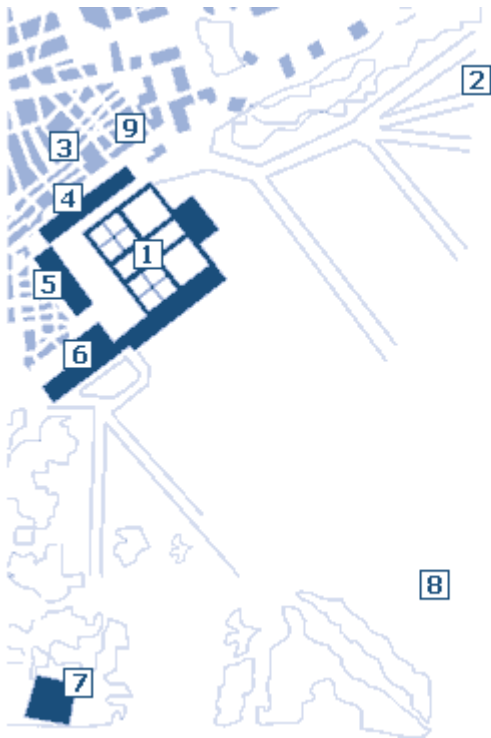


## SAN LORENZO DE EL ESCORIAL



1. Monasterio
2. Casita del Príncipe o de Abajo
3. Real Coliseo de Carlos III
4. Casas de Oficios y Ministerios
5. Casa de Infantes y de la Reina
6. Universidad de María Cristina
7. Casita del Infante o de Arriba
8. La Herrería (silla de Felipe II)
9. Oficina de Turismo

The importance of San Lorenzo de El Escorial dates back to 1557 when King Philip chose the Guadarrama Mountain Range, at the foot of Mount Abantos, as the site where he would build a monastery to commemorate the victory over the king of France in the Battle of San Quintín. Over the years, the amount of time spent by the Spanish kings in this place increased. The population which had settled in the areas surrounding the monastery took on new importance in the 18th Century when King Charles II charged the architect Juan de Villanueva with the construction of various buildings to house the numerous groups that accompanied the king on his hunting trips.

The arrival of the railroad in the 19th Century gave El Escorial a tremendous boost. It became famous not only as a place full of royal monuments, it also had a particular social atmosphere that was created upon being chosen as a vacation site by the most prestigious Madrid families who joined the grandiose summer court of the monarchs.

Today, given its enviable geographical location and its climate which features cool summers, San Lorenzo de El Escorial is a living monument and a tremendously important tourist attraction. The city is universally renowned and was declared a Historical and Artistic Monument in 1971. Thirteen years later in 1984, Unesco recognized it as a Monument of World Interest. As Unamuno stated after his first visit to the monastery, "It is a place that all Spaniards, who have a historical conscience of what it means to be Spanish, should visit at some time during their lifetime, as the devout Moslems visit the Mecca".

## THE MONASTERY

Charles V becomes the founder of the empire and his son, Philip II, who wanted a magnificent mausoleum for his father and a combination temple, pantheon, study center and meditation refuge for himself, decided that it should be located in San Lorenzo de El Escorial where he would construct an immense monastery.



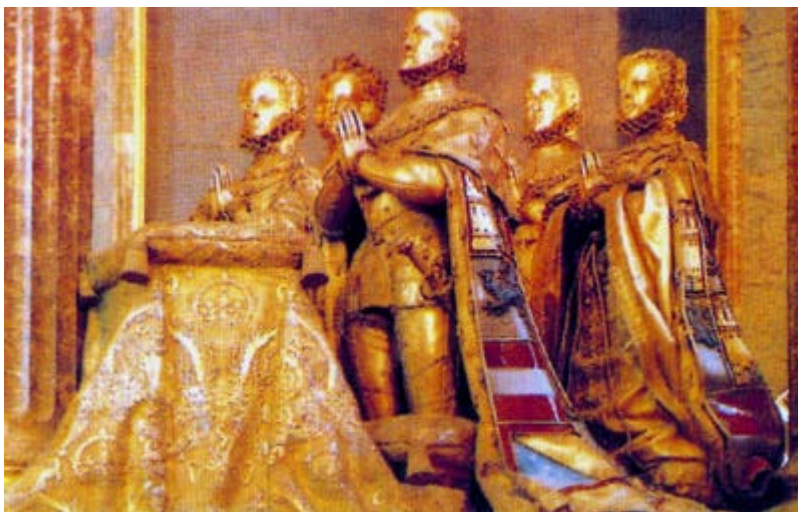
This is how the monastery became the project of one who wanted to give future centuries a fundamental who which synthesizes the imperial ideals of Philip II for all time.

