

# Sevilla Province



Most visits to Andalucía are dominated by the region's capital, Seville (Sevilla in Spanish). It's no wonder: Spain's fourth-biggest city is loaded with romanticism and expectation, and it delivers on many fronts. There's the neck-creaking delights of its architecture, the gluttony-inducing tapas, the palm-aching flamenco clapping, not to mention the adrenaline-pumping bullfighting, and the sleepless *marcha* (nightlife), or the spectacular celebrations of Semana Santa (Holy Week) and Feria de Abril. With a city like this in the centre, who needs anything else? But if you give it a chance, Sevilla the province also has many wonderful things to offer.

With the Río Guadalquivir nourishing the fertile valley, Sevilla the province has provided Andalucía with the fruits of culture and economy since the Tartessos culture grew here, centuries before Christ. The aristocracy of the region enjoyed the rolling agricultural plains of La Campiña, at the east of the province, endowing the area with the three baroque and Spanish Renaissance beauties of Carmona, Écija and Osuna. The fabulous architecture of the three towns offers some of the most stylish hotels in Spain.

But if you really want to get away and hear nothing but birdsong (and an occasional tractor), head for the ever-changing Sierra Morena, a surprise less than two hours away from Seville city. Here you'll be able to indulge in hill walking, bird-watching and flower-smelling, and explore quaint old villages and towns.

## HIGHLIGHTS

- Imagine you were part of the Sultan's in-crowd as you walk through the dreamy **Alcázar** (p99)
- Be humbled by the sheer size of Seville's **cathedral** (p97) and see the city from the top of the beautiful **Giralda** (p99)
- Get professional at the art of *tapear* in Seville's countless **tapas bars** (p118)
- Stay up all night chasing the Virgins in Seville's mesmerising **Semana Santa** (p113) and show off your dancing skills at the **Feria de Abril** (p114)
- Clap till you're blue in the palms at Seville's **flamenco haunts** (p127) and its **Bienal de Flamenco** (p114) festival
- Walk, watch birds, wild flowers and the rolling scenery of the **Parque Natural Sierra Norte** (p139)
- See history at your feet at the Roman **Itálica** (p130) and get a taste of La Campiña's Spanish aristocracy at **Carmona** (p132), **Écija** (p135) and **Osuna** (p137)



■ POPULATION: 1.78 MILLION	■ SEVILLE AV DAILY HIGH: JAN/AUG 15°C/36°C	■ ALTITUDE RANGE: 0M–959M
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## SEVILLE

pop 704,000 / elevation 30m

Seville must be one of the most addictive cities in the world. In it, all of Spain's clichés come together, wrapped in a thick scent of orange blossom: this is the home of the glory and the gore of bullfighting, the soul-ripping sound of flamenco, the sombre and spectacular Semana Santa (Holy Week) processions and the jolly relief of Feria de Abril. Traditional men with slicked-back black hair rule here. There are hundreds of tapas bars with swinging *jamonés* (hams), served by barmen with pencil-thin moustaches. Seville is where the highly strung Carmen rolled cigars on her thighs and loved a *torero* (bullfighter), where Don Juan worked his mojo in times long gone, and where Cervantes and Columbus drank sherry. Need we go on? Seville is the essence of Andalucía's biggest export – the cringing cliché of '*pasión*', which in this city suddenly makes sense.

Seville's most flamboyant season is its Semana Santa. It is celebrated with an odd mix of pioussness and hedonism and visiting the city at this time is an absolute must. Its annual *feria* (fair) is the most festive in the region. Its heritage of art and architecture – Roman, Islamic, Gothic, Renaissance, baroque – is without rival in southern Spain.

Seville lives on the street and its inhabitants are in love with their city (and with themselves). To the true *sevillano* or *sevillana* there's little need for any other place. Mator Rafael Guerra (1862–1941), after a fight in A Coruña on the far northwestern tip of Spain, wanted to get back to Seville that same evening. 'Maestro', they said to him, 'Seville is very far away.' 'Seville, far?' countered Guerra. 'Here is far. Seville is where it should be.'

But of course, there are a couple of catches. Seville is expensive. You might pay €80 here for a room that would cost €50 elsewhere. And prices soar during Semana Santa and the Feria de Abril (April Fair). Also bear in mind that Seville gets *very* hot in July and August. The ideal season to come, for temperatures and atmosphere, is spring (late March to early June).

## HISTORY

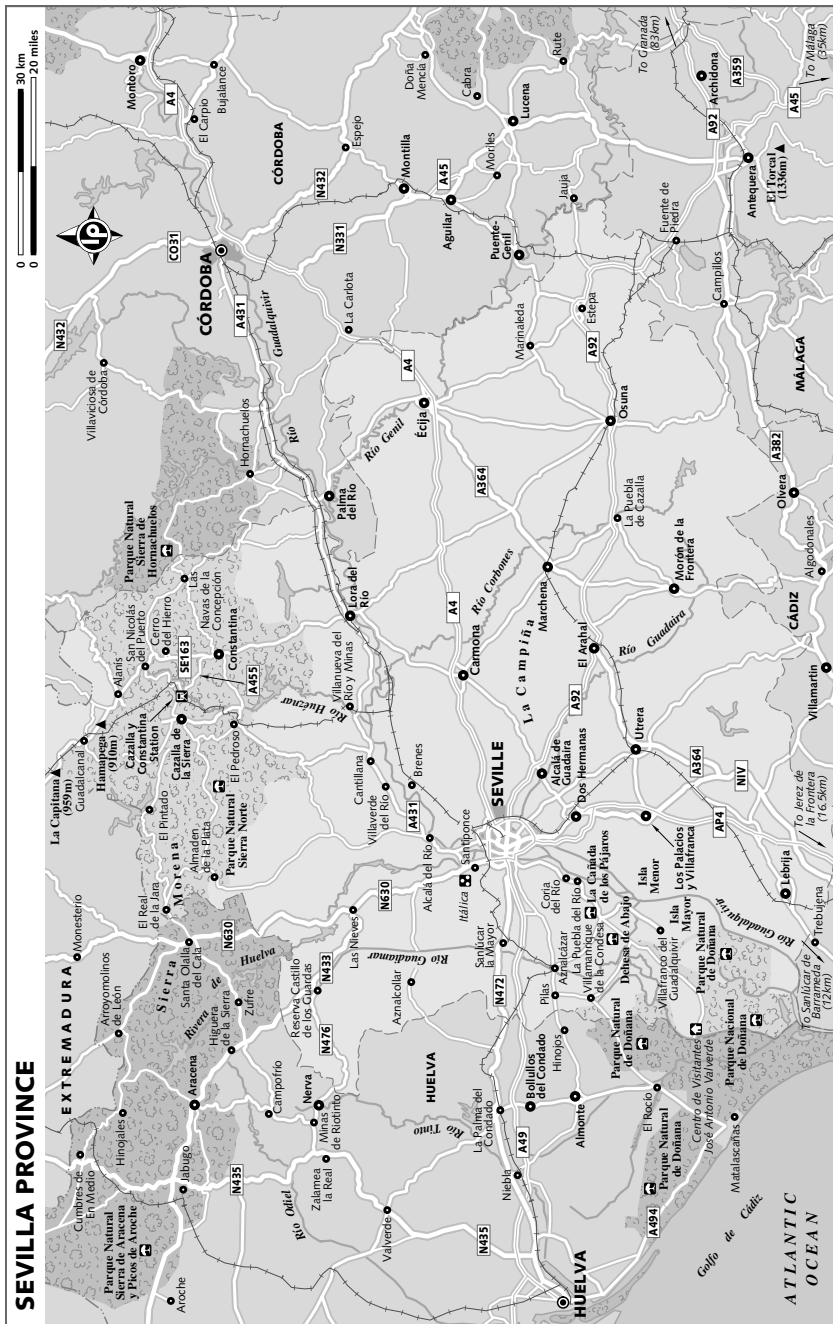
Roman Seville, named Hispalis, was a significant port on the Río Guadalquivir –

navigable to the Atlantic Ocean 100km away – but was overshadowed by Córdoba. Later, Hispalis became a Visigothic cultural centre, especially in the time of St Isidoro (AD 565–636), Spain's leading scholar of the Visigothic period.

The Muslim Ishbiliya became the most powerful of the *taifas* (small kingdoms) after the collapse of the Cordoban caliphate in 1031. Its rulers Al-Mutadid (r 1042–69) and Al-Mutamid (r 1069–91) were both poets. Al-Mutamid, one of the first people in history recorded as falling in love with Seville, presided over a languid, hedonistic court in the Alcázar, but in 1085 had to call in help from the Muslim fundamentalist rulers of Morocco, the Almoravids, for support against the growing threat of Christian reconquest. After taking over all Islamic Spain, the Almoravids were replaced by another strict Muslim sect from North Africa, the Almohads, in the 12th century. Caliph Yacub Yusuf, who made Seville capital of the Almohad realm, built a great mosque where Seville cathedral now stands, and his successor, Yusuf Yacub al-Mansur, added the Giralda tower. But as Almohad power dwindled after the disastrous defeat of Las Navas de Tolosa in 1212, Castile's Fernando III (El Santo; the Saint) went on to capture Seville in 1248.

Fernando brought 24,000 settlers to Seville and by the 14th century it was the most important Castilian city. Seville's biggest break was Columbus' discovery of the Americas in 1492. In 1503 the city was awarded an official monopoly on Spanish trade with the new-found continent. It rapidly became one of the biggest, richest and most cosmopolitan cities on earth, a magnet for everyone from beggars and *pícaros* (card and dice tricksters) to Italian merchants, artists of genius and the clergy of more than 100 religious institutions. Seville was labelled the *puerto y puerta de Indias* (port and gateway of the Indies), the Babylon of Spain and even the new Rome. Lavish Renaissance and baroque buildings sprouted and the city's population jumped from about 40,000 in 1500 to 150,000 in 1600.

But it was not to last. A plague in 1649 killed half the city and, as the 17th century wore on, the Río Guadalquivir became more silted up and less navigable for the



bigger ships of the day; many ships founded on a sandbar at the river mouth near Sanlúcar de Barrameda. In 1717 the Casa de la Contratación (the government office controlling commerce with the Americas) was transferred to Cádiz. Another Seville plague in 1800 killed 13,000 people. Napoleonic troops occupied the city from 1810 to 1812, stealing, it is said, 999 works of art when they left.

The beginnings of industry in the mid-19th century brought a measure of prosperity for some. The first bridge across the Guadalquivir, the Puente de Triana (or Puente de Isabel II), was built in 1852, and the old Almoahad walls were knocked down in 1869 to let the city expand. However, the majority of people in the city and countryside remained impoverished. In 1936 Seville fell very quickly to the Nationalists at the start of the Spanish Civil War, despite resistance in working-class areas (which brought savage reprisals).

Things finally looked up in the 1980s when Seville was named capital of the new autonomous Andalucía within democratic Spain, and the left-of-centre Partido Socialista Obrero Español (PSOE) party, led by Sevillian Felipe González, came to power in Madrid. The Expo '92 international exhibition, marking the 500th anniversary of Columbus' great voyage, brought Seville millions of visitors, eight new bridges across the Guadalquivir, the superfast AVE (Alta Velocidad Española) rail link to Madrid, an opera house and thousands of new hotel rooms. The Expo party had its hangover during the succeeding years of economic recession, but Seville's economy is now steadily improving with a mix of tourism, commerce, technology and industry.

## ORIENTATION

Seville straddles the Río Guadalquivir, with most places of interest found on the eastern bank. The central area is mostly a tangle of narrow, twisting old streets and small squares, with the exceptions of Plaza Nueva and broad, straight Avenida de la Constitución. The *avenida* (avenue) runs south from Plaza Nueva to the Puerta de Jerez, which is a busy intersection marking the southern edge of the central area. Just east of Avenida de la Constitución are the city's major monuments: the cathedral,

the Giralda tower and the Alcázar fortress-palace. The Barrio de Santa Cruz, east of the cathedral and the Alcázar, is touristy, and a popular place to sleep and eat. The true centre of Seville, El Centro, is a little further north, around Plaza de San Francisco and Plaza Salvador. The area between Avenida de la Constitución and the river is El Arenal.

The bus and train stations are on the periphery of the central area, all served by city buses that circle the centre (see p128): Prado de San Sebastián bus station is on Plaza San Sebastián, 650m southeast of the cathedral and within walking distance of the Barrio de Santa Cruz; Plaza de Armas bus station is 900m northwest of the cathedral, within walking distance of El Arenal; and Santa Justa train station is 1.5km northeast of the cathedral, on Avenida Kansas City.

## INFORMATION

### Bookshops

**Casa del Libro** (Map pp102-3; ☎ 954 50 29 50; Calle Velázquez 8; ☎ 9.30am-9.30pm Mon-Sat) A great resource for guidebooks and novels in different languages, as well as maps, dictionaries and Spanish course books.  
**LTC** (Map pp102-3; ☎ 954 42 59 64; Avenida Menéndez y Pelayo 42-44; ☎ Sun-Fri) Andalucía's top map shop.  
**Vértice International Bookshop** (Map pp102-3; ☎ 954 21 16 54; Calle San Fernando 33) Novels in many languages, some guidebooks.

### Emergency

**Ambulance** (☎ 061)

**Fire** (☎ 085)

**Policia Local** (Local Police; ☎ 092)

**Policia Nacional** (National Police; ☎ 091)

### Internet Access

**Ciber Alcázar** (Map pp102-3; ☎ 954 21 04 01; Calle San Fernando 35; per hr €1.80; ☎ 10.15am-10.30pm Mon-Fri, noon-10.30pm Sat & Sun)

**First Center** (Map pp102-3; Avenida de la Constitución 34; per hr €2; ☎ 9am-10pm Mon-Fri, 10am-9.30pm Sat, noon-9pm Sun)

**Internetia** (Map pp102-3; Avenida Menéndez y Pelayo 46; per hr €2; ☎ 10.30am-1.30am Mon-Fri, noon-1.30am Sat & Sun)

**Interpublic** (Map pp102-3; Calle O'Donnell 3; per hr €1.80; ☎ 10am-11pm Mon-Fri, 10am-3pm & 5-11pm Sat, 5-11pm Sun)

**Seville Internet Center** (Map pp102-3; ☎ 954 50 02 75; Calle Almirantazgo 2; per min €0.05; ☎ 9am-10pm Mon-Fri, 10am-10pm Sat & Sun)



<b>INFORMATION</b>	La Ilustre Víctima.....23 C3	Naima Café Jazz.....48 C3
Infhor.....(see 66)	La Piola.....24 C2	Teatro Alameda.....49 C2
Moroccan Consulate.....1 A3	La Raza.....25 D7	Teatro Central.....50 C1
	La Triana.....26 A5	Teatro Lope de Vega.....51 C7
<b>SIGHTS &amp; ACTIVITIES</b>	Mariscos Emilio.....27 A6	Weekend.....52 B3
Basílica de Jesús del Gran Poder.....2 C3	Sol y Sombra.....28 A5	
Basílica de La Macarena.....3 D2	<b>DRINKING ☑</b>	<b>SHOPPING ☑</b>
Capilla del Rocío.....4 B6	Anibal Café.....29 A5	El Jueves Market.....53 C2
Conjunto Monumental de la	Bar Ego.....30 C2	El Jueves Market.....54 D2
Cartuja.....5 A3	Bulebar Café.....31 C3	Green UFOs.....55 C3
Espacio Meteora.....6 D3	Café Central.....32 C3	Nervión Plaza.....56 F6
Iglesia de San Luis.....7 D3	Café de la Prensa.....33 B5	Record Sevilla.....57 C3
Isla Mágica.....8 B1	El Capote.....34 B5	
Lenguaviva.....9 C3	Fun Club.....(see 42)	<b>TRANSPORT</b>
Museo Arqueológico.....10 D8	Habanilla.....35 C2	Bus C1 & 32.....58 F4
Museo de Artes y Costumbres	La Otra Orilla.....36 A4	Bus C1 & C3.....59 D2
Populares.....11 D8	Shiva.....37 A6	Bus C1 Stop.....60 B2
Parlamento de Andalucía.....12 D2		Bus C1 Stop.....61 A3
Parque de María Luisa.....13 D8	<b>ENTERTAINMENT ☑</b>	Bus C2.....62 A3
Sevilla Dance Centre.....14 C3	Almacén.....(see 45)	Bus C2 & 32.....63 F4
Taller Flamenco.....15 C2	Antique Teatro.....38 B2	Bus C2 & C4.....64 D2
	Apandau.....39 C7	Bus C2 Stop.....65 B1
<b>SLEEPING ☑</b>	Auditorio de la Cartuja.....40 B2	Estación de Autobuses Plaza de
Hotel Corregidor.....16 C3	Cine Nervión Plaza.....(see 56)	Armas.....66 B4
Hotel San Gil.....17 D2	Estadio Sánchez Pizjuán.....41 F6	Estación Santa Justa.....67 F4
Patio de la Alameda.....18 C2	Fun Club.....42 C3	Iberia Office.....68 E6
Patio de la Cartuja.....19 C2	Jazz Corner.....43 E5	Sevilla Tour & Tour Por Sevilla Bus
	La Buena Estrella.....44 C3	Stop.....69 D7
<b>EATING ☑</b>	La Imperdible.....45 B3	Sevilla Tour & Tour Por Sevilla Bus
Badalque.....20 C2	La Sonanta.....46 B5	Stop.....(see 60)
Bar-Restaurante Las Columnas.....21 C3	Lisboa Music Club.....47 C2	Sevilla Tour Bus Stop.....70 A3
Casa Cuesta.....22 A5		Tour Por Sevilla Bus Stop.....71 A3

## Internet Resources

**Discover Seville** (www.discoversevilla.com) Set up by a group of young Americans and a Sevillian, this site abounds with useful, hip and fun tips.

**Explore Seville** (www.exploreseville.com) A good, informative site.

**Sevilla Online** (www.sol.com) Sights, language schools, accommodation, festivals.

**Seville Tourism** (www.turismo.sevilla.org) The city's useful official tourism site; its 'Accessible Guide' is especially useful for travellers with a disability, with lists of hotels, restaurants, museums etc with wheelchair access.

**Turismo de la Provincia** (www.turismosevilla.org) Informative official tourist information site for Sevilla province.

## Laundry

Laundries here do the job for you (usually in half a day), with washing, drying and folding included in their prices.

### Auto-Servicio de Lavandería Sevilla

(Map pp102-3; ☎ 954 21 05 35; Calle Castelar 2C; per load €6; ☎ 9.30am-1.30pm & 5-8.30pm Mon-Fri, 9am-2pm Sat)

**La Segunda Vera** (Map pp102-3; ☎ 954 54 11 48; Calle Alejo Fernández 3; per load €8; ☎ 9.30am-1.30pm & 5-8pm Mon-Fri, 10am-1.30pm Sat)

## Media

**El Giraldo** Andalucía-wide what's-on mag with a strong Seville emphasis, available free from tourist offices and some hotels.

**SevilladC** The *ayuntamiento's* (town hall's) free cultural-events magazine.

**Tourist** Free mag for tourists, with worthwhile information about what to see and do.

**Welcome & Olé** Ditto.

## Medical Services

**Centro de Salud El Porvenir** (Map pp102-3; ☎ 955 03 78 17; cnr Avenidas Menéndez Pelayo & de Cádiz) Public clinic with emergency service.

**Hospital Virgen del Rocío** (Map pp94-5; ☎ 955 01 20 00; Avenida de Manuel Siurot s/n) The main general hospital, 1km south of Parque de María Luisa.

## Money

There's plenty of banks and ATMs in the central area. Santa Justa train station, the airport and both bus stations have ATMs. You'll find exchange offices on Avenida de la Constitución and at Estación Santa Justa.

**American Express** (Map pp102-3; ☎ 954 21 16 17; Plaza Nueva 8; ☎ 9.30am-1.30pm & 4.30-7.30pm Mon-Fri, 10am-1pm Sat)

## Post

**Main post office** (Map pp102-3; Avenida de la Constitución 32; ☎ 8.30am-8.30pm Mon-Fri, 9.30am-2pm Sat)

## Telephone

There are many pay phones around the centre of town. The following call centres offer cheap international calls (per minute €0.20 or less to Western Europe, USA, Canada or Australia):

**Ciber Alcázar** (Map pp102-3; ☎ 954 21 04 01; Calle San Fernando 35; ☎ 10.15am-10.30pm Mon-Fri, noon-10.30pm Sat & Sun)

**First Center** (Map pp102-3; Avenida de la Constitución 34; ☎ 9am-10pm Mon-Fri, 10am-9.30pm Sat, noon-9pm Sun)

## Tourist Information

**Infhor** (Map pp94-5; ☎ 954 54 19 52; Estación Santa Justa; ☎ 8am-10pm Mon-Fri, 8am-2pm & 4-10pm Sat, 8am-2pm & 6-10pm Sun & holidays) Independent tourist office at the train station.

**Municipal tourist office** (Map pp102-3; ☎ 954 22 17 14; barranco.turismo@sevilla.org; Calle de Arjona 28; ☎ 9am-9pm Mon-Fri, 9am-2pm Sat & Sun) Reduced hours during Semana Santa & Feria de Abril.

**Regional tourist office** Airport (☎ 954 44 91 28; ☎ 9am-8.30pm Mon-Fri, 10am-6pm Sat, 10am-2pm Sun, closed holidays); Constitución (Map pp102-3; ☎ 954 22 14 04; otsevilla@andalucia.org; Avenida de la Constitución 21; ☎ 9am-7pm Mon-Fri, 10am-2pm & 3-7pm Sat, 10am-2pm Sun, closed holidays); Estación Santa Justa (Map pp94-5; ☎ 954 53 76 26; Santa Justa; ☎ 9am-8pm Mon-Fri, 10am-2pm Sat & Sun, closed holidays) The staff at the Constitución office are well informed but often very busy.

**Turismo Sevilla** (Map pp102-3; ☎ 954 21 00 05; Plaza del Triunfo 1; ☎ 10.30am-7pm Mon-Fri) Information on all Sevilla province.

## DANGERS & ANNOYANCES

Seville has a bit of a reputation for petty crime against tourists – pickpockets, bag snatchers and the like. In reality the risks seem no greater here than in any other large Andalusian city. Stay awake to those around you and make sure you avoid walking alone in empty streets at night and during siesta hours. For general tips on safety in Andalucía see p430.

## SIGHTS

The city's major monuments – the cathedral, the Giralda and the Alcázar – are all

just east of Avenida de la Constitución and south of the city's true centre (El Centro). But there's plenty to see in El Centro and in the neighbouring El Arenal area too, as well as in the areas to the south, north and west.

## Cathedral & Giralda

Seville's immense **cathedral** (Map pp102-3; ☎ 954 21 49 71; www.catedralsevilla.org in Spanish; adult/child under 12yr/disabled/student/senior €7.50/free/free/1.50/1.50, Sun free; ☎ 11am-6pm Mon-Sat, 2.30-7pm Sun Sep-Jun, 9.30am-4.30pm Mon-Sat, 2.30-7pm Sun Jul & Aug, closed 1 & 6 Jan, Palm Sunday, Corpus Christi, 15 Aug & 8 & 25 Dec), one of the biggest in the world, stands on the site of the great 12th-century Almohad mosque, with the mosque's minaret (the Giralda) still towering beside it. After Seville fell to the Christians in 1248 the mosque was used as a church until 1401. Then, in view of its decaying state, the church authorities decided to knock it down and start again. 'Let us create such a building that future generations will take us for lunatics,' they decided (or so legend has it). They certainly got themselves a big church – 126m long and 83m wide. It was completed by 1507, all in Gothic style, though later work done after its central dome collapsed in 1511 was mostly in Renaissance style.

The enormity of the broad, five-naved cathedral is disguised by a welter of interior structures and decoration that is typical of Spanish cathedrals. This truly is one of the most magnificent churches in Spain.

The entry system and timetable for visiting Seville's cathedral change frequently. Current regulations are usually posted up fairly clearly.

## EXTERIOR

From close up, the bulky exterior of the cathedral gives few hints of the treasures within. But have a look at the **Puerta del Perdón** on Calle Alemanes (a legacy of the Islamic mosque) and the two impressive 15th-century Gothic **doorways**, with terracotta reliefs and statues by Lorenzo Mercadante de Breña and Pedro Millán, on Avenida de la Constitución.

The **Giralda**, the 90m decorative brick tower on the northeastern side of the cathedral, was the minaret of the mosque, constructed between 1184 and 1198 at the



height of Almohad power. Its proportions, its delicate brick-pattern decoration, and its colour, which changes with the light, make it perhaps Spain's most perfect Islamic building. The top-most parts of the Giralda – from the bell level up – were added in the 16th century, when Spanish Christians were busy 'improving on' surviving Islamic buildings. At the very top is **El Giraldillo**, a 16th-century bronze weathervane representing Faith that has become a symbol of Seville. (The entrance to the Giralda is inside the cathedral – see opposite).

#### SALA DEL PABELLÓN

Selected treasures from the cathedral's art collection are exhibited in this room, the first after the ticket office. Much of what's displayed here, as elsewhere in the cathedral, is the work of masters from Seville's 17th-century artistic golden age.

#### SOUTHERN & NORTHERN CHAPELS

The chapels along the southern and northern sides of the cathedral hold riches of sculpture and painting. Near the western end of the northern side is the **Capilla de San Antonio**, housing Murillo's large 1666 canvas depicting the vision of St Anthony of Padua; thieves cut out the kneeling saint in 1874 but he was later found in New York and put back.

#### VAULTING & STAINED GLASS

Don't forget to look up from time to time to admire the cathedral's marvellous Gothic vaulting and rich-hued stained glass. The oldest stained glass, with markedly different colour tones, was done between 1478 and 1483 by a German known as Enrique Alemán. This master artisan takes credit for the glass above the five westernmost chapels on both sides of the nave and the glass in the four westernmost bays on either side of the uppermost storey of the nave.

#### COLUMBUS' TOMB

Inside the **Puerta de los Príncipes** stands the monumental tomb of Christopher Columbus (Cristóbal Colón in Spanish) – the subject of a continuous riddle – containing what were long believed to be the great explorer's bones, brought here from Cuba in 1899. The monument, dating from 1902, shows four sepulchre bearers representing

the four kingdoms of Spain at the time of Columbus' famous 1492 voyage: Castile (carrying Granada on the point of its spear), León, Aragón and Navarra. For more on Columbus' four voyages, see p151.

Columbus died in 1506 in Valladolid, northern Spain – poor and apparently still believing he had reached Asia. His remains lay at La Cartuja monastery in Seville before being moved to Hispaniola in 1536. Even though there were suggestions that the bones kept in Seville's cathedral were possibly those of his son Diego (who was buried with his father in Santo Domingo, Hispaniola), recent DNA tests seemed to finally prove that it's really Christopher Columbus who was the owner of these mysterious bones. The researchers managed to convince the Dominican Republic – which had claimed the *real* bones were in Santo Domingo – to open the monument where the remains were held, in order to compare samples. To confuse matters further, the researchers say that although they are certain that the bones in Seville are the real bones, the ones in Santo Domingo could also be real, since Columbus' body was moved several times after his death. Seems that even death couldn't dampen the great explorer's urge to travel.

