



Andalusian horses will dazzle a glamorous international crowd in Seville this September.

The Reins in Spain

Fabulous Andalusian horses featured in spectacular outdoor performances of Bizet's opera *Carmen* make Seville, Spain, the travel destination of the season.

By Jill Brooke

Spain's famed Andalusian horses will be featured in the performances of *Carmen* for Seville's first International Music Festival taking place in September. The horses' choreographed movements are based on both classical (*doma clasica*) and country (*doma va-*

quera), dressage as well as other specialized riding techniques. One can see the grandly costumed horses gallop around the ring making sudden changes of rhythm, spinning tightly, and pivoting in a circle on their hind legs, all apparently in time with the

music. This is what is affectionately called the "canter pirouette." Especially exciting is that these performances will take place on the streets of this ancient city, which has inspired the setting of over 100 operas throughout the centuries, including *Carmen*, *Fidelio*, *Don Giovanni*, *The Barber of Seville*, *The Marriage of Figaro*, and *La Forza del Destino*.

A glamorous international crowd is expected to descend upon Seville between September 2 to 12, at which time there will be ten on-site performances of what is considered *the* world's most popular opera. (*Carmen* was composed in 1869 by Georges Bizet, and based on the 1845 novella by Prosper Merimée.) Since Sophia Loren's son Carlo Ponti, Jr., will be one of the conductors of a music performance, expect his proud mother to be applauding along with everyone else. The Queen of Spain, also a proud mother now that her son Prince Phillippe married the lovely Letizia, will also be there to lend support (along with her King, of course). Among the other high-profile people expected to attend are recording artist Tinuola, interior designers Richard and Marcia Mishaan, and jewellers Georgia and Charles Kaufmann.

Perhaps you, too, would like to catch some of the unique splendor and pageantry of this magnificent show? Show Circuit has gathered the following list of leading hotels and restaurants that may help in your planning:

TOP HOTELS IN THE AREA

**Hotel Alfonso XIII, A Westin Hotel
San Fernando 2**

Seville, Spain 41004

Tel: 011 34 95 491 70 00

Fax: 011 34 95 491 70 99

Email: AlfonsoXIII@WestinHotel.com

Hotel Alfonso XIII in Seville is a showcase of Andalusian grandeur. Guestrooms feature Arabic, Castilian or Baroque-style décor, and all accommodations have dial-up Internet access and safes. Amenities include an outdoor pool and tennis courts. The hotel also houses a business center.



The famous Giralda Tower at the Cathedral

Hotel Becquer
 Reyes Católicos 4
 Seville, Spain 41001
 Tel: 011 34 95 422 89 00
 Fax: 011 34 95 421 44 00
 Email: becquer@hotelbecquer.com
 Reservations: 011 34 95 422 21 72

Conveniently situated in the heart of town, this first class hotel is only a five-minute walk from the legendary Giralda Tower at the Cathedral, the Isla Magica theme park and other attractions. The well-appointed, air-conditioned guest rooms feature attractive Mediterranean décor, and include full bathroom facilities of elegant marble construction.

RECOMMENDED RESTAURANTS
 Egaña Oriza at San Fernando
 San Fernando 41 (very close to the Alfonso XIII hotel)
 Tel: 011 34 95 422 72 54
 Website: www.restauranteoriza.com

Casa Robles
 Alvarez Quintero 58
 Tel: 011 34 95 456 32 72
 Website: www.casa-robles.com

Taberna del Alabardero
 Zaragoza 20
 Tel: 011 34 95 560 63 73
 Website:
 www.tabernadelalabardero.com
 Make your reservations early!

CARMEN ALFRESCO

Although several productions of *Carmen* have already been presented in Seville, none have ever been staged using the dramatic original surroundings of the Plaza de España, the Parque María Luisa, and the 14,000-seat bullfight arena. Because the city's weather is most ideal in September, the month was a great choice for hosting the event. In addition to the Andalusian horses, one can also enjoy the countryside, old-world hotels, and the city's culinary delights.

Carmen will be led by superstar conductor Lorin Maazel and directed by Academy Award nominee Carlos Saura. Contemporary greats, such as Neil Shicoff, Olga Borodina, Angela Gheorghiu, Denyce Graves, Barbara Hendricks, and Ruggero Raimondi, will perform. Three-time Oscar winner Vittorio Storaro will oversee lighting design, Rafael Palmero developed the sets, Gerardo Vera designed costumes, Prof. Wolfgang Fritz of the Vienna State Opera is responsible for sound production, and Motoko Ishii creates the lighting for public areas.