The great expounders of the Humanism of the Renaissance helped the king accomplish his project which was defined by reason, symmetry and balance, without forgetting even for a moment the all important austerity that he desired. Everything was included in a huge quadrilateral of granite and slate that contained sixteen patios and fifteen cloisters.

The main facade is comprised of a superb group of columns, a statue of Saint Lorenzo and the imperial coat of arms. The Patio of the King is found at the entrance with the facade of the basilica to the rear. It has been given the name "Ante-chamber of eternity" and it contains statues representing the kings of Jude. In the way he arranged the different sections (library, basilica, cloisters, etc.), Philip II wanted to reflect the link between religion and humanism.



Aside from the Renaissance decoration featuring a dome painted by Pellegrino Tibaldi, the library has an enormously rich collection of documents which includes Arab and Hebrew manuscripts as well as the personal library of Philip II. The floor is made of gray marble and the walls are covered with the bookshelves designed by Juan de Herrera and carved by Giuseppe Flecha y Gamboa. Among the singular works and manuscripts in the collection, we can find the Ballads of Alfonso X the Wise and the Virgilian Manuscript.



The monastery can be considered a symbol of the might of the Spanish empire in the 16th Century. The church, with its forty three altars each of which is graced by paintings, occupies the central part. The ceilings are decorated with frescos by Lucas Jordan and on each side of the main altar we can find statues of Charles I and Philip II, the work of Pompeo Leoni.

## **CASITA DEL INFANTE**

The Mausoleum of the Kings holds the remains of all the Spanish monarchs from Charles I to Alfonso XIII. A marble gallery leads to the Mausoleum of the Infantas.

The Monastery also houses an important collection of painting and sculpture. We find paintings by exceptional artists such as Tiziano, El Greco, El Veronés and Lucas Jordan. The furniture, however, is from the 18th Century. That was when the palace of the Bourbons was added on to that of the Austrias. The palace is divided into halls and rooms with rich tapestries made over models designed by Goya and which form part of the collection of tapestries based on models by Rubens, Tennyers and other painters.

The visiting hours of the Monastery are:

- From April to September: 10:00 - 18:00.
- From October to March: 10.000 - 17:00.

Close Mondays.

## **FROM THE ROYAL COLISEUM TO THE “CASITA DEL PRÍNCIPE” OR THE LOWER COTTAGE AND TO THE “CASITA DEL INFANTE” OR THE UPPER COTTAGE.**

Jaime Marquet under the orders of King Charles III, carried out the project of the Royal Coliseum which was later reformed by Juan Marqués de Villanueva. Its solemn inauguration took place in 1771. For many years, this was the place where Madrid's noblemen met, usually in the spring and summertime. In 1979 the building was saved, somewhere that miraculously, from complete destruction and was restored and returned to its former condition. It has a seating capacity of 384 for concerts and 342 for theatre productions. It is a magnificent building which draws a number of enthusiasts especially during the summers sessions organized by the University of Madrid (universidad Complutense) in San Lorenzo de El Escorial.

Continuing with our tour, we come to the “Casita del Príncipe”, or lower cottage, designed by the architect Juan de Villanueva for the exclusive use of the court. Its elegant Neoclassical facade is surrounded by cedar trees and magnolias and the inside is decorated with paintings depicting mythological themes, silk tapestries, furniture, clocks, lamps, figurines and other articles which are representative of palace art in the 18th Century.

The last stop on the tour is the “Casita del Infante” or upper cottage. It is a small hunting pavilion, one of the best examples of this type of building and it was also designed by Juan de Villanueva. It is equipped with every type of comfort and is exquisitely decorated and very well situated within the natural beauty of El Escorial..

## **CASAS DE OFICIOS, DE INFANTES Y REINA.**

Today, Floridablanca Street is the lung of San Lorenzo de el Escorial. Juan de Herrera built the Casas

de Infantes (Infante's Residence) in the lot between this street and the impressive monastery facade, the motive being the monarchs' need to house the high-ranking visitors to this city. Some time later, in the 18th Century, Juan de Villanueva used these two residences as models in the construction of the Casas de Oficios (King's Residence) which was destined for the same purpose.

Today, the architectural beauty of Floridablanca Street is underscored by the open patios of the Casas de oficios which are visited by thousands of people who flock to San Lorenzo de El Escorial in the summertime.

## **MARIA CRISTINA UNIVERSITY AND THE SUMMER COMPLUTENSE UNIVERSITY**

Across from the portico of the Monastery we find a beautiful mannered facade in perfect condition which is a symbol of the long teaching tradition which this city has.

María Cristina University is the principle institution of higher learning. It is part of the University of Madrid (Universidad Complutense) and offers degree programs in Law and Business Administration.

