

# Experience CUENCA



**A GUIDE TO DISCOVER  
AND EXPERIENCE  
THE CITY BETWEEN  
LEGENDARY SPOTS AND  
HISTORICAL STREETS**

Official Tourist Guide



AYUNTAMIENTO DE CUENCA



Castilla-La Mancha

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# Why Visit Cuenca

## Because it is...

a city strategically well located on national circuits. Communicated via highways and the High Speed State Train Network (AVE) with the most important Spanish cities.

## Because it is...

a World Heritage City, declared by UNESCO in 1996, owing to its heritage, cultural and gastronomic values.

## Because of that...

special beauty that arises from the harmony between Nature and architectural space, forming a unique symbiosis.

## Because of its...

magnificent preservation of the landscape and its rich historical past that allows us to contemplate its walled medieval layout, its legendary urban routes and its splendid civil and religious architecture.

## Because it is...

a city where Culture plays an exceptional role, thanks to its international Festivals of Music, History and Art





## Because it is...

A city where Light and Colour are reflected in the natural environment of its gorges, where rock blends with pine and water, in a wonderful conjunction, while houses rise and hang towards the abyss.

## Because it is...

a city where Art has its maximum expression, from the artistic movements of the 12th to the 18th century, with the conjunction of this new avant-garde art in which abstraction has its maximum expression.

## Because of its...

varied gastronomy, rich in raw materials and elaboration of traditional and signature dishes, which has earned it the title of Gastronomic Capital of Spain 2023.

## Because...

its Traditions continue to be the bastion of that richness of spirit that makes humble cities great, amidst religiosity, populism and history.

## Because of its...

generous and hospitable population, welcoming the visitor in a clear example of the values of solidarity and friendliness that define it so well.

More information in *Natural Space Guide*



More information in *MICE Guide*



More information in the *Heritage, Art and Culture Guide*





## HISTORY

*A thousand-year-old city where the rock has felt the weight of historical vicissitudes and power struggles, obtaining privileges and honours thanks to the loyalty and courage of its residents.*

After its early origins, in the 10th century, under the Muslim domination of the Peninsula, known through Islamic geographers and chroniclers, we come to its conquest, repopulation and the organization of the Christian territory in the 12th and 13th centuries -with the praiseworthy legal exercise of its Charter of Cuenca- to move on to the strong economic development of the 15th century thanks to the cloth industry, a product of the excellent wool of its nomadic livestock

However, the Modern Age marked a before and after in the urban and population development of the city, with the emergence of the convent in the 16th century, the resurgence of a newly converted nobility and the subsequent crisis of the 17th century with the war of the Communities, the plague, droughts and food crises that caused the collapse of the city's economy.

A certain modernity attempts to cover this historical time lapse throughout the 18th century and some symptoms of

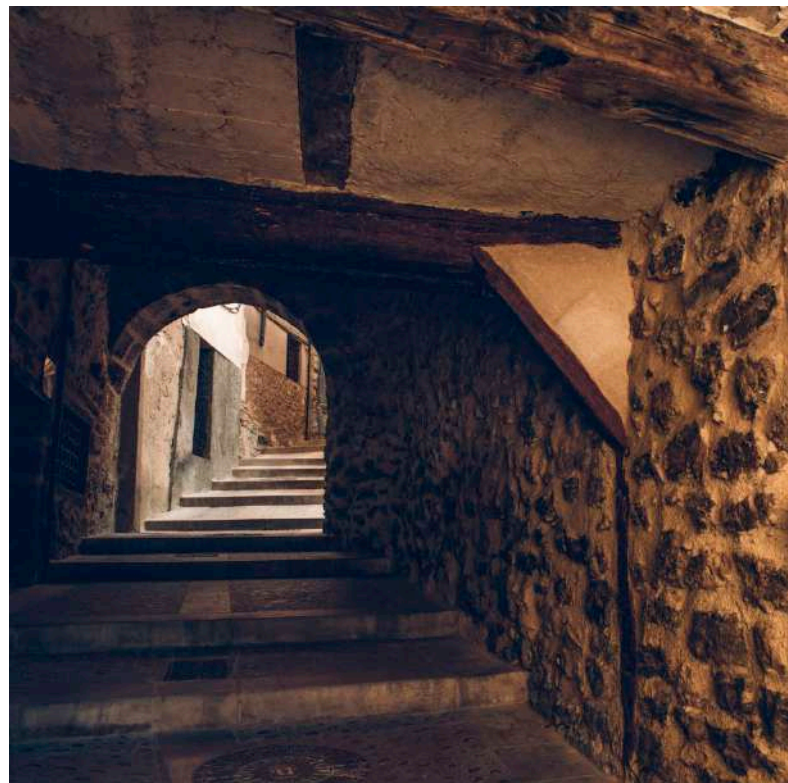
demographic and economic recovery, to reach the 19th century and with it the tragic civil wars, maintaining the city in a long lethargy that lasted until the second half of the twentieth century, when dwellings moved outside the city walls. After the disentanglements of the nineteenth century, the built-up enclave changed its urban profile and the mentality of its people.

Now, a promising upturn is on the horizon, with the revival of tourism, the award-winning gastronomy and the generational change in the different sectors of a modern economy.













## Urban spaces

*A mosaic of buildings rising towards the sky between alleys and nooks and crannies twisted in the mystery of their legends, between rock and pine, between vantage point and river, between towers and gardens.*



The city is divided into a high part, where history and heritage combine to explain the declaration of Cuenca's status and its touristic attraction; and the lower part, where the commercial enclave and the quality of its buildings have allowed the inhabitants of Cuenca to enjoy a stable and high life.

The street layout is a reflection of a city adapted to a space limited by the hollows and riverbeds of the two rivers that surround it: Júcar and Huécar, allowing numerous houses to hang above the abyss and an image with a perspective of height in skyscrapers or balconies that ascend in search of architectural solutions.

The old medieval parishes and neighbourhoods have given way to the new, modern districts outside the walls, adapted to a sustainable environment with parks, gardens and large areas of expansion that offer a wide and varied range of possibilities for hiking or exceptional natural tourism.

The new city opens in the direction of Madrid with the university, educational and health areas, while in the direction of Valencia we find modern urban developments, commercial spaces and industrial estates that define a city in expansion.



## Fairs and **FIESTAS**

*Tradition as the Soul of the People has left its mark on an inherited tradition, while patron saints and virgins offer their blessings to the sound of dances, parades, music, bulls and papier-mâché big heads.*

Like any other city, Cuenca has in its Traditions and Leisure the festive component, whose religious solemnity is defined by the Holy Week of International Tourist Interest, its festivities in honor of St. Julian, defined by a fine Bullfighting Festival and a Fairground that fulfills the dream of young and old, with cultural activities, parades, concerts, parades, horse-riding and sports, among others.

Then, its most popular festival in honour of Saint Matthew, in the middle of autumn, with the running of the young bulls and the solemnities that a historical tradition imposes on its residents and visitors. Activities in which children will have a special role.

Undoubtedly, the representation of the biblical chronology of the Passion Week is the fiesta for solemnity, recollection and art, manifested in its processional parades around those Stations or

sculptural ensembles by renowned artists such as Marco Pérez, Coullaut-Valera, Martínez Bueno or José Capuz, among others. The procession known as Camino del Calvario, where the Turbas are the protagonists of this moment of devotion and rupture, stands out for its originality with respect to other places in religious Spain. Streets and alleys, churches, forks, tulips, marches, hoods, bugles and drums, without forgetting the Miserere, give life to an intense and singular moment of a Castilian town, sober and hospitable













## ARTS AND CRAFTS

*Clay, as an essential element of artisan Cuenca, has felt the breath of life while the potter has shaped his Art, growing the spirit of an artisan Cuenca, through history and values.*

The traditional craft of the city has been and is, historically and today, pottery. We can still speak of a traditional pottery that makes objects for domestic use and now delights us with a modern pottery with a strong decorative character recognized internationally thanks to the late artist Pedro Mercedes, who since 2022 has given his name to the only Alfar in Spain as a cultural space that keeps alive the spirit of its origin as such and is also a modern cultural centre.

The second half of the 20th century witnessed the development of so-called signature ceramics, also known as contemporary ceramics, which the critic Sempere has described in his texts, in which artists of Cuenca clay - heirs of the potters of historical times - present their creative personalities in an art of recognized prestige.