Seville's 14,000-seat bullfight arena is one of several outdoor venues for *Carmen*.



The Andalusian's Noble History

For good reasons, Spain has always prided itself as being the home of Andalusian horses. The roots of the Andalusian reach back to prehistoric times. Cave paintings of horses have been discovered on the Iberian Peninsula in southern Spain dating from 20,000 to 30,000 BC.

A number of researchers believe that the horse was being ridden as early as 4000–3000 BC. When the Phoenicians arrived in Iberia in 2000 BC, and the Greeks in 1000 BC, the Iberian cavalry was already a formidable foe, and the Iberian horse was regarded as the war horse without equal. Homer mentions the Iberian horses in the *Iliad*, written in approximately 1100 BC. The famous Greek cavalry officer, Xenophon, highly praised the “gifted Iberian horses” and their role in helping Sparta defeat the Athenians around 450 BC. Hannibal, in the Second Punic War (218–201 BC), defeated the invading Romans several times with the help of the Iberian cavalry. This military use of the Iberian horse continued unabated, with William the Conqueror ultimately riding an Iberian horse in the Battle of Hastings in 1066.

When heavily armored knights began to constitute the majority of the armed forces of Europe, the Andalusian was briefly displaced as the most popular war horse; however, after the introduction of firearms, the Iberian horse, once again, became the mount of choice for royalty and cavalry officers. New means of riding were introduced, often drawn from the writings of Xenophon. The Iberian horse was the favorite horse of the new, rapid, and agile mounted armies.

Soon thereafter, the Iberian horse became the “royal horse of Europe,” present in every royal court. Grand riding academies were formed in countries all across Europe, including Austria, France, Italy and Germany. In these academies, dressage and high school riding originally began and flourished.

The Iberian horse was the favored mount of these academies because of its impulsion, forward motion, and catlike agility. The Duke of Newcastle, in 1667, wrote of the Andalusian, “It is the noblest horse in the world, the most beautiful that can be. He is of great spirit and of great courage and docile; hath the proudest trot and the best action in his trot, the loftiest gallop, and is the most lovingest and gentlest horse, and fittest of all for a king in his day of triumph.” It was the Andalusian that served as the foundation for the Lipizzaner, of the famed Spanish Riding School in Vienna. It also played a role in the development of most of the German warmbloods, Ireland’s Connemara, and England’s Cleveland Bay, as well as many breeds developed in the New World, including the American Quarter Horse and Peruvian Paso.

In the United States, the Andalusian horse competes in dressage, jumping, driving (both pleasure and competitive), trail, western pleasure and English pleasure. In addition, it is a parade and exhibition horse without peer.

Of course, we cannot forget that the Andalusian, with its love of people, is an absolutely wonderful family horse, displaying the proud, docile temperament for which it has been prized for millennia.

In addition to the performances of *Carmen*, the first Seville International Music Festival will include recitals and orchestral concerts by Lang Lang, renowned cellist Mstislav Rostropovich (accompanied by the Chamber Orchestra of the Russian National Orchestra), and a performance by the New York Philharmonic conducted by Sir Colin Davis.

The force behind Seville’s first International Music Festival, Michael Ecker, founded the company Opera on Original Site, Inc. in 1987, with the aim to market and produce high-quality operatic events at sites with which they are most closely associated. In addition to producing the now historical production of *Turandot* in Beijing’s Forbidden City, he was involved with the first production of *Aida* in Luxor (1987), and promotion, marketing, and production planning of the open-air performances of Verdi’s *Nabucco* in Jerusalem (1988). In 1994, Michael Ecker took on promotion and marketing of the “Three Tenors in Concert,” held in Los Angeles in conjunction with festivities surrounding the World Cup of Soccer. In 1996, he undertook marketing activities in several countries for open-air performances of Verdi’s opera, including those in Paphos, Cyprus. With such credentials, one expects the Seville performance to be equally as fabulous.

ANDALUSIANS IN JEREZ

Oh yes. If one is not too tired from all the parties and festivities and wants to see even more of the Andalusian horses, rent a car and drive 45 minutes south of the city to Jerez de la Frontera.

Jerez is also world famous for its magnificent horses, which you can see at the Real Escuela Andaluza de Arte Equestre—the Royal Andalucian School of Equestrian Art—at Avenida de Abrantes (Tel: 011 34 95 631 11 11).

Sitting proudly in the center of the town, the famous Real Escuela Andaluza del Arte Ecuestre draws millions of visitors each year. The spectacle is held on Tuesdays and Thursdays at noon, although some of the featured Andalusian horses may be a little tired after performing in the glittering Seville production.