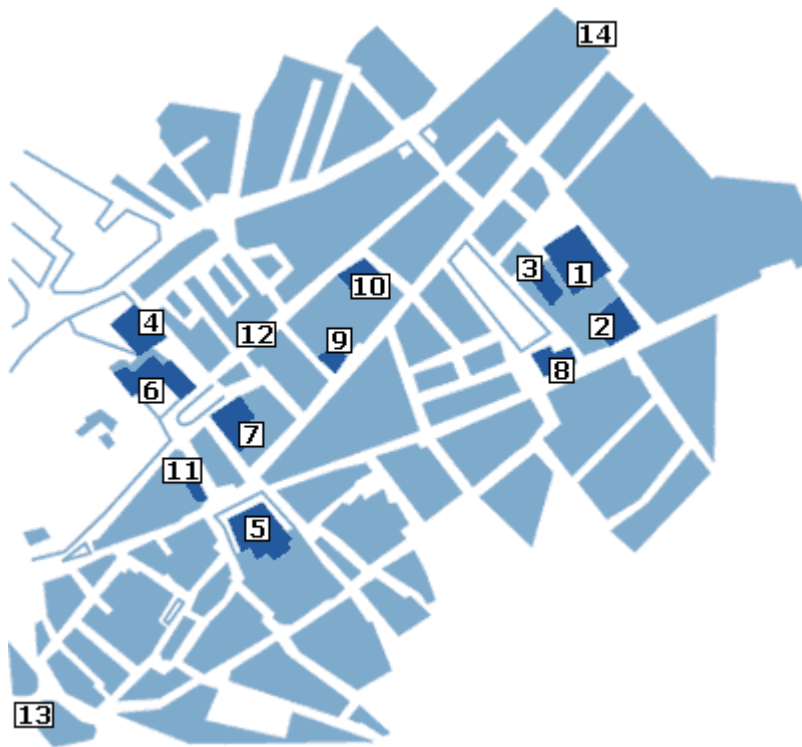


## ALCALA DE HENARES



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Located 30 kilometres from Madrid on expressway A-2, on the banks of the river after which it is named, Alcalá de Henares today is a sizeable city with a population of 170,000.

Archaeological ruins found in the area indicate that the first human settlements date from the Neolithic Era. In Roman times it was an important centre known as Complutum, a name it traded for the current one during Muslim rule.

After the Reconquest, Alcalá became a domain of the Archbishops of Toledo, who built a large palace-fortress here as a second residence. In 1293 King Sancho IV granted Alcalá the privilege of creating an “Academy of General Schools”, the origin of its seven-century-old university.

In 1499 Cisneros decided to found a university, which opened its doors eight years later, making Alcalá the most important intellectual centre in Spain at that time. The city was to be the birthplace or residence of important political and cultural celebrities: Nebrija, Catalina de Aragón, the emperor Ferdinand, Cervantes, Quevedo, Tirso de Molina, Calderón de la Barca, Lope de Vega, St Ignatius of Loyola, etc.

King Charles III granted Alcalá de Henares the title of “city” in 1687. But soon after its historic Complutense University was moved to Madrid in 1836, the city fell into decadence, from which it did not recover until the middle of the Twentieth Century.

Alcalá de Henares began to prosper again early in the sixties with the advent of new industry. It is one of the foremost cities in Greater Madrid today thanks to the renewal of artistic and cultural activities

concomitat with the re-establishment of the university some years ago.

## **ST ILDEPHONSE COLLEGE**

Construction on this building was begun in 1537 by Rodrigo Gil de Hontañón, the architect who designed the cathedrals of Salamanca and Segovia, and finished in 1553 under the supervision of the head engineer Pedro de la Cotera. The most highly skilled sculptors of the area worked on the elegant decoration and its exquisite gridwork was made by the same craftsmen that worked on the cathedral at Toledo, Francisco de Villalpando and Ruiz Díaz del Corral.

The College had three large cloisters, two of which are still standing: the “Patio de Santo Tomás de Villanueva” and “El Trilingüe” (St Thomas of Villanueva Patio and the Trilingual Patio).

