

DISCOVER SPAIN'S WORLD HERITAGE CITIES



Alcalá de Henares
Ávila
Cáceres
Córdoba
Cuenca
Ibiza/Eivissa
Mérida

Salamanca
San Cristóbal de La Laguna
Santiago de Compostela
Segovia
Tarragona
Toledo



CITIES reinvented

Spain is privileged to be among the countries with the great number of sites on UNESCO's World Heritage List.

The Spanish Group of World Heritage Cities began to combine their efforts in 1993 to create a non-profit Association, with the specific objective of working together to defend the historical and cultural heritage of these cities: Alcalá de Henares, Ávila, Cáceres, Córdoba, Cuenca, Ibiza/Eivissa, Mérida, Salamanca, San Cristóbal de La Laguna, Santiago de Compostela, Segovia, Tarragona and Toledo.

In view of their wide variety of historic-artistic, cultural and gastronomic attractions, World Heritage Cities stand out as unique, must-see tourist destinations.





ALCALÁ DE HENARES

reinvented

I would invite you to go out into the pure spring air to walk around, together, these spaces and these successive times –Architecture and History– symbolised by stones that are part of World Heritage.

José Hierro

ALCALÁ DE HENARES

✱ URBAN SETTING OF KNOWLEDGE



University

In the 15th century, Cardinal Cisneros wanted what would be Miguel de Cervantes birthplace to become an ideal university city, by means of an innovative urban layout. This is now the essence of its attractiveness for tourists, forming the basis in 1998 of its declaration as World Heritage.

✱ Looking pensive, fountain pen at the ready, as if about to write a phrase that is difficult to express. Miguel de Cervantes' statue overlooking his namesake square is not excessively large. It looks like just another passer-by, walking high up as if wanting to concentrate over and above the commotion of this large rectangular space that has contemplated so much of the city's life. That of the universal man of letters himself at his origins, when his father, Rodrigo de Cervantes, took him to be christened in the parish of Santa María la Mayor one Sunday in October 1547. The "surgeon" would go

through the crowd with his new-born son, well wrapped up in his clothes, to reach the church whose tower, a survivor of the vicissitudes of the Civil War, still stylises the square's horizon. There is a long distance to walk in this space that used to be a busy marketplace

✱ **"Impressive the size of this square, which visitors scan as they admire its magnitude, always inhabited by the city's spirit."**



Plaza de Cervantes



Arcade in Calle Mayor



Calle Mayor



"The cheerful festive atmosphere would also fill Calle Mayor (...). Evoking the life of this main street is not difficult, since it still reflects the same spirit it had when it was the Jewish quarter's main road."

in medieval times. It is now a relaxing place for walking among chestnut trees, gardens and pavement cafés, and around the modernist bandstand. Impressive the size of this square, which visitors scan as they admire its magnitude, always inhabited by the city's spirit.

The centre of all affairs, which at some time have to be considered in the Town Hall, a building that adds its composure and the atmosphere of its clock tower to the side of the square. Then everything will be mitigated, suspended in free time, which will also settle on the large



Corral de Comedias

✱ **"How many theatre plays have been witnessed by the old Corral de Comedias, one of the oldest and most genuine in Spain..."**

rectangle: today, as in so many centuries past, Plaza de Cervantes is the setting of fiestas and shows. How many theatre plays have been witnessed by the old Corral de Comedias, one of the oldest and most genuine in Spain, now brought back to life and amusement after a thorough restoration. The cheerful >

* THE UNIVERSES OF CERVANTES

*This is the title of the interpretation centre housed since 2006, when the 4th Centenary of **Don Quixote** was held, in the Chapels of El Oidor and Antezana, both of which survived the destruction of the Church of Santa María la Mayor. The baptismal font, where the great author was christened, and his birth certificate, dated October 9, 1547, are some of the elements that recreate the life and work of the Alcalá writer in an initiative that familiarises today's visitors with the world and circumstances that he experienced. The Centre features an important collection of editions of *Don Quixote*, including valuable copies in several languages. Temporary exhibitions also add to this intimate and exhaustive look at Miguel de Cervantes, by means of a successive series of shows from the Cervantes Collection and the Municipal Collection. This is also a place for contemporary writers: every year the Chapel of Antezana hosts a temporary exhibition centred on the Cervantes Prize-winning writer.*



Statue of Cervantes

"Los Universos de Cervantes"
Interpretation Centre (Plaza de Cervantes, no number, tel.: 918 771 930, www.promocionalcala.es). Admission free. Open: (closed Monday) from Tuesday to Sunday, in winter from 11 am to 2 pm and from 5 to 8 pm; in summer from 10.30 am to 1.30 pm and from 6 to 9 pm.



Plaza de Cervantes

festive atmosphere would also fill Calle Mayor, which the Cervantes family would have frequented often since their home looked onto the street, likewise well restored and recreated to give us an idea of the environment that the writer was born into. Evoking the life of this main street is not difficult, since it still reflects the same spirit it had when it was the Jewish Quarter's main road. It features a succession of architectures from different centuries, among very Castilian masonry and stucco-work, ennobled by arches, eternally full of everyday hustle and bustle.

You can just imagine Miguel and his brothers playing among the columns, which were still made of wood then.

"Like a magnificent apparition, the emphatic façade of Colegio Mayor San Ildefonso rises up, meticulous Renaissance elegance designed by Rodrigo Gil de Hontañón..."

There they go, to greet their father, who has come from working in Hospital de Antezana, where he is traditionally believed to have practised his profession. The building, which is also part of Calle Mayor, reflects the character it has acquired since the 15th century, when it was erected under Mudejar inspiration. A pacifying oasis is its patio of Castilian wooden galleries, which lead to the room that was occupied by St. Ignatius of Loyola in exchange for cooking for the sick. Such was his maintenance while he studied in Alcalá during the 1526-1527 academic year. The institution



University

so vehemently promoted by Cardinal Cisneros in the late 15th century was still recent then. It would forever change the agricultural-town appearance that the old Roman Complutum had maintained when it became Al-Qalat-Nahar (The Castle of Henares) under Islam and later on, after the Reconquest, El Burgo de Santiuste, a domain assigned to the Archbishopric of Toledo. Days and hours that seemed to belong to the distant past when Cisneros conceived his "university city," a special urban layout that was very innovative then. Like a magnificent apparition, the emphatic façade of Colegio Mayor San Ildefonso rises up, meticulous Renaissance elegance designed by Rodrigo Gil de Hontañón, also the architect of the cathedrals in Salamanca and Segovia. Is that Quevedo who is now appearing? Is Calderón de la Barca the one that is now entering?

And they could also be Antonio de Nebrija, Fray Luis de León, St. John of the Cross, Mateo Alemán, Jovellanos, Unamuno and so many others. Passage and essence of letters and philosophies in the portentous 16th and 17th centuries, San Ildefonso is still the doorway of exalted names: those that go through it to enter the ancient auditorium to accept or attend the Cervantes Prize. A ritual with centuries of calm surrounded by the serene presence of the courtyards

"A captivatingly timeless look, nearby, at the Cathedral, the only one..."



Magisterial Cathedral

of Santo Tomás de Villanueva, Filósofos and Trilingüe, and all the colleges and offices that resulted from the Utopia of knowledge conceived by the Cardinal. And one of these illustrious figures could also be heading towards any of the many university colleges, those of greatest architectural excellence: that of Jesuitas, of El Rey, Trinitarios, Málaga, Carracciolos,

Dominicos. They might be registered in one of the more modest ones, places that are now unexpected landmarks of the visit, as is the case of Colegio Menor Santa Catalina de los Físicos, founded in 1513 by Cisneros himself.

Over here and over there lies the city of today, which was extended and expanded due to its closeness to Madrid; which >



Interior of Magisterial Cathedral



Wall and Outdoor Sculpture Museum



“How easily would their thoughts flow today in the Jardines de la Paz (Gardens of Peace), beside the well-conserved walls, among the inspiring layout of its outdoor sculpture museum.”

has added the sound of other tongues, particularly those of eastern Europe, to its perennial echo as a living temple of the Spanish language. Up and down Calle de los Colegios, or Calle de Libreros, or Calle de los Escitorios; streets of everyday affairs facing buildings jam-packed with the past, like any of its many convents: Clarisas, Úrsulas, Juanas, Bernardas, Oratorio de San Felipe Neri... And they might now be on their way to an unhurried visit to any of the exhibitions in Casa de la Entrevista, the former church of the Monastery of San Juan de la Penitencia; this so-called “House of the Interview” pays tribute to the first meeting between the Catholic Monarchs and Christopher Columbus, which was held in the nearby Archbishop’s Palace. More and more historical buildings restored so as to continue present in very good condition, such as Palacio de Laredo, a modernist Mudejar “caprice” from the 19th century that now houses the Centre of Cisneros Studies.

Quevedo or Unamuno, so fond of deep thinking, undoubtedly walked within its

walls. The vertigo of their ideas about life up against the vertigo of the extensive history emanating from so many corners in Alcalá de Henares: the Roman scenes captured in the mosaics in Casa de Hyppolitus, the extinguished existence that the Islamic castle of Alcalá la Vieja so vigorously defended, the gates and walls of many centuries... How easily would their thoughts flow today in the Jardines de la Paz (Gardens of Peace), beside the well-conserved walls, among the inspiring layout of its outdoor sculpture museum. Or among the valuable items in the Cistercian museum that now houses the exuberant baroque building of the Convent of San Bernardo. Or in the peace of the pedestrianised Calle de la Victoria, bordering the sober grace of Casa de los Lizana.

A captivatingly timeless look, nearby, at the Cathedral, the only one, along with St. Peter’s Church in the Belgian city of Louvain, that bears the title of “magistral,” meaning that its canons also had to teach at Alcalá University. And go home along Calle Mayor, just as the Cervantes family would.

❖ HOW TO GET THERE:

Alcalá de Henares is only 30 kilometres from Madrid, an easy drive along the A-2 motorway. Both cities are linked by frequent bus and train services.

❖ MORE INFORMATION:

www.turismoalcala.com

Tourist Offices:

*- Callejón de Santa María, 1
Tel. 918 892 694*

*- Plaza de los Santos Niños (no number)
Tel. 918 810 634*



ÁVILA reinvented

Ávila, (...) the Spanish capital that lives closest to the sky, is a tiny and peaceful walled city that is pleasant, secluded, noble and silent. Ávila, mystical and traditional, honest and hard, awaits, out of time, a friendly heart to reveal its crystalline and mysterious secret.

Camilo José Cela

ÁVILA

* THE CRENELATED HORIZON



Panoramic view of Ávila

Geometric and harmonious, the wall surrounding the provincial capital displays its unmistakable silhouette and is the image of a world that is well *sheltered*, serene and evocative, also reflected by other city monuments. Real urban inspiration that was given World Heritage status in 1985.

And the night will arrive, and the lights, one by one, along the 2.5 kilometre perimeter, will make the walls of old Ávila look as if they were made of an incandescent material. And rightly so, because such is the light of timelessness: they have remained solidly immutable since the 12th century, and their battlements and towers of hard, eternal granite are a majestic shield against the passing of time. The life of man is transitory but his works can last,



Wall of Ávila. North Section

with the same fortitude as these walls, which gives meaning to his existence. Reasoning will undoubtedly be confined to the field of unconsciousness, behind the admiring contemplation of its 88 towers, 2,500 battlements, nine gates, as alive as when they were built, or even more so. Their builders, whether Christians or Mudejars, Jews and Moors, could never have imagined that they would be even more visible by night than by day. As bright as never before thanks to the lights.

Before lighting performed the miracle of "historical incandescence" again, the sky still retained the last light, and the spectacle of crenelated horizontality was dotted against the background of triangular mountain peaks, some crowned with the white of snow. It was pure glory that endless postcard spotted from Cuatro Postes and from the Roman bridge over the River Adaja, as splendid as it appeared at the beginning of the day, bright and diffused in the dawn mist. Only that now, at night, after the visit, and having toured and become acquainted with all of this inner world, the sensation was more complete and satisfying. Because the emotion in the first encounter were the walls themselves, but also finding out what they so jealously continued guarding after centuries. >

"Before lighting performed the miracle of "historical incandescence" again, the sky still retained the last light..."



Convent of Santa Teresa. Birthplace



Monastery of Santo Tomás. Cloister of Silence

* THE WAYS OF SPIRITUALITY

Before going through the gates of this fortified world, we already know that it is the birthplace of St. Teresa and it is not merely a cliché to try and find her settings and inspiration. The force of commitment, the literature of faith: with or without devotion, a lot of affairs of life and very admirable. Her channel of vocation can be any street, and her presence is enhanced in each testimony. On the site of the house where she was born are the Convent and Church of Santa Teresa, erected with baroque inspiration in the 17th century by order of the Count-Duke of Olivares; the crypt now houses a museum about the saint. Many years and experiences of her intense life took place in the Monastery of La Encarnación, located outside the city walls, and she often went to confession in the Convent of Santo Tomás. The Monastery of San José was her first foundation and is a genuine example of her ideals of sobriety and simplicity. A way of life that she shared with St. John of the Cross, who was a confessor at the Monastery of La Encarnación, which still houses the chair he used for that purpose and a

drawing he made of the crucified Christ. Christian and Jewish: near the Gate of La Malaventura, a garden recreates phrases from the *Libro del Esplendor*, an essential Cabala book written by Mosé de León, who also lived in Ávila. The spirituality of such ones is the theme of the Mysticism Interpretation Centre, located on Paseo del Rastro and the only one of its kind in the world.



Garden of Santa Teresa. Birthplace



Mysticism Interpretation Centre



Basilica de San Vicente



Casa de las Carnicerías and Cathedral Tower

“Symmetries of remote times that remain intact in the Basilica of San Vicente...”

These contents were already revealed in the serene and captivating stroll along the parapet walk at the top of the walls: gazing towards the mountains, glimpsing the Valley of Amblés, scrutinising the labyrinth of streets, rooftops, towers and belfries crammed into the fortified city. And then descending at the access to the Gate of El Alcázar, and coming out at Plaza de Santa Teresa, and finding out that it is better known as Mercado Grande, since it has been a marketplace and venue for celebrations since time immemorial; the same is true today, now pedestrianised, a favourite spot for walking and visiting bars and restaurants. The sensation would be as luxuriant as this at all times: the monumental aesthetic, its hundred stories, today's daily rhythm and always that restrained silence, more imaginary than real, unquestionable enjoyment.

Calm and placid was the encounter, in the same square, with the Church of San Pedro, with all of its faithful Romanesque design, which stands out among the architectural order's landmarks scattered within and beyond the city walls. Symmetries of remote times that remain intact in the Basílica of San Vicente, the Churches of San Andrés and San Segundo, the Chapel of San Esteban...

Ávila on high, remote and secluded: what a wonderful location for the architecture of faith! The plot protected by the walls would feature a succession of religious buildings, but nobody would say “too many churches!” because each one was a perfectly harmonious note in the city's contemplative symphony. Up Cuesta Antigua, and along streets with a rich atmosphere, we would come to the street of Nuestra Señora de las Vacas, and then to the Monastery of Santo

“... then to the Monastery of Santo Tomás, where the Catholic Monarchs buried Prince Juan...”



