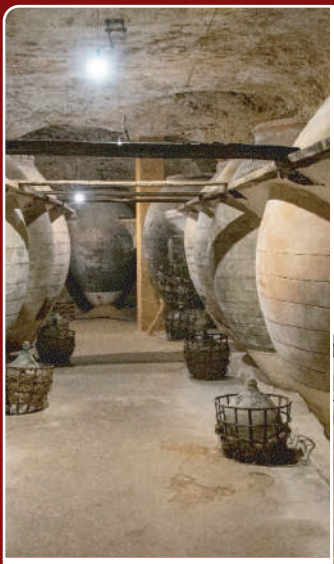






GUIDE

Tomelloso Caves

INN, WINE AND CULTURE

Tomelloso
POSADA VIDA Y CULTURA

Tomelloso
AYUNTAMIENTO

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GUIDED ADVENTURE



Tourist Guide to the Caves of Tomelloso

Discover the Underground Treasure of Tomelloso

Welcome to Tomelloso, Inn, Vineyard and Culture.
Beneath the streets of this vibrant city in La Mancha lies a unique hidden treasure: some 2,500 underground caves. These caves are undoubtedly the city's greatest heritage and one of the most important still preserved today.

The history of wine and caves in Tomelloso dates back more than 200 years. The construction of these cavities began in the early decades of the 19th century, specifically around 1820, when the wine economy began its unstoppable rise in the city. The main purpose of these constructions was the production and preservation of wine.

What makes these caves truly unique are the characteristics of the terrain. The subsoil of Tomelloso, with its layer of limestone between 70 centimetres and 4 metres thick, acts as natural concrete, facilitating excavation without the need for supports. This particular feature of the soil led the men of the area, known as "picaores", to dig into the subsoil with picks and shovels, creating warehouses with semicircular arched vaults. The women, called "terreras", played a crucial role, transporting the earth and sand extracted from the interior to the surface, material which was even used to pave the streets or build their own houses.

These caves were the seed of what Tomelloso is today: the world's largest wine producer. If all the old cave cellars in Tomelloso could be lined up, they would form a tunnel more than 40 km long!. Although new wine-making technologies have replaced their original use, the caves have become a captivating tourist attraction, a veritable museum of underground heritage.

Entering one of these caves is like travelling back in time and discovering the ingenuity of their builders and the art of traditional winemaking. The caves of Tomelloso were designed to provide optimal conditions for storing and protecting wine from sudden changes in climate. They maintain an average annual temperature of between 10 and 19°C and a relative humidity of around 40%, providing the perfect environment for wine to age

The average depth of these caves is approximately 12 metres. The ceiling is formed of hard, rough rock or "crust" or "tobazo", which is between 2 and 5 metres thick.

A distinctive and fundamental feature of the caves are the "lumbreras" (skylights). These openings in the vaulted ceilings, often covered with grates and visible from the pavements, allowed light to enter and, crucially, enabled the carbon dioxide (CO_2) generated during the fermentation of the must to escape. In the past, the skylights were made according to the size of the jars. Inside, the central element is the jar.

Inside, the central element is the jar. Originally made of clay, these enormous vessels could range in capacity from over 100 litres to more than 16,000 litres. The clay jars were brought into the caves through the skylights using ropes and the help of 10 to 12 men. Later, cement jars began to be built directly inside the cave using a mould. The importance of these vessels was such that there was a trade called "tinajero" (jar maker), a profession now vanished, with José María Díaz Navarro being one of the last practitioners.

The caves housed all the tools necessary for the artisanal and family production of wine, such as presses, crushers and various pumps, some called "ball pumps" because of their solid ball valves.

Your Guided Tour: An Unforgettable Experience

A terrain that made it possible
What makes these caves truly unique are the characteristics of the terrain. The subsoil of Tomelloso, with a layer of limestone between 70 centimeters and 4 meters, acts as a "natural concrete," allowing excavation without the need for structural supports.
This particular feature of the ground led the men of the area, known as "picaores," to dig the underground with pickaxes and manual labor, creating chambers with semi-circular vaulted ceilings. Women, known as "terreras," played a crucial role: they transported the excavated earth and sand outside, materials that were even used to pave the streets or to build their own homes.

