



# Riada

SEGOVIA

An aerial photograph of a mountain village, showing a dense cluster of buildings with terracotta roofs. A central square or plaza is visible, surrounded by taller buildings. The terrain appears to be a hillside, with the buildings built into the slope. The overall scene is a typical mountain village setting.

## General introduction, geography and history

This mountain village is located on the north face of the Macizo de Allón at a height of 1,190 metres. The mountain's tallest peaks are Pico del Lobo (2,273 m) and La Buitrera (2,046 m). The Riaza river rises in the heart of the beech forest known as La Pedrosa, continuing for about a hundred kilometres to merge with the Duero at Roa, not far from Burgos.

The oldest known document that mentions Riaza dates from 1235. It relates to an enquiry being conducted by the king's chancellor, Gonzalo Abad, into a dispute over grazing rights between the towns of Sepúlveda and Fresno de Cantespino. However, the origin of the town goes back to the Castilian repopulation programme begun at the end of the 11th century after Toledo was taken (1085) in order to deter a Muslim counter-attack. In the centuries that followed, between Castilian advances and retreats, the area was gradually colonised, augmenting its value in terms of pasture and forestry resources.

Roundabout 1139 Riaza was appropriated to the archdiocese of Segovia cathedral. In 1430 it was said to form part of the domains of the King's Constable, Álvaro de Luna.

The Manor of Riaza belonged to the Dukes of Maqueda from the 16th century until 6 August 1811, the day the Parliament of Cadiz abolished all manorial rights or fiefdoms, limiting absolute real-estate ownership rights to the nation of Spain.



## What to see

### Main Square

This is divided in two parts by the Town Hall. The present layout dates from 1873 when the previous elliptical shape, dominated in the centre by the stand once used to display the heads of executed criminals, was overhauled. Around 1850 a cast-iron lamp-post with a stone base was erected to illuminate the Riaza night life. It did duty for the inhabitants until the 1960s. The south and west boundaries of the square boast low capped walls, supplemented by intricately rounded wrought-iron railings. The side of the square under arches comprises a series of sun-drenched summer homes, dating back in most cases to the eighteenth century. Each boasts its original owner's coat of arms. One house in particular conserves its family shield in immaculate



condition and, furthermore, boasts its own baroque chapel. Simpler Riaza houses are also present. Constructed on a rectangular foundation, they are stone-built and of two stories. The roofs are two-sided and employ the curious technique of laying tiles with the curved side upwards.

### Town Hall

Built in the eighteenth century, it boasts three stories above ground and one below. Its most conspicuous feature is the bell-tower that crowns the building. It



houses the village clock, which was acquired in Madrid and installed in 1895. Behind the Town Hall is the smallest open area pertaining to the main square.

### **Church of Our Lady of the Robe**

This was built in a renaissance style between the last quarter of the fifteenth and the first quarter of the sixteenth century. It comprises a rectangular floor plan distributed into three naves and an apse.

To this initial construction were later added two chapels, a baptistery, a sacristy and, finally, a square tower to house a church bell, crowned with wooden “flameros”, adornments designed to accentuate the delicate lines of the tower.

Of the contents of the church we highlight the seventeenth-century altar that was installed in the church in 1823, having previously done service in the Monastery of La Armadilla in Cogeces del Monte near Valladolid. It incorporates paintings attributed to the master artist Diego Valentín Díaz, representing scenes from the life of Saint Geronimo. Christ Crucified (possibly painted in the fifteenth century) can be seen in the Chapel of the Gentle Name. A polychrome Crucifixion, of the 16th or 17th century, presides over the Chapel of the Nobles or of the Gentlemen.

## Collection of Sacred Art

Inside the church visitors can see an art exhibition comprising many of the most representative works of the people of the villages of Alquité, Madriguera, Riaza, Riofrío de Riaza, Sequera de Fresno, Serracín and Villacorta. Located behind the choir stalls, within part in the bell tower, the exhibition area includes three rooms, each devoted to a specific theme.

