

# ALCALÁ DE HENARES

## AND ITS PARADOR



## THE WISE SEDIMENT OF HISTORY

*“Freedom, Sancho, is one of the most precious gifts that heaven has bestowed upon men; no treasures that the earth holds buried or the sea conceals can compare with it”.*

CERVANTES

The water of the river Henares comes from the summits of Sierra Ministra and then runs downwards towards the Jarama; and from there to the Tajo, which flows, meanders, moves away, flattens, curls in the Atlantic. The water of the Henares is without candour; it wanders, forgetful of the mysteries of the summits, earthy water filled with the coloured earth of the left margin. The valley is asymmetrical, describing gullies, ravines and erecting hills by this shore. On the other hand, the right margin occurs on terraces, rests on Vegas, between islands...

The materials have been admirable arranged; the grain grows in the immensity of the fertile, cultivated lowland, at this side of the river, while the cattle, walking quietly, drinks and grazes, mooing in the fields of the other bank of the river: they frighten away the flies with their tails. Clay and sandstone combine to enhance the cliffs of the Ecce Homo and the Malvecino...

The land has a deep smell. The downpours and changes in course of the river have almost erased the Palaeolithic era. The hills burnt by the sun, like the bushes of the hawthorn of white flowers; all with embeddings of the primitive remains of the Bronze era, visible as soon as they are taken apart. The traveller takes a drink outside time. Half a metre from the present, in open excavations, the city of Alcalá de Henares shows splinters of its origins: ceramics, awls, hand mills and many backs of cabins that, when seen in detail, reveal customs, cultures, hierarchies, kinships with ancestors ...

Many of these primitive tools are gathered in the Regional Archaeological Museum. The pre-beaker ceramic fragments of the Calcolithic found in the site of Esgaravita, the ceramics with zigzag decorative motifs, typical of the Bronze era, found in the indentation of the Ecce Homo and the fortified village unearthed in the Cuesta Zulema, take the foundation of the city as far back as five thousand years BC. Neither Carthaginians nor Phoenicians could have inhabited this place except in the legend, according to which Phoenician soldiers who had been at the Trojan War who established the Alhala quarter on the heights of the Viso Hill and, further down, on the banks of the Camarmilla stream, The one element of truth in this is that there were two towns and that one of them, the acropolis on the hill was called Iper Plataia, but it was founded by the Romans, as was the town on the plain, the prosperous and resounding Complutum.

In the middle of the composition we find a basilica, a forum, thermae, important houses. It was a quiet and peaceful city whose very name bears the fertile confluence of the waters. Fierce fishes drink the mosaics. This was a peaceful city of early Latin character. On the skirts, where the houses become sparser, (the city had the advance of a sewer system), one can find several paths, some of them being the wide main paths. Whether primary and secondary, one could take up to twenty-three routes to get to Complutum.



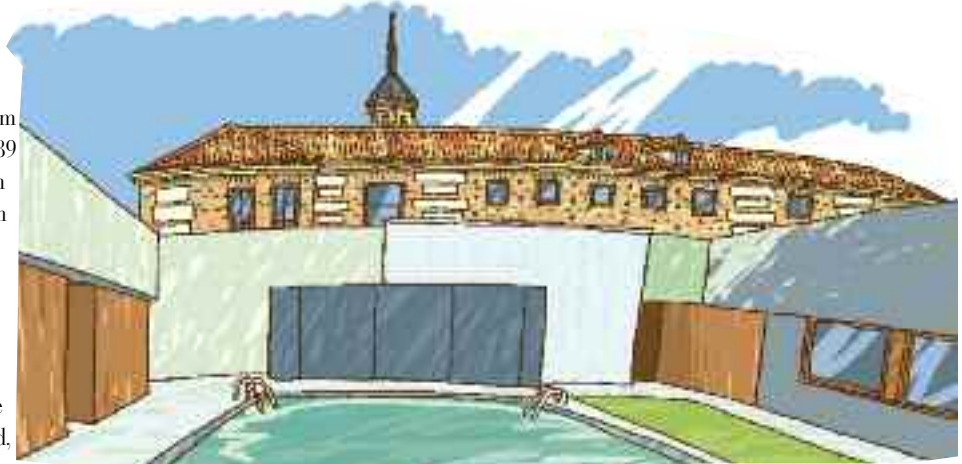
The harvests succeed one another. This is year one AD, with no setbacks taking place. The city prospers. It has no enemies; so it absorbs the scarce population of the upper quarter. Freedmen, slaves and merchants walk its streets. Some of them, the Christians, will later be responsible for undermining the Empire; not with arms but with credos: Christianity, the new religion propagated in the underground of the empire, proves damaging to its very foundations, eating away at the very base of the colonnade. It is now too late to put an end to the rebel religion once arms have been raised against it. Edicts are profusely made and there is an indefatigable persecution but the number of abjurers is negligible in comparison with the hordes of Christians that have grown thanks to the martyrs.

