

SPEND THE NIGHT OR ENJOY A MEAL IN A RENOVATED SPANISH CASTLE, PALACE, FORTRESS, MONASTERY OR CONVENT.

# PARADORES

de Turismo de España

SECOND EDITION

**33**

PARADORES  
ARE FEATURED IN  
THIS EDITION

OPINIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FROM TRAVEL PHOTOGRAPHER MICHAEL C. SNELL

PARADOR DE JARANDILLA DE LA VERA

# PARADORES

OPINIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FROM TRAVEL PHOTOGRAPHER MICHAEL C. SNELL

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THIS PAGE: PARADOR DE JARANDILLA DE LA VERA



**PARADORES** are a chain of hotels owned and operated by the Spanish government that are often located in historic structures – buildings that might otherwise have been difficult to restore and repurpose. Monasteries, palaces and castles now live on as comfortable hotels with wonderful restaurants serving local specialties.

There are nearly 100 Paradores in Spain now, and I have only visited a few. While I can't offer a comprehensive guide, I do want to document my thoughts on the various properties I have stayed in, so that others may discover what I have found to be one of the most unique lodging experiences around.

*Michael C. Snell*



One of the courtyards of the Parador de Santiago de Compostela.

I would recommend consulting the [parador.es](https://parador.es) website for the most up-to-date information on Spain's Paradores. Reservations can also be made directly from the site.

[parador.es](https://parador.es)



**MICHAEL C SNELL**  
PHOTOGRAPHY  
[MICHAELCSNELL.COM](https://MICHAELCSNELL.COM)



Palm trees casting shadows on the walls of the Parador de Zafra.

## A QUICK NOTE ABOUT COVID

The Paradores had to make adjustments during the Covid pandemic just like everyone else. Since I have now made my first post-pandemic visits (Nov. 2022) I thought I'd include a few things I noticed that are now different. Whether they are temporary or not, time will tell.

There are notes posted in most of the Paradores I've seen since 2019 that talk about enhanced cleaning practices, etc. Most of those processes are invisible to guests, though. Paradores have always seemed very clean, and continue to be so.

Food service is where I noticed the most changes. I've always found Parador breakfast buffets to be exceptional. There is always an abundance of choice, and those options always tend to include a few local items so that you can try regional dishes. In my 2022 visits, the buffets were still robust, but most if not all of the hot items have been removed and are now available by order only. Some Paradores had hot menus on the tables, while in others the wait staff would tell you about them.

In a couple of cases, the buffet was entirely missing and the kitchen staff brought a pre-prepared selection of what would normally have been out on the buffet. Pastries, fruit, breads, sliced meats, etc. I always prefer to have the full set of options available, but I have to say that the pre-prepared plates were always great and somehow always included my favorites anyway. I'll also note that in at least one case where I encountered this, it may have had more to do with me being there in the slow season and there weren't enough guests to warrant putting out the full buffet.

You are also now asked (at least in many Paradores) to make reservations for breakfast and other meals when you check in. The bar seems to be the exception where you can seem to grab a sandwich and a drink at any time. For breakfast, you are first shown to your table where you are to take your plate and a small pair of tongs that you will use to take items from the buffet – no fingers, please! Probably not a bad idea, in the long run.



Sirloin of Iberian pig and crunchy sweet potato, ordered at the Parador de Fuente Dé.



Migas, always one of my favorites, here ordered from the hot menu at the Parador de Sos del Rey Católico.



## REGIONS OF SPAIN

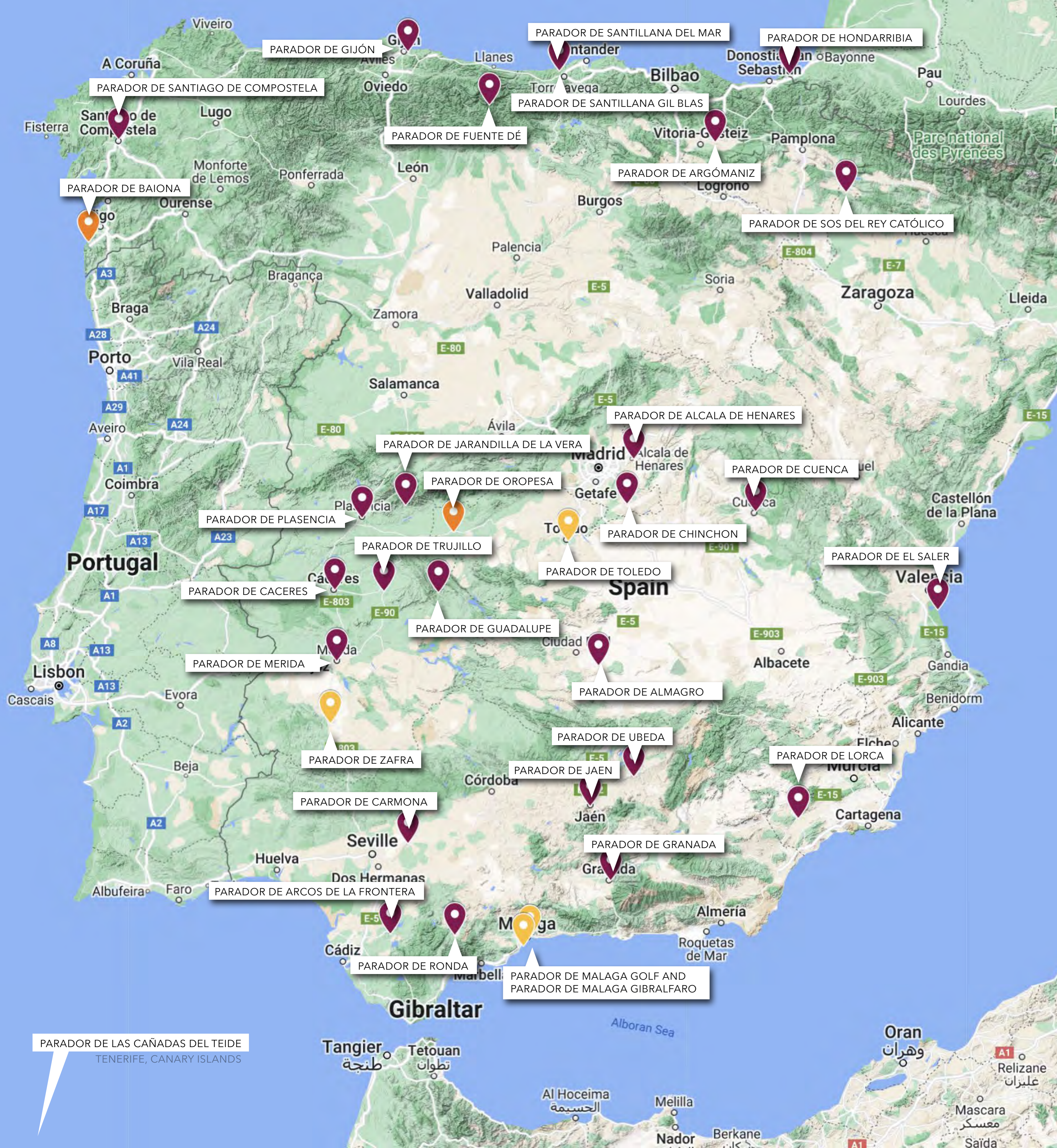
In this book, Paradores are arranged by region. This map will give a general representation of the location and size of each region and a smaller version will appear in the lower right of the region opener pages as a location reference.



BALEARIC ISLANDS



CANARY ISLANDS



- PARADORES IN WHICH I'VE STAYED
- PARADORES WHERE I HAVE ONLY DINED
- PARADORES I HAVE ONLY SEEN



This map shows the Paradores I have visited and that appear in this book. As I encounter more, I will update with new editions. For a map showing the location of *all* Paradores, visit the official Parador website at [parador.es](http://parador.es)



PARADOR DE LAS CAÑADAS DEL TEIDE  
TENERIFE, CANARY ISLANDS

Paradores come in three “flavors” –

■ **ESENTIA**

Restored, historic structures

■ **CIVIA**

Urban hotels in the heart of a city

■ **NATURIA**

Hotels for enjoying the coast or nature

Listings in **WHITE** are Paradores where I’ve overnighted

Listings in **GREY** are Paradores where I’ve only toured or dined

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- Parador de Arcos de la Frontera
- Parador de Carmona
- Parador de Granada
- Parador de Jaén
- Parador de Málaga Gibralfaro
- Parador de Málaga Golf
- Parador de Ronda
- Parador de Úbeda

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- Parador de Sos del Rey Católico ADDED

**ASTURIAS - PAGE 36**

- Parador de Gijón ADDED

**BASQUE COUNTRY - PAGE 40**

- Parador de Argómaniz ADDED
- Parador de Hondarribia ADDED

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- Parador de Fuente Dé ADDED
- Parador de Santillana del Mar ADDED
- Parador de Santillana Gil Blas ADDED

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- Parador de Almagro
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- Parador de Guadalupe
- Parador de Jarandilla de la Vera
- Parador de Merida UPDATED
- Parador de Plasencia UPDATED
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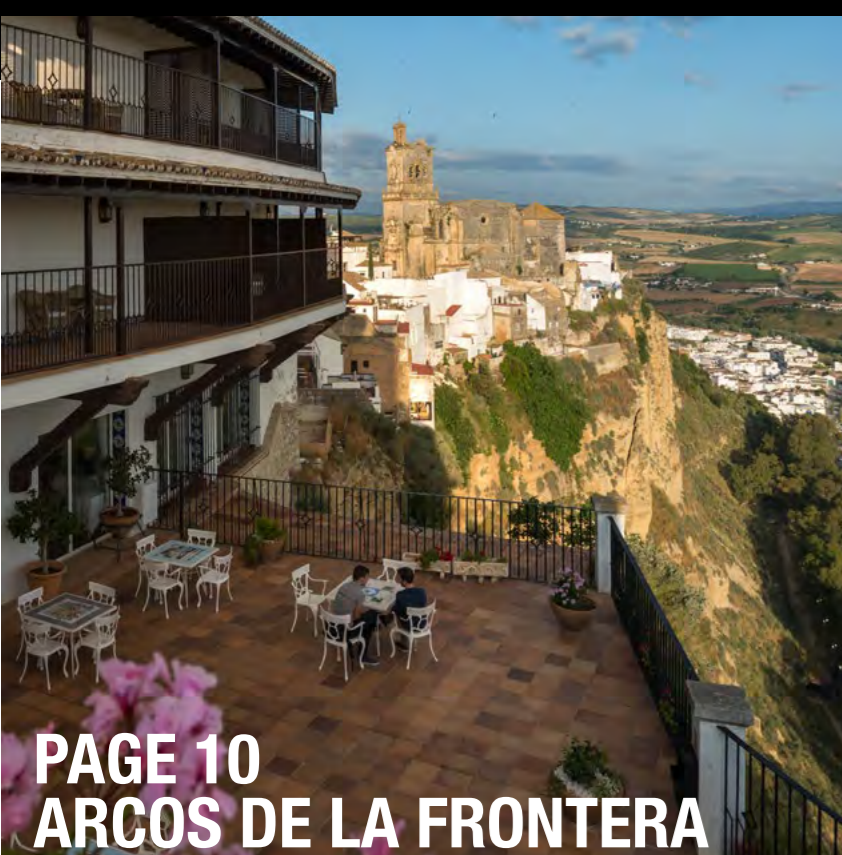
- Parador de El Saler

.....  
**CANARY ISLANDS - PAGE 111**

- Parador de Las Cañadas del Teide

“ADDED” AND “UPDATED” REFER TO LISTINGS THAT ARE NEW TO THIS EDITION OR HAVE BEEN UPDATED DUE TO RETURN VISTS.

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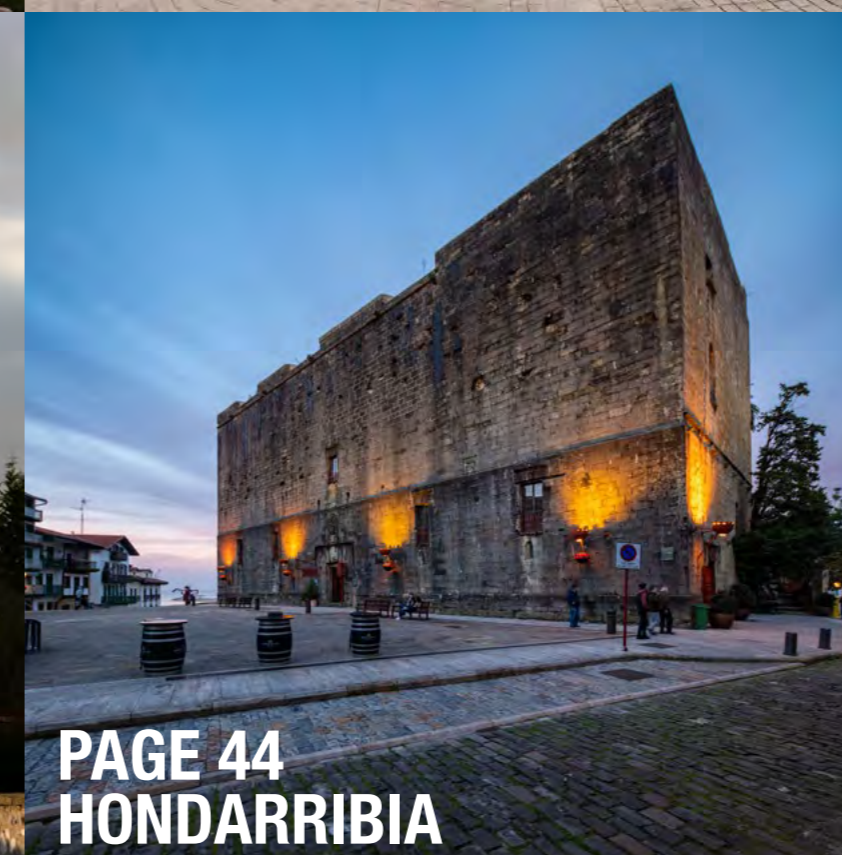
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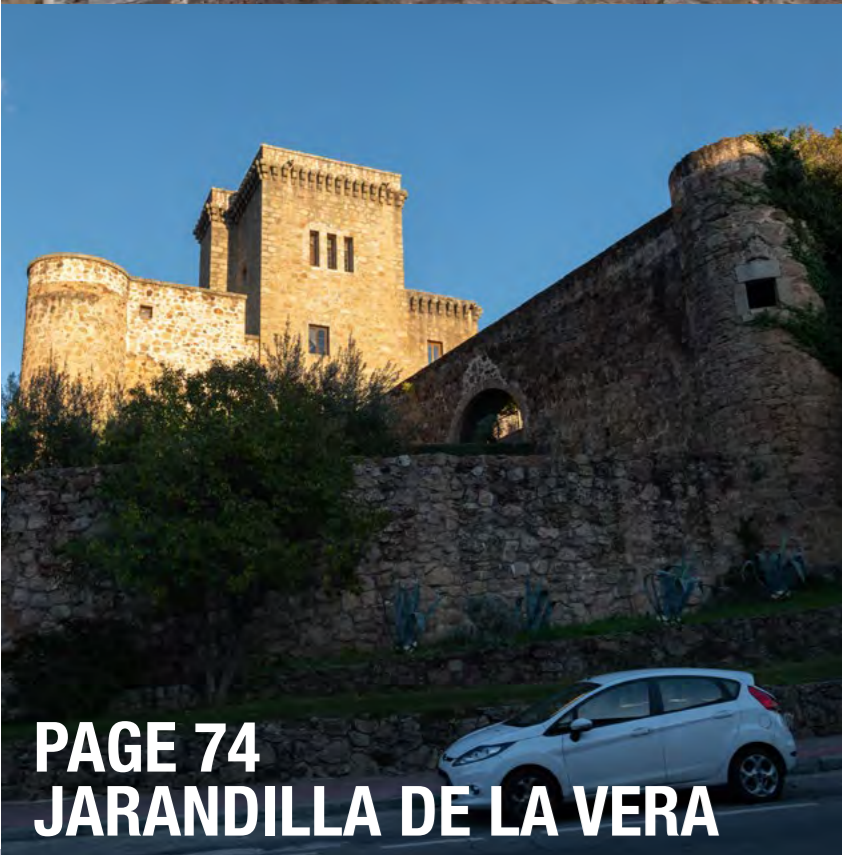
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“**ANDALUSIA** is one of the warmest regions anywhere in Europe. It has a warm, Mediterranean climate with dry, hot summers and mild winters with infrequent precipitation. If there is one characteristic trait of Andalusia's atmosphere, it is its light. The high proportion of hours of sunshine marks the cheerful, hospitable character of the region's people.

