

The Alhambra and the Generalife

En Lectura Fácil 1

ANA SÁNCHEZ PEINADO

Illustrations by LUISA TIMMERMANS

THE ALHAMBRA AND THE GENERALIFE

This guide has been written with the help of mentally disabled people with a variety of cognitive abilities, who have cognitively validated its contents.

Proofreading and technical validation

Asociación Lectura Fácil

ELISABET SERRA

Instituto Lectura Fácil

JORGE M. PÉREZ GARCÍA

INMACULADA LLOVET GARCÍA

Cognitive validation

*Asociación en favor de las personas
con discapacidad intelectual de Dos Hermanas, ANIDI,
Mentally Disabled Persons Association, Seville.*

LAURA HINOJOSA GUTIÉRREZ

JUAN FRANCISCO BAREA CASTILLO

LAURA MONGE RIVERO

JOSÉ LUIS LINEROS CHAMORRO

Administrative Assistance

Instituto Lectura Fácil

JOSÉ LUIS CASTAÑO CHAPARRO



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Editorial coordination

Servicio de Investigación y Difusión del Patrimonio

MANUELA REINA DE LA TORRE

MARIANO BOZA PUERTA

Text

ANA SÁNCHEZ PEINADO

English Translation

TREVOR BULTITUDE

Illustrations

LUISA TIMMERMANS

Layout and design

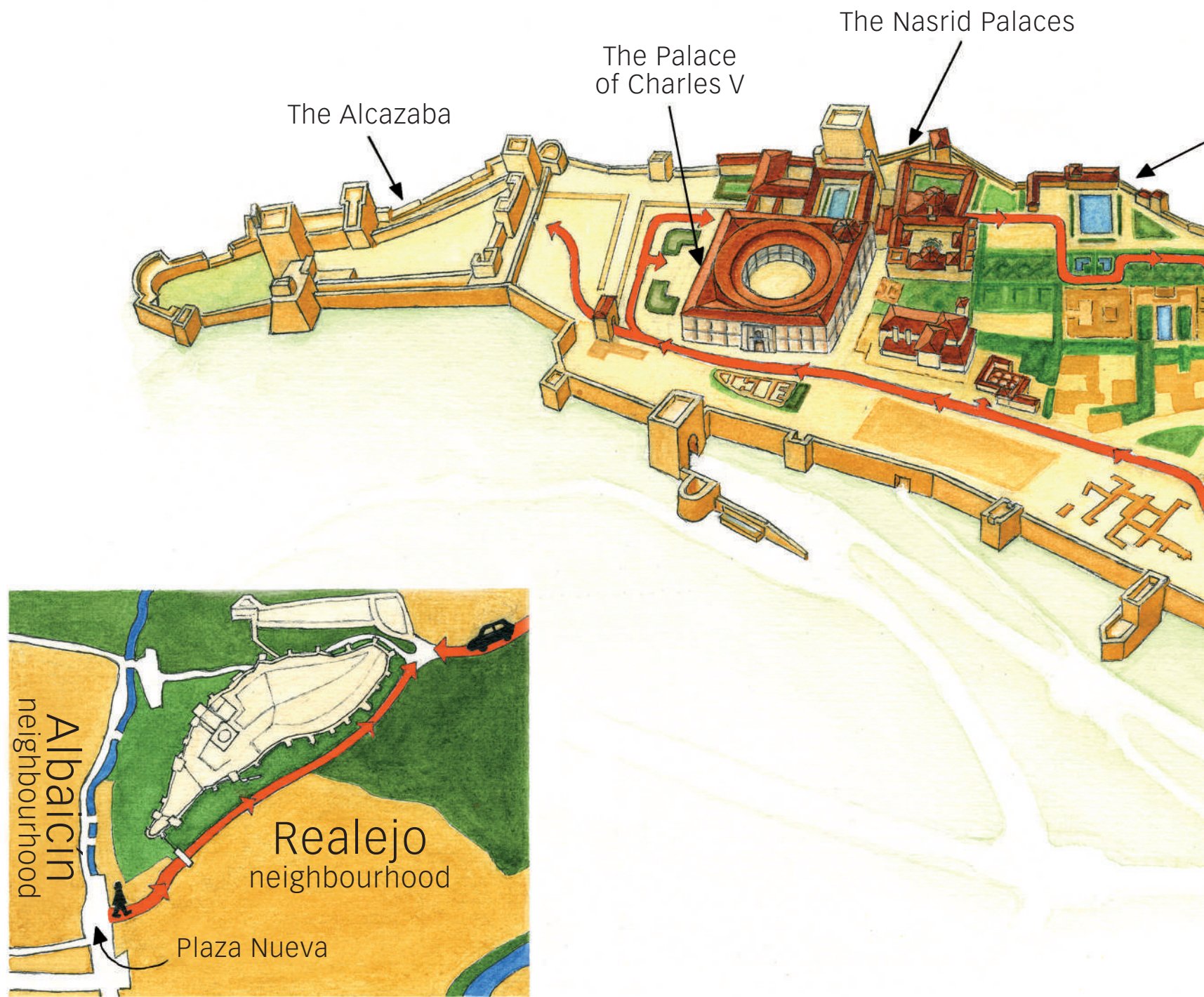
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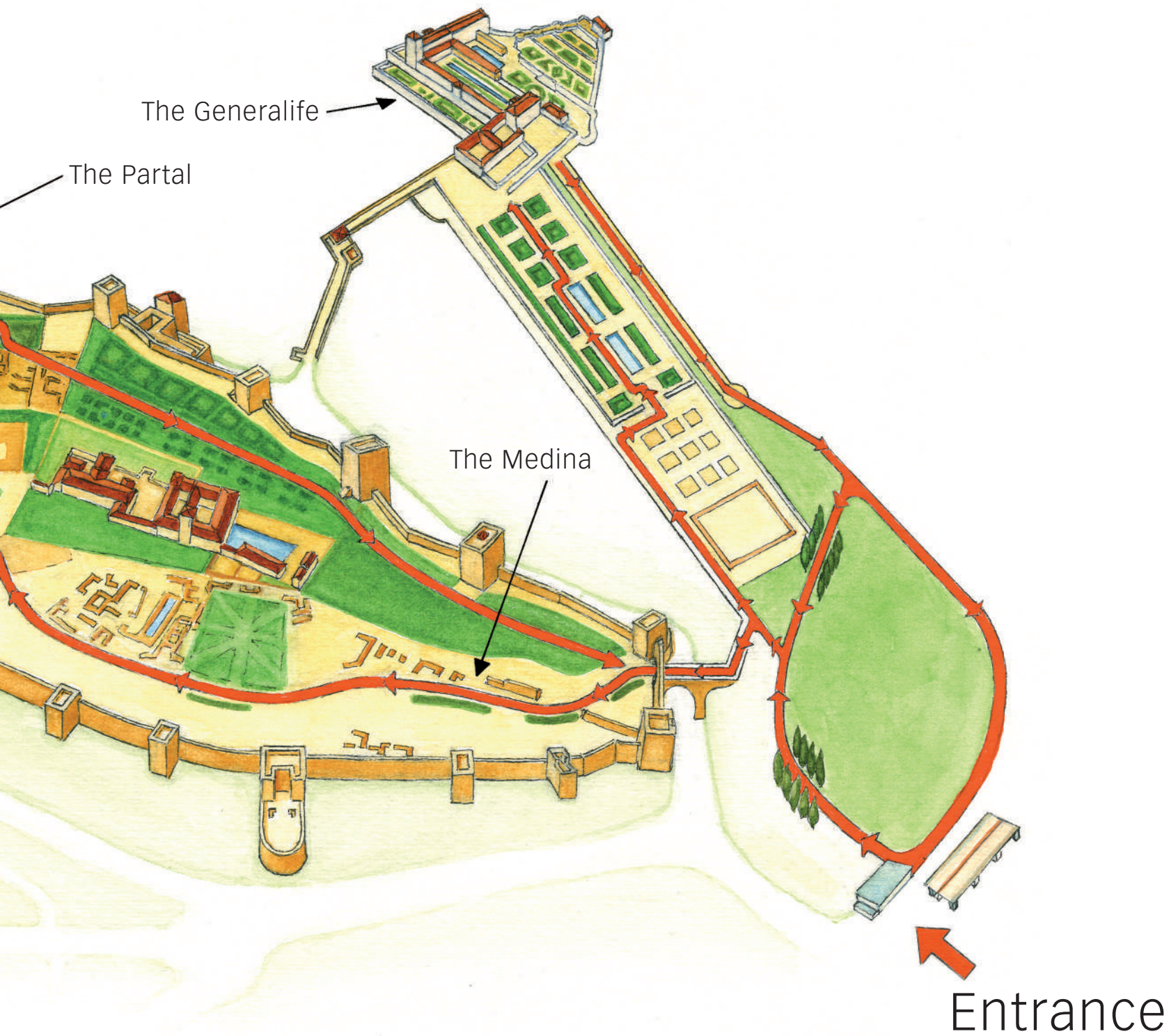
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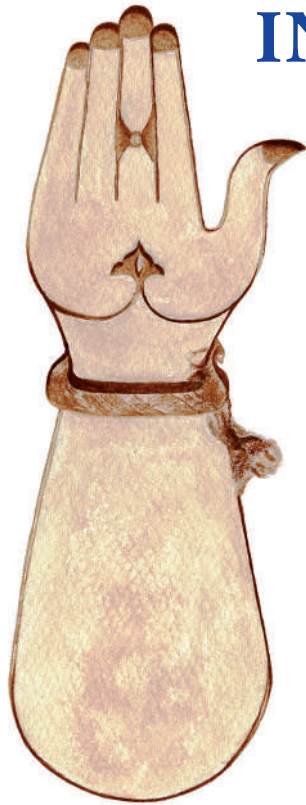
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The Alhambra and the Generalife