#### CORO

In the middle of the cathedral you'll find the large **coro** (choir), which has 117 carved Gothic-Mudejar choir stalls. The lower ones have marquetry representations of the Giralda. Vices and sins are depicted on their misericords.

#### CAPILLA MAYOR

East of the choir is the **Capilla Mayor** (Main Chapel). Its Gothic retable is the jewel of the cathedral and reckoned to be the biggest altarpiece in the world. Begun by Flemish sculptor Pieter Dancart in 1482 and finished by others in 1564, this sea of gilded and polychromed wood holds over 1000 carved biblical figures. At the centre of the lowest level is the tiny 13th-century silver-plated cedar image of the Virgen de la Sede (Virgin of the See), patron of the cathedral.

#### EASTERN CHAPELS

East of the Capilla Mayor, situated against the eastern wall of the cathedral, are some

more chapels. These chapels are normally closed to visitors, which is a shame, because the central one is the **Capilla Real** (Royal Chapel), which contains the tombs of two great Castilian kings – Fernando III and Alfonso X.

#### SACRISTÍA DE LOS CÁLICES

South of the Capilla Mayor are rooms containing some of the cathedral's main art treasures. The westernmost of these is the Sacristy of the Chalices, where Francisco de Goya's painting of the Seville martyrs, *Santas Justa y Rufina* (1817), hangs above the altar. These two potters, one depicted with a lion licking her feet, died at the hands of the Romans in AD 287.

#### SACRISTÍA MAYOR

This large room with a finely carved stone dome, east of the Sacristía de los Cálices, is a plateresque (a decorative genre of architecture, with effects resembling those of silverware) creation of 1528–47: the arch over its portal has carvings of 16th-century foods. Pedro de Campaña's 1547 *Descendimiento* (Descent from the Cross) above the central altar at the southern end, and Francisco de Zurbarán's *Santa Teresa*, to its right, are two of the cathedral's most precious paintings. The room's centrepiece is the **Custodia de Juan de Arfe**, a huge 475kg silver monstrance made in the 1580s by Renaissance metalsmith Juan de Arfe. Also here are Pedro Roldán's 1671 statue *San Fernando* (Fernando III) and Alonso Martínez's *La Inmaculada* (Mary, the Immaculate) of 1657, both of which are carried with the Custodia in Seville's Corpus Christi processions. In one of the glass cases are the city keys that were handed over to the conquering Fernando III in 1248.

#### CABILDO

The beautifully domed chapter house, also called the Sala Capitular, in the southeastern corner, was originally built between 1558 and 1592 as a venue for meetings of the cathedral hierarchy. The Cabildo was designed by Hernán Ruiz, architect of the Giralda belfry. Hanging high above the archbishop's throne at the southern end is a Murillo masterpiece, *La Inmaculada*. Eight Murillo saints adorn the dome at the same level.

#### GIRALDA

In the northeastern corner of the cathedral you'll find the passage for the climb up to the belfry of the Giralda. The ascent is quite easy, as a series of ramps – built so that the guards could ride up on horseback – goes all the way up. The climb affords great views of the buttresses and pinnacles surrounding the cathedral, as well as of the city beyond.

#### PATIO DE LOS NARANJOS

Outside the cathedral's northern side, this patio was originally the courtyard of the mosque. It's planted with 66 *naranjos* (orange trees), and a Visigothic fountain remains in the centre. Hanging from the ceiling in the patio's southeastern corner is a replica stuffed crocodile – the original was a gift to Alfonso X from the Sultan of Egypt. On the northern side of the patio is the beautiful Islamic Puerta del Perdón.

#### Alcázar

This is Seville's Alhambra, on a smaller scale, but just as beautiful. The **Alcázar** (Map pp102-3; ☎ 954 50 23 23; www.patronato-alcazarsevilla.es; adult/child under 16yr/student/senior/disabled €/free/free/free; 🕒 9.30am-8pm Tue-Sat, 9.30am-6pm Sun & holidays Apr-Sep, 9.30am-6pm Tue-Sat, 9.30am-2.30pm Sun & holidays Oct-Mar), a World Heritage monument, stands south of the cathedral across Plaza del Triunfo.

Originally founded as a fort for the Cordoban governors of Seville in 913, the Alcázar is intimately associated with the lives and loves of several later rulers. These include the extraordinary Christian King Pedro I of Castile (r 1350–69), who was known either as Pedro el Cruel or as Pedro el Justiciero (the Justice-Dispenser), depending which side of him you were on.

The Alcázar has been expanded or reconstructed many times in its 11 centuries of existence, making it a complicated building to understand, but in the end this only increases its fascination. In the 11th century, Seville's prosperous Muslim *taifa* rulers developed the original fort by building a palace called Al-Muwarak (the Blessed) in what's now the western part of the Alcázar. The 12th-century Almohad rulers added another palace east of this, around what's now the Patio del Crucero. Christian Fernando III moved into the

Alcázar when he captured Seville in 1248, and several later Christian monarchs used it as their main residence. Fernando's son Alfonso X replaced much of the Almohad palace with a Gothic one. Between 1364 and 1366 Pedro I created the Alcázar's crown jewel, the sumptuous **Mudejar Palacio de Don Pedro**, partly on the site of the old Al-Muwarak palace. The Catholic Monarchs, Fernando and Isabel, set up court here in the 1480s as they prepared for the conquest of Granada. Later rulers created the Alcázar's lovely gardens.

#### PATIO DEL LEÓN

From the ticket office inside the **Puerta del León** (Lion Gate) you emerge into the Patio del León (Lion Patio), which was the garrison yard of the original Al-Muwarak palace. Off here is the **Sala de la Justicia** (Hall of Justice), with beautiful Mudejar plasterwork and an *artesonado* (a ceiling of interlaced beams with decorative insertions); this room was built in the 1340s by Christian king Alfonso XI, who disported here with one of his mistresses, Leonor de Guzmán, reputedly the most beautiful woman in Spain. Alfonso's many dalliances left his heir, Pedro I, with five illegitimate half-brothers and a severe case of sibling rivalry. Pedro had a dozen relatives and friends murdered in his efforts to stay on the throne. One of them, Pedro's half-brother Don Fadrique, met his maker right here in the Sala de la Justicia.

The room gives on to the pretty **Patio del Yeso**, part of the 12th-century Almohad palace reconstructed in the 19th century.

#### PATIO DE LA MONTERÍA

The rooms on the western side of this patio were part of the Casa de la Contratación (Contracting House) founded by the Catholic Monarchs in 1503 to control trade with Spain's American colonies. The **Salón del Almirante** (Admiral's Hall) houses 19th- and 20th-century paintings showing historical events and personages associated with Seville; the room off its northern end has an international collection of elaborate and beautiful fans. The **Sala de Audiencias** (Audience Hall) is hung with tapestry representations of the shields of Spanish admirals and Alejo Fernández' 1530s painting *Virgen de los Mareantes* (Virgin of the Sailors), the earliest known painting about the discov-

ery of the Americas. The Virgin shelters Columbus, Fernando El Católico, Carlos I, Amerigo Vespucci and native Americans beneath her cloak. This room also contains a model of one of Columbus' ships, the *Santa María*.

#### CUARTO REAL ALTO

The Alcázar is still a royal palace. In 1995 it staged the wedding feast of the Infanta Elena, daughter of King Juan Carlos I, after her marriage in Seville's cathedral. The Cuarto Real Alto (Upper Royal Quarters), the rooms used by the Spanish royal family on their visits to Seville, are open for around 12 half-hour tours (€3), some in Spanish, some in English. The tours are for a maximum of 15 people: if you're keen, it's best to book ahead on ☎ 954 56 00 40. Any unreserved tickets are sold at the main ticket office. The tours start in the south-western corner of the Patio de la Montería: highlights include the 14th-century Salón de Audiencias, still the monarch's reception room, and Pedro I's bedroom, with marvellous Mudejar tiles and plasterwork.

#### PALACIO DE DON PEDRO

Whatever else Pedro I may have done, posterity owes him a big thank you for creating this palace (also called the Palacio Mudéjar), which rivals Granada's Alhambra (p359) in its splendid decoration. The palace, unlike the Alhambra, has retained the vivid colours used to fill in the carvings of the wall decorations. This gives the full idea of the incredible visual richness of the interiors of not only the Alcázar, but also of the Alhambra as it once was.

Though at odds with many of his fellow Christians, Pedro had a long-standing alliance with the Muslim emir of Granada, Mohammed V, the man responsible for much of the Alhambra's finest decoration. So in 1364, when Pedro decided to build a new palace within the Alcázar, Mohammed sent along many of his best artisans. These were joined by others from Seville and Toledo. Their work, drawing on the Islamic traditions of the Almohads and caliphal Córdoba, is a unique synthesis of Iberian Islamic art.

Inscriptions on the palace's **façade**, facing the Patio de la Montería, encapsulate the collaborative nature of the enterprise.

While one announces in Spanish that the building's creator was 'the very high, noble and conquering Don Pedro, by the grace of God king of Castila and León', another proclaims repeatedly in Arabic that 'there is no conqueror but Allah'.

At the heart of the palace is the wonderful **Patio de las Doncellas** (Patio of the Maidens), surrounded by beautiful arches, plasterwork and tiling. The doors at its two ends are among the finest made by Toledo's carpenters. The sunken garden in the centre was uncovered by archaeologists in 2004 from beneath a 16th-century marble covering.

The **Cámara Regia** (King's Quarters), on the northern side of the patio, has stunningly beautiful ceilings and wonderful plaster- and tile-work. Its rear room was probably the monarch's summer bedroom.

From here you can move west into the little **Patio de las Muñecas** (Patio of the Dolls), the heart of the palace's private quarters, featuring delicate Granada-style decoration; indeed, plasterwork was actually brought here from the Alhambra in the 19th century when the mezzanine and top gallery were added for Queen Isabel II. The **Cuarto del Príncipe** (Prince's Room), to its north, has a superb wooden cupola ceiling trying to recreate a starlit night sky. It was probably the queen's bedroom.

The spectacular **Salón de Embajadores** (Hall of Ambassadors), at the western end of the Patio de las Doncellas, was the throne room of Pedro I's palace – as it had been, in earlier form, of Al-Muwarak palace (from which Pedro retained the horseshoe-arched doorways). The room's fabulous wooden dome of multiple star patterns, symbolising the universe, was added in 1427. The dome's shape gives the room its alternative name, Sala de la Media Naranja (Hall of the Half Orange). The coloured plasterwork is magnificent. It was in this room that Pedro laid a trap for the so-called Red King, who had temporarily deposed Pedro's buddy Mohammed V in Granada. During a banquet, armed men suddenly leapt from hiding and seized the Red King and his retinue of 37, all of whom were executed outside Seville a few days later.

On the western side of the Salón de Embajadores the beautiful **Arco de Pavones**, named after its peacock motifs, leads into the **Salón del Techo de Felipe II**, with a Ren-

aissance ceiling (1589–91). The **Capilla** (chapel), located along the southern side of the Patio de las Doncellas, has another fine ceiling (1540s).

#### SALONES DE CARLOS V

Reached by a staircase from the southeastern corner of the Patio de las Doncellas, these are the much-remodelled rooms of Alfonso X's 13th-century Gothic palace. It was here that Alfonso's intellectual court gathered and, a century later, Pedro I installed the mistress he loved, María de Padilla. The rooms are now named after the 16th-century Spanish king Carlos I, using his title as Holy Roman Emperor, Charles V. His wedding feast was held here on 11 March 1526 and the **Sala de las Bóvedas** (Hall of the Vault) is adorned with beautiful tiles by Cristóbal de Augusta, commissioned in memory of that event by his son, Felipe II, in the 1570s.

#### PATIO DEL CRUCERO

This patio outside the Salones de Carlos V was originally the upper storey of the patio of the 12th-century Almohad palace. Originally it had consisted only of raised walkways along the four sides and two cross-walkways that met in the middle. Below grew orange trees, whose fruit could be plucked at hand height by the lucky folk strolling along the walkways. The patio's lower level was built over in the 18th century after earthquake damage.

#### GARDENS & EXIT

From the Salones de Carlos V you can go out into the Alcázar's large and peaceful gardens. The gardens in front of the Salones de Carlos V and Palacio de Don Pedro date in their present form from the 16th and 17th centuries. Immediately in front of the buildings is a series of small linked gardens, some with pools and fountains. From one, the **Jardín de las Danzas** (Garden of the Dances), a passage runs beneath the Salones de Carlos V to the **Baños de Doña María de Padilla** (María de Padilla Baths). These are the vaults beneath the Patio del Crucero – originally that patio's lower level – with a grotto that replaced the patio's original pool.

The gardens to the east, beyond a long wall, are 20th-century creations. The way



## INFORMATION

American Express.....	1 B4
Australian Consulate.....	2 E4
Auto-Servicio de Lavandería Sevilla.....	3 C5
Casa del Libro.....	4 C2
Centro de Salud El Porvenir.....	5 F7
Ciber Alcázar.....	6 E7
Dutch Consulate.....	7 D4
First Center.....	8 C6
French Consulate.....	9 E5
Internetia.....	10 F5
Interpublic.....	11 C2
Irish Consulate.....	12 E6
Italian Consulate.....	13 E4
La Segunda Vera.....	14 F5
LTC.....	15 F5
Main Post Office.....	16 C6
Municipal Tourist Office.....	17 A4
Portuguese Consulate.....	18 E8
Regional Tourist Office.....	19 D6
Seville Internet Center.....	20 C5
Turismo Sevilla.....	21 D5
USA Consular Agency.....	(see 1)
Vértice International Bookshop.....	22 E7

## SIGHTS &amp; ACTIVITIES

Aire de Sevilla.....	23 E4
Alcázar.....	24 D6
Antigua Fábrica de Tabacos (Universidad de Sevilla).....	25 D8
Archivo de Indias.....	26 D6
Ayuntamiento.....	27 C4
Baños Árabes.....	(see 23)
Capilla de los Marineros.....	28 A6
Capilla de San José.....	29 C3
Carpe Diem.....	30 D3
Casa de la Memoria de Al-Andalus.....	(see 55)
Casa de Pilatos.....	31 F3
Cathedral.....	32 D5
CLIC.....	33 C3
Cruceiros Turísticos Torre del Oro.....	(see 47)
Fundación Cristina Heeren de Arte Flamenco.....	34 E5
Giralda.....	35 D5
Giralda Center.....	36 E5
Hospital de la Caridad.....	37 C6
Hospital de los Venerables Sacerdotes.....	38 E5
Iglesia de la Magdalena.....	39 B3
LINC.....	40 C3
Maritime Museum.....	(see 47)
Museo de Bellas Artes.....	41 A2
Palacio de la Condesa de Lebrija.....	42 C2
Parroquia de Santa Ana.....	43 A7
Parroquia del Divino Salvador.....	44 D3
Petmarket.....	(see 45)
Plaza de la Alfalfa.....	45 D3
Plaza de Toros de la Real Maestranza.....	46 B5
Torre del Oro.....	47 B7

## SLEEPING

Casa Sol y Luna.....	48 D3
Hostal Córdoba.....	49 E5
Hostal Goya.....	50 E5
Hostal Residencia Naranjo.....	51 B3
Hostal Roma.....	52 A2
Hostal Romero.....	53 A2
Hostería del Laurel.....	54 E6

Hotel Alcántara.....	55 E5
Hotel Alfonso XIII.....	56 D7
Hotel Amadeus.....	57 E5
Hotel Casa Imperial.....	58 F3
Hotel Europa.....	59 C4
Hotel Madrid.....	60 A3
Hotel Maestranza.....	61 C4
Hotel Puerta de Sevilla.....	62 F5
Hotel Puerta de Triana.....	63 A4
Hotel San Francisco.....	64 D4
Hotel Sevilla.....	65 C1
Hotel Simón.....	66 C5
Hotel Vincci La Rábida.....	67 B4
Hotel Zaida.....	68 B2
Huéspedes Dulces Sueños.....	69 F5
Las Casas de la Judería.....	70 F5
Las Casas del Rey de Baeza.....	71 F3
Oasis Backpackers Hostel.....	72 D3
Pensión Cruces.....	73 E5
Pensión San Pancracio.....	74 E5
Un Patio en Santa Cruz.....	75 F5

## EATING

Alfalfa 10.....	76 D3
Altamira Bar-Café.....	(see 92)
Alvaro Peregil.....	77 E5
Bar Alfalfa.....	78 E5
Bar Casa Fernando.....	79 F5
Bar Entrecalles.....	80 E5
Bar Gloria Bendita.....	81 B5
Bar Horacio.....	82 B5
Bar Laredo.....	83 C4
Bar Levies.....	84 E4
Bar Pepe-Hillo.....	(see 81)
Bodega Extremeña.....	85 F3
Bodega Santa Cruz.....	86 D5
Cafe Alianza.....	87 D5
Café Bar Duque.....	88 C2
Café Bar Las Teresas.....	89 E5
Café-Bar Campanario.....	90 D5
Café-Bar Puerta de Jerez.....	91 D7
Carmela.....	92 E5
Casa de la Moneda.....	93 C6
Casa Robles.....	94 D5
Cervecería Giralda.....	95 D5
Confitería La Campana.....	96 C2
Corral del Agua.....	97 E6
El Patio San Eloy.....	98 C2
El Rinconcillo.....	99 E2
Enrique Becerra.....	100 C4
Habanita.....	101 D3
Horno de San Buenaventura.....	102 C5
Horno de San Buenaventura.....	103 E3
Horno del Duque.....	104 C1
Kiosco de las Flores.....	105 B7
La Bodega.....	106 E3
La Giganta.....	107 E2
La Tienda de Eva.....	108 C5
La Trastienda.....	109 E3
Los Alcazares.....	(see 111)
Los Coloniales.....	110 E3
Mercado de la Encarnación (Market).....	111 D2
Mercado del Arenal (Market).....	112 A4
Mesón Cinco Jotas.....	113 B5
Mesón de la Infanta.....	114 B6
Mesón Serranito.....	115 B5
Restaurant La Cueva.....	116 D6
Restaurant San Fernando.....	(see 56)
Restaurante Egaña Oriza.....	117 E7
Restaurante La Albahaca.....	118 E5

Restaurante La Judería.....	119 F5
Restaurante Las Lapas.....	120 D6
Restaurante Modesto.....	121 F5
Restaurante San Marco.....	122 C2
Restaurante San Marco.....	123 E5
Ristorante Cosa Nostra.....	124 A7
Robles Placentines.....	125 D4
Río Grande.....	126 B7
Taberna Los Terceros.....	127 F2

## DRINKING

Alambique.....	128 B7
Antigiedades.....	129 D4
Bar Europa.....	130 D3
Bare Nostrum.....	131 D3
Big Ben.....	(see 128)
Cabo Loco.....	(see 131)
Cervecería International.....	132 C4
El Garlochi.....	133 E3
El Perro Andaluz.....	134 E1
Isbilliya Café.....	135 A4
La Antigua Bodeguita.....	136 D3
La Rebótica.....	137 D3
La Saportales.....	138 D3
La Subasta.....	(see 129)
Madigan's.....	139 B7
Maya Soul.....	140 A6
Mú d'Aquí.....	(see 128)
Nao.....	(see 131)
Nu Yor Café.....	141 A4
P Flaherty Irish Pub.....	142 C5
Sirocca.....	(see 128)

## ENTERTAINMENT

Avenida 5 Cines.....	143 A3
Boss.....	144 B7
Casa de la Memoria de Al-Andalus.....	145 E5
El Tamboril.....	146 E5
Elefunk.....	147 B5
Empresa Pagés.....	148 B5
La Carbonería.....	149 F4
La Teatral.....	150 C3
Los Gallos.....	151 E6
Plaza de Toros de la Real Maestranza.....	(see 46)
Sala La Fundación.....	152 C7
Sol Café Cantante.....	153 E1
Teatro de la Maestranza.....	154 B6

## SHOPPING

El Corte Inglés.....	155 C2
El Corte Inglés.....	156 B3
El Corte Inglés.....	157 B3
El Corte Inglés.....	158 B2
El Postigo.....	159 C5
Sevilla Rock.....	160 C2

## TRANSPORT

Airport Bus Stop.....	161 C7
ATA Rent A Car.....	162 C7
Bus C2 Stop.....	163 E8
Cruceiros Turísticos Torre de Oro.....	(see 165)
Estación de Autobuses Prado de San Sebastián.....	164 F7
Good Rent A Car.....	(see 169)
Jetty.....	165 B7
Parking Paseo de Colón.....	166 A5
Renfe Office.....	167 B4
Sevilla Tour & Tour Por Sevilla Bus Stop.....	168 B6
Triana Rent A Car.....	169 C7

out is via the **Apeadero**, a 17th-century entrance hall, and the **Patio de las Banderas** (Patio of the Flags).

## Archivo de Indias

Found on the western side of Plaza del Triunfo, the World Heritage **Archivo de Indias** (Archive of the Indies; Map pp102-3; ☎ 954 21 12 34; Calle Santo Tomás) has been the main archive on Spain's American empire since 1785. The 16th-century building, designed by Juan de Herrera, was originally Seville's Lonja (Exchange) for commerce with the Americas. Its 8km of shelves hold 80 million pages of documents dating from 1492 through to the end of the empire in the 19th century. Normally, the archive exhibits rotating displays of fascinating maps and documents, including manuscripts written by the likes of Columbus, Cervantes, Cortés or Pizarro. For an update on schedules, check at a tourist office.

## Barrio de Santa Cruz

The old *judería* (Jewish quarter), the Barrio de Santa Cruz (Map pp102-3), has dozens of beautiful squares shaded by orange trees that sag with fruit and perfume the streets with their exquisite blossoms. Although this is tourist central, it's still a vital part of the city and one that's remarkably easy and pleasant to wander.

The barrio (district) extends east of the cathedral and the Alcázar in a tangle of narrow, winding streets and lovely squares, with numerous popular places to stay, eat and drink and plenty of souvenir shops. It became the city's *judería* after the Christian reconquest of Seville in 1248, flourishing especially under Pedro I, whose court included many Jewish financiers and tax collectors. Racial jealousies led eventually to a pogrom that emptied the *judería* in 1391.

Squeeze yourself down the narrow lanes from Plaza del Triunfo and breathe the smell of oranges on the barrio's most beautiful square, **Plaza Doña Elvira**, where you can rest on the *azulejo*-covered benches, under the shade of the orange trees. A few steps east is Plaza de los Venerables, where you can visit the 17th-century **Hospital de los Venerables Sacerdotes** (Map pp102-3; ☎ 954 56 26 96; adult/child under 12yr/student/senior €5/free/2.50/2.50, Sun afternoon free; ☎ 10am-2pm & 4-8pm). Used until the 1960s as a residence for aged priests,

this has a lovely central courtyard and several exhibition rooms, one with a collection of prints of Seville. Don't miss the church with murals by Juan de Valdés Leal and fine sculptures by Pedro Roldán.

Carry on down more narrow lanes eastward to the silent **Plaza de Santa Cruz**, whose central cross, made in 1692, gives the barrio its name and ranks as one of the finest examples of Seville wrought-iron work. A short distance north from here is the **Casa de la Memoria de Al-Andalus** (Map pp102-3; ☎ 954 56 06 70; Calle Ximénez de Enciso 28; ☎ 9am-2pm & 6-7.30pm), an 18th-century mansion on the site of a medieval Jewish house, with one of the most wonderful patios in town which doubles as a stage for quality flamenco performances.

## El Arenal

A short walk west from Avenida de la Constitución brings you to the Río Guadalquivir, with a pleasant riverside footpath. This district, El Arenal (Map pp102-3), is home to some of Seville's most interesting sights.

## TORRE DEL ORO

The Tower of Gold is a 13th-century Almohad watchtower on the riverbank. It once crowned a corner of the city walls that stretched here from the Alcázar, and its dome was, according to legend, covered in golden tiles. Inside is a small **maritime museum** (☎ 954 22 24 19; admission €1; ☎ 10am-2pm Tue-Fri, 11am-2pm Sat & Sun, closed Aug). The collection of models of famous boats merits a visit.

## HOSPITAL DE LA CARIDAD

A marvellous sample of Sevillian golden-age art adorns the church in the **Hospital de la Caridad** (Hospice of Charity; Map pp102-3; ☎ 954 22 32 32; Calle Temprado 3; admission €4, free Sun & holidays; ☎ 9am-1.30pm & 3.30-7.30pm Mon-Sat, 9am-1pm Sun & holidays), a block east of the river. The Hospital de la Caridad, basically a hospice for the elderly, was founded by Miguel de Mañara, by legend a notorious libertine who changed his ways after seeing a vision of his own funeral procession. In the 1670s Mañara commissioned a series of works on the theme of death and redemption from Seville's three finest artists of the day, Bartolomé Esteban Murillo, Juan de Valdés Leal and Pedro Roldán, for the church here. The



juxtaposition of Murillo's optimistic paintings with the suffering depicted by Roldán and the unforgiving vision of Valdés Leal makes for fascinating contrasts.

Valdés Leal's two masterpieces, chillingly illustrating the futility of worldly glory, are at the western end of the church: *Finis Gloriae Mundi* (The End of Earthly Glory) is above the door by which you enter, and *In Ictu Oculi* (In the Blink of an Eye), hangs on the opposite wall. On this same, northern, side of the church are Murillo's *San Juan de Dios* (St John of God), *Anunciación* (Annunciation) and *Moises Haciendo Brotar el Agua de la Roca* (Moses Drawing Water from the Rock). Beneath this last is a sweet depiction of the infant Christ by Murillo (facing an equally sweet infant St John the Baptist on the opposite wall).

The sculpture on the elaborate baroque high altar illustrates the final act of compassion – the burial of the dead (in this case Christ). The tableau, with its strong sense of movement, is Pedro Roldán's masterpiece. To the left of the high altar, steps descend to the crypt where Miguel de Mañara is buried.

Along the southern side of the church is another fine Roldán sculpture, this time of Christ praying before being crucified. It stands between Murillo's *La Multiplicación de Panes y Peces* (The Miracle of the Loaves and Fishes) and *Santa Isabel de Húngria* (St Isabel of Hungary). The church's four largest Murillos were among eight that he painted for this site on the themes of transcending death by compassion and mercy. Four of the eight paintings were looted by Napoleonic troops in the early 19th century.

#### PLAZA DE TOROS DE LA REAL MAESTRANZA

Seville's **bullring** (☎ 954 22 45 77; www.realmaestranza.com; Paseo de Cristóbal Colón 12; tour adult/senior €4/3.20; 🕒 half-hourly 9.30am–6.30pm, 9.30am–3pm bullfighting days) is one of the most handsome and important bullrings in Spain, and probably the oldest (building began in 1758). It was in this ring and the one at Ronda that bullfighting on foot began in the 18th century. Interesting guided visits, in English and Spanish, take you into the ring and its museum, with a peep into the minihospital for bullfighters where a worried picture of

the Virgin Mary above the door prays for their wellbeing. For more on bullfights in Seville, see p127; for general information on bullfighting, see p39.

