



València

THE ANDALUSI LEGACY OF BALANSIYA



Summary:



Welcome to València

Welcome to the Andalusí Experience



València, the European green capital of the Mediterranean, captivates travellers with its singular beauty, looking towards the future proud of its history. Within its multicultural legacy, the Islamic heritage stands out. València, the ancient

Balansiya, known as *Medina Al-Turab* – the City of Sand or of Earth – between the 8th and 13th century, emerged as a significant cultural and commercial centre. The remnants of this flourishing Muslim past can still be appreciated in the city and its

way of life. This guide offers travellers a warm welcome and invites them to discover the legacy of *Balansiya* in every corner of the current València through an unforgettable Andalusí Experience.

How to get there

Located in the east of Spain, on the shores of the Mediterranean, València is accessible by **land**, **sea** and **air**.



València Airport has regular daily flights to more than a hundred domestic and international destinations, including the main intercontinental connection hubs. It is just 8 kilometres from the city and is easily reachable by bus, metro and taxi services.



From the **high-speed train station** Joaquín Sorolla, València is connected to Madrid, Barcelona and other Spanish cities. There is also the Estación del Norte, the local station for regional trains.



The Port of València is one of the most important ports in the Mediterranean, and numerous cruises make stopovers in the city.

Check www.visitvalencia.com for cruises with a stopover.



València can be reached by **car** or bus via two large free highways. The AP-7 runs from north to south along the Mediterranean coast, from the south of France to Andalusia, connecting València to Barcelona and Alicante. The A-3 links directly to Madrid, kilometre 0 of the Spanish road network.

How to get around



València is a sustainable destination thanks to its excellent public transport network, which connects all the neighbourhoods and major **tourist areas**. Although the

city's size allows you to get almost everywhere on foot or by bike, for longer journeys, we recommend the metro, tram or bus.

The **Valencia Tourist Card** allows you to get around comfortably at the best price, while reducing emissions. It offers unlimited trips for 24, 48, or 72 hours on city and metropolitan bus lines, metro, tram and commuter trains.

Plus, it allows free entry to municipal museums and monuments, as well as discounts at the main tourist attractions and numerous shops in the city. It also offers a tasty welcoming gift: two tapas with free drinks.

Balansiya, the Andalusi València

Behind the traces of the Arab city

The remains of the ancient Arab wall can still be appreciated in the Tossal Gallery or l'Almoïna, in the vicinity of Plaza del Àngel and Plaza de Los Navarros, as well as Calle de la Cruz. Remnants of the wall are also preserved inside private buildings, such as the Montaner bakery, the restaurants Orio and Alma del Temple or the language school Españolé.

■ The ancient layout of the wall bears witness to the past of *Balansiya* as the most important *medina* of *Sharq-Al Ándalus*, the eastern territories of the peninsula in Islamic times.

The perimeter of the *medina* had seven gates, amongst which was *Bab Al-Qantara*, the Gate of the Bridge, located behind the current Serranos Towers.

What to visit in the heart of *Balansiya*

Museo de l'Almoïna



■ This archaeological museum houses remnants of the city from its founding by the Romans to the 14th century. Among its treasures are the remains of the Muslim *alcázar* (fortress), which provide a glimpse into what life in Andalusi València was like.

Baños del Almirante



■ These Arab baths or *hammam* date back to the 14th century and are heirs to the Islamic tradition. It is essential to check the opening hours prior to the visit.

La Catedral de València



■ It stands on the site of the ancient *aljama* mosque, built in turn on the Visigoth cathedral. It preserves elements from different periods that reflect its multicultural imprint.

Tribunal de las Aguas



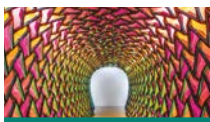
■ It has been resolving irrigation disputes since the time of *Al-Andalus*, every Thursday at midday by the Door of the Apostles of the Cathedral. A UNESCO World Heritage Site, it is the oldest active legal institution in the world, with a clear Islamic influence, and its verdicts can be witnessed live.

