

(Mobile ebook) The Alhambra (Wonders of the World)

## The Alhambra (Wonders of the World)

Von Robert Irwin

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# THE ALHAMBRA

'A perfect introduction to the place  
and a first-rate account of its history'

*Guardian*

ROBERT IRWIN

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**Von Robert Irwin : The Alhambra (Wonders of the World)** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Alhambra (Wonders of the World):

KundenrezensionenHilfreichste Kundenrezensionen1 von 1 Kunden fanden die folgende Rezension hilfreich.  
Remarkable book about a remarkable placeVon FrKurt MessickOne is almost immediately captured by this book from the very opening paragraphs - there is wonderful description of the Alhambra from the perspective of tourist guidebooks which would lead a visitor through the many palaces, chambers, and courts, filling in detail about the

history from both Muslim and Christian eras. Then author Robert Irwin lets the reader know the sad truth - almost all of what is presented on this virtual tour is almost all false. The Alhambra is, if nothing else, a greatly misunderstood place, perhaps an architectural embodiment of Emerson's dictum about greatness. The Alhambra, a grand structure on the outskirts of Granada in southern Spain, is in fact a series of palaces, perhaps more akin to the Forbidden City in China than any European or Islamic palatial counterpart. It is also the only medieval Islamic palace to survive - tradition was among Islamic rulers was to abandon the palace of the old ruler in favour of building a new one, and often the old palaces were razed for building materials - if not by the new ruler, then by the population around the old palaces, now no longer guarded. It is somewhat ironic that it may be because the Alhambra came to be part of Christendom that it, as a classic Islamic building, came to survive at all. Irwin gives a revised tour of the facility following the virtual tour of false information - in this he describes the different palaces, the functions of different buildings and courtyards, and the influence the Alhambra has had both in artistic imagination as well as political and military significance. There are bits of fancy here - the Sala de los Mocarabes, a room whose name comes from the stalactite decorations on the ceiling, is in fact a room without stalactite decorations (those having been burned centuries ago, but the name endures). Names and symbols throughout the buildings incorporate both Islamic and Christianised names, with a not insignificant Jewish influence as well in many respects. The Alhambra was built and preserved over a period of social tolerance and cultural flowering, but allowed to fall fallow during Spain's slow decline as a world power. People such as Washington Irving, Benjamin Disraeli, the Duke of Wellington, the vicomte de Chateaubriand, Victor Hugo and other notables of later mainstream Anglo-American and European culture drew inspiration from and were fascinated with the Alhambra. Indeed, some artists of some periods began to have a distaste for the kinds of Arabesque and medieval influences derivative of the Alhambra, for it has become far too commonplace in their opinion. More modern figures such as Jorge Luis Borges have also drawn inspiration from the site. Robert Irwin's book is a treat to read, giving a sense of the place from an aesthetic, philosophical, architectural, and historical sense. His tracing of the influences expanding from this almost mythical and mystical place is fascinating.

**Kurzbeschreibung** The Alhambra, the 'red fort' on its rocky hill above Granada with its fountained courts and gardens and intricate decoration has long been a byword for exotic and melancholy beauty. In a stimulating new book in the 'Wonders of the World' series Robert Irwin, Arabist and novelist, examines its engrossing and often mysterious history. Built by a bloody and threatened dynasty of Muslim Spain, the Alhambra was preserved as a monument to the triumph of Christianity. Much of what we see is the invention of later generations. Its highly sophisticated decoration is not just random but full of hidden meaning. Even its purpose - palace or theological college - is not always clear. Its influence on art, and on literature, orientalist painting and Granada cinemas, Washington Irving and Borges, has been significant. Robert Irwin enables us to understand the Alhambra's history fully. 'The Wonders of the World' is a series of books that focuses on some of the world's most famous sites or monuments. Their names will be familiar to almost everyone: they have achieved iconic stature and are loaded with mythological baggage. These monuments have been the subject of many books over the centuries, but our aim, through the skill and stature of the writers, is to get something much more enlightening, stimulating, even controversial, than straightforward histories or guides.

