

## introduction

The fortress, alongside the la Hoya stretch of wall and the San Cristobal hill, forms one of the most impressive medieval defence sites in Al-Andalus. Its current morphology is the result of its historical origin and the many alterations it has undergone. The steep hill on which it sits and above all, its high visibility, would have been decisive factors in the choice of its setting, as well as its re-use by the military up until the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

It was declared a Historical-Artistic Monument belonging to National Artistic Treasure in 1933. In 1989, the Department of Culture of the Regional Government of Andalusia who boast the ownership and management of the monument, created the Monumental Ensemble institution of the Alcazaba with the aim of guaranteeing the research, conservation and dissemination of this important legacy.

) Aerial view of the Alcazaba



## itinerary

It is currently divided into three enclosures; the first two are of Islamic origin and the third is a castle built by the Catholic Kings after the Christian conquest of Almería in 1489.

The ensemble can be entered through an open gate in an *albarrana* or *adelantada* tower which is known as the Guard tower (1), subsequently you arrive at the Gate of Justice (2), a gate with a bent entrance defended by two towers, that are currently named the *Torre Redondeada* (round tower) (5) and the *Torre de los Espejos* (mirrors tower) (3). The entrance to the Alcazaba was never direct, they made zigzags to make it difficult and to keep the enemy's entrance always under control.

The origin of the medieval city of Almería dates back to the 9<sup>th</sup> century when it was the port of the city of Bayyana, situated 6km inland. Bayyana was known for its fabric production and for being a distribution centre for slaves, who were traded by sea through its port. Little by little, this port grew until it became al-Mariyya. The new city was walled in the year 955 by the caliph Abd al-Rahman III who awarded it the classification of a medina.

### First enclosure

The first enclosure, which is now turned into a garden, was not originally like that, according to what has been able to be stated based on the archaeological excavations carried out. There was a whole framework of houses and streets, that is to say, it was an inhabited area with indispensable elements for daily life such as those that ensured the water supply.

A hydraulic complex composed of a well, decanting pools, a reservoir and a fountain (4), are a good example of this.

The transformation of this place into a garden with fountains, ponds and tiered irrigation canals was created in the 1940s. At that time, people had a romantic image of Islamic remains and monuments and everything was about emulating the Alhambra and the Generalife gardens.

The journey along the southern stretch or south of the wall, that takes us to the *Torre del Saliente* (eastern tower) (6), provides a view of the city and the bay; but it is the stretch known as the North wall (7) which borders the fortress on its northern side, the best conserved section, in which you can observe the traces of its execution and remains of its plastering. It presents different construction phases, but it is mostly built with the technique of stucco on a stonework base.

The city of al-Mariyya prospered thanks to the trade connections that it maintained with every location in the Mediterranean. It was an important maritime and trading power, known as the "Port of the Mediterranean." During the 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> centuries, the city expanded beyond the original walled area. This growth led to the building of circles of wall that protected the newly emerged neighbourhoods. This is the case of the Jayran wall, named thus because it was this king from the Taifa of Almería who ordered it to be built in the 11<sup>th</sup> century to protect the Masalla neighbourhood.

The first reference to the Alcazaba of Almería, *qasabat al-Mariyya*, is found in a text by Ibn Hayyan. It refers to a fortified enclosure before the caliphal Alcazaba. The Alcazaba was the headquarters of power and in it, the different governments and kings that followed built their palaces throughout the seven centuries that the Islamic period lasted.



) Hydraulic complex

From the North wall, you can observe the Jayrán (8) stretch of wall which runs the length of the la Hoya ravine and climbs the San Cristóbal hill. It is a construction from the 11<sup>th</sup> century, to protect the new suburb that emerged after the economic growth of the city.