#### IGLESIA DE LA MAGDALENA

One of Seville's outstanding baroque churches, the **Iglesia de la Magdalena** (Map pp102–3; Calle San Pablo 12; ☎ Mass times, usually 8–11.30am & 6.30–9pm) was built between 1691 and 1709. Two paintings by Zurbarán hang in the Capilla Sacramental (the first chapel on the right from the entrance), and a fine 1612 Crucifixion sculpture, *El Cristo del Calvario* (The Christ of Calvary) by Francisco de Ocampo, is in the chapel to the right of the main altar.

The church is the home of the Quinta Angustia brotherhood, whose 17th-century *Descendimiento* tableau, showing Jesus being taken down from the cross, is carried through Seville's streets during Semana Santa. This can usually be seen in the chapel on the left as you enter the church; the Christ is attributed to Pedro Roldán.

#### MUSEO DE BELLAS ARTES

Housed in the beautiful former Convento de la Merced, Seville's **Museo de Bellas Artes** (Fine Arts Museum; Map pp102–3; ☎ 954 22 07 90; Plaza del Museo 9; non-EU citizen €1.50, EU citizen free; 🕒 2.30–8.30pm Tue, 9am–8.30pm Wed–Sat, 9am–2.30pm Sun; 🗺) does full justice to Seville's leading role in Spain's 17th-century artistic Siglo de Oro.

Room I exemplifies the 15th-century beginnings of the Sevillian school: the best exhibits are Pedro Millán's terracotta sculptures, displaying a realism that was then rare in Spanish art.

Room II, the dining hall of the convent, displays Renaissance work from Seville and elsewhere, including sculptures by Pietro Torrigiano, an Italian who came to Seville in 1522 and was the major artistic figure of the early Renaissance here.

Room III exhibits Sevillian Renaissance retables and early 17th-century Sevillian paintings. The penetrating portrait of Don Cristóbal Suárez de Ribera by the young Velázquez grabs the attention, as does Alonso Cano's striking *Las Ánimas del Purgatorio* (Souls in Purgatory), in the corner between rooms III and IV.

In room IV, devoted mainly to Mannerism (the transition from Renaissance to

baroque), Alonso Vázquez's large *Sagrada Cena* (Last Supper) is the outstanding canvas. The lovely anonymous statuettes of the child Jesus and child St John the Baptist contrast markedly with the grisly head of St John the Baptist (1591) by Gaspar Núñez Delgado in the centre of the room. From here you move through the beautiful cloister to room V, the convent church, which is hung with paintings by masters of Sevillian baroque, above all Murillo. His *Inmaculada Concepción Grande* at the head of the church, displays all the curving, twisting movement that is so central to baroque art.

Upstairs, highlights of room VI include José de Ribera's very Spanish-looking *Santiago Apóstol* (St James the Apostle) and Zurbarán's deeply sombre *Cristo Crucificado* (Christ Crucified). Room VII is devoted to Murillo and disciples, room VIII to Valdés Leal, and room IX to European baroque art.

Room X has a few carvings by Juan Martínez Montañés and Juan de Mesa but is otherwise all Zurbarán, with a masterly depiction of the contrast between the worldly Pope Urban II and the ascetic St Bruno in *Visita de San Bruno a Urbano II*.

Room XI, the closed-in gallery around the upper storey of the cloister, displays Spanish paintings of the 18th century, a time of little creative verve, though Domingo Martínez's Seville carnival scenes are interesting in their detail. Rooms XII to XIV show 19th- and 20th-century painting, mainly Sevillian but also with Goya's 1824 portrait of Don José Duaso. Among the Sevillian work, don't miss the Romantic portraits of Antonio María Esquivel (1806–57), the early flamenco scenes by Manuel Cabral Bejarano (1827–91), or the eclectic work of impressionist-influenced Gonzalo Bilbao (1860–1938).

#### El Centro

As the name suggests, this is Seville's centre, and the densely packed zone of narrow streets and squares north of the cathedral is home to excellent bars and restaurants.

#### PLAZA DE SAN FRANCISCO & CALLE SIERPES

With a lively history as a market square in Muslim times and then the prime spot for

Inquisition burnings, Plaza de San Francisco has been Seville's main public square since the 16th century. The **ayuntamiento** (town hall; Map pp102–3), on its western side, is a building of contrasting characters: its southern end is encrusted with lovely Renaissance carving from the 1520s and '30s, while its northern end, a 19th-century extension, is bare.

The pedestrianised Calle Sierpes, which runs north from the square, and the parallel Calle Tetuán/Velázquez are Seville's fanciest shopping streets. Between the two streets, on Calle Jovellanos, look into the **Capilla de San José** (Map pp102–3; 🕒 8am–12.30pm & 6.30–8.30pm). This small 18th-century chapel, created by the city's carpenters' guild, is a whole world of breathtakingly intense baroque ornamentation.

The **Palacio de la Condesa de Lebrija** (Map pp102–3; ☎ 954 22 78 02; www.palaciodelebrija.com; Calle de la Cuna 8; admission ground fl only €4, whole bldg €7; 🕒 10.30am–1.30pm & 4.30–7pm Mon–Fri, 10am–1pm Sat Oct–Apr, 10.30am–1.30pm & 5–7.30pm Mon–Fri, 10am–1pm Sat May–Sep), a block east of Calle Sierpes, is a 16th-century mansion with a rich collection of art and artisanry, and a beautiful Renaissance-Mudejar courtyard. If you want to see the top floor, you must wait for the guided tour, but it's worth it. The late Countess of Lebrija was an archaeologist, and she remodelled the house in 1914, filling many of the rooms with treasures from her travels. Ancient Rome was the Countess' speciality, so the library is full of books on antiquity and there are plenty of remains from Roman Itálica (p130), including some marvellous mosaics – especially the large one in the main patio. Upstairs are Arabic, baroque and Spanish rooms. The three-flight main staircase is lined with 16th- and 17th-century Sevillian tiles, and has a coffered ceiling imported from a now-demolished palace at Marchena.

#### PLAZA SALVADOR

A couple of blocks northeast of Plaza de San Francisco, this plaza was once the main forum of Roman Hispalis. It's dominated by the **Parroquia del Divino Salvador**, a major baroque church built between 1674 and 1712 following the demolition of Muslim Ishbiliya's main mosque at this site. Before the mosque, early Christian churches had stood here, and before them, a Roman

temple. Archaeologists are digging at the site, hoping to establish the exact age of the mosque and install walkways for the public to view the excavations. Hundreds of 18th-century burials, just beneath the church floor, were among the archaeologists' first discoveries in 2003. On the northern side of the church, the mosque's small **patio** remains, with orange trees, a font and a few half-buried Roman columns. To visit the church you have to first make an appointment by telephone (☎ 954 59 54 05, 10am to 2pm Monday to Friday). The patio can be visited daily from 10am to 2pm and from 5pm to 7pm.

### CASA DE PILATOS

Another of Seville's finest noble mansions, the **Casa de Pilatos** (☎ 954 22 52 98; admission ground fl only €5, whole house €8, EU citizen 1-5pm Tue free; ☎ 9am-7pm Mar-Sep, 9am-6pm Oct-Feb) is still occupied by the ducal Medinaceli family. It's a mixture of Mudejar, Gothic and Renaissance styles, with some beautiful tilework and *artesonado*. The overall effect is similar to that of the Alcázar.

One explanation for the building's name ('Pilate's House') is that its 16th-century creator, Don Fadrique Enriquez de Ribera, was trying to imitate Pontius Pilate's palace in Jerusalem, to which city he had made a pilgrimage. A rival theory is that the house served as the first station of a Via Crucis (Way of the Cross) route, in which penitents symbolically retraced Christ's steps to the Crucifixion. The first station would represent Christ's appearance before Pilate.

The **Patio Principal** has lots of wonderful 16th-century tiles and intricate Mudejar plasterwork. The armless statue of Athene is ancient Greek; the statues in the other corners are Roman. Around the walls are busts of Roman historical and mythical figures, plus King Carlos I of Spain.

The names of the rooms off the Patio Principal recall the supposed Pontius Pilate connection. The **Descanso de los Jueces** (Judges' Retiring Room), **Salón Pretorio** (Palace Hall) and **Gabinete de Pilatos** (Pilate's Study) have *artesonado*. Beyond the Salón Pretorio is the **Zaquizami**, a corridor with Roman sculptures and inscriptions. The Gabinete de Pilatos leads into the **Jardín Grande** (Big Garden), which features Italian-style loggias.

The **staircase** to the upper floor has the most magnificent tiles in the building, and a great golden *artesonado* dome above. Visits to the **upper floor** itself, still partly inhabited by the Medinacelis, are guided. Of interest are the several centuries' worth of Medinaceli portraits and a small Goya bullfighting painting.

### South of the Centre

#### ANTIGUA FÁBRICA DE TABACOS

The agony and love trouble of Bizet's operatic Carmen took place in Seville's massive 250m by 180m former tobacco factory, **Antigua Fábrica de Tabacos** (Map pp102-3; Calle San Fernando; ☎ 8am-9.30pm Mon-Fri, 8am-2pm Sat). It was built in the 18th century and served its original purpose until the mid-20th century. Long a cornerstone of the city's economy, the factory had its own jail, stables for 400 mules, 21 fountains, 24 patios and even a nursery for the children of its mostly female workers.

It's an impressive if rather gloomy building, in neoclassical style. The main portal sports carvings on the theme of the discovery of the Americas, where tobacco came from: among them are Columbus, Cortés (conqueror of the Aztecs) and two Native Americans, one of them smoking a pipe. At the top of the portal is Fame, blowing a trumpet.

The tobacco factory is now part of the Universidad de Sevilla (Seville University). You're free to wander through and take a look.

#### PARQUE DE MARÍA LUISA & PLAZA DE ESPAÑA

Standing in a large area south of the tobacco factory, the **Parque de María Luisa** (Map pp94-5; ☎ 8am-10pm Sep-Jun, 8am-midnight Jul & Aug) was transformed for Seville's first international fair, the 1929 *Exposición Iberoamericana*, when architects spattered it with all sorts of excellent and quirky buildings, many of them modelled on the native styles of Spain's former colonies. The park is a beautiful oasis of calm with a maze of paths, flowers, fountains, lawns and 3500 magnificent trees. It provides a place to escape from the traffic and noise of the city and is the prime spot where *sevillanos* (people of Seville) go to relax on the weekends.

**Plaza de España**, a rather isolated and relaxing spot with its fountains and mini-

canals, faces the northeastern side of the park across Avenida de Isabel la Católica. Curving round the plaza is the most grandiose of the 1929 buildings, a brick-and-tile confection featuring Seville tilework at its gaudiest, with a map and historical scene for each Spanish province – all designed by the leading *Exposición Iberoamericana* architect, Sevillan Aníbal González.

On **Plaza de América** at the southern end of the park is a large flock of white doves (they'll clamber all over you if you buy a €1.50 bag of seed from vendors) and two interesting museums. The big **Museo Arqueológico** (Map pp94-5; ☎ 954 23 24 01; non-EU citizen €1.50, EU citizen free; ☎ 3-8pm Tue, 9am-8pm Wed-Sat, 9am-2pm Sun & holidays) has a room of gold jewellery from the mysterious Tartessos culture, and fine collections of Iberian animal sculptures and beautiful Roman mosaics. Large quantities of Roman sculpture include statues of two emperors from Itálica near Seville – Hadrian (Adriano) and Trajan (Trajano), with the top half of his head missing).

The claim to fame of the **Museo de Artes y Costumbres Populares** (Map pp94-5; ☎ 954 23 25 76; non-EU citizen €1.50, EU citizen free; ☎ 3-8pm Tue, 9am-8pm Wed-Sat, 9am-2pm Sun & holidays) was a walk-on part as an Arabic palace in *Lawrence of Arabia*. It is in the 1929 exhibition's Mudejar pavilion and its collection includes mock workshops of local crafts, and some really beautiful old festival costumes.

### Triana

The legendary barrio of Triana, across the Río Guadalquivir from central Seville, used to be the quarter of the city's *gitanos* (Roma) and was one of the birthplaces of flamenco. The neighbourhood's name is often heard in flamenco songs, nostalgically remembered by the singers over many generations. Even though the *gitanos* were moved out to new suburban areas in the 1960s and '70s, Triana's teenagers still sit by the river and sing flamenco – Beyoncé would be jealous.

Triana is also a famed **pottery-and-tile-making area**. A dozen shops and workshops still sell charming and artistic ceramics on the corner of Calles Alfarería and Antillano Campos (Map pp94-5). Triana has several diverse and important churches and chapels. Among the most important are

the **Iglesia del Cristo de la Expiración** (Map pp94-5; ☎ 954 33 33 41; Calle Castilla 182; ☎ 10.30am-1.30pm & 6-9.30pm Tue-Sat, 10.30am-1.30pm Sun) houses a much-loved figure of the dead Christ, dating from 1682, that takes an honoured place in Seville's Semana Santa processions. The image is known as El Cachorro (The Puppy): sculptor Antonio Ruiz Gijón was reputedly inspired by the agonised body of a *gitano* singer of that name who had died in a fight in this street. In the southern part of Triana, the **Capilla del Rocío** (Map pp94-5; Calle Evangelista 23) is home to the Hermandad del Rocío de Triana. The departure of this brotherhood's procession of horses and covered wagons to El Rocío (see the boxed text, p157) on the Thursday before Pentecost is one of the most colourful and emotive events in the Seville calendar.

At the **Capilla de los Marineros** (Map pp102-3; ☎ 954 33 26 45; Calle de la Pureza 53; ☎ 9am-1pm & 5.30-9pm Mon-Sat) you'll find the gorgeously be-decked, much adored image of the Virgen de la Esperanza (Virgin of Hope), patroness of Triana sailors, another who has an honoured role in the Semana Santa processions. The **Parroquia de Santa Ana** (Map pp102-3; Calle de la Pureza 80), dating from 1280, has a wealth of antique religious imagery. A strange tradition has it that every woman who kicks 'El Negro', a 16th-century tomb that has tiles depicting a recumbent knight, will find a husband. Poor El Negro has been protected by benches and other obstacles to prevent damage to this precious artwork, but women still want husbands and keep on kicking.

### Isla de la Cartuja

North of Triana, this northern part of an island between two branches of the Guadalquivir was the site of Expo '92. Today it's home to the Isla Mágica theme park (p111), Cartuja 93 technology business park and the historic La Cartuja monastery. Buses C1 and C2 (p130) serve the Isla de la Cartuja.

### CONJUNTO MONUMENTAL DE LA CARTUJA

Founded in 1399, the **Conjunto Monumental de la Cartuja** (Cartuja Monastery; Map pp94-5; ☎ 955 03 70 70; admission incl/excl temporary exhibitions €3/1.80, EU citizen free Tue; ☎ 10am-9pm Mon-Fri, 11am-9pm Sat, 10am-3pm Sun, to 8pm Mon-Fri Oct-Mar, last admission 1hr before closing time) became the

favourite Sevillian lodging place for Columbus, King Felipe II and other luminaries. Columbus' remains lay here from 1509 to 1536. Over the centuries benefactors endowed the monastery with a rich collection of Sevillian art, but in 1836 the monks were expelled during the Disentailment (when church property was auctioned off by the state). In 1839 the complex was bought by a Liverpoolian, Charles Pickman, who turned it into a porcelain factory, building the tall bottle-shaped kilns that stand incongruously beside the monastery buildings. The porcelain factory functioned until 1982.

The whole complex was restored for Expo '92. The entrance is on the monastery's western side on Calle Américo Vespucio. The monastery features a now rather bare 15th-century church; a pretty 15th-century Mudejar cloister; and the **Capilla de Santa Ana**, which was built as the Columbus family tomb. It also features the **Capítulo de Monjes** (Chapter House), full of disarmingly realistic 16th-century funerary sculptures of members of the Ribera family, who were among the monastery's chief benefactors. Also here is the **Centro Andaluz de Arte Contemporáneo** (Andalucian Contemporary Art Centre), with a large collection of modern Andalucian art and frequent temporary exhibitions by contemporary artists.

### CARTUJA 93

Many of the exotic Expo pavilions are now encompassed within this **technology park**, which is home to nearly 200 companies and organisations employing nearly 9000 people. Many of the pavilions still look futuristic, though the built-in obsolescence of a few is starting to show through. You can wander around the area during daylight hours but you may find that the gates are only open on the western side on Calle Américo Vespucio (Map pp94-5).

### Alameda de Hércules & Around

The working-class area of Alameda de Hércules and further north of Calle Alfonso XII and Plaza Ponce de León provides a fascinating contrast to the city centre. There's good nightlife here, and it's the centre of Seville's 'alternative' scene, with intriguing nooks and crannies, boho cafés and one of the city's best street markets (on Calle de la Feria, Thursday morning – see p128).

### BASÍLICA DE JESÚS DEL GRAN PODER

Found behind a large baroque portal in the corner of Plaza de San Lorenzo, the **Basílica de Jesús del Gran Poder** (Map pp94-5; ☎ 954 91 56 72; Plaza de San Lorenzo 13; ☎ 8am-1.30pm & 6-9pm Sat-Thu, 7.30am-10pm Fri) dates only from the 1960s but houses a famous and far older sculpture of the cross-bearing Christ (after which it's named). The almost wizened image of Christ, sculpted in 1620 by Juan de Mesa, inspires much Sevillian devotion and takes place of honour in the *Semana Santa* processions on Good Friday morning. On either side of the altar are a sculpture of St John the Evangelist, also by de Mesa, and an anonymous *Virgen del Mayor Dolor* (Virgin of the Deepest Grief) from the 18th century or earlier.

### ALAMEDA DE HÉRCULES

Once a no-go area reserved only for the city's 'painted ladies', pimps and a wide range of shady characters, the dusty 350m-long parklike strip has reinvented itself as Seville's only 'alternative area', with trendy bars, chic shops, a small gay community and the popular **Teatro Alameda** (see p126). Indeed the city's *la marcha* is rife here and people fill the streets all night at weekends, chatting and drinking till the sun comes up over the *álamo* (poplar) trees that gave Alameda its name. Even though the area's straightened up its act, prostitutes still live and work in the area and some of the streets are pretty uninviting, especially after dark, so it's not a good idea for women to walk alone around here at night.

The Alameda was created in the 1570s by draining a marsh, erecting two columns from a ruined Roman temple at its southern end, topped with statues of Hercules and Julius Caesar by Diego de Pesquera. Its avenues became a fashionable meeting place in the 17th century before sinking into anonymity and dereliction until the 1990s, when it emerged as one of the fastest up-and-coming areas.

### BASÍLICA DE LA MACARENA

The 1940s **Basílica de la Macarena** (Map pp94-5; ☎ 954 90 18 00; Calle Bécquer 1; ☎ 9am-2pm & 5-9pm), off Calle San Luis, the home of Seville's most revered Virgin, will give you a whiff of the fervour inspired by *Semana Santa*. The *Virgen de la Esperanza Macarena*

(Macarena Virgin of Hope), a magnificent statue adorned with a golden crown, lavish vestments, and five diamond-and-emerald brooches donated by a famous 20th-century matador, Joselito El Gallo, stands in splendour behind the main altarpiece. Believed to have been sculpted in the mid-17th century by María Luisa Roldán ('La Roldana'), La Macarena, as she is commonly known, is the patron of bullfighters and Seville's supreme representation of the grieving, yet hopeful, mother of Christ. The power of this fragile, beautiful statue is most evident in the wee hours of the *madrugá* (Good Friday) *Semana Santa* procession. Where she passes, a rain of rose petals falls, and crazed *sevillanos* shout: '¡Macarena, guapa!' (Beautiful Macarena!). To top it all off a *saeta* (sacred Andalucian song) is sung, praising the Virgin's beauty.

A magnificent 1654 statue of *El Cristo de la Sentencia* (Christ of the Sentence) by Felipe Morales is normally positioned in a chapel on the left of the church. Both statues are carried from the church at midnight at the start of every Good Friday. Their journey through the city is the climax of *Semana Santa* in Seville, and their return to the church around 1.30pm on the Saturday is attended by enormous crowds.

The church's **museum** (adult/student/senior €3/1.50/1.50; ☎ 9.30am-2pm & 5-8pm) displays some of La Macarena's extraordinarily lavish vestments, plus bullfighters' suits donated by famous matadors and the *Semana Santa pasos* (platforms) on which both images are carried. The *paso* of *El Cristo de la Sentencia* is a tableau showing Pontius Pilate washing his hands while the order for Christ's Crucifixion is read out.

Buses C1, C2, C3 and C4 (see p130) stop on Calle Andueza, near the Basílica de la Macarena. Across this street is the **Parlamento de Andalucía**, Andalucía's regional parliament (generally not open to visitors). The longest surviving stretch of Seville's 12th-century **Almohad walls** extends east of the church.

### IGLESIA DE SAN LUIS

One of Seville's most impressive churches, **Iglesia de San Luis** (Map pp94-5; ☎ 954 55 02 07; Calle San Luis s/n; admission free; ☎ 9am-2pm Tue-Thu, 9am-2pm & 5-8pm Fri & Sat, closed Aug) stands 500m south of the Basílica de la Macarena. Designed for the Jesuits by Leonardo de

Figuerola in 1731, the baroque San Luis has an unusual equal-armed cross plan, 16 twisting stone pillars and a superb soaring dome. Statues of saints and virtues by Pedro de Mena perch very precariously on pedestals around the lower levels of the dome. *Religio* (Religion) looks as if she's about to topple over and crash to the church floor. Only in use as a church for a few decades, San Luis became a hospice before being abandoned in 1877, but has recently been restored and opened for visits.

## ACTIVITIES

### Isla Mágica

The theme park **Isla Mágica** (Map pp94-5; ☎ 902 16 17 16; www.islamagica.es; adult high season day/night pass €23.50/16.50, child under 13yr high season day/night pass €16.50/12.50; ☎ 11am-11pm mid-Jun-mid-Sep, 11am-7pm Apr-mid-Jun & mid-Sep-Oct, closed Nov-Mar) attracts a million visitors a year and is a great day's fun for kids and anyone who likes white-knuckle rides. Opening hours vary from year to year and between weekdays and weekends, so it's always best to confirm times before going. Half-day and evening tickets are also available; see the website for more information.

The theme is the 16th-century Spanish colonial adventure. Highlight rides include **El Jaguar**, a roller coaster with high-speed 360-degree turns, and the **Anaconda** water roller coaster with vertiginous drops. At busy times you may have to wait 45 minutes for the big attractions. There are also pirate shows, virtual rides, bird-of-prey displays and lots of entertaining street-theatre-type stuff, plus plenty of places to eat and drink.

### Baños Árabes

Rest your weary, sightseeing muscles by taking a soak and a massage at **Aire de Sevilla** (Map pp94-5; ☎ 955 01 00 25; www.airedesevilla.com; Calle Aire 15; bath/bath & massage €18/26; ☎ on the hr every 2hrs from 10am-2am) Arab baths. There are two warm pools and one cold, plus a steam room.

## COURSES

### Flamenco & Dance

The city has many dance and flamenco schools. Check these out: **Espacio Meteora** (Map pp94-5; ☎ 954 90 14 83; www.espaciometeora.com; Calle Duque Cornejo 16A) Innovative arts centre where flamenco and other dance courses are usually ongoing.

**Fundación Cristina Heeren de Arte Flamenco** (Map pp102–3; ☎ 954 21 70 58; www.flamencoheeren.com; Calle Fabiola 1) Long-term courses in all flamenco arts; also one-month intensive summer courses.

**Sevilla Dance Centre** (Map pp94–5; ☎ 954 38 39 02; Calle Conde de Torrejón 19) Salsa, flamenco, classical, hip-hop, contemporary.

**Taller Flamenco** (Map pp94–5; ☎ 954 56 42 34; www.tallerflamenco.com; Calle Peral 49) Flamenco dance and guitar and Spanish-language courses.

Tourist offices and *El Giralddillo* magazine (p96) have further information.

## Language

Along with Granada, Seville is one of the two most popular cities in Andalucía for foreigners to study Spanish. The following are among the best schools: all offer short- and long-term courses at a variety of levels, nearly always with a range of excursions and other spare-time and social activities.

**Carpe Diem** (Map pp102–3; ☎ 954 21 85 15; www.carpediemsevilla.com; Calle de la Cuna 13) Small, friendly school with courses also available in arts, culture, translation and Spanish for business.

**CLIC** (Map pp102–3; ☎ 954 50 21 31; www.clic.es; Calle Albareda 19) Well-established language centre with good social scene; courses in business Spanish and Hispanic studies available.

**Giralda Center** (Map pp102–3; ☎ 954 21 31 65; www.giraldacenter.com; Calle Mateos Gago 17) Friendly atmosphere, plenty of excursions, reputation for good teaching.

**Lenguaviva** (Map pp94–5; ☎ 954 90 51 31; www.lenguaviva.es; Calle Viriato 24) Good on spare-time activities like tapas tours and social drinks; courses in business Spanish available.

**LINC** (Map pp102–3; ☎ 954 50 04 59; www.linc.tv; Calle General Polavieja 13) Small, popular school, good on cultural activities and excursions.

## SEVILLE FOR CHILDREN

The riverbank of the **Guadalquivir** and **Parque de María Luisa** (p108) are good places for younger children to run off some steam, and they'll enjoy feeding the doves in Parque de María Luisa. **Isla Mágica** (p111) gives kids of all ages a great day of fun, though those aged over about 10 will get the most out of the rides. Another likely hit is a **city tour** in an open-topped double-decker bus or horse-drawn carriage (opposite). On

### IN SARA'S SHOES

After a few painful attempts at flamenco dancing, followed by verbal abuse from the neighbour downstairs, I was ready to give up altogether. But then a friend said to me: 'You need a role model, someone whose success can be a guide. Someone like Sara Baras.' And I decided to seek out this woman whose dancing career started at the age of eight, just to talk to her, see what drove her and what keeps her going.

She's a charming young woman, small off stage, and the severe flamenco expression is replaced by a kind smile. I don't tell her I am attempting to learn flamenco, but ask her what inspired her to dance. 'I owe absolutely everything to my mother, as a person and as an artist. She is the kind of person who falls in love with things in a way that transmits to other people. I was very lucky to have been able to follow her to all the festivals and schools since I was a child. I was always watching people dance.' The mother she talks about is Concha Baras, a woman whose school was famed in Andalucía and where flamenco stars started out. 'I was fortunate as a child to be in contact with flamenco's best: Camarón de la Isla. His older brother, Manuel, sang at my mother's school. When Camarón first showed up, it was really bizarre, because he was so shy. It was as if he had no voice, as if he wasn't born with this magical music box in his throat.' I ask her what her first memory of dancing flamenco is. She's embarrassed: 'It was when my mother started her school. There were lots of boys there and I was too embarrassed to dance in front of them.' I think that's a much better memory than mine, which I shan't go into.

