

# Almería, Culture and Traditions



A walk through history



AYUNTAMIENTO  
DE ALMERÍA



Almería  
ciudad



Alcazaba Fortress and La Chanca quarter

# History and culture of the city





Approach to the Alcazaba



Cathedral, Charles V Coat of Arms



Railway Station

**Almería is an open history book for the visitor, a guide through the ages with footprints that have been left on this land over the passing of time. This hospitable and open city is a result of the succession of civilizations, of the mixture of settlers who have succeeded through the centuries.**

Due to its light, its climate and despite its hidden location, it has always been a crossroads in the Mediterranean Basin. Over time this land has flourished and experienced social and economic explosions, in an area that was isolated and economically depressed. Almería has learnt to overcome hard times leaving a trail of cultural expressions, from the richest and most astonishing moments to the most complex and difficult periods.

From the vestiges of ancient civilizations, from the manifestations of the Bronze Age and the most dazzling testimonies of the extensive period and various stages of Muslim domination, to the examples of Renaissance and Baroque art; until we arrive at the modern and contemporary times with the so-called iron architecture, the museums, the religious art and the Civil War Air Raid Shelters, which are a unique example in Europe. The visitor can enjoy a journey through time in Almería, pausing when they prefer at those historical stages

that most call their attention.

All of this is complemented by a rich gastronomy, that accompanies the tourist on his journey through history and time; with facilities to make this easier, such as guided tours that cover all of these different periods in detail and with hospitality.

The city of Almería is located in the south east of the Iberian Peninsula. It is the European city with the most



Civil War Air Raid Shelters

hours of sunlight a year and has over 190,000 inhabitants. This peaceful and welcoming city, full of contrast, boasts 40 km of interesting beaches on which to enjoy the sun and beach or nature tourism, especially on the virgin beaches of Cabo de Gata Natural Park. It has an important commercial and passenger port and a busy airport. In 2005, Almería hosted the XV Mediterranean Games, providing the city with numerous sports facilities and equipment. The city of Almería is developing as an important player within business tourism; bringing together countless attractions for the visitor and offering important monuments, culture, nature, gastronomy, accommodations, golf and leisure; all combining to make it an urban centre of great interest.



Church of San Pedro

# Historical routes

4

The Alcazaba fortress is a great symbol from **Muslim Almería**, the emblematic landmark overlooking the city from up high. From its lofty position, it announces those that arrive by land, sea or air; standing proud and remaining timeless. This is the largest standing fortress built by the Arabs in Spain, with almost one

and a half kilometers of defence walls.

It consists of three walled enclosures; two of which date back to the Muslim period and another, the highest one, which was constructed on the same site as a former watch tower during the Christian period.



Alcazaba Fortress

The situation and settlement of the Almería that we know today, dates back to the 9th century. However, it was not until the 10th century after the victory of Abderramán III over the Mozarab rebels, when they started building the old city at the foothills where the Alcazaba fortress now stands, on the “Al-mariyat Bay-yana” or the watch tower of Almería. The nucleus of the old town consisted of fortress, walls and the main mosque; and below this the walled Medina expanded, which is the quarter known today as La Almedina. This is a splendid manifestation of the passing of time of Muslim origin and Christian development; composed of low, flat roofed houses that contemplate from below, their fortress.

The first compound of the fortress has a large reconstructed garden area and an example of the Muslim water cisterns. In the second, the remains of the private Arab Baths and the wall known as “Mirador o Ventana de la Odalisca” (window of the Odalisque) are conserved. In the official guided tours of the city, this place serves as an encounter of the romantic story between a Christian prisoner and the King’s preferred slave. This enclosure evokes the memory of the palace of King Almotacín and it houses the 10th century Caliph Cisterns, the 16th century Christian arch and the Mudejar hermitage of San Juan, hidden from the passing of the centuries. The third compound is the Christian palace built by the Catholic Monarchs after the conquest of the city in 1489. The Patio de Armas (Parade Ground)