Along with clay craftsmanship, there is also paper craftsmanship, in which Cuenca occupies an outstanding position thanks to the workshops of Segundo Santos and Pilar Martínez.

Let us not forget the Engraving Workshops, developed under the protection of the artistic movement that spawned the creation of the Museum of Spanish Abstract Art, providing Cuenca with a renowned meeting point for the production, printing and exhibition of this technique, which already enjoys a manifest and acknowledged antiquity.

The craft of glass as a workshop, in its historical evolution, has experienced in this city a high degree of modernity and innovation, applying its value in the stained glass windows of Cuenca's cathedral, thanks to artists Henry Dechanet, Bonifacio Alfonso, Gerardo

Rueda and Gustavo Torner, and the Vitrea workshop, dedicated to glass in which their craft combines different disciplines and professions such as glazier, restorer, painter, designer, researcher, blacksmith and curator.

Leather and silverware -historic periods of Arabic and Visigoth origin- have been left behind, and now pottery, in clay, ceramics or glass, has been maintained, without new artistic modalities being forgotten in its evolution.

The Faculty of Fine Arts of the University of Castilla La Mancha in Cuenca and the "Cruz Novillo" School of Arts and Crafts provide the necessary teaching and academic point of reference for the Arts in all their dimensions to have in this city a commitment to the future.





## MUSIC

*Since time immemorial, the drum created the melody that now, in modern times, is accompanied by musical virtuosity in the classicism of avant-garde solfège. Instrumentalists, composers, conductors and numerous voices invade the Cuenca of the present and invigorate that of the future.*

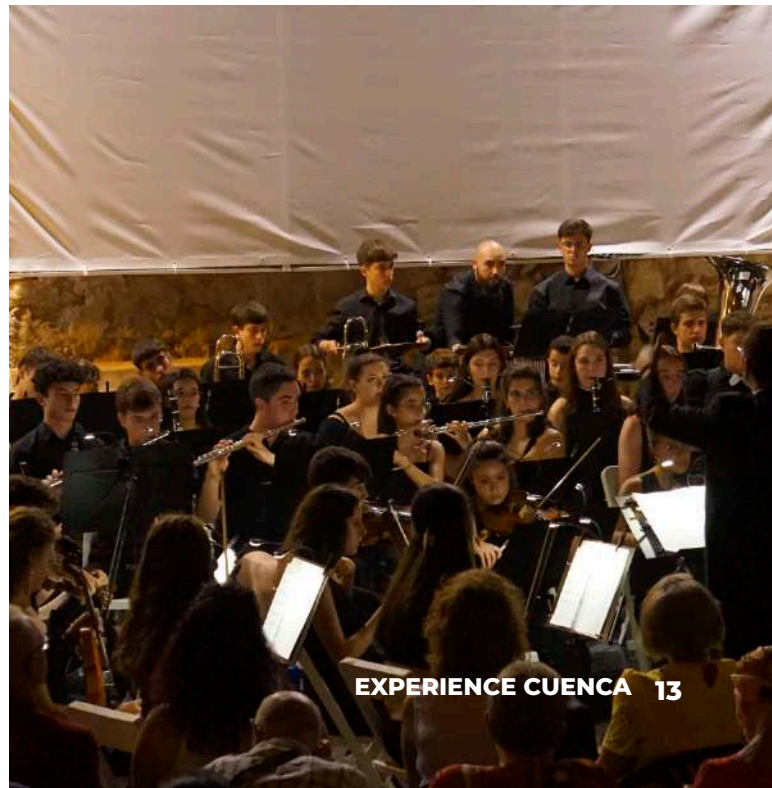


To speak of Music in Cuenca is to speak of teaching and virtuosity, since its Professional Conservatory of Music, dependent on the Provincial Council, as well as the Municipal School of Music and Performing Arts "Ismael Martínez Marín", serve to train a large group of young people, year after year, prominent among whom are the chosen ones who have achieved superior excellence in different musical modalities, without forgetting the different Music Bands, Orchestras,

Associations, Workshops and Choral Groups that demonstrate their mastery and professionalism in concerts, exhibitions and competitions. Musicians such as Nicolás Cabañas and José López Calvo in classical composition or José Luis Perales as author, singer and composer in modern music have served and continue to serve as exemplary role models for excellence in music. The International Week of Religious Music, SMR, and the musical program of Estival Cuenca, are the most recognized

showcases in which Cuenca exhibits its virtues within Music and Theatre. The organ music workshops and concerts organized by the Cathedral, the excellence of Cuenca City of Music with its series of concerts and other musical activities of different groups and municipal programmes of Music in the Street, form a wide network of opportunities to listen to and enjoy music, dance and song.













## MUSEUMS

*The cultural offer in terms of monuments can be completed with a visit to an important and varied network of museums, where archaeology, history, traditions, sacred art and avant-garde art in its figurative and abstract manifestations can be contemplated in spaces of monumental and modernist architecture.*

Cuenca is a city whose historic centre is a veritable museum of history, where each and every artistic period has left its mark. Even so, the cathedral as a living museum is an essential focus to visit, without forgetting that a walk through the history of the world and of humankind is also part of its didactic adventure in the Science and Paleontological Museums of Castilla La Mancha.

Abstract art, in all its genesis - origin, evolution and current avant-garde - can be appreciated in this city in settings that in themselves are true art decorations where nature has its maximum expression.



## CUISINE

*In Cuenca, enchanted cuisine is a unique cuisine. Its regions are home to a gastronomy defined by the charm of its rich nature, its abundant raw materials and its singular economy. In this contrast of the soul of the people, its tradition combines the simple and the generic, whose uniqueness is marked by the charms of its land and the vicissitudes of its history.*

“This mosaic of gastronomic nooks and crannies is adapted to an urban landscape where spaces of beautiful popular design are mixed with urban monuments of architectural evolution, convent buildings, palatial houses and traditional corners where legends alternate with history.

In turn, its aromas implicitly include the visual cuisine provided by the natural landscape of its gorges, deep hollows in the land where the rock alternates between the chromatism of greens, browns and ochres, seeking dreamlike sensations in its market gardens.

A melting pot of different landscapes born of a medieval repopulation of different lands; lost nobility and aristocracy of solid popular and converted Jewish ancestry; viceroys and men of conquest who sailed to bring us different products whose magic involved new flavours and smells; and all this leads us to a cuisine defined by the slogan of "Cuenca Deliciosa" (Delicious Cuenca)."

Cuenca and its province are rich in high quality products of international recognition. Its wines, with the designation of origin, Mancha, Uclés or Ribera del Júcar, as well as the fine cheeses from La Mancha or La Alcarria, without forgetting the oil from private and

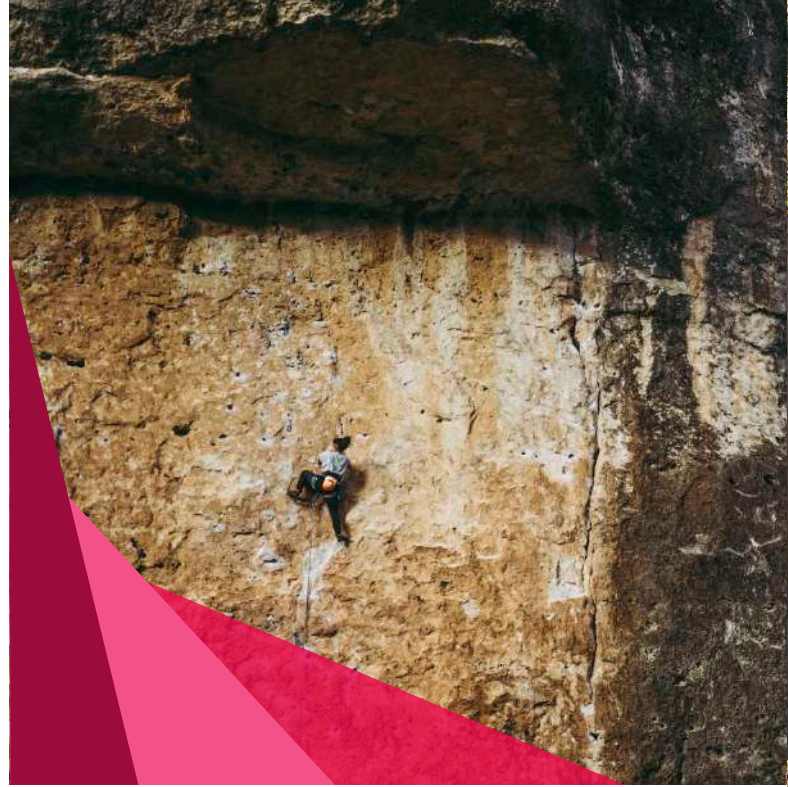
cooperative mills, provide us with that extra quality that makes this gastronomy a model to follow. But we cannot forget the saffron, the purple garlic and the rich honey from Alcarria, composing this mosaic of high quality from Cuenca.

