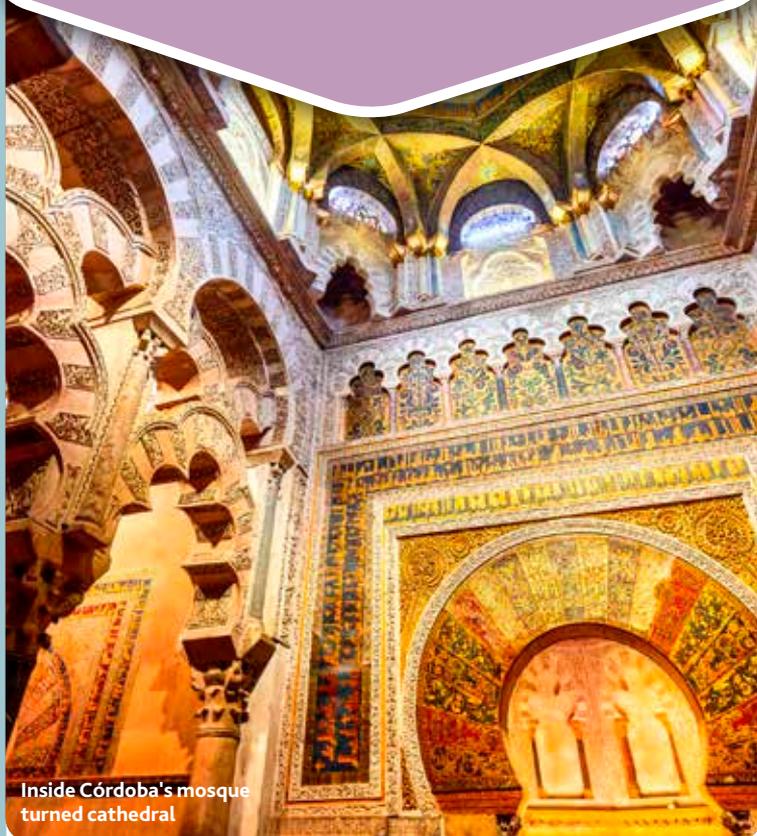


Culture in Córdoba



Inside Córdoba's mosque turned cathedral

In the Spanish city of Córdoba, one of the greatest mosques ever built in Europe overlooks a web of winding medieval lanes that reveal a striking mix of Roman, Moorish and Spanish cultures.

📍 SIGHTS

Alcázar de los Reyes Cristianos

(alcazardelosreyescristianos.cordoba.es; Campo Santo de los Mártires)

Built under Castilian rule in the 13th and 14th centuries on the remains of a Moorish predecessor, this fort-cum-palace was where the monarchs Fernando and Isabel first met Christopher Columbus in 1486.

Asociación de Amigos de los Patios Cordobeses

(Calle San Basilio 44)

This particularly lovely patio, dripping with bougainvillea and other plants, can be visited free all year round. The brightness of its colour depends on the season, but even if the blooms are disappointing, you can still

browse craft workshops within the patio.

Caballerizas Reales

(cordobaecuestre.com; Calle Caballerizas Reales 1)

These elegant stables were built by order of King Felipe II in 1570 as a centre for developing the tall Spanish thoroughbred warhorse (caballo andaluz). The centre still breeds these fine horses and trains mounts and riders in equestrian disciplines. You can watch training or attend the one-hour show that combines horse and rider skills with flamenco dance and music.

Centro Flamenco Fosforito

(00 34 957 47 68 29; Plaza del Potro)

Possibly the best flamenco museum in Andalucía, the

Fosforito centre has exhibits, film and information panels in English and Spanish, giving the history of the guitar and all the flamenco greats.

Medina Azahara

(medinaazahara.org; Carretera Palma del Río Km 5.5)

Five miles west of Córdoba stands what's left of Medina Azahara, the sumptuous palace-city built by Caliph Abd ar-Rahman III in the 10th century. The complex spills down a hillside, with the caliph's palace (the area you visit today) on the highest levels overlooking what were gardens and open fields. The residential areas (still unexcavated) were set away to each side. A fascinating modern museum has been installed below the site.