What to visit in the heart of *Balansiya*



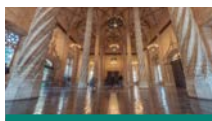
■ Ceramics Museum – Marqués de Dos Aguas Palace

It houses an important collection of Spanish-Muslim ceramics, with pieces from the 9th to the 14th centuries. We recommend that the traveller pay special attention to the ceramics with metallic reflections and those in cobalt blue, brilliant examples of Islamic craftsmanship.



■ Hortensia Herrero Art Center

The Hortensia Herrero Art Center is located in the former Valeriola Palace. Fragments of the Roman circus of *Valentia*, as well as some remains of the Muslim *Balansiya*, have been found in this historical building that today is the home of a contemporary art museum unique in Europe.



■ La Lonja / Silk Exchange

Silk trade in València dates to the arrival of Islam in the 8th century, when Arabs introduced the first silkworms. *La Lonja*, built in the 15th century, is a testament to the flourishing of this activity.



■ Museum and College of High Silk Art

This museum, housed in the former headquarters of the Colegio del Arte Mayor de la Seda (Silkmakers' Guild), gathers the entire history about the tradition and production of this precious fabric, preserving a loom of *vellut* (velvet) to produce this type of fabric using the same technique as in the 15th century.

Mercado Central



■ It is one of the largest markets for fresh produce in Europe. Its location beside the Muslim quarter of La Boatella proves its connection to the Islamic roots of the city.

Plaza Redonda



■ This peculiar square, located in the former souk, has been a central hub of trade in the city since its Islamic times.

Galería Tossal/ Muralla Árabe



■ Underneath the square of the Tossal there is an archaeological crypt that houses a section of the Islamic wall from the 12th century.

Portal de la Valldigna



■ Built into the Islamic wall of the 11th century, this gateway connected the Christian city with the Muslim quarter. Its Gothic arch and the altarpiece of the Virgin are witnesses to the coexistence of Christian and Muslim cultures.

Torres de Serranos



■ These impressive towers were part of the Christian wall. They were built near one of the ancient gates of the Islamic *Balansiya*, *Bab Al-Qantara*. They are a symbol of the city and its past.

Neighbourhoods in València with Andalusí origin

València is a city full of life, a Mediterranean atmosphere and unique corners in its bustling neighbourhoods, each with its own personality. Some of them trace their origins to Andalusí València.



El Carmen neighbourhood

This millennia-old neighbourhood grew between the Christian and Muslim walls, and the Moorish quarter was located here between the 13th and the 16th centuries. It preserves original sections of the ancient Andalusí wall and other remnants of the Islamic fortification.



Ruzafa neighbourhood

It derives its name from the Arabic word *Russafa*, which means 'garden', commemorating the green recreational spaces created by prince Abd Allah al-Balansi in the 9th century.

Other neighbourhoods of the city

València also has neighbourhoods and tourist attractions that, despite having a more recent origin than that of the Andalusí period, are highly recommended for all those travellers who have enough time.



Alameda, City of Arts and Oceanogràfic

We recommend spending a day to leisurely go through the Turia Garden, from the Viveros and Monforte Gardens with the nearby Museum of Fine Arts, to the City of Arts and Sciences, one of the symbols reflecting the futurist vision of the city, with its scientific museum, its opera palace and the Oceanogràfic.



Marina, Beaches and El Cabanyal district

It is an ideal area to enjoy the Valencian cuisine alongside the Mediterranean Sea. The Marina has wide and beautiful spaces to stroll, as well as La Malvarrosa Beach and El Cabanyal Beach, with a wide range of leisure activities, located next to the pleasant and traditional fishermen's quarter.




Cabecera Park and Bioparc

The Cabecera Park is one of the largest green spaces in València. You can visit a small part of Africa in the ecosystems recreated by Bioparc València, featuring vegetation and species from the African savannah, forests from the equatorial Africa and Madagascar, as well as wetlands.

■ VALÈNCIA, GREEN CAPITAL

"Balansiya is that emerald through which a river of pearls flows"

Al-Russafi, Valencian Muslim poet from the 12th century



It is no coincidence that València has been elected as European Green Capital 2024. Its nearly five million square metres of green spaces offer parks and gardens to suit all tastes where one can avoid the hustle and bustle of the city and breathe in nature without leaving the city, or just a few kilometres away.



