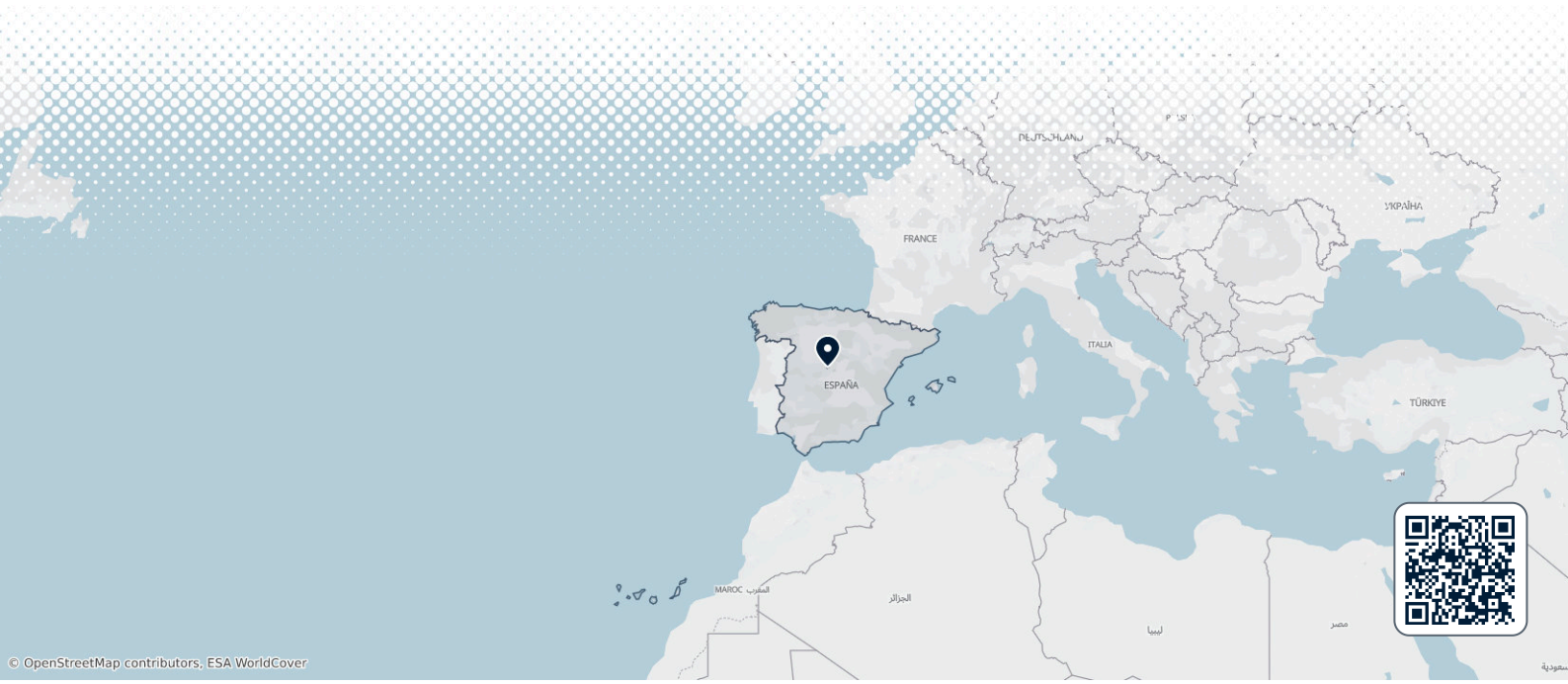


El Escorial

Community of Madrid · Spain

TRAVEL GUIDE

Tripomatic



Overview

El Escorial is a town in the Sierra de Guadarrama, about 50 km northwest of Madrid. It stands next to San Lorenzo de El Escorial, where the Royal Monastery of San Lorenzo de El Escorial is located: a vast granite palace, monastery, basilica and library built for King Philip II in the 16th century and a UNESCO World Heritage Site.

It is a popular day trip from Madrid, and a base for walks in the mountains. The air is cooler than in the capital.

When to visit

Spring and autumn are the most pleasant seasons, and the forests turn golden in October and November. Summer is warm in the day and cool at night, and the monastery is busy at weekends. Winters are cold, with frost and some snow.

The monastery is closed on Mondays, so plan your visit for another day.

