

Escape the Madrid Heat in the Mountains of Cercedilla

As someone who considers themselves a 50/50 city girl and mountain lover, I was slightly curious when moving to Madrid about where the hiking enthusiast side of me would find a place in such a massive city. I find that when most people think of Spain, their minds tend to veer more towards flamenco, sangria, paella, medieval villages, and enchanting cities.

To my surprise, the community of Madrid is also home to a vast range of world-class hiking trails. I was excited the other week to be escaping the city for a day in the mountains of Cercedilla, but was pleasantly surprised when I saw the immense beauty that La Sierra de Guadarrama beholds.

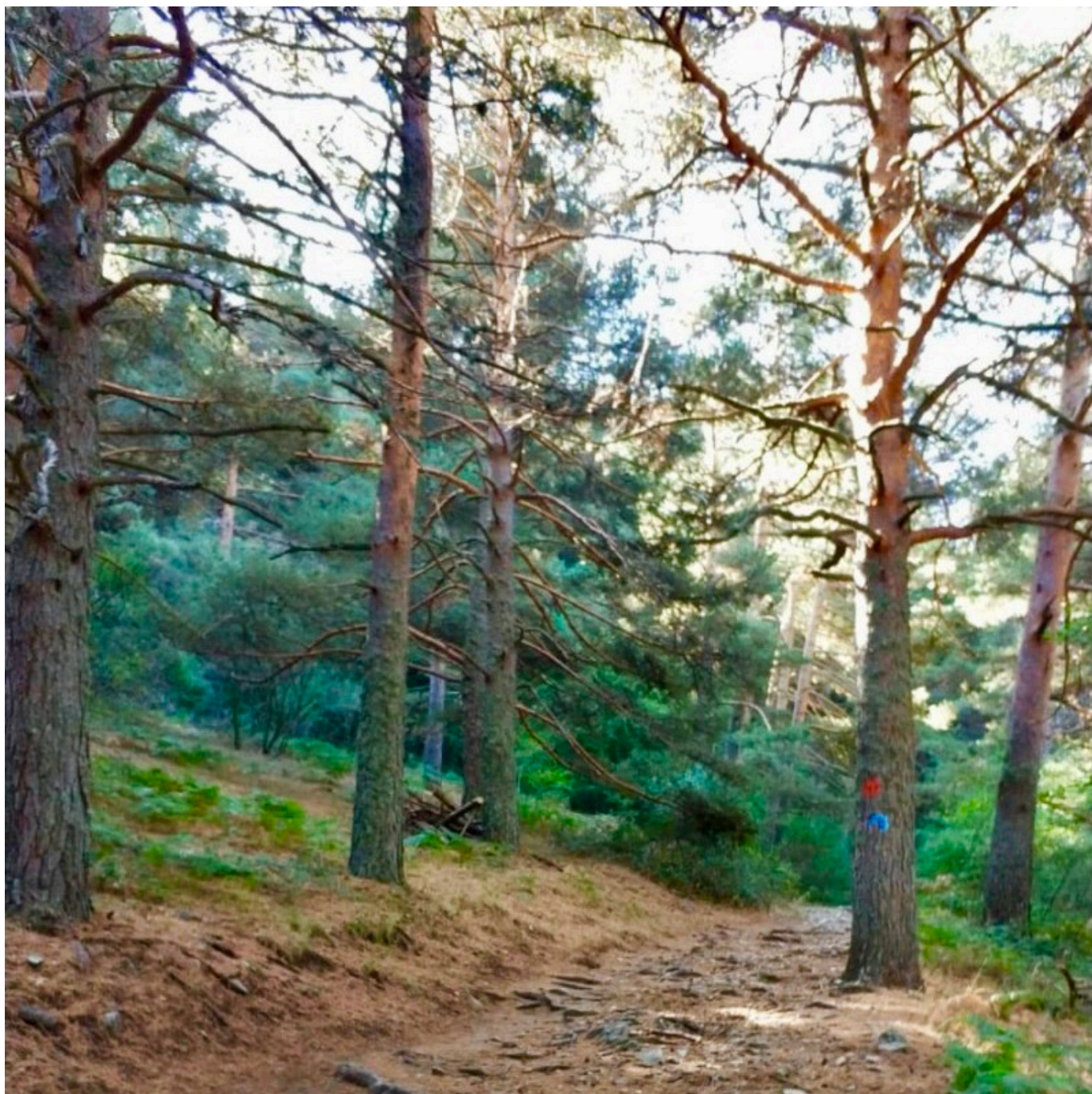


Getting to Cercedilla

Luckily, Cercedilla is only about a one-hour drive away from

Madrid and can be easily reached by [train](#), which will drop you off right in the center of the quaint mountain town. I took a car to Cercedilla and after driving through this charming destination for a bit, found my way to the environmental office.

Stepping out of the car and getting a whiff of the crisp mountain air and pine trees was the perfect welcome into the gorgeous La Sierra de Guadarrama that surrounds Madrid. If you go up to the window at the environmental office, you will meet a guide who will provide you with plenty of information and maps on the hikes that the area boasts.



Choosing Your Hike

The guide at the environmental office explained the map that contains many different color-coded trails, informing us of how long each would take, what the difficulty level was, etc. We decided to do the orange trail and then break off to go to Puerto de la Fuenfria, one of the area's peaks.

Once you leave the environmental office, if you simply drive about five minutes up the road, you will find a lovely restaurant with outdoor seating – perfect for a delicious and

well-deserved bite after your hike! It was from this restaurant that we parked and found the trailhead for the orange trail.

The first part of this hike is definitely the most challenging, which the guide prepared us for at the environmental office. It is most definitely on the steeper side but travels through the thick forest, so although you will feel the burn, you will remain in the cool shade of the trees. The views are absolutely stunning all the way up, overlooking the towering mountain peaks. The trails are also marked very well, with the color of each trail on the trees helping you to stay on track.