The diversity, expanse and ecological wealth of Andalusia bring together the highest peaks of the Iberian Peninsula in Sierra Nevada, large areas of wetland, dense, shady forests, volcanic deserts and all but untouched areas of coastline.

—andalucia.org

# ANDALUSIA



## PARADOR DE ARCOS DE LA FRONTERA

**SITUATED** on the edge of a cliff with stunning views across the Guadalete River valley below, the Parador de Arcos de la Frontera occupies a whitewashed building that was once the home of a local magistrate. The building's history, beyond that, remains a mystery. The town is easily explored on foot, but you might just want to spend the day watching the cloud shadows pass over the fields from your room's balcony or from the outdoor dining areas. The setting is magical.

REGION: Andalusia

PROVINCE: Cádiz

TYPE: Esentia (former magistrate's house)

MY STAY: May 2018

NOTES: If you're driving, the narrow and circuitous route to this Parador can be a challenge – especially when the streets become outdoor patios for the local restaurants. Parking is available in the plaza in front of the Parador, but it is very small and crowded with vehicles.

DETAILS (from [parador.es](http://parador.es)):

Total capacity: 45

Total rooms: 23

Plaza del Cabildo, s/n

11630 Arcos de la Frontera Cádiz

+34 956700500

[arcos@parador.es](mailto:arcos@parador.es)

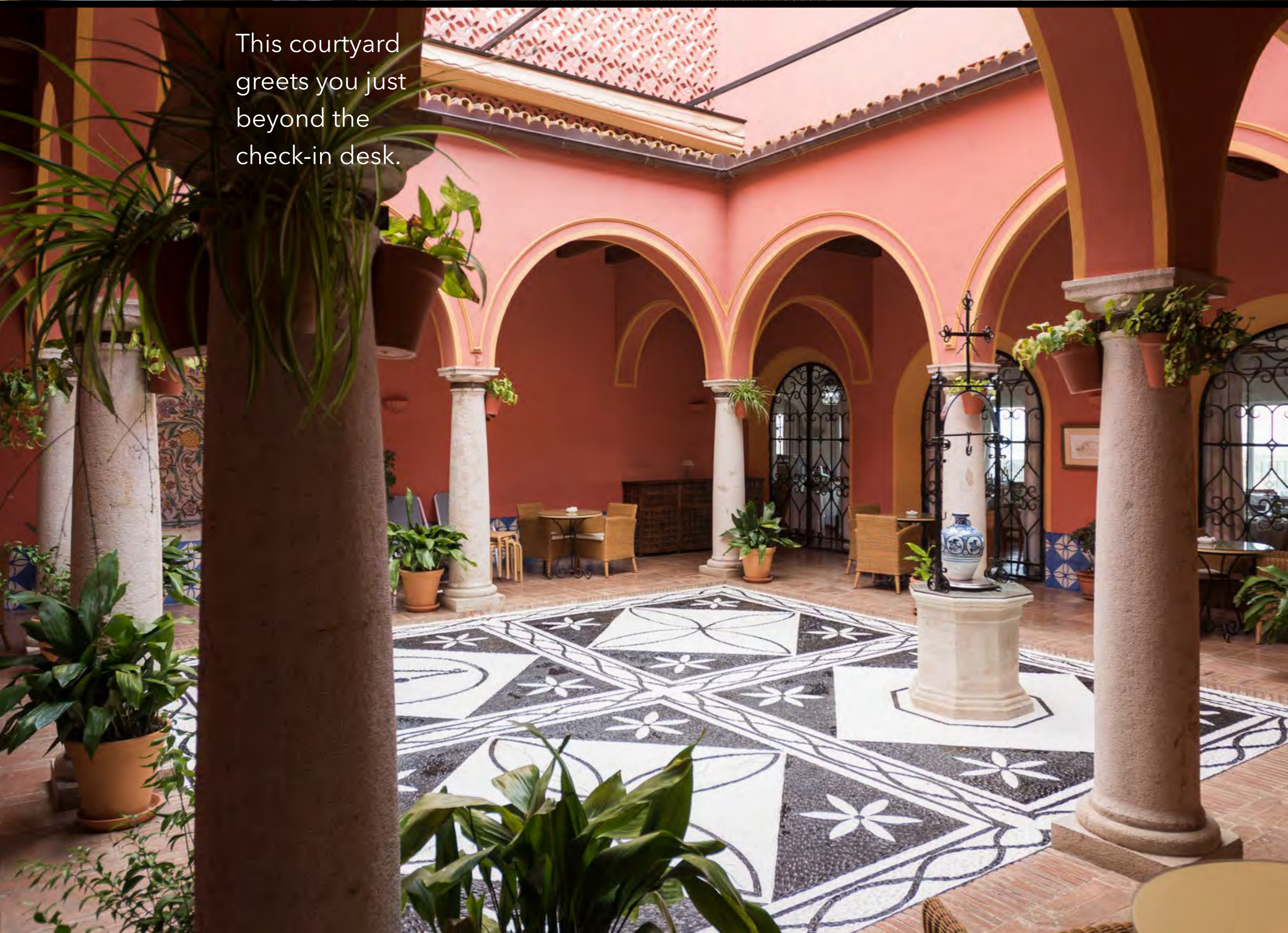
**MORE INFORMATION AT [PARADOR.ES](http://PARADOR.ES)**



We were told we'd been given the best room during our stay in May of 2018 (Room #18) and I believe it was true. We had an unobstructed view of the Church of San Pedro, the valley and the mountains beyond from our corner balcony.



This courtyard greets you just beyond the check-in desk.



Every window in the Parador de Arcos de la Frontera seems to frame a painting.

## FAVORITE THINGS

The view from our balcony. This Parador ranks among my favorites in terms of the setting. Perched as it is on a cliff overlooking the Guadalete River, it's a never-ending show as the light shifts across the valley.



## PARADOR DE CARMONA

**A RETREAT** is one way I would think of the Parador de Carmona. It's near Seville and would make a great base camp for exploring that city, but it's also a peaceful getaway of its own. The Parador de Carmona is adjacent to a walkable old town but feels more rural than you might imagine once you take in the view from your room. It stands high above the surrounding countryside. On the evening we stayed, we were treated to the sights and sounds of shepherds moving their goat herds from field to field for the night. The Parador's public spaces are beautifully designed and, as a guest, you feel like you have private access to a Moorish palace.

**REGION:** Andalusia

**PROVINCE:** Sevilla

**TYPE:** Esencia (built amidst fortress ruins)

**MY STAY:** May 2018

**NOTES:** Spectacular views and a walkable, historic town right outside the gates. Close to Seville (less than half an hour by car), should you find the need to explore further.

**DETAILS (from [parador.es](http://parador.es)):**

Total capacity: 123

Total rooms: 63

Alcázar, s/n

41410 Carmona Sevilla

+34 954141010

carmona@parador.es

**MORE INFORMATION AT [PARADOR.ES](http://PARADOR.ES)**





The gate you drive through upon arrival tells of the fortress that has stood guard on this mountain for centuries.



Inside the Parador de Carmona, the bar and restaurant spaces are both welcoming and grand.





FAVORITE THINGS

This round plaza in Carmona is just one of the many interesting things you'll find as you wander just a short distance from the Parador.

## → PARADOR DE GRANADA

**SPECIAL** doesn't begin to describe this place. The highlight of Granada is the Alhambra – a collection of ancient fortress and palace buildings dating back to 889 A.D. The Alhambra is a magnet for tourists, however, and they are limited to a manageable-yet-still-large number each day. Many hotels lie in the valley below the Alhambra or on the adjacent hillside, but the Parador is actually *within* the Alhambra complex. As a guest, you don't get full access to the palace and fortress at all times, but you are within the gardens and grounds of this special site. That's hard to beat.

REGION: Andalusia

PROVINCE: Granada

TYPE: Esentia (former monastery)

MY STAY: May 2014

NOTES: An incredible location. The Parador lies *within* the Alhambra complex. This Parador has been beautifully renovated and is surrounded by gardens. It's a beautiful walk down into the town, but remember that while it's all downhill, it will be uphill on your return!

DETAILS (from [parador.es](http://parador.es)):

Total capacity: 80

Total rooms: 40

Real de la Alhambra, s/n

18009 Granada Granada

+34 958221440

[granada@parador.es](mailto:granada@parador.es)

**MORE INFORMATION AT [PARADOR.ES](http://PARADOR.ES)**







Fragments of historic tile are found throughout the Parador.



The gardens at the Parador de Granada continue indoors.

## FAVORITE THINGS

The Alhambra looms over the city of Granada and the most famous views of it are from across a narrow valley. This is the scene from the Mirador San Nicolás, one of the most popular viewing spots in the Albaicín neighborhood.

*the Parador is located back here*





## PARADOR DE JAÉN

**I'LL BE HONEST**, we never even had a chance to venture down into the city of Jaén when my wife and I stayed here in May of 2018. Still, we thoroughly enjoyed our time at the Parador de Jaén. The public spaces for the restaurant and lounges are spectacular and you truly have the feeling of living in a castle. Outdoor eating areas and the private balconies embrace the views across the valley to the mountains beyond. The castle ruins next door offer tours and there are gardens and paths to explore that look out over the city and the Nuestra Señora de la Asunción Cathedral far below.

REGION: Andalusia

PROVINCE: Jaén

TYPE: Esentia (built amidst castle ruins)

MY STAY: May 2018

NOTES: Located high above the city of Jaén among the ruins of a series of castles and fortresses on Santa Catalina Hill. Spectacular views and very impressive architecture.

**DETAILS (from [parador.es](http://parador.es)):**

Total capacity: 90

Total rooms: 45

Castillo de Santa Catalina, s/n

23001 Jaén Jaén

+34 953230000

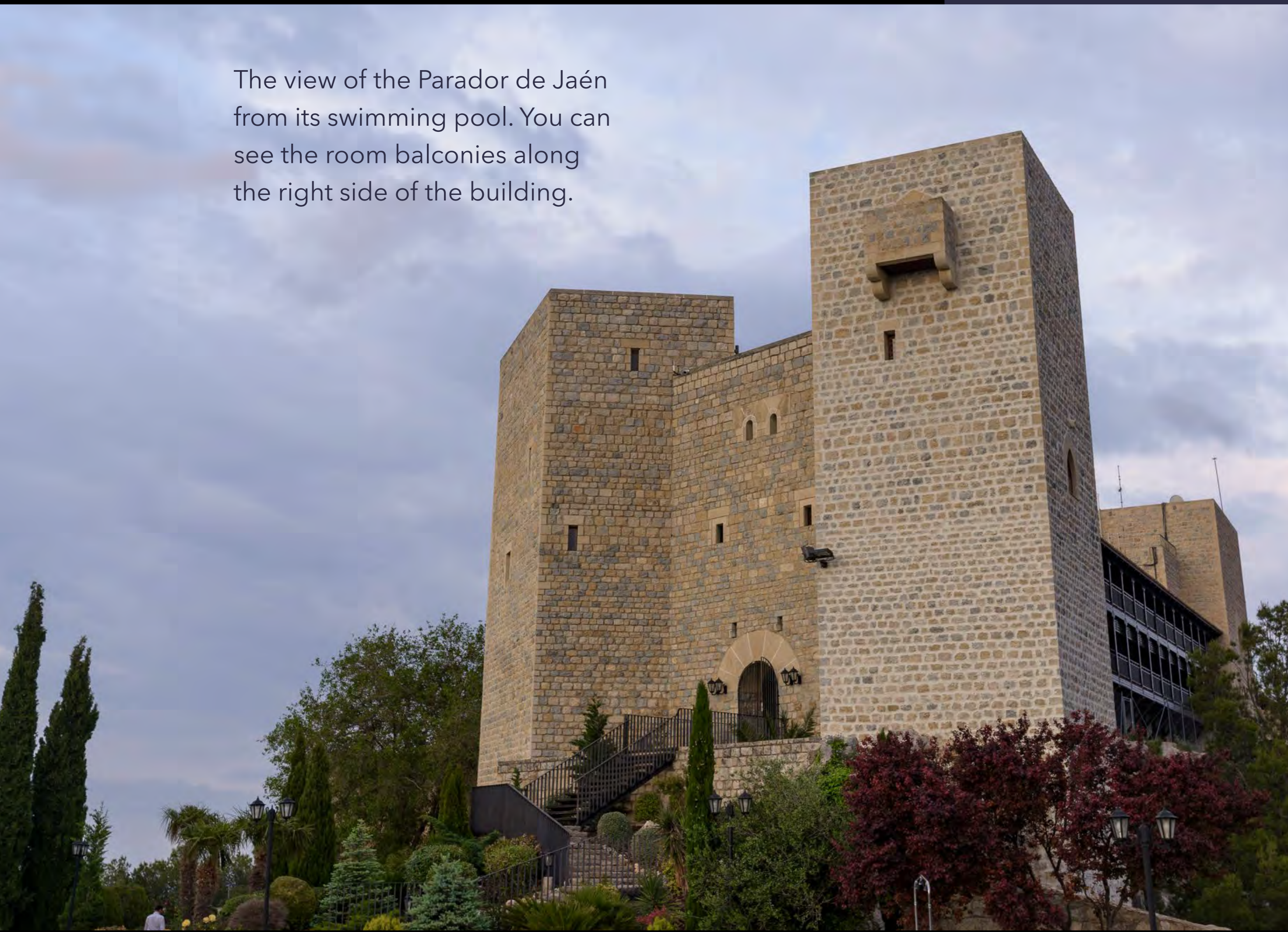
jaen@parador.es

**MORE INFORMATION AT [PARADOR.ES](http://PARADOR.ES)**



The gardens that you encounter on the way to the swimming pool at the Parador de Jaén.

The view of the Parador de Jaén from its swimming pool. You can see the room balconies along the right side of the building.



One of several public spaces within the Parador, this one was set up with table games and lots of comfortable places for reading.



## FAVORITE THINGS

The massive public spaces within the Parador de Jaén are difficult to capture in a photo. Trust me, though, they make for a great place to sit down and enjoy a beer, coffee, wine, or whatever is your preference.



## PARADOR DE MÁLAGA GIBRALFARO

**DRIVING** from Ronda to Jaén, we decided to take the southern route along the Mediterranean coast. We made a point of checking out the two Paradores in Málaga along the way. This one, the Parador de Málaga Gibralfaro, overlooks Málaga from Mount Gibralfaro and offers a stunning view of the city and waterfront. You even have an overhead view of Málaga's bullring. The landscaping and the setting is beautiful and it appeared that there were many indoor/outdoor spaces for dining. Hopefully I'll get the chance to stay here in the future and explore further.

REGION: Andalusia

PROVINCE: Málaga

TYPE: Civia (next to Gibralfaro Castle)

MY STAY: May 2018 (quick stop – no overnight)

NOTES: While not technically an Esentia property associated with an historic site, this Parador does share a hilltop with ruins of a Moorish fortress.

