

MARIBEL'S GUIDE TO SEVILLA ©



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GUIDE BOOKS, WEB RESOURCES AND TRAVEL PLANNING

THE BEST GUIDEBOOKS

- Eyewitness: Seville and Andalusia
- Cadogan's: Andalucía
- Footprint: Andalucía Handbook
- Insight Guide: Southern Spain
- Thomas Cook: Andalucía and the Costa del Sol
- Pallas: Andalucía by Michael Jacobs
- Knopf: Seville and Andalusia

WEB RESOURCES

- www.exploreseville.com - an excellent, comprehensive site. Don't miss!
- www.tertuliaandaluza.com - up-to-date events calendar
- www.turismosevilla.org - in Spanish
- www.guiadelocio.com - in Spanish
- www.aboutsevilla.com - All about Sevilla
- www.altur.com - for all of Andalucía
- sevilla5.com - for hotel and apartment booking
- www.andalucia.com - info for the entire region
- www.sevilla.org - in Spanish only. City government site
- www.elegirhoy.com - Spanish only, for upcoming cultural/musical events; on-line version of the magazine

INFO ON FERIA DE SEVILLA

- www.andalucia.com/seville-feriaa
- feriadesevilla - Spanish only
- [www.spain.info/sevilla/feria de abril](http://www.spain.info/sevilla/feria_de_abril)

INFO ON HOLY WEEK AND SEMANA SANTA

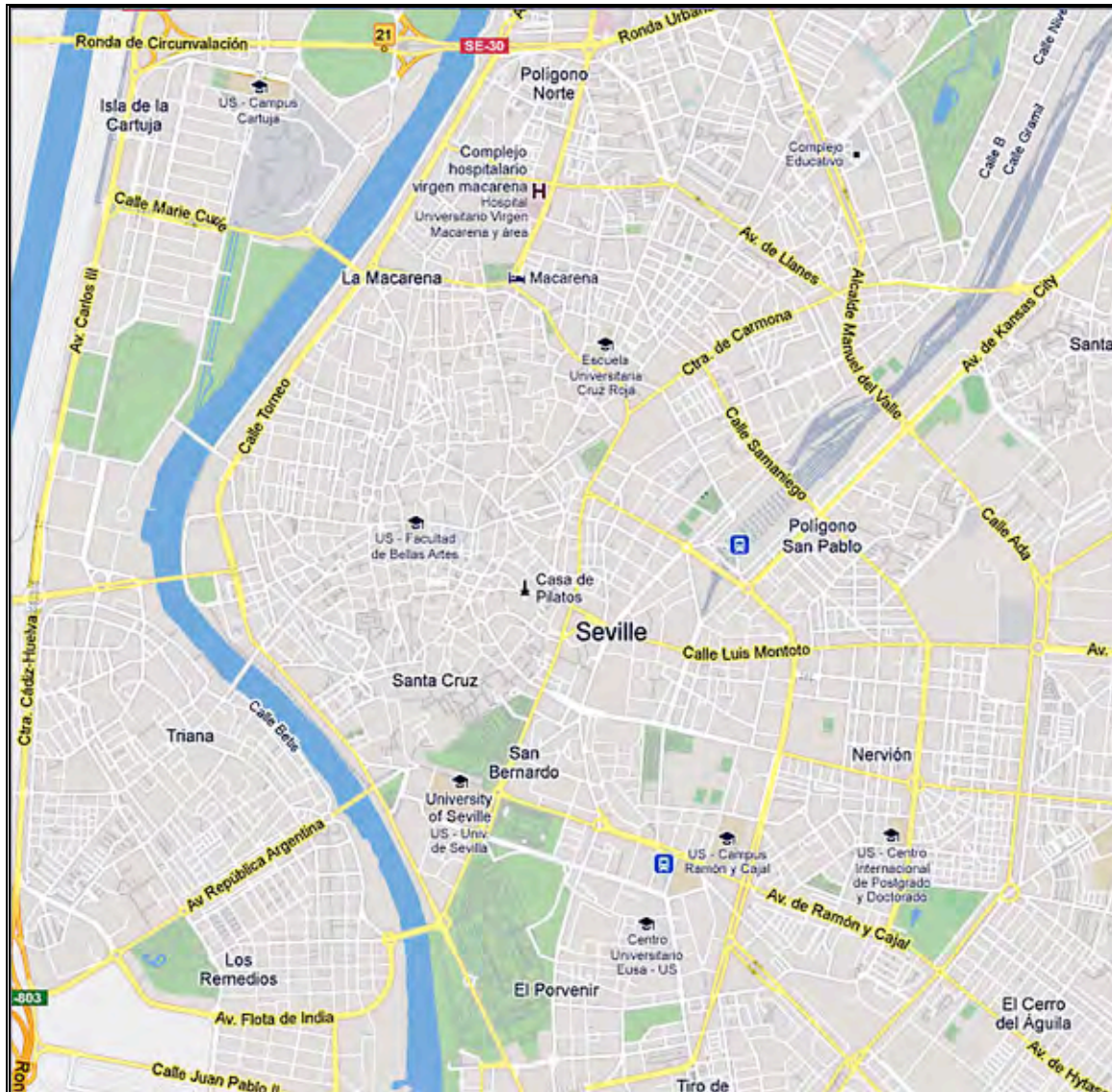
- www.semana-santa.org

TRAVEL PLANNING SERVICES

*Exclusive Travel Planning Services by **Iberian Traveler & Maribel's Guides**. Contact Maribel to arrange a custom itinerary for your trip to Spain, Portugal, Paris or southwest France.*

Travel planning services are fee based, depending on the length of your trip. The fee includes the preparation of a customized, day-to-day itinerary based on the client's specific interests/travel style/budget, customized sightseeing, dining and shopping guides for each destination, booking of all accommodations, making restaurant reservations, securing of performing arts tickets (theater/opera/ballet/flamenco), setting up winery visits, cooking classes, personal guide services or special day tours, car rentals and consultation by email or phone.

USA Tel: (206) 861-9008 / 364-6723



ARRIVING IN SEVILLA

SANTA JUSTA STATION

The AVE departs Madrid's Puerta de Atocha Renfe station several times each day, arriving at Seville's modern Santa Justa station 2-1/2 hours later. From there you can take a taxi to your hotel (www.adif.es).

The AVE trains have three classes of service: Tourist (*turista*), Business (*preferente*) and Club, with service similar to the Club Car service on US Eastern Seaboard Metroliners, offering passengers ala carte meals and unlimited bar service. There is no need to purchase a business class "preferente" ticket on this short run as the *turista* class seats are fine. An exception would be during Holy Week or Feria de Abril when tourist class often sells out days and even weeks in advance with the only remaining seats being in business ("Preferente"). The premium class cars have a 2-1 seating configuration, a meal is served (breakfast-lunch-snack-dinner) and drinks are free. Preferente class passengers have

access to the first-class lounges at each station, which offer free newspapers, soft drinks, juices, water, packaged snacks, Internet access and free parking. Check the current schedule and prices at: www.renfe.es.

AEROPUERTO DE SAN PABLO

Seville's airport is situated just 12 km outside of the city. Currently there are international flights arriving from Amsterdam, Brussels, Düsseldorf, Florence, Frankfurt, Lisbon, London's Stansted and Gatwick, Liverpool, Milan and Paris' CDG and Orly. All of Spain's low cost carriers fly from Barcelona to Sevilla; Vueling and Air Europe competing with Iberia and keeping fares low. Iberia is the only player flying from Madrid to Sevilla because the AVE bullet train makes the trip convenient, swift and easy (www.aena-aeropuertos.es).

TRANSPORTATION FROM THE AIRPORT TO THE CITY

CITY BUS

Linea EA Airport Special (*Especial Aeropuerto*), leaves about every 30 minutes from in front of the arrivals terminal, between 5:20 am-1:15 am, dropping passengers off at Puerta de Jerez, or in the area near Santa Justa station. The journey takes about 35 minutes. A one-way ticket is €4. From there you can taxi to your hotel, but taxis directly from the airport to hotel are quickest and easiest (www.tussam.es).

TAXI

The taxi fare Monday-Friday, from 7:00 am-9:00 pm is a fixed rate of €21,89, while on Saturday, Sunday, holidays and weekdays after 9:00 pm, the rate is fixed at €24,41. The fixed rate for Easter and the Feria de Abril, from 9:00 pm to 7:00 am is €30,50 (www.sevitaxi.es).

RENTAL CARS

You will find having a car during your stay in Seville to be an albatross, not at all recommended and totally unnecessary. If you plan to continue by car to other areas after your Seville stay, you can pick up the car upon departing the city at either Santa Justa train station or at the airport. If you arrive in the city by car, you'll find the easiest drop-off is at the airport. Traffic from the highway into Santa Justa train station can be heavy and the area around the station congested.

I generally arrange all of my Spanish car rentals from the USA through the consolidator - wholesaler Auto Europe (www.autoeurope.com), or its sister company Kemwel (www.kemwel.com). Cars are usually subcontracted through Europcar, their preferred supplier, or can be arranged through Avis upon request. Payment is required at the time of the booking, but is fully refundable should you change your mind.

GUIDED AND SELF-GUIDED TOURS

SEVILLE CARD

This city's monument/transportation pass is available for 1, 2 or 3 days, starting at €33,00 for the 24-hour pass. Passes offer free admission to 13 museums and palaces, unlimited trips on the hop on/hop off tour buses, unlimited public bus rides, a Guadalquivir River cruise, a guided tour of the Real Alcázar and Santa Cruz district, an audio guide to downtown and restaurant and flamenco club discounts. Also available is a public transportation pass, but most visitors will find that public transportation within the city is not necessary as one can easily walk to the major sights. The passes may or may not offer you a real savings, but you can view all of these "money saving" options at: www.sevillacard.es.



TOURIST OFFICE

The main tourist office is located on Avenida de la Constitución, 21, behind the cathedral.

GUIDED TOURS

PASEANDO POR SEVILLA

Offers small group tours of the city that have been very well reviewed. You can check their offerings at: www.paseandoporsevilla.com

There are also private guides available to show you around including the following favorites, both of whom lead walking tours of the city.

- **Concepción Delgado** – [Sevilla Walking Tours](#)
- **Antonio Doblas** (adoblasg@terra.es)

SIGHTSEEING IN SEVILLA

SEVILLE CATHEDRAL



The Cathedral of Saint Mary of the See is considered to be the third largest Cathedral in the world after St. Paul's in London and St. Peter's in Rome, but it does have the world's largest altarpiece and is supposedly the final resting place of Christopher Columbus. Santo Domingo in the Dominican Republic disputes this claim. The remains have recently been removed for DNA testing to finally put a end to these disputes once and for all (catedraldesevilla.es). The Guinness Book of World Records claims that Sevilla's cathedral also has the world's largest interior space.

