

Alcalá de Henares

Community of Madrid · Spain

TRAVEL GUIDE

Tripomatic



Overview

Alcalá de Henares is a historic university city about 35 km northeast of Madrid. It is the birthplace of Miguel de Cervantes, the author of *Don Quixote*, and its university and historic center are a UNESCO World Heritage Site.

It has a long arcaded main street, a famous university building and a Roman archaeological site. It is an easy half-day or full-day trip from Madrid.

When to visit

Spring and autumn are the best seasons, with mild, sunny weather. Summers are hot and dry, and winters are cold.

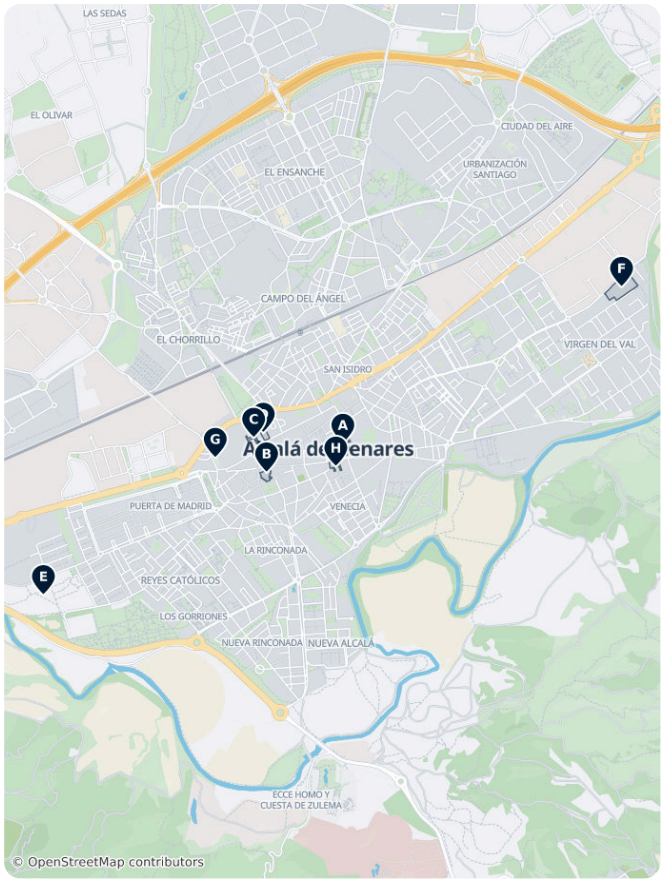
The Cervantes Prize ceremony takes place on 23 April, and the Cervantes Week (*Semana Cervantina*) in October brings a market and street theatre. In November, the play *Don Juan Tenorio* is staged around the town.

MONTH	CONDITIONS	DAY °C avg / max	NIGHT °C avg / min	
January	Poor Poor for sightseeing	11° / 16° Feels like 7°	1° / -3°	Dry air
February	Fair Fair for sightseeing	13° / 19° Feels like 9°	2° / -3°	Dry air
March	Good Good for sightseeing	16° / 23° Feels like 12°	4° / -2°	Dry air
April	Good Good for sightseeing	19° / 26° Feels like 16°	6° / 1°	Dry air
May	Great Great for sightseeing	24° / 32°	10° / 5°	Dry air
June	Good Good for sightseeing	30° / 38°	15° / 9°	21 sunny days · Dry air · UV 8 (Very high) · Up to 5 days above 35°
July	Poor Poor for sightseeing	34° / 39°	18° / 13°	28 sunny days · Dry air · UV 9 (Very high) · Up to 15 days above 35°
August	Fair Fair for sightseeing	34° / 39°	18° / 13°	26 sunny days · Dry air · Up to 13 days above 35°
September	Great Great for sightseeing	28° / 34°	14° / 9°	Dry air · Calm winds
October	Great Great for sightseeing	22° / 29°	10° / 4°	Dry air
November	Fair Fair for sightseeing	15° / 21° Feels like 11°	5° / -1°	Dry air
December	Poor Poor for sightseeing	12° / 17° Feels like 8°	2° / -3°	Dry air

