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TRAVEL AND GASTRONOMY MAGAZINE

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ANDALUSIA
A spring of light, colour and tradition

AUSTRIA
The farms of Tyrol

NORWAY
The Lofoten Islands Mountains and soul

TOLEDO
The Cathedral 8 centuries of history

HERCULANEUM
The day Vesuvius wiped it off the map

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Welcome on Board

Travelling remains one of the most honest ways of looking at the world. Not only because of the places we discover, but because of the way each destination forces us to stop, listen and understand that beauty rarely reveals itself all at once. One must approach it slowly, as one enters an ancient city, a winery, a garden or a kitchen with history.

In this new issue of Traveling, we propose precisely that kind of slow and varied journey. We set off for the Lofoten Islands, in Norway, where the extreme landscape still preserves the seafaring soul of the northern villages. From there we move to the Austrian Tyrol, to its farms and to a form of hospitality linked to the land, to work and to the continuity of traditions. We also pause in Bordeaux, before the symbolic architecture of La Cité du Vin, and travel into the past with Herculaneum, Waterloo and Toledo Cathedral, three settings where history is not a closed lesson, but a presence that continues to speak.

There is room for the light of Andalusia in spring, for the different Denmark of Aarhus, the rural silence of La Vera between Jaraíz and Yuste, and for places with a very marked personality, such as Sarrant, Bokod or the Valle de Alcudia and Sierra Madrona. In the more gastronomic and hotel-focused pages, we enter wineries, restaurants and houses with character: Pago de Cirsus, Flanders and its beer culture, Molino de Alcuneza, Royal Continental, Casino de Alcalá, Soy Kitchen and Arzábal Retiro.

This issue looks far away, but also close at hand. It seeks landscapes, tables, cities and trades that deserve to be told without haste. Because travelling, when it is truly done, is not only about arriving. It is about returning with a slightly wider gaze.

Thank you for joining us. The journey begins now.

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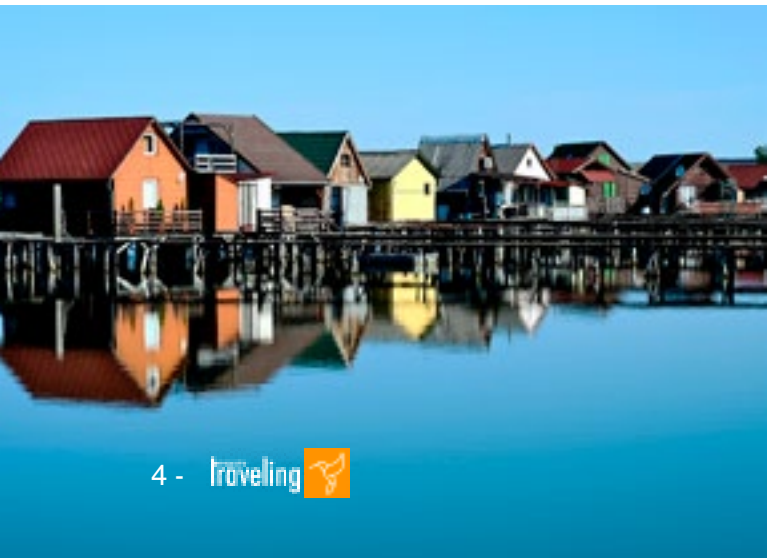

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SUMARY

HOLIDAYS ON TYROLEAN FARMS

Text: Rosario Alonso - Photography: Rosario Alonso and archive

There are journeys whose landscapes remain etched in the memory forever. The Austrian Tyrol belongs to that category. It is not merely a land of pristine mountains, immaculate meadows and villages that seem suspended in another age; above all, it is a way of life. My journey through several Tyrolean farms —now transformed into tourist accommodation without losing their essence— became, more than a getaway, an immersion in a tradition that is still very much alive.

A land shaped by history and geography

Tyrol, in western Austria, is an Alpine region whose history has long been shaped by its geography. Narrow valleys, long winters and an economy built on self-sufficiency have forged a culture in which family and land are inseparable. Since the Middle Ages, farms —the Bauernhöfe— were not merely centres of production, but the heart of social and economic life.

A key element of this tradition is hereditary succession. In many parts of Tyrol, the farm is passed on intact to a single heir —usually the eldest child and traditionally a son— to prevent the land from being divided. A system that some of us may see as archaic and unfair has nevertheless allowed family farms to survive across generations, preserving their identity intact.

From working farm to accommodation with soul

Today, many of these farms have found in tourism a way to diversify their income without renouncing their essence. These are not rural hotels in the conventional sense. In order to offer accommodation, they must meet strict requirements and belong to the Urlab am Bauernhof association: maintaining genuine agricultural or livestock activity, offering their own or locally sourced produce, preferably organic, proximity of the accommodation to the farm, the owners living on site, a regulated size, quality standards, as well as an identifying brand —all with the aim of ensuring respectful integration with the surrounding environment. Everything is regulated down to the smallest detail; the quality and services of each farm are graded by the number of flowers they hold (from 2 to 5), in the same way hotels are rated by stars.

Authenticity on these farms is not a slogan, it is a requirement. And it can be felt in every detail: at breakfast with freshly milked milk and eggs from free-range hens, in homemade bread, in unhurried conversation with the hosts, and in joining in simple farm tasks. This authenticity is reflected in the age of some of these farms, as well as in the fact that guests return year after year —without doubt the best testament to their quality.

How to get there: gateways to Tyrol

The most common access routes are via Innsbruck or Salzburg. From Innsbruck, the Inn Valley structures much of the region and makes it easy to reach towns such as Wörgl or Kufstein. Salzburg, for its part, offers good connections to the eastern part of Tyrol. Travelling by car is, without doubt, the best option. It allows you to stop in small villages, take minor roads and experience the landscape at a more measured pace.

Helen Mayer Farm, in Kirchbichl

HarHartlhof: everyday life in Wörgl

My first stop was at Hartlhof farm, in the vicinity of Wörgl. Cristina and Hannes Eder welcome visitors with a natural ease that immediately draws you into their family life. There is no pretence, no rehearsed script. The farm (an eco-certified accommodation with 4 flowers) continues to function as it always has: animals (dairy farming with its own pastures, carefully maintained and kept in perfect condition so that in summer the cows can be moved there; rabbits, ducks, pigs, chicks and even charming miniature goats) are among the animals that will delight younger guests, making this an ideal farm for families with children. The vegetable garden, hands-on experiences and participation in daily tasks are some of the activities available if you choose this accommodation.

The setting is the Inn Valley, an open landscape of wide meadows and mountains that frame the horizon without dominating it. From here, the possibilities are numerous: gentle hiking routes, cycling along clearly signposted paths, or excursions into more alpine areas, and even skiing in season. What struck us most was the integration of the visitor into daily life. It is not about observing, but about taking part. Feeding the animals, collecting eggs or simply sitting on a wooden bench as evening falls all form part of the experience.

Glarcherhof: Kufsteinerland and the invisible border

In the Kufsteinerland region lies Glarcherhof farm (specifically in Landl, near Thiersee), run by Regina and Klaus Thaler. Here the landscape shifts slightly: Tyrol edges closer to Bavaria and the German cultural influence is perceptible, though without losing its identity. A beautiful, organic farm, where the animals seem to live in a kind of spa, complete with a play area (cows, playful goats, hens that lay blue eggs) that will delight guests. Kufstein, with its fortress overlooking the valley, is a nearby landmark. But the real interest lies in the surroundings:

dense forests, more demanding trekking routes and the chance to venture onto less-travelled paths.

In summer, the area lends itself to high-altitude hiking and mountain biking. In winter, the landscape transforms, opening the way to cross-country skiing or snowshoe walks.
The farm maintains that balance between tradition and openness. Regina takes care of the cooking, faithful to inherited tradition, while Klaus manages the farm. The visitor becomes part of that system, even if only for a few days.

Ascherhof: slow rhythm and untouched nature

Ascherhof farm (Thiersee), run by Helen and Stefan Camprecht, perhaps represents the most modern and personal version of this type of accommodation. It is an organic dairy farm that produces its own dairy products, such as cheese, with a distinctive personal touch in which guests actively take part, as well as in the making of the bread they will later eat. Here, everything seems to slow down.
The setting is more intimate, with meadows stretching across gentle slopes and forests that invite you to wander without direction.

Cristina Eder of Hartlhof Farm

Glarcherhof Farm

Obholzhof farm

Bottom photo: Animals at Glacherhof Farm

Other possible activities include unguided walks, small lakes where fishing is possible, and spaces where one can simply stop and take in the surroundings. It is a place to switch off in the most literal sense. Helen and Stefan understand tourism as an extension of their way of life, not as a conventional business. That difference is reflected in the details: in the shared table, in family recipes, in the absence of artifice.

Obholzhof: Scheffau am Kaiser and the Alpine landscape

The final stop was Obholzhof farm, in Scheffau am Kaiser, run by Maria and Peter Ferger. Here the landscape takes on a more distinctly Alpine dimension. The Wilder Kaiser mountain range dominates the surroundings with its imposing presence.

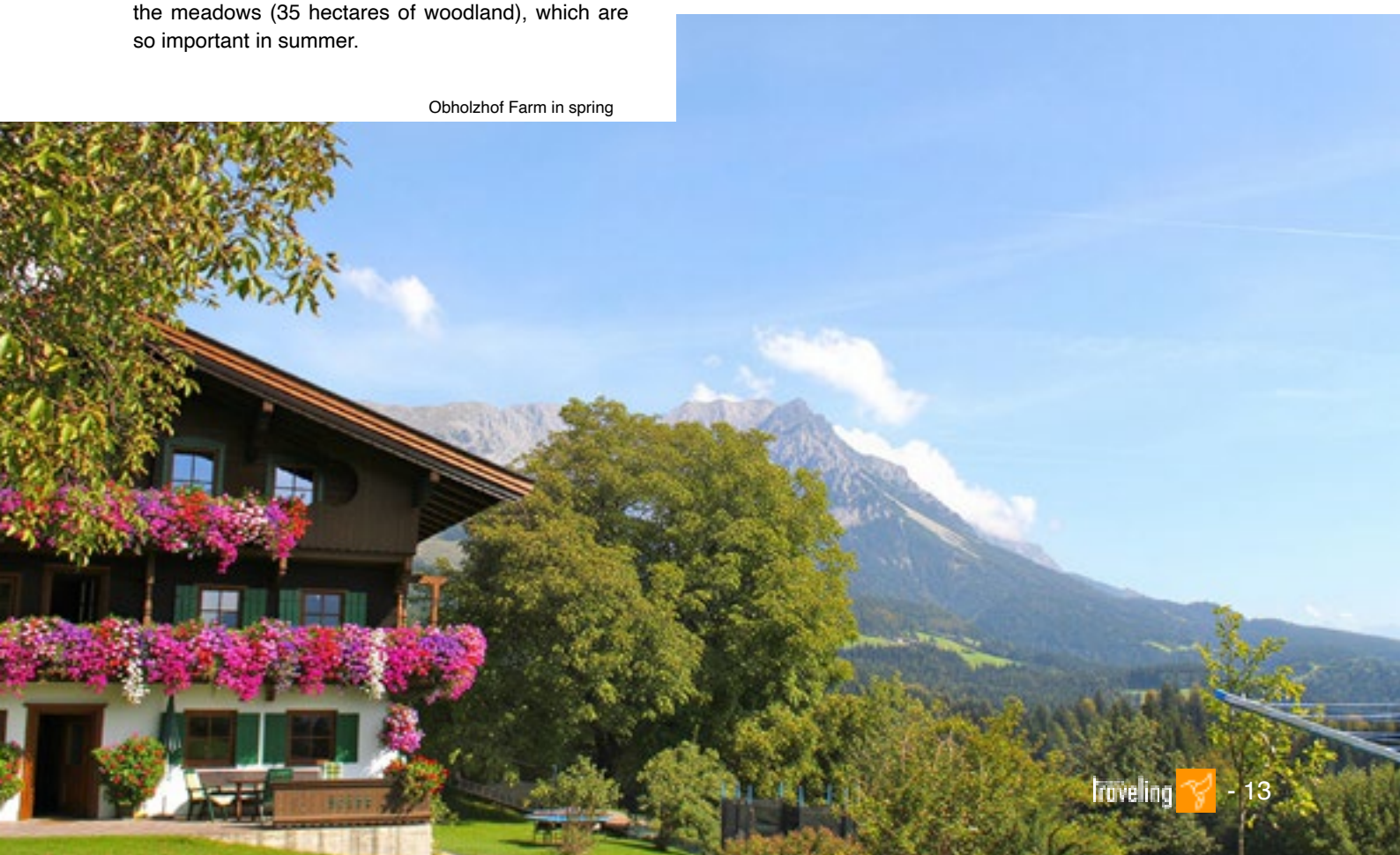
It is an ideal area for those seeking activity. More demanding hiking, trekking routes, via ferratas, mountain biking and even zip lines are all part of the offer. In winter, the proximity to ski resorts further expands the possibilities (up to 3 km of ski slopes).

But beyond the activities, what defines this place is its relationship with the mountain. Not as a backdrop, but as part of everyday life. Maria and Peter convey this with a naturalness that requires no explanation. Since 1964, this family has run this 4-flower farm, the largest of those we visited, set in a bucolic environment at 850 metres above sea level, from which the peak of the Wilder Kaiser (Wild Emperor) can be seen.

Domestic animals, and others not so domestic, together with a significant suckler-cow operation, shape the farm's daily work, without forgetting the care of the meadows (35 hectares of woodland), which are so important in summer.

One of the rooms at Obholzhof Farm

One of the rooms at Ascherhof Farm



Obholzhof Farm in spring

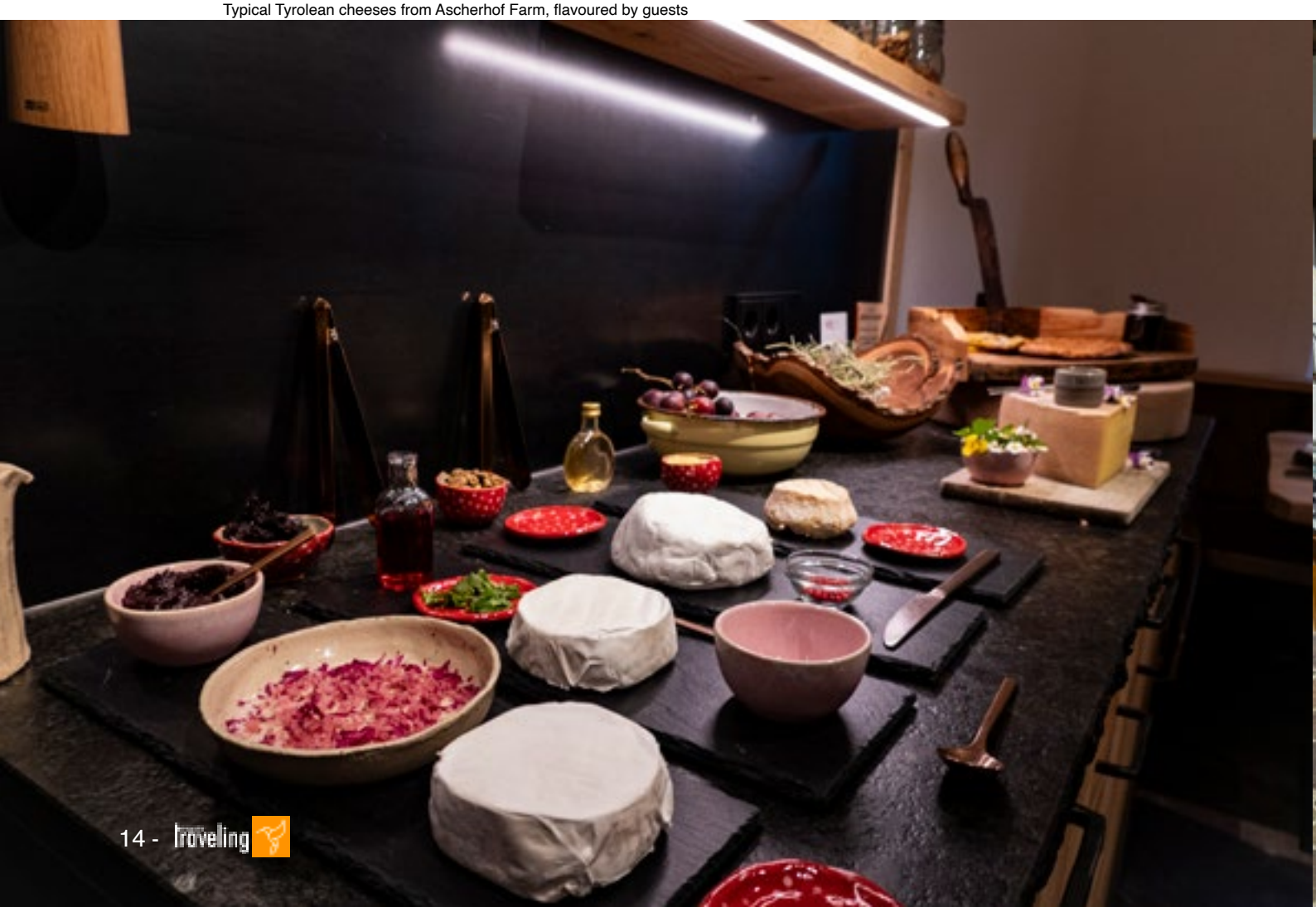
Tyrolean-style schnitzel

Gastronomy: identity on the plate

Tyrolean cuisine is hearty and deeply rooted in its territory; it is understood through necessity. It is food designed to nourish, but also to be shared. In establishments such as the Jausenstation Riedlhof “mountain hut”, in Wildschönau, the menu reflects its diversity from the perspectives of proximity and seasonality, without excess, with great balance. Schnitzel in its various forms speaks of the land. The Viennese version is the most traditional and well-known (veal), but there is also schweineschnitzel (pork), cordon bleu (filled with ham and cheese), or Tyrolean-style schnitzel (with seasonal garnish). But beyond schnitzel, Tyrolean gastronomy also includes widely known dishes such as tiroler speckknödel or spinatknödel (traditional dumplings), clear soups, homemade cured meats, rye breads, artisanal butters and desserts such as kaiserschmarrn (a kind of shredded, caramelised pancake served with compotes) or Apfelstrudel, which are part of everyday life.

A special mention must be made of Tyrolean cheeses. They are an extension of the landscape itself; their production is linked to seasonality and high-altitude grazing, rather than industrial output. Bergkäse, Graukäse and Almkäse are central to the local identity, not only consumed on their own but also integrated into traditional dishes, accompanying soups or warm salads.

Typical Tyrolean cheeses from Ascherhof Farm, flavoured by guests



Tradition and dress: the value of what is inherited

One of the most visible aspects of this culture is traditional Tyrolean dress. The dirndl for women and the lederhosen for men are neither costumes nor folkloric garments reserved for celebrations. They remain present at festivals, events and, in some cases, in everyday life.

During the trip I had the opportunity to visit the Tracht&Braut Werkstatt tailoring workshop (traditional and bridal attire) run by Helen Mayer in Kirchbichl. There, the true value of these garments becomes clear. Each outfit is a unique piece, made using traditional techniques and knowledge passed down from generation to generation.

It is not only about aesthetics. It is a form of identity, a way of belonging to a place. In addition to the tailoring workshop, the family runs a spectacular farm (the building is protected for its historical value) that has remained in the same family for 200 years. It is not yet a member of the Urlaub am Bauernhof association, but will be soon, as it has an organic dairy herd and highly integrated facilities within the territory for events. Another example of how Tyrolean farms relentlessly seek viability in order to survive and remain economically sustainable.

Maria Ferger of Obholzhof Farm

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A model of tourism with purpose

Tyrolean farms do not compete with large hotels, nor do they seek to. Their value lies elsewhere: in authenticity, in the continuity of a way of life, in the ability to welcome without transforming themselves.

Travelling to these places means accepting a different rhythm. It is to understand that luxury can be a conversation, a shared meal, or the sound of the countryside at dawn.

At a time when tourism tends to homogenise experiences, Tyrol offers something different: the possibility of becoming part, however briefly, of a story that continues to be written every day.

Austria

On the left bank of the Garonne, in Bordeaux's former industrial district of Bassins à flot, stands one of Europe's most distinctive cultural buildings. La Cité du Vin is not merely a museum or an interpretation centre; it is a piece of contemporary architecture conceived to give physical form to an intangible idea: wine as a universal culture. Since its opening in 2016, the building has evolved from an urban gamble into a recognisable icon of the city and a benchmark in twenty-first-century museum architecture.

La Cité du vin

Text and Photos: Jose A. Muñoz

A strategic project for Bordeaux

The origins of La Cité du Vin date back to 2009, when local institutions —from Bordeaux City Council to the Interprofessional Council of Bordeaux Wine— promoted the creation of a major cultural centre devoted to wine. It was not conceived as a traditional museum, but as a hybrid facility, halfway between an exhibition space, a theme park and a centre of knowledge.

The project was born with a dual purpose. On one hand, to strengthen Bordeaux's international position as a world capital of wine. On the other, to regenerate an unused industrial area and bring it into the contemporary fabric of the city. This ambition explains its location: a former port site, open to the river and visible from different points of the urban skyline. Following an international competition launched in 2010 —which attracted more than one hundred proposals— the commission was awarded to the Paris-based practice XTU Architects, led by Anouk Legendre and Nicolas Desmazières. The choice was no accident: their approach combines research, sustainability and an experimental eye for architectural form.

"A bottle of wine contains more philosophy than all the books in the world."
(Louis Pasteur)

An architecture without straight lines

From the outset, the architects faced a complex question: how could wine —a liquid, sensory and cultural element— be translated into architecture? The answer lies in the form.

La Cité du Vin deliberately turns away from orthogonality and perpendicularity. There are practically no straight lines. The building unfolds as a fluid volume, with a silhouette that refers at once to the swirl of wine in a glass, to the meanders of the Garonne and to the twisted trunks of the vine.

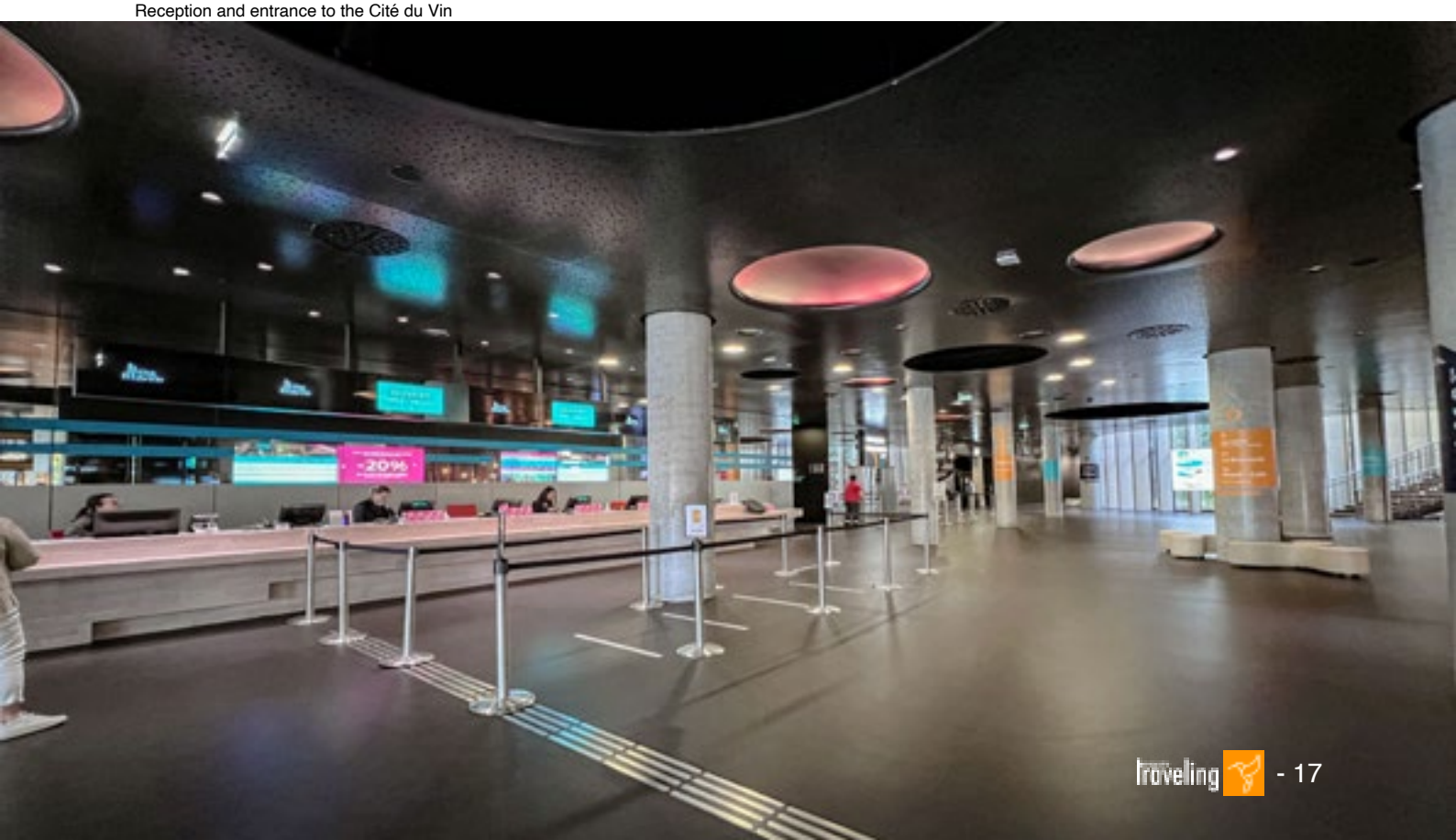
This idea of "liquid architecture" is not rhetorical. It is expressed in every design decision: from the interior volumes to the outer envelope. The architects themselves described it as a "seamless, intangible and sensual roundness", a phrase that sums up the desire to avoid any literal or figurative reading.