Monastery of Santo Tomás. Main façade

“... the Casa de las Carnicerías, attached to the wall, is the most recent tourist office and entrance to the wall...”

Tomás, where the Catholic Monarchs buried Prince Juan, their only son, since its beautiful cloisters were attached to the royal palace, as is now the case of a curious museum of oriental art and natural science exhibiting items from China, the Philippines and Japan. Monuments and experiences that are the invisible lines of the rosary of churches, monasteries and stately homes: Churches of La Magdalena, San Francisco and Santiago; Casa del Marqués de las Navas, Casa del Licenciado Pacheco and Casa del Licenciado Maldonado; Palaces of Velada, of Los Serranos and of Valderrábanos; Monasteries of La Encarnación, of San Antonio and of Nuestra Señora de Gracia.

The world contained within the walls is also in them, since sections of wall provide support for different kinds of buildings. The story never ends: at the Gate of El Rastro, escorted by two square towers, the Balcony of Doña Guiomar evokes this lady's lovesickness while life today continues along Paseo del Rastro (among 19th-century façades

and more easygoing emotions). Feelings encounter and cross each other opposite the cathedral's unique church and fort presence, with its absorbing Gothic style of granite and battlements that make it the strongest tower along the wall.

Prayers would be offered before its Altar de los Reyes or altarpiece by Pedro Berruguete for events in the lives of families of noble descent, such as the Águilas, whose houses display their lineage on Calle Lope Núñez. And then they would go off to fight for what was theirs, since not even spiritual Ávila escaped from combats between competing lords. That is why some of the mansions displaying coats of arms, which sealed their place in >

“The Palace of Los Verdugo houses the Heritage Department and the Spanish Group of World Heritage Cities...”



Palace of Los Verdugo



Cathedral of Ávila. Main façade



Cathedral of Ávila. Central nave

history, have a fort-like appearance. Bureaucratic matters and other affairs have extended, in some cases, the important life of these constructions: the Palace of Los Verdugo houses the Heritage Department and the Spanish Group of World Heritage Cities; the Casa de las Carnicerías, attached to the wall, is the most recent tourist office and entrance to the wall; the Casa de los Guzmanes, with its strong tower, houses the Provincial Council; the Casa de Blasco Núñez Vela, the first viceroy of Peru, houses the Provincial Courthouse; the very ornamental and plateresque Palace of Polentinos is the site of the Army's Military Archives. Life goes on.

Times and trends change, but some people get stuck in a certain century. The Jews, who were excluded from Spanish history in the 15th century, left behind in Ávila the memory of their painstaking work in leather industries in the remains of the tanneries of San Segundo. The old Jewish Quarter extended beyond the Gate of La Malaventura, and there still exists today, on Calle Pocillo, the façade

of what used to be a synagogue, with its brick arches blending in perfectly with the atmosphere retained in this part of the city. Perhaps the memory of the Hebrews' business acumen is the reason why Calle de los Reyes Católicos, where the existence of several Jewish homes is documented, is now a shopping district. And naturally, their activity would involve Plaza del Mercado Chico, the city centre now and then: bureaucracies and guidelines in the town hall, celebrations and traditions among its arches, everyday street life.

All of this and a lot more is what is so jealously guarded by the walls, now shining brightly in the night; now we know them, but there must be so many secrets still enclosed within. The lights insert in the darkness of the night the scene made up of the Gate of El Carmen, with the belfry of the old convent of the same name, now the Provincial Historical Archives, rising up above it. A small glimpse of what the fort hides. Pure essence.

* HOW TO GET THERE:

Ávila is 100 km from Madrid, to which it is linked by the A-6 and AP-51 motorways. Barajas Airport is only an hour away from the city.

It is also connected to the capital by train (www.renfe.es) or by bus (www.avanzabus.com).

* MORE INFORMATION:

www.avilaturismo.com
www.avila.es
turismo@turismoavila.com

Visitor Reception Centre:
 Avenida de Madrid, 39
 Tel. 920 225 969



CÁCERES reinvented

The towers, used for defence in the past, now rise up inviting us to appreciate the beautiful scenery.

Ligia Borges

CÁCERES

✱ IMMORTAL



Panoramic view of Cáceres

✱ While history continued on its way and the city beyond the walls fell into pace with modern life, the world within Cáceres' walls was wonderfully frozen in time. Its admirable architectural layout was declared World Heritage in 1986.

Almost without noticing, the dark cloak of night falls over Plaza Mayor. It is diluted by the shining of the night lights and the cheerful hustle and bustle. The daily coming and going of this rectangular space, surrounded by white façades supported by arches, including that of the town hall, will now



Plaza Mayor and Tower of Bujaco

be replaced by nocturnal delight. In the end, nothing seems so important while time goes by serenely in any of the pavement cafés. And, nevertheless, how impressive is the presence of the Tower of Bujaco, with its imposing battlements and the perennial memory of the old walled city, entire and eternal, is still there. In Cáceres, the emotion of history is an experience that is both real and magical.

The Plaza Mayor is bordered by the beautiful realism of the wall's towers, which the Arabs erected on top of Roman ashlars. Thus began the dancing of the times, the mixing of the centuries, resulting in the flow of pure and fabulous enchantment. The sensation was already sensed in the interpretation centre inside the same Tower of Bujaco, whose battlements overlook the profiles of towers from different periods and inspirations. It was already felt in the day stroll within the city walls, and we will want to experience it again now that walled Cáceres is shining in the night. Up the stairs, to enter the spell and reality once again through the Arch of La Estrella, which in the 18th century replaced the old Puerta Nueva (New Gate). Hiding in the shadow of the night and of time are the Roman stones that fortified the *Colonia Norbensis Caesarina*, founded by the consul Lucius

✱ "The Plaza Mayor is bordered by the beautiful realism of the wall's towers, which the Arabs erected on top of Roman ashlars."



Arch of La Estrella

✱ "...through the Arch of La Estrella, which in the 18th century replaced the old Puerta Nueva."



Tower of Bujaco

✱ "...how impressive is the presence of the Tower of Bujaco, with its imposing battlements..."

Cornelius Balbus in the year 25 BC. The walls erected by the Almohads in the 12th century were made of adobe and are largely still standing. The story of the time of Islamic splendour is explicit in the round tower, joined to the Palace of Carvajal, or in the cistern of the old Alcázar, now part of the Casa de las Veletas. Tangible scenes from disappeared worlds. The spell is multiplied by the details.

The walk now enters the lanes, under the subdued light of the street-lamps and the seductive dazzling of the façades and palaces. Everything learned in the day stroll is now floating in the mystery of the semi-darkness. Those moments of a new beginning after the Reconquest in the 13th century, when the city was resettled by people from Galicia, Asturias and León, who would become lords of the city recaptured for Christendom, and their fortified mansions would wonderfully reflect

their power. What were actually palaces, touched up and nuanced by the Gothic, Renaissance and even baroque and neoclassical styles, would in time become icons and charisma of monumental and timeless Cáceres.

The towers of some of these noble buildings, like bastions of high-ranking lineage, still remain. However, there tops were demolished by order of Isabella the Catholic, who, during her stay in the city, put an end to the continuous clashes between the local nobles and wanted their homes not to be like forts. Therefore, many of them left behind their defensive austerity and were adorned in harmony with the trends down through the centuries. They thereby became the palaces that now display their amassed elegance around the Con-cathedral of Santa María, with the Gothic bearing of its granite masonry, and the square of the same name. The large mansions do not back off from the church's solemn presence, and there is the Gothic and Renaissance eloquence of the Palace of Mayoralgo, with the tasteful details of its Mudejar interior courtyard; or the >



Cistern of Cáceres

✱ "The story of the time of Islamic splendour is explicit in the round tower, joined to the Palace of Carvajal, or in the cistern of the old Alcázar..."



Palace of Los Golfines de Abajo

aforementioned Palace of Carvajal, whose Renaissance courtyard still has a hundred-year-old fig tree; or the character of the bolstered arch in the façade of the Episcopal Palace. The details and coats of arms become more emphatic in the night, when the stream of light from the lamps lengthens their shadow and their depth.

Illuminated by the sun or by artificial light, the very recognisable scene featuring the Palace of Los Golfines de Abajo wins over all impressions: the very real ones contained in its architecture, which combines the aspects of 15th-century fort and 16th-century palace, and the imagined ones regarding affairs of



“Illuminated by the sun or by artificial light, the very recognisable scene featuring the Palace of Los Golfines de Abajo wins over all impressions...”

life and power suggested by its upright tower. Already inspiring fantasy was the fact of finding out, for example, that such a great mansion was the residence of the Catholic Monarchs, who decided to exempt Captain Diego de Cáceres Ovando, a royal paladin, from the prohibition to erect towers. And there it is today, in the small square of San Pablo,

❖ TESTIMONIES OF THE ORIGIN

Cáceres’ heritage represents the architectural tendencies of all ages, but the area of the city and its surroundings also feature traces of the city’s dawn. Apart from the aforementioned stones that make up the base of the city wall, the Roman origin of Cáceres, one of the most important stopovers on the well known Via de la Plata, is present in one of the main gates leading into the Monumental City, the so-called Arco del Cristo or Puerta del Río, built in the 1st century and still intact today, and in the Foro de los Balbos, also called Atrio del Corregidor. It is a spot near Plaza Mayor and attached to the wall at the site of one of the gates of the first Roman fort. A statue from the 1st century now evokes the place’s importance. By the year 78 BC, i.e. 53 years before Cáceres was founded, the Romans had already established in the surroundings a permanent camp called Castra Caecilia, whose remains were discovered at the beginning of the 20th century two kilometres from the city on the road to Torrejón el Rubio. Even remoter is the origin that can be sensed in the Cave of Maltravieso, discovered by chance in 1951 in the present-day Avenida Cervantes and containing human remains, ceramic pieces and what are considered the most outstanding Palaeolithic rock paintings in Extremadura. The discovery’s importance led to the creation of an interpretation centre at the site of the cave.



Arch of El Cristo



“...the aforementioned Casa de las Veletas, with its baroque façade and the pinnacles alluded to in its name.”



Museum of Cáceres



“... the character of the bolstered arch in the façade of the Episcopal Palace.”

the palace of this renowned noble, proudly embracing the elegant Tower of Las Cigüeñas. Such ostentation of titles and watchtowers reverberates in the silence of the night, and it is as if the night illumination had the compulsory task of emphasising it even more. Façades with a name, always sonorous surnames, hard walls, and nevertheless Cáceres’ old town is still accessible, welcoming, intimate. And the fact is that the narrow streets protect the air and the passage, the façades of the palaces can actually be taken in with a single look, the stone masonry ends up becoming familiar. Perhaps it is also the comprehensible simplicity that, apart from the details of the windows and coats of arms, makes the palaces stand out. Perhaps it is the southern warmth, which slips in at every corner.

Therefore, the palatial homes bordering the Plaza de San Mateo do not become overwhelming. Ornamenting this harmony



Plaza de Santa María

is the Palace of Los Paredes Saavedra, the Palace of Lorenzo de Ulloa “el Rico” or the aforementioned Casa de las Veletas, with its baroque façade and the pinnacles alluded to in its name. Once again, the aristocratic mansions turn their emphatic designs towards the church after which the square is called, which occupies the site of the former principal mosque and dominates the square with its sober Gothic style. Other details border architectural reality and its spell in the nearby Church of San Francisco Javier: its baroque façade escorted by two white towers, which are reminiscent in some aspects of the nearby Portuguese churches. Other stories speak of the narrow streets in the San Antonio neighbourhood, which was the location of the Jewish Quarter until 1478. Other times are recreated >



Church of San Francisco Javier

“Other details border architectural reality and its spell in the nearby Church of San Francisco Javier...”





Bishop's Palace

by the Church of Santiago, outside the city walls, founded in the 12th century by the Fratres de Cáceres, the forerunners of the Order of St. James. The echo of the centuries can also be heard beyond the city walls.

Outside the fort is where the noble Francisco Godoy Aldana had to build his palace, with a tower and beautiful corner window, in the 16th century with the riches he brought back from America, where he had accompanied Francisco Pizarro in his campaigns. Outside the fortified enclosure, the life of nocturnal

soirée continues in Plaza Mayor, while the word within the walls sleeps among lights and semi-darkness, housing the reality of its architectural wonder and all the imaginable scenes between the lines of history. In the same square you can likewise glimpse its days from the past, when it was filled with the murmur of celebrations, markets and processions. Very intense and inescapable in Cáceres is this gift of historical cities: walking through the centuries and, for that very reason, living the present with all the more determination.



"In the same square you can likewise glimpse its days from the past, when it was filled with the murmur of celebrations, markets and processions."



WOMAD Festival in Plaza Mayor

* HOW TO GET THERE:

Cáceres is located at the centre of the triangle formed by the Iberian Peninsula's main cities, Madrid-Lisbon-Seville, with a modern system of roads connecting it to the first two by means of the A-5 dual-carriageway (Madrid-Lisbon), via Trujillo; and following the route of the old Via de la Plata, now the A-66 dual-carriageway, Cáceres is linked with Salamanca to the north and with Seville to the south. In relation to public transport, the city is well

connected with the rest of Spain by train and bus.

www.renfe.es

www.estacionautobuses.com

* MORE INFORMATION:

www.caceres.es

Municipal Tourist Office:

Olmos, 11

Tel. 927 247 172



CÓRDOBA

reinvented

Córdoba, apart from being construction and material, is spirit, tradition and culture, is the untranslatable marrow of our Spanish language.

Mario López

CÓRDOBA

* CITY OF ENCOUNTER

An extraordinary symbiosis of East and West, the mosque-cathedral is the protagonist of an urban world on which the city's essential cultures have left their mark. Well assimilated in its present-day urban vitality, the Mosque-Cathedral was registered in 1984 and then the registration was extended to the entire Historic Centre in 1994.



Córdoba Cathedral rising above former Mosque

A few silent steps among the semicircular arches of the mosque-cathedral, the harmonious echo of the centuries, the amazed and incredulous thought that such a magical oriental atmosphere can be found here: in Córdoba, in Spain, in the westernmost part of Europe. Of course, the aesthetic fantasies of *Arabian Nights* are generously scattered among a region that is still enjoying and reinventing its Islamic legacy; but the fact is that this mosque turned into a cathedral projects it so majestically that

it overwhelms our sense of sight and emotions. So those steps are even softer and slower in a walk around this city that can rightly claim the charisma of the syncretic and finely mixed like few others in the world. The present is multiple and fused, and fortunately the atavistic and always suspicious exaltation of what is "pure" is now something of the past. Therefore, many cities are eager to show the variety that can be found in their streets. Córdoba does not have to exert itself.

"...a region that is still enjoying and reinventing its Islamic legacy, but the fact is that this mosque turned into a cathedral projects it so majestically..."



Cathedral Tower. Hernán Ruiz



Mihrab in Mosque. Al-hakem II



Interior of Córdoba Mosque



"The rumours of time slip through the fantasy of the arches, with their recognisable pattern of white masonry and red brick: many of the capitals supporting them on the 850 columns are of Roman origin."