I wonder whether she ever gets bored dancing when she's on tour. Surely it gets a little repetitive? 'When I am dancing, I don't think of anything. I just dance. We have long silences during our shows, but for me, when there is complete silence in the auditorium, it's the same as music. They say it's impossible, but I think I can hear people breathing. It's like a rhythm, a part of the dance.'

Sara is mesmerising, and entertaining, to watch on stage. I decide to stick with it, at least for one more class.

Sunday morning visit the **pet market** in **Plaza de la Alfalfa** (Map pp102–3).

The **Teatro Alameda** (p126) and other venues stage regular theatre for children.

Also recommended:

**Aquópolis Sevilla** (Map pp94–5; ☎ 954 40 66 22; www.aquopolis.es in Spanish; Avenida del Deporte s/n; adult/child under 11yr €16/10.50; ☎ 11am–7 or 8pm approx late May–early Sep) Waterslides and wave pools, in Barrio Las Delicias on the east of the city (off the A92 towards Málaga).

**Reserva Natural Castillo de las Guardas** (Map pp94–5; ☎ 955 95 25 68; Finca Herrerías Bajas s/n, Carretera A476 Km 6.82; adult/child under 13yr €15/11; ☎ 10.30am–6pm Tue–Sun, last admission 4.30pm) About 1000 animals from around the planet roam in semi-liberty and can be viewed from your own vehicle or the park's road-train. There are also bird-of-prey demonstrations. It's 58km northwest of Seville in the village of El Castillo de las Guardas, off the N433 towards Aracena.

## TOURS

**Cruceros Turísticos Torre del Oro** (Map pp102–3; ☎ 954 56 16 92; child over 14yr/under 14yr €12/free) One-hour sightseeing river cruises every half-hour from 11am from the riverbank by the Torre del Oro, with loudspeaker commentary in Spanish, English and German; last departure can range from 6pm in winter to 10pm in summer. From around May to September, there are also Saturday and Sunday round-trip day cruises to Sanlúcar de Barrameda, 100km downriver (adult/child under 14yr/ senior €27/15/21); it's 4½ hours each way, usually with 4½ hours in Sanlúcar in between.

**Discover Sevilla** (☎ 954 22 66 42; www.discoversevilla.com) Out-of-town adventure trips, including horse riding on Doñana beaches and whale- and dolphin-watching in the Strait of Gibraltar, with prices from €25 to €75.

**Horse-drawn carriages** These wait around near the cathedral, Plaza de España and Puerta de Jerez, charging €30 for up to four people for a one-hour trot around the Barrio de Santa Cruz and Parque de María Luisa areas. Prices are posted on boards near their stops.

**Sevilla Tour** (☎ 902 10 10 81; www.citysightseeing-spain.com) One-hour city tours in open-topped double-decker buses and converted trams make with earphone commentary in a choice of languages. The €11 ticket is valid for 48 hours and you can hop on or off along Paseo de Cristóbal Colón (Map pp102–3; near the Torre del Oro), Avenida de Portugal behind Plaza de España (Map pp94–5), or the Isla de la Cartuja (Map pp94–5). Buses typically leave every 30 minutes from 7am to 8pm.

**Sevilla Walking Tours** (☎ 902 15 82 26; www.sevillawalkingtours.com) English-language tours of the main monumental area, lasting about 1½ hours, at 9.30am

and 11.30am daily. The same people also offer tours of the cathedral and the Alcázar.

**Tour por Sevilla/Guide Friday** (☎ 954 56 06 93; sevirama.cb.net) Same deal as Sevilla Tour but doesn't start until 10am.

**Walking in Seville with Carmen** A 90-minute combination of walking tour, street theatre and history lesson given in English by a lively and amusing young woman several days a week from March to October (except July). Look for her flyers around the Barrio de Santa Cruz telling where and when to meet. Your donation is up to you.

## FESTIVALS & EVENTS

### Semana Santa

If you're lucky enough to be in Seville for Semana Santa, prepare yourself for the spectacle of a lifetime. The amount of preparation, witnessed in the streets for weeks in advance, results in a phenomenally intense experience, unmatched by any other city in Spain. It gives a special insight into both Spanish Catholicism and the enormous strength of tradition in Seville.

Every day from Palm Sunday to Easter Sunday, large, richly bedecked images and life-size tableaux of scenes from the Easter story are carried from Seville's churches through the streets to the cathedral. They're accompanied by long processions, which may take more than an hour to pass, and are watched by vast crowds. These rites go back to the 14th century but they took their present form in the 17th, when many of the images – some of them supreme works of art – were created.

Programmes showing each procession's schedule and route are widely available before and during Semana Santa. *El País* newspaper publishes a daily route leaflet and *ABC* newspaper prints maps showing the churches, recommended viewing spots and other details. **Semana-Santa.org** (www.semana-santa.org) is devoted to Semana Santa in Seville. It's not too hard to work out which procession will be where and when. Pick up a procession in its own barrio or as it leaves or re-enters its church – always an emotional moment. Crowds along most of the *carrera oficial* (official route) in the city centre make it hard to get much of a view there, unless you can manage to get yourself a seat. These are sold at nearby ticket windows for anything from about €10 on Plaza Virgen de los Reyes behind the cathedral to €25 or more on Good Friday morning on



Calle Sierpes. But if you arrive early in the evening, you can usually get close enough to the cathedral to see plenty for free.

### Feria de Abril

The April Fair, held in the second half of the month (sometimes edging into May), is the jolly counterpart to the sombre Semana Santa. The biggest and most colourful of all Andalucía's *ferias* is less invasive (and also less inclusive) than the Easter celebration – it takes place on El Real de la Feria, in the Los Remedios area west of the Guadalquivir. Much of the site is taken up by private areas for clubs, associations, families and groups of friends. But there are public areas, too, where much the same fun goes on. The ceremonial lighting-up of the fairgrounds on the opening Monday night is the starting gun for six nights of *sevillanos*' favourite

activities: eating, drinking, talking, dressing up and dancing till dawn.

In the afternoons, from about 1pm, those who have horses and carriages parade about the site – and the city at large – in their finery (many of the horses are dressed up too). Seville's major bullfighting season also takes place during the *feria*.

### Other Festivals & Events

Other major Seville events:

**Bienal de Flamenco** (www.bienal-flamenco.org) Most of the big names of the flamenco world participate in this major flamenco festival, with events every night for a month in the Alcázar or the city's theatres. Held in the September of even-numbered years.

**Corpus Christi** An important early-morning procession of the Custodia de Juan de Arfe, along with accompanying images from the cathedral. Held 7 June 2007 and 22 May 2008.

### INSIDE SEMANA SANTA

Visit Seville at Easter and you'll be up all week, getting excited about men carrying crosses, following Virgin Marys and Jesuses, alongside all the *sevillanos* who are dressed up to the nines.

There are more than 50 *hermandades* or *cofrades* (brotherhoods, some of which include women). Membership of an *hermandad* is an honour keenly sought, even by some who rarely attend Mass. Each brotherhood normally carries two lavishly decorated *pasos* (platforms) and you can work out which *hermandad* is passing by the emblems and the colours of their capes. The first *paso* bears a statue of Christ, crucified, bearing the cross, or in a tableau from the Passion; the second carries an image of the Virgin. They are carried by teams of about 40 bearers called *costaleros*, who work in relays. The *pasos* are heavy – each *costalero* normally supports about 50kg – and they move with a hypnotic swaying motion to the rhythm of their brass-and-drum bands and the commands of their *capataz* or *patrón* (leader). Watching the *costaleros* stop and then start again, each time lifting the heavy *paso* in unison, and the *capataz* shouting encouraging words, is a magnificent experience. Each pair of *pasos* has up to 2500 costumed followers, known as *nazarenos*. Many *nazarenos* wear tall Ku Klux Klan-like capes, concealing the identity of the person wearing them, so that no one knows who they are, apart from God. The most contrite go barefoot and carry crosses.

Each day from Palm Sunday to Good Friday seven or eight *hermandades* leave their churches around the city in the afternoon or early evening. The *carrera oficial* (official route) goes along Calle Sierpes, through Plaza San Francisco and along Avenida de la Constitución to the cathedral.

The climax of the week is the *madrugá* (night/dawn) of Good Friday, when the most respected and popular *hermandades* file through the city, starting with the oldest, El Silencio, which goes in complete silence. Next comes **Jesús del Gran Poder** (p110), followed by **La Macarena** (p110). Then come El Calvario from the Iglesia de la Magdalena, Esperanza de Triana, and lastly, at dawn, Los Gitanos, the *gitano* (Roma) brotherhood. On the Saturday evening just four *hermandades* make their way to the cathedral, and finally, on Easter Sunday morning, the Hermandad de la Resurrección.

City-centre brotherhoods, such as El Silencio, are traditionally linked with the bourgeoisie. They are austere and wear black tunics, usually without capes. *Hermandades* from the working-class districts outside the centre (such as La Macarena) have bands and more brightly decorated *pasos*. Their *nazarenos* wear coloured, caped tunics, often of satin, velvet or wool. They also have to come from further away, and some are on the streets for more than 12 hours.

### SLEEPING

The attractive Barrio de Santa Cruz, which is close to the cathedral, Alcázar and Prado de San Sebastián bus station, has many places to stay in all price brackets. So do El Arenal (west of Santa Cruz towards the river, near Plaza de Armas bus station) and El Centro (the true city centre north of Santa Cruz).

Room rates in this section are for each establishment's high season – typically (but not strictly) from about March to June and again in September and October – and most rates don't include breakfast. Prices go down by at least €10 per room in low season. *Hostales* (budget hotels) may keep the same prices almost year-round. On the other hand, just about every room in Seville costs extra during Semana Santa and the Feria de Abril. The typical increase is between 30% and 60% over normal high-season rates, but a few places even double their prices. Some hotels extend this *temporada extra* (extra-high season) for a whole month from the start of Semana Santa to the end of the *feria*. It's vital to book ahead for rooms in Seville at this time, if you can afford them. Even at normal times, it's always worth ringing ahead. Note that some places ask for credit-card details and charge for the first night in advance.

### Barrio de Santa Cruz

#### BUDGET

**Pensión Cruces** (Map pp102-3; ☎ 954 22 60 41; Plaza de las Cruces 10; s/d/t €35/50/60; d with shared bathroom €40) This lovely old patio house has sparsely decorated rooms on three floors, painted in turquoise blues and whites; beds are on the uncomfortable side. The rooms look a little worn, despite having been refurbished in 2005.

**Huéspedes Dulces Sueños** (Map pp102-3; ☎ 954 41 93 93; Calle Santa María La Blanca 21; s/d €40/50, with shared bathroom €20/40; ☎) 'Sweet Dreams' is a friendly little *hostal* with seven spotless rooms. Those overlooking the street are good and bright. Doubles have air-con, singles don't.

**Pensión San Pancracio** (Map pp102-3; ☎/fax 954 41 31 04; Plaza de las Cruces 9; d €45, s/d with shared bathroom €20/30) The charming furnishings are almost as old as the rambling family house, but it's all sweet and clean. There's a curfew

at 1.30am, when the house closes down for the night (not during Semana Santa and Feria de Abril).

#### MIDRANGE

**Hostal Córdoba** (Map pp102-3; ☎ 954 22 74 98; Calle Farnesio 12; s/d €50/70, with shared bathroom €40/60; ☎) Twelve bright, spotless rooms surround a plant-draped three-storey atrium. The Córdoba is run by a friendly older couple and situated on a quiet pedestrian street.

**Hostal Goya** (Map pp102-3; ☎ 954 21 11 70; hgoya@hostalgoya.e.telefonica.net; Calle Mateos Gago 31; s/d €50/80; ☎) Since the Goya had a facelift in 2005, the gleaming *hostal*'s been more popular than ever. The rooms are elegant and simple, with shining en-suite bathrooms. There's also a lift. Book ahead.

**Un Patio en Santa Cruz** (Map pp102-3; ☎ 954 53 94 13; www.patiosantacruz.com; Calle Doncellas 15; s/d €58/68; ☎) An understated hotel defying the elaborate concept of traditional Andalusian décor. The rooms are kept stylish and simple, and the roof terrace has views of the Giralda.

**Hotel Alcántara** (Map pp102-3; ☎ 954 50 05 95; www.hotelalcantara.net; Calle Ximénez de Enciso 28; s/d €66/84; lift; ☎) Tucked in next to Casa de la Memoria de Al-Andalus, the Alcántara has a wonderful, bright look. The rooms are in gentle vanilla whites with an autumn-leaves print on the curtains and plenty of light. The bathrooms all have bathtubs and luxurious marble sinks.

**Hostel Puerta de Sevilla** (Map pp102-3; ☎ 954 98 72 70; www.hotelpuertadesevilla.com; Calle Santa María la Blanca 36; s/d €65/85; ☎) A small shiny hotel in a great location, the Puerta de Sevilla is all flower-pattern textiles, wrought-iron beds and pastel wallpaper. Rooms are comfortable with plasma-screen TVs and writing tables, and there's a lift.

**Hostería del Laurel** (Map pp102-3; ☎ 954 22 02 95; www.hosteriadel Laurel.com in Spanish; Plaza de los Venerables 5; s/d incl breakfast €72/104; ☎) Legend has it that this establishment inspired playwright José Zorrilla (who stayed here in 1844) to write *Don Juan Tenorio*, one of the most popular versions of the Don Juan story. So rather fittingly, each room here is named after a character in the play. The simple, spacious and bright rooms have cool marble floors and good-sized bathrooms. Renovations are planned for some of the rooms.

**THE AUTHOR'S CHOICE**

**Hotel Amadeus** (☎ 954 50 14 43; [www.hotelamadeusevilla.com](http://www.hotelamadeusevilla.com); Calle Farnesio 6; s/d €70/85; 📍 📺 📺) Here is a hotel for music lovers to come and indulge their passion. An entrepreneurial musician family converted their 18th-century mansion into this unique hotel and named each of the 14 elegant, fabulously designed rooms after a different composer. If you want to practise piano or violin, there are instruments on the premises and a couple of soundproof practise rooms. A glass elevator lifts you to your floor or onto the roof terrace, where you can have your breakfast with views of the Giralda. Music for everyone's ears, in exquisitely stylish surroundings.

**TOP END**

**Las Casas de la Judería** (Map pp102-3; ☎ 954 41 51 50; [www.casosyalacios.com](http://www.casosyalacios.com); Callejón de Dos Hermanas 7; s/d from €108/167; 📍 📺) Once an entire block in the *judería*, this is now a charming hotel comprising a series of restored houses and mansions around lovely patios and fountains. Most of the 116 comfortable, traditional-style rooms and suites sport four-poster beds, bath and shower, writing table, cable TV, phone and safe, and an amazing range of art on the walls.

**Hotel Alfonso XIII** (Map pp102-3; ☎ 954 91 70 00; [www.westin.com/hotelalfonso](http://www.westin.com/hotelalfonso); Calle San Fernando 2; s/d €371/487; 📍 📺 📺 📺) The pride and joy of old Seville, with mahogany, marble and tiles, just the sound of 'Alfonso XIII' sends trembles of pleasure down a *sevillano's* spine. Built to house heads of state visiting the Exposición Iberoamericana of 1929, it has 147 ultra-elegant rooms and suites with every amenity you could imagine, an outdoor pool, a fine restaurant and a sophisticated bar with terrace under lush tropical foliage.

**El Arenal****BUDGET**

**Hostal Residencia Naranjo** (Map pp102-3; ☎ 954 22 58 40; fax 954 21 69 43; Calle San Roque 11; s/d €35/50; 📍) Colourful bedspreads and pine furniture add a touch of warmth to this *hostal*, almost opposite Hotel Zaida. The 27 rooms are all equipped with TV and phone.

**Hotel Zaida** (Map pp102-3; ☎ 954 21 11 38; [www.hotelzaida.com](http://www.hotelzaida.com); Calle San Roque 26; s/d €37/55; 📍)

A gorgeous Mudejar-style patio is central to this 18th-century town house and is its loveliest feature. The 27 rooms here are plain and decent, with phones and reading lamps. There's a lift to the upper floor, and the street is quiet, but ground-floor rooms open straight onto the foyer.

**Hotel Madrid** (Map pp102-3; ☎ 954 21 43 07; [www.hotelmadridsevilla.com](http://www.hotelmadridsevilla.com); Calle San Pedro Mártir 22; s/d €40/55; 📍 📺) At the end of a quiet street, this is a friendly, small, family-run hotel. The 21 pretty rooms have firm beds, nice blue-tiled bathrooms, and little balconies overlooking orange-tree-lined streets.

**Hostal Roma** (Map pp102-3; ☎ 954 50 13 00; [www.hostales-sp.com](http://www.hostales-sp.com); Calle Gravina 34; s/d €48/56; 📍 📺) This attractive *hostal* has 17 rooms and a lift linking its three floors. Rooms all have phone, writing table, prints on the walls and double glazing. The owners have three other *hostales* close by.

Also recommended:

**Hostal Romero** (Map pp102-3; ☎ 954 21 13 53; Calle Gravina 21; d €40, s/d with shared bathroom €20/30) A friendly low-budget choice; the attic rooms with shared bathrooms are like something out of *La Bohème*.

**MIDRANGE**

**Hotel Simón** (Map pp102-3; ☎ 954 22 66 60; [www.hotelsimonsevilla.com](http://www.hotelsimonsevilla.com); Calle García de Vinuesa 19; s €45-60, d €70-95; 📍) The charming Hotel Simón is a small hotel in a fine 18th-century house. It's extremely popular so book well ahead. It's built around a lovely patio with a fountain, and antiques and beautiful Sevillian tilework adorn the passages, sitting areas and broad staircase, as well as some of the 29 good-sized, spotless and comfortable rooms. All have phone and desk.

**Hotel Maestranza** (Map pp102-3; ☎ 954 56 10 70; [www.hotelmaestranza.es](http://www.hotelmaestranza.es); Calle Gamazo 12; s/d €49/87; 📍 📺) Dedicated to the Maestranza bullring, and with a large photograph in the reception to prove it. This small and friendly hotel is on a quietish street and has just 18 spotless but plain rooms, all equipped with phone, safe and little chandeliers. The reception has glitzy gilded armchairs and sofas. The singles are small, but have queen-size beds.

**Hotel Puerta de Triana** (Map pp102-3; ☎ 954 21 54 04; [www.hotelpuertadetriana.com](http://www.hotelpuertadetriana.com); Calle Reyes Católicos 5; s/d €70/96; 📍) The Puerta de Triana is steps away from Triana bridge, and also conveniently close to El Centro and El

Arenal neighbourhoods. The handsome 65-room hotel has traditional fittings and all the modern comforts. The rooms are cosy and medium-sized, with marble floors, desk and telephone, and windows look on to the street or interior patios. Breakfast is included in the price.

Also recommended:

**Hotel Europa** (Map pp102-3; ☎ 954 21 43 05; [www.hoteleuropasevilla.com](http://www.hoteleuropasevilla.com); Calle Jimios 5; s/d €77/95; 📍 📺) Classic furniture and colonial style; comfortable, marble-floored rooms in a fine 18th-century house.

**TOP END**

**Hotel Vinci La Rábida** (Map pp102-3; ☎ 954 50 12 80; [www.vincihoteles.com](http://www.vincihoteles.com); Calle Castelar 24; s/d €154/182; 📍 📺 📺) A beautiful four-storey, columned atrium-lounge greets you in this converted 18th-century palace, now a classy four-star hotel. There are 81 extremely comfortable rooms, with terracotta and marble floors and attractive prints. The hotel boasts a seasonal rooftop bar-café with magnificent views of the cathedral. Service is professional, friendly and polished.

**El Centro****BUDGET**

**Oasis Backpackers Hostel** (Map pp102-3; ☎ 954 29 37 77; [www.oasissevilla.com](http://www.oasissevilla.com); Calle Don Alonso el Sabio 1A; dm €18 per person, d incl breakfast €40; 📍 📺) The sister hostel of the massively popular Oasis in Granada, this stylish, buzzing backpackers is one of a kind in Seville. The neat lounge has 24-hour free internet access, and breakfast is eaten in the top-floor kitchen or the glass-floored roof terrace. Each dorm bed has a personal safe, the atmosphere is good

and the hosts keep you entertained with tapas tours and Spanish classes.

**Casa Sol y Luna** (Map pp102-3; ☎ 954 21 06 82; [www.casosolyluna1.com](http://www.casosolyluna1.com); Calle Pérez Galdós 1A; d €45, s/d/tr with shared bathroom €22/38/60) This is a first-rate *hostal* set in a large, elegantly floor-creaking and beautifully decorated old town house, with antiques in each room, and white embroidered linen that makes you feel as if you're staying at your grandma's house. The shared bathrooms (none shared by more than two rooms) are the biggest and most beautiful you'll find in any *hostal* in Andalucía. No credit cards are accepted, and pay special attention to the 24-hour booking-confirmation policy.

**MIDRANGE**

**Hotel San Francisco** (Map pp102-3; ☎ /fax 954 50 15 41; Calle Álvarez Quintero 38; s/d €55/68; 📍) On a pedestrian street linking El Centro with the Barrio de Santa Cruz, the friendly, good-value Hotel San Francisco is a recently converted 18th-century family home. Nearly all the 16 good-sized rooms look on to the street or an interior patio; all have marble floors, TV and heating.

**TOP END**

**Las Casas del Rey de Baeza** (Map pp102-3; ☎ 954 56 14 96; [www.hospes.es](http://www.hospes.es); Plaza Jesús de la Redención 2; s/d €163/189; 📍 📺 📺 📺) This tranquil, expertly run and marvellously designed hotel occupies former communal-housing patios dating from the 18th century, with traditional Andalusian exterior blinds made of esparto grass. The 41 large rooms, in tasteful blue, white, orange and red hues, boast

**TOURIST APARTMENTS IN SEVILLE**

Four people can rent a clean, comfortable, tasteful, well-located and well-equipped apartment in Seville for well under €100 a night. Two people normally pay between €30 and €70. The accommodation will usually compare well with what you get for the same money in a hotel or *hostal* (a simple guesthouse or small place offering hotel-like accommodation).

There are several websites that provide details of a range of apartments in Seville: they don't usually offer immediate online booking, but provide the chance to request availability and await email confirmation. Try the following:

**Apartamentos Embrujo de Sevilla** (☎ 625 060 937; [www.embrujodesevilla.com](http://www.embrujodesevilla.com))

**Sevilla5.com** (☎ 637 011 091; [www.sevilla5.com](http://www.sevilla5.com))

**Sol** ([www.sol.com](http://www.sol.com))

There's further information available at **Explore Seville** ([www.exploreseville.com](http://www.exploreseville.com)).

attractive modern art, CD player, DVD and wi-fi. The public areas include a super-comfortable lounge and reading room and a gorgeous pool.

**Hotel Casa Imperial** (Map pp102-3; ☎ 954 50 03 00; www.casaimperial.com; Calle Imperial 29; s/d €235/257; (P) (S)) One of Seville's most luxurious and atmospheric hotels, the Casa Imperial is a 16th-century palace with three lovely plant-filled patios – one with a fountain and sometimes a guitarist. Decoration is sumptuous; the 24 luxurious suites and junior suites in various bold colours all have a kitchenette and sitting area, though not all are as big as you might hope. The hotel has a good restaurant and a roof terrace with gorgeous views.

### Alameda de Hércules

#### BUDGET

**Hotel Sevilla** (Map pp102-3; ☎ 954 38 41 61; www.hotel-sevilla.com; Calle Daoiz 5; s/d €35/55; (S)) The recently modernised Hotel Sevilla, on a quiet little plaza, is good value. The 30 medium-sized rooms in pink-and-green colour schemes have good bathrooms, large mirrors, desk, reading lamps and phone. There's a pretty little greenery-filled patio off the broad foyer.

#### MIDRANGE

**Hotel Corregidor** (Map pp94-5; ☎ 954 38 51 11, fax 954 38 42 38; Calle Morgado 17; s/d €78/97; (P) (S)) On a quiet little street up towards the Alameda de Hércules, the 77-room Corregidor is com-

fortable. It has pleasant rooms with phone, TV and a spot of art on the walls. Singles are a decent size. Downstairs are spacious sitting areas and a little open-air patio.

**Patio de la Cartuja** (Map pp94-5; ☎ 954 90 02 00; www.patiosdesevilla.com; Calle Lumbreras 8-10; s/d €69/98; (P) (S)) Excellent-value accommodation for those wanting to self-cater, this is an apartment hotel in a former *corral* – a three-storey patio community that was once the typical form of Sevillian lower-middle-class housing. Located just off the northern end of Alameda de Hércules, each of the 30 cosy apartments has a double bedroom, kitchen and sitting room with double sofa bed.

**Patio de la Alameda** (Map pp94-5; ☎ 954 90 49 99; www.patiodelaalameda.com; Alameda de Hércules 56; s/d €69/90; (P) (S)) Another wonderful former *corral*, recently renovated and under new ownership. The hotel is right on the Alameda nightlife beat, but manages to keep a quiet atmosphere even at the most raucous of times. The large apartments have blush walls and a modern design, kitchens and sitting rooms, and there's plenty of space for a party of four to sleep comfortably.

#### TOP END

**Hotel San Gil** (Map pp94-5; ☎ 954 90 68 11; www.fp-hoteles.com; Calle Parras 28; s/d €126/158; (P) (S)) Just around the corner from the Basilica de la Macarena, San Gil is one of the city's hidden gems. The renovated early-20th-century building focuses on a pretty garden-courtyard and combines acclaimed modern design with beautiful antique tiling and other traditional touches. The 61 cosy, tasteful rooms and suites feature marble-tiled bathrooms; the public areas include a restaurant, bar and pool.

### EATING

Seville's hundreds of tapas bars are the city's culinary pride, and Spanish and Andalusian cuisine doesn't come more honest than this, with gazpacho, simple grilled sardines, or chickpeas bathing in a tomato and spinach sauce. *Tapear* (feeding yourself on tapas) has been described as the most civilised way to eat, and you'll probably end up a tapas addict by the end of your trip. The art of eating tapas is to be with a few friends, have a good appetite, not mind standing up, and

liberally explore the menu. For decoding your tapas menu, see p86.

Classier modern eateries usually give an *alta cocina* (haute cuisine) edge to their Spanish basics, with impeccable, elegant presentation and complex taste structures, and prices to match.

### Barrio de Santa Cruz & Around CAFÉS

**Cervecería Giralda** (Map pp102-3; ☎ 954 22 74 35; Calle Mateos Gago 1; breakfast €3-5) Conquer the effects of the night before with one of the recommended breakfasts here. Munch on your *tostada* (toasted bread; €1.50 to €4.50) and imagine the place in its former guise – an Arabic bathhouse. It's also a tapas bar (see below).