The origin of a wine giant
These caves were the seed of what Tomelloso is today: a major wine-producing power. If all the old cave-wineries were placed in a straight line, they would form a tunnel of more than 40 km. Although modern winemaking technologies have replaced their original use, today the caves have become a fascinating tourist attraction: a true museum of heritage beneath the ground.

Your guided visit: an unforgettable experience
Entering one of these caves is like traveling back in time and discovering the ingenuity of their builders and the art of traditional winemaking. They were designed to provide optimal conditions and protect wine from sudden climate changes:

Average annual temperature: between 10 and 19 ^{0}C
Relative humidity: around 40%
Average depth: approximately 12 meters
Ceiling: compact limestone rock ("costra" or "tobazo") between 2 and 5 meters thick

Lumbreras: light and "breathing" of the cave
A distinctive and fundamental element is the "lumbreras": openings in the vaulted ceilings, often protected with grilles and visible from the sidewalks. They allowed light to enter and, crucially, enabled the release of carbon dioxide (CO_2) generated during the fermentation of the must. In the past, the lumbreras were made according to the size of the tinajas.

Tinajas and vanished trades
Inside, the central element is the tinaja. Originally made of clay, these enormous vessels could range in capacity from more than 100 liters to over 16,000 liters. Many were lowered into the cave through the lumbreras using ropes and the help of 10 to 12 men.
Later, cement tinajas began to be built directly inside the cave using molds. The importance of these vessels was such that there was once a specific trade, the "tinajero," now extinct, with José María Díaz Navarro being one of the last practitioners.

Tools of a family winery
The caves housed all the tools necessary for the traditional, family-scale production of wine: presses, crushers, and several pumps, some known as "ball pumps" ("bombas de pelotas") due to their solid ball valves.



Exploring the caves of Tomelloso is an experience that allows you to connect directly with the past and the rich wine culture of the region. The Association of Friends of the Caves of Tomelloso, created in 2018, is the body responsible for managing visits to these structures, which, as they are privately owned, require prior authorisation.

You can find all the information and book your visit on their website: https://cuevasdetomelloso.com/

Tomelloso is home to approximately 170 caves in excellent condition. A selection of these iconic structures are available for booking, offering visitors the chance to delve into an unparalleled historical and architectural heritage.

Among the spaces open to visitors are:

- Segundo Dios Cave (since 1860, capacity: 50)
- Los Pinillas Cave (since 1900, capacity: 55)
- Orígenes Cave (since 1880, capacity: 70)
- Garcilaso Cave (since 1920, capacity: 30)
- Perales Cave (since 1929, capacity: 30)
- Casero Cave (since 1845, capacity: 12)
- Galileo Cave (since 1845, capacity: 12)
- Abuelo Patricio Cave (since 1940, capacity: 15)
- Abuelo Agustín Cave (since 1917, capacity: 12)
- Las Siete y Media Cave (since 1900, capacity: 15)
- El Morenete Cave (since 1850, capacity: 15)
- "Herraura" Cave (since 1890, capacity: 12)
- Caridad Secreta Cave (since 1920, capacity: 12)
- Cáritas Cave (since 1925, capacity: 50)
- Abuelo Agustín Cave (since 1917, capacity: 12)
- Moreno Cave (since 1950, capacity: 12)
- Grande Carretero Cave (since 1940, capacity: 15)