Whoever wanders around the mosque-cathedral for the first time will work the depths of emotion, so as not to miss any details, to channel the encountered feelings, to truly experience the unique act making up the building. The rumours

of time slip through the fantasy of the arches, with their recognisable pattern of white masonry and red brick: many of the capitals supporting them on the 850 columns are of Roman origin. This heterogeneous history: the church occupies the site of the Visigothic church of San Vicente, which at the beginning of the Islamic invasion was shared by both religions. Work began on the mosque at the end of the 8th century; it would eventually become one of the largest in the world, capable of holding 17,000 people, who would pray in such a magnificent space and sometimes also attend political or educational events. Abd ar-Rahman I, II and III, Al-hakem II, Almanzor... They all left their mark on the great mosque: the *mihrab*, the *gibla*, the *minbar*, the Courtyard of the Orange Trees... It is not difficult to imagine a day of ostentation and celebration, at the height of the caliphate's splendour, >



Forest of Columns. Mosque



Royal Stables. 16th c.



Gate of Almodóvar

“...the Gate of Almodóvar, some parts of the wall...”



weight of that regret, but then our eyes look back and forward again. Two times, two worlds, two appearances; the background nuances and justifies it: what better and more expressive symbol could there be of the historical development of Córdoba and, in fact, of the entire country?

This spirit of historical reconciliation that is conveyed by the interior, and which should now be reflected worldwide, is also present in the exterior of the building. The belfry, Renaissance and baroque, rises up above the Islamic horizontality, and the addition of Christian touches throughout the centuries is visible in the Moorish façades. Our steps quicken now in the street, in the midst of the coming and going of visitors, among souvenir shops and traditional restaurants, with the instinct of continuing in this oriental spell in the middle of the West. Where does this plot continue? One of its most outstanding chapters lies outside the city, in the ruins of what used to be

in this setting that has survived in such a genuine condition.

Or not so much so. Our emotions come to the fore when we arrive at the part that, in the 16th century, was demolished and turned into the Christian cathedral, with an abundant mix of Gothic, Herrera and baroque styles. Emperor Carlos I is said to have regretted authorising Bishop Manrique to proceed with the remodelling. We can now feel the



“Inside the city, part of the former Alcázar remains in the Episcopal Palace, which has occupied its site since the 17th century...”



Alcázar de los Reyes Cristianos

❖ PEACEFUL COURTYARDS AND SQUARES

Although the Romans were great enthusiasts of interior courtyards as the heart of their houses, the Arabs, who barely attached importance to the façades, paid even more attention to them. From both groups, and from Andalusia's own spirit, comes the tradition of Córdoba courtyards, with their cheerful ornaments and colourful plants, which seems to confirm to those passing by, and looking in from the street through the portal, that life there is in fact placid and happy. Open to the outside but secluded, these beautiful intimate spaces stand out, apart from in monumental buildings, in areas such as San Basilio and San Lorenzo. Another alluring place is that of the squares, an urban domain opened up by the Christians, who encountered an almost complete lack of exterior world in the Islamic city. Plaza de los Dolores forms an emblematic ensemble around the unmistakable silhouette of the Cristo de los Faroles. Plaza del Potro contains the Posada del Potro, traditional courtyard housing from the 15th century, mentioned in Don Quixote and now renovated and open to the public. Plaza de la Corredera follows the very Spanish tradition of enclosed squares, although it is the only one of its kind in Andalusia. Balconies and bricks from the 17th century, centred on a space that used to be a bullring and now hosts markets and bars.

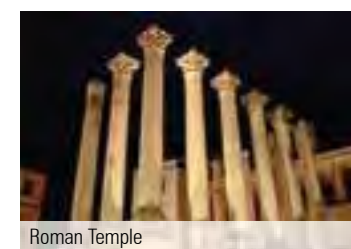


Casa Andalusí

Medina Azahara, a fabulous palace city, a sumptuous showcase of Abd ar-Rahman III's power and grandeur. Inside the city, part of the former Alcázar remains in the Episcopal Palace, which has occupied its site since the 17th century; the minarets that used to be the towers of the Convents of San Juan and Santa Clara; the Gate of Almodóvar, some parts of the wall and also the Tower of La Calahorra, a fort erected on the other side of the Guadalquivir on the site of what was once a Roman entranceway; the baths of Almanzor and those of Calle Comedias... Caliphal Córdoba's heritage must have been abundant and detailed since, with a million inhabitants, it is said to have been Europe's largest city. And also the best educated: Averroes, Maimonides and so many others that travelled the road inspired by Seneca. So much splendour, so much wisdom, so many affairs...

It is true that a lot was swept away by the coming and going of the centuries, but other scenes settled onto the cityscape, which passed through the times of decadence mesmerised by the memory of its prominent life with Romans, Visigoths and Arabs; it thus reached

contemporary times with an intact spirit, settling into the urban vitality of one of Andalusia's most important cities and its only World Heritage City. Post-Reconquest Córdoba began to be defined starting from the 14th century in the Alcázar of the Catholic Monarchs, a royal residence erected on Roman and Islamic foundations. Our senses should also be alert here, since the syncretic plot continues: its rooms witnessed the grief of King Boabdil on being imprisoned and also Isabella and Ferdinand's interview with Christopher Columbus. The beautiful gardens would have been filled with the visionary words of the future discoverer, who would have crossed, overflowing with enthusiasm, the square that now bears his name, opposite the Tower of La Malmuerta, >



Roman Temple



Cuesta del Bailío and May Cross

part of the Christian wall that is still standing. Perhaps he might have prayed for his plan to be successful in some of the 14 so-called “fernandina” churches, since it was Ferdinand III who ordered their construction between the 13th and 14th centuries in order to “christianise” the city: San Pablo, Santa Marina, San Nicolás de Villa, La Magdalena, San Pedro, San Lorenzo...

Although now is the time to speak about the Christian landmarks, we will never lose sight of the details of the wonderful syncretism, which is featured

“...we are obliged to speak of the fine combination of multiple elements on encountering the synagogue...”



Synagogue of Córdoba

in the façades of the houses, their whiteness, the railings of their windows and abundant flower pots; which is like a spirit that incites us to chase it along the narrow, winding lanes. And yes, the itinerary will follow the routes of other very Christian constructions, such as the Triunfos de San Rafael, monoliths that illustrate the popular devotion to the archangel; the Marqués de Fuensaldaña del Valle Palace, now the Conservatory; the former Hospital Mayor de San Sebastián, now a Congress Hall; or the Palace-Museum of Viana, or the Casa de los Villalones. And again we are obliged to speak of the fine combination of multiple elements on encountering the synagogue, which is hidden behind a courtyard on Calle de Judíos, a name indicating that this the district was inhabited by the Jews until they were expelled in 1492. Another history lesson. Another reflexive stop along the way.

There will be a lot of food for thought walking through the rooms of the Archaeological Museum, that of Fine Arts, the Diocesan Museum of Fine Arts... And recognising the harmonious coexistence between artistic and traditional elements in the museum devoted to the Córdoba painter Julio Romero de Torres. And finding out in the Bullfighting Museum about the courage and vicissitudes of Córdoba bullfighters such as Manolete, El Cordobés, Lagartijo or Guerrita. Life that comes artistically close to death. Visitors will be overwhelmed by emotion: the multiple sensation of Córdoba will have a unique place in their memory.

❖ HOW TO GET THERE:

By car and bus along the dual-carriageway from Madrid, Málaga, Seville or Granada.

By high-speed (AVE) train from Madrid in two hours, from Málaga and Seville in 40 minutes, and by inter-city train (www.renfe.es). Seville Airport is an

hour way, and those of Málaga and Seville just under two hours away.

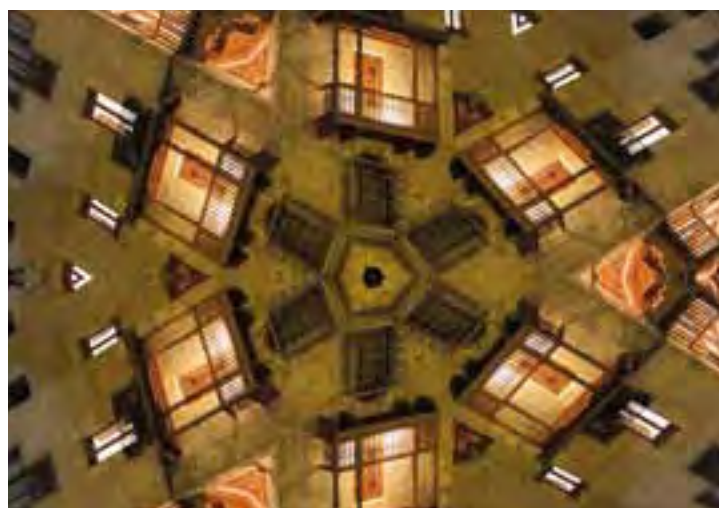
❖ MORE INFORMATION:

www.turismodecordoba.org

Central Tourist Office:

C/ Rey Heredia, 22

Tel. 902 201 774



CUENCA reinvented

Abstract Cuenca, pure, of silver colour, of gentle stones, made of discoveries and oversights –with the same affection–, cubist and medieval, elegant, bold, fierce, as tender as a pregnant wolf, hanging and open; Cuenca, luminous, winged, aired, serene and crazy, infinite, equal, obsessive, noble; old Cuenca.

Camilo José Cela

CUENCA

❖ NATURAL AND HUMAN WONDER



Hanging Houses

As labyrinthine and encompassing as the high rocky outcropping on which it is located, the “city of the Hanging Houses” is pure intertwining between human urbanism and the purest and most impulsive nature.

More than enough merit, apart from other very characteristic values, to be declared World Heritage in 1996.



The mere emotion of the height and vertigo fires up the perceptive will, raising the visitor to the highest heights of feeling. The mere image of old Cuenca nestled about the elevated rocks, pure geological imagination projected skyward from the banks of the rivers Júcar and Huécar, robs sensitivity of all its means. Other beautiful cities gradually appear on the horizon: you have to discover their emotions one by one before gathering them into a single fascination. In Cuenca the ritual is the other way

round: from its height, the intense nature of its scenery arouses this final feeling in the first gaze from the Gate of San Juan, a captivating walk along the Júcar through woodland and the grandiose setting of the rocky bulwarks on which the old buildings, in a fantastic balance, are clustered together. There it is: the entire fascination from the outset, which will immediately arouse our desire to ascend and discover what the tremendous scene encloses, unlocking its emotions one by one.

So let our ascendant steps continue through the Júcar gorge, but without accelerating, since there is more than

“...pure geological imagination projected skyward from the banks of the rivers Júcar and Huécar...”



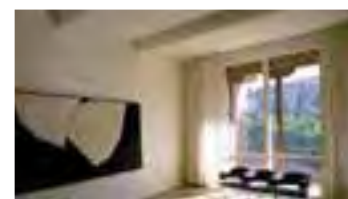
Júcar River Gorge

❖ MUSEUMS AND LANDSCAPES

Cuenca's candidacy for being the Cultural Capital in 2016 includes its wide range of museums. In addition to the Spanish Museum of Abstract Art in the Hanging Houses, there is the Antonio Pérez Foundation, which combines the classic and the new; the Antonio Saura Foundation, which houses temporary exhibitions; the Torner Space, which exhibits works by Gustavo Torner in the Church of San Pablo; or the International Electrophysics Museum (MIDE), devoted to art and new technologies. Other cultural aspects are featured in entities such as the Cuenca Museum, Diocesan Museum, Holy Week Museum or Castile-La Mancha Science Museum. Although the setting of the city is a nature museum per se, close by is the well-known Enchanted City, a fanciful labyrinth of whimsically carved rocks due to the centuries-old action of water and wind, each one with its own name: The Bridge, The Seal, The Sledge, The Mushrooms... And surrounding them, the green splendour of European black pines, willows, lime trees, hazels or white poplars. Species that are present at the source of the River Cuervo, around the curtain of water from the waterfall giving rise to the river. Such explicit landscapes are ideal for a variety of sports, most of which are also available in the surroundings of Cuenca itself: canoeing, cycling, climbing, trekking, bungee jumping, hang gliding...



Rock climbing



Interior of Museum of Spanish Abstract Art



Machine: Interior of Science Museum

enough time and the rushing of fast living already denies us too many delights. The stops and substantial slowness will hang from the multiple details describing the river and the rocks and the graceful architecture. Our eyes will alight on the Church of San Miguel, along with the old wall, a calendar of centuries featuring the touches of successive styles and turned into a concert hall; we will

thereby see that the urban nest on top of the rocky outcropping is still fully alive, continuously reinventing itself. The continuity upwards comes naturally: from the square of the Virgen de las Angustias Sanctuary, a 15th-century church covered by the baroque style, the panorama of the Júcar gorge is overwhelming. Even more? Its capacity for surprising us is never ending: you would think that so much >



View of the Huécar River Gorge



Castle District

and so stylised harmony of crags and vegetation, emphasised by the green water of the river, must have been conceived by someone, whether divine or human, magic or wonderful.

“The metallic pedestrian walkway replaced, in 1902, the stone bridge that had been used to overcome the precipice from the 16th century until it collapsed...”

“...on the way to the district of the Castle, which, at a height of 1,001 metres, is the highest part of the city.”

From man, from his aesthetic sense and even more so from the simplicity of what is necessary, is the most complete profile of the urban layout that is glimpsed from the tower remaining from what was once the castle. From man's dark side are the sombre tasks that the Inquisition carried out in the neighbouring sober construction that now houses the Provincial Historical Archives. A prayer for hope, a thousand petitions for life since the 15th century in the nearby Church of San Pedro, and from a long time before, when it was the site of a mosque. It is the vertigo of the passing of time and everything that has been experienced in every corner, and again it is the vertigo of height when we spot the Huécar gorge, after going through the Arch of Bezudo, on the way to the district of the Castle, which, at a height of 1,001 metres, is the highest part of the city. Afterwards it will continue to be a majestic background along Calle Julián



View of the San Pablo footbridge

“...again it is the vertigo of height when we spot the Huécar gorge...”

Romero, characterised by its simple and sincere traditional architecture, as far as the Bridge of San Pablo. The metallic pedestrian walkway replaced, in 1902, the stone bridge that had been used to overcome the precipice from the 16th century until it collapsed. On crossing it, the vertigo is real and physical; in reality, just a symptom of the view around us: there is Cuenca in its highest and most symbolic essence.

While continuously looking back, at the city's fabulous crests, the route along the exciting walkway will take us to the Convent of San Pablo, which was erected in the 16th century as if it were the natural continuation of another rocky outcropping and is now a National “Parador.” Like a siren call, the image of the Hanging Houses, which we already recognised before crossing the bridge, have been continuously arousing the most pleasing attention: recognising a repeated emblem and seeing that its size corresponds to what we expected is a joyful compensation. So we contemplate them in their entire setting, knowing that it was a complete block of houses that served as a cornice above the precipice in the 17th century. Three were saved from demolition and their singular continuous balconies subject to the best revival, two of them being fundamentally full of content: they house the Spanish Museum of Abstract Art, promoted by well-known artists and one more landmark in the city's fame. And the fact is that art should always *rise* to the occasion.

