

DISCOVERING THE ALHAMBRA MARIA JOSE PEDREIRA @mjpedreira1

The Alhambra is the only Islamic palace from the medieval period that has survived to the present day. It was not initially planned as the palatial city we know today. It grew over centuries. Its embryo is the Alcazaba, a fortress built in the 13th century on the basis of military settlements from the 9th century. The 14th century marks the golden age of the sultans who built royal palaces, including the Partal, the Generalife, Comares, and the Palace of the Lions. In 1492, the Catholic Monarchs reclaimed Granada. In the new Christian era, the Palace of Charles V was built in the 16th century. From this moment on, there were no further modifications. The abandonment of the Alhambra as a permanent residence for kings led it to a period of decline.

Thanks to romantic travelers, especially the American Washington Irving and his "Tales of the Alhambra" (1832), the monument regained fascination. The 19th century marked the beginning of a period of restorations with an idealized orientalist taste, characterized by the notion of a magical Alhambra outside of time and history.

Unlike the 19th century, the main criterion of the 20th century is monumental conservation and scientific restoration. Philately will help us observe these paradigm shifts, especially in the Palace of the Lions.

Cover of the pavillion and Fountain of the Lions



1936-37 Stamp from one of the series issued by the Junta de Defensa Nacional during the Civil War, featuring the dome. We display an imperforate variety.

In 1934, architect **Torres Balbás** removed the small dome from the kiosk, an element that the people of Granada considered essential and original, replacing it with a **four-sided pitched roof**, more in line with the aesthetic of the courtyard. This change remains and can be appreciated in multiple stamps.



Charming coincidence of the new pavillion, a ballet dancer depicted on a postmark from 1980 on the occasion of the 29th International Music and Dance Festival, and another well-known flamenco dancer, Minnie.



Washington Irving E.U.U., 1940

In 1858, the restorer **Rafael Contreras** installed the **dome** of the Levante kiosk, which resembled Persian models to which it was compared. An ornamental principle prevailed, aiming to revive the original monument through changes that were not always well-founded.



Above in order: 1964 issue about Tourism in Spain, Cuba's issuance commemorating the 1992 World Philatelic Exhibition and column of the Court of the Lions. Below, letter sent from Maldives to Spain in 2013. On the left, "Alhambra de Granada" written over the Court of the Lions



Letter sent from Cape Verde to Spain in 2022

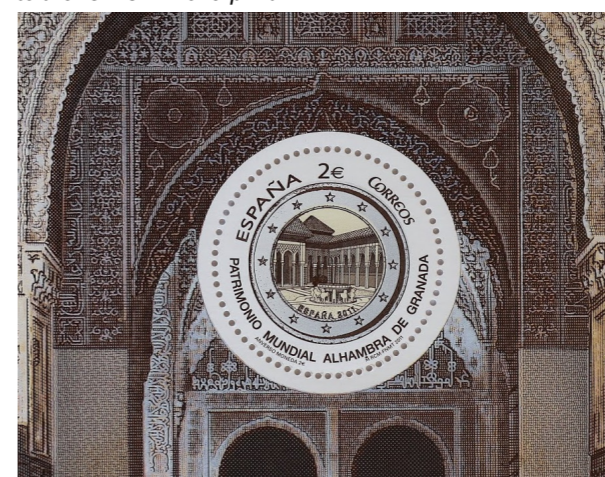
In the **16th century**, the fountain had a second basin, as seen in Spain's issuance for the III Pan American Postal Union Congress. In **1835**, a second spout was added to embellish the fountain, a detail recalled by Maldives' 1992 issuance and a postmark from Bulgaria of the same year.



Series issued in 1931, the last year of the 26-31 period recognized as speculative in Spanish Philately. Pay attention to the 'OFICIAL' overprint



Bulgaria's 1992 World Philatelic Exhibition



In **1945**, the second bowl and the spout from **1835** were removed. In **1966**, the hypothetical medieval configuration of the fountain was restored. In **2012**, a stamp promoting the brand 'Spain' was issued featuring the current state of the fountain after its various restorations.