Here is the Romanised Complutum with its Hypolitus house, its cistern and its nymphaeum, from one of whose sprints two women are collecting water; its forum, its square and its necropolis in its four cardinal points, the series of paths and routes...In the outskirts, the martyrdoms take place. There two boys, Justo and Pastor, meet in what is later to be known as the Campo Laudable (laudable field); they do not abjure and their throats are slashed under the orders of the Praetor.

The people venerate them in secret for centuries, until the bishop of Toledo erects the Martyrium in their honour, later to be removed from the dishonour of the outskirts to the high altar of a primitive temple. Next to the basilica, not far from the cistern, Justo and Pastor have their Wall of the Miracle. Suevi, Vandals and Alans have caused an upturn in the Peninsula. They have not reached Alcalá but the power of Rome has weakened so much that the only solution left is that of a pact with the Visigoths.

The agreement is that they shall maintain the city safe from invaders. So it is from 416 to about forty years later. In 589 Reccared abandoned Arianism and Christianity entered an alliance with the forces in power that was not to be broken until the present day.

Dexterity in the use of the chromatic palette, the skilful manner in which nuances are extracted from lights producing the illusion of painting on stone carried out on the old Complutum by the Romans persist, retaining some of its vigour, with the passing centuries. On the other hand, on the Visigothic area of the picture, the lines of the figures



become blurred, remaining within the urban scenery. They become confused... the contour of the Ecce Homo Hill recovers its eloquence during times of war. Arrows, spears, stones go and come from the other side of the pit of the river up to the battlements of the castle with which the Arabs have emphasised the vigorous natural defence of the mountain. Under the ground, the dominated population conceals what is most valuable.

Coins, crockery, figures. The great treasure of the city is taken far away: behind the Pyrenees, the remains of the Holy Children will not be profaned. Another gleaming treasure is likewise kept safe. This is the mythical table of Solomon. It is recorded in Muslim chronicles, attributing the finding of the table of the Biblical king to the troops of Tariq and Muza. It was a table of 365 legs, decorated with pearls and corals. And although it was never recovered, it is still believed that it ended up in Damascus.

The table must have been taken out in the south, at the level of the cutting. And after its legendary passage the phrase "Cuesta Zulema" remained behind, meaning "the mountain of King Solomon". Even Cervantes, who was christened here, refers to the place in a passage of his Don Quixote, when mentioning the "charger that bore the famous Moor, Muzaraque, who to this day lies enchanted in the great hill of Zulema, a little distance from the great Complutum".

Toledo and Alcalá returned to Christian hands in 1085 in the so-named "Cuenca Pact". But the agreement did not exhaust the Arabic assault initiatives and the former Complutum returned to their domain. The infidel island victoriously rejected all attacks except that of the cross. On 3 May 1118, the infidels escaped from the castle through secret passageways when in the early hours of dawn they saw a crucifix erected on the impregnable hill.

The visitor will probably have read somewhere that Alcalá means castle and duly go there. The sun is in the middle of the afternoon. One can hear the warbling of a black wheatear or a red-billed chough, who knows, and the murmur of the white poplars that custody the banks of the pillaging have disfigured it. It was a huge watchtower that had been erected in the ninth century and was later reconstructed with Complutum stones after it was conquered. The Islamic and Mozarabic civil population by its new owners, which lived in two poor quarters close to the castle, was to move there, to the city. The sole proprietors of the fortress were the Catholic Kings, who seized it as payment and punishment for the rebellious archbishop Carrillo. An if Carrillo enjoyed the privilege of saving his life, having sent the arms of the Portuguese army against the Crown, that was by virtue of Isabel the Catholic settling the debt she had with the archbishop who had saved her "from sewing to make her queen to the detriment of the legitimate heir "Joanna la Beltraneja".