Best months: May, September, October

Climate data: NASA POWER (MERRA-2) · 1996–2025

Top sights



- A Universidad de Alcalá de Henares is the historic university founded in 1499 by Cardinal Cisneros, with a Plateresque façade and courtyards. The ceremonial hall hosts the Cervantes Prize.
- B Catedral Magistral is the Magisterial Church, which is the city's cathedral.
- C Palacio Arzobispal is the Archbishop's Palace, a large building next to the cathedral.
- The Museo Casa Natal de Cervantes is a reconstruction of the house where Cervantes was born, with a museum.
- Calle Mayor is a long, arcaded street with more than 2 km of colonnades, lined with shops and cafés.
- D Museo Arqueológico Regional has archaeology of the region, in a former convent.
- E Complutum is the site of the Roman town of Complutum, with a house and forum.
- F Necrópolis de la Villa Romana del Val is a Roman villa site with a necropolis outside the center.
- G Museo de Escultura al Aire Libre is an open-air museum of sculpture on the university campus.
- H Colegio de Málaga is another historic college building, next to the university.

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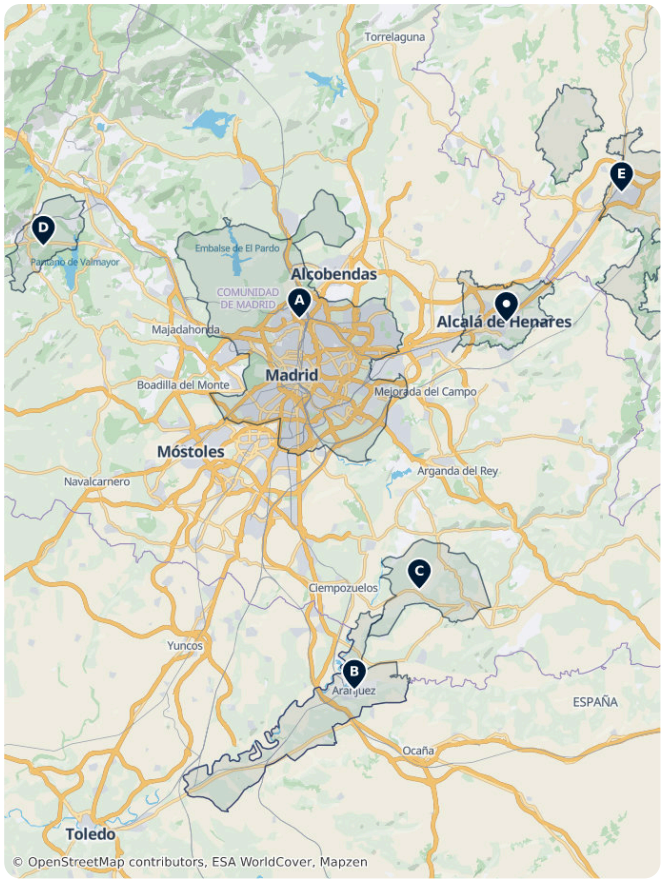
Scan to download the app

What to experience

- Walk along Calle Mayor and stop for tapas and the local pastry.
- Take a guided visit of the University and the Cervantes birth house.
- Visit the Roman remains of Complutum.

Day trips

- A Madrid (about 35 km, 30 minutes by train): the capital.
- B Aranjuez (about 80 km, 1 hour by car): a royal town with a palace and gardens.
- C Chinchón (about 55 km): a village with a round main square.
- D El Escorial (about 80 km): a monastery and royal palace.
- E Guadalajara (about 30 km): a nearby historic town with a ducal palace.



Where to explore

Other places nearby:

- **Madrid area**: Madrid, El Escorial, Aranjuez and Chinchón.
- **Historic cities**: Toledo.

Getting there

- **By air**: Madrid-Barajas airport is about 15 km away, and it takes about 30 minutes to reach by taxi or train.
- **By train**: Commuter trains (Cercanías, lines C-2 and C-7) run from Madrid, in about 30 to 40 minutes. Book on Renfe for long-distance trains.
- **By bus**: Frequent buses run from Madrid's Avenida de América station.

Getting around

- **On foot**: The historic center is compact and flat. The main sights are within a 10 to 15 minute walk of each other.
- **Cycling**: There are bike lanes, and the city is mostly flat.
- **Public transport**: City buses reach the Roman sites outside the center.

Getting around on foot & by bike

WALKABILITY

High

The historic center is compact and flat, and the main sights are within a 10 to 15 minute walk.

CYCLING INFRASTRUCTURE

High

The city is mostly flat, with bike lanes.

Driving

- **Is a car worth it?**: Not needed. The trains from Madrid are quick and the center is walkable.
- **Parking**: Use an underground car park near the center.
- **Restrictions**: Parts of the historic center are pedestrian only.