Cuenca has been named Spanish City of Gastronomy 2023 and this is nothing more than an acknowledgement of its gastronomic capacity, the collective effort made by chefs, producers, traders, waiters and institutions, without forgetting the gastronomic hallmarks that define its raw materials, its flavours and smells between landscape, population and cuisine, and a collective effort to believe in gastronomy as a link between progress, tourism and culture.













## ACTIVE TOURISM

*Lovers of active tourism will find in Cuenca a proficient business network of professionals with excellent training and maximum levels of safety for the practice of these risk and adventure sports.*



The geography and geology of Cuenca offers a special mountain experience tailored to each participant, with recreational activities that are combined with sporting activities, of risk and discovery.

The natural regions of this province, such as the Serranía - where the capital is located - offer a wide range of activities in wonderful landscapes for river diving, canoeing or kayaking, canyoning, sport climbing, caving, rappelling, zip-lining and horseback riding; the Alcarria region, where

ballooning or ultralight flights will afford you the chance to contemplate valleys and villages full of art and history; and La Mancha, with its plains for hiking, biking, environmental interpretation in wetlands and historical itineraries to castles, mills, etc.

Our city, its gorges, its rivers, its dolomites, its monuments, can be seen from the air, while contemplating the majesty of the privileged location and its cloistered wonders.



## LEGENDARY spots

*This city has a special charm. The moonlight turns its nooks and crannies, in every gorge, into idyllic spots where the esoteric can lead to opposing paths.*

It is true that legends have fed the souls of scholars of the Black Legend that encompasses a confusing past, sometimes overly influenced by unclear events, but it is also true that human beings need to drink from these concoctions of a dark historical time, so given to sensationalism, in order to know history in its deepest and most authentic sense.

We can visit or tour the city looking for those Legendary Spots, because Cuenca has many, and in this way reconvert its architectural charms, twists and turns of an elaborate farmhouse and tile roofs that can barely hold the weight of its history. Narrow streets because the medieval city demands it; one-way streets because of the requirements of defence in times of war; alleyways with grilles from which hang, by inheritance, those flowers that decorated the city in the time of the Muslim Basin, like a floating garden,

according to the chronicler Al-Shalá. But not only in those alleys is there a reconverted past, also in its two streets of Ronda, which delimited the walled enclosures to warn of attacks, from which now hang precariously supported balconies, looking into the abyss in fear of losing it. Ronda del Júcar, Ronda del Huécar, Barrio de Saint Michael, Barrio de Saint Martin.

Very often, tourists look for what the standard guidebook does not tell them about. There are places that are barely reflected in the texts on their surroundings because there is no monumental light, but there is a mysterious atmosphere that engages the visitor because there, the legend survives in sonorous composure. We could make a tour of Legendary Spots; however, they would be a little off the beaten track as they do not follow the paths with which the usual tourist routes define the city in its Historical Centre

That and no other reason, leads me to propose some walks through this city, walks or routes, defined by special fundamental elements.

Mere mention of these spots arouses one's curiosity and renders a walk through the city more attractive, and its exploration more mysterious. Here are some examples: Posada Saint Joseph—exterior and interior-; the Chapel of the Holy Spirit y el patio de la Limosna; the Stone Arch or Gate of the Barefoot with the Cross of the Converted; neighbourhood of Saint Michael and the Plazoleta de la Música; Penitent's Corner; the Valencia Gate, Calle de Tintes, Casa de las Rejas and Cristo del Amparo; the neighbourhood of Saint Martin and its Stone stairway; the Cristo del Pasadizo and the Arcediano vantage point; Saint Gil or the Garden of the Poets; the Castle district and the Rincón del Gato; El Retiro and Calle del Teatro, etc. The visitor can ask after these places and enjoy their mystery and curiosity.













## **ROUTES OR WALKS** **through the city**

*Undoubtedly, this Castilian city, anchored in deep nature by rock, water and pine, elevated on that rocky pedestal that defines it, presents a hieroglyphic jumble between those alleys that formed the aforementioned Legendary Spots and, on the other hand, invites us to follow defined walks, in the morning sun, the passivity of the afternoon or the dazzling flash of the lunar night.*

Therefore, we will be able to follow the indications that, via this Guide, the municipality offers walkers, seeking sensations under their feet and over their heads, in that transgression of horizontality when ascending or descending between skyscrapers, inverted stairways or vantage points to the distance, experiencing the pleasure of smells, flavours and colours.

For this reason, we propose a Series of Walks on defined Routes, following an easy descent through the walled architecture and following Modules or Assets that the city itself offers us: Illustrious figures that history has given us; the Path of the Word to follow the path of poets, writers and philosophers; the Imprint of Stone

when visiting historical buildings such as convents, palaces, churches, theatres, prisons; the vertical architecture and the path of modernity, where the medieval skyscrapers connect with those Hanging Houses towards the abyss; Jewish Cuenca, following the course of a historical Jewish quarter, then a converted nobility and ending in the footprint that Sepharad may have left and, why not, the Route of Art in that symbiosis where the classical and abstraction allow us to Experience this city as an Icon of Artistic Modernism.

# BETWEEN LEGENDS AND MISTERY

## Walks through Cuenca

The urban structure of a Historical Centre, twisted, crumbling and sleepy, among millenary stones, pointed arches, passages and tile roofs of old architecture, and now rendered lord and master by this new concept of enriching the past with structural alternatives of the present, makes this city a ritual prone to legends and mysteries.

Thus, to walk through Cuenca is to walk through History, to rediscover Mystery, to provoke the poetic Dream, to revive Romanticism and to sense that there is not only art, in abundance, but also love, tragedy, religion, culture, tradition, sensation, fantasy, reality and fairy tales.

