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## THE OIL MILL

The growing of olive trees in Jerez was very important until the first decades of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, when the expansion of vineyards mean the detriment of olive groves.

This oil mill dates back to the middle of the 18<sup>th</sup> century. It was the Villavicencio family, who had this mill built.

### Milling Room

Here the olives were milled until they became a paste.

The clean olives were poured into the wooden box (the hopper) and the fell onto the round stone on the base called the bed stone. A beast (a mule) went round the bed stone and moved the conical stone (grindstone). The grindstone crushed the olives to obtain the paste.

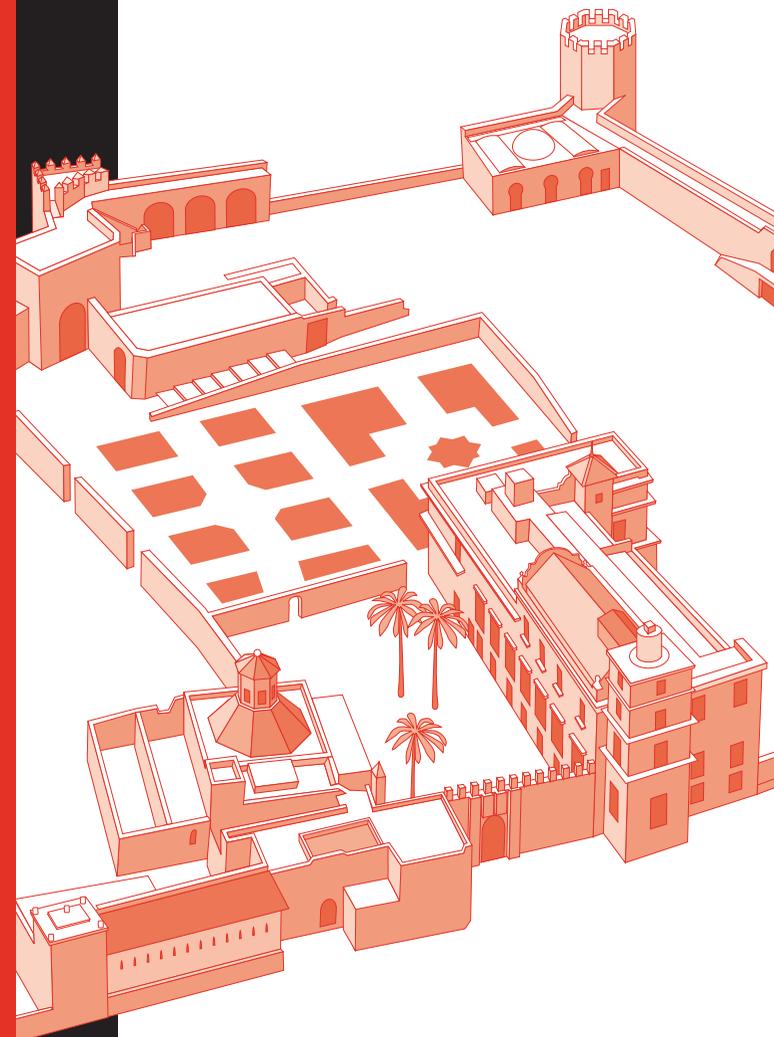
The work in the oil mill was carried out in winter months. Therefore the fireplace was lit the whole day in order to maintain a constant temperature between 20 and 24 degrees. The heat made the oil more liquid making easy, the extraction.

### Room of the beam: pressing and decanting

The paste was put onto a capacho: a round mat made of esparto grass. The capachos were put into a pile with the paste between them, in order to form a block called the cargo (load) of capachos, which was situated under the beam.

In order to lower the beam, the screw situated at one end of the beam, had to be turned. When the beam came down, it pressed the load of capachos and the oil was obtained. The resulting liquid ran along the channel into the tank in the floor.

In the tank, the pure oil, with lower density, remained at the top while impurities (alpechin) sank to the bottom.



## THE ALCAZAR OF JEREZ

Ancient monument, 12th - 18th centuries



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The Alcazar of Jerez, which is one of the most emblematic monuments in the city, is situated on the Southeastern corner of the walled enclosure. With the walls, towers and gates it constitutes a complex defensive system.

The term Alcazar is derived from the Arab word al-qasr and defines a group of buildings, surrounded by walls, which were used both as a fortress and as a palace. It was like a small autonomous unit, seat of the political and military power that ruled the city and its territory. The Alcazar was built in the 12<sup>th</sup> century and it is one of the few examples of Almohade architecture that still exist in the Iberian Peninsula. During the 12<sup>th</sup> century Jerez became one of the most important cities of Lower Andalusia as is shown by the grandiosity of its Alcazar and the extension of the wall, which was 4 kilometers long and surrounded a city of 46 hectares in area and with a population of 16000 inhabitants.