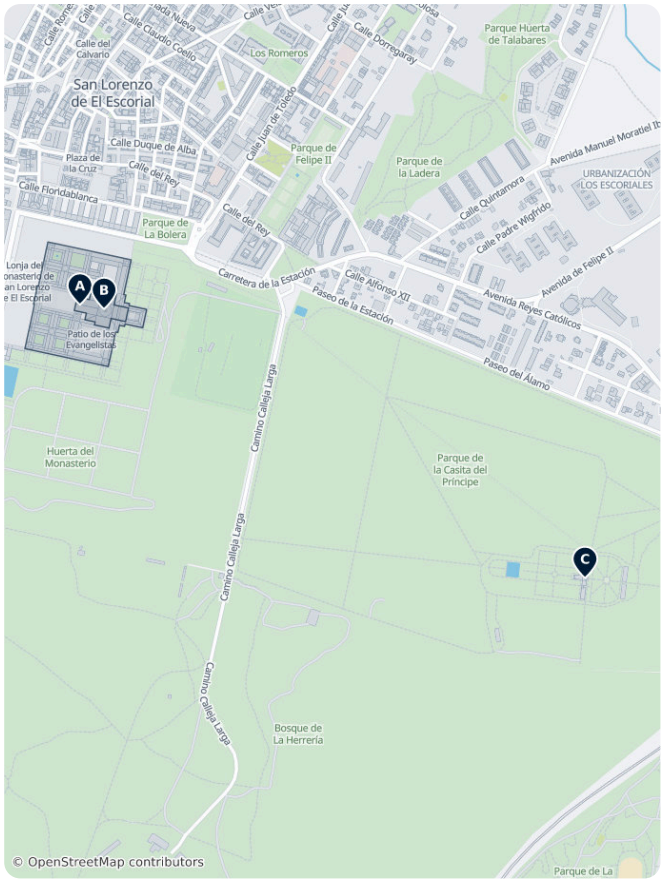
MONTH	CONDITIONS	DAY °C avg / max	NIGHT °C avg / min	
January	Poor Poor for hiking	9° / 14° Feels like 4°	0° / -5°	Dry air
February	Fair Fair for hiking	11° / 16° Feels like 6°	0° / -4°	Dry air
March	Good Good for hiking	14° / 20° Feels like 10°	2° / -3°	Dry air
April	Good Good for hiking	17° / 24° Feels like 13°	4° / -1°	Dry air
May	Great Great for sightseeing	22° / 30° Feels like 19°	8° / 3°	Dry air · Calm winds
June	Great Great for sightseeing	28° / 35°	13° / 7°	21 sunny days · Dry air · Calm winds · UV 8 (Very high)
July	Good Good for sightseeing	32° / 37°	16° / 11°	28 sunny days · Dry air · Calm winds · UV 9 (Very high) · Up to 7 days above 35°
August	Good Good for sightseeing	32° / 37°	16° / 11°	25 sunny days · Dry air · Calm winds · Up to 6 days above 35°
September	Great Great for sightseeing	26° / 32°	12° / 7°	Dry air · Calm winds
October	Great Great for hiking	20° / 27° Feels like 17°	8° / 3°	Dry air · Calm winds
November	Fair Fair for hiking	13° / 19° Feels like 9°	3° / -2°	Dry air
December	Poor Poor for hiking	9° / 14° Feels like 5°	1° / -4°	Dry air

Best months: May, June, September, October

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

Top sights

- A Real Monasterio de San Lorenzo de El Escorial is the great monastery and royal residence, built from 1563 to 1584. It includes the Royal Pantheon, where most Spanish kings since Charles V are buried, the royal apartments, the library and an art collection.
- B Basílica de San Lorenzo de El Escorial is the monastery's basilica, a church with a large dome and a high altar.
- C Casita del Príncipe is a small royal pavilion with a richly decorated interior, built for the prince in the 18th century, in the royal gardens.
- The Monasterio del Campillo is a ruined monastery in the countryside.
- The Silla de Felipe II is a rock viewpoint in the woods, where the king is said to have watched the building work.
- The Museo Cocheras del Rey shows royal carriages.



El Escorial – Plan Your Trip

Turn the places from this guide into a real itinerary, with smart routing, time estimates, and everything you need for a perfect trip.

3M+ downloads · 4.6 stars · 15 years of trip planning

App Store · Google Play

Scan to download the app

What to experience

- Tour the monastery, the Royal Pantheon and the library.
- Walk in the royal gardens and the woods of La Herrería.
- Hike to the viewpoint of Felipe II's Chair.
- Have a long lunch in San Lorenzo, a traditional dining stop for day-trippers from Madrid.

Day trips

- **Valle de Cuelgamuros** (about 9 km): a monumental complex in the mountains, with limited visiting.
- A Aranjuez (about 70 km): a royal town with a palace and gardens.
- B Segovia (about 55 km): a Roman aqueduct and a fairy-tale castle.
- C Chinchón (about 70 km): a village with a round main square.
- **Sierra de Guadarrama** (D Sierra de Guadarrama): hiking and mountain views.