*More information in Heritage, Art  
and Culture Guide*

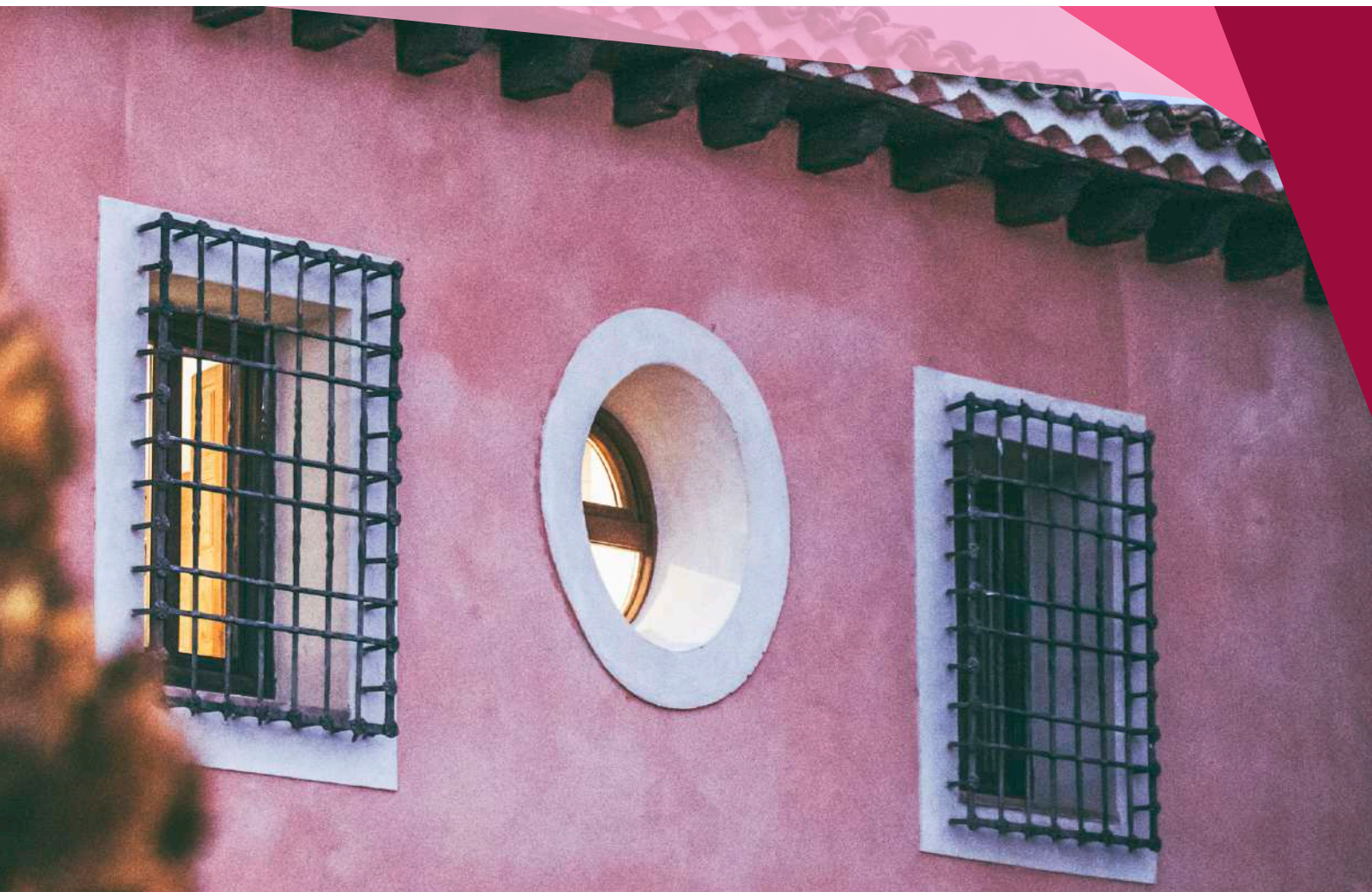




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More routes available in the Natural  
Space Guide





# 1. Poetry Among the Rondas

## Itinerary to follow

**STARTING POINT:** Plaza Mayor

**TYPE:** Circular

We begin the route at the **Plaza Mayor (1)** via Ronda de Julián Romero (maestre de campo in the Thirds of Flanders) and continue between walls of historic buildings. To the left you pass the mysterious ruins of **the Church of Pantaleón (2)** where the sculpture of the Cuenca poet Federico Muelas awaits you. Continue and you arrive at a Baroque facade where, under the name of **College of Saint Joseph (3)**, there is now a well-known catering complex. This was the home of Martínez del Mazo, son-in-law of Diego de Velázquez and Court painter, later a school for cathedral choirboys in the 18th century.

After the facade, you reach a vantage point offering extraordinary panoramic views including, in the distance and on

the other side of the narrow gorge, the **Dominican Convent of Saint Paul (4)**, actualmente Parador Nacional de Turismo a National Parador, and at its feet the kitchen gardens of Huécar. Here we see the logic behind the name Calle Ronda as a vantage point in walled cities. Follow the street and you will enter one of the most iconic spots in the city. **The romantic Christ of the Passageway (5)**, meeting point of lovers who revive a legend written on these walls. Interestingly, the image of Christ is decorated with bouquets of flowers. Next to this, a poetic vantage point that now bears the name of painter Víctor de la Vega, 20th-century muralist and scholar, while the **House of Arcediano (6)**, wraps you in stone and water, warning you of the mystery of its inquisitorial dungeons where witches were tortured. You can still hear the cries of Juana de Santa Fimia.



*Ascent through the passage*

Crossing the aforementioned passageway and accessing by means of stairs, we go through a new tunnel between rocks and above it, the house where the colonizer of California and founder of the city of Joara (Cuenca), Captain Juan Pardo, lived. Next to it, a wicket of the walled city, now closed, but bearing faithful witness to its function in times of la siege. We continue on







## 2. From the Cathedral to the Castle Quarter: route of the palaces

### Itinerary to follow

**STARTING POINT:** Plaza Mayor

**TYPE:** Linear

We start from the Plaza Mayor, opposite the facade of the neo-Gothic cathedral, which gives access to the most important building –monumental and artistic- as a living museum of art. A visit is recommended, as the exceptional grilles and abstract stained glass windows lend a touch of distinction that differentiates it from other Castilian cathedrals.

We go up Calle San Pedro, the only urban thoroughfare that allows the circulation of vehicles in the Old Town. The first thing we find, at number 2 of this street, is the **mansion that was home to Canon Juan del Pozo (1)** (promoter of the construction of the Dominican Convent of Saint Paul –now a National Parador – and of the stone Saint Paul’s Bridge, in the 16th century).

Continuing upwards, we see on the right the ruins of the 13th-century

Church of the Hospitalillo of Saint John, later San Juan de Letrán and now, Church of Saint Pantaleón. There we see the sculpture of poet Federico Muelas.



*Sculpture of Federico Muelas*

Next, separated by an alleyway named after one of the best-known bishops of Cuenca, the former convent of the madres Celadoras “Sacred Heart of Jesus” which now houses the modern **Giraldo Hotel (2)**. From the 17th century onwards, this building, after being the palace of the Carrillo y Albornoz would house this charitable religious congregation. On the left, an arch with a passageway leads us into the Plaza de

San Nicolás, where we find a restored church and the Zavala palace, mentioned earlier.

On the same side if the road, the church facade and the solid building that is the former **convent of the Angelican Nuns (3)**, of the Franciscan order, with a Gothic portico and semi-circular arch, built in 1561 by the family of Commander Castillo and now the “Cruz Novillo” School of Arts and Trades. Continuing upwards, to the left and right, facades of buildings of the nobility. On one side, what is now the **Saint Peter Day Centre (4)** and also the Leonor de Aquitania Hotel and finally a building on the corner for founding children; and on the other side, a fountain informs us that two broad facades recall what in the 17th century was the Jesuit College of Cuenca, whose foundational coat of arms reaffirms its use.

After a few houses –now tourist apartments or hostels- we come to the



facade of the palace of the Counts of Priego, then an artistic portico of what was the chapel of the **Brotherhood of the Epifany (5)**, constructed in 1589, attributed to Francisco de Mora and dependent on the Church of Saint Peter, now a private space. Alongside it, **the palace of the Mayorga or Counts of Toreno(6)**, home to such distinguished individuals as Enrique de Trastámara, writer César González Ruano or painter Gerardo Rueda.

We reach the **Plaza del Trabuco (7)**, a curious name that alludes to a violent altercation between inhabitants of the city – followers of Lope Barrientos and Álvaro de Luna, against the rebels led by Hurtado de Mendoza with the support of the Aragonese. Here, you are met by the **Church of Saint Peter the Apostle (8)**, octagonal, built in the 17th century upon a 13th century foundation. In its interior, the Easter images of Saint Peter and the Denial. Its towers provide a broad view of the upper city. Legend has it that buried under its entrance staircase was the Beata de Villar del Águila, tried by the Inquisition. A combination offering one of the most attractive spots in the city.

Without leaving the street, we climb, leaving behind the house of the Curate of Saint Peter, now home to the Association of Artisans. Descending the steps to the A. Pérez Foundation, we pass private buildings and come to a large building – on our right – that was a medieval castle, before housing the court of the Holy Inquisition with its secret cells, subsequently a public prison and now site of the Provincial **Historical Archive (9)**. A sculpture of the Augustinian friar Luis de León recalls his Belmonteña origins and his Calm Night.

The Gateway of the **Bezudo Arch (10)**, 16th century in its construction and heraldry, reforming the primitive Gothic and the back part of the walled canvasses of the original enclave of the Islamic city leads us out of the fortified city, crossing a stone bridge over an old



Arco de Bezudo

moat and finally, the **Castle Quarter (11)**, once a market garden zone and now, renovated to provide a tourist area of high standing with restaurants and bars where visitors enjoy incredible views of the city hanging above the Huécar gorge. Between the hills of Saint Christopher and el Socorro, the city offers magical landscapes, between rocks, aqueducts and vantage points and, above all, the chance to go hiking along various routes such as the Senda del Agua.

A 16th-century canal that brought water to the city of Cuenca by means of aqueducts – or the **Mirador del Rey**, a stone symbol located on a high point on the way to the summit of Mount Saint Christopher, from which we enjoy extensive natural views. End of the route and a rest to enjoy some well-earned refreshments.



