

SEGOVIA

Prádena



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Prodestur Segovia

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CONTENTS

- p. 3 General Introduction
- p. 6 What to see?
- p. 8 Let's party! - Gastronomy - Folclore
- p. 9 How to get there? - Where do I find information?
- p. 10 Map of the province
- p. 11 Brochures published by Prodestur Segovia



Located on the upper reaches of the Somosierra mountain, this is the southernmost township of the Community of Towns and Lands of Sepúlveda. It was first inhabited thousands of years ago, as is shown by the Neolithic remains found at the site known as the "Cave of the Enelbralejos", a cavity reopened by chance in 1932 and revealing a burial site dating back four thousand years. It contained numerous domestic and ritual ceramic ware, objects made from silex and copper, as well as an interesting collection of cave art. Also of note are the remains found in the caves known as "Las Grajas" and "Carrascal". Roman remains were found in abundance in the town of Prádena. The Roman name for the place, in fact, was Pratum, a derivation of Latin prader; meaning meadow, in allusion to the abundant pastureland in the area. By the year 1247 the place was known as "Pradena", and did not receive its present name until the fourteenth century.

Following its repopulation in that century, Prádena appears in the records as the local administrative centre. At that time it included the outlying districts, now abandoned, of Matandrino, Peña Corva, Pradenilla and El Villar. Also in the fourteenth century the King of Castile, Fernando the Fourth, conferred on Prádena the right to certain mountain terrains and a privilege preventing all other farmers from grazing their sheep on that land.



Throughout the fifteenth century Prádena was famous throughout Spain for the quality of its wool and its fulling techniques. Being a community dependent on its livestock, the inhabitants, mostly shepherds accustomed to seasonal migration to feed their flocks, made use of the Segovia-to-Soria "Royal Sheepway", which passes through the centre of the village, along with other driveways taking them across the plain of Extremadura to what is now the province of Córdoba. In fact, the livestock tradition remains present in the local fiestas of Prádena (Our Lady of the Rosary and of the Fair), that fall on dates that roughly coincide with the return of the young

shepherds from their roving in the south of Spain. Thanks to its privileged position and spectacular views, Prádena was the initial choice of King Philip the Fifth to build what would eventually become the Palace and Gardens of La Granja. We also know that the beech trees of Prádena furnished the original window frames of the Royal Palace in Madrid.

Prádena really came into its own in the 18th century thanks in the main to livestock rearing. It was at that time that the parish church of Saint Martin was built, an impressive neoclassical edifice paid for by the rich sheep owners of the town.

Around the middle of the nineteenth century, Prádena had a population of 906 inhabitants, occupying 24 houses, "some of two stories and well built". This was the evidence supplied by Pascual Madoz in his "Geographical Dictionary of Spain" (1850), in which he adds that the village had a council building that served as a prison, a primary school "common to both sexes" at which 80 pupils studied, and "three fountains of clear water". The same writer refers to the presence of a fulling machine, several looms, four "flour mills" and the breeding of "fine-wool sheep, goats, cows and horses". Lastly, he mentions the abundant presence in the district of hares, rabbits, partridge and other game birds, plus "good trout fishing". In the year 1952 Prádena had 1,042 inhabitants devoted to general farming and sheep farming. There were six flour mills, a soap factory, a slaughterhouse, a sawmill, four carpentry shops and two blacksmith's shops. In the year 1952, Prádena had a population of 1,042, all devoted to farming and sheep raising. There were six flour mills, a soap factory, a slaughterhouse, a sawmill, four carpentry shops, two blacksmiths, and a factory to produce fizzy water. It held two local fairs, one from the 9th to the 12th of June and the other in October, as well as a regular market day on Mondays.

Whereas in times past Prádena lived off the land and, more particularly, off its livestock, at present the town has succeeded in adapting its economic base to take in tourism and the services sector, especially catering for short-term visitors. With some 600 inhabitants,

the town receives each weekend numerous visitors, many of which have ended up buying property in the town. In addition, the arrival in Spain of immigrants has boosted the birth rate, allowing Prádena to look forward to the future with some degree of optimism.