At the top, well up in this same Huécar gorge, opposite the traditional district of San Martín, another recognisable

scene arises, that of the so-called “skyscrapers,” sober houses also hanging above the abyss, in some cases with up to twelve floors, although at the back, their main façade only features four or five. That street where they display their *small side* is Calle Alfonso VII, the main thoroughfare in the old and high Cuenca, where these simple buildings, exquisitely coloured in recent decades, make up a delightfully vivid and evocative scene: with such fine decoration, the daily coming and going seems to be tinged with an extraordinary atmosphere. Special, without doubt, in this same street is the abundant rococo decoration >

“...Calle Alfonso VIII, the main thoroughfare in the old and high Cuenca...”



Colored façades on Alfonso VIII Street



View of the Húecar River Gorge

inside the Church of San Felipe Neri; its stairway is where the *Miserere* is sung during Holy Week, another of the city's renowned events. Religious feelings, like all other feelings, high up seem to be closer to heaven, more ethereal, far more spiritual.

The nobles that built the notable houses on Calle San Pedro even had to conceive their earthly power in a more exalted way. However, the force of the passing of time continues at the same rate—as we know—not overlooking anything or anyone. We are reminded of this by the singsong repetition of the Tower of Mangana clock, built in the 16th century and remodelled in the 20th century, beside the square of the same name. The ornamental nooks and crannies in the baroque façades of Plaza de la Merced seem to be unfazed by every stroke. Although they do resound with bureaucratic droning in the Town Hall, a 18th-century building that completed the

triangle in Plaza Mayor, while maintaining access by means of its three arches.

Another corner of the triangle is occupied by the Convent of Las Petras, and the most prominent vertex is the Cathedral, with its façade stylised and mesmerised by a lively neo-Gothic design. This mystic air of the most exalted that slips through the open arches and reaches as far as the original corners of the building, which began to be built in the 12th century; inside it houses gems such as the transparent baroque style of its altar, conceived by Ventura Rodríguez. Translucent forms of faith.

High up, old Cuenca and all of its feelings. Down below, the certainty of the new town and its daily affairs. There is always time for a break, sometimes a fiesta, to forget about one's problems and go out for some tapas in Calle San Francisco. A "morteruelo" tapa, a glass of La Mancha wine and here everything seems fine, above and below.



"...The ornamental nooks and crannies in the baroque façades of Plaza de la Merced seem to be unfazed by every stroke..."



"...the most prominent vertex is the Cathedral, with its façade stylised and mesmerised by a lively neo-Gothic design."



Front of the Cathedral



Interior of the Cathedral in Cuenca

* HOW TO GET THERE:

Cuenca is 167 km from Madrid; from there you can drive along the A-3 motorway and take the A-40 turnoff. You can also get there by bus (www.avanzabus.com) or by train on the Madrid-Valencia route (www.renfe.es).

* MORE INFORMATION:

www.cuenca.es

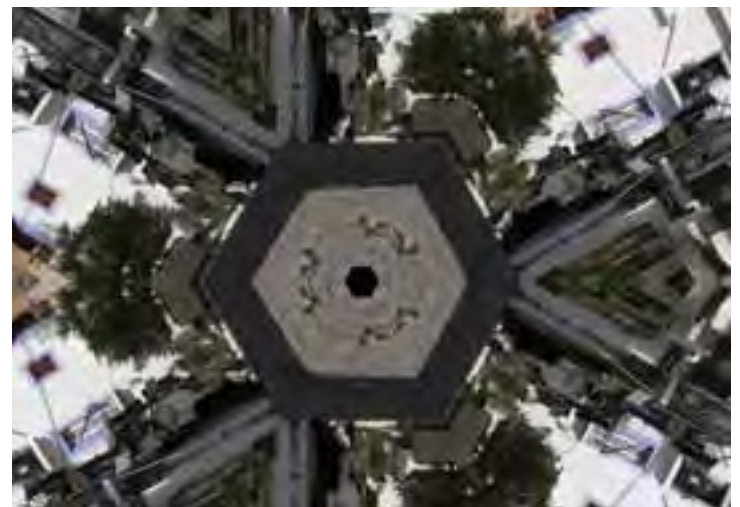
Tourist Office:

Plaza Mayor, 1
Tel. 969 241 051

www.turismocuenca.com

Turismo de Cuenca Foundation:

Avenida Cruz Roja, 1
Tel. 969 241 050



IBIZA reinvented

And the news? Only the boat brought it to Ibiza. Along with the vessel came knowledge; without it, nothing was known about the world. Sometimes, a wave that was choppy due to a distant hurricane brought news about it, because the sea, woven together in vast mobility, makes it possible to speculate beyond the horizon.

Enrique Fajarnés Cardona

IBIZA

* THE TREASURE ISLAND



In 1999, the fortified town of Dalt Vila, the necropolis of Puig des Molins, the Phoenician settlement of Sa Caleta and the prairies of Posidonia sea-grass on the sea bottom in the Ses Salines Nature Reserve were declared World Heritage. Four of the many gems that surprise visitors arriving in an Eivissa full of clichés.



Parade Ground, Dalt Vila

As it sets, the sun paints the reddish, earthy cliff surrounding Sa Caleta beach a fiery colour. The calm, turquoise sea retains the scene and the last bathers take their time in leaving "because it is so nice here," "because this is paradise." It must have seemed like the longed-for Eden to the Phoenicians, who, after sailing from the easternmost part of the Mediterranean, decided to settle in this cove around the 8th century BC. They must have spotted numerous beautiful places along the way, but this island, bathed in light, curled up in its rolling hills and its dense pine trees, was like a blessing from the goddess Astarte. Those same last rays of sunshine revive the shadows among the labyrinthine remains of the settlement they founded, and for a moment they appear to come to life: a sunset exactly the same as

this 28 centuries ago, a day of everyday routine, with all of its affairs and chores. Like these bathers, many settlers would have found it difficult to leave the place, but it had already been decided that they should all move to a new settlement a few kilometres north, in a bay with better conditions and where the capital of the island would be established for all time. The route that is now travelled in car by tourists and residents,



"The tourists that came to the island only aware of its beaches and festive nights are fascinated by the scene of the vertical labyrinth of bulwarks, walls, towers and rooftops..."



Sections of Wall and Bulwark of Santa Lucía, Dalt Vila



Viewpoint and Domes of Church of Santo Domingo, Dalt Vila



"...and they will also discover the harmony and charisma of idyllic Mediterranean landscapes and the white traditional architecture..."

.....

between the city and the south of the island, was the same one taken by those Phoenicians at the beginning of the 7th century BC, loaded down with the weight of all their belongings and that of uncertainty. The load would have felt lighter on contemplating this bay, also illuminated by the gods: on its projecting promontory, at the foot of a fertile lowland, they would build their new world, a city made to last forever that they called Ibosim.

The gestures of today's visitors become more expressive on contemplating the magnificent profile that history has

shaped in the old Phoenician settlement, which later on was Carthaginian, and then the Roman Ebusus, the Islamic Yabisa and finally the Eivissa conquered and resettled by the Crown of Aragon. The tourists that came to the island only aware of its beaches and festive nights are fascinated by the scene of the vertical labyrinth of bulwarks, walls, towers and rooftops: a colossal vessel that is reflected in the waters of the port. The following days they will also discover the harmony and charisma of idyllic Mediterranean landscapes and the white traditional architecture, and then they will say that this island has everything, that its great fame is worthy of many more nuances.

They have discussed it while having a drink in any of the pavement cafés of La Marina, facing the hustle and bustle of the port and the cosmopolitan coming and going of people. They have travelled these streets of old architecture, featuring multicoloured shops; they have looked with wide- >



Restaurants in Plaça de Vila, Dalt Vila

"...streets of old architecture, featuring multicoloured shops..."



Shops in Dalt Vila

❁ GARDENS ON THE SEA BOTTOM



Sea Bed in Nature Reserve of Ses Salines, World Heritage

The World Heritage status also includes a nature site: the prairies of Posidonia sea-grass in the Ses Salines Nature Reserve. This plant, endemic to the Mediterranean and essential in its ecosystem, forms real prairies on the sea bottom between Ibiza and Formentera, the two main islands in the archipelago of the Pitiusas. Knowing what is hidden in the magnificently azure sea, which bathes the beaches in the south of Ibiza, such as Ses Salines or Es Cavallet, and in the north of Formentera, such as Illetes or Llevant, is one more incentive for enjoying these sandy areas that, like so many others on both islands (and like very few in the rest of Spain's Mediterranean coast), are still practically unspoilt. The Ses Salines Nature Reserve includes, also within its territory on both islands, saltworks, especially large in the case of Ibiza, which were worked by Carthaginians and Romans and still produce salt today. They are a real spectacle when herons and flamingos are flying above them.



Portal de Ses Taules, Dalt Vila

open eyes at the local colour in Calle de la Virgen, where they had dinner last night in one of its restaurants; they have arrived at this evocation of Roman temple that is the Mercat Vell (old market), and there they have come across the entrance to the "vertical labyrinth." An elongated ramp leads up to the Portal de ses Taules, the main gate in the overwhelming wall of bulwarks that Felipe II had built in the 16th century due to frequent attacks from the Turks and the appearance of firearms. And now they are inside, among the Renaissance arches in the Patio de Armas (parade ground), which they are told is the location of the market set up by the mythical *hippies*, who, like the ancient Phoenicians, surrendered to the island's beautiful harmony. They walk around Plaça de Vila, among fortified



"...the Portal de ses Taules, the main gate in the overwhelming wall of bulwarks..."

walls and characteristic Ibiza façades, among outdoor restaurant tables and the sweet murmur of serenity. Inside the walled town, they will not lose the feeling of tranquility conquered from time, the passing of the centuries. The preconceived frivolous image disappears for good. And now what? Now it is the emotion of that depth of stones and façades from different times and cultures, which placidly arises among the bougainvillea and palm trees in Plaza de Sa Carrossa. Now it is the fullness of the horizon on view from the bulwark



View of Sa Penya Historic Quarter from Walls



"Now it is the fullness of the horizon on view from the bulwark of Santa Llúcia..."

of Santa Llúcia: spotting through the battlements the line of blue sea, which merges with the sky; contemplating the bay and all of its port and urban facilities, the city draughtboard, which is located on Paseo de Vara de Rey. The feeling gets deeper as they continue walking upwards: the gentle southern whiteness of the old Dominican convent, which now houses the town hall, the history evoked in the small Chapel of Sant Ciriac, the traditional site of the gate through which, on August 8, 1235, the soldiers sent by Jaume I to conquer the island and city slipped through; the eloquent gates and meticulous masonry in Carrer Major, where the medieval nobles erected their houses bearing coats of arms. One of them now houses the Puget Museum, featuring paintings by Puget Viñas and Puget Riquer and an emotional look at the genuine Ibiza of the mid-20th century.



Seaman's Monument and Hotel Montesol, in Puerto



"...the city draughtboard, which is located on Paseo de Vara de Rey."

"...as far as Plaça de la Catedral, whose construction began in the 14th century..."



Cathedral

They continue upwards, through the shady peacefulness of narrow streets, as far as Plaça de la Catedral, whose construction began in the 14th century, at the same time as the Cúria building, now the Centre d'Interpretació Madina Yabisa, a modern initiative that explains the city's history, centred on its Islamic period. A real enjoyable contrast with the characteristic Catalan Gothic style of the building and of the cathedral that so outstandingly crowns the "vertical labyrinth." From its square, visitors contemplate the mesmerising panorama of the bay and the city, as if viewed from the sky. In the same place, they would visit the earliest origins in the Museu Arqueològic d'Eivissa i Formentera, which occupies the former university building. They thought that it would be a wonderful nod to the passing of time housing the Museu d'Art Contemporani right in the Sant Joan bulwark: the old and the new in >



View of Walled Town, World Heritage, from sea



“And the eyes are again drawn to the sea, immense from these battlements overlooking the south and its beaches and the elongated silhouette of Formentera.”

the same dimension. New techniques for travelling through history: the Sant Pere bulwark exhibits milestones in the construction of the wall and the Sant Jaume bulwark features technical development in the military world.

The pleasingly explained past detained them, but up there, there is still some way to go behind the cathedral. Go up even further? Only a little more, as far as the terraces of the bulwarks supporting the Almudaina and the Castle, which in 2010 will house the Balearic Islands' first National "Parador." And the eyes are again drawn to the sea, immense from these battlements overlooking the south and its beaches and the elongated silhouette of Formentera. And also the contiguous mountain, with several old windmills like a graceful crest.

At Puig des Molins (hill of the windmills) there are still some of these constructions,

whose wind power was used to pump water up to the high citadel. Life for the living and a babbling murmur for the dead of centuries and centuries: the Phoenician-Punic necropolis that is bored into this mountain is the largest of those remaining in all the Mediterranean. Around 3,000 underground tombs were excavated here from the time the city was founded to the 7th century AD, and their testimony is narrated piece by piece in the neighbouring Museo Arqueològic del Puig des Molins. Impressed once again, the visitors wonder whether all those that do not go beyond the surface of the island can even imagine its multiple inner soul. They now feel pleased at knowing that Tanit, the female deity that is still very much an icon of the island, is the Carthaginian representation of Astarte, the goddess that accompanied those first Phoenicians. The magic continues.

❖ HOW TO GET THERE:

There are many airlines that fly to Ibiza from different Spanish cities and from all over Europe. General information at www.aena.es.

By boat, from Majorca, Denia, Valencia and Barcelona and several ports along the continental Mediterranean coast, with the companies Transmediterrànea (www.transmediterranea.es) and Baleària (www.balearia.com).

❖ MORE INFORMATION:

www.ibiza.es

*Tourist office in the Cúria building, in Plaça de la Catedral:
Tel. 971 399 232*



MÉRIDA reinvented

Everything changes in time and perishes with the years.
What stability do human things have?
Here, where Mérida now stands, was the famous Emerita that Augustus gave to his veterans to settle.

Elio Antonio de Nebrija

MÉRIDA

* ROMAN AND ETERNAL SPIRIT



Stage of Roman Theatre

The light of hundreds of torches streamed all over and, in the midst of music and great ostentation, the show took place on the stage. A new theatre, a new city: how great you are, Rome! A night of celebration in the year 15 BC to open the great venue financed by Marcos Vipsanius Agrippa.

Augusta Emerita had arisen only ten years before, a city invented by the will of Emperor Augustus to settle the veteran soldiers (*emeriti*) that had fought in the Cantabrian wars. The fertile meadow in the Guadiana valley would be



Grape-Treading Mosaic.
Casa del Anfiteatro

the prize for these brave warriors and, at the same time, the romanisation of Lusitania would be consolidated. A new city, and make it a grandiose one, and let there be no doubt about the splendour of Rome. Firm was the invocation and Mérida made a grand entrance into the history books: in only a few years it had all the elements of a large Roman city and it would not take long to become the most important in Hispania and occupy, according to Ausonius, ninth place among all the empire's cities. So let the dancing in between the columns and statues on the stage continue and do not stop cheering on the comedians...

