

#002

YNS TRAVEL ZINE

memory in the andalus

MADRID
GRANADA
SEVILLE





hi. hola!

Stories from my journey through Andalusia in May 2026. Tracing the places I had once read and only seen through films and television.

Last year, I became quietly obsessed with documentaries about Al-Andalus. I watched stories about the Alhambra, its palaces, intricate geometry, the mind blowing lion fountains and the civilisation that once made southern Spain one of the great centres of the Islamic world.

The more I watched, the more impossible it became to think of Andalusia as just another destination on a map. It became somewhere I wanted to see with my own eyes.

And then there was Game of Thrones.

Like millions of others, I had spent years watching kingdoms rise and fall from behind a screen. But I didn't always realise how much of that fantasy world had been brought to life in Spain, particularly in Andalusia. I watched the gardens of the Royal Alcázar of Seville become the Water Gardens of Dorne. The magnificent Plaza de España appeared in Star Wars: Episode II – Attack of the Clones. Granada's old cobbled streets, Seville's palaces and the dramatic landscapes of southern Spain had already appeared in stories I knew long before I ever arrived there.

So, in a strange way, Spain did feel like déjàvu.

I had seen fragments of it before. On Netflix. Also in Saiful Nang's video of Rarecation haha. They truly inspired me a lot!

And somewhere between these places, I found myself searching for a history I had only just begun to understand.

This is that journey. The echoes of Al-Andalus.

“If I'm an advocate for anything, it's to move. As far as you can, as much as you can. Across the ocean, or simply across the river. The extent to which you can walk in someone else's shoes or at least eat their food, it's a plus for everybody.”
— Anthony Bourdain

**Y. Nabila,
Kuala Lumpur.
2026**

things i wish i knew before going.

BY Y.NABILA

Andalusia is surprisingly easy to explore once you understand its rhythm. But don't try to see everything in one day.

Book major attractions such as the Alhambra well in advance, especially if you want a particular time slot. For moving between cities, trains are usually the easiest option, comfortable, fast and much less stressful than driving into historic city centres. In Seville and Granada, staying somewhere within or close to the old town can save you a lot of time because so much of the city is best explored on foot.

Carry a comfortable pair of shoes.

You will walk a lot—and the beautiful cobblestone streets are not particularly friendly to tired feet. Keep a refillable water bottle with you, as there were a lot of refill spots you can drop by.

Muslim travellers on halal spots.

There were a few options available, particularly in larger tourist areas, but they aren't everywhere. Also, check opening hours and don't assume that every restaurant serving Mediterranean or Middle Eastern food is halal. Vegetarian and seafood dishes can also make things easier when options are limited.





Aloa
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HELADERIAS



GRANADA





For me, Granada was where my fascination with Al-Andalus finally became something real. The city was significant under the Nasrid dynasty, which ruled the Emirate of Granada from 1232 until 1492. As Muslim territories gradually fell to Christian kingdoms during the Reconquista, Granada became the last Muslim-ruled state in Iberia. Its rulers built the Alhambra as their palace-fortress, overlooking the city and the surrounding Sierra Nevada.