## THE PARADOR OF ALCALÁ: THE ETERNAL CHAIR

*“For fleet of foot is he, I wis,  
And idly, therefore, do we pray  
That what for aye hath left us may  
Become for us the time that is.”*

CERVANTES

**H**ow different Spain would have been without this dark monk who dresses in rigorous bronze! Travellers narrow their eyes, trying to form an image other than that surrounding them but to little avail; it is difficult to imagine; Spain without the Queen and King, both amounting to the same.

The alliance that resulted in the two kingdoms becoming a nation was signed by Carrillo. It was he who forged the papal authorisation by virtue of which Isabel could marry Fernando despite his being his biological cousin. This medieval man of God also brought to Alcalá the three first academic chairs, which were to act as the seed for what was later to become the great University of Spain, a Franciscan convent and the collegiate church title for the church of the Holy Children.

The main street makes its way through the houses of the Jewish quarter, from the Picota square to the Door of Guadalajara. Merchants, innkeepers, weavers, mattress-makers, tanners, shoemakers, scribes, professors, masons, potters and carpenters; Christians, old Jews, converts and Mudejars busy themselves with their daily toils. Outside the walls, the market was teeming with activity. Tied to a wooden column, a donkey waits for its master to finish buying vegetables or other provisions. The smell of cumin, when the air blows, imposes itself over the seasoning of the Tendilla olive, over the sweet timbre of cinnamon, over the sour pinch of the aubergines from La Alcarria that were exhibited in the market square in reinforced barrels, jugs, baskets of four, ten and twelve arrobas...

Night falls and the twenty-two doors defending the city start closing. Tomorrow a tally will be made of the tariffs the merchant has brought. Attached to the Door of Burgos stands the regal residence of the Archbishop's Palace where the kings of the Spanish empire brought Catherine of Aragon to the world and met Christopher Columbus for the very first time. Night also closes. A last cloud, a last sheep with a great deal of milk fold away. The moon becomes clear. There, a bell tower is to be added to the church. There, three courtyards are to be opened for the residence hall. There, a dining room is to be created for the poor. The skies are to fill with needles.



Urbanity, hygiene and virtue are to reign among the peoples. A horizon of reason will finish off the edge of each street. Further upwards, his right hand rises as a sign of blessing; Christ is to rule over the new city that was being conceived during the rise of cardinal Cisneros. The traveller observes the repeated emblem, the cord of the Franciscan order, hanging at the sides of the blazon on the façade of the College of Saint Ildephonsus. One is made to remember the words of Francis I of France: "Cisneros has achieved on the own as much as twenty kings of France". The traveller meditates on the continuing freshness the marks of religion, on the deep trace left behind by its factories. The Departments of Philosophy, Theology, Mathematics and, with the Islamic parchments of Granada, the Department of Medicine came to the Master city. The best men in each discipline impart their knowledge in the classrooms. In the Spanish Language room, a man imposes silence on his students, without ever raising his voice. He has left the highly reputable University of Salamanca to try his luck in this still-modest riverbank town in which the Archpriest of Hita sowed mad oats. The lecturer preens his moustache. His name is Antonio de Nebrija, and his is the most famous grammar book ever written in the Spanish language. In the hall de Grados Don Antonio, deep buried in his thoughts, meets Cardinal Cisneros: he allows himself to be taken by the arm and, as the cross the chapel, he invites the professor to participate in a new project. The cardinal has conceived the plan to expand knowledge and Christianity. The most faithful service is the dissemination of the original text, that which contains the Holy Writ: the Bible. A bible that can be read in all its Christian languages. In Latin, Greek, Chaldean and Hebrew.

The traveller's eyes, as they watch the Latin characters, some as straight as stems and others more pleasingly curved, graphemes, pilcrow signs, cannot but feel admiration for Cisneros's publishing endeavour. The polyglot Bible seen at the centre of Cervantes studies is one of the ten that have survived the ravages of the passing centuries. The original circulation was of 600 copies. The intellectual effort of philologists and the aesthetic and technical talent of the printers that cast ex novo types, persists, vibrates. The book emanates a sacred halo of illustriousness, tenaciousness.

