

# Towns with a special charm



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*Front Page: Puerto de Mogán,  
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 Back: Caravaca de la Cruz, Murcia.  
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 murciaturistica*

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Come to Spain and explore a host of surprising, authentic little towns and experience their traditions. Here you'll find luminous sunlight and blue seas.

## INTRODUCTION

▲ PLAYA BALLOTA  
LLANES, ASTURIAS

The cheerful, hospitable people, the beautiful landscape and the culture which you can breathe everywhere you go will make your trip an unforgettable experience.

Throughout the whole country there are so many beautiful medieval towns where time seems to stand still. Explore their streets and historical buildings and discover legends of monks, knights and damsels in distress.

Spend a few days relaxing away from the hustle and bustle. Enjoy picture postcard whitewashed houses in the white villages in Andalusia and the Mediterranean and explore delightful fishing villages in the north of Spain.

Get the full flavour of every little corner. Apart from the delicious, healthy Mediterranean diet (Intangible Cultural Heritage), every region has its own exquisite, traditional dishes and fresh ingredients from the land and the sea. You'll be able to accompany them with some of the best wines in the world.

Extraordinary natural surroundings are a unique feature of many towns and villages. From glaciers and mountains in the Pyrenees to volcanic formations and valuable ecosystems in the Canary Islands, nature plays a leading role in Spain.

Enjoy the experience of visiting some of these towns which faithfully mirror their territory, their history and the people: a real opportunity to discover the roots of our culture.

# WHITE VILLAGES



▲ GRAZALEMA  
CÁDIZ

Explore another side of **Andalusia**. Tour the white villages, so called because of the white-washed houses. They contrast beautifully with the colourful flowers on the balconies and in the natural surroundings.

In the heart of the mountains and surrounded by olive groves, the area is ideal for hiking, and active tourism sports, whilst enjoying exquisite cuisine which abounds with game, good wines, cheeses

and designation of origin virgin olive oil.

The White Villages route in the **Sierra de Cádiz** district can perfectly well be visited by car. It covers a total of 19 municipal districts in the north west of the province of Cádiz, in the exceptionally beautiful, protected areas of **Sierra de Grazalema** (a declared biosphere reserve) and the **Alcornocales Nature Reserve**, part of which is in the province of Málaga.

The historical town centres, hugging the mountainsides, preserve the Moorish layout with steep, narrow, winding streets where you'll find traditional architecture, lookout points and extraordinary archaeological remains.

Most of them originate from ancient settlements, thousands of years old, so in the surrounding areas you'll often find remains of prehistoric, Iberian, Roman, Visigoth and Moorish settlements.

**Arcos de la Frontera**, said to be one of the most beautiful towns in Spain, is the first port of call and the start of this route. It stands high on a hill overlooking the Guadalete River and it is well worth taking a stroll through the monumental historical town centre. The tour should include its most prominent buildings, like the Town Hall, the Ducal Castle (formerly a Moorish fortress) and the Church of Santa María de la Asunción. On the out-

▼ ARCOS DE LA FRONTERA,  
CÁDIZ



## TOWNS WITH A SPECIAL CHARM



▲ ZAHARA DE LA SIERRA  
CÁDIZ

▼ VEJER DE LA FRONTERA  
CÁDIZ



skirts of the district you'll find the Lago de Arcos, a space ideal for fishing, walking along the banks and enjoying water sports like rowing and sailing.

The town of **Bornos** is also on the banks of a lake, and its attractions include the castle-palace of the Ribera family and the nearby remains of the Carissa Aurelia Iberian and Roman archaeological site. As you approach the mountains you'll find **Algodonales**, a district with a Flamenco tradition where they still make their renowned hand-made guitars. In **Setenil de las Bodegas** there is a beautiful and highly original urban layout with strange dwellings built under a huge rock.

The **Zahara de la Sierra** castle keep stands out over the horizon. At Corpus Christi, the streets of this little town become a lush carpet made of green branches, a festivity which dates back over five centuries. Apart from the traditional masses and processions, the townsfolk decorate the walls of their houses with eucalyptus, oleander and flowers and sprinkle herbs on the ground.

In the heart of the mountains, **Ubrique** (a haven for hand-made leather goods) and **Grazalema** are two picturesque towns with a blend of popular architecture and a wealth of extraordinary monuments.

Another delightful town is **Vejer de la Frontera**, with a magnificent walled enclosure overlooking the surrounding countryside from the top of a hill.

## EXPLORE OTHER WHITE VILLAGES IN ANDALUSIA

**Zuheros** (Córdoba), **Osuna** and **Marchena** (Seville) are also well worth a visit. In the province of Málaga you also have **Nerja**, **Mijas** and **Frigiliana**, three beautiful, white-washed towns overlooking the Mediterranean. In the province of Málaga, Ronda has an amazing gorge along the Tagus River, which is over 150 metres deep and divides the town in two.

There are three bridges with amazing views which enable you to cross to the other side. Explore the old town's medieval layout with Moorish influences.

This route should also include the districts of **La Alpujarra** and **Salobreña** (Granada) and **Mojácar** (Almeria). Here you can enjoy the mountain atmosphere as well as taking a dip in the sea.

📍 [www.andalucia.org](http://www.andalucia.org)





## FISHING VILLAGES IN NORTHERN SPAIN

Throughout Green Spain, in spectacular natural surroundings full of cliffs estuaries, beaches and forests, there are dozens of towns which are proud to maintain their seafaring tradition.

