

Córdoba A Natural Destination



Córdoba, in addition to being one of the most important cities in Spain and Andalusia from a tourism perspective, with its 4 World Heritage sites and other tourism offerings, offers citizens and tourists alike a whole diversity of natural landscapes and attractions in the largest municipality in Andalusia, covering 1,255 km².

This is an exceptional space that, thanks to the diversity of its landscapes, offers great opportunities for enjoyment: the proximity of the Guadalquivir River as it passes through the city, countryside to the south, and fertile valleys and nearby mountains to the north, melding with the city.

In Córdoba you'll find nature wherever you go: in the Historic Centre and by the Roman Bridge are the **Sotos de la Albolafia** (1), declared a Natural Monument in 2001 for its extraordinarily rich avian population.

There are also many natural areas particularly apt for visits with children, such as **El Real Jardín Botánico** (3), **Zoo** (2), the 'Children's City' (16); gardens at the main monuments, such as **El Patio de los Naranjos/Patio of the Orange Trees** (5) and **Los Jardines del Alcázar de los Reyes Cristianos/Gardens of the Castle of the Christian Kings** (6); and some 20 parks scattered throughout the city.

Not to be overlooked is the Sierra de Córdoba mountain range, where one will find the periurban park of **Los Villares** (28), just 8 km from Córdoba, with magnificent overlooks; **El Club de Golf Campo de Córdoba**, a public outdoor space with a magnificent 18-hole golf course in the middle of the Sierra Morena mountain range; and special sites in the mountains, including the beautiful ponds and waterfalls at **El Arroyo del Bejarano** and **Los Baños de Popea** (27), **Las Ermitas (Hermitages)**, **Cerro Muriano** (hill), and **El Cerro del Pozo de la Nieve/Snow Well Hill** (26), all ideal sites for hiking...

We propose all these activities: hiking, orienteering in the mountains, active tourism, personal development activities, equestrian and livestock activities, golf, a Cordovan perol (traditional rice dish), a visit to a farm/school, bird watching, a dip at a water park, fishing and many more.



A Natural Destination



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The Guadalquivir River

"The Guadalquivir River has seen the birth and growth of Córdoba in its basin, at the crossroads of the Sierra Morena, its rich valley and fertile countryside. There, its history, culture, art and biodiversity come together in a complex and dynamic system. It is the lung of the city, the backbone of Andalusia.

(Extract from the brochure "The Guadalquivir in Córdoba" published by the City of Córdoba).

The Guadalquivir is, undoubtedly, the undisputed star of Córdoba's Natural Heritage. Following its route, one can see bridges, mills, gardens and parks, unique buildings, natural and historical monuments, museums, overlooks and terraces...

With the river as an axis, one can take 3 nature-filled walks:

Walk 1: start at the **Molino de Martos** (mill) where you'll be able to visit the hydraulic museum and learn about the history of the river and its uses, walk upstream to the gardens of **El Balcon del Guadalquivir** (23), enjoying the flora and fauna. Cross the **Puente del Arenal** (bridge) and admire the sight of Cordoba with the mountains in the background. On the other bank is the **Parque Miraflores** (22) and the Centro de Creación Contemporánea de Andalucía (C3A). Continue by the terraces in the park until reaching the **Roman Bridge**, **La Torre de la Calahorra** (tower) (38), a living museum of Al-Andalus, and observe Los **Sotos de la Albolafia** aviary area.

Walk 2: Los **Sotos de la Albolafia** (1)

Walk 3: From the Puente San Rafael (bridge) you can see the mills: **El Molino de Hierro, or de San Lorenzo; de San Rafael, and de la Alegría** - the latter housing the Palaeobotanical Museum of the **Royal Botanical Garden** (3). Although this area merits another leisurely visit, if you continue the path along the river you will reach the Puent de Andalucía, where you'll find an area for fishing. Follow the channel to the **Molino de Casillas**, of medieval origin, a flour mill that was later a power plant, before finishing this walk at the sculpture dedicated to the "Sage of Andalusia" and aeronautical visionary Abbas Ibn Firnás, whose bridge rises like a bird taking flight, honouring this poet, philosopher, astrologer and alchemist of Cordoba.

The **Guadalquivir River** today is not navigable where it passes through Córdoba, but one can enjoy many aquatic activities organized by the city's multiple active tourism companies.

