

Granada Information



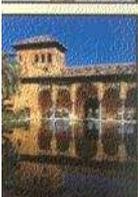
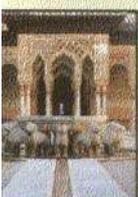
Some history

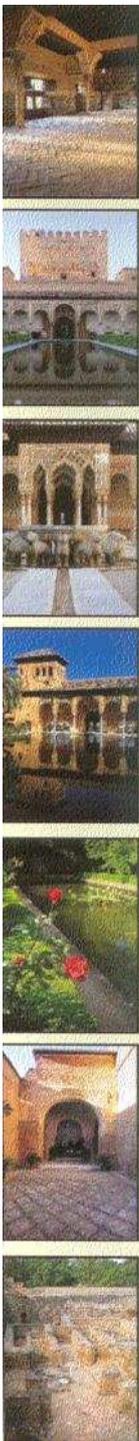
At the very beginning, the land of the city and province of Granada were inhabited by Iberian tribes, evidenced by the discovery of "the Lady of Baza", the finest example of Iberian art. Later the Phoenicians founded the colonies of "Salubinia" (Salobreña) and "Sexi" (Almuñécar) on the coast. There are not many traces of Greek culture, but the Romans certainly left their mark. Apparently, there was a settlement called Eliberris (Ilíberis - Ilbira - Elvira) here first, located in the Valley of the River Darro, on the hill where the Albaycin is today, which the entire region was named after. When Ilíberis was christianised by St. Cecilius in the 1st century, an Episcopal see was founded in it and the "Council of Elvira" was held there in the 4th century, the first one to take place on the peninsula. When the Muslims conquered the peninsula, there were three important population centres in the area: two Roman-Gothic ones, the above-mentioned "Ilíberis" and "Castilia", at the foot of Sierra Elvira, and a third Jewish one, "Garnatha Alyehud", at the foot of the Torres Bermejas (Red Towers), which was really the poor quarter of Ilíberis. The Muslims occupied Castilia first, calling it "Medina Ilbira" (Medina Elvira), the capita of Elvira, and they called the neighbouring population centre, on the hill of the River Darro, Granada. At the beginning of the 11th century, Zawi Ibn Zirí moved his court and the capital of his kingdom, which had been in Medina Elvira, to the hill where the Albaycin is today, which is where the former Ilíberis stood. This is the moment when the city of Granada came into being as far as history is concerned.

A great deal can be written about the years when the Muslim peoples occupied the Iberian peninsula, as this spanned almost eight centuries. However, as far as the history of Granada is concerned, there are two very specific periods worth emphasising, which were ruled over by two dynasties: the Zirid dynasty (1013-1090) and the Nasrid dynasty (1238-1492). The Zirids because they built the city and founded it as an independent kingdom. The Nasrids because they were the last reigning Muslim monarchy in Spain, with their most precious jewel, the city of Granada, as their capital. In the medieval Nasrid period the city also expanded and grew as never before.

The Nasrid Kingdom of Granada, with a population of over 400.000, covered an area from Cabo de Gata to Gibraltar, including the current provinces of Almería, Granada, Málaga, part of Cádiz and Jaén. Nasrid Granada was not a dominating and strong empire as Cordoba was. It was a kingdom that had been encircled. From the start, it had had to pay taxes to the powerful Castilian crown and, aware of its weakness, it always looked for support against its enemies in friendship. Paradoxically, and as a counterpoint to this military weakness, the kingdom of Granada was strong intellectually and culturally, the home to many great poets, artists and thinkers. During this period, the city expanded and grew more than ever before as Muslims from Úbeda, Baeza, Antequera and other localities came to settle here, swelling the number of inhabitants to around 50.000. Not only did they build the Alhambra, but also mosques, palaces, hospitals and even a University.