On the rugged coast of the Cantabrian Sea you'll find places with a real seafaring flavour. On a tour of the coastline from **Galicia** (also bathed by the Atlantic Ocean), **Asturias**, **Cantabria** and the **Basque Country** you'll find beautiful villages built around fishing ports that still provide authenticity.

Each region has its own characteristics, but they share amazing fish dishes, seafood and excellent meat. There are also local delights, like *pulpo á feira* (spicy octopus) in Galicia, *fabada* (white bean stew) in Asturias, beef in Cantabria

and *pintxos* (traditional aperitifs) in the Basque Country, all of which deserve to be discovered at your leisure.

**Baiona** (Pontevedra), in the **Rías Baixas**, not only has a magnificent old town, it has the honour of being the first port in Europe where news of the existence of the Americas arrived. On the first weekend in March the Fiesta de la Arribada (Festival of the Arrival) is held to mark this occasion.

Then there is **Combarro**, a charming, small fishing village, with fisherman's and labourer's cottages, *hórreos* (raised

▲ COMBARRO  
PONTEVEDRA

stone granaries), stone crosses and lookout points with amazing views over the Pontevedra Estuary.

Other attractive towns along the Rías Baixas are **Muros** and **Fisterra**, fishing villages which still preserve their traditional buildings, Romanesque churches and with extraordinary sunsets from their ports and beaches.

In the **Rías Altas** there are also fascinating towns like **Muxía** and **Ortigueira** (A Coruña), where they hold the International Festival of the Celtic World on the second weekend in July. From there you can make an excursion to the Loiba cliffs and enjoy a spectacular panoramic view of the Cantabrian Sea, from "the most beautiful park bench in the world". An idea which started out as a petition by a number of visitors in support of a bench and which went viral on social media.

**Estaca de Bares**, the northernmost point on the Spanish mainland, has numerous attractions. These feature the thousands of birds which cross over this key point when migrating, the Pre-Romanesque bridge of Bares (in Manón), a historical lighthouse and beautiful natural landscapes.

There are two extraordinary seafaring towns, **Ribadesella** and **Llanes**, in eastern **Asturias**. The first owes much of its charm to the delightful Sella River and the famous international canoe race down the river which takes place on the first weekend in August and is quite a festival.

In **Llanes**, the colourful "Cubos de la Memoria" or Memory Cubes by the



LLANES  
ASTURIAS

Basque artist Agustín Ibarrola act as a breakwater and really draw your attention. Its other attractive features are the historical old town, a beautiful coastal pathway and a fantastic seaside golf course.

One of the prettiest towns in Asturias is **Cudillero**, with brightly coloured houses nestling between the mountains and the sea. It looks rather like an amphitheatre where you can watch the spectacle of the breaking waves and the fishing boats that set out each day.



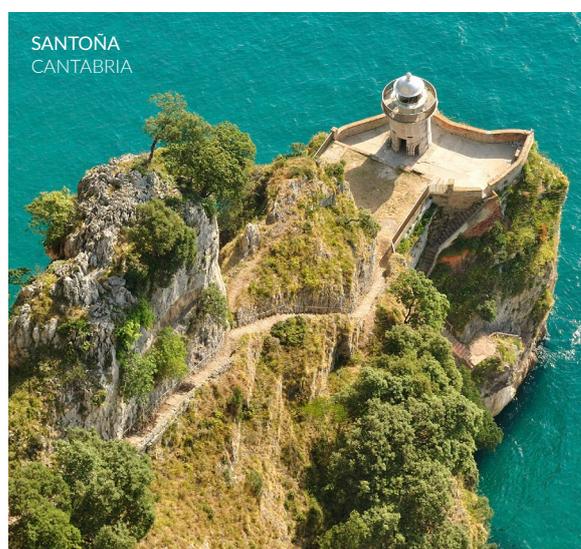
CUDILLERO  
ASTURIAS

In neighbouring **Cantabria**, those visiting **San Vicente de la Barquera** will be met by a large fleet of fishing boats . The town lies on the Saint James Way (World Heritage) and is also the starting point for the Lebaniego Route and has a considerable medieval historical legacy, reminding us of when it was an impregnable bastion in the shelter of the Picos de Europa (Biosphere Reserve).



▲ SAN VICENTE DE LA BARQUERA  
CANTABRIA

**Santoña** and **Laredo** also have a special charm. You can travel between the two towns by boat and enjoy the beautiful surroundings, which include the **Santoña, Victoria and Joyel Marshlands Nature Reserve** and long, golden sandy beaches. We have two recommendations: Try the anchovies in Santoña, a haven for this type of salted products, and watch the **Battle of the Flowers**, a popular festival which takes place in Laredo on the last Friday in August and consists of a parade of carriages decorated with natural flowers.