*Excerpts and suggested walks from the brochure "The Guadalquivir in Córdoba," published by the City of Córdoba.



Sotos de la
Albolafia

The **Sotos de la Albolafia** Natural Monument (1) is located between the Roman and San Rafael bridges. It was declared a Natural Monument in 2001, and is part of the Andalusian Network of Natural Protected Areas (RENPA) for its extraordinary rich population of birds.

It consists of islets whose banks flood with the natural rhythms and fluctuations in the river's water levels. Its vegetation is varied, featuring tamarisks, poplars, ash trees and willows, among which oleander and brambles grow, and, in the wettest areas, cattails, lilies and reeds.

It is also home to a rich variety of fauna, ranging from mammals like the otter to the smallest invertebrates. Its birds, however, with more than 180 species having been catalogued, are what make its diversity superlative. One is stunned and excited to be able to behold, in the middle of the city, large herons, colourful European bee-eaters, diving cormorants, melodious warblers and the spectacular kingfisher.

In the Sotos you can also find traces of the uses to which people have put the waters and energy of the Guadalquivir throughout history. From the Roman Bridge, there are four mills: **San Antonio, En Medio, Pápalo Tierno, or de Téllez; and La Albolafia**, all of them having been declared of Cultural Interest.

Few cities feature a natural monument of this magnitude within their urban perimeters.



Córdoba's
Courtyards

An unparalleled display of beauty and the pride of the people of Cordoba that you will never forget. The offerings related to the courtyards and flowers in Cordoba are rich and varied: from the popular Courtyards Festival, to the monuments embellishing the courtyards, to specific events and parties and traditions centering on flowers, all with the scent of orange blossoms filling the air.

Of special note is **El Palacio de Viana** (39), a majestic monument whose spaces are arranged around twelve magnificent courtyards and a fantastic garden. Different floral species decorate and perfume every corner of the bountiful museum. The last Marquise of Viana, Sofía de Lancaster, managed to maintain the exquisite essence of this 14th-century palace.

The **Córdoba Courtyards Festival** was declared Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity in December 2012, as these spaces represent a unique way of life and of cultural expression. The Festival de los Patios takes place in the first 2 weeks of May in different neighbourhoods around the city, though guided tours of patios can be taken throughout the year. The most important thing if you visit is to be respectful; remember that you are entering the owners' courtyards, personal spaces forming part of their homes, which they kindly open to share this beauty with others.

So that people can enjoy the courtyard experience year round new initiatives have been launched related to them: **new routes and guided tours of the courtyards; flower-related events like Flora**, whose 1st edition was held in 2017 and today is already well established, with internationally-renowned artists, in spaces in spaces constituting Córdoba landmarks, transforming and decorating them with flowers, a long list of celebrations and events related to flowers: **spring's arrival, with "Abre El Azahar" (The Orange Blossom Opens), La Batalla de las Flores (Flower Battle), Mayo Festivo (Festive May) and much more....**

The Royal Botanical Garden, Zoo, Children's City Triangle

To the southwest of Cordoba is an especially appealing area for families, boasting several natural areas of special interest for children: the **Royal Botanical Garden of Córdoba** (3), the **Zoo** (2), the **"Children's City"** (16) and the **Parque Cruz Conde** (15) are not-to-be-missed places for those travelling with children.

The **Córdoba Zoo** was opened in 1968. It is currently a centre for the conservation of species of wild animals, both native to our Mediterranean biogeographical environment and other around the world, as well as an educational facility, not to mention its recreational functions. Most importantly, the Córdoba Zoo is an institution where animal welfare is the highest priority.

The **Royal Botanical Garden** covers some 5.5 hectares, its central area featuring a clearly Andalusian style and different botanical collections of agricultural flora and native flora, flanked to the east by an arboretum in the landscape style. There are two climate-controlled greenhouses for tropical, subtropical and Canarian laurel flora, and two museums (Palaeobotanical and Ethnobotanical), as well as the facilities of Andalusia's Plant Germplasm Bank, containing samples of valuable genetic material of numerous species of Andalusian flora facing potential disappearance.

The **"Children's City"** offers 40,000 m² of space expressly dedicated to offering kids a fun and educational outdoor space.

