Game of Thrones
Ultimate location guide
With season five of the HBO hit underway, YVONNE GORDON travels in search of real-life locations from the Seven Kingdoms... and beyond

SEVILLE & OSUNA, SPAIN
Pamplona in the north is known in the north as the capital of its province and province of Navarre, but in the south some of the most beautiful locations are to be found in the region of Andalucia. This grand and historic region is made up of two provinces, Seville and Cordoba, which are the third and fourth largest provinces in Spain, respectively. Seville is the capital of Andalucia and is home to some of the most famous and beautiful locations in Spain. The city is known for its rich history and culture, and is a popular destination for tourists from all over the world.

SEVILLE

SEVILLE

I’m standing in a square room. The walls are covered in tapestries with blue and green ceramic tiles and ornate plasterwork. Looking up two levels, I see a wooden dome covered in intricate gold star patterns, said to symbolise the universe. From the open courtyards, I can see four balconies look down into the room, while a warm breeze blows through the open windows.

I’m in the Hall of The Ambassadors in the Alcázar. In fact, Spanish-based producer Peter Weir later said that when they first saw it, they knew it was precisely what they wanted. “The Alcázar was so beautiful, and it was just the right location for the Kingdom of Dorne, they hardly had to do anything,” he says. “It was more than they had ever expected for what they wanted. They first saw it, they knew it was precisely the location to be.”

The Alcázar was built in 1354 for the first time in the 14th century by King Peter I. It was finally completed in 1462 by King Ferdinand V and Queen Isabella I. The Alcázar was originally built as a fortress and later expanded into a palace. It is one of the most beautiful and historic locations in Spain, and is a must-see for any visitor to the country.

The Alcázar is home to the Hall of The Ambassadors, which is named after the four ambassadors who were originally located there. The hall is a large room with four columns and four alcoves, each with a statue of a different ambassador. The hall is also decorated with beautiful tile work and frescoes, and is a popular place for tourists to visit.

The Alcázar also features the Palace of Carlos V, which was built in the 16th century for King Charles V. The palace is one of the most beautiful and historic locations in Spain, and is a must-see for any visitor to the country.

The Alcázar is also home to the Alcázar of Seville, which is the largest palace in Spain. The palace was built in the 14th century by King Peter I for his wife, Queen Isabella I. The palace is a beautiful example of Moorish architecture, and is a must-see for any visitor to the country.

The Alcázar is also home to the Alcázar of Cordoba, which was built in the 14th century by King Peter I for his wife, Queen Isabella I. The palace is a beautiful example of Moorish architecture, and is a must-see for any visitor to the country.

TRAVEL INFO:
The Alcázar is located in the historic centre of Seville, and is easily accessible by foot. The palace is open to the public from 10am to 2pm, and from 4pm to 8pm. The palace is open every day of the year, and is closed on Monday. The cost of entry is €6.50 for adults, and €4.50 for children aged 6-18. A combined ticket is available for the Alcázar of Seville and the Alcázar of Cordoba, and costs €11.50 for adults and €8.50 for children aged 6-18. The palace is also open for guided tours, which cost €7.50 for adults and €5.50 for children aged 6-18. The palace is closed on 1 January, 1 May, 25 December, and the day after each of these dates.

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TRAVEL INFO: SEVILLE & OSUNA, SPAIN
home of the Starks. As well as seeing where filming took place, you can also learn archery or take a self-guided Game of Thrones cycling tour (hire bikes on site), passing Audley’s Field and Castle, where Robb Stark took up camp in season one. The real-life stories of the estate are just as interesting as the fictional ones — it has a unique 18th century mansion which has two completely different sides, one Gothic and one classical, and on a free guided tour, you can hear the story of the disagreeing couple that designed it.

MORE INFO: discovernorthernireland.com/gameofthrones

MALTA

Parts of season one were filmed on the islands of Malta and Gozo in the Mediterranean, with Gozo’s famous Azure Window in Dwejra forming the backdrop for Daenerys Targaryen’s wedding to Khal Drogo. The huge limestone rock arch gets its name from the colour of the sea beneath it, and it’s also home to a popular diving spot, The Blue Hole, and the small Inland Sea, a unique salt-water lake connected to the sea by tunnel.