After about an hour and a half of hiking through lush pines and enjoying picturesque moments, we made it to our first lookout point, Mirador Vicente Alexandre. This is a fabulous spot to admire the panoramic views, while having a snack or taking a water break. We found many boulders with Spanish quotes and poems carved on them, which added to the incredible atmosphere.



Puerto de la Fuenfria

After spending about 20 minutes at Mirador Vicente Alexandre, we continued on our hike. The rest of the trail that we took to reach the Puerto de la Fuenfria was a gorgeous dirt road, rather than a typical forest trail that was the first half of the hike. "Dirt road" may not sound like something "gorgeous," but there were barely any people there and horses roaming free with breathtaking views constantly in the background.

After hiking this road and enjoying the mountain views for about another hour and a half, we arrived at the peak. The views were wonderful, just as they were through the entire hike and there is an old fountain that we sat by to eat lunch.

There is an old Roman-built cobblestone road that you will hike down when you leave, which was a different but just as beautiful way than hiking up.

We arrived back at the restaurant, where our car was parked. Here, you can enjoy a nice meal to refuel after the 10-mile hike before driving back to the city.

Explore Madrid's Many Mountains!

After experiencing my first Madrid hike, I can confidently say that living in this vibrant city does not come at the expense of a world-class hike whenever your heart desires. La Sierra de Guadarrama is just one of many fantastic mountain destinations for you to enjoy an escape from the city. Explore the many other natural wonders that surround Madrid, such as Cotos Forest, Abedular Canencia, La Pedriza, and so much more.

By Haley Grant

Also read:

- [How to get to Cercedilla](#)
 - [Madrid's 10 most beautiful surrounding towns \(and how to get there\)](#)
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Madrid's Top Shopping Malls

Believe it or not, Madrid has some pretty fantastic shopping malls, with giant cinemas, mini-golf courses and even indoor ski slopes. And Ikea. If it's raining out (or simply too hot to stay outside), don't hesitate to check out one of our favourite shopping centres!