The evangelising fury of cardinal Cisneros reaches Africa, not by means of letters by brandishing swords. The campaigns in Oran, Bejaia and Tripoli are the work of the cardinal, who makes use of the Regency entrusted him by Ferdinand the catholic, now away in Naples for the occasion of the death of Philip the Handsome. Fernando turns up in Alcalá: he has heard bad words about the works promoted by the cleric of his trust. Before the very facades of the university buildings, the king confesses to him:

"I've come to censure your factories and yet I cannot but admire them." – "Sir," answered the Cardinal. "While you win kingdoms and create captains, I work to train men for you, that they may honour Spain and serve the church..."

"And I must congratulate you for this," answered the monarch who, on seeing the poverty of the materials with which the buildings were being constructed, added: "This seems to me to be less than durable for a work you plan to make eternal..."

"Others will build in marble and stone what I'm erecting in clay" sentenced Cisneros.



## COLLEGE OF ST JEROME. TRILINGUAL COMMON, SIXTEENTH CENTURY

The architectural models used by the Renaissance Alcalá are Italian, but all of them are modelled on the foundations laid out by Cisneros. The traces of his singular theological rationalism are as visible, as impossible to conceal among the ashlar and the mortar as the gargoyles and candlesticks, the minervas, the atlantes that have the audacity to leave the cold crevices, the dark cavities, to make their blood run over the sun of the facades. Cisneros is like a brick dust that gives unity to the whole. It is a difficult task to separate the chapel from the academic department, a sin, science of grace.

The traveller walks along Colegios street, which is wide, long and straight: an Ilustración avenue that leads nowhere, an axis that does not communicate two extremes but rather, creates the meeting point for the students of the Augustine college with that of St Bernard. Here, in each one of the 12 minor colleges, the same number as the disciples of Christ, as many other poor students were being trained, amounting to a total of 72 students along with the pupils of the six grammar schools. Logics, Metaphysics and Physics were the skills being taught at the minor colleges for four years. Higher studies were being pursued at the Major College of Saint Ildephonsus, among which Theology stood out above the rest for being ahead of its time. Erasmism and the analytical approach towards the Holy Scriptures impelled the University of Alcalá to soar above the others of its time. In the words of Batllón: "If Spain had not gone through Erasmism, it would have not given us Don Quixote".

The traveller first crosses the Main School Courtyard, designed by Juan Gómez de Morain in the eighteenth century, then the crossing of the old Student Hamlet, leaves behind the Philosophers courtyard and reaches the Trilingual. The last cloister is that of the Minor College of Saint Jerome, this is its true name. The shadow of a stork longitudinally reaches its western extreme. Throughout its three centuries of splendour the walls of these colleges housed the illustrious likes of Lope de Vega, Quevedo, Francisco Vallés, Ignatius Loyola, Juan Ginés de Sepúlveda, Tirso, Jovellanos, Olavide...

A posthumous work of Cisneros's, this college was entrusted for its construction to Pedro de Cotera who managed to give the cloister an air of the purest Alcalá Renaissance. Although it was most known by all as the Trilingual because lessons were given in Latin, Greek and Hebrew; it owes its name to St Jerome, by reason of the alter being Cisneros's favourite among the four fathers of the Church, thanks to his splendid "Vulgate" in Latin, which the Church kept as the official version of the Holy Scriptures.

The traveller has just sat down at a table of the Parador, next to a window. He has entered like a student of those days, and is now resting from the walk that has taken him there. He drinks something fresh as he waits for his dish. Even if this is not proper, he stands up for a moment. The beauty of the cloister makes him impatient, he responds to its call. He takes a few steps to see it from within. Two of its wings belong to the Parador, the second oldest in Spain, founded in 1929. They serve him the soup, or the salad, the dish. They fill his glass. The traveller shares the table with those illustrious characters from other times.