The beautiful former capital of Malta, Mdina, a walled medieval town, was the setting for King’s Landing in season one. Access is via the impressive Mdina Gate (King’s Gate in Game of Thrones), where even in real life, there’s a long narrow bridge over a moat. Less than 300 people live inside the city walls, and the narrow streets are crooked and curvy, said to be designed that way in medieval times to deflect the path of a shot or arrow from an enemy.

The beautiful public gardens at San Anton Palace were another Game of Thrones filming location, used for parts of the Red Keep. The palace is home to the President of Malta and the formal gardens, which are open to the public and date back to the time of the Grand Master of Malta in 1623, have lots of walkways, benches, fountains, sculptures and bird life, with all sorts of colourful trees and flowers set in neat beds. It’s a peaceful place to spend an hour or two.

TRAVEL INFO: Ryanair (ryanair.com) flies to Malta from €42.99 each way. See also visitmalta.com.

CROATIA

Croatia has some of the most beautiful Game of Thrones locations, with the beautiful Diocletian’s Palace in Split one of the newest to appear last season. This season, the external street shots in Mereen, the city in Slaver’s Bay, have once again been filmed here. The massive palace (31,000sq m) was built from white stone by Roman Emperor Diocletian in the year 305. Wander the tiny streets, getting lost and discovering the cosy bars, shops and restaurants and don’t miss the underground cellars.

The city of Dubrovnik, further south, has featured in previous seasons and fans will recognise many of the locations just from wandering the streets.

Although it is King’s Landing in the fictional HBO series, Dubrovnik’s real history is just as fascinating. The former maritime republic, once one of the richest in the Mediterranean, was founded in the 7th century. To protect its riches, nearly 1,2 miles of thick walls were built around the city, up to 20 feet thick in places, and 82-feet high. These walls are still intact (a drawbridge and a moat even remain) and walking the walls is a great way to get perspective in the city and its setting on the Adriatic Sea. You’ll pass familiar towers and fortresses — Fort Bokar is where Joffrey prepared the canons for battle and the Minčeta tower is where the House of the Undying scenes with Daenerys Targaryen took place.

Just outside the walled city in Dubrovnik is Fort Lovrijenac, St Lawrence’s fort, which you’ll also recognise. There are hundreds of steps up to the fort, but it’s worth it for the clear views out over the Adriatic and also over the red roofs of the walled city of Dubrovnik. The island of Lokrum, a short ferry ride from Dubrovnik, Harbour by boat, was the fictional city of Qarth where Daenerys had her party and is well worth a visit — the island is uninhabited, but has gardens (complete with peacocks), rocky coves and a lake with an underwater passage to the sea.

ICELAND

Although Icelandic filming locations won’t be featuring in this season of Game of Thrones (the scenes at the wall are filmed in studio in Belfast), the land of fire and ice has been the setting for some memorable scenes north of the wall, with White Walkers and Wildlings providing some spine-chilling moments.

In season four, Thingvellir National Park in Iceland was used for the first time as a filming location. The landscape here is barren, a field of volcanic lava covered in a thin layer of mud or snow. In real life, this is where the Mid-Atlantic ridge is pulling the Eurasian and North American continents apart and it’s possible to snorkel between the ridges, in the Silfra Fissure. Thingvellir is also far from any towns, so it’s a good place to see the aurora borealis.

Another filming location in Iceland was Grjótagjá, near Lake Myvatn in the north-east. This is where Jon Snow and Ygritte got cosy in the cave in season four. Filming for the Wildling camp also took place near here, while scenes were also filmed on the glacier Vatnajökull, the largest glacier in Iceland.

MORE INFO: Aer Lingus (aerlingus.com) flies from Dublin to Dubrovnik and Pula; Ryanair (ryanair.com) flies to Zadar. See croatia.hr for more.

MORE INFO: At Independent Travel, we’ve got flights plus three nights in Reykjavik from just €259pp (independent.ie/traveliceland). See also visiticeland.com.

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Croatia’s Dubrovnik featured as King’s Landing; Thingvellir National Park in Iceland was used in season four; actors Sophie Turner and Aidan Gillen share a scene.