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**GUADA
LAJARA**



THE SISTEMA IBÉRICO AND CENTRAL MOUNTAIN RANGES converge in Guadalajara. The tablelands of La Alcarria, the Alto Tajo and the countryside where riverbeds flow form the geography of these territories, crossroads and witnesses of the historical progression of the Peninsula. The very popular architecture, the aristocratic dominions, the castles, the monumental houses, the churches and chapels appear in an attractive landscape scene of great cultural and gastronomic wealth, inviting the traveller to get lost in these **welcoming, charming and surprising territories.**

Wad-al-Hayara, that is how the Muslims knew the ancient Roman town of *Arriaca*, located next to the Henares river. Today it waits for you with the sonorous name of Guadalajara. Admire its amazing monuments, such as the Infantado Palace. Remember epic memories, such as the figures of Alvar Fáñez or El Cid. Taste the delights of its cuisine, such as its sponge cakes or its honey. Visiting Guadalajara is an invitation to discover a province ready to any adventure you wish to live.

The Infantado Palace will welcome you in Guadalajara. It was commissioned in the 15th century by don Íñigo López of Mendoza, first Marquis of Santillana. It is the most beautiful building of the capital. Look at its Renaissance façade first, one of the best in Spain, and then enter to admire the Courtyard of the Lions. The upper colonnade presents filigrees carved in stone alternating fantastic animals, like lions or griffins, and the coats of arms of the Mendoza and Luna families. The Palace is now the seat of the Guadalajara Museum.

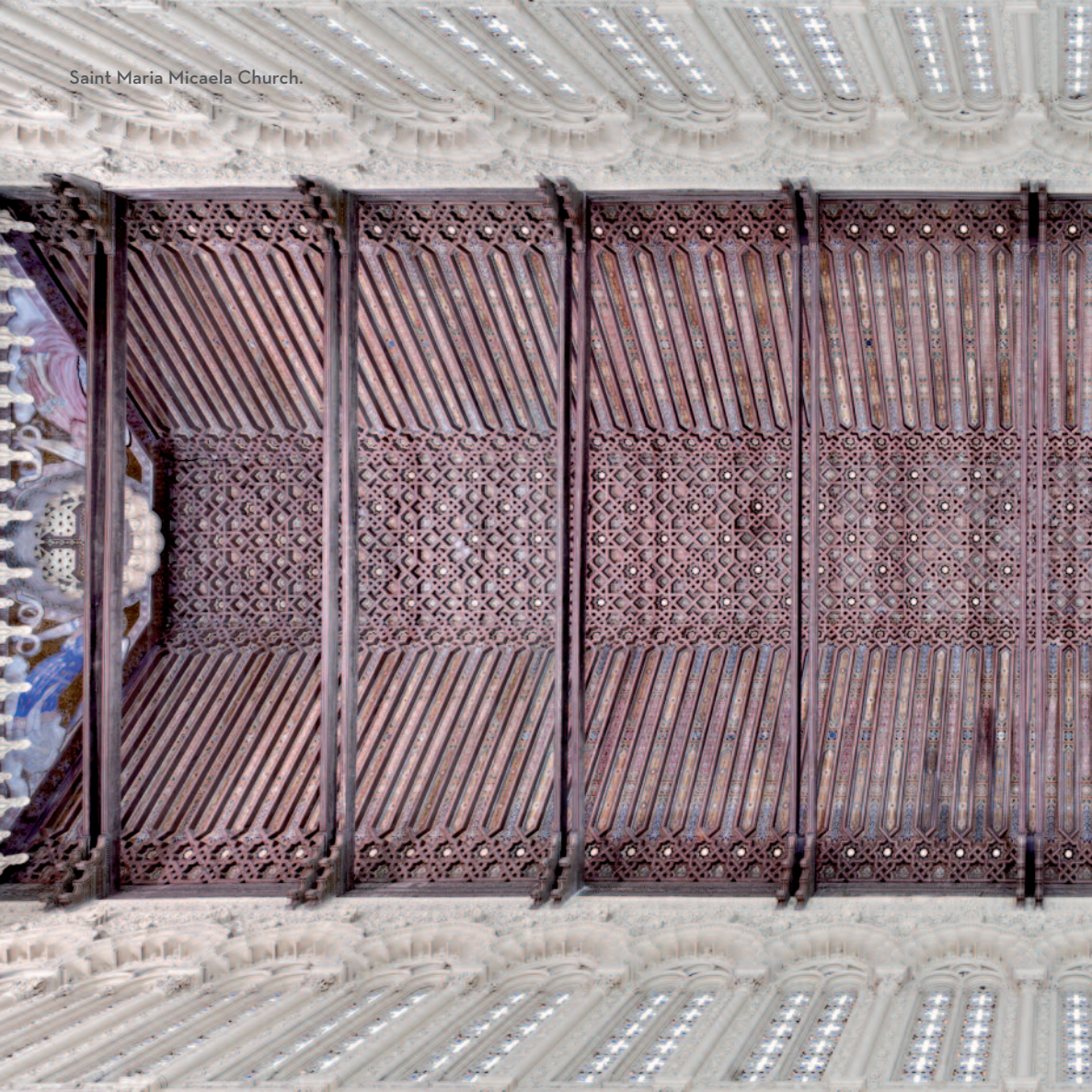
Visit the Alvar Fáñez Tower which was part of the ancient group of entrance gates to the town. The tradition links its name with the lieutenant of Rodrigo Díaz de Vivar who took Guadalajara peacefully, incorporating it to the Kingdom of Castile.