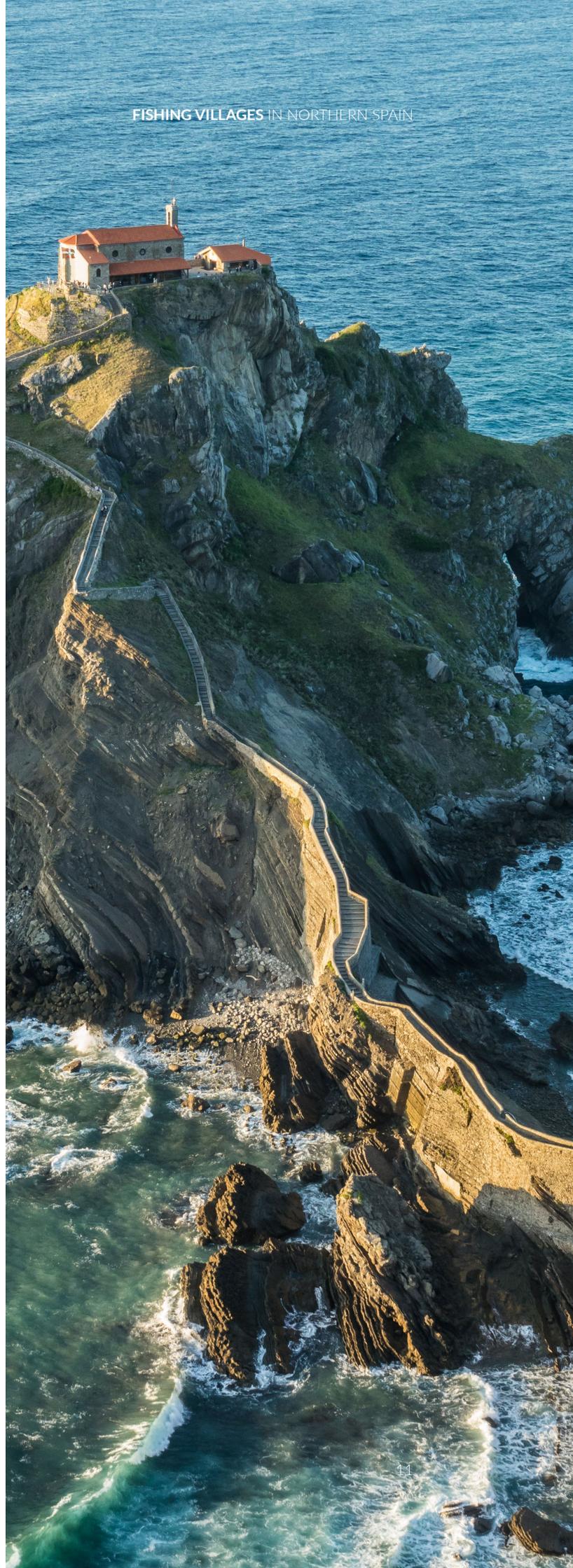


▲ BERMEO  
BISKAIA

In the **Basque Country/Euskadi** you should visit the two sister townships of **Bermeo** and **Elantxobe** (Biskaia), nestling in the spectacular Urdaibai Biosphere Reserve. A stroll through **Bermeo** should include a visit to San Juan de Gaztelugatxe, a 10th century chapel dedicated to Saint John the Baptist, overlooking the sea on an islet and only accessible via a dizzying staircase. An unforgettable image which was used as a location for several seasons of *Game of Thrones*. In **Elantxobe**, **Bermeo** and **Mundaka** (another lovely nearby town, world renowned by surfers), Madalenas Day (22 July) is celebrated with a sea-born pilgrimage where everyone dresses in blue.

**Pasaia**, in the province of Gipuzkoa and very near the city of Donostia/San Sebastián, maintains its seafaring tradition and is architecturally very surprising. There you'll find a cluster of buildings which appear to be suspended over the Pasaia River and the bridge houses, with strange passageways under the buildings.

📍 [www.spain.info/es/descubrir-espana/villas-marineras](http://www.spain.info/es/descubrir-espana/villas-marineras)





## MEDIEVAL TOWNS

If you love history and culture then Spain is the place for you. There are so many enchanting towns with cobble streets, castles and fortresses where time seems to have stood still.

To trace the footsteps of our medieval past, we suggest a unique route crossing the country from the **Basque Country**, on the Cantabrian Sea, to **Extremadura** and the beautiful rural regions of inland Spain.

You can explore towns and cities with an extraordinary monumental heritage dating back to the Middle Ages.

ESTELLA-LIZARRA  
NAVARRE



▲ HONDARRIBIA  
GIPUZKOA

The itinerary starts in **Hondarribia**, a delightful town on the coast of Gipuzkoa, surrounded by a medieval wall. The historical old town opens up like a maze of narrow, cobbled streets with beautiful Basque-style houses and wooden balconies painted in pretty colours.

**Laguardia** (Araba/Álava) preserves its medieval layout, with one building after another displaying coats of arms and Gothic windows. There are more than 300 underground wine cellars, many of which can be visited. In the Alava-Rioja region you'll find some of the best wines in Spain.

The monuments in **Estella-Lizarra** (Navarre) will leave you speechless. It started out from the boom of the Way of Saint James and has an extraordinary artistic heritage featuring the Palace of the Kings of Navarre and the Church of San Pedro de la Rúa.

A stroll through the streets of **Sos del Rey Católico** (Zaragoza) is an experience not to be missed. Take a walk around the outside of the town so you can really appreciate the dimensions of the city walls in one of the prettiest towns in Aragón. This is where Ferdinand the Catholic was born, in the Palace of Sada, an extraordinary building in dressed stone.

