



Toledo & Castilla-La Mancha

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Best Places to Eat

- ➔ Calle Mayor (p229)
- ➔ El Corregidor (p217)
- ➔ La Bodeguilla de Basilio (p224)
- ➔ Kumera (p211)
- ➔ Figón del Huécar (p224)

Best Places to Stay

- ➔ Palacio de la Serna (p215)
- ➔ La Casa del Rector (p216)
- ➔ Hotel Albamanjón (p220)
- ➔ Antiguo Palacio de Atienza (p229)
- ➔ Parador de Cuenca (p224)

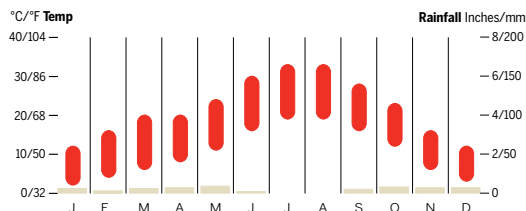
Why Go?

Castilla-La Mancha's landscape is richly patterned and dramatic: undulating plains of rich henna-coloured earth, neatly striped and spotted with olive groves, and golden wheat fields and grapevines – all stretching to a horizon you never seem to reach. This is Don Quijote country, and you'll find references to the fictional knight throughout the region, including a fistful of picturesque windmills. And in many ways, this really is storybook Spain, a land of hearty meals, cheese and wine, lonely hilltop castles and towns stocked with churches.

The area's best-known city is glorious Toledo, an open-air museum of medieval buildings and cultural sights. Cuenca is another wondrous place, seemingly about to topple off its eagle-eyrie perch high above a gorge. There are quiet mountainous stretches here as well, including the Sierra de Alcaraz and the Serranía de Cuenca.

When to Go

Toledo



Mar & Apr Enjoy the countryside's colourful dazzle of wildflowers against a lush green landscape.

May Stroll the evocative streets of medieval Toledo and Cuenca before the sizzle of high summer.

Sep & Oct Hike across Castilla-La Mancha's natural parks and picturesque villages.

FESTIVALS

Corpus Christi in Toledo (p208) is one of the most important religious events, while Cuenca is renowned for its eerily silent *Semana Santa* (p223) processions. If you can, also catch Toledo's Virgen del Sagrario (p209), or Almagro's Festival Internacional de Teatro Clásico (p216).

Best Paradors

- Parador Conde de Orgaz, Toledo (p211)
- Parador de Oropesa (p213)
- Parador de Almagro (p216)
- Parador de Cuenca (p224)
- Parador de Alarcón (p226)
- Parador de Sigüenza (p229)

Architectural Oddities

- Transparente in Toledo's Cathedral – an otherworldly light behind the main altar.
- Valeria – Spain's best-preserved Roman-era Forum.
- Sinagoga del Tránsito, Toledo – one of the last synagogues built in Spain.
- Casas Colgadas, Cuenca – houses hanging out over a gorge.
- Corral de Comedias, Almagro – ancient Shakespeare-esque theatre.
- Windmills, Consuegra – Cervantes' classic novel comes alive.

Off the Beaten Track

If you divert even a little from the main tourist-trail axis of Toledo and El Quijote, you're likely to come across some of Spain's least-visited regions. Evocative Roman ruins don't come any quieter than **Segóbriga** (p226) and **Valeria** (p226), while nearby **Pastrana** (p226) and **Atienza** (p229) are two of Spain's most beautiful medieval villages – come during the week and you'll find no one here. South of Toledo, deserted hilltop castles such as the **Castillo de Montalbán** (p213) whisper, in near silence, of an epic past. In the region's far southeast, **Alcalá del Júcar** (p220) is typical of the villages time forgot in the Río Júcar valley, while the **Sierra de Alcaraz** (p225) is like Castilla-La Mancha's lost world.

ICONIC MUSEUMS

Castilla-La Mancha is best known for its role as the backdrop for one of the world's greatest-ever novels, and two museums – Museo del Quijote y Biblioteca Cervantina (p215) in Ciudad Real and the Casa-Museo de Dulcinea (p219) in El Toboso – provide fascinating insights into this quixotic literary heritage. But other museums, too, offer a chance to get under the skin of the region. In Talavera de la Reina, for example, the Museo Ruiz de Luna (p213) takes you into the wonderful world of ceramics, a centuries-old artisan tradition that's so different from the mass-produced stuff you see elsewhere in Spain. Holy Week celebrations in Cuenca are some of the most stirring in Spain, the city's Museo de la Semana Santa (p222) is the next best thing if you can't be there at Easter.

Top Five Food Experiences

- Visit Villadiego (p216), southwest of Ciudad Real, to learn all about *queso manchego* (a hard sheep's milk cheese).
- Get to know the wines of the prolific wine-producing region of Valdepeñas at Bodega de las Estrellas (p220).
- Dine on venison at Cuenca's best table at Mesón Casas Colgadas (p224).
- Try the famous local eggplants from Almagro at Restaurante Abrasador (p217).
- Sample the best in local cooking with the Menú de Montes de Toledo at La Abadía (p211).