Miradores del Barrio del Castillo







### 3. From the Jewish Quarter to Nazarene Cuenca

## Itinerary to follow

**STARTING POINT:** Plaza Mayor  
**TYPE:** Lineal

We begin this route from the Antepiazza, under the **arches of the Town hall (1)**, a Baroque building designed by architect Jaime Bort. Inside, a beautiful entrance staircase leads up to the Plenary Room, the balcony of which offers a panoramic view of the whole of the Plaza Mayor.



City Hall

We continue along Calle Fuero, cornered between the **convent of the Esclavas or Blancas (2)**, a 16th-century building with a Baroque-Mannerist façade, before ascending to one of the most artistic and welcoming corners of the historic centre under the name of **Plaza de la Merced (3)**. There, the Baroque style reaches its maximum expression and several doorways give us a glimpse of the marvellous interior to which they give access. **The Conciliar Seminary of Saint Julian (4)**, former palace of the Counts of Siruela in the 16th century, now houses the seminarists of the Bishopric and is partly open to visitors in general, between a rococo hall and a gothic altarpiece. The church of the Mercedarian Fathers with its baroque façade, built on an old gothic palace of the Hurtado de Mendoza family, is adjacent to the previous building and now, restored and refurbished, serves as the headquarters of the rich **library of**

**the Seminary (5)**, where incunabula or volumes of high historical value are classified and exhibited for private consultation, subject to authorization. Opposite, the former Nursing Home is now part of the **Science Museum of Castilla La Mancha (6)** and allows us access through a narrow alley or street of Santa Maria to the **Plaza de Mangana (7)**, the old centre of the Arab Alcazar neighbourhood and enclave of the Jewish quarter in the medieval Cuenca.



Plaza de la Merced

In this modernly arranged space is the **Mangana Tower (8)**, a unique architectural element that serves as the city's clock and is located in what was once the Jewish quarter, where archaeological remains of the old Synagogue and the later church of the converted Santa María la Nueva can be seen. The tower was erected on a site of the Montemayor to replace the so-called Torre de la Queda, whose mission was to warn market gardeners, farmers and merchants that the gates of the wall were being closed. Now, the monument to the Constitution of the artist Gustavo Torner brings modernity between time and the avant-garde. At present, it is accessible from a public parking lot.

After a panoramic walk around the area, along Calle Alcázar, we can descend to the back where the remains of the wall allow us to find the **Plaza del Carmen (9)**, where there was once a convent of the Barefoot Carmelites, military barracks, headquarters of the Provincial Court and now a school for boys and girls under the same name.

We go down some steps and a long street to our right to a point where the remains of a bell tower tells us that there was a church there under the dedication of Saint John the Baptist. Next to it, **a wall gate with the name of Saint John (10)**, defines the oldest legend of this city.

We enter Calle del Peso, after leaving Calle Andrés de Cabrera, where the Museo de la Semana Santa (Holy Week Museum) is located, a must-see -formerly the palace of the Girón family-. Following this narrow street we arrive at the **Plaza de San Andrés (11)**, a church built in the 16th century to house the parish church, by the master builder Pedro de Alviz. It is now a centre for exhibitions and cultural activities.

There are two options, return along Madre de Dios alley to Calle Alfonso VIII and go up to the Plaza Mayor, another

excellent route, or go down Calle del Peso to the **church of El Salvador (12)**, an iconic building for the Cuenca Holy Week brotherhoods. Built in the 18th century on the site of another 13th-century Romanesque building, it has a neo-Gothic appearance with a Baroque façade and a slender tower of marvellous workmanship. Its portico is an excellent work, in bronze and wood, by the artist Miguel Zapata.

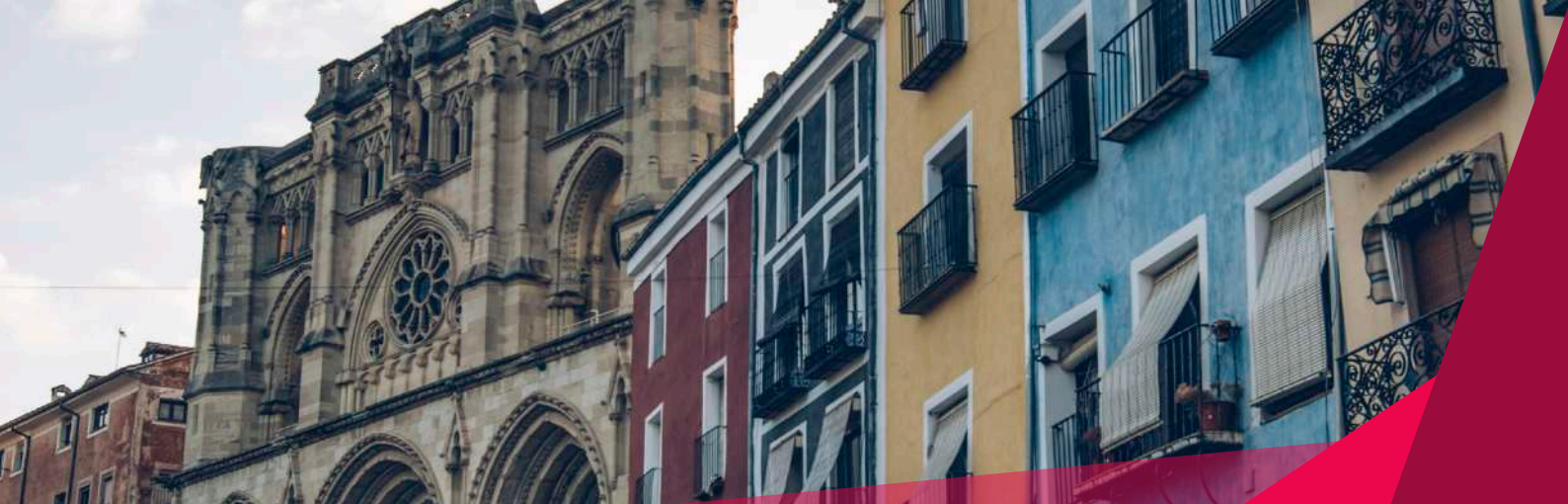
We go down Calle Alonso de Ojeda to reach the **Valencia Gate (13)**, one of the important points that would strengthen the medieval Cuenca. There, the taverns, bars, inns and guild streets with different gastronomic offerings, walks along the Huécar river and a visit to the convent of the Conceptionist Mothers (14), will invite you to enjoy one of the unique environments that this city offers visitors. End of the route.



Valencia Gate







## 4. From the balconies to the Huécar. Schoolchildren, silversmiths and poets

### Itinerary to follow

**STARTING POINT:** Plaza Mayor  
**TYPE:** Circular

Poet Eduardo de la Rica wrote that "Cuenca is elevation, plastic architecture in vertical harmonies" and we will see that during this magnificent walk, through nooks and crannies, narrow streets, skyscrapers and viewpoints overlooking the gorge.



*Casa del Corregidor*

This route has two possible starting points. On the one hand, going up from

the Valencia gate, turning to the right towards the old convent of Las Bernardas and on the other - the one we recommend -, leaving from the Plaza Mayor, along Calle de Alfonso VIII or Antigua Correduría, we would descend until we reach the church of Los Oblatos or Saint Felipe Neri. Before that, on your left, you are greeted by two palatial mansions: on the one hand, the recently restored **Reeve's House (1)**, a 16th-century building that underwent several modifications to its height in the 18th century, housing the original house of the Reeve of the city, then at different times, prison cells, the Courts and the Royal Butchers on the ground floor..

Alongside, the **Casa Palacio de los Clemente de Aróstegui (2)**, also an 18th century building, now private dwellings, with the coat of arms of the lineage and spacious historic outbuildings.

We continue until we reach the staircase and the entrance to the **Oratory of Saint Felipe Neri (3)**, a former convent of the Oblates. where the master José Martín de Aldehuela left his mark in the 18th century. It is a church with a single nave and a Latin cross plan.



*Oratory of Saint Felipe Neri*

We cross Calle Caballeros and turn left to reach a gate where a sign indicates Jardín de los Poetas (Poets' Garden). A romantic place, still to be properly restored, in which the free-standing, solitary tower of the old parish **Church of Saint Gil (4)** presides, a vestige of what this important quarter of the medieval Cuenca used to be. In this neighbourhood, the old parish church of Saint Stephen, the convent of the Madres Bernardas and the hospitals of Saint Sebastián -for men- and Santa Lucía -for women-, as well as the house where the French master Esteban Jamete lived, were witnesses -now disappeared- but which make this walk a nostalgic reminder of medieval times where tales and legends feel the weight of history.