■ L'Albufera

This natural park houses the largest natural lake in Spain. Its name derives from the Arabic word *Al-buhayra*, which means "the little sea". Rice cultivation, introduced by Arabs, has played a fundamental role in shaping the landscape and the ecological wealth of this space, as well as the idiosyncrasy of the Valencian people.



■ L'Horta de València

València's orchard holds 1200 years of wisdom. With the expansion of Islam through the Persian Empire, Egypt and Syria between the 7th and 8th centuries, Muslims learned all the secrets of the irrigation and new species, which they introduced in the Iberian Peninsula. This is how the fertile orchards that today surround the city and its ingenious system of irrigation ditches (from the Arabic *al-saqiya*) were created.



■ Turia Garden

The Turia River has been a source of life and prosperity since time immemorial. Located in its former riverbed, the Turia Garden is a 9-kilometres-long green lung that meanders the city, offering residents and visitors a space for recreation, sport and leisure.

Where to stay

Hospitality is another characteristic of the Valencian people. With almost 200 hotels in the whole city, it is easy to find the perfect place to feel like home. These are our **5-star** accommodations:



Las Arenas Balneario Resort

The best accommodation facing the sea, with direct access to the beach. A 5-star Grand Luxury hotel founded in 1898, which still preserves the spectacular architectural beauty of the Spa Las Arenas.



The Westin Valencia

Exclusive hotel located in an impressive modernist building, 1 km away from the Cathedral and very few metres from the Mestalla Football Stadium. It offers an 850m2 spa and well-known restaurant inside.



Hospes Palau de la Mar

Listed mansion from the 19th century that symbolizes the marine spirit of the city. Located in one of the most beautiful and central streets of València, its style overflows with energy and its history awaits us to get closer to the genuine and pure.



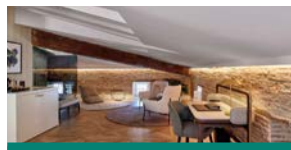
Parador de Turismo El Saler

A must-visit destination for golf lovers, who can enjoy this sport in one of the best courses in the world, between l'Albufera and the sea. Its spa, its views and its location in a beautiful natural park make it unique.



SH Valencia Palace

Elegant hotel facing the Palau de la Música, with swimming pool and rooftop solarium terrace. Very close to the Turia Garden.



Myr Palacio Vallier

A 19th-century mansion in the most beautiful area of the old town. Its roof terrace allows you to enjoy privileged views. Located on a former Roman perfumery dating back to the 3rd century, it offers the best suites in the city.



Only You

An extraordinary location in the heart of the city, a few metres from the busy Plaza del Ayuntamiento. With a

decoration inspired by the Mediterranean, it offers cosy and sophisticated spaces for the enjoyment of the guest.

You can also look for other accommodations according to your tastes and budget in our search engine

Where to eat

Valencian cuisine, internationally renowned, is nourished by local products of the highest quality. L'Albufera is the cradle of rice, and the Valencian orchard offers indigenous vegetables and greens, many of which were introduced by Arabs.

València has restaurants committed to sustainability, healthy eating and respect for the product. Some of them have received the highest rating in the 'We're Smart Green Guide' :

5-RADISHES RESTAURANTS



- Ricard Camarena
- La Salita
- Fierro

4-RADISHES RESTAURANTS



- Lienzo
- Bodega Casa Montaña
- Riff



Andalusi Cuisine

València also offers restaurants specializing in Arabic cuisine where you can complete an authentic **Andalusi experience**.

- Balansiya* Restaurante
- Restaurante Aljuzama
- Sahara Restaurante

Other Restaurants

You can also look for other restaurants according to your tastes and budget:



Andalusi culinary legacy

We can also taste the Andalusí legacy through some of the most famous dishes of our cuisine.

■ Paella

It is one of our most universal dishes. The origin of its name may come from the Arabic *baqiyah*, which referred to leftover food that was mixed with rice to make the most of it.

Despite its humble origin, the paella has evolved into a dish celebrated around the world, thanks to initiatives like the *World Paella Day*, which is celebrated every 20th of September.