INTRODUCTION





The Nasrid Kingdom of Granada

The Nasrid sultans (**Muslim** kings of the Nasrid family) made Granada one of the most beautiful and important cities of its time.

They built the **Alhambra** on top of a hill.

It was from here that they ruled and defended the **Nasrid Kingdom of Granada**, the last Muslim kingdom on the Iberian Peninsula (Spain and Portugal).

Long before this, in the eighth century, Arabs and other Muslim peoples, ancestors of the Nasrids, had crossed the Strait of Gibraltar and invaded the Iberian Peninsula.

They were followers of Islam, the religion of Muhammad.

Those wise and cultured Muslims gave the name al-Andalus to the lands that they had conquered on the Iberian Peninsula.

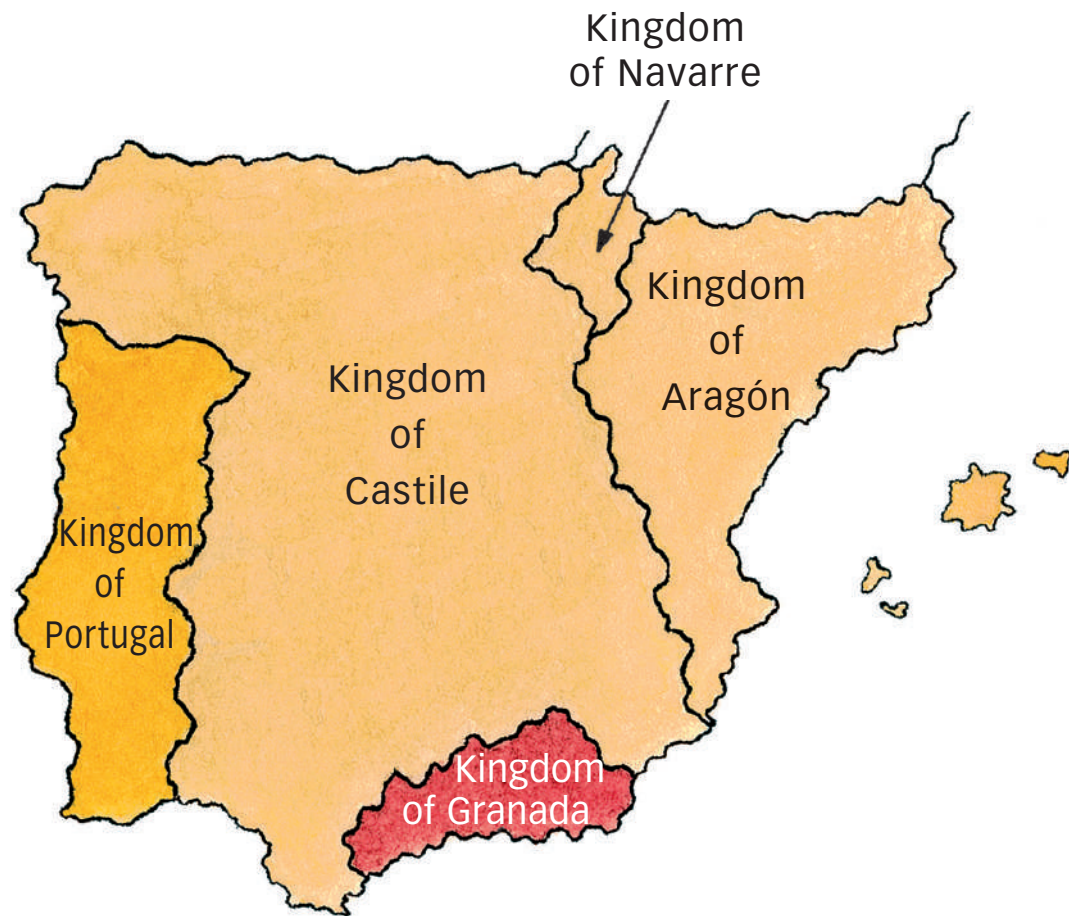
They **seized** power from the **Visigoth** kings, who were Christians, and they organised the life of the entire population according to their laws and customs.

Muslim: Follower of the doctrines of Mohammed.

Seize: To take something with sudden force.

Visigoths: People who governed the Iberian Peninsula after the Roman Empire, in the sixth and seventh centuries.

Iberian Peninsula





Both **Christians** and **Jews** lived on the Iberian Peninsula.

When the new settlers arrived, three different cultures (Christian, Jewish and Muslim) began to live together on these lands.

But several **Christian kingdoms** developed in the north of Spain and their kings advanced south, recovering much of the land.

So, little by little, the Muslims lost almost all of their territory.

Sometimes they made agreements with the Christian kings and at other times they fought against them on the battlefield: Sometimes they were friends and sometimes enemies.

By the beginning of the 13th century, the kings of Castile and Aragon had already reached Andalusia.

They won the battle of Las Navas de Tolosa and conquered a large part of Andalusia.

Only the **Nasrid Kingdom of Granada** remained (the provinces of Málaga, Granada and Almería). It was the last Muslim kingdom on the Iberian Peninsula.

Christians: followers of the doctrines of Jesus Christ.

Jews: followers of the Torah, the book that contains the law and heritage of the Israelite people.



The Nasrid Kingdom lasted another 250 years, until the end of the 15th century.

From the Alhambra, the Nasrid sultans endured the pressure from the Christian kings of Castile and Aragon.

They made deals with their enemies and paid large amounts of money to the Christian kings to leave them alone and not attack their borders.