DETAILS (from [parador.es](http://parador.es)):

Total capacity: 80

Total rooms: 40

Castillo de Gibralfaro, s/n

29016 Málaga Málaga

+34 952221902

[gibralfaro@parador.es](mailto:gibralfaro@parador.es)

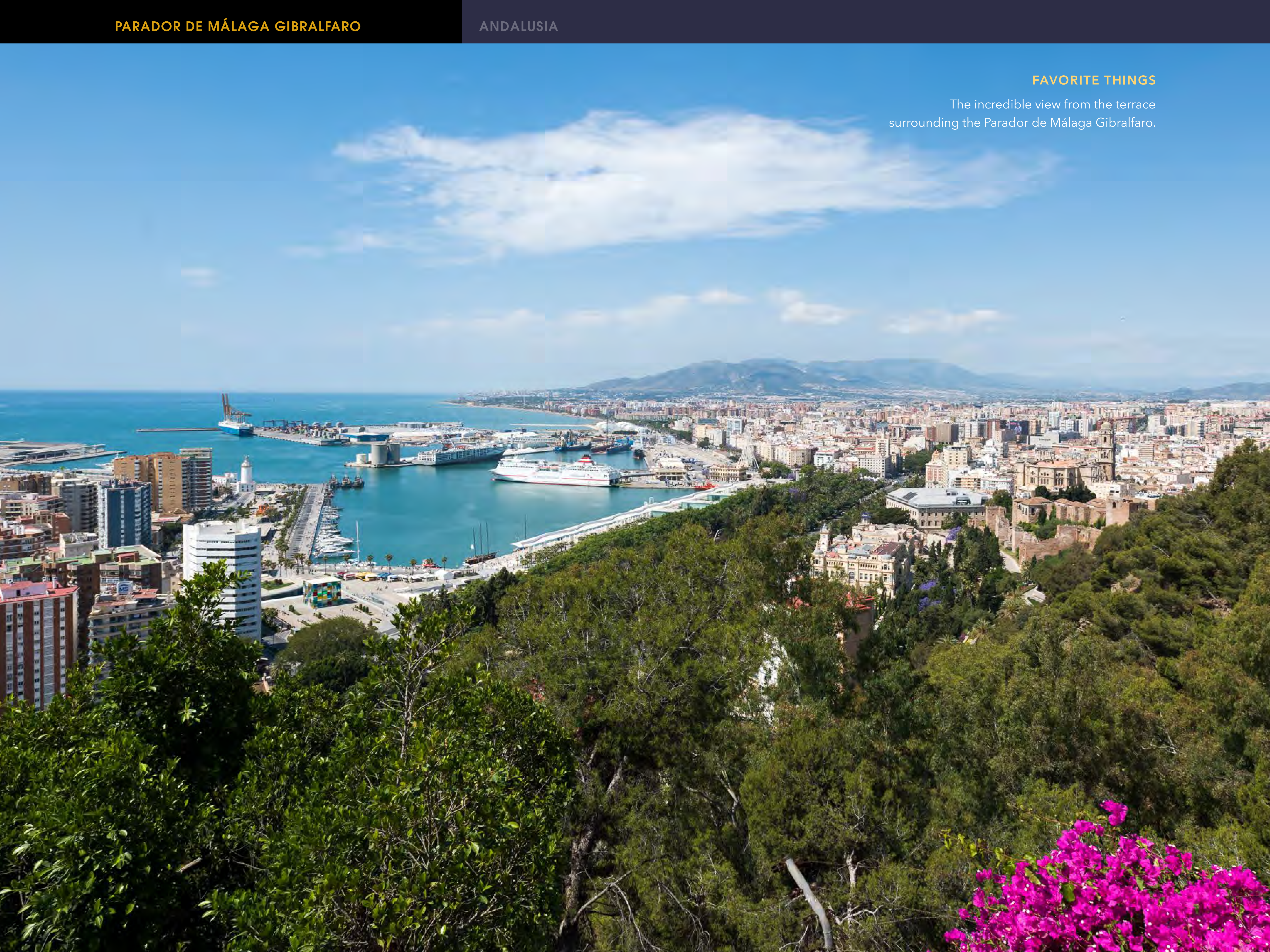
MORE INFORMATION AT [PARADOR.ES](http://PARADOR.ES)





FAVORITE THINGS

The incredible view from the terrace surrounding the Parador de Málaga Gibralfaro.







## PARADOR DE MÁLAGA GOLF

**HONESTLY**, I have no real information on this Parador. I made just a quick stop, only to take a photo, but I'm including it anyway for those who might enjoy golfing in Spain. This is not an historic "Esencia" Parador but a "Naturia" Parador, which are designed to embrace outdoor activity and often feature spas, etc. This Parador appears to be all about golf.

REGION: Andalusia

PROVINCE: Málaga

TYPE: Naturia

MY STAY: May 2018

NOTES: From the website: "boasts an 18-hole course; golf school; 3 putting greens; 2 approach greens; and club, cart and electric car rental. Some guest rooms have private access to the golf course."

**DETAILS (from parador.es):**

Total capacity: 176

Total rooms: 88

Autovía MA-20 (Málaga - Algeciras)

Salida Coín

29004 Málaga Málaga

+34 952381255

malaga@parador.es

**MORE INFORMATION AT [PARADOR.ES](https://www.parador.es)**



## PARADOR DE RONDA

**RONDA** has long been on my list of places I wanted to visit. Let's face it, you see one photo of this famous view and you want to experience it for yourself. It's more touristed than I would like, but how could it not be. What I didn't know years ago, was that the building you see on the cliff to the left of the bridge is the Parador. If you're going to be staying in Ronda, it's hard to imagine a better location than this.

REGION: Andalusia

PROVINCE: Málaga

TYPE: Esentia (former town hall)

MY STAY: May 2018

NOTES: The Puente Nuevo (New Bridge) is the icon of Ronda. To have a place to stay that is perched right on the edge of the gorge next to the bridge is spectacular. Not my favorite Parador in terms of architecture, but among my favorites for its location.

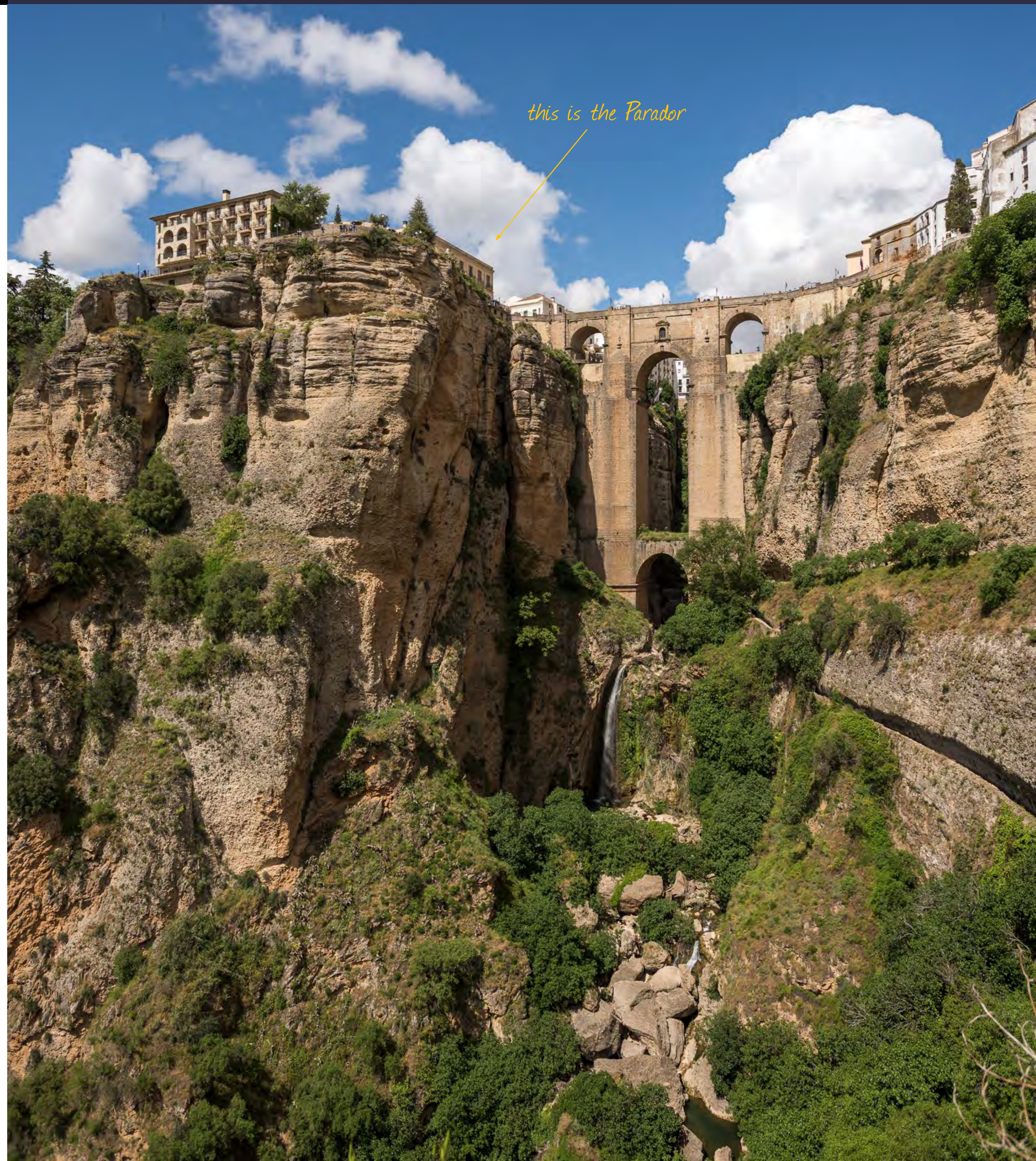
**DETAILS (from [parador.es](https://www.parador.es)):**

Total capacity: 156

Total rooms: 78

Plaza de España, s/n  
29400 Ronda Málaga  
+34 952877500  
[ronda@parador.es](mailto:ronda@parador.es)

**MORE INFORMATION AT [PARADOR.ES](https://www.parador.es)**





The Parador de Ronda is located in a former town hall building but, in my opinion, lacks a lot of the historic feeling that you get in other Esencia Paradores. Still... that location!



#### FAVORITE THINGS

This setting – what better symbolizes Ronda than this gorge and the New Bridge? To stay in a hotel right next to it is fantastic. Oh... and that little window set in the side of the bridge? That used to be a prison cell. I'll stick with staying in the Parador, thanks.



## PARADOR DE ÚBEDA

**ÚBEDA** was unknown to me before I visited in May of 2018. The Parador didn't seem too alluring from the exterior photos I found online but, once I got settled in, I fell in love with this walkable town. The architecture is incredible and there are numerous quiet little plazas scattered about. In the evening the street beside the church you see at the right becomes a buzzing center of activity, lined with bars and restaurants. I think this is now one of my favorite Paradores for the sense of community that exists here. You can quickly settle in and feel like a local. I hope to get back to Úbeda soon to explore further.

REGION: Andalusia

PROVINCE: Jaén

TYPE: Esencia (16th century palace)

MY STAY: May 2018

NOTES: A World Heritage City with some spectacular architecture, including the El Salvador Chapel that sits next to the Parador on Vázquez de Molina Square.

DETAILS (from [parador.es](http://parador.es)):

Total capacity: 72

Total rooms: 36

Plaza de Vázquez Molina, s/n

23400 Úbeda Jaén

+34 953750345

[ubeda@parador.es](mailto:ubeda@parador.es)

MORE INFORMATION AT [PARADOR.ES](http://PARADOR.ES)





FAVORITE THINGS

This view from my window of the El Salvador Chapel, built for burial of Francisco de los Cobos, secretary of the Emperor Charles V.



PHOTO: Landscape near Sos del Rey Católica.

“ **ARAGON** is bisected by the river Ebro, which runs west-east through the province of Zaragoza. It is also home to the highest mountains of the Pyrenees.

ARAGON







## PARADOR DE SOS DEL REY CATÓLICA

**ARRIVING** on a chilly, drizzly day I had the village to myself as I walked the narrow, Medieval streets. I was there off-season and it was incredibly quiet. I saw no other people on my way up to take in the views from the top of the 12th century castillo, and only saw one small tour group as I walked back down. It appears that there are more hotels and restaurants on the far side of the village and it may get more lively in-season, but I loved the quiet and felt as though I had been transported back in time.

REGION: Aragon

PROVINCE: Zaragoza

TYPE: Esentia (Medieval Aragonese manor house)

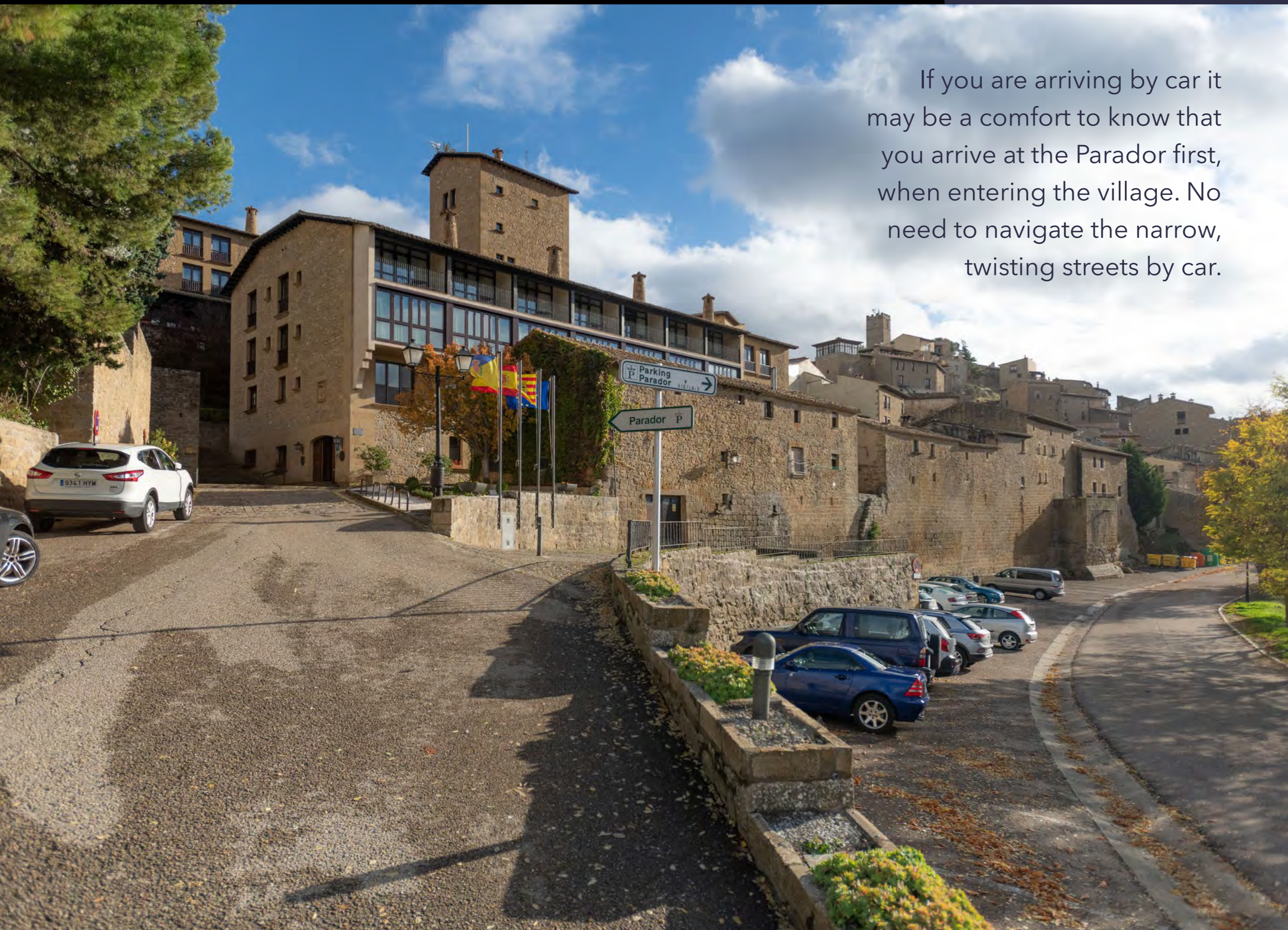
MY STAY: November 2022

NOTES: The Parador itself seems huge, but I didn't have the time to fully explore it. The dining area has an expansive outdoor deck with wonderful views.

Arquitecto Sainz de Vicuña, s/n 50680  
Sos del Rey Católico  
+34 948888011 y +34 948 370 440  
sos@parador.es

MORE INFORMATION AT [PARADOR.ES](https://www.parador.es)





If you are arriving by car it may be a comfort to know that you arrive at the Parador first, when entering the village. No need to navigate the narrow, twisting streets by car.



The view from the window of my room. The floor above me had balconies that were facing the same direction.



One of the most well-preserved Medieval towns I've visited in Spain. There have been renovations, but they have been done with care and haven't spoiled the timeless feel of the place

FAVORITE THINGS

The town itself is spectacular. Small and walkable and stuck in time. Its setting atop a rocky nob provides for great views as well.



