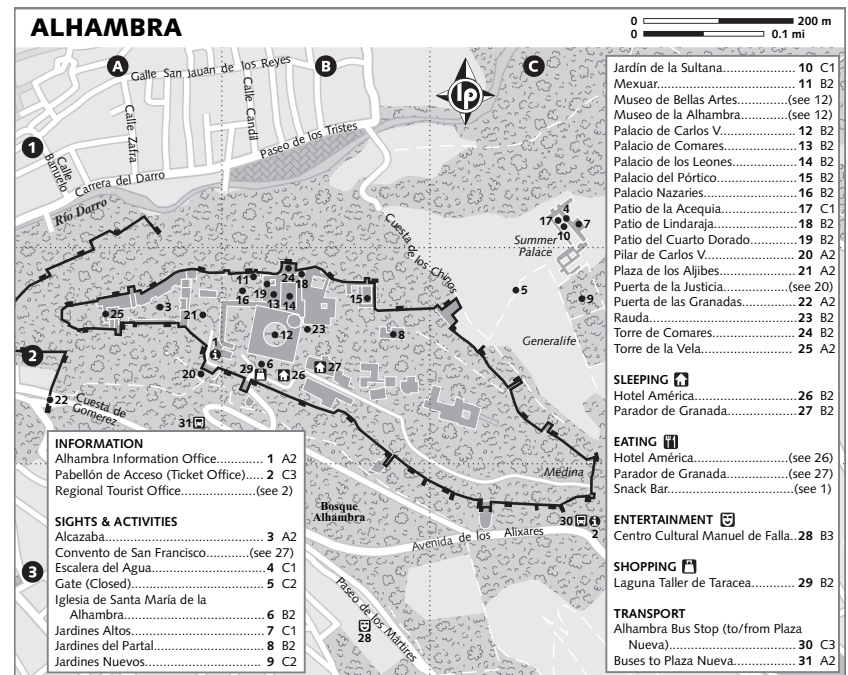
- On the internet at www.alhambratickets.com. The website provides information about tickets for the Alhambra in English, Spanish, French, German and Italian.
- By telephone to **Banca Telefónica BBVA** (☎ in Spain 902 22 44 60, outside Spain 00-34-91 537 91 78; ☎ 8am–5.55pm), which offers an English-speaking service.

For internet or phone bookings you need a Visa card, MasterCard or Eurocard. The reference number you receive must be shown, along with your passport, national identity card and the credit card with which you paid for the ticket, at the Alhambra ticket office when you pick up the ticket on the day of your visit. You may have to queue to pick up your ticket. You cannot buy same-day tickets by internet or by phone or from BBVA, nor can you buy advance tickets at the Alhambra ticket office.

Every ticket is stamped with a half-hour time slot during which you must enter the Palacio Nazarías. You must enter during

this time, otherwise you'll not be allowed in if you miss your slot. Once inside the Palacio Nazarías, you can stay as long as you like. Each ticket is also either a *billete de mañana* (morning ticket), valid for entry up until 2pm, or a *billete de tarde* (afternoon or evening ticket), for entry after 2pm. These are the periods during which you can enter the Generalife or Alcazaba, where you can stay as long as you like. If you buy your ticket on the day of your visit at the ticket office, in busy seasons your time slot for the Palacio Nazarías may be several hours later, and if it's an afternoon ticket you won't be able to enter the Alcazaba or Generalife until 2pm.

The Palacio Nazarías is also open for **night visits** (☎ 10–11.30pm Tue–Sat Mar–Oct, 8–9.30pm Fri & Sat Nov–Feb). For each night 400 tickets are available, at the same prices as daytime tickets, with the ticket office open from 30 minutes before the palace's opening time until 30 minutes after it. You can book ahead for night visits in exactly the same way as for day visits.



GETTING THERE & AWAY**Bus**

Buses 30 and 32 from Plaza Nueva both run every five to nine minutes from 7.15am to 11pm up Cuesta de Gómez to the Alhambra, stopping near the ticket office (at the eastern end of the complex). The buses return to Plaza Nueva via a stop near the Puerta de la Justicia. Bus 32 continues from Plaza Nueva on a second loop through the Albayzín. Bus tickets cost €1.

Car & Motorcycle

'Alhambra' signs on the approach roads to Granada will conduct you circuitously to the Alhambra **car parks** (per hr/day €1.40/14), which are just off Avenida de los Alixares, a short distance uphill from the ticket office.

Walking

There are two main ways to walk up to the Alhambra; both take 20 to 30 minutes from Plaza Nueva.

One is the path **Cuesta de los Chinos**, which leads up from Paseo de los Tristes, emerging about 50m from the ticket office. The office is in the **Pabellón de Acceso**, where you'll also find a tourist information office and bookshop. From the **Pabellón de Acceso** you can enter the Generalife, and move on from there to other parts of the complex.

The other is **Cuesta de Gómez**, which leads up through the Puerta de las Granadas (Gate of the Pomegranates), built by Carlos I, and the Bosque Alhambra woods. Immediately after the Puerta de las Granadas, veer left up the Cuesta Empedrada path to a beautiful Renaissance fountain, the **Pilar de Carlos V**. If you already have your Alhambra ticket, take a sharp left after the fountain and enter the Alhambra without going to the ticket office, through the austere **Puerta de la Justicia** (Gate of Justice), constructed by Yusuf I in 1348 as the Alhambra's main entrance. There's an Alhambra information office a short distance inside this gate. For the ticket office, continue outside the Alhambra walls from the Pilar de Carlos V for about 600m.

ALCAZABA

What remains of the Alcazaba is chiefly its ramparts and several towers, the most important and tallest being the **Torre de la**

Vela (Watch Tower), with a narrow staircase leading to the top terrace, which has splendid views. The cross and banners of the Reconquista were raised here in January 1492. One of the Alhambra's many dungeons is set in the ground just inside the Alcazaba's eastern walls.

PALACIO NAZARIES

This is the place in the Alhambra that will stir the desire to own beauty even in the most unpossessive of people. Unfortunately, you can't steal a building, but you can admire the most impressive Islamic structure in Europe and the finest surviving example of Nasrid art and architecture. The perfectly proportioned rooms and courtyards, intricately moulded stucco walls, beautiful tiling, fine carved wooden ceilings and elaborate *muqarnas* (honeycomb or stalactite) vaulting, all worked in mesmerising, symbolic, geometrical patterns, are meant to embody the infinite glory of God, reinforced by the Arabic inscriptions in stuccowork and wood, and the endlessly repeated *Wa la galiba illa Allah* (There is no conqueror but God). All these were originally painted in bright colours. But, according to Islam, perfection is something mortals can only aspire to and God can achieve, so the artisans and builders left imperfections on the designs on purpose, in order to show their respect and abide by the rules of the Quran.

Mexuar

This 14th-century room is the entrance to the palace. It was used as a ministerial council chamber and as an antechamber for those awaiting audiences with the emir. The public would generally not have been allowed beyond here. The chamber has been much altered; it was converted into a chapel in the 16th century, and now contains both Muslim and Christian motifs. At its far end, overlooking the Río Darro, is the small, lavishly decorated Oratorio (Prayer Room).

Patio del Cuarto Dorado

You pass into this courtyard from the Mexuar, with a small fountain and the Cuarto Dorado (Golden Room) on the left. This patio was where the emirs would give audiences to their subjects. The Cuarto Dorado takes its name from its beautiful wooden

ceiling, which was gilded and redecorated in the time of the Catholic Monarchs. On the other side of the patio is the entrance to the **Palacio de Comares** through a beautiful façade of glazed tiles, stucco and carved wood.

Palacio de Comares

This fabulous *palacio* was originally built by Emir Yusuf I, and thereafter served as the private residence for the ruler. It's built around the **Patio de los Arrayanes** (Patio of the Myrtles), and named after the hedges surrounding its rectangular pool and fountains. The rooms along the sides may have been quarters for the emir's many wives. Finely carved arches atop marble pillars form porticos at both ends of the patio. Through the northern portico, inside the Torre de Comares (Comares Tower), is the **Sala de la Barca** (Hall of the Blessing) from the Arabic *al-baraka* for blessing, a word endlessly carved on the walls. This room leads into the square **Salón de Comares** (Comares Hall), also called the **Salón de los Embajadores** (Hall of the Ambassadors), where the emirs would have conducted their negotiations with Christian emissaries. The stuccowork on the walls again contains repeated inscriptions in praise of God, and the marvellous domed marquetry ceiling contains more than 8000 cedar pieces in a pattern of stars representing the seven heavens of Islamic paradise, through which the soul ascends before reaching the top, where Allah resides.

The southern end of the patio is overshadowed by the walls of the **Palacio de Carlos V**.

Palacio de los Leones

From the Patio de los Arrayanes you move into the Palace of the Lions, 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 led 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 emirs. 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.

Other Sections

From the Sala de las Dos Hermanas a passageway leads through the **Estancias del Emperador** (Emperor's Chambers), built for Carlos I in the 1520s and later used by Washington Irving. From here you descend to the **Patio de la Reja** (Patio of the Grille), which leads to the pretty **Patio de Lindaraja**, originally created as a lower garden for the Palacio de los Leones. In the southwestern corner of the patio is the entrance (only sometimes open) to the **Baño de Comares**, the Palacio de Comares' bathroom, with its three rooms lit by star-shaped skylights.

From the Patio de Lindaraja you emerge into the **Jardines del Partal**, an area of terraced gardens created in the early 20th century around various old structures, ruined and standing. The small **Palacio del Pórtico** (Palace of the Portico), from the time of Mohammed III (r 1302–09), is the oldest surviving palace in the Alhambra. You can leave the Jardines del Partal by a gate facing the Palacio de Carlos V (next to the site of the **Rauda** – the emirs' cemetery), or continue along a path to the Generalife, which runs parallel to the Alhambra's ramparts, passing several towers.

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 heaven and earth.

Inside are two museums. The ground-floor **Museo de la Alhambra** (☎ 958 02 79 00; admission free; 🕒 9am–2.30pm Tue–Sat) has a wonderful collection of Muslim artefacts from the Al-

hambra, Granada province and Córdoba, with explanatory texts in English and Spanish. Highlights include the elegant Alhambra Vase, decorated with gazelles, and the door from the Sala de las Dos Hermanas.

Upstairs is the **Museo de Bellas Artes** (Fine Arts Museum; ☎ 958 22 14 49; admission free; 🕒 9am–2pm Mon–Fri). Most notable in the mainly Granada-related collection of paintings and sculptures are the carved wooden relief of the Virgin and child (c 1547) by Diego de Siloé, several 17th-century works by Alonso Cano, including the modern-looking *Ecce Homo*, and the portraits and landscapes by Granada's two early-20th-century José Marías – López Mezquita and Rodríguez Acosta.

OTHER CHRISTIAN BUILDINGS

The **Iglesia de Santa María de la Alhambra** was built between 1581 and 1617 on the site of the Islamic palace mosque. The **Convento de San Francisco**, now the Parador de Granada hotel (p374), was erected over a small Islamic palace. Isabel and Fernando were laid to rest in a sepulchre here while their tombs in the Capilla Real were being built.

GENERALIFE

The term Generalife comes from the Arabic *yannat-al-arif* or 'Architect's Garden'. Planted on a hillside facing the Alhambra, this is a beautiful, soothing composition of pathways, patios, pools, fountains, trimmed hedges, tall, ancient trees and, in season, flowers of every imaginable hue. It is the perfect place to end an Alhambra visit and to sit and enjoy the peace and contemplate the extent of luxury enjoyed by those who lived here. The Muslim rulers' summer palace is in the corner furthest from the entrance. On the way to it you pass through the Generalife's 20th-century **Jardines Nuevos** (New Gardens). Within the palace, the **Patio de la Acequia** (Court of the Water Channel) has a long pool framed by flowerbeds and 19th-century fountains whose shapes sensuously echo the arched porticos at each end. Off this patio is the **Jardín de la Sultana** (Sultana's Garden), a lovely little garden with the stump of a 700-year-old cypress tree trunk. When this was a flourishing tree, Zoraya, Abu al-Hasan's favourite concubine, flirted with the head of the Abencerraj clan under its thick shade. Unfortunately, this is where she was also caught flirting,

which led to the murders in the Sala de los Abencerrajes of the Palacio Nazaries.

Above are the modern **Jardines Altos** (Upper Gardens), with the **Escalera del Agua** (Water Staircase) – a set of steps with water running down beside them.

Capilla Real

Adjoining the cathedral, the **Capilla Real** (Royal Chapel; Map p366; ☎ 958 22 92 39; www.capillarealgranada.com; Calle Oficios; admission €3; 🕒 10.30am–1pm & 4–7pm Apr–Oct, 10.30am–1pm & 3.30–6.30pm Nov–Mar, from 11am Sun year-round, closed Good Friday) is Granada's outstanding Christian building. Spanish-history fans will enjoy its connection with the Catholic Monarchs Isabel and Fernando, who commissioned it as their own mausoleum, to be built in elaborate Isabelline Gothic style. Since it wasn't finished until 1521, several years after their deaths, they had to be temporarily interred in the Alhambra's Convento de San Francisco.

The monarchs lie with three relatives in simple lead coffins in the crypt, beneath their marble monuments in the chancel. The chancel is divided from the chapel's nave by a gilded screen made in 1520 by Maestro Bartolomé of Jaén – a masterpiece of wrought-iron artisanry. The coffins, from left to right, belong to Felipe El Hermoso (Philip the Handsome; the husband of the monarchs' daughter Juana la Loca, or Joanna the Crazy), Fernando, Isabel, Juana la Loca and Miguel, the eldest grandchild of Isabel and Fernando.

The marble effigies reclining above the crypt were a tribute by Carlos I to his parents and grandparents. The slightly lower of the two monuments, representing Isabel and Fernando and with a Latin inscription lauding them (scarily) as 'subjugators of Islam and extinguishers of obstinate heresy', was carved by a Tuscan, Domenico Fancelli. The other monument (1520), to Felipe and Juana, is higher, apparently because Felipe was the son of Holy Roman Emperor Maximilian. This is the work of Bartolomé Ordóñez from Burgos.

The chancel's densely decorated plateresque retable (1522), with a profusion of gold paint, is by Felipe de Vignani. Note its kneeling figures of Isabel (lower right, with the name 'Elisabeth') and Fernando (lower left), attributed to Diego de Siloé, and the

brightly painted bas-reliefs below depicting the defeat of the Muslims and subsequent conversions to Christianity.

The sacristy contains an impressive small museum with Fernando's sword and Isabel's sceptre, silver crown and personal art collection, which is mainly Flemish but also includes Sandro Botticelli's *Prayer in the Garden of Olives*. Also here are two fine statues of the Catholic Monarchs at prayer by Vignani.

Cathedral

Adjoining the Capilla Real but entered separately, from Gran Vía de Colón, is Granada's cavernous Gothic and Renaissance **cathedral** (Map p366; ☎ 958 22 29 59; admission €2.50; 🕒 10.45am–1.30pm & 4–8pm Mon–Sat, 4–8pm Sun, closed 7pm daily Nov–Mar). Construction of the cathedral began in 1521 and lasted until the 18th century. It was directed from 1528 to 1563 by Renaissance pioneer Diego de Siloé, and the main façade on Plaza de las Pasiegas, with four heavy square buttresses forming three great arched bays, was designed in the 17th century by Alonso Cano. De Siloé carved the statues on the lavish Puerta del Perdón on the northwestern façade, and much of the interior is also his work, including the gilded, painted and domed Capilla Mayor. The Catholic Monarchs at prayer (one above each side of the main altar) were carved by Pedro de Mena in the 17th century. Above the monarchs are busts of Adam and Eve by Cano. In the cathedral museum, be sure to see Cano's fine *San Pablo* sculpture and the golden Gothic monstrosity given to Granada by Isabel La Católica.