Alcazaba Fortress, Third Compound

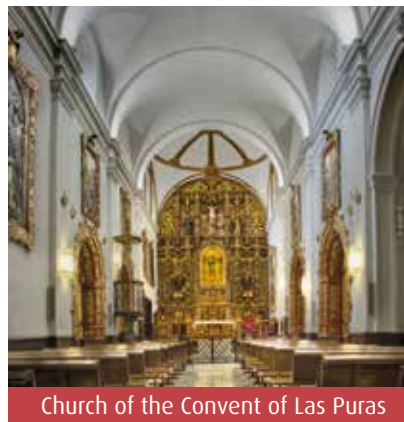
is protected by 3 towers: El Homenaje (Homage), La Noria (Waterwheel) and La Pólvara (Gunpowder).

Other treasures of Muslim Almería open to the visitor are the Jayrán wall, that joins the fortress with San Cristóbal hill and is the limit of the northern part of the old city, and the Centro de Interpretación “Puerta de Almería” near the port. Together with this are the Arab Water Cisterns, situated in the centre of the city next to El Paseo and Calle Real; which as well as being a supreme example of Muslim architecture and engineering, are a modern focus of the Almerian culture. They now house the headquarters of La Peña El Taranto. Also the church of San Juan, the former principal Mosque, which is the jewel of the quarter of La Almedina, ambassador to the fortress above.

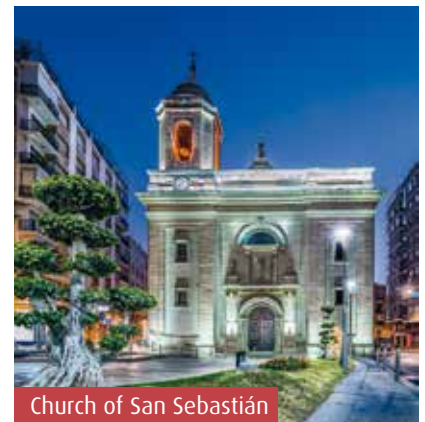
**Christian Almería** allows us to take a tour of the old historical centre of the city, where it is possible to



Church of Santiago



Church of the Convent of Las Puras



Church of San Sebastián





View of the Cathedral Square

enjoy a variety of architectural styles that are a consequence of some Christian settlers, traditionally orientated to popular religious beliefs. This journey becomes especially unique and authentic during Holy Week, a religious celebration that has been acquiring a growing tourist interest in recent years.

Cathedral of Almería, after the previous one was destroyed two years earlier by an earthquake.



Interior of the Cathedral

It is a route passing by the churches of the convents of Las Claras and Las Puras; to the churches of San Pedro and Santiago, right in the historical centre next to Calle Real, the former main street crossing the city; also to the church of San Sebastián situated at the highest part of the Paseo de Almería; or to "La Patrona", church of La Virgen del Mar (the Patron Saint, Our Lady of the Sea), not far from Nicolás Salmerón Park, crowning one of the most beautiful, charming and romantic corners of the city.

This journey leads to the churches of Las Esclavas del Santísimo Sacramento, San Roque and the Hermitage of San Antón; the Convent of La Compañía de María in the Rambla Obispo Orberá, which is found between El Paseo and La Rambla de Almería; and the chapel of the Santa María Magdalena Hospital, which is close to the city's main Park.

The Cathedral square is the highlight of this tour and is also where the visit starts and finishes. The fortified Cathedral was built in 1524 and it became the second

This square was originally designed in the 19th century and it has been remodelled several times since, the last and most recent was at the beginning of this century. Here, we can see the monumental 16th century Renaissance Portal of the Cathedral. It is called a fortified Cathedral due to its double purpose, as a temple and a refuge against Berber pirate attacks, which explains the buttresses of its facade and the towers in every corner. Its doorway exhibits the coat of arms of Charles V and the founding Bishop Diego Fernández de Villalán. It has a rectangular floor plan and late Gothic



Mineral Loading Platform and Marina

structure. In its interior we can find different religious sculptures, as well as extraordinary choir stalls and two organs. The open air cloister is one of the great jewels of the city and it can be considered one of the best examples of the Neoclassical style throughout the Spanish territory.