Once in the small square where we will take Calle Matadero Viejo, we walk past the Bajada a Santa Catalina on the right, and along the street of the same name we will reach the **Church of Santa Cruz (5)** after passing the Huerto de Mateo Arana, now a private tourist area. A church built in the 16th century next to what was the Colegio de Santa Catalina, an ecclesiastical centre of education that would also house theatrical performances; this church was reformed by Martín de Aldehuela in the 18th century, retaining in its interior the tomb chapel of Don Luis Valle de la Cerda, and in modern times converted from the Craftsmen's Exhibition Centre to the current Roberto Polo Contemporary Art Space..

We continue along this unique path and between stairs that go up and down and viewpoints overlooking the gorge, the walker finds himself at the foot of the famous **Rascacielos de Saint Martin or Skyscrapers of Cuenca (6)**, where fourteen floors invite you to remember medieval times and the need for housing in a city with a limited urban space.

From here we can go straight up to the Plaza Mayor through the maze of Calles Clavel and Colmillo to the Town Hall or to the Plaza Obispo Valero. Or continue

walking without taking the stairs and reach the centre of the **Saint Martin neighbourhood (7)**, one of the urban areas with its own parish - now integrated into a public dwelling where only the remains of its Romanesque apse remain-. Undoubtedly, this neighbourhood is one of the most emblematic in the city, having been the home in the 16th century of silversmiths such as the Becerril and carvers such as the Hernández and, in later centuries, painters such as Okano and Wifredo Lam, and now occupied by residents of the city who take advantage of the wonderful studios that were built there in the 1970s.

Some stairs take us up to the arch that opens up the space of Piazza L'Aquila - an Italian city twinned with Cuenca since 1986 - and then we find la Plaza de Ronda - another city twinned with ours since 1975 - where the entrances to the **Museum of Spanish Abstract Art (8)** and the Hanging Houses Restaurants and **Casa de la Sirena (9)**, recently

opened to the public, are located. The back of the palace of the Gómez Carrillo family, first their birthplace and later inquisitorial prisons, where the letters drawn by the artist Miguel Zapata, tell us that this mansion houses the **Museum of Cuenca (10)**, an archaeological museum where a multitude of archaeological pieces of great historical and monumental value can be seen. The narrow Calle de los Canónigos also takes us to the Plaza Mayor after crossing the Episcopal palace. A very interesting route that also invites you to free your spirit and exercise your body. End of this route or walk.



Museo de Cuenca







## 5. From one river to another. Walls, bridges and neighbourhoods

### Itinerary to be followed

**STARTING POINT:** Puente de San Antón  
**TYPE:** Lineal



Church of La Virgen de la Luz

We can do this in two directions. On the one hand, once we have arrived in the city from the direction of Madrid and parked our vehicle in the middle of the Los Moralejos park, we would look for the **Saint Antón's Bridge (1)** where a spectacular view of the old city reflected in the waters of the river itself, starts us on the path to follow. Time permitting, we recommend a visit to the Baroque church of the Virgen de la Luz, with its marvellous, mystical and precious interior, and then a short walk to the **Alfar de Pedro Mercedes (2)** along the Calle de San Lázaro. The views of the river Júcar are marvellous, the walk through the terraced urban space is a journey back to the Middle Ages, and then a coffee in one of the two establishments with terraces is an unexpected pleasure.

We return to the first starting point, the park and **La Trinidad Bridge(3)**, and start the climb towards the historic

centre. This place, already mentioned in the Arab chronicles of Ibn Salá in the 12th century, tells us of a bridge with small eyes where the two rivers of the city converge: Huécar and Júcar, and which had two large defensive towers. In this place, called de los Remedios, the Trinitarian friars had the good fortune to have a convent, later a post office and finally a park.



Palafox

The ascent is made along a wide street called **Palafox (4)**, in honour of the great enlightened bishop of our city, now an enormous and solemn building, first a school, then an institute and finally a professional music conservatory.

When we arrive at the building that today houses the UIMP premises -painted in that bright blue - as the Menéndez y Pelayo International University, and crossing a short alley, we find the **Plaza de Santo Domingo (5)** where a modern fountain and a free-standing tower indicate how important this place was in the past. Here, there was a workman who knew Jerónimo, the founder of the hermitage of Los Jerónimos on the path to the gorge, and next to it, a church to house Jewish converts, parish church, school and crossroads of streets, where several neighbourhoods converge: **El Retiro (6)** towards the river - home to milkmen and illustrious theatrical figures, such as the 17th-century writer Antonio Enríquez Gómez, known under the pseudonym of Fernando de Zárate. In this part of the village, we find the neighbourhoods of Salvador, Saint Vincent and Saint Andrew.

Parish churches, alleys that lead to the **Pósito (7)**, the river Huécar, Calle los Tintes, Calle de la Moneda, the old parish church of Saint Vincent, children's schools, the convent of the **Madres Benedictinas (8)** dedicated to teaching, the small park that was once the market and the chapel of La Esperancilla in front of the **mansion of the Valdés brothers (9)**, humanist writers who elevated the city of Cuenca to the highest universal spheres. Juan, with his beautiful Dialogues and Alfonso, as secretary of Latin Letters of Charles V, to whom some authors attribute the authorship of El Lazarillo de Tormes.

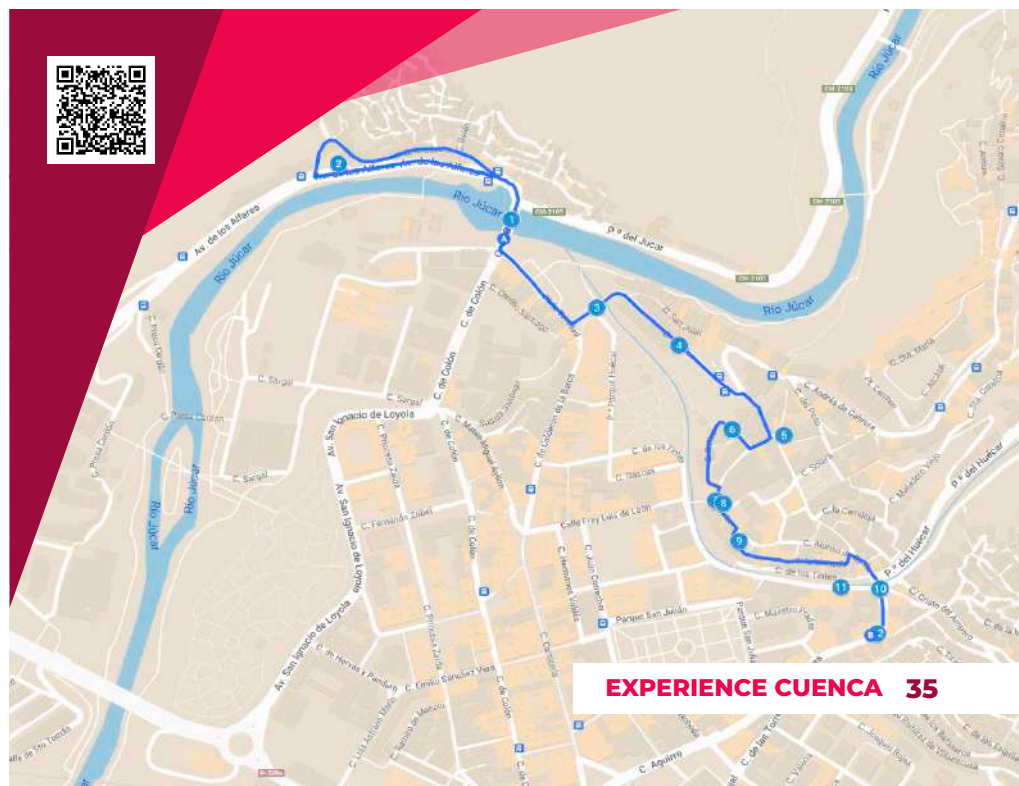
Continuing along Calle Alonso de Ojeda or perhaps along Calle de la Moneda, we reach the other fortified end, the Valencia gate (10), which opens

towards the Levante. There, the aforementioned Convent de las Concepcionistas without forgetting the **Calle de los Tintes (11)** all of which we can walk along if we go through the door of the staircase of El Gallo, next to the Pósito, and then follow the banks of the river Huécar itself; then the Campo de San Francisco and another iconic, special and popular neighbourhood outside the city walls: the Tiradores Bajos or the Cristo del Amparo. Already mentioned in another route. Alongside, the **Casa de las Rejas (12)** with a unique legend and a building with a monumental architectural layout. And we could do this in the opposite direction. If we arrive from the direction of Valencia, once we have entered the city, we go along Calle Hermanos Becerril, then Fermín Caballero to reach the direction of the Parador de Cuenca. Leave your car parked near the bus station or the railway station and follow the road to Calle Ramón y Cajal. We go through what would be the old

Campo de San Francisco with the new church of Saint Stephen, the palace of the Provincial Diputation, Calle de las Torres and towards Puerta de Valencia. There, we would enter the Old Quarter through Alonso de Ojeda Street, going in the opposite direction to the previous one to head towards Saint Antón's Bridge.