La Madraza

Opposite the Capilla Real is part of the old Muslim university, **La Madraza** (Map p366; Calle Oficios). Now with a painted baroque façade, the much-altered building retains an octagonal domed prayer room with stucco lacework and pretty tiles. The building is part of the modern university but you can take a look inside whenever it's open.

Centro José Guerrero

Just along the street from La Madraza, the **Centro José Guerrero** (art museum; Map p366; ☎ 958 22 51 85; www.centroguerrero.org; Calle Oficios 8; admission free; 🕒 11am–2pm & 5–9pm Tue–Sat, 11am–2pm Sun)



is dedicated to the most celebrated artist to come out of Granada – abstract expressionist José Guerrero (1914–91), who was born in the city but found fame in New York in the 1950s. The centre, which opened in 2000, exhibits good temporary shows as well as a permanent collection of Guerrero’s dramatic and colourful canvases. It’s well worth a visit.

Alcaicería, Plaza Bib-Rambla & Plaza de la Trinidad

The **Alcaicería** (Map p366) was the Muslim silk exchange but what can be seen here now is a 19th-century restoration that is filled with tourist shops. It’s best in the early morning light and quiet. Its buildings, divided by

narrow alleys, are just south of the Capilla Real. Southwest of the Alcaicería is the large **Plaza Bib-Rambla** (Map p366), another tourist haunt with restaurants, flower stalls and a central fountain with statues of giants. Its square has seen jousting, bullfights and Inquisition burnings during its lifetime. Pedestrianised Calle Pescadería and Calle de los Mesones lead north-west to the leafy **Plaza de la Trinidad** (Map p366), which has a couple of good tapas bars.

Corral del Carbón

You can’t miss the lovely Islamic façade and elaborate horseshoe arch of the **Corral del Carbón** (Map p366; Calle Mariana Pineda), which began life as a 14th-century inn for merchants.

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It has since been used as an inn for coal dealers (hence its modern name, meaning ‘Coal Yard’) and later a theatre. It is home to government offices and a government-run crafts shop, Artespaña (see p378).

Albayzín

Stretching and twisting its way up the hill that faces the Alhambra across the Darro Valley, the **Albayzín** (Map pp358-9) is one of Granada’s most fabulous treasures. The steep winding streets with the gorgeous *carmen* houses (large mansions with walled gardens, from the Arabic *karm*, for garden) reveal the best views of the Alhambra, and in fact it’s almost as if the Albayzín and the Alhambra secretly fancy each other: the Albayzín doesn’t look as enchanting from anywhere as it does from the Alhambra’s tiled chambers, and the Alhambra looks like it rules the world when seen from one of the miradors of the Albayzín. But despite all this charm and beauty, this neighbourhood is still a work-in-progress and is being refurbished

more each year, and, unfortunately, its narrow streets are often havens for thieves and muggers. We have had reports of muggings, some violent, in the Albayzín so if you are alone try to avoid this area during siesta time (3 to 5pm) and after dark.

Albayzín was once Granada’s ‘cradle’ as an Iberian settlement in about the 7th century BC, and was where its Muslim rulers dwelt before they started to develop the Alhambra in the 13th century. The Albayzín’s name derives from events in 1227, when Muslims from Baeza (Jaén province) moved here after their city was conquered by the Christians. It became a densely populated residential area with 27 mosques, and it survived as the Islamic quarter for several decades after the Reconquista in 1492. Islamic ramparts, houses, gates, fountains and cisterns remain, and Islamic relics are incorporated in many of the churches and villas of the Albayzín.

Buses 31 and 32 both run circular routes from Plaza Nueva around the Albayzín

GRANADA'S SACRED MOUNTAIN

Fancy some fresh air? Then make your way up to the Sacromonte district, the cave-dwelling neighbourhood of *gitanos* (Roma), northeast of the Albayzín. Once deemed a danger to public order and still largely on society's margins except for the area of music (mainly flamenco), the *gitanos* probably started inhabiting the caves before the 14th century. General poverty made many poor peasants who'd come to live in Granada move to the caves in the 19th century. To this day, 80% of the caves are inhabited, and you'd be surprised at how flashy some of them are. But be advised: don't accept invitations to look at a private house (unless you know the person) since a hefty fee may be demanded after.

If you wish to see the *gitanos'* way of life and traditional crafts – metalwork, pottery, weaving, and basket-making – go to the **Centro de Interpretación del Sacromonte** (Map pp358-9; ☎ 958 21 51 20; www.sacromontegrana.com; Barranco de los Negros s/n; ☎ 10am-2pm & 5-9pm Tue-Fri, 10am-9pm Sat & Sun Jun-Oct, 10am-2pm & 4-7pm Tue-Fri & 10am-7pm Sat & Sun Nov-May), a place that makes a trip to Sacromonte really worthwhile. This wide-ranging ethnographic and environmental museum and arts centre is set in large grounds planted with all manner of herbs where you can also see art exhibitions and attend a herbal-remedy workshop. Morning is the best time to see the artists at work. The centre has an outdoor flamenco music, dance and film programme starting at 10pm on Wednesday and Friday from June to September.

To get here, hop off the Sacromonte bus at the Venta El Gallo Flamenco School, 250m along the road from El Camborio cave disco (p377), and follow the signs up Barranco de los Negros to the centre. It's about a 200m uphill walk. Bus 31 (see p367) detours along Camino del Sacromonte eight times daily; times are posted at its stops.

The best views of the Alhambra, Sierra Nevada and the Albayzín are from the Iglesia de San Miguel Alto, at the top of the hill. Make sure you're not hanging around the uninhabited parts by nightfall. Some caves on or near Sacromonte's main street, Camino del Sacromonte, are venues for expensive tourist-oriented flamenco shows or lively dance clubs (see p377). Be discerning so that you don't get ripped off.

10.30am-5.30pm Nov-Feb), which has a camera-obscura system projecting live, 360-degree views of Granada onto a screen. There's a running commentary in Spanish, English and French.

Monasterio de San Jerónimo

Five hundred metres west of the cathedral, the 16th-century **Monasterio de San Jerónimo** (Map pp358-9; ☎ 958 27 93 37; Calle Rector López Argüeta 9; admission €3; ☎ 10am-1.30pm & 4-7.30pm Apr-Oct, 10am-1.30pm & 3-6.30pm Nov-Mar) features some beautiful stone carving and a spectacularly decorated church. In the cloister are two lovely plateresque doorways carved by the monastery's chief architect, the talented Diego de Siloé. The church, in a combination of Isabelline Gothic and Renaissance styles, features an incredible profusion of brightly painted sculpture on the enormous retablo and the towering vaults at the eastern end. Before it, at the foot of the steps, is the tombstone of El Gran Capitán (the Great Captain) – Gonzalo Fernández de Córdoba, the military right-hand man of the Catho-

lic Monarchs. Statues of El Gran Capitán and his wife, the Duquesa de Sesa, at prayer stand either side of the retablo.

Monasterio de la Cartuja

Another architectural gem stands 2km northwest of the centre, reached by bus 8 from Gran Vía de Colón. **Monasterio de la Cartuja** (☎ 958 16 19 32; Paseo de la Cartuja; admission €3; ☎ 10am-1pm & 4-8pm Apr-Oct, 10am-1pm & 3.30-6pm Nov-Mar, 10am-noon Sun year-round), with an imposing, sand-coloured stone exterior, was built between the 16th and 18th centuries. It's 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; and, to the left of the main altar, 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 by Fray José Manuel Vázquez in the 18th century, represent a high point of Granada marquetry art.

Huerta de San Vicente

The great *granadino* writer Federico García Lorca (see the boxed text, p48) spent summers and wrote some of his best-known works at the **Huerta de San Vicente** (Map pp358-9; ☎ 958 25 84 66; Calle Virgen Blanca s/n; admission €1.80, free Wed, admission only by guided tour in Spanish; ☎ 10am-12.30pm & 4-7pm Tue-Sun Oct-Mar, 10am-1pm & 5-8pm Apr-Jun, 10am-3pm Jul-Aug). The house is a 15-minute walk from the city centre and was once surrounded by orchards. Today, the **Parque Federico García Lorca** separates the house from whizzing traffic in an attempt to recreate the tranquil environment that inspired him.

The folksy house contains some original furnishings, including Lorca's writing desk and piano, some of his drawings and other memorabilia, and exhibitions connected with his life and work. A cheeky Salvador Dalí drawing of a short-haired blonde woman smoking a pipe catches the eye.

To get here, head 700m down Calle de las Recogidas from Puerta Real, turn right along Calle del Arabial then take the first left into Calle Virgen Blanca.

Hammams

Granada has two **Baños Árabes** (Arabic Baths) and a visit to one of these is a must-do for the sheer lazy pleasure of it. Both baths offer a similar deal: a bath and aromatherapy massage that lasts for two hours (bath 1¼ hours, massage 15 minutes) and both need advance reservations. Sessions start on the hour every two hours from 10am until 10pm. Swimwear is obligatory (you can rent it here), a towel is provided, and all sessions are mixed.

The better of the two is the **Aljibe San Miguel Baños Árabes** (Map pp358-9; ☎ 958 52 28 67; www.aljibesanmiguel.es; San Miguel Alta 41; bath/bath & massage €15/22) with seven pools of different temperatures, wonderful tiled nooks and arches. The pools feel private and there is a relaxed, silent atmosphere inside, and only six people are allowed in a session, so it never gets crowded. The semidarkness and the drops of condensation from the curved

ceilings are ideal for relaxation. Sweet mint tea is included in your bathing time.

The older but smaller **Hammam** (Map p366; ☎ 958 22 99 78; www.hammampain.com/granada in Spanish; Calle Santa Ana 16; bath/bath & massage €16/25) is in the Albayzín, just below the Alhambra. It has wonderful geometric mosaics, arches and latticework decorations, and soothing background music, but only two pools: one hot and one cold. You can have tea in the *tereria* from 3pm and there's a rooftop restaurant.

Parque de las Ciencias

Granada's fun, modern **Parque de las Ciencias** (Map pp358-9; ☎ 958 13 19 00; Avenida del Mediterráneo s/n; adult/child under 18yr museum €4.50/3.50, planetarium €2/1.50; ☎ 10am-7pm Tue-Sat, 10am-3pm Sun, closed 15-30 Sep), a science museum 2km south of the centre, has plenty of hands-on exhibits and a special room for children to explore basic scientific principles. The planetarium has sessions roughly every hour. Take buses 1, 4, 5, 10 or 11 from the centre.

COURSES

With its many attractions and youthful population, Granada is a good place to study Spanish; it also has several Spanish dance schools. The provincial tourist office can provide lists for all types of schools. For more information check out www.granada.spanish.org, www.spanishcourses.info and www.granadainfo.com.

Centro de Lenguas Modernas (Modern Languages Centre; Map p366; ☎ 958 21 56 60; www.dlm-granada.com; Placeta del Hospicio Viejo s/n) Granada University's modern languages department, in the historic Realejo district, offers a variety of Spanish language and culture programmes, from intensive beginners' courses to classes for teachers of Spanish. Its teachers are highly qualified. Intensive language courses at all levels start at 10 days (40 hours' tuition) for €305.

Escuela Carmen de las Cuevas (Map pp358-9; ☎ 958 22 10 62; www.carmencuevas.com; Cuesta de los Chinos 15, Sacromonte) This private school gets good reports. It teaches Spanish language and culture, and flamenco dance and guitar, all at several levels. A two-week intensive language course (40 hours' tuition) costs €284.

TOURS

Cicerone Cultura y Ocio (☎ 670 541669; www.ciceronegranada.com) Offers guided walking tours in English (2½ hours, €10) from Plaza del Carmen, in front of the *ayuntamiento*, at 10.30am daily.

City Sightseeing Granada (☎ 902 10 10 81) Granada's double-decker city tour bus. It has 20 stops outside the main sights, including the cathedral and the Alhambra. You hop on and off where you like and the ticket (€15) is valid for 24 hours. There's a smaller minibus that does a miniroute. You can travel on either bus with the same ticket.

Granavisión (☎ 902 33 00 02) Offers guided tours of the Alhambra and the Generalife (€38), Historic Granada tours (€43) and excursions further afield.

FESTIVALS & EVENTS

Festival Internacional de Tango (www.eltango.com) Dancing cheek-to-cheek in the street, in dance halls and listening to the wonderful melancholy of tango; held each year from 21 to 26 March. Tickets go on sale at the beginning of the year at the **festival box office** (Map p366; ☎ 958 22 18 44; www.granadafestival.org; Corral del Carbón, Calle Mariana Pineda s/n) and can be purchased online.

Semana Santa (Holy Week) This and Feria de Corpus Cristi are Granada's big two popular festivals; during the week leading up to Easter Sunday, benches are set up in Plaza del Carmen for viewing the Semana Santa processions.

Día de la Cruz (Day of the Cross) On 3 May, squares, patios and balconies are adorned with floral Cruces de Mayo (May Crosses). These become the focus for typical Andalusian revelry – drinking, horse riding, polka-dot dresses and *sevillanas* (traditional Andalusian dances with high, twirling arm movements).

Feria de Corpus Cristi (Corpus Christi Fair) Granada's big annual fair – a week of fairgrounds, drinking, bullfights and *sevillanas*; held early June 2007, mid-May 2008.

Festival Internacional de Música y Danza First-class 2½-week festival of mainly classical music and dance, with many events held in the Palacio Nazaries, Generalife, Palacio de Carlos V and other historic sites; held late June to early July.

SLEEPING

Granada has a great range of places to stay all around the central areas, especially around Plaza Nueva. The best places to lay your head are in the renovated Albayzín *carmen* houses, usually with Alhambra views of some kind, mostly in the midrange and top-end brackets, although there are some good hostels in the area, too.

You should have no problem finding a room except during Semana Santa and at Christmas. At busy times rooms tend to fill up before noon, especially on Cuesta de Gómez, so from March to October book ahead to secure your choice. Most places

keep more or less the same prices year-round except for a few days over Easter. Parking, where offered, costs €8 to €12 per day. For apartments, check out www.granada.info.com.

Near Plaza Nueva

BUDGET

Oasis Backpackers' Hostel (Map p366; ☎ 958 21 58 48; www.oasisgranada.com; Placeta Correo Viejo 3; dm €15, d €36; ☑ ☒ ☓) Granada's top hostel, in a renovated *carmen* house, is seconds away from the *Caldererías* and bars on Calle de Elvira. This place is designed for serious backpackers and word spreads fast, so book ahead to enjoy its little luxuries: happy staff, free internet access, rooftop terrace, personal safes, tapas tours, and a tip-top central location.

Hostal Landázuri (Map p366; ☎/fax 958 22 14 06; Cuesta de Gómez 24; s/d/tr/q €28/45/50/60, s/d with shared bathroom €20/28; ☑) This folksy place boasts a terrace with Alhambra views and a café. The 20 rooms have been updated and a few have a TV; triples and quads are large, bright and comfortable. It's well heated in winter.

Hostal Britz (Map p366; ☎/fax 958 22 36 52; Cuesta de Gómez 1; s/d €32/44, with shared bathroom €25/34) The friendly, efficient Britz has 22 clean, plain rooms with double glazing, gleaming wooden surfaces and central heating. There's also a lift.