**Café Alianza** (Map pp102-3; Plaza de la Alianza; tapas €2-2.50) Old-fashioned street lights, a trickling fountain and colourful wall plants make this small plaza a charming place to relax with a coffee, and Café Alianza is positioned perfectly for just that. Its tapas nibbles are also good.

#### TAPAS

For views and mouthfuls at the same time, go to Calle Mateos Gago – most bars here have good-quality food and wine.

**Bodega Santa Cruz** (Map pp102-3; ☎ 954 21 32 46; Calle Mateos Gago; tapas €1.50-2) A place that has kept its delicious soul despite being within spitting distance from the Giralda's tourist hordes. There's a wonderful range of tapas to be enjoyed here, especially good when paired up with a glass of cool manzanilla, while you stand outside with the chatty crowd.

**Álvaro Peregil** (Map pp102-3; 20 Calle Mateos Gago; tapas €1.50-2) Just up the road from Bodega Santa Cruz, this tiny bar has not much more in terms of decoration than garlic bunches hanging overhead and a couple of tall tables outside to rest your tapas on. But the food is so good you'll need nothing more. The *salmorejo* (a thicker version of gazpacho) is particularly good and is served with strips of *jamón* sprinkled over the top; try the orange wine, made from Seville's famous (and ubiquitous) oranges.

**Cervecería Giralda** (Map pp102-3; ☎ 954 22 74 35; Calle Mateos Gago 1; tapas €1.50-2.50) Exotic variations are merged with traditional

dishes, such as *pechuga bechamel* (chicken breast in bechamel sauce), at this central tapas bar.

**Café-Bar Campanario** (Map pp102-3; ☎ 954 56 41 89; Calle Mateos Gago 8; tapas €2-2.50) A hotchpotch of tapas favourites can be found here, including the cornerstone of Spanish cuisine, the *tortilla de patata* (Spanish omelette), aubergines with cheese and divine croquettes with ham and bechamel. Unlike most of the old bars it has an airy feel.

**Café Bar Las Teresas** (Map pp102-3; ☎ 954 21 30 69; Calle Santa Teresa 2; tapas €2-4, media-raciones €6-8) This atmospheric bar has *jamones* dangling from the ceiling in tidy rows, lovely Andalusian tiles lining the walls, and a red wooden bar propping up the chatting crowd. A great place to stop and have some good and traditional tapas.

### RESTAURANTS

Despite the tourists tirelessly snapping the Giralda, there are authentic, good-quality restaurants in Barrio de Santa Cruz. The interlacing narrow streets and squares just east of the Alcázar are where most restaurants are situated and ordinary Calle Santa María La Blanca has a throng of eateries, whose muddle of outdoor seating is invariably crammed with diners.

**Restaurante San Marco** (Map pp102-3; ☎ 954 21 43 90; Calle Mesón del Moro 6; mains €6-9; (S) closed Mon) Once a place with a cult following for its pasta and pizza, nowadays San Marco's produces average Italian food. The setting of this particular branch is wonderful though, in a large refurbished Arabic bath. Try a plate of *penne all'Arrabiata* and a glass of frosty white wine.

**Carmela** (Map pp102-3; Calle Santa María La Blanca 6; menú €7) The rustic-looking waiting staff, dressed in headscarves and aprons, give this establishment a rather earthy feel. It cooks up a wholesome quiche Lorraine (€6).

**Bar Casa Fernando** (Map pp102-3; Calle Santa María La Blanca; menú €7) This place bustles with punters, most of whom are trying out the good-value menu of the day. There is a variety of options but a small dish of paella, followed by fried fish and a dreamy caramel flan will set you up nicely.

**Altamira Bar-Café** (Map pp102-3; ☎ 954 42 50 30; Calle Santa María La Blanca 4; raciones €7-8) With a pleasant terrace perfect for some al fresco dining or lunching and busy, efficient

### THE AUTHOR'S CHOICE

**Hacienda Benazuza** (☎ 955 70 33 44; www.elbullihotel.com; Sanlúcar la Mayor; r from €350; tasting menu from €110; (S) (P) (S)) This hacienda 22km west of Seville is luxury beyond belief. Opened by Ferrán Adrià, Spain's, and the world's, most famous and inventive chef, this place not only has massive Andalusian gardens, rooms that feel like shrines to luxury, and long, tranquil pools, but also 3 restaurants, one of which, La Alquería, is a 2 Michelin-star sister to Adrià's elBulli (proclaimed the best restaurant in the world). So surrender to Adrià's experimental cuisine in the most luxurious hotel in Andalucía, and don't forget to write!

waiters darting to and fro, Altamira is a decent choice for seafood *raciones* (meal-sized portions).

**Restaurante Las Lapas** (Map pp102-3; ☎ 954 21 11 04; Calle San Gregorio 6; menú €9; ☒ closed Sun) Lying in the path of incessant horse-drawn traffic and, it seems, the whole of Seville's student population, you might find this eatery rather noisy outside and in. But sit back and enjoy the hubbub with a chorizo and potato mixed dish (€7.50).

**Restaurant La Cueva** (Map pp102-3; ☎ 954 21 31 43; Calle Rodrigo Caro 18; mains €11-24) As you stroll through Plaza Doña Elvira, inhale the whiff of orange blossom and sizzling fish, which wafts from this popular seafood eatery. It cooks up a storming fish casserole (€24 for two people), and a hearty *caldereta* (lamb stew; €11) if something meatier takes your fancy.

**Corral del Agua** (Map pp102-3; ☎ 954 22 07 14; Callejón del Agua 6; mains €12-18, menú €23; ☒ noon-4pm & 8pm-midnight Mon-Sat) If you're hankering after inventive food on a hot day, then book a table at Corral del Agua. Its leafy courtyard makes a pleasant spot to sample traditional stews and Arabic-inspired desserts (such as orange, carrot and cinnamon).

**Restaurante La Albahaca** (Map pp102-3; ☎ 954 22 07 14; Plaza de Santa Cruz 12; mains €18-22, menú €27) Gastronomic inventions are the mainstay of this swish restaurant. Try the pork trotter with mushroom, young garlic and pea mousse (really, a posh version of mushy peas).

**Restaurante Modesto** (Map pp102-3; ☎ 954 41 68 11; www.grupomodesto.com; Calle Cano y Cueto 5; mains €7.50-43) Modesto presents a full range of fish dishes, such as Sevillian-style cod (€12.60), served to a classy lot on a persistently busy terrace. Its sister restaurant, **Restaurante La Judería** (Map pp102-3; ☎ 954 41 20 52; Calle Cano y Cueto 13A; menú around €28) gives fans a change of scenery, though the dishes are basically the same.

The dizzily bright lights of the restaurants north of the cathedral function to attract and trap buzzing sightseers, so be prepared. One good option is **Casa Robles** (Map pp102-3; ☎ 954 21 31 50; Calle Álvarez Quintero 58; mains around €20), an upmarket choice that prides itself on its natural food and elegantly styled restaurant. Its dishes, which range from braised bulls' tails to seasonal salads, are beautifully presented.

## El Arenal

### TAPAS

**Bar Pepe-Hillo** (Map pp102-3; ☎ 954 21 53 90; Calle Adriano 24; tapas €1.50-2) For no-nonsense, quality tapas head for easy-going Bar Pepe-Hillo.

**Mesón de la Infanta** (Map pp102-3; Calle Dos de Mayo 26; tapas €2-3) If you like your tapas with a touch of class and a glass of cool sherry, indulge in innovative, well-presented dishes at this Sevillian favourite.

**La Tienda de Eva** (Map pp102-3; Calle Arfe; tapas around €2) Decked out like a village shop, this place offers an escape from the norm. Settle down with a beer and a few slices of chorizo (€2.50) in front of the well-presented tinned goods and gourmet *jamón*.

**Bar Horacio** (Map pp102-3; Calle Antonia Díaz; tapas €2, mains €10-14) Friendly, bow-tied waiters serve up a great selection of tapas at this bar, which heaves with chattering locals.

**Mesón Cinco Jotas** (Map pp102-3; ☎ 954 21 05 21; Calle Castelar 1; tapas €3, media-raciones €7) In the world of *jamón*-making, if you are awarded 'Cinco Jotas' (Five Js) for your *jamón*, it's like you got an Oscar. The owner of this place, Sánchez Romero Carvajal, is the biggest producer of Jabugo ham, and has a great selection on offer. It's best to try a range of different things here, so you can compare and develop your taste for *jamón* to perfection, but know that the prices are high.

### RESTAURANTS

**Mesón Serranito** (Map pp102-3; ☎ 954 21 12 43; Calle Antonia Díaz 11; serranito €3) Specialising in the *serranito*, a Spanish gastronomic institution consisting of a slice of toasted bread heaped with a pork fillet, roasted pepper, a nice bit of *jamón* and garlic, this place is tops for trying this simple but scrumptious bite. The décor is all stuffed bulls' heads and there are photos of Hemingway enjoying a bullfight.

**Bar Gloria Bendita** (Map pp102-3; Calle de Adriano 24; platos combinados around €8) This place smells of strong coffee and strong cheese, and will happily ply you with both. Share the intimate bar with a few locals or escape with your *bocadillo* (sandwich; €3.50) to the tables outside.

**Enrique Becerra** (Map pp102-3; ☎ 954 21 30 49; Calle Gamazo 2; mains €15-21; ☒ closed Sun) Adding a smart touch to El Arenal, Enrique Becerra cooks up hearty Andalusian dishes

to rave about. The lamb drenched in honey sauce and stuffed with spinach and pine nuts (€18) is just one of many delectable offerings.

## El Centro

### SELF-CATERING

**Mercado del Arenal** (Map pp102-3; Calle Pastor y Landero) and the **Mercado de la Encarnación** (Map pp102-3; Plaza de la Encarnación) are central Seville's two food markets. The Encarnación, which mainly sells fruit, veg and fish, has been in its current 'temporary' quarters, awaiting construction of a new permanent building, since 1973!

The department store **El Corte Inglés** (Map pp102-3; Plaza del Duque de la Victoria) has a well-stocked supermarket in the basement.

### CAFÉS

**Confitería La Campana** (Map pp102-3; cnr Calles Sierpes & Martín Villa) La Campana has been heaving with sugar addicts since 1885, and workers and the elite alike storm Seville's most popular bakery for a *yema* (a soft, crumbly biscuit cake wrapped like a toffee), a delicious *nata* (custard cake) that quivers under the glass, or a swollen muffin that's great for dipping into a *café con leche* (coffee with milk; €1.50 or €1 standing inside). The service can be on the slow side at the outside seating area.

**Bar Laredo** (Map pp102-3; cnr Calle Sierpes & Plaza de San Francisco) Watch them slap together a variety of *bocadillos* (€3) for rapid consumption at this popular breakfast spot.

**Alfalfa 10** (Map pp102-03; ☎ 954 21 38 41; Plaza de la Alfalfa 10) The health conscious might be tempted by the multivitamin breakfast (€5) or the natural yogurt and runny honey (€1.50) here. Both slip down a treat.

**Horno de San Buenaventura** (Map pp102-3; Plaza de la Alfalfa 10) The Buenaventura chain is much loved in this city, and the cakes are pretty good. Their offerings are treated like precious jewels and showcased in particularly shiny glass cabinets. You can also have breakfast: a coffee and *jamón serrano* (mountain-cured ham) *tostada* costs €3. There's another branch on the corner of Calles Pagés del Corro and Covadonga.

**Café Bar Duque** (Map pp102-3; Plaza del Duque de la Victoria; €2) This café is perfect for a breakfast or afternoon delight of *churros con chocolate* (see p84).

## TAPAS

Plaza de la Alfalfa is the hub of the tapas scene, with excellent bars.

Hop from sea-themed **La Trastienda** (Map pp102-3; Calle Alfalfa; tapas €1.50-3), off the eastern end of the plaza, to **La Bodega** (Calle Alfalfa; tapas €1.50-2), where you can mix head-spinning quantities of *jamón* and sherry.

**El Patio San Eloy** (Map pp102-3; Calle San Eloy 9; tapas €1.50-2) *Bocadillo* is the name of the game here, and punters sit on the tiled benches that descend in levels below each other, so you get the full view of the goings-on in the bar, while you balance your plate on your knees. Try the *pringá*, a sandwich made with crushed beans and their yummy juice.

**La Giganta** (Map pp102-3; ☎ 954 21 09 75; Calle Alhóndiga 6; tapas €2) On the same street as El Rinconcillo (see p122), and rivalling its talent for tapas, despite being a lot newer. While you're here, marvel at the weeds sprouting from the roof of the old church of Santa Catalina nearby.

**Bodega Extremeña** (Map pp102-3; ☎ 954 41 70 60; Calle San Esteban 17; tapas €1.50-2) Decorated with rustic bits and bobs, Bodega Extremeña flexes its muscles in the meat department and offers mouthwatering *solomillo ibérico* (Iberian pork sirloin).

**Robles Placentines** (Map pp102-3; ☎ 954 21 31 62; Calle Placentines 2; tapas around €2) Modelled on a Jerez wine cellar, this popular haunt serves up tempting dishes such as white asparagus from the Sierra de Córdoba.

**Taberna los Terceros** (Map pp102-3; Calle del Sol; tapas €2.50-3) Los Terceros pulls an energetic, young crowd and serves up fine tapas.

**Bar Levies** (Map pp102-3; ☎ 954 215 308; Calle San José 15; tapas €1.50-4) The ultimate student tapas bar, Levies is constantly crowded

### THE AUTHOR'S CHOICE

**Los Coloniales** (Map pp102-3; cnr Calle Dormitorio & Plaza Cristo de Burgos; tapas €1.50-3.50) The demand at Los Coloniales is so great that sitting down at one of the terrace tables demands plenty of waiting time. If you're ready to wait, get your name chalked onto the board. If not, get your tapas at the bar or sit down in the back room *comedor* (dining room). But make sure you eat here at least once: the superb tapas are huge (try the *churrasco*) and as cheap as they get.



with youngsters who love the huge tapas and small prices, and who come here when everything else is closed, either during *siesta*, or for late-night munchies. Indeed, a *tapas de solomillo al whiskey* is as big as a *ración* in some places and a *tapas* per person is more than enough. Oh, and beer is served in big glasses.

**Bar Alfalfa** (Map pp102-3; cnr Calles Alfalfa & Candilejo; tapas €2-3) This is one of the most charming tapas bars in town, and it serves excellent *jamón*, in generous cuttings. The bar is so small that 10 is a crowd, but if you get to sit down or perch by a barrel-table, you can enjoy the intimate décor of dark, forest greens and tiled walls, and sip a glass of *fino*.

**El Rinconcillo** (Map pp102-3; ☎ 954 22 31 83; Calle Gerona 40; tapas €1.50-4) Seville's oldest bar traces its tapas roots back to the dark 1670s, and its popularity just keeps on growing. Decent, simple tapas like chickpeas with spinach or garlic chicken are served until midnight. One of the favourites at El Rinconcillo is the *revueltos* (scrambled eggs) with *jamón* (€4).

## RESTAURANTS

**Los Alcazares** (Map pp102-3; Plaza de la Encarnación; tapas €2-3, raciones from €5) A perfect, old-world haunt for those who need to fill a gap after visiting the nearby market.

**Habanita** (Map pp102-3; ☎ 606-716456; Calle Golfo 3; raciones €6-9, media-ración €4, tapas from €1.50; ☎ 12.30-4.30pm & 8pm-12.30am Mon-Sat, 12.30-4.30pm Sun) A great restaurant with tasty Cuban food. Try the plantain balls in tomato sauce, or tuck into the *plato variado* with its combination of dishes such as the white and black bean dish, crunchy plantain fritters, *ropa vieja* (literally 'old clothes', a pork dish), and tender yucca with garlic.

**Horno del Duque** (Map pp102-3; ☎ 954 21 77 33; Plaza del Duque de la Victoria; mains around €7-11) The invariably busy Horno del Duque offers standard helpings of paella Valenciana with chicken (€10.50) to bag-laden shoppers.

## Alameda de Hércules

### TAPAS

**Bar-Restaurante Las Columnas** (Map pp94-5; Alameda de Hércules; tapas €1.50-2) Beefy men and tasty tapas are brought together at this low-key restaurant, which serves down-to-earth fare such as *albóndigas* (meatballs).

**La Ilustre Víctima** (Map pp94-5; Calle Doctor Letamendi 35; tapas €2.50, raciones €7) This offbeat place is a popular Alameda hang-out, with some curious wall-paintings. The celebrated vegetarian tapas, including *calabacines al roque* (courgettes with Roquefort cheese; €2.50), are as tasty as ever, followed by a mint tea (€1.50).

## RESTAURANTS

**La Piola** (Map pp94-5; cnr Alameda de Hércules & Calle Relator; mains around €4-7) A pair of trendy media spectacles would blend in splendidly at this comfortably hip Alameda joint. The mixed salad (€4) is best mixed with a freshly squeezed orange juice, for a pick-me-up.

**Badaluque** (Map pp94-5; cnr Calles Calatrava & Pacheco y Núñez de Prado; breakfast €2-4, pizzas €7-9.50) Argentine-owned and always busy, the Badaluque has a good-value breakfast, or join the evening crowds who come for the pizzas. Coffee with a ham-and-cheese *tostada* costs €2.50.

## South of the Centre

**Café-Bar Puerta de Jerez** (Map pp102-3; Puerta de Jerez; tapas around €1.80) Cars and horses whizz around the fountain at Puerta de Jerez at great speed and it's fun to watch the spectacle at this café-bar; an accompanying coffee costs €1.50.

**Restaurant San Fernando** (Map pp102-3; ☎ 954 91 70 00; Calle San Fernando 2; mains €14-27; ☎ 7-11am, 1-4pm & 8.30-11.30pm) The posh Sevillian crowd comes to eat at Hotel Alfonso XIII's restaurant, so slick your hair back and don your best gown if you want to fit in. Haute cuisine is at its hautest here, and dishes like guinea fowl with grated potatoes and sautéed chanterelle mushrooms (€20) are served with a tidy, self-conscious presentation. Most importantly, they taste good.

**Restaurante Egaña Oriza** (Map pp102-3; ☎ 954 22 72 11; Calle San Fernando 41; mains €15-40; ☎ closed Sat lunch & Sun) Still one of the best restaurants in Seville, Egaña Oriza cooks up a superb mix of Andalusian-Basque cuisine, and big meaty dishes such as steak tartar (€24). While it's an undeniably good restaurant, it's a shame about the fume-choked location.

**La Raza** (Map pp94-5; ☎ 954 23 20 24, 954 23 38 30; Avenida de Isabel la Católica 2; mains €10-17) Great for taking a break when you're exploring the area around Plaza de España. The tables are shaded by the large trees in cool Parque de

María Luisa, and this is a perfect place for having your morning coffee.

## Triana

### TAPAS

**Sol y Sombra** (Map pp94-5; Calle Castilla 151; tapas €2; media-raciones €5) The entire ceiling is hung with *jamones* and every inch of wall space is filled with old posters advertising bull-fights, some originals dating back as far as 1933. The barmen wear maroon sweaters and brooding smiles while they serve excellent tapas of green beans with tomatoes, *gambas al ajillo* (prawns with garlic), and other traditional dishes.

**Mariscos Emilio** (Map pp94-5; ☎ 954 33 25 42; Calle San Jacinto 39; www.mariscos-emilio.com in Spanish; tapas around €2) This seafood supremo steams, grills and fries an assortment of aquatic creatures for your enjoyment. A few other branches dot the city.

## RESTAURANTS

**Ristorante Cosa Nostra** (Map pp102-3; ☎ 954 27 07 52; Calle del Betis 52; pizzas €5.50-7.50; ☎ Tue-Sun) Although there are a few pizzerias and pasta parlours on Calle del Betis, Cosa Nostra has an intimate feel that the others lack. The tortellini with gorgonzola (€6.50) is tasty.

**Kiosco de las Flores** (Map pp102-3; ☎ 954 27 45 76; Calle del Betis; media-raciones around €5, raciones around €9, mains €15-40; ☎ Tue-Sun afternoon) Still revelling in the transformation from 70-year-old shack to a glam conservatory (just take a look at the photos on display), this eatery does out great *pescadito frito* (fried fish).

**Casa Cuesta** (Map pp94-5; ☎ 954 33 33 37; Calle de Castilla 3-5; mains around €9-10) Something about the carefully buffed wooden bar and gleaming beer pumps gives a sense that the owners are proud of Casa Cuesta. Indeed they should be; it's a real find for food and wine lovers alike.

**La Triana** (Map pp94-5; ☎ 954 33 38 19; Calle de Castilla 36; menú €10, mains €10-16) The hosts at La Triana are suave and courteous, and while the décor may be minimalist the dishes are not. Menu-of-the-day options include *pisto* (ratatouille) and a meaty main dish. The restaurant also backs out onto a quieter stretch of the river.

**Río Grande** (Map pp102-3; ☎ 954 27 39 56, 954 27 83 71; Calle del Betis; seafood mains €15-29) This restaurant wins the prize for most desirable

location; many diners spend their mealtime gazing at the Torre del Oro. If the menu does manage to catch your eye, try the cuttlefish (€10).

## DRINKING

Bars usually open from 6pm to 2am weekdays and 8pm to 4am on the weekend. Drinking and partying get going as late as midnight on Friday and Saturday (daily when it's hot), upping the tempo as the night goes on.

Thirst-quenching *cerveza* (beer) is just as important to Spaniards as tapas, and it's normally served as a *caña* (almost the equivalent of half a pint). Bodegas also serve sherry (p83), which is perfect for sipping with tapas.

In summer, dozens of *terrazas de verano* (summer terraces; temporary, open-air, late-night bars), many of them with live music and plenty of room to dance, spring up along both banks of the river. They change names and ambience from year to year.

## Barrio de Santa Cruz & Around

**P Flaherty Irish Pub** (Map pp102-3; ☎ 954 21 04 15; Calle Alemanes 7) Not really very Andalucía or anything to do with Seville, but Paddy Flaherty's choice of location (right next to the Cathedral) makes this one of the busiest bars around. Guinness and footie are on offer here, and if there's a game on, the atmosphere is fun.

**Antigüedades** (Map pp102-3; Calle Argote de Molina 40) Blending mellow beats with weird mannequin parts and skewered bread rolls that hang from the ceiling, this is a strange but cool place. Wander past and it'll suck you in.

**La Subasta** (Calle Argote de Molina 36; ☎ 8pm-3am) A smattering of antique paraphernalia gives this place a chic-classy-conservative feel, which goes down a treat with the more up-market Sevillanos.

**Casa de la Moneda** (Map pp102-3; Calle Adolfo Jurado) Part of a group of rambling old buildings, Casa de la Moneda is a fine watering hole that offers old-world charm, tapas (€2 to €2.50) and football on TV.

**Bodega Santa Cruz** (p119), and **Café Bar Las Teresas** (p119), in the heart of the Barrio de Santa Cruz, are two much-loved beer (and tapas) haunts.

## El Arenal

**El Capote** (Map pp94-5; Calle Arjona) An old-time favourite summer al fresco bar, right next to Puente de Triana, El Capote is a fabulous place for day- and night-time drinking. The music is good, and a young, groovy crowd comes here to drink cocktails, beer or sip on a cappuccino.

**Ibilibiyya Café** (Map pp102-3; ☎ 954 21 04 60; Paseo de Cristóbal Colón 2) Cupid welcomes you to this busy gay music bar, which puts on extravagant drag-queen shows on Thursday and Sunday nights.

**Nu Yor Café** (Map pp102-3; ☎ 954 212 889; Calle Marqués de Paradis 30) This cocktail lounge gets sweaty with salsa on Thursdays after 10.30pm, when a Cuban band swings its maracas. There are occasional flamenco nights too.

## El Centro

Drinking is best done around Plaza Alfalfa and Plaza del Salvador. Both throb with drinkers from midevening to 1am and are great places to experience Cruzcampo (the local beer) al fresco. On Plaza del Salvador, grab a drink from **La Antigua Bodeguita** (Map pp102-3; ☎ 954 56 18 33) or **La Saportales** next door, and sit on the steps of the Parroquia del Salvador.

**El Perro Andalúz** (Map pp102-3; Calle Bustos Tavera 11) A bar dedicated to the eponymous surrealist film by Buñuel and Dalí, with suitably odd décor, such as stand-up hair dryers as lamps, chairs with a large eye printed across them (but, thankfully, without being sliced by a razor, like in the movie). Live music is on most nights – just ask in advance what they are staging.

**Bar Europa** (Map pp102-3; ☎ 954 22 13 54; Calle Siete Revueltas 35) With its soothingly colourful tiling, Bar Europa is a pleasant place for a drink and a chat. It also does tea (€0.90) and croissants (€1.10) if you want a break from alcohol and tapas.

**Cervecería Internacional** (Map pp102-3; ☎ 954 21 17 17; Calle Gamazo 3) There are more varieties of bottled beer here (€1.50 for beer on tap) than you may sample in a lifetime, so it's no surprise people keep on coming back. It's a big foreign crowd here.

Alfalfa's Calle Pérez Galdós has a handful of pulsating bars: **Bare Nostrum** (Map pp102-3; Calle Pérez Galdós 26); **Cabo Loco** (Map pp102-3; Calle Pérez Galdós 26); **Nao** (Map pp102-3; Calle Pérez Galdós

## THE AUTHOR'S CHOICE

**El Garlochi** (Map pp102-3; Calle Boteros 4) Dedicated entirely to the iconography, smells and sounds of Semana Santa, the über-camp El Garlochi is a true marvel. A cloud of church incense hits you as you go up the stairs, and the faces of baby Jesus and the Virgin welcome you into the velvet-walled room, decked out with more Virgins and Jesuses. The sombre Easter marches add to the atmosphere. Taste the rather revolting Sangre de Cristo (Blood of Christ) or Agua de Sevilla, both heavily laced with vodka, whiskey and grenadine, and pray to God they open more bars like this.

28); and **La Rebótica** (Map pp102-3; Calle Pérez Galdós 11). If you're in a party mood, you should find at least one with a scene that takes your fancy.

## Alameda de Hércules

In terms of hipness and trendy places to go out, La Alameda is where it's at. The slightly run-down feeling of the area adds to the exclusivity and repels the more posh *sevillanos*, so the boho lot get to keep the place more or less to themselves.

**Café Central** (Map pp94-5; ☎ 954 38 73 12; Alameda de Hércules 64) One of the oldest and most popular bars along the street, the Central has yellow bar lights, wooden flea-market chairs and a massive crowd that gathers on weekends and sits outside.

**Habanilla** (Map pp94-5; ☎ 954 90 27 18; Alameda de Hércules 63) Just opposite Café Central and just as busy, Habanilla's *pièce de résistance* is the lovely handmade bottle-chandelier that dominates the room. Andalusian tiles cover the walls and an impressive collection of coffee-makers decorates the area behind the bar.

**Bar Ego** (Map pp94-5; Calle Galatrava s/n) A strange hybrid of a DJ bar, restaurant, clothes shop and art gallery, this place strives for something completely different in the still predominantly traditional Seville. It's newly opened, Barcelona-hip, and original, and we are hoping it'll survive.