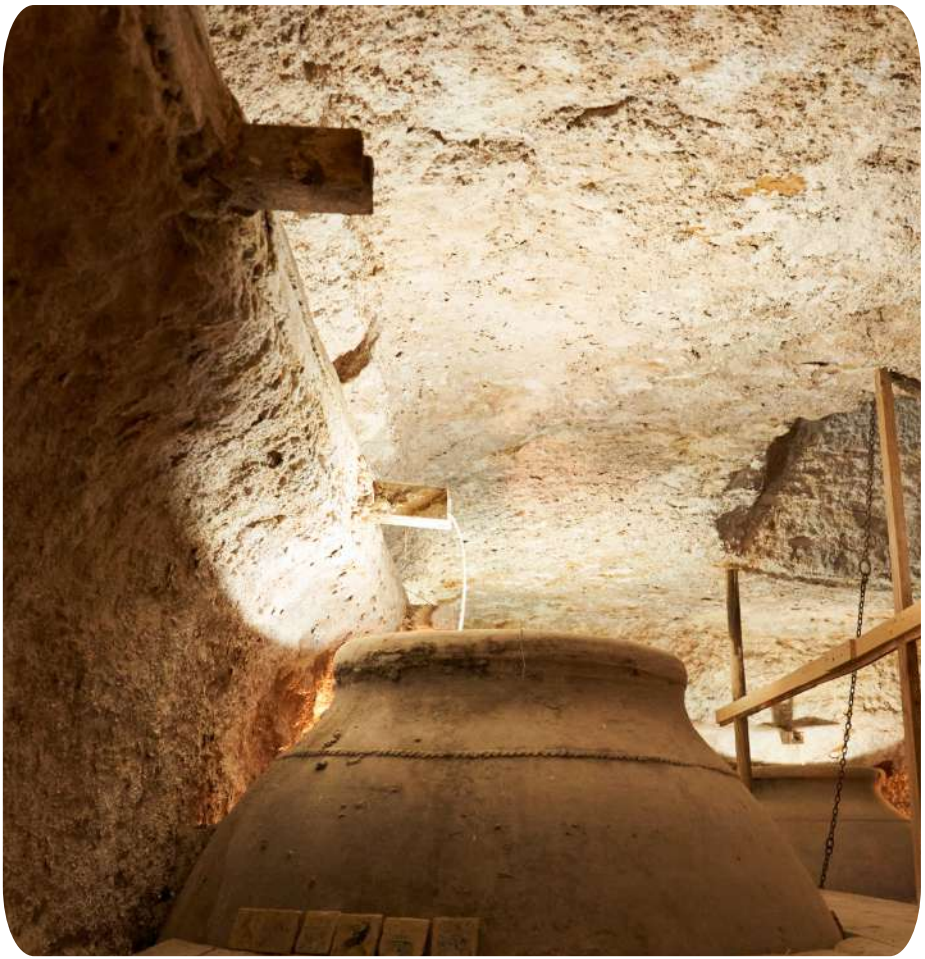
Tomelloso Caves Route

In addition to individual visits, you can opt for the Tomelloso Caves Route (€10 per person), which lasts approximately 2 hours and 30 minutes and has a capacity of 10-50 people. A complete guided tour, offered by specialised guides, includes a visit to the old cave-cellars, insurance and taxes. You can personalise your experience with options such as:

Wine tasting featuring wines from the La Mancha designation of origin, snacks or typical products in a cave.
Visit to a Brandy de Tomelloso winery or distillery.

Extension of the itinerary to visit other sites in Castilla-La Mancha or local museums such as the Carriage and Farming Tools Museum, the Antonio López Torres Museum, or the Los Portales Inn.
The conservation and promotion of these caves is a major undertaking by their owners and the community.

Come and be part of the history and heritage of Tomelloso!



Tomelloso: Cradle of Wine and Unique Heritage

Tomelloso is not only a destination with fascinating underground caves, but also prides itself on being a town with a deep tradition linked to wine. It is the world's leading producer of wine alcohol and home to the world's largest wine cooperative: Virgin of the Vineyards Winery and Olive Mill.

Beyond the caves, Tomelloso offers a cultural and architectural heritage which surprises its visitors. In addition to the caves, we invite you to discover other elements that make up the identity of this land of vineyards:

The Bombos of Tomelloso: These modest but ingenious dry stone rural constructions are another architectural gem of the region. They were built without mortar or cement, using stones from the countryside, in the shape of a false vault. Their original purpose was to house shepherds and farm workers together with their animals and tools, serving as a refuge from inclement weather. It is estimated that there are around 300 bombos in Tomelloso. Some have a horseshoe above the entrance, as a sign of good luck. In 1968, the Town Council commissioned the construction of a bombo to be turned into a museum piece, which can be visited at the Carriage and Farming Tools Museum.