Remembering one of the legendary adventures, he believes to see young Francisco before him, still a minor student, when, having delayed one of his visits to his friends at the Major College for more time than usual, has just found out that the gates have been shut. Finding no other possible

way to leave than that of climbing over the wall, the group of friends decided to use a pulley to help him cross over but with such bad fortune that it got stuck in midcourse, leaving Quevedo some metres away from the ground. On seeing the dangling bundle, the patrolman asked, as was his custom:

"Who goes there?" "This Quevedo" answered the poet, "going neither up nor down not remaining still".

With the Disentailment of Mendizabal, after a time, the buildings were subject to neglect and pillaging. A gesture on the citizens' part saved much of the heritage by founding, for the purchase of the most notable ones, the Society of Co-Owners. Fifty years later, in 1859, the railway arrived and the city experienced a new growth, with its population becoming part of the labour of the industry that was proliferating throughout the whole of the corridor of the Henares. From the seventies onwards, when the university appears, and especially, after obtaining the title of being a Heritage of Mankind, authorities and citizens invested their energies in restoring a much-deserved glory to its streets, buildings and illustrious peoples.

Before the old Hospice installed and still functioning for years in the Minor College of Saint Jerome, Alcalá de Henares has been offering since 2008 a new, cutting-edge hotel complex that includes 128 rooms, a conference hall, reception rooms, a swimming pool, a spa and a restaurant. The work, which makes use of the courtyard and building of the Dominican Convent of Saint Thomas Aquinas, of the seventeenth century, is a feat of contemporary architecture that has responded to the challenge that the monumental environment imposed with highly audacious solutions. The carved garden may be the most creative and efficacious achievement: a garden area over the ceiling of the rooms, communicated by courtyards in the shape of a cross. The parador guest can and must enjoy it all without forgetting the traditional Student Inns, on the other sidewalk of Colegios street, which is noted for its cooking and its exclusive visits to the Trilingual courtyard of the Cisnerian University.



## DISHES OF FISH AND GAME

*"They say it is written, and rightly so, that deprivation is the cause of appetite."*

CERVANTES

**T**he countryside, the mountainous area and the rivers of the area give rise to highly diverse products for adorning one's dish and stimulating one's appetite. The main feature are undoubtedly the different varieties of meat, whether originating from hunting as in the case of wild boar, partridge, hare; or those animals fed with good pastures such as lamb and goat, which are easy to accompany in the pot with mushrooms and vegetables. Crabs and snails are likewise present in a good aperitif.

Alcalá has a typical cuisine that cooks the natural food from both earth and water. There is a modern cuisine, an international cuisine and then another one that honours the age of the Golden century and draws its inspiration from the pots of Don Quixote. From both of these, the traveller may enjoy the most superlative dishes.

So as not to start out with something light that will leave room and hunger left for the fine Pisto de la Alcarria, recommendations include Henares Crabs, which are red, live and well pinched with chilli. Once cleaned and seasoned, one need only throw them live into the hot oil in a clay casserole with garlic and laurel. On the dish they are sprinkled with parsley.

The pisto prepared here and carrying in itself, as usual, green pepper and ripe tomato, the region incorporates the substantial touch of pork loin. The link of the dish cooked on little fire and the touch of some secret spice is the secret behind the gastronomic brilliance of a popular recipe given a different accent in each region. The meal is completed with Honey, whether on cheese, or in some sweet or prepared.

The traveller would not be convinced, if walking these Cervantes lands, if he was not able to enjoy those dishes that were tasted by Don Quixote and Sancho Panza during their adventures. These are not fictitious dishes, but traditional foods that have been transmitted, spoonful by spoonful to the present day and for which there is no lack of opportunities to try them in this area. A good example of this is the Alcalá, where Julián Martín, the head of the cooking department, has assumed responsibility for the now-famous Cervantes Menu. Its purpose is to gather recipes from the times of Don Quixote and adapt them to our day and age.

## THE SECRET RECIPE

**L**et us now then talk about these dishes. In the first chapter of the book, Cervantes describes to what the Hidalgo eats. "... An olla of rather more beef than mutton, a salad on most nights, scraps on Saturdays, lentils on Fridays, and a pigeon or so extra on Sundays".

The Salpicón is usually made to take advantage of the meat left over from other meals; mincemeat is used, heavily seasoned with onion, pepper, oil and vinegar and it is all fried to be later eaten cold.

