

Cities of Castilla y Leon and their paradors

Castilla y Leon is the large Spanish region north of Madrid. The western half broadly corresponds to the historic Kingdom of Leon, and the eastern half to Castile. The river Duero (which becomes the Douro in Portugal) runs mainly from east to west through the cities of **Soria**, **Valladolid** and **Zamora**. Travel between cities is through the vast landscapes of the Castilian Plateau.

Many of the historic cities in the region are (or contain) UNESCO World Heritage Sites. We stayed at paradors in five of these eight major cities.

The city of **Leon**, originally the headquarters of a Roman Legion was the medieval capital of the Kingdom of Leon which was united with Castile in 1252. The Parador is the Hostal de San Marcos, one of **Leon**'s most impressive buildings. It dates from the 16th century, built for the knights of the Military Order of St James which played a key role in Spanish history.



South of **Leon** is **Zamora** on the river Duero (Douro) . Like **Leon**, it is steeped in Spanish history. Like **Leon**, it has a parador in a 16th century palace. However unlike **Leon**, **Zamora** is compact and congested.

Continuing south brings one to the University city of **Salamanca**. Here the modern parador is built on a rise with this splendid view of the city. It is a short walk to the Roman bridge across the river leading to the old city, first passing the two cathedrals, and further on reaching the vast Plaza Mayor.



Travelling east brings one to the Castilian city of **Segovia**. As in **Salamanca**, the parador is modern, but has a splendid view of **Segovia** with the incredible Roman viaduct and the Alcazar.

Not far from **Segovia** is the Royal Palace of La Granja of San Ildefonso – a Spanish Versailles with formal

gardens.

Finally, travelling back to the north-east, the Duero is crossed at **Soria** which is some 275 km east of Zamora. The modern parador at **Soria** is on a hilltop near the city and provides panoramic views.