The still echo of that first night seems etched, more than two thousand years later, in the grandiloquent remains of Mérida's theatre, city icon and essential image. And visitors wander around the terraces, admiring the solemnity retained by those columns and statues at the front of the stage; and they cannot stop imagining so many, so very many performances, and the murmur of 5,500 spectators arranged in the stone seats according to hierarchical order, from bottom to top. There was extra paraphernalia one evening in the year 8 BC because just next door the amphitheatre was being opened, and the gladiators and exotic beasts were giving themselves over, with a fiery survival instinct, to the game of life or

"...in the grandiloquent remains of Mérida's theatre, city icon and essential image."



Partial view of Citadel, the oldest in the Iberian Peninsula



"Evocation arises on its own in the remains of the amphitheatre, by way of the precise elliptical shape, the sand with its pit, the terraces, the rooms were the gladiators prayed to destiny for their life before going out to risk it in front of the frenzied crowd."

death; and how the 14,000 people that had paid to see them roared. The same routine, week after week, year after year, until the slow and inexorable cloud of the empire's decadence gradually made everything vanish. Starting in the 5th century, everything was abandoned, and even ransacked for its magnificent stone, while it witnessed the passing of the

Visigoths and Arabs, the Reconquest and the long anonymous time that followed.

What strength those buildings have; despite it all, they still reflect their grandeur. Evocation arises on its own in the remains of the amphitheatre, by way of the precise elliptical shape, the sand with its pit, the terraces, the rooms >



Roman Amphitheatre

* CLASSICAL THEATRE IN ITS PLACE

Every year the Roman theatre and amphitheatre host the Classical Theatre Festival of Mérida, one of the most significant cultural events in Spain. During the summer, the best productions of plays by Greek and Roman authors attain marvellous realism on being performed in these venues that are so solemnly genuine. It was the legendary actress Margarita Xirgú who, on contemplating the magnificence of the theatre's stage front, wanted to perform *Medea* there. The production, based on Miguel de Unamuno's version, premiered on June 18, 1933, in front of an enthusiastic crowd made up of important personalities, such as Manuel Azaña, president of the Republic, or Gregorio Marañón. The following year, the so-called Roman Week was held and Margarita Xirgú attended again, this time with *Electra*. The Civil War and the victory of the dictatorship interrupted such activity, which was not resumed until 1953, when the performance of *Fedra* opened the festival that has continued until our time. The performance, once again, of *Medea* by Nuria Espert in 1959 provided the final impulse of professionalism and high quality that has characterised the festival since then.



Night views of Roman Theatre. Classical Theatre Festival

were the gladiators prayed to destiny for their life before going out to risk it in front of the frenzied crowd. It is also triggers and intones scenes from *Ben-Hur* in the very recognisable silhouette of what used to be the circus, to the north of the city, despite its scarce ruins: up to 30,000 spectators crammed into the

terraces and applauded the victorious charioteers in the races.

Five centuries of fully Roman existence, which also featured daily hours, work and celebrations, love and strife, streets and families. Everyday life that one day was buried under the building materials of other cultures: how many

"...there is no detail that is not exhibited in the National Roman Art Museum."



testimonies and how many emotions lie below present-day Mérida. The excavations, whether archaeological or routine, are continuously telling stories.

A tale about the grape harvest is related by the mosaics in the so-called Casa del Anfiteatro and there is no detail that is not exhibited in the National Roman Art Museum. The famous building designed by Rafael Moneo, contiguous to the theatre and amphitheatre and opened in 1986, is a fabulous epilogue to Mérida's faded Roman history. As if it were a strong survivor from those days, its brick walls look like an original construction and highlight the stone beauty of columns and statues. Daylight slips through the large arcades and alights on so many pieces, arranged so as to explain their old life and purpose. The archaeological remains over which the museum was erected do so in a sincere way: tombs, walls, a stretch of road... The emotional journey is guaranteed, and will not cease afterwards, when walking around the city streets, since Augusta Emerita raises its head in many corners of modern-day Mérida.

The stones in the churches are superimposed, the same as the creeds, and St. Eulalia, a martyr from the city, is venerated in a chapel built with remains from the sanctuary dedicated to Mars, whose stones likewise form part of the adjacent church that bears his name. One more scene from the Roman plot, which today's *spectators* can follow thanks to the information provided in the reception of Mérida's Museo Abierto (Open Museum). You have to follow the trail around the mosaics in the house of Mithreo, the remains of the forum and so many other remains scattered about the city, evident in Morerías, on the banks of the Guadiana. Roman infrastructure always causes admiration: three pillars



Central Hall in National Roman Art Museum

indicate what used to be the San Lázaro aqueduct, which crossed the ford of the River Albarregas, a tributary of the Guadiana, the same as the Los Milagros aqueduct, which still has enough pillars to give us an idea of the beautiful finish of its triple series of arches. Its high platform supplied the city with water from the Prosperpina reservoir, located five kilometres away, whose Roman dike is still intact along with some of the original channels. This liquid element would water the rites carried out in the large temple to which the Arch of Trajanus belonged, and in the Temple of Diana, whose elegant >



"...the Los Milagros aqueduct, which still has enough pillars to give us an idea of the beautiful finish of its triple series of arches."



Partial view of Aqueduct of los Milagros from parapet of Roman Bridge overlooking the Albarregas Stream



Temple of Diana and remains of the Palace of el Conde de los Cordos



“...the Temple of Diana, whose elegant columns were integrated into the Count and Countess of Los Corbos’ palace in the 16th century.”

columns were integrated into the Count and Countess of Los Corbos’ palace in the 16th century. Augusta Emerita wants to be seen.

Eternal and emphatic is its presence in the Roman bridge crossing the Guadiana, one of the longest in its time; it now contrasts with the aerial and white harmony of the Lusitana Bridge designed by Santiago Calatrava. Thus, today’s Mérida defends its own merit, as it did in times past: the Islamic centuries recited in the walls of the citadel, the Christian

times in the Church of Santa María or the Convent of Santo Domingo. Evocative of the Renaissance are some ancestral homes in Plaza de España, overlooking the orange trees and the everyday atmosphere of nowadays, which takes place in the shops on the pedestrian street called Santa Eulalia, or the restaurants and bars in the surroundings. The new Mérida looks to the future, imagined in the modern profile of buildings such as the Congress Hall and the Jesús Delgado Valhondo Library, based on its idiosyncrasy as the regional capital and an important communications centre, as was also the case of Augusta Emerita. The significance of the Roman city, the same as its stones, also wants to reappear.

“Eterna y rotunda es su presencia en el puente romano que cruza el Guadiana...”



Roman Bridge over the river Guadiana

❖ HOW TO GET THERE:

Mérida is easy to reach from any part of Spain due to the city’s location as a communications centre. The A-5 motorway (Madrid-Lisbon), A-43 motorway (Lisbon-Valencia) and the A-66 motorway (Vía de la Plata), in its section from Gijón to Seville, all pass through it.

It is also an important railway centre, with trains from Madrid, Lisbon, Seville, Badajoz, Cáceres and Ciudad Real stopping at its station.

❖ MORE INFORMATION:

www.merida.es



SALAMANCA reinvented

Remember, my daughter, that you are in Salamanca
That it is known all over the world as the mother of the sciences.
And that normally ten or twelve thousand students study and live there.
Young people, capricious, daring, free, enthusiastic, spendthrift, discreet,
diabolic and good humoured.

Miguel de Cervantes

SALAMANCA

* MONUMENTAL AND INTIMATE



Clerecía and Casa de las Conchas

The historical and monumental city centre that grew around one of the oldest universities in Europe, celebrated just last year the 20th anniversary of its declaration as World Heritage in 1988.

The sun at daybreak, the first warmth, which enters one more day in Plaza Mayor. Yellowish light that sets the golden stones on fire. Pure glittering of gold at this time of day, tangled in the play of shadows created by the filigree of reliefs and statues above the 88 arches of this harmoniously irregular square, pleasingly closed, protected. The courtyard of the large house that is the city, its majestic lounge: we meet in the square, we go for a drink in the square, we speak in the square, we walk around the square. ... The life of residents and visitors goes on throughout the



Details of Arches and Medallions in Plaza Mayor

city, ever aware that the heart is here, beating and open. Even now, when the waiters are setting up the tables outside the bars while the sunshine is now flooding the town hall's façade. And the early tourists are already in an ecstasy, focussing their camera time and again: how will their photos show that the place is both grandiose and familiar at the same time?

Perhaps the mystery is revealed by the history of this square, an icon of monumentality, the undisputed queen of Spanish squares. In 1724, in part of the large area that was occupied by the former San Martín square, work began to erect the rectangular construction designed by Alberto de Churriguera, who was succeeded by Andrés García de Quiñones on his death. It has caused complete admiration since it was opened in 1755: it is impossible not to extol its harmony and exquisite ornamentation; so much so that its style would no longer be just baroque but also Churrigueresque. A palace that is shown on the inside instead of the outside and that is filled with the life of everyone. That is the miracle.

The magic is inflated as the sun prevails and intensifies the peculiar colour of the stone, a golden wonder made of iron and sand that comes from the nearby quarries of Villamayor, and that blends

"...we meet in the square, we go for a drink in the square, we speak in the square, we walk around the square..."



* IERONIMUS, A SKYWARD TOUR

In recent years, the cathedral's medieval towers have housed an exciting and original exhibition-tour. The name of Ieronimus pays tribute to Bishop Jerónimo de Perigieux, an essential figure in the Reconquest at the end of the 11th century and beginning of the 12th century. He was in charge of restoring the diocese of Salamanca after the withdrawal of the Arabs, thereby giving rise to 900 years of art and history in the city. The tour goes up one of the towers and passes through medieval rooms that were hidden or in ruins for centuries, such as the dungeon or the jailer's quarters. It then enters the Sala del Alcaide (Keeper's Room), with its geminate window that dominates the entire interior of the Old Cathedral and an exhibition featuring instruments and liturgical books from that time. Original documents are likewise displayed in the Sala de la Torre Mocha, a defensive watchtower from the 13th century, whose terrace offers a wonderful close up of the marvellous Romanesque cupola of the Old Cathedral and the dome of the New Cathedral, with the city and the River Tormes in the background. The visit continues in the Sala de la Bóveda (Vault Room) and terraces with wonderful views between the upper Gothic tops of the New Cathedral, whose interior grandiosity can also be seen from an elevated platform.

(Information at www.ieronimus.es)



View of New Cathedral and Tower of El Gallo



Detail of pinnacles, New Cathedral

the charisma of Salamanca's entire monumental district and also that of a great number of its modern buildings. You feel like staying for hours and hours in the square and also discovering what lies beyond each one of its entrances. The south-west entrance corresponds to much of the life that is still stretching in the early morning, because it is the route of students "of letters" and of visitors, who immediately stop in front of Plaza del Corrillo, opposite the primitive Romanesque beauty of the façade of the Church of San Martín, the oldest

one in the city, built in 1103. Remote memories in this stone that is ductile but has resisted the ages of the city, as is also the case of the Churches of San Cristóbal, San Benito or the round Church of San Marcos. The journey of history has numerous lines, very often written in Rúa Mayor, a centuries-old route of university students. The same is true today, blessed, like the entire old town, with the marvellous gift of pedestrianisation.

Walking up and down, with the emphatic cathedral tower in the background, now bathed with sunlight, a landmark >



Plaza Mayor



Panoramic view of Roman Bridge and Cathedrals



Palace of Anaya

“Plaza de Anaya, whose architecture shines around the shadow of its trees...”



and so appealing bars and restaurants, Salamanca’s nightlife is a river that flows cheerfully and serenely at the same time, as it has done for centuries. Plaza de Anaya, whose architecture shines around the shadow of its trees, does not disappoint the inquiring visitor: the columns of the solemn neoclassical Palace of Anaya opposite the Gothic waves of flying buttresses and pinnacles in the New Cathedral. And always the colour of mineral sand. And always the amazement.

The surprising thing is that there is not one but two cathedrals, since the old one, with all of its Romanesque cuteness, is hidden behind the new one. Now that the students are in class and the day has entered its daily

in the cityscape. The steps quicken because its tremendous appearance announces the delight of being dazzled, or because the first class is about to begin and those foreign students of Spanish are late. Last night’s partying was fun; and the truth is, with so many



“...their eyes now turn to the Casa de las Conchas (...) Nobody will find the legendary treasure that is said to be hidden in one of the shells decorating its Gothic façade...”



Calle Compañía



“And yes, now that the sun is setting and turning reddish, tour it all again in this unique incandescence of golden stone. Go as far as the river, passing by the remains of the wall and, from the Roman Bridge and its evocation of Lazarillo de Tormes, contemplate the spectacle of all the towers and domes illuminated by the evening light.”



routine, the pace slows down: let the hours go by discovering every corner of the golden labyrinth. Going down the street from Anaya, we come across the Church of S. Esteban, part of the Convent of Los Dominicos, which could well be another cathedral of Renaissance grandiloquence, also expressed in its cloister. A creative way of conceiving spirituality that also flows through the cloister in the neighbouring Convent of Las Dueñas. Inspiring monumentality for the Gran Vía, a street from the last century that begins right there and magnificently recreates the city style along its arcaded buildings. Let time continue passing by, leaving behind what is good...

The University’s plateresque façade was left standing forever. Look for the mysterious frog sitting on a skull, which is said to give good luck, but also run through all the emotions: the evocative atmosphere of Patio de Escuelas, surrounding the statue of Fray Luis de León; the beautiful fresco called “El Cielo de Salamanca,” within the Gothic charm of the Escuelas Menores (Minor Schools); the memory of Unamuno

in his lecture room and his house-museum... And all in the narrowly built street called Calle Libreros, which leads to the immense silhouette of the Pontifical University, with the Church of La Clerecía, as impressive as another cathedral. Visitors admire its baroque style that rises skyward, but their eyes now turn to the Casa de las Conchas (...) Nobody will find the legendary treasure that is said to be hidden in one of the shells decorating its Gothic façade, so it is better to go for some tapas in the bars on Calle Meléndez, now that the university students are having their midday drinks.

After lunch, when the restaurant tables are still occupied, the diligent tourist will seize the opportunity to walk along the medieval recreation that is Calle Compañía. And continue: the Palace of Monterrey, the house where Unamuno died and his statue, the Casa de las Muertes and its mysteries, the tremendous dome of La Purísima... And beyond: the Tower of Clavero, Colegio Fonseca, Huerto de Calixto y Melibea, the Cave of Salamanca... And yes, now that the sun is setting >



Cave of Salamanca

and turning reddish, tour it all again in this unique incandescence of golden stone. Go as far as the river, passing by the remains of the wall and, from the Roman Bridge and its evocation of Lazarillo de Tormes, contemplate the spectacle of all the towers and domes illuminated by the evening light. Sober gold shining in the dark, but also the

"Sober gold shining in the dark, but also the chromatic wonder of the galleries in Casa Lis..."



chromatic wonder of the galleries in Casa Lis, a rare modernist presence that now exhibits exquisite art nouveau and art deco.

