

# By bike and train

An original way of touring three of these places, learning about their past and delving into their setting is on the historical trains that connect them to Madrid: the Tren de la Fresa, the Strawberry Train to Aranjuez, and the Tren de Felipe II, the Philip II Train to San Lorenzo de El Escorial, both from Príncipe Pío Station, and the Cervantes Train to Alcalá de Henares from Atocha Station. A trip back in time that will turn this visit into a unique experience.

If what you like is cycling, you cannot miss the CiclaMadrid tours, 420 kilometres connecting destinations and tourist resources, among them these four World Heritage enclaves and the Guadarrama National Park. A simple, eco-friendly, accessible and healthy way of discovering the charm of our region and its natural environment.

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[www.turismomadrid.es](http://www.turismomadrid.es)

## More information:

Historic Trains:  
[www.renfe.com](http://www.renfe.com)  
[www.trendefelipeii.com](http://www.trendefelipeii.com)

CiclaMadrid:  
[www.ciclasmadrid.es](http://www.ciclasmadrid.es)



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DISCOVERING & ENJOYING

SPAIN

**MADRID**  
REGION

2018 - 2019

WORLD  
HERITAGE  
IN MADRID



CULTURAL AND HERITAGE TOURISM

## What is World Heritage?

The canals of Venice, the Palace and Gardens of Versailles, the Alhambra and the Generalife, the historic city of Cartagena de Indias, the Iguazú waterfalls... These are some examples of assets listed as World Heritage Sites by UNESCO as places of exceptional value for humanity.

In case you don't know, the World Heritage Site list is something like the contemporary version of the "wonders of the world". Only exceptional places with great heritage wealth due to their cultural or natural legacy can obtain this recognition.

Spain has the honour of being the third country with the most World Heritage Sites, only surpassed by Italy and China.

In the Madrid Region we have the good fortune of having four listed enclaves:

- The Monastery and Royal Site of San Lorenzo de El Escorial
- The University and historic centre of Alcalá de Henares
- The Cultural Landscape of Aranjuez
- The Montejo Beech Forest

And all of them less than 100 kilometres from the centre of Madrid. They are a must-see!

## Be guided by exceptionality

What differentiates these sites? The criteria that determine whether a site can be included in the World Heritage list are few but very stringent. On a cultural plane, the listed sites have to be masterworks, reflect the exchange of human values or signify an important – or unique—spot in the development of knowledge. For their part, natural assets have to be eminent examples of the environmental and biological processes in the planet’s evolution and stand out for their biodiversity and conservation.

In this context, the Monastery and Royal Site of San Lorenzo de El Escorial constitute a magnificent example of Humanity’s creative spirit; the dimension of the architectural complex and its natural setting make this a place of inexhaustible value. Alcalá de Henares, in turn, presents key element for the knowledge and study of the Spanish language and culture through two millennia of history. Aranjuez is one of the best examples of a cultural landscape to be found in Europe. And the Montejo Beech Forest is a natural space, outstanding in its category for its environmental and landscape diversity.



## The UNESCO criteria

### *Masterworks of the creative genius*

Humanity’s creative genius has been generously developed in the Madrid Region, with works such as the University of Alcalá and the Monastery of San Lorenzo. Their buildings are architectural and sculptural benchmarks of the Renaissance and served as the model for other centres of learning and power in Europe and America. They are two examples of the power of Humanist cultural development in the Spain of the Golden Age, which lay the foundations for a new era in human knowledge.

### *Exchange of knowledge and human values*

The contribution of Alcalá de Henares to the exchange of cultural values began at a time when three cultures coexisted in Spanish cities, the Christian, Jewish and Muslim districts that gave shape to medieval towns of contrasts and cohabitation. Today they can be toured thanks to a special route. Their most singular contribution is undoubtedly their relationship with the progress made by the Spanish language in an academic setting, with such notably humanist personalities as Antonio de Nebrija, the author of the first Castilian Language Grammar, dating from the 15th century and serving as a model for the rest of the European Romance languages. Some of the most renowned writers of the Golden Age of Spanish literature passed through here, such as Francisco de Quevedo, Calderón de la Barca, Félix Lope de Vega and, especially, Miguel de Cervantes Saavedra, a native of Alcalá and the author of the masterpiece Don Quixote of La Mancha.

### *Architectural and scientific development*

The Palace and Monastery of San Lorenzo de El Escorial exerted considerable influence on the subsequent development of Spanish architecture and its construction processes. We can gain some idea of the technical advances that the construction of this 30,000-square-metres monastery in the heart of the Guadarrama Mountain Range entailed in its time. Philip II stipulated that his library should be an exemplary place for study and research: a veritable Chamber of Wonders with drawings and engravings, portraits of personages, mathematical and scientific instruments, maps, spheres, astrolabes and reproductions of wildlife and flora.

### *Landscapes of their time*

The complex design of the Aranjuez cultural landscape is the result of a combination of landscaping, architectural and artistic works over several key periods in Spanish history, fundamentally the 18th century. In Aranjuez we see a prime example of the relations between humans and nature through its farms and rural architecture. This enclave represents the unique model of equilibrium between technique and aesthetics in the environment that was so typical of the Enlightenment, understood as the entirety of this spot’s natural, social and cultural factors.