1. [Centro Comercial Príncipe Pío](#)



Principe Pio is one of my favorite malls in Madrid because

it's located right in the city center. I love it because you can spend the whole day here, shopping, eating and ending the day with a good movie. Among the many shops you can find here are Zara, Massimo Dutti, Mango, Oysho, Pull & Bear, Zara Home, etc. Restaurants: Vips, Burger King, MacDonald's, Wok Wok, etc

Opening hours

- *Monday to Saturday: From 10 to 22:00*
- *Sunday: 11 to 22:00*

How to get there

- *Metro lines: 6, 10 or "ramal" (from Opera), Línea 6 – Circular*
- *Cercanías lines: C1, C7, C10*
- *Bus lines: 25, 39, 41, 46, 75, 138, Circular 1, Circular*

2. [La Gavia](#)



La Gavia is one of the greatest shopping centres in Spain and even in Europe, where you can find everything you want under the sun. Some of the most popular stores are IKEA, Primark, Zara, Massimo Dutti, FNAC, etc.

How to get there?

- ***Bus lines:*** 142 and 145
- ***Metro line:*** Las suertes

OPENING HOURS

- **SHOPS:** *Monday to Sunday from 10:00 to 22:00 hours * On Sundays and holidays from February to November the center opens at 11:00
- **RESTAURANTS:** Sunday through Thursday from 10:00 to 01:00 hours. Fridays, Saturdays and on public holidays from 10:00 to 03:00
- **IKEA:** Monday to Sunday from 10:00 to 22:00 hours. The

restaurant is open from 09:30 to 21:30

3. [La Vaguada](#)



La Vaguada is a large shopping mall located in Barrio del Pilar. It's big enough to offer several shops and restaurants, but small enough so you won't get lost and you can spend a quiet afternoon.

How to get there?

- **Bus lines:** 42 , 49 , 67,83 , 124, 126 , 127, 128 , 132, 133 , 134, 135, 137 , 147 , N18 , N19
- **Metro lines:** 9 (Barrio del Pilar Herrera Oria) & 7 (Peñagrande)

OPENING HOURS

- **Shopping area:** Monday through Saturday: 10:00 h to 22:00h; Sundays and holidays: 11:00 h to 21:00 h
- **Dining and entertainment area:** Monday through Thursday: 10:00 h to 01:00 h; Friday and Saturday: 10:00 to 02:00 h Sunday: 10:00 h to 01:00 h

4. Madrid Xanadú



Xanadu is one of the best malls I have ever visited. They have everything you want, **even a ski slope**. In addition to clothing stores and restaurants, here you'll find tons of fun activities like bowling, mini golf, a ski slope, and much more!

OPENING HOURS

- Shops: Monday through Sunday from 10 to 22h
- *Entertainment and dining area*: From Sunday to Thursday from 10 to 01h Fridays and Saturdays from 12 to 03h

How to get there?

- Bus: From Príncipe Pío: 528, 534, 539, 541, 545, 546, 547 y 548

5. Centro Comercial Plaza Norte 2



Another huge mall located outside the center, Plaza Norte has tons of shops, restaurants, cinemas, you name it.

Opening hours

- Shopping area: Monday through Sunday from 10 to 22h
- Entertainment and dining area: Sunday through Thursday from 10 to 01:30h; Fridays and Saturdays from 12 to 03h

How to get there

- Buses: 171 and 156 (from Plaza de Castilla)
- Nearest metro: Reyes Católicos (Line 10)

6. Centro Comercial Plenilúnia



Plenilúnio is also situated in the outskirts, it has more than 180 shops, in addition to numerous restaurants, as many cinemas.

Opening hours

- Shops: Monday to Saturday, from 10 to 22h; on Sundays and public holidays from 12 to 21h
- Restaurants: Sunday to Thursday from 10 to 01 h; on Fridays and Saturdays from 12 to 03h

How to get there

- Bus: From Avenida de America: 221, 222, 223, 224, 224A, 226, 227, 228, 229, 281, 282, 283 and 284 from Ciudad Lineal: EMT no. 77

7. Centro Comercial Parquesur



In addition to the usual, here you'll find an **Apple store** outside the city centre.

OPENING HOURS

- Monday to sunday From 10 to 22:00h
- Restaurants: Friday and Saturday From 10 to 2. Sunday from 10 to 1.

How to get there?

