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PROJEKT: The EU as a Palette of Cultures - Getting to Know Each Other as a Path to Tolerance and Respect

JEREZ DE LA FRONTERA: CULTURE – MUSLIM ARCHITECTURE

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In year **A.D. 711** Muslims from North Africa took over Iberian Peninsula for another 781 years and ruled there. The kingdom was called **Al-Andalus** and covered most of the Iberian Peninsula – nowadays Spain and Portugal except for the north. This rule ended by reconquest of the last Muslim kingdom of Granada by the Catholic Kings in **1492**. In the province of Cádiz, there was a Taifa of Seville ruled by the Abbadid dynasty from 1023 to 1091. It gained independence of the Califate of Córdoba and Sevilla



was Almoravids. Finally **in 1248** after 16 months of siege, **Sevilla** was conquered by the Spanish king **Ferdinand III of Castile** and reestablished Christian rule again.

In that time many Islamic buildings were built for resident, military and religion purposes like **mosques, fortresses, palaces and houses**. When last Muslim city Granada had to accept Cristian religion again, a lot of mosques were rebuilt into Cristian churches and cathedrals but many building were left as they were. So, we can now admire Muslim architecture in Seville and Jerez de la Frontera.

One of the biggest fortresses in Andalusia is **Alcazar de Jerez la Frontiera**. This



fortress was built around 11th century and it had water supplies for months as well as gardens for food in case something happens. It has a **mosque, water cistern, bathhouse (hammam), olive oil press and the palace**.

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We visited this palace on Tuesday, went through all the building and climbed the walls. It was very interesting.

Two pictures below are hammam and the water cistern in the Alcazar de Jerez.



Another interesting **Muslim Alcazar** can be seen **in Sevilla** which we visited on our first day when we arrived by plane to Sevilla and the families took us to visit the city and its sights. Two most important Muslim constructions are the **Giralda** and Alcazar. Giralda is a tower which has rams inside do the person could get there on a donkey several times a day to sing the Muslim prayers. It was rebuilt into a Part of Christian cathedral. **Alcazar has a big garden – park and is beautifully decorated.** Even after over 500 years, these building are still beautiful as they were all these years before.

Muslims were not allowed to make pictures or statues of people and animals for religious reasons, so **the walls are decorated by very interesting and complicated geometric patterns.** They also used a lot of **water elements like fountains, streams and small water pools** everywhere in the gardens and patios of the buildings. They also liked gardens, trees and flowers which form part of their houses – for example **orange trees**. You can see Seville Alcazar and Giralda below.