On the west side is La Puerta de los Perdones (Door of Pardons). On the opposite side there is a tower which forms part of the chapel of El Santo Cristo de la Escucha and outside it has the relief of the “Sun of Portocarre-ro”, emblem of the city. Here, the Cubo street leads to the gardens of the Bendicho square and La Casa de los Puche (the Puche’s house). Facing the Cathedral, in the square of the same name, is the 19th century Bishop’s Palace.

The city boasts the Spanish Civil War Air Raid Shelters, open to the public, which are the biggest in Europe. They are nine metres below the surface, and the visitor can walk along about 1 km below the Paseo de Almería of the 4,5 km designed by the municipal architect Guillermo Langle in 1936. These were built during the Civil War between 1937 and 1938, to protect the population from the bombing that destroyed some buildings in the city. The current shelters recreate, for example, the operating room, with all of the instruments from that time and the store room that was constructed in the same period.

The Mineral Loading Platform is, together with the **Railway Station** and the Central Market, some of the most well preserved examples of the so-called iron architecture that remain in Europe. It was a construction for mineral loading and a train track to the coast, connecting one of the most prosperous industries in the history of the city and the province. Today, it is one of the greatest historical monuments from that era and an architectural landmark. It is known as the ambassador of maritime Almería, linking the Railway Station, the city centre and the coastal area.



Compañía de María Building

Alongside them, a stroll through the old quarters takes the visitor on a route into the Bourgeois **Almería** and

the “**city through the centuries**” by a series of squares, streets, gardens and parks that have come to life in recent years. This is the result of a profound renovation of the city, which has respected the history and traditions and managed to preserve its one thousand and one historical essences.

Leaving the Muslim area, visitors can immerse themselves in the different ages of Almería through a journey from west to east: from Nicolás Salmerón Park, parallel to the port, whose gardens are the first and historic great green lung of the city; to the old Christian Almería, with the Constitution Square (known as the Old Square), where the Town Hall and the Monument to “Los Coloraos” are found. Also along the squares of Bendicho, Careagas and La Administración Vieja, where the building of the former School La Purísima is; or the Campoamor square where the Palace of the Marquises of Cabra is located. Continuing to the heart of the city centre, heading towards the Calle Real, are the squares of San Pedro and Flores close to the Paseo de Almería, which is the artery of the 20th century. This is the former Paseo del Principe, where the Casino was built, today converted into a noble building. San Sebastián square is next to the Puerta de Purchena where the most emblematic civil building of the city is situated: La Casa de las Mariposas (Butterflies House), today housing a branch of the Cajamar bank, which is also a cultural and convention centre. This is the starting point to head down the Paseo de América.

In the area surrounding the Paseo is the Pablo Cazard square, that has the School of Arts building with its mysterious and beautiful cloister, close to Cervantes Theatre with the Circulo Mercantil. Not far away is the redesigned Central Market, which is another testimony of the so-called iron architecture, the Apolo Theatre, the Diputación Provincial Palace (County Council), the Palatial House of Juan Lirola and Celia Viñas College. Slightly further towards the east, El Preventorio building and the old railway and bus station are found. These are now listed and distinguished buildings, which are a testimony from two different periods in the history of transportation.



County Council Building



Nicolás Salmerón Park, Fountain of the Fish



Central Market



# Museums and exhibition halls



Centre of Art Museum Almería

Almería has experienced a huge growth in the variety of its museums in recent years. Some of the historical and emblematic buildings of the city are now dedicated to exhibit the testimony of many of the most important artistic manifestations of the past and present.

The Centre of Art Museum Almería (CAMA), has today become one of the principle centres; hosting art, sculpture and photography exhibitions, nearly all year round. It is located opposite the railway and bus station and next to El Preventorio building.

Not very far away, heading up the Carretera de Ronda, the Archaeological and Historical Museum is found, which has been recently revitalized through new exhibitions and displays.