The route continues through Castile-León with a stopover in the peaceful town of **Almazán** (Soria). Head for the Puerta de Villa gateway to reach the beautiful Plaza Mayor where you'll find the Palace of the Hurtado de Mendoza family and the Church of San Miguel.

SOS DEL REY CATÓLICO  
ZARAGOZA





▲ PEDRAZA  
SEGOVIA

**Sepúlveda** and **Pedraza** are two of the most important and best-preserved medieval towns in the province of Segovia. On a stroll through the streets of Sepúlveda you can admire the beautiful churches and the numerous houses with coats of arms. It's also an ideal starting point for a visit to the spectacular Hoces del Río Duratón Nature Reserve. If you get the chance, you should visit Pedraza on the Saturdays in early July to experience the special atmosphere of its Candle Light Nights and enjoy the outdoor concerts.

As you enter Castile-La Mancha, on the horizon you'll see the castle of **Sigüenza** (Guadalajara), an impressive fortress converted into a Parador Hotel. The town also has a beautiful Gothic cathedral in which you'll find the Tomb of the Doncel, a masterpiece of funerary sculpture.

In **Consuegra** (Toledo), the outline of twelve traditional windmills together with that of the Castle of La Muela are the unmistakable hallmark of this location which is strongly related to the



▲ SIGÜENZA  
GUADALAJARA

adventures of Don Quixote. In mid-August, the town is adorned to travel back to the 11th century and recreate the battle between the Castilian and Almoravid armies, where El Cid Campeador died.

This route through Spain's medieval towns also includes Extremadura, where the fortified towns of **Coria** (Cáceres) and **Olivenza** (Badajoz) are well worth a visit. Coria features a stone bridge, the Cathedral of Santa María de la Asunción and the 15th-century castle in which the eye-catching keep is still standing.

Olivenza was founded by the Knights Templar and is on the border with Portugal. It has an excellent monumental heritage featuring a castle, converted into the town's Ethnographic Museum, and two city walls. There are two extraordinary churches, Santa María Magdalena and Santa María del Castillo, the latter housing the impressive altarpiece of *Árbol de Jesé* (over 10 metres high), which depicts the family tree of Mary and Jesus.

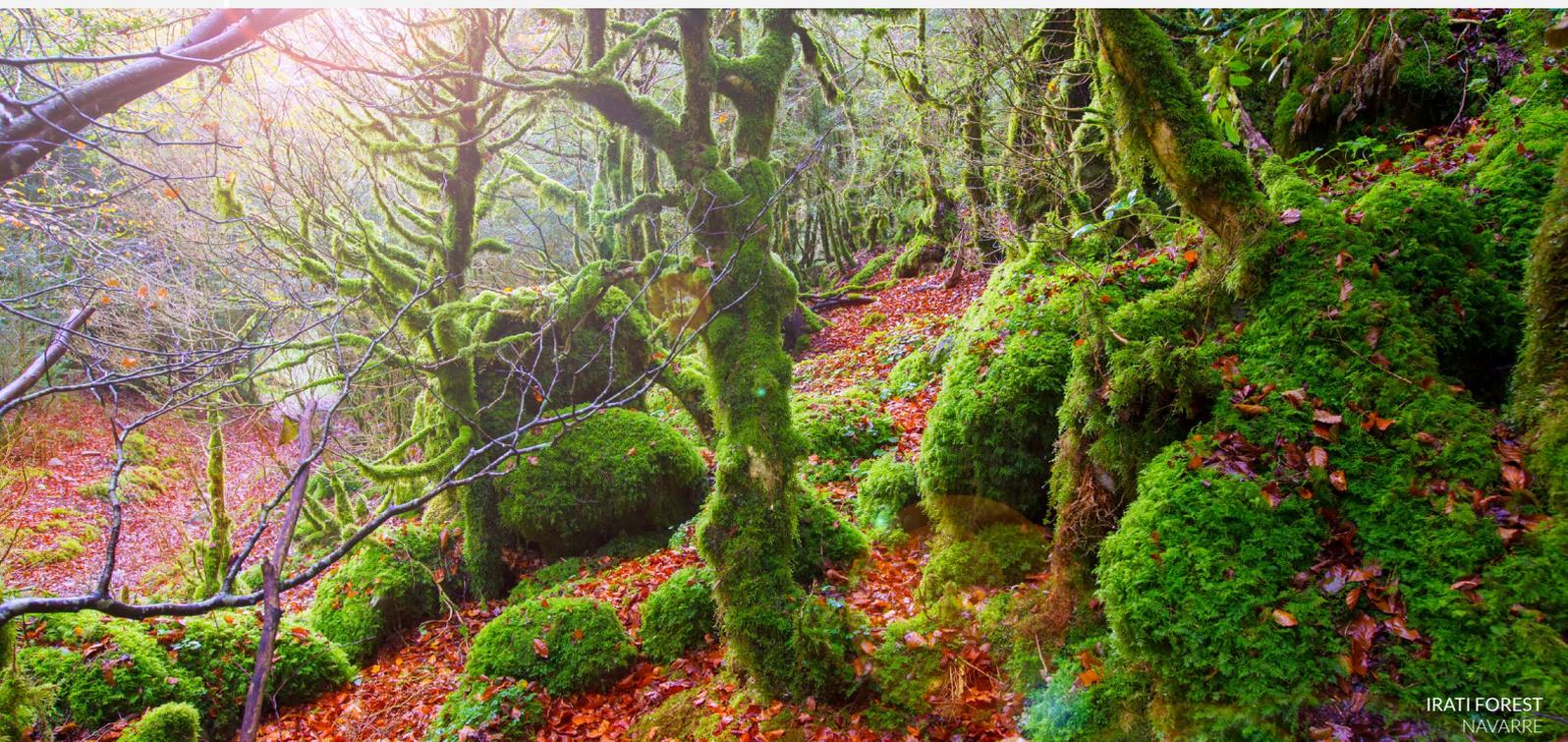
① <https://www.spain.info/es/ruta/ciudades-villas-medievales-espana/>