Engineering and construction: a real technical challenge

If the form is complex, its construction is even more so. The building, with around 13,500 square metres spread across eight levels, stands on a concrete structure supported by hundreds of deep piles, necessary because of the proximity of the river and the technical demands of delicate ground. The "envelope", the skin that protects and insulates, is one of its most remarkable elements. It is composed of a combination of screen-printed glass and iridescent lacquered aluminium panels. These materials do not only fulfil an aesthetic function; they allow the façade to change tone according to the daylight, reinforcing the idea of a living building in constant transformation.

Each piece of the façade was designed to measure. There are no repeated modules. This almost artisanal character within an industrialised system required meticulous control during the construction works, carried out between 2013 and 2016, with a final budget close to 81 million euros

Reception and entrance to the Cité du Vin



Reception desk and entrance area, a space designed by architects Anouk Legendre and Nicolas Desmazières

"Architecture should speak of its time and place, but yearn for timelessness."
— Frank Gehry

The collaboration with specialised engineering firms —such as SNC-Lavalin— and with the scenography studio Casson Mann was key to integrating architecture, exhibition content and technology into a single coherent system.

The interior: an immersive experience

If the exterior seduces through its form, the interior responds to a different logic: that of the journey. La Cité du Vin is conceived as a progressive experience, structured around a permanent exhibition of an immersive nature.

The visitor moves through a series of thematic spaces supported by digital, audiovisual and interactive technologies. There are no traditional display cases. The narrative is built through devices that activate personalised content, in several languages, and adapted to different visitor profiles.

The building is organised vertically. On the lower floors are the reception areas, the wine shop and service spaces. On intermediate levels, the permanent exhibition and temporary galleries. At the top, a panoramic restaurant and a belvedere or viewpoint offering views over the city and the river.

This layout responds to a narrative logic: ascending through the building is equivalent to advancing in the understanding of wine, from its historical dimension to its contemporary projection.

Interactive section showcasing the different colours of wine

Recent evolution: updating without disruption

One of the most interesting aspects of La Cité du Vin is its capacity for adaptation. Far from remaining frozen after its inauguration, the institution has maintained an active policy of renewing content and experiences for visitors over the years.

In 2023, the permanent exhibition —the core of the project— was updated. Content was revised, new digital experiences were incorporated and the interactive character of the visit was reinforced. This update did not alter the spatial structure or the overall narrative, but it did allow the discourse to adapt to new audiences and to the evolution of the wine sector.

At the same time, temporary exhibitions have continued to play a key role. La Cité du Vin has hosted international exhibitions linking wine with other disciplines —art, music, history— consolidating its position as a cultural centre beyond the strictly wine-related sphere.

No major architectural transformations or significant extensions have taken place in recent years. The strategy has been clear: preserve the integrity of the building and update its content, avoiding interventions that could alter its original identity..

Wine tasting bar on the upper terrace with panoramic views

The Great Latitude 20 Winery

View of one of the façades; the photo below shows an interactive room for children

Contribution to the world of wine

La Cité du Vin has redefined the way wine is communicated. Unlike the traditional approach —centred on territories, appellations or techniques— it proposes a global, cultural and transversal vision.

Wine is presented as a universal phenomenon, present in different civilisations and periods. This view broadens the potential audience and places the discourse on more accessible ground, without losing rigour.

In addition, the building works as a platform for dissemination, training and encounter. Seminars, tastings, professional events and educational activities turn the space into an active node within the international wine ecosystem.

Examples of wine colours

Contribution to architectural design

From an architectural point of view, La Cité du Vin represents a successful synthesis between form, content and context.

Firstly, for its ability to generate a dreamlike image without resorting to literalness. The building does not imitate a bottle or a glass; it suggests, evokes, interprets. That distance from the figurative is what gives it lasting relevance.

Secondly, for the integration between architecture and scenography. The project does not separate container and content, but conceives them as a single system. This approach is increasingly relevant in contemporary cultural architecture.

Finally, for its role in urban regeneration. La Cité du Vin cannot be understood without its surroundings. It has acted as a catalyst in the transformation of an industrial area into a new cultural and tourist hub, demonstrating the potential of architecture as a tool for urban change.

Wine-tasting bar on the top floor

A building that matures

Ten years after its opening, La Cité du Vin confirms an intuition: good architecture does not age, it evolves. Like the wine it celebrates, the building gains nuances over time.

It has not needed radical transformations. Its strength lies in a clear idea, well built and executed with rigour. The updating of content has been enough to maintain its relevance.

In a context where many cultural facilities are born with an expiry date, La Cité du Vin shows that it is possible to build contemporary architecture with a vocation for permanence.

Cité du Vin

A sculpture shaped like a flying saucer, located opposite the Cité du Vin ▶

The day Vesuvius erased everything
Herculaneum

Text: Rosario Alonso **Photography:** Rosario Alonso and archive

Imagine a calm Roman town, refined and open to the sea. Not a great capital, but an elegant settlement where life was good. This was Herculaneum, at the foot of Mount Vesuvius, before history stopped it forever, preserving its final breath beneath the volcanic earth.

No one knew that mountain was a volcano. It had remained silent for centuries. Vineyards on its slopes, country roads, an ordinary life. Until AD 79, when that apparent calm was broken without warning.

Herculaneum was smaller than neighbouring Pompeii and also wealthier. Many of its inhabitants belonged to the local elites. The houses had colonnaded courtyards, gardens, fountains, decorated dining rooms and, exceptionally, abundant wooden furniture: doors, beds, cupboards, staircases.

It was a town designed for comfort, open to the coast, overlooking the Bay of Naples. A place where time seemed to pass slowly, gently shaped by the rhythm of the sea.

AD 79: the eruption

The The eruption of Vesuvius took place in AD 79. For centuries, the accepted date was 24 August, based on the letters of Pliny the Younger. However, modern archaeological finds —autumn fruits, recent coins, warm clothing— suggest it happened in autumn, probably in late October.

That day, a column of gas and ash rose kilometres into the sky. Pompeii began to be covered in pumice stone. In Herculaneum, at first, the fall of ash was minimal. Many thought the danger had passed. It had not. The mountain was only beginning to awaken with full violence.

Pompeii died slowly, beneath a rain of volcanic material that lasted for hours. Herculaneum died instantly. During the night, Vesuvius unleashed pyroclastic surges: burning clouds of gas and ash at extreme temperatures. They descended at great speed and reached the town within seconds. There was no time to escape.

Herculaneum was buried beneath more than twenty metres of compact volcanic material. Death was instantaneous. The town vanished completely beneath the hardened volcanic mass.

Restos Humanos

The final refuge

For a long time it was believed that Herculaneum had been evacuated before the disaster. That idea was overturned in the twentieth century, when ancient sheds were excavated beside the shoreline, a kind of dock area used for mooring, unloading or repairing boats.

Inside them appeared hundreds of skeletons: men, women, children and elderly people, aged from only a few months to well into their forties. They were waiting for rescue boats that never arrived. They died in an instant, victims of the extreme heat released by the eruption.

Those bodies, motionless since AD 79, changed forever the understanding of the catastrophe and the final hours lived in the town.

An intact Roman town

The way Herculaneum was buried allowed an exceptional level of preservation. Buildings of several floors, balconies, roofs, doors and carbonised wooden structures have survived almost intact through the centuries.

The Great Tavern

Mural mosaic from the House of Neptune and Amphitrite

Among the most remarkable spaces are the patrician houses decorated with mosaics and frescoes, the public baths, the palestra (a sports and recreational complex) and private homes that reveal what everyday Roman life was like with a unique level of detail.

Herculaneum is not merely a group of ruins: it is a frozen town. Before the eruption, Herculaneum was not a monumental city like Pompeii, but a refined seaside settlement, smaller, wealthier and open to the Bay of Naples. Its streets, laid out in a grid pattern, descended towards the ancient shoreline; many houses enjoyed terraces overlooking the sea and were supplied by the Serino aqueduct, which carried water to fountains, baths and private residences. Archaeology reveals a population of considerable wealth, with abundant wood, marble, paintings and furniture now exceptionally preserved thanks to the volcanic material that carbonised doors, beams and organic objects.

Among the public buildings, the porticoed gymnasium stood out, a vast complex intended for physical exercise, walking and social life. It formed part of Roman urban life, where the body, education and civic encounter shared the same space. It was organised around open areas surrounded by porticoes, useful for walking sheltered from sun and rain.

The women's baths reveal the level of comfort achieved by the town. They contained the usual Roman thermal circuit —warm and hot rooms, washing areas and changing rooms— as well as carefully designed decoration. Their separation from the male baths reflects a mature urban organisation, where bathing was hygiene, conversation and a daily custom, not merely luxury.

Private houses explain the character of Herculaneum better than any text. The House of Neptune and Amphitrite is famous for its magnificent wall mosaic depicting the marine deities, a work that still today embodies the taste for elegance and symbolism of a refined seaside Roman world.

Next to it were decorated rooms and a small commercial space linked to the house, showing how business and residence could coexist beneath the same roof in daily Roman life.

The House of the Wooden Partition preserves one of the most famous finds on the site: a carbonised wooden internal partition, still standing. That folding door separated the atrium from more private areas and shows just how far Herculaneum preserved domestic elements lost in almost all Roman archaeology.

The House of the Wattlework is a notable example of a popular Roman dwelling, standing out for its light masonry construction technique and use of wattlework (wood and light materials) for partitions and upper structures such as roofs. Its interest lies in showing humble, practical solutions within a town where opulent residences and more functional homes coexisted.

More ambitious was the House of the Relief of Telephus, one of the largest known residences. Built in a panoramic position facing the sea, it was arranged over several levels and brought together sculptures of Hellenistic taste. Its name comes from a mythological relief dedicated to Telephus. Columns, terraces and generous spatial scale speak of an elite seeking social representation as well as comfort.

Casa del Relieve in Télefo, top and bottom photos

House of the Deer

The House of the Deer, also open to the seascape, takes its name from the sculptural groups found in its garden. It was a house conceived for visual pleasure: courtyards, porticoes and views towards the bay composed an architecture where nature and art conversed with elegance.

In the commercial sphere, the Great Tavern stood out, located on a main street. These establishments served food, wine or everyday goods and were popular meeting places. Set against the refinement of some domus, they reminded us that Herculaneum was also a living, noisy and working town.

Finally, the Suburban Baths, close to the seafront, combined Roman technique and scenic pleasure. Their rooms offered views and a privileged position beside the coast. They were probably one of the most pleasant places in the town on the eve of the catastrophe.

This was Herculaneum before Vesuvius: a small, cultured and wealthy town where water ran through conduits, marble shone in courtyards and the sea entered the houses as a natural part of daily life. Then silence came.

Mural mosaic from the House of Neptune and Amphitrite

Thermal springs of Herculaneum

The rediscovery in the eighteenth century

Herculaneum came to light by accident in 1709, during the digging of a well. Underground, marbles and sculptures appeared. King Charles of Bourbon (Charles III in Spain) ordered explorations, carried out through tunnels.

For decades, the interest was not scientific, but artistic. Statues, frescoes and objects were removed and are now kept in the National Archaeological Museum of Naples.

The town itself remained buried.

From plunder to conservation

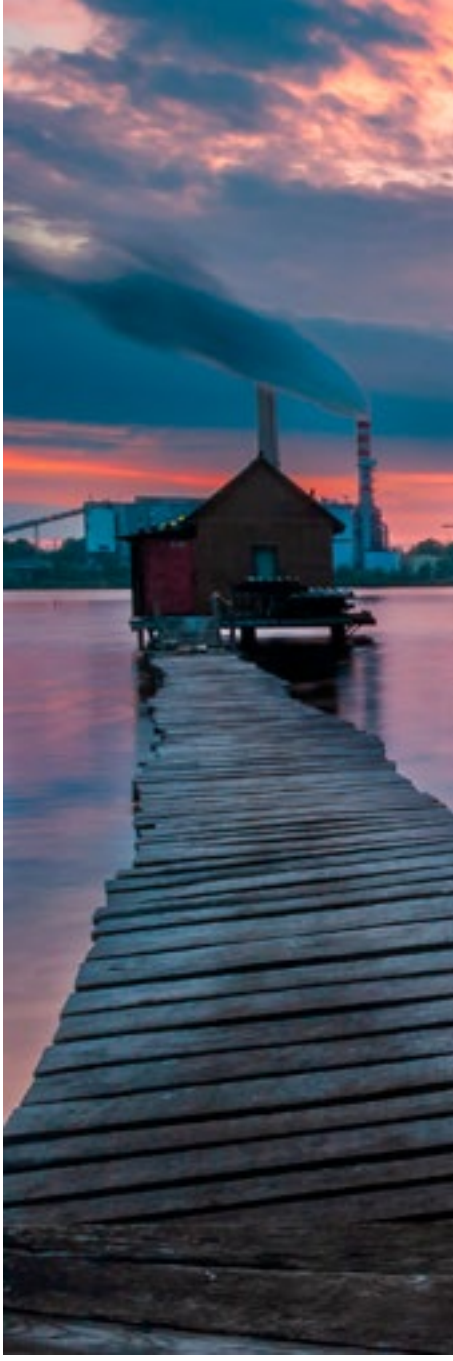
It was not until the twentieth century that archaeology changed its approach. Systematic excavation, rigorous documentation and long-term conservation became the priority.

Today work focuses on consolidating structures, protection against damp, the restoration of frescoes and the study of organic materials unique in the Roman world.

Herculaneum is today one of the best-preserved and most studied sites of Antiquity. Herculaneum did not fall slowly. It was stopped suddenly. Vesuvius destroyed it and turned it into memory.

Wooden Partition House

View of the power station at sunset



BOKOD

The place where water defies winter

By: Sandra Fernández Fernández

Imagine walking through a place where winter seems frozen in time. Where steam draws soft clouds above the surface of the water and wooden houses, suspended on stilts, are reflected as though floating in a dream. This is Bokod, a small corner of Hungary which, far from the usual tourist routes, preserves one of the most unusual and surprising landscapes in Europe.

This small village, located just 80 kilometres from Budapest, hides a curious story that has turned it into a destination as magical as it is unique to visit. In the 1960s, the Oroszlány thermal power station needed a large amount of water to cool its systems. For this reason, the Bokod lake reservoir was created as part of the plant's cooling infrastructure, with the aim of helping cool the machinery and prevent overheating.

With this system, the lake water circulates through the thermal plant and then returns to the reservoir. As a result, the water that flows back arrives warmer than the surrounding environment, preventing it from freezing during the country's harsh winters.

After its construction, the area changed completely. Local inhabitants began using the lake as a fishing area, since the warmer water allowed the ecosystem to remain active even during winter.

To make use of it, they started building small constructions directly above the water. This was done by driving wooden posts into the shallow lakebed and raising light structures above them, usually also made of wood. Over time, these buildings became more solid and were connected by narrow walkways, creating the place's characteristic image: intimate, functional, almost organic and deeply linked to the natural surroundings.

Old wooden walkways leading to the houses on the lake

From fishing village to tourist gem

Over the years, this small village ceased to be a place frequented only by local inhabitants, where only fishermen walked along its piers, and became a recognised destination attracting visitors from different places interested in discovering its singular landscape.

The real boost to its international projection came in 2013, when an image of the lake was chosen as the background for the Microsoft Bing search engine. That photograph, distributed worldwide, sparked the curiosity of thousands of people and turned this corner of Hungary into a point of interest for travellers and photographers alike.

That growing recognition was finally consolidated in 2024, when Lake Bokod and its floating houses were included in the ranking of “Europe’s hidden destinations” compiled by European Best Destinations.

This village is not a mass tourism destination nor an especially dynamic locality, but rather a hidden gem surrounded by nature, where everyday life still follows the slow rhythm typical of many small Hungarian villages.

The small cabins on the lakeshore are privately owned, so access is naturally not permitted. Even so, there is an area belonging to the power station where visitors are allowed to walk. In any case, it is recommended to respect the privacy of the place and avoid entering areas marked as restricted.

Cafés and bars on Lake Bokod where you can enjoy a drink by the water.

A boat moored on Lake Bokod, opposite the huts

WHAT TO DO IN BOKOD

For visitors, Bokod does not offer great monuments or organised activities. What it offers is something else: the feeling of discovering a place barely altered, where the relationship between people and the landscape developed in an almost spontaneous way.

It is a place to walk slowly, observe, take photographs and understand how something as functional as an artificial lake ended up becoming an intimate place for those who visit it.

Around the lake, it is possible to find a spot where coffee is occasionally served. It is not really an establishment itself, but a private cabin whose owner sometimes uses it to welcome visitors and offer them coffee in an informal way. However, there is no fixed service or timetable, and everything depends on whether the owner happens to be in the village.

Altogether, Bokod is a place understood more through experience, where the surroundings eventually envelop those who come to visit it.

THE FUTURE OF THE LAKE

In recent years, Lake Bokod has begun to show more variable thermal behaviour. The reduced activity of the power station has lessened the constant supply of heat to the system, meaning the water temperature now depends increasingly on natural factors such as the weather conditions of each winter.

This change is not perceived abruptly, but gradually. In the cold months, the water reaches lower temperatures than in the past, although it still retains a certain thermal inertia, so its shift towards a completely natural behaviour is not yet clearly perceptible.

This process is also reflected in the way the community living around the lake adapts, year after year, to conditions that change without fully breaking their balance. The daily life of fishermen and of those living above the wooden structures continues its course, marked by routines that depend on that intermediate state between seasonal cooling and the persistence of a temperature that refuses to disappear completely.

While everything around it is caught by ice, these temperate waters maintain life and movement, creating a contrast that seems taken from a tale. Bokod is not only a place: it is a sensation suspended between cold and warmth, between stillness and surprise, between the everyday and the unusual, before the eyes of fishermen, visitors and those who discover in this landscape an unexpected beauty that defies winter and keeps changing softly with each passing season.

View of the power station overlooking the calm lake

Panoramic view of the houses overlooking the lake

Lake Bokod is not merely an industrial landscape: it is a human ingenuity suspended above the water, where tradition adapts to the surroundings with an almost perfect naturalness, without renouncing its essence or its way of life.

Lofoten island

Extreme landscapes, seafaring soul

Text: Clara Serrano Vega - **Photography:** Archivo

On the map of Norway, Lofoten looks like a necklace of sharp islands stretching across the Norwegian Sea, above the Arctic Circle. It is not an abstract “north”, but a real territory that for centuries has lived from fishing, wind, wood and light. And that light —sometimes endless, sometimes scarce— is what ultimately gives meaning to everything: to the mountains rising almost vertically from the water, to the narrow fjords like corridors, to the white sandy beaches one would never expect to find so far north. Lofoten captivates because it changes character with the seasons without losing its identity. In summer, the midnight sun lengthens the days until the clock almost disappears: walks become slow, almost ceremonial, and the body learns to live with a clarity that never truly fades, beneath skies that seem suspended outside ordinary time.

Roads and bridges connect the small islands

Lofoten in 5 moments

1. The arrival

The first impression arrives from the road: dark mountains, cold water, bridges, tunnels and small villages that seem to cling to the edge of the sea.

2. The harbour

In Lofoten, almost everything begins or ends beside the water. The boats, red cabins and drying racks remind us that these islands have lived for centuries looking towards the cod.

3. The light

It is never entirely the same. It changes quickly, softens the mountains, lights the wooden façades and turns a severe landscape into something almost intimate.

4. The road

The E10 is not merely a road: it is the thread that stitches the archipelago together. It should be travelled slowly, allowing time to stop wherever the journey asks.

5. The silence

Beyond the photographs, Lofoten leaves behind a feeling of distance and calm. An ancient north, beautiful and austere,

Fishermen's cottages in Hamnoy

In winter, the polar night (or, more precisely, the low position of the sun) transforms the landscape into a restrained setting: deep blues, snow muting every sound, and the real possibility of seeing the northern lights when the sky opens. In between, spring and autumn offer what many travellers seek: fewer people, more silence, a feeling of Lofoten “for yourself”, with the sea always present and the weather reminding you that nature rules here.

To understand the archipelago properly, it helps to travel through it from east to west. Around Svolvær, on Austvågøya, Lofoten has the pulse of a discreet “capital”: harbour, services, local life that does not disguise itself for visitors. From there, scenic roads and small communities unfold where colour is not a whim, but a response to the darkness: red rorbuer (fishermen’s cabins) raised on stilts, wooden piers, boats still heading out because the sea does not understand seasons.
To plan activities (hiking, fishing, diving, rafting or even Arctic surfing) in Lofoten, the landscape allows outdoor life to be experienced in many different ways, at almost any time of year.

The great visual magnet lies further southwest, around Reine and the villages surrounding it: a landscape of bays and peaks that seems designed to force you to stop the car every ten minutes. Here, walkers find emblematic routes and viewpoints that have become symbols of the archipelago. One of the best known is Reinebringen, famous for its panoramic view earned through a steep climb: in Lofoten, beauty is gained through effort. But not everything is about height. There are beaches such as Haukland or Uttakleiv —with pale sand, icy water and wind combing the coast— where the spectacle is horizontal: the sea opening in bands and, behind it, mountains closing the frame.

Local culture is best understood when the sea is seen as a larder. Lofoten has historically lived from cod, and that memory still survives in its cuisine. Stockfish (tørrfisk, air-dried cod) is more than a product: it is a preservation technique that shaped the trade and character of the place, and today returns as a source of gastronomic pride. And if you travel in winter or towards its end, another key name appears: skrei, the migratory cod arriving in these waters which, when in season, forms part of the finest culinary narrative of the north.

For lunch or dinner with a clear sense of territory, one reliable address is Børsen Spiseri, in Svolvær. It is not a “picture-postcard restaurant”: it is a respected table built around seafood and a local larder spoken of here with respect, without empty marketing. The restaurant itself presents it as one of the best-known dining rooms in Lofoten and highlights the use of fresh ingredients from the islands’ “larder”; it also opens every evening, making it easy to fit into a route. One piece of advice, if you travel with your palate: look for cod prepared in its different forms on the menu, and let the place tell its story without unnecessary embellishment, in a setting shaped by sea, weather and northern tradition. Here, cuisine still maintains a direct relationship with the landscape and the

View of the fishing village of Hamnoy

View of the village of Reine

fishing culture that has defined these islands for generations. If what you want is a more informal stop, but with the same guiding thread —Lofoten as a land of seafood and tradition— there are popular places linked to stockfish around Reine, where dried cod, old drying racks and local trade still form part of everyday life. Here, cod does not appear as a postcard made for visitors, but as a real presence: it is seen, smelled, bought and best understood when observing how it still shapes the rhythm of the villages.

And as a truly “spectacular” place to stay, one of the names that makes most sense is Nusfjord Village & Resort, in the Flakstadøya area. Nusfjord has something many hotels try to manufacture and almost none truly achieve: atmosphere. It is an old fishing village setting, with cabins beside the harbour, sheltered from the northern wind and with a direct relationship between accommodation and landscape: you step outside and you are inside the place itself, not standing before scenery. The wood, salty smell, nearby mountains and still harbour waters create a scene difficult to imitate. In addition, its location works well for covering a large area, since it lies at a reasonable distance from Leknes airport —a practical point for entering and leaving Lofoten— and leaves you perfectly placed to explore both the heart of the archipelago and the southwestern stretch.

The best thing about Lofoten is that it does not demand a “correct” season: it demands adaptation. In summer, the region invites you to walk and enter fishing villages, link viewpoints together and descend to beaches where the water shows no mercy, though the landscape compensates for everything. In autumn, the colours become extraordinary, the days shorten and photography becomes easier because the light works in your favour. In winter, the journey turns intimate: more time indoors, more conversation, greater pleasure in a hot soup or a well-prepared cod dish; and, if the sky allows, the northern lights as a reward. In spring, when the ice loosens and the roads recover their pulse, Lofoten begins moving again with renewed energy, as if the land were breathing once more after months of withdrawal.

There are destinations sold for “what you see”. Lofoten, instead, stays with you because of what it makes you feel: that mixture of raw nature and persistent human life, of fishing tradition and cuisine with identity, of silence and horizon. The landscape is certainly impressive, but what remains is something else entirely: the feeling of being in a territory that still speaks with its past without renouncing the present. It is not merely a place to include on a wish list.

Essential stops along the way

A village: Reine, for its almost perfect silhouette between mountains and sea.

A road: the E10, the backbone of any journey through the archipelago.

A flavour: stockfish, the dried cod that sums up centuries of fishing tradition.

A moment: sunset, when the light lowers and the mountains seem to move closer to the water.

One piece of advice: leave free time. In Lofoten, the best moments are rarely planned.

