



La Rihla.

Academic Network for Minority Issues,



Executive Summary

La Rihla: Islamic Andalusian Journey: Religious Literacy, Safe Space, and Cultural Belonging

La Rihla, organized annually by La Última Medina at the Alquería de Rosales (Granada), is a one-week retreat at the crossroads of culture, spirituality, and community.

It is not “Islam in Spain” but a Spanish Islam: an experience rooted in Andalusí heritage, revived through art, philosophy, spirituality, and dialogue, and open to all members of society.

What makes La Rihla unique?

- A platform for religious literacy, offering accessible knowledge in Spanish about Islam for Muslims and non-Muslims alike.
- A safe space for women, reverts, and seekers to explore faith and culture without fear of judgment.
- A counter-radicalization initiative, where Islam is lived as beauty, history, and culture rather than violent ideology.
- A holistic experience, combining workshops, lectures, nature, horse-riding, swimming, and a guided visit to the Alhambra, embodying the famous *convivencia* both intellectually and practically.



1. Introduction

Across Europe, Islam is frequently presented as foreign or problematic. In Spain, however, Al-Andalus offers a deep historical precedent of coexistence, cultural creativity, and shared heritage, plus it suggests the deep and interesting idea that Islam is part of the Spanish identity.

La Rihla—literally “the journey”—embodies this Andalusí legacy. Hosted in the Alquería de Rosales, nestled in the mountains of Granada, the retreat offers seven days of immersive learning, reflection, and community life. It is an intellectual and spiritual journey where Islam is reimagined as part of Spain’s living cultural DNA.



2. Objectives

- Promote religious literacy to combat stereotypes and foster nuanced understandings of Islam.
- Prevent radicalization by offering inclusive narratives that connect faith to knowledge and culture.
- Reclaim Andalusí heritage as a shared Spanish history, not confined to the past but alive in the present.
- Build inclusivity, welcoming reverts, women, and non-Muslims into dialogue.
- Offer holistic wellbeing, balancing intellectual exchange with physical activities and communal leisure.



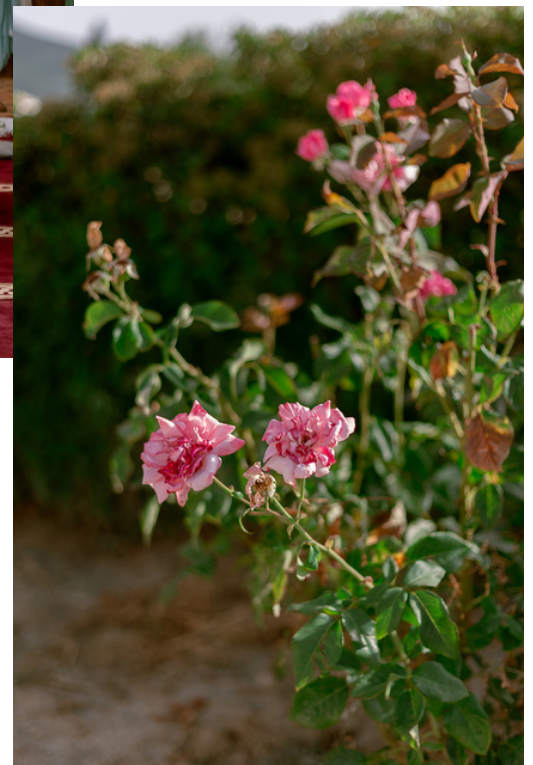
3. Organization and Program

Organizers

- Ali, PhD candidate in Sociology, University of Salamanca.
- Team of La Última Medina in collaboration with the Alquería de Rosales.

Featured Speakers & Contributors

- Emin Alzueta – Poet, philosopher, and teacher specializing in Sufi traditions and modern philosophy.
- Zakaria Sajir (PhD) – Sociologist (USAL), researcher on migration and religious diversity.
- Karim El Imrani – PhD candidate in Islamic Art (UGR), led theoretical sessions on Islamic aesthetics.
- Adiba (Ada Romero Sánchez) – Renowned expert in Andalusí manuscripts and Arabic codicology, with international experience (Timbuktu, Cairo, Qatar).
- Karamy Singateh – BA in Arabic and Islamic Studies, offered reflective sessions on faith, philosophy, and community.



