



SEGOVIA

AND ITS PARADOR



NOBLE LANDS OF WARRIORS AND SHEPHERDS

Only a god could have made a town such as this one, perhaps in the likeness of some part of the celestial kingdom. Only the Devil could mar such divine perfection with sin. But it was mere man who created the miracle before you. Segovia has known joy and suffering, and in the end, has contentedly resigned itself.

It was indeed a god who harnessed the rivers to sculpt these mountains, and lay these rocks in their place. An old and respected historian wrote, *"This stronghold, made impregnable by nature, was chosen by Hercules to found a city... He called it Segovia, possibly from the ancient word Briga, meaning a group of people."*

The Roman invaders met with a surprised and fierce response from those first inhabitants. Here the foreign "iron warriors" encountered brave men and their fast horses, horses which the Romans would take with them to far-off wars.

Such a convenient spot was this that they settled here, building a major road along which to move the legions. They also built temples and other buildings, maybe even the wall and aqueduct. In this, legend seeks to embellish history by claiming that it was the Devil himself who built the bridge.

The Demon is said to have appeared before a young girl who was tired of carrying her water jar and offered her a deal. She would forfeit her pure soul if he managed to bring the water to her home before cockcrow. They both set to work, the Devil building this enormous monument and the girl, repenting of her sin, praying and making promises in the hope of escaping her damnation. When the cock crowed at dawn, the Devil was just one stone short of finishing the job. He had failed to win the girl's soul, but the town got the aqueduct, in the words of Gómez de la Serna, a divine *"scaffolding to line the vault of heaven."*

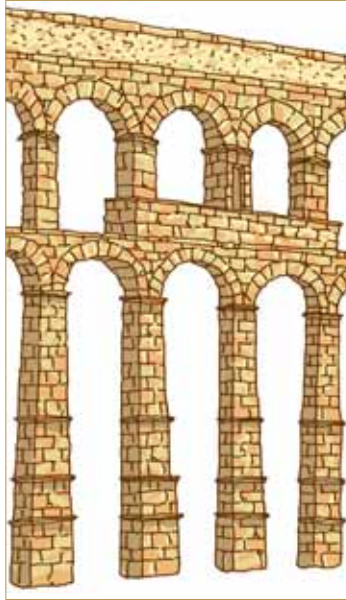
And that, more or less, is how Segovia came to be dominated by the granite wonder that never ceases to amaze the modern visitor.

The town soon received its first Catholic churches and its bishops, at that time Visigoths, put their seal to the agreements reached at the important councils in Toledo. The first of the town's saints were born: Saint Frutos, Saint Valentín, and Saint Engracia. They performed numerous miracles, but were unable to exorcise their new Saracen neighbors. The Moors brought many good things to the area, as elsewhere, introducing new art forms and trade, improving customs and manners and trying to live in peace. But they have left little behind. Segovia would in the end live for the business of religion and war.

The repopulation of the province began in the late 10th century. It had previously been empty, abandoned so that it might serve as a frontier. It was recovered by brave and warlike Castilian counts, greatly troubled by Almanzor's armies and the sieges of al-Mamún, King of Toledo. Parts of the town were badly damaged, but life and trade were already prosperous and intense. As the Arab geographer al-Idrisi could see: *"Segovia is not a town, but a group of small villages whose buildings lie next to one other. There are many men here who could well serve as escorts: they all belong to the King of Toledo's cavalry. They own farms and horses, and in battle are famous for their endurance and strength in*

mountainous terrain.”

The area as far as Toledo was finally won back by the Christian forces of Raymond of Burgundy, son-in-law of Alfonso VI. New inhabitants came from Navarre, Aragon, Rioja, and even Galicia, and the power of the Church became significant. Through their victories over the infidel, the knights reaped for themselves money, land, and titles. Meanwhile, a class of wealthy craftsmen and wool traders developed under the power and privilege of the Mesta, an association of sheep and cattle farmers. Segovia was an obligatory crossroads for drovers' routes and the main center of the wool trade. The good times had arrived. In the early 13th century, woolen cloth from Segovia was famous throughout Spain. So great was its fame, power, and wealth, that it aroused the concern and censure of King Fernando, the Holy.



San Juan de los Caballeros and San Martín; San Millán, with its echoes of the cathedral of Jaca; San Lorenzo; San Esteban; La Trinidad and the legendary Templar church of Vera Cruz, ever protective.