On the last weekend of October, during Consuegra's Fiesta de la Rosa del Azafrán festival, you can see the "Sancho" windmill in operation. It features the full 16th-century machinery.



## TOWNS IN THE PYRENEES

Wood, stone and slate are the prevailing feature of the towns located in the Pyrenees, a mountain chain shared by the regions of **Navarre**, **Aragón** and **Catalonia** in the north west of mainland Spain. Time has stood still in these towns nestling amongst great mountains, lakes and glaciers.



In the countryside surrounding these delightful towns you'll find numerous protected areas, valleys, wild rivers and ravines which are an invitation to adventure and active tourism. While you're here, you shouldn't miss the overwhelming beauty of the **Selva de Irati** forest, the **Aigüestortes i Estany de Sant Maurici** National Park, the **Monte Perdido** mountain landscape (World Heritage), and the **Ordesa-Viñamala** Biosphere Reserve.

The province of Navarre has great

culinary tradition, here you'll find delightful towns like **Roncesvalles**, the point of entry for the French Route of the Way of Saint James. The majestic Collegiate Church of Santa María de Roncesvalles, originally a hospice for pilgrims and the tomb of King Sancho VII the Strong, is an excellent example of medieval architecture.

**Ochagavía** emerges from amongst mountains, beech forests and rivers, it is one of the most picturesque locations in the Navarre Pyrenees and

features cobblestone streets and the medieval palaces of Urrutia, Iriarte and Donamaría. A little further to the east, in the Valley of El Roncal, **Isaba**, **Roncal** and **Burgui** are three interesting little towns where you should stop to try their excellent cheeses.

📍 [www.visitnavarra.es](http://www.visitnavarra.es)

In the heart of the Huesca (Aragón) Pyrenees you'll find some of the region's prettiest towns. For example, you have **Aínsa**, a beautiful walled town with a medieval layout, an incredible castle, an arched Plaza Mayor and stone coats of arms on the façades of the houses. In September, to commemorate the re-conquest of the town by the Christians, they hold what they call La Morisma (a representation of the battle between Moors and Christians).

At the gateway to the Ordesa y Monte Perdido National Park stands **Torla**, with cobbled streets and great stately houses with thick stone walls, with special mention for Casa Viu.

A little to the north, in the beautiful Tena Valley, you can explore the delights of **Tramacastilla de Tena** and **Sandiniés**. Water is a prominent feature of the landscape, above all in **Sallent de Gállego** and **Lanuzá**, where there is a large reservoir with the same name. This is where the South Pyrenees Festival is held every July, not to be missed by lovers of musical fusion, with a surprising stage floating on the lake.



In such an Alpine territory you can also enjoy snow sports and a little *après ski* in some of Spain's best ski resorts, including **Candanchú** and **Formigal**. Spring and summer are ideal for water sports, mountain biking and hiking, as well as some very attractive mountaineering.

📍 [www.turismodearagon.com](http://www.turismodearagon.com)

On the approach to the Pyrenees, in the province of Girona, there are interesting districts like **Ripoll**. Here you'll find the Monastery of Santa María de Ripoll, a medieval gem dating back to the 9th century with a delightful garden cloister.

For more beauty, you shouldn't miss **Besalú**. It is located near the volcanic area of **La Garrotxa** and its fortified bridge and Jewish Quarter with narrow, winding streets will take you back to the Middle Ages.

Right on the border with France, in the Arán Valley (**Lleida**) there are delightful little towns like **Vielha** and **Mijaran**, with medieval houses and Romanesque and Gothic churches.

While you're there you can sample some exquisite Pyrenean gastronomy. Aragón is known for meat dishes such as lamb (traditional, very young lamb called **ternasco**) and game, as well as vegetables such as pink tomatoes from **Barbastro** (Huesca).

In the Catalan Pyrenees, the cuisine is strongly linked to the mountains and the sea. Here there is a prevalence of casseroles and a great variety of cheeses and cold meats like **butifarra negra** (a type of black pudding). For dessert you have the exquisite honey from the region and **daines**, dry pastries with aromatic herbs.

📍 [www.visitpirineus.com](http://www.visitpirineus.com)





## TOWNS ALONG THE SILVER ROUTE

▲ SANTA CRISTINA DE LENA  
ASTURIAS

Follow the old Roman route which crosses most of western Spain. You could take up the challenge and do it on foot or by bike, as a pilgrim along the **Way of Saint James**, or enjoy the wonderful natural landscapes as you travel along by car or motorbike on what is called the **Autovía de La Plata** motorway.

The two routes, the Roman road and the pilgrim's way, have much in common, like numerous churches where you can learn so much about the historical and cultural heritage of each region.