The old fishing village of Nusfjord with its cottages

Andalusia in spring:

a unique experience of light, colour and tradition

Text: Editorial staff - **Photography:** Tourism of Andalusia and archive

Ermita del Rocío, Huelva © Andalusia Tourism

The Spring arrives in Andalusia with a different kind of clarity. The light becomes cleaner, the days grow longer, the countryside turns green again and the squares recover their life. Between May and June, the south experiences one of its most beautiful moments: nature reaches its fullness, patios fill with flowers, country roads open up and the calendar overflows with celebrations where tradition, beauty and shared joy coexist.

Travelling south during these months means discovering a community devoted to its public spaces, its traditions and an open way of understanding life together. It is no coincidence that many of Andalusia's major events take place now. Here, spring is not only observed: it is shared.

The season of light and open roads

After winter, the Andalusian landscape changes completely. The countryside turns green again, the olive groves seem denser and the mountain ranges recover a freshness that summer will later erase. It is the season for travelling slowly, for white villages and for paths inviting visitors to walk while contemplating the landscape.

In Doñana National Park, within its marshlands, these are decisive weeks for birdwatching and for the ecological balance of the park. In the Sierra de Grazalema Natural Park, the routes through mountains and Spanish fir forests reveal a lesser-known and deeply beautiful Andalusia. Further east, Sierra Nevada National Park still preserves snow at higher altitudes while the nearby cities are already living fully in spring.

That contrast between sea, countryside and mountains explains much of Andalusia's appeal: within just a few kilometres, the climate, the light and the landscape completely change.

Desert Landscape, Almería

Sierra Nevada, Granada Geopark

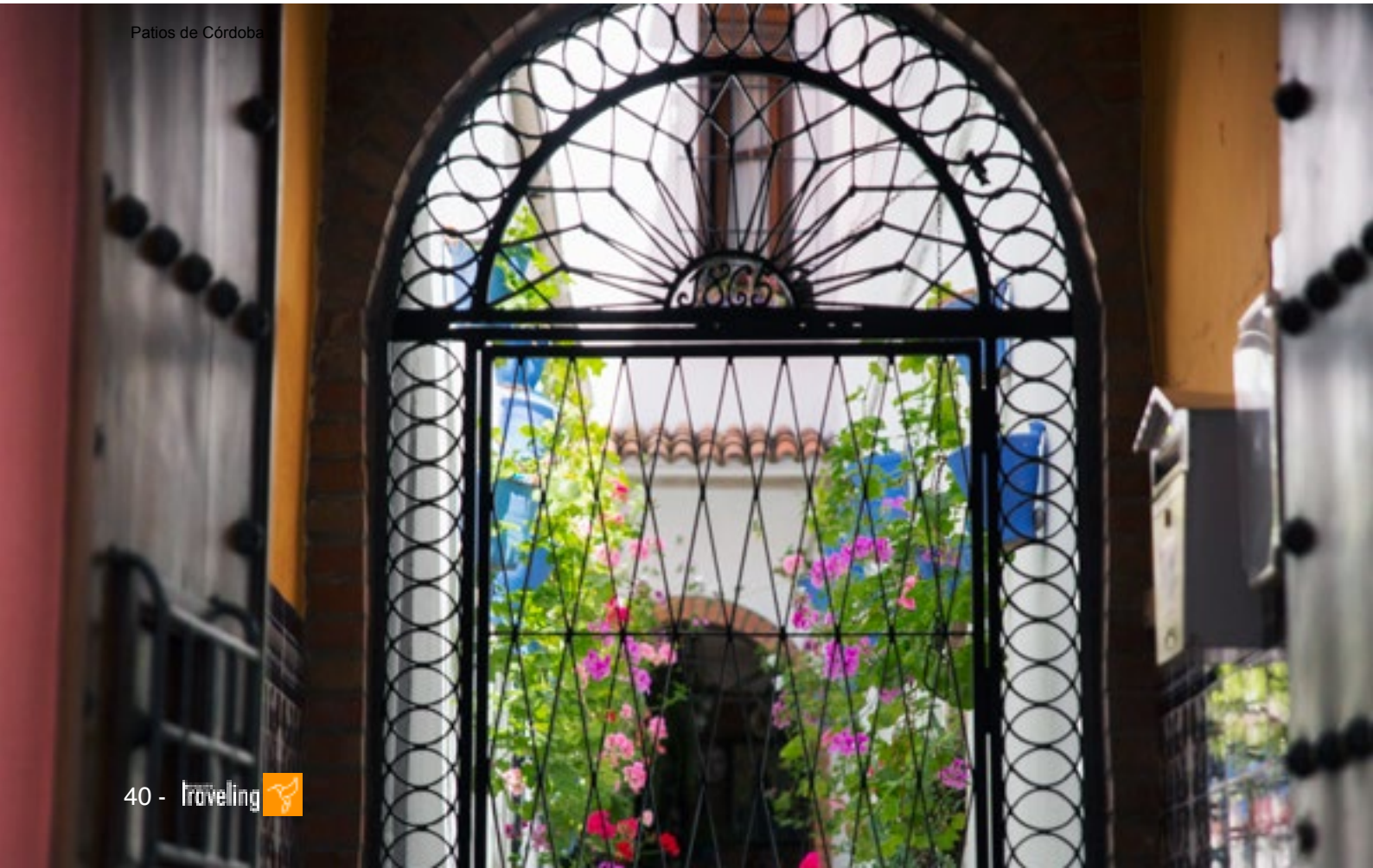
Córdoba and the everyday art of the patios

Few celebrations express so well the connection between architecture, domestic life and beauty as the Córdoba Patio Festival. During May, numerous private patios open their doors to reveal spaces cared for with almost artisanal dedication. Geraniums, carnations, jasmine, fountains and whitewashed walls transform the city into one vast inhabited garden. It is not simply a floral competition. Córdoba's patios were born as an intelligent response to the climate: houses designed to preserve freshness, create intimacy and encourage family life together. Their cultural value was recognised by UNESCO as Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity.

Walking through them means entering a way of life where beauty is not displayed: it is cultivated every day. Córdoba reaches one of its finest moments in May, among white alleyways, the scent of late orange blossom and visitors moving forward in respectful silence.

Inside one of the courtyards © Andalusia Tourism

Courtyards of Córdoba © Andalusia Tourism



Patios de Córdoba

Jerez and the elegance of the horse

If Córdoba represents intimate delicacy, Jerez de la Frontera symbolises expansive celebration through the Jerez Horse Fair, one of the most distinguished events in the Andalusian calendar.

Born in the thirteenth century as a livestock and commercial fair, it gradually evolved into a major social gathering where the horse holds a central role. Carriages, riders, horsewomen and equestrian displays recall Jerez's historic connection with horse breeding and with the Royal Andalusian **School of Equestrian Art.**

The fairground, located in **González Hontoria Park**, brings together open marquees, music, traditional dress and an atmosphere combining popular joy with a certain aristocratic air. Unlike other fairs more focused on nightlife, Jerez shines especially during the day, when the light enhances the horse parades and the colours of the traditional costumes.

It is a celebration where tradition does not feel like scenery, but rather the natural continuation of a city deeply aware of its history.

Horse Fair, Jerez © Andalusia Tourism

El Rocío, pilgrimage and shared emotion

Few Spanish celebrations possess the symbolic power of the El Rocío Pilgrimage, whose date depends on Pentecost and usually falls between May and June. More than a festival, it is a massive pilgrimage bringing together brotherhoods arriving from many parts of Andalusia and the rest of Spain.

Decorated carts, horses, sandy paths, songs and nights spent outdoors form part of an experience combining faith, identity and shared community life. The final destination is the village of El Rocío, beside the marshlands of Doñana, where devotion to the Virgin of El Rocío reaches its culminating moment.

Even for those observing beyond the religious dimension, El Rocío impresses through its human intensity. There is effort, emotion, family memory and a strong sense of belonging. There is also a deep connection with the landscape: much of the journey unfolds through pine forests, dunes and natural spaces of enormous ecological value.

Granada, Seville and the cities that return to the streets

Spring is also felt in urban life. Seville recovers mild nights and squares full until late. Granada mixes the freshness descending from Sierra Nevada with lively viewpoints and gardens in full bloom. Málaga looks towards the sea with promenades full of life, while Cádiz enjoys a luminous calm before the great summer crowds.

Andalusian cities then acquire a particularly pleasant scale. They are easier to walk through, lived more slowly, and clearly reveal that southern talent for turning the street into a place of encounter.

Corpus Christi, Granada © Andalusia Tourism

El Rocío Pilgrimage © Turismo de Andalucía

Travelling before summer

Anyone visiting Andalusia in the spring months will find one clear advantage: balance. The extreme heat of the inland summer has not yet arrived, many destinations retain a serene rhythm and nature still keeps its freshness. It is an ideal time to link monumental capitals with rural escapes, to explore the white villages of the Cádiz mountains, wander through the Renaissance cities of Úbeda and Baeza, or walk beside the Atlantic on the Costa de la Luz.

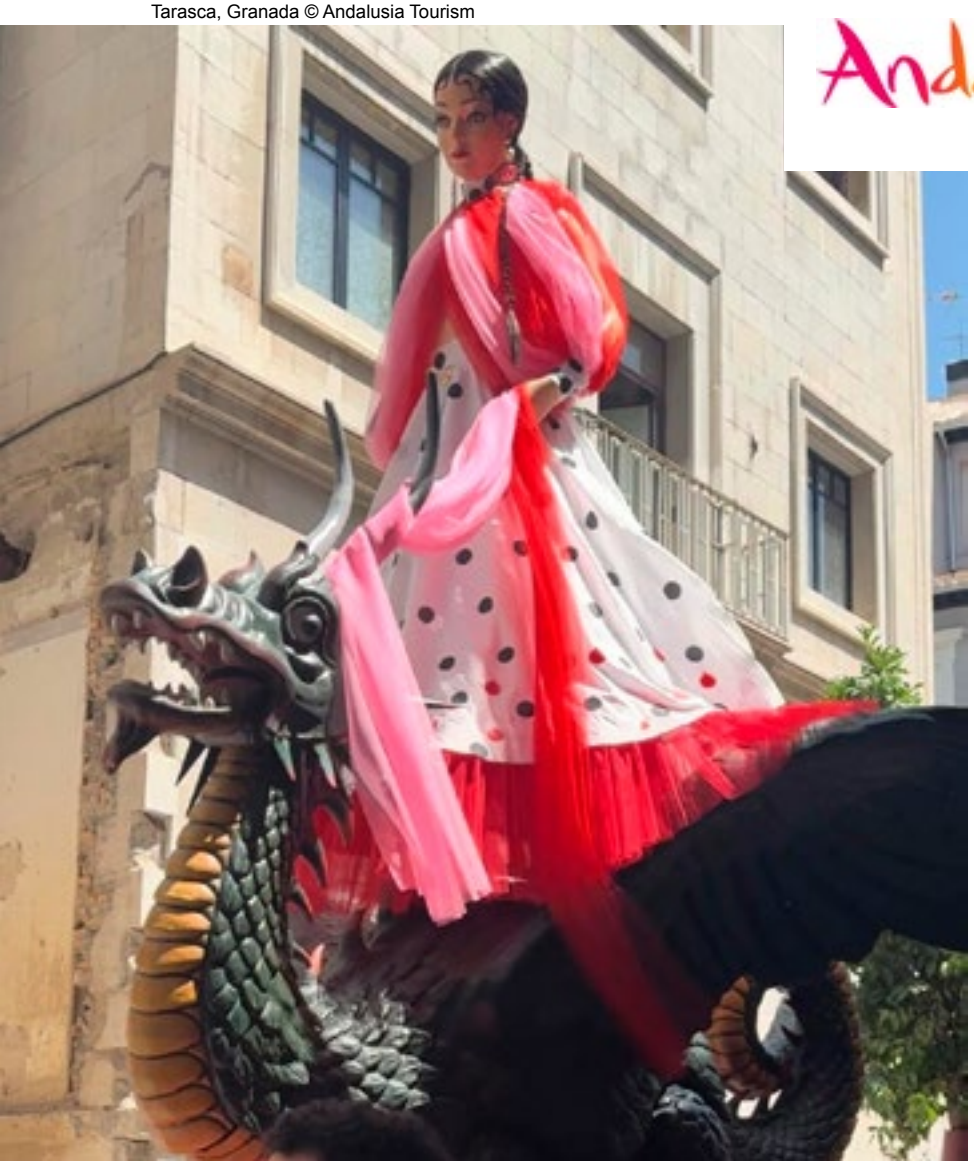
When Andalusia explains itself best

There are numerous cultural, religious and sporting events held during these months. The Córdoba patios, the equestrian elegance of Jerez, the collective emotion of El Rocío, squares filled at sunset and the countryside at its peak compose an image difficult to forget. It is not a postcard prepared for visitors. It is a way of life that, during these months, reveals itself with particular clarity.

There are places where spring can be noticed. And then there is Andalusia. Here it is felt in the light, in the street and in shared joy.

Baeza, Jaén © Andalusia Tourism

Tarasca, Granada © Andalusia Tourism



Andalucía

With the collaboration of the Ministry of Tourism and Foreign Andalusia of the Junta de Andalucía

There are places where spring can be noticed. And then there is Andalusia. Here it is felt on the skin, in the air and in that joy which seems to embrace everything around it.

AARHUS

48 hours in the other Denmark

Text: Jose A. Muñoz - **Photography:** archive

Aarhus It is pronounced almost as if trying to say "Orjus" with the mouth half closed. The name already gives a clue: this Danish city does not reveal itself fully at first, but when it does, it leaves an impression hard to forget. It is Denmark's second city, far less obvious than Copenhagen and, precisely for that reason, kinder to those seeking a short break with character. It has a harbour, museums, cafés, design, old streets, university life and a very natural relationship with the water. It does not need to boast. In Aarhus, everything seems shaped by a mixture of Nordic calm and common sense.

"The Iceberg" apartments, located in the harbour

Old Customs House (Toldboden) Den Gamle By Open-Air Museum (The Old Town)

First day: from the old quarter to the rainbow

The best way to begin is to walk slowly through the centre. Aarhus is one of those manageable cities where you can forget the map for a while. The Latin Quarter, Latinerkvarteret, still preserves the atmosphere of cities that grew before the idea of grand avenues existed: narrow streets, low houses, small shops, cafés with tables outside and an everyday life that does not feel staged for visitors. It is one of the oldest areas of the city and still keeps that human scale so appreciated in northern Europe.

From there it is easy to reach Aarhus Cathedral, dedicated to Saint Clement. It is one of the city's major historical landmarks and a good reminder that Aarhus is not only contemporary design and recent architecture. Its medieval origins, brickwork, height and sober presence introduce an older Denmark, less photographed yet deeply powerful. The city has managed to modernise itself without abandoning that historical foundation, and that is part of its attraction.

Afterwards, it is worth heading towards ARoS Aarhus Art Museum, the art museum that has become one of the city's symbols. Its great attraction is Your Rainbow Panorama, the circular coloured-glass walkway created by Olafur Eliasson on the roof of the building. From above, Aarhus appears tinted red, blue, yellow or green depending on where you stand. It is not merely a striking installation: it works as a different way of understanding the city, of seeing it change with the light and with the movement of visitors. **ARoS ranks among Aarhus's main cultural attractions**, and the tourist office also highlights the importance of other major museums such as **Den Gamle By and Moesgaard.**

For lunch, Aarhus allows visitors to choose between informal cooking and more ambitious gastronomy. The city has gained importance on Denmark's culinary map and now features restaurants recognised by the Michelin Guide, alongside a scene centred on local produce, bakeries, cafés and contemporary dining spaces. There is no need to seek only solemn tables: Aarhus also eats remarkably well in simple places, with that Danish precision that pays attention to bread, butter, fish, seasonal vegetables and coffee. The Michelin Guide maintains a specific selection of restaurants in Aarhus, proof of the gastronomic importance the city has achieved.

AROS Aarhus Art Museum and the famous “Your Rainbow Panorama”

The afternoon can be reserved for Den Gamle By, the open-air museum that recreates Danish urban life through historic buildings relocated from different parts of the country. Its name means “the old town”, and that is exactly what it offers: entering houses, workshops, shops and streets that explain how people lived in other times. It is not a theme park, but a very clear way of telling the social history of Denmark. For a travel magazine, it is one of those rewarding places because it brings together architecture, everyday memory and visual storytelling.

As evening approaches, the city is best enjoyed close to the water. The harbour district has changed greatly in recent years and perfectly reflects Aarhus’s transformation: former industrial spaces converted into cultural, residential and leisure areas. Dokk1, the large library and civic centre beside the harbour, is one of the key pieces of that renewal. It is not just a building: it is a statement of intent about how a city can understand public space. The The European evaluation of Aarhus 2017 linked part of the city’s cultural project precisely with its urban transformation and the redevelopment of the waterfront, including Dokk1, now one of its clearest symbols.

Segundo día: diseño, mar y vida tranquila

The second day can begin beside the harbour, in that more contemporary Aarhus that looks to the sea without solemnity. The city has grown towards the water with new architecture, urban baths and promenades where residents, students, cyclists and travellers mix. Here the difference between a tourist city and a lived-in city is easy to understand. Aarhus receives visitors, yes, but it does not seem to depend on them. Local life still sets the rhythm.

Afterwards, it is worth heading out to Moesgaard Museum, south of the city, in a green and carefully maintained setting. It is one of Denmark’s great museums devoted to archaeology and ethnography, famous both for its collections and for its architecture integrated into the landscape. VisitAarhus places it among the city’s leading attractions, and the Michelin travel guide gives it a high rating within the local heritage scene.

On the way back, lunch can be an excuse to step into the most everyday side of Aarhus: a restaurant serving contemporary Danish cooking, a bakery with good rye bread, a fish restaurant or a food market.

The DOKK 1 building is a public library, cultural centre and municipal services facility. The photo below shows Aarhus's main theatre.

Palacio de Marselisborg

The city was, together with Central Denmark Region, European Region of Gastronomy in 2017, as part of the same cultural momentum that made Aarhus European Capital of Culture that year. That programme defended a simple idea: rethinking good food through innovation, produce and local identity.

The final afternoon is best left for walking. Aarhus is not exhausted by a list of monuments. It has something more discreet: good bookshops, design stores, cafés where nobody seems in too much of a hurry, bicycles crossing silently and a visible youth that does not disturb the city, but keeps it awake. It is university-minded, cultural and clean without feeling cold.

In 48 hours, Aarhus leaves a clear impression: that of a Denmark less monumental than Copenhagen, but perhaps more approachable. A city looking to the future from an old foundation; one that turns a library into a public square, a museum into a viewpoint of colour and a harbour into a meeting place. It is not a short break for accumulating visits, but for understanding another way of living the city. And that, in times of fast travel, is worth a great deal.

How to get there

Aarhus is located on the Jutland peninsula, well connected by train, road and air. The most practical option is usually to fly to Copenhagen and continue by train to Aarhus Central Station, a journey of around three hours. It is also possible to arrive via Aarhus Airport or Billund Airport, both connected to the city by bus services. VisitAarhus particularly highlights the city's good rail connections from Copenhagen and Germany, alongside domestic and international flights.

Where to stay

Hotel Royal

Classic and centrally located, opened in 1838. It is a good choice for those seeking accommodation with historical character, close to the old centre and with the atmosphere of a traditional grand hotel.

Hotel Villa Provence

A small boutique hotel in the heart of the city, with Provençal style and an intimate atmosphere. Ideal for a quiet city break with everything close at hand.

Comwell Aarhus

Modern four-star hotel with interiors designed by HAY and views across the city. A comfortable option for those preferring contemporary lines and up-to-date services.

Where to eat

Domestic

One of Aarhus's leading gastronomic names. It holds a Michelin star and a Green Star for its sustainable approach. Modern cuisine, local produce and a highly contemporary interpretation of the region.

Hærværk

A restaurant strongly linked to seasonal produce and small suppliers. Its cuisine changes according to the market and it has been recognised with a Michelin Green Star for its work in sustainability.

Aarhus Street Food

An informal food market located inside a former bus garage, with more than 30 kitchens and food stalls. Perfect for a quick, varied and uncomplicated meal.

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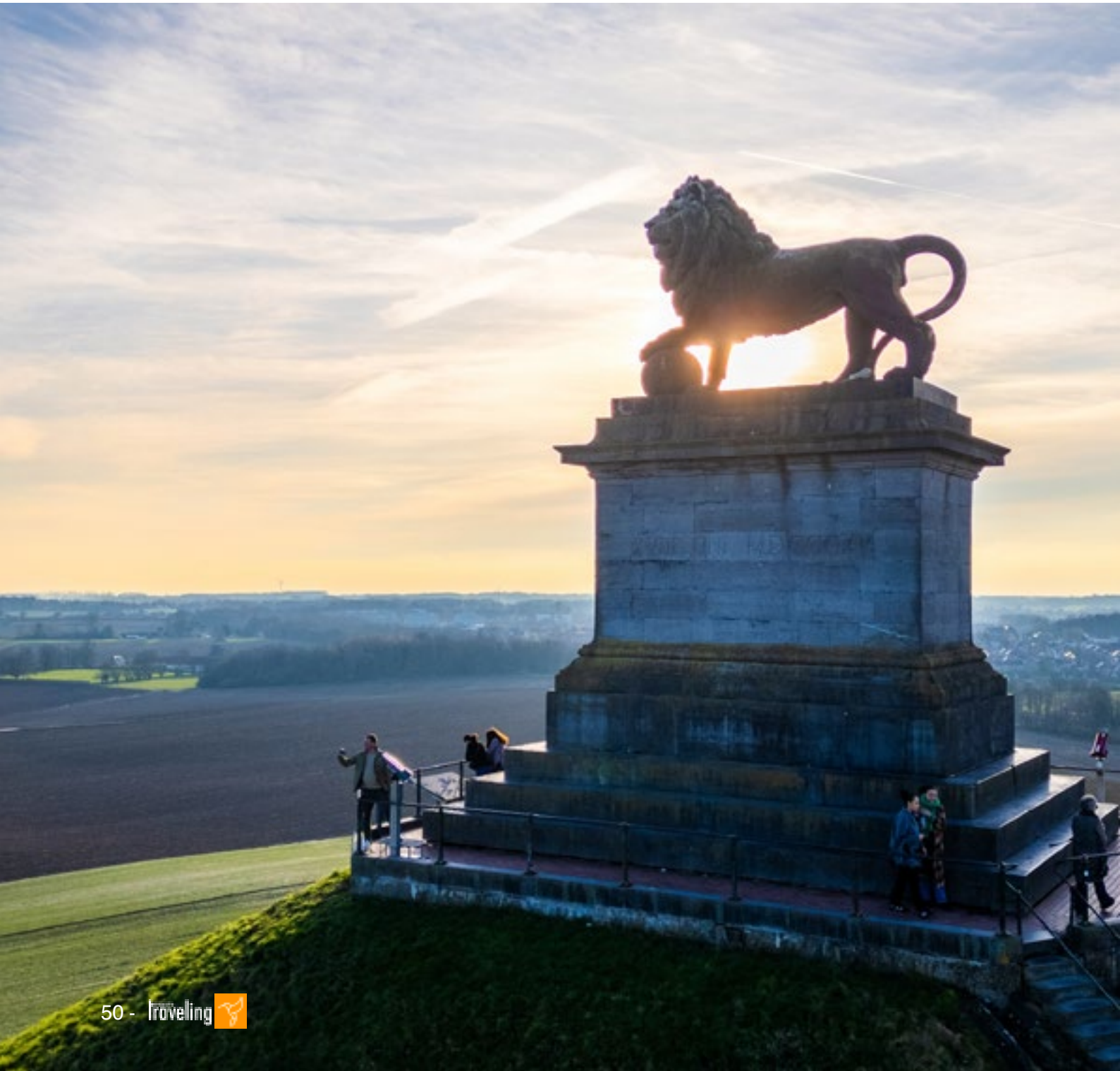
Waterloo

The field where history is still happening

Text and photography: Jose A. Muñoz

The Lion's Hill Memorial



Panoramic view of the Battle of Waterloo, 1815

There are places where history is never forgotten, but relived. Waterloo is one of them. Every June, as the 18th approaches, the fields south of Brussels recover more than visitors: they recover the rhythm, the sound and a certain tension that still seems to linger over the landscape since 1815.

The battle is well known. Napoleon Bonaparte facing the allied troops led by the Duke of Wellington, with the final arrival of the Prussian army under Gebhard Leberecht von Blücher. A single day was enough to bring an end to a period that had shaped Europe for years. What followed —the new political balance of the continent— began, to a great extent, in this very place.

What makes Waterloo interesting is that it has not become a frozen stage set or a simple memory. Every year, the battlefield comes alive again through a historical reenactment which, far from seeking easy spectacle, is grounded in rigour and in a very specific way of understanding the past: from within.

