Islamic art
General characteristics

- Islamic art is especially famous for its architecture.
- There are very few paintings and sculptures, because the Koran did not allow the representation of Muhammad, Allah, people or animals.
- However, islamic art is very fine.
Representative buildings

The most important buildings were:

- **Palaces** (for the caliphs)
- **Mosques** (temples for praying)
Palaces

They usually had gardens and fountains. This courtyard is the **Patio de los Leones** of the Alhambra (Granada).
Palaces

And these gardens are the **Generalife** gardens, also in Granada.
Palaces

Palaces consisted of two areas:

- **Public area** (used for welcoming the ambassadors who went to visit the caliph)

- **Private area** (the residence area of the caliph and his family)
Mosques were the buildings for praying in public, especially on Fridays.

This is the umayyad mosque of Damascus.
The muezzin called to prayer from the minaret.

The Giralda in Seville was the minaret of the old mosque. The mosque was destroyed, and now the plant is occupied by the catholic gothic cathedral.
Some minarets had funny shapes. This one is helicoidal, and it's in Samarra (Iraq)
Parts of a mosque

After going through a door, we find a courtyard or patio. There is an ablution fountain which is used for ritual washing and spiritual purification before prayer.
Parts of a mosque

The prayer hall is a covered area with columns. Muslims pray here.

This is the interior of the Córdoba mosque.
Parts of a mosque

The quibla is the wall muslims face when they pray.

The quibla is orientated towards the holy city of Mecca.
Parts of a mosque

The mihrab is a small niche in the qibla where the Koran is kept.
Parts of a mosque

The mimbar or pulpit. The imam (the muslim priest) leads prayers from here.
Pics of a few important mosques
Dome of the Rock, Jerusalem
Mosque of Cairo, Egypt
Cordoba mosque, Spain
Blue mosque, Istambul
A summary of the parts of a mosque

- Mimbar
- Minaret
- Courtyard (with an ablution fountain)
- Prayer hall
- Quibla
- Mihrab
Decoration of Islamic buildings
The interiors of Islamic buildings were richly decorated.
Decoration

- Muslims used arabic calligraphy symbols as decoration.
- Usually, they sculpted verses from the Koran.
Callygraphy decoration
Decoration

They also decorated the walls with beautiful vegetal designs called ataurique.
Decoration

Or geometric designs
Decoration

- Sometimes, the materials they used were not very rich: simple bricks, plaster, etc.

- But they also used noble materials, like glazed tiles or hard wood like oak or birch (especially for the mimbars).
Decoration (glazed tiles)
Arches
Different types of arches
Arches

- Lobulated arch
A **horseshoe arch**, the most typical islamic arch.
Domes
Domes

- **Mocárabes** (as if they were forming stalactites)
Domes

- Caliphal crossing dome.