- **Room I.** Romanesque and Gothic Art. Here we highlight the presence of the original portrait of Our Lady of the Mantle, dating from the thirteenth century.
- **Room II.** Renaissance and Baroque Art. This room houses various sculptures, the most outstanding of which are the Virgin of the Good Milk, which dates from the seventeenth century, the Saint Joseph Holding the Child, and the Immaculate Conception, painted in the eighteenth and seventeenth centuries respectively.
- **Room III.** Spanish silverware and liturgical objects. This room contains a variety of objects, ranging from a stuffed pelican dating back to the sixteen hundreds (from the seventeenth-century church of Saint Peter in Alquité), to a priest's portmanteau, liturgical objects, and a seventeenth-century tenebrario, i.e., a triangular candlestick of fifteen candles lit at a certain point in the Easter rituals.

## Hermitage of Saint John

Located to the north of the town, this building is set in a wooded glade, enclosed by a stone wall and iron entrance way. The stone cross located in the centre of the





lawn dates from 1553. The date 1783 is engraved on one of the door lintels. It refers, so we understand, to the date of a restoration. The stone lapidaries beneath the porch (added in the 1980s at the time of a further restoration) give us to understand that the hermitage is located on a former cemetery. The hermitage houses a number of “pasos”, the box-like floats decorated with religious carvings for use in the Easter parades. Two such figures, those of St James the Apostle and John the Baptist, can also be seen in the hermitage.

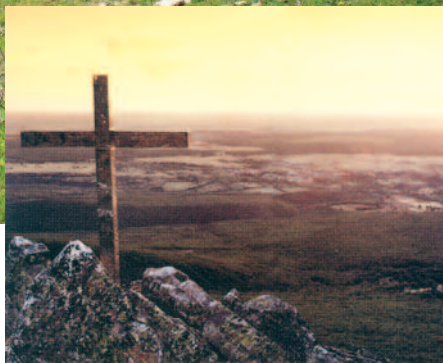
### **Hermitage of Saint Roch**

This was erected in execution of a vow following the plague epidemic of 1599. Built on a rectangular foundation, the façade shows the town crest, reminding onlookers of the significant contribution of the town council to the cost of its construction. It was restored in the 1980s when a porch, supported by stone pillars, was added. The building houses the wooden images of Saint Isidore and Saint Christopher.

## **Surroundings**

### **Hermitage**

It is located 4.5 kilometres from Riaza on the road leading to Santibáñez de Ayllón. The hermitage is located at an altitude of 1,400 metres on the so-called “Mata Serrana” ridge in the midst of a mixed forest of oak and replanted pine. It stands on the site of the church of the former hamlet of Hontanares, which was abandoned and acquired by the Riaza town council in the early 15th century. Hence, the present hermitage replaces an earlier



building. Its construction in the year 1606 was funded entirely by the donations of churchgoers. Alongside the hermitage is a hospice that contains an altarpiece presided over by a painting of Our Lady of Hontanares, flanked by the glorious images of Saint Lucia and Saint Blas.

### Viewing point of Peñas Llanas

To reach the viewing point visitors take the road that runs behind the hermitage. The look-out point is located at a height of 1,440 metres and encompasses the entire Segovian plain. Four separate provinces may be decried from this vantage point:

- **Montejo de la Vega de la Serrezuela**, on the border with Burgos.
- **El pico de Grado**, on the frontier with Guadalajara.
- **Somosierra**, on the border with Madrid.

- On clear days, the **Urbión Mountains**, in the province of Soria.

From the car park of the viewing point visitors may take the road that leads to the so-called "Springs of the Three Drops".



## Route of Colour

Taking the road SG-VIII we progress from Riaza to Santibáñez de Ayllón, the first of the eight locations comprising this route.

### The Yellow Villages

These outlying villages are recognisable by the yellow (and white) quartz of which their buildings and outlying walls are made, either exclusively or in combination with other materials present in the area.