Regarding the famous Duelos y Quebrantos, it's already been said that they stave off one's hunger which is hardly surprising, for the ingredients can reaffirm this: bacon, ham, brains, and finally eggs, which scramble all this fried food, well sautéed with lard. Or as is said in chapter XI: [He] "...drew towards the fragrance that came from some pieces of salted goat simmering in a pot on the fire..."

Tasajos are no more than meat marinated for about four days to be subsequently left to dry in the open air. One can use the meat of a cow, veal, venison or even a wild boar. It is similar to cured beef.

On the Island, Sancho makes reference to the "Olla Podrida" (rotten pot), "... that big dish seems to me to be an olla podrida, and out of the diversity of things in such ollas, I can't fail to light upon something tasty and good for me".

The Olla Podrida is one of the most exquisite dishes of all times. In order to recall its origin, we shall mention the fact that this term comes from the original "Olla Poderida" (powerful pot), as it was known in the Middle Ages, which far from the resemblance it may have with "podrido" (rotten), it refers either to the strength of the ingredients or to the powerful people who were able to taste it. It is a traditional dish from the region of Burgos and is similar to the Castilian Stew, with red beans taking the place of chickpeas.

The "Galianos", better known as the "Gazpacho Manchego". This dish is made with rabbit, hare, partridge or pigeons. It is regarded as shepherd's food, in which meat, after being eaten, is boned, shredded and seasoned to combine with a kind of t made out of flour, water and salt. And it would be wrong to forget the famous crumbs of its Cervantes feast.

When speaking about Avellaneda's spurious Don Quixote...: "May I die, sirs, if the author of this book your worships have got has any mind that we should agree;..." II, chapter LIX

The Migas or Crumbs, best served with days-old bread, that has been chopped and moistened the night before, fried with good olive oil and with garlic, is accompanied with bacon, chorizo, loin, and seasoned with red pepper. They are usually eaten on the same pan. It goes without saying that each region has its variety, and all of them are exquisite.

"There is no path that does not end, unless laziness and sloth interfere"



## QUIET WALKS

If you want to know this sort of village in one or two days, you must walk these streets and squares, like the Colegios Street or the Los Doctrinos Square, with the Corpus Christi Convent (1). On the other side of the street, the convent of Saint Basil the Great (2). Going straight in the opposite direction, the traveller would find La Magistral (3) and, if he has already gone through this from one side to the other, Mayor Street would serve as the pleasant alternative. In either case, one finds the street in between, walking a few metres, avoiding Cervantes and reaching the artery porticoed by the Jewry backwater known as Irlandeses square, full of cafés and the main feature of one of the most beautiful flint grounds ever walked on by human feet.

Nearby we will find Cervantes's house and the Hospitalillo (4), which must be seen, there being hardly any time restrictions. If the traveller is fortunate, he may enjoy a starter or some quartet playing sacred music or a puppet show by the Comedia del Arte. Otherwise, the traveller should continue in his walk, there are always life and a representation out in the open at night.

The nineteenth-century Salón Theatre (5) is nearby, recently restored as are the streets Imagen and Nueva, which flow into O'Donnell Park without vehicles and make the traveller enter the dream of other centuries. It would constitute a serious offence to the acting profession, to the Golden Century, to architecture and, perhaps worst of all, to oneself to leave without seeing the oldest theatre in Europe and the most beautiful along with London's "The Globe": The Corral de Comedias (6).

The visit may be made with a guide in the mornings or one may attend one of its performances, which are always select and linked to the verbosity of our greatest literature. It is to be found in Cervantes square.

In the same Niños Santos square, the patio of what is here known as Casa Tapón offers music, juggling, alternative leisure every weekend and a great many cafés bunched together, all concentrating culture and life, always welcoming painting, photography, recitals...

The Casa de la Entrevista (House of the Interview) (7), thus known for being the place chosen by Isabella the Catholic for informing herself about Christopher Columbus's travelling preoccupations, was the church of the old monastery of San Juan de la Penitencia, founded by cardinal Cisneros in 1504. It is now the venue of the Cervantes Institute. Its library will soon be the privilege of whoever wants to enjoy it; for the time being it is the best place for finding what has been published about Cervantes; the ground floor has what, along with the Oidor Chapel, is the best exhibition hall of the City Council.

