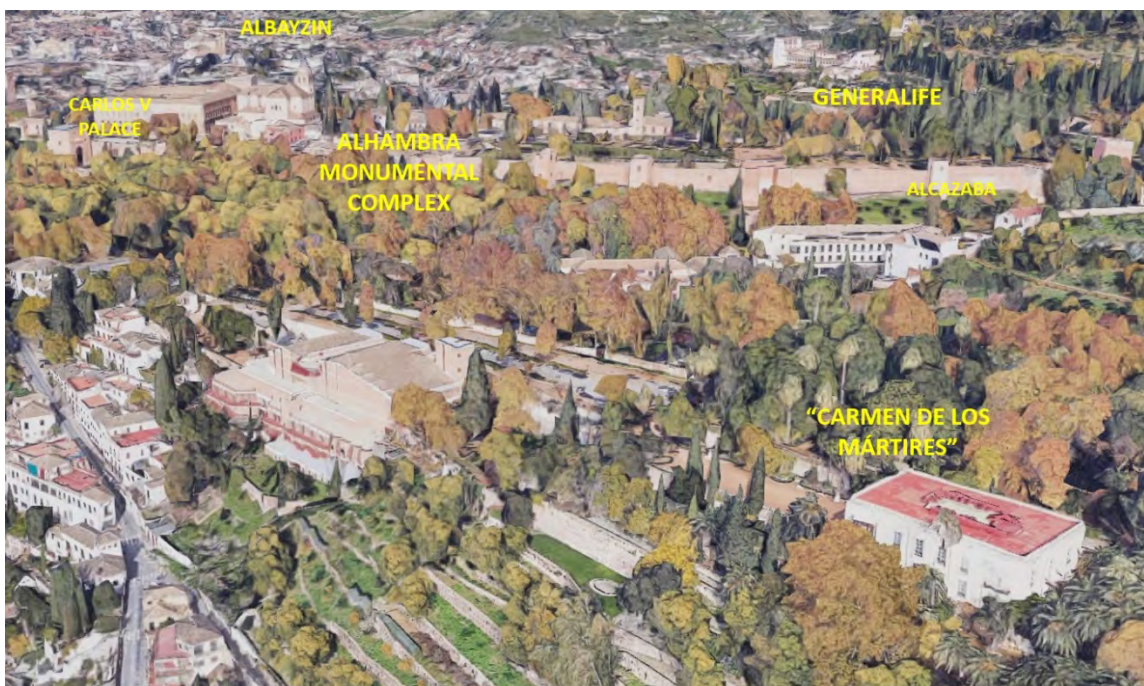


Thursday, September 15th
Closing Dinner at “Carmen de Los Mártires”
For Delegates (full inscriptions, not student inscriptions) and Companions

The closing dinner is going to be developed at **21:00h** in the wonderful “*Carmen de Los Mártires*”.

Just a few metres away from the famous Alhambra Tours, Granada keeps one of its stunning wonders, an oasis hidden away from the hustle and bustle of a capital city. *Carmen de los Mártires* (Carmen of the Martyrs), the largest garden in the city of Granada, stretches out over seven hectares along the southern slopes of Mauror Hill on a piece of land belonging to the Alhambra and that the Moors referred to as Campo de Ahabul. *Carmen de los Mártires* is a 19th-century construction made up of a palace building and vast gardens.



Carmen de los Mártires location in the city of Granada

If we look at the origins of both the place and its name, we find they are also curious. In the 11th century, a compound for jousting and military tournaments was built at the Mauror hill. In addition, they stored supplies for the fortress that they had started to build on the nearby Sabika Hill, which would then grow to become what we know today as the Alhambra. The palace area of the Alhambra was under construction, and the captive Christian workers began being imprisoned here. The area became known by Christians as *Campo de los Cautivos* (Field of Captives). The large dungeons which were dug out of the rock came to house up to 7000 prisoners, many of whom died during the seizure of the city at the end of the 15th century, when the Catholic Monarchs conquered Granada. Boabdil, the last Nasrid king, set out from this spot to deliver the keys of Granada to Isabella I of Castile, who ordered the construction of a hermitage -the city's first church- at the top of the hill, in honour of those Christian martyrs. Although the hermitage no longer exists today, its history led to the name of *Carmen de los Mártires*.

In 1573, that first hermitage was transformed into the Convento de los Carmelitas Descalzos (Discalced Carmelites Monastery), which had an orchard. San Juan de la Cruz, the prior of the monastery between 1582 and 1588, walked through this garden many years ago. The mystical

poet, who wrote most of his verses here, also planted trees, helped design the layout of the gardens and built an aqueduct that brought water from Generalife and can still be seen today. It is said that he would always read and write under the shade of the same tree, an odd cypress variety that is often confused with a cedar. The tree in question was brought from Mexico by Carmelite Missionaries and replanted by San Juan de la Cruz himself. Although it was struck by lightning 20 years ago, the old tree remains standing, with its branches reaching up towards the sky along the edge of the garden.



San Juan de la Cruz's odd cypress



Other views of the gardens

Between 1614 and 1620 a new church was constructed in order to replace the original. The whole convent was demolished in 1842 following the Ecclesiastical Confiscation of Mendizábal. After the monastery was demolished, the property was purchased by General Carlos Calderón and he ordered the construction of the existing mansion. However, Carmen de los Mártires did not reach its maximum splendour until it was ultimately acquired by a wealthy Belgian named Hubert Mersmans in 1891.

During the second half of the 19th-century and the 20th-century historic gardens were built in an array of styles around the mansion. The French Baroque garden, which surrounds a small, round area with a fountain honouring Neptune in the centre and is surrounded by other statues that symbolise the four seasons, is home to magnolia trees, palm trees, orange trees and shrubs in bloom. Of the Spanish garden, only a pond surrounded by rose bushes and lime trees remains today since the rest was destroyed in the 1960s. The English-style garden, formed by a grove of palm trees presided by a fountain honouring Philip II of Spain, can be found behind the mansion.



French Baroque garden



English-style garden

Inspired by the Water Channel Courtyard of the Generalife, the neo-Nasrid courtyard was built in 1944 as a tribute to the gardens of the Nasrid dynasty, with jasmines peering out of the large windows and a rectangular pond in the middle.



Neo-Nasrid courtyard

Carmen de los Mártires was classified as a Cultural Heritage Site in 1943. Today, to the delight of locals and visitors alike, it is a public municipal area where weddings, celebrations or other events can also be hosted.



Outdoor view of the Palace



Indoor view of the Palace

Location: Paseo de los Mártires, s/n.