## **CENTRAL HALL**

The Central Hall and university chapel are the only two parts of the College built in the times of its founder. The Central Hall or Scholastic Theatre, located in the west corridor of the Trilingual patio, was the place where graduation ceremonies and other solemn academic events were held.

## **ST ILDEPHONSE CHAPEL**

Burial grounds for many great men whose names are associated with the university, such as Antonio de Nebrija, Pedro de Gumiel or el Vivino Vallés, King Philip II's physician, it is one of the most characteristic examples of the so-called “Cisneros style”. The plasterwork on its walls, a harmonious blend of Gothic, Mudéjar and Renaissance ornamental motifs, and its polychromatic coffered stuccoed ceilings, afford a most sumptuous atmosphere, making this building one of the stateliest examples of our early Renaissance architecture.

## **ST BERNARD MONASTERY**

Founded for Cistercian monks by Cardinal Sandoval y Rojas in 1617. Its façade is a prime example of Complutensian baroque architecture which harmoniously combines brick as a building material with stone in the doorways, the main vaulted niche with the image of the patron saint, the founder's coats of arms and a fascia with an allusive inscription running along the entire building.

The overall floor plan of the church is oval in shape, and has six chapels; the diagonal ones are a smaller scale model of the large central area which is covered by a huge elliptical dome. This building pioneered urban transformation in this area of the city. Designed to blend with its surroundings, the square comprising the Mother of God convent, the Archbishops' palace and the St Bernard façade is unquestionably one of the most attractive urban complexes in Alcalá.

## **MAGISTERIAL CATHEDRAL**

Built over the graves of Justo and Pastor, children who died as martyrs, this church is one of the only two in the world bearing the tile “Magisterial”, which meant that all its clergymen had to be university “magisters”. The current building was built between 1497 and 1514 under the orders of Cardinal Cisneros, the architects being Antón and Enrique Egas, who opted for a late Gothic style. The sturdy tower stands adjacent to the gallery that is accessed from the main entrance; its Herrerian style steeple was completed in the seventeenth Century.

### **ARCHBISHOP’ PALACE**

Built in the Thirteenth Century as a palace-fortress for the archbishops of Toledo, its design was influenced by the prelates who often spent long periods of time here. The archbishops’ palace was protected by a walled enclosure, some important remnants of which are still standing such as the so-called Tenorio Tower in Palacio Square, which dates from the Fourteenth Century.



### **ST PHILIP OF NERI CHAPEL**

This chapel, founded towards the end of the Seventeenth Century, has a Baroque church with an elliptical vault. Foremost among its treasures are its interesting library and fine collection of religious statues of the school of Gregorio Fernández and Alonso Cano, as well as an extensive array of paintings and religious articles. It has a permanent exhibit in the area open to visitors.

### **JUDGE’S CHAPEL**

This is one of the few remaining structures pertaining to what was the former parish church of St Mary the Elder. The chapel was founded by King John II’s judge, Pedro Díaz de Toledo, in the Fifteenth Century. Note the striking cambered Roman arch, with Mudejar plasterwork. Miguel de Cervantes was baptized in the font in the centre of the chapel. This and the adjacent rooms comprise the city’s most important temporary exhibit centre.

## **CERVANTES HOUSE AND MUSEUM**

Miguel de Cervantes was born in this house in early October 1547. The building was fully restored in 1956 in the style of a home typical of wealthy families in the mid-Sixteenth Century, in which many of the original elements were maintained. Foremost among these are frescoes discovered on a wall of adjacent building. The various quarters contain an interesting collection of paintings, carvings, furniture and decorative articles of Cervantes' time, as well as an extensive collection of old and new editions of Cervantes' writings.

## **CERVANTES THEATRE-SALON**

One of the city's two theatres. It was built in 1888 in a record 29 days. Both the façade and the interiors, rectangular in shape (originally also used as a ballroom) were reformed in 1925. Restored and reinaugurated in 1989, it offers a wide variety of performances on weekends.

## **CERVANTES THEATRE**

This is a "unique" building, in that much of its construction constitutes a record of its past as a place of public entertainment: theatre-in-the-round in 1602, roofed coliseum in 1785, Romantic theatre in 1830 and cinema in the seventies. It is currently being restored.