One favourite location for our cinema is Palacio Square, with its immediately eye-catching Archbishopal Palace (8), the Archaeological Museum and the Baroque jewel of the Monastery of Las Bernardas (9), a guided visit to which is highly recommended.

The construction of the Cistercian convent was carried out under the orders of the Archbishop of Toledo, Cardinal Bernardo de Sandoval, in 1613, in order to house 25 noble nuns. If its main façade, made of brick, is surprising in its simplicity, its interior is delightful with its impressive ornamentation in which a large dome provides a sky to the space. This work is now in the hands of the architect Juan Gómez de Mora, it still belongs to archbishopric but it is no longer inhabited. And although its future is uncertain, it has just been restored. Magnificent canvases by Angelo Nardi are distributed on its walls. This original structure still



retains its chaste air as a former dwelling for nuns, it has been certified a Historical-Artistic monument since 1924. There are more convents, more temples, other museums and gardens worth visiting. The wall leads to the municipal O'Donnell Park, which serves the function of a miniaturised version of the Madrilenian El Retiro, luminous and sombre, or the Garden of the Lions, with the tower of the Magistral chiming in the West and the freshness of summer nights.

The stars are whispering something to the Cyprus trees. The traveller is delighted; he has been protracting the enjoyment of herb liquor. There is something beautiful in the way the night of Alcalá invites one to investigate.

### A trip by car

Up to Nuevo Baztán, one can find a route through Torrejón but the most convenient one from Alcalá is that of Loeches. One must reach Loeches and, from there, carry on the left through the M-219 to get to Nuevo Baztán.

This village of the Community of Madrid, with its avowed Navarrese vocation, despite its being not too distant from Torres de la Alameda, and not far from Arganda and Tajuña, is closer to Thomas More or the Platonic Greek polis.

The traveller is amazed, he fails to understand that he should find so rich and so imperative and defeated a heritage in the middle of this plain. A first dazzled look at so impressive a Baroque display is enough to realize that one is standing before something never seen before but, unless one has read about it, it is impossible to solve the matter of where something so strange came from. Such is the case of Nuevo Baztán as regards some of its bridges, some castles, some springs, sculptures, parks, libraries, but this applies only to no more than four towns of our old world. The origin of their foundation does not lie in men or women, hunters and harvesters but in the undertakings of one single settler, Don Juan de Goyerreche, the royal treasurer and lord of the Olmeda, whose purpose it was to lay down a parish and, around this, what we see nowadays.

It takes little time for one to realise that the drive of the Navarrese's idea was not reduced to the erection of a temple and another pair of noble buildings, but actually included a clear repopulating project. The original

idea of this repopulator, who was ahead of his time, was that of making Nuevo Baztán a centre of textile production that could supply material for the whole of Spain. It is thus that, in 1710, he created the factory of Silk Fabrics, Handkerchiefs and Ribbons and, two years later, the Factory of Fine Glassworks, a monopoly which had the support of King Philip V. Flemish and Navarrese craftsmen worked on the project which eventually foundered a few years later.

In the ruins that still survive one can catch a glimpse of the underlying rationalism, a trend that constituted the basis on which the urban set was erected. Palace and church are united by a single façade. This is a splendid façade that will remind the traveller of Churriguera because its unmistakable Baroque conception is clearly thereto indebted. The artist from Salamanca, when reopening this magnum assignment, enjoyed a great reputation, but his abilities were confined to the realm of sculpture and the altarpiece. His is the palace of the church and the courtyard as well as the urban design of the rest of the village.

It is necessary to wait for the mass hours to visit the interiors, which gives the traveller the licence to get to know about its peoples, about two thousand souls, its taverns, the shadow of one of its trees. The altarpiece of the main altar is a Baroque banquet of scenes in which the master used the "wet clothes" so as to achieve a marble curtain effect.

The logical continuation is for the trip to be continued until Olmeda de las Fuentes, a fresh place with a stream that happens as well as a curious art gallery ceded by the artists that have settled there due to the charm of the village's benevolent and beautiful geography.



## PARADOR DE ALCALÁ DE HENARES

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