MAD RURAL

Castles, monasteries and villas of Madrid



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GOBIERNO DE ESPAÑA
MINISTERIO DE INDUSTRIA Y TURISMO

Plan de Recuperación, Transformación y Resiliencia

MAD RURAL

IN THE FOOTSTEPS OF POWER

The Community of Madrid is home to some of the most influential sites in the history of the Iberian Peninsula. Amidst mountains, fertile plains and vast countryside stand castles, monasteries, walled towns and ancient roads that bore witness to decisive events: alliances between noble houses, disputes over succession, court intrigues and literary tales that shaped the political and cultural destiny of the region.

For centuries, these lands occupied a strategic position between the Christian kingdoms and Al-Andalus, and later within the political fabric of the Spanish monarchy. Around border fortresses, influential monasteries and manorial towns, networks of power, faith and administration were woven, shaping the landscape and the lives of their inhabitants. Many of these places, now silent or incorporated into small rural villages, still bear the visible traces of that past.

We invite you on a themed journey through these settings where power left its mark. Through watchful castles, monasteries steeped in history and towns that still retain the layout of bygone eras, the reader is invited to explore the Community of Madrid at a leisurely pace, with curiosity and a historical perspective, discovering how the past remains present in every stone, every street and every horizon.



MADRID DESTINO RURAL

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SIERRA OESTE DE MADRID

▪ CASTLES, FORESTS AND BORDER MANORS

Heritage · Nature · Ideal for combining culture and wine

For centuries, Sierra Oeste de Madrid was a true frontier land between the Christian kingdoms and Al-Andalus. In this region of gentle hills, Mediterranean woodlands and fertile valleys, fortresses and manors were built to guard natural passes, control strategic routes and secure trade routes linking the plateau with key cities such as Ávila and Toledo. Even today, the landscape bears the mark of that era, of that era, when power was exercised from castles, towers and fortified towns.

The itinerary begins at La Coracera Castle in San Martín de Valdeiglesias, one of the region's most iconic fortresses. It was commissioned in the 15th century by Álvaro de Luna, Constable of Castile and one of the most influential — and also most controversial — figures in Castilian politics. Designed as both a defensive fortress and a stately residence, the building reflects the power and ambition of its builder. Its walls were the setting for a decisive episode in the history of the Iberian Peninsula: following the signing of the Treaty of Toros de Guisando in 1468, the future Isabella I of Castile stayed here whilst consolidating her position as heir to the throne.

The route continues towards Cadalso de los Vidrios, a historic town whose name recalls its long-standing tradition linked to glassmaking—an activity documented since the Middle Ages and which, over time, has been replaced by stonemasonry. Today, the town is surrounded by vineyards and dotted with traditional mountain architecture, its quiet streets evoking the region's stately past. In the surrounding area, small wineries and traditional vineyards keep alive a wine-growing culture that forms an inseparable part of the landscape and local identity.

The route then delves into the characteristic landscapes of western Madrid, where pine and holm oak forests and ancient country lanes guide visitors amongst gentle hills and natural viewpoints. It is a region where nature and history coexist in harmony, and where every path seems to follow the routes once travelled for centuries by merchants, travellers and messengers of the authorities.

To round off the day, a stroll through the streets of San Martín de Valdeiglesias allows us to discover taverns where we can sample the local wines. A perfect way to conclude the experience, bringing together heritage, landscape and winemaking tradition.







Microexperience

Carril del Rey: the historic path between San Martín de Valdeiglesias and Robledo de Chavela

Set amongst Madrid's Sierra Oeste and its open horizons, the Carril del Rey traces an ancient path linking San Martín de Valdeiglesias with Robledo de Chavela, inviting you to explore it at a leisurely pace and with curiosity. Along its route, the path winds through pine forests, holm oak groves and gently undulating terrain, offering a serene and deeply evocative landscape.

This path has deep historical roots: for centuries it was a key route linking towns in the area, used by travellers, traders

and, according to tradition, by royalty themselves on their journeys through these mountains. Today, walking along it is to tread upon a living trace of the past.

The route offers sweeping views, peaceful spots and a sense of connection with the land that is hard to find on busier trails. Ideal for a nature getaway with a touch of history, the Carril del Rey is an invitation to discover the most authentic essence of the Sierra Oeste.