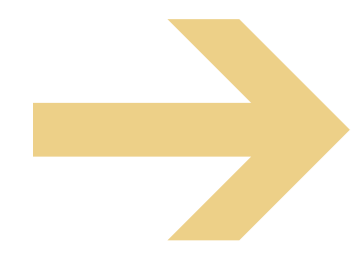
“**ASTURIAS** is situated in a mountainous setting with vast greenery and lush vegetation, making it part of Green Spain. The region has a maritime climate. It receives plenty of annual rainfall and little sunshine by Spanish standards and has very moderated seasons, most often averaging in the lower 20s celsius. Heatwaves are rare due to mountains blocking southerly winds. Winters are very mild for the latitude, especially near sea level.

–wikipedia.org



# ASTURIAS





## PARADOR DE GIJÓN

**LOCATION** is a key part of what I like about this Parador. That, and the striking reddish color the old mill building has been painted. The location is right in the city, not far from the beach, but thanks to the Isabel La Católica Park that surrounds it on two sides, this Parador feels more like a country home. Inside, it is fairly simple and typical of Parador remodels. It does maintain elements of its rustic beamed construction in the bar area but it isn't as palacial feeling as other Paradors that... well... are actually be built inside former palaces. Obvious, I suppose.

**REGION:** Asturias

**PROVINCE:** Asturias

**TYPE:** Esentia (100-year-old mill house)

**MY STAY:** November 2022

**NOTES:** Adjacent to the Isabel La Católica Park, and a short walk through that park leads to the beach of San Lorenzo.

Avenida Torcuato Fernández Miranda,  
15 33203 Gijón  
Register number: H-AS-9901  
+34 985370511  
gijon@parador.es

**MORE INFORMATION AT [PARADOR.ES](https://www.parador.es)**



From the Parador, you can stroll through the Isabel La Católica Park to reach the beach of San Lorenzo and the Cantabrian Sea.



The weather was a bit grey during my visit, but the reddish hue of the old mill building that houses this Parador seemed to warm every space.



FAVORITE THINGS

Proximity to the beach promenade while having the feeling of being far from the city is one of this Parador's charms. You're in the city, but surrounded by nature.

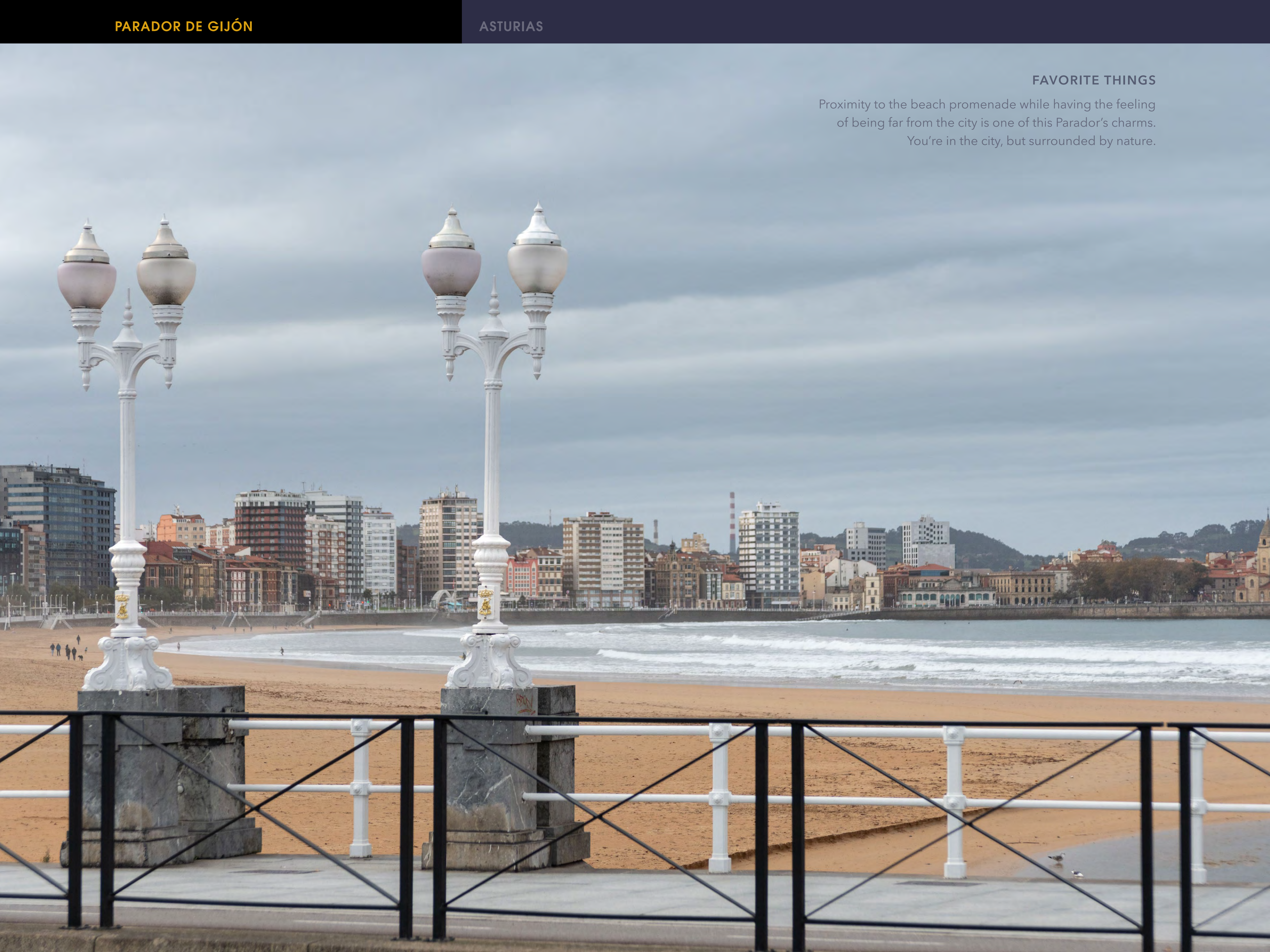


PHOTO: Sunset over the countryside surrounding the village of Argómaniz.

“ **THE FIRST KNOWN INHABITANTS** of the Basque Country date from the Lower Palaeolithic, approximately 200,000 years ago. Basque (Euskara) is one of the oldest languages in Western Europe, preceding the Indo-European tongues. Various scholars claim that there exist nexus between Basque and Iberian, Berber or some of the languages found around the Caucasus, but the origins of Euskara remain a mystery.

– eke.eus

# BASQUE COUNTRY





## → PARADOR DE ARGÓMANIZ

**THE GUEST ROOMS** in this Parador are new construction but connected to this original Renaissance palace that houses a restaurant and bar on the ground floor, meeting rooms above that. A massive breakfast room occupies the entire top floor with the round windows. The experience isn't the same as in Paradors that are built completely within ancient walls, but at least these public spaces give you that historic flavor and the rooms are not compromised by odd floorplans, lack of elevators, etc. The best of both worlds – convenience for the personal spaces but grand public spaces for dining, etc.

REGION: Basque Country

PROVINCE: Álava

TYPE: Esentia (Renaissance palace)

MY STAY: November 2022

NOTES: A good place to stay if you want to be near Vitoria-Gasteiz, but not in the city. It's a short 20-minute cab ride to the heart of the old town.

Ctra. N-1, km 363 01192 Argómaniz  
+34 945 29 32 00  
argomaniz@parador.es



This view of the approach to the Parador de Argómaniz shows the original palace (right) joined to the modern construction of the rest of the Parador check-in and guest rooms (left).



My room had a small private patio space.



This seating area for the bar is integrated into the original entrance to the palace. Historic photos hang on the walls to show how the pre-renovated spaces looked.

FAVORITE THINGS

I liked being close to the city of Vitoria-Gasteiz, but also being far enough away to get these expansive views of the countryside. This is the view from the front lawn of the Parador.



## → PARADOR DE HONDARRIBIA

**WHAT APPEARS** to be a giant block of stone from the approach, the Parador de Hondarribia houses one of the most amazing interior spaces I've encountered in a Parador. The front portion of the building was constructed in the 10th century as a military defence on the River Bidasoa. On the other side of the river is France. While it looks nearly windowless from the front, an interior courtyard brings light into most of the interior spaces. You can explore this building repeatedly and still find new spaces – including some outdoor patios on the back that overlook the river.

REGION: Basque Country

PROVINCE: Gipuzkoa

TYPE: Esentia (10th century castle)

MY STAY: November 2022

NOTES: Challenging to get to by car, but worth the effort. Once you're parked in the gated lot, you can easily be on foot the rest of your stay as you are right in the heart of the old town.

DETAILS (from [parador.es](https://www.parador.es)):

Pza. de Armas, 14 20280 Hondarribia

+34 943645500

[hondarribia@parador.es](mailto:hondarribia@parador.es)

MORE INFORMATION AT [PARADOR.ES](https://www.parador.es)





The concrete pillar seen in the lower right is an elevator that takes you down to the lower part of Hondarribia from the back of the Parador, seen on the left.



The inside of this Parador contains many surprises considering its plain exterior. The bar/restaurant area is seen in the photo at the lower left.





**FAVORITE THINGS**

The location of the Parador de Hondarribia right in the middle of a walkable, albeit hilly, old town.

PHOTO: The view from the Mirador Vega del Pas in Cantabria.

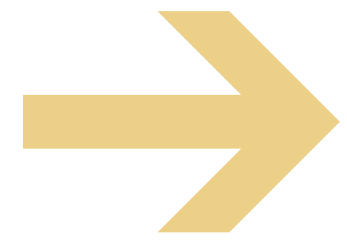
“ **CANTABRIA** belongs to Green Spain, the name given to the strip of land between the Bay of Biscay and the Cantabrian Mountains, so called because of its particularly lush vegetation, due to the wet and temperate oceanic climate. The climate is strongly influenced by Atlantic Ocean winds trapped by the mountains; the average annual precipitation is about 1,200 mm (47 inches).

–wikipedia.org



# CANTABRIA





## PARADOR DE FUENTE DÉ

**STUNNING** is probably the best word to describe the setting of this Parador. Nestled into the Picos de Europa National Park, you only have to look out your room's window for amazing mountain views. In my two nights here I experienced all seasons with rain turning to snow overnight and burning off again into a gorgeous autumn day. There's a cable car that takes you over the Parador and up the mountain, or you can drive to nearby Potes to experience a beautiful mountain village full of shops and restaurants.

REGION: Cantabria

PROVINCE: Cantabria

TYPE: Naturia

MY STAY: November 2022

NOTES: Not in a historic structure, but forgivable for the location in the heart of the Picos de Europa.

**DETAILS (from [parador.es](https://www.parador.es)):**

Fuente Dé, s/n 39588 Fuente Dé,  
Camaleño

+34 942736651

[fuentede@parador.es](mailto:fuentede@parador.es)

**MORE INFORMATION AT [PARADOR.ES](https://www.parador.es)**





The view from my window as snow dusted the mountains.



The Parador de Fuente Dé has a comfortable lodge-like feel inside and the restaurant is excellent, with a good selection of local foods.

FAVORITE THINGS

The view has to be the highlight of this Parador, although I think it would also make a good basecamp for anyone wanting to hike and explore the Picos de Europa.





## PARADOR DE SANTILLANA DEL MAR

**TWO** Paradores are located in the town of Santillana del Mar. This one I have not stayed in, but have stayed in the other, which is shown on the following page. From the Parador.es website's description: *The Parador de Santillana del Mar is a new building which, while respecting the town's surroundings, reproduces popular mountain architecture and has a large, pleasant terrace. It also has a restaurant, a bar, a sauna and a garden. Its spacious rooms, which are large-capacity and boast natural light, have the services and equipment necessary to hold all kinds of events.*

REGION: Cantabria

PROVINCE: Cantabria

TYPE: Esentia (Modern construction)

MY STAY: n/a

NOTES: While not an historic building, it is well-located and blends in with the historic architecture.

DETAILS (from [parador.es](https://www.parador.es)):

Plaza Ramón Pelayo, s/n 39330

Santillana del Mar

+34 942818000

[santillana@parador.es](mailto:santillana@parador.es)

MORE INFORMATION AT [PARADOR.ES](https://www.parador.es)





## PARADOR DE SANTILLANA GIL BLAS

**TOURISTS** are plentiful in the town of Santillana del Mar, also known as “the Town of Three Lies” since it is not a holy site, it’s not flat and isn’t situated on the sea. The town is protected with the designation of an Historic-Artistic Site, however, and is a joy to explore on foot. There are two Paradores in this town, but I recommend this one for its historic nature and ambiance. The Parador de Santillana Gil Blas takes its name from a the main character in a novel written by Alain-René Lesage published in the early 18th century.

REGION: Cantabria

PROVINCE: Cantabria

TYPE: Esentia (17th century manor house)

MY STAY: November 2022

NOTES: Well situated in a small historic town. Near to the prehistoric paintings in the Altamira Caves (A short drive, not walking distance).

DETAILS (from [parador.es](https://www.parador.es)):

Plaza Ramón Pelayo, 11 39330

Santillana del Mar

+34 942028028

[santillanagb@parador.es](mailto:santillanagb@parador.es)

MORE INFORMATION AT [PARADOR.ES](https://www.parador.es)





The lobby of the Parador de Gil Blas (above) and one of the dining areas and courtyard (below).



Dark wooden timbers of the main stairway leading to the guest rooms. There is also an elevator, but it is quite small, as are many in Spain.

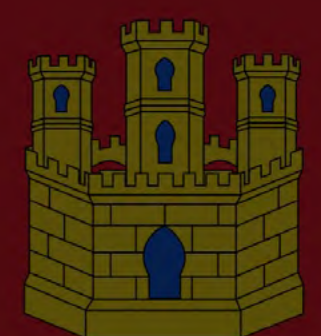
**FAVORITE THINGS**

The location of this Parador is excellent. The front door is on the Plaza Mayor and the back door leads directly onto this main street that takes you down to the 11th century Romanesque church.

“ **THIS IS A LAND** famous for its arts and crafts, for the unique monuments to be seen in its towns and cities, and for being the setting for the adventures of the famous literary hero Don Quixote of La Mancha. Any trip to this area in inland Spain should definitely include a visit to its World Heritage cities such as Cuenca with its famous Hanging Houses, and Toledo with its cathedral and Alcázar fortress. If you like culture and history, you're bound to enjoy its four Archaeological Parks, some of the oldest examples of rock art in Spain, and events such as the International Classical Theatre Festival in Almagro.

– [spain.info](http://spain.info)

# CASTILLA-LA MANCHA





## PARADOR DE ALMAGRO

**PEACEFUL** is a good word to describe my stay at the Parador de Almagro. Night was falling as I arrived and the only sound that was coming through my window was the fountain in the courtyard it overlooked. I walked to the Plaza Mayor to find dinner and it was a leisurely stroll of about five minutes. There are several restaurants encircling the plaza along with a very nice lace-making museum with an accompanying shop. The city also holds an International Classical Theatre Festival every July.

**REGION:** Castilla-La Mancha

**PROVINCE:** Ciudad Real

**TYPE:** Esentia (16th century monastery)

**MY STAY:** May 2018

**NOTES:** Quiet and peaceful retreat in a lovely historic district. Very walkable but not overly lively (at least when I visited).

**DETAILS (from [parador.es](http://parador.es)):**

Total capacity: 108

Total rooms: 54

Ronda San Francisco, 31

13270 Almagro Ciudad Real

+34 926860100

[almagro@parador.es](mailto:almagro@parador.es)

**MORE INFORMATION AT [PARADOR.ES](http://PARADOR.ES)**



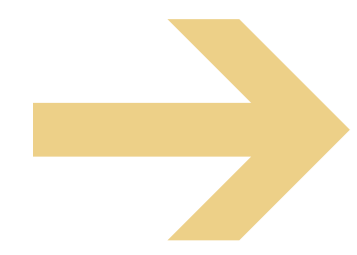




FAVORITE THINGS

Within easy walking distance of the Parador de Almagro is the charming Plaza Mayor with its unique covered arcade and green-painted window casings on the upper floors.





## PARADOR DE CUENCA

**VIEWS** of the Hanging Houses across the Huécar River Gorge can be had from many rooms. Thanks to the pedestrian-only San Pablo Bridge, the Plaza Mayor, Casas Colgadas (Hanging Houses), and many other attractions are just a short walk away.