## **HOUSE OF THE INTERVIEW**

This exhibit hall was formerly the church of the old monastery of St John of Penance, founded by Cisneros in 1504. Its name commemorates the first meeting in Alcalá between Christopher Columbus and Queen Isabel.

## **CALLE MAYOR (MAIN STREET)**

Formerly known as the “Calle Mayor de la Judería” (Main Street of the Jewish Quarter), as early as the Thirteenth Century it was the busiest marketplace in Alcalá, which explains why there are porticoes practically from one end of the street to the other. The wooden piedroits were replaced by stone columns in the Sixteenth Century, some of which are still standing, while others were in turn replaced by square pillars in the Nineteenth Century. A very pleasant place to stroll, the “Calle Mayor” is still lined by buildings from various periods of the city’s past.

Next door to Cervantes’ house is the Antezana Hospital founded in 1485 and still used for that purpose. Its patio, with a porticoed gallery, is a stately example of Gothic-Mudejar civil architecture. The St Ignatius chapel was built inside the church around the room where the saint stayed while he was in Alcalá. Opposite the hospital there is a narrow alley leading to a place called the “Synagogue patio”, site of one of the Jewish people’s two temples in Alcalá before they were expelled in 1492.



## **OPEN-AIR SCULPTURE MUSEUM**

Inaugurated in 1993, it intends to be the largest such museum of its kind in Europe. The museum stretches from the Madrid gate, running parallel to the walled enclosure adjacent to calle Andrés Saborit (Andrés Saborit Street) and Vía Complutense (Complutense Way), and includes around fifty sculptures varying widely in kind of material, technique and style, from figurative to cubism, including abstract art and conceptualism. Poblador, Urculo, Amadeo Gabino, Aizcorbe, Alberdi, Berrutti, Cristóbal, Bararri, Ortí, Beatriz Khon and Pepe Noja, her sponsor, are some of the artists whose works are on exhibit here.

## **COMPLUTUM**

Originally located on the cerro del Viso (Viso Hill) plateau, where remains of the old Roman road can be found, Complutum was moved to the plain some time during the First Century. Ruins of the ancient

Roman city can be seen on the Camino del Juncal (Juncal Road), nearby the Hermitage of the Holy Children. The ruins of the bathhouse complex (hypocaust, tank, etc.) As well as of other civil buildings, discovered in successive excavations, lie near the grand basilica (public square where business was done and sentences pronounced).



## **USEFUL INFORMATION**

### **ALCALA DE HENARES**

Oficina Municipal de Turismo  
Callejón de Santa María, 1  
C.P. 28801. Tel. 91 889 26 94

Ayuntamiento  
Plaza de Cervantes, 12  
C.P.28801 Tel. 91 888 33 00

Información Ayuntamiento  
Tel. 010  
Llamadas desde fuera del término  
91-880 27 62 / 91-880 28 11

RENFE  
Paseo de la Estación, s/n  
Tel. 91-888 01 96

Continental Auto (Bus Madrid)  
Avda. Guadalajara, 5  
Tel. 91888 16 22

Teatro Salón Cervantes

Cervantes, s/n  
Tel. 91 882 24 97

Museo Casa Natal de Cervantes  
Calle Imagen, 2 (28802)  
Tel. 91-889 96 54

Universidad de Alcalá de Henares  
Plaza de San Diego, s/n (28801)  
Tel. 91-885 40 00

Hostería "El Estudiante"  
Calle Colegios, 3  
Tel. 91-888 03 30

Ruinas Romanas de Complutum y Museo de la Escuela Taller de Arqueología  
Camino del Juncal, s/n  
tel. 91-881 32 50

## MADRID

Información Turística de la Comunidad de Madrid  
Tel. 429 31 77

Información General sobre Madrid  
Tel. 010

INFORIBERIA and Reserve  
Tel. 902 400 500

Consortio de Transportes de la Comunidad de Madrid  
Tel. 91-580 19 80

Business hours:  
Small businesses:  
From 10 to 14 and from 17 to 20 h.  
Department Sores:  
From 10 to 21 h.