

# *Carmen de los mártires*



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The Carmen de los Mártires, the largest garden in the city of Granada, occupies an area of seven hectares along the southern slope of the Mauror hill, on land belonging to the Alhambra which the Arabs called Campo de Ahabul.

For Christians it has always been known as Corral de los cautivos (“Prisoners' Enclosure”) where the Arabs punished the infidels. It is from this place that Boabdil leaves to deliver the keys of Granada to Isabella the Catholic, who orders the construction of a hermitage at the top of the hill - the first church in the city - which would honor those Christian martyrs, including the bishop of Jaén and some Franciscan friars.





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Although the hermitage no longer exists, its history gives its name to the current Carmen de los Mártires, a huge garden of gardens with different styles where every corner, with its lakes, sculptures and plant labyrinths, evokes 19th century Romanticism .

It is no coincidence that it is one of the most requested corners of the city for the celebration of weddings.





That first church was transformed, in 1573, into a Convent of the Discalced Carmelites which also included a vegetable garden. The convent was demolished in 1842, following the desamortización of Mendizábal, but the garden was renovated and today it is possible to visit it thanks to a reproduction that has respected the different aromatic and medicinal species that the barefoot Carmelite nuns probably used in their peaceful monastic life: thyme, rosemary, lavender, oregano, strawberries.



The garden saw San Juan de la Cruz strolling, who between 1882 and 1888 became the prior of the convent. The mystical poet, who wrote most of his verses here, also took it upon himself to plant trees and contributed to the conformation of the convent gardens and to the construction, together with his brother, of an aqueduct which brought water from the Generalife and which is survived to the present day.





Between 1858 and 1861 the Calderón family built the historic gardens of different styles that surround the palace. Around a small circular square with a fountain dedicated to Neptune there is the French garden, where magnolias, palms, orange trees and flowering shrubs grow. The current appearance is different from the original one, lower and cropped. Of the Spanish garden, only a pond surrounded by roses and some lime trees has survived, having been destroyed in the 1960s. Behind the palace lies the English garden, a palm forest occupied by a fountain dedicated to Philip II.