The **Hostal Austria** (Map p366; ☎ 958 22 70 75; www.hostalaustralia.com; Cuesta de Gómez 4; s/d/tr/q €35/45/60/70; ☑ ☒ ☓) and **Hostal Viena** (Map p366;

THE AUTHOR'S CHOICE

Hostal Venecia (Map p366; ☎ 958 22 39 87; Cuesta de Gómez 2; r €32, s/d/tr/q with shared bathroom €15/28/39/52) A lovely *hostal* (simple guesthouse) where the friendly hosts are as sweet as the flower-and-picture-filled turquoise corridors. The nine rooms are all different and brim with character. The owners bring you a soothing herbal infusion to drink each morning. Relaxing background music plays, incense wafts, and it's warm in winter. There are overhead fans for the hot summer months. The owners run Hostal Patagonia, a similar, comfortable place in the university area, where you are more independent but still looked after.

☎/fax 958 22 18 59; Calle Hospital de Santa Ana 2; s/d €35/45, with shared bathroom €25/37) are both run by the same Austrian-Spanish family. The Austria has better, though still uninspiring, rooms with attractive wooden doors and shutters. Some of the rooms are on the thigh-achingly high 4th floor, so watch out if you have heavy bags.

Half-a-dozen *hostales* (simple guesthouses or small places offering hotel-like accommodation) are strung along Cuesta de Gómez, between Plaza Nueva and the Alhambra. The streets between Calle de Elvira and Gran Vía de Colón, west of Plaza Nueva, also have several more *hostales* worth a look if you're having difficulty finding a room.

MIDRANGE

Hotel Maciá Plaza (Map p366; ☎ 958 22 75 36; www.maciáhotels.com; Plaza Nueva 4; s/d €49/73; ☑ ☒ ☓) One of four Maciás in Granada, this hotel has 44 comfy rooms with attractive enough décor in an excellent location. Try for a double overlooking the plaza. Its single rooms are small, but you can have a double to yourself for €58. Rates drop to €50 for a double on weekends in winter, July and August.

Hotel Anacapri (Map p366; ☎ 958 22 74 77; www.hotelanacapri.com; Calle Joaquín Costa 7; s/d €78/105; ☒ ☓) Just a minute's walk from Plaza Nueva, the Anacapri has 49 pretty rooms in varied colours, with floral bedspreads, cork floors and satellite TV. Its 18th-century patio is fitted out with cane chairs and palms. Buffet breakfast is €7.50 and the reception staff make you feel welcome.

Hotel Puerta de las Granadas (Map p366; ☎ 958 21 62 30; www.hotelpuertadelasgranadas.com; Cuesta de Gómez 14; s/d €77/97, superior r €107-180; ☒ ☓) One of the renovated *carmen* houses, decorated in a gorgeous modern minimalist style with wooden shutters and elegant furnishings. The more expensive, luxurious rooms have a number of windows that catch divine views of the Alhambra and/or the old-city rooftop. Prices drop significantly midweek. The hotel also has a lift.

Albayzín

MIDRANGE

Casa del Capitel Nazarí (Map p366; ☎ 958 21 52 60; www.hotelcasacapitel.com; Cuesta Aceituneros 6; s/d €73/91; ☒ ☓) A 16th-century patio is the

focus of this beautiful building, with understated décor, wooden balconies, ancient pillars and classy rooms.

Casa del Aljarife (Map p366; ☎/fax 958 22 24 25; www.granadainfo.com/most; Placeta de la Cruz Verde 2; r €95; ☒ ☓) The best place to stay for those who want to feel at home, this beautifully restored 17th-century house has just four spacious rooms and a pretty patio where you can take breakfast.

Hotel Zaguán (Map p366; ☎ 958 21 57 30; www.hotelzaguán.com; Carrera del Darro; s €50, r €80-100; ☒ ☓) A risen-from-ruins and tastefully restored 16th-century *carmen* house. Its 13 rooms are all different; some look out over the Río Darro. There's a bar-restaurant too.

TOP END

The following hotels in the Albayzín all have English-speaking staff and offer breakfast for €10. Each one is sumptuously decorated and has its individual stamp.

El Ladrón del Agua (Map p366; ☎ 958 21 50 40; www.ladrondeagua.com; Carrera del Darro 13; s €76-115, d €99-149; ☒ ☓) Smooth, simple and elegant, 'The Water Thief' mixes modern pleasures with antique beauty, crisp sheets, abstract paintings and a slightly snooty attitude.

Casa Morisca Hotel (Map pp358-9; ☎ 958 22 11 00; www.hotelcasamorisca.com; Cuesta de la Victoria 9; s/d interior €90/119, exterior €120/150; ☒ ☓) This place occupies a late-15th-century mansion that's centred on a patio with an ornamental pool and wooden galleries. It has 14 rooms, which aren't huge but compensate in style.

Hotel Carmen de Santa Inés (Map p366; ☎ 958 22 63 80; www.carmensantaines.com; Placeta de Porras 7; s/d €95/105, ste €125-200; ☒ ☓) This Islamic-era house that was extended in the 16th and 17th centuries is furnished with antiques, and the lovely patio opens onto a garden of myrtles, fruit trees and fountains.

Around Plaza Isabel La Católica

Hotel Palacio de Santa Paula (Map pp358-9; ☎ 902 29 22 93; www.ac-hotels.com; Gran Vía de Colón; r from €205; ☑ ☒ ☓) This opulent and beautiful five-star hotel occupies a former 16th-century convent, some 14th-century houses with patios and wooden balconies, and a 19th-century aristocratic house, all with a contemporary overlay. The rooms sport every top-end luxury you might desire and the hotel also has a fitness centre, sauna and Turkish bath.

Plaza Bib-Rambla & Around

BUDGET

Hostal Lisboa (Map p366; ☎ 958 22 14 14; www.lisboaweb.com; Plaza del Carmen 27; s/d €32/44, with shared bathroom €19/29) On the pretty little Plaza del Carmen and next to the bars of Calle Navas, this friendly place has 28 clean rooms and funny silver-and-pink promo key chains. The rooms are large and basic with granny chequered throws adorning the beds. All rooms have fans and winter heating.

Hostal Sevilla (Map p366; ☎ 958 27 85 13; hostalsevilla@telefonica.net; Calle Fábrica Vieja 18; r €35, s/d with shared bathroom €18/27; (P)) Set inside a young family's house, this friendly, clean, 14-room *hostal* has pretty tilework and lampshades and a great, large double-room attic. All rooms have heating.

Hostal Zurita (Map p366; ☎ 958 27 50 20; Plaza de la Trinidad 7; r €38, s/d with shared bathroom €18/30; (P)) Friendly, super-clean Zurita has 14 quiet, bright and sparkly rooms with winter heating. Nearly all rooms have a little balcony.

Hostal Meridiano (Map p366; ☎/fax 958 25 05 44; www.hostalpensionmeridiano.com; Calle Angulo 9; r €38, s/d with shared bathroom €18/32, 4-/6-person apt €35/40; (P)) Yellow-walled Meridiano has plants dotting the friendly reception and a rocking horse looking nostalgic in the corridor. It's run by a helpful couple tuned to travellers' needs, like internet access and homely rooms. Six of the 18 rooms have a bathroom; the rest share a bathroom between two rooms.

Hostal Mesones (Map p366; ☎ 958 26 32 44; Calle de los Mesones 44; d €40, s/d with shared bathroom €20/32) Mesones is a top family-run *hostal* with impeccably clean rooms, power-shower bathrooms, cute yellow chequered beds and curtains, and balconies that overlook the super-central pedestrianised shopping street below.

Hostal Lima (Map p366; ☎ 958 29 50 29; Calle Laurel de las Tablas 17; s/d €30/40, apt €50, 2-person ste €55; (P)) Possibly the winner of Granada's most kitsch *hostal*, this place bombards with medieval motifs, paintings of Greek goddesses, chubby cherubs playing flutes, Cuban sweet-sellers, and Andalusian tiles here and there. The rooms are in oranges with lovely new bathrooms and brass bedsteads. It may not have style, but it certainly has character.

MIDRANGE

Hotel Los Tilos (Map p366; ☎ 958 26 67 12; www.hotellostilos.com; Plaza Bib-Rambla 4; s/d €41/65; (P)) Excellent spacious rooms overlooking Plaza Bib-Rambla, the cathedral or the Alhambra – the choice is yours. The reception and several bathrooms were being renovated during our research. There's a small but panoramic roof terrace.

Hotel Reina Cristina (Map p366; ☎ 958 25 32 11; www.hotelreina.cristina.com; Calle Tablas 4; s/d €66/98; (P)) The Reina Cristina is a renovated 19th-century mansion that once belonged to the Rosales family, friends of Lorca. The writer spent his last days here before being arrested and subsequently murdered by the Nationalists during the civil war. Rooms are very comfortable and have satellite TV. There is also a good restaurant.

Hotel Navas (Map p366; ☎ 958 22 59 59; www.hotelesporcel.com; Calle Navas 22; s/d €72/96; (P)) An adequate but unexciting city-centre hotel. With 44 rooms, it's on a manageable scale, and all rooms have an external window, pastel tones, satellite TV and a safety box. Prices tumble in July and August.

Realejo

Hostal La Ninfa (Map pp358-9; ☎ 958 22 79 85; Campo del Príncipe s/n; s/d €45/65; (P)) You'll be bowled over by the dozens of funny, colourful ceramic stars on the hotel's façade. The place has tons of character, a pretty foyer-cum-breakfast-room and 10 clean, cosy rooms.

Hotel Molinos (Map p366; ☎ 958 22 73 67; www.eel.es/molinos; Calle Molinos 12; s/d €50/73; (P)) The luminous Molinos is neat and clean, with nine sunny rooms. It once made it into the *Guinness Book of Records* as the world's narrowest hotel. Rooftop views are 360-degree.

Alhambra

MIDRANGE

Hotel América (Map p361; ☎ 958 22 74 71; www.hotelamericagranada.com; Calle Real de la Alhambra 53; s/d €70/106; (P) Mar-Nov; (P)) This has certainly got the best location in town if you can't tear yourself from the Alhambra – it's in its grounds. Alas, there are only 17 rooms, and reservations are essential. There's a leafy patio where good lunches are served.

Hotel Guadalupe (Map pp358-9; ☎ 958 22 34 23; www.hotelguadalupe.es; Avenida Los Alixares s/n; s/d €76/104; (P)) On the Alhambra's doorstep

and with views of the Alhambra or the beautiful olive groves behind, the jolly Guadalupe has 42 spacious, beautifully fitted-out rooms and friendly, efficient staff.

TOP END

Parador de Granada (Map p361; ☎ 958 22 14 40; www.parador.es; Calle Real de la Alhambra s/n; s/d €182/228; (P)) This is the Alhambra's San Francisco monastery, converted into a hotel. Originally built in the time of the Catholic Monarchs, whose initial burial place was here, it's the most expensive parador in Spain. You can't beat its location within the Alhambra and its historical connections. Book ahead.

Sacromonte

Cuevas El Abanico (Map pp358-9; ☎/fax 958 22 61 99, 608 848497; www.el-abanico.com; Vereda de Enmedio 89, Sacromonte; s/d/tr €58/58/73, 4-person 2-bedroom cave €88; (P)) For something different, try the cave lodgings in the Sacromonte *gitano* neighbourhood. The five cave apartments are comfortable and kitted out with heating, a kitchen, a bathroom, hot water and outdoor terraces. There's normally a two-night minimum stay.

Around Granada

Camping Reina Isabel (Map pp358-9; ☎ 958 59 00 41; Carretera Granada-La Zubia Km 4; camping per adult/tent/car €4/4/4; (P)) About 5km south of the centre, Reina Isabel is clean, with good bathrooms. Take La Zubia exit from the Ronda Sur ring road.

Camping Sierra Nevada (Map pp358-9; ☎ 958 15 00 62; Avenida de Madrid 107; camping per adult/tent/car €5/5.50/5.50; (P)) A short walk from the bus station, 2.5km northwest of the centre, this camping ground has big, clean bathrooms and a laundry. Bus 3 runs between here and Gran Vía de Colón in the city centre.

EATING

Here's a place where gastronomy stays down to earth, but still experiments. Granada is one of the last bastions of that fantastic practice of free tapas with every drink. Take note: the more you drink, the better the tapas become. After you order each drink, you'll hear the barman shouting: '*primera!*', '*segunda!*' or '*tercera!*' which means your first, second, and third tapas are on their way. Depending on where you are, you can

get Spanish beans, Arabic couscous, Brazilian chicken or *haute cuisine* tapas, served in dinky dishes.

Top tapas areas include the streets off Calle de Elvira (near Plaza Nueva), south of the cathedral and Calle Navas. The terrace tables on Plaza Nueva, Paseo de los Tristes and Plaza Bib-Rambla are decent, but often very touristy. Alternatively, get some North African nosh up or down the incense-infused Calle Calderería Nueva/Vieja.

A mesmerising experience is dining in the Albayzín. The reward for finding a restaurant with a terrace is a spectacular view of the Alhambra, floodlit at night, though the food may not be as amazing as the views and the prices can be high.

Calle de Elvira, Plaza Nueva & Around

Al Andalus (Map p366; ☎ 958 22 67 30; Calle de Elvira; mains €3-6) The first in a range of over-the-counter, Arabic fast-food-feast kebab houses. This place looks onto Plaza Nueva and does a mean parcel of falafel in pitta (€3).

Café Central (Map p366; ☎ 958 22 97 06; Calle de Elvira; raciones €4.50-8.50) At the beginning of the Calle de Elvira trail, this is a good place for perking up with a strong morning coffee (€1.60) for breakfast, or after a night out.

Bodegas Castañeda (Map p366; Calle Almirantes s/n; raciones from €6) An institution among locals and tourists alike, this place whips up traditional food in a typical bodega (traditional wine bar) setting. Get yourself some Spanish tortilla and *alioli* (aioli; garlic mayonnaise).

Antigua Bodega Castañeda (Map p366; Calle de Elvira s/n; raciones €6.90-13.50) If the barrels of potent 'Costa' wine from the Sierra de la Contraviesa tempt you to the point of befuddlement, then sober up with a few *montaditos* (small sandwiches; €3.20 to €4.50).

THE AUTHOR'S CHOICE

Los Diamantes (Map p366; ☎ 958 22 70 70; Calle Navas 26; media-raciones €6) This place is reason alone to come to Granada: it's a heaven for anyone who loves fish and seafood. The plates are heaped with an amazing mix of *pescado frito* (fried fish) and prawns to die for. A little *caña* (small glass of beer) makes perfect company.

Vía Colón (Map p366; ☎ 958 22 98 42; Gran Vía de Colón 13; mains €10-17; ☎ 8am-1am) A great place for a rich breakfast, where apron-clad, rushing waiters are overlooked by cherubs and angels. There are also meaty mains, such as the delicious *jamón ibérico de bellota* (ham made from pigs fed on *bellotas*, or acorns; €17).

Jamones Castellano (Map p366; cnr Calles Almireceros & Joaquín Costa) This is a perfect delicatessen for picnic preparation – get some *jamón serrano* (mountain-cured ham), *pimientos del piquillo* (preserved charred peppers) and some cheese for a perfect, rhyming *bocadillo* (filled roll).

For fresh fruit and veg head for the large, covered **Mercado Central San Agustín** (Map p366; Calle San Agustín), a block west of the cathedral. Inhale the lingering aroma of the herb and spice stalls along the Calle Cárcel Baja side of the cathedral. The bulging sacks contain everything from sage to saffron.

Alhambra

Parador de Granada (Map p361; ☎ 958 22 14 40; Calle Real de Alhambra s/n; sandwiches from €5; ☎ 11am-11pm) The charming Parador de Granada is a swanky place to indulge in fine fare or a juicy *bocadillo* as you contemplate the Alhambra's magnificence. The whole experience will leave you feeling rather special – as intended.

Albayzín

The labyrinthine Albayzín contains a wealth of eateries, all tucked away in the narrow streets – some behind gates with inconspicuous bells and missable signs.