They took good advantage of the resources of their territory.

The Nasrid Kingdom of Granada was a good place to live from agriculture, industry and from trade with distant lands.

The Nasrid people were experts in irrigation.

They grew fruit trees and also many mulberry trees to feed silkworms.

The silk industry was very important and silk was very appreciated outside the kingdom.

They cherished culture and supported the arts and science.

They surrounded themselves with philosophers, artists and poets and were renowned for their refined customs.

They valued wisdom and liked to think and reason before making a decision.



They also liked to express themselves with elegant words and phrases, and live in beautiful places.

They turned the Alhambra into a paradise.

Many years later, in 1492, the **Christian kings Isabel and Fernando (known as the Catholic Kings) conquered the kingdom of Granada** and took possession of the city.

When they entered the Alhambra they were amazed by its beauty.

The kings of Spain conserved it and used it as a residence when they visited Granada.

The Alhambra

The sultans of Granada had always lived on the hill in the Albaicín neighbourhood, in the upper part of the city.

Their palaces were in the same place that ordinary people lived.

Their houses were in narrow, **winding** streets.

The city was always **crowded** and busy.

Winding: Not straight: Full of twists and turns.

Crowded: Full of people.



Alhamar, the first sultan of the Nasrid **dynasty**, did not feel safe there and decided to move his residence onto the hill on the other side of the Darro River.

He ordered a walled fortress to be built on the hill.

From there, he could control what was happening in the city and defend his kingdom.

He had a **ditch** made to bring water from the Darro River to the hill, because there was no water there.

Thus, the Alhambra began to be built at the beginning of the 13th century.

The descendants of Alhamar extended it, making it safer and more beautiful.

Gradually, the Alhambra became a small city with palaces and walls with towers to defend it.

A lot of people worked in the city, which is why there were so many different buildings.

Dynasty: Kings and princes from the same family.

Ditch: A channel to transport water.



Palaces were built for kings and their families, as well as housing for employees and servants of the court, workshops for artisans, mosques for prayer and public baths.

Building took place in **three distinct areas**:

- The **Alcazaba**: a military zone, where the soldiers lived and worked.
- The **palaces**: where the kings lived with their families and other important members of the royal court.
- The **Medina**: the area where servants, employees, artisans and merchants at the service of the palaces lived and worked.

They also built roads and internal gates to move from one area to another.

The small city was encircled by a 2,000 metre long wall with a number of watchtowers.

The outer gates, to enter or leave the Alhambra, were at the base of some of the towers.

The gates have an unusual design.

The exit cannot be seen from the entrance and you have to go through a curved passageway like a tunnel.



Guards always watched over the exterior gates, and entering through one of them without permission was very difficult.

There were four gates in the wall: The Gate of Justice, The Gate of the Seven Floors, The Gate of the Arrabal and The Gate of Arms.

The **Gate of Justice** is the most important and largest gate in the walls of the Alhambra. The 2 arches of the gate are engraved with a **hand** and a key. The hand represents the 5 Muslim commandments. The key is the symbol of the Nasrid dynasty.

Outside the city walls, on a nearby hill, the sultans built the **Generalife**: a place of rest, with orchards and gardens.

Following the Nasrid period, several changes were made to the Alhambra.

The most important was the Palace of Charles V (The Fifth).

It was built by order of **Charles V (The Fifth)**, the grandson of the Catholic Kings. He liked the Alhambra so much that he wanted to live there.

The **hand** represents the 5 basic rules of Islam:

Belief in one God and in the prophet Muhammad;
prayer; charity; fasting;
and pilgrimage to Mecca.

Charles V (The Fifth):

Charles I (The First) of Spain and Charles V (The Fifth) of Germany.



The Nasrid kings lived in the **Alhambra** for more than 250 years. It was from here that they ruled and defended the kingdom of Granada. Later, it became property of the kings of Spain. Today it is a World Heritage Site.

THE MEDINA





The Medina was a small city within the Alhambra.

There were houses, workshops, a **mosque**, public baths and even a school. Officials, servants, artisans and some important families lived there.

Everything necessary for life in the palaces was produced and sold here: textiles, weapons, jewelry, pots, tableware and many other things.

The Gate of Wine was the most important gate in the interior of the Alhambra. It lead onto the main street, the Calle Real Alta, and the guards closed it at night. Those who came from outside the Alhambra entered through the Gate of the Seven Floors.

The Medina was the most populated and noisy part of the Alhambra. Imagine what life would have been like on the main street, the Calle Real Alta:

There are humble houses and artisan workshops next to the walls of the great palaces.

The street is noisy. People are coming and going. Everybody is on the move.

Some men are transporting all kinds of products – tanned leather, silk threads, sacks of wheat – either on their backs or on the backs of animals.

Mosque: A place of religious activities for Muslims.



Artisans are at work in the doorways of their workshops.
Some soldiers on horseback are crossing the street,
while others are keeping a watchful eye on things from the top of a tower.
A group of women are on their way to the public baths
and some children are running about amongst the people.
From the tower of the mosque, the **muezzin** calls people to prayer,
singing “**Allah** is the victor!” in an astonishing way.

After the Nasrid people, many Christians also lived in the Medina. They used the old buildings and built new ones. The landscape of the city changed.

Along the street of **Calle Real Alta** in the Alhambra you will find:

- **Archaeological remains** of **tanneries**, kilns, **silos**, dungeons, workshops, public baths, houses and palaces.
- The **bath of the mosque** had a steam room. It was very important for Muslims: The **Qur'an** requires washing before prayer, to cleanse the body and the soul. That is why some public baths were next to mosques.

Muezzin: Muslim responsible for calling Muslims to prayer.

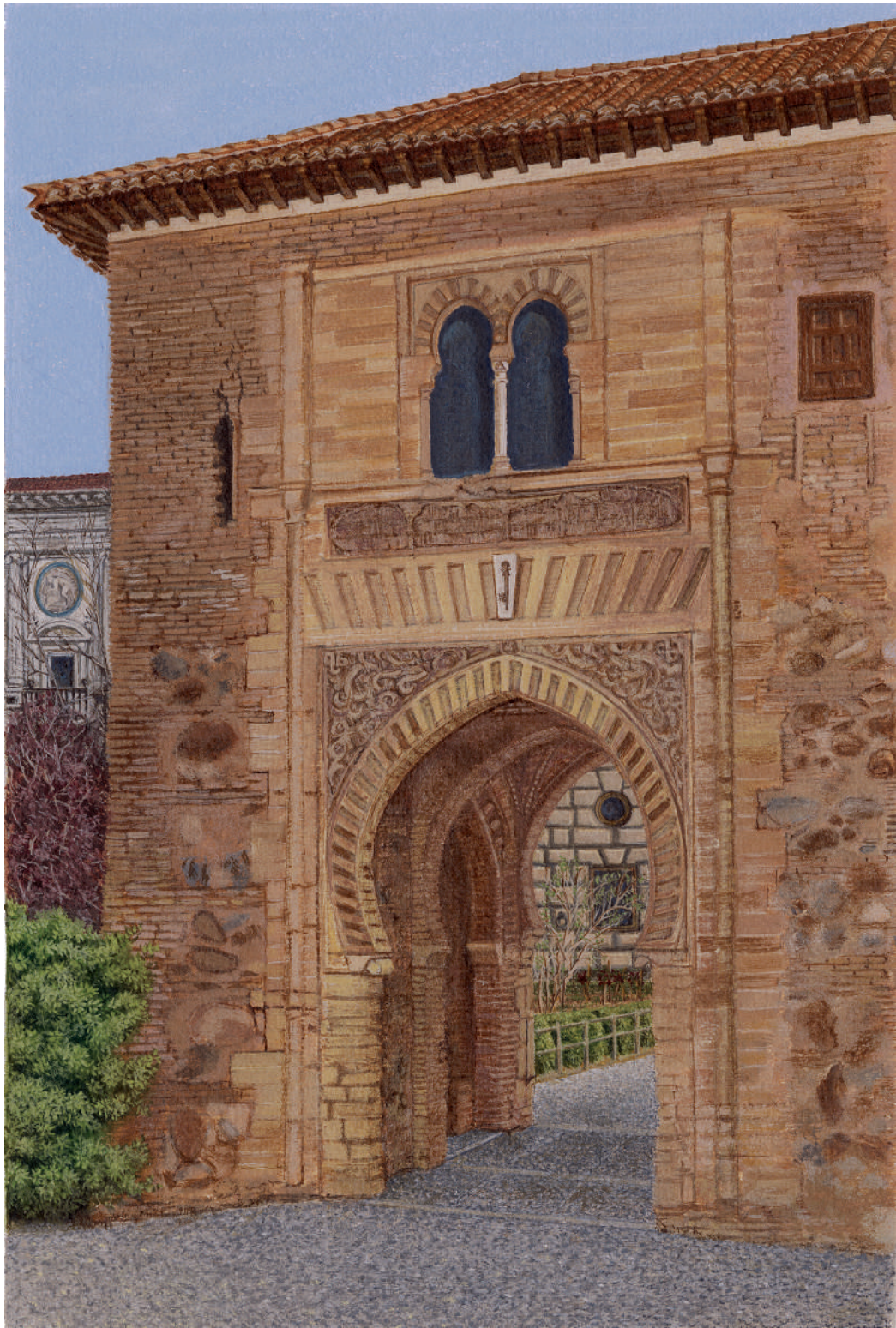
Allah: The name of God for Muslims.