There are also the remains of Roman fortresses, bridges and settlements along the way. Visit small towns where there are the remains of sections of the original road, which runs from **Andalusia** to **Asturias** via **Extremadura** and **Castile-León**.

The road originally ran from Emerita Augusta (present-day **Mérida**, in Badajoz, whose archaeological ensemble is World Heritage) to Asturica Augusta (**Astorga**, León) but eventually linked Seville in the south with Gijón in the north via the Via Carisa which passed through **Lena**, a district known as the "Gateway to Asturias". There are still remains of its Roman past in this beautiful area surrounded by forests and mountains.

The Church of Santa Cristina de Lena is a pre-Romanesque Asturian masterpiece and a UNESCO World Heritage Site.



▲ HERVÁS  
CÁCERES

To the south, in the city of **León**, you can visit the Gothic cathedral and the collegiate church of San Isidoro; or if you're stopping in **La Bañeza** you can join in the fun during their colourful carnival celebrations when the townsfolk parade around the streets in costume.

Nature is a prominent feature of the route, as you'll see in the medieval town of **Béjar** (Salamanca), surrounded by rivers, green valleys and beautiful snowy peaks. Climb up to the El Castaña shrine, where you can find an image of the town's patron saint, or stroll across the El Bosque Renaissance Garden, which is full of secluded pools, forest groves and terraces with beautiful panoramic views of the surrounding area.



PLASENCIA  
CÁCERES

On its way through Extremadura, the Silver Route takes in delightful towns like **Hervás**, **Casar de Cáceres**, **Plasencia** and **Zafra**. They are all well worth a visit, but the Jewish Quarter in Hervás, the cathedral and medieval wall in Plasencia



PLASENCIA  
CÁCERES

and the Plazas Chica and Grande squares in Zafra really shouldn't be missed.

At the southern end, the Silver Route reaches **Carmona** (Seville), one of the oldest cities in Andalusia, with the remains of a Roman necropolis on the outskirts of the town. Its heritage features churches, palaces and city walls within an old town presided over by the extraordinary image of the Alcázar del Rey Don Pedro (now a Parador Hotel).

📍 [www.rutadelaplata.com](http://www.rutadelaplata.com)



ZAFRA  
BADAJOZ

▼ CARMONA  
SEVILLE



## TOWNS ALONG THE MEDITERRANEAN

The Mediterranean coastline is synonymous with sunshine, the sea and the beach, but there are also small, seafaring towns with white houses and cobbled streets.



▲ PAELLA

The variety of the natural areas along this coast provides an outstanding setting for anyone with an adventurous spirit and lovers of active tourism. Gliding, climbing, cycling, sailing and exploring the fascinating world beneath the waves. Protected natural areas, delightful coves and the friendly local people are a guarantee of an amazing holiday.

From Catalonia to Murcia and Andalusia, you'll find a host of incredible flavours to delight your palate. Each region has its own specialities, but they all have rice and fish in common, both of which play a leading role in a great variety of dishes. **Paella** is the signature dish for a cuisine based on produce from the sea and from the garden.

In the Costa Brava there is a fascinating contrast between the whitewashed buildings and the blue sea in towns like **Cadaqués**, where Salvador Dalí lived for a good part of his life, and **Calella de Palafrugell**, both in the province of

**Girona** (Catalonia). The Playa de Port Bo, with pretty, arched fishing cottages by the sea, is one of those picturesque little places that really shouldn't be missed.

📍 [www.costabrava.org/es/](http://www.costabrava.org/es/)



## TOWNS WITH A SPECIAL CHARM

ALTEA  
ALICANTE



The Costa Blanca has surprises like the little island of **Tabarca**, opposite the beaches in **Alicante**. The town centre, surrounded by 18th-century walls, is well worth walking around and while you're there you can pop into a restaurant to try a traditional **caldero** (local rice dish).

**Altea**, also in the province of Alicante, is like a picture postcard. Nestled under a hill, its coastline features little, white-washed cottages and narrow terraced streets tumbling down to the sea. In the beautiful historical old town there's the parish Church of Nuestra Señora del Consuelo, which has two domes covered with blue and white glass ceramic tiles.

📍 [www.costablanca.org](http://www.costablanca.org)

To the south, in the interior of the Murcia region, you'll find **Caravaca de la Cruz**, a place of pilgrimage for Christians as it has a relic from the True Cross. It is kept in the extraordinary basilica and sanctuary, which looks out over the town from on high, and is brought out on procession at the beginning of May each for year for its own festivities. The celebrations also include the Wine Horses marches, declared Intangible Cultural Heritage.

📍 [www.turismoregiondemurcia.es/](http://www.turismoregiondemurcia.es/)

The Balearic Islands are a land of contrasts. This becomes clear in picturesque towns like **Fornells** (Menorca) and **Pollença** (Mallorca). Whilst the former is a small fishing village on a island declared Biosphere Reserve, with a charming port and white-washed, irregularly-shaped cottages, the latter is a medieval town with cobbled streets and in exuberant natural surroundings. Both are essentially Mediterranean.

📍 [www.illesbalears.travel](http://www.illesbalears.travel)

CARAVACA DE LA CRUZ  
MURCIA



# SURPRISING TOWNS IN THE INTERIOR

Spain is best known for the coast, but there are some very pleasant surprises in the interior. The variety of the landscape is the hallmark of so many very special towns and villages which embody a blend of myth and legend, monumental buildings and events essential to the understanding of Spain's history.