**REGION:** Castilla-La Mancha

**PROVINCE:** Cuenca

**TYPE:** Esentia (former monastery)

**MY STAY:** November 2019

**NOTES:** Stunningly located across the Huécar Gorge from the hanging houses of the old town.

**DETAILS (from [parador.es](https://www.parador.es)):**

Total capacity: 126

Total rooms: 63

Subida a San Pablo, s/n  
16001 Cuenca Cuenca  
+34 969232320  
[cuenca@parador.es](mailto:cuenca@parador.es)

**MORE INFORMATION AT [PARADOR.ES](https://www.parador.es)**





FAVORITE THINGS

The spectacular views of the Casas Colgadas (Hanging Houses) across the gorge from the Parador.





## PARADOR DE OROPESA

**THIS PARADOR** looms over the countryside and I'd seen it on more than one occasion when driving between Madrid and Extremadura. I've yet to stay here, but I did make a stop for lunch once on the way to Trujillo. The architecture is stunning and the surrounding Medieval town looks like it would be fun to explore. Next time I'll try and stay longer.

**REGION:** Castilla-La Mancha

**PROVINCE:** Toledo

**TYPE:** Esentia (ancestral home)

**MY STAY:** No overnight – just lunch

**NOTES:** It appears that it would very much feel like staying in a castle. Lots of shops and restaurants lining the surrounding streets.

**DETAILS (from [parador.es](https://www.parador.es)):**

Total capacity: 93

Total rooms: 48

Pza. Palacio, 1

45560 Oropesa Toledo

+34 925430000

[oropesa@parador.es](mailto:oropesa@parador.es)

**MORE INFORMATION AT [PARADOR.ES](https://www.parador.es)**





The Capilla de San Bernardo as seen from the Parador de Oropesa.

AT THE RIGHT: a tile panel on the wall of the Parador de Oropesa describes the Lesser Kestrel.



**CERNÍCALO PRIMILLA**

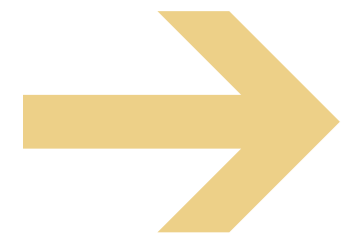
(FALCO NAUMANNI)

AVE DE PRESA, QUE ANIDA EN LOS HUECOS DE ESTE EDIFICIO Y AMENAZADA DE EXTINCIÓN.

-LONGITUD - 29 A 32 CM	-ALIMENTACIÓN - INSECTOS
-ENVERGADURA - 58 A 72 CM	-MIGRADOR
-PESO - ENTRE 90 - 200 GRS	-PONE DE 2 A 6 HUEVOS

ES LA MENOR DE LAS RAPACES DIURNAS IBÉRICA Y TAMBIÉN LA QUE VIVE EN MAS ESTRECHO CONTACTO CON EL HOMBRE.

*Tomás Santos* 



## PARADOR DE TOLEDO

**SITUATED** across the Tagus River from the city of World Heritage city of Toledo provides for stunning views from the Parador's outdoor dining area as well as from many of the rooms themselves. While not located within walking distance of most of Toledo's attractions, the sunrise and sunset views overlooking the skyline make up for it, I'm sure.

**REGION:** Castilla-La Mancha

**PROVINCE:** Toledo

**TYPE:** Esencia

**MY STAY:** October 2019 (drinks on the patio only)

**NOTES:** Get a room with a balcony overlooking the city, if possible. If not, make sure to spend sunset on the generously-sized patio shown at right.

**DETAILS (from [parador.es](http://parador.es)):**

Total capacity: 155

Total rooms: 79

Cerro del Emperador, s/n

45002 Toledo Toledo

+34 925221850

[toledo@parador.es](mailto:toledo@parador.es)

**MORE INFORMATION AT [PARADOR.ES](http://PARADOR.ES)**







The view of Toledo from the Parador.



FAVORITE THINGS

The view from the patio (and many of the room balconies) is amazing at sunset. A scenic overlook on the road below gives similar views, but without the comfort and peace afforded by the Parador.

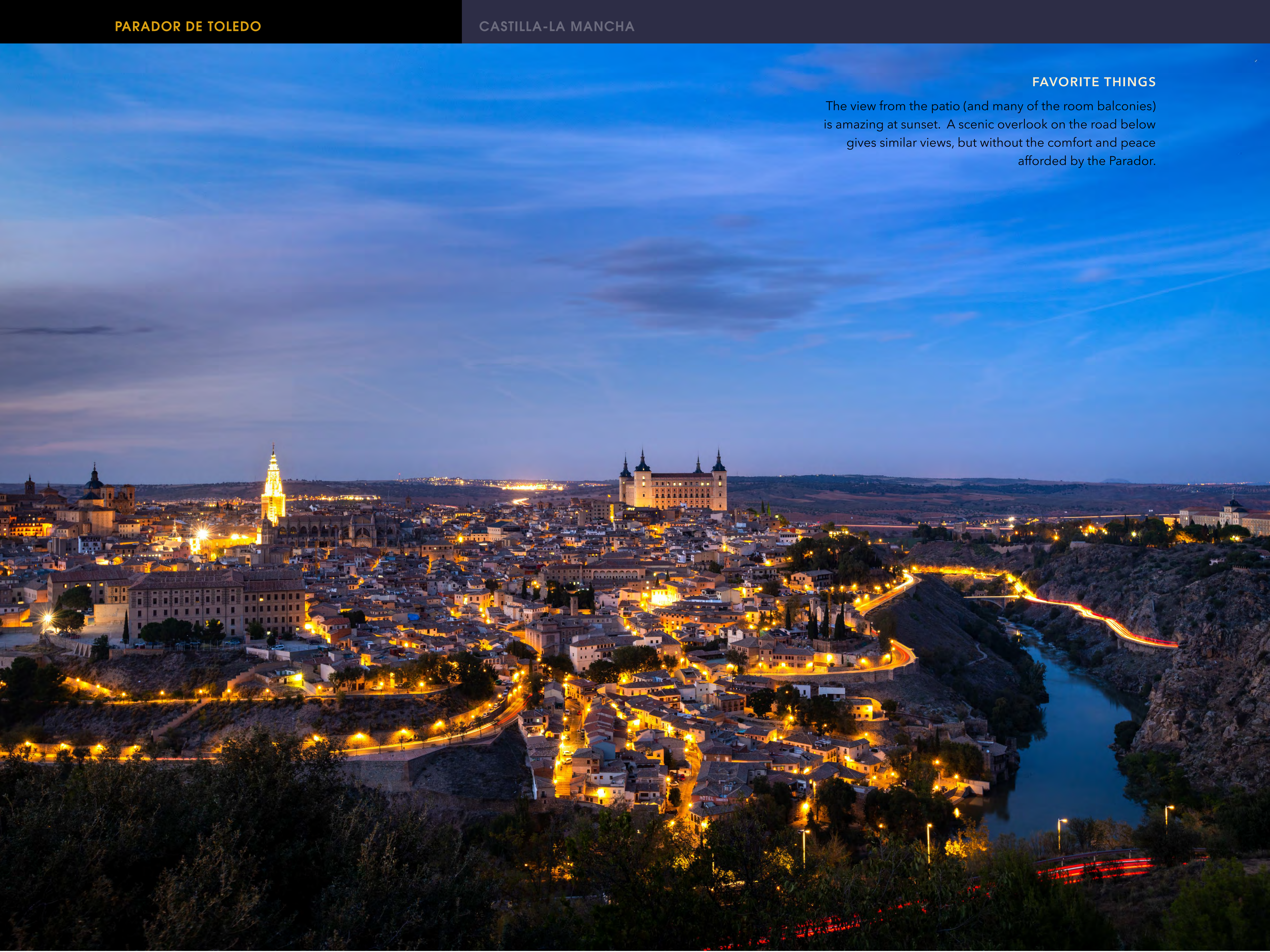


PHOTO: The view of the Extremaduran countryside from Trujillo.

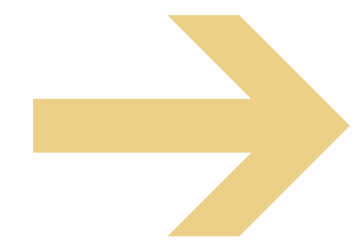
“ **EXTREMADURA** is an unspoilt land of lush forests and majestic mountains, far removed from Spain’s crowded costas – both in terms of kilometres and character.

It’s one of the country’s most sparsely populated regions, roughly the size of Belgium, and its distance from the coast has kept mass tourism at bay.

– [spanishliving.org](http://spanishliving.org)

# EXTREMADURA





## PARADOR DE CÁCERES

**MOVIES** and TV shows are filmed in Cáceres—*Game of Thrones* among them—and it's easy to see why when you wander the streets of Old Town. There is very little to disrupt your imagination and you can easily lose yourself in another time. There are excellent museums as well, if you can pry yourself away from the streets. I did not drive on my own during my visit to Cáceres, but I understand that the parking is very limited at the Parador and you may need to find alternatives if you arrive late in the day. Be aware that there are also a lot of stairs within the Parador and it's nearly as confusing to navigate the hallways as it is the winding streets outside.

**REGION:** Extremadura

**PROVINCE:** Cáceres

**TYPE:** Esencia (Renaissance palace)

**MY STAY:** November 2013

**NOTES:** One of the best preserved old towns I've experienced in Spain. The Parador itself is almost invisible from the street, blending in with the historic structures that fill the area. Truthfully, I often had to look for the Parador's flags to find my way home.

**DETAILS (from [parador.es](http://parador.es)):**

Total capacity: 78

Total rooms: 34

Calle Ancha, 6  
10003 Cáceres Cáceres  
+34 927211759  
[caceres@parador.es](mailto:caceres@parador.es)

**MORE INFORMATION AT [PARADOR.ES](http://PARADOR.ES)**





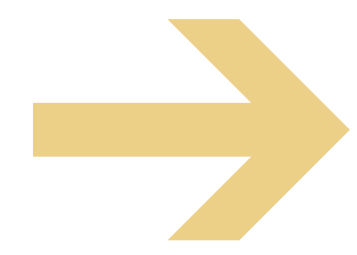
These flags flying from the front of the Parador became my beacon for finding my way home. Otherwise the Parador blends right into the rest of the street.

1  
CALLEJÓN  
DE  
DOÑA LOLA

**FAVORITE THINGS**

One of the few Paradores where I've had the fortune to stay two consecutive nights and I am so glad because there was so much to see and do just within walking distance of the Parador, even without ever leaving Old Town. I don't think I could ever get bored here and there was certainly no lack of good food.





## PARADOR DE GUADALUPE

**AS YOU STAY** in more and more Paradores, you come to realize that the exterior, or front door, does not always prepare you for what you may find inside. The Parador de Guadalupe looks rather plain from the street, but boasts one of the greatest views I have ever experienced in Spain, or anywhere. I'm not sure that my view was shared by all the rooms, but I think many had something very similar overlooking the Royal Monastery of Santa María de Guadalupe. You'll see what I mean in the coming pages.

REGION: Extremadura

PROVINCE: Cáceres

TYPE: Esentia (former monastery)

MY STAY: November 2013

NOTES: One of the best views I've ever had from my lodging. No kidding.

**DETAILS (from [parador.es](http://parador.es)):**

Total capacity: 80

Total rooms: 41

C/ Marqués de la Romana, 12

10140 Guadalupe Cáceres

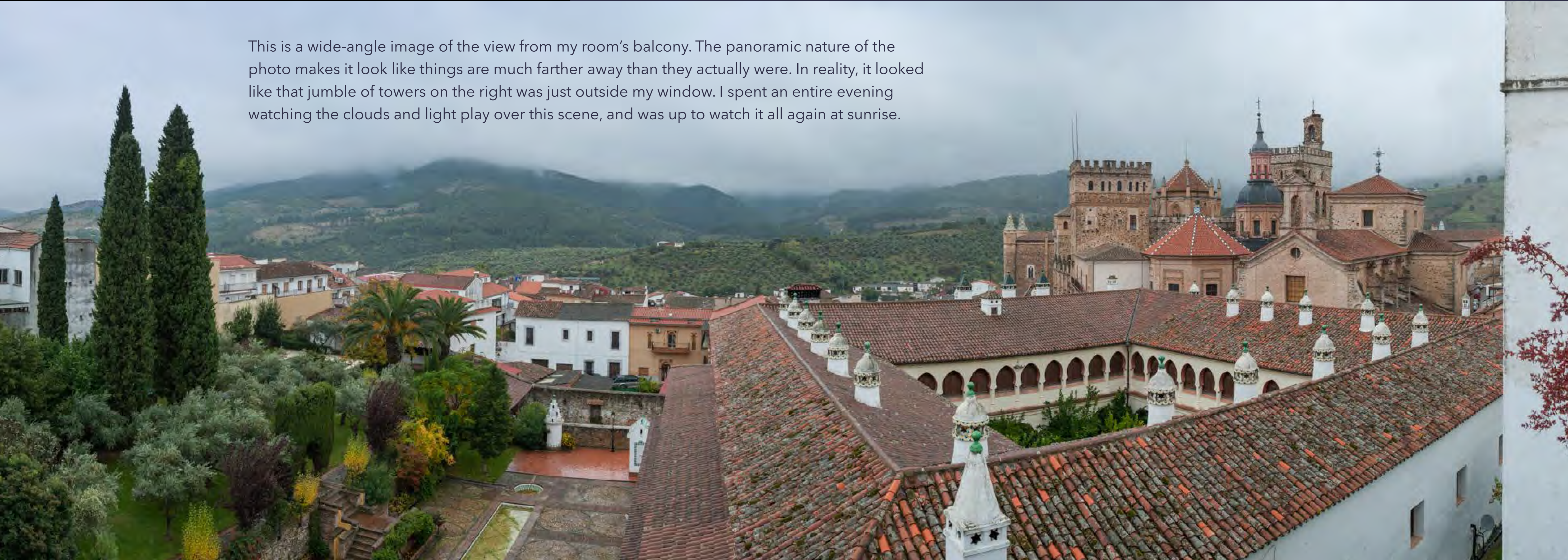
+34 927367075

[guadalupe@parador.es](mailto:guadalupe@parador.es)

**MORE INFORMATION AT [PARADOR.ES](http://PARADOR.ES)**



This is a wide-angle image of the view from my room's balcony. The panoramic nature of the photo makes it look like things are much farther away than they actually were. In reality, it looked like that jumble of towers on the right was just outside my window. I spent an entire evening watching the clouds and light play over this scene, and was up to watch it all again at sunrise.





## FAVORITE THINGS

This view. There were many other interesting things about Guadalupe and the tour of the Royal Monastery was not to be missed, but I loved this view the most and would gladly return just to experience it again.



## PARADOR DE JARANDILLA DE LA VERA

**MY FIRST** Parador experience and, in fact, the first night I spent in Spain was here – the Parador de Jarandilla de la Vera. Having hardly slept on the flight over, I still skipped a nap to wander the town and explore. I had read that there was a Roman bridge nearby (which I found) and the rest of my day was largely composed of happily getting lost in the winding streets. I returned to the Parador to spend the twilight hour photographing the entrance courtyard with its fountains and palms. Not a bad first day in Spain and still one of my favorite Paradores.

REGION: Extremadura

PROVINCE: Cáceres

TYPE: Esentia (castle/palace that once hosted Emperor Charles V)

MY STAY: November 2013 & November 2019

NOTES: Wonderful castle setting. I remember my first room being rather small, but spent little time in it as the public areas were so inviting. On my second visit I had a larger room in a more modern wing of the structure and found myself missing my old room that had had so much character.

DETAILS (from [parador.es](http://parador.es)):

Total capacity: 101

Total rooms: 52

Avda. García Prieto, 1

10450 Jarandilla de la Vera Cáceres

+34 927560117

[jarandilla@parador.es](mailto:jarandilla@parador.es)

**MORE INFORMATION AT [PARADOR.ES](http://PARADOR.ES)**





**FAVORITE THINGS**

I loved this courtyard and would gladly spend a few evenings here enjoying drinks. This was my first Parador experience and still one of my fondest memories of Spain.