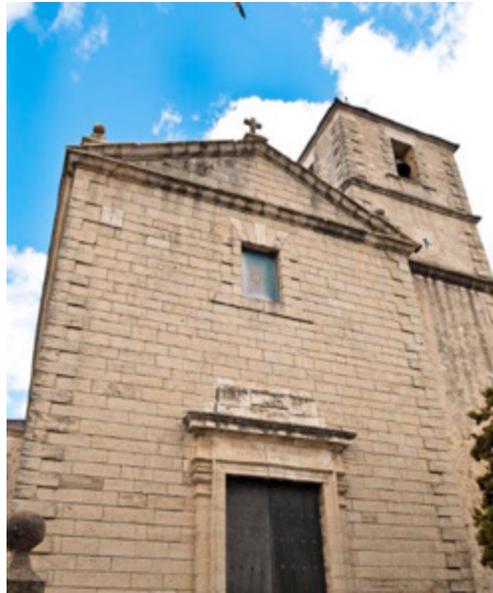


What to see?

The church of San Martín de Tours

Is the largest building in Prádena. It was built in the eighteenth century thanks to donations from the wealthy sheep farmers of the town. The foundation stone was laid in the year 1793 and the building was completed in 1797. It is built in the neoclassical style, based on a Latin Cross floor plan.

Inside the church visitors can see a late Gothic rendering of a Pietá, dated near the end of the fifteenth century, and a sculpture of the Virgin of the Rosary, the patron saint of Prádena. Also of note is the main altarpiece, the liturgical instruments and the collection of oil paintings representing the twelve apostles, the gift of a clergyman raised in Prádena itself.



The Ermita or Hermitage of Saint Roque

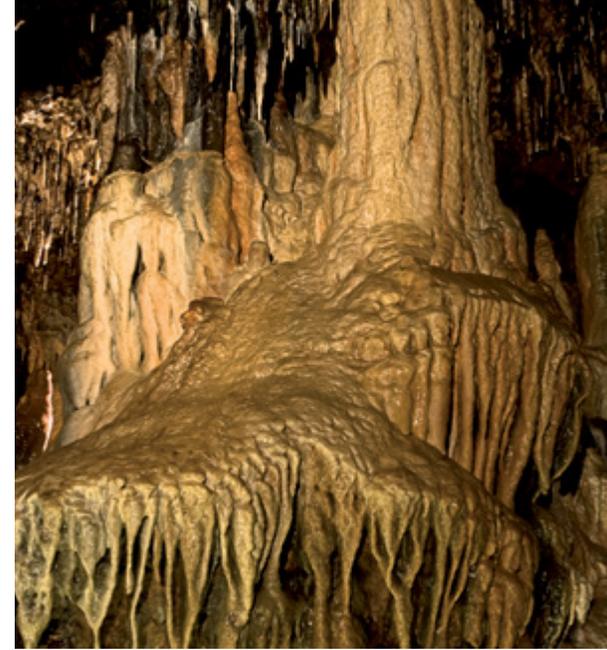
A simple church, was almost certainly built around the turn of the sixteenth century when the plague ravished these lands. At the end of the seventeenth century it became the provisional parish church while the new church of Saint Martin was under construction.

It has a single nave with a raised four-sided apse. The two sides are bound by means of a triumphal stone arch bereft of all decoration. The main altar is located at the forefront of the presbytery. It is executed in baroque style and arranged in three sections, with two niches on either side of the lateral components, plus two in the centre.

The Cave of the Juniper Trees

Located near Prádena and extending for almost four kilometres underground, is the largest cavity yet discovered on the north face of Spain's Central System mountain range. In the early 1930s, while a well was being dug to supply a pig shed, a massive cave was discovered. It rapidly adopted the name given to that part of the range, "The Juniper Trees".