The Plaza Mayor is now emphasised by hundreds of lights, like a marvellous mirage. Many people gather together before having dinner in this "large lounge": a coffee in the Novelty, just like Unamuno or Torrente Ballester, or a "paloma" (Russian salad on pork rind) with a beer in the Casino bar. Then everyone will retire to their rooms, leaving the lights on in the lounge/square.



Façade of Casa Lis (Art Nouveau - Art Deco Museum)

❖ HOW TO GET THERE:

From Madrid via the A-6 motorway and the N-501 road. From Valladolid along the AP-62 motorway and N-620 road. Different train services stop at Salamanca and there are flights from several cities to Matacán Airport, 15 kilometres from the city.

❖ MORE INFORMATION:

www.salamanca.es

Municipal Tourist Office:

Plaza Mayor, 32

Tel. 923 218 342

E-mail:

informacion@turismodesalamanca.com



SAN CRISTÓBAL DE LA LAGUNA reinvented

The first city with a grid layout...

Throughout its history it has lived a sober, secluded and ceremonious life. Apart from farmers and artisans, it is inhabited by knights, graduates, scribes, aldermen and ecclesiastics.

Luis Diego Cuscoy

SAN CRISTÓBAL DE LA LAGUNA

* THE EXEMPLARY CITY



Casa de Alvarado Bracamonte or Casa de Los Capitanes Generales

The colonial atmosphere is the charm and merit of this historical town in Tenerife, a booming city that stands out in all the Canary Islands. Its urban layout was used as a model for the cities that were later founded in America and still exists today, emphasised and nuanced by the Canary Islands' colourful traditional architecture.



On a typical day in times past a few monks from the Convent of San Diego would cram onto their small boat and cross the lagoon to reach the city centre. There they would do their messages and perhaps visit one of the many churches that existed in what was then the island's capital. And back across the lagoon that was included in the city's name and that would eventually become its real name. Because San Cristóbal de La

Laguna is, for residents and visitors alike, simply La Laguna. And all because of that seasonal body of water that disappeared from the map in the 19th century, due to the inconveniences caused by the mud, smells and mosquitoes. The area was drained, making it possible to extend the city centre, whose street layout had remained unchanged since the city was founded in 1496 by Alonso Fernández de Lugo. The first Governor of the Canary Islands was unaware that the establishment of La Laguna would be a historical milestone.

Those were the times of the Renaissance and of urban labyrinths, and the illustrated minds evoked and longed for the lost idealism of the Roman cities' layout. A few centuries would have to go by before the Enlightenment would eagerly reintroduce classical models. La Laguna therefore deserves great credit, since it was ahead of its time in wanting

"...and perhaps visit one of the many churches that existed..."



Church-Cathedral Nuestra Señora de Los Remedios

* OF DRAGON TREES AND LAURISILVA FORESTS

La Laguna's climate is so benign, due to the trade winds, that rooftops even become spontaneous gardens, featuring plants, especially green ones, whose growth promotes humidity. The rain and, even more so, the "liquid breeze" provide the greenness of the mountains that surround the city and decorate the perspective of the streets, the same as the many specimens of dragon tree, an emblematic plant of Macaronesia that shapes streets and squares. Only a short distance from the centre are the green slopes of Monte de las Mercedes, where, apart from walks and trekking through its forests, you can contemplate panoramas of the city and its surroundings from several viewpoints. It is all part of the Anaga

Rural Park, which occupies Tenerife's northernmost peninsula and is an example of the Canary Island's most typical flora, especially the prehistoric relic that is the "laurisilva" forest.

The natural radiance is also provided by the sea off the north coast, about five kilometres from La Laguna, near the villages of Bajamar and Punta del Hidalgo, where the attraction is the salt-water swimming pools prepared in the natural pools capriciously formed by flows of lava.



Panoramic view of San Cristóbal de La Laguna



Panoramic view of San Cristóbal de La Laguna

to reinvent the Greek-Roman myth of the ideal city, with straight streets and everything well laid out to facilitate the life of its inhabitants. Peaceful and naturally without walls, since that is why Fernández de Lugo had chosen this fertile plain in the north of the island,

which is 600 metres about sea level and is still on the route heading south. It was far from the danger of the coast and the Guanches no longer had to be feared, although a few of them still lived in Tenerife, heroically resisting the Castilian conquest. >



"...ahead of its time in wanting to reinvent the Greek-Roman myth of the ideal city, with straight streets and everything well laid out to facilitate the life of its inhabitants."



Viana street



Traditional house



"But what those American cities do not have are these windows that are so reminiscent of English ones... So-called guillotine windows..."

The European development of the Canary Islands was by then unstoppable, and people would come from different Spanish regions, and also from Portugal or Genoa, to consolidate this destiny. And so La Laguna, well defined in its role as island capital, soon matured into a city; and it was very comprehensible that those who passed through, on their way to American journeys, would pay attention to its appearance, having arisen from conditions very similar to those awaiting them on the other side of the Atlantic. Just as today groups of visitors pay close attention to every detail, when listening to this important matter being explained by the enthusiastic guide of one of the tours organised free of charge by the tourist office. There is always someone that knows Cartagena de Indias, or Quito, or

San Juan de Puerto Rico, and then the evocation is easier and more exciting. And here is the city plan in the 16th century, as registered by the Cremonese architect Leonardo Torriani, hired by the administration of Felipe II: it is still intact! The straight streets, intersections, squares... All of the paraphernalia and faith in the future involved in "inventing" a city. The status of World Heritage is indeed well justified.

But what those American cities do not have are these windows that are so reminiscent of English ones... So-called "*guillotine windows*," large with a lower pane of glass that can be lifted up, divided into small panels and often painted white, are a contribution from the Portuguese that settled here. They reached Portugal, where they are plentiful, by way of its sea links with England. They are one of the distinctive touches of traditional Canary Island architecture, along with the famous

"...the tropical vegetation that carpets Plaza del Adelantado."



Plaza del Adelantado



"Ajimez" (projecting balcony) of Convent of Santa Catalina de Siena



"...the Convent of Santa Catalina de Siena and its ajimez..."

wooden balconies made of hard island pine. Details that, tastefully combined with the expressive colours of the façades, describe an atmosphere that is exotic and familiar at the same time. The soft breeze of the trade wind, responsible for the humidity and greenness in the north of the island, in marvellous and magical contrast to the desert-like south, sways the tropical vegetation carpeting Plaza del Adelantado. Around its fountain, in the evening, the benches will fill with people willing to enjoy the sweet passing of time, nothing more. Now the tourists are the ones that, while listening to explanations about the Palace of Nava and its lava stone or about the Convent of Santa Catalina de Siena and its "*ajimez*" (projecting wooden balcony with latticework), cannot stop admiring the pleasing peace that characterises this corner of Tenerife, so near and yet so far from the island's booming beach resorts.

In effect, it does not seem to be the third largest municipality in the archipelago...



"In the background, iconic and predominant, the charismatic Tower of the Church of La Concepción..."



Tower of Church of Nuestra Señora de La Concepción



Courtyard of Casa de Montañés

predominant, the charismatic Tower of the Church of La Concepción, with its unmistakable balconies and its entelechy as an intruding lighthouse.

The very Mudejar ceilings in the church are a focal point, a mirror reflecting what would also reach America. A carved wooden ceiling that likewise blesses other churches, such as that of San Juan Bautista, spiced up by the orientalist charm of its "ajimez," or that of El Cristo, with its overwhelming silver altar. The use of silver is another distinctive feature of La Laguna's churches, an ornamental gift of faith that also illustrated the Church of San Agustín before a fire turned it into an evocative ruin that now adds to the story-line of the street of the same name. Very interesting is Calle San Agustín, featuring buildings of importance: the former Hospital de los Dolores, now converted into a

"...the plot of the present-day Instituto de Canarias Cabrera Pinto, which with modern skill displays its contents in the former convent."



Belfry of former Convent of San Agustín



"...the Casa Montañés, with its courtyards and its magnificent ferns..."

modern library; the Palace of Lercaro, which houses the Tenerife History Museum, or the Casa Montañés, with its courtyards and its magnificent ferns, and the premonition of many whispering and entertaining evenings. Its rooms saw the beginning in the 18th century of the university, which adds to the city's fame and now hosts around thirty thousand students. There must be a lot of nightlife...? Of course, especially around a series of streets, close to the old town, which they call *El Cuadrilátero*.

The celebration will be more pompous and official, but with the same desire to have fun, in the Regional Festivity of San Benito, the patron saint of farmers, which attracts people from all over the archipelago in July; or throughout the laborious carpets of flower petals that decorate the streets at Corpus Christi; or under the monumental display of fireworks in honour of the Venerated Christ of La Laguna, which reaches its climax on September 14. Peaceful life and festive life, the nearby sea and forest and, just next door, the North Tenerife International Airport and Santa Cruz, the capital... Also a model city in the 21st century? Undoubtedly so.

❖ MORE INFORMATION:

www.aytolalaguna.org

Tourist Information Office:

C/ La Carrera, 7

Tel. 922 63 11 94

(starting point for guided tours)

E-mail:

turismo.laguna@cabtfe.es



SANTIAGO DE COMPOSTELA reinvented

Stone, if there are stars, also flies.
Above the bevelled and cold night
Grow, twin lilies of boldness;
Grow, push, towers of Compostela.

Gerardo Diego


SANTIAGO DE COMPOSTELA

* EXCITING END OF THE ROAD




Obradoiro Square

It is the final apotheosis of the Jacobean Route, a fiery labyrinth of granite and white windows that faithfully recreates its centuries-old essence. A holy, university, Galician, cheerful and melancholic city. A divine and human city.

 A smile and a few tears on Monte do Gozo. The destination is marvellous and it is right there: the stone pattern of Santiago stamps its profile of towers onto the greenness of the hills and the incandescent grey sky. From the viewpoint on top of this hill, which announces the end of the Road, the pilgrims, whether believers or not, glimpse with devotion the final act of their route of religious faith or worldly experience. Their gestures reveal the emotion: mission accomplished. But an anticipated nostalgia also creeps in: all those kilometres that are now behind them, those moments and those

unrepeatable people. It all vanishes in the jubilant descent, those final metres that will take them to the city that has always been shining on the horizon during their very long journey. The trip, the same as for millions of pilgrims throughout the centuries, might have been a real personal catharsis or perhaps only an eventful and entertaining

 **"...the stone pattern of Santiago stamps its profile of towers onto the greenness of the hills and the incandescent grey sky."**



Panoramic view of Santiago

* OTHER ROUTES, OTHER WAYS

Beyond the historic city centre, Santiago has other aspects that are well worth "going out of your way." There is a beautiful view of the city from the Belvís district, where the popular Virgen del Portal sanctuary is located. The area now features some forays into avant-garde architecture, such as the A Trisca socio-cultural centre designed by John Hejduk. It is one of the innovating buildings that, along with other architects such as Peter Eisenman, César Portela, J.P. Kleihues or Manolo Gallego, and examples such as the CGAC contemporary art centre, designed by Álvaro Siza, are featured in one of the thematic itineraries called **Walking Tours**, organised by Turismo de Santiago (www.SantiagoTurismo.com). Far from these futuristic profiles and the practicality of the "ensanche" (urban expansion area), the Collegiate Church of Sar, on the banks of the river of the same name, still features all of its 12th-century Romanesque charm, also enhanced by the very visible inclination of its walls and columns. The place's everlasting peace can be found again in the Convent of San Domingos de Bonaval, which now houses the ethnographic Museo do Pobo Galego, or also in the old San Pedro neighbourhood, with its traditional houses bordering part of the Road and its genuine atmosphere of veteran shops and bars. However, for real peace, that of the hills surrounding the city; whose greenness extends into the city thanks to urban parks with fine views such as Campus Sur, Eugenio Granell, Carlomagno, La Almáciga, Galeras or La Granxa do Xesto.



Museum of Galician People




Bonaval Gardens



Galician Centre of Contemporary Art and San Domingos de Bonaval

walk, but the arrival in Plaza del Obradoiro and the first contemplation of the majestic cathedral will be invariably solemn. How grandiose the world is!

The façade's baroque display, with its precise ornaments and the sententious background of granite stone, nuanced by the moss, which adds character and intensity, is a scene that overwhelms everyone, pilgrims or mere visitors. And then they all begin to turn to contemplate >

 **"the arrival in Plaza del Obradoiro and the first contemplation of the majestic cathedral will be invariably solemn."**



Cathedral of Santiago



Obradoiro Square



Pórtico de la Gloria

the complete story of this square, which is called after the masonry workshops that were installed here during the construction of the baroque façade: the austere Gothic elegance of the Hostal dos Reis Católicos, a former

"In those times the silversmiths were based in Plaza de Platerías, which features the cathedral's only remaining Romanesque façade and the Clock Tower."

"First stop: the Pórtico de la Gloria and the expressiveness of which the concise Romanesque design was capable."

pilgrim hospital converted into a "Parador"; the baroque covering of the Romanesque Archbishop's Palace of Xelmírez; the simple Renaissance style of Colegio de San Xerome and the French-style neo-classicism of the Palace of Raxoi, now the town hall, which seems to liven up the light of the square by means of its many balconies and bright windows. A lot of affairs and a lot of space, more than appreciable in a country where the majority of cathedrals are not given the visual gift of a proper square in front of their façade.

As if following the thread of the solemn, the sumptuous symmetry of the double stairway takes visitors inside the cathedral at procession pace. First stop: the "Pórtico de la Gloria" and the expressiveness of which the concise Romanesque design was capable. A few linger on, trying to identify the instruments of the famous musicians and imagine their conversations, so real is their appearance. The ritual continues: embracing the saint behind the altar and,



Platerías Square

"...the French-style neo-classicism of the Palace of Raxoi, now the town hall, which seems to liven up the light of the square by means of its many balconies and bright windows."

if it is the right time, contemplating the tremendous swinging of the "botafumeiro" censer, and remembering that it was made so big and to move so much because of the strong stench caused by Jacobean travellers in times past. This vertigo of time is enjoyed in settings with very many centuries of life. The film of data and images that is screened in one's head will be enhanced in the cathedral museum inside the cloister. And thus eternity seems comprehensible.

What would Rosalía de Castro have seen in the emotion of the stones in her city, with her ever-present melancholy? A sweet and enjoyable "saudade" (some kind of homesickness) emanates from Santiago's granitic architecture, softly experienced from the snow-white frames of its windows and viewed as a whole from the cathedral's stone rooftops. The sun is shining, because (as we all know) the planet is in a strange state and there is less and less rain, even here, and the façades of the squares surrounding the cathedral seem to grow larger, but that literary melancholy is not completely erased. And look at the visitors gathering around the "tunos" (student musicians), who intone their eternal songs in "rúas" and squares, strumming away on their lutes. They come to the "No te enamores, compostelana" when some pilgrims break away to finally cross Plaza de la Quintana and go through the Holy Door. Through another cathedral entrance they will come across Plaza de la Azabachería, officially called "Plaza de la Inmaculada," where medieval travellers encountered the tables of moneychangers and merchants, especially those selling shoes. In those

times the silversmiths were based in Plaza de Platerías, which features the cathedral's only remaining Romanesque façade and the Clock Tower. How refreshing the coolness coming from the Fuente de los Caballos (Fountain of Horses) is now that the sun is getting hot, and how lively the Rúa do Vilar appears from here. The divine was good and what is human will be also.