The terrain that shaped the battle

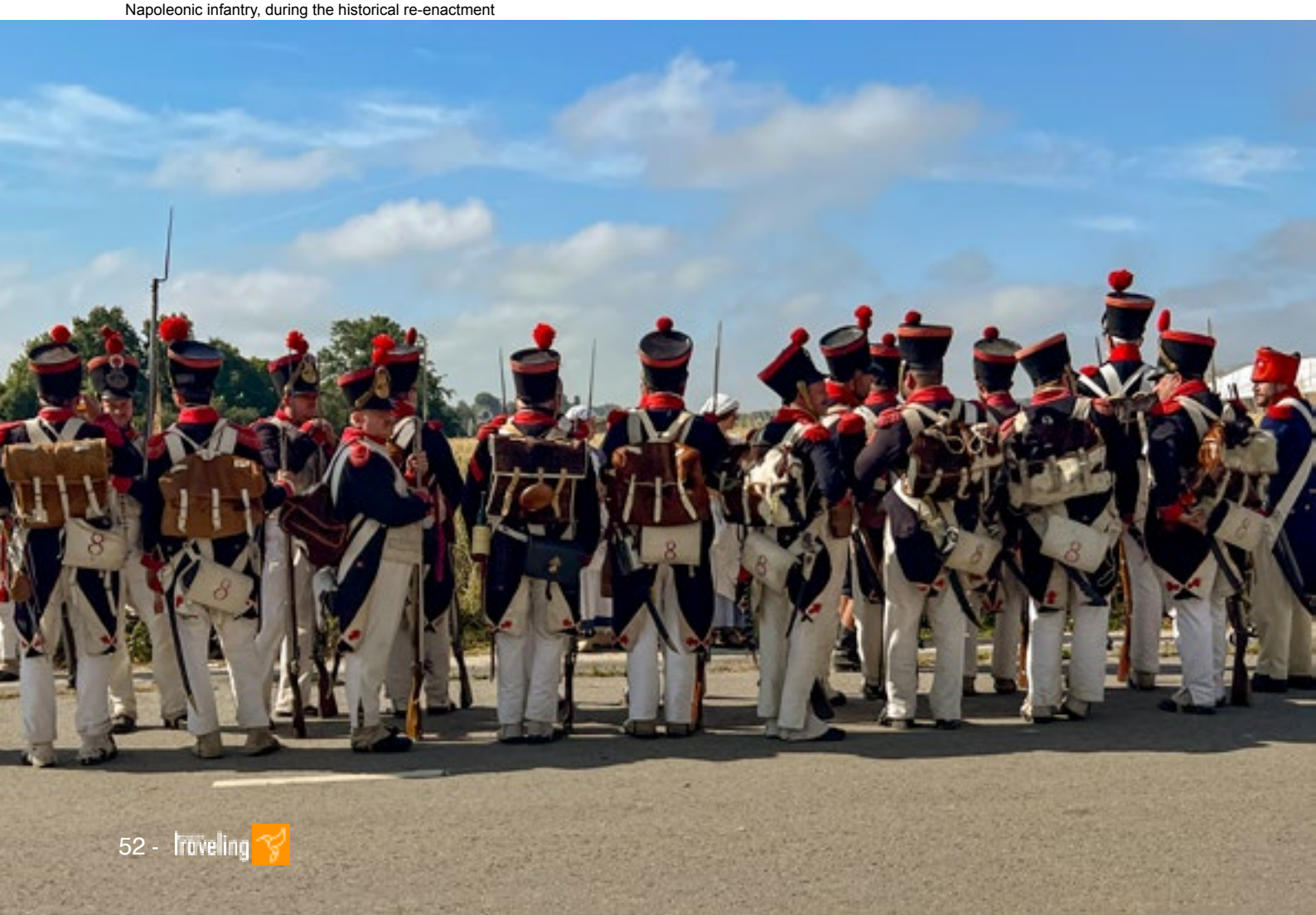
The first thing that surprises is the place itself. There are no sets built for the occasion here. The references are still there: Hougoumont, La Haye Sainte, the Lion's Mound. The terrain, with its gentle undulations, helps explain why each position was key. Walking across it is, in itself, a form of historical reading.

The reenactment unfolds on that same ground. It is not an improvised performance. The participants —historical reenactors, not extras— arrive with a level of preparation that goes far beyond what is visible. Uniforms made from period patterns, faithfully reproduced weapons, detailed study of military tactics and regulations. Every gesture responds to prior learning.

That effort is visible in the details. The way they advance, the time it takes to load a musket, the discipline of the formations. Nothing is fast. Nothing is designed for immediacy. And precisely there lies part of its value: it forces us to look at the battle from another time, far removed from today's logic.

Lion Mountain and the entrance to the celebration

Napoleonic infantry, during the historical re-enactment



The moment when everything comes to life

There is a moment when the reenactment stops being calm observation and turns into realism. It usually comes with the first artillery shots. The sound is dry, forceful, and the smoke of black powder remains suspended in the air longer than one expects. Suddenly, visibility drops, the field becomes confused and the scene gains in density.

From that point on, the movement is constant but contained. The infantry advances in line, the cavalry enters and withdraws in measured charges, the cannons set the rhythm. There is no unnecessary spectacle. What is sought is to come as close as possible to what that day might have been.

On major anniversaries —such as the one held in 2025— the deployment reaches significant figures, with thousands of reenactors, horses and artillery pieces. But even in smaller editions, the overall feeling remains. It is not so much a question of quantity as of coherence.

Much more than a reenactment

The experience is not limited to combat. Throughout the weekend, the military camps —the bivouacs— offer a glimpse into the daily life of the soldiers. How they slept, how they cooked, how they organised their day. There is also a civilian presence, period trades, explanations about care for the wounded and the logistics that sustained the armies.

Top and bottom photos: a re-enactment of the battle

Top photos: images of the battle; bottom: uniformed horsemen re-enacting the Napoleonic hussars

TThat context is essential. It helps us understand that the battle was not only a sequence of manoeuvres, but a far more complex reality, in which fatigue, organisation and uncertainty weighed as heavily as strategy.

It is worth stressing one point: Waterloo does not present a glorification of war. The approach is clearly educational. Visitors do not merely observe; they also receive information, context and keys to interpret what they see. The battlefield today has an interpretation centre and museum spaces that complete the experience.

And it is there that everything begins to make sense. Because Napoleon's defeat was not merely a military episode. It meant the close of one period and the beginning of another, marked by a new European order that would last for decades. Another interesting aspect is the origin of those taking part. The reenactment brings together groups from different European countries —and also from beyond Europe— who share the same vocation for history. There is no single viewpoint. And that adds a broader dimension, more faithful to what it originally was: a European battle in every sense.

At a time when history is often consumed quickly, almost superficially, Waterloo offers another relationship with the past. Slower, more demanding, and perhaps more honest. Not everyone needs to see it to understand it, but those who come to this field in June discover something that does not always appear in books. The real scale of the conflict. The weight of the terrain. The slowness of movement. The constant uncertainty. The physical presence of a place where decisions had consequences that still echo across the landscape and Europe's shared memory, reminding us that history was once lived breath by breath.

In the end, that is what remains. Not so much the reenactment itself, but the feeling of having been in a place where history, somehow, is still happening, measured in footsteps, smoke, silence and memory, and in the quiet awareness that the ground still speaks.

Toledo Cathedral

800 years of greatness

Text: Editorial staff - **Photography: © Fundación Impulsa Castilla-La Mancha and archive**

Work on Toledo Cathedral began in 1226. Eight centuries later, that project, raised to affirm the spiritual weight of the primatial see, becomes the centre of one of the great cultural events of 2026. From 25 May to 14 October, the exhibition Primada. VIII Centenary of Toledo Cathedral proposes a route as ambitious as it is evocative: showing how this temple has been, for centuries, much more than a religious building. It has been a symbol of power, an artistic workshop, a refuge of memory and the heart of a city.

The first thing that distinguishes this exhibition is its setting. It is not installed in an outside museum or in neutral rooms. It is held inside the cathedral itself, using spaces rarely visited by the public. The route crosses cloisters, historic stairways, old chapels and the retrochoir, so the viewer does not only contemplate works: they walk through the place that saw them born. On few occasions is the setting so inseparable from the content as here. This museographic decision also makes it possible to understand the cathedral as a sum of superimposed times, where each century left a visible mark.
The Primada exhibition is structured in two great periods. The first enters the Middle Ages, from the beginning of the works to the late fifteenth century.

The second covers the Early Modern period, between the sixteenth and eighteenth centuries, when Toledo consolidated its prestige with new works of art, important commissions and a clear desire for posterity.

Each element responds to a symbolic logic: raising the gaze, guiding the route and underlining the spiritual dimension of the whole.
The figure of **Archbishop Rodrigo Jiménez de Rada** appears as one of the essential names behind that first impulse. Alongside him, other prelates, canons and patrons gradually enlarged the cathedral's heritage with tombs, images, liturgical objects and artistic commissions that today allow us to reconstruct a period of extraordinary vitality. But a cathedral does not live by stone alone. It also lives by ceremony. That is why one of the exhibition's greatest successes is to pause over the daily life of worship. Vestments, codices, goldsmithery and liturgical utensils remind us that for centuries everything was designed to heighten religious experience: light, music, colour, incense, the gleam of precious metal and the symbolic weight of every gesture.

Rear of the choir, by Berruguete © Fundación Impulsa Castilla-La Mancha

TOLEDO CATHEDRAL

Another of the most attractive sections is devoted to the Cathedral Treasury. In the Middle Ages, relics meant devotion, but also prestige. To guard them meant attracting pilgrims, reinforcing authority and consolidating a spiritual identity. Over time, Toledo gathered a notable collection, accompanied by reliquaries where faith and art meet naturally. Some of these pieces also allow us to appreciate extraordinary goldsmithing techniques, now almost impossible to repeat.

To this ensemble is added one of the most singular pieces of the cathedral heritage: **the Monstrance of Arfe**, a masterpiece of Spanish Renaissance goldsmithery. Made in the sixteenth century by Enrique de Arfe, its monumental structure and richness of detail make it an exceptional example of how sacred art reached levels of technical and symbolic complexity difficult to equal.

The second part of the exhibition shows a cathedral open to new horizons. With the Renaissance and the Baroque, Toledo entered into dialogue with Italy, Flanders, Rome and also with America.

Jiménez de Rada © Fundación Impulsa Castilla-La Mancha

For centuries, Toledo Cathedral gathered relics and works with a clear purpose: to turn faith into experience. From medieval goldsmithery to the Baroque, each piece seeks to move the viewer and make the sacred present.

Sculpture by El Greco © Fundación Impulsa Castilla-La Mancha

New influences are emerging, new sensibilities and new ways of representing the sacred. Visitors will find works linked to masters such as El Greco, Velázquez, Zurbarán, Luca Giordano and Juan de Borgoña, among other names.

What is interesting is not only the gathering of illustrious signatures, but understanding why they are there. Toledo Cathedral acted for centuries as one of Spain's great centres of artistic demand. Archbishops and cardinals used art as an expression of faith, certainly, but also as a political and cultural language. Each altarpiece, each canvas and each sculpture spoke of an institution conscious of its rank. The symbolic competition between Europe's great ecclesiastical sees also explains that desire to attract the finest artists.

Special attention should be paid to the ensemble formed by the Ochavo and the Sagrario, spaces where devotion reached a measured and brilliant theatricality. There the Baroque deployed all its visual grandeur: moving the believer through emotion, surprise and beauty. In these spaces, light, materials and the arrangement of the works form part of a carefully constructed discourse.

The exhibition also restores the city of Toledo to prominence. For the cathedral cannot be understood in isolation. It marks the urban skyline, organises ceremonies, dominates perspectives and has

been for centuries a constant presence in civic life, articulating spaces and setting the rhythm of the city.
From afar, its towers announce Toledo; from within, they summarise its history. Even the urban economy, artisan trades and much of the festive calendar revolved for generations around its activity, creating a living network of relationships. Another aspect worth underlining is the restoration work linked to this event. Many pieces arrive after delicate interventions that have recovered colours, volumes and details lost over time, restoring legibility to works that seemed exhausted. This is not only about exhibiting heritage, but about preserving it for the future. To restore also means to research: each cleaning or technical analysis provides new data on authors, materials and creative processes, expanding knowledge of their original context.

Some will come drawn by the great names of painting, others in search of a historical reading, and others simply wishing to enter spaces of the cathedral that usually remain in shadow.

Toledo Cathedral, Emperador organ; photo below: Chapter House
© Fundación Impulsa Castilla-La Mancha

Main Sacristy of the Cathedral © Fundación Impulsa Castilla-La Mancha

San Sebastián crowns a monstrance crafted from silver and gold-plated silver © Fundación Impulsa Castilla-La Mancha

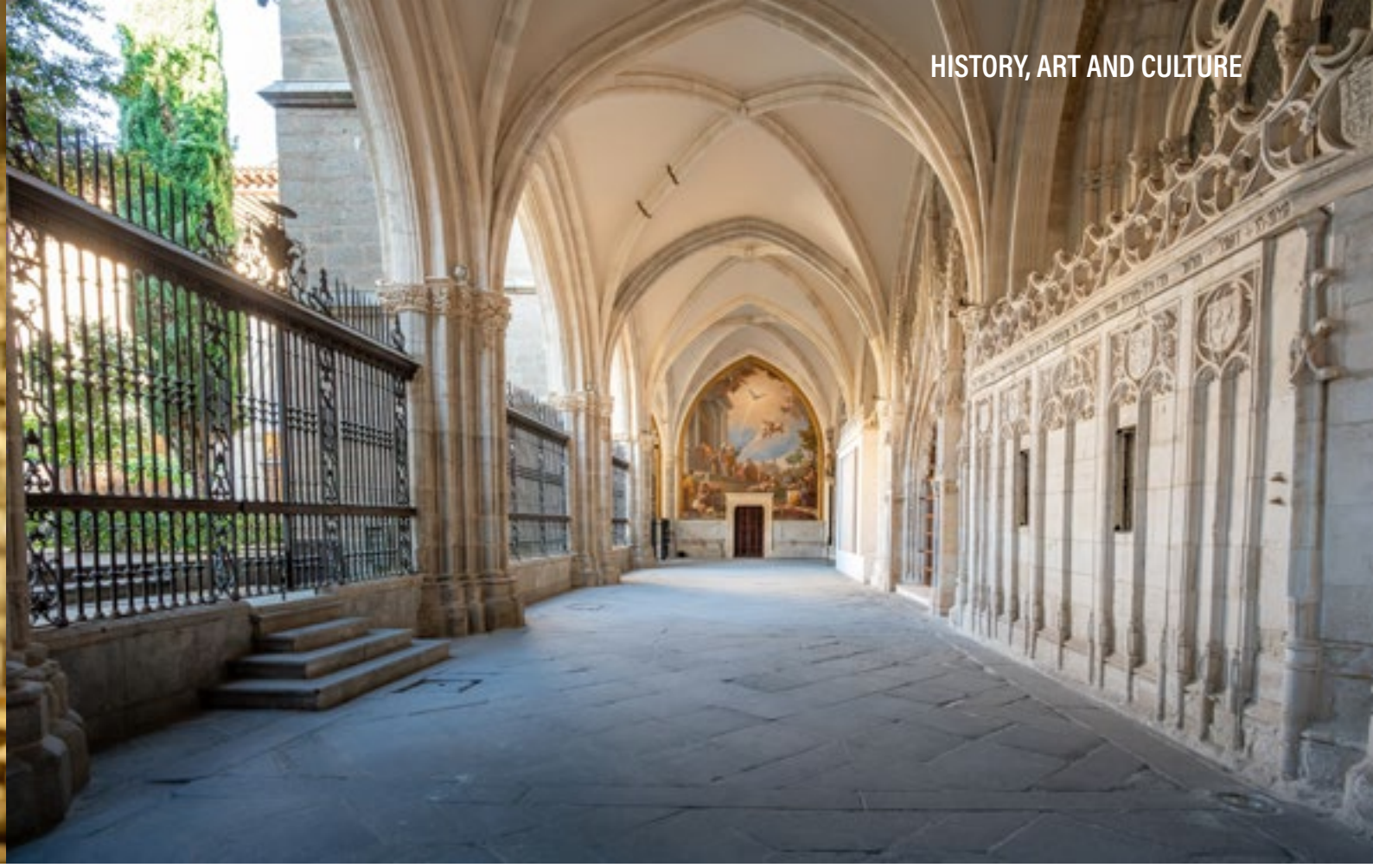
Cardinal Cisneros' mitre © Fundación Impulsa Castilla-La Mancha

Everyone will find something. Because Primada does not simply bring together valuable pieces: it proposes a structured reading of Toledo Cathedral as a living organism, able to explain, through its works, the cultural, political and religious evolution of Spain since the thirteenth century.

Along that route appear figures such as El Greco, Francisco de Goya and Juan de Borgoña, but also anonymous workshops, goldsmiths, embroiderers and master ironworkers whose lesser-known labour is decisive for understanding the whole. The exhibition does not focus only on authorship, but widens the view towards the crafts that shaped the cathedral and its heritage, recalling that sacred art was, for centuries, a collective work.

The exhibition also all

ows the building to be read as a sum of layers. The Gothic fabric, begun in the thirteenth century over the former main mosque, coexists with Renaissance and Baroque additions that gradually transformed its appearance. Each chapel, each altarpiece and each grille responds to a specific moment, a mentality and a way of understanding power. The great processional monstrance by Enrique de Arfe —one of the most emblematic pieces— is not only a masterpiece of European goldsmithery: it is the reflection of a city that, in the sixteenth century, projected its spiritual and economic influence through art. And perhaps therein lies its greatest merit. In an accelerated age, the ex-



Cathedral Cloister

hibition invites us to pause. To look calmly at a vault, understanding the constructive logic of the Gothic and its aspiration towards height and light. To follow the filigree of a monstrance, where every detail responds to a technical precision inherited through generations. To understand why a mitre, a painted panel or a grille could condense beauty, power and thought at the same time. It is not an exhibition for quick consumption: it demands time, attention and a certain willingness to be carried along by nuance.

There is also a less visible, but essential, discourse: that of conservation. Many of the pieces displayed have undergone recent restoration processes that have recovered polychromy, volumes and details hidden by the passage of time. These works not only ensure the survival of the heritage, but also provide new data on techniques, materials and creative processes, refining historical knowledge of the cathedral and its artistic context.

Another of the exhibition's strengths lies in its ability to connect architecture, liturgy and urban history within a single narrative. Toledo Cathedral is not presented as an isolated monument, but as the centre of a city that grew, organised itself and projected its influence around it for centuries. The relationship between the cathedral and Toledo becomes especially visible in the way the exhibition links ceremonial life, artistic patronage and civic identity.

The route also allows visitors to appreciate the extraordinary continuity of the building. Unlike many historical monuments transformed into static spaces, the cathedral continues to function as a place of worship, memory and representation. That continuity gives the exhibition unusual depth: the works are not detached objects displayed behind glass, but part of a living context that still preserves its original meaning.

Toledo is not merely celebrating an anniversary. It is celebrating the continuity of a work that has never stopped transforming. Eight centuries later, the old cathedral still preserves its capacity to astonish, not as an immobile vestige, but as a space where history continues to converse with the present. Those who visit Primada will not only see works: they will understand why this building has been, and remains, one of the great symbolic centres of European culture.

Eco-destinations

Alcudia Valley and Sierra Madrona

The Wild Heart of Empty Spain

Text: Editorial Staff - **Photography:** Archive

Alcudia Valley

Do not look here for crowds or fashionable hotels. The Alcudia Valley and Sierra Madrona do not reveal themselves at first sight. You have to seek them out, enter their 150,000 hectares of dehesas, quartzite ridges and Mediterranean forests, and accept their rules: here time is marked by the deer during the rut, the low flight of the Spanish imperial eagle and the deepest silence you have ever paid to hear.

Three seals that are not ornaments

In 2021 it was designated a Starlight territory, a recognition of the quality of its night sky, free from light pollution. In 2024, UNESCO included it in the Global Geoparks Network as part of the Calatrava Volcanoes Geopark, confirming what locals already knew: that this land holds in its depths unique volcanic monuments, such as Castillejos de la Bienvenida or the volcanic lagoon of La Alberquilla, suspended high in Sierra Madrona like a whim of nature.

But the seal that best defines its spirit is another. Since 2023, this natural area —included in the Sierra Morena SAC SPA— has been part of the Sustainability Recognition System for Nature Tourism in the Natura 2000 Network. Translated: the companies operating here not only avoid damaging the environment, but work actively to conserve it. And they do so with names of their own: Ágata Verde, Alma Wild Nature, Hotel Rural Sisapo, Madronactiva and Nido de Alcudia.

In southern Ciudad Real, where Sierra Morena seems endless, there is a territory that has collected seals of excellence —Starlight, UNESCO Geopark, ecotourism commitment— without losing one iota of its untamed essence. This is not a destination, it is an immersion.

Spanish imperial eagle

Iberian lynx

La Alberquilla Volcanic Lagoon

The Kingdom of the Eagles and the Lynxes

Si or those who travel with binoculars around their neck, this is the place. In the Valle de Alcudia and Sierra Madrona Natural Park live 275 species of vertebrates, four of them endangered. The list is almost a declaration of intent: Spanish imperial eagle (with between seven and ten well-defined territories), black stork, cinereous vulture —one of the largest colonies in the world, with more than one hundred breeding pairs—, Bonelli's eagle, golden eagle, Egyptian vulture, peregrine falcon, eagle owl.

And then there is the Iberian lynx, increasingly present, which finds here an ideal refuge for its recovery.
Autumn is the peak moment. Between mid-September and mid-October, the deer enter the rut and the valley fills with a guttural roar that locals call berrea. It is a deeply moving sound spectacle: males mark territory, confront one another, bellow at dawn and at dusk. If you want to experience it, seek an experienced guide; they know where to place you without disturbing, at the exact limits where observation becomes respect.

Volcanoes, gorges and a sea of stone

The geology of the Valle de Alcudia is another of its great treasures. We are talking about some of the oldest materials in the Iberian Peninsula, the so-called Alcudia facies, visible in a landscape of Appalachian morphology: eroded valleys, quartzite ridges, aligned mountain ranges.

The Natural Monument of the volcanic lagoon of La Alberquilla was formed in the crater of a volcanic explosion and offers spectacular views of Sierra Madrona. The Riofrío gorge, a narrow ravine crossing the Sierra de la Umbría de Alcudia, is a deep cleft where still waters provide habitat for otters, herons and cliff-nesting birds of prey.

And for lovers of underground mystery, there is the Mina de los Pontones Micro-reserve, where up to 6,400 individuals of six different bat species have been recorded. A specially protected refuge that must be visited with the care such a fragile space deserves.

The Human Footprint: From the Tartessians to Transhumance

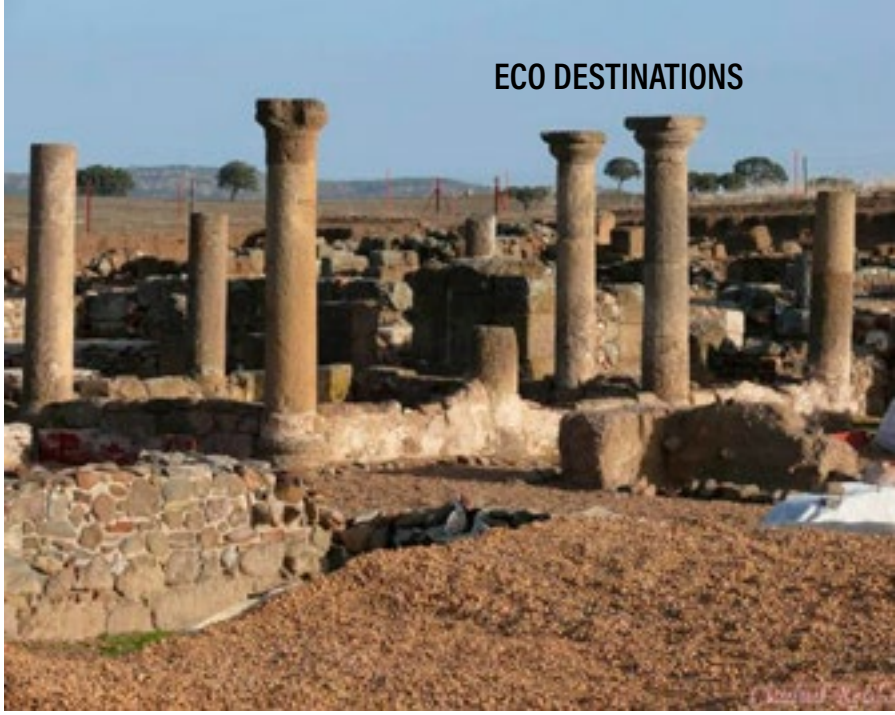
Not everything here is nature. Human beings have left their mark on this territory since ancient times. The schematic rock paintings of Peña Escrita and Batanera, declared a Historic-Artistic Natural Monument in 1924, are among the most important prehistoric ensembles in the Iberian Peninsula.

The archaeological site of La Bienvenida is another essential stop. Remains of dwellings dating from the seventh century BC to the fourth century AD have been uncovered there. Archaeologists have documented its importance during Iberian and Roman times —it may have been the legendary Sisapo, sought after by Tartessian kings for its silver and cinnabar mines— but there is also evidence of much earlier occupation.
Later, during the Middle Ages, the Order of Calatrava transformed this territory into the great Royal Dehesa, an obligatory passage point of the Cañada Real Segoviana for the transhumant flocks travelling between the plateau and Andalusia. The Venta del Zarzoso still stands as a silent witness to that period.
How to experience it

The ecotourism experience here is not improvised.

Companies such as Ágata Verde offer flora, fauna and geology observation routes of around 10 kilometres and four hours in duration, led by interpretive guides carrying binoculars, maps, educational material and, above all, knowledge. They also organise waste collection and reforestation activities as voluntary compensation. Prices are around 15 euros per adult.
Madronactiva, Alma Wild Nature and Descubre Alcudia complete the range of respectful activities.