From the original Islamic alcazar the following elements still exist: the two gates, the mosque, the Arab baths, the octagonal tower, the palace of the Patio of Doña Blanca, situated at the foot of this tower.

From later periods we could point out the Homage Tower from the late 15<sup>th</sup> century and the Villavicencio Palace and the oil mill, both from the 18<sup>th</sup> century.

In order to visit the Alcazar we recommend the following route:

1. **The city gate**, which was the original entrance to the fortress. It constituted the only access from the city to the alcazar. It is a typical entrance to an Islamic fortress, an S-bend gate. A monumental horseshoe arch gives access to a space covered by a vault.
2. **The mosque**, a small private oratory. It is the only mosque that still exists from the 18 mosques of the Islamic city. It dates back to the 12<sup>th</sup> century and it has the typical elements of these religious buildings. The minaret, tower from which the faithful were called to prayer. The ablutions courtyard, with a fountain in the middle for the ablutions that had to be carried out before entering the prayer room. The meaning of these ablutions is the ritual purification through water. The prayer room presided

over by the mihrab, a small niche in the middle of the quibla wall which points in the direction of Mecca. King Alfonso X, the Wise, who conquered the city in 1264 consecrated this mosque to Christian worship and dedicated it to the Virgin Mary. He dedicated two of his canticles to her, the summaries of which are to be seen on two marble plaques on either side of the altar.

3. **The oil mill**. This oil mill was erected within the restoration plan that Lorenzo Fernández de Villavicencio carried out in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. The growing of olive trees had great importance in Jerez and its countryside until the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, as is shown by this facility for the milling and pressing of oil. Inside there is the mill itself and the chamber of the beam, where the large wooden beam which was used to press the olives is situated.
4. **The Parade Ground**. This courtyard dates back to the Christian period and was the place where military formations regularly assembled and were reviewed. It was also used to hold important events.
5. **The garden**. It recreates the atmosphere and aesthetics of gardens in palaces of the Al-Andalus period.
6. **The Arab baths (Hammam)**. They were for private use. Major ablutions constituted a religious obligation as well as a pleasure for the senses. They present the classical distribution of the Roman thermae, three rooms according to temperature:
  - The cold room, a transit area before entering the wet area.
  - The warm room, the biggest one. Here people were given massages and had their bodies soaped. It is worth mentioning the beauty of the vaults, which are different in each corner, and the stars of the ceiling that let the light come in.
  - The hot room, where steam baths were taken. The temperature in this room was very high because of its proximity to the boiler and because of the underground heating system.

7. **The country gate**. From the two gates of the alcazar, the country gate was the most difficult to defend as it gave access to the exterior of the city (outside the walls). This is why it is very narrow, the vaults are very high and it has three bends.
8. **The Villavicencio Palace**. In 1664 Bartolomé Fernández de Villavicencio inherited the alcazar. The Villavicencio family, one of the most powerful and noblest families in the city, had a lot of restoration work carried out, among which was the construction of this beautiful baroque palace, which was built over the ruins of the old Islamic palace. The rooms of the palace maintain the beauty and decoration of its original atmosphere. On the second floor there is the Municipal Pharmacy from the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The beautifully carved original wooden shelving and its flasks and jars are to be admired. On the top floor of the tower of the palace is the Camera Obscura, an important tourist attraction which shows a bird's eye view of the city, its countryside and monuments with live and moving images and turns you into a privileged observer of the city and its surroundings.
9. **Royal Pavilion**. It is situated beside the octagonal tower, against the wall, at a great height. It is the only palace of the Almohade period which has been preserved inside the alcazar and it was originally used as a rest pavilion. It has an arched entrance and a pool in front of the building. A central arch gives access to a square room covered by an octagonal dome, like the dome of the prayer room of the mosque. On either side of the central room there are two smaller rooms used for rest.
10. **Octagonal Tower**. It is an original tower of the Islamic fortress and is situated on the southeastern side, at the highest point and thus, it constitutes a magnificent watchtower to observe the surroundings which explains its defensive potential and the magnificent views from its battlements.
11. **Homage Tower**. Rodrigo Ponce de León, Marquis of Cádiz, had this tower built in 1471. Its structure is that of a homage tower for it was originally surrounded by a moat which isolated it and it was used both as the last defensive redoubt and as a dwelling. It has a semi basement and three floors. From the second floor there is access to the chamber of the Islamic tower to which it is annexed.