

Alcalá de Henares

The city of Alcalá de Henares (population 180,000) is located 30 kilometers (18 miles) northeast of Madrid. The city has an important historical tradition: Romans called it “Complutum,” and its current name is of Arab origin. The city’s many monuments and buildings form part of Spain’s national heritage. Alcalá de Henares was the first planned university city in the world, founded by Cardinal Ximénez de Cisneros in the early 16th century. It was the original model for the *Civitas Dei* (City of God), the ideal urban community which Spanish missionaries took to the Americas, and also for universities in Europe and beyond. The University of Alcalá dates back seven centuries and has an historical heritage with which few classical universities of Europe can compare. The university moved to Madrid in 1836. In 1977 a new University of Alcalá was founded, using the old college buildings in the historic city centre and a new campus outside of town. Alcalá de Henares is best known as the birthplace of Miguel de Cervantes, author of *Don Quixote*, and some rare editions of the book can be seen in the *casa consistorial* (town hall). The city was named a World Heritage Site by UNESCO in 1998.