Kasbah (Map p366; Calle Calderería Nueva 4; teas €1.80-2.40) Belly-dancing spectacles take place in this candlelit tea den, among glimmering cushions and customers, invisible through the sweet smoke of the hookah. Match cream-topped Arabic special tea (€2.40) with a doubly fattening cream-and-chocolate crepe (€2.30) and dance the calories off later.

Tetería As-Sirat (Map p366; Calle Calderería Nueva 4; teas €2-3) For a lung-filling hookah and tea experience try this little place next door to Kasbah. Among a head-spinning variety of teas you'll find Cocktail Cleopatra (€3) or a fruity mango infusion (€2), which complements the honey-and-orange crepe (€3) nicely.

Restaurante Arrayanes (Map p366; ☎ 958 22 84 01; Cuesta Marañas 4; mains €7-17; ☎ from 8pm) An excellent North African restaurant that will make you weep with joy over its lamb tagine, where wrinkly dates snuggle next to the tender meat and the whole affair is sprinkled with blanched almonds (€10). The chicken couscous melts like snowflakes in your mouth. The décor is a healthy mix of cushions and little mirrors and there's no alcohol.

El Agua (Map pp358-9; ☎ 958 22 33 58; Plaza Aljibe de Trillo 7; fondues per person €14-19, minimum 2 people; ☎ 1.30-3.30pm & 8-11.30pm Wed-Mon, 8-11.30pm Tue) Wild fondue feasts are the mainstay of this first-rate restaurant. Melt along with the cheese as you dunk your chunks of juicy *jamón* and take in the fabulous Alhambra views.

Terraza las Tomasas (Map pp358-9; ☎ 958 22 41 08; Carril de San Agustín 4; mains €16-20; ☎ 1.30-3.30pm Mon-Tue, 1.30-3.30pm & 8.30-11pm Wed-Sat) For a touch of adventure and exclusivity, ring the little bell to get in here and enjoy the romantic views of the Alhambra, impeccable service and commendable food. Try the *granadino* favourite, tortilla Sacromonte (€9 for starter).

Plaza Bib-Rambla & Around

Poê (Map p366; Calle Paz; media-ración €3) Imagination, Brazilian influence and a desire for something different has resulted in a great mix of excellent free tapas, such as *feijoada* (bean and rice stew) or chicken stew with polenta, and a trendy international vibe. Hang out at the bar, chat to others and enjoy this gem.

Om-Kalsum (Map p366; Calle Jardines 17; media-ración €3) Just around the corner from Poê and even more exciting, Om-Kalsum is a tapas bar gone North African, so you get mini-lamb tagines, gorgeous bite-sized chicken kebabs in pitta bread, and a stomach-full of couscous with caramelised onion and swollen sultanas. A satisfied international crowd reclines full on the cushioned seats.

Gurrero (Map p366; ☎ 958 28 14 60; Plaza de la Trinidad 7; raciones €5.50-6.50) A low-key café-bar and many a hungover person's breakfast choice, this is where you come for *tostadas* (€1.50), freshly squeezed orange juice and a tall glass of *café con leche* (café latte).

Reca (Map p366; ☎ 636 891189; Plaza de la Trinidad s/n; mains €8) Relatively new and already

one of Granada's top tapas places, Reca is always packed with people hungering after their wonderfully presented, modern dishes. Miraculously and thankfully it is about the only bar in the area that serves food until 5pm, without a break in the middle of the day.

Cunini (Map p366; ☎ 958 25 07 77; Calle Pescadería 14; menú €18) A good reputation surrounds this little upmarket seafood bar and restaurant on the old Fishmonger Square, where you can get first-class fish and seafood as tapas, standing at the bar, or sit down and really indulge in the restaurant at the back.

DRINKING

Granada buzzes with floorboard-bashing flamenco dancers, bottle-clinking travellers and grooving students out on the pull. The best areas for drinking are Calle de Elvira and around the university. Other chilled bars line the Río Darro at the base of the Albayzín, and Campo del Príncipe attracts a sophisticated bunch.

El Rincón de Michael Landon (Map pp358-9; Calle Rector García Duarte 2; beer €1.50; ☎ noon-4pm & 8pm-1am Mon-Sat, 8m-1am Sun) In the midst of Granada's student life, this funny bar is dedicated to retro kitsch and the bizarrely cult star of *The Little House on the Prairie*. The hip bunch that hangs out here comes for the simple tapas (with names such as JR – *Jamón* & Roquefort), beer, and music blasting from the small stereo.

Anaís Café (Map p366; Calle Buensuceso 13; glass of house wine €1.50; ☎ 9am-1pm) This is a bar for bookworms with a penchant for imbibing, literary evenings and tarot readings, as well as mindless fun.

Bodegas Castañeda (Map p366; Calle Almireceros; glass of house wine €1.50) and **Antigua Bodega Castañeda** (Map p366; Calle de Elvira; glass of house wine €1.50) are the most inviting bars, with out-of-the-barrel wine and bites of tapas to keep things going.

El Círculo (Map p366; Calle de Elvira; beer €1.50) One of Calle de Elvira's treasures, El Círculo is a calm and unpretentious tapas bar with a slightly retro feel. After one of the large spirit measures you might be wishing there were more seats, though.

Bagdad Café (Map pp358-9; Coca de San Andrés; glass of house wine €1.50; ☎ from 6pm) A dirty side street and a derelict feel won't put off those hunting for Granada's alternative scene.

Strain to hear the pulsing beat through the black door and then make your way into the chilled den.

Café Bar Elvira (Map pp358-9; Calle de Elvira 85; beer €1; ☎ from noon) A hang-out for dreadlocks, whistle and dog-on-a-bit-of-string-type crowd, the café's atmosphere is jolly and there's drinking, singing and shouting all day – partly thanks to the large spirit measures and the popular mixers.

El Rincón de San Pedro (Map pp358-9; Carrera del Darro 12; ☎ from noon) Turquoise walls and slate tiles give this hip bar a cooling feel to complement the sound of the Río Darro trickling past. Gaze out of the back doors onto the greenery at the base of the Alhambra as you sip a refreshing gin and tonic (€4.50).

ENTERTAINMENT

There's lots to get you dancing in Granada: it's home to Andalucía's best nightclub, and the city's large university population includes plenty of aspiring musicians who keep the gig circuit alive. Look out for posters and leaflets advertising live music and nontouristy flamenco. The bi-weekly flyer *Yuzin* (www.yuzin.com) lists many live-music venues, some of which are also dance clubs where DJs spin the latest tracks. The excellent monthly *Guía de Granada* (€1), available from kiosks, lists entertainment venues and places to eat, including tapas bars.

Posters listing forthcoming cultural events can be viewed on the notice board in the foyer of **La Madraza** (Map p366; Calle Oficios), located opposite the Capilla Real.

Nightclubs

Granada 10 (Map p366; Calle Cárcel Baja; admission €6; ☎ from midnight) A glittery converted cinema is now Granada's top club for the glam crowd, who recline on the gold sofas and go crazy to cheesy Spanish pop tunes.

Enano Rojo (Map pp358-9; Calle de Elvira 91; ☎ from 10pm) Gritty and grungy Enano Rojo, with its toadstool emblem, plays jazz and funk to a hip crowd on weekends. Midweek it's a little tamer and the later you get here the better.

Industrial Copera (☎ 958 25 84 49; www.industrialcopera.net; Carretera Armilla, Calle la Paz, warehouse 7; admission varied; ☎ 11pm-late) The award-winning Industrial Copera has been voted Andalucía's best club. It is a warehouse where serious clubbers go for serious all-nighters. The

GRANADA'S TOP FIVE FLAMENCO HAUNTS

It's difficult to see flamenco that's not geared to tourists but some shows are more authentic than others and attract Spaniards as well as foreigners.

Centro de Interpretación de Sacromonte (Map pp358-9; ☎ 958 21 51 20; www.sacromontegrana.com; Barranco de los Negros s/n; 🕒 10am-2pm & 5-9pm Tue-Fri, 10am-9pm Sat & Sun summer, 10am-2pm & 4-7pm Tue-Fri & 10am-7pm Sat & Sun winter) In summer the flamenco nights here are well worth catching. For more information on the centre, see the boxed text, p370.

El Eshavira (Map pp358-9; ☎ 958 29 08 29; www.eshavira.com; Postigo de la Cuna 2) Top local performers come to bash the guitar strings or floorboards in this boho hang-out in the Albayzín.

El Upsetter (Map p366; ☎ 958 22 72 96; Carrera del Darro 7; admission €10) Live flamenco on Saturday nights and a good chance to miss the tourists.

Los Tarantos (Map pp358-9; 🕒 day 958 22 45 25, night 958 22 24 92; Camino del Sacromonte 9; admission €21) Though it's geared towards tourists, the midnight shows on Friday and Saturday can still be promising and draw fewer foreigners. For these shows, you can prebook tickets through hotels and travel agencies. Wear your dancing shoes if you want to sit in the first few rows: you'll be pulled up on stage before you know it!

Peña de la Platería (Map pp358-9; ☎ 958 21 06 50; Placeta de Toqueiros 7) Buried deep in the Albayzín warren, Peña de la Platería is a genuine aficionados' club with a large outdoor patio. Catch a 9.30pm performance on Thursday or Saturday.

music is varied, so look out for posters or check their site, but count on lots of techno, a fair dose of hip-hop, and DJs from Ibiza, Madrid and Barcelona. Get a cab there and keep their number for the return journey.

Planta Baja (Map p366; www.plantabajanet.net; Calle Homo de Abad 11; admission €5; 🕒 12.30am-6am Tue-Sat) Planta Baja's popularity never seems to wane, and it's no wonder since it caters to such a diverse crowd and has top DJs like Vadim. There's old school, hip-hop, funk and electroglam downstairs, and lazy lounge sessions on the top floor.

Afrodisia (Map pp358-9; www.afrodisiaclub.com; Calle Almona del Boquerón; admission free; 🕒 11pm-late) If you dig Granada's ganja-driven scene, this is where you'll find a like-minded lot. Lots of groovin' and lovin' takes place on the dancefloor and DJs spin 'original black sounds' aka hip-hop, ska and reggae, funk and even jazz on Sundays.

Sugar Pop (Map pp358-9; Calle del Gran Capitan 25; admission €5; 🕒 11pm-late) This place has a good vibe and draws a young, studenty crowd that loves indie music and quality pop DJs.

El Cambario (Map pp358-9; ☎ 958 22 12 15; Camino del Sacromonte 47; admission €6; 🕒 from 11pm Sat & Sun) Mixing modern sounds with prehistoric surroundings, El Cambario has two dance floors with one at cave level.

Live Music

El Eshavira (Map pp358-9; ☎ 958 29 08 29; www.eshavira.com; Postigo de la Cuna 2; 🕒 from 10pm) Just off

Calle Azacayas, duck down the spooky alley, battle with the hefty door and adopt the *granadino* penchant for dark, smoky haunts that ooze cool jazz and sultry flamenco.

El Upsetter (Map p366; ☎ 958 22 72 96; Carrera del Darro 7; admission for flamenco show €10; 🕒 11pm-late) For a decent Saturday-night flamenco show head to El Upsetter, which doubles as a dreadlock-swinging reggae bar for the rest of the week.

Tetería del Hammam (Map p366; ☎ 958 22 99 78; www.hammamspain.com/granada in Spanish; Calle Santa Ana 16; 🕒 8pm-late) If heel-banging is not your thing and you prefer midriff movement, there's belly dancing here on Thursday nights.

Concerts & Theatre

Centro Cultural Manuel de Falla (Map p361; ☎ 958 22 00 22; Paseo de los Mártires s/n) A haven for lovers of classical music, this venue right near the Alhambra presents weekly orchestral concerts.

The **Teatro Alhambra** (Map pp358-9; ☎ 958 22 04 47; Calle de Molinos 56) and the more central **Teatro Isabel La Católica** (Map p366; ☎ 958 22 15 14; Acera del Casino) both have ongoing programmes of theatre and concerts (and sometimes flamenco).

SHOPPING

Excellent, classic pots with their distinctive *granadino* blue-and-white glazing can be bought at **Cerámica Fabre** (Map p366; Calle Pescadería s/n). A distinctive local craft is *taracea*

(marquetry), used on boxes, tables, chess sets and more – the best have shell, silver or mother-of-pearl inlays. Marquetry experts can be seen at work in **Laguna Taller de Taracea** (Map p361), opposite the Iglesia de Santa María in the Alhambra. Places to look out for Granada handicrafts include the Alcaicería, the Albayzín and Cuesta de Gomérez. Also try the government-run Artesanía in the Corral del Carbón (p366). The Plaza Nueva area is awash with jewellery vendors, selling from rugs laid out on the footpath, and ethnic-clothes shops.

Get a handmade guitar for those flamenco classes from **Manuel L Bellido** (Map p366; Calle Molinos) or just see the *guitarrero* (guitar maker) at work.

For general shopping, trendy clothes and ever-delightful Spanish shoes, try pedestrianised Calle de los Mesones, or **El Corte Inglés** (Map p366; Acera del Darro).

GETTING THERE & AWAY

Air

Iberia (Map p366; ☎ 958 22 75 92; Plaza Isabel La Católica 2) has flights daily to/from Madrid and Barcelona.

From the UK, two low-cost, web-based airlines fly to Granada daily: **Ryanair** (www.ryanair.com) and **Monarch Airlines** (www.flymonarch.com).

Bus

Granada's **bus station** (Map pp358-9; Carretera de Jaén) is almost 3km northwest of the city

centre. All services operate from here except for a few to nearby destinations such as Fuente Vaqueros. **Alsina Graells** (☎ 958 18 54 80) runs buses to the following destinations:

Destination	Cost	Duration	Daily Frequency
Baza	€8	2hr	up to 8
Córdoba	€12	3hr	9
Guadix	€4.50	1hr	up to 14
Málaga	€9	1½hr	16
Mojácar	€15	4hr	2
Seville	€18	3hr	10

Alsina also handles buses heading to Las Alpujarras (p387), as well as destinations in Jaén province and on the Granada, Málaga and Almería coasts, and to Madrid (€15, five to six hours, 10 to 13 daily).

Alsa (☎ 902 42 22 42; www.alsa.es) runs buses up the Mediterranean coast as far as Barcelona (€60 to €70, seven to 10 hours, five daily). It also runs buses to many international destinations.

Car & Motorcycle

ATA Rent A Car (Map p366; ☎ 958 22 40 04; Plaza Cuchilleros 1) has small cars for one/two/seven days for €71/83/219.

Train

The **station** (Map pp358-9; ☎ 958 20 40 00; Avenida de Andaluces) is 1.5km west of the centre, off Avenida de la Constitución. Four trains

DRIVING IN GRANADA: IT WILL DRIVE YOU AROUND THE BEND

Granada's traffic system has been designed to give the uninitiated a nervous breakdown. Vehicle access to the Plaza Nueva area (and therefore to the narrow streets leading up from Plaza Nueva to the Alhambra and the Albayzín) is restricted by red lights and little black posts known as *pilonas*, which block certain streets during certain times of day. Residents and other authorised drivers slot cards into a box, causing the posts to slide down into the ground to let one car (only) pass. You'll see the warning sign '*Obstáculos en calzada a 20 metros*' and will have to detour. The only exception is if you are going to stay at one of the Plaza Nueva area hotels – in which case, press the button by your hotel's name beside the *pilonas* to speak with your hotel's reception, which will be able to lower the *pilonas* for you.

