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**Trujillo**  
**and the surrounding area**  
**by Martyn Swan**



When I first came to Extremadura in 2006, I drove all around the region looking for my new home and a place to set up my new business. Five minutes after arriving in Trujillo I knew I had found both.

So much so, that I didn't stay very long and drove away to see if I could find anywhere that I liked more. If Extremadura could provide anything better than Trujillo then I wanted to see it as soon as possible.

But although I did find other beautiful areas and many interesting towns, nothing compared in my mind to that first effect that Trujillo had on me. So I returned and checked into a hotel for a few days and started to explore my new home.

So, right up front, let me confess something. Although Extremadura is full of beautiful places, I am biased; I personally think that Trujillo is the nicest of them all. In this article I will try and give you a flavour of the place and some indication of why I fell in love with the area.

## **History**

Trujillo was originally a Roman town and their influence is all around us today, from colonnades in the old town to aqueducts in the countryside.

In the film *Gladiator*, Maximus tells Marcus Aurelius about his home and farms near Trujillo, although he should more correctly have referred to it by its Roman name of Turgalium.



Trujillo has an imposing castle which overlooks the town and the surrounding countryside and can be seen from miles around. The castle dates back to long before it was occupied by the Moors and is a beautiful area to explore. The town was returned to Christian hands in 1233 and was officially declared a city in 1431.

But Trujillo really came into its own in the 15<sup>th</sup> century with the emergence of the Conquistadors, the Spanish adventurers who conquered and colonised most of South America. Prominent amongst these was Francisco Pizarro, the conqueror of the Inca Empire and Peru, who was born in Trujillo around 1471 – 1475 (nobody is quite sure exactly when).

Hardly born with a silver spoon in his mouth, he was the illegitimate son of an army Captain and a local peasant woman but, following his exploits in Peru and other parts South America, he achieved fame and fortune and his statue now occupies a place of honour in la Plaza Mayor, the main square in Trujillo.

The name Trujillo has spread far and wide in South America with cities or states of that name in Colombia, Honduras, Peru and Venezuela.



## **Modern Trujillo**

Trujillo today is a town of approximately 10,000 inhabitants, many of whom still earn their living from local agriculture. There are a fair number of Spanish tourists who visit the city, as well as a growing influx of visitors from South America visiting their roots, but as yet the town is still largely undiscovered by Northern Europeans and other tourists (I'm pleased to say!)



One of the things that first struck me about Trujillo was the beautiful Plaza Mayor, recently voted the 4<sup>th</sup> prettiest in Spain. Many towns in Spain have attractive squares but often these are full of tourists or sometimes homes to Government buildings with no real life of their own. In Trujillo, la Plaza Mayor is a living, breathing, working square, the

real heart of the town. In the morning it is buzzing as schoolchildren are dropped off at the school and many of the parents then take to the cafés to have coffee with their friends. Later in the day there are people having a drink or lunch in one of the many cafés and on market day (Thursday) the square is again full of locals enjoying the weather and the company of friends. And in the evenings, especially in the summer, the square is once again the centre of relaxation for visitors and locals alike.

All of the fiestas – and there are many! – take place in la Plaza Mayor. Some are large religion-based gatherings such as Chívri on Easter Sunday when 10,000 people throng the square and dance traditional dances and eat and drink as they did when they were shepherds and peasants.

Some are less historic, such as the weekend each year when the square is absolutely full of brightly-coloured bouncy castles of all shapes and sizes! And there are children's basketball tournaments, open-air theatre, medieval markets, cycle races, music and many other events throughout the year.



## **The Area**

There are many villages dotted around the area; Madroñera (the biggest), Herguijuela, Conquista de la Sierra, Santa Cruz de la Sierra, Ibahernando, Plasenzuela, and many others, including Aldea del Obispo which is also known as Aldea de Trujillo – confusing!



All of these villages will have the essentials of life; shops, cafés, bars, a weekly market, a primary school, a doctor or a Health Centre, a pharmacy and a municipal swimming pool, as well as their own fair share of fiestas, when the whole village will join in the celebrations.

Many people in the villages come into Trujillo on market day to do their shopping. We have a couple of medium sized supermarkets in Trujillo and a larger one on the edge of town. Trujillo also has a wide range of shops; you can buy pretty much anything here from a new kitchen to a new car. But if you need a wider selection it is available in Cáceres, about 40 minutes away.