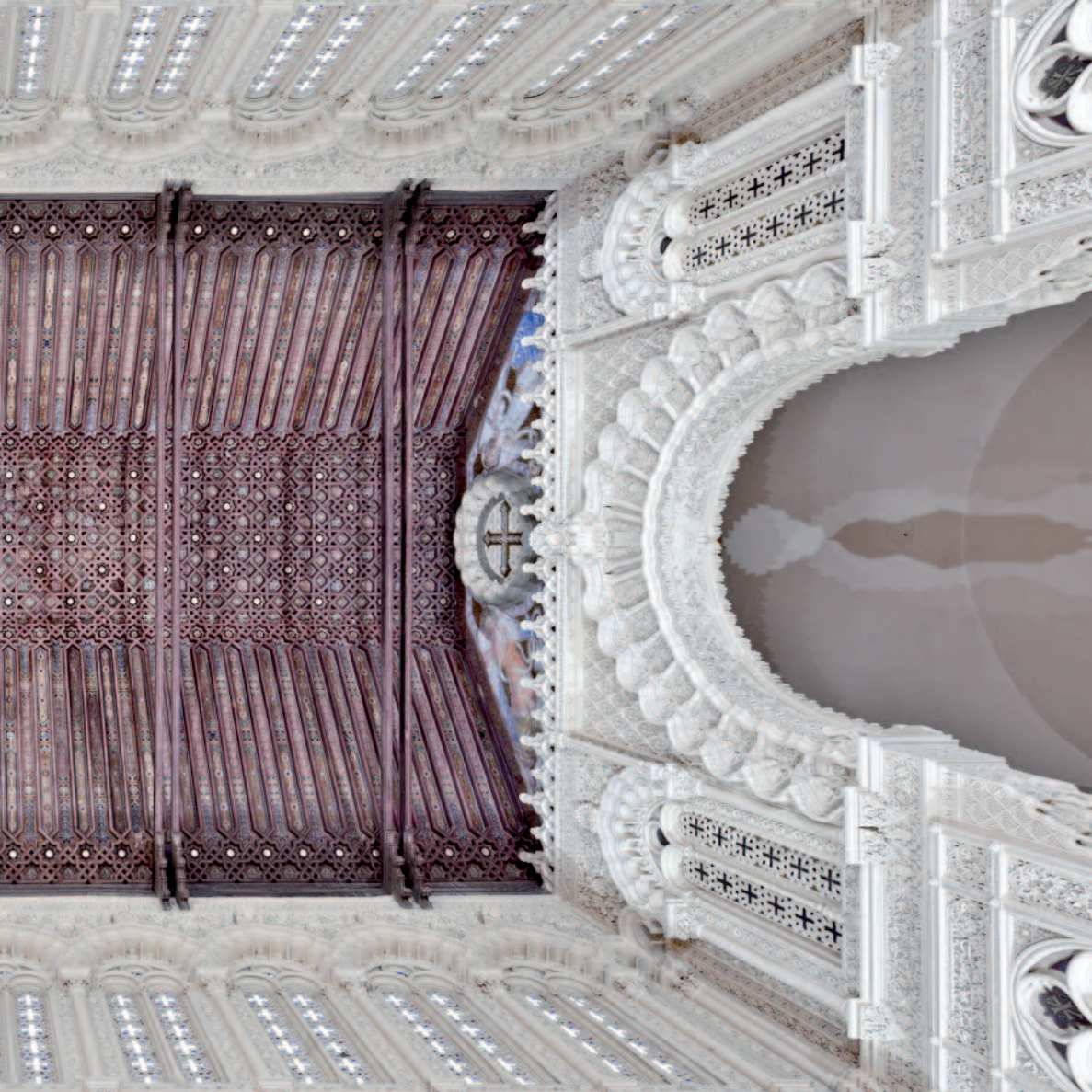
The Infantado Palace, Guadalajara.





