



## What is World Heritage?

UNESCO declares World Heritage those places of exceptional value for humanity. They are privileged places, with great heritage wealth due to their cultural or natural legacy.

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 five 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 Landscape of Light
- The Montejo Beech Forest

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

## 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. Its buildings are landmarks of the Renaissance and served as models in Europe and America. They are two examples of the Humanist cultural development of the Spain of the Golden Age.

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Comunidad de Madrid



1. San Lorenzo de El Escorial
2. Alcalá de Henares
3. Aranjuez
4. Landscape of Light, Madrid
5. The Montejo Beech Forest

## World Heritage

### Exchange of knowledge and human values

The Christian, Jewish and Muslim districts of Alcalá de Henares shaped a medieval town of contrasts and cohabitation, as a great cultural value. His relationship with the progress of the Spanish language in an academic environment is close, with characters such as the humanist Antonio de Nebrija, author of the first Grammar of the Castilian Language, from the 15<sup>th</sup> century. Some of the most famous writers of the Golden Age of Spanish literature passed through there, such as Francisco de Quevedo, Calderón de la Barca, Félix Lope de Vega, and especially Miguel de Cervantes Saavedra, a native of Alcalá and author of the masterpiece Don Quixote of La Mancha.

### Architectural and scientific development

The Palace and Monastery of San Lorenzo de El Escorial exerted a considerable influence on the subsequent development of Spanish architecture. Philip II stipulated for his 30,000-square-meter library should be an exemplary place for study and research: an authentic Chamber of Wonders with drawings and engravings, portraits of characters, 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 periods in Spanish history. It's an 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.

### Living traditions

The three aforementioned enclaves are places that preserve and maintain their own folklore and live their festivals and traditions with intensity. Holy Week in Alcalá, the pilgrimage of the Virgen de Gracia in San Lorenzo de El Escorial, the Mutiny of Aranjuez, as well as traditional crafts or gastronomy are kept alive.

### Green urbanism

The Paseo del Prado and Buen Retiro are a green urbanism model from the enlightened absolutist era. It represents a utopian society linked to the arts and sciences, a paradigm of culture, within a natural setting in the city. It also represents the idea of democratisation of knowledge, allowing citizens to learn science and enjoy the arts in a civic recreational space.

### 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.

Let's go visit!



## 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 18<sup>th</sup>-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.



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◀ Library of the Monastery.  
San Lorenzo de El Escorial  
▶ Assembly Hall of  
Cisneros University

## Alcalá de Henares

Alcalá de Henares take us back to roman times in the ruins of *Complutum*. Its legacy can be seen, along with other witnesses of the history of Madrid, in the Regional Archaeological Museum.

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

The renaissance Alcalá is shown in its university, founded in 1499 by Cardinal Cisneros, an indispensable political figure in the Spanish 15<sup>th</sup>-century. Its beautiful façade is a must. In the assembly hall, each 23<sup>rd</sup> of April the Spanish Monarchs present the Cervantes Prize for Literature. You can't miss its comedy theatre, the Corral de Comedias dating from the 17<sup>th</sup> century on Plaza de Cervantes.



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Sunset in Island  
Garden. Aranjuez

## Aranjuez

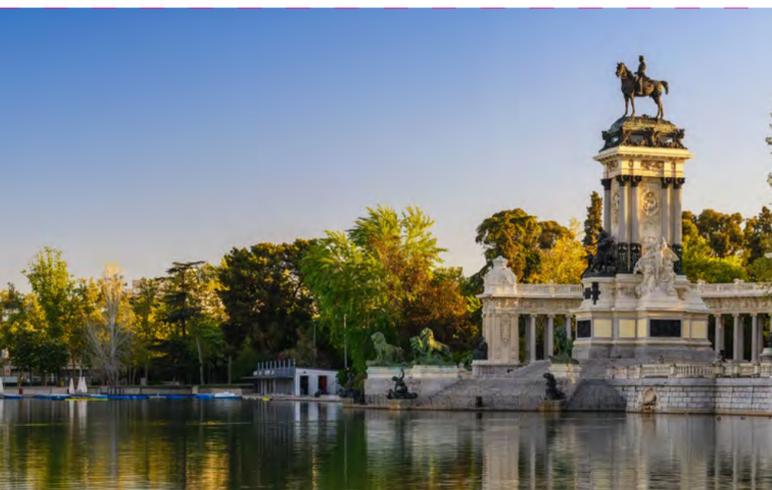
In Aranjuez we get ready for long walks with cultural, artistic and gastronomic stopovers.

An indispensable visit is to the Royal Palace—built in the 18<sup>th</sup> 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.



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## The Landscape of Light

The latest site to be added to UNESCO's World Heritage List in the Madrid Region protects Europe's only urban natural space, where art, nature and science go hand in hand.

In the 16<sup>th</sup> century, Madrid introduced a novel urban design that would later be adapted by the 18<sup>th</sup>-century enlightenment in other European capitals. The space was a tree-lined promenade that organically included elements related to culture, science and nature.

It gathers ecologically important spaces, such as the *Jardines del Buen Retiro* or the Royal Botanical Garden, some of the world's most important museums—the Museo del Prado, Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía or the Thyssen-Bornemisza National Museum—and places specialising in science, such as the Royal Astronomical Observatory.



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◀ Pond in Retiro Park  
▶ Hayedo de Montejo  
beech forest

## The Montejo Beech Forest

Sited in the Sierra del Rincón Biosphere Reserve, 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 forest along different routes: the *Senda del Río*, the river trail which runs parallel to the river Jarama, the *Senda de la Ladera*, a mountainside trail, or the *Senda del Mirador*, for more experienced hikers, that 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, they are restricted. 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.



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and bookings

## 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.



More information:

*Tourist Trains:*

[www.esmadrid.com/tren-fresa](http://www.esmadrid.com/tren-fresa)

[www.esmadrid.com/tren-cervantes](http://www.esmadrid.com/tren-cervantes)

[www.trendefelipeii.com](http://www.trendefelipeii.com)

*CiclaMadrid:*

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

*Madrid Region Tourism:*

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