

A stroll through the 16th century

Opposite the Tourist Information Office-Interpretation Centre, we find the Monastery, *Monasterio de San Lorenzo de El Escorial* (1), bordered by a levelled area, a stone esplanade known as the *Lonja* (2).

If we continue to the right, following the main facade of the Monastery, we go under an archway, the *Arco de la Compañía* (3). To the left, we can enjoy the view of the Friars' Garden, *Jardín de los Frailes* (4), the pond, *el estanque* (5), the Friars' Kitchen Garden, *la Huerta de los Frailes* (6) and the Herrería Meadows, *Dehesa de la Herrería* (7).

At one end of the south-facing facade of the Monastery is the Gallery of Convalescents, *Galería de convalecientes* (8), conceived as an independent structure to enable patients to be in isolation, which it was designed for.

In the upper part of the kitchen garden and orchards, we find the *Cachicanía* (9) or gardener's cottage, the dwelling of the person who looked after this beautiful corner of the estate. Built in around 1564 and with some remodelling work by Francisco de Mora in 1596, it is a square building, with a slate roof, where tools, implements and firewood were also stored.



Leaving the grounds of the Monastery, we now walk in the direction of the *Paseo de los Alamillos*, coming upon, on the right, one of the most important buildings of its time: the Company Quarters, or *Casa de la Compañía* (10), currently the María Cristina Royal University College, or *Real Centro Universitario Escorial-María Cristina*.

If we continue along the main facade of this building, we come to the street called *calle Leandro Rubio*, main road of the beautiful neighbourhood of *El Plantel* (11), which was given the name of the plantation of trees that Felipe II had ordered created, containing species such as ilex, chestnuts, oaks and hazel trees.

Having reached the end of *calle Leandro Rubio* and after turning into *Floridablanca*, we find on our left the building known as *Casa de Jacometrezo (12)*, the oldest in the area. This stone construction dates from the beginning of the Monastery works. Located just on the edge of *el Plantel*, it would later be the residence of the Italian sculptor, Jacomo da Trezzo, which gave it the name with which it has reached our days.

Continuing down *calle Floridablanca*, on the right we can see some attractive ruins covered in vegetation which climbs up the enormous chimneystacks that remained outside what was the House of the Slates, *Casa de las Pizarras (13)*, located in the vertex of the *lonja*. This was the residence for the doorman of the King's kitchen, the servants and the maker of esparto articles of the friary.

Continuing a little further until we are parallel to the square, the *Plaza de la Constitución*, if we look to the left and slightly upwards above street level, we can see the Professors' House, *Casa de los Doctores (14)*.

Progressing along *calle Floridablanca*, on the right and separated by the street *calle Grimaldi*, we can see the First and Second House of Trades, *Primera y Segunda Casa de Oficios (15 and 16)*, where we end our stroll.

Monasterio de San Lorenzo de El Escorial (1)

In the Letter that Felipe II wrote to the General of the Hieronymite Order, on 16 April 1561, he set out the reasons which led him to construct the Monastery: as recognition for the victory of the battle of Saint Quentin, which took place on St. Lawrence's Day in 1557 and his desire to build a mausoleum in memory of his parents and himself, dedicated to St. Lawrence.



The work began under the architect Juan Bautista de Toledo in 1563, but the architect who continued it was his disciple, Juan de Herrera, from 1567, when Juan Bautista de Toledo died, until 1584, when the construction of the Monastery finished. The latter modified the design and created his own style, known as Herreran-style, characterised by decorative bareness and geometrical rigour.

The main facade, west-facing, has two large side doors which are the entrances to the Alfonso XII school and to the Augustine friary. In the centre of the facade, among eight Doric columns, is the main entrance of the building, crowned by a body of Ionic columns, among which we can identify the family coat of arms of Felipe II and a colossal statue of St. Lawrence, created in granite by Juan Bautista Monegro, which are particularly noteworthy.

Within it, it boasts the Plaza of the Kings (*Patio de Reyes*), the Basilica, the library, the crypt of the Kings (*Panteón de Reyes*), the crypt of the Princes and Princesses (*Panteón de Infantes*), the palaces (*Palacios*), and the Chapter Rooms (*Salas capitulares*), among other areas. The art museum and the architectural museum are a must for visitors.