Saint Maria Micaela Church.





In the inside, a visitor interpretive centre will approach the times narrated in the *Romance del Mío Cid* narrative poem. The Islamic bridge over the Henares river, the Alamín Tower and the Bejanque Gate are other architectural proofs of that mediaeval past.

Stop at the parish church of Santiago, where the Plateresque mausoleum of the Zúñiga family is; or at the Piedad Convent and Don Antonio de Mendoza Palace, with a Plateresque courtyard. The town hall built with historicist elements and a forged iron bell tower will draw your attention. The modern design of its Plaza Mayor respects the typical Castilian arcade. Do not miss the Pantheon of the Condesa de la Vega and the nearby church of Santa María Micaela.

Take an entertaining walk through its bustling streets in the commercial centre that will lead you to San Nicolás el Real church, a Baroque church in a distinctive Jesuit style. The church of el Carmen is also Baroque, whose façade will be easily seen for its three semicircular archs. Park of la Concordia is one the most appreciated green areas of the town by its neighbours. Relax there before continuing to San Ginés church, Santo Domingo de la Cruz convent and the Luis de Lucena chapel. The Diputación Provincial building has an interesting Neo-mudéjar courtyard. If you cross the street dedicated to Doctor Ramón y Cajal, the Co-Cathedral of Santa María la Mayor, built on an ancient mosque.

Guadalajara stands out for its cultural activity. Its renowned Public Library opens its doors in the Dávalos Palace, a beautiful building from the 16th century. The Tales Marathon, held in June, is a compulsory date for the visitor. Another important cultural hub is also the Buero Vallejo Auditorium, dedicated to the playwright from Guadalajara whose 100th anniversary is celebrated this year. Other cultural references are the Tenorio Mendocino performances on All Saints Eve and the Francisco Sobrino Museum, with an exhibition of the sculptor and key creator of the Spanish film industry.

Before starting to discover the province, make one last visit: the Fort of San Francisco, a group of convents with a long history. These convents even became a *maestranza*, a knight society, for military engineers. Under the crypt of its church, visit the Pantheon of the Mendoza, similar to the one built for the Spanish monarchs in the Monastery of El Escorial.



ARISTOCRATIC DOMINIONS, TABLELANDS AND MONUMENTAL HOUSES

Numerous are the landscapes as well as the cultural heritage and local cuisine that is waiting for us in the villages of Guadalajara. Disputed territories in mediaeval times, the importance of aristocratic dominions and noble families is still in its amazing heritage. Let us go north in the first place. Sierra the Ayllón mountains, the spectacular town of Sigüenza, small churches and Romanesque hermitages are our destination.

Arriving in Sigüenza is wonderful. Just by noticing the towers of its cathedral we feel that we are going back to the best past times. It is one of the best preserved mediaeval towns in Spain. Its arcaded Plaza Mayor is stunning. The Cathedral, a symbiosis of Romanesque and Gothic styles, is an art lesson. Its maximum artistic representation lies in the sepulchre of Vázquez de Arce, the *Doncel of Sigüenza* (the young nobleman of Sigüenza). The cathedral's sacristy keeps a painting by El Greco, *The Annunciation*. The monumental complex is astonishing: the Diocesan Museum, San Vicente church, church of the Ursulines and Santiago church, the Casa del Doncel house, the Seminar, the Posada del Sol tavern, Arcediano House and the Infants School... After visiting all this you deserve a gastronomic reward.