) North wall

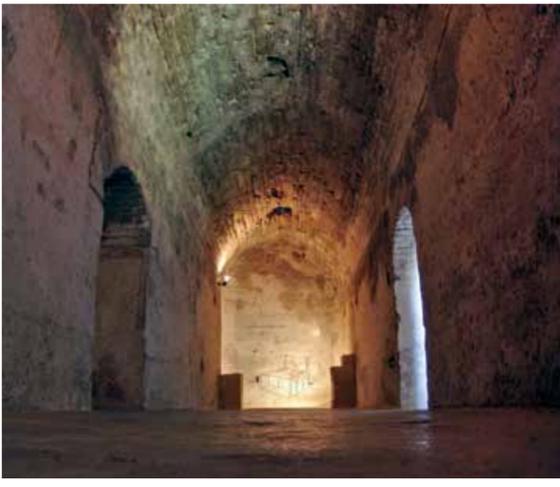


) Jayrán wall and San Cristóbal hill

### Second enclosure

The second enclosure is separated from the first by the Vela wall (10). It can be accessed through its two towers, the North (11) and the South (13). The Campana stronghold (12) is a construction from the Christian period to adapt the Islamic walls to the changes in fortifications due to the use of artillery.

Beyond the Vela wall we find the caliphate reservoir (14), a half-buried water system construction made up of five internal units. It is one of the oldest constructions of the fortress, it has a square floor plan and it is unusual in that its units have an oblique shape regarding their perimeter walls.



) Vela wall

) Caliphate reservoir



) Shrine

Attached to the reservoir is the San Juan shrine (15), built by the Catholic Kings after the Christian conquest, dedicated to San Juan Evangelista for the worshipping of the garrison assigned to the Alcazaba. The building was divided into two floors and when it ceased to have a religious use, it became a military unit. It is currently a room with multiple uses for conferences, courses and educational activities.

designed by him. This whole area does not correspond with what should have existed in this place during the Islamic period.

Beyond the shrine, we find an area with ponds and gardens; at the bottom, the so-called Casa del Alcaide (warden's house) (16), conceived by the conservationist architect F. Prieto Moreno, in the romantic style of the gardens of the first enclosure, also



) Inside of the house

In front of this area, the so-called Arab houses are located (19). They are reconstructed areas on top of the remains of Islamic structures, although part of the paving has been recovered and original skirting decorated with red stucco. They recreate a traditional Islamic house,



) Pond and warden's house



) Housing area. General photo

with an interior patio and annexes distributed around it. Inside, they house original pieces of the Alcazaba.

In the vicinity of these houses, the archaeological remains have been excavated of an area of distribution, dating from the Nazari period (17), along with a patio as a distribution element of the difference rooms.

### The palace

Since its origin, the Alcazaba of Almería was the headquarters of power. This has resulted in a variety of superimposed palatial structures (20). The oldest remains that have been documented correspond to structures from the 9<sup>th</sup> to the 10<sup>th</sup> centuries. During the 11<sup>th</sup> century, the whole area inside the Alcazaba was rebuilt with an extensive garden and rooms at its end. The floors were marble and the walls were decorated with plastered riches. A pond was also built; and around the perimeter of the garden, a series of platforms through which you can ascend



) Troop baths

to a higher level, at the height of the tree canopy.

Inside the palace, the private baths stand out (21). Baths constitute a fundamental element in the life of Muslims, since they fulfil three functions: hygienic,



) Stucco



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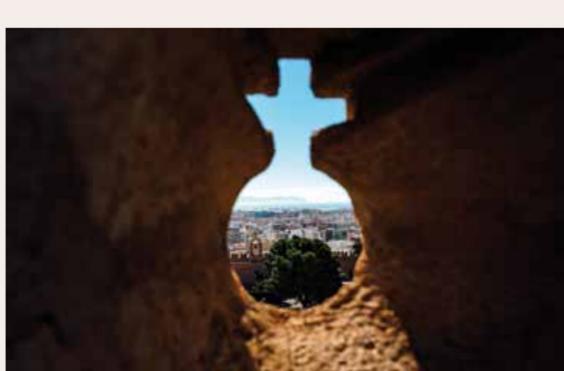


ritual and social. They are made up of several rooms with different temperatures: the cold room, the warm room and the hot room. Outside the main wall of the palace, but inside the palatial area, we find the so-called troop baths (18), built in the 11<sup>th</sup> century, which were still in use until the 16<sup>th</sup> century. In the 12<sup>th</sup> century, the garden was restruc-

tured and a new pavilion was created in the northern part with two floors, which is known as the Torre de la Odalisca (odalisque tower). In the Nazari period, the fortress underwent important alterations. New doors were opened, structures were terraced, and in general, a reorganization of the whole palatial complex took place.