It's a good idea to ask advice beforehand from your hotel about parking. Some hotels have their own parking facilities for which they might charge you anything from €7.50 per day. Alternatively, there are underground car parks such as **Parking San Agustín** (Map p366; Calle San Agustín; per hr/day €1/16), just off Gran Vía de Colón, and **Parking Plaza Puerta Real** (Map p366; Acera del Darro; per hr/day €1/12), as well as the Alhambra car parks (see p362). Free parking can be found in the little streets across the river, on the eastern side of town, but you'll have to search, remember where you parked, and walk back.

run daily to/from Seville (€20, three hours) and Almería (€13, 2¼ hours) via Guadix. Three go to Ronda (€11, three hours) and Algeciras (€17, four to 4½ hours). For Málaga (€12, 2½ hours) or Córdoba (€14, four hours) take an Algeciras train and change at Bobadilla (€7, 1½ hours). Five trains go to Linares-Baeza daily (€10 to €19, three hours), and one or two each to Madrid (€31 to €35, six hours), Valencia (€42 to €62, 7½ to eight hours) and Barcelona (€52 to €125, 12 to 14½ hours).

GETTING AROUND To/From the Airport

The **airport** (Map pp358-9; ☎ 902 40 05 00) is 17km west of the city on the A92. At least five daily buses (€3), operated by **Autocares J González** (☎ 958 49 01 64), run between the airport and a stop near the Palacio de Congresos, stopping in the centre on Gran Vía de Colón, where a schedule is posted at the outbound stop, opposite the cathedral (see the Central Granada map, p366). A taxi costs around €18 to €20.

Bus

City buses cost €0.90. Tourist offices give out a leaflet showing routes. The Bono Turístico voucher (see p360) includes nine bus rides.

Bus 3 runs between the bus station and Gran Vía de Colón in the centre. To reach the centre from the train station, walk straight ahead to Avenida de la Constitución and pick up buses 4, 6, 7, 9 or 11 going to the right (east). From the centre (Gran Vía de Colón) to the train station, take No 3, 4, 6, 9 or 11.

Taxi

Taxis line up on Plaza Nueva. Most fares within the city cost between €4.50 and €7.50. To call a taxi, ring **Teleradio taxi** (☎ 958 28 06 54).

AROUND GRANADA

Granada is surrounded by a fertile plain known as La Vega, planted with poplar groves and crops ranging from potatoes and corn to melons and tobacco. La Vega has always been vital to the city and was an inspiration to the writer Federico García

Lorca, who was born and died here. The **Parque Federico García Lorca**, a memorial park between the villages of Viznar and Alfacar (about 2.5km from each), marks the site where Lorca and hundreds – possibly thousands – of others are believed to have been shot and buried by the Nationalists at the start of the civil war.

FUENTE VAQUEROS

The house where Lorca was born in 1898, in Fuente Vaqueros village, 17km west of Granada, is now the **Museo Casa Natal Federico García Lorca** (☎ 958 51 64 53; www.museogarcia lorca.org; Calle Poeta Federico García Lorca 4; admission €1.80; ☎ guided visits hourly 10am-1pm & 5-7pm Tue-Sun Apr-Jun, 10am-2pm & 6-8pm Tue-Sun Jul-Sep, 10am-1pm & 4-6pm Tue-Sun Oct-Mar). The place brings his spirit alive, with numerous charming photos, posters and costumes for plays that he wrote and directed, and paintings illustrating his poems. A short video captures him in action with the touring Teatro Barraca.

Buses to Fuente Vaqueros (€1.50, 20 minutes) by **Ureña** (☎ 958 45 41 54) leave from Avenida de Andaluces in front of Granada train station. Departures from Granada at the time of writing were at 9am and 11am, then hourly from 1pm to 8pm except 4pm, Monday to Friday, and at 9am, 11am, 1pm and 5pm on Saturday, Sunday and holidays.

EAST OF GRANADA

The A92 northeast of Granada crosses the forested, hilly Parque Natural Sierra de Huétor before entering an increasingly arid landscape. Outside Guadix the A92 veers southeast towards Almería, crossing the Marquesado de Zenete district below the northern flank of the Sierra Nevada, while the A92N heads northeast across the Altiplano, Granada's 'High Plain', which breaks out into mountains here and there and affords superb long-distance views on the way to northern Almería province.

GUADIX

pop 20,135 / elevation 915m

Guadix (gwah-deeks), 55km from Granada, is a place mainly famous for the fact that it has the biggest concentration of cave dwellings in eastern Granada – not prehistoric

remnants but the homes of about 3000 present-day townfolk. It's a great place to stay the night (in a cave) and try out the town's excellent, tourist-free tapas bars.

Information

There's a **tourist office** (☎ 958 66 26 65; Carretera de Granada s/n; ☎ 9am-3pm Mon, 9am-4pm Tue-Fri, 10am-2pm Sat) on the Granada road leaving the town centre and an **information office** (☎ 670 20 83 53; ☎ 9am-3pm Mon, 9am-4pm Tue-Fri, 10am-2pm Sat) by the cathedral, where multilingual German-born Tania provides general information and takes you around on walking tours (€10 per person).

Sights

At the centre of Guadix is a fine sandstone **cathedral** (Calle Santa María del Buen Aire; admission €2; ☎ 10.30am-1pm & 2-7pm Mon-Sat, 9.30am-1pm Sun), built between the 16th and 18th centuries on the site of the town's former main mosque in a mix of Gothic, Renaissance and baroque styles. Nearby, **Plaza de las Palomas** is beautiful when floodlit at night.

A short distance south you'll find the 10th- and 11th-century Islamic castle, the

Alcazaba (Calle Barradas 3; admission €1.20; ☎ 11am-2pm & 4-6.30pm Tue-Sat, 10am-2pm Sun), which gives views over the main cave quarter, the Barriada de las Cuevas, some 700m south.

The typical 21st-century cave has a white-washed wall across the entrance, a chimney and TV aerial protruding from the top, and all mod cons inside. Some have many rooms. The caves maintain a comfortable temperature of around 18°C year-round. The **Cueva Museo Municipal** (☎ 958 66 08 08; Plaza de Padre Poveda; admission €1.50; ☎ 10am-2pm & 4-6pm Mon-Sat, 10am-2pm Sun & holidays), in the Barriada de las Cuevas, recreates typical cave life.

Sleeping & Eating

Cuevas Pedro Antonio de Alarcón (☎ 958 66 49 86; www.cuevaspedroantonio.com; Barriada San Torcuato; s/d/q €40/61/104; ☎ ☎) The genuine Guadix experience (ie sleeping in a cave) is best at this comfy, modern cave-apartment-hotel with a pool and restaurant, 3km from the town centre, along the Murcia road heading towards the A92 (look for 'Alojamiento en Cuevas' signs).

Hotel Comercio (☎ 958 66 05 00; www.hotelcomercio.com; Calle Mira de Amezcua 3; s €48.15, d €55-64; ☎ ☎)

DETOUR: ORCE

The dusty Altiplano village of Orce styles itself as the 'Cradle of European Humankind'. A fossilised bone fragment possibly between one and two million years old, found in 1982 at nearby Venta Micena, may be part of the skull of an infant *Homo erectus*, an ancestor of *Homo sapiens*. If so, the bit of bone would be the oldest-known human remnant in Europe. The many sceptics, however, say the 'Hombre de Orce' (Orce Man) fragment more likely came from a horse or deer and could be less than a million years old. Even so, Orce can still claim Spain's oldest evidence of human presence in the form of stone tools that are 1.3 million years old.

For most of the last four million years, much of the Hoya de Baza, the now arid basin in which the Baza-Orce area lies, was a lake. Wildlife drinking at the edge of the lake was vulnerable to attack by larger animals, and the relics of such encounters, between one and two million years ago, have been found at Venta Micena and nearby sites. The uncovered fossilised bones include dozens of species, including the mammoth, rhinoceros, sabre-tooth tiger, hippopotamus, giant hyena, wolf, bear, elephant and buffalo.

A good selection of the finds – including enormous mammoths' teeth and a replica of the 'Hombre de Orce' fragment (the original is under lock and key in Orce town hall – are on show in Orce's interesting **Museo de Prehistoria y Paleontología** (☎ 958 74 61 01; admission €1.50; ☎ 11am-2pm Tue-Sun year-round, 6-8pm Tue-Sun Jun-Sep, 4-6pm Tue-Sun Oct-May), in an Islamic castle just off the village's central square.

Orce makes an interesting detour if you are driving between Granada/Guadix/Baza and the Los Vélez area of northern Almería province. Eighteen kilometres east of Baza on the A92N, turn north along the A330 towards Huéscar. After 23km, turn east along the SE34 for Orce (6km away).

Continuing east from Orce it's a further 30km to María, the first Los Vélez village. As you cross the empty plains between Orce and María, it's quite a thrill to know that this landscape was once roamed by the likes of mammoths, sabre-tooth tigers and elephants.

If caves don't rock your boat, check into this long-standing central hotel with comfy rooms and a fine restaurant.

Churrería Serrano (Puerta del Parque; ☎ breakfast) For breakfast, get takeaway *churros con chocolate* (doughnuts and hot chocolate; €1 to €2) or sit inside and check out the characters who run this place.

La Bodeguita (Calle Doctor Pulido 4; drink & tapa €1) Guadix also has some remarkable tapas bars, but La Bodeguita is one of the best. Here, old men and families enjoy delicious tapas in simple surroundings and eat baked spuds, and raw *habas* (broad beans) when in season.

Bodega Calatrava (Calle La Tribuna s/n; drink & tapa €1.50, ración €5) The other top tapas spot in town, where you can have excellent tapas such as juicy fried prawns, or sit down and order some *raciones*.

Getting There & Away

Guadix is about one hour from Granada (bus €4.50, train €6) and 1½ hours from Almería (bus €7.50, train €6 to €14); there are at least nine buses and four trains daily in each direction. At least two daily buses head to Baza (€4, one hour) and Mojácar (€11, three hours). The **bus station** (☎ 958 06 06 57; Calle Concepción Arenal) is off Avenida Medina Olmos, about 700m southeast of the centre. The train station is off the Murcia road, about 2km northeast of the town centre.

MARQUESADO DE ZENETE

This bleak, flat area between Guadix and the Sierra Nevada was a prosperous agricultural district in Islamic times, awarded to Cardinal de Mendoza, chief adviser to the Catholic Monarchs during the war against Granada in the Reconquista times. His illegitimate son Rodrigo de Mendoza became its first *marqués* (marquis).

The main town, Jerez del Marquesado, is a starting point for ventures into the high Sierra Nevada. Thirteen kilometres east of Jerez, the forbidding **Castillo de La Calahorra** (admission €3; ☎ 10am-1pm & 4-6pm Wed, other times by appointment with caretaker Antonio Trivaldo ☎ 958 67 70 98) looms above the village of La Calahorra. The castle was built between 1509 and 1512 by Rodrigo de Mendoza, whose tempestuous life included a spell in Italy unsuccessfully wooing Lucrezia Borgia. The

building's domed corner towers and blank walls enclose an amazingly elegant Italian Renaissance courtyard which has a staircase of Carrara marble. There are at least two *hostales* and one hotel to be found in La Calahorra village, from which the A337 heads south over the Puerto de la Ragua pass to Las Alpujarras.

BAZA

pop 21,000 / elevation 850m

The market town of Baza, 44km northeast of Guadix, dates back to Iberian times. Its attractive Plaza Mayor is dominated by the 16th-century **Iglesia Concatedral de la Encarnación**. Baza's **tourist office** (☎ 958 86 13 25; Plaza Mayor 2; ☎ 10am-2pm & 4-6.30pm except holidays) is in the same building as the town's good **Museo Municipal** (☎ 958 70 35 55; admission €1.20; ☎ 10am-2pm & 4-6.30pm except holidays), whose mainly archaeological collection includes a copy of the *Dama de Baza*, a person-sized Iberian goddess statue unearthed locally in 1971 (the original is housed in Madrid's Museo Arqueológico Nacional).

In town, about 500m south of Plaza Mayor, is the friendly **Hostal Anabel** (☎ 958 86 09 98; Calle María de Luna s/n; s/d €22/38; ☎), but the real treat is the mini-cave resort **Cuevas Al Jatib** (☎ 958 34 22 48; www.aljatib.com; Arroyo Cúrcal s/n; 2-person cave €75-95, 4/6-person cave €89/143; ☎ ☎) on the edge of town, with comfortable accommodation in five well-equipped caves, plus Arab baths, a tearoom, a restaurant, a play-cave for kids and a cave adapted for wheelchair users.

The **bus station** (☎ 958 70 21 03; Calle Reyes Católicos) is 200m north of Plaza Mayor. There are about 15 buses a day to/from Guadix (€3.50, one hour) and Granada (€8, two hours) in one direction and Vélez Rubio (€4.50, 1½ hours) in the other.

SIERRA NEVADA

The Sierra Nevada range, with mainland Spain's highest peak, Mulhacén (3479m), forms an almost year-round snowy backdrop to Granada. The range extends about 75km from west to east, crossing from Granada into Almería province.

All the highest peaks (3000m or more) are towards the range's western (Granada) end, and the Estación de Esquí Sierra Ne-

vada (Sierra Nevada Ski Station), Europe's most southerly and one of Spain's best, stands on its northern flank. In the warmer seasons the mountains and the valleys beneath them (especially Las Alpujarras, to the south) offer wonderful walking.

The best overall maps of the area are Editorial Alpina's *Sierra Nevada, La Alpujarra* (1:40,000) and Editorial Penibética's *Sierra Nevada* (1:50,000). Both come with booklets, in English or Spanish, describing walking, biking and skiing routes.

The ideal period for walking in the high mountains is early July to early September: only then is the high ground reliably snow-free and the weather relatively settled. Unfortunately this doesn't coincide with the most comfortable months down in the valleys (see p387). Late June/early July and the first half of September are the best compromise periods. The Sierra Nevada is a serious mountain range: temperatures on the summits average 14°C less than in the highest Alpujarras villages. You should come well equipped, and prepared for cloud, rain or strong, icy winds at *any* time.

Nearly all the upper reaches of the Sierra Nevada are included in the 862-sq-km Parque Nacional Sierra Nevada, the biggest of Spain's dozen national parks. This rare high-altitude environment is home to 2100 of Spain's 7000 plant species, among them unique types of crocus, narcissus, thistle, clover, poppy and gentian. Andalucía's largest ibex population (about 5000) is here, too – in summer, walkers may come across ibex anywhere above about 2800m.

Surrounding the national park at lower altitudes is the 848-sq-km Parque Natural

Sierra Nevada, with a lesser degree of protection.

ESTACIÓN DE ESQUÍ SIERRA NEVADA

The **ski station** (☎ 902 70 80 90; www.sierranevadaski.com in Spanish), at Pradollano, 33km from Granada on the A395, is an ugly modern construction and very crowded on weekends and holidays in the ski season (when it has a thumping nightlife), but the skiing and facilities are good enough to have hosted the World Alpine Skiing championships in 1996 and now a World Cup event every year. Snow conditions and weather are frequently better than in more northerly Spanish ski resorts.

Information

About 10km before the ski station is the **Centro de Visitantes El Dornajo** (☎ 958 34 06 25; ☎ 10am-2pm & 6-8pm Apr-Sep, 10am-2pm & 4-6pm Oct-Mar), with plenty of Sierra Nevada information, and maps for sale.

Activities

The ski season normally lasts from December to April or early May. *Forfaits* (lift passes; one day for €27 to €35) and accommodation cost the least in the 'promotional' periods at the beginning and end of the season, and cost the most around Christmas/New Year and other holiday periods, and on Saturday and Sunday from January to March.

