

CHINCHON



Chinchón is one of the most picturesque and attractive towns which the Community of Madrid has to offer and therefore merits at least a kilometers from the city of Madrid and can be reached by way of National Highway N-III.

Information: La Veloz, Avenida del Mediterráneo, 49, telephone: 91-409 76 02.

Your first impression of Chinchón may be an unforgettable experience. Arriving at the outskirts of the town, the earth tones of the landscape offer a variety of color ranging from gray to dark brown.

The first thing you see of the town are the clusters of houses clinging to the hilitops and which appear to be taken from an old legend. Looking towards the south we can observe theruins of a 14th Century castle, reconstructed four hundred years later only to be set on fire by Napoleon's troops. The medieval square, complete with a portico making it one of the most original in all of Sapin, adds another touch of enchantment to this town. Just over 5,000 inhabitants from the very heart of Castile work and prosper here. Chinchón is very much alive and is renowned for its garlic, sine, brandy and anisette.

ECHOES OF HISTORY

Although the history of Chinchón dates back to the year 1.083 when Alfonso VI of Castile drove the Moslems from Toledo and the surrounding area where they had been entrenched, one should also consider that this area, virtually on Madrid's very doorstep, was inhabited by the Iberians, Romans and

Visigoths before the arrival of the Arabs.

During the reign of the “Catholic Monarchs”, Ferdinand and Isabel, Chinchón played an important role and was named Conty of Chinchón. It was offered as a gift from the monarchs to Andrés de Cabrera, Marqués of Moya and renowned defender of the king as well as to Beatriz de Bobadilla, his spouse and Queen Isabel’s lady of honor and faithful servant during the conflict with Juana La Beltraneja over the succession of the Crown of Castile.

The County of Chinchón gave a boost to the town and to the whole region as well. Its political and cultural influence grew as the Counts surrounded themselves with artists and intellectuals and constructed important buildings, convents and churches in the vicinity of the castle. Today, these structures form part of the rich heritage which this town has to offer and allow the visitor to bear witness to the “echoes of history”.

Goya was among the many admirers of Chinchón. The universally renowned painter went there to visit his brother who was the town priest and was very much impressed by the hospitality of the counts and the citizens as well as by their customs. His impressions are immortalized in his work.

A UNIQUE “PLAZA MAYOR” (MAIN SQUARE)

Together with the anisette distilleries, this is one of Chinchón’s most typical attractions and is one of the most unique squares in all of the Community of Madrid. It has recently been painted green, creating an even greater contrast with the colors of the landscape. Originally it was natural esplanade used for cattle fairs. As time passed, it came to be the heart of the town and an integral part of all that went on there.

It was at the beginning of the 16th Century that the first bullfight (in honor of Philip “the handsome one”) was held in the square. It quickly became a tradition that was passed down over the centuries and survives even to this day. In 1863 the famous matador “Frascuella” was seriously gored during an afternoon bullfight. Once he recovered from his mishap, he organized and sponsored a charity bullfight in order to show his gratitude to the citizens of Chinchón for their concern. This annual tradition has carried on to the present and the funds collected are given to the San José Home for Senior Citizens. Today it is the bullfighter Manuel Vidrie who altruistically takes responsibility for the organization of this annual event as the famous matador from Madrid, Marcial Lalanda and the young bullfighter Julio Aparicio did before him.

Important bullfights and famous matadors were not the only attractions that the Chinchón Plaza Mayor offered however. It was also host to memorable theatrical productions, concerts, popular dances as well as to some tragic events such as executions ordered by the court of justice. All of these events together give this small square quite an important historical profile.

The surrounding areas are marked by a flurry of activity and the square is the inevitable meeting point. In the wintertime it is cozy and peaceful and in the summer, it is refreshing and buzzing with activity. Throughout the whole year, the square offers an animated and picturesque atmosphere. Its irregular shape, formed by a row of houses, creates a sort of amphitheatre which gives the square the unique

aspect of being a stage where life's daily dramas are played out.

It is below the balconies, the serene Castilian porticals, where the visitor finds refuge.

Restaurants, taverns and stores are distributed throughout the square and the rest of the town offering an excellent selection of products typical of the local gastronomy.



The visitor will always be warmly received by this town, its people, its hidden wonders and the magnificence of its historical monuments, by its unpretentious beauty and of couse, by the spirit emanating from its celebrations.



THE CASTLE

It reaches upwards on the outskirts of the town, standing tall and bearing witness to the centuries that mark the past of the historical town of Chinchón.