**Alquité:** The name is of Arab origin, appearing in the records for the first time in 1123 as "Alchité". It adopted the present spelling in the eighteenth century. It is located at an altitude of 1,280 metres on a hillock dominated by the Church of Saint Peter, whose most notable feature is the portico with its three magnificent archivolts.

**Martín Muñoz de Ayllón:** this location had slate quarries that provided the roofing of the Palace of La Granja and the flooring of

Segovia Cathedral. Of particular note is the church of Saint Martin of Tours, the patron saint of the village.

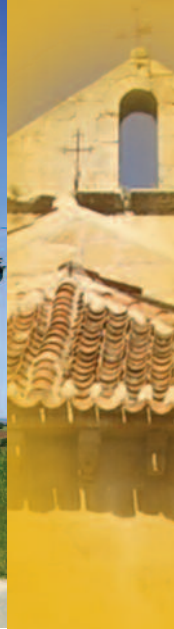
### The Red Villages

In some parts of the Ayllón Hills there is a substratum of reddish rock rich in ferric nitrates. The local buildings are thus constructed of baked reddish clay, which takes its hue from rocks of the surrounding countryside.

**Villacorta:** a village founded at an altitude of 1,092 metres above sea level, having as its centrepiece the church of Saint Catherine, notable for its Romanesque doorway and sixteenth-century mudejar decoration. Just outside the village itself can be found two pigeon stage-posts, a Roman bridge that crosses the Vadillo river, a restored windmill and the Saint Roque hermitage.

**Madriguera:** situated at a height above sea level of 1,138 metres, Madriguera was an active centre of trade and services for the outlying area. It had its own council house,





casino-cum-hotel and chemist's shop. The church, dedicated to Saint Peter, with its open bell tower is in keeping with the splendour of the town's heyday, when it boasted no fewer than 750 inhabitants. Many of its beautifully carved wooden balconies survive. Near the village is an old clay mine and a spring famed for the ferrous properties of its waters.

### **Black Villages**

These villages of the Ayllón Hills are known for their singular architectural features, in particular, the black and dark greys of the slate employed in building the houses and barns.

**Becerril:** situated at an altitude of 1,241 metres above sea level, it is known for its church, Our Lady of the Assumption, a circular Romanesque building with a magnificently preserved interior that includes an original altar painting. On the outskirts of the village there are mines devoted to iron and "ampelite", a kind of soft

slate. There is also a splendid grove of holly bushes and rowans.

**Serracín:** this was built on the foothills of the Pizarral mountain at a height of 1,230 metres above sea level. Of its church, known as the Nativity, only the bell tower remains. On the hill known as Mingohierro two silverworks were set up, together with a slate mine.

**El Muyo:** references to this hamlet go back to 1587. Of special note is the church, the Holy Martyrs (Saint Cornelius and Saint Ciprianus), which retains in its interior a gothic processional cross known colloquially as a "ripped-off" (desgajo) as Christ's arms are carved to imitate the boughs of a tree.

**El Negrodo:** The curious fact about this village is that the Church of Vallehermoso (a Romanesque foundation boasting a fine renaissance portal) lies without the village boundary whereas, most unusually, the hermitage, dedicated to Our Lady of the Rosary, is located inside the village.



### **Other places of interest in the area**

Off the route but within access via the N-110 where it diverges to Fresno de Cantespino, are:

**Aldeanueva del Monte:** this hamlet belonged to the Constable of Castile, Álvaro de Luna, before passing to the hands of the Count of Miranda. Its church, of Romanesque origin, is devoted to Saint Anthony. The hermitage, devoted to St John, is located on the outskirts of the villaje.

**Barahona de Fresno:** this village retains some of the original clay houses typical of the area. Of particular interest is the church of Saint Christopher, of Romanesque origin, which has a semi-circular apse prized for the decoration on the borders of the ledges and the rounded window.