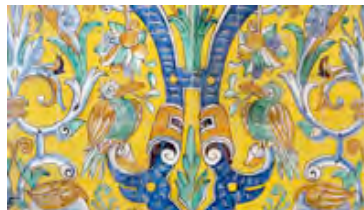
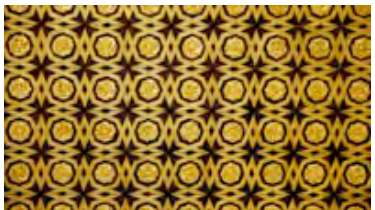
The cathedral was built with ramps instead of steps as the Moors used to charge up the ramps on horseback to call the faithful to prayer. There is a prominent Moorish minaret, or watchtower rising above the plaza. In the 12th century it served as the minaret for the Grand Mosque, **La Giralda**. Walk up the 37 ramps leading to the top for the spectacular views of the city.



Opening hours for cultural visits outside of the regular mass hours are: September-June, Monday-Saturday from 11:00-5:00 and on Sunday from 2:30-6:00. In July and August, Monday-Friday from 9:30-3:30 and on Sunday from 2:30-6:00. Admission is €7, free on Sundays.

REALES ALCÁZARES

The Royal Alcázars of Sevilla was built by Peter the Cruel in 14th century, this is the official residence for the King and Queen when they come to town. It boasts splendid tile work and a maze-like construction in which you'll find yourself constantly getting lost, saying, "have I been in this room before?" Its beautiful, fragrant gardens, worth at least an hour of your time in and of themselves, are my favorites in Andalucía. If you see it before you visit the Alhambra, the faded colors of the tile work in Granada may actually be a bit of a letdown (www.alcazarsevilla.org).



The Alcázar is open October-March, Monday-Sunday from 9:30-5:00 and April-September, Monday-Sunday from 9:30-7:00. Closed on the 1st & 2nd of January, Good Friday and Christmas day. Admission is €8,50, €2 for students 17-25 and free for pensioners, the disabled and those 16 or younger.

BARRIO DE SANTA CRUZ

The highly atmospheric, romantic former Jewish quarter, is in the area east of the cathedral and the Reales Alcázares. It's a delightful, typically Moorish labyrinth of very narrow, winding cobblestone streets, many far too narrow for cars to pass through. Here you'll see whitewashed houses with balconies festooned with geraniums and lovely patios with gurgling fountains surrounded by orange trees, wonderful for aimlessly strolling about. At night you'll come across young people playing guitar in the plazas and impromptu dancing of Sevillanas in the **Plaza de los Venerables**. You'll find the Hostería del Laurel of the Don Juan legend in the **Plaza de Doña Elvira**. Restaurante La Albahaca, Los Gallos tablao, El Tamboril bar are located in the **Plaza de Santa Cruz**. The Murillo gardens are particularly special. Watch your purses/wallets when walking through this area at night.



MUSEO DE BELLAS ARTES

Seville's Museum of Fine Arts has a reputation second only to the Prado for its fine collection of 17th century Spanish Baroque masters. The museum, housed in a 16th century monastery whose main chapel is the piece de resistance, is filled with paintings by Sevilla's Esteban Murillo. Other Spanish Baroque masterpieces by Zurbarán, a beautiful set of female saints, Pacheco, Velázquez, plus Italian Caravaggio, have to work hard to compete with this magnificent setting. The former convent is so beautiful you'd take vows just to live there. The shining darkness of Spanish Catholicism is the main impression you get from these devout canvases, culminating in the great glory of room 5 where the lavishly decorated dome seems to lead to the heavens.

This is a totally unsung gem (www.museodebellasartesevilla.es).

HORSE DRAWN CARRIAGE RIDE

Catch the carriage in front of the Cathedral. It will take you past the university building, which was the **Real Fábrica de Tabacos**, the Tobacco factory of the classic Spanish opera Carmen. After passing the factory, you'll pass through María Luisa Park and onto its beautifully tiled **Plaza de España**, one of Spain's top five public city parks and a wonderful oasis in this city. The route then takes you down the Guadalquivir River past the Torre de Oro and the beautiful **La Maestranza** Plaza de Toros, the bullring. It's a great, relaxing way to get an overview of the city and very romantic at night. Well worth the cost. The going

rate for a 40-minute tour is around €30. If you miss out on this, you can always try a buggy ride in Córdoba.



CASA DE PILATOS

This is an early 16th-century mansion and a house of the superlatives; best tiles, best bougainvillea, best patio, best arches, best fountains, best idea of what a staggeringly opulent city Seville must have been when it was at its peak. This dazzling mix of Moorish and Renaissance styles hidden behind a discreet facade is now a private museum with a stunning collection of Moorish tiles (azulejos). Maybe the price tag and the hard-to-locate location puts off most of the tour groups because at times you can almost convince yourself it's all yours. The walls are completely "papered" in tiles of several different designs. Makes you dizzy just contemplating them. It also has pretty gardens with fountains for a rest (www.fundacionmedinaceli.org). Don't miss this "out of the way" gem!



PALACIO DE LA CONDESA DE LEBRIJA

Located at Calle Cuna, 8, behind the pedestrian street Calle Sierpes, is another sumptuous 16th century palace. The central patio is paved with Roman mosaics and lovely 17th century ceramic work on the staircase.

Open Mondays and Fridays from 10:30-7:30, Saturdays from 10:00-2:00 and 4:00-6:00 and Sundays from 10:00-2:00 only, except for July and August when it's open Monday-Friday from 9:00-3:00 (palaciodelebrija.com). Visits are €5 (lower floor) and €8 (both floors).

HOSPITAL DE LA CARIDAD

Calle Temprado, 3, is a 17th century Baroque hospital and church containing haunting paintings by two of Sevilla's native sons, Esteban Murillo and Valdes Leal. They include the latter's quite macabre picture of an archbishop devoured by maggots, above exit door of the chapel. The convent's founder, Don Miguel de Mañara, is buried beneath the hospital's chapel. Legend says that he was the model for the original Don Juan character in Tirso de Molina's play, *El Burlador de Sevilla* (www.santa-caridad.es)

Open Monday-Saturday, 9:00-1:30 and 3:30-6:30, Sundays from 9:00-1:00, Admission fee is €4, but free on Sundays for Spanish nationals.

ARCHIVO GENERAL DE INDIAS

Situated on the west side of the Plaza de Triunfo, houses the largest documentation of Spain's discoveries of the New World. Primarily for scholarly research, the archives have a small revolving exhibit open to the public and which may include documents written by Columbus, Cortés or Pizarro (www.mcu.es).

Open 16 September-15 June, Monday-Friday from 8:00 to 3:00, and from 16 June-15 September, Monday-Friday from 8:00-2:30. Admission is fee.

BASÍLICA DE LA MACARENA

In La Macarena quarter, the old working-class neighborhood of Sevilla, is also home to the most revered idol in this city of shrines, the tomb the most idolized by matadors. Virgen de La Esperanza Macarena is the virtual goddess of Seville; a 17th century statue of the Virgin Mary kneeling in prayer, is paraded on a solid silver platform with incredible ceremony during Holy Week every year. (www.hermandadde lamacarena.es).

She lives with her carriage in the modern Macarena Basilica, near the old city wall, and is a fabulous sight to behold. And all the more so because she's adorned in priceless diamonds donated by Joselito, a famed local matador. Clearly his devotion didn't work, as he died in the ring in 1920. His heroically over-the-top tomb, always adorned in fresh flowers, is in the nearby cemetery of San Fernando.



PARQUE DE MARÍA LUISA

The park, renovated by the French architect Jean-Claude Nicolas Forestier for the 1929 Ibero-American Exposition, can easily be seen by carriage ride. This is a popular spot on

Sundays for families who stroll the grounds, or sit at one of the many outdoor cafes at the entrance to the park (www.parquedemarialuisa.com). **DO NOT** wander through this park late at night.

A BOAT TRIP DOWN THE RIVER

Only recommended simply to refresh you on a blusteringly hot summer day-put your feet up after a taxing round of sightseeing and take one of the half hour trips down the Guadalquivir River. This can be a pleasant way to spend your siesta time between lunch and more sightseeing/shopping during the fiery hot summer season. Doesn't go too far and doesn't pass many historically beautiful or significant sites but a nice way to cool off during siesta. Cruceros Panorámicos offers this from the Torre de Oro daily.



RELAXING IN A HAMAAM (day spa)

AIRE DE SEVILLA

This urban spa has been created from the remains of 17th century Arab baths (Hamman) and can be found tucked away down a narrow street in the Santa Cruz quarter. It offers several different packages including a 90-minute bath followed by aromatherapy or a massage. The baths are mixed and swimming suits are required, but if you don't have one, they will lend one to you. Open year around from 10:00 am-2:00 am daily.

You should book a week ahead for a weekend treatment, or at least 24 hours in advance for a mid-week appointment. The attached teashop serves breakfast, teas and Moorish pastries. You can check prices and make a reservation online at: www.airedesevilla.com.

POPULAR DAY EXCURSIONS FROM SEVILLA

THE DANCING HORSES OF ANDALUCIA

This is a spectacular display of dressage of the beautiful Carthusian horses, cousins to the Lipizzaner Stallions of the *Spanish Riding School* in Vienna, and their riders, in period costumes, “dancing” to classical music. Called the *Cómo Bailan Los Caballos Andaluces*, it's held at the **Real Escuela Andaluza del Arte Equestre**, the 18th century *Palacio de las Cadenas* on Avenida de Abrantes.



Performances are held at noon every Thursday during the year and on Tuesdays from March to October. There is also a performance on Fridays from 15 July-31 October. The ballet lasts for 1-1/2 hours with a brief 10-minute intermission. These performances are extremely popular and often sell out a month or more in advance! The best seats are the up-close, €21 “preferencia” seats on both sides of the VIP seats, but other seats are priced at €13 and €17 and have great sightlines. When you pick up your tickets at the box office they will offer you an entrance ticket to the adjacent carriage museum, [El Museo de Carruajes](#), as well.



There is absolutely **no** videotaping or photography allowed during the performance, but they do sell books and tasteful souvenirs in the gift shop and posters of the horse ballet are sold at the coat and camera check stand. During intermission it's customary to sip a quick

sherry at the bar, although run, don't walk. It gets utterly mobbed very quickly, as does the gift shop. You can watch them schooling, or visit the stables on other days.

You can reserve via credit card by phone they speak English, Tel: (+34) 956 318 008, or email and pick up tickets at box office, or book on line at: www.realescuela.org. *Check the special Saturday performances in 2013.*

If you want to do a little sightseeing around the city after the horse ballet, the **Visit Jerez** tour bus departs from in front of the Royal Equestrian School promptly following the show, at 1:30.