Food & drink

Alcalá is known for its *rosquillas* (small ring-shaped sweets) and *costrada*, a layered custard pastry. Madrid-style dishes such as *cocido* (chickpea stew) and roast lamb are common in the traditional restaurants.

Tapas bars around the central streets serve a small dish with each drink.

What to eat & drink

BREAKFAST

Churros · Churros con Chocolate
Fried dough sticks served with a thick, dark hot chocolate for dipping — a classic Spanish breakfast or late-night snack.

LUNCH

Paella Valenciana
A saffron-scented rice dish cooked in a wide, shallow pan. The traditional Valencian version uses chicken, rabbit, and green beans — best eaten at midday.

Gazpacho
A cold, blended soup of raw tomatoes, cucumber, pepper, garlic, olive oil, and vinegar, originally from Andalusia. Served as a drink or a starter, especially in summer.

DINNER

Pulpo a la Gallega
Boiled octopus sliced onto a wooden board and dressed with olive oil, coarse salt, and smoked paprika — a signature dish of Galicia.

SNACKS & STREET FOOD

Jamón Ibérico
Dry-cured ham from acorn-fed Iberian pigs, sliced paper-thin and eaten on its own or with bread. The finest grade, jamón ibérico de bellota, is one of Spain's most prized products.

Tortilla Española
A thick potato and egg omelette, served warm or at room temperature, found in virtually every bar in Spain. Often eaten as a tapa or a quick meal.

Patatas Bravas
Fried potato chunks served with a spicy tomato sauce or aioli — one of the most common tapas across the country.

Pintxos
Small snacks anchored to slices of bread with a toothpick, the Basque Country's answer to tapas. Found in bar counters across San Sebastián and Bilbao, often with elaborate toppings.

Croquetas
Crispy breaded cylinders with a creamy béchamel filling, typically made with jamón, bacalà (salt cod), or mushrooms.

DRINKS

Rioja Wine · Vino de Rioja

Spain's best-known wine region produces full-bodied reds from Tempranillo grapes, aged in oak. The crianza, reserva, and gran reserva labels indicate increasing age and complexity.

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Safety & health

Alcalá is a safe city. Summer heat is strong, so wear sun protection and drink water. Pickpocketing is possible on busy streets, so keep an eye on your belongings.

History

Alcalá began as the Roman town of Complutum. In the Middle Ages it was ruled by the Moors, and it was later a seat of the archbishops of Toledo.

Cardinal Cisneros founded the university in 1499, and it became one of the leading centers of learning in Spain. Miguel de Cervantes was born here in 1547. The university moved to Madrid in 1836 and returned to Alcalá in the 20th century. The historic precinct was listed by UNESCO in 1998.

Country facts

Quick practical facts for Spain at a glance:

CURRENCY

EUR €

EMERGENCY

112

ELECTRICITY



Type C / Type F
230 V · 50 Hz

LANGUAGES

Spanish

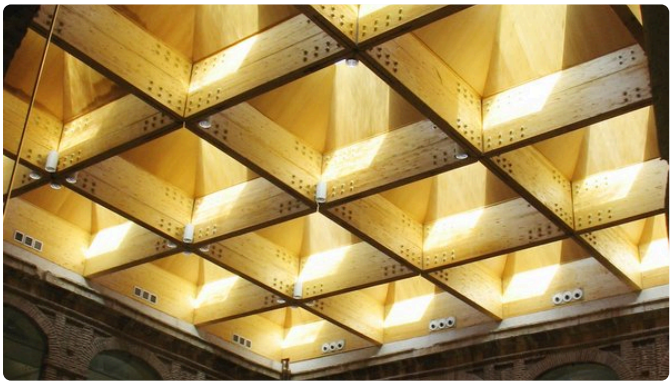
TAP WATER

Safe to drink

Alcalá de Henares Essentials

Alcalá de Henares, a UNESCO World Heritage site, is defined by its 15th-century university and its legacy as the birthplace of Miguel de Cervantes. This list covers the city's Renaissance core, featuring the University's Plateresque facade and the 17th-century Corral de Comedias theater. Key landmarks include the Gothic-Mudéjar Magisterial Cathedral and the Archbishop's Palace. Visitors can explore the preserved 16th-century home of the author of Don Quixote and the historic Hospital de Antezana, one of the oldest continuously operating medical facilities in Europe.





A University City Alcalá de Henares

The University of Alcalá is a public university located in Alcalá de Henares, a city 35 km northeast of Madrid in Spain and also the third...