Where to explore

Other places nearby:

- **Madrid area**: San Lorenzo de El Escorial, Chinchón, Aranjuez and Alcalá de Henares.
- **Nearby city**: Segovia.
- **Mountains**: Sierra de Guadarrama.

Getting there

- **By train**: Commuter trains (Cercanías line C-8) run from Madrid Atocha and Chamartín to El Escorial in about 1 hour. The station is about 2 km from the monastery. Book long-distance trains on Renfe.
- **By bus**: Buses from Madrid's Moncloa station take about 50 minutes and stop close to the monastery.
- **By car**: The M-600 and the A-6 motorway lead from Madrid in about 45 minutes.

Getting around

- **On foot**: The monastery and the old town of San Lorenzo are close to each other. The town is on a slope.
- **Local bus**: Connects the station and the center.
- **Taxi**: Available at the station.

Getting around on foot & by bike

WALKABILITY

Moderate

The monastery and the old town are close together, but the town is on a slope.

CYCLING INFRASTRUCTURE

Moderate

Roads and forest tracks are good for cycling, but the hills are steep.

Driving

- **Is a car worth it?**: Not necessary. The train and bus from Madrid are simple. A car helps for the mountain viewpoints and villages.
- **Parking**: There is paid parking near the monastery, and it fills up at weekends.
- **Roads**: Mountain roads can be icy in winter.

Food & drink

The cuisine of the Madrid mountains is hearty. Try *cocido madrileño* (chickpea stew), roast lamb and suckling pig, grilled beef from the Sierra de Guadarrama, and *judiones* (large white beans). Many restaurants in San Lorenzo serve a set lunch menu (*menú del día*).

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.

El Escorial – Plan Your Trip

Turn the places from this guide into a real itinerary, with smart routing, time estimates, and everything you need for a perfect trip.

3M+ downloads · 4.6 stars · 15 years of trip planning

App Store · Google Play

Scan to download the app

Safety & health

El Escorial is a safe town. The mountain weather changes quickly, so bring a jacket even in summer. In winter, roads and paths can be icy. Use sun protection on hikes.

History

King Philip II ordered the monastery built to commemorate the victory at the Battle of St. Quentin in 1557 and to serve as a royal burial place. The architects Juan Bautista de Toledo and later Juan de Herrera designed it, and it was completed in 1584.

It was a royal palace, a monastery, a school and a library at once, and the center of the Spanish court in the Habsburg era. The building and its site were listed by UNESCO in 1984.

Country facts

Quick practical facts for Spain at a glance:

CURRENCY

EUR €

EMERGENCY

112

ELECTRICITY



Type C / Type F
230 V · 50 Hz

LANGUAGES

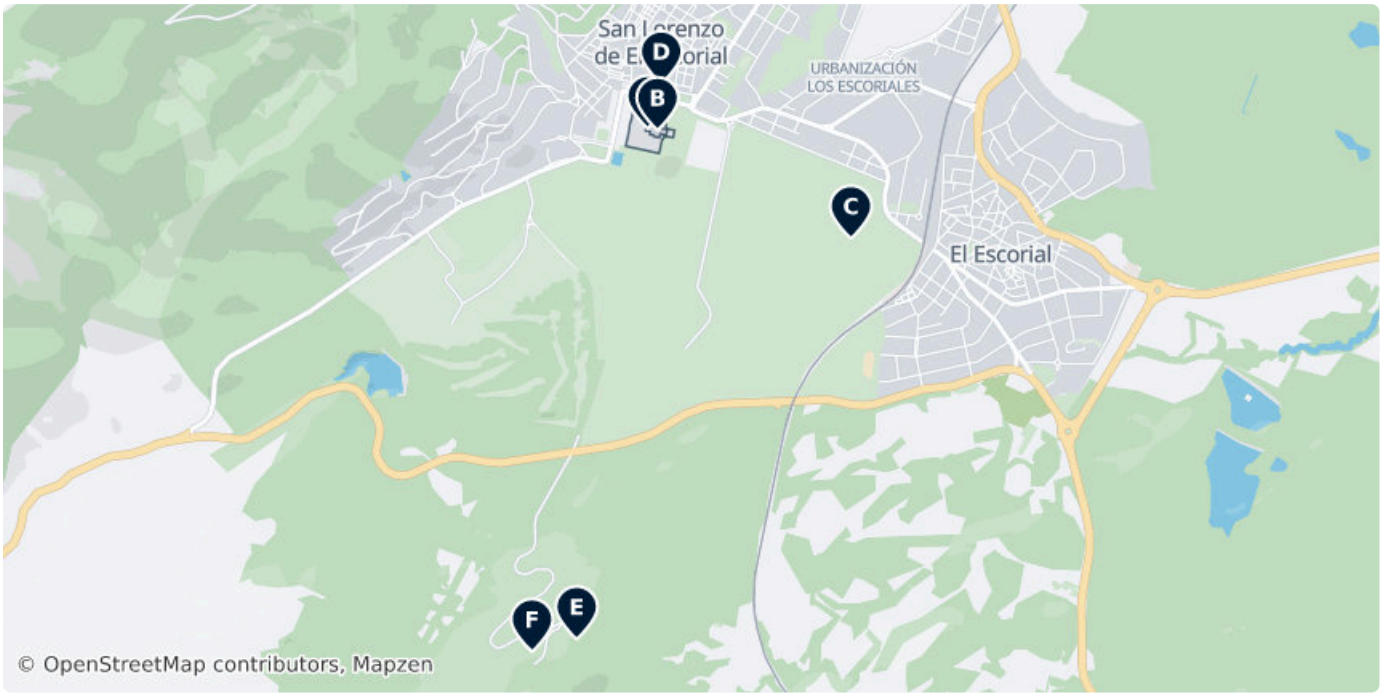
Spanish

TAP WATER

Safe to drink

El Escorial's Essential Landmarks

El Escorial is defined by the Royal Monastery of San Lorenzo, a 16th-century UNESCO World Heritage site commissioned by King Philip II. This massive granite complex integrates a royal palace, basilica, pantheon, and library, showcasing the austere Herrerian architectural style. The surrounding area includes the Casita del Príncipe, a neoclassical pavilion designed by Juan de Villanueva, and the Real Coliseo Carlos III, one of Spain's oldest theaters. Strategic viewpoints provide panoramic perspectives of the monument set against the Sierra de Guadarrama.





A Monastery and Site of the Escurial

Built in the 16th century, this extensive complex used to be a royal residence of the Monarchy of Spain.

Avda. Don Juan de Borbón y Battemberg, s/n., 28200 San Lorenzo de El Escorial, Madrid, Spain (40.58905, -4.14790)

patrimonionacional.es, +34 91 890 59 03



B Basílica de San Lorenzo de El Escorial

The spiritual center of the monastery complex, this Renaissance basilica features a 92-meter-high dome and an altar decorated with works by Pellegrino Tibaldi. It houses the royal pantheons where most Spanish monarchs are buried.

San Lorenzo de El Escorial 28200, Spain (40.58898, -4.14736)



C Casita del Príncipe

An 18th-century neoclassical small palace designed by architect Juan de Villanueva for the Prince of Asturias. It is surrounded by formal gardens and contains a rich collection of silk hangings, porcelain, and period furniture.

28280 El Escorial (40.58437, -4.13652)



D Real Coliseo Carlos III

Inaugurated in 1771, this is the oldest covered theater in Spain that preserves its original 18th-century court theater layout. Designed by French architect Jaime Marquet, it still hosts regular theatrical and musical performances.

Calle Floridablanca 20, 28200 (40.59094, -4.14715)

E Mirador Los Ermitaños I

A scenic vantage point located on the ascent to Mount Abantos, providing a wide perspective of the monastery complex and the surrounding landscape of the Madrid mountains.

(40.56732, -4.15189)

F Mirador del Entorno del Monasterio

A viewpoint offering a direct look at the monastery's massive granite walls and its architectural relationship with the town of San Lorenzo de El Escorial and the royal orchards.

(40.56680, -4.15439)

DATA SOURCES

Map data	© OpenStreetMap contributors, ESA WorldCover, Mapzen
Data	© OpenStreetMap contributors, Wikipedia, Tripomatic, Official websites

IMAGE CREDITS

- Monastery and Site of the Escurial — "Patio de los Evangelistas - Monasterio de El Escorial.", CC BY-SA 3.0
- Basílica de San Lorenzo de El Escorial — "Fachada de la Basílica de El Escorial" by Manuel González Olaechea, CC-BY-SA-3.0
- Casita del Príncipe — "Casita del Príncipe (El Escorial)." by Dorieo, CC BY-SA 3.0
- Real Coliseo Carlos III — "Teatro Real Coliseo Carlos III, San Lorenzo de El Escorial, Madrid, Spagna" by Cruccone, CC BY-SA 3.0 es

A free travel guide — not for sale. Travel guide generated with AI on November 13, 2026. Text and layout by Tripomatic, licensed under CC BY-SA 4.0. Map data © OpenStreetMap contributors, available under the ODbL. Photos are under their own licences, as credited on this page.