

Granada – UNESCO City of Literature

10 Things to know:

The city of Granada is located in the eastern part of the Autonomous Community of Andalusia in the centre of the county of Vega de Granada with a population of just over 240,000. If the metropolitan area is included the population rises to 498,00, of which 6.3% are foreign residents from other countries, the biggest group being Moroccan. The population doubles during university term time due to the influx of students, especially European Erasmus students.

1. The Spirit of Literature

Granada has been a recurring theme in literature from the distant past to the present day; from the time Al-Siquindi wrote that Granada was the Damascus of Al-Andaluz, a feast for the eyes, a lifter of spirits, to the writings of Francisco Nieva and Salman Rushdie. Humanists changed Granada into a centre for poetic innovations; baroque poets immortalized its rivers and the labyrinthine character of its walled gardens, romantic travellers praised its ruins, rescuing them from the ravages of time. Contemporary writers looked to Granada for answers to the cause of a crisis in values. They also sought to unravel the ancestral remains of the Andalusia culture and to explain why their literature was so pure.

2. Poetry and Prose in the Stones

It is not surprising that the most prestigious architectural spaces of Granada's most famous monument, the palaces of the Alhambra, embodies one of the most singular collections of poems that has ever been built in stone. The intricate Arabic inscriptions carved into the ceilings, columns and walls contain poetry and verses from the Qur'an. Reading its walls is like turning the pages of an ancient book.

3. Literary Events

There are hundreds of literary events, poetry recitals, book launches, round tables, writers' meetings, celebrations, conferences, seminars and more held in the city every year; these events are the result of all sorts of private and public initiatives. The University of Granada, through the Secretariat de Extensión Universitaria responsible for extracurricular activities, the Cátedra Federico Garcia Lorca and different departments of the Humanities Faculty, organise numerous events throughout the academic year which encourage literary promotion and research on a national and international level.

4. The Legacy of Lorca

Federico García Lorca was born in 1898 in Fuente Vaqueros, a small town a few miles west of Granada. As a poet, playwright and theatre director his contribution to literature has been significant. Today the Fundación García Lorca is responsible for safeguarding the author's legacy, encouraging the study and dissemination not just of the poet's work but also of all the other artistic and cultural manifestations that maybe related to it. The Parque García Lorca is the place where the

poet was murdered and today a place where poetry events are organised in celebration of his work. El Centro Federico García Lorca is a new building project underway comprising a 50 m² exhibition centre with a programme of temporary exhibitions, a theatre and multipurpose hall where concerts, poetry readings, conferences, film screening and literary events will be held. The building will also have a floor dedicated to educational workshops.

La Huerta de San Vicente was the poet's family summer residence from 1926 to 1936. Federico García Lorca wrote some of his most important works here and he lived here in the days leading up to his detention and assassination during the first days of the Spanish Civil War. It was opened to the public as a museum-house in 1995; it has since become an important and lively cultural centre in the city of Granada with events for all ages.

5. A City of Poetry

The Festival Internacional de Poesía de Granada (FIP) is the most important poetry festival in Spain with over ten thousand people coming to the city each Spring to hear poetry, as a result Granada has become the poetic capital par excellence. Performing poets have included Nobel prize winners such as Derek Walcott, Mario Vargas Llosa, Wole Soyinka and Herta Muller. In recent years the festival has expanded to increase its reach with an FIP for Children programme, a literary competition to bring poetry to schools in Granada, and FIP in the Province bringing poetry readings to smaller towns near Granada.

The Federico García Lorca prize for poetry is the most generous Spanish language poetry prize and has become in recent years one of the most important on the international poetry scene. It is organised by the Ayuntamiento de Granada city council, which publishes the winning entries in the Granada Literaria collection.

6. International Literature

Granada is a partner with the HAY Festival which first began in the Welsh city of Hay-on-Wye in 1988 and has since become international. The city of Granada joined in 2007 as the Hay Festival Alhambra and literary meetings now take place with top international writers such as Orhan Pamuk, Umberto Eco, Juan Goytisolo, Fernando Sabater, Almudena Grandes and Luís García Montero. The 2013 festival was a sell-out with more than 20,000 spectators.

The Festival Internacional de Poesía de Granada is twinned with similar events in Nicaragua, Costa Rica, Mexico, Cuba, Guatemala, Puerto Rico and Italy, and continues to expand its partnerships.

7. Literary walks and guided visits

Among the guided visits run by experts at the Alhambra, there are always literary themes, such as in the "Memoria poética de la Alhambra", a poetic history of the Alhambra, or García Lorca, provided by the Junta de Andalucía. There are also literary tours around important neighbourhoods such the Zaidín and the Albayzín and more recently guided visits based on the novel *La muladí* written by Jose Luis Gastón Morata. The monuments mentioned in the doctor's writing were recreated as if it was the same Nasrid Granada from the book.

8. Books and Booksellers

The book industry has always been very important to Granada and its booksellers and editors have always stood for innovation, collective dynamism and a commitment to the city's culture. The Asociación de Empresarios y Comerciantes del Libro en Granada, a pioneering and long established association gathers together 76 of Granada's booksellers. Granada's Book Fair, the Feria del Libros in 2012 and 2013 was the biggest in Andalusia, exceeding Seville's famous book fair which has twice the allocated budget.

9. Books and Booksellers

The creative industry is one of the most dynamic sectors in Granada and has the biggest growth rate. Since the 70s the city has embodied one of the keenest publishing traditions in Andalusia and is now becoming one of the most important publishing industries in the south of Spain. There is a strong emphasis on high quality publishing, including work from Granada's authors to other contemporary Spanish and international writers, and with a specific focus on promoting young people on the national literary scene.

10. Education

In 2006 the department for education began a reading and library initiative aimed at infant, primary and secondary schools in Andalusia and designed to develop reading and learning skills. A range of resources and activities were established including literary meetings with authors, reading clubs, literary guides and competitions.