As for the **Parque Cruz Conde**, the park covers some 140,000 m² and houses groves of different tree species, including some seldom found in Córdoba: feijoas, Russian olives, and Golden rain trees, mixed with Judas trees, black locusts, cypresses, Aleppo pines, date palms, fan palms, elms, coastal she-oaks... It includes an athletic circuit used intensively by hundreds of outdoor exercise enthusiasts.

*Texts taken from the brochure "Córdoba, Our Natural Heritage," published by the City of Córdoba



Córdoba is the Andalusian city with the highest proportion of publicly-owned green spaces, ranking fourth in Spain in this regard. Its parks and gardens offer citizens and tourists alike a whole range of environmental services, ranging from the production of oxygen, to shade, to the filtering of particulate matter, temperature moderation, soil water retention, as well as providing spaces for sports, leisure and socialization.

From the oldest garden in Europe conceived during the al-Andalus era, El **Patio de los naranjos**/ **Patio of orange trees**, (5) to the 2nd oldest in the city, the **Jardines de la Agricultura** (10), to natural spaces built on ancient orchards, such as the gardens of the **Alcázar de los Reyes Cristianos/Castle of the Catholic Kings** (6), and the **Jardines del Palacio de Orive/Gardens of the Palacio de Orive** (7), boasting a jacaranda towering some 20 meters high, the **Jardín de los Poetas/Garden of the Poets** (8), and the historical garden of La **Alameda del Obispo** (9) where one can admire a labyrinth showcasing Baroque Cordovan gardening.

Meanwhile, Los **Jardines del Duque de Rivas** (11), with their orange and date palm trees, Los **Jardines de la Victoria** (12) and Los **Jardines de Valléllano** (14) constitute a kind of spine running through Córdoba.

For exercise, **El Tablero** (17), **El Parque de Elena Fortún** (18), **El Parque Elena Moyano Madre Coraje** (19) and the **Parque de la Asomadilla** (24) which is the second largest in Andalusia, covering 270,000 m², are unbeatable options.

To take a quiet, brisk walk, start in the **Parque Juan Carlos I** (20) near the Rectorate, the park having been developed on the site of a Roman amphitheatre; continue along the **Paseo de Córdoba** (21), where, when spring comes, it is delightful to breathe in the intense scent of the roses planted all along it, before finishing in the **Jardines de Colón/Gardens of Columbus** (13) one of Córdoba's most elegant and stately spaces.

For a photo session with Córdoba as a backdrop, and unforgettable memories, go to the **Parque de Miraflores** (22), **El Balcón del Guadalquivir** (23) or **El Mirador Osario Romano** (overlook) (29).



The **Sierra de Córdoba** is a fascinating part of the Sierra Morena range, covering 30,000ha. With its own unique characteristics, these mountains are emblematic of Cordoba's nature, constituting an exceptional extension of the city into the countryside. For the people of Cordoba, the Sierra is a residential space, a place for spiritual refuge and prayer, and an area for recreation and leisure. Much of it is listed in the Special Plan for the Protection of the Province of Córdoba's Physical Environment as an area of "special recreational interest."

At the foot of the mountains are important townships and heritage elements, such as the Medina Azahara archaeological site, the Monasterio de San Jerónimo, the Castillo de la Albaida (castle), **Cerro de las Ermitas** (Hermitages Hill), of great historical and symbolic value for the people of Cordoba.

An ideal place to hike and to discover places like **El Cerro del Pozo de la Nieve** (Snow Well Hill) (26), **Los Baños de Popea** (ponds) (27) and the **Fuente del Elefante** (fountain). Visitors can also admire the scenery from **El Cerro de las ermitas**, with its viewpoint up at 520m, **El Mirador de las Niñas** (overlook), **El Balcón del Mundo**, and the **ermitas** (hermitages) including that of **Santo Domingo**.

A unique space, where the **Córdoba Golf Course** is located in the middle of the idyllic setting of the Sierra Morena. With panoramic views of great scenic beauty, it covers an area of 70 hectares of pine, cork oak and holm oak forest within a marvellous natural area whose flora and fauna offer visitors sights of great beauty. This magnificent 18-hole, par-72 golf course is unique, wending its way between trees, by streams, valleys, slopes, and a central lake, its greatest allure being the contact with nature that it offers golfers.

The sierra is also a paradisiacal place to enjoy a good perol cordobés in the **Parque de los Villares** (28). Do you know what a perol is? Come join us, and we'll tell you...

