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ALBACETE

Liétor.



THE VILLAGES AND TOWNS OF Albacete spread through the endless plains of La Mancha, clamber up the steep mountains of Alcaraz and Segura, smashed together in the valleys of Júcar and Cabriel rivers, dotted along the plains of Hellín... We are in a region full of contrasts, where the cultural and monument wealth is blended with a varied and unique nature. Places to delight your senses, to live adventures and discover, places that seduce you. Travelling its routes and paths **the visitor will not be left indifferent.**

AMAZING ALBACETE

Coming to Albacete is easy. Located between the centre of the peninsula and the coasts of Levante, it is a historical crossroad. You can reach Albacete by train, road and even by plane. A great city awaits you. It is a relevant commercial, industrial, administrative and service centre that offers an interesting cultural heritage and a delicious cuisine. Come to Albacete, the most populous city in Castile-La Mancha and travel through a region full of surprising contrasts. The name of the city comes from the Arabic *Al-Basit* (the plain), name given to a small farmhouse by the Arabs. It became independent from the town of Chinchilla in 1375 and started to expand thanks to the continuous royal concessions such as the one made by the Catholic Monarchs, which allowed the town to hold a weekly free market; or the concessions made by Philip IV in 1710, which gave the city the privilege to hold an annual fair.

Discover the most important chapters of the history of Albacete by visiting its Museo Arqueológico Provincial. Among its collections you will find the articulated dolls, made of ivory and amber glass, discovered in the Roman necropolis of Ontur; also you will be able to see the Sphinx of Haches, found in the municipality of Bogarra, considered by some as the “Gioconda” of Albacete.

North Station by Benjamín Palencia / Sphinx of Haches.





The architectural environment where you will enjoy these treasures will also astonish you. The museum, built about fifty years ago in Abelardo Sánchez park, presents an adventurous proposal to adapt to the surrounding environment. Do not miss the paintings kept in the museum by Benjamin Palencia the great painter from Barrax who founded the Vallecas School. Apart from this you should also visit the Municipal Museum that once was the old town hall, built in a historicist style. Its rooms display a sample of popular world art collected by Ramírez de Lucas. Now you are in Plaza del Altozano square, in whose gardens you have to take a picture next to the cutler's memorial. To its back we can highlight the modernist silhouette of the Grand Hotel.

Move forward to the Cathedral's square and visit the cathedral dedicated to Saint John the Baptist, built in the 16th century. It houses the chapel devoted to Virgen de los Llanos, patron saint of the city. Near the cathedral you will find the town hall, a modern building constructed with freestone from Salamanca and crowned by a big clock.

When Isabella II of Spain granted Albacete the title of town in 1862, the railway had already arrived at the city. This fact, together with the appointment as province capital thirty years before, was crucial to strengthen the urban, administrative, social and economic development that Albacete experienced in the coming years.

The numerous historicist and modernist buildings of its streets confirm this strong development. Some examples are the Provincial Palace or the attractive properties situated in Tesifonte Gallegos street or Marqués de Molins street. And, of course, the elegant shopping arcade Lodaes Passage with Neo-baroque elements. The famous Teatro Circo, core of the cultural activity of Albacete, is also a unique building. In the Depósitos del Sol, former water deposits used to supply the city with water, you will find nowadays a modern public library.

Albacete Cathedral





Provincial Government of Albacete.



CUCHILOS DE ALBACETE
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PLAZA CASTELLANOS

Visiting Albacete means to approach the traditional craft of cutlery. The museum aimed to show the visitor this craft industry, an activity of cultural heritage, can be found on the Cathedral's square, in a modernist palace known as Casa del Hortelano. It might be a good idea to purchase a piece of this typical craft given its guaranteed high quality as well as its beauty. And respecting what tradition dictates, "Albacete's knives shall not be given, but sold to a friend at a symbolic price, so that friendship does not get harmed".

Albacete is a modern and cosmopolitan city, open to the world. Its vibrant commercial activity and student atmosphere give evidence of the cosmopolitan character of the city, as well as the economic power of its industrial state and its science and technology park. Make a visit to the University Campus, and Castile-La Mancha Botanical Garden, a place open to research the biodiversity of the region. There, traditional and experimental crops live together with exotic plants carefully grown in its greenhouse. It is a good place to walk, ride a bike or even run along Via Verde de La Pulgosa periurban park.