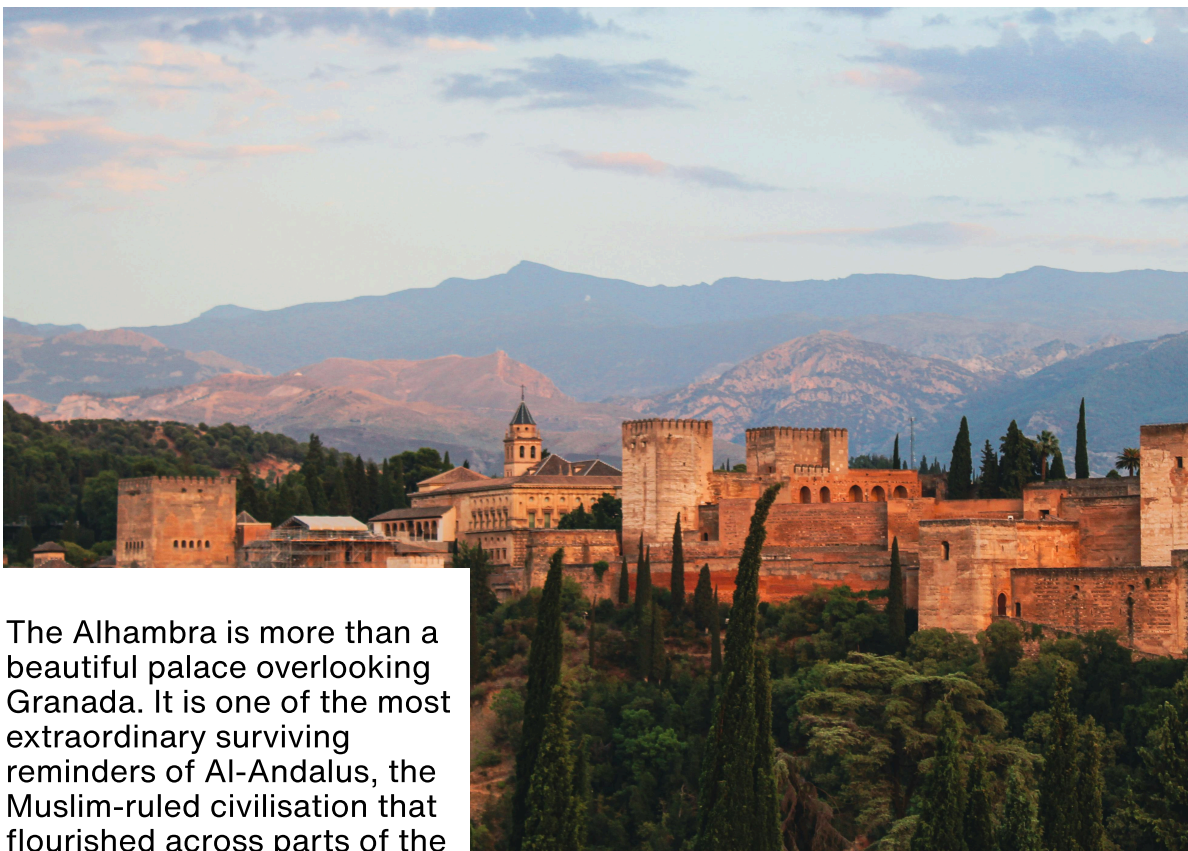
Granada was also a city shaped by water. The surrounding mountains provided streams that were channelled into the city through an intricate network of irrigation systems. Water supplied homes, gardens, baths and agricultural land, helping transform Granada into a remarkably fertile place. Some of the traditional acequias and water systems still influence the landscape today.

In 1492, Muhammad XII—known in Spanish history as Boabdil, surrendered Granada to Ferdinand II of Aragon and Isabella I of Castile. The Nasrid Kingdom was gone. Muslim political rule in Iberia had come to an end.

Granada continued to carry traces of the civilisation that had shaped it for centuries. Some were preserved, transformed, some were also deliberately erased, and others simply absorbed into the city that came afterwards.

That is perhaps what made Granada so emotional for me.





The Alhambra is more than a beautiful palace overlooking Granada. It is one of the most extraordinary surviving reminders of Al-Andalus, the Muslim-ruled civilisation that flourished across parts of the Peninsula for centuries. Its name is generally associated with the Arabic al-ḥamrā' meaning "the red one". You can see why the name is associated with the reddish hue of its walls, especially at dusk, when the setting sun casts a warm light.

Alhambra when the night falls.





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YNS TRAVEL ZINE





SEVILLE

PLAZA DE ESPAÑA
PHOTOGRAPHED BY Y.NABILA



the city of Dorne.