During the Crusades, a tired Knight Templar arrived at the door of the church. But no one would open the door to him and he died in the open air of the freezing mountain night. The corpse was found the following morning. Crows had ripped his neck open and pecked out his eyes. The Abbot was contrite and angry at the sight, and cursed those black, macabre birds forever: *“From this day onwards, never more shall you perch upon the roof of this holy temple.”* And as the visitor can see, so it has been.

By this time the town was already the Romanesque jewel which would be admired long into the future. There were several buildings with Mozarabic and unusual oriental influences, such as the temples of

STONES OF LIGHT

From the Parador, the visitor has a privileged view of the medieval town, which has remained largely unchanged over the course of time. These streets and peoples knew their greatest glory from the 14th century onward, when the Alcázar (fortress) abandoned its severe Cistercian airs and became a palace for the Trastámara monarchs.

The character of the Segovian people began to take its future form. These warriors by trade became shepherds for profit, at times peaceful, but never tame. Their noble actions also made them generous and welcoming to strangers, and they were inclined to be as liberal as they were unyielding when their values were threatened. It is as if the spirit of Juan Bravo, the comunero rebel who rose up against Carlos I, carried on, determining the nature of these people forever more.

Life at the time took place amongst a happy mixing of Jews, Moors, and Christians. Segovia was the queen of Castile's Mudejar culture. The Alcázar was decorated with Moorish designs in pure gold and became a Muslim palace. Noblemen danced and paraded in knightly tournaments filled with nostalgia.



The fourth Trastámara king to be known as Enrique – *“who loved all sad songs”* – was a melancholic patron of culture, art, and peaceful coexistence. He donated his pleasure palace to the Franciscan monastery of San Antonio el Real, later to be given to the cloistered nuns of the order of Saint Clare by the Catholic Monarchs. Enrique also founded the Hieronymite monastery of El Parral, one of the most unusual examples of religious architecture in Segovia. The convent of San Francisco was built, eventually to be used as a military academy, although its fine Gothic cloister remains.

The Jews brought considerable wealth and culture to the town. They eventually had five synagogues and several kosher butchers. Here the group was not so brutally repressed as in other areas, although the Catholic Monarchs finally forced them to live apart. The Jewish quarter was located in the southern part of the town between the main synagogue, today the church of Corpus Christi, and the canonry. They promoted culture to such an extent that it was in Segovia that the first book was printed in Spain. It was the records of a diocesan synod printed by Juan Parix, a typographer brought from Rome by the Arias Dávilas, a family of converts. They also gladly

spent their money on work on the cathedral, later destroyed, and were the protectors of Juan Guas, a unique architect, renowned master of the Spanish/Flemish art of Toledo, and for bringing the Gothic style to Segovian Mudejar.

Extensive livestock and grazing became an

essential industry, trade, and business for the area. The 16th century was the “*Century of Wool*”, Segovian wool. Some 13,000 lengths were produced here, equal to the production of either Mantua or Florence, considered the finest in Europe. There came to be more than 600 mills, providing employment for nine out of every ten of the area’s workers. There were manufacturers employing over a hundred workers, up to eighty master hat-makers and some hundred and forty tanneries.

Segovia came to be the most important center for the age-old art of the mint when Felipe II ordered the Royal Mint to be built in an old mill on the banks of the Eresma. It continued to operate until the mid-19th century. Segovia became the third largest and famous town in Castile. This is where Juan de la Cruz, the mystic who later became a saint, would come to live and die, praying in ecstatic communion with the Saint of Avila. His remains are venerated at the church which bears his name at the Carmelite Convent, located alongside the Church of La Fuencisla, named for the miracle-performing virgin and patron saint of Segovia, built in the style of Juan de Herrera.

These streets are the setting for scenes from Don Quixote. Good old Lope de Vega, a somewhat naughty young man, ended up in the jail here, a building which today houses the town archives. Quevedo’s creation for El Buscón, Don Pablos, a model rogue and miser, was born here, along with the Dómine Cabra’s school for fasting, according to a stone on the Socorro Arch.

The passing of time, and jealousy, led to a decline. The wool trade was discredited and proscribed by a royal decree stating that “...no manufacturer, dealer, or trader of cloth, or their children may become an alderman of Segovia...”. At the beginning of the 18th century an attempt was made to correct this foolish mistake with another royal order: “...not only the profession of tanner, but also the other arts and trades, such as blacksmith, tailor, cobbler ... are honest and honorable. Work in these trades does not debase ...or disqualify anyone from holding public office...”