The station has 85 marked downhill runs – five graded black (very difficult), 36 red (difficult), 35 blue (easy) and 10 green (very easy). The highest start almost at the top of 3395m Veleta, the second-highest peak

NOT JUST FOR SKIERS

The ski station is not just for skiers. You can ice-skate (€7.50 per hour, including skate rental), ride a dog-sled (€40 per person per half-hour), go snowshoeing (€34 per two hours) and even toboggan on giant inner tubes (€15 per half-hour). Remember that nonskiers need to wrap up just as warmly as skiers!

The Al-Andalus cable car has wheelchair access, and skiing equipment for the disabled is available near its upper station.

Outside the ski season the **Sierra Nevada Activa programme** (www.sierranevadaactiva.com) lays on a host of warmer-weather activities. Options include mountain biking to Trevélez (one day €78) or the coast (two days €170); a four-day trek to several of the range's 3000m-plus peaks (€346); a day's horse ride to the Cañada de Siete Lagunas (€80); and canyoning on the Río Verde above Almuñécar (€75 per day). In winter it offers cross-country skiing expeditions and guided ascents of the high peaks.

them. From the Posiciones del Veleta it's about 4km to the top of Veleta, an ascent of about 370m with 1½ hours' walking (plus stops); or 14km to the top of Mulhacén, with four to five hours' walking; or about 15km (five or six hours) all the way over to Mirador de Trevélez (avoiding the summits). From the Mirador de Trevélez it's around three hours to the top of Mulhacén (6km, 800m ascent), or you could reach the **Cañada de Siete Lagunas**, a lake-dotted basin below the eastern side of Mulhacén, in 1½ to two hours.

If you want to make more than a day trip of it, there are four high-mountain refuges where you can spend the night.

The **Refugio Poqueira** (☎ 958 3433 49; per person €9; ⚔ year-round) is a modern 87-bunk refuge with a restaurant (breakfast €3.50, dinner €10) and hot showers, towards the top of the Poqueira Valley at 2500m. Phone ahead, if possible. You can get here by walking 4km from the Mirador de Trevélez (about one hour), or following the Río Mulhacén for 2.3km down from the road beneath the western side of Mulhacén, then veering 750m southeast along a path to the refuge.

Sleeping in the three *refugios vivac* (simple stone or brick shelters with boards for around 12 people to sleep on) is free, and they are always open, but reservations are not possible. Refugio Vivac La Caldera is below the western flank of Mulhacén, a 1½-hour walk up from Refugio Poqueira; Refugio Pillavientos is about a 20-minute walk southwest along the road from Refugio La Caldera; Refugio Vivac La Carigüela is at the 3200m Collado del Veleta pass below the summit of Veleta.

Overnight camping in the mountains is permitted, but only above 1600m, at least 50m from high-mountain lakes and at least 500m from staffed refuges and vehicle tracks. You must give prior notification by email, fax or letter to the park authorities: check the latest regulations at a park information office.

You can also reach the refuges and high altitudes under your own steam, without using the shuttle service. From Capileira, path No 3 with yellow marker posts (see the boxed text, p389) makes its way up the Poqueira Valley to Cortijo Las Tomas, from which it is about 45 minutes further up to the Refugio Poqueira – about five hours'

walking from Capileira in all. A good route from Trevélez is to head northwestward up to the Cañada de Siete Lagunas, from which you can ascend Mulhacén via the rocky Cuesta del Resuello ridge – around seven hours' walking from Trevélez.

MONACHIL

pop 6000 / elevation 810m

Climbers swamp this attractive village in the foothills just 6km southeast of Granada for the spectacular gorge, **Los Cahorros**, just to its east. There are 300 sport and classical routes here, though Los Cahorros is also good for short walks, with a nearby suspension bridge and waterfalls. Monachil is also the home of British-run **Ride Sierra Nevada** (☎ 958 50 16 20; www.ridesierranevada.com), a recommended mountain-bike tour firm. It offers guided biking holidays with self-catering accommodation from UK£110 (long weekend) or from UK£175 (one week). Prices include airport transfers.

Buses to Monachil (€0.80, 15 minutes) run 20 times a day (10 on Saturday, four on Sunday) from Paseo del Salón in Granada.

LAS ALPUJARRAS

Las Alpujarras or La Alpujarra, a 70km-long jumble of valleys along the southern flank of the Sierra Nevada, is a beautiful, diverse and, dare we say it, slightly strange place. Heavenly in its landscape of arid slopes, deep crags and egg-white villages that look as if they were spilled by accident onto the mountain side, the towns on the mountain's lower belts simmer with New Age hippies hoping to get spiritual in front of confused locals. Menus in English and tons of traditional rugs and jugs on display mean that the term 'unspoilt' is not entirely appropriate here. A recent upsurge in tourism and foreign (mainly British) settlers has given the area a new dimension.

Still, there are villages in Las Alpujarras where tourists rarely set foot, and you'll know those places by the narrow car-unfriendly roads and incredible silence. The villages were built in Berber-style during the area's flourishing Islamic past. Winding lanes of flat-roofed, two-storey houses (the lower storey is still often used for storage and animals), and the terraced and irrigated

SILKWORMS & ROUGH TIMES

Berber migrants introduced silkworms (the mulberry leaf-eating caterpillars of the silk moth) to Las Alpujarras in Muslim times. Thread spun from the silkworms' unravelled cocoons was the raw material of the thriving silk workshops of 10th- and 11th-century Almería and, later, Nasrid Granada. Together with irrigation-based agriculture, the production of silk thread supported a population of probably over 150,000 in at least 400 villages and hamlets in Las Alpujarras by the late 15th century.

On his surrender to the Catholic Monarchs in 1492, the last emir, Boabdil, settled at Laujar de Andarax in the eastern Alpujarras (Almería province), but left for Africa the next year, leaving behind an oppressed and dissatisfied Muslim population in the mountain villages. Muslim riots in 1500 and continuing unrest between the Muslim population and the Christian rulers, plus a new repressive decree by Felipe II in 1567 that forbade the use of Arabic names and dress and even the Arabic language, produced another revolt in 1568. The revolt was led by an Alpujarras Morisco (Muslim convert to Christianity) named Aben Humeia. Two years of vicious guerrilla war in Las Alpujarras ended only after Don Juan of Austria, Felipe's half-brother, was brought in to quash the insurrection and Aben Humeia was assassinated by his cousin Aben Aboo.

Almost the whole Alpujarras population was then deported to Castile and western Andalucía, and some 270 villages and hamlets were re-peopled with settlers from northern Spain. The other villages were abandoned. Over the following centuries, the silk industry fell by the wayside and swaths of Las Alpujarras' woodlands were lost to mining and cereal growing.

hillsides offer a unique look into this once-remote area's way of life.

It's a delightful area to explore on foot and is the starting point for some of the best routes up into the Sierra Nevada.

The main road into the Alpujarras from the west is the A44 (C333 on some signs), which leaves the N44 34km south of Granada. The GR-421 turns north off the A348 just west of Órgiva to wind along the northern slopes of the Alpujarras, rejoining the A348 a few kilometres north of Cádiar.

Many Alpujarras villages are within the Parque Natural Sierra Nevada but none are within the Parque Nacional Sierra Nevada.

Walking

The best times for walking in Las Alpujarras are April to mid-June, and mid-September to early November, when the temperatures are just right and the vegetation at its most colourful.

An infinite number of good walks connect valley villages or head up into the Sierra Nevada. *Holiday Walks in the Alpujarras* by Jeremy Rabjohns is a useful English-language guide available locally, as is the **Discovery Walking Guides** (www.walking.demon.co.uk) guide to Las Alpujarras. Two long-distance footpaths traverse Las Alpujarras. One is the GR-7, which crosses Europe from Greece to Tarifa (Cádiz province): you could follow it

through the Granada Alpujarras from Laroles to Lanjarón in one week. The 144km GR-142 runs east from Lanjarón along the length of Las Alpujarras, then curves northwest to Fiñana on the northern flank of the Sierra Nevada in Almería province. See p382 for information on maps.

Sleeping & Eating

It's worth booking ahead for rooms in Las Alpujarras during Semana Santa and from July to September. Many villages have apartments and houses for short-term rental; ask in information offices or check websites such as **Turgranada** (www.turgranada.com).

Most Alpujarras food is what good Spanish food is all about: beans, lentils and grains, combined with good meat and local trout. Trevélez is famed for its *jamón serrano*, which some say is the best in Spain. A *plato alpujarreño* consists of fried potatoes, fried eggs, sausage, ham and maybe a black pudding (sound like an English breakfast to you?), and usually costs around €6.

'Alpujarras' or 'Costa' wine comes from the Sierra de la Contraviesa, on the south flank of Las Alpujarras, and tends to be strong and fairly raw.

Getting There & Away

Buses to the Alpujarras are run by **Alsina Graells** (☎ Granada 958 18 54 80, Órgiva 958 78 50 02,

Málaga 95 234 17 38, Almería 950 23 51 68). From Granada, buses leave three times daily for the following destinations:

Destination	Cost	Duration	Daily Frequency
Bérchules	€7.50	3¼hr	3
Bubión	€5.50	2¼hr	3
Cádiar	€7	3hr	2
Capileira	€5.50	2½hr	3
Pampaneira	€5	2hr	3
Pitres	€5.50	2¾hr	3
Órgiva	€4	1½hr	3
Trevélez	€6.50	3¼hr	3
Válor	€8	3¾hr	2
Yegen	€8	3½hr	2

Return buses start from Bérchules at 5am and 5pm and from Pitres at 3.30pm. There is a Málaga–Órgiva bus (€9, 3¼ hours, once daily except Sunday), and a daily Almería–Bérchules service (€8, 3¼ hours).

ÓRGIVA

pop 5370 / elevation 725m

The main town of the western Alpujarras, Órgiva is a scruffy but bustling place. The Thursday morning market in Barrio Alto, the upper part of town, is a funny mix of locals and the New Age hippies that form the town's international populace, who gather to buy and sell everything from vegetables and cheese to bead necklaces.

The landmark 16th-century twin-towered **Iglesia de Nuestra Señora de la Expectación** (Plaza García Moreno) stands beside Órgiva's central traffic lights. The **Alsina Graells bus stop** (Avenida González Robles 67) is about 300m down the street from here. You'll find banks and ATMs on and around Plaza García Moreno.

Sleeping & Eating

Camping Órgiva (☎ 958 78 43 07; www.descubre.laalpujarras.com; A348 Km 18.9; camping per adult/tent/car €4.50/5/3.60, cabins/bungalows €35/55; 📍) This smallish camping ground, 2km south of the centre on the A348 towards the Río Guadalfeo, has a nice pool area and a reasonably priced restaurant, and some nice still-standing cabins.

Hotel & Hostal Mirasol (☎ 958 78 51 08/59; Avenida González Robles 5 & 3; s/d hostal €17/28, hotel €35/45; 📍) Near the bridge over the Río Chico on the western side of town, the Mirasol provides plain but adequately comfortable

rooms with tiled floors and all-white walls. Those in the hotel section are larger and newer and have TV.

Hotel Taray (☎ 958 78 45 25; www.turgranada.com/hotelataray; A348 Km 18.5; r from €73; 📍 📍 📍) A rural idyll with a wild garden, massive pool, two good restaurants and white-washed walls. The rooms are in pleasant pastels, with traditional bedspreads. The hotel sits about 1.5km south of the centre on the A348 running down towards the Río Guadalfeo.

Café Baraka (Calle Estación 12A; snacks & light meals €2-3) The spicy aromas tell you this pleasantly spacious café has been touched by the New Age generation. There are herbal teas, milk shakes and *shwarmas*, or a variety of sandwiches. You'll find it beside the municipal car park in the upper part of town.

Mesón Casa Santiago (Plaza García Moreno; mains €6-12) Good for grilled meats at indoor or outdoor tables, right in the heart of town.

PAMPANEIRA, BUBIÓN & CAPILEIRA

When seen from a distance, these three almost Portuguese-sounding villages look like splatters of white paint, Jackson Pollock-style, against the grey arid land that surrounds them. Pampaneira (1050m), Bubión (1300m) and Capileira (1440m) are the Alpujarras' most beautiful and touristy villages, clinging to the side of the deep Baranco de Poqueira ravine, 14km to 20km northeast of Órgiva, with good restaurants and decent hotels. Capileira, the highest of the three, is the best base for walks.

Information

You'll find ATMs just outside the car park entrance in Pampaneira, and in Capileira at **La General** (Calle Doctor Castilla) bank.

Punto de Información Parque Nacional de Sierra Nevada (☎ 958 76 31 27; Plaza de la Libertad, Pampaneira; 🕒 10am-3pm Sun & Mon year-round, 10am-2pm & 5-7pm Tue-Sat, afternoon hours 4-6pm about mid-Oct–Easter) Plenty of information about Las Alpujarras and Sierra Nevada; maps and books for sale.

Servicio de Interpretación de Altos Cumbres (☎ 958 76 34 86, 686-414576; 🕒 about 9am-2pm & 4.30-7.30pm) By the main road in Capileira: information mainly about the national park, but also on Las Alpujarras.

Sights

All three villages – like many others in Las Alpujarras – have solid 16th-century **Mude-**

WALK LIKE AN ALPUJARRAN

Eight trails ranging from 4km to 23km (two to eight hours) are marked by colour-coded posts in the beautiful **Baranco de Poqueira**. Although their starting points can be a little hard to find, they are marked and described on the recommended Editorial Alpina map (see p382). Most routes start from Capileira.

Path No 2, a 4km circuit down into the valley and back up again, starts at the end of Calle Cerezo in Capileira. Path No 4 (8km, 3½ hours) takes you from Capileira up to the hamlet of La Cebadilla, then down the western side of the valley and back up to Capileira. To find its start, walk down Calle Cubo from Plaza Calvario at the northern end of Capileira, turn right where the street takes its second turn to the left, and follow the street out into the countryside. Fork up to the right 125m after the last village building on your right. Path No 3 continues up the valley from La Cebadilla to Cortijo Las Tomas (from which it's a steep half-hour walk up to Refugio Poqueira) then returns to Capileira following a path high on the eastern side of the valley (the full round-trip from Capileira is 19km, about eight hours).

Nevadensis (☎ 958 76 31 27; www.nevadensis.com), at the information office in Pampaneira, offers hikes and treks with knowledgeable guides, including a combined 4WD and foot ascent of Mulhacén for €35 per person.

jar churches (mass times are posted on the doors). They also have small **weaving workshops** that you can peek at: an interesting little one in Bubión is the French-owned **Taller del Telar** (Calle Santísima Trinidad; 🕒 11am-2.30pm & 5-8.30pm), with ancient looms from Granada. Also in Bubión, don't miss the **Casa Alpujarreña** (Calle Real; admission €1.80; 🕒 11am-2pm Sun-Thu, 11am-2pm & 5-7pm Fri, Sat & holidays), beside the church. This is an excellent little folk museum in a village house that was left untouched from the 1950s until its recent adaptation – a marvellous glimpse of bygone Alpujarras life!

Activities

Nevadensis (see the boxed text, above) is a highly experienced local firm offering a host of guided activities in the area, including mountain biking, climbing, canyoning, horse riding and even snowshoeing. Horse-riders recommend rides with **Rafael Belmonte** (☎ 958 76 31 35; www.ridingandalucia.com) and **Dallas Love** (☎ 958 76 30 38; dallaslove@ararakis.es); both are Bubión-based, speak English and offer trail rides lasting anywhere up to a week. **Horizonte Vertical** (☎/fax 958 76 34 08; www.granadainfo.com/hv; Calle Nivel 6, Bubión) will take you paragliding over some of this thrilling topography.

Sleeping & Eating

For self-catering accommodation try **Rustic Blue** (Barrio la Ermita, Bubión; ☎ 958 76 33 81; www.rusticblue.com), an agency that rents out cottages, farm-houses and village houses in the region.

