



# Extremadura

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## Best Places to Eat

- ➔ Atrio (p549)
- ➔ Restaurante Torre de Sande (p549)
- ➔ La Finca (p558)
- ➔ Tábula Calda (p565)
- ➔ Casa Juan (p556)

## Best Places to Stay

- ➔ Hotel Casa Don Fernando (p548)
- ➔ La Flor de Al-Andalus (p564)
- ➔ Hospedería del Real Monasterio (p555)
- ➔ Posada dos Orillas (p553)
- ➔ Haldón Country (p557)

## Why Go?

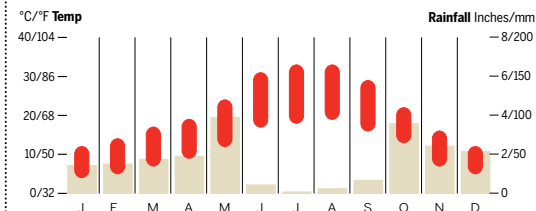
Visiting Extremadura is a journey into the heart of old Spain, from the country's finest Roman ruins to beautiful medieval cities and villages. Mérida, Cáceres and Trujillo rank among the country's best-preserved historical settlements, while *extremeño* hamlets have a timeless charm, from the remote hills of the north to beguiling Zafra on the cusp of Andalucía in the south.

Relatively few foreign travellers make it this far. Spaniards, however, know it as a place to sample some of inland Spain's finest food, especially roasted meats, the pungent and creamy Torta del Casar cheese and the finest *jamón* from Monasterio. If food is your thing, you'll love it here.

And this is a region of big skies and vast swathes of sparsely populated land with isolated farmhouses. Wooded sierras rise along the region's northern, eastern and southern fringes, while the raptor-rich Parque Nacional de Monfragüe is arguably Extremadura's most dramatic corner.

## When to Go

### Cáceres



**Apr** The Valle del Jerte becomes a spectacular white sea of cherry blossom.

**Jul–Aug** Mérida's 2000-year-old Roman theatre hosts the Festival del Teatro Clásico.

**Sep** Good weather and few tourists make this a prime time to visit.

## NATURAL EXTREMADURA

The crown jewel in Extremadura's natural spaces is the Parque Nacional de Monfragüe (p561). Both the Ruta de Isabel La Católica (p555) and Vía de la Plata have sacred roots. Other fine trails include the PR40 (p560) and the Ruta del Emperador (p558).

## Best Festivals

- ➔ Festival del Teatro Clásico (p564), Mérida, July and August
- ➔ Los Empalaos (p558), Valverde de la Vera, Good Friday
- ➔ Womad (p548), Cáceres, May
- ➔ Fiestas de Trujillo (p553), September

## Unesco World Heritage Sites

- ➔ Ciudad Monumental (p544), Cáceres
- ➔ Roman Ruins (p562), Mérida
- ➔ Real Monasterio de Santa María de Guadalupe (p554), Guadalupe

## Best Paradors

- ➔ Parador de Cáceres (p549)
- ➔ Parador de Trujillo (p553)
- ➔ Parador Hernán Cortés (p567), Zafra
- ➔ Parador de Plasencia (p556)
- ➔ Parador Vía de la Plata (p565), Mérida

## To Drive or Not to Drive

If you plan on only visiting the major population centres, a car can be an inconvenience – the old centres of Cáceres, Mérida, Plasencia, Badajoz and, to a lesser extent, Trujillo and Zafra can be extremely difficult to navigate if you're driving. All of these towns are well connected with each other and cities further afield by train and bus. If, on the other hand, you want to get off the beaten track to places like Guadalupe, the Parque Nacional de Monfragüe, Alcántara and Monasterio, you'll have no choice but to rent a car.

## VÍA DE LA PLATA

The name of this ancient highway (aka Ruta de la Plata) probably derives not from the word for 'silver', but the Arabic *bilath*, meaning tiled or paved. But it was the Romans in the 1st century who laid this artery that originally linked Mérida with Astorga and was later extended to the Asturian coast. Along its length moved goods, troops, travellers and traders. Later, it served as a pilgrim route for the faithful walking from Andalucía to Santiago de Compostela and it's now increasingly a rival to the much more crowded Camino de Santiago. From Seville, it's a 1000km walk or cycle to Santiago or a similar distance to Gijón. Entering Extremadura south of Zafra, the well-marked route passes through Mérida, Cáceres and Plasencia, then heads for Salamanca in Castilla y León. Take a look at [www.rutadelaplata.com](http://www.rutadelaplata.com) or pick up the guide (€3) from tourist offices on the route.

## Top Five Food Experiences

- ➔ Visit the Museo del Jamón (p570) in Monasterio and then sample the region's best *jamón*.
- ➔ Track down one of Spain's most celebrated cheeses, the Torta del Casar, in Casar de Cáceres (p549).
- ➔ Eat your fill with the famously epic portions served up at Trujillo's Restaurante La Troya (p554).
- ➔ Experience one of Spain's most celebrated fine-dining experiences at Atrio (p549) in Cáceres.
- ➔ Enjoy Extremadura's most creative tapas on one of the region's prettiest squares at Gastro-Bar Baraka (p567) in Zafra.