The harmonious magic of the granite and the very characteristic, large Compostela windows extend through the "rúas" by means of Galician-style *pazos* (small palaces), churches and houses, which are aligned, with or without arcades, along the capricious street layout. Very appetising restaurants, trendy shops, bars with a lot of atmosphere... Where to stop? Which way to turn?

Although it is no longer a spiritual journey, it seems >

"...and how lively the Rúa do Vilar appears from here."



Rúa



Obradoiro Square

like one; because, presented in this way, human entertainment has a lot of transcendental value. Rúa Nova, O Franco, A Raíña, Orfas, Preguntoiro, the narrow Entrerrúas, O Toural... They sound like a fantastic litany, these names used to title this absorbing world, where tourism and genuineness are not mutually exclusive. A portion of "pulpo á feira" (Galician-style octopus) and a Ribeiro wine? Yes please, since they will have an authentic taste, like all the sea and land products that look so fresh in the very Galician Mercado de Abastos (food market) on Rúa das Ameas. Lunchtime, time for earthly enjoyment.

Evening will come and make its way through the sunshine, which still prevails over the clouds. Up and down the streets, walking is a passion. As far as the monastery, church and museum of San Martiño Pinario, with its Benedictine legend and almost Escorial-like size; or as far as the Alameda park, dense in its romanticism, panoramic in its views: all of this glorious city in the place where, in the distant past, there was a Roman town and a pagan mausoleum, which, in the 9th century, would be identified as the tomb of St. James. It could only be his, since oral tradition speaks of the apostle's preaching and martyrdom in Spain's *finis terrae*. And that is how it all began, and this far-flung world became a centre of Christendom and European life. The number of churches

multiplied: San Paio, San Francisco, San Fructuosa, Las Ánimas... Room was made for knowledge: the university began in Colegio Fonseca, whose halls, surrounding its magnificent courtyard, are now used for exhibitions. That is where modern designs creep in, as they do in the new neighbourhoods, giving rise to the contrast of avant-garde architectures. The city, which has been the capital of Galicia for decades, is as alive as ever. The future is not a dream.

Peaceful now that night has arrived, wrapped in its northern mist, which dims the light from the lamps in the "rúas." At the weekend they will be full of late-night social activity, because then problems also seem to be made of mist. The fog likewise blurs the cathedral towers; and all of Plaza del Obradoiro, tinged with the diffused light of the street lamps, looks like a fantasy for a few straggling pilgrims. They do not want the trip to end or the emotion to evaporate.



Pilgrims

* HOW TO GET THERE:

Several national and international airlines fly into Santiago Airport (www.aena.es). You can also arrive by train (www.renfe.es) or by bus (www.tussa.org); also by car via any of the dual-carriageways leading to the city.

* MORE INFORMATION:

www.SantiagoTurismo.com

Central Tourist Office:

Rúa do Vilar, 63

Tel. 981 555 129



SEGOVIA reinvented

In the vision that the traveller forms of Segovia, all the city's monuments mingle around in magnificent chaos. The mind is full of palaces, chapels, arches, capitals, railings, windows, towers, altarpieces... The imagination, dazzled, goes from one marvel to another during hours of remembering. We cannot quickly impose order and calm on admiration.

Azorín

SEGOVIA

* THE UNEQUIVOCAL PROFILE



Panoramic view of Cathedral and Alcázar of Segovia, from Eresma Valley

A high Roman aqueduct that crosses the medieval streets, an Alcázar reminiscent of Central European castles, spiritually attractive Romanesque churches, located between the green mountains and the brown plain... Everything in this Castilian city is peculiar and unmistakable.

How can you not be mesmerised by this succession of stylised arches that, like a fantasy bridge, seems to fly over the old rooftops? It does not matter if this is not your first visit to Segovia: the old Roman construction prevails from its height and its perseverance. Almost two thousand years exhibiting its elegance due the miracle of its granite stones, interlocked without any mortar at all. Until recently, it was still used to bring water from the mountains to the city... Is there a more solemn *pipe* in the world? Even Segovia residents themselves, no matter how many times they pass by it on their daily journeys, cannot help contemplating it

with a sense of pleasure and unending surprise. There it is as an essential emblem in the city's coat of arms, and it was an important factor in the city's declaration as World Heritage in 1985; it will also be an argument in the campaign to have it named the European Cultural Capital in 2016.

Without looking away, the Roman construction, most probably erected in the 1st century, acquires another perspective as we go up the stairs of Postigo del Consuelo, there where the arches disappear and the channel enters the old town; and then it seems like an enormous window overlooking the first snippets of the austere Castilian plain. The panorama contrasts in magical agreement with the mountainous backdrop against which the city stands out, erected, at a height of more than a thousand metres, on a rocky *ship*

"Impossible not to look at the Aqueduct time and again."



View of Aqueduct of Segovia from the Wall



View of Alcázar of Segovia from Cuesta de los Hoyos

"The evident bow, towering above the rivers Eresma and Clamores, is the Alcázar, the other scene of monumental originality."

about to beat against the green waves of the Guadarrama slopes. The evident bow, towering above the rivers Eresma and Clamores, is the Alcázar, the other scene of monumental originality. The fort, built on top of what was probably a Celtic "castro" (fortified settlement) and Roman citadel, experienced different restorations until Felipe II wanted it to look like the German castles that decorated the young years of his father, Carlos I. Thus, the slate rooftops and capitals turned the Castilian bulwark, the base of previous kings' hunting pastime, into an

"The panorama contrasts in magical agreement with the mountainous backdrop against which the city stands out..."

unexpected Central European recreation. Absolutely peculiar: a Rhine castle in the middle of the Castilian plateau.

The pensive hours of Alfonso X the Wise, the comings and goings of the Trastámara family, the early ups and downs of Isabella the Catholic... Memories that are evoked in the meticulously restored rooms following the fire of 1862, after it had been a prison and the Royal Artillery School. The vicissitudes of history are only part of the visit's enjoyment, since it is not merely the monument itself but its location, vertex and beautiful mystery of the cityscape, which can be contemplated from the high Tower of Juan II. The more fairytale-like image features, on the other side, the keep, with that play of circular towers that is a tourist icon of the city, of Castile >



Cathedral of Segovia

❖ VISIBLE MEMORY OF THE JEWISH QUARTER

The presence of Jews in Segovia was especially significant from the 13th century onwards. As in other Castilian cities, there were obliged, along with Moors, to reside in well-defined neighbourhoods, which, in the case of Segovia, extended from the Almuzara to the section of wall running from the old slaughterhouse to the Gate of San Andrés. Its existence can be traced in this southern area of the old town, among twisted lanes and brick houses with a wooden framework. The centre of that medieval ghetto was the present-day Calle de la Judería Vieja, which is near the location of the Major Synagogue, now the Church of Corpus Christi. The same street leads to the house-palace of Abramam Seneor, one of the most important Jewish figures before the expulsion of 1492. It now houses the Jewish Quarter Educational Centre. On the present-day Calle Barrionuevo, probably one of the most populated at that time, is the house of Samuel Denan, one of the few that still preserve the memory of the persons that lived there. Another synagogue, of the five that used to exist, occupied the site of what is now the Daughters of Jesus school, not far from Calle Judería Vieja. The oldest one was situated very close to Calle de la Almuzara, one of the Jewish Quarter's most important, in the present-day Plaza de la Merced.



Segovia's Jewish Quarter



"Also very personal are the typical Segovia houses that differ from those in the rest of Castile due to the less sober and more ornamental nature of their sgraffito, the geometrically patterned plaster on their façade."



Detail of la Alhóndiga façade

Plaza Mayor. It had to be "moved" to one side of the Church of San Miguel, where Isabella the Catholic was crowned in 1474, in order to open up the space of city life that is now the square, among the arcaded buildings, and the traditional cafeterias and terraces, and the pace of a normal day: a point of symbiosis between residents and visitors. The latter will not spend long conversing over a nice coffee or tapa, because they still have to decipher that other original merit that is the accumulation of Romanesque churches: that of San Martín and its columned vestibule, its apses and its Mudejar tower; that of La Santísima Trinidad, so genuinely preserved; that of San Esteban, with its high tower featuring geminated windows that form part of the city's unmistakable silhouette; that of San Millán, built in the image of the model cathedral of Jaca; that of San Justo and its expressive Christ Pantocrator; that of San Juan de los Caballeros and its tombs of noble lineage...

Knights and kings are recalled in the halls of the Monastery of San Antonio el Real, which used to be the location of the hunting palace of Enrique IV, Isabella the Catholic's half-brother; its presence is defined by Gothic, Mudejar and plateresque designs. The same mix of styles describes the Monastery of El Parral, whose construction was ordered by the same king in the 15th century, while still a prince. The memory of another way of living life is witnessed by the Monastery of Los Carmelitas Descalzos, near the Church of La Vera Cruz, founded by St. John of the Cross, whose remains lie in a tomb that, in everyone's opinion, is far removed in its ostentation from the verses and satyrs of the poet saint. Being able to look into lives that disappeared centuries >



"Until we come to the infinite decorative play of pointed shapes displayed by the cathedral..."



Aerial view of Segovia Cathedral



"The Alcázar is really only the bow of the story about towers and streets and events..."

events that unfolds as the rocky boat widens out. The narrative enclosure is delimited by the city wall, which is still intact in a large part of its three-kilometre perimeter, along with three of its five gates: San Andrés, Santiago and San Cebrián. Within them, the layout is that of a labyrinth of streets and alleys, always surrounding the most monumental buildings and, above all, with traditional Castilian façades. Also very personal are the typical Segovia houses, which differ from those in the rest of Castile due to the less sober and more ornamental nature of their sgraffito, the geometrically patterned plaster on their façade. Until we come to the infinite decorative play of pointed shapes displayed by the cathedral, thanks to the ease and clarity that comes from its outstanding hillside situation. In such a location it could only be Gothic, although it began to be built in 1525, made to look like what it still looks like: the stone boat's main sale.

Its pinnacles exalt the city's ornamental endeavour, profusely filling the scene of



Alcázar of Segovia

and León, of the entire country. The surrounding scenery is likewise fairytale-like: the greenness of the Pinarillo forest, the slopes cradling the two rivers, the area of Zamarramala, the Church of La Vera Cruz... This church with an evocative dodecagonal ground plan, erected in the 13th century by the Order of the Holy Sepulchre, was said to belong to the Knights Templar, as if to adorn the area's irresistible evocative power even more.

The Alcázar is really only the bow of the story about towers and streets and



Titirimundi Puppet Festival



"Here remains the thematic entertainment during the time of good weather: Titirimundo (international puppet festival)..."

ago and into spaces that still feature what they used to be, is an alluring sensation characterising historical cities such as Segovia. What moments and who experienced them in the Casa de los Picos, in the Tower of Arias Dávila, in the Tower of Lozoya or in the Casa de la Moneda? What poetry was there in the routine hours during the thirteen years that Antonio Machado lived in what is now his house-museum?

Impossible to imagine that life right now, one day, will also be an echo in a space. Give it time, but in the meantime

"And then will come the darkest of nights..."



the daily existence of present-day Segovia sails along in its *stone boat* with the ease of a city that feels just right, at a very convenient distance from Madrid and its fancies. Here remains the thematic entertainment during the time of good weather: Titirimundo (international puppet festival), Folk Segovia, Musical Summer... And always the city's own life and that of its wave of visitors. An afternoon shopping in Calle Real or in Calle de José Zorilla; tapas and dinner in Plaza Mayor, the bar district or the San Millán neighbourhood. And then will come the darkest of nights, experienced without a notion of time in the club district. The Aqueduct, now lit up. Impossible not to look at it again...



Aqueduct of Segovia

* HOW TO GET THERE:

From Madrid, by car or bus via the A-6 motorway and the AP-61 turnoff or the N-603 road; by train, with local trains or the high-speed AVE train, in less than 30 minutes.

* MORE INFORMATION:

Visitor Reception Centre:
Azoguejo, 1. 40001 Segovia

Tel. 921 466 720

info@turismodesegovia.com
www.turismodesegovia.com

Booking Centre:

Tel. 902 112 494

info@reservasdesegovia.com
www.reservasdesegovia.com



TARRAGONA reinvented

A city that, if you want to believe a man like myself that has seen so many things, is the most pleasant of all those that may be chosen for a rest. You find will in it, O guest and friend, honest, sober, tranquil people. (...)

P. Anneus Florus

TARRAGONA

* ROMAN AND VERY MEDITERRANEAN



Panoramic view of Tarragona

Ancient Tarraco, the paramount Roman town in Hispania, is still the visible and beating heart of the modern Catalan city. Its prominent remains are mixed, in a warm atmosphere, with profiles from other centuries and with the bright blue of the Mediterranean.

Like a performance from the neighbouring Port Aventura theme park, visiting the city is like a treasure hunt. You have to walk around the streets and alleys, discover the clues and symbols, closely contemplate the evident elements, get an idea of the proportions and of distant time. The prize: the well experienced recreation of this exemplary Roma city that was Tarraco, one of the first erected as such by the empire of the Mare Nostrum outside the Italian Peninsula. The illustrative game will likewise feature

the endearing scenes of a typical small Mediterranean city: daily calm, palm trees and corners, everyday life facing the sea, the light.

Before starting to "hunt" for Tarraco, whose remains were declared World Heritage in the year 2000, it will be advantageous to contemplate a model of the Roman city; it is on display, the way it is thought to have looked in the 2nd century AD, in Bóveda de Pallol, in the square of the same name. All the details are there, vigourously worked and imagined in order to lucubrate curiosity and evocation. A normal day in that century in the city, which had become a Roman enclave in the 3rd century BC, during the ups and downs of the Second Punic War: rituals in the main temple, in the highest part; comings and goings a little further down, in the spacious arcaded area of the forum. Today, the site is partially occupied by the Cathedral of Santa Tecla, whose Gothic façade, which features an impressive rose window, illuminates the end of Carrer Major (main street).

In the cathedral, inside and outside, in its cloister and in its diocesan museum, among its Romanesque and Gothic designs, Roman stones are constantly arising; they are typically decorated with bolsters and bear inscriptions and bas-reliefs, inserted into rear >

"...the Cathedral of Santa Tecla, whose Gothic façade, which features an impressive rose window, illuminates the end of Carrer Major (main street)."