10 Plaza de Cervantes, Alcalá de Henares 28801, Spain
(40.48231, -3.36282)



B Museo Casa Natal de Cervantes

Reconstructed 16th-century manor house located on the site of Miguel de Cervantes' birth. The museum displays period furniture, domestic items, and a significant collection of early editions of Don Quixote.

Calle Mayor 48, 28801 Alcalá de Henares
(40.48226, -3.36710)



C Plaza de Cervantes

The city's central landscaped square featuring a 19th-century bronze statue of Miguel de Cervantes. It is bordered by the Town Hall and the historic Corral de Comedias theater.

6 Plaza de Cervantes, Alcalá de Henares 28801, Spain (40.48252, -3.36427)



D Magisterial Church of Sts Just and Pastor

The Magistral Cathedral of Saint Justus and Saint Pastor is a Roman Catholic cathedral located in Alcalá de Henares, Spain.

3 Calle del Empecinado, Alcalá de Henares 28801, Spain (40.48057, -3.36888)



E Archibishop's Palace

The Archiepiscopal Palace of Alcalá de Henares is a palace located in Alcalá de Henares, in the Community of Madrid, Spain.

2 Plaza del Palacio, Alcalá de Henares 28802, Spain (40.48267, -3.36991)



F Corral de Comedias de Alcalá

Dating to 1601, this is one of the oldest preserved public theaters in Europe. The building retains its original courtyard layout, stage, and later Baroque and Neoclassical architectural modifications.

Calle Cerrajeros 15, 28801 (40.48221, -3.36476)

corraldealcala.com, +34 91 877 19 50



G Regional Archaeological Museum of the Community of Madrid

The Regional Archaeological Museum or Archaeological Museum of the Community of Madrid is an archaeological museum in Alcalá de Henares,...

Plaza de las Bernardas, 28801 Alcalá de Henares
(40.48298, -3.36915)

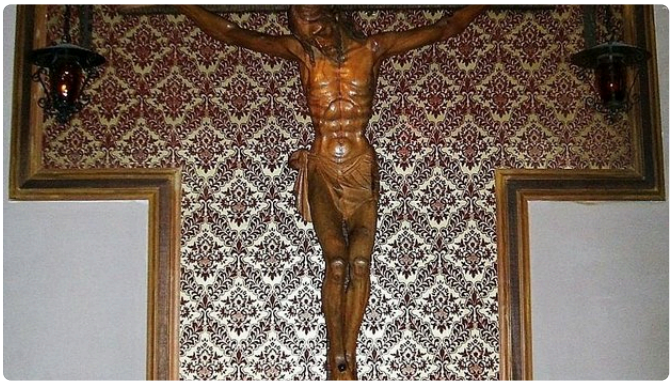
madrid.org/museoarqueologicoregional/, +34 91 8796666



H Palace of Laredo

The Palace Laredo is a palace located in Alcalá de Henares, Spain. It was declared Bien de Interés Cultural in 1975.

Paseo de la Estación 10, 28807 Alcalá de Henares
(40.48786, -3.36397)



I Antiguo Hospital Benéfico de Nuestra Señora de la Misericordia

Founded in 1483 and known as El Hospitalillo, this is one of the oldest hospitals in the world in continuous use. It features a traditional Castilian courtyard and a Gothic-Mudéjar chapel.

Calle Mayor 46, 28801 Alcalá de Henares
(40.48245, -3.36691)



J Capilla de San Ildefonso

A 16th-century chapel serving as the historic university's most significant building. It houses the Carrara marble tomb of Cardinal Cisneros and features intricate Mudéjar plasterwork and polychrome ceilings.

(40.48247, -3.36349)

+34 91 8854157



Torre de Santa María

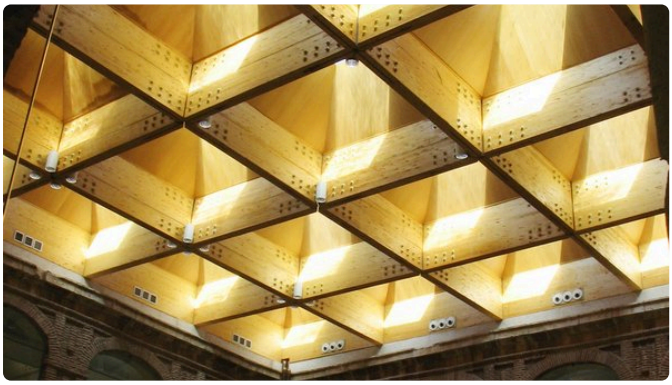
The surviving bell tower of the former Parish of Santa María la Mayor. The tower is accessible to visitors and offers panoramic views of the city's historic center and university rooftops.