As the land is still cultivated in the traditional manner without lots of chemicals being used, the countryside is very beautiful and green and is a riot of colour with wild flowers in the Spring.

The area is home to many different sorts of birds, especially the storks which seem to nest on every available rooftop and pylon. They can be seen on the historic buildings around the square building their nests and raising their young and can be heard making a clacking noise with their beaks like a demented woodpecker. It is considered very lucky if you can get a pair of storks to nest on your land.

40 minutes drive north will take you to the Monfragüe National Park, a protected area where the River Tagus flows through deep gorges and birds of prey circle overhead or nest on the craggy rocks. There are various view points in the park – miradores – with hides so you can watch the birds without disturbing them. Even if you are not a serious bird watcher a trip to Monfragüe will be a very rewarding experience.



## **The Weather**

The weather here can get fairly hot in summer, but as long as you follow the example set by the locals this is not really a problem. Most people aren't around much before 10:00am and go off to lunch at 2:00pm. Then it is siesta time – a brilliant Spanish tradition in my opinion! – and people reappear around 5:30 – 6:00pm. This is time to do the routine jobs – go to the supermarket, for example, followed by the more important work of relaxing in the square with a drink and some tapas indulging in the local sport of people and stork watching.

People tend to stay up quite late in the summer evenings, often till the early hours. Indeed it is quite common for any events in the square not to start till 10:00 or 11:00pm.

Some people have air conditioning in the summer although personally I have never found it necessary, although ceiling fans are certainly a good idea. The heat is pretty dry here; there is no high humidity to produce that hot and sticky unpleasant feeling.

You can be pretty certain that there will be no rain during the summer although the odd summer thunderstorm is not unknown. It can be fun watching everyone in the square dash for cover and to see the rain flowing in torrents over the old cobbles, but it never lasts long and a couple of hours later everything is back to normal again.

Obviously there is more rain in the winter but this tends to come in relatively short bursts. A few rainy days and then the sun will come out again and everywhere will be greener for the experience.

It is very rare for us to get any snow – in fact it did snow briefly some years ago and everyone came out of their houses to look. But it didn't last long; by the time I had located my camera and walked to the square it was all gone. And we only get the occasional frost which you might need to scrape off the car windscreen early in the morning, or alternatively just wait an hour or so until the sun does the job for you.

If you live here all year round you will need some sort of heating at home in the winter. Some people install central heating although this is less necessary if you live in an old house with thick walls; often a couple of oil filled radiators and a blazing log fire will be sufficient. Ecological pellet-burning stoves are also becoming more popular.

And, even in the winter, if the sun is shining (which it does more often than not) it is usually warm enough to enjoy a drink or a coffee outside during the middle of the day when the sun is high, although it can be quite chilly earlier and later.

## **Communications**

There has been a big investment here in road building over the past few years due to the availability of EC grants. Trujillo sits just off the main Madrid to Seville motorway, a vast stretch of toll-free road which is mostly empty except around the big cities. Driving on this motorway is a pleasure, not a chore. There is an excellent network of A roads so getting around is not a problem.

The nearest airport is Madrid, about 2½ hours drive away. Another possibility is Seville, about 2¾ hours or Lisbon, around 3 hours. There is a new international airport planned near Cáceres but due to the financial crisis this has been delayed and personally I don't think it will be open some years yet.

There is an internal airport at Badajoz with flights to other cities in Spain, around 1½ hours away. The Spanish high-speed train – the AVE – while not serving Trujillo direct will be available within about 45 minutes drive – eventually!

Some people see this distance from an airport as a disadvantage; personally, I see it as our insurance against the area being flooded with foreign visitors and residents which could change the character of the area, as has sadly happened in many other parts of Spain.

An alternative to driving is an excellent bus service which serves the major cities such as Madrid and also smaller local towns. And virtually every village will have a bus service to Trujillo, although this may only be one or two buses a day.

I do hope that this has given you a brief insight into this undiscovered part of Spain and if you have any questions about Trujillo and the area please email me at [martyn@extremacasa.com](mailto:martyn@extremacasa.com) and I will do my best to answer them for you. If you would like to receive a free copy of the newsletter we send out to our clients every month please let me know or just register on our website at [www.extremacasa.com](http://www.extremacasa.com) . Each issue has some local news, a feature such as property renovation or mortgages and a sample of a few of our properties.

I look forward to hearing from you and to welcoming you here soon.

*Martyn Swan*

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