The Christian era began with the conquest of Granada by the Catholic Monarchs on 2 January 1492, bringing with it a new age of splendour. The new Christian monarchs completely pampered the city, as the conquest marked the end of the long period of the Reconquest. A large number of churches, convents and monasteries were built in Granada to reassert the triumph of the Catholic religion over Islam. In those first years of the reigns of the Catholic Monarch and of the Emperor Charles V the city's great Christian monuments were built: Royal Chapel, Cathedral, Convent of Santa Isabel la Real (St. Isabella the Royal), University, Palace of Charles V, Monastery of San Jerónimo (St. Jerome), etc., which are late Gothic and Renaissance in style. Artists as important as Egás, Siloé and Machuca came





to work in Granada in this period.

Although the victorious Christians, Jews and Moriscos were able to live together in the first few years after the conquest, the victors' ideological positions became more radical as time went by, further limiting the rights that had at first been granted to people with other faiths. There was far more intolerance shown towards Jews, who were expelled, than towards Moriscos, who were tolerated. Nevertheless, at the end of the 16th century, when Philip II was on the throne, the Moriscos' rights were totally violated and they were plagued by taxes and more intolerance towards their customs, which came to a head in the bloody "Morisco Rebellion" or "War of the Alpujarras" (1568-1571). The Moriscos were defeated and later, during the reign of Philip III, they were expelled. This led to an enormous setback in the economy, but above all in Granada, due to the huge enriching influence they had here.

The Baroque and Post Baroque of the 17th and 18th centuries marked another prosperous time for Granada's architecture, as this was when monuments such as the Monastery of Cartuja (completed), the Basilicas of San Juan de Dios (St. John of God) and Virgen de las Angustias (Our Lady of Sorrows) and the Church of Sagrario (Tabernacle) were built. There was another group of great artists, who created a school within and outside the city: Alonso Cano, Pedro de Mena, José Risueño, the Moras...

There was a decline at the start of the 19th century with the Napoleonic invasion, which destroyed part of the city's wealth of monuments. In 1829, the American writer Washington Irving came to Granada and he wrote the "Tales of the Alhambra". The city made a comeback, as many writers, artists and romantic travellers came here, attracted by its legends: Dumas, Daumier, Delacroix, David Roberts..., who immortalised the city and gave it a universal dimension.

Granada experienced a new boom with Isabella II's visit in 1862 and the coronation of the poet José Zorrilla in the Palace of Charles V in 1889, and measures were taken to restore the Alhambra, which finally opened its doors to the public in the reign of Alfonso XIII. Since then to our times, Granada's fame has spread, especially during the "Generation of 27" with Federico García Lorca, Manuel Falla, Pablo Neruda, Salvador Dalí and Juan Ramón Jiménez, who turned it into one of the most important artistic, literary and musical cities, not just in Spain, but in the world.

The Spanish Muslims, Rulers of Al-Ándalus

The conquest by the Muslims of Al-Ándalus, which is what they called Spain, was fast and easy. At the beginning of 8th century, the Visigoth reign of Sabin had been greatly weakened by corruption and the fighting of its governors, which meant that the Muslims from the other side of the Strait of Gibraltar were able to occupy the lands very rapidly. The existing communities of Christians and Jews were tolerated in exchange for taxes, so the population of Al-Ándalus was a mixture of races and creeds.

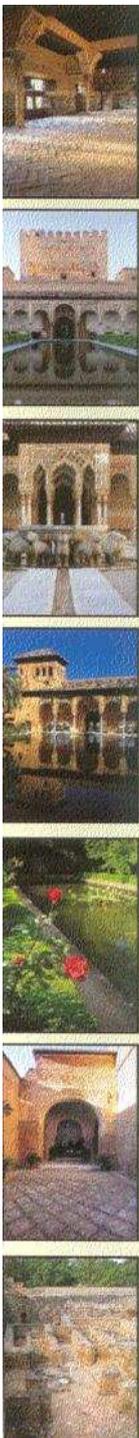
A priori, it would be difficult to understand why the Muslim people, for whom the jihad, "holy war", is one of their fundamental religious precepts, allowed other religions to coexist in the towns they occupied. The explanation lies in the fact that Jewish and Christian religions were also monotheist, related to Islam through Abraham (the father of the three religions). Moreover, for the Muslims, Jews and Christians were "brothers" who had made a mistake and who did not want to accept Allah's message. The Muslims called the Christians and the Jews Ahl-al-kitab, which means "book people", referring to the Bible, which they even took part of their traditions and previous revelations from. That is the reason why they were granted a special status.

