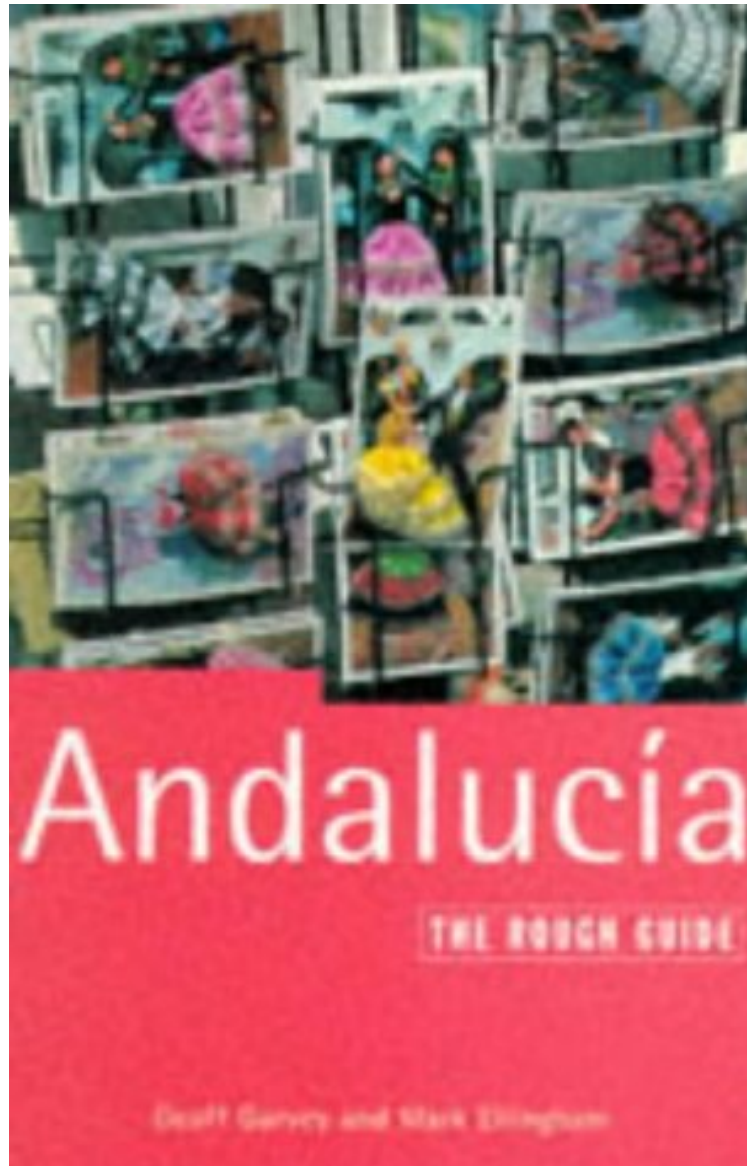


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Mark Ellingham, Geoff Garvey

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Mark Ellingham, Geoff Garvey : The Rough Guide to Andalucia (2nd Edition) before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Rough Guide to Andalucia (2nd Edition):

12 of 16 people found the following review helpful. Nice summary of Andalucia By C. GochicoaNice, complete summary. Balance between culture and accommodations/ dining info. Most accommodations are in the budget category. A good help in planning my vacation.

"The Rough Guide to Andalucía" is the definitive guide to one of Europe's most alluring destinations. Features include:

The best guidebook. -- Sunday Express, London, UK
The excellent Rough Guide to Andalucía. -- The Daily Telegraph, London, UK
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Where to go: some highlights
Andalucía's manageable size makes it easy to take in something of each of its elements – inland cities, extensive coastline and mountaineous sierras – even on a brief visit. The main characteristics and appeal of each province are covered in the chapter introductions, but the more obvious and compelling highlights include: Sevilla. Andalucía's capital city, the home of flamenco and all the clichés of the Spanish south has beautiful quarters, major Christian and Moorish monuments and extraordinary festivals at Easter and at the April feria. Moorish monuments. Granada's Alhambra palace is perhaps the most sensual building in Europe; the exquisite Mezquita, a former mosque, in Córdoba, and the Alcázar and Giralda tower in Sevilla, are also not to be missed. Castles. Niebla in Huelva and Baños de Encina in Jaén, as well as those in the cities of Málaga and Almería are the outstanding Moorish examples; the best Renaissance forts are at La Calahorra in Granada and Vélez Blanco in Almería, whilst hilltop Segura de la Sierra in Jaén has the most dramatic location. Cathedrals. Sevilla's Gothic monster is the biggest, but those of Cádiz, Granada, Jaén, and Almería are all worthy of a visit. Renaissance towns and hill villages. Small-scale towns and villages, once grand, now hardly significant, are an Andalucian forte. Baeza and Úbeda in Jaén are remarkable treasure-houses of Renaissance architecture, while Ronda and the White Towns to the west are among the most picturesque hill villages in Andalucía. Baroque. The Baroque splendours of Andalucía are without equal; towns such as Écija and Osuna in Sevilla province, and Priego to the south of Córdoba have clusters of stunning Baroque churches and mansions. Roman and prehistoric ruins. Itálica near Sevilla, Baelo Claudia near Tarifa and Carmona's Roman necropolis are all impressive Roman sites, while for an atmospheric lost city Mulva, in the hills of the Sierra Morena, is hard to beat. Andalucía also has some of the most important prehistoric sites in Europe, including a group of third millennium BC dolmens at Antequera, and the remarkable Los Millares site near Almería. Beaches and resorts. For brashness and nightlife it has to be the Costa del Sol, but you'll find that the more authentic resorts such as Nerja, Almuñecar and Mojácar are less frenzied. The region's best beaches lie along the Atlantic coast and to the east of Almería. Hiking. The Sierra Nevada and the nearby foothills of Las Alpujarras in Granada are excellent places for hiking, as are the densely wooded hills of the Sierra de Cazorla and the Sierra de Morena – including the latter's less well-known offshoot, the Sierra de Aracena, in the north of Huelva. Andalucía's dozen or so parques naturales (natural parks) are located in areas of great natural beauty, and are detailed in the Guide. Seafood. This is Andalucía's speciality and is excellent all along the coast but particularly so in Málaga and seafood-crazy Cádiz. The many good places to try it are listed in the relevant chapters throughout the Guide. Bars. Spain has the most bars of any country in Europe, and Andalucía has more than its share of these. For sheer character and diversity, the bars of the cities of Córdoba, Sevilla and Cádiz are some of the best anywhere. Offbeat. Among the more curious things to see in Andalucía are a self-styled pope who has built a New Vatican near Utrera in Sevilla province; a rosary museum at Aroche in Huelva displaying beads once owned by the famous; a nineteenth-century English- designed housing estate in the middle of the city of Huelva; a mini-Hollywood in Almería which preserves the film-set of famous paella westerns; still-functioning nineteenth- century sulphur baths used by Lord Byron at Carratraca in Málaga; a Communist village run on Utopian principles at Marinaleda in Sevilla; the spectacular mines of Río Tinto in Huelva; and Andalucía's oldest inn, complete with highwayman's cell, at Alfarnate, in the rugged Axarquía district of Málaga.

When to go
In terms of climate the question is mainly one of how much heat you can take. During the summer months of July and August temperatures of over 40°C (104°F) on the coast are normal and inland they rise even higher in cities such as Sevilla, generally reckoned to be the hottest in Spain. The solution here is to follow the natives and get about in the relative cool of the mornings and late afternoons, finding somewhere shady to rest up as the city roasts in the midday furnace. The major resorts are busy in July and packed in August (the Spanish holiday month) when prices also are at their highest. Better times to visit are the spring months of April, May and early June when lower temperatures combine with a greener landscape awash with wild flowers. The autumn is good, too, although by this time much of the coastal landscape looks parched and the resorts have begun to wind down; in hilly areas, however, such as the sierras of Cazorla and Aracena and the high valleys of Las Alpujarras the splendours of autumn can be especially scenic. The winter months – particularly December and January – can often be dismal and wet as well as cold at altitude, although Almería sees only one day of rain a year on average and in winter has many days of perfect crystal visibility.