- By bus: 432,481,483,485,488,497
- Nearest metro: Line 12. El Carrascal

8. Islazul

OPENING HOURS

- Commercial area: Monday through Sunday from 10 to 22h

- Entertainment and dining area: Sunday to Thursday from 10 to 01h; Fridays and Saturdays from 12 to 03h

How to get there:

- By Bus: 35 and 118. 5 minutes from the shopping center: 108, 155, 480, 484 and 485
- Nearest metro: Line 11: La peseta, San Francisco and Carabanchel Alto Stations.

Pictures: [Hola](#), [Un Buen día](#), [El país](#), flickr, [AbsoluteMadrid](#), [Dolce City](#), [Urbanity](#)

Catedral de Justo, a self-built cathedral in Mejorada del Campo, Madrid

Conceived and brought to life by a present-day Don Quijote and situated in La Mancha, stands a cathedral like no other. Over half a century ago, former monk and visionary, Justo Gallego Martínez, also called Don Justo, made it his life-long quest to build a cathedral in his hometown of Mejorada del Campo, just 20km from Madrid. Today, at nearly 90 years old, he is still pursuing his dream.

I'd been meaning to visit the **Catedral del Justo** for a long time, although it wasn't until last weekend that I finally made it out there with my husband, James. It's a [great day-trip destination from Madrid](#) if you have a car, as you can combine it with a visit to [Alcalá de Henares](#) afterwards.

To be honest, visiting this cathedral is a visceral experience, making it difficult to describe the feeling of

seeing it first-hand. As I approached it, I was first impressed by how big it is. With outer dimensions of 20×50 square meters, it takes up a whole block and has a somewhat whimsical appearance.



As I entered, I noticed a huge dome hovering over me, 40 meters high and 12 meters in diameter. The columns, walls, floors and stairwells are made out of materials that were either found, recycled or donated from local tile and brick factories. Even though parts of the building reminded me of an old scrapyard, it did resemble a cathedral—just from another planet!

The next thing that caught my eye was Don Justo himself, sitting contentedly on a chair, reading a book as if everything surrounding him was completely normal. His little dog was running around and an old TV was playing the same

trance-like song, over and over again.



When I got home I started reading up on the history of the cathedral. It turns out that Don Justo never got a legal building permit, nor is his cathedral recognized by the Catholic Church. But for me, there was no question I was entering a spiritual place.





What strikes me the most is the story behind his decision to dedicate his life to building this cathedral by himself. Born in 1925, Don Justo had a religious upbringing and aspired to be a monk. However, his dream was crushed when he was diagnosed with tuberculosis; he promised himself that if he ever recovered, he would build a cathedral from scratch and make a shrine to "Our Lady of the Pillar". In 1961, he started building on an olive grove that belonged to his family in his hometown of Mejorada del Campo, and he hasn't stopped since.





He never studied architecture nor formalized any sort of building plan; instead he envisioned it in his mind and drew inspiration primarily from the Vatican, St. Peter's Basilica and other churches around Spain. On certain occasions, he received help from professional architects and volunteers, but overall, this cathedral is the realization of one individual's dream. He has financed his work through renting inherited land and donations.





Although it will take at least another 15-20 years to complete the cathedral, Don Justo expects to be there every day,

despite his nearly 90 years. Walking through the cathedral's crypt, courtyard, mini cloisters and chapels; gazing up at the dome and examining the different recycled materials used to make the columns, staircases, and floors—it feels slightly Gaudí-esque. In fact, the town of Mejorada del Campo, which notoriously has not fully embraced Don Justo's cathedral, eventually changed the name of the street on which it lies to "Calle Antonio Gaudí."





Not surprisingly, I've read that many people have called Don Justo crazy. Watching this present-day Don Quijote sitting on his chair, reading quietly in the cathedral he has been building with his own hands for more than half a century... while it all feels like a dream, the cathedral is real, and so is Don Justo. I highly recommend paying them a visit and enjoying the experience of witnessing such a unique vision come to life.

