







GUIDE

Ethnographic Tourism

INN, WINE AND CULTURE

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Tomelloso:
A Journey to the Ethnographic Heart of La Mancha

Welcome to Tomelloso, a town located in the northeast of the province of Ciudad Real, in the Autonomous Community of Castilla-La Mancha. Although it has held the title of City since 1927, its inhabitants still refer to it as "the town" or "my town", reflecting a deep bond with the rural world that remains strongly present in its identity. Considered the unofficial capital of La Mancha Alta, Tomelloso has a population of around 40,000 inhabitants.

Viticulture, the cultivation of the vine, is the municipality's main economic activity and the true backbone of its history and culture. This winemaking tradition has brought national and international recognition to Tomelloso, home to Virgen de las Viñas Bodega y Almazara, the wine cooperative largest in the world. The vine is not only a crop, but also a symbol that defines its people and around which much of local life revolves.

Folk art plays a fundamental role in the construction of Tomelloso's identity. Through its artistic expressions, festivals and traditions, the community strengthens its bonds and its sense of belonging, showing how these cultural expressions are essential to understanding the character of the place.

Get ready for a journey through its festivals, trades, gastronomy and deep rural roots, where the past remains alive and is reflected in every detail.



The Romería of Tomelloso:
A Spectacle of Art and Devotion

The Tomelloso Romería, declared a Festival of Regional Tourist Interest in 2014, is a popular festival of great importance celebrated on the last weekend of April. This festival, in honour of the Blessed Virgen de las Viñas, is a vibrant display of art, symbolism and tradition. It aspires to be declared a Festival of National Tourist Interest.

Three main symbols stand out in the festive setting of the Romería : the Santísima Virgen de las Viñas, the mule trains and artistic floats and green ones.

► The Santísima Virgen de las Viñas:

- She has been the patron saint of Tomelloso since 1944, with her image sculpted in Valencia in 1942.
- She symbolises the town's wine-growing wealth, carrying a bunch of white grapes, while the Child ("Niñete") who accompanies her carries red grapes.
- Originally, her image was on clouds and supported by a vine, with vine shoots and fruits on her garments.
- Her arrival in 1942 and the first Romería in 1944 were linked to the request for rain for the fields in an area affected by drought. It is said that the Virgin answered the request and "it is rare for it not to rain during the Romería ".
  The Virgin resides most of the year in her Hermitage-Shrine in the Pinilla area (4 km from Tomelloso).
- You can visit the Shrine (listen to the audio guide on our website) and, from there, begin the "Bombos Route" (PR-CR 50), detailed in our Dry Stone guide.





► Mule trains and pilgrim carts:

- The Romería is particularly well known for the beauty and picturesque nature of its mule trains, which are harnessed in luxury or silk, as well as for the decoration of the vintage carts that are transformed into pilgrim carts.
- There are two styles: the "luxury" or "silk" style with bright colours such as red and yellow, and the "simple" or "everyday" style in black and white, which recalls the way mules used to go to work in the fields.
- The art of harnessing mules and carts is an artistic expression of extraordinary value, recognised nationally.
- Mules were considered part of the family because of their contribution to the livelihood of the family.
- The carts of Tomelloso are unique, originally modelled on Valencian carts but adapted to be more powerful. They are loaded in a special way for the Romería , with the boards lowered as far as possible and sacks of wheat or barley placed on the peaks.



Traditional Crafts and Trades: ***The Soul of Tomelloso***

Not only is the ethnographic heritage of Tomelloso evident in its festivals, but also in the folk arts reflecting its history and deep connection to the rural environment.

► The Art of Mantilla Embroidery:

Mantilla veil embroidery is a craft requiring extraordinary patience, traditionally practised by women. As part of the annual cycle of preparations for the pilgrimage, craftswomen devote months of work to creating these complex trousseaus. The colourful motifs show a strong Andalusian influence and inspiration from Manila shawls, including the figure of the Virgin Mary and the coat of arms of Tomelloso.