### *Living traditions*

The three enclaves mentioned above are places that conserve and maintain their own folklore and live their festivals and traditions with intensity. The Alcalá Holy Week; the pilgrimage of the Virgen de Gracia, Our Lady of Grace, in San Lorenzo de El Escorial; the Mutiny of Aranjuez, an uprising led against King Charles IV in the turbulent years that preceded the Napoleonic invasion of Spain in 1808; together with traditional crafts or cuisine, are kept alive and are very much worth discovering.

### *A unique ecosystem*

With more than 120,000 trees, 900 of them centuries old, the Montejo Beech Forest is a peak example of Europe’s primeval beech woods. It also has a considerable density of other unique species. The value of this forest resides above all in the flexibility of the trees and their tolerance of the different climatic, geographical and physical conditions it has experienced in the course of its history. These features make of this space a natural treasure of the Sierra del Rincón Biosphere Reserve.



## San Lorenzo de El Escorial

San Lorenzo de El Escorial boasts an extraordinary artistic heritage and its location in the Guadarrama Mountain Range adds further natural and landscape attractions for mountaineers and hiking devotees who cannot resist the appeal of the Forest of La Herrería and the Abantos Pine Forest.

The monastery has immense historical, artistic and cultural value. The palace buildings of the Hapsburgs and the Bourbons, the Library, the Basilica, the Patio de los Reyes (the Monarchs’ Courtyard), the Royal Pantheons and the Jardín de los Frailes (the Friars’ Garden) are unique spaces that are not to be missed.

A stroll around the historic-artistic complex and a visit to the Charles III Royal Coliseum, an enchanting 18th-century theatre, are equally recommended. We also suggest an excursion to Philip II’s Chair, from which it is said that the monarch would watch the progress of the monastery’s building works.

More information: [www.sanlorenzoturismo.es](http://www.sanlorenzoturismo.es)

## Alcalá de Henares

A visit to Alcalá de Henares can begin by taking us back to Roman times in the ruins of *Complutum*, which form part of the Madrid Region’s Visitable Archaeological Sites. And once in the historic centre, we continue to discover the interesting history of Madrid in the Regional Archaeological Museum.

But Alcalá is also the cradle of a universally famous writer, Miguel de Cervantes Saavedra, the author of Don Quixote of La Mancha, the world’s first novel. The Museum that recreates his birth house is located on the high street, the Calle Mayor.

The University of Alcalá was founded in 1499 by Cardinal Cisneros, an indispensable political figure in 15th-century Spain, together with the Catholic Monarchs who supported Columbus’s enterprise to America. A tour is essential to view its beautiful façade, the Trilingual Courtyard, which was the teaching venue for students of Latin, Greek and Hebrew, and the Paraninfo, the assembly hall where each 23rd of April the Spanish Monarchs present the Cervantes Prize for Literature, the “Nobel Prize of Spanish letters”. Its comedy theatre, the Corral de Comedias dating from the 17th century on Plaza de Cervantes, offers guided tours as well as a carefully selected programme of plays.

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## Aranjuez

In Aranjuez we get ready for long walks with cultural, artistic and gastronomic stopovers.

An indispensable visit is to the Royal Palace –built in the 18th century in the French style brought to Spain by the new royal dynasty, the Bourbons— which organizes guided tours; the Royal Barges Museum and the Casa del Labrador cottage; and, inside the historic centre, the bicentennial Bullring. In a walk around the Jardines del Príncipe (the Prince’s Gardens), the Jardines de la Isla (the Island Gardens) and the Parterre Gardens you will evoke the melodies that the famed composer Maestro Joaquín Rodrigo dedicated to them in his celebrated Aranjuez Concerto.

Nature lovers will obtain special enjoyment from the environs of the Tagus riverbanks, with the historic groves and kitchen gardens that surround the municipality.

More information: [www.aranjuez.es](http://www.aranjuez.es)

## The Montejo Beech Forest

A visit to the Montejo Beech Forest, in the Sierra del Rincón Biosphere Reserve, becomes a very special experience in contact with nature. Along the extensive mountainside that ends in the river Jarama, the beeches, together with oaks and holly trees, create one of the most beautiful and best-conserved environments in the whole of the Madrid Region.

You can traverse this magical forest along different routes: the Senda del Río, the River trail which runs parallel to the Jarama, covers all the settings within the beech forest in an easy route and is thus ideal for children and the elderly. The Senda de la Ladera, the mountainside trail, is a climb on which we can recognize species that grow at greater height. And for the most experienced hikers, we recommend the Senda del Mirador, the Vantage Point trail which, with its greater gradient, includes excellent panoramic views of the upper basin of the Jarama.

Visits to the Montejo Beech Forest are always guided by environmental educators and are free of charge, but in order to ensure its conservation and minimize impact on the setting, they are restricted to a limited number. To enjoy them you have to book ahead on its website or in person at the Resource and Information Centre of the Sierra del Rincón Biosphere Reserve.

More information and bookings: [www.sierradelrincon.org](http://www.sierradelrincon.org)

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Comunidad de Madrid

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You can traverse the forest along different routes: the Río, the River trail which crosses to the Jarama, covers the area within the beech forest and is thus ideal for all ages and elderly. The Senda de los Montes, a mountainside trail, is a route we can recognize specially at greater height. An experienced hiker, you can follow the Senda del Mirador, the most scenic trail which, with its panoramic views, includes excellent paths leading to the upper basin of the river.

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