Los Tintes street







## 6. The balconies over the Júcar and the Las Angustias viewpoint

### Itinerary to be followed

**STARTING POINT:** Tourist Office Anteplaza  
**TYPE:** Circular

This is a route that mixes the urban and the natural, without forgetting legend or religious mysticism.

We start from the tourist office in the Anteplaza. We go through the pointed arch and up the steps to the **Saint Michael quarter (1)** and find the first viewpoints overlooking the Júcar. Between the back of the Town Hall and the many picturesque bars, we descend to find façades, balconies, a medieval street and a pointed arch that reminds us of the times of the Jews and Mudejars. These are the San Miguel skyscrapers - about twelve storeys high, they housed families in the Modern Age.

We continue downhill, leaving behind the circular mullions with railings - curiously, those that were removed from the Baroque façade of the cathedral in the 20th century -, Placeta del Rotus or Placeta de la Buharda and arrive,

passing through a small passageway, at the **church of Saint Michael itself (2)**.

A Romanic apse, from the 13th century, modified in the 16th century with a design and dome by Esteban Jamete and finally restored by necessity in the 18th century with a major transformation, including the design of the current façade. It has been deconsecrated since the beginning of the 20th century and is now the venue for concerts of the Religious Music Week and Easter proclamations.

We continue along Calle Ronda del Júcar or Calle de las Armas, or we could go towards the main square through the Callejón de las Armas, whose arch would give us access to the old Calle Pilares. If we continue along the previous street called San Miguel, we will come out onto the first part of the Calle Severo Catalina (Pilares) and from there, we will go down some steps dug

out of the rock itself in what is called the Bajada a las Angustias, towards a doorway carved into the stone and which in many writings appears as the **New (3) or Friars' doorway**. This whole area is magical, because in its descent we find a face and a cross, engraved in rock, where the cock crows to the curious and mysterious reflections can be seen during the days of the full moon.



*Cruz del Arrepentido*

Crossing this passage or stone gateway, we find a building with a landscaped atrium and small square, framed by a railing and a stone votive cross in the centre. It is called the **Penitent's Cross (4)**, also known as Cruz de los Descalzos or Cruz del Milagro. Its legend is well known. It corresponds to a convent of Barefoot Franciscans from 1578 whose dedication was to San Lorenzo Mártir. Don Marcos de Parada donated the land, house and orchard for it. It is now a private property in the process of being restored.

Opposite the convent, a hermitage was renovated at the end of the 17th century thanks to José Martín de Aldehuela, who designed the façade and also a new access excavated in the rock. It is a shrine dedicated to the **Virgen de las Angustias (5)**, a place of pilgrimage and much devotion - especially on Friday of Sorrows - as she is the patron saint of the Diocese of Cuenca. The place where it is located is a corner where silence helps contemplation, with a fountain (which, according to tradition, if you drink from you will become a bride or groom) and a privileged natural setting, with viewpoints overlooking the Júcar river. Behind the hermitage is a modern building houses the facilities of the FUDEN (Nursing Foundation) and a path that takes us to the stairs leading to the Bezudo Arch. It is a popular path for hiking, due to its beauty, layout and scenery.

However, we will ignore this path and continue downhill from the small square of the hermitage of Las Angustias, along an asphalted path with viewpoints overlooking the river. After this descent, which is called "de las Angustias", we reach the banks of the river Júcar and a place where we find a very typical restaurant, "**El Recreo Peral (6)**", which is so named because of the use that has always been made of this space. There you can play Castilian skittles, contemplate the gorge itself and walk to both sides. We advise you to do so,

once you have drunk some water in the **Fountain Of the Fan (7)**, with a legend included, and on the left, accessing numerous stone steps that lead to the - after over a hundred steps - to the **Gate of Saint John (8)**, the place where history has it that the Christian troops of Alfonso VIII entered when the city surrendered in 1187.

This gate, one of the nine that the Islamic fortification of this city had, is called the Aljaraz gate, the Gate of the Blind or the Gate of the Wool. It was a common way for cattle to leave and enter the city to graze outside it.

Once we have crossed it, we will find ourselves in Calle Andrés de Cabrera, - a convert from Cuenca who married Beatriz de Bobadilla and was the first Marquis of Moya - and we climb upwards towards the centre of the Old Quarter. We continue walking and find on the right, the palace of the Girón family - now the Museum of Holy Week-, then the **church of Saint Felipe Neri (9)** and

we continue along what is called Calle de Alfonso VIII, the old Correduría, Casa de los Clemente de Aróstegui and **Reeve's House (10)** -recently restored- to reach the main square. On the ascent to the left, we can see the Carmen building, the Mangana underground car park and the entrance to the Junta de Cofradías. An iron gate indicates that this is the location of one of the **Cuenca Underground Walks (11)**, a tourist area that immerses us in the mysterious Cuenca. At the end, we are welcomed by the Antepiazza and the City Hall, the place where we began this walk.



Church of Saint Felipe Neri







## 7. The Huécar route, between music and vertigo

### Itinerary to be followed

**STARTING POINT:** Iglesia de San Esteban  
**TYPE:** Lineal

We should do this from the **church of Saint Stephen (1)** and Plaza de la Hispanidad, starting at Calle Carretería as the commercial centre of the city or the Escuelas Aguirre -founded by the philanthropist Lucas Aguirre Juárez in the 19th century- for the education of pupils and now home to the Municipal Library and Adult Centre. That is to say, from the modern part of the city to the most iconic corners as tourist elements: Hanging Houses and Saint Paul's Bridge.



*Church of San Esteban*

The best way to continue is along Aguirre street, to reach the Puerta de Valencia -through Las Torres street-. Before arriving, the **Casa de las Rejas (2)**, a place of legend and hostel accommodation now under the name of Posada de San Julián. This building, built at the end of the 16th century, has two floors with a porticoed courtyard on the inside and a vegetable garden at the back. In front, a façade with extraordinary grilles and a coat of arms with two naked angels and a window framed by pilasters at the corner of the building.

We continue and on the left-hand side is the entrance door to the **convent of the Conceptionists (3)**, built at the beginning of the 16th century thanks to the Montemayors and with a façade by Pedro de Alviz. It was modified in the 18th century with the contribution of Martín de Aldehuela and its Baroque church façade has a belfry - Aldehuela

decided to maintain the 16th century layout in its structure - ashlar pilasters and, next to it, the bridge over the River Huécar, which grants Access to the Gate of Valencia.



*Convent of las Concepcionistas*

Instead of entering the Old Town, in this case, we would continue along the left bank of the river and we arrive at a modernist, avant-garde building with an elegant entrance that bears the name of **"José Luis Perales" Theatre Auditorium (4)** where an extensive annual programme provides the Cuenca public with constant leisure and cultural activities.

Once we have crossed it, and left what was called the bridge of the Molino de San Martín, a sloping access leads us to a large, monumental and well-preserved building, a primitive **Dominican convent of Saint Paul (5)** and now the site of the National Parador. Inside, the cloister, the rectory and the Vincentian hall are of excellent structure and decoration. Next to it, the old church with a baroque design and an extraordinary façade by Martín de Aldehuela, which is now the Gustavo Torner Space for contemporary art, very popular with the public.