The *Patio de los Reyes* is reached as you pass through the main door and measures 64 metres long by 38 metres wide. In the upper part of the facade, which gives access to the Basilica, there are six kings from the tribe of Judah upon enormous pedestals of granite stone, the work of Juan Bautista Monegro.

The *Basílica* takes the form of a Greek cross and its central cupola is crowned by a dome 92 metres high, which makes it stand out among the other towers of the building. The majority of its frescos above the vaults were painted by Lucas Jordan in the 17th century, except those located above the Choir and the main altar which are the work of Luca Cambiasso. The main altar is decorated with paintings by Zucaro and Tibaldi. At either side of the main altar there are bronze depictions of Carlos V and Felipe II with their respective families by Pompeyo and León Leoni.



The library, *Biblioteca*, has one of the most valuable collections in the world, not due to the quantity of documents and books, as there are around 50,000 volumes, but due to the quality of these, the collections of Arabic, Hebrew and Latin manuscripts being especially precious. The room, open to the public, is a vaulted gallery measuring 54 metres long by 9 metres wide. It is decorated with paintings by Tibaldi and Carducci, from the 16th century. The iconographic programme is very interesting: to the north, Philosophy is represented; opposite it is Theology; and between the two are the seven Liberal Arts – Grammar, Rhetoric, Dialectic, Arithmetic, Music, Geometry and Astronomy.

The crypt called the Pantheon of the Kings, *Panteón de Reyes*, is located under the main altar, and here are buried practically all the kings of Spain from Carlos I onwards, except for Felipe V, Fernando VI and Amadeo de Saboya. The Pantheon is an octagonal room. On one of its sides is the entrance and on the opposite side is an altar with a gilded bronze figure of Christ by Domenico Guido. The room is decorated with deep-red and grey marbles and gilded bronze.

The crypt for the Princes and Princesses, *Panteón de Infantes*, was created in the middle of the 19th century, during the reign of Isabel II, and the works were completed in 1886. Constructed of white marble, it is made up of nine rooms. In the first is a bronze sculpture of Isabel II praying. The most notable tomb of this pantheon is that of Juan de Austria, illegitimate son of Carlos V. In another of the rooms, there is a great collective tomb in the shape of a cake in which are buried some of the children of the royal families who died before their First Communion.

The palaces, *Palacios*, occupy part of the north facade and that of the east, in addition to the projecting wall of the basilica. The palace rooms from the 16th century were occupied by Felipe II. The first of these is known as the Hall of Battles, *Sala de las Batallas*, decorated with paintings by Genoese artists: Oracio Cambiasso, Fabricio Castello, Nicolas Granello and Lazaro Tavarone. These painted battle scenes, among which were the battle of *la Higuera* and the battle of St. Quentin. In another of the rooms, you can see the sedan chair which carried Felipe II at the end of his life, when, due to the gout, he was barely able to walk. The Portrait Room, the Map Room and the Throne Room take us through to the bedroom where the King died, characterised by simplicity. The Bourbon Palace, *Palacio de los Borbones*, was decorated at the end of the 18th century, under Carlos III and his son, Carlos IV. The influence of French taste is apparent in the style of the furniture,

porcelain, lamps and all manner of decorative objects. The most important items in these rooms are the collection of tapestries designed by artists such as Goya, Bayeu and Tennyers, among others.

The Chapter Rooms, *Salas Capitulares*, as their name indicates, were used by the monks to celebrate their chapter meetings. The ceilings were decorated in Pompey style and although a large part of their artistic richness went to the New Museums, they still contain works by El Greco, Rivera, Tintoreto, Titian and El Bosco.

The new museums, *Nuevos Museos*, are divided into two themes: painting and architecture. In the art museum, *Pinacoteca*, we can find works by Titian, José de Rivera, Lucas Jordan, Bassano and El Greco, among others.

The architectural museum, *Museo de Arquitectura*, houses an important collection of tools, models, plans and mechanisms used during the construction of the Monastery.