**Bulebar Café** (Map pp94-5; ☎ 954 90 19 54; Alameda de Hércules 83; ☎ 4pm-late) This place fills up with young sweaty bodies at night, though it still retains a pleasantly chilled atmos-

phere in the early evening. Lounge around on the old furniture or sit in the courtyard out front.

## Triana

For a real treat, prop yourself up with a drink by the banks of the Guadalquivir in Triana; the wall along Calle del Betis forms a fantastic makeshift bar. Carry your drink out from one of the following watering holes: Alambique, Big Ben, Sirocca and Mú d' Aquí. They are all clustered on Calle del Betis 54 (Map pp94-5) and open from 9pm.

**Maya Soul** (Map pp102-3; Calle del Betis 41-42) Beat-up leather sofas and soulful house music make this a soporific afternoon stop-off. Things get livelier in the evening.

**Café de la Prensa** (Map pp94-5; Calle del Betis 8) Dedicated and decorated in honour of all things in print (*prensa* is 'press' in Spanish), this café's walls are stuck with yellowed, printed paper and create a warm (and highly flammable) effect. The bar is relaxed and people come to have a beer and a game of cards here.

**La Otra Orilla** (Map pp94-5; Paseo de Nuestra Señora de la O) A couple of passages lead through to the river bank, where you'll find this buzzing music bar blessed with a great outdoor terrace.

**Madigan's** (Map pp102-3; ☎ 954 27 49 66; Plaza de Cuba 2; ☎ from noon) This raucous Irish pub is the best on Plaza de Cuba, and is now one of the hip places for mass youth gatherings.

**Shiva** (Map pp94-5; Calle San Jacinto 68) Handsome barmen aside, you'll be swooning from the candlelight and incense (and maybe the alcohol) before you know it.

North of Calle del Betis, Calle de Castilla has several more good bars, brimming with a mixed local crowd on weekend nights, including **Casa Cuesta** (Map pp94-5; Calle de Castilla 3-5) and **Anibal Café** (Map pp94-5; Calle de Castilla 98).

## ENTERTAINMENT Nightclubs

Seville's nightlife, or *la marcha*, as it's commonly known, is famed throughout Spain, and it mainly ranges from just hanging out in bars, drinking and talking at the top of your voice, continuing on to late-opening clubs, or going to see experimental theatre and stomping flamenco. You can find a range of live music most days, and some bars

have space for grooving. DJs mix a range of beats every night, with soulful house and funk as the most popular choices.

The ever-present *botellón* is big all over Spain, and consists of crowds of young boozers, gathered around bottle-covered cars and scooters, listening to the beats of *reggaeton* – a hybrid of hip hop, Jamaican dancehall (soca and calypso) and Latin music.

Clubs in Seville come and go with amazing rapidity but a few have stood the test of time. The partying starts between 2am and 4am at the weekend, so make the most of your siesta.

If a club flyer is thrust into your hand, keep hold of it – you're more likely to get in for free. Dress smarter (so no sportswear) at the weekend as clubs become much pickier about their punters, and prices are hiked up dramatically if you don't fit the scene.

Get to grips with the latest action by picking up *Welcome & Olé* or *¿Qué Hacer?* (both monthly and free from tourist offices) or by logging onto [www.discoversevilla.com](http://www.discoversevilla.com), a great resource, or [www.exploresevilla.com](http://www.exploresevilla.com). For flamenco listings and events try [www.tallerflamenco.com](http://www.tallerflamenco.com).

**Boss** (Map pp102-3; Calle del Betis 67; admission free with flyer; ☎ 8pm-7am Tue-Sun) Make it past the two gruff bouncers wedged in the doorway and you'll find Boss to be a top dance spot. The music is a total mix but mainly appeals to the masses.

**Weekend** (Map pp94-5; ☎ 954 37 88 73; Calle del Torneo 43; admission around €7; ☎ 11pm-8am Thu-Sat) Just across the road from the Guadalquivir, Weekend is one of Seville's top live-music and DJ spots.

**Lisboa Music Club** (Map pp94-5; Calle Faustino Álvarez 27; admission €6; ☎ midnight-6am Wed-Sat) LMC, near the Alameda de Hércules, is a fashionable club for house and techno lovers. Stylish, '60s-inspired decor spars with modernity; it's very hip.

**Fun Club** (Map pp94-5; ☎ 95 825 02 49; Alameda de Hércules 86; admission live-band nights €3-6, other nights free; ☎ around 11.30pm-late Thu-Sun, from 9.30pm live-band nights) When live music isn't taking over the stage, DJs play anything from indie to rock and pop, and sometimes funk, and there's plenty of dancing space.

**Antique Teatro** (Map pp94-5; ☎ 954 46 22 07; Matemáticos Rey Pastor y Castro s/n; admission varied; ☎ Thu-Sat 11pm-7am) Notorious for turning

foreigners away; get your hair slicked back Sevilla-style if you're a man, and look drop-dead gorgeous if you're a woman, and try getting into this top club, located at the Expo '92 Olympic Pavillion. In summer, there's a torch-lit garden and cocktail sipping under the stars.

**Apandau** (Map pp94-5; Avenida de María Luisa s/n; admission varied ☹ 8pm-late Sat & Sun summer) Looking more like a palatial greenhouse than a disco, Apandau has three separate halls in which to salsa the night away.

**Aduana** (☎ 954 23 85 82; www.aduana.net; Avenida de la Raza s/n; admission varied ☹ midnight-late Thu, Fri & Sat) Located 1km south of Parque de María Luisa, this huge dance venue plays nonstop grooves for manic party people.

**Elefunk** (Map pp102-3; Calle de Adriano 10; admission free; ☹ 8pm-late) A super popular club packed with youngsters in search of, well, funk.

### Live Music

Tickets for some major events are sold at the music shop **Sevilla Rock** (Map pp102-3; Calle Alfonso XII 1). For information on flamenco in Seville, see the boxed text, opposite.

**Fun Club** (Map pp94-5; ☎ 95 825 02 49; Alameda de Hércules 86; admission live-band nights €3-6, other nights free; ☹ around 11.30pm-late Thu-Sun, from 9.30pm live-band nights) When it comes to music, this little dance warehouse is deadly serious. With a host of funk, Latino, hip-hop and jazz bands, it's not surprising that it's a music-lovers' favourite. Live bands play Friday and/or Saturday.

**Naima Café Jazz** (Map pp94-5; ☎ 954 38 24 85; Calle Trajano 47; admission free; ☹ live performances from 10pm) This intimate place sways to the sound of mellow jazz that goes live on weekends. Ask the friendly bar staff for details of who's playing and when.

**La Buena Estrella** (Map pp94-5; Calle Trajano 51; ☹ live performances from 10pm) Tap along to weekly jazz sessions in the evening or sip tea by day at this chilled café.

**Jazz Corner** (Map pp94-5; Calle Juan Antonio Cavestany; ☹ 7pm-late Tue-Sat, 5pm-late Sun) A big venue for jazz aficionados.

**La Imperdible** (Map pp94-5; ☎ 954 38 82 19; sala@imperdible.org; Plaza San Antonio de Padua 9; admission €5-6) A few blocks west of Alameda de Hércules is an epicentre of experimental arts in Seville. Its small theatre stages lots of contemporary dance and a bit of drama and music, usually at 9pm. Its bar, the

**Almacén** (☎ 954 90 04 34; admission free), stages varied music events from around 11pm Thursday to Saturday – from soul and blues bands to psychedelic punks and DJs mixing everything from soulful house to industrial breakbeat.

### Theatre

Seville is big on cultural entertainment, be it classical drama, contemporary dance, flamenco or world music. Catch performances at the following venues:

**Auditorio de la Cartuja** (Map pp94-5; ☎ 954 50 56 56; Isla de La Cartuja) Huge venue for big-name acts.

**Teatro Central** (Map pp94-5; ☎ 95 503 72 00; Calle José Gálvez s/n) From top-end flamenco productions to plays and contemporary dance.

**Teatro de la Maestranza** (Map pp102-3; ☎ 954 22 65 73; Paseo de Cristóbal Colón 22) Opera and classical-music buffs should head here for stirring concerts.

**Teatro Lope de Vega** (Map pp94-5; ☎ 954 59 08 53/54; Avenida de María Luisa s/n) This theatre will seduce you with its ornate-looking exterior and its wide range of shows.

There are a couple of municipally run but innovative experimental theatres:

**Sala La Fundición** (Map pp102-3; ☎ 954 22 58 44; Calle Matienzo s/n) Has offbeat offerings.

**Teatro Alameda** (Map pp94-5; ☎ 954 90 01 64; Calle Crédito 13) Located just off the northern end of Alameda de Hércules.

### Cinemas

**Avenida 5 Cines** (Map pp102-3; ☎ 954 29 30 25; Calle Marqués de Paradas 15 s/n; admission €5) This is the best cinema for v.o. (*versión original*; foreign-language) films in Seville, with around 14 film options from which to choose. It has around three showings per day.

**Cine Nervión Plaza** (Map pp94-5; ☎ 954 42 61 93; Avenida de Luis Morales s/n; tickets €3.90 Mon-Fri, €5 Sat & Sun) This massive 20-screen cinema is within the Nervión Plaza shopping complex. It has between three and six showings per day.

### Sport

Seville's modern 60,000-seat Estadio Olímpico (Map pp94-5) is at the northern end of Isla de la Cartuja. It wasn't enough to secure Seville's bid for the 2012 Olympics but there's always 2016.

**La Teatral** (Map pp102-3; ☎ 954 22 82 29; Calle Velázquez 12) Based in El Centro, this ticket

### SEVILLE'S TOP FLAMENCO SPOTS

**Casa de la Memoria de Al-Andalus** (Map pp102-3; ☎ 954 56 06 70; Calle Ximénez de Enciso 28; adult/child/concession €11/5/9; ☹ 9pm daily) Highly recommended show in a great patio setting.

**Sol Café Cantante** (Map pp102-3; ☎ 954 22 51 65; Calle Sol 5; adult/concession €18/11) Up-and-coming flamenco performers and guitarists head to this popular café for shows on Wednesday, Thursday, Friday and Saturday nights at 9pm.

**Los Gallos** (Map pp102-3; ☎ 954 21 69 81; www.tablaolosgallos.com; Plaza de Santa Cruz 11) A *tablaos* above average. Some top-notch flamenco artists have trodden Los Gallos' boards in the early stages of their careers. There are two-hour shows at 9pm and 11.30pm nightly for €27, including one drink.

**La Carbonería** (Map pp102-3; ☹ 954 21 44 60; Calle Levías 18; admission free; ☹ about 8pm-4am) A converted coal yard in the Barrio de Santa Cruz with two large rooms, each with a bar, that has flamenco shows of varying quality.

**La Sonanta** (Map pp94-5; ☎ 954 34 48 54; Calle San Jacinto 31; admission free; ☹ 10pm Thu) A Triana bar with flamenco on Thursday.

**El Tamboril** (Map pp102-3; Plaza de Santa Cruz; admission free; ☹ from 10pm) Pack in to watch Sevillans flamenco the night away.

agency sells tickets for bullfights, football matches and some concerts at a mark-up of a few euros. You need to book well in advance for the most popular events.

### BULLFIGHTING

Queues for tickets outside Seville's **Plaza de Toros de la Real Maestranza** (Map pp102-3; Paseo de Cristóbal Colón 12; www.realmaestranza.com) start weeks before the first fights, which take place just before the Feria de Abril. They stretch for hundreds of metres down the road and show the Maestranza's popularity and prestige in the bullfighting world. Even though it's a relatively small ring (it holds 14,000 spectators), it's one of the oldest and most elegant. The fights held here are some of the best in Spain, fought by the top toreros. Seville's crowds are some of the most knowledgeable, and many say, the most demanding and difficult to please. The season runs from Easter Sunday to early October, with fights every Sunday, usually at 7pm, and every day during the Feria de Abril and the week before it.

From the start of the season until late June/early July, nearly all the fights are by fully fledged matadors (every big star in the bullfighting firmament appears at least once a year in the Maestranza). These are the *abono* (subscription) fights, for which locals buy up the best seats on season tickets. Often only *sol* seats (in the sun at the start of proceedings) are available to nonsubscribers attending these fights. The cheapest seats start at €25. The most ex-

pensive tickets, if available, cost a whopping €110. Most of the rest of the season, the fights are *novilladas* (novice bullfights), with young bulls and junior bullfighters, costing from €9 to €42. Tickets are sold in advance at **Empresa Pagés** (Map pp102-3; ☎ 954 50 13 82; Calle de Adriano 37), and from 4.30pm on fight days at the *taquillas* (ticket windows) at the bullring itself.

For more on the Plaza de Toros de la Real Maestranza, see p106.

### FOOTBALL

It is said that the only thing that divides Seville, apart from the Guadalquivir, is the *sevillanos'* passionate support for its two rival professional clubs, **Real Betis** (www.realbetisbalompie.es) and **Sevilla** (www.sevillafc.es). Both teams are currently well established in the Primera Liga and Sevilla won the UEFA Cup in 2006. Players on Betis' books include Spanish international midfielder star Joaquín.

Betis plays at the Estadio Manuel Ruiz de Lopera (Map pp94-5), beside Avenida de Jerez (the Cádiz road), 1.5km south of Parque de María Luisa (take bus 34 south-bound from opposite the main tourist office). Sevilla's home is the **Estadio Sánchez Pizjuán** (Map pp94-5; Calle de Luis Morales), east of the centre.

Except for the biggest games – against Real Madrid or Barcelona, or when the Seville clubs meet each other – tickets cost between €25 and €60, payable at the gates.

## SHOPPING

Shopping in Seville is a major pastime, and shopping for clothes is at the top of any *sevillano's* list. The lovely cluster of pedestrian shopping streets is among the prettiest in Europe.

Calles Sierpes, Velázquez/Tetuán and de la Cuna (all on Map pp102–3) have retained their charm with a host of small shops selling everything from polka-dot *trajes de flamenca* (flamenco dresses) and trendy Camper shoes to diamond rings and antique fans. Most shops open between 9am and 9pm but expect ghostly quiet between 2pm and 5pm when they close for *siesta*.

For a more alternative choice of shops, such as independent and rare-recordings music shops or vintage clothes, head for Calle Amor de Dios and Calle Doctor Letamendi, close to Alameda de Hércules (Map pp94–5).

Tourist-oriented craft shops are dotted all around the Barrio de Santa Cruz (Map pp102–3), east of the Alcázar. Many sell local tiles and ceramics with colourful Al-Andalus designs, scenes of old rural life etc, as well as a lot of gaudy T-shirts.

**El Postigo** (Map pp102–3; cnr Calles Arfe & Dos de Mayo) This indoor arts-and-crafts market houses a few shops selling a variety of goods ranging from pottery and textiles to silverware.

**Green UFOs** (Map pp94–5; ☎ 954 37 63 14; Calle Amor de Dios 42) A great independent music shop, with a great collection of electronic, breakbeat, pop and rock CDs by artists worldwide. The shop has its own recording label too, and it sponsors the South Pop music festival.

**Record Sevilla** (Map pp94–5; Calle Amor de Dios 27) Fancy mixing flamenco with house? Then grab your vinyl here. Staff are knowledgeable about the music scene, too.

**Nerviñón Plaza** (Map pp94–5; ☎ 954 98 91 41; Avenida Luis de Morales s/n) This large shopping complex is located about 1.5km east of the Barrio de Santa Cruz, just off Avenida de Eduardo Dato.

El Corte Inglés department store (Map pp102–3) – the best single shop to look for just about anything you might need – occupies four separate buildings in central Seville: two on Plaza de la Magdalena and two on Plaza del Duque de la Victoria.

There is also a large branch located on Calle Montoto.

## Markets

The most colourful street market is **El Jueves Market** (Map pp94–5; Calle de la Feria; ☎ Thu), east of Alameda de Hércules, where you can find everything from hat stands to antiquated household appliances. It's as interesting for those who like people-watching as it is for those with an eye for a bargain. Alternatively, lose yourself among the leather bags and hippy-type necklaces on Plaza del Duque de la Victoria and Plaza de la Magdalena, which both stage **markets** (☎ Thu–Sat).

## GETTING THERE & AWAY

### Air

Seville's **Aeropuerto San Pablo** (Map pp94–5; ☎ 954 44 90 00) has a fair range of international and domestic flights (see p441).

### Bus

Seville has two bus stations. Buses to/from the north of Sevilla province, Huelva province, Portugal, Madrid, Extremadura and northwest Spain use the **Estación de Autobuses Plaza de Armas** (Map pp94–5; ☎ 954 90 80 40, 954 90 77 37) by the Puente del Cachorro. Other buses use the **Estación de Autobuses Prado de San Sebastián** (Map pp102–3; ☎ 954 41 71 11; Plaza San Sebastián), just southeast of the Barrio de Santa Cruz.

Buses go to various destinations from Plaza de Armas:

Destination	Cost	Duration	Daily Frequency
Aracena	€6	1¼hr	2
Ayamonte	€10.50	2hr	4–6
Cáceres	€15	4hr	6 or more
El Rocío	€5	1½hr	3–5
Huelva	€6.50	1¼hr	18 or more
Isla Cristina	€9	2hr	1–3
Madrid	€16	6hr	14
Matalascañas	€6	2hr	3–5
Mérida	€11	3hr	12
Minas de Riotinto	€4	1hr	3

For information on buses to/from Portugal, see p445. Plaza de Armas is also the station for buses to Santiponce (€0.80, 30 minutes), and Sevilla province's Sierra Norte (p139).

Various buses leave from Prado de San Sebastián:

Destination	Cost	Duration	Daily Frequency
Algeciras	€14–15	3¼hr	4
Antequera	€10	2hr	6
Arcos de la Frontera	€7	2hr	2
Cádiz	€10.50	1¼hr	10 or more
Carmona	€2	45min	
Córdoba	€9.50	1¼hr	10 or more
Écija	€5.50	1¼hr	
El Puerto de Santa María	€8	1½hr	5
Granada	€18	3hr	10 or more
Jaén	€16	3hr	3–5
Jerez de la Frontera	€6.50	1¼hr	10 or more
Málaga	€15	2½hr	10 or more
Osuna	€6	1¼hr	
Ronda	€9	2½hr	5 or more
Sanlúcar de Barrameda	€8	1½hr	5 or more
Tarifa	€15	3hr	4
Wejer de la Frontera	€11.50	3hr	5

Other buses travel to destinations along the Mediterranean coast from the Costa del Sol to Barcelona, and there's one bus at 5.30pm Monday to Friday to Conil (€10, two hours), Los Caños de Meca (€13, 2½ hours), Barbate (€13, three hours) and Zahara de los Atunes (€14, 3½ hours).

## Car & Motorcycle

Some local car-rental firms are cheaper than the big international companies, though booking before you come (see p451) is usually the cheapest option of all. Several local firms have their offices on Calle Almirante Lobo off the Puerta de Jerez: most of them are open on Sunday morning, plus the typical office hours from Monday to Saturday:

**ATA Rent A Car** (Map pp102–3; ☎ 954 22 17 77; Calle Almirante Lobo 2)

**Good Rent A Car** (Map pp102–3; ☎ 954 21 03 44; Calle Almirante Lobo 11)

**Triana Rent A Car** (Map pp102–3; ☎ 954 56 44 39; Calle Almirante Lobo 7)

You'll find larger companies at the transport terminals:

**Atesa** (☎ 954 41 26 40; Airport)

**Avis** Airport (☎ 954 44 91 21; Estación Santa Justa (Map pp94–5; ☎ 954 53 78 61)

**Europcar** Airport (☎ 954 25 42 98; Estación Santa Justa (☎ 954 53 39 14)

**Hertz** (☎ 954 51 47 20; Airport)

## Train

Seville's **Estación Santa Justa** (Map pp94–5; ☎ 954 41 41 11; Avenida Kansas City) is 1.5km northeast of the centre. There's also a city-centre **Renfe information & ticket office** (Map pp102–3; Calle Zaragoza 29).

Fourteen or more superfast AVEs, reaching speeds of 280km/h, whizz daily to/from Madrid (€64 to €70, 2½ hours). There are cheaper 'Altaria' services (€55, 3½ hours). (For fares and other information see p445.)

Trains go to various destinations:

Destination	Cost	Duration	Daily Frequency
Antequera	€11	1¼hr	3
Barcelona	€53–88	10½–13hr	3
Cádiz	€9–29	1¼hr	9 or more
Córdoba	€7–€24	40min–1½hr	21 or more
El Puerto de Santa María	€7.50–26	1–1½hr	10 or more
Granada	€20	3hr	4
Huelva	€7–16	1½hr	4
Jaén	€16	3hr	1
Jerez de la Frontera	€6–16	1–1¼hr	9 or more
Málaga	€16	2½hr	5
Mérida	€12	3¼hr	1

For Ronda or Algeciras, take a Málaga train and change at Bobadilla. For Lisbon (€51, 2nd-class, 16 hours), you must change in the middle of the night at Madrid.

## GETTING AROUND To/From the Airport

Seville airport is about 7km east of the centre on the A4 Córdoba road. From Monday to Friday, buses of **Amarillos Tour** (☎ 902 21 03 17) make the trip from Puerta de Jerez to the airport (€2.50, 30 to 40 minutes) every 30 minutes from 6.15am to 2.45pm and 4.30pm to 11pm, and from the airport (arrivals terminal) to Puerta de Jerez 30 minutes later. On Saturday, Sunday and holidays, the service is reduced to 15 buses in each direction daily. The buses stop at Santa Justa train station en route.

A taxi costs €15 (€18 from 10pm to 6am and on Saturday, Sunday and holidays).



## Bus

Buses C1, C2, C3 and C4 do useful circular routes linking the main transport terminals and the city centre. The C1, going east from in front of Santa Justa train station, follows a clockwise route via Avenida de Carlos V (close to Prado de San Sebastián bus station), Avenida de María Luisa, Triana, the Isla de la Cartuja (including Isla Mágica) and Calle de Resolana. The C2 follows the same route in reverse. Bus 32, from the same stop as bus C2 outside Santa Justa station, runs to/from Plaza de la Encarnación in the northern part of the centre. The clockwise C3 route goes from Avenida Menéndez Pelayo (near Prado de San Sebastián bus station) to the Puerta de Jerez, Triana, Plaza de Armas bus station, Calle del Torneo, Calle de Resolana and Calle de Recaredo. The C4 does the same circuit anticlockwise except that from Plaza de Armas bus station it heads south along Calle de Arjona and Paseo de Cristóbal Colón.

A single bus ride is €1. You can pick up a route map, the *Guía del Transporte Urbano de Sevilla*, from tourist offices or from information booths at major stops, including Plaza Nueva, Plaza de la Encarnación and Avenida de Carlos V.

## Car & Motorcycle

Seville's one-way and pedestrianised streets are no fun for drivers. Hotels usually charge €10 to €15 a day for parking. Most underground car parks charge around €16 for 24 hours – see the Seville map (pp94–5) and Central Seville map (pp102–3) for locations. **Parking Paseo de Colón** (Map pp102–3; nr Paseo de Colón & Calle Adriano; up to 10 hr €1.50 per hr, 10–24 hr €12) is a little cheaper.

## Taxi

From 6am to 10pm Monday to Friday, taxis cost €1 plus €0.65 per kilometre. At other times and on public holidays, it's €1 plus €0.80 per kilometre.

# AROUND SEVILLE

## SANTIPONCE

pop 7560 / elevation 20m

The small town of Santiponce, about 8km northwest of Seville, is the location of Itálica, the most impressive Roman site in Andalucía, and of the historic and artisti-

cally fascinating Monasterio de San Isidoro del Campo. There's a **tourist office** (☎ 955 99 80 28; Calle La Feria s/n; ☎ 9am–4pm Tue–Fri & Sun) next to the Roman theatre.

**Itálica** (☎ 955 99 65 83; Avenida de Extremadura 2; non-EU citizen €1.50, EU citizen free; ☎ 8.30am–8.30pm Tue–Sat, 9am–3pm Sun & holidays Apr–Sep, 9am–5.30pm Tue–Sat, 10am–4pm Sun & holidays Oct–Mar, closed 1 & 6 Jan, 28 Feb, Good Friday, 1 May, 15 Aug, 1 Nov, 25 Dec) was the first Roman town in Spain, founded in 206 BC for soldiers wounded in the Battle of Ilipa, nearby, in which a Roman army under General Scipio Africanus extinguished Carthaginian ambitions on the Iberian Peninsula. Itálica was the birthplace of the 2nd-century-AD Roman emperor Trajan, and probably of his adopted son and successor Hadrian (he of the wall across northern England).

Most of the Romans' original *vetus urbs* (old town) now lies beneath Santiponce. The main area to visit is the *nova urbs* (new town), added by Hadrian, at the northern end of town. The site includes broad paved streets, one of the biggest of all Roman amphitheatres (able to hold 20,000 spectators), and ruins of houses built around patios with beautiful mosaics. The most notable houses are the **Casa del Planetario** (House of the Planetarium), with a mosaic depicting the gods of the seven days of the week, and the **Casa de los Pájaros** (House of the Birds).

To the south, in the old town, you can also visit a restored **Roman theatre**. In April or May each year this is the setting for a European youth festival of Greco-Latin theatre, with plays by classical playwrights. Itálica has been heavily recycled over the centuries and parts of its buildings have been reused in Santiponce, Seville and elsewhere. You can see statuary and more mosaics from here in Seville's Palacio de la Condesa de Lebrija (p107) and Museo Arqueológico (p108).

The **Monasterio de San Isidoro del Campo** (☎ 955 99 69 20; admission €2; ☎ 10am–2pm & 5.30–8.30pm Fri & Sat Apr–Sep, 10am–2pm & 4–7pm Fri & Sat Oct–Mar, 10am–3pm Sun & holidays) is at the southern end of Santiponce, 1.5km from the Itálica entrance. The monastery was founded in 1301 by Guzmán El Bueno, hero of the defence of Tarifa in 1294 (see p215). In the 15th century its order of hermitic Hieronymite monks decorated the Patio de Evangelistas and central cloister with a rare set of mural paintings of saints and Mudejar geometric and floral

designs. By the 16th century the monastery had one of Spain's best libraries, and one monk, Casiodoro de Reina, did the first translation of the Bible into Spanish (published 1559). But Reina and others were too much influenced by Lutheran ideas for the liking of the Inquisition, which dissolved the nascent Protestant community, imprisoning and executing some monks while others managed to escape into exile.

In 1568 the monastery was occupied by a different (nonhermitic) order of Hieronymites, for whom the great 17th-century Sevillian sculptor Juan Martínez Montañés carved one of his masterpieces – the retablo in the larger of the monastery's twin churches – as well as the effigies of Guzmán El Bueno and his wife María Alonso Coronel that lie in wall niches either side of the retablo, above their tombs.

In the 19th century the monks were again expelled from this monastery. It

subsequently served as a women's prison, brewery and tobacco factory. Finally, after a 12-year Junta de Andalucía restoration project, it was recently opened for visits.