ROMAN RUINS OF ITÁLICA

The ruins can be found 8 kms north of the city, 15 minutes by bus from the Plaza de Armas station to the village of **Santiponce**. It's the first Roman colony in Spain, dating from 3rd century B.C., and birthplace of emperors Trajan and Hadrian. Amphitheater was originally designed with seating for up to 40,000, for a city with only 10,000 inhabitants at its epoxy in the 2nd century A.D ([Ruinas de itálica](#)).

Open 16 September-31 March, Tuesday-Saturday from 9:00-6:30, Sunday and holidays from 10:00-5:00. Open 1 April-31 May, Tuesday-Saturday from 9:00-8:00, Sunday and holidays from 10:00-5:00 and 1 June-15 September, Tuesday-Saturday, and from 9:00-3:30 and Sundays and holidays from 10:00-5:00. Closed Monday, 1 January, 1 May and Christmas day. Admission is free to EU citizens, €1,50 for everyone else.

CARMONA

This is a lovely monument and mansion filled small city, a miniature Seville, filled with noble, stately homes. Be sure to visit the **Roman Necropolis** at the western end of town and have drinks in the enclosed Moorish patio of the fortress **Parador Alcázar de Pedro el Cruel** ([Parador de Carmona](#)).

The Casal bus company runs hourly busses to Carmona from Sevilla's Prado de San Sebastián bus station. Check the schedule at Autocares Casal (autocarescasal.com). The trip takes about one hour.

The Roman Necropolis (www.museosdeandalucia.es) is open 16 September-31 March, Tuesday-Saturday from 9:00-6:30, on Sunday and bank holidays from 10:00-5:00. From 1 April-31 May it's open Tuesday-Friday from 9:00-8:00, Saturday from 10:00-8:00 and Sunday and bank holidays from 10:00-5:00. From 1 June-15 September its open Tuesday-Friday from 9:00-3:30, Saturday from 10:00-3:30 and Sunday and bank holidays from 10:00-5:00. Closed on Mondays and 1 January, 1 May and Christmas day. Admission is free to EU citizens, €1,50 for everyone else.

WHITE VILLAGES

Although the Moorish **pueblos blancos**, perched on the hillsides along the route of the White Villages, are best seen after a stay in Seville, on route to the coast, or can be a wonderful destination in and of themselves (Grazalema, Ronda, Arcos, Gaucín). See "Routes of the White Villages" (andalusia-web.com)

An Australian, **Paul McGrath**, [The Other Spain](#), does offer an all-day minibus tour of the white villages from Seville for 2-8 passengers. His tours have been well recommended by Rick Steves.

HALF-DAY TRIP TO CÓRDOBA

via the high-speed AVE train - Except on Mondays

Depart from Santa Justa rail station on the 9:00 am AVE, which arrives in Córdoba at 9:40 (buy a "turista" class ticket), take a taxi (around €5) to the plaza in front of the mosque, **La Mezquita**, now the official Córdoba cathedral, and first acquaint yourself with the layout of the city and get a good map at the handy regional tourist office on the square.

THE GREAT MOSQUE OF CORDOBA

The Mezquita is open for visits from 10:00-7:30 Monday-Saturday and Sundays from 2:00-7:30. Try to enter at 10:00, as by 11:00 the hordes of tour bus groups will have arrived, making leisurely, contemplative viewing of the treasures there within virtually impossible (www.mezquitadecordoba.org)



ALCÁZAR DE LOS REYES CRISTIANOS

After touring the mosque, head to the gardens of the adjacent Alcázar de los Reyes Cristianos. Open Monday-Saturday from 10:00-2:00 and 4:30-6:00, and Sunday from 9:30-3:00 (www.ayuncordoba.es)

MUSEO TAURINO

If you're a bullfight aficionado, and read Spanish, then stroll over to the **Museo Taurino** on Plaza Maimónides in the heart of the Judería, the ancient Jewish quarter, across from the NH Amistad hotel (still closed for renovations). It's a huge, rambling, musty 2-floor structure with rooms filled with memorabilia and 19th century bullfight posters, some rooms having been made shrines to two famed Córdoba born bullfighters, Manolete and El Cordobé, but no explanations in English (cultura.cordoba.es). *Closed for renovations.*

MUSEO DE BELLAS ARTES CORDOBA

If you are an art buff, make a short visit to the museum on the Plaza del Potro, which houses works by Ribera, Zuloaga, Zurburán and Goya. Admission is free for EU members, €1,50 for everyone else (www.museosdeandalucia.es).

Open Tuesday from 2:30-8:30, Wednesday-Saturday from 9:00-8:30 and on Sundays and holidays from 9:00-2:30. From 16 June-15 September it's open from 9:00-2:30. Closed on Monday, 1 & 2 January, 1 May, 24 October and 24, 25 & 31 December.

CASA DE SEFARAD



On Calle Judíos, 20 in the Jewish quarter, the *Judería*, the heart of the historical city center, visit the tiny 14th century (pre-Inquisition) synagogue, one of the two oldest in Spain, the other being Toledo's *Sinagoga del Tránsito*, now closed for renovation. Note the upstairs women's gallery and the intricate Hebrew stuccowork. Guided tours are available in Spanish, English and French. There is also a music workshops on traditional, Sephardic and Andalusí music. Closed Mondays (www.casadesefarad.es).

While in the *Judería*, your senses will be assaulted by the crass, tacky souvenir shop souk-like atmosphere that has been built up around the mosque. Lose yourself in the back alleys and side streets of this labyrinth to get a better flavor of the quarter and to peek through the wrought iron gates into the beautifully decorated interior patios of the homes.

LA CASA ANDALUSI

Visit a typical Córdoba home with a number of patios near the synagogue, at Judíos, 12.



Or take a carriage ride from the Plaza del Triunfo to escape the tourist throngs and tackiness of the souvenir medina surrounding the mosque (www.lacasaandalusi.com).

DINING IN CÓRDOBA

RESTAURANTE CABALLO ROJO

Cardenal Herrero, 28, has a lovely shaded terrace upstairs, an oasis from the tourist hordes, offering really fine and creative regional fare based on ancient Mozarabic and Sephardic dishes. Very attentive service, and known as one of the finest dining spots in Andalucía, Córdoba being the culinary capital of the region. Try the thick gazpacho, salmorejo, and the artichokes in Montilla wine (www.elcaballorojo.com). Reservations recommended.

Tel: (+34) 957 475 375 – 957 478 001

TABERNA CASA PEPE DE LA JUDERÍA

If you're not in the mood for a full meal but just need tapas instead, head straight to Calle del Romero, 1, to where you can sit downstairs in the shaded patio and order from their extensive tapas/raciones menu. Try the truly delicious olive oil ice cream. No, really! (www.casapepejuderia.com).

Tel: (+34) 957 200 744

TABERNA CASA RUBIO

Located at Calle Puerta de Almodóvar, 3, at Calle del Romero, offers traditional Sephardic dishes and tapas. There is both an outdoors terrace and a comfortable rooftop terrace (www.restaurantecasarubio.com).

Tel: (+34) 957 420 853

BODEGAS CAMPOS RESTAURANTE

A short walk from the crowds at the Alcázar, you'll find this interesting and popular tapas bar and restaurant, a local favorite, at Calle Lineros, 32. Founded in 1908 as a wine cellar and tavern. Reservations recommended (www.bodegascampos.com). Open daily from 1:00-4:00 and 8:30-11:00, closed Sunday night and 25 & 31 December.

Tel: (+34) 957 497 500

After a late lunch, you'll be ready to take the 40-minute AVE ride back to Sevilla. Afternoon trains depart the station at 3:44, 4:44 and 5:44.

LODGING IN CÓRDOBA

HOSPES PALACIO DE BAILIO *****

A beautiful 53-room 16th-century palace with outdoors and indoor pools and a luxurious spa in the heart of the city at Ramírez de las Casas Deza, 10-12 (www.hospes.com). Public parking is available nearby for €26,44/day.

HOTEL CÓRDOBA PALACIO *****

If you have Marriott Rewards, or want to earn some, then the perfect choice is this modern hotel on Paseo de la Victoria, in the center of the city, a 5-minute walk from the Mezquita and La Judería, the ancient Jewish quarter (www.marriott.com). It has a seasonal rooftop pool and fitness center. If driving, public parking is available on site for €17,88/day

NH AMISTAD CÓRDOBA ****

This is an 83-room, 18th-century manor house at Plaza de Maimonides, 3, is located next to the old city walls in the Judería, next to the 14th-century Synagogue and the Bullfighting Museum (www.nh-hotels.com). Has a rooftop pool with views of the Mezquita.

MACIÀ ALFAROS ****

The larger, and less expensive Alfaros, 144 rooms in a traditional Andalusian-style building at Alfaros, 18, is a 15-minute walk from the Mezquita (www.maciahoteles.com). It has an outdoors pool and private parking for €17,85/day.

BALCÓN DE CÓRDOBA ****

Located just steps away from the Mezquita Mosque, this small, 10-room boutique property has a rooftop terrace with panoramic views of the city (www.balcondecordoba.com). No pool, but parking is available nearby for €20/day. Selected by Condé Nast Traveler as one of the 6 best hotels in Spain in 2012.

Do a search of the discount booking sites for the best prices.

*If you're a B&B only type, then choose the very small **HOTEL LOLA ****, above the Taberna Casa Pepe (www.hotellola.es).*

BULLFIGHTS IN THE PLAZA DE TOROS

LA REAL MAESTRANZA

Bullfights take place every Sunday afternoon at the beautiful La Maestranza Plaza de Toros, the Cathedral of Spanish bullfighting. The season runs from Easter Sunday to October 12, el Día de la Hispanidad. The most important corridas are held daily during the **Feria de Sevilla**, which usually occurs two weeks after Easter Sunday. Other important corridas are held on 15 August for **La Virgen de los Reyes**, the patron saint of Sevilla, the **Feria de San Miguel**, on the last weekend of September, and **La Virgen del Pilar** on 12 October.



Sevilla's Plaza de Toros

Sunday afternoon bullfights during the summer months are usually *novilladas*, novice bullfighters and young bulls. Tickets must be purchased at the Plaza ticket offices, or behind the bullring at Empresa Pages on Calle Adriano, or at any one of the official ticket booths you'll find around the city, such as the one next to the Hotel Simón on Calle García de Vinusal. 19, or the one located on the shopping street Calle Tetuán. Ticket booths charge a 20% markup. Tickets can usually be purchased on the day of the bullfight except on the above-mentioned dates.