Over the past five years, the Universidad Complutense has offered summer courses in San Lorenzo de El Escorial. This project was developed by the dean, Gustavo Villapalos who has managed to bring thousands of students, scholarship grantees, researchers professors and speakers from all over the globe together in this very special place. Among the invited speakers we can find some of the most renowned figures of this century in the fields of science and the humanities.

During its first few years, the summer school program of the Universidad Complutense used the old Felipe II hotel, built in the 50's, as its only meeting place. Using the name "Euroforum/Felipe II", the building was transformed into a university campus with classrooms, press centers, meeting rooms and other halls needed in a academic institution. The professors and invited speakers resided in the same building while the scholarship grantees and other participants stayed in the María Cristina University or the Royal Cliseum where some of the courses were given as well.

The program met with such tremendous success that the organizers had to increase the number of classrooms and residence quarters. This led to the remodeling of the Infantes Palace, popularly known as "Casa de Peláez". On July 11, 1991 the work was completed. The architect Miguel de Oriol e Yarra had transformed the magnificent building, originally the work of Juan de Villanueva, into a center with more than 250 rooms for teachers and students as well as several classrooms, one of them able to accommodate 300 people.

## **LA HERRERÍA (THE FOUNDRY)**

This beautiful place, a mixture of fields and oak forest known as "La Herrería", was declared a "Picturesque Landscape" in 1961. It is located between the Monastery and the Villa de El Escorial. The "Seat of Philip II" is located here.

In "La Herrería" we can find a club which goes by the same name and includes an enormous golf course

as well as the “Virgen de la Gracia” (Our Lady of Grace) hermitage. This is a very peaceful place where one can relax after visiting the Monastery and the palaces.

## **GEOGRAPHICAL LOCATION**

San Lorenzo de El Escorial, located 50 kilometers from Madrid, receives more visitors than any other place in the Community of Madrid. To go by car take the N-VI Highway or go by way of the Galapagar Pass on route C-505. There is a bus line providing regular service between Madrid and El Escorial which goes by way of La Coruña Highway passing through Las Rozas, Torreloayón and Collado-Villalba. There is regular train service as well from the stations: Norte, Atocha and Chamartín. Both trains and buses run more frequently during the summer months.

Another advantage that El Escorial offers is its location at the foot of the Madrid mountain range. It is the starting point for some interesting hikes, the most common of which is the Valle de los Caídos (Valley of the Fallen) which is a temple of monumental proportions, crowned by a huge cross and several sculptures by Juan de Avalos. Construction began in the 40's by order of General Francisco Franco, Head of the Spanish State during the dictatorship.

The main basilica is an excavation within a mountain with a long stairway leading to the entrance. It took twenty years to accomplish this feat and the work was done by prisoners of Spanish Civil War. The crypt of Valle de los Caídos holds the remains of the principal leaders of the Spanish Nationalist Movement: General Francisco Franco and José Antonio Primo de Rivera.

## **USEFUL INFORMATION**

### **SAN LORENZO DE EL ESCORIAL**

Tourist Office in San Lorenzo de El Escorial  
c/ Floridablanca, 10  
Tel. 91-890 15 54

“La Herrería” Golf Club  
Ctra. De Robledo, s/n  
Tel. 91-890 52 44

El Escorial Caravanning  
Tel. 91-890 24 12

Civil Guard  
Tel. 91-890 26 11

National Heritage Delegation in the Monastery:  
Tel: 91-890 59 02 / 03 / 04 / 05  
In Valle de los Caídos:

Tel. 91-890 56 11

Town Hall, San Lorenzo de El Escorial  
Plaza de la Constitución, 3  
Tel. 91-890 35 61 / 91-890 36 44

RENFE. Train Information  
Tel. 902 24 02 02

Policía Municipal  
Tel. 91-890 52 23

Euroforum Infantes  
Tel. 91-896 17 50 / 91-890 66 51

Taxi  
c/ Floridablanca,1  
Tel. 91-890 40 01

Estación de Tren  
Tel. 91-890 00 15

Eurotaxi  
Tel. 908 50 50 00

Autobuses Herranz  
Madrid - San Lorenzo de El Escorial - Valle de los Caídos  
Tel. 91-890 41 00

## **MADRID**

Tourist Information for the Community of Madrid  
Tel. 91-429 31 77

General Information on Madrid  
Tel. 010

INFORIBERIA and Reserve  
Tel. 902 400 500

Transportation Consortium of the Community of Madrid  
Tel. 91- 580 19 80

Business hours Small businesses:

From 10 to 14 and from 17 to 20 h.

Department Stores:

From 10 to 21 h.