Santiponce has several spots for a meal. **Casa Venancio/Gran Venta Itálica** (☎ 955 99 67 06; Avenida Extremadura 9; mains €6–13), opposite the Itálica entrance, has good rabbit or partridge with rice (€17 for two). For seafood or more rice dishes, head to the slightly fancier **La Caseta de Antonio** (☎ 955 99 63 06; Calle Rocío Vega 10; mains €10–18; ☎ closed Sun night, Mon & all Aug), a few steps south of Casa Venancio then a minute's walk along a side street.

Buses run to Santiponce (€1, 30 minutes) from Seville's Plaza de Armas bus station at least twice an hour from 6.30am to 11pm Monday to Friday, a little less often on weekends. In Santiponce they make a stop near the monastery, and terminate at the petrol station outside the Itálica entrance.

## DETOUR: BIRDS & PINE FORESTS

A detour through the northeast fringes of the Doñana area (p154) en route to El Rocío (p156), or a day trip into the same territory from Seville, will reward any nature lover. You'll see plenty of large birds – flamingos, storks, eagles, hawks, herons – even before you get out of your car.

Leave Seville southwestward by Avenida de la República Argentina and the A3122 to Coria del Río and La Puebla del Río. For information about the Doñana area, stop for a chat with the friendly, knowledgeable, English-speaking folk at the **Punto de Información Puebla del Río** (☎ 955 77 20 03; www.rutasdedonana.com; Avenida Pozo Concejo s/n; ☎ 9am–2pm & 5–7.30pm), beside the A3122 in La Puebla del Río, 15km from central Seville. Seven kilometres further along the road is **La Cañada de los Pájaros** (☎ 955 77 21 84; www.canadadelospajaros.com; Carretera Puebla del Río-Isla Mayor Km 8; adult/child under 5yr/child under 13yr/student/senior €6/free/€4/5/5; ☎ 10am–dusk), a nature reserve with thousands of easy-to-see birds of 150-plus species, including flamingos and many others that inhabit the Parque Natural de Doñana.

Time for lunch? **Venta El Cruce** (☎ 955 77 01 19; Carretera Puebla del Río-Isla Mayor Km 9.5; raciones €10, 1.75km beyond La Cañada de los Pájaros at the turn-off for Villafranco del Guadalquivir, serves a typical range of meat and fish dishes but the speciality, in this area of rice fields and wildfowl, is *pato con arroz* (duck with rice), served on Saturday and Sunday. If you'd prefer to picnic outdoors, continue past the Villafranco junction and fork right after 600m along the signposted Carril de Cicloturismo Pinares de Aznalcázar-La Puebla. This road running through lovely tall pine woods towards the village of Aznalcázar has been turned into a *via paisajística* (landscape route), with speed bumps to restrict motor vehicles to 40km/h and special roadside reflectors to warn wildlife of traffic at night. About 6km along is the **Área Recreativa Pozo del Conejo**, with picnic tables beneath the trees.

Return 6km to the main road and turn right (southwest). On the right after 4km is **Dehesa de Abajo**, a 1.5-sq-km nature reserve with walkways to observation points over Europe's largest woodland nesting colony of white storks (400 pairs) and hides overlooking a lake. A variety of raptors also nest here. To continue to El Rocío, carry on southwest from Dehesa de Abajo to the Vado de Don Simón causeway across the shallow Río Guadiamar. At the far end of the causeway turn right (northward) to Villamanrique de la Condesa, from where it's 20km southwest to El Rocío by unpaved road, or 43km on paved roads via Pilas, Hinojos and Almonte.

## LA CAMPIÑA

La Campiña – the rolling plains east of Seville and south of the Río Guadalquivir, crossed by the A4 to Córdoba and the A92 towards Granada and Málaga – is still a land of huge agricultural estates belonging to a few landowners, dotted with scattered towns and villages. History goes back a long way here: you'll find traces of Tartessians, Iberians, Carthaginians, Romans, early Christians, Visigoths, Muslims and many others. Three towns of La Campiña region – Carmona and Écija on the A4 and Osuna on the A92 – are especially worth visiting for their architecture, art and fascinating histories.

### CARMONA

pop 27,000 / elevation 250m

Carmona is a charming old town, dotted with old palaces and impressive monuments, perched on a low hill overlooking a wonderful *vega* (valley) that sizzles in the summer heat. There's a handful of impres-

sive places to stay, and possibly one of the loveliest hotels in Andalucía.

This strategic site was important as long ago as Carthaginian times. The Romans laid out a street plan that survives to this day: their Via Augusta, running from Rome to Cádiz, entered Carmona by the eastern Puerta de Córdoba and left by the western Puerta de Sevilla. The Muslims built a strong defensive wall around Carmona but it fell in 1247 to Fernando III. The town was later adorned with fine churches, convents and mansions by Mudejar and Christian artisans.

Carmona stands on a low hill just off the A4, 38km east of Seville.

### Orientation & Information

Old Carmona stands on the hill at the eastern end of the modern town: the Puerta de Sevilla marks the beginning of the old town. The helpful **tourist office** (☎ 954 19 09 55; www.turismo.carmona.org; ☹ 10am–6pm Mon–Sat, 10am–3pm Sun & holidays) is inside the Puerta de Sevilla. There are banks with ATMs on Paseo del Estatuto and Calle San Pedro, west of the

Puerta de Sevilla, and on Plaza de San Fernando, the main square of the old town.

### Sights

#### NECRÓPOLIS ROMANA

Carmona hides a fascinating site just over 1km southwest of the Puerta de Sevilla: the **Necrópolis Romana** (Map p132; Roman cemetery; ☎ 954 14 08 11; Avenida de Jorge Bonsor s/n; admission free; ☹ 9am–2pm Tue–Sat 15 Jun–14 Sep, 9am–5pm Tue–Fri, 10am–2pm Sat & Sun rest of year, closed holidays). You can climb down into a dozen or more family tombs, hewn from the rock in the 1st and 2nd centuries AD, some of them elaborate and many-chambered (a torch is useful). Most of the dead were cremated, and in the tombs are wall niches for the boxlike stone urns containing the ashes.

Don't miss the **Tumba de Servilia**, as big as a temple (it was the tomb of a family of Hispano-Roman bigwigs), or the **Tumba del Elefante**, with a small elephant statue.

Across the street, you can look down onto a 1st-century-BC **Roman amphitheatre**.

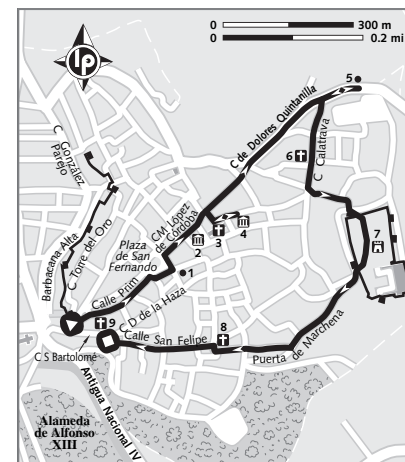
#### PUERTA DE SEVILLA & AROUND

This impressive main gate of the old town has been fortified for well over 2000 years. Today it also houses the tourist office, which sells tickets for the interesting upper levels of the structure, the **Alcázar de la Puerta de Sevilla** (adult/child/student/senior €2/1/1/1; ☹ 10am–6pm Mon–Sat, 10am–3pm Sun & holidays), with fine views and an upstairs Almohad patio with traces of a Roman temple. An informative leaflet helps you identify the various Carthaginian, Roman, Islamic and Christian stages of the construction of the Alcázar.

Lengthy sections of Carmona's **walls** extend from the Puerta de Sevilla. The **Iglesia de San Pedro** (☎ 954 14 12 77; Calle San Pedro; admission €1.20; ☹ 11am–2pm Thu–Mon), west of the Puerta de Sevilla, is worth a look for its richly decorated baroque interior – and if its tower looks familiar, that's because it's an imitation of Seville's Giralda (p99).

#### OLD TOWN WALKING TOUR

You can go around Carmona in an easy stroll (Map p133), starting from the Puerta de Sevilla. The central Calle Prim leads up to Plaza de San Fernando (or Plaza Mayor), whose 16th-century buildings are painted a pretty variety of colours. Just off this square, the patio of the 17th-century **ayuntamiento**



(1) (☎ 954 14 00 11; Calle El Salvador; admission free; ☹ 8am–3pm Mon–Fri, 4–6pm Tue & Thu) contains a large, very fine Roman mosaic showing the Gorgon Medusa.

Calle Martín López de Córdoba leads northeast off Plaza de San Fernando past the noble **Palacio de los Ruedas** (2) to the splendid **Iglesia Prioral de Santa María** (3) (☎ 954 19 14 82; admission €3; ☹ 9am–2pm & 5.30–7.30pm Mon–Fri, 9am–2pm Sat 1 Apr–20 Aug, 9am–2pm & 5–7pm Mon–Fri, 9am–2pm Sat 22 Sep–31 Mar, closed 21 Aug–21 Sep). Santa María was built mainly in the 15th and 16th centuries, on the site of the former main mosque in a typical Carmona combination of brick and stone. The Patio de los Naranjos by which you enter (formerly the mosque's ablutions courtyard) has a 6th-century Visigothic calendar carved into one of its pillars. Inside the church, don't miss the fine Gothic pillars and ceiling tracery, and the plateresque main reredos.

If Carmona has got under your skin, an extensive background of the town can be explored at the **Museo de la Ciudad** (4) (City History Museum; ☎ 954 14 01 28; www.museociudad.carmona.org; Calle San Ildefonso 1; adult/child/student/senior €2/1/1/1, free Tue; ☹ 10am–2pm & 4.30–9.30pm Wed–Mon, 10am–2pm Tue 16 Jun–31 Aug, 11am–7pm Wed–Mon, 11am–2pm Tue rest of year), behind Santa María. There are archaeological and historical displays here, housed in a 16th- to 18th-century mansion. Most impressive are the Roman and Tartessos sections, the latter including a unique collection of large

**CARMONA**

0 400 m  
0 0.2 miles

**INFORMATION**  
Tourist Office..... 1 C2

**1 SIGHTS & ACTIVITIES**  
Alcázar de la Puerta de Sevilla.....(see 1)  
Alcázar..... 2 D2  
Ayuntamiento..... 3 C2  
Iglesia de San Bartolomé..... 4 C2  
Iglesia de San Felipe..... 5 C2  
Iglesia de San Pedro..... 6 C2  
Iglesia de Santiago..... 7 D1  
Iglesia Prioral de Santa María..... 8 C2  
Museo de la Ciudad..... 9 D2  
Necrópolis Romana..... 10 A3  
Palacio de los Ruedas..... 11 C2  
Plaza del Palenque..... 12 C2  
Puerta de Córdoba..... 13 D1  
Puerta de Sevilla.....(see 1)  
Roman Amphitheatre..... 14 A2

**2 SLEEPING**  
Casa de Carmona..... 15 C1  
Hospedería Marques de las Torres..... 16 D2  
Hotel Alcázar de la Reina..... 17 C1  
Parador Alcázar del Rey Don Pedro..... 18 D2  
Pensión Comercio..... 19 C2

**EATING**  
Café Bar El Tapeo..... 20 C2  
Mesón Sierra Mayor.....(see 9)  
Molino de la Romera..... 21 D2  
Restaurante San Fernando..... 22 C2

**TRANSPORT**  
Buses to Seville..... 23 B2  
Buses to Écija & Córdoba..... 24 C2  
Underground Parking..... 25 B2

**3** To Lora del Río (30km); Écija (50km); Córdoba (103km)  
To Sevilla (35km)  
To Écija (53km); Córdoba (109km)  
To Marchena (29km)

**4** Alameda de Alfonso XIII

**5** Ronda León de San Francisco

**6** Ronda del Matadero

**7** Ronda de la Cruz

**8** Ronda de la Haza

**9** Ronda de la Cruz

**10** Ronda de la Cruz

**11** Ronda de la Cruz

**12** Ronda de la Cruz

**13** Ronda de la Cruz

**14** Ronda de la Cruz

**15** Ronda de la Cruz

**16** Ronda de la Cruz

**17** Ronda de la Cruz

**18** Ronda de la Cruz

**19** Ronda de la Cruz

**20** Ronda de la Cruz

**21** Ronda de la Cruz

**22** Ronda de la Cruz

**23** Ronda de la Cruz

**24** Ronda de la Cruz

**25** Ronda de la Cruz

**A** To Córdoba (103km)  
**B** To Sevilla (35km)  
**C** To Córdoba (103km)  
**D** To Sevilla (35km)

**1** Calle Prim  
**2** Plaza de San Fernando  
**3** Calle San Pedro  
**4** Calle San Felipe  
**5** Calle San Bartolomé  
**6** Calle San Pedro  
**7** Calle San Felipe  
**8** Calle San Bartolomé  
**9** Calle San Pedro  
**10** Calle San Felipe  
**11** Calle San Bartolomé  
**12** Calle San Pedro  
**13** Calle San Felipe  
**14** Calle San Bartolomé  
**15** Calle San Pedro  
**16** Calle San Felipe  
**17** Calle San Bartolomé  
**18** Calle San Pedro  
**19** Calle San Felipe  
**20** Calle San Bartolomé  
**21** Calle San Pedro  
**22** Calle San Felipe  
**23** Calle San Bartolomé  
**24** Calle San Pedro  
**25** Calle San Felipe

earthenware vessels with Middle Eastern decorative motifs.

From the Iglesia de Santa María, Calle Santa María de Gracia and Calle de Do-lores Quintanilla continue to the **Puerta de Córdoba (5)**, originally a Roman gate, with good views of the valley eastward.

Moving back uphill and turning south-west down Calle Calatrava, you reach the **Iglesia de Santiago (6)**, with a pretty Mudejar tower. South of here are the ruins of the **Alcázar (7)** fortress, with the luxury parador (state-run hotel) built within its precinct in the 1970s. It was Pedro I who turned the original Almohad fort into a Mudejar-style country palace, similar to his parts of the Seville Alcázar, in the 14th century. The Catholic Monarchs further embellished the Alcázar before it was severely damaged by earthquakes in 1504 and 1755. Join the Spanish families who come to have a drink or a meal at the parador's lovely patio, and enjoy the views.

Start back along Puerta de Marchena, on the southern rim of the town, then head into the tangle of streets to see the 14th-century **Iglesia de San Felipe (8)**, notable for its pretty brick Mudejar tower and Renaissance façade, and the 15th- to 18th-century **Iglesia de San Bartolomé (9)**.

## Sleeping

At all the following except the parador expect to pay one-third or 50% more during Semana Santa and Seville's Feria de Abril, and less in the low season (which includes July).

**Hospedería Marques de las Torres** (☎ 954 19 62 48; www.hospederiamarquesdelastorres.com; Calle Fermin Molpceres 2; dm €23; r €60; 🍷) An almost un-real combination of dorm beds and hotel

rooms in a converted *palacio* (palace), with a fabulous turquoise pool that explodes between terracotta walls in the sunny garden. The dorms are clean and small, and sleep two or four per cabin, with shared bathrooms. The cabins look a bit like train compartments and are separated by a fixed screen which doesn't go all the way up to the ceiling. The comfortable rooms have plush wide beds.

**Pensión Comercio** (☎/fax 954 14 00 18; Calle Torre del Oro 56; s/d €32/45; 🍷) A lovely tiled old building with a Mudejar-style arch and patio, surrounded by 14 cosy, clean rooms.

**Hotel Alcázar de la Reina** (☎ 954 19 62 00; www.alcazar-reina.es; Plaza de Lasso 2; s/d incl breakfast €100/126; 🍷 🍷 🍷 🍷) Luxurious and modern, but essentially soulless, this 68-room hotel is built in what was a monastery garden in the old town. One of its two patios holds a pool and there's a good restaurant.

**Parador Alcázar del Rey Don Pedro** (☎ 954 14 10 10; www.parador.es; Alcázar s/n; s/d €100/128; 🍷 🍷 🍷 🍷) Built amid the remains of the Alcázar of Pedro I, in a medieval fortress-palace style that mixes Islamic and Christian influences, Carmona's parador exudes historic atmosphere. The 63 spacious rooms and the public spaces are luxuriously equipped with antique and antique-style furnishings, the restaurant is excellent, and few Andalusian swimming pools are more spectacularly sited.

## Eating

Several bars and cafés on and around Plaza de San Fernando do *raciones* and tapas: **Café Bar El Tapeo** (☎ 954 14 43 21; Calle Prim 9; tapas/raciones €1.50/5, menú €9) is friendly, down-to-earth and popular.

**Mesón Sierra Mayor** (☎ 954 14 44 04; Calle San Ildefonso 1; tapas €1.30-2.30) It's all about ham and piggies in this place where excellent tapas and *raciones* are served in a little patio inside the Museo de la Ciudad building. Ham and cheese from the hills of Huelva province are the specialities.

**Restaurante San Fernando** (☎ 954 14 35 56; Calle Sacramento 3; mains €12-15, menú €25; 🍷) 1.30-4pm Tue-Sun, 9pm-midnight Tue-Sat) The *menú* (set menu) at this classy restaurant overlooking Plaza de San Fernando offers a taste of five or so different dishes, perhaps beginning with cream of green apple soup followed by stuffed salmon pastries, then pears in red wine to finish. One or two other morsels are fitted in along the way.

**Casa de Carmona** (☎ 954 14 41 51; www.casadecarmona.com; Plaza de Lasso 1; mains €16-22, menú €24-48) This elegant hotel restaurant is famed for its quality haute cuisine with an Andalusian touch and its fine wine list.

**Molino de la Romera** (☎ 954 14 20 00; Calle Sor Ángela de la Cruz 8; 4-course menú incl 2 drinks €18; 🍷 closed Sun evening) Serves hearty, well-prepared Andalusian meals in an interesting 15th-century oil-mill building. It has a bar and café if you fancy something light and a lovely terrace overlooking the valley.

**Parador Alcázar del Rey Don Pedro** (☎ 954 14 10 10; www.parador.es; Alcázar s/n; menú €27) This parador's refectory-style dining room is one of the best in town. Try the speciality *espinacas de Carmona* (spicy spinach) or *cartuja de perdiz* (partridge and vegetables).

## Getting There & Away

**Casal** (☎ 954 41 06 58) runs buses to Carmona from Seville's Prado de San Sebastián bus station (€2, 45 minutes, 20 a day Monday to Friday, 10 Saturday, seven Sunday). The stop in Carmona is on Paseo del Estatuto, 300m west of the Puerta de Sevilla. **Alsina Graells** (☎ 954 41 86 11) runs buses to Écija (€3.70, 45 minutes) and Córdoba (€7.50, two hours) at 8am and 2.30pm, from an empty lot outside Puerta de Sevilla.

There's around-the-clock underground parking on Paseo del Estatuto (three/six/10/24 hours for €2/4.50/7.50/12).

## ÉCIJA

pop 38,900 / elevation 110m

Of the towns of La Campiña, Écija (*ess-ih-a*) is perhaps the most understated. An

increase in visitors over recent years has resulted in a growing number of monuments and museums to visit, and a spruce-up campaign aimed at making the town centre progressively more attractive. The town's (sometimes still crumbling) Gothic-Mudéjar churches and imposing, baroque palaces are a treat for the eyes and a retreat from the sun. Écija is known both as *la ciudad de las torres* (the city of towers), for its many baroque church towers whose colourful tiles glitter in the sun, and as *la sartén de Andalucía* (the frying pan of Andalucía), for that same sun which beats cruelly down on the town, sometimes topping 50°C.

The town's reconstruction involves renovating one of the town's most beautiful buildings, Palacio de Peñaflo, and the main town square, Plaza de España, which, although a fascinating archaeological excavation site originally dug up for an underground car park, is a bit of a mess to look at. Écija owes most of its architectural splendours to the 18th century, when the local gentry, rich from wheat and oil production, splashed out on large mansions. The church towers were rebuilt after an earthquake in 1757. Écija's long and fascinating earlier history is still being dug up.

Écija lies 53km east along the A4 from Carmona.

## Information

The helpful **tourist office** (☎ 955 90 29 33; www.ecija.es; Plaza de España 1; 🍷 9.30am-3pm Mon-Fri, to 2pm Jul & Aug, 10.30am-1.30pm Sat, Sun & holidays) is in the front of the *ayuntamiento* on the central plaza. Its good tourist map will guide you around the sights.

## Sights

Recent excavations in the central **Plaza de España** (also called El Salón) have yielded spectacular finds. When the plaza was dug up for an intended underground car park, its western half (nearest the *ayuntamiento*) turned out to be the site of a 9th- to 12th-century *makbara*, a Muslim cemetery with 4000 burials. At the eastern end were Roman baths with a swimming pool and a gymnasium stuffed with pieces of sculpture hidden there since the 3rd century AD. At the time of research, both the Roman baths and the Muslim cemetery were being

## THE AUTHOR'S CHOICE

**Casa de Carmona** (☎ 954 14 41 51; www.casadecarmona.com; Plaza de Lasso 1; r incl breakfast from €160; 🍷 🍷 🍷) The concept of luxury is taken to a whole new level in Casa de Carmona. This beautiful 16th-century palace once belonged to an aristocratic family and it feels as if they still live here: the rooms are furnished in an antique country manor style, the wooden beds are laid with soft white-lace pillows, the bathrooms have old-fashioned taps and stand alone baths and there isn't a lifeless room in the building to make you realise you're in a hotel. The reading area that comes with the suite has rugged carpets and slightly torn sofas. Heavy drapes let in rays of light from the tall bright windows. Everything exudes a sense of comfort and lazy learning, and the elegant library is stacked with books and magazines. The almost tropical-looking swimming pool has a matching sense of decadent beauty.

further explored, before the area is eventually replaced by the car park.

The **ayuntamiento** (Plaza de España 1; ☎ 9.30am-3pm Mon-Fri Sep-Jun, 9.30am-2pm Jul & Aug, 10.30am-1.30pm Sat, Sun & holidays) boasts a fine Roman mosaic depicting the punishment of Queen Dirce, tied to the horns of a bull. To see it, ask at the tourist office: a staff member will accompany you and, when possible, show you the art treasures in the building's 19th-century Sala Capitular (Chapter House). Tourist office staff also run a **cámara oscura** (camera obscura; admission €2.50; ☎ 10.30am-1.30pm), which projects live, moving images of the town onto a screen – a uniquely complete panorama of Écija's wonderful spires, belfries and palaces and the main square below.

The famed **Iglesia de Santa María** (Plaza Santa María), just off Plaza de España, has one of Écija's finest church towers. A block south from Plaza de España along Calle Cintería, the handsome 18th-century Palacio de Benamejís houses the fascinating **Museo Histórico Municipal** (☎ 955 90 29 19; Plaza de la Constitución; admission free; ☎ 9am-2pm Tue-Sun Jun-Sep; 9.30am-1.30pm & 4.30-6.30pm Tue-Fri, 9am-2pm Sat, Sun & holidays Oct-May). Pride of place goes to the best finds of Roman sculpture from Plaza de España, including a full-sized sculpture of an Amazon (legendary female warrior), an athlete's torso and a white marble male head (possibly the god Mars). The rest of the museum has absorbing displays covering the full spectrum of Écija's history, including Iberian sculptures and Roman mosaics.

A couple of blocks east, Écija's most ubiquitous image is that of the huge 18th-century **Palacio de Peñafior** (Calle Emilio Castelar 26; admission free; ☎ 9am-1.30pm Mon-Fri Jun-Sep, 10am-1pm & 4.30-7.30pm Mon-Fri, 11am-1pm Sat & Sun Oct-May) or 'the palace of the long balconies', which is thankfully up for a facelift. Its attractive, curved façade is lined with frescoes, and the balconies stretch above them. Enter to see the grand staircase and the pretty two-storey patio, which houses the town library and two exhibition rooms.

Across the street corner, the **Palacio de Valhermoso** has a lovely Renaissance façade. Turn down Calle Cadenas opposite the Palacio de Valhermoso and head for the elegant tower of the **Iglesia de San Gil** (Calle San Antonio). Just past this church, on the right, is the **Plaza de Armas**, where Écija's 12th-century Islamic Alcazaba (fortress), and,

below that, Roman and Tartessos levels, are being excavated. Fine Phoenician ceramics and the only known mosaic depicting the Roman god of the year, Annus, have been found here, and the site is projected to become an *in situ* museum.

Head back past the Palacio de Valhermoso to check out the towers of the **Iglesia de San Juan** (Plaza San Juan) and the **Convento de San Pablo y Santo Domingo** (Plazuela de Santo Domingo) – the latter hung with a gigantic set of rosary beads – en route to the **Parroquia Mayor de Santa Cruz** (Plazuela de Nuestra Señora del Valle; admission free; ☎ 9am-1pm & 6-9pm Mon-Sat, 10am-1pm & 6-9.30pm Sun Jun-Sep, 9am-1pm & 5-9pm Mon-Sat, 10am-1pm & 6-8pm Sun Oct-May). Santa Cruz is Écija's parish church but was once the town's principal mosque and still has traces of Islamic features and some Arabic inscriptions. Arches, fountains and patios from now-roofless parts of the building surround three sides with romantic effect. The main altar is a lovely 5th-century early Christian stone sarcophagus, carved with Greek script and the images of Abraham, Isaac, Christ the Good Shepherd and Daniel. Across the street is the 16th- to 18th-century **Palacio de los Palma** (☎ 955 90 20 82; Calle Espíritu Santo 10; admission €3; ☎ 10am-2pm), with a porticoed patio and richly decorated halls with Mudejar *artesonados*. From here it's just four blocks south back to Plaza de España.

### Sleeping & Eating

**Hostal Santiago** (☎ 954 831 626; Av Del Genil 18; s/d €17/32) This was the only budget place in town during research, and is for budget emergencies only. Above a petrol station and a 15-minute walk from the centre, the Santiago is not as bad as it looks from the outside. The rooms are decent enough for a night's kip: clean, but plain and slightly depressing. As we said, budget emergencies only.

**Hotel Platería** (☎ 955 90 27 54; [www.hotelplateria.net](http://www.hotelplateria.net); Calle Platería 4; s/d €38/64; ☎) Just a block east of Plaza de España, this hotel offers excellent value. The 18 decent-sized vanilla-coloured rooms have spacious beds, and most look on to a pleasant central courtyard. The restaurant, open for all meals, does terrific food at good prices (menu of the day €7).

**Hotel Palacio de los Granados** (☎ 955 90 10 50; [www.palaciogranados.com](http://www.palaciogranados.com); Calle Emilio Castelar 42; t/st

### THE AMAZON OF ÉCIJA

Écija's superb marble figure of an Amazon (legendary female warrior) stands 2.11m high, still bearing traces of her original decorative red paint. Looking surprisingly unwarlike and carved with great delicacy, she is thought to have once stood in Rome with a handful of other Roman copies of the same 5th-century-BC Greek original. The original, by sculptor Policletus, adorned the Temple of Artemis at Ephesus (Turkey), one of the seven wonders of the ancient world. One of the Roman copies was, for some reason, brought to Colonia Augusta Firma Astigi (as Écija was then known) in the 1st century AD and then hidden, along with other prized sculptures, in the swimming pool of the town's forum baths in the 3rd century AD when early Christians were on a pagan-idol-smashing rampage. The pool turned out to be such a secure hiding place that the Écija Amazon did not see the light of day again until excited archaeologists scraped away the earth from the pool on 7 February 2002.