Some of the best matadors to see: El Juli, Rivera Ordóñez, Finito de Córdoba, Enrique Ponce, Manuel Díaz, El Cordobés, José Tomás. During the prestigious Easter fair, the corridas begin at 6:30, 7:00 during the summer.

The bullring offers 40-minute bilingual guided tours from May-October from 9:30-8:00 and November-April from 9:30-7:00 for €7 general admission, €4 for retirees, children 6-11 for €3. Closed on Good Friday and Christmas Day.

The tour includes a peak into the chapel and surgical room. There is a terrific gift shop with a large selection of bullfight and feria posters, matador's shoes and hat, zapatillas and monteras, and capotes, the pink/yellow matador's capes. It's a great stop for gifts and classy souvenirs. You can read about the history of the bullring at: RealMaestranza.com.

Check the bullfight schedule at:

Plaza de Toros de Lamaestranza.com, TicketsToros.com or MundoToro.com.

MY SEVILLA DINING GUIDE

WHAT TO DRINK

- **Fino** or **Amontillado** - a dry sherry
- **Manzanilla** - a brand of sherry made in Sanlúcar de Barrameda
- **Cruzcampo** - a Spanish beer now owned by Guinness.

WHAT TO EAT - DISTINCTIVE SEVILLE OR ANDALUSIAN SPECIALTIES

- *Pescaíto frito* - fried fish.
- *Coquinas* - clams in white wine/garlic sauce.
- *Jamón Jabugo* - a wonderful cured ham; the finest quality available is from the black hoofed pigs that have grazed on acorns in the province of Huelva. A favorite brand: *5 Jotas*
- *Espinacas con garbanzos* - creamed spinach with chickpeas.
- *Tortilla de camarones* - a toasted thin omelet of baby shrimp.
- *Berenjenas rellenas* - meat filled fried eggplant.
- *Salmorejo* - a thick gazpacho from Córdoba with tiny chunks of cured ham.
- *Pringá* - an acquired taste. It's the boiled meats and sausages that accompany *cocido*, the Spanish version of pot-au-feu.
- *Puntillas* - fried baby squid.
- *Mojama* - pressed, dried and salted fish roe.
- *Papas aliñás* - cold boiled potatoes with tomato and green pepper dressing.
- *Pincho moruno* - shish kebab.

I've designated my recommended restaurants into the following categories with an estimated cost per person, including a glass of wine:

Tipping is not expected, as service is included in the bill but at the more elegant restaurants, diners sometimes leave an extra 5 per cent, but never more.

Cheap: €15-€20

Inexpensive: €20-€30

Moderate: €35-€45

Expensive: €50-€70

Very expensive-special occasion splurge: €80-€100 +

MY FAVORITE DINING SPOTS

Temples of Haute Cuisine

EGAÑA-ORIZA

San Fernando, 41, is attached to walls of Alcázar Palace and adjacent to the Murillo gardens (restauranteoriza.com), directly across the avenue from the University Fábrica de Tabacos, of the opera Carmen fame. There is a gorgeous conservatory/winter garden dining room with a soaring ceiling covered in a beautiful, white iron grillwork. Expect perfect service from the attentive, suave maitre d' and the well-trained staff. There is also an extensive wine list for your pleasure.

This has been one of our very favorites for a number of years for a classy, sit-down meal, or for gourmet tapas at the Bar España. The food may be slightly better at Taberna, Poncio, or Salvador Rojo, but the Basque cuisine from chef-owner José María Egaña is par excellence and the overall experience; cuisine, service, décor, ambience, is absolutely lovely. It's also a great location for people watching, as the patrons are the movers and shakers, the aristocrats of Seville society.

It may seem a little on the expensive side, at €100 for 2, but it's well worth the experience. It lost its Michelin star rating, but still merits at least one. Campsa guide gives it 2 soles (suns). Gourmetour: 8 out of a possible 10. Count on an average check of €50/person (www.restauranteoriza.com).

Open for lunch from 1:30-4:00 and for dinner from 8:30-midnight. Closed Sunday and all of August.

Tel: (+34) 954 227 254 or email them at: reservas@restauranteoriza.com

SALVADOR ROJO

Located at Avda. Manuel Siurot, 33. The chef-owner, who spent time in the kitchen of Hacienda Benazuza El Bulli, opened his own eponymous place. Esmeralda, his wife, manages the room.

Creative Andalusian cuisine and one of city's top five, but be prepared for the spartan décor. Nice wine list, heavy on sherries. There is also a cigar menu. Degustación menus for €35 & €55 (www.salvadorrojo.com)

Open Monday-Saturday 1:30-4:30 and 9:00-1:00 am. Closed Sunday and all of August.

Tel: (+34) 954 229 725

AZ-ZAIT

Plaza de San Lorenzo, 1, has been lauded as one of Seville's very best. Its name means "olive oil" in Arabic. Nice breads served with world-class olive oil. Try the white gazpacho, *ajoblanco*, with melon sorbet. You might choose to skip the dessert and opt for their excellent cheese course (www.az-zaitrestaurantes.com).

Open Tuesday-Sunday, noon-4:30 and Tuesday-Saturday, 8:00-12:30 am. Closed in August.

Tel: (+34) 954 906 475

LA TABERNA DEL ALABARDERO

Zaragoza, 20, is housed in a 19th century mansion once belonging to the poet Juan Antonio Cavestany. There is a central patio and a very pretty fin de siècle decor in the upstairs dining rooms. The cuisine is Basque inspired and there are branches in Madrid, Puerto Banús, Benahavís and D.C. One can eat from a very inexpensive, but very good value menu del día available only at mid-day in the downstairs bistro, prepared and served by students of the in house culinary/catering school. The formal, upstairs dining room serves tasting menus for €48 & €58, but for the price, I prefer Egaña Oriza. Live music at night. Gourmetour gives it a rating of 8.5/10 (www.tabernadelalabardero.es).



Open daily 1:30-4:30 and 8:30-midnight. Closed during entire month of August.

Tel: (+34) 954 502 721

Moderately Priced to Moderately Expensive Dining

ABANTAL

C/ Alcalde José de la Bandera, 7 y 9, next to Luis Montoto in the Nervión quarter. The young chef, Julio Fernández Quintero, has received very good reports for his new wave, creative Andalusian fare served in a contemporary, sophisticated setting with well spaced tables. Home made sorbets. Tasting menus: €57 & €72. English menu available (www.abantalrestaurante.es).

Open Tuesday-Friday from 2:00-4:00 and 9:00-11:00, Saturdays 2:00-4:00 and 8:30-10:30. Closed Sunday, Monday, April Fair and 4-28 August.

Tel: (+34) 954 540 000

CASA ROBLES

Alvarez Quintero, 58, near the cathedral, is a mix of traditional Andalusian cuisine and a few more innovative dishes. Great desserts. Very popular among locals in the know, but its location brings in plenty of tourists as well and is highly recommended by many hotel concierges. Recommended dishes are foie gras with Pedro Jiménez, *Dorada* (baked porgy) and *solomillo de cerdo* (pork filet). A tasting menu is available. Gourmetour rating: 7/10. English menu available. Expect an average check of €36/person (www.casa-robles.com).

Open Monday-Saturday, 1:00-5:00 and 8:00-1:00.

Tel: (+34) 954 213 150

LOS CUEVAS

(yes "los", not a grammatical mistake), is at Virgen de las Huertas, 1, on the corner of Paraíso, behind the Plaza de Cuba on the west side of the Guadalquivir in the Los Remedios district, on the other side of the avenue from Triana. Be sure to take along a good map. The chef is the owner's wife. Have the waiter bring you what is best for the day. There is a tapas bar with a tiny 5-table dining room in back (www.loscuevas.com).

Open Tuesday-Sunday, 1:00-5:00 and 9:00-1:00. Closed Monday and August.

Tel: (+34) 954 278 042

EL ESPIGÓN

Bogotá, 1, is getting lots of good press, Gourmet, NY Times, etc., for having the freshest, best fish in town. Try the *urt*, a trout-like fish, or the *guiso marinero*, a bouillabaisse. Also has a restaurant in Madrid at Capitán Haya, 58 (elespigon.com).

Open Monday-Saturday, 1:00-4:30 and 8:30-midnight.

Tel: (+34) 954 626 851

Two that tourists always seem to love because of ambiance more than food!

LA ALBAHACA

Plaza Santa Cruz, 12, next to Los Gallos flamenco tablao. Has a pretty décor in an elegant townhouse-palace on the prettiest square in the heart of the Barrio de Santa Cruz. Tourists love it because it's so fetching and romantic. Innovative Basque cuisine getting better and better (www.andalunet.com).

Open Monday-Saturday noon-4:00 and 8:00-midnight. Closed Sundays.

Tel: (+34) 954 220 714

CORRAL DEL AGUA

Calle del Agua, 6, is also in the Barrio de Santa Cruz, adjacent to the Alcázar, with the same owners as La Albahaca. It's a bit of a cutesy-touristy place, but also an oasis. The patio is filled with wishing wells, grape arbors and flickering lanterns. They offer a nice garlic and almond soup, ajo blanco, as well as a nice shellfish soup, zarzuela de mariscos. Has a €16 menu at lunch, VAT not included. Menus are in English (www.corraldelagua.es).

Open Monday-Saturday noon-4:00 and 8:00-midnight. Closed Sundays.

Tel: (+34) 954 224 841

TAPAS HOPPING

Tapas in Barrio Santa Cruz

MODESTO



Cano y Cueto, 5, near Murillo Gardens in the Santa Cruz quarter is very near the Casas de la Judería hotel. The outdoor terrace is always jam packed with locals at night. Great fried fish platters, *pescaíto frito*. Try the small clams steamed in garlic and white wine, coquinas, you'll lap up the sauce! This is not gourmet, white tablecloth cuisine, but simply a very lively and dependable local bar serving primarily fish and shellfish, with slightly chaotic service. The waiters are very, very busy, bustling about, but are nevertheless able to handle the constant stream of diners (www.modestorestaurantes.com).

Open daily 12:30 pm-2:00 am

Tel: (+34) 954 416 811

It's the favorite local tapas bar of the owner of Casa 7, a sherry baron, scion of the González Byass sherry dynasty, who could well afford to dine elsewhere. Its recipe for saucy clams and shrimp with wild mushrooms *almejas negras al Marqués de Villalúa* has been featured in Food & Wine magazine.

CASA ROMÁN

Plaza de los Venerables, 1, along with the Bodeguita Romero, is one of the best local places for the fabulously bitter jamón Jabugo, but go elsewhere for other tapas. It is a delightful square in the heart of the Barrio Santa Cruz with outdoor tables and is always lively. This is an adorable little square, which you should definitely see in you're wandering through the Santa Cruz quarter (www.facebook.com).