But if there is anything that characterised the Muslims' reign in Al-Ándalus, it was the fragmentation and fragility of their territories, which meant that their rule was never peaceful. These were times of constant wars, either against the Christians, who were gradually narrowing the siege to the north, or against other Muslims, sometimes even those from Al-Ándalus, other tribes from the north of Africa, who were constantly invading them from the south. This circumstance meant that the rulers had to resort to policies of pacts and alliances to keep the peace in their territories.

The Alhambra

Nearly everyone who comes to Granada and visit the Alhambra for the first time asks the same questions: What does the Alhambra mean, what it is, who had it built, why...?. And there are even more questions when they go inside and start to wander around the marvels of this monument, amazed by its beauty and a little lost.

The name Alhambra comes from the Arabic word qalat-al-hamrá, which means "red" or "red castle" or "reddish". A first theory about this meaning would be based on the reddish colour of the ferruginous materials used to build it, mainly adobe bricks. However, it is now thought that the walls of the



Alhambra were white, like the walls of the Generalife or the houses in Albaycin, and that the red colour, as narrated by the Arab chronicler, Ibs Aljatib, comes from the gleam of the torches when night fell, giving the walls this special colour. It was the inhabitants of the neighbouring quarter of the Albaycin and of the Vega (fertile plain) who gave it this name.

The Alhambra is a complex of monuments, it is a "jewel" of Arab architecture, which was built by the Nasrid Emirs of the Kingdom of Granada in the last period of history of Muslim rule on the Peninsula. Everyone who visits the Alhambra for the first time thinks that is just the Nasrid Palace, or Royal Residence, with the Patio de los Leones (Courtyard of the Lions) and its rooms as the focal point. But the Alhambra covers a far greater area and was originally a real palatine city, like an acropolis, fortified and "isolated" from the city of Granada. It covered an approximate area of 104.000 square metres and had the same characteristic buildings and quarters found in every Muslim city:

- Religious constructions: Mosques (temples), morabitos (hermitages) and rawdas (cementeries).
- Civil constructions: Private homes, alcazars (palaces), madrazas (universities), fondacs (guest houses), fundqs (marketplaces for wheat and other goods) and maristanes (hospitals).
- Military constructions: Alcazabas (fortresses), towers, access gates to cities and bridges.

Almost all these buildings were in the Alhambra, although over time many of them have disappeared. Only what is left of the Alcazaba, the majority of the towers and the most important palaces have remained. However, in its heyday, the Alhambra was a real walled city, with at least seven palaces, residences for completely diverse social categories, all kinds of offices, the royal mint, private and public mosques, workshops of different trades, shops, public and private baths, a royan cementery and a fortress with barracks and prisons.

The city was protected by all the towers (there were up to thirty) and the ramparts, which went around the perimeter. There were at least three entrance gates to it: the Puertas de la Justicia and Armas (Gates of Justice and of Weapons), both strongly fortified, in the north-west part and south-west part of the city, for access to the Alcazaba and the Royal Residence. In the south-east sector was the Puerta de los Siete Suelos (the Gate of the Seven Floors), not as well fortified, which was the entrance to the Medina, or people's quarter, which is nowadays known as the Secano (this area occupied more than half of the complex). according to tradition, Boabdil left the Alhambra through the Gate of the Seven Floors. The Catholic Monarchs, out of respect for him, ordered it to be walled up so that no one could ever pass through it again. The Puerta del Arrabal (Gate of the poor Quarter in the Tower of the Points) cannot be considered as one of the citadel's gates as it was an access linking the Alhambra with the Generalife.