Archaeological remains: Old ruins.

Tanneries: Workshops where animal skins are tanned (prepared for another use).

Silos: Dry, underground places where wheat and other cereals are stored.

Qur'an: The Muslim holy book.



The Gate of Wine



The baths were public and served as a meeting place.
Men and women used the toilets separately

- The **Saint Mary Church of the Alhambra** was originally a mosque. The Christians converted it into a church. Later, at the end of the 16th century, they demolished it and built a new church. The image of the Virgin of the Alhambra is very popular. It is taken on the Holy Week procession every year.
- The **Gate of Wine** connects the Calle Real Alta to the Plaza de los **Aljibes** and the Alcazaba.

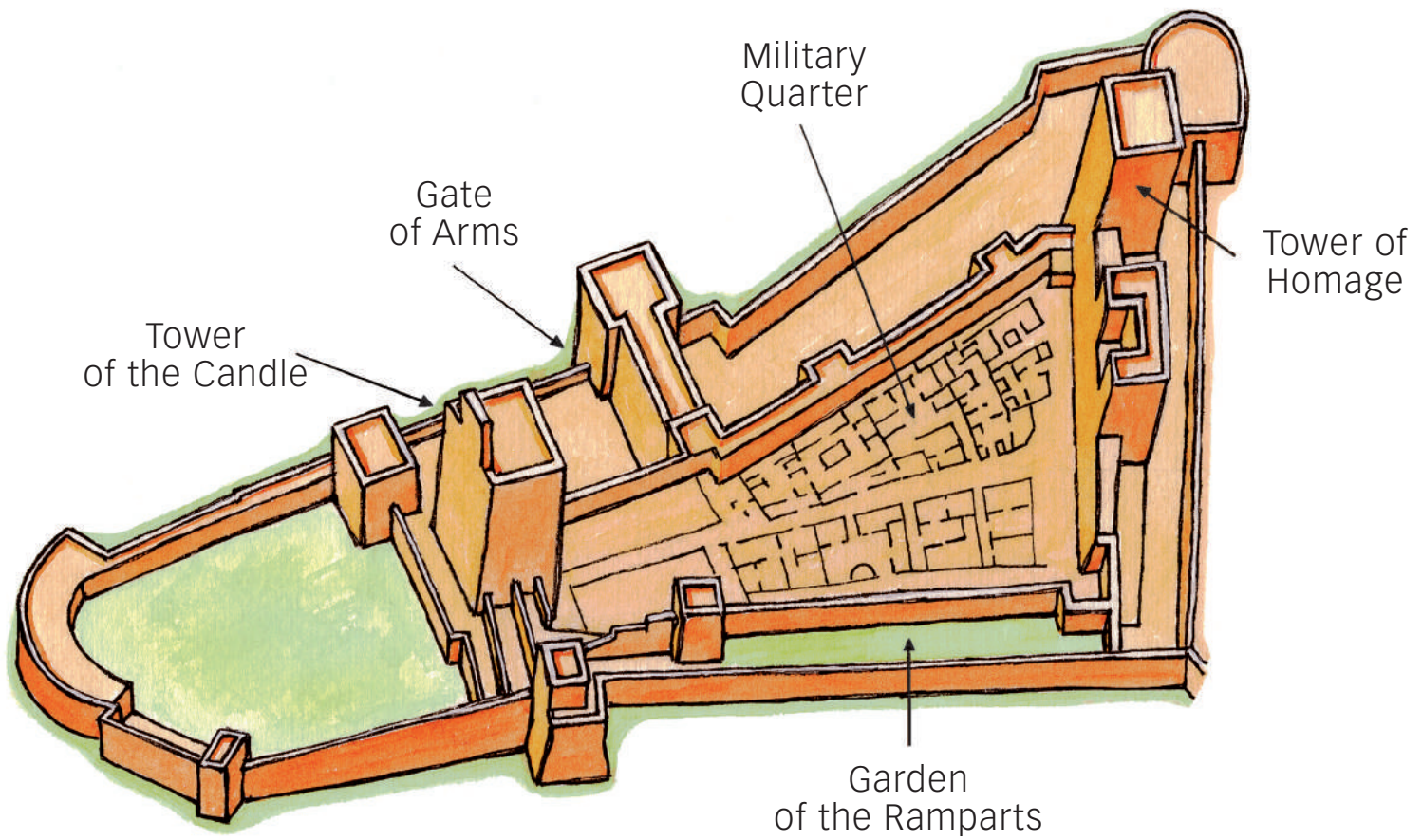
Aljibes: Large water tanks.

The **Medina** was a small city within the walls of the Alhambra. Along the main street, the Calle Real, you can find the remains of the Nasrid city and later constructions.

THE ALCAZABA: THE FORTRESS



The Alcazaba





The Alcazaba is the military zone, the fortress of the Alhambra.
It is protected by high walls and tall towers.

From here, you can see the city of Granada and the farmlands of La Vega,
which is why Alhamar, the first Nasrid sultan,
had the Alhambra built here. He repaired the old, red stone castle
that stood on the site and made it his residence.
People called it “al-Hamra”, the Red Castle.

The Alcazaba is ready to defend the palaces and the city of the sultans.
It has double walls, strong, high towers,
a **moat**, a street and a **military** district.

The soldiers watched from the towers
and the **ramparts**. When they saw danger,
they warned the guards in the other towers
and they all prepared to defend the Alhambra.

The Christians made defensive **bastions** and
covered the hill of the Alhambra with forests.

Today, the fortress’ towers offer splendid
views over Granada.

Moat: A deep hole dug around
a castle (and often filled with
water) to make it more difficult
to attack.

Military: Belonging to the army.

Ramparts: The wall around
a castle.

Bastions: Parts of a fortress wall
that stick out, generally on the
corners, to protect the walls.