Tel: (+34) 954 228 483



Plaza de los Venerables

Tapas near the Cathedral

BAR ESTRELLA

Estrella, 3 (*same owners as Bar Giralda*). Have mariposas de caviar, or pate de cabracho. Unusual tapas, not so frequented by the tourist trade as the Bar Giralda. It specializes in seafood tapas, such as *boquerones fritos*, small fried anchovies (www.hermandad-estrella.org).

Tapas in the heart of downtown Sevilla

BODEGUITA CASABLANCA (*Antonio Tomás Casablanca*)

Adolfo Rodríguez Jurado 12, next to the Archivo de Indias. Opened by the youngest son of the family who ran the much-praised bar-restaurant Casablanca on Zaragoza, 50, now closed. This is the spin off tapas bar, continuing in the same vein (bodeguitacasablanca.com).

Open 5:00 pm-7:00pm and 8:15-12:30 am, Saturday 12:30 pm-5:30 pm. Closed Saturday afternoon and Sunday.

Tel: (+34) 954 224 114

ROBLES PLACENTINES

Placentines, 2. Head up Calle Alvarez Quintero from the Cathedral, bear right onto the Argote de Molina then left on Placentines. Family owned and popular with locals, it offers extraordinary fish and has a value priced menú del día. There is also a tapas bar downstairs decorated with sherry barrels and hams hanging from the ceiling. The upstairs dining room has attractively presented gourmet cuisine and great desserts. Pretty much an institution (www.casa-robles.com).

Open daily from noon to 2:00 am.

Tel: (+34) 954 213 1621

It has the same owners as the **Casa Robles** at Alvarez Quintero, 58, (for a sit down meal. Gourmetour gives it a 7/10 rating) as well the new, smaller **Robles Tapas** overlooking cathedral square.

BODEGUITA ROMERO

Harinask, 10, in the El Arenal quarter near the bullring is known for their great jamón and tortilla de camarones. It's great, with a lively atmosphere, particularly around 8:30 to 9:00, right after the bullfights (bodeguita-romero.com).

BODEGUITA ANTONIO ROMERO

Gamazo, 16, is also near the bullring in the El Arenal quarter. Very classy with an elegant tapas bar that attracts a well-heeled, loyal local crowd, particularly after the bullfights at the Real Maestranza. Sample the tapas at the bark, or reserve a few days ahead of time for one of the highly coveted tables in the back dining room. Same crowd, same family as Bodeguita Romero (www.bodeguitaantonioromero.com).

ENRIQUE BECERRA

Gamazo, 2, is also near the bullring in the El Arenal quarter and is has a very lively tapas bar and dining room (enriquebecerra.com). The specialty is lamb in honey sauce. This is another Sevilla classic that is very popular with tourists. English menus are available.

Its recipe for lamb meatballs with mint, *Albóndigas de cordero a la hierbabuena*, has been featured in Food & Wine magazine and their spinach with chickpeas recipe, *espinacas con garbanzos*, and honeyed roast lamb with spinach and pine nuts, *cordero asado a la miel relleno de espinacas y piñones*, in Saveur. Another standout is the eggplant, zucchini and peppers, *-alboronía* (enriquebecerra.com).

Closed Sundays and 7-21 August.

Tel: (+34) 954 213 049

Tapas near the Palacio de las Dueñas, off the Plaza Ponce de León - Worth the journey

EL RINCONCILLO



Calle Gerona, 40, was founded in 1670 and is oldest tapas bar in Sevilla. It's a place filled with Old World ambiance, supposedly where the custom of "tapas" began and is still attracting a loyal local crowd and a few tourists. Be sure to sample the delicious **espinacas con garbanzos**, spinach with chickpeas, which is served in a Cazuela dish, or the **pavía de bacalao**, cod fritters. Tab will be chalk written on ancient wooden counter. Old sherry barrels that serve as stand up tables. Owners will be opening a new restaurant soon (www.elrinconcillo.es).

Open from 1:00 pm-1:30 am.

Tel: (+34) 954 223 183

TABERNA COLONIALES

A tiny place with outdoor tables facing the Plaza Cristo de Burgos, 19, near the Casa de Pilatos, around the corner from the Casa del Maestro Hotel. Delicious tapas. Attracts locals only (www.tabernacoloniales.es).

Open daily from 12:30 pm-12:15 am.

Tel: (+34) 954 501 137

Tapas in Triana

LA ALBARIZA

C/ Betis, 6, at the very end of Betis, across the Guadalquivir River in the Triana district via the Puente de San Telmo Bridge. Here you'll find chalk white walls, sherry casks as tables and hams hanging from the ceiling. There are 42 varieties of tapas on the list. Try the tiny lamb chops, *chuletillas de cordero*, or shrimp omelets, *tortilla de camarones*, with green peppers. Michel Rostang, the famous Parisian chef, has dined here. The clientele is very chic and it's always packed (www.laalbariza.es).

Open Tuesday-Sunday for lunch from noon-4:00 and Tuesday-Friday for dinner from 8:30-midnight.

Tel: (+34) 954 332 016 – 661 776 260

Tapas near San Lorenzo church and Alameda de Hércules Park

BAR RESTAURANTE ESLAVA

Calle Eslava, 3, is a very popular spot with a legendary, but minuscule tapas bar with a dining room in back. Have their "*puddín de espinacas con béchamel*", stuffed fritters, "*solomillo al cabrales*", filet mignon in blue cheese sauce, or "*merluza con ajetes*", hake with garlic shoots (www.espacioeslava.com)

Open Tuesday-Sunday for lunch from 1:30-4:00 and Tuesday-Saturday for dinner from 9:00-11:30. Closed Sunday evening and Monday.

Tel: (+34) 954 906 568

MY SEVILLA SHOPPING GUIDE

Mantillas and Silk hand embroidered shawls

FELICIANO FORONDA – On pedestrian Calle Sierpes, 67, or Alvarez Quintero, 44.

BORDADOS FORONDA - Argote de Molina, 20.

JUAN FORONDA - Calle Tetuán, 28. Has a web site: sierpes.com/foronada/index.htm.

BLASFOR – Calle Sierpes, 79.

Fans

CASA RUBIO – Calle Sierpes.

Flamenco Dresses (or *trajes de gitana* for a Halloween party or costume ball)

CANDELA - Calle Harinas, 34.

LINA - Calle de los Lineros, 17.

PARDALES - Calle Cuna, 23.

AZAHARES - Cuna, 31.

TRAJES SEVILLANOS - Cerrajería, 65, between Calle Sierpes & Cuna.

Guitars

MANUEL VELA MARTÍNEZ - Calle Bordadores, 3.

CASA DE LOS ARTESANOS - Across the river in Triana, on Calle Covadonga, by Andrés Domínguez.

Riding gear

LÓPEZ - Calle Cuna 34

Antiques

MORO GONZALES – Downtown on Calle Placentines.

ANTIGÜEDADES LOLA ORTEGA - under the arches of the Plaza del Cabildo / Quepo de Llano, 22.

Perfume and Cologne

Jasmine scented **Agua de Sevilla**, which opened a new store on San Fernando, 3, in an old palace, where in the library you can have a fino and tapas while shopping. There are also the fragrances **Carmen**, **Abril**, or **Victorio y Lucchino** by Victorio y Lucchino, the Seville fashion designers, available at any perfumería.

Pottery and Tiles

CERÁMICA SANTA ANA - San Jorge, 31 in the Plaza del Callao, across the Guadalquivir River in the Triana district. This best-known shop sells replicas of 16th century designs.

CERÁMICAS ROCÍO - Also located in the Triana district at Calle Antillano, 8.

SANTA ISABEL - Calle Alfarería, 12, the street of the potters.

CERÁMICA ISABEL RUIZ - sells pottery with hunting motifs, San Jorge, 27.

More Ceramics - Far more "touristy" than those listed above

SEVILLARTE - which has flowery, pastel, cutie designs, is located at Sierpes, 66.

MARTIÁN - Sierpes, 74. These are far more "touristy" than those listed above.

Children's clothing

LUNA LUNERA - Calle Sierpes.

English-style Bone China

PICKMAN is available at Isla de la Cartuja, or at Spain's department store, El Corte Inglés on Plaza Duque de la Victoria. I find the brown/cream oriental design dull, but I do like their pastel (green/pink/cream) pattern.

Córdobaan Riding Hats

MAQUEDANO - Sierpes, 40. Spain's best hat shop!

Olive Oil - The best olives are those filled with anchovies of La Española, or Sierpes brands

LA TIENDA DEL ACEITE - Calle García de Vinuesa, 31.

CLUB DEL GOURMET - El Corte Inglés department store on Plaza Duque de Victoria downtown.

DELICIAS DEL BARRIO - Calle Mateo Gagos, which leads east from the cathedral. The best olives are those filled with anchovies of La Española, or Sierpes brands.

Sweets

LA CAMPANA - Sierpes, 1, famous for their "torta de polvorón.

Apparel

Pedestrian Calle Tetuán is home to Spanish designer clothing shops (V & L, Robe") El Torno on the Plaza del Cabildo Sells goodies made by the cloistered nuns in convents all around the city: Also have children's clothing. Or go directly to the Convento de Santa Paula, Calle Santa Paul 11, where you can buy jams, orange marmalade, quince paste and "Tocino de cielo" cake. Or to Convento de San Leandro, to Verino, Adolf Domínguez) as well as the Gap type Zara and Mango clothing emporia.

Leather Goods (luxury)

LOEWE - Plaza Nueva, sells those gorgeous, but expensive, buttery leather bags and Hermes type, classic and timeless silk scarves (140 Euros for a scarf). There is also small branch in Hotel Alfonso XIII.

Rest/ refueling stop while shopping

CONFITERÍA LA CAMPANA - Calle Sierpes, 1, for pastries, morning coffee and ice creams.

MY GUIDE TO SEVILLA NIGHTLIFE

Flamenco

Internationally renowned flamenco artists to search out - Eva Yerbabuena, Sara Baras, Antonio Canales, Tomatito (guitar), Paco de Lucía (guitar), María Pagés, Lola Greco, Belén Maya, Farruquito, Cristina Hoyos, Joaquín Cortés.

MUSEO DEL BAILE FLAMENCO

An '06 creation of flamenco legend Cristina Hoyos, star of Carlos Saura's flamenco movies, *Carmen* and *Blood Wedding*, and current director of the Ballet Flamenco de Andalucía. It's a private initiative but subsidized by city hall and the Andalusian regional government. It offers VIP nights with a special tour of the museum, a flamenco performance by top talent accompanied by wine and tapas (www.museoflamenco.com).

The museum, located at Manuel Rojas Marcos. 3, is open for touring from 9:00-6:00 November-March and until 7:00 pm April-October. Admission: Adults €10, children €6.

