

# The best bookshops in Granada, Spain

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*Isabel López Ruiz shows us around the most beautiful bookshops in Granada, Spain. If there's a bookshop that you think other students and academics should visit when they're undertaking research or visiting a city for a conference, find more information about contributing after this article.*



The word 'bookshop' is not usually one associated with the city of Granada, in southern Spain; Alhambra, tapas, and sun are probably more obvious choices, but as of 1st December 2014, things have started to change as Granada has been named a UNESCO City of Literature.

Undeniably, Granada remains one of Spain's most important literary centres. It is the birthplace of renowned poets like Fray Luis de Granada, the alma mater of Spain's most important twentieth-century poet, Federico García Lorca, and it served as inspiration for literary giants like Washington Irving.

Bookshops have been fundamental in keeping the city's literary heritage alive. Here, I have selected three noteworthy 'librerías' that are sure to satisfy any bookish visitors.

**Tienda Librería de la Alhambra:** Conveniently situated close to the city's historic centre, this elegant bookshop/souvenir shop/information point hybrid should be your first port of call if you are interested in learning more about Granada's artistic heritage. Particular attention is paid to the city's famous UNESCO World Heritage Site of the Alhambra, Generalife, and Albayzín, with a huge range of literature available in several languages. There is something for everyone: from basic tourist guides to specialised books on Islamic art and design which bring the shelves to life with their bright, patterned covers, emulating the very walls they seek to depict. The vast majority of titles are available in English, with E. H. Gombrich's seminal *The Story of Art* being a particular gem. This bookshop also sells high quality souvenirs (postcards, jewellery, stationary) and even has an official information point where visitors can print off their Alhambra tickets. Two sister bookshops are located by the entrance to the Alhambra complex and inside the Palace of Charles V. Highly recommended for anyone with a passing interest in the Alhambra and art in general.



**Librería Bakakai:** This charming, self-proclaimed 'critical' bookshop is one Granada's hidden treasures. Stepping inside makes one feel like they have gone back in time into an early twentieth-century revolutionary 'tertulia,' where attendees would be invited to discuss revolutionary artistic, literary, and political ideas. Most of the titles available in this bookshop clearly align themselves with left-wing ideologies, but that should not detract any avid readers from visiting, as Bakakai sells an eclectic mix of second-hand and rare books, zines, and political and literary journals, to name a few. Furthermore, it has well-stocked, specialist sections on Feminism, Anthropology, Colonialism, Beatnik Counterculture, and even Slavic Literature. Bakakai also holds regular literary events and debates, contributing to its encouragement of 'critical thinking.' Unfortunately, most titles are only available in Spanish but this bookshop is still worth a visit for any open-minded book lover, if not only to enjoy its seemingly chaotic yet cosy layout. Ideal for humanities and social sciences researchers, and anyone interested in political and social theory.



**Librería Babel:** Possibly the most traditional bookshop out of the three, but by no means any less interesting, Babel

has made a name for itself in Granada as a reliable and well-stocked hub for university students and general readers alike. It is one of the largest bookshops in the city, with a sister bookshop just down the street, also called Babel. It features a huge number of literary works translated into Spanish, as well as all the latest releases. Nestled at the far end of the bookshop, visitors can find entire bookshelves dedicated to Spanish literature, a must-see for anyone interested in or studying the works of authors from Miguel de Cervantes to Miguel Delibes. Due to its size, Babel also features a large number of university textbooks and academic manuals which would not be stocked in other smaller bookshops. With a wide range of available topics, from Sport to Philosophy, plus a suitably colourful Children's section in the middle of the shop, Babel is sure to stock any book you are looking for. Once again, the vast majority of titles are in Spanish, but foreign visitors should visit Babel if they want to get a taste for what a typical Spanish bookshop looks like.

Honourary mentions go to Librería Metro, Granada's prime English bookshop, and three beautiful second-hand bookshops: Librería Atlas, Librería Praga, and Librería Reciclaje, all centrally located.

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**Do you have a favourite bookshop? If there's a bookshop that you think other students and academics should visit when they're undertaking research or visiting a city for a conference, then now's your chance to tell us all about it.**

As part of a new feature on LSE Review of Books, we're asking academics and students to recommend their favourite two or three bookshops in a particular city, with the aim of building an exciting online series for our book-loving community of readers the world over.

Bookshops could be academic, alternative, foreign language, hobby-based, secret or underground institutions, second hand outlets, or connected to a university. We'd like to cover all world regions too.

If something comes to mind, we're looking for around 150 words per bookshop, detailing why this place is a must-see. Our editorial team can then find suitable photos and links to accompany the piece, though you're welcome to supply these too. We only ask that you focus on just one city or region, and two or three bookshops within it.

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