However, one of the great tourist attractions of Almería is the Casa del Cine (Cinema Museum) located in

the so-called Cortijo Romero. During this flourishing period, actors such as Clint Eastwood or Brigitte Bardot stayed here, as well as John Lennon during the shooting of his film in Almería "How I won the war". His song "Strawberry fields forever" was composed in this building. Today, the Cinema Museum has the biggest historical collection from the period when Almería was the European Hollywood and allows a guided visit of those moments, with quite a few technological resources.

The Museum of the Spanish Guitar "Antonio de Torres," the Andalusian Centre of Photography or the Centre of Documentation from the 2005 Almería Mediterranean Games, which is installed in the University; complete some of the most outstanding examples of the Almerian museum and exhibition space.



Cinema Museum



Constitution Square

# Guided Tours

**The Municipal Tourist Office, located in the Town Hall square, tel: 950 210 538 and 950 270 848, web site: [www.turismodealmeria.org/es/visitas-guiadas](http://www.turismodealmeria.org/es/visitas-guiadas), is the best way to find out further information, register and participate in any of these tours.**

Guided tours have become one of the most demanded tourist resources in the city of Almería. The City Council has launched thirty thematic visits, some dramatized, some seasonal and, in general, all with the aim of promoting the main tourism resources: the history, the traditions and the landmarks of the city.

These visits take you through the different historical periods, such as the Muslim, Christian or Bourgeois Almería. They focus on some of the best tourist attractions, like the churches and Cathedral, cinema, the antiquity of Los Millares and the Civil War Shelters. They lead you to the port, to the gastronomy of the tapas or to

areas within Cabo de Gata like Las Salinas or Rodalquilar (the latter is just outside the municipal boundary). They speak of the mysteries of Almería, its bullfighting tradition, the characters and most emblematic streets, the Central Market or the most important buildings. The tours range from history to architecture, from the characters to the stories, with a focus on specific dates of the year when seasonal tours are organized. The most popular ones are the theatrical visits.



The City's Christmas Tree



Procession of the Three Kings



Torregarcía Hermitage

# Local Traditions

The daily life of Almería is full of festivities and typical traditions in each season of the year. Without a doubt, the highlight is the last week of August when the Feria and Fiestas in honour of Our Lady of the Sea take place, which commemorate the day of the Patron Saint on the last Saturday of August. During these days, the city comes alive with cultural, social, sporting, historical and religious activities; including a "misa rociera" (flamenco mass) and a floral offering to the Virgen del Mar.

The maritime procession of the Virgen del Carmen is another protagonist of a timeless and popular tradition. On July 16th, the image is taken on a parade from the church of San Roque to the port where it is then carried on a fishing boat. This is one of the most exciting and genuine celebrations in the fishing neighbourhood of the city.

On December 26th, Almería celebrates the Día del Pen-

dón (Day of the Banner), which commemorates the conquest of the city by the Catholic Monarchs in 1489. This consists of a civic-religious procession from the Town Hall in the square of the same name to the Cathedral, carrying the banner of the city. It is one of the most significant dates in the Almerian Christmas calendar. Another important date is the celebration of the traditional Romería de Torregarcía, a pilgrimage in a setting close to the city (near El Toyo) where the statue of the Virgin of the Sea appeared in 1502.

Other celebrations not to be missed are: Holy Week (declared a festival of tourist interest in Andalusia) and on May 15th the fiesta for the other Patron Saint of the city, San Indalecio; also the famous Cruces de Mayo (May Holy Cross festivals), the Carnival or the long awaited summer Cultural Festivals.





**Oficina Municipal de Turismo**  
Tel. 950 210 538  
Email: [oficinadeturismo@aytoalmeria.es](mailto:oficinadeturismo@aytoalmeria.es)

[www.turismodealmeria.org](http://www.turismodealmeria.org)

**Dream Escapes.** Urban people and families

**Accommodation.** Much more than just hotels

**Congress and Exhibition City.** Exclusivity in the Mediterranean

**Charms of Cooking.** 190,000 "thankful palates"

**Land of Film.** Unique scenes

**Year round Sun and Beaches.** Spectacle of light and water

**Health, Leisure and Sport.** An oasis of wellness

**Golf Courses.** Walking on the green

**Cruises and Yachting.** Almeria from the sea