## → PARADOR DE MÉRIDA

**MÉRIDA** sticks in my memory mostly for its Roman ruins. So much Roman history exists here that column fragments are used to decorate the center of traffic roundabouts. The Roman theater is probably their centerpiece but there is also an amphitheater, a Roman bridge, a giant aqueduct and several smaller – but still impressive – ruins scattered about the city here and there. Mérida also has a phenomenal museum for Roman antiquities. The Parador de Mérida is a vast, rambling collection of hallways that lead to spacious, well-appointed rooms.

REGION: Extremadura

PROVINCE: Badajoz

TYPE: Esentia (18th century convent)

MY STAY: November 2013 (lunch only), stayed in November 2019

NOTES: The first time I was to have stayed here, the Parador was booked up for a wedding but I did get to have a wonderful lunch in their restaurant. Six years later I was able to stay here and thoroughly enjoyed the experience and location.

DETAILS (from [parador.es](http://parador.es)):

Total capacity: 164

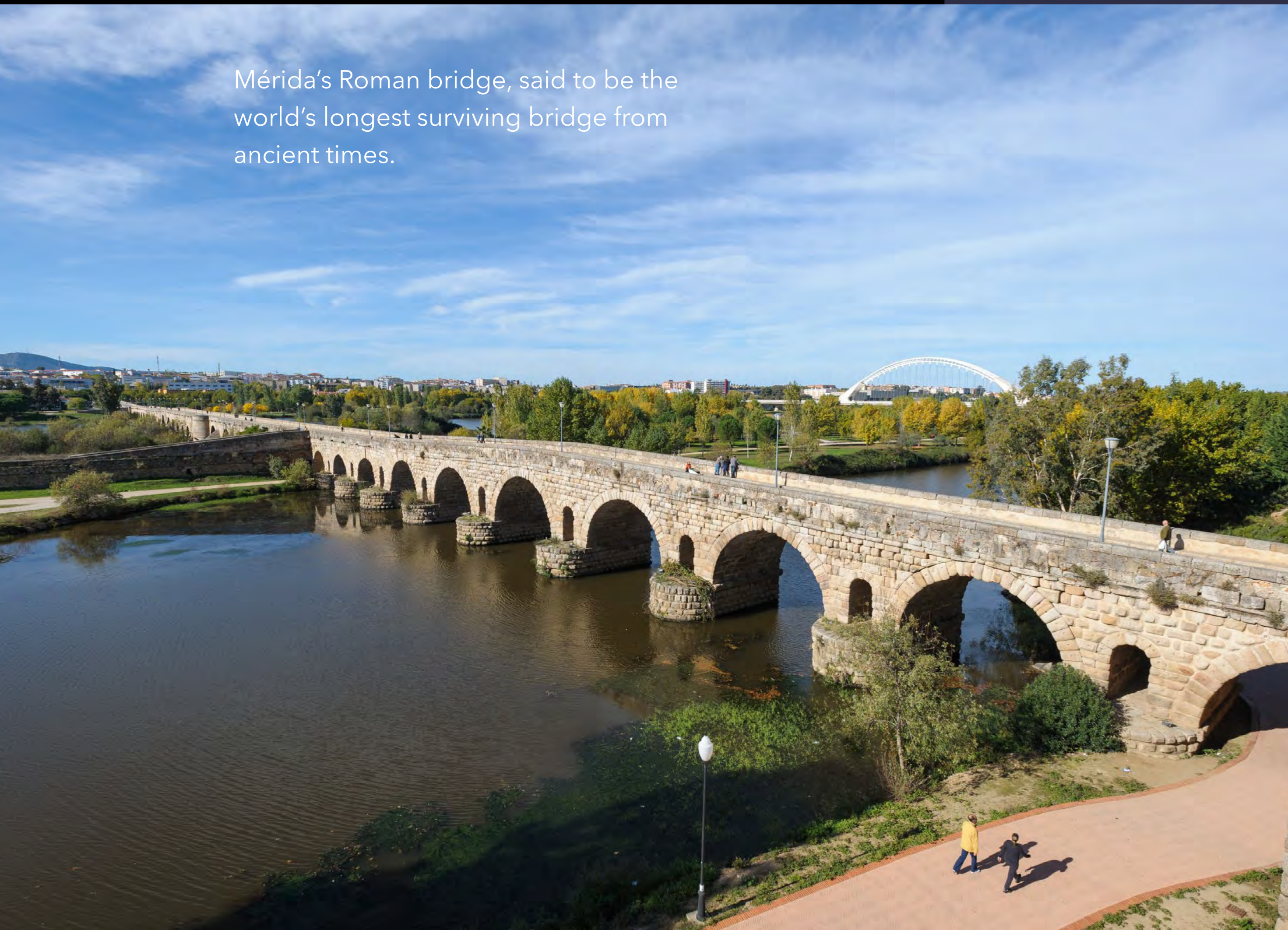
Total rooms: 82

C/Almendralejo, 56  
06800 Mérida Badajoz  
+34 924313800  
[merida@parador.es](mailto:merida@parador.es)

**MORE INFORMATION AT [PARADOR.ES](http://PARADOR.ES)**



Mérida's Roman bridge, said to be the world's longest surviving bridge from ancient times.



Mérida's Temple of Diana is part of the city's main Roman Forum. Mérida was founded as Emerita Augusta in 25 BC by Emperor Augustus.

The entrance to the Parador de Mérida.



An interior courtyard in the Parador de Mérida offers a quiet spot to have a coffee and relax.



My room in the Parador de Mérida with its elegantly vaulted ceilings.

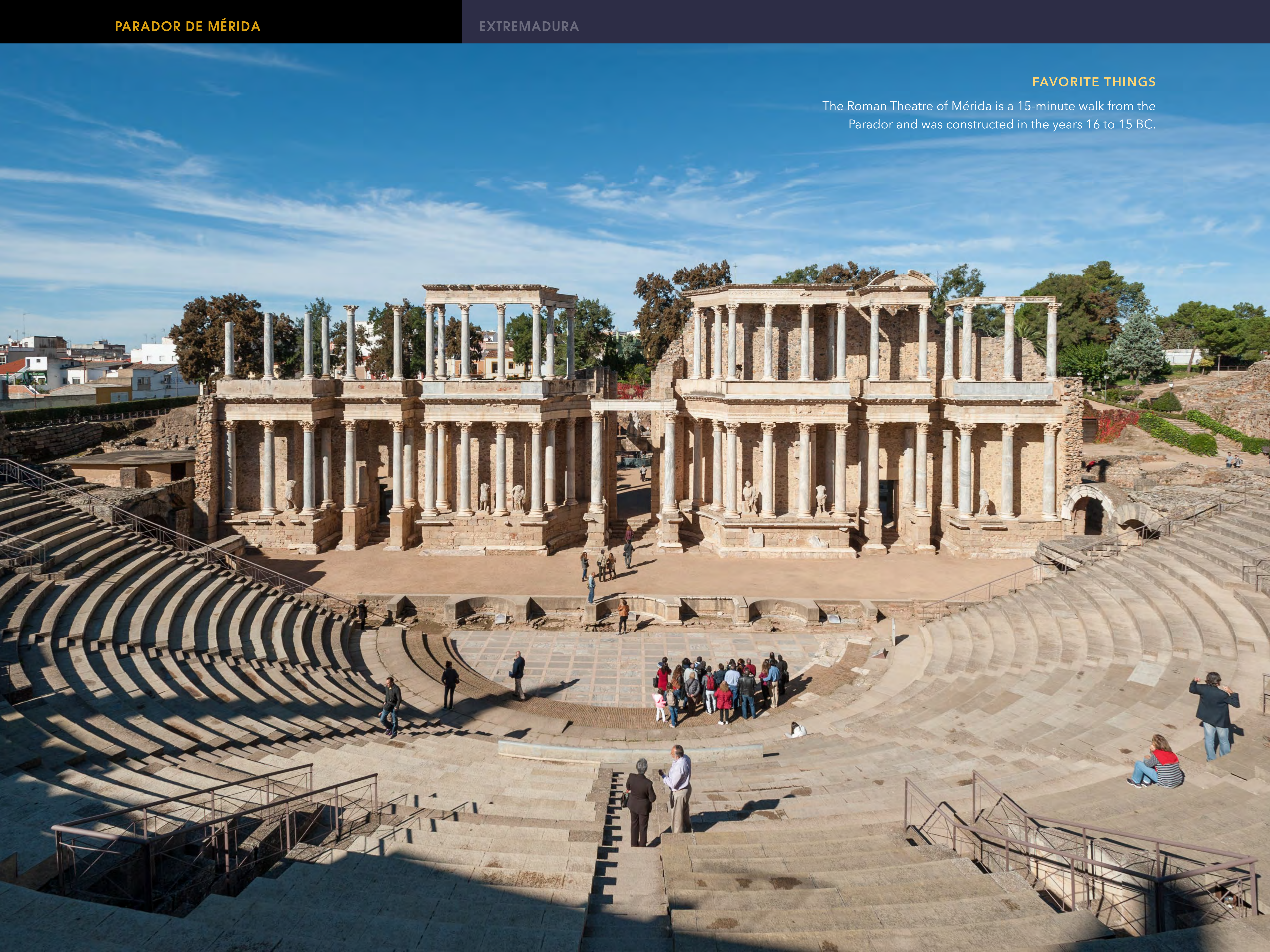


A sitting room near the lobby of the Parador.



FAVORITE THINGS

The Roman Theatre of Mérida is a 15-minute walk from the Parador and was constructed in the years 16 to 15 BC.







## PARADOR DE PLASENCIA

**MY ROOM** at the Parador de Plasencia was expansive. I'm not sure if it was out of the ordinary but I did get the chance to tour some of the "upper-level" rooms, and they were even much, much larger. No promises – in most Paradores I've found that no two rooms are alike – but that's the charm of staying in these repurposed structures. Sometimes you get a tiny room with a tinier window, and sometimes your room is better described as a suite. The public spaces are astounding as well. Just check out the ceiling of the stairwell shown at the right.

**REGION:** Extremadura

**PROVINCE:** Cáceres

**TYPE:** Esentia (15th century Santo Domingo Monastery)

**MY STAY:** November 2013 and November 2019

**NOTES:** Truly exceptional architecture with a really fun bar/lounge in the lower levels.

**DETAILS** (from [parador.es](http://parador.es)):

Total capacity: 132

Total rooms: 66

Plaza San Vicente Ferrer, s/n

10600 Plasencia Cáceres

+34 927425870

[plasencia@parador.es](mailto:plasencia@parador.es)

**MORE INFORMATION AT [PARADOR.ES](http://PARADOR.ES)**





My room at the Parador de Plasencia in November of 2013. There is more to the room, down the corridor you just see at the right – beyond that little half step that was nearly the death of me on more than one occasion.



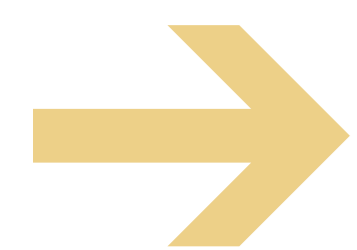
This was NOT my room, although I would have been quite happy if it had been.



## FAVORITE THINGS

I unfortunately discovered this cool bar underneath the Parador de Plasencia as I was leaving. Had I known about it the evening before, I would have loved spending some time here.





## PARADOR DE TRUJILLO

**SPARE** is a word I would use to describe Trujillo and its Parador. I don't mean that as a negative, I find it pleasantly simple and straight-forward. Truthfully, I would go so far as to say that Trujillo is one of my favorite Spanish towns, in one of my favorite regions. But it's not a flashy, touristy kind of town. There is plenty for a visitor to see, but the town seems resolute to go about its own business rather than trying to impress you. I love that and it's really refreshing after visiting other cities that are overly touristy and don't even seem real any more.

**REGION:** Extremadura

**PROVINCE:** Cáceres

**TYPE:** Esentia (Convent of Santa Clara)

**MY STAY:** November 2013, dined March 2016

**NOTES:** Another Parador that doesn't tell you much from the entrance but it has a wealth of character and is located within easy walking distance of all the historic sites in Trujillo.

**DETAILS (from [parador.es](http://parador.es)):**

Total capacity: 80

Total rooms: 40

Santa Beatriz de Silva, 1

10200 Trujillo Cáceres

+34 927321350

[trujillo@parador.es](mailto:trujillo@parador.es)

There's something about Trujillo, but I always seem to be arriving back to my lodging late. On my first visit, we checked in right at sunset (when this shot of the entrance was taken) and on my second visit to Trujillo I stayed at another hotel in town but would come here to dine after sunset when my day of photography was done. Sunset is a special time in Trujillo and you'll want to be in the Plaza Mayor or up at the castle to enjoy it.



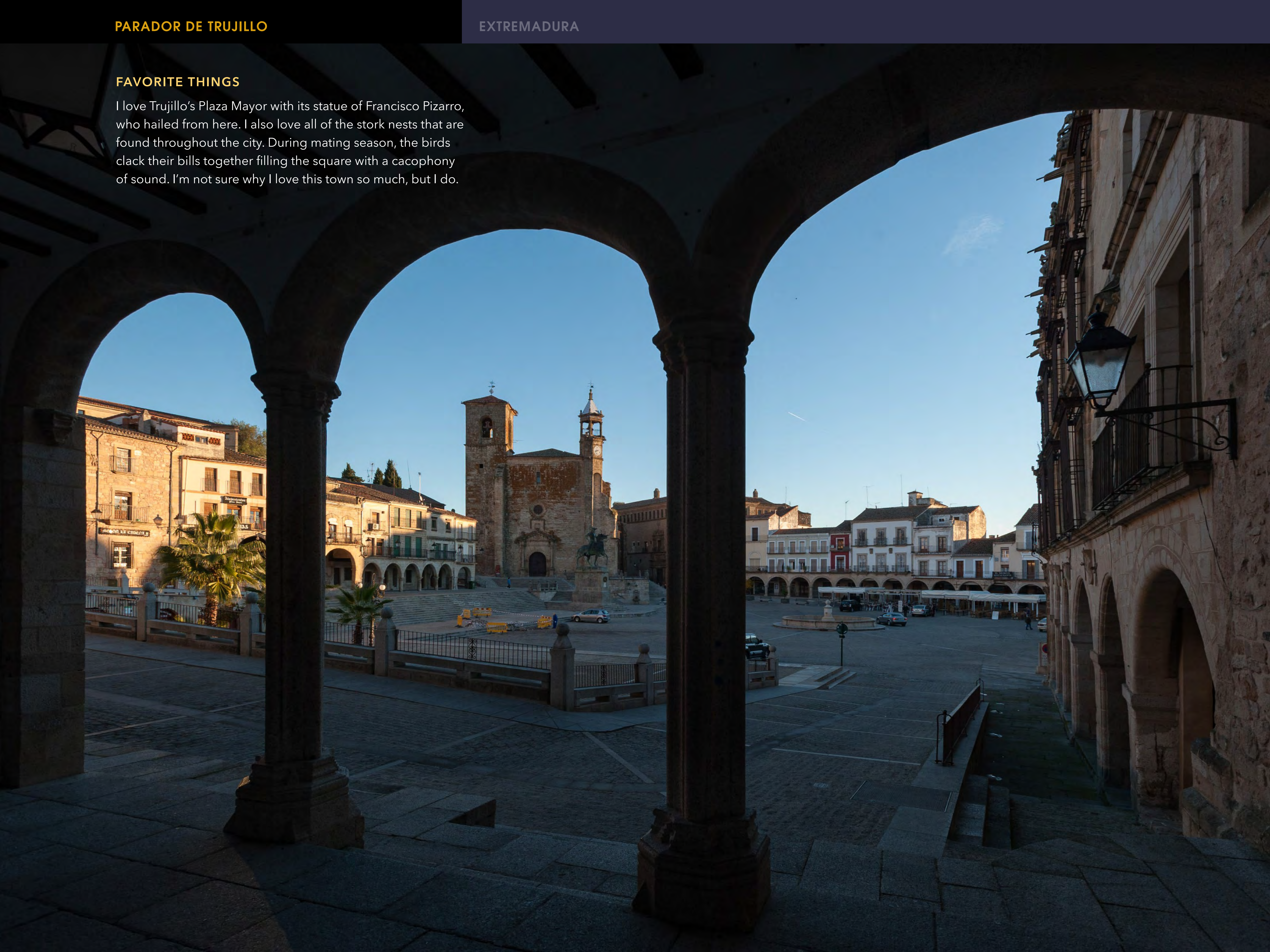


To the left is a view of the Parador de Trujillo from the castle that overlooks the town, and below is the view of Trujillo out my Parador window at dawn.