Other copies of Policletus' original, unearthed in Rome in the 17th and 19th centuries, are in museums in Berlin, Copenhagen and New York.

incl breakfast €120/160; ☎ ☎ ☎) Écija's best choice is found along a lovely mansion-rich street. This 18th-century converted mansion is set around two patios and provides 11 palatial-style rooms and suites, all unique and designed by one of the hotel's owners with a fantastic mix of traditional and modern elements. Contemporary art decks many walls. Dinner is available on request, and the hotel can organise visits to Écija's archaeological digs, churches and horse-breeding centres.

**Las Ninfas** (☎ 955 90 45 92; Calle Elvira; 3-course menú €9; ☎ closed Mon; ☎) Around the corner from the Museo Histórico Municipal and decorated with local art treasures, this welcoming restaurant offers excellent Andalusian and local specialities.

**Bisturí** (☎ 954 83 10 66; Plaza de España 23; menú €10 & €15; ☎) Right on the central square, Bisturí has something for everyone, at reasonable prices. Eat out on the *terrace* (terrace) or in the air-conditioned interior restaurant.

**Bodegón del Gallego** (☎ 954 83 26 18; Calle Arcipreste Juan Aparicio 3; mains €10-13) This busy, wood-beamed restaurant is the place for fine seafood.

### Getting There & Away

**Linesur** (☎ 954 83 02 39) operates up to 11 buses daily to/from Seville (Prado de San Sebastián; €6, 1¼ hours). Alsina Graells has three or more buses to Córdoba (€4, 1¼ hours), and one to Carmona (€4, 45 minutes). The bus stop is by the football ground on Avenida de Andalucía, six blocks south of Plaza de España.

### OSUNA

pop 17,430 / elevation 330m

Osuna is the loveliest of La Campiña's towns, with beautifully preserved baroque mansions and an impressive Spanish Renaissance monastery. Several of the town's most impressive mansions were created by the ducal family of Osuna, one of Spain's richest since the 16th century, and the family whose name the town now carries.

It is 91km southeast of Seville, along the Granada-Seville A92.

### Information

On the central Plaza Mayor, the **Oficina Municipal de Turismo** (☎ 954 81 57 32; [www.ayto-osuna.es](http://www.ayto-osuna.es); ☎ 9am-2pm Mon-Sat) and the **Asociación Turístico Cultural Ossuna** (☎ 954 81 28 52; ☎ 10am-2pm & 5-8pm Mon-Fri, 10am-2pm Sat & Sun) provide tourist information and hand out useful guides detailing the town's monuments in various languages. The Asociación Turístico can also provide English-, French- or Spanish-speaking guides costing €50/100 per half-/full day.

### Sights

Calle Carrera, north from the central Plaza Mayor, is the street where most of the hotels are situated. The museum, monastery, church and university are all in a cluster just east off Plaza Mayor, up a steep hill. The area west of Plaza Mayor, which is a triangle of Calle Carrera, Alfonso XII and Carretería Antequera, is sprinkled with mansions and churches and cut up by lovely little streets and passages, and divided by Calle Sevilla, which leads west



off Plaza Mayor. The bus station is south-east of the main square, on Avenida de la Constitución.

### PLAZA MAYOR

The leafy square has the partly modernised 16th-century **ayuntamiento** on one side, a large **market building** on the other, and the 16th-century church of the **Convento de la Concepción** at the end. Sit down and eat *pipas* (seeds) with the Osunans, on one of the square's benches.

### BAROQUE MANSIONS

You can't go inside most of Osuna's mansions, but their façades are still mesmerising. One is the **Palacio de los Cepeda** (Calle de la Huerta), behind the town hall, with rows of Churrigueresque columns topped by stone halberdiers holding the Cepeda family coat of arms. It now serves as a courthouse. The 1737 portal of the **Palacio de Puente Hermoso** (Palacio de Govantes y Herdara; Calle Sevilla 44), a couple of blocks west of Plaza Mayor, has twisted pillars encrusted with grapes and vine leaves.

Moving north from Plaza Mayor up Calle Carrera, you pass the **Iglesia de Santo Domingo** (1531) before you reach the corner of Calle San Pedro. The **Cilla del Cabildo Colegial** (Calle San Pedro 16) bears a sculpted representation of Seville's Giralda, flanked by the Sevillan martyrs Santa Justa and Santa Rufina. Further down, the **Palacio del Marqués de La Gomera** (Calle San Pedro 20) has elaborate clustered pillars, with the family shield at the top of the façade. This is now a hotel (see opposite) – step inside for a drink.

### MUSEO ARQUEOLÓGICO

The Torre del Agua, a 12th-century Almohad tower, just east and uphill from Plaza Mayor, houses Osuna's **Museo Arqueológico** (Archaeological Museum; ☎ 954 81 12 07; Plaza de la Duquesa; admission €1.50; ☎ 11.30am-1.30pm & 4.30-6.30pm Tue-Sun Oct-Apr, 11.30am-1.30pm & 5-7pm Tue-Sun May-Sep, closed Sun afternoon Jul & Aug). The collection of mainly Iberian and Roman artefacts found in the vicinity is well worth seeing: it includes copies of the celebrated Iberian Toro de Osuna (Osuna bull) and the Roman Osuna bronzes, whose originals are housed in the Louvre in Paris and Spain's national archaeological museum in Madrid.

### COLEGIATA & AROUND

Osuna's most impressive monuments overlook the centre from the hill above the Museo Arqueológico. The **Colegiata de Santa María de la Asunción** (☎ 954 81 04 44; Plaza de la Encarnación; admission by guided tour only €2; ☎ 10am-1.30pm & 3.30-6.30pm Tue-Sun Oct-Apr, 10am-1.30pm & 4-7pm Tue-Sun May-Sep, closed Sun afternoon Jul & Aug), a large 16th-century former collegiate church, contains a wealth of fine art collected by the Duques de Osuna, descendants of its founder, Juan Téllez Girón, the Conde de Ureña.

In the main body of the church are José de Ribera's *Cristo de la Expiración*, a marvellous example of this 17th-century painter's use of contrast; an elaborate baroque main retable; a contrasting 14th-century retable in the Capilla de la Virgen de los Reyes; and, in the Capilla de la Inmaculada, a Crucifixion sculpture of 1623 by Juan de Mesa. The church's sacristy contains four more Riberas. The tour also includes the lugubrious underground Sepulcro Ducal, created in 1548 with its own chapel as the family vault of the Osunas, who are entombed in wall niches.

Opposite the Colegiata is the **Monasterio de la Encarnación** (☎ 954 81 11 21; Plaza de la Encarnación; admission €2; ☎ same as Colegiata), now Osuna's museum of religious art and well worth a visit. The 18th-century tiles in the cloister, representing the five senses, the seasons, the Alameda de Hércules in Seville and diverse biblical, hunting, bullfighting and monastic scenes, are among the most beautiful of all Sevillan tilework, and the monastery church is richly decked with baroque sculpture and art. One upstairs room has a cute collection of 18th-century child Christs.

On the hill top just above the Colegiata is the **Universidad de Osuna**, a square building with pointed towers and a stately Renaissance patio, founded in 1548 by the Conde de Ureña to help combat Protestantism. It's now an outpost of Seville University, providing courses in nursing and business studies. Down behind the Monasterio de la Encarnación, the 17th-century **Iglesia de la Merced** (Cuesta Marruecos) has a lovely baroque tower and portal.

### Sleeping & Eating

**Hostal 5 Puertas** (☎ 954 81 12 43; Calle Carrera 79; s/d €25/40; 📶) The 14 smallish but decent

rooms here have TV, phone and heating. Some are let to university students.

**Hostal Esmeralda** (☎ 955 82 10 73; www.hostal-esmeralda.com; Calle Tesorero 7; s/d 25.50/42; 📶 📺) Clean, friendly and family-run, the Esmeralda is about 200m south of Plaza Mayor. Rooms are simple and reasonably sized, with TV, and open on to tiled passageways off a small sky-lit patio.

**Hostal Caballo Blanco** (☎ 954 81 01 84; Calle Granada 1; s/d €30/50; 📶 📺) An old coaching inn on the corner of Calle Carrera, 350m north of Plaza Mayor, the friendly 'White Horse Inn' has courtyard parking and 13 comfy rooms in deep red or blue, with reading lamps and tasteful prints. There's a restaurant here too (open Monday to Saturday).

**Hotel Palacio Marqués de la Gomera** (☎ 954 81 22 23; www.hotelpalaciodelmarques.com; Calle San Pedro 20; s/d €77/96; 📶 📺 📺) An excellent opportunity to stay in one of Osuna's finest baroque mansions. The gorgeous *casa palacio* has its own chapel, so you can get down to praising the Lord before breakfast, and the religious imagery is hauntingly present throughout the building. There are 20 large, lovely and varied rooms and suites around a beautiful, arcaded, two-storey central patio. Its elegant restaurant, **La Casa del Marqués** (mains €9-18), provides a tempting Andalusian and Spanish menu, while its **Asador de Osuna** grill specialises in charcoal-grilled meats.

**Restaurante Doña Guadalupe** (☎ 954 81 05 58; Plaza Guadalupe 6; 4-course menú €12.30, mains €11-16; ☎ closed Tue & 1-15 Aug; 📶) On a small square between Calles Quijada and Gordillo (both off Calle Carrera), Doña Guadalupe serves up quality Andalusian fare from partridge with rice to wild asparagus casserole. There's a good list of Spanish wines too.

**El Mesón del Duque** (☎ 954 81 28 45; Plaza de la Duquesa 2; raciones €8-11) Enjoy well-prepared Andalusian dishes on the quiet terrace opposite the Museo Arqueológico, with views up to the Colegiata.

### Getting There & Away

The **bus station** (☎ 954 81 01 46; Avenida de la Constitución) is 500m southeast of Plaza Mayor. Up to 11 daily buses run to/from Seville (Prado de San Sebastián; €6.50, 1¼ hours). Four daily buses go to Fuente de Piedra (€4.50, 45 minutes) and Antequera (€5, 1¼ hours), and two each to Málaga (€8, 2½ hours) and Granada (€11.50, 3¼ hours).

Six trains a day run to/from Seville (€6 to €6.50, one hour) and three each to/from Antequera (€5.50, one hour), Granada (€12, 2½ hours) and Málaga (€8, 1½ hours): the **train station** (Avenida de la Estación) is 1km south-west of the centre.

## PARQUE NATURAL SIERRA NORTE

This 1648-sq-km natural park, stretching across the north of Sevilla province, is beautiful, rolling, often wild Sierra Morena country. It's an ever-changing landscape of green valleys and hills, woodlands, rivers and atmospheric old towns and villages with Islamic-era forts or castles, part-Mudejar churches and narrow, zig-zagging white streets. It's a nature lover's delight that, so far, has been discovered by few foreigners. The spring wild flowers are among the most beautiful you'll see in Andalucía and you'll have a chance to spot bulls grazing, as well as the cute dark *cerdo ibérico* pigs that end up as all that delicious *jamón*.

At least 14 walks of a few hours each are signposted in various areas. The routes are shown on the IGN/Junta de Andalucía 1:100,000 map *Parque Natural Sierra Norte*, and described in Spanish in the booklet *Cuaderno de Senderos*, available at the Centro de Interpretación El Robledo visitors centre (p142).

The two main towns, Cazalla de la Sierra and Constantina, lie 20km apart at the centre of the park.

### GETTING THERE & AROUND Bus

**Linesur** (☎ 954 98 82 20) runs buses from Seville's Plaza de Armas three times daily (twice on Saturday and Sunday) to Cazalla de la Sierra (€6, 1¼ to 2¼ hours) and Guadalcanal (€7.50, 2¾ hours), and three to six times daily to El Pedroso (€5, 1¼ hours) and Constantina (€5, 1¼ hours).

### Train

Cazalla y Constantina station is on the A455 Cazalla-Constantina road, 7km from Cazalla, 12km from Constantina. Three trains daily rattle to/from Seville (€5, 1¼ hours). All stop at El Pedroso en route and continue

to/from Guadalcanal, and one goes to/from Zafra, Mérida and Cáceres in Extremadura. The 4.30pm train from Seville arrives at Cazalla y Constantina station at 6.22pm – in time to catch the Constantina–Cazalla bus that passes the station at about 7.30pm Monday to Friday – but you should confirm current schedules.

## EL PEDROSO

pop 2290 / elevation 415m

A pleasant village of broad cobbled streets, El Pedroso lies 16km south of Cazalla de la Sierra on the A432 from Seville. The 15th-century **Iglesia de Nuestra Señora de la Consolación** in the village centre contains a 1608 *Inmaculada* by the great sculptor Juan Martínez Montañés (in the chapel to the right in front of the main altar). The **Sendero del Arroyo de las Cañas**, a 10km marked walking route around the flattish country west of El Pedroso, beginning opposite Bar Triana on the western side of town, is one of the prettiest walks in the park. It goes through a landscape strewn with boulders and, in spring, gorgeous wild flowers.

The eight-room **Hotel Casa Montehuéznar** (☎ 954 88 90 00; www.montehueznar.com; Avenida de la Estación 15; s/d incl breakfast €35/55; 🍷) provides comfortable rooms with attractive wooden furnishings, around the upper floor of a pretty patio. The hotel is in the street leading up towards the village centre (500m away) opposite the train station. Its good restaurant is normally only open Friday to Sunday; at other times **Bar-Restaurante Serrania** (☎ 954 88 96 03; Avenida de la Estación 30; platos combinados €5-8), at the bottom of the street, is a reasonable fallback.

**Restaurante Los Álamos** (☎ 954 88 96 11; Carretera Cantillana Km 29.5; meat raciones €6), on the A432 just south of El Pedroso, makes a good lunch stop. You can dine al fresco on a large veranda looking out over a garden with lots of birds. Meats are a speciality and the *queso Manchego* (Manchego cheese) is superb.

## CAZALLA DE LA SIERRA

pop 5000 / elevation 600m

This attractive little white town, spread around a hill top 85km northeast of Seville, has a great little selection of places to stay and pleasant walks in the woods. The

site of an Islamic castle, it was conquered by Fernando III in 1247. In the 16th and 17th centuries Cazalla was celebrated for its wines and brandies, which were exported to the Americas.

## Information

The new **tourist office** (☎ 954 883 562; 🕒 8am-5pm) is on Plaza Mayor, next to the Iglesia de la Consolación. Tourist information is also available at the **ayuntamiento** (☎ 954 88 42 36; Plaza Doctor Nosea s/n; 🕒 8am-3pm Mon-Fri). There are plenty of banks with ATMs on the central pedestrianised street, Calle La Plazuela, and nearby on Calle Llana, the main road passing through town.

## Sights

The outstanding building in Cazalla's tangle of old-fashioned streets is the fortress-like **Iglesia de Nuestra Señora de la Consolación** (Plaza Mayor; 🕒 Mass 7.30pm Tue-Sat, noon Sun), a mainly 14th- and 15th-century construction in the region's typical red brick and yellow stone. Badly damaged in the civil war, it's actually more impressive outside than inside.

**La Cartuja de Cazalla** (☎ 954 88 45 16; adult/child €3/1; 🕒 9am-2pm & 4-8pm) is a large 15th-century monastery in a beautiful, secluded nook of the Sierra Morena, 4km from Cazalla (take the signposted turn-off from the A455 Constantina road, 2.5km from Cazalla). Built on the site of an Islamic mill and mosque, the monastery fell into ruin in the 19th century. In 1977 it was bought by art lover Carmen Ladrón de Guevara, who is devotedly restoring it, in part as an arts centre (it has a ceramics' workshop and art gallery) and the restored church functions as a concert hall. A good guesthouse is part of the project.

## Activities

### WALKING

Two tracks lead from Cazalla down to the Huéznar Valley and by combining them you can enjoy a round trip of 9km. They pass through typical Sierra Norte evergreen oak woodlands, olive groves and small cultivated plots, plus the odd chestnut wood and vineyard.

One track is the **Sendero de las Laderas**, which starts at El Chorrillo fountain on the eastern edge of Cazalla at the foot of

Calle Parras. A 'Sendero Las Laderas 900m' sign on Paseo El Moro, just down from the Posada del Moro, directs you to this starting point. The path leads down to the Puente de los Tres Ojos bridge on the Río Huéznar, from where you go up the western bank of the river a short way, then head west under the Puente del Castillejo railway bridge (first take a break at the picnic area on the far bank, if you like) and return to Cazalla by the **Camino Viejo de la Estación** (Old Station Track). You can also join this walk from Cazalla y Constantina station by following the 'Molino del Corcho' track down the Huéznar for 1km to the Puente del Castillejo.

## HORSE RIDING

Experienced local horseman Ángel Conde runs the recommended stables **Cuadras Al Paso** (☎ 689-944451; Plaza JM López-Cepero 3; per hr/day/week €18/100/600) with home-bred mounts that are a mix of Andalusian, Arab and English thoroughbreds.

## Courses

**Turismo Rural Hidalgo** (☎ /fax 954 88 35 81; www.turismoruralhidalgo.com; Calle Virgen del Monte 19; courses incl hostel accommodation per week €260-310), run by a Dutch couple resident in Cazalla, organises an almost year-round programme of one to three week workshop courses in flamenco dance and guitar, *sevillana* dance, painting, ceramics, Andalusian cooking and Spanish language, including some courses for kids.

## Sleeping & Eating

**Posada del Moro** (☎ /fax 954 88 48 58; www.laposada.delmoro.com; Paseo El Moro s/n; s/d incl breakfast

€40/60; 🍷 🍷) Decorated as an improvised tribute to Andalucía's Islamic past with a Moroccan-style interior. A long and narrow fountain in the large garden has a cool swimming pool, and plays host to Moroccan-themed parties. The rooms are spacious, large and comfortable, with red marble floors, pretty cork-topped furnishings, and views of the garden. The restaurant (mains €10 to €15) cooks up local specialities such as wild asparagus and assorted game.

**Hospedería de la Cartuja** (☎ 954 88 45 16; www.cartujadecazalla.com; s/d incl breakfast €60/95, dinner €22; 🍷 🍷 🍷) The guesthouse at the beautiful Cartuja de Cazalla (opposite) has eight modern rooms hung with work by former resident artists, plus suites and a small house for families. There are two inviting pools, and riding stables on site (ride/class per hour €20/15). Much of the fare at the excellent dinner table, in the monastery's old pilgrims' hostel, is home-grown. Room rates go down if you stay longer than one night.

**Palacio de San Benito** (☎ 954 88 33 36; www.palaciodesanbenito.com; Paseo El Moro; r €139-235; 🍷 🍷) This luxurious, antique-filled boutique hotel occupies what was a 15th-century hermitage and pilgrims' hostel and still includes a Mudejar church. All 10 ultra-comfortable rooms are completely different. The restaurant (mains €14 to €20), open to all, serves all meals, with an emphasis on country specialities such as venison, partridge and salmon.

Other options:

**Hostal Castro Martínez** (☎ 954 88 40 39; Calle Virgen del Monte 36; r €29-35; 🍷) Gloomy budget accommodation in the town centre; it can be noisy.

## THE AUTHOR'S CHOICE

**Las Navezuclas** (☎ 954 88 47 64; www.lasnavezuclas.com; s/d incl breakfast €46/64, 4-person apt €118; 🕒 closed early Jan-late Feb; 🍷 🍷) In the 16th century, this *cortijo* (farm) housed tired workers who'd spent all day toiling at the olive-oil mill. Now, this gorgeous farmhouse, sitting on a hill that overlooks meadows and trees, accommodates tired tourists who've spent all day walking the surrounding hills. The Italian host, Luca, turned the old *cortijo* into this simple, stylish place to stay over 20 years. The rooms and apartments are tasteful and rustic, there are several common areas with open fireplaces for the winter and a large pool for scorching summer days. Excellent meals are based on home-grown produce. Good walks start right here and your friendly host can set up great bird-watching, horse riding and other activities. Altogether this is one of the best places to stay in Andalucía. From Cazalla, go 2km south towards Seville, then 1km east down a dirt road (signposted).

## Shopping

Buy Cazalla's celebrated *anisados* (aniseed-based liqueurs), at the handicrafts shop **La Artesa** (Calle La Plazuela 1) or **La Destilería** (Calle Llana 1). The *guinda* (wild cherry) variety is a rich, heart-warming concoction.

## HUÉZNAR VALLEY

The Río Huéznar (or Huesna) runs north-south through the countryside about halfway between Cazalla de la Sierra and Constantina. The A455 Cazalla-Constantina road crosses the river just east of the Cazalla y Constantina train station. A 1km drivable track leads downstream from here to the Puente del Castillejo railway bridge and the Área Recreativa Molino del Corcho (p140). Upstream, the river is paralleled by the SE168 road, which runs 13km to the village of San Nicolás del Puerto. The **Isla Margarita picnic area** is about 1km up the river from the station. From Isla Margarita a walking path leads up the eastern side of the river all the way to San Nicolás del Puerto: after about 4km it meets the course of a disused railway running to San Nicolás and the old mines of Cerro del Hierro – you can walk along this instead of the path, if you like. Two kilometres before San Nicolás are the **Cascadas del Huesna**, a series of powerful waterfalls on the river.

There are three camping grounds along this stretch of the river:

**Camping Batán de las Monjas** (☎ 955 88 65 48; Carretera SE168 Km 7; camping per person/tent/car €3/3/2.50; 📍) A 20-tent farm site east of the river; access by 1km vehicle track from the SE168, fording the river.

**Área de Acampada El Martinete** (☎ 955 88 65 83; Carretera SE168 Km 12; camping per person/tent/car €3/3.50/free; 📍) Shady site 2km from San Nicolás; short paths lead to the Cascadas del Huesna and the good Restaurante El Martinete (raciones €7).

**Camping La Fundición** (☎ 955 95 41 17; Carretera SE168 Km 2; camping per person/tent/car €3.50/2.50/1.50; 📍) Large, shady site on the river's western bank, 1km up from Isla Margarita, with a restaurant, pool and bar.

## CONSTANTINA

pop 7000 / elevation 555m

Constantina is the 'capital' of the Sierra Norte and really feels like a mountain town, where, unless you're a nature lover, there isn't much to see or do. The Parque Natural Sierra Norte's visitors centre, the **Centro de Interpretación El Robledo** (☎ 955 88 15 97; Carretera Constantina-El Pedroso Km 1; 🕒 10am-2pm Tue-Thu & Sun, 6-8pm Fri, 10am-2pm & 6-8pm Sat Oct-Jun, 11am-1pm Tue & Thu, 6-8pm Fri, 10am-2pm & 6-8pm Sat & Sun Jul-Sep, closed 1 & 6 Jan, extra hr some holidays) is located 1km west along the A452 El Pedroso road from the southern end of Constantina. It has interesting displays on the park's flora, fauna and history, and a clearly labelled

botanical garden of Andalusian plants that is a picture in spring and well worth a 20- to 30-minute wander. Also in the garden are a few enclosures with birds of prey that are unfit to be returned to the wild.

Buses stop at **Bar Gregorio** (☎ 955 88 10 43; Calle El Peso 9) in the town centre. There are several banks with ATMs on the pedestrianised main street, Calle Mesones.

## Sights & Activities

The western side of Constantina is topped by a ruined Almoravid-era **Islamic fort** – worth the climb for the views alone. Below are the medieval streets and 18th-century mansions of the **Barrio de la Morería** district. The **Iglesia de Santa María de la Encarnación** (Plaza Llano del Sol), in the centre, is a Mudejar church with a 16th-century plateresque portal and a belfry (popular with nesting storks) that was added in 1567 by Hernán Ruíz, who also did the one atop the Giralda in Seville.

The **Sendero Los Castañares**, a 7km marked walk, starts from the north end of Paseo de la Alameda in the north of town. It takes you up through thick chestnut woods to a hilltop viewpoint, then back into Constantina below the fort (about two hours, total).

## Sleeping & Eating

**Hotel San Blas** (☎ 955 88 00 77; www.fp-hoteles.com; Calle Miraflores 4; s/d €46/64 Aug, Semana Santa & Sat all year, €33/48 other times; 🕒 📍) Though pale and uninteresting, the large, decent rooms at this friendly hotel have big bathrooms and either look out towards the castle or to the pool area. It's 200m off the main road from Cazalla and is clearly signposted.

**Hotel Casa Rural Las Erillas** (☎ 955 88 17 90; http://laserillas.com; s/d incl breakfast €60/80; 📍) A small family venture about 500m along the Sendero Los Castañares, this is a collection of comfortable farmhouse lodgings in lovely gardens, with a pool. Good meals are available and made with plenty of local produce.

**Bodeguita Tomás** (Calle El Peso 1; tapas/mediterranean €2/3.50) Come here, next to the bus stop, for tempting tapas of venison or fried potatoes and Roquefort.

**Mesón de la Abuela Carmen** (☎ 955 88 00 95; Paseo de la Alameda 39; raciones €7-11; 🕒 9.30am-late Tue-Sun) Locals flock to this large, barnlike eating hall near the northern end of town for its succulent grilled meats; salads and some seafood dishes provide options for noncarnivores.

### DETOUR: LA CAPITANA

If you're heading north into Extremadura, or just fancy a day out from Cazalla or Constantina, don't miss the magnificent vistas from the highest point in Sevilla province, La Capitana (959m).

Head north on the A432 from Cazalla or the SE163 from Constantina, pass Alanís and continue 11km along the A432 to Guadalcanal. At a junction as you enter this village, follow the 'Sendero de la Capitana' sign pointing to the right up a bypass road. After 1.5km, above the village, turn left down a minor road, then almost immediately right up an unpaved road with another 'Sendero de la Capitana' sign. Though signposted as a *sendero* (footpath) this is perfectly drivable, with a little care, in a car of normal clearance. Follow the track as it climbs in a general northwest direction along the Sierra del Viento (Windy Range), taking the major track at all forks. Expansive views open out as you pass an observatory on the left after 1.6km and TV towers up on the right after 2.1km and 4.3km. Keep your eyes open for vultures and birds of prey roaming the updraughts along this very breezy ridge. Some 500m after passing below the second TV tower, you pass through a gate: just beyond it, park and follow the 'Mirador de la Sierra del Viento 300m' sign to the hilltop ahead of you. This is the summit of La Capitana, where the views in every direction are limited only by atmospheric conditions. To the south extend the many ranges of the Sierra Norte, to the north the endless plains of Extremadura. If you're lucky you'll have the entire hill to yourself and the only sounds you'll hear will be wind, birds and the bleating of sheep.

Return the way you came.

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