The cave is structured on three levels: upper, middle and lower or river galleries. It is relatively level, showing a gradient of only 13 metres. The central gallery, perfectly able to take guided tours, has a magnificent collection of cave art executed in the Bronze Age, 2,200 years before Christ. We also see a wide variety of mineral colours contained in the so-called speleothems or secondary mineral deposits. The cave is of immense value archaeologically, for



potholders and for tourists, aside from its obvious aesthetic value. It is in an excellent state of preservation, having remained closed to the public for many years following discovery. Tourist visits began in 1995, restricted to only a part of the cave. The cave is the responsibility of the municipal council of Prádena.

Prehistoric Village

Reproduces the setting of a prehistoric village as from the Iron Age through to the Bronze Age. By passing through the various sections of the exhibition the visitor can see the many different domestic tools that have been found, from which it is possible to piece together the way of life of the inhabitants of these caves, who, more than 4,000 years ago, treated them as a revered site, to be used exclusively for funeral rites.



Royal Sheep Trail

At the approach of winter the Segovian flocks headed for fresh pastures in the south of the Iberian peninsula, using the purpose-made "Royal Segovian Sheep Trail" which they followed in a westerly direction.

Tree species

Above 1,650 metres the tree that predominates is the juniperus nana, known locally as "jabinos". At a height of approximately 1,200 metres the Pyrenean oak (*quercus pyrenaica*) starts to take over. And above 1,650 metres the juniperus nana stages a comeback. There are vast numbers of oaks, many of them centuries old, as well as juniper trees, estepas and broom... Given the annual cropping of their smaller branches by the local inhabitants in need of firewood to ward off the rigours of winter, the trunks of many of these trees have swollen to huge proportions, having withstood this treatment over hundreds of years. Along the banks of the streams are large numbers of ash and groves of mixed species.



The holly tree (*ilex aquifolium*)

Is a bush or shrub of the family of the aquifoliaceae. Perennially green, it has wavy spiked leaves of a shiny dark emerald colour, white flowers and its fruit is a small red or orange globe the size of a pea. As winter approaches the landscape around Prádena undergoes a marked change. The scene saddens as heavy cloud and mist predominate. The trees shed their leaves, except for the holly tree, whose bright red berries emerge to defy the rest of the species. The leaves of the holly tree are perennial, of a shiny green colour, and its red berries have long been used to brighten the Christmas parlours of Segovian homes. There are numerous species of holly. The commonest has dark green leaves with spiky borders and berries in clusters. They are not true berries but what is

known as drupes, i.e. fruits with a stone. The hollies' small white flowers, arranged in bunches, appear in May. Holly trees grow wild in woods and thickets and when allowed may reach heights of 15 metres. Their wood, of very fine grain, is much appreciated by cabinet makers and the manufacturers of musical instruments. Their flowers attract bees. It is said that from the wood of these Prádena holly trees they made the windows of the Royal Palace in Madrid.

El Bardal

Recreation Ground

This is a broad open space, shaded by huge juniper trees, the majority well over a hundred years old. The park also has swimming pools, running tracks, football pitches, barbeque facilities, as well as a bar.



2 February

"Firelight Day", in each neighbourhood the inhabitants start a bonfire with the wood they have collected in the previous weeks, and have high tea cum supper of toasted sweetmeats in a party that lasts until the early hours of the morning.

Carnival

On carnival days the youths of the town bring out what is known as the "tora". This is basically four timbers joined in a rectangle with bull's horns placed on one end. Armed with this contraption the young men try to "harness" the young women. Then, on festival Tuesday, known as the day of the cockerels, they smash, i.e. "kill" the "tora". Also on this day in the village square the locals extend coloured ribbons from balcony to balcony on which to hang jugs full

of flour and red pepper, along with colourful ribbons. Then the village youths, mounted on mules and horses, try to break the jugs with a lance. In days now past, the locals hung from the ribbons not jugs but live cockerels. This custom, however, was banned.

Easter Week

On Resurrection Thursday, Friday and Sunday processions take place throughout the town. On Easter Thursday and Good Friday the young people of Prádena form choruses in the processions that take place throughout the town. These processions are famed throughout the surrounding region for their solemnity and restrained emotion, typical of the religious processions of Castile. On Resurrection Sunday the church bells are rung at dawn, and at midday the young people take part in a procession



that visits all the memorial crosses in the town. On that day, the women do the singing, notably the song **"The Day of the Meadow"**. On Easter Sunday and Monday, all the inhabitants of Prádena meet on the two meadows to have breakfast, lunch and supper. The make-shift tables are fashioned using sticks and stones. The children play a game known as "inque", which uses a sharpened pole they have to make stick in the earth.