## FAVORITE THINGS

I love Trujillo's Plaza Mayor with its statue of Francisco Pizarro, who hailed from here. I also love all of the stork nests that are found throughout the city. During mating season, the birds clack their bills together filling the square with a cacophony of sound. I'm not sure why I love this town so much, but I do.



## PARADOR DE ZAFRA

**I WAS** taking part in a bird-watching tour when I visited Zafra, so my time in the area was largely spent out in the countryside looking for raptors and songbirds. We stayed two nights in another hotel in Zafra (just across from the Parador, as it happened) and I did find a little time to explore the town. The Parador was featured on one of my city tours and it was a massive structure surrounded by palm trees. The website mentions that it boasts spacious rooms, which I don't doubt, but can't confirm on my own. I didn't even get to grab a meal at this one – just a quick peak into the main courtyard and that was it.

**REGION:** Extremadura

**PROVINCE:** Badajoz

**TYPE:** Esentia (15th century castle)

**MY STAY:** March 2016 (brief tour only)

**NOTES:** I stayed just down the street from the Parador de Zafra, but got a brief tour of the central courtyard during a city tour. I'm afraid I can't tell you much from that quick visit, but the town was quite interesting.

**DETAILS (from [parador.es](http://parador.es)):**

Total capacity: 102

Total rooms: 51

Plaza Corazón de María, 7

06300 Zafra Badajoz

+34 924554540

[zafra@parador.es](mailto:zafra@parador.es)

**MORE INFORMATION AT [PARADOR.ES](http://PARADOR.ES)**



I loved the way the palm trees cast their shadows on the outer wall of the Parador de Zafra at sunset.



Some additional views of the architecture of Zafra where the Parador often seems to be looming above.



The entrance to the Parador.





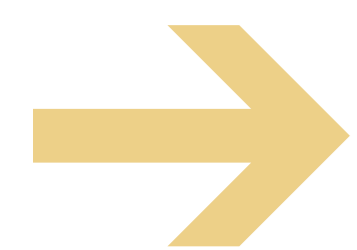
PHOTO: One of the many stone granaries found throughout Galicia.



“ **GALICIA** is located in the green and lush north western corner of Spain. Geographically, Galicia is situated just above Portugal and faces both the Atlantic Ocean and the Mar Cantabrico. This part of the country has an economy based on fishing, farming, agriculture and increasingly tourism. Galicia has a climate offering four separate seasons and is actually pronounced “Galithia” (the “ci” pronounced as “th” in spanish).  
– [galiciaguide.com](http://galiciaguide.com)

# GALICIA





## PARADOR DE BAIONA

**THIS PARADOR** stands on the Monterreal Peninsula where the Vigo River meets the Atlantic Ocean. The area features several beaches and there is an inviting looking trail that circles the castle walls. I only visited this Parador for a lunch but it has definitely made the list of Paradores to which I want to return for a stay. It is a little more removed from the city than many, but it certainly provides access to a wide variety of scenic opportunities with surrounding beaches and rocky coastlines.

REGION: Galicia

PROVINCE: Pontevedra

TYPE: Esentia (medieval fortress)

MY STAY: July 2016 (lunch only)

NOTES: I was impressed by the architecture as well as the setting. Judging by the room count, this is a fairly large Parador but it still felt cozy and inviting as I passed through the lobby and into the main dining room for lunch. It was a great meal, as are most I've had in Paradores.

DETAILS (from [parador.es](http://parador.es)):

Total capacity: 244

Total rooms: 132

Monterreal, s/n

36300 Baiona Pontevedra

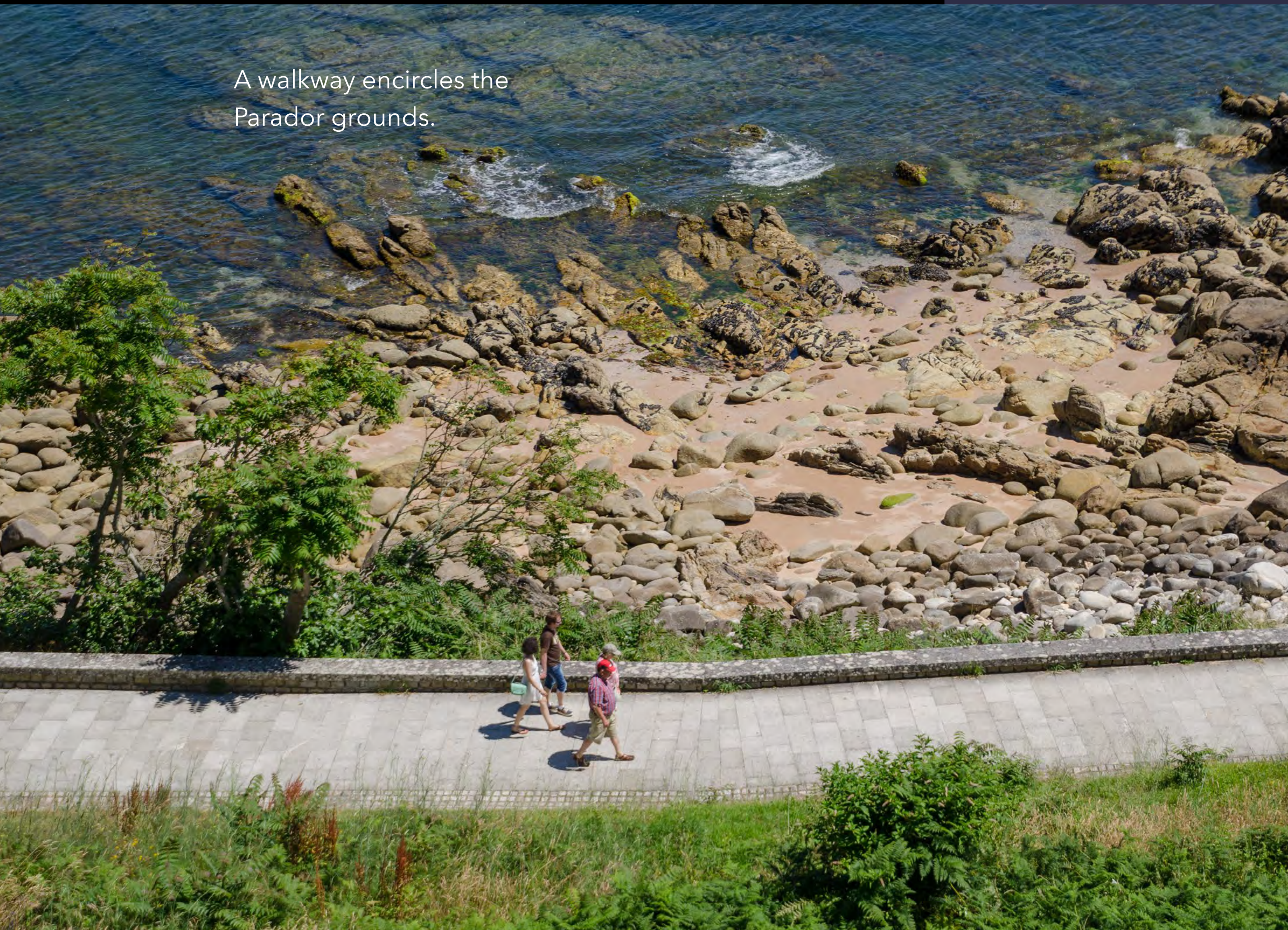
+34 986355000

[baiona@parador.es](mailto:baiona@parador.es)

**MORE INFORMATION AT [PARADOR.ES](http://PARADOR.ES)**



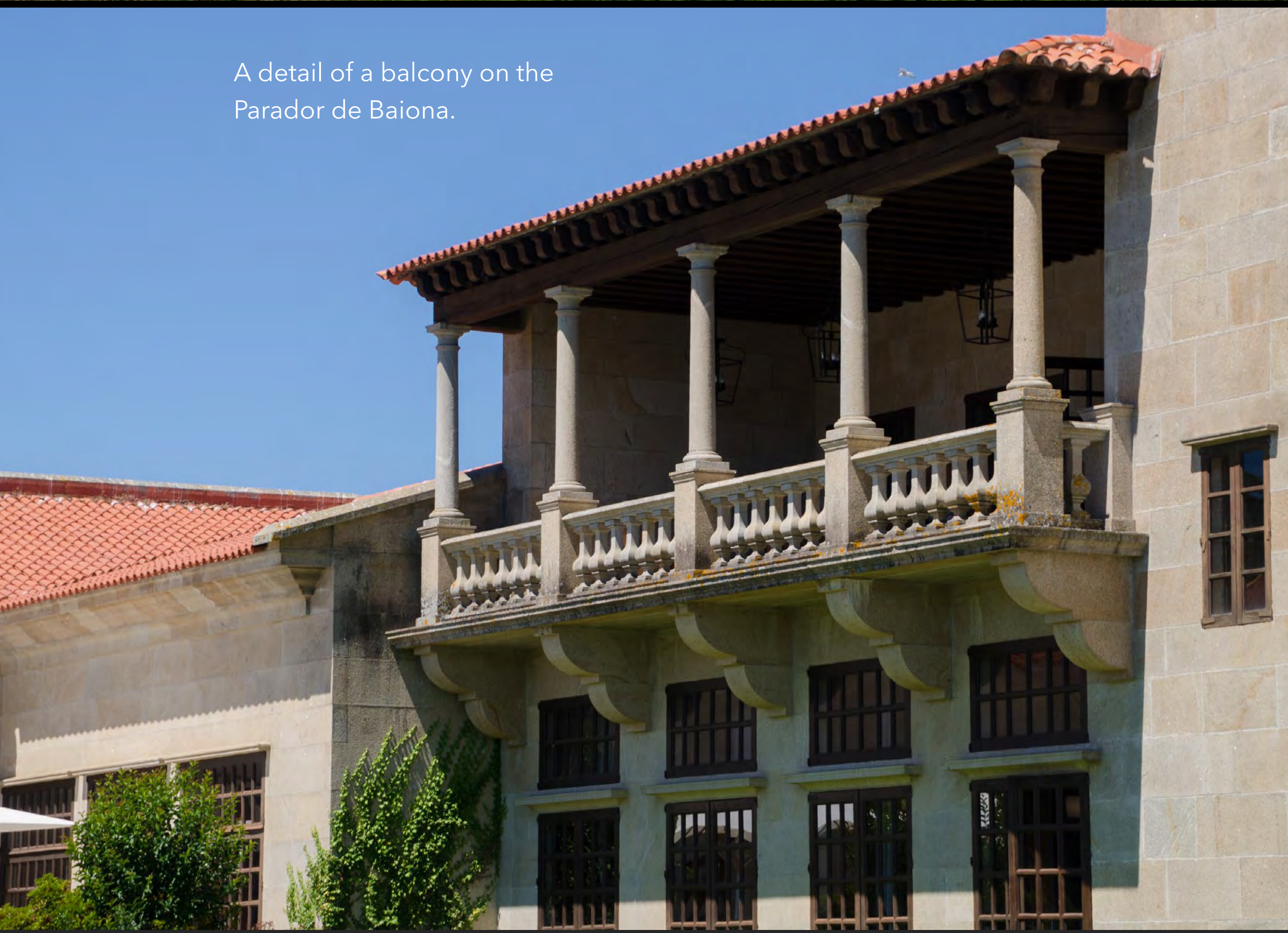
A walkway encircles the Parador grounds.



Stone crosses, or "cruceiros," like this mark significant social or religious places throughout Galicia.



A detail of a balcony on the Parador de Baiona.





### FAVORITE THINGS

The views. Overlooking both the Atlantic to the west and the bays created where the River Vigo meets the ocean to the north and east (above), the Parador de Baiona provides a variety of coastal views.



## PARADOR DE SANTIAGO DE COMPOSTELA

**THE WAY OF ST. JAMES**, also known as the Camino de Santiago, is a route of religious pilgrimage like few others. The Way has been followed by millions over centuries and the pilgrims all end up on Obradoiro Square, which the Parador shares with the Cathedral de Santiago de Compostela. Some consider this Parador to be the oldest hotel in the world. Whether you're a weary pilgrim or just a traveler looking to explore Galicia, this is a great place to rest your feet and take in the history.

REGION: Galicia

PROVINCE: A Coruña

TYPE: Esentia (1499 Royal hospital)

MY STAY: July 2016

NOTES: Incredible architecture, incredible location, incredible history. This is among the top Paradors in so many ways.

DETAILS (from [parador.es](http://parador.es)):

Total capacity: 262

Total rooms: 137

Praza do Obradoiro, 1

15705 Santiago de Compostela

A Coruña

+34 981582200

[santiago@parador.es](mailto:santiago@parador.es)

MORE INFORMATION AT [PARADOR.ES](http://PARADOR.ES)





My room was not the largest I've had in a Parador but it was beautifully appointed and overlooked one of the building's four cloisters, or courtyards.



One of the many hallways leading to guest rooms at the Parador de Santiago de Compostela.

FAVORITE THINGS

I have a knack for visiting historic sites when the most iconic structure is covered in scaffolding. So it was when I visited the Cathedral de Santiago de Compostella. It hardly took away from the experience, however.

*this is the Parador*



PHOTO: The Plaza de Cervantes in Alcalá de Henares.

“ **MADRID** is synonymous with culture and street life. The capital city is home to some of the most frequently visited museums in Spain, and its surroundings offer the chance to visit several outstanding monumental sites.

But you'll find the Madrid Region offers much, much more. For example, the cities of Aranjuez, Alcalá de Henares and San Lorenzo del Escorial, all of which have been declared World Heritage Sites. Or small picturesque towns such as Chinchón, and the charming villages in the mountains.

–spain.info

MADRID





## PARADOR DE ALCALÁ DE HENARES

**ONE OF THE FEW** Paradores that I have visited repeatedly, the Parador de Alcalá de Henares is conveniently situated near the Madrid-Barajas Airport and makes a great first-night stop upon arrival or last-night stop before catching a flight home. Alcalá de Henares, the town, is the birthplace of Cervantes and home to one of the oldest universities in the world, founded by King Sancho IV of Castile as Studium Generale in 1293. The Parador sits in a nice walkable area, near the Plaza de Cervantes and its colorful rose gardens.

REGION: Madrid

PROVINCE: Madrid

TYPE: Civia (17th century monastery)

MY STAY: Nov. 2013, May 2015, July 2015

NOTES: While there is an historic component to this Parador, the rooms are largely confined to new construction that makes clever use of light shafts to make underground rooms feel light and airy.

### DETAILS (from [parador.es](http://parador.es)):

Total capacity: 256

Total rooms: 128

Colegios, 8

28801 Alcalá de Henares Madrid

+34 918880330

[alcala@parador.es](mailto:alcala@parador.es)

**MORE INFORMATION AT [PARADOR.ES](http://PARADOR.ES)**





The Parador de Alcala de Henares is a Civia Parador. The rooms and public areas are much more modern than most you'll find in Esentia Paradores.



While there is an historic component to this Parador (the monastery seen screened in the background) much of this building is new construction making ingenious use of available space.

## FAVORITE THINGS

Within easy walking distance of the Parador is the Plaza de Cervantes with its rose gardens and statue of the author who gave us Don Quixote. The city is another that appears to be favored by storks, who nest on nearly every rooftop.





## PARADOR DE CHINCHÓN

**ANOTHER** Parador I've had the privilege to revisit is the Parador de Chinchón. Like the one in Alcalá de Henares, this Parador is fairly close to Madrid-Barajas Airport, making it a convenient first or last night of any trip connecting through Madrid. This Parador has more of the historic character that I like, however and it's a blissfully peaceful place to spend the night. The Plaza Mayor across the street (which sometimes doubles as a bullring) is lined with interesting bars and restaurants so, should you decide to stray from your comfortable lodgings, you're sure to find sustenance there.

REGION: Madrid

PROVINCE: Madrid

TYPE: Esentia (Augustinian monastery)

MY STAY: July 2014, May 2018

NOTES: Terraced gardens lead down to an outdoor pool and the main plaza of Chinchón is just across the street with a multitude of dining options.

