

STONE STORIES AND LIVING MEMORY

The nearby mountain range that never fails to surprise

*A journey through time
in the Guadarrama mountain*

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The Guadarrama mountain is far more than a natural destination: it is a land where history, culture and emotion intertwine in every corner. This guide invites curious families and lovers of good stories to explore a living landscape, where paths whisper and stones remember.

Festivals with a soul

An emotional calendar of the Guadarrama mountain

We invite you on a journey through time and feelings. A route through mountain villages that treasure their traditions, renewing them with every generation. Don't just come to see them: come to feel them.

January: Warmth that awakens memory Luminarias and Saint Sebastian

20 January - El Boalo, Moralzarzal, Becerril de la Sierra

The mountain opens its festive calendar around glowing bonfires. In the winter darkness, the Luminarias light up the shared spirit. In El Boalo, old pig-slaughter traditions are recalled with crackling pork cakes and aniseed hot chocolate. In Moralzarzal, newly married young men roam the streets with cowbells and fire, just as their grandparents once did. In Becerril de la Sierra, the night turns into dancing, races, games and a communal paella.

Week of 20 January: La Vaquilla

Los Molinos

Since the 16th century, La Vaquilla has set the village buzzing with mock bull runs, dulzainas (traditional shawms), gunpowder and medieval costumes. Declared a Festival of Regional Tourist Interest, it is a truly immersive experience that connects straight to the visitor's heart.

Late January: The spirit of togetherness

23–24 January - Collado Mediano: El Rondón

Saint Ildefonso and Our Lady of Peace bring together faith, music and tradition. For four days, the village is organised into groups – young men, young women, married couples and children, who fill the square to the rhythm of the Rondón dance, accompanied by dulzainas, pestiños and sangría.



February: History, gunpowder and popular humour

3 February - *Miraflores de la Sierra: Los Perreros*

Saint Blas is the perfect excuse to relive an epic feat. Dressed in colourful costumes and firing blank muskets, Los Perreros commemorate the defence of the village against Napoleonic troops. The day ends with cod and potato stew and a humorous performance of "La Vaquilla", blending satire, history and community spirit.

May: The rebirth of the mountain Las Mayas festivals and May Crosses

3 May - *Soto del Real, Moralarzal, Collado Mediano*

When fields burst into bloom, the mountain celebrates renewal. In Soto del Real, La Maya, Queen of Spring, is crowned amid picnics and dulzainas. In Moralarzal, the May Cross becomes a quarrymen's pilgrimage. In Collado Mediano, neighbours climb to Roblepoyo with music, friendship and mountain stews.

September: The flavour of togetherness

9 September - *Hoyo de Manzanares: La Caldereta*

This is the festival that sums up the soul of the mountain: unity, tradition and gastronomy. What once was a sharing of bulls between married and single men is now a huge communal Caldereta stew in the main square. Also declared a Festival of Regional Tourist Interest, it turns Hoyo into the capital of popular cooking and collective spirit.

Check our **events calendar on our website** so you don't miss these tradition-rich celebrations of the **Guadarrama mountain**.

Un territorio que celebra su identidad.

En la Sierra de Guadarrama podrás disfrutar todo el año:

Guadalix de la Sierra:

- Patron Saint Festival of the Virgin of El Espinar (September)

Cercedilla:

- Saint Sebastian (January)
- Gastronomy week, horse and "gabarrería" (May)
- Saint Anthony (June)
- El Aurrulaque (July)
- Virgin of the Snows Festival (August)
- Patron Saint Festival of the Nativity of Our Lady (September)

Navacerrada:

- Saint Anthony of Padua (June)
- Patron Saint Festival of the Nativity of Our Lady (September)

Mataelpino:

- Águedas Day (February)

Cerceda:

- Festival of the Holy Christ (September)

Alpedrete:

- Saint Quiteria & Stonemasons' Festival (May)
- Our Lady of Carmen Festival (July)
- Assumption (August)

Manzanares El Real:

- Virgin of La Jarosa (August)
- Saint Michael the Archangel (September)
- Saint Francis of Asís (October)

Guadarrama:

- Virgin of La Jarosa (August)
- Saint Michael the Archangel (September)
- Saint Francis of Asís (October)

The Memory route

This trail is a journey through time, an invitation to wander along cobbled streets, pause at centuries-old fountains and listen to what the stone still whispers. Each chapter opens a different window onto the soul of the mountain:

- **Water**, flowing from fountains, washhouses and springs, for centuries, life, health and meeting place.
- **Ancient trades**, showing how stone, wool, wood and ice sustained whole generations.
- **Our grandparents' homes**, simple granite houses speaking of resilience and community.
- **Summer architecture**, holiday villas that brought health tourism and a new way of living the Sierra.