How to get there:

Catedral de Justo is located in **Mejorada del Campo**, a small town just 20km from Madrid. To get there, there are two **public buses** from the center: *Avenida de América* (line 282) and *Conde Casal* (line 341). However, going by car is a better option, so you can continue your day-trip to [Alcalá de Henares](#),

Cervantes' hometown, which is about a half hour away or less.

Address: *Calle de Antonio Gaudí*

Bus Line 341 from Conde Casal ([link](#))

Bus Line 282 from Avenida de América ([link](#))

Also check out our post on 10 best day-trips from Madrid!

Let's hit the slopes! Ski and snowboard in Madrid

Yep, that's right. Just when you thought Madrid couldn't get any better, that it was a city purely of terrazas, tapas, cañas and sunshine, winter rolls around and you discover it has yet more to offer. What's not to love about a place where you can soak up the sun by the pool in the summer, then ski the hell out of some mountains in the winter? After an unseasonably warm start to the season, it looks like we're finally in for some snow, so get your gear on and let's go!

Where?

There are three ski areas near the capital:

[Puerto de Navacerrada](#)



Image from [Puerto de Navacerrada's Facebook](#)

Puerto de Navacerrada is the closest ski area to Madrid, around 65km away, but it's also the smallest. You can download the piste map [here](#).

[Valdesquí](#)



Image from [Valdesquí's Facebook](#)

Valdesquí is around 75km from Madrid, in the next valley over from Puerto de Navacerrada. Although it's a little further away, it's worth the extra mileage as it's a lot bigger than its neighbour (see the piste map [here](#)). However, its proximity to the capital means it can get very busy.

[La Pinilla](#)



Image from [La Pinilla's Facebook](#)

La Pinilla is located just over the border in Castilla y León and is the furthest ski area from the capital, around 120km away. It also covers a fairly large area (piste map [here](#)) but there are usually fewer people, due to its more remote location. Most of the people I know who ski or snowboard in Madrid say this is the best area to go to.

How do I get there?

I'm not going to lie, the easiest way to get to all three areas is by car, particularly if you're taking ski or snowboard equipment with you. If you haven't got a car, you could rent one, persuade a nice friend with a car to take you or use a service like [BlaBlaCar](#). Or steal one if you have to. Seriously though, it is possible to get there on public

transport but it takes a while and the buses and trains aren't at the most convenient times, especially at weekends. You can get the Cercanías Line C8b to Cercedilla then jump on line C9, getting off at the Puerto de Navacerrada stop or the Cotos stop for Valdesquí, but you still have to take a taxi or a shuttle bus to get to the actual ski areas. Bus 691 from Moncloa is also an option but takes about 90 minutes and only goes once an hour at weekends. La Pinilla is even harder to get to on public transport, with just a few Alsa buses going to Riaza, a nearby village. However, there is a company which runs a shuttle bus at weekends from Atocha and Plaza de Castilla. More info [here](#).

When can I go?

All the ski areas are now open and will be every day until March or whenever the snow disappears, maybe April if we're lucky. However, they're sometimes forced to close due to strong winds or other adverse weather conditions, so make sure you check the website or ring beforehand. Whether you're going by car or by public transport, and I can't stress this enough, get there AS EARLY AS YOU CAN. Although the ski areas don't open until 9am, I wouldn't recommend leaving Madrid any later than 7am. Once the car parks are full, they stop letting people in and you'll be going home disappointed. Some of my friends like to head up even earlier and enjoy a leisurely breakfast there, thereby avoiding queues and stress.

What facilities do the ski areas have?

All the ski areas have all the normal facilities you'd expect: ski and snowboard rental, restaurants, bars, hotels, etc. You

might want to consider renting equipment in Madrid before you go, as the official rental places in the ski areas can have pretty long queues and some of the other non-official places, although quicker, often don't have such good equipment. Another option would be to go up the day before, sort out equipment rental and ski passes in the afternoon and stay the night in a hotel, meaning you're all ready to catch that first chairlift in the morning!

How much does it cost?

The price of ski passes, or *forfaits*, varies depending on the ski area and how many days you want to go for, but the usual cost is around 30-40 euros per day. Food and drink are typically expensive at the ski areas, so take your own if you want to save money.