4 Plaza de Rodríguez Marín, Alcalá de Henares 28801, Spain (40.48162, -3.36385)

Alcalá de Henares Highlights

Alcalá de Henares, a UNESCO World Heritage site, was the world's first planned university city. This list features the historic University of Alcalá, founded in 1499, and the birthplace of Miguel de Cervantes, now a museum dedicated to 16th-century life. The selection includes the Neo-Mudéjar Palace of Laredo, the Regional Archaeological Museum housed in a former convent, and the Edificio Cisneros, illustrating the city's architectural evolution from the Spanish Golden Age to modern academic use.





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B Museo Casa Natal de Cervantes

This museum is a reconstruction of the 16th-century house where Miguel de Cervantes was born in 1547. It displays period furniture and a collection of his literary works, reflecting the daily life and atmosphere of the Spanish Golden Age.

Calle Mayor 48, 28801 Alcalá de Henares
(40.48226, -3.36710)



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madrid.org/museoarqueologicoregional/, +34 91 8796666



E Edificio Cisneros

Functioning as the Learning and Research Resource Center (CRAI) for the University of Alcalá, this building opened in 2014. It combines modern academic facilities with the historic architectural style of the surrounding university district.

7 Calle de San Diego de Alcalá, Alcalá de Henares 28801, Spain (40.48350, -3.36164)

Hidden Gems of Alcalá

Explore the historical depth of Alcalá de Henares through its architectural and literary landmarks. This selection highlights the city's connection to Miguel de Cervantes, featuring his reconstructed 16th-century birthplace and a 19th-century bronze monument. The list also includes significant religious sites like the Capilla de San Ildefonso, which houses Cardinal Cisneros' Plateresque tomb, and the Ermita del Cristo de los Doctrinos with its 13th-century crucifix. For a unique cultural perspective, the La Fábrica del Humor gallery showcases specialized exhibits on graphic satire.





A Museo Casa Natal de Cervantes

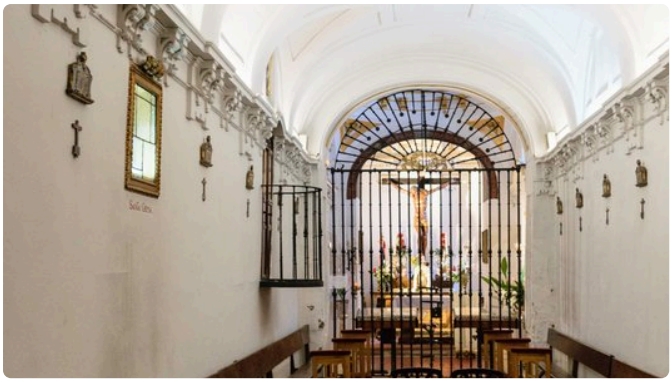
A reconstructed 16th-century manor house located on the site of the author's birth. The museum displays period furniture, traditional domestic spaces, and a courtyard reflecting Spanish life during the Golden Age.

Calle Mayor 48, 28801 Alcalá de Henares
(40.48226, -3.36710)

B Monument to Cervantes

A 19th-century bronze statue sculpted by Carlo Nicoli, situated in the city's main square. It commemorates the author of Don Quixote and serves as a central landmark within the historic district.

(40.48253, -3.36428)



C Ermita del Cristo de los Doctrinos

A 16th-century chapel featuring a notable Mudéjar-style coffered ceiling. It houses a highly venerated 13th-century carved wooden figure of Christ, a significant example of medieval Spanish religious art.

Calle de los Colegios 9, 28801 (40.48194, -3.36017)



D Capilla de San Ildefonso

Built in the early 1500s as part of the University of Alcalá, this chapel contains the elaborate Plateresque tomb of Cardinal Cisneros and features intricate Mudéjar ceilings and stucco work.

(40.48247, -3.36349)

+34 91 8854157

E Sala de Exposiciones La Fabrica del Humor

An art center dedicated to graphic humor and satire, managed by the Quevedo Institute of Arts. It hosts rotating exhibitions of cartoons and illustrations within a historic university building.

Calle Nueva 4, 28801 (40.48195, -3.36786)

Mo–Sa	11:00–14:00, 16:00–19:00
Su	11:00–14:00

iqh.es/fabrica/

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