Accommodation is equally up to the task. Hotel Rural Sisapo is the destination's sustainable benchmark, although the rural houses in Solana del Pino, Mestanza or Fuencaliente offer smaller and more familiar alternatives. All are committed to the ecotourism programme, guaranteeing that your stay contributes to conservation and local development.



La Bienvenida archaeological site

Cave paintings at Peña Escrita and Batanera

Alcudia Valley and Sierra Madrona

A charming village

SARRANT

The Circular Village drawn by Gers

Text: Clara Serrano Vega - claraserranovega@gmail.com **Photography:** Archive

To arrive in Sarrant is to enter a carefully conceived maze. There are no streets crossing at right angles. No squared-off main square. Here everything is curved, concentric, enveloping. The houses crowd around the church as if guarding a secret, and the only way in is through a fourteenth-century gate-tower that still preserves its original portcullis.

That tower is the threshold to another time. Once inside, the noise of the road disappears, and the whisper begins.

A village that embraces itself

Sarrant was not always French. Or, rather, it did not always belong to the King of France. In 1265, Philip IV of France, known as “the Fair” or “the Iron King”, established here a charter of customs that protected the inhabitants and set the rules of coexistence. The village then became a castrum royal, a fortified camp with a rectangular plan that over time evolved into this highly unusual circular form.

Why a circle? Because the church stood at the centre and the houses, seeking protection, gradually pressed close around it. There is no military reason. There is a reason of neighbourliness, of mutual shelter. Sarrant is a village that embraces itself because it does not want anyone left outside, alone or helpless. Walk through its streets. Look at the stone and half-timbered façades, the overhanging upper floors leaning out over the street as if the houses

wished to shake hands. Some date from the fifteenth century, others from the sixteenth. All have that ochre colour of Gascon earth, that torchis mixing mud and straw which over the years has gained a texture impossible to imitate.

San Vicente, en el ojo del huracán

En At the exact centre of the circle stands the church of Saint Vincent. It was rebuilt after the Wars of Religion, and in the nineteenth century an octagonal spire was added, today dominating the whole landscape.

The interior holds surprises. A carved wooden confessional. An eighteenth-century pulpit. And, above all, the châsse of Sainte-Catherine, a reliquary that is one of the best-kept treasures of the Gers.

But what truly impresses in Saint Vincent is its silence. Because at the centre of the circle, with the houses pressed close around it, the noise from outside does not arrive. Only the echo of footsteps on stone. Only the breathing of the traveller who has found, without looking for it, a refuge.

The village that drew itself

Up to this point, Sarrant would be a pretty medieval village, one of several found in France. But Sarrant has an ace up its sleeve that makes it unique.

In 2014, the village reinvented itself. An illustration festival, supported by the Médiathèque départementale of the Gers, began to take shape. And suddenly, Sarrant ceased to be only ancient stone and became the first “Village de l’Illustration” in France.

Today, eleven illustrators have designed the village’s street plaques. Each street has its own image, its own style, its own artist. It is as if Sarrant had decided that its walls, too, could tell stories through drawings.

At the Maison de l’Illustration, exhibitions follow one another throughout the year. In July, the Estivales de l’Illustration attract artists from across Europe. And the workshops of resident artists, such as the Ateliers Charrette collective (screen printing, engraving, typography), are open to anyone wishing to learn.

Example of a street name plate

Church of St Vincent

Sarrant streets

There are villages you walk through in a straight line, and then there is Sarrant, which is walked in a spiral.
In the heart of the Gers, this thirteenth-century circular castrum is one of those architectural rarities worth a detour. Especially now that, besides being beautiful, it has become the first “Village de l’Illustration” in France.

Sarrant Town Council

The House of Enlightenment

SARRANT

The bookshop where you can eat

There is a place in Sarrant that does not appear in ordinary guidebooks but should be an essential stop. It is the Librairie-Tartinerie. A bookshop where you can also eat. Or a restaurant where you can also read.
Do not ask how it works. Just go in, leaf through a book, order a tartine with local produce and sit down to watch life go by. Because in Sarrant, life moves slowly, and that, in these times, is almost a luxury.

The surrounding area: the Gers at a leisurely pace

Sarrant is small, but its surrounding country seems never-ending. Gascon Lomagne unfolds in gentle hills, minor roads and open fields where time moves forward without noise. On the outskirts of the village, the Sentier du Pigeonnier, a circular route of about eight kilometres, follows rural paths between crops and offers fine views of the traditional dovecotes that dot the landscape, one of the most recognisable architectural signs of the Gers.

Very close by are family farms, small stone churches and markets where people still buy through conversation more than through consumption. In season, there is no shortage of artisanal foie gras, confits, farmhouse cheeses and the famous white garlic of Lomagne, one of the emblematic products of the area. For those who prefer to move slowly, several rural holdings offer donkey or cart rides, simple plans that connect with a peasant France now increasingly rare. And if there is time, it is worth approaching nearby villages such as Mauvezin or Solomiac, where rural heritage remains alive among arcaded squares and old stone. You do not come here to tick off monuments: you come to breathe better.

SWISS WINE COUNTRY

Europe's great unknown

By: Alejandro y Luis Paadín - alejandro@paadin.es

Suiza Switzerland is a country usually associated with ideas as diverse as diplomatic neutrality (some regions have remained at peace for more than 700 years), the Red Cross, pocket knives, cheeses, watches, chocolate, finance, mountain tourism and railways… But if we move beyond these clichés and think about wine, probably the only link that comes to mind with the Swiss Confederation is its strong taste for drinking it.
Many wineries dream of exporting wine, however small the shipment, to Switzerland. Its high GDP per capita (more than €90,000 annually in 2025), the average salary of its inhabitants (among the highest in the world) and its affinity for quality wine make this central European country one of the most attractive destinations for many wineries in our country. What is far less known, however, is its established wine sector, which in some regions forms a vast monoculture responsible for unique and iconic landscapes.

Despite having a relatively high production volume (14,400 hectares that in 2025 generated 84,000,000 litres), Swiss wine remains largely unknown on international markets since barely 1% of production is exported. This very low figure is due largely to the limited competitiveness of its wines in a sector where price polarisation continues to increase.
The difficulty of working Swiss vineyards, phytosanitary treatments, as well as high salaries and government taxes, mean that the price of a kilo of grapes ranges from around 3 euros (mainly whi-

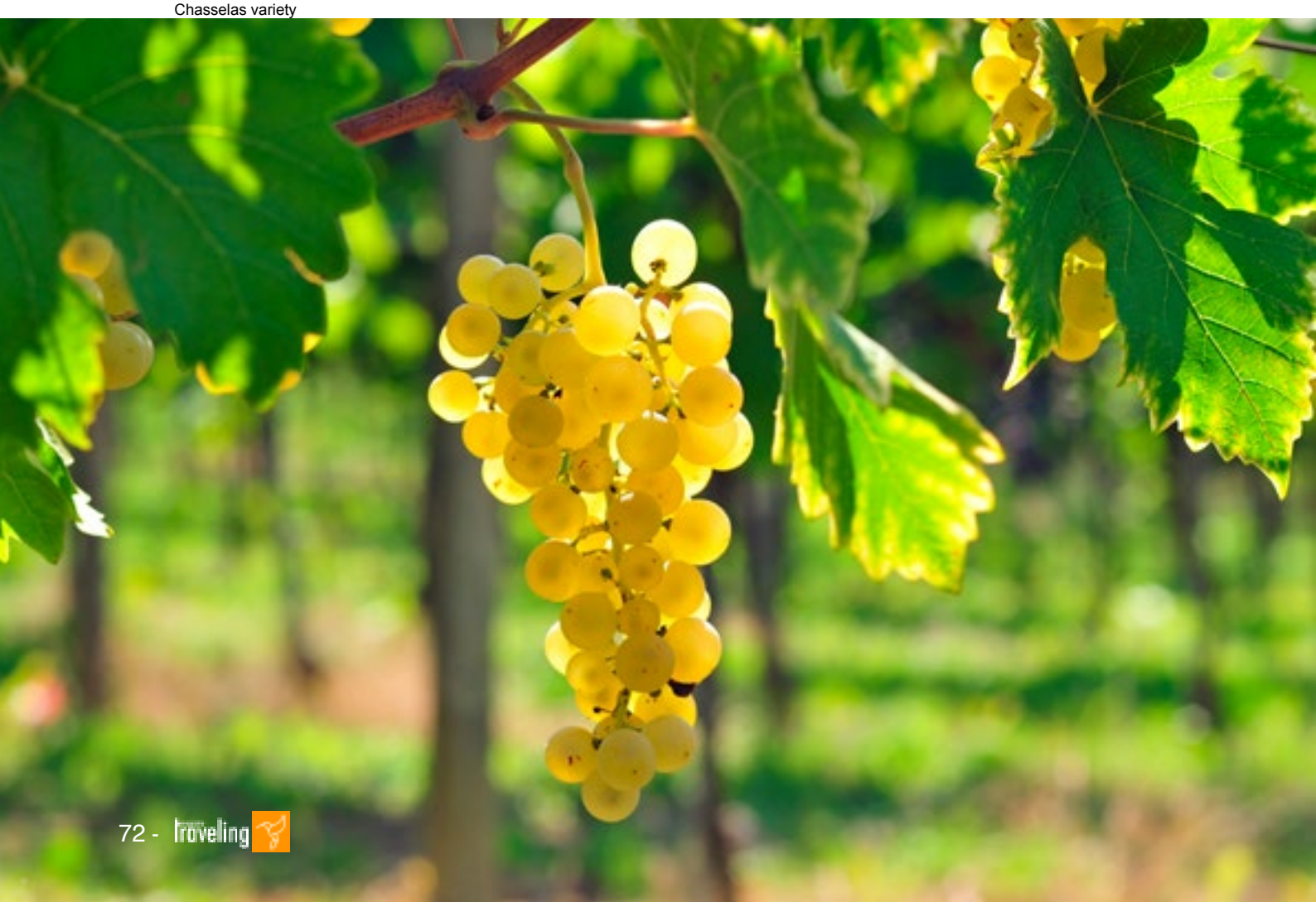
te varieties) to 6 euros (more common for red grapes). The number of working hours required in the vineyard per hectare and year is especially revealing when understanding production costs, since these range from 400 hours (more mechanised valley vineyards) to 1,500 hours (small plots that may lie more than 1,000 metres above sea level on vertiginous slopes), while in an average Bordeaux vineyard work per hectare usually amounts to around 300 hours.
Inevitably, Swiss wines command higher prices than the European average. Although more red wine than white is produced (a trend consolidated in recent decades, with red wines now accounting for around 60% of total production), if there is one emblematic grape variety in Switzerland, it is Chasselas. This grape, while not internationally famous, is widely regarded in global viticulture because it is often used as the reference point for determining the earliness or lateness of the vegetative cycle of other varieties.

It is striking that famous Swiss neutrality has managed to leave its mark on viticulture throughout the world.
Chasselas is a difficult grape for newcomers, and even the Swiss themselves admit that between seven and eight years of experience are needed to appreciate it fully. Although it is not especially recognised for primary aromas, its versatility is enormous and, depending on soil type, slope, orientation or vine training, it develops very different profiles. Even within the same variety there are clones so distinct that they have given rise to two grape typologies: Fendant (for wine production) and Giclet (for table grapes). If the opportunity arises, tasting its evolution in bottle is highly instructive, with interesting development up to 15–20 years, after which wine fatigue becomes increasingly evident.

But Switzerland is much more than Chasselas, since this is only one of more than 250 grape varieties cultivated in the country (only 168 are authorised within the AOCs). This amalgam of grapes can be divided into three clearly differentiated groups: Indigenous (80), Traditional (23; introduced before 1900) and Foreign (150; introduced after 1900).

If we add to this the wine regions (6), the AOCs (+40), the subregions and local specialities (such as the Chasselas Non Filtré produced by certain growers in Neuchâtel or the Vins des Glaciers of the Val d'Anniviers), the result is undoubtedly a country rich in diversity and wine tradition.
It is impossible to speak about Switzerland without

Chasselas variety



mentioning cultural practices such as chaptalisation (the addition of sugar to must in order to increase alcohol levels) and, in many cases, malolactic fermentation in white wines to soften acidity. These practices are sometimes pushed too far and, in our opinion, can distort the essence of some of the most carefully tended and exquisite vineyards in the world. Perhaps chaptalising a Petit Arvine to raise it to 14° alcohol and forcing malolactic fermentation to make it richer and less fresh runs contrary to international consumption trends, but it undoubtedly creates a style of its own. This may explain why, in the last ten years, white wine exports have fallen from a dominant 93% to 41% of total exports.

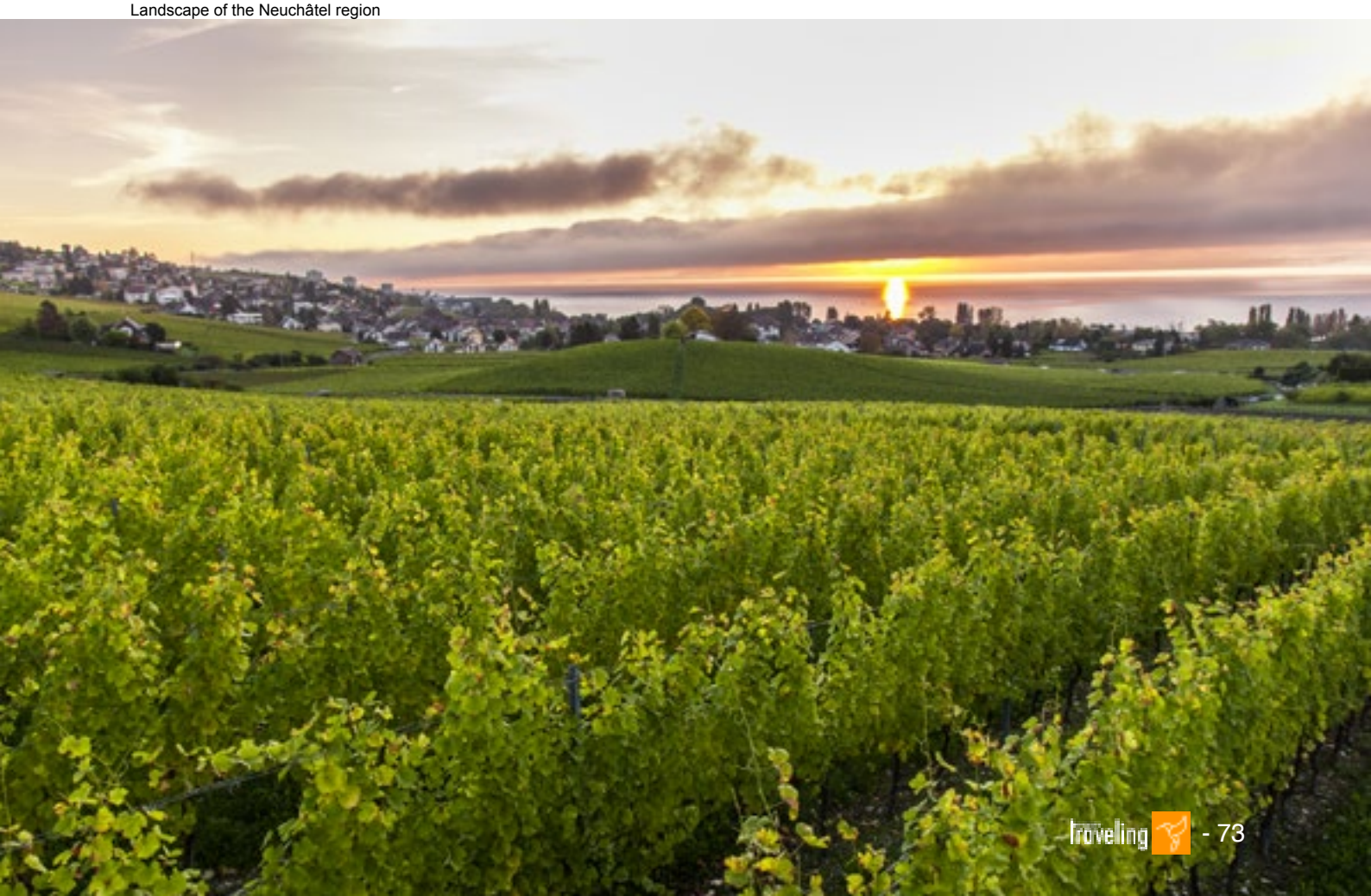
Even so, each region has its own legislative and cultural identity. From the French-speaking Genève, Vaud and Trois-Lacs to Italian Ticino, passing through German-speaking Switzerland, without forgetting Valais with influences from all three cultures. To better understand all this diversity, we will outline the main characteristics of the six most important wine regions of the Swiss Confederation.

Grapes from the Valais region of Switzerland

GENÈVE

Bearing in mind that each canton has its own legislation, it is not unusual for qualitative vineyard terms to change from one region to another. In the case of Genève (Geneva). The law recognises 22 Premier Crus whose grapes have historically been acknowled-

Landscape of the Neuchâtel region



Genève region

Vaud region

Neuchâtel region

ged for their high quality. As Switzerland remains outside European Union legislation, it is unsurprising that for several generations some Genève winegrowers also owned vineyards on the French side whose grapes were handled in Switzerland, allowing the wines to pass as Genevan.

Its 1,400 hectares are divided between 57% red grapes, with Gamay as the leading variety, and 43% white grapes headed by the omnipresent Chasselas.

VAUD

A natural continuation of the Genève vineyards, it stretches around Lake Genève through several AOCs. This region can boast one of the rare vineyard landscapes recognised as a UNESCO World Heritage Site: the AOC Lavaux. With terraces mainly facing south/south-west, this Appellation embraces two of the exceptional vineyards overlooking Lake Geneva: AOC Dézaley Grand Cru and AOC Calamin Grand Cru.

But Vaud extends beyond Lake Genève (the name given to Lake Léman on the Swiss side), reaching northwards to Lake Neuchâtel and south-eastwards, gradually climbing through the Swiss Alps with the AOC Chablais.

TROIS-LACS

The lakes of Neuchâtel, Bienne and Morat give their name to this region whose almost 1,000 hectares are shared almost exclusively between Pinot Noir and Chasselas. While the first is used to produce the local speciality Oeil de Perdrix (in reference to the pink colour of a partridge's eye), Chasselas is bottled by some wineries without filtration (Non Filtré).

Although the Traditional Method for sparkling wines was introduced as early as the beginning of the nineteenth century, current production is not especially significant within the region. While white varieties dominate in Morat and Bienne, in Neuchâtel red grapes account for nearly 60% of the total vineyard area.

VALAIS

With French, German and Italian influences, this valley forms the first wine region of the Rhône River and lies between two rocky massifs whose vineyards are entirely opposed in character. While on the left bank the north-facing slopes benefit varieties such as

Pinot Noir and Gamaret (which require fewer hours of sunlight), the right bank is usually reserved for others such as Merlot or Cornalin. In both cases, due to the low annual rainfall (650 mm per year) and the highly draining soils, Valais is the only Swiss canton where irrigation is permitted.

This region possesses a large number of highly interesting traditional varieties such as Petite Arvine (Arvine), Païen (Savagnin Blanc), Humagne Rouge (Cornalin) and Cornalin (Rouge du Pays, not to be confused with the Cornalin of the Aosta Valley), without forgetting of course Fendant (Chasselas), which together with Pinot Noir once again form the two major grapes of the region, closely followed by Gamay. With 4,800 hectares and an average annual production of 45,000,000 litres, it is the most productive region in the entire country.

The Vineyards of Valais

TICINO

Known as the Merlot region, this variety represents 80% of regional production, followed far behind by Chardonnay, Sauvignon Blanc, Cabernet Franc… in this area of strong Italian influence, Chasselas is virtually absent.

With 2,200 hours of sunshine and around 1,600 mm of annual rainfall, its climate has a stronger Mediterranean influence, despite which hail frequently devastates the vineyards. Of the more than 5 million litres produced in 2017, almost one fifth was Blanc de Noirs (mostly made from Merlot), a very common winemaking practice in the region.

The Vineyards of Ticino

GERMAN-SPEAKING SWITZERLAND

With vineyards widely dispersed, the most important variety is Blauburgunder (Pinot Noir), followed by Riesling-Sylvaner or Rivaner (Müller-Thurgau). Despite the confusion its name may cause, the latter variety does not come from a crossing of Riesling and Sylvaner, but from a crossing between Riesling and Madeleine Royale developed in 1882 by the nurseryman Hermann Müller, originally from the canton of Thurgau. Almost a third of annual production corresponds to white varieties, while the remaining 70% is clearly dominated by Blauburgunder. This dispersion gives the region a highly fragmented character, with small plots, local traditions and very different interpretations depending on altitude, exposure and canton. The result is a discreet but diverse wine landscape, less spectacular than Valais or Lavaux, yet deeply rooted in local consumption and everyday Swiss wine culture.

Variety Blauburgunder

Where do the Paadín eat

CGN Cruises
(Compagnie Générale de Navigation)

Lake Geneva (departures from Geneva, Lausanne, Montreux)
www.cgn.ch

The historic Lake Geneva navigation company offers various gastronomic experiences aboard its elegant boats, some of them Belle Époque in style. From relaxed lunches to sunset dinners, sailing between vineyards and the Alps while enjoying local cuisine makes this proposal one of the most authentic and sophisticated ways to approach the Swiss way of life.

Café du Soleil

Place du Petit-Saconnex 6, Ginebra
www.cafedusoleil.ch

Considered by many to be the temple of fondue in Geneva, this historic restaurant has spent more than a century perfecting one of the country's most emblematic recipes. Without artifice, with impeccable produce and a loyal clientele, it is the ideal place to understand the essence of traditional Swiss cuisine.

Auberge de l'Onde

Chemin Neuf 2, Saint-Saphorin (Lavaux)
www.aubergedelonde.ch

In the heart of the Lavaux terraces, this restaurant combines contemporary Swiss cuisine with one of the most spectacular views in the country. Surrounded by vineyards and with Lake Geneva at its feet, it is the perfect setting to explore the relationship between landscape, wine and gastronomy.

Kronenhalle

Rämistrasse 4, Zúrich
www.kronenhalle.com

Much more than a restaurant, Kronenhalle is an institution where history, art and fine dining meet. Frequented by the city's cultural and financial elite, it offers an impeccable interpretation of Swiss classics in a setting full of character.

Findlerhof

Findeln, Zermatt
www.findlerhof.ch

Located on a slope with direct views of the Matterhorn, this mountain restaurant elevates Alpine cuisine to a refined level without losing authenticity. The access, part of the experience, and its careful cooking make it an essential stop for understanding Switzerland at its most scenic.

Grotto della Salute

Via dei Sindacatori 2A, Massagno (Ticino)
www.grottodellasalute.ch

In the Italian-speaking region of Switzerland, this traditional grotto offers an authentic gastronomic experience based on local produce, polenta and Merlot wines. Its rustic, relaxed atmosphere reveals a different and surprisingly Mediterranean side of Switzerland.

From Jaraíz to Yuste

The historical legacy of La Vera

Text: Jose A. Muñoz
Photography: Jose A. Muñoz y Archivo

In northern Cáceres, where Extremadura turns greener and the Sierra de Gredos descends towards market gardens, gorges and villages of quiet life, Jaraíz de la Vera appears as a natural gateway to a comarca with far more depth than its fame suggests. Paprika has given these lands their name and aroma, but the journey also leads towards a deeper history: the memory of the old castle of Jariza, the final retreat of Charles V at the Monastery of Yuste and the unexpected German Military Cemetery of Cuacos, a silent presence linking this rural corner with the European wounds of the twentieth century. Among sloping squares, water paths, country cooking and mountain landscapes, La Vera offers a serene, close and meaningful escape, the kind that endures in the traveller.

Main Square in Jaraíz de la Vera

Pedro Chate Gorge near Jaraíz de la Vera

Jaraíz de la Vera is not only a town famous for paprika, nor just another name on the map of northern Cáceres. It is a good base from which to explore La Vera calmly, enter its villages, approach its gorges, taste its gastronomy and discover that this rural territory holds far more history than it first appears. The first impression comes in the **Plaza Mayor**, broad, sloping, with arcades and two levels. It is not a solemn or perfect square, but a lived-in one, the kind that explains a town better than any leaflet. At the upper end, where the Town Hall now stands, tradition places the old **castle of Jariza**, a fortress of Arab origin that may have given the town its name. Hardly any visible remains survive, absorbed into private houses and urban memory, but the idea helps one look at Jaraíz differently: beneath the present town there was once a defensive place, surrounded by scrubland and rockrose, in a key position within the comarca.

That past is not presented here in monumental form. It has to be read in the slope of the square, in old names, in the relationship between the town centre and the land. And perhaps that is why it fits so well into a rural tourism feature: because this is not about rushing from one monument to another, but about walking, looking, asking and letting the place gradually reveal itself. Jaraíz preserves that air of a comarca capital where daily life can still be felt: shops, bars, neighbours, market, mid-morning conversations and a rhythm that does not seem designed for visitors, but for those who continue to inhabit the territory.

La Vera also softens the classic image of Extremadura. Beneath the **Sierra de Gredos**, the landscape fills with water, gorges, market gardens, oaks, chestnuts and paths that invite walking more than covering kilometres. From Jaraíz, one can head out towards nearby landscapes, villages with traditional architecture and corners where summer is understood around a natural pool. Water is one of the simple luxuries of this comarca: it descends clean from the mountains and organises much of rural life. It is not an ornament in the landscape, but a constant presence that refreshes, irrigates and accompanies.