From September 7 to 17 Albacete celebrates its popular festival honouring the patron saint Virgen de los Llanos. If you want to live some unforgettable days, full of joy and entertainment as well as delicious cuisine, book your visit for this period, you should not miss it. The origins of this festival date back to over 300 years ago. It is celebrated in a special location called "la sartén" (the pan). This fairground, a typical example of popular architecture with Neo-classical style, was built in 1783 during the reign of Charles III.

On festival days the atmosphere at the fairground is amazing. Feel free to participate in its programme full of activities and experience yourself this festival, one of the most important in Spain, declared to be of international tourist interest. Oh! And do not miss its traditional *corridas de toros* in the local bullring with elements of Neo-mudejar style designed by the architect Julio Carrilero.





Apart from enjoying all kinds of activities, festival days offer you the exceptional opportunity to taste local cuisine. Albacete's cuisine is very traditional, highlighting dishes such as Manchego gazpacho, made with game meat. The menu choice is varied and inviting: *galianos*, a warm stew made with flat round bread known as *torta de gazpacho* and game meat such as partridge, hare or rabbit; *atascaburras*, a dish often prepared with salted cod, boiled potatoes, garlic and walnuts; *migas rulas*, made bread crumbs, garlic cloves, *chorizo* sausage and bacon slices; pickled partridge; *gachas*, a porridge-like dish made with grass pea flour, garlic and meat; lamb stew; pork loin preserved in *orza*, a jarlike container; *ajo mataero*, a traditional meal made with pork liver, garlic and bread; *pisto*, a warm stew similar to ratatouille prepared with vegetables; *asadillo*, a dish made with roast red peppers, tomatoes, garlic and cumin; game; cheese... For the dessert *miguelitos* from La Roda, puff pastries with cream usually; *panecillos dulces*, sweet bread rolls; *delicias de Almansa*, typical confectionery from Almansa; *borrachos de Minaya*, typical sponge cakes soaked in liquor from Minaya; or flores, flower-shaped pastries usually sprinkled with sugar or topped with honey. This feast must be paired with good wines from La Mancha, La Manchuela, Almansa or Jumilla D.O (Protected Designation of Origin), to which the renowned vineyards of our province belong.

PLAINS, MOUNTAINS AND VALLEYS

Albacete is the great door of a province divided in the natural areas known as La Mancha, La Manchuela, Campo de Montiel, Sierra de Alcaraz y del Segura and the valleys of Jucar and Cabriel rivers. Travel the plains and steep sierras and find unique and stunning places. *Make your way by going farther* and start your journey towards the vast plains crossed by Don Quixote.

The town Ossa de Montiel brings us to the Lagunas de Ruidera Natural Park. This series of lakes and pools, mysterious source of the Guadiana river, is a paradise in Castile-La Mancha. Swim in their waters, remarkable for their unforgettable greenish colour, and practice some of the many water sports that the natural park offers. If you want to experience Don Quixote's adventures, go into the Montesinos Cave and let yourself get bewitched by the arts of Merlin. Enjoy a delicious meal and be prepared to cross La Mancha ready for battle and looking for adventures. Villarrobledo is a prosperous town, famous for its wine and cheese production. The reputation of its *tinajas*, earthenware wine barrels, has been proof for centuries of the work of the local potters. Equally famous is Villarrobledo's Carnival, which is among the most important and visited in Castile-La Mancha.

Alcalá del Júcar.





The towns of Munera, Minaya, La Roda, Barrax, La Gineta, Lezuza, El Bonillo, Fuensanta and Tarazona de la Mancha are musts in the visitors' calendar. In Tarazona de la Mancha, already in the natural area of La Manchuela you will enjoy the views of its Plaza Mayor with wooden balconies. Balazote, about 28 km from Albacete, is a town whose origin dates back to ancient times. One of the great icons of the Iberian culture was found there, the stunning "Bicha" as it is called. It represents a lying bull with a man's head. The original is displayed in the Museo Arqueológico Nacional in Madrid. In Albacete's Museum a copy of the sculpture is shown together with mosaics from a Roman villa also discovered in Balazote.