The **Tower of Homage** is the most important tower in the Alcazaba. The gate in this tower is the entrance to the fortress.

The Nasrids had many castles and watchtowers distributed throughout their territory.

When there was danger in one place, the soldiers made smoke signals or luminous signs with mirrors to let nearby towers know.

The soldiers in the Tower of Homage could see the towers and fortresses distributed across La Vega farmland and the mountains of Granada.

The **military zone** is enclosed by walls in the centre of the Alcazaba.

A part of the sultan's army always lived inside the Alcazaba, and was on permanent guard.

The labyrinth of small walls in this area is all that remains of the buildings of those guards of the Alcazaba.

Archaeologists have discovered the remains of houses, storerooms, kilns, **dungeons** and even a steam bath.

Dungeons: Dark, underground rooms where prisoners were kept



Wall walk, Gate of Arms and Tower of the Candle in the background



The dungeons are dug into the ground
and a rope ladder was used to enter them.

The houses are along the right side of the central street.
The most important house has a **pond** in its central courtyard.

The **Gate of Arms** is in a tower with access to a roof terrace.

Below, a path leads to the Gate.

People from the city came along this path
to resolve their affairs in the sultan's court.

Before entering, they handed their weapons to the guards at the gate.

They could not enter if they were armed.

Then, they had to walk along a street,
between high walls while soldiers controlled
their every move from the ramparts.

From the tower you can see
the Albaicín neighbourhood:
the church towers, the narrow streets,
the gardens of the typical **Carmen houses**,
the city wall...

Pond: An area holding water
for irrigation.

Carmen houses: Typical houses
with an orchard and a garden,
which Christians began to build
in the seventeenth century.



The **Tower of the Candle** is in a unique place in the Alcazaba. This watchtower stands out above the city and seems **unassailable**.

The tower is several floors high and houses storerooms, accommodation for the guards and a dungeon in the basement. Soldiers were able to control a wide area from the watchtower's **arrow slits** and **battlements**.

When the Christians conquered Granada, they put a bell on top of the tower. The ringing of the bell has guided the rhythms of everyday life of the people of Grenada for a long time. Today, the bell on the Tower of the Candle still marks the hours and it is also rung repeatedly on special occasions.

From the tower, there are views in all directions: The Sierra Nevada mountains, the cathedral, the old neighbourhoods, like Albaicín or Sacromonte, the modern ones, and the city of the Alhambra.

The **Garden of the Ramparts** was a moat in the Nasrid era.

Unassailable: Very difficult to attack or conquer.

Arrow slits: long, narrow windows in a castle wall to shoot from. The slits were narrow on the outside and wide on the inside so that soldiers could shoot in all directions but were protected from projectiles fired at them.

Battlements: a wall along the top of the castle's defence with spaces that soldiers can shoot through.



At the beginning of the 17th century, when the Alhambra was controlled by Christians, the moat was transformed into a garden.

Today, this old moat is a place of rest, an **open garden** and a viewpoint overlooking Granada.

Open garden: A garden without walls.

The **Alcazaba** is the fortress of the Alhambra. The palaces and the city of the Alhambra were defended from here. Nowadays, it is a viewpoint overlooking Granada.



The Court of the Myrtles



There were other important rooms on the south side of the courtyard and there are four smaller houses on the sides.

It is still not known for certain who lived in these houses – perhaps it was the sultan’s wives or the heir princes.

There were exclusive places for women within the palaces.

When guests arrived who were not family members, they would be attended to by men and the women would retire to their rooms on the upper floor.

They could look through the latticed windows to see what was happening but nobody could see them.

There was always water inside Nasrid palaces. It was a most valuable asset. The water in the pool In the Court of the Myrtles is calm and still, and reflects everything, like a mirror.

The entrance to the sultan’s house is through a large wooden door and an arch with **muqarnas**. The first room of the house is **The Room of the Ship** and was the waiting room for the Throne Room.

The small holes in the wall at the entrance to the room were for jugs of water for visitors.

Muqarnas: Plaster ornaments which cover arches and roofs.



Muqarnas



Almost everything is decorated: the walls, the arches and the roof.
This is clearly the house of a very important person.

This room also served as a living room, dining room and bedroom.
Muslim houses did not have many rooms.

The same room was used for working, eating,
receiving visitors and for sleeping.

The sultan's house was very comfortable: It had a bathroom,
a prayer room, for daily prayers, and steam baths to relax in.

The smooth walls were covered with **tapestries** and there were brightly
coloured carpets on the floor. Muslims sat on cushions on the floor
and had low tables. They rested on mattresses on low wooden **benches**.
In winter, they used charcoal braziers to keep warm.

The **Throne Room** is the main hall of the palace.
Those who entered it were impressed,
receiving the covert message:

The Sultan is the highest authority
and Allah protects him.

The room is large and square,
with a spacious wooden domed roof.

Tapestries: Large woven cloths
of silk or wool hung on walls.

Benches: Low platforms,
close to the ground.



In the dome, thousands of colored pieces form wheels of stars. They represent paradise, where Allah lives and where good Muslims go after death.

This is the room where the sultan received **ambassadors** and important people and celebrated on festive occasions.

There are nine small **alcove rooms** in the walls of the room. The sultan's throne was in the central alcove, facing the entrance, and the others were for guests.

The entire room is decorated, from the floor to the roof dome: There are geometric figures, representations of vegetation, and Arabic **words of praise** to God and the sultan throughout the room.

Ceramic tiles, plasterwork on the walls and the wooden elements of the dome adorned the Throne Room in bright colors, like a luxurious dress.

The lattice windows filter the light and soften it, so that the room is in half-light.

Ambassadors: People that represent a country.

Alcove rooms: Spaces where people can stay to rest.

Words of praise: Words of appreciation and admiration.



Imagine the mysterious, intimate and refined atmosphere of the half-lit room where the sultan received visitors, sitting on his throne, under the dome of Allah's paradise. Everybody immediately understood the hidden message of the Throne Room.

The Palace of the Lions

The Palace of the Lions is the most famous palace in the Alhambra. Sultan Mohammed V (the Fifth) ordered his architects and craftsmen to create a beautiful and refined environment for him and his family. They did an extraordinary job.

Here, too, the rooms are arranged around the courtyard. But this courtyard is surrounded by a portico and there is a fountain in the centre, the Fountain of the Lions.

The main rooms of the palace are on the ground floor. There is one on each side of the courtyard. It was in these rooms that the sultan and his family celebrated festivities and entertained their guests with music and poetry.

The Hall of Muqarnas and the Hall of Kings could be opened to the courtyard without doors when the weather was fine.



The Court of the Lions



On the other sides of the courtyard there are two independent houses, the Hall of the Abencerrages and the Hall of the Two Sisters. These homes have an upper floor with everything necessary for daily life, including alcove rooms and bathrooms.

The **Hall of Muqarnas** was the entrance hall to the palace.

Imagine that the sultan has invited you to a party and you are in this hall.

This is what it would be like:

You are in a long hall.

The ceiling is a dome with muqarnas painted in bright colors.

The lower parts of the walls are covered with tiles.

The rest of the walls feature coloured plasterwork and silk tapestries.

There are carpets on the floor.

Light enters from the courtyard through three large arches with muqarnas, which are the entrance to the courtyard.

But heavy curtains hang from the arches, leaving the hall in shade. What could be on the other side?

The **Court of the Lions** is a courtyard with a portico all around it. Two parts extend into the courtyard.

The portico is supported by 124 thin Nasrid columns with decoration like lace. It looks like a marble forest.





Water flows from the **Fountain of the Lions**.

It comes out through the mouths of the twelve lions and runs smoothly down marble channels. The water flows continuously from the interior of the rooms to the fountain, like in the **Garden of Paradise**.