Mezquita

(mezquita-catedraldecordoba.es; Calle Cardenal Herrero)

It's impossible to overemphasise the beauty of Córdoba's great mosque, in all its remarkable serenity (even in spite of the tourist crowds). One of the world's greatest works of Islamic architecture, the Mezquita hints, with lustrous decoration, at a refined age when Muslims, Jews and Christians lived side-by-side in an interaction of cultures. In the 16th century, a Christian cathedral was plonked right in the middle of the mosque.

Museo Julio Romero de Torres

(Plaza del Potro 1; 00 34 957 47 03 56)

A former hospital houses this popular museum devoted to the much-loved local painter Julio Romero de Torres (1874–1930), who is famed for his paintings expressing his admiration of Andalusian female beauty. He was also much inspired by flamenco and bullfighting.

Palacio de Viana

(palaciodeviana.com; Plaza de Don Gome 2)

A stunning Renaissance palace with 12 beautiful, plant-filled patios, the Viana Palace is a particular delight to visit in spring. Occupied by the Marquesses de Viana until 1980, the building is packed with art.

Puente Romano

(Av del Alcázar, s/n, 14003)

Spanning the Río Guadalquivir just below the Mezquita, the handsome, 16-arched Roman bridge formed part of the ancient Via Augusta, which ran from Girona in Catalonia to Cádiz.

Sinagoga

(turismodecordoba.org; Calle Judíos 20)

Constructed in 1315, this small, probably private or family synagogue is one of the best-surviving testaments to the Jewish presence in medieval Andalucía, though it hasn't been used as a place of worship since the expulsion of Jews in 1492. It's decorated with extravagant stucco work and inscriptions.

Templo Romano

(Calle Capitulares 1)