CASA DE LA MEMORIA DE AL ANDALUS

Is a genuine and noteworthy venue for authentic flamenco housed in an 18th century palace, converted into the Moorish Cultural Center at Calle Ximénez de Enciso, 28. Has received very good reviews. Performances are given nightly at 7:30, and at 9:00 on Mondays (casadelamemoria.es). Adults €16, children €6-11, 10.

LOS GALLOS

Plaza de Santa Cruz, 11, across from the Albahaca restaurant, in the heart of the Barrio de Santa Cruz. This is a traditional flamenco show, a "tablao", a nightclub with a floorshow geared almost exclusively to tourists. There are two shows each evening, 8:15 and 11:30, but for more authenticity, try the late show (www.tablaolosgallos.com). Adults €35, children €20 up to 8, students €32 up to 25, with international card.

TABLAO EL ARENAL

Calle Rodó, 7, near the bullring, has shows at 8:00 (with dinner starting at 7:00) and 10:00 nightly. The show and drink costs €37, show and tapas menu €60, shown and tasting menu €72 (www.tablaoelarenal.com).

For impromptu late-night flamenco sessions (singing - not a floor show)

Not filled with tourists

LA CARBONERÍA

Leviés, 18, is only a few blocks from the Santa María la Blanca church. There's no sign above the red doors. Open daily from 8:00 until 2:30 am. It's a converted coal warehouse turned into bar with two large rooms and an inviting inner courtyard where the local musicians hang out and where impromptu flamenco jam sessions are held from around 11:00 pm to midnight, but the show may start as late as midnight. It attracts a lively, young local crowd, plus a smattering of foreign University Students (www.facebook.com).

CASA ANSELMA

Calle Pagés del Corro, 49, is four blocks back from Calle Betis in Triana, the old gypsy quarter on the other side of the Guadalquivir River, where there's communal singing and revelry, but you need to go very late, after midnight. Owned by a flamenco artist. Look for the façade of bright Andalusian tiles. Not touristy like the tablaos (www.facebook.com).

LO NUESTRO

For impromptu flamenco you can wander through the Triana district on the west side of the Guadalquivir River to the local bars, such as Lo Nuestro on riverfront Calle Betis, 31. Don't go too late (www.facebook.com).

SIMPECAO

Paseo de la O, near the Iglesia de la O in Triana, on the river walk, is a hangout for the young.

BIENAL DE FLAMENCO

For three weeks in September, on **even** numbered years, Sevilla is host to the internationally famous Flamenco festival, in which most of the top names in flamenco dance and music participate (www.labiennial.com).

*Dance***TEATRO LOPE DE VEGA**

Located at the entrance to the Parque de María Luisa, this is where internationally known flamenco artists such as Antonio Canales and Tomatito often performed during season and during the three week long **Bienal de Flamenco** in September of even-numbered years (www.teatrolopedevega.org).

You can check the schedule in the free newspaper **El Giradillo** (www.elegirhoy.com), or in **The Tourist**, which is available in all hotels. You can also check the schedule for famed flamenco performers at **Teatro Central** on the Isla de la Cartuja (www.juntadeandalucia.es).

*Opera***TEATRO DE LA MAESTRANZA OPERA HOUSE**

Right on the Paseo Colón, next to bullring, was built for 92 World's Fair (controversial architecture). The season opens in September (www.teatrodelamaestranza.es).

MY RECOMMEND SEVILLA LODGING

Here are my favorite Sevilla hotels in all price ranges

Note: Holy Week and Feria are extremely popular in Sevilla and throughout Andalucía. Hotels are usually booked several months in advance and charge 3 to 4 times their normal rates, which is typical during most major festivals in Spain.

IN THE BARRIO SANTA CRUZ

High End to Moderate

LAS CASAS DEL REY DE BAEZA ****

Very stylish, luxury 44-room designer hotel tucked away on a cobbled square in a quiet, very authentic residential northeastern portion of the Barrio. It was reconverted in '01 into a charming boutique hotel by the Hospes group, who have reconverted mansions into hotels in Valencia, Alicante, Madrid, Córdoba and Granada. The location is quiet, a very pleasant 10 to 15-minute walk from the cathedral area, in a non-touristy, non-commercial district. The mansion was built by King Fernando III as a gift to the King of Baeza and is adjacent to the Jesús de la Rendención church. In the center of this lovely home are three courtyards; the rooms face the courtyard around galleried walkways and up narrow stairways (www.hospes.com).

The building is typically Andalusian white washed with woodwork painted in blue gray. The windows have sea grass blinds, giving it a faintly colonial feel. Rooms have slate floors, iron beds, flat screen TVs, DVDs and CD players, while in the baths you'll find robes, mosaic tiles and "rain forest" showers. Furnishings are a mixture of ultra modern, Andalusian (simple straw rugs, straw window shades) and Indonesian. Suites are spacious and luxurious, perfect for honeymooners. The *piece de resistance* is their lovely and relaxing rooftop pool area with views of the Giralda.

Lots of quiet inner patios, several downstairs sitting rooms filled with modish cinnamon colored leather sofas, very attractive, full service restaurant. Breakfast includes daily specials plus buffet. The black suited female staff is snap-to professional, fluent in English and very friendly, especially Esperanza, the housekeeping supervisor and Cristina at the front desk. It gets top rating from El País hotel critic. We've sent friends here who have really enjoyed it. It is featured in the Karen Brown "charming hotels of Spain" guide, Louis Vuitton Spain guide and is a member of both Tablet Hotels and Great Small Hotels.

Moderate

LAS CASAS DE LA JUDERÍA ****

Plaza Santa María la Blanca, 5, Barrio de Santa Cru, is a full service hotel, consisting of a series of 27 converted ducal palaces, the former home of the Duque de Béjar, opened for the '92 Worlds Fair. It has 177 rooms, including 12 junior suites, grouped around romantic interior patios (www.intergroupoteles.com).

Hard to find because it's very secluded in the Barrio de Santa Cruz. Near Santa María la Blanca church, down the tiny Callejón de Dos Hermanas. Valet will be looking out for cars trying to come in to the Callejón and will grab one's car and whisk it away to the underground parking garage (for an extra charge). It also houses a full-scale restaurant and piano bar with music each evening from 6:00-7:00. Very well run and well maintained, just what the doctor ordered for first timers (and non-Spanish speakers) to Sevilla. It's handy to

great tapas bars in the neighborhood, such as Modesto for seafood, Bar España of the Egaña Oriza Restaurant and Casa Román for Jabugo ham.

There are plant and fountain filled courtyards and open verandas with wicker sofas. Elegant bedrooms, very comfy. Room No. 29 has its own terrace while No. 30 is a suite with chairs and table in entryway and Oriental rug, plus small balcony. Note: some people find **some** rooms "too dark and gloomy", so ask to see your room before committing. It belongs to the *Casas y Palacios* Intercrop collection, along with the Casas de los Mercaderes. Noted as being the "best bang for your buck" in the city. It now has an outdoor pool.

CASA DEL MAESTRO * (*but don't let that fool ya!!*)

Stayed here 4 nights during Holy Week. It's located between Casa de Pilatos and Santa Catalina church, on a truly tiny, one block long pedestrian street called Almudena, about 15-minute walk to the Cathedral or 5 minutes to the shopping district. Nice tapas bars are also walking distance, such as El Rinconcillo on Gerona (www.lacasadelmaestro.com).

This is an utterly charming but very small (only 11 rooms), completely authentic Andalusian home formerly belonging to famed flamenco guitarist, Niño Ricardo. You enter through an elaborate wrought iron door onto a lovely tiled courtyard where there are a few tables for breakfast and around it, a minuscule reception room and a very minute, nicely furnished parlor lounge with a sofa and an honesty bar (for a glass of Rioja, a whiskey or a gin tonic) and a computer terminal. The decor is simple but very stylish, nice furnishings and wall colors.

The feel is that of a true Sevillain traditional home. There are two floors of guest rooms upstairs in galleries around the courtyard and a delightful rooftop terrace where you can have breakfast overlooking the Giralda and Cathedral in the distance. No elevator and a very narrow staircase, which accounts mainly for the fact that the hotel only gets one star in the official classification from the government tourism agency.

The rooms are all individually and lovingly decorated and named (the decorator, wife of Niño Ricardo's grandson, had deep pockets) with design furniture, high quality linens and upholstery, some having canopy beds. Our room, Tierra Minera also had a sofa, coffee table, Persian rug and beautiful enormous Moroccan ceramic water vessel and faced the street. The bathrooms are decorated in flowery tiles, the toiletry sets are from Escada and there are fresh flower vases. There is daily evening turndown service with pitcher of ice water and chocolates, satellite TV, individually controlled heating and a/c which really works, breakfast brought to your room by the white-jacketed (Tunisian?) butler, unless you want to have it in the rooftop terrace.

Service is very personal and familiar, like being a guest in a private home. Some people might not like this type of service, preferring the convenience of a larger hotel with more amenities. Price wise, it is at the level of most 3-4 star hotels in town but delivers very high quality for the money.

It belongs to the Rusticae group, a lovely collection of small Spanish hotels with charm and character, which can be booked easily through Inns of Spain (innsofspain.com). It's also a selection of Lugares Divinos, as is the Cortijo Soto Real in Utrera, and it's featured in Alistair Sawday's Special Places to Stay/Spain guide.

CASA 7 ***

Calle Vírgenes, 7, Barrio de Santa Cruz, in the heart of Santa Cruz quarter but with NO parking garage of it's own (casanumero7.com). A very special, private, *"not for children"*, home away from home owned by the very suave scion of the regal González Byass sherry family of Jerez, don Gonzalo González y Gordon who oozes with aristocratic charm, is very, very British and outrageously well-connected. Mom is a Gordon (Gordon's gin), and he's left (sterling) framed pictures of Prince Phillip, King Alfonso XIII and King Juan Carlos in the parlor, all intimate family friends. He's decorated the six rooms of the three-story manor with his own personal family heirlooms, priceless oils, antiques, and Orientals (www.casanumero7.com).

Everything is exquisite, down to the last detail, but also totally impractical for a hotel (didn't dare take that gorgeous, irreplaceable crystal decanter of bath gel into the shower for fear it would break). Had to use a step stool to hang clothes in the closets since they were built for ball gowns. Casa 7 started out as a privileged, private pied-a-terre for his ruling class British pals (guest book remarks make an interesting read - "Dear Gonzalo, lovely stay-no children, no Americans!"), but then he opened it up to us commoners (only God knows why).

