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Michelle Obama visits Spain's Granada

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GRANADA, Spain—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.



U.S. First Lady Michelle Obama smiles while she visits Marbella... (AP Photo/Sergio Torres)

A crowd of several hundred people shouted "Obamal" 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.

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).

Spanish media grappling with the summer news doldrums are giving the visit blanket coverage, with some even going so far as to report on how foreign media are reporting the first lady's trip.



U.S. First Lady Michelle Obama, right, and her daughter Sasha, left, arrive at Malaga's airport, southern Spain, on Wednesday, Aug. 4, 2010. The White House says First Lady Michelle Obama is in Spain for a private trip with longtime family friends. (AP Photo)