The *Doncel of Sigüenza* / Sigüenza's view.





Sigüenza has a first-class offer of local cuisine, highlighting its roast lamb or kid, marinated trout, game products, Castilian garlic soup , *yemas del Doncel* (confectionery made with egg yolk and sugar) or *bizcochos borrachos* (sponge cakes soaked in liquor). There are excellent places to taste the local cuisine. The Parador Nacional is located in the old castle from the 12th century, which was also an Arabic fortress.

The mediaeval atmosphere will be constant in the county of Sigüenza. It is reflected in the beautiful Romanesque examples that we will find on our way: Bustares, Pelegrina, Carabias, Pozancos, Albendiego, Campisábalos, Romanillos, Baidés, Barriopedro, Cifuentes, Gárgoles de Arriba, Santiuste, Pinilla de Jadraque, Yela, Abanés, Hortezuela de Ocán, Riba de Saelices, Castellar de la Muela, Tartanedo, Córcoles, Poveda de la Sierra, Millana or Beleña de Sorbe, whose stone calendar carved in an arch is flawless. You cannot miss this unique architectural route.

Between Sigüenza and Atienza, where we will make a long stop, you will find the famous Imón salt lakes, whose exploitation was protected by the monarchs since the Middle Ages. The facilities which King Carlos III modernised in the 18th century are still preserved. Atienza is another well-conserved monumental complex. The municipality spreads along a hillside topped by a stone castle. It is also known because of its *Caballada*, an amazing cavalcade on Whit Sunday that has been celebrated for over eight hundred years.

Monastery of Monsalud, Córcoles / Carabia's Church / Cavalcade of Atienza / Calendar of Beleña del Sorbe.





Imón salt lakes.







In Cantalojas, in the Sierra de Ayllón mountains, you can find the Hayedo de Tejera Negra Natural Park. It is a unique location, considered as the most meridional beech forest in Europe. La Buitrera glacial valley is the source of the Lillas and Zarzas rivers. Enjoy the different routes that you can follow in this environment, highly regarded also by mushroom pickers. The highest peaks of Castile-La Mancha are found in these mountains. One of them is the 2,048 metre-high Ocejón peak.

Near here the famous black architecture villages wait for you. Its houses, built with thousands of dark-coloured or reddish stones and slate slabs create a unique and surprising environment. Majaelayo is a very interesting and charming village, as these territories are suitable to practice hiking and mountain climbing, activities that will take you to places like Campillejo, El Espinar, Campillo de Ranas, Roblelaca or Robleluengo. In Valverde de los Arroyos, a famous municipality for its Dances of the Holy Sacrament, celebrated the next weekend after the Corpus Christi festivity, you must visit the waterfall called *Chorrera de Despeñalagua*.

Since the middle of the last century, Hita celebrates every summer its Mediaeval Festival. It is a peculiar way to pay homage to Juan Ruiz, the Archpriest who wrote the *Libro del Buen Amor* (*The Book of Good Love*), an fundamental poem for the Castilian literature. Its interesting monumental heritage –walls, Santa María Gate, San Pedro ruins or Church of San Juan Bautista- can also be admired in the underground, as there are hundreds of caves used as wine cellars in the village. Cogolludo is also a location of special interest.

Ocejón's peak / Medieval Festival of Hita / Campillo de Ranas.



It is said that you can eat the best roast kid in the world in Jadraque. To discover if this statement is true or not, come and try it. Before booking a table in any of its renowned restaurants, go for a walk through its streets or even better; go up to the castle, known as El Cid castle. Among Jadraque's singular constructions Los Verdugos Palace, where Jovellanos lived for a time, stands out. Apart from its Romanesque church, Pelegrina is well-known by hiking, bicycle touring and sport-fishing fans. In this district belonging to Sigüenza the Barranco del río Dulce Natural Park is found. Walk through the park calmly and enjoy the rocky areas, where Félix Rodríguez de la Fuente filmed some of his documentaries. There is a viewpoint remembering the missed naturalist.