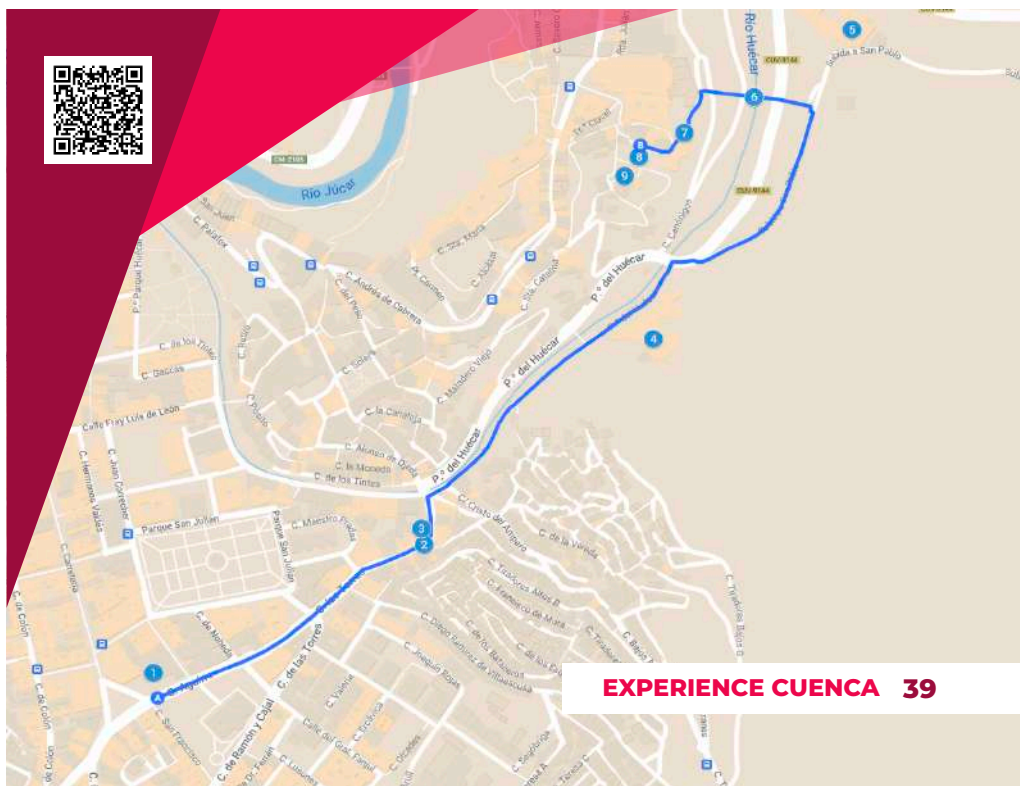
We cross **Saint Paul's Bridge (6)**, originally built in the 16th century, and enter the monumental and historic city through Calle Canónigos and the **Santa María Gate (7)**, to reach the Plaza de Ronda and the skyscrapers of Saint Martin, already mentioned on other routes. This bridge, originally made of stone and commissioned by the canon Juan del Pozo, under the design of Andrés de Vandelvira, was demolished in the 18th century due to problems of support and commissioned to be made of iron by the engineers Bartle and Fuster, and inaugurated in 1903.

In the **Plaza de Ronda (8)**, so called because of the twinning between this city in Malaga and Cuenca, we can see the back of the Museum of Cuenca and the famous Saint Martin skyscrapers (9), with their fourteen storeys between the emptiness of the gorge and the surrounding neighbourhoods of low houses.

The route can be finished by going down the slope of the aforementioned Calle Canónigos to the river Huécar itself, crossing the remains of the old gate of the Hidalgos, or by the stairs and viewpoints from the Plaza de Ronda towards the Saint Martin neighbourhood and the descent towards the small bridge itself, going down by the house that houses the College of Architects, opposite the Auditorium theatre, or by continuing towards the Puerta de Valencia along the Santa Catalina path.



*Saint Paul's Bridge and Dominican Convent of Saint Paul*







## 8. In modernity, Tintes and el Gallo seeking Santiago Itinerary to be followed

**STARTING POINT:** Parque de los Moralejos  
**TYPE:** Circular

This route is between the intersection of the old town and the new town. We leave the walled enclosure, the fortified gates and then, between Calle Tintes, Campo de San Francisco and Calle del Agua, we turn our gaze to the commercial Cuenca, that of the first districts outside the city walls.



*Santiago Hospital*

From right to left or the other way round, my intention is that the traveller can stroll between Calles Aguirre, Carretería, Calderón de la Barca and the surrounding areas that allow access to the Hospital de Santiago Apóstol, emblem of medieval Cuenca.

If you start from the Los Moralejos Park, building of the Delegation of Agriculture, formerly **Casa de las Arrecogidas (1)**, you will come across Saint Antón's Bridge, so you can head down the street that was once the part of Barrionuevo, the first neighbourhood outside the medieval city, and thus meet up with the street Calderón de la Barca. If you have time, when you are in front of the present-day Delegation of Agriculture, you could go down this sloping street and on to the area of bars and restaurants called La Ceca, in honour of what was there in the past: Mint, Tapestry Factory and now a private leisure area.

Halfway along Calle Calderón de la Barca, on the right, some baroque stairs lead to the **Hospital de Santiago (2)**, but not before having the opportunity to see the second **shelter of underground Cuenca (3)**. This tourist area is now very popular with travellers and allows them to experience the most tragic moments of the Civil War of 1936.



*Nazareno's Square*



Accessed by these imperial-style staircases, we reach the small square and façade of the Hospital, built by Martín de Aldehuela in the 18th century. Its interior is extraordinary and shows the different moments of its evolution as a building.

Once you have had a chance to enjoy the surroundings, go back down and walk along the same street until you reach the **Plaza de la Constitución** or **Plaza del Nazareno (4)**, formerly the Plaza de Cánovas del Castillo. At this point, you have two options, either to continue along the commercial **Calle de la Carretería (5)**, with some 19th century buildings, or along Calle Fray Luis de León, commonly known as Calle del Agua, due to the frequent floods that have occurred throughout history. This street ends at the **Escalerillas del Gallo (6)**, where the Royal Granary is located, pending completion of its restoration. Between this street and **Saint Julian Park (7)**, the former Canalejas Park, now a meeting place, is the Plaza de España with its coloured fountain and the former municipal market -deteriorated and in disuse-.

Several buildings separate you from the aforementioned park, including those housing institutions such as the Bank of Spain, the Post Office, the State Treasury, the Social Security, the Maestro Pradas School, and the Defence Sub-delegation, among others. Behind it is the **Palacio de Diputación Provincial (8)**, a beautiful building that offers guided tours to see its noble spaces and also hosts exhibitions and cultural events. All of them border the park and serve as a turning point in administrative Cuenca. Not forgetting the headquarters of the former Caja de Ahorros de Cuenca savings bank and the **Círculo de la Constancia** or **Casino de Cuenca (9)**.



Diputación Provincial Palace





# EXPERIENCE CUENCA

## Text

*Miguel Romero Saiz, writer, historian and official chronicler of the city...*





provides in this General Guide to Cuenca a new approach from the perspective of novelty, with a view to defining its tangible and intangible beauties, in this peculiar vision of the City of the Senses, where the singularity of its buildings -historic, religious and innovative-, are adapted to an irregular landscape in which rock, water and pine magnify its special original meaning.

This expert scholar, academic and cultural manager, author of more than thirty books, once again dignifies his narrative vision from the desire to seek innovation in descriptive elements, without forgetting the singularity of their interiors or decorative aspects.

Legendary spots, charming viewpoints, the nooks and crannies of a millenary and imaginative city in these Routes and Walks, find a different evaluation here, going up or down streets and alleys, rediscovering grilles, balconies and tile roofs, so that visitors, tourists and even residents can take advantage of all the visible and not so visible resources of a chosen and universal city.



## *Tourist Office*

-  Oficina Municipal de Turismo. Ayuntamiento de Cuenca  
C/ Alfonso VIII, 2 Cuenca
-  (+34) 969 241 051
-  [www.visitacuenca.es](http://www.visitacuenca.es)
-  [ofi.turismo@cuenca.es](mailto:ofi.turismo@cuenca.es)

## *Ayuntamiento de Cuenca*

-  [www.cuenca.es](http://www.cuenca.es)

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*Official guide  
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*Official guide  
Heritage Art and Culture*



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