Microexperience

Wines of Sierra Oeste

San Martín de Valdeiglesias is one of the most prominent wine-growing regions within the Vinos de Madrid Designation of Origin. Its vineyards, many of them planted with old Garnacha vines growing in granitic soils, stretch amongst pine forests and the sun-drenched slopes of the mountains. Several local wineries offer guided tours and tastings that allow you to discover how tradition and modern viticulture come together in this historic landscape. Tasting their wines after visiting the Castillo de la Coracera is the perfect way to round off the experience, bringing together heritage, the local area and gastronomic culture.





SIERRA DE GUADARRAMA





FORTRESS AND LANDSCAPE IN THE HEART OF THE MOUNTAINS

Heritage · Landscape

The fortress-palace of the County of Manzanares del Real, a place of power, luxury and intrigue. The bastion of control and defence for our region, and one of the most frequently featured film locations in the world of cinema

Also known as the Castle of the Mendoza, it is one of the best-preserved fortresses in the Community of Madrid and one of the most notable examples of 15th-century military-palatial architecture in Spain. Commissioned in 1475 by Diego Hurtado de Mendo-za, the first Duke of Infantado, it was built of solid granite stone on the remains of an ancient Romanesque-Mudejar chapel. Its location, set against the imposing peaks of what is now the Sierra de Guadarrama National Park, creates a scene where history and landscape seem to have been in dialogue for centuries. This contrast, between the granite masonry and the peaks of La Pedriza in the background, is an irresistible sight for any photographer.

The castle formed part of the extensive estate of Manzanares el Real, a strategic territory controlled by the powerful Mendoza lineage, one of the most influential families in late medieval Castile. From here, lands, pastures and routes crossing the mountain range were administered, whilst the fortress symbolised both the political power and social prestige of its owners. Its design combines defensive elements — towers, barbicans and walls — with features typical of a noble residence, designed to accommodate the courtly life of the time



Micro-experience

Fortress Viewpoints

The natural viewpoints situated around the castle allow you to view it from different angles, appreciating how its silhouette of towers and walls blends into the granite landscape of the mountains. At sunset, the stone takes on golden hues that further emphasise its monumental character.

An interesting fact is that the castle was never completed according to the original plans, which envisaged a larger and even more ambitious architectural complex. After centuries of neglect and plundering, the castle underwent two major restoration projects in the 20th century that saved it from ruin. Despite this, it remains in an extraordinary state of preservation.

Today, the interior houses an interpretation centre dedicated to the Middle Ages and the Mendoza family, where we can imagine what daily life was like in a 15th-century noble residence. Its courtyards, galleries and rooms evoke a time when politics, the administration of the territory and courtly life unfolded within these granite walls.

The surroundings of Manzanares el Real invite you to extend the experience beyond the monument itself.

Nearby lies La Pedriza, one of Europe's most unique granite landscapes, where the passage of time has sculpted whimsical rock formations amongst pine forests, meadows and mountain streams. Signposted trails and natural viewpoints allow you to explore this landscape where nature and history intertwine.

To round off the visit, it is well worth a visit to the Ethnological and Archaeological Museum of Manzanares el Real, which offers an insight into how life evolved in this mountainous enclave: from the earliest human settlements to the development of livestock farming and agriculture that for centuries shaped the economy and culture of the region.

There are so many things that are gradually disappearing with the passing of time, but we will always have a place where we can preserve them and remember them.

LAS VEGAS & ALCARRIA MADRILEÑA



THE BORDER OF THE TAGUS AND THE LEGACY OF THE ORDER OF SANTIAGO

Heritage · Landscape

Las Vegas & Alcarria Madrileña preserve the legacy of their past as a strategic territory, where military orders, fortresses and fortified towns played a fundamental role in controlling the routes that crossed the Tagus valley.

The route can begin at the Keep of Villarejo de Salvanés, the main remnant of the former castle of the Order of Santiago. Standing over 30 metres high, this imposing structure illustrates the defensive importance of a site that guarded the routes between Castile and the south of the peninsula.

The route continues to Colmenar de Oreja, one of the most notable historic towns in this region. Its unique porticoed Plaza Mayor and the nearby Hermitage of Cristo del Humilladero are two of the main heritage landmarks of a municipality marked by centuries of prosperity and commercial activity.

The experience can be rounded off in the vicinity of Oreja Castle, whose ruins command one of the most spectacular panoramic views of the Tagus Valley. From this vantage point, it is easy to imagine a landscape in which fortresses, military orders and trade routes were decisive for the organisation and defence of the territory.





A PLANNED CITY: BAROQUE AND INDUSTRY

Heritage

Las Vegas & Alcarria Madrileña is home to one of the most unique urban development projects in the Community of Madrid: Nuevo Baztán, a town conceived in the early 18th century as a true *factory town.* Set amidst a landscape of rolling hills, open fields and luminous horizons, this settlement emerged as an ambitious economic and urban experiment that combined industry, residential life and religious life within a single, planned design.