As a Game of Thrones fan, walking into the Real Alcázar of Seville felt slightly surreal. This was Dorne—the fictional kingdom I had watched on screen—except the real palace was far older and far more fascinating than the fantasy world created around it.

The Alcázar itself carries centuries of Islamic architectural influence, particularly in its intricate mudéjar decoration. Standing there, I kept thinking about how strange travel can be, sometimes you visit a place because you saw it in a television series, only to discover a much older story. I knew nothing about it before!

Alcázar comes from the Arabic al-qasr (القصر), meaning “the palace” or “the castle.” The Arabic word itself ultimately comes from the Latin castrum, meaning a fortified place.

So when you hear Real Alcázar de Sevilla, you are essentially hearing a name that carries a little piece of Al-Andalus within it: the Royal Palace of Seville.





PLAZA DE ESPAÑA
PHOTOGRAPHED BY Y.NABILA

the Naboo in Seville



I had already seen it transformed into the fictional city of Theed on the planet Naboo in Star Wars: Episode II – Attack of the Clones, if you watched it, if you haven't go watch it now! On screen, it looked almost unreal and strangely otherworldly. When I arrived here, I stood dumbfounded as I realised the real thing was even more beautiful.

Built for the Ibero-American Exposition of 1929, Plaza de España is one of Seville's most recognisable landmarks. Its enormous semicircular building embraces a central plaza, with a canal running along the front and four bridges representing the four ancient kingdoms of Spain.





K.O. A LAS DROGAS
PLAN REGIONAL CONTRA LAS DROGAS
DE LA COMUNIDAD DE MADRID

MADRID

STATUE OF THE CARLOS III
PHOTOGRAPHED BY Y.NABILA



my first hello to spain.

Madrid was my first encounter with Spain on this journey, and perhaps the city that felt the most different from what I had imagined when I thought about Andalusia.

Madrid felt modern, energetic and very European. Interestingly, the name Madrid carries a trace of its Islamic past. The origins of the name are debated, but one widely discussed theory connects it to the Arabic Mayrit or Magerit, associated with the city's early medieval period under Muslim rule. The name has been linked to the Arabic word mayra, referring to water or a watercourse. Cool, I thought to myself.

I spent much of my time strolling around the city. Places around Puerta del Sol, Plaza Mayor, the Royal Palace and Gran Vía can be connected on foot, and walking makes me start noticing the little things like the balconies, the pretty flowers by the street, and finding a local shawarma. Oh, don't panic when dinner feels ridiculously late compared with Malaysia. Restaurants commonly serve later than you might expect, and the city stays active well into the evening.





Don't leave Spain without trying the original Ilaollao. Yes, this is its birthplace!

Ilaollao is a Spanish frozen-yogurt brand that opened its first shop in Dénia, Alicante, in 2009, before expanding across Spain. Its first Madrid locations followed in 2010.

getting there: kuala lumpur to madrid

Estimated Return Fare: RM2,500–RM3,500

(depending on season and booking window)



Tips for Finding the Best Deals:

- Start with Skyscanner. Don't immediately search for one fixed date. Use the calendar and price graph to compare different departure and return dates.
- There are currently no direct KUL–Madrid flights, so expect at least one stop. Compare airlines and transit cities, but look beyond the headline fare.
- Don't wait forever for the "perfect" fare. There is no magic price that appears on a particular Tuesday at midnight. If you find a fare that fits your budget and dates book it!
- Barcelona can sometimes be a better-value entry point from Kuala Lumpur, depending on the dates and airline fares. Even if Madrid is your actual starting point, it can be worth comparing KUL → Barcelona against KUL → Madrid before booking.



Inside Madrid Airport

more travel hacks



- Trains can be much more convenient than flying. Book earlier if you have fixed travel dates, especially for popular high-speed routes.
- Book the Alhambra before you book your outfit. Seriously.



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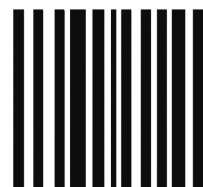
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