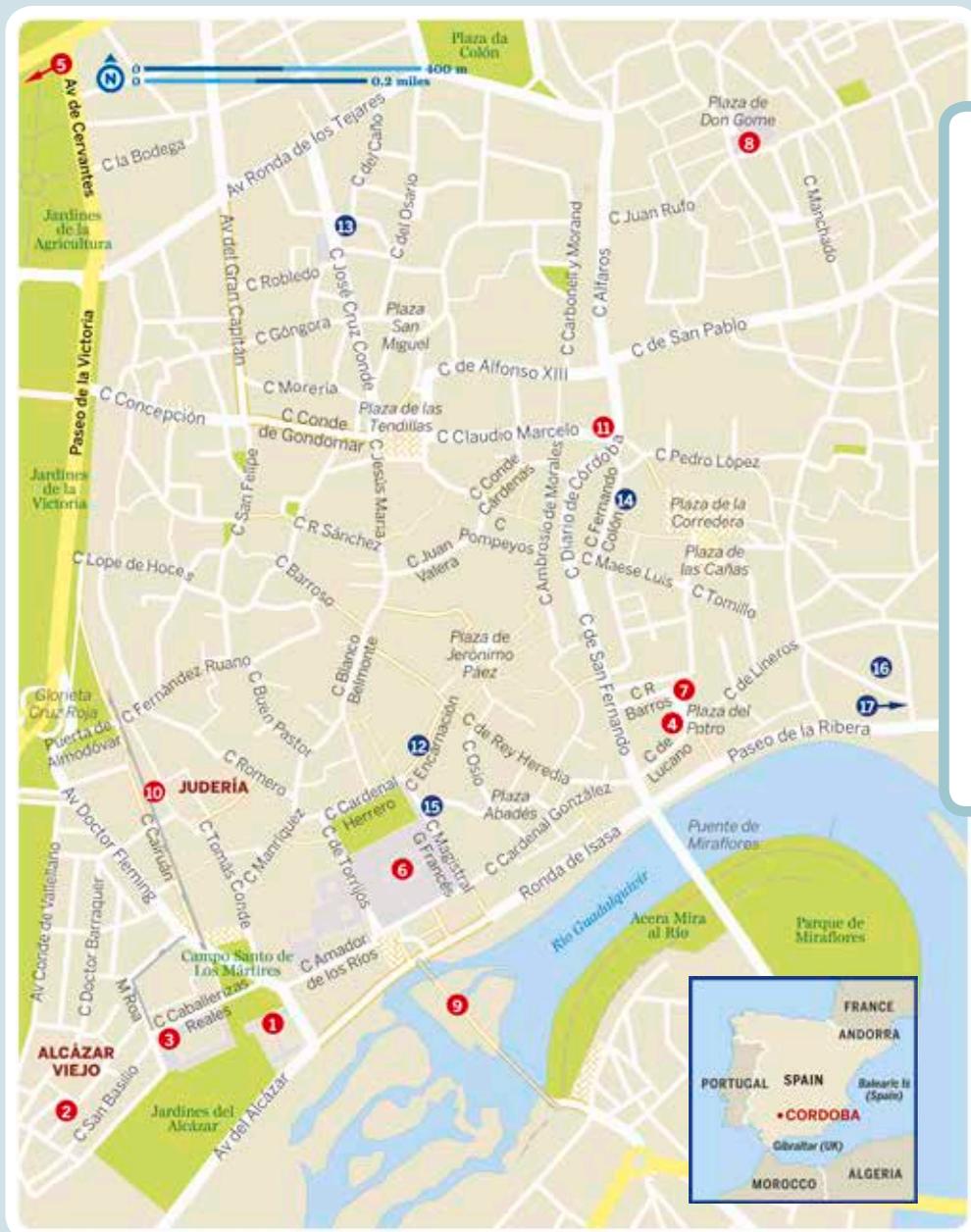
This 1st-century AD Roman temple has 11 Corinthian columns, which make a striking sight, especially when floodlit. Probably dedicated to emperor worship, the temple is thought to have looked east towards a huge Roman circus. The band of cats that hangs out here must be the most photographed in Spain.

Good to know

Oway Tours does an entertaining, free, 2½-hour walking introduction to the city, with enthusiastic guides providing snippets of history along the way. Find the guides with blue shirts and blue umbrellas in Plaza de las Tendillas at 10.30am daily: participants are divided into English-, Spanish- and French-speaking groups (owaytours.com).



CULTURE IN CÓRDOBA



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TOP PICKS

Sleeping

Balcón de Córdoba

£££

Best for 17th-century architecture (balcondecordoba.com)

Offering boutique luxury near the Mezquita, the 10-room Balcón de Córdoba has a lovely patio, slick rooms and ancient stone relics dotted around.

Bed and Be

£

Best for a budget option (bedandbe.com)

An exceptional hostel: staff are clued up on Córdoba's social scene and there's a great rooftop bar.

Casa de los Azulejos

££

Best for great azulejos (tiles) (casadelosazulejos.com)

Hints of Mexico infuse this stylish hotel; the patio has banana plants, ferns and potted palms bathed in sunlight. The uncluttered rooms feature big beds and pastel walls.

Hotel Mezquita

££

Best for proximity to the Mezquita (hotelmezquita.com)

This place has elegant rooms with marble floors and balconies overlooking the mosque.

Patio del Posadero

££

Best for Moorish design (patiodelposadero.com)

A 15th-century building has been superbly converted with unique contemporary design in the old-Córdoba Moorish style.

Viento 10

££

Best for chilling (hotelviento10.es)

This place offers eight relaxing, comfortable rooms in a beautiful, bright style, and ancient pillars in alcoves in the walls.



FURTHER READING

Lonely Planet's *Andalucía* guide (£13.99) has a Córdoba section. It's also available as an eBook (£9.79) and as an individual Córdoba PDF chapter (£2.99).