PAMPANEIRA

Hostal Ruta del Mulhacén (☎ 958 76 30 10; www.rutadelmulhacen.com; Avenida Alpujarra 6; s €25-35, d €30-45) Most of the cosy rooms at this *hostal* at the entrance to the village have balconies, and a few have their own terraces with views down the valley.

Hostal Pampaneira (☎ 958 76 30 02; Avenida Alpujarra 1; s/d €26/36) Opposite Hostal Ruta del Mulhacén, this place has a friendly local owner and clean, good-sized rooms. Its Restaurante Alfonso is one of the village's best-value eateries (trout €5.50, menú €9).

Restaurante Casa Diego (☎ 958 76 30 15; Plaza de la Libertad 3; mains €5-9) Good trout with ham, or local ham and eggs are great for lunch or dinner on the upstairs terrace.

BUBIÓN

Hostal Las Terrazas (☎ 958 76 30 34; www.terrazas.alpujarra.com; Plaza del Sol 7; s/d €22/29, 2-4-/6-person apt €48/59/77) Rustic rooms, caramel bathrooms and excellent views of the valley from the terraces (hence the name) on each floor. The wood-reception area is decorated with farming tools and little plants. Signposted off the main road.

Teide Restaurant (☎ 958 76 30 84; Carretera de Sierra Nevada; menú €8) A good, traditional, local people's restaurant by the road, with a *menú del día* that includes generous portions of lentils for starters, meat in a tomato sauce, plus salad and coffee, while local characters flood in and out for some *jamón* and wine.

CAPILEIRA

Campileira (☎ 958 76 34 19; Carretera de Sierra Nevada; camping per person/site €3.50/6.50, dm €12, d €27; (P)) Some 500m up the Sierra Nevada road from the top of the village, Campileira provides clean dorms in a spacious stone building, hot showers, inexpensive meals (breakfast €2.15, dinner €8.55), camping on a grassy terrace and fabulous views.

Hostal Atalaya (☎ 958 76 30 25; www.hostalatalaya.com; Calle Perchel 3; s/d incl breakfast with view €22/36, without view €17/32) The Atalaya, just 100m down the road from Mesón Poqueira, is friendly and geared to travellers, with simple but pleasant rooms and plenty of information on offer.

Mesón Poqueira (☎ 958 76 30 48; Calle Doctor Castilla 11; s/d €18/24, 2-/4-/6-person apt €48/80/90) A good mountain-lodge hotel, just off the main road, with spacious, simple rooms and a friendly owner who'll give you any information you want, though in Spanish only. A good breakfast is included, and there's the option of a doggie bag breakfast if you're going walking.

Finca Los Llanos (☎ 958 76 30 71; www.hotelfinca.losllanos.com; Carretera de Sierra Nevada; s/d €45/72; (P) (🚰)) Recently refurbished, Los Llanos now has some pretty nifty suites and tasteful rooms with terracotta-tile floors and folksy textiles, and a library by the restaurant. It's at the top of the village, which means that the views from the pool are excellent.

Cortijo Catifalarga (☎ 958 34 33 57; www.catifalarga.com; Carretera de Sierra Nevada; s €58-69, d €73-90, apt from €73; (P)) This charmingly renovated old farmstead is the choicest base in the Poqueira Valley. The signposted 500m driveway begins 750m up the Sierra Nevada road from the top of Capileira. Chestnut beams, stone floors and Moroccan rugs decorate the spacious rooms, and some have their own terrace. You can dine indoors or out, and hear live music some nights. The views are fabulous and so is the food – a mix of Andalusian, Arabic, Catalan, vegetarian and more (mains €6 to €12).

Bar El Tilo (☎ 958 76 31 81; Plaza Calvario; raciones €4-6) The village tavern is on a lovely white-washed square with a terrace where you can have good-value *raciones* such as melon and ham or *patatas a lo pobre*, potatoes with peppers and garlic.

Restaurante Ibero-Fusión (☎ 958 76 32 56; Calle Parra 1; salads €5-9, mains €7-10; 🍷 7-10.45pm) This

long-established restaurant just below the church is a bizarre but brilliant find in the middle of the Alpujarras – a gastronomic fusion of Andalusian, Arabic and Indian, excellent for vegetarians. Think couscous, dhal and, ehm, Saharan turkey with dates and apples.

Shopping

All three villages have many craft shops selling, among many other things, colourful, inexpensive, homespun Alpujarras cotton rugs. In Capileira **J Brown** (☎ 958 76 30 92; Calle Doctor Castilla) sells quality handmade leather and suede clothing at good prices, including waistcoats from €50.

PITRES & LA TAHA

Pitres (1250m) is a true break from the tourists and souvenirs you'll find in the Poqueira gorge villages, although not as beautiful. But the five lovely villages in the valley just below Pitres – **Mecina**, **Mecinilla**, **Fondales**, **Ferreirola** and **Atalbéitar** – are a treat for those looking for quiet tradition. They are grouped together in a municipality called La Taha, the old Arabic name for the administrative units into which Las Alpujarras was divided. Ancient paths between these hamlets wend their way through lush woods and orchards, while the tinkle of running water provides the soundtrack. A few minutes' walk below Fondales is an old Islamic bridge over the deep gorge of the Río Trevélez, with a ruined Islamic mill beside it (ask for the *puente árabe*). For those of you with vehicles, narrow roads mean slow driving is recommended.

Sleeping & Eating

Balcón de Pitres (☎ 958 76 61 11; www.balcondepitres.com; Carretera GR-421 Km 51, Pitres; camping per adult/tent/car €5.50/5.50/5, cabins & cottages from €45; (P) (🚰)) Just above the main road on the western side of Pitres, this camping ground is shady and fairly spacious. It has a decent, inexpensive restaurant and some nice wooden cabins. You pay extra to use the pool.

Refugio Los Albergues (☎ 958 34 31 76; Pitres; dm €7-8; 🍷 closed mid-Dec–mid-Feb) Los Albergues is a small, simple walkers' hostel in a beautiful setting 200m (signposted) off the GR-421 main road on the eastern side of Pitres. It has an equipped kitchen, hot showers and interesting outdoor toilets. The friendly

THE AUTHOR'S CHOICE

Sierra y Mar (☎ 958 76 61 71; www.sierraymar.com; Calle Albaicín, Ferreirola; s/d incl breakfast €36/56) Hidden away along the sun-bleached alleys of the gorgeously quiet village of Ferreirola, this place is a true marvel. Bought and decorated over 20 years by the welcoming, multilingual Danish and Italian owners, the small houses and the garden just keep on getting more beautiful. It has a wild, grassy garden, white walls, sea-blue coffee tables and great views of the valley, plus stylish, earthy rooms with writing desks under the windows that frame the views delightfully. If you want to plan walks in the district, the hosts are super-knowledgeable. There is a preference (not a rule) for stays of more than one night.

German owner is full of information on the area's many good walks. There's one double room (€24/21 with/without heating).

L'Atelier (☎ 958 85 75 01; www.ivu.org/atelier; Calle Alberca 21, Mecina; s/d €29/42, incl breakfast €30/45) A little French-run vegetarian guesthouse in a centuries-old village house, L'Atelier serves gourmet meatless meals and has six cosy rooms and an art gallery next door. Vegetarian cookery courses happen here, too. The restaurant is open from 7pm to 11pm, Wednesday to Monday.

Hotel Albergue de Mecina (☎ 958 76 62 41; Calle La Fuente s/n, Mecina; r €65; (P) (🚰)) A tasteful 21-room hotel, modern and comfortable but with touches of traditional Alpujarras style.

TREVÉLEZ

pop 840 / elevation 1476m

Trevélez, set in a gash in the mountain-side almost as impressive as the Poqueira gorge, is famous for three reasons: it's a starting point for routes into the high Sierra Nevada; it produces some of Spain's best *jamón serrano*, with hams trucked in from far and wide for curing in the dry mountain air; and it claims to be the highest village in Spain. Other villages actually have better claims to the 'highest' title, but the Trevélez municipality is certainly the highest on the mainland, as it includes the summit of Mulhacén.

Along the main road you're confronted by a welter of ham and souvenir shops, but an exploration of the upper parts reveals a lively, typically Alpujarran village. La General bank, just above the main road, has an ATM.

Sleeping & Eating

Camping Trevélez (☎/fax 958 85 87 35; www.camping.trevez.net; Carretera Trevélez-Órgiva Km 1; camping

per adult/tent/car €4.50/5/3.50, 2-/4-person cabins from €19/39; (P) (🚰)) Eco-aware and among lots of trees, the camping ground slopes on a terraced hillside. There's a good-value restaurant that serves up tasty veg dishes (€2.50 to €4), as well as meat and fish dishes (€6 to €7.50).

Hotel La Fragua (☎ 958 85 86 26; Calle San Antonio 4; s/d €23/35) The rooms at La Fragua are pine-furnished and comfortable, but if a walking group decides to clatter forth at 6am, you stand little chance of sleeping through it. The hotel is towards the top of town, a 200m walk (signposted) from Plaza Barrio Medio. Its restaurant, Mesón La Fragua (mains €6 to €9), a few doors away, is one of the best in town, with items including partridge in walnut sauce, fig ice cream, excellent pork *solomillo* (sirloin) and some good vegetarian dishes.

Hotel Pepe Álvarez (☎ 958 85 85 03; Plaza Francisco Abellán s/n; s/d €23/41) Some rooms have a terrace overlooking the busy plaza, which spills out by the main road at the foot of the village.

Mesón Joaquín (☎ 958 85 89 04; GR-421; 3-course menú €7) This is one of Trevélez' better restaurants, but mind your head on the hanging hams! The Joaquín is on the western side of the village.

Restaurante González (☎ 958 85 85 31; Plaza Francisco Abellán s/n; mains €5-13) A good-value place by the main road at the foot of the village, this restaurant serves trout, *jamón*, *plato alpujarreño* and other local fare.

EAST OF TREVÉLEZ

Seven kilometres south of Trevélez the GR-421 road crosses the low Portichuelo de Cástaras pass and turns east into a harsher, barer landscape, yet still with oases of greenery around the villages. The central and eastern Alpujarras have their

own magic but see fewer tourists than the western villages.

Bérchules

pop 805 / elevation 1350m

This village 17km from Trevélez is set in a green valley that stretches a long way back into the hills. The area around here offers attractive walks.

La Posada (☎ 958 85 25 41; Plaza del Ayuntamiento 7; per person with private/shared bathroom €18/15) provides simple but comfortable lodgings – two sturdy old village houses adapted by villager Miguel, which are geared to walkers but open to all. Vegetarian breakfast and dinner are available.

By the main road at the bottom of Bérchules the **Hotel Los Bérchules** (☎ 958 85 25 30; www.hotelberchules.com; Carretera s/n; r €42-45; (P)) has good, clean, bright rooms (all with bathtub), helpful English-speaking hosts who can help you set up all manner of activities, the best restaurant in town (mains €6 to €11; try the local lamb with mint) and a cosy lounge area with a bookcase full of books on Spain.

Cádiar

pop 1600 / elevation 850m

Down by the Río Guadalfeo 8km south of Bérchules, Cádiar is one of the bigger Alpujarras villages. The **Alquería de Morayma** (☎ 958 34 32 21; www.alqueriamorayma.com; d €49-59, 4-person apt €84; (P) (☎)), 2km south of Cádiar just off the A348 towards Órgiva, is one of the most charming, and progressive, places to stay in Las Alpujarras – an old farmstead lovingly renovated and expanded by its *granadino* owners to provide 19 comfortable rooms and apartments, all unique. There's excellent, moderately priced food, a library of Alpujarras information, great views, fine walking available nearby and fascinating art and artefacts everywhere. The Alquería also hosts classes in tai chi, reiki, yoga and other disciplines.

Yegen

pop 400 / elevation 1100m

Yegen, where writer Gerald Brenan made his home in the 1920s, is about 12km east of Bérchules. Parts of the valley below Yegen have a particularly moonlike quality. **Brenan's house**, just off the village square, is marked by a plaque. Several **walking routes**

have been marked out locally, including a 2km 'Sendero de Gerald Brenan'.

El Rincón de Yegen (☎ 958 85 12 70; www.aldearural.com/rincondeyegen; s/d €25/36, 4-person apt €65; (P) (☎)) is a small hotel on the eastern edge of the village with old-fashioned furnishings and an excellent, medium-priced restaurant (mains €7 to €13). Succumb to the pears in Contraviesa wine and hot chocolate.

Válor

pop 735 / elevation 900m

Válor, 5km northeast of Yegen, was the birthplace of Aben Humeya, leader of the 1568 rebellion, and is the setting for the biggest of several annual Moros y Cristianos (Moors & Christians) festivities in Las Alpujarras that recreate the historical clash. On 14 and 15 September, colourfully costumed 'armies' battle it out noisily from midday to evening.

Mairena

pop 300 / elevation 1050m

The unspoiled village of Mairena, 6km from Válor, enjoys superb views from its elevated position. **Las Chimeneas** (☎ 958 76 03 52; www.alpujarra-tours.com; Calle Amargura 6; d incl breakfast €70; (P) (☎)) is something of an institution: a village house renovated in charming, uncluttered style by helpful young British owners who are also keen walkers. They offer guided walks, mountain biking, horse riding and painting excursions, serve good dinners (€15) using local organic produce, and can organise transport from Granada or Guadix.

East of Mairena you'll encounter the A337, which crosses the Sierra Nevada by the 2000m Puerto de la Ragua pass (occasionally snowbound in winter) to La Calahorra.

COSTA TROPICAL

The ambitiously named coast of Granada is in fact a true Mediterranean landscape with barren hills, aromatic herbs and wiry pomegranate trees, but the suggestion of tropical lushness comes thanks to the hot-climate crops such as custard apples, avocados and mangoes that are grown in the area. Although this stretch of the coast has not been nearly as exploited by devel-

opers as that of the neighbouring Malaga and Almería provinces, there are signs that things are heading that way as land runs out elsewhere.

The 80km coastline has spectacular views from the N340 as it winds up and down between scattered seaside towns and villages. East of Motril, the mountains often come right down to the sea, making for some of Andalucía's better scuba diving (especially around the towns of Calahonda and Castell de Ferro, although the settlements are drab and the beaches pebbly). West of Motril the terrain is less abrupt and there are three quite attractive beach towns.

SALOBREÑA

pop 11,750

Salobreña's huddle of white houses rises on a crag between the N340 and the sea. It's not a breathtaking town, though there is an impressive Islamic castle and below is a long, wide dark-sand beach. It's a low-key place for most of the year but jumps in August.

Orientation & Information

Avenida García Lorca, the easterly entrance into Salobreña from the N340, leads 200m straight to the helpful **tourist office** (☎ 958 61 03 14; Plaza de Goya; ☎ 9.30am-1.30pm & 4-7pm Tue-Sat). The Alsina Graells bus stop is diagonally across the street from the tourist office and the beach is 1km further on.

Sights & Activities

The **Castillo Árabe** (Arab Castle; admission incl Museo Histórico €3; ☎ 10.30am-1.30pm & 4-8pm), a 20-minute walk uphill from the tourist office, dates from the 12th century, though the site was fortified as early as the 10th century. The castle was used as a summer residence by the Granada emirs, but a dark legend has it that Emir Mohammed IX had his three daughters, Zaida, Zoraida and Zorahaida, held captive here. Washington Irving throws in his own angle on the story in *Tales of the Alhambra*. The inner Alcazaba, a setting for many cultural events, retains much of its Nasrid structure. You can walk along parts of the parapets. Just below the castle is the 16th-century Mudejar **Iglesia de Nuestra Señora del Rosario**, with an elegant tower and striking arched doorway. The **Museo Histórico** (Plaza del Ayuntamiento; admission incl Castillo Árabe €3;

☎ 10.30am-1.30pm & 4-8pm) is nearby, in the former *ayuntamiento*, below the church. The museum exhibits artefacts and documents on Salobreña's history, with archaeological findings going back around 6000 years.