The wall, which gave stateliness and protection to this strategically located town, no longer exists. Although the castle's foundations date back several centuries, it became important in the 15th Century when Chinchón was granted the status of seignioralty. Lofty and solid, it was the fortress which protected the population from the attacks of Castile's enemies; especially the Arabs who tried to make their advance from Toledo in order to take control of the entire peninsula.

It still stands at attention today despite having lost its majestic "Torre del Homenaje" (homage tower). Hardly a trace is left of this tall tower with a rectangular base which was an example of the military architecture of the time. It is still possible to identify what was once the moat surrounding the fortress, the stronghold and the bridge leading to the castle's entrance.



THE "CASA DE LA CADENA", THEATER AND THE CHURCH OF THE ASSUMPTION

The legacy of Chinchón's seigniorial past is represented by its majestic houses, nobiliary architecture and its religious structures. Some examples are the "Casa de la Cadena" (the house with the chain), the Lope de Vega Theatre and the Church of the Assumption.

The "Casa de la Cadena" is an historical monument and one of the finest examples of nobiliary architecture and was home to Philip V during the War of Succession.

The Lope de Vega Theatre, located close to the church, has been host to a number of important plays. At the time when the Theatre was still in the Palace of the Counts of Chinchón, the immortal author (after whom the Theatre is named), presented one of his comedies there. In 1891, the theatre was relocated to the place where it stands today.

Construction began on the Church of the Assumption in 1534 and was not completed until 1626. It is situated in the vicinity of the square and is an example of plateresque architecture. It is made of ashlar stone and boasts a canvas by Goya on the altar piece.

A visit to these sites is essential in order to acquire a deeper understanding of the history and customs of Chinchón.

THE AUGUSTINIAN MONASTERY AND THE CONVENT OF THE POOR CLARE NUNS

The founding of the first monastery dates back to the 15th Century and its structure was characteristic and representative of the architecture of the time. It was transformed three centuries later, maintaining its original function until the second half of this century. It currently houses the "Parador Nacional" (national hotel) of Chinchón which is cozy and quite busy given its location in the town.

In terms of both its architecture and history, the Convent of the Poor Clare Nuns is comparable to the Augustinian Monastery. It forms an integral part of the town's landscape and has a very interesting convent church. In contrast to the modern conveniences which can be found in the Monastery turned Parador, in the Convent of the Poor Clare Nuns and especially in the church, we get a sense of the peace, silence and tranquility that pervade the religious life.

ARTISANRY

One can find very unique artisanry in Chinchón. both pottery and metal are worked using the traditional techniques. Even baking becomes an art, the bread taking on a number of different shapes and designs. A stroll through the town's streets in search of this handicraft art will allow us to discover the beauty of those out-of-the-way places which can offer a charm different from that of the important monuments like the seigniorial houses or the hermitages of San Roque or Misericordia.

CULTURE AND TOWN HOLIDAYS

The Passion of Christ was first represented on Holy Saturday, 1963 and since then has become firmly rooted as a cultural event in the town. To a certain degree it is the return to the custom of the religious plays of the past.

July 25th, the feast of St. James the patron saint of Spain, is celebrated by the running of young bulls which are then used in the bullfight which takes place in the Plaza Mayor in the afternoon.

The annual week-long celebration is in honor of the town's patron saint Our Lady of Grace and San Roque and is held from the 13th to the 18th of August. In addition to the religious events and celebrations and the dances, one can see the running of the bulls, bullfights and concerts that attract a number of tourists.

In addition to the above-mentioned charity Bullfight Festival, Chinchón celebrates Our Lady of the Rosary on the third Sunday of September with fireworks and a night procession.

USEFUL INFORMATION

CHINCHON

Town Hall
Plaza Mayor, 3
Tel. 91-894 00 84

Civil Guard
Ctra. Valdelagua
Tel. 91-894 00 08

National Hotel
("Parador Nacional")
of Chinchón
Avda. del Generalísimo, 1
Tel. 91-894 08 36

Distance from Madrid: 45 Km.
Carretera de Valencia (N-III) to Arganda, then follow Rout 330

Bus Service:
La Veloz
Avda del Mediterraneo, 49
Tel. 91-409 76 02

MADRID

Tourist Information for the Community of Madrid
Tel. 91-429 31 77

General Information on Madrid
Tel. 010

INFORIBERIA and Reserve
Tel. 902 400 500

Transportation Consortium of the Community of Madrid
Tel.91-580 19 80

Businesses hours
Small businesses:
From 10 to 14 adn from 17 to 20 h.
Department Stores:

From 10 to 21 h.