**Pressestimmen** This book captures and conveys the mysterious attractions of the Alhambra.--Doris Lessing "The Spectator" (01/17/2004)[A] fascinating book.--Malise Ruthven "Sunday Times" (01/04/2004)[A] delicious, tart monograph.--Vera Rule "The Independent on Sunday" (01/11/2004) In this rich, concise contribution to the literature, Robert Irwin uses his vast knowledge of medieval Islam to illumine both myth and reality, history and imagination, without disenchanting the romantic reader... Having been to the Alhambra many times, after reading this wonderful book I wished to go back--and see it for the first time.--Shusha Guppy "The Independent" (02/13/2004) A fascinating and very manageable guide. Irwin takes in the history of the Alhambra's inhabitants, its cultural importance to Westerners and to a new generation of Islamic writers.--Mirand France "Daily Telegraph" (01/17/2004) Edward Said pointed out that in writing about the Arab world, authors always have an agenda. Perhaps Irwin has replaced a Romantic illusion about the Alhambra with one more attractive to the New Age. Irwin is, however, modest about the possibility of ever knowing what the Alhambra was for. And his agenda seems to be nothing more sinister than to get us to look once more and to marvel once again at something we only thought we knew.--Robin Banerji "The Prospect" (01/22/2004) It is...greatly to Robert Irwin's credit that he has written a book on the subject that is sensible, scholarly, astringent and witty. It is a fine addition to what promises to be an outstanding series on the world's great monuments.--Martin Gayford "Sunday Telegraph" (02/01/2004) Irwin's book is both a perfect introduction to the place and a first-rate account of its history.--Mark Cocker "The Guardian" (01/10/2004) "The Alhambra" is a succinct, witty, often acerbic compendium of facts, legends, and outright delusions about this Nasrid architectural masterpiece. He also manages, with style and flair, to convey a surprisingly rich store of detail on medieval Andalusian culture and life... He is the ideal companion: amusing, learned, curious, often eloquent... "The Alhambra" contains much precious detail drawn

from the Arabic sources, historical as well as literary.--Eric Ormsby"New York Sun" (09/13/2004)The only Muslim palace to survive in the West, the Alhambra, a beautiful collection of buildings and gardens set against the mountain backdrop of Granada, has been fixed in travelers' imaginations since the 19th century works of American novelist Washington Irving made the site famous. Unfortunately, much of what we know and think about it remains more romanticized fiction than fact. Here, Irwin (a novelist and noted Islamicist) helps set the record straight. As he explains, the Alhambra has been highly--and often inaccurately--reconstructed over the centuries, changing and expanding with the shifting notion of how this collection of buildings had been originally used. No matter how beautiful, he asserts, today the Alhambra is a mere shadow of its former glory, when it dripped with beautiful tapestries and exquisite carpets. Irwin's direct and witty style makes this slim volume a joy to read, and his chapter on the depiction of the Alhambra in Western literature is especially useful.--Olga B. Wise"Library Journal" (07/15/2004)Robert Irwin writes beautifully and is dauntingly clever but the stunning thing about him is his originality.--Ruth RendellIrwin's book is a learned but entertaining companion for any visitor.--Oleg GrabarIn his remarkably concise, original and readable study, *The Alhambra*, Irwin deploys impressive scholarship to skewer many of the myths that have grown up around the beautiful palace complex of Nasirid Granada: 'legends, lies and honest mistakes are as much a part of the story of the Alhambra as is the factual record,' he writes. 'So are vandalism, inadequately researched and botched restoration work and distortions caused by the demands of the tourist trade.' It is these myths and distortions that Irwin sets about dismantling, a task he clearly enjoys...Irwin shows that the Alhambra has meant many different things to many different people. If the Victorians liked to see it as a symbol of Oriental luxury and debauchery, then many modern Arabs have seen it as a symbol of defeat, 'an icon of exile and loss.'--William Dalrymple"Times Literary Supplement" (07/16/2004)The Alhambra is a succinct, witty, often acerbic compendium of facts, legends, and outright delusions about this Nasrid architectural masterpiece. He also manages, with style and flair, to convey a surprisingly rich store of detail on medieval Andalusian culture and life...He is the ideal companion: amusing, learned, curious, often eloquent...The Alhambra contains much precious detail drawn from the Arabic sources, historical as well as literary.--Eric Ormsby"New York Sun" (09/13/2004)Robert Irwin has written a compact companion to the history, architectural features, and enduring attraction of the Alhambra. Although this book is in a small guidebook format, the text corrects many of the romantic myths about the Alhambra that most tourists encounter. This book is recommended as excellent reading for someone planning a visit to the Alhambra or for the armchair traveler...His thesis about the geometrical foundations of the design and the use of the Alhambra as 'a palace to think in' is persuasively argued.--Karen GouldKurzbeschreibungThe Alhambra, the 'red fort' on its rocky hill above Granada with its fountained courts and gardens and intricate decoration has long been a byword for exotic and melancholy beauty. In a stimulating new book in the 'Wonders of the World' series Robert Irwin, Arabist and novelist, examines its engrossing and often mysterious history. Built by a bloody and threatened dynasty of Muslim Spain, the Alhambra was preserved as a monument to the triumph of Christianity. Much of what we see is the invention of later generations. Its highly sophisticated decoration is not just random but full of hidden meaning. Even its purpose - palace or theological college - is not always clear. Its influence on art, and on literature, orientalist painting and Granada cinemas, Washington Irving and Borges, has been significant. Robert Irwin enables us to understand the Alhambra's history fully. 'The Wonders of the World' is a series of books that focuses on some of the world's most famous sites or monuments. Their names will be familiar to almost everyone: they have achieved iconic stature and are loaded with mythological baggage. These monuments have been the subject of many books over the centuries, but our aim, through the skill and stature of the writers, is to get something much more enlightening, stimulating, even controversial, than straightforward histories or guides.