### **Beech wood of la Pedrosa**

This is included in the recommended Natural Sites of Castile and León. It lies between Riofrío de Riaza (Segovia) and

Majaelrayo (Guadalajara) on the north face of the Ayllón range at an altitude of 1,430 metres and occupies a total area of some 87 hectares. Together with another two beech woods, that of the "Tejera Negra" in the province of Guadalajara and that of the Montejo de la Sierra in the province of Madrid, this is a fine example of what was once the humid wooded carpet of Spain's Central Mountain System, particularly that part known as the "Sierra of Ayllón".

One of the most attractive features of this setting are the beech trees, high and broad in shape. It is interesting to note how the branches of these beeches start at points quite low down the trunk of the tree. This is because for many years these youngest branches were used to supply a chair factory that operated up until the mid-twentieth century in the town of Riofrío de Riaza. Unadvised, the trees continue to sprout them.

At the feet of these botanical giants, amid ferns, mosses and lichens, you can trace the first



waters of the Riaza river, which after a course of some 100 kilometres flows into the Duero River where it crosses the Burgos town of Roa de Duero. The breadth of the colour palate in these landscapes is well worth the effort made.

The red of the beech woods is counterpoised by bare rock faces and the quartz outcrops that separate the beech from the oak groves that clothe the foothills of the mountains. It is worth noting that beech is, on the whole, a tree that thrives in moister, more northerly climates, making the Pedrosa forest an exception to the rule and the southernmost beech forest not only in Europe but in the world as a whole.

Despite the dramatic climatic swings these trees have to put up with – dry summers, lack of mist or fog, and minus-zero winters), these forests maintain their splendour and are gradually expanding in size. At this level the majority of the trees are relatively young, with the older trees higher up the hillside where they are harder to reach. Mingled among the

beech are examples of oak, chestnut, hawthorn and holly, as well as thickets of heather, blackberry and other fruit-bearing bushes.

## **Ski resort and mountain adventure park**

### **La Pinilla – Riaza Valley**

#### **365 days of mountain sport and adventure**

La Pinilla is known by winter sports enthusiasts as the best ski resort in Spain's Central mountain range thanks to the variety, quality and extent of the ski runs. The resort's system of artificial snow uses more than 184 cannons with a capacity to cover 70% of the total runs. Its lifts can cope with 12,000 skiers per hour. It is the only resort in the Central Mountain System having a cable car that takes skiers to the heart of the ski station.

Thanks to its privileged location, La Pinilla can offer its installations and ski runs to the several million people who live less than an hour away by



car. It is located just 45 minutes from Madrid-Barajas airport. To improve visitors' skiing experience the resort has arranged for the following novelties to be available for the upcoming season: a specific, well signposted "customer attention" zone; a Snow Garden designed for children from three to seven years of age; the start-up of the La Pinilla Ski and Mountain School; and the construction of the inn "La Pinilla Albergue" located at the bottom of the runs and having a capacity for 50 persons.

In the summer season, "Multi-Adventure Time", the station offers a wide range of sports and outdoor activities for all ages: Tyrolean traverse, archery, rock-climbing, mountain biking and, as a special attraction, a permanent mountain-bike park (the first in Spain) with no fewer than five different descents at varying degrees of difficulty. If you do not own a bike, there is a hire

service that will enable you to enjoy the facilities offered by Specialized to the full.

Always intent on improving and growing the resort, each year the station organises a growing number of sporting events. Of these, we may mention the various international events we have organised such as the Maxi-Avalanche Championship and the La Pinilla "Teva Raid". Of these we would highlight the various international competitions such as the European MaxiAvalanche Championship and the Teva-La Pinilla Raid. This sporting background makes the station one of the leading destinations for those who delight open-air sport at any time of the year.

## **Other Sports**

All who want to make the most of their stay in Riaza to practice their



favourite sports should take into account the wide range of all-year-round activities organised by the Ski Station, as well as the ideal environment surrounding the town itself, perfect for walkers, mountain bikers and horse-riders. In addition, you can take advantage of:

- A Sports Centre, complete with courts for basketball, tennis, indoor football, etc.
- A spectacular municipal court for the Spanish wall-game "pelota". There is a second court behind the main one. Both are to be found in the El Rasero council park, which also boasts a large open space for other activities.
- Fully equipped football (soccer) ground, known as "Las Delicias".
- Various courts for different activities (paddle, tennis, five-a-side football, etc.) as well as a gymnasium and a municipal outdoor swimming pool, all



located within the grounds of the Riaza Camping Bungalow park.

## Other places worth visiting

### La Nevera

The former wash-house for the village, it is located opposite the hermitage of Saint John. It employs two cannons supplying massive amounts of water. In 1897 it was given a major overhaul.

### El Escorial

This is near the exit of the village, close to the road SG-VIII. It consists of a strong stone wall, a small water source, and a bathing facility for sheep and goats. The last major reform was carried out in 1879.

### El Rasero Park

Located on the east of the town, this is a large grassed area as a recreation park. We highlight the 18 stone crosses that come into their own on Good Friday. The oldest cross dates back to 1550, while the newest is really new, brought into to replace a breakage.

### Artesanía

Riaza is a town known for its skills in woodworking and restoration. There are also a variety of antique shops, together with a private art gallery.

## How to eat

The typical dish of the town is roast lamb. Of late dishes using the wealth of wild mushrooms in the region have begun to compete. We draw attention to the town's strength in puddings and sweets, particularly those made using a pastry base, as well as its luxurious honey.

## Let's party!

### Local fiestas

- San Blas, 3 February.
- Santa Águeda, 5 February.
- Mayday, 1 May. Celebrated with folk dancing in the square.
- San Gregorio, 9 May. Patron Saint of Riaza. On this day the typical dish is cod stew.
- Month of July. International speed-painting competition known as the "Villa de Riaza" contest.
- Virgin of the Shawl, 8 September. Patron saint of the village. The date is celebrated by a sung and danced Castilian mass, followed by dancing and a formal procession, led by the effigy of the Virgin Mary
- Pilgrimages to Hontanares, which take place from the first to the second Sunday following the Day of the Virgin of the Shawl. Throughout the week the town celebrates its annual holiday period.

## How to get there

Located to the north-east of the province of Segovia, bordering on Soria and Guadalajara. The town can be reached quickest via the N.1 (Madrid-Irún) exiting at exit point N-110. It is 75 km from Segovia and 120 km from Soria.

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**Remaquetación:** Paulino Lázaro  
Enero 2014

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- Real Sitio de San Ildefonso
- Riaza
- Sepúlveda
- Turégano
- Villacastín

CAPITAL

Provincial Tourist Board

Plaza Mayor, 9 40001 Segovia  
 Tel.: 921 466 070 / Fax: 921 460 492  
 www.segoviaturismo.es  
 info@segoviaturismo.es



Tourist Office

Plaza Mayor, 10 40001 Segovia  
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Azoguejo, 1 40001 Segovia  
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 Fax: 921 466 724  
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Other tourist information points

Tourist Information Point in the City Walls

Plaza del Socorro, 2 y 3 40001 Segovia  
 Tel.: 921 461 297  
 www.redjuderias.org

Bus station

Po Ezequiel González, s/n 40002 Segovia  
 Tel.: 921 436 569  
 informacion.estacion@turismodesegovia.com

AVE (high-speed rail) station

Estación Segovia-Guiomar  
 Ctra. de Juarrillos, s/n 40195 Hontoria (Segovia)  
 Tel.: 921 447 262  
 informacion.ave@turismodesegovia.com

Association of Official Tour Guides of Segovia

Tel.: 691 117 197  
 www.guiasdeturismodesegovia.es  
 guiasdeturismodesegovia@yahoo.es

Central Reservations Office of Rural Tourism in Castile and León

Tel.: 902 203 030  
 www.castillayleonesvida.com

Association of Rural Taxis in Segovia

Tel.: 645 836 373  
 Para cualquier traslado a la provincia  
 www.segotaxirural.com



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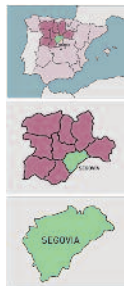
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