) Odalisque tower



) Detail of embrasure

### Third enclosure

Almería passed into the hands of the Christians in 1489. Upon the structure of the Islamic palace, the Catholic Kings built a new castle, with a triangular base, with three purposes: to solve the defence issues, given the terrible state in which the old fortress was in after the strong earthquake suffered in 1487; to respond to the newly emerged military demands with the development of artillery; and to create an emblematic image, representative of the newly established power. To that end, a new constructive language was employed based on well-carved ashlars, semi-circular towers and small windows in the shape of a "ball and cross" at ground level for the positioning of the pieces of artillery. The so-called Plaza de Armas square stands out (22) and the Torre del Homenaje (tower of homage) (23), which was the residence of the warden.

In this third enclosure, the Torre de la Noria (noria tower) (24) is also found, inside of which there is a waterwheel to lift water and the Torre de la Pólvora (gunpowder tower) (25).



) Tower of homage



- |                                       |                                 |
|---------------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| 1. Main entrance. Guard tower         | 14. Caliphate reservoir         |
| 2. Gate of Justice                    | 15. Shrine                      |
| 3. Mirrors tower                      | 16. Pond and the warden's house |
| 4. Hydraulic complex                  | 17. Housing area                |
| 5. Round tower                        | 18. Troop baths                 |
| 6. Eastern tower                      | 19. Museumised Arab houses      |
| 7. North wall                         | 20. North area of palace        |
| 8. Jayrán wall and San Cristóbal hill | 21. Private baths               |
| 9. Gardens of the first enclosure     | 22. Plaza de Armas square       |
| 10. Esplanade and Vela wall           | 23. Tower of homage             |
| 11. North tower                       | 24. Noria tower                 |
| 12. Campana stronghold                | 25. Gunpowder tower             |
| 13. South tower                       |                                 |

### welcome

For years, the Ministry of Culture of the Regional Government of Andalusia has endeavoured to modernise the Andalusian museums in order to make them centres capable of tackling new cultural and social challenges, with the aim of achieving the best and maximum access of citizens to the collections.

The museums of Andalusia managed by the Ministry of Culture form a network composed of 24 institutions, very different to each other. The Museum of Almería, Monumental Ensemble of the Alcazaba of Almería, Museum of Cádiz, Archaeological Ensemble of Baelo Claudia, Archaeological Museum of Córdoba, Fine Arts Museum of Córdoba, Madinat al-Zahra Archaeological Ensemble, Archaeological and Ethnological Museum of Granada, Casa de los Tiros Museum, Fine Arts Museum of Granada, Museum of Huelva,

Museum of Jaén, Archaeological Museum of Úbeda, Museum of Arts and Popular Traditions of High Guadalquivir, Archaeological Ensemble of Cástulo, Iberian Museum, Museum of Málaga, Archaeological Ensemble of Antequera Dolmens, Archaeological Museum of Seville, Museum of Arts and Popular Traditions of Seville, Fine Arts Museum of Seville, Andalusian Centre of Contemporary Art, Archaeological Ensemble of Carmona and Archaeological Ensemble of Itálica.

At these museums, anyone is welcome who wishes to learn more about our region and our heritage with their resources and the activities that are carried out there. This artistic, archaeological and ethnographic heritage reflects what we were like and how we have come to be what we are now. The institutions, through their exhibitions and activities, show what we long to be in the future.

We want to welcome you to this museum, hoping that you enjoy your visit. We encourage you to visit all the museums in Andalusia and we thank you for the tie that you have created, from now on permanently, with Andalusian heritage.

Ministry of Culture

### visit us

How to get there?

**Public transport**

Line 1.

**Private transport**

Plaza Marín Car Park.

The most direct access to the monumental Ensemble is from the Mediterráneo motorway, at the Puerto exit.

For information about opening hours, group tours and prices, visit [www.museosdeandalucia.es](http://www.museosdeandalucia.es)

**Remember**

For the proper use of these facilities and for the enjoyment of all, it is necessary to comply with the rules established by the centre and to adhere to the instructions of the security staff.



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