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Go Culture

Dutch courage



**Wine and
beer
at the
heart
of
Dutch
culture**

By **John O'Connell**

It is a common sight in the Netherlands to see a man in a white shirt and tie, with a dark jacket, walking through a museum or gallery. He is looking at the art on the walls, but he is also looking at the people around him. He is a Dutchman, and he is proud of his country's culture. He is also proud of his wine and beer. He is a Dutchman, and he is proud of his country's culture. He is also proud of his wine and beer.

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Moorish palace at the heart of Seville

A GREAT HOLIDAY consists of a collection of sensory experiences that will linger in the memory forever: arresting vistas and alien architecture, the warm sun caressing our unaccustomed Irish skin, an unfamiliar culture assaulting our ears and the tantalizing tastes of an exotic cuisine.

Sometimes the most vivid experiences of all are olfactory, as the unique smells of a destination linger long after we leave for home. A recent visit to the fragrant gardens of the magnificent Alcázar, in Seville, will remain locked in my sensory memory bank.

This royal palace, whose name comes from the Arabic for castle, is at the heart of this magnificent Spanish city; its upper apartments are still used by the country's royal family.

A fortified building was constructed on this site by the Moorish people of the Almohad dynasty, who over-ran Spain from their north African base in the 13th century. Today's building was commissioned by King Pedro the Cruel of Castille in the 14th century. He used Moorish workers to incorporate beautiful and distinctly Islamic design features into every aspect of the palace and its gardens, rendering it one of the best remaining examples of Mudéjar architecture.

The tranquil walled gardens, with their soothing fountains and exquisite pavilions, are filled with overwhelmingly lovely scents. A warm summer breeze will waft tantalising perfumes from vibrant blooms and shady citrus trees, making you forget the bustle of the modern city just beyond the walls.

It is a place that often invades my daydreams, soothing the senses on a wet and blustery Irish day.

■ Real Alcázar de Sevilla,
Patio de Banderas, Seville,
00-34-954-502324,
[www.patronato-
alcazarsevilla.es](http://www.patronato-alcazarsevilla.es)

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**ELEANOR
FITZSIMONS**