It's right down the street from Casas de la Judería in the heart of the Barrio de Santa Cruz. The €177 rate includes full English breakfast (scrambled or fried eggs, breads, jams, ham, freshly squeezed juice), VAT is extra. During our stay we had 2 sweet, shy white-jacketed Ecuadorian servants/butlers at our constant beck and call (just opened our room door and they magically appeared) to do laundry, fetch drinks, make phone calls, all at no extra charge. They're brothers, and we grew quite fond of them. Hope they're still on duty. Others we've sent here have loved them too. Plus at cocktail time in the formal parlor we had the pleasure of Don Gonzalo's engaging company, his stories about being shipped off at age 12 to England to clean toilets (had to learn the value of money and hard work) and his dining/entertainment advice. We even joined him and his wife for dinner at Modesto. He had just come back from a big game hunting safari in Africa and salmon fishing in Scotland, so he may not be in attendance during your stay. He has opened another beautiful B&B, Casa Viña de Alcántara, in a former hunting lodge on the edge of his family's vineyards outside of Jerez de la Frontera.



However, two caveats here: if Gonzalo is off on one of his world adventures, it's not quite the same experience if you don't get to meet him, chat and sip sherry. His favorite formal restaurant is the Egaña-Oriza and for casual dining/tapas, he prefers Modesto. British Tatler magazine called it "one of the best small hotels in the world". Also the new house manager isn't reportedly as knowledgeable about the city as the staff at the Judería or Amadeus, and since the guests are primarily British, it may appear to some Americans as too British or even too formal, stuffy. It's not a place for families, and it's not a place for those who must have sat. TV, CD player, video games, internet access, constant activity. Like something out of Noel Coward, a rather unique experience. It's featured in Alistair Sawday's Special Places to Stay/Spain guide and is a member of Great Small Hotels. Can be booked through Inns of Spain (innsofspain.com), where one can read the guest reviews.

POSADA DEL LUCERO ****

On Almirante Apodaca, near the Plaza Cristo de Burgos on the very upper edges of the Santa Cruz quarter and around the corner from the Casa del Maestro, a quiet, residential location. It's a '06 entry into the Seville design hotel scene, brought by owners of the Hotel Rey Alfonso X. It is housed in former inn of the 17th century and is done in sleek, minimalist style (www.hotelposadadelucero.es).

The 38 rooms and three jr. suites offer a/c, safes, minibars, king size beds, free daily press and evening turndown service, internet access, bare floors, walnut woods, textiles from prestigious Gastón y Daniela, and the baths are done in a sleek white and slate color palette. Rates include buffet breakfast. Other hotel amenities include a coffee shop, 24-hour room service, solarium and free daily press. A standard double goes for as low as €121,58, not including breakfast.

*Upper Budget***HOTEL AMADEUS *****

Calle Farnesio 6, Barrio de Santa Cruz, new, sweet little 19-room B&B with a musical (piano-Mozart) theme and owned by a mother-daughter team. It is situated on a tiny, narrow street in the heart of the Barrio de Santa Cruz at Farnesio. 6, near the Casas de la Judería and Santa María la Blanca church, a terrific location. It's a less expensive option, kind of a "budget boutique". Attractive downstairs parlor with typical and very pretty Andalusian tiled patio fitted with grand piano for special evening concerts, given usually twice a week, also a music library and practice room (www.hotelamadeussevilla.com).

The rooms are supposed to be sound-proofed, but if you want to come back to your room for an early evening siesta, you may be disturbed by music from downstairs, classical music playing in the background. The evening manager is particularly sweet, and in general the staff gets high reviews for kindness and attention to detail. A Fodor's poster was unhappy with his attic suite, called the "ático" on the web page, but otherwise the rooms get very nice reviews.

The Jr. suite on the 3rd floor, 2nd floor in Europe, is especially nice, the one with green floral bedding and an exposed beam ceiling and others have enjoyed the 2nd floor Maria Callas room. The blue room pictured on the web site, with piano, has a large bathroom and is on the 3rd floor. Nice, fluffy towels. Downstairs room is rather narrow lacks privacy since it's off the hall on the way from the parlor where concerts are held to the back sitting room, but the upstairs rooms are quite nice and antique filled. Twin beds put together to make doubles with antique headboards. There is an Elevator. Lovely roof top terrace overlooks the Giralda tower of the cathedral. Received a nice write up in British Condé Nast Traveler and is also a Rick Steves favorite, so book far in advance.

A standard double is from €85-€112, but the rates go up to €184/night for during Holy Week and the April fair. Breakfast is €9,35/person.

The owners have opened an annex, **La Música**, around the corner with 6 exterior (somewhat noisy at night) and 6 interior (patio) rooms. All of the rooms here have a plasma TV. Check in is done at the Amadeus, where breakfast is taken, either in the lobby or the rooftop terrace. Both can be booked with Inns of Spain (innsospain.com) where guest reports have been highly favorable.

HOTEL ALCÁNTARA **

Calle Ximénez de Enciso, 28, Barrio de Santa Cruz, is as new as the Hotel Amadeus, but entirely different in ambience (hotelalcantara.net). It has a pared down, contemporary, “dorm-chic” type IKEA style with spare décor and hospital mounted TVs in the bedrooms but also has a lovely interior courtyard (if somewhat sparsely decorated too) and an equally great location in the heart of the Santa Cruz quarter. No balcony rooms. A former 18th century seigniorial mansion, it was reconverted into a hotel three years ago. A Fodor friend stayed there for 4 nights during Holy Week and was happy. (www.hotelalcantara.net).

It's €152 tariff for a standard double during holy week is a good value, but for the same money I'd choose the Amadeus for more charm and typical Sevilla character.

A great flamenco venue, **Casas de la Memoria**, is located on the same street. This hotel, along with many of my favorites, can be booked through Inns of Spain and guest reviews have been quite positive. It's also a Rick Steves favorite, keeping it constantly filled.

*Budget***HOTEL DOÑA MANUELA ****

Paseo Catalina de Ribera 2, nicely located next to the Murillo Gardens and adjacent to my favorite tapas bar/restaurant, *Modesto*, and a member of the Modesto hostelry group. It has 19 pleasant rooms with a/c, in-room safe, flat screen sat. TV. Three superior rooms on the top floor have their own private verandas (www.hoteldonamauela.com).

The building has an elevator and WiFi access. The Holy Week/April Fair double room rates are only €169, actually a decent value for Seville's “extra season”. Continental breakfast costs an additional €5,99.

HOSTERÍA DEL LAUREL **

This is another convenient, economical option right on the prettiest square in the Barrio, above the bar/restaurant *Hostería del Laurel* of the Don Juan legend at Plaza del los Venerables, 5 (www.hosteriadellaurel.com).

In the beginning of the play, where Don Juan would hold court and boast about his many conquests and where the famous bet was made that he could capture the heart of a young nun. Downstairs is atmospheric bar with hanging hams. There is a menu in English for tourists, not Seville's very finest cuisine, but still good. 22 rooms open onto a courtyard. Simple décor, marble baths and unadorned marble floors and A/C. Under €96 for a double, breakfast included. Prices are not outrageously gouged during Feria, or Holy Week. There are also apartments available. But check recent guest reviews on Booking.com and Trip Advisor.

UN PATIO EN SANTA CRUZ **

Can be found on pedestrianized Calle Doncellas, number 15, near the 4-star Casas de la Judería. It is a budget option in the quarter that provides far more comfort than many hostels. It's housed in a completely renovated 19th century building, its 13 rooms distributed on three floors around a central atrium (www.patiosantacruz.com)

The hotel is equipped with an elevator. The stark white lobby with marble floor is made more inviting and cheery with hanging flowerpots and contemporary artwork. Smallish

guest rooms offer a/c, satellite TV (including CNN), phone, safe, free WiFi (but no desk for one's laptop), Ikea style furnishings and bare hardwood floors. Most rooms are interior with windows facing the atrium rather than the street. Some guests have complained about noise coming from the atrium. The few exterior rooms keep the street noise at bay with double glazed windows. Two top floor rooms have direct access to the roof top terrace with its views of the cathedral. The terrace is furnished with lounge chairs and a fridge, and guests can purchase drinks at the reception desk to enjoy on the terrace.

The hotel does not serve breakfast, but it's situated around the corner from Las Doncellas bakery, and cafés abound in the vicinity. For €65-€85 per night for a standard double room, €146 during Semana Santa, this small hotel offers a good value. One should always check the guest reviews on Inns of Spain as well as on Trip Advisor before booking.

HOSTAL CALLEJÓN DEL AGUA

Calle Coral del Rey, 23, a quiet street in the heart of the quarter, is perhaps a better choice in terms of style, sophistication and comfort than the two 2 star budget hotels mentioned above. Because of its architectural limitations, it can only be classified as a hostel, but it offers many amenities of a "budget boutique" hotel. Housed in a 19th century typical Seville residence, it was very nicely reconverted in '06 (www.callejondelagua.com).

Downstairs you'll find a lovely central patio with fountain, and the 16 rooms are distributed among three floors (no elevator), up the lovely original staircase. Each is named for a particular brotherhood of Holy Week. One room is handicapped accessible, and the doubles have either a double bed or two singles. They've been stylishly decorated and all are exterior. Some have balconies facing the quiet street. All provide the same amenities: free WiFi, a/c, satellite TV, hair dryers in baths (but no make up mirror or fancy toiletries). There are no in-room safes but one can leave valuables in the reception desk safe.

As do most all of my favorite Seville hotels, the Callejón has a roof top terrace furnished with tables and chairs where one can enjoy a drink purchased from machines. The hostel does offer a simple, free continental breakfast consisting of coffee and pastries. For dining, almost endless opportunities are available in the neighborhood. This cheerful and pretty little place offers great value, a double for only €150, during Seville's "extra" season, Holy Week and April fair, when most hotels double or even triple their rates. The hostel is located around the corner from the charming Callejón del Agua restaurant and just one minute away from one of my favorite tapas bars, Bar Estrella.

Downtown*Luxury***WESTIN ALFONSO XIII *******

Avenida San Fernando, 2, a 151-room, Starwood Luxury Collection, 5-star Grand Lux, neo-Moorish palace hotel built by Alfonso XII to house VIPs visiting the 1929 Ibero-American exhibition, and completely renovated in 2012. Celebrities such as Julio & Enrique Iglesias stay here (www.starwoodhotels.com).

All the society events and important news conferences take place here. Conventions too. Some members of the Royal Family stayed here when daughter was married in Seville's cathedral. Nice for an afternoon tea, or a Sunday brunch. Has a small branch of famous leather shop, "Loewe".

*Moderate***CASA ROMANA ******

Trajano, 9, a few blocks above the top end of pedestrian Calle Sierpes, and a 10-minute walk from the Cathedral is a 4-star, 27 room property opened in September '04, with both modern and traditional wings and beautiful interior patios (hotelcasaromana.com). The name refers to the hotels owners, a noted family of jewelers, and its location on Calle Trajano, named after the Roman emperor (www.hotelcasaromana.com).