Cathedral



Arch of Berá



Roman Aqueduct

* TREASURES BEYOND THE CITY WALL

Tarraco is not only still present in the old Tarragona. Throughout the area, the Roman civilisation left behind memories of its dominant existence. About 4 kilometres away is the Les Ferreres aqueduct, whose double row of arches overcomes a gully; it is one of the remains from the magnificent construction that carried water to the city from the River Francolí. A tourist icon, the famous Arch of Berá, located about 20 kilometres away, in the municipal district of Roda de Berá, rises up with all of its simple elegance in the middle of what used to be the Via Augusta. The Tower of Los Escipiones, six kilometres away, beside the N-340 road, is one of the funerary monuments that all Roman cities usually had at their entrances. A curiosity is the Mèdol quarry, beside the La Mòra beach, which provided the stone to erect Tarraco; it still features the pointer that marked the excavated height and where the micro-climate has created dense vegetation. Outside the city and on the banks of the River Francolí, you can visit a Paleo-Christian necropolis from the 3rd century AD, which had a basilica whose remains can be seen in the Parc

Central shopping centre. Of the many agricultural villas that surrounded Tarraco, you can visit the remains of that of Els Munts, in the village of Altafulla, and that of Centelles, in Constantí.



Cala de la Mola



Villa of Els Munts



Villa of Centelles



Roman Circus



Roman Wall

walls or in their original wall. In fact, this is something that happens in many houses and establishments in the old town. And there is no stopping the imagination: what is hiding in the Casa Balcells, whose Gothic windows look onto the same square as the cathedral? What was there, what happened there? Around the corner is the Casa de los Ingenieros, whose façade, featuring expressive 19th-century sgraffito, reveals two Roman altars and, above them, two sarcophaguses with Jewish inscriptions

“And now the amphitheatre, far below, its silhouette standing out against the blue Mediterranean...”



Roman Amphitheatre

“The Roman walls stayed standing, as they do today, being contemplated with admiration by visitors and with pride by residents.”

from medieval times. The symbols become diversified in these narrow alleys, featuring old balconies, which, without altering their placid calm, are like a labyrinthine museum.

The very narrow passageway of Sant Magí, the city's patron saint, or Carrer del Comte, like so many other streets that are being fully restored to life: an old shop, a restaurant of modern design... Life continues in old Tarraco after so many centuries and despite bad times such as the Islamic invasion, when the border fighting left it uninhabited, abandoned among the stones of its ancient splendour. The Roman walls stayed standing, as they do today, being contemplated with admiration by visitors and with pride by residents. Here you do not have to look for clues, since Tarraco is explicitly displayed in the sections of wall and towers that run for more than a kilometre, probably a fourth of the original enclosure, the oldest of those built by Rome in the Iberian Peninsula. And now we see



“Walls, vaults and terraces accurately recreate this entertainment venue that was located below the forum...”

the details: the base of colossal stones, which might have formed part of the first Roman garrison; the marks on the enormous ashlar of characteristic gold colour, which are like the signatures of those that worked them. The towers beat the rhythm along this easy landscaped walk of the treasure hunt: that of El Arzobispo, with its medieval addition; that of La Minerva, with its original bas-reliefs and inscriptions, and that of El Capiscol. Vertigo of centuries and of possible eternity.

The emphatic city wall has left behind traces in many places, as is the case of Plaza del Pallol, within the cultural cultural centre, and the exterior arch that forms part of the building containing the model that began the “game.” We are still following after Tarraco, but Tarragona continues to prevail: an echo reinforced in the medieval fort called Muralleta; cheerfully symbolic dyes in the large mural illuminating Plaça del Sedassos; local colour with character in the colonnade on Calle de la Merceria... A refreshment in any of the pavement cafés in the elongated Plaça de la Font, dominated by the town hall, and may it be a pleasing recess in the search. But no, the shower of traces is unstoppable, and now the circus arises; some of its remains can be seen in this square's establishments. A climax and take note: it is one of the best-preserved Roman circuses in Western Europe, since it still offers a very complete idea of the bend used in chariot races. Walls, vaults and terraces accurately recreate this entertainment venue that was located below the forum, from which it was

accessed through places such as the Tower of Pretorio. Part of the present-day City History Museum, located in Plaça del Rei, this tower, which was a medieval centre of power, is pure symbolic spirit. From its terrace roof there is a complete panorama of the city, the surrounding scenery, the sea. The solid evocation of Tarraco: the search is over.

And now the amphitheatre, far below, its silhouette standing out against the blue Mediterranean and its skeleton touched up by the remains of a Paleo-Christian church and another Romanesque one, is like a reward. It must have been a beautiful display on the day of a multicolour show there, right beside the sea. The maritime >

“A refreshment in any of the pavement cafés in the elongated Plaça de la Font...”



Plaça dels Sedassos



Balcony of the Mediterranean



“The maritime light, emphasising and happy, invades the setting that is now the Balcón del Mediterráneo walk, and slips by the statue of the *almogávar* soldier Roger de Lauria into the spacious Rambla Nova.”



Rambla Nova. Shopping district

light, emphasising and happy, invades the setting that is now the Balcón del Mediterráneo walk, and slips by the statue of the “*almogávar*” soldier Roger de Lauria into the spacious Rambla Nova. This wide boulevard, so characteristic of Catalan urban planning, which took over the role of Rambla Vella during the 19th-century development, features the unmistakable modernism of the Casa Salas or the singularity of the Teatro Metropol. Aesthetics that encircle the spirit of Tarraco, such as the 18th-century excellencies of Casa Caterllarnau and Casa Canals, inside the old town. From the same time are some fortifications and bulwarks that bolstered the defence of the city and its port, which, after remodelling, was

opened with great splendour and the presence of King Carlos IV and his wife María Luisa de Parma.

Today, its cranes, like modern dinosaurs, crowd the seascape and announce a land of changes. Movement is also well known throughout this popular tourist coast, sufficiently distant so as not to alter Tarragona’s peacefulness, sufficiently close for those who want to enjoy it. The same is true of the overwhelming cosmopolitanism and urban activity of Barcelona, faraway yet close. Who would think so on Llarga beach, beside the city, surrounded only by woodland; you feel like continuing with the game and imagining a Roman ship sailing on the horizon...

❖ HOW TO GET THERE:

Renfe’s high-speed AVE train (tel. 902 240 202, www.renfe.com) from Madrid to Barcelona stops at Tarragona’s Camp Station.

❖ MORE INFORMATION:

www.tarragonaturisme.cat

Municipal Tourist Office:

Carrer Major, 39
Tel. 977 250 795



TOLEDO reinvented

From all parts and in all of its points,
Toledo is amazing and awesome.

Ortega y Gasset

TOLEDO

* TESTIMONY OF TOLERANCE



A large bend in the River Tagus frames the image of eternal postcard. World Heritage since 1986, the City of the Three Cultures is a labyrinth of living and shared history.



Panoramic view of Toledo

The dense blue of the sky vigorously outlines the silhouette of old Toledo, contemplated from the Valley viewpoint. The scene is real but features the chemistry of the abstract, as if it were an enlarged projection of what we have seen in so many photos and screens. Perhaps the dreaminess of El Greco's painting might creep into the sensation: stormy clouds and symbols, recognisable shapes but as if about to disperse, a premature application of impressionism. The magic is also that of the eternal: four centuries later, the panoramic profile is practically the same as the one the painter portrayed from

another place. Our reluctance to break the charm of contemplation will ease, since we are well aware that the scene, inside, will not disappoint the aroused feeling.

Although early and humble, the Tagus traces the map with the emphatic meander that surrounds the elevation on which the old town sits; it thus excludes from what is almost a circle neighbouring memories such as the Castle of San Servando or the more conventional symbols of the new city.

Respectful curiosity as we approach the solid essence of the mirage glimpsed



"Or cross the river -such a symbolic action- to continue understanding, by way of the most historical bridges: that of San Martín, with its Gothic towers..."



Bridge of San Martín



Panoramic view of Toledo



Calle San Román. Façade of Councils and Visigothic Culture Museum



"They are now full of shuffling tourists, closely looking at their maps so as not to get lost."

from the viewpoint. Where should we access its contents? With parsimony, crossing the city wall enclosing the circle through the Gate of Bisagra, which is almost a fort in itself, with its towers and details, inherited from the Arabs, transformed during the imperial era. And then go up to the Gate of El Sol, unmistakably Moorish, to begin to enthusiastically contemplate the phenomenon of "the three cultures." Or cross the river -such a symbolic action- to continue understanding, by way of the most historical bridges: that of San Martín, with its Gothic towers, or that of Alcántara, with its 18th-century arch and the tower that was renovated by the Catholic Monarchs. And ascend the slope, and delve into the plot of the scene.

A labyrinth. The recurrent word is inevitable since no other better defines the irregular layout of narrow streets and alleys, which are bordered by façades of sober character, well protected by the shade of their rooftops, whose eaves sometimes seem on the verge of touching each other. That is how the Arabs conceived their cities: centred on the interior of the houses, their rooms and their placid courtyards; streets were just for passing by. They are now full of shuffling tourists, closely looking at their

maps so as not to get lost. Residents always know which alley to take to avoid the wave of visitors and beat them to Plaza de Zocodover, the open heart of the crammed city. An animal market (that is what its name means) in Moorish Toledo, the absolute centre of the capital of Castile-La Mancha was the scene of executions during the Inquisition, bullfights and all kinds of popular expressions. Today, its everyday life is that of the bars and restaurants laid out under the symmetry of its old balconies and arches. It is a pity, says the waiter in one of the pavement cafés, that you cannot see the square on the Day of Corpus Christi, so festooned and solemn and expressive...

Like a procession of the feeling of the times is the tour of the city, startled, in its seclusion of narrow streets, by the buildings and squares exalting the explicit monumentality. The Alcázar >

"A labyrinth. The recurrent word is inevitable since no other better defines the irregular layout of narrow streets and alleys..."



"...above all to the cathedral's predominant Gothic supports."



is the climax, the constant force. A Roman fort and a Moorish citadel, Carlos V began remodelling it into a royal residence, something that the El Escorial-size building never was since the seat of the Court was established in Madrid. A prison and barracks before being destroyed in the Civil War, and now a viewpoint overlooking the Tagus and the neighbouring scenery. From the spacious horizons of its gardens to the capricious semi-darkness of its lanes, to arrive at the exalted walls of the Museum of Santa Cruz; a former hospital, its rooms are now full of archaeological and artistic sparkles. Back in the pleasing shade of the streets, illuminated in their concise but persistent ornamentation, before once again widening our perspective in the Town Hall square, which seems to have forced its way into the street layout in order to give light and a view to the municipal building, also of El Escorial-like size, and above all to the cathedral's predominant Gothic supports. It is hard to look up and come face to face with the sky, after the irrevocable horizontality of the streets. The solitary cathedral tower strives to touch infinity, but that is a matter of faith, and what is clear and wonderful is its exalted beauty.

The different beliefs look to the same heaven, although they give it different names, namely hope, that is all there is to it. And this is very clear in this city, where Christians, Moors and Christians lived together with the odd conflict, but in essential harmony. Long is the life of Toledo's Jewish Quarter, delimited by Moors and Christians between the Gate of El Cambrón and the Tagus, prosperous and subjected



Tower of Toledo Cathedral

to the usual distrust. Only two of the nine synagogues that the city had in the 16th century survive; more than enough for them to be what they are: a referential testimony, a solid memory. The ups and downs of their bold survival adds mysticism to the atmosphere created by the arches of Santa María la Blanca, erected as a synagogue in the 13th century and transmuted into a church in the 15th century. The 14th century saw the construction of the Tránsito Synagogue, defined by an attention to detail that alloyed Jewish, Arabic and Christian elements, as if to say that we are all more or less the same.



"The Alcázar is the climax, the constant force."



Alcázar and Bridge of Alcántara

❖ "COBERTIZOS," COURTYARDS AND "CIGARRALES"

Toledo casts a great spell in its most secluded and hidden aspects. Walking along its narrow streets, you cannot avoid noticing the courtyards revealed by open doors. The stream of light and space, often enveloped in flower-pot greenery, is a real contrast to the shadowed narrowness of the streets. The ones on Calle de Alfileritos are well known. With or without courtyards, many streets have personality in themselves: Calle del Ángel, which ends at the Arquillo del Judío; Callejón del Diablo and others with "esoteric" names behind the Teatro de Rojas; Cuesta del Águila, an absolute example of Toledo's layout. They are definitely enveloping when they become tunnels by joining two buildings together. These are the so-called "cobertizos," like that of Santo Domingo el Real, one of the longest and a real night-time attraction, or the very popular one of San Pedro Mártir or that of Santa Clara. Full daylight should be sought at the viewpoints within the city, such as that of Palace of Fuensalida, which overlooks the Jewish Quarter. And in the surroundings, in the so-called "cigarrales," country estates with old summer houses belonging to the Moors, some of which have now been turned into charming hotels.



"Cobertizo" (covered street) of Santa Clara



"Cobertizo" (covered street) of Santo Domingo El Real

The decoration looks very similar to that of the Cristo de la Luz Mosque, declares an enthusiastic visitor. And what a strange name, he adds, for a mosque. Built in the year 999, it was also converted into a church and is now the most complete image of Moorish Toledo, which continuously raises its head here and there: the Salvador and Tornerías mosques, the Tenerías baths, the halls in Colegio de las Doncellas. Also reappearing are many Roman stones, in the baths in Plaza de Amador de los Ríos

or in the vaults of Nuncio Viejo. Apart from the Moors and the Romans, it was also the capital of the Visigoths, whose simple and effusive jewellery is exhibited in the museum housed in the Church of San Román; with the same enthusiasm with which the Sephardic Museum displays, in the Convent of Caballeros de Calatrava, the memory of the Jews that were expelled from Spain. They are all sons of Toledo, reunited and recognised after the centuries. >



"...adds mysticism to the atmosphere created by the arches of Santa María la Blanca, erected as a synagogue..."



Interior of Santa María la Blanca Synagogue



"...El Greco, whose painting *The Burial of the Count of Orgaz*, exhibited in the Church of Santo Tomé, is one of the climaxes of the visit to Toledo."



The Burial of the Count of Orgaz." Church of Santo Tomé



The Burial of the Count of Orgaz." El Greco

What a fine combination that of the Mudéjar and Gothic styles, designed by men after all, in the words of those visiting the rooms of the Monastery of San Juan de los Reyes, erected by Isabella the Catholic as a dynastic pantheon, although she later preferred the conquered and desired Granada. Toledo remained close to the queen's heart; a long time later, its secluded magic likewise charmed the artist Victorio Macho, whose house-museum overlooks the Tagus on the rocky crags of Roca Tarpeya. Toledo was also a dwelling place in the days of intense inspiration for El Greco, whose painting *The Burial of the Count of Orgaz*, exhibited in the Church of Santo Tomé, is one of the climaxes of the visit to Toledo. The imagined change from life to death, the celestial other world: everyone looks at the painting with surprised devotion. And later, in the artist's museum, which recreates the life and aesthetics of his time so well, they will come across the View and Plan of Toledo, the painting evoked from the Valley viewpoint: satisfaction at now knowing and understanding the scene on the inside. The age-old miracle of harmonious architecture, the tolerance of living together and so many other lessons from the past.

* HOW TO GET THERE:

From Madrid, via the AP-41 toll motorway, the A-42 dual carriageway or the high-speed AVE train (www.renfe.es); a daily bus service also links the two cities.

* MORE INFORMATION:

www.toledo-turismo.com

Tourist Office in Town Hall:

Plaza del Consistorio, 1

Tel. 925 254 030

"Casa del Mapa" Municipal

Tourist Office:

Plaza de Zocodover, 6

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