Guadalajara celebrates in 2016 the 100th anniversary of the birth of Camilo José Cela, awarded with the Nobel Prize in Literature. He wrote one of the most popular works about La Alcarria, tableland and valley district, where the rivers Tajo, Henares and Tajuña flow. This county is plentiful in fields populated by Holm oak trees, willows, black poplars and a great variety of aromatic plants, which are essential to produce the delicious honey. Some important municipalities are Torija –with it Viaje a la Alcarria Museum–, Birhuela, Cifuentes, Mondéjar –name of a known wine designation of origin–, Yebes, Lupiana and Pastrana. This last village needs a more relaxed stop.

Pastrana is another beautiful mediaeval village, where its Nuestra Señora de la Asunción collegiate church stands out. The Parish Museum is found in this collegiate church and the Parish Archive is also kept here. Saint Teresa of Avila founded in Pastrana San José convent, where the Princess of Eboli would later enter. Moreover, every spring Pastrana celebrates the International Beekeeping Fair, the oldest of this sector in Spain.

Not far from here, to the south and by the banks of the Tajo river, we should go to the Recópolis Archaeological Park in Zorita de los Canes, an exceptional visit to the Visigothic town. The visit will be completed with a tour in the castle and the medina of Zorita.

Do not leave La Alcarria district without visiting Trillo and going up the so-called “Tetas de Viana” (literally “Tits of Viana”, due to its shape), two hills of flat peaks that were immortalised by Cela in his book. There is a popular saying: “Tits of Viana, there are many who see them, but very few have tried them”. To avoid being one of those who just sees them, there is a hiking route that will lead you to the top.





Gancheros in Alto Tajo.

Trillo.



In its long course crossing the Iberian Peninsula, the Tajo river also goes through steep and precipitous locations in Guadalajara. Molina de Aragón is a good destination to go to the Alto Tajo Natural Park, whose protection and influence areas comprise more than forty municipalities, some of the in Cuenca as well. It is an area of great interest for its beautiful landscapes and its flora and fauna wealth. You will find a wide range of active tourism offers to enjoy this special ecosystem full of canyons and gorges. You can access to horseback, hiking or bicycle tours, canyoning and even potholing expeditions.

Peralejos de las Truchas, Taravilla –do not miss its small lake–, Peñalén, Villar de Cobeta, Corcuente, Aguilar de Anguita, Alcolea del Pinar, Luzaga –with important Roman sites–, Riba de Saelices, Saecorbo or Valtablado del Río are important locations. In these you will see unique Romanesque temples, such as Santa María monastery in Buenafuente del Sistal. During the first weekend of September the Fiesta de los Gancheros festival is celebrated to remember the *gancheros*, those who transported tree trunks they had cut down in the mountains downstream to places like Aranjuez or Toledo. José Luis Sampedro paid homage to them in his novel *The River That Takes Us*.

Castle of Molina de Aragón.



Following the stream downriver we find the reservoirs of Entrepeñas and Buendía, a typical area to enjoy water sports. The castles and walls of Molina de Aragón, head of the aristocratic area named after the town, give evidence that the city was disputed during the Reconquista. There is a lot to see there, since it is a relevant aristocratic town. A Romanesque bridge consisting of three arches crosses the course of the Gallo river. Worth mentioning are the churches of Santa Clara, San Felipe, San Gil, Santo Tomás and San Francisco. Among them you will see aristocratic houses and palaces. You will also find good places to taste its local cuisine, specialised in roast meats, trout and game, and you will be able to finish the feast with some delicious sponge cakes made of flour, egg and custard known as *patas de vaca*, literally cow legs.

We are near the end of the journey. We still have to discover the villages of the Señoría Molina district, near the region of Aragon. Campillo de Dueñas –in whose castle the popular series *Game of Thrones* was filmed–, la Yunta, Embid, Tortuera, Fuentelsaz, Hinojosa, Tartanedo, Concha, Mochales or Labros are some of the municipalities. In this last village the Romanesque hermitage of Santa Catalina is preserved. There we can appreciate the triumph arch supported by capitals which are decorated with plant motifs and representations from mediaeval bestiaries.

Guadalajara, its counties and its villages wait for you. These territories are full of landscape beauty and aristocratic stories. They are also plenty of good gastronomy, local festivals of all kinds like *mayordomas*, *águedas*, *botargas*, *soldadescas* or Passion representations. It is a privileged place to enjoy with your family or with your most adventurous friends. A nearby paradise. 🍷

Entrepeña's reservoir / Botarga.







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Castilla-La Mancha