Industrial chimneys: These grandiose monoliths decorate the urban landscape of Tomelloso. They are remnants of the old alcohol factories that, from the late 19th century to the mid-20th century, led Tomelloso to its position as the world's leading producer of wine alcohol. At their peak, more than a hundred were in operation. With heights of over 45 metres, they served to vent the smoke from the large boilers used in the distillation process. Some of them can be visited, even at night, as they are illuminated.
Tomelloso is part of the La Mancha Wine Route and has been recognised nationally as the Best Wine Tourism Municipality 2022. It is also the perfect setting for a visit to the Lagunas de Ruidera Natural Park.

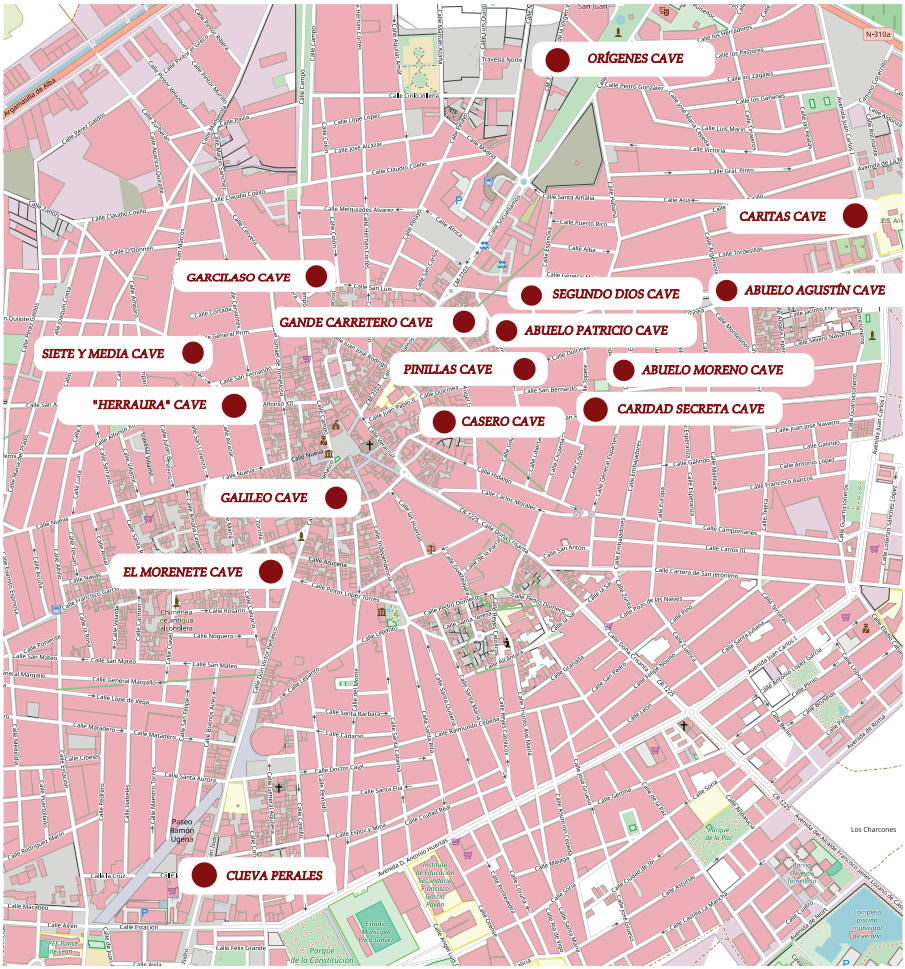


Don’t wait any longer to discover the magic which Tomelloso has to offer, from the depths of its caves to its landscapes and wine-making traditions! We invite you to immerse yourself in the history, culture and, of course, the excellent wines and exquisite cuisine of this land.

For more tourist information about Tomelloso, please visit:

https://visitatomelloso.com/





Municipal Tourist Office

Tuesday to Friday: 9:30 a.m.–2:00 p.m. and 4:30 p.m.–7:30 p.m.
Saturdays: 10:00 a.m.–2:00 p.m. and 4:30 p.m.–8:00 p.m.
Sundays: 10:00 a.m.–2:30 p.m.
Public holidays: 11:00 a.m.–2:00 p.m./Mondays: closed

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