That mixture of mountain and valley also explains the agricultural wealth of the area. Around Jaraíz appear market gardens, drying houses, smallholdings and a culture of produce closely linked to the home. **La Vera paprika**, with Protected Designation of Origin, is not simply a tourist claim. It is part of a way of growing, drying and preserving. Its smoky aroma is present in stews, meats, patatas revolconas, pig slaughters and many recipes born of necessity that eventually became identity. It is also a flavour that explains the patience of the region, where time, smoke and careful handling matter. In many kitchens, a small spoonful is enough to bring La Vera into the dish. That is why paprika here is not only an ingredient, but a form of memory. On a rural journey, that simple cuisine tells as much as a church or a viewpoint.

The cloister of Yuste Monastery

Views of Cuacos de Yuste

Very close by is **Cuacos de Yuste**, one of those places that justify the detour. There stands **the Monastery of San Jerónimo de Yuste**, chosen by Charles V to spend his final years after abdicating and withdrawing from the front line of power. The visit has historical interest, of course, but also a very human reading: one of the most powerful men in Europe ended up seeking a secluded place, surrounded by orchards, silence and mountains. The complex preserves that balance between monastic austerity and imperial memory. It does not overwhelm; it accompanies. Yuste is not understood only as a monument, but as a chosen landscape. The place speaks of weariness, of abandoned power, of illness, faith and a final wish to step away from the noise of the world.

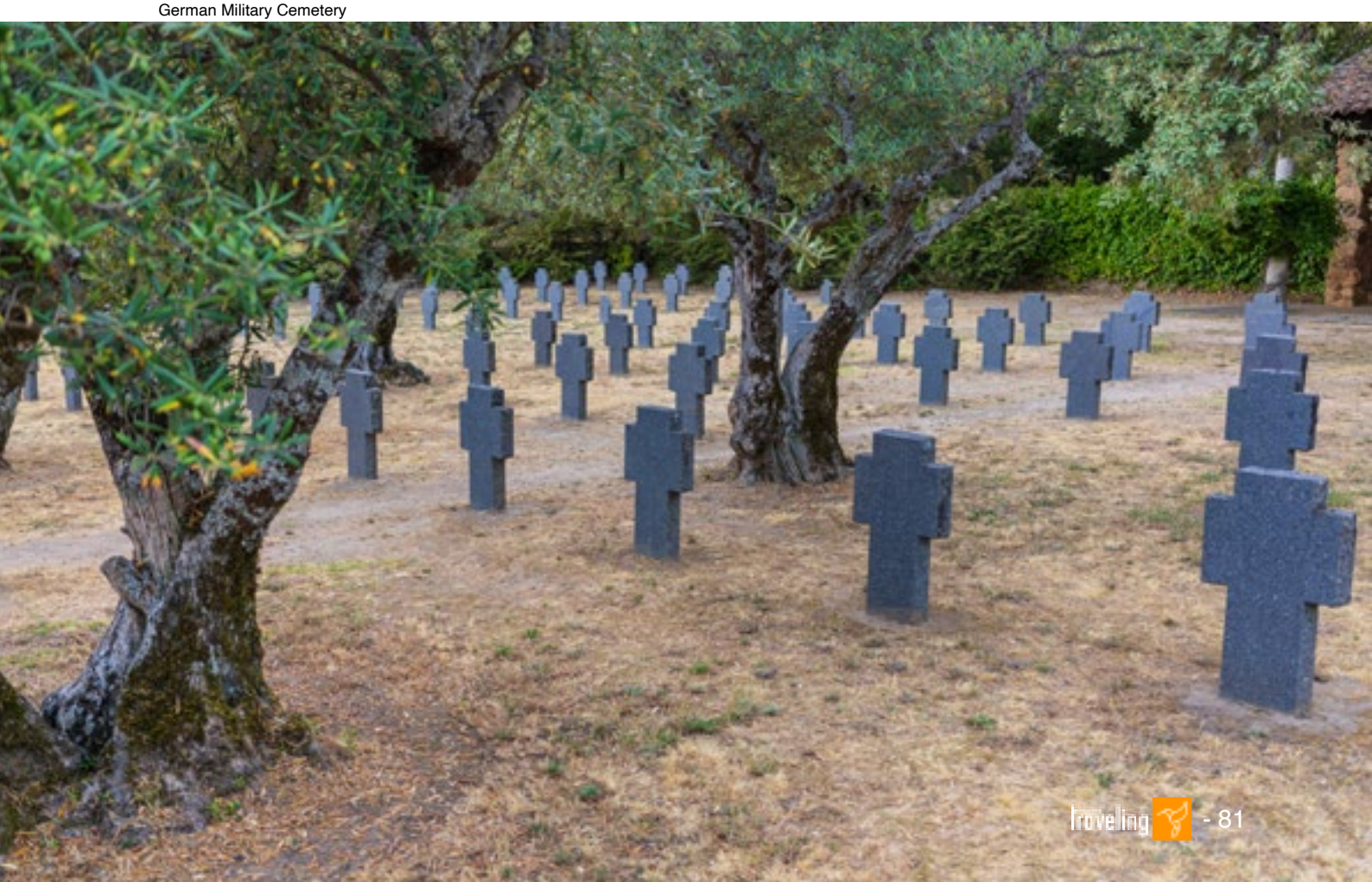
The visit allows one to imagine that end of life without the need to exaggerate it. The monastery, the cloisters, the church and the royal chamber form a sober ensemble, well fitted into its surroundings. There is no theatrical grandeur here, but contained grandeur. Perhaps that is why it moves more deeply. The architecture helps one understand the meaning of retreat: measured rooms, stone, wood, secluded patios and a constant relationship with the outside. Everything seems designed to look inwards without losing sight of the mountains. **Charles V** died at Yuste on 21 September 1558, and since then the monastery's name has been forever linked to European history. But what is most interesting for the traveller is that this history does not appear in isolation, but surrounded by a rural landscape that still retains a very strong presence.

A short distance from the monastery comes an unexpected stop: the **German Military Cemetery** of Cuacos de Yuste. It is a sober, well-kept and silent place, where 180 German servicemen who died during the First and Second World Wars rest. Many died at sea or in accidents linked to those wars, and their remains were scattered across different Spanish cemeteries until they were brought together here in the 1980s. The enclosure, simple and orderly, avoids any monumental effect. That restraint makes it even more eloquent. It is not a tourist site in the usual sense, nor should it be visited as a light curiosity. It is a place of respect, brief and austere, adding a European dimension to the journey through La Vera.

Its presence is surprising precisely because of that: because it appears in the middle of a land of kitchen gardens, gorges and quiet villages. Near the monastery where a sixteenth-century emperor ended his days, soldiers from the wars of the twentieth century now rest. The relationship is not direct, but the contrast is powerful. In just a few kilometres one moves from imperial history to the memory of modern conflicts, from rural roads to a foreign cemetery, from the daily life of villages to a broader reflection on Europe and its wounds. La Vera, almost without intending to, thus brings together two different times: that of an empire fading away and that of a continent marked by far more recent wars. The interesting thing is that all this happens without breaking the rural tone of the escape. Jaraíz, Yuste and Cuacos are explored along small roads, through stone villages, market gardens, simple restaurants, rural lodgings and the scent of paprika. History appears, but it does not impose solemnity. It is integrated into the landscape, as one more layer. One can spend the morning walking through a gorge, eat migas or a spoon dish, and in the afternoon visit Yuste or pause for a few minutes before the crosses of the German cemetery. That naturalness is one of La Vera's virtues: it allows the traveller to move from the everyday to the historical without changing register, without turning the journey into a heavy lesson.

That is why this area works so well for a Rural Tourism section. It does not sell a perfect postcard or a manufactured experience. It offers something simpler and truer: a village as a starting point, a green mountain comarca, several visits with substance and a slower way of travelling. Jaraíz de la Vera allows one to enter Extremadura through a less obvious door, where the countryside, history and daily life still walk together. And that, in times of hurried travel, is already reason enough to stop, breathe deeply and rediscover the value of travelling without haste through places that still feel authentic.

German Military Cemetery



Royal Continental

Gio Ponti’s elegance against the backdrop of Vesuvius

Text: Rosario Alonso **Photography:** Hotel Royal Continental

On the Riviera di Chiaia, On one of Naples' noblest promenades, the Royal Continental has chosen to look back in order to move towards the future. Facing the bay, with Vesuvius drawn on the horizon, this historic hotel has restored on its first floor the spirit with which it was born in the 1950s. This is not a simple refurbishment: it is a rigorous restoration of the rooms conceived by Gio Ponti, one of the essential figures of twentieth-century Italian design.

The history of the building begins in the postwar years. In 1949, the Neapolitan engineer Roberto Fernandes acquired the land of the former Royal des Étrangers, an emblem of nineteenth-century hospitality damaged during the Second World War. He commissioned a new hotel from the architect Ferdinando Chiaromonte, with more than two hundred rooms and architecture aligned with the modern optimism of the time. Shortly afterwards Gio Ponti joined the project, taking charge of the interior design and leaving his most visible mark in the panoramic rooftop pool, considered an innovation at the time: it was one of the first hotel pools in Italy supplied with seawater pumped directly from the bay.

In 1954, the pool appeared on the cover of Domus magazine, directed by Ponti himself.

In 2003, the original building was integrated with the nearby Continental —built in the 1980s by architects Alberto Izzo and Camillo Gubitosi— to form the present complex, with around 390 rooms. However, the intervention that now makes the difference is concentrated in twenty-four rooms in the historic wing. These are the rooms designed by Ponti in 1953, which for decades had undergone alterations that diluted their original character.

The Fernandes family, owners of the hotel, chose a philological restoration. The project was entrusted to the Neapolitan architect Francesca Muzi, a specialist in recovering historic interiors, in collaboration with the Milan archive that preserves Ponti's work. The process was not immediate. Period photographs, original plans and documentation kept by the family were reviewed. Stratigraphic tests were carried out on walls and ceilings to identify the exact colours used in the 1950s. The aim was not to reinterpret Ponti, but to return him accurately to his context.

The hotel enjoys a privileged location overlooking the Mediterranean.

ROYAL CONTINENTAL HOTEL

The result is what is now known as the “Gio Ponti Floor”, a level that functions almost like a time capsule. Many of the original furnishings had been stored in different areas of the hotel. They were recovered and restored one by one by local craftsmen: cabinetmakers, upholsterers and marble workers who returned each piece to its material dignity. The iconic Superleggera chairs, designed by Ponti for Cassina in 1957, dialogue with tables of clean lines, geometric lamps and noble wooden headboards. The terrazzo floors have recovered their original sheen and the fabrics have been reproduced following historic patterns preserved in Italian textile archives.

Each room presents variations, yet all share the elegant restraint characteristic of Ponti’s language: balanced proportions, attention to detail and a modernity that does not age because it rests on formal clarity. The windows still open onto the same landscape contemplated by post-war travellers: the silhouette of Vesuvius, the changing blue of the bay and the unmistakable outline of Castel dell’Ovo, just a few steps from the hotel.

The more recent Continental wing offers a contemporary aesthetic, with large windows and materials that converse with local tradition: Italian marble, fine woods and reinterpreted terrazzo. Taken as a whole, the hotel maintains a balance between memory and renewal without falling into decorative nostalgia.

Life at the Royal Continental extends beyond accommodation. Its rooftop, with panoramic swimming pool, remains one of the city’s most privileged viewpoints. On the upper floor, the restaurant Otto s.l.m. —its name referring to the height above sea level— proposes a cuisine combining local produce with contemporary technique.

One of the hotel’s historic rooms

Fish from the Tyrrhenian Sea, vegetables from Campania and southern olive oil are reinterpreted through a modern lens while the sunset turns the bay shades of pink.

The Elements cocktail bar has become a meeting point for both guests and Neapolitans. From the terrace, the view embraces Vesuvius and the castle illuminated at night. It is this mixture of international traveller and local neighbour that keeps the character of the hotel alive, fully integrated into the pulse of the city.

Swimming pool at the Hotel

Royal Continental Neapolitan Hotel Restaurant

Added to this is a strong congress vocation. The auditorium, with capacity for around 500 people, and the modular rooms with sea views place the Royal Continental among the main event venues in Naples. Medical congresses, business conventions or private celebrations find here a setting difficult to match for location and capacity.

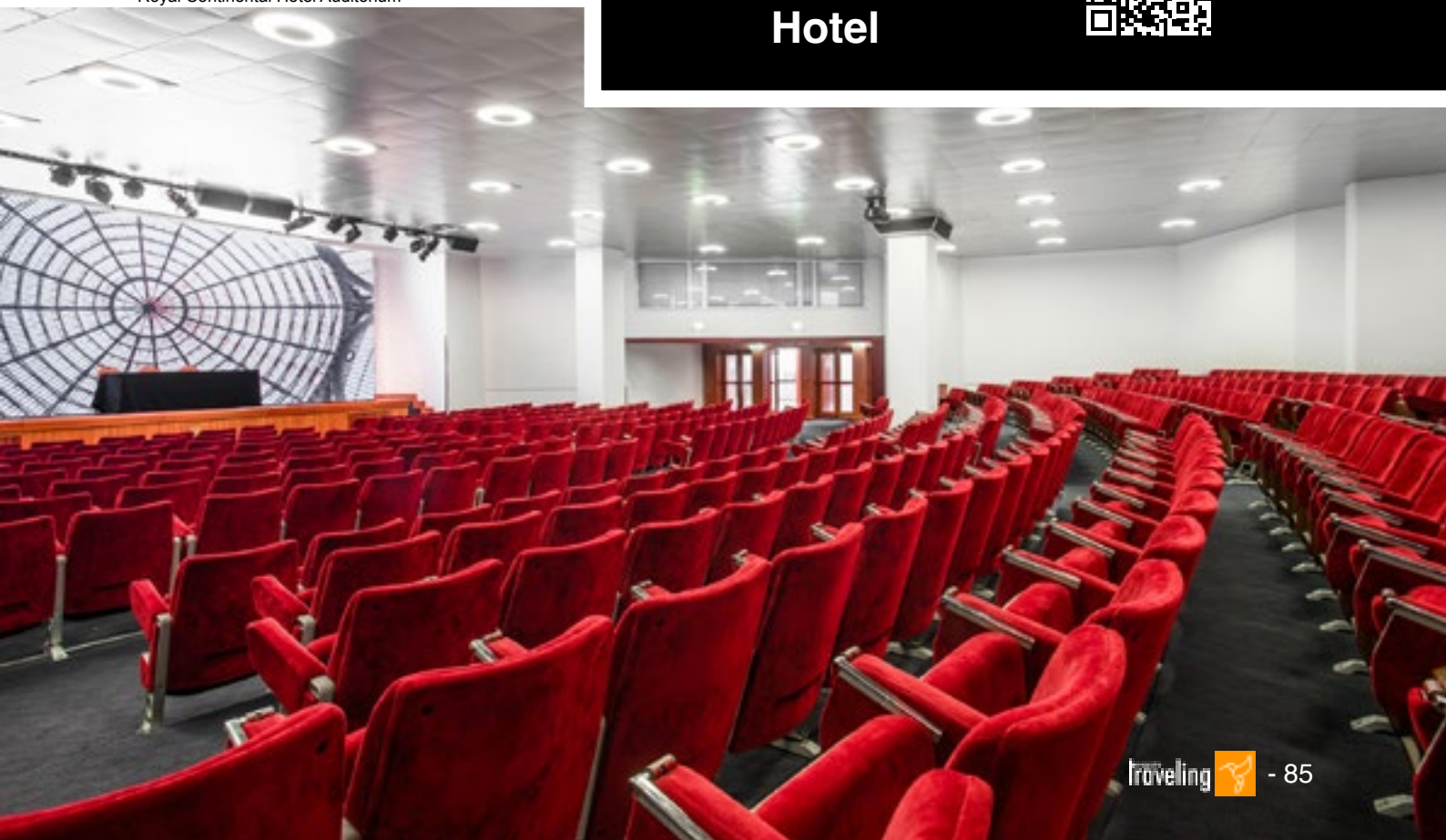
But beyond figures and services, what distinguishes the Royal Continental today is the coherence of its commitment. In a city where history accumulates in layers, rigorously recovering Gio Ponti's legacy means recognising that modern design is also part of heritage. Looking into one of those twenty-four restored rooms is to understand that elegance needs no excess. A precise line, finely worked wood and the light of the bay entering through the window are enough.

Naples has the virtue of mixing the popular and the cultured without asking permission. The Royal Continental shares that same condition: a hotel open to the city, a refuge for the traveller and, from now on, a habitable museum of a time when Italy believed in the future through design. Here, time does not stand still. It simply learns to live with its finest version.

Royal Continental Naples Hotel Bar

Royal Continental Hotel

Royal Continental Hotel Auditorium



Molino de Alcuneza

Thirty years of haute cuisine and understated luxury

Text: Jose A. Muñoz - **Photography:** Molino de Alcuneza

Just a few kilometres from Sigüenza, and little more than an hour from Madrid, there are places where time seems to move at a different pace. Relais & Châteaux Molino de Alcuneza belongs to that rare category of destinations that do not merely accommodate travellers: they reconnect them with the landscape. In 2026, it celebrates thirty years of history, established as one of the essential names in Spanish gastronomic hospitality.

The origin of the project has something of a fortunate intuition about it. In 1992, the parents of Blanca and Samuel Moreno discovered an old fifteenth-century flour mill on the outskirts of Sigüenza. In those stones they saw more than a noble ruin: they imagined a rural retreat with its own character. After several years of restoration, the hotel opened its doors in 1996. What began as a family business eventually became a national benchmark thanks to a simple yet powerful idea: excellence without artifice.

A small hotel where every detail counts

Today the hotel has 17 rooms, a spa, gardens and a gastronomic restaurant. Its intimate scale is not a limitation, but an essential part of its charm. Here there is neither anonymity nor haste. Every space is conceived for rest: stone walls, noble wood, calm tones and an atmosphere that encourages guests to slow down and reconnect with silence.

The rooms combine rural character with contemporary comfort. Some preserve original beams and historic architectural details; others incorporate terraces or open views across the countryside around Sigüenza. The amenities respond to what today's traveller expects: carefully controlled air conditioning, high-end beds, sustainable amenities, wifi, relaxation areas and an overall feeling of elegant retreat, far removed from urban noise and the constant pressure of the city.

The wellness area adds another layer of value to the stay. The spa integrates naturally into the hotel's philosophy of calm, with treatments, water circuits and spaces conceived to prolong that idea of silent luxury so often invoked and so rarely fulfilled in reality.

The strength of a family

The second generation assumed responsibility naturally. Blanca Moreno runs the hotel; Samuel Moreno leads the kitchen. That dual perspective —hospitality and gastronomy— has helped consolidate a coherent and recognisable personality. Nothing feels improvised, yet nothing becomes rigid or excessively formal.

Recognition from outside soon followed. The restaurant today holds a Michelin star, a Michelin Green Star and a Repsol Sun, together with the Sustainable Sun distinction. Important honours, certainly, although perhaps the greatest achievement is another altogether: preserving the family spirit intact after three decades of work and evolution.

Guardians of the territory

Molino de Alcuneza does not understand luxury detached from its surroundings. Much of its identity is built upon a close network of nearby producers: beekeepers, market gardeners, millers, livestock farmers, truffle growers and local artisans. The hotel refers to them as "Guardians of the Territory", an expression that perfectly summarises an entire philosophy and way of working.It is not simply about buying local produce.

One of the suites at El Molino

It is about sustaining a fragile rural economy, preserving traditional trades and protecting biodiversity. In times of gastronomic uniformity, that philosophy carries growing value and meaning.
Among its collaborators are the DeSpelta flour mill, honey producers with the D.O. Miel de la Alcarria designation, the traditional salt works of Saelices de la Sal, wineries from Guadalajara and artisanal producers of beer and spirits.

The cuisine of Samuel Moreno

Samuel Moreno's cooking approaches the Castilian recipe book through a contemporary sensibility. There is technique, but no exhibitionism. There is memory, but no static nostalgia. His tasting menus —Molienda, Clásicos and Esencias— move through landscape, seasonality and the local pantry.

One of the most celebrated chapters is bread. Moreno is regarded as one of the country's most respected chef-bakers and works with organic flours and ancient wheat varieties. At the table appear breads made from spelt, monococcum, senatore cappelli or giant rye, all prepared through carefully controlled fermentations.
The menu and tasting sequences reveal a cuisine with its own distinct personality. Among the emblematic bites are the perdigacho made with spelt bread —a reinterpretation from Sigüenza—, trout tartare with roe, or the giant rye croquette with Iberian ham and goat's milk.
Then come dishes of greater depth: ramen inspired by black garlic soup from La Mancha with mushrooms, organic lentils with pigeon and cabbage, ravioli of partridge stewed in the Toledo style, suckling pig with roasted garlic cream, honey from La Alcarria and truffle, or crispy fideuá with squid and langoustine. In desserts, honey returns once again alongside chocolate, cream and carob.

Breakfast without staying overnight

One of the novelties marking its thirtieth anniversary is opening the artisanal breakfast to non-resident guests, always by prior reservation. The news is more significant than it may seem. In many hotels breakfast is a mere formality; here it has become an experience. Freshly baked breads, daily pastries and local produce explain why it has been recognised at events such as Madrid Fusión.

Blanca and Samuel Moreno

Hake with cockle pil pil, citrus fruits and fresh herbs

Bread-making

A very homely breakfast of excellent quality

Black garlic soup

Looking at the sky

The anniversary also includes special proposals, among them the “Eclipse & Stars” package for August 2026, making the most of the astronomical quality of Guadalajara’s skies. A commemorative dinner, guided observation and live music connect with another growing trend: slow, nocturnal travel linked to nature.

Much more than a getaway

Molino de Alcuneza shows that the future of quality tourism can lie in small places, managed with judgement, where every decision has meaning. It does not compete through size, but through authenticity. It does not boast of empty modernity, but of coherence.

Thirty years after opening that restored old mill, the hotel still recalls a simple truth: when landscape, cuisine and hospitality speak the same language, the traveller senses it from the first minute. And rarely forgets it.

Molino de Alcuneza Hotel

View of the spa

Stages, Books and Exhibitions to Travel Through Time

Through performing arts, literature and exhibitions, you can travel to other eras, places and discover other worlds.

By: Julián Sacristán - comunicacion@wfm.es

Antonio Campos

Antonio Campos, La caricia de la diferencia, Quisiera cantarte toda una canción and El Imperio Fan Contraataca are examples of theatre, circus, book and exhibition, forming four proposals for travelling through Spain through culture.

Antonio Campos is a creator who, with humour and great preparation, tells us the classics in a very personal way, so personal that he performs all the characters himself.

Antonio, with his own company, is a playwright, producer, cultural manager and member of the Academy of Performing Arts, as well as Artistic Director of the Castilla-La Mancha Performing and Musical Arts Fair. He currently has a repertoire of six works with which he tours Spain like a good Cid, a Ulysses, a Lazarillo de Tormes, a Cervantes with his Exemplary Novels, a Buscón or the most famous go-between, La Celestina. All the works can be enjoyed in different parts of Spain until November 2026. They are directed by Lluis Elias, with many years of experience at Els Joglars.

La caricia de la diferencia, by creator Leire Mesa, premieres an urban contemporary circus show combining fixed trapeze, acrobatic dance, live txalaparta, clowning and object and puppet manipulation. The work arises from the question: Who will care for my child? La caricia de la diferencia begins its tour on 15 May in Bizkaia, and for now its final performance is on 28 September in Huesca. The show is signed by Leire Mesa and director Patricia Pardo, and proposes a narrative arc in which a pregnant woman with clown traits moves through birth, breastfeeding, exhaustion and shared responsibility, leading us, through the musicians, towards the celebration and optimism of care. With a gaze that does not renounce humour, tenderness or wonder.

Quisiera cantarte toda una canción is the second novel by Susana Hornos, the Riojan actress and playwright who presents her new book at the Madrid Book Fair. Recently awarded the second City of Lebrija Novel Prize 2026. The new novel is a fable about old age and second chances. The work has been described as “a kind and very well-structured novel”, highlighting the evolution of its characters and its ability to humanise and dignify truth. Its origin lies in 2013, when the author was living in

Buenos Aires and followed the floods in La Plata, which deeply affected her when she saw elderly residents of a care home on the roof. A few days later those elderly people had to return to their homes, and Susana thought: “this cannot be easy either for them or for their families”.

The phrase the author chooses for the world to know her is spoken by one of the characters: “If they let me shout to the world, now that I know what it is to be alive and to be dead, I would tell all children that, if they are still in time, they should run and have a little drink or a coffee with their parents in the nearest bar while the morning sun comes in, because the simplest things are what we miss most.”

La caricia de la diferencia

El Imperio Fan Contraataca is an exhibition that also includes different interactive areas, allowing visitors to approach the saga first-hand, with themed backdrops for taking photographs, testing their skills as Jedi, young Padawan visitors, or getting close to models of iconic spacecraft.

After invading cities such as London, Los Angeles, Paris and Melbourne with its troops, the exhibition can now be enjoyed in Madrid at Espacio Delicias. Inside, visitors will find life-size recreations of iconic scenes from the films, original costumes from the productions, detailed dioramas, sections dedicated to characters from all generations such as Boba Fett, the Stormtroopers, the beloved Grogu —known to fans as Baby Yoda—, the Mandalorians or Darth Vader, hard-to-find action figures and unique memorabilia pieces for the most devoted Warsies.