The Memory route is far more than a tourist route: it is a tribute to those who shaped, with effort and beauty, the identity of the Guadarrama mountain.

Museums of Memory

To complete the experience, stop at two places where history comes alive:

- **Ethnographic Museum of Becerril de la Sierra**
- **Ethnological and Archaeological Museum of Manzanares El Real**

Water

Liquid memory of the Guadarrama mountain

In these 14 mountain villages, fountains have always been more than hydraulic works: they were meeting points, places of shared work, celebration and health. Each one tells a story; each has witnessed generations pass by.

In villages like Guadarrama, Hoyo de Manzanares and Moralarzal, water was so abundant and prized that it became a source of healing, with springs studied by doctors and sanatoriums built around their purity. In others, such as Alpedrete and Cercedilla, washhouses were an extension of the home and communal taps a hard-won victory.



The Fountain of the Spouts – Guadarrama

Built in 1785 during the reign of King Charles III, this neoclassical fountain stands on the old Royal Road to Castile. It is one of the most monumental and iconic fountains in the entire Guadarrama mountain.

The Four-Spout Fountain – Moralarzal

Famous for its medicinal waters, this fountain was built in 1885 and soon became renowned throughout the Guadarrama mountain.

The Spout Spring – Hoyo de Manzanares

Its waters were used by the tuberculosis sanatoriums established in Navacerrada and Guadarrama, from the late 19th century to the mid-20th century.



The Dehesa Boyal Washhouses – Alpedrete

Set in the heart of nature, among gold granite quarries, these washhouses evoke a life that was simple and tough. Here came the herds of transhumant shepherds and the village women to wash clothes.

Guillén Zamorano Square Fountain – Alpedrete

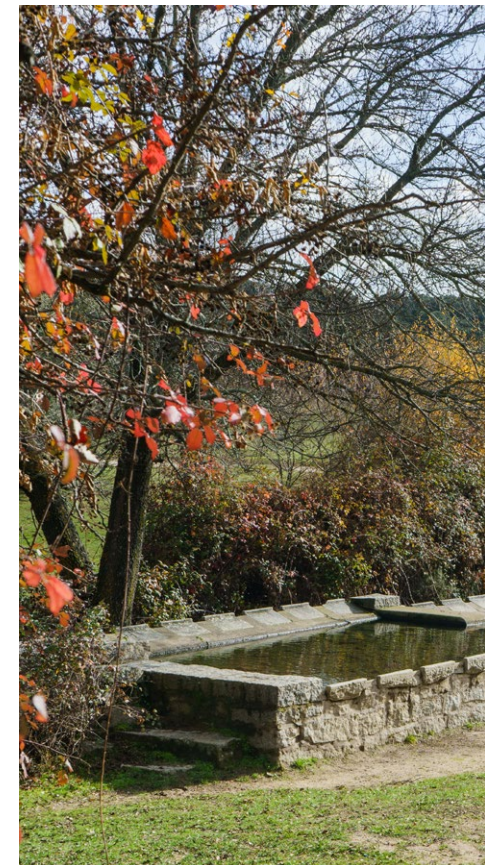
Its inauguration in the mid-20th century became an unforgettable local event. When the tap was first opened, a powerful jet of water burst out, to the amazement, surprise and joyful cheers of everyone gathered in the square.

The Cercedilla Washhouse

One of the best-preserved washhouses in the whole mountain, it was built in **1945** and was once the feminine heart of the village.

New Fountain - Miraflores de la Sierra

Built in 1791 in Baroque style, this fountain originally included stone troughs.



Traditional trades and crafts

The working soul of the Mountain

The Guadarrama mountain was, for centuries, a land of labour. Before tourism, before the summer season, mountain life was woven from hard, wise and silent trades, passed down from parents to children, shaped by the mountain, water, stone and cold.

Wander through these places we mention, to "learn" how our ancestors saw our villages and landscapes.



The Stone that Built History

In Alpedrete, granite became the lifeblood of the community. The berroqueño granite provided work and purpose to a whole community of stonecutters. This stone travelled far: to the Monastery of El Escorial, the Royal Palace, and the cobblestones of Madrid. The Canter Museum and the old quarries, now transformed into leisure spaces, bear witness to this ancient craft, brought by stonemasons from Galicia and Cantabria.