Princess Isabel was crowned in one of the most beautiful Gothic churches in the town, San Miguel. She was to become the famous Catholic queen, and responsible for many reforms and changes in the

Spanish country and its peoples, including Segovia. The common brick of the Moors, although it was Mudejar, was succeeded by the Gothic granite of Juan Guas emblazoned with coats of arms.

Segovia found both glory and suffering in its valiant role as heart of the comunero revolt. The town organized itself into a government of the people. Peasant, manufacturing, and tradesmen’s militias – with noble patronage for their tax rebellion – cornered the royal troops, who had taken refuge in the Alcázar.

The adventure was to end in disaster. Juan Bravo met his heroic end, and the cathedral was left in ruins. The conquering Carlos ordered the construction of the beautiful late Gothic church we see today. It was designed and built by Gil of Hontañón, also the architect of Salamanca’s new cathedral.

Only then could the main square be laid out, although it was forever left unfinished by the intruding apse of the cathedral, an appropriate invader. Even more than other more dazzling examples, this medium-sized square has become the true heart of restless, cultural, and lively leisure for locals and visitors alike. A town hall was finally built here; previously the council had been forced to meet in a series of rented properties.

The lights of Segovia would gradually fade, tinged only with the Versailles-like artifice of the spectacular royal summer residence at La Granja, so remote and distinct from local tastes and activity.

So low had the town sunk that a common local saying had it that “being from Segovia between 1900 and 1930 often also meant having to leave the town.” But it seems that things were not quite so bad as that: the generation of ’98 left its mark here in harmony with the efforts of the Sociedad Económica de Amigos del País, a cultural missionary organization from the time of Carlos III, with Unamuno, Azorín, and Baroja. Antonio Machado left his poetry here, as well as his home, French lessons, and prayers of nostalgic love. These are but a few names, and there are more to come. As one of Panero’s verses says so well:

“...The moon over the dusty plain

GENEROUS KITCHENS AND SOUP POTS

“At each sip, Cabra said: ‘There is nothing like a good soup, whatever anyone may say, everything else is vice and gluttony.’ He then lifted his bowl, saying, ‘This is full of health, with a touch of inventiveness.’”

Quevedo. El Buscón.

Bhe writer summed it up well during his time here some four centuries ago. But he left something out of the picture, perhaps more because of lack of means than ignorance.

Even the shortest visit will let one know, or at least suspect, that Segovia offers a range of culinary offerings for all tastes –cheap,

expensive or fancy, refined, and even fastidious when necessary. Frivolous dishes sit alongside home-cooking and hearty recipes of all shapes and sizes. There are light vegetable-based dishes with surprising flavors, and tender meats and cheeses and sweet desserts, washed down with excellent wines.

You will find endless examples anywhere you look: in Azoguejo in the shade of the aqueduct, along the main square and in the nooks and crannies of the surrounding streets and squares, or in the Arrabales area. The Parador itself has an excellent reputation for serving a complete and representative range of local dishes.

There are **Castilian Soups**, with simple recipes and magnificent results. Vegetables from Fuentepelayo, Sanchonuño, and Mozoncillo are mixed and sautéed or cooked in a hundred other ways.

There are wild mushrooms from the woods and pine forests of the mountains. Trout come from the rivers, when they are no more than streams leading to the sea.

There is a wide range of **Beans**, such as those from Balseca and La Granja. They are served with a variety of accompaniments: game, beef, and pork from La Matilla, Cantimpalos, Gomezserracin, or **Blood Sausage** from Bernardos.

There are stews such as **Empedrao**, made with cod, rice and potatoes, following the traditional recipe of the farmers of Cantalejo.

Caldereta Soup was inherited from the shepherds of what was the heart of the Mesta. **Partridge** is served on its own, marinated or stewed.

But the king of the table is **Suckling Pig**, with its crispy skin and monk-like smile, prepared beneath the pulpit of Cándido's restaurant or in Cuéllar and San Pedro de Gallos. **Lamb** is becoming increasingly



popular, reclaiming its rightful place, and is served as a specialty in Torrecaballeros, Pedraza, Riaza, Sepúlveda, Cuéllar, Turégano, Ayllón, and La Rosa.