The lions are in a circle and look outwards to all points of the courtyard. Their ears are raised, they are vigilant, like guardians, under the orders of the sultan. Mohamed V (the Fifth) had the fountain decorated with twelve lions to show his strength and power.

Written on the fountain you can read:

These are the lions of war and only their respect
for the **Emir** controls their fury.

The poet Ibn Zamrak, prime minister of Mohammed V (the Fifth), wrote a poem to praise his lord and the beauties of the palace. It is engraved on the edge of the fountain:

Are there not in this garden wonders
that God has made incomparable in their beauty?

The **Hall of the Abencerrajes** is the main hall of a house.

Garden of Paradise: For Muslims, paradise, after death, is a beautiful garden with 4 rivers.

Emir: The sultan.

Abencerrajes: A noble family from the Alhambra. The Hall had a different name in the Nasrid era.



On the entrance steps, two hidden doors lead to the upper floor and other rooms of the house.

The hall has a fountain in the centre and two rooms on opposite sides.

The domed roof is very high, with muqarnas forming a huge 8-pointed star.

Light enters from above, through the latticework on the sides of the star, lighting the dome, which seems to float in the air.

The water from the fountain goes down a channel to the courtyard.

The starry dome is reflected in the water.

This is a room for rest and pleasure of the senses.

Messages in Arabic are repeated along the walls:

“Only Allah is victorious”, “Blessings”, “Joy”.

The most important room in the palace is the **Hall of the Kings**.

This is where the sultan held banquets and met his most trusted acquaintances.

The hall is long but it is divided into smaller parts, with varying degrees of light

and adorned with arches and small domes with muqarnas.





Three main alcoves open onto the Court of the Lions.

They have some paintings on their ceilings which are very different from Nasrid decoration.

In these paintings, Muslims and Christians appear together.

Mohamed V (the Fifth) had a good relationship with King Pedro I (the First).

In the central alcove the painting features kings.

This was the Sultan's alcove, where he sat with his guests.

The **Hall of the Two Sisters** belongs to the other house in the Palace of the Lions.

This house has three rooms on the ground floor: the Hall of the Two Sisters, the Hall of the Aljimeces and the Lindaraja viewing point.

The Two Sisters are two large marble slabs on the sides of a fountain.

Here too, the water comes out of the fountain inside the hall and is channeled to the Fountain of the Lions.

The spectacular roof dome represents the **firmament** and seems deep and **infinite**.

The firmament: The sky full of stars and planets.

Infinite: Without end.



The dome is shaped like an 8-sided pyramid and looks like a deep tunnel. The coloured muqarnas repeat shapes to form stars inside each other, getting smaller and smaller. More than 5,000 small **cells** fill the dome from the centre down the sides.

Sunlight lights the dome during the day. Lights and shadows move over the muqarnas, making the dome seem deeper and more mysterious. It looks like stars moving across the sky.

Above the tiles on the lower part of the wall, a written poem runs around the room:

How much delight for the eyes!
The noble one renews his desires here.

The **Lindaraja viewing point** is the most beautiful place in the house. It is like a little box full of jewels, and has a stained glass window in the ceiling. Here, the Nasrid craftsmen created some of the most beautiful and complicated motifs of the Alhambra.

Sitting on the floor of the viewing point, the sultan could contemplate the landscape with the Albaicín neighbourhood in the background, and a garden under the windows.

Cells: Small holes or cavities in a surface.



Later, those views were blocked by some rooms that were built for Emperor Charles V (the Fifth). The viewpoint of Lindaraja must have been the sultan's favorite place to think and relax.

A corridor between balconies leads from the Hall of the Two Sisters to the **rooms of the Emperor Charles V (the Fifth)**. On one side, you can see the Comares baths, and on the other, the Lindaraja courtyard.

The office of Charles V (the Fifth) has a large fireplace with the emperor's shield. How different it is to the other halls of the Alhambra!

The baths

Yusuf I (the First) made the baths for his Comares Palace. Each palace in the Alhambra had its own **hammam**.

The hammam of the Comares Palace has a rest room, a cold room, a warm room and a hot room. It also had a stove, a woodshed, and a water boiler. Light enters the baths through star-shaped **skylights**.

Hammam: Steam bath.

Skylights: Holes in the roof.



The baths had an ingenious heating system:
Hot air circulated through clay pipes
which passed under the marble floor and warmed it.
Water was poured into a canal sunk into the floor
so that steam filled the room.
It was the perfect sauna.

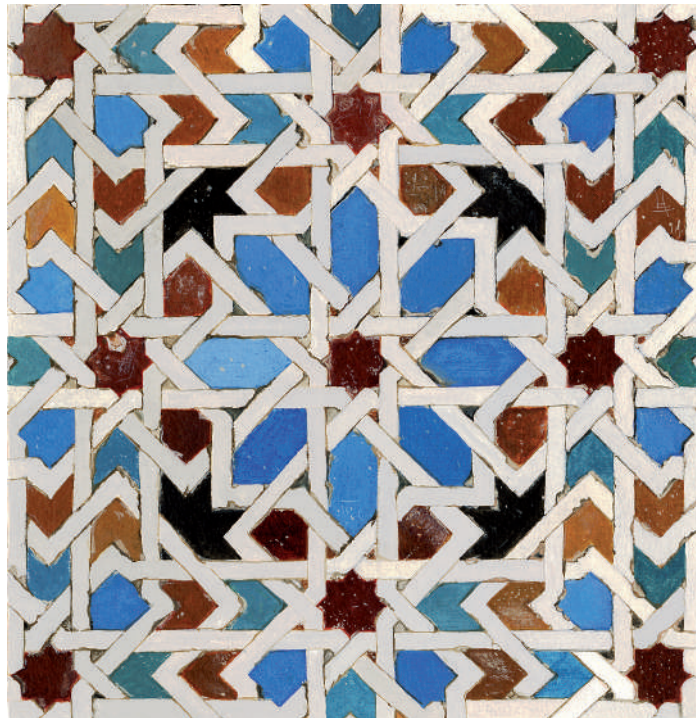
The warm room, where they took steam baths,
is the largest of the rooms.
After the bath, they relaxed in the rest room.

The bath's servants would fetch buckets of hot and cold water from basins.

The **Nasrid Palaces** were the residences
of the sultans of the Alhambra.

The three most important palaces are: the Mexuar Palace,
the Comares Palace and the Palace of the Lions.

THE PARTIAL AND THE PROMENADE OF THE TOWERS





The Emperor Charles V (the Fifth) visited Granada with his wife Isabella of Portugal during their honeymoon in the year 1526, almost 500 years ago.

They stayed at the Alhambra and were impressed by its beauty. Charles V (the Fifth) decided to build a palace inside the Alhambra, for when he visited Granada.

He was the most powerful king in the world, ruling over extensive territories in Europe and America. He had inherited them from his maternal grandparents, the Catholic Monarchs, and from his paternal grandparents, Maximilian of Austria and Mary of Burgundy.

The architect Pedro Machuca was responsible for the project of the **Renaissance**-style palace. This style of building, modelled on those of **classical antiquity** in Greece and ancient Rome, was fashionable in Europe.

The Greeks and the Romans had built big and beautiful buildings. They had applied mathematical rules to make their buildings safe and beautiful.

Renaissance: An artistic style from the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. It comes from the word reborn: to be born again.

Classical antiquity: A period referring to ancient Greek and Roman culture. Classical art is Greek and Roman art from that time.



Renaissance architects used rules and elements from the art of classical antiquity to build new buildings. Charles V (the Fifth) admired the Renaissance style.