**DETAILS (from [parador.es](http://parador.es)):**

Total capacity: 76

Total rooms: 38

Los Huertos, 1

28370 Chinchón Madrid

+34 918940836

[chinchon@parador.es](mailto:chinchon@parador.es)

**MORE INFORMATION AT [PARADOR.ES](http://PARADOR.ES)**





The breakfast room at the Parador de Chinchón is one of the most attractive, in my opinion. All Paradores offer excellent buffet breakfast selections.

## FAVORITE THINGS

I like to find a nice bar or restaurant around the Plaza Major and enjoy the view from the outdoor dining areas. This plaza also provides parking for the Parador – at least at those times when it has not been converted to the town's bullring.



PHOTO: The Mar Menor, a lagoon is separated from the Mediterranean Sea by a sandbar 22 km in length.

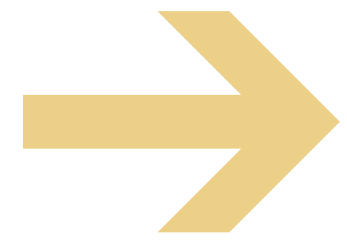
“ **MURCIA** has just over 170 km of coastline: coves and small beaches alternate with rocky shores and sheer, craggy cliffs. As a geographical accident of nature we find La Manga, a coastal strip of land which, bar a few connecting channels, or narrows, completely closes off the Mar Menor lagoon from the Mediterranean. The Murcian littoral offers on the one hand unprotected shores with wild seas and on the other small coves with calm, placid waters. Sand-dunes, beaches, salt-water lagoons, mud-flats... the Murcia coastline includes numerous places of unquestionable interest to the naturalist.

– [murciaturistica.es](http://murciaturistica.es)



# MURCIA





## PARADOR DE LORCA

**PARADORES** that are built on the sites of castles often occupy the high ground. From a defensive standpoint it makes sense. A hill is defensible and offers a view of the surrounding area to ensure no enemies are approaching. The Parador de Lorca is built on the site of Lorca Castle (ruins remain as well) and it definitely fits this pattern. It sits high above the city of Lorca with incredible views. The downside is that you're quite separated from the town, but the Parador is interesting enough that it doesn't much matter. There's plenty to see and do onsite, but the town is worth exploring as well.

REGION: Murcia

PROVINCE: Murcia

TYPE: Esentia (built on castle site/ruins)

MY STAY: May 2018

NOTES: Sits high above the city but is surrounded by preserved architectural ruins that can be explored.

DETAILS (from [parador.es](http://parador.es)):

Total capacity: 152

Total rooms: 76

Castillo de Lorca s/n

30800 Lorca Murcia

+34 968406047

[lorca@parador.es](mailto:lorca@parador.es)

MORE INFORMATION AT [PARADOR.ES](http://PARADOR.ES)







The Parador de Lorca is new construction on an historic site. As usual, however, much care has been taken to respect the site and to imbue the Parador with the history with which the area is associated.

## FAVORITE THINGS

The setting is pretty spectacular. This shot was taken from one of the remaining castle towers, looking out over the Parador and down to the city of Lorca below. As you can see, the Parador is quite separated from the town, but not so far that you can't pop down to explore for the day.



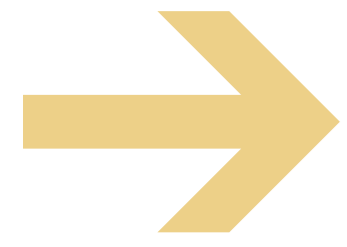
“ **THE REGION OF VALENCIA** has a total area of 23,255 km<sup>2</sup> and a profoundly Mediterranean landscape with vast coastal plains alternating with striking mountainous areas, in addition to 632 km of coastline so visitors can enjoy the sea and the good climate all year round. It has a population of over 5,000,000 inhabitants, and boasts an age-old culture which includes the celebration of numerous popular fiestas in all its towns and villages; there are major tourist resorts along its coastline, and it has several large cities—foremost of which is Valencia—with a full range of services, as well as sleepy villages in the interior. From north to south, the Region of Valencia comprises the provinces of Castellón, Valencia and Alicante. These are known and promoted in the tourist industry by their four larger designations: Costa Blanca, Benidorm, València Terra i Mar and Castellón Costa Azahar.

—spain.info

**PHOTO:** Valencia's City of Arts and Sciences is located on the former Turia riverbed. The river was rerouted after a flood in 1957 and the old riverbed was converted to a series of parks and recreational spaces.

# VALENCIA





## PARADOR DE EL SALER

**SOUTH** a few miles from the city of Valencia, and perched on a strip of land that separates the Mediterranean from the Albufera lagoon, the Parador de El Saler is a quiet retreat. A short path leads through the golf course to a sandy Mediterranean beach where you can watch the sun rise over the water. Or, if your room is one of the many overlooking the sea, you may do so from the comfort of your balcony. While this Naturia Parador lacks the historic elements that I love, I still appreciate it for the relaxing place that it is – and the beach is a huge bonus.

**REGION:** Valencia

**PROVINCE:** Valencia

**TYPE:** Naturia

**MY STAY:** March 2016

**NOTES:** Stunning setting for a Naturia-style Parador featuring a spa, golf course, outdoor swimming pool, soccer field, and conference amenities. A great getaway while still not far from the city of Valencia.

**DETAILS (from [parador.es](http://parador.es)):**

Total capacity: 80

Total rooms: 40

Avda. de los Pinares, 151

46012 El Saler Valencia

+34 961611186

[saler@parador.es](mailto:saler@parador.es)

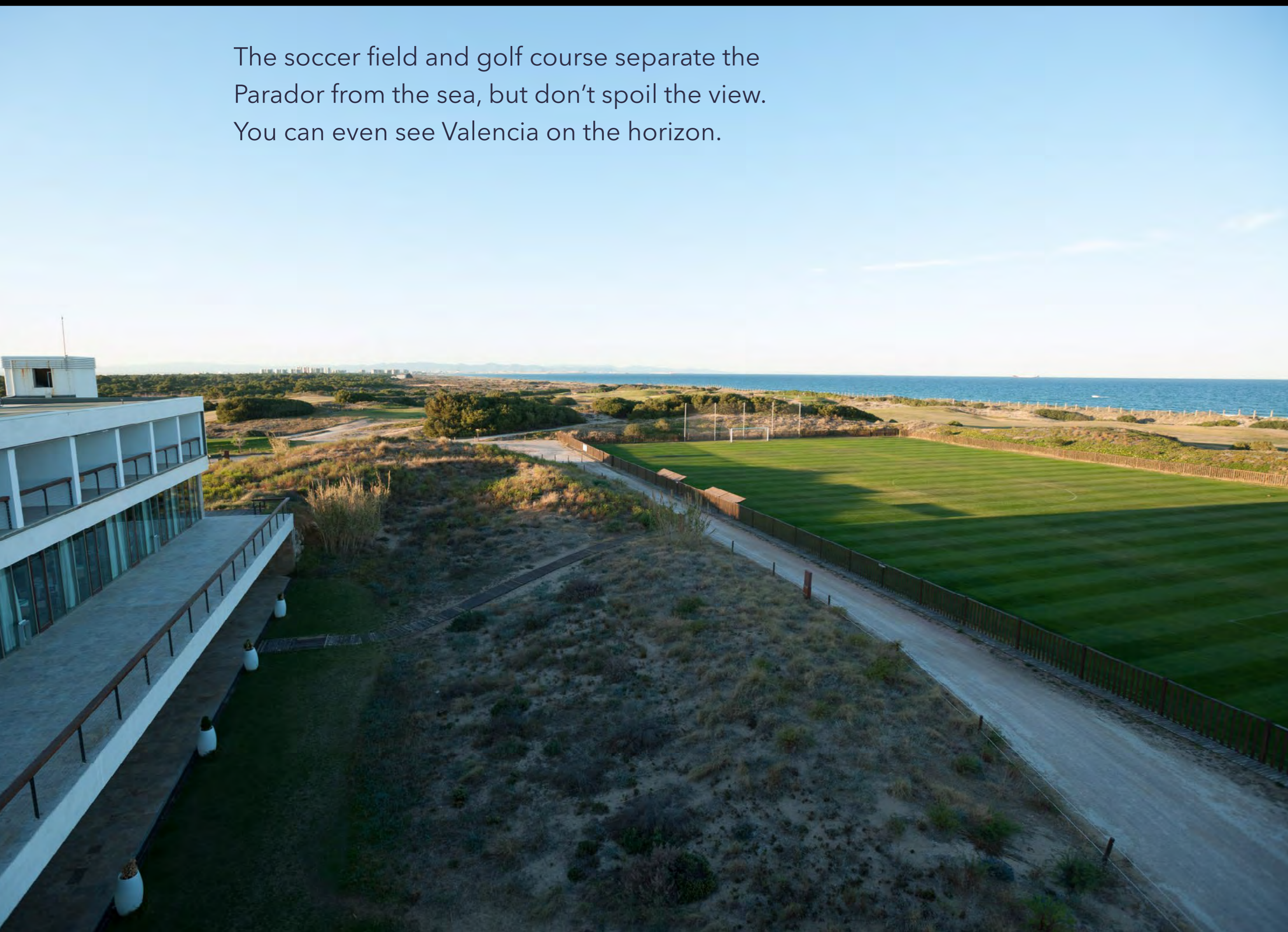
**MORE INFORMATION AT [PARADOR.ES](http://PARADOR.ES)**





This beach is just a very short walk from the Parador, down a path that crosses the golf course. You can just make out the city of Valencia in the distance.

The soccer field and golf course separate the Parador from the sea, but don't spoil the view. You can even see Valencia on the horizon.



**FAVORITE THINGS**

While the rooms are lovely at the Parador de El Saler, you might not spend much time in them when this beach is such a short walk away.

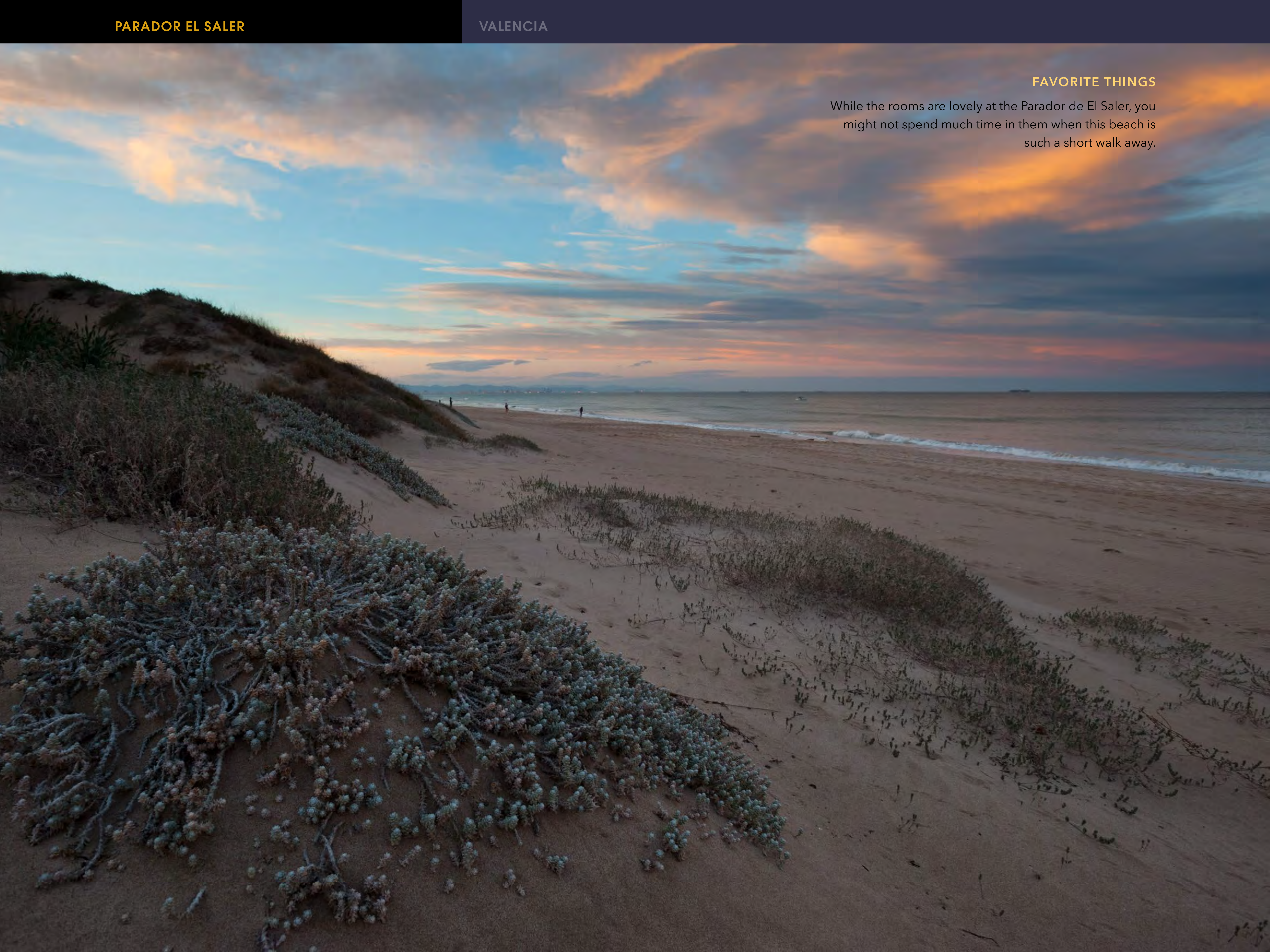


PHOTO: Garachico at sunset on the island of Tenerife.

“ **THE CANARY ISLANDS**, a Spanish archipelago off the coast of northwestern Africa, are rugged volcanic isles known for their black- and white-sand beaches. Tenerife, the largest island, is dominated by the sometimes-snowy active volcano Mt. Teide, which has its own astronomical observatory and is part of Teide National Park.

– google

CANARY ISLANDS



## PARADOR DE LAS CAÑADAS DEL TEIDE

**LOCATED** within the boundaries of Tiede National Park, this Parador feels wildy remote and offers spectacular views of Mt. Tiede, the highest peak in all of Spain. Well removed from the resorts that line portions of Tenerife's coastline, here you will feel you are in a different world. In fact, NASA used some of the nearby terrain to test the Mars rover due to the similarities to that rocky planet. It's a special beauty that doesn't end at sunset. This part of Tenerife offers some of the best night sky viewing in the world.

**REGION:** The Canary Islands

**PROVINCE:** Tenerife

**TYPE:** Naturia

**MY STAY:** November 2018 (lunch, no overnight)

**NOTES:** The drive from La Laguna to the Parador is a special one. You leave a charming island village and climb through an ancient pine forest. As you rise higher, you're offered stunning views of the coastline below before entering a Mars-like landscape crafted by volcanoes.

**DETAILS (from [parador.es](http://parador.es)):**

Total capacity: 73

Total rooms: 37

Las Cañadas del Teide  
38300 La Orotava Santa Cruz de Tenerife  
+34 922386415  
[canadas@parador.es](mailto:canadas@parador.es)

**MORE INFORMATION AT [PARADOR.ES](http://PARADOR.ES)**







When you're at the Parador de Las Cañadas del Teide, you're a long way from Tenerife's coastal resorts. Here the landscape is dominated by Mt. Tiede and the surrounding volcanic caldera. It's a desert-like environment and it can be a little chilly at night, in comparison to the coast where temperatures tend to stay in the upper 60s and lower 70s at all times. It's an amazing getaway.





**FAVORITE THINGS**

There is a lot to love about the island of Tenerife but one of my most memorable experiences was seeing the night sky from the rocky area just across the road from the Parador. This is one of the best night sky viewing spots in the world, and to spend an evening here under the stars is a truly amazing thing.



Parador de Carmona

**THANK YOU** to all of the people who have helped me to explore and experience these incredible hotels.

**The Tourist Office of Spain in Chicago** and all of the regional tourist boards who have assisted me.

**Paradores de Turismo** for hosting stays and meals over the years. I'm now truly addicted to your properties.

**Iberia Airlines** has been my main mode of transportation between the US and Spain. Comfortable and reliable.

**Hertz Rental Cars** for providing me with transportation during my 7 Paradores in 7 Days road trip in 2018.

*Michael C. Snell*

To learn more about Michael C. Snell's photography, or to find out about other books, visit [michaelcsnell.com](http://michaelcsnell.com)



Parador de Ubéda



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