Susana Hornos © Alejandra López

Since opening in 2021, Espacio Delicias has become a cultural landmark in Madrid, welcoming more than two million visitors to date.

From Wednesday to Sunday until Sunday 5 August. From 11:00 to 13:00 and from 16:00 to 20:00. An experience for all audiences that may perhaps be extended.

Four interesting proposals for cultural tourists, offering several ways to travel and discover places with a cultural purpose, to immerse oneself in and learn about traditions, art, history, gastronomy and local heritage. This type of traveller seeks personal enrichment through different cultural expressions.

El Imperio Fan contraataca

Manena's Window

Travel Anecdotes

Words and Photos: Manena Munar manena.munar@gmail.com

Those little things..." as Joan Manuel Serrat would sing, are what remain in the memory after a journey —the ones that, when recalled, bring back a smile, a tear, or even bursts of laughter. I would like to take a few of them from the chest of my memories and share them with you"

Malta, a joyful island

As its name suggests, Gozo, in the Maltese archipelago, is an island made for enjoyment. I remember curtains dancing in the wind, the turquoise and transparent sea, delicious skewers of fish, and churches with two clocks designed to deceive death.

We boarded the ferry at Ċirkewwa, on the island of Malta, bound for the harbour of Mġarr, on Gozo; both ports with names that sound almost musical and onomatopoeic.

I closed my eyes to enjoy the breeze and the scent of the sea. When I opened them again, the fierce blue of both sea and sky forced me to squint as I took in, in fragments, the spectacular sight of the harbour crowded with picturesque schooners, bustling people and the bell tower of the Church of Our Lady of Lourdes rising omnipresent above it all.

We were a group of colleagues under the guidance of our guide, who was almost a child herself, charming and tiny, yet followed without question because, despite her sweet appearance, she had character — and woe betide anyone who strayed from the group. During the coach journey to our accommodation we managed to form a fleeting impression of Gozo. Greener than Malta, with vi-

The curtains fluttering in the breeze, a characteristic feature of Gozo's houses

llages sharing the same colour as the earth and doorways covered by curtains that the island's constant wind swayed with grace, turning those curious drapes into a distinctly Maltese hallmark. The owner of our guesthouse turned out to be a cheerful man who never stopped talking while showing us around "Butterfly Farm", a surprising residence full of hidden corners, courtyards, tropical and continental plants and an unusual décor that would have delighted Agatha Christie or Conan Doyle alike. After seeing the place, we decided to draw lots for the rooms; one was larger, another overlooked the garden, another stood apart and contained, above the bed, a sculpture resembling a werewolf's head — and naturally that room fell to me — while another enormous, gloomy space filled with bunk beds was assigned to our young guide. Once everyone had reluctantly accepted their fate, we climbed back into the minibus to attend a barbecue on the Marsalforn quay.

Dining by the sea on the Marsalforn breakwater

The episode of the haunted house faded into the background the moment we saw the table laid beside the water, on the Marsalforn breakwater, with the sea crashing against the rocks and the village lights close enough to illuminate us yet distant enough to preserve the silence. The waiters were ready to begin grilling the skewers and offering us glasses of delicious Maltese wine. The waves breaking on the quay, the warmth of the wine running through our veins and the fresh charred fish made us feel in paradise and helped us laugh away the prospect of returning to Butterfly Farm to sleep, which was, in a way, like stepping back into childhood. Its many peculiar objects encouraged endless guessing games about their origins and purpose. And I must tell you that, close to midnight, I heard a soft knock on the door. "How strange," I thought, getting up cautiously. There stood our dear guide, in her pyjamas, looking frightened and proposing a midnight room exchange because her room was far too large for her alone. Delighted, I agreed to the nocturnal move and left my werewolf behind, still seeming to glance sideways at me. The next morning, questions such as "How did you sleep in the tiger-head room?" and "Did the werewolf attack you?" while another declared "I slept like a saint in that Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs cottage" became the main topic of conversation over a generous breakfast on the terrace before we set off to explore what already promised to be a beautiful destination.

Mġarr Harbour, on the island of Gozo

The capital of Gozo, depending on the language spoken or the historical memories invoked, is officially known as Victoria, though unofficially as Rabat. It is a Mediterranean city, sensual and winding, where every corner, house or café whispers historical events, anecdotes, gossip and even unsolved crimes from the many peoples who passed through the beautiful island and left their clear mark upon it. Whether Phoenicians, whose gift for trade can still be sensed in the island's many markets, Carthaginians, Romans, Byzantines, naturally Arabs, Normans, French and finally the British, until Malta was finally able to become itself in 1964. From each of them there remains either a brick, a statue, a building, a ruin, or the Maltese Cross of the famous Knights of Malta appearing at every turn.

I was struck by the sight of the typical British red telephone boxes and postboxes in every Maltese town and village. My surprise came from being used to seeing them in London, beneath usually grey skies and mild damp weather, whereas posting the postcard from each journey for my grandson into a thoroughly British postbox under an intense Mediterranean blue sky and in the warmth of 40 degrees felt strangely out of place.

One particularly delightful moment was breakfast at Café Jubilee; some ordered freshly baked croissants while others, myself included, chose the delicious little pastry called "Imqaret", filled with dates and scented with aniseed and citrus. All this accompanied by jazz and blues music, newspapers from the same era and a retro décor confirming the chronology of the 1920s and 30s, the golden years of Gozo's capital. A brief aside to note that Maltese and English are the two languages spoken in Malta, and I even noticed the beautiful tiles naming the streets in both languages. After glancing at the straw hats in the market, I paused for a few moments before the monument to Mary Meilak, about whom I later investigated, discovering one of Malta's most renowned poets, born in Gozo and among the first to write in Maltese about the life of her island.

We wandered beneath a generous sun through La Citadel (the Gran Castello), imagining stories of pirates and corsairs while zigzagging among bastions and walls sheltering St Mary's Cathedral, the Archaeological Museum, the Armoury, the Natural History Museum and the Folklore Museum. Looking out at the seductive sea surrounding Gozo, I understood both Ulysses' enchantment with the nymph Calypso and how such a small island could have had so many cosmopolitan admirers.

As for gastronomy, the cheese from farms such as Ta'Riccardo is absolutely delicious, places where sheep are treated almost as members of the family. I found it touching to see the tenderness with which Riccardo cared for the sheep, feeding newborn lambs with a bottle as though tending a treasure. Bread is kneaded daily, and the olive oil is green and full of flavour. One of the curiosities of Gozitan cuisine is the importance of rabbit, prepared in many varied and delicious ways. Although at first I was slightly hesitant, since I am not used to eating that particular little animal, once I tasted it I loved it.
Remembering the Azure Window.

Monument to the Gozo-born poet, Mary Meilak

The care with which Ricardo looks after his sheep

Jonathan waits in the spectacular bay of Hondoq ir-Rummien. On board his boat we discovered the waters of Gozo: at times emerald, at others turquoise, always crystal clear and an authentic pleasure for diving. Every few moments heads emerged from the sea wearing the satisfied expression of people who had just enjoyed a unique time among Gozo's marine flora and fauna. Jonathan drove his motorboat at full speed while we passengers bounced like ping-pong balls against the sides. I clung on with everything I had, convinced that at any moment I would be thrown overboard. Barely able to look properly, I glimpsed the island of Comino as we sped past it, tiny as its name suggests, yet still important enough to form part of the Maltese island triumvirate despite seeming almost lost within the archipelago.

After burning through a considerable dose of adrenaline thanks to Captain Jonathan, the massage at the Hotel St Lawrence Kempinski —an oasis filled with palm trees and birds of paradise— given by a therapist from Sri Lanka felt dreamlike; a true "beginning again". Continuing with echoes of the Iliad, we arrived at Calypso's Cave where, although the nymph entangled Ulysses in her amorous nets, he remained faithful to Penelope, who continued endlessly weaving. From there one enjoys a beautiful panorama over Ramla Bay (Xagħra), the longest beach on Gozo, and can also discover the photogenic and slightly unsettling landscape of the Qbajjar salt pans: quadrangles of water forming a curious chequerboard softened by the clay mounds surrounding them, some with brightly painted doors; the salt huts where fishermen store their equipment.

One of the many "must-sees" in Gozo, in the area of Dwejra, was the Azure Window, a natural arch twenty-eight metres high that seemed placed there precisely so that sunsets might become incomparable. It served as a setting for Game of Thrones and, naturally, we took countless photographs there in every imaginable pose: with the sun, without it, framed by the arch, beside the rock, beside the boat and among those lunar-looking rock formations. Sadly, however, I must tell you that the ancient Azure Window no longer exists. On 8 March 2017, during a storm, the arch collapsed and fell into the sea.
Perhaps that is why Gozo remains in the memory as a chain of sensations: wind in the curtains, warm Imqaret, salt on the skin, turquoise water and the quiet melancholy of places that change while we are not looking.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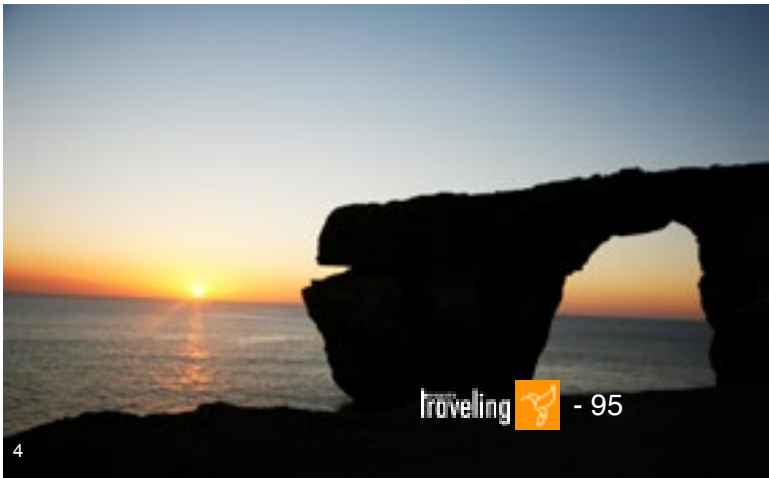

4

1. The pleasure of diving in the waters of Gozo
2. A tiny island called Comino
3. Ramla Bay (Xagħra), the longest beach on Gozo
4. The spectacular, now vanished, Azure Window

Algunas iglesias de Gozo tienen dos relojes, uno con la hora trucada, para engañar a la muerte

Rema que te rema en la experiencia del kayak

Puerto de La Valeta en la isla de Malta, imposible de olvidar

Can… death be deceived?

Another sight that surprised me, just like the British phone boxes and postboxes, was the number of churches on the island and their disproportionate size compared with the rest of the architecture. One beautiful example is the sixteenth-century Ta' Pinu Basilica which, standing alone in the countryside among wild fennel, is dedicated to the Virgin Mary and serves as a guide for many Maltese pilgrims and a healer of sorrows.

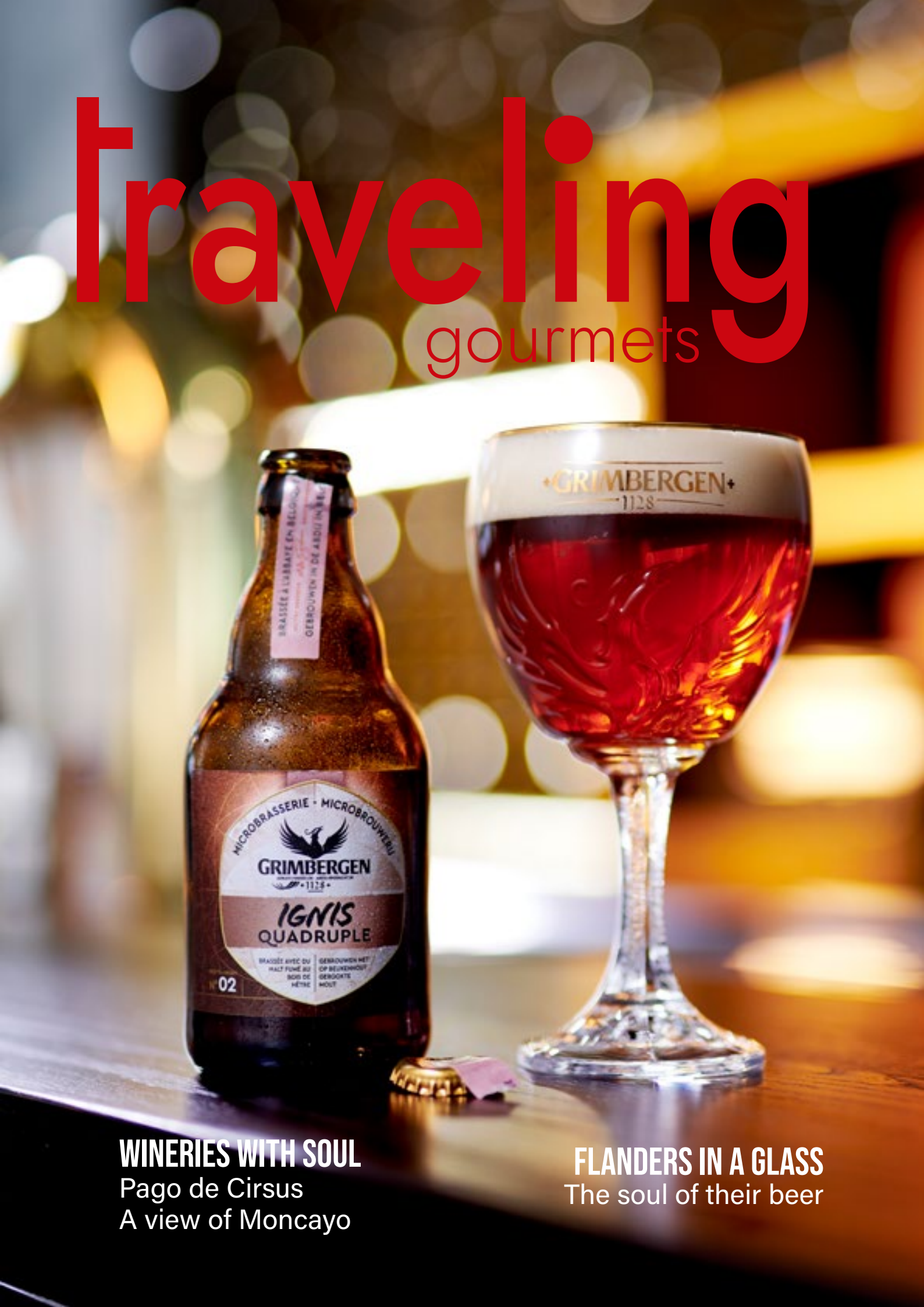
Religion prevails on the island and its inhabitants donate part of their possessions so their churches may be the best cared for and the most beautiful. In fact, one village is distinguished from another by the churches that define them. And I found it astonishing and rather wise that some of them, such as the church in Xagħra, possess two clocks, one showing the real time and the other a false one to deceive death so it will not know when it is time to take someone away. I did not have time to ask the locals whether they had succeeded in fooling it and, if so, how one might adopt such a chronological custom. …Another curious detail of Gozo's landscape is occasionally coming across a stone kangaroo crowning the roof of a house. Maltese emigration to Australia was massive and the kangaroo has become part of the emigrant family, proudly displayed atop the home. Malta is full of such things!

Pulling together at the oar

An anecdote that made me smile —though I suspect my companion, despite saying nothing, was far less amused— was the following. Included in the tour was the experience of kayaking; nowadays it seems one must "experience" as much as possible while travelling. I was paired with a strong-looking man who decided to take command and sit in the front seat of the canoe. I paddled and paddled as hard as I could and felt quite proud of how smoothly we were gliding along, with very little effort, truth be told. I was puzzled by the fact that, at the end, my companion looked exhausted and drenched in sweat while I remained perfectly fresh. With impeccable politeness he pointed out the small detail that he had paddled himself nearly to collapse because my own handling of the paddle produced absolutely no effect whatsoever —quite the opposite, in fact.

The end of the journey gifted us one of the most spectacular photographs one could dream of: the view of the Grand Harbour of Valletta on the island of Malta, where brightly coloured traditional luzzus with the Eye of Osiris painted on their bows mingle with the water taxis —dhajsas—, yachts and cruise ships under the protection of Fort Saint Elmo and the impressive walls surrounding the city. I must say that I have already seen a great deal in life and yet the image of Valletta's Grand Harbour has never faded from my memory.

traveling gourmets



WINERIES WITH SOUL
Pago de Cirsus
A view of Moncayo

FLANDERS IN A GLASS
The soul of their beer

Unusual Europe at the table:
Six unusual dishes that surprise without shocking

Text: Editorial Staff - **Photography:** Archive

Europe boasts great national recipe books, refined cuisines and centuries of culinary tradition. But, far from the most travelled paths of taste, the continent preserves a handful of singular recipes that disconcert the traveller and fascinate the curious. They are not dishes designed to provoke, but born of necessity, popular ingenuity or ancient customs preserved by time. Some seem eccentric, others simply unexpected. All say something about the place they come from.
Here are six unusual dishes from European gastronomy that make an impact through their originality, not through any rejection they may cause. Spain could not be absent from this selection, a country where popular cooking has known how to turn humble products into memorable recipes.

Lampredotto – Florence, Italy

In a city famed for Renaissance art and the elegance of its palaces, one of its best-loved bites comes from humble cooking. Lampredotto, very similar to our tripe, is made with one part of the bovine stomach, slowly cooked in aromatic broth until tender. It is then served, above all, inside a bread roll dipped in its own juices.
Its name refers to the lampreda, a long-bodied fish whose texture lingered in Florentine memory. Today it remains a cult street food in Florence, where traditional stalls keep the recipe alive and where many travellers seek it out as an authentic experience, far from menus designed for tourists.
Varieties: with parsley green sauce, with spicy sauce or simply plain.

Alheira – Northern Portugal

At first sight it looks like just another sausage. However, alheira holds one of the most singular stories in Iberian cooking. It was born between the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, when many converted Jews in Portugal needed to appear to eat pork in order to avoid suspicion. They thus created a “false sausage”, originally made with poultry, bread, garlic and fat.

Over time it evolved and today may include different meats, but it keeps that soft texture and characteristic smoky flavour. It is especially famous in Trás-os-Montes, where it is still made artisanally and forms part of food fairs and traditional markets.

Varieties: game, chicken, pork or traditional artisan versions. This type of sausage or chorizo is served grilled or fried, and may accompany other foods such as rice or vegetables, chips, etc.

Gallinejas and Entresijos – Madrid, Spain

Spain also has dishes capable of surprising visitors. Gallinejas and entresijos are a traditional Madrid speciality born in the old working-class districts of the city. They are made with different parts of suckling lamb, fried until crisp outside and juicy within.

For decades they were inseparable from street fairs, patron saint festivities and neighbourhood taverns, served in paper cones and eaten standing up, with a good wine or a well-chilled beer, in a festive, popular atmosphere. Today they survive as a delicious rarity that connects with old Madrid, with its markets, corralas and street life. Their golden appearance and presentation in portions also make them a highly photogenic dish.

Varieties: mixed, only gallinejas, only entresijos or served with chips.

Hákarl – Iceland

Iceland has turned its extreme conditions into culinary identity. Hákarl is Greenland shark or basking shark cured for months through a traditional process of fermentation and drying. It emerged as a method of preservation and of removing the animal's natural toxins.

Its powerful aroma (it smells of ammonia) has fed legends among travellers, but served in small portions it forms part of Icelandic gastronomic heritage and is often accompanied by local schnapps, Brennivín. More than an everyday dish, today it is a cultural experience linked to the country's memory and its harsh historical conditions for survival. This dish is an example of Viking adaptation to the island's extreme climate.

Varieties: soft cuts from the inside and drier pieces from the outside.

Casu Marzu – Sardinia, Italy

Few cheeses have generated as much fame as casu marzu from Sardinia. It is an extreme evolution of Sardinian pecorino, taken to a very advanced maturation until it becomes an intense and penetrating cream. Beyond the controversy surrounding its production, it is a rural symbol of identity and cultural resistance.

It is a Sardinian sheep's cheese characterised by containing live larvae of the cheese fly, which has made it known as the most dangerous cheese in the world. It is known as "rotten cheese", in which the extreme fermentation caused by the larvae gives it that soft structure and an intense, spicy flavour. For centuries it was considered a festive and prestigious product in certain pastoral areas of the island. Its international notoriety has led many travellers to arrive in Sardinia asking for it, now turned into a Mediterranean gastronomic legend, although its sale is banned in the European Union and also in Italy.

Varieties: they depend on the degree of curing and on the area where it is made.

Paparajotes or 'trolleo' dessert – Murcia, Spain

Its rarity lies in being a true culinary trompe-l'oeil. Introduced by the Arabs into this Spanish region, it was made in farming homes. Market gardeners prepared it daily and ate it after each meal, accompanied by café de puchero or café de olla (barley water), all cooked over wood. It is nothing more than lemon tree leaves coated in a batter made basically with flour, milk and egg, fried in olive oil and dusted with icing sugar and cinnamon. The trick: the lemon leaf is not eaten, and the surprise comes when someone teases you and does not warn you. The little leaf in question is impossible and inedible; it only serves to give aroma and flavour to the batter.

Today it is a typical sweet of Murcia's spring festivities, as well as of the September Fair, when the huertano peñas set up the traditional barracas.

Varieties: paparajotes with chocolate coating, paparajote ice cream or paparajote cake.

Some dishes were not born to please everyone, but to survive time. In them, necessity, popular ingenuity and local pride are mixed. European gastronomy is also written in strange, humble and surprising recipes, able to explain a territory better than many monuments.

The unusual also tells the story of Europe

These dishes remind us that gastronomy was not always born to seduce the visitor. Many recipes emerged to make use of scarce resources, preserve food or keep customs alive in difficult times. What now seems extravagant was once pure everyday logic.

They also show that European culinary identity is not limited to luxury or haute cuisine. In markets, fairs, street stalls and family tables, recipes survive that speak of hunger overcome, domestic ingenuity and local pride. There lies their true value.

Each strange bite opens a door to local history. Europe is not discovered only in museums, cathedrals or landscapes. Also at its most unexpected tables, where the unusual often hides memorable stories. And often, after the initial surprise, something far more interesting appears: the deep flavour of a living tradition.

Pago de Cirsus

The Navarran château where the wine overlooks Mount Moncayo

Text: Editorial staff - **Photography:** archive

In Ablitas, in southern Navarre, Pago de Cirsus brings together vineyard, winery, hotel and restaurant in an estate open to the cierzo wind and the horizon of Moncayo. More than a wine stop, it is a complete escape: single-estate wine, Ribera landscape and calm hospitality among vines.

An estate with its own character

There are wineries one visits for their wines and others that are remembered also for where they stand. Pago de Cirsus belongs to that second category. It is located in Ablitas, in southern Navarre, within Finca Bolandin, an estate where vineyard, winery, hotel and restaurant coexist. Everything is gathered within the same landscape: a luminous, open plain, with the dry air of the cierzo, the distant presence of Moncayo and that sobriety so typical of the lands of the Ebro valley.

The first image already says a great deal. In the middle of the vineyards stands a stone building with a tower, inspired by a certain medieval Navarrese air. It is not an ordinary industrial winery, nor a rural hotel placed beside some vines. Pago de Cirsus has built its identity around a more complete idea: that of a wine estate where the traveller can taste, eat, sleep and better understand the origin of what is in the glass.

Finca Bolandin is located in the municipality of Ablitas, in the Ribera Baja of Navarre. According to the winery itself, the estate covers 200 hectares and lies at around 395 metres above sea level. There the four buildings already mentioned are integrated, allowing a very complete wine tourism experience to develop, without separating wine from its territory.

That bond with the land is one of the features that best explains the character of Pago de Cirsus. The winery works with grapes from the estate vineyard surrounding its facilities. The soil, the microclimate, the varieties grown, the winemaking and the ageing all form part of the same story. At a time when many wineries speak of origin, here origin is visible even before entering: it is in the rows of vines, in the orientation of the estate, in the wind and in the breadth of the landscape.

The winery's castle

Barrel cellar

The winery and the single-estate wine

The recent history of Pago de Cirsus began in 1997, with the initial drive of Iñaki Núñez. In 2014, the winery was acquired by the Gómez Mangione family, formed by Alejandro Gómez Sigala and Letizia Mangione, a stage that opened a new phase in the project. Since then, the house has reinforced a clear line: producing wines linked to the estate and consolidating wine tourism as an essential part of its personality.

The status of vino de pago adds an important nuance. It is not only an attractive category, but a way of underlining the singularity of a specific estate. Finca Bolandin obtained in 2014 the classification of Denominación de Origen Vino de Pago, a figure reserved for defined sites with their own characteristics. In the case of Pago de Cirsus, that idea fits naturally: the wine is not presented as a creation detached from the landscape, but as a direct consequence of it.

The winery has known how to unite a recognisable image with work centred on the vineyard. Here, the grape does not arrive from far away nor disappear into a generic story. It is born on the same estate, surrounds the building and accompanies the visitor from the first moment. That proximity gives meaning to the experience. Before entering the barrel room, one has already seen the origin of the wines. Before tasting them, one has understood something of their character.