Other options

[Madrid SnowZone at Xanadú](#)



Image from [Madrid SnowZone's Facebook](#)

Of course, you don't have to limit yourself to skiing in the winter. At Madrid SnowZone in the Xanadú shopping centre you can ski and snowboard all year round if you want. It's not quite the same as being in the great outdoors surrounded by snow-capped mountains, but it's great for learning to ski or just practising your technique. You can get there on buses 528, 534 and 539 from Príncipe Pío. Check out their website for offers, classes and more.

[Club Amistad](#)

Madrid's oldest and largest ski club organises buses to the ski areas, classes and equipment rental, amongst other things. They also organise trips to ski areas in other parts of Spain and abroad. Check out their website for details.

Further afield

While the ski areas in Madrid aren't bad for a day trip, they can get extremely busy and the snow isn't always the best. There are ski areas all over Spain, so if you have a weekend or a few days to spare, I'd recommend going to one of the following:

[Sierra Nevada](#) (Andalucía)



Image from [Sierra Nevada's Facebook](#)

The big daddy of southern Spain, Sierra Nevada is a massive ski area just outside Granada (see piste map [here](#)). It often has sunny weather and is very popular with Spaniards, with a fantastic après-ski scene. They get a lot of snow but because of the temperature cycles it can quickly get icy. Not the best place if you're looking for powder.

Formigal (Aragón)



Formigal is the biggest ski area in Spain and generally has more reliable and better-quality snow than the south. Your *forfait* also includes the neighbouring resort of Panticosa, so when everything is open that's 176km of skiable terrain (see piste map [here](#)). The nearby village of Formigal is pretty small so it can get booked up quickly. The same company also owns another great resort called [Cerler](#), which more difficult to get to but generally has better snow and fewer people.

Astún (Aragón)



Powder day in Astún!

Smaller than Formigal and less crowded, if you get Astún on the right day the snow can be incredible (see piste map [here](#)). You can stay in the town of Jaca and get a bus, so it's perhaps slightly easier for a last-minute trip than Formigal. There's another resort right next to Astún called [Candanchú](#) which is also excellent, although the terrain is considerably more challenging.

Even further afield...

Of course, you don't have to stop there! There are plenty of resorts in Catalonia ([Baqueira/Beret](#) is the most famous one) and Andorra has some fantastic areas such as [Grand Valira](#).

See you on the slopes!

Let's visit the wine region, Ribera del Duero, from Madrid!

We all know that we owe a lot to the Romans- the feats of engineering, the inventions, the creation of basic law, the art. But in the case of Ribera del Duero, we owe them the discovery of the perfect place to grow the tempranillo grape, and the beginnings of the Ribera del Duero wine region.

Do you like full-bodied red wines, exploring ancient ruins and travelling through stunning landscapes? Then Ribera del Duero could be your next destination. To give you a head start, here are some useful tips from inside the wine industry, including where the region is, why it is famous, my favourite winery and how to get there from Madrid.

The scoop

Ribera del Duero is talked about as being one of the most prestigious wine regions in Spain. It is renowned for its

full-bodied, elegant and complex red wines, which are of an **extremely high quality** (the region's regulatory body only allows a certain amount of grapes to be produced per harvest-meaning that quality is in, and quantity is out).

In fact, in 2012 Ribera won a Wine Star award for being the **best wine region in the entire world** (which in the wine world is the equivalent to winning the Oscars).

Roman Gods and Medieval fortresses

Ribera del Duero became an official D.O. (Designation of Origin) region in 1982, but wine has been produced here for **over 2,000 years**. We know for sure that the Roman people of Ribera del Duero made wine, because they left behind mosaics of the Roman God of wine, Bacchus.

Bacchus was, amongst other things, the youthful, beautiful and (somewhat) androgynous God of harvest, wine and general all-round debauchery (he was actually the half mortal son of Zeus, so who can blame him). You can still see a 66 metre mosaic tile floor dedicated to him and his frivolous escapades at the *Baños de Valdearados*, a small pueblo right in the centre of Ribera del Duero.