15 May, "Day of Saint Isidor", on this day a mass is held followed by a procession of the patron saint. In the square, neighbours are invited to share lunch from a communal hotpot.

First weekend in July

Feast in honour of the Sacred Heart of Jesus.

Day of St John

On 24 June the young men and women of Prádena trek to the San Juan river to wash their faces and eat chocolate. The young men pick bunches of flowers and branches of elder to make wreathes to place on the front doors of their girlfriends' house.

First Sunday in October

Feast in honour of Our Lady the Virgin of the Rosary, patroness of the town. The festivities in honour of the town's patron saint last five days. Numerous activities are organised. On Sunday there is a procession at which the effigy of the saint is borne through the town.

Saint Martin's Day

On 11 November in Prádena the inhabitants celebrate the Day of Saint Martin, the town's male patron saint.

Saint Andrew's Day

This day, 30 November, is chosen to celebrate the day popularly known as the "Day of the Bells". The village youths tie numerous bells to their backs and run through the village and dance to make them ring.

Gastronomy

Stew

In the olden days, when Spanish shepherds walked their flocks the length and breadth of the entire country along the royal sheep trails, if a sheep went lame or broke its leg, it was sacrificed and used to make "caldereta", i.e., lamb hotpot. Originally, in Prádena, it was not called a hotpot but a "fry up" ("frite" in Spanish). The meat, which was tough, was first well cooked. A garlic was crushed and olive oil and a pinch or two of paprika pepper added. As Castilian shepherds rubbed shoulders with the their colleagues from Extremadura to the west, the

frite gradually permuted into what is today called caldereta, or stew that, today, is no longer made of mutton, as of old, but of lamb, which is quicker to cook. When the sheep shearers were about their business, the farmer gave them a lamb each for every 100 pelts shorn. The lamb they immediately killed and cooked to provide a constant source of refreshment throughout the day.

For mutton stew, the best mutton to be had is that of Prádena, Casla, Arcones and Matabuena.

Garlic soup

Garlic soup is traditional in this region, given its cold winters. It is cooked slowly over a gentle flame, periodically adding cumin, a touch of fat, paprika and crushed garlic.

Roast lamb

Lamb is the traditional Sunday roast of the people of Prádena. Given the quality of the stock in this part of Spain it would be hard to find a better place for trying this dish. For the connoisseurs the best lamb for roasting comes from Sepúlveda, as there the lambs are reared in the foothills, where they can forage for the best herbs.

Although “migas” (literally breadcrumbs)

Are not typical of this part of Spain, the shepherds introduced them, having discovered them, to their great delight, on their trips down to Extremadura.



How do I get there?

From Madrid,
take the A-6 (143 km)
or the A-1 (114 km).

From Segovia,
take the N-110,
towards Soria. (45 km).

Tourist

Establishments

For more information at:
www.segoviaturismo.es

Other information of interest

Segovia Capital distance: 45 km.

Area: 46,33 Km².

Altitude: 1.119 m.

Population: 545 inhabitants.



i Where do I find information?

City Council of Prádena

Plaza de la Constitución, 1
40165 Prádena
Tel. y Fax. 921 507 006
www.pradena.es
info@pradena.es

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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.redjuaderias.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 Juarillos, s/n 40195 Hontoria (Segovia)
Tel. 921 447 262
informacion.ave@turismodesegovia.com

Association of Official Tour Guides of Segovia

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Central Reservations Office of Rural Tourism in Castille and León

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www.castillayleonesvida.com

Association of Rural Taxis in Segovia

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www.segotaxirural.com

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www.turismosepulveda.es
turismo@sepulveda.es

Villacastín
Plaza Mayor, 1 40150 Villacastín (junto Ayto.)
Tel. 921 198 547
www.villacastin.es
turismovillacastin@gmail.com



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