Nor is there any need to turn the visit into a technical lesson. What is interesting about Pago de Cirsus is that it allows one to approach wine in a clear and friendly way. The traveller can tour the winery, learn about the wine-making process and finish with a tasting that helps give names to what was before only landscape: fruit, structure, freshness, oak, time. The glass then ceases to be an isolated object and becomes the natural extension of the place.

Sleeping, eating and looking at the vineyard

But Pago de Cirsus does not end with the winery. Its great strength as a destination is the whole. The boutique hotel, surrounded by vineyards and olive trees, occupies a stone tower that recalls the world of French châteaux and the medieval past of Navarre.

Vineyards on the estate itself

It has 12 rooms, each named after wines made at the winery. It is a simple but effective detail:the guest does not stay in a building unrelated to wine, but inside its universe. The stay has that appeal many contemporary travellers seek: silence, landscape and a certain sense of retreat, yet without renouncing comfort. From the rooms or common areas, the vineyard does not appear as a backdrop, but as the true centre of the place. The visit may begin with a tasting, continue at the table and end at dusk, when the light softens the stone of the tower and Moncayo remains as a line in the background.

The gastronomy reinforces that idea of a complete experience. The restaurant allows the wine not to remain isolated in the tasting, but to converse with the cuisine, the produce and the unhurried rhythm of a getaway. In a winery such as this, the table is no minor addition: it helps one understand the wines in another way, with time and context. The house itself proposes experiences combining accommodation, visit, tasting and restaurant, a formula well suited to those seeking more than a brief stop.

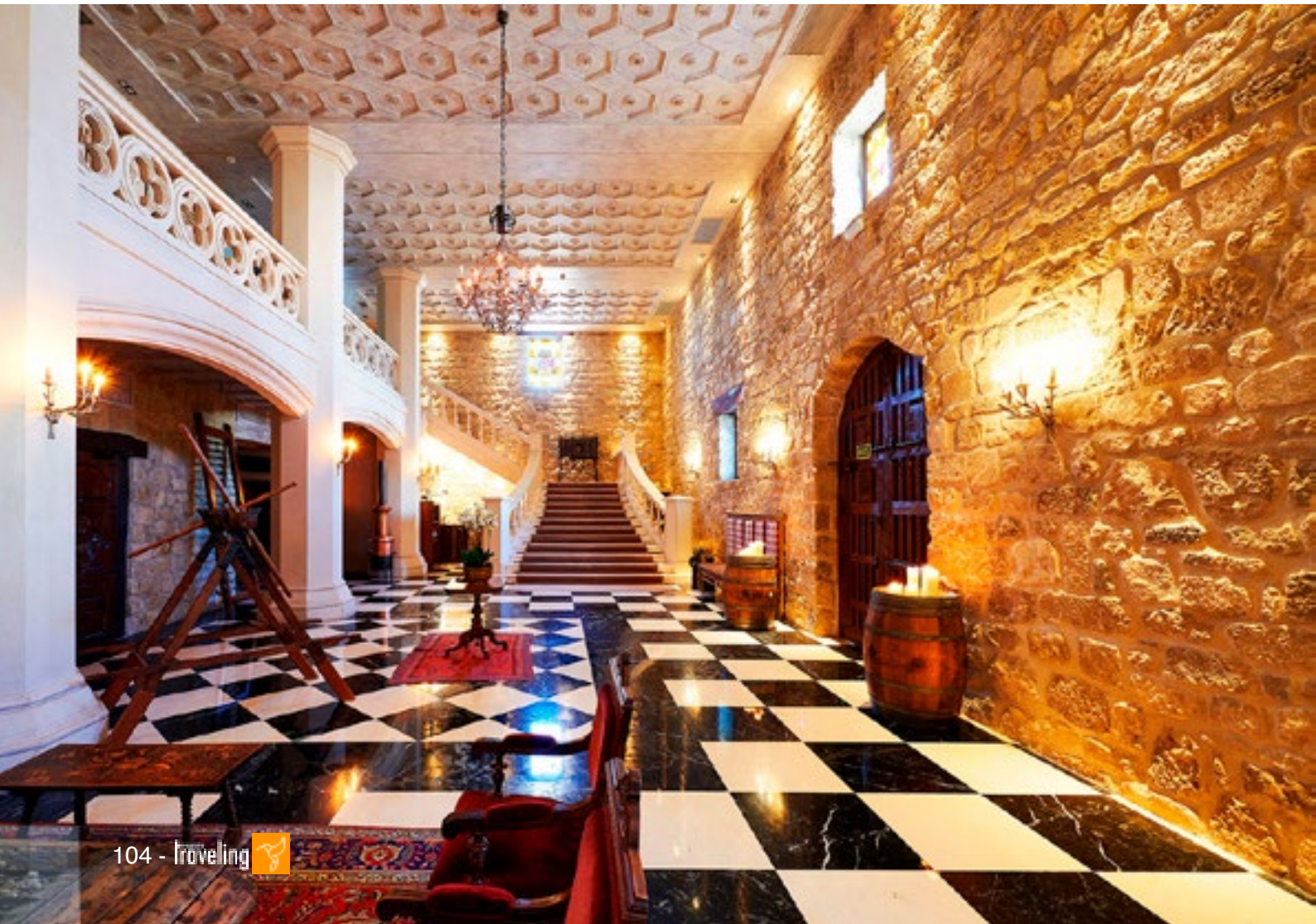
The location also works in its favour. Ablitas lies in a southern Navarre that is often less looked at than the green valleys of the north, but has a very marked personality. From Pago de Cirsus, one can build an escape towards Tudela, the Ribera market gardens, the surrounding villages and the Bardenas Reales, one of the most singular landscapes of the peninsula. That proximity allows the journey to combine wine, nature, gastronomy, heritage and a slower rhythm of travel.

Perhaps that is why Pago de Cirsus fits so well in a section called Wineries with Soul. Because its appeal is not based on a single element. It has recognisable architecture, its own vineyard, hotel, restaurant, landscape and a recent history of family continuity. But, above all, it has an increasingly rare virtue: it allows the visitor to understand wine without haste. Here the glass is not explained only through tasting notes. It is explained by looking around.

At Pago de Cirsus, wine is born from a specific estate and returns to it in every experience. It is drunk, yes, but also walked, contemplated and awaited. And in that dialogue between land, winery and hospitality appears the true reason for the journey.

Pago de Cirsus

Hotel lobby



Family Selection

Syrah and Cabernet Sauvignon. Aged for 16 months in new French oak barrels. Hand-harvested grapes. A balanced, powerful red wine with round, silky tannins. Notable aromatic richness. Plums and hints of spices such as cinnamon and cloves. Good structure, bright balance, smooth on the palate with a long, firm finish. D.O.P. Bolandin.

Selected Vintage

Cabernet Sauvignon, Syrah and Merlot. Aged for 12 months in French oak barrels. Cherry-red colour with violet hues at the rim. Aromas of ripe fruit, plum, chocolate, creamy oak and walnut. Velvety and silky on the palate. Long, medium-bodied, balanced and well structured. D.O.P. Bolandin.

Cuvée Special

Cabernet Sauvignon and Syrah. Aged for 14 months in new French oak barrels. Dark cherry colour with garnet edges. Aromas of ripe fruit, oak and balsamic notes. Structured, elegant and well balanced. A clear expression of the vineyard's character. One of the winery's most awarded wines. D.O.P. Bolandin.

Rosé Gran Cuvée Special

Garnacha, Syrah and Tempranillo. Rosé fermented for 3 months in French oak barrels. Soft pink, salmon-toned colour. Fresh and fruity rosé, with hints of red fruit and white flowers. Smooth and light on the palate, with good body in harmony with its acidity. D.O. Navarra.

Barrel-fermented Chardonnay

Single varietal. 100% Chardonnay. Fermented for 12 months in new French oak barrels. Bright yellow colour. Aromas of ripe fruit and sweet spices. Long on the palate, creamy, well structured and balanced. D.O.P. Bolandin.

Chardonnay

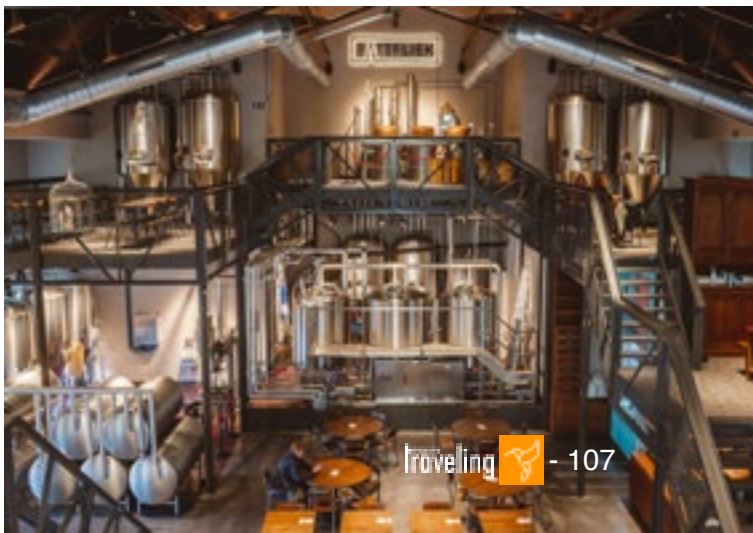
Single varietal. 100% Chardonnay. Young and fruity, with a bright straw-yellow colour. Aromas of white and tropical fruit such as mango and pineapple, harmoniously integrated with candied fruit. Compact and fresh on the palate. Persistent finish. Easy to drink. D.O. Navarra.

Flanders in a glass

the soul of their beer

Text: Rosario Alonso
Photography: Rosario Alonso y Oficina de turismo de Flandes

1.- Café de Gouden Vis, Mechelen
2.- Cycling routes between breweries © David Samyn
3.- Harvesting hops
4.- Westmalle Brewery adding hops
© www.milo-profi.be
5.- Batteliek Brewery



To speak of Belgium is almost to speak of beer. In few European countries has one drink achieved such cultural depth, such technical diversity and such an everyday presence. Belgian brewing tradition is not limited to consumption: it forms part of the landscape, social life, popular festivities and a heritage passed down for centuries in abbeys, farms, urban taverns and small family breweries. It is no coincidence that Belgian beer culture was recognised by UNESCO as Intangible Cultural Heritage.

Within that universe, Flanders stands out, the Dutch-speaking north of the country, where beer maintains an intimate relationship with the land and with history. Here internationally known names coexist with an admirable network of artisanal producers who continue defending old methods, slow fermentations and recipes with strong personality. If Brussels contributed urban refinement and Wallonia some famous abbeys, Flanders preserves a rural and patient vein that explains much of Belgian brewing prestige. Each beer in its glass, endless menus, colours, aromas, bubbles and pairings… everything becomes a ritual.

A land where every village had its beer

For centuries, many Flemish localities had their own brewing tradition. Beer was nourishment, a safe drink compared with doubtful water and an economic engine. The raw materials arrived from nearby: barley, wheat, oats and hops, while yeasts —before being scientifically understood— acted almost like a mysterious force.

The Boon Brewery's barrel room © Rosario Alonso - Bottom photo: toasting with beer on one of the terraces at Great Market Square

That historical continuity explains today's variety. In Flanders one can find finely made blond ales, dark spiced beers, abbey beers, farmhouse saison and, above all, one of the world's most singular styles: spontaneous fermentation beers, known as lambic.

The miracle of lambic

Few brews inspire as much admiration among beer lovers and master brewers as lambic. Born in the Senne Valley and Pajottenland, west of Brussels and already in Flemish territory, this beer does not use cultivated yeasts added by the producer. The hot wort cools in wide open vats called coolships, where it comes into contact with yeasts and microorganisms present in the air. Then begins a long ageing process in wooden barrels.

The result does not seek sweetness or immediate ease: dry, acidic, complex, vinous notes appear, with hints of green apple, leather, hay or rustic cider. It is a demanding beer, for an adult palate, and deeply linked to the territory. From lambic come other gems. **Gueuze** blends young and old lambics to provoke a second fermentation in bottle, with fine bubbles and great ageing capacity. **Kriek** incorporates cherries, while other versions use raspberry, peach or grape. In times of industrial uniformity, lambic remains an act of cultural resistance.

Boon Brewery: guardians of Lembeek

Few houses represent that tradition better than the historic brewery of Lembeek, a locality whose name many consider linked to the very term lambic. Today Boon is an international reference for its defence of the classic method and for the constant quality of its blends. Founded by Frank Boon in 1978, it is known for its commitment to tradition and its vast maturation cellar, with capacity for more than 2 million litres of beer in oak barrels.

Its merit has been twofold: preserving barrels, long times and artisanal knowledge, while also modernising facilities without betraying the style. Its gueuzes show admirable balance between acidity, freshness and depth. It also produces dry, honest krieks, far removed from the excessively sweetened versions that for years confused the wider public.

Visiting Lembeek helps one understand that these beers were not born as a fashionable product, but as the rural expression of a specific comarca. Its best-known products are Oude Geueze Boon, Oude Kriek, with cherries, as well as versions such as Faro and other more special releases. They are a world reference, having won 6 consecutive gold medals at the World Beer Cup between 2008 and 2018.

Kestemont Oude Geuze tradicional

Kestemont: new energy for an old tradition In Dilbeek,

also within Pajottenland, Kestemont represents the contemporary impulse of Flemish craft beer. The brewery occupies the former premises of the Goossens family, where beer was produced from the eighteenth century until 1968. The Kestemont family bought the site in 2016 and in 2019 began ageing lambic in barrels. Since 2021 they have produced their own lambic in a new brewhouse. This is a generation that looks to the past without mechanically copying it. It recovers the value of natural fermentations, local raw materials and patience, while working with today's technical standards.

Their beers usually stand out for the use of organic ingredients, many of which, such as wheat and fruit, are grown by the family itself on its farm. Oude Geuze has a curious label, a rabbit, referring to a historical anecdote. It is said that Charles V came to that same place wishing to eat game. As no large game was available, he was served small game instead, rabbit, and according to the story, although he ate it, it did not seem to satisfy him greatly.

Abdij van Park: beer and monastic life

The monastic tradition is inseparable from Belgian beer. At the Norbertine Abbey of Park, near Leuven, brewing is understood as historical continuity rather than simple business.


OUD DUBBEL
CHRISTIAEN
GUEUZE
BELGE
ROCK
ATLAS
ORVAL
ROCK & ROLL
EXPORT
ARTOIS
SPARTA
PILS
OUD
CROYBERG
AS EXPORT
PILS
Jasco
Overlord
Christmas Speciale
FOX
PILS
BIEREN
CROMBE
ZOTTEGEM
PACON
STELLA
ARTOIS
PALM
ROSSI
BAB
Spéciale
PALM
LANDELIJKE
WONING
Golden
TIGER
BELLEVUE


BREWERY

1.- Belgian Beer Battle Flanders
© FARMBOY JANOPDEKAMP
2.- Abdij Van Park - Leuven
3.- Kestemont Brewery © Rosario Alonso
4.- Sausages with mashed potatoes from Goesting DOK Brewery © kris vlegels

Founded in the twelfth century, this community has recently recovered its brewing link through projects connecting heritage, agriculture and hospitality.
The beers associated with Abdij van Park usually show classic elegance: malty balance, moderate bitterness and a gastronomic profile. They are bottles that pair well with cheeses, poultry or traditional Flemish cooking. In addition, the monumental setting turns the visit into a complete cultural experience, where architecture, silence and beer share the leading role.

Much more than a drink

Flemish beer cannot be understood only through technique. It lives in wooden bars, in specific glasses for each style and brand, in slow conversations and in the habit of drinking with attention. Here a beer is not simply “taken”: it is served, observed, smelled and shared.

In fast-moving times, Flanders keeps ancient recipes alive. Some of its best beers need months or years before reaching the glass. Lambic, with its wild fermentation and untamed complexity, is perhaps the best metaphor for this land: discreet, hardworking and capable of turning patience into excellence.

VISITFLANDERS

Alcalá Casino venue

Alcalá Casino

Text: Rosario Alonso - **Photography:** Rosario Alonso and Alcalá Casino

In the heart of Plaza de Cervantes, inside the historic Círculo de Contribuyentes, Casino de Alcalá opens a new gastronomic chapter. Its renewed menu respects traditional cooking, but presents it with greater technique, better produce and a dining room designed for eating well, without hurry and with pleasure.

There are restaurants that win you over long before you reach the table. Casino de Alcalá is one of them. It stands in Plaza de Cervantes, in the very heart of Alcalá de Henares, in a Neo-Mudéjar building that forms a natural part of the city's historic landscape. Its presence is not decorative: it accompanies the experience. To enter here is to step into a place with life, history and that atmosphere of spaces that have seen generations pass through.

The restaurant has known how to use that heritage without turning it into an old postcard. The dining room is warm, bright and welcoming. The Salón Noble preserves the height and character of the building; the private room offers a more intimate atmosphere; and the Patio, glass-covered and with two olive trees, brings a calm light, almost like a Mediterranean greenhouse. Added to this are two outdoor terraces, one at street level and another beside the steps, perfectly suited to prolonging lunch or dinner when the weather allows.

The kitchen is now living a particularly interesting moment with the arrival of Carlos Ordiales and Alejandro Alberquilla. Their work can be felt in a menu that is more refined, more current, yet without losing its connection with recognisable flavours. There is no complicated or distant cooking here. There is technique, seasonal produce and dishes that are understood from the first bite.

Among the new proposals, the Josper-grilled leek with hollandaise sauce and Iberian pork jowl stands out. It is a simple-looking dish, but well built: the smoky touch of the Josper, the unctuousness of the jowl and a sauce that rounds off the whole without hiding the vegetable flavour. The crispy torreznos with patatas revolconas also work very well, a direct, Castilian recipe, the kind that needs no explanation when it arrives hot at the table. The cheese board, with quince paste and regañás, follows the same line: clear produce, good accompaniments and a desire to share.

The menu also keeps some of the restaurant's emblematic dishes, now revised with greater intention. The truffled semolina risotto, the steak tartare and the garden tomato with sopraffino speak of Spanish cooking brought up to date without losing its character. They are dishes with depth, but also with ease, designed to please and to remain in the memory through flavour, not artifice.

Among the desserts, the cheesecake with a crunchy butter and Lotus biscuit base plays a winning hand. It is indulgent, recognisable and has that final touch many diners look for when they do not want to end the meal with something cold or distant, but with a real dessert.
The dining room also adds value. Sergio Adán, sommelier and restaurant manager, has designed a wine list with more than one hundred references, with prominence given to Spanish appellations, attention to sherries and a few touches from the Old and New World. The by-the-glass service, very broad thanks to the Coravin system, allows guests to choose better and accompany each dish with greater freedom.
Casino de Alcalá convinces because it forces nothing. It has the building, the dining room and a kitchen that looks at produce with respect. But, above all, it has something that matters greatly in gastronomy: dishes one wants to eat, well-chosen wines and the simple feeling of having eaten somewhere worth returning to.

Leek cooked in the Josper oven with hollandaise sauce and Iberian pork jowl

Steak tartare with a classic dressing and egg yolk emulsion

Cheesecake with a crunchy base made from butter and Lotus biscuits

Soy Kitchen:

China, Madrid and Julio Zhang's freestyle wrestling

Text: Jose A.Muñoz - **Photography:** Soy Kitchen

On Zurbano Street, Soy Kitchen has achieved something quite rare: it has taken Chinese cuisine to a new level of creativity without losing any of its character, vitality or authenticity.

Soy Kitchen It is not a conventional Chinese restaurant, nor does it need to be. In Madrid, where for years Chinese cuisine was too closely associated with a predictable repertoire, Julio Zhang has built a restaurant with its own personality, hard to pigeonhole and easy to remember. His house, located at Calle Zurbano, 59, in Chamberí, holds 1 Sol from Guía Repsol and is recommended by the Michelin Guide, recognition that confirms the place it occupies within contemporary Asian cooking in the capital.

The chef, born in Beijing and known in Spain as Julio Zhang, does not cook from pure nostalgia or from literal imitation. His career helps explain this: trained in China, he passed through Pamplona before settling in Madrid, where he opened the current Soy Kitchen on Zurbano in 2017, in a larger premises with an open

Chef Julio Zhang

kitchen. That mixture of travel, craft and Spanish produce explains much of his cooking. Here Chinese tradition is present, but not enclosed in a display case. It appears in the wok, in the stocks, in the heat, in the acidity, in gelatinous textures, in dim sum and in that way of cooking which never entirely separates savoury, sweet, fatty and fresh. But Madrid also appears, along with the nearby market and Spanish produce that Zhang uses with freedom. The house itself speaks of contemporary Asian cuisine with local, seasonal ingredients.

The menu changes and moves, yet it keeps a clear line: dishes with intensity, technique and a certain boldness. Among the starters are proposals such as stewed and glazed suckling pig's ears, Hong Kong-style wok mussels with foiesabi, wok-cooked corvina with yuzukosho sauce, or hot-and-sour soup of oxtail and boletus. These are not names placed there merely to impress; behind them is a cuisine of contrasts, with long stocks, sharp sauces and bites that tend to leave a mark.

The dim sum section is one of the restaurant's strongest arguments. Black ha kao with a veil of Joselito pork jowl, pork and prawn xiaolong bao with prawn oil, cheek xiomae with truffle sauce, or oxtail gyoza with kimchi emulsion and coconut milk show well that way of crossing paths without losing the sense of the dish. There is Chinese technique, certainly, but also recognisable nods for the Madrid diner.

Among the main courses, Soy Kitchen allows itself to go further: chilli crab, kung pao turbot, low-temperature wild duck, wok beef with seasonal mushrooms or Chinese aubergine in Grandma Zhang's style.

Sliced scallops with seasonal vegetables

These are dishes designed to be eaten with appetite, not for cold contemplation. They have power, sauce, aroma and that sense of living cooking that asks the diner to let go.

There are also tasting menus, such as Long with 9 courses and Hu with 8 courses, conceived as journeys through the chef's cooking, although the à la carte menu allows for a more direct and shared visit. That is perhaps one of the restaurant's virtues: it can work as a complete gastronomic experience, but also as a table for discovering specific dishes without too much ceremony.

Soy Kitchen appeals because it does not try to soften everything. It has character, heat when needed, well-understood fat, deep flavours and a cuisine that looks towards China while keeping its feet firmly in Madrid. Julio Zhang has made his restaurant a personal, recognisable place, the kind that cannot be explained by a label alone. Authorial Chinese cooking, yes, but above all cooking with its own voice.

Sirloin tartare

Soy Kitchen (Madrid)

Arzábal Retiro

Spanish cuisine in the heart of Madrid

Text: Rosario Alonso - **Photography:** Arzábal

Arzábal Retiro It is the origin of the group founded by Iván Morales and Álvaro Castellanos. It opened in 2009 beside Retiro Park and, since then, has established itself as a well-known address for contemporary Spanish cooking in Madrid. Its formula is clear: produce, recognisable dishes, a good bar, a carefully chosen wine cellar and a comfortable atmosphere, designed both for an informal meal and for a longer table.

The location carries great weight in its character. The restaurant is in the Retiro area, opposite one of the city's great parks, in a setting of constant movement, close to museums, hotels, offices and residential streets. It is an easy place to meet, to eat after a walk or to prolong lunch without hurry. That mixture of local and visiting guests has allowed it to work as a neighbourhood restaurant, but also as a gastronomic stop for those seeking well-executed Madrid cooking.

The famous Arzábal Bikini

The premises preserve the spirit of a tavern, although taken into a more contemporary format. The bar plays a leading role and allows for a more informal meal, based on wines, raciones and dishes to share. The dining room offers a more polished image, with warm decoration, noble materials, good lighting and a comfortable layout. It does not seek attention through excess, but rather creates a pleasant, urban and recognisable atmosphere.

The new menu keeps that line. Arzábal does not break with its classics, but accompanies them with new proposals and greater attention to seasonal produce. Among the most representative dishes are still the Iberian ham croquettes with Latxa sheep's milk, Russian salad with tuna belly, free-range eggs with truffle or patatas a la importancia with small langoustines. These are familiar recipes, well identified by regular customers, which explain the type of cooking of the house: Spanish flavours, precise technique and presentations without artifice.

The bar gathers bites designed for sharing, such as homemade duck foie gras, pâté en croûte with pickles, cockles with fino reduction, garlic and chilli, garlic prawns, lamb sweetbreads with parmentier or crispy pig's ear with brava sauce. There are also cured meats, preserves, cheeses, Cantabrian anchovies, oysters and other pantry products.

The vegetable section gains presence with seasonal grilled vegetables, confit artichokes, leeks with romesco, mangetout with guanciale and egg yolk, or pink tomato with tuna belly. Among the main courses, the kitchen keeps a recognisable base: stewed lentils with guinea fowl, tripe, creamy rice with oxtail and morels in Port, hake with clams, skate with black butter, grilled octopus with red mojo, almadraba bluefin tuna tartare and meats such as suckling lamb chops, steak tartare or matured Galician blonde beef.

The wine cellar is another important part of Arzábal Retiro. From its earliest years, wine has accompanied the identity of the group, with a broad list designed to work both by the glass and in more complete meals.

Arzábal Retiro remains a contemporary tavern with clear roots: a good location, warm interior design, recognisable Spanish cooking and a menu that updates itself without moving away from what has always worked.

Arzábal Retiro

Grilled octopus with red mojo sauce

Matured Galician blonde beef

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