► MADERUELO  
SEGOVIA



In **La Rioja**, surrounded by vineyards and mountains, you can visit towns with great monasteries, walled enclosures and stately buildings. One of the prettiest is **Ezcaray**, an urban complex with balconies full of flowers, palaces and churches like that of Santa María la Mayor.

A little to the south, in **Calahorra**, you can explore the Jewish legacy in its streets, visit the incredible cathedral and the Museo de la Verdura, an interactive centre teaching all about market gardening in the La Rioja region.

📍 [www.lariojaturismo.com/](http://www.lariojaturismo.com/)

If you're looking for places to take you back to the Middle Ages, in the **Castile-León** region there are some beautiful towns. In the province of **Segovia**, you should visit the delightful town of **Ayllón**, especially on the last weekend in July when the town dresses up to commemorate its medieval past.

Nearby you'll find **Maderuelo**, located on a hill above the banks of the Linares reservoir. This small town has preserved several Romanesque churches and chapels.

📍 [www.turismocastillayleon.com/](http://www.turismocastillayleon.com/)

TOWNS WITH A SPECIAL CHARM



The **Madrid Region** has a great selection of attractions apart from the city itself. In the mountains to the north there are beautiful little towns surrounded by nature. One of these is **Patones de Arriba** which features black, slate architecture. The natural surroundings are ideal for active sports like canoeing, hiking, mountain bike and climbing.

Then there are places full of history like **Aranjuez**, famous for its Renaissance Royal Palace and beautiful gardens, whose cultural landscape has been declared World Heritage Site. Its tree-lined streets and spacious avenues lead to important monuments like the Teatro Real, the Casa de Oficios y Caballeros (home to the court during the reign of Carlos III), the Church of San Antonio and the Mercado de Abastos market.

Another little town with special charm in this region is **Chinchón** which has a circular Plaza Mayor, one of the prettiest in Spain. It is surrounded by buildings with linteled galleries and characteristically green wooden balconies.

📍 [www.turismomadrid.es/](http://www.turismomadrid.es/)

The broad plains of **Castile-La Mancha** are ideal for an unforgettable getaway in a land of windmills and legendary castles. In the province of **Ciudad Real**, **Almagro** features a rectangular square where green also plays a leading role. You can take a stroll and visit the 17th-century Corral de Comedias open air theatre where works by authors from Spain's Golden Age are still performed every week. In July it holds the renowned International Classical



▲ ROYAL PALACE  
ARANJUEZ, MADRID

Theatre Festival.

In the province of **Albacete** you can visit the ancient towns of **Alcalá del Júcar** and **Chinchilla de Montearagón**, with houses and caves dug out of the mountains, perfectly adapted to the terrain along steep, narrow streets leading up to the medieval castles overlooking both towns.

📍 [www.turismocastillalamancha.es](http://www.turismocastillalamancha.es)

To the south-east there are the wild landscapes of the **Murcia** plateau region like **Jumilla**, called "La Bella" by the Moors. This is a good starting point for a wine route through the region, although it is also renowned for its gardens and its Iberian, Roman and medieval legacy.

📍 [www.turismoregiondemurcia.es](http://www.turismoregiondemurcia.es)

# TRADITIONAL TOWNS IN THE CANARY ISLANDS

You can visit the Canary Islands any time of the year as the climate is mild and it is always nice and warm.

▲ TAZACORTE  
LA PALMA

Apart from the beaches, volcanic landscapes and the contrast between lush greenery and barren desert, in the eight islands in the archipelago there are also some extraordinary discoveries to be made: traditional hamlets, small towns with white-washed houses and historical town centres with iconic buildings, which tell us all about the islands' history and the friendly, hospitable people.

Discover the traditions of **Fuerteventura** (Biosphere Reserve) in the town of **Betancuria**. This city dates back to the 15th century, it is located in one of the most barren parts of the

island and has an amazing historical town centre.

The island of **La Palma** is also a Biosphere Reserve. Apart from having a night sky which is ideal for star gazing, in La Palma there are also picturesque places like **Tazacorte**, with a town centre full of ancestral 16th- and 17-century houses. You can see the new landscape as created by the 2021 volcanic eruption, and visit the only museum in Europe dedicated to bananas, the Canary Islands' most characteristic fruit and a prominent feature of the landscape around Tazacorte.

**El Hierro** (also a Biosphere Reserve) harbours some great treasures and we're not only talking about the marvellous seabeds which are a haven for divers. The village of **El Pinar** in the south east of the island lies in a rough volcanic landscape and is surrounded by large pine forests. You'll love the peaceful atmosphere, the handicrafts and lookout points like **Tanajara**.

In **Lanzarote** (also a Biosphere Reserve), Teguise is one of its main attractions, with its stately palaces in the narrow streets which converge on the church, the highest building in the town. On Sundays there is a street market with colourful stalls selling handicrafts.