■ Horchata

The cultivation of tiger nuts in València dates to the 8th century, when Arabs brought along this tuber from the banks of the Nile. The fertile Valencian lands were perfect for its development, and it is used to produce horchata, a unique plant-based drink.



■ Confectionery

The Arab influence is also evident in the Valencian confectionery, especially in sweets such as the *arnadí* (a cake made with pumpkin or sweet potato), the sweet potato cakes or the marzipans, typical on the festivity of Sant Donís (9th October).



Shopping around the city

València is a city to enjoy shopping: thanks to its variety, its originality, and the atmosphere of its shopping areas, where there is always a nearby pleasant terrace where you can get your strength back. It offers all kinds of shops, from the most traditional to the top brands, and unique boutiques by Valencian designers. València has been a member of UNESCO's Creative Cities Network under the 'Design' category since 2023 and was designated World Design Capital in 2022.

■ Areas of Colón and Centro

The main shopping area starts around the Colón metro station, along the streets of Colón, Don Juan de Austria, Jorge Juan and Cirilo Amorós in l'Eixample. In Poeta Querol Street you will find the most exclusive boutiques. Be sure to visit the traditional textile stores for the elaboration of regional costumes that Valencians proudly wear during the Fallas festival in March.

■ Alternative shopping and crafts

The neighbourhoods Ruzafa and El Carmen offer the most alternative shopping. If you are looking for Valencian crafts, head to the ceramic and bobbin lace stalls in the Round Square, or to the so-called Calle de las Cestas, in English Street of Baskets (c/ Músico Peydró), in Ciutat Vella. From the second Sunday in May until the celebration of the Corpus Christi, the traditional *l'Escuraeta* market fills the Plaza de la Reina with all kinds of handmade products.

■ Jewellery of Andalusí inspiration

Jewellery designer Vicente Gracia draws inspiration from the roots of Islamic Hispanic culture and from Sufi poetry to create his designs. His store, located in a neo-Mozarabic style building inspired by the Alhambra, is a reflection of this influence.

Would you like to know about more shops?



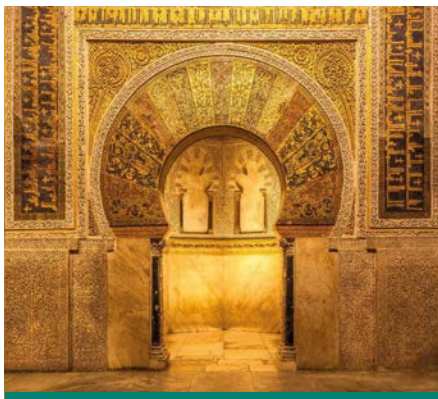
Live in Spain the Andalusí Experience

We suggest a journey that will take you through almost the entire Spanish geography. A **journey through space and time**.

We invite you to see, smell, taste and listen. We invite you to feel the wealth of a cultural legacy rooted in history and very present in our way of living.

A legacy that spreads from South to North, from East to West. From the 8th to the 15th century and beyond... An immense and precious heritage that has endured through the ages and is already part of us, sometimes without even noticing.

Come to discover the **Andalusí Experience** and enjoy it with us.



Practical information

València is a welcoming and sustainable city, which offers multiple transport options to get around.

Can we help you?

THE HEART OF BALANSIYA

- 1** Tossal Gallery – Arab wall
- 2** Central Market
- 3** Portal de la Valldigna
- 4** Cathedral of València
- 5** La Lonja (Silk Exchange)
- 6** Round Square
- 7** Silk Museum
- 8** Water Court (Tribunal de las Aguas)
- 9** Serranos Towers
- 10** Ceramics Museum /
Marqués de Dos Aguas Palace
- 11** L'Almoina Museum
- 12** Hortensia Herrero Art Center
- 13** The Almirante Muslim Baths

OTHER POINTS OF INTEREST

- 14** Bioparc
- 15** Turia Garden
- 16** El Carmen neighbourhood
- 17** Ruzafa neighbourhood
- 18** North orchard
- 19** City of Arts and Sciences
- 20** La Marina
- 21** L'Albufera