The old Muslim town spills out below the castle, ending on one side in steep cliffs. There's a **mirador** on Paseo de las Flores, below the castle.

It is possible to drive to this upper part of town (follow the 'Casco Antigua' and 'Castillo Árabe' signs) but parking can be difficult. There's also an urban bus from the lower part of town up to the Iglesia de Nuestra Señora del Rosario a few times a day (except Sunday).

Salobreña's long **beach** is divided by a rocky outcrop, El Peñón. Playa de la Charca, the eastern part, is grey sand; the western Playa de la Guardia is more pebbly.

Sleeping

Pensión Mari Carmen (☎ 958 61 09 06; Calle Nueva 30; s/d €20/39, d with shared bathroom €24; ☎) The Mari Carmen has beautifully bright and clean pine-furnished rooms, some with their own terrace, and a communal terrace with great views. It is a 10-minute uphill walk from Plaza de Goya.

Hostal San Juan (☎ 958 61 17 29; www.hotel-san-juan.com; Calle Jardines 1; d €42; ☎) A lovely tiled and plant-dotted patio-lounge welcomes you as you enter this sparkly *hostal* on a quiet street about 400m from the tourist office. The rooms have wrought-iron bedsteads and dizzying red-and-white bathroom tiling, plus a large roof terrace.

Hotel Avenida (☎ 958 61 15 44; www.hotelavenida tropical.com; Avenida Mediterráneo 35; s €35-55, d €50-80; (P) (☎)) This is a family-oriented hotel and the best place to rest your head in town. It's equipped with 30 comfortable elegantly simple rooms with phone, satellite TV, bathtub and safe – plus its own restaurant, elegantly decked-out bar, Jacuzzi and sun terrace, you may never see the town. The hotel is between the town centre and beach.

Eating & Drinking

There are loads of restaurants, beachside *chiringuitos* (small open-air eateries) and bars, and a spot of nightlife, on and near the beachfront.

Restaurant El Peñón (☎ 958 61 05 38; Paseo Marítimo s/n; mains €6-12; ☎ closed Mon) Just by El

Peñón, the big rock dividing Salobreña's beach, this place has good medium-priced seafood and meat, best enjoyed as you sit outside, almost on top of the waves.

Restaurante Tropical (☎ 958 61 25 84; Paseo Marítimo; mains €7.50-15; ☹ closed Tue) This popular semi-open-air steakhouse has some bizarre sauces with the meat, like pineapple and curry. It's right on the corner when you hit the beachfront road coming from town.

Also recommended is **La Bodega** (☎ 958 82 87 39; Plaza de Goya; menú €8, meat & fish mains €10-20), by the tourist office, with outdoor tables and good service.

Getting There & Away

Alsina Graells (☎ 958 61 25 21) has at least six daily buses to Almuñécar (€1, 20 minutes), Granada (€5.50, one hour), Málaga (€7 1½ hours) and Nerja (€3, 40 minutes), plus four to Almería (€8, 1½ hours) and one (except Sunday) to Órgiva (€2.50, 30 minutes).

ALMUÑÉCAR

pop 24,700

Heading 15km west of Salobreña, Almuñécar is pretty uninviting, save for the attractive old section around its 16th-century castle. Popular with Spanish tourists and a growing community of northern Europeans, it's bright and not too expensive, although the beaches are mainly pebbly.

Orientation & Information

The N340 runs across the northern part of town, with the bus station just to its south. Plaza de la Constitución, the main square of the old part of town, is a few minutes' walk southwest of the bus station, with a maze of narrow streets dotted with galleries and interesting boutiques, spreading to its south and southeast.

The beachfront is divided by a rocky outcrop, the Peñón del Santo, with Playa de San Cristóbal – the best beach (grey sand and small pebbles) – stretching to its west, and Playa Puerta del Mar to the east.

There's a **tourist information kiosk** (☎ 958 63 11 25; Avenida Fenicia; ☹ 10am-2pm & 5-8pm, afternoon hours 4-7pm approx Oct-Apr) along the street from the bus station near the roundabout on the N340. The **main tourist office** (☎ 958 63 11 25; www.almunecar.info; Avenida Europa s/n; ☹ 10am-2pm & 5-8pm, afternoon hours 4-7pm approx Oct-Apr) is 1km southwest of the kiosk and the roundabout

in the Palacete de La Najarra, just back from Playa de San Cristóbal.

Sights & Activities

Just behind the Peñón del Santo is a 'sexy' tropical bird aviary, **Parque Ornitológico Loro-Sexi** (☎ 958 63 02 80; adult/child €2/1.50; ☹ 11am-2pm & 5-7pm, afternoon hours 4-6pm approx Oct-Apr). The **Castillo de San Miguel** (☎ 958 63 12 52; incl Museo Arqueológico €2/1.50; ☹ 10.30am-1.30pm & 5-7.30pm Tue-Sat approx Nov-Mar, 10.30am-1.30pm & 4-6.30pm Tue-Sat approx Oct-Apr, 10.30am-1.30pm Sun year-round) tops the hill, and was built by the conquering Christians over Islamic and Roman fortifications. The sweaty, circuitous climb up to the entrance rewards with excellent views and an informative little museum. The **Museo Arqueológico** (☎ 958 63 12 52; Calle Málaga; ☹ 10.30am-1.30pm & 5-7.30pm Tue-Sat approx Nov-Mar, 10.30am-1.30pm & 4-6.30pm Tue-Sat approx Oct-Apr, 10.30am-1.30pm Sun year-round) a few streets northeast, is set in 1st-century Roman underground galleries called the Cueva de Siete Palacios. It displays finds from local Phoenician, Roman and Islamic sites plus a rare 3500-year-old Egyptian amphora, probably brought by the Carthaginians. One hundred metres along Avenida de Europa from the main tourist office is **Parque Botánico El Majuelo** (admission free; ☹ 9am-10pm), where you'll find the **Factoría de Salazones de Pescado**, which is the remains of a Carthaginian and Roman fish-salting workshop. The park hosts Andalucía's only summer jazz festival, the international **Festival de Jazz en la Costa**, in early July.

You can paraglide, windsurf, dive, sail, ride a horse or bicycle, walk, or descend canyons in and around Almuñécar and nearby La Herradura. The tourist office's website and its leaflet *Sport Tourism* have information.

Sleeping

The town has a whopping 40 hotels, *hostales* and holiday apartments.

Hostal Altamar (☎ 958 63 03 46; Calle Alta del Mar 21; s/€16-25, d/€50) On a narrow street lined with internet cafés in the old part of the centre, the Altamar's rooms are plain brown and white, but comfy; there's a pleasant lounge-cafeteria where you can get breakfast.

Hotel California (☎ 958 88 10 38; www.hotelcaliforniaspain.com; Carretera N340 Km 313; s/d €33/48; P) Shame about the name but the Andalusian-Moroccan interior makes things better with

10 colourful rooms all with a private balcony, prettily tiled bathrooms and great views of the town and sea. The hotel is just off the N340 on the northwestern edge of Almuñécar, and the friendly young English and Belgian owners, one of them an experienced and enthusiastic paraglider, offer packages for paragliders combining accommodation, breakfast, car hire, guiding and retrieval for around €400 per person per week.

Hostal Plaza Damasco (☎/fax 958 63 01 65; Calle Cerrajeros 16; s/€20-30, d/€60) This is a spotlessly clean *hostal* in the older part of the town centre, prettily adorned with flowers and tiles. All 17 rooms have a bathtub.

Hotel Casablanca (☎ 958 63 55 75; www.almunecar.info/casablanca; Plaza San Cristóbal 4; s/d €45/64; P ☹) Islamic arches, bright rooms with carved wooden beds and wardrobes, beautiful lamps, balconies or picture windows – you can't get much better than this in Almuñécar. The tall, slimline hotel overlooks the Peñón del Santo and is almost opposite the monument to Abd ar-Rahman I on Playa de San Cristóbal.

Eating

La Trastienda (Plaza Kelibia; canapés €4-5) The wonderful smoked salmon, caviar and cheese canapés come with a delicious salad, or you might fancy some *tablas* (platters) of cold meats, cheeses and smoked fish for €6 to €10.

La Galería (☎ 958 63 41 18; Paseo Puerta del Mar 3; mains €13-18, lunch menú €15 & €25; ☹ closed Wed) A talented young Belgian chef has upped the eating standards in Almuñécar by serving up tasty duck, meat and fish dishes and inventive concoctions such as wild mushroom and foie-gras lasagne. Find it above Playa Puerta del Mar on the eastern side of town.

Restaurante Calabre (☎ 958 63 00 80; Playa de San Cristóbal; mains €9-15; ☹ closed Tue) A great place for seafood on the beach, at the eastern end of Playa de San Cristóbal. There's an open-air terrace facing the waves and a nice bright glassed-in area for cooler days. Beware of items priced by the kilogram!

For tapas, head to Plaza Kelibia, a pedestrianised plaza in the old town filled with tables from several bars.

Drinking & Entertainment

In summer Plaza Kelibia and the beach bars along Playa Puerta del Mar buzz all night.

Musical events, theatre, poetry readings and a cine club happen at the **Casa de la Cultura** (☎ 958 83 86 05; Calle Angustias Viejas).

Getting There & Away

From the **bus station** (☎ 958 63 01 40; Avenida Juan Carlos I), at least six buses a day go to Almería (€10, two hours), Granada (€7, 1½ hours), La Herradura (€0.90, 15 minutes), Málaga (€6, 1½ hours), Nerja (€2.30, 30 minutes), and Salobreña (€1, 20 minutes), and one (except on Sunday) to Órgiva (€4, 1¼ hours).

LA HERRADURA

pop 4300

The little resort town of La Herradura, 7km west of Almuñécar along the coast, is like the Tarifa of Costa Tropical with its endless appeal to water-sports enthusiasts, and paragliders who ride the thermals that rise around the hills backing its pretty, horse-shoe-shaped bay. It's also popular locally for good seafood restaurants. The sheltered town beach is packed in July and August, but a few kilometres to the west, down a 1km side road beyond the towering Cerro Gordo headland, is a popular 'clothing-optional' beach, Playa Cantarriján. On the far side of Punta de la Mona, which forms the eastern side of La Herradura's bay, is an attractive pleasure-boat harbour, Marina del Este.

Orientation & Information

The Alsina Graells bus stop is at the top of Calle Acera del Pilar, by the N340. This street heads south to the seafront Paseo Andrés Segovia (also called Paseo Marítimo), which runs along the bay. There's a **tourist information kiosk** (☹ 10am-2pm & 5-7pm Mon-Fri, 10am-2pm Sat) a few steps west of this junction along the Paseo: it's a branch of the Almuñécar tourist office, whose website, www.almunecar.info, also covers La Herradura.

Activities

For rentals, outings, classes and courses: **Buceo La Herradura** (☎ 958 82 70 83; www.buceola.herradura.com; Marina del Este) Diving.

Club Adventure (☎ 958 64 07 80; www.club-adventure.com; Calle Olmos 3) Paragliding, canyoning, mountain biking.

Club Nautique (☎ 958 82 75 14; www.clubnautique.com; Marina del Este) Diving, yachting.

Granada Sub (☎ 958 64 02 81; www.gradasub.com; Paseo Andrés Segovia 6) Diving.

DETOUR: CARRETERA DEL SUSPIRO DEL MORO

If you're OK with narrow, winding mountain roads then, for a truly spectacular alternative to the normal N323 up from the coast to Granada, take the Carretera del Suspiro del Moro from Almuñécar, with the option of stopping off for a good walk en route. With the N340 main road through Almuñécar, turn into town at the roundabout by the tourist information kiosk. Pass McDonald's on your left and follow the street around to the right, then take the first turn-off to the right – Calle Suspiro del Moro (you may notice a small 'Otívar' sign pointing in the direction you must go). The road passes under the N340 and heads northward out of Almuñécar up the Río Verde valley. You reach the village of Otívar after 13km. Make a note of your car's kilometre reading here.

From Otívar the road winds its way endlessly upwards with ever more breathtaking panoramas and ever higher, more jagged crags appearing above. In 13km from Otívar the road ascends 1000m before, relatively speaking, levelling off for the next 7km to its highest point.

Sixteen kilometres from Otívar, the signed 7.35km Sendero Río Verde walking trail starts on the western side of the road. This circular route of around 3½ hours descends nearly 400m into the deep valley of the Río Verde, with fine views and a good chance of sighting ibex as you go. At the highest point of the road, 3.5km later, another marked walk branches off to the Pico de Lopera (1485m), 2.5km west. Beyond here the landscape is generally gentler and after around 15km you start to get views of the often snowcapped Sierra Nevada to the east.

Turn left 35km from Otívar onto a road signed 'Suspiro del Moro' and in five minutes you emerge in front of the Suspiro del Moro restaurant, with Granada in view 12km to the north. You're at the Puerto del Suspiro del Moro, the 'Pass of the Moor's Sigh,' where, legend has it, the last Muslim emir of Granada, Boabdil, looked back and wept as he left the city for the final time in 1492. Follow the 'Granada' signs to continue to the city.

Windsurf La Herradura (☎ 958 64 01 43; www.windsurflaherradura.com; Paseo Andrés Segovia 34)
Windsurfing, kitesurfing, canoeing, kayaking.

Some of the best dive sites are around Punta de la Mona and Cerro Gordo at the bay's eastern and western ends respectively, and the Grutas de Cantarriján further west.

Sleeping

Hotel Sol Los Fenicios (☎ 958 82 79 00; www.trypnet.com; Paseo Andrés Segovia; s €69-128, d €95-174; (P) (♿) (♿))
The best hotel in town, towards the eastern end of the beach, with 42 rooms. Nearly all have a sea view and terrace or balcony, and are set around an interior patio. The restaurant and café-bar overlook the beach, too.

Also recommended:

Nuevo Camping La Herradura (☎ 958 64 06 34; Paseo Andrés Segovia; camping per 2 adults, tent & car €20) Fairly basic camping ground across the street from the western part of the beach.

Hostal Peña Parda (☎ 958 64 00 66; Paseo Andrés Segovia 65; d €48) At the western end of the beach, with a good restaurant.

Hostal La Caleta (☎ 958 82 70 07; Paseo Andrés Segovia s/n; d €60-72) Towards the eastern end of the beach, also with a good restaurant.

Eating

Most restaurants on Paseo Andrés Segovia serve good food at reasonable prices, although they mark up drinks.

El Chambao de Joaquín (☎ 958 64 00 44; Paseo Andrés Segovia; paella €6) Paella is dished out from a giant pan at 2.30pm every Saturday and Sunday in the beachside garden here at the far eastern end of the beach. You need to book for Sunday.

Chiringuito La Sardina (☎ 958 64 01 11; Paseo Andrés Segovia; mains €9-16) Situated right on the beach, La Sardina is a top place for seafood.

Mesón El Tinao (☎ 958 82 74 88; Edificio Bahía II, Paseo Andrés Segovia; mains €12-20; (♿) closed Mon) El Tinao prepares excellent Alpujarras food and unusual dishes such as duck with raspberries.

Getting There & Away

Plenty of Alsina Graells buses head east and west along the coast and a few go to Granada. Buses go to Almería (€9.50, 3½ hours, five daily), Almuñécar (€0.90, 15 minutes, 10 daily), Granada (€7, two hours, five daily), Málaga (€5, 1¾ hours, six daily) and Nerja (€1.60, 20 minutes, 10 daily). Catch them from the Alsina Graells bus stop at the top of Calle Acera del Pilar, by the N340.

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