

The Miami Herald

Michelle Obama visits Spain's Granada

By IAN SULLIVAN | Published: 10:02 AM 08/05/2010 | Updated: 3:00 PM 08/05/2010

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GRANADA, Spain (AP) — U.S. first lady Michelle Obama and her 9-year-old daughter Sasha toured a historic cathedral in the southern city of Granada on Thursday on the first full day of their vacation in [Spain](#).

Before entering the cavernous church, they tried to beat the blazing heat of the Andalusia region by stopping at a well-known ice cream parlor across the street.

A crowd of several hundred people shouted "Obama!" and "guapa!", or beautiful, as the

Obamas entered the cathedral with a large security detail in tow.

The [Obama plans](#) also include taking in a flamenco performance in the old Sacromonte quarter, a hillside district known for caves that serve as dwelling places or taverns for nightlife fun, and a nighttime visit to the Alhambra, the exquisite, reddish citadel that was the seat of Moorish rule in Spain.

The cathedral was ordered built by King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella after they recaptured the city from the Moors in 1492. It stands on the site of what had been Granada's main mosque and houses the monarchs' remains.

The Obama delegation arrived Wednesday for a five-day private visit and is staying at a [luxury hotel](#) just outside the southern jet set resort of Marbella on the Costa del Sol. President Barack Obama and the couple's elder daughter Malia stayed in the United States.

For Marbella, the visit is a public relations gold mine as a city once synonymous with glitz and wealth tries to shake off a more recent reputation for corruption and being a haven for fugitives from justice. Some British media have labeled Marbella as the capital of what they call 'Costa del Crime.' A real estate scandal in 2006 prompted the dissolution of the entire Marbella town council.

"The fact that the Obama family is coming to Marbella is a clear indication that Marbella is considered a leading [tourist destination](#), and it is testament to all the positive changes that have been made in the city since our council was elected four years ago," Marbella's tourism chief Jose Luis Hernandez said.

A Spanish public relations company called Oak Power Communication estimated the Obama visit will be reported on by more than 8,000 media outlets worldwide and generate publicity worth euro800 million (\$1 billion).