► The Art of Artistic Mule Shearing (Breech Embroidery):

Artistic shearing is one of Tomelloso's most unique and exclusive traditions. This technique, which is not practised in this form anywhere else in Spain, is in serious danger of disappearing. Currently, there is only one active practitioner, Manuel Ortega, who is known as the "last artistic shearer" in the country, dedicated to preserving this laborious craft which can take up to five hours of work per animal.

► The Bombos: Popular Architecture of La Mancha:

- The extensive municipal area of Tomelloso is dotted with "bombos", unique dry stone constructions.
- These rural shelters are built using a false limestone dome, closed at the top by rows of stones, and can have several interconnected rooms.
  They blend into the landscape, appearing to be part of the terrain.
- They represent an important ethnographic heritage, having formerly served as shelters for farmers who spent the week in the fields.
- The centrepiece of the Museum of Carts and Farming Implements is a large bombo built in 1968 by Pablo Moreno "Cota" using over two million stones.

Tomelloso Gastronomy: A Taste of Rural Tradition and Ethnographic Experiences

Gastronomy in Tomelloso is a pillar of its identity, especially during festivals, where the "pilgrimage ritual of dining" is celebrated. Shared meals are intrinsic to pilgrimages and an act of generosity that reaffirms the community.

Typical Dishes and the Flavour of the Countryside: Festivals are the perfect opportunity to taste the foods which once sustained the "farmers or labourers" who "went for working in the fields" (spent the whole week).

- **Migas de Gañán:** Traditional breadcrumbs made with day-old bread and served with chorizo, bacon, garlic and grapes.
- **Gachas manchegas:** A popular dish made with chickpea flour, olive oil, purple garlic, sweet paprika and bacon, ideal for eating straight from the pan with Pan de Cruz bread.
- **Caldereta de cordero:** A hearty stew with Manchego lamb, garlic, bay leaves and paprika, traditionally prepared in a pan.
- **Asadillo:** Roasted red peppers with garlic, cumin, olive oil and salt.
- **Gazpacho Manchego:** Also called galianos. It is a brothy and hearty stew, of pastoral origin, made with unleavened flatbreads, rabbit, hare and partridge.
- **Other typical sweets** and products include: hojuelas (thin crispy pastries), rosquillos (ring-shaped pastries), flores (during Holy Week), tortas de mosto (grape juice cakes), mostillo (a type of jam), arrope (a type of syrup), Pan de Cruz (a type of bread), chocolate donuts, pastas flora (a type of pastry), and mantecados (a type of shortbread). Typical products include Manchego cheeses, brandies, mistelas (a type of sweet wine), liqueurs, as well as nationally renowned melons and watermelons in the summer season.









Essential Ethnographic Experiences

Museum of Carts and Farming Implements	An ethnographic museum showcasing past agricultural life, with sections such as the forge, carpentry workshop, threshing floor, wine cellar, cave, wine press, drum, bombo and a traditional kitchen. It is a key place to understand how farmers worked the land and made wine.
Caves-Wine Cellar	The underground cavities beneath many houses in Tomelloso, where wine was once made. More than 2,200 caves are still preserved, offering guided tours as an important tourist attraction. The entrance to the cave-cellar is a "magnificent example of ethnographic heritage".
Mondema Artesanos / Artesa	Tienda y taller de artesanía donde se fabrican piezas de madera y se promueven las tradiciones artesanas. Ofrecen talleres y regalos originales que reflejan la cultura local.
Virgen de las Viñas Winery and Olive Mill	The cooperative has an old part with a wine press dedicated to a museum, where agricultural tools and machinery are on display.
Grape Harvest Festival	On August 24th, the offering of the first musts to the Patron Saint takes place, a symbolic act in which the first extractions of grape juice are presented as a sign of gratitude and devotion. This ceremony, steeped in tradition, marks the official start of the Fair and Festivals and brings together locals and visitors around one of the most representative customs linked to the world of the grape harvest.





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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