The stylish rooms, set around an interior patio with beautifully tiled fountain, all have satellite TV, minibar, safe, hair dryer and WiFi Internet access. Rooms in the historic wing face the street and are blessed with high ceilings. The elegant marble baths have double sinks. There's a rooftop terrace with a Jacuzzi for 8 and 24-hour room service and laundry. Room rates do run on the high side compared to my other favorites, and buffet breakfast costs an extra €17. Represented by Secret Places, Chic Retreats and the very reliable Inns of Spain, which lists it as a 4-flower property, lots of charm.

TABERNA DEL ALABARDERO ****

Calle Zaragoza. 20, is housed in a 19th century mansion built around a central patio above the famed restaurant of the same name. It is in a less pretty, captivating section of downtown, but has just 7 uniquely decorated rooms named for Andalusian cities. Some are large and bright, others rather gloomy. Opt for a deluxe room or suite; the Málaga suite has a separate living room with a fireplace. There is also a rooftop terrace (www.tabernadelalabardero.es)

Owned by the priest and King's confessor, *Luis de Lezama*, who runs his restaurant empire (Tabernas in Madrid – 5 locations, Marbella, San Pedro de Alcántara and even Washington, D.C.) for his foundation, which benefits orphanages and underprivileged youth.

This Taberna also houses his restaurant/hotel/catering school. Creative Basque cuisine in elegant 2nd floor dining rooms, plus lively, always crowded bistro downstairs serving a bargain menu del día. Very busy 24/7 downstairs. Also featured in the Louis Vuitton Spain guide and a Karen Brown Spain guide favorite.

*Upper Budget***HOTEL ALMINAR *****

The 12-room Alminar, which means “minaret” in Spanish, opened in March '05 as a sister to the Alcántara. It's found down a quiet pedestrianized street, Alvarez Quintero, near Casa Robles, a stone's throw, 50 meters, from the cathedral. It has a small reception area and a side courtyard where breakfast is served and where you can relax with a complimentary coffee, soda, water or beer stored in the fridge (www.hotelalminar.com).

The compact but stylish rooms are decorated in minimalist style, baths done in green glass and are equipped with a/c, satellite TV, phones, minibar and Internet access. Two superior double rooms on the top floor have private terraces and Giralda views.

Guests rave about the warm welcome received from the young, friendly and helpful English speaking desk staff. Breakfast costs an additional €6 and can be skipped due to the high number of cafes in the area. Solid Trip Advisor reviews. In fact, it and the Amadeus make it to the very top of Trip Advisor's popularity index, primarily because of their high price/quality ratio. Can also be booked through Inns of Spain and is featured in Alistair Sawday's Special Places to Stay/Spain guide.

Note: *The Alminar has a sister hotel on the Costa de la Luz, in Vejer de la Frontera, **La Botica de Vejer**.*

HOTEL ADRIANO **

Calle Adriano, 12, is located downtown on a street loaded with tapas bars and is just behind the beautiful bullring, Plaza de la Real Maestranza, a block from the Guadalquivir River in the El Arenal quarter (hoteladriano.net). Opened in '03; this lovely completely renovated Seville mansion is painted a pretty peach color. Has a pretty Andalusian style patio, a Jacuzzi on the top floor, a roof top terrace, a café with outdoor seating, and the 34 rooms are kept immaculate. They are furnished in traditional style, some with 4-poster beds. All have marble floors and offer in-room safes, satellite TV and baths with hair dryers (en.adrianohotel.com).

Other Areas**LA MACARENA****LA ALCOBA DEL REY *****

An 11-room “boutique” hotel not in the heart of the Santa Cruz district, but instead further north, in the Macarena district, next to the Macarena Basílica, and owned by an importer of Moroccan house ware. The interior patio is reminiscent of one at the Alcázar, and each room is individually decorated in high Andalusian (Moorish) style and named for a figure of Al Andalus culture. The Beatriz de Suabia room is said to be the most romantic, with a 4-poster bed. They all have Moroccan rugs, lamps and beds. Baths either have a stand alone tubs or semi-open showers integrated into the room (www.alcobadelrey.com).

It is represented by Rusticae and Inns of Spain and designated a 3-flower property. Rooms have all the mod cons (except for minibar), plus hotel provides Internet access, 24-hour room service and garage parking. Guest praise the courteous and helpful staff.

If you fall in love with a piece of china, a crystal goblet, a lamp, your bed or your curtains, these items may be purchased and shipped home. The rates do run high for such an off-center location, a 20-minute walk from the cathedral, but breakfast is included in the tariff.

SUITES AND APARTMENTS HANDY FOR FAMILIES

SUITES DEL MAESTRO

Brand new apartments created by the owners of my favorite boutique hotel, Casa del Maestro, located near the cathedral on Hernando Col, a pedestrian only street. There are six apartments here; four of them sleep 4 guests (2-bedroom, 1-bath), 2 apartments sleep 2 (1-bedroom, 1-bath), and each is named for a flamenco master. The two apartments on the top floor, Lola Flores and Pepe Pinto, have private terraces overlooking the Giralda. All boast marble floors, bold color schemes, in bright blue and red, Turkish wall hangings, Moroccan brass lamps and cushions from India. The showers are tiny but bathrobes and slippers, along with deluxe toiletries, are provided. Living rooms have wall-mounted plasma TV and free WiFi. They are built around a central patio in a new building rather than an historic Andalusian home and provide the same high class and style as the Casa del Maestro. The kitchens come equipped with fridge, microwave and 2-burner stove (www.lacasademaestro.com).

As is the case of the Casa del Maestro, the reception desk is staffed only from 9:00-10:00, but when you arrive (by taxi!), a butler will greet you and escort you to your suite (via the elevator). Other amenities include minibar, daily cleaning and laundry service. During the high, high season, called "extra season", Holy Week and Feria de Abril, rates range from €259 - €500, not a bad price at all for 4 people when room rates across the city triple. The Suites are a selection of Rusticae, Secret Places, Inns of Spain and i-escape.

CASA ABADES

There are only two suites, sleeping two persons each, in this exclusive and historic, three-story luxury property decorated in Moorish-Andalusian style and represented by Secret Places (casaabades.com). It is located in the center of Sevilla across near the Cathedral and offers a living room with fireplace, satellite TV, CD player, a/c, tiny rooftop pool (dipping size) and barbeque grill. There is no daily maid service, but the owner provides clean sheets, pillows and towels for guests. Iron and ironing board and hair dryer, are also provided, along with free Internet access. Kitchenette has a stove with 4 burners and dishware for 4. A minimum of 3 nights is required (www.secretplaces.com).

APARTAMENTOS MURILLO

In the heart of the atmospheric Santa Cruz quarter on Reinos, 6, has 16 air conditioned apartments with kitchenettes, located one block from the Murillo gardens (www.grupoadhra.com).

While offering a very good value for 3 (a tight fit for 4), Trip Advisor reviews suggest that visitors not book a ground floor apartment because of street noise and noise coming from the reception area. Second floor apartments, or those facing the back, are best. Elevator cannot access 3rd floor apartments. After 11:00 guests must go to the Hotel Murillo next door to access their apartment. Kitchenettes have full fridge, stove, coffee maker, microwave and dishware but no dishwasher. No Internet access or laundry facilities, no satellite TV (just

Spanish channels). Don't attempt to drive to the hotel, as it is situated on a pedestrianized street in the heart of the Moorish maze that is the Santa Cruz quarter.

CORTIJOS or HACIENDAS

Outside the city - within a 20-minute drive

HACIENDA LA BOTICARIA *****

Located between Alcalá de Guadaíra and Utrera, 12 km from Seville, is a beautiful, expensive and luxurious property on a gorgeous estate, owned by the Agua de Sevilla perfume firm, which keeps growing in both reputation and size. Now with 110 rooms and 29 suites it is surrounded by 4 gardens (www.eurostarshaciendalaboticaria.com)

There are several pools, stables and a complete riding program, spa and 18-hole golf course. The large rooms are outfitted with the finest in amenities, including bathrobes and high-speed Internet access. 24-hour room service, two restaurants including "El Molino Blanco" with a fantastic Basque chef and outstanding wine list, plus the more informal "Taberna de Sirio", located in the stables, plus convention facilities and helipad. The coach house has a collection of stunning antique carriages.

CORTIJO SOTO REAL *****

This is another ultra deluxe, country house/hotel, with breathtaking views, located on a 5,000-acre estate outside of Utrera. Nonstop activities include swimming in two pools, a complete spa with body treatments, gym, indoor pool, sauna, Jacuzzi and beauty salon, plus tennis, mountain biking, quads, 4X4 guided excursions, clay partridge shoots, carriage rides, and horseback riding (www.hotelcortijosotoreal.com).

The resort has its own stables, *Yeguada Marquesa*. The main restaurant, Al Andalus, with exquisite Moorish décor, offers set priced dinners, while the Bistro del Jardín serves lunch under the rose covered pergolas by the pool. This palace property is the former home of an Algerian prince and now belongs to the Belgian director of HACE and decorated by the renowned Pascua Ortega. There are only 24 large rooms with 24-hour room service, high speed internet access, flat screen TV, and the marble baths provide make up mirrors, bathrobes, Loewe toiletries, Jacuzzi tubs and separate showers. The hotel also offers baby-sitting service. It has been well reviewed by Fernando Gallardo of El País.

A member of the Small Leading Hotels group, Époque Hotels, Chic Retreats (along with Seville's Casa 7, mentioned above), Magic Safari Lodges, and is a 4-flower selection of Inns of Spain. It's also a selection of Johansens, JP Moser, Great Small Hotels and Lugares Divinos.

HACIENDA DE ORÁN ****

A "heaven for horse lovers", also a member of Rusticae, but much smaller, simpler and less expensive, more of a B & B type of lodging. Located 27 kms from the city near Utrera, it sits in the middle of a *vega* surrounded by olive and palm trees, on 400 acres of land (haciendadeoran.com).

It's the quintessential Andalusian hacienda from the 17th century, surrounded by whitewashed walls. There is a watchtower and stables. It has a restaurant, swimming pool, biking, and 4x4 excursions. There is a full riding program plus carriage rides. Its carriage

museum has the best private collection of horse drawn carriages in Spain. The hacienda offers 13 double rooms, 4 jr. suites and 2 suites. Rooms are outfitted with king size beds, a/c, sat. TV, radio, desks and baths come with bathrobes. Joanne Wier holds week long cooking classes here. The hacienda does a brisk wedding business with the wedding banquets reserving the entire restaurant so you may want to book here mid-week. Breakfast costs an additional €12.

Caveat: Please read the guest reviews on innsofspain.com regarding flies! Remember that this is a working ranch as well as hotel.