Core Activities

- Workshops: Calligraphy (local artisans), geometric design, stucco, tilework.
- Lectures: Philosophy & Spirituality (Emin), Islamic art (Karim), Andalusí manuscripts (Adiba), reflections on Modernity (Karamy), Sociology of Religion & Identity (Zakaria).
- Complementary activities: Horse-riding, swimming pool, nature walks, bow and arrow.
- Cultural excursion: On the final day, participants enjoyed a guided visit to the Alhambra, connecting retreat learning to the most iconic Andalusí monument.



Daily Schedule

- Morning (11:00–13:30): Lectures (e.g., Zakaria, Karim, Adiba).
- Afternoon (15:00–17:00): Artistic workshops (calligraphy, geometry, stucco, tilework).
- Evening (17:00–19:30): Philosophy and reflective sessions (Emin, Karamy).
- Night (21:00–22:30): Open debates, poetry, cultural dialogue.
- Recreational slots: Horse-riding, swimming pool, nature hikes.
- Closing activity: Guided Alhambra visit.



4. Why La Rihla Is Special

- **More than theory:** Combines academic depth conversation and debates with hands-on craft and embodied practices.
- **Safe and inclusive:** Converts, women, and non-Muslims are active participants, not outsiders.
- **Holistic balance:** Intellectual enrichment coexists with leisure, nature, and physical activities (horses, pool).
- **Living heritage:** Andalusi manuscripts, crafts, and philosophy are revived as living practices.
- **Anchored in place:** Culminates with the Alhambra visit, symbolically linking participants to Spain's Islamic past and present.



5. Impact and Outreach.

- Strengthening religious islamic literacy in Spanish society.
- Countering extremism through critical knowledge and cultural confidence.
- Empowering communities: women, converts, youth gain visibility and voice.
- Reclaiming Andalusí identity as a shared heritage of Spain.
- Inspiring replication in other European contexts where Islam is framed as “foreign.”



6. Lessons Learned and Future Directions.

One of the goals of La Rihla is to serve as a replicable model for intercultural and interfaith initiatives with minority communities. From the 2025 edition, several key lessons emerged that can guide future workshops:

1. Accessibility through Digital Platforms

Many participants suggested recording and uploading lectures to platforms like YouTube. This would extend La Rihla's reach to a wider audience, including those unable to travel.

Digital access also ensures minority communities worldwide can benefit from the content.

2. Balance of Theory and Practice

Participants valued practical workshops (calligraphy, crafts, horse-riding, manuscript handling) as much as lectures. Future editions could expand hands-on sessions, allowing participants to engage with Islamic heritage not only intellectually but also physically and artistically.

3. Creating Safe Natural Spaces

The natural setting of the Alquería was crucial in creating a non-judgmental environment where people felt free to learn regardless of background, belief, or identity. Replication elsewhere should preserve this element: minority learning spaces thrive when embedded in nature and away from everyday pressures.

4. Framing the Tradition

The core idea to replicate is not merely “teaching about Islam,” but rather understanding the Islamic tradition as cultural knowledge and lived heritage, free from ideology or dogmatism. This framing reduces suspicion, fosters curiosity, and prevents extremist appropriations of religion.

5. Inclusivity as a Principle

Converts, women, and non-Muslims participated fully and felt welcome. This inclusivity must remain a central pillar in replication efforts, ensuring diversity of voices and experiences.

6. Sustainability and Community Building

Alumni networks could keep participants connected after the retreat, reinforcing a sense of community and multiplying the project's long-term impact. Partnerships with local artisans, academics, and cultural institutions help embed the program in broader social and cultural ecosystems.



7. Conclusion

La Rihla 2025 demonstrates that Islam in Spain is not an import but a deeply Spanish phenomenon. It is a retreat where *convivencia* is practiced, where radicalization is prevented through knowledge and belonging, and where Islam's cultural richness is experienced through study, art, recreation, and shared memory.

By integrating scholarship, arts, leisure, and a symbolic journey to the Alhambra, La Rihla offers a model of how minority spaces can become laboratories of inclusive citizenship and cultural resilience.

Short summarized video about La Rihla: <https://www.instagram.com/reel/DN1EcZIWyQ/>