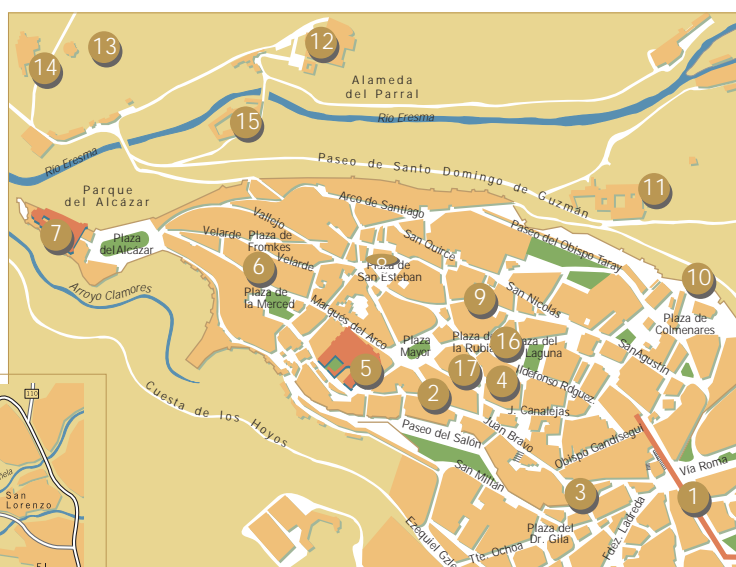
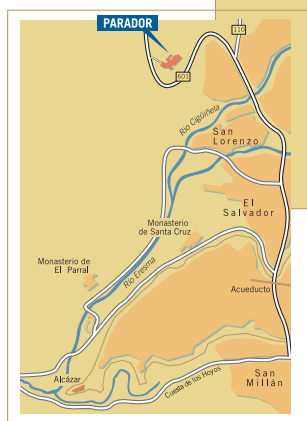
As there is no shortage of ewes, there is no lack of **Cheeses** from Cuéllar, Espirido, and Navas de San Antonio. Neighboring areas provide excellent **Wines**, especially from the banks of the Duero, from Rueda, Valtiendas, and Peñafiel.

Many of the desserts are traditional recipes created by the cloistered nuns of the area, including **Soplillos**, **Florones**, **Ojuelas**, **Tortas** and **Rosquillas**. **Ponche**

Segoviano cake is the perfect way to round off the meal, even for the most demanding palate.

ROMANESQUE ROUTE

1. **Aqueduct.**
2. **Former synagogue.** Corpus Christi Convent.
3. **House of the Picos.**
4. **San Martín Church.**
5. **Cathedral.**
6. **San Andrés Church.**
7. **Alcázar.**
8. **San Esteban Church.**
9. **Trinidad Church.**
10. **San Juan de los Caballeros Church.**
11. **Santa Cruz Convent.**
12. **El Parral Monastery.**
13. **Vera Cruz Chapel.**
14. **Carmen Convent.**
15. **Mint.**
16. **Arias Dávila Tower.**
17. **San Miguel Church.**
18. **House of the Alhóndiga.**
19. **San Marcos Church.**



THROUGH GORGES AND VALLEYS

E line of jagged white peaks; cascading water-filled gorges and gentle valleys; shrines, monasteries, palaces, and castles; bells that speak with the memories of wars and prayers; the customs of peoples lost and found; local traditions, aristocracy, gastronomy, art, geography, handicrafts: the visitor will find all this and more within easy reach of the Parador.

Royal Summer Palace

La Granja de San Ildefonso. Palace and retreat dedicated to San Ildefonso by Enrique IV. Home to Hieronymite monks during the reign of the Catholic Monarchs. Turned into a palace in the French rococo style for Felipe V. A symphony of water in a garden of ancient trees. Royal

Glass Factory and Tapestry Museum. The Bourbon king and his wife Isabel Farnese were laid to rest in the collegiate church. **Riofrío Palace:** Refuge and retreat of Isabel Farnese when she was widowed. Refined building used as a hunting lodge and frequently visited by the Spanish monarchs. Sumptuous furnishings and valuable paintings.