The project was spearheaded by Juan de Goyeneche, a businessman and politician from Navarre with close ties to the court of Philip V. His aim was to create a modern industrial complex dedicated to the manufacture of glass, cloth, hats and other manufactured goods, attracting craftsmen and skilled workers. To this end, he designed an urban model that was innovative for its time, in which the organisation of space reflected a clear vision of order, functionality and progress.

The architectural complex is centred on the Goyeneche Palace and the Church of San Francisco Javier, two iconic buildings designed by the architect José Benito de Churriguera, one of the leading figures of the Spanish Baroque. Surrounding them is a grid of straight streets and geometrically organised squares, designed to structure both productive activity and the daily lives of the inhabitants. This rational and



unified approach, rare in Spain at the time, makes Nuevo Baztán an exceptional example of planned urban development.

Declared a Historic-Artistic Monument in 1941 and currently a Site of Cultural Interest, the complex retains much of its Baroque character intact. Strolling through its streets allows one to imagine the life of the community that settled here over three centuries ago: craftsmen, traders and workers who were part of one of the most innovative industrial projects of their time.

To round off the visit, a short walk through the surrounding countryside allows you to enjoy the characteristic landscape of Madrid's Alcarria region, a land of open fields, scattered holm oak groves and tranquil paths where history and nature merge into a single scene. From its natural vantage points, one can clearly perceive the relative isolation that facilitated the creation of this unique urban experiment.



SIERRA NORTE DE MADRID



HISTORIC VILLAGES AMONGST TOWERS AND ARCADED SQUARES

Heritage · Tranquillity · Senior visitors

The Jarama countryside is home to some of the most evocative historic villages in the north of the Community of Madrid. In this landscape of rolling hills, farmland and villages built of golden stone, time seems to pass at a leisurely pace. Squares lined with arcades, porticoes, medieval towers and historic churches invite you to stroll calmly through their streets, discovering a heritage that reflects centuries of community life and Castilian tradition.

The tour begins in Torrelaguna, whose historic and artistic centre is one of the region's finest. Its cobbled streets, noble palaces and religious buildings are a reminder of the importance this town attained between the 15th and 16th centuries. Its crowning glory is the Church of Santa María Magdalena, a magnificent example of Madrid Gothic architecture, whose imposing structure dominates the town's skyline.







SPIRITUALITY AND POWER IN THE LOZOYA VALLEY

Heritage · Landscape

The Lozoya Valley, in the heart of Madrid's Sierra Norte, is home to some of the most representative sites of spiritual and political power during the Middle Ages. Surrounded by the mountains of the Sierra de Guadarrama and traversed by the tranquil course of the River Lozoya, this region was for centuries a strategic area where routes, influences and forms of power converged. Monasteries, fortified towns and historic bridges still bear witness today to the importance of this valley in the history of Castile.

The tour can begin at the Monastery of Santa María de El Paular, founded in 1390 on the initiative of King John I of Castile. It was the kingdom's first Carthusian monastery and one of the great spiritual and cultural centres of medieval Castile. For more than four centuries, the monastery maintained close ties with the monarchy and with some of the region's most influential families, becoming a centre of artistic patronage and religious life. Its church, cloister and monastic quarters reflect the balance between Carthusian austerity and artistic richness, whilst the valley's natural surroundings convey the serenity characteristic of a place designed for silence, contemplation and monastic life.

Nearby lies the Puente del Perdón, an elegant stone bridge steeped in history and tradition. According to legend, condemned prisoners could appeal against their sentence at this spot before crossing the bridge, in a final attempt to secure clemency. Beyond history or legend, the bridge symbolises the connection between the monastery and the roads that shaped life in the valley.



A few kilometres away lies Buitrago del Lozoya, one of the best-preserved medieval towns in the Community of Madrid. Its walled enclosure, virtually intact, surrounds the historic centre and is embraced by the river, creating one of the most distinctive scenes in Madrid's heritage. The castle, towers and walls serve as a reminder of the strategic importance of this enclave, situated at a natural pass between the two plateaus and key to controlling the territory for centuries.

Exploring the Lozoya Valley is, in short, discovering a landscape where spirituality, power and nature intertwine. Silent monasteries, historic bridges and fortified villages offer an insight into how this mountainous region was, for centuries, a setting where faith, politics and geography shaped history.



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