The Ancient Romans believed that wine was a 'daily necessity' and produced wine in Ribera del Duero for everyone in society- men, women, slaves, aristocrats and peasants

In fact, Ribera del Duero gets its entire name from the Romans and their love of wine; they were also so thankful for the blessing of the river on their vineyards, that they personified the river as Durius, a River God (who, we can only assume, was working in cahoots with Bacchus).

Ribera del Duero continued to make wine long after the Romans left- all throughout the Visigoth, Muslim, Christian and medieval eras, right up until today. This means that Ribera del Duero not only has beautiful vineyard landscapes shaped by thousands of years of wine making, but also a winemaking tradition as old as the Coliseum.

If you are interested in medieval history or have a penchant for fairy-tale architecture, Ribera del Duero also has an

incredible collection of Middle Age castles. On my last trip, I visited the official 'National Monument' of the castle of Peñafiel, which is located where all good castles are- on top of a hill.



The castle of Peñafiel

Geography

Ribera del Duero is a long and narrow wine region shaped to follow the path of the Duero river. Ribera del Duero is effectively an extended area of vineyard river bank, which is why the word 'Ribera' (river bank) is used in its name.



The Ribera del Duero the wine region includes parts of **four regional territories**– covering the south of Burgos, extending west into Valladolid and encompassing sections of Segovia in the south and Soria to the east.

There are 4 main municipalities: Peñafiel, Roa, Aranda del Duero and San Esteban de Gormaz. These are surrounded by rural areas of vineyards and wineries, churches, castles and beautiful valleys.

My favourite winery

There are almost 300 wineries spread over the river banks of Ribera del Duero, a combination of hundred-year-old traditional family wineries and modern corporate giants, but for me, the winery [Pago de Carraovejas](#) is a real diamond- a shining example of how to keep Ribera del Duero's wine traditions alive, but not be afraid of modern innovation.

Back in the 1970's, a curious young sommelier José María Ruíz had a dream that he would one day own his own restaurant, where he would serve Segovia's most traditional dish, 'cochinillo' (roast baby piglet), which would be paired with his own Ribera wine.

Years later, and just 3km outside Peñafiel, Ruíz's impressive winery is in the perfect location in a sunny valley, protected by the hills from the North Wind and close enough to the river.



The vineyards of Pago de Carraovejas in its special valley this summer 2014, with views of Peñafiel castle in the distance

On my last trip to Ribera, I took part in the unveiling of Pago de Carraovejas' new wine tasting technique: the peeling and tasting of the skin, pulp and seeds of the grape before tasting the wines. This is a prime example of Carraovejas' innovative approach to wine and ability to think outside of the box, as is their research with Universities to create their own natural yeasts and bacteria specific to the land.



Pago de Carraovejas in winter, photograph taken by my colleague and wine expert Raul Buendía. As the seasons change, so do the landscapes- with so many vineyards, each season brings unique stunning views

If you tour their winery, not only will you taste their fantastic red wines throughout the tour in different winemaking rooms (a refreshing take on the traditional end-of-tour wine tasting), but you will also get to enjoy 3 delicious tapas dishes (including 'cochinillo') that have been carefully elaborated in Ruiz's dream restaurant to pair with the wines.



One of the delicious tapas served in the barrel room on my last visit- a tuna, sautéed pepper and vegetable stack, with edible flower

If you have a food allergy, Pago de Carraovejas are up to the job. They can adapt their tasting menu to gluten free and lactose free diets if you let them know in advance- and they will even serve gluten free bread. You might also want to let them know if you don't want to eat 'cochinillo' (baby piglet fed only milk and slaughtered at 15-20 days old), if you are a vegetarian, vegan or have certain meat eating beliefs.

Which wineries?

To see a list of all of the wineries registered in the region, go to the official [Ribera del Duero D.O.](#) website.

If this seems too overwhelming and you aren't sure which winery to pick, or how to organise numerous visits that fit

together, you could organise a [wine tour of Ribera del Duero](#) from Madrid. You could even visit a winery that produces one of your favourite wines!

How to get there

Ribera del Duero has so many places to visit that you could leave Madrid in a number of different directions, depending on where you are headed. Here are two routes to the wine towns Peñafiel and Aranda de Duero.

