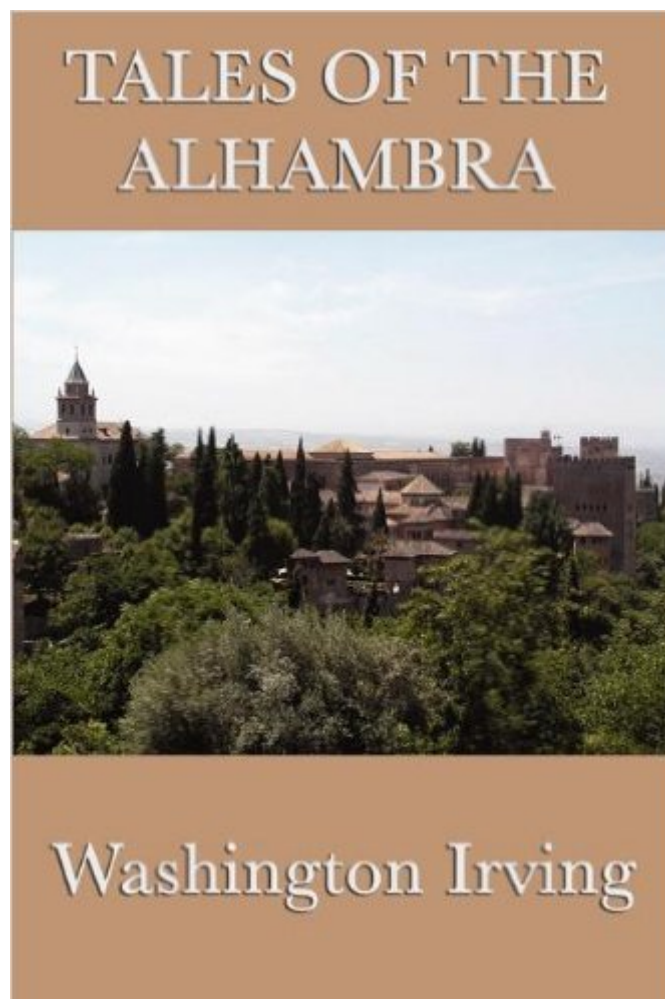


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Tales Of The Alhambra



Synopsis

The Alhambra : a series of tales and sketches of the Moors and Spaniards was published in May 1832, Consisting of a series of essays and short fiction pieces, it was referred to as his "Spanish Sketch Book." In 1851 Irving wrote the "Author's Revised Edition", also titled Tales of the Alhambra. Tales of the Alhambra is a collection of essays, verbal sketches, and stories.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

"Tales of the Alhambra" was penned by American author Washington Irving ("Rip Van Winkle," "Sleepy Hollow") during a stay at the legendary Alhambra in Granada, Spain. I bought this book after my visit to the Alhambra, and found it to be a fantastic companion to what I had seen and experienced. The Alhambra (and Generalife) is a combination fort/palace/gardens dating from the 13th century, filled with fantastic Arabic architecture (ornate plasterwork, ceramic tiles, sculpted marble fountains and archways), and lots of room for imagining the days of its former greatness, which Irving brings to life most memorably. The book is illustrated with charming and detailed watercolour engravings dating from the same period when the book was written. Irving seamlessly winds legend, history, and a Spanish travelogue of sorts together, and even though the book is over 170 years old, it seems as if it was written yesterday. There are tales of princes, genies, lost and found loves, enchanted treasures, battles, hellish headless horses (does the inspiration seem familiar?), and commentary on the Spanish landscape and nature of the Spaniards that he lives with. Full of bewitching music, the smell of roses and exotic perfumes, fiery sunsets, and the ghosts

of the past, the book is a sensory treat as well. If you plan on visiting the Alhambra, read this first--it will definitely enhance your experience. If you've already visited, this makes a priceless souvenir, bringing to life once more the stately halls and fragrant gardens.

Washington Irving is credited with bringing the glorious history and unbelievable beauty of the Alhambra, in the city of Granada, (the last stronghold of the Moors in the South of Spain) to Western consciousness. After spending a day at the Alhambra last Summer, and passing by the closed apartments that he occupied, I decided to listen to his book while driving one hour each way to work. (any short trips won't work because all of the 'tales' are lengthy) My title says it all. If you are a student of dry history this book is not for you. Only about 20-30 minutes will satisfy your curiosity for the facts. If you enjoy legend and lore this book is it. The bulk of the book tells numerous stories of princes and princesses, kings and soldiers, common laborers such as mule drivers and water carriers, loves found and loves lost, and especially the perennial human lust for long lost and buried treasure, etc., all told with a wonderful style and feel for southern Spain of the 13-th to 15-th centuries. The factual account of how Columbus finally came to agreement with Isabella and Ferdinand to sign the contract for the three ships, almost by chance in 1492, while the two sovereigns were outside Granada laying the final siege of the Alhambra fortress, is mind blowing. History came 'that close' to having Columbus sail three French ships instead of the Nina, the Pinta and the Santa Maria. If you want just the facts, look elsewhere. But if you are planning a trip to Granada and the Alhambra, definitely pick up this book, along with a second, more fact based, and give a read or listen. I wish I had done that before my trip. It would have given much more life and enjoyment to the place as I walked through the various rooms and towers and gardens that Irving so lovingly describes.

I visited Spain in Nov 2002 and was absolutely enchanted by the Nasrid Alhambra palace in Granada. Built in the foothills of the Sierra Nevada mountains, it casts a watchful eye over the inhabitants of the city below. From the exterior, palace is surrounded by an imposing fort structure built of reddish brown stone - clearly meant to give the vision of martial strength to the outsiders. At night from the Albaycin (Old Arab Quarter), the palace is hauntingly beautiful-floodlights on the fort giving it a ghostly appearance. Upon entering the deceptively unassuming palace, a world of breathtakingly beautiful art and architecture slowly overwhelms you. I simply couldn't get enough of this palace and often found myself trying to absorb as much of it's ambiance as possible. I was introduced to Washington Irving's work when I had bought an audioguide at the entrance of the

palace. This guide was essentially oral excerpts from his book detailing the history and legends of each room as I walked through them. Upon completing the tour, I then was compelled to buy the book. Reading it, I could see the Alhambra in front of my eyes again. In addition to that, I could imagine its former royal inhabitants as the legends of chivalry, romance and ghosts were told. Washington Irving had the opportunity to live for several months in the Alhambra palace. Back then it was a forgotten Moorish fort in a terrible state of disrepair. His style is very soft and dreamlike, thus one is drawn into his writing as he discovers the legends from the 'guardians' who have taken residence in the palace. This book was truly a delight to read, I highly recommend it to anyone wanting to learn about the Alhambra or as a memoir of one's own visit to the palace.

On returning from Spain this spring with fresh memories of The Alhambra of Grenada, I downloaded Washington Irving's work. I wish I had read it before visiting The Alhambra. In these not so dusty pages one views the political and social background of The Alhambra, and hence, all of Spain. The halls, terraces, fountains are richly discussed in this work, mixed in with the Ghostly visions and stories there associated that Irving relates. The stories alone are as fresh as modern television, rich fodder for the imagination. He also describes Spain as it was in the early 19th century, allowing the traveler to compare his own sojourn there. Well worth the reading.

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