Romanesque

Sotosalbos: Excellently preserved 11th-century church. **Santa María de la Sierra:** 13th-century Cistercian ruins. Las Vegas Chapel. **Pedraza:** A monument to medieval prosperity. Palace of the Inquisition and the Castle of the Velascos. **Castilnovo:** Mudejar castle built in the 14th century. **Turégano:** 15th-century church and fortress with a double row of battlements, built by Juan Guas and Gil de Hontañón. Stopping place for Fernando the Catholic, and jail to Antonio Pérez, feared and powerful secretary to Felipe II.

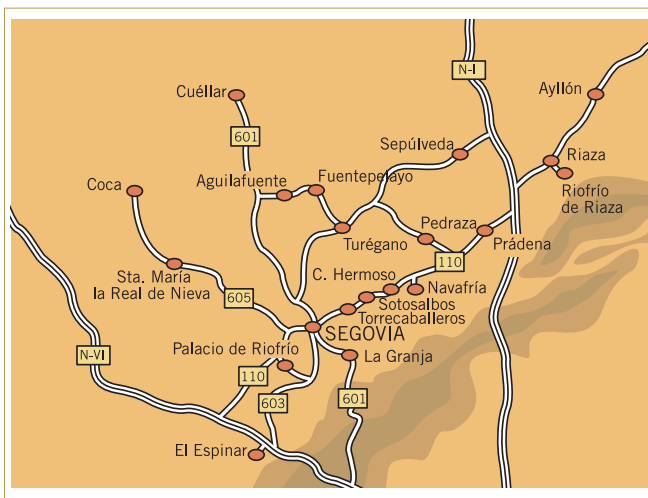
Gothic

El Espinar: Church of San Eulipio with an important 16th-century altarpiece. Church of San Sebastián. **Martín Muñoz de las Posadas:** Main square with Renaissance town hall. Palace of Cardinal Diego de Espinosa, attributed to Juan Bautista of Toledo, one of the architects who worked on the Escorial Palace. Late Gothic parish church with Renaissance façade. Home to El Greco's "Calvary Canvas." **Santa María la Real de Nieva:** 14th-century Gothic church dedicated to Our Lady of the Soterraña by Queen Catherine of Lancaster. **Paradinas:** Gothic temple and remains of Roman mosaics.

Mudejar

Carbonero el Mayor. Church of San Juan Bautista, incorporates several architectural styles. Shrine of the Virgen del Bustar. **Fuentepeelayo:** Excellent coffered ceiling in the church of Santa María la Mayor, with traces of the Gothic style. **Aguilafuente:** Church of San Juan and Roman ruins. **Cuéllar:** Town of medieval

power and charm. Enrique IV gave this elegant castle and town to his favorite, the Duke of Alburquerque. Later the prison of Espronceda. A great display of the Mudejar style: the churches of San Andrés, San Esteban, San Martín, and El Salvador. **Coca:** Town of Celt-Iberian origins protected by two large stone verracos, (sculptures), on the banks of the Eresma and Voltoya rivers. Gothic-Mudejar style fortress, the seat of the Fonseca family, a model of the military architecture of the time. Gothic church of Santa María.



Medieval Valleys and Rivers

Routes along which art, handicrafts, nature, and gastronomy happily mix. The **Duración Valleys** wend their lazy way towards Sepúlveda with pleasant stops at **Torrecaballeros**, **Sotosalbos**, **Collado Hermoso**, and **Pedraza**. **Sepúlveda:** The province's artistic treasure dating back to the 11th and 12th centuries. Remnants of ancient Moorish and Jewish ways of life. The churches of La Peña, El Salvador, Santiago, and San Justo. Main square, castle and excellent woolen handicrafts. **Maderuelo:** Medieval silhouette overlooking the Linares reservoir. Churches of Santa María and San Miguel.

The Hidden North

Navafría: Mountain pine forests around the source of the river Cega. An ingenious water-driven hammer is still used to craft copper cauldrons. Romanesque churches along the road to **Prádena**, where the **Enebralejos Caves** are well worth a visit. **Riaza:** Large, oval, picturesque main square surrounded by colonnades topped with balconies, something for both the sun and the winter. Gothic church with a Renaissance tower. Hontanares Chapel, begun in the 16th century. The superb Tejera Negra beech forests await in Ríofrío de Riaza. **Ayllón:** Town full of noble mansions from the 15th-17th centuries. Contreras Palace is a national monument and an excellent example of the civic architecture of the time. The elegant main square and the town hall were built in the 16th century.



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