In **Tenerife** there are places with wonderful natural monuments. **Santiago del Teide**, for example, which is very

▼ LOS GIGANTES CLIFFS  
TENERIFE





▲ LA OROTAVA  
TENERIFE

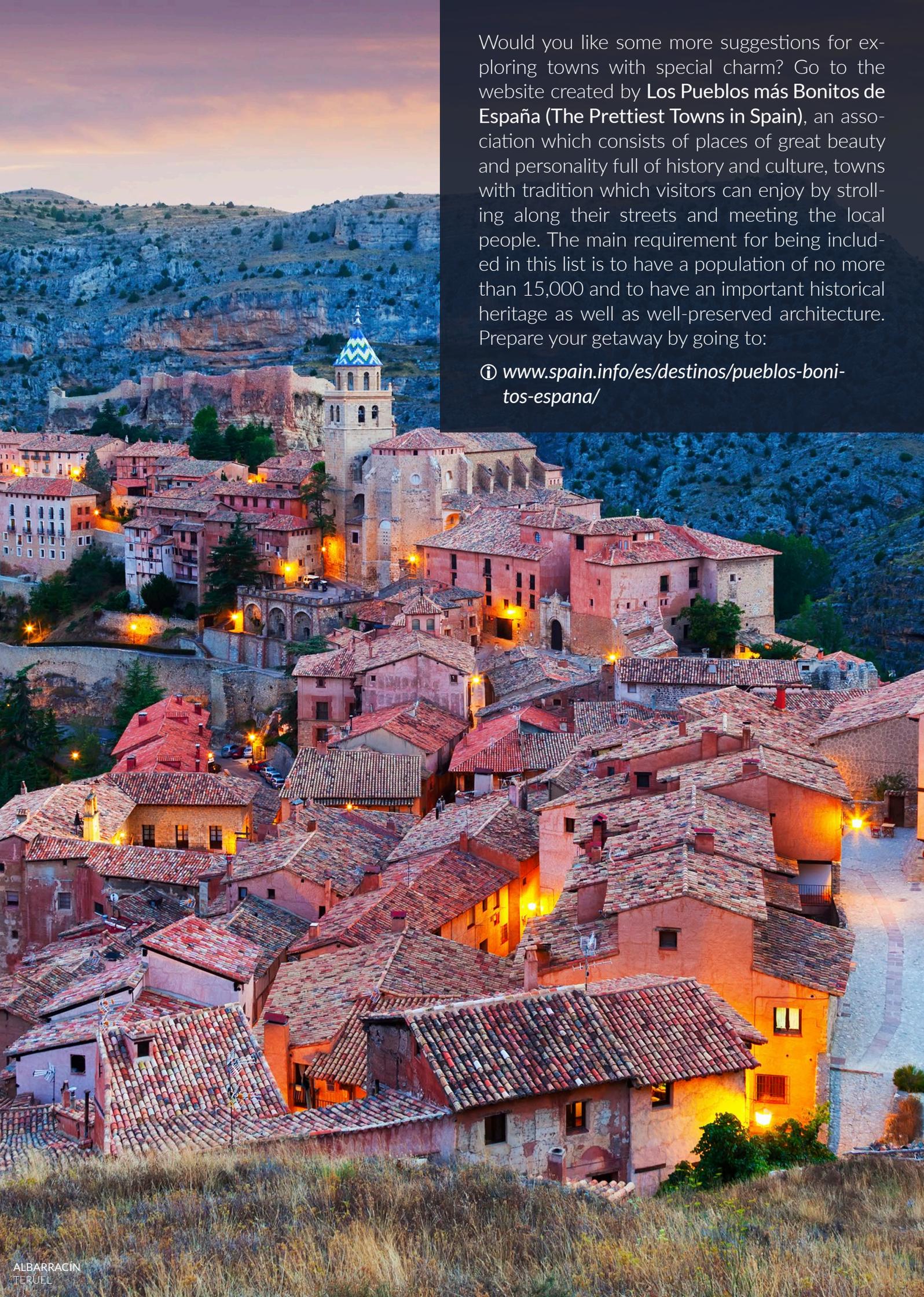
near the cliffs of Los Gigantes, and **La Orotava**, the point of entry for the National Park of El Teide (World Heritage), whose volcano is the highest peak in Spain. Discover this beautiful district with traditions like the Corpus Christi Festival, during which each year the main streets and squares are decorated with carpets made of flowers.

In **Gran Canaria** there are numerous places with special charm. In the north of the island you can stroll amongst the colourful façades in **Arucas** and discover the wonderful Church of San Juan

Bautista. In the south, the buildings in **Puerto de Mogán** are trimmed in bright colours, there are gardens full of flowers and bridges over the sea-water channels, just like a miniature Venice.

Meanwhile, on the island of **Gomera** (Biosphere Reserve), its capital city, **San Sebastián** was an essential stopover for Columbus on his voyages to America. The charming historical town centre is home to the Casa de Colón, or House of Columbus, a museum exhibiting a collection of pre-Columbian art.

📍 [www.holaislascanarias.com](http://www.holaislascanarias.com)



Would you like some more suggestions for exploring towns with special charm? Go to the website created by **Los Pueblos más Bonitos de España (The Prettiest Towns in Spain)**, an association which consists of places of great beauty and personality full of history and culture, towns with tradition which visitors can enjoy by strolling along their streets and meeting the local people. The main requirement for being included in this list is to have a population of no more than 15,000 and to have an important historical heritage as well as well-preserved architecture. Prepare your getaway by going to:

① [www.spain.info/es/destinos/pueblos-bonitos-espana/](http://www.spain.info/es/destinos/pueblos-bonitos-espana/)



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