The southern region of the province of Albacete is home to Júcar river, whose valley, with its amazing landscapes, is full of natural attractions and jaw-dropping surprises. Alcalá del Júcar is one the most wonderful and astonishing towns in Castile-La Mancha. The gorge where it is located makes its way through oak forests and the winding streets go up the hill until they reach the castle. You will see houses dug in the bare rock, keeping legends of the times when the Arabs inhabited these border lands. You will cross a Roman bridge and the night views of the town, beautifully illuminated, are a show you must not miss. You will love the touristic and gastronomic offer of Alcalá del Júcar. Continue your travel heading to Jorquera, a medieval town also situated on a privileged vantage point.

"Las Terreras" Nature Learning Space, in the town of Casas Ibáñez, brings you closer the Ca-briel river, at the frontier with the province of Cuenca. Walk or ride a bike on its hiking routes and other ecotourism activities. From here you can explore the first foothills of the mountain ranges in the eastern coast regions. The area is rich in caves and caves with cave paintings, such as the ones in Alpera. There are also sites where Iberian artifacts have been found, like the ones of El Llano de la Consolación, and El Cerro de los Santos in the town of Montealegre del Castillo.

As you arrive in Almansa you will see far in the horizon the slim figure of its castle, located high up on a big rock. The surrounding urban area has been declared a historical-artistic site. Take the opportunity of the town's craft tradition and buy a good pair of shoes and do not forget either to taste the excellent wines. Keep travelling and you will see another unique fortress in the municipality of Chinchilla de Montearagón dominating La Mancha plains from the heights.





Tamborada de Hellín.

Visit the towns of Hellín and Tobarra during their Easter celebrations. Both towns hold festivals called *tamboradas* (drum-playing), where local drummers play on the street. The continuous sound of miles of drums playing for hours will leave you speechless. Do not miss this special and popular act of faith which has even developed its unique craft traditions. Yet both municipalities have more in common. Tobarra, with numerous emblazoned houses, is a place where very important Iberian sites have been found. Hellín, with its Arabic old town and the surroundings are also rich in archaeological sites, highlighting Tolmo de Minateda site. In the town of Agramón we will meet the Mundo river and its course that offers us stunning spots. But before continuing let us make a stop in the reservoirs of Talave, Cenago, Fuensanta or Camarillas.



Alcaraz.

A new stage of the trip begins heading to the southern area of the province in Alcaraz. At its main square there are two similar towers – Trinidad tower and Tardón tower – that look as if their roofs were about to join. They are the symbols of this town, whose great artistic heritage gives evidence of the rich and prosperous past of Alcaraz. It was an important textile production centre and a strategic position to access the ancient realms of Murcia, Jaén and Granada. Six kilometres far from town, make a stop at Santuario de Nuestra Señora de Cortes shrine, where one of the most crowded religious pilgrimages or *romería* in Castile-La Mancha is celebrated. Alcaraz also gives name of a beautiful and steep sierra with attractive activities for tourists, from the health resort in the borough of Reolid, with its medicinal water source and hot springs and its Nature Reserve Estrecho del Hocino to El Salobre, a privileged spot for fishing lovers and hikers.

Mundo River Source.





The medieval town of Riópar is a stunning setting near the source of the Mundo river, another of the natural treasures of this region. The old San Juan factories, famous for its bronze and brass products, were located here. This Natural Park is a destination for family and adventure tourism. Enjoy while travelling through Calar del Mundo and los Chorros. Take the opportunity and go potholing in the Cueva de los Chorros cave. Watch how a big number of birds of prey fly and admire the flora growing in the hillsides. Not many river sources in Spain are surrounded by such a beautiful landscape.

Enjoy a rewarding picnic in one of its recreational areas or make a stop in the towns of Ayna, Letur, Molinicos, Férez, Nerpio or Elche de la Sierra to taste the most traditional dishes of the area. Ayna is known as “Switzerland of La Mancha”. In Elche de la Sierra you will see its coloured sawdust carpets that decorating the streets during the Corpus Christi procession. In Nerpio you will find a lot of cave paintings declared World Heritage Site by UNESCO. And to conclude, Letur presents us a very typical urban area of great historical and heritage value.

It is not easy to summarise in words the pleasant experiences waiting for you in Albacete. If you really want to enjoy a region full of surprising contrasts, come and visit a province, where the plains of La Mancha turn into steep mountain areas. As we said before, coming to Albacete is easy. Discovering its province and having a great time there as well. 🍷

Cañón de Almadenes / Letur / Sierra del Segura / Elche de la Sierra.







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Castilla-La Mancha