

TOURIST INFORMATION

The city of Alcalá de Henares belongs to the Autonomous Community of Madrid. It is located 30 km. from the capital on the Madrid-Barcelona motorway, and 20 km. from the Internacional Airport of Barajas. Its population is of approximately 200,000 inhabitants.



Founded in I B.C. by the Romans, who named it "Complutum", its name was changed, during the Muslim Rule during the second half of VIII century to "Qual'at abd al-Salam", where the present name of Alcalá comes from.

After the conquest by the Bishop of Toledo in 1118, the city became Seat and residence of the archbishops of Toledo, who walled and expanded it.

Alcalá de Henares reached the height of its glory at the end of the XV century, when Cardinal Cisneros founds the Complutense University. Its main site was the San Ildefonso College, which boasts with an admirable plateresque façade.



During the XVIII and XIX centuries, the city suffers a progressive decay culminating in the transfer of the University to Madrid.

In 1977, the University of Alcalá is created and recovers and restores the ancient colleges in order to once again serve their purpose as educational and research centres.

Alcalá de Henares was named a world Heritage site by UNESCO in 1.998 in recognition of the fact that Alcalá was University City in the world.

Alcalá de Henares was also the birthplace and residence of Miguel de Cervantes, the most illustrious Spanish writer of all times. The IV Centenary of the *Quixote* publications, a comedy which is considered



one of the most important literary works, was celebrated in 2005, and the city of Alcalá de Henares made a solemn tribute to its author and his work.

PLACES OF TOURIST INTEREST

- **Ancient University – San Ildefonso Major College**

Founded by Cardinal Cisneros in 1499, the original foundation included a Mayor College from which a number of Minor Colleges depended upon. The institution was transferred to Madrid in 1836 and returned to Alcalá de Henares in 1977.



The main façade, forming by a plateresque ensemble, was created by Gil de Hontañón in 1553. Several courtyards compose the building's interior, the Santo Tomás de Villanueva Courtyard being the most notable amongst them with a herrenian style; and the Patio Trilingüe (Trilingual Courtyard), which used to be a Latin, Greek and Hebrew school.

The Paraninfo, located in the old University's Main Hall, was built around 1520 and has an impressive Mudejar style covered ceiling. Its walls are adorned with plateresque style plasterwork.

San Ildefonso's Chapel is the oldest building within the University ensemble and its decoration is very much as that of the Paraninfo. Cardinal Cisneros is buried in it.



- **Iglesia Magistral (Magisterial Church) – Cathedral**

Its construction was ordered by Cardinal Cisneros at the end of the XV century, in the location where, according to tradition, the martyrdom of the Holy Children Justo and Pastor took place. The building, of a late Gothic style, consists of three naves with groined vaulting, lancet arches and ambulatory. The Magisterial Church is, together with San Pedro de Lovaina (Belgium), one of the only two churches in the world owning such title, given by the Pope to all the churches who had University professors among their canons. The tower-belfry is the Cathedral's most remarkable exterior feature.



- **Archbishop's Palace**



Built by the bishops of Toledo as a castle-fortress during XIII and XIV centuries, it was turned into a palace by bishops Fonseca and Talavera in the XVI century. The main façade dates back to this time. At the end of the XIX century it was a thoroughly rehabilitation by Don Manuel Laredo, who was inspired by Neo-Gothic and Neo-Mudejar styles.

- **San Bernardo Convent**

This is one of the nine enclosed convents that still remain in Alcalá de Henares. It was founded in 1618 by Cardinal Bernardo de Sandoval for the nuns of the Cistercian Order.



The main façade, with its austere brick look, only open with its three stone fronts. The interior shows an elliptic ground floor covered by a great oval dome. Six chapels are arranged around the nave. Instead of the more typical altarpiece, the church has a rather curious "four face canopy", which allows the celebration of four simultaneous masses.

- **Cervantes' Natal House Museum**

An example of the XVI century Castilian housing, it sheltered the birth and early childhood of Miguel de Cervantes. The house is built around a courtyard with a two-floor portico. The lower floor is devoted to the family's daily life, while the halls and bedrooms are found in the upper floor.



- **Antezana Hospital**



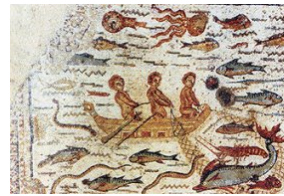
It is the oldest operating health center in Spain. It was founded in 1483 by Don Luis de Antezana and his wife Doña Isabel de Guzmán to provide free assistance to



humble patients. At present time, it still leads its present activity. The building is a typical Castilian two-storey courtyard with a pillar-supported balcony in the upper level.

- **Complutum**

In the eastern zone of Alcalá, the remains of the Roman "Complutum" can be found: a forum with a basilica and hot baths, as well as numerous villas in the surroundings, characterized



CLIMATIC FEATURES

On account of its location in the centre of the Iberian Peninsula, Alcalá has a Continental climate. Annual average temperature is about 13°C, with a pronounced contrast between the relatively cold winters and the high summer temperatures. Rainfall is scarce, most of it occurs in April, May and November. In July, the temperature may fluctuate between 20° and 36°