Ice and the harshness of “la nevería”

In Cercedilla and Navacerrada, snow wasn't just for play: it was sustenance. Ice-men “neveros” would haul ice from the high mountain snowdrifts down to Madrid, carried by mules and oxen-drawn carts. This dangerous yet profitable trade turned mountain ice into a luxury item in urban Madrid during the hot summers of the 19th century.



Where Memory Grazes: The livestock farming that Shaped the Landscape

Since the 11th century, the ancient Segovian shepherds have shaped the Guadarrama mountains landscape through their livestock activity. The dehesas (grazing lands) and cattle tracks that still remain are testament to this millennia-old heritage.

Transhumance: Wool and Starry Roads

The Cañadas Reales (Royal Cattle Tracks), such as the Segoviana, were the highways of the past. Shepherds and their flocks crossed the mountain in search of grazing grounds and water. Today, the Ruta de los Pastores in Los Molinos, the Puente Viejo of Manzanares, and the dehesas of Guadarrama preserve this heritage of movement, resilience, and deep understanding of the environment.

Beehives and Rural Wisdom

In Miraflores de la Sierra, the Mendicoechea Beekeeping School (1925-1936) was a pioneer in apiculture training in Spain. Founded by Narciso de Liñán and Jerónimo Sastre, it taught farmers how to improve pollination and harvests, combining science with tradition.



Watermills, Flour and Memory

In Los Molinos, Manzanares El Real, and Miraflores, water powered life. The flourmills transformed grain into bread and work. Today, only ruins or reconstructions remain, like the Evaristo Mill in Los Molinos, but the sound of the river still carries the memory of this once-vital activity.



Of Blacksmiths and Woodmen: Trades that Forged Character

The horseshoeing anvil of Collado Mediano and Cercedilla recalls the importance of the blacksmith, essential in a world of draft animals. In Navacerrada, the gabarreros (woodmen) collected branches to make firewood, while the charcoal burners produced charcoal. These trades, smelling of smoke and resin, still resonate in the popular romerías (pilgrimages).

Rural Schools: Learning from Nature

In El Boalo, Cerceda, Soto del Real or Miraflores, the 19th and 20th-century stone schools symbolised modernity and hope. Today, they remain in use or have been turned into libraries, yet they still hold the essence of the days when knowledge was written on slates with chalk.



Our Grandparents' Homes

Houses with a mountain soul

The traditional homes of our villages are the sincerest expression of a way of life that is austere, resilient, and deeply connected to the surroundings. Built between the 17th and 19th centuries, these homes were more shelter than architecture, adapted to the harsh climate and the rhythms of the land.

In **Becerril de la Sierra**, small houses for livestock farmers, with a single storey, granite walls, and outbuildings for animals, stand as witnesses to a time when everything had its place: warmth, bread, tools, and silence.

In **Collado Mediano**, homes turned inward. Closed off from the exterior, protected from the wind, these homes were worlds unto themselves. Over time, the opening to the world came in the form of larger windows, benches on facades, and local shops like the legendary "Casa Cuená". It was in the 19th century, with the arrival of stonemasonry, that the identity of the mountain homes received a fresh boost.

In **Miraflores, Navacerrada, Soto del Real...** each village keeps its own way of understanding shelter and space. Single-storey homes, thick walls, wood, tile and granite. Small windows to trap warmth, high attics for provisions. Everything speaks of adaptation, ingenuity, and simple living.

In **Soto del Real**, the storks crown the church tower as symbols of continuity. In **Guadalix de la Sierra**, the historic clock of the town hall echoes the cinema and the voice of Pepe Isbert, proclaiming, "As your mayor, I owe you an explanation," from the unforgettable film **Bienvenido, Mister Marshall**, which was filmed in this very town.

All our villages have streets lined with these typical granite houses. We invite you to explore them all: Alpedrete, El Boalo, Cerceda, Cercedilla, Mataelpino, Guadarrama, Hoyo de Manzanares, Los Molinos, Manzanares El Real, Moralarzal.



Summer Architecture

The cradle of Madrid's summer holidays

Walking today through the villages of the Guadarrama mountain is also walking through the traces of Madrid's first health and nature tourism. Long before mass tourism, a new concept began to emerge here: hygienist summer holidays, the bourgeois retreat, the quest for clean air, pure sunlight, and clear waters.