Machuca designed the grand stone palace to be strong and long-lasting: a palace for a powerful man.

He designed a harmonious and beautiful building. It is very original: square on the outside and round on the inside.

The palace has two similar floors. On the ground floor, stone blocks protrude from the wall. The well-aligned windows and doors are decorated with **pediments**, columns and **garlands** of flowers.

On the **main façade** there is a large door between 2 smaller doors.

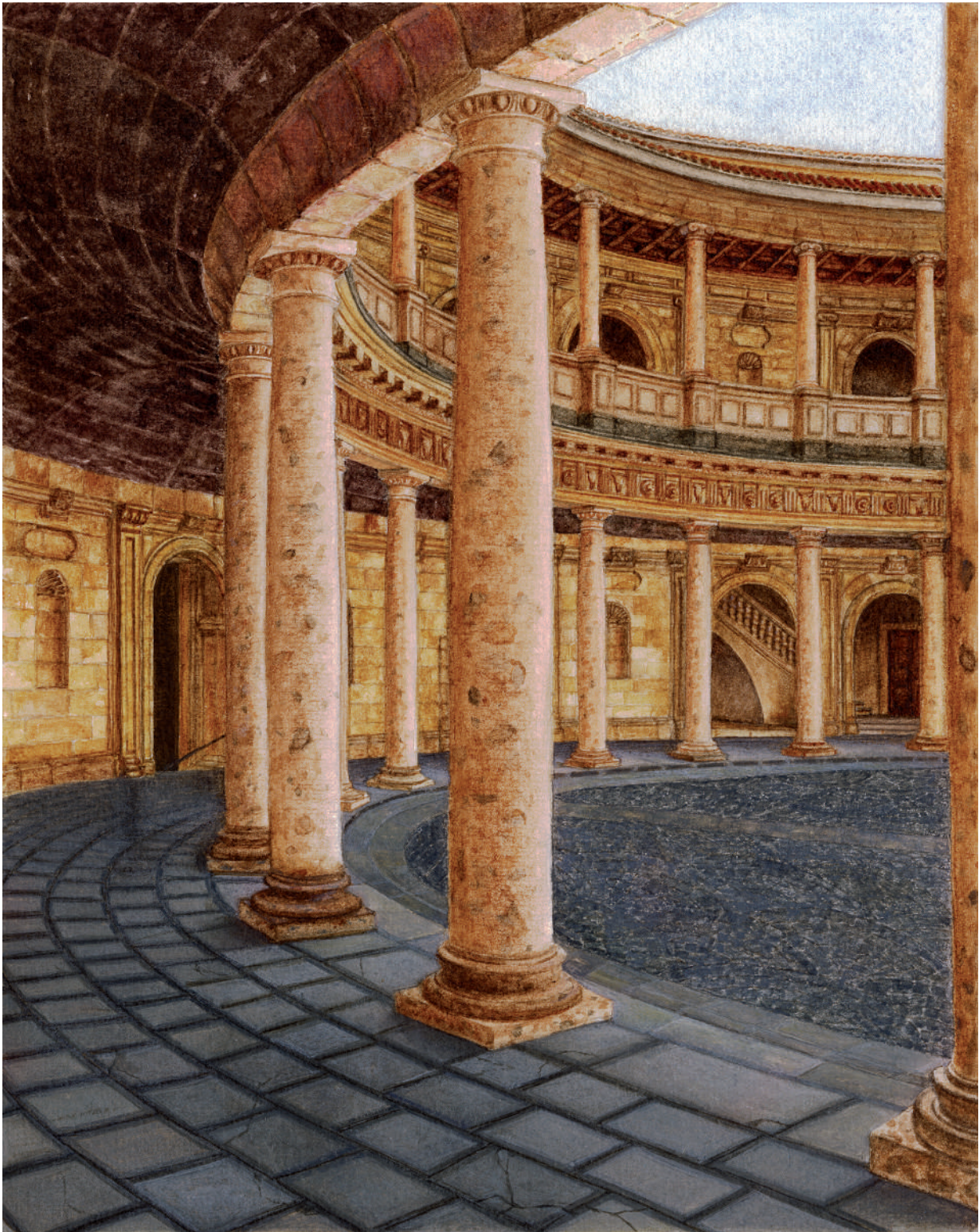
It looks like a Roman triumphal arch.

Beside the doors there are four reliefs engraved in marble.

They tell a story and make a wish.

Pediments: Triangular or curved architectural element over a door or a window.

Garlands: Strips of flowers.



The courtyard of the Palace of Charles V (the Fifth)



Two of the reliefs represent the historical **Battle of Pavia**. Charles V (the Fifth) had enemies, and he had to fight to maintain his power in their territories.

The other two reliefs have a message:

The desire of the Emperor is universal peace.

Laurel wreaths, angels, and weapons on the ground represent peace.

The inner **courtyard** is circular and yet it is inside a square building. The two basic geometric shapes of the circle and the square were perfect for renaissance architects.

The courtyard has 2 floors and columns made from a conglomerate rock formed by smaller stones.

A Greek-style **frieze** runs around the ground floor above the columns.

The courtyard is large and simple. The columns of the two floors are aligned in a circle. Everything combines harmoniously and is balanced.

Battle of Pavia: A battle between Charles V (the Fifth) and Francis I (the First) of France, in Pavia (Italy).

Frieze: A wide, smooth or decorated part of a wall along the top of columns.



The palace took a long time to build
and the Emperor never lived in it.

Now, the palace houses the Museum of the Alhambra
and the Museum of Fine Arts of Granada.

In the sixteenth century, Charles V (the Fifth) ordered a palace to be built inside the Alhambra. The architect Pedro Machuca designed this palace in Renaissance style. The Museum of the Alhambra and the Museum of Fine Arts are now in this palace.



THE GENERALIFE



The Generalife was the sultan's country house. It was a palace with gardens and orchards, a place where the sultan could come to rest and to get away from his worries.

The Generalife is outside the walls of the Alhambra. It had extensive terrain. In addition to the palace and gardens, it had orchards and pastures for sheep.

The Nasrids had brought the water from the Darro River to these dry hills and filled them with gardens.

They used wells, water tanks, irrigation channels, pools, waterwheels, and **stop gates**, to obtain the water.

The water of the Royal Canal irrigates the orchards and gardens of the Generalife before it flows across an **aqueduct** and enters the Alhambra.

From 1492, the Generalife belonged to an important family of Christian nobles. Currently, the Council of the Alhambra and the Generalife is responsible for its conservation.

Stop gates: Gates in an irrigation system which can be opened or closed to distribute water around the system.

Aqueduct: A construction to channel water across a valley.



The **New Gardens** are at the entrance.

There is an outdoor theatre which hosts

The International Festival of Music and Dance of Granada.

From the theatre, there is a beautiful panoramic view of the Alhambra and the Nasrid gardens with Granada in the background.

The **gardens** of the Generalife supplied the food for the sultan's kitchen. The farmers cultivated all kinds of vegetables, fruit trees and aromatic plants: spinach, artichokes, watermelons, melons, pomegranates, mulberries, peach trees, lemon trees, almonds, etc.

Muslim farmers knew how to work the land.

Nobody did it as well or as carefully as they did.

They were also experts in irrigation.

In the Christian era, the Moriscos, who were Muslims who had converted to Christianity, continued working at the Generalife.

They taught their methods to other gardeners.

Today, the gardeners of the Alhambra and the Generalife continue that tradition.

The entrance to the **Generalife Palace** is a simple gate.

There is a key, a symbol of the dynasty, above the gate.



The Court of the Main Canal



The rooms of the palace are around a courtyard,
the **Court of the Main Canal**, which has two porticos with arches.
It is the hidden garden of the palace.