There was a university ("Madraza"), located in the space between the Alcazaba and Machuca Tower. The most important palaces, many of them today left with ruins inside or with only an incomplete part standing, are: the three palaces forming the Royal Residence (Mexuar, Comares and Lions); Partal Palace and Yusuf III Palace, in the Partal area; the Abencerraje Palace in the Secano area; and an important palace given to the Franciscans by Catholic Monarchs so that they could establish a monastery there, which is today the location of the San Francisco Parador hotel. This is where the Catholic Monarchs were buried when it was a Franciscan monastery until they were later transferred to the Royal Chapel.

There were two well differentiated sectors in the complex: "upper Alhambra" in the south-east sector and "lower Alhambra" in the north-west, linked by two streets or main arteries: the Calle Real Alta (Upper Royal Street) and the Calle Real Baja (Lower Royal Street). The main Mosque was in the centre, since, as in Muslim cities, it was the axis around which the city's activity rotated.

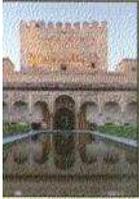
There were also three areas or quarters based on the activity or social strata of the people living there. The area where the people lives was called the medina (city). It was located in the place we now call the "Secano", in upper Alhambra. This was where officials, craftsmen, traders and other inhabitants who covered the main requirements of the city lived. The area where the garrison lived in the residential quarter, which, besides the Palaces or Royal Residence, covered the Partal area and the towers right up to the Generalife in lower Alhambra (*).

(*) Granada and the Alhambra, Ediciones Miguel Sánchez, ISBN: 84-7169-085-3, Depósito legal: GR-225/2005

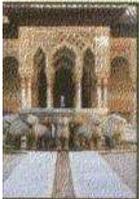
The **Patio of the Lions** (Patio de los Leones) is probably the most famous place of the Alhambra. It is so called because of the twelve lions that throw jets of water and which are part of the fountain in the middle of the patio. The big dodecagon-shaped basin rests on top of these twelve lions that are around it. This white marble fountain is one of the most important examples of Muslim sculpture. A poem by Ibn



Zamrak was carved on the border of the basin. At the beginning of the 17th century another basin was added and is currently in the Garden of the Ramparts (Jardín de los Adarves), as well as the jet, which was done later, as indicated in the engraving.



Patio of the Lions This patio was built by order of Mohammed V, its ground plan is rectangular and it is surrounded by a gallery in the style of a Christian cloister. It does not follow the typical Muslim Andalusian patio style, more like the Court of the Myrtles (Patio de los Arrayanes). The gallery is supported by 124 white marble columns with fine shafts, which are decorated on the exterior side with many rings and which support cubic capitals and big abacuses, decorated with inscriptions and stylised vegetal forms. Under the wood carving frieze there are plaster arches, except for those of the pavilions and the ends of the longer sides of the galleries, which are of mozarabes, with scallops decorated with rhombus-shaped carvings. At the middle of each of the two longer sides of the patio there is a semicircular arch bigger than the rest of the arches and with archivolts of mozarabes and scallops decorated with styled vegetal forms. These arches lead to the Hall of the Abencerrajes (Sala de los Abencerrajes) and with the Hall of the Two Sisters (Sala de Dos Hermanas). The chambers where the sultan's wives lived are over the arches. At the middle of each of the shorter sides there is a pavilion, built on part of the patio. The pavilions' ground plan is square and they are covered with semispherical domes with a wooden interior.



In the centre of the patio there was a low garden and the galleries' floor is made out of white marble. The garden went through many alterations over the years and it has now been eliminated in order to avoid the dampness it may cause. There are white marble channels, which start inside the pavilions and inside the halls of the two other sides and which get together at the central fountain forming a cross. On the ends of the channels there are jets that send water to the central fountain.