Architecture of Rest, a Reflection of Change

The "hotelitos" (small summer houses) as they were affectionately called back then, initially appeared as isolated holiday homes, and later as entire colonies at the edges of the town centres. Their construction marked the beginning of a profound urban transformation across the region: from agricultural and pastoral villages to tourist and residential destinations.



Recommended visit:

The most iconic “hotelitos”

Mansion of Miraflores de la Sierra

Along the roads to Rascafría (M-611) and Canencia (M-629), spectacular holiday villas still stand, built at the beginning of the 20th century by summer visitors from Madrid. Influenced by the hygienist movement, these “hotels” responded to a new understanding of wellbeing: fresh air, spring water, and healthy architecture. Among their most illustrious guests: Vicente Aleixandre, Santiago Ramón y Cajal, Niceto Alcalá-Zamora, Felipe González... Here, poetry, science, and rest converged.

Cercedilla: Summer Holidays, Skiing, and Modernity

Since the arrival of the railway in 1888, Cercedilla became the epicentre of nature tourism in the mountain. Figures like Canalejas, Ramón y Cajal, Sorolla, Bardasano, Luis Rosales, and more spent their summers here.



Colonia Vindel. Hoyo de Manzanares

An ambitious project by Marcelo Usera, the developer behind the Madrid district of the same name. On the outskirts of the village, several 30s-era buildings still stand, featuring an eclectic style: granite and decorative brick, crosses on facades, and painted ceramics.

Hotel Laris. Los Molinos

A building from the early 20th century, originally a hostel and restaurant for wealthy clientele. During the Spanish Civil War, its basement served as a refuge. Later, it was refurbished into a hotel, attracting Madrid families seeking the fresh air of Los Molinos.

Summer Colonies. Guadarrama

In the 1920s, residential area like La Alameda and Las Angustias emerged, located away from the town centre. These chalet colonies marked the shift from elite tourism to family tourism.



Villa Paca. Collado Mediano

Built in 1898, this was the first holiday chalet in the municipality. Its name, and the nearby Fuente Barbarita (Barbarita Fountain), evoke the names of its original owners. With the arrival of the train, Collado Mediano became an ideal spot for summer visitors. Though today it's a private residence and not visible from the street, Villa Paca remains the symbol of the birth of mountain tourism and the growing urbanism that forever changed the village's appearance.



The Soul of the mountain Trail

Following the trail of silence

From the High Middle Ages, this mountain was land of dispute and reconciliation. When in 1085, Alfonso VI conquered Mayrit (Madrid), the southern side of the mountain fell under Castilian influence. Attracted by its pastures, the Segovian shepherds brought their herds and founded villages that, over time, would become strong mountain towns. It was Alfonso X the Wise who, seeing the constant disputes between Madrid and Segovia, incorporated the land into the crown and named it El Real de Manzanares, unifying these lands blessed by nature and time.

In this context, the Sierra churches were born. They were not only places of worship but also social, cultural, and artistic landmarks. Each church tells a story, each stone carries a prayer, each altarpiece a lesson in art and resilience.

Church of Santa María la Blanca. Cerceda

Imposing and serene, this 16th-century church is a symphony of architectural styles. Declared a National Historic Monument, its architecture represents the transition from Romanesque to Ávila Gothic. The slender bell tower rises as a beacon of the soul, and inside, treasures such as a Renaissance baptismal font and a flamenco-style altarpiece await. Here, each performance by the local choir is a near-mystical sonic experience, thanks to the church's extraordinary acoustics.

Church of the Assumption. Alpedrete

Stone upon stone, the Church of the Assumption rises as a fortress of the spirit. Its defensive air, Mudéjar woodwork, and elegant stone spiral staircase speak of a community that fused faith with the strength of local stone. It stands as a witness to time, the craftsmanship of the stonemasons, and a devotion that has shaped its identity in granite.

Church of Saint Sebastian. Cercedilla

This church, dedicated to the village's patron saint, dates back to the late Romanesque period. Its Latin cross floor plan, notable 17th-century Baroque altarpiece, one of the Sierra's artistic treasures, and the marks of time, including the scars from the Spanish Civil War, make its visit an emotional journey through the history of the Sierra de Guadarrama.

Parish Church of Saint Ildefonso. Collado Mediano

Built in 1782 using materials from earlier temples, the Parish Church of Saint Ildefonso houses a beautiful Baroque altarpiece from the 17th century, originally belonging to the Convent of the Mercedarias in Madrid. Its sober beauty and careful restoration make it one of the most beautiful churches in the Sierra. Here, history and grace go hand in hand.