Outside, the Garden of the Friars, *El Jardín de los Frailes*, and the Gallery of Convalescents, *Galería de convalecientes*, stand out. Felipe II was a great nature lover and so the *Jardín de los Frailes* is an ample garden, containing a dozen green parterres around an equal number of small ponds, each with a water fountain at their centre. These gardens, in the most northern end, are crowned by one of the more beautiful architectural features, the *Galería de Convalecientes*, located between the Infirmary and the Pharmacy Tower, which is placed upon a set of Doric columns forming a right angle.

The Monastery of San Lorenzo de El Escorial was declared a Historic-Artistic Monument in 1931, and in 1984 was recognised by UNESCO as a World Heritage Site.

Casa de la Compañía (10)



The Company Quarters were designed by Francisco de Mora, architect, and disciple and follower of Juan de Herrera. The construction work was undertaken between 1590 and 1597, with the aim of housing in a single building all the warehousing, services and animals of the Hieronymite Community, the religious order entrusted with the care and maintenance of the Monastery.

The main building of the Company Quarters had a square floor plan with a square interior patio, and there was a first floor with fifteen arches per side on square columns and a second floor with large square windows over which the slate roofs were placed.

On the ground floor were the mill, the ovens, the refectory with kitchen, as well as cells for guests and friars of the mendicant orders. On the upper floor were the craftsman workshops and the infirmary. In the southern row of rooms, a large doorway of a Tuscan order was

opened to allow carriages and livestock to pass. To its left was a one-floor building for the smithies and coach houses.

The main façade is the southern one, of Herreran style; it stands out due to its sober wall surface of granite masonry, interrupted by the embellishment of the openings, the fascia and the stonework cornice.

At the end of the 19th century, the buildings were in an abandoned state. This brought about their delivery in 1892 to the Order of Saint Augustine, the new community that took care of the Monastery, in order to establish in it the Royal College of Advanced Studies of El Escorial, known today as the Real Centro Universitario María Cristina (María Cristina Royal University) in honour of its protector, the reigning queen María Cristina of Hapsburg-Lorraine.

The declaration dated 3rd June 1931 classifying the Palace and Monastery of San Lorenzo as a Historical-Artistic Monument includes the Company Quarters among the attached buildings.

Currently, the María Cristina Royal University teaches courses in Law, Business Administration and Management and Chiropractics. In addition, it is one of the centres providing Summer Courses in San Lorenzo de El Escorial.

Casa de los Doctores (14)



The architect Juan de Herrera carried out this project, the House of the Professors, in 1583. This was the first building to be built outside the Monastery grounds, and was to provide accommodation for the teachers of art and theology at the College, as being lay teachers they could not reside in the Friary.

The construction took place on land that was at a quite considerably higher level than the Monastery, and this meant that Juan de Herrera had to create a containing wall to deal with this difference in height. This has given rise to the importance for the town of the house, as it was the origin of what would be the first street in the locality, now *Floridablanca*.

The house had a rectangular floor plan, on two levels, and is divided into three dwellings that internally are completely independent from each other as dwellings. At the end of the 19th century, an additional floor was added.

Primera (15) y Segunda Casa de Oficios (16)



Although physically separate, the First and Second House of Trades make up an edifice conceived as a single unit. The concept for the houses arose out of the lack of space at the Monastery for housing all the palace quarters.

Designed by Juan de Herrera, and beyond the walls of the monastery, the work was directed by Herrera and later by Francisco de Mora between 1587 and 1596. Located between the low-level stone esplanades, or the *lonja*, and the high-level street currently known as *Floridablanca*, they were a satisfactory solution to the greatly different height levels of these two areas. As a result of this, their façades are of different heights, with three floors giving onto the *lonja* and two floors facing *Floridablanca*, leading to two different scales, one of continuous façades similar to the Monastery, and the other where this continuity is broken by three patios for each House, with arcades and square pillars.

In the 19th century the two Houses of Trades were functionally separated, initiating their use for different purposes, a separation that has continued to our time. At present, the First House of Trades houses the Cultural Centre, the Manuel Andújar Municipal Library, an Exhibition Hall and the Local Tourist Information Office. In the Second House is found a chapel, what was the *capilla de los labrantes* (chapel of the labourers), now the *Santuario de Nuestra Señora de Gracia*, and it also holds the "Padre Antonio Soler" Music School, belonging to the Madrid regional government.