The sound of water comes from the jets of an elongated fountain
over the Royal Canal of the Alhambra.
It crosses the entire courtyard and provides water to four **flower beds**.
In the time of the Nasrids, myrtle, roses, jasmine,
pomegranate and orange trees all bloomed in the courtyard.

It was a garden inside the sultan's palace,
the “joyous palace” as it was called.
The courtyard was hidden within the palace.
There was only a small viewing point in the wall,
from which the sultan could contemplate the landscape.
Later, the Catholic Kings turned that side
of the courtyard into a viewing gallery.

The **Royal Chamber**, in the north pavilion,
was the main living room of the palace.
At the entrance, an Arabic inscription says:

Enter with good sense, share wisdom,
be sparing with words, and leave in peace.

Flower beds: Parts of a garden
where flowers are planted.



The **Court of the Sultana's Cypress Tree** is another garden. The owner of the Generalife, the Marquis of Campotéjar, changed it to his liking. Often, you can only hear the sound of water from the fountains and the Royal Canal in the courtyard.

An inscription under a dry cypress tree, which is more than 100 years old, tells the legend of some secret meetings between the sultana and a noble from the Abencerraje family.

A steep staircase goes up to the **Upper Gardens**. They are nineteenth-century gardens, in the **Romantic style**. In that period, it was popular to walk through gardens along paths between hedges, exotic flowers, and trees, like magnolias.

The **Water Stairway** is the most outstanding feature of the gardens. The Nasrids built these steps and channelled water down the walls beside the handrails. The steps lead up to a prayer room.

The water flows down the stairs' handrails, so that those who are climbing the stairs are accompanied by the sound and coolness of water. For the poet Federico García Lorca those railings were:

Railings of the moon,
through which the water rumbles.

Sultana: Feminine form of the title Sultan, used for the sultan's wives or female leaders.

Romantic style: A cultural and artistic movement in Europe and America during the 19th century.



The Generalife gardens have inspired travellers, musicians, artists and poets throughout time.

There is a large gate to leave the palace gardens.
A house for the sultan's guests can be seen below.
The road to the exit continues along the Promenade of the Oleanders and the Promenade of the Cypress Trees.

You can almost hear the verses that the poet Juan Ramón Jiménez wrote when he was at the Generalife:

The waters speak and they weep
Beneath the white oleanders;
Beneath the rose oleanders,
The waters weep and they sing,
For the myrtle in bloom
Above the opaque waters.

The **Generalife** was built outside the walls of the Alhambra as a recreational estate for the Nasrid sultans.
After 1492, it belonged to a family of Christian nobles.
It is now a World Heritage Site.



REGULATIONS



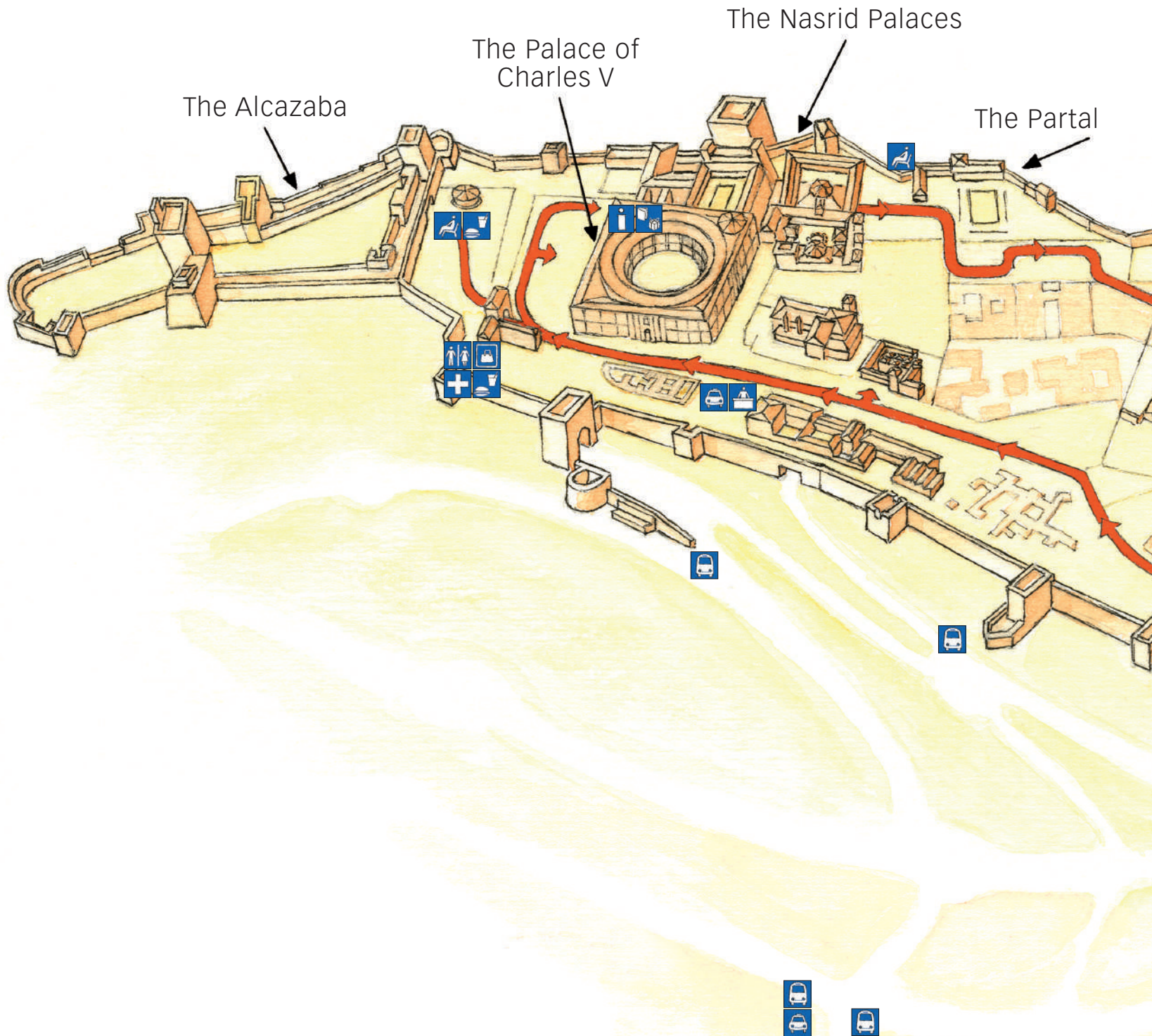
Please respect these rules during your visit.
Help us protect our heritage.

The following activities are prohibited:












- Smoking, eating or drinking, except in the spaces provided for that.
- Using a tripod or flashes to take photographs.
- Touching decorative elements, walls, columns or plants, because they are very fragile and easily damaged.
- Throwing rubbish on the floor. Please, use the bins.
- Wearing inappropriate clothing, including going without shoes.
- Lying on benches, walls or gardens.
- Entering with animals, except guide dogs for those with impaired vision.

Thank you for your collaboration.

The Alhambra and the Generalife





-  Information
-  Cloakroom
-  Visitors Service Desk
-  Bathroom / WC
-  Taxi
-  Bus
-  First Aid
-  Parking
-  Rest Area
-  Food and Drink
-  Bookshop and Shop



This book was completed on
Friday, 4th January, the date
of birth of Louis Braille.

Granada 2019

This publication, which inaugurates the easy-to-read collection, En Lectura Fácil, is conceived as an attractive and simple guide to the Alhambra and the Generalife. It is a useful tool with which to explore and understand the value of this extraordinary patrimony and have a more interesting and enjoyable visit.

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