By car:

I would recommend travelling to Ribera del Duero by car so that you can see Ribera's landscapes as you travel up from Madrid. This is all part of seeing Ribera- the land, the vineyards, castles and landscapes have all been shaped by wine making. You will also have the freedom to move about the region once you are there- you could stay in a wine town and drive to rural wineries and castles during the day, returning to eat delicious local food in the town at night.

You can see which companies rent cars in Madrid by going to our previous [Travelling by car in Madrid: renting cars, car sharing or carpooling](#) article.

Route: Madrid- Peñafiel

Duration: 2 hours approx.

Tip: Combine this route with a stop at the beautiful UNESCO city of Segovia on the way

Route: Madrid- Aranda de Duero

Duration: 1 hour 45 approx.

Tip: You can find recommended Aranda de Duero scenic driving routes for once you have arrived in the area, on the official [Aranda y Ribera guide](#) website. Useful for a weekend trip.

By bus:

It is possible to travel to a few of the wine towns by coach

from Madrid. This would be a good option if you would just like to visit the main wine towns.

Route: Madrid- Peñafiel

Depart from: Moncloa

Duration: 3 hours approx.

Price: 17,00 approx. single

Company: The official Peñafiel website cites travelling with [La Sepulvedana](#)

Route: Madrid- Aranda de Duero

Depart from: Avenida de America

Duration: 2 hours

Price: 12,00€ approx. single (24,00€ approx. return)

Company: [Alsa](#)

Wine word for your trip

El sarmiento– the little young, green vine shoot

Cuenca

What to see:

Less than two hours driving from Madrid, you'll find the city of **Cuenca**, which is a "must-see" kind of place if you're travelling around Spain. **Cuenca** was named a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 1999 and its *Hanging Houses* well deserve such honor.

These iconic houses from Cuenca were built in the 15th century and the best way to see them is from the bridge of San Pablo. Another city monument is the Cathedral of Cuenca, whose

construction started in the 12th century.

Once you walk around the city and check out other important sites, you should also enjoy the city's gastronomy. As in most parts of Spain, Cuenca has a passion for meat and a tender roast lamb is its specialty. I can't tell you which is the best "Asador" or rotisserie in the city, but here's a link to [Trip Advisor](#). Hope you have fun finding the right place (please let us know if you do)!

How to get there:

▪ By Train (AVE-Medium Distance)

Depart from: Atocha train station

Schedule:

Departure ([Madrid-Cuenca](#))

Return ([Cuenca-Madrid](#))

Duration: approx. 50min (AVE) 2h 50min (Medium distance)

Price AVE (High speed): 24€ (round trip approx. 48€).

Price (medium distance): 14€ (round trip approx. 28€).

▪ By bus

Depart from: Méndez Álvarez

Schedule: [Check Avanza web site \(English\)](#)

Duration: approx. 2 hour 10 min

Price: 14€ (round trip 28€)

Where to find it on a map:

San Lorenzo del Escorial



What to see:

El Escorial is famous for its beautiful *Monasterio* which was built between 1563 and 1584. We recommend going inside the monastery, even though the entrance fee costs €10.

Once you've visited the monument, it's absolutely necessary to take a walk around the charming little town. Grab a seat at a *terrazza* and enjoy the pure air of the city's mountains, known as *la sierra de Madrid*.

How to get there:

- **By cercanías train ([map](#))**

Depart from: Sol, take Cercanías Line C3

Schedule:

Departure ([Horario Sol-El Escorial](#))

Return ([Horario El Escorial-Sol](#))

Duration: approx. 1 hour

Price: 5,40€ (round trip 10,80€). Buy tickets from machines inside Sol's train station.

**Note: you will have to walk 15 min or take another bus to get to the center.*

▪ By bus

Depart from: Moncloa, take bus line 661

Schedule:

Bus line [661](#) (every 10-15 min)

Bus line [664](#) (every 10-15 min)

Duration: approx. 1 hour

Price: 4,20€ (round trip 8,40€). Buy tickets on the bus.

Where to find it on a map:

