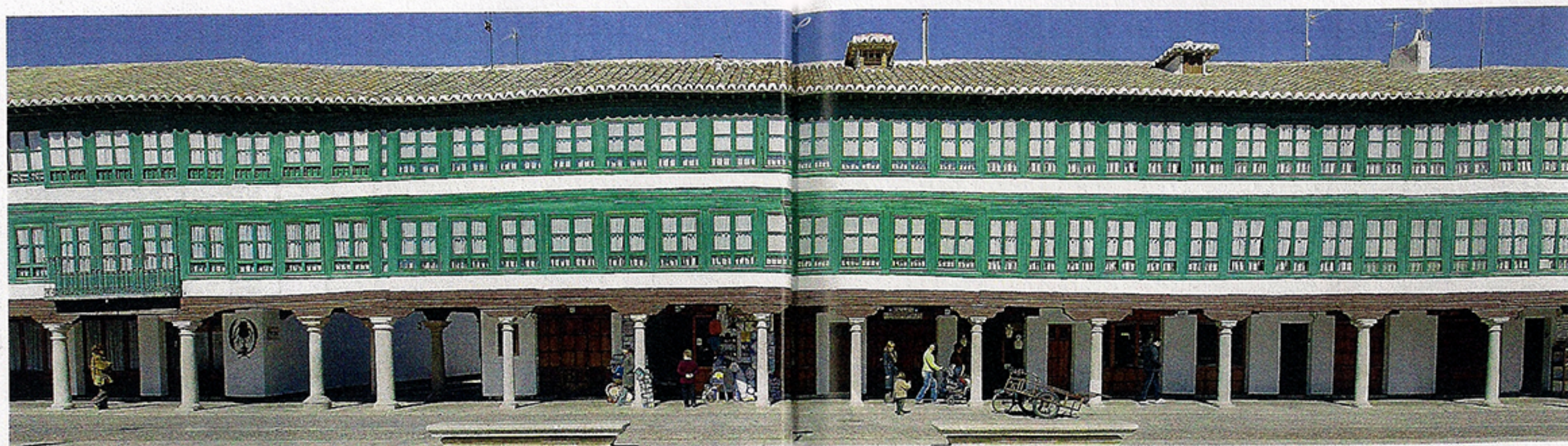




View of Plaza Mayor in Almagro.

FESTIVITY

The Muestra Gastronómica de la Berenjena (Aubergine Gastronomic Festival) in Almagro is celebrated since 2006. Although this is a

rather new event, restaurants are full due to the amount of people coming to taste this product of La Mancha.

- The beautiful Plaza Mayor, flanked by Tuscan colonnades, is the starting point to visit this locality. Full of pavement restaurants, this is the perfect place to taste a dish of *pisto* (fried vegetable hash), aubergines or *migas* (fried breadcrumbs). The 16th century Town Hall is located on this square as well as its most precious treasure, the comedy theatre. A group of actors plays as guides during a dramatised visit in which an off-voice tells the story of the building. It was built in 1628 as comedy house and declared Monumento Nacional (National Monument) in 1955. Near the square, Fúcares warehouse was erected in the 16th century by a prominent family of German merchants



DO NOT MISS

The Comedy Theatre in Almagro. It is a 17th century construction that is kept as originally built. The stage was found intact in 1950, so it was established as a theatre again.

to store cereal received from feudal estates and Almadén mercury mines. But Almagro's most distinguishing feature is the bobbin lace. Making them require an expertise that can only be found in local female workers. Museo del Encaje (Bobbin Lace Museum) exhibits the best textile collections. The 17th century Gothic church of Madre de Dios, also with Renaissance features, or the 1519 Asunción de Calatrava convent are mandatory visits.

Lands of Castles and Flocks

On the way to the next stage, Calzada de Calatrava, the CM-413 road joining Almagro and Puertollano goes through landscapes that define the essence of La Mancha: small, quite towns, endless straight roads, shepherds guarding sheep, hills of volcanic origin and silence. Here, in the middle of Calatrava region, the knights of the Order with this same name used to ride. Once the town has been crossed, you can see the Castillo de Calatrava la Nueva built in 1217 after Navas de Tolosa battle. In addition, this area is one of the natural paths to the impressive landscapes of Sierra Morena. Castillo de Salvatierra is located at Atalaya hill, to which you can get through the CR-504. This was a Muslim fortress of Roman origin. Visits are not allowed due to its ruinous state and its private ownership. The end of the road leads to La Alameda district and to an old cheese factory from the Order of Calatrava Priory. This building is worth visiting to have an idea of the architecture from that period. Today, this place is a restaurant with great attention to detail whose furniture reflects the customs of La Mancha. This is why it can be considered a real museum. ■

SURPRISE

Castillo de Calatrava la Nueva is, without doubt, a magical corner. Its views on top of the hill are breathtaking. Plains extending over dozens of kilometres, villages spreading through them, and Sierra Morena in the background can be viewed. There, one can perfectly imagine how people lived in the Middle Ages. The wind that always blow here, relieves the effect of climbing through a stoned path.